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Tatar Teaching and Learning Resources in Finland

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Abstract

Tatar-language education has been organised by the Tatar communities in Finland for more than a century. This traditional minority, today comprising less than a thousand members, was already literate and valued education on arriving in Finland in the second half of the nineteenth century. With very little official support, they have continued to transmit their language, culture, and religion through original and adapted teaching and learning resources (TLRs) for more than six generations. The TLRs target mainly children and young people of kindergarten and school age, but many publications and activities are aimed at all age groups. This overview approaches the production of Tatar TLRs in Finland from cultural, multilingual, and social points of view, discussing less-common aspects in minority research such as the role of women, the significance of traditions, religion and community organisation, attitudes to adaptation and education, as well as the impact of the political and economic situation, multilingualism, and multiculturalism on a minority with a high number of polyglots and transnational connections. The qualitative case study is interdisciplinary, based on a literature review and several decades of participatory observation, interviews, and informal discussions; it uses source pluralism and memory studies to discuss the developments and the cultural and social aspects of TLR production and application of TLRs in language and culture preservation.

Keywords: Finland; multilingual learners; Tatar; traditions; women

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In Finland, Tatars have educated children, young people, and adults in their language, culture, traditions, and religion for more than a century. The majority of teaching and learning resources (TLRs) used in Tatar-language education has been produced locally, but the materials also reflect impulses and inspiration from multiple sources both in Finland and abroad. The Tatars in Finland are a little-known minority who began forming during the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, they comprise fewer than a thousand speakers (for a historical overview, see Halén & Martikainen, 2016). Although the minority is small, the language is not seen as endangered: it is being continuously transmitted over generations, and the quantity of publications, events, and other activities in which the language is used are impressive when compared with the size of the minority. Over 300 published original and translated works have been identified (Halén, 1979, 1996; Belyaev, 2017, pp. 227–237; Stahlberg, 2025), of which a substantial amount is specially designed or functions as TLRs; the quantity of unpublished works distributed among community members or employed in education is impossible to count.

Publications and teachers from abroad have received much attention both within the Tatar communities and in research, but local educators – mainly women whose total teaching years and TLR production far exceed those of the invited teachers – have mostly been forgotten or ignored. Many of the unpublished materials are the creative products of these dedicated persons. Documenting and analysing the development of locally produced TLRs – and especially women’s contributions – are one of the objectives of this study. Other objectives are to discuss less-common and often understudied topics in minority research, such as the role and significance of traditions, religion, the role of community organisations, as well as attitudes to education, adaptation and integration, how the political, social and economic situation of the minority influences TLR production, and the impact of multilingualism and multiculturalism on a minority who possesses a large number of polyglots and transnational connections. The presentation is limited to Finland and the Finland Tatar language; a broader discussion about Tatar language TLRs produced in Tatarstan or the global diaspora, or in other Tatar languages, is beyond the scope of this contribution.

This article is based on original research detailed in a book, *Tatar Education in Finland* (Stahlberg, 2025). Previous research specifically about Tatar TLRs in Finland is scarce. Tatar education and publishing activities have been mentioned briefly in several publications, and publishing activities have been mapped out by Halén (1979; 1996) and Bedretdin (2011; 2021a; 2021b), yet without specific attention to TLRs. Belyaev (2017) discusses TLRs within the broader context of language and traditions preservation, and the Turkish connections are presented by Küçük & Yılmaz (2024). Until recently, scholars have been mostly interested in the Tatars as a well-integrated Muslim minority (discussion in Ståhlberg & Cwiklinski, 2020; see also Halén & Martikainen, 2016; Leitzinger, 2006). The role of women has been explored by Mahmutova (2005), Bedretdin & Stahlberg (2021), and extensively by Stahlberg (2022).

The sources used here are published and unpublished works, archive materials (private and public), participatory observation, structured and unstructured interviews in

person, recordings, e-mails, digital materials, and chiefly informal talks with Tatars from below school age to seniors, both in Finland and globally. Working with a tiny minority like the Tatars in Finland confronts the researcher with complex questions about the protection of informants. Because all of them are interconnected through family, friendships, and other close relationships, informants opt out of talking if their names are published, and they require everything to be heavily anonymised so that nothing can be traced back to them. The minority chose invisibility already in the 1930s, and has kept a low profile for so long that still today almost no one agrees even to mentions of age, gender, or location (Stahlberg, 2022, pp. 14–16). The oppressive political situation of the Tatars in Russia, with whom the Tatars in Finland are in regular contact, is also not conducive to openness. The only informant who has accepted to be mentioned by name is the retired teacher Fazile Nasretidin, who has answered many questions and kindly provided unpublished presentations, materials, and photographs from her archive. As one of my multiple family backgrounds is with the Tatar minority, my insider knowledge about the strong measures Tatars have taken to protect themselves for almost a century is reason enough to respect their wish for anonymity. Originally this protection grew out of fear of the brutal regime in the Soviet Union (many relatives remained behind the Iron Curtain), but it developed further in Finland for self-preservation as a minority in a society which only in recent decades is becoming increasingly multicultural. Therefore, I choose safety before science, generalising and collectivising informant opinions and thoughts instead of following common academic practice. In minority research, it is of utmost importance to assess risks and perceived security and not to betray the trust of informants. Further, as I have collected materials for practically my whole life (mostly piecemeal in informal talks), dates cannot no longer be retrieved. Another serious challenge when doing research is that the minority has created a positive image about itself; thus, in formal interviews, much information remains hidden behind success stories. Only after building up relations over many years can difficult topics and experiences be discussed; in this case, my family background provides a shortcut.

This study is qualitative and interdisciplinary, and employs memory studies methods for assessing memories and perceived realities of the past. The *source pluralism* method (Myrdal, 2012) has been applied, utilising a broad range of sources and fragmentary information, academic, oral, literary, and informal. A “balanced interpretation” (Myrdal, 2012, p. 165) is attempted; yet if the road remains bumpy, it is because there are still many holes to fill and the production of TLRs among Tatars is not smooth and regular. Women’s work is a “classic field” in source pluralism (Myrdal, 2012, p. 173). Especially in the field of TLRs in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs), browsing research literature shows that female input is hardly ever mentioned, if at all. In economic and social terms, the Tatars could be seen as a middleman minority (Bonacich, 1973), as they came as thrifty traders and occupied an intermediate position in Finland. In contrast to several others, however, they see themselves as an integral part of society sharing its values and attitudes, but possessing an additional dimension of Tatariness. Their awareness of being a minority is not exclusive: the Tatars like to say that they are both Tatars and Finns. A linguistic and literary analysis of the Tatar TLRs must

be carried out elsewhere for space reasons, but I would argue for the fact that all Tatar TLRs are multilingual because their speakers and writers are multilingual (see Stahlberg, 2025): all over the world, Tatars are at least bilingual and they are often polyglots. As Dembeck (2017) explains, there are no monolingual texts, although literary works (and in our case, TLRs) on the surface may appear monolingual.

The term “Tatars” is confusing, as it is employed for various groups and historically also for the Mongols. The Tatars in Finland are western Mishär Tatars of the Volga Tatar group. Volga, Crimean, Siberian, and several smaller Tatar minorities are separate groups. The Mishär language belongs to the Volga-Ural subgroup of the northwestern (Kipchak) group of Turkic languages. Mishär is common among the Tatars in the multilingual and multicultural region south of the Volga River between Nizhny Novgorod and Kazan (the capital of Tatarstan). Mishär is supposed to be a dialect of Kazan Tatar, because Kazan Tatar is considered to be the Volga Tatar language norm and the main literary language, and it enjoys high prestige among Tatars globally. Mishär, however, differs in pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure, and contains strong influences from neighbouring Finno-Ugric languages such as Mordvinian and Mari (Eleusin, 2020; Berta, 2022). Modern Finland Tatar has been strongly influenced by Finnish both in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation (Ståhlberg, 2023; Nisametdin, 2011; Halén, 1991).

The situation of the Volga Tatar languages is complex: in Tatarstan, officially an autonomous republic in Russia but with limited freedom, Tatars comprise just over half of the population; everywhere else in Russia and in the vast global diaspora, Tatars live scattered in minority situations. Tatars do not have an internationally recognised state; any guidelines for language and script, or safeguarding the use of the Tatar languages, is in the hands of the speakers and a handful of institutions in Tatarstan who use Kazan Tatar. For political reasons, support for education in Tatar and the teaching of the language have been drastically reduced in Tatarstan (Radio Free Europe, 2017). It should not come as a surprise that Mishär has scarcely any institutional support; only in Finland do the Tatar organisations issue recommendations for spelling and language use of the Finland Tatar variation of Mishär. In the Volga region, Mishärs hold on to their language while using also Kazan Tatar and Russian in parallel (Moskvitcheva et al., 2023). The Tatar language is multiscriptual, with Arabic script in use in Finland until the 1960s; after that, with various spellings in the Latin script (see Ståhlberg, 2023; Daher, 1999). The Cyrillic script was imposed on the minorities in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and again, more recently, in Russia. The question of scripts is closely intertwined with the development of Tatar TLRs in Finland: materials have not only been updated because of modernisation of topics or language use, but also because of script reforms.

‘Tatar’ signifies here the minority and is also shorthand for the ‘Tatar language’; the context defines the meaning. The Tatar communities in Finland should not be viewed as a single ethnic, cultural, or linguistic entity, although many and close connections exist. Inner dynamics and historical developments vary among the communities in different towns in Finland, and these communities are not monolithic: Turks and other Turkic-language speakers (usually

from Central Asia or the Caucasus) and Muslims with other linguistic backgrounds have been part of the Tatar communities even before the official organisations were established. Since the 1990s, recent migrants of various origins join in prayers, events, and celebrations. For TLR production, it is also essential to consider the role of global networks and connections with other Tatar, Turkic, and Muslim groups, and states with interests in the Tatars in Finland. In the following, a historical and contextual overview of Tatar education is provided before presenting TLRs produced in Finland and discussing them.

Tatar Education in Finland

Tatars value education and literacy highly. Education in the Volga region possesses at least a millennium of history: the Turkic-speaking Volga Bulgars, who are considered ancestors of the Volga Tatars, converted to Islam at the beginning of the tenth century, necessitating the establishment of religious education. After the fall of the Kazan khanate to Russia in 1552, Tatars were heavily oppressed, but in the seventeenth century Tatar language, religion, and education surfaced again. Tatar boys acquired education in village schools and higher learning in Kazan and in Central Asia, and girls from well-to-do families were taught by young unmarried women at home. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the reformist Jadidist movement advocated a modern secular education and schools for girls as well (Stahlberg, 2022, p. 8).

From the 1860s, Mishär Tatar traders from villages near Sergach, in Nizhny Novgorod province in European Russia, increasingly explored the markets in the capital Saint Petersburg and the nearby autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland (part of Russia 1809–1917). A few decades later, so many families were established in Finland that Tatar-language education for children became necessary. At least since the 1910s, the communities arranged informal and formal education at multiple locations. The Tatars are today considered a traditional and historical minority in Finland. Fewer than a thousand speakers live mainly in urban areas, with larger groups in Helsinki, Järvenpää, Tampere, and Turku, and smaller ones in Kotka, Lahti, Oulu, Kemi, and other towns (Halén & Martikainen, 2016; Belyaev, 2017, pp. 77–99). Before 1917, the Tatars moved within the same country, the Russian Empire, and could continue to live within their own cultural sphere. Family, relatives, friends, and neighbours were just a railway trip away, and many Tatars travelled regularly back and forth between Finland and their home villages. They were well-equipped with strategies for preserving their language, religion, and culture in a minority setting and a multilingual and multicultural area. These western Tatars shared a linguistic, literary, and cultural sphere with Kazan (around 300 km northeast from their home villages) and other Tatar- and Turkic-speakers in Europe, Central Asia, Caucasus, Qing China, and the Ottoman Empire, and their religion brought them into contact with other Muslims throughout the world. The first generations remained strangers in Finland and experienced some hostility as foreigners; in their own view, home was still in the villages (Stahlberg, 2022, p. 6; Elmgren, 2020; Fazile Nasretudin).

In the village of Yangapar (also called Aktuk), from where the majority of Mishär Tatars moved to Finland, a boys' school was taught by the mullah, and around 1910 a girls'

school was established; most villagers were literate by 1900. They often visited other villages for educational celebrations where pupils performed and presented what they had learned at school; this tradition was also brought to Finland. Those few who, for whatever reason had received only some education (more frequently, women), taught themselves to read Tatar-language newspapers and magazines, and asked their children and grandchildren for help in writing letters (Fazile Nasretidin; Stahlberg, 2022, pp. 30–36, p. 121). Although many Mishär Tatar traders learned Swedish and Finnish in addition to speaking and reading Russian (several also knew Persian and/or Arabic), they did not send their children to schools in Finland before the 1920s. Instead, they invited an imam to care for their religious needs, to keep records of the growing communities, and to teach their children. The Helsingfors (Helsinki) Islamic School was arranged by *Gelsingfors cämiyät hayriyâ islamiyâse r.y. / Helsingin musulmaanien hyvääntekeväisyysseura* [Beneficial Society of Helsinki Muslims], founded in 1915. The earliest teachers in Finland were imams from the Volga region; the longest-serving imam was Weli-Ahmed Hakim (1882–1970), active in Helsinki and Tampere between 1914 and 1962 (Halén & Martikainen 2016, p. 87; Belyaev, pp. 166–169). He taught reading, writing, and religion and also secular topics based on books published in Kazan. Success was rewarded with a beautiful golden certificate (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1. Certificate printed in Kazan for the first grade, dated 1 May 1917, issued to Hamsä Kanykoff. The topics he studied were: reading in Turkish [Tatar], calligraphy, spelling, arithmetic and ethics. Kanykoff family archive. Photo: © Sabira Ståhlberg 2024.

In the mid-1920s, connections between Tatars abroad and their families, relatives, friends, and trade partners in the Soviet Union were cut, and the common linguistic and cultural sphere was destroyed (Bekkin, 2020). Preserving the linguistic-cultural heritage and memories of their lost homes became the main goal for all Tatars in exile. Cooperation between Tatars in Finland, Estonia and Latvia intensified; communities on both sides of the Gulf of Finland arranged visits, courses, and camps for children and youth until the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states in 1939. In consequence, for political, demographic, and organisational reasons, as the largest and most well-organised group outside the Soviet Union, the Tatars in Finland became the most active educators, publishers, and preservers of Tatar language and culture in the northern Baltic Sea region. Connections were not completely broken, however: before the 1920s and increasingly again after 1991, textbooks were imported from Kazan, yet well into the 1940s and again after the 1960s, books from Kazan (since 1920 the capital of the autonomous Soviet republic of Tatarstan) still found their way to Finland, often illegally in individuals' luggage. Older books published in Finland followed the Kazan style (Galiullina & Salnikova, 2012; Salnikova & Galiullina, 2014; 2020), and the newest books published after 1991 are often adapted from Kazan Tatar. In the 1930s, grammars and other books were imported from Tatar publishers in Japan and Korea. After the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923, the focus shifted there: teachers and imams were invited and Turkish textbooks were translated and adapted into Tatar. The new republic continued and intensified the connections it had inherited from the Ottoman Empire, and thousands of Turkic-speakers from Eurasia migrated there, and also many Tatars found refuge in Turkey. The Tatar and Turkish languages and their secular approach to religion are relatively similar, yet Turkish textbooks had to be translated and adapted when used for educational purposes (for further discussion about adaptation, see Stahlberg, 2025). The new political situation caused an identity crisis in the late 1920s in Finland: the first generation of Mishär Tatars called themselves Muslims but, influenced by Turkey, some began calling themselves Turks or Northern Turks in order to distance themselves from the Soviet Union, and pressured others to do the same. Until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Tatars in Finland commonly called themselves Turks. This caused several Tatars to distance themselves from the communities, or to participate but continue to call themselves Tatars, Mishärs or Muslims (Halén & Martikainen, 2016, pp. 99–100; Stahlberg, 2022, p. 37).

The Tatars in Finland also began looking for Tatar intellectuals and teachers in exile in Germany, Poland, and other countries: teachers and imams had been invited from outside Finland at least since the end of the 1910s (Belyaev, 2017, pp. 165–180). After 1917, many Tatar intellectuals from Kazan and other cities in Russia fled through Finland; several lived and taught there for some time (Halén & Martikainen, 2016, p. 96; Belyaev, 2017, pp. 117–132), and a few immigrated to Finland for good, for example Turkestan-born Gibadulla Murtasin (1895–1968) (Baibulat, 2004, pp. 74–77). Intellectuals like Musa Bigi (Bigiev, 1870 (or 1875)–1949) played especially important roles as teachers, encouraging the Finnish Tatars to learn the language and ways of their new homeland but to keep their own language and heritage

(Zaripov & Belyaev, 2020). The Finnish Islamic Congregation in Helsinki was established in 1925 (*Finlandiye Cemaat İslamiyesi / Suomen muhamettilainen seurakunta*; from 1963 *Finlandiya İslam Cemaati / Suomen Islam-seurakunta*). Other organisations appeared in the 1930s and 1940s: *Turku Türk Tatar Birliği / Turun Turkkilais-Tataarilainen Yhdistys* [Turku Turkish-Tatar Society] was established in 1938 (between 1951 and 1955 it was called *Turku Türk Birliği / Turun Turkkilaisyhdistys* [Turku Turkish Society]); now it is part of the Helsinki congregation. *Tampere İslam Mahallesi / Tampereen Islamilainen seurakunta* [Tampere Islamic Congregation] was founded in 1942 (from 2019 *Tampere Tatar Cämiyäte / Tampereen tataariseurakunta* [Tampere Tatar Congregation]). A cultural association, *Finlandiya Türkleri Birliği ry. / Suomen turkkilaisten seura* [Society of Finnish Turks] or “FTB”, was established in 1935 in Helsinki. These organisations have done extensive work on preserving and transmitting the language, culture, religion, and traditions, as well as publishing books and educational materials (Figure 2).

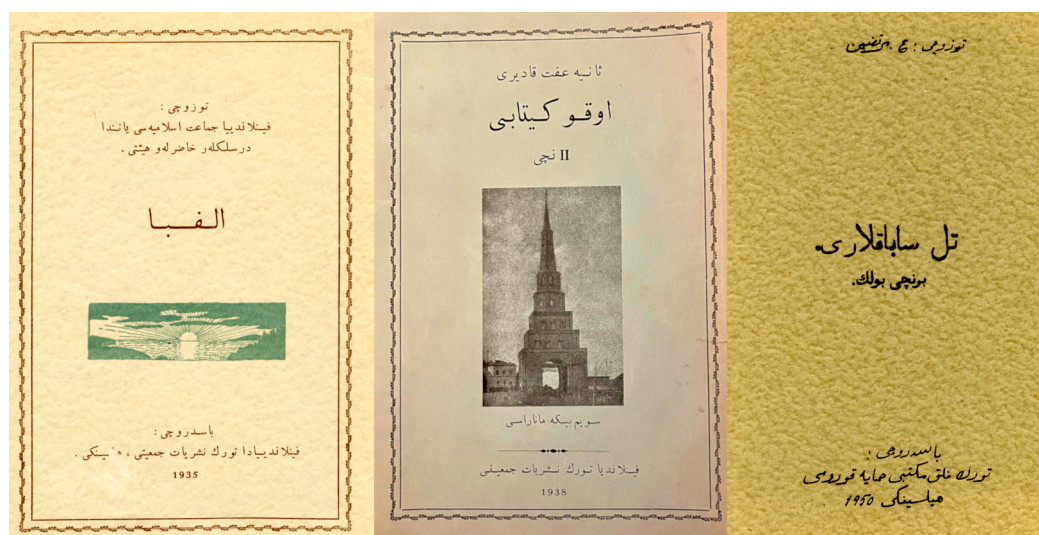


Figure 2. Early Tatar educational publications in Finland, from left: ABC-book (1935) and reader (1938) published by the Finnish Islamic Congregation in Finland, and language lessons (1950) published by the support association for the Turkish public school. Photo: © Fazile Nasretudin 2024.

Tatar male teachers travelled extensively among the diaspora groups in Europe and Asia, teaching courses on language, literature, religion, and other topics, staying for many weeks or months in cities and smaller towns. Many of them wrote, adapted and translated materials for educational purposes. The Tatar kindergarten in Helsinki, on the other hand, has been the exclusive responsibility of female teachers ever since its beginnings in the 1920s. Women have also taught children of school age since the 1930s at least. The work of local female teachers and camp supervisors has gone mostly unnoticed: for most of the century, they have produced abundant (mostly unpublished) TLRs, arranged programmes (music and songs, recitations, poetry, etc.) for celebrations and children’s festivals, and participated in all kinds of activities, events, schools, courses, and camps, and taught and transmitted cooking and other traditional skills. Few, if any of the women teachers, have had professional teacher education. As with all Tatar women in Finland, they have been

highly educated: for example, Fazile Nasretdin had a successful career as a speech therapist before taking up teaching the Tatar language. Interest in education and children, a sense of responsibility for transmitting language and culture, and enjoying working with the young have been – and are still – motives for Tatar women to join in the teaching and organising activities. No systematic recruitment occurs; new teachers among local women are brought in by other women who are teaching or have taught.

From the 1920s onwards, young Tatars increasingly studied at Finnish public schools. Until the 1950s, the percentage of young Tatars who finished gymnasium (secondary school) was actually slightly higher than among the majority Finns (Leitzinger, 2006, p. 252). A project for establishing a Tatar-language public school in 1930 was initiated but failed; the next effort, in 1948, by *Türk Halk Mektebi Himaye Korumu / Turkkilaisen kansakoulun kannatusyhdistys r.y.* [Turkish Public School Support Society] was successful. A bilingual Tatar-Finnish public school, *Türk Halık Mektebi / Turkkilainen kansakoulu* [Turkish Public School] was established in Helsinki (**Figure 3**). Dozens of Tatar children studied there under the guidance of Gibadulla Murtasin and a professional Finnish teacher, Kristiina Kandelin. In the last few years of the school, a few Turkish teachers were invited (see Belyaev, 2017, pp. 182–187; Küçük & Yılmaz, 2024). This was the only time that Tatar education has received institutional support in Finland: the school received legal status and funding from Helsinki municipality in the 1950s. The curriculum met the criteria of a Finnish public school and the pupils could therefore continue their studies at high schools and universities. In the 1960s, the Arabic script was substituted by the Latin script, causing some protests especially among elderly Tatars. Using the Latin script, however, increased Tatar-language literacy. With the introduction of more phonetic renderings, a tangible improvement in reading and writing skills could be observed according to informants who went to the school. In 1969, the public school closed due to a lack of pupils (Halén & Martikainen, 2016, p. 98; Fazile Nasretdin). With further reforms, the Tatar Latin script in Finland has become increasingly phonetic; it also differs from other Tatar Latin scripts in use (Daher, 1999; Ståhlberg, 2023; 2025).



Figure 3. The Turkish school in Helsinki celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1958. On the cover of the jubilee publication, photos show children performing and an interested audience. Photo: © Fazile Nasretudin 2024.

Since the 1970s, Tatar language and Islam have been taught to children and young people at evening or weekend classes and special courses, and at summer and winter camps. A Tatar school with language and religious teaching is offered now only a few hours per week on Saturdays in Helsinki. Until the 2000s, teaching and educational events were arranged in several locations in Finland far more often, usually on a weekly basis, and for some periods even daily if a guest teacher was visiting. Nowadays, younger members come together occasionally for celebrations, lectures, or events. Pensioners gather at the “Nitro Club” every month, and daily prayers are arranged during Ramadan (fasting month); otherwise, prayers take place on Fridays. Educational evening events are arranged two or three times per semester; teachers, activists, children, and parents prepare the programme together with poetry recitals, singing, and other contributions. Digital materials (DVDs, CDs, online) and story books are available nowadays. A baby box, inspired by the Finnish “maternity box”, is presented to new parents: it includes books, music, games, and other useful objects to help parents teach Tatar language and culture (Bedretdin & Ståhlberg, 2021; Belyaev, 2017, pp. 239–243). Tatar-language activities continue to be organised by the congregations and FTB, and also by the football, hockey, and bandy team *Altın Orda* [Golden Horde] (est. 1933 in Terijoki) and the sports club *Yolduz* [Star] (est. 1945), whose regular bulletin *Yolduz haberleri* [Yolduz news] remains a popular reading among all ages. Sports events and camps gather dozens of participants of various ages.

Music, drama, and other performances are seen as important resources and tools to transmit language and traditions: children and youth are taught to perform songs and poetry recitals before an audience from an early age. The cultural association FTB especially has been crucial for socialisation into the Tatar dimension, and for oral and written language and culture transmission; much of Tatar transmission is oral. Choirs and theatre groups have performed in Tatar at least since 1930, and rock bands have been established since 1968 (Stahlberg 2025).

In the 1960s, during a political thaw, limited contacts with Kazan became possible, but Tatar imams and teachers from Russia replaced Turkish ones only after 1991. Before that, any materials for teaching, textbooks, and story books published in Kazan arrived in Finland with individual Tatar tourists and traders who visited the Soviet Union. Today, the Tatar language in Finland is chiefly used in family and community situations, in communication with Tatars and Turkic-speakers from other countries, and for reading news and materials on the internet. Knowledge of the language is a prerequisite for socialisation and participation in the community. Besides at home, language skills are developed also at the community level through the Saturday school (not compulsory), courses and activities, camps, and regular celebrations and events. Traditionally children and young people are the main target groups for educational resources, but publications, activities and courses for adults should also be seen as crucial elements in lifelong learning processes about Tatar language, culture, and “being Tatar” (Stahlberg, 2022, p. 7). Photocopies (Xerox) and somewhat later computers and printers facilitated the production of unpublished materials. Locally-produced photocopied materials have been widely distributed since the 1980s (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4. Photocopied kindergarten materials from the 1980s. Photo: © Fazile Nasrettdin 2024.

Besides community-organised activities, two independent groups appeared in the 2000s. *Yabalak* [Owl] has issued books, CDs, DVDs, and an online dictionary. *Aybagar* [Sunflower] (est. 2018) has published the world’s first Tatar-language Easy-to-read books and the first haiku collection (Nasrettdin, 2022; Stahlberg & Nasrettdin, 2021), Finland Tatar language documentation, teaching materials, and linguistic and cultural heritage through food

recipes, poetry, stories, etc. *Aybagar* utilises the possibilities of online Open Access publishing, providing electronic materials in both Latin and Cyrillic script with English translations, honouring also the Arabic script heritage of the Tatar language in illustrations. In addition to being taught as a heritage language within the minority, Tatar has been taught as a foreign language on the academic level at the University of Helsinki by Ymär Daher (from 1963 to 1991) and in the 1990s and 2000s by Okan Daher and Kadriye Bedretdin; Tatar courses were offered as optional in the framework of Central Asian studies. The University of Turku has prepared an online and printed dictionary in collaboration with community member and previous president of the congregation, Okan Daher (Moisio et al., n.d.) but, as it is a translation from Kazan Tatar, it has found few users among Tatars in Finland.

Tatar TLRs in Finland

Tatars have written and published a large amount of literature and TLRs in Finland during the past century. In Harry Halén's (1979; 1996) overviews about their publishing activities, the main categories were identified as history, memoirs, (auto)biographies, stories, poetry, drama, proverbs, songs, religious literature, teaching and enlightenment materials, and children's books and magazines. In this section, I will give an overview of the TLRs, trends and developments, and main actors involved in TLR production.

Tatar TLRs are mainly targeted at the young; this is not surprising considering that language, religious, and cultural learning is seen as essential for the next generation and crucial for the survival of the minority. Educational and didactic materials comprise traditionally printed schoolbooks for formal education, often written or adapted by invited teachers, as well as unpublished teaching and supplementary materials produced by local female teachers. Children's pages for home education have appeared regularly in the Helsinki-based magazine *Mähallä Habärläre* [Community News, 1949–1970, rekindled in 2012]. Other language-supporting resources and extra readings, in addition to specially-designated teaching materials, include folk tales, songs, proverbs, and poetry, among others. Teenagers are encouraged to acquaint themselves with religious literature, too. Children and young people learn songs and poems by heart and often present drama at community events; drama, especially, has been an efficient and popular way to transmit language on a higher level than everyday speech for all age groups. The topic of drama among the Tatars in Finland requires a separate study; it is important to note here that several Tatar authors in Finland have written plays, and theatre performances both by groups from Finland and invited from Kazan and Ufa (Bashkortostan) have been frequent since the 1960s (Stahlberg, 2025).

Publications for adults, printed or photocopied with the aim to preserve language, culture, and memory, are mainly books, brochures, and magazines. Although they are mostly not defined as such, literary publications, lectures by visiting speakers, and cultural events function as sources for adult self-education and the improvement of language and cultural competences. In recent decades, digitalisation has entered Tatar publishing activities with CDs, DVDs, social media, and internet materials. The majority of the publications printed

in Finland are available at the National Library in Helsinki, in the office of the Helsinki congregation, and/or in home libraries. Older materials are mainly accessible in private collections, but several can also be found in the National Library.

The most active long-term producers and publishers of Tatar TLRs fall historically into three categories: community-driven initiatives by congregations and organisations, and somewhat less frequently, by individuals and temporary work groups. The majority of Tatar publications in Finland have been produced and financed by the organisations, and the Finnish Islamic Congregation in Helsinki is by far the most active publisher. School initiative associations, the FTB cultural society, and the Tampere congregation have also published several works. All publications by the organisations were – and are usually – circulated for free to members, until recently practically all Tatar speakers in Finland. Some authors mention donations from sponsors, mostly other community members and wealthy company owners; Tatar business owners can traditionally be counted upon to support publishing projects. Various educational activities and events, the school, camps, courses, and other formats are funded by parents and members, and salaries for invited teachers and imams are paid by the congregations. Work groups are commonly formed by community members for specific projects and often disband after completion. Official institutions or commercial publishers in Finland have not participated in the publishing of Tatar-language educational materials; only in the 2000s did the independent groups *Yabalak* and *Aybagar* receive funding from Finnish or Finland-Swedish foundations, and for several years they have continued to work with various projects, functioning more like miniature organisations. *Aybagar* also includes non-members and non-Tatars (Stahlberg, 2025).

Among individuals, the two most productive writers and publishers were Hasan Hamidulla (1900–1988) and his cousin Sadri Hamid (1905–1987). Their goal was to enlighten Tatars about their heritage and to support the preservation of language and culture while keeping up to date with Finnish and world events. Hamidulla published, among others, a history of the home village Yangapar, and wrote extensively about his own life and religious topics, poetry, proverbs, folk songs, drama, detective and historical novels, and a Jules Verne-inspired book for teenagers about outer space. Sadri Hamid collected Tatar proverbs, words, and phrases, presenting his thoughts mostly in poetic form. In protest against the Latin script reform in the 1960s, he published a series of pamphlets about the beauty of the Arabic script. Hamid also wrote and edited two magazines in Arabic script in Oulu and Helsinki, *Tavış* [Voice] in 1967 (six issues) and *Ak yul* [White Road] 1967–1977 (63 issues) with news, facts, fiction, poetry, proverbs, history, memories, and original drawings. Publications were distributed to subscribers by the writers-publishers themselves; circulation was facilitated by a phone and address book Hamidulla published (Bedretdin, 2021a). Earlier publications were always printed (Hamidulla had his own press) or photocopied. Today, digital materials are increasingly used and, for example, Easy-to-read books in Latin and Cyrillic scripts are available both as printed books and Open Access online materials (Stahlberg, 2020–2022; Stahlberg & Nasretidin, 2021).

Academic publications and research could be identified as a further category, but scholar-produced materials are not used as TLRs in education and gain little interest among adults. One reason is the language: research on Tatars in Finland is mostly done in Finnish, English, Kazan Tatar in Cyrillic script, Russian, or Turkish. Finnish and English reach their readers, but only some individuals are able to understand the other languages and the Cyrillic script. Another serious issue is the gap between academic scholarship and the perceived reality: those who are interested in research and follow scholarly work often comment in informal talks about multiple errors and the lack of understanding among scholars about Tatars in general and Tatars in Finland especially (Stahlberg, 2025).

The Tatar TLRs produced in Finland have been thematically categorised below to facilitate the overview of the characters, developments, fashions, and perceived needs of the minority for educational and didactic materials. As space is limited, for full lists and details about individual publications, the reader is referred to my work *Tatar Education in Finland* (Stahlberg, 2025). Published materials form the bulk; much unpublished material (such as teacher reports and diaries) is not accessible or lost. Teacher manuals and pedagogical literature and topics are absent among the materials. This situation can have several explanations: as multilinguals, teachers could learn and gain information from non-Tatar sources and did not see the need for publishing or transmitting pedagogical knowledge in written Tatar. Invited teachers from abroad often have pedagogical training, but the majority of the local teachers have little or no special education and are mostly self-taught, learning by doing and finding inspiration both from inside and outside the community (Stahlberg, 2025; Fazile Nasretudin).

Language

The largest Tatar TLR categories by far are language and religious education. Knowledge of the language is at the core of Tatar identity in Finland; only in recent years has this started to change. Until the 1930s, Kazan-produced books were used for teaching, and they served as models for publications prepared in Finland: an ABC-book and two readers, outwardly modest books (more like brochures) in Arabic script, were published by the Finnish Islamic Congregation in Helsinki in 1935 and 1938. These were followed by Gibadulla Murtasin's language lessons in 1950, prepared especially for the school in Helsinki. A reprint of the work *Mäktäptä milli ädäbiyät däresläre* [National literature lessons at school] by the Tatar national poet Abdulla Tukay (1886–1913) was issued in 1953 by the Turkish Public School Support Society. Invited teacher Feride Biçuri's translations from Turkish textbooks appeared in Latin script in 1969–1970. The bilingual public school had closed by this time and new teaching materials were needed after the script reform. Another invited teacher, Korean-born Naile Binark (1940–2023), published three language-learning books with various Latin script spellings.

A long break followed, characterised by a growth in unpublished materials. Photocopying became common in Finland in the 1970s and 1980s and caused a revolution: it enabled teachers to quickly produce or adapt new materials (no need to wait for slow

editors and publishers); to prepare interesting materials (piecing together elements, adding pictures from newspapers or magazines, etc.), and to easily copy and distribute materials to students. Local women used their creativity and imagination to prepare TLRs adjusted to the needs of their pupils, and several illustrated the materials themselves or asked someone from the community to prepare drawings and embellishments in order to make the visual aspect more attractive for learners. Among the most productive are Hamide Çaydam, who taught at the school in Helsinki between 1974–1984 and 1991–2015, and Fazile Nasretdin who taught in Helsinki from 1985–1991 and in Järvenpää from 2006–2011. Many of the self-produced materials cannot be recovered, but the preserved TLRs clearly differ from previous textbooks and exercises in visual aspect and contents. They reflect a highly flexible way of teaching, and also mirror the specific linguistic and cultural challenges faced by pupils as perceived by the teachers.

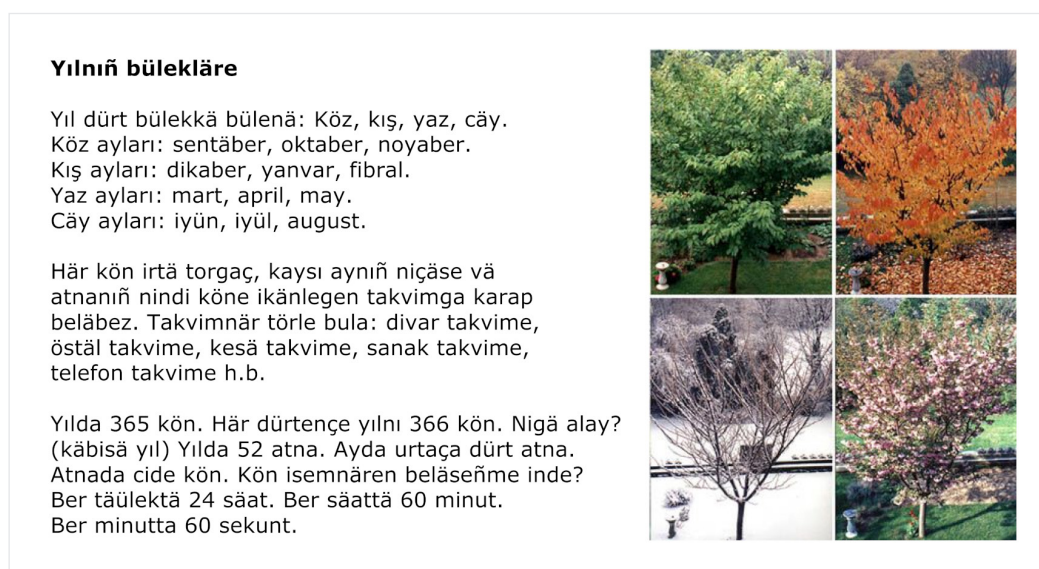


Figure 5. Unpublished exercises on seasons and time by Fazile Nasretdin. Photo: © Fazile Nasretdin 2024.

Folk and fairy tales, poetry, proverbs, rhymes, stories, songs, and other extra materials are seen as valuable language-supporting resources and have a constant presence in language teaching, kindergarten activities, and events. Topics in these materials vary from folklore and traditions to developing knowledge and social skills. Extra readings, proverbs, and stories were published and self-published in the 1970s and 1980s by activists including Fazile Nasretdin, Ferah Alautdin, and Derya Samaletdin. In the 1980s, a kindergarten work group with various members produced photocopied materials for children's activities; another work group, Mother Tongue Club, edited and adapted folk tales by Abdulla Tukay, Derdmend (Därdemänd, pen name for Zakir Sadiq ulı Rämiev (1859–1921), and nonsense verse in the 1980s.

Since 2016, the Finnish Islamic Congregation has published translations of Kazan Tatar works for children's basic language education, some trilingual in Tatar, Finnish, and English (**Figure 6**). In contrast to the locally-produced TLRs by female teachers, which

mainly contain exercises and short readings in Finland Tatar in Latin script, these newer works reflect the increasingly multilingual situation of children today, and simultaneously introduce more Kazan Tatar. In the 2000s, several fairy tale books have been published by the Finnish Islamic Congregation, and in 2009 the *Yabalak* group published Abdulla Tukay's famous folk tale *Su anası. Vedenhaltijan kampa* [The comb of the water fairy] as a Tatar-Finnish bilingual edition.

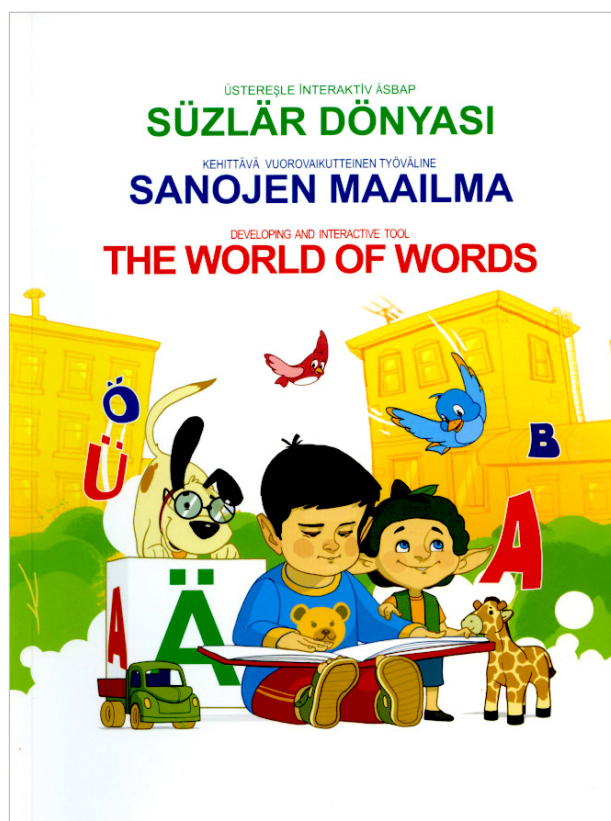


Figure 6. A modern multilingual vocabulary for children, published by the Finnish Islamic Congregation in Helsinki (2018). Photo: © Fazile Nasretudin 2024.

Religion

Religion continues to be part of the Tatar heritage in the highly secularised society of Finland, but Tatars are neither conservative nor strict Muslims. Islam is respected, although individual Tatars might not practise it. Although the Tatars have experience of more than a century of Islamic education, they have downplayed religious aspects since the 1990s, when larger groups of Muslim migrants with less tolerant views began arriving in Finland (Stahlberg, 2022, pp. 106–112). Children and teenagers are taught religion by an imam and religious celebrations are arranged by the communities. Religious works and TLRs are exclusively a male occupation and most are published books. The importance of religion in the early period can be observed in publishing: the first known published book in Tatar in Finland is a religious work from 1907 on morals, issued in Tampere. Religious works and textbooks in Arabic script for religious education by important Tatar intellectuals like Ahmedhadi Maksudi (1868–1941), who also visited Finland, were commonly used and reprinted.

Imam Weli-Ahmed Hakim and invited Turkish imams, including A. Naim Atasever (1970s), Abdurrahman Kaya (1980s), and Enver Yıldırım (beginning of the 1990s) often wrote and/or translated Islamic works, mostly for the benefit of adults who are supposed to transmit religion to their children. The books were also – and are used – for the religious education of adults and teenagers. In recent years, imam Ramil Belyaev has translated some modern works (see Belyaev, 2017, pp. 165–180). Among lay persons, Hasan Hamidulla, Önder Çaydam, and the invited teacher Zakir Kadiri (1878–1954) wrote about religion, but Hamidulla's works are more general reading and memoirs (**Figure 7**). In the early period, the publishers were mostly the Finnish Islamic Congregation and the associations supporting the public school initiative; private sponsors have supported religious works for specific reasons such as a jubilee or special occasions. The religious works published and used in education in Finland offer readers theoretical and philosophical information on the one hand, and practical advice about how to be a Muslim on the other. The topics are religious lessons for children; history and virtues of the prophets; religious practice such as alms, pilgrimage, and prayer; faith, morality, ethics and sermons. Reforming and updating Islam was the mission of the Jadidists in the nineteenth century, and all Tatar publications produced in Finland strongly echo this tradition.

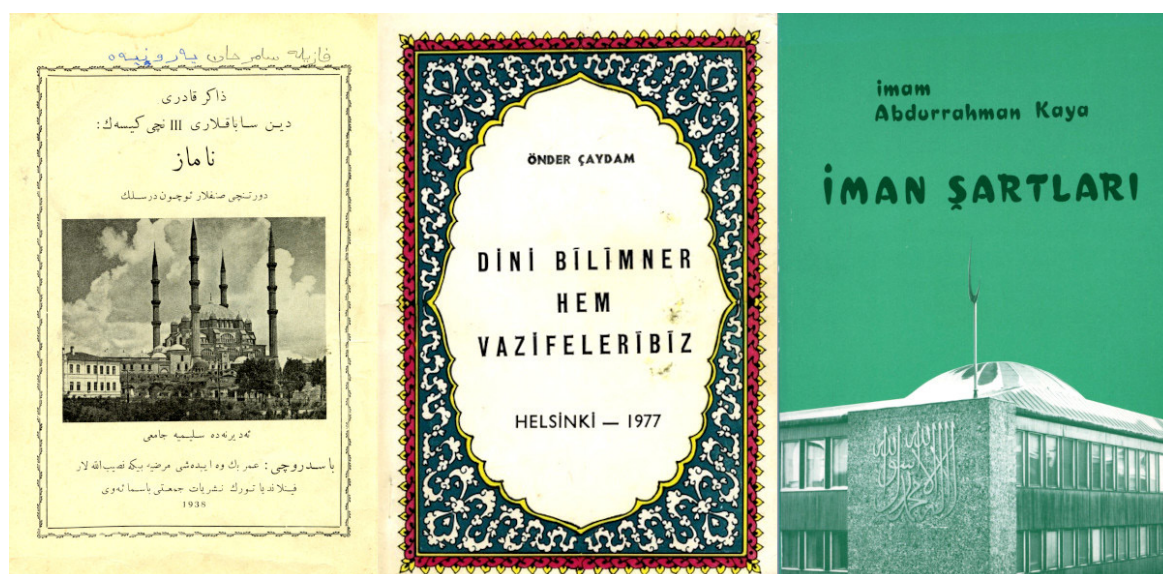


Figure 7. Religious works published in Finland: from left, Zakir Kadiri's prayer book (1938) with Hagia Sofia in Istanbul on the cover, Önder Çaydam's book (1977) with traditional ornaments and Abdurrahman Kaya's work (1988) with the Tatar mosque in Helsinki. Photo: © Fazile Nasretudin 2024.

Heritage, History and Traditions

History has been a tricky topic for Tatars in Finland for political reasons. The question “who are we” has been debated ever since Mishār traders had to explain their origins to the inhabitants in Finland. The first answer was Muslims, but after the independence of Finland in 1917, and especially after the connections with their home villages were severed by the Soviet Union in the 1920s, the Tatars had to invent a new identity and the debate turned from

religion to ethnicity. Some of the Tatars chose to continue life as Muslims, Mishärs or Tatars, but a majority chose (or were persuaded) to call themselves Turks or Northern Turks. Their origins and homes, now behind the Iron Curtain, were consciously faded into the background. Most of this debate remained unwritten and was conducted during events and meetings, but some publications appeared: after Zakir Kadiri's Turkish history book in 1938, Feride Biçuri published a pamphlet in 1969 asking who the Kazan Turks were. It was only in 2023 that a history book, *Tarih ezlärendä* [In the footsteps of history], containing also history of the communities in Finland and targeted at children and young people, was published by the congregation in Helsinki.

Music and singing play important roles in the lives of Tatars and are crucial in education and cultural transmission. Songs are always performed at celebrations and events. At the kindergarten, music and singing are an important part of the activities: the CD *Äylän bälän* [Round and round], issued by *Yabalak* in 2007, is used regularly. Tatar-language songs, including folk songs, composed works, and children's songs, have been collected in two large volumes and in several smaller volumes, *Bıznuñ cırlar* I–II [Our songs] in 1980 and 2000. Children's songs have been published several times between 1988 and 2015. These songs are partly known to Mishär Tatars, but many are from Kazan, and there are also translated international songs. The publishers are mainly the FTB cultural association, the Finnish Islamic Congregation, and the independent *Yabalak* group. In the work groups for preparing these publications it is mainly women who participated, and several collections have been created only by women. Tatar traditions are transmitted mostly orally, person-to-person, and through practice, for example cooking together at home or at cooking courses. Derya Samaletdin's recipe book *Milli aşlarımız / Perinneruokiamme* [Our traditional foods], at first prepared for cooking classes and distributed for many years as a photocopied compendium, was published in hardcover in 2013 by FTB for wider distribution, and it was also translated into Finnish.

Online materials and Easy-to-read

With increasing use of internet, computers and mobile phones, the use of printed books and audio and video technology in LP, CD, DVD, and other older formats is declining. The Tatars in Finland use social media for thematic groups such as literature and language, and there is a video channel from the Helsinki congregation with some prayers and talks. Members have access to more online materials than the general audience. The Tatars are also emerging from their long self-chosen invisibility: young Tatars write Wikipedia entries about Finnish Tatars, their language, history, and culture, etc. The *Yabalak* online dictionary offers the possibility to look up words between Finland Tatar and Finnish and vice versa. The most versatile online publisher is *Aybagar*, who utilises the possibilities of the internet to distribute TLRs in digital formats. Easy-to-read books, written originally as multicultural works in Finland-Swedish, have been translated to support children who start reading, or children and young people who already can read but their Tatar reading and writing skills need improvement. All books are offered as free PDFs and have been published separately in Latin and Cyrillic scripts (**Figure**

8) (Stahlberg, 2020–2022; Stahlberg & Nasretudin, 2021). The Easy-to-read books are the first in Tatar language globally. Feedback from readers in Finland, the global diaspora, and Russia shows that they fulfil a need for easily understandable books on modern topics.

The language in these books is Finland Tatar based on Mishär but it has been internationalised, so that Kazan Tatar and other Tatar dialect speakers can also understand. This is mainly visible in the vocabulary: for example, if a typical Finland or Mishär Tatar word is used, it is either explained or, next time it is used, a synonym from or close to Kazan Tatar or a word existing in several Turkic languages is employed. For some words, which are loans from Finnish in Finland Tatar and where there is no recognisable Tatar word, have been recreated or invented on the basis of Kazan Tatar and other Turkic languages (Stahlberg & Nasretudin, 2021; Stahlberg, 2025). The *Aybagar* team also publishes word and expression lists in Tatar, Finnish, and English, especially targeting parents and young learners, and also non-Tatar spouses and partners who are learning or want to get some knowledge of the language, as well as Tatars who want to improve their language skills and vocabulary. Literary works, stories, poems, recipes, and history also appear on the website. *Aybagar*'s videos of Tatar-language Easy-to-read audio books appear with the text on the screen, enabling the learner to listen and read simultaneously.

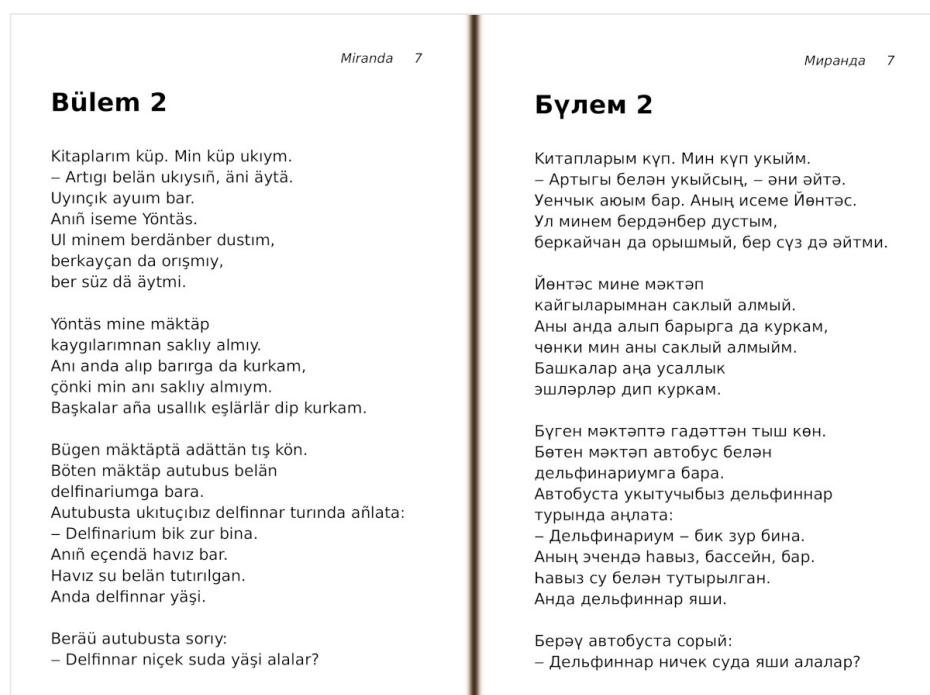


Figure 8. Pages from the Easy-to-read books *Miranda* (Latin script), left, and *Миранда* (Cyrillic script), both published in 2022. Photo: © Sabira Ståhlberg 2024.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has not yet entered the Tatar-language publishing world in Finland, but individuals use various AI platforms for translations, queries, etc. Tatar translation, spellcheckers, transcription, and Cyrillic-Latin converter platforms exist, but the language is Kazan Tatar and the Latin script is one of the many variations in use globally, but not Finland Tatar. One of the great challenges before AI and the internet-based use of Tatar

languages is that there is no unified Latin script. Further, Finland Tatar is a specific case, as it reflects both Mishär and Finland Tatar pronunciations, and these vary between families and even between individuals (Ståhlberg, 2023, p. 268). Thus, there are no “clean” datasets. The influence of multilingualism of the speakers should further be taken into account. Digitised materials for AI training are commonly based on Kazan Tatar, as neither Mishär nor Finland Tatar have been extensively published online; even if they were, there are multiple spelling issues, as the Latin script has been modified several times since the 1960s. Finland Tatar falls into the same category as many other LCTLs, lagging behind in digital materials and AI usage possibilities (Godwin-Jones, 2025).

Recent projects including Finnish universities (Turku and Helsinki) also use Kazan Tatar and not Finland Tatar. Tatars from Finland have not participated in these projects (Sintez, n.d.; Revita, n.d.; Zakirova et al., 2024). Also, a Tatar dictionary (Moisio & Daher 2016; Moisio et al., n.d.) uses Kazan Tatar; Okan Daher has only transliterated the Cyrillic into Latin script and added some words in Finland Tatar. Few Tatars in Finland appear to use these resources; if asked directly, they usually point to the multiple errors and quote the use of Kazan Tatar as an obstruction and reason for not using it.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Tatar minority is today more visible to the public in Finland and globally than ever before, but their educational efforts are little-known, recognised, or understood. This is not only a question of Finnish authorities or society in general ignoring them; the Tatars themselves have contributed to this concealment, preferring to keep their activities inside the communities. The high degree of literacy, educational traditions, and multiple language skills among Tatars facilitated their integration in Finland and also formed the basis for the preservation and development of language and heritage. Education continues to be important and viewed as a pathway to success in life; almost all young Tatars have received a dual education since the 1950s: they have studied at university or received another kind of higher education in the Finnish educational system, but also learned Tatar language, culture, and religion either at the Helsinki school or at summer camps.

Tradition plays a crucial role in the teaching of Tatar topics: because the local teachers received their Tatar-language education in the community (the first generation in villages; the later generations in urban Finland) and found it good and useful, they want to transmit these positive experiences to the following generations. Tatar women in Finland play a crucial role here: as mothers, teachers, TLR producers, and carriers of traditions, their contribution is far broader and much more important and long-term than that of visiting or male teachers. Their impact is still little valued, but the local female teachers should not be underestimated: although Tatar-language TLRs have been inspired by Finnish TLRs and school education, Kazan Tatar, Turkish, and other materials from abroad, their work – and especially the unpublished materials – show a high degree of creativity, fun, and adaptability to the needs of pupils in combination with Tatar literary, cultural, and pedagogical traditions. The “Soft” approaches by these self-

taught women contribute to the specific developments of TLRs in Finland: traditions, culture, literature, and food play important roles; innovative combinations of language development and TLRs with social skills, knowledge about nature and the environment, songs and music, fairy and folk tales, history and nonsense verses, and more recently also Easy-to-reads, contribute to making learning fun and attractive. This is very important for minority languages, which often receive less attention and are perceived to have lower prestige in society. The secret of keeping the Tatar identity, language, religion, and culture is intriguing for many outside the minority, but the multifaceted and various ways of transmission, based on tradition but developing new formats and content, could be a key as to why the Tatar minority is alive in Finland after 150 years and continues actively to transmit its language and knowledge. Other important factors are the traditional connections with international Tatar and Turkic networks, and an inclusive approach, accepting a 'both-and' identity. The Tatar strategy of having and keeping multiple identities can be learned, and it could be useful for more recent immigrants who are afraid of losing their identity in the integration process.

In academic research, the case of the Tatars in Finland can contribute to knowledge about the role of traditions, culture, and religion forming a stable platform for minority learners learning about their own background and constructing their identity, and to the sociological understanding of TLR production among minorities. A cultural approach to the study of TLRs shows that the Tatar "model" requires not only human and organisational resources but also financial resources. Tatar company owners and community members support publishing activities, and parents pay for the schooling of their children. The TLR production shows that it can be arranged without official support; as a middleman minority, Tatars have been able to provide the necessary resources themselves. Self-production gives freedom to form the TLRs in the way the minority wants; with official support, this would not be the case.

Attitudes are important for the encouragement of communities and individuals to work for a common goal of transmitting their language, religion, and heritage, and for parents to convince and send children to weekend school and summer camps. The need for Tatar language and culture is today increasingly perceived as less important by younger Tatars. Decreasing numbers in class indicate that fewer parents now view regular Tatar-language education as valuable, although they themselves remember fondly their own Tatar-language education. Elderly Tatars are especially worried about the fact that fewer than a dozen children show up on Saturdays for classes in Helsinki. The children who do not attend Tatar school regularly are not socialised into the community as naturally as regular learners. A reduced interest in Tatar socialisation is also observed at courses and camps: until the 2010s, summer and winter camps lasted for several weeks with dozens of children, but presently summer camps take less than a week with just a few participants. Children from other towns outside Helsinki receive no regular language or religious education; they have to rely on summer camps and occasional visits from teachers.

Turkish and Kazan Tatar teachers and textbooks have changed the Mishär Tatar language and culture in Finland, and the Tatar minority has adapted and reinvented itself

several times over the past century; this is also reflected in the TLRs. These have been prepared according to the supposed or perceived needs of the communities and learners and for various educational formats, schools, courses, camps, and self-study. A much-debated topic among Tatars in Finland, and especially between previous teachers, is that the TLRs have never fully answered to the needs, the quantity has not been sufficient, and the materials have not been updated quickly enough – and yet the Tatars have managed to transmit their language and culture and educate children, youth and adults for over a century. Further, the question if the TLRs reflect, for example, the religious needs of the communities and individuals, and especially children and young people who are studying the religion must be asked (Saber et al., 2022). The importance of religion is decreasing, and many Tatars say, if asked in informal talks, that they find strict religious requirements too limiting and discouraging for religious interest and practice. The introduction of a more global Islam is not perceived as the traditional way or as their “own” religion, although the morals and ethics of Islam are seen as positive and worth learning and transmitting.

A further challenge is language: dwindling numbers of fluent speakers are a great concern for the communities; one hour of language teaching per week is not enough for multilingual learners to become fully proficient in reading and writing Tatar. The gap between the language spoken at home and the Kazan-influenced language taught at the Tatar school has become an issue: several young Tatars reported having trouble with spelling even after graduating from the school at age 15–16 (Kiss, 2021). There is also a serious lack of modern advanced reading materials in Finland Tatar after the basic level. The language and contents of older publications are incomprehensible for the new generations even if many texts are in Latin script. Most read only the magazines and circular letters to members published in Tatar by the congregations, the cultural association, and the sports club, or materials published by independent work groups. Learners and readers therefore turn to other languages for books, and Tatar remains mostly a spoken emotional and/or family language. Because of diminishing communities and reduced possibilities to use the language, however, even those who are good speakers and work to improve their language through reading and writing must adapt to the situation of others not necessarily grasping their meaning if they use more advanced language. Finnish is then often used as a bridging language. In recent years, the Tatars have become more aware of multilingualism and multiculturalism as enriching elements in life, and these aspects are increasingly mirrored also in the TLRs and children’s books. *Aybagar*, for example, publishes regularly in Tatar Latin and Cyrillic scripts, Finnish, and English.

Digital materials are a new challenge: younger Tatars use mobile phones and computers daily, but there are only a few modern e-books available. The lack of reading in Finland Tatar limits the vocabulary and language use to everyday life. If the language is to survive in Finland, efforts are needed to produce interesting reading materials for all ages. Books, TLRs, and other materials should appear also electronically and be freely available online. Further video and audio materials are needed to attract younger audiences. The main questions today are: how important are the Tatar language and culture for the next generations? How much are

younger Tatars ready to invest in the transmission and continuity of the heritage they have received from their active and and linguistically and culturally conscious ancestors? And how can Tatar teaching and learning resources be adapted to the needs of the digital generations so that they attract more users?

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