

## 1 Unfree Labour in Russian History

---

Various forms of human bondage, ill-treatment and debasement have prevailed for millennia, whether legal, illegal or ‘part-legal’, whether in pre-capitalist economic formations or under capitalism, state socialism or military dictatorship and whether in shadow or black economies. Forced labour can be integral to imperialism, war and pillage and can be perpetuated by the state in its use of captives and prisoners. In today’s world, illegal patterns of unfree labour may also occur in some states with the collusion of law enforcement organs which should be there to protect citizens and ensure national security. Pictures can be complex and vary according to century, region, country, location, political structures, economic system, type of society, population density, labour scarcity and local issues. Unfree labour and forms of labour exploitation can thus be situated in a variety of political and socio-economic contexts and settings.

What the literature describes as ‘slavery’ has a global history. Although publications in the West have focussed disproportionately on ancient Greece, the Roman empire and the southern USA, unfree labour has not been restricted to these examples.<sup>1</sup> William D. Phillips has underscored that slavery has ‘appeared in nearly every part of the world’, has been traced back to ‘the earliest civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt’ and has also been found in ‘more recent societies at various levels of development’.<sup>2</sup> There is general agreement that slavery existed in medieval Europe, in Scandinavia, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Asia,

<sup>1</sup> David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015); Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformation of Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society in Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974); Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage, 1967); and William Lee Miller, *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> William D. Phillips, Jr., *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 3.

China and Russia, in both rural and urban settings.<sup>3</sup> Slavery has also been evident in Christian and Muslim societies. Slavery can take root in various contexts with different dimensions but which share a common core of ‘un-freedom’ or ‘non-freedom’. Likewise, situations that technically by definition are not ‘slavery’ but which involve maltreatment, debasement and abuse of dignity across a spectrum may occur too, but fall short of full confinement.

Given that the main focus of this book is on the contemporary Russian Federation, why include one chapter that presents different forms of unfree labour patterns earlier? The purpose is to illustrate how varied in Russian history categories of unfree labour have been. This is because a key task of social science is to generate classifications and typologies and to discuss norms, patterns and values. Historians have been known to rebuke social and political scientists for their a-historicity, for not taking more nuanced approaches to unfree labour and for being unaware of its past complexities. This overview introduces different categories of unfreedom from the Russian past to illustrate its various forms and contours and to show how deep the roots of unfreedom went. The objective is to sketch a wider introductory portrait of Russia given its past and the scale of unfreedom endured. As such, it sets out to highlight the tapestry of coerced labour over time.

This book does not contend, however, that there was an inevitable linear development from slavery and serfdom to unfree labour today, or that forced labour for Russia is ‘a way of life’ best explained by the existence of a servile culture of subordinates. Neither slavery nor serfdom was a necessary prerequisite for the development of current forms of labour exploitation or for the growth of modern forms of slavery as some scholars would define them. Rather, they were prior categories of unfreedom in a land from which many Russians have since travelled to other lands and found themselves restricted, confined or even enslaved there. They are also antecedents of patterns of exploitation in which both Russians and non-Russians might find themselves on Russian territory, but not their direct causes. Just because Russians ‘enslaved’ their own in the past, it does not automatically follow that this is a determining independent variable making it inevitable in the present. This book does not

<sup>3</sup> Léonie J. Archer, ed., *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour* (London: Routledge, 1988); Robert Edgar Conrad, *World of Sorrow: The African Slave Trade to Brazil* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Anthony Reid, ed., *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in South East Asia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983); Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (London: Profile Books, 2009).

suggest such grand causality, especially given the global nature of forms of unfree labour and labour exploitation. At most, it acknowledges that Russia and many other countries have endured forced labour in the past too, often harsh.

Russian history, however, has certain distinguishing features. Richard Hellie has underscored that slavery was one of its oldest social institutions and that the number of laws about it was ‘staggering’. Russia, moreover, was the only country ever to have had a government department ‘devoted solely to the issue’.<sup>4</sup> The state and its laws defined different categories of unfreedom. In all centuries, unfreedom in some shape was one of Russian society’s norms, whether in slavery or later serfdom, or in forced labour during penal servitude in *katorga*, or in the forced labour of the Soviet Gulag. Carceral forms of labour, however, are analytically quite distinct from Hellie’s eight categories of slavery. Hard labour performed by prisoners is not unique to Russia and is found in other penal systems and during wartime when demanded of POWs. The ways in which prison labour is organised and treated may, however, vary across the political systems in which it is located and depend upon how those in charge in specific locations treat their prisoners. The forced collectivisation of agriculture in the 1930s can also be construed as a form of unfreedom for those who did not want it.

This chapter looks briefly at the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of these different categories and unpacks their characteristics, relationships and mechanisms of subordination. It contends that the geographic vastness of the Russian landmass in certain historical contexts has lent itself to the use of unfree labour. Periods in which there were keen attempts to produce more, whether in agriculture or in industry, to develop the economy and to ‘modernise’, as leaders variously understood that term, have been conducive to the utilisation of unfree labour. This was particularly the case in the drive to push frontiers further and to colonise more land, especially in areas of low population density. Similarly, the need to build an army and a fleet, develop transport links and form distribution networks created demands for labour. A common factor is labour shortage at a time of increased demand for it. In all centuries, it is pertinent to ask what factors and mechanisms facilitate, encourage and perpetuate unfree labour. Another question pertaining to Russia is whether cultural attitudes towards ‘the individual’ in society played a part.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Hellie, ‘The peasantry’, in Maureen Perrie, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia: From Early Rus’ to 1689*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 286–297.

### Distinguishing Features

A case can be made that the history of unfreedom in Russia is distinctive in key ways. Firstly, eight different categories of ‘slave’ have been identified, rendering the picture complex and variegated. Secondly, among these categories, and rare in slave systems, was the possibility of ‘self-sale’ into ‘voluntary’ slavery for protection and avoidance of tax. Thirdly, distinct from the Western tradition, upper classes could find themselves in a form of unfreedom through the system of *pomest’ie*, or conditional service landholding. Under this, in the words of Tibor Szamuely, the aristocracy was ‘not merely subdued or tamed’ but was without privileges or a full right to land ownership and ‘left unreservedly at the mercy of the state that had placed it in bondage’. The introduction of the *pomest’ie* system meant a ‘degradation’ of these once ‘free serving-men’ into the ‘Sovereign’s slaves’ and compulsory military service for the *pomeshchiki*, or landholders, was unavoidable up to 1762 when it was no longer obligatory. In holding land ‘by grace’, the nobleman was ‘tied to the state by bonds of compulsion’.<sup>5</sup> This, however, involved a very different kind of bond from the labour extracted from slaves and serfs or from the harsh demands of *katorga* and forced labour in the Gulag’s notorious camps of Kolyma, Vorkuta, Noril’sk and Karaganda, where a sentence often meant death.

Landholding was not about full private ownership at all. In Geroid T. Robinson’s terms, the noble landlord was simultaneously ‘an hereditary State-servant’ and ‘an hereditary serf-master’.<sup>6</sup> With these lands came the peasants on whom they were thereby enserfed. Thus, fourthly, over the years, a system of serfdom emerged as part of a process ‘in the making’ due to an ‘expanding system of overlordships’, what Robinson characterises as ‘a progressive encroachment upon the economic and personal status of the peasant’ and a ‘triumph of the servile system’. Even though the tsars were increasing their power over the landlords, the grip of the latter over the peasants was ‘even more conspicuous’.<sup>7</sup> As time passed, according to Peter Kolchin, divisions and differentiations amongst peasants ‘became meaningless and gradually evaporated’ as ‘slaves slowly merged with serfs’.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, as highlighted by Jerome Blum, the one explicit restriction imposed by tsars on the power of landlords over serfs

<sup>5</sup> Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition*, pp. 52–53. Military service was long. In 1793, it was reduced from life to twenty-five years and subsequently in 1834 to twenty years with five in reserve, down in 1855 to twelve years with three in reserve.

<sup>6</sup> Geroid T. Robinson, *Rural Russia Under the Old Regime: A History of the Landlord–Peasant World and a Prologue to the Peasant Revolution of 1917* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *Rural Russia*, pp. 12–25.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 37.

was that the peasants ‘must not suffer ruin’. In short, depending upon the behaviour of the *pomeshchik* and the way in which his or her steward treated serfs in the owner’s long absences, as well as the nature of the obligations demanded from serfs, the lives of serfs in Blum’s assessment ‘varied widely’. Nonetheless, they shared an unfreedom which increased in magnitude over time, but which fell harder on some types of obligations than others.<sup>9</sup> Other factors that affected the *pomeshchik*’s behaviour and the serf’s response included population density on the land, whether the harvest was good or bad, if there was famine, the wider economic situation and if it was a time of peasant rebellion.<sup>10</sup>

A different category of unfreedom is that of convict labour and of forced labour in exile. Peter the Great introduced *katorga* to facilitate his reforms. He used convict labour to build the new city of St Petersburg and the port of Rogervik on the Baltic coast. Alan Wood has observed that it was ‘the collective muscle-power of conscript or convict oarsmen’ that propelled the wooden galleys of Peter’s new Russian navy.<sup>11</sup> War was a driver, and industrialisation and ‘modernisation’ depended upon the labour of prisoners or what Andrew Gentes dubs the ‘malleable workforce’ which could accomplish feats due to its vast numbers at a time when technology was lacking. After Peter, the locus of *katorga* shifted to Siberia, and exile there was the tsarist penal code’s harshest form of punishment and could amount to perpetual exile in Siberia (*ssylka na katorgu v Sibir*).<sup>12</sup> In remote places with harsh climates and low population density, criminals were removed from the society of European Russia as a ‘release valve’ and deposited on its margins to perform manual labour and work in factories whilst labouring in shackles in what Gentes sees as ‘commodifying the human body’ and serving as a ‘colonizing tool’.<sup>13</sup> Such forced labour enabled economic development even if it did so inefficiently and at huge human cost. It also helped the process of colonisation of a landmass where free settlers were sparse. Those who survived

<sup>9</sup> Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), chs. 6 and 7.

<sup>10</sup> For an economic argument on serfdom involving a high land/labour ratio, see Evsey D. Domar, ‘The causes of slavery or serfdom: a hypothesis’, *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 39, No. 1, March 1970, pp. 18–32.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Wood, ‘Introduction: Siberia’s role in Russian history’, in Alan Wood, ed., *The History of Siberia: From Russian Conquest to Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 6–7. He notes that *katorgon* is a medieval Greek word for ‘galley’. It entered Russian in a nautical sense and moved from meaning galley slave to hard labour in penal servitude.

<sup>12</sup> Alan Wood, ‘Russia’s “Wild East”: exile, vagrancy and crime in nineteenth-century Siberia’, in Wood, ed., *History of Siberia*, pp. 117–137; and Andrew A. Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590–1822* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Gentes, *Exile to Siberia*, pp. 4, 16.

and who stayed also populated the land. Petty criminals who were exiled could also be required to build fortifications such as on the Kola peninsula, in Orenburg and in Astrakhan, and to perform manual labour, even if they were not categorised as *katorga*.

The Soviet state, too, harnessed forced labour, which became integral to its grand socialist modernisation plans in construction projects, mining, road works and factories. The vast Gulag with its different categories of camps and settlements used the labour power of its inmates, often to their breaking point, in order to serve the Soviet economy and ideologically in order to redeem them through work, where redemption was deemed possible. Steven Barnes contends that prisoners were ordered hierarchically from the most to the least redeemable through a ‘complex matrix of identities’.<sup>14</sup> Political prisoners incarcerated for being ‘enemies of the people’ under Article 58 of the Criminal Code were in a minority and were considered less reformable than the ‘socially friendly common criminal’.<sup>15</sup> Under Stalin around 18 million spent time in the Gulag’s camps and prisons. The figures peaked in 1953 when 5.2 million were in camps, colonies and internal exile and, of these, more than 2.4 million were in corrective labour camps and colonies.<sup>16</sup> The harshest were viewed by Alexander Solzhenitsyn as protracted murder camps. On the fate of a prisoner, he commented: ‘it wasn’t only his body. His soul was crushed too.’<sup>17</sup> Soviet policy to collectivise agriculture ushered in for historians another category of unfree labour, reminiscent in some respects of serfdom before it.

### Unpacking the Historical Categories

#### *Slave Holding*

What, briefly, are the key characteristics and contours of these identified categories of unfreedom? In the years before Kievan Rus, Norse raiders in the Viking era took Slavic, German and Baltic slaves. Trade routes ran from the Baltic sea to Novgorod and Kiev and then to Constantinople in the Byzantine empire. The raiders also travelled via the river Volga to the Middle East. Slaves were thus an important part of trade.

<sup>14</sup> Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, p. 202.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (London: Book Club Associates, 1974), p. 504.

Historians agree that most peasants were ‘free’ when Kievan Rus was formed at the end of the ninth century, but that it was nonetheless a ‘slave-holding society’ and that ‘slaves seem to have been the staple of its foreign commerce’.<sup>18</sup> As Blum has put it, from the Kievan era peasants ‘had the right to come and go’ as suited them but only so long as they had not indentured themselves. This was the case right into the fifteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Soviet historiography of the ninth to fifteenth centuries, however, according to Aleksandr Zimin, had largely neglected the study of slavery, which remained ‘manifestly inadequately illuminated’ due to a concentration by academics on the collapse of clans and a focus on the Marxist concept of the construction of feudalism.<sup>20</sup> As Sergei Bakhrushin put it, in the ninth and tenth centuries, ‘slave’ simply meant ‘an object of trade’.<sup>21</sup> Janet Martin has described how slaves were ‘consistently exported’ along with pelts, wax and honey from Kievan Rus to Byzantium in return for silks, satins, jewellery and glass.<sup>22</sup> Ibn Fadlan has been quoted by Zimin and by Andrei Kovalevskii for his observations that ‘special value’ was accorded to female slaves, or ‘beautiful girls [*devushki-krasavitsy*] for the merchants’.<sup>23</sup> Zimin added, ‘girls for Russia represented a particular importance as a commodity’.<sup>24</sup> George Vernadsky described how certain tribal and clan leaders ‘rose above the clan community and formed the foundation of an aristocratic upper class’. This class ‘depended on slave labour’. War was the ‘primary source’ since those ‘prisoners who could not redeem themselves were turned into slaves’.<sup>25</sup> In addition, ‘the Russes used periodically to collect tribute’ and this came ‘partly in money, but mostly in kind – slaves, food products and furs’.<sup>26</sup> When slaves were traded in exchange for silk fabrics, spices, wines and fruits, they were conducted ‘in their chains’

<sup>18</sup> Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Blum, *Lord and Peasant*, p. 106.

<sup>20</sup> Aleksandr A. Zimin, *Kholopy na Rusi: S Drevneishikh Vremen do Kontsa XV v* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), pp. 5–6. Zimin documents the changing vocabulary. Church literature used the word *cheliad* for slave. Other terms were *semia*, *ognishche*, *dom*, *otrok* and *parobok*. The word *roba* applied initially to women who ploughed, from the verb *robit'*, an ancient term for the later *pakhat'*. *Roba* came to mean female slave.

<sup>21</sup> Zimin, *Kholopy na Rusi*, p. 22; Sergei V. Bakhrushin, ‘Nekotorye voprosy istorii Kievskoi Rusi’, *Istoriik-Markesist*, No. 3, 1937, p. 171.

<sup>22</sup> Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980–1584* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Zimin, *Kholopy na Rusi*, pp. 22–23, from Andrei P. Kovalevskii, *Kniga Akhmeda Ibn Fadlana o ego Puteshestvii na Volgu v 921–922 gg.* (Khar'kov, 1956), p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> Zimin, *Kholopy na Rusi*, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> George Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959). He points out that ‘slaves were known, collectively, as *cheliad*’, coming from the root of *chel* meaning ‘clan’, pp. 103–104.

<sup>26</sup> Vernadsky, *The Origins*, p. 192.

34 Unfree Labour in Russian History

along the banks of the river Dnepr.<sup>27</sup> The territory of Rus, however, endured periodic raids from nomads such as the Pechenegs from the southern steppe. They came, as Geoffrey Hosking notes, for ‘grain, luxury goods and slaves’.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Rus was put under huge pressure from the nomadic world, and an advancing ‘Mongol onslaught’, as Szamuely dubbed it, ravaged Russia ‘with a destructive fury’, thereby ‘erasing’ the ‘flourishing Kiev civilization’.<sup>29</sup> The power centre of Rus shifted to the north-east. In 1223, the Mongols crossed the Volga and subjugated a vast landmass for more than 200 years, which according to one interpretation thereby cut it off from Europe.<sup>30</sup> Rus amounted to a huge territory of warring principalities.

Tatar and Turkic nomads on the steppe between the Volga and the Dnepr attacked parts of Russia. Their ‘devastating raids’, according to Szamuely, ‘had one object: slaves’. As a result, Russian slaves were transported into the Crimean Khanate.<sup>31</sup> The Mongol empire was bound by the Silk Road, stretching from China to Eastern Europe.<sup>32</sup> The merchant caravans exchanged slaves, fur, fish and caviar from Russia for silks, spices and ceramics. There were, however, regional variations. Charles Halperin has argued that the rich agricultural and urban region of Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus ‘suffered much harm’ from the Mongols’ ‘periodic deprivations’ to curb its power, that there was ‘a certain amount of incidental destruction’ and that ‘slave-raiding forays along the borders were not uncommon’.<sup>33</sup> As well as collecting slaves, the Mongols extracted an annual tribute. On occasion the people would vent their anger at Mongol domination and taxation, as in 1262. Hosking holds that ‘townspeople objected particularly to the practice of taking away for slavery or conscription householders who could not or would not pay their dues’.<sup>34</sup>

Quite how much Russia suffered economically is subject to debate. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Golden Horde was no longer united but had fractured into different khanates. Halperin underlines that, even after the Golden Horde had gone, ‘the international trade it had nourished continued’ and Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus ‘enjoyed the greatest

<sup>27</sup> Vernadsky, *The Origins*, p. 286.

<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition*, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup> For the argument that Russia was not entirely cut off, see Paul Dukes, *A History of Russia 882–1996*, 3rd edn (London: Macmillan, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition*, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> Martin, *Medieval Russia*, p. 142. See also Reinhard Wittram, *Russia and Europe* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons Ltd, 1973).

<sup>33</sup> Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1987), pp. 76–77.

<sup>34</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 55.



access to the lucrative oriental market', despite all its prior sufferings.<sup>35</sup> Finally, under Ivan III and Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible), the dominance of Moscow was finally established and not without its prior co-operation with the Mongol Horde which included collecting its tributes.

Richard Hellie's highly detailed and comprehensive analysis presents a typology of eight kinds of slavery, or *kholopstvo*, in Muscovy: hereditary (*starinnoe*) slavery which referred to those whose parents had been slaves and so they were too; full (*polnoe*) slavery which had three origins of either self-sale, marriage to a slave or upon becoming a steward or housekeeper without the employer stipulating that free status could be kept; registered (*dokladnoe*) slavery which referred to elite slaves, most notably estate managers; debt (*dolgovoe*) slavery for 'defaulters and criminals unable to pay fines'; indentured (*zhiloe*) slavery, a status into which people would sell themselves for a specified term of years and would subsequently be freed; voluntary (*dobvol'noe*) slavery which occurred when a person had worked for another for three to six months and could then be converted at the employer's request; 'limited service contract slavery' (*kabal'noe*) which could mean a process of self-pawning for one year, then to be converted into self-sale and full slavery 'upon default of repayment' and then 'self-sale for the life of the purchaser'; and finally military captivity.<sup>36</sup> Hellie argues that it is impossible to give accurate percentages within each category at any given time, but that the most important types were hereditary, full and limited contract slavery.

Commenting on early modern Russia, Erika Monahan has underscored that 'slavery was a normal part of Siberian life – an unquestioned fate for some, a survival strategy for destitute others, and an enduring threat for natives and Russians in the borderlands'. The Kalmyk economy, for example, was fed by 'slave raiding' which attacked Russian and Tatar settlements, capturing 'all ranks'.<sup>37</sup> Slaves could be sold to markets in the Ottoman empire or sold back into the Russian empire through ransom.

<sup>35</sup> Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 85. Halperin points out the complexity of the impact made by the Mongols and that some areas escaped much damage 'through political dealings or geography'. Even in areas like Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus, different principalities could do well or be harmed at different times.

<sup>36</sup> For the fullest account, consult Hellie, *Slavery in Russia*, pp. 33–71. See, too, his 'Recent Soviet historiography on medieval and early modern Russian slavery', *Russian Review*, Vol. 35, No. 1, January 1976, pp. 1–32.

<sup>37</sup> Erika Monahan, *The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), p. 154.

*From Slavery to Serfdom*

In Russian history, slavery and serfdom were technically distinct and described by different words. Slaves were '*khology*' and serfs were called '*krepostnye*'. Slaves did not pay taxes and did not have the obligations of a serf, who was tied to his or her owner's land. Many historians, following Hellie, hold that serfdom had its roots in slavery and was still a form of bondage. Hellie dates serfdom back to the 1450s and holds that from 1462 to 1613 the majority of the population 'were peasants who were becoming serfs, perhaps 85 per cent'. The others, 'perhaps 5 to 15 per cent', were slaves.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, enserfment over time 'descended into slave-like conditions', and by the end of the sixteenth century the obligations of peasants had been hugely increased. In Hellie's estimation, the prior norm of enslaving one's own helped to make this possible. This picture contrasts starkly with the process of enslavement in the USA, which was totally reliant on the transportation of black Africans.<sup>39</sup>

A relevant skeletal periodisation here for an overview of slavery and serfdom can be broken down into distinct, if overlapping, periods. There are the years before the ninth century which merit no more comment than given above. Then the ninth to fifteenth centuries were the years from Kievan Rus through Mongol invasion in 1223 to the warring principalities and the emergence of Muscovy as dominant, in which slaves might be captured, traded and used in households. During the years from 1462 to 1613, following Hellie, peasants were 'becoming' serfs, enabled by the huge territorial expansion of Muscovy, serious labour shortages, political centralisation and the growing power of the tsars. Kolchin depicts enserfment as a 'drawn-out process' in stages which spanned 'some three hundred years'.<sup>40</sup> Key laws and decrees over time shaped, restricted and debased the lives of peasants.

If peasants ran away, and hundreds of thousands did, their flight caused consternation among the gentry, especially where population density was low and land plentiful. As the Russian state expanded in size through colonisation and annexation, its extending frontier meant the potential advance of landholding and with it the geographical advance of serfdom.<sup>41</sup> Where the state did not give land to nobles, as in Siberia, serfdom did not

<sup>38</sup> Hellie, 'The peasantry', p. 294.

<sup>39</sup> For a comparative history, see Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*.

<sup>40</sup> Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*, p. 2. For variations across the land, see Valerie Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> Once it had become the dominant principality, Muscovy expanded hugely. It grew roughly sevenfold in size from 1462 to 1533, then doubled again before the end of that century. See Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*, p. 4; and Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 79–84.