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SOI: [1.1/TAS](https://doi.org/10.15863/TAS) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](https://doi.org/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

Natalia Sergeevna Romyanskaya

Institute of Service and entrepreneurship (branch) DSTU
PhD, Associate Professor

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

THE HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF FREE COSSACKS IN RUSSIAN REGIONS

Abstract: In the article, the authors draw the attention of readers to the fact that we have summarized the results of the study of the origin 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 role of the Cossacks in this great colonization movement to the East. For this purpose, analytical essays and materials of registered mass documentary sources and their chronological thematic registries of records, selected by us from the expense books of the Treasury Department, were used.

Key words: Treasury order, 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., Romyanskaya, N.S., Korablina, S.Yu., & Volkova, G.Yu. (2025). The history of the formation of free Cossacks in Russian regions. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, 10 (150), 141-162.

Soi: <https://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-10-150-8>

Doi:  <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2025.10.150.8>

Scopus ASCC: 2000.

Introduction

UDC193.57:303.46.

Without denying the importance of all these factors, one cannot, at the same time, fail to acknowledge that the widespread dissemination of

"nationalist" views among the Cossacks was, of course, largely facilitated by the elementary ignorance of their bearers. In 1906, in his speech at a meeting of the 1st State Duma, the writer F.D. Kryukov, a deputy from the Don Cossacks, spoke about the obstacles on the Cossack's path to education, explaining them by

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the fact that "ignorance is recognized as the best means of preserving the military Cossack spirit." And in 1928, the former Yesaul of the Don Army, former justice of the peace and member of the Don Army Circle I.P. Kartashev, noting that "the Cossacks were brought up to have abnormal relations with the non-Cossack population, which the Cossacks treated with extreme contempt," gave the following explanation: "In the past, the Cossacks did not study their Don history either in schools or in military service...". As Kartashev recalled, "during the Great War in the 25th separate hundred, which included Cossacks from all over the Khopersky district from 20 to 40 years of age, they could not explain to me why they were called Don Cossacks! Even the sergeants were stumped by this question." The overall impression of such blatant ignorance is, of course, somewhat mitigated by certain representatives of the Cossack intelligentsia of the first quarter of the 20th century, who had a good knowledge of history and attempted to convey to the "broad masses" of Cossacks scientifically grounded views on their origins and ethnicity. In particular, the former chairman of the Terek Host Government, E.A. Bukanovsky, wrote: "The historical reasons for the emergence of the Cossacks on the Don, Terek, Yaik, Kuban, and other lands, and the ideas by which the Cossacks lived, indisputably emphasize that they were a unique product of the Russian people and Russian life <...> The Cossacks never separated themselves from the Russian people, and even in the era of their free and independent existence, outside the borders of the Muscovite kingdom, they considered themselves bound to them by inseparable ties."

In the same spirit, the former member of the State Duma, Don Cossack I.N. Efremov, spoke in 1928: "Being effectively independent, independently communicating with foreign states, fighting against the tyranny of the governors and the oppression of the peasants by the service class, the Don Cossacks as a whole considered themselves, and were in fact, the vanguard of the Russian people, expanding the boundaries of the Russian state."

Cossack Colonel N.F. Roshchupkin (of the Terek Host) agreed with this opinion: "Whatever the Cossacks' original origins—from the Scythians or Sarmatians, or perhaps even more ancient peoples—this circumstance cannot shake the Cossack's clear consciousness that he is a Russian. Moreover, this distant pedigree of the Cossacks lacks any solid historical credibility and is not universally recognized in scholarship. One thing is certain and indisputable: the Cossacks, in their origins, spirit, and essence, are flesh of the flesh and bone of the Russian people."

Such individuals sometimes achieved success in their influence over the "Cossack masses," and it is perhaps this (or perhaps political expediency) that explains the resolution of the First All-Russian Congress of Working Cossacks (February 20 – March 6, 1920): "The Cossacks are by no means a separate

nationality or nation, but constitute an integral part of the Russian people." However, the majority of Cossacks at that time already lived with entirely different, mythical notions of their ancestry...

The writer (and Kuban Cossack) P.I. Tkachenko has spoken out quite harshly about their followers and like-minded individuals, who now speak on behalf of the modern Cossacks: "The reluctance to seriously engage with culture, that is, the human spirit, on the part of the leaders of the Cossack movement and within Cossack societies is truly taking on a somewhat provocative character," he fumes. "And naturally, in such a situation, the consciousness and soul, which we are obligated to protect first and foremost, like the apple of our eye, are occupied by other forces, from the downright wicked to the marginal."

These forces were subjected to merciless criticism by Sergei Antonov. Being a Don Cossack himself, he explains the current popularity of the "Cossack" ("independent") ideology, first of all, by the ignorance and pride of those of his fellow countrymen who took "a falsely understood purely class arrogance for national feeling."

"The current dominance in the minds of anti-scientific nonsense, taken from the books of all sorts of Gordeyevs (vol. I) and Savelyevs, and the neo-Cossack "Cossack madness" that comes from it" S. Antonov directly links with the "destruction of the Cossack intelligentsia". And those who try to support their arguments about the Cossacks as an "independent ethnos" with a famous quote from the novel by M.A. Sholokhov get especially hard done by. According to S. Antonov, they see "nothing beyond the assertion of illiterate Cossacks that "the Cossacks are descended from the Cossacks". Do these people understand, Antonov is indignant, that after a hundred years they themselves remain at the same "methodological" level of the rural Central Party School, and at the same time they continue to fuss over the passage, in general a quote, having made a slogan out of it. But if, for example, some atamans exploit this topic for completely understandable reasons, then the selfless efforts of ordinary autonomist public figures are difficult to explain. Here they are "being led", and that's it! And how far are they being led? After all, who claims all this? Yes, the one who knows nothing about his relatives further than his great-grandfather."

According to S. Antonov, even the Don nobles "often did not know their roots deeper than the end of the 18th century", and even more so, appeals to the "opinion of the people", "who supposedly know some homespun truth about themselves, and in general are always right "by definition" are untenable in disputes about the origin of the Cossacks. And as an example of how the people can be "right", Antonov cites the well-known misconception of the peasants of Central Russia, who at the end of the 19th century still remembered the war with Napoleon and therefore

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confidently called the thousand-year-old burial mounds scattered around their villages "French graves" ... In the media and especially on the Internet, there are many manifestations of historical illiteracy of representatives of the modern Cossacks, however, when it is combined with overflowing initiative, completely absurd situations arise in their ridiculousness. For example, this one. In 2013, the Cossacks of the Meshchersky farm in the Ryazan region decided to erect a monument to... Khan Batu. It turns out that they are convinced that Batu was "not a destroyer, but a defender of not only the Ryazan land, but also the entire Russian land and the first Cossack warrior - Batka", who "stood at the origins" of the Cossacks, "himself came from the Cossacks", "is an iconic figure, undeservedly denigrated by historians of the Romanov dynasty"...

Main part

The loss of historical memory and the distortion of ethnic identity are quite common in our lives, both on an individual, group, and even mass level (for example, "mountain" Tajiks, distinguished from "plain" Tajiks by their light hair and eyes, consider themselves descendants of Alexander the Great's warriors, while Romanians claim direct descent from the Romans). However, such mythical genealogies have a hard time correlating with reality. Self-awareness is, of course, a very important component of ethnicity, but it is far from the only one, for ethnicity is not only a subjective concept, as follows from modern Russian legislation ("I'll join whatever nation I want"), but also an objective reality. And, for example, the Carpathian Rusyns, Siberian Tatars, Kryashchens, and Nagaybaks, although they have long declared themselves to be separate, independent ethnic groups, do not find support in this from the scientific community, despite all their ethnic self-awareness... Let us now move on to the system of evidence that adherents of the "autochthonous theory" use, regardless of criticism of this or that position of the "migration theory."

First of all, this involves searching old maps and the writings of ancient authors for ethnonyms and toponyms (both real and mythical) that somehow sound similar to the word "Cossacks": Az, Yasy, Kazy, Kasog, Kassak, Khazar (Khazar), Cherkasy, Azov, Caspian, Caucasus, Kazbek, and so on—all the way to Amazons. The result of this research is a "completely logical" conclusion such as: "The ancestral home of the Cossacks, the Land of their Fathers in the strict sense of the word, should be considered the North Caucasus Plain, the Azov region, and the banks of the Don River," where such toponyms and ethnonyms were and are found to this day.

This method is not new: it was called "symbolic etymology" and was rejected by scholarship as early as the early 19th century. It is noteworthy that at the

end of the 19th century, the famous Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary, in its article on the Cossacks, stated the following: "...The question of the origin of the Cossacks remains not yet fully elucidated in all its details, although its general solution has already been firmly established in modern literature. Previous historians derived the Cossacks from the non-Russians who inhabited certain areas of southern Russia during the appanage-veche period—the Khazars, the Black Hoods, the Kasogs, and the Circassians. Nowadays, such explanations, based solely on naive philological approximations of similar-sounding names, have been completely abandoned..."

Alas! A hundred years later, at the end of the 20th century, "naive philological rapprochements" were once again taken up by some historians and even became the main methods of research for some, sometimes taken to the point of complete absurdity. In particular, they are widely used by the ideologists of "independent" Ukraine, who claim that the god Buddha belonged to the Budin tribe living in Ukraine, and the name of the god Vishnu comes from the word "cherry", brought by Ukrainians who migrated to India, that the Egyptian pharaoh Menes was from the territory of the Mensky district in Chernihiv region, and the Roman ruler Sulla came from Posulye, etc. Moreover, these and other "discoveries" of the same scientific level are presented in all seriousness - through the printed organ of the Verkhovna Rada "Voice of Ukraine", radio and television. The "laurels" of such researchers apparently do not give rest to some Russian authors. In particular, those who, in order to substantiate the "autochthonous concept" of the origin of the Cossacks, constantly refer to the work of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus "On the Governance of the Empire", written in the period from 948 to 952. There, among the Caucasian countries, a certain "Kasakhia" is mentioned, and it is declared to be the "cradle of the Cossack race". The idea that Constantine Porphyrogenitus could have called "Kasakhia" the place of residence of one of the Caucasian peoples, for example the Kasogs (i.e. the ancestors of the Adyghe), apparently did not even occur to these authors; amateur researchers of the history of the Cossacks sometimes interpret this work of the Byzantine emperor as indisputable evidence of the existence in the 10th century. not only the country of Kazakia, whose borders extend from the foothills of the Caucasus to the lower reaches of the Don, but also the "people who bear the name 'Cossacks'."

Both the former proponents of the "autochthonous theory" and their current adherents apparently weren't and aren't bothered by the fact that, firstly, ethnonyms and toponyms with "kaz," "kas," and "kos" (and especially with "az," "as," and "os") can be easily found in regions of the world that can't be linked to Cossack ancestry—even as far afield as

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America and Africa (the Kazan River in northern Canada, the Kasai River in West Africa, the Kassala Province in East Africa, etc.). Secondly, even if we assume that the "Cossack" people once inhabited the Black Sea region and the Caucasus, their genetic connection to today's Cossacks still needs to be traced and proven. After all, history often sees the same name transferred from one people to another over time. For example, it is well known that the ethnonym "Romans" ("Romans", "Romans") was transferred to the Greeks – the inhabitants of Byzantium – and to the Dacians – the supposed ancestors of the main population of Romania, and is also the self-designation of the Gypsies ("Roma").

And it would be fine if historians didn't have documentary materials at their disposal that would allow them to form a scientifically grounded understanding of the early stages of Cossack history and their roots! Then perhaps the most "daring" hypotheses would have a right to exist, deriving the Cossacks not only from the peoples who once inhabited the North Caucasus and the Northern Black Sea region, but also from the ancient inhabitants of Mesopotamia (for example, the Assyrians—after all, this ethnonym also contains the root "as"), Egypt, or even from even more exotic places—for example, the legendary Atlantis. But materials revealing the true picture of the formation of the Cossacks have long been introduced into scholarly circulation; our archives are, figuratively speaking, filled with them, so it's not surprising that authors of works that still use methods of "symbolic etymology" are often harshly criticized in our country.

In 1995, the renowned Chelyabinsk historian V.F. Mamonov wrote: "It's impossible to base any serious theory on such a shaky foundation as the similarity of words in the names of tribes mentioned by ancient authors with the word 'Cossacks.'" This is not to mention the fact that the reports of ancient authors themselves, whenever possible, should also be verified, since they reported, for example, that the inhabitants of Eastern Europe burrowed into the snow for six months, fell asleep, and remained in this state until the weather warmed up."

As Elena Murashova noted in 2004, while analyzing a pseudo-historical work, "all figures in the parasciences love to dabble in linguistics, and they all adhere to one simple principle: if it sounds similar, it's the same thing." Alexei Penzensky, a candidate of historical sciences, is even more harsh in his assessment: "When amateurs venture into the field of linguistics, they become a laughing stock."

The truth of these observations becomes evident at every turn when reading amateur literature. Thus, the pillar of "Cossack nationalism," E.P. Savelyev, claimed that the title of the Khazar ruler—Khagan—derives from the Slavic "kokhany," meaning "beloved," and means "ruler chosen by the people." The name of the people, the "Sarmatians," comes from

the word "Syromyat"—meaning "rawhide makers," and the Huns derived their name from the Latin "unus," meaning "one, unity, union of peoples." He believed that the Slavs acquired their famous name because they loved glory, while the Germans, in the eyes of the Slavs, were simply poor and homeless, hence their nickname "Germans." Okay, Savelyev. This "fiery Cossack nationalist" published his landmark work in 1915 and lacked a higher education. As A.M. Dubovikov noted of his writings, "almost all of Savelyev's arguments demonstrate a blatant ignorance on many issues," including linguistic ones. But the same level of knowledge of history and philology in the search for the "ancestral homeland of the Cossacks" is sometimes demonstrated by seemingly well-educated contemporaries, and one very eloquent example of this is a lengthy article by T. Litvinenko, whose arguments are also largely based on linguistic sophistication. From these, in particular, it follows that the word "Cossack" originates from the Indo-European "kos(koz)," meaning "horse," and is translated as "horse owner." Why did the meaning of this word change so radically by the 14th century? (see above) and why, at least in the 16th century, the Cossacks, judging by data from quite reliable sources, more often acted on foot and on boats, and not on horses, remains in this case a mystery, not explained in any way by T. Litvinenko...

In general, the depth and scientific nature of T. Litvinenko's judgments can be judged by the following examples. She derives the Russian word "sloboda" from "selobad", where "bad" in Iranian means a settlement or fortified settlement. Meanwhile, both historians and philologists have long been well aware of its true etymology, derived from the word "freedom" (pronounced in the old days as "sloboda"), since initially in Rus', settlements that were liberated (received "oslabu" (relaxation, relaxation) from taxes (a typical example from the 17th century is Sloboda Ukraine). T. Litvinenko derives the word "kokarda" from "khokh" and "horde" and "translates it into Russian" as "supreme in the horde," although it is well known that it was borrowed from French without the influence of any "hordes." Litvinenko understands the word "stanitsa" only in its later (modern) meaning and traces it back to the Iranian "stano," and the fact that in the 16th-17th centuries, Cossacks called "stanitsas" not settlements but detachments is probably unknown to her.

With this level of knowledge in the field of history and linguistics It's no surprise, then, that in her search for the "ancestral homeland of the Cossacks," T. Litvinenko reached as far back as the 8th–7th millennia BC, essentially identifying with the "first Cossacks" all the Indo-European tribes and peoples who, according to her understanding, lived at that time in the "South Ural-Siberian forest-steppe" and engaged in nomadic pastoralism. Litvinenko's

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"Cossacks" also included the Aryans, who came to the modern territory of Iran and India "from the Urals" in the 2nd millennium BC, the Cimmerians, who inhabited the Northern Black Sea region in the 8th–7th centuries BC, and the Central Asian Sakas and Black Sea Scythians ("Cossacks of the 1st millennium BC").

God knows what data these conclusions are based on. T. Litvinenko doesn't bother to provide arguments to support her ideas about "Cossack ethnogenesis." And such an approach to the "fundamental question of Cossack studies" is not uncommon among amateurs who take on its solution. Another example is the widely known work of the émigré A.A. Gordeyev in the 1990s, "History of the Cossacks." Its author believed that the Cossacks, although they had "ancient roots," were formed primarily from "blood tributaries" whom the Mongol-Tatars, collecting a "tithe" in people, allegedly took annually from Rus' after its conquest and resettled in their mid-13th-14th centuries as border guards. A.A. Gordeyev has failed to support his "hypothesis" with references to sources (due to the lack of any). Gordeyev, naturally, failed, and this passage drew criticism even from some proponents of the "autochthonous theory." For example, the renowned Cossack writer V.E. Shambarov responded rather harshly, noting that Gordeyev based his conclusions on the assumption that Russian princes under the Horde's rule were not allowed to have armed retinues, and that a tenth of the population was annually driven into slavery and used by the khans to guard the borders, which is where the Cossacks originated. "These assumptions do not correspond to historical reality," Shambarov writes. "No people could have withstood the annual theft of a tenth of their population (...after 15 years, only a fifth of the people would remain). And no one, of course, would have 'Cossackized' the slaves."

Another "hypothesis" that is quite popular in Cossack circles and goes back to the works of E. Savelyev is also considered to be completely unproven. Based on the fact that in the Russian North "Cossacks" have long been the name for hired workers, some "Cossack scholars" have concocted the following fascinating story. Under pressure from the Tatars in the 14th century, a "mass exodus" of Cossacks "to Rus'" began. This is how the Sevryuk Cossacks, Ryazan Cossacks, Meshchera Cossacks and others appeared. And many of these "refugees" reached the Arctic Ocean, brought there "seafaring skills inherited from ancient times", and then "began their march to the Pacific Ocean in parties and squads of explorers" and it was the descendants of these "emigrant Cossacks" who, first of all, poured into the Don from Muscovy in the 16th-17th centuries, and not the Russian peasants in bast shoes. It is useless to remind the adherents of this "concept" that not a single piece of evidence about the migration of any groups

of the population (especially those called "Cossacks") from the south to the Russian North in the 14th century has been found in the sources: despite all its absurdity, this "concept" is very "convenient" for the supporters of the "autochthonous theory". Let's say you prove that this or that Don Cossack comes from the tradesmen of Tambov or Voronezh, and in response you hear: "Or maybe he's a descendant of those Cossacks who migrated to Rus' in the 14th century?"...

The lack of historically supported arguments in favor of the "autochthonous theory" prompts some of its adherents to seek support in new myths, sanctifying them with the authority of world celebrities. For example, some Cossack activists claim that the renowned Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl, while conducting excavations in Azov in 2001, discovered certain "archaeological layers" that supposedly prove the "antiquity of the Cossack people." Nothing specific about these "layers" is reported, but it is clear that Thor Heyerdahl could not have supported the "autochthonous theory" with any discoveries. In Azov (and later in Azerbaijan), he was searching for the ancient roots not of the Cossacks, but of the Vikings, and with little success. Heyerdahl's book, "In Pursuit of Odin," published as a result of this research, was thoroughly criticized by the academic community for its amateurism.

However, in most cases, the authors of works defending the "autochthonous theory" of the origin of the Cossacks still strive to justify it with references to real facts, interpreting them, however, only from their own ideological positions.

For example, in an effort to prove the non-Russian ("not from Muscovite people") origin of their ancestors, they emphasize the peculiarities of Cossack culture: the types of dwellings and outbuildings that are not the same as in the "Great Russian provinces," the differences with "old Russia" in funeral rites, musical creativity, dances, dialects, etc.

Such contrasts are often accompanied by disparaging assessments of the cultural characteristics of "Moscow" ("the appearance of the cheerful, bright villages stood in stark contrast to the gloomy villages of peasant Russia..."; "the primitiveness of Moscow shipbuilding..."; "in Muscovy... the singing is rather dull and monotonous..." and so on), which not only reveals the ideological underpinnings of such research but also demonstrates the authors' complete incompetence in the discipline of ethnography (ethnology). According to ethnography, the specific elements of Cossack culture are entirely consistent with scientific notions of ethnographic (historical and cultural) groups (or subethnic groups) found in virtually all more or less large peoples, including the Russians.

The prominent pre-revolutionary historian M.K. Lyubavsky drew the following conclusion from his observations of the Terek Cossacks: "The Russian

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element in the Cossack's nature and way of life remained predominant, and the Terek Cossacks, cut off from Rus', on their distant outskirts, remained Russian people who preserved their language, their national traditions, their faith..." Yet in the Caucasus, M.K. Lyubavsky noted, the Cossacks absorbed a significant number of "native elements" from among the mountain peoples and were strongly influenced by "native culture." I would add: much more strongly than the Don Cossacks, who more than others advocated for the status of a "separate people." During his trip to the Don Host region in 1883, the Russian ethnographer M.N. Kharuzin drew attention to the fact that "almost every village with its adjacent farmsteads bears a special imprint, expressed in pronunciation, forms of life, rituals, etc.", but "no matter how diverse the local customs and rites, the Great Russian element, the Great Russian rites and customs, still hold first place." The modern ethnologist M.A. Ryblova, after studying the cultural specifics of the early Cossack communities on the Don, came to the conclusion that they were not a "people," but a socio-cultural group, and in general "The cultural model of the Don Cossacks" appears to researchers as "part of the all-Russian tradition."

In 1928, Metropolitan Evlogy, reflecting in exile on the historical fate of the Cossacks, was inclined to believe that "the Russian national type has been preserved more purely and expressed more vividly in the Cossacks than in other parts of the Russian people." At the same time, however, he made a reservation: "I mean the Cossacks of European Russia; I know almost nothing about the Siberian Cossacks and do not undertake to judge them." But even in Siberia, as modern researchers A.V. Remnev and N.G. Suvorova write, "despite the anthropological specifics, everyday and even linguistic borrowings, the Cossacks remained within the framework of Russian folk culture..."

"Cossack culture is subject to all the general national characteristics of the development of Russian national culture," says Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences A.S. Kargin. He is convinced that "if we follow the logic of some specialists who separate Cossack culture from the general Russian culture by any means, then we will get the primacy of the particular over the general. Cossack culture is a multi-colored Cossack culture, representing Ural, Don, Kuban, Siberian, Far Eastern features. Each of them is also integrated into a regional tradition - South Russian, Siberian, Ural, Volga, etc. This diversity was obvious even to some of the emigrant "Cossacks", who therefore considered it impossible to talk about a "single Cossack nation", and it is precisely this that is one of the reasons that does not allow us to consider the Cossacks not only a "separate ethnic group", but also a "single sub-ethnic group": the differences in material and spiritual culture of the Cossacks of different "armies" and

"rivers" are too great. The Cossacks are a collection of sub-ethnic groups, the differences between which were determined by the regional and chronological features of their formation. "The Cossacks do not represent something integral in ethnic terms. An ethnic characteristic can only be given to each separate regional group of Cossacks," writes ethnologist I.A. Averin.

Therefore, the position of those "moderate separatists" who propose to consider the Cossacks "the fourth East Slavic people" (along with Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians) is also untenable - i.e., although "special", but still close to the Russian people "ethnos". Let's assume that the Don Cossacks will be considered as such. But then the Kuban Cossacks will have to be recognized as the "fifth East Slavic people", the Terek Cossacks - the "sixth"? And what order in this row will the Ural, Orenburg, Siberian Cossacks, etc. be placed? And how then to deal with similar problems within the Cossacks themselves? It is known that on the Don and the Urals there were strong cultural and everyday differences between the "upper" and "lower" Cossacks, on the Kuban - between the descendants of the "Black Sea" and "linean" Cossacks, etc. And in general: do the people of Tambov, Voronezh, Ryazan and other representatives of the Great Russian ethnic group differ in language and culture from the Cossacks (the same Don Cossacks, for example) in the same way as they do from Ukrainians and Belarusians? "Despite the fact that the Cossack subculture with its peculiarities related to the specifics of worldview and mentality is a reality of the modern world, it is wrong to talk about fundamental differences between Cossacks by origin and other Russian people," sums up the results of his research candidate of cultural studies A.V. Ponomarev. "Just as different ethnic groups can coexist within one culture, so in one ethnic group there can be bearers of different material cultures," Ya. A. Butakov rightly notes. By now, the works of ethnologists have convincingly proven that the Cossack population of all "rivers" and "troops" has much more in common in language and spiritual culture with the Russians of other regions of the country than differences, and in this regard, the Cossack sub-ethnic groups are not fundamentally different from other sub-ethnic groups of the Russian people - Pomors, odnodvortsy, Bukhtarmintsy, Polekhs, etc. The differences between them, according to V. V. Trepavlov, "were nothing more than local variants of a single civilizational socio-cultural complex." The only exceptions in this regard were large foreign groups "registered" as Cossacks: Kalmyks, Buryats, Tatars, Ossetians, etc. If they did not dissolve into the Russian Cossack environment, they formed ethnographic groups - subethnoses - within their own peoples.

In their desire to distance themselves from the "Russian peasant" and prove the absence of blood ties

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with him, Cossack ideologists sometimes use simply ridiculous arguments. Some authors emphasize, for example, that the Cossacks ("as is well known"), unlike the Russians, "never wore bast shoes" and did not lock their houses. But having taken up "bast shoe studies", we will have to disappoint such authors: the Cossacks wore bast shoes, they did, and at the same time, in the North, the inhabitants of some "peasant" regions practically did not know bast shoes. And this is really well known. It cannot be said that bast shoes were common footwear for the Cossacks, but, nevertheless, on the upper Don and Khopra, the Cossacks "used" them (at least during agricultural work) - both women and men. Lapti, among other types of everyday homemade footwear of the Don Cossacks, are mentioned, for example, by the Cossack writer V.E. Shambarov. The same is clearly evidenced by the engravings of the late 18th - mid-19th centuries that have come down to us and have been repeatedly published even in recent times. And what was depicted on them was not some kind of accident. As modern researchers emphasize, "the Cossacks of the Upper Don villages dressed very unpretentiously, practically the same as the inhabitants of the southern Russian provinces." (It is noteworthy that on the Don, the "lower" Cossacks, calling the "upper" Cossacks "chigs", teased them with the proverb: "Chiga tore the bast, chiga wove bast shoes"). And among the Ural Cossacks, both in the 19th and in some places even in the middle of the 20th century, according to the research of S.K. Sagnaeva, bast shoes were an indispensable attribute "mortal" clothing, and if we take into account that archaism always dominates in funeral rites, the conclusion will be unambiguous: in earlier times, bast shoes were not at all a great rarity in Cossack life.

The proponents of the "autochthonous theory" categorically deny the very possibility of Cossacks wearing bast shoes, based on the fact that "in bast shoes it is absolutely impossible to ride a war horse, "hold the leg" and catch the stirrup in flight. Only shoes with a narrow toe are suitable for this...". Here again we are dealing with very vague ideas of one of the disputing parties about the "subject of discussion":

firstly, bast shoes in Rus' were made not only with a "rounded" but also with a "trapezoidal", i.e. narrow, head (the latter, in particular, were common in the Ryazan and Tambov regions, territorially close to the Cossack Don);

and secondly (and this was already discussed above), the "first Cossacks" often did without horses at all, preferring boats or skis.

"The army at the beginning of its history was on foot," believe the authors of the collective monograph "Cossack Don: Essays on History" (which the just-quoted proponent of the "autochthonous theory" V.I. Varenik calls "a remarkable two-volume work"). "Before becoming famous as excellent horsemen, the Cossacks successfully mastered the art of confident

and fast movement on the surface of the water," writes the Rostov historian A.T. Urushadze. As for door locks, we must recall another "well-known" fact: even the Russian "non-black earth" village usually did not know them until the 20th century, and in some places until very recently - until it entered into "close contact" with "civilization" in the form of the newcomers, usually urban population (tourists, builders, soldiers).

Proponents of the "autochthonous theory" of Cossack origins, of course, use more serious arguments to support it. However, this theory also doesn't stand up to scrutiny and, as a rule, is insufficient to recognize the conclusions drawn from it even as a scientific hypothesis. A particular example of this is the work of the Rostov archaeologist (and Cossack activist) M.I. Kraisvetny. Although he believes that, despite its multiethnicity, the "late" Cossacks were characterized by a "clear predominance of the Slavic ethnic group," which "seeped" into the Don region over several centuries, he nevertheless derives the "core" of the Cossacks from the North Caucasian peoples, primarily the Circassians (Adyghe). He bases this conclusion on the opinions expressed by 18th-century historians. (G. Bayer, V.N. Tatishchev), as well as from the ideas about their "Circassian" origin that were widespread at that time among the Don Cossacks (and noted by General A.I. Rigelman), but the main reasons for substantiating his concept are given to him by comparisons "Early" Cossacks and the Adyghe. M.I. Kraisvetny believes that they had "virtually identical" lifestyles and social structures, emphasizing "warlike nature, seafaring, horsemanship, and military skills." As for the dating of the "initial period of the emergence of the Cossacks," M.I. Kraisvetny's work varies, but generally ranges from the 8th to the early 13th centuries.

M.I. Kraisvetny sees the advantage of his version of the origin of the Cossacks (over the "Turkic-Slavic hypotheses") in the fact that it "does not require far-fetched explanations." However, this assertion is the most difficult to agree with. M.I. Kraisvetny's constructions are precisely characterized by their far-fetchedness and detachment from historical reality. World history knows of many tribes, peoples, and ethnosocial groups that, while at roughly the same stage of socio-political development and living in similar natural, climatic, and geopolitical conditions, were not related genetically, but had much in common in their social structure and mentality. For example, the Germanic and Slavic tribes in the early Middle Ages (outside observers sometimes even confused them with each other). But does this mean that the Slavs descended from the Germans, or vice versa—the Germans from the Slavs? Or consider an example from a later era: the pirates of the Caribbean and the Cossacks of the 17th century. They united into communities similar to each other in both their

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internal structure and way of life. But can this lead us to conclude that they shared a common origin? The similarity in the social structure of the Free Cossacks and the Adyghe, noted by M.I. Kraisvetny, apparently did indeed exist, but it is important for understanding not the origins, but the social nature of Cossack communities of the 16th and 17th centuries, and we will specifically examine this issue below. In this section, it is necessary to note the inconsistency of another hypothesis proposed by M.I. Kraisvetny—his attempt to provide his own etymology for the word "Cossack." Archaeologist Kraisvetny rejects the traditional interpretation of this term by philologists (calling it "a great stretch and a mere fabrication") and believes that "the etymon of the term 'Cossack' is most likely the Adyghe term 'Khasa/Kassa,' meaning a people's legislative assembly, while 'Cossack' means 'member of the Kasa/Circle.' In the Adyghe language, 'khasa-k' means 'going to Khasa.'" Well, if such an interpretation could explain the existence of the term 'Cossack' within the North Caucasus region and the Don-Azov region, then what about the entire area where this word was distributed in the 15th-16th centuries? But it covered the territory from the Altai to the Danube and was a place of residence, mainly, of the Turkic peoples, for whom (as noted above) the word "Cossack", with all its variants of meaning, for a long time went back to the concepts of "outcast", "vagabond", "impoverished wanderer"...

The peculiarities of the Cossack mentality, only briefly touched upon in the works of M.I. Kraisvetny, are often brought to the forefront by other proponents of the "autochthonous theory." Thus, N.N. Lysenko compares the "mental properties," "behavioral stereotypes," and "behavioral reactions" of the parties, drawing on the book "On the Russian National Character" by sociologist and cultural scientist V.F. Chesnokova (Ksenia Kasyanova), first published in 1983 and reprinted many times. He shows, point by point, how "ancestral Cossacks" differ "mentally" from Russians, thereby... banging on an open door. Ethnologists who classify certain population groups as subethnic groups naturally base their analysis on the specifics of not only their material but also their spiritual culture, their worldview, and their social psychology. All these features, caused and fully explained by differences in the nature of occupations, climatic and landscape conditions of residence, the presence (or absence) of contacts with neighbors of other ethnicities and other factors, allow researchers to distinguish from the main mass of a people (ethnos) its individual sub-ethnic groups - "ethnographic groups", according to the old terminology.

Having compared the mentalities of "Russians" and "Cossacks," Lysenko concludes that "we are confronted with two completely different peoples." But even if we accept absolutely all the "discrepancies" he identified as genuine, it is impossible to accept this conclusion without sinning

against the truth. This is primarily because then all the social classes of the Russian Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries would have to be considered "separate nations," since the "mental differences" between them were also significant—just compare the nobility, peasantry, merchants, and clergy. According to Lysenko's logic, these too are "completely different peoples."

It must also be acknowledged that N.N. Lysenko's "comparison of mentalities" is not entirely accurate—it relies on very limited material and disregards other opinions. V.F. Chesnokova's book, which he uses to substantiate his conclusions, contains many controversial points, largely due to the very methodology of her research. It summarizes the results of an analysis of the Russian "social archetype" using psychological tests developed in the 1930s and 1940s at the University of Minnesota in the United States to study individual characteristics and mental states. These tests are widely used in clinical practice, but are clearly insufficient for studying the mentality of entire ethnic groups. Those interested in the peculiarities of the Russian national character will certainly notice that "Typically Cossack" (according to Lysenko's classification) "mental traits" are also found in many Russians who are not Cossacks. At the same time, many among them do not share at least half of the views that N.N. Lysenko attributes to the Russian non-Cossack population. A very intriguing perspective on the same issue can be found in the publicly available "Bibliographic Digest on the Don Cossacks." "Extremely interesting," it states, "are the latest studies by professional psychologists in the 'hot spots' of the post-Soviet space (Transnistria, Abkhazia), revealing the ethnic behavioral stereotypes of the 'battlefield' of Russians and Cossacks. These stereotypes are undoubtedly the most important mental characteristics. It turns out that the so-called 'battlefield excesses' of Russians and Cossacks are completely identical and do not coincide with similar stereotypes of other ethnic groups. Both "never abandoned their dead or wounded under any circumstances, accepted combat conditions as a normal environment, [demonstrated]... paroxysms of insane bravery," and so on. The conclusions of military psychologists about the mental affinity between Cossacks and Russians constitute a serious argument in favor of the theory of their common origin." A group of researchers from the First Cossack University named after K.G. Razumovsky came to a similar conclusion, noting that "the culture and mentality of the Cossacks makes them akin to ethnic Russians. This is especially evident in behavioral stereotypes in combat situations..." This is especially evident in language: no matter what dialects Russians speak, they will understand each other without much difficulty throughout the entire area of their settlement from the White Sea to the Pacific Ocean, whereas, for example, in Germany, the inhabitants of its southern

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and northern regions, if they decided to express themselves in their dialects, would encounter considerable difficulties.

However, some proponents of the "autochthonous theory" also take an uncompromising position on the "language question." Thus, I.V. Kachanov, a graduate of Dagestan University, qualified as a "history teacher" and who considers the Cossacks a distinct and independent people, bases his position, in part, on the fact that the Cossacks speak "their own" language. According to Kachanov, the Don "gutor" is not a dialect, but an independent language, moreover, close in its "synthetic word formation" to Germanic and Romance languages. A dialect, in I.V. Kachanov's view, "is a variety of language used in a specific territory. Thus, there are "okayushchie" and "ykayuschie" dialects and subdialects. This does not change the word. The Cossack language, however, contains words that we will not find in the Great Russian language." Well, one can only assume that the author of this passage is not only at odds with dialectology, but hasn't even consulted V.I. Dahl's "Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language"... Even further in his linguistic research was Murad Adzhiev (later Adzhi), a geographer by training, writer, and journalist, who also doesn't consider the Cossacks part of the Russian people. However, he derives them not from "ancient Kazakia," or the ancient peoples of the Northern Black Sea region and the Ciscaucasus, but directly from the Polovtsians (Kipchaks), who were allegedly only forcibly Russified by "tsarism" in the 18th and 19th centuries ("according to the laws of colonial genetics"), despite fierce resistance. And one of Adzhiev's main arguments is the fact that the Cossacks usually knew the language of their non-Russian neighbors well (these were primarily Turkic peoples—Tatars, Nogais, and Kazakhs) and often spoke it in everyday life. "Deadly" logic, to say the least... If we reason like this, then the long-standing Russian population of Yakutia should be recognized as descended from the Yakuts, since in the 18th and 19th centuries they widely used the Yakut language in communication (according to observers, the use of French in Russian capitals was similar at that time). And the Terek Cossacks, by the same logic, should be excluded from the "Cossack ethnogenesis" scheme proposed by Adzhiev, since they knew the languages of the mountain peoples of the Caucasus, which are not Turkic. As for the language used by the Cossacks in earlier times, it was exhaustively characterized back in 1930 by the renowned Russian émigré historian S.G. Pushkarev, and this characterization has long been frequently cited by modern researchers. Having thoroughly examined the work published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, In his five-volume major publication, "Don Affairs," I.G. Pushkarev drew attention to the fact that many documents emanating from the Don Army in the 17th century

were written in "a beautiful, expressive 'Moscow-Russian' language" and that "the Cossacks not only wrote their replies and petitions to Moscow in this language, but also corresponded with each other."

The reasons for the widespread and frequent use of the language of foreign-speaking neighbors among the Cossacks are elementary and were sometimes clearly explained by the Cossacks themselves. Thus, at the end of the 19th century, the famous researcher of the Siberian Cossack army (in the future, General) G.E. Katanaev, when asked why his subordinates spoke "in Kyrgyz" (i.e. in Kazakh), received the following answer: "We cannot help but speak in Kyrgyz, because with the Kyrgyz language you can walk the entire steppe, and when you wait for a Kyrgyz to start speaking Russian, he learns poorly, the Russian language is not Kyrgyz - it is a tricky language, you will not learn it soon"...

The proponents of autochthonous theories of the origin of the Cossacks also try to use anthropology - with the same degree of depth of penetration into the subject, as they do with linguistics. On the Internet, for example, one can find a categorical (but, of course, not supported by any specific material or references to any research) assertion that "anthropologically" the Cossacks "are a single people, not mixed with anyone", because they allegedly followed the "ancient Aryan law" that forbade "mixing one's blood with foreign blood". And "therefore, even what Sholokhov wrote about the Turkish origin of his hero (presumably, Melekhov) should be treated with caution".

The author of this profound conclusion, unlike M.A. Sholokhov, apparently never was struck by "that racial mixture which always catches the eye when looking at a Cossack crowd," and certainly has not read the confessions of the Cossacks themselves about marrying "infidel women," although information about this has long been introduced into scholarly circulation. In particular, the words of the Don Cossacks addressed to the Turks from the famous "Tale of the Siege of Azov" (1642) have acquired textbook fame: "And we take and choose for ourselves beautiful and beloved wives from you, from the Tsar-city ..." Or the explanation of the Cossacks' refusal in 1645 to swear allegiance to the Tsar on the grounds that most of their children were allegedly born from "infidel women." Documentary evidence of this kind has also long been known: "The name is Yemelyan, Kuzmin, and the son is tuma; "He, Yemelka, was born on the Don in Cherkasskoye. His father, Kuzma, was a Russian, a Tambov soldier, and his mother was Turkish." Let me remind you that, according to some accounts, the most famous Don Cossack, Stepan Razin, was also a "Tuma."

Such information, of course, cannot be absolutized and used to conclude that the majority of Cossacks are of ethnically mixed origin, but the fact that Russian Cossacks are far from racial and ethnic

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"purity" is an indisputable fact. And if it does not fit into some "theories", then it must be worse for them, not for the facts. An example of futile attempts to make anthropology work for one of these theories we find in the same M. Adzhiev, and they are notable for the fact that they destroy the author's own constructions. "You can't confuse a real Cossack with anyone," writes Adzhiev, "blue-eyed, fair-haired, stocky, that's the majority," and that's exactly what the Polovtsians were, in his firm conviction.

Adzhiev is not alone in this opinion: not only amateurish works (citing certain "Russian chronicles") but also some professional historians describe the Polovtsians as fair-haired Caucasians. However, works by specialists in the archaeology and history of Southern Rus' in the 10th–13th centuries offer entirely different accounts of the Polovtsians' appearance. According to S.A. Pletneva, a leading authority on the study of the nomads of the southern Russian steppes, the Polovtsians were Mongoloids (albeit not as "classical" as the Mongols or Buryats)—a view supported by her study of Polovtsian burials—and, consequently, were, for the most part, dark-haired and brown-eyed.

Among the Polovtsians, there may have been fair-haired individuals (similar to how brunettes are found even among the Finns, and blondes among the Italians), and these may not have been limited to those (as some researchers believe) born to Russian captive women. The appearance of the Polovtsians, like that of the Pechenegs who preceded them, sometimes revealed the results of interbreeding with remnants of the pre-Turkic (Scythian-Sarmatian) steppe population, and such Caucasoid "inclusions" were even later characteristic of the nomadic world of Eurasia. For example, researchers encountered fair-haired (or chestnut-tinged) Kazakhs as early as the 19th century.

Therefore, attempts to connect the origin of the ethnonym "Polovtsy" with the natural color of their hair are also untenable. In Russian, "polovy" actually means "yellow" (from "polova," i.e., straw), and although it cannot be ruled out that the Polovtsians fashioned their hair in a corresponding color, the most convincing explanation for this name was given by the same S.A. Pletneva. In her opinion, the Russians simply "calqued" into their own language the self-designation of part of the Kipchak hordes (who called themselves "sary" and "shar," i.e., "yellow"), since "color" designations of political associations were widespread among nomads ("Black Bulgarians," "Blue Mongols," "White" and "Blue" Hordes). The writer B.A. Almazov, following M. Adzhiev (and also without evidence), calls the Polovtsians (like most Turks in general) a fair-haired and blue-eyed people. Apparently inspired by Adzhiev's "anthropological method," he places sculptural portraits of Polovtsians, reconstructed from their skulls, alongside photographs of certain Cossacks, thus demonstrating their

similarities. I am certain, however, that Almazov could just as easily have found similarities with the fossilized Polovtsians in the appearance of many Russians who are not Cossacks, especially since he himself considers modern Russians "equally" both Slavic and Polovtsian (although elsewhere in his book the proportion of "Polovtsian blood" in Russians is reduced to a quarter). The proportion of "non-Slavic blood" in the Russian nation can, of course, be debated at length and to no avail, as there are no "ethnically pure" peoples in modern-day Eurasia, and given its turbulent history, marked by mass migrations, there simply cannot be. Russians are no exception here, and although the nature and extent of interbreeding varied across different areas of their settlement, it cannot be simplified (in some areas, Slavs mixed only with Finno-Ugric peoples, in others with Balts, in still others with Turks, and so on), since over the thousand-year history of the Russian state, there was a constant mixing of populations within it, and not only Slavic ones. It is known, for example, that the Turkic Berendey tribe was settled in the 12th century both along the southeastern border of the Russian lands and in the Vladimir-Suzdal region.

The conclusions of amateurs about the origins of the Cossacks find support not only in pseudo- and pseudoscientific works, but also in the works of seemingly serious scholars. For example, a candidate (later doctor) of philosophical sciences, the renowned liberal cultural scientist I.G. Yakovenko, spoke in favor of M. Adzhiev, believing that "despite the controversial nature of certain propositions" (I wonder which ones?), "the material he collected is convincing." In addition to Adzhiev, Yakovenko named as his like-minded colleagues L.N. Gumilyov (who traced the Cossacks to the Khazars), A.A. Gordeev (slightly adjusting his concept, based on the author's logic), and R.G. Skrynnikov (completely distorting his position). "My conviction is," writes Yakovenko, "that the Cossacks arose as a result of Polovtsian-Russian interbreeding, with the Polovtsian substratum clearly dominating." To be convinced of this, one only needs to look closely at the faces in 19th-century photographs. The shape of the skull, the physical build—all of this (as well as the characteristics of everyday culture and song) differs strikingly from Slavic typology and reveals the Cossacks as natural steppe dwellers."

I.G. Yakovenko's system of proof is essentially limited to this line of argumentation, testifying, first of all, to his poor knowledge of both Russian "typology" in general (which, as is well known, is far from uniform) and Cossack typology in particular (apparently, he came across few "19th-century photographs"). Anthropology, with a strictly scientific, impartial approach to its use, provides grounds for completely different conclusions, testifying, in particular, that even the Ural Cossacks, who for centuries had close contact with the Turkic-

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Mongol- and Iranian-speaking peoples, many of whose representatives directly joined their ranks, in their anthropological type, for the most part, did not differ from other Russians. It turned out that although the Yaik (Ural) Cossack Host was always considered "multinational," according to the 1723 census, only about 6% of the Yaik Cossacks were non-Russian, and in the mid-19th century The Ural Cossacks' "polyethnicity" was as follows: Bashkirs and Mishars constituted 7%, Tatars 5%, Kalmyks 1.2%, and Karakalpaks and Kazakhs 0.8%. The situation remained essentially unchanged, so that in 1862, Russians constituted 86% of the Ural Cossacks, and by 1885, their share had increased to 93.6%. As A.I. Izyumov noted, "the bulk of the Ural Cossacks by origin... were purely Russian, with little intermixture with Tatars and Bashkirs, Kalmyks and Kazakhs."

One of the leading Russian medievalists (and, by the way, a Terek Cossack by birth), Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences A.P. Novoseltsev, shortly before his death (1995), also spoke out about the disputes about the ethnic nature of the Cossacks: "...In journalism and popular publications, the opinion is increasingly expressed that the Cossacks are not Slavic at all "... not a Turkic institute, but a Turkic one, and it is proven that even the Don Cossacks of the 18th-19th centuries were Turks... I will point to the articles of M.E. Adzhiev. Reviewing his publication in one of the magazines ("Around the World"), I delicately pointed out this kind of error. However, the editors of the magazine published only part of my review, in which the noted remark was omitted. I am convinced that the term "Cossack" itself (incidentally, identical to the ethnonym "Kazakh") is of Turkic origin, which does not at all mean that the East Slavic Cossacks (Great Russian, Ukrainian and mixed) were Turkic, although it is well known that individual Turkic elements took part in its formation. In particular, this can be noted for the Don and Ural Cossacks. However, the role of the Turks in the formation of these Cossack troops was minimal..."

The Don Cossacks became an object of study for anthropologists a century ago, and the results of this work allowed V.V. Bunak to "classify the Don Cossacks as belonging to one anthropological type, predominant on the Russian plain, characterized by the same general differences." The researcher noted that even "the Ukrainian type... turns out to be more distant from the Don Cossacks." According to V.V. Bunak's observations, among the Don Cossacks "there are also no significant traces of admixture of foreign blood; they appear only in isolated places and in comparatively small quantities."

Research conducted among the Don Cossacks by modern anthropologists (in our case, Doctor of Biological Sciences V.F. Kashibadze and Candidate of Biological Sciences E.F. Batieva) also yielded a completely expected and unambiguous result, namely:

the conclusion that the basis of the "physical status" of the Don Cossacks "lies in morphological characteristics common with the population of the south-eastern zones of Central Russia, which indicates the direction of genetic connections. The anthropological history of the Don Cossacks, - these researchers note, - implies migration processes from the indicated area, mixing between different original groups of Russians and an insignificant inclusion of southern and eastern elements in an increasing proportion to the south. And the main conclusion of the study conducted by V.F. Kashibadze together with O.G. Nasonova is even more specific: morphologically and genetically, the closest group of the population to the Don Cossacks are the Russians of the Ryazan region.

The protracted dispute over the ethnic nature of the Cossacks may be settled by the increasingly confidently asserting science of DNA genealogy ("population genetics"). Selective studies conducted using its methodology did not reveal any significant differences between the Cossack population and residents of the central regions of Russia, confirming the earlier conclusions of anthropologists, which gives scientists yet another reason to assert that the Cossacks are not a unique ethnic group different from the Russians.

For researchers who have studied the early history of the Cossacks in depth, this conclusion did not come as a surprise. It coincides with the conclusions that they had already made long ago based on the entire complex of sources from the 16th–17th centuries that have been identified to date. And an important place among them is occupied by documentary material about where the Cossacks themselves or their ancestors "came from." And these data decisively diverge from the widely disseminated opinions of the "Cossack" emigrants and their modern followers, who claim that among the peoples who joined the Cossacks, Russians were the least numerous.

Information about the Cossacks having wives, children, parents and other relatives "in Rus'" is constantly encountered in the office documentation of the 17th century. The regions from which the bulk of Russian settlers left "to become Cossacks" in the 16th–17th centuries are also well known. These are mainly the districts of the Moscow state closest to the "Cossack rivers". It is noteworthy that the Cossacks were indignant at the decree of Boris Godunov, which deprived them of the opportunity "to come to their relatives in the Ukrainian cities". On the other hand, the sources often contain direct references to the presence of "relatives" in the Cossack regions among many residents of the border Russian cities (on the Don, for example, the family ties of the Cossacks with the Voronezh people were especially noticeable). Researchers also have at their disposal numerous documentary materials containing "interrogatory

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speeches" of the Cossacks with direct indications of the places of their "exit", as well as "nicknames of a regional nature (such as "Tambovets", "Voronezhets", "Belgorodets", "Kostromitin", etc.).

An analysis of all this information showed that among the Yaik Cossacks in the 17th century, "almost all of Russia was present", but settlers from the Volga regions predominated. Recently, attempts have been made to prove the predominantly northern Russian origin of the Yaik Cossacks. Moscow historian V.V. Bakhtov cites quite representative material indicating similarities in the names of fishing gear, folklore plots and professional vocabulary of the Russian inhabitants of the White Sea and the Ural Cossacks. But by doing so, he only confirms the Volga version, since he notes the same similarity in principle with respect to the Russian population of the Lower Volga region. In any case, settlers from the North could not get to Yaik without passing the Volga, which, incidentally, is directly evidenced by one of the legends cited in V.V. Bakhtin's work: it says that the ancestors of the Uralians, having left the White Sea, at first ("even before Ermak") "went for a walk on the Volga...".

As for the Don Cossacks, the majority of them came from the southern Russian districts. Circumstances The migrations of Russians to the Don have been studied most thoroughly to date, and evidence suggests that those who migrated there were often those already familiar with life on the Don: those who not only had relatives or fellow countrymen among the local Cossacks, but also those who interacted with Cossacks visiting Russian cities, and those who frequently visited the Don themselves on trade or other business. (Recent research has convincingly demonstrated that the line between the inhabitants of the southern Russian outskirts and the Don Cossacks was generally vague and undefined.)

It was more difficult to determine the connections with the "metropolis" of the oldest groups of Terek Cossacks. Among the places of their "exit" are the Don, the Volga, the Ryazan Principality and other southern and south-eastern outskirts of the Moscow state of the 16th century, the central and north-eastern regions of pre-Petrine Russia, as well as the Novgorod lands, and all these versions are confirmed in the folklore, rituals and peculiarities of the speech of the Terek Cossacks.

It is unlikely, however, to expect that the above evidence of the Cossacks' predominantly Russian origins will lead to any rapid or decisive reconsideration of their positions by the majority of those who consider the Cossacks an "independent ethnic group." They will, in their arguments, emphasize even more the "peculiarities of the mentality" of their "people," as other "Russian separatists"—from those in Siberia to those in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad—have long done, and will begin to "develop" definitions of the concept of

"ethnos" that would completely exclude its most important component—common origin. Or they will follow the path of their ideological predecessors, among those "Cossack" émigrés, who declared that "the mere fact of the Cossacks' origins from the Russian people cannot hinder the independent (independent) existence of the Cossacks. After all, there once was a single Slavic people." They will endlessly harp on the "phenomenon of Cossack self-awareness."

So, much work remains to be done to convey accurate information about the origins of the Cossacks to the general public, and obstacles will continue to arise. Among them is the position of some of our colleagues who advocate a synthesis of the "migration" and "autochthonous" concepts of Cossack origins, believing that they have an equal right to exist and "complement each other."

So, according to this position, on one side of the scale we have a vast amount of concrete historical material, introduced into scholarly circulation by several scholars, testifying to the mass exodus of Russians "to the Cossacks" in the 16th and 17th centuries. On the other, "indigenous" side of the scale, as demonstrated above, there is not a single scientifically substantiated argument. These are replaced by fantasies, conjectures, hypotheses based on dubious assumptions and shaky analogies, purely speculative "theories" or those built on guesses and conjectures, "naïve etymologies"—that is, illiterate toponymic and onomastic constructions based on the random sound similarities of names and geographical names. And, it turns out, these two "scales" completely "balance" each other? This is absurd. And anyway: what kind of "compromise," what kind of "synthesis" can there be between scientific truth and fantasy? Since when has science begun to recognize the equal right to existence of myths and real facts?!

Most professional historians, of course, reject the "autochthonous theory" of Cossack origins, relying on a solid source base and extensive historiography. However, the substantiation of their concepts is not always straightforward: the authors' positions are sometimes insufficiently clearly defined, and the criteria for defining certain ethnosocial structures as Cossack (or proto-Cossack) are sometimes vague, which gives proponents of the "autochthonous theory" free rein to pile up ever new "hypotheses" within its framework.

In order to create a strictly objective, scientifically substantiated concept of the origin of the Cossacks, it is necessary, first of all, to proceed from the fact, noted, in particular, by the ethnologist S.K. Sagnaeva, but often overlooked by historians, that the "Cossacks" appeared much earlier than the "Cossacks", and therefore (I repeat) not every mention of them in the sources should be considered as the entry of the ancestors of the current Cossack population of Russia into the historical arena. And

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these ancestors can be "calculated" in only one way: to find those groups of the population that, regardless of their name, were built on the principles and orders accepted by the undoubted ancestors of the Cossacks - members of the free Cossack communities of the 16th-17th centuries. That is, we need to find out who and when developed and acquired a stable character that form of social organization, which can be called the "institution of the Cossacks", and trace whether it had a continuous connection with the Cossack communities of the 16th-17th centuries.

The characteristic, i.e. inherent to free Cossack communities of all "rivers" and "troops" features of social organization are well known. They are recorded in historical sources, starting from the end of the 16th century and in their totality are as follows, namely:

- 1) social equality of community members;
- 2) the so-called Cossack democracy, which assumes that all important issues are resolved at general meetings and that the executive branch is elected from the bottom up;
- 3) the "heterogeneous" nature of the communities, i.e. the unification of people who, for the most part, were not related (Cossack associations were not consanguineous communities);
- 4) the specific nature of the occupations of the community members, and these occupations, in accordance with the terminology of the 16th–17th centuries, were called "military trade".

The last feature is especially important, but some researchers of the early history of the Cossacks mention it in passing, through a comma with "fishing" and "hunting", or even insist that these trades, along with cattle breeding, were the main occupation of the Cossacks. In their opinion, a Cossack is simply "a free man on a free land", while Cossack communities are, first and foremost, associations of warriors, whose important source of existence in the 16th-17th centuries was military spoils. This is a fact firmly established by pre-revolutionary researchers and has not been refuted by anyone since then, but only confirmed. True, proponents of the "autochthonous" theory object to this, but their position doesn't hold up to scrutiny if only because the Cossacks themselves, at least since the 17th century, called their territorial units "Armies" ("Don Host," "Yaik Host," etc.) and declared that without "military industry," they could not "feed and clothe themselves." This was confirmed by outside observers, as well as by the Cossacks' stubborn reluctance to engage in farming. In the Don region, it was prohibited until the end of the 17th century, under penalty of death, with the rather eloquent explanation: "so that military industry would not be hindered."

As for the "free people on free land", historians know of them among the non-Cossack population as well. Let me remind you again of the "Bukhtarma masons" - Old Believers who settled in the Altai in the 18th century without permission and accepted Russian

citizenship only in 1791 (and even then with the status of "yasak people"). They, like the Cossacks, were free and almost all armed (since they were actively engaged in hunting), had communal self-government, but they did not consider themselves Cossacks and no one called them that, since, unlike the Cossacks, the Bukhtarma masons were not engaged in "military trade", but led a traditional peasant way of life.

If we apply the criteria developed above to those ethnopolitical associations that sometimes appear in literature as the direct ancestors (precursors) of the Russian Cossacks, then we must, of course, immediately exclude from their number the most ancient tribes and peoples who inhabited the Don region, the Azov region, and the Northern Black Sea region as a whole—the Scythians, Sarmatians, Goths, Huns, Avars, Khazars, etc. The information we have about their life and social structure does not allow us to speak of their closeness, much less identity, with the Cossacks, and whether social elements emerged from their midst that could have created free communities of the Cossack type, we simply do not know, but even if such elements emerged, it is clear that since they were not reflected in historical sources, they were not of a stable nature, did not act as any significant political force in the historical arena and, therefore, had no continuity with the subsequent "free" settlers of the southern Russian forest-steppe and steppe.

At the same time, it's impossible not to see that in the southern Russian region, even before the 16th and 17th centuries, population groups in many ways similar to the well-known Free Cossacks repeatedly emerged. For example, certain specific groups of the Turkic population of the forest-steppe zone of Eastern Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries are cited in a number of works as the ancestors of the Cossacks. First and foremost, these are the "Black Hoods"—a conglomerate of the remnants of the Pechenegs, Torks, Berendeys, Kovui, and other nomadic tribes and peoples who inhabited the Northern Black Sea region before the Polovtsians, but were displaced by them from their former habitats and came under the protection of the Russian princes, settling as their vassals along the southeastern borderlands of Rus', primarily along the Ros River.

N.M. Karamzin already saw a connection between the Black Klobuks and the later Cossacks. S.M. Solovyov generally believed that military settlements along the Ros River represented the "seed of Cossackdom" as early as the 11th century. Similar analogies are also drawn by some modern researchers. For example, I.L. Konevichenko believes that there is "no serious reason" to "disregard the Black Klobuks from the Cossack ancestors": "they occupied the same economic, cultural, and professional niche as the Cossacks did later." V.V. Glushchenko calls the Black Klobuks "one of the many ancestors of the Cossack lineage on the Dnieper." According to S.A. Pletneva,

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the Black Klobuks "began to develop a way of life that would later characterize the Cossacks." She presents this way of life as follows: "Men were always ready for military campaigns, while the entire economy was actually based on women, and children (boys) were raised from childhood in the spirit of daring and horsemanship."

It's difficult, however, to discern what is specifically Cossack about this: such was the way of life for all nomadic peoples of Eurasia in that era. If the reference is to the border service assigned to the Black Klobuks, then this was characteristic not of free Cossacks, but of service Cossacks: of the city Cossacks stationed in the Belgorod, Izyum, Simbirsk, and other fortified "chernye cherubim" of the Muscovite state in the 17th century, and of the line Cossacks who guarded Russia's borders in the Caucasus and Siberia in the 18th and 19th centuries. And it is precisely these Cossacks that another prominent archaeologist and historian, V.L. Egorov, apparently has in mind when he writes that the Black Klobuks performed "practically Cossack service."

The Black Klobuks' social organization differed greatly from that of the Cossacks, and this is perhaps the main obstacle to their recognition as "proto-Cossacks." As S.A. Pletneva writes, "the Black Klobuks exhibited a clearly defined social hierarchy... At the top stood prominent aristocrats, reporting directly to the prince of the main city of any principality that had such vassals." It is also well known that representatives of this "aristocracy" were given entire cities to govern in Rus'. Needless to say, how far removed all this was from the democratic order of free Cossack communities?

V.F. Mamonov believes that "the theory of the Black Klobuks as the core of Russian Cossacks... remains just one possible hypothesis—nothing more." I believe, however, that given the above, it cannot even be seriously considered as a hypothesis...

According to a number of features, another group of the Turkic population of the southern Russian steppes of the pre-Mongol period, the so-called Wild Polovtsians, could have been much closer to the free Cossack communities of the 16th–17th centuries. They are mentioned in chronicles from the 1240s and, judging by these reports, unlike the Black Klobuks, they were not vassals, but allies of the Russian princes. The "Wild Polovtsians" roamed near different regions of the Russian border, were not part of any of the large "hordes" known to historians, consisted of families (ails) not related to each other by blood relations and, apparently, were the remnants of those tribal associations that were defeated by the Russians at the beginning of the 12th century. We know nothing about the internal organization of the "Wild Polovtsians", but whatever it was, it also does not seem possible to recognize them as the ancestors of the Cossacks. Having fallen under the power of the Mongols, both the Black Klobuks and the wild

Polovtsians dissolved into the general population of the Golden Horde. This is the opinion of leading experts on the history of the nomadic world of the southern Russian steppes. Therefore, admitting the possibility of the formation of proto-Cossack structures there in the pre-Mongol period, we will be forced to state that it was abruptly interrupted and stopped for a long time by the Mongol-Tatar conquest.

Among the contenders for the place of the founders of the Cossacks, the so-called Brodniks are often put forward. Some of the titles of the works dedicated to them speak for themselves: "The Predecessors of the Cossacks - Brodniks", "The Brodniks - Ancestors of the Don Cossacks", etc.

The most original point of view on the "Brodnitsky problem" belongs, of course, to L.N. Gumilev, who claimed (as usual, without bothering to provide evidence) that the Brodniks were "descendants of the ancient Khazars in the Don Valley", who "changed their ethnonym" and "began to be called Cossacks". The leading researcher of the history of Russian colonization, M.K. Lyubavsky, considered Brodnikov to be the immediate ancestors of the Cossacks, and among modern authors, the same point of view is held by historians A.P. Skorik, R.G. Tikidzhyan, V.P. Trut, A.V. Golovnev, V.V. Glushchenko, and political scientist A.E. Mokhov.

Some researchers write about the origin of the Cossacks from the Brodniks with reservations - "it is not excluded", "it is quite possible", "with a certain degree of probability", etc. At the same time, the "direct relationship" of the Brodniks with the Cossacks did not cause any doubts among the majority of representatives of the Cossack émigré historiography. At the same time, some of them (for example, Sh. Balinov) referred to a certain (not specified) "Russian chronicle", according to which the Brodniks represented "an already established nationality, steadfast, capable of resisting foreign influence", and therefore "even under the rule of the Polovtsians" (and then the Mongols) preserved "their Slavic type, language, their Christian religion", having "their own cities, churches", engaged in agriculture.

Similar ideas are popular among current Russian activists of the Cossack revival, and in this they find full support from a number of writers who touch on the history of the Cossacks.

Some Cossack activists go very far in developing and disseminating the "Brodnitsky theory." By calling the Brodnitskys their ancestors, they portray them as more than just "an autochthonous ethnic group", but a people who have resisted "Russian expansion" since ancient times. Here is an example of such an interpretation.

According to the chronicle, in 1223, at Kalka, the Mongols used one of the Brodniki leaders, the "voivode" Ploskinya, in negotiations with the remnants of the Russian forces to persuade them to capitulate. One might wonder what could be added to

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this report? It turns out, a lot. S.V. Kazakov, head of the press center of the Great Don Host, gives the following interpretation of the Kalka episode: "A detachment led by the Brodniki ataman Ploskinya, together with the Mongol expeditionary force, defeated the Russo-Polovtsian forces," thereby putting an end to the Russian princes' "obsession" with "drinking the Don with their helmets," i.e., conquering Cossack lands.

The Don and Azov regions are cited as the home of the Brodniki in many works, both light and serious. Some researchers "disperse" the Brodniki throughout the Northern Black Sea region—from the Danube to the Caucasus. What is the basis for all these opinions?

The surviving information about the Brodniki dates back to the 12th and 13th centuries and is extremely scant. The primary source for studying that era is ancient Russian chronicles, but these contain only three brief mentions of the Brodniki (1147, 1216, and 1223), which in no way align with their description by the "Cossack" Sh. Balinov, cited above. However, some information can be gleaned from Byzantine and Hungarian documents of the same period, as well as toponymic data, and a comprehensive study of all available sources allows modern historians to reach the following, entirely justified conclusion.

The Brodniki were free communities of fugitives and outcasts, primarily from southwestern Rus'. They settled in the 12th century not in the Don region (there are no indications of this in the sources), but in the Lower Danube region (including the area between the Dniester and Danube rivers). Their main occupations were fishing, piracy, marauding raids, and military mercenaries. Those who settled on the Berlad River (a tributary of the Seret River, which flows into the Danube) were called "Berladniki," and collectively they were sometimes referred to as "Podunai."

Sources allow us to assert with a fair degree of certainty that the Brodniki were primarily Russian by origin, Orthodox Christians by faith, and distinguished by their militancy and bravery ("they despised death"). The fact that they were almost always referred to in the plural, i.e., as a "collective entity" (in which, admittedly, "old Brodniki"—possibly elders—may have distinguished themselves), may indicate the communal (military-democratic) nature of their social organization.

Sources "discover" Brodniki not only in the Danube region but also in other areas, where they typically operated alongside the Polovtsians. This is easily explained by the fact that both, as mercenaries, actively participated in princely feuds and could therefore have been found in a wide variety of locations. Proponents of the Danube localization of Brodniki have a more difficult time explaining something else: the traces of small settlements with Old Russian ceramics from the 12th century

discovered by archaeologists on the middle Don (at the mouths of small rivers and near ravines), as well as the remains of Russian settlements and Christian cemeteries from the same period on the lower Dnieper. But while archaeologist S.A. Pletneva connects them with Brodniki, ethnologist and historian I.A. Averin associates them with Russian captives captured during Polovtsian raids on Rus' and settled in steppe "winter camps" to work for their new masters. "Archaeologists have not found any evidence of the Russians' belligerence," he notes.

Averin also categorically denies the possibility of a genetic connection between the Brodniks and either the ancient Slavic population of the Don (who lived there since the 8th century) or the Khazars, since the former, under pressure from the Pechenegs, left this region at the beginning of the 10th century (moving to the middle reaches of the Oka River basin), and the latter at the beginning of the 11th century, also settling in the surrounding countries and peoples.

The etymology of the word "brodniki" is not as simple as many people think. S.A. Pletneva gives the most common (as if self-evident) interpretation: "The name 'brodniki' comes from the word 'to wander', close in meaning to the Turkic root 'kaz' (to wander), from which the word 'Cossacks' was formed." Such interpretations have been put forward for a long time and are even considered as proof of the existence of continuity between the brodniki and the Cossacks. "The word 'Cossack' itself is close in meaning to the word 'brodник', and it is very likely that one is a replacement for the other," wrote M.K. Lyubavsky. This point of view is shared and developed by the modern researcher A.V. Golovnev. However, I.A. Averin holds a different opinion and points out that "the meaning of the term 'brodник'... had a relation to river themes in most Slavic languages... The verb 'brodit' in all Slavic languages defines slow movement, walking on water or catching fish with a seine." In this regard, he again notes the term's attachment "to a specific geographic area and a specific professional orientation of the Russian 'Podunai' – fishermen and river merchant-pirates who did not disdain military mercenaries."

I.A. Averin is skeptical of the opinion of historians who believe that "the Brodniki are the same Cossacks, only from the times of Kievan Rus", but his skepticism in this case is not entirely justified. If we generalize all the specific historical material about the Brodniki that has been discovered to date, then their similarity with the later Cossacks cannot go unnoticed: it is obvious in their way of life and quite probable - in the features of social organization. Therefore, it is unlikely that the analogies between the Brodniki and the free Cossacks of the 16th-17th centuries drawn by historians should be considered a great exaggeration. And such analogies are found in the works of many serious researchers - P.V.

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Golubovsky and others. They call the Brodniki "the prototype of the later Cossacks", "the prototype of future Cossacks", "the predecessors of the later Russian and Ukrainian Cossacks", etc. S.A. formulates his position more extensively. Pletneva: "Brodniki—bands of free Russian steppe settlers, analogous to the Cossacks who emerged in the steppes 500 years later." It seems that, on the whole, these researchers are correct.

Another question is whether the Brodniks can be considered the ancestors of the Cossacks of the 16th-17th centuries. Is there a direct connection between them? Most professional historians answer this question evasively, but tend to deny such a connection rather than recognize its existence, citing, as a rule, the paucity of sources. As A.I. Kozlov noted, "the Brodnik version of the origin of the Cossacks certainly contains a number of interesting observations, but overall, for all its temptation and appeal, it is not particularly convincing. And, first of all, because it has no compelling evidence. This opinion is fully reproduced in his works by A.V. Sopov, although he begins the history of the Cossacks "at least from the 10th-11th centuries."

E.I. Dulimov, V.K. Tsechoev, and V.A. Volkov also believe that historians have not yet presented convincing evidence of the transformation of Brodniki into Cossacks. According to I.L. Konevichenko, "the Brodniki version of Cossack origins certainly contains a number of interesting observations, but overall, despite its appeal, it is not convincing enough. Primarily because it lacks compelling evidence."

M.A. Ryblova takes a more consistent position on this issue. She notes that none of the supporters of the so-called Brodnitskaya theory "has managed to find a single source indicating the presence of a direct connection and continuity between the Don Cossacks and the Brodniks."

I would venture to assert that seeking such continuity is futile. The fate of the Brodniki has been traced quite clearly by now. Some of them, under pressure from the Mongol-Tatars in the mid-13th century, moved to the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary (into the territory of western Romania and Slovakia), while those remaining in the Danube-Dniester interfluvium were assimilated by the surrounding population. Ultimately, the Brodniki lost their distinctiveness and merged with other peoples (primarily Bulgarians, Romanians, and Moldovans).

Even if we accept the entire Northern Black Sea region (including the Don-Azov region) as the Brodniki's area of settlement, this doesn't change the essence of the matter: the population living there before the Mongol invasion was either swept away or assimilated by the conquerors. And they did not tolerate any "guerrilla warfare" in their rear; from the 1230s onward, they firmly and permanently established themselves in the southern Russian steppes, maintaining them under such severe pressure

and control that any free, self-governing communities within the Horde territory were long out of the question. This has been convincingly demonstrated by many researchers, so that if the Brodniki can be considered in the context of Cossack history, it is only as a "dead end" on its "family tree."

Some historians (both amateurs and professionals) in turn link the Brodnitsa problem to another version of the Cossacks' origins, which is essentially based solely on the notes of the Flemish Franciscan monk Guillaume (William) Rubruck, an envoy of the French king Louis IX to the Mongol Khan. In 1253, Rubruck and his companions reached the banks of the Don, where they were ferried across the river in boats by certain Russians who lived in a settlement specially built to service the Don crossing and who, in addition to ferrying merchants and ambassadors, were engaged in fishing and farming. Commenting on Rubruck's account, A.P. Skorik and V.A. Bondarev writes that the ferrymen he mentions "could very well have been prisoners captured in Rus', settled by Batu on the banks of the Don with the task of performing the aforementioned functions." However, Skorik and Bondarev consider the Brodniki version "more probable," even in the "absence of indisputable evidence." Accepting this version, these researchers believe, "we can speak of the Brodniki as the most likely ancestors of the Cossacks."

In this work, A.P. Skorik and V.A. Bondarev made extensive use of the work of the aforementioned "Cossack" A.A. Gordeev, who, within the framework of his concept of the origins of the Cossacks in the depths of the Golden Horde (and also in the absence of evidence), linked the ferrymen described by Rubruck with the Brodniki (allegedly "converted into military settlers"). Such interpretations of the Franciscan monk's accounts were bound to raise objections in the scholarly community. Volgograd historian N.B. Skvortsov, for example, opposed the use of the writings of 13th-century Western European authors (including Rubruck) as evidence of the existence of the Cossacks. True, his argument essentially boiled down to stating the undeniable fact that these writings contain not a single mention of "Cossacks." But this is insufficient: after all, as noted above, the ancestors of today's Cossacks could have been mentioned in sources under other names.

The main thing that does not allow us to classify the carriers mentioned by Rubruk as Cossacks (or as brodniks) is that the nature of their activities is exclusively peaceful. And if the Cossacks still often "earned extra money" by ferrying people and goods across rivers (for example, the Volga) in the 16th–17th centuries, then arable farming on the same Don was prohibited until the end of the 17th century. In addition, historians do not have a single piece of evidence about the existence of such carriers in the 14th–15th centuries, and even less about their genetic connection with the later Cossacks. Contrary to the

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opinion of some historians, it is not traced in relation to those "slaves of the Tatars" from among the Russians, Hungarians and Alans who, according to Rubruk, "gather at once in groups of 20 or 30 people, run out at night with quivers and bows and kill everyone they find at night." Robberies and thefts have been an integral part of people's lives at all times, but this did not turn everyone who committed such crimes into Cossacks...

A peculiar offshoot of the Brodnitskaya version of the origin of the Cossacks can be considered the Tmutarakan version, according to which the ethnically mixed population of the Russian Tmutarakan principality, which existed in the 10th-12th centuries on the Taman Peninsula and in eastern Crimea, became either the "core" of the Cossacks, or one of its components - after they turned into Brodniks. This point of view was reflected to one degree or another not only in the amateurish works of the "Cossacks" (such as, for example, Sh. Balinov, who claimed that the Brodniks were the "old Slavic-Russian population of the Tmutarakan principality"), but also in the works of some professional historians, in particular V.V. Mavrodin, who considered the Brodniks as an intermediate link between the Tmutarakan people and the Cossacks. In his opinion (not supported, however, by data from representative sources), it was precisely the descendants of the Tmutarakanians and Brodniks who accepted the colonization wave from Central Russia, which completed the formation of the Cossacks.

Some modern researchers are also attempting to develop this point of view. Among them are the philosopher P.N. Lukichev and the aforementioned historian A.P. Skorik. They believe that the super-passionate "mixed population of the Tmutarakan Principality could have become the core around which the Cossack population of the Don subsequently grew." Cultural studies doctor A.F. Grigoriev is absolutely certain that "the ethnogenesis of the Cossacks in the North Caucasus is linked to the southern Russian Tmutarakan Principality." The same concept is defended by historians V.B. Vinogradov and S.A. Golovanova, who, however, admit that "sources directly confirming their conclusions are currently lacking." The "indirect evidence" they cite prevents their version from being considered even as a serious hypothesis. Indeed, one cannot consider the fact that "the end of the Russian period in Tmutarakan's history and the appearance of the name Brodniki in written sources coincide" as an argument in its favor, nor that, according to the description of a Roman missionary who visited Tmutarakan in 1237, the "noble people" of this city "leave a little hair above the left ear as a sign of nobility, shaving their entire heads..."—that is, they resembled the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Those who draw such bold parallels are apparently "unaware" that this, so to speak, hairstyle was not unique to the Zaporozhian Cossacks. It has

long been known, in particular, that it was widely used in the Middle Ages among the nomads of Eurasia, including those who exerted a powerful influence (including in the realm of "fashion") on neighboring peoples and states.

It is noteworthy that, despite the widespread dissemination of the "Tmutarakan version," the posthumously published major study by the renowned St. Petersburg historian A.V. Gadlo on "Tmutarakan Rus" makes no mention of any connections with the Brodniki.

The Tmutarakan-Brodnitsa concept, in turn, is part of a broader theme—the ancient Slavic-Russian population of the Don region and the North Caucasus. Not only amateurs, but also some professional historians, have attempted to "build a bridge" from this population to the Cossacks of the 16th century. In the 1930s, V.V. Mavrodin even proposed considering the Lower Don and the North Caucasus as the original home of a Slavic-Russian population that survived there during the Polovtsian and Mongol-Tatar periods, but he, of course, was unable to prove this due to a lack of relevant data in his sources.

In the 1980s, the renowned Don historian V.N. Korolev cautiously attempted to revive this idea. He allowed for the possibility of the permanent existence of "small, isolated groups of Slavic-Russian populations on the Don, which could have formed the core of the future Don Cossacks," but he himself acknowledged the lack of evidence for his hypothesis. "Archeology could help solve this problem. Unfortunately, no archaeologists are working on it," he lamented.

Modern researchers E.I. Dulimov and V.K. Tsechoev, who are very sympathetic to this idea, are nevertheless forced to admit that it does not have ("yet") a sufficiently deep justification, not being confirmed by any currently known written or archaeological sources, and only a few "old" Cossacks of the Lower Don are ready to be counted (it is not clear, however, on what basis) among the descendants of the ancient autochthonous population.

S. M. Markedonov is much more harsh in his assessments. He, not without reason, called the system of argumentation in favor of this concept in the works of V. V. Mavrodin and his students (primarily N. M. Volynkin) "speculative constructions" based on arbitrary handling of sources, and in general characterized it as politically biased, pursuing a very specific task - to prove the involvement of the Northern Black Sea region in the formation of the Russian national state.

O. Yu. Kuts, relying in particular on the research of the Ukrainian historian V. A. Brekhunenko, draws attention to the fact that the Don became an arena for "Cossackization" only after the arrival of people "from different regions" at the turn of the 15th–16th centuries, who brought there both the concept of "Cossack" and the corresponding way of life, which

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was not typical of the earlier Slavic population of the region. In addition, the researcher emphasizes, after the invasion of the Volga-Don steppes in 1395–1396 by Timur's troops, there was no permanent population, including Tatar, on the Don for a long time.

In historical literature, the so-called Chervlenoyarsk people are often mentioned as the original core of the Cossacks. They were the Orthodox (both Russian and Tatar) population of the Khoper-Don interfluvium (Chervlny Yar) of the 14th century, who were directly subordinated to and governed by the Golden Horde and enjoyed some "autonomy" within its framework. The well-known St. Petersburg historian A.A. Shennikov compared the position of the Chervlenoyarsk people in the Golden Horde with "the position that the Don Cossacks subsequently occupied in the Muscovite state", although he considered his point of view only as a "working hypothesis. But even in this capacity, as the equally well-known historian and archaeologist M.V. Tsybin showed, it turned out to be very vulnerable. The social organization of the Chervlenoyarsk people (in particular, the presence of "boyars"), the nature of their occupations (harvesting hay, supplying the Golden Horde with handicrafts, etc.) does not correspond to the ideas about the free Cossacks of the 16th-17th centuries. The fate of the descendants of the Chervlenoyarsk people is unclear, but their successive connection with the later Cossacks is also not confirmed by archaeological excavations or written sources: for the 15th century, information about Chervlenoy Yar is simply absent. It's also difficult to accept the point of view that harks back to the opinion of the Don historian P.P. Sakharov, expressed back in 1914, which connects the origins of the Cossacks with the "free hunters" and "peaceful toilers" who began to develop the Don lands in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Such people may, of course, have appeared in considerable numbers on the upper Don at that time, but as long as their primary occupation remained "peaceful labor," they could be likened to anyone but Cossacks. Only those who found their main source of livelihood in military "trade" became Cossacks. Thus, we return once again to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter about "free men on free land"... I repeat: there were many such people in Rus' in the 16th and 17th centuries, including among those actively engaged in hunting and fishing, but this did not make them Cossacks. For example, in Siberia, numerous hunting cooperatives operated. They, as a rule, consisted of free people, but were not considered or called Cossacks. However, here is what is noteworthy: when the famous explorer Erofey Khabarov conceived a campaign against the Amur, he recruited his army mainly from hunters, and they, having embarked "on the warpath", began to call themselves "Cossacks"... However, it would also be rash to classify all free people engaged in the "military trade" as Cossacks or their predecessors. Thus, there

are great doubts about identifying the ancestors of the Cossacks with the Novgorod ushkuiniks - participants in military and robber expeditions that smashed and robbed both Tatars and Russians on the Volga and Kama in the 14th - early 15th centuries. E.P. Savelyev once tried to prove the origin of some of the Don Cossacks from Novgorodians, relying, among other things, on the opinion of the academician of painting E.A. Oznobishin. Such pre-revolutionary researchers as I.D. Popka and V.A. Potto put an equal sign between the ushkuiniks and the first Cossacks, and some modern authors actually agree with them.

Over the last half century, the attention of such serious researchers as V.N. Bernadsky, V.F. Mamonov, L.V. Cherepnin, A.V. Malov, and A.V. Golovnev has been drawn to the ushkuiniks. Their works show that there is indeed a certain similarity between the object of their study and the free Cossacks. Both were robbers, both were called "good fellows", and gangs of both were formed on a voluntary basis... But this is probably where the analogies end. There is no information about the internal organization of the ushkuiniks' gangs, and the idea that it was most likely "democratic", like the Cossacks' (since in Novgorod they were used to deciding everything at a veche) is purely speculative. They, of course, correspond to what we know about the structure of robber gangs of later times, but they are in contradiction with one important circumstance: the leaders of the ushkuiniks were most often people from the Novgorod nobility (and they were called, by the way, not "atamans", but "governors").

The assertion that the ushkuiniks led a "typical Cossack lifestyle" is contradicted by the fact that ushkuiniks were not a permanent occupation for these representatives of Veliky Novgorod, whereas for the free Cossacks, "warrior trade" became a way of life. Cossacks in the 15th–17th centuries certainly engaged in robbery, but not all who committed robbery were Cossacks.

V.N. Bernadsky considers ushkuinichestvo a "specifically Novgorod phenomenon," refusing to connect it with the Cossacks or even compare it. L.V. Cherepnin also draws no analogies with the Cossacks, although he admits that ushkuiniker gangs could have been formed "from people without a specific occupation," removed "from the framework of ordinary city corporations," emerging "from the poorest part of the urban population," and, "perhaps, from among ordinary feudal lords." In his opinion, ushkuinichestvo as a "peculiar phenomenon" arose because "representatives of the ruling class sought to exploit such people for their own interests, removing them from Novgorod and directing their strength and energy toward organizing enterprises that would facilitate the further expansion of the economic and political influence of the Novgorod boyars in Rus'." And according to A.V. Golovnev, "the Volga Cossacks were the heirs of the Novgorod river

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pirates." "This 'Cossackdom' of the eastern borderlands," he writes, "was the link between the northern 'people of the veche' and the southern 'people of the circle.' Not only the similarity in the customs and practices of the Novgorodians and Cossacks, but also their interaction along the 'Volga arc' became the foundation of the eastern borderland freemen." V.F. Mamonov believes that "despite the significant similarities between ushkuinism and the Cossacks (especially in the early days of their existence), there are also enormous differences," and that "Cossackism is, after all, a more complex phenomenon." At the same time, he calls ushkuinism "...one of the main sources of the emergence of the Cossacks."

A similar point of view is held by some other modern researchers (for example, I.Yu. Vasiliev), but theirs is also purely speculative. We have no evidence to support the conversion of ushkuiniks to Cossacks, and the fact that such a transition was entirely possible does not necessarily prove its reality. The Novgorod (northern) "trait" noted by some researchers in the language and culture of 19th- and 20th-century Cossacks should hardly be considered indisputable proof of the presence of ushkuiniks among the ancestors of the Cossacks, namely:

Firstly, as is well known, after Novgorod and Vyatka were subjugated by Moscow at the end of the 15th century, many residents of these "republics" were resettled to the center of the country, and later they could have easily left for the Volga, Yaik, Don or Terek;

Secondly, it cannot be ruled out that residents of the Novgorod region "became Cossacks" at an even later time (sources record that some Don Cossacks had parents living in Novgorod in the mid-17th century). Be that as it may, even if a "Novgorod influence" is discernible in some Cossack dialects, it is still inferior to the dialects of the southern Russian regions, which generally predominate among the Cossacks, especially the most numerous—the Don dialect.

Furthermore, it's worth noting the significant time gap between the disappearance of the ushkuiniks from the historical arena and the emergence of free Cossack communities. The campaigns of the Novgorod "povolniki" ceased at the very beginning of the 15th century, while the first associations of free Cossacks are clearly documented by sources towards the end of that century. Thus, the disappearance of the ushkuiniks and the formation of Cossackdom (as a social institution) are separated by at least two generations. This gap, however, could have been somewhat filled by the Vyatka people (who, according to A.A. Shennikov, were "direct descendants of the Novgorodians and exactly the same river pirates"), who undertook predatory expeditions in the Lower Volga region until the 1470s. However, there is no information in the sources about the participants in these campaigns becoming Cossacks, although this possibility certainly cannot be

completely ruled out. At the same time, historical sources allow us to discover, precisely in the 15th century, distinct groups in the vastness of the "Wild Field" that can truly be considered "proto-Cossack." As follows from the major works of a number of Russian and foreign historians, relying on accounts from Russian chronicles, Polish chronicles, Muscovite-Turkish and Muscovite-Crimean correspondence, Nogai affairs, documents from the Italian colonies of the Northern Black Sea region, and other sources from the 15th and 16th centuries, proto-Cossack associations were formed by people from various Tatar hordes, which, following the collapse of the Golden Horde and the degradation of its statehood, entered a period of acute socio-political crisis and internecine wars. According to some researchers, sources reflecting events that took place in the territory of the former Golden Horde and adjacent regions of other states up until the 16th century. In general, only Tatar Cossacks are mentioned—both those in the service of various rulers and those who were "free." Deprived of their nomadic camps, finding themselves not only outside their "yurt" but also outside their social status, these people chose war as their main occupation and engaged in either predatory raids on neighbors and banal robbery, or military mercenaries, and eventually found places of their more or less permanent residence in hard-to-reach riverine areas, which in fact served as buffer zones between the state and ethnopolitical entities that arose on the ruins of the Golden Horde. There, the proto-Cossacks could establish their bases—small fortified "towns" - and unite into militarized communities.

The military-democratic (Cossack) nature of self-government may not have developed immediately, but the preconditions for it were present in the patriarchal structure of the lower echelons of nomadic Tatar communities. It was precisely this, as the most optimal form of social organization under those conditions, that drove the proto-Cossacks to this form of social organization, precluding the very possibility of social discord within their ranks. While at first, proto-Cossack associations could still be led by representatives of the Tatar tribal elite (it is known that even "Cossack Genghisids" sometimes found refuge in the aforementioned "buffer zones" in the late 15th and 16th centuries), as representatives of different tribes and clans ("elei") intermingled within these communities, the Tatar nobility inevitably had to be replaced by elected atamans and esauls. The fact that the titles of these positions are of Tatar origin (as is much of the specifically Cossack terminology) is in itself indicative.

The next and most important stage in the formation of the Russian Cossacks emerged already in the 16th century and was associated with the mass exodus of Russians and Ukrainians to the steppe rivers "to become youthful" (the latter ethnonym is, of course, conditional - at that time, no one anywhere

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called anyone "Ukrainians").

It's no coincidence that the phrase "Russian Cossacks" first appears in sources from the early 16th century. During this period, political, economic, and social tensions in Rus' increased, and, in particular, as Volgograd historian I.O. Tyumentsev believes, a profound crisis of the patrimonial and manorial systems occurred, leading to the impoverishment and exodus to the "Field" of many service people—nobles, boyar children, their military servants ("battle kholops"), streltsy, and gunners. They became the first Russian Cossacks. And the first Zaporozhian Cossacks, according to the convincingly substantiated opinion of V.I. Markov, were primarily descended from the military service class of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. And the opportunity for all of them to roam the "Field" with impunity also increased dramatically due to the crisis of the Golden Horde statehood, especially after the defeat of the Great Horde in 1502 and its disintegration.

Among the Russian regions that supplied the contingent for the formation of both service and free Cossacks, Ryazan region was clearly in the lead for a long time; some researchers even call it the "cradle of Russian Cossacks". But the adjacent lands, especially Meshchera, also played an important role in its formation: with the general predominance of Tatar (service) Cossacks, sources from the mid-16th century increasingly record Russian Cossacks. It is important to note that at first (apparently, until the 1540s), "Cossackization" for people from Russian "Ukraines" was most often temporary, carried out "in visits". As follows from one of the diplomatic documents of that time, after "walking" for some time "on the Field" and causing "some mischief" there, these "darling Cossacks" went away "to their own lands". But from the 1540s Russian Cossacks began to settle more and more firmly on the tributaries of the Don (Oskol, Seversky Donets), on the Don itself and on other "Cossack" rivers, gradually filling their ranks not only with servicemen, but also with all sorts of "walkers", "workers", tradesmen and, finally, peasants - all those who preferred "wild freedom" outside of their country to the forced and routine life in their own country.

This process has found a corresponding reflection in long-known and quite representative sources. Thus, in 1538, during negotiations with one of the Nogai murzas, the Moscow ambassadors stated 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 in the Field; both Cherkassians, and Kievans, and your sovereign's, have come to the Field from all the Ukraines...". How the Russian-Tatar symbiosis in the "Wild Field" took place, one can only guess. But, most likely, the relationship between the first Russian and Tatar Cossacks was predominantly peaceful and

mutually beneficial. The Russians could not help but appreciate the Tatars' better knowledge of the terrain and their horse fighting skills, and the Tatars appreciated the Russians' possession of firearms and their shipbuilding and navigation skills, which were little known to the nomads.

Conclusion

The population of Rus was much more numerous than the Turkic population of Eastern Europe, and that is why, as R.G. Skrynnikov correctly noted, during the 16th century the Russians numerically prevailed among the Cossacks. The change in the ethnic composition of the Cossack communities is evident, first of all, from the fact that among the references in the sources to the Cossacks the number of Russian nicknames and names increases, as the Cossacks themselves increasingly point to their Russian origin, and the result of this "Russification" by the beginning of the 17th century is noted by outside observers. Thus, the Dutch merchant I. Massa, who lived in Moscow in 1601-1609, knew the Russian language and was well informed about Russian affairs, left the following note: "The Cossacks are people of various tribes ... but for the most part they are Muscovites and speak mostly Moscow." As already noted, Siberian chronicles refer to Yermak's Cossacks as "Russian warriors" and "Russian people." Interestingly, in the south of the Yenisei province, among the indigenous inhabitants of some uluses, the ethnonym "Russians" was literally translated as "Yermak's people." The Russian origin of most of the "Yermak Cossacks" is also indicated by the names and nicknames of almost all currently known associates of the "conqueror of Siberia." Having analyzed the names and nicknames of the Yaik Cossacks mentioned in sources from the late 16th century, E.V. Kusainova also came to the conclusion that at that time, "there was undoubtedly..." "The Slavic element predominated." It is noteworthy that the Cossacks who inhabited the "Field" were considered primarily Russian by the rulers of neighboring countries (Turkey, Crimea, the Nogai Horde), who complained about the Cossacks' banditry in the mid-16th to early 17th centuries, not just anywhere, but to Moscow, directly calling the attackers "Russian Cossacks," "Rus," "Rus-robbers," "Don Rus," and "Russian people" (and those who were directly subjected to these attacks clearly distinguished even between "Moscow Cossacks" and "Circassian Cossacks").

The influx of Russian population strengthened the military-democratic character of the social organization of the free Cossacks, for it brought with it the traditions and forms of "secular" self-government, which, as recent research shows, were quite tenacious and effective in Rus' right up until the end of the 17th century, not only among the rural but also the urban population, including service people.

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Moreover, the introduction of firearms, shipbuilding, and navigation skills to Cossack communities with the arrival of immigrants from Russian and Ukrainian lands dramatically increased the Cossacks' military-technical potential, the effectiveness of their military "industries," and their ability to resist attempts at destruction or subjugation. M.A. Ryblova generally characterizes the Cossacks of this period as "people of the water," while the Rostov historian A.T. Urushadze believes that, under those conditions, the river surface offered the Cossacks the most suitable platform for both surprise attacks and rapid retreat, making rivers the most favorable environment "for the emergence and subsequent development of Cossack communities." And he is right: the lamentations of the Cossacks' steppe opponents (particularly the Nogais) about their inability to successfully resist Cossack raids carried out from river boats are well known.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that although the areas where the Russian Cossacks were formed, as N.B. Skvortsov aptly put it, were located, as it were, "on a 'no man's' land—a boundary, a blurred space where different geopolitical interests, landscapes, and civilizational horizons converged," the threat of enemy attack on Cossack settlements was constant and quite real, and therefore for a long time (on the Don—until the end of the 17th century) they were usually located in hard-to-reach places, unsuitable for normal life, but convenient for defense.

As for the traditional distribution of free Cossacks along the rivers, which eventually led to their gradual formation, it is well known. If we were to generalize all the rather obvious conditions and circumstances, the combination of which allowed for the emergence of such a unique ethno-socio-cultural phenomenon as the Free Cossacks, then the following should be noted among them:

1. *Socio-temporal factor* Cossack communities could not have emerged before the disintegration or at least a significant weakening of tribal ties. Only a climate of social and political instability in society provided a sufficient number of "passionaries" from among marginalized individuals, fugitives, outcasts, and other "people without status"—these being the main "building blocks" of early Cossack communities—for self-organization.

2. The corresponding political and geographical conditions, and, above all, the relative proximity to the "exit" points for potential Cossacks of vast, sparsely populated, and inaccessible territories, not fully controlled by either the metropolis or other state entities. Furthermore, the bases of free paramilitary communities had to be relatively close to states and peoples wealthy enough to serve as the object of "military trades," to provide the opportunity

for recruitment into military service and the free exchange of military spoils for food and necessary weapons and household items, but at the same time incapable of destroying or subduing the bandits, traders, and mercenaries who periodically visited them (often all in one person). The Lower Danube region, which in the 12th-13th centuries was the main habitat of the "predecessors of the Cossacks—the Brodniks," in the 15th-16th centuries it was already too developed and populated to become a base for the "proto-Cossacks", but the Dnieper below the rapids, the middle and lower Don, the lower Volga, Yaik and Terek were ideal for them.

3. The corresponding international situation (foreign policy factor). The first Cossack communities must have had ample opportunity to exploit the contradictions between the surrounding peoples and states to their advantage, and therefore, as the authors of the two-volume "Cossack Don" aptly noted, it is no coincidence that they arose "in a region where the political ambitions of neighboring states clashed."

Thus, we can conclude that such a unique ethno-socio-cultural community as the free Cossacks was formed in the period from the end of the 15th century to the middle 16th century and, being the result of the interaction of a whole series of factors of a geographical, ethno-political and social nature, it then developed according to its own internal laws, eventually turning from a free into a service...

The appearance of the Cossacks on the historical arena was certainly not accidental. The emergence of social groups similar to the Cossacks on the forest-steppe and steppe outskirts of Eastern Europe was inevitable sooner or later. The peoples inhabiting it had been moving towards this for centuries, periodically singling out from their midst the most freedom-loving and energetic groups of people who, accordingly, created the type of social organization most suitable for the dangerous life in the "Field" - the Cossack community, and then the "host".

Cossack-type communities have been multiethnic since ancient times, but it is impossible not to see that they acquired a stable character and the possibility of successful development only when Russian people actively joined in the process of their formation and began to numerically predominate in them. Russian Cossacks assimilated Tatar Cossacks quite quickly and at the same time borrowed much from their language, way of life, customs, and combat skills, and later adopted much from other peoples who came into contact with them (including the Caucasians) and eventually created their own bright and original culture, which became an integral part of the all-Russian culture and significantly enriched it.

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