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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9434.00291>

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Poe, Marshall. "Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and the Demise of the Romanov Political Settlement" *The Russian Review*, 62:4 (2003) pp. 537-564. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9434.00291>

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Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and the Demise of the Romanov Political Settlement*

Marshall Poe

Draft: Not for Citation

It is not proper to boast that [a boyar's] honor is inborn, nor is it proper to desire [honor] too strongly.

-Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to Boyar V. B. Sheremetev, 1660¹

In 1613, the faction headed by the Romanov clan successfully reconstituted the troubled Muscovite political system, largely by calling a truce among the warring boyar parties and re-integrating elite elements that had been ousted during the Time of Troubles. The Romanov political settlement, in turn, was disrupted in the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich as a host of “new men” were advanced to high stations. Late Imperial scholars were the first to propose that the old boyars were being supplanted by parvenus beginning in the 1640s.² A century later, this observation was confirmed by the pioneering work of Robert Crummey. Crummey was the first to use sophisticated prosopographical techniques to study the composition of the boyar elite. By investigating the backgrounds and career patterns of Russia's most powerful men, he was able to demonstrate that a significant inflation of honors occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century—the “aristocrats” (as Crummey called them) were giving way to “new men.”³ Yet even today the exact chronology, depth and political significance of this status inflation remains unclear. We know it happened, but we don't know exactly when, who was affected, and what wider consequences it had. In this essay we will explore each of these issues in order to render a more exact picture of high politics in pre-Petrine Russia.

We will begin by sketching the outlines of the Muscovite political system in the seventeenth century, paying particular attention to the recruitment of candidates to the ranks of “boyars and дума men” (*boiars i dumnye liudi*⁴), Muscovy's ruling elite. Next, we will offer a simple scheme for measuring the status of these candidates and will classify them accordingly into status groups. We will then attempt to infer the appointment policy operative in different reigns by investigating the status of men appointed by different tsars. We will see that Aleksei Mikhailovich—the “quietest” (*tishaishi*) tsar of myth and legend—wrought a status revolution at the Russian court that set the stage for the destruction

*The author would like to thank Robert Crummey, Olga Kosheleva, Russell Martin and Boris Morozov for their assistance in compiling and interpreting the data on which this article is based. Paul Bushkovitch offered useful commentary. Earlier versions of this essay were presented at The Institute for Advanced Study (1998), The Davis Center for Russian Studies, Harvard University (1999), and the annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (2000, 2001). Funds for research were provided by the International Research and Exchange Board. This article is dedicated to the memory of Mikhail Petrovich Lukichev.

¹“Nakazy boiarinu V. B. Sheremetevu,” in *Moskoviia i Evropa*, ed. A. Liberman and S. Sokarev (Moscow: Fond Sergeia Dubova, 2000), 544.

²On the “decline of the *boiarsstvo*,” as most late Imperial historians understood it, see: Vasilii O. Kliuchevskii, “Istoriia soslovii v Rossii,” in *idem, Sochineniia v deviat' tomakh* (Moscow: Mysl', 1989), vol. 6, 321-23 and especially 382; *idem, Boiarskaia дума dremei 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; Nikolai Pavlov-Sil'vanskii, *Gosudarevy sluzhby liudi* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tip., 1898), 163-64; E. D. Stashevskii, “Sluzhiloie soslovie,” in *Russkaia istoriia v ocherkakh i stat'iakh*, ed. M. V. Dvornar-Zapol'skii (Kiev: 1912), 32; V. N. Storozhev, “Boiarsstvo i dvorianstvo XVII veka,” in *Tri Veka. Rossia ot Smuty do nashego vremeni* (Moscow: Tip. I. D. Sytina, 1912; Reprint Moscow: Izd. “GIS,” 1991), 212-31.

³See Robert O. Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors. The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613–1689* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983).

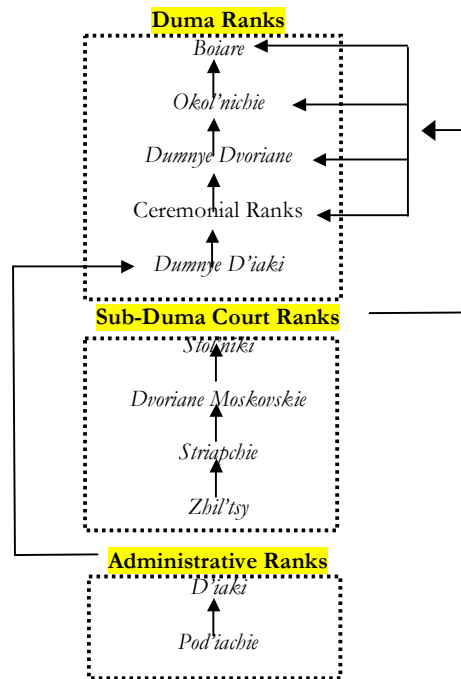
⁴Gregorii Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvomaniie Alekseja Mixajlovica*, text and commentary by A. E. Pennington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), fols. 6, 25, 26v, 31v, 34v, 35, etc.

of the political settlement of 1613. By the end of Aleksei's reign in 1676—well before the accession of Peter—the Romanov compromise between the royal family, the old boyars and the parvenu element had been shattered. Aleksei had opened the flood gates, if slowly, and they could not be closed.

Romanov Court Politics: Ranks, Actors, and Interests

The *duma* ranks were part of the *gosudarev dvor*, the “Sovereign’s Court.” The entire court was arranged hierarchically into three groups of ranks, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Sovereign’s Court in the Seventeenth Century



As the arrows in Figure 1 suggest, the men in the *duma* ranks above *dumnyi d'iak* were generally recruited from hereditary servitors in the sub-*duma* court ranks.⁵ Elected hereditary servitors could be appointed to any *duma* rank above *dumnyi d'iak*. Once they had assumed a rank, they could progress upward. Ranks could not be skipped after entry. *Dumnye d'iaki* were generally recruited from the ranks of *d'iaki*.⁶ Like their hereditary counterparts in the *duma* cohort, they could progress through ranks after appointment, again, without skipping.

Three chief political actors or interests operated within the court—the sovereign, the old elite, and lower status servitors.⁷ The tsar was the prime mover and linchpin of the entire political system. Important for our purposes is the

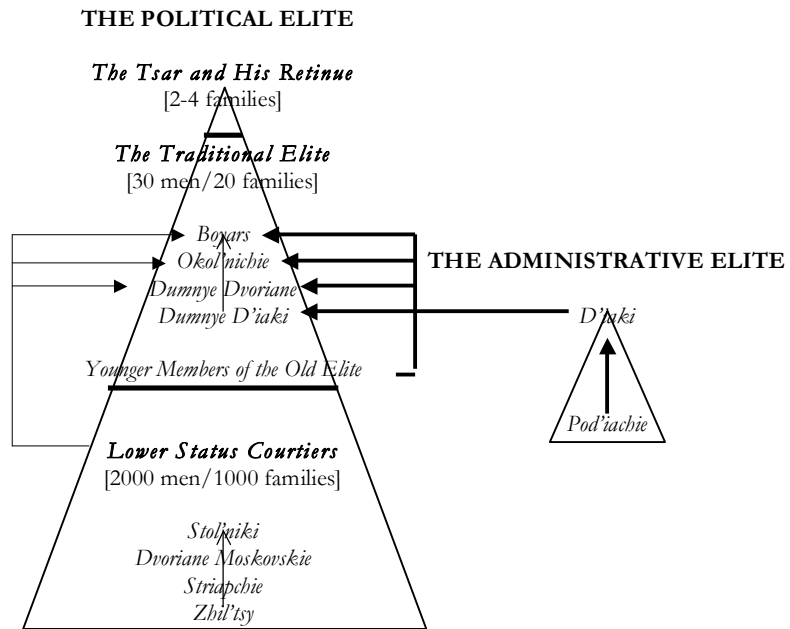
⁵On hereditary servitors (*sluzhilye liudi po otechestvu*) at court, see Nikolai Pavlovich Pavlov-Sil'vanskii, *Gosudarevy sluzhilye liudi. Liudi kabal'nye i dokladnye*, 2nd edition (St. Petersburg: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1909), 128-208.

⁶On the administrative class (*d'iachestvo*), see Natal'ia Fedorovna Demidova, *Sluzhilaia biurokratii v Rossii XVII v. i ee rol' v formirovanii absolutizma* (Moskva: Nauka, 1987).

⁷This is not to say that these were the only political actors in Muscovy. Certainly there were others (the Church, elite women, etc.). These three, however, are the most significant for our limited purposes. On the Church in politics, see: Georg Bernhard Michels, *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). On elite women in politics, see: Isolde Thyret, *Between God and Tsar: Religious Symbolism and the Royal Women of Muscovite Russia* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

fact that he appointed men to the *duma* ranks. Yet the Muscovite sovereign did not rule alone, but rather with the aid of close relatives, advisors, and mentors.⁸ The existence of a small retinue of advisors around the tsar was recognized by the Muscovites themselves: Gregorii Kotoshikhin, the treasonous scribe who penned the only indigenous description of the Muscovite political system, explicitly calls them the “close people” (*blizhnye ljudi*).⁹ The second major political interest at the Muscovite court were old elite servitors, that is, men of very high, heritable status whose families traditionally held positions in the *duma* ranks. These were Muscovy’s aristocrats: for centuries, they had commanded Muscovy’s armies, administered Muscovy’s central offices, and governed Muscovy’s far-flung territories. Their right to high offices was guarded by *mestnichestvo*, early Russia’s mechanism for protecting the order of precedence.¹⁰ Finally, we have men and families serving in the lower orders of the *gosudarev dvor*—the thousands of *stol’niki*, *dvoriane moskovskie*, and *striapchie* who occupied minor offices in Moscow and the provinces. They could never reasonably hope to win appointments to the *duma*. Figure 2 describes the three interest groups within the system of ranks.

Figure 2: The Sovereign’s Court (circa 1620)



Explicitly rejecting late Imperial and Soviet conflict-based models, American scholars have emphasized the role of consensus among early Russian notables.¹¹ And rightfully so: the tsar, upper elite, and lower courtiers were all involved

⁸There are a number of famous examples: Mikhail and his father, Patriarch Filaret; the young Aleksei and Boris Ivanovich Morozov; Sophia and Prince Vasilii Vasil'evich Golitsyn; Peter and his assembly of friends.

⁹Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvomanie Alekseja Mixajlovica, passim* (see especially fols. 34-36v).

¹⁰The literature on *mestnichestvo* is large. For a recent treatment, see Nancy Shields Kollmann, *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999), esp. 131-68.

¹¹See especially: Keenan, “Muscovite Political Folkways,” *Russian Review* 45 (1986), 115-81; Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics. The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345-1547* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Daniel Rowland, “The Problem of Advice in Muscovite Tales about the Time of Troubles,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 6 (1979), 259-83; *idem*, “Did Muscovite Literary Ideology Place Any Limits on the Power of the Tsar?” *Russian Review* 49 (1990), 125-56; Valerie Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces: Russian Political Culture and the Gentry in the Seventeenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

in the same collaborative enterprise—rule of the Muscovite state—and therefore generally cooperated with one another. Though there certainly were episodes of political violence within the *gosudarev dvor* (the *Oprichnina*, during the Time of Troubles, under Sophia and Peter), it is telling that the Muscovites never developed a formal institution that might represent differing political agendas among notables. None, apparently, was needed.

Yet consensus is only half the story. If we assume that all three actors were rational, and that they were in some measure self-interested, then it follows that the external structure of the Muscovite court itself brought their interests into opposition. This is because they were all in the market for what was, in essence, a scarce commodity—duma rank. Control of the high ranks was unequal. The tsar held the largest share—he made all the appointments. The old elite held a smaller share—by Muscovite tradition, elite families had a special claim on the upper ranks, often passing them on through several generations. And the mass of courtiers held the smallest share—only very occasionally would the tsar reach down into the lower rungs of the court to elevate a common *stol'nik*, but the possibility was always open.¹²

Given this inequitable distribution, we can guess that each actor pursued a different strategy in the market for duma ranks. The tsar's course was one of balance: he attempted to distribute just enough of the ranks to elite servitors so as to guarantee their allegiance, while at the same time reserving a portion for the purposes of patronage, reward of merit, or some other end. Members of the old elite pursued a strategy of maintenance: they fought to preserve their hold on the duma ranks by keeping new servitors out of existing positions and preventing the tsar from minting new seats. The common courtiers' strategy was offensive: they used a variety of mechanisms to win favor with the tsar or elite (service, marriage alliances, etc.) in order to gain a place among the duma men. Like all durable systems, the Muscovite court experienced periods of equilibrium—moments in which the three parties were satisfied with the distribution of duma ranks—and periods of imbalance—times of dissatisfaction. In our simple model, movement from one state to another occurred when the relative power of one of the actors shifted in such a way that a new distribution became possible. Any change in the relative strength of one of the actors would, logically, invite a shift in the distribution of seats. Finally, it must be stressed that though each group of actors shared common interests, there is no *prima facie* evidence that they ever *consciously* acted as groups. Rather, like unorganized consumers in a market, they pursued common interests independently.

¹²Here the emphasis is on “common”: the sons of elite families often held lower court ranks before being advanced to a duma rank.

A Model for Inferring Duma Appointment Policy

The tsar, then, having carefully taken into account the constellation of political forces, appointed men from the *gosudarev dvor* to the *duma* ranks. We know from a great variety of sources that in selecting men for advance, he employed two general types of conflicting criteria—earned status and congenital status.¹³ The Muscovite court was not meritocratic, but nonetheless men could distinguish themselves through excellent service, political savvy, or clever patronage and rise through the ranks. Neither was the court divided into completely hereditary castes, but nevertheless birth and birth alone was an extremely important determinant of a servitor’s career pattern. In attempting to reconstruct *duma* appointment policy over the course of the seventeenth century, our task is to determine the relative importance of these two criteria in given eras and reigns. The ratio of the two factors offers us a way to infer the relative power of the tsar, the hereditary elite, and courtiers of lower status: when the tsar had more power, merit (broadly construed) was served at the expense of birth; when the old elite had more power, birth was served at the expense of merit.

The assumption that Muscovite politics was a zero sum game, though perhaps not entirely accurate, is justifiable on methodological grounds in so far as it enables us to concentrate on one of the two types of status. Such a move is important because, practically speaking, it is next to impossible to quantify earned status in the Muscovite context. The Russians practiced no “grading” system for service of different types. Servitors did not receive points for different kinds of service according to any rational scheme. Besides, the service records of the vast majority of courtiers cannot be reconstructed fully on the basis of existing records, so the point is moot. Congenital status, in contrast, lends itself much more readily to measurement because its components were by and large binary—one had the status, or one did not.

Muscovite political practice suggests there were three such components: estate, heritage, and kinship. Estate is the simplest of the lot: in Muscovy, all subjects were cleanly divided between “princes” (*keniaz’ia*) and “commoners.”¹⁴ Heritage is more complex. Among the Muscovite elite, the antiquity of one’s lineage was a vital factor in social status. Older clans, that is, ones that had entered Muscovite service long ago, were more esteemed than younger clans.¹⁵ We will call older clans “pedigreed” and younger clans “unpedigreed.” Finally, we have kinship. The Muscovite elite had a strong sense that families should maintain their possessions, including the *duma* ranks.¹⁶ Practically speaking, nepotism meant that if a man were a “legacy,”—a servitor preceded in a rank by a kinsman—he was more likely than a “pioneer”—someone without a ranked kinsman—to succeed to that rank. One significant caveat must be made: we will consider only kinship in the male line, for both practical and historical reasons. Practically, it is quite easy to ascertain patrilineal kinship within the *duma* ranks due to the passage of surnames from father to son. In contrast, it is difficult to establish whether any two men were related through the female line due to the scarcity of evidence about women in general

¹³Kotshikhin, for example, wrote that “great families” (*bolshie rody*) served as boyars, but not *okol’niche*; “lesser families” (*rody menshi*) served as boyars and *okol’niche*; “middle-ranking” families (*srednie rody*), “descended from *dvoriane*” (*iz dvorian*), served as *okol’niche* and *dumnye dvoriane*; *dumnye d’iaki* were always of “inferior birth” (*porodoiu byvaet menshi*), though they might achieve high station by virtue of their good works. The *dumnyi d’iak*’s status was earned; the “great man’s” was congenital. Kotshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Mixajlovica*, fols. 33-34. Aleksei touches on the distinction. See “Nakazy boiarinu V. B. Sheremetevu,” 544 and Buskovitch’s excellent commentary on this letter (Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, 26-28).

¹⁴The term “commoner” is used to mean “untitled courtier” for brevity’s sake.

¹⁵We can see this distinction in action, for example, in *mestnichestvo* cases in which servitors appeal to the antiquity of their clan’s service to the grand prince. Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, 131-39, 154-67. Kotshikhin plainly said that clans were esteemed in proportion to their length of service. Kotshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Mixajlovica*, fol. 34.

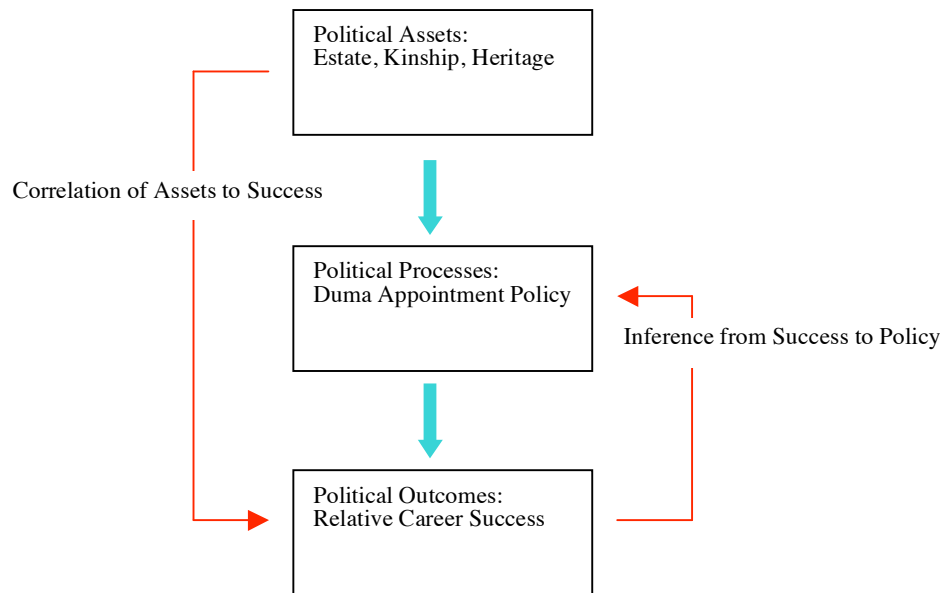
¹⁶For decades and even centuries, clans passed seats in the high ranks through generations from one member to the next. See Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics*, 55-89 and Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 25-27. Kotshikhin simply assumed that ranks were in some sense heritable. Kotshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Mixajlovica*, fols. 33-34.

(genealogies almost never mention them) and marriages in particular (there were no marriage registries). Historically, much evidence suggests that patrilineal ties were more important than matrilineal, though this is not to deny that the latter were, in many instances, crucial. Marriage of women into the royal family offers a clear, if likely exaggerated, example of the “boost” that candidates might receive through marriage: the Streshnevy, Miloslavskie, Naryshkiny and Lopukhiny all placed members in the *duma* ranks after one of their own had married the tsar. It should be remembered, however, that the Dolgorukie, Apraksiny and Grushevskie did not receive the same benefit from their royal marital alliances.

It is true that in practice some princes had more status than others, some pedigreed men had more status than others, and some legacies had more status than others. But for our purposes this subtly is not important. All that matters here is that *on average* men with the higher characteristic had more congenital status than those with the lower characteristic. Certainly there will be exceptions, but they will be only that.

Using three types of congenital status described above, we can investigate in detail alterations in *duma* appointment policy over the course of the seventeenth century. Figure 3 describes this technique.

Figure 3: Model for Assessing the Role of Congenital Status



In this model, candidates for election are endowed with inherited political assets (estate, kinship and heritage) that combine to determine their cumulative congenital status. *Duma* appointment policy dictated the selection criteria, which was figured in terms of the amount of cumulative congenital status successful candidates had to possess. The results of this selection process are reflected in relative career success, which is measured by attainment of one or more *duma* ranks. Our technique for reconstructing *duma* appointment policy is, therefore, inferential: we will first correlate the degree of congenital status with career success in different periods and then infer the appointment policy that had to be operative at the time in order to produce this result.

To accomplish this, we will employ two sets of data: first, a representative sample of all the men who served in the *gosudarev dvor* (one in ten of the approximately 15,000¹⁷) in the seventeenth century and, second, the records of all the men who were promoted to the *duma* ranks of boyar, *okol'nicii*, *dumnyi dvorianin*, and *dumnyi d'iak* (483) from 1613-1713.¹⁸ In both cases, we will code the men in the data sets according to their congenital status: estate (prince or commoner), heritage (pedigreed or unpedigreed), and kinship (legacy or pioneer). Estate classification was made on the basis of the presence or absence of the title “*kniaz*” before a man’s name in the Boyar Books and Lists. If the title was present, then the man was classified as a prince; if not, then he was classified as a commoner. Heritage classification was made on the basis of the presence or absence of kinsmen in the pre-Romanov *duma* ranks. If a servitor had such kinsmen, then he was classified as a pedigreed man; if he did not, he was classified as an unpedigreed man. Kinship classification was made on the basis of the presence or absence of a kinsman in the Romanov *duma* ranks prior to the accession of the servitor in question. If a servitor had such a ranked kinsmen, then he was classified as a legacy; if he did not, he was classified as a pioneer. Men who had held *duma* rank prior to 1613 and were re-appointed upon the succession of Mikhail in 1613 were considered legacies if they had kinsmen in the *duma* ranks during or after the reign of Ivan IV.¹⁹ Finally, one point will be assigned to each high status characteristic in order to give a rough indication of their cumulative congenital status.²⁰ The result of this classification is as follows (superior status characteristics are bolded). Figure 4 graphically displays the same breakdowns.

¹⁷For this purpose every tenth court member was selected from Ivanov’s alphabetical index of all men recorded in the Boyar Books. See Petr I. Ivanov, *Alfavitnyi ukazatel’ familii i lits, upominaemykh v Boiarskikh Knigakh, khraniashchikhsia v I-m odelanii moskovskogo arkhiva Ministerstva Iustitsii, s oboznacheniem sluzhebnoi deiatel’nosti kazhdogo litsa i godov sostoiianiia v zanimaemykh dolzhnostiakh* (Moscow: Tip. S. Selivanovskogo, 1853). As there is no correlation between congenital status, career success and the alphabetical order of a servitor’s name in Ivanov, this selection is random for these purposes. The sample of 1489 men from Ivanov was investigated in the archival copies of the Boyar Books in Moscow (*Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov* (RGADA), fond 210, *boiarskie knigi*). Each of the entries was found in the Boyar Books on the folios indicated by Ivanov, suggesting that his index is quite accurate.

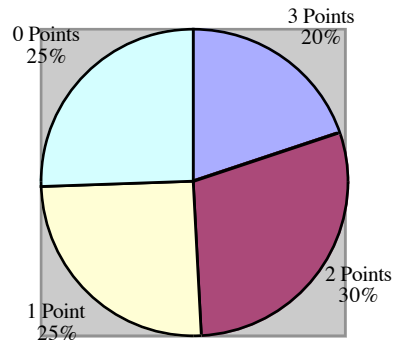
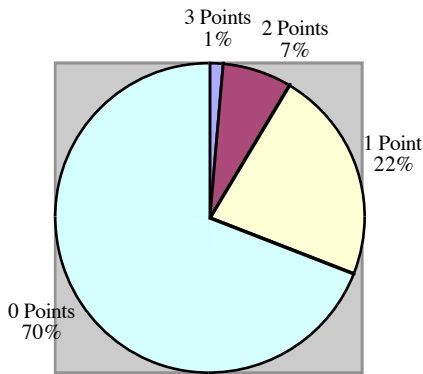
¹⁸The list of men appointed to the boyar ranks was constructed by inspection of the *boiarskie knigi* and *boiarskie spiski* held in RGADA, fond 210 and supplemented by information found in Crumme, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 178-214.

¹⁹Sources used to construct a list of families that placed members in the *duma* ranks prior to 1613 include: Margarita E. Bychkova, *Sostav klassa feodalov Rossii v XVI v. Istoriko-genealogicheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986); Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics*; Stepan B. Veselovskii, *Issledovaniia po istorii klassa sluzhbykh zemlevladel'tsev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969); Aleksandr A. Zimin, “Sostav Boiarskoi dumy XV–XVI vekakh,” *Arkhograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1957* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1958), 41-87; and Aleksandr A. Zimin, *Formirovanie boiarskoi aristokratii v Rossii v vtoroi polovine XV–pervoi treti XVI v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988).

²⁰In point of fact, each of these factors had a different impact on a servitor’s career chances. Detailed statistical analysis suggests that kinship was most influential, followed by heritage and estate (these being almost exactly equivalent). See Marshall Poe, *The Russian Elite in the Seventeenth Century. Volume 2: A Quantitative Analysis of the “Duma Ranks,” 1613-1713* (forthcoming, Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Sciences), Chapter 6. The differences in question, however, are relatively slight, therefore we are fully justified in assigning them equivalent values.

Table 1: Status Types and Status Cohorts (1613–1713)

Estate	Heritage	Kinship
<i>3 Points (duma=96 men; court=220)</i>		
Prince	+Pedigreed	+Legacy
<i>2 Points (duma=142 men; court=1080)</i>		
Prince	+Pedigreed	+Pioneer
Prince	+Unpedigreed	+Legacy
Commoner	+Pedigreed	+Legacy
<i>1 Point (duma=122 men; court=3300)</i>		
Prince	+Unpedigreed	+Pioneer
Commoner	+Pedigreed	+Pioneer
Commoner	+Unpedigreed	+Legacy
<i>0 Points (duma=123 men; court=10290)</i>		
Commoner	+Unpedigreed	+Pioneer



Congenital Status and Duma Appointment Policy, 1613-1713

In purely statistical terms, appointment to *any* duma rank was very unlikely: only 483 of 14890 men at court were chosen for duma service over the course of the century, about 3%. For the average servitor at court, therefore, the chances of being appointed to the duma ranks were about one in 30. But not all servitors were “average.” In fact, a servitor’s expectations of advance to the duma ranks varied with his congenital status. This can be seen in Table 2, which compares the percentage of men in the point cohorts at court and in the duma ranks.²¹

²¹In this and the following tables the larger numbers are percentages and the small numbers in square brackets are absolute quantities.

Table 2: Status and the Probability of Appointment (1613–1713)

	%Court	%Duma Cohort	Probability of Appointment
3 Points	1% ^[220]	20% ^[96]	44%
2 Points	7% ^[1080]	29% ^[142]	13%
1 Point	22% ^[3300]	25% ^[122]	4%
0 Points	69% ^[10290]	25% ^[123]	1%
Total	100% ^[14890]	100% ^[483]	

Obviously, higher congenital status was directly related to the chances of appointment: men with three points—the hereditary elite—could reasonably anticipate appointment to the *duma* ranks, while men with zero points—common courtiers—had no such illusions.

If appointed to the *duma* ranks, men with high status entered at a higher level than their low status counterparts. Table 3 displays the entry rank of men in the four status groups.

Table 3: Entry Rank and Cumulative Status (1613–1713)

Status	Boyar	<i>Okol'nichii</i>	<i>Dumnyi Dvor.</i>	<i>Dumnyi D'iak</i>	Total
3 Points	69% ^[66]	31% ^[30]	0% ^[0]	0% ^[0]	100% ^[96]
2 Points	38% ^[54]	54% ^[76]	8% ^[11]	1% ^[1]	100% ^[142]
1 Point	7% ^[8]	43% ^[53]	45% ^[55]	5% ^[6]	100% ^[122]
0 Points	7% ^[1]	12% ^[16]	54% ^[67]	33% ^[39]	100% ^[123]
Total	27% ^[129]	36% ^[175]	27% ^[133]	10% ^[46]	100% ^[483]

In Table 3, the correlation between status and entry rank is direct: most men with three points entered as boyars; most men with two points entered as *okol'nichie*, most men with one point entered as *okol'nichie* or *dumnye dvoriane*, most men with zero points entered as *dumnye dvoriane* and *dumnye d'iaki*.

Not only were men with high status more likely to be appointed to the *duma* ranks and more likely to enter at a high rank, they were much more likely to end their careers at the top of the hierarchy. This is apparent in Table 4, which figures the proportion of men in the four status cohorts who ever held the ranks of boyar, *okol'nichii*, *dumnyi dvorianin*, and *dumnyi d'iak*.²²

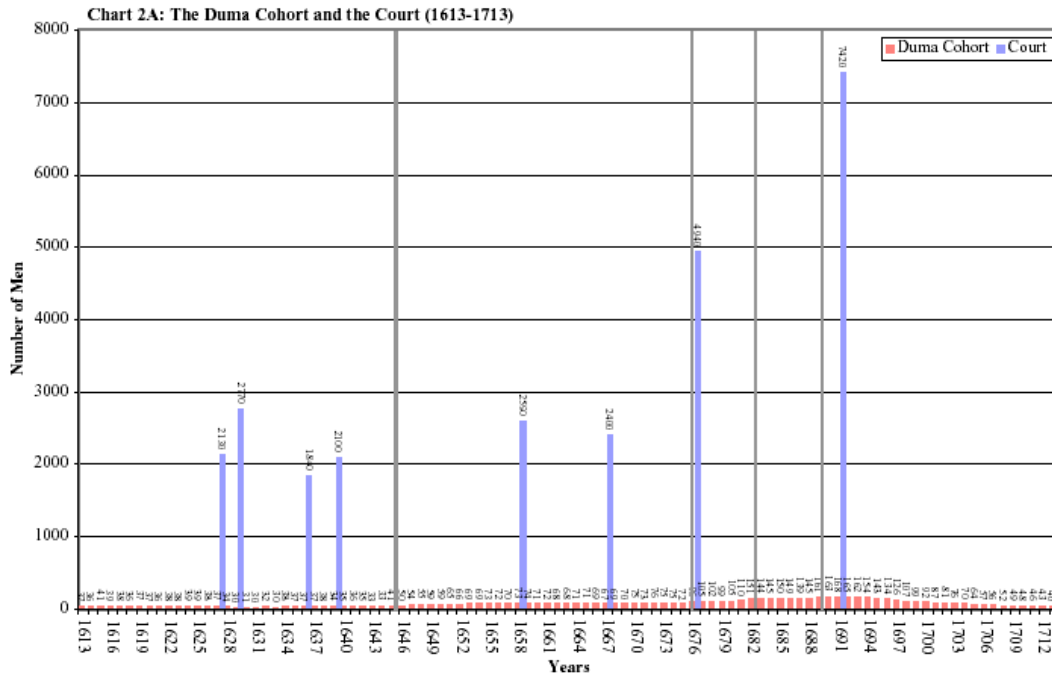
Table 4: Expectations and Cumulative Status (1613–1713)

Status	Boyars	<i>Okol'nichie</i>	<i>Dumnye Dvoriane</i>	<i>Dumnye D'iaki</i>
3 Points	83% ^[80]	31% ^[30]	0% ^[0]	0% ^[0]
2 Points	58% ^[82]	58% ^[82]	8% ^[11]	1% ^[1]
1 Point	29% ^[36]	63% ^[77]	45% ^[55]	5% ^[6]
0 Points	10% ^[13]	34% ^[42]	65% ^[80]	32% ^[39]

If he were appointed to the *duma* ranks, a man with three status points could fully expect to achieve the rank of boyar in the course of his career—83% of such men did. Similarly, *duma* men with two status points, once appointed to the *duma* ranks, could expect to achieve either boyar (58%) or *okol'nichii* (58%). Men in the one-point status group were unlikely to advance to boyar, but they had a reasonable expectation of achieving *okol'nichii* (63%) or *dumnyi dvorianin* (45%) after appointment to the *duma* ranks. Finally, *duma* men with zero status points might achieve *okol'nichii*, but were much more likely to end their careers as *dumnye dvoriane* (65%).

²²Note that the cumulative total for the percentages in the rows is greater than the total percentages of men in the point groups because men could hold more than one rank in their careers.

The data presented establishes that дума appointment policy over the entire century strongly favored men with high congenital status. Having set this century-long framework, we are now in a good position to investigate changes in дума appointment policy over time. We can begin by charting the growth of the дума ranks and the Sovereign’s Court in the seventeenth century. This is done in Chart 1, which tracks the absolute size of both cohorts over the course of the century.²³



As we can see, the size of both the дума ranks and the court grew dramatically, particularly after the reign of Mikhail. As a rule, Mikhail appointed men to the дума ranks to replace losses. Therefore in his reign the дума cohort was stable at about 35 members. In like fashion, he seems to have held the size of the court steady at about 2000 men. Aleksei eliminated the “replacement” policy of his father and substituted one aimed at growth. In his reign the дума cohort grew to about 70 men and the court to approximately 5000 servitors. Fedor, Sophia, and (initially, at least) Peter all followed Aleksei’s policy of growth, though more aggressively. Under Fedor, the дума cohort grew to about 100 men; under Sophia, to about 150 men; and under Peter, to about 165 men. Courtiers multiplied as well, though not at the same rate. In the early 1690s, Peter lost interest in the дума ranks, stopped making new appointments, and the дума cohort steadily declined as its occupants died.

Within this secular trend, we can clearly detect certain local patterns. The most notable is the pattern of growth: the дума cohort did not expand gradually, but in short bursts of appointments that followed the accession of a new monarch, beginning in Aleksei’s reign and gaining strength in Fedor’s. In 1645 Aleksei appointed 11 new members to the дума ranks, more than in any single year in Mikhail’s reign. Over the next decade he appointed 64 men to the дума

²³Accurate data on the size of the court are available only for years in which there are complete Boyar Books, namely, 1627, 1629, 1636, 1639, 1658, 1667, 1676, and 1691. See Mikhail P. Lukichev, “Boiarskie knigi XVII v. kak istoricheskii istochnik” (Kand. Diss., MGIAI, 1984) and *idem*, “Obzor boiarskikh knig XVII v.,” *Arkhivograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1979 g.* (Moscow: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1980), 255-66.

ranks—Mikhail appointed 64 men *during his entire reign*. At that point, Aleksei’s rate of appointment slowed considerably. He replaced men who exited and, for the last 20 years of his reign, maintained the *duma* ranks at about 70 men. But at the accession of each of his successors, Aleksei’s precedent was followed as new rulers rapidly appointed large numbers of their own men to the *duma* ranks: in the first year of their reigns, Fedor, Sophia, and Peter appointed 30, 44, and 19 men to the *duma* cohort respectively.

What kind of men did respective sovereigns appoint? We can begin to answer this question by investigating the status composition of the *duma* ranks and court over time. This is done in Table 5, which compares the two proportions (the “Court” and “Duma” columns) for selected years and describes the factor by which upper status men were over- and lower status men under-represented in selection for the elite ranks (the “Bias” column).²⁴

Table 5: Status Composition of the Duma Cohort and Court (1613–1713)

Year	3 Points		2 Points		1 Point		0 Points	
	Court	Duma ±Bias	Court	Duma ±Bias	Court	Duma ±Bias	Court	Duma ±Bias
1627	2%	38% ^[14] +18x	13%	30% ^[11] +2.3x	23%	19% ^[7] -1.2x	62%	14% ^[5] -4.4x
1629	1.5%	33% ^[10] +22x	10%	33% ^[10] +3.3x	20%	20% ^[6] 1.0x	69%	13% ^[4] -5.3x
1636	1%	22% ^[8] +22x	12%	43% ^[16] +3.6x	21%	19% ^[7] -1.1x	66%	16% ^[6] -4.1x
1639	.5%	24% ^[8] +48x	10%	44% ^[15] +4.4x	22%	18% ^[6] -1.2x	67%	15% ^[5] -4.5x
1658	2%	30% ^[22] +15x	8%	37% ^[27] +4.6x	25%	10% ^[7] -2.5x	65%	23% ^[17] -2.8x
1667	3%	30% ^[20] +10x	9%	27% ^[18] +3.0x	23%	15% ^[10] -1.5x	65%	28% ^[19] -2x
1676	3%	24% ^[23] +8x	7%	19% ^[18] +2.7x	22%	28% ^[27] +1.2x	68%	29% ^[28] -2x
1691	1%	10% ^[17] +10x	7%	27% ^[45] +3.9x	23%	36% ^[60] +1.5x	69%	27% ^[46] -2.5x
Total	1%	20% ^[96] +20x	7%	29% ^[142] +4.1x	22%	25% ^[122] +1.1x	69%	25% ^[123] -2.8x

The message of Table 5 is clear and striking: the advantage afforded men of high status diminished throughout the century. Three-point men were consistently over-represented in the *duma* ranks by a very wide margin (+20x over the whole period). Yet the degree to which the selection process was biased in their favor declined severely over the course of the century (from +18x to +10x).²⁵ Two-point men were also over-represented by a wide margin (+4.1x) in the upper orders throughout the century. They did not, however, suffer from a significant loss in advantage, as can be seen by the relative stability of their degree of over-representation (from +2.3x to +3.9x).²⁶ In comparison to the other groups, one-point men were treated (from a statistical point of view) “fairly”: their proportion in the court was closely matched by their proportion in the *duma* ranks, suggesting no bias whatsoever. Nevertheless, they were the only group to move

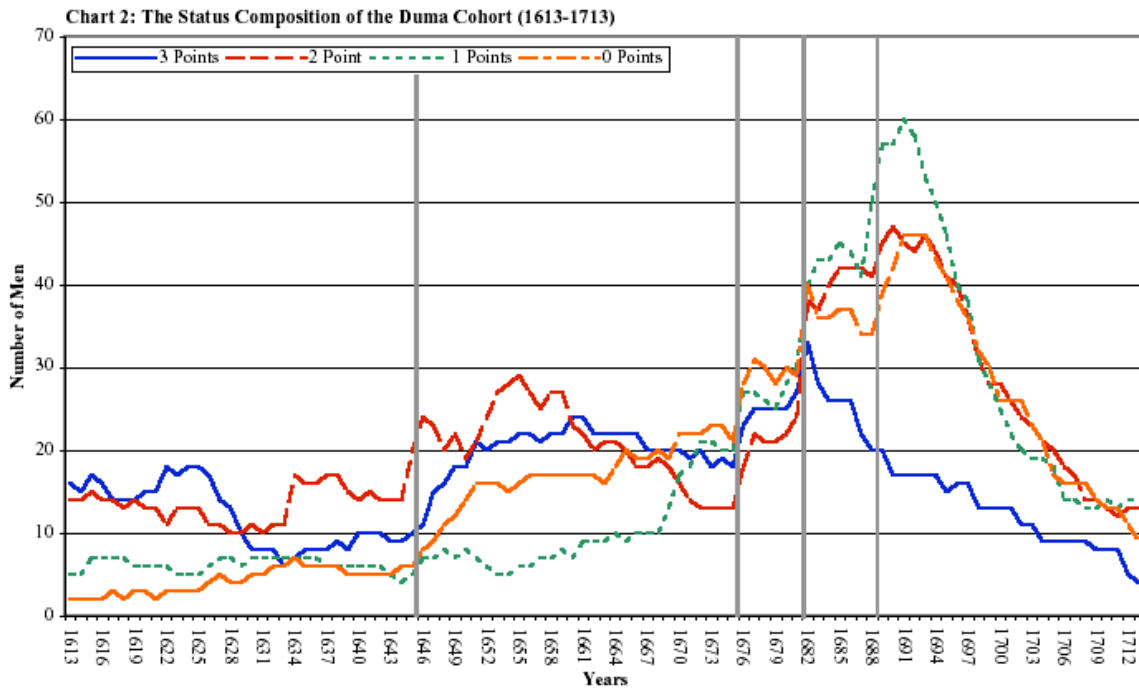
²⁴When analyzing the impact of status on the selection of men from the *dvor* to the *duma* ranks, it is important to understand the statistical concept of “selection bias.” If a binary selection from a population is said to be statistically “fair,” then the proportions of two items in the sample should approximate the proportion of the two items in the pool from which the sample was taken. In an “unfair” selection, the two proportions will diverge, suggesting that the selection process (and the selector) was biased in some way. A simple example illustrates this intuitive notion. Princes made up approximately 12% of the court, but comprised exactly 34% of men in the *duma* ranks. They were over-represented by a factor of +2.83x (= 34%/12%). Correspondingly, commoners made up approximately 88% of the court, while they comprised only 66% of servitors in the upper orders. They were under-represented by a factor of -1.33x (88%/66%). Thus we conclude that the selection process—this aspect of the appointment policy—was biased in favor of princes by 2.83 times and against commoners by 1.33 times. The higher the factor of over-representation, the greater the bias for (+) or against (-) the group in question.

²⁵The “bulge” in 1639 is likely the result of a sampling accident, that is, it is the result of a very unlikely statistical event rather than a reflection of any change in the composition of the court. It seems more likely that three-point men continued to make up between one and two percent of the court in this period.

²⁶The “bulge” in 1636 and 1639 probably reflects the decline in the percentage of three-point men in the *duma* ranks and the consequent rise in proportion of two-point men rather than any reversal of policy.

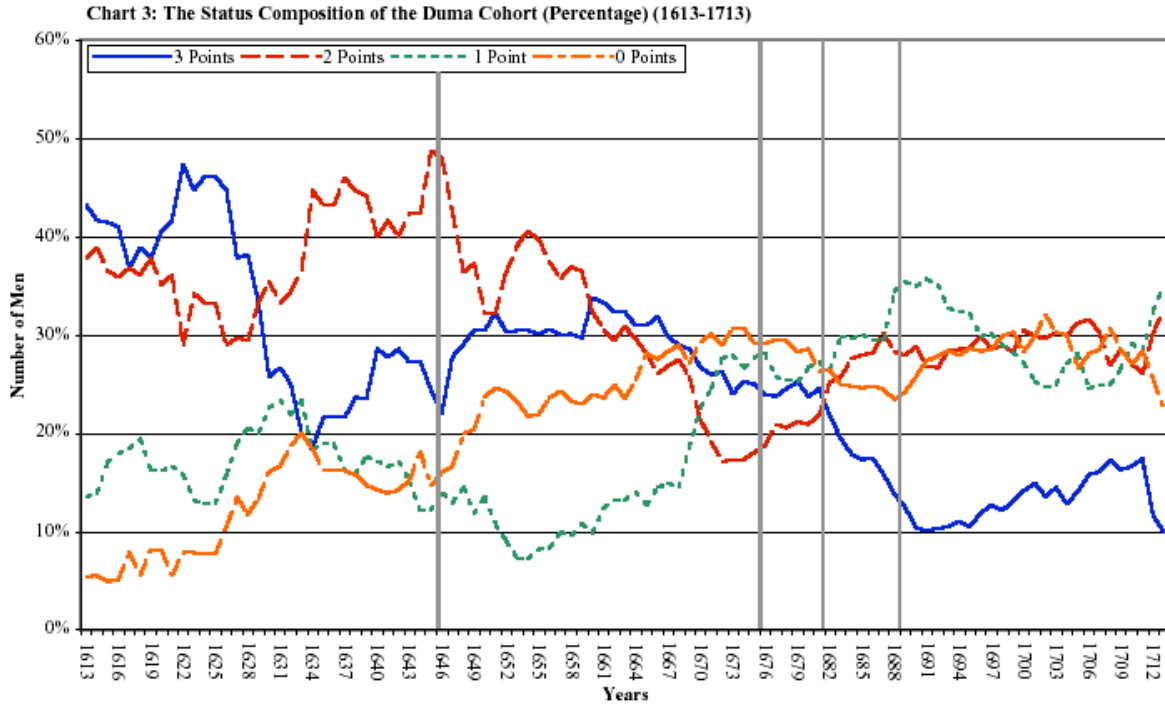
from (slight) under-representation to (slight) over-representation in the upper orders (-1.2x to +1.5x).²⁷ Finally, there was always a prejudice against the appointment of men with zero status points to the *duma* ranks, for they were consistently under-represented in the upper orders (-2.8x over the period). It should be said, however, that their fortunes improved dramatically over the course of the century, as can be seen in the nearly serial decline in the degree of under-representation they suffered (from -4.4x to -2.5x).

The result of the decline in the importance of high status was reflected in status composition of the four *duma* ranks. Chart 2 traces the *number* of *duma* men in each status group over the course of the century.



The number of all types of men grew (until the early 1690s, when appoints to the *duma* ranks ceased), but the relative proportion of each group shifted dramatically. The weight of lower status men (with one and zero points) rose, while that of upper status men (with three and two points) fell rapidly. This is evident in Chart 3, which graphs the *percentage* of the *duma* cohort made up by members of each status group.

²⁷The “trough” in 1658 would seem to be the result of unusual sampling in the court tally, rather than a shift in policy.



The ranks of the lower status elements began to grow consistently in the reign of Aleksei. By about 1654, the percentage of the duma cohort made up by the lower status groups began a serial increase and that of the upper two cohorts (logically) a serial decrease. By about 1670, the four groups had equal weight in the duma cohort.

The relative decline of the high status groups was primarily a result of a conscious shift in appointment policy, rather than a shift in the composition of the court. This fact is clear in Table 5 above. Note that the make up of the court—the candidate pool for selection—remained relatively stable over the course of the century, while the make up of the duma ranks—those selected—changed dramatically. Statistically it follows that if the composition of the candidate pool remained the same, and the composition of the selected group changed, then the criteria for selection must have been altered. In a word, the policy was *intentionally* changed. Table 6 enables us to see *who*—or at least what regime—changed it. This table compares the percentage of men of various status at court (the “Court” column) with the percentage of the same among all those appointed to the duma ranks by successive monarchs (the “Apps.” column).

Table 6: The Status Composition of the Duma Cohort and Court by Reign (1613–1713)

Reign	3 Points			2 Points			1 Point			0 Points		
	Court	Apps.	Bias	Court	Apps.	Bias	Court	Apps.	Bias	Court	Apps.	Bias
Mikhail	1%	33% ^[31]	+33x	12%	37% ^[35]	+3.1x	21%	15% ^[14]	-1.4x	66%	15% ^[14]	-4.4x
Aleksei	2%	25% ^[37]	+12x	9%	28% ^[42]	+3.1x	24%	20% ^[30]	-1.2x	65%	26% ^[39]	-2.5x
Fedor	3%	23% ^[19]	+7.7x	7%	24% ^[20]	+3.5x	22%	25% ^[21]	+1.1x	68%	28% ^[23]	-2.4x
Sophia	3%	5% ^[5]	+1.7x	7%	28% ^[29]	+4x	22%	39% ^[41]	+1.8x	68%	29% ^[30]	-2.3x
Peter	1%	8% ^[4]	+8x	7%	30% ^[16]	+4.3x	23%	30% ^[16]	+1.3x	69%	32% ^[17]	-2.2x
Total	1%	20% ^[96]	+20x	7%	30% ^[142]	+4.3x	22%	25% ^[122]	+1.1x	69%	25% ^[123]	-2.8x

Clearly, Aleksei consciously “lowered the bar” for advancement to the *duma* ranks: high status men were not as preferred as they had been under Mikhail, and lower status men were not as disadvantaged. This shift in policy continued under Aleksei’s successors. They, too, altered *duma* appointment policy so as to increase the opportunities of lower status men. It is interesting to note, however, that zero-point men did not benefit appreciably from the shift in policy after the reign of Aleksei.

The consequence of this progressive “lowering of the bar” can be seen in the changing composition of the *duma* ranks over the course of the century. In order to set a benchmark, we will begin by investigating the status composition of the four ranks over the course of the century. As we might anticipate, men with higher aggregate status tended to congregate in the upper ranks (the appointment policy was biased in their favor), while men with lower aggregate status tended to find places in the lower ranks (the policy was biased against them). This regularity is made plain in Table 7. It shows the distribution of the status types in each rank.²⁸

Table 7: Cumulative Status and the Duma Ranks (1613–1713)

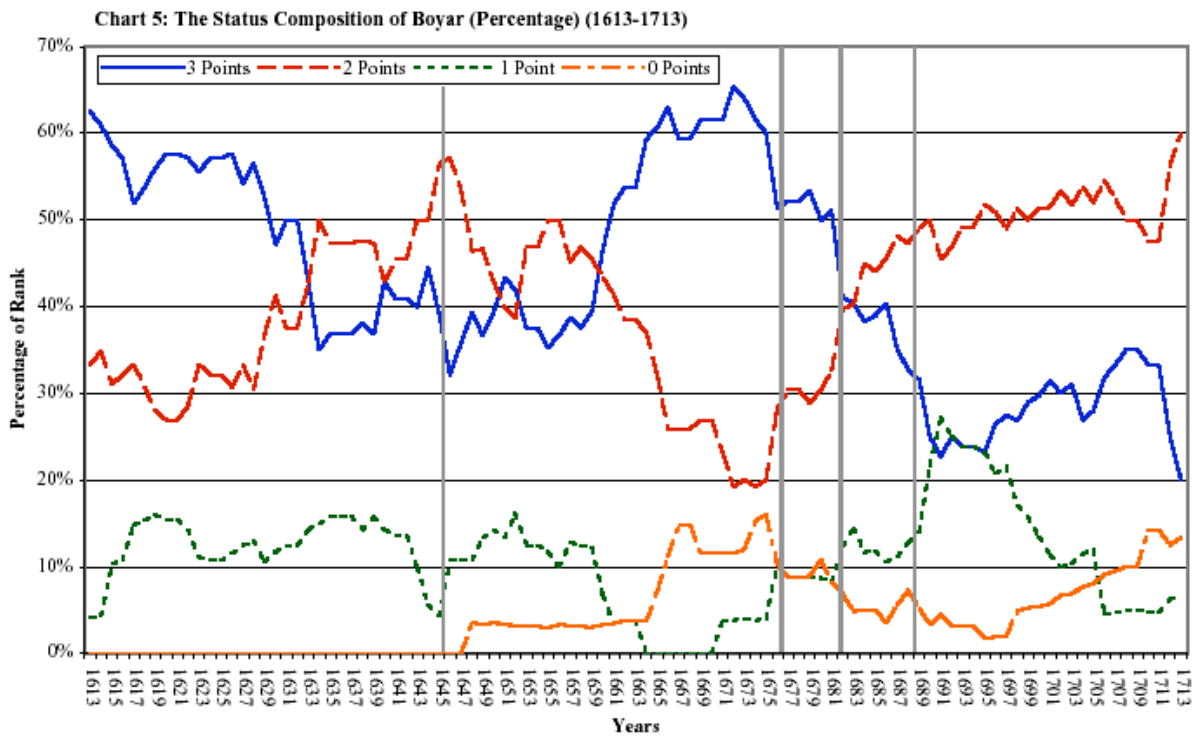
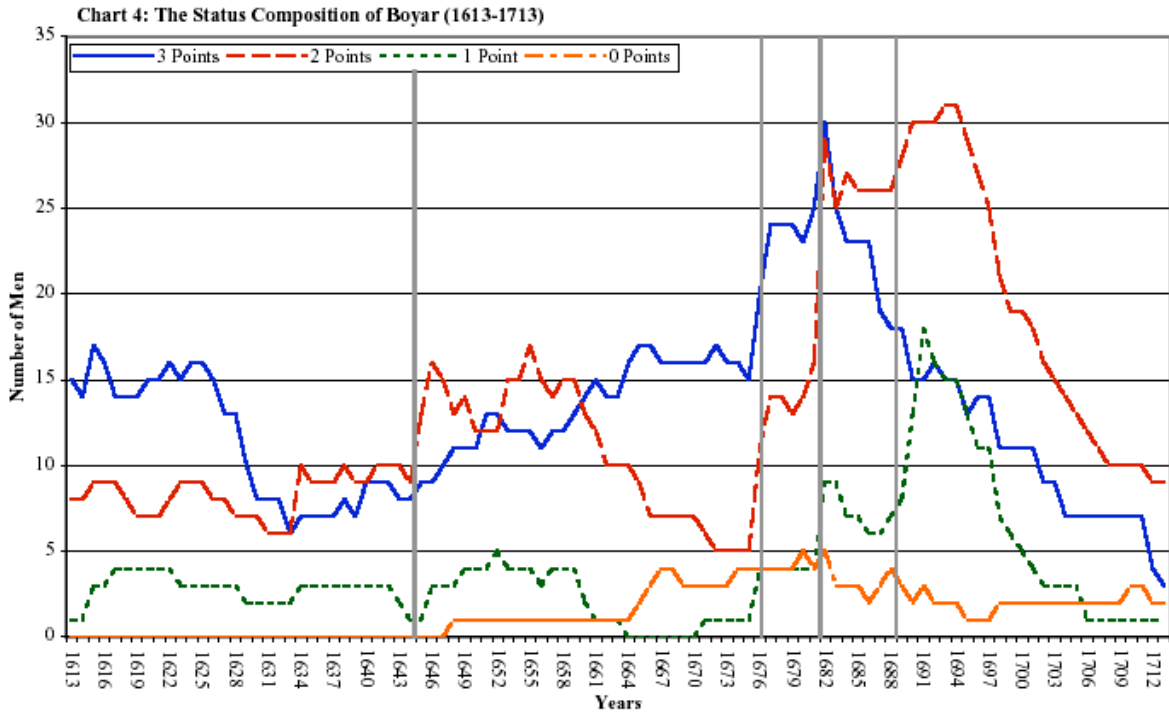
Status	Boyars	±Bias	Okol.	±Bias	D. Dvor.	±Bias	D. D’iak	±Bias
3 Points (1%)	38% ^[80]	+38x	13% ^[30]	+13x	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)
2 Points (7%)	39% ^[82]	+5.6x	36% ^[82]	+5.1x	7% ^[11]	1x	2% ^[1]	-3.5x
1 Point (22%)	17% ^[36]	-1.3x	33% ^[77]	+1.5x	38% ^[55]	+1.7x	13% ^[6]	-1.7x
0 Points (69%)	6% ^[13]	-11.5x	18% ^[42]	-3.8x	55% ^[80]	-1.2x	85% ^[39]	+1.2x
Total	100% ^[211]		100% ^[231]		100% ^[146]		100% ^[46]	

Three-point men made up only 1% of the court, so they were massively over-represented among boyars (+38x) and *okol’nicie* (+13x). As all three-point men were princes, they never became *dumnye dvoriane* or *dumnye d’iaki* (the rules prohibited princes being appointed to these ranks). Similarly, two-point men, who made up 7% of the court, were widely over-represented among boyars (+5.6x) and *okol’nicie* (+5.1x). Very few of them ever entered the lower two ranks. The status of one-point men was too low to allow them to be boyars in great numbers and too high to permit them to be appointed to *dumnyi d’iak*—thus they were under-represented in both ranks (-1.3x and -1.7x). Their ranks were *okol’nicii* and *dumnyi dvorianin*, in which they comprised a large percentage (33% and 38%) and were over-represented (+1.5 and +1.7). Men with no status points had too little honor to be made boyars and *okol’nicie* and were, as we might expect, significantly under-represented in both ranks (-11.5 and -3.8). They made up the bulk of *dumnye dvoriane* and *dumnye d’iaki* (55% and 85%).

This century-long structure, however, masks significant changes in the status composition of each rank, changes that were the direct consequence of an evolving *duma* appointment policy. Throughout most of the seventeenth century, the

²⁸Note that this table registers the total number of men who ever held the ranks specified. Because a man might hold several ranks in the course of his career, the totals are higher than the number of men in the *duma* ranks (483).

rank of boyar remained the nearly exclusive preserve of men in the upper status cohorts, as can be clearly seen in Chart 4, which compares the *number* of men in the four status groups in the boyar rank, and Chart 5, which does the same in terms of *percentage*.



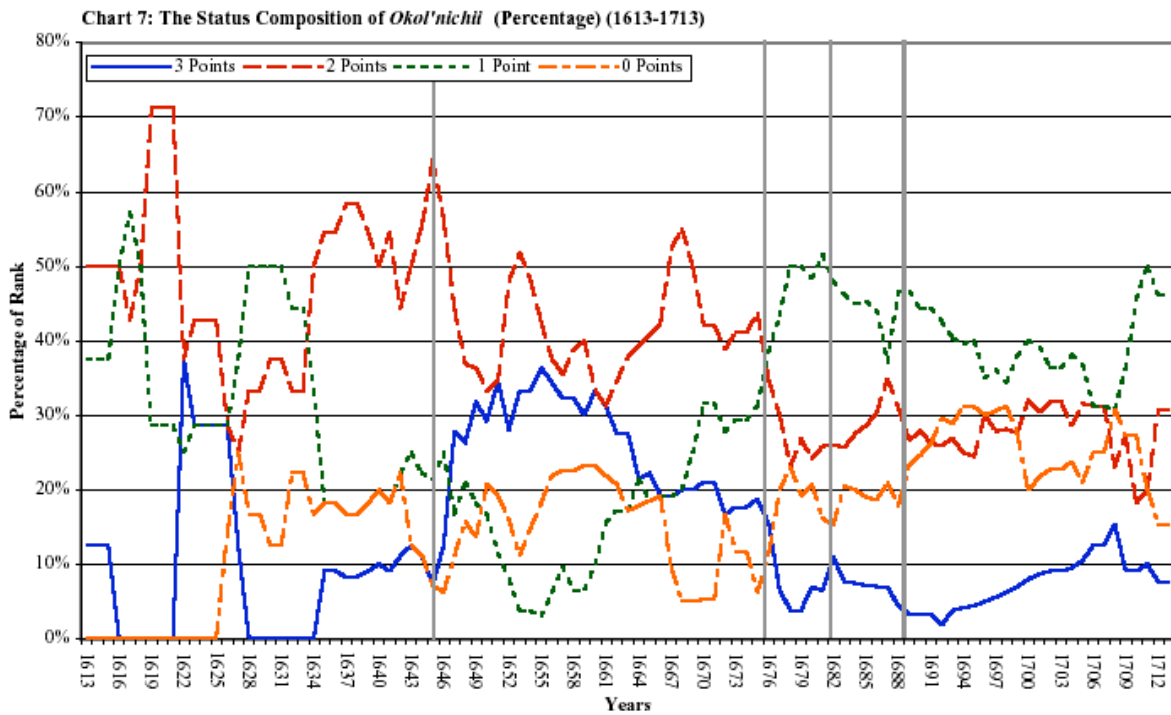
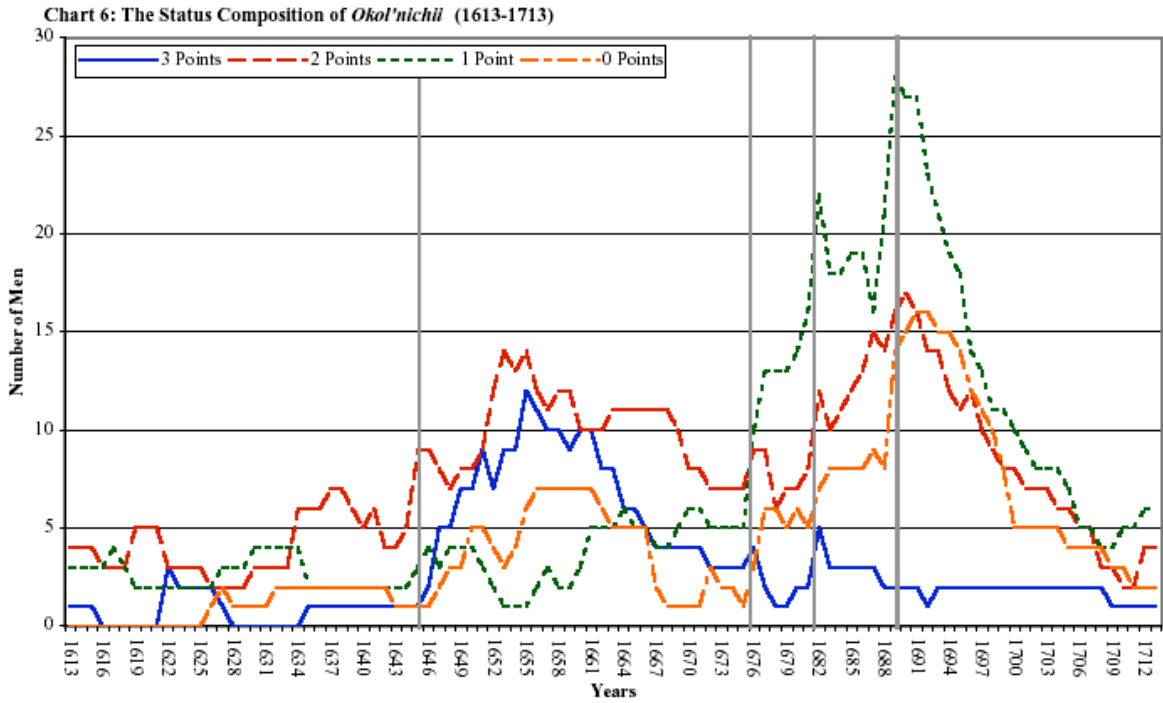
Until the reigns of Sophia and Peter, men with two and three points predominated in the boyar rank; thereafter, men with one and two points began to achieve the highest rank in large numbers. Men with zero points never made up more than 10% of the boyar rank. The subtle shift of appointment policy brought by Sophia is reflected in Table 8, which shows the proportion of all men appointed and promoted to boyar in given reigns comprised by men in the four status cohorts.

Table 8: Advancement to Boyar and Status by Reign (1613–1713)

Reign	3 Points			2 Points			1 Point			0 Points		
	Crt.	Apps.	\pm Bias	Crt.	Apps.	\pm Bias	Crt.	Apps.	\pm Bias	Crt.	Apps.	\pm Bias
Mikhail	1%	53% ^[28]	+53x	12%	38% ^[20]	+3.2x	21%	9% ^[5]	-2.3x	66%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)
Aleksei	2%	46% ^[27]	+23x	9%	34% ^[20]	+3.8x	24%	10% ^[6]	-2.4x	65%	10% ^[6]	-6.5x
Fedor	3%	47% ^[15]	+15.7x	7%	38% ^[12]	+5.5x	22%	9% ^[3]	-2.4x	68%	6% ^[2]	-11.3x
Sophia	3%	20% ^[7]	+6.7x	7%	51% ^[18]	+7.3x	22%	23% ^[8]	+1.04x	68%	6% ^[2]	-11.3x
Peter	1%	9% ^[3]	+9x	7%	37% ^[12]	+5.3x	23%	44% ^[14]	+1.9x	69%	9% ^[3]	-7.7x
Total	1%	38% ^[80]	+38x	7%	39% ^[82]	+5.6x	22%	17% ^[36]	-1.3x	69%	6% ^[13]	-11.5x

The boyar appointment policies of Mikhail, Aleksei, and Fedor were similar: about half of all men appointed to boyar had three points, a bit more than a third had two points, and something above 10% had fewer points. Perhaps due to the power of the old families, even Aleksei did not dare radically alter the status criteria for being appointed boyar. Note, however, the initial appearance of zero-point men among the boyars occurred under Aleksei. With the accession of Sophia we see a sudden shift: the bulk of men appointed to boyar in her reign and Peter's had one and two points. Simultaneously, the degree to which three-point men were over-represented among boyars declines dramatically (from +15.7x to +9x). It took time, but by the 1680s the “new men” had begun to enter the highest rank in significant numbers.

Men of middling and lower status were far more successful in achieving the rank of *okol'nichii*, as is apparent in Chart 6, which compares the *number* of men in the four status groups in the second rank, and Chart 7, which does the same in terms of *percentage*.



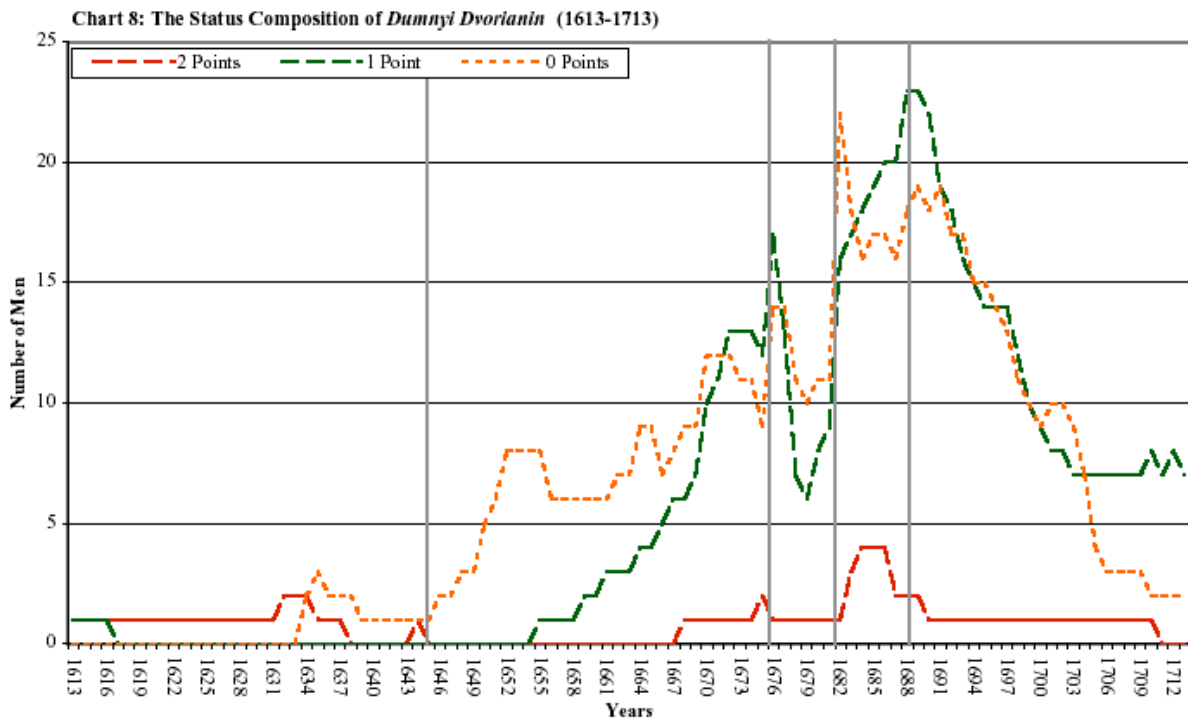
Though men with three and two points tended to dominate the rank (numerically and proportionately), they lost their grip in the middle third of the century as more and more men with one and zero points were advanced into the rank. This alteration of policy can be seen in Table 9, which displays the percentage of all men appointed and promoted to *okol'nichii* in given reigns comprised of men in the four status cohorts.

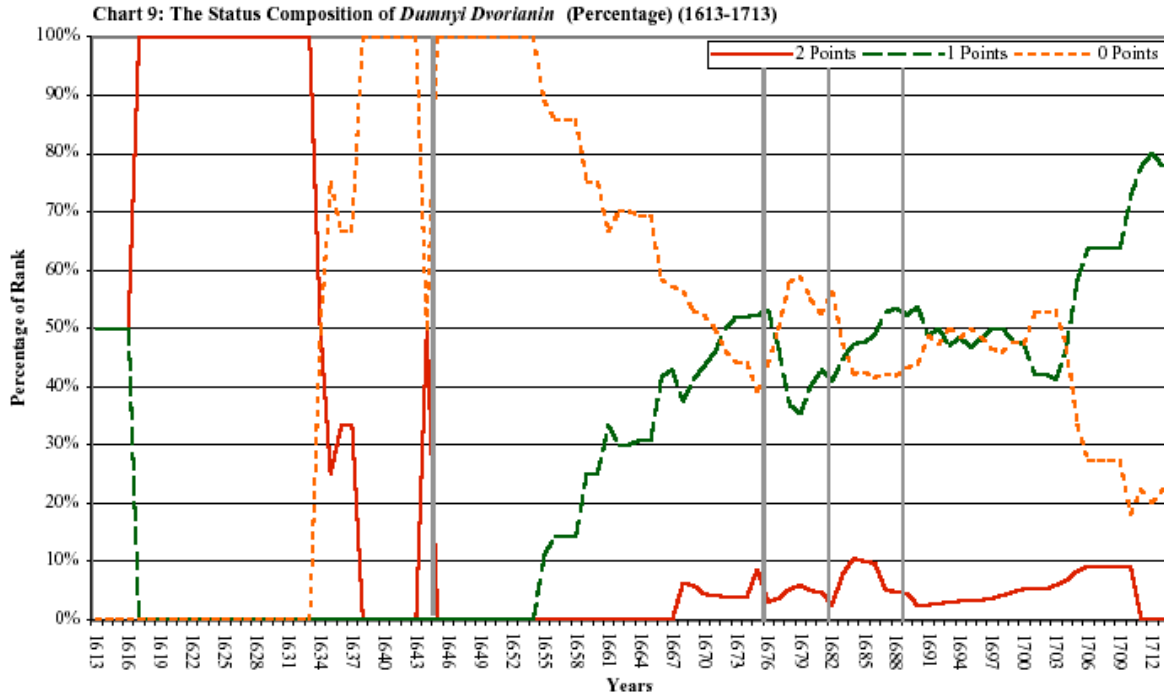
Table 9: Advancement to *Okol'nichii* and Status by Reign (1613–1713)

Reign	3 Points			2 Points			1 Point			0 Points		
	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias
Mikhail	1%	16% ^[5]	+16x	12%	47% ^[15]	+3.9x	21%	25% ^[8]	+1.2x	66%	13% ^[4]	-5.1x
Aleksei	2%	25% ^[18]	+12x	9%	40% ^[29]	+4.4x	24%	19% ^[14]	+1.3x	65%	16% ^[12]	-4.1x
Fedor	3%	9% ^[3]	+3x	7%	31% ^[11]	+4.5x	22%	42% ^[15]	+1.9x	68%	17% ^[6]	-4x
Sophia	3%	7% ^[3]	+2.3x	7%	33% ^[14]	+4.7x	22%	42% ^[18]	+1.9x	68%	19% ^[8]	-3.6x
Peter	1%	2% ^[1]	+2x	7%	27% ^[13]	+3.9x	23%	46% ^[22]	+2x	69%	25% ^[12]	-2.8x
Total	1%	13% ^[30]	+13x	7%	36% ^[82]	+5.1x	22%	33% ^[77]	+1.5x	69%	18% ^[42]	-3.8x

The appointment policies of Mikhail and Aleksei regarding *okol'nichii* show broad similarities: 20% three-point men, 45% two-point men, 20% one-point men, and 15% zero-point men. With the arrival of Fedor, however, we see a manifest change in approach: the percentage of men with three points made *okol'nichii* declines with every successive monarch (25%>9%>7%>2%); the degree of three-point over-representation declines (from +12x to +2x); the percentage of men appointed to the second rank with two points stagnates (at about 30%); and, most significant, the percentage of men appointed to *okol'nichii* with zero and one point increases in every successive reign. The explanation for this change is clear: in the second half of the century, the “new men” began to reach the rank of *okol'nichii* with increasing frequency, slightly before they began to enter the rank of boyar.

In contrast to boyar, which was dominated by high status men, and *okol'nichii*, which was a transitional rank, *dummyi dvorianin* was nothing other than conduit for “new men” into the *duma* ranks. This fact is made plain by Chart 8, which records the *number* of men of various status in the third rank and Chart 9, which does the same in terms of *percentage*. Beginning early in the reign of Aleksei, men with zero points—“new men”—were made *dummye dvoriane* with increasing frequency.





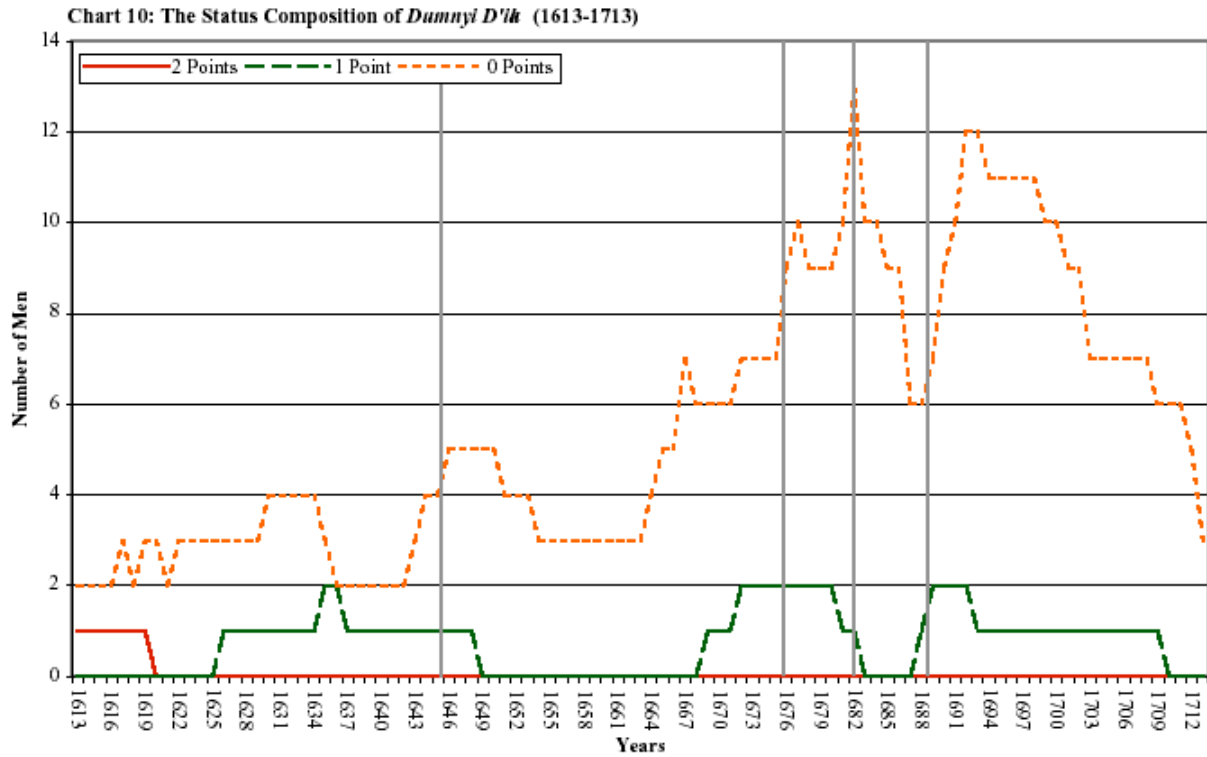
As we have indicated, Aleksei brought them into the *duma* ranks as *dumnye dvoriane* because he had no other option: men of such low status could not be appointed as boyars or *okol'niche* (at this time in the century) and the particular men in question were not from the administrative class, so they could not be brought in as *dumnye d'iaki*. Shortly after a number of zero-point *dumnye dvoriane* appeared, they were joined by *dumnye dvoriane* with one point. The explanation for this is clear: zero-point pioneers were sponsoring their kinsmen into the *duma* ranks, and they—upon appointment as *dumnye dvoriane*—became legacies (hence one point). The two groups, zero- and one-point, dominated the rank for the remainder of the century. The policy shift that brought these lower status men into the *duma* ranks can be seen in Table 10, which compares the number of men in the four status cohorts appointed or promoted to *dumnyi dvorianin* by successive rulers.

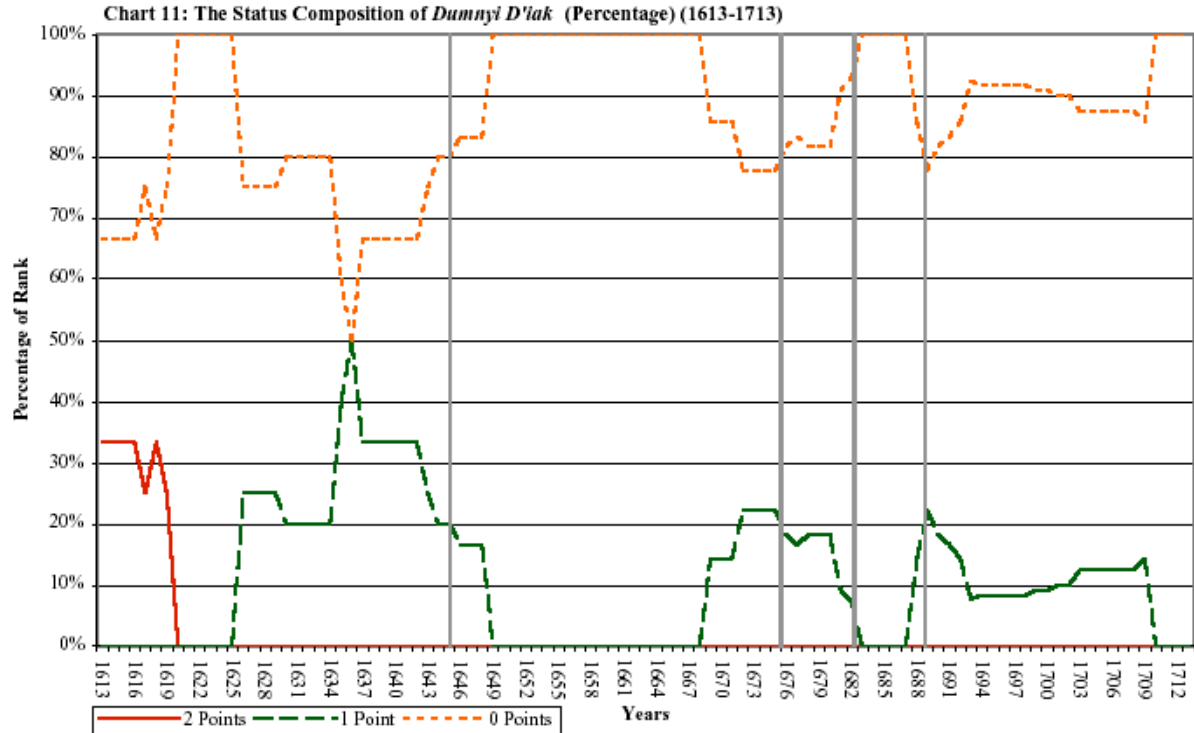
Table 10: Advancement to *Dumnyi Dvorianin* and Status by Reign (1613–1713)

Reign	3 Points			2 Points			1 Point			0 Points		
	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias
Mikhail	1%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	12%	33% ^[3]	+2.8	21%	11% ^[1]	-1.9	66%	56% ^[5]	-1.2
Aleksei	2%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	9%	5% ^[2]	-1.8	24%	35% ^[14]	+1.5	65%	60% ^[24]	-1.1
Fedor	3%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	4% ^[1]	-1.8	22%	41% ^[11]	+1.9	68%	55% ^[15]	-1.2
Sophia	3%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	10% ^[5]	+1.5	22%	44% ^[23]	+2	68%	46% ^[24]	-1.5
Peter	1%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	23%	33% ^[6]	+1.5	69%	67% ^[12]	-1.03
Total	1%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	7% ^[11]	1	22%	38% ^[55]	+1.7	69%	55% ^[80]	-1.3

The break that occurred with the accession of Aleksei is manifest. He established an appointment regime for *dumnyi dvorianin* that remained in force with very little change throughout the century: between 5% and 10% of appointments would have two points; between 35% and 45% would have one point; and between 50% and 65% would have zero points.

The story is similar for *dumnyi d'iak*: the rank was dominated throughout the century by men of low status, especially men with zero points. This fact can be seen in Chart 10, which records the *number* of men of various status in the fourth rank and Chart 11, which does the same in terms of *percentage*. One proviso is in order: since the total number of *dumnye d'iaki* in the data set is small, the wild fluctuations in Chart 11 are not terribly significant.





Practically speaking, royal appointment policy concerning the status of men serving as *dumnye d'iaki* remained unchanged throughout the century: men of three- and two-point status were excluded from consideration, men of one-point status were very occasionally appointed, and the overwhelming bulk of appointees to the rank would be of the lowest status. Table 11, which compares the number of men in the four status cohorts appointed or promoted to *dumnyi d'iak* by successive rulers, demonstrates the remarkable consistency of this policy.

Table 11: Advancement to *Dumnyi D'iak* and Status by Reign (1613–1713)

Reign	3 Points			2 Points			1 Point			0 Points		
	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias	Crt.	Apps.	±Bias
Mikhail	1%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	12%	9% ^[1]	-1.3x	21%	18% ^[2]	-1.2x	66%	73% ^[8]	+1.1x
Aleksei	2%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	9%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	24%	13% ^[2]	-1.8x	65%	87% ^[13]	+1.3x
Fedor	3%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	22%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	68%	100% ^[6]	+1.5x
Sophia	3%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	22%	20% ^[1]	-1.1x	68%	80% ^[4]	+1.2x
Peter	1%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	23%	11% ^[1]	-2.1x	69%	89% ^[8]	+1.3x
Total	1%	0% ^[0]	-(n/a)	7%	2% ^[1]	-3.5x	22%	13% ^[6]	-1.7x	69%	85% ^[39]	+1.2x

Here again it is important to recall that, due to the small numbers involved, the percentages are not of great significance. Nevertheless, it is clear that seventeenth-century Russian sovereigns considered the rank of *dumnyi d'iak* below the honor of men with two and three points. On rare occasions, a man with one point might be made *dumnyi d'iak* (for example, a legacy). By and large, however, all *dumnye d'iaki* were recruited from the administrative class, a class that included no princes and no men with distinguished lineages.

Conclusion: The Demise of the Romanov Settlement

What, then, can we conclude about changes in the seventeenth-century Russian political system? Our most general observation must be this: successive monarchs intentionally “lowered the bar” for advancement from the *gosudarev dvor* to the *duma* ranks. Under Mikhail, one virtually had to have very high inherited status to win appointment to the *duma* ranks; by Peter’s time, men of lower status were often promoted to the higher ranks. The key figure in this development was Aleksei: he consciously increased the size and altered the composition of the *duma* ranks by allowing a small but growing number of lower status “new men” into its midst. His successors followed suit.

Why did Aleksei initiate this reform? Since Kliuchevskii’s time, the standard and accepted explanation has been that Aleksei realized that the hereditary boyar elite was becoming increasingly irrelevant to the state.²⁹ Evidence suggests that Aleksei was interested in modernizing Muscovy’s army and administrative apparatus.³⁰ The traditional boyar elite, so the argument goes, could offer little help in this effort. Once they had been warriors, leading Muscovy’s cavalry forces. Later they became trusted advisors, counseling the tsar intelligently on matters of importance. In Aleksei’s time, however, they neither fought nor advised very well. Even men of low status did not respect them, as Kotoshikhin’s unflattering portrait demonstrates.³¹ So Aleksei began the process of supplementing hereditary rankholders with competent “new men.” As Crummey says, Aleksei “opened up [the *duma*’s] ranks to outstanding servitors, regardless of their social origin.”³²

This argument, however, would seem to be incomplete in two ways. First, it fails to put Aleksei’s reform into the context of the court and the patronage system that operated within it. Kliuchevskii and those who followed him seem to have been aware that the court grew in the seventeenth century, but they never connected this development with the arrival of the “new men,” at least explicitly. Yet the two developments were probably related. Evidence from the Boyar Books suggests that the court was growing in the 1650s: in the last decade of Mikhail’s reign, it had comprised about 2000 servitors, while in the first decade of Aleksei’s reign it had probably expanded to 2500 or even 3000 men. These new entrants lobbied for places in the *duma* ranks. Just how they did so remains completely obscure, but we might surmise that Aleksei bowed to pressure and increased the number of *duma* appointments to satisfy the new courtiers. As we’ve seen, the *duma* ranks expanded with the court.

Yet the fact that Aleksei was able to promote “new men” in this way presents us with a puzzle, for by Muscovite tradition the tsar was neither free to distribute existing *duma* positions as he liked, nor was he absolutely free to mint new positions. And here we come to the second deficiency of Kliuchevskii’s thesis: it fails to place Aleksei’s reform in its probable political context—the silent struggle between a forward-looking tsar, his traditional elite, and the “new men” who were flooding the court. So far as I know, we have no direct evidence of this pivotal political battle. Circumstantial evidence, however, suggests that it took place, probably during around the Thirteen Years’ War (1654-67). Prior to that conflict, the hereditary elite was still in control of the *duma* ranks: in 1653, three and two point men together outnumbered one and zero point men 48 (69%) to 21 (31%), and they completely dominated the ranks of boyar and

²⁹See the references in fn. 25 above.

³⁰This notion is strongly argued in Philip Longworth, *Alexis, Tsar of all the Russias* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984). Muscovy was under significant military pressure in the seventeenth century, and Aleksei initiated a number of important military reforms. See Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 181-201.

³¹Kotoshikhin writes: “in many cases boyar rank is conferred not for intelligence but for exalted lineage, and many of them are unlettered and uneducated.” Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Mixajlovica*, fol. 35v.

³²Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, 28.

okol'nichii. At the end of the war, the hereditary elite had lost much of its numerical advantage: in 1668, 39 (57%) *duma* men had three or two point status, while 30 (43%) one or zero points, and the men of lower status were increasingly being appointed to *boyar* and *okol'nichii*. That the war may have had an impact on Aleksei appointment policy is hinted in Table 12, which compares Aleksei's pre-war and war-time appointments.

Table 12: Aleksei's Appointments before and during the Thirteen Years' War

	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point	0 Points	Total
1645-53	19 (31%)	24 (38%)	4 (6%)	15 (24%)	62 (100%)
1654-67	14 (25%)	16 (28%)	12 (21%)	14 (25%)	56 (100%)

The shift toward lower status appointments is evident, if not dramatic. In the earlier period, Aleksei appointed many more high status men than low status men; during the war, the two groups were called on with almost equal frequency. Again (see Table 6), one notes that zero-point men did not benefit from the shift in appointment policy.

If we look briefly at the identity of the men appointed in the two eras the difference in policy becomes much clearer. In the early period, a young Aleksei appointed a considerable number of lower class men to the *duma* ranks, but they are often in-laws, favorites, or clients of his mentor B. I. Morozov.³³ During the war, the mature Aleksei made some such appointments,³⁴ but he also advanced classic “new men”—experienced servitors with demonstrated worth, though lacking in congenital status.³⁵ Before being appointed to the *duma* ranks, these men often occupied crucial military and administrative offices. Yet their efforts were not rewarded with *duma* appointments. Aleksei remedied this problem.

It stands to reason, however, that Aleksei faced resistance in this effort to “open careers to talent.” For centuries, the traditional *boyar* clans had dominated the *duma* ranks, and at the on-set of the war they continued to do so. It was in their vested interest to resist any effort to bring in “new men,” either by replacing traditional elites or by appointing them to new positions. Again, there is no direct evidence that they fought Aleksei. But we do have two excellent pieces of circumstantial evidence: the gradual pattern of Aleksei's advancement of the “new men” and the re-creation of the rank of *dumnyi dvorianin*. The tsar did not bring the “new men” in all at once. He could not do so without risking a costly and dangerous political battle with the old elites. Rather, he pursued a conservative approach, appointing a few “new men” at a time. But even here his options were limited by the hold of the old elites over the upper ranks. Aleksei knew that they would likely grumble if he promoted men of lower status to the highest ranks in the *duma* orders, for these were the traditional preserve of the old elite. Neither could Aleksei make the more honorable of the “new men” *dumnye d'iaki*, for that rank was deemed too low for the hereditary servitors in the *gosudarev dvor*. Therefore Aleksei opted for a strategy that would at once appease the hereditary *boiarsvo* and permit him to promote the “new men”: he transformed the rank of *dumnyi dvorianin*. The chronology of events is telling. In 1650, Aleksei took the unprecedented step of appointing a fifth man to *dumnyi dvorianin*. Prior to that act, the largest number of *dumnye dvoriane* had been four (in 1634 and 1635), and ordinarily there had only been one. By the first year of the war, there were eight of them. During the war,

³³In-laws: I. D. Miloslavskii, I. A. Miloslavskii. Favorites: I. M. Anichkov, B. M. Khitrovo, M. A. Rtishchev. Clients of Morozov: P. T. Trakhaniotov.

³⁴His favorites included F. M. Rtishchev, G. I. Rtishchev, G. M. Anichkov, I. B. Khitrovo.

³⁵Here we have in mind I. P. Matiushkin, I. A. Ivanov, A. O. Pronchishchev, I. F. Eropkin, P. K. Elizarov, I. I. Baklanovskii, N. M. Boborykin, V. M. Eropkin, A. L. Ordin-Nashchokin, O. I. Sukin, I. A. Pronchishchev, Z. F. Leont'ev, I. I. Chaadaev, G. B. Nashchokin, D. M. Bashmakov, Ia. T. Khitrovo, G. S. Karaulov, A. S. Durov, B. I. Nashchokin, G. S. Dokhturov, L. T. Golosov.

he promoted 16 more. Among them we find many of Aleksei's "new men."³⁶ During the war the tsar began to promote his *dumnye dvoriane* into the ranks of *okol'nichie*.³⁷ One of them, A. L. Ordin-Nashchokin, was made boyar in 1667 and served as effective prime minister until 1671. In that year another "new man," A. S. Matveev took his place, though he was not promoted to boyar until 1674.³⁸

Under Aleksei, then, two prominent "new men" came to rule Russia. Others exercised less visible but no less important roles as leaders in the Chancellery system. Aleksei appointed 48 men with under three points of congenital status to the *duma* ranks. As the appendix below makes apparent, the tsar entrusted them with a great number of Muscovy's highest administrative offices.³⁹ Particularly notable is the fact that Aleksei placed his "new men" in the most important *prikazy*: the Military Service Chancellery (*Razriad*), arguably the most powerful *prikaz* in seventeenth-century Muscovy; the Service Land Chancellery (*Pomestnyi prikaz*), which administered landed estates given to the gentry throughout Russia; and the Ambassadorial Chancellery (*Posol'skii prikaz*), which controlled Muscovy's foreign affairs.⁴⁰

As Paul Bushkovitch has recently argued, it is difficult to overestimate the impact of these appointments on the Muscovite political system. Aleksei's alteration of *duma* appointment policy destroyed the equilibrium between the tsar and the elite families that ended the Time of Troubles. By the end of the Thirteen Year's War, the tsar clearly had the upper hand in political matters. Aleksei had successfully transformed the *duma* ranks from a royal council controlled by hereditary clans into a well of royal patronage to be distributed as the tsar desired. The tsar no longer ruled exclusively with the *duma* men, but instead *via* special consular and executive bodies. Kotoshikhin described two of them. The first was a kind of privy council chosen from the "closest boyars and *okol'nichie*" (*boiare i okol'nichie blizhnie*). Here Aleksei discussed affairs "in private," outside the large council.⁴¹ Second, Kotoshikhin detailed the workings of the Privy Chancellery (*Prikaz tainikh del*), where the "boyars and *duma* men do not enter . . . and have no jurisdiction."⁴² "And that chancellery," he wrote, "was established in the present reign, so that the tsar's will and all his affairs would be carried out as he desires, without the boyars and *duma* men having any knowledge of these matters."⁴³ Kotoshikhin's understanding of Aleksei's relation to hereditary *duma* men is clear: while he honored them, he did his real business with the "closest people." He was, it is true, hardly the first Russian ruler to surround himself with an inner circle of powerful advisors.⁴⁴ He was, however, the first to do so since the political settlement that ended the Time of Troubles. For one of the few times in Muscovite history, the tsar had succeeded in liberating himself from the elite of which he was a part. Muscovy became a monarchy—or at least more monarchical—as it had been under Ivan III and Ivan IV.

³⁶I. P. Matiushkin, A. O. Pronchishchev, I. F. Eroshkin, P. K. Elizarov, I. I. Baklanovskii, V. M. Eroshkin, A. L. Ordin-Nashchokin, I. A. Pronchishchev, Z. F. Leont'ev, I. I. Chaadaev, G. B. Nashchokin, D. M. Bashmakov, Ia. T. Khitrovo, G. S. Karaulov, L. T. Golosov.

³⁷Z. V. Kondyrev in 1655, F. K. Elizarov in 1665; A. L. Ordin-Nashchokin in 1665; A. S. Matveev in 1672; I. B. Khitrovo in 1674.

³⁸On the rule of Ordin-Nashchokin and Matveev, and its impact on court politics, see Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, 49-79.

³⁹Data in this appendix was drawn from S. K. Bogoiavlenskii, *Prikaznye sud'i XVII veka* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdat-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1946).

⁴⁰On the Chancellery system, and the importance of these chancelleries in particular, see Peter B. Brown, "Muscovite Government Bureaus," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 10: 3 (1983), 269-330.

⁴¹Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvomani Alekseja Mixajlovica*, fol. 36.

⁴²Ibid., fol. 123v.

⁴³Ibid., fol. 124.

But only for a moment, for Aleksei's new order proved untenable. He was strong enough and clever enough to use his novel tool of patronage sparingly. His successors were neither. As a result of their political insecurity, Fedor, Sophia and young Peter—together with those who urged them on—were forced to “go to the well” of *duma* patronage often in order to win support among the *boiars*. They made hordes of appointments from the ever expanding court in a desperate effort to curry favor. The *duma* ranks ballooned, and thereby lost their meaning even as royal patronage. Aleksei's weak successors had, in essence, devalued the currency bequeathed to them by their father. What Aleksei had carefully designed as a mechanism to bring new talent into the political class resulted, under his children, in the destruction of that class. As early as 1681, even the wise old men of the traditional elite—led in this instance by Vasilii Golytsyn—were actively searching for a new order to replace what had obviously been broken.⁴⁵ They failed, and it would be to Peter, who personally witnessed the corruption of his father's legacy, to forge a new and profoundly monarchical political system.

⁴⁴On the existence of such “inner circles” in previous eras, see A. I. Filiushkin, *Istoriia odnoi mistifikatsii: Ivan Groznyi i “Izbrannaia Rada”* (Moscow: VGU, 1998) and Sergei Bogatyrev, *The Sovereign and His Counsellors. Ritualised Consultations in Muscovite Political Culture, 1350s-1570s* (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 2000).

⁴⁵A. I. Markevich, *Istoriia mestnichestva v Moskovskom gosudarstve v XV-XVII vek* (Odessa: Tip. Odesskago Vestnika, 1888), 572ff.; V. K. Nikol'skii, “Boiarskaia popytka' 1681 g.,” *Istoricheskie izvestiia izdavaemye Istoricheskim obshestvom pri Moskovskom universitete* 2 (1917), 57-87; G. Ostrogorsky, “Das Projekt einer Rangtabelle aus der Zeit des Tsaren Fedor Alekseevich,” *Jahrbücher für Kultur und Geschichte der Slaven* 9 (1933), 86-138; M. Ia. Volkov, “Ob otmene mestnichestva v Rossii,” *Istoriia SSSR* (1977), no. 2: 53-67; P. V. Sedov, “O boiarskoi popytke uchrezhdeniia namestnichestv v Rossii v 1681-82 gg.,” *Vestnik LGU* 9 (1985), 25-29; Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, 226-31; Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, 118-19.

Appendix: Aleksei's New Men in the Chancelleries

<i>New Man</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>DDv</i>	<i>O&</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Chancellery Offices</i>
Elizarov, F. K.	1646	1650	1655		Service Land [1643/4-63/4]
Anichkov, I. M.		1646			Tsar's Workshop [1635/6-46/7]
Chistoi, N. I.	1647				Grand Treasury [1630/1-46/7]; Ore [1641/2]; Ambassadorial [1646/7-47/8]
Narbekov, B. F.		1648			Grand Revenue [1648/9-51/2]
Zaborovskii, S. I.	1649	1664			Military Service [1648/9-63/4]; Monastery [1667/8-75/6]; New Tax District [1676/7]
Lopukhin, L. D.	1651	1667			Kazan' Palace [1646/7-71/2]; Ambassadorial [1652/3-64/5]; Novgorod Tax District [1652/3-64/5]; Seal [1653/4-63/4]; Provisions [1674/5]
Kondyrev, Z. V.		1651	1655		Equerry [1646/7-53/4]
Ianov, V. F.		1652			Patriarch's Court [1641/42-46/7, 1648/9-52/3]
Matiushkin, I. P.		1653			Great Treasury [1634/5-61/2]; Ore [1641/42]
Ivanov, A. I.	1653				Treasury [1639/40-44/5]; Ambassadorial [1645/6-66/7]; Novgorod Tax District [1645/6-63/4]; Seal [1653/4-68/9]; Monastery [1654/55]; Seal Matters [1667/8]
Pronchishchev, A. O.		1654			Investigative [1654/55-56/7]
Eropkin, I. F.		1655			NONE
Elizarov, P. K.		1655			Moscow (<i>Zemskii</i>) [1655/6-71/2]; Kostroma Tax District [1656/7-70/1]; Financial Investigation [1662/3-64/5]
Baklanovskii, I. I.		1655			Moscow Judicial [1630/1-31/2]; Grand Revenue [1632/3-37/8]; Artillery [1658/9-62/3, 1672/3-77/8]; Grand Treasury [1663/4-68/9]
Ordin-Nashchokin, A. L.		1658	1665	1667	Ambassadorial [1666/7-70/1]; Vladimir Tax District [1666/7-70/1]; Galich Tax District [1666/7-70/1]; Little Russian [1666/7-68/9]; Ransom [1667/8]
Anichkov, G. M.		1659			Grand Palace [1657/8-64/5]; Palace Judicial [1664/5]; New Tax District [1664/5-68/9]
Pronchishchev, I. A.		1661			Grand Treasury [1661/2-62/3]; Monastery [1664/5]; Grand Revenue [1667/8-69/0]; Ransom [1667/8-69/0]; Criminal [1673/4-74/5]
Leont'ev, Z. F.		1662			NONE
Chadaev, I. I.		1662			Moscow (<i>Zemskii</i>) [1672/3-73/4]; Foreign Mercenaries [1676/7-77/8]; Dragoon [1676/7-86]; Siberian [1680/1-82/3]
Nashchokin, G. B.		1664			Vladimir Judicial [1648/9]; Slave [1658/9-61/2]; Postal [1662/3-66/7]
Khitrovo, I. T.		1664			NONE
Bashmakov, D. M.	1664				Tsar's Workshop [1654/55]; Grand Palace [1655/6]; Privy Affairs [1655/6-63/4]; Lithuanian [1657/8]; Ustiug Tax District [1657/8-58/9]; Financial Investigation [1662/3]; Military Service [1663/4-69/0, 1675/6]; Ambassadorial [1669/0-70/1]; Vladimir [1669/0-70/1]; Galich [1669/0-70/1]; Little Russian [1669/0-70/1]; Petitions [1674/5]; Seal [1675/6-99/0]; Treasury [1677/8-79/0, 1681/2]; Investigative [1676/7, 1679/0]; Financial Collection [1680/1]
Karaulov, G. S.	1665				Service Land [1659/0-69/0]; Grand Palace [1669/0]; Postal [1669/0-71/2]; Kazan' [1671/2-75/6]; Moscow (<i>Zemskii</i>) [1679/0]; Criminal [1682/3]; Investigative [1689/0]
Durov, A. S.	1665				Postal [1630/1-31/2]; Equerry [1633/4]; Grand Revenue [1637/8-39/40]; Musketeers [1642/3-44/5, 1661/2-69/0]; Ustiug Tax District [1653/4, 1669/0-70/1]; New Tax District [1660/1-61/2]
Khitrovo, I. B.		1666	1674		Grand Palace [1664/5-69/0]; Palace Judicial [1664/5-69/0];
O.-Nashchokin, B. I.		1667			NONE
Golosov, L. T.	1667				Patriarch's Court [1652/3-58/9, 1660/1-62/3]; Ambassadorial [1662/3-69/0, 1680/1]; Novgorod [1662/3-69/0, 1680/1]; Ransom [1667/8]; Tsarina's Workshop [1659/0-60/1]; Vladimir [1667/8-69/0, 1680/1]; Galich [1667/8-69/0, 1680/1]; Little Russian [1667/8-69/0, 1680/1]; Pharmaceutical [1669/0-71/2]; Smolensk [1680/1]; Ustiug [1680/1]

<i>New Man</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>DDv</i>	<i>Ok</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Chancellery Offices</i>
Dokhturov, G. S.	1667				Postal [1649/0-51/2]; Grand Palace [1651/2-53/4]; Musketeers [1653/4-61/2]; Grand Treasury [1661/2-63/4]; New Tax District [1664/5, 1666/7, 1669/0-75/6]; Ambassadorial [1666/7-69/0]; Vladimir Tax District [1667/8-69/0]; Galich Tax District [1667/8-69/0]; Novgorod Tax District [1667/8-69/0]; Little Russian [1667/8-69/0]; Seal [1668/9-75/6]; Service Land [1669/0-75/6]; Military Service [1673/4-75/6]; Ransom [1677/8]
Tolstoi, A. V.		1668			NONE
Rtishchev, G. I.		1669			Tsar's Workshop [1649/0-68/9]
Ivanov, L. I.	1669				New Tax District [1662/3-63/4]; Grand Palace [1663/4-69/0, 1680/1]; Armory [1663/4-69/0]; Musketeers [1669/0-75/6, 1677/8]; Ustiug Tax District [1672/3-75/6, 1679/0]; Lithuanian [1674/5]; Investigative [1675/6]; Ambassadorial [1675/6-81/2]
Titov, S. S.	1670				Musketeers [1655/6-56/7]; Vladimir Tax District [1655/6-56/7]; Galich Tax District [1655/6-56/7]; Criminal [1656/7]; Military Service [1657/8-58/9, 1669/0-73/4]; Financial Collection [1662/3-63/4]; Grand Palace [1663/4-69/0]; Vladimir Judicial [1663/4]
Solovtsov, I. P.		1670			Provisions [1669/0-70/1]
Sokovnin, F. P.		1670			Tsarina's Workshop [1666/7-69/0, 1676/7-81/2, 1681/2]; Petitions [1675/6]
Nesterov, A. I.		1670			Gun Barrel [1653/4, 1655/6, 1657/8, 1660/1, 1665/6]; Armory [1659/0-67/8]; Gold Works [1667/8]
Matveev, A. S.		1670	1672	1674	Little Russian [1668/9-75/6]; Ambassadorial [1669/0-75/6]; Vladimir Tax District [1669/0-75/6]; Galich Tax District [1669/0-75/6]; Novgorod Tax District [1669/0, 1671/2-75/6]; Ransom [1670/1-71/2]; Pharmaceutical [1671/2-75/6]
Leont'ev, F. I.		1670			Artillery [1672/3-76/7]
Khitrovo, I. S.		1670	1676		Provisions [1667/8-69/0]; Ustiug Tax District [1670/1-71/2]; Monastery [1675/6-77/8]; Judicial Review [1689/0]
Poltev, S. F.		1671			Dragoons [1670/1-75/6]; Foreign Mercenaries [1670/1-75/6]
Naryshkin, K. P.		1671	1672	1672	Ustiug Tax District [1676/77]; Grand Treasury [1676/77-77/78]; Grand Revenue [1676/77-77/78]
Khitrovo, A. S.		1671	1676		Grand Palace [1669/0-78/9]; Court Judicial [1669/0-75/6, 1677/8-78/9]
Bogdanov, G. K.	1671				Military Service [1656/7-60/1]; New Tax District [1660/1-65/6]; Ransom [1666/7, 1668/9, 1670/1-71/2]; Ambassadorial [1670/1-75/6]; Little Russian [1668/9-75/6]; Vladimir [1670/1-75/6]; Galich [1670/1-75/6]; Grand Treasury [1675/6-76/7]; Grand Revenue [1675/6-76/7]
Polianskii, D. L.	1672				Privy Affairs [1671/2-75/6]; Provisions [1675/6-77/8]; Grand Revenue [1675/6]; Investigative [1675/6, 1677/8]; Musketeers [1675/6-77/8, 1681/2]; Ustiug Tax District [1675/6-77/8]; Judicial [1680/1]; Moscow (<i>Zemskii</i>) [1686/7-89/0]; Treasury [1689/0]
Naryshkin, F. P.		1672			NONE
Mikhailov, F.	1672				Artillery [1655/6]; Foreign Mercenary [1656/7-57/8]; Grand Treasury [1659/0-63/4]; Grand Revenue [1662/3]; Privy Affairs [1663/4-71/2]; Grand Palace [1671/2-76/7]
Matiushkin, A. I.		1672			Equerry [1653/4-63/4]; Gun Barrel [1653/4]
Lopukhin, A. N.		1672			Tsarina's Workshop [1669/0-76/7]
Panin, V. N.		1673			NONE