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□ Editorial

Dear readers,

throughout 2011, “multilingualism and school textbooks”, the topic of the conference hosted by the Free University of Bolzano in Brixen/Bressanone (Italy) in September 2011, has been a major challenge for our network. This is reflected, among others, in the workshop “Primers and Readers for Plurilingual Literacy Acquisition” which RP-SIG had arranged as part of this conference, and in a number of reports published in the last and in this issue of Reading Primers International. What we have learnt is that educational efforts to teach reading and writing under conditions of multilingualism, and lessons that primers and readers can tell us about these efforts, deserve more in-depth research in a historical and cross-cultural perspective. The RP-SIG network will continue to pay attention to these questions.

In the network’s “Preliminary Profile”, compiled in September 2009, the initiators, all of them Europeans, had expressed their hope “that this initiative, striving to overcome any Eurocentric approach, will widen our horizon by integrating experience and expertise also from other parts of the world”. Two years later we are pleased to state that with new members from Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, RP-SIG has made an important step to include authentic experience and research-based expertise from non-European countries with specific and fascinating traditions of literacy acquisition.

We wish all our readers a peaceful and happy year 2012!

December 21, 2011

Joanna Wojdon & Wendelin Sroka

□ Contents

□ RP-SIG News

RP-SIG developments and plans	2
New members	3
Members’ news	4

□ Research

Foreigners, the foreign and minorities in German primers 1933-1945 ...	5
The Tatar primer “Alifba” in the 1990s and 2000s	7

□ Country Notes

Laos: Reading primers – remarkable development in a few years	10
Russia: Colloquium to discuss the history of primary school textbooks .	10

□ RP-SIG News

□ Developments and plans

RP-SIG workshop and exhibition at the conference "Multilingualism and School Textbooks", September 2011, Brixen/Bressanone

On September 24, 2011, RP-SIG held the workshop "Primers and Readers for Plurilingual Literacy Acquisition" as part of the conference "Multilingualism and School Textbooks" in Brixen/Bressanone (Italy). The workshop included three presentations: on Yiddish primers (presenter: Evita Wiecki), on three German-Polish primers from three centuries (presenters: Gert Geißler, Wendelin Sroka), and on the PLURES ("Primers and elementary readers for plurilingual reading instruction in Europe") project idea, promoted by RP-SIG.



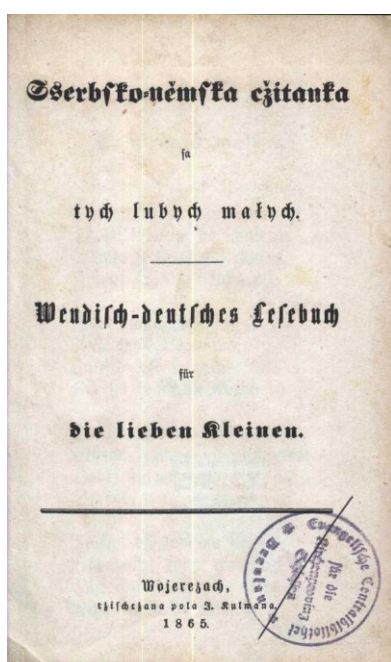
The "Missionshaus" of the Free University of Bolzano in Brixen/Bressanone

For this occasion RP-SIG had also prepared an exhibition of primers and readers for plurilingual reading instruction from European and American countries, on display in the "Missionshaus" of the Free University of Bolzano. The exhibition catalogue, published in German, contains, in addition to more than 100 illustrations, descriptions by Tülay Altun, Cologne (Germany), Eduardo Arriada, Pelotas (Brazil), Juris Cibuljs, Riga (Latvia), Wolfgang Fickert, Erlangen (Germany), Gert Geißler, Berlin (Germany), Elż-

bieta Alina Jakimik, Warsaw (Poland), Tuija Laine, Helsinki (Finland), Mare Mürsepp, Tallinn (Estonia), Eliane Peres, Pelotas (Brazil), Pembe Şahiner, Essen (Germany), Wendelin Sroka, Essen (Germany), Jerzy Treder, Gdańsk (Poland), Evita Wiecki, Munich (Germany) and Joanna Wojdon, Wrocław (Poland).

Copies of the catalogue can be ordered for a nominal charge of 12,95 € plus postage from orders-rpsig@arcor.de. More information about the content and the design of the catalogue is available at www.schulbuch-gesellschaft.de/de/rp

Primers and basal readers for plurilingual reading instruction (PLURES) – a project framework



Title page of a Sorbian-German reader, published in 1865 in Wojerecy (Hoyerswerda, Saxony)

Interested members and friends of RP-SIG have continued to discuss challenges and opportunities to launch a research-based documentation project, aimed at demonstrating the variety and the wealth of textbooks for plurilingual reading instruction, and studying the contexts of its development and use. The thematic areas which have found most interest so far are

- German-Slavonic encounters: primers and readers for bilingual reading instruction (German in combination with a Slavonic language), 17th century to present,
- Kurdish primers.

At present, efforts are made to compile bibliographies of relevant educational texts. The group focusing on German-Slavonic primers and readers would highly welcome additional input by scholars with expertise in Austrian, Czech and Slovenian educational history (contact: rp-sig@arcor.de).

□ New RP-SIG members

New Institutional Member

Hisales (*História da Alfabetização, Leitura, Escrita e dos Livros Escolares* = History of Literacy, Reading, Writing and School Textbooks) is a research group, linked to the Graduate Program in the College of Education of the *Universidade Federal de Pelotas* in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The group conducts research in the field of history of literacy. It was created in 2006, and it is registered in the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico - CNPq* (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) of the *Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia* (Department of Science and Technology), in Brazil. Website: <http://www.ufpel.edu.br/fae/hisales/>

The general objectives of HISALES' research are: 1) analyzing the production and circulation of Brazilian primers, especially produced in the state of Rio Grande do Sul; 2) examining textbooks produced in the state from the 1940s to the 1980s; 3) identifying the premises of the teaching of reading and writing at different times in the history of primary schools in the Rio Grande do Sul; 4) understanding the strategies used to disseminate proposals and methods for literacy in the state; 6) analyzing policies for literacy and literacy practices; 5) identifying literacy materials produced by teachers; 7) studying literacy educator's trajectories and memories. HI-



SALES also maintains collections of Brazilian primers and textbooks. Currently, HISALES has a collection of approximately 500 Brazilian primers and 200 textbooks produced in Rio Grande do Sul from the 1940s to the 1980s.

As an institutional member of RP-SIG, HISALES is represented by its coordinator, Dr Eliane Peres, a professor at the College of Education of the *Universidade Federal de Pelotas* since 1991. She works in the Undergraduate (Teacher Education) and Graduate Programs (Master and Doctorate) coordinating dissertations and theses on the history of literacy and textbooks. Her research work focuses on primers written by educators from the state of Rio Grande do Sul. She is a member of *Associação Nacional de Pesquisa em Educação* (ANPEd) of *Sociedade Brasileira de Educação* (SBHE) and of *Associação Sul-rio-grandense de História da Educação* (ASPHE), and she has published and edited many books on the subject of history of literacy.

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New Individual Members

Dr **Héctor Rubén Cucuzza**, Buenos Aires (Argentina), is professor of social history of education (*Profesor Titular de Historia Social de la Educación*) and, since December 2010, *Profesor Extraordinario Emérito* at the National University of Luján. He is founder and director of the Social History of Education research group at this university. Since 1996, the research group carries out the project *Historia Social de la Enseñanza de la Lectura y la Escritura en Argentina* (Social history of teaching reading and writing in Argentina = HISTELEA; www.histelea.unlu.edu.ar/). HISTELEA's research work considers school textbooks as privileged sources to reconstruct the history of reading and writing instruction. Rubén Cucuzza has published, among others, *Yo Argentino. La construcción de la nación en los libros escolares (1873-1930)* [I am Argentinean. Nation-building in school textbooks (1873-1930)], Buenos Aires 2007, and he is co-editor, with Pablo Pineau, of *Para una historia de la enseñanza de la lectura y escritura en la Argentina. Del catecismo colonial a La Razón de mi vida* [Towards a history of teaching reading and writing in Argentina. From the colonial catechism to *La Razón de mi vida*], Buenos Aires 2002.

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Dr **Falco Pfalzgraf** is Academic Co-ordinator of the Language Centre and Junior Deputy Head of the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film at Queen Mary, University of London (United Kingdom) and Acting Deputy Director at the Centre for Anglo-German Cultural Relations. He completed his doctoral thesis on linguistic purism in Germany (University of Manchester 2003, under the supervision of Prof. Martin Durrell). Falco Pfalzgraf's main area of research is the application of discourse analysis, especially concerning the influence of English upon German, and the related subject of Linguistic Purism (the latter field being understood in its widest sense and with both a synchronic and diachronic focus). He also conducts research on the relationships between politics, language, and culture. His most recent work concerns discourses of foreignness in German primers 1933-45 (see page 5-7 of this issue of RPI). E-Mail: f.pfalzgraf@qmul.ac.uk

Dr **Dorothy Tanck de Estrada**, Mexico (Mexico), born in the United States, is professor of social history at the Centre for Historical Studies (*Centro de Estudios Históricos*) of *El Colegio de México* (COLMEX). She has earned a BA at Trinity University, Washington, D.C., a Masters degree at the University of California in Berkeley and a PhD in history at *El Colegio de México*. For thirty years she has searched for and analyzed reading primers used in New Spain (Colonial Mexico) and in 19th century independent Mexico. She is author, amongst others, of *La Educación Ilustrada, 1786-1836. Educación primaria en La Ciudad de México* [Illustrated education, 1786-1836. Primary education in Mexico City], 1978; *La enseñanza de la lectura y la escritura en la Nueva España, 1700-1821* [The teaching of reading and writing in New Spain, 1700-1821], in: *Historia de la Lectura en México*, pp. 49-83, 6th ed., 2010; c) *Pueblos de Indios y educación en el México Colonial* [Indian peoples and education in Colonial Mexico], 3rd ed. 2010; d) *História mínima. La educación en México* [Minimal history. Education in Mexico], 2nd ed., 2011.

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Members' news

Eva Balz, Berlin (Germany) has successfully finished her studies of Modern and Contemporary History at Humboldt-University in Berlin and earned a *Magister Artium* degree. Her final thesis "The Implementation of State Ideology through Primers in Stalinism and National Socialism: A Comparative Analysis of Family Depictions 1933-1941" is available at the library of the Georg-Eckert-Institute in Braunschweig. Since April 2011 Eva Balz holds a position as research assistant at the Chair for "German History of the 20th Century with a focus on National Socialism" at Humboldt-University.



Juris Cibuljs at the inauguration of an exhibition of primers in Pskov, Russia, November 7, 2011

On December 6, 2011, **Juris Cibuljs**, Riga (Latvia), a linguist, successful publicist, dedicated collector of primers and active member of RP-SIG from the very beginning, celebrated his 60th birthday. In November he had inaugurated an exhibition of primers from his extraordinary rich collection at the General City Library in Pskov (Russia). The exhibition, supported by the Consulate of the Republic of Latvia in Pskov, was well received by the public, with a great number of reports in the media.

In 2011, Juris Cibuljs has published a) "Purlovas grāmata", a volume of 342 pages on the Latgalian subdialect spoken in this village, including a primer based on the sound method [*Lautmethode*] and b) a paper on "*Franča Kempa ābeču nozīme latgaliešu raktstības un lasītmācīšanas attīstībā*" [The significance of primers by Francis Kempas for the development of Latgalian orthography and reading instruction], part of the Proceedings of the 3rd Congress on Latgalistics which had been held in Greifswald (Germany) in 2010. Visu labāko, Juri!

The role of the school textbook in the historical context is analysed from a variety of perspectives in a new book by **Carsten Heinze**, Schwäbisch Gmünd (Germany): *Das Schulbuch im Innovationsprozess. Bildungspolitische Steuerung – Pädagogischer Anspruch – Unterrichtspraktische Wirkungserwartungen* [The school textbook in the process of innovation. Educational governance – pedagogical requirements – expectations of instructional effects]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt Publishers 2011, 252 p. The book includes – pp. 129-184 – a chapter on primers in Nazi Germany: “Wir wollen deutsche Kinder sein”. *Die Fibel im Nationalsozialismus zwischen Kindorientierung, Erziehung zur Volksgemeinschaft und Lesenlernen* [„We want to be German children.” The reading primer during National Socialism between child orientation, education for the ethnic community and learning to read].

Eliane Peres, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), is visiting professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (USA) from December 2011 to November 2012. Her research work will focus on “Influences from the North-American thought in the production of analytical method based primers for teaching reading and writing in Rio Grande do Sul.”

Joanna Wojdon, Wroclaw (Poland) has spent this semester as a visiting scholar at the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (Belgium). She gave a “research-in-progress” presentation on the reading primers from the Soviet bloc at a seminar at the Faculty of Arts and a lecture addressed to Erasmus students on reading primers as propaganda tools of the communist regimes. All presentations were followed by interesting and inspiring discussions.

□ Research

□ Primers in Nazi Germany

Falco Pfalzgraf: *Ausländer, Fremde(s) und Minderheiten in deutschen Fibern 1933–1945* [Foreigners, the foreign and minorities in German primers 1933–1945]. In: *Muttersprache. Vierteljahresschrift für deutsche Sprache* no 3/2011, pp. 161-192

Primers published and used in Nazi Germany have more recently been the object of analyses by Eva Balz and Carsten Heinze (see p. 4 f. of this issue of RPI). Findings of a research project on the occurrence of foreigners and/or minorities in these primers have now been published by Falco Pfalzgraf in the journal “Muttersprache”. The author summarises his study for RPI.

If one looks at research conducted on primers used in German schools from 1933 to 1945, it becomes apparent that there is plentiful material available on Nazi indoctrination in German primers in general; e.g. on Nazi symbols, Nazi-specific content, NS organisations, Hitler-cult, Fatherland, and so forth. One does, however, hardly find publications which deal with the question of how foreigners, the foreign in general (countries, continents, customs, traditions, etc.), and minorities are depicted. The aim of my research project was to fill this research gap.

In summer 2010, I was awarded a scholarship by the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Brunswick [Braunschweig], Germany, which allowed me to use their excellent collection of primers for my research. I was able to identify 202 primers in their holdings which were used in Germany from 1933 to 1945, probably the largest stock available worldwide. These 202 primers constitute my corpus for the research project.



“Gypsies”, from: Wenzel R. Richter, Franz Effenberger: *Neuland*. [Drawings: Karl Kostial]. Reichenberg: Roland-Verlag Trausel, Second edition 1942, p. 46

To approach my research question, I decided to use a German variety of 'discourse analysis' which allowed me as a linguist to look beyond the text boundary and analyse illustrations, songs, and the like. The corpus was analysed page by page, i.e. I manually searched the 202 primers for the appearance of foreigners, foreign elements (countries, continents, customs, traditions, etc.) and minority groups. Appearances in the text and/or picture were recorded. Each appearance was then grouped into the following ten areas: carnival; circus; daily environment; (fun)fair; play/game; song/rhyme/(fairy) tale; travel/adventure; war; zoo; context-free.

Only 82 of the 202 primers (roughly 40%) contain foreigners, foreign elements, or minority groups. In the other 60%, nothing appears at all. This was a much lower percentage than I expected. In those 82 primers, foreigners, foreign elements, or minority groups appeared 239 times; 137 times in the text and 102 times in pictures. This means, that on average, we have almost three appearances per primer (of those 82), twice in writing and once in a picture.

Most present is the 'Negro'/Moor who appears 82 times; 46 times in the text and 36 times in a picture, and the 'Indian', i.e. Native North American who appears 64 times; 29 times in the text and 35 times in a picture. Both are always male and always depicted stereotypically, dressed in a 'typical' African/North American tribal style. The 'Negro'/Moor appears mostly in the contexts of circus and travel/adventure – in exotic contexts, so to say – but also in connection with the chimney sweep, representing a 'dirty person'. The 'Indian' appears mostly in the contexts of play/game, carnival and travel/adventure. In contrast to our initial expectations, both the 'Negro'/Moor and the 'Indian' are never explicitly depicted as racially inferior. All other groups appear only marginally; especially those two minority groups of which very large numbers were killed by the Nazis: the 'Gypsies' (Sinti and Roma) and the Jews.



"A Jew stealing golden leaves ..."; illustration to the story "About the little tree which wanted to have different leaves". From: Franz Lüke: *Mein erstes Buch*. [Xylographies: Hans Pape]. Dortmund: Crüwell, 1935, p. 37

'Gypsies' appear only nine times in three of the 202 primers (=1.5%), six times in a text and three times in a picture. Three times they are mentioned neutrally as circus musicians. In two primers (and additionally in a new edition of one of those) they appear in two stories, one of which is relatively neutral, whereas the other one is significantly anti-Ziganistic. Jews appear even less often: only six times, three times in a text and three times in a picture. They appear in two primers – and additionally in a new edition of one of them – i.e. in three of the 202 primers (=1.5%). Here, all appearances are anti-Semitic, one even more than the other two (identical ones).

We can conclude that there is surprisingly little explicit racist discourse in the primers we looked at, and the question is why that is the case, under a Fascist regime. Our hypothesis is that the facts we encounter here are the result of several factors; among them didactical necessities as well as organisational

problems within the Nazi administration. To find out whether this hypothesis is valid, one would have to look at more school books from the time and systematically consider educational policy and school textbook history; vertically over the years 1933-1945 and horizontally over the different school years. I am currently planning a bigger research project in that direction.

□ Tatar primers

The Tatar Primer "Alifba" in the 1990s and 2000s

by Alla Salnikova, Kazan/Tatarstan (Russia)

In connection with a vigorous discussion about the so-called "ethnic component" in the federal educational standards, considerable importance is attached to the textbooks for elementary schools in the national languages of the Russian Federation. As well as all Russian school textbooks, they were substantially revised to be deprived of "Soviet traits" and ideologically influenced by political changes in the national regions. The Tatar national primer "Alifba" was among them. This primer changed greatly during the 1990s and 2000s though its basic part still survived.

The Declaration on State Sovereignty of Tatarstan, adopted on August 30, 1990 by the Supreme Council of the Republic and the Constitution which followed it on November 6, 1992 established legislatively Russian and Tatar languages as the equal state languages in the Tatar Republic. According to these documents and some additional laws and instructions issued from 1992 to 1994 constitutional statements had to be filled with real content: the role of the Tatar language in education had to be extended, the quantity of national and the so-called "mixed" schools in Tatarstan had to be increased too. Both languages had to be studied in equal quantities in Russian schools and classes and there should be no differentiation between the "first" and the "second" languages in Tatarstan schools.

It was not really difficult to proclaim these slogans at that time, but it was extremely complicated to implement them in life. At that time the Tatar language was slowly dying. In 1988/89 only 12 % of pupils attended Tatar schools and nearly all those schools were situated in the villages. In the capital of the Republic – Kazan – there was only one Tatar school next to 200 Russian schools. In this situation a problem of Tatar primers became extremely important: thousands of children, Russian boys and girls including, were going to cross the school threshold, and all of them had to learn Tatar. And what could their teachers offer them?

The widespread national primer that was used during the first Post-Soviet years in Tatar and Russian schools was the "Alifba" written by R.G. Valitova and S.G. Vagizov (it was usually called "Light Blue Alifba" because of its light blue cover page). It was first published in 1964 and was reprinted more than 30 times. It was a really "Soviet" primer which didn't differ greatly from the Russian primers published by the central printing houses. Its national discourse was weak and pressed – not to say replaced – by the Soviet discourse. This approach was not appropriate in the situation of the "national renaissance". But in the early post-Perestroika period it was impossible to prepare and introduce a new Tatar primer because of some hardly overcoming barriers: lack of money, lack of specialists (well-qualified tea-



"The light blue Alifba": Tatar primer by R.G. Valitova and S.G. Vagizov, Kazan: TKN, 14th edition 1978



The Moscow Kremlin – a “must” in Soviet primers for reading instruction in non-Russian languages: R.G. Valitova, S.G. Vagizov, Alifba. Kazan: TKN, 14th edition 1978, p. 92, detail

chers were engaged in the struggle for survival), lack of stability (political events changed each other kaleidoscopically). So the easiest way to obtain a comparatively new primer was to release the previous Soviet Alifba from the elements of Sovietness. By 1992 some of the “Soviet” stories and images (about Kremlin, Moscow, Lenin, “October Children”, pioneers, etc.) were replaced by politically neutral (“Birthday”, “Santa Claus” etc.) ones, but not all of them. Portraits and sculptures of Lenin disappeared from the Alifba only in the midst of the 1990’s.

Though Soviet symbols were taken away, the Alifba still continued to be old-fashionably “Soviet” in its form

and content. Manner of behavior, activities, clothes, toys, mimicry, gestures, postures – both children and adults placed in this book – were bearing the traces of the ineradicable Sovietness and were not supplemented even a little with the norms and examples dictated by a new, post-Soviet time. “National” markers didn’t change even a little: skullcaps, headscarves, Tatar leather boots – portraits of the famous Tatar writers and poets, the Sabantuy festival, children’s names – traditional and rather boring stereotype, the main virtue of which was its conformity with a standard national canon.

As nearly all Tatar schools were concentrated in the villages, the Tatar primer was usually oriented on the children living there and usually depicted rural life. Now in the situation of obtaining and strengthening of sovereignty such orientation seemed to be very useful because the local rural social and cultural space is generally known for its “traditionalism” and even something like “ethnic exclusiveness”. So it was a good chance to show the national through rural, even at the cost of following desurbanist notions. All the heroes of the Tatar primer lived in the village; and their ethic and esthetic norms, style of life and mentality were presented as brilliant models of social behavior. That was acceptable before the 1990’s, but not now. When the young city dwellers opened this textbook they were greatly surprised: they never or extremely rarely saw boys in skullcaps on the streets or their mothers in white headscarves at home. No different – Russian or Tatar they were – they experienced a feeling of “otherness”. So the basic principle necessary for every child’s edition was transgressed here – a principle of “belonging”, of familiarity that is constructed socially. That is why in the minds of many urban



Not very much appreciated as a role model by young city dwellers: Tatar dairymaid in the “Red Alifba”: R.G. Valitova, S.G. Vagizov, Alifba. Kazan: Magarif 2002, p. 73, detail

children the Tatar language coincided with “rural life” and obtained in their eyes an imaginary uselessness in the city conditions. “Post-Sovietness” even as actualization of ethnicity on the personal level or postulation of sovereignty in general was not presented at all.

The other primer used at that time – the “Red Alifba” – prepared by the same authors and first published in 1986 was oriented on Tatar schools and classes. It was more “modern” (there were some stories and pictures concerning city life, mostly about Ka-

zan) and more "national". An "Ethnic component" is presented on every page of a book. The picture to the right is extremely demonstrative. A boy in Tatar national clothes with a pointer in his hand is standing near a huge red map of the Tatarstan Republic. He is surrounded by children in the national clothes of the former Soviet republics, now – independent states. A Russian girl is also there. The text is the following: "This is a map of Tatarstan. Tatarstan is our Motherland. The Motherland is a land of friendship. All of them are united friends". So Tatarstan here is equal with other republics, including Russia. Such an approach would have been considered "politically erroneous" in Soviet times.

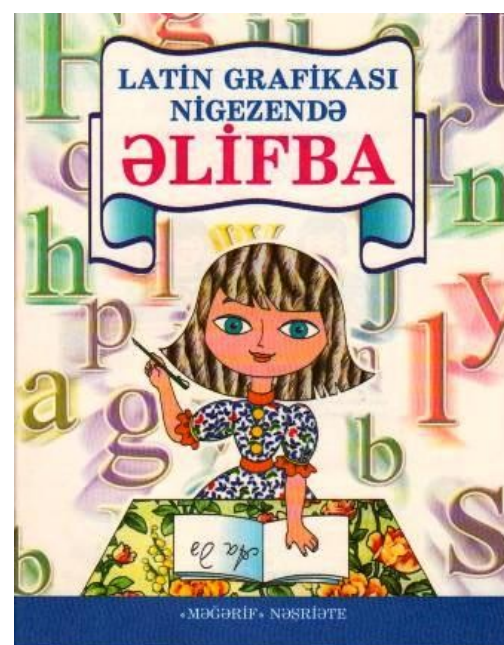
Non-titular ethnic groups were not presented in the Alifba at all. It could be traced even in visual images. All primer's characters had specific "national" features; there were no blonds among them (though in reality many of Tatars are blonds); there were no Russian names on its pages.

At the turn of the 21st century a new type of experimental primer appeared in Tatarstan – a primer in Latin script. In the situation of obtaining and strengthening of state sovereignty the rejection of the Cyrillic alphabet served as a specific symbol of independence from central authorities. According to a law issued by the State Council of Tatarstan on September 15, 1999, Latin script had to replace the Cyrillic alphabet as more adequate to the grammatical system of the Tatar language. This law was going to come into force in September 1, 2001. Kazan bookstores received 10 thousands of Tatar primers written in Latin script. They were prepared – once again – by S.G. Vagizov and R.G. Valitova in 2000 (see front cover of this primer to the right). But the strengthening of the vertical power line which took place in Russia stopped these attempts very soon. The Federal Law "On the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation" stipulated that all state languages in the RF must be based only on Cyrillic script. In November 2004 the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation refused attempts by Tatarstan's supreme power to revise the graphic base of the Tatar written language. Primers in Latin script were taken away from schools.

Nowadays the traditional "Alifba" is often replaced in the education process by "Tatar language" manuals. But as the inquiries show Tatar language teachers still consider Valitova's and Vagizov's Alifba to be the best primer among all others.



"Tatarstan – our motherland": R.G. Valitova, S.G. Vagizov, Alifba. Kazan: Magarif 2002, p. 52



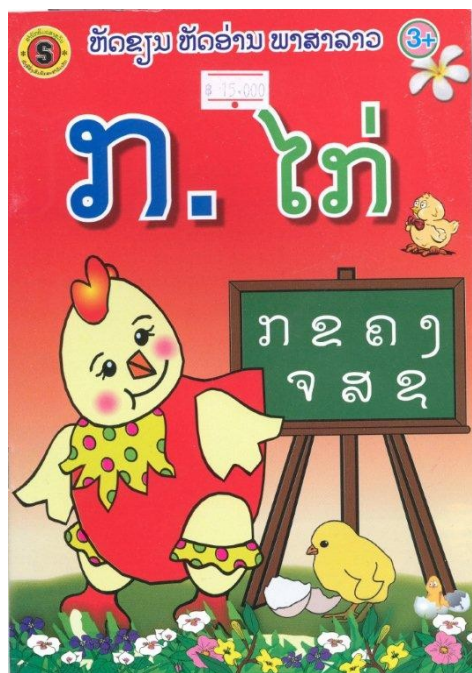
S.Ğ. Wağizov, R.Ğ. Wəlitova: Latin grafikası nigezendə Əlifba. Kazan: Magarif 2000, front cover

Country Notes

Laos

Reading primers in Laos – remarkable development in a few years

By Rune Bengtsson, Stockholm (Sweden)



Front page of a Lao primer, issued in 2010. Like in Thai primers, the front page is often illustrated with chicken and eggs, since they represent the two first letters in the alphabet: goo - gai (chicken) and khoo - khai (egg)

I have visited Laos three times: in 2006, 2008 and 2010. Every time I have visited bookshops in order to buy primers. The first year it was quite an easy task; a few books existed, issued by the state owned publishing house and accessible at any bookshop or at market stands. The second time there had started to appear private alternatives.

During my third visit I had a big variety of primers to choose from and I even had to make a selection; to buy all of them would have meant overweight on my trip back. I think this development is reflecting the development in Laos at large. Even though the country still defines itself as a communist country, the last few years have seen huge steps in the direction of a market economy. The new primers are colorful and have a lot in common with their counterparts from Thailand. The Lao and Thai languages are closely related to each other – perhaps like Swedish and Norwegian.

An interesting thing is that the Lao primers today include the letter “r” (ຮ in Lao). Some decades ago there was a campaign in Laos against the letter “r”, which was said not to be originally Lao but an influence from Thai. Excluding “r” was a way of increasing the difference between the languages.

Russia

Colloquium to discuss the history of primary school textbooks in Russia

On February 28, 2012, the Ushinskij Library in Moscow will host a colloquium devoted to the history of textbooks for primary schools in Russia. Presentations will cover a great number of issues, ranging from school textbooks as socialization instruments to the relationship of texts and illustrations in textbooks. The organizing committee of the event includes, among others, RP-SIG members Vitalij Bezrogov, Galina Makarevich and Alla Salnikova.

URL: <http://childcult.rsuh.ru/announcements.html?id=1808697>

About RPI

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