

S E R F D O M

Group -102
Sub group 3



WHAT IS A SERF?

- A serf is a peasant who lives under the political system of feudalism – they aren't just unique to Russia but were found across Europe throughout the middle ages. The peasant is almost, but not quite, a slave, tied to the land of a landowner who also owns the right to that peasant's existence. As well as working on their landowner's land (on the fields, in his mines, in his factories), they could rent a small patch of land on which they could practice subsistence farming to provide for their own needs.*



HISTORY OF RUSSIAN SERFDOM

- *Serfdom in Russia developed gradually over many centuries. Historians usually trace the root of Russian serfdom to the 11th century, but it only began to fully establish itself after the introduction of the Sobornoye Ulozhenie (Law Code) in 1649 by Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich which first legally tied serfs to Russian estates. Shortly after, in 1658 it was made illegal for serfs to flee their estates and this really entrenched them in their lowly position in Russian society.*
- *Slavery was also legal in Russia until 1723, when it was abolished by Peter the Great. The lot of slaves was not greatly improved, though – the vast majority simply became serfs.*
- *By the middle of the 19th century, around half of all Russian peasants were privately owned serfs. Other Russian peasants mostly worked on land owned by the state – nominally they were freer, but in reality they remained serfs.*



Pugachev's Rebellion



Pugachev Rebellion



- Peasant Revolt caused by absolute control over serfs by nobles
- 50 revolts between 1762-1769
 - Weakened Catherine's power over provinces
- Pugachev: Executed 1775.
- Caused numerous "Reforms"
 - Serfs further tied to land
 - Provinces got more self control

INTRODUCTION

- *Yemelyan Pugachev, in full Yemelyan Ivanovich Pugachev (born c. 1742, Zimoveyskaya-na-Donu, Russia—died 21 January 1775, leader of a major Cossack and peasant rebellion in Russia (Pugachev Rebellion, 1773–75)*
- *An illiterate Don Cossack, Pugachev fought in the Russian army in the final battles of the Seven Years' War (1756–63), in Russia's campaign in Poland (1764), and in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74. Following the siege and conquest of Bendery (1769–70), however, he returned home as an invalid. For three years after his recovery, he wandered, particularly among settlements of Old Believers, a dissident religious group that exercised considerable influence over him.*
- *Learning in the course of his travels of the Yaik (Ural) Cossack Rebellion of 1772 and of its cruel suppression, Pugachev proceeded to Yaitsky Gorodok (now Oral), where the Cossacks remained discontented. Although he was arrested there for desertion from the army, imprisoned at Kazan, and sentenced to be deported to Siberia, he escaped and in June 1773 appeared in the steppes east of the Volga River. Claiming to be Emperor Peter III (who had been deposed by his wife, Catherine the Great, and assassinated in 1762), Pugachev decreed the abolition of serfdom and gathered a substantial following, including Yaik Cossacks, peasant workers in the mines and factories of the Urals, agricultural peasants, clergymen, and the Bashkirs. Planning ultimately to depose Catherine, Pugachev stormed and laid siege*

- *As the landowners of the region, fearing for their lives, fled to Moscow, Catherine recognized the seriousness of the rebellion and sent an army commanded by Gen. A. I. Bibikov against Pugachev (January 1774). In the spring Bibikov defeated Pugachev at Tatishchevo, west of Orenburg, but Pugachev proceeded to Kazan and burned the city (July 1774). He was defeated again several days later, but he crossed the Volga River, intending to gather reinforcements among the Don Cossacks. He captured Saratov (August 1774) and besieged Tsaritsyn (now Volgograd), where Gen. A. V. Suворov finally defeated him (September 3 [August 23, Old Style], 1774). Pugachev escaped but was betrayed by some Yaik Cossacks, sent to Moscow, and executed.*