Between the late fifteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth, Muscovite Russian society became solidified into a rigid, legally defined hierarchy. Social status, as codified in the Ulozhenie of 1649, became hereditary: the child followed the father as government servitor, urban taxpayer, or serf. Most historians have focused upon this process at the bottom, in the enserfment of the Russian peasantry. The thesis of this article is that the top levels of Russian society were the first to suffer subjugation to the service of the state. And in gaining control over the elite, the emerging Muscovite autocracy made use of a variety of instruments of social control that were subsequently adapted and applied in bringing about the subordination of the lower strata of society.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the grand princes had succeeded in making service to the Muscovite ruler the prerequisite for advancement for both individuals and families. In establishing the principle of service, Moscow's rulers had the backing and cooperation of organized religion. After secular support had helped to bring about the victory of the central church establishment over the non-possessors in the early sixteenth century, the church, despite its emphasis on "parallelism" and the "symphony" of the spiritual and temporal powers, collaborated unreservedly with the secular authorities. The tsar was God's supreme agent on earth, and it was the duty of all Christians to serve him faithfully and unquestioningly.

Such moral pronouncements undoubtedly found a receptive audience in the members of the old Muscovite boiar clans that had been the principal support of the grand princes in the struggles of the fifteenth century. For members of the Muscovite elite, taking service with appanage princes or the church

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was considered a "degradation" and appears to have happened infrequently.\(^2\) Conversely, those who held high rank in the appanages subsequently paid a high price for their eminence, since they found it very difficult to advance along the Muscovite service ladder once the appanages were liquidated.\(^3\) Even more important, the origins of the untitled Moscow boiar families did not provide a basis for preferring one clan over another, and their claims to status and rewards rested primarily upon service.\(^4\) Thus, weight attached to service rather than birth would promote their interests.

But perhaps the greatest advantage enjoyed by Moscow's rulers in defining their relationship vis-à-vis the elite in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries lay in the heterogeneous nature of the growing service class. As part of the policy of state expansion, the grand princes encouraged the more able and ambitious members of the local elites to transfer their allegiance to Moscow rather than to remain in the service of their former lords. By the late fifteenth century it was already clear that the path to advancement for individuals and families lay in their service to the Muscovite ruler, and thereafter the more ambitious and enterprising of the service elite fought for appointments that would keep them near the sovereign, close to the source of influence, power, and rewards.

Thus, princes and boiars from the former appanage territories, West Russian "service princes" from the Lithuanian borderlands, and loyal Tatars all flocked to the grand prince's court, where they competed for favor with members of the old untitled Muscovite boiar clans.\(^5\) Although many such

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\(^3\) A. A. Zimin, "Dmitrovskii udel i udel'nyi dvor vo vtoroi polovine XV-pervoi treti XVI v.,” *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie distsipliny*, 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), 194-95, and "Udel'nye kniaz'ia i ikh dvory vo vtoroi polovine XV i pervoi po polovine XVI v.,” in *Istoriia i genealogia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), p. 188.
