

Muscovite “Citizenship”: Rights without Freedom*

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Where the arbitrary will of one individual constitutes the highest law . . . there exists a state (*gosudarstvo*) but not a country. There exist subjects, but no citizens. (FONVIZIN)

I see the subjects of the tsar,
But where are the citizens of the country?
(PRINCE P. V. VIAZEMSKII)¹

As is its wont, the historiographic pendulum continues to sway back and forth in the field of Muscovite history; but instead of diminishing, the distance between its defining extremes is growing. On one end of the pendulum’s arc, a growing collection of work questions the standard despotic, state-centered story of Muscovite autocratic rule. In the vanguard of this movement among Western historians, J. L. H. Keep, Horace W. Dewey, and Hans-Joachim Torke explored the mechanisms by which society and state communicated in Muscovy and the ways in which society was empowered to participate in economic, social, and political negotiation with the state. These and other scholars opened these areas for investigation while never overlooking the controlling power of the centralizing state.² In the late 1980s and 1990s, the preponderance of schol-

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¹ Both quoted in C. S. Ingerflom, “Oublier l’état pour comprendre la Russie?” *Revue des études slaves* 66 (1994): 131.

² Hans-Joachim Torke, *Die staatsbedingte Gesellschaft im moskauer Reich: Zar und Zemlja in der altrussischen Herrschaftsverfassung, 1613–1689* (Leiden, 1974); Horace W. Dewey, “Charters of Local Government under Tsar Ivan IV,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 14 (1966): 10–20, and “The 1550 *Sudebnik* as an Instrument of Reform,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 10 (1962): 161–80; and J. L. H. Keep, “Bandits and the Law in Muscovy,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 35 (1956): 201–22, and “The Muscovite Elite and the Approach to Pluralism,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 36 (1970): 201–32. For an insightful review of nineteenth-century Russian scholarship on the role of society in Muscovy or the relationship between state

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arly publications in the United States seemed to swing in this direction, moving even farther toward a more emphatically revisionist view of Muscovite autocracy. This view, most forcefully articulated by Nancy Shields Kollmann, presented the Muscovite autocracy as one tempered by religious morality and by the practical need to build consensus and support at least among its elites, if not among its broader population.³ At the other end of the pendulum's arc, a few important recent contributions challenge this "soft" view of Muscovy and militantly reassert the older notion that Muscovite rule was despotic and the society compliant and servile. Thus, Marshall Poe urges us to take seriously Western travelers' impressions of Muscovites as "a people born to slavery" and leads us to wonder what the Russians meant when they called themselves "Slaves of the Tsar." Similarly, Richard Hellie poses the question, "Why did the Muscovite elite not rebel?" and answers his own query with a list of the ways in which Muscovite autocratic and religious institutions kept society in a state of abject subjection. "There seems little doubt that, in comparison to European notables, the elite of Muscovy was seriously abased."⁴

The problem that still faces us all is to find some common ground between these two images: a knout-wielding state and servile population on one side, and, on the other, a cohesive state and society bound by common notions of dignity, piety, and order. Both pictures have been powerfully argued and have surface validity, and yet it is difficult to reconcile the two.⁵ Rather than indulge

and society, see Gary Hamburg, "Inventing the 'State School' of Historians," in *The Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State*, ed. Thomas Sanders (Armonk, N.Y., 1999), pp. 98–117.

³ Nancy Shields Kollmann, *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1999), and *Kinship and Politics: The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345–1547* (Stanford, Calif., 1987). Related views are found in Michael Flier, "Breaking the Code: The Image of the Tsar in the Muscovite Palm Sunday Ritual," in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. Michael S. Flier and Daniel Rowland (Berkeley, 1994), 2:213–42; Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," *Russian Review* 45 (1986): 115–81; Valerie A. Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces: Muscovite Gentry and Political Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Stanford, Calif., 1997); and Daniel Rowland, "Did Muscovite Literary Ideology Place Any Limits on the Power of the Tsar?" *Russian Review* 49 (1990): 125–56, "Ivan the Terrible as a Carolingian Renaissance Prince," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995): 594–606, and "The Problem of Advice in Muscovite Tales about the Time of Troubles," *Russian History* 6 (1979): 259–83.

⁴ Richard Hellie, "Thoughts on the Absence of Elite Resistance in Muscovy," *Kritika* n.s., 1 (2000): 6, and "Why Did the Muscovite Elite Not Rebel?" *Russian History* 25 (1998): 155–62; Marshall Poe, "What Did Russians Mean When They Called Themselves 'Slaves of the Tsar'?" *Slavic Review* 57 (1998): 585–608. Poe's book, *A People Born to Slavery": Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476–1748* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000), takes a slightly different approach to the meaning of slavery in Muscovy, a view more in line with that presented here.

⁵ This debate draws on some important antecedents in Russian scholarship and has

in polemics that would further polarize the discussion, I hope to reach a productive synthesis of the "hard" and "soft" interpretations through a new way of thinking about the problem of state and society in Muscovy. In attempting to answer the challenging questions of the hard-line "neodespotic school," I offer here a thought experiment applying the unlikely category of "citizenship" to the Muscovite context. Citizenship has offered one of the most important tools for understanding relations between states and societies in Western Europe and in the modern period, but it has not been applied to historical studies of monarchies and certainly not to the famously autocratic Muscovite tsardom. In holding Muscovy up to the standards of citizenship, we may discern more clearly what Muscovite political relations were and what they were not. The point of the exercise is to address some of the fundamental questions that haunt Muscovite historiography, questions of how subjects of the tsar conceived of themselves and of their role in the tsar's realm. Acknowledging from the start that the notion of citizenship in Muscovy is counterintuitive (and, ultimately, anachronistic and inapplicable), I nonetheless ask the reader to suspend disbelief and follow this exercise in the hope of opening new ways to understand the long-term successes of the Muscovite state.

Building on the existing literature, particularly Kollmann's elegant treatment of "strategies of integration in an autocracy," this analysis draws on extensive evidence to argue that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Muscovites of all degrees expressed a powerful sense of membership, participation, and

drawn in a number of contemporary Russian historians in recent years. However, it has been most actively engaged by Western European and North American scholars. In Poe's terms, the debate pits a "Harvard School of Muscovite studies" against its critics (see Marshall Poe, review of *By Honor Bound*, by Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Russian Review* 59 (2000): 299–300). Some Russian antecedents of the consensus/consultation approach include I. I. Ditianin, "Rol' chelobitii i zemskikh soborov v upravlenii Moskovskogo gosudarstva," *Russkaia mysl'* 5 (1880); and V. E. Val'denberg, *Drevnerusskie ucheniia o predelakh tsarskoi vlasti* (Petrograd, 1916). Current expressions of this approach include M. M. Krom, "Politicheskii krizis 30–40-kh godov XVI veta (postanovka problemy)," *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 5 (1998): 3–19; V. I. Karpets, "Verkhovnaia vlast' v Rossii XVI–XVII vv.," *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, no. 9 (1985): 108–114, and "Samoupravlenie v Rossii v XVI-seredine XVII v.," in *Instituty samoupravleniia: Istoriko-pravoe issledovanie*, ed. L. S. Mamut (Moscow, 1995), pp. 146–58; and Sergei Bogatyrev, *The Sovereign and His Counsellors: Ritualised Consultations in Muscovite Political Culture, 1350s–1570s* (Saarijärvi, 2000). Class analyses and studies of the Muscovite "estate-representative monarchy" from the Soviet period suggest some degree of enfranchisement and participation. See, e.g., L. V. Cherepnin, *Zemskie sobory russkogo gosudarstva v XVI–XVII vv.* (Moscow, 1978); and N. E. Nosov, *Stanovlenie soslovno-predstavitel'nykh uchrezhdenii v Rossii: Izyskaniia o zemskoi reforme Ivana Groznogo* (Leningrad, 1969). Support for the despotic view is also common in Russian works. See, e.g., V. B. Kobrin and A. L. Iurganov, "Stanovlenie despoticheskogo samodержaviiia v srednevekovoi Rusi," *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 4 (1991).

entitlement.⁶ They expressed these claims collectively and individually through a variety of means, using words and actions: grievances, pilgrimages, incantations, and petitions. If pushed too far, they moved to rebellion to assert claims to which they felt entitled through their membership in the polity. More routinely, Muscovites articulated their claims on the state through litigation or through other means of invoking the protection of legal norms and processes. This formulation—a society actively claiming membership, entitlement, and participation through legal institutions and norms and vigorously asserting those claims when the state violated them—brings us to a point where the term “citizenship” might begin to apply. The idea of citizenship pushes beyond the notion of social integration suggested in the revisionist literature to date. If applicable, it would support a stronger recasting of Muscovite rule as a system built on broad inclusion, active membership, and participation of all classes of people—to some extent even of peasants and slaves. However, the suggestion that slaves be included within the umbrella of Muscovite citizenship raises serious doubts about the entire model and will bring this discussion full circle, to a conclusion that directly addresses Poe’s and Hellie’s questions about the meaning of slavery in Muscovy, and hence to the relationship between citizenship and freedom.

There are many definitions of citizenship from which to choose. Most studies of modern citizenship define the term along the lines of “a personal status consisting of a body of universal rights (i.e., legal claims on the state) and duties held equally by all legal members of a nation-state.”⁷ Following T. H. Marshall, many recent scholars also accept that citizenship goes beyond purely

⁶ Kollmann, *By Honor Bound* (n. 3 above), pp. 169–202.

⁷ Margaret R. Somers, “Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere: Law, Community, and Political Culture in the Transition to Democracy,” *American Sociological Review* 58 (1993): 588. See also Somers’s more recent piece, “The Privatization of Citizenship: How to Unthink a Knowledge Culture,” in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, 1999), pp. 121–64; and Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). The concept of citizenship in imperial Russia and the Soviet Union has attracted considerable attention in recent publications; see, e.g., Jane Burbank, “Legal Culture, Citizenship, and Peasant Jurisprudence: Perspectives from the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Reforming Justice in Russia, 1864–1996: Power, Culture, and the Limits of Legal Order*, ed. Peter H. Solomon, Jr. (Armonk, N.Y., 1997); David Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens: A Comparative Perspective,” *Revolutionary Russia* 9 (1996): 43–81; and the “Discussion” in *Slavic Review* 59 (2000) (the articles in the discussion are Josh Sanborn, “The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation: A Reexamination,” pp. 267–89; Scott J. Seregny, “Zemstvos, Peasants, and Citizenship: The Russian Adult Education Movement and World War I,” pp. 290–315; S. A. Smith, “Citizenship and the Russian Nation during World War I: A Comment,” pp. 316–29; and replies by Sanborn and Seregny, pp. 330–42).

political and legal rights and includes as well civil and social rights and entitlements, "the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society."⁸ To test the relevance of citizenship to the Muscovite case, one would have to break this definition into its component parts and establish the relevance of each element in Muscovy. Thus, the task ahead consists of establishing (1) that subjects of the tsar conceived of themselves as members of a polity; (2) that their right to membership was a recognized and universal right (i.e., that their claims to membership could not be negated, ignored, or trivialized by the state or by others); (3) that membership conferred a right to some degree of political participation; (4) that their social rights included a claim to social justice and minimal economic security; (5) that they all equally owed duties and enjoyed universal civil, legal, political, and social rights; and (6) that their claims on the state and the state's claims on them were articulated and enforced through universal legal norms.

I

Did subjects of the Muscovite tsar conceive of themselves as members of a single polity or of a broader Muscovite political community? The explicitly political relationship that Muscovites expressed most often and called on most strongly was a direct link upward to the sovereign. Muscovites routinely called on the tsar in ways that emphasized a relationship of belonging, not to a horizontal community but to the tsar himself. "Sovereign, tsar, and grand prince, I, your slave [or your orphan, or your pilgrim], petition you." These were the standard salutations in Muscovite petitions, which articulated a sense of belonging to the tsar and hence claiming membership in the community of his dependents, with a right to his protective attention. Of the several terms for "slave," one particular word, *kholop*, was reserved for members of the noble elite and connoted a privileged status. The same sense of belonging and status emerges in the altogether nonformulaic setting of an altercation in 1627, when one man warned another during a fight: "Don't bother me. I am the sovereign's man (*muzhik*), and my beard is also the sovereign's."⁹ Although his declaration landed him in court, facing charges of *lèse majesté*, he apparently assumed

⁸ T. H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," in his *Class, Citizenship and Social Development* (New York, 1964), p. 72.

⁹ N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Slovo i delo gosudarevy*, vol. 1 of 2. Published as *Zapiski Moskovskago arkheologicheskogo instituta*, vol. 14, document no. 43 (Moscow, 1911), p. 49. Here and elsewhere, I would like to thank my anonymous reviewer for useful observations.

that belonging to the tsar conferred on him, and his beard, a particular inviolability and entitled him to make certain claims to dignity and protection. Like the sovereign's coins, seals, documents, and palaces, protected by law from the least violation, the sovereign's bondsman, as part of the sovereign's property, basked in the sovereign's protective aura.

The verticality of this tsar-centered political imagination differs sharply from the horizontality that is characteristic of modern national identification. Benedict Anderson writes, "The nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship."¹⁰ Muscovites' vertical vision sits at odds with this modern criterion for national identification but nonetheless expresses a powerful sense of identification with a political entity. Because the tsar stood for the polity, the powerful vertical relationship with the sovereign was inherently political and not just religious, devotional, or personal.¹¹ Identifying oneself as belonging to the tsar was inherently a political act of identifying oneself with the Muscovite polity. The person of the grand prince or tsar defined both nation, in the premodern sense of the polity or broadly inclusive political community, and state.¹² This isomorphism is born out in the political history of Muscovy. In the absence of a tsar, the nation—that is, the collective of people who identified themselves as Muscovites or as subjects of the tsar—mobilized to reconstitute either the state, the tsar (in the person of various pretenders), or both at once.

Beyond the vertical lines of connection between tsar and people, Muscovites invoked other kinds of horizontal or crisscrossing bonds more in keeping with Anderson's requirements for constituting a national polity. In petitions and collective actions, Muscovites identified themselves with various horizontal communities within the tsardom: sometimes with the people of their own rank, sometimes with the people of their own region, and sometimes, more broadly, with "Orthodox Christians," "people of all ranks," or "all the land." Kollmann's investigation of the concept of *obshchestvo* (society) shows that while Muscovite Russians lacked a coherent, stable concept of society as a whole, they "used myriad ways to describe the social community larger than their

¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), p. 7.

¹¹ Ingerflom, defining the Romanov system not as a state but as a *gosudarstvo*, a possession or emanation of the sovereign, makes the startling proposal that we "forget the state" in order to understand Russia ("Oublier l'état pour comprendre la Russie?" p. 129).

¹² Here I am using the term "nation" carefully, defining it as a collectivity that is broadly inclusive of the whole political community, as opposed to a partial or local community identity. Thus, "nation" does not yet carry the modern connotation of a community with the right to govern itself or as the ultimate source of political legitimacy. Nor does it carry ethnic connotations, at least in the Russian case. Elsewhere, I use the less theoretically laden terms "polity" or "political community." My thanks to Ron Suny for helping me through these rocky terminological shoals.

local and familial world." "Individuals presented themselves as embedded in many networks—family, household, locality, social rank (Orthodox religion was perhaps implicit for most). . . . Family, patronage, dependence, village or town, the comradeship of social rank gave sustenance and stability to individuals in Muscovy, far more than did the central institutions of the state or the myth of the tsar's patrimonial kindness."¹³

Kollmann suggests that a strong, self-aware national community had yet to emerge in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, that a community waving a banner as "Russians" or "Muscovites" would have had little meaning at that time. But, as she acknowledges, moments of crisis easily, if fleetingly, generated or brought to the surface more general concepts of political community in a broadly inclusive sense. Banner-waving regiments did indeed march forth to battle in the name of some powerful mobilizing collectives in this period, and not only those regiments formally mustered by the tsarist regime but also numerous autonomous or semiautonomous armies. The renegade Cossack Ermak and his company marched under the banner of the Archangel Michael and in the name of a tsar who had repudiated their entire enterprise, and they conquered Siberia in the name of God and tsar.¹⁴ The butcher Kuz'ma Minin and Prince Andrei Pozharskii organized in the name of God, the Muscovite Realm, and "all the Russian land" to liberate Muscovy from foreign invaders and reestablish a tsar on the throne.

The Time of Troubles, when "widowed" Moscow, languishing without a tsar on the throne, fell to the Poles, provides particularly vivid illustrations of the concepts of inclusive political community that could motivate early modern Russians to active self-sacrifice.¹⁵ Various seventeenth-century tales record Minin's miraculous vision of St. Sergei, "protector of the Muscovite realm and the entire Russian Land." The saint instructs the butcher to "collect money and assemble armed men" and to "cleanse the Muscovite realm." Before a gathered crowd of townspeople, Minin proclaims: "The Muscovite realm and other cities, great and small, are all being destroyed by the godless. Honorable peo-

¹³ Nancy Shields Kollmann, "Concepts of Society and Social Identity in Early Modern Russia," in *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Samuel H. Baron and Nancy Shields Kollmann (DeKalb, Ill., 1997), pp. 42, 44.

¹⁴ *Ermak's Campaign in Siberia: A Selection of Documents*, trans. from the Russian by Tatiana Minorsky and David Wileman, ed. Terence Armstrong (London, 1975); R. G. Skrynnikov, *Sibirskaiia ekspeditsiia Ermaka* (Novosibirsk, 1982); and, on Ermak's banners, Daniel Rowland, "Biblical Military Imagery in the Political Culture of Early Modern Russia," in Flier and Rowland, eds. (n. 3 above), pp. 193, 198, and pl. 10.

¹⁵ For example, "Should our reigning city, Moscow, be long widowed?" (*Pamiatniki istorii Nizhnegorodskogo dvizheniia v epokhu Smuty i zemskago opolocheniia, 1611–1612 gg.*, comp. P. P. Todorskii and E. Turaeva, ed. S. V. Rozhdestvenskii [Nizhni Novgorod, 1912], 11:447; my translation).

ple, from great lords to simple people, are all being cut down, and of these misfortunes it is impossible to speak." Lamenting the destruction of "almost all the Russian land," Minin implores his fellow townsmen to "devote all our goods and wealth to God's will . . . and to be ready to lay our own heads on the line for the Christian faith."¹⁶ Minin uses a synergistic combination of religious and more pragmatic arguments to rouse his neighbors to concrete action. Having made the religious case for cleansing the land, he adds: "What does our wealth do for us? It will only awaken the pagans' envy, and they will come and take our city, and they won't delay in treating us like all the other cities."¹⁷ A common plight unites Russian towns and people in self-defense.

The mobilizing power of God and country indicates a sense of political community that could be set into motion, even if it lay dormant most of the time. Muscovites paid taxes, served in the tsar's armies, litigated in the tsar's courts, and prayed for the tsar during church services.¹⁸ Even for those in the remote provinces and for the lowest among them, the experience of belonging to the tsar and of being part of the community of subjects of the tsar was very immediate, and the vocabulary of belonging was readily available.

II

If Muscovites of various social degrees imagined themselves to be part of a vertical and horizontal community, did they also imagine that such status brought with it recognition of their membership, and did such recognition matter? In other words, did they express in any way a sense that their claims to membership could not and should not be negated, ignored, or trivialized? Quite strikingly, Muscovites of all ranks asserted their right to be acknowledged as part of a community. Kollmann's work on honor demonstrates the urgency with which Muscovites defended their proper standing within the universe of ranks and characters that made up their community, their Muscovite world.¹⁹ In 1648, members of the Moscow taxpaying collective and the distant Tomsk community similarly claimed their rights as members of the tsar's realm to address him directly and to obtain redress against the corruption

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 428, 429.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

¹⁸ When Muscovites refused to pray for the tsar, they were making a deliberate and explicitly political statement, divorcing themselves from the political/religious community of subjects. In Solovki, the site of a prolonged rebellion against tsar and church, "neither priests nor parishioners prayed for the health of the tsar and his family," and peasants "collectively refused to swear the oath of allegiance" (Georg B. Michels, *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Russia* [Stanford, Calif., 1999], p. 171).

¹⁹ Kollmann, *By Honor Bound* (n. 3 above), pp. 95–168.

and abuses of their local governor. When the tsar refused to accept their petition, they rebelled.²⁰ Behind every supplication lay an assumption that the tsar owed his subjects both his attention and his aid. The most official recognition and protection of Muscovites' collective and inherent right to be part of their natal community was the practice of ransoming captives from raiding neighbors. Vast amounts of money were collected from the subjects of the tsar and expended on recovering their captive brothers and sisters. This explicit recognition of community contained mechanisms for deepening and widening a sense of identification within the community of taxpayers as a whole and of formalizing an obligation of the polity to its Christian subjects.²¹

The encounter with neighboring states over the recovery of prisoners of war demonstrates that the official institutions of state operated with a sense of obligation to act in defense of its Christian members. Thanks to Michael Khodarkovsky's pathbreaking study of the imperial frontier, we can assert that the non-Christian, non-Russian peoples who were successively incorporated into the empire made the same kinds of membership claims. As dependents of the tsar, subject khans expected protection from enemies and guarantees of ample pastureland and supplies. The tone of such demands illustrates the sense of entitlement and the common language of moral obligation that lay behind them. The state reciprocated by acknowledging an obligation to protect and defend its new populations, using the same language in return. In response to a Nogay request that some Astrakhan nobles be dismissed, Ivan IV wrote: "We cannot remove them because we took Astrakhan and appointed our governors there, and we gave our word to the Astrakhan nobles that they would be protected. . . . If we remove them . . . in foreign lands some would say that we did not keep our word, that the two faiths could not live in peace, and that the Christian sovereign was destroying the Muslims. And it is written in our Christian books that it is not allowed to convert to our faith by force; people should have whichever faith they wish."²² Khodarkovsky notes that, in taking nomadic peoples under its sovereign control, the Muscovite state committed itself to protect them. "This was far easier said than done, since the open frontier and the mobility of the nomads prevented the government from being able to exercise an efficient control over the nomadic peoples. Such inability to prevent the mutual hostile raids among its purported subjects had served to undermine the government's credibility and to force the nomadic peoples to look for other

²⁰ Valerie A. Kivelson, "'The Devil Stole His Mind': The Tsar and the 1648 Moscow Uprising," *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 733–56; N. N. Pokrovskii, *Tomsk, 1648–1649 gg. Voevodskaia vlast' i zemskie miry* (Novosibirsk, 1989).

²¹ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington, Ind., 2002), pp. 19–25. (My thanks for permission to read his work prior to publication.)

²² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

alliances, which did not always coincide with Russia's interests."²³ Membership in the tsardom, whether for Orthodox Slavs or Muslim nomads, conferred a valuable, practical basis for entitlement claims, which, if not honored, could cause political disaffection.

III

Definitions of citizenship require not only that citizens and the state reciprocally recognize membership in the polity but also that membership confer some degree of participation in the political life of the realm. Muscovite sources record a variety of manifestations of political participation. The Muscovite government, at least from the early sixteenth century on, presented itself to its public as interested in popular sentiment, responsive to popular initiative, and eager to involve its populace in its own governance. The chronicles that attempt to make sense of Ivan the Terrible's threat to abandon the throne in December 1564 and his return to Moscow the following month assure us that he responded to popular pressure to return from Aleksandrovskaiia sloboda and resume his office. They insisted, "How can sheep be without a shepherd?"²⁴ Whether accepting petitions or soliciting advice at assemblies of all the land, the government performed an ongoing drama of consultation that provided a vehicle for political participation. In affirming the people's right to have their voices heard, the tsar acknowledged their active membership in the political life of the realm. In ignoring their opinions once heard, the tsar acted on the particularly Muscovite variant of participatory politics that limited political participation to consultation, supplication, indignation, and riot.

After the extinction of the Riurikid line of tsars, the collective will of the people assumed a role as an element in the selection and confirmation of new tsars. The voice of the land was understood as an embodiment of divine choice. Toward the end of the Time of Troubles, the people of the middle Volga region articulated this sense of popular will as an expression of divine choice. In a communiqué sent to the military leadership at the siege of Moscow, the military servitors and provincial residents, as well as the non-Russian Tatars, Chiuvas, Cheremis, and Votiaks of the Kazan region, swore to stand together with the pro-Muscovite forces, "in love and counsel and unity," "for the sake of the true Christian faith" and "the house of the Most Pure Mother of God." They described their common foe as "destroyers of our Christian faith, . . . the Polish and Lithuanian people, and Russian bandits (*vory*)." They resolved to "stand firmly until God gives us someone as sovereign in the Muscovite realm, and

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

²⁴ *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (St. Petersburg, 1904), 13:392–93.

[until] a Sovereign of the whole land of the Russian State will be chosen by us for the Muscovite Realm."²⁵ God's will and popular choice would work together to guarantee the proper choice. In their formulation, the writers insisted that the selection process should include all interested parties and should not allow one group to overshadow or disenfranchise the others: "If the Cossacks choose a Sovereign for the Muscovite state according to their own will alone, without relying on all the land, we don't want that sovereign for the realm."²⁶

Collective petitions evoked this element of popular choice again in 1648, with a suggestion that what "all the land" conferred, it might also take away. This valorization of popular choice and popular wisdom was not confined to the language of opposition and rebellion. It was a fundamental feature of the tsarist regime's self-presentation. Major revisions of law or policy were broadly discussed at assemblies of "people of all ranks," systematically or unsystematically called together in Moscow to consider the issues at hand. Whether or not such assemblies had any substantive input in the decision-making process, the practice of consultation was very public and very much part of the regime's own public image.

Acknowledging the important role of consultation and popular opinion, official decrees were issued with preambles stating that the grand prince had undertaken such legislation in response to petitions received. Purportedly in response to local pressure, Vasili III and Ivan IV devolved local policing and tax assessment and collection onto locally selected agents of village communities. By this means, local governance became, at times, oppressively participatory. Participation was not only allowed; it was mandatory, with the knout as enforcer. Even after the institutions of local self-administration were subordinated to a centrally appointed governor and then gradually phased out, local participation remained a crucial element in local administration. The town and village elders remained the spokespeople, chief witnesses, and intermediaries between local and central institutions; local town square scribes wrote

²⁵ "Stoiati na krepko do tekh mest, kogo nam dast' Bog na Moskovskoe gosudar'stvo Gosudaria; a vybrati by nam na Moskovskoe gosudar'stvo Gosudaria vseiu zemleiu Rossiiskiiia Derzhavy" (*Akty, sobrannye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh Rossiiskoi imperii Arkheograficheskoiu ekspeditseiu imperatorskoi Akademii nauk* [St. Petersburg, 1836], vol. 2, no. 197, p. 246). This volume contains a number of documents expressing a quest for solidarity, called "love and counsel and unity," among the Russian people during the Time of Troubles. Others indicate the ongoing concern with elevating the proper person as sovereign, someone selected by both God and popular acclamation. See nos. 171, 179, 180, 183, 188, 190, 191, 193, 194, 202, 219.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 246. Later, more literary and more embellished renditions of the selection of the tsar appear in *Pamiatniki istorii Nizhnegorodskogo dvizheniia v epokhu Smuty* (n. 15 above), pp. 433–35, 449.

petitions for the townspeople and also served as official scribes when governors found themselves without any literate staff members; the shaky wooden shacks that served as provincial jails were perfunctorily guarded by local guards; and roads, taverns, and postal stations were all staffed by locals in official garb. Local communities, including the taxpaying commune of the city of Moscow itself, became sites of an active, participatory, associational life. Relations with central agents were worked out both collectively and by particular factions, but all relied on the flexible exchange and interpersonal connections that would allow their voices to be heard. Politics took a form not altogether congruent with a modern idea of the word, but political activism on a local level intersected with state-level politics and provided a potential basis for mobilization. Local collectives could function as a united voice in times of duress, as when prohibitions on selling land to nonlocals depressed the regional real estate market or threw obstacles in the way of concluding advantageous marriages.²⁷

A brief comparison with the very different case of England, where citizenship developed early into a powerful cultural tradition, helps to demonstrate the significance of local participatory opportunities. As a cautionary note, let me stress that this comparison is meant to raise points for consideration, not to suggest that the two cases were fundamentally alike.

In England, as in Muscovy, a powerful system of central rule rested on a welter of local courts and amateur officials. Historical sociologist Margaret R. Somers describes a political system that was, at least superficially, remarkably similar to Muscovy's: "Herein lies the plasticity of England's legal infrastructure. To enforce and expand its unified system of public rule, the state not only had to strengthen the center, but also to empower local courts and officials to act, in principle, as agents of Parliament and the Crown. The distinctiveness of the English state was not that it lacked a bureaucratic machinery, but that this machinery depended on the participation of, and coexistence with, semi-autonomous local jurisdictions throughout the land."²⁸ England thus developed

²⁷ V. A. Aleksandrov, *Vlast' i obshchestvo: Sibir'v XVII v.* (Novosibirsk, 1991); V. A. Aleksandrov and N. N. Pokrovskii, "Mir Organizations and Administrative Authority in Siberia in the Seventeenth Century," *Soviet Studies in History* ("Coercion and Community Interest Representation in Muscovite Local Government," ed. Brian Davies) 26, no. 3 (1987–88): 51–93; M. M. Bogoslovskii, *Zemskoe samoupravlenie na russkom severe v XVII v.*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1909–1912); B. N. Chicherin, *Oblastnye uchrezhdeniia* (Moscow, 1856), pp. 450–96; A. D. Gradovskii, *Istoriia mestnogo upravleniia v Rossii*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1868); A. I. Iakovlev, *Prikaz sbora ratnykh liudei, 1637–1653 (146–161) gg.* (Moscow, 1917), p. 71; A. A. Kizeveter, *Mestnoe samoupravlenie v Rossii. IX–XIX st. Istoricheskii ocherk*, 2d ed. (Petrograd, 1917; reprint, The Hague, 1970); A. A. Zimin, *Reformy Ivana Groznogo: Ocherki sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi istorii Rossii serediny XVI v.* (Moscow, 1960); N. E. Nosov, *Ocherki po mestnogo upravleniia russkogo gosudarstva pervoi poloviny XVI veka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1957).

²⁸ Somers, "Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere" (n. 7 above), p. 598.

"a system of state-centered participatory rule," in which the law was "neither fully state controlled nor fully decentralized." "This interdependence among institutions and the populace created a system built on negotiation and political contingency, not a zero-sum distribution of power. This meant that the outcomes of legal processes were often unpredictable. Thus, the state interacted with, exhorted, and was vulnerable to local arenas and popular communities."²⁹

Somers identifies the kinds of popular participation at the local level that could be activated into citizenship rights and claims under the proper historical circumstances. As early as the thirteenth century, "almost the entire free population of the country [was involved] in the work of the law courts." Participation at the county and village level included "serving on juries; serving on bodies of 'expert witnesses' drawn from the communities, which most legal and administrative procedures required; carrying out popular petitions and village court activities; responding to proclamations from the central government posted throughout villages; and participating in the appointment of local constables."³⁰ Political participation also included a variety of unsanctioned acts, ranging from petition campaigns against abusive masters and officials to riots. With minor alterations, these lists would describe local participation in Muscovite legal-administrative affairs. Certainly almost the entire population was involved in the work of Muscovite administration and justice, serving as expert witnesses or as participants on judicial panels, formulating and carrying out popular petitions, responding to proclamations from the center, or participating in the appointment of local tax officials and constables. Interdependence of center and locality and a high degree of "compromise, cooperation, co-optation, and resistance" characterized the Muscovite system as well as the British.³¹ The similarity between these systems, generally posited as opposite extremes on the scale of popular participation, should warrant a reexamination of our assumptions about Muscovite autocratic rule. These low-level local traditions of participation did indeed take on the coloring of citizenship claims in England through intensive interaction with the state and its laws. As subjects and dependents of the tsar, Muscovites too had a platform from which to lodge complaints and to expect redress.

Protest and rebellion remains one of the most valuable sites for gauging popular attitudes toward political life and viewing the claims that people actually made. In particular, the Muscovite practice of pretendership allows for insights into the popular political imagination. Rebels routinely acted within a tsarist framework, claiming to act in the name of the good and true tsar. This

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 599–600.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 599 n. 16.

³¹ Cynthia Herrup, "The Counties and the Country: Some Thoughts on Seventeenth-Century Historiography," *Social History* 8 (1983): 169.

could be enacted in two registers: either as an attempt to make their voices heard by the good tsar in the Kremlin, who would protect his loyal subjects if only he knew the truth, or in the name of a pretender offered as the true tsar. In either case, the rebellions of the seventeenth century confirm that even the most disgruntled acted on a sense that they had certain basic entitlements within the established system and that when their claims were unjustly ignored they could take whatever action was necessary in order for their protests to be heard. While decidedly in tension with a “consensus and cohesion” model of Muscovite politics, rebellions bear out the idea that Muscovites had a strong sense of what was owed them as members of the tsarist polity and were willing to take drastic action to assert their claims. They acted according to some set of expectations as to what constituted decent treatment, suggesting that their understanding of their polity was not based on coercion and resistance alone.

Critical assessments of the seventeenth-century rebellions have pointed out that the movements never gained enormous peasant followings. For instance, peasants joined the Razin Rebellion (1670–71), also called the Peasant War, only late in the day, and even then, as Khodarkovsky has shown, the vast majority of peasant rebels were non-Christians who resented Russian oppression.³² But if one focuses instead on the numbers who did take part, who threw caution, security, and resources to the winds to follow pretenders or rebels, one sees a picture that demonstrates anything but political lethargy. These were people who were willing to risk all for political change, whether it was system affirming, system altering, or purely destructive political change. If one considers low voter turnout in our fully enfranchised country, the percentages involved in these extremely high-cost movements might seem more impressive. The activist Kuz’ma Minin, the butcher-patriot from Nizhnii Novgorod who inspired his community to sacrifice money and wealth to free the land from the Poles, was not an anomaly in the Muscovite political landscape. Political involvement was not something that required a difficult mental re-adjustment or a disregard for an entrenched tradition of passivity; rather, the extreme activities of rebellion, or “national mobilization,” grew from the on-

³² Michael Khodarkovsky, “The Stepan Razin Uprising: Was It a ‘Peasant War’?” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 42 (1994): 1–19. On pretendership, see among others, B. A. Uspenskij, “Tsar and Pretender: *Samozvancestvo* or Royal Imposture in Russia as a Cultural-Historical Phenomenon,” in Ju. M. Lotman and B. A. Uspenskij, *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, ed. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1984), pp. 259–92; C. S. Ingerflom, “Entre le mythe et la parole: L’action. Naissance de la conception politique du pouvoir en Russie,” *Annales histoire, sciences sociales*, no. 4 (1996): 733–57; Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: The False Tsars of the Time of Troubles* (Cambridge, 1995). Perrie suggests that some pretenders were more subversive of the established order than others, and in this she is undoubtedly right.

going dialogue between the authorities and the people they governed concerning the boundaries of appropriate exploitation and the structures of morality, piety, and mercy. The fine line between petition and rebellion suggests a powerful continuity of political expression and political participation, a tradition of talking back to—or at least talking with—power.

IV

Citizens' social rights, according to Marshall's expanded definition, include a claim to social justice and minimal economic security. These, as suggested above, were the bread-and-butter issues of politics in Muscovy. Social justice matters tended to be framed as issues of moral justice, with pleas framed in language redolent of misery, poverty, infirmity, and isolation. Widows and orphans were never simply widowed or orphaned but were left poor, alone, "wandering from house to house." Their claims to minimal economic security thus were expressed as pleas for charity. Young men, who in post-Reagan America would have been told to go out and get a job, appropriated the same language of poverty and misery to evoke the desired compassion. The landless young gentrymen of Arzamas, for instance, wrote to Tsar Michael in the aftermath of the Time of Troubles, letting him know their miserable state of poverty. Overlooked during the years of chaos, they had never received the land allotments that were their due, and now they drifted from house to house in desperate poverty, unable to serve their sovereign as they would have liked to do.³³ Wounded soldiers lovingly described each spear thrust and each musket ball that had marked their flesh, spilled their blood, hacked at their limbs, clouded their vision, and enfeebled their bodies. In Muscovite politics, victimization translated into entitlement and material benefits.

The prevalence of appeals for pity suggests that Muscovites based their demands in large part on a sense of moral economy, not on any putative rights of citizenship.³⁴ E. P. Thompson's concept of moral economy is indeed a useful framework for interpreting the claims made by Muscovite subjects. And yet, while Muscovites lavishly employed the language of dependency and moral obligation to provoke their tsar to action, they simultaneously invoked the

³³ "Wandering from house to house" is a widely used phrase. For example, Sankt-peterburgskii filial Instituta rossiskoi istorii RAN, St. Petersburg, f. 62, Kolleksiia Kablukova, no. 51; N. A. Popov, ed., *Akty Moskovskago Gosudarstva, izdannye Imperatorskoi akademieiu nauk*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1890), 1:270–71. Regarding the gentrymen of Arzamas, see *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov* (henceforth RGADA), Moscow, f. 210, *Vladimirskii stol, stlb.* 73, 1. 229.

³⁴ E. P. Thompson formulates the idea of moral economy in "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76–136, and *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (New York, 1975).

standards of written law and procedural norms to further their cases. As in the English case, one could argue that Muscovites did not limit themselves to invoking paternalistic pity and benevolence. They also called on the codified laws governing Muscovite life and demanded due process as their legal right.³⁵

V

This reference to law and procedure brings us to the fifth and sixth criteria of citizenship from the definition above. The fifth element of that definition holds that citizens are all equally responsible to perform the duties of citizenship and are equally entitled to enjoy universal civil, legal, political, and social rights. The sixth element specifies that their claims on the state and the state's claims on them should be articulated and enforced through universal legal norms. Universal duty is not too hard to see in the Muscovite case. Roland Mousnier described Muscovy as a liturgical society in the Weberian sense—a society in which all members were bound to serve.³⁶ The kind of service varied by estate and standing, but all were universally bound to serve. This definition squares nicely with the despotic school of Muscovite studies, which dwells on the servitude of the Muscovite population, high and low. It also fits well with the consensus school, which stresses the mutuality of the enterprise of Muscovite state building and the degree to which the elites, at least, were involved in the process.

If universal duty matches neatly with the Muscovite picture, equal rights conspicuously do not. Equal entitlement to universal civil and social rights did not apply in Muscovy, a serf- and slave-owning society; but then again, citizenship developed perhaps most strongly in the slave-owning United States, so the “universality” of civil and social rights evidently can apply within a restricted segment of a population.³⁷

The next requirement, that all citizens enjoy equal legal rights and that their claims be enforced through universal legal norms, also presents some sticking points in the Muscovite case, but on examination it proves less problematic than one might think. In the late sixteenth century, the Englishman Giles

³⁵ Somers discusses the application of moral economy vs. citizenship claims in “Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere,” p. 609.

³⁶ Roland Mousnier, *Social Hierarchies 1450 to the Present*, trans. Peter Evans, ed. Margaret Clarke (New York, 1973).

³⁷ A good deal of interesting work in French and American history shows that “universal” citizenship was construed as exclusively male, as well as white, adult, and free. See Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York, 1998); Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988); Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis, 1989).

Fletcher was struck, and negatively impressed, by the sharp differences between English and Russian attitudes toward the law. He remarked that the Russians had hardly any law—only a slim book—and that the monarch blithely ignored it in any case, making himself the source of all law.³⁸ Moreover, what laws there were in that slim volume (later superseded by an exceedingly thick volume) were patently unequal. Where is the universality and equality in a law that specifies different punishments and different remunerations for violations by and against different categories of people?

George Weickhardt's insightful work on equal justice and due process in Muscovite law brilliantly cuts through the haze of confusion on this point to show that equality and universality were in fact the essence of this inequitable law. The equality and universality lay in the application of the law, not in the particulars of fines and outcomes. Although the law specified different penalties for people of different ranks, every Muscovite, from serf to boyar, had the right to demand a just, unbiased, procedurally correct hearing in accordance with the relevant laws.³⁹ In practice, of course, the law functioned very differently than it appeared on paper, but examination of actual litigation demonstrates that the insistence on equal justice and due process that Weickhardt finds in legal principle was actively exercised by litigants throughout the realm.

Bound by its own publicly proclaimed laws, the tsarist state had no choice but to respond to the legally based claims of its public. Litigants demanded judicial hearings, and the state had no choice but to open an investigation and hold a trial. Once a case was decided, the losing party had the right to appeal on grounds of procedural violations, and they did so with a vengeance. Once a petitioner filed a grievance, the administrative-judicial machinery was forced to creak into action. A petition unanswered constituted a legal impropriety and in itself provided grounds for a charge of malfeasance. Charges and countercharges, appeals and counterappeals, could drag on for years, and the state had no mechanism for stopping the process. Each investigation of a case could be lengthy, costly, and time-consuming. Real estate litigation required "general, wide-scale investigations" of all the residents of an area. Court officials had to journey out to the disputed lands, trudge around the boundaries with local witnesses for each side, draw up maps, interview current and past landholders, cull through archives, and give the litigants their day in court. All of this had to take place under the threat that the entire process would have to be repeated if the losing side refused to accept the judgment. Aggrieved parties had the

³⁸ Giles Fletcher, "Of the Russe Commonwealth," in *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey (Madison, Wisc., 1968), p. 177.

³⁹ George G. Weickhardt, "Due Process and Equal Justice in the Muscovite Codes," *Russian Review* 51 (1992): 463–80.

right to appeal on a wide variety of procedural grounds: witnesses had been bribed, maps had been drawn inaccurately, or the judge was the brother-in-law of the defendant's cousin. "According to your Sobornoe Ulozhenie law code," petitioners would explicitly remind the tsar, a certain process should have been followed or a certain right of appeal had to be granted. The state, in these endless lawsuits, was helpless before the articles of its own legal statutes.⁴⁰ Powerful officials, of course, could ignore laws, and, as in any real-world system, judicial corruption was not infrequent; however, legality of process provided a framework for imagining legal rights and demanding appropriate redress. The language of universal law, due process, and equal justice gave Muscovites a legal and procedural claim on the state, unencumbered by the paternalism and particularism of moral economy arguments.

The unintended and unforeseen consequence of Muscovy's increasing regulation and homogenization of legal norms throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was to provide a new language of dissent and a new justification for political critique.⁴¹ Rebels and dissenters mimicked the legal and formalistic rules and procedures of the center, using an available language of universal norms to justify and affirm their standing. The various pretenders not only appropriated the names and personae of members of the tsar's family but also employed the official language and forms of decrees, seals, laws, and titles. Urban rioters used the same petitionary formulas sanctioned by everyday administrative practice to lodge cutting criticisms of the tsar and his administration, and they framed their critiques in terms of his failure to apply the law fairly and uniformly in his courts. They lamented that the powerful prevailed in courts, that justice was not heard, and that, unlike the classic lawgivers of old, the current tsar failed to ensure universal justice and due process.⁴² Even non-Russians invoked the power of universal law. In 1628, Nogay elites appealed to the Russians to resolve the internal quarrels that were raging among them. They pleaded that "they could no longer resolve their disputes in accordance with their Muslim laws" and wished to submit themselves to Russian justice.⁴³ Muscovite law fostered a sense of entitlement to universally fair application of justice, a sense that could readily turn against its source.

⁴⁰ Valerie A. Kivelson, "Cartography, Autocracy and State Powerlessness: The Uses of Maps in Early Modern Russia," *Imago Mundi* 51 (1999): 83–105; V. B. Kobrin, *Vlast' i sobstvennost' v srednevekovoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1985), pp. 161–98.

⁴¹ Ingerflom sees a new secularism in the language of dissent emerging in the seventeenth century as well, but he attributes it to different causes ("Entre le mythe et la parole" [n. 32 above], pp. 752–57).

⁴² Kivelson, "'The Devil Stole His Mind'" (n. 20 above), pp. 733–56.

⁴³ A. A. Novosel'skii, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva s tatarami v pervoi polovine 17 veka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1948), pp. 142–45, quoted by Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier* (n. 21 above), p. 129.

VI

In this survey we have covered most of the key elements of a standard definition of citizenship, and Muscovite subjects seem to fit the bill in surprising ways. Somers's summary serves nicely as a précis of our investigation so far: "At issue were not expectations of charity or paternal beneficence, but demands for legitimate *rights*. Social claims were inseparable from the insistence that *participation* and norms of *universal justice* . . . [were] central to their freedom under the law. These claims to rights thus depended on the core components of citizenship—*membership, participation, association, inclusion/exclusion, national identity*, and above all, the constitutionally guaranteed *rule of law*."⁴⁴

According to this widely inclusive conception of the term, Muscovite subjects were, or seem to have been, fully enfranchised citizens. Their rights to membership, participation, association, inclusion/exclusion, collective identification with the polity, and, above all, the guaranteed rule of law place them in the good company of their constitutionally free English brethren. Muscovite sources harp on all of these themes and demonstratively proclaim the importance of these rights to Muscovites of all ranks and degrees. They actively used, defended, and broadened their claims to the prerogatives and duties of citizenship.

But these statements are, of course, absurd. And here lies the most significant aspect of this exploration. If all of these elements—membership, participation, association, inclusion/exclusion, collective identification with the polity, and rule of law—can be found in Muscovy, without stretching the evidence, why does the end result fit so badly with what we know about Muscovite state and society? How, for instance, could Ivan the Terrible's campaign of terror against his own people, during the period known as the Oprichnina, occur in a nation of citizens? The problem arises from applying broad definitions developed by sociologists and political scientists with a modern orientation. With their focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these modernist scholars are able to frame definitions within a context in which certain fundamentals of political engagement can be safely assumed. The generic requirement that citizenship confer "a right to some degree of political participation" allows for a wide application of this term—too wide to be helpful in an early modern context. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, populations expressed themselves in collective actions, petitions, riots, and prayer, not through the formalized, representative, legislative institutions that came to characterize the modern era. Particularly since feminist scholars have taught us that "the personal is political," the scope for "some degree of political participation" has become infinitely broad. But the particular form of political

⁴⁴ Somers, "Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere" (n. 7 above), p. 609.

participation in a given society makes a substantial difference in defining relations between the rulers and the ruled. Muscovites, and other early modern subjects, participated in the political lives of their realms in ways that would later be marginalized and delegitimized by the rise of democratic institutions and representative legislative bodies. Supplication and riot would fall out of the spectrum of legitimate political action in Western Europe in the wake of the eighteenth-century revolutions, but in Muscovy they remained the staples of political involvement. This difference in method and medium of expression sets Muscovite enfranchisement apart from any meaningful concept of citizenship.

Another concept is crucially important in distinguishing Muscovite political organization from those forms that we associate with citizenship, and that concept is “freedom.” In Muscovy, in many (although not all) contexts, the word “liberty” carried a strongly negative connotation. Already in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, Englishmen were able to interpret the law “as conferring citizenship rights on them as ‘free-born Englishmen’—a rallying cry that invoked the cultural narratives of mythical England before the Norman Conquest.”⁴⁵ Freedom was the term that grounded English claims to rights and entitlements, and served as the fundamental basis for the development of English citizenship. The term surfaces as an important element in Muscovite political discourse as well but most often as a negative, an aberration, a violation to be avoided and suppressed at all costs. Together with the descriptor “insubordinate” (*neposlushnyi*), the adjective “free” or “at will” (*vol’nyi*) signified disorder and disturbance, disruptive willfulness. Edicts prohibited the wandering of “free” people, who had the temerity to follow their own will. Villagers turned in suspicious “free people” who showed up in their midst without official papers to sanction their presence. Townspeople actively agitated, in the early and mid-seventeenth century, for the return of their fellow townspeople who had wandered off, shirking their collective taxpaying and service obligations and leaving their more dutiful neighbors in the lurch.⁴⁶

How can we understand this behavior within the framework of citizenship?

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 596. For an interesting discussion of the origins of English concepts of freedom and their link to property rights, see Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978).

⁴⁶ On the edicts against and denunciations of “free people,” see RGADA, Moscow, f. 210, Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 11, ch. 1, ll. 232–35, 426–27, 498–506; Moskovskii stol, stlb. 11, ch. 2, ll. 192–94, 262–66, 272–73, 288–300, 312–18, 330; stlb. 13, ch. 1, ll. 209–15, 286; ch. 2, ll. 522–23. On the townspeople’s quest for limiting their own movement, see Richard Hellie, “The Stratification of Muscovite Society: The Towns-men,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 5 (1978): 119–75; Valerie A. Kivelson, “Bitter Slavery and Pious Servitude: Muscovite Freedom and Its Critics,” *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 58 (2002): 109–19.

First, we need to consider the negative connotations of "freedom" in a collectively structured society. Manifestations of individual will were closely associated in the Muscovite mind with disruptive, selfish passions. Andrei Toporkov, in an imaginative and perceptive study of magical spells, points out that magic provided an illicit route toward individual (hence selfish, uncommunal) wish fulfillment. Spells were performed to serve an individual's sexual urges or to further other selfish agendas: greed, hatred, revenge. Thus, spells and magic were inherently at cross-purposes to the normative goals of the collective. Toporkov suggests that in magical spells and practices one can detect some of the earliest traces of individualism in Muscovite culture, traces of a kind of self-serving freedom that received harsh condemnation from the surrounding society.⁴⁷

Second, we need to consider the positive connotations of dependency in Muscovy, where pleas for mercy, pleas for rewards, and even friendly salutations on letters among friends and family members were framed in a language of subordination and dependency. Not only did the tsar's subjects address him as his orphans, but nephews also addressed their uncles and sons their fathers in similarly reverent terms, stressing their own lowly status as opposed to the addressee's lofty standing and awesome might.⁴⁸ Hellie's work has convincingly demonstrated that slavery functioned as a social safety net in a society without other forms of social security and welfare. Those unable to survive by other means could seek refuge and sustenance in indenture or self-sale.⁴⁹ In return for their labor, slaves could expect minimal support, food, housing, and protection. The master's obligation to his slaves and dependents is stressed in the proscriptive guide to respectable behavior, the *Domostroi*, and in edicts and laws of the central state.⁵⁰ Because masters owed their slaves stern guidance as well as mercy, this model could accommodate the harshest punishment from on high into a system of reciprocal obligation.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Andrei L'vovich Toporkov, "Gramota No. 521: Zagovor ili liubovnaia zapiska?" in *Slovo i kul'tura* (Moscow, 1998), 2:230–41.

⁴⁸ S. I. Kotkov, ed., *Gramotki XVII-nachala XVIII veka* (Moscow, 1969), and *Pamiatniki delovoi pis'mennosti XVII veka: Vladimirskaia kraia* (Moscow, 1984), pp. 249–88.

⁴⁹ Richard Hellie, "Slavery in Comparative Perspective," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 6 (1979): 133–209, and *Slavery in Russia, 1450–1725* (Chicago, 1982).

⁵⁰ For instance, "If Someone Keeps More Slaves than He Can Afford," in *The Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible*, ed. and trans. Carolyn Johnston Pouncy (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994), pp. 123–24.

⁵¹ This model was invoked to explain the violence of the grand princes and tsars against their subjects. Ivan the Terrible's attacks on his highest boyars were interpreted as justifiable retribution against unworthy slaves. See Rowland, "Did Muscovite Literary Theory Place Any Limits on the Power of the Tsar?" (n. 3 above); and, more recently, Bogatyrev (n. 5 above), pp. 86–91.

An alternative concept of freedom, more familiar and more like the English usage, was also available and in circulation within Muscovite culture, or at least at its peripheries. This positive notion was sometimes expressed with the far less ambiguous term *svoboda* (freedom). Most dramatically manifested in Cossack mythology and the various Cossack rebellions, the appeal of freedom was never completely effaced by the collectivist structures of state and society. The staying power of the songs and tales about Stenka Razin, the charismatic leader of the 1671 Cossack rebellion, is a clear indicator of the appeal of this alternate cultural line. Unjust bondage or coercive enslavement provided a basis for lament and brought oppressors to court, showing that Muscovites could value their freedom and fight for it when it was threatened. Moreover, the constant drain of population to the peripheries, to Siberia, and to the southern frontier suggests a chronic quest for some form of freedom.⁵² Cultures certainly can sustain complex and mutually contradictory values and norms. The more common negative assessment of freedom, however, exerted a powerful force in shaping Muscovite political culture, both at the local level of the village or taxpaying commune and at the higher level of tsarist authority.

If we recognize how strongly negative the valence of the term and concept of “freedom,” or “will,” were to Russian society, we can come to see how a self-enslaving stance could be the morally correct one, even one obliquely tied to the rights of citizenship. If citizens can, in principle, claim minimal economic and social rights, then preserving the tax base and labor base of a peasant or town community might be seen as a basic right of citizenship.⁵³ If the tax and labor base eroded, if one’s neighbors fled at will, the subsistence, dignity, and cultural values of those left behind would be severely undermined. Townspeople’s cries for locking their neighbors to their lands and obligations did not demonstrate an abject, self-enslaving mentality at work. Instead, they should be viewed as a call for protection of the townspeople’s basic civil and economic rights to survival, order, and continuity.

⁵² On the Razin myths and ballads, see K. V. Chistov, *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy XVII–XIX vv.* (Moscow, 1967); M. A. Iakovlev, *Narodnoe pesnotvorchestvo ob atamane Stepane Razine* (Leningrad, 1924); A. N. Lozanova, *Pesni i skazaniia o Razine i Pugacheve* (Moscow, 1935). On negative and positive concepts of freedom in Muscovite culture, including court cases, see Kivelson, “Bitter Slavery and Pious Servitude.” On flight to the peripheries, see, among others, A. A. Novosel'skii, “Pobegi krest'ian i kholopov i ikh sysk v Moskovskom gosudarstve vtoroi poloviny XVII veka,” *Uchenye zapiski RANION* 1 (1926): 327–54.

⁵³ “In fact,” as Steven Hoch writes, “being tied to the land is a much underrated notion; in Russia, from the mid-seventeenth century being a peasant (with few exceptions) implied an entitlement to land, which is not a bad deal, if you are subsistence-oriented” (“The Serf Economy, the Peasant Family, and the Social Order,” in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, ed. Jane Burbank and David Ransel (Bloomington, Ind., 1998), p. 200.

Slavery and freedom prove to be essential categories for analysis in trying to make sense of Muscovite political relations. The argument for self-conscious Muscovite citizenship claims appears to fall apart on the basis of this ineffable concept of freedom as a positive, inalienable human right. Yet, as we have seen, suspicion of freedom did not translate into supine fatalism; rather, it could mobilize political activism and claims against the state. When individual freedom constituted a threat to the fundamental social and economic rights of the community, claims to political enfranchisement would necessarily take a different, but equally logical, form. Muscovites articulated demands for collective protection rather than for individual rights and invoked entitlements as dependents of the tsar—his slaves or orphans—rather than as free citizens. These alternative platforms and values made their politics no less active and their engagement no less serious than that of their Western contemporaries. Different in form and content from more recognizable claims of citizenship, Muscovites' political ideology rested on a strong right to belong and participate in a polity.

If this particular configuration of rights claims did not constitute a recognizable form of citizenship, what should we call it? Setting citizenship aside, let us resuscitate the more traditional label. As noted by the authors of the passages quoted in the epigraphs above, Russians were subjects of the tsar, not citizens of a state. "Subjecthood," a more expansive, capacious category than "citizenship," more accurately describes their status. Subjecthood can allow for degrees of inclusion, for rights without freedom, for political participation outside the bounded framework of legislative institutions. Subjects' relations with a monarch entailed reciprocal obligations: "The monarch owed the subject protection and the subject owed allegiance. The relationship also conveyed privileges: although subjects could and did hold different ranks, in theory each could claim certain rights, not the least of which was the right to . . . equal consideration under the law."⁵⁴ The idea that Russians were subjects, not citizens, is not at all new. What is new, though, and what we have gained by this excursus into the unlikely terrain of Muscovite citizenship, is a more accurate and inflected understanding of precisely what it meant to be a subject of the Muscovite tsar. Subjecthood was not a debased status. Muscovite subjects enjoyed almost all of the fundamental criteria of citizenship: membership, participation, association, inclusion/exclusion, national identity, and the rule of law. And yet, they lived in a society without democratic representative institutions, one in which politics were enacted in a personalistic and particularistic register. Serfdom and slavery were the order of the day, and even the

⁵⁴ Christopher L. Brown, "Empire without Slaves: British Concepts of Emancipation in the Age of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 56 (1999): 282. See also James H. Kettner, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608–1870* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1978).

elite unselfconsciously, uncomplainingly, and even proudly styled themselves slaves of the tsar. They lived in a culture in which freedom itself carried a largely negative value.

At its most productive, comparative history can add to our understanding by posing unexpected questions or removing the blinders of received wisdom. Thus, holding Muscovite society up to the lens of citizenship has allowed us to answer the fundamental questions with which we began. What did Russians mean when they called themselves slaves of the tsar? They meant, as Poe indicates, that they were his obedient servants in the standard formulation of contemporary Western Europe, that they were proud to be the lowly slaves of the world's greatest ruler, and that they were simply polite and well versed enough to know the proper formulas. But they also meant, as Poe notes in his article, that they were his dependents and could by rights call on the tsar for protection, attention, mercy, and remuneration. In this compact phrase, the Muscovite elites enunciated a complex language of entitlement together with an acceptance of social hierarchy and their own position in it.

The concept of enfranchised subjecthood also helps us reply to Hellie's question about why the Muscovite elite did not rebel. Muscovite elites did not rebel (often) for the very good reason that they considered themselves part of the political establishment. They claimed subjects' rights of membership and participation in the plastic political universe that they inhabited, and the sovereign acknowledged their claims by listening to them, accepting their petitions, involving them in court ceremony, judging their cases according to standard legal procedure, and giving them positions of administrative and judicial power in the governmental structure. Not only the elite but also members of society at large were brought into the system, implicated in its workings, and co-opted by a sense of membership, participation, and ownership of the administrative state apparatus. Coercion and fear played a role, but one should not overlook, in examining the overwhelming compliance of the Muscovite population, the degree to which the tsarist autocracy won the support of its subjects, Russian and non-Russian, by acknowledging their membership, listening to their grievances, granting their claims, honoring their entitlements, and conducting its business according to formal, written law.⁵⁵ Subjects had to be accorded certain rights—economic, political, and cultural.

Muscovites were not citizens; they were subjects. Yet, this exercise in ap-

⁵⁵ On the acknowledgment of non-Russian subjects, see Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, passim. Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, and Thomas Vaughan, eds., *Russia's Conquest of Siberia: A Documentary Record, 1558–1700* (Portland, Oreg., 1985), 1:59: "In regard to iasak people [non-Russians obligated to pay tribute in fur, called *iasak*] who have become impoverished because of having to pay our iasak, and who are unable to pay, and who want to come to Moscow to petition us . . . allow two or three of these persons to come to us in Moscow."

plying unlikely categories demonstrates that they were not, as many accounts suggest, slaves of a cruel, proprietary despot. The proximity of citizen and subject status allows us to reexamine the concept of early modern subjecthood and to highlight specifically where it aligns with modern citizenship and where it differs. Using a tightened, more refined definition of citizenship than the open-ended one with which we started, this study suggests that subjecthood differs from citizenship in two substantive ways. These two are not necessarily those that initially come to mind. The difference rests not in the absence of any rights, entitlements, or universal application of law. Subjects, like citizens, enjoy, demand, and exercise all of these. It rests not in the absence of a sense of belonging or membership; the two categories hold these in common. The two differ not in the absence of active spheres and traditions of political participation; again, both manifest these as core structural elements. Rather, the points of divergence are, first, the absence in subjecthood of specific electoral institutions that, once in place, marginalize and delegitimize the previous forms of political expression—supplication, petition, consultation, and riot—and, second, the absence among subjects of a self-conscious claim to freedom as a citizen's right.

Muscovy developed configurations of rights and claims, membership and participation, framed in the absence of freedom. Retrieving such unfamiliar forms of enfranchisement, minimized and forgotten in the aftermath of the Enlightenment's introduction of the rights of man and citizen, allows us to reimagine a political universe based on many of the inclusive and empowering elements of citizenship and yet embedded within an altogether different system of values and practices. With this reframing of Muscovite politics, we can answer both Hellie's and Poe's questions and even go beyond, extending our answer from the compliant elites addressed in their questions to the population as a whole. We can explain why the "much-suffering" Russian people "have accepted their lot and not tried or probably even wanted to rebel against it" and why they called themselves slaves of the tsar.⁵⁶ The answers to both lie in recovering this vigorous understanding of subjecthood, informed by its resemblances with and its differences from modern, democratic citizenship.

⁵⁶ John Gooding, *Rulers and Subjects: Government and People in Russia, 1801–1991* (New York, 1996), p. ix. Gooding's book, devoted to a later era, illustrates that the view of Russia as a despotic state and subjugated society is not confined to the Muscovite period.