

FLAGS AND BANNERS OF THE ORENBURG COSSACK ARMY from the 18th Century to Modern Times

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The Cossacks were a free people who ran the borders of the Russian state and organized into semi-republican self-governing groups (“Cossack armies”). Most known Cossack settlements were in the modern territory of Ukraine, Siberia, along the Volga River, and near the city of Uralsk in the modern Republic of Kazakhstan. Cossacks lived by hunting, salt mining, and fishing. They defended their settlements from any enemy and from government troops, too. They enjoyed semi-democratic power (major decisions were adopted by the council, the *Krug*).

Conflicts with Cossacks in the 17th and 18th centuries led the Russian government to believe that they might be useful for border service, and reached an agreement with them. The government granted some political rights to the Cossacks, they were free from some taxes, but they were required to serve as border guards. They received some compensation and became part of the governmental system. Cossacks lived near the borders in semi-military settlements and were always ready for military service.

Except for self-organized and self-governed Cossack troops (the Don Cossacks and the Ural Cossacks), most Cossack armies were created by the government. Gradually, self-governed Cossack troops became uniformed and a regular part of the army, while still enjoying many privileges in their lifestyle and organization. The Orenburg Cossack army was one of these government-organized armies.

After its founding in 1734, many Cossacks were moved to the new fortified city of Orenburg near the southern border of the Russian state. Cossacks from Ufa, Samara, Alexeevskoe, and Iseth came to Orenburg and its surroundings. They all carried their old banners.

The Cossacks of Ufa had:

- a white banner with a double-headed eagle, the Heavenly Host (God Savaof), St. Boris and St. Gleb;
- yellow banners with St. George and St. Dimitry;

- a yellow banner with Archangel Michael.

The Cossacks of Iseth had several ramshackle banners (with St. George).

The Cossacks of Samara had:

- a light-pink banner with a red stripe along the bottom and a double-headed eagle;
- a light-yellow banner with a red stripe along the bottom and a double-headed eagle;
- a white silk banner with the monogram of Peter I;
- a white banner with Archangel Michael, St. Zosima, and St. Savvaty; and
- other banners.

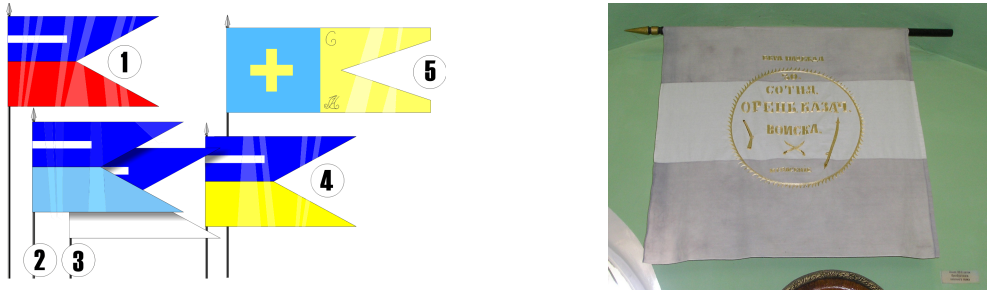
In 1748 an irregular Cossack corps was formed in Orenburg. In 1755 the corps and garrisons of small forts along the border were united into the Orenburg Cossack Host, and in 1756 it received a large corps banner, a medium-sized regimental banner, and nine small company banners. All banners had a similar design—on light yellow field with a red border, a cross in the center with rays and a heraldic shield with an image of Orenburg castle. Interestingly, the Stavropol Cossacks received a similar banner the same year; the heraldic shield on their flag had an image of the city of Stavropol.

From 1840 the Orenburg Cossack Host consisted of 10 cavalry regiments. They all received colors in 1842. The colors were blue with two tails, and had images of the double-headed eagle and the monogram of the Czar, Nikolai I. In 1856 two new regiments received similar (but azure) colors with the monogram of Alexander II.

In 1855 six infantry battalions received colors with a white cross and green “corners”. In 1831 one color was granted to the 9th regiment honoring its heroism in the Russo-Turkish War of 1829. Squadrons of Cossack regiments called “hundreds” (as they had 100-200 riders) had uniformed cavalry guidons with the upper half blue and the lower parts in various colors:

- 1st Hundred—red;
- 2nd Hundred—light-blue;
- 3rd Hundred—white;
- 4th Hundred—green;
- 5th Hundred—yellow; and
- 6th Hundred—brown.

Separate hundreds which were not parts of any regiments also had guidons and banners. However, they were not uniform. See, for example, the image of the banner of the 3rd Hundred of the Army and an unknown hundred's guidon (both from the Orenburg Museum).



Hundreds' Guidons (left), banner of the 3rd Hundred of the Army (right)

In 1900 a new type of army colors was designed. In the centre was the face of Christ, and on the obverse the monogram of the Emperor. Different banners were distinguished by the colors of the border and field. A banner with a green field and a blue border represented the Orenburg Cossacks. Such colors were granted to the Orenburg Cossack School in 1904, to the 14th Orenburg Cossack regiment in 1915, and to the Orenburg Cossack Division in 1916.



Headquarters Flag of the 1st Orenburg Cossack Regiment with Inscription "1.0"

Regimental flags of the Orenburg Cossacks were blue with a white saltire and the number of the regiment. Headquarters flags were white with a dark border (see the image of the headquarters flag of the 1st Orenburg Cossack Regiment). But these flags were unpopular and used very rarely. After the February Revolution of 1917 and before the Communist

Revolution the red flag became very popular in Russia. The Orenburg Cossacks decided in April 1917 to adopt a new banner: red with St. George and the motto “Free Cossacks”. We have no image or photo of this banner (see our reconstruction).



Reconstruction of the Banner of the Orenburg Cossacks, 22.4.1917

Professor W. Trembicky wrote about a blue-raspberry banner of the Orenburg Cossacks in an issue of *Flagmaster*. We cannot confirm this; we did not find any mention of this flag in our sources. It may be the flag of Cossacks outside of Russia. According to the memories of members of the Orenburg Army, when they were in Mongolia they used a red banner with a small tricolor in the corner. Perhaps this was because one of the army leaders, Bakich, was a socialist (but not communist).

In 1998 the Orenburg Cossack army was reformed as a “public organization”. Modern Cossacks have no weapons (they use only ceremonial sabers), but they do have uniforms and banners. Their main tasks now are:

- patriotic education of youth;
- preservation of their specific life-style;
- historical reconstruction;
- helping the economic development of regions with Cossack populations;
- assisting government entities with anti-criminal activity, border guard service, etc.

In 2000, the Commission of Cossack Affairs in Moscow designed a new version of the banner for all Cossack societies. It is a banner with Christ’s face and the inscription “Russia will escape with faith”. The design is very close to the design of the army color of 1900. But, in fact, the Orenburg Cossacks prefer their original banners. Some use a reconstruction of the historical banner of 1756, others use new banners with designs based on the 1756

banner (for example, the Orenburg “Slavic” city society). Some societies use a neutral design with religious and army symbols.

Postscript

A new coat of arms and banner for the Orenburg Army Cossack Society (Оренбургское войсковое казачье общество) were adopted by decree of the president on 9 February 2010. The banner is green with a blue border. A double-headed eagle is depicted on the obverse and the coat of arms of the Orenburg Army Cossack Society is on the reverse. The flag of the Orenburg Army Cossack Society was adopted by presidential decree on 14 October 2010. It has a green field with a blue border and the coat of arms of the society in the center. While the banner will exist as a single unique item, the flags can be replicated.



Banner of the Orenburg Army Cossack Society (left: obverse, right: reverse)



Flag of the Orenburg Army Cossack Society

Flags and banners of Orenburg Cossack army from XVIIIc. until modern times

Lomantsov V.

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YOKOHAMA - 2009



ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY



1574 – Ufa castle founded
1730ths - Ufa cossacks removed to Orenburg

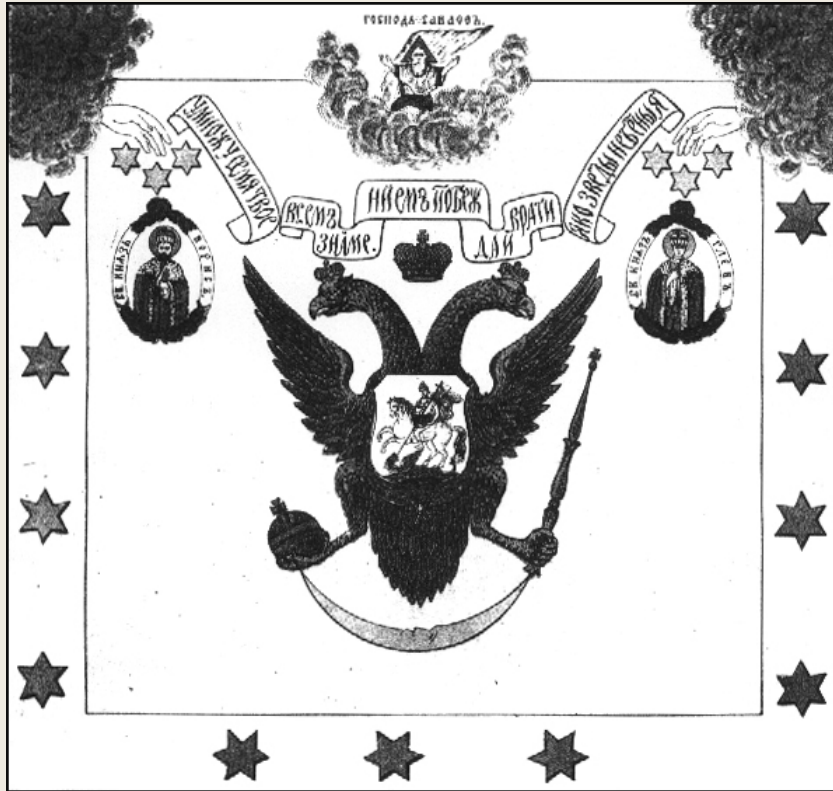
1586 – Samara founded
1700 – Alexeevskoe founded
1730ths – Samara and Alexeevskoe
cossacks removed to Orenburg

1744 Orenburg Irregular Corps founded
1755 Orenburg Army organized

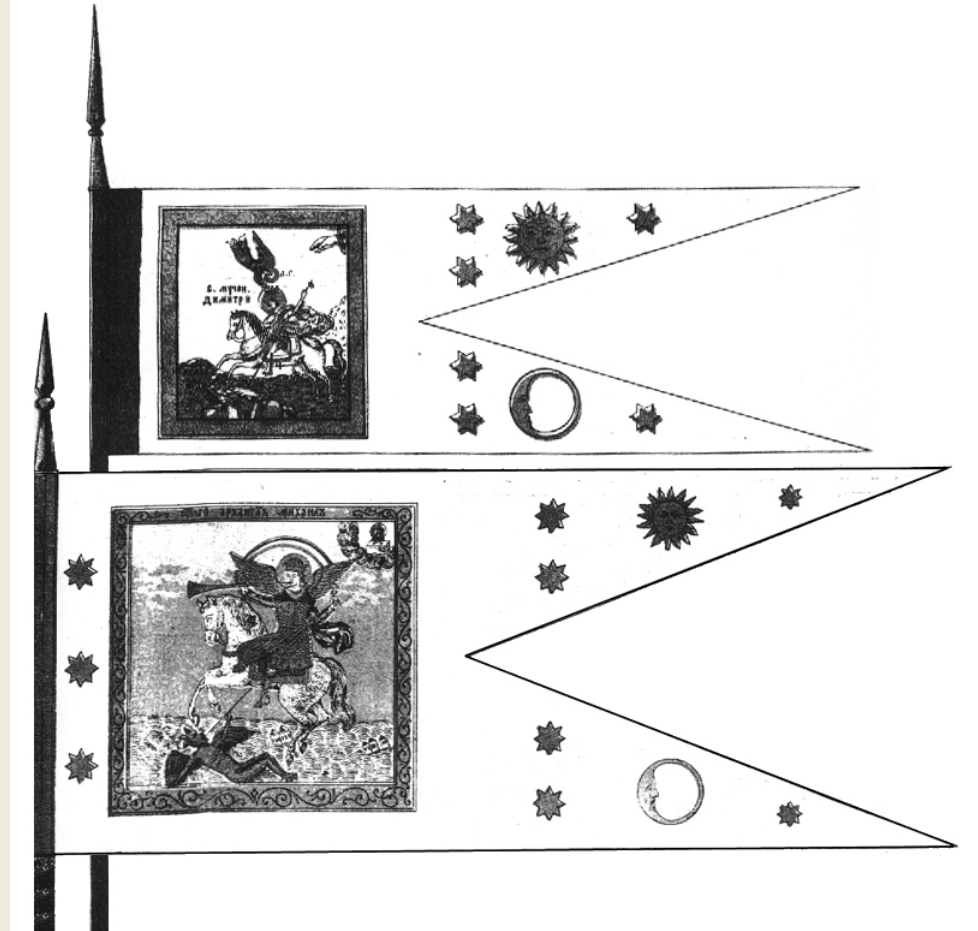
1736 – Iseth cossacks army was founded
1730ths - Iseth cossacks moved to
Orenburg

1755 – Kalmyks moved to Orenburg
Cossacks Army

PREDECESTORS OF ORENBURG ARMY. UFA COSSACKS

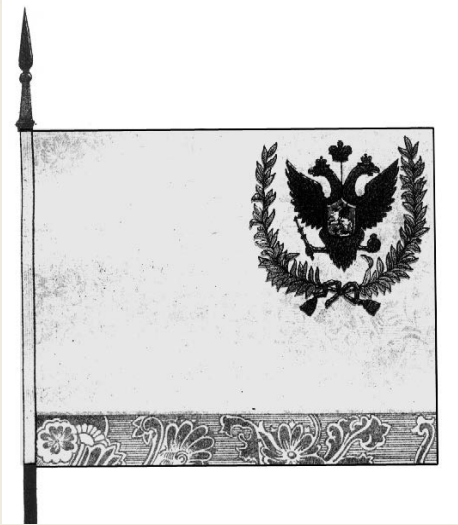


The God Savaof, St.Boris and St. Gleb.
Cream field, White border



Yellow banners with St.George and
St.Dimitry3

PREDECESSORS OF ORENBURG ARMY. SAMARA COSSACKS



Light-pink (light-yellow)
banner with red stripe
along the bottom

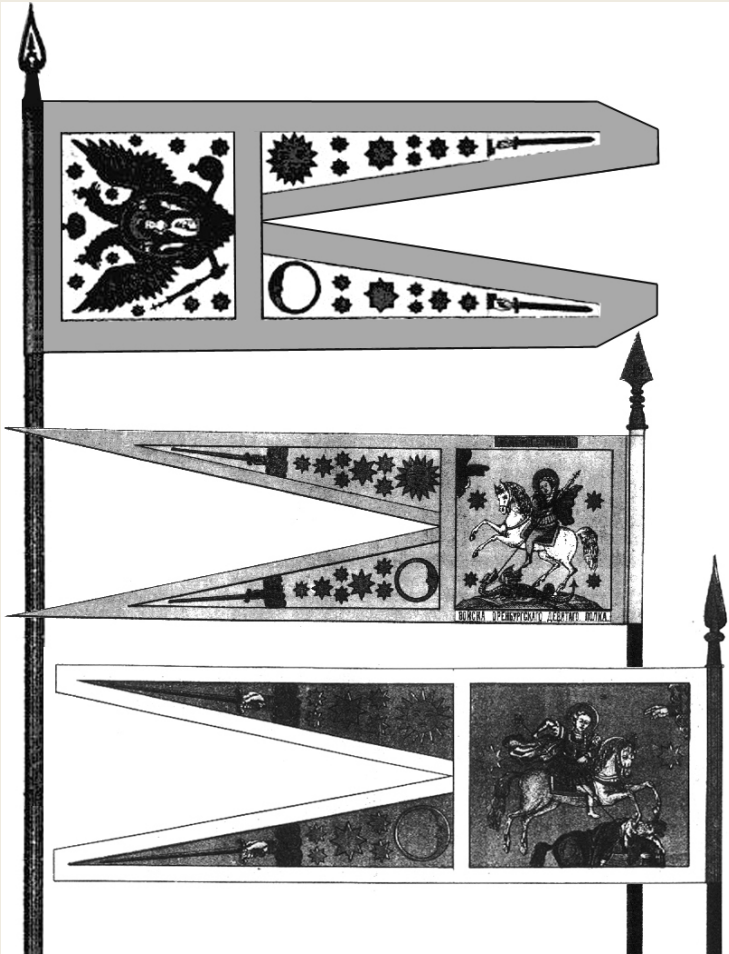


White banner with
Peter I cipher

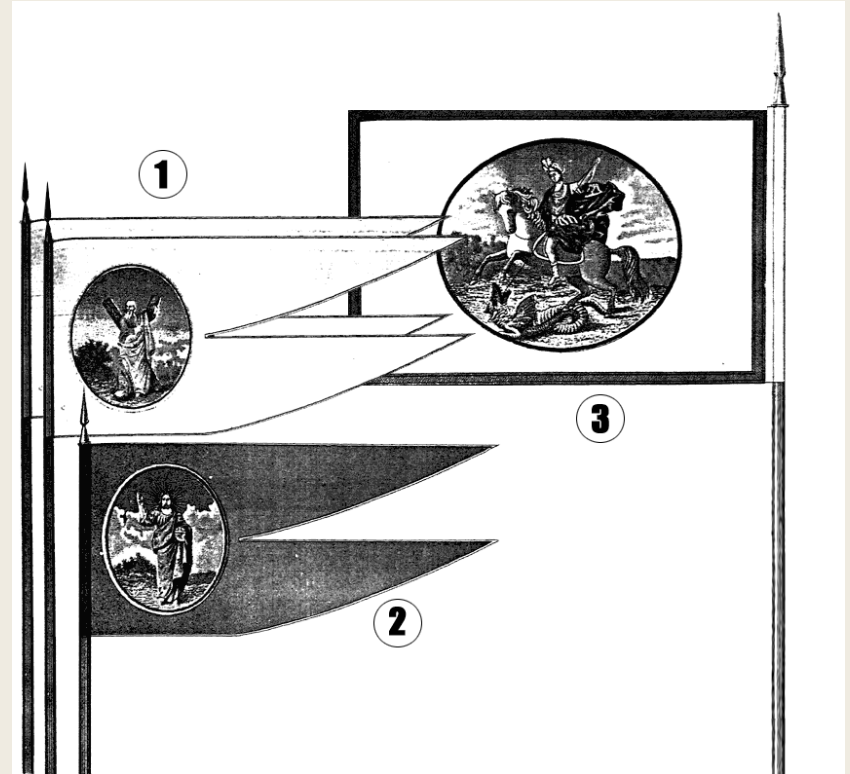


White banner with
Arch.Michael,
St.Zosima and St.Savvaty

PREDECESTORS OF ORENBURG ARMY. ISETH AND KALMYK COSSACKS

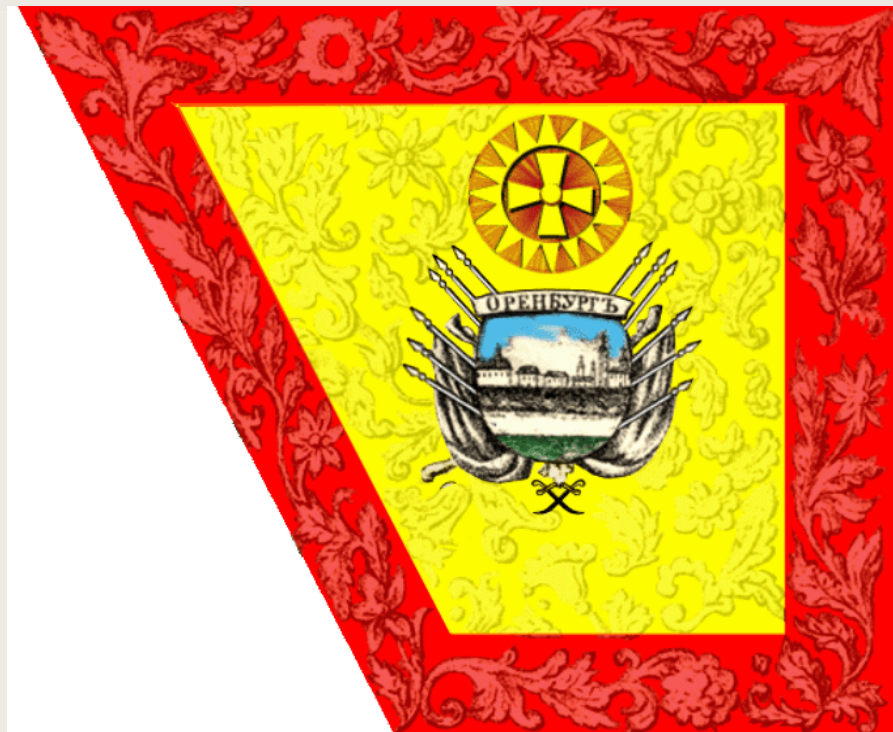


Banners of Iseth cossacks. 1700ths



Banners of Kalmyk regiments. 1811

FOUNDATION OF ORENBURG ARMY

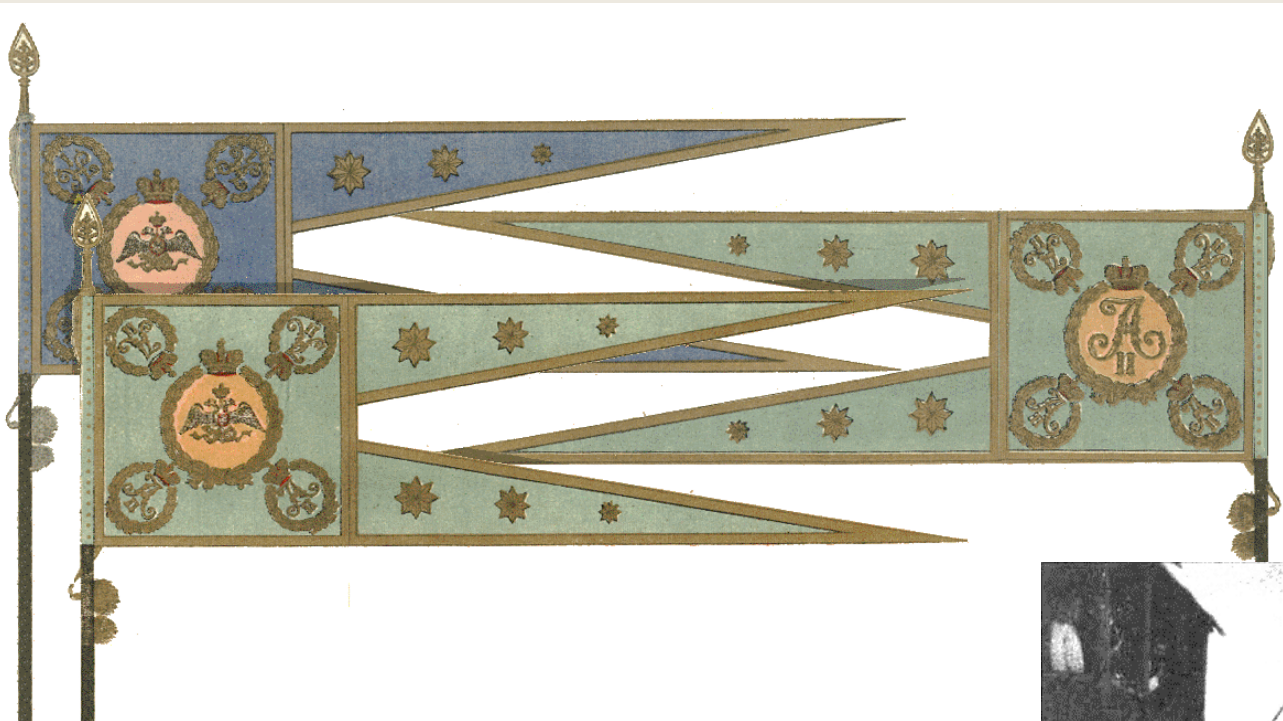


Orenburg Cossacks' Banner. 1756.



Stavropol Cossacks' Banner. 1756.

BANNERS OF REGIMENTS



Colors of Orenburg Cossack regiments:

1842 – blue

1856 - azure

Colors of Orenburg Cossacks, beg of XX c.



COLORS OF REGIMENTS

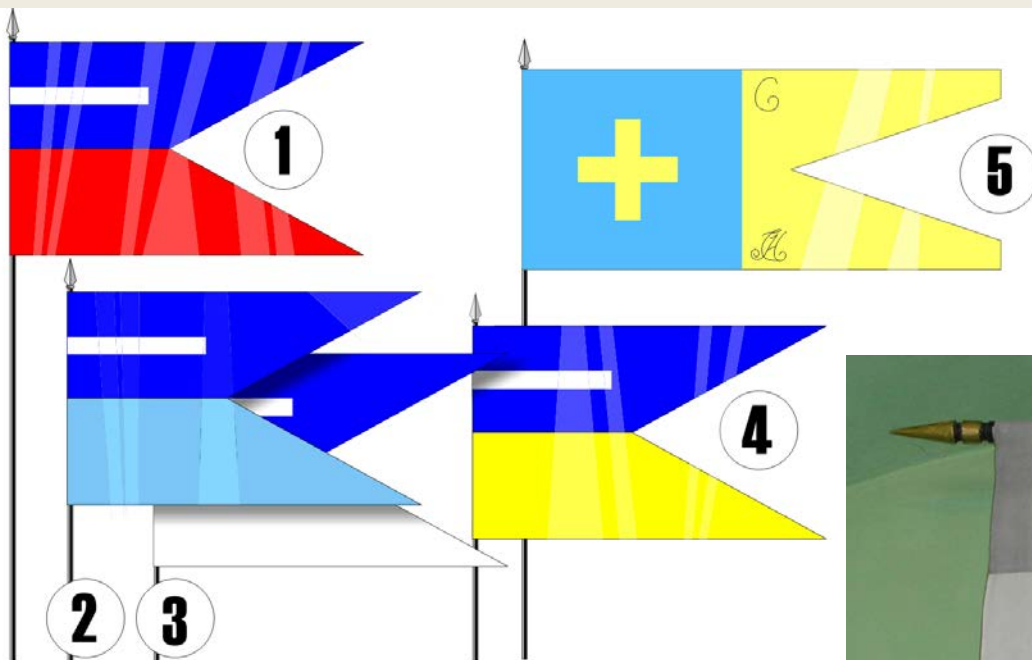


Color of 9th Orenburg Cossack regiment (for Russian-Turkish war) 1829



Color of Infantry Cossack Battalions. 1855

BANNERS OF 'HUNDREDS'



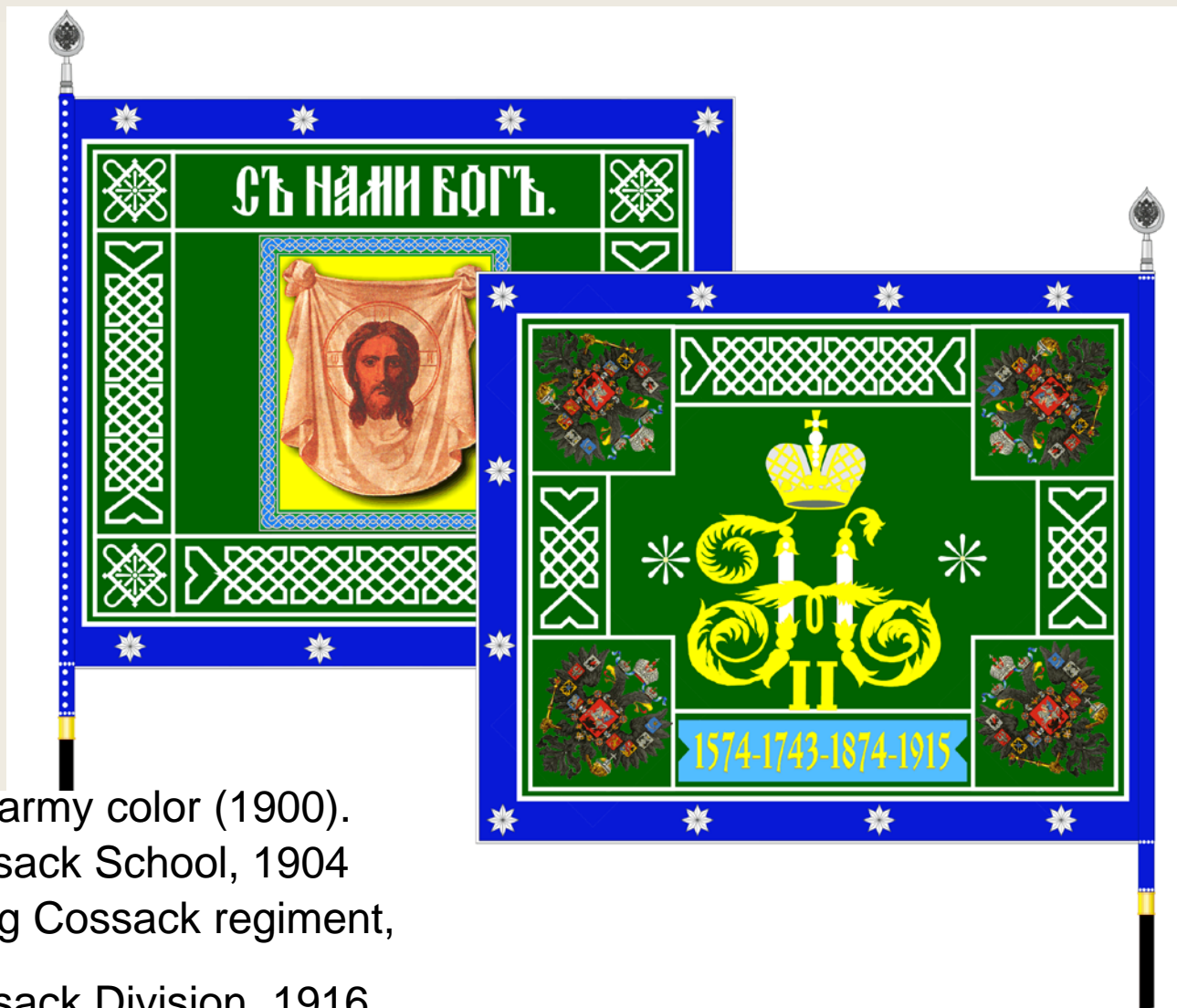
Real banner of 3rd hundred (photo from Museum)



Hundreds guidons:

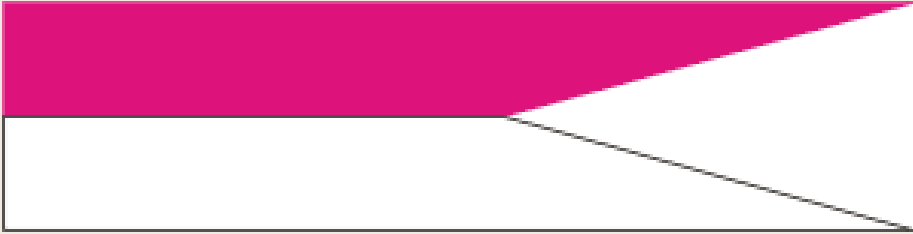
- 1 – 1st hundred,
- 2 – 2nd hundred,
- 3 – 3rd hundred,
- 4 – 5th hundred,
- 6 – unknown hundred guidon from Museum.

COLORS OF REGIMENTS



New model of army color (1900).
Orenburg Cossack School, 1904
14th Orenburg Cossack regiment,
1915
Orenburg Cossack Division. 1916

FLAGS OF REGIMENTS



Personal guidon



Regimental flag. 1st World War



Flag of regimental Headquarter. 1st World War

REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR



Reconstruction of the Banner of
Orenburg Cossacks,
22.4.1917



Flag of Orenburg Cossacks, Civil
War 1918-1920. (reconstruction of
prof. W.Trembicky; not confirmed)



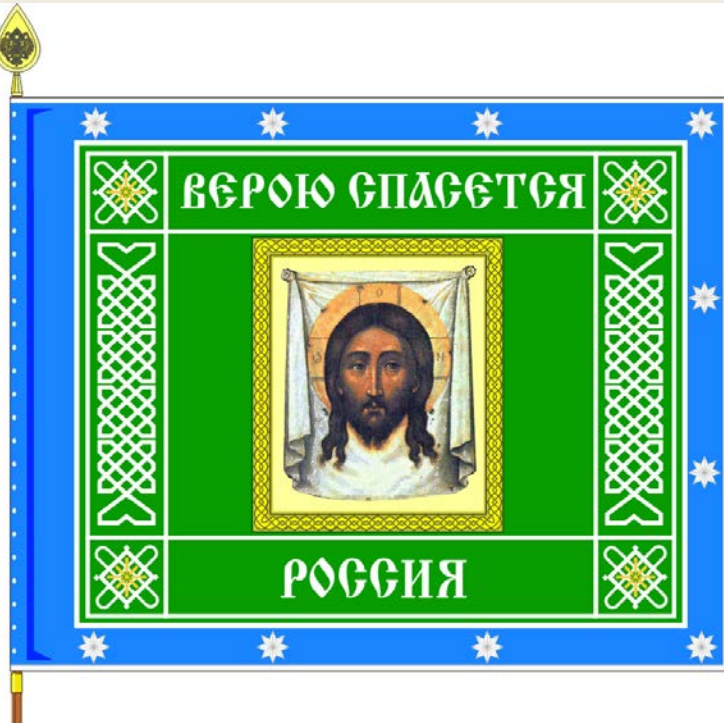
Flag of Orenburg Cossacks,
Mongolia. 1921. (reconstruction
after written description)

COSSACKS OF MODERN TIMES



Color of 1st department Orenburg Cossacks Army. 1991. Obverse and Reverse .

COSSACKS OF MODERN TIMES



Model of Color for Orenburg
Cossacks Army designed by Central
Commission on Cossacks Affairs.
2000.



Banner of Cossacks' society "Slavic"
14

COSSACKS OF MODERN TIMES



Cossacks' Banners at holiday parade. 2009

Sources



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