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(Article begins on next page)

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‘Luxury beyond morals’: the rise and transformation of the concept in 18th century Russia.

Elena Korchmina and Mikhail Kiselev[1]

Abstract

Luxury has always been an intrinsic part of world history, but the words *‘luxe’/’luxury’* in the conventional sense are quite new, entering the French and English languages only in the 17th century. It was only at the end of the 17th century that the core of this phenomenon came up for discussion in Europe against a backdrop of development of international trade and incipient economic growth. During these debates, the concept of luxury was gradually demoralized by economic liberalism. A seminal role in the defining of the concept of luxury was played by translations. European thinkers coordinated their positions even if they disagreed with each other. How was the notion of luxury conceptualized outside the European Roman world? Russia is an interesting example that helps to understand it. The article answers when and why the concept of luxury entered Russian political thought and why although the luxury, finding itself outside the bounds of morality, continued to be only condemned in the economic sphere.

I. INTRODUCTION

Luxury has always been an intrinsic part of world history (Sekora, 1977, p. 51), but the words *‘luxe’/’luxury’* in the conventional sense are quite new, entering the French and English languages only in the 17th century(Jennings, 2007, pp. 79-105). It was in no way fortuitous that it was only at the end of the 17th century that the core of this phenomenon came up for discussion in Europe (Shovlin, 2006) against a backdrop of development of international trade and incipient economic growth (Allen, 2009). During these debates, the concept of luxury was gradually demoralized by economic liberalism and reshaped as a “modern and more objective economic concept” (Scott, 2015, p. 5). There were two different luxury debate according to Istvan Hont. The first was between

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republicans (‘ancients’) and Christians (‘moderns’). Its critics argued that luxury was the product of economic inequality, the cause of depopulation, and eventually corrupted honor and moral strength. Its defenders claimed luxury was an engine of population growth, higher living standards, the progress of the arts and sciences, and as a result led to happiness of citizens. “The second debate was amongst the ‘moderns’ themselves. The issue for them was not whether to accept modern economic growth, but how to make it politically and morally benign” (Hont, 2008, p. 380.). By 1762, the article on ‘Luxury’ by the marquis de Saint Lambert became a summary of the luxury debates by that time (Hont, 2008, p. 379). Thanks to the writings of such authors as B. Mandeville, J.-F. Melon, Voltaire and S.-L. Montesquieu, luxury was not perceived so negatively.

A seminal role in defining of the concept of luxury was played by translations or, as Sophus Reinert puts it, “emulations”, in so far as for the continental translators of key writings “there was no need to invent an entirely new vocabulary of political economy or of cultural practice…” (Reinert, 2011, p. 65). Thus, European thinkers coordinated their positions even if they disagreed with each other. Eventually the concept of luxury became a universal concept with a sole commonly accepted meaning. (Sekora, 1977, p. 6) Nowadays ‘luxury’ is defined as “a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense”, designating a thing (things) which is expensive or difficult to obtain, a rarely obtained pleasure.[2] But how was the notion of luxury conceptualized outside the European Roman world?

Russia is an interesting example that raises some questions. First of all, it was a relatively ‘backward’ country, where luxury per se was an essential part of the “imperial imaginary”. (Kollmann, 2017, pp. 129, 189-204; Hellie, 1999, p. 627). This contradiction caused real economic problems of indebtedness both at the state and the private levels. (See: Sherbatov, 2010) One way of fixing it was the introduction of sumptuary laws which became an important tool in defining the concept of luxury. We consider sumptuary laws as part of a polemical struggle, when rulers combined political posturing and practical reasoning. Thus, the investigation of the sumptuary laws in Russia reveals one of the ways of defining the concept of luxury.

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[2] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/luxury,
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/luxury,
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/luxury,
https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/luxury

Secondly, starting from the middle of the 17th century, and especially from Petrine times, Russia became more acquainted with European works of political economy and moral philosophy, translating and adapting them. Although "translators lost the security of compatibility when they turned to extra-European languages and traditions". (Reinert, 2011, p. 65). How did Russian translators accomplish the task of describing such a relatively new phenomenon as luxury? Did they accept transliteration or search for a Russian equivalent? How did they fill a vague new term with different implications? Translations caused obvious difficulties; coping with them, translators defined the new concept. This process constituted another channel in defining the concept of luxury.

The article falls into three parts. In the first part, the landmarks of the development of the term *roskosh* ('luxury') in the first half of the 18th century will be indicated. The second part is devoted to the history of Russian sumptuary laws until the late 1750s. We will show how the legislators tried to sketch what luxury was. In the third part we will answer the questions as to when and why the concept of luxury entered the Russian sumptuary laws and what changes it caused.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF ROSKOSH ('LUXURY') IN RUSSIA TILL THE LATE 1750S AND THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSLATIONS

During the 17th and 18th centuries the notion of *roskosh* ('luxury') drifted from primarily a moral and aesthetic category to a concept imbued with a variety of connotations, especially economic ones. It was not a linear process, but the trend is noticeable.

The notion of *roskosh* ('luxury') came into the Russian language from Polish. The word and its derivatives, such as: *roskoshnik*, *roskoshno*, *roskoshnyi*, could be found in Russian texts since the 17th century. All of them referred both to weltering in pleasure and to excessive spending. One of the texts of the 17th century defined the meaning of the concept of *roskosh* as "enjoyment of abundance". (Slovar', 1997, Vol. 22, p. 214) In his famous "Trilingual Lexicon" F.P. Polikarpov suggested a synonym of *sladostrastno* ('voluptuously') for the word *roskoshno* ('luxuriously'), a synonym of *sladostrastie* ('voluptuousness') for *roskosh* ('luxury') and so on. (Polikarpov, 1704, p. 79). Such a synonymous connecting of *roskosh* ('luxury') and *sladost* ('delight') was common not only for Polikarpov. The famous Metropolitan of the Petrine era, Stefan Yavorsky, warned the

audience in one of his sermons: “The devil does not show the danger of the fishing rod, but hides it with something: he baits either godawful luxury or sinful voluptuousness”. (Yavorskii, 2014, p. 207). In 1717, another well-known preacher of Peter’s time, as well as a translator Gavriil Buzhinsky, condemned in his sermon those who squandered the power given to them by God for false idleness. Such people, in his opinion, “are betraying themselves to death, because they are destroying health and strength with idleness, luxuries, sweets, fornication, impotence and drunkenness…” (*Propovedi…,* 1901, pp. 2–3.) Also, in the translation of “Introduction to European History”, carried out by the order of Peter I and printed in 1718, Buzhinsky rendered the statement “in omni libidinis ac voluptatum” as *vo vsekh roskoshakh i slastekh* (‘in all kinds of luxuries and lusts’), and in another place he translated *luxuria* as *slastmi i roskoshami* (‘delights and luxuries’). (Pufendorf, 1718, p. 97, 149). The concept of either *roskosh* or *roskoshi* (‘luxury and luxuries’) in Petrine times is met not only in the texts of clergy. For example, in 1715–7 the projector I. Filippov in his report to Peter I offered “those officials who, either by laziness or drunkenness or great luxuries, would cease to care about your Majesty’s affairs, should be dismissed”. (Pavlov-Silvanskii, 1897, p. 66). The famous author of the Petrine time, Ivan T. Pososhkov, instructing his son, warned him: “From wealth comes pride, vanity, gourmandise, voluptuousness, stuffocation, all indecent luxury”. (Pososhkov, 2010, p. 317.) Pososhkov linked the need for a moderate life, first of all, with the church commandments. So, in his “Book of Poverty and Wealth” he mentioned that “Jesus Christ …being on the earth, had neither the rich dress nor gourmet food with species,” and advised “for the sake of all-people’s protection that not only monks, but also the merchants should be kept from excessive drunkenness and from luxurious living, and most of all they must be secured from overseas drinks so they neither drink themselves nor serve round. So, it would be desirable that not only petty officials, but people of any ranks did not taste overseas drinks, thus they would not lose money in vain”. (Pososhkov, 2010, p. 136.)

Moreover, on October 22, 1721, Peter the Great himself, in a ceremonial speech in St. Petersburg which he edited personally, stated that “subjects should not be lulled with **luxuries and sweetness of peace** (*roskoshmi i sladostiu pokoya*) (emphasized by us), should not let go of weapons on water and on the ground which would always be kept in good order.” (Voskresenskii, 1945, p. 59) Everyone should follow this rule, because otherwise Russia would share the fate of other countries, which went bankrupt through such negligence.

On the basis of the foregoing, we argue that in the Petrine time the concept of *roskosh* ('luxury'), often used in the plural, as well as its derivatives, was associated with a delightful and sinful life. Luxury meant not only expensive goods, but also the process of obtaining a sinful pleasure, which partly could be achieved by consuming expensive goods. The church condemned it and suggested that a person should rather improve his or her own character, avoiding laziness and idleness, engaging himself or herself in useful activities, and keeping discreet moderation. So, in accordance with the church teaching, these rules were aimed at the salvation of a particular person. At the same time, the statements of Peter I and Pososhkov of the 1720s reveal that the problem of luxury already started to be linked with the strength of the state and its wealth: unnecessary luxury could lead both to a weakening of the state and to the impoverishment of its subjects.

One of the most important results of the Peter's reforms about modernisation was the strengthening of European intellectual influence. Before Peter's reforms Muscovite ideas about economics were based primarily on the religious doctrine of the Eastern Christian tradition. As a result, the European debate about luxury in the 17th century largely passed by Russian authors. However, in the first quarter of the 18th century, the reforms meant that the Russian reader was faced with the problems of acquisition of all European knowledge, starting with ancient authors such as Cicero. Consequently, the active intellectual adoption provoked by Peter I was scattered and slow, what noticeably manifested in case of the concept of luxury.

A number of important papers on luxury remained practically unknown to Russian readers. Thus, B. Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees" was not discussed or quoted in 18th century Russia, and a complete translation in Russian was published only in 1974. The delay in adoption of European ideas implied there was a significant time lag between the release of works in Western Europe and their translation and publication in Russia. Thus, "Political Essay upon Commerce" by J.-F. Melon, which revived the luxury debate, was published in 1734 in France, and as early as 1738 it was translated and published in Britain. This book was published in Russian only in 1768. The similar story happened with the treatise "On the Spirit of Laws" by S.-L. Montesquieu, which was first published in French in 1748, and his English translation was already published in 1750. As for Russia, the first part of this book by Montesquieu in Russian was published in 1775, and the complete translation was released only in 1809–1814. A similar fate awaited Voltaire's satirical poem "Le Mondian", which appeared in 1736 in connection with the debate about luxury and was

devoted to the protection of the latter. Its Russian translation was published only in 1797. (Aonidy, 1797.)

One of the consequences of the stressed fragmentation and delay of the adoption of ideas was that the key translated work on luxury in Russia by the middle of the 18th century was F. Fenelon's "The Adventure of Telemachus" published in Europe for the first time in 1699. Its Russian translation, made by Andrei Khrushchev in 1724, was successfully distributed in handwritten form, and in 1747 it was published on the direct instructions of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna. The book was consequently widely read, including by those with major roles in the formation of political language, including writing laws.

In order to understand better the nuances of the Russian translation of 1724, made by Khrushchev, (Fenelon, 2011). we compare it with an English translation made around this time by an Englishman, John Ozell. (Fénelon, 1719). In Britain there had already been an active debate about luxury, so the concept itself was already developed. To avoid confusion speaking about the concept of luxury we will use the following words: in Russian it will be '*roskosh*', in English - '*luxury*', and in French - '*luxe*'.

The comparison of the Russian and the English translations shows that for Khrushchev the notion of luxury was quite new and amorphic unlike for the English translator, as is clearly demonstrated by the following passages. Describing the island of Crete, Fenelon wrote: "*Pour le faste et la mollesse, on n'a jamais de soin de les réprimer; car ils sont inconnus en Crete…*" (Fénelon, 1793, p. 65). Khrushchev translated this phrase almost verbatim: "Roskoshi i slastolubie bez nakazaniya ostavleny, ibo togo v Krite ne znali" (Fenelon, 2011, p. 67-68). In his turn, Ozell conceptualized the original "*without punishment*" into the notion of sumptuary laws. "*As for sumptuary laws for suppressing Luxury and Extravagancy they have no need thereof, the Cretans being utter strangers to those vices…*" (Fénelon, 1719, p. 91). In England by the 18th century the sumptuary laws had existed for a long time, which is why Ozell easily saw the core idea of the limitation of luxury consumption.

The second case demonstrating the translators' level of knowledge about luxury describes temporality in the well-known monologue "O, Telemacus". Fenelon wrote that luxury goods are those things that people did not know 30 years before ("*des choses qu'on ne connaissait point trente ans auparavant"*). Khrushchev translated this passage without indicating any precise time (*«На всяк день новые нужды находят и не могут без таких вещей жити, которых прежде*

не знали») (Fenelon, 2011, p. 297). Ozell rendered it directly that "*people can no longer subsist without things, which thirty years before had not even been heard of*". (Fénelon, 1719, p. 232). Thus, the image of the complexity of the problem was not yet developed at that time in Russian society, unlike in English or French ones. That's why it is necessary to investigate which French words were translated into Russian as '*roskosh*', and into English as '*luxury*'.

Several French words and the corresponding adjectives were translated into Russian by the word '*roskosh'*. Here is a list of these words in decreasing order: *faste, luxe,*[3] *délices, vaine délicatesse, profusion.* Khrushchev was free to choose in each case how to translate. Both Khrushchev and Ozell always rendered '*luxe*' as '*roskosh*' and '*luxury*' correspondingly. But Khrushchev more often translated '*faste*' as '*roskosh*' than the English translator did. Moreover, as a rule Ozell used either several words ('*vain pomp*') or such words as '*pride*', '*vanity*', '*extravagancy*' to render '*faste*' when Khrushchev used only one '*roskosh*'.

What are the original meanings of the French words '*faste*' and '*luxe*'? In the dictionary by Antoine Furetière, from the late 17th century, the word '*faste*' has three meanings, but only two of them are relevant to us. The first implication is vanity, pride, boasting; it reflects corrupted feelings and people's unworthy behavior. The second meaning is magnificence related to Courts, the luxurious, magnificent way of a king's life, with a touch of respect and admiration rather than condemnation. The word '*luxe*' has two meanings both with negative connotations: weakness based on abundance, which leads to effeminacy and the wrong way of developing a state when it reached its fullest flourishing, a squandering of resources. Very roughly we can define '*faste*' as the origin of luxury consumption, feelings which lead to excesses in expenditure, but '*luxe*' is the consequence, the dangerous state of ruin both moral and economic. The English translator felt this difference, but the Russian seems to converge the reason *('faste'*) and the consequence ('*luxe'*). And this mixture was quite justified, as far as the original implication of the word '*roskosh*' was that of excessive feelings.

The combinations of two concepts by Khrushchev can be illustrated by his translation of the passage where both words were used and by the famous monologue "O, Telemacus". In the French original we read : "*On leur imputait aussi tous les désordres qui* ***viennent du faste, du***

[3] The word 'le faste' is about twice as likely to be used in the French text itself as the word 'le luxe'

luxe, et de tous les autres excès *qui jettent les hommes dans un état violent, et dans la tentation de mépriser les lois pour acquérir du bien*" (our emphasis). Khrushchev translated '*faste*' as *roskoshi* ('*luxuries*') and '*luxe*' as *nevozderhzannost'* ('extravagancy'). (Fenelon, 2011, p. 254) At the same time, the English translator was more precise: "*To kings also imputed all the disorders, that arise from pomp, luxury, and every other excess ...*" (Fénelon, 1719, p. 147) For Khrushchev these two words ('faste' and 'luxe') were interchangeable. In the Russian translation of the monologue the word '*roskosh*' was used eleven times, almost a fifth of the total. The word '*roskosh*' rendered the French words '*luxe*', '*faste*', '*volupté*',[4] and '*dépense fastueuse*'.[5] But the English translator adhered mostly to the original text, turning 'luxe' into 'luxury' and 'faste' into *'(expensive) ostentation'*.

Thus, Khrushchev made *roskosh* a collective concept, including excessive sentiments and vanity, on the one hand, and expenditure on expensive goods and pound-foolishness on the other. And it corresponds very well to other influential texts on political economy of the time: Sergei Volchkov's translation of the famous "Oeconomus Prudens Et Legalis" written by Franz Florinus, a 17th-century German theologist. Volchkov's "Florianova ekonomia" was first translated in 1738, but had several reprints. There were only eight cases of using the word *roskosh* ('luxury'). Sometimes it is difficult to define the implication of the term, but four cases are quite clear, when the word *roskosh* ('luxury') was included into the synonymic list of corrupted feelings: vanity, debauchery, sloth and so on. (*Florinova ekonomia*, 1760, p. 11–12, 27, 30) Two tokens have a clear economic meaning, the author warns not to spend money on expensive luxury living. (*Florinova ekonomia,* 1760, p. 38) Thus, we saw that around the 1720s-30s the word *roskosh* ('luxury') implied corrupted feelings and unreasonable economic behavior in translations of European writings vilifying luxury.

The above said two texts did not limit the translations which dealt with the problem of luxury. For example, luxury as a source of moral corruption was condemned fiercely in the treatise "Pensées de Cicéron", compiled by l'abbé d'Olivet, which translation was published with the help

[4] Compare: sans amollir les riches par des **raffinements de volupté -** Не оскудя богатых людей в **раскошах -** no need to corrupt the rich by the **refinements of luxury**.

[5] Compare: faire honte à tous ceux qui aiment une **dépense fastueuse** – посрамил всех, живущих в **великих раскошах** – can shame the fools that are fond of **expensive ostentation** and parade.

of Mikhail Lomonosov in St. Petersburg in 1752. Moreover, a lot of translated articles were published in the first Russian journals (*Ezhemesiachnye sochineniia,*1760, pp. 501–24, 1764, pp. 240–54).

An important feature of the set of translations of European works, where the concept of luxury was actualized, was that the notion was discussed primarily beyond the church discourse. In oft-stated "The Adventures of Telemachus," the concept of luxury was not associated with Christian asceticism and the problem of salvation. It dealt primarily with the impact of luxury on society. The latter was portrayed as one of the causes of moral corruption, which, in turn, led to various political disasters. The risk zone for such corruption was, first of all, the elites, who in fact were the only ones who could allow the systematic consumption of luxury goods. And here in Russia a remarkable contradiction arose: one of the consequences of Peter's Westernization was that the consumption of European luxury goods became not only easier, but also in some way an integral part of the elite's life, a testament to its European character. (Bugrov, Kiselev, 2016, 265–6). Actually, the Europeanized imperial court of Russia was supposed to maintain its brilliance at a sufficient level, thereby demonstrating the power of the empire. (See: Ageeva, 2008). At the same time, the transfer of the monarch's residence from Moscow to the port city, Saint Petersburg, contributed a lot to the fact that luxury goods became more accessible to the court elite. (Semenova, 1998, pp. 94–134.) It turned out that while translated influential Western European texts condemned luxury, the economic realities of Russian Westernization contributed to the proliferation of luxury goods. And here, some space for the emerging of sumptuary laws arose.

III. THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN SUMPTUARY LAWS TILL THE LATE 1750S

The Russian rulers started to promulgate sumptuary laws quite late, from the middle of the 17th century, when in some European countries such as France and England this practice had actually stopped, but in others (including, among others, Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden) it still persisted. (Hunt, 1996) Sumptuary laws were introduced in almost all countries, and Emanuela Zanda found some basic principles in their application all over the world. (Zanda, 2011, pp 105–7.) First of all, in each society the government considered it as its proper duty to regulate luxury consumption, otherwise the state would be at risk of weakening and debilitating. Luxury is socially disruptive because it dissolves the boundaries between different strata of society. Secondly,

protectionist concerns interconnected with sumptuary reasons. The third constant feature is "the duty of government to defend the heritage of the ruling class by preventing their impoverishment." But what Zanda found the most interesting was that "sumptuary legislation, whenever and wherever enacted, was about limiting and controlling the display of luxury rather than the actual luxury itself." As far as there are no special investigations of this problem on the Russian material, we cannot state right now whether all these features could be applied to Russian sumptuary laws. Although A. Hunt argues that sumptuary laws were a part of the Russian Westernisation project. (Hunt, 1996, p. 146.)

The first sumptuary laws appeared in Russia at the time of the Russian Tsar Feodor Alekseevich (1676–82). There were two decrees, which could be defined as normative, as they did not include any sanctions for violation of the law. The first determined which clothes court nobility should wear in the Tsar's presence, and the second obliged his subjects (*boyars*) to use carriages according to their status. (PSZ, no. 850, 902) In these edicts there was no explanation, that is why these rules are difficult to qualify even as restrictions.

The reign of Peter I was marked by revolutionary changes in different spheres, and the promulgation of sumptuary edicts was no exception. His legislation demonstrates very well that sumptuary laws are more than restrictions of luxury consumption; they included edicts imposing a dress style based on the European tradition and at the same time promoted and protected Russian industry. Thus, sumptuary laws went in three sometimes contradictory directions: a) the forced introduction of the European way of living implicitly led to an increase in consumption standards, including luxury goods; b) promotion of industrial development, including the development of crafts, aimed at the production of luxury goods; c) limitations of luxury consumption. The part of sumptuary legislation connected with Western dress has been extensively discussed by specialists who came to the conclusion that "by the end of the reign of Peter, any dislike of the edicts against Russian dress had been overcome." (Ribeiro, 2002, p. 102.) We will not discuss it here.

Analyzing sumptuary legislation, we will start with the law which promoted luxury production. The famous "Grant Charter" for Shafirov and Tolstoy was promulgated on 8 June 1717. The preamble denoted the purpose of this decree: "for the common good and good economy of our subjects, for merchants and all craftsmen thanks to whom all other countries prosper." (PSZ I, no. 3089) Shafirov and Tolstoy obtained the right (or the duty) to establish factories and produce gold, silver, silk, and wool brocade, and damask, velvet, satin, taffeta, gold, and silver lace, and

ribbons, silk stockings, and so on. A Russian historian, Nikolai Voskresenskii, stressed the importance of this decree signed in Paris; it became the basis for Peter's future industrial policy. (Voskresenskii, 2017, pp. 86–87). Thus, in the middle of 1717, while in Paris, Peter I adopted a law that promoted, first of all, the domestic production of luxury goods and refined taste, but after six months he strictly forbade people to consume these very luxuries by issuing another edict.

The introduction of the first Petrine sumptuary law was caused by economic problems and the Great Northern War, which was explicitly announced in the text of the law. In 1717, it was strictly forbidden to wear clothes embroidered with gold and silver, or to gamble. The penalty for the breach of this law was a fine, but its size remained unknown. (PSZ I, no. 3127) All subsequent laws started with the citation of this decree. In January 1718, there was another edict clarifying the previous one. When manufactures for producing silver and gold braid had been opened, it was permitted to turn out silver and gold lace, but these goods could be sold only in Saint Petersburg. (PSZ I, no. 3144, 3167) The reason for such indulgence was "to avoid unnecessary loss for manufactures". The edicts of 1718 influenced Russian commerce through the Trade Tariff of 1724. (PSZ I, no. 4452) The imported goods that belonged to luxury, even if there were no domestically produced analogues, were subject to increased duties. It is important to note that the term 'a luxury good' was not defined; only through practice can we find out what was considered as luxury.

The development of sumptuary legislation resulted in the Order of Ranks of 1722, where its core idea was formulated for the rest of the century: "every outfit, carriage and livery should **correspond with rank and social status**," (our emphasis) otherwise gentleship and dignity of rank were diminished, and many subjects would become ruined by expenditure on clothing above their rank and status. (PSZ I, no. 3890)

But, despite including sumptuary rules in one of the most influential laws, Peter did not introduce clear sanctions for disregard of the law, and this needs an explanation. First of all, we should take into account Voskresensky's idea that "for the most important laws Peter... signed the corresponding punishment invariably with his own hand." (Voskresenskii, 2017, p. 425). Punishment seems to be an indicator of Peter's attitude to a particular law, and it is possible the sumptuary legislation was only partly important for him as far as "... the protection of religious customs, morals stemming from religion, as well as good morals, was a secondary responsibility for him". (Voskresenskii, 2017, p. 234). But we have strong doubts that it was the case because the very fact he included sumptuary regulations in one of the laws that determined the history of

Russia, emphasizes how important fixing the permissible level of luxury consumption was to Peter. So, the second, and more plausible explanation is that the absence of sanctions signals that he did not understand to the very end how to control personal luxury consumption.

In general, during the Petrine reign the set of items which could potentially send inexperienced consumers to ruin was determined and it did not change much during the 18th century; dresses, carriages, and liveries for servants became the symbols of luxury. But the Petrine sumptuary legislation was aimed not so much at banning the consumption of luxury goods as at its regulation, the Order of Ranks fixed the permissible level of luxury; moreover, no clear sanctions were introduced for the violation of the law. To formulate these simple and clear rules it was not necessary to use the concept of luxury ('*roskosh*'), which was known to Peter the Great. The following emperors and empresses only defined the acceptable level of consumption.

After Peter's death, there was no new Russian sumptuary legislation for almost 15 years. Neither Catherine I, nor Peter II, nor Anna Ioannovna paid any attention to the restriction or prohibition of luxury consumption. [6] In 1732, the English Resident at the Russian court noted that he never saw such heaps of gold and silver lace laid upon cloth, and even gold and silver things, as are seen here. (Ribeiro, 2002, pp. 101-2) But there were some regulations aimed at the protection and promotion of luxury industries, continuing Peter's policy with a direct reference to his "Grant Charter" of 1717. (PSZ I, no. 6850, 6997, 7294, 6554) So, till Anna Leopol'dovna none of the rulers was concerned with restricting or prohibiting conspicuous consumption.

Unexpectedly, one of the most innovative sumptuary laws appeared in the short regency of Anna Leopol'dovna. (Ribeiro, 2002, p. 103). The most plausible initiator of the edict was Andrei Osterman. (Osterman, 1873) Although this edict contributed several significant updates, it was emphasized that all novelties were not novelties at all, because "…our ancestors had an intention to put it into practice…" (PSZ I, no. 8301) Who were supposed to be the ancestors (Peter I or Anna Ioannovna) is not clear. In the preamble, it was stated as a commonplace that a prosperous reign depended on nothing else but the protection of subjects from all excesses. Although the term *roskosh* ('luxury') was not used, the word 'excess' could be interpreted as 'luxury' in the modern sense of the term. In the text of the law only one item was mentioned – extravagant dresses with golden and silver decorations which cost more than four rubles. The lack of moderation in dress

[6] There were only some edicts regulating behavior: PSZ I, no. 4983, 29 November 1726.

could lead only to ruin, and the legislator stresses that through expensive dresses a lot of money left the country. The rhetoric of the law reflects the dangers of luxury consumption. For the first time, it was explicitly stated that all these rules did not relate to the noble elite of the first three ranks, the courtiers and foreigners who were not on duty. The struggle against luxury consumption was not to ruin the splendor of the court. The major legislative change concerned sanctions. It was pointed out that the only way to harness luxury was a general prohibition (*general'noe zapreshchenie*). (PSZ I, no. 8301) It is not entirely clear from the text of the edict how this ban was supposed to work, but the legislator wanted somehow to control the merchants' activity. During the 18th century, the legislator had never been so serious about limiting the consumption of luxury goods to everyone except a narrow stratum of noblemen of the top three ranks. It is hard to believe that Elisabeth did not know about this decree,[7] but in her legislative practice the law was never mentioned.

Elisabeth's reign became a turning point, when sumptuary laws became very detailed, the range of things subjected to regulation widened, and at the end of the reign, the word *roskosh* ('luxury') imperceptibly entered legislation. The first and the most complete sumptuary law was promulgated in the year after her accession to the throne. It looks like a program to which she never returned, regulating later only some features of luxury consumption. It is important that excesses and superfluity were considered by the legislator as an *obvious* problem for the state and for personal finances: "What a considerable loss to the State and the removal from the State of a considerable amount of money comes from the producing of extravagant dresses and the upkeep of a rich crew" (PSZ I, no. 8680). This phrase is likely to reflect the massiveness of the phenomenon (Chechulin, 1889, p. 61, 80, 82–83, 89, 90.). It corresponds with the narratives among nobles who were complaining about debts. (*Arkhiv*, 1871, p. 48.)

The motives for introducing a sumptuary law remained the same: to avoid the waste of money. But the explanation became more detailed: "but also those who do not have any ranks without realizing their extreme ruin, but only to show how elegant they, their wives and children are … wear a dress rich with silver and gold materials not according with their status, and … thus come to such an exhaustion of their estate, that they lose their villages by mortgaging and selling

[7] As we see later Elisabeth in her main sumptuary law mentioned the same amount of money (four rubles) as the maximum cost of the dress.

them" (PSZ I, no. 8680). As far as the subjects, primarily noblemen, did not understand that they spent more money than they could afford, strict state control was required for their own sake. For the first time not only males, but females and children are mentioned. The new law regulated the costs of dresses for any subject in Russia, including the top nobility unlike the previous edict of 1740, where nobles of the first five ranks were excluded. Thus, the expenditure on dresses for every rank was defined and limited to some extent.

Some changes related to the essence of the notion of luxury; for example, excess in consumption had acquired a shade of temporality and short-lived things were considered superfluous. Wearing dresses with overseas filament lace was forbidden because their price was too high compared with their fragility, so it was a waste of money.

For the first time Russian legislation not only specified the exact amount of the fine, but also introduced a mechanism of control. The fine was equal to the annual salary for those who did not have ranks, and to the costs of their dresses for the rest. The mechanism, how to distinguish a new "prohibited" dress from an old "allowed" one, meant that every luxurious dress must be sealed by a wax seal where it was not visible. It is difficult to imagine how this procedure could be put into practice, especially since who should stamp the dresses remained unclear.

As a whole, this law was a summary and continuation of the Petrine legislation, because one law, on the one hand, limits conspicuous consumption, but on the other hand, promotes domestic industry, including the production of goods of refined taste. This law introduced rules for each group of ranks, singling out especially the court and the noblemen of the first five classes. And regulating the behavior of the first four or five ranks remained the main concern of sumptuary legislation during Elisabeth's reign.

The intention to the distinguished nobles through sumptuary laws varied during the reign. The legislator sometimes gave direct instructions to purchase dresses that were expensive and worthy to be seen by the eyes of the Empress. On 2 December 1743, the Empress ordered people verbally to come to masked balls only in good and not miserable (*gnusnyi*) dress(PSZ I, no. 8827). On the occasion of the wedding of the future emperor Peter III and the future empress Catherine The Great (1745), a special decree was introduced, which ordered the nobility who would be in St Petersburg during the wedding festivities to prepare in advance the best dresses and coaches they could, and magnates could even get some extra money from the treasury in advance (PSZ I, no. 9124). The special attitude to the upper-class nobility was explicitly revealed in the decree banning

the import of silk and brocade items to all ports except St Petersburg (PSZ I, no. 10803). The capital was the main port, where the court of Her Imperial Majesty was situated, where all the noblemen and foreign ambassadors lived: hence luxury goods were more necessary for noble society there than for people in other cities.

Thus, despite a widespread use of the concept of luxury in Russian literature, sumptuary laws described the dangers of conspicuous consumption and regulations of luxurious consumption without using the word itself, the notions of 'excess' or 'superfluity' seeming to be sufficient. The main idea was to protect the existing social structure. And the social structure had to be visible; every subject should follow the rules of outfit according to their ranks. Neither sanctions for violation of these rules were introduced, nor these rules were clearly written. But, at the end of 1760 something happened, and in 1761 two edicts appeared mentioning the dangers of luxury.

IV. THE INCLUSION OF THE CONCEPT OF LUXURY INTO RUSSIAN SUMPTUARY LAWS

Until the mid of the 1750s the reign of Elisabeth Petrovna was relatively peaceful, with Russia not leading any wars. This break favored economic growth, increased the import of expensive foreign goods, and consequently led to the rise of conspicuous consumption primarily among the nobility (Gidion, 2008, pp. 116–25, 203). However, this changed in the second half of the 1750s. The beginning of the Seven Years war and the necessity to spend a lot of resources to supply the Russian army outside the country undermined the economy, and led to an urgent need to increase existing state revenues and to search for new revenue sources. These external reasons pushed the luxury debates to the next level.

On 31 of October, 1760, Count Petr I. Shuvalov introduced to the Senate a project about lightweight coinage. Part of the potential profit should be assigned to improve credit for the nobility and merchantry. But he worried greatly that this money would be used by the nobles not only for creating profitable enterprises, but also for luxury goods. To escape conspicuous consumption, it was necessary "to make an essay and to decree in such a way, when luxury would be brought into permissible borders, and thereby both noble teenagers and young people would be encouraged to achieve the advantages provided by the noble status, … and to prove their dignity leading a decent and moderate life." (Georgii Mikhailovich, 1896, pp. 233–4.)

The question about the impact of luxury on nobility was a concern for P.I. Shuvalov much earlier than 1760. In the second half of the 1750s, suggesting improvements in military education he appealed to the Greek history as a negative example: “being proud of victories” Greeks “weakened in military affairs, and indulged in luxury followed by peace, so laziness was born, through which both agility and courage disappeared” (Shuvalov, 2010, p. 167). He argued that “knowledge of political history and geography is necessary for anyone, but especially for a nobleman who is preparing for military service.” Thus, a young nobleman while studying history “examining the character of Sardanapalus, disdains a luxurious, voluptuous life, and therethrough despises the very luxury and voluptuousness” (Shuvalov, 2010, p. 206). Shuvalov arguing about the negative influence of luxury was concerned about its moral impact on young nobles primarily. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that according to the draft of the 4th chapter “On the obligations of the parent” (*O dolzhnosti roditelskoi*) of the third book of the Code prepared by the Legislative Commission in 1759–1760, the most important task of the parents was “to bring up their children in discipline and to put extreme efforts to train them in all necessary sciences and exercises, and most of all to hold them back from luxuries” (Obrazovatelnye proekty, 2015, p. 332).

In the Senate during the discussion on the project of minting a lightweight coin, a number of concerns were raised. So, Chancellor Count Mikhail I. Vorontsov wrote that “about a hundred thousand estates were pawned by the nobles”. Therefore, nobles invested received loans neither in industry nor in agriculture, but wasted them and finally beggared themselves. As many nobles, who already mortgaged their estates, wasted money on travelling abroad. (Troitskii, 1966, p. 77.)

P.I. Shuvalov made a number of amendments to the draft, and then in April 1761 it was approved by the Senate. However, the prosecutor general of the Senate, Prince Yakov P. Shakhovskoi presented his objections, who by this time already read the Telemachus by Fenelon. He claimed that the distribution of money on credit would contribute to conspicuous consumption both of nobles and merchants who parroted nobles’ behavior. In this regard, Shakhovskoi wrote: “Look at ancient history, you will see how much luxury, generated by excess profits in all previous monarchies, was multiplied by negligence, and how many misfortunes it made; let us think more closely, what compelled Peter the Great and his daughter, our Monarch, to stop luxury by many decrees.” So, the Prosecutor-General asked the Senate not to make hasty decisions on Shuvalov’s project, arguing that it would lead to indebtedness and impoverishment of the nobility. Moreover,

Shakhovskoi believed that because of both the rise of prices and the increased pursuit for luxury goods, those who failed to borrow state credits could start to seek out posts in the state and use these posts to increase their own revenues. As a result, the Prosecutor-General suggested rejecting the idea of giving out money from the treasury. He believed that it rather should be established a commission of men of merit to suppress the expansion and harm from the luxury by regulations, to define the level of luxury for every rank. If the Senate ignored his objections, Shakhovskoi threatened to appeal to Elizabeth personally. (Georgii Mikhailovich, 1896, p. 257-8).

It is noteworthy that according to Shakhovskoi's memoirs, in 1760, he could quote fragments of "The Adventures of Telemachus" by heart. Thus, in 1761, both P.I. Shuvalov and Y.P. Shakhovskoi was clearly familiar with the dangers of luxury for morale. But each of them made his own conclusions on how to deal with the economic consequences of the luxury spread.

On May 22, 1761, P.I. Shuvalov presented his counterarguments to the objections of Y.P. Shakhovskoi. He argued that "there are a lot of examples not only in antiquity, but even in modern times, when multiplication of money is not harmful at all to states, but otherwise brings substantial benefits; England and Holland, who abound in capital, have less luxury comparing with the poorer states wasting small revenues on luxury goods." But on the issue of luxury, Shuvalov agreed that "it should be stopped in less time." But, he mentioned that "its limitation should be implemented with great care and consideration." As a result, Shuvalov stated: "The establishment of a credit of four per cent leads not to the impoverishment of the nobility but to the enrichment and public benefit." Accordingly, "the commission on luxury cannot replace the establishing of a bank, because these two initiatives are very different at their core." (Georgii Mikhailovich, 1896, pp. 261-2). It is noteworthy that the senators decided to support Shuvalov's project, so in the end Shakhovskoi really appealed to Elizabeth Petrovna, and stopped the implementation of the project. (Iukht, 1994, pp. 138–39).

By the time of this discussion, luxury was the subject of close attention of not only P.I. Shuvalov and Y.P. Shakhovskoi. Thus, in the letter dated December 19, 1760 to the head of the Commerce Commission, Count Ivan G. Chernyshev, the Secretary of the Conference at the Court D.V. Volkov discussed the positive trade balance of the state, and argued that "luxury and passion for all kinds of other peoples' news is growing incredibly." At the same time, he emphasized that it would seem easier to stop importing all luxury goods, but he warned that such a prohibition would cause problems for the very commerce. (Arkhiv, 1880, p. 123). In circa end of 1760,

Elizabeth's minion Ivan I. Shuvalov suggested to establish a guardianship board, which would look at the villages of young people, not letting them ruin their estates by their passions and whims. (Shuvalov, 1867, p. 82.)

By March 1761, this debate about luxury reached Elizabeth herself. And an important role in this discussion was played by Senator Count Roman I. Vorontsov. On March 22, he informed the Senate that on March 18, when he was at court, the Empress was speaking of "the multiplied wasteful luxuries of young people" (*umnozhivshayasya rastochitel'naya poskosh molodykh ludei*) and regretted "that the young nobles were extremely ruined." As a result, the Senate decree was issued prohibiting to import unnecessary things, such as lace, blond, paper snuff-boxes, and other stuff like this.[8]

The Senate received this information and issued a decree on March 22, 1761 (PSZ I, no. 11218). On June 14, 1761, the Senate, following the ideas and care of Elizabeth Petrovna adopted a number of rules which limited the ability of young nobles to manage patrimonial estates, as well as borrow money. The last paragraph of this decree ordered that all bills of exchange which were drawn because of gambling should be declared invalid and destroyed (PSZ I, no. 11272). Additional regulations to reduce conspicuous consumption were prepared but were not eventually presented by the Senate due to Elizabeth Petrovna's death.

So, although the issue of luxury was debated in the Senate in connection with the project of Petr I. Shuvalov, the first normative act in which the concept of luxury appeared, was adopted thanks to Elizaveta Petrovna and Roman I. Vorontsov, who worried greatly about the situation of young nobles. And here it is important to consider that Roman I. Vorontsov seemed to worry about consumption of luxury goods not by some abstract young nobles but rather by his own son. He was ready to support the harnessing of luxury among youth for personal reasons. At that time his son, Alexander R. Vorontsov, was travelling abroad, and Roman Vorontsov was deeply concerned about his expenditures.

The letters of Roman Vorontsov to his son are very important for understanding the general reasoning behind Russian sumptuary legislation. They demonstrate the concern of a deeply loving

[8] Archive SPb II RAN, f. 36, op. 1, d. 1067, l. 16об. The first who drew attention to this note was L.N. Semenova, but she erroneously indicated that its author was Chancellor M.I. Vorontsov. See: Semenova, *Byt i naselenie*, 113, 133.

father over his son's actions over whom he has and, at the same time, does not have power. "Now I can only keep an eye on you… You are living in Versailles with young people, in your own will, you have money; you can use it decently or dishonestly, the only difference is that your intemperate living will force me to bring you back soon, and everyone will know why you will have to return." (Arkhiv, 1885, pp. 28–30.) The Empresses, both Elisabeth and Catherine II, seemed to feel the same towards their subjects. The only way to make the subjects obey was to deprive them of money and to subject them to public censorship.

During the whole year of 1758 Roman Vorontsov kept repeating: "Remember, my friend, that you went to study, but not to flaunt, and that you cannot make a good name by prodigality." (Arkhiv, 1885, p. 25.) "I also remind you: live abstinently, run away from extra expenses ... I allow you to enjoy fun, decent to your years, but only with temperance..." (Arkhiv, 1885, pp. 28–30.) At the beginning of 1760 he wrote a cutting letter to Alexander: "I am startled by the fact that you spent more than 15,000 rubles in two years, I know for sure that you were not motivated by necessity, but by pride and vanity alone" (Arkhiv, 1885, pp. 40–41). This letter upset Alexander, and he probably wrote to his father about his frustration, so in one of the next letters from 23 June 1760 Roman Vorontsov offered insights into the problem of expenditure. "Prodigality is one of those qualities that is harmful to a young man, it scares the father, because it may entail something worse. Although now I do not consider you to be extravagant, however, when I suddenly received a large sum of promissory notes, I did not know what such a sum of money was used for. Could I consider those costs as fair? ... At the very time when I was trying to hold you back from supposed wasteful expenses, I could hardly bear to keep from you what was happening in my heart .... I wrote to you that I would forbid the banker to give you money, but instead I wrote to him asking to give you what your needs and circumstances would require." (Arkhiv, 1885, pp. 43–44). Thus, the father's anger is no more than a just anger; he can be furious, but he never deprives his children of parental care and love. And in a letter from August/September 1760 he explicitly wrote about it: "I wrote to you that I would define and assign the exact amount that your annual expenses would not exceed; but after I wrote another letter where observing the wealth of our family, realizing your needs and costs, I allowed you to take as much money as you need to lead a decent life, these are the only consequences of my anger." (Arkhiv, 1885, p. 48.) It could not be by chance that the first sumptuary law appeared when Roman Vorontsov was very worried about his son, trying to limit his expenses, calling for strict adherence to the rules, but in the end, even though he suggested

his son spent more than he should, his father did not limit his expenditure, because of the expectations from others, a quite unlimited circle of people.

It is difficult to say who first used the word *roskosh* (‘*luxury*’), Roman Vorontsov or Elisabeth, but both of them used this word. (Arkhiv, 1885, p. 46.) And they certainly knew the concept of luxury not only because of Fenelon and other works, but based on their own experience.

V. CONCLUSION.

Thus, in the first two thirds of the 18th century the concept of luxury underwent a remarkable transformation in Russian political discourse. In the first quarter of the century it was paired with problems of high morality of society and maintaining the positive trade balance, but in the early 1760s it additionally gained a new and important economic significance. For the ruling elite, luxury now turned out to be bad, not only because it reduced the positive trade balance and damaged morals. Luxury became bad because it began to ruin the nobility. In turn, this led to interesting transformations of the legislation related to the sumptuary laws.

Until the early 1760s the government, while regulating the consumption of luxury goods, was worried about the external labeling of the social hierarchy, as well as maintaining a positive trade balance. Shifts in the consumption of luxury goods to the nobility led to the fact that the concept that had existed before, mainly in moral reasoning, was needed first to describe new economic realities, and then to regulate them. In this regard, an interesting interaction of practices and concepts took place. In order to comprehend new practices, the moral concept of luxury was introduced, which eventually became an actual economic concept for the ruling elite.

By the early 1760s in the economic debates about luxury there were no voices proving its usefulness. By this time in Western Europe, thanks to the writings of such authors as B. Mandeville, J.-F. Melon, Voltaire and S.-L. Montesquieu, luxury was not perceived so negatively. However, due to the peculiarities of intellectual transfer the works of those authors were rather poorly known in Russia, and “The Adventure of Telemacus” by F. Fenelon remained the main book about luxury. But the main argument was about condemnation of luxury because of its negative impact on public morality. The presence of an unequivocal moral condemnation contributed to the economic condemnation, and all together strengthened the negative connotations of the concept of luxury.

Of course, in the reign of Catherine II, translations of the works of Melon and Montesquieu, and other authors in which luxury was defended were published. Moreover, the readers of such translations could react very positively to such essays. For example, in 1775 a Russian translation of an essay on "Luxury" by Jean François de Saint-Lambert was published in St. Petersburg (Sen-Lamber, 1775). This article, published for the first time in 1764 in Diderot's famous Encyclopedia, argued that moderate luxury did not lead to corruption of morals and at the same time promoted the development of trade and industry. One of the copies of this translation ended up in the library of a major Russian industrialist N.A. Demidov, who owned metallurgical plants in the Urals. According to his own handwritten note on the last page of the book, he read it on February 20, 1787 and gave a positive assessment of its ideological content: "It is aggravating that this is so true but not so much written about it." (Martynov, Osipova, 1979, p. 71.) However, this was no longer enough to steer the discussion of luxury in a positive direction. Accordingly, in 1794, in the first explanatory dictionary of the Russian language, "Dictionary of the Russian Academy", issued with the active participation of the president of the Russian Academy and associate of Catherine II, Princess E.R. Dashkova, luxury was defined as follows: "Excessive satisfaction of imaginary needs, preferring rarity in things and paying too much for them." The following examples were cited as examples of the use of the word luxury in the dictionary: "Luxury is a consequence and sometimes a source of damage to morals. The luxury of the fall of the state is the reason. Luxury produces high prices." (Slovar', 1794. Col. 164–165.)

So, luxury, even at the official level, continued to be condemned for both moral and economic reasons, which was reflected in the legislation. Although Catherine II proclaimed herself a student of Montesquieu, and also corresponded with another defender of luxury, Voltaire, she also issued a number of sumptuary laws. The manifesto of 3 April 1775 introduced the rules of acquiring and using carriages, as well as sewing liveries for servants, two main indicators of conspicuous consumption starting with the reign of Peter I. (PSZ I, no. 14290) In the preamble, it was stated that "at the present time, many noble families have financial problems, many others are almost ruined by hefty debts, and day after day luxury increases along with the high cost of living"; that is why the legislator introduced or in fact repeated the rules on how to live without debts. In the conclusion, she underlined that the status of a nobleman is based on inner qualities, but not on superfluous and useless external luxury, including carriages, rich clothes, excess of servants and rich decoration of houses. Catherine pointed out that there was no need to prescribe new rules; she

hoped the right mindset and education of noblemen would have its effect. Thus, Catherine declared the rules, but she was not even trying to consider all possible nuances, giving aristocrats freedom in their way of living. In about six months, despite the declared freedom, the supervision of the aristocrats' behavior was implemented in the Statute of provincial administration (PSZ I, no. 14392). The viceroy together with the urban and rural police had to suppress a variety of abuses, but especially "immense and ruinous luxury", which led to "excesses", "debauchery", "extravagance", "tyranny" and "cruelty" (PSZ I, no. 15 569). If employees of the city police department (*Uprava Blagochiniaya*) saw that servants' clothes were embroidered with gold and silver threads, they could cut off this 'luxury jewelry' and deliver it to an office of public assistance. Thus, Catherine did not introduce any penalties and fines in her sumptuary laws. She was hoping for the good will of her subjects, and somehow tried to find someone in a province who would be in charge of the application of the law, but it was obvious that the Viceroy could not afford to spend any reasonable amount of time on harnessing luxury. This is very visible when we touch on the cases when estates were put under the management of trustees because of a risk of bankruptcy.

Thus, the transfer of the concept of luxury to Russia from the Western European context that took place in the 18th century did not at all mean a mechanistic assimilation of all its meanings, or a complete acquaintance with Western European disputes about it. The intellectual transfer was fragmentated and lagged, which is why the book of its moral critic of F. Fenelon "The Adventure of Telemachus" acquired great importance in comprehending luxury by the middle of the 18th century, while luxury's defenders were ignored. In addition, the Russian economic context also had its own specifics due to the financial difficulties of the nobility. As a result, luxury, finding itself outside the bounds of morality, continued to be condemned in the economic sphere. That condemnation then manifested itself in the emergence of sumptuary laws.

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