

To: UTC and Script Ad Hoc
 From: Debbie Anderson, SEI, UC Berkeley
 RE: Comments on CYRILLIC CHE WITH HOOK's use in Khanty and Tofa (Tofalar) (L2/22-280)
 Date: 29 December 2022

Below is feedback on the proposed CYRILLIC LETTER CHE WITH HOOK in [L2/22-280](#).

1. From Tapani Salminen (Finno-Ugrian language specialist with expertise in Forest Nenets, Northern Khanty and Eastern Khanty, source for L2/12-052 Request for 2 New Cyrillic Characters for the Khanty and Nenets Languages)

CHE WITH HOOK and CHE WITH DESCENDER are *not* contrasted, yet, Nikita M is right when it comes to consistency, as EN WITH HOOK and EN WITH DESCENDER or KA WITH HOOK and KA WITH DESCENDER are not contrasted either. I remember you commenting on this question when it first appeared in our correspondence that the WITH HOOK characters were kept as a legacy from earlier descriptions ... and although their inclusion was later recognized as an error, it was simply not possible to eliminate them in favour of proper WITH DESCENDER characters, as hoped by people using the alphabets in question.

This is perhaps all too familiar to you, but the WITH HOOK characters represent allographs created by the «Просвещение» (“Enlightenment”, later «Дрофа») publishing house, which, however, is responsible for printing the bulk of school books in the relevant languages, hence the *shape* WITH HOOK is the one first encountered by pupils learning to read and write in the said languages. Nevertheless, Жж Кк Лл Нн Чч are to be preferred over the respective “hook” allographs, and search engines in particular should start treating them correctly as variants of the same characters.

I attach an image that we have discussed before [see L2/12-052] to demonstrate that the very same language, Eastern Khanty, is written accurately with descenders in a regular newspaper article, of which there are hundreds, as opposed to “hooks” that only appear in a handful of publications quoted by Nikita M.

Қул көнччө қө

Әй пухәлнә қул
 көнччө ики вәд. Әймәта
 латнә қул көнччө ики
 йәвәны ай рытнат мән.
 Сарнә йәвән йәчәнә
 сорәм мәх. Ванхә йөвәт,
 қоләп қөчәхтәта йәх.
 Қоләп қөв. Ләрпиләтәх,
 ләрпиләтәх, әй латнә
 вәрхә ти йәх. Ар қулнә
 питы. Қуләт рыта пән,
 йәңқәнам мән. Ики
 пухәла йөвәт, утә қил.
 Йәңк қөнәңнә Вәс ики

әләд. Күнчәт қөвәт. Вәс
 икинә пырипи: «Нүң
 қөяхи вөсән?» «Ма аяң
 қө вөсәм. Қәтя, вөв
 йиңалди!» – пырәс
 ньәвмиләд. Аяң қө
 ястәд: «Вәс икия вө-
 вам әнтә йөвәтл. Ма
 пәткахтәдәм, вәр ар
 тәйләм.

«Дүв тьяқа тенә! –
 пытәмтәх Вәс ики. –
 Рытә махәлта кирәх-
 тәдәм». Аяң қө ястәд:

«Қулпәм ләрпитәтахә
 пыхәрта! Вәс ики қо-
 ләп ләрпитәтахә ымәд.
 Аяң қөнә лупнат ухәди
 мәтқәмты. Вәс ики йәң-
 ка көрәх. Йәмат кәчах-
 ди. Атәм турат виқкә-
 тәх. Өс тю пырәс ики
 қынт илмәхтәх панә
 йәқәнам нүрәхтәх.

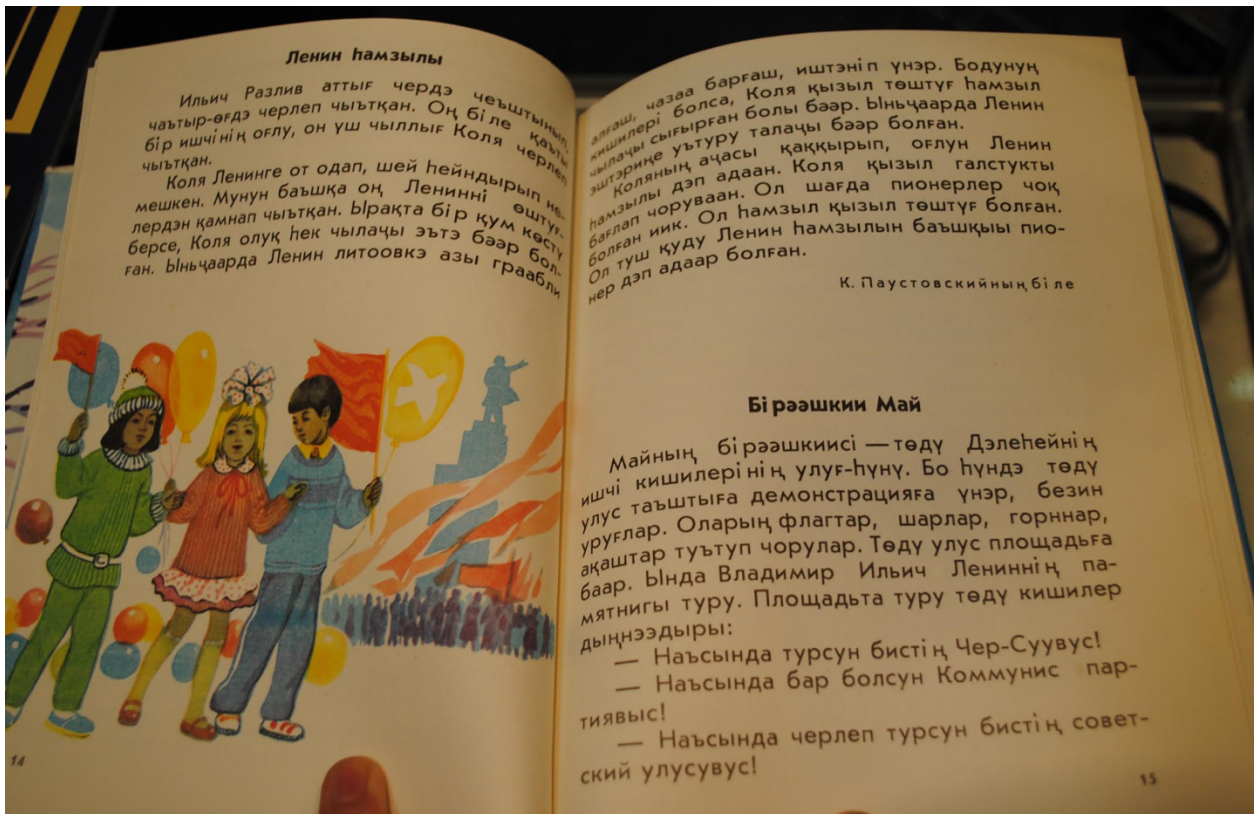
Руслан
 КУРЛОМКИН

Ухәт пухәл

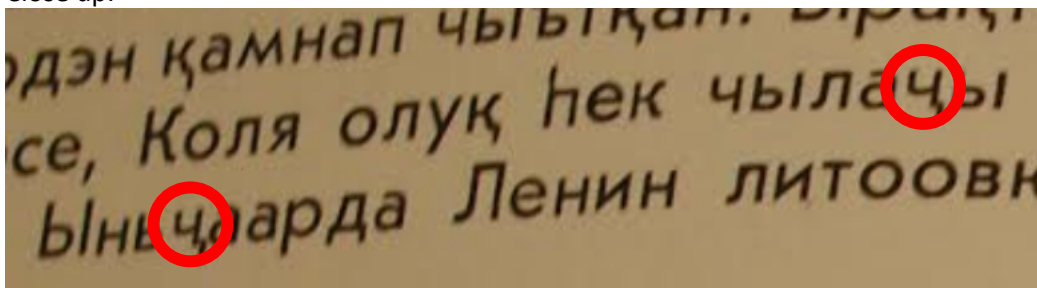
2. From Rustam Yusupov (maintainer of Tofastan.ru)

I don't think there are more than 10 books in Tofalar published by this time, so we don't have much.

Valentin Rassadin, the author of Tofalar alfabet, used CHE WITH HOOK in his publications on phonetics and morphology of Tofalar. But we should consider that those are scientific publications printed before the Tofalar alphabet was officially stated. Even after that, in late 1980s, textbooks in Tofalar were published using the Russian alphabet, and all additional elements for Tofalar letters were added to the layout manually, by hand. I enclose a photo of the book Sylytschyk (A Little Star) in Tofalar, where you can find CHE WITH DESCENDER:



Close up:



Prosveshchenie, the Russian publishing house authorized to print textbooks, is using all the additional Tofalar letters with HOOKS, including CHE, in Tofa-Russian-Tofa dictionary, 2005.

As I assume, Tofastan.ru is the only public resource in the world containing digital texts in Tofalar. I use letters with hooks based on:

1. Rassadin's books
2. Russian-Tofalar-Russian dictionary by Prosveshchenie.
3. Traditional use letters with hooks (but not descenders) for the languages of the Indigenous peoples of the North in Russia. Tofalars are ones of them.

I don't use CHE WITH HOOK only because it's still not in Unicode.

Practically, people in Russia don't make a difference between hooks and descenders. For example, Evenki (another people of the North) can use both Ң or Ҥ for the letter "NG". Technically, the use of Ң is wrong.

As for Tofalar, there is still no standard – the language is not in actual everyday use now, they just try to revive the language in schools. I'll try to contact people in Tofalaria directly to ask if they consider CHE WITH HOOK and CHE WITH DESCENDER as the same or different letters. If I get an answer, I'll pass this information on to you.

Addendum to above:

I've received an answer from Arzhana Surun specializing in Tofalar: "In fact, they use letters with descenders, not with hooks. Letters with hooks are considered as graphical variants of the ones with descender."

3. From Tapani Salminen (follow-up to comments above from Rustam Yusupov)

The English name of the language is Tofa, not "Tofalar".

In fact, Mr. Yusupov and I completely agree with the origin and function of CHE WITH HOOK and other characters WITH HOOK: they were created as (visually more distinct or pleasing?) allographs of the corresponding characters WITH DESCENDER by the publishing house «Просвещение» ("Enlightenment", later «Дрофа»). When Mr. Yusupov refers to the publications of the late great professor Rassadin in this context, he actually refers to works published by the said publishing house, or works citing or imitating them.

Mr. Yusupov is correct in claiming consistency, as there are several other character pairs in the Unicode standard WITH HOOK vs WITH DESCENDER. At the same time, he does not claim that there should be a contrast between WITH HOOK and WITH DESCENDER characters, so the immediate solution for him and everyone else is to drop WITH HOOK characters altogether and continue or start using WITH DESCENDER characters in their stead.

At this point, I can only reiterate my original conclusion that there has never been a contrast between WITH HOOK and WITH DESCENDER characters, the WITH DESCENDER characters being both older and more widely used, while the WITH HOOK characters are limited to publications by a single publisher, which, admittedly, has been a major influence on the creation of books in many languages, including Tofa.

I was very pleased to read the following comment:

- > I've received an answer from Arzhana Surun
- > specializing in Tofalar: "In fact, they use letters with
- > descenders, not with hooks. Letters with hooks are
- > considered as graphical variants of the ones
- > with descender."

Apart from the fact that the English name for the language is Tofa, this is an exact paraphrase of what I have said earlier. The "graphical variants" by Arzhana Surun are obviously equivalent to what I have previously called "allographs".

An addendum to my [note above]: when Mr. Yusupov wrote that

- > Practically, people in Russia don't make a difference
- > between hooks and descenders. For
- > example, Evenki (another people of the North) can
- > use both Һ or ӧ for the letter "NG".

he echoed the sentiment of mine and others. But when he added that

- > Technically, the use of Һ is wrong.

he was simply mistaken, or rather misled: the use of Һ is right for Evenki, Tofa, Tundra Nenets, and every language in question.