**The Global Silk Trade**

0.2 - About this Module for Students

**Introduction**

In this module, we will learn how and why the first globalization took place, starting in the 16th century. To do this, we will examine the 16th-18th century Asia-Pacific silk trade, with a particular focus on southeast China, the Philippines, and New Spain (colonial Mexico). For the next two weeks, we will trace the making, wearing, and trading of silk to understand the formation of early modern globalization. This will help us better appreciate the relationship between our own fashion tastes and larger global economic and political forces, and generally to appreciate the long history of the globalized world we have grown up in. We designed this lesson to require roughly six hours of class time over two weeks and about twice that amount preparing for class. If it takes significantly more than that, you should talk to your professor. It may be that they can offer some useful guidance to you, or it may be that they can offer some guidance to the *History for the 21st Century* project to adjust the lesson for future students.

We will learn:

* How and why the silk trade became global starting in the sixteenth century.
* How and why wearing silk became so fashion for some, and critiqued by others.
* How merchants exported silk from China to Mexico via Manila and how this trade affected both Ming China and New Spain.
* How and why the Chinese and Spanish empires tried and ultimately failed to regulate the silk trade.

**Format**

This module centers on discussions of primary sources – both texts written during the period of time we are studying and pictures of images and production produced during that time – placed in context by short readings produced by professional historians.

**Learning Goals**

By the completion of our module, you will have analyzed a diverse collection of primary documents that relate to the history of the making, wearing, trading, and regulation of silk. You will:

* Learn that globalization is not just a recent phenomenon, but was rooted in supply and demand forces centuries ago.
* Make connections between these historical developments and your own life.

**Schedule and Readings**

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| **Topic** | **Readings before the class** | **In-class activities** |
| Introduction | Reading 1: Introduction to the Global Silk Trade, 1570–1700 | * Introduction to the lesson
* Discussion of the origins of global silk trade
* Map activity
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| Lesson 2: The Production of Silk | Reading 2: The Production of SilkPrimary sources from ChinaPrimary sources from New Spain  | Discussion of primary sources |
| Lesson 3: New Silk Fashions | Reading 3: New Silk Fashions Primary sources from ChinaPrimary sources from New Spain  | Discussion of primary sources Video on *casta* paintings |
| Lesson 4: The Manila Galleon Trade | Reading 4: The Manila Galleon TradePrimary sources from China Primary sources from New Spain | Discussion of primary sources |
| Conclusion | Reading 5: Concluding Remarks | Wrap up discussion |