

Dressing for the Occasion: Adopting and Resisting Western Dress Under Peter the Great

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the importance of clothing to the Russian population during the reign of Peter Alekseyevich, known historically as Peter the Great. As part of his sweeping transformations, the Tsar mandated that the Russian people begin dressing in Western styles so they may better align themselves with their Western European counterparts. Many analyses of Peter the Great focus on the economic reforms, and in turn overlook the sociocultural aspects that facilitated the success of many of his projects. Despite the autocratic power of the Tsar, the Russian people were tied to their traditional garments, and were faced with a difficult choice – to follow the personally expensive requests of Peter I, or to risk their status and retain traditional Russian values. The sartorial reforms of Peter the Great implicated more than just clothing; rather, they were about religious piety, masculinity, changing social status, and growing divisions between ranks.

KEYWORDS: Peter the Great, Russia, Sartorial Reforms, History of Material Culture, Russian History

Introduction

Peter Alekseyevich is remembered in history as Peter the Great, a man recognized for instituting mass changes across Russian territory during his reign as Tsar from the 1680s until his death in 1725. The Tsar arguably had the greatest impact on the trajectory of the Eastern power. Foreign relations were altered throughout his reign, but domestically it was of high priority that the Russian nobility remained loyal to him despite the sweeping changes he instituted. With a personal interest in medicine and naval technology,¹ Tsar Peter I toured and worked in multiple European nations, learning what he could of their successes. Upon returning home, Peter's government began adopting and enforcing Western ways – from schooling, to the organization of government, and beyond – with the hope that this would bring Russian society up to par with the more advanced norms of the Western World. Peter brought back the ideas which emerged out of the period of enlightenment to the country he reigned and began implementing them at a rapid pace. While the Westernization of Peter the Great is often synonymous with technological advancements, the social structure of Russia also proved to be a critical component of the changes. By altering the most seemingly mundane aspects of society, Western ways eventually became inherent to Russian life. Social changes took place by introducing new forms of entertainment such as the regatta,² introducing a secular schooling system, and adopting new dress codes.

Traditional Russian society, prior to the reign of Peter I, was rooted in the norms of the Orthodox church and associated traditional dress with piety,³ meaning that changing fashions were not as simple as adjusting to new styles and fabrics. Clothing was intertwined with one's religious beliefs, so when the Tsar began implementing these changes in dress, they were not warmly welcomed by those with vested religious interests. These ties between clothing and religion extended further, impacting the facial hair of Russian men. Believing that beards were demonstrative of masculinity and piety, Orthodox followers were hesitant to follow legislation which required a clean-shaven face. Not only did Peter I have to face the opposition from the church and their

believers, but the Russian landmass was comprised of ethnically diverse groups, each with their own norms, values, and importantly, clothing. While similarities in traditional styles existed, the clothing of his subjects was not entirely cohesive. Therefore, the meanings associated with the garments were not cohesive, too.

While there are varying hypotheses which attempt to explain why Peter the Great instituted mass reforms which erased traditional values and embraced Western modernity, the focus on dress in these changes demonstrated the inherent nature of fashion to permeate society, as well as the use of dress as a political statement. By mandating dress changes, fashion became inherently political, and no Russian was able to escape making a political statement by the clothing they chose to wear. Initially, while older generations of nobility tended to follow policy in public, many rejected these changes in private. By mandating social change, Peter I's reforms became all encompassing, and allegiance to the Tsar's values could be clearly seen through the fashion of the masses.

Peter I's Rise & Desire to Westernize

The reign of the man who would one day become "the Great" began somewhat unconventionally when he was named Tsar a month before his tenth birthday.⁴ After Peter's father, Tsar Aleksei, died in January 1676,⁵ Peter's eldest half-brother succeeded the throne and became Fedor III, Tsar of All Russia at the age of fourteen.⁶ Peter was only three at the time of their father's death. While this followed the tradition in which the eldest surviving son of the Tsar would rule after the monarch's death, Peter's family did not believe this would last long. Fedor was chronically ill, leading Peter's maternal family to believe he could one day be named the leader of the country. As relatives of the Tsar, this would cement their regal status as well as ensure they were awarded land and other valuable goods throughout their lives. Their desires came to fruition when Peter, who was still in the early years of his childhood, was named Tsar in 1682 after Fedor III died childless.⁷ While already having waited for the death of the ruling Tsar, Peter's accession only occurred as his other

¹ Lindsay Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 3.

² Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 265.

³ Evgenii V. Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great: Progress through Coercion in Russia* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 219.

⁴ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 8.

⁵ James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.

⁶ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 2.

⁷ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 2.

half-brother, Ivan V, was recorded as having severe mental deficits, and therefore was unfit to rule alone. Had Ivan been considered, Peter would have been third in line following his father. However, Russian primogeniture was considered more of a custom than absolute law, so deviations such as this were accepted.⁸ Despite being the Tsar of All Russia, Peter was still a child. Thus, his half-sister Sophia, who was the full sister of Fedor III, acted as Regent of Russia in his place.⁹ Sophia, who was often described as 'power hungry', gained her regency as the result of violent conflict between the two families, after which Ivan became the senior Tsar and Peter the junior.¹⁰ While neither of the male sovereigns were capable of truly ruling Russia, Sophia acted in their place. Peter acted only in a ceremonial capacity by attending court functions for show,¹¹ but even this was limited and he often was left to pursue his own interests separate from the duties of the Tsar.¹² As Peter aged, support among the nobility for Sophia dwindled and she lost control in the fall of 1689, and Peter I regained his full autonomy as Tsar and began ruling in his own right.¹³ Ivan remained a Tsar alongside Peter until his death in January 1696,¹⁴ but mainly took on roles related to the Orthodox Church.

Nearly a decade into his personal reign, Peter I embarked upon his Grand Embassy to Europe from 1697-1698, where he studied shipbuilding and navigation in the Dutch Republic,¹⁵ fueling his boyhood love of anything marine.¹⁶ The Tsar's group continued across Europe, stopping in England, Vienna, the Netherlands, and modern-day Latvia. Each new location served as a stark reminder of how far behind his native Russia lagged. Peter feared that this would lead to long-term foreign dependency if nothing changed.¹⁷ As Western practices had slowly been infiltrating the lives of upper-class Russians for decades, this trend was likely to continue, and would leave them at the mercy of foreign suppliers and prices. Royal account books which recorded purchases indicated a high number of orders for 'German dress' from foreign tailors and dressmakers between 1690 and 1691, not only for the Tsar himself, but for many of his close associates.¹⁸ While the Russian elite had begun to make changes aligning with Western norms, the vast majority of the population remained in

traditional ethnic dress.

Traditional Russian Garments

Often considered impious by the church in his early days for his love and use of German dress,¹⁹ Peter's fashion choices clearly demonstrate the ties of clothing to Russian Orthodoxy, and by extension, traditional Russian culture. His love of Western dress strayed from the beliefs of both his father Aleksei, and older brother Fedor III, each of whom had implemented legislation to curtail the adoption of non-Russian fashions. Beginning in 1675, Aleksei banned all Russians from wearing any Western clothing to be able to better distinguish foreigners from natives. In 1680, Fedor extended this to ban specific styles from being worn, emphasizing this restriction for those attending court events. Despite these attempts, neither leader was fully effective. Their failure were caused by polish influence, though minor, that was present in the style dress and the removal of facial hair at court during Fedor's reign.²⁰ While a select few strayed from traditionalism, most who attended court retained Russian traditional dress until Peter mandated otherwise, if even then.

Local traditions had often influenced the style of ornamentation that would appear on garments, but during this period of transformation all ethnic dress was combined into a single category of Russian fashion.²¹ Russian dress is generally characterized as being long in the body, often extending to the floor, with long sleeves on shirts or full-length garments. Additionally, both men's and women's dress were very loose, a significant distinction given how form-fitting garments were popular in Western Europe at the time. The loose style allowed most garments to be cut on straight lines and made of fewer sections of fabric, allowing for a more simplistic method of tailoring that could be done at home.²² This was particularly important for the peasantry as it drastically reduced costs for necessary pieces.

Garments recovered across Russia are held in modern museums as a display of both the traditions and changes that Russian fashion has gone through. In 1976, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET)

⁸ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 8.

⁹ Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great*, 3.

¹⁰ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 9.

¹¹ Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great*, 4.

¹² Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 9.

¹³ Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great*, 3.

¹⁴ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 16.

¹⁵ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 23.

¹⁶ L.R. Lewitter, "Peter the Great, Poland, and the Westernization of Russia," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19, no. 4 (Oct 1958): 495, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2707919>.

¹⁷ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 24.

¹⁸ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 15.

¹⁹ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 12.

²⁰ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 280.

²¹ Christine Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes: A History of the Russian Fashion Industry, 1700-1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 8.

²² The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1976), 11.

in New York City curated the *Glory of Russian Costume* exhibition, which obtained over 500 pieces of clothing and accessories²³ from five Russian museums²⁴ (called the USSR at the time of The MET collection). The exhibition was split into three sections, *Russian Costume from the 11th to the 17th Century*, *Folk Costume from the 18th to the Early 20th Century*, and *Urban Costume from the 18th to the Early 20th Century*,²⁵ each of which displayed items characteristic of the time and place they originated from.

The *Russian Costume* section is of particular interest due to the archeological work that was done to obtain many of these earlier pieces, none of which were wholly preserved. Garments that were retrieved closer to the reign of Peter I, however, were kept in better condition, which allowed visitors of the initial exhibit, as well as readers of the collection catalogue, to see the consistency of style during this period. It is important to note that not all objects are photographed, but they are all numbered and described. Additionally, the majority of images that are included are shown in black and white, which means that while viewers are able to assessing the style of the garments themselves, their knowledge of the colour of the garments and the finer details are restricted to the description provided by The MET of each item.

While accessories dominated this collection, as metals and stones were more likely to be preserved than fabrics, there are a number of seventeenth-century garments which are well preserved. The first of these is item 62 in the catalogue, an *okhaben*, a woman's outer garment (Figure 1). The photo shows a relatively simplistic garment, open in the middle, with sleeves reaching almost to the bottom of the body of the piece. A darker trim is seen around the edges of each side,²⁶ described as "gold galloon."²⁷ A boy's shirt, called a *rubakha* (Figure 2), is pictured on the same page as the *okhaben* and follows the same general style – with the notable exception of the sleeve length. It too is a simple t-shape, having loose garment with trim along each edge as decoration. As this is not outerwear, it does not open in the center, but does have a large slit which opens at the neck.²⁸

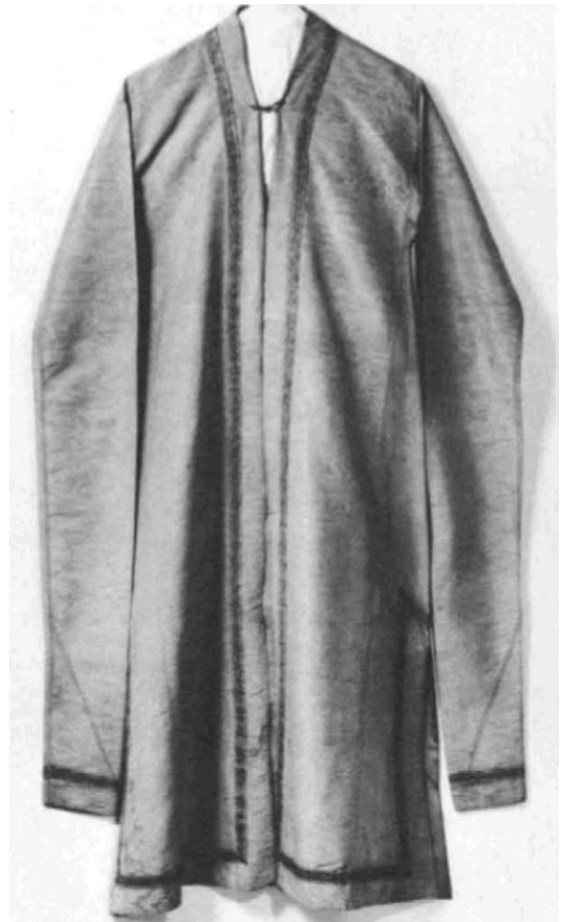


Figure 1. 'Okhaben (women's outer garment)' from The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *History of Russian Costume from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Century*. New York, 1976, 42.

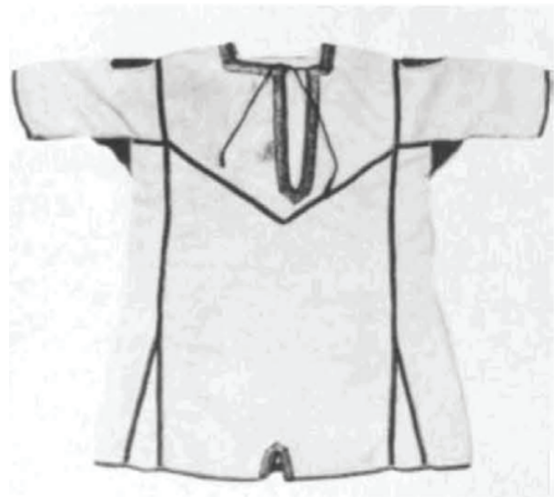


Figure 2. 'Rubakha (boy's shirt)' from The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *History of Russian Costume from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Century*. New York, 1976, 42.

²³ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume*, 8.

²⁴ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume*, 3.

²⁵ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume*, 9.

²⁶ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume*, 42.

²⁷ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume*, 37.

²⁸ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume*, 42.

Both examples showcase the simplicity of design that the average Russian would have worn prior to dress reform. While these were typical of the masses, clothing of the nobility or senior clergy members would have been more ornamented. The catalogue does not include pictures of these garments, though it describes two robes that would have been worn in religious ceremonies as having been decorated with pearls and precious stones and made of foreign fabrics.²⁹ As with other Russian-made garments, despite their increased decoration that served to show status, they would have been loose-fitting and long in the body and arms. Although these styles were cemented into Russian life for centuries, some of Peter's first reforms targeted clothing.

Sartorial Reforms

Fashion reform, like Peter I's other changes, started at the top with the Tsar and those closest to him before spreading downwards – first to the nobility, then to professionals located in high density urban areas and, finally, to the peasantry in the countryside. Even before formal legislation on dress, close associates and family members of Peter I were recorded to have worn Western fashions in their day to day lives.³⁰ Rather than allowing Western styles to infiltrate Russian society gradually, he mandated that members of the Russian court and all other officials abandon traditional garments in favour of the German style in an official proclamation of the Tsar – also known as an *ukaz* – in the year 1700.³¹

This initial decree targeted most demographics within the boundaries of Russia, but excluded members of the clergy and the peasantry – permitted they did not enter urban city limits. If, for any reason, a peasant were to enter city limits, they would be required to wear what became known as 'city clothes' in order to follow the requirements for Western dress, but could retain traditional ethnic dress so long as they remained engaged in agricultural activity outside of urban centers.³² In this time, these two groups were exempt from following the new fashion requirements, whereas those working or living in urban centers, those of the upper ranks, and those employed by the state, were required to comply with the Tsar's

demands. While it is unclear whether this was an intended consequence of the ruling, this subsequently deepened the urban-rural divide as it became increasingly visually clear where one was from based on the clothing they wore.³³

In addition to Western clothing, Peter identified beards as a hallmark of Russian tradition, and therefore included facial hair in his list of mandatory changes. Soon after his first sartorial reforms were instituted, the Tsar decreed that all townsmen must be clean shaven, or they would be subject to an additional state tax. Some records claim the tax could range between 30 to 100 rubles,³⁴ while others had strict values, at 60 rubles for merchants and other townspeople, and 100 rubles for elite men. At the time, the average salary of a Russian carpenter was just 10 rubles per year,³⁵ meaning it would be financially impossible for the majority to opt out of the ban on facial hair. To ensure that men either followed the law or paid the appropriate tax, licenses – generally in the form of small discs called *znak*³⁶ – were attached to the beard. The *znak* were embossed with writing and a small picture, and meant that the tax had been paid³⁷ and the man's beard did not defy state sanctions. To show how seriously this law was taken, for a period of time, barbers were stationed outside the city gates of Moscow to shave any man's beard who did not have the proper license.³⁸

Once these new laws were instituted, it was expected that they would be followed almost immediately, giving little time for the Russian fashion industry to catch up to legal expectations. When the first written rules were issued in early January 1700, those who were able were asked to abide by the legislation by Epiphany, which would happen two days later. Meanwhile, the rest would have until Shrovetide, which falls between early February and March each year. This timeline was impossible for most, so Peter I granted an extension until December 1 of that year for men, and January 1 of 1701 for women to follow the ruling.³⁹ Even with this extension, without the proper industries in place to accommodate the rapid change in clothing requirements, Russians were forced to turn to Western tailors and dressmakers as the internal fashion industry caught up.

²⁹ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *History of Russian Costume*, 39.

³⁰ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 21.

³¹ Christine Ruane, "Clothes Make the Comrade: A History of the Russian Fashion Industry," *Russian History* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 313.

³² Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 67.

³³ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 10.

³⁴ Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great*, 218.

³⁵ Matthew P. Romaniello, "Grandeur and Show: Clothing, Commerce, and the Capital in Early Modern Russia," in *The Right to Dress: Sumptuary Laws in a Global Perspective, c 1200-1800*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Ulrika Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 386.

³⁶ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 282.

³⁷ Stephen Graham, *Peter the Great: A Life of Peter I in Russia* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1950) 107.

³⁸ Graham, *Peter the Great*, 106.

³⁹ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 283.

Western Wear in Russia

The highly stratified nature of Russian society ensured that clearly defined boundaries isolated individuals and their families to a particular role. To this end, those closer to the top of the social hierarchy were subject to the most scrutiny by the Tsar for their fashion choices. During the early days of the fashion legislation, few tailors in Russia were trained in Western stitching techniques, nor were many aware of the latest men's and women's styles. Those that were trained in Western styles became overwhelmed with requests and were unable to keep up with demand.⁴⁰ In light of these challenges, as well as the desire to ensure they had the finest garments, top nobility was forced to turn to foreign designers to ensure they remained in the good graces of Peter I. This took place either by travelling abroad for the purpose of buying new clothing, or by having their new Western apparel imported.⁴¹ Both options were quite expensive, and was therefore either unattainable for the majority, or unsustainable over the long term even if one could afford travel or importation initially.

The high cost of foreign goods in combination with the fact that Western wear was required for all urban, upper class, or state-employed individuals drove the fashion and design industry in Russia. At first, Russian tailors resorted to replicating foreign designs that they had purchased. This had a positive economic impact as domestic labour and capital was used in the production of these garments,⁴² but it still heavily relied on foreign production, meaning prices remained higher than necessary. To encourage the domestication of the fashion industry, promote Western dress, and integrate general Western principles further into Russian life, Peter I campaigned to have European tailors move to Russia.

This began in the early eighteenth century as the Russian state assured foreigners that should they set up businesses in the Eastern country, they would quickly accumulate a large customer base. As there was a lack of appropriate garment manufacturers during this period, foreigners saw this as a lucrative opportunity. While the Russian state provided a stable business opportunity, they required the assurance that these foreigners would

employ Russians as apprentices in their shops, teaching them the intricacies of Western design and needlework.⁴³ This would ensure that, in a future with fewer foreigners living and working in Russia, their knowledge of garment making would remain in the country. It also allowed Russian nationals to use their knowledge of local fashion taste to adapt foreign designs that may be more attractive to their customers.⁴⁴ This campaign proved to be so successful that Russian tailors would often use foreign names for their businesses to attempt to fool customers into thinking it was a legitimately foreign shop. In many cases this was futile, but it did demonstrate the preference that Russians had for foreign tailors, especially in the earlier years of Westernization.⁴⁵

The opportunity to apprentice with a foreign tailor, while a promising opportunity, proved to be difficult for many. In order to truly infuse Russian society with European norms, the guild structure was introduced. A master who sat for and passed an examination would be inducted into the tailors' guild. He would then be permitted to set up his own business and hire and train apprentices and journeymen.⁴⁶ The conditions of these lower-status workers were often abysmal, with many living in a small workshop⁴⁷ where they worked long hours for little pay. In many cases, apprentices were treated as labourers, and it was not until one became a journeyman that their master would finally begin teaching the trade.⁴⁸ However, this remained a more favourable option to many.

Despite the attempts to domesticate foreign fashion and its production, many were hesitant to participate in the changes. Over the course of Peter's reign and his many successors, Russians of all social statuses would eventually adopt Western fashion as their everyday wear, though this did not occur as immediately as the Tsar had initially desired.

Rejecting Westernization

Social revitalization under Peter the Great is cited as the earliest example of a 'new order'⁴⁹ in which elites are able to show their loyalties to the ruler by adopting new forms of dress, or reject his principles by retaining aspects of traditional society.⁵⁰ Peter

⁴⁰ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 14.

⁴¹ Ruane, "Clothes Make the Comrade," 314.

⁴² Ruane, "Clothes Make the Comrade," 314.

⁴³ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 38.

⁴⁴ Ruane, "Clothes Make the Comrade," 314.

⁴⁵ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 38.

⁴⁶ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 25.

⁴⁷ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 33.

⁴⁸ Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 28.

⁴⁹ Igor Fedyukin, "Westernizations' from Peter I to Meiji: War, Political Competition, and Institutional Change," *Theory and Society* 47, no. 2 (April 2018): 215.

⁵⁰ Fedyukin, "Westernizations' from Peter I to Meiji," 214.

himself, along with his close circle, had been wearing Western clothing for years, as demonstrated by the orders for 'German Dress' and other foreign goods such as Rhine wine and mathematical instruments⁵¹ prior to the Grand Embassy to Europe of 1698. It is unclear how willing his associates were to change their dress, or if they did so only because of the Tsar's request. Whichever the case, they obliged. This was not the reality for the general population, however. As previously stated, Peter's initial expectations that Western wear would become the norm almost immediately after his January 1700 *ukaz*, was not the case. In response to the delay, Peter extended the regulations to take effect in December 1700 for men, and January 1701 for women. Even after this postponement, many who were subject to the laws chose to retain their traditional wear.

The younger generation of nobility was more willing to accept change, having been slowly exposed to foreign ways during their upbringing. Their mothers and fathers, however, were far more resistant. Having served Tsars Alexis and Fedor, both of whom had legislated against Western dress as well as being brought up in the Orthodox church, many saw Peter's choices as going against the word of God. The 1551 Stoglav Council produced the *One Hundred Chapters*, which intended to homogenize Orthodox traditions within the borders of Russia.⁵² Here it is explicitly stated that "the sacred rules to all Orthodox Christians warn them not to shave their beards or moustaches or to cut their hair. Such is not an Orthodox practice, but a Latin and heretical bequest of the Greek Emperor Constantine V."⁵³ In addition to the clearly stated religious expectations of facial hair which separated practitioners of Eastern and Western Christianity, it was a common belief throughout Russian society that God gave men the ability to grow facial hair, but withheld this power from women so that they would be reminded of their subordinate positions to their husbands and fathers.⁵⁴ Abandoning their beards in favour of a clean face meant abandoning these beliefs, an act that most were unwilling to participate in.

In terms of dress, those who wanted to remain in the good graces of the Tsar would often sport French or

German fashions in public, but felt more comfortable in loose fitting, traditional Russian dress which they continued to wear in the privacy of their homes.⁵⁵ This choice reflected the power Peter had as Tsar to impact the wealth and status of the nobility. Even those that did not agree with his principles, mainly for religious reasons, understood the possible negative effects their choice to publicly defy him could have. Choices of dress became inherently political; was it better to continue to align oneself with their spiritual beliefs, or to give this up in favour of political status? Everyone had a decision to make every day.

An anonymous 1708 letter claimed that the wives of the top boyars would only choose Western dresses when Peter was in Moscow. However, when he was travelling elsewhere, they would revert to their traditional clothing. The author of the letter went as far as identifying the offending women and their husbands by name in his writing.⁵⁶ Once again, this shows how the top nobility understood the consequences of their choice of clothing. Even the wives, who would not have been politically relevant to Peter's administration, knew their choice of clothing would have effects upon their husbands. When they were at risk of being seen by the Tsar, they would adhere to the regulations; but given more freedom, their choice, likely supported by their husbands, would be to return to traditional Russian clothing. "A German tunic worn by a German means nothing, but a German tunic worn by a Russian turns into a symbol of his adherence to European culture."⁵⁷ Conversely, purposely continuing to wear a Russian caftan became a symbol of adherence to tradition and protest against the Tsar's changes.

In Moscow, inspectors would issue fines to those who did not follow regulations, even going as far as to cut off the bottom of robes that went past the accepted length.⁵⁸ However, the fines appeared to be relatively ineffective as by 1720, two decades after the initial reforms, very minimal revenue had been brought in,⁵⁹ suggesting the enforcement of both fashion and the punishment was ineffective for the masses.

Much of the work around Russian dress reform focuses on the implications felt by the nobility as they

⁵¹ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 15.

⁵² Romaniello, "Grandeur and Show," 377.

⁵³ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 284.

⁵⁴ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 284.

⁵⁵ Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great*, 219.

⁵⁶ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 285.

⁵⁷ Zhivov, V. M. and Uspensky B. A. "'Tsar' i Bog:

Semioticheskie aspekty sakralizatsii monarkha v Rossii"

Quoted in Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 280.

⁵⁸ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 284.

⁵⁹ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 286.

were in more direct contact with Peter I. However, the legislation of 1700 also impacted anyone living and working in Russia's cities. Beginning in 1705, residents of Siberia petitioned the Tsar to be able to return to traditional dress due to the undue financial hardship that this change had imposed upon residents. Their request was granted in 1706, and traditional Russian clothing could continue to be worn without fear of punishment.⁶⁰

Although the majority of scholars who have pioneered the field of Russian fashion agree that the adoption of Western dress faced numerous barriers, and was generally disliked in earlier years, this opinion is not universal. In a 1987 exhibit review of the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, now Saint Petersburg, author Sandra Miller claims that members of the court were enthusiastic about the 1700 *ukaz* and needed little persuasion from their leader to don the "sophisticated looks sported at the court of Louis XIV," rather than their "unflattering image, beards and all."⁶¹ Her claim is unsupported by evidence, but remains critical to include in a holistic study of Peter's dress reforms. Whether intentional or not, Miller's writing shows clear bias in assuming the superiority of the West as evident in his not assuming that Russians of the 1700s enjoyed and wanted to preserve their unique styles.

Despite some contrary beliefs, confirmation through letters, fines, and continuous legislation prove that the adoption of Western dress was slower than initially desired. The efforts of Peter were not unsuccessful entirely, however, as by 1900 even the Russian peasantry appeared European.⁶² The efforts of Peter's subjects to resist change may have had some impact, but nothing would be enough for the Tsar to repeal his legislation.

Conclusion

Peter I's reforms began the sartorial transformation. Yet his expectation that such a massive social change would be accepted and instituted within a few years was unfounded. The barriers he faced were simply too great for this to become reality. From the association of piety with Russian dress and men's facial hair, to the lack of industry to produce Europeanized goods, the rapidity he sought for the adoption of Western dress in Russia was impossible. Fashion was used as a tool of allegiance or quiet rebellion, and despite efforts, there were limits to enforcement.

The changes discussed in this paper span only the first few years of Peter's sartorial reforms, however, this is by no means all encompassing. In addition to the work he did to modernize the Russian population, his successors followed his principles to further update Russia as they saw fit. Catherine I, Peter's wife, despite only being on the throne for a few years, continued to work on enforcing European transformation as did many that came after her.

⁶⁰ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 284.

⁶¹ Sandra Miller, "Russian Style 1700-1920: Court and Country Dress from the Hermitage," *Irish Arts Review* 4 no. 1 (Spring 1987): 61

⁶² Ruane, "Clothes Make the Comrade," 317.

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