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BOOKS, BROCHURES, AND BELONGING: INITIATIVES OF THE JOURNAL “OSNOVA” (1861–1863) FOR EDUCATING ILLITERATE UKRAINIAN POPULATION*

The article focuses on the cultural and educational activities of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, united around the St. Petersburg journal «Osnova» (1861–1863), towards the illiterate Ukrainians during a period of partial liberalization of intellectual life in the Russian Empire. Through its network of correspondents and travelers, «Osnova» actively promoted Ukrainian-language literature, educational texts, and cultural activities aimed at fostering a feeling of belonging together among Ukrainian peasants. The journal's editorial board provided standardized questionnaires that guided the correspondents' reports, emphasizing key themes like education and the 1861 peasant reform. These correspondents distributed works by Panteleimon Kulish, Taras Shevchenko, and other prominent Ukrainian authors at fairs and cultural events, despite initial skepticism from the illiterate population. Findings reveal that peasants began to recognize the value of education and Ukrainian-language literature. «Osnova» integrated historical narratives, particularly the Cossack period, into educational practices, using emotionally charged stories written in the Ukrainian language to create a sense of shared heroic past. Although challenges persisted, such as censorship and competing cultural influences, the journal's initiatives significantly contributed to the growth of Ukrainian cultural awareness, especially in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Poltava gubernias. The study revealed that the problem of poor learning stems not only from deficiencies in non-Ukrainian language education but also from the lack of practice in applying acquired knowledge. In response to this, the «Osnovians» encouraged the development of folk theaters, literary readings, and cultural events where peasants played the main roles in historical reenactments. These activities reinforced the educational initiatives by providing platforms for the illiterate population to engage with Ukrainian history and language in a communal setting. The systematic efforts of «Osnova» suggest a noticeable shift in the attitudes of the illiterate population towards Ukrainian cultural and educational practices.

Key words: «Osnova», illiterate Ukrainian, Ukrainian language, education, textbook, Sunday school, travelogue.

Statement of the problem. The late 1850s to early 1860s in the Russian Empire marked a time of cautious intellectual liberalization, albeit within the confines of imperial control [1, c. 177–183; 2, p. 42–43]. This period witnessed the emergence of a network of pro-Ukrainian organizations, clubs, and publishing houses that functioned as vital intellectual communities [3, c. 171]. The monthly bilingual (Ukrainian and Russian) journal «Osnova» («Foundation»), published in St. Petersburg from 1861 to 1863 (censorship delayed publication of the last issue for October 1862 until February 1863) exemplifies this trend, serving as a distinctive intellectual hub for the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The former members

of the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius (1845–1847) formed the core of «Osnova»: Vasyl Bilozersky (editor), Panteleimon Kulish, Mykola Kostomarov, and Taras Shevchenko [4, c. 58–61]. Beyond its publishing activities, the journal's editorial board sponsored the publication of Ukrainian books and directed the correspondents to address key problems in Ukrainian education.

The paper focuses on the exploration of the journal's educational activities through interactions with the illiterate Ukrainian population. Existing scholarship on interactions between the intelligentsia and the peasantry often overemphasizes nation-building processes or broad cultural aspects. This study, however, adopts a different approach. By focusing on how «Osnova» members implemented educational initiatives to the illiterate Ukrainians, I intend to amplify the voice of the peasantry and provide a more nuanced understanding of their engagement with the

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intelligentsia. This study will contribute to a broader understanding of literacy initiatives and their impact on social and cultural transformation, providing valuable insights for scholars of education, social history, and nation-building processes. By examining the educational endeavors of «Osnova», we gain insight into how «thick» journals in the Russian imperial context functioned not merely as sources of information, but as major intellectual think tanks aimed at practical implementation.

The journal's subscription announcement characterized the process of public education as a «question of life» [5, c. 4]. Following the abolition of serfdom in that same year, the «Osnovians», through various educational initiatives, aimed to expand the peasantry's understanding of their rights, history, culture, and language [5, c. 4–5]. I argue that the educational and cultural activities of the «Osnovians» were aimed at building a «feeling of belonging together» [6, p. 19–20] among the illiterate Ukrainians in 1861–1862.

Analysis of recent research and publications. This article draws on the historiography that examines the educational activities of the journal «Osnova». In particular, the role of the journal in promoting the Ukrainian language and educational literature for Sunday schools [2, p. 58–63; 7, c. 53–64; 8, c. 48–52], cooperation with local Ukrainian communities [4, c. 82–103], and the challenges of implementing the cultural visions of «Osnova» in the competitive environment of the Russian Empire [9, p. 66–98]. Viktor Dudko's article on censorship (1997) provides a crucial lens for understanding the role of authorities in shaping the activities of the «Osnovians» [10, c. 71–102].

Anton Kotenko's dissertation (2013) is noteworthy as he referred to the specificity of «Osnova's» travelogues as the creation of a «national space» of Ukraine [11, p. 82]. While I concur with Kotenko's assertion, I further posit that these journeys through Ukrainian territories and the resulting interactions with «ordinary people» not only fostered a shared «national space» for the Ukrainian intelligentsia but also profoundly impacted the self-awareness of the illiterate population.

Tetiana Portnova's monograph (2016) fills a gap in the discourse on the peasantry in the second half of the nineteenth century [12]. In her view, the journal «Osnova» predominantly portrayed an idealized image of the peasantry [12, c. 191], which, on one hand, underscores the significance of the rural world in «Osnova's» worldview, but on the other hand, reveals an overly axiomatic perspective held by the «Osnovians» on various aspects of peasant life.

In order to incorporate the Ukrainian territories into the general imperial context, I involved the work of Stephen Frank and Ben Eklof [13, p. 115–132]. While they have little direct relevance to Ukrainian problematic, they provide a broader perspective on the matters of education and readership within the Russian Empire as a whole.

The methodology is based on the Reinhart Koselleck's theory of temporal sediments. According to the theory, historical time consists of short-term, medium-term, and long-term temporal sediments (or layers) [14, c. 21–41]. I am focusing on short and medium layers, which are responsible for unique events and the recurring structures that lead to them. This allows me to view the sources from the perspective that all unique events are components of a certain structure. In particular, I am tracing «event-structure» connection between the correspondents and the editorial board of «Osnova».

I use the Max Weber's term «feeling of belonging together», which includes the dependence of the category, in our case illiterate Ukrainians, on specific events, prevailing public narratives and discourses [6, p. 19–20].

The printed legacy of the journal «Osnova» constitutes the main part of the source base. I devoted the majority of my attention on the «Visti» («News») section, which provides the most detailed descriptions of the interactions between the intelligentsia and the illiterate population. Additionally, taking into account the organizational function of «Osnova», editorial articles are an important source as they testify to the general policy of the publication.

Task statement. The aim of the study is to comprehensively outline the interactions of the journal «Osnova» as a network of Ukrainian intelligentsia with the illiterate Ukrainian population in their educational activities of forging communal self-awareness.

Throughout the paper I seek to answer the following questions. At first, what were the practical enlightening activities of the «Osnova» members in their interactions with the illiterate Ukrainian population? This entails investigating the scope and main thrusts of these activities, as well as examining how the illiterate Ukrainians reacted to them. At second, how organized was the activity of Ukrainian intelligentsia around «Osnova»? This involves examining the relationship between the editorial board and correspondents, and analyzing the journal's editorial policy and guidelines.

Outline of the main material of the study. The journal «Osnova» engaged with relevant problems of its time, particularly the state of education in

Ukrainian gubernias [15, c. 97]. The journal's authors were vocal critics of the prevailing educational system, which they saw as stagnant and riddled with shortcomings. Instead, they advocated for increased financial support for Sunday Schools and the promotion of Ukrainian language literature as an alternative. The problems of education were one of the most popular topics in the «Visti» section of the journal. According to my calculations, the journal published 125 articles in this section over the course of two years of its existence; 48 of them addressed the problem of public education.

Sunday schools were official institutions. Their status, number of subjects, time and place of classes were clearly regulated by the legislation of the Russian Empire. They were supposed to teach four disciplines: God's law, reading and writing in Russian, arithmetic, and drawing [15, c. 93]. In fact, they were not intended to differ from the classical educational institutions of that period. However, a certain number of teachers did not follow these instructions and taught Ukrainian language, literature, and history [16, c. 5; 17, c. 65].

History was strictly prohibited in Sunday schools. At the same time, Ukrainian activists were searching for different ways to introduce Ukrainian language into the educational process. Some of the Ukrainophiles collected signatures and sent petitions to the St. Petersburg Committee of Literacy demonstrating discrepancies between the perceptions of Ukrainian and Russian-language textbooks by Ukrainian pupils [18, c. 107–110; 19, c. 14–15]. They even argued that learning Ukrainian would help to better understand Russian [20, c. 71–72], but officials rejected their initiatives.

Despite the rejection, «Osnova» effectively spread Ukrainian historical and cultural narratives in Sunday schools by producing inexpensive textbooks, brochures, and grammar books in Ukrainian language. In particular, Kulish's printing house (the journal «Osnova» was also published there) produced «Metelyky» («Butterflies») – inexpensive Ukrainian-language brochures containing selected works of Ukrainian writers. They published 39 editions of this series [21, c. 25]. There is evidence that teachers used «Butterflies» in Sunday school in the city of Khorol (Poltava gubernia) [16, c. 5]. The number of cheap Ukrainian-language books sold also speaks to the popularity of this literature. From January to October 1861, 12,195 cheap books (priced from three to fifteen kopecks) were sold in Poltava, Chernihiv, Kyiv, Katerynoslav, and Kharkiv gubernias [22, c. 155–156]. Interestingly, the largest number of books were sold

in Khorol – 2,478 copies. [22, c. 155]. It is difficult to determine how significant this number within the context of the imperial book circulation since statistics are unfortunately unavailable. However, the «Osnovians» themselves referred to these figures as a positive example in other references [23, c. 18]. Furthermore, in 1862 young people were actively purchasing Ukrainian books, including «Butterflies», from Vasyl Hnylosyrov at the Kaplunivka and Ohtyrka fairs [24, c. 67].

«Osnova» took part in the creation of Ukrainian primers and grammars [7, c. 61]. I will focus on two popular Ukrainian language textbooks by the «Osnovians»: Shevchenko's «Bukvar' Yuzhnorusskiy» («Southern Russian Primer») and Kulish's «Hramatka» («Grammar book»).

«Osnova» published Shevchenko's letter dated January 4, 1861, in which he sent the first ten copies of his primer for trial and, if necessary, was willing to sell 5000 copies at a low price with the proceeds going to the development of Sunday schools [25, c. 26]. In total, Shevchenko's primer was printed in an edition of 10,000 copies [26, c. 166].

In 1861, Kulish was preparing a reissue of his «Hramatka», which first appeared in 1857. The first edition was popular but became a bibliographic rarity by 1861 [27, c. 328–329]. To reduce the price, Kulish halved the volume of the second textbook (from 149 to 68 pages) [8, c. 48] and published a print run of 5000 copies, similar to the first edition [26, c. 166].

Oleksandr Konysky tested Kulish's textbook in his travels around the Poltava gubernia. In April 1862, he spent two days in the village of Stari Sanzhary and visited the local school. The best pupil read a text from their Russian textbook to Konysky, but couldn't explain it in his own words. Instead, Konysky asked him to read a similar text in Ukrainian from Kulish's «Hramatka» (edition not specified). The child read the text and was able to explain it [19, c. 14]. In the same article, Konysky characterizes Ukrainian-language education as a «new method» and emphasizes that local teachers are amazed that a child can be taught to read in a week [19, c. 15].

Ukrainian-language textbooks were the connecting link through which the «Osnovians» conveyed Ukrainian history. A content analysis of these texts supports this claim. For instance, in Kulish's «Hramatka» (1857), the term «Ukraine» and its derivatives appear more than 40 times, while references to «Malorossia» («Little Russia») and its derivatives are entirely absent [28]. In addition to psalms, Kulish added to children's reading practice the heroic epic of the Cossacks. In particular, on thirteen pages there is a lengthy «Starosvitska дума pro hetmana Nalyvaika»

(«Old Testament about Hetman Nalyvaiko») with author's historical explanation [28, c. 27–40]. At the end of the book, Kulish included an article in which he tried to form mental and geographic boundaries of Ukraine, emphasizing on its ancient existence by the language perspective: «The Ukrainian land stretches far on both sides of the Dnipro River; it extends as far as the people speak our language, and the people speak our language even in the Austrian reign, up to the very Carpathian Mountains. [...]. More than two hundred years have passed – and what hasn't been turned upside down in Ukraine! There were hetmans, there were voivodes and governors; [...] but the language remained the same as it was during the reign of King Stephen, the same song resounds throughout Ukraine, from the Carpathians to the Esman, from Poland to the Don» [28, c. 146–148].

Shevchenko's primer contains similar national elements. He included two folk dumas about Oleksiy Popovych and Marusya Boguslavka as reading exercises [29, c. 14–22]. They glorify the Cossack army and honor the deed of Marusya Bohuslavka, who achieved the liberation of the Cossacks from Turkish captivity.

Such emotionally charged texts, written in the reader's native language, could create in the peasants' minds an image of a heroic past. To understand how these texts circulated and their impact, we can look to examples like Hnylosyrov's account in «Osnova». He describes reading works by Shevchenko, Kulish, and Hrebinka at a fair in Ohtyrka, noting that the crowd listened with great enthusiasm, particularly when he read from Kulish's «Khmelnyschyna» («The period of Khmelnytsky»). [24, c. 71]. In another article, Vsevolod Kakhovsky informs «Osnova» that in the village of Starodubivka in the Kharkiv gubernia, the works of Shevchenko, Marko Vovchok, Kvitka-Osnovianenko, and a number of others began to gain great popularity [30, c. 58].

What is particularly striking is the initial reaction these books evoked. In both instances, the authors observe that some individuals, primarily those who were illiterate, found the very idea of Ukrainian-language literature – or even the existence of a written Ukrainian language – so unbelievable that it led to outright laughter. However, this initial disbelief gradually transformed into acceptance and, eventually, enthusiasm [24, c. 71; 30, c. 58].

At the same time, these publications do not provide unequivocal evidence of the success of Ukrainian-language literature, as «Osnova» often presented an exaggerated image of the peasantry. For instance, in T. Rylsky's article «Z pravoho bereha Dnipro»

(«From the Right Bank of the Dnipro»), he mentions how folk sayings reflect the peasants' perception of the acceptability of theft or the return of certain goods for money. The editorial board added a footnote in this article offering counterarguments and emphasizing the need for further study of the «popular view on property» [12, c. 85]. According to Portnova, the editorial board consistently applied similar defensive strategies regarding the peasantry in other publications as well [12, c. 125].

While the actions of «Osnova» and its correspondents were significant in promoting Ukrainian language and literature, it's crucial to remember that they operated within a complex network of cultural influences. The program of «Osnova» encountered a counter-program in the form of Russian and Polish literatures, which also held sway over segments of the Ukrainian population. Pavlo Chubynskyi wrote to «Osnova» from Boryspil expressing his concern about the fact that people were singing Russian songs at fairs or mixing them with Ukrainian ones [31, c. 130–131]. At the mentioned fairs in Ohtyrka and Kaplunivka, people often asked Hnylosyrov about well-known Russian lubok works such as «The Battle of Russians with the Kabardians» and «Yerusan Lazarevich» [24, c. 72]. In this way, it is true that the cultural situation in Ukrainian lands had a competitive and ambiguous nature [9, p. 70]. However, amidst this competition, Ukrainian-language literature possessed a distinct advantage. Thematically and linguistically, they resonated more deeply with the illiterate population. The stories, characters, and language of Ukrainian literature were familiar and accessible, fostering a stronger connection with readers.

Therefore, «Osnova» played a pivotal role in disseminating Ukrainian educational and literary materials to the rural population on a broad scale. The journal's strategy revolved around producing affordable brochures and concise textbooks in large quantities, aiming to reach the widest possible network of Sunday schools. These texts often revolved around the Cossack era, employing narratives of a heroic past to foster a sense of belonging together among the peasantry, bound by a common history and a defined geographical territory.

Travelogues and local history articles offer valuable insights into the perception of specific regions. A traveler encounters the imagined (based on what they have read or expected prior to the journey) with the real (what they actually see as a result of the trip). These journeys gave rise to a widely accepted belief that the people populating the Ukrainian lands actively share common distinctive traits.

An important task for «Osnova» was to coordinate these travelogues, providing them with a specific thematic focus. According to Kotenko, the journal «Osnova» consciously shaped the perception of the «national space» of Ukraine by actively promoting the collection and publication of guidebooks and travelogues from Ukrainian cities and villages [11, p. 82]. The journal contains direct evidence that researchers received financial support from «Osnova» to conduct trips across Ukrainian lands [32, c. 75–76].

In order to actively coordinate the activities of traveling or local authors, the journal also provided them with a specific questionnaire. While the questionnaire itself may not be explicitly documented, its existence can be inferred from the recurring themes and rhetoric evident in the «Osnova's» travelogues. The format of their articles resembles a classic letter-reply, suggesting that correspondents were responding to a predetermined set of questions. In two instances, authors explicitly mention fulfilling their earlier commitments to «Osnova» [33, c. 188; 34, c. 66]. Further evidence is provided by another article where the correspondent explicitly states that they were directly contacted by «Osnova» and asked to contribute a piece on interesting events within their region, with a specific thematic focus [35, c. 92]. However, the most remarkable example is an article by an anonymous author, where they express frustration toward «Osnova», accusing the journal of demanding too much and listing various topics: «You want to know, of course, a lot – everything. How the peasant affairs are going, how land demarcation is progressing, how the economy is doing, the education of the people, the number of schools in each area, what they teach there, the interests of the upper-class society (aristocracy), what they aspire to, their plans, and so on and so forth? Oh my God! It's almost impossible to answer so many questions» [36, c. 89].

Although Osnova's archive, including letters from the editorial board, remains inaccessible, the rhetoric strongly suggests that the journal used a specific questionnaire for its correspondents. This questionnaire guided their efforts by directing attention to certain topics, with a particular focus on the successes and shortcomings in the development of public education [4, c. 30].

The problem of poor education was not only pressing but also practical. Illiteracy contributed to the problem of distrust between peasants and landlords in certain regions, as peasants could not read the regulations on the abolition of serfdom themselves. They often mistrusted the information provided by officials, leading to resistance against the reform in some

gubernias [37, c. 47–48]. Therefore, it became essential for a trusted individual to be able to read the documents. Following the reform, peasants experienced a «disruption» in their understanding of the world, which prompted them to recognize the practical benefits of education. «To prevent landlords from reestablishing serfdom, we must educate children and teach them to read», – Konysky captured the sentiments of the Poltava peasants [38, c. 52]. The consistent use of phrases like «novyi lad» («new order»), «nove zhyttia» («new life»), «teper vony vilni lyudy» («now they are free people»), and similar expressions among both the peasants and the intelligentsia also indicates a shift in illiterate Ukrainians' attitude towards education [39, c. 59; 40, c. 16].

Travelogues and local history articles clearly illustrate the activities that the «Osnovians» actively pursued to address the educational needs of illiterate population. According to my calculations, the journal published a total of 110 travelogues and local history pieces. These articles spanned all sections of «Osnova», offering personal observations of specific regions, with insights into geography, population, economy, history, and culture. The highest concentration of documented entries came from Left Bank of the Dnipro River, particularly the Poltava and Chernihiv gubernias, while on the Right Bank, the majority of reports originated from the Kyiv gubernia.

The activity of local Ukrainian Hromadas in these three gubernias explains such statistics. Leonid Hlibov published the newspaper «Chernihivskiy Lystok» («Chernihiv Leaflet») (1861–1863) in Chernihiv, which closely aligned with «Osnova» [4, c. 27]. In Kyiv, the «Chlopomans» community (primarily descendants of assimilated Polish families, who advocated for closer ties with the Ukrainian peasantry) was highly active, and «Osnova» frequently published their articles. A police chief's report to the General-Governor of Kyiv, Podillia, and Volyn gubernias confirms the link between «Osnova» and the Kyiv Hromada (including the «Chlopomans»), implicating them in the dissemination of the «Little Russian» language [41, арк. 183в.].

One of the most active travel correspondents from Poltava gubernia was Konysky. In «Osnova», he published at least nine travelogues and local history articles, focusing primarily on literacy. In particular, he informed «Osnova» about the unsuccessful initiatives of the «Society for Literacy» and the publication «Niva», which the Poltava Hromada wanted to establish to foster cultural interest [38, c. 52]. Furthermore, following Hlibov's example in Chernihiv, Konysky intended to publish the «Poltavsky horodo-

voy Lystok» («Poltava City Leaflet»), but this project also failed, although «Osnova» expressed hope for its eventual realization [42, c. 65].

It was noted that Konysky tested Kulish's «Hramatka» by having the top student at the local school in Stari Sanzhary recite texts from both «Hramatka» and a Russian textbook. This method was common practice among the «Osnovians». In another article, Konysky employed the same approach with a female student from the village of Machukhy [43, c. 10]. While traveling through the Poltava gubernia, Lev Zhemchuzhnikov read historical and lyrical works by Kulish, focused on the Cossack era, to the peasants [44, c. 97]. In the village of Starodubivka (nowadays Donetsk region), there was a circle in the estate of the landlord where Ukrainian books were read aloud [30, c. 58]. In one of the schools of Poltava, the parents of 114 out of 157 students demanded the introduction of Ukrainian language in the educational process [2, p. 60].

Cultural events were another traditional method of disseminating Ukrainian narratives. One less obvious factor contributing to low literacy rates was the lack of opportunities to practice. A child might learn to read and write proficiently, but without the need or opportunity to apply these skills in daily life, regression was inevitable. Eklof cites imperial statistics from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, which show that 84% of students experienced a decline in spelling skills after completing primary school, while 16% regressed in reading skills [13, p. 124–125]. Unfortunately, there is no information available regarding how this data correlates with the situation in Ukrainian gubernias. However, I assume that the problem was even more acute considering that the official education was conducted in Russian. «Osnova's» texts clearly point to the lack of practice: «... peasants who learned to read and write quickly forget due to the lack of books to read» [45, c. 122].

Therefore, «Osnovians», while traveling, actively organized evening gatherings, folk theaters, literary readings, with peasants playing the central role. They promoted the concept of a Ukrainian theater that would include three key elements: the Ukrainian language, folk actors, and domestic or historical Ukrainian themes [46, c. 183]. After graduating from St. Volodymyr University in Kyiv, the «Chlopoman» Borys Poznansky settled in the village of Dudari near Kyiv, where he began teaching in 1861 [47, c. 89]. He recounted his attempts to stage two plays by the Ukrainian poet and composer Denys Bonkovskyi, «Tropak» and «Ukrainets Kozak», for the peasants, but these performances failed to gain popularity

among the rural population [18, c. 110]. In the same year, Vasyl Kulyk writes that during the Illinska fair in Poltava, the local Hromada organized a commemoration event dedicated to Shevchenko, which was attended by many people, including peasants [48, c. 107]. The two folk plays, «Bidnist' ne porok» («Poverty is not a vice») and «Shelmenko, volosnyi pysar» («Shelmenko, provincial scribe»), were supposed to be performed in Poltava during the Easter holidays, but the authorities did not allow their staging [49, c. 171–172]. Meanwhile, in Hadiach, a Ukrainian folklorist Ivan Rudchenko successfully held performances for Christmas in August 1861 and used the proceeds to open a city library [50, c. 150]. In Tarascha, Kyiv gubernia, an unknown author reported organizing literary readings to raise funds for sending the top student from the local school to the gymnasium [51, c. 103–104].

Thus, travelers and local researchers contributed to shaping new experiences among peasants, which emerged following the 1861 peasant reform. Their articles, while unique in content, repeatedly focused on themes crafted by the editorial board of «Osnova». Notably, of the four articles from «Osnova» that were banned by censorship, two dealt with peasant resistance during the reform, and the other two related to public education [10, c. 73–75]. The travelers' primary mission remained the promotion of education in the Ukrainian language, using textbooks embedded with historical and cultural Ukrainian narratives. Simultaneously, an important aspect of the «Osnovians» educational efforts involved engaging peasants in cultural activities, encouraging them to practice the language through folk theaters, literary gatherings, and evening events. It is also worth noting the repeated attempts by the Ukrainian intelligentsia to establish local publishing houses similar to Osnova. While such efforts succeeded in Chernihiv, they failed in Poltava.

Conclusions. In 1861–1862, the journal «Osnova» launched an ambitious cultural initiative. The most significant effort was the publication of affordable Ukrainian-language fiction books, known as «metelyky», along with educational literature. These books became widely popular due to their broad distribution, low cost, and large print runs. They were used for teaching in Sunday schools and sold at fairs and bookstores. «Osnova» actively promoted the sale of these books, sharing information about distribution locations, offering free copies, and encouraging their widespread circulation.

An analysis of the content in two textbooks by Kulish and Shevchenko, actively promoted by «Osnova», reveals that these works served as a bridge

between the past and the present. The «Osnovians» deliberately highlighted recent Cossack history in their reading exercises, as it resonated with collective memory and lived on through folk legends, tales, and songs. The use of the Ukrainian language was a key feature of this literature. The spatial perception of imagined Ukraine, shaped through the linguistic factor and thematic content, found its most detailed expression in Kulish's «Hramatka». These and similar Ukrainian-language publications introduced a new experience for illiterate Ukrainians, as seen in their reaction to the language and historical narratives, primarily conveyed through «Osnova's» lens.

At the same time, educational practices were aimed not only at helping students acquire literacy but also at preserving it for the future. «Osnova's» local correspondents, while traveling through villages and towns, not only distributed Ukrainian-language texts but also sought to organize cultural events. Their central idea was to establish folk theaters where peasants would play the leading roles, depicting historical and everyday themes.

As an organizational body, «Osnova» guided the activities of its correspondents and travelers by providing them with a unified questionnaire. The primary

focus of the travelogues and local histories revolved around the state of education and the progress of the peasant reform (1861). An analysis of the geographical distribution of these writings reveals that the «Osnovians» were most active in Poltava, Chernihiv, and Kyiv gubernias.

The available sources do not offer a definitive answer regarding the success of the «Osnova» in fostering a sense of belonging together among illiterate Ukrainians. The absence of concrete statistical data on book circulation and literacy rates in the second half of the 1850s and early 1860s limits my ability to definitively assess the full impact of their endeavors. However, I can confirm that the Ukrainian intelligentsia around «Osnova» pursued such a goal and organized activities toward this end. Correspondents from different regions documented similar transformations among the illiterate population in their reception of Ukrainian-language books ranging from initial mockery to eventual acceptance and praise – as well as a growing recognition of the need for basic education following the 1861 peasant reform. This indicates a transformation in the experiences of the illiterate Ukrainian population, creating a foundation for the continued growth of Ukrainian cultural and educational practices.

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Тоноян А.А. КНИГИ, БРОШУРИ ТА ПРИНАЛЕЖНІСТЬ: ІНІЦІАТИВИ ЖУРНАЛУ «ОСНОВА» (1861–1863) ДЛЯ ОСВІТИ НЕПИСЬМЕННОГО УКРАЇНСЬКОГО НАСЕЛЕННЯ

У статті досліджується культурно-освітня діяльність української інтелігенції, об'єднаної навколо петербурзького журналу «Основа» у період 1861–1863 рр. Акцент робиться на просвітницьких практиках, спрямованих на подолання неписьменності серед українського населення в умовах часткової лібералізації громадського та інтелектуального життя в Російській імперії. Через свою мережу кореспондентів та мандрівників, «Основа» активно просувала україномовну літературу, освітні тексти та культурні заходи, спрямовані на формування почуття спільної приналежності серед українських селян. Редакція журналу надавала стандартизовані анкети, які скеровували звіти кореспондентів, акцентуючи увагу на ключових темах, таких як освіта та селянська реформа 1861 року. Ці кореспонденти поширювали твори Пантелеймона Куліша, Тараса Шевченка та інших видатних українських авторів на ярмарках та культурних подіях, незважаючи на початковий скептицизм з боку неписьменного населення. Результати дослідження показують, що селяни почали усвідомлювати цінність освіти та україномовної літератури. «Основа» інтегрувала історичні наративи, особливо козацький період, в освітні практики, використовуючи україномовні оповіді з вираженою емоційною

насиченістю, для створення відчуття спільного героїчного минулого. Незважаючи на труднощі, такі як цензура та конкуруючі культурні впливи, ініціативи журналу значно сприяли зростанню української культурної свідомості, особливо в Київській, Чернігівській та Полтавській губерніях. Дослідження виявило, що проблема поганого навчання впливає не лише з недоліків не-україномовної освіти, але й з відсутності практики застосування набутих знань. В контексті практики «Основ'яни» заохочували розвиток народних театрів, літературних читань та культурних подій, де селяни відігравали головні ролі в історичних реконструкціях. Ці заходи підсилили освітні ініціативи, надаючи платформи неписьменному населенню для взаємодії з українською історією та мовою в громадському середовищі. Систематичні зусилля «Основи» свідчать про помітний зсув у ставленні неписьменного населення до українських культурних та освітніх практик.

Ключові слова: «Основа», неписьменний українець, українська мова, освіта, підручник, недільна школа, тревелог.