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Published in the USA

European Journal of Contemporary Education  
E-ISSN 2305-6746  
2021. 10(4): 1057-1067  
DOI: 10.13187/ejced.2021.4.1057  
<https://ejce.cherkasgu.press>

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## Chrestomathies on the History of Cossackdom: A Comparative Analysis

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### Abstract

This paper is devoted to matching existing chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom ('A Don Chrestomathy' (1919) and 'A Chrestomathy on the History of Don Cossackdom' (1994)) against the technical principles for compiling such chrestomathies proposed in 2018 by M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev. The primary focus is on 'A Don Chrestomathy', created by a group of prominent Don local studies experts (including Kh.I. Popov and A.A. Kirillov). The paper draws the conclusion that 'A Don Chrestomathy' is based on totally different technical principles compared with the contemporary chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom – it acts not as illustrative material for the course on Cossack history but a universal book for extracurricular reading that provides a summarizing account of the prerevolutionary Don Cossack Host. While the direct use of 'A Don Chrestomathy' in present-day pedagogical practice holds little promise (most importantly, due to the absence in it of texts from the Soviet period), it does contain a number of potentially effective ideas, the likes of which are not present in the contemporary chrestomathies. This includes the division of texts into historical (relatively authentic) and literary (less authentic but capable of emotionally immersing the reader in a given era). In addition, use could be made of some of the forgotten texts in 'A Don Chrestomathy' as part of courses related to history and literature.

**Keywords:** Cossackdom, pedagogy, chrestomathy, methods for compiling chrestomathies, 'A Don Chrestomathy' (1919).

### 1. Introduction

At present, there is an obvious demand in Russia for the creation of various Don (Cossack) chrestomathies. Subsequent to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the first work of this kind was released by well-known local studies expert M.P. Astapenko (*Khrestomatiya, 1994*). In the

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21<sup>st</sup> century, books on Don literature have come out on a regular basis, with most of them intended for specific types of educational institution ([Literatura Dona, 2005](#); [Literatura Dona, 2019](#)). However, as noted by M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev in 2018, “there is virtually no scientific and research-and-practice literature on issues of compiling collections of learning materials and chrestomathies on history for secondary educational institutions” ([Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 175](#)). In the case of chrestomathies on Cossack history (the above-mentioned scholars do not consider chrestomathies on Don literature), this situation has had dire implications. According to M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev, M.P. Astapenko displays in his chrestomathy “a lack of self-reflection”, and the reasoning behind his approach to the selection of material is not very clear ([Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 175](#)).

M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev can lay claim to being the first in contemporary Russia to draw up a clear set of technical requirements for chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom. These requirements can be boiled down to the following five points: 1) try to use “texts that are short and vivid, capable of evoking an emotional reaction from the reader”; 2) “give up on the use of texts by contemporary researchers whose writing is dry and geared exclusively to specialists”; 3) “use prerevolutionary orthography”; 4) dispense with “changes to orthography and punctuation” and “editorial notes”; 5) limit it to “texts covering the pre-Soviet history of Cossackdom” ([Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 175](#)). At a minimum, these are debatable. However, one can only endorse an attempt to formulate clearly a set of requirements on selecting texts for a Cossack chrestomathy. Moreover, it is based on the insights from these researchers that a sort of chrestomathies (selections of texts for use in class) are compiled and employed today by instructors at schools that offer courses related to Cossack culture ([Strigin, 2019: 277](#)).

Thus, there exist no perfect chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom to date. What is more, the literature is quite scarce on the development of technical principles for compiling such chrestomathies. In creating a book of this genre, compilers can face a whole range of problems, including both those discussed in the articles of M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev and those overlooked by them. Most importantly, there is the issue of drawing a line between covering the history and covering the literature of historical Cossack regions in a chrestomathy. For instance, while the chrestomathy by M.P. Astapenko is formally devoted to the history of Don Cossackdom, in actuality almost all of the texts in it are literary texts depicting that history. For instance, most of the chapter on the Time of Troubles consists of excerpts from novels by P.N. Krasnov, complemented by folk songs, poems by A.S. Pushkin, and excerpts from works by two historians – a Russian one (V.O. Klyuchevskii) and a Don one (V.D. Sukhorukov) ([Khrestomatiya, 1994](#)). M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev, too, acknowledge the importance of including in chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom “works of literature, and even works of fine art” as something capable of evoking a stronger emotional response from the reader ([Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 179](#)). In the end, it appears that, within a Cossack region, chrestomathies on local literature and local history will inevitably either complement each other or conflict with each other if they include literary works on Cossack history.

With this in mind, it may be worth drawing upon the experience of creating the first special Cossack literary/historical chrestomathy, ‘A Don Chrestomathy’, published in 1919 ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918](#)). This chrestomathy has almost never been used as intended. The cause behind its being consigned to oblivion is obvious – released by the White government of the Don Cossack Host, its use in Soviet pedagogy was politically unacceptable. Neither prior nor subsequent to the disintegration of the Soviet Union did it attract the attention of either historians focused on the Civil War or pedagogues. Yet ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ is of interest from a number of aspects. Firstly, the team of scholars who compiled it includes prominent Don scholars and public figures such as A.A. Kirillov, A.I. Petrovskii, and Kh.I. Popov ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: flyleaf](#)). Secondly, unlike present-day pedagogues, they provide a clear foundation on how to select material ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918](#)). And thirdly, the majority of texts that form today the basis of chrestomathies on Don literature (e.g., not only works by M.A. Sholokhov and other Soviet writers but Cossack émigré literature as well) did not yet exist in 1919. Therefore, certain texts in ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ may be considered for re-inclusion in pedagogical practice.

This paper analyzes the principles underlying the compilation of ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ and selection of texts for inclusion in it, comparing them with those for chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom from the post-Soviet period. This may be of interest in terms of reviving the

prerevolutionary pedagogical experience, and may also help draw the attention of historians and pedagogues to this undeservedly forgotten book.

## **2. Materials and methods**

'A Don Chrestomathy' was created on the initiative of the government of P.N. Krasnov, the most notorious and controversial 20<sup>th</sup> century Don ataman. He is better known today as a Nazi collaborator and advocate of Cossack independence. However, in the period 1900–1910, this Cossack general had actually been going through quite a complex ideological evolution. He was keenly involved in opinion writing and was one of the ideologists of Don conservatives. For instance, his articles edited by Kh.I. Popov, who had close ties to Russian nationalists, would be reprinted in the Don Provincial Gazette newspaper (Kornienko, 2013: 93). Back in his day, P.N. Krasnov personally received an order from the Host's administration for the creation of a book on Cossack history to be used in schools. This led to the release of the popular book 'The Pictures of the Past Quiet Don' (Krasnov, 1909). Therefore, it is no wonder that, upon assuming the post of Ataman of the Don Cossack Host, the general/opinion writer would uphold the tradition of officially commissioning popular books on the history of Cossackdom.

Yet P.N. Krasnov went even further. He commissioned as many as two books, and these were unique – nothing of the kind had been released before 1917. Previously, the authorities had predominantly commissioned essays on the history of Don Cossackdom (apart from 'The Pictures of the Past Quiet Don' by P.N. Krasnov himself, another work worthy of note is 'Don Cossacks' by A.N. Pivovarov (Pivovarov, 1892)). This time, P.N. Krasnov commissioned popular essays on the geography of the Don region, which he entrusted to well-known geographer V.V. Bogachev (Bogachev, 1919), and a chrestomathy on Don Cossackdom that would contain a set of important texts about it. The ataman must have intended to make serious changes to the actual system of education in the Don region, including expanding the regional component in it (which was in perfect alignment with the ideology of his government). Thus, 'A Don Chrestomathy' was to form part of a set of books for the education of the younger generation of Don Cossacks. At a minimum, the set included 'Essays on the Geography of the Almighty Don Host' by V.V. Bogachev. Therefore, these two books may be considered a significant source on Don pedagogy from the Civil War period.

'A Don Chrestomathy' will be compared with 'A Chrestomathy on the History of Don Cossackdom' by M.P. Astapenko and matched against the principles for compiling Cossack chrestomathies clearly formulated by M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev. The use of the comparative method will help identify the similarities and differences between the principles for compiling chrestomathies on Don Cossackdom practiced by different authors. The use of the descriptive method will make it possible to introduce into general circulation some of the more interesting insights laid down in 'A Don Chrestomathy'.

## **3. Results**

### *Chrestomathy compilers and creation process*

The flyleaf of 'A Don Chrestomathy' lists five compilers: L.V. Bogaevskii, A.A. Kirillov, I.I. Nogin, A.I. Petrovskii, and Kh.I. Popov (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: flyleaf). All were members of the early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Don intelligentsia, who combined service, public activity, and local studies research. With that said, the political views of these individuals differed from one another quite significantly. Below each of them is discussed briefly for a clearer insight into the focus of the book compiled by them.

Kh.I. Popov had repeatedly attracted the attention of Don historians and local studies experts as a person who stood at the origins of the Novocherkassk Museum of Don Cossackdom. Materials on his activity are published to this day (Boiko, 2010). The first short biography of him was written in his lifetime – in a collection entitled 'Nineteenth Century Donians'. As evidenced in this biography, the son of an ordinary Cossack, Kh.I. Popov was a hardworking and talented advocate of Cossack traditions. He made his way up owing to a fortuitous combination of circumstances. Back in the 1860s, when he wrote articles for the local press on hot-button political issues, he was elected from his native stanitsa to a select committee in Novocherkassk, where he caught the attention of higher-ups and was granted a grade rank (Dontsy, 2003: 408-409). Subsequently, while serving in the Host's administration, he wrote extensively on local studies topics. Starting in the 1880s, he oversaw the establishment of the Don Museum, which he would go on to take the

helm of (Dontsy, 2003: 408-409). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kh.I. Popov was still actively involved in public life in the Don region, seeking to simultaneously “work as much as possible toward a Russian national revival” and “uphold, at the same time, the old precepts of Don Cossackdom” (Kornienko, 2013: 42). However, Kh.I. Popov’s extremely conservative views and his age (he was born in 1834) made him the target of jokes in the local press, and his attempts to take part in elections to the State Duma failed (Kornienko, 2013: 59-60). Thus, while being the oldest and most experienced of the compilers of ‘A Don Chrestomathy’, Kh.I. Popov tried to combine Russian nationalism with loyalty to Cossackdom.

In contrast to the old conservative, A.I. Petrovskii, Kh.I. Popov’s longtime political opponent, was a member of the Second State Duma representing the Constitutional Democrats (Boiovich, 1907: 92). In his day, he was a fairly prolific author who wrote both literary works and opinion pieces. He is the author of an original collection of satirical biographies of Don atamans (Petrovskii, 1916). In that collection, A.I. Petrovskii clearly expresses his social position, defending the democratic traditions of Cossackdom and contrasting them with the despotism of Russian emperors: “The era of appointed rulers out of Saint Petersburg, employed over the course of nearly two centuries by the crowned ruiners of this great country to punish the Silent Don for something and to warn of something, has expired; <...> the time will come before long when the old Don, roused and free from the yoke of imposition, will choose as Host Ataman whomever it sees fit through free popular election” (Petrovskii, 1916: 40). Accordingly, A.I. Petrovskii was a democrat, and, while he was not free from Cossack patriotism, his patriotism had a democratic tincture, as opposed to Kh.I. Popov’s nationalistic patriotism.

Another compiler of ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ whose contribution to Don history is significant was A.A. Kirillov, a theologian and local studies expert, whom contemporary historians even have written personal biographical articles on (Agafonov, 2005). Not a Cossack by descent (he was born in Novgorod Governorate), A.A. Kirillov taught for 41 years at Don Ecclesiastical Seminary, combining this with local church studies (Agafonov, 2005: 164-168). A true believer and connoisseur of Don history, A.A. Kirillov did not seek active involvement in politics, and nothing is known of his political position. That being said, it is highly doubtful that, being a priest and not a Cossack, he would have espoused the ideas of Cossack nationalism.

Finally, much less is known of the last two compilers of ‘A Don Chrestomathy’, L.V. Bogaevskii and I.I. Nogin. These individuals were associated with the Don Museum, the future Novocherkassk Museum of Don Cossackdom. I.I. Nogin even stayed in the Soviet Union after the end of the Civil War. He was in charge of said museum for some time under the Bolsheviks. After his death, he had the honor of being written an obituary for in the Soviet press (Lunin, 1935). According to the obituary, the “apolitical” I.I. Nogin, who had taken up work at the museum back before the revolution, was an excellent museum employee, a real “walking encyclopedia” for the Don region (Lunin, 1935: 168-170). While some may naturally find the above 1930s obituary inaccurate, it is curious that it talks about I.I. Nogin’s sincere desire to comprehend Marxism. It even mentions that the last major work effort undertaken by the old local studies expert was a “plan for exhibits in the historical/revolutionary section of the museum”, which eventually was put into effect with a few modifications (Lunin, 1935: 168-170). Thus, I.I. Nogin, perhaps including at the time ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ was being created, was not a convinced proponent of the White movement, but rather was a research scientist with an extensive knowledge of literature related to Cossackdom.

As regards L.V. Bogaevskii, this officer served for many years in the administration of the Don Cossack Host, was involved in local studies work, worked with the Don Museum, and in 1918 was appointed by the P.N. Krasnov’s government as the museum’s assistant director (Vergunova, 2012: 42-49). An uncompromising opponent of Bolshevism, it was he who oversaw the moving of the museum’s treasures outside of the country. During World War II, L.V. Bogaevskii assisted the Nazis in forming Cossack units in Yugoslavia (Vergunova, 2012: 42-49).

As we can see, to have ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ compiled, P.N. Krasnov enlisted the services of individuals who, on one hand, were quite influential and, on the other, represented totally different political spectrums. A Russian nationalist, a Black-Hundredist, if you will – and a Constitutional Democrat; the future creator of the historical/revolutionary section at the Novocherkassk Museum – and a future Nazi follower. With that said, at 1910 Kh.I. Popov and A.A. Kirillov were possibly the most sophisticated Don local studies experts. The first of them was hailed in his lifetime as the best



historian of Don Cossackdom, alongside V.D. Sukhorukov, an author active in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ([Dontsy, 2003: 408](#)).

Unfortunately, nowadays, work on creating chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom is mostly undertaken without enlisting the services of the more competent specialists in the field. What makes the chrestomathy by M.P. Astapenko particularly vulnerable is that it was compiled by one person, which could have provided a foundation for a fair amount of subjectivism on the compiler's part (it is no wonder that M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev note that the principle behind the selection of material for his chrestomathy is not very clear). M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev took part in the development of 'A Chrestomathy on the History of Don Cossackdom' at the Ob-Ugric Institute for Applied Research. However, this research facility is by no means a leading center for the study of Cossackdom. 'A Don Chrestomathy' is arguably a good example of how to form a team not for writing but for selecting important texts on the history of Cossackdom – it must include people representing a variety of social/political views and professions. Part in the development of said book was taken by prominent amateur local studies experts (Kh.I. Popov и A.A. Kirillov), political figures (Kh.I. Popov and A.I. Petrovskii), a professional scholar with museum work experience (I.I. Nogin), and functionaries (Kh.I. Popov and L.V. Bogaevskii).

At the same time, it must be taken into account that the potential of the team of compilers of 'A Don Chrestomathy' could not have been exploited in full measure amid the Civil War. The compilers themselves noted that they were faced with issues such as "hasty work, having to find the right material quickly in multiple other publications, difficulty getting the book published at this time, a shortage of paper, and a lack of spare time" ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: 406](#)). Therefore, one may need to draw a clear line between the compilers' technical ideas voiced in the preface and what actually came into being. Nevertheless, what makes 'A Don Chrestomathy' a decidedly interesting book is that it was put together by a strong team composed of individuals with totally different views on Don Cossackdom, yet desirous of creating a single body of texts on it.

#### *Concept for the chrestomathy*

The critical difference between 'A Don Chrestomathy' and the contemporary chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom lies in the focus of these books. M.P. Astapenko geared his chrestomathy to "students in schools, gymnasia, lyceums, colleges, cadet-corps schools, and other secondary educational institutions, as well as a wide audience of readers interested in Don history" ([Khrestomatiya, 1994: flyleaf](#)). M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev went even further – they suggested not just creating this kind of book "for students in upper cadet grades of secondary school teaching Cossack culture" but also gearing it directly to instructors practicing a style of teaching focused on "warm humor, plain and frank talk, and reflective reading" ([Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 178](#)). By comparison, 'A Don Chrestomathy' was intended to provide the reader with a way to "familiarize themselves with their native land in an unconstrained, comprehensive manner" ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918](#)). The compilers characterized the book as follows: "Intended for extracurricular at-home reading within the bosom of a Cossack family, 'Don Chrestomathy' can also serve in the instructor's hands as a school study guide for use in teaching literature, history, and geography, its content supplementing the inevitably terse and dry textbook" ([Donskaya Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918](#)).

Thus, the contemporary chrestomathies on Don Cossackdom mainly serve as school study guides that can be used for out-of-class reading as well. 'A Don Chrestomathy', on the contrary, was intended as a book for extracurricular reading that could be used as part of a school's curriculum. This conceptual difference was highly significant and gave rise to a raft of other differences, which will be described below. The compilers of 'A Don Chrestomathy' tried to create a universal collection of texts intended to "enable a comprehensive familiarization of the reader with their native land" ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918](#)), while the contemporary compilers tend to prepare their chrestomathies for use as part of a specific history or literature course. Therefore, it is impossible for the teacher to make complete use of 'A Don Chrestomathy', from beginning to end – simply because of the variation in the subject matter of texts within it. Apparently, the idea was that teachers would personally pick from it texts relevant to their course; on the bright side, reading 'A Don Chrestomathy' would provide children with an integrated interdisciplinary knowledge of the Don Cossack Host in the period 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, including its history, literature, and everyday life.

Correspondingly, there is a difference between the objectives pursued by the compilers of the contemporary chrestomathies and the authors of 'A Don Chrestomathy'. As already noted more than once, M.P. Astapenko did not explain what objectives he had pursued with his book. However, judging by the obvious predominance of literary texts in it, he desired not so much to provide the reader with a solid knowledge of Don history as to achieve their emotional engagement with it. M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev base their judgment on a similar technical rationale. Here is how they characterize the possible use for their chrestomathy: "The objective for the teacher is not only to help the student find and "absorb" historical information. The teacher must also seek to provide scholarly insight into the picture of the past, its poetics, re-create realistic images of our often forgotten ancestors, convey to the student the "aroma" of the past" (Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 178). Arguably, some of the debatable technical requirements for chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom proposed by them are specifically based on the suggestion that such chrestomathies are intended for use by teachers of this particular kind (someone who could, say, point out to the student an inaccuracy in a text by a prerevolutionary author and who attaches greater importance to the "aroma of the past", including in terms of orthography).

'A Don Chrestomathy' was to "enable a comprehensive familiarization of the reader with their native land" via independent, extracurricular reading. Therefore, its compilers attached much greater importance to historical accuracy. They also desired to achieve the child's emotional engagement with history, so they included excerpts from literary works on Don history. However, they not only complemented these with popular science essays on "certain particularly significant issues in Don history" but tried to provide the reader with "an interesting and truthful picture of the history of their native land" as well (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918). Therefore, whereas M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev are staunchly against the use in chrestomathies of "texts by contemporary researchers who write dry and almost exclusively for specialists" (M.P. Astapenko simply does not furnish such texts, without providing any rationale for doing so), 'A Don Chrestomathy' includes writings from a host of historians from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These are Kh.I. Popov himself, N.I. Krasnov (a prominent Don statistician in the post-reform period), and V.A. Potto, a Russian historian specializing in the Caucasian War. While a great many contemporary researchers of Cossackdom write in an abstruse scholarly style, there are some whose writing is quite clear and even literary. For instance, there is A.V. Venkov, one of the more prominent historians of the Don Civil War, whose scholarly books, which match the latest achievements of historiography, are written in a fairly literary style (Venkov, 2021). Arguably, the approach used with 'A Don Chrestomathy', which combines then-contemporary and old texts, is much more preferable than the one followed by the compilers of the contemporary chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom. Then again, that is just a consequence of a more prudent approach to the use of sources, whereby the emotional engagement of students is seen as a complement to the use of scientifically accurate texts, rather than a goal in itself. Perhaps, the use of this approach was associated with the engagement in the compilation of the chrestomathy of certain prominent specialists in Don history at the time. In this context, of relevance is the following excerpt from I.I. Nogin's obituary: "Characteristically, the typically humble and taciturn I.I. [Nogin] tended to react painfully and passionately to any "lightweight" literature on the Don region containing inaccurate, unverified, or incorrect information and statements and express indignation at the authors' lack of knowledge about the facts and neglect of relevant sources" (Lunin, 1935: 170).

#### *Structure of the chrestomathy*

Among the chrestomathies examined in this work, M.P. Astapenko's is the one with a simpler structure. It is divided into 18 chapters, which describe some of the key events and periods in the military history of Cossackdom. For instance, the 19<sup>th</sup> century is covered by the following three chapters: 'For the Honor and Glory of Russia... (The Wars with Napoleon, 1805–1814)', 'The Crimean War. Ya.P. Baklanov', and 'For the Freedom of Coreligionist Bulgaria (The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878)' (Khrestomatiya, 1994). Thus, texts on the Cossacks' everyday life and civil history, as well as writings by Cossack authors on non-historical topics, were not included in the collection. This approach appears to somewhat limit the potential for employing this chrestomathy for both academic and extracurricular reading – it can hardly be used even with courses on Don regional history, which will inevitably include sections covering the Cossacks' peacetime life.

M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev suggest that such chrestomathies be constructed based on the problematic-thematic principle rather than the chronological one (Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 178). However, it can be argued that they are not being sufficiently consistent in this respect. In practice, two of the three parts proposed by them for a Cossack chrestomathy follow the chronological scheme in a sufficiently standard manner – the parts on preimperial and imperial Cossackdom (Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 178-179). Only the third part, the one “on the spiritual culture of Cossackdom and images of Cossacks in literature and art”, is indeed problematic and original ((Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 179). A more significant aspect that differentiates this chrestomathy from M.P. Astapenko’s is that it has a greater thematic diversity of texts and complements the military history of Cossackdom with its civil history and history of everyday life (Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 178-179).

Whilst ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ is more original in structure compared to its contemporary counterparts, there are both upsides and downsides to it. Most importantly, in an attempt to “enable a comprehensive familiarization of the reader with their native land”, the compilers of this chrestomathy structured the material within it not chronologically and not problematically but thematically. The first part, as per the initial plan, was to be reserved for “literary works” (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918). The second part was intended to deal with history, so it was to incorporate trustworthy literary works and popular science essays on Don history (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918). Likewise, the third part was to be devoted to geography (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918). Theoretically, this kind of structure made the chrestomathy easier to navigate to enable the reader to find an excerpt with the minimum of trouble. Besides, it obviated the issue of emotionally engaging, yet historically inaccurate, texts – these could be included in the first part as fiction (e.g., the excerpts from N.V. Gogol’s ‘Taras Bulba’) (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: IV).

However, in actual practice, the compilers ran into a serious problem – the complete failure of their attempt to fit a comprehensive description of Cossackdom into a single volume of medium size. As a consequence, it was decided not to equally reduce each part but to remove the third, geography-related, part – in hopes that this material would be included in V.V. Bogachev’s ‘Essays on the Geography of the Almighty Don Host’ (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: 406). Concurrently, a similar problem was faced by V.V. Bogachev as well – as a comprehensive popular geographic description of the Don Cossack Host would not fit physically into a book for extracurricular reading, he, on the contrary, resorted to reducing the parts dealing with history and everyday life (i.e. ethnography) – in hopes that these would be covered in ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ (Bogachev, 1919: 516). According to V.V. Bogachev, this solution was suggested to him by P.N. Krasnov, who took an active part in the compilation of both study guides (Bogachev, 1919: 516). Thus, the instant failure of an attempt to create an all-embracing chrestomathy on the history, literature, and geography of the Don region would result in the creation of a chrestomathy on history and literature.

Besides, it is a lot harder for an unprepared reader to search for texts in ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ than in the chrestomathy by M.P. Astapenko. The reader can easily find their way through the latter based on the chapter titles – i.e., the texts are grouped to ease the reader's search for a particular event. By contrast, in ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ the texts are distributed between the historical and literary parts in a somewhat vague manner. For instance, the popular science essay by well-known botanist A.N. Krasnov, ‘Rare Plants in the Chakva Appanage Estate’, is subsumed under the literary part, while the excerpt from A.S. Pushkin’s ‘The Captain's Daughter’ is included under the historical part (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: IV). What is more, whereas in the historical part the texts are arranged in an easy-to-understand chronological order, the literary part has a fairly confusing structure. It is divided into five sections (chapters): (1) folk art, (2) poetry by Russian authors, (3) poetry by Don authors, (4) prose by Russian authors, and (5) prose by Don authors (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: I-V). And again, the use of this approach is well-founded and offers a number of benefits – it helps include in the chrestomathy both writings on the Don region by Russian authors and writings on various topics by Don authors. However, in actual practice, it is quite hard to find your way through the chapters due to the totally random ordering of the material from the participating authors. For instance, the three poems by N.V. Kukol'nik are provided separately from each other (Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: I-II). This appears to result in quite an inconvenience: in looking in ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ for a text dealing with a particular topic, the reader has to look through the tables of contents for all sections in the book. For instance, texts on the War of 1812 are present in the chapter on Russian poetry (‘Praise Be to Our Whirlwind Ataman’ by V.A. Zhukovskii), the one on Don poetry (the anonymous poem ‘In Memory of Count

Platov'), and, of course, the historical part ('The First Donian Shots on the Neman in 1812' by V. Shcharovskii) ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: I-V](#)). On the other hand, excerpts from works by L.N. Tolstoi are provided both in the chapter on Russian prose (the excerpt from the short novel 'The Cossacks') and in the historical part (the excerpt from 'War and Peace') ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: IV-V](#)).

Thus, there are some aspects about the structure of 'A Don Chrestomathy' that merit consideration. Most importantly, there is promise in dividing the texts into historical, i.e. characterized by a certain degree of authenticity, and literary, i.e. based on a made-up story. A clear line being drawn between local authors and authors from other regions who wrote about Cossackdom is of some interest for the reader as well. However, in general, the best thing about this chrestomathy, too, is the purely chronological structure of the history section. Perhaps, with a chrestomathy for school-age children, there is actually no point in moving away from the convenient approach of arranging the material in a chronological manner. A different structure could be suggested only when dealing with stories that do not readily fit into the chronological frame.

#### *Specific texts*

Unfortunately, M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev do not specify what kind of texts, in their view, must be included in a chrestomathy on the history of Cossackdom. Besides, they mention the names of possible authors of such texts only once – in the following context: "We have made use of quotations from N.I. Kostomarov, S.M. Solov'ev, V.O. Klyuchevskii, and other historians from the past" ([Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 179](#)). Therefore, in this case it appears to be impossible to match the methodologies proposed by them with 'A Don Chrestomathy'. Nevertheless, it is revealing that M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev speak specifically of "quotations" from historians from the past and, essentially, recommend using for a chrestomathy on the history of Cossackdom "short and vivid" texts, as was mentioned before.

Apparently, M.P. Astapenko followed similar principles in compiling his chrestomathy. Certain chapters in his book mainly include short (at times just a couple of sentences long) quotations from different sources. For instance, the chapter '...for the Don and Volga toward the East...' includes the following quotations (provided here in full): "The frontier created Cossackdom, and the Cossacks created Russia" (L.N. Tolstoi); "History holds a special place for the Cossack, as a warrior, in the military world. Only the Russian people have had Cossack settlers" (F.A. Shcherbina); "The Russians were approaching Siberia little by little... But the glory for the first conquest thereof ought to accrue not to the Russians but to the Don Cossacks" (A.N. Radishchev); etc. ([Khrestomatiya, 1994: 39-40](#)). Taking this kind of approach, which technically is possible to do for pedagogical purposes, is, from a purely scholarly standpoint, a sign of disrespect for the source. A publicistically-oriented statement wrenched out of context is certain to distort reality somewhat. Besides, M.P. Astapenko does not provide anywhere the specific source for each quotation, which is not particularly helpful to interested readers wishing to consult the original source.

The compilers of 'A Don Chrestomathy' take a much more scientific approach in this case too. They prefer using large, several pages long, excerpts or even freestanding short stories and essays, and providing not only the work's full name but in most cases the specific source for it too. Also, in the opening chapters (as a reminder, 'A Don Chrestomathy' was being prepared in haste, which may have hindered its compilers from putting all of their ideas into effect), some of the texts are even accompanied by short annotations. For instance, one of the poems is prefaced by the following introduction: "This is a wonderful, heartfelt poem dedicated to the Don by a little known poet named Yakubovich. The Don, its history, and the original way of life of its inhabitants could not but fascinate this ardent, richly gifted person. Yakubovich visited the Don in the 1820s, and here is what he has to say about it" ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: 55](#)). Arguably, annotations of this kind, intended to provide the reader with a tiny bit of information on the context in which a particular work was created, may be more than welcome in a chrestomathy on the history and literature of Cossackdom. It is hard to agree with M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev's assertion that commentaries to texts in such chrestomathies must be kept as short as possible, as that allegedly "helps open up potential for independent exploratory, including lexical, work" ([Ershov, Kiselev, 2018: 179](#)). By this logic, the actual chrestomathy may reduce the potential for independent exploratory work, so creating it makes little sense.

There is also considerable variation between the chrestomathy by M.P. Astapenko and 'A Don Chrestomathy' in content in terms of drawing upon diverse bodies of literature. According to



M.P. Astapenko, his book includes “excerpts from works by A.S. Pushkin, M.Yu. Lermontov, V.A. Zhukovskii, G.R. Derzhavin, A.V. Kol'tsov, I.I. Dmitriev, L.N. Tolstoi, and other icons of Russian literature” ([Khrestomatiya, 1994: flyleaf](#)). While this does not mean total renunciation of the practice of including texts by little known Cossack authors, the basis for the chrestomathy by M.P. Astapenko, however, is still Russian classical literature. ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ contains a much larger number of half-forgotten texts by Don regional writers and poets. There are over 60 poems by Don authors alone, with this body including works by totally forgotten litterateurs, the likes of which cannot be found in the chrestomathy in M.P. Astapenko ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: II-III](#)). For example, there are several poems by one of the compilers, A.I. Petrovskii, and here is one of them ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: 164](#)):

Russian	English
“Step' shirokaya krugom Vsyudu predο mnoyu, Ubralas' vsya, porosla Kovylem travoyu.	“The wide steppe is everywhere. It's all around me. All spiffed up, It has adorned itself with feather grass.
Edu den' i edu dva – Step' da step' glukhaya... Vot on, krai kazachii nash Bez kontsa, bez kraya!”	I've been journeying for a day and another In the vast, wild steppe, This land of ours, the land of the Cossacks, Unbounded and unending!”

Even more curious is the chapter on Don prose, which is dominated by writings from P.N. Krasnov and royalist writer I.A. Rodionov. While P.N. Krasnov's oeuvre is represented by fairly neutral excerpts describing everyday life (e.g., horse races between Don officers) ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: 258-263](#)), I.A. Rodionov's is represented here by opinion pieces of doubtful literary value, yet of relevance in 1919: “The might, honor, and glory of our motherland used to be our great goal; Orthodoxy and Tsardom used to be our refulgent beacons. Today, our once brightly shining beacons are being blown out by the foul-smelling mouths of some strangers; the people's eyes are being clogged with foreign smoke; in that pitch dark fog, it is getting harder to see the great goal. The people are confused; many have lost their reason for existence and, like a heavy block of rock, are plunging into the abyss below with a beastly bellow” ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: 244](#)).

Consequently, there is substantial variation between ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ and the chrestomathies by contemporary authors in terms of the selection of texts. The chrestomathy by M.P. Astapenko or a hypothetical chrestomathy compiled in accordance with the technical requirements proposed by M.F. Ershov and A.G. Kiselev, just on account of their reliance on texts by Russian classics and Russian historians, as well as their use of “short and vivid” excerpts from such texts, stand a much greater chance of getting contemporary schoolchildren interested. ‘A Don Chrestomathy’, which to a much larger degree relies on prerevolutionary Don literature and does not consider making use of the more advantageous excerpts from texts by modest authors, will hardly be of interest to readers with limited initial knowledge of the history of Cossackdom.

Therefore, the disregard for ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ on the part of contemporary pedagogue practitioners is understandable and explainable – apart from the book having a structure that is complex and inconvenient for an unprepared reader, the majority of texts in it are “morally outdated”. With that said, the compilers of the chrestomathy can hardly be accused of doing a poor job of selecting material for it – most of the prerevolutionary Don literature was not distinguished by a high average level, and is mainly forgotten now. Yet the number of texts by authors of longstanding fame, like P.N. Krasnov, V.D. Kryukov, and A.S. Serafimovich, included in ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ is fairly decent ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: IV-V](#)). Certain texts from this book appear to be of some interest and may be worth bringing back into pedagogical practice. In some cases, this has to do with the circumstances surrounding their creation. For instance, ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ contains patriotic poems by Cossack authors written during World War I ([Donskaya khrestomatiya, 1918: 150-151](#)). In other cases, of interest are the identities of the authors of these poems (e.g., A.A. Leonov, one of the first Don poets, or N.I. Krasnov, a statistician and major military functionary). In other words, while outdated as a chrestomathy for pedagogical practice,

‘A Don Chrestomathy’ has retained its significance as the first and so far only scholarly chrestomathy on Don prerevolutionary literature.

#### 4. Conclusion

What makes ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ a worthy alternative to the handful of contemporary chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom is that it is based on a completely different concept. Whereas the contemporary chrestomathies are narrowly specialized (in actuality, they are intended exclusively for use in schools as part of individual subjects), ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ was intended as a universal collection of texts on Cossack history, literature, and geography for independent reading, and its compilers had a clear understanding of the desired concept and stood by it all the way.

It follows from their experience that expanding the subject field in a Cossack chrestomathy has a few obvious benefits. Most importantly, it makes it possible to incorporate into it both popular science essays from serious researchers and avowedly fictitious fiction on Cossack history, without creating, however, a conflict between the provision of accurate information and the emotional engagement of readers. At the same time, the contemporary chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom, which do not draw a line between literary and historical texts, are characterized by a tendency to amplify the emotional component at the expense of the scientific one, going as far as fully giving up on the use of contemporary works from professional scholars. The mistakes made by the compilers of ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ are the result of the inhomogeneity of material published in it. More specifically, from the beginning they tried to fit into a limited space texts covering an excessively wide range of subjects (not only history and literature but geography as well); they failed to create a user-friendly system of separating scientific and literary texts (dividing texts across too many areas may complicate the practical use of a chrestomathy).

Furthermore, the universality of ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ makes it possible to use it today as a significant source on the Don region’s prerevolutionary literature. While the inclusion in this book of many texts by Don authors that are of doubtful literary value may hinder its use in present-day pedagogical practice, these texts are of undoubted interest to researchers of the history and literature of Don Cossackdom.

Lastly, when undertaking to create new chrestomathies on the history and literature of Cossack regions, it would help to draw upon the experience of ‘A Don Chrestomathy’ with a focus on learning from the imperfections and with a view to developing further the good aspects about it. Given the limited number of post-Soviet chrestomathies on the history of Cossackdom, building upon the experience of their compilers could be really useful.

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