In-Between the Global and the Local:

Silk in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Russia

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Introduction

Silk shaped the processes of early globalisation that affected Russia, by creating networks of cultural, political and commercial connections between the East and the West. The new "cosmopolitan material culture" of the early modern period, as Beverly Lemire suggests, "redefined material life, social practice and commercial enterprise" and became "emblematic of evolving economic, social and political systems."[1] This chapter explores these changes and charts the identity politics related to silk textiles in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Russia by examining silk trade and acquisition, the introduction of new practices, as well as attempts to develop silk manufacturing. The chapter discusses the early development of the Russian silk industry in the context of localized consumption and mercantilist policies. I argue that silk fabrics became transformed from globally traded artefacts into tokens of local identity politics. They turned into in-between textiles negotiating and driving societal change "between Self and Other," where the Other signified not only the territorial and cultural Other, but also old forms of life within Russia. These textiles helped to create what Homi K. Bhabha calls "the in-between space" where cultural values and notions of selfhood underwent negotiation.[2] The textiles were crucial tools that materialized identities in a time when Russia became embedded in an increasingly globalized world.

Russian silk textiles do not feature prominently into the big narratives of early modern globalized textile markets perhaps because Russian silk industry developed on a small scale.[3] However, during the early modern period, many silk textiles passed via Muscovy, with the country becoming an important trading centre. The present chapter therefore seeks to contribute to the historiographic debate on global consumerism by showing how Russia became part of global processes, and how these textile encounters culturally enriched the country and offered practices of collaboration. These practices created spaces of in-betweenness, connected societies, offered moments of self-reflection, drove changes, produced new concepts of identity, and contributed to the emergence of early modernity.

Globalising Silk Textiles

Trade along the Silk Roads and acquisition of textiles and technologies of silk production had a global nature in the early modern period, and silk fabrics circulated in Muscovy long before the eighteenth century. Royal and court garments, ecclesiastical vestments, and furnishings made of silks contributed to the opulence of court ceremonies and mass services. The court purchased textiles from domestic and foreign merchants in the stalls and at the Persian market in Moscow[4] and abroad via foreign residents, and received gifts from visiting diplomats, petitioning foreigners, and monarchs and other officials during the embassies abroad.[5] Thus, in 1649, the Shunzhi emperor (1644–61) sent tsar Alexis (1645-1676) 700 bolts of patterned and embroidered silk to mark the improvement of Russian-Chinese relationships.[6] Such material diplomacy worked where other diplomatic languages may have failed, and alliances were forged through these gifts. Textiles were instrumental in developing global connections, “shared values and material and visual experiences,” but also underscored cultural differences

and conveyed power imbalances.[7] Fabrics obtained as war booty provide examples of such asymmetric relations.[8]

Treasury inventories contain detailed information about acquired fabrics, their sources, quantity and prices. According to these records, in 1629 and in 1635, the Persian shah sent tsar Mikhail (1613-45) two pieces of velvet, approximately five meters each at a price of forty roubles per item, with botanical patterns on gold and silver grounds. Likewise, in 1639, the court purchased four pieces of velvet approximately seven meters each at a price of seventy roubles from a Greek merchant. The court bought further silk from the Persian ambassador.[9]

The main seventeenth-century suppliers of silks were Persia, Ottoman Istanbul, Italy and China, however, Ottoman satins and velvets were among the most affordable options. Bright in colours with large botanical images which formed geometrical patterns, velvets had a thick cotton base. Ottoman craftsmen borrowed floral elements from Persian decorative art, but without realistic details of the later. In Russia, Ottoman silks were used for furnishings and outer garments, and often had second-life repurposing. In 1678, for instance, many subjects received Ottoman velvets, which previously decorated the walls in the Palace of Facets in Moscow, for garments. Persian textiles were more often used to make clothing.[10]

Import of Safavid fabrics increased after the annexation of Kazan' in 1552 and Astrakhan' in 1556.[11] These textiles also interested European merchants who hoped to have a transit trade via Muscovy, but while giving a ten-year licence in 1634 to Holstein merchants, the government allowed them to purchase only raw silk in Persia to protect Russian trading interests.[12] According to Tamara Ganjalyan, "the Armenian merchants of New Julta [in Astrakhan'] dominated the Persian raw silk trade" and participated "in international trade—especially between India, Persia, and Europe." Armenian merchants owned a monopoly on the raw-silk transit trade via Muscovy between 1667 and 1719, although with some restrictions. They traded with the English Muscovy Company and exported silk via the Caspian and White

Seas and from 1708 via St. Petersburg.[13] The land route via Astrakhan', Moscow and Poland gained increasing importance during Ottoman-Persian wars when imports to Europe via the Black Sea were unsafe.[14] A transit route for Chinese silks was established during Ivan Petlin's embassy (1618–19),[15] but more regular supplies arrived in Russia after the conclusion of the Nerchinsk Treaty in 1689. Yet, even before these official endorsements, silk textiles moved across borders, brought new experiences and cross-cultural awareness creating spaces of in-betweeness and becoming culturally re-appropriated.

Seventeenth-century dowry inventories list garments and furnishings made from silk textiles occasionally mentioning their Persian or Chinese origins. According to Vladimir Klein, in the earlier periods, *kamká* (patterned damask silk) "was the most widely used silk fabric," which was imported from East Asia and Western Europe. While Venetian *kamka* was popular at the court, Chinese *kamka* was a more affordable option.[16] The 1612 dowry of Epestemia who likely belonged to a family of monastery peasants in the Vologda region listed two women's hats made of azure and red *kamkas*. The 1637 dowry of Feodor Brashchin's daughter, probably from a "black-plough" state peasant family in Tur'ia (part of the Komi region), contained a head covering/towel (*shirinka*) and pillowcases made from silk-embroidered linen, and a headband (*pereviazka*), which was often made from brocade or with goldwork embroidery.[17] In such cases, embroidery threads usually came from the East. Textile objects embroidered by maidens with traditional decorative patterns demonstrated their craft and artistry, but peasants could have equally purchased these items during annual fairs—both Vologda and Tur'ia were part of the northern trading routes.[18] Festive garments from the collection of the Hermitage Museum (Fig. 1) made in the upper reaches of the Volga River, close to Astrakhan', could have belonged to a merchant family involved in textile trade. They are made of both more expensive brocade and damask and more affordable chintz.

Figure 1: Maiden's Festive Costume. Russia, second half of the eighteenth century. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inventory number ERT-13037. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Leonard Kheifets, Alexander Lavrentyev and Vladimir Terebenin.

The dowries meant to showcase a degree of prosperity. The two headdresses listed in the 1637 dowry cost almost as much as a cow.[19] Their decorative functions and aesthetic appeal were other financial indicators. Imported textiles and threads domesticated through sewing and embroidery became in-between objects which participated in initiation rites and contributed to community-making. Decorative towels, for instance, performed symbolic functions in life-cycle rituals—protection, donation, integration and notification.[20] Yet, in the earlier periods, the demand for high-quality silks was mainly among court nobles and clergy.

In the seventeenth century, Arkhangel'sk became an important trading centre in the north. According to Rita Mazzei, vessels, particularly from Holland and Hamburg, delivered high-quality Italian silks to the port's annual fair where ermesin taffeta and damask silk from Lucca, Venetian-type tabby (moire-like silk) and Genoise-type velours were popular. This trade was full of risks from navigation challenges in adverse weather conditions to not knowing about textile demands, from high import taxes, having to accept (sometimes reluctantly) leather

yuft for silk, to losing money on sales or incurring further expenses for unsold fabrics. Nevertheless, many merchants persisted knowing that they could lose or gain between twenty and twenty five percent. This trade also depended on shipments of Persian and Chinese silk via the Astrakhan' route. The rebellion of Stepan Razin (1630–71) in the Don and Volga region (1667-1671) affected delivery of Persian silks and thus Italian merchants were at a great advantage.[21] This example suggests not only the impact of political and geopolitical events on trade, but also the existence of interdependent global trading networks.

In 1668, Ambassador Petr Potemkin (1617-1700) started preliminary conversations with French merchants about the import of textiles such as *altabas* (silk brocade with silver gilt thread), velvet, gold *ob''iar* (moire-like fabric), damask silk and satin via Arkhangel'sk.[22] Before departing from Paris, he purchased several watches and a selection of brocades for almost 1,000 *écus*. His embassy also received gifts from Louis XIV (1643–1715) including tapestries, carpets, various brocades and high-quality red/orange fabric possibly used for bedding.[23] Such purchases and diplomatic gifts contributed to the import not only of textiles, but also of decorative arts, lifestyles and cultures. New textile products started to populate public and private spaces establishing new sensory and aesthetic experiences.

Already during the Russo-Polish War (1654–57), tsar Alexis came into contact with European lifestyle, which according to his physician Samuel Collins left a profound impact on the tsar, "since his Majesty has been in Poland, and seen the manner of the Princes houses there, and ghess'd at the mode of their Kings, his thoughts are advanced, and he begins to model his Court and Edifices more stately, to furnish his Rooms with Tapestry, and contrive houses of pleasure abroad."[24] According to Ivan Zabelin, at the end of the seventeenth century, the royal palace in Moscow had European-style furnishings—chairs and armchairs with velvet and satin upholstery and mirrors, which were usually covered with silk fabrics when not in use.[25]

Both royal and ecclesiastical authorities also communicated by means of silk in ceremonial practices and gift exchanges. Such exchange between the tsar Mikhail and the patriarch Joseph (1642–52), which included satin, brocade and silk damask, took place after the election of the latter in 1642.[26] These acts solidified a political union between the state and the Church and foregrounded silk as a tool for community making, in this case, elite-making, as the royals, nobles and ecclesiastical authorities were usually giving and receiving silks.[27] Such statal-ecclesiastical exchanges remained in place until the late seventeenth century.

Ecclesiastical vestments and furnishings made of high-quality textiles were often products of transcultural work that incorporated traditional motifs of their native countries with some elements added later in Russian workshops. Craftsmen in the Ottoman city of Bursa and in a Safavid court workshop initially made many of these fabrics and vestment bases using "naturalistic and mythical" figural patterns. The shoulder pieces were frequently embroidered in Muscovy using abstract, floral and religious motifs.[28] Russian workshops also made ecclesiastical vestments from Chinese and later French textiles.[29]

Ottoman and Chinese luxury silks, used for making the robes of state and sent as royal gifts, were often re-modelled into ecclesiastical vestments to give these materials a second life.[30] According to Ivan Zabelin, churches also received fabrics previously used for royal cradles, to make shoulder pieces and furnishings. These gifts were believed to bring blessings into babies' life,[31] but also channelled wealth into useful consumption. Their reuse and focus on thrift was often a matter of moral considerations. *Domostroi*, a sixteenth-century book of household rules, advised Muscovites to be frugal and charitable and keep their clothes clean and tidy.[32] Such focus on preservation embodied the significance of tradition and stability.

Materiality also was of crucial importance for religious practices.[33] Vestments and furnishings made of the repurposed fabrics became both material and immaterial objects that facilitated spiritual transcendence. In this context, it did not matter that these textiles

incorporated exotic motifs such as embroidered dragons used in Chinese court robes or genre scenes woven in the Safavid court workshop.[34] In Russian orthodox contexts, the emphasis shifted from these textiles' native meanings and pictorial representations to their new nature as sanctified objects. Through their participation in religious practices, such textiles became culturally re-appropriated and re-semioticised into spiritual objects (Fig. 2).[35]

Figure 2: Chasuble, with images of Majnun being comforted by animals. Sixteenth-century Persian silk; seventeenth-century shoulder piece embroidered in Russia. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inventory number IR-2327. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Leonard Kheifets, Alexander Lavrentyev and Vladimir Terebenin.

Travel records written by members of the embassies document the early modern Russian fascination with silks. Muscovy was keen on establishing international relations and sent diplomatic missions to Poland (1601/02), Persia (1618–20), Imereti, Georgia (1650–52), China (1654–57, 1692–95), Venice (1656/57), Florence (1658/59), Spain and France (1667/68), as well as several further European countries (1697/98) to name only a few embassies. These travellers described ethnic clothing, ceremonial dress and textile gifts, silk fabrics used for

garments and furnishing and sold in the stalls.[36] Nikifor Tolochanov (before 1627–after 1663) noted that everyone in Imereti had been involved in silk trade while the Holstein merchant Eberhard I. Ides (1657–1708) mentioned Chinese manufactories specialising in silk brocades and damasks.[37] As such accounts show, silk played an important role in negotiations and participated in the processes of early globalisation. While Muscovite embassies to Europe presented Persian silks as diplomatic gifts, the Buryats in Siberia at the end of the century purchased Persian silks and cloth brought from Hamburg.[38]

The wide range of textiles mentioned in the seventeenth and mid-eighteenth-century documents indicate their popularity. These documents list brocades, Venetian damaskette, *baiberek* (lightest silk-and-wool brocade), *altabas*, damask silk, taffeta, satin, *gros de tours*, *ob'iar'*, velvet-like *aksamit* and Persian *izorbat* (both with gold and silver threads). A 1743 decree mentions various Chinese silks including *gol'* (shiny fabric), *kanfa* (satin), and smooth, floral and striped *svistun*.[39] Such documents testify to the existence of global commercial networks and the development of advanced technologies that could process silk, woolen, silver and gold yarns into sophisticated patterns. The quality of silk, which also depended on its fibre properties, was an indicator of taste and refinement. Global textile markets, with silks being among the most valued commodities, facilitated the development of a cosmopolitan material culture in which merchants performed the roles of intermediaries introducing new textiles and fashions, helping create new social and aesthetic experiences, and facilitating knowledge transfer.[40]

Localising Identity Politics: Silk Textiles in Petrine Russia

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, silk textiles helped to maintain social hierarchy, but also signified changes that started to take place in clothing and social orders. At

the beginning of the century, Peter I (1682-1725) introduced shorter and more practical West European coats and decreed women to wear European dresses in urban areas.[41] His reform refocused the perception of dress from the concepts of tradition and stability to those of functionality, change and fashion associated with notions of modernity. When in 1702, Peter decreed woollen French coats and camisoles made of three different brocades for ceremonial dress, his regulation showed more flexibility than a 1680 decree of Feodor (1676-82). Peter's edict included lower-ranking officials, and while assigning particular brocades—gold, with silver-gilt thread and coloured—for different ranks, but not for specific occasions, allowed for variations when officials did not have certain textiles.[42] These material changes coincided with Peter's attempts to introduce further meritocracy following the abolition of *mestnichestvo* seniority system based on one's place in the boyar hierarchy by Feodor, in 1682. In these emerging social and clothing orders, silk and woollen fabrics became in-between textiles that manifested changes in social fabric, lifestyle and culture.

Peter I started to introduce new dress coercively after his first embassy to Europe (1697/98). According to Evgenii Anisimov, the reforms led to the decisive prioritisation of secular principles over religious ones.[43] With these clothing changes, came new values and practices, including the restructuring of public and private life and interest in new leisure activities and fashionable consumption. It is symptomatic that the manual of conduct *The Honorable Mirror for Youth* (1717), commissioned by the tsar, placed much emphasis on public behavior attempting to redefine the boundaries of public life and privacy. In the context of cultural re-evaluations and re-appropriations, textiles became crucial items materialising change and in-betweenness. Like European-style clothing, furnishings disseminated new ideas about manners and practices. Some signs of this refocusing to secular culture and more individualistic values appeared in the seventeenth century, for instance, with the introduction of mirrors and chairs instead of benches in domestic spaces (Fig. 3), an interest in decorative

furnishings, portraiture, scientific tools, and the appearance of private libraries and study spaces.

Figure 3: Dutch-style oak chair with brocade upholstery made in Russia, early eighteenth century. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inventory number ERMb-6. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Leonard Kheifets, Alexander Lavrentyev and Vladimir Terebenin.

In a 1718 decree, Peter officially introduced new gatherings, “assemblies”, in private houses modelled on European social practices.[44] This reformulation of spaces and sociability also resulted in new material. More nobles started to decorate their houses with textile wallcoverings and tapestries. One of Peter’s close associates Petr Shafirov (1669–1739) furnished his home with crimson velvet, which he brought from his mission to Istanbul (1711-14), with fabrics with botanical patterns, European and Persian furniture, and tapestries purchased in Amsterdam in 1717.[45] Wealth and passion for conspicuous consumption of St. Petersburg first governor Alexander Menshikov (1673–1729) reached such proportions that all his rural houses had velvet and damask wallpaper.[46] In addition to being objects of fashionable consumption, these textiles added to physical comforts of domestic spaces by shielding drafts and created emotional ambience through their bright and warm colours. The functions of

domestic spaces became better defined through textile furnishings, which reflected personal tastes, interests and experiences of their owners.

In eighteenth-century Russia, social and material flexibility increased. As Bhabha suggests, new globalized connections engendered hybridity and creativity in expressing identities and dealing with norms.[47] Eighteenth-century Russian palace furnishings show elements of such trans-cultural hybridity and in-betweenness. Among the objects in Peter's bedroom in the Ekaterinhof Palace, which did not survive, Mikhail Pyliaev mentioned a simple pine bed probably built by the tsar himself with green silk cushions and a duvet cover with embroidered gold eagles, likely made on royal orders. A Flemish marine painting, a genre favoured by the tsar, and an old mirror hung on the walls. The room housed a cabinet with Chinese cups and an icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir. A wardrobe with his caftan (*justaucorps*) stood at the entrance into the room.[48] Peter's bedroom contained objects belonging to three different traditions—Eastern Asian, European and Russian—, as well as to traditional and new cultures; some of these objects were also culturally re-appropriated as in the case of silk bedding, which originated in China, but could have come to Russia from Europe. Bedding fabrics, for instance, were among the gifts which Louis XIV gave to Potemkin in 1668. Peter's silk bedding became further re-appropriated with an addition of imperial embroidery. One can identify many examples of such trans-culturalism that contributed to the creation of hybrid cultural spaces on the grounds of eighteenth-century palaces.

Prior to the eighteenth century, fabrics and furnishings represented old luxury that strove for grandeur; in early eighteenth-century Russia, however, such textiles started to become objects of what Jan de Vries defines as new luxury striving for comfort and pleasure and restrained by taste, luxury which is linked more to Enlightenment ideas about 'modernity' than to the notion of a social hierarchy. Seventeenth-century Holland was one of the first countries where this new pattern of consumer behaviour emerged, with the tsar being able to

observe new practices during his European embassies.[49] Similarly, Peter's bedroom decor in the Ekaterinhof Palace was modest and functional reflecting his personal tastes and austerity during the Great Northern War (1700–21).

Through their visual language, tapestries and textile wallcoverings also performed educational functions providing cultural information about depicted places as was the case with the Four Continents Tapestry Series (1745–47) woven in St. Petersburg.[50] Likewise, hand-painted Chinese silk wallpaper in the Crown Room of Peter's Peterhof Palace, which depicts the process of porcelain productions in Jingdezhen, demonstrates not only fascination with silks, but also with porcelain and its production technology.[51] According to Iuliia Blagoder, nobles started to decorate houses with painted silk in a chinoiserie style, which was popular in mid-seventeenth century Europe, during Peter's reign.[52] Such decorative choices show that consumption went beyond the Baroque fascination with curiosities, being dictated by interests in other cultures and scientific and technological advances. West European dress introduced by Peter I belonged to this new luxury as well refocusing its value from sumptuousness to comfort and functionality.

The tsar was eager to learn about industries, the sciences, and the arts of different countries, and his visit to the famous Gobelins Manufactory in Paris in 1717 was productive for the development of a state-sponsored tapestry and silk-weaving industry in Russia.[53] According to Nina Biriukova, Peter decided to establish a tapestry manufactory in 1716, and upon his request Jean Lefort (1685-1739) invited several Parisian masters to Russia.[54] Silk industry became a focal point in the Petrine reform programme around the same time. It combined state sponsorship, reformism, and protectionism with the desire to engender the articulation of new cultural practices through textiles. These textiles became a reference for a society in transformation, a yardstick for measuring in-betweenness.

With the relocation of the capital to St. Petersburg in 1712, manufactories producing silk textiles, ribbons and galloons started to appear in both capitals. Peter's idea of economic and industrial modernization was to replace small producers with larger companies to make industries more efficient through centralization. These ideas were in line with European mercantilism policies and state-sponsored production partly engendered by the introduction of standing armies in the seventeenth century.[55]

As suggested by Wallace Daniel, the recognition of domestic needs and Peter's trips to Europe, particularly his visit to Paris, "encouraged him to develop policies to help private entrepreneurs."[56] In 1717, Peter's close associates—Vice Chancellor, Baron Petr Shafirov, Secret Councilor Petr Tolstoy (1645–1729) and General Admiral, Count Feodor Apraksin (1661–1728) who joined the company later—received a monopoly charter to make French and other imported fabrics in the capitals and other towns, to sell them for fifty years without taxation, and to export abroad.[57] Tolstoy's trip to Italy in 1697/98 may have sparked his initial interest in textiles. His travel notes demonstrate a refined knowledge of fabrics and a keen interest in furnishing details, as he discusses luxury textiles as well as textile and clothing production in Venice and Naples.[58] Both Tolstoy and Shafirov developed a further interest in fabrics during their missions to Istanbul and during Peter's second embassy to Europe where Shafirov visited manufactures and purchased fashionable goods for the royal family.[59] Both could not have helped noticing the tsar's enthusiasm for tapestry and textile manufacturing during this trip.[60]

The founders together with invited merchants invested approximately 88,800 roubles into their company, paid 10,000 roubles for an import license and received a subsidy of 45,672 roubles and silk worth of 20,230 roubles from the government.[61] This was a large investment considering that in 1723, the government advised manufacturers to have smaller initial capitals.[62] The company received a permission to invite domestic and foreign co-owners,

employ local and foreign craftsmen and import necessary materials. In return, they planned to produce a variety of textile products including gold, silver, silk and woolen brocades and damasks, velvets, satins, *kamkas* and taffetas as well as various ribbons, galloons/braids and stockings.[63] The company did not own exclusive rights only on production of accessories, as greater affordability and broad applicability of these products widened their consumer pool. To further encourage their production, in 1718 the government gave Alexey Miliutin (1673–1755) who produced textiles, silk ribbons and braids in Moscow since 1714, a charter of privileges to make these accessories.[64]

As it had been the case for many manufactories in Europe, Russian textile enterprises received economic incentives and protection from potential competition. The monopoly charter given to the nobles granted them land and premises freely and in permanent ownership in any towns where they intended to set up manufactories. Only the Senate had power over them, and mainly in the matters that had to do with complaints. Such terms ensured protection from bureaucratic interference that could have caused production delays.[65]

The government reinforced the company's monopoly on the production and import of European textiles by several protectionist decrees issued in 1717/18. Their second aim was to curtail luxury consumption and police expenses, as in the case of the 1717 edict, which prohibited making and wearing fabrics with gold and silver threads. Merchants had to sell European supplies by 1719 or otherwise pay high fines. The decree, however, did not affect Chinese and Persian textiles and domestic silks without gold and silver.[66] The rationale for these restrictions, in addition to protectionism, was the long-lasting Great Northern War that required much expenditure.

Many countries imposed similar prohibitions. Eighteenth-century England, for instance, placed restrictions on the import of various textiles including silks from the East and products made of silk and with "gold or silver-thread."[67] As elsewhere in Europe and the world,

in Russia, the development of textile production and in this case of silks became part of the process of acquiring national independence in terms of economy and in terms of localisation of materialized identities. As noted by Bhabha, globalisation drove this desire "to fix cultural difference in a containable, visible object," in this case textiles[68] which transformed from globally traded products, driving the agendas of an increasingly globalized world, into tokens of local identity politics shaping new national agendas.

The government, however, quickly realized the adverse impact of the ban on the nascent industry and state needs. A 1718 decree allowed the company founded by the nobles (most likely based on their request) to make gold and silver ribbons and braids in St. Petersburg, but using only fifty *poods* (1805.6 pounds) of silver annually.[69] The need for uniform braids perhaps can explain this relaxation, but braids were also used for home furnishings and civilian garments. A few weeks later, another decree further extended the sale period for European textiles until 1720. After this date, merchants faced both fines and confiscations. To control the situation, customs officials were required to register and stamp all prohibited fabrics still available for sale.[70]

The import of European textiles was reinstated in 1719, and the company sold its import license to Dutch merchants, as the manufacturers lacked commercial experience and faced financial shortages.[71] The two-year license allowed the Dutch merchants to sell 100,000 roubles worth of silk fabrics annually in St. Petersburg. The manager of St. Petersburg manufactory could still import samples of new brocades for 300–400 roubles monthly to keep up with European fashions.[72] A follow-up decree relaxed geographical restrictions by permitting merchants to sell brocades in Livonia (parts of present-day Latvia and Estonia).[73] By narrowing down imports geographically, the government tried to control the flow of goods and trade, ensure proper taxation and tackle smuggling problems.

No restrictions, however, affected Chinese and Persian brocades. Peter was keen on

supporting well-developed trade with the Safavid dynasty and establishing regular trade with the Qing dynasty promoting material and cultural imports from these countries. While drawing on European examples in his policies, he capitalized on geographical and economic advantages of Russia's location by purchasing more affordable raw silk and fabrics from East Asia, which had a wider consumer pool. Whereas European textiles helped to form local-national noble identity, Eastern fabrics democratized the market and supported local industry with raw silk. In 1719, the government allowed the textile company to purchase thin silk in China for approximately 15,000–20,000 roubles as well as goods in the Siberian governorate,[74] and from 1721 permitted manufacturers to import silk for a fifteen-year period, all without taxation.[75] Despite the slow development of silk industry, manufactures produced good quality textiles. In the mid-eighteenth century, "luxuriant white, floral velvet" and "satin damask" decorated the walls of the Ekaterinhof Palace, with both textiles produced in St. Petersburg in 1729. The palace furniture had similar upholstery.[76]

In the provinces which Peter annexed during his Persian campaign (1722/23), he also hoped to develop silk industry. The Gilan province alone had an annual export of approximately 1,179,360 kilograms of silk to Ottoman Istanbul before 1722, with most going to European merchants.[77] In 1724, Peter planned to resettle peasant families to the region for silk-rearing. This idea remained unrealized.[78] One might, however, argue that this brief colonisation of the region, which lasted until the end of the Russo-Ottoman war (1735–39), started earlier, with the appropriation of material culture and construction of the images and spaces of otherness.

Local Russian identity politics in regard to silk textiles continued to be driven by the state. The 1721 decree allowed manufacturers (nobles and merchants) to purchase villages with possessory peasants to help with labour recruitment—there was hardly any free labour in Russia.[79] According to Simon Dixon, "peasants constituted over 90 per cent of the

population"—with 55.8 per cent being serfs, 9 per cent court peasants, the rest were state peasants.[80] Manufacturers could resell the attached peasants only with the factories and could not mortgage or loan these enterprises. In this way, the government ensured that merchants did not use the decree just to purchase peasants for themselves. In 1714, the government authorized the transfer of manufactories into private hands hoping to improve their efficiency, reiterating these provisions in 1723.[81] From 1723 any willing individual could open factories and receive various incentives including an exemption from military service.[82] Peter regarded manufacturing as a form of state service, which gave an opportunity for upward mobility. The state encouraged foreigners to establish factories in Russia promising them equal rights and privileges with local manufacturers and an opportunity to negotiate further terms. The government promised to give them start-up subsidies and apartments for an initial period. Russian envoys received instructions to encourage and help craftsmen to resettle,[83] however, not all promises became realized.

Moreover, the manufacturers hired craftsmen abroad with varying degrees of success. A few enjoyed high salaries and had comparatively affluent lives, some struggled financially and socially, and some were sent home because of poor work ethics and squandering, as it happened with a pattern master de Bourno(n)ville hired in 1717 for the textile company. Bourno(n)ville brought approximately sixty workers to Moscow many of whom were unqualified for the job.[84] In some cases, craftsmen shared their knowledge reluctantly fearing that they might lose their well-paid jobs. Boris Shablikin, who worked at the manufactory that made ribbons and worsted stockings in St. Petersburg, for instance, learnt to set up ribbon looms by secretly watching his master's work.[85] Worrying that apprentices could not gain required knowledge locally, in 1723 the tsar advised to send them abroad to study.[86] Yet, there were also successful examples of cooperation. An Armenian master hired by Miliutin to make yarn successfully taught four of the six apprentices, and another master from Hamburg

promised Miliutin to teach fifteen apprentices to weave ribbons and braids and draw and arrange smooth and raised patterns. All these projects of forging local identities were, in fact, deeply anchored in global networks. Miliutin pursued philanthropic goals and took economically disadvantaged pupils: “I start the above manufactories not for myself alone, but for the common weal, and so that craftsmanship could improve.”[87] For many apprentices, this was an opportunity to advance socially. Shablikin, for instance, was later put in charge of the manufactory where he started his apprenticeship.

Many early eighteenth-century garments were products of transcultural cooperation, and Peter I’s summer dressing gown/banyan made of popular blue silk damask with a grapevine pattern and a matching smooth blue silk lining is one such example (Fig. 4).[88] The East India Companies brought these garments, also known as Indian dressing gowns, to Europe around 1634. Worn at home, oftentimes with a waistcoat and breeches, they were suited for informal gatherings.[89]

Figure 4: Peter I’s dressing gown from Chinese damask made by Russian and Dutch masters in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inventory number ERT-

8343. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Leonard Kheifets, Alexander Lavrentyev and Vladimir Terebenin.

The dressing gowns likely came to Russia during Peter's reign and became known by their German name *Schlafrock* or its Russian adaptation *shlafor*. The inventory of the property confiscated from Vasilii Golitsyn (1643–1714), head of the Foreign Affairs Chancellery between 1682 and 1689 and one of the wealthiest Muscovites, lists 138 caftans, but not a single dressing gown.[90] The style of this robe that resembles that of the Dutch *japonse rock* and Japanese *kosode*, was popular in Holland and England, but the imported garment underwent some modifications.[91] Peter's robe has a trapezoidal rather than a straight T-shape. Its design is simple and modern. The patterned fabric looks light. The garment in its functionality and moderate luxury conveyed through the texture and damask-woven design is an object of a new material culture with a new angle on thrift and a focus on individualisation. Throughout its life cycle, the robe belonged only to one owner without being repurposed after Peter's death.

The dressing gown is a domesticated global garment, a product of several traditions. Another word used for a garment of similar design, but of a different function in seventeenth-century Muscovy was *khalat* from the Ottoman *hil'at* and Arabic *khil'a* (a caftan, 'robe-of-honour').[92] This word will be later adopted for a dressing gown in Russia. The Ottoman garment was a "long, full-cut, but straight robe" usually made of silk. Many of these garments had long sleeves that almost reached the floor. Ottoman and Persian royals presented these robes as gifts, reward and/or a sign of distinction.[93] Peter's robe has shorter sleeves. Moreover, both in Europe and Russia, this garment became linked with domestic spaces, leisure activities and a different timeframe for its use. One could wear it in the presence of family and friends, when reading in the library or drinking tea, a practice introduced in Muscovy in the seventeenth century. The word *Schlafrock* expressed this change of function and relocated these robes of Eastern Asian origins, which were not dissimilar in their cuts and length to the banned

traditional garments in Petrine Russia, to private spaces. Their presence in European and Russian wardrobes reflected fascination with East Asia and the fashionability of chinoiserie. Peter likely saw this garment during his trips to Holland, which would explain his preference for Dutch tailors. In its new local contexts, the garment signified the growing importance of private time and engagements, leisure and intellectual activities. While it still conveyed a degree of luxury through the quality, pattern and colour of its fabric and association with leisure, its functional design became associated with modern concepts of comfort and convenience.

The grapevine fabric pattern may have hinted at local political agendas and cultural codes which Peter utilized in “bacchanalian mysteries of state” through which he enacted his reforms of ecclesiastical and state orders. The All-Joking, All-Drunken Synod of Fools and Jesters, which consisted of his supporters, orchestrated these mysteries associated with the concept of the Transfigured Kingdom.[94] As in the case of Peter’s clothing reforms, with this garment, there is a refocusing from a vestimentary hierarchy with its distinctive degrees of sumptuousness to Enlightenment luxury, comfort and individualisation. This is an in-between garment which moves from an old to a new vestimentary system. It is a global and local product with its own history and individual story, which occupies an important place in the tsar’s wardrobe. It is exemplary for a variety of Peter’s dressing gowns, housed at the Hermitage Museum, which were made by Russian and European craftsmen.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the significance of silk in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Russia, charting a history of societal changes that put silk textiles centre-stage for the negotiation of how such shifts took place. Silks drew Russia into global textile markets, but

this globalisation resulted in local and national identity politics driven by the reform programme of Peter I. Silks were pivotal for a governmental, societal and mercantile reform programme. They linked economic production with the state, fostering the implementation of mercantilist and protectionist policies; yet, they were also pivotal for the enunciation of new cultural concepts linked with an Enlightenment reform programme.

Some of these policies and agendas, however, had only limited impact on society. The business of the textile company founded by the nobles was developing slowly, and the quality of their brocades varied. In 1724, their Moscow manufactory was divided between several merchants,[95] some of whom started successful enterprises including a famous silk-weaving factory in Frianovo in the Moscow region established by an Armenian merchant Ignatii Sheriman (?-1752). In 1720, a silk-rearing manufacture opened on the Akhtuba river in the Astrakhan' region.[96] According to Peter Lyashchenko, by the end of the Petrine reign there were seven silk enterprises in Russia of the total of 195 large manufactories.[97]

The quality of local silks and the demand did not meet expectations even at the end of the century. Russia continued to rely on imports, but Peter I laid the foundation of the industry with his successors reinstating many of his policies throughout the century. The early modern material world of silks was mobile and helped to create and defy boundaries within and beyond Russia. It facilitated the arrival of new concepts and ideas that helped to form new cultural practices, transforming silk fabrics into in-between textiles negotiating and shaping societal change in Russia. Material changes often preceded social ones, with silk textiles contributing to early processes of globalisation and the formation of concepts of nationhood both in Russia and around the world.

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