Nationalizing Science in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russian Ideological Origins of the Naval Ministry’s “Literary Expedition”

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Abstract
This article discusses the issue of conflicting “languages” inside the literary ethnography of mid-nineteenth century imperial Russia. The case under investigation here is the Russian Naval Ministry’s “literary expedition”, launched by Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevič in 1855–1861 to study the fishing and shipping practices of different parts of the Russian Empire and to produce sketches about them. Exploring the preparatory stage of the expedition, the author identifies the European and Russian precedents of literary ethnography from Adelbert Chamisso’s Reise um die Welt to Ivan Gončarov’s Frigate Pallas, which may have provided a model for Konstantin. Extant unpublished documents of the expedition from Russian and Estonian archives allow us to reconstruct its ideological origins and to show that it was born from the spirit of the Russian Geographical Society’s projects and the so-called “nationalizing” paradigm of ethnographic knowledge that dominated the discursive field in the 1850s. The author demonstrates that the underlying idea of the expedition had much in common with Slavophiles’ ethnography (the case of Ivan Aksakov) and its project of “Russian science”. The last part of the article shows how this “nationalizing” paradigm clashed with cosmopolitan and liberal ideas when Konstantin was launching the expedition.

Keywords: History of Russian science, literary ethnography, mid-nineteenth century Russian literature, Russian nationalism, writers and power.

0. Introduction
Recent studies on the issue of ethnic diversity and “Russianness” in mid-nineteenth century Russia have demonstrated that there was no authoritative and officially imposed ethnographic discourse that would cover all the institutions and spheres of knowledge of the time (Becker 1991; Knight 1998; Geraci 2001; Geraci 2004). The present article tackles this issue in the form of a case study of the famous ethnographic “project” which was called the “literary expedition”. My aim is to explore its ideological origins in a broad context of contemporary ethnographical knowledge. The research is based mainly on unpublished sources from Russian and Estonian archives, memoirs, correspondence and some ethnographic texts of the time. I argue that the “literary expedition” of the Naval Ministry was an indispensable part of a broad and influential paradigm of nationalizing knowledge, which dominated in Russian science and the discursive space of the 1850s and was a symptom of the emergence of modern nationalism.

What was the “literary expedition”? In August 1855, in the midst of the Crimean battle for Sevastopol, Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevič, the head of the Russian Naval Ministry, commissioned a group of well-known young Russian writers to describe the life and customs of coastal and river inhabitants of the Russian Empire. The aim of the expedition stated in Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevič’s special instruction was to examine the fishing and shipping of different imperial inhabitants in order to prepare a reform of naval recruitment. The list of travelling writers included Aleksey Pismenskij, Aleksandr Ostrovskij, Michail Michajlov, Grigorij Danilevskij, Sergej Maksimov, Aleksey Potchinn, Aleksandr Afanás’ev-Čužbinskij and Nikolaj Filippov. The “literary expedition” lasted for six years, from 1855 till 1861, when the Russian writers toured the Urals, the Caspian Sea, the lower Don, Volga, Dnieper, Dniester and the White Sea coast. According to the grand duke’s prescription, each participant had to publish his literary-ethnographic sketches in the naval journal Morskij sbornik and in other journals. As a result, in 1855–1861 the whole series of articles and books appeared as follows: Pismenskij’s Puterye očerki (1857), Tatary, Astrachanskie armjane (both 1858), Kalmyki (1860); Ostrovskij’s Putešestvie po Volge ot istokov do Nižnego Novgoroda (1859); Potchinn’s Lov krasnoy ryby v Saratovskoj gubernii (1857), Reka Keržene (1859), S Vetlagi (1861); Maksimov’s books God na severe (St. Petersburg 1859) and Na Vostoke. Poezdka na Amur (St. Petersburg 1884); Danilevskij’s Novyj i obyčaj ukrainskih čumakov (1857); Afanás’ev-Čužbinskij’s book Poezdka v južnujo...
Rossiju (St. Petersburg 1861–1863); Michajlov's *Uralskie očerki* (1859). The detailed overview of the expedition, its itineraries and participants' works are discussed in depth in the dissertation of Cathy Clay (Clay 1989) and in her article (Clay 1995). This allows us to focus mainly on the preliminary stage of the "literary expedition" and explore the unnoticed contexts and underinvestigated aspects of this project.²

The present article consists of four parts. First, I explore its ethnographic context and its main agencies (the Russian Geographical Society and the Naval Ministry). Then, I trace the precedents and the models of "literary ethnography" which the grand duke may have known when designing and launching the project. In the next part, which deals with the relationships between Konstantin Nikolaevič, Slavophilism and the idea of "Russian science", I show that the underlying paradigm of the expedition was a nationalizing concept. Finally, I explain why the Naval Ministry and Konstantin Nikolaevič chose "literati" to perform these important state tasks and how two conflicting paradigms of ethnographic knowledge clashed before the launch of the expedition.

1. The "Literary Expedition" in the Context of Ethnographic Science

It has become customary to regard the "literary expedition" as a product of "liberal bureaucracy" and the modernizing aspirations inside the Naval Ministry on the eve of Alexander II's reforms (Clay 1989, 7–20; Clay 1995). The majority of the officials, bureaucrats, scientists, writers and intellectuals shared the opinion that the empire's modernization depended on carefully collected knowledge about all aspects of human diversity: statistical, geographical, ethnic, class-based, religious, etc. (Mogil'ner 2008, 10–12). C. B. Clay (1989, 318) argued that the expeditionary participants' essays upgraded Count Uvarov's paradigm of nationhood (*narodnost*) and designed a new understanding through the idea of imperial diversity. However, it remains unclear whether it was the initial idea of the grand duke or the result of the writers' endeavours. In other words, it is important to uncover the underlying ideology of the expedition organizers. The first step is to place the expedition in the ethnographic context of the 1850s.

There is a direct link between the grand duke's modernizing aspirations and the rapid expansion of the ethnographic field in the 1850s. The idea of the "literary expedition" belongs to the series of enterprises, expeditions and investigations launched by the Russian Geographical Society (hereafter RGS) at the end of the 1840s.³ In the beginning of the 1850s, the RGS split into two conflicting factions, "German" and "Russian" (Knight 1998, 116–122). The "German faction" (Karl Baer, Ferdinand Vrangelev, Fedor Litke, etc.) saw the purpose of ethnography as the study of various imperial ethnic groups, primarily small and endangered ones. The "Russian faction" (Nikolaj Naděżdin, the Miжугин brothers, Aleksandr Golovnin, etc.), on the contrary, were interested in investigating Russians and Russian nationality. By the early 1850s, the "Russian faction" occupied all the key positions in the RGS, which led to the so-called "Russification" of ethnographic research by reducing studies on allophone peoples (*nemocy*) and intensifying the research on "Russians". This was reflected in the content of the RGS proceedings and papers,⁴ where the number of articles on Russians radically increased. Conversely, the percentage of articles about non-Russians in the RGS proceedings was small in comparison with the works on various Slavic nationalities.

By the mid-1850s, the Russian Geographical Society became a kind of "social network". Membership was considered prestigious and necessary if one wished to identify oneself with a growing group of progressive-minded officers, administrators, scientists and writers interested in studying Russians and other ethnic groups, and hence in the modernization of the country. In 1856, among the RGS members were such prominent writers and poets as Ivan Turgenev, Aleksey Tolstoj, Michail Saltykov, Ivan Panaev, Fedor Tjutčev, Michail Pogodin, Sergej Maksimov.⁵ From this list, it is easy to see that the only link that united writers with such different and even conflicting political and aesthetic perspectives (e.g., Westernizers and Slavophiles) was their membership of the RGS. In this respect, the RGS became a space for communication between senior officials, writers and members of the imperial family. Despite the fact that many Russian writers of the time were RGS members, they did not participate in expedition activities and their membership had a rather symbol-

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² On some more aspects of the expedition, see Vlavin 2012.

³ E.g., the Urals, Eastern Siberia, Caspian, Azov, Ladoga, Amur expeditions, etc. On the role of the grand duke in their management, see Krauchyna 2001, 66–111 and Knight 2009. On the ethnographic expeditions of the 1830–40s, see Višlenkova 2009.

⁴ Zapiski imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obščestva, Vestnik imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obščestva, Geograficheskie izvestija, Etnograficheskij sbornik.

⁵ Lists of new members were published in Vestnik imperatorskogo geograficheskogo obščestva. If before 1857 there was a fashion to join the society, then after 1857 writers began to abandon it. Thus, in 1857 Panaev and Turgenev left it, and in 1859 Tjutčev and Pogodin followed suit.
Gončarov’s essays about circumnavigation began to appear in 1855 in the journals (Otechestvennye zapiski, Morskoi sbornik), they naturally attracted the attention of senior maritime officials. To date, it has not been known that the head of the Naval Ministry, Baron Ferdinand Vrangell, requested the Ministry of Finance in May 1855 to “free Mr. Gončarov from his duties for some time to produce extracts from his travel notes to be published in Morskoi sbornik.”

This request was granted, and the writer was not just freed from his duties, but also received a grant. In June 1855, Golovnin, the secretary of Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevič, wrote to Vrangell that “His Highness agreed to write to the minister about giving Gončarov a grant.”

This very high endorsement explains how Gončarov managed to finish most of the essays and compose the book known as Frigate Pallas in a very short time. In November 1855, Konstantin Nikolaevič thanked Gončarov for his “excellent articles about Japan”, which he had read “with great pleasure”: “It made a good impression not only on me but on a whole range of writers […] It is more valuable than any diamond rings because it is unprecedented and not an ordinary prize, but refined and delicate.” As a result of this correspondence between the writer and officials, Gončarov presented his new book “Russians in Japan in late 1853 and early 1854” to the grand duke.

Thus, Gončarov’s case as chronicler of the Japanese expedition served for Konstantin and Golovnin as a model for all subsequent commissions for writers, and Gončarov’s literary output was treated as an example of brilliant prose that future participants were expected to live up to.

However, Gončarov’s voyage and literary report were not the first in the history of Russian literary ethnography. Golovnin, as a son of the renowned

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6 Russian State Archive of the Navy (RGA VMF) in St. Petersburg (hereafter RSAN), fond 410, inv. 2, file 1069, fol. 8 ("Delo o komandirovanii literatorov v raznye kraia Rossii dlia sobiranija svedenij, do morskoj časti otnosjačichsja"). All translations from Russian are mine - A. V.

7 Interestingly, the information on the salary that Gončarov received on board is still unknown. The certificate of Gončarov’s salary has survived in the files of the Inspectorate Department of the Naval Ministry: his annual salary was 1973 rubles 63 kopecks (RSAN fond 283, inv. 3, file 327, fols. 4, 18). These sums were later taken as the norm in the case of other writers on subsequent literary expeditions.

8 RSAN fond 162, inv. 1, file 550, fols. 110–110 v.

9 Aleksandr Golovnin’s letters to Baron Vrangell (Estonian Historical Archive = Eesti Ajalooharidusfond 2057, inv. 1, fol. 476, fol. 26).

10 Golos minuvelo 1913 no. 12:238.

11 Ibid. p. 242. See also the file "O predstavlenii imperatricce sočinenii Gončarova «O Japonii» po chodatajstvu Velikogo knjazja Konstantina Nikolaeviča" (Russian State Historical Archive fond 469, inv. 1, year of 1855, file 326, fol. 2).

12 In 1858, the poet Apollon Majkov sailed on the corvette Bajan in the Mediterranean, the writer Dmitrij Grigorovič travelled around Europe, and the writer Ivan L’chovskij – around the world.
Russian traveller Vasilij Golovnin (author of the famous *Journey around the World*), might have had in mind another travelogue, *Reise um die Welt* (1836), written by the prominent romantic writer Adelbert von Chamisso. This was the literary result of his voyage on board of the Russian ship *Rurik* under the command of Otto Kotzebue in 1814 (Kaareve 1970). Although Chamisso officially participated in the Russian expedition not as a writer but as a naturalist and botanist, his readers knew him as the author of *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*. Chamisso's multiple identities (French aristocrat, emigrant, German citizen, commissioned by the Russian emperor) were typical of the research ethos in the imperial era of the first Russian circumnavigation of the globe at the dawn of romantic nationalism in the 1810s (Vinkovetsky 2001; Wortman 2008). That is why the question of the national spirit of each country, and Russia in particular, did not arise in Chamisso's travelogue. The only aspects the author cared about in his narration were his language and social identity. The text depicts how staying on board increased Chamisso's alienation from Russian-speaking sailors, but at the same time made him closer to the German-speaking Captain Kotzebue and other senior officers (Chamisso 1886). Gončarov's book belonging to the next epoch in the shaping of modern nationalism presented a different model, that of the national arrangement of the world, well described by scholars (Vasileva 1998; Gončarov 2000, 499–523).

Starting from the 1830s, the mobility of writers in Europe increased significantly. Authors began to publish literary reports about their voyages to the most exotic countries more and more often; readers demanded not just accounts of voyages, but refined and sophisticated fiction written by celebrities (Wolfzettel 1986; Guyot and Massol 2003; Thompson 2011). In the 1830s and 40s, travelogues became one of the most popular genres of romanticism, first in French letters, known for Alphonse de Lamartine and Gerard de Nerval's *Voyages en Orient* (1835, 1851), and Xavier Marmier's *Lettres sur le Nord: Danemark, Suède, Norvège, Laponie et Spitzberg* (1840). Among other such writers was Alexandre Dumas, who especially excelled in this field, regularly producing travelogues. For example, his 1858 "Russian tour" travelogue was sarcastically reviewed by many Russian journalists. These voyages were not organized and financed by the State (except for Marmier's northern expedition) and therefore they should be considered as providing a comparative context for the "literary expedition", not as its precedents.

3. Literary Ethnography and Slavophilism: The Case of Ivan Aksakov

Confrontation between "Russian" and "German" factions also took place outside the RGS. It can be found in other institutions and discursive fields in the mid-1850s. In what follows, two manifestations will be considered – the case of Slavophiles and the launch of the "literary expedition".

During the Crimean War, the emergence of a patriotic discourse went hand in hand with the spread of a Slavophile (and more precisely Russophile) discourse. Such expansion appeared both in science (esp. ethnography) and in literature.

In respect to science, the notion of "Russification" was one of the central points in the ideology of the Slavophile journal *Russkaja beseda* (1856–1860). In the programmatic article *Two Words about Nationhood in Science* (1856) Jurij Samarin argued that a nationally orientated point of view had advantages over a positivistic and cosmopolitan perspective when historians were dealing with a national culture because it enabled a deeper understanding of the national spirit ("A Russian could cognize Russians much better", Samarin 1856, 44). Samarin emphasized that he was only speaking of the benefits of the "affinity between the cognositive thought and the object to be cognized" and rejected the idea of inventing a "Russian national outlook" as a kind of a universal paradigm of knowledge (ibid., 45).

This "Russification" of science immediately appeared in the humanities, primarily in history and Oriental studies, for example the heated 1855–1858 debate on the status and biography of the Russian historian Timofej Granovskij. It was initiated by his fellow Orientalist Vasilij Grigor'ev, who accused Granovskij of incompetence, cosmopolitanism, dilettantism and, ultimately, of the "Germanization" of Russian science. The public eventually split into two camps, Grigor'ev's supporters (mostly Slavophiles), and his opponents (the liberals Konstantin Kavelin, Nikolaj Pavlov and others).
Some scholars believe that the intensity of the debate was caused by a lack of consensus about what the biography of a scientist should be, i.e., the lack of a biographical canon for such figures (Kalugin 2008, 111–112). However, the causes were rooted much more deeply. The debate on the strategies for writing a biography of a historian signalled that the professionalization of knowledge and specialization of science in the 1850s went hand in hand with its nationalization and even “Russification.” A careful analysis of Grigor’ev’s rhetoric and argumentation shows that the ideal scientist ought to be a narrow specialist, not a dilettante. Moreover, this professionalization was synonymous with nationality (russkost’), “asceticism” and “scientific puritanism,” which were rigidly opposed to the “German,” “artistry,” “epicureanism” of the late Granovskij. Grigor’ev’s stance was part of the Slavophile discourse and demonstrated how the issue of professionalization of the science was closely associated with a nationalistic impetus.

In particular, one of the manifestations of the Slavophile nationalizing discourse was Ivan Aksakov’s activities – an interesting initiative that was closely related to the idea of the “literary expedition.”

In 1853, as an RGS member, Aksakov asked the chief of police Aleksandr Orlov to commission him as a writer to the frigate Diana, which was planned to circumnavigate the world. Assuming the chief of police that the writer’s labour was “no less important and useful for the State than any other honest labour”, Aksakov pointed to the absence of modern Russian literary travelogues of high quality. He argued that Russians looked at other countries through the eyes of foreigners without having a Russian “fresh,” “original” notion of them. Aksakov’s decisive argument was that “Admiral Konstantin Nikolaevič would have supported his wish, if any institution (e.g., the Ministry of National Education) had officially sent him on board the frigate” (Aksakov 1892, 16). Aksakov’s initiative met no success; he was rejected because of his bad reputation in the eyes of officials and the secret police. However, the idea of getting a state-funded post for writing a literary travelogue, inspired with national feeling, suggested that Aksakov’s ambition extended much further than the mere duty of a chronicler like Gončarow, who was at sea at the time. It is very likely that Aksakov knew about Gončarow’s mission (rumours of his departure were circulating in literary circles), but he could not guess that this voyage would result in a great book (the post as secretary of the expedition did not involve writing a travelogue).

Aksakov’s unfulfilled “initiative” was intended to perform two tasks: first, to rehabilitate writers in the eyes of the government, raising their status by showing that they could give profitable service to the State; secondly, Aksakov dreamed of creating not only highly artistic but also completely national writings, in which a Russian identity would emerge against the background of the Western “other.” However, the text that met these requirements was created not by the Slavophile Aksakov but by the moderate Westerner Gončarov. In his Frigate Pallas, the narrator’s viewpoint combined a pro-Russian nationalistic stance and a paradigm of Western values. Researchers have emphasized that the author of The Frigate Pallas contrasts British and American colonialism with “Russia’s original model of the civilizing process”, which is humane, noncoercive, disinterested, and gradual (Gončarov 2000, 520–521). Such a picture of Russia’s policies in Siberia and the Far East is indeed presented in the final chapters of the travelogue in the depiction of “Young Russia”, which was growing in the Far East as a great success of the imperial civilizing mission. Let us give only one example of such nationalistic pages from Frigate Pallas.

Writing about the fact that “there is much that is Russian and non-Russian, which in time will also become Russian” (Gončarov 1855, 284), and that “all measures and actions taken by the government are aimed at bringing [this] handful of children from a foreign tribe into the enormous Russian family” (ibid., 299), Gončarov unambiguously means the Yakuts’ gradual assimilation – the idea that they will dissolve completely into Russian society.

The Yakuts, as the main object of the Russian civilizing mission, come across in Gončarov as a “quiet and polite people”, who are moving rapidly along the path of Christianity and progress and, consequently, according to Gončarov, of education and maturity (a large part of the sketch From Yakutsk is devoted to a description of the success of Russian Orthodox missionaries). The Yakut, the savage, “who but recently was half man, half beast” (Gončarov 1855, 293), becomes the Russians’ main helper in the taming of a harsh land, a testament to the absolute success of the Russian civilizing mission in the Far East and the guarantor of Russia’s high status among other empires. About the appropriateness and usefulness of this mission, Gončarov has no doubts whatsoever: the Russians “taught the Aleuts and the Kuril Islanders to live
and pray... created, invented Siberia, populated and educated it, and now want
to give back to the Creator the fruit of the seed cast by Him" (ibid., 289).

It should be emphasized that there is no contradiction between Goncharov's
westernizing position and his aspiration for the assimilation of various ethnic
groups into the Russian national body. Such a stance was not unique and was
entirely in keeping with the official discourse, even among the Westernizers,
concerning the necessity of Russia's civilizing mission.

This is one of the reasons why Grand Duke Konstantin and Golovnin
chose this book as an example for writers.

In spite of the fact that, according to many contemporaries, Konstantin's
Slavophilism increased during the Crimean War, he apparently did not con-
sider it appropriate to send Slavophiles on expeditions. Candidates were re-
cruited in other circles – among the young writers from the literary journal
Moskvitjanin, who were close to but not identical with the Slavophiles.

4. Launching the Expedition in 1855: A Clash of Two Concepts
of Ethnography

Why did the initiative for the "literary expedition" originate not from the
RGS but from the Naval Ministry, which was not formally involved in sci-
ence? First, one can assume that Konstantin's idea stemmed from his seri-
ous ambition to turn his ministry into an experimental platform for further
government reforms and to take the initiative away from the RGS. It was a
kind of competition between three ministries – National Education, Navy
and State Domains. Second, the grand duke's liberal ideology relied on the
principle of "openness", which can be implemented by involving experts as
well as any other opinions, including those of writers. Moreover, Konstantin
sympathized with Slavophilism in 1853–56.

One can argue that two opposing factions appeared inside the Naval Min-
istry, as had happened before in the RGS. Both factions had different views
on what science was and how to conduct ethnographic research. The "German"
faction included officials and geographers of the older generation – the
head of the Naval Ministry, Baron Ferdinand Vrangel' and the chair of the
Naval Scientific Committee, Admiral Michail Reineke. The "Russian" faction
consisted of Grand Duke Konstantin, Prince Dmitri Obolenskij, Aleksandr
Golovnin, and Count Dmitri Tolstoj. If for the "Germans" the ideal of sci-
cientific knowledge was a cosmopolitan research ethos, which involved obtaining
specific practical benefits and strict professionalization of the field ("only ex-
erts make science"), the "Russians" aspired for a nationalization and "Rus-
ification" of the science, blurring the disciplinary boundaries and engaging a
wide range of social forces in the process.

The clash of the two scientific paradigms occurred at the stage of prepara-
tion for the expedition. On 16 August 1855 a "member" of the "Russian fac-
tion" Dmitri Obolenskij noted in his diary his impressions of Konstantin's
order to equip the literary expedition. For Slavophile Obolenskij (he was Juri
Samarin's cousin), the main benefit from the expedition was that "the grand
duke will enter into more intimate relations with writers; thus he will be more
involved in literature and through this participation he will give it a stronger
right to be. It is very important at the moment."

The rehabilitation of "suspect" literature in the eyes of the government was
the ultimate goal for Obolenskij. Like Konstantin, he saw in literature and pol-
itical journalism as a "resource for good" (Obolenskij 2005, 83). However, this
notion of benefit strongly differed from that of the "German" faction and had
a symbolic meaning that can be formulated as the intention to strengthen the
prestige and power of literature.

It was this concept of science that was reflected in the first secret memo
of the "literary expedition". The first goal of the voyage was to "describe the
manners and customs of the population which was engaged in fishery and
was suitable for naval recruitment". Such a statement did not cover all
of Konstantin's intentions. He wrote further: "I do not consider it appropriate

17 Vera Aksakova wrote in her memoirs how Slavophiles perceived Konstantin as their ally
(Aksakova 2013, 130). Among the reasons was, for instance, the grand duke's permanent
communication with Slavophile Dmitri Obolenskij, a close friend of the Aksakov brothers,
and Konstantin's assistance to Stepan Ševyrev in his publication of Nikolai Gogol's second
volume of his Dead Souls. On the rise of patriotism during the Crimean War, see Maiorova
2010, 28–51.

18 On these contexts of the grand duke's politics see Lincoln 1982, 142–150; Ševyrev

19 For example, Sergei Maksimov's reports and sketches "A Year in the North" (1859)
were the most significant research on Samoyeds and Zyryans after Vladimir Islavin's book
"Samoyeds in their Home and Public Life" (St. Petersburg 1847), which was the report
ensuing from an inspection by the Ministry of State Domains.

20 On relationships between government and regional knowledge in Russia, see Loskutova
2012.

21 RSAN fond 410, inv. 2, file 1069, fols. 7v–8.
to give a detailed program for this study and make place for any intention to collate descriptions according everyone's own view. But I ask you to elaborate general instructions for collecting the data that could be of most importance for us”.

The only example specified in the memo was not ethnographic but literary. The grand duke wished to receive essays “in the manner of Gončarov’s excellent articles”.

The relative freedom in the selection of the example and the lack of requirements forced the curator of the expedition Baron Vrangell’ to express his disagreement. In his report to Konstantin in full accordance with the “German” scientific paradigm, the Baron proposed to oblige writers to work out all the scientific literature about the province to which each of them would go. Wrangell was sure that the final sketches had to be of “practical use”.

In a letter to Obolenskij, Vrangell’ articulated his stance even more straightforwardly, stressing that the ministry did not need a crowd of “writers-enthusiasts”, gifted perhaps to write only light (in accordance to the taste of our audience) literary articles, sentimental and picturesque, but not relevant to our goal.

Vrangell’ elaborated the requirements that suggested a critical review of all the literature on the regions to be explored, a careful program of research and even an examination to be passed by the writers. However, Konstantin did not approve this project, and the desired outcomes of the expedition were described as follows:

I ask you to pay particular attention to a) their homes, b) their crafts, with an indication of circumstances favouring and inhibiting their development, c) ships and different shipping tools and means employed by them, indicating their names and presenting, if possible, their image, d) their physical appearance and condition, and e) their manners, customs, habits, and all the features, sharply separating them from the other inhabitants of the same region morally and industrially, as well as in speech, sayings, beliefs, etc. If you find it possible to discern other characteristic features of the region and its inhabitants, it would be up to you to insert them in the description. The naval commanders, having no desire to rein in your
talent, give you the full right to describe your voyage and the results of your observations in the form and volume you find most convenient and expect from your pen works that are worthy of it, in content and style as well as in volume. (Pisemskij 1936, 615)

Thus, the final “program” was a compromise and combined both scientific elements dating back to Nikolaj Nadeždin’s plan for ethnographic study of inorodcy (Knight 2009, 124–128), and liberal elements that left space for the writers’ imagination. Although there was no emphasis on non-Russians or Russians in the memo, the writers found themselves de facto in the role of ethnographers, observing and describing different ethnic groups – Tatars, Kalmyks, Armenians, Samoyeds, Sami, Ukrainians, Jews, etc. The memo did not require writers to master prior ethnicographic literature, but an analysis of their essays demonstrates unquestionable knowledge of the most important ethnographic work on the region they were sent to.

The choice of the expedition routes was made in accordance with the nationalizing ethnographic paradigm. It suggested the study of the internal (median, northern and southern) provinces of Russia, lying in its European part, not Siberia and the Far East. Itineraries include Archangelsk and the White Sea, Ladoga and Onega Lakes, the Volga from ‘Tver’ to Astrachan’, the lower Ural River along with the lower Don and Dnieper.

Within the framework of the nationalizing ethnographic paradigm, the Ministry did not choose professional ethnographers and geographers, but writers. However, almost all of the expedition members were already known for their brief ethnographic essays (Afanas’ev–Čužbinskij, Potechin, Michajlov, Maksimov, Danilevskij) or artistic works about the life of the common people (Pisemskij, Potechin, Maksimov, Michajlov). It is also important that Aleksandr Ostrovskij, Aleksej Pisemskij and Michail Michajlov published their early works in Michail Pogodin’s famous Slavophile journal Moskvitin Alanin and were close to the so-called “young editorial board”. This circle aspired not just for the collection and publication of folklore but for a new aesthetics for the presentation of peasant life.

In this respect, some researchers call the expedition participants “ethnographers” (Clay 1995, 45), which generally does not conflict with the genre

22 Ibid., fol. 12v.
23 Ibid., fol. 11.
24 The draft of this programme was published in Pisemskij 1936, 614.
25 On the variety of their genres, see Maksimov 1890 and Clay 1995.
of their works, as disciplinary and discursive boundaries in the 1850s were flexible and blurred. Discursive uncertainty, an inability to describe ethnography as an institutionalized science in the middle of the nineteenth century, allows us to consider travel essays in the same field as the works of university orientalists, ethnographers, naturalists, historians and linguists. Their disciplinary and professional status cannot be considered as belonging to the realm of “pure” ethnography or “pure” literature.

5. Conclusion

Launched in 1855 and finished in 1861–1862 by Sergej Maksimov’s last trip to the Far East (the Amur), the “literary expedition” can be regarded as one of the most prominent joint initiatives of the authorities and literati on the eve of the Great Reforms. Of course, each participant in the expedition pursued his own, often very pragmatic and mercantile, goals and could have in mind his own vision of nation, civilizing mission and relationships between Russians and other ethnic groups. It was only at the start of the expedition that all the mentioned writers shared the elation of establishing the new project. Maybe the best example of this elation and aspiration for new knowledge and new activity can be found in the words of Ostrovskij’s and Pisemskij’s friend and literary critic Evgenij Edel’son, who wrote in private correspondence:

The grand duke encourages literature decisively and with extraordinary zeal. There is a state-funded project to send a few writers to different parts of Russia to study and describe it. Pisemskij had already received such a proposal. That would be a good activity for Ostrovskij and maybe for me too. Once the war is over, the whole squadron will be outfitted to travel, and there will be a writer on each ship. Such a happy time is coming for literature.

However, the majority of participants tended just to spend a few months on a trip, gather the necessary materials and return to the capital. Thus, Filippov and Pisemskij had already finished their trips at the end of 1856. Other writers experiencing some difficulties on their way in remote regions decided to quit the project taking the line of least resistance. Thus, the famous playwright Aleksandr Ostrovskij broke his leg on his tour and returned to Moscow in 1857 having written only one sketch about the Volga. In the same year, Potechin, Michajlov and Danilevskij finished their trips. The most prolific and strongest among the others were Maksimov and Afanas’ev-Čužbinskij, who requested extra financial support and an extension of the commissioned time to reach the most remote points (the Amur and Dneestr, respectively). After his trip to the White Sea and the Amur in 1856–1859 Maksimov headed for the Caspian and the Black Sea in 1862–1863. Afanas’ev-Čužbinskij used his trip not only to collect materials but also to gather a whole range of additional data regarding discussions of the emancipation of the peasants in 1861 and of some criminal cases. Although the expedition was a secret event and there was no officially published information about the writers’ trips, the literary community was aware of the significant role which literati played in the shaping of the new paradigm of ethnographic knowledge.

The exploration of the “literary expedition’s” ethnographic context showed that the agency of the nationalizing paradigm was not only the RGS but also the Naval Ministry, which took the initiative in developing “Russian science”. In a comparative context, the Russian literary expedition looked like a unique project financed and implemented by the government. There were no European examples in the 1820–50s when prominent writers were commissioned by the state to produce any literary or ethnographic works. This enables us to pose the question about the special features of ethnographic knowledge in imperial Russia, which needs further exploration.

The nationalizing paradigm of knowledge (and ethnography in particular) in the 1850s accounted for the request for writers to be commissioned

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27 For instance, Aleksej Pisemskij did not hide that he participated in the project in order to receive a sufficient allowance and to improve his finances – see Vdovin 2012.

28 Thus, Aleksej Pisemskij and Sergej Maksimov expressed a strong doubt whether a Russian civilizing mission could be effective. See in detail Vdovin 2014.

29 Russian National Library (St. Petersburg), Division of manuscripts, fond 1123, file 67, folks. 14v–15.


31 Afanas’ev stayed in the south, in Ukraine, until 1860 (RSAN fond 410, inv. 2, file 1069, fol. 362).

32 There was only one exception: in 1858 in the journal Sovremennik, the editor Ivan Panaev announced Dmitrij Grigorovič’s sea trip around Europe. However, he did not indicate that this voyage was arranged by Grand Duke Konstantin.
as a special social force to describe common Russian people and inorodey in the provinces and reconsider the very notions of "nationhood" and "Russian-ness". The "literary expedition" of the Naval Ministry was the first project in the history of Russian ethnography in which the nationalizing stimuli of the authorities and some prominent writers coincided. However, the practice of state-funded literary ethnography was not established as a permanent institution. On the contrary, literary ethnography in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Gleb Uspenskij, Vladimir Tan-Bogoras, Semën Anskij, etc.) stuck to a radical and populist ideology (Rabinovitch 2005).

Finally, the fact that the nationalizing paradigm had come to be so popular on the eve of the great reforms meant that the request for the old, "humanist" knowledge-mediated texts and romantic ideology of culture retained its influence and complicated the process of modernization. These limitations and contradictions should also be problematized in further studies of the interaction of "scientific" and literary ethnography in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Ivan IV’s testament of 1572, the only extant will from his reign, is a valuable source of information about his disposition of various territories, his ambivalence toward appanages, his ambiguity about the continued existence of his oprichnina, and his psychological mood at the time of its composition, even when it only corroborates or articulates facts known from other sources. Unfortunately the testament survives only in a single manuscript with an 1805 watermark which purports to be a copy of an earlier copy by an "A. Kurbatov" written in St. Petersburg in 1739. A "Preface" dates the testament to 7080 in the Byzantine calendar from the creation of the world and 1572 CE when Ivan was in Novgorod. The document is accompanied by annotations, some of which admit ignorance of the meaning of passages in the text. The testament is incomplete, breaking off where one would expect the authenticating signatures of its witnesses.

Cornelia Soldat’s Das Testament Ivans des Schrecklichen von 1572 is the most extensive and comprehensive publication ever devoted entirely to the testament. She concludes unambiguously that the testament has no value whatsoever as a source on Ivan’s reign because it is a literary ‘mystification’ of the 1820s, probably created by archivist A. F. Malinovski and definitely created for historian N. Karamzin, who cited it in the notes to volume nine of his Istoriia russkaja.

The book consists of an abstract (one page, in English), a four-page foreword (also in English) by Russell E. Martin (III–VI), which praises its ‘ambitiousness’ and use of the concepts and methodologies of Slavic literature. Acknowledgments (1–2), an introduction, four chapters, and a résumé which is less a conclusion or summary than a ruminations on the theme of historical perceptions of Ivan in modern times. The presentation is enhanced by seven black-and-white photographs (unnumbered pages following 457) of the manuscript of Ivan’s testament in RGADA taken by the author (RGADA fond 197, ot. 1, #79, Malinovski portfolio), an extensive bibliography (469–498), a glossary (499–502), and an index (503–510) whose page numbers are completely unreliable. This is a major revisionist study, unfortunately marred by a quantity of factual and typographical errors and bibliographic omissions far greater than one would expect in a monograph of this quality. These technical flaws distract the reader while detracting from Soldat’s exposition.

Chapter 1, "Einleitung" (3–42) sets Soldat’s study of the testament as a literary ‘mystification’ within the context of Edward Keenan’s conclusion that the Kurbskij-Ivan correspondence was an "apocrypha." Soldat claims to be following Keenan in treating the testament as a pseudo-epigraph and analyzing its contexts by "close reading." She places the testament within the family of medieval, early modern and modern forgeries.

Chapter 2, "Testamente Ivan IV. – Datierung und Forschungsstand" (43–149) supplies historiographic background about the 1572 and other testaments ascribed to Ivan. Soldat begins by accepting the existence of a testament by Ivan in 1553 mentioned in the interpo

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