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Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
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Tatar primer Atagaji/Iman Sharty as an object of cultural heritage

Alla Arkad'evna Salnikova^{*}, Dilyara Magzumovna Galiullina, Anfisa Nikolaevna Ibragimova

Kazan Federal University, 420080, Kazan, Kremlin Street, 18Kazan, Russia

Alla.Salnikova@kpfu.ru

Dilyara.Galiullina@kpfu.ru

Anfisa.Ibragimova@kpfu.ru

Abstract

The study aims to investigate Tatar Primer Atagaji / Iman Sharty as an object of cultural heritage via the reconstruction of the history of creation and existence of a text in culture and the analysis of the Atagaji primer. As a result, the primer as a socio-cultural phenomenon and an important object of cultural heritage today attracts the increased attention of scientists. In conclusion, the Tatar Primer Atagaji / Iman Sharty is considered not only a national educational book of elementary literacy but also an important tool of cultural and educational policy.

Keywords: Cultural, History, Education, Primers, Heritage.

Tatar primer Atagaji/Iman Sharty como objeto de patrimonio cultural

Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar Tatar Primer Atagaji / Iman Sharty como un objeto de patrimonio cultural a través de la reconstrucción de la historia de la creación y la existencia de un texto en la cultura y el análisis del primer Atagaji. Como resultado, la introducción como un fenómeno sociocultural y un objeto importante del patrimonio cultural de hoy en día atrae la creciente atención de los

científicos. En conclusión, el Tatar Primer Atagaji / Iman Sharty se considera no solo un libro educativo nacional de alfabetización primaria, sino también una herramienta importante de política cultural y educativa.

Palabras clave: Cultural, Historia, Educación, Primers, Patrimonio.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Article 3 of the Federal Law the objects of cultural heritage (historical and cultural monuments) of the peoples of the Russian Federation of June 25, 2002, emphasizes the status of such objects of cultural heritage as genuine sources of information about the origin and development of culture. On this basis, we can declare the high cultural value of school textbooks, including textbooks for elementary schools, in which adults design a kind of guidebook of the world around us, expedite acculturation of the younger generation, and along with this these processes occur differently in different ethnic and cultural environments. Taking this fact into account, we can safely state that the Tatar national primer Alifba is the most important source on the history of the Tatar people culture among other universal and informative sources. Alifba is engaged in structuring, preserving and transmitting basic cultural concepts and values, passing national traditions to the next generations.

According to some experts, the Tatar national primer appeared as early as in the period of Volga Bulgaria and credibly existed in the

last quarter of the 18th century; it was going a difficult path along with the development of the Tatar ethnos itself. It played a crucial role in the process of shaping the Tatar nation, in developing the new-style proto-secular educational tradition among the Tatars, later in turning the Tatar people into one of the fraternal peoples of the great multinational socialist Motherland and endowing them with Sovietness, and then it participated in establishing sovereignty of the Republic of Tatarstan. Tatar alifba is a unique historical source for studying national educational policies as well as politics of memory which play an important role in the process of acquiring and preserving national identity (BEZROGOV ET AL., 2016).

Complying with the times, the Tatar primer has repeatedly and dramatically changed along with the social changes inevitably reflecting and embodying them, and at the same time constructing an image of the wonderful, coming tomorrow the younger generations will live on its pages. Therefore, the object of cultural heritage is both separate Tatar primers and the entire historical and constantly transforming complex of such textbooks as evidence of various periods and stages of the Tatar people's life. At the same time, in our opinion, we should pay attention to some educational publications underlying the origins of the Tatar prime book tradition and serving the basis for this educational complex. We should mention the first well-preserved printed primer for maktab, the Tatar alphabet Atagaji (Alphabet, reading by syllables) / Iman Sharty (The Conditions of Faith) with the prayers to read (BIANCHINI & ROBERTO, 2016).

2. METHODS

Considering the main objective of our work, the study of the possibilities of the national primer as a bearer and a translator of the cultural memory of the Tatar people history, the applied research methods have become the reconstruction of the history of creation and existence of a text in culture and the analysis of the Atagaji primer as a result of the interaction between text and context. We made a transcription of the primer texts, their review and analysis including the graphics and the book objectives. The problems of text attribution and the specifics of its functioning in the educational space were also considered (LEVINSON ET AL., 2017: KHANJANI, ET AL, 2017: SETIAWAN ET AL, 2019).

The researchers also applied the methods of a new history of education that implies studying the educational realities through a political and socio-cultural prism, the methods of historical psychology in order to identify specific ways of constructing the cultural memory of the past through educational books.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primer Atagaji was first published in Kazan in 1802 with an edition of 11 thousand copies. This textbook was essentially the first book for reading, the main and almost the only educational textbook

used for teaching reading and writing in Tatar maktab until the 90s of the XIX century. The primer was reprinted almost annually in large editions and had 190 editions. The Tatar child began his lesson with this book, he read Alifba with its help, studied the language of the Quran and religion, received certain knowledge of fiqh (Islamic law). Later, the book was published under the names Alifba Iman Shartlary Belan (Alphabet with prayers), Sharayit al-Iman or Iman Sharty (Conditions of Faith). The Tatars simply called it Alifba (or Alebbi, Alpi). For more than a hundred years (the last edition was issued in the Soviet times, in 1928), this primer had been almost unchanged. The additions that were made concerned the prayers that had not been previously included.

The language of the book was popularly called bookish as it was the official religious language, which had been the literary language of the Kazan Tatars for a long time. The Tatar literature historians Rakhim and Gubaidullin, having carefully analyzed the text of the primer found a striking similarity with the language and style of the Bukhara tombstones of the 8th century AH, which indicated, in their opinion, the early creation of the textbook (SALNIKOVA & GALIULLINA, 2014; 2016).

The question of the textbook authorship has remained controversial for a long time. Some sources attributed the authorship to Murtaza bin Kutlugush al-Simeti (late XVII - early XVIII centuries), a resident of Mamadysh district, others - to IshniyazShirniyaz, the Khalif

of Kargalinskiy madrasa. Today, the prevailing opinion is that the author of the book is Murtaza Kutlugush. The prominent Tatar enlightener Sh. Mardzhani linked the appearance of this book with the period of Volga Bulgaria. We can assume that Murtaza Kutlugush just adjusted the textbook that had been preserved and circulated widely among the population. Developing the idea of VALIULLIN (2004), a well-known expert in the field of the history of Tatar education and the Tatar book KARIMULLIN (1993) argued that the primer had been serving as a textbook in Tatar maktab and madrasas since ancient times. In his opinion, this was the first book that teaches reading and writing in Arabic letters.

The Muslim clergy considered the Iman of the Sharty a sacred book. In the book, there was a conversation between two Muslims. The main provisions of Muslim dogma were explained in short question–answer form. This form of presentation was later used in the Jadids primers. For example, in *Svad Khan (A Literate Person)* VALIULLIN (2004) explained not only the basics of Islam but also the norms of children's behavior in family and society in the form of questions and answers.

This primer was highly appreciated by Russian missionaries. So, in 1894, the Islamic scholar and historian E.A. Malov translated it into Russian. In his work the *Mohammedan Primer*, he compared Iman Sharty with the Russian scholastic alphabet book *Primary teaching by a man who wants to understand Divine Scripture*. He considered the

laconic content of Iman Sharty an advantage and the low printing quality- one of its main disadvantage. SAFIULLINA (2003) was skeptical about excessive re-editions and mass character of the book reprints, although he immediately asked to take an example from the Tatars, who almost all studied with one primer while the Russian primers changed every 2–3 years. He saw the reason of the reprints not in the demand, but in the fear of its being banned as non-native. In fact, the *Mohammedan* primer according to SCHÜTZE & MATTHES (2018) does not contain anything, which would give a serious reason for the Russian government to ban printing this children's book.

Since the end of the XIX century the old-fashioned Tatar primers based on the word-by-word teaching method and focused on mechanical reading and memorization of prayers, have been increasingly criticized by the advanced Tatar clerisy. The reform of the national school system resulted in the gradual substitution of the old-fashioned theological educational institutions by the new-style (Jadids) maktabs and madrasas and the emergence of a new generation of Tatar primers based on the most advanced sound (syllable reading) teaching method.

However, this did not mean that the old-fashioned religious and moral textbooks were excluded from the educational process: according to the data of Kazan Interim Committee on Press Affairs for 1909, out of 70 textbooks for religious Muslim schools, the religious and moral textbooks made 66.4% and the textbooks of general

education made only 33.6%. The circulation of *Iman Sharty* in 1906 was issued 19,000 copies. In the first decade of the Soviet regime, *Iman Sharty* was used to teach Muslim dogma in mosques and private houses. It was a concession of the Soviet authorities to believing Muslims by the resolution of the CEC and CPC of the RSFSR of October 8, 1923.

The primer as a socio-cultural phenomenon and an important object of cultural heritage today attracts the increased attention of scientists. If we talk about domestic historiography the interest of researchers is mainly focused on the Russian and Western European primers. You can also find a series of studies on the primers of the peoples of Russia. However, most of them contain the sociopolitical, historical and cultural characteristics of Soviet and post-Soviet primers.

Separate chapters about early printed Tatar primers are included in the works devoted to the history of Tatar national education, books, and printing, in reference books. The works of foreign specialists devoted to the study of religious textbooks for elementary school as a socio-cultural phenomenon are significant, first of all, with their methodology, techniques of studying various genres of the primers texts. Other studies of interest include publications on the history of the primer presented in the *Reading Primers International* newsletter (RPI) (Essen) which have been published regularly since 2009.

4. SUMMARY

The Tatar primer *Atagaji* (Alphabet, reading by syllables) / *Iman Sharty* (Conditions of Faith) should not be underestimated as an object of cultural heritage and as an essential component of the national educational system of the Tatar people. Undoubtedly, this textbook was a typical example of an old-school primer, but for its time it was actual and well-timed. Not only did whole generations of Tatar children learn to read with it; it inspired them with the cult of knowledge that is a characteristic of Muslim culture reflected in the classical sayings of the Quran and Sunnah (Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave, seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim).

Observing the high level of literacy among the Tatars of the Kazan Province, a missionary educator, an inspector of public schools KOBLOV (1908) explained it according to Islam. The study of the religious sciences and communicating them to people is considered a pleasing to God and he observed a school in every Tatar village where the mullahs taught children for a pittance or for free.

Prominent Tatar enlighteners who made a significant contribution to the improvement of the Tatar national primer had been trained themselves with the primer *Iman Sharty*, that represented a natural stage in the development of Tatar national textbooks and gave a grounding for future *Jadids* textbooks. In the course of discussion

between cadimists and jadidists, Iman Sharty was used as one of the most important arguments about the advantages of the cadimist system of education.

Finally, in the first Soviet decade, a period of eradicating bourgeois nationalism and cultivation of proletarian nationalism, the primer Iman Sharty turned out to be one of the most important practical tools for finding and preserving national identity within the framework of the new Soviet political space.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this article, the Tatar primer *Atagaji / Iman Sharty* (1802–1928) is considered not only a national educational book of elementary literacy but also an important tool of cultural and educational policy, one of the main culture-building texts focusing on national children's audience. It embodied and promoted those patterns of national life and national behavior, which had to be a leading light as it was a bearer of the spiritual values of the Tatar people. Such a socio-cultural mission makes it not only an important historical source but also an integral feature of the multi-national Russian cultural heritage.

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