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In the 18th century, Russian culture and society underwent a dramatic shift. Aiming to modernize the country, the emperor Peter Alekseevich completely reformed the state – its army, governance, economy, and culture. That included the reform of the alphabet and its identity, which resulted in traditional Cyrillic alphabet going obsolete.

To develop the reformed Cyrillic alphabet, the emperor commissioned Dutch masters from the printing presses in Amsterdam. Then, Grazhdanskii Shrift (Civil Font) has been developed from the sketches made by the Emperor himself.¹ The new font was a mix between shapes taken from Latin scripts and directly transferred to the Cyrillic alphabet and designs based on the roman type (or Dutch Antiqua). The mindset behind the alterations was to copy the foreign original in Cyrillic, without the intention to develop a radically new set of Cyrillic characters.²

“The Cyrillic type is far too overloaded with accents, abbreviations [over-written signs, titlos], neither Vyaz³, with solemn decorativeness, nor these over-written elements help legibility. the individual letters of the Cyrillic type stop the line and do not merge into a word.”⁴ Developing Cyrillic font into a metal casted type has shifted the role of the book in Russian society, making books more accessible. Moving from old forms to the new, clear and legible type created a cultural link with progressive (as opposed to the pre-reform Russia) Europe. The new typeface was used in the first Russian newspaper Vedomosti, the first textbook Geometriia and a significant number of geographical maps, all of which went to print soon after the font was developed. The new “westernized” type led to the huge stylistic and ideological gap between the two languages.

Foundry: Oc-Ta (oc-ta.org)

Design: Inna Kochkina

Year: 2019

Available formats: woff, ttf, eot, otf

Language: Basic Latin, Western European, Central European, South Eastern European, Basic Cyrillic, Bulgarian, Serbian

As a Russian-born Netherlands-based type designer, I always felt both related to and distant towards the traditional identity of Cyrillic writing, looking at it either as valuable cultural heritage or an outdated visual language. In present-day Russia, Poluustav (Semi-uncial), the pre-reform Cyrillic book writing, is strongly associated with religious journalism and is often used in grocery shop signboards. It is also widely used by Slavic nationalist groups. More often than not the use of this font is an ideological choice, which keeps it in the past and suppresses further development.

The interest in the own country’s folk art in early 20th century Russia inspired the creative community to study traditional Cyrillic typeface, influencing book design, graphic arts and theatrical production. Ivan Y. Bilibin (16 August 1876 – 7 February 1942) has extensively evolved traditional writing by implementing it in his work, revealing the national ornaments and the character of Old Russia. I most value his typographic work in which Bilibin relied on the pre-reformed type, practicing and experimenting with particularities of traditional Cyrillic font styles. In 1900 Bilibin and other members of the ‘World of art’ (Mir Iskusstva) group got commissioned by the state to create artworks to represent Russia at the Paris World’s Fair. This newfound attention to old Cyrillic type helped to base the national identity on the pre-reform visual language. Inspired the work of Ivan Yakovlevich Bilibin, I am naming this typeface after him.

Cyrillic and Latin scripts of Bilibin typeface were designed simultaneously, interweaving the constructed roman type with Poluustav letterforms, figurative descenders of Skoropis’ (Semi-cursive) and the elements of Civil Font. Through merging asynchronous elements, this font attempts to build the bridge between multiple lingual identities of Cyrillic visual language.

1. The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture, James Cracraft p. 33–41.
2. The Journal of Typographic Research Volume III, Number 4, October 1969. p.321 The Genesis of Russian Grazhdanskii Shrift or Civil Type—Part 1. Ivan L. Kaldor
3. A combination of the abbreviations—mainly of ligatures and pseudo-ligatures—and decorative writing. Shchepkin, in the German translation of his definitive study called it “Ligaturschrift,” i.e., ligature writing. Kaldor, in his Slavic Paleography and Early Russian Printing (unpublished doctoral dissertation; University of Chicago, 1967) introduced the term “interlaced writing”. Early Slavic printers as a rule followed the MS traditions and added the black band of viaz’ to the initial pages of their chapters.
4. A. A. Sidorov, historia oformleniia russkoi knivig (Moskva: Gizlegprom, 1946), p. 132.

Vilibin Regular

Виллбнн Обычный

Uppercase

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Lowercase

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o
p q r s t u v w x y z

Accented uppercase

Á Ā Ą Ą Ą Ą Ą
Â Æ Ā Ā Ā Ā Ā Ā Ā Ā Ā Ā Ā
Ć Ć Ć Ć Ć Ć Ć
É Ě Ê Ĕ Ĕ Ĕ Ĕ Ĕ Ĕ Ĕ Ĕ Ĕ
Í Î Ï Ï Ï Ï Ï Ï Ï Ï Ï Ï
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Accented lowercase

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Ligatures

ff ffi ffj fi fj gg ty

Figures

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 0 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Cyrillic uppercase

А Б В Г Д Е Ж З И К Л М Н О
П Р С Т У Ф Х Ч Ш Э Ъ Ы Ю Я

Cyrillic lowercase

а б в г д е ж з и к л м
н о п р с т у х ч ш э ъ ы ю я

Accented uppercase

Ґ Ғ È Ё Æ Ў Ѓ Ү Ц Щ Ү Ъ Ь Ъ
S € I Ĭ J Ħ Ҧ Ҧ Ө V F Ж К Н Y
Ҹ Х Ч Һ Ǝ Ǝ І Ǻ Ǻ Ǽ ǻ Æ ̆ ̇ ̈

Accented lowercase

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Ligatures

Ѡ ѡ

Punctuation & Symbols

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♦ * # / \ | () { } []
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“ ” ‹ › † ‡

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10 pt Ivan Yakovlevich Bilibin (16 August 1876 – 7 February 1942) was a Russian illustrator and stage designer who took part in the *Mir iskusstva*, contributed to the Ballets Russes, co-founded the Union of Russian Painters and from 1937 was a member of the Artists' Union of the USSR. Ivan Bilibin gained popularity with his illustrations to Russian folk tales and Slavic folklore. His work was throughout his career inspired by the art and culture of Old Russia.[1]

Ivan Bilibin was born in Tarkhovka, a suburb of St. Petersburg. He studied in 1898 at Anton Ažbe Art School in Munich, where he was heavily influenced by Art Nouveau and the German satirical journal *Simplicissimus*,[2] and then under Ilya Repin in St. Petersburg.[3] After graduating in May 1901 he went to Munich, where he completed his training with the painter Anton Ažbe.[citation needed] In the period 1902 to 1904,[citation needed] working under the Russian Museum (Museum of His Imperial Majesty Alexander III) he traveled to the Vologda, Olonetsk and Arkhangelsk Governorates, performing ethnographic research, and examining examples of Russian wooden architecture.[4] He published his findings in the monograph *Folk Arts of the Russian North* in 1904. Old Russian art had a great influence on his works. Another influence on his art was traditional Japanese prints and Renaissance woodcuts.[5][6]

After the formation of the artists' association *Mir Iskusstva*, where he was an active member, his entry into the newspaper and book graphics scene began with a commission for the design of magazine *Mir Iskusstva* in 1899, later contributing essays on Russian Folk art.[7] Artistic design of other magazines such as *Dog Rose* (Шиповник) and expenditure of the Moscow publishing house followed. Bilibin gained renown in 1899, when he released his illustrations of Russian fairy tales. During the Russian Revolution of 1905, he drew revolutionary cartoons, especially for the magazine

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Родился 4 (16) августа 1876 года в посёлке Тарховка Сестрорецка, (близ Петербурга), в семье военно-морского врача Якова Ивановича Билибина[5].

В 1888 году поступил в Первую Санкт-Петербургскую классическую гимназию, которую окончил с серебряной медалью в 1896 году. В 1900 году окончил юридический факультет Санкт-Петербургского университета. В 1895—1898 годах занимался в рисовальной школе Общества поощрения художеств. В 1898 году два месяца учился в мастерской художника Антона Ашбе в Мюнхене. Несколько лет (1898—1900 гг.) занимался под руководством Илья Репина в школе-мастерской княгини Марии Тенишевой, затем (1900—1904 гг.) под руководством Репина в Высшем художественном училище Академии художеств.

Жил преимущественно в Санкт-Петербурге. После образования художественного объединения «Мир искусства» становится активным его членом.

В 1899 году Билибин случайно приезжает в деревню Езны Весьегонского уезда Тверской губернии. Здесь он впервые создаёт иллюстрации в ставшем впоследствии «Билибинском» стиле к своей первой книге «Сказка о Иван-царевиче, Жар-птице и о Сером волке».

В 1902, 1903 и 1904 годах Билибин посещает Вологодскую, Олонецкую и Архангельскую губернии, куда его командировает этнографический отдел Музея Александра III для изучения деревянной архитектуры.

Художественный талант Билибина ярко проявился в его иллюстрациях к русским сказкам и былинам, а также в работах над театральными постановками. С 1899 по 1902 годы он создаёт

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