

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИИ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

SOI: [1.1/TAS](#) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](#)

International Scientific Journal
Theoretical & Applied Science

p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) e-ISSN: 2409-0085 (online)

Year: 2025 Issue: 10 Volume: 150

Received: 01.10.2025
Accepted/Published: 30.10.2025 <https://T-Science.org>

Issue

Article



Yulia Igorevna Prokhorova

Institute of Service and entrepreneurship (branch) DSTU
Bachelor, Shakhty, Russia

Arthur Alexandrovich Blagorodov

Institute of Service and entrepreneurship (branch) DSTU
postgraduate student

Lyudmila Anatolyevna Romanova

Yug-Test LLC
Ph.D., Associate Professor,
deputy Director (Rostov-on-Don, Russia)

Svetlana Yurievna Korablina

LLC CPOSN Ortomoda
Candidate of Technical Sciences, Associate Professor, Deputy director

Galina Yurievna Volkova

LLC CPOSN Ortomoda
Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor, Gen. principal,
Moscow, Russia

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCHING THE ORIGINS OF THE COSSACKS AND THEIR SOCIAL STATUS IN RUSSIA

Abstract: In this article, the authors draw readers' attention to the fact that we have summarized the results of our research into the origins of the Cossacks, their social organization, and the relationship of the first free Cossack communities with the Russian state and the development of Siberia and the Far East in the context of the Cossacks' role in this great colonization movement to the East. For this purpose, we used analytical essays and materials from registered mass documentary sources and their chronological thematic registers of records, selected from the expenditure ledgers of the Treasury Prikaz.

Key words: Treasury Office, ethnosocial situation, post-Horde space, Great Horde, Russian state, history of the Cossacks, frontier zone, historiographic approaches, historical realities, neo-baptism, migration theory, Trojan War.

Language: English

Citation: Prokhorova, Yu.I., Blagorodov, A.A., Romanova, L.A., Korablina, S.Yu., & Volkova, G.Yu. (2025). On the importance of researching the origins of the Cossacks and their social status in Russia. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, 10 (150), 127-140.

Soi: <https://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-10-150-7>

Doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2025.10.150.7>

Scopus ASCC: 2000.

Introduction

UDC 193.57:303.46.

The authors summarize the results of their study of the origins of the Cossacks, their social organization, and the relationship of the first free

Cossack communities with the Moscow (Russian - since Ivan the Terrible) state and the development of Siberia and the Far East in the context of the role of the Cossacks in this great colonization movement to the East. For this purpose, materials from registered mass documentary sources from the Treasury Prikaz

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	PIIHQ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

archive, previously unpublished by Cossack historians, were used. Thematic registers of entries selected from the Treasury Prikaz expense books for the period from the election of Mikhail Romanov to the throne in 1613 until 1624 serve not only as an illustration of the analytical section, but also as a significant addition to and expansion of our knowledge of Cossack history during this period, for which many Cossack historians considered it unlikely to find new significant documents. Although some of these documentary materials were introduced into scholarly circulation by Ivan Yegorovich Zabelin, this work was incomplete and was carried out at a level that does not correspond to modern developments in archaeology: the selection of authored excerpts for publication is extremely capricious (if not random), and the historian failed to verify them with the original documents before publication, let alone reference specific manuscripts. Only in 1613/1614 these books were published, but at the same archaeographic level, which does not correspond to the modern development of science.

This article explores historiographic discussions about the origins of the Cossack phenomenon and the realities dictated by written sources. The study covers the period from the first mentions of the Cossacks to the first decades of Russian history, supported by extensive documentary sources documenting the existence of the Cossacks as an established phenomenon of Russian life. It also highlights the social organization of the free Cossacks and their place in Russian history and society.

The origins of the Cossack phenomenon are examined in the context of the military-political and ethno-social situation of the entire post-Horde region of Dasht-i-Kipchak, beginning with the collapse of the Great Horde. The main mythologemes of Cossack history and historiographical paradigms are examined. The validity of scholarly historiographic theories and concepts is examined from the perspective of the representativeness of their source base. The article attempts to trace the origins of some By popular myths, in which historiographic and biographical studies of the lives and work of the first non-professional historians from the Cossack community, as collectors, witnesses and bearers of many Cossack legends and myths, were of great assistance. In the article, the authors summarize the results of many years of research into the social organization of free Cossack communities in the context of development, namely:

firstly, the Russian state from the Grand Duchy of Moscow and Vladimir to the Russian Tsardom;

Secondly, in the context of the formation and development of the class-service structure of Russian society and its relationship with the taxable classes of the Moscow state, the history of the Cossacks is illuminated at the early stage of its formation and existence both in the Russian state and in the frontier

zone during the first decade of its history, provided by mass documentary sources, is a chronological register of records of the expense books of the Treasury Prikaz with the mention of the Don, Yaik and Volga Cossacks, the free atamans, esauls and Cossacks mentioned in them, the participation of the Russian Cossacks in the development of the lands of Siberia and the Far East and the formation of the Siberian Cossacks, summarizes the research of the authors of the history of the development of Siberia and the Far East and the initial history of the free Russian Cossacks, in the form of a chronological thematic register of records of the expense books of the Treasury Prikaz on the awards of Siberian Cossacks for service, the articles cover the first 12 years of the reign of Mikhail Fedorovich Romanova.

The data from these years is particularly valuable for the history of the development of Siberia, as it illuminates the period not only before the formation of the Siberian Prikaz (1637), when all Siberian service people were kept by the Prikaz of the Kazan Palace, the archive of which was almost completely destroyed in the fires of the 18th - early 19th centuries, but also before the great Moscow fire of May 1626. All this lends unique significance to the records of the ethnic Treasury Prikaz, revealed through a page-by-page review of thousands of pages of handwritten books.

Main part

The issues under consideration are considered "fundamental" in Cossack historiography: a correct interpretation of them determines the understanding of the entire history of the Cossacks, including not only their early but also subsequent periods. But since the Cossacks have always been a typologically complex phenomenon, we must first define the term itself. "subject of research". Documents relating to the early (pre-18th century) history of Russia reveal, on the one hand, "free" Cossacks, who lived on the steppe outskirts of the Muscovite state ("in the Field") in self-governing, independent communities; on the other, "service" Cossacks (otherwise known as "gorodovy"), stationed in the garrisons of border and "outlying" towns as riflemen and gunners; and "Cossacks," who constituted the lowest rank of warriors in the armies of the state entities that emerged from the ruins of the Golden Horde (the Crimean, Kazan, and Astrakhan Khanates, and the Nogai Horde). The question naturally arises: how, from this conglomerate of ethno-social groups called "Cossacks," can we identify those who were the ancestors of the modern Cossacks? It is common knowledge that it originates from eleven Cossack "troops" that existed in Russia at the beginning of the First World War (1914) - Don, Ural, Terek, Kuban, Astrakhan, Orenburg, Siberian, Semirechye, Transbaikali, Amur and Ussuri.

There are no particular problems regarding the origins of the Cossacks assigned to the "hosts" stationed in Asian Russia. As can be seen from well-

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИЦ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

preserved documentary materials, the Orenburg, Siberian, Semirechye, Transbaikai, Amur, and Ussuri Cossack "hosts" were specifically created between the mid-18th and late 19th centuries by order of the Russian government to protect the country's eastern borders by defining "into the Cossacks" were peasants, townspeople, retired and offending soldiers, "newly baptized" and representatives of other social groups, who, as a rule, had no previous connection with the Cossacks, with their "dilution" by people from the "city" Cossacks and from the previously formed Cossack "troops". In the small Astrakhan "troops", finally formed on the same principle in 1817, people from The "service class" (urban Cossacks, their children, and representatives of the "old" Cossack "hosts") still apparently predominated. The situation was similar with the Terek and Kuban Cossack "hosts," which were officially formed only in 1860 and by that time had also absorbed many peasants, smallholders, soldiers from military settlements, and other individuals of non-Cossack origin. But the Kubans' solid core was formed in the western part of their settlement by the "Black Sea Cossacks" (former Zaporozhian Cossacks), while in the eastern part, by representatives of the Caucasian Linear Cossacks, formed in 1732 by subordinating to a single command a chain of fortifications that by that time stretched from the Caspian to the Black Sea and were protected primarily by transferees from the Don and the Volga Host (created in 1731 primarily from Don Cossacks and abolished in 1777). The core of the Terek Host, meanwhile, was formed by the Greben and Terek Cossacks, who had long lived in the region, as well as the "linear" Cossacks who joined them.

Thus, all questions related to the problem of the origin of the Cossacks relate only to the history of the oldest Cossack "troops" - the Don, Ural and Terek, as well as the Zaporozhian - which goes back into the "darkness of centuries" before it was abolished in 1775, then continuing to exist as part of the Black Sea army (formed from "faithful Zaporozhian Cossacks" in 1783), resettled in the 1790s to Kuban. But even with regard to the history of the oldest Cossack "troops", certain reservations are required.

The fact is that the term "host" itself, as applied to territorial associations of free Cossacks, appeared in sources relatively late – at the beginning of the 17th century, yes and for a long time there was no clear distribution by location ("by rivers") among the Cossacks. Free Cossack bands ("stanitsas") could freely move from the Dnieper to the Don, from the Don to the Volga, from the Volga to the Yaik, from the Yaik to the Terek and back. They sometimes united for joint campaigns, sometimes, on the contrary, they were at odds with each other and moved from one camp to another. In the order documentation recording Moscow's contacts with the free Cossacks, they are localized, as a rule, by the place of their last location - from where they "came

out" for this contact. Therefore, along with the well-known Don, Zaporozhian, Yaik, Terek Cossacks, in documents of the 16th-17th centuries one can, for example, find mention of the "Polish" Cossacks (i.e., those who simply came out of the steppe - "from the Field") or even "sea" Cossacks (i.e., those who came from some sea campaign).

The Volga is often mentioned in contemporary sources as a departure point for Cossack detachments. But in addition to the "similar people" from various "armies" who "roamed" along this river, there were also many who lived more or less permanently, considered "native" Volga Cossacks. They even formed their own Volga "army." But it didn't last long—until the mid-17th century—and the "native" Volga Cossacks eventually joined the garrisons of nearby Russian cities (as strelets and other military personnel) and the "armies" of other Cossack rivers.

The latter was a common occurrence during the formation of Cossack "hosts": small and unstable associations of free Cossacks gradually fell under the influence of larger Cossack communities and merged with them, but as local groups, they were able to retain their distinctive character for a long time. Nevertheless, the centers of free Cossack unification in the 17th century ultimately became the middle and lower Don and its tributaries, the Yaik (Ural), the Terek, and the Dnieper below the rapids. The "hosts" that formed on these rivers became the historical core of the Cossacks, and studying the process of their formation may provide the answer to the "fundamental question of Cossack studies." By the 1990s, it was considered to be solved in principle. According to the works of outstanding pre-revolutionary and Soviet historians (G.F. Miller and others), the following scheme, such a picture of the origin of the Cossacks emerged.

No earlier than the 15th century, independent, self-governing, militarized communities of outcasts, fugitives, and adventurers of all kinds arose in the southern Russian steppes and adjacent forest-steppe regions, along the banks of steppe rivers then densely overgrown with forests and reeds, in buffer zones between various state entities. Initially, these were primarily drawn from various Tatar "hordes," and these "hordes," following the crisis of the Golden Horde statehood that occurred in the 15th century, were prone to political and social upheaval and no longer had the real ability to reliably control all the territories nominally under their control.

In the 16th century, the Free Cossacks increasingly included people from Russian and Ukrainian lands, and by the end of the century, they were already decisively dominant within the Cossack community. From their Tatar "cradle," the Cossacks brought with them many elements of material and spiritual culture, including specifically Cossack terminology (their self-designation, the words "ataman," "esaul," "bunchuk," "kosh," "maidan,"

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	PIIHQ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

etc.). However, the "foreign component" within the Cossacks was not limited to Tatars. By the will of fate, representatives of other peoples also found their way into their ranks: Poles, Vlachs, Lithuanians, Caucasian highlanders, Turks, Greeks, Magyars, Kalmyks, Kazakhs, and even Germans. However, the ethnic core of the Cossacks was still Russian (on the Don, Volga, Yaik, and Terek rivers) and Ukrainians (on the Dnieper).

The first Cossack communities apparently consisted almost entirely of bachelors, but over time the Cossacks (everywhere except the Zaporizhian Sich) began to acquire families. At first, their wives were mainly representatives of the surrounding peoples - Tatar, Turkish, Persian, highland women (in the Caucasus), who were usually captured during military campaigns and raids, and in good neighborly relations with neighboring peoples, they were acquired for a bride price. Gradually, the number of Russian women in the Cossack regions also increased: from the "captives" captured from the "infidels", from those who were taken by the Cossacks "from Rus'" during the increasingly frequent trips there on official, commercial or pious business, and later - from the families of settlers, because in the second half of the 17th century, Russians sometimes went "to the Cossacks" in whole villages. Gradually, this entire heterogeneous mass was transformed into a community that lived by interests that usually differed greatly from those in the homeland, and with the prevalence of common Russian features in language and spiritual culture, it acquired a number of important features that make it possible, closer to our time, to define the Cossacks of the Don, Yaik (Ural) and Terek as ethnographic groups (subethnoses) of the Russian people, and the Zaporozhian Cossacks as Ukrainian.

That is the entire scheme of the origin of the Cossacks, which was generally recognized in our country until the 90s of the 20th century. It was based on a huge and quite representative factual material accumulated over almost three centuries of scientific study of Cossack history. What is this material?

Firstly, this is a large complex of documents stored in our archives, to a large extent already published and clearly testifying to military affairs as the main occupation of the Cossacks and to the mass exodus of Russian people "to the Cossacks" in the 16th-17th centuries.

Secondly, there are references from the 17th-18th centuries to the predominantly Russian origin of the Cossacks, which belonged to both outside observers and the Cossacks themselves.

Thirdly, there are lists of names with indications of where the Cossacks listed in them came from. "came out."

Fourthly, there are many names and nicknames of Cossacks that have come down to us from the 16th-17th centuries, clearly indicating their Russian origin.

Fifthly, the work of linguists showing the

closeness of Cossack dialects to the dialects of those regions of Russia from which the majority of settlers came to these or those "Cossack rivers".

Philologists, moreover, have quite convincingly proven the origin of the word "Cossack" itself and found out that its root ("kaz") is Turkic, going back to the meanings "to wander", "to wander", "to migrate". It appeared (as vagrancy and outcaste itself), of course, long before the emergence of the Cossacks as such. It turned out, in particular, that the word "Cossack" is found in the Kipchak-Arabic dictionary, compiled, apparently, in Egypt and dating back to the middle of either the 13th or 14th century, and is interpreted there precisely as a person "homeless", "homeless", "loner", "wanderer", "exile". In Russian sources, "Cossacks" began to be mentioned at the very end of the 14th - beginning of the 15th centuries. At that time, this term denoted a rather broad and gradually expanding range of concepts, and the most common meaning at first was also "outcast", "homeless vagabond", "poor wanderer". But soon in Rus' another meaning of the word "Cossack" became much more common: a free man, a daredevil, engaged in military affairs. At the same time, in the Russian North, "Cossacks" were the name given to hired workers (and the expression "Cossacks" was in use there for a long time) "to Cossack" in the sense of "to labor"), among the Nogais - people, leaving those who went to work in foreign lands, among the Kumyks and Balkars - servants and farm laborers, among the Ossetians - captive slaves, etc., and in the Tatar states that arose on the ruins of the Golden Horde, "Cossacks" are simply the lowest rank of warriors (and not necessarily from ethnic Tatars), guards, lightly armed cavalry. All these facts led historians to an unambiguous conclusion:

The concept of "Cossack" primarily denoted a certain way of life, and not an ethnic or religious community.

It was clear that in the earliest references to the term "Cossack" reflected its main, basic meaning, allowing us to understand the reasons for the emergence of other interpretations and meanings. A person who fell out of the social structure of his society (expelled or left it himself), in search of means of subsistence could enter military service with one of the powerful of that world - this is how service Cossacks appeared, who made up the lowest rank of warriors, guards, in the Tatar khanates of the 15th-16th centuries, and the first city Cossacks in Rus'. An outcast and homeless vagabond could also engage in peaceful work, hiring himself out as a farm laborer for someone - this is how hired workers, called Cossacks, appeared. Fugitives and outcasts could finally unite into self-governing communities that lived by robbery and from time to time "sold their sabre" to the rulers of neighboring countries - this is how the free Cossacks appeared, which eventually united into the Zaporozhian, Don, Yaik and Terek "troops" - the

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИИ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

historical core of the Cossacks of Russia.

In the Turkic world, whole tribal groups sometimes found themselves in the position of fugitives and outcasts, having separated for some reason from their fellow tribesmen, but having nevertheless preserved their previous family, economic and everyday life. Then a separate ethnic group called "Cossacks" could have formed from them, and this is exactly what happened to the ancestors of modern Kazakhs, in whose name the last "k" was replaced by "kh" only in the late 1930s (and in the 18th-19th centuries they were called "Kirghiz-Kaisaks" or simply "Kirghiz"), but in Russian sources of the 16th-17th centuries this people appeared precisely as "Cossacks", and it was with reference to them that the expression "Cossack (or Cossack) Horde" was used. The concept presented was called the "migration theory" in the "Cossack studies" literature, and is still shared by most historians. However, since the early 1990s, when the revival of the Cossacks began in our country, it has been subject to harsh criticism. It is branded as "official", "state-owned", is called "runaway serf" (or "runaway peasant") and is contrasted with the "autochthonous theory", the essence of which boils down to the following, namely:

The Cossacks are a special people, having nothing in common with the Russian people in their origin. The immediate ancestors of the Cossacks in this regard are either practically all the peoples who have lived in the Don region, the Azov region and the Northern Black Sea region since ancient times (Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Goths, Huns, Avars, Khazars, etc. - up to the ancient Slavs), or one, specifically "Cossack" people, and, according to some adherents of this "theory", so ancient that they took an active part in the Trojan War (13th-12th centuries BC) and founded Rome.

The author of the last statement is E.P. Savelyev, a "Don patriot" who had neither a historical nor a higher education, and who published in 1915 a book on the "ancient history of the Cossacks", which has been reprinted several times in recent years and is very popular among today's Cossacks. On the same "ideological basis" in the second half of the 19th - first third of the 20th centuries, amateurish works by V.M. Pudavov, V.A. Golubintsev, I.F. Bykadorov, P.K. Kharlamov and other amateur researchers of Cossack history were built.

Having continued their publishing activities in exile, these authors passed on their vision of the prehistory and early history of the Cossacks to the next generation of emigrant historians, typical representatives of which were, for example, the creators of the three-volume "Cossack Dictionary-Reference Book", published in 1966-1970 in the USA (editors and compilers - G.V. Gubarev and A.I. Skrylov, who shared all the main concepts of the Cossack "independents" of the early 20th century,

also demonstrating at every step their political bias and lack (or complete absence) of scientific training.

The views of most representatives of this school of historical thought were formed during the Civil War, when "independent states" were established in the Don and Kuban regions, requiring corresponding ideological support. Subsequently, already in exile, the ideologists of Cossack separatism (primarily Don and Kuban Cossacks) acted within the framework of the "Free Cossack Movement" they had organized and were usually referred to as "Cossacks." They declared that "only in an independent state existence (a sovereign state or states) can the Cossacks achieve the highest spiritual and cultural development, equal and free coexistence of the populations of their lands, and their economic development" (I.F. Bykadorov), and they justified their right to this sovereignty by asserting the "ancient and non-Muscovite" origins of the Cossacks. The quintessence of Cossack separatism was expressed with utmost clarity in the words of the collaborationist general P.N. Krasnov, spoken to his comrades in Potsdam in 1944 and contradicting much of what he had said earlier: "Cossacks! Remember, you are not Russians, you are Cossacks, an independent people. Russians are hostile to you." Since the 1990s, these ideas have been almost entirely adopted by many activists within the Cossack movement and further developed in their works. Moreover, modern adherents of the "autochthonous theory" have included not only writers, journalists, philosophers, philologists, sociologists, engineers, retired military personnel, and other amateurs without a historical education. Professional historians have sometimes also fallen under its influence—though only those who have not specifically studied the early history of the Cossacks. Before examining the arguments of proponents of the "autochthonous theory," let's consider what they find objectionable about the "migration theory."

Let's immediately disregard the categorical assertions of some militant amateurs about its lack of "any evidence": such a position can be explained either by the total ignorance of its proponents, some kind of mental disorder, or political speculation. As noted, the "migration theory" relies primarily on a vast amount of documentary material, relatively well preserved in our archives and long since introduced into scholarly circulation. Among these, it is especially important to note documents related to the activities of the Muscovite state's foreign policy department—the Ambassadorial Prikaz, which for a long time was responsible, among other things, for relations with the Free Cossacks. These include various "cases"—Nogai, Crimean, Turkish, Don... The latter are particularly valuable due to their large number and the fact that a significant portion of them were published by the Archaeographic Commission between 1898 and 1917. She published 5 volumes ("books") of "Don Affairs" in the famous series

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	PIIHQ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

"Russian Historical Library", thus providing the opportunity to become familiar with this unique and invaluable complex of sources to all those interested in Cossack history.

But many proponents of the "autochthonous theory" are a priori critical of them, explaining their skepticism by the idea that archival materials could have been "falsified" at a later time. Those who admit this possibility demonstrate a complete ignorance and misunderstanding of archival science and the crucial historical discipline of source studies. Professional historians and researchers don't need to be told why archival documents can be removed from scholarly circulation (destroyed, classified), but cannot be falsified. Let's explain this to amateurs.

Each era is associated with its own order of office work, its own order of drawing up documents, its own writing materials, methods and manners of writing, differing from both previous and subsequent historical periods and well known to specialists. Even if we assume that some archivist, thoroughly versed in all these things, having found a blank sheet of paper from the 16th or 17th century (and the time of its production is easily determined by watermarks), writes on it some text in the handwriting corresponding to that time, with a properly sharpened pen and ink made according to an old recipe, he will be able to mislead his colleagues for a short time. Even without a chemical analysis of the components of this product, they will certainly recognize a fake, because it is practically impossible for one person to take into account all the paleographic subtleties. And since the production of such fakes cannot be an easy and quick matter, and finding unwritten sheets of paper from the 16th-17th centuries is generally extremely difficult, the very assumption that hundreds and thousands of storage units in our archives are fakes seems absurd ...

Among the more specific claims against the "migration theory," one often encounters the following reasoning: since the word "Cossack" appears in documents compiled before the 15th century, then, therefore, the assertion of "official historians" about the emergence of the Cossacks at the end of that century is not true.

In response to this, one can only reiterate that all manner of outcasts, vagabonds, and penniless wanderers, who engaged in robbery or hired themselves out to others and were called "Cossacks," could have been mentioned in sources long before the emergence of the Cossacks on the historical stage as an independent political force, represented by self-governing militarized communities. But it was precisely such communities, by general admission, that became the historical core of the Cossacks in Russia, and the beginning of their formation, according to reliable sources, dates precisely to the period from the late 15th to the early 16th centuries.

This process is directly reflected in the sources. Thus, in a 1469 entry by the renowned Polish

chronicler Jan Długosz, we read: "A multitude of Tatars, assembled from fugitives, robbers, and outcasts, whom they call Cossacks in their own language... invaded... the land of the Polish Kingdom."

In the Moscow Chronicle of the late 15th century, under the year 1492, we find the following entry: "On the 10th day of that same summer, June, the Tatar Orda Cossacks arrived, with Tomeshok at their head, and with them two hundred and twenty men - to Aleksin, to the volost on Voshan, and, having plundered, they went back." The message of the Grand Duke of Moscow Ivan III to the Ryazan princess Agrafena from 1502 has long been well known, in which it was said about her subjects, the Ryazan people, in particular: "And whoever disobeys and goes arbitrarily to the Don in a bravado, and you would ... order his execution, not denying the widow's and women's affairs." Regarding "molodechestvo," I'll note that "molodets" is a Russian synonym for "Cossack," which was in use at least until the mid-17th century. So even the traditional way of addressing Cossacks—"atamans and Cossacks"—sometimes read "atamans and molodetsy" (later evolving into "ataman-molodetsy"). And in the surviving 16th-century accounting documents ("desyatnya") concerning service people in southern Russian cities, against the surnames of many boyar children we find standard entries like: "wandered into the steppe," "went into the Cossacks," "went to the Don," "is a Cossack in the Field," "is an ataman among the Cossacks." No less famous is the letter of the Grand Duke of Moscow Vasily Ivanovich (1479–1533), in which he wrote to the Crimean Khan about the Cossacks "who live along the Don, having long fled our state." That is, according to these (and other) reports, the Cossacks of the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries already acted as fully formed communities, representing an independent political force with which the rulers of neighboring states had to reckon, which was not observed previously. By the middle of the 16th century, sources record a peculiar result of the first stage of the formation of free Cossacks. In 1538, during negotiations with one of the Nogai murzas, Moscow ambassadors said that "many Cossacks go to the Field: Kazan, Azov, Crimean and other darling Cossacks, and Cossacks from our Ukraine, having mixed with them, go." And the Putivl voivode reported to Moscow in 1546: "Now, sovereign, there are many Cossacks on the Field; "and the Cherkassians, and the Kievans, and your sovereigns, came to the Field from all the Ukraines..." Critics of the "migration theory" often cite the following argument: the main character of the Kievan cycle of epics, Ilya Muromets, is called an "old Cossack" in them, which means that the Cossacks already existed in Ancient Rus', i.e., at least in the 10th-12th centuries. Again, we have to acknowledge the extremely weak understanding of the source studies of the supporters

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИИ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

of the "autochthonous theory". They either do not know that almost all the epics that have come down to us were written down only in the 19th century, or they do not attach any importance to this fact. Meanwhile, over the centuries of their existence, the Kievan cycle of epics underwent significant deformation, and in them not only the heroes became "Cossacks", but also their enemies, instead of the Pechenegs and Polovtsians who really opposed Rus' in the 10th-12th centuries (the names of whose leaders are sometimes brought to us by epics), became "Tatars"—an adversary from a later era—and even the Chukchi and the Koryak-Olutors... As noted in one of their works by renowned scholars of ancient Russian history I. Ya. Froyanov and Yu. I. Yudin, "A study of the Russian heroic epic shows that many bylinas, having emerged during the tribal system, were subsequently reworked in accordance with new historical conditions, a new historical context. Therefore, the epic bears the stamp of different eras."

A related line of argument is the claim that Don Cossacks participated in the Battle of Kulikovo (1380). And in this case, the "ancientists" of Cossack history were not at all perturbed by the fact that this legend was recorded in the late 17th century and is not only unsupported by reliable sources but also contradicts them. As V.F. Mamonov notes, "there is essentially no reliable documentary or chronicle evidence of the existence of Don Cossacks in 1380, while legends about their participation in the Battle of Kulikovo abound," and "from author to author, from book to book, this story is enriched with new details," so that, for example, even the voivode Bobrok Volynsky is transformed into a "Cossack ataman." The legends widely circulated in pseudoscientific literature about the Cossacks presenting Prince Dmitry with icons (the Don Mother of God and the Grebenevskaya Mother of God) rest on a similarly shaky foundation. However, proponents of the "autochthonous theory" draw from these legends the entirely "logical" conclusion that by 1380, the Don Cossacks already had not only their own military organization but also churches with icons. A specific village is even named, whose residents supposedly presented Dmitry Donskoy with one of these icons—"Sirotsky Gorodok" (later the Sirotskaya Stanitsa). The only problem is that historians and archaeologists have determined that this village arose no earlier than the late 16th century. As for the Don as a whole, according to the notes of Hierodeacon Ignatius, who accompanied Metropolitan Pimen to Constantinople in 1389, along their entire route from the upper reaches of the river to Azov they did not see human habitation - "neither city nor village" - and of the inhabitants they met only nomadic Tatars.

In general, adherents of the theory of Don Cossack participation in the Battle of Kulikovo are distinguished by an extremely poor understanding of both the era it marks and the historiography of the

issue, which is expressed, in particular, in their "refutation" of those postulates of the "migration theory" that, in fact, do not exist within it. Thus, its proponents are credited with the view that the Cossacks emerged solely as a result of the flight of serfs and peasants from serfdom. "The year is 1380. There are no serfs or landowners yet, no one to flee from," declares one of its adherents. "autochthonous theory". "The fable... about the runaway Muscovites who founded the Don Cossacks has no basis and does not stand up to criticism. In the 15th century, when the Cossacks appeared on the Don, there was no serfdom in Russia yet, and anyone could move from one place to another," echoes another and adds: "Remember that the epic hero Ilya Muromets is called a "seasoned Cossack". But he acted much earlier than the 15th-16th centuries and was definitely not a runaway serf!"). "It is clear that the Cossacks existed even before the emergence of serfdom," the third opponent of the "migration theory" sums up the list of cases of mentioning "Cossacks" in sources before the 17th century. That is, according to their ideas, people could run and hide only from serfdom - there could be no other reasons for flight, but we will not find such statements in the works of competent researchers of the early history of the Cossacks. They point to the various motives that guided those wishing to join the Cossack ranks and cite relevant sources. In particular, to the notes of the Lithuanian ambassador to Crimea, Mikhailon Litvin, dating back to the mid-16th century. He explained the departure of the inhabitants of Rus from their long-settled places in the steppes as follows: "...Some are hiding from the power of their fathers, or from slavery, or from service, or from [punishment for] crime, or from debts, or from something else; others are attracted by... rich profits and more abundant places."

English travelers who encountered the "Russian Cossacks" on the Caspian Sea in the second half of the 16th century also did not associate the appearance of the Cossacks with serfdom and called them "exiles, placed outside the law." And the message of the former clerk of the Ambassadorial Office (who was then in charge of relations with the free Cossacks) Grigory Kotoshikhin about the Don Cossacks, long known in scientific circles and dating back to 1666, looks like this: "And they are people of Muscovites and other cities, and newly baptized Tatars, and Zaporozhian Cossacks, and Poles, and Lyakhs, and many of them Moscow boyars, and merchants, and peasants who were sentenced to death for robbery and thievery and other deeds, and having stolen and robbed their boyars, they go to the Don"). The opinions of historians who do not connect the origin of the Cossacks only with the escape from "serfdom" are either unknown to or deliberately ignored by the supporters of the "autochthonous theory", as well as the recently published data on the free departure of residents of the border Russian lands to the Don "to

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИИ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

become Cossacks" in the 16th-17th centuries. In particular, as O. Yu. Kuts showed on the basis of a large documentary material, and in the second third of the 17th century "people who committed a crime or fled from their owners did not always go to the Don to become Cossacks. Among those who came to the Don there were many personally free people, especially young people, and, above all, from the southern outskirts of the Russian state."

The interpretation by some modern Cossack activists of the statement of the Cossacks themselves about their origin, often used by supporters of the "migration theory", in the famous "Tale of the Azov Siege" (1642) seems rather strange: "We are fleeing from that Moscow state, from eternal labor, from free serfdom, from the sovereign's boyars and nobles ...". According to the head of the press center of the Great Don Army S.V. Kazakov, these words cannot be trusted, since the author of the "Tale" is Yesaul Fyodor Poroshin - a former serf, and not a "natural" Cossack. But, firstly, Poroshin's authorship is not a firmly established fact, and secondly, whoever wrote the "Tale", it conveys the moods and views of the entire Don Army, otherwise it would not have been so widely (and in several "editions") distributed among the Cossacks in its time. And could such lines from the Tale be foreign to the "natural" Cossacks: "Forgive us, our quiet sovereign Don Ivanovich, we will no longer ride with the formidable army after you, our ataman, nor shoot wild animals in the open field, nor catch fish in the quiet Don Ivanovich..."

The Cossack or non-Cossack origin of the authors seems to be of decisive importance for activists like S.V. Kazakov: the former, naturally, are much more trustworthy than the latter. But how, in that case, should the supporters of the "autochthonous theory" relate to the following statements by undoubted representatives of the Cossacks?

Former member of the Don Military Circle M.A. Polikarpov: "By blood, Cossacks are predominantly Russian people, but in admixture there is everything."

Former member of the Don Military Circle and the Supreme Circle of the Don, Kuban, and Terek, P.A. Skachkov: "Cossacks are a purely Russian, deeply original phenomenon..."

Cossack of the Don Army, General K.I. Sychov: "Cossacks, and the Don Cossacks in particular, are the descendants of Russian people, whose roots go back to the lands of Moscow, Suzdal, Ryazan, Vladimir, Novgorod, etc."

Or, finally, the ataman of the Terek army (since April 1917) M.A. Karaulov - one of the most educated representatives of the Cossack intelligentsia, who attributed the emergence of free Cossacks to the beginning of the 16th century: "We can safely say that the Cossacks are Rus', but not a weak-willed serf Rus', groaning under a foreign yoke and helplessly drowning in internecine strife, but a free, victorious Rus', widely spreading its eagle wings across the

steppe expanse..."

M.A. Karaulov's ideas about the reasons for the departure of Russians to Cossack communities are entirely consistent with scientific data. According to him, "the 'best' people of Muscovite Rus' flocked there, all those who, sensing great strength within themselves, wanted to unleash it across the open field, to show off their youthful prowess and gain honor for themselves, and glory for the Cossacks. Those who sought salvation from involuntary serfdom, from attachment to the land, to taxation, to a landowner, also flocked here, since by the end of the 16th century the Muscovite state already held its citizens in a tight grip, imposing upon them heavy obligations to the state—obligations that did not correspond to their rights. And so, whoever wanted to free themselves from this grip, from the burden of taxes and duties and from the tyranny of the sovereign's nobles and boyars; "Those who desired a free, uninhibited life, those who were not frightened by the general equality that reigned in the Cossack communities, but were drawn to the comradely brotherhood – all flocked to the banks of the "backwoods" rivers and swelled the ranks of the Cossacks..."

Some proponents of the "autochthonous theory" attempt to explain the position of its opponents during the Soviet era by claiming they were simply afraid of running afoul of Marxism-Leninism, since Karl Marx himself allegedly shared the basic tenets of the "fugitive serf theory" of Cossack origins. But what then about the above-cited statements by Cossack representatives? Attributing them to a fear of "running afoul of Marxism-Leninism" is simply not feasible in this case: M.A. Karaulov was killed in December 1917. "revolutionary-minded soldiers," while M.A. Polikarpov, P.A. Skachkov, and K.I. Sychov were émigrés, active participants in the anti-Bolshevik movement. So, one can probably doubt their affiliation with "natural" Cossacks... Critics of the "migration theory" of Cossack origins commonly use arguments such as these: the fugitive peasants, whom "official historians" consider the ancestors of the modern Cossacks, were unsuited to life in the "Field," lacked any military skills or abilities, "had no combat weapons at their disposal," and even if they did, they could not have transformed themselves, in such a short time, into skilled warriors before whom "Turkish sultans trembled," and so on. But these arguments are also completely unfounded, as are the assertions that "the warrior and the farmer, which the fugitive peasants were, have completely different mindsets, skills, and customs." Those who hold this opinion are simply "transferring" peasants of the 19th and early 20th centuries, whom they knew "from life" or from fiction, to the conditions of the "Wild Field" of the 16th and 17th centuries. But each era is characterized by its own sociocultural types. Moreover, it was usually the youth who joined the Cossacks from the peasantry, and they were always able to quickly adapt

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	PIIHQ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

to new conditions. Wasn't it from among the peasant youth that the armies of Rumyantsev and Suvorov, who demonstrated miracles of bravery and military skill to the world, were recruited? And in the 16th and 17th centuries, Cossacks were most often residents of border regions, who, due to constant enemy raids, had both weapons and the necessary armed skills for survival. It is significant that in the garrison in the "Ukrainian" city of Yelets in the early 17th century, as I.O. Tyumentsev and E.V. Kusainova have shown, former peasants predominated among the "novik" Cossacks. In Bryansk in the mid-17th century, as D.A. Lyapin discovered, "service was performed... by peasants from local settlements, armed with arquebuses, as well as coachmen with spears." In Western Siberia, according to a 1670 "registration," of 579 dragoons, 38 were from the tradesmen's milieu, and 384 were peasant children. Numerous so-called "siege" (or "estimate") lists and books of Russian cities have survived from the 17th century, specifying where and with what weapons each household owner should be in an "emergency time." These "lists" included both servicemen and tradesmen, as well as peasants. According to V.A. Volkov, "many district peasants were armed with combat weapons, including firearms, not only in border volosts but also in areas quite remote from the borders," and "in the south of Russia, weapons became a necessary accessory for almost all rural residents." In Siberia, right up until the 18th century, peasant volunteers often participated alongside servicemen in military campaigns against nomads to avenge raids on their villages and settlements; peasants at that time could even constitute the main force in the defense of Siberian settlements, quite officially receiving weapons and ammunition for this purpose from the "treasury." In 17th-century Siberia, there were numerous examples of typical peasants transforming into courageous warriors (a typical example being the "conqueror of the Amur region," Yerofey Khabarov), which is not surprising, given the northern (Pomor) origins of most Russian settlers beyond the Urals: during the Time of Troubles of the early 17th century, the "residents" of Pomorye, as V.D. Puzanov notes, "not only defended their cities and districts... but also formed militia armies that liberated the Muscovite state from foreigners." Beyond the Urals, these skills were, of course, in demand and were further developed.

The military organization of the taxed population of the Russian North from the 15th to the 17th centuries was specifically studied by A.M. Molochnikov. He demonstrated the prowess of the tradesmen and peasants of this region with both bows and arrows (easily explained by the hunting skills of the local population) and other weapons—arquebuses and "homemade guns," "toporki," berdyshes, spears, sulicas, and spears. The general assessment by contemporaries of the northerners' military prowess was as follows: "great warriors and extremely brave in

military affairs..." P.P. Epifanov, a prominent specialist in military history, came to the conclusion that in Russia in the 17th century, "the traditional skill of townspeople and peasants in handling bladed weapons and firearms, passed down from grandfathers and fathers to sons and grandsons, gave the government the opportunity, despite the enormous losses of military personnel in continuous wars, to systematically replenish the 'depleted places' of riflemen, gunners, and city Cossacks..." The desire of peasants and other "hard-earned people" to get into the service class by any means necessary is also quite well known, and it was not always welcomed by the government: almost everyone "Reviews" of outlying town garrisons in the 17th century revealed peasants recruited (often for bribes) into the streltsy, city and white-town Cossacks, reiters, and gunners. However, in the free Cossack communities, such "reviews" did not occur at that time. Today's Cossacks generally dislike the mention of peasants ("muzhiks") among their ancestors, and therefore some Cossack ideologists transfer the realities of the early twentieth century to the 16th and 17th centuries: even while acknowledging the flight of many peasants to the Don at the end of the 17th century (and there is no escaping this fact), they are certain that the peasants "did not become Cossacks" anyway, and that among all the other settlers (military serfs, nobles) only the descendants could become Cossacks - "after two or three generations." This purely speculative conclusion decisively contradicts the data of historical sources, relying on which researchers have long established that at the end of the 17th - beginning of the 18th centuries. The admission of fugitives (including peasants) into the Cossacks, although more difficult than in the past (and in some places newcomers began to be enrolled in the Cossacks "selectively" as early as the mid-17th century), did not occur "after two or three generations," but after a much shorter period of time - 5-7 years. According to the "interrogations" of Cossacks on the Yaik in 1719, "many declare that they are descendants and fugitives from various cities and suburbs and districts; gunners' and soldiers', and Cossack children, and yasak and palace peasants, and registered blacksmiths and their children, and tradesmen." And the overall result of the influx of the peasant population into the Cossack regions can also be illustrated by the example of the Yaik. There, by 1724, out of 4,536 representatives of the male Cossack population (including the elderly, children and the disabled), 3,196 people turned out to be from the peasantry, and from Of the Cossacks fit for service, 1,922 people (i.e. more than 60%) identified themselves as such. The life of the Cossacks in close proximity to hostile and numerous "hordes" while constantly engaged in "military business" was dangerous even in the 18th century. "In battles and campaigns", while defending their "towns", the Cossacks often suffered heavy losses and could not

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИИ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

neglect any opportunity to replenish the "army" by influx of people from outside. The Cossacks openly spoke to the Moscow authorities about the impossibility of "serving the great sovereign" without such reinforcements in response to demands to hand over certain fugitives: "only we give people over, and we will not go to the Don." And if the "army" sometimes accepted into its ranks even captured enemies from among the "infidels", then any Russian and Orthodox person capable of holding a weapon in his hands was even more "welcome" among the Cossacks... While stating this, one cannot help but admit that in Soviet historiography, when covering the issue of the social status of people who joined the Cossacks, a certain bias was allowed: apparently, trying to emphasize the closeness of the Cossacks to the oppressed strata of Russian society, and in connection with their active participation in the "class struggle", many researchers derived the Cossacks, first of all, and mainly, from the peasants (although they did not deny the presence of representatives of other social strata in it and even sometimes cited facts that cast doubt on the peasant origin of the majority of the Cossacks). Moreover, some historians, referring to V.I. Lenin, generally called the Cossacks "part of the Russian peasantry" or "a more organized detachment of the peasantry". However, in the last three decades, this imbalance has been corrected: historians increasingly emphasize that until the mid-17th century, the free Cossacks had the fewest peasantry members, while the most prominent among them were petty service people, including "combat serfs," i.e., military servants belonging to boyars and nobles.

And this is natural, since the final stages of the formation of a unified Russian state saw a serious infringement of the rights of local political elites. This is why, in the "desyatnya" (counties) of southern Russian cities from the early 16th century, records appear of this or that impoverished boyar's son "wandering into the steppe" or "joining the Cossacks." Among the free Cossacks of the 16th and 17th centuries, individuals with noble (and even princely) surnames are often encountered. That said, it is certainly impossible to completely deny the presence of former peasants among the Cossacks even at the early stages of their history: their absence among the Cossacks would be very strange, given that in the 16th–17th centuries, more than 90% of the country's population was made up of peasants. We find indications of the peasant origin of some of the Cossacks in reliable sources at least since the beginning of the 17th century, and later on, more and more often. It is noteworthy that among the Cossacks of Ataman Balovnya, who were captured after the defeat of his army near Moscow in 1615, those who came from peasant backgrounds, as A.L. Stanislavsky showed, occupied second place, making up 25.5% of those captured (and in first place, may the ideologists of the Cossack revival forgive me, were still serfs -

35.1%). Even such a convinced adherent of the "autochthonous theory" of the origin of the Cossacks as E.P. Savelyev was forced to acknowledge the appearance "on the Don in the first half of the 17th century of runaway serfs, whom the Cossacks, who were constantly in need of people, willingly accepted into their ranks." Numerous cases of peasants being accepted into the Cossacks on the Don were noted in relation to the second third of the 17th century by O. Yu. Kuts, and this acceptance was quite natural: by March 1667, there was a report from the Tsaritsyn governor, who was well informed about Cossack affairs, that "fugitive boyar people and peasants with wives and children came to many Don towns from the border (i.e. from the outskirts of the Moscow state).

Finally, it is well known that the ranks of the free Cossacks were often replenished by Russian people who escaped from "infidel" captivity, and these were people from a wide variety of classes, including peasants. In their efforts to debunk the "runaway peasant theory," some Cossack activists try to use such a scientific discipline as historical geography, but sometimes demonstrate complete ignorance of it. For example, here is what the Supreme Ataman of the Great Brotherhood of Cossack Troops V.F. Nikitin writes: "We open the map and look at these secluded corners in which hundreds of thousands of runaway peasants with their families and belongings could so successfully hide for at least two centuries. And what do we see? These are the largest, central, main rivers of Russia — trade and political highways! The Dnieper, Don, Volga, Ural and Terek. It is difficult to imagine a more unfortunate place to hide <...> There are no forests, mountains, impassable swamps here... This is mainly steppe, which can be seen for many kilometers around and where the search for fugitives is maximally simplified." At the heart of such reasoning is, once again, the transference of modern realities back into the depths of time, so characteristic of amateurs. In this regard, we cite the words of one of V.F. Nikitin's associates in the Cossack revival effort, the journalist V.I. Varenik. Unlike his eminent colleague, he had seriously studied the historical geography of his native Don region, and he was surprised by "the inattention that the overwhelming majority of Don history researchers paid to the problem of landscape zones, as if the centuries-long shifting boundaries of forests and steppes had never existed."

"Today's authors," writes V.I. Varenik, "approach the assessment of natural phenomena of the 15th and 16th centuries from today's perspective, without taking into account the global changes in climate and vegetation over the past 500 years." But back then, as V.I. Varenik convincingly demonstrates, large forested areas stretched along the Don, its lower reaches abounding with lakes that transitioned into swamps, branches, and channels "with a continuous sea of reeds." In other words, there were plenty of

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	PIIHQ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

places to "hide" on the Don at that time. And this is not V.I. Varenik's discovery. That dense forests once grew in wide swaths along the banks of the steppe rivers of the East European Plain was well known even to pre-revolutionary historians. It was also well known that, in addition to forests, vast reed beds—similar to those that covered the Lower Dnieper with its numerous islands and channels—could serve as refuge for fugitives. There, according to M.K. Lyubavsky, a leading specialist in historical geography, "only the Cossacks knew how to navigate the impenetrable wilderness of the floodplains. Turkish ships, caught in the floodplains in 1626, barely escaped and never again dared to penetrate their depths." And on the Lower Volga—in the Samara Bend—there were not only forests but also mountains with numerous caves, and it is no coincidence that this very place became a stronghold for the Volga Cossacks in the 16th century. And it is completely surprising to read about the absence of mountains on the Terek (i.e. in the North Caucasus!), where, according to one of the most substantiated versions, the Cossacks were called "Grebensky" because they initially settled "on the ridges of the mountains"... Thus, in the 16th–17th centuries, all sorts of fugitives had a place to hide on the "Cossack" rivers if necessary, especially since in this case we are not talking about "hundreds of thousands of fugitives", but about an immeasurably smaller number of them. According to data cited by R.G. Skrynnikov, at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, "the total number of free Cossacks on the southern outskirts of Russia (including the Zaporozhian Cossacks) hardly exceeded 11–14 thousand". At the same time, on the Don their number "hardly exceeded 3 thousand people. The number of Cossacks on the Volga was approximately the same". Half a century later, the demographic situation on the "Cossack rivers" had not changed fundamentally. According to the testimony of the Cossacks themselves, on the eve of the "Azov siege" of 1641 (i.e., as Cossack historians believe, "at the peak of its power") the Don Host consisted of approximately 10 thousand people. On other rivers in the mid-17th century there were much fewer Cossacks: on the Yaik - about 2 thousand, on the Terek - only 500. Incidentally, the dynamics of the Cossack population in itself demonstrates the inconsistency of the "autochthonous theory" of its origin. Thus, if after the "Azov siege" only about 4 thousand Cossacks remained alive on the Don, then after 10 years there were already more than 10 thousand, and by 1670 - about 20 thousand. It is clear that such an increase in the number of the Don Host through only "natural growth" (without a massive influx of people from outside) was impossible - especially considering the fact that most Cossacks at that time did not have families ... The Cossacks usually built their first "towns" in the most secluded, inaccessible places—they were, therefore, wary of

enemy attack. Not so much from "Rus" as from the surrounding "hordes" (Nogai, Tatar), as well as Turkey. Due to the great difficulties of organizing them (due to the distances involved), expeditions by Moscow's armies to the Cossack rivers were generally quite rare (and far from always successful). Until the early 18th century, they did not aim to capture and return fugitives "to Rus." If they did occur, they were "targeted," directed only against groups of "thieving" Cossacks who had somehow greatly angered Moscow. With the rest, Moscow preferred to negotiate "service" (and not without success), forced to accept the fact that "there is no extradition from the Don." It is also quite understandable why those who aspired to become The fugitives, "free men," didn't settle in some remote taiga wilderness hundreds of miles from human habitation, but, as V.F. Nikitin put it, went to "the largest, most central, and most important rivers of Russia—trade and political thoroughfares." Cossacks were usually "passionaries" who preferred "military pursuits" to peaceful labor, but it's clear that if you start doing so under the tsar's command on the highway somewhere in the Murom forests, turning into a common robber, you won't have much fun for long: sooner or later you'll be caught and hanged, and the "swag" from such a "trade" won't compare to the spoils of plundering merchant ships on the Volga or raiding "for zipuns" to the Turkish, Crimean, and Persian shores. And if such campaigns coincide with Moscow's foreign policy plans, then one can receive a "salary" for them from the "great sovereign"... Along the same lines, proponents of the "autochthonous theory" counter the arguments of "official historians," even appearing in fiction: since people fled to the Don and other "backwater" rivers, it means they had somewhere and someone to flee to—that is, some permanent population already lived there, and this, of course, was the "Cossack people" or some remnants of the "original," ancient Cossacks, some kind of "core." But this argument also doesn't stand up to scholarly scrutiny. It wasn't just individuals who fled to the "Wild Field," and history knows numerous examples of people self-organizing in new lands and successfully adapting new settlers to unfamiliar conditions. These include the "Bukhtarma masons"—Old Believers who left in the 1770s and 1780s. Beyond the borders of the Russian state, deep into the Altai Mountains (into "Stone") and settling there on the Bukhtarma River, throughout the 19th century hosting numerous refugees from the already firmly established regions of Siberia. And the first European colonists on the American continent. And the founders of "pirate republics" in the Caribbean. To whom did they flee? And indeed, would human settlement across the globe have occurred without the work of pioneers and settlers? But in our case, the Russian people just had "who to turn to" "to flee": in the second half of the 15th century, Cossack bands were already in full swing "on the Field." But these

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	PIIHQ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

were, of course, not representatives of the mysterious "Cossack people," but of a people well known to contemporaries and historians—outcasts and fugitives from the Tatar hordes. As R.G. Skrynnikov believed, "at first, the number of Russian settlers in the 'wild field' was small, and they often settled in Tatar stanitsas, where runaway slaves and 'black people' who had strayed from their nomadic camps lived." A.L. Stanislavsky presented the process of formation of the first Cossack communities in a similar way: "Whether Slavic Cossack detachments were created on the Tatar model, whether the Slavic element gradually displaced the Tatar element in the free steppe detachments, or perhaps both occurred—sources provide scant information on all this. However, for a long time, the Cossacks remained relatively indifferent to the nationality and class origins of those they accepted into their ranks. A Nogai Tatar next to a former Ryazan peasant, an impoverished boyar's son under the command of a serf—these were common combinations even in the 17th century."

Conclusion

One of the most powerful arguments used by opponents to debunk the "migration theory" of Cossack origins is the "phenomenon of Cossack self-awareness." They claim that Cossacks, for the most part, always clearly distinguished themselves from Russians, did not consider themselves Russian, "never historically associated themselves with the Muscovite people," and so on. Indeed, such views were already widespread on the Don by the end of the 18th century, and later on other Cossack rivers, and this fact is often presented as evidence of a distinct Cossack origin, distinct from Russian: popular memory, they say, is infallible. Some authors, moreover, claim that the Cossacks never associated their origins with the migration of their ancestors from anywhere else. "Cossacks descend from Cossacks" is the leitmotif of their statements on this matter (usually accompanied by a reference to the relevant episode from M.A. Sholokhov's "Quiet Flows the Don"). And there are also those among Cossack scholars who believe that not only the Cossacks of past centuries did not consider themselves Russian, but also the inhabitants of the Moscow regions, and the government itself, viewed the Cossacks as a distinct nationality." Doctor of Historical Sciences (and "ancestral Kuban Cossack") N.N. Lysenko, who specializes in the history of the Iranian-speaking nomads of Eurasia in the 2nd century, BC - II century. AD even "develops" this idea and comes to a very "bold" conclusion: "Not only in the majority, but perhaps in all sources without exception on the history of Rus-Russia of the 14th-17th centuries, we will not find any mention of the Cossacks in the context "Russianness"... And it "thus becomes clear to him that at least the Don Cossacks—the alpha and omega of Russian

Cossacks"—had "very few common genetic roots with the Great Russian ethnos." To be convinced of the absurdity of these claims, it is enough to look at the so-called Siberian Chronicles, which describe Yermak's campaign: the comrades of the famous ataman are directly called "Russian Cossacks," "Russian warriors," and "Russian people." And the notion that the Cossacks never considered themselves Russian is also untrue. Documents have preserved Cossack statements about their ancestry: among the Don Cossacks, as early as the mid-17th century (in the aforementioned "Tale of the Azov Siege"), and among the Ural and Greben Cossacks, closer to the mid-18th century. And all of them traced their ancestors primarily to Russian territory, directly calling them "fugitives" and "newcomers from various places."

The Cossacks' ideas about their origins as "fugitives from Russia" are even recorded in folk legends about the events of the 16th century recorded in the Don region. Many historians have already noted this fact. A.L. Stanislavsky emphasized that in the 17th century, Cossacks "perceived themselves as part of the Russian people, and considered their settlements to be part of Russia" ("the Muscovite state"). S.M. Markedonov quite reasonably concludes that since the "Tale of the Siege of Azov" was addressed not to the Ottomans or the Crimeans, but to the Zemsky Sobor of the Muscovite state, its words about the Cossacks' origins ("we flee from that Muscovite state from eternal slavery, from unfree servitude, from the sovereign's boyars and nobles") should be seen as the Don Host's official recognition of their flight from Rus' to the Don as the primary source of their formation. O.Yu. Kuts draws attention to the Don Cossacks' keen reaction to the "plundering" of Rus's Orthodox population during the Tatar raids, calling those taken captive into "infidel" slavery "their fathers, and mothers, and half-sisters." This found support and understanding among the Muscovite government, which praised the Cossacks for serving the sovereign, "remembering... their nature." In a study of the socio-psychological makeup of the Don Cossacks of the 17th century, based on a solid documentary base, O. Yu. Kuts also concludes that they were characterized by a sense of belonging to the Orthodox world, the Russian state, and the Russian population. "Being largely of Russian descent," writes Kuts, "the Cossacks retain a sense of belonging: the Don Cossack community, in its worldview, recorded both in Cossack military dispatches to Moscow and in internal Don documents... appears to us to be largely a part of Russian society." According to O.V. Gubenko, "the Cossacks of the Caucasus, primarily the Terek Cossacks, have in all eras served as a connecting link (in various forms) within the pan-Caucasian society, while ensuring the connection of this society with Russian society and remaining, regardless of their pronounced Caucasian character, an integral part of the Russian cultural space." T.A.

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИЦ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

Tkachenko also writes that the Terek Cossacks, who lived far from the borders of the Russian state at the beginning of the 17th century, "felt themselves an integral part of it." N.A. Mininkov notes that the folklore tradition of the Don Cossacks linked the time of their appearance on the Don with the "Kazan service" of Ivan the Terrible (i.e., only with the mid-16th century), and, examining the mentality of the Don Cossacks of the 17th century, comes to the conclusion that they then "equally felt their belonging to Russia, and to the Don, and to the Russian people," that in the documents emanating from the Don Host "there was never a desire to oppose the Cossacks to the Russian people, and the Don to Russia," and the Don Cossacks "felt themselves part of the all-Russian unity."

It is noteworthy that in the 1660s and 1670s, the expression "Russian Cossacks" was common in the Don region—if, for example, it was necessary to distinguish them from the "Khokhlachi" Cossacks), and the descendants of the Nekrasov Cossacks, who left Russian territory in 1708 after the suppression of the Bulavin Uprising and eventually settled in Turkey, retained the historical memory of their origin and considered themselves Russian until the end of the 19th century.

In Russia, after the influx of foreigners and free admission to the Cossack ranks ceased, turning the ranks into a closed, privileged class, the Cossacks quickly began to forget their roots, and the increasingly pronounced distinction and alienation between the Cossack and the "peasant" began to be explained by exotic genealogies, especially since the Cossacks had already formed their own nobility, which was repugnant to the very idea of "peasant" origins. A class-based pride emerged, which, in turn, acquired an ethnic dimension. Let's recall Leo Tolstoy's story "The Cossacks," written in 1863: already in the mid-19th century, the Greben Cossacks viewed the Russian peasant as "some kind of alien, wild, and despicable creature." According to the famous traveler G.N. Potanin, the Ural Cossacks also sharply contrasted themselves with "the rest of the Russian people." At the end of the 19th century, Similar sentiments have been noted by researchers even among Cossacks beyond the Urals, where Cossack armies were artificially formed by government decree, with peasants being recruited en masse. There, too, Cossacks began to look down on "muzhiks" (peasants) as "an inferior breed," distancing themselves from "Russians" in every way, and marriages with "muzhiks" or "little peasants" were generally unheard of among Cossacks. Subsequently, claims of Cossack descent from fugitives sometimes came to be perceived among Cossacks as a direct insult, as they were interpreted as

an attempt to separate the Cossacks from the "Muscovite dregs."

The underlying contempt for the "peasant" (muzhik), according to eyewitnesses, was characteristic, above all, of the Don Cossacks in the second half of the 19th century. According to observations by the ethnographer and lawyer M.N. Kharuzin, dating back to the early 1880s, "the Cossacks do not like non-residents, they call them "Russians", "Rus", and oppress them in every possible way, although, according to the Cossacks themselves, they cannot do without them, because "a Russian will fence a wattle fence, a Russian is a blacksmith, he is also a digger, a tailor, a carpenter, a sheepskin weaver, a pustoval, a laborer, and a merchant" ... The situation of the "Russians" was especially difficult in former times: for example, upon seeing a Cossack, a non-resident was obliged to bow to him from afar; If he doesn't do this, then "the very last Cossack" could beat him with complete impunity."

B.S. Kornienko explains this situation by the fact that by the early 20th century, in the Don region, the "muzhik" was perceived as "the antithesis of the exalted image of the 'glorious Cossack,' devoid of the latter's masculine traits," but "parasitizing on the Cossack backbone," since he often managed his farm more successfully than most Cossacks. Kornienko also sees a distinct socioeconomic underpinning to this "Cossack nationalism." The fact is that by this time, the class organization of the Cossacks had come into conflict with the modernization processes underway in the country, which were incompatible with the existence of a distinct military service class. The threat of transforming the Don Host Oblast into a regular province, stripping the Cossacks of their privileges (and, consequently, "turning them into muzhiks"), became apparent. Under these new conditions, the Cossacks also proved uncompetitive as agricultural producers. The influx of "outsiders" into the Don Host region at the beginning of the 20th century led to their numerical superiority over the Cossack population, who looked with envy at its lands and actively penetrated economic spheres inaccessible to most Cossacks (trade, finance, etc.). Hence the Cossacks' desire to prove the "original" rights to their territory, the slogan "The Don for the Don Cossacks," and other manifestations. "nationalism".

Other researchers of the "late" history of the Cossacks have reached similar conclusions regarding the causes of Cossack "separatism." Some of them suggest looking at the problem from yet another angle: as the question of abolishing the Cossack class increasingly became a topic of discussion in the early 20th century, Cossack leaders began to vigorously "prove" that the Cossacks were a people, not a class, that could be abolished.

Impact Factor:	ISRA (India)	= 6.317	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
	ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 1.582	ПИИИ (Russia)	= 0.191	PIF (India)	= 1.940
	GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.100	IBI (India)	= 4.260
	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

References:

1. Bogaevsky, B. A. (2024). On the origin of the Cossacks // *Native land: Bulletin of the Don Military Association*. No. 1, Paris.
2. Gordeev, A. A. (2023). *History of the Cossacks*. Moscow: Strastnoy Bulvar, Books 1, 2, 3 – 2022, Book 4 – 2023.
3. Gordeev, A.A. (2024). *History of the Cossacks* / Preface by A.V. Shishova, Moscow: Veche.
4. Grushevsky, M. S. (n.d.). *History of the Ukrainian Cossacks before unification with the Moscow State*. vol. 1–2, Kyiv, 2023–2024.
5. (2025). *Demyan Bedny. Red Cossack*, Moscow: Publishing House of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets of Russia, K. and K. Deputies.
6. (2023). *Don Cossacks in the Patriotic War of 1812: Collection of materials and documents*. Moscow.
7. (2024). *Yenisei Cossack Army: Bulletin of the Yenisei Cossacks*, Krasnoyarsk.
8. (2025). *Transbaikal Cossack Host. Instructions for stanitsa atamans*. Chita.
9. Zabugina, V. S. (2025). *Cossacks of the Don and Terek in the February and October Revolutions and the Civil War (historiography)*: Vladikavkaz.
10. Ivanov, R. (2024). *A Brief History of the Amur Cossack Host*. Blagoveshchensk.
11. (2023). *Cossacks. Problems of History and Historiography: Proceedings of the 28th All-Russian Correspondence Scientific Conf.* / Ed. by S. N. Poltorak. St. Petersburg.
12. (2023). *Cossacks. Encyclopedia* / Editorial Board: A. P. Fedotov (chief editor) and others. Moscow: Encyclopedia.
13. (2024). *How the Cossacks Fought: Historical Stories about the Zaporizhian Cossacks* / Yu. A. Mytsyk, S. N. Plokhly, I. S. Storozhenko. Dnepropetrovsk: Promin, 2024. (This happened a long time ago).
14. Karaulov, M.A. (2025). *Terek Cossacks in the past and present*. Vladikavkaz.
15. Karaulov, M.A. (2024). *Terek Cossacks*. Moscow: Veche.
16. Korolenko, P.P. (2025). *200th Anniversary of the Kuban Cossack Army (1696–1896)*. Yekaterinodar.
17. Muzhev, I. F. (2023). *Cossacks of the Don, Kuban and Terek in the Revolution (1812 - 1917)* Ordzhonikidze.
18. (2023). P.K. More on the issue of the origin of the Cossacks // *Rodimy Krai*. No. 69. Paris.
19. Pisarev, S. I. (2021). *300th Anniversary of the Terek Cossack Host (1577–1877)*. Vladikavkaz.
20. Radik, A.K. (2024). *Soviet Cossacks*. Rostov-on-Don.