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## «66 % of Literacy among the Male Population of School Age Brings it Closer to Common Education» vs «in the Largest Villages, it was Difficult to Meet a Literate Person»: the Main Statistical indicators of Primary Education among Don Cossacks in the XIX century. Part 2

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### Abstract

The question about the degree of development of primary education in the Don in the XIX century remains controversial among historians. Archival documents and testimonies of contemporaries allow us to cover this question in completely different ways (both quotes in the title are taken from them). The article attempts to summarize statistical information about the development of primary education in the Don Cossack environment from 1799 to 1899. A number of myths prevalent in historiography (for example, about the significant role of zemstvos in the creation of new educational institutions in villages or about the crisis of Don education in 1880–1890) are debunked.

**Keywords:** history of education on the Don, primary education of the Don Cossacks in the XIX century, district schools, parish schools, parochial schools, literacy schools.

### 1. Introduction

“The Don Cossack Host is second to last in terms of school enrollments, and is the last one in terms of the number of schools as compared to other irregular military formations” (Nash krai, 1963: 467); “In the largest villages, even in those closest to towns and cities, it was difficult to meet a literate person” (Nash krai, 1963: 465); “The school is in the most wretched state in all respects” (Nash krai, 1963: 466). All these are excerpts from the documents featured in the milestone anthology “Our Land” (Nash krai), prepared by leading Soviet historians of Don Cossacks in 1963 (the list of authors included a number of respected researchers such as A.P. Pronshtein and I.P. Khlystov). Naturally, all the excerpts are original, but they, just like compilers’ comments do,

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reflect only one facet of reality. The authors had to pick up archival materials echoing ideological statements defined in the preface to the section “Enlightenment on the Don”: “Primary and secondary education was in a plight until October 1917” (Nash krai, 1963: 459); “The reform of public education was increasingly curtailed by the government. The reactionary steps particularly intensified in the 80s-90s” (Nash krai, 1963: 459).

On the other hand, a polar opposite trend is now taking shape to idealize the pre-revolutionary Don education. For example, a Taganrog historian, L.A. Donskova, in one of her papers, says that the stance of Soviet historians on education was not only “a tribute to the narrow, class-biased and politicized approach of the Soviet era”, but also “suffered from one-sidedness and was unable to consider multiple and contradictory aspects of the government’s educational policies” (Donskova, 2008: 133). Yet she further provides a similar one-sided and idealized picture of “the authorities and society combining their efforts in the field of education”, based on “ideas of the common good and religious virtues” (Donskova, 2008: 138). Interestingly, the modern author repeatedly refers to information from the “Our Land” anthology of documents, but interprets them in a completely different way inconsistent with Soviet researchers. For example, while the anthology compilers saw the launch of new educational institutions in 1860-1870 as a least-evil measure by the government that did provide financing for the most of the facilities (Nash krai, 1963: 458), L.A. Donskova regards this increase in primary and secondary schools as an illustration of “consolidated efforts by the Don Oblast administration, zemstvos, the public” (Donskova, 2008: 133-135).

At the same time, neither Soviet historians nor today’s researchers made any attempts to systematize even the essential statistical information on education on the Don in the 19th century. In fact, the only person who tried to act on the matter was the secretary of the Don Statistical Committee, S.F. Nomikosov, who pointed out in 1884 that the number of students in the Don region doubled in 1830-1860, grew by 6 times in 1860-1870, and only by 1.7 times in 1870-1880 (Nomikosov, 1884: 575). It is already clear from this information that a popular Soviet statement claiming that “the introduction of zemstvo institutions on the Don in the 70s also contributed to the growing number of primary schools” (Nash krai, 1963: 458), is a historiographical myth, and in the zemstvo period on the Don, the pace of opening new school actually slowed down dramatically as compared to the previous decade. For this reason, we decided to elaborate on the idea of S.F. Nomikosov, and trace how the number of schools and their students grew on the Don in the 19th century, and then, using the information gathered as a basis, to develop an understanding of the factors that actually hampered and accelerated the expansion of education.

This article is a continuation. Part I see (Peretyatko, Zulfugarzade, 2019).

## **2. Materials and methods**

Nevertheless, certain circumstances impeded the use of this research method. First of all, the borders of the Don Host Oblast underwent major changes in 1888 as new regions – Rostov-on-Don, Azov and Taganrog – were now included in it. Moreover, the region’s territorial division was also revised, and this did not allow us to use statistics on individual districts. A solution for this problem was offered by the materials of the commission headed by Lieutenant-General N.A. Maslakovets, which investigated the causes of impoverishment of Don Cossacks in 1899. In the process, the commission collected detailed data on primary education in the Cossack community (Protokoly, 1899: 251-262). On the other hand, before 1880, when parochial and literacy schools first began to open in the Don Host Oblast, local statistical figures separately indicated the number of students and students in Cossack villages (stanitsas) and peasant schools. So, this enabled us to compare the statistical indicators we are interested in for 1880 and 1890, but exclusively for the Cossack population of the region. Considering this, we decided to limit the scope of our research in the paper, and only deliver the systematized material on primary education in the Cossack community.

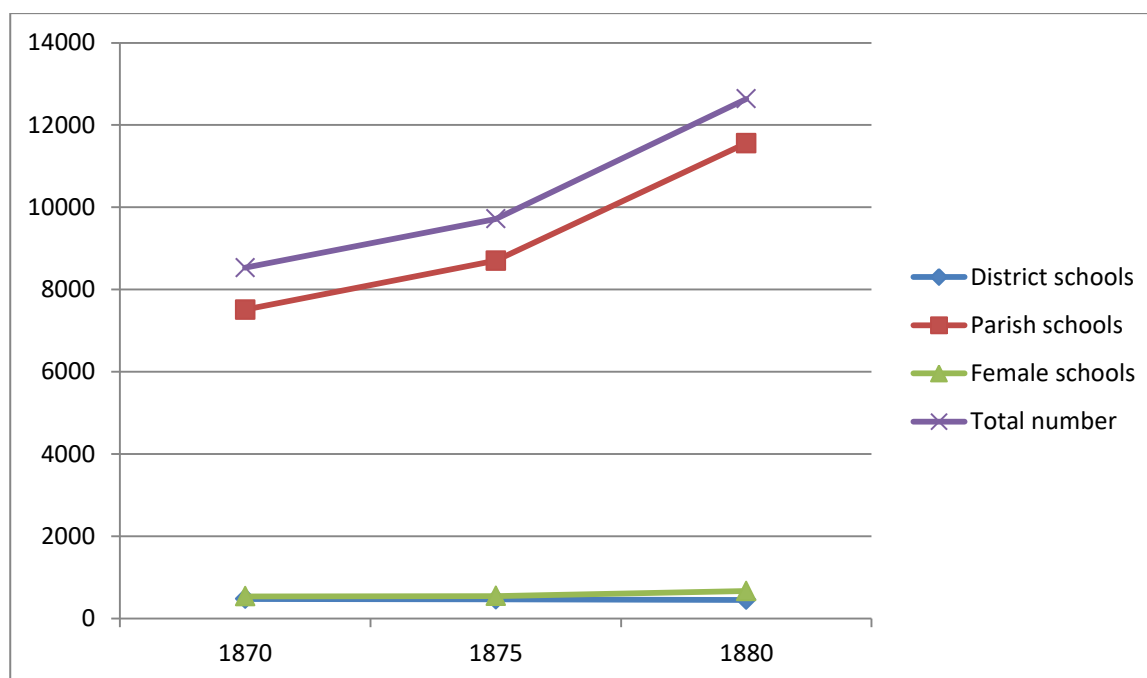
Although technically, even with this restriction, the data we used was not quite comparable. We know how many children attended stanitsa schools for the most of the 19th century. However, we have precise information that the schools taught not only Cossacks but children from other estates as well although their number was insignificant (for example, in early 1860, 7 serf peasants, a few dozens of clergy and merchant children took a training course there) (Krasnov, 1863: 401-403). On the other hand, a part of Cossacks could study in rural schools. Reviewing the year of

1890, we, on the contrary, knew how many Cossacks studied in primary and secondary schools, but we have no data what proportion of them received education outside stanitsas. In any case, the number of students in primary schools specified in official statistics was approximate. In 1896, a contemporary gave the following description of the situation in Don rural schools: “In September, the school accepted 12, in October – 15 and in November – 24 students, more students were also brought in December and in January, but 20 students stopped going to school from mid-March, and another 15 in April” (Po voprosu..., 1896: 4). It is obvious that in this context the number of students reflected in the documents depended to the great extent on the counting method. Moreover, throughout the 19th century, Don officials and scholars complained at the outrageous inaccuracy of absolutely any official numerical data. Here is what K.A. Kartushin, an employee at stanitsa boards of the Ust-Medveditsky district, wrote about this: “Data is not collected based on any rational program but often fabricated to only show modifications in the data already available at hand and of the same value and origin” (Protokoly, 1899: 156). For this reason, the inaccuracy and crudeness of information we provide here would be inevitable even if the borders of the Don Host Oblast remained the same, and we had homogeneous material regarding the number of students in stanitsa primary and secondary schools or on the number of Cossacks who received primary education over one hundred years. And yet this does not downgrade the statistics we systematized. In 1902, the head of the Main Directorate of the Cossack Hosts, P.O. Shcherbov-Nefedovich, when found himself in a similar situation, wrote to the Minister of War in the preamble to the document prepared by him: “Some of the statistical tables enclosed in this report should only be considered approximately correct” (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 1861. L. 30b). The same refers to the diagrams that we created as they contain only rough figures but reflect general trends in the progression of Don education, and although with inaccuracies in Don statistics, specific numerical values can vary greatly in them from the actual ones, in most cases variances in these values by 10–20% will not affect the general trends and patterns we have identified.

Speaking of the materials that constituted the basis of our paper, in this case, we preferred to use, if possible, testimonies and accounts of people related to Don education, rather archival sources. The fact is that most of these people (for example, S.F. Nomikosov, S.S. Robush, Kh.I. Popov) often tried to explain the data quoted by providing important information and valuable insights. Since the information is often unknown even in the scholarly community, and some of the texts on Don education, published in the late 19th century, are not analyzed or relied on by researches, we will extensively leverage from the historical descriptive method. The methods of historical comparison and historical systematization will be instrumental in drawing general conclusions and summaries on the trends in the development of the Don education.

### **3. Discussion and results**

And indeed, in the 1870s, the Don education was stuck in the next phase of the stagnation, and, moreover the spread of education not only slowed down after the above boom, but was restrained by external factors. We have seen that the growing number of students in the 1860s was ensured with the help of parish schools that were financially supported by stanitsas. However, in 1870, the Host authorities decided to transfer a number of expenses, which were earlier covered by the Host treasury, to stanitsa budgets, and the measure was implemented several times in the next two decades (Protokoly, 1899: 104). Interestingly, in 1899, the disastrous line of action for the Don education was highlighted by Minister of War of the Russian Empire A.N. Kuropatkin himself. Here is how he described the situation: “Literacy is declining in the Don <Host>. They are asking to allocate subsidies from the Host budget. Stanitsas’ money is spent on accoutrements for Cossacks” (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 2109. L. 95). S.F. Nomikosov noted that by the early 1880s, primary and secondary schools in the Don Host Oblast were “packed with students and students to bursting”, and “the number of those who wanted to receive primary education rose from year to year” (Nomikosov, 1884: 579). Below are given diagrams for these years based on S.F. Nomikosov’s data (once again, they are somewhat at odds with the information provided by S.S. Robush and “The memorial book of the Don Host Oblast”, which we used before, but since we are interested in dynamics, we tried, if possible, to pick up data for one diagram from one source).



Source: [Nomikosov, 1884: 576-577](#).

**Fig. 1.** Dynamics of the number of students in Cossack schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1870-1880

The [Figure 1](#) clearly shows that the expansion of school education in the first half of 1870 slackened not only as compared with the boisterous five-year period from 1860 to 1865, when the number of students in schools went up by more than 5,000, but also as compared with the five-year period from 1865 to 1870, when the similar growth was about 1,500. In 1870-1875, the increase only slightly exceeded 1,000. However, the second half of 1870 signaled some improvements in the situation, even despite the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878. The absolute growth recorded at the time (almost 3,000 people) was second only to the period from 1860 to 1865. We should yet note that just in 1880, according to S.F. Nomikosov, in addition to one-class parish schools that functioned exclusively in Cossack stanitsas, 15 two-class parish schools began to operate, of which 3 were located in peasant settlements. Although we have no precise data on the number of students in the schools, the figure can be estimated at several hundred people (in total, 15 two-year schools taught 1,613 children, and, accordingly, if we take the average figures, 3 such facilities should have around 332 students ([Nomikosov, 1884: 574-577](#))). However, even with this correction, it is obvious that in 1875-1880, the region managed to exceed the growth of school enrolment rates characteristic of the previous decade.

This, probably, should be attributed to the activities of the zemstvo bodies on the Don, which were introduced only in 1876. At the time, a familiar contradiction (we know well from previous periods) became distinctive – instead of facilitating the natural development of education in the Cossack environment (and it had appropriate prerequisites for this, as we showed above), the zemstvo authorities tried to accelerate the process by dramatically increasing allocations for educational institutions, and the funds for their operation were again collected from Cossacks. Here is a citation of N.A. Maslakovets on the state of affairs: “The Khopersky district assembly, despite very disadvantaged economic circumstances of the local population, expands the budget to a hundred thousand rubles for no imperative reason; moreover, despite the relatively efficient financial arrangements made for the public education in the district, it allocates 30,000 rubles for the same project” ([Maslakovets, 1880: 41](#)). As he noted, in the end this measure simply led to the refusal of the Khopersky district Cossacks to pay zemstvo duties ([Maslakovets, 1880: 41](#)). With his staunch conservative views, N.A. Maslakovets cannot be considered an absolutely reliable source in this regard; however, we uncovered complaints in the State Archive of the Rostov Region, executed by stanitsa assemblies that “zemstvos will inevitably bring well-off citizens into extreme poverty, and consequently, Cossacks would be much better able to maintain their life and material standing

without zemstvos” (GARO. F. 301. Op. 10. D. 85. L. 29-29ob.). Ultimately, the zemstvos’ attempt to speed up the development of the Don education, contrary to the logic of events, ended in failure: despite the fact that the existing schools were “packed with students and students to bursting”, Cossacks did not want to pay additional charges, imposed by zemstvos, to start new schools. So, the administrative bodies were closed down in 1882 (Volvenko, 2003: 51).

If we look back at the last diagram we analyzed, we can see that in terms of the education structure, the 1870 situation continued the trends of the previous decade. The number of students in district and female schools achieved stability for a while. The overall increase in the number of Cossack children receiving primary education was still driven by parish schools. However, as a reminder, by 1871 the total number of schools had reached 154 in the Don region. Meanwhile, there were only 121 stanitsa in the Don Host Oblast even in 1899 (Maslakovets, 1899: 42). So, by 1871, the majority of stanitsas were covered by a network of parish schools. This inevitably hampered the growth of the school infrastructure, and the number of the educational facilities increased only from 154 to 170 (excluding 3 schools in peasant settlements) from 1871 to 1882 (Nomikosov, 1884: 574-577). We can see that the pace was even slower than in 1866–1871 when the number of schools went up from 123 to 154 in half the time. It was evident that by the late 1870, the Don education should be redefined and leap to the next level of quality, similar to the one which it was organized in early 1860, while zemstvos could only offer quantity by increasing the funding for education needs. Moreover, as we showed above, the general financing of stanitsa schools worsened significantly from 1870, because the possibilities of stanitsa capitals were lessened in this regard.

Despite the background, the leap was still implemented, but its core was formed by literacy schools and parochial schools subordinate to the clerical administration. Based on the data from S.F. Nomikosov, first such facilities were opened on the Don in 1880, but even in 1882 there were only 18 such schools, both in Cossack and peasant districts, with 1,112 students (given the fact that the statistician wrote about “peasant literacy schools”, the contingent was mainly represented by peasants) (Nomikosov, 1884: 575-577). The secret of the subsequent growth of the number of such educational institutions and students in them can be revealed in the materials of N.A. Maslakovets’ commission. Kh.I. Popov, a renown expert in the Don local history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reported to this commission that parochial schools, unlike the schools, managed by the Department of Public Education, enjoyed no fixed funding, but were “left solely to the discretion of the department responsible for them and local communities and charitable institutions” (Protokoly, 1899: 259). According to his estimates, an average parochial school (including two-class schools) received 212 rubles per year, with around half the sum donated by local donors, and another quarter provided from the churches’ own income (the remaining quarter was paid by the Holy Synod) (Protokoly, 1899: 260). For comparison, in one-class parish schools, personnel alone were paid 460 rubles each year (Protokoly, 1899: 252). Therefore, when in the 1880s, the Don region saw parochial schools establishing on a massive scale, the process was not checked by the financial capabilities of stanitsas and the Host. Cossacks only paid donations they could afford, and the primary funding was provided by the Russian Orthodox Church.

According to the protocols of N.A. Maslakovets’ commission, parochial schools, being far from ideal, were able to partially meet need for education in the Cossack community. Another commission member, I.G. Folimonov even proposed that the entire responsibility for primary education on the Don should be handed over to the clergy in order to mitigate the discord between parochial schools and schools of the Ministry of Public Education (Protokoly, 1899: 262). However, as time passed, parochial schools faced increasing hardships in performing their functions at a minimum satisfactory level because they had to operate in the conditions of desperate shortage of funds. By the end of 1890, they survived only thanks to the initiatives led by the local diocese and civic courage of the clergy. Kh.I. Popov wrote that priests managed parochial schools and taught there the Law of God totally free of charge and, despite this, most of them “conduct their mission with zeal” (Protokoly, 1899: 260). Teachers in parochial schools were paid much smaller salaries than their colleagues in the schools run by the Ministry of Public Education, and deacons and psalm readers who graduated from the seminary were required to teach without any payment at all (we should note that Kh.I. Popov already did not speak of any “zeal” in this category of teachers) (Protokoly, 1899: 260). On the other hand, part of the funding allocated for the operation of the district and military inspections for parochial schools was actually transferred to schools in khutors (on the Don, new settlements, which had detached themselves from stanitsas) and stanitsas, in the

form of annual allowances (4,600 rubles per year) and, in addition, as one-time payments in case a new school was opened (from 8,000 to 12,000 rubles) (Protokoly, 1899: 260). Moreover, the diocesan authorities required that churches annually donate 44,000 rubles to support schools on top of the statutory 26,000 rubles paid from their incomes. As a result, this only allowed the schools to make ends meet in the teaching costs, but many parishes did not have even enough money to maintain church buildings (Protokoly, 1899: 260). With all their sympathy for parochial schools, Cossacks, because of quick impoverishment, found it increasingly difficult to pay the much needed voluntary donations to the schools, and the diocesan authorities ran out of resources to help these educational institutions (Protokoly, 1899: 260).

It is clear that in this context collecting accurate and reliable statistics on parochial schools was a matter of the low priority to their administrations. This might explain why the Don statistical editions of the 1880s (first of all, in “The memorial book of the Don Host Oblast”) informed only of the total number of students in the region without specifying their place of study and estate. In all probability, even the archives preserve no exhaustive information on the state of education in Cossack and peasant communities in the Don Host Oblast in the years – while the Ministry of Public Education differentiated stanitsa and rural schools, the church authorities did not. Therefore, we will review the period from 1880 to 1890, and up to 1895, inclusively, without creating diagrams similar to those provided above, relying on fragmentary statistics.

In the 1880s, parochial schools expanded even more intensively on the Don than parish and rural schools in the 1860s. While in 1882, as we showed above, there were 18 such schools with 1,112 students, by 1890, the number reached 350 (126 parochial schools and 224 literacy schools) with 10,248 students (Po voprosu..., 1896: 3)! This time, the rate of opening new schools continued longer than ever before as there had been already 553 parochial schools by 1894 that were attended by 17,616 people (On the subject ..., 1896: 4). By 1895, the church authorities succeeded in launching schools not only in each stanitsa, but also in each parish except for the two newly established church territorial units (in 1894 and in January 1895) (Otchet, 1896: 3). And again, schools were set up through grass roots initiatives as common people were interested in them. So, while in the 1850s, private teachers were hired in major stanitsas, in the 1890s, they were already invited to small khutors that had no even parochial schools (Protokoly, 1899: 261). However, such khutors lacked money to establish full-fledged educational facilities in line with the Ministry of Public Education standards: inhabitants could only afford to pay a teacher a monthly salary of 30-40 rubles (Protokoly, 1899: 261). As for the church authorities, they had no resources to open literacy schools in each khutor, and therefore, by late 1890, the existing educational facilities continued to be “excessively packed with students”, just as in the early 1880s (Protokoly, 1899: 261). Contemporaries noted with regret that the growing number of schools still failed to keep pace with the growing population, and the number of children who did not receive primary education only increased every year (from 145,556 in 1891 to 145,871 in 1895; however, we see below, the share of such children steadily declined) (Po voprosu..., 1896: 4).

Here, however, we should provide one more fact. From the 1870s to 1890s, the Don population was refilled largely through migrations from other Russian governorates. According to the calculations of a modern historian, M.V. Alyaev, between 1860-1870, the Cossack population grew by 1.56 % per year, and the non-resident population by 13.92 % per year (Alyaev, 2005: 38); for the period from the 1880s to the 1890s, he measured an annual growth at 1.77 % for Cossacks and at 7.44 % for peasants, both local and non-resident ones (Alyaev, 2005: 45). As a result, there was a gap between the rapidly rising number of schools and the growth of the population that was replenished only because of the inflow of migrants from outside. We will show below that the situation was noticeably better in Cossack stanitsas, and the improvement fell on the period from 1880 to 1890.

As for the relative figures, we have already written that the information, given by S.F. Nomikosov in 1870, indicated 11.2 % of boys and 2 % of girls who studied on the Don. Using simple calculations based on the primary statistics provided by him, we found out that in general the share of children who went to school was 6.7 % in the Don Host Oblast (Nomikosov, 1884: 578-579). By 1880, this proportion increased, but only slightly, to 9.3 % (Nomikosov, 1884: 578-579). Meanwhile, in 1890, according to the records of the Don diocesan authorities, the proportion of students reached 18.7 % of the total number of Don children, and by 1895 approached 23.2 % (Po voprosu..., 1896: 4). However, S.F. Nomikosov apparently overestimated the proportion of children

in the general population, taking the figure almost equal to 20 % in his calculations (Nomikosov, 1884: 578), while other authors considered it not higher than 9 % (Protokoly, 1899: 261). Perhaps, this is way a leap in the share of students in 1880 was not that impressive.

In any case, the results achieved disgruntled Don educators and officials in education. We quoted A.N. Kuropatkin as saying that “literacy was declining in the Don Host” in the 1890s. Although the Minister of War obviously exaggerated and dramatized the situation, his account was grounded not only on the fact that in absolute numbers the share of non-educated children increased on the Don. He cited statistics on other Cossack Hosts, which suggested that by 1897, 64 % of school-age boys attended school in the Urals Host, 75 % in the Orenburg Host, and the Kuban Host could announce that it had achieved universal education (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 2109. L. 95). In the circles of the Don clergy, it was rumored in the 1890s that the neighboring Kharkov and Voronezh governorates were ready to introduce compulsory education (Po voprosu..., 1896: 1). It is clear that in this background, the 23.2 % of the schoolchildren reported by the diocesan authorities could not be considered as a good performance indicator.

For this reason, when in 1899, N.A. Maslakovets' commission was created to identify the root causes of the impoverishment in the Don Cossack community, its members underlined the need to achieve “general male literacy” at least in the group of the Cossack population (Protokoly, 1899: 251). Data on education levels in stanitsas was collected by the commission specifically to understand how serious steps should be taken to achieve the goal. A comparison of the data with the information for 1882, provided by S.F. Nomikosov, suggests that in 1880-1890, the reach of primary education enhanced dramatically in the Cossack community. Over the period, the array of primary schools administered by the Ministry of Public Education more than doubled in stanitsas – from 170 to 368 (Protokoly, 1899: 251). Even the number of parish schools (that were already numerous enough) increased substantially (from 165 to 259). However, we would first emphasize the opening of many relatively rare educational institutions such as female schools (61 vs 14), and private schools (240 vs 14) (Nomikosov, 1884: 574-575; Protokoly, 1899: 250). The number of Cossacks who studied in schools of the Ministry of Public Education grew from 12,638 to 24,235 (Protokoly, 1899: 251). But even a more significant contribution was made by parochial schools, improving quantitative indicators on the Cossack primary education. According to Kh.I. Popov, the number of such schools in Cossack stanitsas reached 555 (171 parochial schools, 307 literacy schools and 77 female schools), and the facilities taught 18,576 people (Protokoly, 1899: 259)! As we can see, with selfless devotion shown by the Don priests and efforts of the diocesan authorities, the parochial primary education on the Don almost closed the gap with the secular education, and even surpassed it in the number of schools in less than two decades after it appeared. Hence, from 1882 to 1899, the total number of primary and secondary schools improved from 170 to 923 in stanitsas, and the number of students from 12,638 to 42,811. It is easy to see that in the long term, abolishing Don zemstvos not in the least slowed down the spread of primary education in the Don region, but on contrary the parochial version of the education, thanks to its cheapness and accessibility in small khutors, proved to be much more efficient than the zemstvo project.

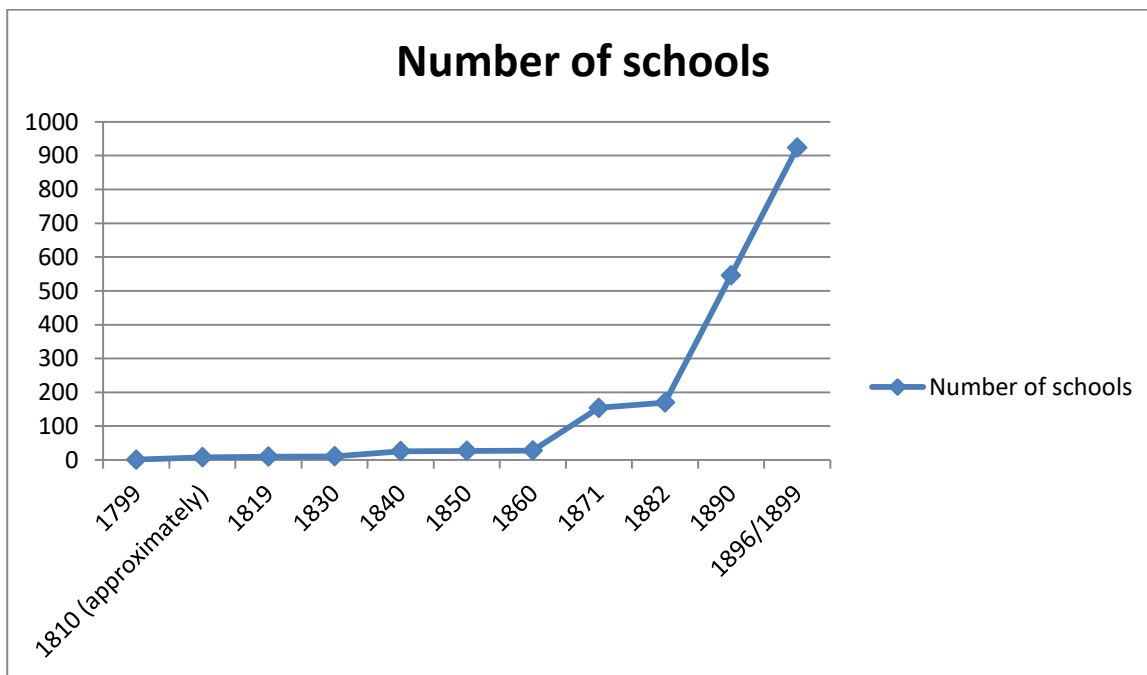
As a result, when N.A. Maslakovets' commission presented its findings on quantitative indicators on the Don Cossack primary education, the figures were unexpectedly most favorable. The commission evaluated that 67 % of boys and 22.2 % of girls of the Cossack estate studied in primary schools (Protokoly, 1899: 259). However, since the exact number of Cossack children was unknown to the commission, the figures were an approximate estimate. If they used S.F. Nomikosov's counting method, the data would have been much worse, namely it reflected that the primary education was received by 31 % of boys and 10.75 % of girls (as a reminder, members of N.A. Maslakovets' commission took the percentage of children was 9 % in the total the population, while S.F. Nomikosov – almost 20 %). This is another example illustrating that it is a great challenge to uncover any reliable absolute figures when studying the Don education.

In any case, members of N.A. Maslakovets' commission firmly believed that the level, at which most Cossack boys received primary education, had been successfully passed by 1899. One of the commission members, A.S. Yezhov, commented the conclusions: “66 % of male literacy among the school-age population brings it closely to general education so that we can consider that the population's need for it has matured, and only the lack of the adequate number of schools prevents the entire male population of school age from learning” (Protokoly, 1899: 251). However, the commission members argued that to promote further progression of the primary education,

Cossacks needed government support more than ever before. Schools were to be created in relatively sparsely populated areas of the Don Host Oblast, since densely populated areas already enjoyed the facilities; meanwhile, the poverty of the Cossack population worsened to such grinding levels that it was unable to endure new expenses on education (Protokoly, 1899: 252). Consequently, the last remaining internal resources of the population, Cossacks' willingness to study and the enthusiasm of the church authorities, having played their positive role in the Don education in 1880-1890, were now depleted, and the Don education was to face another period of stagnation unless it received any help from the state. And in his final report, N.A. Maslakovets formulated one of the points as follows: "The Commission stated the opinion that it is essential to employ all sorts of levers and practices to satisfy the needs, which are taking shape in the minds of the Cossack population, in the universal primary education for all of them" (Maslakovets, 1899: 101).

**4. Conclusion**

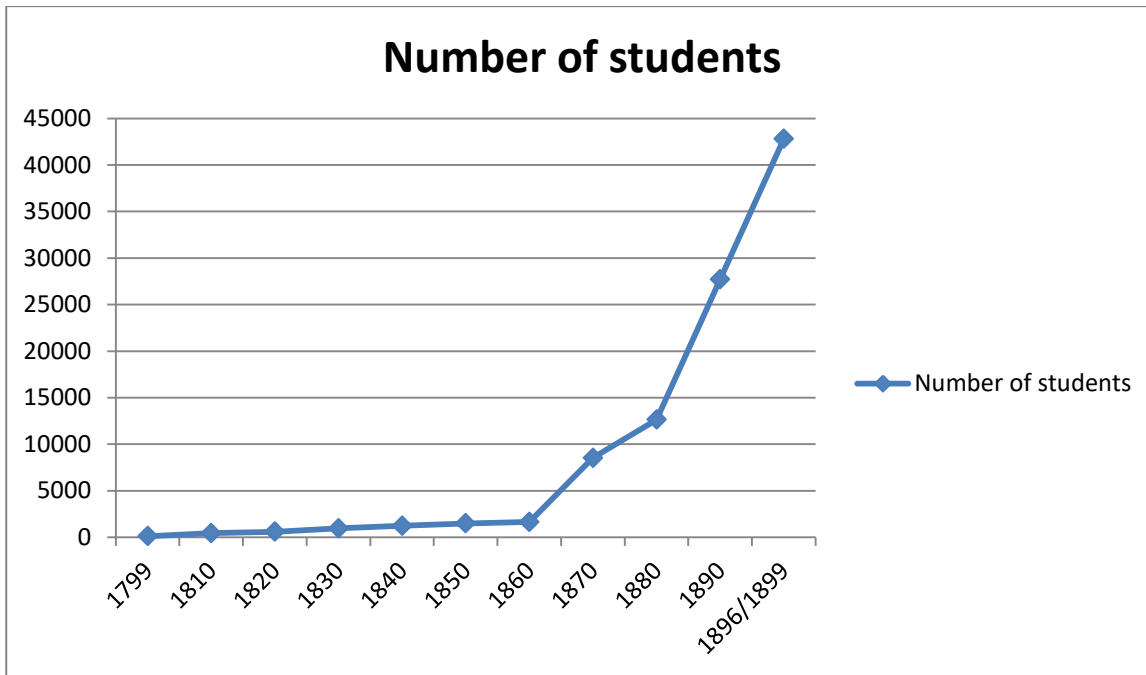
Summing up the points detailed in our paper, we would like to present two diagrams to readers to summarize the above statistical material.



Note. For 1890, we took the arithmetic average between 1882 and 1896/1899, because there is no data available for the period, and we proceeded from this starting point only to maintain the scale in the diagram.

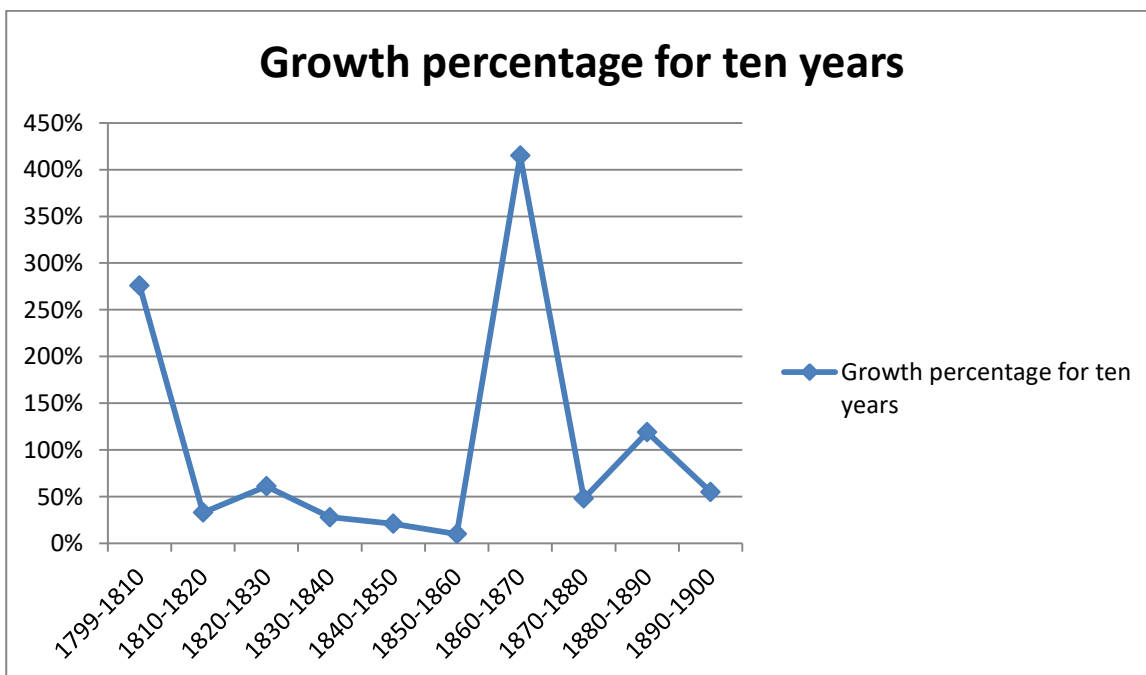
**Fig. 2.** Dynamics of the number of Cossack schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1799-1900





Note. For 1890, we took the arithmetic average between 1880 and 1896/1899, because there is no data available for the period, and we proceeded from this starting point only to maintain the scale in the diagram.

**Fig. 3.** Dynamics of the number of students in Cossack and parochial schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1799-1900



Note. The data for 1880–1900 are very approximate, as they are calculated on the basis of the arithmetic average for 1890.

**Fig. 4.** Dynamics of the number of students in Cossack and parochial schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1799-1900 (relative indicators, growth percentage over a decade)

The diagrams show that in absolute figures, the primary education developed in the Don Cossack community continuously throughout the 19th century. However, the development can be

precisely divided into two periods. In 1799–1860, both the number of schools and students in Cossack stanitsas grew at a very slow pace; schools existed only in district centers and major stanitsas, and as a result the documents in this and in the beginning of the next period gave rise to claims, popular in the Soviet historiography, that “In the largest villages, even in those closest to towns and cities, it was difficult to meet a literate person”. However, in 1860, the situation turned for the better. The period from 1860 to 1899 was characterized with a rapid growth in the number of both educational institutions and Cossack children who attended them. An indicative statement expressed in the Soviet historiography saying that, as it were, in the counter-reform period, in 1880–1890, “the reform of public education is increasingly curtailed by the government” turned out to be a historiographic myth as it was in these decades when more schools were opened than ever before, and the number of schoolchildren grew most rapidly in absolute terms. The situation in the Don education rather confirms the concept of a Rostov historian, R.G. Tikidzh'yan, proposing to consider the years from 1861 to 1905 as a single period of the Don Cossack modernization (Tikidzh'yan, 2016: 102-103).

If we look at the relative growth rate, we will see that each of the periods in the Don education development in the 19th century consisted of several stages, with periods of stagnation followed by the rapid growth in primary schools and students. Below we will try to provide a description of each of the stages.

1) 1799–1805. This time brings about the launch of first schools outside Cherkassk, and the event was facilitated by the activities to spread literacy rolled out by enthusiastic priests and policies of the Don atamans in the 18th century. Although the number of Cossacks wishing to study in the early 19th century seemed not to be too big, there were already enough of them to ensure the normal functioning of schools, at least in large administrative centers. Considering this, it is clear why *uezd* and “*uezd-style*” schools become the main type of primary school at the time. The number of schools and pupils increase by several times, but the increase is insignificant in absolute figures – we speak about the opening of individual schools and several hundred students in them.

2) 1805–1815. New schools continue to be started, but the number of students goes down (a unique situation for the period under review). Logically, the situation was pre-determined by the Napoleonic wars when a significant part of the male population was conscripted.

3) 1815–1835. The first period of relative stagnation in the Don education. Almost no educational institutions open, and the number of students grows by 100–200 people over the five-year period, and this is slower even in absolute terms as compared with the 1799–1805 period. Moreover, the growth rate slows down every five years, and we can speak of a visible crisis in primary schooling. Apparently, the crisis gradually developed as *uezd* schools depleted its capabilities. It was inconvenient for most Cossacks to take their children to study in remote administrative centers, parochial schools were scarce, and the number of students was insignificant there. Although the authorities did not object to the opening of such schools, there were practically no community initiatives to this end; sometimes the new schools had to close as Cossacks were unwilling to support them.

4) 1835–1839. This period marked a sharp increase in the number of parish schools initiated from the top, and they became the main educational institutions of primary education for the Don Host. Although the number of students indicated only a slight growth, the period created prerequisites for its further improvement.

5) 1839–1861. For the first time in the history of the Don education, stagnation resulted from the wrong policy of the imperial government. Cossacks demonstrated a stronger desire to study, but very few schools were opened, first because of the policy on Don Cossacks, pursued by Nicholas I, and later because of the bureaucratic complexity that made it very difficult to establish new schools. At the same time, Don Atamans M.G. Vlasov and M. G. Khomutov seemed to sympathize with the idea of enlightenment, and created the foundation to further accelerate the development of primary education. In particular, as early as in 1859, they raise the issue of teacher training for future schools, and in 1860, M.G. Vlasov petitioned to grant “permission to establish male and female schools in all stanitsas and populous settlements”.

6) 1861–1866. The time of the most rapid expansion of the Don Cossack primary education, estimated in relative numbers. In the previous five years, the number of students increased by 100–200 people, but now it grew by more than 5,000! Perhaps this is the only period when we can

speak of synergies between all stakeholders when “the authorities and society combined their efforts in the field of education” – stanitsa assemblies repeatedly requested the Host ataman to open new parish schools, and the Host authorities encouraged the process as much as possible by simplifying bureaucratic procedures and arranging training courses for teachers.

7) 1866–1884. However, this improvement did not last long. In the second half of 1860, Cossacks show weaker interest in developing education – it is obvious that schools already functioned in large stanitsas, and the process of starting new ones slowed down noticeably. On the other hand, since 1870, the Host authorities begin to gradually build up financial pressure on stanitsa budgets, handing them over more and more former host expenditures. Eventually, when by the second half of 1870, existing schools were overcrowded, stanitsas simply did not have enough money to open new ones. From this point on, the prevalence of those who wanted to study over the number of places available in schools becomes the norm for the Don. The introduction of zemstvos, contrary to the Soviet historiography, contributes almost nothing in the progress of education, but aggravates the financial plight: zemstvos make efforts to raise charges levied from Cossacks for school maintenance, and this leads to the closure of the zemstvo bodies.

8) 1884–1899. A partial solution for the situation was the opening of parochial schools that were mainly operated at the expense of voluntary donations and church authorities. With the affordability of such schools for the population, it became possible to establish them even in individual khutors, and the number of students in absolute figures grew more quickly than ever. Still, even the contemporaries, who sympathized with parochial schools, refused to recognize their operation as normal – in fact, the schools owed their existence only to the enthusiasm of the local diocese and priests who made great sacrifices for the sake of education. By the end of the century, the densely populated areas in the Don Host Oblast were fully covered by a network of schools, but the diocese and the population had no more resources, and creating new schools became impossible in less populated areas unless the government offered help.

The facts we gave above allow us to suggest that most concepts, prevailing in the Don historiography (about the major role of zemstvos in developing primary education on the Don, about a decline in education in 1880–1890, about the continuous fruitful cooperation between the authorities and society in education, etc.), disagree with the statistics that survived to the date. Moreover, the idea of small number of schools and students in the Don Host Oblast also should be corrected. If we take only the Cossack population, the proportion of students among the Cossacks of school age, calculated by N.A. Maslakovets' commission in 1899 (66 %), almost corresponds with the figures on other Cossack Hosts given in the same year by A.N. Kuropatkin (64 % for the Ural Host and 75 % for the Orenburg Host). Even if members of N.A. Maslakovets' commission gave a somewhat idealized representation of the situation, it is obvious that problems with attending schools mainly concerned the non-Cossack population of the Don Host Oblast, which rapidly increased, and providing an adequate number of educational institutions for the category was difficult for objective reasons. On the other hand, some important facts (for example, the role of the church in developing education or the impact of prosperity levels of Cossacks and the state of stanitsa budgets on the development) have remained unexplored so far. To turn around the situation, historians should shift from ideologically biased concepts and refer not only to individual documents and accounts of contemporaries, but to their total range that should be reviewed using a systematic approach, without picking up individual statements that confirm the a priori chosen concept.

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