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The Introduction of Playing Cards and Card Playing in Russia

Vyacheslav Shestsov
Tomsk State University
totleben@ya.ru

Abstract

This article examines when and how playing cards were introduced in Russia. The work presents an analysis of the causes and the process of card games adoption in the Russian Empire in relation to its Westernization. The paper shows the peculiarities and the meanings of the playing environment in noble culture and in the context of wider historical problems: the transition from medieval culture to modern history; the translation and the perception of cultural novelties; and the correlation of such categories as labor, celebrations and leisure. The article is based on various sources: laws, customs books, private sources, and literary works.

Keywords

playing cards – westernization

Playing cards emerged in Europe at the end of the fourteenth century and spread across European countries where variant national decks developed, e.g., French, German, Italian, and in other versions. Even so, the topic remains largely unexplored. As one scholar put it,

the study of playing cards reveals a great deal about the direction and force of cultural currents. This is well understood in many European countries. In Britain, however, it would be easier to obtain funding for research into the history of garden trowels than for a historical study of card games.¹

¹ Michael Dummett, "The History of Card Games," *European Review* 1, no. 2 (1993): 135.

This situation is happily changing,² and Russian scholars are conducting research into the topic, though the study of playing cards in Russia has not yet received much attention on the part of the international research community.³ This article seeks to introduce some of the results reached in that field of inquiry to readers outside Russia.

The history of playing cards in Russia is usually associated with the leisure activities of the Russian nobility of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and with the literary work and life of Alexander Pushkin, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy. However, playing cards had been widespread in Russian society long before that. The first historical evidence of playing cards in Muscovy dates back to 1586. In the *Dictionnaire Muscovite* compiled by members of the first French expedition to the mouth of the Northern Dvina, playing cards were mentioned along with such games as *zern'* (dice) and draughts.⁴ Based on the territory where the use of this particular term was recorded, it may be assumed that playing cards, as well as other articles of daily use in the West, were brought to Muscovy by the English who, in search of the Northern Sea Route, reached the mouth of the Northern Dvina in 1553, or by the Dutch, who appeared there in 1577. This is how, in the seventeenth century, European imports of playing cards to Russia were carried out. According to the rules of the English Muscovy Company, which enjoyed the exclusive right to trade with Russia, sailors were banned from playing cards; however, the reading aloud of those rules on a weekly basis may be indicative of their poor compliance with those rules.⁵

Nevertheless, the idea of playing cards being introduced into Russia through the discovery of the Northern Route is merely an assumption because there is no other definite evidence available in this respect. The *Dictionnaire Muscovite*

2 Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance: Gambling in Western Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); David G. Schwartz, *Roll the Bones: The History of Gambling*, 2nd ed. (New York: Winchester Books, 2013), Nicholas Tosney, "The Playing Card Trade in Early Modern England," *Historical Research* 84, no. 226 (Nov. 2011): 637–656.

3 Yu. M. Lotman, "Theme and Plot: The Theme of Cards and the Card Game in Russian Literature of the Nineteenth-Century," trans. C.R. Pike, *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory*, no. 3 (1978): 455–489; idem, "Kartochnaia igra." *Besedy o russkoi kul'ture: Byt i traditsii russkogo dvorianstva (XVIII – nachalo XIX veka)* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1997), pp. 136–163; G.F. Parchevskii, *Karty i kartezhniki: panorama stolichnoi zhizni* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Pushkinskii fond, 1998); E.V. Kovtun, ed., *Azart v Strane Sovetov*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Olimp-Biznes, 2012).

4 *Parizhskii slovar' moskovitov 1586* (Riga: Izdatel'stvo Latviiskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1948), pp. 107–108.

5 *Istoriia torgovykh snoshenii Rossii s Anglii* (Iur'ev: Izdanie Ministerstva torgovli i promyshlennosti, 1912), vyp. 1, 21, 71.

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TABLE 1 *The origins of Russian card terminology at the end of the sixteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth centuries*

Suits and court cards	Terms				
	Czech	Polish	Ukrainian	Belarusian	Russian
Hearts	Cervene (Ger.)	Czerwien	Cherva, chivra	Chyvra, cherven'	Chervona
Diamonds	Bubny (Ger.)	Dzwonki	Bubna, dzvinka	Bubni, zvonki	Bubna
Clubs	Zaludy (Ger.) Zir (Cz.) Krize (Fr.)	Zolodzi	Zholudz', zhir	Zhludi, zhludzi	Kresty
Spades	Zelene (Ger.) Lopaty (Fr.)	Wino	Wino, piki	Wino, piki	Wina, lopaty
Ace	Tous (Ger., Fr.)	Tuz	Òuz	Tuz	Tuz
King	Kral (Ger., Fr.)	Krol	Korol'	Kral'	Korol'
Queen	Svrsek (Ger.) Kralka (Fr.)	Wyznik Kralka	Wyshnik, kralya	Wyshnik, kral'ka	Korol'ka
Jack	Spodek (Ger.) Chlapek (Fr.)	Niznik	Nizhnik, khlap	Nizhnik	Kholop

1586 remains the only document in which playing cards are mentioned in relation to Russia at the end of the sixteenth century. Perhaps, playing cards had been known to Russians before the English and the Dutch came to the north of Russia. The Soviet linguist Vasily Chernyshev developed a hypothesis about the Czech origin of Russian card suits and court cards. Comparing Russian card terminology with Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Montenegrin, Polish, and Czech terms, Chernyshev discovered that it was the Czech terms that were closest to the Russian ones.⁶ For that comparison, Chernyshev used the Russian card terminology of the end of the eighteenth century. We have at our disposal the dictionary by the English traveler Richard James who visited Kholmogory and Arkhangelsk in 1618–1619. In that dictionary there are the names of Russian card suits and court cards of the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁷ This information, to some extent, refines the conclusions by Chernyshev, though, on the whole, confirms his overall hypothesis (see Table 1).

6 V.I. Chernyshev, "Terminologiya russkikh kartezhnikov i ee proiskhozhdenie," in *Russkaia rech'*, vyp. 1 (Leningrad: Academia, 1928), pp. 45–68.

7 *Russko-angliiskii slovar'-dnevnik Richarda Dzhehmsa (1618–1619)* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1959), p. 146.

According to Chernyshev, Czechs became acquainted with the original types of playing cards – Italian, French, and German – before other Slavic peoples did. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the production of cards in the Czech lands constituted an entire industry. Russian names for cards and suits were borrowed from the terms of partly “German” and partly “French” cards that were then in use in the Czech lands. German-Czech terms dominate the names of suits: “cervene” – “chervona,” “bubny” – “bubna,” “zaludy” – “zhlyudi,” and probably “zelene” – “wina” (both words meaning grapes). There were also French-Czech terms in use: “krize” – “kresti,” “lopaty” – “lopaty.” The names of court cards, by contrast, were dominated by the French-Czech terms: “chlapek” – “kholop,” “kralka” – “korol’ka,” the latter being the same for both types, and only term “tous” – “tuz” borrowed from the “German” cards. It is probably due to the fact that cards in the Czech lands were not strictly divided into French and German types that in the Russian language there were no such French or German terms left as, for instance, “srdce” (hearts), “kostky” (diamonds), “eso” (ace), “svrsek” (knight), and “spodek” (jack). The Polish card terminology, despite its similarity to the Russian one, cannot explain such Russian names as “bubna,” “kresti,” “lopaty,” and “kholop.” Only one Polish term – “wino” – is the same in all the three languages: “wino” (Belarusian), “wino” (Ukrainian) and “wina” (Russian). However, the name of this suit may have derived from the Czech word “zelene,” which, as well as “wino,” was used to refer to green leaves or grapes. The Polish influence is significant only in the card terms of Rus’ Minor and White Rus’: “dzwonki” – “dzwinka” and “zwonki,” “wyznik,” and “niznik” – “vyshnik” and “nizhnik.”

In general, though, the Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian languages have a common Czech basis for their card terminology, whereas specific Belarusian and Ukrainian terms were not reflected in the Russian language. Thus, Muscovite Rus’, White Rus’ (Belarus), and Rus’ Minor (Ukraine) may have received cards from the same source – the Czech lands – presumably at the end of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, cards were introduced into Muscovite Rus’ without the involvement of Belarusians and Ukrainians, who had experienced Polish influence.⁸

Chernyshev believes that playing cards were brought to Russia through its southern and southwestern borders by Greek and Moldavian merchants. Initially, they imported them legally and when they were banned, they smuggled them in. To support his hypothesis, Chernyshev points to the friendly ties between Moldavian rulers and Moscow and the eastward spread of the

8 Chernyshev, “Terminologiya russkikh kartezhnikov i ee proiskhozhdenie,” pp. 54–64.

Czech language and culture in the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries.⁹ But this historical argument seems to be of a too general and arbitrary character; furthermore, the import of cards to Muscovy were legal virtually throughout the seventeenth century. To date, there are no direct and accurate historical facts indicating the introduction of playing cards into Russia from the Czech lands. Subsequently, in spite of the linguistic similarities between the Russian and Czech terminology, the Czech origin of Russian playing cards cannot be asserted unequivocally. Research into this area is complicated by the fact that neither images of playing cards nor principles or names of card games of the end of the sixteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth centuries have survived to the present day which could be compared to European ones.

In the seventeenth century, playing cards were known, first and foremost, in the cities involved in the transit trade of foreign-made goods. Small wholesale lots of those goods were transported from Arkhangelsk to the cities in the basin of the Northern Dvina River and the country's central regions, as well as to the Urals and Siberia. One of the main places for the sale of foreign goods coming from Arkhangelsk was Ustiug Velikii. In the years 1633–1636, 1650–1656 and 1675–1680, there were around 2,225 dozen playing cards (26,700 decks) delivered from Arkhangelsk to Ustiug Velikii, which were sent on to Moscow, Vyatka, Blagoveshchensk, Sol Vychegodskiaia, Sol Kamskaia, Perm, and Kazan. The largest consignments were shipped to Siberian cities.¹⁰

Despite the widespread distribution of playing cards in Muscovy, according to customs books, they used to be imported in small quantities, considering the country's size. Trade operations with these goods in the domestic market were small-scale. Little demand for playing cards accounts for the absence of any evidence of a specialized craft activity connected with their production in the seventeenth century. The lack of card production may also have resulted from the scarcity of paper (domestic paper was of low quality, and so most paper in pre-Petrine Russia was imported and therefore expensive).

In the seventeenth century, card games along with dice were considered to be one of the several social vices. The Russian historian Nikolai Kostomarov wrote that *zern'* (dice) and playing cards were seen as the "most reprehensible pastime" and were attributed to the "favorite amusement of idlers, revelers,

9 Ibid., pp. 59–60.

10 The statistics are drawn from *Tamozhennye knigi Moskovskogo gosudarstva XVII v. Severnyi rechnoi put': Ustiug Velikii, Sol'vychehodsk, Tot'ma v 1633–1636, 1650–1656, 1675–1680* 22. (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1950–1951), vols. 1–3.

scoundrels, and the depraved.”¹¹ Indicative of this view is the first evidence concerning playing cards, which appears in 1613, and involves the case against the ambassadors to the German lands Stepan Ushakov and Semion Zaborovsky. The interpreter Timofei Fanelin, in his testimony, described the following row with the German nobility which took place on their way to Berlin:

The German nobles were playing cards, and there came Stepanov’s attorney who was drunk and started to turn their cards ... and that made the nobles very upset, they pushed him away from the table; he was about to start fighting with them when Timofei himself hit the guy with a stick.¹²

According to records, gambling was widespread among servicemen, especially in Siberia (where the largest numbers of playing cards used to be sent). Games often turned into fights and provoked robbery, theft, and murder; they were associated with drunkenness and a low level of moral conduct. Servicemen often lost their property, state-owned weapons, and pay.¹³ In many injunctions by tsars and military governors, there was a set phrase used to oblige governors and officials to deter the military from doing bad things, so that they “did not carouse and get drunk or illegally keep any wine, tobacco, brothels or *zern*.”¹⁴

City administrations and officials were, under the threat of punishment, banned from playing dice and card games or deriving profits from gambling. In instructions given by a governor of Yakutsk to a customs officer it was stated that if “anybody undertakes ... to keep cards and dice for sale and you, the customs officer, will keep silent about that ... or even take bribes for your silence or if you yourself start dealing with cards or *zern*, ... you will be mercilessly punished by order of the Sovereign.”¹⁵ Recurrent bans are indicative of the fact

11 N.I. Kostomarov, *Ocherk domashnei zhizni i nraov velikorusskogo narvoda v XVI–XVII stoletiiakh* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia K. Vul’fa, 1860), p. 144.

12 *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii Drevnei Rossii s derzhavami inostrannymi*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Vtorogo Otdeleniia Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1852), pp. 1076–1079.

13 *Akty istoricheskie* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Vtorogo Otdeleniia Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1842), vol. 4, no. 74; vol. 3, no. 193; *Akty, otnosiashchiesia do iuridicheskogo byta drevnei Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Akademii nauk, 1864), vol. 2, no. 230.

14 *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter *PSZ*), First Series (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Vtorogo Otdeleniia Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1830), vol. 3, no. 1540.

15 *Dopolneniia k Aktam istoricheskim* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A. Transhelii, 1848), vol. 3, no. 7.

that the laws were not always observed and so it may be assumed that all of these documents reflected not the actual but the desired state of affairs.

There were nationwide legislative measures taken against gambling as well. The Decree of 1648 prohibited “any diabolic action, mockery, and buffoonery with all sorts of diabolic games,” including dice, playing cards, chess, and draughts.¹⁶ This Decree led to a drastic decrease in the importation of cards to Russia. If in the years 1633–1636 there were about 548 dozen decks of cards delivered to Ustiug Velikii from Arkhangelsk, in 1650–1651 this number fell by one half, to only 249 dozen. In 1652–1656 the importation of cards to Ustiug Velikii ceased entirely. After the death of the Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich in 1676, and probably due to the “pent-up demand” that formed during his reign, the importation of cards resumed and even increased, if compared to 1650–1651, by approximately six times: from 1676 to 1680, under the new Tsar Fyodor Alexeevich, there were around 1,428 dozen decks brought into Ustiug Velikii.¹⁷

According to the Law Code of 1649 – the *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* – gambling was banned but the game itself did not constitute a crime itself and was only considered as one of the causes of crime. Gamblers, if there were no thefts or any other serious crimes committed by them, would have to pay a fine or be whipped in public on the square.¹⁸

The Orthodox Church was also among those opposed to gambling and it was the Church that initiated the Decree of 1648. The Church’s Book of One Hundred Chapters – the *Stoglav* of 1551 – referenced the rules of the Sixth Ecumenical Church Council, barring not only pagan dances and games but also such secular games as chess, draughts, and dice, though there was no specific reference in the rules of the Council about these “dances and games.”¹⁹ Prohibiting chess, the tsar himself did not adhere to the ban. It is known that Ivan the Terrible died at the chessboard. In the *Domostroi*, games were seen as a vicious passion:

Demons will rejoice and gather together, seeing that their time has come, and will do whatever they want roistering and playing dice and chess, and other games that they find amusing.²⁰

16 *Akty istoricheskie*, vol. 4, no. 35.

17 The statistics are drawn from: *Tamozhennye knigi Moskovskogo gosudarstva XVII v.*

18 *Sobornoe Ulozhenie 1649 g.*, in *Rossiiskoe zakonodatel'stvo x–xx vekov*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1986), p. 232.

19 *Stoglav*, in *Rossiiskoe zakonodatel'stvo x–xx vekov*, 2:368 (chap. 92).

20 *Domostroi* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1985), pp. 80–81.

The literary and pedagogical text “On Children’s Manners” which is a translation into Russian of the writings by Erasmus of Rotterdam “De civilitate morum puerilium” (1530) dates back to the beginning of the third quarter of the seventeenth century. It was translated by the Russian-Ukrainian writer Epiphanius Slavinetsky by the governmental order to establish European norms of behavior in Russia. There are references made in the text as follows: “Games which are commanded to be refrained from are: dicing, playing cards, and bathing.”²¹ When making contractual records of employment or of acceptance of a person as an apprentice to a craftsman, it was definitely stipulated that a worker or a student not only has to “do all work obediently,” but also “not to drink, play dice or cards and not to go to taverns.”²²

However, despite the fight against gambling on the part of state authorities and the Church, it was one of the sources of income for local municipal budgets. Military governors, using public money, would buy playing cards and give them to private individuals to organize gambling and to judge in the event of disputes between players.²³ Thus, in 1624, a governor of the Siberian city of Tara appealed to the Siberian Chancellery (*Siberskii Prikaz*), which ruled Siberia, to ban gambling in the town, as it led to theft and other crimes. The Siberian Chancellery replied that it was impossible because dice and cards in the city of Tara had long been enjoyed by private persons and constituted a source of public revenue. Governors were to keep an eye on those who played such games so that they played quietly and did not commit any crimes in case of losses.²⁴ Games of chance were held in state-owned taverns where servicemen, industrialists, and traders spent a significant amount of their time. Thanks to the players, the consumption of alcohol was high; and as games attracted traders, state revenues from the sale of vodka and customs fees increased. That is why state officials – heads of taverns and of customs – organized the gambling, the revenue from which went not only into municipal budgets but into their own pockets, as well. In 1649, with regard to the ban on gambling, the governor of the Dvina region wrote to Novgorod that “in previous years, when dice and playing cards were allowed in taverns, there used to be more

21 V.V. Bush, *Pamiatniki starinnogo russkogo vospitaniia* (Petrograd: Tipografia Kiugel’gen, 1918), p. 54.

22 A.A. Liutsidarskaia, *Starozhily Sibiri* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1992), p. 170.

23 “Kniga raskhodnaia (1622–1623) Turinskogo ostroga,” in *Akty, otnosiashchiesia do iuridicheskogo byta drevei Rossii*, vol. 2, no. 143.

24 S.B. Veselovskii, “Azartnye igry kak istochnik dokhoda Moskovskogo gosudarstva v XVII veke,” in *Sbornik statei, posviashchennykh V.O. Kliuchevskomu* (Moscow: Tipografia S.P. Iakovleva, 1909), pp. 305–306.

players and pitukhs (drunkards and barflies), and so customs duties and vodka fees used to be high." In 1668, residents of the city of Tiumen responded in the same way to the governor of Tobolsk, namely that "if dice and playing cards are prohibited, no one will drink state vodka." For that reason, and especially in Siberia, the practice of private individuals buying out games of chance continued to exist in the eighteenth century as the state feared that "if to abolish that, gambling will not stop, the state treasury will lose revenues, and governors themselves will start to exploit the malign passions of the population for their own benefit."²⁵

During the reign of Peter the Great (1689–1725) the demand for playing cards increased: from 1716 through 1723 there were 2,873 dozen (34,476 cards) packs imported into Russia through the cities of Arkhangelsk and St. Petersburg. In 1722 there was a cards manufacturing works owned by the merchant Vasilii Korotkii, and, in 1724, another one owned by Dutchman Nikolai Fanderstam.²⁶ The "diary" of the Holstein noble F.W. Bergholz, who lived in Petersburg and in Moscow in 1721–1722, mentions four card games played in Russia at that time: Marriage, L'Hombre (*lombre*), L'Entrée and King. Bergholz played "Marriage" with an unknown Russian noble on his way from Narva to St. Petersburg even not knowing the Russian language. Bergholz had learned about the "unique and clever" Russian game of kings from Duke Karl Friedrich and offered a thorough description of it. The foreign diplomatic corps played L'Hombre – a card game that originated in Spain in the sixteenth century – and in the German Quarter, Bergholz played L'Entrée²⁷ with the wives of Dutch and German merchants. But what kind of game it was and what the rules were, remain unknown. Thus only one of the four card games mentioned by Bergholz had a Russian origin, while the other three were European. All these games were games of skill, where the gain depended more on the skill and qualities of the player rather than on chance. These did not require significant money; the games were played not for large gain or loss (which is more relevant for gambling), but rather for the process itself.

25 Veselovskii, "Azartnye igry kak istochnik dokhoda Moskovskogo gosudarstva v XVII veke," p. 311.

26 *Istoriia Moskvy*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953), p. 25; E.I. Zaozerskaia, *Razvitie legkoi promyshlennosti v Moskve v pervoi polovine XVIII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953), pp. 208–210, 334–336; A.V. Kovrigina, "Inozemnye kupty-predprinimateli Moskvy petrovskogo vremeni," *Torgovlia i predprinimatel'stvo v feodalnoi Rossii* (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1994), pp. 193, 204.

27 *Dnevnik kamer-iunkera F.V. Berkhgol'tsa, 1721–1725 22*. (Moscow: Tipografiia Moskovskogo universiteta, 1902), 1: 24–25; 2: 8, 191, 202.

The rather scarce information from Bergholz on card games as compared to the testimonies of contemporaries and foreigners on the times of Catherine the Great leads to the conclusion that card games were not a widespread leisure activity among the nobles in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. An important factor here was that Peter the Great himself did not like to play cards and hence these were not a feature of the court balls that he introduced.²⁸ In Petrine times the presence of Moscow-fashioned antiquity was still being felt, and its devotees continued to adhere to the traditional ideal of life, according to which the game was seen as a “devilish act” inappropriate for Orthodox people. For instance, I.T. Pososhkov, the first Russian economist, who used to voice his original ideas on the development of entrepreneurship, defined the card game as something typical of “Lutheran misbelief,” which had,

not seen or heard in their newly invented creed of a living or dead Wonderworker appearing. The only wonderworkers we see aplenty are those who can till midnight and till the very dawn sleeplessly ride and dance, drink with musicians and play cards ... All us faithful people may the God save from such wonderworking of theirs.²⁹

To P.A. Tolstoy, a cupbearer who visited Venice in 1697–1698, a professional gambling house with many thousands turnover and the participation of women seemed unusual.³⁰

In the post-Petrine period, in the era of palace revolutions (1725–1762), gradually a significant layer of nobles had formed who were free of public duties. These nobles viewed the superficial replication of the European lifestyle as their new way of life. “The result of the western influence is a heavy feeling of leisure games and amusement,” wrote the famous nineteenth-century historian V.O. Kliuchevskii. “This was because we initially needed the western influence to deal with urgent and pressing matters, but in the course of the eighteenth century it fell on those who lived at the benefit of other people’s labor and had nothing much themselves to do, and thus filled their leisure time with games and amusement.”³¹ This “leisure class,”³² which was looking to European

28 *Dnevnik kamer-iunkera F.V. Berkhgol'tsa*, 2: 70–71.

29 I.T. Pososhkov, *Zaveshchanie otecheskoe k synu* (Moscow: Tipografia A.I. Mamontova, 1873), pp. 176–177.

30 “Puteshestvie stol'nika P.A. Tolstogo 1697 i 1698 gg.,” *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 4 (Moscow: Tipografia Moskovskogo universiteta, 1888), pp. 548–549.

31 V.O. Kliuchevskii, “Zapadnoe vliianie v Rossii posle Petra,” *Neopublikovannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), p. 112.

32 See T. Veblen, *Teoriia prazdnogo klassa* (Moscow: Progress, 1984).

nobles and increasingly alienated from its own national past, began to form at the court of Empress Anna of Russia (1730–1740). The ostentatious and wasteful consumption and indolence became for them a required norm, a duty. The people close to the Empress strove to draw attention upon themselves, make an impression by competing amongst themselves in the luxury of their carriages and house adornments, in their expensive clothes, in jewelry and in insignias.

“Quite applicable to the Russians of that time is the observation made by C.H. Manstein, a Prussian general in Russian service, to the late Polish king [August II] about some of the nobles of the court: “My lord, one should make the city gates far wider so that all the nobles who carry entire villages on their shoulders can pass through.”³³ D.A. Korsakov, a Russian historian of the nineteenth century, wrote:

The luxury of the court of Anna of Russia would astonish with its splendor even the tried eye of the nobles of the Windsor and Versailles courts. The wife of an English resident, lady Rondo is in raptures over the splendor of court festivities in Petersburg that would convey her with their magic setting into the land of fairies and remind her of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. These festivities also amazed the spoiled marquis of Louis XV’s court and his ambassador in Russia, de la Chetardie. Balls, costume balls, “*kurtagi*” [imperial outings], tours, Italian opera, full-dress dinners, ceremonial receptions of ambassadors, military parades, weddings of high-profile persons, and fireworks would succeed each another in a colored kaleidoscope and consume the golden rain of *chervontsi* that fell on them lavishly from the treasury.³⁴

It was during the reign of Empress Anna that card games were introduced to court, particularly European gambling games Quintich and Pharaoh. Here is the description of it from contemporaries: “Great games were played at the court, from which many have made their fortune and the majority went to rack and ruin. Often times I happened to see one would lose up to 20 thousand rubles in a single sitting of Quintich or Pharaoh.”³⁵ “The Empress’s reception looked like private gatherings. Her royal circle is assembled for some half an hour. Afterwards the empress and the princesses [Elizabeth of Russia and

33 Kh.G. Manshtein, *Zapiski istoricheskie, grazhdanie i voennye o Rossii s 1727 po 1744 god*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izdatel’ T. Malygin, 1823), p. 56.

34 *Iz zapisok kniazia P.V. Dolgorukova. Vremia imperatora Petra II i imperatritsy Anny Ioanovny* (Moscow: Nizhne-Volzhscoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1989), p. 134.

35 *Iz zapisok kniazia P.V. Dolgorukova*, pp. 58–59.

Anna Leopoldovna] sit to play cards; their lead was followed by those who stay and love the game.”³⁶ The empress herself played to lose: “She kept the bank but only allowed those she chose to lose; and whoever won she would immediately pay; and as normally the game was played with marks, she would never take money from those who lost to her.”³⁷ Lady Rondo, the wife of an English resident at the Russian court, informed her fellow countrywoman:

The wife of the Polish minister [the Polish-Saxon ambassador Le Fort] hosts gatherings every evening with all the people of good society, but to my sorrow most of these come to play, although it is not strictly required to do so. People come to these gatherings whenever they want, without any invitation; for those who wish to stay there is dinner sometimes, and I think that a conversation there would be quite pleasant if only cards were not known in Russia.³⁸

Significantly, the rooms of the ice house, where in 1740 a buffoonish wedding of Prince M.A. Golitsyn took place, had among such necessary items as a bed, table, chairs, dinnerware, mirror, candlesticks, and a clock for card playing.³⁹ On Voznesenskaia Street in St. Petersburg, the first specialized gambling house of a German woman known as Drezdensha was opened.⁴⁰

Thus in the contest of mirroring everything European, the Russian leisure class adopted from its West European counterpart, among other superficial culture elements, also the European card games as a means of decent and decorous (and ostentatiously-leisure in nature) pastime and as one of the forms of conspicuous consumption. On the backdrop of constant increase in ostentatious spending that would indicate one’s high social standing and ensure respect of others, a win in a gambling game became the source of funds for such spending, while a loss (the bigger, the better) was a proof of financial well-being.

36 *Pis'ma ledi Rondo* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel' R. Isakov, 1874), pp. 52–53.

37 Manshtein, *Zapiski istoricheskie*, pp. 58–59.

38 “Lediano dom, postroennyi v S-Peterburge, v 1740 g. Opisanie ochevidtsa akademika Georga Vol'fganga Krafta,” *Russkaia Starina* 7 (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo M.I. Semevskogo, 1873), pp. 354–360.

39 *Pis'ma ledi Rondo*, pp. 11–12.

40 See M.I. Pyliaev, “Azartnye igry vstarinu,” *Staroe zhit'e* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A.S. Suvorina, 1897), 22; “Zapiski M.V. Danilova, artillerii maiora napisannye im v 1771 godu (1722–1762),” *Bezvremen'e i vremenshchiki: Vospomaniia ob "epokhe dvortsovykh perevorotov" (1720–1760-e gody)* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991), pp. 316–317.

During the reign of Empress Elizabeth (1741–1761) the ostentatious indolence and conspicuous consumption in the empress' court continued to gain momentum. For instance, count P.I. Shuvalov had such capabilities as to “treat the unexpectedly arrived empress, and a considerable number of courtiers with her, to a dinner served as if purposefully prepared; and that was to his merit, and he enjoyed profound respect from the court at least, despite various fluctuations in his or her majesty's regard.”⁴¹ Those who had “indecent country-like dresses” were not allowed to court costume balls under the threat of punishment.⁴²

For many representatives of the court nobility, the mirroring and near complete copying of the European lifestyle was the main manifestation of their adherence to European culture, which had the effect of disassociating the nobles from their own national past. V.O. Kliuchevskii identified two typical examples of this manifestation: a “Petimetr” and a “Coquette”:

A petimetr is a noble gallant, brought up in the French manner; the rest of Russia did not exist for him or existed only as an object of ridicule; he despised the Russian language as much as he did German; he would not want to know anything about Russia ... A coquette is a noble lady, brought up in the French manner and could be called a petimetr's sibling but for the sometimes not very familial relationships between them. She would feel at home anywhere except in her own country. Her entire worldly catechesis consisted in dressing up elegantly, making a gracious coming out, a nice bow, and a delicate smile.⁴³

Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, the leisure class began to grow, largely because the material well-being of nobles was improving: the “dividends” from taking part in palace revolutions, the distribution of peasants and state enterprises, the revenue from distillation and bread exports, cheap loans from the Bank of the Nobility (*Dvorianskii bank*), and the increased duties of peasant serfs offered exciting possibilities for the satisfaction of material needs. Following the court, the capital and provincial nobles began to get accustomed to a high-society lifestyle and maintain a considerable level of consumption,

41 *Opovrezhdenii nraovv Rossii kn. M. Shcherbatova i "Puteshestvie" A. Radishcheva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), p. 60.

42 N.I. Grigorovich, “Maskarady v 1750–1752 gg.,” *Russkaia starina* 11 (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo M.I. Semevskogo, 1874), pp. 775–776.

43 Kliuchevskii, *Russkaia istoriia. Polnyi kurs lektsii*. 3 vols. (Moscow: Mysl', 1993), 3: 346.

including gambling. This material well-being also became possible due to the fact that nobles received more and more free time as a result of being gradually freed of compulsory state service, which was secured in legislation by Peter III's and Catherine II's *Charters to the Nobility* (in 1762 and 1785, respectively).

In 1761, towards the end of her reign, Empress Elizabeth regularized card games and divided them into legal games of skill and illegal games of chance, or gambling. Legal card games were those where the outcome depended not only on chance but also on the intellect and the skill of the player (L'Hombre, Piquet, Pamphile, etc.), and these were allowed to be played "in the noble's houses" but only "for the smallest wagers, and not for gain but solely for fun." Gambling games included those where the outcome was determined entirely by chance and luck (Pharaoh, Quintich, etc.) and were strictly prohibited "except for Her Imperial Majesty's palace apartments,"⁴⁴ where the high-stakes games took place. This partial relaxation of the ban only sowed confusion about the attitude of governmental authorities towards gambling, and, moreover, created a precedent for the rest of the nobles to follow.

The reign of Catherine II the Great (1762–1796) was the peak for card games both in the court in the capital cities and in the provinces in the eighteenth century. Card games came to be closely connected to the Russian noble class as expenditure and as a subject of close scrutiny of the legal authorities (though with little practical effect). The notes and memoirs from that time mention sixteen kinds of card games.⁴⁵ Prince G.A. Potemkin, according to his contemporaries, would lose "countless amounts."⁴⁶ His house always had designated rooms where the "guests could play whatever card game they wanted."⁴⁷ From his Jassy residence he would "send to Warsaw for cards,"⁴⁸ and for his wagers he used gems, just as the empress would, and "never noticed the cost of a win or a loss."⁴⁹ S.G. Zorich, another favorite of Catherine's, opened in a palace given him in Shklov not only a cadet corps but also a kind of cards academy, which many nobles of that time visited.⁵⁰

44 PSZ, First Series, vol. 15, no. 11275.

45 V.A. Bil'basov, "Andrian Gribovskii, sostavitel' Zapisk o Ekaterine II," in *Bil'basov, V.A. Istoricheskie monografii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Skorokhodova, 1901), p. 138.

46 A.G. Brikner, *Potemkin* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Rikera, 1891), p. 276.

47 *Russkii byt po vospominaniiam sovremennikov XVIII veka*, Part 1 (Moscow: Zadruga, 1914), p. 141.

48 *O privatnoi zhizni kniazia Potemkina* (Moscow: Panorama, 1991), p. 3.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

50 K. Valishevskii, *Vokrug trona* (Moscow: Obrazovanie, 1910), pp. 88–89.

In the capital cities a new form of pastime emerged for the Russian nobles: the English Club in Petersburg (1770) and the Moscow Club (1783), where card games played were enormously popular. In the English Club “the old master sergeants would say that gamblers are per se the foundation of the Club; they feed its existence; other members exist just for decoration, as a kind of ornament. In certain years the revenues from card games would amount to up to one hundred and fifty thousand rubles.”⁵¹ In his notes, S.N. Glinka, a Russian writer, described the life of “fancy Moscow society” at the end of Catherine II the Great’s reign as follows:

Moscow was feasting in a complete revelry of fun ... The bank would rule the night. Then pawnshops would be cramped more and more with those pawning the souls of serfs. Quick and unexpected were the transitions from luxury to ruin.⁵²

The memoirs of L.N. Engelhart – an adjutant to, and relative of, Catherine II’s favorite G.A. Potemkin – mention that “games of chance were forbidden by law, but the state turned a blind eye.”⁵³ The renowned adventurer Giacomo Casanova, who visited Russia in 1765–1766, also left a useful testimonial about the state’s lack of enforcement of laws against gambling:

After the ball, having slept for the entire day, I went to visit General Melissino ... Everything at his house was after the French manner: the food and drinks were excellent, the talks vivid, and the card games were even more so ... Beginning with the very first night I got down to Pharaoh; the company there was all made of respectable people who would lose with no regret and win without vainglory. The modesty of the visitors as well as their high status guarded them from any harassment from governmental authorities.⁵⁴

Not only for the capital but also for provincial nobles the card game became a mandatory part of their lifestyle and was considered “the best cure for indolence in the time of rest” (i.e., an activity), “a useful and pleasant mental exer-

51 Pyliaev, “Azartyne igry vstarinu,” p. 42.

52 *Russkii byt po vospominaniiam sovremennikov XVIII veka*, Part 2, Book 1, p. 215.

53 V.A. Gol'tsev, *Zakonodatel'stvo i nravy v Rossii XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo A. Popovoi, 1896), pp. 78–79.

54 *Zapiska venetsiantsa Kazanovy o prebyvanii ego v Rossii, 1765–1766* (Moscow: Panorama, 1991), p. 8.

cise, that brings together society and gives occasion for a light and amusing conversation.”⁵⁵ According to A.T. Bolotov, one of the most educated landlords of the second half of the eighteenth century and the founder of agronomics and pomology in Russia, the middling Petersburg nobles would spend time at their gatherings “mostly by playing cards, for then [the middle of the eighteenth century] this evil began to become customary, just as the present-day [the end of the eighteenth century] social life began to emerge and take root.” According to Bolotov’s observations, card games in the middle of the eighteenth century “were not yet in that atrocious customary use as nowadays [end of the eighteenth century], and one would not sit over cards till noon, or into the afternoon and almost through the entire night without getting up.”⁵⁶ These following words about card players are attributed to Catherine the Great herself: “These people could never be useful members of society, because they got used to leisure and to the luxurious life. They want to spend their entire life in this evil game, thus depriving themselves of their estate and not displaying the slightest concern about it. They make others miserable too, those whom they trick into the game!”⁵⁷

On the whole, the Europeanized lifestyle, introduced from above by Russia’s rulers at the beginning of the eighteenth century, had become by century’s end something natural and integral. Having begun as an imposed preference for the fruits of foreign culture, the upper class itself “acquired the taste” for things Western, adopting them as a kind of variant of the national culture. In N.M. Karamzin’s *The Letters of a Russian Traveler* (1801) a Parisian noblewoman who was seeking escape from the revolution asked: “What pleasures does your social life have?” To which she got the following answer: “All those that you enjoy: performances, balls, dinners, cards and the favor of ladies.”⁵⁸

The strengthening of landlords’ power over serfs, palace revolutions and liberation from state duties facilitated the fact that liberty – the “liberties of the nobles” – were understood as unbridled self-interest – as a lack of restrictions.

“Say what you will about the interests of the nobles, but they existed,” wrote M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, a Russian writer of the second half of the nineteenth century. He continued:

55 N. Chechulin, *Russkoe provintsial’noe obshchestvo vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia V.S. Balasheva, 1889), pp. 93–94.

56 A.T. Bolotov, *Zhizn’ i prikliucheniia Andreia Bolotova, opisannye samim im dlia svoikh potomkov* (Moscow: Terra, 1993), pp. 166–167.

57 Pyliaev, *Saryi Peterburg* (Leningrad: Titul, 1990), p. 224.

58 N.M. Karamzin, “Pis’ma russkogo puteshestvennika,” *Sochineniia* (Leningrad: Khudoshestvennaia literatura, 1983), p. 389.

The contents of this phenomenon was simple and fake (and that is why it disappeared so easily), but the fact that the phenomenon was very real – that is beyond any doubt ... Lack of restraint and impunity were the two notions that fed one another. Unrestraint flattered a savage feeling itself, while impunity made the pleasure of unrestraint more complex and added some spice to it.⁵⁹

High-stakes card games were also one of the manifestations of unrestrained liberty that the government was unable to restrict and which led not only to dire financial consequences but also to psychological exhaustion. Here is how V.I. Lukin, a writer in Catherine II's reign, described "ill-fated" gamblers in the foreword to his comedy *The Spendthrift by Love Reformed* (1763):

Some resemble with the pale complexion the dead, who had risen from their coffins; some resemble dreadful furies with their bloody eyes; some, with their depressed spirit, are alike the criminals being led to execution; some have an unusual blush as red as cranberries; and some are streaming with sweat as if they are eagerly performing a profoundly difficult and useful job. The majority of these unrestrained spendthrifts curse the day they were born and their parents slam down their fists on the table, pull on their hair, and the shred cards that are the instrument of their misery.⁶⁰

Lukin's comedy, which was meant to "liberate young people of games and squander" and give the audience an "innocent and fun diversion," was performed at court several times, but to little avail (the emphasis in it and in many other words of the eighteenth century on "innocence" in an activity was a common literary *topos*, and evidently for good reason).

It was in that same year that the first literary work, completely devoted to card games, was published – the poem *The L'Hombre Player* (*Igrok lombera*) (1763) by V.I. Maikov.⁶¹ The poem was a great success and was republished twice during the author's lifetime: in 1765 and 1774. The success can be explained by the fact that the contents and plot of the poem, the issues raised in it related to card games, resonated well with noble society of that time. V.I. Maikov's *The*

59 M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, "Dnevnik provintsiala v Peterburge," *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 10 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1970), pp. 290–291.

60 *Sochineniia i perevody V.I. Lukina i B.E. El'chaninova* (St. Petersburg: Tipografia I.I. Glaunova, 1868), p. 9.

61 V.I. Maikov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow and Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1966), pp. 55–71.

L'Hombre Player may be considered the first cultural reflection on the topic of card games and the state of mind of a gambler. The author, however, is mainly focused on the external aspects of the game, on its immediate effects. The reasons that induce a man to play, gambling as one of the traits of the Russian character, the mystical side and symbolism of playing cards, the tragedy of the one who lost – all these topics were explored and developed in Russian literary works of the nineteenth century.

Thus, card games as a Europeanized (as well as an ostentatious and wasteful) diversion were gradually becoming a large and popular part of noble life in eighteenth-century Russia. The widespread growth of gambling in Russia, which was noted by contemporaries and foreigners alike, can be explained by one specific feature of the Russian society in the eighteenth century: that alongside the introduction of new cultural forms in the social, economic and political life of Russia's elite, there was also a borrowing of features of Western European aristocratic culture, features, like card playing and gambling, that were part of an increasingly obsolete, even medieval knightly and aristocratic ideal.

If we compare the description of a medieval knight, made by V. Zombart and A. Ia. Gurevich, with a Russian noble of Catherine II's reign, we will see an almost exact match:

To lead the life of a feudal lord is to live life to its fullest, you and those around you; which means to spend one's time at war and in hunting and wasting one's nights in a cheerful circle of merry drinking companions, playing dice or in the arms of beautiful women. It means to build castles and churches, to display splendor and pomp at tournaments and other celebrations, to live in the lap of luxury to the extent one's funds allow, or even if they do not allow it.⁶²

Among the virtues that characterize a feudal lord, the most important was generosity ... The rent he gathered from his domains allowed him to make feasts, to hold celebrations, to receive guests, and to make gifts – in sum, to live the high life ... Prudence, thriftiness – these qualities conflicted with the ethics of his class. Their incomes are in the hands of a bailiff, a steward, a headman, while his job is to eat and drink away the gains, and to give away and squander his possessions. And the louder and wider he

62 V. Zombart, *Burzhua. Etiudy po istorii dukhovnogo razvitiia sovremennogo ekonomicheskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1994), pp. 12–13.

can do it, the bigger his fame and higher his social status will be, and the more respect and prestige he will enjoy.⁶³

In Europe this ideal was steadily losing ground under the influence of the Reformation, educational criticism and the principles of the “virtue of the commoners” and was finally decisively overthrown in its citadel – revolutionary France. Medieval nobles were displaced by “the new nobles,” who were focused on hoarding, economic activity, utilitarianism, pragmatism and the more rational use of their time. “In the second half of the seventeenth century the victory of labor over leisure became final.”⁶⁴ Leisure time was now seen as a only brief respite to refresh one’s strength for subsequent labor. As early as in the eighteenth century and especially in the nineteenth century (which as a historical phenomenon began in 1789 rather than 1801), extravagant generosity, indolence, and contempt for productive labor were increasingly seen as anachronistic. Self-indulgence was restrained by a new sense of ethics and a new notion of decency:

One should abstain from various wayward ways and be seen only in decent circles; one cannot be a drinker, a gambler, a womanizer; one should attend the Divine Liturgy or the Sunday church sermon; in a nutshell, one should also in their social behavior be a good “commoner” – out of business interest. For such a moral lifestyle increases one’s credit.⁶⁵

A negative opinion also formed towards card games as an activity contradictory to labor. In some of the didactic literature, cards appeal only to the “mindless, dull person, possessed with vain and sinister interests.”⁶⁶ This attitude formed not only under the influence of the facts of life of a middle-class society, but was also nourished by Humanist literature. For instance, in Erasmus’s *The Praise of Folly* (1509) we can find the following apt lines:

Whether dice-players may be so favourably dealt with as to be admitted among the rest is scarce yet resolved upon: but sure it is hugely vain

63 A. Ia. Gurevich, “Kategorii srednevekovoi kul’tury,” *Izbrannye trudy*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Universitetskaia kniga, 1999), pp. 194–195.

64 Gurevich, “Kur’tura bezmolvstvuiushchego bol’shinstva,” Gurevich *Izbrannye trudy*, vol. 2, p. 520. ■ non-matching quotation mark

65 Zombart, *Burzhua*, pp. 99–100.

66 V.P. Darkevich, *Narodnaia kul’tura srednevekov’ia: svetskaiia prazdnichnaia zhizn’ v iskusstve IX–XVI vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), p. 127.

and ridiculous, when we see some persons so devoutly addicted to this diversion, that at the first rattle of the box their heart shakes within them ... and that poring old men, that cannot tell their cast without the help of spectacles, should be sweating at the same sport; nay, that such decrepit blades, as by the gout have lost the use of their fingers, should look over, and hire others to throw for them. This indeed is prodigiously extravagant; but the consequence of it ends so oft in downright madness, that it seems rather to belong to the furies than to folly.⁶⁷

Johan Huizinga develops this view, writing that

the 19th century seems to leave little room for play. Tendencies running directly counter to all that we mean by play have become increasingly dominant. Even in the 18th century utilitarianism, prosaic efficiency and the bourgeois ideal of social welfare – all fatal to the Baroque – had bitten deep into society. These tendencies were exacerbated by the Industrial Revolution and its conquests in the field of technology. Work and production became the ideal, and then the idol, of the age. All Europe donned the boiler-suit. Henceforth the dominants of civilization were to be social consciousness, educational aspirations, and scientific judgement.⁶⁸

This is exactly why the descriptions of the Russian upper-class society, made by the Englishmen, the Frenchmen and other representatives of dynamically developing nations, are so very similar: they could see their past selves, or, to be more precise, the past of their own aristocracies. Many of the observations about the emptiness, stagnation, indolence, wastefulness and superficiality of upper-class society were nearly identical to those being made by French moralists about their own country in the seventeenth century, such as La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld. Russian nobles in their own Middle Ages were mostly poor, financially dependent, subjugated and burdened with state service, and managed to realize the knightly ideal only in the eighteenth century. It is in the modern age that the nobles imagined themselves as an independent corporation that dominated over all other classes and possessed exclusive rights in the

67 Erasm Rotterdamskii, *Pokhvala gluposti* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1983), chap. 39, p. 110. The translation is taken from "The Project Gutenberg EBook of *In Praise of Folly*," <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30201/30201-h/30201-h.htm>.

68 Iokhan Kheizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Moscow: Progress, 1992), p. 216. The translation is taken from *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London, Boston, and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 191–192.

economic, legal, governmental and cultural spheres of life. The nobles would receive financial independence, be freed of obligatory state service and have a wide choice of occupations in the eighteenth century; and it would be then that leisure, conspicuous consumption, class consciousness, and the arcane rules of etiquette would come to dominate their society, dominating their time and diverting their attention to economic, public and political activities.

To conclude, the question of where and when cards were brought to Russia remains open. Based on the data available, we can only argue that playing cards were linked to the increasing Western cultural influence in Russia, and that cards were already known in Muscovy in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The rules of some card games and the names of the seventeenth-century cards and suits have not survived to the present time; however, the close link between playing cards and dice (*zern'*), particularly in the laws prohibiting their use, allow us to conclude that were used for games of chance connected to cash prizes. The insignificant amount of imports of playing cards to Muscovy in the seventeenth century and the absence of their domestic production suggest that most gambling was done through a quite simple and conventional game of dice dating back to the Indo-European past of the Slavic peoples. The state monopoly on the organizing of gambling suggests that playing cards were not in much use. Games of chance spread significantly in the seventeenth century among servicemen, however, especially in Siberia, which can probably be explained by the irregular conditions of military service – separation from families and households, frequent and long military deployments, and participation in collecting taxes on the fur trade. The spread of playing cards did not take place among elite of Russian society due to their preference for chess and draughts – the traditional games of the Russian Court. The Orthodox Church also opposed gambling, and its precepts often both reflected and determined cultural norms. Only in the eighteenth century did card games (both of chance and commercial ones) adopted as a part of the leisure lifestyle of the Russian nobility, a lifestyle increasingly and deeply influenced by Westernization.

The adoption of the knightly ideal by the Russian nobility in the eighteenth century made an impact on the nature of card games. Firstly, with new attitudes among the nobility toward wealth and leisure time, cards became the proof of one's financial status, a peculiar kind test wealth. Not paying out a gambling debt meant to throw doubts on one's solvency and break an obligation towards peers, thus making the gambling debt a debt of honor. This was a cultural norm of the time and noble class and was not regulated by law, since card games and their resulting debts were not protected by the courts. Secondly, spending one's pastime over a game would highlight one's belonging to the free and Europeanized elite that had the leisure time to waste away their days and

nights, unlike the servile classes that were occupied by labor. In a real way, the nobility's corporate, class identity (at least for its highest rungs) was a result of new and common focus on nonproductive, non-material spheres. It is thus not surprising that card playing and other games grew in the narrow social circles of the nobles' homes, social clubs, and salons. Thirdly, card games came to be seen as an exclusive elite pastime as noble culture changed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The ability to play card games, especially the games of skill, became one of the rules of high society decorum. Beginning with the last third of the eighteenth century a card game became a sort of behavioral constant; only the rules and names of the games would change. The image of the noble that emerges from the era of Catherine the Great would become imprinted on noble society not only in the eighteenth century but in later generations as well. The Russian noble with a fan of cards in his hands became as enduring an image as any other of the Russian "genteel class."