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# Absolutism and the New Men of Seventeenth-Century Russia

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## Absolutism and the New Men of Seventeenth-Century Russia

Marshall Poe

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In his renowned description of Russia, the Muscovite bureaucrat Grigorii Kotoshikhin described the boyar *duma* — Old Russia's royal council — as composed of the representatives of four groups of families, each of which had the hereditary right to place their sons on the royal council.<sup>1</sup> At the pinnacle of power were families whose members served exclusively as boyars, the highest rank in the council. They were followed by lesser families whose sons serve as *okol'nichie* and less often as boyars. Below them Kotoshikhin identified clans of middling status whose scions entered the *duma* as *dumnye dvoriane*, and occasionally progress to *okol'nichie*. Finally, Kotoshikhin points to the undistinguished families that provided the council with *dumnyi d'iaki*, the fourth rank in the body. Kotoshikhin's depiction, as we might expect given his many years in chancellery service, is quite accurate: a host of sources confirm that the *duma* had long been composed of four hereditary castes, each more distinguished than the next. However Kotoshikhin's account of the *duma* is deficient in one important respect: he offers only the slightest hint of a momentous shift in the history of the council that was occurring in the mid-seventeenth century. "Of the former great clans of princes and boyars," he wrote laconically, "many have died out." And indeed this was true, the old families were in slow decline. But the waning of the traditional elite was only half the story. The regime of Aleksei Mikhailovich had opened the *duma* to servitors of low birth and, even as Kotoshikhin wrote in 1666, they were flooding the lower ranks of the once exclusive council. These "new men" were transforming both the ancient culture of the *duma* and its social profile.

The influx of the new men was first explored by historians of the late-nineteenth century, who attached cardinal significance to it.<sup>2</sup> They suggested that the crown promoted the new cohort in order to produce a counterweight to a recalcitrant and conservative aristocracy. The new men, so the argument continued, were the unflinching supporters of the monarch who disdained the privileges afforded aristocrats. The conflict between the old and new elements was resolved in favor of the latter in 1681 and 1682 when *mestnichestvo* — the ancient system of appointments that privileged the distinguished clans — was destroyed and a new "Table of Ranks" was proposed. Later scholars rightly called this interpretation into question. They point out that the entire argument is built on circumstantial evidence: there is no direct indication in the historical record of political struggle between the old and new families. Rather, the evidence suggests that politics in the late Muscovite court was based on clans, not larger status groups. According to one critic, the entire debate as to the relative weight of the aristocratic and parvenu elements in the court is "useless" and stems

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<sup>1</sup>G. Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v tsarstvanie Alekseia Mikhaïlovicha*, text and Commentary by A. E. Pennington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 36-37.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, V. O. Kliuchevskii, "Istoriia soslovii v Rossii" [1886], in *idem, Sochineniia v deviaty tomakh* (Moscow: Mysl', 1989), vol. 6, 321-23 and especially 382; V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Boiarskaia дума drevnei Rusi* (Moscow: Tip. T. Malinskago i A. Ivanova, 1883), 387-92; A. I. Markevich, *Istoriia mestnichestva v Moskovskom gosudarstve v XV - XVII* (Odessa, 1888: Tip. "Odesskago Vestnika"), 559-60 and 582; N. Pavlov-Sil'vanskii, *Gosudarstvennyye sluzhbye liudi* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tip., 1898), 163-64; E. D. Stashevskii, "Sluzhiloie soslovie," in *Russkaia istoriia v ocherkakh i stat'iax*, ed. M. V. Dovnar-Zapol'skii (Kiev: xxx, 1912), 32; V. N. Storozheva, "Boiarsstvo i dvorianstvo XVII veka," *Tri Veka. Rossiia ot Smuty do nashego vremeni* (Moscow: Tip. I. D. Sytina, 1912; Reprint Moscow: Izd. "GIS," 1991), 201-31.

from an insufficient appreciation of the fact that the Muscovite crown pursued a policy designed to produce a unified service class.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the interpretive attention the new men have received, they have never been made the subject of detailed analysis.<sup>4</sup> Thus many aspects of the history of the new men remain unclear. When do the new men first appear? How many of them were there? What kind of people were they? Why did the court promote them to the *duma*? And what role did they in fact play in the transformations bound up on the elimination of *mestnichestvo* in 1682. In what follows I would like to suggest answers to each of these questions. The basis for my study is an analysis of the careers of the 192 new men who were promoted to the *duma* between 1645 to 1713. They are distinguished from all other *duma* members in three ways. First, they had no patrilineal kinsmen in the *duma* of Mikhail Fedorovich, the first Romanov tsar' who ruled from 1613 to 1645. Second, they were untitled, that is, not members of the Rurikid, Gedymin or Chingisid aristocracies that supplied early modern Russia with virtually all of its princely families. Finally, they were not royal in-laws, at least at the time of their appointment. Members of these groups were traditionally given preferment in *duma* appointments, whereas the new men — bereft of rank-holding ancestors, titles, and royal status — must have found some other road to the council. Before we proceed, a word about the sources. The nature of the Muscovite documentation makes the reconstruction the lives of the new men and the policy that created them quite difficult. In stark contrast to notables elsewhere in early modern Europe, the new men — and the entire service elite — left us very little with which we might enter their world. They wrote no diaries, few letters, and almost nothing in the way of literature. Government records are similarly laconic. Among them we find no plans, no position papers, no political treatises, and, most important for our purposes, no discussion of policies regarding recruitment to the boyar *duma*. What we have, in a word, is lists: lists of members of the *duma* (the *boiarskie knigi* and *spiski*), chronological lists of court activities (the *razriadnye knigi*), and list of administrative personnel (*spiski prikaznykh liudei*). With the aid of these documents we can roughly sketch the course of a servitors's career — when he entered service, what sorts of offices he held, when he was promoted to the *duma*, and the nature of his activities thereafter. Once these dossiers are compiled, a collective biography can be outlined, and on the basis of this biography, the logic behind government policy can be inferred. This is precisely what I've attempted to do in the case of the new men.

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<sup>3</sup>H. J. Torke, "Oligarchie in der Autokratie — Der Machtverfall der Bojarduma im 17. Jahrhundert," *Forschungen zur Geschichte Osteuropas* 24 (1978), 197-197. Similarly, see R. Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors. The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613-1689* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 87.

<sup>4</sup>Much attention has been focused on a related phenomenon — the growing importance of career-administrators, many of whom were new men, in the boyar *duma*. See especially N. F. Demidova, "Biurokratizatsiia gosudarstvennogo apparata absolutizma v XVII-XVIII vv.," in *Absolutizm v Rossii*, ed. by N. M. Druzhinin et al. (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), 206-42; N. F. Demidova, *Sluzhbilaiia biurokratiiia v Rossii XVII v. i ee rol' v formirovanii absolutizma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987); B. Plavsic, "Seventeenth-Century Chanceries and their Staffs," in *Russian Officialdom*, ed. by W. M. Pintner and D. K. Rowney (Chapel Hill, N. C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980), 19-45; G. G. Weichhardt, "Bureaucrats and Boiars in the Muscovite Tsardom," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 10: 3 (1983), 331-56; and B. O'Brian, "Musovite Prikaz Administration of the Seventeenth Century: the Quality of Leadership," *Forschungen zur Geschichte Osteuropas* 38 (1986), 223-35; R. Crummey, "The Origins of the Noble Official: The Boyar Elite, 1613-1689," in *Russian Officialdom*, 46-75.

## The Rise of the New Men of the Seventeenth Century

From the founding of the Muscovite principality in the fourteenth century, membership in the boyar council had been restricted to a small set of pedigreed (*rodovytie*) families who passed the ranks of *boiarin* and *okol'nichii* by collateral succession in the male line.<sup>5</sup> As older families died out (or, much more rarely, were removed), the court exercised considerable restraint in granting new families the right to hold the highest ranks. The number of such families rose gradually in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (from 11 in 1407 to 46 in 1555), as did the number of men holding the top two ranks (from 7 in 1371 to 55 in 1555). When the court was re-constituted after the accession of Mikhail Romanov, it was even smaller than it had been in the second-half of the sixteenth century. From 1613/14 to 1644/45 an average of 35 men held one of the top four ranks in any given year. And there was considerable continuity in the composition of the pre- and post-Time of Troubles court. For example, in 1626/27 28 men held one of the top four ranks. Of them, 14 had ancestors who had been boyars or *okol'nichie* in the mid sixteenth century and 22 were members of pedigreed clans recorded in the official genealogical registers of ancient elite families (*rodoslovnye knigi*).<sup>6</sup>

The traditional policy regarding *duma* appointments began to change in the mid-seventeenth century, when the court lowered the hereditary requirements for entry into the *duma* and thereby weakened the hold the older families on the higher ranks. In the last year of Mikhail's reign, 30 men held one of the elite ranks; in the first year of Aleksei's rule 51 occupied the upper reaches, more than at any time since Ivan IV's time. Aleksei continued to make new appointments throughout the fifties, sixties, and seventies. Over the course of his reign an average of 69 men held one of the top four ranks in any given year. Fedor Alekseevich's brief reign brought an additional influx of men. In the year of his coronation (1675/76) he added over 30 new men to the *duma*. An average of 106 servitors held the top four ranks in his time. The coming of Peter and Ivan meant unprecedented increases in the size of the *duma*. In 1681/82 over 50 new appointments were made, bring the total upper rank holders to an unheard of 164. The *duma* ranks reached their maximum size in 1689/90 at 182. Thereafter the number of men in the *duma* steadily diminished until the final extinction in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

Though many different groups profited from the court's liberality, the greatest beneficiaries were the "new men" — un-titled servitors whose clans had not placed members in the *duma* of Mikhail Romanov. Of the 379 men appointed to the top four ranks of the *duma* between the accession of Aleksei and the dissolution of the *duma* in 1713, they made up

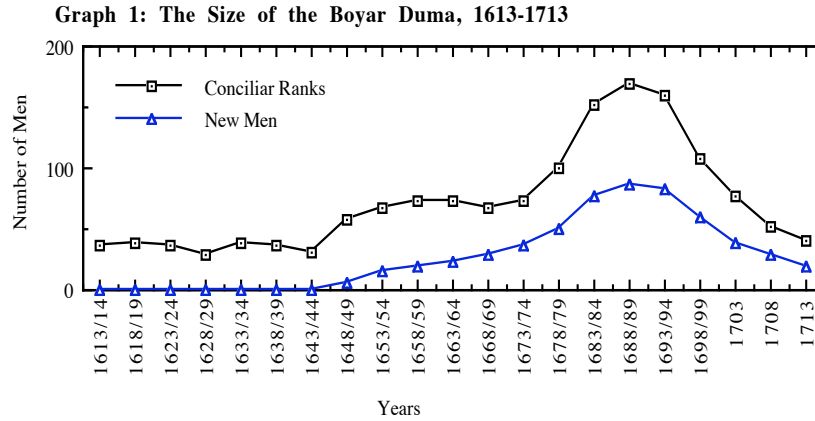
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<sup>5</sup>This is the primary argument of N. S. Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics. The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345-1547* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987), 55-89.

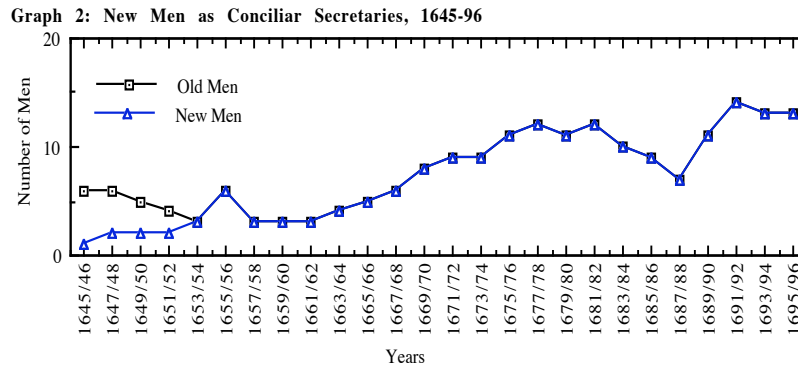
<sup>6</sup>This is consistent with Crummey's observation that "between 1613 and 1645 slightly more than half of all members of the *Duma* came from old aristocratic families." See R. Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors. The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613-1689* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 26. Also see R. Crummey, "The Reconstitution of the Boiar Aristocracy, 1613-45," *Forschungen für Osteuropäische Geschichte 18* (1973), 187-220.

<sup>7</sup>The table was constructed on the basis of my examination of data in O. Kosheleva, B. Morozov, R. Martin, M. Poe, *The Muscovite Biographical Database* (MBD). The MBD is based on the following sources: 12 boiar books, 1666/7-1691/92 (found in RGADA, *fond* 210 (*Razriadnyi prikaz*), *opis'* 1 "*boiarskie knigi*" and *opis'* 9a "*stolbtsy Moskovskogo stola*"); 80 boiar lists, 1610/11-1713 (RGADA, *fond* 210 (*Razriadnyi prikaz*), *opis'* 2 "*boiarskie spiski*" and *opis'* 9a "*stolbtsy Moskovskogo stola*"). Additional information was gathered from Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 178-214, P. I. Ivanov, ed., *Alfavitnyi ukazatel' familii i lits, upominaemykh v boiarskikh knigakh* (Moscow: Tip. S. Selivanovskogo, 1853), *passim* and S. B. Veselovskii, *D'iaki i pod'iachie XV-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), *passim*. A complete list of sources together with more extensive data on the composition of the *duma* is available in M. Poe, *The Russian Boiar Duma, 1613-1713: Annual Composition and Socio-Statistical Analysis*, which I hope to publish soon.

51%, or 192 servitors.<sup>8</sup> In what must have been a conscious effort on the part of Aleksei's regime to alter the composition of the *duma*, the proportion of new men in the body increased from 6% in 1645/46 to 51% in 1675/76.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter the percentage of new men in the *duma* stabilized, fluctuating between 48% and 55% until the institution's demise.<sup>10</sup> Graph 1 describes changes in the size of the *duma* and the influx of the new men.



The new men made their most rapid progress in the *duma's* two lower ranks. By 1653/54 they had completely colonized the rank of *dummyi d'iak*, making up 100% of its composition for the remainder the century and beyond. This can be seen in Graph 2.

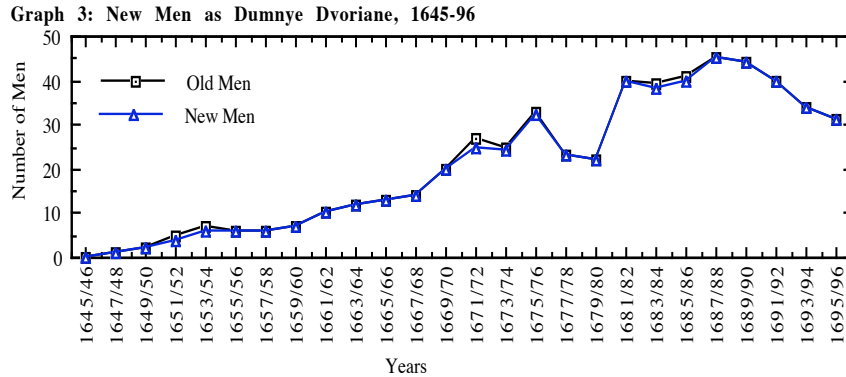


The rank of *dummyi dvorianin* was in essence re-created in the reign of Aleksei as a conduit for new men into the *duma*. There had been *dummye dvoriane* in the court of Mikhail, but they had been very few (never more than 3 in any year, and usually 1). In the 1650s, Aleksei began to increase the number of *dummye dvoriane*, and he did so almost exclusively with new men. In the last year of his reign (1674/75) there were 23 *dummye dvoriane*, 22 of whom were new men (the exception being F. P. Naryshkin, a royal in-law). Aleksei's policy was continued by his successors: in 1680/81 (the last year of

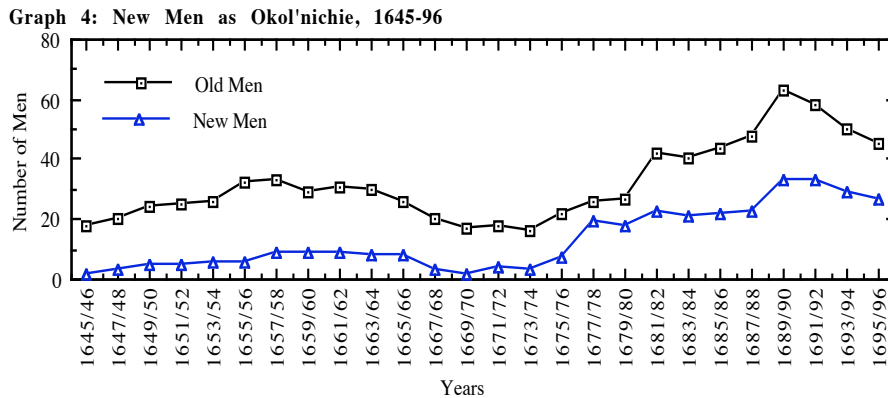
<sup>8</sup>The data on appointments is taken from the MBD and Crumme, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 186-213. The figure of 187 was arrived at by subtracting three privileged groups from the total: 1) appointees who were members of families with representatives in the *duma* of Mikhail Fedorovich (135); 2) appointees who were titled nobility (31); 3) appointees who were royal in-law (21).

<sup>9</sup>Crumme notes this shift in appointment policy, though characterizes it in somewhat different terms. See *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 28.

Fedor's reign), 22 of 22 *dumnye dvoriane* were new men; in 1695/96 (the year Ivan V died), 31 of 31 *dumnye dvoriane* were new men; in 1713 (the year Peter dissolved the *duma*), 10 of 10 *dumnye dvoriane* were new men. This can be seen in Graph 3.



Movement into the upper ranks, the long-time preserve of the old and titled families, proved much more difficult for the new men. Over the course of Aleksei's reign, the proportion of new men among *okol'niche* rose from 11% to 32%. It then increased to 55% in the first year of Fedor's reign and remained at roughly that level through 1713. Though they were unable to increase their representation among *okol'niche*, the new men did reach positions of power within the rank. In 1664/64 the new man B. M. Khitrovo became the senior *okol'nicii* in the *duma* before he was appointed *boiarin* in 1666/7. In later years Khitrovo would be followed by the new men H. M. Boborykin, P. D. Skuratov, I. S. Khitrovo, V. S. Narbekov, who held the senior position among *okol'niche* from 1676-1706.

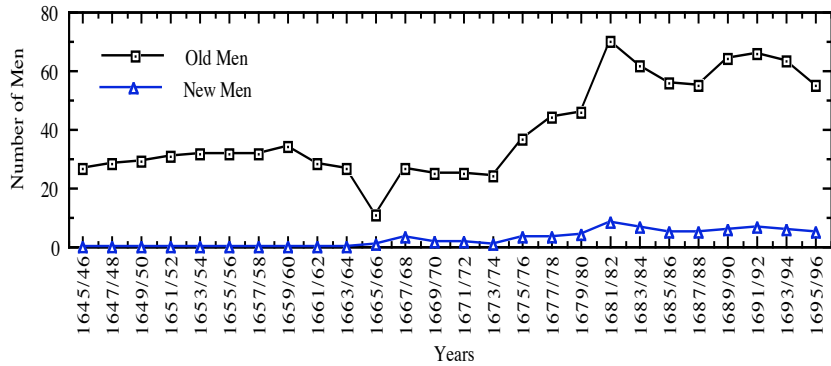


The success of the new men in achieving *boiarin* was much more limited. For the first 20 years of his reign, Aleksei proved unwilling (or unable?) to appoint a new man *boiarin*. Thereafter between 1 and 4 new men held that dignity through the end of Fedor's reign, never making up more than 11% of *boiars*. Though more men in absolute terms would be made *boiarin* in later years, the court limited their weight in the *duma* to around 10%. Neither did the new men gain much seniority among the *boiars*. B. M. Khitrovo reached the 16th place before he died in 1680. B. G. Iushkov reached

<sup>10</sup>This development is consistent with Crummy's observation that the *duma* was becoming less aristocratic in the seventeenth century. See *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 26-29.

the same position in 1697/98, and by 1713 had advanced to fourth in seniority, but by that time the *duma* was powerless.

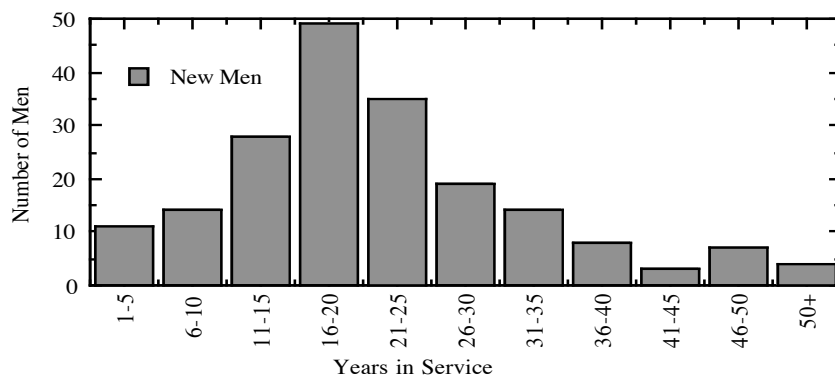
**Graph 5: New Men as Boyars, 1645-96**



The fact that the new men were not afforded the advantages of birth tangibly affected their career patterns in the *duma*. In contrast to the princely and older service families, the new men were almost never immediately promoted into the *duma* with the rank of *boiarin*. In only two cases did men receive this status on their first *duma* appointment — I. M. Briukhovetskii in 1665 and M. L. Pleshcheev in 1682. More frequently (36 instances) the new men entered the *duma* as *okol'nichie*. However the overwhelming majority of new men began their *duma* service as *dumnyi dvoriane* (119 instances), that is, in the rank *Aleksei* had re-created to bring new blood into the *duma*. To round out our survey, 35 new men entered the *duma* as *dumnyi d'iaki*.

If the new men were not promoted into the *duma* by hereditary right, how did they gain access? Five factors affected the fortunes of an upwardly mobile elite servitor, two traditional and three new. The first among the traditional factors was longevity: it had long been the case among the distinguished families that only men of a certain age and experience were promoted to the *duma*, even if they held the right to *duma* appointment as senior member of their line. The same seem to have been true of the new men, as Graph 6 demonstrates.

**Graph 6: Years in Service Prior to First Duma Appointment**



The vast majority of new men served between 11 and 30 years before they were appointed to the *duma*, the average span for all new men being 21. This figure varies little by reign: in *Aleksei* time the average years before first *duma* appointment was 21 years, in *Fedor's* 21 years, and in *Peter and Ivan's* 19 years. Certainly there was room for discretion: royal favorites such as I. T. and P. T. Kondyrev might be promoted soon after they entered service, while others such as

S. S. Koltovskii would be compelled to languish for many decades before the tsar' honored them with a *duma* rank. Yet the consistency of the average years before appointment across reign suggests that all three monarchs and their handlers observed a reasonably constant policy regarding the age at which a servitor might be appointed to the *duma*. The average varies more significantly by rank. Those new men who entered the *duma* as *okol'nichie* served an average of 23 years prior to appointment. Those entering as *dumnye dvoriane* served an average of 24 years. However those who ascended as *dumnye d'iaki* served an average of only 15 years. The difference between the upper two ranks and *dumnye d'iaki* may be an artifact of Muscovite record-keeping: chancellery personnel probably appeared later in their careers in court records than elite military personnel. Yet the difference may also be due to the fact that the chancellery personnel brought much needed administrative knowledge and skill to the *duma*.

A second traditional factor was, somewhat surprisingly, kinship. The first new men to enter the *duma* had no family in the council to support their candidacy, at least in the male line. However as these pioneers moved into the *duma*, they sponsored their relatives, in effect attempting to re-create the traditional pattern of hereditary membership for clans in the *duma*. Table 1 suggests the importance of kinship in appoints of new men to the *duma*.

**Table 1: Members with Ancestors in the Duma prior to Appointment, by Reign and Entry Rank**

<i>Reign</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Ok</i>	<i>DDv</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Aleksei 1645-76	0/1 (n/a)	2/13 (15%)	13/32 (41%)	1/14 (7%)	16/60 (27%)
Fedor 1676-82	0/0 (n/a)	5/7 (71%)	12/30 (40%)	0/7 (n/a)	17/44 (38%)
Peter/Ivan 1682-96	0/1 (n/a)	5/13 (38%)	25/54 (46%)	2/15 (13%)	32/83 (34%)
	0/2 (n/a)	12/33 (36%)	50/116 (43%)	3/36 (8%)	65/187 (35%)

Thirty-five percent of all new men appointed to the *duma*, 1645-1696, had at least one relative in the male line at the time of their accession. Though most families in this class succeeded in placing only 2 (24) or 3 (8) members in the *duma*, 7 families had 4 or more members on the council. The most successful were the Khitrovos, with 8 members on the council. As might be expected, the number of new appointees with relatives in the *duma* increase over time, from 16 in the reign of Aleskei to 32 in the reign of Peter and Ivan, as does the percentage of appointees with relatives among all new entrants. Those holding political ranks — *okol'nichie* and *dumnye dvoriane* — were much more successful in helping their relations enter the *duma* than were *dumnye d'iaki*. The reason is clear: the political ranks were traditionally hereditary within clans, while the administrative rank of *dumnye d'iaki* had never been formally passed within clans.

Though longevity and kinship played a role in the accession of the new men, these were not and could not have been the primary forces behind their progress. Much more important were agents related to the court's attempt to bring men of talent into the *duma*. Three such factors are identifiable in the careers of the new men. The first of them is what might be called "field service" — work away from the capital as a high-ranking officer in the diplomatic corps, army, or provincial administration. The military aristocracy had long had a monopoly on these positions, and they were traditionally seen by them as a means of achieving status at court. This is reflected in the fact that field service was inscribed in the court service registers (*razriadnye knigi*), books used to calculate status within the context of *mestnichestvo*. For the new men, without distinguished pedigrees, field service was still more important in gaining access to the consular ranks. This can be seen in Table 2.



**Table 2: Members with Field Service prior to Appointment, by Reign and Rank**

<i>Reign</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Ok</i>	<i>DDv</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Aleksei 1645-76	0/1 (n/a)	11/13 (85%)	26/32 (81%)	0/14 (n/a)	37/60 (62%)
Fedor 1676-82	0/0 (n/a)	4/7 (57%)	18/30 (60%)	0/7 (n/a)	22/44 (50%)
Peter/Ivan 1682-96	1/1 (100%)	4/13 (30%)	40/54 (74%)	0/15 (n/a)	45/83 (54%)
	1/2 (50%)	19/33 (58%)	84/116 (72%)	0/36 (n/a)	104/187 (56%)

Fully 69% of the new men who first entered the *duma* as *boiare*, *okol'nichie*, and *dumnye dvoriane* had held major "field" assignments prior to their appointment. Among those who did we find some of the most noteworthy men of the century: A. L. Ordin-Nashchokin, a provincial soldier went on to become Russia's effective prime minister from 1667-71; A. S. Matveev, a former commander of the *strel'tsy* who succeeded Ordin-Nashchokin as *defacto* government head from 1671-76; A. A. Shepelev, a military man who pioneered the introduction of Western-style forces in Russia during the Turkish War of 1667-81. Interestingly, the percentage of new appointees who had held a field assignment prior to appointment declines as the century progressed, a fact commensurate with the increasing importance of kinship in the reigns of Fedor and Ivan and Peter. The fact that those made *okol'nichii* performed field service prior to appointment slightly less often than *dumnye dvoriane* may suggest that promotions to the higher ranks were less dependent on a good field service record.

Service in the chancelleries was also important for promotion to the *duma*. The seventeenth century was an era of rapid bureaucratization in Muscovy. The number of separate chancelleries (*prikazy*) grew significantly, as did the number of administrative specialists (*prikaznye ljudi*) who staffed them. As the administration became more important to the operation of the court, elite military servitors began to serve in the chancelleries and chancellery personnel began to attain *duma* rank. Both process are visible among the new men, as Table 3 indicates.

**Table 3: Members holding Chancellery Directorships prior to Appointment, by Reign and Rank**

<i>Reign</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Ok</i>	<i>DDv</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Aleksei 1645-76	0/1 (n/a)	8/13 (61%)	18/32 (56%)	14/14 (100%)	40/60 (66%)
Fedor 1676-82	0/0 (n/a)	6/7 (86%)	10/30 (33%)	7/7 (100%)	23/44 (52%)
Peter/Ivan 1682-96	1/1 (100%)	5/13 (38%)	14/54 (26%)	15/15 (100%)	35/83 (42%)
	1/2 (50%)	19/33 (58%)	42/116 (36%)	36/36 (100%)	98/187 (52%)

Slightly over half all new men appointed to the *duma* had directed a chancellery prior to their entry into the council. For military servitors — those holding the ranks of *dvoriane moskovskie* or *stol'nik* before their appointment — such service was one of a number of ways they demonstrated their worth. I. B. Kamynin, for example, was a governor in Simbirsk in 1649, head of the Vladimir Judicial Chancellery in 1651, an ambassador in 1652, governor of Verkotur'e in 1659, and head of the Masonry Chancellery in 1664 — all before he was made *dumnyi dvorianin* in 1676. In contrast, for chancellery personnel administrative service was the only path to the *duma*, since there were not permitted to hold important field duties. Thus all of the *d'iaki* who were made *dumnye d'iaki* had served in high offices in the chancellery system. More

often than not, at the time of their appointment they had been or were being made chief of one the major chancelleries.<sup>11</sup> Apparently the directorship of the Military Service, Service Land and Ambassadorial Chancelleries were considered so important that they carried with them nearly automatic appointment to the *duma*. As with field service, the percentage of those serving as chancellery directors prior to appointment declines over the course of the century, consistent with a generally relaxation of service requirements in Fedor's reign and there after.

Field and chancellery service were not the only schools for new men. In addition a large number of them worked in the court administration. The household of the Muscovite grand prince had traditionally been administered by a staff of dependent servants — majordomos (*dvoretskie*), keepers of the seal (*pechatniki*), treasurers (*kaznacheia*) and so on. The men who held these positions were by and large low-born and rarely gained access to the *duma*.<sup>12</sup> However in the seventeenth century court offices rose in status: they began to be included in canonical lists of *duma* ranks and to be held by distinguished military servitors. In essence, a stable hierarchy of elite court offices developed parallel to the hierarchy of traditional *duma* ranks. In the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich the court began to use the palace administration as a training ground for men of undistinguished lineage who would one day be *duma* members, as can be seen in table 4.

**Table 4: Members holding in Court Service prior to Appointment, by Reign and Rank**

<i>Reign</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Ok</i>	<i>DDn</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Aleksei 1645-76	0/1 (n/a)	5/13 (38%)	17/32 (53%)	7/14 (50%)	29/60 (48%)
Fedor 1676-82	0/0 (n/a)	5/7 (71%)	16/30 (53%)	3/7 (49%)	24/44 (54%)
Peter/Ivan 1682-96	1/1 (100%)	10/13 (77%)	17/54 (31%)	5/15 (33%)	33/83 (40%)
	1/2 (50%)	20/33 (61%)	50/116 (43%)	15/36 (42%)	86/187 (46%)

Slightly under half of the new men who were appointed to the *duma* from 1645 to 1696 held a court rank or served as the director of a court chancellery prior to their accession. These men had access to the tsar and many of them could justifiably be called favorites. They used their influence to gain a foothold in the *duma*. For example, A. I. Matiushkin, Aleksei Mikhailovich's childhood friend, was Huntsman (*lovchii*), Privy Steward (*komnatnyi stol'nik*), and director of the Equerry Chancellery (*Koniushennyi prikaz*) in the royal household before he was made *dumnyi dvorianin* in 1672. The percentage of those serving as court officers before their advance into the *duma* declines slightly over the course of the century, again confirming the general trend toward a relaxation of service requirements for new entrants. More interestingly, the evidence suggests that court offices were relatively more important for those who entered the *duma* *okol'nichie* than those who entered as *dumnye dvoriane* or *dumnye d'iaki*. Access to the tsar brought high rank, and the more of it one had, the higher the rank one attained.

Aside from the chancellery personnel, who gained access to the *duma* almost solely on the basis of their expertise, there is surprisingly little specialization in the pre-*duma* careers of the new men. They were by and large generalists who

<sup>11</sup>Particularly the Military Service (*razriadnyi*), Service Land (*pomestnyi*), Ambassadorial (*posol'skii*), Musketeers (*strel'etskii*), Grand Palace (*bol'shoi dvorets*), Siberian (*Sibirskii*), or Grand Revenue (*bol'shaia kazna*). Of the 36 men appointed to *dumnyi d'iaki*, 32 had held or were being appointed to the directorship of one of these seven chancelleries.

<sup>12</sup>Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics*, 93-97.

used some mix of long service careers, kinship, field work, administrative activity and court offices to make their way into the *duma*. This can be seen in Table 5. Each factor affecting appointment has been given a value of 1 and added up for each servitor, such that servitor who benefited from all five factors would receive a score of five. The minimum score is one, because all of the personnel in the sample lived long enough to join the *duma*. Table 5 provides the average for each rank and reign.

**Table 5: Longevity, Kinship, Chancellery, Field, Court Service**

<i>Reign</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Ok</i>	<i>DDv</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Aleksei 1645-76	n/a	2.9	3.3	2.6	3.1
Fedor 1676-82	n/a	3.7	2.7	2.4	2.9
Peter/Ivan 1682-96	n/a	2.9	3.1	2.3	2.7
	n/a	3.1	2.9	2.4	2.9

Chancellery personnel score lower than military elites because they generally did not have the option of field or court service. Their typical career pattern involved approximately fifteen years work as an under-secretary (*pod'iachii*) and secretary (*d'iak*), appointment to the directorship of a chancellery, and then appointment to the *duma*, particularly if the directorship were one of the major chancelleries. Military personnel served for about twenty years in some combination of field, chancellery or court service and only then, sometimes with the aid of a kinsman, received a seat on the *duma*. Interestingly, total average of factors for each servitor declines as the century progresses. This does not indicate specialization, but instead a general decrease in the requirements for service before appointments. This can be seen if the two traditional factors — longevity and kinship — are disaggregated from the new "meritorcratic" factors — field, chancellery and court service. The average of the former increases from 1.2 to 1.4 over the course of the century, while the average of the later decreases from 1.8 to 1.6. Kinship was becoming more important, if only slightly, relative to service.

Traditionally once a servitor entered a *duma* rank, he remained in it for the remainder of his career. The ranks were essentially hereditary castes, and there was little movement between them. There were exceptions to this rule: as Kotoshikhin suggested and analysis of career patterns in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries demonstrate, a few servitors advanced from *dumnyi dvoriane* and a few more from *okol'nichii* to *boiarin*, but such instances were relatively rare.<sup>13</sup> In the second half of the seventeenth century this situation changed dramatically, as is suggested by Table 6, which shows the percent of regular succession in *duma*. Regular succession occurred when a servitor is promoted into a rank from the rank immediately preceding in the hierarchy, that is, when ranks are not "skipped" by appointees.

**Table 6: Percent of Regular Succession within the Duma , 1614-1696**

<i>Reign</i>	<i>Boiare</i>	<i>Okol'nichie</i>	<i>Dum. Dv.</i>	<i>Total</i>
Mikhail F. (1614-45)	18% (5/28)	5% (1/21)	20% (1/5)	11% (6/54)
Aleksei M. (1645-76)	44% (26/59)	11% (9/82)	8% (4/49)	20% (39/190)

<sup>13</sup>Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics*, 97-104.

Fedor A. (1676-82)	29% (5/17)	43% (13/30)	5% (1/20)	28% (19/67)
Ivan and Peter (1682-96)	59% (34/57)	37% (29/79)	5% (3/59)	34% (66/195)

In the reign of Mikhail Fedorovich, regular succession was rare, consistent with the closed character of the *duma* ranks. However over the course of the century it rose appreciably until one third of all appointments were in rank order. The percentage was in reality higher than this near in the second half of the century if two peculiarities of the system are taken into account. First, the rank preceding *dumnye dvoriane* was not really *dumnyi d'iaki* as it appeared in lists of ranks (the *boiarskie knigi* and *spiski*), but *stol'nik* or *dvorianin moskovskii*, a sub-*duma* rank for military servitors. Almost all of the men who became *dumnye dvoriane* in the second half of the century had held one of these two ranks before appoint. Second, virtually all chancellery personnel had been *d'iaki* before being promoted to the *duma* as *dumnye d'iaki*. Thus regular succession into both the ranks of *dumnyi dvorianin* and *dumnyi d'iak* approached 100 %, a fact which raises the total percentage of regular succession for all ranks. The conclusion to be drawn from these data is clear: the *duma* ranks were being transformed from relatively closed castes to steps in a *cursus honorum* through which particularly lucky or hard working servitors might pass in the course of their careers.<sup>14</sup>

Closer examination of those who progressed through ranks suggests that this *cursus honorum* was created expressly to accommodate the arrival of the new men. This can be seen in Table 7, which compares the total number of promotions through ranks with the number of such promotions of new men, 1644-1713.

**Table 7: Total Regular Promotion vs. Regular Promotion of New Men, 1646-1713<sup>15</sup>**

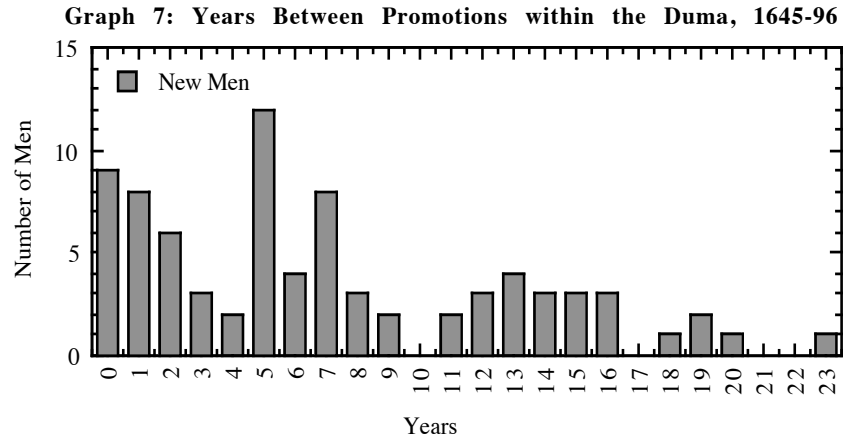
<i>Progression</i>	<i>Total Servitors</i>	<i>New Men</i>
DD. > DDv. > Ok. > B.	1	1 (100%)
DD. > DDv. > Ok.	3	3 (100%)
DD. > DDv.	6	6 (100%)
Dv. > Ok.	36	36 (100%)
Dv. > Ok. > B.	12	11 (92%)
Ok. > B.	57	7 (12%)
Total	115	64 (56%)

Excluding boyars from consideration, nearly all of the servitors who progressed through ranks were new men. Together Tables 5 and 6 show the evolution of a bifurcated system of promotion into the upper reaches of the *duma*. The sons of the most distinguished families, as Kotoshikhin said, were promoted directly to boyar or to *okol'nichie*. In the latter case, they might proceed to boyar. However the new men normally entered as *dumnye d'iaki* (in the case of chancellery personnel) and *dumnye dvoriane* (in the case of military personnel) and then progressed into the upper reaches of the *duma* by regular succession.

<sup>14</sup>Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 24.

<sup>15</sup>The data for this table was drawn from the MBD, Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, Ivanov, ed., *Alfavitnyi ukazatel'*, and Veselovskii, *D'iaki i pod'iachie XV-XVII vv.*

The prevalence of regular succession among the new men raises the question of meritocracy in promotions. Did the court alter the system in order to allow men of talent to rise through the ranks of the *duma*, as they had opened the *duma* itself to merit? The evidence is mixed. In contrast to the case of accession to the *duma*, servitors so not seem to have been required to hold a rank for a certain number of years before promotion, as graph 7 suggests.



The data on years between ranks suggests only that promotions were contingent on factors other than time spent in a rank. If the data is broken down by reign, however, a different conclusion is presents itself. In Aleksei's reign *duma* members served an average of 10.5 years between ranks, where as in Fedor's and Ivan and Peter's they served an average of 5.2 and 4.8 respectively. Aleksei insisted that his new men earn their promotions, while his successor (or, better, his successor's handlers) were more interested in promoting their clients than cracking the whip. This conclusion is further supported if other factors that might affect promotion are examined, as is done in Table 7.

**Table 7: Traits of Personnel Promoted through the Duma**

<i>Reign</i>	<i>% in Service</i>	<i>% Favorites</i>	<i>%Kin</i>
Aleksei Mikhailovich	100% (20/20)	45% (7/20)	25% (5/20)
Fedor Alekseevich	63% (14/22)	82% (18/22)	31% (7/22)
Ivan/Peter	42% (9/21)	33% (7/21)	14% (3/21)

To be sure, Aleksei's promotees benefited from close connections to the court and kin in the *duma*, but all of them also served in one or another capacity. The same cannot be said for those raised up in Fedor's and Peter and Ivan's reigns: with increasing frequency they preformed no service at all in exchange for the rewards. *Duma* promotions were mildly meritocratic, though less and less so as the century progressed.

**Conclusion**

Having described the entry of the new men into the *duma* and their progression through ranks, let us ask why the court of Aleksei Mikhailovich altered the traditional appointment policy and what long term effect this had on the culture of elite service in Muscovy. In answer too the first question, no explanation is to be found in policy statements or laws issued by the court: there are none of the former and the latter are silent on the issue. Neither can an explanation be

arrived at by extrapolating from particular national events of the 1660s, 1670s and 1680s: the pace of appointments does not correlate with the Thirteen Years War, Razin's rebellion or the Turkish conflict. Rather, the particular skills of the new men themselves provide window the governments intent in raising them up. It will be recalled that the new men offered Moscow three types of service — field, chancellery, and court.. In Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, each of these arena was undergoing rapid modernization in the second half of the century. The army was being transformed by the import of new model military reforms. The chancelleries were expanding, a largely in response to the demands of the new military, and becoming more important in the everyday administration of the state. And tsar's household was become a large privy court, replete with its own hierarchy of privy councilors who went by archaic names such as "cupbearer" and "chamberlain." By promoting the new men to the *duma*, the court was in essence rewarding these men for their services in what were becoming crucial arms of the growing absolutist apparatus, blending the traditional servitors (many of whom served in the same capacity) with a new and previously under-appreciated cohort. To be sure, this policy of recruiting the best and the brightest was very inconsistently pursued, particularly after the death of Aleksei in 1675. The power to appoint the low-born could be used for pure patronage and nepotism (and often was) as easily as for rewarding the worthy. Nonetheless, the general thrust of the reform is clear: the *duma* was being opened, albeit tentatively, to talent.

And this offers a key to understanding the long term significance of the new men for Muscovy. The promulgation of this principle created dissonance between the new and old status systems. Under the *mestnichestvo*, rank in the *duma* and the possession of offices were, at least formally, dependent upon the lineage. Certainly service was important, but it generally entered consideration only after the right to sit on the *duma* or hold a high office had been established genealogically. Thus the fundamental hierarchy for purposes of *duma* appointment and office-holding was thus a hierarchy of families as it appears in the official court genealogical records (*rodoslovnye knigi*). The promotion of the new men, as historians have long pointed out, violated this status order. Certainly the families of some of the new men were recorded in the genealogical records, but since their patrilinear ancestors had not served in elite positions under Mikhail Romonov, they could not — at least under the rules of *mestnichestvo* — legitimately claim seat in the royal council or high offices by right of inheritance. Yet through the discretion of the court they were able to do both. This, in turn, caused tangible anomalies of two types. First, as the new men gained higher rank in the *duma* via the *curus honorum*, servitors with lower genealogical status were ranked (in the *boiarskie knigi* and *spiski*) above those with high genealogical status. Second, new men with inferior pedigrees served above servitors with distinguished lineages in the army, chancelleries, and court offices.

How did the court ultimately resolve this potential conflict? The answer is unclear, but there is reason to believe that it did so by means of a compromise between the aristocracy and merit, the culture of traditional elite and that of the new men. The aristocracy would be required to serve, but they would not loose all of their hereditary privileges. In course of the seventeenth century, the court repeatedly removed important service assignments from status calculations, declaring them "*bez mest*." Appointments were to be made on the basis of merit. The aristocrats responded by entering service in the new army, chancelleries and court offices in unprecedented numbers. As the quality of aristocratic service rose, *mestnichestvo* became less important for retaining status. Yet when the ancient institution was eliminated in 1682, the aristocrats were ensured that their genealogical status, though diluted by the inclusion of the new men, would be maintained: immediately after the genealogical registers were burned the court called for new and improved books,

presumably with an eye to re-creating the aristocracy writ large. The new men would likewise be required to serve, but they too would benefit from the creation of a new and expanded aristocracy with them as duly recorded members. In short, the Russian court had succeed in implementing reforms that created the basis for the Petrine reforms and absolutism — a unified service elite.