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Marshall Poe

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For the Muscovite state, the seventeenth century was one of evolution and growth, rather than radical change.¹ The century experienced no political revolutions of the magnitude seen during the reigns of Ivan III and Ivan IV. Russia, having recovered from the confusion of the Time of Troubles, remained a strong autocracy firmly in the hands of a small, martial ruling class. This is not to say that there was general stasis. Things still fell apart, though only for brief moments. And one can detect a single important political trend—the remarkable inflation of honors begun under Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and radically amplified by his weak successors. Nonetheless, the general picture was one of continuity, punctuated by momentary fits of confusion and gradual change.

The case is much the same in the realm of institutions.² Seventeenth-century Muscovy was administered by the same fundamental *types* of organization that it had been before the great upheaval of the beginning of the century. The most important institutions remained the royal family, its court and courtiers (*gosudarev dvor*), and the administrative chancelleries (*prikazy*). Similarly, the boyar council (*sobor*) and the assembly of all the land (another *sobor*)—both inventions of an earlier age—continued to operate in the seventeenth century much as they had before. All of these institutions grew, but not so much as to fundamentally alter their essential character.

Finally, we might note that the state existed for the same purpose as it had in the sixteenth century and earlier—to serve the interests of the Muscovite ruling class.³ Though one occasionally finds Biblical tropes in Muscovite ornamental texts about monarchs ‘tending their flocks’ and such, the truth is that the elite did not hide the fact that they were a self-interested ruling class and that the state was the instrument of their domination. They showed open contempt for peasants, merchants and often clergymen, and almost never missed an opportunity to fleece them—a point made and bemoaned by the well-traveled, well-educated, and well-informed political philosopher (and proto-Slavophile!) Iuri Krizhanich in the 1660s.⁴ Any attempt at protest that was not couched in the most subservient terms was met with a rush of horrific violence (violence that only the state could muster, since it was the only organized interest in early modern Russia). As visiting foreigners often noted, there was no talk of the ‘commonwealth,’ the ‘common good,’ or common anything (that would come with Peter and from Europe). Muscovites high and low believed the tsar owned

¹The best general history of seventeenth-century Russia remains V. O. Kliuchevskii, *A Course in Russian History: the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968). For a survey of primary and secondary sources, see S. A. Christensen, *Istoriia rossii XVII v. Obzor issledovaniĭ i istochnikov* (Moscow: Progress: 1989). On high politics, see Robert O. Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors: the Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613-1689* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) and Paul Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great: the Struggle for Power, 1671-1725* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²For an overview of governmental institutions, see N. P. Eroshkin, *Ocherki istorii gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Uchebno-Pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo Ministerstva prosveshcheniia RSFSR, 1960).

³For an extended discussion of the Russian ruling class and its interests, see Marshall T. Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁴Iuri Krizhanich, *Politika*, ed. A. Gol'dberg (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), pp. 583-84.

everything—land and those occupying it—by heavenly proclamation.⁵ That he distributed his largess unequally (and predominantly to the elite) bothered not a soul. No one could conceive of any other order, no one objected to it (at least for very long...), and no one even thought it wrong. It was the way of things, and that was that.

The Tsar in His Court

Muscovites had an entire catalogue of sayings to the effect that the tsar was like God (and, one might add, the God of Moses rather than Jesus)⁶, so it is only appropriate that we begin our survey of seventeenth-century institutions with the ruler and his court.

Let us begin with the royal person, for he was an institution in his own right. In contrast to some monarchies, the Russians do not seem to have recognized or even known about the ‘king’s two bodies’ doctrine.⁷ The clergy said and commoners believed that the tsar was selected by the Lord, not *to hold the office* of tsar, but *to be* tsar. This is why one finds so much talk of the ‘true tsar’ and ‘pretenders,’ particularly during the Time of Troubles when it was tough to tell the difference, but also after the ascension of the Romanovs.⁸ Just how one could know the ‘true tsar’ was anybody’s guess, but that there was a ‘true’—that is, divinely appointed—tsar was never seriously questioned. There was, then, no office of ‘tsar’; there was just the ‘true tsar,’ a person and family ordained by the hand of the All Mighty.

We know, of course, that Mikhail Romanov was elected or, rather, his family won out in a rough and tumble competition dominated by occupying Cossacks in 1613. But it wasn’t considered polite (or even safe⁹) to mention this after the fact. That’s because Mikhail was the ‘true tsar.’ His family and their propagandists spent a lot of effort to drive this point home. They went so far as to argue that they were not only the very descendents and rightful heirs to the Rurikids (*via* one of Ivan IV’s marriages), but that they *were* in some mystical sense Rurikids themselves. This effort to cloak themselves in other-worldly divinity appealed to the Muscovite mind, but it doubtless had little effect on the men who actually engineered the Romanov ‘succession.’ They knew, as politicians always know, what had *actually* happened. Nonetheless, it made no sense for them to do anything but play along. The tsar, after all, was one of them and would—if he were wisely selected—protect their interests. Mikhail and his successors did just this, and they became ‘true tsars’ as a result.

⁵P. V. Lukin, *Narodnye predstavleniia o gosudarstvennoi vlasti v Rossii XVII veka*. Moscow: Nauka, 2000, *passim*.

⁶On these dicta, see Poe, Marshall T. ‘A People Born to Slavery’: *Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), appendix one.

⁷On the European concept, see E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). For an explicit contrast, see Michael Cherniavsky, “Saintly Princes and Princely Saints,” in idem, *Tsar and People: A Historical Study of Russian National and Social Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 28-30.

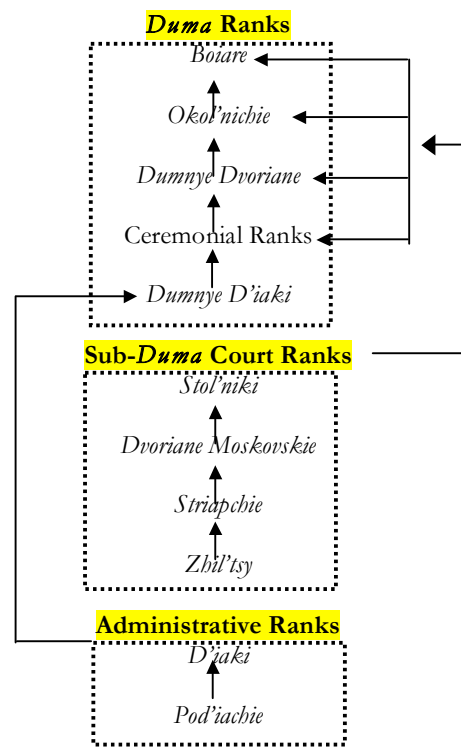
⁸On pretenderism, see Chester Dunning, *Russia’s First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001) and Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: The False Tsars of the Time of Troubles* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁹On the Romanov’s campaign to stamp out pretenderism, see Mark C. Lapman, “Political Denunciations in Muscovy, 1600 to 1649: The Sovereign’s Word and Deed,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1982); N. I. Novombergskii, *Slovo i delo gosudarevy: Protsessy do izdaniia Ulozheniia Alekseia Mikhailovicha 1649 g.* (Moscow: A. I. Snegireva, 1911), and G. G. Tel’berg, *Ocherki politicheskogo suda i politicheskikh prestuplenii* (Moscow, 1912).

Though one reads occasionally in Muscovite didactic texts that the tsar should do this or that (take council, be merciful, be wise¹⁰), he really had only two hard and fast duties: to produce a suitable heir and to rule the country in consultation with his boyars. There were, naturally, rules about how he would perform these two tasks, the former governed by Christian doctrine and the later by custom. Since the rights and obligations of Orthodox marriage are sufficiently well known (one wife, or at least one at a time), as is the process by which an heir is begotten, let us discuss the rules of Muscovite politics as they were practiced in their principle arena, the sovereign's court (*gosudarev dvor*).¹¹

The sovereign's court was the locus of political power in Muscovy. It was not a place (though the royal family did have quarters in the Kremlin called a 'court' or *dvor*), but rather a hierarchy of ranks. Figure 1 outlines them.

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



As one would expect, higher ranks were more honorable than lower ranks, and generally less populous. To some degree, different rankholders did different things: the men in the *duma* ranks (*boiare i dumnye liudi*) advised the tsar in the royal council (*duma*), an ill-defined customary body whose power waxed and waned depending on the age of the tsar, the authority of those around him, and the number of councilors present. Those below the *duma* ranks (the sub-*duma* court ranks in Figure 1) generally worked as footmen of various sorts at court—serving at table, guarding the palace, performing in ceremonies, escorting emissaries and so on. Despite their modern ‘servile’ connotations, these lines of

¹⁰See Daniel Rowland, “The Problem of Advice in Muscovite Tales about the Time of Troubles,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 6 (1979), pp. 259-83 and idem, “Did Muscovite Literary Ideology Place Any Limits on the Power of the Tsar?” *Russian Review* 49 (1990), pp. 125-56.

¹¹For a bibliography of works on the *gosudarev dvor*, see O. Kosheleva and M. A. Strucheva, *Gosudarev dvor v Rossii: konets XV-nachalo XVIII vv.: katalog knizhnoi vystavki* (Moscow: Gos. publichnaia istoricheskaia biblioteka Rossii, 1997).

employ were considered very honorable duty by high-born Muscovites (and certainly better than serving in the provinces). Finally, the administrators served in the chancelleries (*priказы*). Because they performed servile work (writing), they were drawn from a less honorable class (*sluzhbiye liudi po priboru*, or ‘service people by contract’) rather than from the ranks of hereditary servitors (*sluzhbiye liudi po otechestvu*, or ‘service people by birth’).¹²

As Figure 1 suggests, servitors sometimes moved through the ranks. The rules for entry into and promotion through the upper ranks were as follows.¹³ The men in the three *duma* ranks above *dumnyi d’iak* (*boiarin*, *okol’nichii*, *dumnyi d’iak*) were generally recruited from hereditary servitors in the sub-*duma* court ranks. Elected hereditary servitors could be appointed to any of these three ranks (that is, not *dumnyi d’iak*). Once they had assumed a rank, they could progress upward, for example, from *dumnyi dvorianin* to *okol’nichii* or from *okol’nichii* to *boiarin*. Ranks could not be skipped after entry—one could not go directly from *dumnyi dvorianin* to *boiarin*. *Dumnye d’iaki* were generally recruited from the ranks of *d’iaki* (who were themselves recruited from clerks (*pod’iachie*), all of whom were men of lower birth).¹⁴ Like their hereditary counterparts in the *duma* cohort, they could progress through ranks after appointment, again, without skipping.

To simplify a bit, the game of Muscovite politics had as its goal either advancement to the high ranks (for individuals and their families) or control of the composition of these ranks (for the royal family, or blocks of allied families). It bears mentioning that seventeenth-century politics had very little to do with policies and everything to do with persons. There may have been debate on this or that issue, but, as we’ve noted, everyone in the sovereign’s court was (to continue our metaphor) on the same team and pursued the same goal—the maintenance and, if possible, the expansion of the elite’s interests.¹⁵ Certainly there was conflict over issues. But it is telling that the Muscovites never developed a formal institution that might represent differing political agendas among notables. None was needed. The prime political question, it appears, was always *who* would pursue this common agenda, and only rarely *whether* it should be pursued.

There were, in essence, three players in this contest.¹⁶ First, there was the tsar himself. In theory, he made all appointments to and promotions through the ranks. Yet in fact he did not rule alone, but rather with the aid of close relatives, advisors, and mentors.¹⁷ 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

¹²On this distinction, see N. P. Pavlov-Sil’vanskii, *Gosudarevyi sluzhbiye liudi. Liudi kabal’nye i dokladnye*, 2nd edition (St. Petersburg: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1909), pp. 128-208.

¹³This system is described in Crummy, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, pp. 23-24, as well as in Marshall T. Poe, *The Russian Elite in the Seventeenth Century*, 2 vols. (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2003), vol. 2, pp. xxx.

¹⁴On the administrative class, see Natal’ia Fedorovna Demidova, *Sluzhbilaiia biurokratīia v Rossii XVII v. i ee rol’ v formirovanii absolutizma* (Moskva: Nauka, 1987).

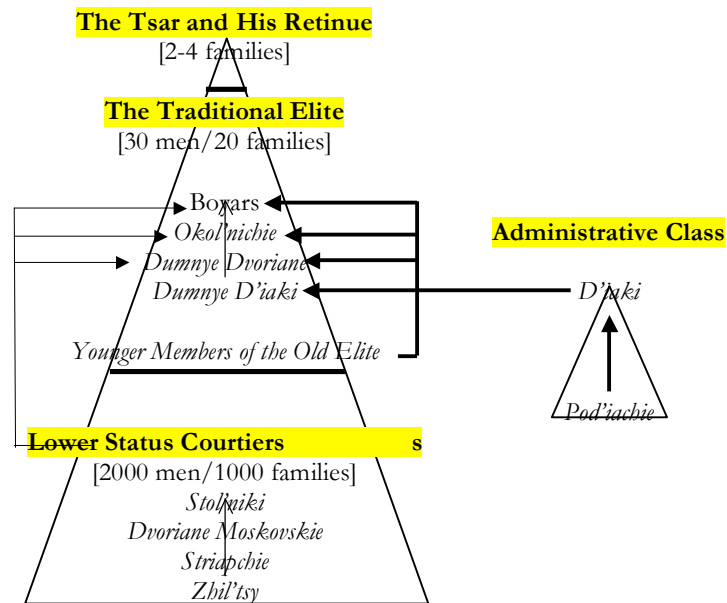
¹⁵On consensus among the elite, see: Edward L. Keenan, “Muscovite Political Folkways” *Russian Review* 45 (1986), pp. 115-81; Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics. The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345–1547* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 2, 7-8, 18, 44, 149-52, 184. The degree of consensus is the subject of some debate. See the exchange between Valerie Kivelson and Marshall Poe in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, pp. xxx.

¹⁶This 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).

¹⁷There are a number of well known 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.

Muscovite political system, explicitly calls them the “close people” (*blizhnye liudi*).¹⁸ These confidants would and could bend the tsar’s ear when it came to appointments and promotions. The second major class of players 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.¹⁹ Their right to high offices was guarded by *mestnichestvo*, early Russia’s mechanism for protecting the order of precedence.²⁰ Finally, we have men and families serving in the lower orders of the sovereign’s court—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)



The contest over the *duma* ranks was not a fair one. The tsar held the most power—he, as we’ve said, made all the appointments. The old elite had considerable though less power—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 had the least

¹⁸G. Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvanie Alekseja Mikhajlovica*, ed. A. E. Pennington. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1980), fols. 34-36v. On Kotoshikhin’s understanding of governmental institutions, see Benjamin P. Uroff, “Grigorii Karpovich Kotoshikhin, ‘On Russia in the Reign of Alexis Mikhailovich’: An Annotated Translation” (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Illinois, 1970) and Fritz T. Epstein, “Die Hof- und Zentralverwaltung im Moskauer Staat und die Bedeutung von G.K. Kotosichins zeitgenoessischen Werk ‘Über Russland unter der Herrschaft des Zaren Aleksej Michajlovic’ für die russische Verwaltungsgeschichte,” *Hamburger Historische Studien* 7(1978), pp. 1-228.

¹⁹On them, see Crumme, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, *passim*.

²⁰The 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), pp. 131-68.

power—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.

Each of these parties deployed different strategies to gain victory. 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.

Who Won? A Brief Overview of Seventeenth-Century High Politics

As Mikhail Romanov ascended the throne in 1613, he and the coalition of forces that supported him faced serious difficulties. There were several claimants to the crown (some arguably more legitimate than Mikhail Fedorovich), the country was occupied by Swedes, Poles and numerous rebel bands, and the economy was in shambles after many years of bloody civil war. No one was really sure who the 'true tsar' was. The Romanov party did the only thing it could to maintain power: issue a 'national' call to eject the foreigners, declare a *de facto* amnesty to those in other camps, and began the slow and painful process of reducing its opponents—alien and domestic—one at a time. First, the rebels were defeated (Zarutsky, Mnizzek), then the otherwise distracted Swedes were pacified (the Treaty of Stolbovo, 1617), and finally the Poles were ejected (the Truce of Deulino, 1618). These measures shored up the Romanov's hold on power. The return of Mikhail's father, soon-to-be Patriarch Filaret, from Polish captivity in 1619 solidified it. For the first and last time in Russian history, father and son—the head of the church and head of the state—ruled together.

Aside from this single (albeit dramatic) innovation, the diarchy pursued a moderate course aimed at shoring up political support and recouping the considerable losses incurred during and after the Troubles. Even after the situation had stabilized, there was no general purge of elements who had fought for the 'wrong' side in the previous decades (though the Romanovs did turn hard on their former allies the Cossacks). Rather, the sins of the Time of Troubles were forgotten for all but a few. The old boyars returned to their high places, irrespective of what port they had sought in the storm of the Troubles. The administrative class took its station as well, again without suffering for its prior allegiances. And the central and provincial military servitors were prepared for the up-coming reckoning with Poland, which finally came in 1634.

Indeed, after the Romanov political settlement, Russian high politics were marked by a general peace for over thirty years. Certainly there were intrigues, schemes, and plots (many of which are unknown to us, hidden by the habit of not writing anything of importance down), but these were the quotidian affairs of every court in every country. The political quiet was shattered, finally, in 1648. Three years earlier, the young Aleksei Mikhailovich succeeded his much venerated father. Aleksei's former tutor, Boris Ivanovich Morozov, became regent and packed the court and council with his cronies. Though a capable man, he was surrounded by the corrupt Miloslavskii clique (Aleksei's first wife was a Miloslavskii; Morozov married her sister, thereby become the tsar's brother-in-law). Calls of government corruption grew louder until Moscow and several other cities exploded in riots aimed a bring Morozov and the Miloslavskii's down. The mob lynched officials, burnt houses and looted shops. At one point, the tsar himself was threatened by the angry

crowd. By all reports, this episode had a powerful effect on the youthful, pious ruler.²¹ Bowing to pressure, Morozov and the tsar's father-in-law were exiled (only to shortly return), corrupt officials (or at least those the crowd said were corrupt) were brutally executed, and the tsar resolved to reform the state in such a way as to make sure such things never happened again.

Aleksei turned to the able Prince N. I. Odovskii for help. He headed a commission designed to solve all the unattended problems faced by Muscovy at one bold, legislative stroke. Perhaps recalling his father's fondness for public input (it had saved them once...), Aleksei called a massive assembly of 'all kinds of people' in Moscow for this purpose. In hindsight, it was a risky move for an immature leader still reeling from his first taste of popular protest. But the commission did its monumental work, the public acclaimed it, and Muscovy had a roadmap to permanent order—the *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* of 1649, one of the largest law codes of the early modern period. Like all successful compromises, there was something in it for everyone (or at least everyone who mattered): the powerful had their places next to the tsar affirmed; the gentry received the right to pursue run-away serfs and slaves as long as necessary to return them; and the common urban folks were promised that the corruption would be punished to the fullest extent of the law (which was, we should note, quite far).²² Again, peace reigned at court and in the country. Save two periods of urban unrest brought on by debasement of the silver with copper (1656 and 1662), all was quiet. Or so it appeared. Under the calm surface, however, an important struggle was occurring at the very heart of Muscovite high politics.

The greatest cause of Aleksei's reign (and his greatest triumph) was the Thirteen Years' War, his effort to recoup the losses suffered at the hands of the hated Poles. Personally marching off to battle in 1654, he took a direct interest in making sure his crusade was brought off successfully. In the course of his campaigning, Aleksei must (and here we are speculating) have judged for himself the merits (and demerits) of his soldiers, for he came back to the capital devoted to the idea of reforming, if not overturning, the existing political order.²³ In the context of a rapidly evolving administrative and military context, the traditional boyar elite had become distinctly less useful. Even men of low status did not respect them, as Kotoshikhin's unflattering portrait demonstrates.²⁴ Talented men—regardless of birth—who were willing to serve and serve well were needed. Given the rules of appointment to the boyar ranks, such 'new men' had no chance to attain the highest honors. Merit was not being rewarded, at least in the way Aleksei believed it should be. Obviously, the rules had to be changed so as to allow the entry of the 'new men.'²⁵

The tsar did not bring the 'new men' into the *duma* 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

²¹Philip Longworth, *Alexis, Tsar of all the Russias* (London: Secker & Warbug, 1984), pp. xxx.

²²On the *Ulozhenie*, see A. G. Mankov, *Ulozhenie 1649 goda-kodeks feodalnogo prava Rossii* (Leningrad: "Nauka," 1980); I. L. Ivina, ed., *Sobornoe ulozhenie 1649 goda: tekst, kommentarii* (Leningrad: Izd-vo "Nauka," Leningradskoe otd-nie, 1987), and Richard Hellie, trans. and ed., *The Muscovite Law Code (Ulozhenie) of 1649* (Irvine: Charles Schlacks Jr., Publishers, 1988). For an excellent treatment of the general context, see Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

²³Longworth, *Alexis, Tsar of all the Russias*, pp. xxx. Muscovy was under significant military pressure in the seventeenth century, and Aleksei initiated a number of important military reforms. See Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy*, pp. 181-201.

²⁴Kotoshikhin 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 tsarstvovanie Alekseia Mikhailovicha*, fol. 35v.

²⁵The following paragraphs are adapted from Marshall T. Poe, "Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and the Demise of the Romanov Political Settlement," *Russian Review* 62:2 (2003), pp. xxx; idem, "Absolutism and the New Men of Seventeenth-Century Russia," in J. Kotilaine and M. Poe, eds., *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003), pp. xxx; and idem, *The Russian Elite in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 2, *passim*.

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 sovereign’s court. Therefore Aleksei opted for a strategy that would at once appease the hereditary *boiarstvo* 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, he promoted 16 more. Among them we find many of Aleksei’s ‘new men.’²⁶ During the war the tsar began to promote his *dumnye dvoriane* into the ranks of *okol’nicie*.²⁷ 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 1674.²⁸

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. In all, Aleksei appointed 48 low status ‘new men’ to the *duma* ranks. As we can see in Figure 3, the tsar entrusted them with a great number of Muscovy’s highest administrative offices.²⁹

Figure 3: Aleksei’s New Men in the Chancelleries

<i>New Man</i>	<i>DD</i>	<i>DDv</i>	<i>Ok</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]
Chistoï, 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]
O-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-

²⁶I. P. Matiushkin, A. O. Pronchishchev, I. F. Eropkin, P. K. Elizarov, I. I. Baklanovskii, V. M. Eropkin, 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.

²⁷Z. 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.

²⁸On the rule of Ordin-Nashchokin and Matveev, and its impact on court politics, see Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, pp. 49-79.

²⁹Data in this table was drawn from S. K. Bogoiavlenskii, *Prikaznye sud’i XVII veka* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdat-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1946).

Poe/Muscovite State/Not for Citation

					69/0]; Ransom [1667/8-69/0]; Criminal [1673/4-74/5]
Leont'ev, Z. F.		1662			NONE
Chaadaev, 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]
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
Rtshchev, 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

Particularly notable is the fact that Aleksei placed his ‘new men’ in the most important *priказы*: the Military Service Chancellery (*Razriad*), arguably the most powerful *priказ* in seventeenth-century Muscovy; the Service Land Chancellery (*Pomestnyi priказ*), which administered estates given to the gentry throughout Russia; and the Ambassadorial Chancellery (*Posol'skii priказ*), which controlled Muscovy's foreign affairs.³⁰

Aleksei began the process of supplementing hereditary rankholders with competent ‘new men.’³¹ 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 font 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.³² Second, Kotoshikhin detailed the workings of the Privy Chancellery (*Priказ тайных дел*), where the “boyars and *duma* men do not enter . . . and have no jurisdiction.”³³ “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.”³⁴ 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.³⁵ 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.

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 *boiarstvo*. They made hordes of appointments from the ever expanding court in a desperate effort to curry favor. The result can be seen in Figure 4.

³⁰On the *priказ* system, and the importance of these chancelleries in particular, see Peter B. Brown, “Muscovite Government Bureaus,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 10: 3 (1983), pp. 269-330.

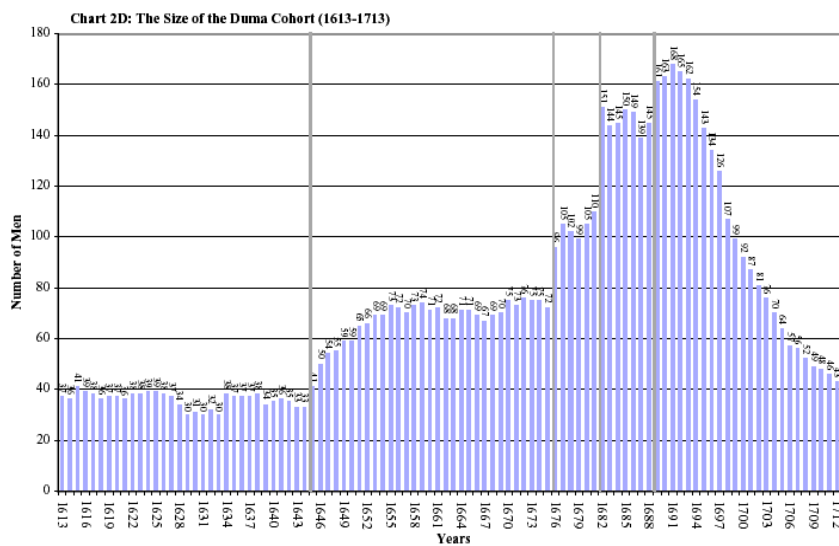
³¹Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors*, p. 28.

³²Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fol. 36.

³³Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fol. 123v.

³⁴Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fol. 124.

³⁵On the existence of such “inner circles” in previous eras, see A. I. Filiushkin, *Istoriia odnoi mistifikatsii: Ivan Groznyi I “Tzbrannaia Rada”* (Moscow: VGU, 1998) and Sergei Bogatyrev, *The Sovereign and His Counsellors. Ritualized Consultations in Muscovite Political Culture, 1350-1570* (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 2000).

Figure 4: the Size of the *Duma* Ranks, 1613-1713.

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. Confusion reigned among the elite; *mestnichestvo*—a nuisance from the point of view of the crown and meaningless from the point of view of the old elite—died an unmourned death.³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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.

The Chancelleries

While the boyar and court elite led Muscovy, chancellery personnel—the *prikaznye liudi*—administered it. They were, as we’ve seen, distinctly second-class citizens at court, ‘employees at will’ serving at the pleasure of the tsar—or not. But the state was growing rapidly in the seventeenth century, and with it the administrative burden of far-flung, complex operations. Since the *prikaz* personnel had needed organizational skill and a deep knowledge of affairs, the elite generally kept them employed and reasonably satisfied—the state could not run without them. If a chancellery man performed well and had the proper connections, he could advance, first, through the administrative ranks (*pod’iachii* to *d’iak*) and, then, to the *duma* (though very rarely and almost always to *dumnyi d’iak*, no further). This *cursus honorum* was steep: only a

³⁶Marshall T. Poe, “The Imaginary World of Semen Koltovskii: Genealogical Anxiety and Falsification in Seventeenth-Century Russia,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 39 (1998), pp. 375-88.

³⁷A. I. Markevich, *Istoriia mestnichestva v Moskovskom gosudarstve v XV-XVII vek* (Odessa: Tip. Odesskago Vestnika, 1888), pp. 572ff.; V. K. Nikol’skii, “Boiarskaia popytka’ 1681 g.,” *Istoricheskie izvestiia izdavaemye Istoricheskim obshchestvom pri Moskovskom universitete* 2 (1917), pp. 57-87; G. Ostrogorsky, “Das Projekt einer Rangtabelle aus der Zeit des Tsaren Fedor Alekseevich,” *Jahrbücher für Kultur und Geschichte der Slaven* 9 (1933), pp. 86-138; M. Ia. Volkov, “Ob otmene mestnichestva v Rossii,” *Istoriia SSSR* (1977), no. 2, pp. 53-67; P. V. Sedov, “O boiarskoi popytke uchrezhdeniia namestnichestv v Rossii v 1681-82 gg.,” *Vestnik LGU* 9 (1985), pp. 25-29; Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, pp. 226-31; and Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, pp. 118-19.

small proportion of all clerks (*pod'iachie*) were made *d'iaki* and *d'iaki* were made *dumnye d'iaki*.³⁸ As we've noted, late in the century some of the *prikaz* people occupied important positions in the government, and one served as *de facto* prime minister. This remarkable shift upward was a reflection of the growing importance of administrative work for the state.

The world of the *prikaz* people was different from that of any other Muscovite in a number of ways. First, the chancellery employees were literate, a fact that differentiated them from even most members of the elite (Kotoshikhin called the latter “unlettered and uneducated”).³⁹ As the century drew to a close, a few of them would even develop a taste for something we might sensibly call ‘literature’ (most all of it imported), a first for Muscovy.⁴⁰ Second, the *prikaz* people worked in offices run in quasi-rational fashion. The chancelleries had many of the trade marks of the classic Weberian bureaucracy: written rules, regular procedures, functional differentiation, reward to merit.⁴¹ This is not, of course, to say that *prikaz* employees were insulated from the winds of nepotism, favoritism and even caprice. Far from it: most *prikaz* people were the sons of *prikaz* officials, all had patrons, and not few were summarily dismissed without cause. Nevertheless, the rudiments of the modern administrative office were all present in the *prikazy*. Finally, chancellery workers lived in Moscow cheek-by-jowl with the elite: the *prikazy* were located in the Kremlin and Kitaigorod and their employees lived in the environs. This proximity gave them access to power that was unimaginable for the typical Russian.

As the interests of the state expanded, so too did the ranks of the *prikazy*.⁴² The number of *prikaz* people grew significantly in the seventeenth century, from a few hundred in 1613 to several thousand in 1689. The vast majority of them were lowly clerks (*pod'iachie*). These men did most of the work in the offices, and their numbers expanded mightily during the century: in 1626 there were around 500 of them in the Moscow offices; by 1698 there were nearly 3000.⁴³ As in all Muscovite institutions, we find hierarchy among the clerks—junior (*mladshii*), middle (*srednii*), and senior (*starshii*). If a man were particularly lucky, he might be appointed to *d'iak*. *D'iaki* ordinarily commanded the chancelleries, serving together with an extra-administrative servitor (usually a man holding *duma* rank). They could be tapped for other services as well, as Kotoshikhin tells us: “they [*d'iaki*] serve as associates of the boyars and *okol'nichie* and *duma* men and closest

³⁸S. K. Bogoiavlenskii, “Prikaznye d'iaki XVII veka,” *Istoricheskie zapiski* 1 (1937), pp. 220-39.; Demidova, *Sluzhilaia biurokratiia*, pp. 23-24.

³⁹Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fol. 35v.

⁴⁰This development is discussed in S. I. Nikolaev, “Poeziia i diplomatiia (iz literaturnoi deiatel'nosti Posol'skogo prikaza v 1670-kh gg.),” *Trudy. Institut russkoi literatury. Leningrad. Otdelenie drevnei literatury* 42, (1989), 143-73 and Edward L. Keenan, *The Kurbskii-Groznyi Apocrypha: the Seventeenth-Century Genesis of the “Correspondence” attributed to Prince A. M. Kurbskii and Tsar Ivan IV* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 84-89.

⁴¹This is emphasized in Peter B. Brown, “Early Modern Russian Bureaucracy: The Evolution of the Chancellery System from Ivan III to Peter the Great, 1478-1717” (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Chicago, 1978); idem, “Muscovite Government Bureaus,” *Russian History* 10:3 (1983), pp. 269-330; and B. Plavsic, “Seventeenth-Century Chanceries and their Staffs,” in D. K. Rowney and W. M. Pintner, eds., *Russian Officialdom: the Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the 17th to the 20th Century* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of Carolina UP, 1980), pp. 19-45.

⁴²On the chancellery personnel and their growth in the seventeenth century, see N. F. Demidova, *Sluzhilaia biurokratiia v Rossii XVII v. i ee rol v formirovanii absolutizma* (Moscow: “Nauka”, 1987); idem, “Gosudarstvennyi apparat Rossii v xvii veke,” *Istoricheskie zapiski* 108 (1982): 109-54; idem, “Biurokratizatsiia gosudarstvennogo apparata absolutizma v xvii-xviii vv.,” in *Absolutizm v Rossii (xvii-xviii vv.). Sbornik statei k semidesiatiletiu so dnia rozhdeniia i sorokapatiletiu nauchnoi i pedagogicheskoi deiatel'nosti B. B. Kafengauza*, ed. N. M. Druzhinin (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), pp. 206-42; and idem, “Prikaznye liudi xvii v. (Sotsial'nyi sostav i istochniki formirovaniia),” *Istoricheskie zapiski* 90 (1972), pp. 332-54.

⁴³Demidova, *Sluzhilaia biurokratiia*, p. 23.

men in the chancelleries in Moscow and in the provinces, and of ambassadors in embassies; and they . . . administer affairs of every kind, and hold trials, and are sent on various missions.”⁴⁴ Like the *pod'iachie*, the numbers of *d'iaki* grew in the seventeenth century: in 1626 there were around 50 serving in the chancelleries; by 1698, there were roughly twice that many.⁴⁵ Of the roughly 800 men who served as *d'iaki* in the century, only 47 ever achieved the exalted status of *dumnyi dvorianin*. These men were super-secretaries: they attended the royal council (though they were required to stand during the proceedings), advised the tsar, and administered the most sensitive affairs.⁴⁶ Of them, 13 achieved the rank of *dumnyi dvorianin*; four, *okol'nichii*; and one, boyar.⁴⁷ Naturally, all of these men were advanced late in the century, after Aleksei Mikhailovich had ‘opened the ranks to merit.’

The number of chancelleries themselves grew in the seventeenth century as well. In the ten years following the accession of Mikhail, the number rose from around 35 to around 50; thereafter, the number varied between 45 and 59.⁴⁸ These figures are, however, misleading on a number of counts. First, most chancelleries were quite short-lived, reflecting the fact that they were often created on an *ad hoc* basis to fulfill a specific mission (for example, the collection of a tax, or the investigation of a particular affair). Only the largest chancelleries administering the most central functions—the Military Service, Service Land, the Ambassadorial and so on—operated continuously throughout the century.

⁴⁴Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fol. 37v.

⁴⁵Demidova, *Sluzhilaia biurokratiia*, p. 23.

⁴⁶Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fol. 33 ff.

⁴⁷See Poe, *The Russian Elite in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. xxx.

⁴⁸On all that follows concerning the *prikazy*, see Brown, “Early Modern Russian Bureaucracy” and idem, “Muscovite Government Bureaus.”

Figure 5: Numbers and Type of Chancelleries Per Decade, 1610s-90s⁴⁹

	1610s	1620s	1630s	1640s	1650s	1660s	1670s	1680s	1690s
CHANCELLERIES OF THE REALM	44	50	48	47	50	54	51	40	46
MILITARY AFFAIRS	12	9	17	15	15	17	15	11	15
• Manpower Mobilization	3	4	5	7	7	4	4	4	5
• Weapons Production	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	5
• Fortification	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
• Finance and Supply	4	1	5	2	3	5	6	3	3
• Prisoner of War Redemption	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	0
• Military Administration	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
FINANCE	12	12	10	11	11	12	12	9	11
• Taxation	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	9	10
• Treasuries	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
• Minting	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0
• Mining	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
SERVICE LAND	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
FELONY PROSECUTION	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
FOREIGN AND COLONIAL AFFAIRS	2	2	3	5	7	9	6	5	5
• Diplomacy	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
• Southern and Western Territories	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	2	2
• Colonial Administration	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
• Judicial Instance for Foreigners	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	1
POSTAL SERVICE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
URBAN AFFAIRS	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1
• Townsmen	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
• Moscow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
• Health Statistics	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
• Social Welfare	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
LITIGATION	7	10	6	5	5	7	7	7	8
• Petitioning	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	0
• Upper and Middle Service Classes	11	13	9	9	9	11	11	11	11
DOCUMENTS AND PRINTED MATTER	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS	3	2	0	1	2	1	1	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	1	8	5	2	2	1	2	1	1
PALACE CHANCELLERIES	10	14	14	13	12	7	8	9	8
COURT AND ITS LANDS	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	3	2
CARE OF THE TSAR	5	5	5	5	3	2	3	2	2
PRECIOUS METALS AND OBJECTS	2	5	5	5	6	3	3	3	3
MEMORIAL SERVICES AND HISTORY	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
PRIVY CHANCELLERIES OF THE TSAR	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	3
ALEKSEI MIKHAILOVICH	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
PETER THE GREAT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
PATRIARCHAL CHANCELLERIES	3	4	3	3	3	4	5	4	4
TOTAL	57	68	65	63	66	66	65	56	61

Though the chancelleries were not officially arranged in any ‘organizational chart,’ we can gauge their administrative

⁴⁹Peter B. Brown, “Bureaucratic Administration in Seventeenth-Century Russia,” in J. Kotilaine and M. Poe, eds., *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003), pp. xxx.

scope by placing them in functional categories. What is most apparent in Figure 5 is the concentration on military and foreign affairs—the *priказы* were primarily instruments of war-making. Most of them were either directly engaged in provisioning the army (the military chancelleries, and we should include the Service Land Chancellery here as well) or funding the army (the financial chancelleries). Though the foreign affairs chancelleries were fewer in number, one of them—the massive Ambassadorial Chancellery—was a locus of state power which controlled far flung territories. Chancelleries in these categories were the largest, best funded, most powerful, and most honorable of all the administrative organs in the central government.

Like the work-a-day lower court nobility, the chancellery personnel grew more powerful during the course of the century for the simple reason that the tsar found their services increasingly indispensable. Modern states cannot operate without relatively efficient—or at minimum, effective—bureaucracies. They collect the taxes, recruit personnel, and organize complex affairs generally. Throughout early modern Europe, states were traveling a road that made them more and more dependent on the offices of well-trained, skilled administrators. So it was in Muscovy. By the close of the century, the status of both administrators and administrative work had risen appreciably. More and more of them were elevated to the royal council, and increasingly hereditary military servitors of very high status (the old boyars and ‘new men’) opted to serve the tsar in the *priказы*.⁵⁰ The once entirely martial ruling class gained a hybrid character, working with near equal frequency in the court, army and offices. It was a common story, one that has parallels in Prussia, France and all other successful early modern states.⁵¹

Other Central Institutions: the ‘Boyar Council’ and ‘Assembly of the Land.’

The tsar, the court and the *priказы* were the central stable elements of Muscovite governance throughout the seventeenth century. This being said, there were two other institutions, quite different in character, that we find in era: the so-called “boyar council” (*boiarskaia дума*) and “assembly of all the land” (*zemskii sobor*). Both have been the subject of considerable controversy. Early historians, with their eyes to the west, saw in them formal counsel and even representative bodies, the Russian analogues to peer councils and parliaments. Later historians called these views into question, noting that both terms were invented by eighteenth-century Russian historians and that there is very little in law or custom that defined the competence or operation of these bodies. With this in mind, let us look at what is known about these institutions today.

The phrase *boiarskaia дума*, though a later coinage, has come to stand for the regular high councils held at the courts of Kievan, Appanage, and particularly Muscovite princes from the ninth to the early eighteenth century.⁵² It appears in

⁵⁰Robert O. Crummey, “The Origins of the Noble Official: The Boyar Elite, 1613-1689,” in D. K. Rowney and W. M. Pintner, eds., *Russian Officialdom: the Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the 17th to the 20th Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), pp. 46-75. Also see Bickford O’Brien, “Muscovite Prikaz Administration of the Seventeenth Century: The Quality of Leadership,” *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 24(1978), pp. 223-35.

⁵¹On the All-European context, see Marshall T. Poe, “The Military Revolution, Administrative Development, and Cultural Change in Early Modern Russia,” *The Journal of Early Modern History* 2:3 (1998), pp. 247-73 and “The Consequences of the Military Revolution in Muscovy in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38:4 (1996), pp. 603-18.

⁵²The literature on the boyar elite (what we have called the *duma* ranks of sovereign’s court) is immense, while studies of the *duma per se* are few (largely due to a lack of sources). The standard treatments, all somewhat dated, are: V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Boiarskaia дума drevnei Rusi. Opyt istorii pravitel’stvennogo uchrezhdeniia v sviazi s istoriei obshchestva*, 3d ed. (Moscow: Sinodal’naia tip., 1902); S. F. Platonov, “Boiarskaia дума—predshestvennitsa senata,” in idem, *Stati po russkoi istorii (1883-1912)* (2nd ed; St. P., 1912), pp. 447-94; V. I.

no medieval or early modern Russian source. The terms “council” (*duma*), “privy council” (*blizhniaia дума*) and “tsar's senate” (*tsarskii sinkliit*) appear in Muscovite sources and refer to a royal council of some sort. In early Muscovy, dependent service families, not princes or independent lords, staffed the council. Consistent with this fact, the council seems to have evolved into an instrument of the prince's private administration (his “patrimony” (*voitchina*)). Officers of the domain (“chiliarchs,” (*tyatskie*)), “major-domos” (*dvoretskie*), “seal-bearers” (*pechatniki*), “treasurers” (*kaznacheia*) are identified among his councilors. Classes appear among the boyars in the council early on: the “privy boyars” (*vedennye boiare*) and “departmental boyars” (*putnye boiare*), for example, are distinguished from all others. These men were probably agents of the prince's private administration, but this is not certain. The competence of the council appears to have been extensive but is indistinguishable from that of the prince. No formal definition of powers is found in any source. Similarly, nothing is known of the internal operation of the council in the early period.

The princely council underwent considerable development in connection with the rise of Muscovy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. To the old Muscovite service families were added immigrants from defeated appanages, the Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Tatar Khanates. These new arrivals were at first given minor positions in the grand princely administration and later, after they had been tested, were given high court rank and served as councillors. Records of this era permit the identification of most of those holding these ranks, something impossible in the Kievan and Appanage periods.⁵³ The evidence suggests that the number of men holding “councilor ranks” (*dumnye chiny*) was small, hovering around 15 members in the years of Ivan III and Vasili III, though it increased in size to about 50 under Ivan IV. In this period the competence of the *duma* — or at least of certain members of the council— is suggested in legislation and legal documents for the first time. The Law Code (*Sudebnik*) of 1497 directs that the “boyars and familiars are to administer justice” (*suditi sud boiaram i okolnichim*), and it is known from surviving cases that they did so.⁵⁴ In like measure, the *duma* seems to have had some legislative authority, as can be seen in the oft-repeated Muscovite formula ‘the lord orders and the boyars affirm’ (*gosudar ukazal i boiare prigovorili*). Despite these hints, the exact boundaries of the *duma's* independent competence, if any, remained unregulated.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century foreigners provided some sketchy evidence of the operation of the council.⁵⁵ They report seeing the council arrayed during ambassadorial audiences. However it is evident that on such occasions the members played highly scripted roles that probably did not reflect the proceeding of ‘private’ council meetings. According to the English Ambassador Giles Fletcher, central and provincial administrators, as well as private suitors, appeared before the *duma* on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at seven in the morning.⁵⁶ The foreigners

Sergeevich, *Drevnosti russkogo prava*. Vol. 2: *Veche i kniaz. Sovetniki kniazia* (3rd. ed.; St. Petersburg, 1908). The best modern treatment is Bogatyrev, *The Sovereign and his Counsellors*.

⁵³On the membership of the *duma* (or at least the identity of those holding *duma* ranks) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see: S. B. Veselovskii, *Issledovaniia po istorii klassa sluzhbilykh zemlevladel'tsev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969); A. A. Zimin, *Formirovanie boiarskoi aristokratii v Rossii v vtoroi polovine XV - pervoi treti XVI v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988); Nancy S. Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics. The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345-1547* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); A. P. Pavlov, *Gosudarev dvor i politicheskaia borba pri Borise Godunove* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992); M. E. Bychkova, *Sostav klassa feodalov Rossii v XVI v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986).

⁵⁴B. D. Grekov, ed., *Sudebniki XV-XVI vekov* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1952), p. 19. Also see Ann M. Kleimola, *Justice in medieval Russia : Muscovite Judgment Charters (pravnye gramoty) of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Philadelphia : American Philosophical Society, vol. 65, 1975).

⁵⁵Poe, *A People Born to Slavery*, pp. xxx.

⁵⁶Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, eds. John V. A. Fine and Richard Pipes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 34-36.

generally dismissed the *duma* as an ineffectual body, but this is not entirely accurate.⁵⁷ The council was very active during the Time of Troubles and succeeded in imposing an oath on tsar Vasilii Shuiskii in 1606. According to Kotoshikhin, a similar oath was taken by Mikhail Romanov in 1613, but this is uncorroborated.⁵⁸

In the seventeenth century, the competence of the council, as well as its exact composition and mode of operation, remained undefined—there was no constitution or even coherent (and inscribed) custom detailing who was (or should be) on it, or what it was to do (other than deliberate with the tsar). Kotoshikhin thoroughly describes general congresses of council members in which affairs were discussed and legislation was considered, affirmed, and sent to the chancelleries for promulgation.⁵⁹ He tells us that “although [Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich] used the title ‘autocrat,’ [he] could do nothing without the boyars’ council.”⁶⁰ His father, in contrast, did quite a bit without their council. He favored smaller groups of familiars (the *blizhnye liudi*) over the mass of courtiers who were coming to occupy the *duma* ranks.⁶¹ By the second half of the century, the number of men who held these ranks was in all probability too large for *all* of them to serve as councilors, and there is no evidence that they did so. The *duma* ranks, as we’ve said, had turned into a source of patronage for weak monarchs and thus the councilors—at least most of them—were deprived of their council.

The history of the *zemskii sobor* is just as controversial and murky.⁶² The phrase itself was coined by the radical Slavophile Konstantin Aksakov around 1850.⁶³ It is found in no Muscovite source. Nineteenth-century Russian historians of a liberal bent tried their best to make out of the thin evidence a ‘proto-parliamentary’ body that—but for the unbridled power of self-seeking tsars and boyars—might have led Russia to enlightened liberal democracy. More sober historians, focusing on the evidence rather than projecting their fantasies on bygone eras, contradicted this rosy interpretation. The battle continues.

What can be said with confidence is this.⁶⁴ Some sort of popular assembly was first called by Ivan IV and, thereafter, occasionally by his successors. The regime of Mikhail Romanov—weak and attempting to establish its legitimacy—seemed particularly fond of them (he was ‘elected’ by one), though his father was not. Though the assemblies (usually called *sobory*) could be assigned very specific tasks—for example, ratification of the *Ulozhenie* of 1649 (called ‘*Sobornoe*’

⁵⁷Poe, *A People Born to Slavery*, pp. xxx.

⁵⁸Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fols. 184-85v.

⁵⁹Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fol. 35v-36.

⁶⁰Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fols. 185v-86.

⁶¹Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii*, fols. 36-36v.

⁶²On the historiography of the *zemskii sobor*, see L. V. Cherepnin, *Zemskie sobory russkogo gosudarstva v XVI-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), pp. 5-47 and Peter B. Brown, “The *Zemskii Sobor* in Recent Soviet Historiography,” *Russian History* 10:1 (1983), pp. 77-90.

⁶³K. S. Aksakov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii K. S. Aksakova*, 3 vols. (Moscow: P. Bakhmetev, 1861–80), vol. 1, p. 11.

⁶⁴The following is drawn from: Ellerd Hulbert, “Sixteenth-Century Russian Assemblies of the Land: Their Composition, Organization, and Competence” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1970); Hans-Joachim Torke, *Die staatsbedingte Gesellschaft im moskauer Reich: Zar und Zemlja in der altrussischen Herrschaftsverfassung 1613-1689* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); L. V. Cherepnin, *Zemskie sobory russkogo gosudarstva v XVI-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978); Ira L. Campbell, “The Composition, Character and Competence of the Assembly of the Land in Seventeenth-Century Russia” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1984); and Donald Ostrowskii, “The Assembly of the Land as a Representative Institution,” in J. Kotilaine and M. Poe, eds., *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003), pp. xxx.

because it was affirmed by a *sobor*)—they were generally organized by the government to take stock of opinion on affairs domestic and international.

The composition of the assemblies was never set, though they appear to have had two salient characteristics—they were elite (almost entirely composed of high-born military servitors) and they were *ad hoc* (the government often simply gathered servitors and clerics already in Moscow). Some were large—several hundred delegates; others were small—several dozen delegates. The assemblies were not regularly conferred according to any schedule. Rather, they seem to have been called in moments of doubt or crisis. Delegates almost always support the government; there was no forceful ‘debate’ as far as we know. Their exact competence—like the royal council—was never defined in law or custom, though they were consulted on a wide range of affairs. As we can see in Figure 6, some acclaimed tsars, others declared war, while others still adopted legislation.

Figure Six: Seventeenth-Century ‘Assemblies of the Land’ and their Activities⁶⁵

Year	Primary Activity
1613	chose Mikhail as tsar
1614	advised on stopping movements of Zarutskii and the cossacks
1616	discussed conditions of peace with Sweden and a monetary levy
1617	advised on a monetary levy
1619	advised on raising of Filaret to the patriarchal throne
1621	advised on war with Poland
1622	advised on war with Poland
1632	advised on the collection of money for the Polish campaign
1634	advised on the collection of money and on the Polish campaign
1637	advised on an invasion of the Crimean Khan Sefat Girey and the collection of money
1639	advised on response to Crimean treatment of two Muscovite envoys
1642	recommended support of Don Cossacks in relation to the taking of Azov
1645	chose Aleksei as tsar
1648	advised the composition of a new law code
1648-49	<i>Ulozhenie sobor</i>
1650	advised on the movement of people into Pskov
1651	advised on Russo-Polish relations and Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi
1653	advised on war with Poland and support of Zaporozhian Cossacks
1681-82	advised on military, financial, and land reforms.
1682	chose Peter as tsar (April 27); chose Peter and Ivan as co-tsars (May)
1683-84	advised on peace with Poland

⁶⁵Ostrowskii, “The Assembly of the Land,” pp. xxx.

Delegates were called as a matter of service obligation (and sometimes viewed said service as onerous), not as a matter of ‘right.’ Neither in years without assemblies, nor in the year they were extinguished finally, was there any protest or even mention of them in Muscovite sources. Foreigners, who were often careful observers of Russian politics, very rarely note them and when they do attribute little importance to them.⁶⁶

Concluding Remarks

In the end, the seventeenth-century Muscovite state proved to be quite robust. Even after it was almost totally taken apart in the malestrom of the Time of Troubles, the triptych tsar-court-*priказы* re-emerged rapidly and in full form. The ruling class wasted no time or effort on costly government experimentation in 1613. It simply picked itself up and got down to business. And its business was rule, plain and simple. For the tsar, his court and the men of offices, the entire point of the state was to rule over others and live off them. Never was this point seriously questioned. One must admire the single-minded purpose this sort of concentration bespeaks. While other early modern states (whatever their form) might pursue any number of goals—fostering science, patronizing the arts, educating the public, spreading the Good Word—the Muscovite elite focused nearly all its energy in ruling others or conquering others so that they might rule them. Domination was their *raison d’être*.

As the century closed, this focus was, for good or ill, lost. Peter and his cohort were enamored of a different vision of the state and its goals, one that was as new to Russia as it was profoundly alien to the Muscovite spirit. Aleksei Mikhailovich could no more have said he was the ‘first servant of the state’ than he could have sworn off the Orthodox faith. He could not serve the state because he owned the state. It was his instrument to do with as his master—God in Heaven—commanded. Neither could his servitors have said they were serving anything like the ‘common good.’ Such a thing was impossible, for they were honorable men and truly honorable men served only God and his representative, the tsar. As for the rest—all those who were neither tsars nor servants of tsars—they just didn’t matter.

⁶⁶Poe, *A People Born To Slavery*, pp. xxx.

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