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# Terms for Dependent People in Rural Russia in Early Modern Records

## 1 From Macro to Micro: Back and Forth

Much of the historiography of Russia<sup>1</sup> in the early modern period is preoccupied with the history of power politics: the “collection of Russian lands” and the founding of the “centralised Russian state” with Moscow as its new capital. Comparisons to Western Europe, to the estates-based state (*Ständestaat*) and absolutism, and the rise of Russia to great power status in the European Concert despite being a country exporting raw-materials<sup>2</sup> were and are quite often on the minds of historians. In the Soviet Union, historiography was preoccupied with the question of how Russia fitted into the socio-economic concepts of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Lenin. After 1934, the old political and the new socio-economic schools combined to form Soviet Patriotism, which became Russian nationalism in reaction to Germany’s attack in 1941. Russian nationalism included the history of the other Soviet nations, as long the leading role of the “older brother” Russia was not questioned.<sup>3</sup> Whether the image of a “centralized” Muscovy is upheld or questioned remains a question of political decisions – to this day.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Manfred Hellman et al., eds., *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1976–2003); Hans-Heinrich Nolte, *Geschichte Russlands*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012); Collection of sources in German translation: Hans-Heinrich Nolte, Bernhard Schalhorn, and Bernd Bonwetsch, eds., *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014).

2 To cut the long discussion on unequal development very short – Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Ungleich verbundene Entwicklung: Russland und der Westen seit dem 16. Jahrhundert,” in *Handbuch der Entwicklungsforschung*, ed. Karin Fischer, Gerhard Hauck, and Manuela Boatča (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016): 333–36.

3 Erwin Oberländer, *Sowjetpatriotismus und Geschichte* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1976); Benjamin F. Schenk, *Aleksandr Nevskij* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004); Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Ot sovetskogo patriotizma k rossijskomu nacionalizmu, 1941–1942,” in *Germanija i Rossija v sud’be istorika: K 90-letiju Jakova Samojlovicha Drabkina*, ed. M. B. Korchagina and V. V. Ishhenko (Moscow: Sobranie, 2008): 171–82; Jens Binner, “Ein neues Bild des Stalinismus in Russland?” in *Nationen und Nationalismen in Geschichtsschreibung und Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Hans-Heinrich Nolte (Gleichen: Muster-Schmidt, 2020): 125–33.

4 Vladimir Putin claimed that “Russia is part of western European culture [ . . . ] but Russia has been founded as a super centralist state, this is in our genetic code, in the traditions, in the mentality of the people.” Vladimir Putin and Natalija Gevorkjan, *Ot pervogo lica. Razgovory s Vladimirom Putinom* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2000): 167. But pre-Petrine Russia was governed by consent: Hans-

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**Note:** Transliteration GOSSTANDARD.

In global history the place of Russia is debated: was it actor or object in the “rise of the West,” semi periphery or periphery of the global system,<sup>5</sup> “a peripheral Empire,”<sup>6</sup> a lonely nation and the heir to Byzantium<sup>7</sup> – or following in the traditions of the Eurasian steppe?<sup>8</sup> Was Russia at its best as a communist alternative and one of two superpowers? Can post-Petrine Russia be defined as the first “imperialistic” empire in the European Concert of Powers, a forerunner to Napoleon and the Hohenzollern?<sup>9</sup> The turn goes back to micro-history.

The number of dictionaries and encyclopedias alone offers convincing reasons for starting a new round of research in semantics.<sup>10</sup> The terms on feudalism in Russia have mostly been used for all kinds of topics, except in historiographies of everyday life<sup>11</sup> and of culture.<sup>12</sup> A fresh look at the sources is also necessary, because during the Soviet era, party intervention disallowed the opinions of outsiders on feudalism in Russia, as in the case of Mikhail Gefter.<sup>13</sup> Research outside of Russia, “from the other shore,” is only possible because Russian scholars, mostly in the Academy of Sciences, edited a remarkable amount of sources on our topic – in the

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Heinrich Nolte, “The Tsar Gave the Order and the Boiars Assented,” *The Medieval History Journal* 19, no. 2 (2016): 229–52. The abstract confuses my position with Vladimir Putin’s.

5 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Zur Stellung Osteuropas im Internationalen System der Frühen Neuzeit: Außenhandel und Sozialgeschichte bei der Bestimmung der Regionen,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 28 (1980): 161–97; English translation: Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “The Position of Eastern Europe in the International System in Early Modern Times,” *Review* 4, no. 1 (1982): 25–84.

6 Boris Kagarlickij, *Periferijnaja Imperija* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2009).

7 See the new editions: Nikolaj Berdjaev, *Russkaja ideja* (Sankt Peterburg: Azbuka-klassika, 2008); Archiepiskop Serafim (Sobolev), *Russkaja ideologija* (Sankt Peterburg: A. S. Suvorin, 1992); compare Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “On the Loneliness of Russia and the Russian idea,” *Coexistence* 32, no. 1 (1995): 39–48.

8 Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev, *Drevnjaja Rus’ i Velikaja step’*, 3rd ed. (Moscow: Mysl’, 1993).

9 Hans-Heinrich Nolte, *Kurze Geschichte der Imperien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017): 277–302.

10 Sergej G. Pushkarev, *Dictionary of Russian Historical Terms from the Eleventh Century to 1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970); Hans-Joachim Torke, ed., *Lexikon der Geschichte Russlands: Von den Anfängen bis zur Oktoberrevolution* (Munich: Beck, 1985); V. A. Vladykina, O. F. Kozlov, N. N. Khimina, V. F. Jankovskaja, eds., *Gosudarstvennost’ Rossii. Slovar’-Spravochnik*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1999–2005): vol. 1–2; M. P. Mchelov, ed., *Rossijskaja Civilizacija* (Moscow: Respublika, 2001); Norbert Franz, ed., *Lexikon der russischen Kultur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002); Karl-Friedrich Jäger, ed., *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, 16 vols. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002–2015).

11 Carsten Goehrke, *Russischer Alltag*, 3 vols. (Zurich: Chronos, 2003–2005).

12 A. V. Arcikhovskij, ed., *Ocherki russkoj kul’tury*, vols. 1–2 (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1978–1979).

13 Carsten Goehrke, “Zum gegenwärtigen Stand der Feudalismusdiskussion in der Sowjetunion,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 22 (1974): 214–47; Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Late-Soviet Control of Historiography: the Case of Michael Gefter,” in *Scientific Freedom Under Attack*, ed. Ralf Roth and Asli Vatansever (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2020): 87–100.

tsarist, Soviet and the republican eras. I am grateful for this work, which constitutes the basis for my analysis.

## 2 Dependent People in the Russian Countryside

### 2.1 General Conditions for Agriculture and Trade in Eastern Europe

This text focuses on dependent people in rural areas. Of course towns, border populations, the bureaucracy and the social history of the royal dynasty (and other princely families) also are important for analyzing Russian history, but if one starts with a specific selection, agrarian history<sup>14</sup> suggests itself as fundamental for the period.<sup>15</sup>

Eurasia east of the river Bug may be divided into roughly four geographic zones: tundra, taiga, steppe and desert. In the west between taiga and steppe, there is a wedge-shaped piece of mixed woodland, with the wide end between St. Petersburg and Kiev, that grows ever narrower until it ends at the Urals behind Kazan; its boundaries are determined by the amount of precipitation coming from the west, cold air from the north and heat from the south.<sup>16</sup> The climate affected the soil, albeit over long periods of time. There is fertile topsoil in favorable parts of the wedge, and chernozem soil in the steppe region.<sup>17</sup>

The strip of chernozem soil in the north of the steppe has the best, and the wedge-shaped area of mixed woodland still fine conditions for peasants in the broad socio-economic meaning of the term.<sup>18</sup> But for centuries it was a battleground between nomad and peasant societies. Until the beginning of the sixteenth century, Russian and Finno-Ugrian peasants, most of them Christians, settled the wedge to

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**14** Boris D. Grekow, *Die Bauern in der Rus von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, trans. Herbert Truhart and Kyra von Bergstraesser, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie, 1959); A. L. Shapiro, ed., *Agrarnaja istorija Severo-Zapada Rossii*, 2 vols. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978).

**15** Some sources and literature on Russian peasants in English: Robert E. F. Smith, ed., *The Enserfment of the Russian Peasantry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Robert E. F. Smith, *Peasant farming in Muscovy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry 1600–1930: The World the Peasants Created* (London: Longman, 1999); Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Russia's Age of Serfdom: 1649–1861* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

**16** Sketch of the climate zones in Nolte, *Geschichte Russlands*: 19.

**17** I. P. Gerasimov, ed., *Fiziko-geograficheskij Atlas Mira* (Moscow: Akademija Nauk SSSR i glavnoe upravlenie Geodezii i Kartografii, 1964): 192–249, maps on temperature, frost, soils, precipitation etc. on page 202–20.

**18** Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Co., 1969; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999): xxii: “populations that are existentially involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation.”

the north and west of the Oka. The Kazan region was the center of the Turkic-speaking and majority Muslim, Tatar, peasant-based society. After the Mongol conquest it became a khanate and continued to be a stronghold of the “Golden horde,” the western part of Mongol Empire and the empires of the Dzhingissid dynasty which were based on a nomad economy, control of peasants and interregional trade.<sup>19</sup> The taiga is difficult for agriculture, and tundra and steppe offer good conditions only for nomads, who are capable of making a living on relatively barren grounds.

For centuries, trade had been one of the cornerstones of people and states in the region. Since no silver or gold was mined until the eighteenth century, precious metals had to be imported – from Mesopotamia, from Germany or via the Netherlands from Latin America.<sup>20</sup> Prices for *kholop* serfs below are given in rubles, but fluctuated widely. In early Muscovy a ruble was fixed at 206 g, in 1704 at 25–26 g of silver.<sup>21</sup> Since Russian exports mostly consisted of products by peasants or hunters (or of slaves), these also formed the main basis for the use of money in domestic and foreign trades,<sup>22</sup> since only silver money was trusted, while paper money had no and copper money only little credit.<sup>23</sup> Also the tributes paid to the Mongol Empire and later the ransoming of Russian captives in Kaffa had to be carried out in silver.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.2 Terms for Dependent People in the Kievan Rus

The Kievan Rus had its center in the fine soils and relatively mild climate of what today is Ukraine. Although foreign trade had played a decisive part in the founding

<sup>19</sup> Introductory Nolte, *Kurze Geschichte der Imperien*: 121–36.

<sup>20</sup> Ian Blanchard, *Russia's 'Age of Silver'* (London: Routledge, 1989); Dariusz Adamczyk, “Friesen, Wikinger, Araber,” in *Ostsee 700 – 2000: Gesellschaft – Wirtschaft – Kultur*, ed. Andrea Komlosy, Hans-Heinrich Nolte, and Imbi Sooman (Vienna: Promedia, 2008): 32–48.; Artur Attman, *The Russian and Polish Markets in International Trade* (Göteborg: Elanders, 1973): 103–93; Jan de Vries, “Connecting Europe and Asia: A Quantitative Analysis 1497–1795,” in *Global Connections and Monetary History 1470–1800*, ed. Dennis O. Flynn, Arturo Giráldez, and Richard von Glahn (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 2003): 35–106.

<sup>21</sup> Iwan Georgewitsch Spasskij, *Das Russische Münzsystem* (Leningrad: Aurora, 1957; Berlin: transpress, 1983). Compare A. S. Mel'nikova, *Russkie monety ot Ivana Groznogo do Petra Pervogo* (Moscow: Financy i Statistika, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> For the process see now Dariusz Adamczyk, *Monetarisierungsmomente, Kommerzialisierungszonen oder fiskalische Währungslandschaften? Edelmetalle, Silberverteilungsnetzwerke und Gesellschaften in Ostmitteleuropa 800–1200* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> Richard Hellie, *The Economy and Material Culture of Russia* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> De facto a constitutional tax in Muscovy. I used the following edition of the basic law code, *Sobornoe Ulozhenie 1649 Goda. Tekst. Kommentarii*, ed. A. G. Man'kov (Leningrad: Nauka, 1987). German translation: *Das Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, ed. Christian Meiske (Halle: Martin Luther Universität, 1984): chap. VIII.

of the state, Christianization, the decline of Byzantium, the rise of nomad power and the intensification of economic control over rural areas increased the importance of agriculture for the princes and the nobility – they lived less from trade and more from feudal rents. This was the economic context for the “feudal parceling” of Russia even before the Mongols conquered the country; the political one was a state owned by a dynasty which habitually divided the inheritance and competed between individual branches of the family. In the religious context, unity was preserved by the church.

The oldest codices of law in Russia were written in Novgorod Velikiy, a trade center near the Baltic Sea, which was governed by the church and the boyars, and which is referred to in the literature as a republic.<sup>25</sup> Here at the beginning of the twelfth century, citing older texts, especially of Grand Prince Jaroslav and his sons in the eleventh century, this lawbook was compiled. The texts are called *Ruskaia Pravda* – there are short and long redactions. For the edition used here thirteen manuscripts were compared.<sup>26</sup> The main content of the *Ruskaia Pravda* is the fixing of bloodwite (wergild, *virā*), but by the twelfth century many other topics had been added.<sup>27</sup>

Dependent people are called *roba*, *kholop* or *chelyadin* in the *Pravda*. *Roba* is a woman slave. Etymologically the word is derived from Indo-European \*rb, from which derive German *Arbeit* (work) and *Erbe* (inheritance), Bohemian *robotten*, and the word *rabotat'* in modern Russian. It is related to \*arb – orphaned, small.<sup>28</sup> A *roba* is a woman worker, *rab* is used for a male slave, but rarely. The usual term for male dependents is *kholop*, which most probably derives from a word meaning young man, in Ukrainian today *khlopec*.<sup>29</sup> The histories of the terms *rab* and *kholop* indicate, that (enforced or habitual) labor by young people was common in medieval times, and that young people generally were at risk of becoming dependent.<sup>30</sup> Also, as in the term “boyar’s children” for the lower nobility, age was used to define social status, and *young* quite often meant *low*. *Chelyadin* is the only word that includes both men and women. A *chelyad'* is the collective term for all those working in a master’s household. The single term for a servant is a *chelyadin*. The *chelyad'*

25 Introductory Nolte, *Kurze Geschichte der Imperien*: 51–53.

26 O. I. Chistjakov, ed., *Rossiiskoe Zakonodatel'stvo X–XX vekov v devjati tomakh*, 9 vols. (Moscow: Juridicheskaja literatura, 1984–1994): vol. 1; V. L. Janin, ed., *Russkaja Pravda. Vvedenie* (Moscow: Juridicheskaja literatura, 1984): 5–46, at 34, 45. The text of the *Prostrannaja redakcija*, 64–132 (V. L. Janin, ed., “Prostrannaja redakcija,” in *Zakonodatel'stvo Drevnej Rusi*, vol. 1, ed. V. L. Janin (Moscow: Juridicheskaja literatura, 1984): 189–298).

27 *Prostrannaja redakcija*, §§ 64–73.

28 Friedrich Kluge, s. v. “Arbeit,” “arm,” “Erbe,” in *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, twentieth ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967); Compare Andrea Komlosy, *Arbeit: Eine global-historische Perspektive* (Vienna: Promedia, 2014): 36–52.

29 Pushkarev, *Dictionary*.

30 Michael Zeuske, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Sklaverei*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019): 292–344.

has its own options, for instance it may decide to hide one of its number who has committed a crime, but the collective then has to pay the fine for him.

The justice system depended on the communities, but the princes extended their jurisdiction. In a case of murder, direct vengeance by family members was legal, but the Grand Princes provided the option to pay a fine instead. The bloodwite (*vira*) according to the *Russkaja Pravda*<sup>31</sup> was:

- for killing one of the prince's leading men, 80 *grivna*<sup>32</sup>
- an ordinary man of the prince 40, *grivna*
- a merchant, an artisan or a wetnurse, 12 *grivna*
- for a man from the rank and file (of peasants), 5 *grivna*
- for a woman slave (*roba*), 6 *grivna*
- for a *kholop* 5, *grivna*

For killing a prince, no bloodwite was provided, which means that there always would be vengeance in this case. The difference in the *vira* between one of the prince's men and a *kholop* was 16:1; that between a merchant, artisan or wetnurse and a *roba* 2:1; a *roba* is valued a little higher than a *kholop*. *Kholop* and peasant are assigned the same value. The *Russkaja Pravda* describes three kinds of full *kholops*<sup>33</sup> – 1) bought before witnesses, 2) married to a *roba* and 3) having accepted a job as *tiun* of a prince or boyar. A full *kholop* is “unfree,” he may not testify in court (except as *tiun* “if necessary”); he does not pay the fee for the prince's judgement, but pays double the amount to the plaintiff.

The later texts in the version emphasize more defining property. According to an article that was added later,<sup>34</sup> *kholop* and *roba* no longer have a bloodwite; in case they are killed (without provocation), a fixed amount is to be paid to the plaintiff and a fee of twelve *grivna* to the prince. When a master has children with a *roba*, the mother and the children are to be set free when the master dies, but do not have any claims to his estate.<sup>35</sup> The last part of the *Pravda* is on *kholops*.<sup>36</sup> It repeats the definitions for becoming a full (*polnyj* or *obel'nyj*) *kholop*, with the obvious aim of limiting such transitions. Similarly, §111 notes what may not lead to it. The next articles describe fugitives and offer, albeit without much enthusiasm, the help of state officials in bringing them back. §116 forbids *kholops* to lend money, but §117 allows them to engage in trade in case their master agrees. §120 decrees

31 *Prostrannaja redakcija*, §§ 1–21. Since texts from different centuries have been combined into one text, there are some contradictions.

32 The Kiev-Grivna in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries was a chunk of silver of c. 260 g. Spasskij, *Das Russische Münzsystem*: 54.

33 *Prostrannaja redakcija*, §§ 63–71.

34 *Prostrannaja redakcija*, § 89.

35 *Prostrannaja redakcija*, § 98.

36 *Prostrannaja redakcija*, §§ 110–21.

that the family of a *kholop* accused of robbery shall not automatically come under suspicion, but only in case there is proof of their complicity.

### 2.3 Northern Russia after 1237

One of the results of the conquest of Russia by the Mongolian Empire in 1237 was that the southern strip of the mixed woodland wedge was returned to nomadic use and lost for agriculture. Peasants of the Rus' either emigrated westward, in the direction of Lithuania and Poland, or to the north of the river Oka. Later the Grand Princes of Moscow won the power struggle among the northern Russian princes and started gather together the "Russian lands." In the west, their territory was called Muscovy to distinguish it from the other "Russias" in Lithuania and in Poland.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Muscovy stretched from the Polish-Lithuanian border – quite often with Smolensk as border town – and the most eastern inlet of the Baltic Sea in the west, to the White Sea in the north, the borders of the Kazan Khanate – east of Nizhniy Novgorod – and to the upper reaches of the river Donets in the south. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Muscovy conquered the Volga valley towards the Caspian Sea and in the seventeenth century it expanded into Siberia and towards the Dnepr. Russian settlement in the new south started, but as before, the steppe mostly was used as pasture by Nogai Tatars, Kalmyks or Cossacks.

The agrarian system<sup>38</sup> of Muscovy proper was characterized by slash-and-burn agriculture. After clearing, the land could be used to cultivate buckwheat, rye, barley and oats. It was difficult to keep a cow or a horse alive through the long winter. The piece of arable land, could be used for a period of four or five years, after which new land had to be cleared; but it took about 25 years until the trees had grown high enough to render it advantageous to clear again. Peasants and settlements migrated in the wake of the land they cleared, and it made little sense to own a particular stretch of land. In order to obtain value from the peasants, a lord had to have claims against specific persons or their communities, which were autonomous organizations.

However, as population density increased, more land was being taken into constant use, and by the sixteenth century, permanent settlements and three-field crop rotation became common in Russia to the south of the upper Volga. Hay making

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<sup>37</sup> Maps can be found in *Westermanns Atlas zur Weltgeschichte*, vol. 2, ed. Hans-Erich Stier et al. (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1956): 71; Introduction Andreas Kappeler, *Kleine Geschichte der Ukraine* (Munich: Beck, 1994): 41–53.

<sup>38</sup> Introduction Hans-Heinrich Nolte, "Russische Bauern zwischen Waldeinsamkeit, Kommune und Kapitalismus," in *Unterdrückung und Emanzipation in der Weltgeschichte*, ed. Florian Grumbles and Anton Weise (Hannover: Jmb-Verlag, 2017): 127–51.



increased, which made it possible to feed more cattle through the winter and to manure part of the land. In the eighteenth century, some lords introduced four-field rotation systems or even – following the example of Holstein (which itself followed England) – “up and down husbandry” with five, six or more fields.<sup>39</sup> But three-field systems prevailed in central parts Russia till collectivization in the twentieth century, while in the peripheries shifting cultivation with slash-and-burn agriculture remained dominant.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.4 Survey of Social Groups in Rural Early Modern Russian

The fundamental social institution of the period was the fenced-in family-court or household, in which noblemen and peasants lived, *Hof* in German, in Russian called *dvor*. The term *chelyad'* was by then used only rarely, maybe indicating a loss of autonomy of the people living in a household. The *dvor* was headed by a man. An adult man – whether he was a prince or bishop, a peasant or a cottager – was the *khozjain* (master of the house) in his household. Since in this period it required a married couple to make a living as peasants,<sup>41</sup> he would marry. The internal division of labor and authority was not monopolized by the man, but the rule was that he decided outside the *dvor* and the wife inside.<sup>42</sup> Since in Russia the testator was free, women might inherit such a *dvor*, but they too would soon marry. Between 1635 and 1725, and even more between 1678 and 1721, the *dvor* also was a tax unit,<sup>43</sup> which made it profitable to have as many people living on a *dvor* as possible. A Russian household in the early modern period consisted of a collection of buildings whose size was determined by the building material (logs). The *dvor* was surrounded by a fence with a more or less beautiful gate. Husband and wife lived there with their children, unmarried relatives and possibly servants. There were three major types of agrarian settlements: (1) *derevnja* – a small village or hamlet; (2) *seló* – a village, often with the main house of a noble estate; and (3) *volost'* – the territory of a community (*mir*), this was often also where the church and the room (*izba*) of the *starosta* was. In the “black” *volosts* the members would elect the “eldest” (*starosta*) and the local judges for offenses that were tried within the village;

39 Michael Confino, *Systèmes Agraires et Progrès Agricole* (Paris: Mouton, 1969). Map in Hans-Heinrich Nolte, ed., *Der Aufstieg Rußlands zur europäischen Großmacht* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1981): 64.

40 Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: no. 3.1 description from 1790: mostly slash and burn with a four-year term, but Tatars around Kasan used a three-field system. Compare no. 3.3.

41 In the eighteenth century a couple was called quite often *tjaglo* – a yoke, invoking their capacity to carry certain work-loads together.

42 Although for an urban household compare Klaus Müller, ed., *Altrussisches Hausbuch* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1987).

43 Richard Hellie, *Slavery in Russia* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982): 538.



in the *volosts* belonging to a prince or a *pomeshchik* the owner would appoint an officer for administration and local adjudication. The prosecution of murder and robbery were the monopoly of the government.<sup>44</sup> The peasants had to pay a land tax (*dan*), perform corvée labor for the noble owner (*barshchina*) and/or pay him rent (*obrok*).<sup>45</sup> The *volost'* had to collect taxes of all kinds and was liable for their payment (*krugovája poruka*); in the eighteenth century also supplying recruits.

Who was living on the land in what conditions in the sixteenth century?

From the state's point of view there were "black people" (*chernye*) paying full taxes, and "whitened people" (*belomestnyj* in Moscow) who paid less tax, since they gave *barshchina* or *obrok* to either a church institution or to a noble landowner. A village (*seló*) belonging to the Grand Prince may serve as a micro example (1543/4).<sup>46</sup> In this village there were three untaxed households (two priests who served two churches and one deacon), 75 taxed peasant households (*vytye*) plus 26 untaxed ones (*nevytye*). The taxable unit was named *sokhá* – that is a light plow. Officially, untaxed land had been cleared only recently. The ratio between arable and grazing land to be worked for the landowner (*barshchina*) and the fields the peasants could use for themselves was about 1:2, if hamlets were included, it was 1:3. Remote hamlets paid their dues in monetarized form (*obrok*), but in this village also those in the center had to contribute some smaller dues, for instance for "the goose, the cock, the eggs," in that form. Obligations in kind were changed to money.

There were two kinds of property rights of the nobility:<sup>47</sup> (1) *Votchina* – an inherited estate. Many were part of a family inheritance and were passed on when a branch of the family died out. It could be sold only if the family agreed. There were also *votchinas* belonging to individuals, which could be sold freely. In western Europe this would be called an allodium. (2) *Pomest'je* – an estate given by the Grand Prince or a church institution to a nobleman on the condition of service. The Western European equivalent would be a *feudum* (*fief*). This of course could not be sold – until the Russian allodification of *pomest'ja* during the reign of Anna.

For a peasant, there were two kinds of property rights within a *volost'*. He owned his household, his tools and his land (either by clearing or in the three-field rotation system). Politically, the *volost'* was made up of the *khozjain's*. As members of the *volost'*, peasants owned the forests, lakes and rivers communally. In this period there was no periodic redistribution of the arable land; the romantic concept of

<sup>44</sup> Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: no. 2.18.

<sup>45</sup> A list of the distribution in 1780 can be found in Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, eds., *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: no. 3.2.

<sup>46</sup> Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: no. 2.1.

<sup>47</sup> Hans-Heinrich Nolte, "Eigentumsrechte im Moskauer Rußland," in *Rechts- und Verfassungsgeschichte in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit: Gedenkschrift Joachim Leuschner*, ed. Katharina Colberg et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983): 226–44.

“archaic socialism” in Russia is not confirmed by the sources.<sup>48</sup> The redistributive commune was instituted in the eighteenth century only<sup>49</sup> (for better control of the peasants and to keep the poor from running away).

There were different statuses for the agrarian population; starting at the top:

1. Nobility living on the land: princes (*knjaz*), high nobility (*boyar*) or low nobility (*deti boiarskie*).
2. Clergy (with their own justice system, as in the western church).
3. Officials of big landowners (*tiun'*, or even *kholop*)
4. *Starozhilec* – a peasant who has lived in one community for a long time
5. *Novoporjadchik* – a newly settled peasant. He accepted service with a landowner for a sum of money and might become *starozhilec*
6. *Polovnik* – “peasants who owned a half” of the soil needed for farming
7. *Bobyl* – cottager, landless peasant
8. *Kholop* – could fall into several different categories:
  - 8.1 *Starinnyj* (old) – inherited
  - 8.2 *Kuplennyj* – bought
  - 8.3 *Polnyj* – full or *dokladnyj* – by official act –
  - 8.4 *Kabalnyj* – *kabalá* was a written acknowledgement of debt. We may systematize three kinds of *kabalnyj kholop*:
    - 8.4.1 *zajèmnaja* – which was simply a certificate of debt
    - 8.4.2 *sluzhilaja* – agreement to serve for time instead of paying
    - 8.4.3 *polnaja, kholopskaja* – agreement to serve for life

In rural areas, *kabalnye* and *kholops* might live within the households of estate owners and work as servants performing domestic tasks (cleaning, cooking, sewing, heating etc.), but also clerical ones. They might live “behind the estate” (*zadvornye*) in their own houses and work estate land. They might even be put into autonomous positions with their own households, for instance in fights for land against other estate owners or *volost's*.

9. The ninth group of people living in rural areas were children, unmarried men and women living within the households of *khozjains*. Although most probably there were many individual differences within this group, we might find those who endured the worst living-conditions – sleeping in the ashes and not on top of the oven (as the tales about Cinderella indicate).

We have to keep in mind though that all these people of different statuses were Orthodox Christians. They were obliged to attend church on Sundays, go to confession and receive Holy Communion at least once a year. In moral and

<sup>48</sup> Carsten Goehrke, *Die Theorien über Entstehung und Entwicklung des mir* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964).

<sup>49</sup> Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: no. 3.67, 3.73.

intellectual matters, they were tried by the church, as well as in all cases of adultery, magic and sorcery. They enjoyed a Sunday rest that started on Saturday a 3.00 pm, and of course quite a number of feast days.<sup>50</sup> Orthodox parishes before Peter I were small, everybody knew everybody.

10. Outside of the church there was the tenth group of people living in rural areas:<sup>51</sup> This was the non-Orthodox nobility (from the fifteenth century onwards, this group included Muslim Tatars and animistic “elders” or Mordva and Cheremiss “bestmen”; from the sixteenth century onwards they were Latin Christians – soldiers from Scotland and Switzerland, artisans from Italy and Germany etc.; and from the eighteenth century onwards they were members of the Finnish-Swedish and Baltic German Protestant nobility), but also Muslim and Jewish, Catholic and Protestant prisoners of war and *Iasyry*. As a rule, these different religious communities had their own places of worship (mosques, temples etc.) and their own parish-like organizations.

Sometimes the lack of a right to relocate is seen as defining a slave. But in reality, only few people in the Russian countryside were free to leave. A *votchinnik* had to live on his *allod*, unless he inherited another. A *pomeshhik* had to live on his *po-mest'e*, unless he was given another. Both had to follow the call to arms and go to war at whatever frontier – they could go elsewhere, but not follow their own free will. A clergyman had to live at the post assigned to him by his bishop. In case his wife (Orthodox parish priests have to be married) died or went into a convent, he could also ask to join a monastery. The *starozhilec*, the settled peasant, was rather an exception. However, even his right to leave the land was limited to two weeks a year in 1497, and it was laid down that when leaving he had to give one ruble to the lord, or in his absence nail it to the gate of the farmstead. The *novoprojadchik* could have the same right, as soon as he had paid back the sum given him by the lord for establishment of his *dvor*. A *kholop* had no right to choose his place of living and laboring.

During the sixteenth century the nobility fought to limit the right of peasants to leave, and during some years migration was forbidden. Then there would be a search for those who changed their lords or went into the forest.<sup>52</sup> In the *Ulozhenie*

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<sup>50</sup> *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. X, §§ 25–26.

<sup>51</sup> For the religious aspect see, Hans-Heinrich Nolte, *Religiöse Toleranz in Rußland 1600–1725* (Göttingen: Muster-Schmidt, 1969); Nolte, “Verständnis und Bedeutung der religiösen Toleranz in Rußland,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 17 (1969): 494–530. For ethnic aspects see, Andreas Kappeler, *Russlands erste Nationalitäten: Das Zarenreich und die Völker der Mittleren Wolga vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1982); Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich* (Munich: Beck, 1991); English version: Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multi-ethnic History* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: no. 2.24.

of 1649 the peasants lost the right to leave the land and were made *krepostnyj* – tied to the soil,<sup>53</sup> or rather to a certain village community. After the *starozhilcy* and *novoporjadchiki* had lost their right to leave, the differences between them and the *polovniki* and *bobyli* became less important and they were increasingly subsumed together in the status of *krest'jane*. Most peasant families over the centuries experienced a deterioration of their status from free (black) to dependent people (white). In the literature the social reason given for tying peasants to the soil is that the lower nobility wanted it, as warfare had developed into a full-time occupation, and those fighting could no longer work the fields to feed their families. But peasants might run away, and big landowners, especially the clergy, were able to offer better conditions to peasants than owners of small estates. But there was also an economic argument: as noted above, the move to agriculture in permanent settlements was more expensive and required more specialized labor. The practice of free movement went well with slash and burn, but not so much with three-field rotation systems. Last but not least, the costs of control in (comparatively) densely settled regions were less than in wooded ones. Incidentally, all persons, *kholops* included, were free to visit even far-off towns and markets. Legally, however, leaving their places of residence was difficult, if not impossible, for most of these groups.

But the enormous territory of Russia simply invited men and women to explore their possibilities in another place. Legally, only few people were allowed to change their places of residence, but in reality there was considerable, albeit illegal, movement. Running away (*begstvo*) was the only way by which a *kholop* could achieve some freedom, and more than a quarter ran away at some time or another.<sup>54</sup> Tying them to the soil increased *begstvo* by peasants. After the schism (*raskol*) of the seventeenth century, a new group was added: the Oldbelievers who fled religious persecution.<sup>55</sup> “Living on the run” was also quite common in the eighteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Running away was, indeed, part of the continuous expansion of Russia. After conquering the Volga khanates and building defense lines (*sechki*), in the seventeenth century, Russian, Mordva and Tatar peasants went south. Such groups – people fleeing for social or religious reasons – also formed the initial waves of Russian settlements.<sup>57</sup> Not a few of them lived on the other side of the *sechki*, and other

53 Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: no. 2.25.

54 Hellie, *Slavery*: 552.

55 Nolte, *Religiöse Toleranz*: 122–81. The government was not able to control this flight: Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Die Reaktion auf die spätpetrinische Altgläubigenbedrückung,” *Kirche im Osten* 19 (1976): 11–28.

56 Andrey Gornotaev, “Living ‘on the run’ in Eighteenth Century Russia,” paper presented at the conference “Slavery, Captivity and Further Forms of Asymmetrical Dependencies in Early Modern Russia,” hosted by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), September 26–27, 2019.

57 Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Migrating in Tundra and Taiga: Russian Cossacks and Traders in Siberia and Alaska,” in *Bevölkerungen, Verbindungen, Grundrechte: Festschrift Jean-Paul Lehnert*, ed. Norbert Franz, Thomas Kolnberger, and Pit Péporté (Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2015): 165–75.

frontiers – Oldbelievers in Livonia, Poland, the lower Donets and Caucasia,<sup>58</sup> hunters and fishermen on the American west coast, possibly as far as Seattle.<sup>59</sup>

## 2.5 *Kholops* in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

For research on Russian terms for dependent people and the problems of translation I use a contemporary dictionary<sup>60</sup> as well as Pushkarev's Dictionary of Russian Historical Terms.<sup>61</sup> I read editions of the sources, which lend themselves to this work because they have an index of terms. Mostly the texts used are church and state records; but since the nobility used monasteries as repositories, there are also some private documents. I will cite AFZCh<sup>62</sup> and ASEI<sup>63</sup> by the numbers of the documents. The typical word for dependent people in these volumes is *ljudi* – “Leute” in German, “people” in English. *Rab* is still being used, as is *kholop*, but there are more than 50 forms of *ljudi* (*ljudi polnye, monastyrskie, knjazhie, ljudi votchinnikov* = belonging to a monastery, a prince, an estate owner . . .) We cannot read all *ljudi* as *kholops*; there are also *volostnye* (members of a *volost*). The semantic field ranges from *sluzhilye ljudi v pomest'e* – low nobility<sup>64</sup> – to *polnye ljudi*,<sup>65</sup> who were full property and could be bequeathed, as they were by *knjaz* (prince) Andrej F. Golenin to his family in 1482.

<sup>58</sup> Nolte, *Religiöse Toleranz*: 141–42.

<sup>59</sup> Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov, *Rossija otkryvaet Ameriku 1733–1799* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otoshenija, 1991): 180–81. Report of the Russian Ambassador in Spain 1789, excerpt in Hans-Heinrich Nolte, ed., *Geschichte der USA*, part 1 (Schwalbach am Taunus: Wochenschau, 2006): 109–10. Bolkhovitinov argues, however, that the Spanish captain erred by 10 degrees in determining the location of these Russian settlements. Lydia Black, *Russians in Alaska* (Fairbanks: Alaska University Press, 2004): 79–99, at 95, does not mention Russian settlements that far south. In case they existed and were Oldbelievers, they would have tried to present an official appearance to the Spanish military, and then attempted to hide farther away.

<sup>60</sup> German translation in *Dictionarium Vindobense*: Gerhard Birkfellner, ed., *Teutscher, und Reussischer Dictionarium* (Berlin: Akademie, 1984). This is an edited MS from the late seventeenth century from the Trinitarian monastery in Vienna, Alsergrund, founded 1688 – “Ordo Sanctissimae Trinitatae Redemptionis Captivorum” – in Austria called Weißspanier. Members of the order travelled in Muslim countries and bought enslaved Christians. To negotiate with the owners, the monks needed to know the social status of the slave back home. Today, the monastery is owned by the Friars Minor Conventual.

<sup>61</sup> Pushkarev, *Dictionary*.

<sup>62</sup> Lev V. Cherepnin and Aleksandr A. Zimin, eds., *Akty feodal'nogo zemlevladienija i chozjajstva XIV – XVI vekov* [following AFZCh], part 1–2 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, 1951–1956). Part 1: Documents on land owned by the Metropolitan or Patriarch of Moscow in different parts of the country, dated between 1390 and 1602; part 2: 428 records of the Josifo-Volokolamsk Monastery, mid-fifteenth century to 1612, including secular documents kept in the monastery.

<sup>63</sup> Boris D. Grekov, ed., *Akty social'no-ekonomicheskoj istorii Severo-vostochnoj Rossii konca XIV: nachala XVI v.* [following ASEI], vol. 1–3 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1952–1964).

<sup>64</sup> Cherepnin and Zimin, AFZCh, part 2, no. 62.

<sup>65</sup> Cherepnin and Zimin, AFZCh, part 2, no. 15.

My example is the term *kholop*.<sup>66</sup> I translate it as “indentured servant.” The semantic field of the term is very broad; not differing very much from *ljudi* in this regard. Some of these – *kholops* for life – lived in conditions which may not have been very different from slaves in other societies,<sup>67</sup> while others were members of the lower nobility. In the selected two editions of church records between 1390 and 1612 the term *kholop* is used: To enumerate *kholopy i roby* with their families in last wills, for instance that of Vasilij Borisovich (Tuchka-Morozov) from 1497. Some are recorded with their occupations, such as stable master, falconer, cook, German cook, bootmaker, tailor, carpenter etc. Some are Tatars, of whom some also have their occupations listed. Especially noted are *stradniki*, which term the editor explains as *kholops* working in *barshchina*; we may conclude that the *kholops* for whom no occupation was given were peasants working on *obrok*. Vasilij willed a considerable economic organization, including the workers, to his sons: a noble estate.<sup>68</sup> As was customary in a will, Vasilij manumitted a considerable group of *moj kholopy i roby* – he “let them go into freedom.”<sup>69</sup> In another will, a *roba* who had provided sexual services to the lord is set free.<sup>70</sup> D. G. Pleshcheev, a member of the lower nobility, in 1558/9 freed in his will “my prisoners from Kazan and Germany, men and women and boys and girls” – not *kholops*, but prisoners of war.<sup>71</sup> In many wills *kholops* are listed as fugitives. They are mentioned by their names and the heirs are enjoined to search for them.<sup>72</sup> *Kholops* are named as autonomously laboring on farms – peasants in the socioeconomic meaning – of a princess and two princes.<sup>73</sup> It is accepted as an argument in court that *kholops* stole documents. This shows that some were employed in the administrations of estates in the tradition of the *tiun*.<sup>74</sup> A nobleman could be a *kholop*. Ivan Voronin gave himself up as *kholop* to princess Ofrosyna and received a *volost’*. As *kholop* he was removed from the list of heirs to his family’s *votchina*. When the other branch of the family who owned the *votchina* died out during the plague, the children of Ivan wanted to inherit the

66 *Dictionarium Vindobense*: Leibeigener Diener/ LeybEygen/ Scklave; Pushkarev, *Dictionary*: A male slave. My translation to German: Knecht, Diener, dabei für polnyj kholop: leibeigener Knecht; to English for Muscovy: bondsman, indentured servant.

67 Hellie, *Slavery*; Introductory Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Kholopen,” in Jäger, ed., *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*: vol. 1, 543–44.

68 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 1, no. 612; citation p. 523: *svoikh ljudej kholopov i rob*.

69 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 1, no. 612; citation p. 524: *tekh vsekh ljudej otpustil na slobody*. Similar Cherepnin and Zimin, *AFZCh*, vol. 2, no. 15, 172, Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 1, no. 67, 67a.

70 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 1, no. 67a, in case I interpret *zhonka moja polnaja* adequately.

71 Cherepnin and Zimin, *AFZCh*, vol. 2, no. 274, citation 281.

72 Cherepnin and Zimin, *AFZCh*, vol. 2, no. 15.

73 Cherepnin and Zimin, *AFZCh*, vol. 3, no. 15, 1036.

74 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 105, 521.

family *votchina*. At first they were rejected, but Ivan Vasilevich (in this record he used the title *tsar*) in 1474 granted them the privilege to buy the *votchina* back.<sup>75</sup>

As noted in the *Pravda*, a free man who marries a *roba* becomes a *kholop*, but a 1511 change to the law allows a *kholop* to marry a free woman who remains free. The children from this union were to be divided – boys to follow the father’s status, girls their mother’s.<sup>76</sup> In Novgorod Velikiy, *kholops* were not admitted to testify as witnesses, except in cases within their group.<sup>77</sup> It was a sin to kill a *kholop*, but Moscow granted as privilege to the Dvina lands that such cases should not come before the governor (*namestnik*).<sup>78</sup> Flight was an established custom.<sup>79</sup> Fugitives were sometimes hidden by other estate owners.<sup>80</sup>

### 2.5.1 The Lists of Djak Dmitrij Alab’ev

At the end of the sixteenth century, the central government in Moscow ordered a new registration of all *kholops* in the territory of Novgorod Velikiy, which had been annexed more than one hundred years earlier (1478). In 1597/1598, the Djak Dmitrij Aljab’ev from Novgorod took notes from all records which the owners of *kholops* presented, and also noted down the history of the *kholops*’ families up to his time. The handwritten books in which he collected the notes have not been preserved, but there are copies in other collections.<sup>81</sup> As a rule the texts<sup>82</sup> have been copied from older documents, some from the last decades of independent Novgorod. The Djak created a register of *kholops* in Novgorod Velikiy, and “*kholops*” is used in a couple of records. In all records though the term *v polnicu* is used. I translate this as “bought into full service,” which might correspond to *polnye ljudi*, but that term is only rarely used. In most cases it is noted that the *kholop* sold himself. Aljab’ev, the compiler of the list, does not give the reasons either why a person sold themselves and or their children, or why another bought them. He is only interested in “full” *kholopstvo*.

For almost all *kholops* in this register the names of their family members are given –of husbands, wives and children. In most cases we find “family trees,” as it

75 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 1, no. 282.

76 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 242. This does seem to be an exception, see below Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no 410, 439.

77 “Novgorodskaja Sudnaja Gramota,” in Chistjakov, ed., *Rossiiskoe Zakonodatel’stvo*: vol. 1, 306.

78 There were regional court systems (*guby*) where cases were heard – but only those brought before them. The main point here is that Moscow would not ask for fees in such cases.

79 Cherepnin and Zimin, *AFZCh*, vol. 2, no. 15, 16.

80 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 357.

81 For the history of the texts see N. A. Golubcov, “O novgorodskikh zapisnykh knigakh starym krepostjam na kholopov d’jaka D.i M. Aljab’eva 1597–98 gg.,” in Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 410–11.

82 Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 392–462.



was the object of the questioning to prove or disprove that the *kholops* in 1598/1599 in Novgorod Velikiy were descendants of *kholops* who had entered into this status legally. People selling themselves and their families *v polnicu* did so initially with the formula “by their own will” (*po svoej vole*). After 1485<sup>83</sup> the formula is no longer used. Until the annexation by Moscow many bought and sold “without bailiff” (*bez pristava*); after 1478 most bought with a bailiff. Other purchases were considered legal when the person was bought from another citizen (this is only a minority of the cases).

Peasants living in rural areas sold themselves by giving the key to their farmstead to their new master. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the records show an increase in buying (and selling) of peasants together with their farmsteads in some hamlets. Novgorod families, such as the Novotschonok or Muravev, increased not only the number of their *kholops* but also their influence over the soil in competition with the *obshchina*. The handing over the key to one’s own farmstead symbolized such selling and buying. A text from 1507<sup>84</sup> seems to indicate that the term “he gave his key” developed into a transaction formula and was used without the acquisition of property rights in a hamlet, while the term *v polnicu* was less used. If we correctly interpret these changes in formula and procedure, it means that after the annexation of Novgorod Velikiy by the Grand Prince of Moscow the persons bought and sold (mostly by themselves) lost social presence or standing. Taking the formula at face value, after the annexation it was no longer necessary for those who sold themselves and their families to testify that they did so of their own free will.

In almost all of these family trees we find considerable numbers of fugitives: flight was a common option for the *kholops* at least of the north-west of Russia. Even in case a master knew where his runaway *kholop* lived, he did not always decide to spend the means to get him back.<sup>85</sup> Most of these *kholops* cost about one ruble, only a few cost two.

We find cases of a free man going into *kholopstvo* in order to marry a *kholop* woman,<sup>86</sup> and of a woman becoming *roba* to marry a *kholop* man.<sup>87</sup> After 1460, we have the case of the wife of a tailor (*zhonka*) being sold together with her three daughters “of her free will,” but without her husband, for six rubles for the four of them.<sup>88</sup> In 1490 Ivan Fedorov syn Novokshonov bought the *zhonka* Orenka and her

<sup>83</sup> The last one being Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 416.

<sup>84</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 453.

<sup>85</sup> Which even was the case for big estate owners, see the excerpt from the list of fugitives of Trinity Monastery in Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: 62–63.

<sup>86</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 410.

<sup>87</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 439.

<sup>88</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 400. The exact date is not known.

daughter; again we are not told about the fate of her husband.<sup>89</sup> It is noted that both women are married, and marriage in the Orthodox Church in this period is indissoluble. Can we conclude that the women were indebted from their own business, and were able to sell their daughters (not their sons) into *kholopstvo* to make up for the debt? Further research is necessary.

Women might own *kholops*, usually by inheritance as noted above, but also by purchasing them.<sup>90</sup> Tatjana Gordeeva in 1510 sold her son, his wife and their son for four rubles, again to a member of the Novokshonov family.<sup>91</sup> While many buyers had third names like Novokshonov (family names), many sellers or those being bought only had two (Christian name and patronymic). A buyer 1499 is listed with his patronymic in both the modern (Nikiforovich) and the older form (Nikiforov syn).<sup>92</sup> Also a considerable number of the names of both sellers and buyers do not sound Slavic. In a couple of cases “cheremis” and “mordva” form part of the names. I assume that these and others belonged to the Finno-Ugric population of the region, which today lives in autonomous republics. Also in other regions (Ingria) some used their Finno-Ugric tongues until the twentieth century.<sup>93</sup>

### 2.5.2 Summing Up for the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

The word most frequently used for dependent people in north-western Russia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was *ljudi*, and the semantic field stretched from low nobility to persons fully owned by someone. The semantic field of *kholop* in a comparable way extended from a nobleman serving a princess to an actual servant. The terms changed though in the late sixteenth century. The Djak Al’jabev put together a list of *kholops* in Novgorod Velikiy in 1598 to control the usage of that term. In all records the term *v polnicu* (bought) is used— in most cases the person had sold themselves – “into full service.” People selling themselves and their families into full service did so in the beginning with the formula “by their own will.” After the annexation by Moscow that formula fell out of use.

Women could own and buy *kholops*, and female members of the princely families might accept noblemen as *kholops*, but a husband could sell himself and his

<sup>89</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 422. The easiest solution would be, that the husbands not noted in no. 400 and 422 had died.

<sup>90</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 415.

<sup>91</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 459.

<sup>92</sup> Grekov, *ASEI*, vol. 3, no. 442.

<sup>93</sup> Later than main Russian settlement and Russification-processes since the eighteenth Century, but still show the diversity of ethnic groups the maps in S. I. Bruk and V. S. Apenchenko, eds., *Atlas narodov mira* (Moscow: Glavnoe Upravlenie Geodezii i kartografii, 1964): 14–15, 18–25; for a brief sketch see Nolte, *Geschichte Russlands*: 410. Compare Imbi Sooman, “Sprache, wofür stehst Du wirklich,” in Komlosy, Nolte, and Sooman, eds., *Ostsee*: 174–96.

family into *kholopstvo*. *Kholops* might have responsible and autonomous roles like promoting the interests of their lords in land or keeping records. They could own property – for instance money. At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century the records show (for Novgorod Velikiy) an increase in buying (and selling) peasants complete with their farmsteads in some hamlets, which also gave the local lord influence in these hamlets. The formula used was “to give the keys” to the lords. To run away – *begstvo* – was common and is mentioned in many of the documents consulted.

## 2.6 *Kholops* in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The government, instigated by the church, promoted the limitation of *kholopstvo* and discouraged the charging of interest – in the words of the *Sudebnik* (law code) of 1555 (called *Stoglav*), “so that the peasants will stay and the villages will not fall empty.”<sup>94</sup> The aim of Alyab’ev’s work in Novgorod Velikiy 1589 fits in with that policy – registering also was an instrument to prevent free persons from falling into *kholopstvo* without control. But during the crisis of the *Smuta* the number of dependent persons increased, and during the seventeenth century *kholopstvo* was an important social status: the second most dependent group of people in Russia (only the *jasyry*, prisoners of war, were even more dependent).<sup>95</sup> From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards there existed a special *Kholopij Prikaz*<sup>96</sup> (a government department), where *kholops* had to be registered.<sup>97</sup> Their social and legal statuses could differ widely, from servants for a specified, limited time to *kholops* being born into dependency.<sup>98</sup> All legally free people of Russia, high and low nobility, servants (*sluzhilye ljudi*) of all ranks, merchants and artisans (*posackie ljudi*), as well as peasants and even *kholops* themselves, could own the labor of a *kholop*, whether for a specified number of years or an unlimited time. The duration of limited *kholopstvo* was measured in years.

<sup>94</sup> § 76 of the *Sudebnik* of 1555 required from all clerics and advised all lay people not to take interests from peasants (*chtoby za nimi christijane byli, i sela ikh ne byli ne pusty*). A. D. Gorskiy, “Stoglav,” in Chistjakov, ed., *Rossijskoe Zakonodatel'stvo*: vol. 2, 242–500, citation 354.

<sup>95</sup> Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Jasyry: Non-Orthodox Slaves in Pre-Petrine Russia,” in *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World-History 1200–1860*, ed. Christoph Witzenrath (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015): 247–64.

<sup>96</sup> There are different forms of writing this name.

<sup>97</sup> Vladykina et al., eds., *Gosudarstvennost' Rossii*: vol. 4, 384–85; Grigorij Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Mihajlovicha*, ed. Aleksandr Barsukov (Sankt Peterburg: Imperatorskaja Arheograficheskaja Kommissija, 1906): 113.

<sup>98</sup> Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Mihajlovicha*: 113: *dvorovye, kabalnye, danye, zapisnye*. And also debtors for a period, in which they were supposed to work of their debts, as *slugi*.

Richard Hellie in his fundamental research referred to *kholops* as “slaves.”<sup>99</sup> He used two registers dated 1597 and 1603 respectively, which together listed 5,575 *kholops*, of whom about two thirds had sold themselves, more than one tenth had become the property of their masters by gift or inheritance, one twentieth was born into *kholopstvo* and only 148 became *kholopy* by captivity. In the remaining cases, it was not possible to clearly establish their former status. In Hellie’s words, “most of Muscovy’s slaves were natives.” However, he did not use the special lists kept for prisoners of war.<sup>100</sup> The history of these ethnically, socially and in most cases religiously differing groups is yet to be researched.

From the cases handled in the *prikaz* during the seventeenth century and selected for publication by Iakovlev, only Orthodox people appear, although some names or definitions (like *murza*, *batrak* or *tatarka polona*) hint at non-Orthodox family backgrounds.<sup>101</sup> In cases analyzed by Paneiakh, we find “he was prisoner” given as the reason for giving oneself into *kholopstvo*, but obviously these were Russians who had been captive in Poland or the south.<sup>102</sup> The legal position was defined in §119 in chapter 20 of the *Ulozhenie* legal code.<sup>103</sup> The code begins by forbidding members of the lower nobility (*deti bojarskie* without *pomest’e*) to become *kholops* of *boyars*, but legalizes earlier such acts. Peasants or cottagers who run away and ask to be taken as *kholop* by other masters are to be sent back. The *Kholopij Prikaz* has to ensure that *kholops* freed by a will really are set free “even if children, brothers or officers do not let them go of their own free will.”<sup>104</sup>

There was no limit to the daily labor of *kholops*, except for those established by the Church with Sunday rest, daily prayers, Lent etc. *Kholops* were entitled to food and to marriage, but the lord could decide who they were to marry. As mentioned above, marriages were not dissoluble.<sup>105</sup> Children of mixed marriages were assigned to the lower status. In legal matters *kholops* counted as subjects, admitted to the oath and heard in the *Kholopij Prikaz*. They were able to successfully oppose being forced into *kholopstvo*.<sup>106</sup> The killing of a *kholop* was considered murder, but a difference was made: in case a *kholop* killed his master he was to be sentenced to

**99** Hellie, *Slavery*: 356–58. Cf. generally: 82–83.

**100** Vladykina et al., eds., *Gosudarstvennost’ Rossii*: vol. 4, 384.

**101** “Dokumenty: Tjazhby po kholop’im delam,” in *Kholopstvo i kholopy v Moskovskom gosudarstve XVII veka*, ed. A. Iakovlev (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk, 1943): 323–27, 401–14, 496–512. For the time before Aleksandr A. Zimin, *Kholopy na Rusi (s drenejshikh vremen do konca XV v.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973).

**102** V. M. Panejakh, *Kholopstvo v pervoj polovine XVII v.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984): 80–86, 124–25; Panejakh, *Kholopstvo v XVI-nachale XVII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975).

**103** *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. XX, 103–17; commentaries 309–53.

**104** *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. XX, § 14.

**105** *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. XX, § 62.

**106** Iakovlev, *Kholopstvo*, 513–62; Hellie, *Slavery*: 540–53.

death “without mercy” – meaning he or she was to be tortured heavily.<sup>107</sup> A *kholop* had “honor” and was entitled to one ruble of compensation in case his honor was offended; a *kholop* woman to two rubles.

Children could be born into unlimited *kholopstvo*.<sup>108</sup> The work of an indentured man-servant was fixed at 5 rubles a year, children of such *kholops* added by their work to repaying the indebted sum (for children above 10 years fixed at 2 rubles a year).<sup>109</sup> In this way the repayment by labor of a fixed debt was regulated. Children could also be given into temporary *kholopstvo* by free parents.<sup>110</sup> As noted above, the etymology of the terms for dependency indicates that youth and labor had been traditionally connected. It was normal for children to work in early modern Europe,<sup>111</sup> and they learned their trades by working alongside their parents.<sup>112</sup> Giving (or even selling) children into service also was not uncommon: for instance in southern Germany children of poor parents, mostly from Austria, were usually procured through markets. The parents expected their children to bring back some cash when they returned.<sup>113</sup> But only in regions with bonded labor (in Germany, these were most regions to the east of the river Elbe)<sup>114</sup> was it possible to be born into bondage; this was also true for some of the *kholops*. Iakovlev found that prices for *kholops* in Novgorod between 1593 and 1609, from children to adults, varied between one and five rubles.<sup>115</sup> Hellie found that prices varied between four rubles for someone who had learned a clerical trade, and two for a beggar.<sup>116</sup> Comparing these prices with the sums they were entitled to receive in case their honor was offended, or the sum of two rubles a year prescribed for the labor of a youngster, it appears that the low price for *kholops* reflected the limitations there were for their uses.

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**107** *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. XXI, § 80. As this chapter shows, the Russian justice system (like the Western ones in this period) depended on torture, but obviously *kholops* were tortured sooner in higher degrees. For the history of torture in Russia see Evgenij Anisimov, *Dyba in knut* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999).

**108** Or even divided between two owners of one married couple Smith, *Enserfment*: no. 48; *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. XX, § 5 regulates, that children born before their parents became *kholops* are free, from which follows, that others are unfree. The commentary on page 312 notes, that this § is a transfer from the *Sudebnik* of 1550.

**109** *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. XX, § 40.

**110** *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, chap. XX, § 45.

**111** Maria Papatthanasies, “Kinderarbeit,” in Jäger, ed., *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*: vol. 9, ll. 553–57.

**112** For children in Russia see B. N. Mironov, *Social'naja istorija Rossii (XVIII–nachalo XX v.)*, 2 vols. (Sankt Peterburg: Dmitrij Bulanin, 1999): vol. 1, 233.

**113** Roman Spiss, “Tiroler und Vorarlberger ‘Schwabenkinder’ in Württemberg, Baden und Bayern von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg,” in *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa*, ed. Klaus J. Bade et al. (Paderborn: Schöningh & Fink, 2007): 1036–39.

**114** Comparative overview Christoph Schmidt, *Leibeigenschaft im Ostseeraum* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997).

**115** Iakovlev, *Kholopstvo*: 60–65.

**116** Hellie, *Slavery*: 366.

In my opinion, the term “slaves” is misleading for research on *kholops*.<sup>117</sup> However, my suggestion to translate it as “indentured servants” does not quite fit the perhaps 15% (around 1600 persons) born into *kholopstvo*, although this percentage was decreasing. A historian of Russia, used to making terminological differences between research publications and those aimed at a wider public, may accept the use in a global history of slaveries,<sup>118</sup> but the difference should be noted.

The most obvious desideratum is research on the non-orthodox and non-Russian part of the servant population,<sup>119</sup> starting maybe with searching the archive for the lists of prisoners of different kinds.<sup>120</sup> This research requires historians trained in the history of Islam and especially the Tatar khanates and settlements between the rivers Wisla and Yenissey.<sup>121</sup>

## 2.7 Future Directions for the Russian Empire

When the tsardom was transformed into an empire, the status of *kholop* was abolished.<sup>122</sup> In 1704, the *Kholopij prikaz* was closed.<sup>123</sup> In 1713 it was decreed that both peasants and *kholops* had to pay the same amount of poll tax, and to supply recruits.<sup>124</sup> The status of *kholop* was abolished in 1723. Now all servants of the nobility within the towns<sup>125</sup> and on the estates had the status of peasants (*krest'jane*).<sup>126</sup> Between 1676 and 1762, the percentage of those with the status of *peasant* in the population of Russia increased from 80% to 91%, while the percentage of townspeople

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**117** For the immanent terminologies see Gleb Kazakov, “Semantics of Slavery in Early Modern Russia,” Paper presented at the workshop “Slavery, Captivity and Further Forms of Asymmetrical Dependencies in Early Modern Russia,” hosted by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), September 26–27, 2019.

**118** Zeuske, *Handbuch*: 930.

**119** Advanced, I hope, by Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “POWs, Slaves and Kholops: Non-Orthodox and Non-Russian servants in Early-Modern Russia,” unpublished manuscript from 2020.

**120** Noted in Vladykina et al., eds., *Gosudarstvennost' Rossii*: vol. 4, 384.

**121** Map in Nolte, *Geschichte Russlands*: 415.

**122** Hellie, *Slavery*: 695 – 710.

**123** Vladykina et al., eds., *Gosudarstvennost' Rossii*: vol. 4, 384–85; Erik Amburger, *Geschichte der Behördenorganisation Russlands von Peter dem Grossen bis 1917* (Leiden: Brill, 1966): 3 (it was united with the *Vladimirskij prikaz*); 117 (in 1704: the *Prikaz cholopëgo suda* with the *sudnyj prikaz*).

**124** Repeated inter alia 1722: Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: 107–8.

**125** Friedrich Christian Weber, *The Present State of Russia*, 2 vols. (London: W. Taylor, 1722; London: Frank Cass 1968): vol. 1, 191–92: “The Country People, who are in the same Manner [as the noble families] hurried away from their own Habitations, and forced to settle at Petersbourg.”

**126** *Gorodskoe soslovie* in statistics does not count all inhabitants of towns, but those of the status “townspeople.” For their social stratification 1724 see Mironov, *Socialnaja istorija*: 116.

decreased.<sup>127</sup> That percentage corresponds, albeit roughly, to the percentage Hellie gives for *kholops* in pre-Petrine society.<sup>128</sup> The word *khlop* became part of a formula in correspondence<sup>129</sup> (similar to “your obedient servant” in English).

The economic interest of the masters in *kholops* was that, as long as taxes were paid by farmstead or per head, while individual *kholops* were untaxed, they had tax-free labor within their households. Looking at the end of *khlopstvo* from the point of view of the masters, they lost a privilege between 1704 and 1723. But since it had been legal to sell full *kholops*, many owners went on selling these “peasants” after 1723, creating one of the loopholes for selling peasants without land on markets. And in any case the sale of peasants still happened without official interventions in cases of bankruptcy of a noblemen.<sup>130</sup>

Officially, after 1723 all people living in rural areas (except the nobility and clergy) were peasants, and many town dwellers – servants of the nobility – also belonged to this status. New terms<sup>131</sup> became common for servants<sup>132</sup> living in someone else’s household (*dvor*). Quite often they were called *dvorovye*.<sup>133</sup> Also the practice of sentencing insolvent debtors to forced labor for creditors until the debt was repaid *za zhiv* (in real life) continued until 1834. Socially proximate persons were “workmen,” mostly captured runaway peasants who were controlled by the police and sometimes hired out to private enterprises. In 1799, they were included into the lowest category of townspeople (*meshchane*).

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**127** Mironov, *Social'naja Istorija*: 129–30: The absolute numbers of townspeople increased also, but not as fast as the population of the Empire.

**128** Mironov, *Social'naja Istorija* has no catchword *Khlopstvo* in the index for the two volumes.

**129** Elena I. Marasina, *Vlast' i lichnost': Ocherki russkoj istorii XVIII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 2008): 254–63.

**130** Compare Radishhev, excerpts in Nolte, Schalhorn, and Bonwetsch, *Quellen zur Geschichte Russlands*: 143–45.

**131** In the religious history of the empire we observe a centrally planned change of terms, see Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “‘Newly enlightened’: A Case of Intellectual Engineering,” *Canadian American Slavic Studies* 38, no. 1–2 (2004): 33–60. Whether comparable procedure for social history is found in the sources remains to be researched.

**132** Pavel G. Ryndzjanskij, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo doreformennoj Rossii (The status of town-citizens in pre-reform Russia)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, 1958): 48–50.

**133** Examples for *dvorovye* not living in households of the nobility S. S. Ilizarova, ed., *Akademik G.F. Miller – pervyj issledovatel' Moskvy i moskovskoj provincii* (Moscow: Janus, 1996): 83: *napisannykh po revizii za kanceljarskimi sluzhiteljami dvorovykh ljudej* (“people living in households written to staff of the chancellery in the revision”) or 109: *Rospis' [ . . . ] za raznymi chinami pri domakh dvorovykh ljudej* (“list [ . . . ] of people living in households with different ranks”).



### 3 Some Conclusions

During the period in which the history of Russia was governed from Moscow, the terms for dependent people (*ljudi* of different kinds) were systematized. While in the fifteenth century there were many kinds of *ljudi* and *kholops*, ranging in social status from a *tiun* to an inherited man similar to a slave, in the sixteenth century the Moscow government organized a separate *Prikaz* for the *kholops*, and in the seventeenth century the usage of the term was standardized in the *Ulozhenie*. The government of Peter I ended the status of *kholops* in 1723 and made them peasants (*krest'jane*). From the history of the semantic fields we may conclude that it was characteristic for the Muscovy tsardom to use the quite differentiated term *kholop*, and characteristic for the Petersburg empire to use the very comprehensive and quite broad term *krest'janin*.

By losing the rights to change their lords (conclusively in 1649) and to appeal (1767), but perhaps most of all by being forced to supply recruits to the military (1722), all peasants were diminished in status, income and family life.<sup>134</sup> The nobility in Muscovy had two kinds of landed property: inherited allodia and fiefs that were bestowed, but they had to provide service from both. In the eighteenth century the nobility won its freedom from the obligation to serve and full possession of their estates. Allodia and fiefs were equated as property (*imenie*).

The empire secured the position of the nobility and increased the burden on the peasants – to man and finance army and navy, the administration and imperial building programs. Society was rearranged. Old differences were reduced and legal statuses were created that encompassed larger groups. The government also used, as previously mentioned, new terms for its social engineering. The long-term effects of these politics were polarizing. The transition to empire was a long process. To describe it in current geographic terms: it started with the conquest of Tatarstan in 1552 and the Eurasian trading center of Astrakhan in 1556, and was extended by the conquest of Siberia within the following century. It was seriously challenged by the Swedish occupation of the Baltic coast and the Polish occupation of Moscow 1610–1612. But empire-building gained new momentum with the Russian conquest of the eastern parts of Belorussia and Ukraine in 1667, and was completed by the conquest of Estonia and northern Latvia and the new title of “emperor” in 1721. Was there an alternative in the face of the military capacities of other members of the concert of powers (the Ottoman Empire up to 1683; Sweden up to 1709, Poland/Saxony up to 1706, Austria, later Prussia, then Napoleon . . .), similarly bent on expansion? Not to forget the Manchu, who advanced via the old Silk Road?<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Soldiers lost their positions in their villages, served for 25 years and did not earn enough to allow them to marry.

<sup>135</sup> Nolte, *Kurze Geschichte der Imperien*: 223–77.

The transition was accompanied by a constant systematization and degradation of dependent people. In numerous uprisings, even wars, which originated in the peripheries and were led mostly by Cossacks, the rebels attempted to end the power of nobility and bureaucracy. They were never able to conquer the center, but slowed down the extension of first Moscow's and then St. Petersburg's power.<sup>136</sup> And yet, despite of the defeats of the rebels in these wars from the periphery, some limits to imperial social engineering remained: the chance to run away was a normal option for servants of all standings, including peasants. Of course this option for dependent people must have influenced the behavior of their masters.

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<sup>136</sup> Hans-Heinrich Nolte, "Russkie 'krestjanskije vojny' kak vosstanija okrain," *Voprosy Istorii* 1994, no. 11: 31–38.

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