

Title: The case of the Cyrillic letter PALOCHKA
Source: Michael Everson
Status: Expert Contribution
Date: 2000-07-09

U+04C0 I CYRILLIC LETTER PALOCHKA may have been derived from U+2160 I ROMAN NUMERAL ONE, (≈ LATIN CAPITAL LETTER I) commonly used in Russia and available in many character sets, such as typewriters. As a letterform it has not undergone a great deal of evolution, but this document presents such shapes as it is known to have. Strictly speaking the *páločka* is caseless; formerly it had been given the Unicode property of “other letter” but this was changed in 1999 to the Unicode property of “capital letter”. This document investigates the appropriateness of that decision. The name is the Russian word *пáлочка* ‘drumstick, baton, wand’; in typography *пáлочка* means ‘stem, main stroke’, as the vertical line in the letter T.

¹ **абаза хьацIа** ‘Abazin (person)’ (Latinski bold) (Тугов 1967:24)

² ЦI цI *цIы* (Latinski plain and Latinski italic) (Тугов 1967:24)

³ ТЫГВ ВЛАДИМИР даредакторпI ‘Vladimir Tugov editor’ (Latinski plain) (Тугов 1967:title)

⁴ **А. Гь. ХIАМЗАТОВ** ‘А. Н. Hamzatov’ (Bastion bold) (ХIамзатов 1993:title)

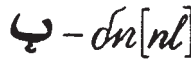
⁵ МАХIАЧХЪАЛА ‘Makhachkala’ (Bastion plain) (ХIамзатов 1993:title)

⁶ Авар калам: шагъаразул школазе цIалул тIехъ I класс. (Bastion plain) (ХIамзатов 1993:title)

⁷ **XI xIа xIи xIy xIо xIе** (Bastion bold) (ХIамзатов 1993:55)

Note the use of an identical glyph for the *páločka* and the Roman numeral in line 6 here (the book is for children in the first year of school). So far we have a *páločka* which looks like a capital letter I and which, notably (line 2), *retains its serifs when italicized*.

⁸ **ЛЕЗГИ ЧIАЛ** ‘Lezgian’ (Latinski bold) (Рамалданов & Ражабов 1992:title)

This book, for children of the second year of school, contains also models for penmanship. Unfortunately, I only have a few sample pages of the book, and do not have its samples of how the *páločka* is handwritten. However, Haarmann 1990:500 gives  examples of the handwritten letter in transliterations for an Arabic orthography for Adyge: the orthography, devised by Umar Bersej in 1853, shows ARABIC LETTER BE WITH OGONEK, and two transcriptions of that: бп [пI].

An anomolous presentation is however found in a recent work:

⁹ **ТIАХЪАЗУЛ ТУКАДА** ‘In the bookshop’ (Bastion bold) (Атаев 1992:63)

¹⁰ МагIарул мацIалда тIахъал ругицI нужер? ‘Do you have any books in Avar?’ (Bastion plain) (Атаев 1993:63)

Here we see that the form of the *páločka* is the same as the lower-case version, that is, it does not get bold when put into all caps bold. Is this indicative of a kind of case distinction or of bad typography? Answer: the latter. In my view the evidence suggests that the UTC decision to change the case property of this character from “other letter” to “capital letter” was correctly taken.

References

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