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FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALPHABET OF THE CRIMEAN TATAR LANGUAGE: A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Abstract

The article deals with the formation of the modern alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language. Materials on the history of the Crimean Tatar language, the formation of the literary language, and the development of the alphabet are presented. The scientific and methodological basis of our investigation became the works of leading historians, linguists who were engaged in general, Crimean Tatar linguistics, issues of the history of the language. Taking into account the historical context, the main key elements of the formation and development of Crimean Tatar graphics were outlined. The research used the works of linguists, historians, writers, publicists and cultural figures, such as Bohdan Azhniuk, Alina Dochu, Tyshchenko-Monastyrska Oksana, Afize Emiramzayeva, Arnautova Ayshe, Ismail Gasprinskyi, Riza Fazylov, Safter Nagayev, Ismail Kerimov, Ayshe Kokiyeva. The article reveals the formation of the Crimean Tatar alphabet from the 12th century to the present, taking into account the history of the development of the Crimean Tatar language. In this regard, each episode of the history of the language during the period of use of each individual alphabet in the Crimean Tatar language was separately presented and described. The article outlines and reveals a range of problems and tasks for a thorough study of the Crimean Tatar language in a historical context. Much attention is paid to the problem of the transition from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin alphabet. It is noted that this problem is or was relevant not only for the Crimean Tatar language but also for other Turkic languages. The influence of historical events and linguistic processes in the language on the state of the modern alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language is determined.

Keywords: Crimean Tatar language, Turkic languages, graphics, alphabet, history.

1. Introduction.

The general problem of the history of the Crimean Tatar language is sociopolitical, because the language was often under pressure and developed in conditions of sociopolitical oppression. Just like the Ukrainian language, the Crimean Tatar language was tried to be

destroyed by the Russian Empire, the USSR and the modern Russian Federation. In the course of history, many speakers of the language were destroyed, the Crimean Tatar language and literature suffered, and the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed. Today, the problem of transition to a new alphabet is more relevant than ever for the Crimean Tatar language. It consists in the absence of a generally accepted alphabet. Linguists still cannot agree on the final version of the modern alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language.

2. Literature Review.

This article contributes to the solution of this problem and makes it possible to navigate in the historical context of the alphabet, as well as to perform the following tasks: get acquainted with the history of the language, follow the process of changing the alphabet, and analyze the consequences of the transition from one alphabet to another. The practical significance of solving this problem lies in the development of a standardized alphabet of the modern Crimean Tatar language. In Crimean Tatar linguistics, there are very few works devoted to the problem of the alphabet and spelling. B. M. Azhniuk, A. R. Dochu, O. O. Tyshchenko-Monastyrska, A. S. Emiramzaeva, A. R. Arnautova, N. Seytyagyaev were engaged in the research of this topic in modern times. In their works, scientists note, that the Crimean Tatar language is one of the endangered languages.

3. Aims and Objectives.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the history of the formation of the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language. The main tasks are the following: to trace the history of the development of the Crimean Tatar language, to determine the historical periods of the development of the Crimean Tatar alphabet, and to analyze the influence of historical events on the Crimean Tatar alphabet.

4. Methodology.

Historical sources, scientific articles and current legislation were used as a database for the research. During the research, methods of observation, description, analysis, as well as synchronic and diachronic methods were used.

5. Discussion and Results.

The Crimean Tatar language is an agglutinative, analytical language that belongs to the Kipchak-Polovtsk group of the Turkic language family. It was formed on the territory of modern Crimea. It is the native language of the Crimean Tatars. According to the 2010 UNESCO classification, the Crimean Tatar language belongs to the endangered languages (UNESCO, 2010 URL: https://cutt.ly/dwT10Te1).

In the late 12th century – early 13th century, together with Islam, traditional Arabic script comes into common use in Crimea: د, ذ, ر, ز, ژ, س, ش, ص, ض, ا, ب, پ, ت, ث, ج, چ, ح, خ ى, گ, ل, م, ن, و, ه, گ, ڭ, ك, ك, ط, ظ, ع, غ, ف, ق, ك [13].

Crimean Tatar writing in Arabic script was developing, changing, and being used in manuscripts as well as in printed editions till 1883. In 1883, Crimean Tatar publicist, editor and publisher of ترجمان newspaper (*Terciman* – Cr. T. "translator") Ismail Gasprinski, together with the Crimean Tatar intellectuals and his colleagues, the so-called folk teachers, started work on reformation of the Arabic script. Gasprinski considered bringing the Arabic letters to match the Crimean Tatar sounds as the main task of the reformation.

Having only three letters to design vowels, the Arabic script did not correspond to the phonetic order of the Crimean Tatar language. So, Gasprinski considered the increment of the vowel letters amount essential.

From 1884 to 1914, Gasprinski published in *Terciman* several articles named *The New Orthography*, *The Sound Orthography* (Gasprinski, Terciman 1884–1914), etc. In these articles, he analyzed in detail every sound in borrowings from Arabic and in Crimean Tatar words and revealed the characteristic features of these sounds with deep knowledge of the linguistic phenomena of the time. Despite his efforts, the Arabic script still was able to keep its steady position.

Only in 1920 did the progressive intellectuals approach the idea of creating a new alphabet again. The expedience of refusing the Arabic script and transitioning to the Latin script because of the phonetic limitation and overly complexity of the former becomes obvious to the nation.

In 1928, the First All-Crimean Scientific Conference of the Crimean Tatar Language was held in Simferopol. The main report of the conference was *The Basis of Orthography of the Crimean Tatar Literary Language* (Choban-zade, 1928) by B. Choban-zade. Apart from that, *History of the Crimean Tatar Orthography of the Period of Arabic Script* (Ayvazov,1928) by A. Ayvazov and *The Mixed Dialect As a Basis for the Crimean Tatar Literary Language* (Ipci, 1928) by Umer Ipci were also presented.

It was especially sharply discussed which dialect should become a basis for the literary language. After thoroughly studying and analyzing a respectable amount of the vocabulary and phonetics, the mixed dialect of the Crimean Tatar language (orta yolaq) was unanimously accepted as a basis for the literary language. Participants of the Conference led by B. Choban-Zade approved a special orthography commission. After the Conference, research on the Crimean Tatar vocabulary was conducted; the commission members, together with other linguists, did a thorough job of improving the Crimean Tatar orthography, establishing a new compilation of the Crimean Tatar orthography and punctuation. Fight against the orthographic disorder, which was shaking up the general orthography system and causing a large number of difficulties for publishing houses and school teaching, was the main task of the commission, which saw the publishing of the first compilation of the orthography and punctuation rules as a principal means of dealing with misrule. The Crimean Tatar language did not have such a compilation, so working on it was seen as the most important and necessary.

In the process of preparing for the transition to the new alphabet, many issues related to the structure of the language arose. In 1929, Second All-Crimean Scientific Conference of the Crimean Tatar Language was held in Simferopol, where such reports as *The Ways of Development of the Crimean Tatar Language* (Nedim, 1929) by M. Nedim, *The Orthography of the Borrowings from Arabic, Persian, And Other Languages* (Ipci, 1929) by U. Ipci, *The Terminology Issues in the Crimean Tatar Language* (Latifzade, 1929) by A. Latifzade, also problems related to publishing the terminological vocabularies and *The Spelling Dictionary* were discussed. Apart from that, reports about the course of the expedition work of gathering language material and folklore were also presented.

At the Conference, the decision to transition to the new alphabet based on the Latin script was made. In the same year, an official decree of the Crimean Government about the transition to the new alphabet was issued.

The new alphabet contained 32 letters, among them 24 consonants and 8 vowels: A a, B b, C c, Ç ç, D d, E e, F f, G g, Ƣ ƣ, H h, J j, İ i, K k, L l, M m, N n, Ŋ ŋ, O o, Ɵ ɵ, P p, Q q, R r, S s, Ş ş, T t, V v, X x, U u, Y y, Z z, Ƶ z, Ь ь [13].

In 1935, the Third All-Crimean Scientific Conference of the Crimean Tatar Language was held in Simferopol. This Conference agenda included such issues as ways of development of the Crimean Tatar literary language, bases of the grammar of the Crimean Tatar language, main foundations of the structure of the literary language orthography, and

main foundations and rules of punctuation of the literary language. Especially significant reports were *About the Grammar Basics* (Kurkci, 1935) by U. Kurkci and *About Orthography* (Bekirov, 1935) by M. Bekirov. O. Samoylovich and N. Dmitriyev were participants in the Conference and also took a great part in preparing and arranging these reports. Exactly in these papers nature of the grammar order and peculiarity of the orthography rules of the Crimean Tatar language were revealed. In 1936, *The Spelling Dictionary* and training manuals were published for the first time.

In 1938, the Cyrillic alphabet was forced on the Crimean Tatar people as well as on other Turkic peoples. The order of the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR No. 989 dated June 22, 1938, approved "the presented project of the Crimean Tatar alphabet and the list of basic rules of spelling based on the Russian language with amendments made to it by the Institute of Language and Writing of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR." The same year, in June, by resolution of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean ASSR, information was published on the introduction of a new alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language which consisted of 37 letters, among them 27 consonants and 10 vowels: А а, Б б, В в, Г г, Гъ гъ, Д д, Е е, Ё ё, З з, Ж ж, И и, Й й, К к, Къ къ, Л л, М м, Н н, Нъ нъ, О о, П п, Р р, С с, Т т, У у, Ф ф, Х х, Ц ц, Ч ч, Дж дж, Ш ш, Щ щ, ъ, Ы ы, ь, Э э, Ю ю, Я я [13].

The Crimean Tatar orthography is based on the phonetical principle. However, the rules of spelling of borrowed words were established together with the alphabet. Thereby, borrowings from the Russian language are written considering their Russian spelling.

The main phonetical rule of the Crimean Tatar language is synharmonism. There are two distinguished kinds of vowel harmony: palatal and labial. The essence of the former is the fact that only those affixes can be attached to a root which contains palatal vowels. Every grammar category chooses the affix version which suits the root vowel. There can be no such unity in borrowings from the Russian language thus affix attached to a root agrees with the last sound of the root, for instance: *колхоз-джы* (collective farmer), *ракета-лар* (rockets), *комитет-ке* (committee), etc.

In 1938, due to the creation of an alphabet based on the Cyrillic alphabet of the Russian language, new orthography rules were formed and accepted, and orthography manuals were published. A compilation of rules should have become the next step in the literary language development because the mentioned institute admitted the presence of many inaccuracies and false positions in the orthography based on the Cyrillic alphabet, but additional work in this direction was not conducted.

Orthography reformation had a great value for the literary language development and its approximation to the dialects. Nowadays, the difference between the southern and northern dialects is not so large, and it lets native speakers understand each other better.

Punctuation regulations of the literary language were formulated already in 1892 by I. Gasprinski. Modern rules of the Crimean Tatar orthography and punctuation were accepted at the Second All-Crimean Scientific Conference of the Crimean Tatar Language. However, nowadays, native speakers mostly use rules of the Russian orthography and punctuation, again, because of the impact of the Russian language, which is strengthened by the usage of the Cyrillic alphabet of the Russian language.

Also, Cyrillic graphics incorrectly convey the sounds of the Crimean Tatar language. For example, sounds uncharacteristic of the Russian language. The sounds [q] and [ñ] in Cyrillic are denoted by combinations of two letters: the consonants [к] and [н] with a solid sign [ъ] – [къ][нъ] taken from the Russian alphabet, [у], [ю]; [о], [ё] are selectively used to indicate [ü] and [ö], depending on the word. Thus: kün – *кунь*, ötmek – *отмек*, but ömür – *омюр*, söz – *сёз*. The sound [â] softens the preceding consonant sound (except [t], [d], [n],

[q], [ğ]), while in Cyrillic it is denoted as [я], which is fundamentally incorrect, because the rules are violated of synharmonism: kâde – кяде. At the same time, the combination of the letters ya is also conveyed using the letter [ı]: yaptım – *яптым*, thus [â] and [ya] are equated, which is a mistake. The combination yo is also conveyed by "ё": yoq – *ёкъ*, equating [ö] and [yo].

The sound [c] is denoted by two letters [дж]. And since there is no such sound in the Russian language, there were precedents of reading by people who have a low level of command of the language [дж] separately by letters, for example: оса – оджа. For one letter "е" in the Cyrillic alphabet there are two letters [е], [э]. Of course, there are two different sounds, but their difference is only phonetic and does not affect synharmony, respectively, the affixes added to the word, so the presence of two "е" only confuses people with a low level of language proficiency. In contrast to the need to enter two letters to indicate "h", the hard one is hıyar, and the aspirated one is Allah. It depends on which affix is used in the word: hard [h] – Allahtan, aspirated [h] – Allahdan. When using Cyrillic graphics, under the influence of the Russian language, average speakers make mistakes, which consist in applying the rules of the Russian language to Crimean Tatar, for example: instead of "yahşı" (yahşı) they write "yahshi", due to the rule of the Russian language: zhi-shi is written through [i].

Also, as we can see, the Cyrillic alphabet overloads the word with letters, which makes it more difficult to read. In addition, the most frequent words in any language are words with fewer letters: *къырымтатарларданъ* – qırımtatarlardañ, *джавлукъларнынъ* – cavluqlarnıñ, *топрагъынъызгъа* – toprağınızğa.

Latin, in turn, facilitates interaction with the specific sounds of the Crimean Tatar language, and also helps to perceive Crimean Tatar as another language, distinguishing it from Russian. The Crimean Tatar language has a lot of Russian loanwords, and the Cyrillic alphabet only contributes to the emergence of new ones. The final transition to the Latin alphabet will help stop this process.

On June 26, 1991, the Second Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar People (Crimean Tatar Resource Center, 2023 URL: https://cutt.ly/zwT0x0kS), national gathering, the higher representative authorized body of the Crimean Tatars, was convened where the decision to transition of the Crimean Tatar language to the Latin alphabet of a new model was made.

This was a formal decision with rather legal than linguistic power. At the same time, it became an official reason for the change of the script. Work on the alphabet was conducted by enthusiastic linguists and special councils of Crimean Engineering and Pedagogical University and Tavrida National V. I. Vernadsky University till 2014. At this time, several various versions of the alphabet based on the Latin script were suggested, but none met the needs of the Crimean Tatar language to the full extent, so linguists have been disputing as to what should be the decisive alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language.

In 2014, the Russian Federation occupied Crimea, and in September 2014, Law No. 165-FZ dated 11.12.2002 (Gazeta.ua, 2014 URL: https://cutt.ly/bwT0nmnL) came into force which prohibits using any other alphabet except Cyrillic. After that, any further work on creating a unified alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language based on the Latin script was frozen.

On September 22, 2021, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a law about codification of the Crimean Tatar language on the basis of the Latin script. De facto, this also is a formal decision that ratifies the Latin alphabet as the main alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language because work on it is not finished yet. Although, from the legal point of view, this law is very important, both from a linguistic point of view and from a legal point of view.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine decided:

1. To agree with the proposal of the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories and the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People regarding the approval of the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language based on the attached Latin script.

2. The Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories together with the interested central and local executive bodies with the participation of local self-government bodies, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people to take measures to: 1) transfer the educational process, which is carried out in the Crimean Tatar language, including textbooks, methodical materials, etc., to the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language based on Latin graphics until September 1, 2025; 2) stimulation of the use of the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language based on Latin graphics in other spheres of language functioning.

3. The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide comprehensive information about the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language based on the Latin script to citizens of Ukraine, including those who live in the territory of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, as well as international partners of Ukraine, in particular in the context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages declared by the United Nations General Assembly for 2022-2032 and on the site of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples. (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021 URL: https://cutt.ly/awT16MAc).

This is the alphabet prescribed in the law: A a, B b, C c, Ç ç, D d, E e, F f, G g, Ğ ğ, H h, İ i, I ı, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, Ñ ñ, O o, Ö ö, P p, Q q, R r, S s, Ş ş, T t, U u, Ü ü, V v, Y y, Z z (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021 URL: https://cutt.ly/awT16MAc).

Nowadays, a small amount of the Crimean Tatar language experts in the continental part of Ukraine still are working on the development and unification of the Crimean Tatar alphabet.

6. Conclusions.

Using the alphabet based on the Arabic script, the Crimean Tatar language went a long way in developing for nearly six hundred years. When a need for change appeared, the Crimean Tatar intellectuals made a reformation within which a decision to transition to the Latin script was made. This revealed more opportunities in the educational, writing, and publishing fields. Scientists of the time were watching carefully both the new alphabet and the process of its implementation into the Crimean Tatar language. Some inaccuracies and problems were noticed while using the older model of the Latin alphabet. So, three scientific conferences were conducted with the aim of making corrections to orthography, language standardization, and defining grammar rules. This work wasn't completed, the alphabet had functioned only for 9 years which was not enough also for adapt it to meet the needs of the Crimean Tatar language. Instead, the Soviet government in 1938 forced the Cyrillic alphabet based on the Russian language with rules of the Russian language offhand pulled onto the Crimean Tatar language as an addition. It was not enough time for all Crimean Tatars to get used to the former alphabet while it was changed again. The Cyrillic alphabet had the same fate: in a year after the reformation, World War II started. Of course, no language development was possible in wartime. On May 18, 1944, Crimean Tatars were deported; in this way, the nation was divided and the language environment was destroyed. At the same time, censorship of any publications was imposed, education was prohibited, and the Crimean Tatar language came under the cancelling policy. The snowbreak began in the 60s only when it became possible to print literature and publish newspapers and books in the Crimean Tatar language based on the Cyrillic script, although there still were many

limitations. On June 26, 1991, Second Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people was convened and the decision to transition of the Crimean Tatar language to the Latin script (the new model) was made. However, de facto, this transition took place only on paper and the majority of people were still using the Cyrillic script. Papers, books and textbooks sometimes would be published in the Latin script but only as exclusion. On February 23, 2014, the Russian Federation occupied Crimea and in half a year the law on prohibition of Latin script use came into force. Since then, the Crimean Tatar linguistic space has been divided into two vectors: in Crimea and in the continental part of Ukraine. On September 22, 2021, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the law on codification of the Crimean Tatar language based on the Latin alphabet.

This is a small but very important step in the history of the Crimean Tatar language. Now the task of scientists is to further work on the alphabet of the modern Crimean Tatar language based on Latin graphics. In today's alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language, adopted by the Verkhovna Rada, there is no letter [â], there is only one [h], but we need two, there are letters and sounds that scholars still argue about, for example [e], [ñ], [j]. In addition, it is necessary to carry out educational activities. Currently, 80% of Crimean Tatars use Cyrillic script in everyday life, journalism, and scientific activities. Based on historical events and the process of transition from one graphic to another, it becomes clear that not all changes in the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language benefited it. The Crimean Tatar language actually stood still for 50 years. And the level, as we say, of the modern Crimean Tatar language remained in the state of 50 years ago. For the last 20–25 years, linguists have been working on improving the language. But, despite these innovations, now there is no reason to consider Crimean Tatar a developing language.

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Бібліографічний опис:

Анотація

Стаття присвячена питанню формування сучасної абетки кримськотатарської мови. Представлено матеріали з історії кримськотатарської мови, утворення літературної мови, розвитку абетки. Науково-методологічною базою нашої розвідки стали роботи провідних істориків, мовознавців, котрі займалися загальним, кримськотатарським мовознавством, питаннями історії мови. З огляду на історичний контекст було окреслено основні ключові елементи становлення та розвитку кримськотатарської графіки. У ході дослідження були використані праці мовознавців, істориків, письменників, публіцистів і діячів культури, таких як Богдан Ажнюк, Аліна Дочу, Тищенко-Монастирська Оксана, Афізе Емірамзаєва, Арнаутова Айше, Ісмаїл Гаспринський, Різа Фазилов, Сафтер Нагаєв, Ісмаїл Керімов, Айше Кокієва, Наріман Сейтяг'яєв, Бекір Чобан-заде, Умер Інчі, Асан Сабрі Айвазов, Абдулла Лятіфзаде, Мамут Недім, Мемет Бекіров, Усеїн Куркчі та ін. У статті розкривається становлення кримськотатарської абетки з XII ст. до сьогодення, з урахуванням історії розвитку кримськотатарської мови. У зв'язку з цим, окремо було представлено та описано кожен епізод історії мови в період використання кримськотатарською мовою окремої абетки. Стаття окреслює та розкриває коло проблем і завдань для ґрунтовного дослідження кримськотатарської мови в історичному контексті. Велику увагу приділено проблемі переходу з кириличної абетки на латинську. Зазначається, що ця проблема є або була актуальна не тільки для кримськотатарської мови, а й для інших тюркських мов. Визначено вплив історичних подій і лінгвістичних процесів в мові на стан сучасної абетки кримськотатарської мови.

Ключові слова: кримськотатарська мова, тюркські мови, графіка, абетка, історія.