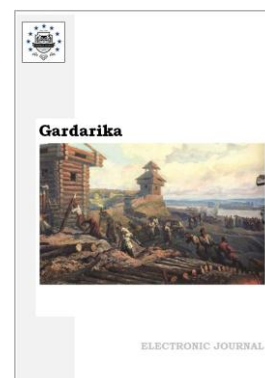


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Articles

Cherkasovs (Keretskys): During the Period of the Muscovite Kingdom (to the 450th Anniversary of the Cherkasov Family)

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Abstract

The paper examines the history of the Cherkasov family from Keret during the period of the Muscovite Kingdom. The attention is given to the first five generations in the history of the family, who lived in the period from 1570 to 1725. The source base of our research is based on archival materials from the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (Moscow, Russian Federation), as well as the Archive of the St. Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation).

In conclusion, the author states that the history of the Cherkasovs from Keret today has 17 generations, which fell on the period from 1570 to the present. At the same time, the family history of the period of the Moscow Kingdom is only the first five generations (1570–1725): the initial chronological point is associated with the birth in 1570 in the Zaporozhian Sich (territory of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth) of a Cossack named David (1st generation), and the final one with the death in 1725 of a representative of the 5th generation Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov. With the death of Prokopii Antonovich, an entire epoch came to an end – an epoch in which a representative from the 2nd generation of the Cherkas Davydov family, the son, stays from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the territory of the Moscow Kingdom, serves in its military formations and settles in Keret. Cherkas's sons, who continued their father's work, also receive excellent military training. Cherkas' grandson Anton participates in the defense of the Solovetsky Monastery, and his great-grandchildren serve in the Streltsy army and take part in hostilities. During this era, all four generations of Cherkasovs from Keret (2nd – 5th generations) were directly related to military service in the Muscovite Kingdom either as part of military men or as part of the Streltsky army. This allows us to talk about the Cherkasovs from Keret as a family of sovereign servants of the period of the Moscow Kingdom.

Keywords: Cherkasovs (Keretskys), family history during the Muscovite kingdom, 1570–1725, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Muscovy kingdom.

1. Introduction

The Cherkasovs (Keretskys) or the Cherkasovs of Keret are an ancient Cossack Old Believer family that came from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Muscovite Kingdom on the

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cusps of the 16th and 17th centuries. The 17 generations of the family have amounted today to nearly 400 destinies. The paper focuses on the family's first five generations whose years of life fell within the period of the Muscovite Kingdom.

2. Materials and methods

The source base of our research builds on two groups of historical documents – archival documents and collections of published documents. The first group includes archival materials from the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (Moscow, Russian Federation), as well as the Archive of the St. Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation). The second group is comprised of “Acts of the Muscovite State” (Akty..., 1890), “Collection of charters of the Collegium of Economy” (Sbornik gramot..., 1929) and the collection of documents “Copies from ancient royal charters...” (Kopii s drevnikh..., 1834).

The methodology of our research utilizes general historical principles and methods, including key principles of historicism, consistency and objectivity. The principles play an important role as our research relies on extensive use of both archival and published sources and rests on broad historiography. The work also traditionally employs the chronological method to arrange a study based on the chronological sequence of events that occurred in the Russian North.

3. Discussion

The historiography of our research, as we have already pointed out in the Methods, is comprehensive and consists of three groups of works: the first group covers Cherkassy colonization, the second group – the Russian North during the Muscovite Kingdom, and the third group – the history of the Cherkasov family of Keret.

We include the following studies in the first group: a work by N.M. Bagnovskaya on the origin of the term “Cherkasy” (Bagnovskaya, 2016) and a work by A.I. Papkov, close to the topic, on the terms “Cherkasy” and “Lithuanian people” (Papkov, 2012), the famous “Onomasticon” by S.B. Veselovskii on ancient Russian names, nicknames and surnames (Veselovskii, 1974), a work by A.I. Papkov & V.V. Savina on the settlement of the Cherkasy on the southern frontier of the Muscovite Kingdom (Papkov, Savina, 2013), a work by I.P. Kamenetskii on ataman Cherkas Aleksandrov and his descendants (Kamenetskii, 2021), as well as his work about the Cherkasy on service in Siberia (Kamenetskii, 2023), and, finally, a work by G.Yu. Koleva on the Cossacks from the “Lithuanian list” in Siberia (Koleva, 2014).

The second group of works is connected with the Russian North in the period of the Muscovite Kingdom. The pre-revolutionary works on the subject include the work by Archimandrite of Solovki Dosifei on the history of the monastery over 400 years (Dosifei, 1833) and “A brief historical description of the parishes and churches of the Arkhangelsk diocese” (Kratkoe..., 1898). The Soviet period saw the publishing of the following works: E.D. Stashevskii on the Smolensk War of 1632–1634. (Stashevskii, 1919), a book by R.B. Myuller “Essays on the history of Karelia” (Myuller, 1947), as well as the treatise by G.G. Frumenkov about the Solovetsky Monastery and the defense of the White Sea region (Frumenkov, 1975). In the modern Russian period, authors continued to explore the topic. For example, in 1998, the work by A.T. Shashkov “Heretics in Siberia” came out (Shashkov, 1998), in 2014, O.V. Komarov addressed the topic of militiamen (*ratnye lyudi*) in Pomor cities in the period of the Muscovite Kingdom (Komarov, 2014), and finally E.M. Proskuryakova examined the foreigners in the regiments of *pashennye* soldiers (servicemen who combined military service and traditional farming) in the Olonetsky district (Proskuryakova, 2018).

Speaking of the third group of works, the historiography, dedicated to the Cherkasovs of Keret, has encompassed more than 30 works today, ranging from biographical essays of the family's famous representatives to general historical works. The biographical essays feature a work telling the story of Pavel Ivanovich Cherkasov (1883–1931), an official in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Russian Empire (Cherkasov, 2023), a work dedicated to the combat route of A.T. Kemov during the First World War (Cherkasov, 2023a), an article on the family of I.F. Cherkasov (Cherkasov, 2022), the combat route of I.I. Cherkasov during the Second World War (Cherkasov, 2022), a biographical essay about A.P. Cherkasov (Cherkasov, 2022a), a work on the development by P.I. Cherkasov, the best inventor of Kamchatka, (Egorov, 1985), as well as a work devoted to the 20th anniversary of the research and pedagogical activity of A.A. Cherkasov (Tarakanov, Ludwig, 2019).

The body of general historical works consists of historical and genealogical research about the Cherkasov family (Cherkasov, 2021) and an attempt to produce an ancestral calendar (Cherkasov, 2021a).

4. Results

The history of any family contains a lineage-initiating document: for someone, it might be a vital record of the birth of a great-grandfather, made in the early 20th century and stored in a regional archive, for others these might be records in cadasters (*pistsovy knigi*) of the first half of the 17th century. The second category includes the old Cossack family of the Cherkasovs from the Keret village, who have lived here since the time of the Muscovite Kingdom.

A lineage-initiating document is a special document; regarding genealogy, its distinctive feature is the earliest date specifying personal information about a family member.

For the Cherkasovs (Keretskys) such a document was dated April 12, 1629, and its title read as follows: “Agreement of the peasants of the Keretskaya volost, Cherkas Davydov, Ivan and Yakov Avksentiev’s Menshikovs, for two luks* without a quarter of the land area of the Knyazheozersky monastery in Keret, given by them to the Chupa clerk (copy)” (*luk – an old measure of taxed useful land in Russia) (Figure 1) (RGADA. F. 1201. Op. 5. D. 34. L. 1).

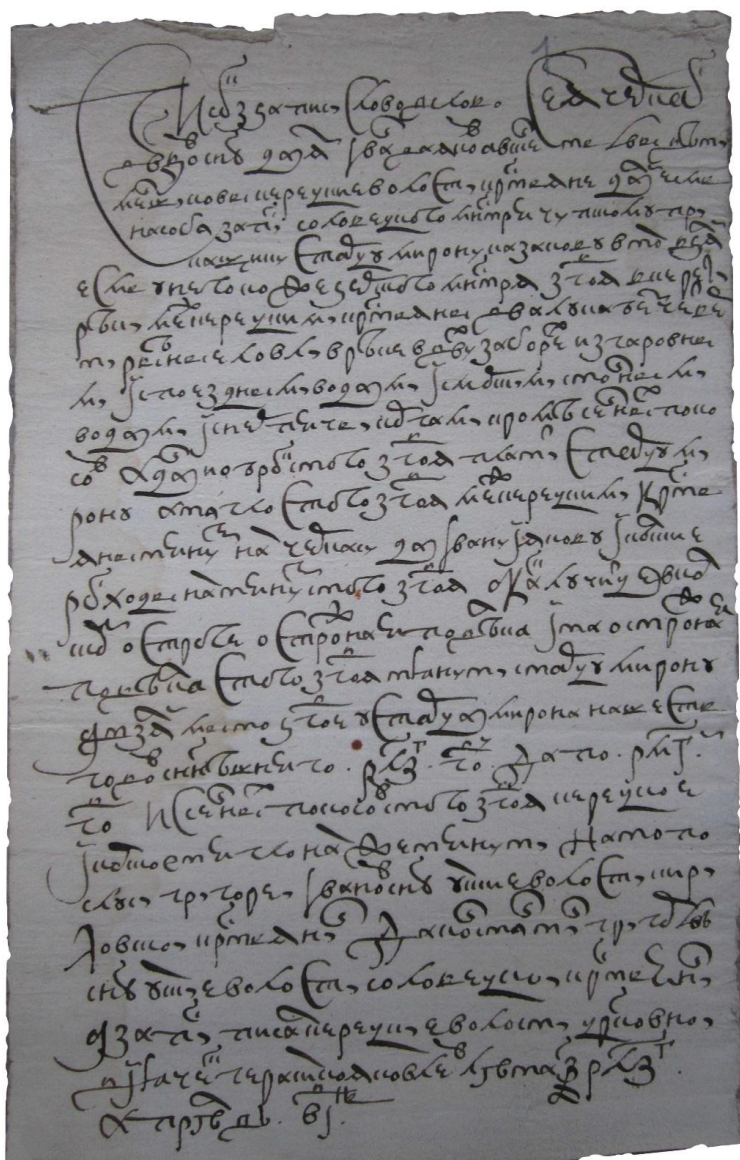


Fig. 1. A lineage-initiating document on the history of the Cherkasovs of Keret. Agreement of peasants. April 12, 1629 (RGADA. F. 1201. Op. 5. D. 34. L. 1)

The document provided the following information: “A word for word copy of the agreement. I, Cherkas, Davdov’s son, and I, Ivan, and Yakov Avksentiev, children of Menshikov, peasants from the Keretskaya volost, hereby assumed an obligation, set forth by elderly monk Miron Kazakov, the Chupa clerk of the Solovetsky monastery, whereunder we have taken a land area from the Kozhezersky monastery in the Keret river between Keret peasants, measuring two luks without a quarter, for fishing in the river in two fish garths, including waters for large mesh and garnet fishing, sea effluent waters, kerpyachy (wood bundles?) and ridges, except for hayfield meadows, and we shall pay tribute and quitrent from this land area to elderly monk Miron, dues from this land area shall be paid to Keret peasants by us, Cherkas, Ivan and Yakov, and the Kolsky expenses from this land area shall be born by us, and if a stockade cutting takes place in Kolsky ostrog, the stockade material from this land area shall be paid for by elderly monk Miron. We have leased the land from elderly monk Miron for six years from the current RLZ (137, 1629) to RMG (143, 1635). The Keretsky and Kolsky dues from the hayfield meadows, located on this land area, shall also be paid by us. As witnessed thereupon by Grigorey Ivanov, a son from the Umskaya volost, a Kirilovsky peasant, and Konstantin Grigoriev, a son from the Umskaya volost, a Solovetsky peasant, and the agreement was written by Gerasimko Yakovlev, the church sexton of the Keretskaya volost, on the 12th day of April, 7137” (RGADA. F. 1201. Op. 5. D. 34. L. 1).

Commenting on the source given above, we should explain that Keret was part of a hunting and fishing territory, and arable farming was not developed here. As a result, the unit of taxation for the local population was a *luk*, and income from *luk* lands was collected in form of products obtained in local fishing and hunting activities, for example in squirrels, martens, falcons, etc. (Myuller, 1947: 25).

To put together a picture of Keret – the place where representatives of the Cherkasov family lived, we will turn to history. Let us give a brief historical overview of Keret in the 16th – early 17th centuries. As early as in the middle of the 16th century (data for 1553), the Kemskaia volost, which included Keret, had 96 inhabited homesteads with 146 people of the taxed population and 63 Cossacks (Myuller, 1947: 88). Keret was a border territory of the Muscovite Kingdom at that time. The territory was a relatively recent addition to Russia (in 1478, following the decline of the Novgorod Republic) and for this reason its neighbors (Swedes and Kayan Germans) considered it a disputed land.

The first clashes between the Pomorye (White Sea region) population and an external enemy date back to 1579–1580, when Kayan Germans raided Kem. Later, in 1590, Kem was attacked by Swedes who devastated the entire Kemskaia volost (Kratkoe..., 1898: 112).

To defend the Karelian coast at the end of the 16th century, the Solovetsky Monastery* made efforts to establish resistance centers. In 1591, the Suma ostrog (stockaded town) was built, in 1593–1598, the Kem fortress and the Kem fortified town were built. Along with that, the monastery also fortified two large Pomor villages at that time – Keret (Keretskoe) and Soroka (Sorotskoe). In Soroka, for example, the courtyard was secured “with a standing palisade in front and with a fence in the back,” and in Keret, the monastery encircled its premises with a palisade made of palings (Figure 2) (Frumenkov, 1975). Although the Keret and Soroka structures offered less robust defense comparing to those of the Suma and Kem *detinets* (strongholds), but they were real medieval fortifications. In addition to *Streletsy* soldiers (soldiers of regular units), the monastery fortifications were defended by militiamen from the local population.

Several passages and gates were constructed in the palisade to connect the settlement with the outside world. The process consisted of harvesting and processing timber, transporting the material, digging trenches and ditches, and installing structures. The construction of such fortifications required several months and efforts of professional carpenters and their assistants.

Given the fact that all major settlements in the Russian North were fortified and almost entirely held by the local population, king John III of Sweden recommended in 1590 in his instructions to the commander of his expeditionary force that Russian settlements should be burnt down while people and booty sent to Sweden. This was the only method, he believed, to put an end to the Russian presence in the North. In September 1591, Swedish expeditionary units crossed the border of the Muscovite Kingdom and began to implement their plan in Pomorye. However,

* The monastery was built during the Novgorod Republic. The first mention refers to 1429.

Swedes failed to seize the Suma ostrog in their attack, and they retreated. In 1592, Swedes mounted a second attack which “ravaged the entire Pomorye, destroyed grain barns, saltworks, all livestock, devastated fishing grounds, took many peasants captive, robbed and burned churches.” Keret was taken by storm and its churches were burned (Sbornik gramot..., 1929: 470). Swedes approached the Suma ostrog and were defeated here again. The Suma ostrog was defended by Streltsy soldiers from the Solovetsky Monastery and peasant militiamen of whom a significant part was Cossack settlers from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

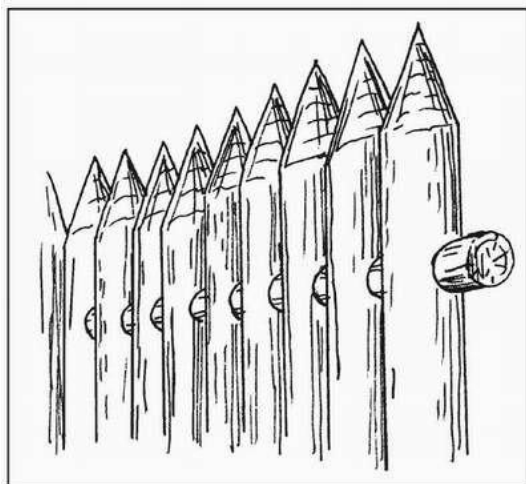


Fig. 2. Protective palisade structure (*tyn*)

The largest Pomorye campaign by Swedish troops took place in 1611; the plan was to annex the captured lands to Sweden. The 1,500-strong campaign was launched in March 1611 with a general line of advance on Suma and Solovki. As Swedes invaded Russian borders, they sacked 11 Russian villages. The peasants, who were almost entirely militiamen from the devastated Russian villages, grouped into detachments and engaged in guerrilla warfare. As a result, the Swedes, moving along the Kem River, never reached the White Sea and organized an orderly retreat to their territory from the Chupa village.

So, in the second half of the 16th and early 17th centuries, the Russian North was a zone of active hostilities where the interests of Sweden and the Muscovite kingdom clashed. In the circumstances, Moscow sought out potential allies, and found them in the Cherkasy Cossacks who actively migrated from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Muscovite Kingdom at the time.

I should point out right away that the Cossackdom began to emerge in the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as early as at the beginning of the 16th century. At the time, the Cossack class was replenished by “oppressed peasants... restless souls from the gentry youth and people... who fled from Poland and Rus’ to avoid the retribution of justice” (Koleva, 2014: 130). As a result, the Polish administration decided to leverage the element in the interests of the state. For example, in the regular Polish army, the “brave Cossack cavalry” was in second place after the Polish knighthood (Polish hussars), followed by artillery and infantry (Koleva, 2014: 130).

N.M. Bagnovskaya noted: “the social connotation of the historical name “Cherkas” is testified by 16th century sources – this is a specific free Cossack, a warrior. At the time, the Cherkasy took part almost in every war and military conflict. Various documents mention them either as recruits in the army of Polish kings, or in service of major Polish magnates” (Bagnovskaya, 2016: 24).

In the 1550s, Cherkasy Cossacks also turn up in the Russian North. It is known that the customs duty near Kargopol was carried out by 60 Cossacks who performed the function not as workers, but as service class people.

In 1588, a detachment of 25 Cherkasy under the command of Asey Martynov operated in Putivl. In the same year, a detachment of 50 Cherkasy and volunteer (*okhochie*) Cossacks, led by ataman Yakov Lysy, was sent to the Wild Fields. These detachments were used to stop raids by so-called “rogue Cherkasy” who carried out robbery raids in the Russian territory (Papkov, Savina, 2013: 51).

In 1589, 15 Cossacks, under the leadership of ataman Fyodor Gorokhovskii, came to Putivl to seek service (Papkov, Savina, 2013: 51). In 1590, the Kanev Cherkasy, i.e. the Cossacks from the Kanev city (Cherkasy Oblast), were observed in the Russian North. The Russian North also saw the so-called okhochie (volunteer) Cossacks – free Cossacks – also united in detachments. In the same 1590, the army of the Solovetsky Monastery had a detachment of 50 volunteer Cossacks. Volunteer Cossacks had their own atamans and formed organized units.

In 1590, the headman of the Kargopol district rallied 400 militia Cossacks from the monastic villages of the Spassky-Kargopolsky Monastery to join the campaign against Kayan Germans (Finns). Kargopol Cossacks played an active role in the defense of the Kargopol fortress in 1612.

We should take a glance at the composition of the Russian expeditionary force that mounted a retaliatory raid in the winter of 1591–1592. The campaign was undertaken by: “300 people from Ustyug, 200 people from Usolye, 400 from Kargopol, 400 from the Dvina Region, 800 people from Zaonezhye, 150 people from Pomorye volosts and lake region and 40 people of free Cossacks” (Komarov, 2014: 19–20). This reference makes clear that the primary source for raids on Swedish territory was refilled from local inhabitants, most of whom were Cossacks. Moreover, salaries for raids were paid to militiamen from the funds of the Solovetsky Monastery itself (Komarov, 2014: 20). There is a specification for the campaign left by Archimandrite Dosifei: “In the winter of 1591, voivode Stepan Borisovich Koltovskii with Smirny Shokurov, Moscow Streltsy leaders Vasily Bagryantsev, Andrei Onichkov, Grigory Bryantsov and a detachment of 1,300 militiamen and 40 Serpukhov “Cherkases” (Cossacks) under the command of ataman Vasily Khaletskii crossed the Swedish border and ransacked all homesteads along the Ovluya and Sigovka rivers in the Ostrovskaya and Kolokolskaya volosts and took the Lemenga ostrog by storm” (Dosifei, 1833: 88–89).

In October 1592, a Cossack detachment of 102 volunteer Cossacks, led by ataman Maksim Ryachin, attacked a Swedish outpost (400 soldiers and 8 cannons) and seized it. The cannons were subsequently handed over to the Solovetsky Fortress.

In 1592, the Russian detachment for the Kayan campaign, in addition to other ethnic groups, included 90 people – pans and Cherkasy, i.e. those who came from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

In 1594, there were 50 Cherkasy in Putivl who had no land and received only a salary in form of money and bread. Around the same time, in the period between 1594 and 1597, cases of land allocated to Cherkasy were recorded near Ryazan (Papkov, Savina, 2013: 52).

However, militiamen united not only to undertake raids, but also to protect their territory. As a reminder, the majority of the Polish-Lithuanian troops that swarmed the Muscovite Kingdom in the Time of Troubles in the early 17th century were Cherkasy (for example, in 1613, two Cherkasy regiments operated near Tikhvin: one led by Colonel Sidorko and the other by Colonel Baryshpolts (Akty..., 1890: 82)). In October 1613, a royal decree for the Podvinye (Dvina river region) population ordered “to urgently send two hundred men with fire arms and with all sorts of combat weapons” to rebuff rogue Cherkasy who assaulted on Vaga and Kargopol (Akty..., 1890: 82).

As shown in Figure 3, the Solovetsky Monastery had 4 fortified settlements in the border areas – the Kem fortress, the Suma ostrog and two fortified villages, Keret and Sorotskoye. Cherkasy Cossacks, who moved from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, were sent for residence to the settlements. The Cossacks were called “inozemtsy” (foreigners) in the Muscovite Kingdom and they played an important role, for example, in the colonization of Siberia (Koleva, 2014: 133).

The Cherkasy had several options how to get into the Muscovite Kingdom. One of the options was described by A.T. Shashkov in his work “Heretics in Siberia in the first half of the 17th century”: in 1615, when the Lithuanian Cherkasy raided the Solovetsky hunting and fishing areas, for the Suma ostrog “a Cherkashenin, named Mikhalko, left the Lithuanian regiments, and he said that he was a Russian Cossack, a native of Chernigov.” It found out later that the Cherkas came from Lithuania, rather from Chernigov (Shashkov, 1998: 279).

At the beginning of the 17th century, the service class people in the Muscovite kingdom also included foreigners (“Litva”, “German”, “Cherkasy”, etc.) (Koleva, 2014: 127). As it was noted above, foreigners began to appear in Russian service in the second half of the 15th century. The number of Lithuanians and Germans in the Russian armed forces was 2,000 people as early as in the time of Vasili III (1479–1533), and in the same period they were engaged as administrative

staff. The foreign element especially increased in the Muscovite Kingdom during the Time of Troubles and later when efforts were made to mitigate its consequences.



Fig. 3. The Solovetsky Monastery’s area of influence in the Russian North at the end of the 16th century

Interestingly, although the Cherkasy, who moved from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Muscovite Kingdom, had sabers and harquebuses as the most common weapons, some also had a simple “*rogatina*” (bear spear) (Brezgunova, 2019: 30).

However, let’s return to Keret. The presence of Cossacks in the Keret village in the early 17th century is evidenced in the document of the Solovetsky Monastery No. 149 for 1613 “On the protection of Keret monastery bobyls (poor landless peasants) and Cossacks from oppression and violence inflicted by Keret volost inhabitants who imposed dues on them” (Kopii s drevnikh..., 1834: 100b.). We should explain that the Solovetsky Monastery owned only 1/4 of all inhabitants and lands in the Keretskaya volost at the time.

In all probability, the conflict between the monastery and the Keretskaya volost administration was never resolved. For example, in 1625, document No. 216 specified: “A document to protect Solovetsky elderly monks, servants and peasants of the Keretskaya volost from violence and taxes of lay people” (Kopii s drevnikh..., 1834: 140b.).

Meanwhile, the situation remained tense in the Russian North. For example, in 1623, four Danish warships appeared at the mouth of the Kola river. They never ventured to openly attack the Kola ostrog, but limited themselves to raiding Russian fishing vessels and retreated.

According to the observation of E.D. Stashevskii, a historian of the Smolensk War, a whole stream of foreigners had surged into Russia since 1629, among whom there were many professional military men (Stashevskii, 1919: 37).

At the same time, in 1629, voivode Mikhail Speshnev arrived to do service in the Solovetsky Monastery and Suma ostrog (Kopii s drevnikh..., 1834: 15). Concurrently with his arrival, another inhabitant turned up in Keret – Cherkas, a son of Davyd, who, according to the agreement of the peasants, received a land area in that year to ensure economic provision for his family. This first lineage-initiating document for the history of the Cherkasov family not only gives us an idea that a peasant named Cherkas stayed in Keret on April 12, 1629, but also indicates that his father was Davyd. It is also important to understand that in the first half of the 17th century, Keret peasant homesteads were not distinguished based on social estates. Keret was the patrimony of the Grand Duke and Sovereign, and only the priest’s homestead was differentiated there, while all the rest were categorized as peasant homesteads, and the peasants, for example, featured Cossack captain

Oborin (probably from the Streltsy army of the Solovetsky Monastery). It means that no one discriminated between Cossack homesteads and servant homesteads.

The document did not specify the age of Cherkas Davyd's son, and the information was not as well provided in a later document, dated 1635 (RGADA. F. 1201. Op. 5. D. 47. L. 4). We managed to identify Cherkas' approximate age only thanks to the information about his descendants. For example, Cherkas' great-grandson, Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov, was born in 1659 (RGADA. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 135). Proceeding from this, we can assume with a high degree of probability that Prokopii's father, Anton Ivanovich, was born around 1638 (the 1635 documents did not mention him yet), and Prokopii's grandfather, Ivan the son of Cherkas (or Cherkasov) was born in 1610. Therefore, if we suggest that the son and grandson of Cherkas gave birth to their sons when they were young (20–25 years old), we can determine Cherkas' approximate year of birth, namely 1590. Based on the same difference in years between generations, we can assume that Cherkas' father, Davyd, was born in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the territory of the Zaporozhian Sich no later than 1570. This helped us establish the starting date for the history of the Cherkasov family of Keret.

Let us continue. In 1629, Cherkas arrived in Keret, he was about 40 at the time, he came with two sons. We were able to find out the name of one of the sons – it was Ivan, born around 1610, the name of the second son currently remains unknown. We do not exclude that there was a wife and daughters in the family, but no women were specified by the census documents of the first half of the 17th century.

Nothing is known for certain about the reasons why Cherkas and his family came to Keret; we discovered no traces of Cherkas Davydov's son either in the Solovetsky Monastery or in other settlements on the White Sea shores. Although a reasonable assumption was that, most likely, Cherkas received his name while doing a military service in the Muscovite Kingdom.

To support the latter point, we should turn to the onomastics of the name Cherkas. The period under review marks a significant number of historical figures with the name or nickname Cherkas. For example, the famous people with the name include Ermak's brother-in-arms, future ataman Cherkas Aleksandrov* (Kamenetskii, 2021: 98), which was dispatched from Tobolsk for the construction of the Tara city in 1594 (Kamenetskii, 2023: 79). Another well-known Cherkas in Siberia was an administrator in Tobolsk, the “son of the boyars,” Cherkas (alias Vasily) Rukin (Kamenetskii, 2023: 84). In addition, documents for 1518 mention the Lithuanian governor Cherkas Khreptov. The famous book by S.B. Veselovskii's “Onomasticon. Old names, nicknames and surnames” also indicates the name Cherkas as a male name. Let us explain that Veselovskii's work was a reference book on names, nicknames and surnames of North-Eastern Rus' of the 15th–17th centuries and was prepared based on a comprehensive range of published and unpublished sources (chronicles, acts, *razriady* (register books), etc.). For example, the materials for 1600 contain a mention of Cherkas Tugarinov, the son of Myakinin (Veselovskii, 1974: 351). The Myakinins were known since 1452. Aleksandr Myakinin was sent from Moscow to Vyatka to lead people to the cross (Veselovskii, 1974: 210). It appears from the examples that men with the names Cherkas came from Cossack families, were listed in military formations, were of Cherkassy origin and did a military and government service both in the Muscovite Kingdom and in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, the most remarkable thing is that the bearers of the name or nickname Cherkas received it while being far from their homeland and far from the Cossack territories. In other words, the people received the name Cherkas while doing a foreign service as the nickname did not make any sense among the Cherkas themselves (among the Cossacks), because ordinary Orthodox names were of common use there.

Once again, in the 16th and early 17th centuries, the nickname “Cherkas” could only be given to a militarized man who distinguished himself in military service, as a rule, a commander of a detachment of mercenaries or Cossacks, serving far from his historical homeland.

So, the name Cherkas in the 16th–17th centuries appeared in chronicles and register books (*razriady*), pointing at the Cossack origin of the bearer of the name, a person with a Cherkassy background. When Cherkas Davydov's son comes to Keret, and he comes when he is almost 40 years old, he calls himself Cherkas. Considering the above, this could only happen under one

* Still, there is also evidence that Cherkas Aleksandrov had the name Cherkas as a nickname, while his real name was Ivan.

circumstance: a Cherkassy Cossack came to the Muscovite Kingdom in an earlier period to do a military service (he might be an ataman of a detachment of Cossack volunteers (okhochie lyudi)) and was long called by the nickname Cherkas. He spent many years in the service, and as a result, his nickname eventually became his name. He got married here, gave birth to children, and at the age of 40 left the state service for whatever reason. Following this, he is assigned to stay in border Keret as a peasant militiaman, i.e. a potential warrior. To support this point, we should note that Keret had a significant population of Cherkassy Cossacks, but none of them had a name or nickname “Cherkas”, either before or after the arrival of Cherkas Davydov’s son. Considering the above, we can suggest a hypothesis that Cherkas Davydov’s son turned up in the Muscovite Kingdom in the first decade of the 17th century where he was in the state service for a long time, and it was there that he received his name – Cherkas.

In 1635, the second document of those currently uncovered appears and gives idea about the family of Cherkas Davydov’s son. This is a census of the sovereign-owned homesteads in the Keret village, conducted in 1635 (RGADA. F. 1201. Op. 5. D. 47. L. 4).

The census had the following background: in 1634, the possession of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Keretsky volost with all useful land areas that had previously belonged to the tsar was given over to the Solovetsky Monastery (Kopii s drevnikh..., 1834: 170b.). For this purpose, a census was conducted in 1635 of 40 sovereign-owned homesteads, and these included the homestead of Cherkas Davydov’s son. Quote: “The homestead of Cherkas Davylov, he has two sons, half a third of a luk of land and two loks without a quarter of the Kizhezersky land, for which he pays dues” (RGADA. F. 1201. Op. 5. D. 47. L. 4). The source shows that in 1635 he continued to use the land allotted to him in 1629 for a term of 6 years. The document also clarified the composition of his family (two sons).

Unfortunately, these are the only available historical traces of Cherkas Davydov’s son (or Cherkas Davydovich) and his life in Keret. We can add here that regarding the specific living environment on the border, the Cherkas family paid great attention to the military training of their sons. Being of a Cossack of origin, Cherkas, in all probability, was born and raised in the Zaporozhian Sich. The militarized community put a special emphasis on the physical development of its members. Young Cossacks continuously improved their skills through competitions in rowing, swimming, diving, running, jumping, equestrian training, shooting, fencing and various types of wrestling. Adult Cossacks also took part in harsh fist fights. Contemporaries, eyewitnesses of the fist fights, spoke about Zaporozhian Cossacks: “Why do they need guns if they have such great fists?” In this setting, it was simply impossible for weak people to live in the Zaporozhian community. That is why Cherkas’ children received a similar military education. We will continue to uncover direct and indirect references to the military service done by Cherkas’ descendants, but first things first.

The next document discovered was dated 1668, i.e. it was executed 33 years later. The population census of the Keret village, dated January 16, 1668, discovers the following entry: “The homestead is run by Antoshko Ivanov, he had children Pronka, Ivashko” (RGADA. F. 137. Op. 1. D. 1. L. 1220b.-123). Subsequent research revealed Pronka was none other than Prokopii Antonov, a son of Cherkasov (1659–1725), and Ivashko was his brother Ivan, born in 1662. After a direct family link was reconstructed between Cherkas Davydov’s son and his great-grandson Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov, we were able to fill in the missing gaps (See Figure 4). In addition, we found the family of Anton Ivanov’s son in the census documents of 1676. The census for that year reads: “BobyI Ontoshka Ivanov, he has three sons: Pronka and Ivashko – 10 years old, Yakushko – two and a half years old” (Sbornik gramot, 1929: 530-535). The information makes it possible to establish the approximate age of Prokopii’s brothers, Ivan and Yakov.

In general, the period between the 1668 census and 1676 census is very interesting because it was at this time that the uprising of the Solovetsky Monastery took place against Patriarch Nikon’s reform (the uprising started in 1668 and ended in 1676). According to historical data, during the siege of the monastery by the tsar’s troops, it was Keret that supported the rebellious Solovki in these tough times. Based on this, we can justifiably believe that Cherkas’ grandson, Anton Ivanovich (he was about 35 at that time), was directly involved in the defense of the Solovetsky Monastery. By the way, Solovetsky monks imposed such a great influence on the village that even after the monastery yielded in 1676, Keret remained an Old Believer village until the beginning of the 20th century (it is known that the village bolstered the Schism ideas, despite the operation of two churches in the village at the end of the 19th century. Only 8 people attended the sacrament of

communion there in 1894, while 445 people were considered not to fulfil this Christian duty. See [Kratkoe..., 1898: 181](#)).

According to little-known information, there were 72 homesteads in Keret in 1676, of which 10 were managed by Cossacks, in addition to this, another 30 male Cossacks lived on peasants' farmsteads. Hence, in 1676, the proportion of Cossacks in the village reached 20–25 % of the total number of inhabitants ([Sbornik gramot..., 1929: 530-535](#)), and taking into account Cossack settlers who arrived earlier (for example, in the 16th century) and who had already been termed themselves as peasants by that time, the proportion of Cossacks in the village was even higher. We do not even exclude the possibility that the village had the entirely Cossack composition.

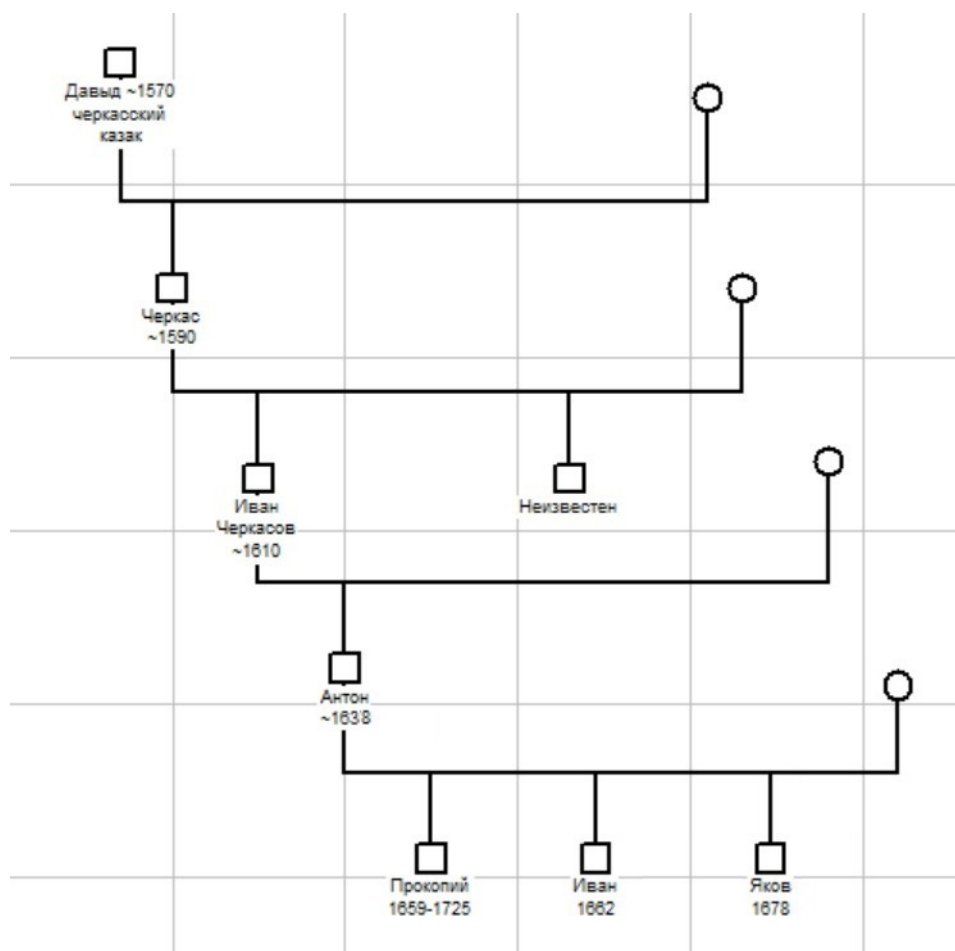


Fig. 4. The first five generations of the Cherkasov family of Keret since 1570.

In 2021, our investigation into the history of the Cherkasov family identified Prokofii Cherkasov (alias Prokopii) as the progenitor of the Cherkasov family of Keret, but determined only the approximate date of his birth – roughly in 1685 ([Cherkasov, 2021: 1673](#)). It should be clarified that we calculated the date of his birth based on one generation (20–25 years), but in fact it turned out that when Prokopii's son Isak was born (1711), Prokopii was already 51 ([Arkhiv SPb II RAN. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 135](#)). This explains the difference in Prokopii's date of birth. As for the point about the progenitor, the new archival materials, discovered in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts and introduced into research practice in the summer of 2023, enabled us to gain a deeper insight into the history of the family and identify Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov as a representative of the family in the 5th generation.

So, according to the 1668 and 1676 documents, we discovered the family of the father of Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov (1659–1725) – Anton Ivanovich, who was born around 1638. We think the date better lines up with reality because the 1635 census registered no Anton Ivanovich yet ([RGADA. F. 1201. Op. 5. D. 47. L. 4](#)). Thanks to Anton's patronymic, we also figured

out the name of his father Ivan (born around 1610), who in turn was a son of Cherkas. Unfortunately, we have not been able to establish the name of Cherkas' second son so far as the documents from the period between 1635 and 1668 are in a poor state of preservation.

The next document was dated 1711, and it was a census book of the Kolsky ostrog and the Kolsky district. In the document, we can find out the family of Prokopii, son of Anton, Cherkasov: "In the homestead, there is bobyl Prokopei, son of Anton, Cherkasov, fifty-one years old, crippled and partially blind; his wife, Varvara daughter of Ivan, thirty years old, their children – a son, Isak, one and a half years old" ([Arkhiiv SPb II RAN. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 135](#)). In addition, the same document specifies the family of Prokopii's brother, Ivan Antonovich, which lived in Ivan Odnoletkov's farmstead: "In his farmstead, there is Ivan, son of Anton, Cherkasov, forty-eight years old; his wife, Evdokia, daughter of Fedor, forty-five years old; their daughters: Natalya, thirteen years old, Anna, four years old, and they came to the Keretskaya volost in ΨI [1710]" ([Arkhiiv SPb II RAN. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 140ob.-141](#)). The document also mentions a family in Prokopii Antonovich's homestead: "... widow Anna, daughter of Anisim, 30 years old, her children: son Fedor – 9 years old, Luka – 4 years old" ([Arkhiiv SPb II RAN. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 135](#)). This is the family of his deceased younger brother, Yakov Antonovich Cherkasov, who died at the age of about 30 under unclear circumstances.

In 1711, Prokopii Antonovich's homestead had 12 inhabitants, six of them belonged to the Cherkasov family, while the rest lived in the farmstead and did various jobs. Here is a list of other people who lived in the farmstead: "bobyl Stepan, son of Ivan, Kalugin – 25 years old, unmarried; his mother, widow Marfa, daughter of Evdokim, 45 years old, blind; his aunt Agripina, daughter of Evdokim, – 50 years old, blind; Stepan's grandmother, Efrosinya, daughter of Ivan, – 80 years old; ... There is also in the farmstead a non-local Karelian Mikhaila, son of Kalina; his wife, Anna, daughter of Naum, 30 years old" ([Arkhiiv SPb II RAN. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 135](#)). So, Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov's farmstead provided home to three blind people (Prokopii himself, Marfa, Agripina), one elderly woman, aged 80 (Efrosinya), in addition to this there were three young women (Varvara and two Annas), three young children (Isak, Fedor, Luka) and only two workers (Mikhailo and Stepan). Although the time marked financial hardships and a large number of disabled people, the farmstead continued to lead a relatively liveable life. The farmstead, in essence, was already a shelter for visually impaired people at the time and had the largest number of such inhabitants in the Keret village.

According to the census book for 1711, Prokopii Antonovich's brother, Ivan Antonovich (b. 1662), returned to Keret only in 1710, at the age of 47 (in 1711 he was 48). While analyzing the 1699 lists of Streltsy soldiers in the Kolsky ostrog, we discovered Ivashka Antonov (Ivan Antonovich), and interestingly he was specified in two different Streltsy lists ([RGADA. F. 137. Op. 1. D. 1](#); [RGADA. F. 137. Op. 1. D. 3](#)). It means that Prokopii Antonovich's brother, Ivan Antonovich, a descendant of natives who came from the militarized class of Zaporozhian Cossacks, was listed in the Streltsy army of the Muscovite Kingdom.

According to the same 1711 census, Prokopii Antonovich himself was maimed (had a saber or bullet wound), i.e. he was engaged in active combat operations. If we consider that in 1676, Prokopii, as a child, lived in Keret and continued to live there in 1711, this means that Prokopii could do a military service in the period from 1685 to 1709 and serve only in the Streltsy army, because no other military organizations existed in the Russian North. With a high degree of probability, he served either in the Sumsky ostrog, or in the Solovetsky Monastery itself. To support the point about a long-term service in the Streltsy army, we can provide the fact that in 1711 Prokopii had a relatively young wife (Prokopii was 51, while his wife was 30) and a 1,5-year old child, i.e. the marriage took place in the relatively recent past. A big age gap was not typical of those getting married in the Keret village; the only exception could be a groom's higher social status. For example, in the period of his Streltsy service, Prokopii was in the position of a *pyatidesyatnik* (commanded a Streltsy detachment of 50 people). Summarizing all of the above, we can say with a high degree of probability that Prokopii Antonovich, like his brother, was a military professional who served in the Streltsy army and took part in combat operations.

Meanwhile, the economic situation in the Cherkasov family continued to deteriorate. Eight years later, according to the census lists (*revizskie skazki*) compiled in the First Petrine Census of 1719, the farmstead of Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov, who by that time was completely blind, began to be classified in the lists among impoverished farmsteads. For example, the document stated: "Destitute Prokofei Cherkasov – 60 years old, blind, his son Ivan (specified as Ivan by mistake, earlier and later will be registered as Isak) – 10 years old, nephew Luka Yakovlev

(i.e. Yakov's son) – 13 years old, in the same homestead destitute Stepan Petrov – 58 years old, blind” (RGADA. F. 350. Op. 2. D. 1476. L. 160b.). We should clarify that the First Census, held in the time of Peter I in 1719, did not take into account females, however, we can see, as compared with the 1711 census, that the number of the blind among the farmstead men increased. Looking ahead, let's say that disabled soldier Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov will die around 1725 at a very respectable age (at least 65 years old), compared to many other members of the Cherkasov family, and his son Isak will regain the family's economic well-being. This brief overview of Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov's life (1659–1725) clearly illustrates that the Keret Cherkasovs performed a prominent social function in the life of Russian society. His descendants appreciated the value of the lifetime service done by Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov (1659–1725), a former Streltsy chief, who was injured in the service and founded a village shelter for visually impaired people in civilian life, and on August 1, 2022, almost 300 years after Prokopii Antonovich's death, to celebrate the personality, the Cherkas Global University, a fundamental electronic library, was renamed the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library.

5. Conclusion

The history of the Cherkasovs of Keret has now 17 generations that cover the period from 1570 to the present. The family history during the Muscovite Kingdom embraces only the first five generations (1570–1725): the initial chronological point is associated with the birth of a Cossack named David (1st generation) in the Zaporozhian Sich (territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) in 1570, and the final one with the death of a representative of the 5th generation Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov in 1725. The death of Prokopii Antonovich marked the end of an entire era – an era in which a representative of the family's 2nd generation, Cherkas, son of Davyd, comes from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Muscovite Kingdom, serves in its military formations and settles down in Keret. Cherkas' sons, who continued their father's legacy, also receive excellent military training. Cherkas' grandson, Anton, participates in the defense of the Solovetsky Monastery, and his great-grandchildren serve in the Streltsy army and take part in hostilities. During the era, all four generations of the Keret Cherkasovs (from 2nd to 5th generation) were directly related to military service in the Muscovite Kingdom either as part of militiamen or as part of the Strelets army, and this, in turn, allows us to speak of the Cherkasovs from Keret as a family of sovereign servants of the period of the Muscovite Kingdom.

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