

# Founders of Kyrgyz Soviet Literature

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# Kasym Tynystanov

Prominent Kyrgyz scientist, politician and poet. The first Minister of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic



# Biography

- Kasym Tynystanov was born in 1901 in the village of Chirpykty in the Issyk Kul province.
- He went to school between 1912 and 1916 in Karakol and Sazonovka village (current name: Ananievo) of Ysyk Kul province.
- Literacy was minimal among Kyrgyz nomads at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1916 after an unsuccessful revolt against Tsarist authorities, most of the residents of Ysyk Kul, fleeing Russian troops, escaped to China, Kasym and his parents were among them. They returned in December 1917.
- He moved to Almaty, to get education where education opportunities did exist. Through Almaty authorities he entered the Kazakh Institute of Education (Kazinpros) in Tashkent.
- Tynystanov was arrested, as part of Stalin's Great Purge, on 1 August 1938 and was subsequently executed on 6 November the same year.

**Major linguistic work**  
**Development of the Kyrgyz alphabet**

- According to historical archives, Kasym started to develop the first Kyrgyz alphabet while a student at Kazinpros. His first screenplay written in Kyrgyz, in his alphabet, was for a theatrical performance called *Alymkul*. Unfortunately, the manuscript was lost after Kasym's arrest. Some of his poems and prose were published in Kazakh newspapers in Kyrgyz script since 1922.
- Kasym worked on his alphabet between 1921 and 1926; he finalized the alphabet for the approval of the Government in 1924 and started to work on Kyrgyz orthography, which was approved in 1927 by the so-called Academic Center.
- In 1924, Kasym Tynystanov, O. Aliev, B. Daniyarov and several others formed a Scientific Commission, which developed a Kyrgyz alphabet based on Arabic script. They created the first Communist Party newspaper in Kyrgyzstan *Erkin Too*. The day when the first issue of the newspaper was published is considered the birthday of written Kyrgyz language.
- On December 20, 1924 at the opening ceremony of the Academic Center at the Department of the People's Education (DPE), Kasym Tynystanov was appointed a Deputy of Ishenally Arabaev, the Chair of the Center.
- The Center was created to coordinate research activities of the DPE and supporting its educational activities. In spring of 1925 Kasym published several articles and convinced the government and the Communist Party in the need of a new script. Kasym made a speech at a Special Convention of Educators in which he analyzed the shortcomings of the existing Arabic based script and presented a new draft Latin based script.
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- As a result of the discussion the Convention decided to include in the agenda of the coming Scientific and Educational Congress the issue of transferring from Arabic-based script to a new Latin based one. The Congress of May 1925 accepted Kasym's proposal and issued a resolution indicating activities related to the process of transfer. The National Scientific Commission created a Society of Supporters of the New Alphabet, chaired by Kasym Tynystanov, which started to promote understanding and use of the new script.
- After the Turkologists Congress Kasym became a permanent member of the Scientific Council of the USSR's Central Committee on Alphabet Adaptation, which had a mission on transferring the scripts of all Soviet Turkic languages to a Latin-based alphabet. In 1928 Kasym developed an alphabet for the Uyghur language and drafted a Dungan alphabet for the Dungans, living in the Soviet Union. In one and a half year after the Turkologists Congress a Committee for a New Kyrgyz Alphabet is created within DPE, with Kasym as its Deputy Chair.
- In 1928 to meet the lack of periodicals in Kyrgyz, Kasym Tynystanov, Torokul Aitmatov and several others initiated the creation of a first scientific and educational journal *Jany Madaniyat Jolunda*. The journal was financed through private contributions by representatives of Kyrgyz intelligentsia. The journal not only promoted the introduction of a new alphabet, but also aimed to improve qualifications of Kyrgyz teachers.

- With the creation of the People's Commissariat of Education (The Ministry of Education) in spring of 1927, Kasym Tynystanov became its first chair (the Minister of Education) and remains in this position for the several years.
- When the old Arabic based script was still in use, Kasym published the first textbook *Ene Tilibiz* (*Our language*) which was later published again with minor corrections in new Latin based script. The comparison of the two editions brings one to a conclusion that the only principal difference between the alphabets is the appearance of letters.
- In May 1934 on the Republican Orthography Convention presented New Orthography of Kyrgyz Language, which unlike the previous version also included the rules of correct use of Soviet and international term words. The New Orthography was published later that year. Together with Kasym's Punctuation it was approved with minor corrections by the Kyrgyz Government.
- Under Kasym's guidance for the People's Commissariat created ethnographic research sub-departments of the Scientific Council the first National Museum and the historic and geographic society, as well as the Committee of the New Alphabet

# Lexical and grammatical studies

- Kyrgyzstan officially joined the USSR as Karakyrgyz Autonomous Republic in 1924. In 1927 The People's Commissariat and its Academic Center were the two principal institutions responsible for education and science.
- In April 1925 the Academic Center temporarily ceased its activities. All functional responsibilities were transferred to the People's Commissariat. Being the Chair of the Commissariat Kasym Tynystanov continued to develop the concepts for coordination of the research and education in Kyrgyzstan. He also initiated various activities on studying Kyrgyz lifestyles and language peculiarities. Earlier, in 1924 after the approval of the new alphabet, Kasym created first Kyrgyz readers (reading books) for the first three grades of primary schools, the *Grammar of the Kyrgyz Language*, covering the primer, phonetics, morphology, and syntaxes. His *Morphology* (1934) and *Syntaxes* (1936) were later published separately as school textbooks.
- Kasym created a very successful terminology for the Kyrgyz grammar. Some 90 percent of the whole terminology, created by him is still in use. He created curricular as well as textbooks on language study for pedagogic institutes. Kasym laid out the theoretical basis for Kyrgyz grammar.



- Alone and as a co-author he created terminological dictionaries on seven subjects, among which were philosophy, social sciences, zoology.
- A deep grammar research as well as detailed study of word inflection and formation patterns allowed Kasym to open "morphonology", a new trend in linguistics.
- As a Chair of the People's Commissariat, Kasym not only organized numerous ethnographic research expeditions within Kyrgyzstan, but coordinated and took part in joint expeditions from other Soviet Republics. His many publications were based on the analysis of the findings of such expeditions.
- His analysis of Moldo Niyaz's *Datka Aiym* became the first sample of a textual study. His contribution to the formation of Kyrgyz linguistics was tremendous.

# **Preservation of Kyrgyz oral folklore**

- Before the Socialist Revolution, the Kyrgyz people, who did not have written language, had a very rich oral folklore. Such epics as *Manas* were extremely popular among the people. It was in 1923 that Tynystanov first went on an expedition to the eastern shore of Issyk Kul Lake to collect folklore. Later, when he became the Head of the Academic Center and the Chair of the People's Commissariat of Education, he continued to work on *Manas*. In 1926 he supported the publishing of a part of Semetei epic story (a part of a greater *Manas* epos), Tynybek's version, which Tynystanov personally valued very much. Since then his work concentrated on analyzing, preservation and publishing of Sayakbai Karalaev's and Sagynbai Orozbakov's versions of the *Manas* epic.
- In the end of 1931, *Manas* found a reflection in a theatrical performance of in the National Theater. The screen play was written by Kasym Tynystanov. Kasym wrote that *Manas* is the source of original Kyrgyz oral poetry and should be considered a part of the world cultural heritage.
- In 1935, Kasym, by then Deputy Chair of Editorial Board of *Manas* epic, proposed to publish *Manas* in Russian and Kyrgyz. He also presented a report at the USSR Conference on *Manas* Study, held in Frunze city in December 1935, where together with Mukhta Auezov and Evgeniy Polivanov he emphasized the importance preserving the epic.
- Since 1936 together with Polivanov he translated and published selected parts of the epos in Russian. *Manas* always remained an important part of his life. Even in prison, he continued to read *Manas* to his prison mates.

# Academic appointments

- In August 1932 Kasym was appointed Acting Director of the Institute. He also focused on Dungan culture. His colleagues, especially, welcomed the creation of a Dungan Sector at the Institute, which became the core organ on study and preservation of Dungan culture.
- As for his academic titles, in 1934 Kasym Tynystanov became Senior Scientific Fellow and later an Active Member of Kyrgyz Research Institute of Culture. Since 1933, he taught History and Contemporary Kyrgyz Language at Kyrgyz Pedagogical Institute as Acting Professor. Because Kasym was expelled from the Communist Party in 1935, he seemed to have never been able to defend his Doctor's Dissertation, which he, nevertheless, successfully defended later in 1936.



# Contributions in other fields

- As the Chair of the People's Commissariat of Education, Kasym contributed to the development of Kyrgyz soil science, botany, zoology, economics, agriculture, etc.
- Intensive work caused numerous health problems, and he voluntarily left the post of the Chair of the People's Commissariat of Education. In May 1931 after a long health treatment Kasym returned to his work and headed the Department of Language, Literature and Art at the National Council for Kyrgyz Language and Literature of the Kyrgyz Research Institute of Culture.
- Since then and until his arrest (he was arrested on unfounded political accusations on August 1, 1937 and executed on November 6, 1938) he continued to work on Kyrgyz grammar. His role in organization of the Kyrgyz Research Institute of Culture was significant.

# **Aaly Tokombaev** (1904-1988)

**A poet, composer, and a famous novelist**



- **Aaly Tokombaev** was born on November 7, 1904, in Kyrgyzstan in the village of Chon-Kemin. Tokombaev was a poet, composer, and a famous novelist who greatly influenced the Kyrgyz nation. In 1927 he graduated from the Middle Asian Community University in Tashkent. After graduation, he fully devoted himself to Soviet Kyrgyz literature.
- In the following years of 1927 through 1940 he began to write a collection of poems. Tokombaev published the collections *Lenin* (1927), *Flowers of Labor* (1932), and *Early Poems* (1934) and the novellas *The Dnieper Empties into the Deep Sea* (1939) and *The Wounded Heart* (1940). Throughout the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) he wrote patriotic and narrative poems through which he expressed his opinions, ideas, and beliefs.
- In his time Kyrgyzstan was the scene of a struggle between tsarism and Soviet rule. He wrote such novels as *Before the Dawn, Part 1*; *Bloody Years* (1935); *Before the Dawn, Part 2* (1947). Through those books he expressed opinions on the unfair rule and treatment of the Kyrgyz people.
- He died in 1988.

