Sexual slander and gendered insult were among the most important issues at stake in affronts to honor. A man or woman’s own sexual probity might be assailed, a man’s wife slandered, or a mother oath (maternyi lai) hurled. Women and sexuality were as central in the workings of honor in early modern Russia as they were in sixteenth-century Italy, England, France, the Germanys, and elsewhere. And for good reason. Sexual promiscuity had power greater than crime and cursing to shake the foundations of society—it could break up families, humiliate fathers and husbands, and produce unwanted children. Individuals jealously guarded their reputations for moral probity and exerted controls on community members to toe the line.

Women had a particularly pivotal role in maintaining the stability of family and community institutions, and thus their honor was at the heart of Muscovite honor codes. This chapter, then, extends my analysis beyond insult to explore the tapestry of community relations and values illustrated by women’s involvement in honor litigations.

**Honor and Shame**

In the intensity of its treatment of women, Muscovy resembled the classic “honor and shame” societies associated with the Mediterranean basin. In such societies, according to anthropologists, honor is the primary shaper of individual and group behavior. Gender roles are highly articulated, and strict forms of social control enforce honor as society construes it.¹

Honor was construed patriarchally—that is, it centered on male authority. Men achieved honor by protecting the chastity and reputations of the women

in their authority. In some settings, they also won honor by pursuing sexual exploits with other families’ women, but apparently not in Muscovy. Here there was no tradition of openly kept mistresses or illegitimate offspring; men were expected to be celibate outside of marriage. Women were not only held to that expectation, but were enjoined to cultivate “shame,” construed as modesty, humility, and obedience. Ironically, because this code of values focused so heavily on women’s sexuality, women held the psychological upper hand. Their promiscuity could humiliate fathers and husbands, and so women were both respected and feared by men. Men often accorded honorable women exaggerated respect, but attitudes toward women were fundamentally misogynistic. Female nature was distrusted as evil and seductive, a source of social disorder. Because of their inherent power, women needed to be controlled.

Control took many forms. Marriages were arranged, association with members of the opposite sex was limited and supervised, and women’s bodies were covered with proper headdresses, modest hair styles, and layers and layers of fabric. At its most extreme, control meant physical seclusion and shrouding. At its most diffuse, it took the form of symbolic and tangible rewards for conformity to men’s expectations.

Symbolically, “honorable” women earned the esteem of the community and family members as “good women” or “good wives.” Tangibly, they merited honorable marriages and material upkeep by the menfolk bound to protect them—fathers and husbands, or lacking them, more extended male kin. The exaggerated respect they received often meant more than gallantry; it could also translate into economic benefits. In Muscovy, for example, insults to the honor of a married woman were compensated at twice the rate of insults to her husband; insult to a man’s unmarried daughter at four times that rate. Patriarchy often offers such a flip side to its strictures: Women who conformed benefited in status and in material wealth; within the confines of societal norms, women could carve out a sphere of authority and respect.


Muscovite social values and their day-to-day practice give real-life illustration of the Janus-like implications of patriarchy. Moral teachings emanating from the church were fundamentally misogynistic, tracing women's evil to Eve's original sin and drawing on St. Paul's view that women should be obedient in all things to their husbands. Orthodox teachings associated sexuality with the devil and saw women as the devil's most ready accomplices in subverting humankind. Women were excoriated as temptresses, gossips, and agents of disorder. George Fedotov quotes the fourteenth-century handbook, the *Emerald*: “It is better to suffer from fever than to be mastered by a bad wife. . . . Do not entrust your secrets to a bad wife lest you perish.” The sixteenth-century household handbook, the *Domostroi*, quoting Ecclesiastes, warns of social castigation for sexual impropriety: “Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter, or she may give your enemies cause to gloat, making you the talk of the town and a byword among the people, and shaming you in the eyes of the world.”5 The stringency of the dominant trend of these sources is not unique to Russia; contemporary European attitudes toward women, particularly in prescriptive handbooks, were essentially the same.6

But such literature also accorded women value and utility within a patriarchal paradigm. An honorable woman, for example, was praised as “her husband's crown,” in the words of the Old Testament quoted by the Domostroi. Such women were “capable, long-suffering and silent,” obedient and chaste, but most interestingly, they were also competent. The *Domostroi* paints the ideal woman as an energetic household manager: She is constantly busy at embroidering and sewing; she fetches food, tends the household garden, works into the wee hours of the night spinning, is generous to the poor, is wise and loyal, and is perspicacious in speech. Guided by her husband's advice, of course, she supervises servants, instructs daughters in embroidery and cooking, and most important, sets an example of piety that leads the whole family to salvation.


Reflecting on this ideal of womanhood, the Domostroi effuses: “Who can find a capable wife? Her worth is far beyond coral.” Accordingly, strong female characters figure in hagiography of female saints as well as in secular tales. Of course, they are primarily praised for their piety, chastity, devotion to family, and charity, but they are also accorded great strength of personality and wisdom in their pursuit of piety. St. Fevroniia of Murom, for example, is credited with magical powers and is shown defying and besting the Murom boyars with her wit. Iuliana Lazarevskaja strong-mindedly tends to the poor to the detriment of her health and the neglect of weekly church services. Tatiana Suntulova outwits her pernicious suitors with clever ruses and remains faithful to her spouse.

The Old Belief’s treatment of women dramatically demonstrates the mixed legacy of patriarchal attitudes toward women. In the first generations, the Old Belief depended on the patronage of powerful elite women and revered the martyrdom of Boiarinya Feodosiia Morozova, but subsequent generations downplayed these women’s roles and constructed a male pantheon of saintly exemplars.

The practice of dishonor litigations in Muscovy, as we shall see, reflected these social values. Whether through indigenous East Slavic traditions or through Orthodox teachings to an illiterate society in sermons and the reading of saints’ lives in liturgies, patriarchal attitudes were disseminated among Orthodox subjects of the tsar. We see evidence in the elite and peasant villages, the far North, the steppe frontier, and the Kremlin palace. One has to wonder why this particular social code flourished. To a great extent, a functionalist analysis works here: Misogyny and patriarchy underwrote a social system that proved stable. They created stable families on a patrilineal model, families that in turn provided labor and production; reproduction and the rearing of children; and the fulfillment of social responsibilities, such as tax payment and military service. The patriarchal system preserved itself by imposing behavior that ensured the marriageability of daughters and the purity of a wife’s issue.

7 Pouny, Domostroi, pp. 102–3, 132–33. The Domostroi is here quoting Proverbs (12:4) and Ecclesiastes (26:1–3).
Such utility can be seen at all social levels. In the elite, it was the patrilineal clan and the family heritage that garnered economic and political status and privileges for individuals. Elite families used marriage alliances to preserve and expand family wealth and to advance politically. At the apex of the elite, for example, the ruler’s marriage and those of his closest kin determined the inner circle and hierarchy of power for generations to come. Thus, elite families were particularly sensitive to family honor and reputation.

In taxpaying communities, patriarchy was no less functional. In farming and trading communities, the labor unit was the married couple and its household, capable of creating and mobilizing enough labor to feed and shelter its members and to meet state obligations. Unmarried daughters drained as much production from the family as their labor contributed, so they needed to be honorably married off at the appropriate age. Sons in stable marriages contributed to the household economy until they created their own homesteads by fission or inheritance.

 Particularly in Russia, where collective responsibility of the whole community for taxes, law and order, and other civil duties was regularly practiced, everyone depended on the stability of the household unit. Among taxpayers, as in the elite, disobedient wives and children could cripple the family economy, and sexual promiscuity by men or women upset the stability of both family and


community. Runaway wives left household and children abandoned; unchaste and thus unmarriageable daughters became a lifelong burden on their fathers; dissolute husbands left family and dependents impoverished. Community and kin had to come to the rescue. Therefore, sexual activity had to be kept within the permitted parameters of lawful marriage, and patriarchal demands for obedience had to be honored.

Ultimately the issue was survival, particularly for poorer families living at a bare subsistence level, but for all social ranks as well. Muscovy, like most pre-modern societies, had few social welfare resources other than the family. Grand princes had a traditional responsibility to care for the poor, which they fulfilled by distributing alms and patronizing monasteries but not by systematic social policy. Orthodox social values mandated charity, but the church seemed unable to provide it as an institution. Although monasteries did take in some poor persons, widows, and other needy people, Russian Orthodoxy's hesychast and ascetic values, the primacy of the monastic ideal, and insufficient resources all militated against the church's being active in community outreach. Communities might rally to help individuals in a crisis, but resources were scarce. Families had to depend on one another. Not surprisingly, then, individuals evoked the necessity of family when beseeching the tsar's favor. In 1618, for example, the governor of Shuia in the Vladimir region reported that a poor man, assaulted by a family of town bullies, complained that "he could not sue them because they are people with lots of family, and with friends and co-conspirators (liudi sem'ianisty i s svoimi druizi i z zagovorschchiki)." And in 1634, a peasant from the Northern Dvina land in the far North complained that he was helpless before the assaults of his neighbors: "I am a solitary little man alone in the world (chelovechenko odinashno), I farm this little plot (pashnishko) alone." Even for the elite, having family to draw on was an important issue. In 1639, a member of a North Caucasus clan—the Cherkasskii princes—that had been in Muscovite service for several generations nevertheless sued a scion of an old Moscow family who had insulted him, "seeing my foreign status" (vi dia moe inozemstvo); Cherkasskii called himself "kinless" (bezsemeinoi). Similarly, in 1675, a boyar lamented his "kinless, helpless, defenseless" position.14


Beyond their rhetorical effect, these laments had more than symbolic value. Document after document describes the predicament of widows and abandoned wives left to “wander from house to house,” living off the kindness of others.\(^{15}\) In a particularly poignant case, a woman from Ustiug Velikii in the North reported that her estranged husband abused her even after she had left him to become a nun; he assaulted her in her convent cell, beating her so badly that she had to leave the convent and seek help. She went to her son-in-law’s home, saying, “And I have no clan or tribe other than they and cannot run to anyone and rest my head anywhere.”\(^{16}\) Whether metaphorically or materially, in this society being without kin was not a comfortable position. Patriarchal attitudes and social institutions built around such attitudes tried to ensure that everyone had a minimal safety net to which to turn.

But one should not overdo the structuralist analysis. Patriarchy endured in Muscovy not only because it created social stability. Patriarchal social values were cultural constructs that had a life of their own even as they generally flew in the face of reality. Martin Ingram speaks of the tension stemming from “everyman’s experience of the day-to-day conflicts between the dictates of the patriarchal ideal and the infinite variety of husband/wife relationships.”\(^{17}\) Women in the absence of husbands proved themselves capable of managing households, meeting the tax burden, and taking on worldly responsibility. Women owned property, managed considerable household duties, participated in family decision making, and orchestrated the elaborate negotiations and festivities associated with betrothing and marrying off their sons and daughters.\(^{18}\) As we have seen, such competence at domestic tasks was consistent with patriarchal values, and in principle, an alternative, more egalitarian social code might have been more appropriate. Nevertheless, patriarchy surmounted its contradictions: Men still spoke of women as weak and inferior, curtailed their property rights, and subjected them to a range of humiliating expectations and

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\(^{15}\) See, for example, RIB 25 (1908), no. 159, cols. 207–8 (1638); RIB 25, no. 232, cols. 316–17 (1661); Moskovskaia delovaia, pt. 2, no. 126, pp. 113–14 (1686).

\(^{16}\) RIB 25, no. 105, cols. 128–31 (1632).


controls. Patriarchy existed as a cultural code affirming men’s psychological sense of superiority, regardless of its economic or social instrumentality.

**Patriarchy in Defense of Women**

As these values played out in Muscovite life, they imposed dual obligations on fathers, families, and communities. First was the obligation to protect and defend women’s honor from the slightest insult, because slurs on women also insulted the men who had responsibility for them. Insults also jeopardized maidens’ marriage chances and humiliated the family in the eyes of the village or local community. Second was the obligation to control women’s behavior to prevent the humiliation that promiscuity might cause and the real burdens (such as an illegitimate child) it might impose on women’s fathers, neighbors, or communities. We can see this tension even in laconic Muscovite records (primarily litigations over dishonor and related juridical documents), paralleling the richer evidence unearthed by historians of patriarchal social relations in Imperial Russia.19

We will survey a wide array of evidence of how patriarchal strictures prompted Muscovites to use the law to defend women or to control them, moving beyond honor litigations to other legal and cultural practices. Contrary to what one might expect, documents show considerable effort to protect women from the physical oppressions engendered by patriarchy. At the extreme, Muscovite family patriarchs defended their daughters and wives from the ultimate dishonor of rape. They lodged complaints with local authorities if their daughters were threatened with rape or if they were victims of an attempted rape. In 1638, for example, an archimandrite of a monastery in Suzdal’ province reported that a gang of men had attacked one of his monastery’s villages at night, stolen goods, ransacked the village, and seized a woman, who was then rescued by neighbors. He lodged the complaint against a crowd of men who had repeatedly threatened these lands. A peasant in the Ustiug Velikii area (near the midreaches of the Northern Dvina River in the North) in 1675 complained that another peasant repeatedly threatened to rape his daughter and to harm him. Similarly, a landless man complained in 1691 that “my sister Agafia was going to fetch water and when she had not yet reached the bridge by the market, the Murom townsman Iakunka Ovchinnikov grabbed [her] and pulled her under the bridge,” sexually assaulting her.20

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Muscovites also litigated vigorously to defend reputation and uphold patriarchy when the culprits could be identified. Courts, in turn, took the accusations very seriously. In a case that began with an alleged incident in 1698 and lasted through charges and counter charges until at least 1701 (when the documentation ends), a soldier’s wife accused a church deacon of assault, insult, and attempted rape. She persisted in her charges even though the deacon denied all and was supported by witnesses. In another case, officials of the metropolitan of Murom and Riazan entertained the case of Fekolka Kirilova. Sought out by church authorities because she was bearing an illegitimate child, Kirilova initially accused a worker, Ivashko Bunda, of raping her. Then she accused the priest who had raised her as an orphan in his home of raping her and of maintaining illicit sexual relations with her over several years. As the priest stood firm in his denials, Kirilova piece by piece recanted details of her testimony, eventually fully withdrawing the rape charge against the priest (although not the charge against Bunda). It is remarkable that the court so assiduously investigated the accusations of this increasingly compromised witness in a trial that lasted from May to August 1683.

Courts punished severely those found guilty of rape. For example, a woman sued the son of a priest in 1689 on behalf of her thirteen-year-old niece, who had been seriously injured in a sexual assault. The case stretched from January to July, and despite the defendant’s denials and the hearsay nature of the evidence against him, he was found guilty. His specific cash fine is not specified, but he agreed to pay the girl’s dowry (dogovor na veno). The case includes excerpts of Byzantine secular law mandating that a rapist pay one-third of his property to his victim and be subjected to the physical mutilation of having his nose cut off (the latter was not ordered in this case). A woman of Ustiug Velikii province in 1686 settled a case of rape and assault on her home by two men, and the judges ruled that the settlement payment should be in accord with her dishonor value. In 1698, a woman sued her father-in-law, a widower priest, for numerous attempts at rape; he admitted his guilt and was banished to a monastery to await further sanctions.

In an extended case from Moscow of 1687 that deserves particular attention, the boy co-tsars Ioann (b. 1666) and Petr (b. 1672) Alekseevichi and regent

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21 RGADA f. 210, Prikazniy stol, stb 2634, ll. 1–30.
23 RIB 12 (1890), no. 199, cols. 948–54.
24 RIB 12, no. 166, cols. 724–30.
25 RIB 14, pt. 2, no. 79, cols. 1280–84.
Sofiia Alekseevna gave a young woman a resoundingly favorable verdict in a suit for rape. The incident unfolded when a man of service rank, Stepan Korob’in, ordered his serving man, Serezhka Morev, to find him a woman for sexual dalliance. Serezhka, with the help of a female friend Katerinka, lured a young girl, Mavrutka Ventsyleeva, to Korob’in’s home under false pretenses. The court transcript continues:

They brought this maiden, Mavrutka, from Katerinka’s home, on Serezhka’s horse, saying they were taking her [home] to her mother, the widow Dun’ka, but, not taking her to her mother, they took her to the home of Stepan Korob’in. . . . And he, Serezhka, dragging her, Mavrutka, to him, Stepan, to his home, gave her to him Stepan in his living quarters for sexual relations. And he, Stepan Korob’in, raped her, Mavrutka, in his home in the living quarters, and he, Stepan, having raped her, Mavrutka, cast her out of his home.

Tsars Ioann and Petr and Tsarevna Sofiia ordered Serezhka beaten and exiled to Siberia with his family for his role in the crime. They ordered that Katerinka be put on stringent surety bond rather than suffer the usual punishment of exile, because her husband was in military service and the tsars were loathe to remove him from it and unwilling to exile Katerinka alone: “for the crime of a wife, husbands are not to be sent in exile; but it was not appropriate to send her Katerinka alone from her husband.” The tsars reserved their harshest punishment, appropriately, for the rapist:

And for rape Stepan Korob’in is to be punished as well by beating with a knout, and the sum of 500 rubles is to be levied on him and, it having been collected, it is to be given over to the maiden Mavrutka for her dishonor and for her dowry, and he Stepan is to be sent under guard to Solovetskii monastery until [the tsar] orders [otherwise]. And as for the fact that he, Stepan, in his testimony and in face to face confrontation with her, Mavrutka, said that he, Stepan, engaged in sexual relations with her, Mavrutka, with her consent and [he said that] he did not rape her, and [as for the fact that] he asked for a general investigation in the community (poval’nyi obysk) that he said would reveal previous deceit (plutovstvo) by her and her mother: there is no reason to carry out such a community questioning according to his request. Even without a community questioning, his, Stepan’s, guilt in this affair is clear from the investigation and from his Stepan’s own testimony, since he himself, Stepan, admitted in his testimony that he had told Serezhka Morev, before they brought the maiden to him, to bring him a woman or maiden for sexual relations, and in addition Serezhka Morev in testimony said about this also that he, Stepan, had spoken with him, Serezhka, about bringing [to him] a woman or

26PSZ 2, nos. 1266 and 1267, pp. 905–7. For further discussion on these issues, see my “Women’s Honor,” pp. 67–69.
maiden. And so the plan for this unlawful sexual attack was shown to be his, Stepan's. And those people mentioned above who brought this maiden to him, Stepan, also said in testimony, and others said after torture, that he Stepan raped her, Mavrutka, in a room in his home and she, Mavrutka, implored him, Stepan, not to rape her.

And according to secular laws (gradskie zakony), for such unlawful activity not only punishment but penalty is ordered to be done, and it is ordered to give the maiden [a portion] from the property of him who raped her. And thus it is appropriate to punish him, Stepan, for his rape and for the dishonor of the maiden and for her dowry to collect from him that money, 500 rubles, so that other people in the future will not find it fitting to behave this way.

Soon thereafter the tsars pardoned Korob'in and rescinded his exile, but not the five hundred-ruble fine.27

Mavrutka Ventsyleeva's case is noteworthy in many respects. First, the crime was deemed so heinous by a high-ranking Moscow servitor that it merited the personal attention of the rulers themselves, or at least their judicial administration (it's impossible to say to what extent the co-tsars and/or Sofiia were actually involved, but the transcript bears an immediacy that strongly suggests their direct participation). Second, the defendant's wealth and social status did not carry weight in the face of the victim's and witnesses' testimonies; his seemingly universal excuse that she had participated willingly and that she was deceitful was dismissed out of hand. Third, the crime was perceived as crippling this woman's prospects for an honorable marriage, and thus the award specifically took the place of her dowry, providing her a lifetime source of support.

Accused men also felt strongly about a charge of rape; their reputations were at stake as well. For example, a church deacon was accused in 1701 of attempting to rape a woman on the street as she was returning home from a wedding. He charged her with falsely accusing him in retaliation for his having told her to leave the wedding because of her own disruptive behavior. “Now others call me a fornicator (bludnik) in their petitions because of her,” he charged in his petition to the patriarch. The case is unresolved in the surviving record, but the witness cited by the plaintiff did not corroborate her charges.28 For the accused man, such an accusation left him at risk of further insult; clergy were particularly vulnerable because of the tension between their sacerdotal status and their lives immersed in local village life.

Muscovites also used the law to curb abuses of male authority, notably wife beating. Orthodox teachings condoned physical punishment for women, children, and dependents, urging only that it be just and moderate. The *Domostroi*

27PSZ 2, nos. 1266 and 1267, pp. 905–907.
28RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stb. 2634, ll. 1–30.
enjoined: “Beat [a disobedient wife] when you are alone together; then forgive her and remonstrate with her. But when you beat her, do not do it in hatred, do not lose control.” The text goes on to list items that men should not use in beatings, because they cause too much injury: “a stick or staff or... anything made of iron or wood.” As one surety document of 1640 put it, a husband’s beating of his wife should be “humane” (po liudtski) “to avoid injury” (bezvech’em).29

Numerous examples reveal the tensions of household life in early Russia. Litigants declared that excessive beating invalidated a husband’s conjugal authority over his wife: Because of his beatings, “he lives with her illegally,” one irate stepfather, a townsman of Ustiug Velikii in the North, declared of his abusive son-in-law in 1632.30 In the city of Shuia in 1626, a husband reported that his mother-in-law had threatened him because he abused his wife. If he did not stop beating his wife—her daughter—the mother-in-law threatened to take the wife back home and send her “brother” (indicating any close male kinsman) to beat up the abusive husband.31 A group of brothers, townsmen of Ustiug Velikii, sued in 1655 on behalf of their married sister, who was being beaten by her mother-in-law and brothers-in-law while her husband was away on a trading expedition to Siberia.32 The wife of the executioner (zaplechnoi master) in Iakutsk in 1683 won permission from the metropolitan of Siberia and Tobol’sk for a divorce because of her husband’s abuse of her (she declared that she feared for her life), even though she had been caught in adultery.33

In one especially poignant case in 1687, a father reported that he had had to rescue his daughter three times from crippling beatings by her husband and her father-in-law. The father won an out-of-court settlement whereby the guilty men agreed to support the injured woman for the rest of her life while she lived apart from her husband.34 Also in 1687, in the Ustiug Velikii area, a peasant and his son chased down the son’s runaway wife and turned her over to the court of the archbishop for questioning. She testified that she fled because the two men had beaten her, and that while in flight she had had one illegitimate child and now had formally married again, from which union she was expect-

30RIB 25, no. 99, col. 123. See also the complaint by a mother in 1627: RIB 25, no. 34, col. 36.
311626: Pamiatniki delovoi, no. 128, p. 162.
321655: RIB 25, no. 207, cols. 272-73.
33AluB 2 (1864): no. 220, cols. 641-43. Other instances include these: In 1645, an uncle sued on behalf of his niece: RIB 14, no. 342, cols. 739-40. In 1659, a wife sued her husband: RIB 25, no. 225, cols. 305-6. In 1666, a father sued his son-in-law: Moskovskaia delovaia, pt. 2, no. 61, p. 74. In 1644, a mother sued on behalf of her daughter: RIB 25, no. 183, cols. 236-37. For others, see RIB 25, no. 207, cols. 272-73 (1655); Moskovskaia delovaia, pt. 2, no. 52, pp. 68-69 (1655); ibid., no. 58, p. 72 (1660).
34RIB 12, no. 183, cols. 866-75.
ing a child. She went on, however, to say that she would return to her first husband if he promised to stop beating her. 35 Although men continued to have the upper hand in a society in which they were expected to discipline dependents with physical force, women could legitimately seek protection through intermediaries or through their own actions, such as flight or taking the veil.

Women also justly complained when men reneged on promises to marry them or support them in their old age. 36 These cases are particularly revealing of the vulnerability of women, who expected to find in marriage and family both respectability and a material security for the future. For example, a “poverty-stricken widow” in 1603 in the town of Tarnask in the Kholmolgory region on the White Sea sued her deceased husband’s nephew and heir, who had expelled her from the household and refused to return to her her dowry or her share of her husband’s property. A woman of Ustjug Velikii sued in 1629, saying that her husband and his brother had gone off to “wander” and that she had suffered prison for his debts and had finally paid them off with great hardship. Now, she reported, the two men have returned and they have been beating her, once so badly that neighbors had to rescue her from being murdered. And, she complained, the husband also fails to support her and her children now that he has returned. 37

In a similar case, a priest sued in 1637 to recover the rest of the dowry of a woman who was apparently his ward; he had given her in marriage to the son of a local peasant. He reported that the husband and father-in-law neglected her, had cast her out, and had “wasted and drunk through her dowry.” The priest promised that he would preserve what remained of it until he could marry her off again to a more acceptable man. A woman from Zavalov village in the Ustjug Velikii area complained in 1638 that her mother-in-law had not been supporting her, as she had promised, while her husband was in Siberia. So now the abandoned daughter-in-law is forced to “wander from house to house,” living off her own work, alms, and the generosity of “good people.” 38

In 1642, a townsman in Balkhonka, near Kazan’, sued on behalf of his daugh-


36 In addition to those cited here, see RIB 25, no. 225, cols. 305–6 (1659); RIB 12, no. 251, cols. 1169–78 (1695); Pamiatniki pis’mennosti v muzeiakh Vologodskoi oblasti 4, pt. 2 (Vologda, 1984), pp. 74–75, partially published in Delovaia pis’mennost’ Vologodskogo kraia XVII–XVIII vv. (Vologda, 1979), p. 29 (1698); RIB 14, no. 134, cols. 344–46 (1620) (this last is an upkeep agreement).

37 1603: RIB 14, no. 221, cols. 540–41. 1629: RIB 25, no. 77, cols. 88–90.

ter, saying that her husband, a townsman of Nizhnii Novgorod, had beaten and abused her and had forced her, pregnant, into a convent (where she had had the child) and that he had kept her dowry and remarried within a week of his wife's taking of the veil. Now, the father charges, the husband is reneging on his promise to pay the convent her upkeep. A townswoman of Ustiug Velikii complained in 1661 that her husband has taken up with another woman and fails to support her, his legal wife. So now she "wanders" about the village, living off alms.39

Promises of marriage were particularly sensitive, inasmuch as with such an understanding a woman might consent to premarital sex. If the agreement were broken, she was left publicly humiliated, unable to make an honorable marriage and deprived of material support.40 Orthodox practice exacerbated this likelihood with the practice of formal betrothal (obruchenie), which could significantly precede the wedding ceremony and which was taken as binding. In reforms of 1775, the church closed the time gap between betrothal and wedding to avoid putting affianced parties, particularly women, in awkward situations, as in these telling examples.41 In 1646, a townswoman of Ustiug Velikii reported that a man and his father and brother had taken her to live with them on a promise of marriage to the plaintiff—he had sworn a vow on an icon, possibly a form of betrothal. Nevertheless, he had expelled her from the home when she became pregnant. Now, she asks that it be put on record that he, his brother, and father are threatening her and her child with all manner of evil. In the Vologda area in 1657, a peasant woman complained that a man had reneged on a promise to marry her, had lived with her for a year and a half, had fathered her son, and now has married another woman. Now she has no one to support her.42 Grigorii Kotoshikhin, who wrote a description of government and mores in the court elite in the 1660s, paid particular attention to this vulnerable moment. If a prospective suitor, he wrote, wins the privilege of viewing a prospective bride in person and then insults her with "evil and shameful words, and drives other bridegrooms from her," he should be made to marry her because of the dishonor to her.43

Muscovites also vigorously protected women from more symbolic assaults on their well-being; here the opportunity to litigate over honor provided a public forum to enforce social values. A woman's hair—here as in many other cultures—had both honorific and sexual connotations and thus became a site where conflict and tension would be played out. In the Russian language, for example, over time the verb *oprostovolosit'sia* added to its literal meaning of "uncovering one's hair" the connotation of making a fool of oneself. In Muscovy, maidens wore a single braid, while married women wore two plaits covered by a kerchief or headdress. Women also dressed modestly in voluminous layers of clothes. Numerous suits for dishonor were filed because a man knocked off a woman's headdress, pulled her braids, or ripped her clothing. Men were equally sensitive to affronts to their bodily dignity, protesting when their clothes were ripped or beards pulled.

Men were particularly sensitive to verbal slanders about the women in their families. Repeatedly in the cases in my database, men specified that they had been insulted "with a mother oath." In 1641, for example, a military servitor (a *zhilets*) in Tula (south of Moscow toward the steppe frontier) complained that while he was getting ready to go off on military duty, a group of neighbors accosted him at his home and insulted him with a mother oath. He sued for the insult not only to him but also to his mother. Men also protested when a woman was called a "bad wife" or "bad woman" (*nedobraia zhena*), which covered a range of negative connotations. In 1623, for example, a gentryman of Nizhnii Novgorod called a musketeer captain's wife a "bad woman" and tried to lift up the carriage mantle shrouding her, also a humiliation. And in 1635, Prince Dmtrii Ivanov syn Meshcherskii admitted that he had called his sister-in-law a "bad wife" and had said that her children were illegitimate; he

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46 RIB 25, no. 63, cols. 72-73 (1628); ibid., no. 86, cols. 100–2 (1631); RIB 2 (1875), no. 206, cols. 946–49 (1642); RIB 14, no. 295, cols. 662–64 (1623); RIB 14, no. 336, cols. 729–30 (1641). RGADA, f. 210, Prikazniy stol, stb. 262, l. 45, (1680); ibid., stb. 15, ch. 2, ll. 708–10 (1625); RGADA, f. 2160, Sevskii stol, stb. 37, ll. 10–12 (1689); *Moskovskaia delovaiia*, pt. 2, no. 102, pp. 97–98 (1676).


48 RGADA, f. 210, Prikazniy stol, stb. 130, ll. 403–31.
pleaded drunkenness to excuse his bad behavior and was sentenced to perform a ritual of humiliation and to pay a large fine.49

Men responsible for women would protest explicit sexual slander against them. While women also suffered other insults—they were often called thieves and criminals (vor, vorovka)—sexual slander was by far the affront most often addressed to them. They were called bitch (suka), whore (blia', kurva), and cheater (plutovka). In 1649, for example, a squireman on the steppe frontier in Userda complained that his neighbor came to his home and called his wife and two maiden daughters whores. The two men eventually settled out of court. A brawl erupted in 1691 at the home of a Moscow boyar, Prince Iakov Nikitich Odoevskii, between a stol'nik, P. V. Kikin, and a state secretary (d'iak) Kharlampov. Kikin charged Kharlampov with accusing him of committing incest with his mother and taunting him repeatedly about it. Kikin reacted so vociferously that Prince Odoevskii sued him for the dishonor of creating such a disruption in his home, while Kikin sued Kharlampov for the dishonor to his mother. He was, as he said in his petition, "ready to die for his mother's honor." Unfortunately, the case is unresolved in the extant records.50

Similarly, a townsman in the Kitaigorod section of Moscow in 1691 sued another for saying that he had had sexual relations with the plaintiff's maiden daughters.51

Muscovites also sought legal protection from the scorn of illegitimate birth. Prayers and christenings were withheld from unmarried mothers and their babies until the mothers testified that the pregnancy was caused by rape or otherwise coerced sexual relations. This issue shows the two-edged sword of patriarchy: Patriarchs sought to establish the respectability of their female dependents, while the verification procedure exerted social control, perhaps helping to deter illicit sexual activity. In 1679, for example, a landlord reported to church judicial authorities in the Riazan' and Murom metropolitanate that his servant girl, who had fled his village, had given birth. She claimed to the investigating priest that she had been raped and had had no other sexual relations. The priest then performed the required prayers and gave her the proper documentation (a pocherevmaia pamiat'). Similarly, in 1682, a landlord's man from the Murom area reported to the local governor that a servant girl of the

51 1691: RGADA, f. 210, Prikazny stol, stb. 1203, ll. 6–9, 140–58. Other suits involving sexual slander include RIB 25, no. 63, cols. 72–73 (1628); I. E. Zabelin, Domashnii byt russkikh tsarei v XVI i XVII st., 3 bks. (Moscow, 1990), reprint publ. of 4th exp. ed. (Moscow, 1918), pp. 354–58 (1642); RGADA, f. 210, Prikazny stol, stb. 1013, ll. 22–40 (1669); RGADA, f. 210, Belgorod stol, stb. 1260, l. 242; K. P. Pobedonostsev, ed., Materialy dla istorii prikaznogo sudoproizvodstva v Rossii (Moscow, 1890), viazka 76, delo 43, p. 98 (1713).
landlord had lived illegally with another man and had had a child. He turned in the accused couple, who reported that they had been punished in the church courts in the previous year for fornication (bludnoe delo). The governor then turned the man over to the church courts for further punishment.52 A priest in the Northern Dvina area in 1690 investigated an illegitimate birth to Pelageika Prokop'ev' doch'. Pelageika accused a man of raping her and then taking her as his common-law wife; he denied all. They finally reached a settlement in which he paid something toward the child's upkeep.53 In 1696, a parish priest in the Northern Dvina area questioned a single peasant girl about an alleged pregnancy. She was forced to undergo physical examination by some widows of the village and was pronounced not pregnant. A woman in 1694 was reported to the archbishop's court in Tot'ma in the North (in the Vologda area) and questioned about her illegitimate pregnancy. She accused a young man and then a priest of raping her, then eventually recanted, naming the baby's real father, a man who had fled the area. She was beaten for her initial false accusation.54

Such litigation was carried on mainly by men on behalf of their dependent women. But women participated in their own defense as well. In the absence of a male superior, widows, nuns and abbesses, soldier's wives, and others might speak up for their own honor. They litigated to win social approbation and psychological reinforcement, as well as tangible compensation. Courts did indeed award women the twofold or fourfold fines they merited by law. In 1685, for example, a townsman in Kolomna near Moscow sued because another townsman had insulted his wife and two sons with a mother oath and had threatened them with a club. According to the settlement, the man was awarded the dishonor payment for townsmen of his category (seven rubles), his wife received fourteen rubles, and his two sons received seven between them, for a total of twenty-eight rubles.55 In 1690, a provincial cavalryman of Elets (south of Moscow near the upper Don) won a case on behalf of his maiden daughter who had been beaten, insulted, and accused of stealing. He was awarded thirty-two rubles, four times his allotment of eight, but the judgment was overturned on procedural grounds.56 In 1692, a minor sued on behalf of his widowed mother and himself for unspecified verbal abuse (bran'). He was awarded half his father's annual allotment of seventy-five rubles (his father had been a zhilets—a Moscow-based cavalry rank), and his mother received twice the allotment.57

A shipbuilder won a settlement in 1709 for verbal insult to himself and his wife,

53RIB 12, no. 212, cols. 988–90.
55RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stb. 918, ll. 18–43.
56RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stb. 2608, ll. 1–58.
57RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stb. 1561, ll. 1–28.
for the accusation that she was a criminal (vorovka). They received 303 rubles (twice the shipbuilder's annual allotment of 101 rubles for his wife, and 101 more for himself). And in a complicated case of 1720, the litigants—all Armenians in Russian service—reached an out-of-court settlement that amounted to the plaintiff's annual allotment for himself (fifty rubles; he was a barber to Peter I's wife Catherine) and twice that for his wife. The charge was that the defendants had verbally insulted husband and wife and had beaten the man. When a male litigant sued on behalf of women or other family members, it was apparently he, not the insulted dependents, who pocketed the award.

Dishonor suits demonstrate Moscow's patriarchal value system, rewarding people whose virtue was affirmed and punishing those guilty of slander. For women, this had paradoxical implications: The more women identified with these values and used these judicial protections, the more patriarchy was reinforced. To the modern mind, the system would hardly seem a welcoming ethos for women. But we should recall that to contemporaries, these gendered roles offered security in an insecure world. When women were in positions such as domestic managers, marriage brokers, propertied widows, nuns, or abbesses, they operated with a certain degree of autonomy. Living by the standards of patriarchy, women balanced control with reward and carved out spheres of independence.

Enforcing Patriarchal Values

In addition to internalized values of patriarchy and opportunities to litigate over verbal and physical humiliation, communities had other ways to enforce controls on women's behavior and sexual activity, such as veiling and seclusion. This was particularly an issue for the elite, because control over women helped to maintain high status. At the same time, it was not feasible to prohibit peasant and urban women from the public square and marketplace. Indeed, veiling and seclusion of elite women the world over signified status; they "were signs that a man could afford to have servants... and that he occupied an economic position that allowed him to protect the honor of his family from abuse." Elite Muscovite women were secluded through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by all accounts more intensely in the seventeenth century. They lived in separate quarters at home, wearing shrouds or traveling in closed carriages in

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58RGADA, f. 239, Sudnyi prikaz, op. 1, ch. 4, delo 5420, ll. 1–15v; published in part in Pobedonostsev, Materialy, pp. 45–46.
59RGADA, f. 239, Sudnyi prikaz, op. 1, ch. 4, delo 5761, ll. 1–20v.
60See the literature on women's authority in the interstices of society cited in my "Women's Honor," pp. 69–70; Worobec (Peasant Russia, pp. 8, 13–14, 177–78, 204–5, 215) makes this point as well.
Muscovite weddings were elaborate rituals that combined folk elements with religious liturgy; here, in an engraving from the 1647 edition of Olearius’s *Travels*, the bride is transported in a closed carriage to the church. Olearius wrote, “Their weddings are elaborate, and the bride is conveyed to her new home with special pageantry” (trans. Samuel H. Baron). Women in the elite as a rule traveled in similar carriages, secluded from the public gaze. (Illustration: Adam Olearius, *Oft beehrte Beschreibung der neuen Orientalischen Reise* [Schleswig, 1647]. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Southern California Libraries.)

Contemporaries, foreign and Russian, commented on the practice. Sigismund von Herberstein, referring to the 1520s, wrote: “No woman who walks in the street is deemed chaste or respectable. Thus wealthy or important people keep their women so shut up that no one can see or speak to them.”

Among the cases I studied is the instance in 1623, cited in the previous section, when a man tried to raise the mantle of a woman’s carriage.\(^\text{62}\)

\(^{62}\)RGADA, f. 210, Moscow stol, stb. 15, ll. 320–28 (1623).

the early seventeenth century, a French mercenary, Jacques Margeret, noted: “Russian women are held under close supervision and have their living quar­ters separate from that of their husbands.”Royal women were shrouded in curtains as they walked between churches in the Kremlin; at other times they rode in closed carriages. For the elite, this practice protected women’s value as marriage partners and procreators, as it also demonstrated the affluence and honor of the family.

At the same time, one should not take seclusion as evidence of women’s abject subordination. They were accorded significant respect and established spheres of independent activity compatible with the norms of patriarchy. Women, respected for their piety and moral example, often operated independently in the religious sphere. Several elite women, for example, provided safe haven and material support for persecuted Old Believers in the first generation of the Schism. Women in the ruling family maintained correspondence with Eastern patriarchs, patronized monasteries and distributed alms, and interceded with the tsar for mercy in judicial cases. Most significantly, they were regarded as essential components of the functioning of the “God-dependent” community. This is strikingly apparent in Aleksei Mikhailovich’s correspondence with his sisters at court, as analyzed by Isolde Thyret. While off at battle, the tsar entreated the female members of his household for prayers for victory; he informed them of the daily military and political events as well. Clearly he saw them as involved in the fused public/private world of Kremlin politics and as playing an essential spiritual role in his godly autocracy.

Communities could also use public forums of insult as a strategy to encourage conformity to social expectations. This could occur in a number of forms. The very act of shouting insults, especially sexual innuendoes, in public forums could be construed as policing social behavior—insulting was a strategy, after all. Hurling an insult at someone publicly was an assault on his reputation, a means of forcing a reaction from the insulted person, which could redound to the benefit of the insulter. By their very nature, insults were not affronts to personal dignity unless uttered publicly, before witnesses. Thus, the very utterance lodged doubt in people’s minds and forced the insulted party on the defensive. As David Garrioch argues on the example of eighteenth-century Paris, insults “were a form of socialisation, a way of teaching [the dominant] value system,

65 Herberstein, Description of Moscow, p. 40; Olearius, Travels, pp. 73, 169; Mayerberg, Relation 2:116–18.
66 See my “The Seclusion of Elite Muscovite Women.”
67 Michels, “Muscovite Elite Women.”
and of compelling, if not real observance, at least lip-service to it.” Even if an insult were brought to court and litigated, the “insulting moment” provided a site for social manipulation. “If the opponent did not join battle, the insults proclaimed the victory of the insulter and the public shaming of the victim.”69 With witnesses spreading gossip quickly through the community, an insult could become a permanent slur on one’s reputation unless sternly countered. Insults worked in this way in Muscovy as well; recall the complaint cited in the previous section by a church deacon accused of rape, that “now others call me a fornicator.”

In most of these cases, insults seem to have been hurled in anger in the heat of a brawl or altercation. But sometimes the elements of persistence or publicity suggest a more didactic intent to shame someone into better behavior. In 1605, for example, neighbors succeeded in driving a family out of the town of Tarnask in the Khomogory area with repeated public insults to the wife for sexual promiscuity. Similarly, a woman walked up to a man in Moscow in 1666 and accused him of luring a servant girl and a maiden into sexual activities with others; the man was so insulted that he called her a slovenly bastard, and she sued him for dishonor. In a 1683 investigation by officials of the archbishop of Ustiug Veliki and Tot’ma into an illegitimate birth, a man yelled at another man in public, accusing him of incestuous relations with his sister, the unwed mother under investigation. Many witnesses corroborated the sexual slander. The accused sued for dishonor, saying that his sister was married to a man now in Siberia and denying any immoral activity.70 And in Kostroma in 1694, a criminal investigator (syshchik) shouted out loud in church, calling another man of much higher rank (a stol’nik) a “bastard” (vybliad ok) and insulting him with a mother oath. A man in 1700 assaulted a priest in church while he was performing the liturgy; the priest’s wife and daughter came to his rescue and were attacked as well. Later at a compatriot’s house, the man called the priest, who was his own father confessor, a “thief, criminal, and fornicator.”71 Such insults in such public settings, particularly in church or in cases of repeated harassment, might have been intentional public shaming.

The more specific the insults got, the more likely it seems that the sexual slander of which individuals complained so bitterly might have been uttered to police


711694: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stb. 1552, ll. 30–58. 1700: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stb. 2342, ll. 16–28. For another incident of insult in a church, see RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stb. 128, ll. 346–49 (1641).
neighbors’ conduct. Note, for example, the incident in 1686 in Vologda in which a man accused his neighbor of a range of crimes, including theft and heresy, and capped off the tirade by saying before many witnesses, “your wife goes from house to house and sleeps around.” The insulted man sued for dishonor; in any case, the insult had the intent of public shaming “before many witnesses.” Or the instance in 1689, when a gentryman asserted that another was illegitimate, alleging that the man’s mother had slept with a household servant; or one in 1655, when a man in a new-model regiment accused another man’s wife of “sneaking into the cellar” for sex. Both incidents suggest self-righteous moralizing.72

Even if victims did defend themselves promptly, damage could be done. Christine Worobec gives a telling nineteenth-century example of a maiden whose reputation was ruined (she had been publicly shamed) because of sexual slanders that were later proven groundless and publicly recanted. Such false accusations were accordingly harshly punished, but harm had been done.73 Choosing to insult could be done by a rival for spite or in a calculated fashion to advertise unacceptable conduct to the community. Even though such insults may have been punished as dishonor because they upset community norms for proper interaction—and even if there were no truth in them—they demonstrated and affirmed community norms and put all within earshot on notice of the unpleasant consequences of deviance.

Individuals could also adopt more ritualized forms of public shaming. In early modern Europe, a particular type of insult—called in France tapage or bacchanale—was practiced. David Garrioch explains: “This consisted of an aggrieved party—nearly always a man—stationing himself outside his opponent’s door or window, shouting out insults and generally creating a nuisance, often for quite some time.” The grievance that prompted the public outburst might consist of having been spurned in a love affair, or it might reflect neighbors’ concern at perceived loose morals in a local household; it usually concerned sexual impropriety. Garrioch documented it in eighteenth-century Paris, Elizabeth Cohen in sixteenth-century Italy, and we see it in Muscovite sources as well.74 There are cases of Muscovites complaining of other people publicly shouting sexual slander at them at their homes. In 1626, for example, a parish priest in Iur’evo Polskoi reported that a neighbor, apparently drunk, came to his


73Worobec, Peasant Russia, pp. 146–48. Gromyko also cites an example in which the community rallied to reinstate an innocent girl’s sullied reputation: Traditsionnye normy, pp. 93–99.

home while the priest was away and stood “at the window yelling mother oaths at my wife and maiden daughter.” The defendant was found guilty and beaten with bastinadoes and imprisoned for the offense.\textsuperscript{75} Also in 1626, the townswoman Ovdotitsa in Ustiug Velikii put on record her complaint (iavka) against her neighbor Mariia Tarasova that Mariia wanted to bewitch her and that she “came under my window and said all manner of unspeakable insult.” Mariia responded by denying the charges and suing Ovdotitsa for dishonor. A peasant of the Northern Dvina lands sued in 1653, saying that a neighbor “came under my window and insulted my mother with all manner of unspeakable insults and called her a whore and before this he has bragged of doing all sorts of unlawful things to us, murder and theft.” And in 1666, Ivan Sas, a colonel in service in Belgorod on the southern frontier, insulted his commanding officer, Boyar Prince Boris Aleksandrovich Repnin; a few days later Sas came to Repnin’s home and “made great noise under the window.”\textsuperscript{76}

Each of these instances is different, and none is fully elaborated, but in each case the element of publicity to enforce community norms is clear. In the last cited case, for example, the commanding officer’s response to the noisemaking was to tell Sas to sue him properly in the district offices. But clearly Sas’s goal was to humiliate Repnin beyond the range of the mere courthouse. In the first and third cases, the element of \textit{tapage} is suggested, inasmuch as a wife and maiden daughter were targets of the insults, and sexual slander was explicit. In the allegations of witchcraft, the public shaming may have stemmed from enmity between neighbors, but the attempt to publicly discredit is clear.\textsuperscript{77}

A more elaborated public shaming ritual would be a charivari, in which a large, diverse group of community members—men, women, and youth—held a family or individual up to public ridicule for gross infractions of community norms, particularly sexual norms. The form varied in different countries, as did the targeted behaviors. In usual early modern European practice, cuckolded husbands and those whose wives were perceived to dominate them were targets of ridicule; older men who upset the local marriage market by marrying much younger women often brought the wrath of the young men of the community on them. Adulterous wives were ready targets, as were young girls of dubious virtue. Charivaris were mounted to drive the implicated parties publicly through the community in some humiliating way that was symbolic of the alleged offense. Cuckolded husbands were tied backward on horses with horns fixed to their heads; girls of ill repute were paraded through town with tarred

\textsuperscript{75}1626: RGADA, f. 210, Prikazniy stol, stb. 17, ll. 172–73, 330–34.

\textsuperscript{76}1626: RIB 25, no. 9, cols. 10–11, no. 10, cols. 11–12. 1653: RIB 14, no. 359, cols. 766–67. 1666: RGADA, f. 210, Prikazniy stol, stb. 977, ll. 1–46.

\textsuperscript{77}For another example of insult shouted in anger, see RGADA, f. 210, Prikazniy stol, stb. 824, ll. 1–99 (1680).
clothes, bared bosom, and disheveled hair. Sometimes the humiliation took the form of marking the door and home of a suspected miscreant—tarring the door, affixing horns to the gate, breaking open the door or gate—all symbolic of easy, illicit sexual access. Always, charivaris were accompanied by noise—shouts, drums, or the singing of lewd songs, the so-called rough music. These spectacles powerfully exerted social pressure, not only forcing individuals to conform or to depart the village, but also putting the whole community on notice that such treatment awaited them should they ever transgress.78

Charivaris are recorded after the Muscovite era in Russian peasant communities in the nineteenth century, and they followed much the same form: a theatrical, ritualized display featuring riding backward, "rough music," and the public display of the transgressor. But their targets were more concerned with petty theft and other crimes that destabilized village communities than with sexual mores. Stephen Frank argues that collective shamings for sexual transgressions were unnecessary because husbands were expected to punish philandering wives themselves.79

In the Muscovite period, as far as I have been able to tell, such collective charivaris did not occur. In one intriguing dishonor case of 1651, a man in service in Mozhaisk complained that it was said he had ridden a cow and a bear "like a fool (shutom)," a reference to riding backward; he denied it vigorously, saying a community survey had exposed the allegation as false.80 But this oblique reference may not refer to a ritual like charivari. It is possible that charivaris in Muscovy are hidden by the nature of the sources. As Worobec noted for the nineteenth century, charivaris were unofficial (in fact they were officially condemned by church and state alike) outbursts of community disorder that would not likely be recorded systematically.81 They tended to be noted


79Frank, "Popular Justice"; Worobec, Peasant Russia, p. 195. Minenko also notes how accusations of thievery were insulting in eighteenth-century peasant communities: Zhivaia starina, p. 93. Gromyko describes public humiliation of women accused of illicit sexual activity (smearing tar on their gates, throwing soot on their clothes): Traditsionnye normy, pp. 93-99.

80Moskovskaia delovaia, pt. 5, no. 1, p. 200.

81Worobec, Peasant Russia, p. 22. David Garrioch and Martin Ingram both note that charivaris declined when authorities began to prosecute them as a form of public disorder, as well as when social changes undermined their impact: Garrioch, Neighbourhood and Community, p. 217-18; Ingram, "Ridings," pp. 189-92.
only when affronted victims of charivaris complained against the humiliation they had suffered.\textsuperscript{82} And *tapage* amounted to a sort of charivari by individuals.

For collective shaming rituals, Muscovites seemed either to substitute the forms of individual insult that we have discussed or to rely on patriarchal control as Worobec suggests, or—a third alternative—to turn to official institutions for enforcement of norms. Elements of public shaming, after all, were deeply ingrained in Muscovite judicial sanctions, some approaching charivari-like symbolism. Grigorii Kotoshikhin reported: “men who commit crimes with other men’s wives or with maidens and are caught, on the day of capture or another day they both, man and woman, no matter of what rank they are, are led through the marketplace and through the city streets together, naked, and then beaten with a knout.”\textsuperscript{83} Public processions of convicted criminals also occurred. In 1699, thieves taking advantage of a fire to steal were (in addition to harsh punishment and exile) ordered to be led publicly by the scene of the fire; and for those soldiers or townspeople who should have been fighting the fire, town criers were dispatched to announce their perfidy to the various town and soldier neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{84} Members of the political elite who were found guilty of offenses were exposed to the reprobation of their peers in the Kremlin by being led publicly to punishment. In 1633, for example, two *stol’niki* who had sued a boyar for precedence lost their suit and were sentenced to prison for dishonoring the defendant. But as they were being led across the Kremlin grounds to prison, “in front of the Frolov Gates,” it was announced to them that the tsar had bestowed mercy and canceled the sentence.\textsuperscript{85} If members of the elite refused to accept defeat in suits over precedence, they were subjected to a public ritual of humiliation, as discussed in Chapter 4. The principle of publicity is clear here.

People also had recourse to official institutions to bring erring members into conformity with norms or to reassert norms in the face of individuals flouting them. An example of such recourse is the many notices (*iavki*) used to put deviance from norms on record in advance. Fathers, for example, could use the courts to dissociate themselves from a wayward daughter or a runaway wife, from the debts such women were compiling, or from the dishonor their wantonness heaped on the family. These notices also graphically illustrate the gendered roles imposed on men and women, husbands and wives, sons, daughters,

\textsuperscript{82}For example, the public shaming discussed by Elizabeth Cohen in “Honor and Gender” and the charivaris examined by Natalie Zemon Davis in “Charivari, Honor and Community” came to light because their victims sued for defamation.

\textsuperscript{83}Kotoshikhin, *O Rossi*, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{84}PSZ 3, no. 1693 (1699).

\textsuperscript{85}Dvortssovye razriad\(y\) (DR), 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1850–55), 2: cols. 350–51 (1633). N. D. Sergeevskii cites other examples of “marketplace” (torgovaia kazn”) punishments, in which the element of publicity intensified the punishment: *Nakazanie v russkom prave XVII veka* (St. Petersburg, 1887), pp. 155–58.
and daughters-in-law. In 1621, a peasant from the Ustiug Velikii area registered with authorities his complaint that his wife had run off with another man and also with his life’s savings, and that now the other man boasts he will ruin him even further with false accusations. In 1626, a peasant from Vologda registered with local authorities the complaint that his daughter-in-law had run away, stealing jewelry and clothing from the family, and then died. He wanted it recorded that he and his son had no responsibility in her death.

Also in 1626, a townsman of Ustiug Velikii served notice that his daughter-in-law was living with his son not as a good wife should, but “illegally,” as he put it. She has fled the household and has threatened to commit suicide out of spite to her husband and his father. The father declared that, should she do harm to herself such as “throwing herself into water, hanging herself or running into traffic,” it would not be their fault. In 1628, a peasant in the Ustiug Velikii area registered a notice about his daughter-in-law: Since her husband, his son, has gone to Siberia, the wife refuses to obey him, steals, and has left home. Now he wants to renounce responsibility for her so the girl’s “clan and tribe” will have no claim against him.86

Similarly, a musketeer in Ustiug Velikii in 1629 registered a complaint against his wife’s “drunken criminal behavior” (*pianskoe vorovstvo*): She steals from him, has physically attacked her in-laws, and has left home to live with her family, who are now threatening him with harm. He seeks to put people on notice of the possibility that they would assault him, falsely accuse him, bewitch him, or otherwise ruin him. In 1632, a merchant or artisan from Ustiug Velikii registered a complaint against his wife because “she doesn’t obey me; whenever I leave the house for work, she sells our wares in the neighborhood for a loss and she does not do her work and does not live with me and she threatens me and has left me.” In another such notice, a cleric from Ustiug Velikii in 1638 dissociated himself from his wife, who had taken up with another man while he himself had sat in prison because of her false accusations against him. Now that he has been released, she has fled to unknown parts. He declares himself not responsible for her future actions. Also in Ustiug Velikii in 1640, a priest served notice that his errant daughter-in-law had fled home repeatedly, “not loving her husband and not wanting to live with him, but not because she was beaten or tortured but of her own willfulness.” She had recently fled again, stealing clothing and jewelry. Her father-in-law petitioned to absolve himself of responsibility for her debts and criminality.87 These many notices publicly affirmed values as they also pragmatically protected the initiator’s material interests.


Parents could register complaints about their prodigal children, even bringing them to court. In 1629, an Ustiug Velikii townsman recorded a notice dissociating himself from his son, who drinks, disobeys him, plays at dice, and is falling into debt. “After this point he is no longer my son and I will have nothing to do with him.” The father denied responsibility for the dissolute man’s debts and “criminality.” In 1655, the eminent Moscow merchant (gost’) Vasilii Shorin sued that his ward was living so recklessly and wastefully (beating his wife, carousing with women, drinking) that “his wife and son are always in tears.” He asked that the patriarch send the dissolute husband to a monastery “for his drunkenness and cheating . . . so that his soul will not perish.” A mother in Moscow sued her son in 1683, alleging that “he lives illegally, forgetting the fear of God and does not attend church.” He goes about with “unbaptized foreigners” and disobeys, injures, and dishonors her. In questioning, the son, apparently a follower of the Old Belief, responded, “I pray in my home, I follow the old religion and bless myself in the old fashion,” and denied the rest of the charges. He was ordered beaten for his insults to his mother and sent to a monastery for his apostasy.88

Neighbors and other non-kin also reported people to the authorities for immoral behavior. In 1630, the abbess of a convent posted notice with the courts of the metropolitan of Ustiug Velikii about a nun in the convent and her daughter, who caroused: “they come here at night with unknown people and drink and make noise and threaten and dishonor us.” A gardener registered a complaint in 1663 against a woman who had been living at his household: “she drinks and carouses (brazhnichaet) and . . . goes about with unknown people” and insults and threatens the plaintiff and his wife. Now she has left the household again, leaving her children abandoned and “dying of hunger.” The petitioner declares that he will not be responsible for any harm that might come to her while she is gone. The governor of Suzdal’ was sent in 1666 to investigate a charge of adultery. The husband was found guilty “because he failed to take his wife away from sin and procured for her (ei svodnichaet uchini).” The errant husband was beaten and imprisoned for his sin as well as for insulting the governor while resisting arrest. In Tobol’sk in western Siberia, a Cossack turned in another man with a girl in 1684 because he said they lived in sin. The woman was beaten for her sexual license.89 In 1695, a man registered notice about his abusive neighbor in the Vladimir area; he reported that the neighbor


beats his wife so badly that she has had to be rescued by neighbors, whom he
now insults and threatens with an ax and falsely accuses. A wife turned in her
husband, a church deacon, to the Holy Synod in 1721 because of his adultery.
He was stripped of his ecclesiastical rank and told to live properly with his wife
again. "And a picture of him (persona) should be sent to all bishops so that
nowhere should he be allowed to serve holy liturgies." The woman he had
sinned with was sent to be punished by the civil authorities.90

Notices (iavki) represent one voice protesting errant behavior and implicitly
seeking community affirmation. Muscovites could also impose legal obliga­
tions on individuals, not always with good results. For example, an artisan in
the tsar's Kadashevo settlement in 1660 petitioned that his niece's husband,
apparently living in his household, be sent to a monastery because he had
reneged on his written promise "that he will not drink and carouse and will go
to church . . . and will obey me in all things." Now the man fails on all counts,
"beats and tortures" his wife, and has drunk up all her dowry property. Alter­
natively, to police deviance, Muscovites could deploy an institution of collec­
tive responsibility—that is, surety bonds. In 1640, ten townsmen from the
settlement (posad) of the Tikhvin monastery, for example, put up a surety bond
to guarantee that a member of their community would straighten his ways:

He will live with his mother, not insulting her or beating her, and will not beat his
wife until injury without cause, and will not commit murder (golovshchina), and
will not go out at night to buy and drink wine and beer and tobacco and will not
even think of this, and will not associate with criminal people from outside of the
community, and will not play dice, and he will live like all the other good towns­
men live with their mothers and wives, without criminal behavior, and will disci­
pline his wife according to her just deserts and humanely, not with intent to injure.
Should he relapse into his bad ways, the guarantors will suffer whatever penalty
the monastic elders decree.91

The absence of collective charivaris and the recourse to judicial instruments
such as notices and surety bonds do not necessarily validate the statist inter­
pretation of Russian history, that Muscovite society was passive and inert.
Rather, we have seen individuals consciously using a variety of strategies to
police their communities: internalized patriarchal values, male authority over
women and dependents, individual insults, more ritualized forms of insult,

901695: Pamiatniki delovoi, no. 200, pp. 217–18. 1721: Polnoe sobranie postanovlenii i raspo­
riaschenii . . . Synoda 1 (1869), no. 91, p. 117.
911660: Moskovskaia delovai, pt. 2, no. 58, p. 72. 1640: Alu no. 301 (II), p. 313, my transla­
tion. Also translated in H. W. Dewey and A. M. Kleimola, eds. and trans., Russian Private Law in
legal notices, and bonds. The use of surety bonds reminds us in fact that Muscovites often gathered their forces collectively. Surety bonds were used liberally in litigation to ensure participation in proceedings or to guarantee payment of fines; they were imposed by the state to guarantee the loyalty of high-ranking men. Responsibility for tax payment was collective in communities; village and urban communes elected collective representatives for local administration. In fact, we do well to recall how minimal was local government, how weakly felt was central control in outlying districts, and how local government was composed of members of the community in any case. These were not disengaged, inert communities dependent on the state to order their lives.

All these examples show communities and individuals struggling to do the impossible—that is, to maintain an idealized patriarchal community in which adolescents never cross the bounds from courting to illicit sex, in which illegitimate children are never born, in which all young people are married off to proper mates and stay married, in which husbands never overstep the bounds of their authority over women, and in which no wives ever commit adultery while their soldier husbands are off at war. It was an impossible goal and yet its pursuit attracted significant energies. That pursuit took forms from those as ephemeral as religious teachings and modeling of gender roles to more tangible complaints about neighbors' and kinsmen's behavior, to insults in public places and publicly imposed sanctions. Individuals sought recourse from insult by defending their honor, or that of their daughters and wives, in court. Thus the discourse of honor in a patriarchal setting both provided norms for regulating specific behavior and offered individuals mechanisms for safeguarding their reputations in their communities. The code of honor itself, in which women played a central role, was designed to ensure substantial compliance to social norms. And from that compliance came social stability—resting on a base of male authority, women's honor, and collective community norms.