
Legal Chapters of the First Soviet Tatar Alphabet Book for Adults as Part of an Educational Project and a Tool for Political Indoctrination

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Abstract

One of the meanings of law is: "The set of regulations that govern individuals, because they are in society. Man is a social being and should live among his peers. Every person who lives in the community fulfills his desires and needs with their cooperation. From the beginning, a wise man recognized well that the survival of his society is not possible with chaos and coercion, and he must have rules governing the relations of individuals, from the point of view of being members of the society, and today we call the sum of these rules "laws". In this way, although different legal schools have differences in determining the basis of rights and laws, they firmly believe in the minimalism and maximalism of morality in relation to law, and as a common feature of all, they emphasize the effective role of morality on law. But familiarity with legal concepts and its generalization in the society requires proper education more than anything else. Therefore, with the revelation of the close relationship that exists between legal and moral foundations, it should be known that one of the important issues related to law education is how it can be taught in order to witness its correct implementation in the society and its recognition in educational books. In this article we consider the first adult Soviet-Tatar alphabet books, published in the Arabic graphics since the first decade of the USSR existence till the Tatar alphabet Latinization in 1927. Those alphabet books were of a mass publication in 1920th during the beginning of a large-scale illiteracy liquidation campaign, held in the USSR. The books were fulfilled with "ideal" soviet characters and "illustrative" Soviet pictures and resolved pedagogical, educational and agitational objectives. Thus, illiteracy training successfully coexisted with political indoctrination. Methodologically, the main attention was paid to the "Bolshevism language" transcription that was presented in texts and illustrations. There was also shown the specificity of the educational publications based on a special age and a special ethno-confessional and ethno-cultural target audience. The evolution of such alphabet books of 1920th is considered in terms of its content and structure, so the alphabet books, focused on various categories of the adult Tatar population: workers, peasants, Red Army men; are considered as well. A special emphasis was placed on the presentation of the "external" and "internal" Soviet government enemy image and the defense of the socialist Fatherland in Tatar alphabet-books texts and illustrations for adults. The authors revealed the correlation of political agitation and myth-making elements on pages of the alphabet books with the realities of the country's political life, as well as came to the conclusion about the importance of Tatar alphabet books for adults to solve primary nationwide tasks of quick acculturation Soviet people of all ages and nationalities and of a new Soviet ideology implementation into their consciousness.

Keywords: legal chapters, political indoctrination, Tatar alphabet book, Soviet enlightenment project, political indoctrination, social educational practices.

Introduction

The first Soviet Tatar alphabet books for adults were published after the October-1917th revolution events and got its mass publications in 1920th during the beginning of a large-scale illiteracy liquidation campaign in the USSR.

This campaign was started with the Extraordinary Commission for the Illiteracy Liquidation decree issued by the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic published by December 26, 1919. According to the decree, the whole country population at the age of 8-50 years, not able to read and write, was obliged to learn to read and write in Russian or in a native language at will [1, p. 377]. In 1923 the decree was supplemented with the Liquidation of Illiteracy decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic stating the expiration date of the Illiteracy liquidation campaign by the 10-year anniversary of the

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October Revolution, on November 7, 1927, and also legislating on opening of chain-service-liquidation-illiteracy points (liquidation points) since a 1923/1924 fiscal year [2]. To compare to the Chuvash, Mari, Mordovian and Russian peoples, the general level of literacy of the Tatars was very high at that time [3, p.209; 4]. However, it didn't stop the new Soviet government from declaring the "illiteracy" and "backwardness" of the Tatar population as it was primary about the "political" ignorance. In response the new Soviet alphabet books specifically for that very category of population appeared. Those alphabet books were filled with "ideal" Soviet characters and "illustrative" Soviet pictures that had the most important political and educational impact. Without profound analysis of those publications, our understanding of the history and specific nature of the Soviet education would be limited and incomplete.

Along with the above-mentioned decrees in the USSR in the 1920s a large number of alphabet books was published for adults occupied in different professional fields: metalworkers, railway workers, plumbers, textile workers, cotton workers, livestock farmers, firefighters, repairmen, policemen, doctors; the material of those alphabet books was presented based on specific facts from professional student activities [5, p. 211-215]. So, this trend was applied to national educational publications and Tatar alphabet books in particular.

Methods

The authors of this article focused their attention on Tatar alphabet books for adults published in Arabic graphics since the first decade of the USSR existence till the Tatar alphabet Latinization carried out according to a directive in 1927. Methodologically, the main attention was paid to the transcription of the "Bolshevism language" presented in texts and illustrations in Tatar alphabet books for adults as a specific kind of such a language, oriented at a special age ethno-confessional and ethno-cultural commonality.

Results and Discussion

The first Tatar alphabet books for adults were being published in the period since the beginning of 1920 till the beginning of 1940s. We should call one «Zurlar alifbasy» ("Alphabet book for adults") as an example. It was published in 1921 and compiled by a group of outstanding Tatar culture figures, writers and publicists Khodja Badigi, Galimdgan Ibragimov, Fatih Saifi-Kazanly, G. Hudiyarov and Galimdgan Sharaf [6].

By its appearance and structure this alphabet book reminded pre-revolutionary Tatar alphabet books. It had a few drawings and its content and quality were quite primitive: a lamp, a sleigh, a student board, attached to the cart, not to the wall. A lot of texts were borrowed from works of fiction without titles and authors' names.

For different categories of Tatar Republic population, there were different alphabet books. The peasants, for example, were to be trained according to the «Krest'yan alifbasy» ("Peasant alphabet book"), and the Red Army men - according to the «Kyzylarmeets alifbasy» ("Alphabet book for the Red Army men") [7, 8]. These alphabet books were used to teach them read and write. From the alphabet books people received elementary information on mathematics, the nature of the region, the latest technical achievements in agriculture, the Soviet way of life, and so on.

But the main task of the new Tatar alphabet books for adults was, with no doubt, to educate a reader in the spirit of the Soviet ideology. The differences between "us" and "them", our life "before" and "after" were presented from the first pages of the alphabet books already. For example, a peasant alphabet book started with a picture of a manor house and its owners. On the terrace, framed by beautiful columns, an elegant young Tatar woman was reclining on feather pillows. Next to her there was a fruit tray and a jug with some drink. A stately man was depicted with his back to the woman, and in front of him in a humiliated, humble pose, there was an oppressed, destitute Tatar poor man [7, p. 2]. Such a drawing was intended, probably, to awaken the feeling of the "class hatred". At the same time, it did not correspond to historical realities at all. After the conquest of the Kazan Khanate, the existing system of feudal land tenure was destroyed. There was a gradual disintegration of the class of Tatar feudal lords, which ended in its almost complete disappearance by the beginning of the 18th century. The overwhelming majority of the dependent population became "yasak". Although the word "alpavyt" ("landowner") has survived in the Tatar language, landowners in the region were predominantly Russians, like the main part of peasants. That's why the image in the alphabet books of a Tatar landowner and a Tatar serf is more an example of propaganda than a reflection of reality.

The texts and illustrations of the alphabet books were supposed to demonstrate the positive changes taking place in the village in the first years of the Soviet regime. "Peasant alphabet book" introduced the peasants to the latest achievements in technology, gave advice on correct, "science-based" approaches to farm management. First of all, the necessity of the shift from a three-field to a many-field system was proved [7, p. 17; 8, p. 51], since the 1920s the agriculture of the republic was still based on the medieval three-field system. That was a very urgent problem, and it was no coincidence that it came to the pages of the alphabet book.

After the famine of 1921, the republic was gradually overcoming the economic crisis. However, most of the peasant farms did not have the funds to introduce the latest scientific and technical achievements. The alphabet book offered the simplest solution to the problem - the creation of cooperatives, using colorful language to

describe the advantages of collective farming over individual one. One of the examples was a text about a certain village Burtas (Burtasov) of the Volokolamsky Uyezd of the Moscow Governorate. The authors explained the well-being of the village, the availability of equipment, a new school, an electric power plant, a large herd (there were 120 heads of small and large cattle per 20 households) by collective farming [7, p. 36]. The description of the “fabulous” village, after all the horrors of the starvation in 1921, should have made a strong impression on peasants. We could not confirm the existence of such a village in the indicated period in the Volokolamsky Uyezd of the Moscow Governorate. However, the village of Burtasy, known since the 17th century, is still existing in the Kamsko-Ustyinsky District of the Republic of Tatarstan. Most likely, the authors of the alphabet book decided to locate this fake Potemkin village with a familiar name, far from Soviet Tataria, and thus make this story more believable.

Elements of political agitation and myth formation in the alphabet books were combined with the realities of the country's political life. One of the texts of the alphabet book for the Red Army men says: “Our boss is a peasant village. Therefore, we protect the fields from bandits” [8, p. 53]. These words have a strong political and historical sense. Collectivization had not yet begun, and “bandits” did not mean kulaks, who hindered the development of collective farms. Recently, in 1920, “The Pitchfork uprising” was suppressed in the region – an anti-government uprising of peasants caused by the policy of “War Communism”. It turned out that, if necessary, the Red Army could stand against “its own subjects”. However, the alphabet constantly emphasized the fundamental difference between the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army as the defender of the interests of the working people.

Appropriate political ideas were promoted through the images in the alphabet books for adults. There is one interesting drawing depicting a worker and a peasant holding hands against a red star. One has a hammer in his hand, the other has a sickle. It is easy to recognize the Kazan Tatars by carefully drawn features of the face and clothes of the peasant. Therefore, long before the appearance of Vera Mukhina's famous sculpture “Worker and Kolkhoz Woman”, the theme of “community” between city and village was expressed in the alphabet book by very close and easily readable images. The cover of M. Mukhammedov's alphabet book «Esche-krest'yan berlege. Zurlar yochen alifba» (“The unity of workers and peasants. Alphabet book for adults”), published in Moscow in the mid-1920s, has exactly such visual [9]. The first page of the textbook also depicts a worker and a peasant. They shake hands against a plant, a five-pointed star, a sickle, and a hammer [9, p. 1]. The author tried to create a single alphabet book for the residents of cities and the countryside. This can be seen in such texts as “Workers” and “Peasants”. The author contrasts the “bad” past with the “good” present: “The peasants were sold by the owners. If they resisted, they were hanged and slaughtered,” “the rich owned everything without working,” but now the people own “factories, plants, land, and water” [9, p. 15-17].

The Tatar alphabet book for adults directly named those external “enemies” of the Soviet state. It was necessary to fight against them and defend the Soviet regime. Those were “bourgeois” Poland, Romania, Finland, Latvia, and Estonia, i.e. the countries the Soviet state had the territorial claims to. The alphabet book even indicated the number of their armies [8, p. 30]. The main conclusion was the following: it is necessary to increase your own army and prepare for a future war in order to put an end to the enemies of the working people. Every page of the alphabet book was saturated with the idea of the existence of an external and internal threat, enemies and counterrevolution. The internal, “invisible” enemy was even more terrible than the external one: “We call ourselves Red Army men. We will destroy all the enemies of the Soviets like weeds. Our sharp bayonet shines, and all counter-revolutionists tremble at the mention of our name” [8, p. 23]. Such enemies were, for example, “the graphs who rose up against us. They attacked from Siberia, Ukraine, Crimea, and the West. Do you know who saved us then? Of course, a brave Red Army soldier” [8, p. 26]. The alphabet book called for a realistic assessment of the enemy: “Never consider the enemy weak ... Go down fighting” [8, p. 20].

There was always the topic of war and defense of the socialist motherland in the alphabet books of that period [10]. That is why the alphabet book for the Red Army men cited the text of the oath of the Red Army man: “I promise to defend the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at a moment's notice of the Workers' and Peasants' government. I promise to spare no effort to defend the duty of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the brotherhood of nations” [8, p. 27].

Alphabet books for adults traditionally included texts about V. Lenin, M. Kalinin, M. Frunze [7, p. 26; 8, c. 37, 41]. Anyway, politics could not replace peasant and rural issues from the alphabet books. Even in «Kyzylarmeets alifbasy» (“Alphabet book for the Red Army men”), a significant part of texts was directly related to agriculture: “Old agriculturist's advice”, “Better life after introducing eight-field system”, “A veterinarian's advice”, etc. [8, p. 50-53]. The veterinarian's advice, for example, contained rules for caring horses, the main draught animal and “fighting entity” of the Red Army: “Look after a horse as if it were a small child, love it. Don't hit and don't scold it. Attract it to yourself with soft and kind words. Let her love and obey you” [8, p. 53].

Pre-revolutionary Tatar alphabet books never divided people into the rich and poor, prioritizing moral education in accordance with the Islamic traditions. Now social differentiation (“poor”/“rich” as “friends”/“foes”) was clearly and definitely indicated in textbooks. For example, «Zurlar alifbasy» (“Alphabet book for adults”) of

1921 edition contained a large number of texts of a class nature. In one of the texts, a rich man was greatly surprised when his servant asked him to pay his salary: “Why does he need money? He never has patience, - thought the rich man [6, p. 31-33]. In the text «Soldattan kaitkach» (“After returning from the army”), the former soldier Sadyk was arrested only because he did not stop when the sergeant called him and did not answer the question: “Why didn't you stop? Who do you think you are?” The police sergeant humiliated and insulted Sadyk. But Sadyk replied: “Don't shout at me. I'm not the person who is afraid of you. What do you think?” And then he left. The sergeant promised to punish him and kept his promise. At night, Sadyk was arrested [6, p. 49-51]. In such a way, alphabet books and textbooks became the guides of the new state policy and ideology. Over the past decades foreign researchers of Soviet studies repeatedly analyzed the problem of illiteracy liquidation in the USSR as an integral part of the Soviet educational policy [11, 12, 13, 14, 15 etc.]. After the publication of the book “Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization” [16] by Stephen Kotkin, a metaphor of “Sovietization” as instilling the skill “to speak in a Bolshevik manner” became widespread, although studies of real literacy training in Soviet Russia in 1920s, moreover literacy training for adults, were almost out of practice. In the latest Russian historiography, there is some growth of an interest towards Soviet alphabet books for adults as a means of ideological indoctrination; however, such studies are still few and inaccurate [4, 17, 18, 19 etc.]. New studies, devoted to the Soviet educational project, aimed at liquidating illiteracy among adults and representatives of non-Russian peoples in Russia in 1920s are of a great interest as well. [20, 21 etc.].

Summary

The 1920s were the period of bold searches and desperate experiments in Soviet education. Both political and institutional, as well as methodological aspects of literacy training of different categories and groups of the population, differing in terms of their gender and age, national, confessional, and communal affiliation, turned out to be actualized in a moment. Within the framework of ongoing reform processes, the problem of making up for the shortfall of alphabet books and expanding the functional orientation of the alphabet book as the most important educational, pedagogic, and political outreach mean has become almost the main problem. The new Soviet alphabet books were created on a fundamentally new ideological and political basis, which allows us to speak of a kind of “alphabet book revolution” when the alphabet books were changed, of course, not overnight, and when the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and its results were directly or indirectly became, in fact, a significant focus in the alphabet books [22].

Conclusions

Tatar alphabet books for adults, as one of the varieties of Soviet alphabet books, followed their Russian counterparts and tried to imitate them. At the same time, they retained traditional national characteristics and played an important role in formation of the modern literary Tatar language and development of ethnic culture on a new, Soviet basis. Alphabet books for adults solved not only pedagogic, educational, but also propaganda tasks, and literacy training successfully coexisted with political indoctrination. Interestingly, the degree of “Sovietization” of alphabet books for adults and children was different: in textbooks for children it was weaker; in textbooks for adults it was much stronger and more obvious. In general, the most important state goal of introducing a new Soviet ideology into the consciousness of Soviet people of different ages and different nationalities was solved through the alphabetical texts.

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