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RESEARCHERS OF THE CRIMEAN TATAR LANGUAGE IN THE
19TH –20TH CENTURY

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Abstract

The paper examines the status of the Crimean Tatar language in the late 19th – early 20th century, finds out the authors engaged in the Crimean Tatar studies, describes scientific publications devoted to the issues of the Crimean Tatar language. The sources surviving on the Crimean Tatar language include alphabet books, grammar books, reading books, dictionaries, scientific articles, calligraphy copybooks and other publications. The paper provides a brief historical overview of the status of the Crimean Tatar language at the turn of the 20th century, analyzes historical processes that contributed to reforming the old Crimean Tatar language and evolving the modern literary Crimean Tatar language. The emerging materials opened up the major challenges facing the Crimean Tatar linguistics in the target period. In addition to major literature, periodicals are given, the pages of which captured the first scientific articles on the status of the Crimean Tatar language. The paper accentuates the key features and the level of prior studies of historical documentation, its importance for the history of the Crimean Tatar linguistics. The lack of adequate information on the studies devoted to the Crimean Tatar language sets the goals and objectives of further research. The findings will fill the gaps in the history of the Crimean Tatar literary language, become a help for a comprehensive study of the issues, serve as material for compiling an anthology on the researchers of the Crimean Tatar language at the turn of the century.

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1. Introduction

The historical processes to mark the second half of the 19th – the first half of the 20th century were crucial for the evolvement of the modern literary Crimean Tatar language. The target timespan stretches over several periods in the history of the Crimean Tatar language. The first written sources dedicated to the Crimean Tatar language were published in the period called the Period of Darkness ‘Qarah Devir’ (late 18th – late 19th century). Since the late 19th to the early 20th century, the next period lasts that is commonly called the Period of Renaissance ‘Uyanuv Devri’, since the period of oblivion is followed by the era of the revival of the Crimean Tatar language, literature, culture, art and science of the Crimean Tatars. The contemporaries of this period called it the Period of Tarjiman – named after the first newspaper that for 35 years set the tone for social and scientific thought in the Crimea and beyond. The last period included in the target period is the turn of the 20s-40s, which is commonly called in the history of the Crimean Tatar language the Soviet Period ‘Sovet Devri’. During these years, in line with the Soviet policy, the old Crimean Tatar language was being reformed and the modern literary Crimean Tatar language was being developed.

The extant Crimean Tatar written heritage contains samples of writings going back to earlier historical periods, but among them there are no examples devoted to the Crimean Tatar language. The first studies of primary concern come in the middle of the 19th century, and the modern Crimean Tatar language is finalized in the middle of the 20th century, for what reason, these time frames are indicated herein.

The first educational literature on the Crimean Tatar language appeared as soon as the language was taught as a separate discipline at various education institutions of the Crimea: schools, colleges, maktabas, madrasahs, etc. The first researchers of the Crimean Tatar language were the teaching staff who published a variety of educational literature – ABCs, grammars, reading books, textbooks, dictionaries, scientific articles, etc.

The paper is relevant due to the lack of comprehensive linguistic studies on the issue, despite the fact that some researchers of the Crimean Tatar language mentioned herein and their scientific publications were investigated earlier. The paper called for descriptive, comparative historical and comparative methods of research.

2. Problem Statement

This study is, based on extant sources, to analyze the issues of the Crimean Tatar language of the late 19th – early 20th century.

The study is aimed at the following tasks:

- i. to find out the researchers engaged in the Crimean Tatar language at the turn of the century;
- ii. to describe the features found in scientific publications on the Crimean Tatar language of the target period;
- iii. to analyze the challenges faced by the Crimean Tatar language and see how the linguistic situation was developing in Crimea as indicated in historical documentation of the late 19th – early 20th century.

3. Research Questions

Until recently, '*Qarah Devir*' has been thought not to survive any written monuments in the Crimean Tatar language. However, some digitized sources found in world libraries filled this gap, enabling to analyze the features that reside in the Crimean Tatar language of that period. Among the first monuments worthy of note is the bilingual Russian-Tatar phrasebook *Qyrym Tartarja-Russça Lugat* published in Kazan in 1852. The publication was prepared by Abdurrahman Çelebi Krym-Havaje, a teacher of the Crimean Tatar language and director of the Simferopol secondary school. The dictionary falls into sixty thematic groups that, in addition to vocabulary, provide examples of set expressions and oral folk art of the Crimean Tatars with translation into Russian. For the first time, the Crimean Tatar text, in addition to the traditional Arabic alphabet, was printed in Cyrillic, and the author recognized the phonetic features of the Crimean Tatar language.

The second important writing is the Russian-Tatar Alphabet Book by Abdurefi Bodaninsky, published in 1873 in Odessa. The author wrote the book, endeavoring to teach the Russian-speaking and other nations inhabiting the Crimea the Tatar language, and to teach the Tatars the Russian language. A. Bodaninsky taught at the Simferopol school since 1864 and from the same year, he was in charge of the Tatar department.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is, based on extant sources, to analyze the issues of the Crimean Tatar language of the late 19th – early 20th century and discover the names of researchers who contributed to evolving the modern literary Crimean Tatar language.

5. Research Methods

In this study, an in-depth analysis of the available literature sources was carried out.

6. Findings

In 1875, Vasily Khristoforovich Kondaraki, a Crimean local historian, writer, ethnographer, who was perfect in the Crimean Tatar language, put *Self-Tutorial (Crimean Indigenous Dialects)* of the Turkic-Tatar and New Greek Languages in the second part of the *Universal Description of Crimea*, which is a thematic dictionary of frequently used Crimean Tatar words, names of household items. The dictionary provides basic information about various parts of speech, as well as 43 examples of dialogues. The transcription is given in the letters of the Russian alphabet, probably in view of the fact that it will be used mainly by the Russian-speaking population. (Nepomnyashchy, 2019)

In 1873, Ilya Ilyich Kazas, a Karaite cultural and educational figure, teacher, poet and translator, published *A Brief Practical Textbook of the Russian Language for Tatar Primary Schools* (part one, grammar), and in 1875 – *A Brief Practical Textbook of the Russian Language for Tatar Primary Schools* (part two, reading book). As long as the textbooks were prepared with an aim of teaching the Russian

language to the Crimean Tatars, theoretical explanations on each topic in Russian are followed by texts and exercises to reinforce the material in the Crimean Tatar language.

The features of the Crimean Tatar language of the target period are captured on the pages of the Turkish-Tatar-Russian Dictionary of Dialects: Ottoman, Crimean and Caucasian, published in Moscow in 1864. The author of the dictionary is Russian orientalist, historian, philologist Lazar Emmanuilovich Lazarev. The first part of the dictionary describes the basics of the Crimean Tatar grammar, whereas the second part is the dictionary of the written Crimean Tatar language of the target period.

Lazar Zakharovich Budagov (1812–1879) was an outstanding Russian Orientalist Turkologist, author of the Comparative Dictionary of Turkic-Tatar Dialects in 1969. One of the 19th century largest dictionaries containing about 25,000 lexemes, is the foundation of Russian Turkic philology and has no analogues. The value of this classical writing is that it records the historical and dialectal features of the Turkic languages.

The above authors and scientific works of the second half of the 19th century, which recorded the features of the written Crimean Tatar language, need in-depth exploration and rethinking.

In the late 19th – early 20th century, the era of enlightenment came to embrace all spheres of social and cultural life of the Crimean Tatars. The first Arabic printing house, besides the Tarjiman newspaper, began to print stories, novels, plays and other publications in the Crimean Tatar language. The first academic literature was published for schools proposing novel teaching methods – maktab-i cedid, opened on the initiative of I. Gasprinsky.

The brightest author of the target period is the outstanding educator Ismail Gasprinsky. Teacher-reformer of the late 19th – early 20th century, whose ideas were brought into the reform of the national school and the first national textbooks. The first reforms of the period concerned the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language. At I. Gasprinsky's initiative, the phonetic method '*usul-i savtie*' began to be used in schools, which was based on representing all vowel sounds in writing. With this method, learning to read took only two months, and the schools became widespread in the Crimea, the Urals, Siberia, Central Asia and Azerbaijan. In 1884, the first alphabet book based on the new method, "*Hoja-i subyan*", was published.

The written Crimean Tatar language of the late 19th – early 20th century was the southern coastal dialect of the Crimean Tatar language that traditionally remained similar to the Ottoman Turkish language and was not understood by the entire Turkic-speaking population of Crimea. In the early 20th century, a group of writers, Orta Yolaqçılar, attempted to publish the first works in the middle dialect of the Crimean Tatar language Orta Yolaq. The middle dialect, understandable to all Crimean Tatars, was then taken as the basis of the modern Crimean Tatar literary language.

In 1905, through the efforts of the Muslim Charitable Society, the first secondary school, Ruşdiye, was opened in Crimea. Ümer Sami, Yusif Ziya, Ethem Fevzi and Şevki Bektöre, invited from Istanbul, gave classes in various Crimean schools. All of them were representatives of the Crimean Tatar diaspora.

In the early 20th century, the above researchers published several alphabet books and textbooks on reading for primary and secondary schools. In 1910, under the authorship of Hafuz Ümer Sami, the textbook Çojuqlara arqadaş (A Friend of Children) was published. Yağya Naci Bayburtlı becomes the author of

Elifba (Alphabet Book) (1913). In 1915, Yusif Ziya published *Anahtar, yahud tarifatlu elifba-i turki* (Key or Comprehensive Turkic Alphabet Book).

In 1925, *Tatar elifbesi* by Şevki Bektöre (Tatar Alphabet Book) was published. In his textbook, by adding various superscript and subscript characters to letters, Bektöre tried to help children easily distinguish between vowel sounds that were traditionally represented by the same form in writing (Koroglu, 2019).

Since in the target period the Crimean Tatars used Arabic script in writing, it is necessary to mention textbooks and copybooks on calligraphy, among which the primacy should be given to the textbook *Hutu-i islamie* (1900) authored by the famous historian, ethnographer and calligrapher Osman Aqçoqraqlı. Among the notebooks on calligraphy, it is necessary to highlight the copybooks *Yazy Hojasu* and *Meşk Kitabı*.

In the early 20th century, several appreciable Arabic grammars “sarf” were published in Crimea, intended for middle and high schools. There are two editions of the grammar *Sarf-i Turki* of 1907 and 1909. As it had no author and due to the publication at the printing house of the *Tarjiman* newspaper, the first grammar is attributed to I. Gasprinsky’s writings (Ganieva, 2017). The author of the second grammar has not been identified yet, but the initials A.R.B. are indicated on the cover.

Unlike the predecessors, the grammar of *Qavaid-ul-lisan-i turki* of 1916, was written in a more sophisticated language with multiple borrowings from the Persian language that were not found in other sources of the target period. Moreover, the textbook contains examples describing Istanbul and its outskirts, which does not rule out a possibility that it was written by an author who had something to do with Turkey or who received education there. On the cover of the textbook, the name of the author is indicated – Abdulkadir, whose identity is still unknown.

In 1916, in Petrograd, one of the largest Russian Turkologists of the first half of the 20th century, Alexander Nikolaevich Samoylovich, published *An Experience of Brief Crimean Tatar Grammar* that contains an analysis of the grammar, graphics and spelling of the Crimean Tatar language. For the first time, the author used the term Crimean Tatar language in the title of the textbook; previous editions were called traditionally Turkic – *türki*.

The well-known Crimean Tatar scientists Çoban-zade and Kurkçi refer in their works to the grammar of 1920 by Tevfik Mehmed Türk-Tatar sarfu (Turkic-Tatar Grammar). The edition is considered lost, but the fact that it is mentioned by well-known researchers in their papers suggest that it was present and significant in the target period. Besides the name of T. Mehmed, no other information about the author and his activities has been found out so far.

The next by date of publication is the grammar by Bektöre *Tatarça sarf, nahv* (1924). The author did a great job, trying for the first time to write a grammar in the Crimean Tatar language, close to the spoken language, and developed Crimean Tatar counterparts of centuries-old Arabic linguistic terms. Apparently, these terms are similar with modern Crimean Tatar linguistic terminology.

The years 1924–1928 were fruitful for another Crimean Tatar scholar-philologist Bekir Çoban-zade. He published the following scientific works: *Türk-Tatar lisaniyatına medhal* (Introduction to Turkic-Tatar linguistics) (1924), *Qyrymtatar ilmiy sarfı* (Academic Grammar of the Crimean Tatar Language) (1925), *Tatar dialektolojy* (Tatar Dialectology) (1927), *Son devir edebiaty* (Literature of the

Last Period) (1928). B. Çoban-zade's textbooks are notable for their arrangement, academic character and volume, which indicates the author's scientific degree. The works of the scholar are written in the Ottoman-Turkish language, which, according to the author, was done specifically to reach a wider audience.

The Great October Revolution of 1917 kicked off the development of the national language of the Crimean Tatars, which laid the groundwork for national literature, school education, the press, theater, state affairs. The process of simplifying the Crimean Tatar language and bringing it closer to the folk language took decades. Starting with public organizations in the early twentieth century, it resulted in a number of scientific and practical language conferences held in the Crimean ASSR in the 1920s–1930s. The I and II All-Crimean Conferences (1927–1929) officially adopted the middle dialect of the Crimean Tatar language as the basis of the literary language, new principles for terminology were articulated, and the Latin alphabet was adopted. In 1934, the III conference defined basic grammar of the Crimean Tatar literary language. The spelling conferences of 1927, 1929 and 1934 were published as separate collections (Koroglu, 2021).

The transition from the old to new script gave the Crimean Tatar linguistics several alphabets authored by Abibulla Odabaş. The philologist produced many alphabet books, scientific articles on pedagogy and language. In 1924, in collaboration with I. S. Kaya, he published Guidelines for Teaching the Crimean Tatar Language that contains the basics of grammar and texts for learning to read. Having transited to the Latin alphabet, the textbook was republished by Isaac Samuilovich Kaya independently entitled Guidelines for Teaching the Crimean Tatar Language in the New Alphabet (1928). In 1925, Odabaş and Aji-Asan published the textbook Türk-Tatar tili (Turkic-Tatar Language). Aji-Asan was a teacher who contributed to the development of public education and the Crimean Tatar language. In 1928, Cemaledinov and Ametov published Yeni Türk-Tatar elifbesi (New Turkic-Tatar Alphabet). Abdul-Kerim Cemaledinov was a Crimean Tatar linguist, translator of several school textbooks in the Crimean Tatar language. The studies of the mentioned authors have not been fully investigated.

The next little-known Crimean Tatar researcher is Yaqub Kemal who studied the Crimean version of the Turkic-Tatar manuscript of the 14th century Nehj-ul-feradis published in 1930. The Soviet orientalist-Turkologist Najip notes that Kemal was educated in Beirut and the Lazarev Institute in Moscow. For some time, he worked as the director of the Zincirli Madrasa, then the Oriental Museum in Yalta. He repeatedly led scientific expeditions and collected a significant number of manuscripts of the 13th–14th centuries, which he successfully studied and prepared for publication (Najip, 1989). Attention should be paid to the name of Vehbi Sheikh-zade who studied together with Yaqub-Kemal in Beirut and was educated as an orientalist. His few articles testify to his deep knowledge of Arabic studies and the history of the Crimean Tatar writing. The heritage of both authors needs to be studied.

The Crimean Tatar vocabulary of the target period has been preserved in various concise and complete bilingual dictionaries. Moskvich repeatedly republished the Brief Russian-Tatar Dictionary (Crimean dialect). The Exhaustive Russian-Tatar Dictionary (Crimean-Tatar Dialect) was published in 1906 by Osman Zaatov. Approved for publication in 1925, the Turkic-Tatar dictionary of Bilyal Terlekçi was finalized by the author, and the facsimile of the dictionary was published only in 2014 entitled Crimean Tatar-Russian Dictionary. It is necessary to signify the importance and necessity of studying

these lexicographic publications, since they have promoted the lexical composition of the Crimean Tatar language of the late 19th – early 20th century.

Among the Crimean newspapers and academic journals that raised the issues of the Crimean Tatar language, literature and public education are the newspapers Tarjiman (Interpreter), Millet (Nation), Yaş Quvvat (Young Power), Yeni Dunya (New World); journals Oquv İşleri (Problems of Education), İleri (Forward). Articles from the Tarjiman devoted to the problems of language were collected and published by Akpınar (2008) in the book *Secilmiş eserler*. The texts from the Millet are transliterated and collected in a separate edition of Kirimov Millet jevherleri (Kirimov, 2012). Materials from the newspapers Yeni Dunya and Yaş Quvvat (1923) are collected in the book *The Tread of Culture* (Kerimov, 1997). Scientific articles devoted to the problems of the Crimean Tatar linguistics were mainly published on the pages of the Oquv İşleri in 1925–1929 and İleri in 1928–1930. Among the numerous authors, are Odabaş, Lâtif-zade, Ozenbaşly, Aji-Asan, Asanov, Sheikh-zade, Aivazov, Aziz, Nedima, Çoban-zade, Seydahmet, Tanabayly, Aleviy, Zevriy, Ipçi and others. The articles are devoted to the challenges of the historical period: defining literary language norms, purifying the language from borrowed vocabulary, simplifying the language and graphics, switching to a new script, normalizing spelling, etc.

The Crimean Tatar literary language continued developing until the Second World War. During this period, Arabic affixes, words, and phrases were replaced by Russian borrowings or equivalents of the Crimean Tatar language. Several grammars and textbooks were published, the authors of which are Islyamov, Dermenji, Mullina, Islyamov, Kurtmollaev, Ametov, Batyrmurzaev and others.

7. Conclusion

The late 19th – the early 20th century is the period when the modern Crimean Tatar literary language was reformed and developed. The most productive authors of this period were Gasprinsky, Çoban-zade, Aivazov, Bektöre, Odabaş, Lâtif-zade, Aji-Asan, Sami, Bayburth et al. The personalities of such language researchers as Abdulkadir, Tevfik Mehmet have not been declared yet. The heritage of Krum-Havaje, Bodaninsky, Yaqub-Kemal, Sheikh-zade remains poorly explored. It is necessary to rethink the contribution of Aivazov, Bektöre, Odabaş, Lâtif-zade, Aji-Asan to the development of the Crimean Tatar language. Further studies into the subject will help to carry out a comprehensive assessment, shape knowledge on the status of the Crimean Tatar language in the late 19th – the early 20th century, fill in the gaps and present the original history of the Crimean Tatar language.

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