Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi to his boyars:

You know my habits and my customs, for I was born and grew up before you, and I have ruled with you. . . . With you I have fought valiantly in many lands. . . . I have maintained honor and love towards you; I have given you to rule cities and great lands; I have held your children in love; to none of you have I done evil, nor have I seized you by force nor abused you nor reproached you nor plundered you nor dishonored you but I have loved you all and I have held you in honor. I have rejoiced with you and I have despaired [with you]. . . . To me you are not "boyars" but princes of my land.

PSRL, 25: 216.

Introduction: Court Politics and the Political System

THIS IS A BOOK about politics, power, and autocracy. In it I examine how political power was achieved, distributed, and contested at the Muscovite grand-princely court from its fourteenth-century founding to the watershed reign of Ivan IV in the middle of the sixteenth century. Muscovy was an autocratic polity: no social groups and no political institutions shared sovereignty with the Muscovite ruler. But the absence of political pluralism did not preclude political dynamism. The grand prince, his counselors the boyars, and other court personnel participated in a lively political order; analyzing that system and how it developed over time is my aim in this book.

This work is part of a tradition observed by numerous scholars, inasmuch as it depicts Muscovite politics as autocratic and patrimonial. The Muscovite autocracy was a political system unlike those that readily come to mind for comparison. It was different from the later Imperial Russian system of central control in that it lacked that system's extensive bureaucratic apparatus; it was also different from the systems existing in early modern West and Central European states in that it allowed a multiplicity of interests to be represented without tolerating social pluralism in politics. In Muscovy through the sixteenth century, power was the private possession of the sovereign; he shared it in friendship, not by obligation, with his comrades and chosen counselors. The political system that developed from such presumptions, despite this façade of autocracy, was remarkably complex. That complexity is the focus of this work.

Since about the 1950's, scholars have concentrated their attention on the sovereign's half of Muscovite autocracy and have analyzed why Moscow's landed servitors failed to unite in opposition to Russia's centralizing monarchs. The answer has been found in the forceful leadership of rulers from Ivan III (1462-1505) to Ivan IV (1533-84) and in their methods of subjugating the elite, including disgrace, confiscation of property, abolition of a servitor's right to move freely to a new place of service, the use of informers, and the taking of loyalty oaths that imposed collective responsibility on the elite. Scholars have also analyzed the factors

that atomized the elite beginning in the fifteenth century: partible inheritance, a postulated impoverishment of the landed service class, the ravages of warfare, and the system of precedence (*mestnichestvo*).[1] This approach provides a vivid picture of the means by which Muscovy's rulers gained immense power over the servitor classes, but it tends to underemphasize the boyars' half of the political relationship. To focus on the monarch creates an unbalanced view, since, in Muscovy as elsewhere, no sovereign could be a literal autocrat. He depended upon men to carry out his will and to maintain a social consensus supporting his power. One historian, discussing medieval European politics, echoes this line of thinking: "The complete dependence of the king on the nobility . . . needs to be stressed. . . . The ruler was dependent on those who were prepared to obey him."[2] Individuals drawn from the servitor classes – Moscow's boyars – wielded real power, which was subsumed patrimonially under the ruler's sovereignty. The growth of Muscovite autocracy is the story not just of the sovereign's power, but of his interaction with his boyars and of the boyars with one another. I propose, then, to look at autocracy from the inside out, that is, from the point of view of the men who ruled Moscow, who devised, executed, and benefited from the aforementioned policies of oppression.

It is appropriate to emphasize the uniqueness of the Muscovite political system, since comparisons with the development of West European political systems are implicit in much historical writing about Muscovy and have shaped the dominant interpretations of Muscovite politics. The model is only superficially apt. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, ambitious rulers throughout Europe faced the problem of winning the support of leading social groups necessary to centralize their states. Monarchs in England, France, the Germanies, Poland, and Bohemia solved the problem by sharing sovereignty with parliaments and by giving privileges to corporate estates. When circumstances permitted, some rulers regained their dispersed authority; they circumvented representative institutions to create bureaucratically centralized, absolutist regimes. Many scholars have seen in Muscovite centralization the hand of a progressive monarch; they have looked in turn for representative institutions, a bureaucracy, and emerging social classes. These they have found in the administrative reforms of the 1530's and 1550's (the *gubnaia* and *zemskaia* reforms), the Councils of the Land (*zemskie sobory*), and the broadening of court ranks to include the gentry. Dramatic conflicts such as the dynastic crises of the 1430's-40's, the 1490's, and the period of the minority of Ivan IV – as well as the Oprichnina – have been construed as victories either for centralizing autocrats or for emergent social classes in a political world defined in class terms.[3]

But the comparison to European "new monarchs" is imperfect: Moscow's administrative reforms did not confer local autonomy and the Councils of the Land were not representative institutions.[4] Actors in court politics did not define themselves as West and Central European nobilities did: they did not constitute a privileged corporate class, and their political struggles were not expressions of class-based antagonisms. Struggles at court were not over policies and rights, but over personal power as defined in terms of kinship and personal alliances.[5] Muscovite sovereigns followed a different path to centralized rule.

Muscovite political development lacked the sources of feudalism that helped generate demands for representative institutions or privileges by corporate estates in Europe.[6] Muscovy had no vestigial Roman aristocracies, no Germanic kings and tribal elites, no politicized Roman Catholic papacy and church hierarchy. It lacked the legal traditions bequeathed to Europe as a result of Roman occupation and Germanic invasion and developed by secular and ecclesiastical cultural establishments. Muscovy's political development was also influenced by its social situation: as late as the sixteenth century, Muscovy's military, bureaucratic, and urban classes were too small to demand enfranchisement as their counterparts in the West did. And Muscovy had no cause to complicate its political arrangements, since neither social pressure nor governmental inadequacies prompted it to do so. Muscovy's political system – socially exclusive though it was – adequately served the needs perceived by its rulers and was tolerated by society.

That the Muscovite political order was characterized not so much by conflict as by cooperation and integrity is a dominant theme of the analysis presented here. The Muscovite system might be likened not to its protoparliamentary European contemporaries but to medieval European monarchies – in the maintenance of a personal relationship between sovereign and men, in the monarch's reliance on personal loyalties as a basis for forging political relationships, and in the simplicity of the governing institutions and social structures. The Weberian "ideal type" of patrimonial rule also seems to reflect Muscovy's political principles.[7] Such a revised interpretation of sixteenth-century political life has the virtue of explaining the "failure" of boyars to act as an aristocracy. Perceiving the boyars as having a unity of interest with the sovereign helps to explain certain phenomena such as the continuity in power of boyar families, including the clan that spawned the Romanov dynasty as well as the Obolenskii, Bel'skii, Glinskii, Mstislavskii, and Shuiskii princely clans. It also helps to explain why the boyars did not voice aristocratic self-consciousness during the sixteenth century and why other classes did not win political power to a significant degree until after the mid-sixteenth

century. This interpretation implies the need for a new conceptual vocabulary for Muscovite politics, one that recognizes the mutual dependence and complex interaction of the men in power.

The Muscovite Political System

One logically consults the sources when attempting to build a new vocabulary of political relations. Muscovite sources provide information about politics, but they do not describe political relations. The sources fall into two broad categories: (1) documents and court records, such as diplomatic records, land transaction deeds, wills and charters, and genealogical and military service books; and (2) narrative sources, predominantly chronicles. Both types provide information on events and characters at court, but not explicit information about the principles underlying political activity. The sources do not use terminology that would reveal the existence of corporate or institutional bodies, nor do they include constitutions or charters of corporate estates' rights. These deficiencies force the historian to devise his or her own conceptual framework of politics, based on a considered understanding of the society as it presents itself. For most historians, this has meant taking the narrative sources at face value when assessing the autocratic power of the sovereign and analyzing political groups and struggles in terms of the social classes to which the members and participants belonged. But this means filling in the gaps with an implicit comparison of Muscovite political relations to contemporaneous European politics, and such an approach has led to conflicting and unsatisfactory historiography. A more serviceable framework can be built by following the lead of the sources, with their emphasis on family and on harmony at court, and by reading narrative sources with a sensitivity to their implicit meanings.

Muscovite sources were written in a patrimonial vein. To their persistent emphasis on family, loyalty, and personal relations we can trace some historians' awareness of affinitive principles in Muscovite politics. The court's records of the elite were structured by family: genealogical books, which recorded the male membership of the military elite, were kept at court, side by side with records of military service. Narrative sources often identified factions as families – for example, "the Shuiskie" or "the Kubenskie." Sources also direct our attention to marriages among boyar families and between boyar families and the grand-princely clan. Significantly, the court stored its records of attendants at royal weddings in a prominent place in the important books of military service records.[8] Such evidence suggests that family and personal alliances were dynamic forces in politics; an analysis of political crises and boyar succession patterns confirms such a conclusion.

The source record also draws our attention to other sorts of personal relations in politics. Personal loyalty, rather than legalistic obligation, is highlighted in narrative tales that define the good boyar as one who "wishes well" for his sovereign; that some testators called their executors "my lord" suggests dependency and personal, not formal, links in political associations.[9] One might describe these networks of loyalty and dependence as "vertical."

Narrative sources and court rituals suggest a more ambiguous ideology of political relations. Churchmen – and by the sixteenth century the grand prince's scribes as well – wrote chronicles according to an official ideology of Christian autocracy: rulers possessed undivided sovereignty and total power, metropolitans gave moral advice and interceded for mercy, boyars were "good" or "bad" counselors, and grand princes were "virtuous" or "evil." Grand princes were omnipotent, but the boyars were their true comrades.[10] This ideology is idealized in comparison with reality, but it intimated the bounds of proper political behavior. It demonstrated the sovereign's exclusive autocratic power, as well as the existence of real prohibitions against any boyar's challenging the ruler; at the same time it provided ample justification for the boyars' presence in politics. Politics upheld the ideals of this ideology, such as the requirement for a cooperative relationship between all boyars and the grand prince, or the toleration of an inequitable division of power and status among the boyars themselves. Muscovite chronicles also illuminate political relations in that they situate such relations in the realm of the personal and moral. They make no provision for constitutional institutions, enfranchised political classes, or corporate privileges, and this gap paralleled the absence of such entities in real life. The sources suggest rather that politics was the personal interplay of the elite men, women, and families, and was shaped by factors such as self-interest, personal charisma, respect for tradition, loyalty to family, and the obligations of honor and of dependency.

It is this insight about the personal nature of Muscovite court politics that informs my analysis, summarized in the remainder of this section. Court politics governed relations between the grand prince and the boyars (including the *okol'nichie* from the late fifteenth century[11]). It encompassed customs determining political recruitment (how men became boyars, or advisers to the sovereign and the sole political actors with him), the hierarchy of status (how boyars distributed power among themselves), association (on the basis of what principles men grouped in politi-

cal struggles), conflict and its resolution (what issues provoked boyars to disrupt stability and how those conflicts were ended). Although these customs resulted in the creation of a complex political order for grand princes and boyars, they also led to the establishment of a potent government that acted as one toward the outside world.

Just as the grand prince and the boyars worked out patterns to govern their relationships at court, so also did they establish norms of interaction within the broader political system. From the beginning the boyars and the grand prince were not alone at the Kremlin court. Even in the fourteenth century, the court used a few scribes to keep records. The boyars and the grand prince also depended upon men to lead parts of the army, to collect taxes, and to carry out minimal functions of local administration. These military servitors were drawn from the larger social class of landed cavalrymen from which the boyars themselves had come. Members of that class owned land worked by peasants and they served Riurikid princes; the wealthiest and most politically astute of them supported their own retinues and constituted a pool from which regional princes chose boyars. In the fifteenth century, the Muscovite court also used the services of a few financiers; as the state apparatus expanded with the increase in Moscow's territory and the size of its army, more central administrators and scribal cadres were required as well. All these groups—scribal and administrative bureaucracies, financiers, military servitors—constituted the executive arms of grand-princely and boyar decision making; they also represented a potential challenge to the boyars' monopoly on effective political power and were a potential catalyst for change in Moscow's court politics.

As the state, army, and administration grew, the grand prince and the political elite were forced to devise ever more complex ways of organizing government and maintaining social stability. In doing so, however, they adhered to traditions established in the fourteenth century. Emerging social classes were excluded from politics. Members of eminent princely clans and untitled lesser families were made boyars. Those from other classes—servitors, merchants, and scribes—were bought off with social concessions, including status distinctions, position within the system of precedence, landholding and judicial privileges, reforms of local government, increase in the number of court ranks and of the number of men who held them, and eventually even restrictions on the mobility of peasants that benefited the landed service class. Muscovy was thus able to endure into the sixteenth century with a decision-making elite that was institutionally and socially simple.

The Muscovite political system was grounded in affinitive relations; kinship ties, marriage alliances, and patronage provided a basic stability.

But it also tolerated dynamic change. The problem of political recruitment, for example, was solved by passing boyar status within families according to established norms. But the composition of the elite was also determined by more dynamic events. Immigrant princes, cadet branches of old Muscovite clans, and new servitor families struggled bitterly for the right to become hereditary boyars. Some succeeded, having been chosen because of their talents, their close relationship with the grand prince, their wealth, or their foreign connections. These new boyars competed for status by engaging in shrewd politicking and forming alliances. Stability was assured even in competition, however, since boyars maintained their eminence by marriage alliances that lasted for generations. Marriage by no means created inviolable political alliances, but ties by marriage and kinship provided ambitious men with several overlapping kinship groups, giving them maximum flexibility when opportunities for advancement arose at court.[12]

The political order was characterized by both stability and dynamism. The fact that some members of the inner circle were related to the grand prince meant that the tenure of the most powerful boyars was long-lasting, since the kinship link of boyar family to sovereign dynasty endured from generation to generation. Yet this organizing principle meant that marriages in the grand-princely family became the focus of fierce competition that often erupted into disruptive political struggles. Most conflict at court up to the mid-sixteenth century concerned succession and marriage problems in the Daniilovich dynasty. Political conflict, in turn, could change the paths defined by such marriages: shrewd politicking, the influence of the grand prince, and expedient coalitions of boyars could break the power of factions that would otherwise have been ensured by heredity. Kinship and politics interacted to shape the system, but neither influence was dominant.

Heredity and marriage, as has been suggested, constituted one source of stability in the elite. Boyars were assured that their power and status could be passed on to their sons from generation to generation. Men in the inner circle could count on their kinship with the grand prince to last at least a generation, and all men could assume that marriage alliances would endure for generations. A second source of stability in court politics appears to have been the boyars' commitment to avoid conflict in the interest of preserving and furthering a strong, stable government. This consensus is suggested by symbolic representations in the chronicles of the boyars' harmonious relation with the grand prince, by the relatively infrequent internecine conflict among boyars, and by the hereditary continuity of the boyars. In addition to agreeing to limit competition among themselves, the boyars agreed to respect the sovereignty of the grand

prince and to divide benefits and power among themselves satisfactorily, if inequitably. Consensus might be offered as a useful alternative to conflict in characterizing Muscovite court politics. If consensus was achieved by boyars' self-limiting practices, it was also cultivated by mediating forces at the court—namely, by the metropolitan and by the grand prince himself.

The grand prince played two roles in Muscovite court politics. He could be a mediator, enabled by his charismatic sovereignty to stand above the fray and to intercede in disputes if necessary. But he could also be a dynamic political actor, a partisan participant in a faction—most likely in the group here called the inner circle, since that group was, in part, composed of his affines. As Presniakov remarked, "In his ties with the boyars was found the main source of the grand prince's personal social power."[13] When the grand prince appears to have forcefully pursued a policy, such as a diplomatic initiative, a marriage alliance, or the punishment of a boyar, some or all of the boyars stood behind him and the boyar elite as a whole acquiesced. Because they cooperated in the general running of the government, saving conflicts for issues that were within the defined limits of court politics, Muscovy's sovereigns and boyars commanded a nearly invincible state and military machine.

The Historiography of Muscovite Court Politics

This study of the political traditions of the Muscovite court is warranted for three reasons. First, the theoretical problem of how political activity was reconciled with autocratic power has received scant attention. Many historians have assumed the sovereign power in Muscovy to have been so great that they could see no political interplay; for other historians, class conflict took precedence over autocratic power. But to admit that Muscovy was an autocracy does not preclude the possibility that the ruler required political and administrative support, nor that the ruler and his supporters generated a dynamic political system. In developing a mutually acceptable system of relationships with men "who were prepared to obey" them, Moscow's grand princes in fact forged a dynamic political system without abandoning their claim to patrimonial authority.

Second, this study is justified because of the intricate relationship between ideology and reality in court politics: a highly articulated political infrastructure was concealed beneath a deliberate claim of literal autocracy. The persistent emphasis in Muscovite sources on the sovereign's exclusive autocratic power is striking, given that the boyars also held real, albeit not institutionalized, power. Moscow's sovereigns and boyars consistently upheld the façade that the sovereign, and the sovereign alone, made all government decisions and formulated all policy. They did so because the notion had both symbolic and real utility for them.

The conflicting traditions of historiography regarding Muscovite politics provide a third justification for this study of Muscovite court politics. Scholars have described Muscovite politics using concepts ranging from Oriental despotism to protoparliamentarianism. Opinions abound on issues relevant to court politics, such as how to explain particular court crises, or how to characterize political relations at court. Some of the interpretation presented here can be found in previous scholarship, but it also conflicts with a great deal of written opinion on Muscovy, particularly with the approaches typically employed in Soviet historical writing.

One can identify two approaches in the historiography on the subject of Muscovite politics: the "rational" and the "patrimonial," to borrow Weber's terms.[14] According to the rational approach, which has a decidedly Western orientation, political activities involved abstract entities that were impersonally defined, were safeguarded by law, and were accorded a share in public authority. Such entities in early Russia are said to include the "Boyar Duma," the state, and corporate estates such as the high aristocracy and lesser gentry. Relations among these groups are considered fundamentally antagonistic: estates struggled for a share of the king's power, the state tried to increase its control, and one's gain was the other's loss. This approach was dominant in prerevolutionary Russian and Soviet historical writing; it is exhibited in works as different as those of some of the prerevolutionary "statist" and liberal scholars and those of most Soviet Marxist historians.

The patrimonial, or nonlegalistic approach is based on the assumption that premodern political relationships were not grounded in formalized law and that groups were not organized as constitutional or corporate entities. Rather politics is viewed in personal terms: political relationships were structured by tradition, self-interest, and loyalty; groups were formed around principles of kinship, friendship, and dependence. Such an approach has inspired two different historiographical interpretations of Muscovite politics. One interpretation stresses the absolute personal power of the sovereign and thus denies the real political interaction of other political groups. This, in brief, is the extreme statist and Slavophile position. The other interpretation is the one adopted in part by A. E. Presniakov and by S. B. Veselovskii and is the one found in this book. According to this approach, dynamic political interaction took place within the framework of autocracy in Muscovy, groups were formed as a

result of personal loyalties, tradition was a strong force in political organization and behavior, and self-interest was an overriding force in political conflict.

Such distinctions may be familiar to students of premodern European politics, for they echo recent trends in research. Influenced by anthropology, collective biographical method, and social history, scholars are moving away from interpreting premodern political systems as constitutional, and premodern politics as class struggles; they are paying more attention to dynastic concerns, as well as to patronage, family strategies, and similar means of accomplishing the functions of government.[15] In Russian historical writing, these two interpretive approaches have coexisted since the nineteenth century, when historians, influenced by their extensive training in European history, confronted the evidence of continued autocracy in Russia with a constitutionalist predilection to find seeds of political pluralism and enfranchised classes. As a result, few Russian historians have consistently used either approach: the work of almost every historian includes aspects of both a rationalist and a patrimonial approach.

N. M. Karamzin, in his romanticized *Istoriia rossiiskogo gosudarstva* (*History of the Russian State*), first published from 1818 to 1829, rarely raised issues of political structure since he focused on dynastic history. Karamzin's goal, in part patriotic and literary, was to tell a good story. He painted Russian history as the nation's heroic struggle to throw off the Mongol yoke, and in this struggle he considered Ivan III's era (1462-1505) a turning point: Ivan III consolidated autocracy externally by defeating the Mongols and internally by subordinating other political forces—neighboring principalities, his kinsmen settled in semiindependent principalities (appanages), and the boyar aristocracy—to his control. Politically, Karamzin supported the idea of a responsible aristocracy in a framework of autocracy, and he presented relations between state and elite in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in a similar Westernized framework: he saw political groups as corporate classes locked in competition at court.[16] It is worth pointing out, however, that Karamzin was like numerous historians who followed him in that his implicit theory of political power contradicted his overall conceptual framework. Although he depicted boyars as a powerful aristocracy whose political rights the autocracy had to destroy, he also implied that the sovereign totally controlled appointments to boyar rank. Thus he implied the existence of an independent political class at court, yet made it the creature of the autocrat.[17]

S. M. Solov'ev brought a metahistorical interpretation to the study of Russian history.[18] In his *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (*History of Russia from Earliest Times*), published from 1851 to 1879, Solov'ev adopted a historicist framework of organic social evolution to explain

Russian development; he asserted that from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries Russia underwent a transition from a society ordered by the "kinship principle" (*rodovoe nachalo*) to one based on the principle of an impersonal "state" (*gosudarstvennoe nachalo*). His was an evolutionary view; he did not emphasize Ivan III's reign as a major turning point, but postulated steady evolution toward "state" relations from the time of Andrei Bogoliubskii (grand prince of Vladimir from 1157 until 1174) to the time of Ivan IV's Oprichnina (1564-72). Despite his gradualist understanding of political change, Solov'ev, like Karamzin, implicitly adopted a rational approach in describing political structure: he depicted the rise of autocracy as a struggle between the state and social groups (boyars, appanage princes) and explicitly posited that Russian history paralleled Western political and social development, albeit lagging in time.[19]

In his attention to kinship principles (remnants of which he claimed to exist even in the system of precedence in sixteenth-century Muscovy), Solov'ev demonstrated aspects of a patrimonial approach to politics. Other adherents to the "statist" school that Solov'ev represents took that approach to an extreme. They emphasized the sovereign's autocratic power so strongly that they conceded little possibility of political interaction. K. D. Kavelin's and B. N. Chicherin's essays on Muscovite autocracy, for example, represent that position. Slavophiles similarly stressed the personal nature of political relations in Muscovy, but they positively appraised Muscovy's lack of corporate classes and bureaucratic institutions, stressing the harmonious unity of people and autocrat.[20]

A similar division between the rational and patrimonial approaches was also evidenced in the works of historians belonging to the "juridical" school of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Authors of textbooks on Russian law, including V. I. Sergeevich, I. D. Beliaev, and M. F. Vladimirskii-Budanov, mechanically divided Russian history into eras defined only by chronology—the Kievan (tenth to thirteenth centuries) and Muscovite (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) periods. Some juridical scholars favored a rational explanation of politics, focusing on legal norms and political institutions. For example, Vladimirskii-Budanov, in his recounting of Muscovite legal history, depicted Moscow's boyars as constituting a pseudoparliamentary institution, the Boyar Duma. He pointed to its broad judicial and administrative competence, its regular meeting times, and its members' high social status as evidence of its institutional independence. He argued that its power was like that of a parliament since the grand prince by tradition had to heed his boyars.[21] Because Vladimirskii-Budanov based his interpretation primarily on data from seventeenth-century Muscovy—when the Duma was indeed a

more formalized, although not a parliamentary, institution—his argument seemed well founded and has endured. Muscovy, in Vladimirskii-Budanov's view, looked and acted much like a European "new monarchy."

Vladimirskii-Budanov's contemporary and fellow juridical scholar, V. I. Sergeevich, adopted the opposite approach: he argued that the sovereign was virtually omnipotent and that the Boyar Duma was not an "institution" of any permanence. Sergeevich noted that the term "Boyar Duma" was not used in Muscovite times but had been adopted by nineteenth-century historians. He called the boyars' activity simply "the act of counseling"; their advice was not binding on the sovereign.[22] The contrast between the views of Vladimirskii-Budanov and Sergeevich exemplifies a tension in much of prerevolutionary scholarship on the subject of Muscovy. Many Russian scholars spoke of institutions and corporate estates, suggesting that incipient political pluralism was emerging by the sixteenth century in Muscovy. Other scholars emphasized the power of the autocracy to a degree that seemed to contradict their suggestion of political pluralism conveyed by the use of terms as "Boyar Duma" and "aristocracy." V. O. Kliuchevskii's definition of the Boyar Duma is a tortured attempt to resolve the dichotomy between literal autocracy and implied rule by law:

> By its nature [the Boyar Duma] was a legislative institution that created general rules, permanent norms; but before us [remain] only the practical results of its legislative work. . . . For each such institution as our Boyar Duma we are used to considering the issue of whether it was obligatory for the leadership or only an advisory board; but people of those centuries did not distinguish such subtle understandings. . . . Hidden from society by the sovereign above and the clerk below, [the Duma] was a constitutional institution with broad influence but without a constitutional charter, a government seat with a broad circle of affairs but without a chancery or archive.[23]

Kliuchevskii, a scholar too sensitive to the sources to be dogmatic, combined in his works on Muscovite politics aspects of both the rational and patrimonial approaches. Kliuchevskii was attracted to Vladimirskii-Budanov's view that the Boyar Duma represented a force for political pluralism in Muscovy. In his *Boiarskaia duma drevnei Rusi* (*Boyar Duma of Ancient Rus'*), first published in 1882, Kliuchevskii called the boyars an "aristocracy," thus drawing a parallel with the politically privileged estates of some early modern European countries. He posited that Moscow's boyar class should have won corporate rights in the sixteenth century and lamented that it had "failed" as an aristocracy. Kliuchevskii presented the boyar aristocracy's political activities in institutional terms: he argued that men became boyars by working their way up a ladder of ranks, a hierarchy reminiscent of the later Petrine Table of Ranks and

indeed of bureaucracies contemporary with that great historian. But Kliuchevskii was also attentive to evidence that supported a more patrimonial view of political relations: he argued that until the time of Ivan III, sovereign princes and their boyars in Northeast Rus' cooperated harmoniously and patterned their political activities after those of a private household economy. He spoke knowledgeably of the "genealogical layers" of the families in the elite, of the importance of family and precedence in politics, and of the ultimate power of the sovereign to appoint boyars. In Kliuchevskii's view, impersonal state relations and conflict between the boyar aristocracy and the sovereign developed only in the time of Ivan III, with the biological extinction of some old boyar families and the influx of once-sovereign princely clans whose ideas turned a traditional elite into a corporate class. In sum, Kliuchevskii straddled the fence, presenting a polity affected by conflicts among sovereign, aristocracy, and Boyar Duma, yet also influenced by the autocracy, the continuity of boyar families in power, and a kinship- and service-based system of status determination.[24]

Many of the scholars writing at the turn of the century followed a rational, Westernized approach, evidencing less sensitivity to its ambiguities than Kliuchevskii had shown. Authors of textbooks, for example, described the sixteenth century in terms of the struggles of the state, social classes, and representative institutions—a clear comparison with contemporary understanding of the development of early modern Europe.[25] Of the major historians, N. P. Pavlov-Sil'vanskii argued that early Muscovy was feudal on a Western model; he emphasized juridical over socioeconomic aspects.[26] S. F. Platonov, despite his renowned knowledge of the sources, also adopted a rational approach: he described sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century political crises as struggles of progressive forces—Councils of the Land, monarchs, "gentry"—against a retrogressive princely "aristocracy" and Boyar Duma. Like virtually all of his predecessors, Platonov did not clearly explain how boyars won their roles; he deferred to the power of autocracy in implying that the sovereign appointed them.[27]

In Platonov's day monographic research also illuminated Muscovy in ways more consistent with a patrimonial understanding of politics. Among these works were studies on the system of precedence that highlighted family solidarity, not aristocratic corporatism, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century politics.[28] S. V. Rozhdestvenskii, in his monograph on sixteenth-century service landholding, published in 1897, rejected the theory that Ivan III used the distribution of service land grants to create a new political class that would rival the aristocracy. He showed that the state favored with such grants the old, established families that also owned patrimonial land.[29] Even the early Russian Marxist historians,

mindful of Russia's difference from the West, used the concept of "Asiatic despotism" to explain the absence in Muscovy of key aspects of the Western heritage, including feudalism, political pluralism, rule by law, corporate estates, and parliamentary development.[30]

A patrimonial interpretation of Muscovite politics is evident in the studies of Moscow's fifteenth-century dynastic war and the survey essay on Muscovy by the eminent St. Petersburg scholar A. E. Presniakov (both published in 1918).[31] Presniakov extended into the sixteenth century Solov'ev's view of the Muscovite polity as a reflection of the Daniilovichi's kinship principle (*rodovoe nachalo*). Presniakov argued that, as a result of the Muscovite dynastic war of the fifteenth century, the basis of the dynasty's rule was changed from an appanage (*udel'noe*) principle to a patrimonial (*votchinnoe*) principle. But he denied that the war transformed Muscovy into a more impersonal, constitutional polity. Presniakov thus rejected the Westernizing implicit in Solov'ev's scheme of evolution. In *Moskovskoe tsarstvo* (*The Tsardom of Muscovy*), Presniakov depicted the boyars' role in politics as based on Rus' traditions, not on aristocratic pretensions or the institutional rights of the Boyar Duma. Presniakov did not explore how men became boyars but, like Kliuchevskii, he commented on the tenacity of families in politics and the power of family traditions as exemplified by the system of precedence. Presniakov thus offered a compelling alternative to conflict-based, Westernized, rational concepts of the early Russian state and society.

But that rational approach found strong adherents among some early Marxist historians at the beginning of the twentieth century. Rational concepts, rather than concepts consistent with Asiatic despotism, became the official canon in Soviet historical circles in the 1930's. Since then Soviet historians writing on Russian history have followed different approaches, and their interpretations have often been the subject of controversy, but because the interpretive framework for Russian history established in the 1930's has endured as the scholarly point of reference, a distinct Soviet approach to Muscovite politics can be identified. It is essentially a mid-nineteenth-century view, having roots in the same Hegelian stage theory on which Solov'ev's organic description of Russian historical evolution was based. It analyzes political groups rationally, according to their members' class interests; it assumes that history evolves in stages propelled by class struggle and that Russia followed approximately the same stages of development that Western Europe did, in approximately the same order and at approximately the same time. Unlike prerevolutionary proponents of a state theory, however, Soviet scholars perceive class struggle between the state and society as occurring in all periods, even during the appanage era (approximately the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), which was considered politically harmonious by Kliuchevskii and others.

Muscovite history, however, poses many problems for the Soviet Marxist interpretation, and Soviet scholars have labored to resolve them.[32] L. V. Cherepnin's *Obrazovanie Russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva v XIV-XV vekakh* (*The Formation of the Centralized Russian State in the 14th-15th Centuries*), published in 1960, was a comprehensive statement of the current Soviet approach. Cherepnin argued that Muscovy's early modern centralization was feudal, but was accomplished without the emergence of bourgeoisie and the development of representative political institutions that occurred during that stage in the West. He explained the anomaly by reference to Russia's geopolitical situation: Tatar occupation and military threats from all sides required central state power. Appropriately, Cherepnin also argued that a national market was developing that demanded political unification.[33]

Cherepnin's work on the fifteenth century established a specific interpretation of political struggle of the period of interest to us. He argued that the fifteenth century witnessed the weakening of appanage decentralization and the transition to national unity; the catalyst for change was class struggle between forces of autocratic centralization. On one side stood Muscovite grand princes, untitled boyars, and, under Ivan III, the gentry supported by service land grants (*pomest'e*); on the other stood forces for appanage separatism (the church, appanage princes, princely boyars, and service princes).[34] Cherepnin's work established a model that was elaborated upon by his successors, including I. I. Smirnov and S. M. Kashtanov; they saw the same political groupings in sixteenth-century political struggles.[35] Conforming further to a Marxist stage theory, Soviet scholars in general characterize the sixteenth century as one in which the various social estates won representative institutions in government, just as their European counterparts did.[36]

A younger generation of Soviet scholars that included N. E. Nosov and A. A. Zimin, and that is currently represented by R. G. Skrynnikov and I. Ia. Froianov, has modified this argument somewhat, without changing its "rational" approach. These historians suggest that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century political struggles were not concerned with the issue of centralization, but rather were class conflicts over control of the apparatus of government. Skrynnikov claims that Ivan IV's personal motivations and his Oprichnina are inexplicable in terms of class analysis, and he characterizes the basic tension of this reign as the struggle between aristocracy and gentry.[37] In his discussion of how men became boyars, Zimin initially noted that family heritage, marriage alliances, cronyism, and extraordinary talent helped a man to become a boyar, but ultimately

he presented an argument that is more rational than patrimonial, in the terms used here. He suggested that men worked their way up ladders of service, finally achieving boyar rank by merit and as a result of the confirming favor of the sovereign; affinitive factors were supplementary.[38] Froianov, in his works on early Kievan politics, goes further in shifting to a new paradigm: he depicts Kiev Rus' as a prefeudal society in which family and community were more important organizing principles than were state institutions and class antagonisms. V. B. Kobrin has explicitly attacked the class struggle interpretation of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Muscovite politics, and several other works have introduced a new approach by presenting conflict at court as "internal class struggle" engaged in by family factions, not rival classes. But Froianov's views have been criticized by Soviet scholars.[39] Soviet historians have extended the Marxist paradigm to its extreme, but it remains to be seen if they will officially abandon a class and institutional approach.[40]

Soviet scholars are nevertheless presenting Muscovy less legalistically, echoing the views of turn-of-the-century scholars like Presniakov. There is good reason for this: a direct historical connection can be found in the works of S. B. Veselovskii. Veselovskii advocated a prosopographical approach to Muscovite history, as well as a complementary interpretation that stressed family and personal networks over class and institutions. Veselovskii reached the peak of his career in 1917, when he was made a professor at Moscow University. His views and writings found little favor in Soviet historical circles, however, and Veselovskii was allowed to publish relatively few works in the Soviet period. He died in 1952, and his unpublished works began to appear beginning in the mid-1960's; his archive is still being mined for source publications and essays.[41]

Veselovskii's work points the way to a new synthesis of interpretations of Muscovite court politics, although he neither envisaged nor accomplished that goal. He was convinced that a knowledge of the history of Muscovite boyar families and of their landholdings was crucial to an understanding of the rise of Muscovite autocracy. To this end he prepared exhaustive monographs on boyar family histories and their landholdings. Veselovskii demonstrated the continuity of families in boyar rank over time, but without systematically examining how one became a boyar. He also noted kinship relations among actors in political crises without generalizing about political conflict. He rejected an analysis of Ivan's Oprichnina as a movement by or against classes and presented it merely as a power struggle among leading boyar families.[42] Thus he implied that the continuity of boyar family development was a force behind historical change – a view presaged by Kliuchevskii's attention to the genealogical evolution of the landed elite as a whole. Veselovskii's work, once published, drew attention away from an institutional and class analysis of Muscovite political life, and focused it on the individuals in power and their personal relationships.

The current generation of Soviet scholars has borrowed its methodology for studying political groups from Veselovskii, although, as has been suggested, application of that methodology has resulted in contradictions between the evidence garnered and the historians' rationalist and Marxist approaches. Zimin used a prosopographical approach before most of Veselovskii's publications appeared,[43] and in the wake of their publication in the 1960's, many other Soviet scholars, including V. B. Kobrin and M. E. Bychkova, adopted it as well.[44]

Veselovskii's work – appearing, as it did, simultaneously with a change in emphasis in Western historical writing toward social history and collective biographical methods – has influenced Western historians of Muscovy to shift away from class analysis and implicit Western comparisons.[45] Numerous American scholars have questioned the use of class analysis as a tool for interpreting Muscovite political struggles.[46] Gustave Alef and Ann Kleimola have discussed the problem of the evolution of autocracy, providing valuable empirical information on social class evolution and patterns of military service. Alef, following Veselovskii and Zimin, argues that men advanced to political power by progressing up a "*cursus honorum*" of military or court ranks, and he has tried to establish the duration of service careers. Nevertheless, both he and Kleimola have stressed that service was only one of the factors contributing to the acquisition of boyar rank; the others were marriage, favor, politicking, and "good luck."[47] In Germany, Hartmut Russ has written a masterful analysis of political relations between Moscow's sovereigns and boyars during most of the period covered here; his view of those relations as characterized by cooperation and his analysis of the Muscovite political system as a "retinue" (*druzhina*) state strongly complement the interpretation of this book.[48]

Robert Crummey and Brenda Meehan-Waters, in their work on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russia, have used methodology similar to Alef's and Kleimola's and have developed interpretations that complement Russ's work. Influenced more likely by Western trends in political analysis than by the involuted history of these ideas in Russian historical writing, Crummey and Meehan-Waters have rejected a class and institutional approach toward the study of politics in favor of one focused on family, marriage, friendship, and patronage.[49] Their work reveals a marked continuity in patrimonial political relations from the early Muscovite period to the seventeenth and even the eighteenth centuries. For example, both describe political groups as "vertical," cutting across class

lines and encompassing boyars, bureaucrats, and lesser servitors; both hold that patronage, loyalty, and kinship, not class consciousness or ideological conviction, united groups and sparked conflict. They see what could be considered a vestigial survival of factors like heredity in political advancement, combined with length of service and talent. As Kleimola demonstrates for the sixteenth century, Crummey argues for the seventeenth century that advancement to boyar rank depended on a multiplicity of factors including service, favor, and family. Not surprisingly, Meehan-Waters considers service to have been a far stronger determinant of political power during the reign of Peter the Great, but she nevertheless discerns a strong continuity of leading families. Perhaps the most interpretatively innovative work of all is that of Edward L. Keenan, Jr., who has used a structural and anthropological approach to argue that family was the most important factor in Muscovite political life, that political groups were affinitive, and that political history was shaped by a pursuit of consensus, not conflict.[50] Keenan's brief and stimulating essays on court politics are among the first efforts toward a theoretical analysis of the topic, but they do not use the diachronic approach used here.

This historiography concerning Muscovite politics from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries in many ways sets the stage for this study because it shifts emphasis toward family and affinitive relations in public life. Furthermore, the evidence of the sources would seem to suggest the preferability of a modified patrimonial approach, one that allows for dynamic political interaction. Publications of documents, source studies, and monographs since the 1950's make it increasingly possible to develop a systematic analysis of political relations in early Muscovy.[51]

Methodology

A few remarks on the methodology and source criticism used in this study are in order. The method of research was designed to facilitate attainment of the goal of defining the Muscovite political system by concentrating on principles of advancement, association, conflict, and ideology. The subject and process of investigation narrowed the area of concern to the families of boyars and the sovereign. A working goal, therefore, was to identify the boyars at any given time, and to ascertain their family's membership and their marriage and political alliances as revealed by the sources.[52]

A master list of boyars was compiled from documentary sources (lists of signatories on charters and lists of boyar representatives at diplomatic negotiations) and from military service records.[53] A. A. Zimin's list of boyars from 1462 to 1584 and Gustave Alef's and Ann Kleimola's supplements were consulted,[54] but ultimately the list used for this study had to be reestablished on the basis of primary sources. Appendix 2 provides not a list of boyars, but rather a list of families within clans that possessed hereditary boyar status; a list of boyars alone would give a misleading impression about court politics. Men were boyars as family leaders, not as individuals, and the timing of their receipt of boyar rank depended as much on their situation in their family as on their own efforts. Boyars are therefore listed in families and the list is intended to be comprehensive. Men have been identified as boyars in Appendix 2 if official documents refer to them as such; uncorroborated references in genealogical books and chronicles have not been credited, since these were not official records, nor were they generally contemporary. Family trees of boyars have been constructed on the basis of late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century genealogical books. (Nineteenth-century compendiums of noble genealogies are replete with errors and have not been relied on.)[55] Strictures of space prevent the inclusion of genealogical charts for the over 90 families in about 60 clans considered here. Evidence pertaining to boyar family economy and patronage networks is incomplete; for only a few boyars can one trace the growth or decline of wealth and correlate that with the individual's political success. The economic interests that boyars brought to political interaction can therefore be described only generally.[56]

A chronology of court politics was compiled from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chronicles, as well as documentary and diplomatic sources; then the changing composition of the boyar elite was correlated with important political developments. The growth of boyar clans and their relationships were also traced over time. Men were grouped in political alliances when several types of evidence—kinship, marriage alliances, direct chronicle references, shared political fates—corroborated each other. Information on marriage alliances was compiled from genealogical books, land deeds, and other occasional sources, but it is extremely incomplete. From all of this research some consistent themes emerged: the importance of family and personal loyalties, the continuity in politics of great clans over time, and the real power of the boyar elite despite the façade of autocracy. With regard to the specific principles of political activity, however, sources were less revealing.

Politics was the affair of so small and personally intimate a group of families that they did not need to set down the rules of their interaction. Some sources—genealogical books, precedence cases, and military service books—directly reveal the affinitive world of court politics. Other sources are the most misleading of guides. Chronicles and tales can be inaccurate and, far worse, they depict the political world monochromatically: an omnipotent sovereign rules with the aid of a slavish

elite. The discovery that such different sources do permit a consistent interpretation has been perhaps the most intellectually exciting part of this work.

The least of the problems with chronicles and other narrative sources is inaccuracy; since they were edited over generations, they occasionally omit accounts, alter information, garble proper names, and so on, but most factual errors can be corrected. As a general rule, in this work those chronicles were preferred that were written closest in time to the events described. Thus, for fourteenth-century information, the sixteenth-century Nikon chronicle is here considered less reliable than corresponding entries in Priselkov's reconstruction of the earlier Trinity chronicle; the various fifteenth-century compendiums are also favored over the Nikon. However, because some chronicles, including the Nikon, are the sole source of some information, all relevant chronicles have been consulted, if not necessarily accepted.

The politicization of chronicle writing is more challenging to the historian than the determination of factual flaws. Each chronicle had at least two purposes underlying its writing. The first was to depict events with the "proper" political interpretation. Thus, the Nikon chronicle version of a fourteenth-century event may be of interest not for its accuracy but to the extent that it reveals sixteenth-century attitudes. It has been well demonstrated, for example, that the Voskresenie chronicle, edited in the 1540's, is sympathetic to certain boyar groups in its depiction of the conflicts during the minority of Ivan IV in the 1530's and 1540's, whereas the "Brief Chronicle of the Beginning of the Tsardom," edited in the 1560's, castigates all boyars for "boyar misrule" and glorifies autocratic power.[57] To uncover the biases of the chronicles is to illuminate political thought and reality at the time of their composition.

A second purpose underlying chronicle writing was to render a didactic model of moral behavior in political as well as private life—to transmit a political theory.[58] Muscovite political ideology did not directly reflect the situation at court, primarily because the authors of narrative sources were not participants in court politics. Nevertheless, such sources reveal the principles that shaped court relations. For this study, then, chronicles and court ritual were investigated for what they reveal of political interaction and ideology, and court crises were analyzed to try to extrapolate political principles.[59]

There are few other narrative sources that can be utilized for the analysis of Muscovite political reality or ideology. The bias in foreign travelers' accounts limits their usefulness, but occasionally foreigners identified key aspects of Muscovite politics, even if they themselves did not realize their importance. Narrative sources such as the early chapters of the protocols

of the 1551 *Stoglav* Church Council complement the ideology of the chronicles. With caution one may also go beyond the sixteenth century for sources on political ideology and on customs of those at the pinnacle of power. For example, the political ideology inherent in the early-seventeenth-century tales of the Time of Troubles, in Kotoshikhin's testimony on court ceremonial around the 1660's, and in seventeenth-century descriptions of political customs involving the inner circle as analyzed by Robert Crummey, reveal apparent vestiges of earlier practices.[60] Crummey's study of seventeenth-century boyar politics underscores the finding of this study that the political customs of those at the pinnacle of power changed with excruciating slowness. The way in which power was dispersed at the top of the elite in the seventeenth century parallels earlier traditions, including the custom of according central importance to the dynastic wedding in the determination of the status hierarchy among the boyars and the custom of presenting an idealized harmony among sovereign and boyars in ideological writings. Thus, the sometimes more discursive seventeenth-century sources will be cited for their explication of certain traditions of high court politics.

The problem of the Kurbskii sources would seem to loom large for this study. For generations, the correspondence attributed to Ivan IV and Prince Andrei Kurbskii, plus a history of Ivan IV's reign attributed to the prince, have influenced scholars' interpretations of sixteenth-century Kremlin politics. The authenticity of these writings, however, has been questioned by Edward L. Keenan on the basis of analysis of the manuscript survival pattern, of the "convoy," or compositions with which these texts were frequently bound in miscellanies, of the language and structure of the texts, and of their anomalous position among other primary sources on sixteenth-century politics.[61] The research presented here tends to confirm Keenan's doubts.

The writings attributed to Kurbskii and Ivan IV alternately harmonize and conflict with other primary source evidence on politics at the Muscovite court in the period prior to Ivan's wedding in 1547. At times the writings provide information on boyars and marriage alliances of the mid-sixteenth century that can be corroborated by other evidence. Their authors seem to have been privy to chronicle accounts of the years of Ivan's minority. At other times the correspondence and history are inaccurate, suggesting either the writer's faulty memory or later writers' flawed falsifications. Should Keenan be right, it is not unreasonable that a seventeenth-century author might be cognizant of boyar family histories. The precedence system, the maintenance of genealogical books into the Romanov restoration, and Robert Crummey's work on the seventeenth-century boyar elite all prove that family heritage and marriage alliances

remained important in politics. Thus, the relative accuracy of the correspondence and history may support Keenan's position. No matter what one's conclusions, a skeptical treatment of their contents is mandated.

Such caution about the contents of the correspondence and the Kurbskii history is also called for because these works conform so well to the conventions of Muscovite political ideology.[62] Ivan's goodness is explained in terms of his moral virtue and his having good advisers; his degradation stems from his having rejected good advisers for evil ones. Detail is heaped on detail to establish Ivan's depravity as a child and as a mature adult. Kurbskii's (or the pseudo-Kurbskii's) compositions echo so well the formulaic ideology of Muscovite politics that one cannot rely on the literal accuracy of these descriptions of Ivan's personality or of his motivations. As Keenan has cogently observed, much about these works differs in form and spirit from other sixteenth-century sources, including their genres (personal correspondence and a narrative history), the Polonized and Grecified language of the later letters and the *History*, and their presumption of open political discussion. No other sixteenth-century personal letters are known to exist, save a few brief communications from Vasilii III to his wife inquiring about the health of their son. No such secular description of secular events survives from the sixteenth century, nor do other narrative disquisitions by boyars exist. (Neither Peresvetov nor Bersen Beklemyshev, both of whom commented on court politics, was a participant in them.) Authentic or not, these sources do not offer much new information for this study and, because of their questioned authenticity, they have been used with a liberal grain of salt: their characterizations of Ivan's personality have been discounted, and specific facts have generally not been accepted without corroboration.

Proceeding in this manner deprives us of the sole narrative sources for Ivan's political philosophy; it leaves only formulaic and secondhand chronicle and *Stoglav* sources to testify to the characteristics of his personality through the 1550's. Such a method also discredits the concept of "the Chosen Council" and diminishes the roles of Syl'vestr and Adashev in the 1550's. When we are deprived of the anomalous Kurbskii–Ivan IV correspondence and the Kurbskii history, we see Ivan less as a real personality; but sixteenth-century documents, chronicles, and other sources, if read sensitively, nonetheless constitute a rich and consistent record of Moscow's political ideology and court political system.

This book is concerned with the period beginning with the founding of the Muscovite grand principality of the Daniilovichi in the early fourteenth century. I take the arrangement of power relations created by the marriage in 1345 of Prince Ivan Ivanovich, soon to be grand prince, to

symbolize the founding of the system of Muscovite court politics. The period extends to the resolution of the crisis precipitated by Ivan IV's minority; Ivan IV's marriage in 1547 was the first of several steps, including further marriages in the sovereign family, that reconciled competing boyars after a generation of strife. Within these chronological bounds, represented by Chapters 1 and 5, I trace the development of Muscovy's political traditions. Chapter 1 presents the circumstances that shaped Muscovite politics in the court's founding century. In subsequent chapters, the evolution of Moscow's court politics is explained more thematically than chronologically. Political recruitment is the subject of Chapters 2 and 3. The discussion centers on how heredity and service influenced who became boyars and when the position was awarded. These chapters are supported by the appendixes: Appendix 1 is a discussion of how ages and lifespans might be reckoned for Muscovite boyars; Appendix 2 is a profile of all boyar families; it lists all boyars according to the family they belonged to, as is consistent with the book's interpretation. Such a format makes clear the hereditary and collateral nature of boyar succession. Chapter 4 focuses on political hierarchy: how status and power were apportioned among the great families. Chapter 5 is an examination of political association and conflict; a study of Ivan IV's minority from 1533 to the 1550's illustrates its conclusions.

The book ends in the mid-1550's, when Muscovy was on the threshold of a protracted era of threats to tradition. Some of those threats were presented by territorial expansion that necessitated ever more complex administrative institutions, an increase in bureaucratic personnel, and an expanded army manned by the growing servitor classes in Moscow and the provinces. The Oprichnina (1564-72), the political competitions of Boris Godunov's reign (1598-1604), and the disruptions of the Time of Troubles (1604-13) seriously threatened the Muscovite state. Ivan IV used the Oprichnina to attack directly the principles that are defined in this work as central to the proper functioning of court politics: hereditary succession in boyar clans, the grand-princely marriage as arbiter of political power, and the political exclusivity of established boyar families. His compatriots in the Oprichnina further ravaged the established power hierarchy by carrying out murders and property confiscations. Whether these combined actions of the Oprichnina fundamentally changed Muscovite politics or the composition of the elite is a subject for further study. But the fact that Ivan IV did try to use the Oprichnina to strike so deeply at Moscow's political principles and established elite, and that disruption of normal political activity continued in the subsequent decades, suggests a natural ending point for our analysis of the founding and evolution of that political system.