

SUSPICION, TRUST, AND BROKERAGE AMONG CONTEMPORARY DON COSSACKS IN ROSTOV OBLAST OF RUSSIA

Aleksei Boiko

*Aleksei Boiko, Department of History, HSE University in Saint Petersburg, Russia.
alxyboiko@gmail.com.*

Research for this article was conducted within the project “Social Structure and Economic Order of Don Cossack Societies” with funding from the Khamovniki Foundation for Social Research.

This study explores the construction of authority and formation of reputation inside the contemporary Don Cossack community/movement in Rostov Oblast of Russia. The subject of the study is the structure of informal relationships based on the interpersonal acts of reciprocal categorization and recognition. I explore the emergence of authority of contemporary Don Cossack leaders that takes place in the context of permanent suspicion, mutual surveillance, and recognition seeking among Cossacks inside and outside of formal Cossack organizations. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork data, interviews, and network analysis, I explain the rise of Cossack intragroup brokerage and the non-institutionalized authority of Cossack leaders. The article emphasizes the importance of symbolic communication, especially the use of semantic polysemy of nominative categories to connect distinct groups, cliques, and individuals. The structure of distributed authority among Cossacks is explained by the discursive strategies of framing the perpetually contested group boundaries. This explanation requires a reconceptualization of “brokerage” in anthropological theory as a practice that relies on switching between the symbolic frames of mutual categorization and recognition.

Keywords: Authority; Brokerage; Cossacks; Frame Analysis; Mixed Methods Research; Social Network Analysis

THE COSSACK REVIVAL AND THE CRISIS OF TRUST

The Cossack revival movement began in the late 1980s, in the final years of the Soviet Union. It was accompanied by the growth of numerous autonomous informal groups focusing on Cossack history, military history clubs, and reenactment movements. These groups were formed in Rostov Oblast (Don Voisko¹), Krasnodar Krai (Kuban' Voisko), Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other regions and cities of Russia. Cossack associations attracted local intelligentsia—historians (both academic and

¹ The word *voisko* should be considered as a synonym of “host” or “army.”

popular), fiction writers, folklorists, local amateur ethnographers (*kraevedy*), and military reenactment activists engaged in the process of movement formation (Derluguian and Cipko 1997; Boeck, 1998; Toje 2006; Arnold 2014; Popov 2018). A few years before the collapse of the USSR, Cossack associations began to create their own “military-historical clubs,” folklore ensembles, and newspapers. In the 1990s the private self-representation of Cossack identity became public (Boeck 2004; Toje 2006). The movement was formed out of adult men with different professional backgrounds and social ranks who shared interests in Cossack military history and folklore. Images of the preindustrial, semi-military and semi-peasant Cossack mode of life were taken from elderly relatives, folklore, fiction, historical written sources (folk and academic), and Soviet movies and songs portraying Cossack carefree rural life (Toje 2006). However, the Cossack movement opposed the official Soviet state-centered narratives about Cossacks. The Cossack leaders claimed that prerevolutionary Cossacks were not a privileged military estate (*soslovie*), but a people (*narod*) and considered the Bolsheviks’ policy of de-Cossackization (*raskazachivanie*) as a genocidal practice. As a result, this narrative has become an important element of contemporary Cossack political language and memorial culture (Miller and Kamentsev 2024).

Since 1990 members of these groups began to establish the first formal Cossack organizations—Cossack societies. They were modeled on the prerevolutionary Cossacks and copied their organizational structure and visual attributes. Such societies were legally registered as nonprofit organizations; they were egalitarian groups that chose their leaders (atamans) during regularly held special meetings (*krug*, “circle”). The *krug* projected the image of ancestral communal political traditions, an ideal of military democracy where the ataman was “the first among equals” and responsible for Cossacks of his *khutor*, *stanitsa*, *yurt*, or *okrug*—territorial units of the prerevolutionary Cossack political body, *voisko* (“host”).

Cossack societies also adopted their own “code of ethics” and sometimes even used extralegal means against their members or outsiders for violating such rules (Skinner 1994). The weakness of law enforcement bodies in the 1990s made common among Cossacks the use of violence to pursue personal, corporate, or political ends. Some Cossacks and Cossack organizations became visible players in the market of what Vadim Volkov (2016) called “violent entrepreneurship.” Many former police officers (*militsonery*) and military veterans were engaged in the movement (Grau 1993; Rvacheva 2022). Some of them already had combat experience in local conflicts such as the Transnistria war, the South Ossetia war, the war in Abkhazia, and the two Russian-Chechen wars. They viewed military service of their ancestors as an integral part of the Cossack tradition to be restored. The grassroots demands met governmental approval in 1996, when most of the formal “Cossack societies” were gradually incorporated into a large federal organization—the Reestr, otherwise known as the Registered Cossack Societies of the Russian Federation. Informal groups gradually turned into formal organizations and legal subjects. The revival of civil service provided Cossack societies and atamans opportunities to receive public funding, power, and land. However, the official status represented a threat of loss of

political and financial independence and transformation of independent Cossack associations into a privileged paramilitary estate (*kazachestvo*, “Cossackdom”) again. Atamans used their influence, authority, and ties to stay in a state of permanent bargaining with government institutions and political forces. Some scholars note that the rehabilitation and restitution of Cossacks in the 1990s were later transformed into the restoration of their privileges, specific rights, and freedoms (Lankina 1996), while others distinguish between revival as an independent grassroots process and rehabilitation as the state-directed policy (Boeck 2004). Subsequently, the Cossack community experienced a rapid increase in the number of members—especially during the 1990s—partly caused by the economic and political benefits of membership in Cossack organizations. Such growth in the number of Cossacks led to a crisis of trust and rising suspicion toward neophytes among other Cossacks. Numerous politically engaged Cossacks refused to join official Cossack societies or joined nonofficial Cossack organizations. They blamed the Reestr for blurring their group’s boundaries by accepting almost everyone into Cossack societies and for the pollution and distortion of Cossack symbols and customs. The circles of “pureblood” Cossacks grew suspicious of newcomers and their motives because benefits from membership in official Cossack societies attracted many strangers, outsiders, and impostors. The identity construction was not just cooperation, but also competition between different groups and their visions of priorities for the Cossack movement. The vigilance toward new members of the Cossack movement and suspicion of imposture became widespread among descendants of Cossacks considering themselves as *narod* (the people), as a political subject and ethnic group with its independent identity and culture.

Who should be considered a real Cossack? I followed my informants to answer this question, which combines descriptive and normative aspects. The suspicion and “conventional distrust of outsiders” (Herzfeld 1988:76) forced Cossacks to create and maintain the trust relationship and to test the neophytes on whether they were “true Cossacks.” This feature of the contemporary Don Cossack community explains the endogenic mechanisms of authority formation. The authority of Cossack leaders takes place in the context of permanent suspicion, mutual surveillance, and pursuit of mutual approval and recognition. Every Cossack has to be known, approved, and recognized by other Cossacks. I argue that such a recursive and decentralized omnilateral panoptic gaze produces a sense of personalized honor and authority among Cossacks. Importantly for my argument, this authority is informal because it is not reducible to the formal positions in the Cossack organizations—or to the patronage of economic and administrative resources. It involves the struggle for symbolic power of nomination among the most recognized and approved individuals. The very use of the word “Cossack” does not belong to any single visible center of authority but is distributed among the subjects themselves. This individualized authority rests on the “intersection of official and unofficial categories and practices” (Jauregui 2016:51–52). In what follows, I investigate these personalized forms of authority—or, as anthropologist Caroline Humphrey calls them, “localized forms of sovereignty” (2007:420).

By focusing on the concept of brokerage, I suggest that the authority is being accumulated and circulated in the contemporary Don Cossack movement through a horizontal symbolic exchange. I emphasize the role of the open and frequently discursively marked disregard for the bureaucratic rules in the making of reputational networks.

NOMINATION AND MEDIATION

The contemporary Don Cossack movement in Rostov Oblast is represented by numerous organizations (*kazach'i obshchestva*), informal groups, and individuals. Such segmentation makes the mediation necessary for outsiders to be accepted in the Cossack society or just recognized as Cossacks.

To be recognized as a Cossack, an outsider must confirm to other Cossacks his right to identify himself in this way and prove his belonging to the Cossack people. The status positions and the belonging to the community are constantly challenged and maintained. Every Cossack has to know other Cossacks and be known to them personally. The word “Cossack”² in everyday interaction is not purely descriptive but is also performative and normative, “a matter of interaction, not contemplation” (Barth 1969:29). It has to be performed by an individual-like status role (Barth 1969:28; Herzfeld 2018). Michael Herzfeld’s study of Glendiot men in Crete (1988) and Pierre Bourdieu’s study of Algerian Kabyles (1979) demonstrate that relationships of honor necessary imply the competition for symbolic approval. The degree of belonging is determined by the degree of involvement in identity performances, or what Craig Calhoun (2003) called “participation in ethnicity.” Bourdieu (1985, 1994) stated that the power of naming—the essence of the concept of symbolic power and especially the “authority of nomination” as a specific type of symbolic power—is usually monopolized by official state institutions operating through legal concepts and language. Conversely, in the case of contemporary Cossacks the state and government bodies have no controlling stake in such symbolic capital, even though, as Rogers Brubaker (2004) asserts, they act as powerful identifiers and participants in boundary-making processes. The nominative power to call someone a Cossack is the result of multiple acts of personal reciprocal recognition between distinct persons.

Consequently, the struggle for the recognition of other Cossacks often requires being recognized by the most-recognized members of Cossack community. I call these most-recognized Cossacks “brokers” to emphasize their role in the communication and exchange. The concept of brokerage clarifies the phenomenon of authority among Cossacks and explains the function of nominative statements concerning belonging to the Cossack community. Earlier anthropological studies of brokerage

² The flexible meaning of this identity category was mentioned in studies of Kuban’ Cossacks (Derluquian and Cipko 1997; Boeck 2004; Toje 2006; Puzankov 2022). While most relevant studies of the contemporary Cossack movement focused on Kuban’ Cossacks in Krasnodar Krai (Skinner 1994; Derluquian and Cipko 1997; Boeck 1998, 2004; Toje 2006; Arnold 2014; Popov 2018), I carried out my study of Don Cossacks in Rostov Oblast.

tended to explain the power of middlemen by the “congruence of cultures” (Barnes 1969) and the crisis of trust between competing groups (Schwartz, Turner, and Tuden 1966) that creates the demand for a mediator. I follow Jeremy Boissevain’s distinction between patronage and brokerage. According to him, a patron operates with land, jobs, grants, and knowledge (first-order resources), whereas a broker deals with strategic social contacts (second-order sources) (Boissevain 1974:147–148). While the concept of cultural broker supposed by Clifford Geertz (1960) captures the relation between “high” global cultures and “low” local cultures,³ I prefer to describe the horizontal ties between comparable groups and cliques inside the Cossack community. Some scholars argue that the behavior of brokers and their legitimacy are framed by the brokers’ ability to manage the meanings of interactions and interpret them (Cohen and Comaroff 1976:88–89; Kapferer 1976:12). Therefore, the values involved in the process of exchange are “not given,” but the interaction itself makes them valuable (Cohen and Comaroff 1976:102). The meanings of words and categories can be shifted, expanded or narrowed. If human beings are “themselves also symbolic elements of the communicative situation,” as Claude Lévi-Strauss stated (1963:61), then their roles should be defined in terms of their own definition of the situation. Social categories and identities verbalized as roles should be considered not just as elements of objective social structure but as symbols (Parkin 1976:177), through which actors recognize each other and communicative situations. Thus, the legitimacy of the broker is not a given but should be permanently performed. Taking into account the relevance of the critique of the anthropological scholarship on brokerage, some recent studies indicate that brokers are not just passive figures resulting from the decentralized political field (Bierschenk, Chauveau, and de Sardan 2002), but inventive agents who reproduce the moral economy and ignore or distorts the effects of state and market (James 2011). While recent studies have primarily focused on external and vertical brokers who sustain relationships between local communities and external actors (Epple 2021; Walther 2021), current research describes intracommunal brokerage.

My informants themselves stressed the importance of brokerage relations during our conversations. Petr, a 53-year-old ataman of one of the oldest Cossack societies in Rostov-on-Don established by retired military officers in the 1990s and a highly respected person in a Cossack community put it this way: “Where there are two *zdravye*⁴ Cossacks, I will always be the third” (Petr, Rostov-on-Don, Sept. 17, 2021).

The importance of interpersonal ties emphasized by my informants has affected the choice of fieldwork and analytic strategy. To trace these ties I used snowball sampling to collect network data and ethnographic methods to explain

³ The term “broker” was used to describe the role of individuals who provide a connection of the local community to the nation-state level (Wolf 1956; Silverman 1965; Blok 1974). In the studies in the sociology of social movements the concept of broker is used for understanding the relations of codependence between leaders and followers (Diani 2003).

⁴ *Zdravyi* may mean healthy, sane, or reliable.

this data and describe how the authority⁵ of Cossack leaders and the phenomenon of brokerage among Don Cossacks emerge from symbolic acts of mutual nomination and recognition among Cossacks. I focused on two symbolic levels of communication: (1) dyadic ties of mutual recognition by two informants as Cossacks and (2) rhetorical framing of such ties and relationships in the Cossack community.

The two levels cannot be explained separately. They provide us with two basic tools of description and explanation of informal authority in the Cossack community. The dyadic ties of mutual recognition as Cossacks form the reputational network of the Cossack community. The usage of shared category (with flexible meaning) distinguishes a special communicational level, which social movement scholar Harrison White calls category network—"catnet" (2008:52). Mutual acceptance serves as a basic feature of interaction (Goffman 1967:11) that is mediated by a two-way process of self-construction (Crossley 2010:92) implying both identification of self and categorization of others as Cossacks. Communicative meaning is not just the passive content of the social ties; rather, the rhetoric of everyday talk itself produces these ties, maintains the roles of actors (Snow et al. 1986; Mische 2003), and allows participants to "save face" (Goffman 1967:5). I demonstrate how the switching and translation between different interpretative frames of mutual categorization make the authority of Cossack leaders. Such frame-bridging acts (Snow et al. 1986:467) form the basis of brokers' legitimacy.

⁵ I use the concept of authority, which was originally introduced by Max Weber, to emphasize the importance of the noninstitutionalized influence of Cossack leaders, based on the subjective (or more accurately in this case intersubjective) meaning that actors attach to the actions of each other (Weber 1978:4). The "minimum of voluntary compliance" (212) implies the process of subjective and individual interpretation of others' actions. Therefore, the personal status of individuals and the whole social order hinge on "the way in which social honor is distributed in a community" (Weber 1958:181). I argue that such distribution results from what Julian Pitt-Rivers calls "transactions of honor" (1966: 38) between distinct individuals. Therefore, the distribution of honor also distinguishes between insiders and outsiders (Kollmann 1999:26).

Weber himself mentioned prerevolutionary Cossacks of the Russian Empire several times when describing the differences between different forms of feudal relationships. He described them as a military caste (*Kriegerkaste*) serving a patrimonial monarch but depending on him (Weber 1922:688). Weber supposed that Cossacks had no land of their own, but had a right to get their income ("prebend") from the occupied title. They paid "blood tax" for such privileges of performing military ("liturgical") obligations (726). In another passage Weber depicts the Cossacks as a rare example of the Russian equivalent of West European feudalism (720), emphasizing the greater political autonomy that Cossacks had in comparison with the rest of the nobility of the Russian Empire. Cossacks were not a research object for Weber, but the difficulties that he encountered attempting to categorize Cossacks of the Russian Empire reflect the internal political complexity of such communities.

THE COSSACK NETWORK AND DISTRIBUTED AUTHORITY

I conducted my fieldwork in different areas of Rostov Oblast between September 2020 and October 2021.⁶ During this time I had conversations with 82 informants (73 men and 9 women), recorded semistructured ethnographic interviews of varying duration (from several minutes to more than four hours), and visited local Cossack events such as holidays, church worships, local sports competitions, and military trainings, making notes and records. In addition, I asked every informant to share with me contact information for other Cossacks. Cossack community is not socially and locally isolated from its surroundings and does not typically form sustainable local neighborhoods, thus I had to find Cossacks by using the snowball sampling technique. Therefore, all my informants are directly or indirectly connected by the network of reciprocal verbal recommendations, demonstrating their interpersonal trust and approval of each other. A similar methodology has been used earlier by Paul McLean (2007) in his study of patronage letters in Renaissance Florence, in which he explores the formation of personal prestige and honor through the acts of written communication. The focus on the relational nature of social networks helps to avoid formalist oversimplification and reification of social ties and offers the possibility to connect structural and cultural variables (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994) and levels of analysis (Erikson 2013).

Using collected data, I built a network model of the Cossack community in Rostov Oblast.⁷ It connects my informants (nodes) by the ties (edges) of mutual acquaintance and acceptance based on their shared identity (see figure 1). Therefore, every two connected nodes designate two informants reciprocally recognizing each other as Cossacks. This model does not however imply equivalence of ties and that these relations have the same subjective meaning for Cossacks, but it makes visible several important positions based on the generalized reciprocal trust and approval.

As the model shows, Cossacks construct their relations across the boundaries of formal organizations. However, I mention some of them:

- **DVIK (1986–2009)** (Platov Don Military-Historical Club)—an association of Rostov intelligentsia—local historians, reenactment movement activists, folklore enthusiasts, and writers. DVIK members were active participants in the early Don Cossack revival. Former members of DVIK are highly respected persons in the Cossack movement due to their significant expertise in Cossack history and culture.
- **KKD, DKR (1990–2015)** (Cossack Krug of Don, Don Cossack Republic) was the most successful independent Cossack nationalist organization of Rostov Oblast. It aimed to achieve political and economic independence of the Don Host Region, declare the independence of the Don Republic, and bring Rostov Oblast and former Don Host territory under the control of Cossack

⁶ The fieldwork was conducted before the war in Ukraine began in February 2022. The impact of the war on the current Don Cossack community and movement should be explored in future studies.

⁷ Full dataset is available at https://github.com/alxboiko/cossacks_dataset.

associations. KKD/DKR was in opposition to local and federal governments, and in the 2010s it lost much of its influence because of internal conflicts and external pressure from local authorities and the law enforcement.

- **SKOVD (1990–1998)** (The Union of Cossacks of Don Host Region)—the first Cossack organization successful in bringing together small autonomous Cossack groups. SKOVD's organizational form was modeled on that of prerevolutionary Cossacks. Rural (*khutor*, *stanitsa*) and urban (*gorod*) Cossack societies were subordinated to the larger organizational unit—*yurt*. *Yurty*, in turn, were subordinated to *okrug*. And *okruga* were subordinated to the host. Host and each *okrug* (district), *yurt*, *gorod* (city), *stanitsa* (village), and *khutor* (single-homestead settlement) had their own elected atamans. Thereby atamans were ranked by the number of members of Cossack societies under their patronage. Unlike KKD/DKR, leaders of SKOVD were engaged in active political cooperation and bargaining with the government of Rostov Oblast. SKOVD was the forerunner of the three largest organizations in the region—VVD, VKO VVD, and SKVRiZ. In 1998 SKOVD changed its name to VKO VVD, but many former members of SKOVD left it and established their own Cossack societies.
- **SKVR (1991–2005)** (The Union of Cossack Hosts of Russia and Abroad) was headed by the former campaign ataman of SKOVD. SKVR was a parallel organization to SKOVD and pursued the goal of political representation of Cossacks in government. SKVR provided active support to Boris Yeltsin, the first president of Russia.
- **VVD (1995–present)** (Almighty Cossack Host, Cossack National Guard) was established by the former ataman of SKOVD Nikolai Kozitsyn. VVD is an active Cossack organization formed as a result of a split between leaders of SKOVD. Kozitsyn and VVD members actively participated and continue to participate as volunteers in post-Soviet military conflicts (Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Chechnya, and Ukraine). VVD is politically loyal to the federal authorities but enjoys significant political autonomy. It competes with the next two Cossack organizations for the title of the descendant of and successor to prerevolutionary Cossacks.
- **VKO VVD (1998–present)** (Host Cossack Society “Almighty Cossack Host”) is the main Cossack organization of the Reestr with the largest number of members in Rostov Oblast. As a successor of SKOVD, VKO VVD became deeply engaged in political coordination with local authorities of different levels. Groups comprising VKO VVD were privileged by regional and federal legislation. They had opportunities to get rent-free land without competition for the purposes of revival of the traditional Cossack economy. Also, these Cossack societies can participate in civil service such as the protection of public order in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Volunteers of Cossack militia squads (*druzhiny*) have an official salary for this kind of service. VKO VVD is often criticized by other Cossack movement members (especially Cossack intelligentsia and Cossack nationalists) for its officialism

and lack of political and financial independence, but registration in the Reestr gives the Cossack association a legal status and additional resources and opportunities.

- **SKVRiZ (2014–present)** (The Union of Cossacks-Warriors of Russia and Abroad) is the second most significant and influential Cossack organization by number of members. SKVRiZ was founded by former ataman of VKO VVD and deputy of the State Duma Viktor Vodolatskii. SKVRiZ is a rapidly growing organization, recruiting many new members, including former members of VKO VVD. It has a less formal organizational and political structure than VKO VVD but has no specific privileges officially recognized by law. Despite this fact, SKVRiZ is often viewed as deeply rooted in informal relations with law enforcement agencies.

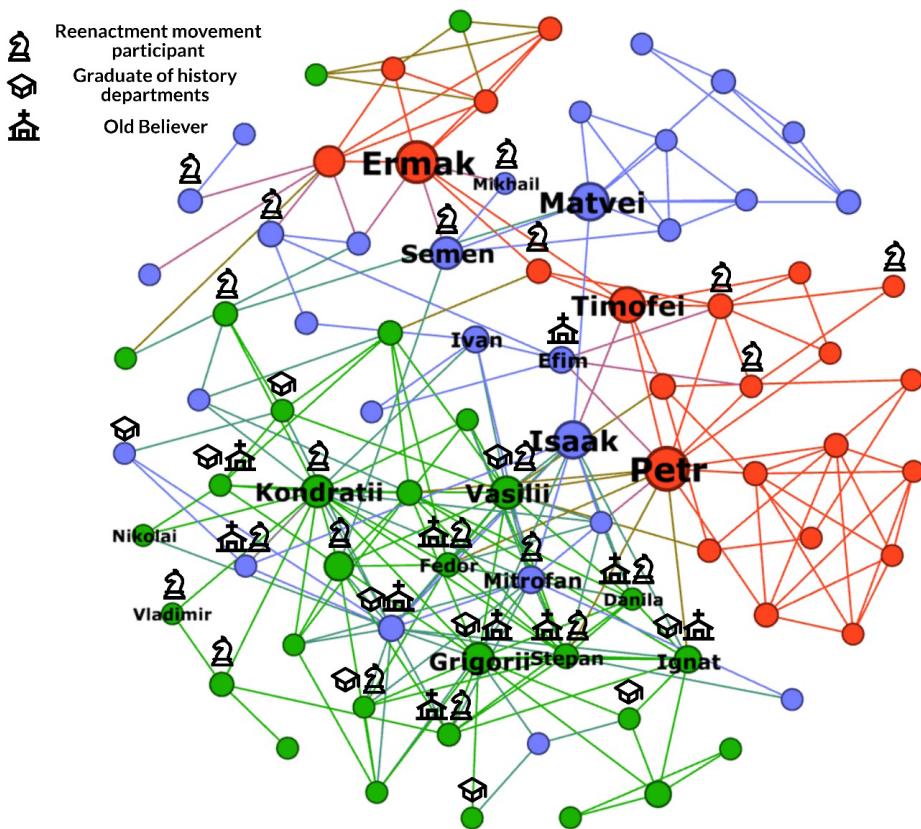


Figure 1. Network model of the Don Cossack community of Rostov Oblast. Members of two largest Cossack organizations are marked in blue (VKO VVD of the Reestr) and red (SKVRiZ). Other Cossacks (green) are "free" and do not belong to any Cossack organization or belong to smaller autonomous informal Cossack groups. The size of the node is proportional to the number of shortest paths passing through a given node.

The last two mentioned organizations—VKO VVD (marked in blue in figure 1) and SKVRiZ (marked in red in figure 1)—deserve more attention because of their scale and power. Both organizations have a formal hierarchical structure that reproduces the structure of prerevolutionary Cossack Voisko (figure 2). The position of a *stanitsa*, *khutor*, or *gorod* ataman in the Don Voisko (VKO VVD) endows the individual with significant influence in the urban or rural locality. Cossack societies included in VKO VVD can get, without tender, from the local government rent-free land plots for indefinite lease and use them for agriculture or sublease. VKO VVD atamans organize Cossack militia (*druzhiny*)—a local nongovernment policing organization consisting of members of Cossack society. The rent from land and militia activities provides the Cossack societies with additional resources. However, many Cossacks did not join Cossack societies or joined smaller autonomous Cossack groups. For this reason, it is insufficient to focus the study exclusively on the Cossack organizations and their formal members. Every local Cossack organization (even subordinated to the larger one) has its own principles of enrollment of neophytes.

Cossack societies SKVRiZ and VKO VVD of the Reestr compete with each other. VKO VVD is the largest Cossack Host organization in Rostov Oblast (as well as in Volgograd Oblast, Astrakhan Oblast, and Kalmykia). There are more than three hundred Cossack societies of VKO VVD in Rostov Oblast alone. VKO VVD's activity is strictly regulated by federal and regional laws, and the charters of Cossack societies must comply with state regulations. After registering with the Reestr, numerous Cossack societies gained exclusive opportunities that other nonprofit organizations do not possess. Additionally, Cossack society members are permitted to join Cossack squads to aid police officers. Unlike voluntary squads, Cossack societies and government bodies, ministries, or state-owned enterprises guarantee regular modest salaries to their members through contracts. Typically, it is not the primary employment for ordinary members, although VKO VVD atamans often refer to their service as a vocation. They are more than just patrons, utilizing resources such as administrative power, Cossack militia squads' salaries, and land. They also frame their activities and interactions within the context of integrating Cossacks into the everyday rational-bureaucratic routine of local administration.

Despite the influence of Cossack organizations, there are no general criteria for communal approval and recognition. The reputation of Cossacks is personalized and hinges on the set of opinions of other respected Cossacks. Hence, the voice of Cossack leaders mediating between Cossacks or Cossack organizations has a huge weight. I will illustrate it in more detail below.

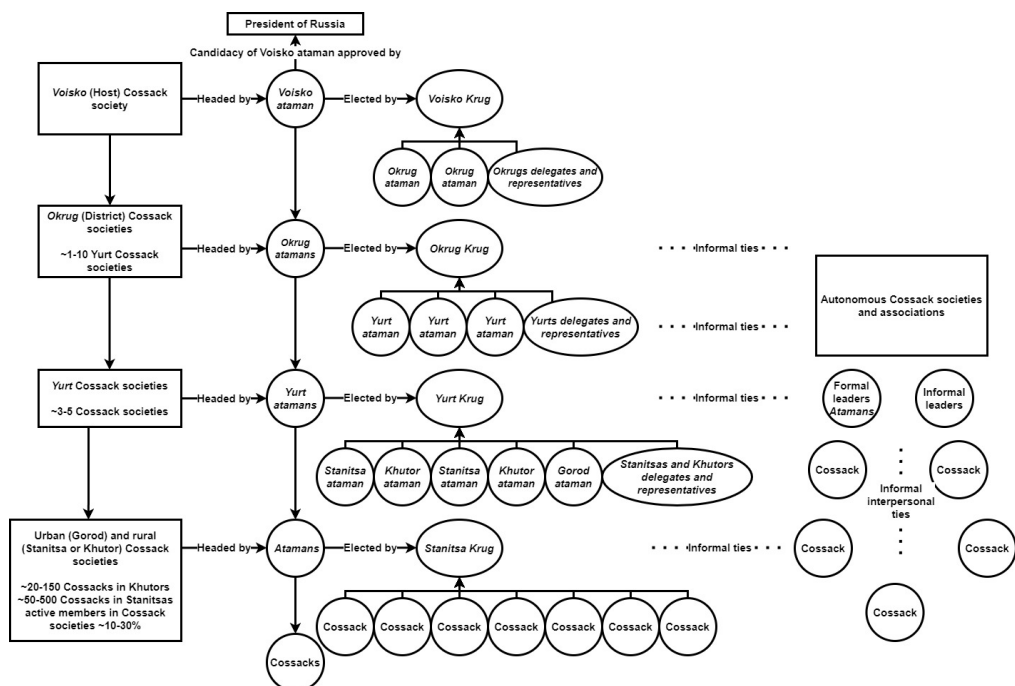


Figure 2. Structure of Cossackdom in contemporary Russia.

BEYOND COSSACK ORGANIZATIONS

In October 2021 I was invited to the annual gathering of the okrug Cossack society of VKO VVD in one of the settlements in the south of Rostov Oblast. This event is called *krug* (circle). *Krug* is a regular gathering of Cossacks of a certain district, *yurt* (which unites several *stanitsy* and *khutory*). Such gatherings are held to further the interests of people claiming to be ethnic Cossacks, to discuss the use of land, communicate with local authorities, elect new ataman, and admit new members of the circle. The *krug* that I attended was organized in the building of the local administration, and it was led by the former *yurt* ataman performing the ataman’s functions. The current ataman, however, did not attend the meeting. Cossacks were sitting in rows in front of three people: the ataman’s deputy, the head of district administration, and a priest. The local judge and representatives of municipal administration were also sitting to the side of the rows. There was a special person armed with a traditional Cossack whip (*nagaika*) who was there to ensure order and prevent disturbances during the meeting. The *krug* started with a ceremonial speech by the ataman’s deputy (Isaak⁸) and the priest’s blessing. Then the Cossacks voted to admit a new member to the society after this person told the gathering where he was born and baptized and what his occupation was (he was a former police officer). He was

⁸ Real names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

admitted unanimously. After the acceptance of the neophyte, the ataman's deputy reported on the Cossack society's activities and outlined its goals. In the report, Isaak blamed the Cossacks for coming to the gathering to "take something from the Cossack society, but not to give to it" and urged them to start farming businesses to support the society financially.

Isaak is a 51-year-old businessman and farmer and is highly respected among other Cossacks. Other informants characterized him as a serious man with an excellent reputation who possesses extensive knowledge about the agriculture business and winemaking. He had assisted some of my informants in starting a business or acquiring land. Land ownership elevates rural Cossacks from *stanitsy* and *khutory* above urban Cossacks, as they consider land as the foundation of the local community, as Isaak stated:

In Rostov-on-Don, for example, there are several Cossack communities in *stanitsy* that have no land or foundation. They are just "administrative units," and do not have any special meaning. You cannot even try to compare the system of self-organization of the Cossacks in the cities and on the land. They are completely different in everything. We, the Cossacks of the First Don District, are always sarcastic and condescending toward the Cossacks of the Rostov District. First, because we know that the majority of *stanitsy* [there] exist only on paper, and second because we know that the Rostov District has always been non-Cossack and alien.⁹ And so it goes on. (Isaak, Semikarakorsk, Oct. 2, 2021)

Isaak is also well known as a mediating figure, connecting Cossack societies of his *yurt* with administrative bodies. He helps to regulate local conflicts between different ethnic groups or individuals and helps Cossack societies to get land plots. In everyday conversations, Cossacks endow land with extra-economic meaning. This symbolic meaning is a part of the interactional frame, which is reproduced among Cossacks and concerns the degree of belonging to the community:

This entire land here is our Cossack *prisud*.¹⁰ We are the indigenous owners here. It so happened that the indigenous people of Don have always been Cossacks. (Ivan, Rostov-on-Don, Oct. 16, 2020)

If you are the owner of your land, you put things in order. And if you are not the owner, you just do what you are told from above. (Kondratii, Krugloe, Nov. 15, 2020)

The land is the bedrock. The Cossack traditionally fed from water and grass. (Stepan, Starocherkasskaia, June 27, 2021)

Ownership of land does not need to confer status upon the owner; rather, it depends on the way it is utilized. The Cossacks talk about the atamans who utilize the land belonging to Cossack societies for personal gain or privatize it and subsequent-

⁹ *Inogorodnii*—non-Cossack residents and peasants of the Don and Kuban' regions in prerevolutionary Russia. Contemporary Cossacks use this word in the same way.

¹⁰ *Prisud* can be translated as a special territory regulated by the Cossack customary law.

ly lose the confidence of the Cossack community, resulting in their abandonment of Cossack movement. So achieving recognition and status is not necessarily linked to financial success, but rather to portraying oneself as a true Cossack landowner and reinforcing moral connections with the local community. All economic and political dealings and interactions must be conducted as a Cossack, with the involvement of fellow Cossacks. There is a lot of discussion among the Cossacks about atamans using land belonging to Cossack societies for personal gain or privatizing it, which leads to losing the trust of the community and abandoning it. Therefore, recognition and status are not necessarily tied to financial success, but rather to presenting oneself as a genuine Cossack landowner, strengthening moral ties with the local community.

Isaak asserts that the Cossack “revival is complete” and acknowledges that the Cossacks “must evolve economically” to increase their influence. Few atamans within VKO VVD manage their enterprises, but when they do, this fosters trust and admiration from other Cossacks, both within and beyond the Reestr (VKO VVD). Such diversification of resources reduces the Cossack societies’ reliance on government support. The demonstration of personal autonomy and independence is a crucial aspect of self-portrayal for members of the official Reestr organizations who desire to establish a good reputation among Cossacks, even those not affiliated with any organization. Therefore, Cossack atamans’ behavior sometimes involves openly disregarding organizational formalities to overcome nonofficial Cossacks’ mistrust of the Reestr.

The “real Cossacks” are not just members of a Cossack organization and subjects of its rules, but those who go beyond their “official duties” and have connections with the land and people. He does not “work as a Cossack” but he “is a Cossack.” As the ataman of one of the VKO VVD Cossack societies, 32-year-old Semen from Shakhty, put it: “Someone works as a Cossack and someone lives as a Cossack, so everything that is connected with Cossacks—we care about it. How they write about us, how they talk about us” (Semen, Shakhty, Sept. 5, 2021). Performing of Cossack individual subjectivity requires switching between different footings for categorization. Atamans of VKO VVD prioritize following Cossack service (*sluzhba*) and duty to keep military traditions over the ancestry. However, they can’t escape the need to prove their ancestry.

Some informants illustrated this clash between the “rational-bureaucratic” rules of Cossack organizations and the importance of kinship and communal ties. They act as mediators providing translation to the Cossacks with different views on who is a Cossack and who is not. For example, they often combine military and religious strategies of identity framing.

I met Matvei, one of the atamans in the Kamenskii District, in the municipal administration building, where the local Cossack society of VKO VVD has its own office and a small museum with the library. He was recommended to me earlier by Semen during the celebration of a Russian Orthodox holiday (the Dormition of the Mother of God) in the main cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church in Rostov, where most of the atamans of VKO VVD participated in the church service along with the *voisko* ataman and the governor of Rostov Oblast. During the service, the bishop mentioned Cossacks several times in his preaching, emphasizing their role as defend-

ers of the faith and calling them “Christ-loving Cossackdom.” These religious ceremonial gatherings play a significant role in the process of communication between VKO VVD atamans, regional officials, and representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Most Cossacks are Orthodox Christians, but I found out that Old Believers (*starobriadsty*) in particular form an influential and dense clique of “free” Cossacks (see figure 1):¹¹ “Old Believers are not in the Reestr at all. They are all shady; they are all sly asses. If they were in the Reestr, it would be completely Old Believer. Half of my Cossack friends are Old Believers” (Mitrofan, Rostov-on-Don, July 2, 2021).

The Old Believer Orthodox Church is structurally more egalitarian and autonomous than the Russian Orthodox Church. However, it is not the only reason why Old Believer Cossacks form such dense ties. The political history of the Cossacks and the religious history of Old Believers intersected in the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries when Old Believers participated in the revolts led by the Cossack atamans Razin (1667–1671) and Bulavin (1707–1708) (O’Rourke 2000:61). Shared memory attracted many Cossacks to the Old Believer Church, and they sometimes consider religious traditions of the Old Believers as a part of their own heritage and Cossack image. Religious affiliation serves as an additional “way of framing of social relations” (Brubaker 2018:157): “The highest point where a Cossack can go back to his roots is to convert to Old Belief, the original faith of his ancestors” (Efim, Rostov-on-Don, Nov. 2, 2020).

Religious framing of Cossacks as the “army of Christ” deals with the priority of both blood and duty. The idea of service to God and to the fatherland became their framing device, which they use to communicate with other Cossacks. Matvei organizes militia squads and educational events for children in local schools dedicated to local history, especially the military history of the Russian Civil War and the Second World War. Contemporary Cossacks often describe the Civil War of 1918–1923 as a patriotic and national war because most Cossacks were fighting against the Red Army on the “White” side. And vice versa they consider the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 as a civil war because around 75,000 Cossacks participated in the Wehrmacht military units (Newland 1991:89) or collaborated with the German occupation, while other Cossacks were soldiers in the Soviet Army. Such a standpoint is not usually voiced in public, because it contradicts the official state-centered public narrative, especially in the Reestr VKO VVD. Many VKO VVD atamans like Matvei are called “Red” by the non-Reestr Cossacks for trying to “end” the Civil War by forgetting the grievances of Whites toward Reds and reach national reconciliation. Nevertheless, he takes attempts to attract White intransigents to his Cossack society: “You see, two comrades had a fight, ‘Red’ and ‘White’ in those times, and then someone comes and starts taking revenge on those who are not guilty of anything. That’s politics, too. We’re proud of our ancestors. You know, I think that people have both the bad and the good. Our ancestors were great” (Matvei, Kamensk, Sept. 13, 2021).

¹¹ On the positive correlation between belonging to a parish and social capital see Oreshina, Prutskova, and Zabaev 2015.

Therefore, leaders of VKO VVD try to smooth out ideological contradictions, by emphasizing the importance of today's affairs over the past. Several years ago Isaak participated in municipal elections as a candidate from the Communist Party even though most Cossacks have anti-communist views and even Isaak's office is decorated with a big portrait of the Don Ataman Aleksei Kaledin, who was a leader of the White resistance to the Red Army during the Russian Civil War until his suicide in February 1918. The contrast between official and nonofficial rhetoric of members of VKO VVD demonstrates their personal independence and subjectivity and gives them bargaining space and plays an important role in attracting non-Reestr Cossacks.

Semen and his deputy Mikhail share such a view:

And how do you know today if you're a Cossack or not? Someone may not have a pedigree; we all have red blood,¹² they say. I think that if a person comes and says: "I am interested in your movement, and I want to be with you, to participate, to live this Cossack life," if a person has this desire, then he has a drop of blood of his Cossack ancestors in him. (Semen, Shakhty, Sept. 5, 2021)

The ataman uses a rhetorical switch and moves from the frame of kinship and ancestry to the frame of action and Cossack service. The advantage of Cossack service lies in the strict regulation inherent in the formal bureaucratic organization of the VKO VVD Cossack societies, which makes them "official" Cossacks. Unlike autonomous nonformal Cossack associations, which "invent" their traditions, customs, songs, and holidays, Semen and Mikhail consider the written norms of the Cossack society's charter as an expression of seriousness and legal formality:

everything is prescribed, from the buttons to the shoelaces. We don't have to think it up. The state has already invented everything for us. And when I am reading Federal Law 154 on the Russian Cossacks. . . Everything is written there intelligently and correctly. And that is a big plus for us. . . We don't need to invent anything; we already have everything. That's why I tell people that we need to be in one structure. (Semen, Shakhty, Sept. 5, 2021)

Rational-legal framing of personal relations operates as a means of emphasizing the importance of formal rules and obligations between Cossacks participating in common enterprises such as Cossack squads or voluntary military units. It designates "serious matters" and separates them from "nonserious" activities of Cossacks who do not belong to the organizations (marked in green in figure 1), whom they call *kazach'i obshchestvenniki* (Cossack civic activists).

BROKERAGE AND TRANSLATION

It is more appropriate to emphasize the importance of brokerage than patronage, even though some of my informants act like patrons by gaining their authority through the distribution of goods and privileged positions. As an example, Timofei is

¹² This can mean that there are no more descendants of "White" Cossacks.

the owner of a shipping company and a few restaurants in Rostov and the ataman of a local okrug of SKVRiZ. During our conversation, Timofei accused VKO VVD officials of being interested only in profit and rent from their positions and militia squads: "I don't want to make money for myself by any means, but what the hell do I need it for? I even wanted to leave, but the guys wouldn't let me go, the council of atamans gathered and said: 'Timofei, we don't need anything without you.' So I decided to stay" (Timofei, Rostov-on-Don, July 13, 2021).

Like many Cossack entrepreneurs, Timofei focused on moral obligations to the community rather than solely on his personal wealth and economic goals of his business. His friend Petr, ataman of one of the oldest Cossack societies of SKVRiZ Voisko in Rostov-on-Don, established in the 1990s by retired military officers, manages several hardware stores and devotes his free time to the Cossack society's activities. These activities involve organizing a Cossack voluntary *druzhina* of approximately 30 men, legally functioning as a people's voluntary squad (DND).¹³ This squad differs from the Reestr Cossack squads of VKO VVD in terms of funding. Whereas members of the Reestr Cossack squads receive salaries for their services from local municipalities, members of Cossack voluntary squads are given financial rewards that are not fixed and are paid as bonuses. This detail renders non-Reestr Cossack societies of SKVRiZ less economically and politically dependent on government bodies and ministries. Petr describes this autonomy as a necessary condition for solidarity and trust among Cossacks: "Not to lose the community, not to merge into anything. What do unification and merging imply? It's the blurring of boundaries, foundations, and customs. When such a mess of merging and unification begins, a lot is lost. And to keep our identity, we registered ourselves as a public organization, not as a Cossack society" (Petr, Rostov-on-Don, Sept. 17, 2021). Ermak, a retired military officer and ataman of another SKVRiZ district, also emphasized the importance of personal and corporate autonomy in the Cossack organization: "We collected our own funds, without receiving any external support like VKO VVD does. We collected every kopeck ourselves and spent it accordingly. Although SKVRiZ collaborates with businesses, we do not ask for any financial assistance. We do not want to be dependent; we are on our own" (Ermak, Kamenolomni, Sept. 11, 2021).

The Cossack organization that is a part of SKVRiZ and led by Petr also conducts military trainings for adult members and sports competitions for children. Additionally, the society celebrates Orthodox holidays and supports a folklore ensemble (a close-knit group of seven informants marked in red to the right of Petr) made up of pensioners who sing Cossack songs. Most of the members of Cossack society are adult men. According to Petr, every Cossack should be able to answer three key questions: Where is my *stanitsa* or *khutor*? Where is my *prikhod* (parish)? Where is my *sotnia* (a military territorial unit or just comrades in arms)?

Why are these markers like locality (*stanitsa*), religion (parish), and social affiliation invoked together? Hereby Petr marked three important lines of Cossack iden-

¹³ The evolution of the people's voluntary squads in contemporary Russia was described by Ekaterina Khodzhaeva (2019).

tity legitimation based on descent and locality, religious commitment, and comradeship. The relevant criteria of “*zdravyi* Cossack” are situational and individual. Several former *militsiia*¹⁴ officers and current members of the Cossack society headed by Petr do not know “where their ancestors’ bones lie,” but according to the ataman, “God leads them to their roots.” He believes that divine guidance can lead them to their Cossack identity. This rhetorical strategy, which Erving Goffman called “keying” (1974:44), allows him to switch the meaning of “Cossack” from ethnic attributes to religious. Therefore, Cossack leaders like Petr are carrying out frame alignment practices (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1986) and connect Cossacks with different outlooks concerning group boundaries. The boundaries of such frames are pliable and dependent on the particular interpersonal relations (Johnston 2013).

The atamans’ statements regarding the principles of membership in the Cossack community aim to reconcile various frameworks within which Cossack identity can be defined. They believe that simply being a descendant of Cossacks is insufficient. Instead, one must embody their way of life continually: “They sit under the portraits of their heroic ancestors. . . But if they do not consider themselves real Cossacks, how can I?” (Petr, Rostov-on-Don, Sept. 17, 2021). The “descendants” generally choose not to become part of Cossack organizations. The densest part of the community network connecting Cossacks (marked in green in figure 1) lies outside of the formal Cossack organizations. They interact during church worship and holidays, memorial events dedicated to important dates in Cossack history,¹⁵ reenactment events, and ethnic sports competitions. Hence the relationships between them are not formally restricted by the rules and codes of these organizations, so they do not have generally recognized atamans. Most “free” Cossacks are skeptical toward large formal Cossack organizations and do not welcome the idea of Cossack service such as Cossack “militia” squads, but sometimes they need the help of atamans of VKO VVD or SKVRiZ to organize the above-mentioned events.

The leaders of such *vol’nye* (free) Cossacks do not occupy official positions of atamans. They are businessmen, professional or nonprofessional researchers of Cossack history and folklore (*kraevedy*), and Cossack movement activists. Sometimes individuals may hold these roles simultaneously. There is a correlation between graduates of the Faculty of History at the largest university in Rostov Oblast and the positions held by graduated Cossacks within the Cossack movement network (see figure 1). Historical knowledge plays an important role in everyday self-presentation, which involves embedding family history within the history of all Cossack people. Cossacks with specialized education and participation in the Cossack movement provide other Cossacks with expert knowledge that is highly valued.

Grigorii, the director of one of Cossack museums, is described by an Old Believer Danila as a person who “has first-hand experience with this way of life, as he resides in a Cossack *kuren*”¹⁶ and is dedicated to restoring historical *kureni*. His knowledge of

¹⁴ Russian police force’s official name before 2011.

¹⁵ E.g., the day of remembrance of the victims of de-Cossackization, January 24.

¹⁶ *Kuren*’ is a traditional Cossack dwelling.

Cossacks' life is based on the history of his *khutor* and extensive research of archival documents. These are living informants who fought in the Second World War and remember their parents. This man values truth and bases all his opinions on historical facts" (Danila, Rostov-on-Don, May 16, 2021).

The role of Cossack intellectuals can be illustrated with an important event among Don Cossacks organized by Vasilii, a history professor at one of the universities in Rostov Oblast, and his friend Fedor. These reenactment events are held several times a year in a field near one of the Orthodox chapels. One specific aspect of these events is their focus on edged weapon training, demonstrated through various competitions. Adult Cossacks and their children compete in using a *shashka* (traditional Cossack weapon) or spear, wrestling, and archery. *Shashka* is a unifying symbolic element that combines the three "keys" categorizing the Cossack: ancestry, military service, and faith. Before the competitions, an Orthodox priest, who is also a Cossack, sanctifies the *shashki* and Cossacks with the holy water. A member of Cossack *druzhina* of VKO VVD, Efim, told me that the Cossack *shashka* possesses mysterious properties and guides the hand of its owner: "To prevent wrongful killings, *shashki*, which are ritual weapons, are sanctified and purified" (Efim, Rostov-on-Don, Nov. 2, 2020).

If someone wishes to attend or take part in such an event, they must be known among other Cossacks. The organizers attract other Cossacks regardless of their organizational affiliation:

I have never been a member of any Cossack organization as a matter of principle, except this one. And why I did not join any other organizations? Because what we do is the revival of the ancient rites. In addition, we pursued the goal of uniting different Cossack movements and organizations, and there are a huge number of them. We provide such a neutral ground where people will be able to put aside their disagreements, either ideological or political or whatever. And based on the idea of preserving the warrior tradition, we could gather at least once a year in one place, and it would become something unifying. So it would be wrong for us to represent any of these organizations. We felt like we had to take a neutral stance. (Fedor, Rostov-on-Don, Oct. 8, 2020)

They have gained recognition and a favorable reputation for their facilitation of communication among the Cossacks, as Danila described his experience of participation in such events: "Cossacks with Cossack roots started to get to know each other. There was nothing like that before. People came from everywhere, and for two or three days they had an opportunity to connect. Now everyone knows each other like a close family. We all know, love, and try to tolerate each other" (Danila, Rostov-on-Don, May 16, 2021).

Ignat, a Cossack historian and Grigorii's colleague at the museum, recognizes that some elements of the event may be nontraditional, but he is pragmatic about it:

We gathered around the fire, prayed, and ate. In the evening, we all joined together for prayer. As most of us are Old Believers, we follow the old order of prayer, and even some Orthodox Christians participate with us. During prayer, we

stand. Afterward, we returned to the fire to sing songs and play. Of course, it may look like something new. It may be a part of a revived tradition, but its authenticity is uncertain. The situation resembles that of a century ago. (Ignat, Razdorskaia, Sept. 30, 2021)

Organizers of Cossack events Vasilii and Fedor are not pleased with the activities of the Reestr Cossacks, especially the Cossack militia squads, but they are in contact with them and sometimes receive support from VKO VVD atamans: "According to our deal, the *voisko* supports us with food or sometimes something else. That's not a small thing, really. Although nowadays administrative support of VKO VVD just legitimizes the event, otherwise you can't get so many people together in the open air. You're going to get arrested for illegal meetings" (Vasilii, Zernograd, Sept. 16, 2020).

During these events, VKO VVD Cossacks not only helped but also gained access to historical expertise and consultations from Cossack movement activists, including professional historians. This informal approval from other Cossacks makes it possible to overcome mutual distrust and suspicion. It makes clothes and cold weapons a signaling system and an element of the framing process. Items functioning as such symbols must be produced by personally known Cossacks, as they are part of the personal face and honor to be maintained. Therefore, Cossacks prefer to purchase cold weapons and Cossack clothes from Kondratii's store.

Like most Cossacks, Kondratii believes that their identity is determined by their origin. However, he thinks that the best way to maintain this identity is through building local communities of Cossacks, having their own businesses. Generally, Cossack activists do not openly express their political views and instead focus on everyday life and mutual support:

I don't get involved in politics. My task is to preserve our culture, traditions, and just to help each other—that's the most important thing. I do my own thing; I make friends with my comrades, and we help each other—for now, I have just this idea. The most important thing is mutual assistance. . . .

We live on our own land, on the Don. Why do we need any Cossack societies there? There is no problem that there is an ethnic community. There was a leader of the community, who conducted events. I have other goals, just to live as a human being, to communicate with my own people, and to build some business. All these movements start a lot of talk—I looked at it all when I was 18. Why create artificially, this service—why the hell is it needed? If you want to serve, please go to the army or the police and serve. And so I do not understand it. (Kondratii, Krugloe, Nov. 15, 2020)

Kondratii's store is well known among Cossacks and has become a place where they connect. He hires only Cossacks to make and sell weapons and clothes. Such private "ethnic" business is not very profitable, but other Cossacks support him because Kondratii is an important intermediary in the exchange of goods and information: "We support Kondratii in every way possible, and he stays afloat and does something of his own" (Vladimir, Azov, Nov. 27, 2020).

Accordingly, support and recognition from other Cossacks are integral prerequisites for personal authority and individual reputation. I argue that the support and recognition stem not from accessing particular resources but from the communication strategies of Cossack leaders. Vladimir claimed that Kondratii is “a friend to all and friend to none,” but that is exactly what becomes the condition for maintaining his face and reputation among other Cossacks. These practices of self-presentation do not necessarily require a commitment to the moral virtues or values of the community. Being a Cossack is not just being a good man, but “being good at being a man,” as Herzfeld emphasized regarding the Glendiot everyday ethics (1988:16). The moral virtues legitimizing the status of Cossack leaders are not unquestioned; they are disputed and challenged.

Physical coercion or the ability to use it is also merely one of the tools of this challenge, but it does not function as a direct cause of authority. However, it functions as a key for categorization. Everyone should demonstrate to others that being a Cossack is not a game or a bluff; Cossack is not a role and he takes it seriously. Willingness to take risks is a gamble, which distinguishes real Cossacks from *riazhenye* (fake) Cossacks. I interviewed an informant regarding one Cossack ataman who is rumored to be an adventurer and not a real Cossack. My interlocutor defended and blessed him, stating that the ataman had his own army and loyal Cossacks who were always prepared to assist him. And this is what makes him a real Cossack general:

Weapons give birth to power, not a piece of paper. A piece of paper is only as strong as the person who wrote it. If he has power behind him, he writes the law, and that law works. Any law is effective when there is power behind that law to enforce it. It is the same here. . . .

There was nothing behind the Cossacks until they had guns in their hands. A rifle gives birth to power. It happened in Transnistria; it happened in Abkhazia; it happened somewhere else. But it did not appear here, so a piece of paper remains a piece of paper. And I was in favor of its appearance. (Nikolai, Rostov-on-Don, Nov. 22, 2020)

To gain recognition, each Cossack must manifest a specific level of individual autonomy from either the laws of the state or the rules of Cossack organizations. Thus, the right to belong to the Cossacks can be won by taking risks for the sake of the Cossack community. The risk-taking transforms the role of the Cossack as an element of participation in the Cossack movement into a part of individual identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Cossacks are involved in the Cossack movement not only to varying degrees but also in different ways. These practices of involvement, including Cossack patrols, religious and memorial events, ethnic enterprises, reenactment events, and historical research, contribute to the tension surrounding the primary marker of the belonging to community: Which layer of reality makes a Cossack more real? This study demonstrated that there are at least four frames of reference through which the Cossack identity can be inscribed. They are determined by different “keys” (ancestry, faith, service, and risk), used to legitimize someone’s belonging to the community.

However, none of these footings are considered primary or universal for recognizing someone as an undisputed member of the group. The importance of acts of recognition and nomination explains the need for translation and interpretation by brokers reconciling several frames of reference and switching between them. My informants rarely used a single frame to communicate with and categorize others. Brokers avoided using the ideal-type concept of a group. The more involved they became in the community, the more flexible they became in terms of such identity-framing practices. Their role as brokers is closely linked to the meaning translation they engage in when connecting disparate groups. Interdependence among various cliques with contrasting frameworks, as well as their competition for mutual recognition, leads some of them to act as symbolic brokers. Such leaders quickly attain significant positions in the distribution of honor and trust within the community.

This study illustrates the relationship between two levels of analysis: structural and symbolic. It demonstrates the relevance of using mixed methods to the study of the correlation between status positions and communication strategies. The research contributes to the future studies of informal authority in similar contexts and will be relevant for further research of the contemporary Don Cossacks.

REFERENCES

- Arnold, Richard. 2014. "Testing Constructivism: Why Not More 'Cossacks' in Krasnodar Kray?" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30(6):481–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2014.889365>.
- Barnes, John A. 1969. "Networks and Political Process." Pp. 1–76 in *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns*, edited by J. Clyde Mitchell. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Bierschenk, Thomas, Jean-Pierre Chauveau, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan. 2002. "Local Development Brokers in Africa: The Rise of a New Social Category." Working paper of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies 13, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany.
- Blok, Anton. 1974. *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860–1960: A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneur*. London: Harper & Row.
- Boeck, Brian J. 1998. "The Kuban' Cossack Revival (1989–1993): The Beginnings of a Cossack National Movement in the North Caucasus Region." *Nationalities Papers* 26(4):633–657. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905999808408592>.
- Boeck, Brian J. 2004. "From the Verge of Extinction to Ethnic Distinction: Cossack Identity and Ethnicity in the Kuban' Region, 1991–2002." *Ab Imperio* 2:617–645. <https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2004.0048>.
- Boissevain, Jeremy. 1974. *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. *Algeria 1960: The Disenchantment of the World; The Sense of Honour; The Kabyle House or the World Reversed; Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1985. "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups." *Social Science Information* 24(2):195–220. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00174048>.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure in the Bureaucratic Field." *Sociological Theory* 12(1):1–18. <https://doi.org/10.2307/202032>.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2018. "The Social Organization and Political Contestation of Cultural Difference: Thinking Comparatively about Religion and Language." Pp. 152–168 in *Ethnic Groups and*

- Boundaries Today: A Legacy of Fifty Years*, edited by Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marek Jakoubek. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Calhoun, Craig. 2003. "The Variability of Belonging: A Reply to Rogers Brubaker." *Ethnicities* 3(4):558–568. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796803003004007>.
- Cohen, Anthony P., and John L. Comaroff. 1976. "The Management of Meaning: On the Phenomenology of Political Transactions." Pp. 87–107 in *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior*, edited by Bruce Kapferer. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Crossley, Nick. 2010. *Towards Relational Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Derluguian, Georgi M., and Serge Cipko. 1997. "The Politics of Identity in a Russian Borderland Province: The Kuban Neo-Cossack Movement, 1989–1996." *Europe-Asia Studies* 49(8):1485–1500. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668139708412511>.
- Diani, Mario. 2003. "Leaders or Brokers? Positions and Influence in Social Movement Networks." Pp. 105–122 in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, edited by Mario Diani and Doug McAdam. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Jeff Goodwin. 1994. "Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency." *American Journal of Sociology* 99(6):1411–1454. <https://doi.org/10.1086/230450>.
- Epple, Susanne. 2021. "When 'Street-Level Bureaucrats' Act as Cultural Brokers: The Normative Dilemmas and Personal Commitment of Government Officials in Southern Ethiopia." *Cultural Dynamics* 33(4):348–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09213740211029684>.
- Erikson, Emily. 2013. "Formalist and Relationalist Theory in Social Network Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 31(3):219–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275113501998>.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1960. "The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2(2):228–249. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500000670>.
- Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior*. Garden City, NY: Anchor.
- Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Grau, Lester W. 1993. "The Cossack Brotherhood Reborn: A Political/Military Force in a Realm of Chaos." *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* 2(3).
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1988. *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 2018. "Boundaries, Embarrassments, and Social Injustice: Fredrik Barth and the Nation-State." Pp. 66–77 in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries Today: A Legacy of Fifty Years*, edited by Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marek Jakoubek. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Humphrey, Caroline. 2007. "Sovereignty." Pp. 418–436 in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, edited by David Nugent and Joan Vincent. Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hunt, Scott A., Robert D. Benford, and David A. Snow. 1994. "Identity Fields: Framing Processes and the Social Construction of Movement Identities." Pp. 397–416 in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, edited by Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- James, Deborah. 2011. "The Return of the Broker: Consensus, Hierarchy, and Choice in South African Land Reform." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(2):318–338. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2011.01682.x>.
- Jauregui, Beatrice. 2016. *Provisional Authority: Police, Order, and Security in India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnston, Hank. 2013. "A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata." Pp. 217–246 in *Social Movements and Culture*, vol. 4, edited by Hank Johnston and Bert Klendermans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kapferer, Bruce. 1976. "Introduction: Transactional Models Reconsidered." Pp. 1–22 in *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior*, edited by Bruce Kapferer. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

- Khodzhaeva, Ekaterina. 2019. "Revival of the DND (People's Volunteer Squads) in Russia: A Case of Top-Down Social Mobilization." *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* 11(3):105–141. <https://doi.org/10.25285/2078-1938-2019-11-3-105-141>.
- Kollmann, Nancy S. 1999. *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lankina, Tomila. 1996. "The Cossacks: A Guarantor of Peace or a Land-Mine in Russia's Federalism?" *Nationalities Papers* 24(4):721–726. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0090599608408480>.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1963. *Structural Anthropology: Claude Lévi-Strauss*. New York: Basic Books.
- McLean, Paul D. 2007. *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Miller, Alexey, and Alexander Kamentsev. 2024. "The Cossacks of Southern Russia in 21st-Century Memory Politics." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cpcs.2024.2014678>.
- Mische, Ann. 2003. "Cross-talk in Movements: Reconceiving the Culture-Network Link." Pp. 258–280 in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, edited by Mario Diani and Doug McAdam. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Newland, Samuel J. 1991. *Cossacks in the German Army, 1941–1945*. London: F. Cass.
- Oreshina, Daria, Elena Prutskova, and Ivan Zabaev. 2015. "The Social Capital of Russian Orthodox Christianity in the Early 21st Century: Applying Social Network Analysis." *State, Religion and Church* 2(2):6–28.
- O'Rourke, Shane. 2000. *Warriors and Peasants: The Don Cossacks in Late Imperial Russia*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Parkin, David. 1976. "Exchanging Words." Pp. 163–190 in *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior*, edited by Bruce Kapferer. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Pitt-Rivers, Julian. 1966. "Honour and Social Status." Pp. 19–78 in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, edited by John Peristiany. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Popov, Anton. 2018. "Re-enacting 'Cossack Roots': Embodiment of Memory, History, and Tradition among Young People in Southern Russia." *Nationalities Papers* 46(1):1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1354363>.
- Puzankov, Ilya A. 2022. "'U kazaka vsia zhizn'—voina, v kazach'em serdtse strakha net!' ili kak segodnia stanoviat'sia kazakami." *Interaksiia. Interv'iu. Interpretatsiia* 14(4):41–61. <https://doi.org/10.19181/inter.2022.14.4.3>.
- Rvacheva, Olga V. 2022. "Vozrozhdenie kazachestva na iuge Rossii v sovetskii period (seredina 1920-kh–nachalo 1940-kh gg.) i v postsovetskii period (1990-e–2000-e gg.): Istoriko-sravnitel'nyi analiz." Doctor of Sciences dissertation, Volgograd State University.
- Schwartz, Marc J., Victor W. Turner, and Arthur Tuden. 1966. "Introduction." Pp. 1–41 in *Political Anthropology*, edited by Marc J. Schwartz, Victor W. Turner, and Arthur Tuden. Chicago: Aldine.
- Silverman, Sydel F. 1965. "Patronage and Community-Nation Relationships in Central Italy." *Ethnology* 4(2):172–189. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3772728>.
- Skinner, Barbara. 1994. "Identity Formation in the Russian Cossack Revival." *Europe-Asia Studies* 46(6):1017–1037. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668139408412214>.
- Snow, David A., E. Burke Rochford Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review* 51(4):464–481. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095581>.
- Toje, Hege. 2006. "Cossack Identity in the New Russia: Kuban Cossack Revival and Local Politics." *Europe-Asia Studies* 58(7):1057–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130600926306>.
- Volkov, Vadim. 2016. *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Walther, Eva-Maria. 2021. "Brokers in Straitjackets: The Moral Quandaries of Refugee Support Organisations in Slovakia." *Cultural Dynamics* 33(4):316–330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09213740211011190>.

- Weber, Max. 1922. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der Verstehenden Soziologie*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr.
- Weber, Max. 1958. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited and translated by Hans Gerth. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Vol. 1. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- White, Harrison C. 2008. *Identity and Control: How Social Formations Emerge*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1956. "Aspects of Group Relations in a Complex Society: Mexico 1." *American Anthropologist* 58(6):1065–1078. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1956.58.6.02a00070>.

ПОДОЗРЕНИЕ, ДОВЕРИЕ И ПОСРЕДНИЧЕСТВО В КАЗАЧЬЕМ СООБЩЕСТВЕ РОСТОВСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ

Алексей Бойко

Алексей Бойко, департамент истории, Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики» в Санкт-Петербурге, Россия. alxyboiko@gmail.com.

Исследование выполнено в рамках проекта «Социальная структура и хозяйственные порядки донских казачьих обществ» при финансовой поддержке Фонда поддержки социальных исследований «Хамовники».

В предлагаемом исследовании рассматривается конструирование авторитета и формирование репутации в современном донском казачьем сообществе Ростовской области. Объектом исследования выступает структура неформальных отношений, основанных на межличностных актах взаимной категоризации и признания. Рассматривается возникновение института неформального авторитета лидеров современного донского казачьего движения, протекающее в условиях постоянного подозрения, регулярного наблюдения и поиска взаимного признания среди казаков внутри и за пределами формальных казачьих организаций. Опираясь на данные этнографических наблюдений, интервью и методы сетевого анализа, автор объясняет возникновение феномена внутригруппового посредничества и неформального авторитета лидеров казачьего движения. В статье подчеркивается значимость символической коммуникации, в частности использования семантической полисемии номинативных категорий, связывающих отдельные группы и индивидов внутри сообщества. Структура распределенного авторитета среди казаков объясняется дискурсивными стратегиями фрейминга непрерывно оспариваемых групповых границ. Это объяснение подразумевает реконцептуализацию понятия брокеража в антропологической теории как практики, в основе которой лежит переключение между различными фреймами взаимной категоризации и признания.

Ключевые слова: авторитет; брокераж; казаки; сетевой анализ; смешанные методы; фрейм-анализ