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The System of Public Education in Astrakhan Governorate in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Part 1

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Abstract

This set of articles relies on reference and memorandum books from the period 1873–1917 to explore the development of the system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate. This is the first piece in the set. It examines the region's geographic, economic, and social characteristics and provides an insight into the state of affairs in its education sector as at 1873, i.e. the study's lower chronological limit.

The principal sources used in this study are the Memorandum Books for Astrakhan Governorate, relevant statistical descriptions, and relevant laws and regulations. Use was also made of relevant archival documents from the National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan (Kazan, Russian Federation). These sources contain official correspondence on the organization of the educational process in the region.

Methodologically, use was made of sets of historical (historical-systematic, historical-comparative, historical-typological, historical-genetic, and historical-statistical) and general (synthetic analysis, content analysis, and systems analysis) research methods.

The system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate was not as advanced as that in many other regions of Russia. There were difficulties, especially in the early 19th century, associated with the Russification of the region. As at 1873, the governorate had 38 educational institutions with a combined enrollment of 2,395 (1,702 boys and 693 girls).

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The period 1837–1873 was a time marked by brisk development in the region's female education sector, when its boy to girl student ratio changed from 8.8:1 to 2.45:1.

Keywords: public education, system of public education, public schools, Astrakhan Governorate, education in Astrakhan Governorate

1. Introduction

This set of articles on the development of the system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate comprises four parts:

- 1) Part 1, which represents a general characterization of the region's geography, economy, social situation, and education sector as at 1873.
- 2) Part 2, which represents an analysis of the system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate in the post-reform period (1855–1881, i.e. the reign of Alexander II) and the counterreform period (1881–1894, i.e. the reign of Alexander III).

This part focuses on the period from 1874 to 1894.

3) Part 3, which represents an analysis of the system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate in the period from 1894 to 1907.

This period saw the reign of Nicholas II and witnessed a number of momentous events in the Russian Empire's domestic and foreign policies, including the explosive demographic growth, the failed Russo-Japanese War, and the Revolution of 1905, and, as a consequence, a number of critical structural transformations, including the shift from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one, the emergence of a parliamentary system of government, and the dismantling of the traditional peasant commune, which had been in place for many centuries.

4) Part 4, which represents an analysis of the system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate in the period 1908–1918.

This chronological period saw the application of the Decree on Allocating 6,900,000 Rubles toward Primary Education of May 3, 1908, intended to make education more accessible to all citizens. The period witnessed World War I and the Revolutions of 1917 – the events that changed the nation forever.

The present article kicks the series off with a general geographic, economic, and social characterization of the region and an account of the system of public education in it as at 1873, i.e. the study's lower chronological limit.

2. Materials and methods

The principal sources used in this study are memorandum and reference books containing data on the region's educational institutions and student body. In particular, use was made of statistical data from the 1873 Memorandum Book for Astrakhan Governorate (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1873).

Use was also made of relevant archival documents from the National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan (Kazan, Russian Federation). These sources contain official correspondence on the organization of the educational process in the region.

A wide range of statistics was obtained from 'Statistical Data on Astrakhan Governorate (from a Report from the Chamber of His Majesty the Emperor)', published in 1845 in the *Astrakhanskiye Gubernskiye Vedomosti* newspaper (Statisticheskie svedeniya, 1845). This information helped gain a valuable insight into the development of the region's education system.

Valuable information is also available from 'Public Education', an article covering primary, parish, and parochial schools in Astrakhan Governorate published in 1838 in the June 4 supplement to the *Astrakhanskiye Gubernskiye Vedomosti* newspaper (Narodnoe obrazovanie, 1838).

Certain characteristics of ethnic minority education in the region were discussed in Issue 33 of the *Astrakhanskiye Gubernskiye Vedomosti* newspaper for 1850 (Astrakhanskie tatary, 1850).

Valuable statistical data on the region's ethnic and confessional makeup and the population size of its cities and uyezds are available from the First General Census of the Russian Empire of 1897 (Perepis'..., 1904)

Some information on education in the region in the waning days of the Russian Empire is available from 'The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod for 1914', published in Petrograd in 1916 (Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1916).

It has become a tradition for researchers in this area of study to draw upon laws and regulations reflecting the reaction of the government to changes in the socio-economic situation in the country, i.e. something that must, above all, have had an effect on the education sector. Of particular value in this respect is 'The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire', which comprises 33 volumes. The second collection covers the period from 1825 to 1881, and the third one covers the period from 1881 to 1913 (PSZRI, 1914).

In terms of methodology, use was made of both historical research methods (traditional and nontraditional) and general research methods.

The following traditional historical research methods were used:

- historical-systematic method (employed to explore the system of education in Astrakhan Governorate through the lens of the region's political, social, demographic, and economic situation);
- historical-comparative method (in terms of (a) the chronological aspect, employed to compare the states of the system of education in Astrakhan Governorate in different stages during the period under review; in terms of (b) the historical-geographic aspect, employed to compare the development of the system of education in Astrakhan Governorate with that in other regions of the Russian Empire);
- historical-typological method (employed to classify the region's educational institutions by level);
- historical-genetic method (employed to investigate the effect of the various preceding events and government policies on the development of the region's education sector).

The only nontraditional historical research method used in this work was the historical-statistical method (employed to conduct a quantitative analysis of the region's educational institutions and student body).

The general research methods employed in this study were synthetic analysis, content analysis of the literature and sources, and systems analysis.

The use of the above methods in an integrated manner helped conduct the research as objectively and comprehensively as possible.

3. Discussion

There is a relative paucity of dedicated research on the system of education in Astrakhan Governorate. Below is an outline of the prerevolutionary, Soviet, and contemporary historiography covering the development of the education system in the region.

The system of education in Astrakhan Governorate was researched fairly in depth by prerevolutionary historians.

A highly valuable work representing an in-depth analysis of the system of education in the region as an administrative unit is N. Kazansky's 'Public Education in Astrakhan Governorate', a series of articles published in 1898 in the journal *Russkaya Mysl* (Kazanskii, 1898a; Kazanskii, 1898b; Kazanskii, 1898c; Kazanskii, 1898d). The work explores the development of the governorate's education system right from the moment it was established, with insight provided into aspects such as types of educational institutions, ethnic education, and members of officialdom and teaching staff in the region with a substantial contribution to the development of its education system.

Muslim education in the governorate was examined by N. Mikhaylov in the article 'On the Education of Sunni Muslims in Astrakhan', published in 1844 in the February 12 supplement to the *Astrakhanskiye Gubernskiye Vedomosti* newspaper (Mikhailov, 1844).

Ethnic education in the region was examined in the article 'On the Introduction of Instruction in Tatar and Kalmyk at the Astrakhan Ecclesiastical Seminary', published in the *Astrakhanskie Eparkhial'nye Vedomosti* newspaper on March 1, 1891 (O vvedenii..., 1891).

Preschool education in the region was examined in 'On Preschool Education in the Astrakhan Region', published in the journal *Izvestiya Astrakhanskogo Gubernskogo Komissariata po Narodnomu Obrazovaniyu* on May 16, 1918. This article by V. Kalegulov analyzes the state of preschool education in the region both during the author's contemporary period and earlier (Kalegulov, 1918).

The operation of Astrakhan's First Male Gymnasium in the period from 1806 to 1914 was examined by T. Ostroumov in his copious monograph (over 800 pages) (Ostroumov, 1914).

Lastly, definitely worthy of mention are the prerevolutionary works analyzing the region in general and devoting some attention to its education system, namely 'Essays on the Lower Volga Region' by P.I. Nebolsin, published in Saint Petersburg in 1852 (Nebol'sin, 1852), and the 126-page book 'The Astrakhan Chronicle: Historical Figures, Events, Ordinances of Public Authorities, and Facts about Social Life in the City of Astrakhan for the Period from 1554 to 1896 inclusive' by A.N. Shtylko, published in Astrakhan in 1897 (Shtyl'ko, 1897).

Some general information relating to the region's socio-economic characteristics and the state of its education system is available from 'The Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary' (Brokgauz-Efron, 1890).

The only dedicated study on the history of education in Astrakhan Governorate released during the Soviet period is the dissertation 'Public Education in the Astrakhan Region in the Period between the 19th and Early 20th Centuries' by A.B. Olneva (Ol'neva, 1988). The region's education sector is mentioned in the period's several integrated works on domestic education only in passing alongside that of other areas in the Russian Empire. These include I.M. Bogdanov's 'Literacy and Education in Prerevolutionary Russia' (Bogdanov, 1964) and V.Z. Smirnov's 'Essays on the History of 19th-Century Progressive Russian Pedagogy' (Smirnov, 1963).

Of particular note are 'Essays on the History of Education and Pedagogical Thought across the Nations of the USSR (Spanning the Second Half of the 19th Century)' (Ocherki, 1976) and 'Essays on the History of Education and Pedagogical Thought across the Nations of the USSR (Spanning the Period from the Late 19th to Early 20th Centuries)' (Ocherki, 1991).

The relevant articles published in Soviet-era periodicals include A.G. Rashin's 'Literacy and Public Education in Russia between the 19th and Early 20th centuries', published in the collection *Historical Notes* (Rashin, 1951), and V.Z. Smirnov's 'The Ways to Maintain Student Discipline in Gymnasiums and Progymnasiums', published in the journal *Sovetskaya Pedagogika* (Smirnov, 1956).

Among the contemporary works covering the history of education in Astrakhan Governorate, of particular note is the monograph 'The Kazan Educational District between the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries' by I.E. Krapotkina (Krapotkina, 2011) and the textbook 'The Development of the Education Sector in Astrakhan Governorate in the Period between the 18th and early 20th centuries: A Series of Lectures' by A.M. Treshchev, G.V. Alferova, and E.A. Tarabanovskaya (Treshchev i dr., 2001).

There is a fair amount of research exploring the ethno-confessional aspects of education in the region. For instance, the monograph 'Islam in the Astrakhan Region' by V.M. Viktorin, published in Moscow in 2008, devotes a significant amount of attention to the key education-related issues that were faced by the governorate's Muslim residents (Viktorin, 2008). Some information about the ethnic education of Astrakhan Muslims is available from the fundamental work 'Government Regulation of Islam in the Russian Empire between the Last Third of the 18th and Early 20th Centuries' by D.Yu. Arapov (Arapov, 2004).

There appears to be a fairly large amount of research on ethnic and confessional education in Astrakhan Governorate. I.K. Zagidullin explored the Tatar school sector in the light of the Russification-focused policy pursued by the tsarist government in the second half of the 19th century (Zagidullin, 1992). The duo R.G. Rezakov and F.M. Rekesheva analyzed the ethnoconfessional aspects of preschool and primary education in Astrakhan (Rezakov, Rekesheva, 2014). E.A. Tarabanovskaya explored the role of non-governmental initiatives in the development of the system of national education in Russia in the early 20th century through the example of Kazakhs receiving education at an Astrakhan school for medical technicians and midwives (Tarabanovskaya, 2016). The series of articles by R.M. Islemisova is devoted to the historiography of the management of the education of Tatars in Astrakhan Governorate in the 19th century (Islemisova, 2013), the government's policy in the area of managing the education of Tatars (through the example of Astrakhan Governorate) (Islemisova, 2014), and the government's activity in the area of managing the education of Astrakhan Tatars in the first half of the 19th century (Islemisova, 2015).

A comparative analysis was also conducted of the development of the system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate vis-à-vis a few other regions of the Russian Empire, including Vologda Governorate (Cherkasov et al., 2019a; Cherkasov et al., 2019b), Voronezh Governorate (Cherkasov et al., 2020), Kars Oblast (Magsumov et al., 2020), Tiflis Governorate (Mamadaliev et

al., 2020), Penza Governorate (Mamadaliev et al., 2022), the territory of the Kuban Cossack Host (Molchanova et al., 2020), and Stavropol Governorate (Natolochnaya et al., 2020).

Some general information about the region's education system is available from A.A. Cherkasov's 'Primary Education in Russia (1894–1917): The Stages in Its Development' (Cherkasov, 2011), which contains data on Russia's literacy levels in the period 1894–1917.

4. Results

Astrakhan Governorate emerged as a standalone administrative unit in 1717 via a decree issued by Peter I on November 22, prior to which the region was part of Kazan Governorate. Its capital was the port city of Astrakhan, Russia's southern outpost. The territory of the governorate changed on a continual basis. At different times in history, it incorporated portions of modern Kazakhstan and parts of the Caucasus and had its territories incorporated into Kazan Governorate (Saratov, Samara, Simbirsk, Syzran), Orenburg Governorate (the territory of the Yaik Cossack Host), and Saratov Governorate (Tsaritsyn). Up to the mid-19th century, the governorate did not have a clearly defined territory. It began to have clearly defined borders only by 1862. However, following the Revolution the Bukey Horde became a separate administrative unit. Astrakhan Governorate was abolished in 1928. By the end of the 19th century, Astrakhan Governorate was comprised of the following areas (Perepis', 1897):

- Astrakhan Uyezd (population 219,760; capital Astrakhan (population 112,880));
- Yenotayevsky Uyezd (population 76,080; capital Yenotayev (population 2,826));
- Krasnoyarsky¹ Uyezd (population 65,995; capital Krasny Yar (population 5,593));
- Tsarevsky Uyezd (population 198,022; capital Tsarev (population 6,977));
- Chernoyarsky Uyezd (population 100,316; capital Cherny Yar (population 4,226));
- the Kalmyk Steppe (population 128,573);
- the Bukey Horde (population 214,796; capital Khanskaya Stavka (population 2,564)).

The region's capital, Astrakhan, became part of Russia under Ivan the Terrible in 1556. The city was of great importance at the time, being a port and trading outpost. It continues to be so to this day.

As a maritime region, Astrakhan Governorate was big on fisheries, which represented "a substantial source of income for local and non-local residents and was the hub around which other resource use sectors revolved" (Brokgauz–Efron, 1890: 361). A major sector in the region's economy was salt extraction. The region's second most significant sector was livestock farming (mainly horse and cattle breeding). The region was not big on arable farming, with most of this activity concentrated in Tsarevsky Uyezd, which itself could afford to supply wheat to other regions only in high-yield years. Gardening in the region was limited to grapes (Astrakhan's outskirts) and apples (Krasny Yar's outskirts).

In terms of ethnic composition, the governorate's population was dominated by ethnic Russians, with members of this group present in large numbers in Astrakhan, Astrakhan Uyezd, and Yenotayevsky Uyezd. The region's other large ethnic groups were Kazakhs (43.6 % in Krasnoyarsk Uyezd) and Ukrainians (38.2 % in Tsarevsky Uyezd and 40.7 % in Chernoyarsky Uyezd). The bulk of the population in the Kalmyk Steppe and the Bukey Horde was made up of Kalmyks (95.3 %) and Kazakhs (96.5 %), respectively. Overall, the governorate had the following ethnic makeup as at 1897: ethnic Russians – 40.8 %, Kazakhs – 25.5 %, Kalmyks – 13.8 %, Ukrainians – 13.3 %, and Astrakhan Tatars – 5.3 %. (Perepis'..., 1897: 91).

An acute issue facing the region's education sector was slow progress in Russifying it, with most of its ethnic minorities pushing for instruction to be conducted in their own native tongue, which contravened the government's policy of seeking to unite the nation. For example, when in 1821 the head of the Astrakhan Tatar community, M. Niyazov, brought up the matter of opening up a school where Tatar residents could be taught Russian, the proposal had no backing from either members of the Tatar community (which is quite logical) or the Governor (which is somewhat strange, as his input could have contributed to the furtherance of the cause substantially) (NART. F. 92. Op. 1. D. 1278. L. 8). Things changed during the reign of the authoritarian Nicholas I (vis-àvis the "liberal" Alexander II). The "orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality" formula by S.S. Uvarov

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¹ The city of Krasny Yar in Astrakhan Governorate is not to be confused with Krasnoyarsk, a modern Russian city located in eastern Siberia.

(Russia's Minister of Public Education at the time), embraced at the government level, provided the momentum to Russify the region. In 1838, professor Mirza Kazembek composed a template invitation for Muslim children not only in the native languages (Tatar and Persian) but in Russian as well, with the aim of urging them to pursue "national" education. The Ministry of Public Education backed the project and gave it the green light (NART. F. 92. Op. 1. D. 4816. L. 2-3).

Astrakhan Governorate's education sector was answerable to the Kazan Educational District.

Based on data from 'The Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary', as at 1890 the public education sector in the governorate (exclusive of the city of Astrakhan) was comprised of parish, primary public, parochial, and literacy schools. Across the region's uyezds, there were a total of 11 schools with a combined enrollment of 682 students (505 boys and 177 girls). Across its villages and stanitsas, there were a total of 193 schools with a combined enrollment of 1,809 students (6,203 boys and 1,887 girls). In the Kalmyk Steppe, there were five general schools with a combined enrollment of 1,144 students (1,099 boys and 45 girls). In the Bukey Horde, there were two specialized and six general schools (Brokgauz–Efron, 1890: 361).

The data in Table 1 are based on information from the 1873 Memorandum Book for Astrakhan Governorate and the article 'Public Education in Astrakhan Governorate'.

Table 1. Numbers of Educational Institutions and Students in Them in Astrakhan Governorate in the Period 1837–1873 (Kazanskii, 1898c: 4; Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1873)

	Number of educational institutions	Number of students		
Year		Boys	Girls	Total
1837	20	1,074	122	1,196
1850	23	N/A	N/A	1,412
1861	29	N/A	N/A	Approx. 1,500¹
1873	38	1,702	693	2,395

As we can see, the period from 1837 to 1873 witnessed a nearly twofold rise in the number of educational institutions in the region and a precisely twofold increase in the size of its student body. In the middle of the first half of the 19th century, boy students outnumbered girls in the region by a wide margin, with the boy to girl student ratio of 8.8:1 reflecting adherence to traditional (patriarchal) values in society at the time. However, things began to change by the middle of the second half of the 19th century, a trend observed in other regions across the country as well (Cherkasov et al., 2020; Molchanova et al., 2020). By 1873, the ratio was 2.45:1. This increase of nearly three times in the number of girl students in the region over a 36-year period is well reflective of liberal tendencies inherent in the reforms undertaken by Alexander II, including in the area of education.

However, the system of education in Astrakhan Governorate can hardly be characterized as advanced if we look at it from the standpoint of the numbers of educational institutions and students in the region against its total population. Certain regions of the Caucasus and Ukraine had a much better developed education system than Astrakhan Governorate (Mamadaliev et al., 2020; Cherkasov et al., 2022). However, there also were regions that trailed Astrakhan Governorate (e.g., Penza Governorate (Mamadaliev et al., 2022)) and those that were nearly on par with it (e.g., Vologda Governorate (Cherkasov et al., 2019a)) in this respect.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the insights gained from this study:

1) There is currently a relative paucity of research covering the development of the system of education in Astrakhan Governorate. The only component that has been researched more or less in depth is the ethno-confessional aspect.

¹ The data were obtained from the article 'Public Education in Astrakhan Governorate' (Kazanskii, 1898c: 4).

- 2) As a multi-ethnic region, Astrakhan Governorate was difficult to Russify, which was especially the case in the first quarter of the 19th century. Ultimately, this problem was resolved.
- 3) The system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate was not as advanced as that in many other regions of Russia. As at 1873, the region had 38 educational institutions with a combined enrollment of 2,395 (1,702 boys and 693 girls).
- 4) The liberal reforms undertaken by Alexander II, which brought about the collapse of the old patriarchal worldview, had a profound effect on the region's education sector, with its boy to girl student ratio changing from 8.8:1 in 1837 to 2.45:1 in 1873. And that is considering that a large portion of the region's population was Muslim.

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