

THE POMEST'Ē SYSTEM OF 16th-CENTURY FROM
THE PERSPECTIVE OF A MILITARY SERVICE FAMILY

Studies of the pomest'ē system, one of the defining institutions of 16th-century Muscovy, have generated scholarly debates about its features and functions. This essay shifts the focus to the experiences of military serving men who depended upon that system. It examines the petitions of two brothers who requested pomest'ia in the mid-16th century. Their petitions contain details about their roles as military servicemen, the contingent nature of pomest'ē land tenure, the operations of the pomest'ē system, and spheres of responsibility of servicemen and government officials. They are insufficient by themselves to draw general conclusions about the pomest'ē system, pomeshchiki, and their families. But they do inform the scholarly debates on these issues and demonstrate that a complete picture of the system and its operations cannot be drawn without taking into account the perspective of individuals who participated in it.

Keywords: Land tenure, military serving men, Muscovy, petitions, pomest'ē system

After Ivan III annexed Novgorod, he transferred military serving men from other regions of his realm and settled them on *pomest'ia*, landed estates carved out of properties confiscated from Novgorodian boyars, the Archbishopric, and monasteries. By the middle of the sixteenth century a pomest'ē system had developed not only for Novgorod, but throughout Muscovy. This system provided fundamental economic support to cavalymen who formed the core of an army that defended and extended the Muscovite realm in the service of the crown. Management of the system necessitated the development of Muscovy's central and provincial administrative apparatus. By thus contributing to its territorial expansion and the centralization of authority, the pomest'ē system was one of the defining institutions of 16th-century Muscovy.

Scholars have produced numerous studies of the pomest'ē system. Their analyses of land registers, charters, and decrees have generated not only overviews of the system and its functions, but also contentious debates about its features, e.g., when and how serving men acquired pomest'ia, the relationship between military service and possession of pomest'ia, and the nature of pomest'ē land tenure¹. Less attention has been devoted to the *pomeshchiki* themselves. Yet, underlying the pomest'ē system and the studies of it, there were thousands of pomeshchiki, individuals who served, mainly in the army, managed their pomest'ia as agricultural estates, and interacted with government officials.

This essay examines two petitions, submitted by the brothers, Mikhalets (Mikhalko) and Muratets, sons of the pomeshchik Dmitrii Rezanov². The petitions, which are requests for pomest'ia, tell the story of one service family and the challenges its members faced in the mid-1550s as they negotiated the pomest'ē system seeking solutions to their problems. The personal experiences related in the petitions are anecdotal, and do not provide a basis for generalizations about the situations and aspirations of all pomeshchiki. The petitions, nonetheless, offer a glimpse of the servicemen's understanding and expectations of the pomest'ē system. By viewing its operations from the perspective of its participants rather than from the hindsight of historians, they make it possible, moreover, to test the accuracy of scholarly conclusions about the system.

The first of the two petitions was submitted by Mikhalets Rezanov, an active military serviceman who had returned from Kazan'. Mikhalets had no pomest'ē of his own, nor did he have a share in his father's pomest'ē, which consisted of 20.25 *obezh*. But Dmitrii had been transferred to the *reshetochnyi prikaz* in Novgorod, leaving Mikhalets, he implied, with no means of support. The transfer similarly affected Mikhalets' younger brothers Ignatko, who was also serving in the military, Ovdokimko, who was just entering service, and three others who were not yet of serving age. Mikhalets requested a pomest'ē, unattached to his father's lands, so he could continue his military service.

In January 1556 the *d'iak* Vasil'ii Stepanov sent his decision to officials in Novgorod. He ordered them to verify Mikhalets' claims and, if confirmed, to issue him a pomest'ē, consisting of 8 *ob.* from unassigned (*porozhnye*) pomest'ia before the next military review. He also instructed the local officials to transfer Dmitrii's pomest'ē to Ignatko and Ovdokimko, who were to serve from it immediately.

The second petition was submitted by Muratets on behalf of Mikhalets and himself. In his version Muratets stated that he and his brother had been jointly awarded a pomest'ē for their service at Kazan'; it was to have consisted of 18 *ob.*, 10 for himself and 8 for Mikhalets, unattached to their father's estate. But, he reported, that order had not been carried out. Consequently, Muratets requested 18 *ob.* from the pomest'ē of Levont'ii, son of Ignat'ii Skrypitsyn. According to Muratets, Levont'ii had died, had not been married, and was survived by his mother Domnitsa and sister Okulina. His estate, containing 26.5 *ob.*, had escheated to the tsar. On February 26, 1556, the *d'iak* Stepanov granted Muratets' request. He also granted 9 *ob.* of the pomest'ē as a *prozhitok* to Skrypitsyn's mother (5 *ob.*) and sister (4 *ob.*)³.

The two petitions are requests for pomest'ia. The details they contain about the petitioners' military experience, their family, and their father's pomest'ē, however, reveal their problems and concerns, their understanding of their responsibilities, and their expectations of the officials managing the pomest'ē system. They also inform the issues debated by scholars.

¹ For discussions of scholarly contributions and debates, see: [Martin, 2010, p. 231–234; Martin, 2012b, p. 461–464; Ostrowski, p. 36–39].

² *Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim, sobrannia i izdannia Arkheograficheskoiu kommissieiu* (hereafter – DAI). St. Petersburg, 1846. Vol. 1. № 52.31, 52.35. P. 111–112, 114–115.

³ Skrypitsyn's pomest'ē (26.5 *ob.*) was not quite large enough to yield 18 *ob.* for the Rezanovs and 9 *ob.* for his relatives.

Muratets and Mikhalets identified themselves as military servicemen. Mikhalets, emphasizing that role, pointed out that he had been in the army for four years and had recently returned from Kazan'. He indicated he wanted a pomest'e so that he could continue to carry out his duties. A statement from the *voevoda* Prince Andrei Mikhailovich Kurbskii attesting to Mikhalets' service performance was included in the memorandum sent by Vasil'ii Stepanov to the Novgorodian officials. For Mikhalets as well as his brother Muratets, who also noted his service at Kazan', their participation in military campaigns justified their requests for pomest'ia, which they regarded as rightful compensation for the services they had rendered and necessary for the continuation of their military careers. Although they had not acquired pomest'ia when they entered the army⁴, their military records, the Rezanovs implied, made them eligible to possess them.

Dmitrii Rezanov's experience also sheds light on the relationship between performing service and possession of a pomest'e. Dmitrii's release from military duty resulted in the loss of his estate⁵. Release from military service was not unusual. Despite a common assertion in scholarly literature that military service in Muscovy was for life [Hellie, 1971, p. 28; Keep, p. 40; Veselovskii, p. 306–307], the ill, the elderly, and severely wounded were frequently relieved of their duties. Many were placed in the care of sons or other family members, who often took over their pomest'ia and service responsibilities⁶. A few were allowed to keep their pomest'ia⁷, while others were granted *prozhitki*⁸. But some, as Dmitrii Rezanov, were assigned to different jurisdictions, such as the *reshetochnyi prikaz* or *gorodovoi prikaz*⁹. In the experience of the Rezanov family, possession of a pomest'e was not permanent or secure; it was contingent upon ongoing military service.

When Mikhalets and Muratets began their military service at least four years earlier, the income from their father's pomest'e had supported them. But by the time they returned from Kazan' or shortly thereafter, their father had been transferred out of the jurisdiction of the pomest'e system and had lost his pomest'e. Deprived of that source of support, the brothers urgently needed to acquire a substitute and sent their petitions to the tsar requesting pomest'ia. Their actions reflect their understanding that it was the tsar through his officials who controlled pomest'e land and its distribution. They reveal, in addition, that the brothers' expected those officials, once informed of their difficulties, to provide a remedy.

The petitions also provide insight into the Rezanov brothers' understanding of the nature of pomest'e land tenure. In contrast to the scholarly proposition that pomest'ia were virtually heritable property and that sons regularly gained possession of their fathers' pomest'ia¹⁰, neither Mikhalets nor Muratets expected or wanted to "inherit" his father's estate. They preferred pomest'ia unattached to their father's lands.

Their choice may have been linked to their roles as servicemen. Mikhalets' claim that a pomest'e was necessary to fulfill military service duties appears frequently in petitions. It is so common that it seems to be a formulaic expression designed to elicit a favorable response. It nonetheless reflected the reality that through the first half of the 16th century the amount of pomest'e land made available to pomeshchiki had not kept pace with the increase in the number of adult *deti boiarskie* dwelling and dependent on it [Abramovich, p. 194; Shapiro, p. 147–148, 196]. Despite government increases in the amount of land devoted to pomest'ia¹¹ and supplements to individual estates, especially in 1538/39¹², the estates of some pomeshchiki in the mid-1550s still did not contain the 10 ob. of productive land considered necessary for a serviceman to equip himself with the weapons, armor, horses, and supplies required for campaign duty¹³. Iakov Suslov and his three sons, for example, never received the additional land they were accorded in 1538/39 and had only 11 ob. (3.67 ob./man) to support themselves and their military service¹⁴. The Elagin family fared better, but still had substandard allotments. Although four brothers, who shared a pomest'e of 20 ob., were granted a supplement of 26 ob. in 1538/39, they received just two, yielding 5.5 ob./man. That figure increased after one brother died, but only to 7.33 ob./man¹⁵.

Mikhalets, who detailed the sizes of his father's pomest'e and of his family in his petition, was undoubtedly aware that the pomest'e, consisting of 20.25 ob., could support no more than two fully equipped serving men. But Dmitrii had seven sons, three of whom (Mikhalko, Muratets, and Ignatko) had begun their military service; a fourth (Ovdokimko) was about to enter service. His pomest'e had not been proportionately enlarged to accommodate the entire family and their service expenses. Mikhalets and, presumably, Muratets, accordingly, did not seek control of their father's pomest'e, but asked for their own, detached estates. From their point of view military service was a more salient issue than heritability. Acquiring

⁴ On allocating land when young men were enrolled in the military, see: [Veselovskii, p. 306–307].

⁵ On losing pomest'ia for not performing service, see: [Hellie, 2004, p. 43]; *Samokvasov D. Ia.* Arkhivnyi material: novootkrytye dokumenty pomestno-votchinnnykh uchrezhdenii Moskovskogo tsarstva. Moscow, 1905. Vol. 1. Pt. 1. P. 147.

⁶ DAI. № 47.1, 47.3, 52.39. P. 65–66, 117–118; Novgorodskii pistsovyia knigi (hereafter – NPK). 6 vols. St. Petersburg, 1859–1910. Vol. 4. P. 577, 578; Vol. 6. P. 685; Pistsovyie knigi Novgorodskoi zemli (hereafter – PKNZ). 6 vols. Moscow, 1999–2009. Vol. 5. P. 150–151, 167, 176; *Samokvasov D. Ia.* Arkhivnyi material. Vol. 1. Pt. 2. P. 17, 28–29.

⁷ NPK. Vol. 6. P. 588–589; DAI. № 52.33. P. 113; *Samokvasov D. Ia.* Arkhivnyi material. Vol. 1. Pt. 1. P. 148.

⁸ E.g., NPK. Vol. 6. P. 951, 993; *Samokvasov D. Ia.* Arkhivnyi material. Vol. 1. Pt. 2. P. 8, 28, 113, 178; Moscow, 1909. Vol. 2. Pt. 2. P. 212–213. See also: [Veselovskii, p. 307].

⁹ DAI. № 52.27, 52.33. P. 108–109, 113.

¹⁰ On supporters of this proposition, see: [Martin, 2010, p. 233–234].

¹¹ E.g., NPK. Vol. 4. P. 278–280; see also: [Abramovich, p. 194–195; Shapiro, p. 84, 119, 148–149].

¹² E.g., DAI. № 52.16, 52.17, 52.18, 52.20. P. 99–104.

¹³ PSRL. St. Petersburg, 1904; Moscow, 2000. Vol. 13. P. 268–269; on norm in 1539, see: [Abramovich, p. 196]. On military equipment and its costs, see: [Hellie, 1971, p. 30–31, 38; Martin, 2012a, p. 24–26].

¹⁴ DAI. № 52.16. P. 99–100.

¹⁵ DAI. № 52.18. P. 101–102.

a pomest'e that would generate income to meet their service expenses was paramount; they were not preoccupied with the issue of inheritance.

Neither Mikhalets nor Muratets expressed any concern for their younger brothers. Ignatko and Ovdokimko, who were just beginning their military careers, nonetheless acquired their father's pomest'e. Although the transfer resembled an inheritance, it was the d'iak Stepanov who made the decision to issue the pomest'e to them. The basis for his decision is not provided. It could have been to comply with a practice of keeping pomest'ia within families. It could have been to ensure that the youths would have the resources to begin their service immediately, as ordered. It may also have been to follow the principles underlying a decree specifying that the pomest'ia of men transferred to the gorodovoi prikaz were to be distributed to their sons¹⁶. In any case Stepanov's orders, although prompted by the petitions, extended more broadly than the relatively narrow and self-interested requests of the petitioners.

Stepanov's response appeared to have resolved the issue for Mikhalets, Ignatko, and Ovdokimko. But before Mikhalets received his pomest'e, Muratets submitted his petition. He informed the tsar that his previous order had not been carried out. He offered no explanation, but, as the experiences of the Suslov and Elagin families illustrate, delays or failures to carry out orders from Moscow were not unknown¹⁷.

Muratets, unwilling to wait and having become aware that Levont'ii Skrypitsyn had died, petitioned for 18 ob. from Skrypitsyn's pomest'e to satisfy the previously made allocations to himself and his brother. Requests for a specific estate were not unusual, prompting scholars to assert that it was the responsibility of deti boiarskie to find their own land [Hellie, 1971, p. 37]. Muratets' statement suggests, however, he had taken the initiative to locate suitable land in order to hasten a resolution, satisfactory to officials as well as to his brother and himself, of his dilemma. Officials not only accepted his proposal, but again responded more expansively by also providing for Skrypitsyn's mother and sister.

The petitions and responses to them do not tell the full story of the Rezanov family. They do not reveal precisely why Dmitrii Rezanov's status changed. Nor do they indicate whether the response to Muratets' petition concluded this chapter in their lives¹⁸. They do, however, present an image of the pomest'e system, as it was seen by some of those intimately involved in it, and offer insight into issues that have become topics of scholarly debate.

The Rezanov brothers viewed pomest'ia and possession of them from the perspective of men in military service. They implied they deserved pomest'ia because they had served and stated they needed pomest'ia in order to continue their service. But the system did not automatically issue estates to them and they had relied on their father's pomest'e until Dmitrii, released from military duty, lost his pomest'e. The change in their father's status confirmed for Muratets and Mikhalko that possession of a pomest'e was conditional and that their own situations were precarious. Although they had lived and depended on their father's pomest'e, they did not regard it as their property. They recognized the tsar and his officials as the controllers of pomest'ia, and they turned to them to make new arrangements that would enable them to meet their military obligations. They requested pomest'ia detached from their father's estate. Their requests were specifically for themselves; they did not concern themselves with other family members or with the future disposition of their father's pomest'e.

The exchange between the Rezanovs and the officials in Moscow also sheds light on the operations of the pomest'e system. The response to the Rezanov petitions provided the requested assistance. But the officials who managed the system had been reactive, not proactive. They had not issued pomest'ia to Mikhalets and Muratets when they began their military service nor had they increased the size of Dmitrii's pomest'e at that time. They had not issued pomest'ia to the Rezanov brothers when the change in father's status resulted in their loss of resources to support their service. They took action only after receiving the petitions. Similarly, having issued their initial orders to local officials to issue land from unassigned pomest'ia to the Rezanovs, they did not monitor the results, but let the matter rest until they received new information that their orders had not been carried out. By limiting themselves to responsive action, officials in Moscow effectively made the petitioning servicemen responsible for supplying information about their problems, about progress made in resolving them, and even about potential solutions to those problems, including identifying lands that had become available for redistribution. But, once alerted to the circumstances not only of the petitioners, but of their family members, d'iaki broadened the scope of their responses beyond the narrow requests made by the petitioners and made provisions for the welfare of them all.

The examined petitions relate the experiences of two serving men in a single family in the mid-16th century. They contain details about their roles as military servicemen, the contingent nature of pomest'e land tenure, the operations of the pomest'e system, and spheres of responsibility of servicemen and government officials. They are insufficient by themselves to draw general conclusions about the pomest'e system, pomeshchiki, and their families. But they do inform the scholarly debates on these issues and demonstrate that a complete picture of the system and its operations cannot be drawn without taking into account the perspective of individuals who participated in it.

¹⁶ DAI. № 52.27. P. 108–109. See also: DAI. № 52.33. P. 113; [Storozhev, p. 21–22, 139]. For another narrowly focused decree, see: AAE. St. Petersburg, 1836. Vol. 1. № 225. P. 216–217. For regulations on transferring pomest'ia to relatives in the 17th century, see: [Hellie, 1971, p. 57; Ostrowski, p. 39–40].

¹⁷ For other examples, see: DAI. № 52.15. P. 98–99; *Samokvasov D. Ia.* Arkhivnyi material. Vol. 1. Pt. 2. P. 112–117.

¹⁸ There are no records of the Rezanov brothers in published pistsovye knigi from later years, but there are hints of a connection between the Rezanov and Skrypitsyn families (see: PKNZ. Vol. 2. P. 132–135, 137).

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СИСТЕМА ПРЕДОСТАВЛЕНИЯ ПОМЕСТИЙ РАТНЫМ СЛУЖИЛЫМ ЛЮДЯМ
В МОСКОВСКОМ ГОСУДАРСТВЕ В XVI в.

Исследования поместной системы — одного из ключевых институтов Московского государства XVI в. — породили научные дискуссии о его признаках и функциях. В данном очерке центр внимания переносится на житейские практики ратных служилых людей, зависевших от упомянутой системы. В нем рассматриваются челобитные двух братьев, которые в середине XVI в. испрашивали себе поместья. В этих челобитных содержатся подробности об их обязанностях в качестве ратных служилых людей, условной природе поместного землевладения, функционировании поместной системы и сферах ответственности служилых людей и чиновников. Сами по себе эти подробности недостаточны для общих выводов о поместной системе, помещиках и их семьях. Однако они вводят соответствующие сюжеты в научный оборот и свидетельствуют, что целостная картина изучаемой системы и ее функционирования не может быть получена без учета восприятия тех лиц, которые ее формировали.

Ключевые слова: землевладение, ратные служилые люди, Московское государство, челобитные, поместная система

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ПОСОЛЬСТВО «ВОСТОЧНОГО ЦАРЯ» К АЛЕКСАНДРУ НЕВСКОМУ

В статье определяется инициатор отправки посольства к Александру Невскому. Сравнение различных источников показало наибольшую вероятность прибытия посольства из столицы Монгольской империи.

Ключевые слова: Александр Невский, послы, Батый, Гуюк, Туракина

В тексте первой редакции Жития Александра Невского содержится указание на прибытие к Александру Ярославичу посольства от восточного правителя: «В то же время бѣ некто царь силенъ на Вѣсточнѣй странѣ, ему же бѣ богъ покоришь языки многы, от вѣстока даже и до запада. Тѣй же царь, слышавъ Олександра тако славна и храбра, посла к нему послы и рече: “Олександре, вѣси ли, яко богъ покори ми многыя языки. Ты ли единъ не хощеши покоритися силе моеи? Но аще хощеши съблюсти землю свою, то скоро прииди къ мнѣ, и да узриши честь царства моего”».

Князь же Олександро прииде во Володимеръ по умертвии отца своего, в силѣ велицѣ. И бысть грозень приездъ его, и промчеша вѣсть его и до устья Волгы. И начаша жены моавитьскыя полошати дѣти своя, ркуще: “Олександро князь ѣдет!”

Съдумав же князь Олександръ, и благослови его епископъ Кирилъ, и пойде к цареви, въ Орду. И видѣвъ его царь Батый, и подивися, и рече велможамъ своим: “Воистину ми скажете, яко нѣсть подобна сему князя”. Почтивъ же и честно, отпусти и»¹.

Исследователи не занимались вопросом установления личности «восточного царя». Только в некоторых работах, упоминающих Житие Александра Невского, встречается предположение, что «восточным царем» являлся

¹ Реконструкция первоначального текста Жития Александра Невского // Бегунов Ю. К. Памятник русской литературы XIII века «Слово о погибели Русской земли». М.; Л., 1965. С. 192.

