The Endurance of Honor

Social change in the seventeenth century prepared the way for a more complex structuring of government, for the forging of a more explicitly privileged corporate elite, and for the mobilization of social forces for ambitious military and fiscal goals. Most of the reforms undertaken by Peter I (b. 1672, ruled 1682–1725) had their antecedents in Muscovite times: To a great extent, his contribution was to systematize and intensify reform. He systematized, for example, the trend toward aristocratization in the elite by creating the terminology and status of nobility with the 1722 Table of Ranks. More so than had the abortive 1681 reform proposals, Peter's reforms created new institutions of governance: twelve "colleges" (to replace dozens of chanceries), a Senate, and a series of reforms of local and urban administration. More systematically than the legislation of the 1680s, Petrine laws set down rules for behavior in state institutions, defining the extent of government authority and rationalizing the bureaucratic service. Peter took the Muscovite army—by the 1690s essentially a modern one—and made it immense, thereby setting into motion reverberating forces of taxation, social regimentation, and peasant recruitment that changed the Russian countryside. In a purposeful manner, he gave the elite a new European vocabulary and new genres for cultural expression. Much of what he endeavored did not outlive him, his beloved navy being the prime example. And much of what had informed Muscovite society and politics endured beyond his reign.

What makes Peter's endeavors and those of his successors most dramatic for observers—and perplexing for those engaged by the "continuity or change?/reform or revolution?" conundrum—is the way in which Petrine reform turned Muscovite themes and traditions to its own use. Peter did this so emphatically, with such single-mindedness, that ultimately change was accomplished by riding the crest of continuity. The political system of late Muscovy that he carried to fruition paralleled the ideas of European absolutism. He introduced an even more explicit rhetoric of absolutism, capitalizing on the late seventeenth-century Russian embrace of the concept of "social good" and initiating a claim to unlimited power for an autocracy that theretofore had not known one. Peter adopted an aggressively secular rhetoric of power and an overtly secular program for the culture of the elite. Confronted with such intense stimuli, traditional Muscovite institutions—among them the theory and practice of honor—adapted. The state preserved the opportunity for individuals to defend honor, and individuals and families continued to seek public vindication for insult. But the emphasis of the concept of honor gradually changed from the collective to the individual.

Continuities in the Use of Honor

The abolition of precedence in 1682 did not abolish the defense of honor. Indeed, the abolition decree specifically mandated that anyone attempting to sue for precedence in the future should, in addition to suffering confiscation of property and loss of position, pay a dishonor fee (bescheste') to each man in the clan whose member was being sued. The decades between the abolition of precedence and Peter I's serious engagement in reform—that is, from the 1680s to 1690s—were so rife with dishonor litigation that suits from this era constitute a significant portion of our database and have been frequently referred to in the preceding text. As suggested in Chapter 1, the proliferation of suits was likely a response to social change as much as a compensation to the upper ranks for their loss of precedence (after all, precedence suits had been curtailed over the seventeenth century). Legislatively, honor received the same sort of unsystematic treatment that had characterized the seventeenth century: Edicts established the dishonor compensation for new social groups and institutions (1684, 1699).

2PSZ 2, no. 905, pp. 377-78 (1682).
3The published description of the Military Service Chancery, a major resource for dishonor suits through the 1690s, averages fewer than one hundred cases per decade from the sixteenth century through the 1660s, and then lists 178 in the 1670s, 445 in the 1680s, and 893 in the 1690s. Even accounting for better survival rates of later documents, this disproportion is striking.
4RGADA, f. 210, Moscow stol, stb. 717, pt. 1, ll. 23-24 (1684; dishonor value of Voskresenskii monastery); PSZ 3, no. 1731 (1699; dishonor value for Greeks insulted by foreigners).
enjoined musketeers not to dishonor people with rowdy behavior (1682); mandated corporal punishment for peasants guilty of dishonor who lacked the wherewithal to pay a cash fine (1687); and even defined the dishonor fine (calculated in numbers of camels, horses, bulls, and sheep) that Mongol and Buriat tribal elders had to pay if they insulted Russian emissaries or soldiers (1689). A decree of 1690 has a somewhat rationalizing character, inasmuch as it tried to distinguish intentional from unintentional mistakes in names and titles in official documents, allowing only intentional slights to be litigated as dishonor.

Dishonor continued to capture legal attention in the first two decades of the next century. Two trends are evident. On the one hand, even while maintaining essentially Muscovite traditions regarding honor, edicts tended to limit slightly the scope of "dishonor," forbidding confiscation of land to pay a dishonor fine (1700), forbidding soldiers to sue merchants for dishonor (1700), and forbidding anyone to dishonor members of foreign embassies by trying them in chanceries other than the Foreign Affairs Chancery (1708). An edict in 1700 tried to limit frivolous suits over colorful epithets, the likes of which earlier would have qualified as actionable insults (e.g., "little gentryman," "assaulter," "baby," "coward"). In that same year, a suit was thrown out as frivolous when a man complained that another had leered at him "in a beastlike way" (zverobrazno). In 1719, precedence-type quarrels over place in state service were again resolutely forbidden. During Peter's reign, the term for insult began to change: obida and oskorblenie were used interchangeably with beschest'e. In 1721, for example, laws clarified that church people should sue for obida or for verbal insult (bran') in church, not civil, courts. In 1722, General Procurators were enjoined from causing dishonor (beschest'e) to anyone through careless consideration of cases. Change and continuity are evident in an edict of 1723. Paralleling the 1649 Conciliar Law Code, it prohibited disorderly behavior and insulting language in the Senate and before judges in courtrooms. The punishments prescribed were a combination of Muscovite penalties (paying a fee based on the annual salary of the aggrieved party, brief imprisonment, confiscation of property) and penalties from the new military ordinances (military trial, public petition for forgiveness).

Legislation in 1724 continued Muscovite traditions by affirming that judges were entitled to collect dishonor pay-

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5PSZ 2, no. 963 (1682).
6PSZ 2, no. 1238 (1687); PSZ 3, no. 1329, sect. IX, arts. 2–4 (1689).
7PSZ 3, no. 1374 (1690).
10PSZ 5, no. 3384 (1719).
ments (beschest'e) from accusers if they were falsely accused of favoritism. Even after Peter, Muscovite terminology and practice endured: In the 1730s and 1740s, the Cossack officer corps of various parts of Ukraine were allowed to use local legal norms in resolving disputes over dishonor (beschest'e).12

On the other hand, Peter tried to inculcate a sense of personal honor on a European model, honor that was “highly individualized,”13 based on a person’s cultivated self, rather than on heritage and clan. He declared in the 1720 General Regulation: “No reward so leads people to do good than the love of honor (chest’), in the same way that no punishment is so feared as its loss.”14 While Muscovite honor was a collective, family possession, here the accent is on the individual.15 Although it took decades for such a concept to be internalized, the sorts of cultural changes the elite was undergoing in the late seventeenth century made educated people receptive to these ideas.

Peter also introduced the concept of “defamation” of military officers or civil servants found guilty of treasonous harm to the state. This was a concept of “political death,” by which guilty parties were deprived of all property and of civil rights (access to the legal system, for example), publicly labeled “defamed person[s]” (shel’m), and expelled from “the society of good people.” If the crime was serious enough, they could be executed.16 There are some Muscovite precedents for such exclusion of criminals from society: “Disgrace” (opala) banished an individual from the tsar’s presence (literally, “from before his bright eyes”), and, as I have noted, perpetrators of high crimes were excluded from honor. Muscovite law also implicitly treated some sanctions as shaming to the person. It was an insult, for example, to accuse someone of having been flogged, and corporal punishments were reserved for lower social ranks in punishment for dishonor. According to the Conciliar Law Code of 1649, for example, in one instance in which beating was mandated, imprisonment could be substituted for men of high birth.17 Public shaming rituals, such as the humiliation of the elite in precedence litigation (vydacha golovoiu) or public beatings (“punishment in the marketplace,” or torgovaia kazn’), combined shame with the intent to deter

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121724: PSZ 7, no. 4593. Ukraine: PSZ 9, no. 6578, no. 14 (1734); PSZ 12, no. 9062 (1744).
14PSZ 6, no. 3534, chap. 53 (1720) (also published in PRP 8:102).
15V. Spasovich rather quaintly argued that true honor is individual honor and thus couldn’t exist in Muscovy’s patriarchal society: “O prestupleniakh protiv chesti chastnykh lits po ulozheniiu o nakazaniakh 1845 goda,” Zhurnal Ministerstva iustitsii 3, pt. 2 (1860):5–13.
16Various references to defaming sanctions: PSZ 6, no. 3006 (Voinskie artikuly, chap. 12, arts. 98, 99, chap. 15, art. 123, chap. 16, arts. 124–25) (1716) (also published in PRP 8:342–43, 348–49); PSZ 7, no. 4460 (1724). My thanks to Irina Reyfman for raising these issues to me in a personal communication.
17RZ 3: 105 (chap. 10, art. 20).
or to reconcile. Peter’s “political death” conveyed more systematically than had Muscovite law a vision of society as a sphere of honorable individuals from which people could be excluded by their unworthy behavior.¹⁸

Other Petrine legislation demonstrates this more personalized image of honor. The 1716 Military Articles, for example, labeled the author of anonymous defamations “dishonorable” (beschestnyi); they and the Naval Ordinance of 1720 put the same label on anyone who committed a crime while using a false name. The Table of Ranks of 1722 branded a man as “dishonorable” if he falsely claimed noble heritage.¹⁹ In Courland, later in the century, being forced to “stand by the pillar of dishonor” (stoianie u beschestnogo stolba) was listed as among the “shameful” (postydnye) criminal punishments sufficient to allow a spouse to sue for divorce.²⁰

Even as these changes occurred, however, the popular conception of honor remained traditional and inclusive, as we can see in attitudes toward dueling. Dueling, generally by sword rather than pistols in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, came to Russia as a foreign import and got a cold reception. The elite apparently perceived it as a foreign affectation made unnecessary by traditional Muscovite protections of honor. A Prussian ambassador, Johannes Gottgillf Vockerodt, who had lived in St. Petersburg for several years under Peter I, wrote in 1737:

Generally, for Russians, of all the foreign ideas nothing is more amusing than . . . the concept of honor . . . Thus Peter found in no other of his laws no more such eager acquiescence than in the prohibition on dueling, and to this day no Russian officer considers demanding satisfaction in the case of insult (beschest’e) to him by a man of equal standing but, rather, assiduously follows the prescriptions of the Edict on Duels which orders the injured side to submit a complaint to the proper courts.²¹

These attitudes persisted: Irina Reyfman argues that many late eighteenth-century Russians found dueling a barbaric practice, at odds with their Enlight-

¹⁸A rare Muscovite instance of implicit definitions of community is the clause of the 1589 law code that deprives only the worst of criminals of honor: PRP 4 (1956):421 (art. 71).

¹⁹Defamation: PSZ 5, no. 3006, chap. 18, art. 150 (1716); see a similar usage in the Patent on Duels (chap. 49, art. 11), labeling someone a “good for nothing” or “unworthy” (negodnyi) for hitting another man or for challenging another to a duel. Military and Naval Ordinances on false name: PSZ 5, no. 3006, chap. 22, art. 202 (1716), and PSZ 6, no. 3485, chap. 18, art. 137 (1720); see a similar clause in the 1832/1842 edition of the Criminal Code (Svod zakonov Rossisskoi imperii, poveleniem Imperatora Nikolaia Pavlovicha sostavlennyi. Vol. 15. Zakony ugolovnye [St. Petersburg, 1832], 15, art. 660; repeated as art. 768 in ibid. [St. Petersburg, 1842]). Table of Ranks: PSZ 6, no. 3890, arts. 16, 18 (1722).

²⁰This punishment may be a sort of stocks: PSZ 25, no. 18,517 (1798).

ment desire to create a rational society ruled by law. It is not surprising that
dueling was almost exclusively the preserve of foreigners in Russia from the
mid-seventeenth to at least the mid-eighteenth century.22

Despite Peter's commitment to a more individualized style of honor, he
wanted to avoid the extreme aristocratization that dueling represented. He and
subsequent Russian rulers, like their European counterparts, perceived dueling
as a threat to the public order. In 1702, Peter I issued an edict forbidding duel-
ning among foreigners in Russian service on pain of death, "despite the customs
of all neighboring states,"23 and in 1716, extensive legislation on dueling was
included in the Military Ordinance (Ustav voinskii) as the "Patent on Dueling"
(chapter 49).24 It set harsh sanctions and mandated the use of the courts for
insult (obida)—defined as verbal assault, humiliating blows, or threats, essen-
tially equivalent to Muscovite concepts of beschest'e.25 All insults had to be
reported promptly, either by the insulted party or witnesses; failure to do so
incurred punishment. Similarly, judges would be fined if they did not resolve a
case promptly—within six weeks, preferably three to four. The law emphati-
cally declared the tsar's willingness to defend honor: "So that an insulted party
. . . should not have the least cause to seek satisfaction himself and avenge him-
self, We here announce and assure that We will never for any intercession or
considerations fail to give anyone the required satisfaction according to this
Our edict" (art. 10). Those who persisted in defiance of the law faced loss of
rank and large fines for summoning someone to a duel and execution for actu-
ally unsheathing swords or exchanging blows. These strictures applied to all
participants, including seconds, go-betweens, and witnesses.

The Military Ordinance went on in its "Military Articles" (Artikuly voinskiye)
to prescribe harsh punishments for any disturbance of public order by any mili-

22Irina Reyfman, "The Emergence of the Duel in Russia: Corporal Punishment and the Honor
Smith], "Duels and the Matter of Honor," in R. P. Bartlett, A. G. Cross, and Karen Rasmussen,
eds., Russia and the World of the Eighteenth Century (Columbus, Ohio, 1988), pp. 229-42, and
Lu. M. Eskin, "Duel' v Moskovii 1637 goda," Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1997 god (Moscow,

23PSZ 4, no. 1890 (1702).

24PSZ 5, no. 3006, chap. 49 (1716); also published in PRP 8:457-60. The Patent had been for-
mulated ca. 1708-11: PRP 8:460-66, commentary.

25Obida and oskorblenie began around this time to join the term beschest'e to indicate insult to
honor, but they also bore the more general meaning of affront or injury. The word beschest'e con-
tinued to be used as a verb and particularly as a noun indicating the cash payment for dishonor. See
usages of beschest'e through the eighteenth century in SRIa 1 (1975):179-80, and Slovar' russkogo
izyka XVIII veka, 8 vols. to date (Leningrad, 1984--) 2 (1985):17. On obida, see SRIa 12
and its next edition, the Slovar' Akademii rossiiskoi po azbuchnomu poriadku razpolozhennyi, 7
Slovar' Akademii rossiiskoi po azbuchnomu poriadku 4: col. 401.
military men—“quarrel, verbal insult, fistfight” (which would have generated suits for dishonor in the civilian world). The Articles also addressed the topic of intentional false allegations, either in the form of pasquinades (anonymous written denunciations) or disparagement of another’s honor behind his back or to his face. Interestingly, in addition to harsh corporal punishments, this code introduced a new ritual for intentional disparagement behind someone’s back and for direct verbal abuse: public recantation and request for forgiveness from the victim on bended knee (as well as a prison term). This form of supplication was a novelty drawn from European practice but served the purpose of bringing closure to antagonisms and publicly restoring reputation—just as had Muscovy’s “surrender by the head” ritual. Subsequent Petrine Laws—the Naval Ordinance of January 1720 and the General Regulation of February 1720—echoed these concerns. The General Regulation, for example, prescribed harsh punishment—corporal punishment, confiscation of property, and/or loss of rank determined “according to the circumstances, the issues and the people involved”—for saying insulting or abusive words in the Colleges (state ministries), because such behavior disturbs “good order and general calm.”

Petrine law of this kind essentially codified Muscovite practice more systematically, offering redress for insult in the interest of avoiding public disorder. These laws did not supersede the norms of the Conciliar Law Code of 1649, but supplanted them (despite repeated attempts, Peter never succeeded in codifying a new law code, and the Conciliar Law Code of 1649 remained in force through the eighteenth century). The harshness of the sanctions was necessary for the inculcation of military discipline in the new Petrine army and bureaucracy, but the overall intent was also to cultivate a new kind of elite—educated, confident, and dignified. Peter also introduced new precedents and emphases. He accentuated the Muscovite practice of punishing more harshly insult to public places and officers of the state than insults to private individuals; he set statutes of limitations on reporting and adjudicating insult and introduced sanctions based in part on the offense as well as on the rank of the disputants. Peter introduced a public ritual, less elaborate than “being sent by the head” and not limited to the elite, that served the same purpose. Eventually

26Quarrels: PSZ 5, no. 3006, chap. 17, arts. 133–48 (1716).
28Pasquinades: PSZ 5, no. 3006, chap. 18, arts. 149–53 (1716).
29PSZ 6, no. 3485, bk. 5, chap. 1, arts. 4–7, and note included in art. 7 (1720).
30PSZ 6, no. 3534, chap. 55 (1720).
31Peter’s directives to compile a new legal codex: PSZ 4, no. 1765 (1700); PSZ 5, no. 2819 (1714); PSZ 6, no. 3661 (1720); PSZ 7, no. 4658 (1725). In addition to references to the Conciliar Law Code in cases discussed below, see the edict of 1724, which Peter signed with the notation, “enter into the Ulozhenie” (PSZ 7, no. 4460).
these trends toward harsher sanctions for insult to officials and a more individualized sense of personal honor found their way into civil legislation.

New Petrine ideas and laws coexisted with older norms for many decades. Essentially similar to Muscovite cases are those from Peter's lifetime. In September 1701, for example, a peasant from the Komaritskii commune area of the Upper Oka region won a suit against another peasant for the dishonor of being called a murderer and thief; the defendant refused to pay the fine because he insisted that the victim was “a murderer and a thief.” But investigation proved him wrong, and in February 1702, the court upheld the original verdict. In February 1704, a stol'nik won a suit against the governor of Shatsk for arresting his man without cause and ordering his men to assault the plaintiff's home, during which assault they insulted him with a mother oath. He won his suit because the defendant failed to appear at trial and then absconded without paying the dishonor fees of more than five hundred rubles.32 In a similar case in 1716, a stol'nik sued a mayor for calling him a slanderer. The defendant delayed by various familiar stratagems (outright refusal, accusing the judge of favoritism and winning a change of venue, and petitioning for delay because of service obligations) and finally settled the case in 1722 when it had been transferred a second time, this time to the Moscow appellate court (Nadvornyi sud). A suit of 1700 regarding official abuse of power strikes similar chords. A group of undersecretaries and judicial personnel charged that a bailiff in service to the patriarch of the church had insulted an official document and had beaten, verbally abused, and unjustly imprisoned them. The bailiff denied all, feebly claiming that he pulled a man by the hair because of the latter's “impoliteness” and that he had insulted not the document but only those who had written it. The result is unknown, but the case followed Muscovite and Petrine precedent in its concern with representations of the state and with abuse of power.33

Even in the middle of the century, legal precedents continued to refer to Muscovite norms as well as newer Petrine ones. A suit of 1746, for example, punished a man for affronting the dignity of his office by working without proper uniform and for verbally insulting a subordinate with a mother oath; the decision invoked the General Regulation (1720) and the Military Ordinance (1716) in fining him for “the affront to the court room” and “for the dishonor” (beschest'e) to the man, but a comparable case of 1744 turned to the 1649 Conciliar Law Code for norms of sanction. In 1765, a court found “abusive words” (rugatel'nye slova) to be insult (obida) worthy of legal punishment, and in 1769,

the Conciliar Law Code's ruling on insult to parents by children (chap. 22, art. 4) was explicitly cited in a case against a nobleman for insult to his mother.34

The Catherinian era (1762–96) did not create significantly new standards regarding honor, but in typical Enlightenment fashion, it systematized the law.35 Muscovite norms of compensation were upheld. The Charter to the Cities of 1785 and the unpromulgated Charter to State Peasants, also of 1785, both specifically defined the dishonor fine (beschest’e) for these groups in traditional ways—as equivalent to their annual tax obligations—and repeated the Muscovite norm that wives should be recompensed for dishonor with twice their husband's fine, unmarried daughters with a fourfold fine, and minor sons half the fine.36 In 1797, legislation regarding state peasants set cash compensation rates for various ranks of village officials who suffered insult while on duty, adding a brief prison or labor term and threefold fines for insult with the blow of a hand.37 Catherinian legislation also maintained the Muscovite and Petrine preoccupation with proper conduct, both public and private. The 1782 Ordinance of Good Order or “Police” Ordinance, for example, forbade insulting language, quarrels and fights, slander, threatening letters and duels, and disorder in public places, and it imposed stiff fines on transgressors.38 Catherine also added to traditional concerns about judicial corruption (a theme sounded since the 1497 law code) other aspects of abuse of power, such as insulting behavior by officials during lawful searches of private property, and unlawful and improper searches and seizure of property. Victims of such abuse were allowed to collect dishonor from the insulting officials.39

341746: PSZ 12, no. 9335. 1744: PSZ 12, no. 8968. 1765: PSZ 17, no. 12,523. 1769: PSZ 18, no. 13,262 (this case also echoes Muscovite practice in that the Empress interceded to reduce the sentence).
36Townsmen: PSZ 22, no. 16,188, art. 91. Peasants: David Griffiths and George E. Munro, trans. and eds., Catherine II’s Charters of 1785 to the Nobility and the Towns (Bakersfield, Calif., 1991), art. 62, p. 75.
38Corrupt adjudication: PSZ 17, no. 12,710, arts. 8, 10, 11 (1766). Unlawful searches: PSZ 19, no. 14,172, art. 13 (1774); PSZ 21, no. 15,174, art. 88 (1781)—the latter ruling is significant in that it suggests that insulted parties from all social groups were eligible for compensation, whereas the 1774 ruling exempted peasants.
In its treatment of insult to honor, Catherine II's Manifesto on Duels (1787) fully reflected Enlightenment systematizing and European rhetoric. For the first time in Russian law, there was an actual definition of insult (here the preferred terms were *obida* and *oskorblenie*): “If someone causes a damage to someone either materially or subjectively, that is, if he shames, slanders, treats with contempt, humiliates or provokes someone, that is *oskorblenie* or *obida*” (art. 8). Insult could take three forms—“word, letter, or action”—and the element of intent to insult was necessary. Insult by blow was distinguished from a wound (*ran’, uvecht’e*) by its lesser severity: “If someone threatens or actually hits someone with a hand, leg, or weapon, or pulls hair, that is *obida* by deed. Note: If someone draws blood or causes a black and blue spot or pulls out hair, then that is called a wound” (art. 14). Wounds were punished more harshly.

Following Petrine precedent, the Manifesto on Duels forbade private vengeance by dueling, referring victims of insult to the courts. For the first time in Russian law, it distinguished between civil and criminal jurisdictions for insult to honor, based on the severity of the insult itself. Those guilty of “serious insult” (*tiazhkaia obida*), such as dangerous blows or blows to the head or face (which were intrinsically humiliating), faced criminal punishment. So did those whose insults were associated with public space: “An insult is magnified *(otiagoshchaetsia)* according to its accompanying circumstances.” Such offenses included insults such as those taking place “in a public place, in church, in the Emperor’s palace, in a state office, or if someone is insulted during the performance of his duties, or in the presence of people in authority.” “Serious” insult also involved issues of social hierarchy: If someone insulted a natural superior (such as a parent, a landlord or serf owner, or an official or commanding officer), that too merited criminal sanctions. The Manifesto devoted little attention to sanctions, compensation, or procedure. It left the impression that for minor insults, the traditional pattern of compensation based on social status would be followed, whereas “serious” insults would merit criminal penalties such as those contained in Petrine military codes. And indeed, cases of 1800 and 1820 for less than “serious” verbal insult and threats cited norms, “dishonor” (*beschest’e*) fines, and court fees that had been stipulated in the 1649 Conciliar Law Code.40

Nevertheless, the seeds planted in Peter’s time bore fruit in Catherine’s with the emergence of a more individualized sense of honor. In his play *The Brigadier* (1769), Denis Fonvizin satirized a provincial gentryman’s preoccupation with a seemingly Muscovite-style of honor. The lampooned character insists on his “honor” even when he has been made totally ridiculous:

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40 Manifesto on Duels: PSZ 22, no. 16, 535 (1787). PSZ 24, no. 19,552 (1800); PSZ 37, no. 28,121 (1820).
COUNCILOR: No, my lord. I know what to do with your son. He has dishonored \textit{(obeschestil)} me and I will sue him for as much dishonor fine \textit{(beschest'e)} as I am due by law.

BRIGADIER'S WIFE: What! We should pay you for dishonor? For Heaven's sake, what for?

COUNCILOR: Because, my good lady, honor is more valuable to me than anything. I will sue him for every cent due to me according to my rank, not begrudging him even a penny.

In contrast to these sentiments evoking Muscovite terminology and dishonor fees, Fonvizin puts a more modern standard of honor in the words of the same character who, abashed and repentant, ends the play thusly: "They say it is hard to live with your conscience. But I have now learned for myself that to live without a conscience is the worst of all." Indeed, at the end of the eighteenth century, a widely distributed didactic handbook listed "the love of honour" as second in the "virtues of men" and stressed that "Honour is not in the power of the one who wishes to be honoured, rather it lies in the hands of those who honour us"; if others remain blind to one's good behavior, the honorable man pays no heed, confident in his own virtue. This 1783 publication also associates honor especially with the nobility: "Honour and the desire to preserve their acquired privileges without any suspicion ought to be the incentive for all the noblemen's deeds." Also in this century, the verb "to dishonour" took on the new meaning of "to take away one's good name."

More lethally, Russian noblemen began to identify with a code of individualized honor that led them to dueling. By the first third of the nineteenth century, aristocrats often dueled to avenge their honor—this, despite a century of legislation that assured them the state would be solicitous about such affronts. Irina Reyfman argues that the trend is evidence of a disillusionment by educated society with the willingness of the state to protect its rights; more significantly, it also manifests a more individual sense of dignity.

The trend of late eighteenth-century legislation was to focus more attention on the content and consequences of an insult and to distinguish criminal from civil degrees of insult, steering Russia in the direction of European legislation on libel and slander. From the point of view of honor, the 1832 Digest of the Laws of the Russian Empire (\textit{Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii}), compiled by Count Mikhail Speranskii, essentially repeated existing precedent without

\begin{itemize}
\item[42]Reyfman, “The Emergence of the Duel.”
\end{itemize}
tying up loose ends, particularly regarding norms of compensation. Its Criminal Code (vol. 15) devoted a chapter to insult—repeating the definitions of honor in the 1787 Manifesto on Duels—and followed Petrine precedent on insults to officials, offenses in public places, slander in pasquinades, defamation of the law, and dueling. The Civil Code of Speranskii’s Digest (Svod zakonov 10), meanwhile, made no effort to define “minor” insult except in contrast to “serious” offenses, but it did try to systematize compensation norms, without great success. Noting that the norms of the 1649 Conciliar Law Code were outdated, it declared the precedents established by Peter to be operative. However, these—presumably the principle of criminal sanction for offenders according to the severity of the insult—seemingly coexisted with compensation fines called beschest’e. Recalling the 1649 Law Code, it specifically defined the dishonor fine for noblemen and bureaucrats as equal to their annual salary and affirmed the 1785 edicts equating fines for townsmen with their annual tax burden and setting the dishonor fines for wives, unmarried daughters, and minor sons as fixed proportions of their husband’s or father’s fee. Regarding civil compensation for peasants, the Code cited the Conciliar Law Code provision that levied a cash fine on all peasants for insult (art. 386) and mentioned earlier laws for cash compensation to insulted village elders in state peasant communities and in colonies of foreign settlers.

In laws of 1845 and 1851, the issue of honor was codified for criminal and civil injuries in a relatively new and much more systematic way. The 1845 criminal code, for example, devoted an entire section to “crimes against the life, health, freedom, and honor of private persons,” with chapters on the sorts of “serious” insults that were punishable with criminal sanctions: direct personal insult by blows, threats of physical assault, dishonorable deeds and verbal insult, slander (klevetica), unlawful seizure, violent assault, and threats. It set up escalating “levels” of severity of punishment depending on prior intent, the

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43 On Speranskii’s work of compilation, see Marc Raeff, Michael Speransky: Statesman of Imperial Russia, 1772–1839, 2d rev. ed. (The Hague, 1969), chap. 11, and Wortman, Development, chap. 2.
46 Svod zakonov . . . Vol. 10: Zakony grazhdanske i mezhevye, 3d ed. (St. Petersburg, 1835), arts. 380–87. The earlier laws are cited in two other codes in the 1832 Digest. The first was the law on service by peasant representatives (“Ustav o sluzhbe po vyboram”), which set payments for insult to elected commune officials: Svod zakonov . . . Vol. 3: Svod uchrezhdenii gosudarstvennykh i gubernskikh. Pt. III. Ustavy o sluzhbe grazhdanskoj (St. Petersburg, 1832), pt. 3, bk. 2, arts. 1139, 1166, 1192, 1210. The other code was the regulation for foreign colonists (“Svod postanovlenii ob inostrannyykh kolonialakh”), which listed fines for insult to officials in colonies in Saratov, Novorossiia, and other colonies: Svod zakonov . . . Vol. 12: Svod ustavov gosudarstvennogo blagoustroistva, pts. 4 and 5 (St. Petersburg, 1832), pt. 5, bk. 3, arts. 964–65.
location of the insult, or the social status of its target (e.g., parent, senior kinsman). The lowest level of sanction involved public recantation and request for forgiveness as well as a brief prison term and compensation called by the Muscovite term, beschest'e; more serious offenses merited longer imprisonment, confiscation of property, corporal punishment, even exile. The 1845 Criminal Code frequently stipulated that individuals had the right to request civil compensation (beschest'e) in addition to the criminal punishment an offender would face for “serious” dishonor.

In other chapters, the 1845 Criminal Code went into greater depth than had the 1832/1842 Criminal Code to identify what constituted insult to representations of the tsar, insults long deemed “serious.” Such insults included disrespecting the public announcement of a law, defacing a posted law, disseminating pasquinades about state officials or the laws themselves, and so on. Conversely, it repeated the criminal sanctions and civil compensation for unlawful seizure and misbehavior by officials that were familiar from Catherinian times (arts. 376–78). The 1851 civil code removed much of the Muscovite complexity about sanction for insult, setting a narrow range of fines, from one to fifty rubles, depending on the relationship between the insulter and the aggrieved party.

By the nineteenth century, law specific to peasants was being codified, including provisions for defense of honor. The 1832 Civil Code (in its article 386) had repeated the 1649 Conciliar Law Code’s norms regarding dishonor for peasants; later codes refer to article 386 as precedent for peasant litigation on dishonor. In 1839, the Rural Judicial Charter for State Peasants explicitly amplified the provisions of the 1832 Civil Code by defining a state peasant’s dishonor fine (it was made equivalent to the annual tax obligation of a man in the community to which the insulted party belonged) and specifying (as had the 1832 Civil Code, the 1785 Charter to the Towns, and earlier Muscovite law codes) that wives, daughters, and minor sons would receive, respectively, twice, four times, and one-half their husband’s or father’s dishonor fee. The 1839 Charter also mandated harsher sanctions, in addition to dishonor fines, when insults took place in public places or were directed at officials. These provisions were repeated in the 1857 Code for the Good Ordering of State Peasant
Communities, which also incorporated norms from the 1851 civil law on compensation for insult.\textsuperscript{51} As for criminal law, state peasants were not covered by the 1845 Criminal Code but remained under the jurisdiction of the 1839 Rural Judicial code until 1864.\textsuperscript{52} The 1857 statute for foreign agrarian colonies did incorporate criminal penalties for insult to village officials based on the 1845 Criminal Code: It imposed harsher punishments for verbal insults to local officials, including public recantation before the assembled villagers (\textit{na obshchem skhode}) and sanctions as decreed in the 1845 Criminal Code (namely, brief imprisonment and a fine according to the circumstances of the insult).\textsuperscript{53} A new criminal code for the recently emancipated peasants was issued in 1864: the Code of Punishments to be Handed Down by Communal Judges. This law included provisions for insult (\textit{obida}) by word, deed, and in writing.\textsuperscript{54} From 1832 on, such laws for peasants specifically applied to state peasants. However, given that the 1832 Civil Code referred to the 1649 law covering all peasants, and that after emancipation all peasants were given the right to defend their honor, one can surmise that throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries private (enserfed) peasants at least in principle had the right to seek compensation for insult, presumably in village and landlords' courts. Case law indeed shows that honor remained a high social value, and frequent issue for disputes, among peasants in Imperial Russia.\textsuperscript{55}

By 1851, honor was prosecuted more systematically under civil and criminal law. Punishment and compensation were based on the circumstances of the insult as well as on social status; insult to public officials and flagrant insults were singled out for particular sanction. But the evolution of the law remained


\textsuperscript{52}On peasants’ exclusion, see introduction to the 1845 \textit{Ulozhenie o nakazaniakh}. On the continued relevance of the 1839 Rural Judicial Code, see the provisions appended on March 31, 1863, to the 1861 decree emancipating serfs: “Osoboe prilozhenie k tomu IX Zakonov o Sostoianiiakh ... Polozheniia o krest’ianakh,” in \textit{Prodolzhenie Svoda zakonov Rossiskoi imperii}, izd. 1857 goda po 31 marta 1863 goda, pt. 3: \textit{Stat'i k IX tomu Svoda} (St. Petersburg, 1863), arts. 24, 102 (repeated in \textit{Svod zakonov} 9 [St. Petersburg, 1876]).


\textsuperscript{54}“Ustav o nakazaniakh, nalagaemykh mirovyimi sud'iami”: \textit{PSZ}, series 2, vol. 39, no. 41,478, arts. 31, 130–38. This law was thereafter included in editions of \textit{Svod zakonov} 15 with the same article numbers; see, for example, the 1914 edition: \textit{Svod zakonov} 15, pt. 1 (Petrograd, 1914).

true to Muscovite precedents: All social groups could still litigate to defend honor (even serfs), and the honor of the state still functioned as a metaphor linking individuals and ruler.

Conclusion

Peter Berger suggests that the obsolescence of traditional concepts of honor in modern times is not necessarily a good thing. Once communities cease defining honor in terms of adherence to community institutions and values and celebrate the dignity of the individual instead, social behavior enjoys fewer constraints and wider latitude. In the European tradition, this course of development has generally been praised as progress toward democracy and the realization of personal capacities, but it comes at the cost of community and connection. "Modern man, almost inevitably it seems, is ever in search of himself," Berger observes. Honor may traditionally have played the conservative role of upholding established social institutions and precluding change, but it also provided individuals a sense of belonging and a blueprint for negotiating the challenges of life. Berger laments the atomization of individuals and communities that comes with the waning of honor and the rise of individualism and opines that inevitably individuals will again come to identify themselves with new collective practices and institutions and new concepts of honor. He hopes, however, that such institutions and values will be based on a regard for human dignity.

Berger's nostalgia for a perhaps idealized past is driven by a philosopher's concern with the harsh edges of modern society. In considering the past, however, we might be wary of equating the existence of a coherent society-wide honor code with personal contentment; certainly, many other forces conspired to make premodern societies alienating places in which to live. Still, Berger's point is compelling. There is something in honor that holds a society together.

Honor does so not only because it prescribes behavior; that is the least of it. Rather, it provides a flexible code with which to handle the structures and tensions of daily life. We have seen how in Muscovy honor was an idiom for resolving and pursuing conflict, how it was a discourse that infused the way people interacted in their homes, families, and villages. It also gave people an idiom with which to relate to the powers that be—a sense that their honor was part of a larger social reserve that linked them with tsar and thus God through officials and other representations of the state. It was not a highly articulated vision of society, nor necessarily a deeply compelling one—most individuals

probably regarded the local tax collector and military governor with scant appreciation. Honor's defense provided institutions and norms that linked people with their society, however, as well as a strategy for perceiving coherence in one's surrounding world. This would become particularly useful as bureaucracy and reform brought individuals more and more in contact with the "imagined community" of the absolutist state.

I have argued that the defense of honor was systematized during the sixteenth century in Muscovy because two processes came together at that time. One was the complex social tension arising from tremendous social mobility, social change, and social disruption experienced in virtually all corners of the realm. Such circumstances put people in competition with others for status, threw people into new settings where relations needed to be established from scratch, and cast prevailing norms into doubt. In similar circumstances in other early modern societies, defamation and pursuit of redress from insult both became tools for negotiating social change. And that spelled increased litigation.

The second process that helped to systematize honor in sixteenth-century Muscovy was the state's single-minded project of mobilizing social and natural resources to increase the expanse, power, and wealth of the grand prince's realm. In this project, offering individuals protection from insult served several goals. It punished disruptive behavior among neighbors, within regiments, or in any corporate group, and thus contributed to social order. It provided an alternative to private vendetta and feud. It reinforced the social status quo with sanctions pegged to social rank. It also disseminated an idealized vision of the state as united by honor from the tsar down to the humblest person, and this constituted a mechanism of social cohesion. It was probably not a terribly effective mechanism, given the weak development of communication, of central government at the local level, and of literacy. Cohesion, however, was an elusive goal for all premodern states. Finally, in offering to provide a legal defense of honor, the state created a tangible link between community and state, individual and tsar. This was a service from which individuals and clans benefited; in showing the sovereign to be a just judge and patron of his people, it helped to legitimize his government. For all these reasons, the latent consciousness of personal dignity evident in Muscovite society and its Rus' antecedents was crystallized in the sixteenth century into two judicial institutions and practices, the redress of dishonor (beschest'e) and precedence (mestnichestvo).

I have also explored the social aspects of Muscovite honor, arguing that Moscow's discourse and practice of honor were remarkably inclusive, both socially and geographically. Not only were all social ranks, even enslaved people, deemed to have honor defensible in court (the only people excluded were those guilty of the most serious crimes). In addition, all the tsar's subjects, regardless of religion and ethnicity, were included in the legislative provisions on dishonor; many foreigners, non-Slavs, and non-Orthodox litigated over honor. Cases studied here come from all corners of the empire, even Siberia. In
this, Muscovite codes of honor differed from those in many contemporaneous European countries, where the tendency by the early modern period was for corporate groups—guilds, nobilities—to define separate codes of honor and thus to safeguard entrenched social positions. In Muscovy, in contrast, a shared understanding of dignity provided a putative unity.

At the same time, Muscovite practices in defense of honor—inasmuch as they linked compensation with social rank—reinforced social hierarchy. The landed military elite was valued far more than taxed people; ecclesiastical hierarchs and monks at the greatest monasteries enjoyed far greater compensation than did humble parish priests and monks at poor monasteries. The institutions of Muscovite honor reinforced the corporate structure of society: Compensation scales identified such corporate groups as provincial gentry, Moscow-based officers, boyar clans, Cossacks, new model army regiments, townsmen, merchants, Siberian native tribes, and enserfed peasants. All could defend their social status from defamation.

Moscow's discourse about honor—the definition of what constituted an honorable person—complemented the preachings of Orthodox didactic works and put forward a vision of dignity particularly attractive to the sort of government Moscow had. It was a social code that encouraged social conformity and order. It stressed the inviolability of marriage and family, the respect of social hierarchy, the avoidance of violence in word and deed in family and community, loyal service to the state, and identification with one's born social position. It was not a social code that validated change, innovation, or social mobility, and that was precisely what the state would have wanted. It was particularly strict on women, prescribing extreme subservience to male authority and strict control over sexual activity. Meekness and obedience were virtues that brought honor to women and presumably—by quelling the autonomy of half the population—that also decreased the potential for social disruption.

Not all was so tranquil in the actual practice of defense of honor, of course. Individuals, clans, and communities aggressively wielded the ideas and judicial instance of honor litigation to serve their purposes. They insulted in order to torment neighbors, they harassed rivals with interminable suits, they used honor as a lever to pressure community members to toe the line morally and legally, they used dishonor suits to bring long-standing quarrels to closure. The state may have had a conservative interest in entertaining litigation over reputation, but communities negotiated this discourse in their own ways.

As suggested above, the Muscovite state seems to have used honor as one of many mechanisms to promote a vision and reality of social cohesion. I surveyed here the range of those mechanisms—coercive force and the threat thereof; co-opting social groups, especially elites, with rewards in the form of land, serfs, wealth, and status; ideas expressed in writing, in ritual, and in symbol, as in art and architecture; and practices such as defense of honor. The way in which honor promoted social cohesion in Muscovy was particularly interesting. The
tsar styled himself as the center of a community of honor and imbued all his institutions and representations with honor. Insults that took place in his presence or chambers were doubly dishonoring to the recipient; insults to the tsar's judges, bailiffs, or documents were insults to him. Symbolically, the realm was a community of honor. On a narrower plane, the tsars used honor as an instrument of social control over the highest elite, adjudicating precedence disputes in such a way that social hierarchy was maintained and the tsar's authority demonstrated and affirmed.

I have also argued that the Muscovite use of honor changed with changing times. On the one hand, litigation over defamation escalated in the late seventeenth century in response to some significant social transformations—enserfment, the de facto transformation of the cavalry elite into a landed gentry, the emergence of aristocratic sensibilities, the expansion of bureaucracy and bureaucratic control, and the wholesale reform of the army. Russians continued to litigate to defend their honor well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time, however, the content and practice of honor underwent a gradual change. Precedence was abolished in 1682 when the clan-based elite had been so transformed in membership and attitude that the system of reckoning hierarchy by clan heritage had become antiquated. Clan honor was yielding to a consciousness of aristocratic corporate honor by the end of the century. Simultaneously, attitudes toward state and society were changing, prompting more individually oriented social values, which we see emerging in the reigns of Aleksei Mikhailovich and Sofia Alekseevna. These trends are most strikingly and forcefully demonstrated by Peter I's transformation of the discourse of autocracy, which now made an absolute claim of sovereign personal power. This claim was a far cry from Moscow's corporately defined political ideology, in which the tsar's power was limited by his obligations to be pious, just, caring of his people, attentive to their advice, and respectful of tradition—"changing nothing." Although codes of honor took several decades to catch up with Peter's bold pronouncements, the first hints of a more individualized honor and a more corporate sense of state and society can be discerned in the late Muscovite years.

This book has ranged widely to situate honor in the broad context of Muscovite social values, social structure, and political system. In doing so, it has opened up many issues that deserve further consideration. As the first large-scale effort to examine the defense of personal dignity from dishonor (beschest'e) and to assess the broadest patterns of precedence (mestnichestvo) litigation, it is certainly not the last word on either subject. Microhistorical studies of the workings of precedence, for example, may well yield interesting stories of how particular families used precedence litigation at particular times and circumstances; a local history of the workings of dishonor litigation in a defined geographical community could similarly yield important insights into the meaning of honor, the practice of the law, and the structure of society at the local level.
Several of the work’s key themes go beyond honor and merit further exploration. One is the issue of legal culture. Dishonor litigations are only one manifestation of how Muscovites used the courts, how the law was written and applied, and how laws and litigation provided social mechanisms to individuals and communities. Such themes could be pursued in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Moscow and provincial archives, which are teeming with court cases, and such research would immeasurably expand our understanding of lived experience on the local level in conditions of autocracy. The field of legal history—jurisprudence and practice, particularly in eighteenth-century Russia—is greatly underdeveloped and awaits its historian. Another perspective opened by this work involves concepts of society. I have only scratched the surface in examining how Muscovites saw their place in their communities, how they regarded the broader social collective, how prescriptive literature regarded state and society, and how these concepts might have changed over time. I have argued that Muscovites had little conceptual vocabulary for collective self-understanding, but the nuances of how communities did understand themselves in so diverse a realm remain to be explored.

Throughout, I have also sought to demonstrate the value of viewing Muscovy in a comparative context, at least on issues such as social and political practice. Interpretations of the practice of politics and the structure of society in early modern Europe and Russia seem to be converging: Historians of Europe are becoming less interested in juridical institutions and abstract theory and more engaged in sorting out the messy diversity of social identity, community relations, and political administration. At the same time, historians of Muscovy are looking beyond statist models to assess lived experience. Thus contemporary historiography in each of these fields has much to offer the other.

This work also raises, if only implicitly, the question of periodization. It is traditional to regard Peter I as a great divide in Russian history, and on some grounds, there is good reason to continue to do so. The Petrine era’s radical break with traditional expectations about both political power and the relationship of corporate groups to the state certainly changed the course of Russian history over the long run. Our study of honor also shows, however, that such changes came gradually and that they were prepared by political policies and practices initiated a generation or more before Peter took power. Beneath the obvious and dramatic changes in political ideology, institutions, and high culture, much about Muscovy changed slowly, if at all. The life of the peasantry, for example, apparently got worse, but did not change fundamentally. The content of the law and the nature of litigation also changed only slowly, despite sporadic efforts at legal reform. Tracing the practice and discourse of honor to the Imperial period shows strong continuities in practice and concepts, as well as gradual change. Implicitly, this study portrays the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a unified and integral historical period for Russia, and it is hoped that other historians will push their research across the great
Petrine divide—forward to include the eighteenth century for “Muscovite” historians, backward to embrace the seventeenth century for “Imperial” historians. We may in time conclude that Russia’s “early modern” period stretches from roughly 1600 to 1800.

Finally, this study of honor sheds light on the most vexed question of Russian historiography of the pre-Petrine era: the relationship of the state to society and the nature of autocracy. That Muscovites enjoyed protections of personal honor, and that those protections became only more explicit in law and practice as the state embraced European absolutism, tells us much about society and government in Russia before the great reforms of the 1860s. Russia was not a totalitarian state, nor an Oriental despotism, nor even a “plain tyranny,” despite what some theorists of state and society have been saying about it since the sixteenth century. The state did indeed have great authority, and society had relatively little, as far as legal privileges and institutionalized bases of power went. There were, however, equally great limits to the state’s power, limits imposed by the practical exigencies of colonial administration, by the empire’s multiethnic character, by geography and climate, by the dearth of literacy and education, and by available technology and means of communication. Even more significantly, the state took as its responsibility defending the honor not only of public offices, ranks, and institutions but also of private individuals. No matter how pragmatic that practice, it was also an affirmation of deeply rooted cultural values. And because the state was responsive to some social needs and limited in its coercive power, individuals enjoyed a wide arena for local autonomies and self-direction. No matter how autocratic or absolutist were premodern rulers’ claims to authority, the reality of social practice was more open, more varied, and less predictable and controllable than they would have wanted.

Honor is only one arena in which individuals, families, and communities in early modern Russia interacted with each other and with the government in ways that satisfied both sides. Local government, landholding patterns, religious observance, litigation over misdemeanors, even criminal litigation were arenas in which communities manipulated the laws and negotiated institutions even as they conformed to state demands. Muscovite society has perhaps been underestimated—dishonored, one might say—by our failure to appreciate how dynamic, diverse, and complex it was.