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# Education and Nation-Building in (Post)Soviet Crimea: Constructing Crimean Tatar Identity through Early Literacy Textbooks

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**Education and Nation-Building in (Post)Soviet Crimea:  
Constructing Crimean Tatar Identity through Early Literacy Textbooks**

By  
Viktoriiia Brezheniuk

A Thesis Presented  
In Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in  
Comparative and International Education

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This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Comparative and International Education

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## **Abstract**

The annexation of the Crimea, a former Autonomous Republic of Ukraine, by the Russian Federation that took place in March 2014 has had profound implications for every sphere of life in the region. The heated debate around the legitimacy of the annexation has caused multiple discussions on the local and international levels about the nation-building policies used throughout history by the Soviet and Ukrainian states that had control of the peninsula. Assumptions have also been made concerning the possible identity construction policies used by the Russian government towards their new citizens. Since primary education serves as an effective channel for instilling into populations the feelings of patriotism and loyalty to the state and its institutions, early literacy textbooks serve as a reflection of the dominant ideology of the state. This study is an attempt to examine the nature of education policies aimed at national identity (re)building processes in Crimea during the Soviet, Ukrainian, and the most recent Russian periods. Specifically, it aims to examine the role of primary education textbooks in promoting assimilation policies. Using critical discourse analysis of nine primers from the Soviet, Ukrainian, and Russian periods of Crimean governance, I analyze texts and illustrations in line with the following questions: How is Tatar national identity constructed in early literacy textbooks? What values are prioritized by the state? And how is Tatar childhood portrayed and imagined in textbooks? The findings of the research reveal that early literacy textbooks serve as a major tool of political socialization of children and reflect respective state ideologies dominant during each historical period.

# **Education and Nation-Building in (Post)Soviet Crimea: Constructing Crimean Tatar Identity through Early Literacy Textbooks**

## **Introduction**

Crimean schools welcomed first graders in September 2014 with the national flag of the Russian Federation and the chords of the Russian anthem. Formerly a part of Ukraine, Crimea started a new page of history within a different country, following Russia's annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea after the military intervention in March 2014. Even though the international community did not recognize the region's annexation as legal, Russia has continued to administer the peninsula as two federal subjects - the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol.

The change of government had profound implications for Crimea in every sphere of life, especially in the area of education. Two hundred thousand Crimean students started their school year with an introductory class dedicated to “the return of Crimea and Sevastopol home, to Russia” (Svobodnaya Pressa, 2014). All these first-graders received brand new textbooks. As noted by the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation Tatyana Tretyak, an estimated 3 million textbooks were delivered to Crimea by 6 publishing houses, including “Enlightenment” (“Prosvescheniye”). The overall cost of the textbooks reached 1



billion rubles (over US\$19 million) for Crimea and 163 million rubles (over US\$3 million) for Sevastopol (Ria Novosti, 2014). "Prosvescheniye" delivered the textbooks to 662 schools as part of a program entitled “To the

children of Russia: Address - Crimea, Textbooks - Prosvescheniye” (Ria Novosti, 2014). According to the Deputy Education Minister, this was only the first stage of Russia's educational

assistance, which would be followed by the creation of original textbooks of the Crimean Tatar language and literature, as well as the translation of textbooks for grades 1-9 from Russian into the Crimean Tatar language (Novosti Krimea, 2014).

While the language problem has always been on the agenda of the Crimean *mejlis* (the highest executive-representative body of the Crimean Tatars) and has been heatedly debated by the governments having control over Crimea at different times, this issue has once again gained extreme significance after the annexation. Even though Russian authorities claim that the three official languages of the peninsula - Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar - are equally protected by the Crimean Constitution, evidence does not support the claim. The Minister of Education of the Crimea Natalia Goncharova stated that there would be no required learning of all the three state languages (BBC Ukraine, 2014). According to her data, 94.8% of instruction is conducted in Russian (BBC Ukraine, 2014). The only Ukrainian school, Simferopol Ukrainian school-gymnasium, has almost completely lost its status. Only 9 classes with Ukrainian language instruction have been composed as opposed to 31 classes with Russian language instruction (Krym Realii, 2014). Before the annexation, Crimea had 7 Ukrainian, 15 Crimean-Tatar, and 600 Russian-speaking schools. With Russia gaining control over the peninsula, Ukrainian language classes are no longer offered. Moreover, Russia is facilitating the re-qualification of 2,500 school teachers of Ukrainian to Russian. Overall, over 5,000 teachers of general subjects have been re-qualified. Independent media channels claim that the new education of the Crimea aims at forgetting the Ukrainian language. Deputy Head of Education Administration of Sevastopol Viktor Oganesyanyan made a statement that the teaching of the Ukrainian language would considerably decrease and the teaching of Russian would fundamentally increase (Sevastopol, 2014). The Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine is appalled by the statements of

Russian authorities regarding the limitation of enrollment to Ukrainian classes in primary school. The Ministry described the policy as a violation of the rights of the child to receive education in his/her native language. The Ministry claims that according to the norms of international and Ukrainian laws, Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine. According to Article 20 of the Ukrainian legal code “On the basis of the language policy of Ukraine,” “the choice of the language instruction is an undeniable right of the Ukrainian citizen” (Rada, 2012). However, this right is completely denied by the Russian government.

The libraries of the Crimea have already received a special series of books entitled “100 Books of Russia’s President” that will be considered “an intellectual bank” of classic works of Russian literature, which is a compulsory component of the school program (Krym Realii, 2014). The Russian authorities promise that Crimea will receive textbooks in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages by the end of next year. For the transition period, the Russian Ministry has allowed schools to use last-year’s textbooks for teaching Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar. However, high-school students will not be allowed to choose any language instruction other than Russian. Therefore, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar students have lost the opportunity to receive their full general education in their native language.

Russia has refused to hear the appeal of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to respect cultural and ethnic peculiarities of the diverse region and not violate the right of citizens to be educated in their native languages and cherish their traditions. While the international community speaks up in support of Ukrainian territorial integrity, primary-school students are socialized into the new reality where Ukraine no longer seems to be their homeland. The public expresses various opinions on the issue. There is clearly a hope that Russian policy will take into consideration the complex Crimean history and cherishes Crimean traditions. However, there is

also fear that the exclusive focus on the Russian language and values in multinational Crimea aims at assimilating the people through anti-constitutional policy of Russification. Mejlis members continue to share their concern that Crimean Tatars will have to sacrifice their national identity as a result of the annexation and the accompanying policies of assimilation.

The current study aims to examine the nature of education policies aimed at national identity (re)building processes in Crimea during the Soviet, Ukrainian, and the most recent Russian periods. Specifically, I will examine the role of primary education textbooks in promoting assimilation policies. For the purposes of this study, I will compare and analyze the context of 9 early literacy textbooks published during the Soviet, Ukrainian, and Russian periods of Crimean governance to reveal the nation-building strategies used by respective state governments in primary school. The research will address the following questions: How is Tatar national identity constructed in early literacy textbooks? What values are prioritized by the state? And how is Tatar childhood portrayed and imagined in textbooks? The textbooks were selected through convenience sampling and included texts approved by the respective Ministries of Education during the three periods under study. The study was based on critical discourse analysis of texts and illustrations, comparing changes and continuities over time.

### **Background: Crimea's Significance throughout History**

The 21st century has been marked by simultaneously rising urge to protect national identity and geographic borders. As states around the world have established reliable laws that protect their territorial integrity, the disruption of the national unity of the state of Ukraine came unexpectedly. The intrusion into Ukrainian sovereignty, namely the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, was condemned by influential international actors worldwide. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a non-

binding resolution 68/262 affirming the "territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders" by a recorded vote of 100 in favour to 11 against, with 58 abstentions (United Nations, 2014). However, Russia has continued to insist that the process of Crimea's admission into the Russian state was the result of a free and democratic vote of the people. According to statistics presented by the Russian authorities, a referendum on the incorporation of Crimea into Russia, held shortly after the takeover of the Crimean Supreme Council had an official turnout of 83.0% and resulted in a 96.7% (Crimea) and 95.6% (Sevastopol) affirmative vote (Economic, 2014). These data are questionable and have been critiqued by multiple national and international agencies. According to a major Ukrainian news site TSN, Russia's Council on Civil Society and Human Rights accidentally publicized the authentic results of the referendum: 50-60% voted for unification with Russia, with a voter turnout of 30-50%. This leads to a range of between 15% and 30% voting for annexation (Forbes, 2014). However, there is no sufficient evidence to prove the above numbers. The official reason for organizing the referendum in the first place was the protection of Russian-speaking population of Crimea. However, the international community has questioned the underlying motives of Russian authorities, suggesting that the reasons for annexation may have included geopolitical, military, strategic, political, and economic motivations, as well as possible personal motives of the Russian officials. With Crimea an important strategic object that has played a key role as a gate between Europe and Asia, its geopolitical reconfiguration may aid Russia in strengthening its positions in Eastern Europe.

The strategic significance of the Crimean region has been acknowledged by state leaders throughout history. This Turkic ethnic group resided on the Crimean Peninsula since 13<sup>th</sup> century, originating from the Turkic tribes arriving from Asia to South-Eastern Europe in 10<sup>th</sup>

century. Until the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Crimean Tatars represented the largest percentage of Crimea's population. However, the political situation changed this dynamic. Crimea changed hands several times. It was administered as the Crimean Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic from 1912 to 1944, and suffered from forced deportation on the order of Joseph Stalin in 1944. The region was transferred from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954, and finally transformed into the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within Ukraine in 1992.

However, one of the most serious attempts to take control over the Crimean Tatar population against its will was the forced deportation of Crimean Tatars from the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on Stalin's order by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) on May 18, 1944. The officially reported ground for deportation was the collaboration of Crimean Tatars with Nazi Germany during World War II. Interestingly, the rhetoric for the first deportation was similar to the one used during the most recent annexation. As stated by the leader of the Communist Party Petro Symonenko, the deportation of 1944 was initiated to "protect" the Crimean Tatars (Liga Novosti, 2012). More than 230,000 people were deported, and from 15 to 36% of Crimean Tatars died from starvation or disease as a result (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2014). Crimean Tatars were not able to return after this unlawful deportation until the time of "perestroika" in 1989. Upon return, Crimean Tatars faced serious physical and psychological adaptation to the new circumstances. In the 1990s, pressure for autonomy within Ukraine, threats of secession and unification with Russia, and bold claims that Crimea was rightfully an ancestral homeland of Crimean Tatars clashed as the government in Kiev "foundered on its own political battles over the future of their nation-state" (Sasse, 2007). In 1991, at the referendum on sovereignty in the Crimean oblast of the Ukrainian

Soviet Socialist Republic, 94% of Crimeans voted for joining independent Ukraine, and in 1992 the region became an autonomous part of the state. Now, after 23 years of living in an autonomous region, Crimean Tatars have to face another major adjustment. After years of work trying to establish their national identity as a minority on the peninsula where 58% of the population is ethnically Russian and about 24% percent Ukrainian (BBC Russia, 2014), Tatars have become the object of another political game. Shortly after Crimea has marked 70 years after the deportation, Russia gained control and, according to the predictions of many political experts, the situation is unlikely to be reversed.

The need for political prognosis for the future gives historians reason to look back at Soviet policies targeting national minorities. The findings are not surprising: political maneuvers in introducing a language of interethnic communication, the right to choose the language of instruction, or the availability of minority languages as an elective are not new for the post-Soviet space. Soviet authorities utilized the same scheme in order to conduct their well-known dual approach to national minorities “national in form, but socialist in content.” In work based on his dissertation, Dmitry Gorenburg (2005) states that during the times of the Soviet Union, “the Soviet government enacted assimilationist policies at the same time as it maintained and even strengthened the ethnic institutions that were established in the 1920s” (p.1) He makes an overall argument that

Russian was labeled the language of interethnic communication, but speaking Russian became an essential element of participating in Soviet society. Since language use is generally a zero-sum decision, promoting one central language inevitably led to a decline in use of competing national languages. And since language, in turn, is a key component



of ethnic identity, the shift in language use away from national languages led to an increase in ethnic assimilation of members of non-Russian minorities. (p. 1)

If we analyze the Soviet approach to minorities and compare it to the one undertaken by the Russian authorities towards Crimean Tatars after the annexation, we will observe some distinct parallels. First, within the framework of the school reform of 1958, the First Secretary of the Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev introduced the concept of Russian as the language of interethnic communication throughout the Soviet Union. The same was done by the Russian authorities in the case of Crimea after the annexation. Ministry officials made it explicit that, according to the Education Law of the Russian Federation, the only official language of education is Russian. Second, the resolution of the Communist Party gave parents the right to choose the language of instruction for their children, while strongly encouraging parents to send their children to Russian language schools. Local authorities organized meetings where parents expressed their preference for Russian-language instruction for their children. Similarly, in present-day Crimea parents are positioned as primary decision makers. When asked for an explanation as to why Ukrainian classes have considerably decreased and the gymnasium became Russian, the education administration of the Crimea claimed that they followed the wish of the students' parents. Finally, while minority students attending Russian language schools in their homelands during Soviet times were usually given the opportunity to study their native language as a subject, this type of instruction did not compensate for the lack of native-language education. Since in many regions such courses were considered electives or were additional to the regular school program, children did not take these classes very seriously (Gorenburg, 2005). In parallel, the study of Crimean Tatar language on the peninsula is no longer mandatory and the

students' performance in class is not graded, which results in deteriorating students' performance.

In order not to offend the national sensitivities of non-Russians, the intensification of educational assimilation was taking place without an overt restriction of the rights of the republics in the area of education. Szporluk (2000) gives a comprehensive short overview of policy transformations under the overall goal of “flourishing” (rus. “rastsvet”) and the process of “drawing together” (“sblizhenie”). The researcher states that in 1966 the elementary and secondary school network was subordinated to the specially established federal Ministry of Education. A decree of the Supreme Soviet Presidium placed most crucial matters of school curricula in the non-Russian schools under central regulation. Further, in 1972, the Ministry of Education mandated all non-Russian schools to expand the use of Russian in the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Importantly, preparatory classes for children were structured with the straight-forward goal of teaching Russian. In addition, the textbooks utilized throughout the USSR became uniform, which meant that the textbooks for non-Russian speakers were translated from Russian, frequently without conforming to all the rules of translation. Such policies have resulted in the fact that since the 1930s non-Russian Soviet citizens received advanced education in Russian (Szporluk, 2000). This does not suggest that the above linguistic policies resulted in the individuals' change of identity in all cases. However, such policies did carry important implications.

Even though the Soviet rules may have appeared “democratic” to some outsiders, they supported the overall trend of Russification and undermined minority languages and cultures. In many cases, the above policies were extremely successful in the creation of a “Soviet person.” Equally, interesting are the reactions of national minorities towards the regime expressed in the

underground literature (“samizdat”). Szporluk (2000) highlights three standpoints on nationalities in the “samizdat” literature: the “general democratic” platform, which concerned itself with the civil rights issues, Russian nationalistic movement demanding the recognition of the entire USSR as Russia, and, finally, nationality programs demanding the protection of the rights of their respective peoples. The last standpoint included Tatars advocating for their right to return to Crimea and Ukrainians opposed to Russification efforts. In this regard, it is important to highlight that the attitudes of the latter groups were not anti-Russian, but opposed the regime that allowed Russians and the Russian language to subdue other nationalities (Szporluk, 2000). Szporluk’s conclusion presents an important point for the present research. He notes that if the Soviet leaders do not separate Russian national accretions from what has come to be considered the Soviet identity, the regime is bound to go on mistaking Russification for the promotion of the “liable internationalist socialist civilization” (Szporluk, p.20).

Such an overlap became a reality over time and was taken for granted by an overwhelming part of the Soviet population. Gorenburg (2005) suggests that “had the Soviet Union retained such policies for another 1-2 generations, it is not unlikely that a large percentage of minority group members would have declared Russian as their native language or switched their ethnic identity to Russian” (p. 27). Therefore, history shows the dangers of the lack of a critical approach to nation-building strategies transmitted through linguistic policies and education in general.

The current assimilation efforts of the Russian government, particularly the large human resource and financial investment streamed into the recently restructured Crimean education system, have all the potential to produce a similar result - the creation of a homogenous Russian population at the expense of national minorities. Therefore, it is critical to examine how current

school curricula and textbook reforms reflect and contribute to the assimilation strategies implemented in the Crimean schools.

### **Literature Review: Constructing Patriots through School during Nation-Building Processes**

Assimilation of national minorities into the majority culture has been a common policy during the Soviet nation-building processes, as well as many other countries in Western Europe and North America. During nation-building processes, states tend to grant significant priority to the reinforcement of political learning through various channels, which contribute to the overall goal of assimilation, “the belief that cultural groups should give up their heritage cultures and take on the host society’s way of life” (Baker, 2001, p. 391), conforming to the dominant national norms. Alba (1999) interprets assimilation as a radical process of simplification: “ethnic minorities shed themselves of all that makes them distinctive and become carbon copies of the ethnic majority. In this view, assimilation imposes a bland homogeneity where a more interesting heterogeneity had existed before” (Alba, 1999, p. 7).

Assimilation stands in contrast to multiculturalism, “the view that groups should maintain their heritage cultures as much as possible” (Baker, 2001, p. 287). According to Alba (1999), multicultural society means “the factual existence of plural cultures, each associated with a distinctive ethnic origin and all contained within a single societal frame” (Alba, 1999, p. 8). Therefore, both assimilation and multiculturalism are about the politics of recognition of cultural peculiarities and the dynamics of power between the dominant and the dependent groups. It needs to be noted that there are variations on both ends. However, in general the term *multiculturalism* means that the majority group is willing to undertake measures towards the survival of a minority culture, whereas in case of *assimilation* the majority demands the acceptance of its culture, placing minority groups in the position of inferiority and disadvantage

(Alba, 1999). In such a way, the level of acceptance of difference in the society, or, in other words, the tolerance level for cultural variation, may be assessed on a scale in between assimilation and multiculturalism as two polar concepts. Throughout further analysis, the concepts of assimilation and multiculturalism should be understood accordingly.

### ***The Role of Education in Nation-Building Processes***

Concerns over the preservation and strengthening of national identities during nation-building processes - whether through assimilation or multiculturalism policies - are central to research in comparative education, political science, and other fields of study. Instilling into populations the feelings of patriotism and loyalty to the state and its institutions is often viewed as the only effective vaccination against popular unrest and political instability (Janmaat, 2007). Such “vaccination” would be especially necessary in light of the current military conflict over the land of the Crimean Tatars. In order to ensure support of the population in the new (Russian) nation-building efforts, it is essential to ensure that the population identifies itself with the state. While there are various ways of contributing to this goal, such as effective media strategies and targeted social benefit system, school education remains the key institution in the long run. This may be explained by the fact that “school curricula create a so-called ‘matrix’ in the students’ awareness that they then use as a reference point in their relationship with history and modernity, evaluation of self and the other” (Fillipova, 2009). Education gains even larger significance if regarded as a “major socialization agent” (Anderson, 2006). Anderson (2006) argues that education is one of the key agents when it comes to reproducing society’s ideology, shaping national identity and constructing an imagined community in periods of active nation building. (Anderson, 2006). This imagined bond and national kinship is perpetuated at all levels of

education. The idea of education being “a primary institutional circuit through which predominant social and cultural constructions can be disseminated and maintained” (Silova, 2014, p. 2) is undeniable. Therefore, we may argue that in order to guarantee that the Russian state functions as a whole community, the nation-building mechanisms will be activated through school curriculum to speed up Crimea’s assimilation.

In most nation-building processes, including post-socialist transformation processes, school curricula and textbooks play a central role in socialization of children. Textbooks contribute to the construction of “official knowledge” (Apple, 1993), a shared system of beliefs and values transmitted to the particularly impressionable young people in schools (Silova, 1996). In the context of Crimean education, early literacy primers are of particular significance as their extensive re-writing by the Russian Federation was necessitated by the newly viable constructions of reality in times of radical social and political change to enable the reconstruction of national identity. At the time of change that has overtaken every major area of life, the barely conscious identity of a modern person is increasingly susceptible to outside influences. The new recipient nation, therefore, would benefit from the fact “for most people, being a part of the nation is a matter of upbringing and socialization rather than a matter of conscious choice” (Bakke, 2000, p. 8). In such a way, it is within the reach of the school to shape “the forms of perception, categorization, interpretation and memory that serve to determine the orchestration of the habitus which are in turn constitutive basis for a kind of national commonsense” (Cillia, 2009, p. 156).

Palonsky (1987) also underlines the relation between elementary school instruction and political socialization outcomes, explaining that “no political system could persist without a planned program for inducting succeeding generations into appropriate roles and ideological

orientations” (p. 493). According to Thompson (1968), these roles and orientations are not static. Upon learning about their national identities, individuals can forget and later on again remember them. This fluid nature of national identities means that they can be reconstructed by schools for the well-being of the state (Barrett, 2000). It is important to emphasize that the process of identity construction and reconstruction does not necessarily appear to the students to be artificial or arbitrary, but as an objective reality - “official knowledge” - which is an inevitable and necessary to become members of the society (Barrett, 2000). Because we tend to view nationality as somehow natural and normal, schools have the power to manipulate individuals’ national commitment through educational materials and ways of instruction that are taken for granted. Manipulation may be interpreted as “amending or reinforcing the patterns of political learning in dramatic and enduring fashion” (Palonsky, 1987). Such reinforcement, in turn, happens through a process of cognitive and affective development that determines the pattern of behavior and provides its driving force respectively (Piaget, 1969).

### **Sample and Method**

Early literacy textbooks play a critical role in instilling in the new generation the feeling of belonging to a particular state. Through texts and images, young citizens begin to position themselves in society in relation to the others. Primers aim to reinforce the national ties and develop patriotic sentiments that will follow individuals throughout life. As Apple (1986) suggests, “it is the textbook that often defines what is elite and legitimate culture to pass on” (p. 83). Textbooks that encompass the “legitimate” knowledge for children become harder to challenge since “75% of the time elementary and secondary students are in the classroom and 90% of their time on their homework is spend with text material” (Apple, 1986, p. 83). These texts as well as images that accompany them serve the purpose of the dominant pedagogy which

“focuses solely on the transmission of official knowledge and perpetuates and mitigates against the challenging of the legitimacy of the content materials” (Bishop, 2003, p. 24). The materials presented to the students are expected to accomplish the goal of assimilation.

Since children are more susceptible to outside influence, assimilation tends to be a more speedy process when attempted at a younger age. From this standpoint, it is logical that a significant number of Soviet social scientists recommended that linguistic assimilation, a typical example of explicit assimilation (Baker, 2001), of non-Russians, be attempted at a very early age, or at a pre-competitive stage of personality formation (Szporluk, 2000). Power relations embedded in society are easily perceived on a subconscious level through educational experiences in primary school. Therefore, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013) serves as an adequate tool for deciphering content that is transmitted through texts and images in early literacy textbooks.

Qualitative approach undertaken for this research allowed for a broad interpretive analysis of texts and images. Prevailing themes characteristic of all the primers under analysis were identified at the first stage of the research. The next step was allocating the materials into thematic groups: contemporary reality construction, national symbolism, and national heroes. Once grouped, the text and images were compared and contrasted in order to examine the differences in the construction of national identities of Crimean Tatars through primers during the Soviet, Ukrainian, and Russian periods of Crimea’s governance. The comparison was intended to answer the central question of what roles Crimean Tatars are expected to take within the conjuncture of a respective society.

The central narratives detected in the primers were mapped along the following research questions related to national identity construction:



- *How are children portrayed in textbooks published during different historical periods in Ukraine? What roles are they expected to assume in the society that they belong to?*
- *Who are the role models and why are they selected for the primers? What do they represent? What is their ethnic affiliation?*
- *How diverse are the national symbols depicted in the primers? What values are those symbols expected to instill in children?*

The above list of dominant narratives is not exhaustive. However, the analysis of these three themes provides a more or less comprehensive picture of the national values that are transmitted to the young citizens through textbooks. The texts and images allow for multiple interpretations and an attempt was made to capture the multiplicity of interpretations of cultural narratives.

### **Sample**

For the purposes of this study, I utilized critical discourse analysis of 9 early literacy textbooks published before and after the annexation of Crimea by Russia. The sample consisted of 2 textbooks of the Soviet period (1921-1991) specifically recommended by the Education Ministry for the Crimean Tatar population; 5 textbooks of the Ukrainian period (1992-2014): 2 for Ukrainian speakers, 2 for Russian speakers, and 1 for Crimean Tatars; and 2 textbooks of the Russian period (2014-present): one for Russian speakers and one for the Tatar population. All the textbooks in the sample were selected from the official list of primers recommended by respective Ministries of Education using convenience sampling. In addition, the primers included in this study were produced by the leading publishing houses (see Table 1).

It is important to mention that in order to examine the messages of the Ukrainian period of Crimea's governance (1992-2014), it was deemed necessary to contrast the textbook

specifically recommended by the Ministry of Education for Crimean Tatars to the ones recommended by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education for the schools with Ukrainian and Russian language of instruction. Such an approach was intended to examine the messages sent to national majorities and to follow the prevailing ideas in the national education discourse. A similar approach was adopted for the examination of primers during the Soviet and Russian periods. In the section examining textbooks of the Russian period, one textbook is used by all population groups and the other specifically by the Tatar minority. As for the Soviet period, it was considered useful to select a pilot edition published by the Soviet authorities together with the mainstream primer aiming to position Tatars in the Soviet society.

The textbooks from the Soviet period were collected from public libraries in Ukraine, the primers from the Ukrainian period were retrieved from publicly accessible websites, and the textbooks from the Russian period were found in Russian public libraries in the city with one of the most significant percentage of Tatar population - Kazan, Russia. The inclusion of the primer utilized by this population group is possible due to their strong historical and cultural connection to Crimean Tatars. The Crimean ethnos was shaped as a result of assimilation of various peoples residing on the Crimean territory at different times in history. The Crimean population was seriously united by the Islamic religion adopted by a major part of the Crimeans. The Muslim population of Crimea was called "*krimtsi*." However, as Crimeans joined the Russian Empire in 1783, they began to be called "*tatars*." In regards to the tatars of Kazan, they were renamed from the "*bulgars of Volga*," where they resided before Ivan Groznej occupied Kazan in 1552. Throughout history, one can find multiple interactions between Crimean and Kazan tatars. The deportation on Stalin's order affected a large percentage of the Kazan Tatar population similar to Crimean tatars. The government of the Soviet Union did not forbid Kazan Tatars from residing

in Crimea. However, upon the return of Crimean tatars to the peninsula, their own unique culture was restored. In addition, the languages of both peoples stem from the Turkic language family (Avdet, 2014), which allows for the primer for Kazan tatars to be utilized in Crimean tatar classrooms. This is the practice we are currently observing in Crimea: the Kazan primer by Gariffulina is largely in use throughout the peninsula.

Knowledge of Russian and Ukrainian as my native languages allowed me to compare the texts in those languages without the assistance of a translator. However, such assistance was used during the analysis of the texts in the Crimean Tatar language.

**Table 1. Analyzed early literacy textbooks (primers, *bukvari*, *abetki*, *alifbe*)**

<b>№</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Publishing House</b>	<b>Language</b>
1.	1979	Valitova Vagizov	Алифба. Букварь для 1 класса четырёхлетней начальной татарской школы [Alifba: Primer for Grade 1 of 4-year Tatar Primary School]	Tatar Publishing House	Tatar
2.	1990	Akmolaev	Букварь : Экспериментальное учебное пособие для 1-го класса [Primer: Pilot Educational Edition for Grade 1]	Radianska Shkola	Tatar
3.	2005	Harahadi	Элифбе : Підручник для 1 класу [Primer: Textbook for Grade 1.]	Krimnavchpedderzhvidav	Tatar
4.	2012	Rudyakov Frolova Mironova	Букварь. 1 класс [Primer. Grade 1. For schools with Russian	Gramota	Russian

			language of instruction]		
5.	2012	Vashulenko Lapshina	Букварь. 1 класс [Primer. Grade 1. For schools with Russian language of instruction]	Osvita	Russian
6.	2012	Vashulenko Vashulenko	Буквар: підручник для 1-го класу. [Primer. Grade 1. For schools with Ukrainian language of instruction]	Osvita	Ukrainian
7.	2012	Zaharijchuk Naumenko	Буквар: підручник для 1-го класу. [Primer. Grade 1. For schools with Ukrainian language of instruction]	Gramota	Ukrainian
8.	2012	Gariffulina Miyassarova	Алифба: учебник для образовательных организаций начального общего образования с обучением на русском языке, для изучающих татарский язык как родной [Alifba. Textbook for primary education institutions with Russian as the language of instruction, for those learning Tatar as their native language]	Magaryf	Tatar
9.	2014	Goretskij	Азбука для первоклассников [Primer for first- graders]	Prosveshenie	Russian

## **Findings: Construction of Tatar Identity through Primers in the USSR, Ukraine, and Russia**

The analysis of texts and illustrations revealed both explicit and implicit messages about particular national identities constructed through textbooks, varying depending on the language of the primer and the time of publication. Textbooks published during all three periods (Soviet, Ukrainian, and Russian) aimed to create for the children a space of shared values. Identity construction is clearly a multidimensional concept and encompasses a wider range of ideas not restricted to national symbols, national heroes, and the portrayal of children's everyday lives. However, these elements are crucial for the construction of imagined communities to which children are expected to belong and in which they will operate.

While analyzing national symbols, it was important to consider the categories that national elements constructed. One of the important questions to pose was the breadth of the picture that the textbook symbols painted and how much it allowed for difference and diversity. In the analysis of national heroes, the study examined the contributions of the prominent figures of the nation, those valued by the authors of the primers and, at the same time, by the state that endorsed the textbooks. Finally, crucial was the analysis of the everyday life of the children portrayed differently from one primer to another. The question that the section aimed to answer was how that depiction positioned the Tatar minority in relation to the majority culture.

### **Primers of the Soviet Period (1921-1991)**

Examining the portrayal of children's everyday lives, it is important to keep in mind the relation of Tatars as a national minority to the children that are identified with the majority culture. The pilot black and white edition by Akmolaev (1990) depicts the co-existing Soviet and Crimean Tatar realia. However, this "co-existence" does not imply "equality." In particular,

children participating in typical Soviet school activities, such as doing morning exercises, studying or helping their family, do not look Tatar at all.

Image 1: Soviet school setting



(Akmolaev, 1990, p.9)

At the same time, Tatars are engaged in the activities that are typically (and stereotypically) attributed to their minority status: boys learning to ride or feed horses and drive a tractor and girls mainly involved in work around the house such as making bread or sewing clothes. Children's everyday activities portrayed in this textbook appear in strong contrast with the Soviet industrialized reality that symbolizes national development.

Image 2: Soviet industrialized vs Tatar rural societies



(Akmolaev, 1990, p. 19)

(Akmolaev, 1990, p. 27)

In addition to the separation of activities based on national identity, we see the distribution of responsibilities based on gender within Crimean Tatar society itself. Women are mostly engaged in household work, while men are performing stereotypically male activities: operating a tractor, working in the field, etc. However, it is important to note that such a distribution of activities based on gender is not unique to Akmolaev's primer. Such representation is characteristic to all the primers in the analysis.

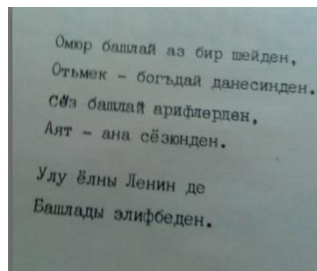
Image 3: Male vs female Tatar activities



(Akmolaev, 1990)

The ideological message on the first page of the primer is clear: Tatars belong to Lenin's state. Children are encouraged to follow Lenin's example and study as hard as he did.

Image 4: Tatars belong to Lenin's state



(Akmolaev, 1990, p.32)

Life begins with small things,  
bread with wheat seeds,  
a word begins with letters,

life begins with mother's words.  
This way Lenin also began with the alphabet.

Even though the primer is black and white, it is still clear that there is no depiction of representatives of the minority culture in the primer. The images overall create a rather limited working atmosphere within the Crimean community. The impression one might get from the primer is rather gloomy: Tatars are working in the village-looking area and do not interact with the outside world.

The national Tatar identity is much stronger, however, in the primer by Valitova and Vagizov (1979), known in the community and referred to by the Ministry of Education as “the red primer” due to the color of the cover. Unlike the primer by Akmolaev, this textbook does not entirely limit the children to rural areas. The world constructed by the images and texts is much more modern: Tatar children have their morning routine that does not differ from that of any other children. Images of children in national outfits go together with the ones where Tatars are wearing everyday clothes and are engaged in non-stereotypical activities, such as fishing. The means of transportation depicted on the pages of the primer look modern as well: one can find an airplane “Aeroflot,” a modern train, etc.

At the same time, Soviet symbolism is rather strong: Tatars are wearing Soviet school uniforms as they conduct morning physical training lesson. Heroes in national outfits outside of school significantly outnumber the ones in everyday clothes.

Image 5: National vs. everyday Tatar clothes



(Valitova, 1979, p.14)



Another observation is that young women in the pictures tend to wear national outfits at home, whereas older women are depicted wearing national clothes at all times regardless of the setting. Not only are the characters wearing national outfits, the heroes of Tatar fairy tales are dressed so as well. The dolls with which girls are playing are no different. The book even depicts the national Tatar production - leather boots. The food that children prefer is clearly traditional Tatar, too - *echpochmak* (Tatar triangular pastry, filled with minced beef, onion and potatoes) and *belyash* (deep-fried cakes filled with minced meat). The contrast between the traditional and Soviet realia is quite striking. One might get the impression that Tatars are placed in the Soviet context when they are learning something that goes in line with the Soviet ideology. Whenever they go back to their community, they are represented rather stereotypically.

Image 6: Soviet symbolism



(Valitova, 1979, p.4)



(Valitova, 1979, p.34)



(Valitova, 1979, p.56)

As mentioned before, even though the textbook does not limit the characters to the village area, it does not take them out of their land, in this case Tatarstan. The image below is rather symbolic. The boy pointing at the map of Tatarstan is surrounded by children dressed in the outfits of now former Soviet republics. The Russian girl is there too. The picture is accompanied by the caption below: “This is the map of Tatarstan. Tatarstan is the homeland.

Motherland is the land of friendship. And they are friendly brothers.” Based on this picture, it is possible to claim that Tatarstan was finally presented as equal among the equal.

Image 7: Tatar boy introduces peoples of the USSR to his Motherland



(Valitova, 1979, p.4)

However, this seemingly equal representation could be questioned by certain factors that speak about isolation. First of all, all the characters are depicted the same way: they all look Tatar. There is not a single blonde character in the book, even though in reality there are plenty of blonde Tatar representatives. In addition, there is not a single non-Tatar name mentioned anywhere. The only other depiction of the others is the picture of three children carrying vegetables, a Tatar boy being one of them. All of the children are wearing national outfits.

Image 8: Children happy about good crops



(Valitova, 1979, p.14)

There are no Russians in the book interacting with Tatars in an everyday setting and minimal representation of “the others.” This contributes to the overall feeling of segregation and

does not support the symbolic image of friendship between peoples that the Soviet Union tried so hard to uphold.

### **Primers of the Ukrainian period (1992-2014)**

The 5 primers from the Ukrainian period of Crimea's governance should be considered in three groups depending on whether they were recommended for primary schools with Ukrainian, Russian, or Crimean Tatar as the language of instruction.

The two textbooks from the Ukrainian period recommended for Ukrainian speakers share one important similarity: a strong sense of Ukrainian national identity. The strong focus on Ukraine as homeland can be seen from the illustrations of Ukrainian national symbols, such as the traditional Ukrainian embroidered towel *rushnik*, fields of wheat, the traditional Ukrainian berry *kalina* (cranberry), the Ukrainian national house *hata*, national musical instruments *trembitas*. Significant are the depictions of Ukrainian nature, as well as poems and texts about the beauty of the Ukrainian landscape. The texts and poems tend to be quite descriptive of all the Ukrainian territory - from East to West. The texts include "I live in Ukraine," "Our Motherland," "Native land," "My country is Ukraine," "I live in Ukraine," "I am Ukrainian."

Image 9. Poem “Native land”



(Vashulenko, 2012, p.3)  
Ukraine is the native land  
Field. River. Blue plain.  
It is lovely to walk along the path.  
You and I live here.

The national feelings are intensified by the illustrations of children mostly wearing national outfits. The characters are frequently depicted with the beautiful Ukrainian scenery in the background. Crimea is mentioned several times in both primers as belonging to Ukraine.

Image 10: Poem “Native land”



(Zaharijchuk, 2012, p.37)  
I am holding colored pencils in my hand.  
I want to draw the Crimean mountains and the Carpathians.  
The steppe, and the hills of the Dnieper,  
And lakes, and forests,  
And the rainbow, and cranberry,

The Black Sea, the Danube-  
All this is our Ukraine  
Our wonderful native land.

A realistic depiction of famous Ukrainian sites is provided together with their poetic visualization. The children get the impression that these places are within their reach, and they can travel there whenever they want to. Interestingly, even though the depicted sites are rather prominent, they are not very well known internationally, which might convey the feeling of ownership among the children since they get the “inside look at their country.”

Image 11: Ukrainian sites



(Zaharijchuk, 2012, p.130)

Hotin - an old town on Bukovina

Hust - the town of old castles

Hersones - a museum town in the Crimea

Children are introduced to the most prominent Ukrainian poets and writers: Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko, Taras Shevchenko. They have a chance to learn a little about their lives and read abstracts of their most famous works. This part of the primer is decorated with images that visualize abstracts from the writers’ work in Ukrainian traditional style.

The textbook by Vashulenko (2012) even describes a very old custom cherished in Ukraine “Ivana Kupala.” This holiday is considered by many to be a pagan tradition. Therefore, the church does not recognize it. Since the children can observe this tradition being practiced by their grandparents and, for some, their parents, the primer creates a link to the real life. The tradition became the basis of many fairy tales that the children might also hear from their

parents. The girls typically make a wreath, go to the river or a lake with their friends and let the wreath float away. Boys are expected to wait on the opposite bank and catch the wreath of the girl they like. In this way the wreath connects couples on the day of Ivana Kupala.

Image 12: Ivana Kupala



(Vashulenko, 2012, p.51)

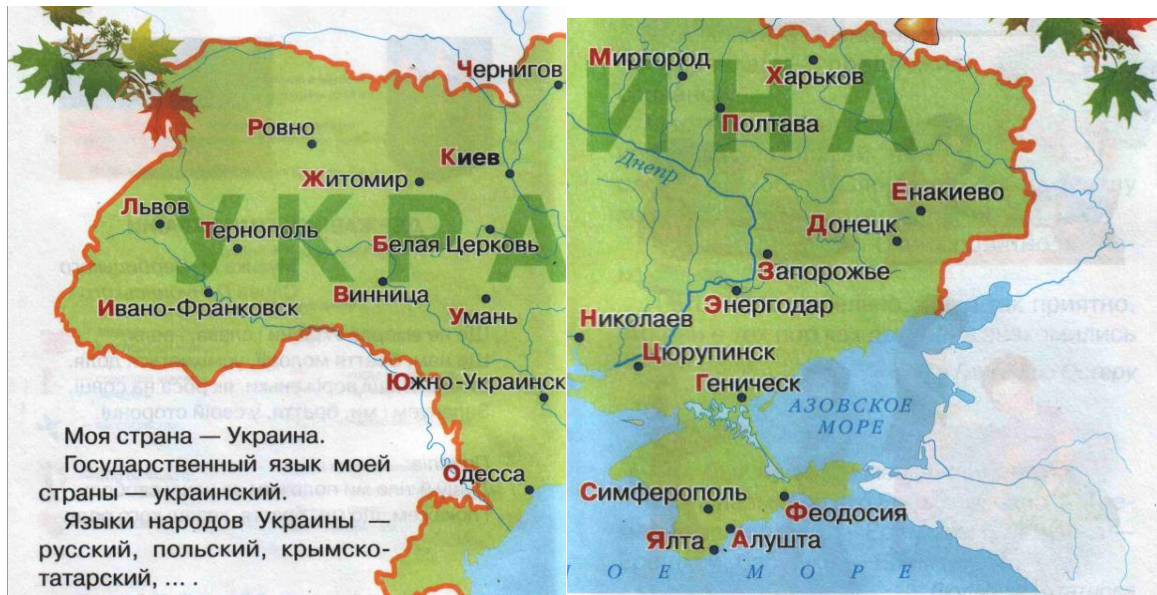
In July on Ivana Kupala boys were making a fire.  
And girls let the wreaths flow in the water.  
They let the wreaths go and sang “Float, wreath, float!”

This example illustrates how the primer cherishes ancient traditions of the Ukrainian people. It establishes the link between the children’s family traditions and the present, where they are supposed to learn to love their state. In this textbook even the letter “Ji” is learnt through the derivatives of the words “Ukraine” and “Kyiv.” However, the textbook’s heavy focus on national education is combined with the depiction of a very homogenous population. There is no mention of other ethnicities living or languages utilized in Ukraine.

Similar to the textbooks recommended to the Ukrainian speakers, the two textbooks used for Russian -speaking children in Ukraine have prominent national content. However, these textbooks tend to be generally more inclusive and provide a wider picture of reality than the ones for Ukrainian speakers. Regardless of the language of the primers being Russian, the books

clearly state that the national language of the country is Ukrainian. They also mention other languages used in Ukraine, including Russian, Polish, and Crimean Tatar. The children are later faced with the question “what other languages of the peoples of Ukraine do you know?”

Image 13: Map of Ukraine



(Rudyakov, 2012, p. 4-5)

My country is Ukraine

The national language of my country is Ukrainian

The languages of the peoples of Ukraine are Russian, Polish, Crimean Tatar, ...

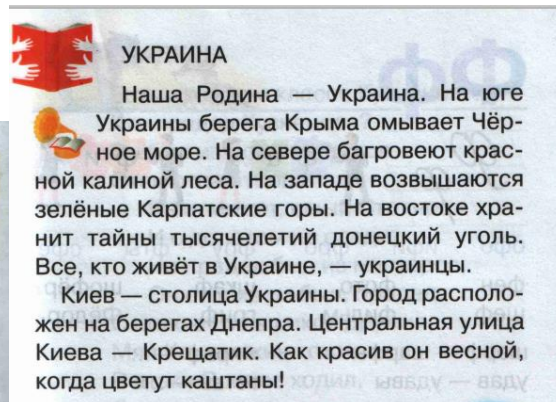
We can see that Crimea is clearly depicted on the map as an integral part of Ukraine. It is mentioned further in the primer several times as illustrated in images below.

Image 14: Crimea in Ukrainian texts



(Rudyakov, 2012, p. 96)

Yalpug, Pripyat are rivers in Ukraine  
Yalta is a resort in Crimea  
Japan is a country in Asia



(Rudyakov, 2012, p. 109)

Our homeland is Ukraine. In the South the banks of Crimea are washed by the Black Sea. In the North the forests are red with cranberry. In the West rise the green Carpathian Mountains. In the East thousand-year old Donetsk coal is keeping its secrets. Everyone who lives in Ukraine is Ukrainian.

In regards to language and culture, the primer by Rudyakov (2012) features

Ukrainian and Russian side by side, creating the image of equality of different ethnicities. This is visible from the depiction of prominent Russian and Ukrainian figures next to each other - Aleksandr Pushkin and Fedor Tyutchev as prominent Russian figures, and Ivan Franko, Lesya Ukrainka, and Taras Shevchenko as the Ukrainian ones. In addition, the textbook features Ukrainian and Russian national games (“Hlebchik” and “Solnishko”) one after another. Symbolically, the children receive a similar impression of equality, as they can observe Russian *matryoshkas* depicted on the pages of the primer together with prominent Ukrainian symbols, such as poplar tree (*topol*) and cranberry (*kalina*). Together with portraying traditional Ukrainian routines of the past, the textbook shows modern technological progress that has affected both girls and boys.



The second textbook for Russian speakers of Ukraine, the one by Vashulenko (2012), is also quite inclusive and adequately portrays realia relevant to both ethnic groups, Ukrainians and Russians. Images with signs in Ukrainian and Russian are used side by side throughout the book.

Image 15. Russian and Ukrainian signs



(Vashulenko, 2012, p.110) (Vashulenko, 2012, p.88)  
Ukr. Mail                      Rus. Fairy tales

The textbook features texts about Ukraine as a native land and teaches children to appreciate Ukrainian nature.

Image 16. Trip to Kiev



**Мы скоро поедem в Киев. Там — дядя Павел. Мы ему написали. Он нас давно —. Мы поката́емся на метро́ и на кáтере по Днепру. Посетим театр кукол. Интересно, какие спектакли там идут?**

(Vashulenko, 2012, p.64)

We are going to Kiev soon. My uncle Pavel lives there.

He has been waiting for us for a long time.

We will take the subway and a boat along the Dnieper.

We will go to the puppet theater. I wonder what is showing.

Similar to the primer by Rudiakov, the primer by Vashulenko starts with the Ukrainian national anthem. It also features prominent Ukrainians, such as Leonid Kadenyuk, the first astronaut of independent Ukraine. This aspect deserves special attention since the text about Kadenyuk presents the harmonious intersection of the two cultures with which the children may identify:

Image 17. Dream come true

**МЕЧТА СБЫЛАСЬ**

Когда первый в мире космонавт Юрий Гагарин полетел в космос, украинскому мальчику Лёне Каденюку шёл десятый год. Он жил тогда в селе Клишковцы на Буковине.

Лёня мечтал повторить подвиг Юрия Гагарина. Он упорно учился и занимался спортом.

И свою мечту Леонид Каденюк осуществил. Он увидел нашу родную Землю из далёкого космоса.

Многие ребята мечтают полететь в космос. Но надо не только мечтать, а и готовиться к этому. И тогда мечта

(Vashulenko, 2012, p.116)

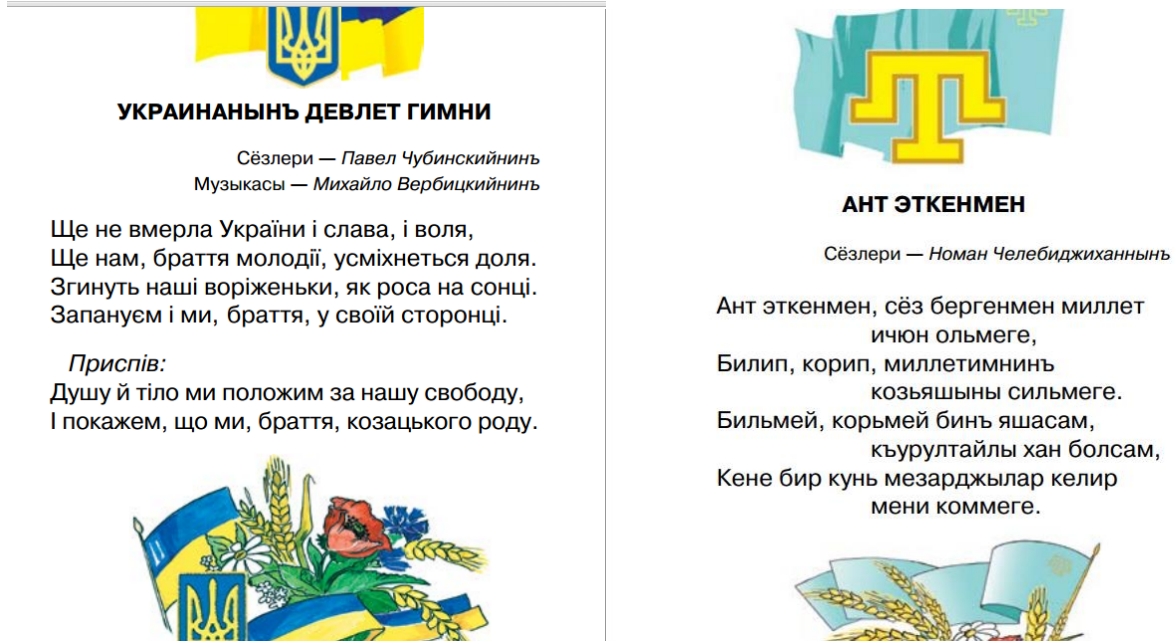
When the first cosmonaut Yuriy Gagarin went to space,  
a Ukrainian boy Lyonia Kadeniuk was almost ten years old.  
At that time, he was living in the village of Klishkovtsi on Bukovina.  
Lyonia dreamt of repeating the achievement of Yuriy Gagarin.  
He studied hard and did a lot of sports.  
And his dream came true. He saw our native land from space.

In addition, the textbooks add to the amount of traditional Ukrainian symbols, depicting also the sun, bread, and a whooping crane (Ukrainian national bird).

Even though the textbooks used throughout the Ukrainian period seem quite inclusive compared to the ones used during the Soviet times, none of them depict Crimean Tatar children. The latter have their own textbook. The Crimean Tatar “Elifba” by Harahadi has been the most commonly used primer among the Crimean Tatar minority. Harahadi’s primer has a clearly demonstrated national component. The book starts with the national symbols of both Ukraine

and the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea. The anthem is presented in both languages: Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar.

Image 18. National symbolism in Crimean Tatar textbook



(Harahadi, 2005, p. 4-5)

*Ukrainian anthem:*

Ukraine has not yet died,  
The glory and the freedom!  
Still upon us brave brothers,  
Fate shall smile!  
Our enemies will vanish  
Like dew in the sun;  
We too shall rule  
In our country.  
Soul and body we will lay down  
For our freedom  
And show that we brothers  
Are of the Cossack descent

*Crimean Tatar anthem:*

I pledge, give my word to die for the nation  
Knowing, seeing, to wipe away the teardrops of  
my nation.  
If I live a thousand years without seeing,  
knowing and become a khan with council,  
Still one day the gravediggers will come to bury  
me.

The texts featured in the book make it clear that Crimea is part of Ukraine and this is where Crimean Tatars belong. The primer features stories about Ukrainian cities, as well as pictures of Ukrainian sites outside of Crimea.

Image 19. Ukraine as Motherland in Crimean primer

Жи-то-мир    За-по-ро-жье    Уж-го-род



**Украина шеэрлери**

Украина гузель ве зенгин бир ульке. Анда чокь шеэрлер, койлер, озенлер, голлер, тарлалар, дагълар бар. Энь буюк озен — Днепр. Онынъ ялысыны Запорожье шеэри яраштыра.

Уж озени янында Ужгород деген къади-

(Harahadi, 2005, p. 107)



**Украина**

Украина буюк бир мемлекеттир. Къырым Украинанынъ бир къысмыдыр. Мында кениш чёллер ве тарлалар, деньизлер ве озенлер, орманлар ве дагълар пек чокь.

Украинада зенгин осюмлик алами, берекетли

(Harahadi, 2005, p. 136)

Ukrainian cities.

Ukraine is a beautiful and rich country.

There are lots of cities, villages, rivers, lakes, fields and mountains there.

The Dnieper is the largest river.

Zaporozhie is situated on the banks of this river. Uzhgorod, a very old town, is situated on the river Uzh.

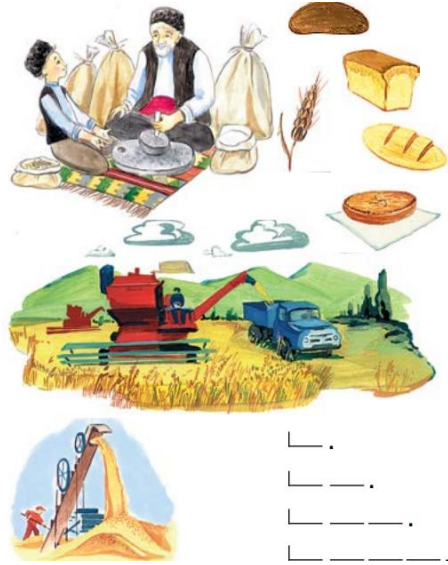
There is a very old town called Zhitomir in Ukraine, too

Ukraine.

Ukraine is a big state. Crimea is a part of Ukraine. There are a lot of wide fields, seas and lakes, forests and mountains here. There are rich fields for different crops and the soils that give harvest. There is wheat, potato, sugar beets, grapes planted here. There are more than a thousand towns in Ukraine. Kyiv, Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Lvov, Lugansk, Chernigov are big cities.

While the textual part clearly inspires a sense of belonging, the illustrations primarily feature Crimean Tatars in their traditional setting. We observe pictures of traditional gender roles, traditional symbols specific to the minority (such as a horse, sheep, fire, whistle, mountains, goats). A lot of attention is paid to the theme of nature, especially the depiction of fields and related routines (gathering crops, cutting logs, feeding horses).

Image 20. Traditional Crimean Tatar activities



(Harahadi, 2005, p.29)

While the traditional Crimean Tatar images are quite prominent, it is important to recognize that Crimean reality is not only depicted as rural: many images portray a modern urban reality and children dressed in a modern fashion. Therefore, the connection between the past and the present is well-established. Traditions go hand in hand with the modern life:

Image 21. Traditional and Modern depiction of Crimean Tatars.



(Harahadi, 2005, p. 38)



(Harahadi, 2005, p. 87)

An important part of the primer is devoted to role models. The textbook features five prominent Crimean Tatar figures: children’s poets Asan Chergeyev, Dzhemil Kendzhe, Eyup Dermendzhi, Nuzet Umer, and Bilial Mambet. The children are introduced to some of the most famous pieces of children’s literature that the writers produced. No non-Crimean writers are introduced in the primer. Although this may be interpreted in different ways, a possible reason might be the fact that children are expected to cover Russian and Ukrainian writers in other classes, so the primer serves as a unique source that could focus on Crimean role models specifically and introduce children to possible role models at a young age.

### **Primers of the Russian period (2014-present)**

Examining “Elifba” by Gariffulina (2012) published in Russia, we no longer observe any distancing between Tatars and other ethnic groups. Children are depicted realistically. The primer features kids of different looks and nationalities engaged in various modern-day activities: hockey, reading, playing football. The activities people are engaged in generally correspond to the present: men and women are designing a multi-apartment building, boxing, driving, flying planes. The modern activities are shared equally among the genders.

Image 22. Tatar activities



(Gariffulina, 2012, p.91)

Fairy tales are no longer constrained to Tatar history as separate from their homeland: they connect Tatars to Russia. Tatar identity is clearly presented as a source of pride. Texts about

Tatars and their national symbols go together with images of the representatives of non-Tatar people in a way that avoids dissonance. Tatar national symbols are depicted several times, as well as Tatar national colors.

Image 23. Tatar symbolism



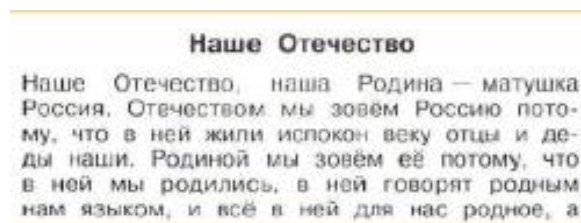
(Gariffulina, 2012, p.72)

Technological progress is a prominent theme: computers are featured quite prominently. Children are introduced to the world: next to a Russian *bogaty*r we see a Greek statue; Red square is next to a picture of a Bulgarian site, a text about Kazan is side by side with a depiction of a man leading a camel in the desert.

Girls and boys wear modern clothes. The whole primer shows everyday reality: the pharmacy, traffic lights and subways that children see in real life. At the same time, it is important to distinguish that even though this textbook is available to Crimean Tatars in particular and used while there is no alternative in the Tatar language, the book was not written for the Crimean population. It was published in Kazan, Russia and has been used for the education of Tatars residing in the Russian territory. The fact that Crimean Tatars have been using the textbook further perpetuated the long-term discussion about Crimean national identity. Specifically, Crimean Tatars have made a serious effort to emphasize their unique position. They tried to convey the message that Tatars are not the same, their languages are not identical, and they do not share a common history. However, by using the Russian textbook Crimean Tatars once again had to face the same questions about the distinctions among the Tatar groups.

The only book that was officially distributed to the Crimean population at the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year is Bukvar by Goretskiy (2014). The content introduced to Crimean Tatars this year was a reason for concern for many Crimean parents. The nationalistic elements appear almost on every page: “Moscow is the capital of Russia;” “It is becoming bigger and more beautiful every year”; “Russia is my Motherland”; “My land is Russia”; “Our Motherland is Mother Russia.” Children are asked to compose a story using the words: Russia, Motherland, Moscow, land.

Image 24. Our Fatherland



**Наше Отечество**  
Наше Отечество, наша Родина — матушка Россия. Отечеством мы зовём Россию потому, что в ней жили испокон веку отцы и деды наши. Родиной мы зовём её потому, что в ней мы родились, в ней говорят родным нам языком, и всё в ней для нас родное, а

(Goretskiy, 2014)

Our Fatherland, our homeland is mother Russia.

We call Russia our Fatherland

because our fathers and grandfathers have lived here for centuries.

We call it homeland because we were born here, they speak our native language here, and everything is dear to us.

The map of Russia is followed by a story:



Image 25: My land is Russia



Моя Земля, моя страна — Россия.  
Мы посадим у дома сад. Будут у  
нас сливы и яблони. Красота! Рады  
будут все: папа, мама и сестра.

(Goretskij, 2014, p.111)

My land, my country is Russia.  
We will plant a garden next to the house.  
We will have plums and apple trees.  
Everyone will be glad: father, mother and sister.

The primer praises the Russian people and service to the homeland: “To live is to serve the Motherland.”

Русские трудом славны.  
Жить — Родине служить.  
Всякому мила своя сторона.

(Goretskij, 2014, p. 110)

Russian are known for their hard work.  
To live is to serve homeland.  
Everyone loves their native land.

The historic component is crucial. Pride for Russian history is instilled, for example, through the text about Cyril and Methodius, the creators of the Slavic alphabet. Russia’s contemporary history is connected to its prominent past:

## Image 26. First teachers of the Slavic language

### Первоучители словенские

Именно так, первоучителями словенскими, называют во всём мире, особенно в славянских странах, равноапостольных Кирилла и Мефодия. А что такое равноапостольные? Это значит — равные апостолам, ученикам самого Господа, Иисуса Христа, то есть очень высокая честь оказана Кириллу и Мефодию.

За что?

За то, что они создали славянскую азбуку. Именно ту, которую мы изучаем. Конечно, написание букв сильно изменилось, некоторые буквы исчезли, но основа осталась.

Кирилл и Мефодий считали, что у славянского народа должна быть своя письменность. Они говорили: разве не для всех светит солнце, разве не для всех идёт дождь, разве не всех кормит земля? Все люди равны, все люди — братья, все равны перед Господом, и всем нужна грамота.

День памяти первоучителей — 24 мая. В этот

(Goretskij, 2014, p.83)

Cyril and Methodius are known around the world, especially in the Slavic countries, as the first teachers of the Slavic language.

They are called “equal to apostles,” the disciples of God, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Cyril and Methodius have been greatly honored. What for? For creating the Slavic alphabet. The one we are learning. The spelling of the letters has certainly changed a lot, some letters have disappeared, but the basis has remained.

Cyril and Methodius thought that the Slavic people should have their own writing system. They said: doesn't the sun shine for everyone, doesn't it rain for everyone, doesn't the land feed everyone? All people are equal, all people are brothers. All are equal before God, and everyone needs literacy. The day of remembrance of the first teachers is May 24.

The story about Kyrill and Mefodij is followed by the text about the first Russian primer by Ivan Fyodorov dating back to 1574, as well as prominent works of famous Russian writers and poets, such as Pushkin, Yesenin, Krylov, Tolstoy. The texts are accompanied by the representation of fairy tales characters, many of whom are wearing Russian national clothes.

Image 27. Russian fairy tale characters



(Goretskij, 2014, p.83)

There is absolutely no diversity represented through pictures or texts. All the children mentioned in the book have typical Russian names and stereotypical Russian appearance. By all means, there are no adjustments made to accommodate the interests of national minorities. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the new generation of Crimean schoolchildren is learning that Russia is their homeland and how to serve it.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of primers published in the Soviet, Ukrainian, and Russian periods of Crimean governance clearly reveals that early literacy textbooks serve as a major tool of political socialization of children. Early literacy textbooks were analyzed in an attempt to examine the extent to which primers reflect diversity and depict the peculiarities of unique Crimean Tatar culture throughout the three historical periods. The analysis showed that the texts and images utilized in the textbooks reflect respective state ideologies dominant during each historical period.

Even though the level of assimilation or multiculturalism is a very subjective notion, it is possible to make some conclusions. Specifically, both primers from the Soviet period clearly focus on the “otherness” of Tatars by emphasizing the gap between the majority and minority

cultures. Some clear oppositions that are created are rural-urban, developed-underdeveloped, industrialized-non-industrialized, progressive-delayed. The texts and images of the Ukrainian period convey a similar picture. The materials of the Ukrainian primers seem to create similar stereotypes, even if the oppositions between the majority and minority are not so polarized. The primer from the Russian period recommended by the Ministry of Education of Russia specifically for Tatar children appears to be the most inclusive of all. It portrays the world of diversity, where people do not look the same and are not engaged in the same activities. The textbooks shows the modern world with all of its dimensions: modern family, real streets, texts about contemporary reality. This message is not transmitted through the recommended textbook for Russian speakers, the one that was distributed to Crimean children after the annexation. In this way, Crimean Tatars have historically experienced two opposite ends of the nation-building spectrum: from stereotypical depiction of Tatars as Ukraine's or Russia's "other" to the over-exaggerated portrayal of one and the same - fully assimilated - good Russian citizens.

What this research tries to avoid is the conclusion of which policy or textbook is "better." The goal of the analysis is to examine the values and ideologies that primers aim to instill in children. In this regard, all of the examined textbooks accomplish the goal of trying to create citizens of a respective state that would share and accept the values of the majority culture. The Soviets would learn to respect the state of Lenin, as well as prioritize the Soviet school, a healthy lifestyle, and exemplary behavior by decent students who love their state, which is composed of a number of friendly regions. The Ukrainian-speaking children living in independent Ukraine would learn that Ukraine is different from its "big brother" - it is a different country with symbols that are entirely distinct from the ones in its Soviet past. The Russian-speaking children living in independent Ukraine would be given a broader view, combining the Soviet past with the

Ukrainian present. The Crimean Tatars living in independent Ukraine would learn that Ukraine is their homeland, while facing the fact that they are different. Some may equate “different” to “special” in their interpretation. However, the fact is that the primer contrasts Crimean Tatars to the majority group. Finally, children learning from the most recently distributed Russian textbooks would learn from the primers about the superiority of Russians. When new young citizens are faced with such explicit messages of nation-building, the clash of identities poses a challenge for teachers to meet the challenge of introducing these messages in the classroom.

This is why it is important to note that primers are only part of the story, especially if, according to the Russian Ministry of Education, next year the children will receive completely new ones. The larger question in this context is the messages that are delivered by the teachers behind closed doors. Do these messages differ depending on the political orientations of teachers? Do they use these new primers and how? How do teachers introduce Crimean Tatar national identity in relation to others? How do educators explain to children the shift to a different ideology? While reaffirming the role of education in national identity construction, the research opens the door to a broader analysis of the discourse of nation building and political socialization of children. To answer the questions above, a more in-depth examination would be necessary, including interviews with all the relevant stakeholders, as well as class observations. However, the success of such research would clearly depend on the political conjuncture that, due to its increased fluidity, does not allow for any predictions.

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## VITA

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