### Part III

# **Explorations** and **Empire**



## 11. Texts of Exploration and Russia's European Identity

"Russian Christopher Columbuses, scorning dismal fate, Will open a new route through the ice to the East, And our Mighty Power shall reach America, But now wars urge another glory."

—Michael Lomonosov, Verse from "Peter the Great," 17611

### RUSSIA AS OUTPOST OF THE EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT

In 1721, at the celebration of the Treaty of Nystadt ending the Northern War with Sweden, Peter the Great accepted the title of emperor (*imperator*). Chancellor Gavriil Golovkin made clear the symbolic meaning of the change in a speech to the Senate. Peter, he intoned, had taken Russia "from the darkness of ignorance into the Theater of the World, so to speak from nothingness into being, to one of the political peoples of the world." The adoption of a western, Roman image of secular rule was expressed in the imagery of emergence, showing movement from ignorance and superstition to the promotion of science, which was cultivated by "political peoples of the world," who had embarked on explorations and extended their realms as they ventured into the unknown.

In other words, a sign of Russia's emergence onto the "theater of the world" was its engagement in the European project of world exploration and its scientific pursuits. In the late seventeenth century, Siberia had become the focal point of interest for western scholars and explorers interested in pathways to China. Dutch and German scholars began to publish descriptions of the region. During Peter's reign, Russia participated in this effort. An expedition

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> M. V. Lomonosov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izd. Ak. Nauk SSSR, 1959), 8: 703.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: Social-Economic Literature, 1963), 9, 321.

of Cossacks led by V. V. Atlasov explored Kamchatka. D. Y. Antsyferov and Ivan Kozyrevskii conducted explorations of the Kurile Islands.<sup>3</sup> Peter also sought to bring Russia into the European scientific endeavor. In his correspondence with Peter, the famed German philosopher Leibniz had wondered whether Asia was joined by land to North America, and the emperor was determined to find the answer. He instructed two surveyors, Ivan Evreinov and Fedor Luzhin: "Go to Tobolsk, and from Tobolsk, with guides, travel to Kamchatka and beyond, wherever you are shown, and describe these areas to find out whether America is joined to Asia. This is to be done with great care."4 The surveyors provided him only with a map of the Kurile Islands. Disappointed and on his deathbed, Peter entrusted the undertaking to a Dane in Russian service, Vitus Bering. The Bering explorations showed what the simple instructions to Evreinov and Luzhin entailed. It took the explorer three years just to reach the Pacific by land. Once there at Okhotsk, he built his ship, the St. Gabriel, but the results of his first expedition proved unsatisfactory, as he failed to reach America.

The Academy of Sciences, established by Peter in 1724, sponsored Bering's second expedition, from 1733 to 1743. One part consisted of a sea expedition to the coast of America; the other, a land expedition, was charged with a multifaceted description of Siberia. The sea expedition was grandiose and arduous. Moving the equipment and supplies from Tobolsk to Okhotsk, where the ships were built, took hundreds of sledges and lasted eight years. Bering finally discovered the coast of North America, but died in a sea accident on the return voyage. The land expedition was led by a team of scholars under the direction of the historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller, a Westphalian, who had come to study at the newly opened Academy in Petersburg and the naturalist, Johann-Georg Gmelin. The team conducted a vast survey of Siberia, including geography, flora, and fauna, Siberian peoples and their languages. Müller brought back copies of hundreds of documents from local archives, which provided the basis for his classic History of Siberia. Gmelin's four-volume Voyage through Siberia, published in Göttingen in 1751, also focused on flora and fauna but included extensive descriptions of Siberian people. Other naturalists, Stepan Krasheninnikov and Georg Wilhelm

Eric Donnert, Russia in the Age of the Enlightenment (Leipzig: Edition Leipzin, 1986), 95-6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii*, 9: 532.

Steller, wrote accounts of an encyclopedic character on Kamchatka. All in all, the expedition's maps, as well as collections of materials, provided the basis for future ethnographical, historical, botanical and zoological studies of the regions.<sup>5</sup>

The scholarly texts of the "great Northern expedition," as it was often called, were potent symbols of Russia's European character. Written in or quickly translated into European languages and accompanied by elaborate illustrations, they showed Russia participating in European explorations of Russia. The paradoxical character of this relationship was concealed by defining Siberia as a colony, similar to those of the west. In the 1730s, the historian and geographer Vasilii Tatishchev drew a line between Europe and Asia at the Urals, which soon gained general acceptance. As Mark Bassin wrote, "In one stroke, Siberia was transformed into an Asiatic realm cleanly set off from a newly identified 'European Russia'." Russians began to call Siberia "Great Tatary," which Europeans had often used to refer to Russia in general.<sup>6</sup> The relationship was also concealed by defining the expeditions as Russian, regardless of the nationality of the leaders or the authors of the texts. For instance, Müller wrote of a "summary of the voyages made by Russians on the Frozen Sea, in search of a north east passage," and Vitus Bering came to be known as the "first Russian sea-farer." The designation "Russian" came to be applied to anyone serving the westernized Russian state.

Another sign of Russia's European identity was the production of maps indicating the extent and the features of the empire ruled by the Russian state. Following the example of western monarchies, Peter used maps to define Russia as a discrete territory, initiating what James Cracraft has called the "visual conquest of Russia." After Peter's Great Embassy of 1697-98,

Donnert, Russia in the Age of the Enlightenment, 99-100; S. A. Tokarev, Istoriia russkoi etnografii: dooktiabr'skii period (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 82-5, 87-93; Gert Robel, "German Travel Reports on Russia and their Function in the Eighteenth Century," Deutsch-Russische Beziehungen im 18. Jarhrhundert: Kultur, Wissenschaft und Diplomatie, ed. Conrad Grau, Serguëi Karp, and Jürgen Voss (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 276-8.

Mark Bassin, "Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian East in the Early Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* vol. 6, No. 3 (June 1991): 767-70.

Müller's book appeared in 1764 in English and 1766 in French. Gerhard Friedrich Miller, Voyages From Asia to America: For Completing the Discoveries of the North west Coast of America (London: Thomas Jefferys, 1764). See the entry for Bering in Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brogauza i Efrona (St. Petersburg: I. A. Efron, 1892), 6: 534.

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he commissioned maps of southern Russia, including his recent conquest of Azov, from his officers Jacob Bruce and Georg Mengden. In 1719, the tsar founded a Cartography Department, where the French astronomer Joseph-Nicolas Delisle collaborated with the Russian cartographer, Ivan Kirilov. Although Kirilov's *Atlas Vserossiiskoi* and the Academy's *Atlas Rossiiskoi* did not attain the accuracy of contemporary European atlases, they represented the first efforts of the Russian state to mark the extent and boundaries of the empire.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the century, Russians were developing what Willard Sunderland describes as a "territorial consciousness" that identified Russia with the land belonging to the empire as well as with the westernized monarchy that created the empire.<sup>9</sup>

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In 1767, Catherine the Great's *Instruction* to the Legislative Commission, assigned to codify Russian laws, announced the European character of the Russian state as an apodictic truth, demonstrated by the success of Peter's reforms. The rapid expansion of the empire during Catherine's reign later afforded another indication of the success of the westernized Russian state. The empire grew in the south and the west to encompass the littorals of the Caspian and Black Seas, as well as the lands that came to Russia with the partitions of Poland. Russia now seemed not only to equal but also to excel its western rivals as the most imperial of nations, comprising more peoples than any other. By 1797, the economist Heinrich Storch could write, "no other state contains such a mixed and diverse population. Russian and Tatars, Germans and Mongols, Finns and members of the Tungusic tribes live here separated by vast distances and in the most varied regions as citizens of a single state, joined together by their political order..." He went on to

James Cracraft, The Petrine Revolution in Russian Imagery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 272-81; Larry Wolff, Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization in the Mind of the Enlightenment (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 144-6; Mark Bassin, "Russia Between Europe and Asia," Slavic Review vol. 50, No. 1 (Spring 1991): 7-9.

This tendency in Russian statecraft is analyzed in depth in the innovative article by Willard Sunderland, "Imperial Space: Territorial Thought and Practice in the Eighteenth Century," in *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*, ed. Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, and Anatolyi Remnev (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 37-55.

conclude that to see so many different people united in one state "is a most rare occurrence, a second example of which we look for in vain in the history of the world." The empress favored comparisons with Rome. One poet opined that Russia has "soared with greatness like Rome in its flourishing days and extending the limits of its territories has given laws to all and amazed the entire world." <sup>10</sup>

However, Russia's European character did not remain undisputed. Chappe d'Auteroche's derogatory account of the journey in *Voyage en Sibirie*, published in 1768, challenged Russia's claim to belong to the enlightened peoples of Europe. The book deplored the bondage and ignorance of the Russian people, as well as their lack of genius and imagination, which he ascribed to the climate and the atmosphere of despotism that, he claimed, poisoned Russian arts and manufacturing. The illustrations of the book by Jean Le Prince reinforced this impression, showing such scenes as dirty hovels and brutal punishment by the knout.<sup>11</sup>

In reply, Catherine wrote her famous *Antidote*, affirming the enlightenment beliefs in the universality of human nature and the perfectibility of all peoples. To substantiate her views, she launched a massive survey of the regions of Russia under the direction of the Academy of Sciences. The "Academy Expedition" assembled an impressive array of German scholars, who for six years undertook detailed and extensive studies of various parts of the empire and produced works describing the economic, geographical characteristic of particular regions, as well as the variety of its human subjects. Perhaps the most important contribution was made by Peter Simon Pallas. Pallas traveled through the Urals, Altai, and Trans-Caucasus region, and his work was published in German, English, French, and Russian editions. His account included observations of the mining resources, animal and plant life, as well as the manners and traditions of the peoples he encountered.<sup>12</sup> His

Andreas Kappeler, The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History (Harlow: England, 2001), 141; Stephen Baehr, "From History to National Myth: Translatio imperii in Eighteenth Century Russia," The Russian Review vol. 37, no. 1 (January 1978): 10-12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Isabel De Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 337-8; Hans Rogger, National Consciousness in Eighteenth Century Russia (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 263-5; Wolff, Inventing Eastern Europe, 36, 76-7.

Robel, "German Travel Reports on Russia and their Function in the Eighteenth Century," 278-9; Donnert, Russia in the Age of the Enlightenment, 110-11.

exquisitely illustrated study of Russian plants, compiled on the basis of the trip, was a landmark of eighteenth-century botany.

Another member of the expedition, Johann Georgi, in the late 1770s published German, French, and Russian versions of a monumental four-volume Description of all Nations of the Russian Empire, their Way of Life, Religion, Customs, Dwellings, Clothing and other Characteristics. The study was based on his own observations during his participation in the "physical" expedition as well as on the works of Müller, Gmelin, Krasheninnikov, and Pallas.<sup>13</sup> Georgi applied the methodology of natural science formulated by Linnaeus to create a taxonomy of the nationalities of the empire. Language was his principal determinant of classification, and he placed groups speaking the same language in the same nationality.<sup>14</sup> The text Georgi produced confirmed that the Russian empire was the most diverse of empires. "Hardly any other state in the world possesses such a great variety of different nations, survivals of peoples, and colonies as the Russian state."<sup>15</sup>

Georgi and other scholars of the Academy Expedition shared Catherine's enlightenment faith that human nature was uniform. They believed that all peoples possessed reason; however, that reason developed only through education, which would be imposed from above and eventually would bring about the elimination of national traits. Those at earlier stages, for instance, the Tungus and the Chukchhi, were ignorant, simple, and possessed a beguiling innocence, but "the uniformity of State organization" could transform all nationalities, including ethnic Russians, into educated, Europeanized Russians. The state, Georgi concluded, was "leading our rude Peoples by giant steps toward the common goal of general enlightenment in Russia, of a wonderful fusion of all into a single body and soul, and of creating, as it were, an unshakable Giant that will stand for hundreds of centuries." <sup>16</sup>

Tokarev, Istoriia russkoi etnografii, 103-110.

Nathaniel Knight, "Constructing the Science of Nationality: Ethnography in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russia" (Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University, 1995), 32-40.

Tokarev, Istoriia russkoi etnografii, 103.

Yury Slezkine, "Naturalists versus Nations: Eighteenth-Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity," in Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1800-1917, ed. Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 38-9; Knight, "Constructing the Science of Nationality," 36-7.

#### "Russian Christopher Columbuses" and Their Texts

The great Russian polymath and academician Michael Lomonosov insisted on a different measure of Russia's European identity. The Russian state could achieve glory equal to that of other states only if it developed sea power and extensive commerce with foreign nations, particularly in Asia. His poem of 1761, "Peter the Great," put his own hopes for future "Russian Christopher Columbuses" in Peter's mouth. In 1762, his memorandum, composed for the tsarevich Paul, "A Brief Description of Various Voyages in Northern Seas and An Indication of a Possible Passage through the Siberian Ocean to East India," asserted that Russia had lagged behind other states in the development of foreign trade because they had greater access to sea routes, and therefore "from ancient times had learned sea-faring and the art of building ships for long voyages." As a result, Russia had enjoyed little success in trading with Eastern peoples.

Lomonosov looked forward to the appearance of Russian seamen and shipbuilders. His immediate concern, however, was to discover and open a Northeast passage that would make it possible for Russian ships to sail across the Arctic Sea into the Pacific. He argued that such a voyage was feasible. He claimed that though Arctic voyages faced the hardships of ice and cold, these challenges did not compare with the terrible storms, savage people, illnesses, and the extremes of weather, faced by Portugese explorers on their way to the East Indies. The last sections of the memorandum set forth a scientific analysis of the waters and the ice flows of the Arctic Sea, leading to the conclusion that "according to natural laws and information concordant with them," such a voyage would fare well. Lomonosov succeeded in convincing the Admiralty College to launch two expeditions under Vasilii Chichagov in 1765 and 1766, but his ships could not find their way through the ice and heavy fog, and turned back less than one-third of the way from the port of Kola to the Bering Straits.

In the last decades of the eighteenth century, Catherine began to follow Lomonosov's suggestions and took measures to enhance Russia's sea power and presence in the North Pacific. The quickening of her interest was in response to the changed situation in the Pacific. James Cook's third voyage (1776-79)

<sup>17</sup> Lomonosov, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 6: 422-5.

made known the abundance of furred animals in the North Pacific and spurred British merchants to develop an extensive trade, particularly with China. <sup>18</sup> Cook's example was important in another respect; unlike previous explorers, he published his journals. <sup>19</sup> Cook's journals represented at once scientific documents, charting new waters and islands, and cultural statements, recasting the relationship between Europeans and the Pacific peoples he encountered. The three volumes of his journals appeared in Russian translation from 1780-1805, and wielded considerable influence. The government promoted the publication of two Russian accounts of sea explorations, Grigorii Shelekhov's description of his colonization of Kodiak Island, and Grigorii Sarychev's account of his voyage to Siberia and study of the Siberian coastline.

Shelekhov, often called "the Russian Christopher Columbus," was a merchant who came from Ukraine to make his way in the rough and tumble frontier of Okhotsk. In Okhotsk, he organized a group of merchants and hunters to mount an expedition to the shore of Kodiak Island off the southern coast of Alaska. With the support of the Russian government and a loan of 50,000 rubles from the wealthy Ural mine owner, N. Demidov, Shelekhov sailed with three ships from a port near Okhotsk in 1783. After a year's journey, he reached Kodiak Island, where he built the first Russian settlement in America, which would become the center of the Russian fur trade in Alaska. Shelekhov also tried to organize the competing merchants into a monopoly under government protection, an effort that succeeded only after his death with the establishment of the Russian-American Company in 1799.

Shelekhov's account of his achievements was not a seaman's journal but an official report submitted to the governor-general of Siberia, published in 1791.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Cook, Shelekhov made little effort to record the truth. He cast himself as a benevolent conquistador, subduing the natives

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> In the preface to his account of his voyage, Adam Johann von Krusenstern gives a vivid description of the backwardness of Russian merchants and seafaring (Captain A. J. Von Krusenstern, *Voyage Round the World in the Years*, 1802, 1804, 1805, & 1806 [London: C. Rowerth for J. Murray, 1813], xxi-xxii).

Bernard Smith, Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 231.

See the Introduction by Richard A. Pierce to Grigorii I. Shelekhov, *A Voyage to America*, 1783-1786 (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1981), 1-15.

For a list of the editions of Shelekhov journey, see Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Shelekhov's Voyage to Alaska: A Bibliographical Note (New York: New York Public Library, 1932), 5-8.

with minimal force and winning their admiration and obedience. The frontispiece set Shelekhov's achievement in the frame of myth. The rather crude illustration depicted a merchant, presumably Shelekhov, standing on a shoreline, receiving a seal skin from a native. The figure of Mercury hovers in the clouds, announcing the benevolence of the gods. Various animals—an otter, and sea lions—sit gazing out innocently. The caption below repeats the first three lines of Lomonosov's verse. Lomonosov's fourth line was replaced with the words, "And glory comes to Russians everywhere." <sup>22</sup>

The stately peacefulness of the scene was consistent with the heroic tale that Shelekhov contrived. He described how he subdued the "savages" (whose numbers he greatly exaggerated) by ordering his men to open fire with cannons. He then told the natives of the "tranquillity, grandeur, power, and beauty of everything in Russia," and extolled the empress's mercy. They were astonished at the speed with which he built houses. He promised to instruct them, showed them Catherine's portrait and some books, and then announced how fortunate they were to live under laws. He also claimed that he had taught them the bases of Christianity. As Richard Pierce has shown, Shelekhov's claims were refuted by all later accounts. Like earlier conquistadors, he massacred hundreds, treated those who survived brutally; the houses and education were fabrications. It would be many years before the natives on the island adopted Christianity. His abuses became notorious, and were perpetuated in the practices of the Russian-American Company at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

In 1785, Catherine the Great sponsored a voyage to explore Russian holdings in the North Pacific and to take possession of areas not formally incorporated into the Russian empire. She appointed Captain Joseph Billings to lead the expedition. Billings had accompanied Cook on his third expedition and entered Russian service in 1783. He captained the lead ship, the *Pallas*, and a Russian naval officer Gavriil Sarychev, the second, *The Glory of Russia*. The expedition undertook the arduous trip to Okhotsk, where the ships were built, and finally set sail in 1787. The explorers tried but failed

The illustrations is available in the original publication, *Russia Engages the World*, 1453-1825, edited by Cynthia Hyla Whittaker, 100.

Puteshestvie G. Shelekhova s 1783 po 1790 god uz Okhotska po Vostochnomu Okeanu k Amerikanskim beregam, i vozvrashenie ego v Rossiiu (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1812), 15-21, 29-36; Pierce, Introduction to Shelekhov, A Voyage to America, 8, 10, 12-13.

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to reach the Kolyma river in Northern Siberia, then sailed for America. It is clear that Sarychev took the tasks of the expedition far more seriously than the Englishman. He carefully mapped the shorelines of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Aleutian Islands.<sup>24</sup>

Sarychev kept a journal, but without intention to publish. Loggin Golenishchev-Kutuzov, a noble naval officer, working on the translation of Cook's journals, then prevailed on him to put his entries in order and "compose a connected narrative from them." The author became convinced of both the benefit of such a publication to seafaring and the pleasure that it would bring to the reading public.<sup>25</sup> Sarychev's account was the first Russian explorer's journal in the Cook tradition, but the least sophisticated and comprehensive. Like other seamen publishing journals, he took care to apologize for his unpolished writing. "I have not tried like some explorers to embellish my tale with attractive, extraordinary and diverting, but invented adventures, but have followed the exact truth, describing real events, and in places, made my own remarks." The text is written in simple conversational style. Captain Cook, he claimed, had been limited by his dependence on large vessels meant to traverse the seas and, as a result, had often taken islands for the mainland and clouds for islands. Sarychev used baidars—the native Siberian canoes—and rowboats to investigate the shoreline. Another purpose of his visit, he understood, was to assert the sovereignty of the Russian empress in Siberia—to give "an effusive expression of [Her Majesty's] benevolence and to announce Her protection to the savage people in the countries subject to Her."26 His descriptions of the native peoples, particularly the Iakuts, are sympathetic, but extremely critical of their superstitions, especially the way the shamans exploited the natives' credulity. Sarychev provides a lengthy, astonished description of a shaman, screaming and writhing as he evokes the evil spirits that presumably had inflicted illness on a Yakut. A print shows the shaman's presumed loss of control as he takes the spirit into himself. Other illustrations depict inhabitants of Unalashka, and a group of Iakuts.

Donnert, Russia in the Age of the Enlightenment, 112-14; Krusenstern, Voyage Round the World, xviii.

Puteshestvie flota-kapitana Sarycheva po Severovostochnoi chasti Sibiri, Ledovitomy Moriu i Vostochnomu Okeanu (St. Petersburg, 1802), viii; the volume was published in 1802 with a dedication to Emperor Alexander I and translated into English in 1806.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Ibid., n. p., iv-vi, xii.

Like those accompanying Cook's later journals, they favor science over art, eschewing invention in order to inform.<sup>27</sup>

#### RUSSIANS AS EUROPEANS

Shelekhov and Sarychev wrote their accounts without intending to publish them. The descriptions of sea expeditions during the reign of Alexander I (1801-25) were statements of their authors' achievements as events in the history of world exploration. Educated in elite naval institutions, they familiarized themselves with western thought and literature, and, as Ilya Vinkovetsky has shown, "considered themselves engaged in active dialogue with general European culture."28 Several of them took advantage of opportunities, to train in the British navy. Indeed, the four captains of major sea explorations of the first quarter of the nineteenth century— Adam Johann von Krusenstern, Iurii Lisianskii, Vasilii Golovnin, and Mikhail Lazarev-served as officers and saw combat with the British navy, an interchange initiated by Catherine II. They came to believe that Russia would show its European character by extending its sea power, like Britain, into the Pacific and developing trade and colonies. They had little interest in Siberia, which had come to be regarded as a barren, forbidding land, a bleak place of exile that was, for better or worse, a part of Russia.<sup>29</sup>

For the explorers of Alexander's day, the model was not Christopher Columbus, but James Cook, and the composition of a journal was the demonstration of both their achievement and their European character. They aspired to Cook's professional competence and integrity, as well as his determination to combine exploration, the expansion of trade, and the advancement of science. Like Cook, they took naturalists, astronomers, and artists on board, leaving a scientific and artistic as well as a verbal record of the journeys. They adopted Cook's sympathetic and inquisitive manner toward native peoples. Their journals revealed a new conception of Russian seamen as European explorers—to use Marc Raeff's phrase, full partners in the project of world exploration.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Sarychev, 29-31; Smith, 1-4, 20-8, 36-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ilya Vinkovetsky, "Circumnavigation, Empire, Modernity, Race: The Impact of Round-the-World Voyages on Russia's Imperial Consciousness," *Ab Imperio*, 1-2 (2001): 198-201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Bassin, "Inventing Siberia," 770-5.

Cook had shown the possibilities of extended sea voyages. Taking up an idea of Catherine's, these explorers reached the Pacific by sea, thus avoiding the overland trek to Okhotsk. They now embarked on "round-the-world" voyages, beginning at Kronstadt, crossing the Atlantic with stops in the Canary Islands and Brazil, rounding Cape Horn to the west coast of South America and to explore the myriad islands of the Pacific, before heading north to Siberia and Alaska. The voyages returned by the China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Cape of Good Hope. They sailed in modern ships built in London or the Baltic ports, rather than the ramshackle vessels put together in Okhotsk. The first to embark on this route was Adam Johann von Krusenstern, a Baltic German nobleman from Estland educated at the Naval Cadets Corps, who took part in naval battles against Sweden in 1789-90. He served in the British navy from 1793 to 1799, when he saw combat against French warships and witnessed the vigorous British trade in the Far East. He returned with a determination to reform the Russian navy and to extend its reach in the Pacific.

Krusenstern's journal, published in four volumes (1809-11) opened with a virtual manifesto about the future of Russian naval exploration. He recalled his chagrin when he observed an English trading vessel in Canton, which, after being fitted out in Macao, had reached the northwest coast of America in less than five months. Russians customarily brought their furs to Okhotsk, then to Kiakhta, and then to Canton—a two year trek. He reasoned that if Russia had good ships and sailors, the journey could be made directly and the return trip could bring Russia goods from Canton and other ports along the way. The empire then could also avoid the payments to England, Sweden, and Denmark for East European and Chinese goods, and could even undersell these nations in the north German market. He proposed to augment the Naval Cadets Corps with six hundred young noblemen and one hundred commoners, the latter to be trained for the merchant service and "on the same liberal footing as the nobles." "In this manner a most useful body of men might be created for the service of their country; nor would Cook, Bougainville, or Nelson have ever been what they proved to [their countries], if attention had only been paid to birth."30

Krusenstern envisioned a sweeping governmental program that would extend Russian sea power and establish a merchant marine and an assertive

<sup>30</sup> Krusenstern, Voyage Round the World, 1: 25-9.

and enterprising merchantry in the Far East. His proposals made little headway during the reign of Paul I (1796-1801), who showed little inclination to further Catherine's policies. Reversing his father's despotic measures, Alexander I was sympathetic to efforts to show Russia's support for science and exploration. Two high officials of the beginning of Alexander's reign-Count Nikolai Mordvinov and the Minister of Commerce, Count Rumiantsev—promoted the project; both remained forceful proponents of sea explorations throughout the epoch. In addition, resources provided by the Russian-American Company made it possible to purchase the latest ships and equipment in London. Krusenstern captained the first ship, the Nadezhda (Hope), and his protegé, Iurii Lisianskii, the second, the Neva, which followed a somewhat different route. Two naturalists, George Heinrich von Langsdorff and Wilhelm Gottfried Tilesius traveled on the trip, along with the astronomer Johann Kaspar Horner. Krusenstern also agreed to take along Otto and Moritz von Kotzebue, two sons of Auguste von Kotzebue, the conservative German playwright who was in Russian service, and a special embassy to Japan, headed by the ambassador, Nikolai Rezanov.<sup>31</sup>

Alexander I brought the project of Pacific exploration into his scenario of friendship, kindness, and sympathy, making it an expression of his image of wise and enlightenment monarch.<sup>32</sup> Krusenstern described how the emperor carefully inspected the two ships: "He noticed everything with the greatest attention, and expressed his satisfaction," with the ships and the new equipment acquired in England. He spoke with the commanders and "attended with some pleasure the work that was going on board the ship." Alexander also bestowed the revenues of an estate, 1,500 rubles for twelve years, on Krusenstern's wife, to set his mind at ease.<sup>33</sup> Alexander accorded similar attention to Lisiasnkii on the *Neva* upon its return.<sup>34</sup>

Krusenstern had to make room on the Nadezhda, though reluctantly, for the special embassy, headed by Rezanov, who was Shelekhov's son-in-law (Ibid., 1: 5, 17-8). The voyage was marred by conflicts between Rezanov, a high official and courtier who outranked Krusenstern. See Victoria Joan Moessner, "Introduction," in George Heinrich von Langsdorff, A Voyage Around the World From 1803 to 1807 (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1993), xiii-xvi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Scenarios of Power, 1: 195-201.

<sup>33</sup> Krusenstern, Voyage Round the World, 1: 6-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Urey Lisianskii, Voyage Around the World in the Years, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806 (London: J. Booth, etc., 1814), 316-17.

Krusenstern's voyage originated the genre of Russian ship journal as a sign of Russia's advancement and sophistication; it was taken up by the others who left accounts of this voyage: Lisianskii, Langsdorff, Rezanov, and the clerk of the Russian-American Company, Fedor Shemelin, who accompanied Rezanov's embassy. Krusenstern's journal appeared almost simultaneously in Russian, German, and English, Lisianskii's in Russian and his own English translation, and Langsdorff's in German and English. The volumes included maps of the discoveries, scientific reports, illustrations of scenes of the voyage, plant and animal life, and portraits of the native peoples the authors met and described. They announced to the world Russian seafarers' active involvement in the exploration of the Pacific.

In the Alexandrine era, Russia's American settlements replaced Siberia as the indication of imperial status and prestige. The explorers' descriptions of their encounters with native peoples reflected the sympathetic, inquiring attitude of those striving to understand human beings remote from their own experience. While the eighteenth-century faith in education and progress persisted, it receded into the background at the sight of individuals bizarre in appearance, dress, and conduct. The evidence of the corruption and abuses of the Russian-American Company belied the easy identification of civilization and progress, while the Rousseauist image of primal innocence lingered to produce feelings of guilt and uncertainty in the confrontation with people who did not conform to their notions of humanity.

The accounts of native people on this first circumnavigation were varied, reflecting the authors' efforts to make sense of their perceptions while maintaining their role as detached scientific observer. They were particularly nonplussed by the inhabitants of Nukahiwa, an island in the Marquesan chain in the South Pacific. On the surface, the Nukahiwers fit the conception of the innocent savage, handsome, friendly, peaceful, and honest. The men were large and striking, and many covered their bodies with tattoos, a frequent subject of illustrations in all the journals showing the distance of these natives from European society. However, Krusenstern and his comrades learned of the dark side of the Nukahiwers from a runaway British seaman, Edward Roberts, who told them of their brutality, and frequent episodes of cannibalism.

Krusenstern was struck by the absence of institutions and morality in their midst. The king possessed no power, and as a result there was no justice; theft was regarded as "a particular merit in those who evince adroitness." Men took connubial vows, but adultery was general, and he learned of husbands consuming their wives and children during famines. He held their religion in particular contempt. There were priests among them, but from Nukahiwers' "moral character," he concluded that the religion had done nothing to ameliorate it. The Nukahiwers had all the marks of children of nature, but of a nature that was violent, brutish, and profligate.<sup>35</sup>

Iurii Lisianskii was somewhat more sympathetic. He believed that they regarded their marital vows as sacred. Following the logic of eighteenth-century ethnographers, he attributed their violence and brutality to instinct and ignorance, which led them to believe in superstitions and magic.<sup>36</sup> Langsdorff expressed a Hobbesian conception of human nature. Everything he saw in Nukahiwa seemed to support his notion that "there is no creature on earth in all zones and climates that rages against its own species as much as man .... Among savages as well as civilized peoples, man eternally seeks to destroy his species." The depravity of the Nukahiwers, however, demonstrated the beneficial effects of civilization. "I have, unfortunately, seldom observed the gentle tender feelings of affection and love, of friendship and attachment, even of parents for children and vice versa among brutal uncivilized nations."<sup>37</sup>

The Aleutians and the inhabitants of Kodiak Island off the south coast of Alaska evoked the same feelings of offence and disapproval from Lisianskii and Langsdorff (Krusenstern did not describe these peoples). Lisianskii was contemptuous of their lengthy mourning rites and their fantastic myths of origins. He considered the Toyons' practice of keeping male concubines especially repulsive. He found the inhabitants of Kodiak Island incapable of conversation: "a stupid silence reigns amongst them... I am persuaded that the simplicity of their character exceeds that of any other people, and that a long time must elapse before it will undergo any very perceptible change." On occasion they did not fear to appear before him in the nude, though they considered him "the greatest personage on the island." But he was most disgusted by their filth: "They have not the least sense of cleanliness. They will not go a step out of their way for the most

Krusenstern, Voyage Round the World, 1: 152-84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Lisianskii, Voyage Around the World in the Years, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 79-90.

Langsdorff, A Voyage Around the World From 1803 to 1807, 1: 91.

necessary purposes of nature." They used urine to launder their clothing and even to wash themselves.  $^{38}$ 

Both Lisianskii and Langsdorff were critical of the Russian-American Company for its cruel and irresponsible treatment of the natives subject to their authority, and their accounts bear what Vinkovetsky describes as "the mark of condescending paternalism." Lisianskii criticized the company for setting prices on agricultural implements that the natives could not afford. Langsdorff was more sweeping in his condemnation. The Company's agents were hunters, many of them former convicts from Siberia, who wielded despotic power over the natives. "They have tortured those defenseless creatures to death in the cruelest manner and gone unpunished. That is why the natives hate the Russians, including their wives and children, and kill them whenever the opportunity presents itself." They had lost all their possessions and "own barely more than the clothing on their backs." <sup>39</sup>

Krusenstern's expedition was the first of thirty-three sea voyages to the North Pacific from 1803 to 1833, many of which were described in journals. Two notable expeditions were led by Otto von Kotzebue, who as a boy had sailed with Krusenstern from 1803 to 1807. His first expedition, from 1815 to 1818, financed by Count Nikolai Rumiantsev, received the sympathetic attention of Alexander I, who allowed the ship, the Riurik, to fly the Russian military flag, along with the commercial flag, in order to protect it from international incidents. Kotzebue's voyage was another effort to find a Northeast passage and Krusenstern prefaced Kotzebue's account with a plea for such a voyage. 40 Kotzebue did not in fact attempt to find a passage, but reached Kamchatka and the Bering Straits and claimed to discover over threehundred islands. His account of his voyage appeared in German, English, and Russian. Remarkable illustrations by Ludovik Choris, an artist of Russian-German parentage, were published in a separate volume in Paris in 1822.41 Kotzebue's second voyage around the world from 1823-26 also resulted in a multi-volume publication in Russian and English.

<sup>38</sup> Lisianskii, Voyage Around the World in the Years, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 179, 182-3, 214-5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Langsdorff, A Voyage Around the World From 1803 to 1807, 2: 21-2, 36-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Flot-kapitan Kotzebue, *Puteshestvie v iuzhnyi okean...1815-1818* (St. Petersburg: N. Grech, 1821), iii-v.

Louis Choris, Vues et paysages des régions équinoxales recuillis dans un voyage autour du monde (Paris: Didot, 1826).

Another notable explorer, Vasilii Golovnin, authored Around the World on the Kamchatka, 1817-1819, a volume that expresses the viewpoint of a talented and educated naval officer who was determined to defend and extend Russia's possessions in the Pacific. Golovnin was educated at the Naval Military Academy at Kronstadt and read extensively in the history of sea exploration and philosophy as well as the works of the philosophes. From 1802 to 1805, he served in the British navy, and saw combat under Admiral Nelson. In 1807, he undertook a voyage on the Diana to conduct a survey of the Northern Pacific regions. Despite numerous mishaps—including being taken captive in South America and Japan—he completed a survey of Russian possessions along the coast of Alaska. Upon his return, he wrote an account of Japan that enjoyed great popularity and became a classic text on the subject. Golovnin served as the model for the cosmopolitan, professionally trained naval officer for future generations. Three explorers— Fedor Litke, Ferdinand Wrangel, and Fedor Matiushkin—served under him on the Kamchatka and praised the strict and rigorous training they received in the "Golovnin school."

Golovnin's trip had several objectives: to deliver supplies to Kamchatka; to survey islands in Russian possession not already surveyed as well as a stretch of the Northwest Coast not approached by Cook; and to inquire into the treatment of natives by the Russian-American Company.<sup>42</sup> He confined most of his criticisms of the company to a confidential report he wrote for the government. He approached the natives without the sense of righteous superiority displayed by his predecessors. Describing the Kodiak islanders, Golovnin observed the survivals of idolatry; although they professed Orthodoxy, the natives refused to talk about the subject, "because the first Russian settlers...made fun of and expressed scorn at the various myths which they heard about the creation of the world and man." The Sandwich or Hawaiian islanders stole, but "at least along with all the other European 'arts' they have learned to steal like civilized people"—that is, they did not take things that they did not need. He believed that the introduction of Christianity and the art of writing to the Sandwich Islanders would enable them to reach a stage of development "unparalleled in history." "But it is not

V. M. Golovnin, Around the World on the Kamchatka, 1817-1819, 7 (Honolulu, HI: Hawaiian Historical Society, 1979), 7; L. A. Shur, K beregam Novogo Sveta (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 89-90.

easy to introduce a foreign religion to a free and vigorous people!" Conquered peoples outwardly accepted the faith of their conquerors, but free people had to be persuaded, and it would take a long time to accomplish that. $^{43}$ 

In general, Golovnin shared Krusenstern's vision for an expansion of Russian initiatives in the Pacific and demanded a rebuff to merchants from the United States, who had been encroaching on the Russian fur trade in Alaska. He inspected the small Russian settlement at Fort Ross in California, which had been established in 1812; he found that it was thriving and enjoyed the friendship of the local Indian tribes. Hi gave an eloquent defense of Russia's rights to the fort and the adjacent land.<sup>44</sup> However, in the last years of his reign, Alexander I abandoned his aims in the Pacific. The triumphalist mood that set in after the victory over Napoleon was sufficient to display Russia's parity with or even moral superiority to Europe. The development of Russian naval power was no longer necessary to elevate Russia's prestige. The beginning of the Greek war of independence in 1821 convinced Alexander that it was necessary to avoid offending the British in the Pacific. Golovnin watched in dismay as the attention to the fleet began to wane, a tendency that would continue during the reign of Nicholas L45

The final text of this rich period of naval explorations was Captain Fedor Petrovich Litke's *A Voyage Around the World*, 1826-1829. Litke, a product of the Golovnin school, came from a Russified German family, the Lütkes. His father served in the Customs administration and the imperial court. He joined the navy in 1812, and in 1817 gained a place on Golovnin's Kamchatka expedition. Litke understood his role more as a scientist than a representative of Russian sea power. He contemplated the difficulties awaiting him on the voyage of the *Kamchatka* but was inspired with the determination "to see much that is new that cannot be learned in the fatherland, and the hope that our voyage will not be without benefit for the enlightened world and will not remain without reward from the monarch." 46

From 1821 to 1824, he led an expedition to study the island of Novaia Zemlia in the Arctic Ocean. In 1826, he was assigned to captain a voyage

Golovnin, Around the World on the Kamchatka, xxviii-xxx, 116, 122-3, 202, 206-7.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 127-31,162-6.

See the "Forward" to Golovnin by John J. Stephan, xiiii-xiv.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Shur, K beregam Novogo Sveta, 89.

on the Seniavin to the Pacific to the North East coast of Asia and the Northwest coast of America, which would be the subject of his Voyage. In the introduction, Litke emphasized that the principal goals of his expedition were scientific, unlike the expeditions of the previous fifteen years, which "were destined to carry cargoes to Okhotsk and Kamchatka, and to cruise around the colonies of the Russian-American companies" and produced few scientific results. In addition to surveying shores of the Bering Sea and Pacific islands, Litke undertook scientific investigations with the pendulum on the curvature of the earth; with a magnetic needle on the theory of gravity; and with a barometer on climatic phenomena. The naturalists on the voyage, Alexander Postels and Karl Heinrich Mertens, collected hundreds of specimens of flora and fauna. Postels also collected ethnographic materials, costumes, arms, utensils, and ornaments. The two naturalists and Friedrich Heinrich Kittlitz, the accompanying artist, compiled a portfolio of 1,250 sketches, some of which were published as illustrations to Litke's text.<sup>47</sup> Litke's scientific work gained him world renown: his survey of the Bering Sea revealed unknown shorelines and islands; his conclusions about the curvature of the earth were considered major scientific contributions; and his findings with the magnetic needle provided material for important works of other scholars.

Litke's *Voyage around the World*, written in Russian and published simultaneously in Russian and French, marked a new stage in the evolution of the genre of texts of exploration. The effacing mode of the humble ship captain, not given to verbal expression, disappears. Litke does not contain his authorial voice and shapes his material to express his own personal feelings and views, for instance, describing the beauty of a sunset, or recalling the problems of perception, when the last port-of-call remains in the sailor's mind. The confidence and authority in his writing and his eloquence of expression give his account the flow and evocative power of a literary text. A review of the first two parts of his study greeted *Voyage* as a "European book." "The appearance of a European book in our literature is an event like the appearance of a comet." The reviewer perceived that the European persona of the author was expressed in the quality of his writing, the vividness of his perceptions, and the nobility of his attitude toward native peoples.<sup>48</sup>

Frederic Litke, A Voyage Around the World, 1826-1829 (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1987), i, viii-xi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> "Puteshestvie vokrug sveta," *Biblioteka Dlia Chteniia* vol. 9 (1835): Part 5, 1-32.

Concerning the last encomium, Litke describes the native peoples encountered with ease and confidence: there is no sense of discomfort at the crude customs and the squalor of native life. He respects their myths of origin, such as a tale of a legendary flood told by the Kaloshes of Sitka. He notes that they resembled the myths of other peoples, including those of the ancient Greeks: "the childhood dreams of the human spirit are the same under the beautiful sky of Greece as in the wild forests of America."49 The Kaloshes' sacrifice of slaves and their brutal warfare evince "the same bloodthirsty vengeance that we find with the Bedouins and our own mountain people." "The customs of the Kaloches," he concluded, "differ very little from those of other peoples who live in wild independence. They are cruel to their enemies, and all strangers are enemies. They are suspicious and cunning." These qualities designated a people "who have neither civilization nor any religion based on the love of one's fellow man. But they do not render them unworthy of being human beings, as would infer a very recent traveler, in which case one would have to similarly discard a major part of the peoples who inhabit the earth." He then went on to describe their positive qualities: their love for their children, who were obedient; the absence of poverty in their midst; their attention to their physical condition; and their love for life, proven by the absence among them of suicide.<sup>50</sup>

Litke found that the administration of the Russian-American Company had greatly improved. The company had reached a fair arrangement with the Aleutians, who were exempted from paying tribute, either in skins or currency, as long as they agreed to supply half their manpower to hunting sea animals when the company demanded it.<sup>51</sup> He concluded that the condition of the Aleutians on the island of Unalashka had changed greatly for the better. They had adopted the habits of the Russians and their way of life and dress. They had become true converts to Orthodoxy: they had begun to adopt Christian beliefs; attended church diligently; made the sign of the cross when boarding ship; and sent their children to the school founded for them.<sup>52</sup>

Litke's text expresses the confidence of a seaman, born and educated in Russia, who serves the Russian emperor and expresses his western identity

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Litke, A Voyage around the World, 83-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Ibid., 88-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Ibid., 72-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Ibid., 101-2.

in his scientific contributions and literary sophistication. However, Russia's Pacific empire was losing its political significance by the time the book was published, and the new emperor, Nicholas I, boasted of Russia's superiority to the west because of its defense of monarchy and religion, as evidenced by the victory over Napoleon and Russia's military might. The doctrine of Official Nationality proclaimed the national character of the westernized monarchy and the distinctiveness of its institutions.<sup>53</sup> In this setting, exploration took new directions. Litke remained a respected and influential figure in Russian government and cultural life—he was a founder and first vice-president of the Russian Geographical Society, which organized geographical and ethnographic expeditions in the last decade of Nicholas's reign. These expeditions, however, focused not on the exotic world beyond, but on Russia itself. They sought not so much an engagement with the world and fostering Russian Europeans, as answers to the question of Russia's distinctive national identity.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Scenarios of Power, 1: 275-8, 298-9, 379-81.

On Litke and the Geographical Society, see Nathaniel Knight, "Science, Empire and Nationality: Ethnography in the Russian Geographical Society, 1845-1855," in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, ed. Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 108-47.

# 12. Russian Noble Officers and the Ethos of Exploration



**1** uring the nineteenth century, Russian noble officers led extraordinary expeditions to the Pacific, the Russian Far East, and Central Asia. The first generation of noble explorers undertook maritime explorations of the Northern Pacific. Later in the century, army officers organized expeditions to the distant reaches and borderlands of Russia. Inspired by their readings and the examples of European and Russian explorers, both generations were driven by a powerful personal desire to venture into the unknown. By embarking on organized expeditions of discovery and scientific investigation, they sought both to realize these aspirations and to fulfill the obligation of service to emperor and Russia borne by Russian noblemen since the reign of Peter the Great. Their determination to embark on difficult and perilous expeditions reflects what I call an ethos of exploration, which they expressed in accounts of their voyages as well as in scholarly and personal writings. These writings defined their personal identities both as Russians and as European explorers and scientists. This article will trace the emergence of the ethos and its transformation in response to changing conceptions of the Russian nation and its imperial destiny during the nineteenth century.

The training of Russian noblemen to lead maritime expeditions began in the last decades of the reign of Catherine the Great. In response to Captain James Cook's discovery of an abundant sea otter population in the North Pacific on his last voyage (1776-1779), Catherine assigned young officers from the Naval Academy and the Naval Cadets Corps to serve apprenticeships in the British navy, a practice followed also by Alexander I. Four of these officers, Adam Johann von Krusenstern, Vasilii Golovnin, Iurii Lisianskii, and Mikhail Lazarev, served and saw combat on British ships. Their model of professional dedication and integrity was Captain Cook—

a seaman who combined the goals of maritime exploration, the expansion of trade, and the advancement of science.<sup>1</sup>

The first contingents of noble naval explorers embarked on circumnavigations of the globe that took to them to the North Pacific and to Russia's recent Pacific acquisitions. Following a route proposed by Catherine's War Cabinet, they avoided the difficult overland trek from Petersburg to Okhotsk, which took at least two years.<sup>2</sup> They started out at Kronstadt, crossed the Atlantic with stops in the Canary Islands and Brazil, rounded Cape Horn to the west coast of South America, and then explored myriad islands in the Pacific before heading north to Siberia and Alaska. They returned via the China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Cape of Good Hope. They captained modern ships built in London or the Baltic ports, rather than the ramshackle vessels put together in Okhotsk. Like Cook, they took aboard naturalists, astronomers, and artists, leaving scientific and artistic as well as verbal records of their journeys. Like him, they charted unknown areas and composed literate and detailed diaries, intended for publication and translation.

Beginning with Krusenstern's voyage of 1803-06, Russian seamen completed thirty-three circumnavigations by 1833. A Baltic German nobleman from Estland, Krusenstern was an active proponent of Russian exploration in the North Pacific. He had served with the British fleet from 1793-99 and observed the vigorous British trade in the Far East. Krusenstern envisioned an ambitious governmental program that would extend Russian sea power, establish a merchant marine, and develop an assertive and enterprising merchantry to engage in trade with China. He received little encouragement from Emperor Paul I (1796-1801), but when Alexander I ascended the throne, he welcomed Krusenstern's initiative.<sup>3</sup> Krusenstern, who commanded the

On eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century explorations, see Article 11 or "Texts of Exploration and Russia's European Identity," in *Russia Engages the World*, 1453-1825, ed. Cynthia Hyla Whittaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). Article 11 in this volume. "Zapiski o puteshestviiakh i evropeiskaia identichnost' Rossii," in *Rossiiskaia imperiia: strategii stabilizatsii i opyty obnoveleniia*, eds. M. D. Karpachev, M. D. Dolbilov, A. Iu. Minakova (Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo VGU, 2004).

Ryan Jones, Empire of Extinction: Nature and Natural History in the Russian North Pacific, 1739-1799 (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2008), Chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. von Krusenstern, Voyage Round the World in the Years, 1802, 1804, 1805, 1806 (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1968), 1: 6-7. Reprint of the original London edition of 1813.

*Hope* and his comrade Iurii Lisianskii, in charge of the *Neva*, the second ship on the voyage, publicized their exploits. Five of the participants left accounts: Krusenstern, Lisianskii, George Heinrich von Langsdorff, Nicholas Rezanov, and the clerk of the Russian-American Company, Fedor Shemelin.<sup>4</sup>

Vasilii Golovnin was the most influential exemplar of the ethos of sea exploration. Born into an old Russian family, he was orphaned at the age of nine in 1785. His relatives, lacking means, sent him to the Cadets Corps of the Kronstadt Naval Academy, where from 1785 to 1793, he was educated at governmental expense. In 1802, Alexander I sent him to train in the British navy, where he served until 1805 and saw combat under Admiral Nelson. In 1807, he undertook a voyage, on the ship *Diana*, to conduct a survey of the Northern Pacific regions. Despite numerous mishaps, among them being taken into captivity in South America and Japan, he completed a survey of Russian possessions along the coast of Alaska. Upon his return, he wrote an account of Japan, which enjoyed great popularity and became a classic text on the subject.<sup>5</sup>

Golovnin's second major trip was the subject of his widely read account, Around the World on the Kamchatka, 1817-1819. His assignment was to supply the island of Kamchatka, to survey islands in Russian possession as well as a stretch of the Northwest Coast not approached by Cook, and to investigate the treatment of natives by the Russian-American Company. He also visited Fort Ross, the Russian settlement in Northern California. Golovnin provided a Spartan model of dedicated captain-explorer. Rigid but principled, he instilled a sense of the importance of discipline and obedience in his officers and disregarded cosmetic matters of cleanliness and show, which were popular at the time and became a virtual obsession for Nicholas I. At sea, he remained in his uniform at all times, even when he slept.

Three renowned explorers—Fedor Litke, Ferdinand Wrangel, and Fedor Matiushkin—served under Golovnin on the *Kamchatka*. Litke admired him and praised the strict and rigorous training of "the Golovnin

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Urey Lisianskii, Voyage Around the World in the Years, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806 (London: J. Booth, 1814); George Heinrich von Langsdorff, A Voyage Around the World From 1803 to 1807 (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1993); Nicholas Rezanov, Rezanov Reconnoiters California (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1972); F. Shemelin, Izvlechenie iz "Zhurnala pervago puteshestviia rossian vokrug zemnago shara" (n.p., 1818). Pamphlet volume in New York Public Library.

See Ella Lury Wisell, "Introduction," V. M. Golovnin, *Around the World on the Kamchatka*, 1817-1819 (Honolulu, HI: The Hawaiian Historical Society and the University Press of Hawaii, 1979), xix-xxiii.

school,"6 but he nurtured no warm feelings for him. Golovnin showed his subordinates no kindness, no human feeling. They, like Litke, revered him for his "feeling of duty, honor, and nobility." Golovnin recognized their talent. He recommended Wrangel and Litke to lead expeditions—Wrangel to chart the Arctic coast of Siberia, Litke to chart Novaia Zemlia, which he undertook in 1821, at the age of twenty-four.

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The seamen who led these voyages saw themselves as European explorers, helping to advance Russia as a sea power in emulation of Britain and other seafaring nations. They had been educated in elite naval institutions, where they learned about western thought and literature, and, as Ilya Vinkovetsky observed, "considered themselves engaged in active dialogue with general European culture." They represented an enclave of young officers who were markedly different from other members of the noble officer corps in the navy—extreme variants of the type of noble servitor cut off from estate and family ties, completely devoted to serving the goals of a dynamic westernizing autocracy. The names of several of them—Krusenstern, Litke, Wrangel, Anzhu (Anjou)—indicate Baltic or European ancestry that itself set them apart in a special category. Several were orphans—Vasilii Golovnin, Fedor Litke, Ferdinand Wrangel—who were sent to Petersburg as boys and found their true home in the naval officers' corps.

The memoirs of Fedor Litke tell how a young Russian nobleman was drawn to seafaring and emerged as a prominent figure in the naval and scientific establishment during the reign of Nicholas I. Litke's family, the Lütkes, were among those recruited by the Russian monarchy to put their scholarly knowledge and skills to the service of the Russian state and nobility. His grandfather arrived from Germany with a Masters of Philosophy to serve as Assistant Rector of the gymnasium under the Academy of Science. He wrote on the physical sciences, chemistry, and theology. Litke's father was

Graf F. P. Litke, "Avtobiografiia," in V. P. Bezobrazov, *Graf Fedor Petrovich Litke* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk,1888), 1: 88-95

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1: 88.

<sup>8</sup> Ilya Vinkovetsky, "Circumnavigation, Empire, Modernity, Race: The Impact of Round-the-World Voyages on Russia's Imperial Consciousness," Ab Imperio 1-2 (2001): 198-201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See Marc Raeff, Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), 122-9.

associated with the Martinist sect of the Masonic movement and wrote essays of a mystical character. He served as the manager of the estates of Prince Repin, but due to the failure of a vitriol factory he received from Repin, had to move to Petersburg, where he began service in the Petersburg Fiscal Chamber and the Commerce College.

Litke's memoirs begin with a tale of early tragedy. His mother died two hours after his birth. "On September 17, 1797," he wrote, "I became my mother's murderer." The blow of her death led his father to contemplate suicide and left him unable to care for Litke or his siblings. The boy was sent to relatives with "coarse morals," who indulged in debauchery and regarded him as little more than a nuisance. "Childhood did not leave me with a single pleasant memory." At school, he recalled only the rod. He was the youngest in class, played no games, and was physically undeveloped. When he was eleven years old, his father died, leaving his son and second wife completely bereft. Two months later, his grandmother died. He was placed under the tutelage of a hated uncle, who ignored him completely. In these years he began to find solace in his reading, particularly Karamzin's Letters of a Russian Traveler and occasional issues of the journal Priatnoe chtenie. 10

Litke experienced his intellectual and social awakening during the summer of 1811, when he visited his sister and her husband in Kronstadt. There he fell into the company of young naval officers and began to share their love for the sea. One of them, Dmitrii Golovnin, the brother of Vasilii Golovnin, took him under his wing and taught him Arithmetic and Geography. A book about explorations awakened dreams of sea voyages. He paid close attention to the events of 1812, keeping a diary of everything he heard. In 1813, he merited distinction in the naval bombardment of Danzig. 11

Serving in the Naval Cadet Corps, he participated in the lively social life of the capital. He devoted himself to the study of navigation and sailed whenever the occasion arose. His efforts were well rewarded. In 1814, he received the invitation to sail with Vasilii Golovnin on the *Kamchatka*, which immediately appealed to his urge "to plunge into the unknown." He read the published journals of Krusenstern, Lisianskii, Sarychev, Cook, and Anson, and "lived in the future." When he returned from the voyage, he felt himself "a sailor of the school of Golovnin." That meant "thinking of the essence of the matter, not paying any attention to its appearance." 12

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Litke, "Avtobiografiia," 1: 33-40, 45.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1: 58-63.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 1: 87, 94.

Litke followed these principles when he captained his own circumnavigation, which he described in his celebrated A Voyage Around the World, 1826-1829. The voyage clearly was planned at the end of Alexander's reign, without the earlier determination to assert Russia's maritime power. Litke understood his principal role as a representative of Russian science. In the introduction to his account, he emphasized that the principal goals of his expedition were scientific, unlike the expeditions of the previous fifteen years, which "were destined to carry cargoes to Okhotsk and Kamchatka, and to cruise around the colonies of the Russian-American companies." In addition to surveying the shores of the Bering Sea and Pacific islands, Litke undertook various experiments, with the pendulum on the curvature of the earth, with a magnetic needle on the theory of gravity, and with a barometer on climatic phenomena. Litke's scientific work gained him worldwide renown. His survey of the Bering Sea revealed unknown shorelines and islands. His conclusions about the curvature of the earth earned praise as major contributions to science. His findings with the magnetic needle provided a basis for future scientific discoveries.<sup>13</sup>

Both Litke and Wrangel saw their achievements as Russian contributions to a European scientific and cultural project. Many educated Russians took their discoveries and accounts as evidence that Russians had established themselves as true Europeans. For example, in 1835, an anonymous review of the first two sections of Litke's account praised the work as a "European book." "The appearance of a European book in our literature is an event like the appearance of a comet." The author observed that Litke's European identity was evident in the quality of his writing, the sharpness of his perceptions, and the nobility of his attitude to native peoples. 14

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In the last years of his life, Alexander I's interest in explorations and expansion in the Pacific waned. The triumphalist mood that set in after the victory over Napoleon was sufficient to display Russia's parity with or even moral superiority to Europe. In addition, the beginning of the Greek war of independence in 1821 convinced him that it was necessary to avoid offending the British in the Pacific. When Nicholas I ascended the throne at the end

Frederic Litke, *A Voyage Around the World*, 1826-1829 (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1987), i, viii-xi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> "Puteshestvie vokrug sveta," *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 9 (1835): pt. 5, 1-32.

See John F. Stephan, "Forward" to Golovnin, Around the World on the Kamchatka, xiiii-xiv.

of 1825, he gave a national orientation to Russian science and exploration, which now increasingly focused on continental Russia. He brought leading figures to the Academy of Sciences, many of them seeking new fields of study in the geology, the flora and fauna, and ethnographical groups of Russia. In 1832, Nicholas placed Litke in charge of the education of Grand Duke Constantine, establishing him as a person of influence in matters relating to science and exploration.

Another Baltic nobleman, Alexander Middendorf, a professor at Kiev University, took the initiative in opening new regions to exploration.<sup>16</sup> In 1843, he embarked on an expedition to northern and Eastern Siberia to investigate the effects of permafrost on the animals of the region.<sup>17</sup> However, Middendorf exceeded his assignment and traveled south to the Amur River, which connected eastern Siberia to the sea, and which he believed would bring great economic benefits to Russia. The Amur region, according to the treaty of Nerchinsk of 1689, belonged to China, and it was official policy to respect Chinese rights to the area. Middendorf found that Chinese boundary markers were inaccurate, and concluded that Russia was entitled to far more of the territory than the authorities believed. He returned not to reprimands and penalties, but to a hero's welcome, banquets, and acclaim from the nascent Russian Geographical Society. Most important, Nicholas received him sympathetically and, Middendorf wrote, "wished to learn from me the circumstances in the Amur lands."18 Nicholas had been aware of the importance of Siberia to Russia and had made sure that western Siberia was included on the heir's tour of the empire in 1837.

Middendorf displayed the new sense of mission and entitlement that would characterize Russian explorers from the 1840s. Wishing to trespass the established borders of Russia, the explorers were denied official approval, for fear of antagonizing Russia's neighbors and the Great Powers, but gained tacit support from powerful figures and eventually approval from the throne. One of these supporters was a naval officer, G. I. Nevel'skoi, who had long cherished

Alexander Vucinich, Science in Russian Culture: A History to 1860 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 304-6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> A. F. Middendorf, *Puteshestvie na sever i vostok Sibiri*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Imp. Ak. Nauk, 1860-1877).

Mark Bassin, Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 78-84; Middendorf, Puteshestvie na sever i vostok Sibiri, 1: 187.

the notion of exploring the Amur in order to debunk the official wisdom that the river was inaccessible by ships from the sea. Nevel'skoi had come in contact with the imperial family by serving as instructor to the Grand Duke Constantine in naval science, who also accompanied him as a companion on sea voyages.<sup>19</sup>

Despite official resistance, Nevel'skoi mounted an expedition in 1848 and 1849 under the pretext of carrying supplies to Kamchatka and various settlements on the shore of Okhotsk. With the support of Governor General Nikolai Murav'ev (later called Murav'ev-Amurskii) and the encouragement of the heir, Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich, Nevel'skoi ventured to the mouth of the Amur and declared that it was open and navigable. When he returned, he met bitter rebukes from many of Nicholas's ministers and a committee chaired by the Foreign Minister Nesselrode. Again Nicholas took the side of an explorer who had ignored formal constraints. He called Nevel'skoi's achievement "dashing (molodetskii), noble, and patriotic," awarded him the Order of Vladimir, fourth level, and declared, according to Nevel'skoi, "Where the Russian flag has been hoisted, it should never be taken down."20 Nevel'skoi later shared his experiences and his ideas with young officers like Mikhail Veniukov. His account of his voyage, The Heroic Exploits of Russian Naval Officers in the Far East of Russia, written shortly before his death in 1876, was a vigorous statement of the explorer ethos.<sup>21</sup>

The economic advantages that were supposed to accrue to Russia with the opening of the Amur not only failed to materialize, but became a secondary concern. The gaze of Nevel'skoi and the other naval officers soon turned south to the Ussuri valley, which promised access to the markets of Manchuria and China. The Amur was only a first step toward annexing the entire region,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> G. I. Nevel'skoi, *Podvigi russkikh morskikh ofitserov na krainem vostoke Rossii*, 1849-1855 (St. Petersburg: A. S. Suvorin, 1897), v-vi; Bassin, *Imperial Visions*, 127n.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Bassin, Imperial Visions, 127-29; Nevel'skoi, Podvigi russkikh morskikh ofitserov na krainem vostoke Rossii, 112.

In it, Nevel'skoi stated his conviction that it was not obedience or discipline that opened the Amur, but the officers' daring acts, "outside the order of command" (vne povelenii). It was "solely at their own discretion (po svoemu usmotreniiu)" that "they had ventured to give this minor commercial expedition state direction and had occupied the mouth of the Amur river and in the name of the Russian government announced to natives, Manchurians and to foreign vessels in the vicinity of the Amur estuary, that Russia had always regarded this area as its possession...." (italics in original) (Nevel'skoi, Podvigi, 57, 412).

including the Ussuri basin. In this respect, Middendorf's and Nevel'skoi's Amur adventures marked a transition from the goal of a maritime empire to a continental empire, whose exploration and expansion would center in Asia.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, it portended a disregard for international borders, with the monarch's tacit approval.

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The backing for Nikolai Murav'ev's and Nevel'skoi's ventures came from the members of the Russian Geographical Society.<sup>23</sup> The Society had been established at the initiative of Litke and the eminent botanist and geographer Karl von Baer, under the aegis of the Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaevich, and remained a favored institution under the monarchy that pursued a scientific agenda focused on the territory of Russia. In his inaugural address as vice president, the de facto head of the society, Litke emphasized that Russia was "part of the earth that has been studied very little" and had "unique variations in climate, geognosy, in flora, and fauna, with numerous peoples and so forth."<sup>24</sup>

The ethos of exploration now evoked new goals and a new type of explorer. If the professional sailor Captain Cook provided the model for the previous generation of noble seamen, the model for Russian explorers became the explorer-scholar, whose focus was not the sea, but the vast lands of Asia adjacent to Russia. The works of two world-renowned German scholars, Karl Ritter and Alexander von Humboldt, turned the attention of young Russian officers to these lands. Ritter's nine-volume study of physical geography, *Die Erdkunde*, published from 1832 to 1859, was devoted predominantly to Asia. Alexander von Humboldt, the nobleman, explorer, and polymath, visited parts of Central Asia in 1829 and in 1843 published a three-volume account of his experiences and findings. His conclusions about the mountain ranges of Central Asia inspired Russian explorers to plan their own expeditions.<sup>25</sup>

Litke's passion for exploration was prompted by the curiosity of the scientist. The young members of the Geographical Society, however, regarded

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Bassin, *Imperial Visions*, 211-12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ibid., 100, 128.

Cited in Nathaniel Knight, "Science, Empire, and Nationality: Ethnography in the Russian Geographical Society, 1844-1855," in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for* the Empire, ed. Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 110.

V. A. Esakov, Aleksandr Gumbol'dt v Rossii (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1960), 77-9.

geography as conveying something more—namely a means to understanding the nation and the people through their land. Alexander Golovnin, the secretary of the Society and the son of Vasilii Golovnin, made a special effort to recruit talented and progressive young noblemen into the society. Between 1848 and 1850, a rift opened in the Russian Geographical Society between the founders of the society, Litke and von Baer, and the younger members, who sought to take a more "national approach" to science—to direct the society to the more "practical" goals of Russian geography and ethnography. The younger members rallied behind Mikhail Murav'ev, a wealthy nobleman and powerful official with a Russian surname.<sup>26</sup>

In 1850, to Litke's chagrin, Mikhail Murav'ev defeated him in the election for Vice-President of the society he had helped to found. Litke was shocked and bemused by this show of national consciousness. He had perceived no contradiction between his European ancestry, his scientific work, his service to the emperor, and his sense of himself as Russian. Reflecting on the his father's life from the perspective of the 1860s, Litke wrote, "He was in his soul a Russian (*russkii*) and considered himself a Muscovite and it didn't occur to anyone to call him a German.... For such an outrage one had to be destined to live in our enlightened century."<sup>27</sup>

The next generation of explorers, exemplified by Peter Semenov and Mikhail Veniukov, although inspired by the examples of Krusenstern, Golovnin, and Litke, were scientists and army officers who sought to infuse imperial exploration with a national purpose. For them, science became a means to shape their own sense of nation. Semenov, who served as secretary for the Society from 1849, translated the first volume of Karl Ritter's Die Erdkunde von Asien. In the introduction, he described science as "self-knowledge' (samopoznanie), that is as the recognition of the objects and forces of Nature and the ability to subject them to our own power, to use them for our needs and demands...the desire to introduce the treasures [of human knowledge] into the life of the nation." The treasures that Semenov had in mind comprised knowledge of the geography of the nation.

On the foundation of the Geographical Society and the involvement involvement of the "enlightened bureaucrats" in its work see W. Bruce Lincoln, In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats 1825-1861 (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), 91-101; Knight, "Science, Empire, and Nationality," 110-14.

Litke, "Avtobiografiia," 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Cited in Bassin, *Imperial Visions*, 97.

This knowledge represented for Semenov not merely a contribution to science, but also means to advance Russia's interests by extending its territorial sway. In an article of 1855 devoted to a description and analysis of the geography of the Amur region, Semenov observed that the explorations of the previous thirty years had shown that "Russia moves forward, as Providence itself has ordained, in the general interests of humanity: the civilizing of Asia." He envisioned a future in which Russians would not annihilate native populations as the Spanish had in South America and the British in North America. "Rather, they gradually assimilate [the half-wild tribes of Central Asia and the Far East] to their civilization, to their social life and their nationality." <sup>29</sup>

Semenov and Veniukov were representatives of a new type of noble explorer as army officer. Like Golovnin, Litke, and Wrangel, they had limited means and had to depend on their service for their livelihood. However, unlike them, they came from old noble families of Riazan province and retained a sense of attachment to their estates and their families. Most important, unlike their predecessors they engaged in formal study of geography and the natural sciences, at St. Petersburg University. They emerged trained scientists, and during their careers regarded themselves as geographers, rather than officers.

While Litke's memoirs focused on his service to the emperor and to the Russian state, those of Semenov and Veniukov expressed a new sense of concern for the Russian land and people. Their life stories follow the pattern of romantic noble memoirs of mid-century and begin with affectionate memories of life on the family estate. Unlike Litke, whose arrival in Petersburg was his entry into a new world of science and dignity, theirs was a traumatic break from a cultured and sympathetic family life close to nature. Both found in the realm of Natural Science a means to fulfill the imperative of state service and to link their lives with the Russian people and the Russian land.

Semenov's father had fought at Borodino in the Izmailov Guard's Regiment. His mother came from a French family that had arrived in Russia in the eighteenth century. Both parents followed the literature and thought of the first decades of the nineteenth century, and their estate became a cultural center for the local nobility. Semenov recalled a life that was "open and hospitable." In 1843, at age sixteen, circumstances abruptly changed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Ibid., 203-4.

P. P. Semenov-Tian-Shanskii, Memuary (Petrograd: Izdanie sem'i, 1915), 1: 50.

His father died, and his mother began to suffer mental illness. He was shortly enrolled in the Lycée at Tsarskoe Selo.

Semenov learned much from the teachers at the School, but his heart and his interests remained with his estate in Riazan province, where he spent five months each year indulging his love for "nature and freedom." Fascinated first by gardens, he read the books on the subject from the estate library, memorized the Latin names of plants and trees by heart, and began to collect specimens. A German tutor acquainted him with the science of botany, which remained his first love throughout his life, and he mastered the principles of the Linnaean system. He hunted fauna on the estate as well, particularly insects and river crabs. "Every day and from each excursion I brought back something new and interesting." In the winter time, he read his father's atlases, works on geography, Russian classics, Karamzin's history, French plays, Sir Walter Scott, and especially Shakespeare. He was indifferent to children's books, except for Robinson Crusoe, which he found in three languages in his father's library.<sup>31</sup>

Semenov yearned to attend the university, but his mother could not afford the cost. Instead, he was placed at the elite School of Guards' Ensigns and Cavalry Ensigns. In 1845, he took the opportunity to attend university courses. He studied the natural and physical sciences and formed friendships with the botanist Andrei Beketov and the biologist and later pan-Slavist Nicholas Danilevskii. In 1855, after Alexander II had ascended the throne, Semenov traveled abroad to study Geography in Berlin. His young wife had just passed away. Shaken by the tragedy, he vowed to overcome his grief by beginning a new life and devoting his energies to "exploits (podvigi) that were difficult but beneficial for my fatherland." The first exploit he envisioned was to climb the heights of the Tian-Shan mountain range, which no European had reached, and bring back samples of rock to test Humboldt's hypothesis that the mountain had been volcanic. The second was to work for the emancipation of Russian serfs.<sup>32</sup>

In Berlin, Semenov prepared himself for the first of these tasks by studying meteorology with Heinrich Wilhelm Dové, mineralogy and geology with Gustav Rosé, who had accompanied Humboldt on his Central Asian trip, and, most important, geography with Karl Ritter. He declared that his journey to the Tian-Shan region, sponsored by the Geographical

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 1: 137-44.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 1: 238-9.

Society, would be devoted to the greater understanding of Russia.<sup>33</sup> Enjoying the cachet of the Society, Semenov felt empowered to flout rules and restrictions. To reach the Tian-Shan mountains he had to cross the border of Russia and enter China, which would violate a prohibition of private expeditions into neighboring countries. As a result, he omitted mention of his goal in his application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and described the purpose of his trip as the exploration of the Altai and the Kirghiz steppes. By concealing his goal, the Tian-Shan mountains, from the authorities, he gained the necessary escorts and papers to enter the region. He made numerous important scientific discoveries. Along the way to Lake Issyk Kul, he disproved the assumptions of Ritter and Humboldt that it was the source of the river Chu. His observations about the geology and geography of the region threw doubt on Humboldt's hypothesis that the mountains had a volcanic origin. He discovered and described five glaciers.

Semenov also saw his expedition as a means to promote Russian expansion and colonization in the region. With the favor of Mikhail Murav'ev and the Geographical Society, he succeeded during the first months of 1857 in strengthening the resolve of the Governor of Western Siberia, General G. I. Gasfort, to defy the authorities and occupy the adjacent Zailiisk region. He argued that this would "firmly secure peaceful Russian colonization, would make it become one of the pearls of Russian power in Asia." He argued for moving Russian administrative centers further into Central Asia.<sup>34</sup> Semenov returned to Petersburg to work behind the scenes to influence the decisions leading to the emancipation of the Russian serfs. He remained a lifelong champion of Russian colonization, which he described in 1892 as "part of the great colonizing movement of the European race," comparable to the overseas colonization of Spain, France and England.<sup>35</sup> He went on to initiate numerous geographical and statistical studies of the empire and later served as Vice-President of Russian Geographical Society. While critical of much in Russian government,

W. Bruce Lincoln, *Petr Petrovich Semenov-Tian-Shanskii: The Life of a Russian Geographer* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1980), 21. Lincoln provides an excellent critical account of the journey.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Ibid., 23, 25, 28-9, 31-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Cited in Uillard Sanderlend (Willard Sunderland), "Imperiia bez imperializma?" in *Novaia imperskaia istoriia post-sovetskogo prostranstva*, ed. I. Gerasimov, et al. (Kazan: Tsentr issledovanii natsionalizma i imperii, 2004), 463.

he remained devoted to the monarchy and was awarded the hereditary title Tian-Shanskii by Nicholas II in 1906.

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Mikhail Veniukov, also an eminent geographer, served under Semenov in the Society. In 1873, he was appointed editor of its journal, and began work on an ethnographic map of European Russia. In contrast to Semenov, Veniukov regarded the monarchy as the source of Russia's social and economic problems and the major deterrent to the formation of a Russian nation-state. Like Semenov, Veniukov grew up on a small estate in Riazan province and his memoirs describe his strong attachments not only to his grandmother and father, but to the local priest and peasants, who were whipped before his eyes, causing him to weep. Like other gentry memoirs at the time, his portrayed an idyllic childhood. He described the estate as his "paradise" where, as an only child, he was doted on by the adults, especially women.

Veniukov's father was a small landlord, from an old family, and served in minor local positions such as town head (*gorodnichii*). He conveyed to his son the feelings of patriotism, sacrifice, and courage that he had felt during the Napoleonic wars. He stirred his son's imagination with tales about Bagration and Kutuzov, whose lithographed portrait hung on the wall. Before he could read, Veniukov could recite Vasilii Zhukovskii's "Bard in the Camp of Russian Warriors" by heart. He learned to read from his grandmother, and was fascinated by an old book on navigation. "I learned that on earth there were places such as London, Paris, and Kronstadt." 38

In 1845, at age thirteen, Veniukov was sent off to Petersburg to prepare for the officer corps in the Noble Regiment (*Dvorianskii polk*), under the Second Cadets Corps. He compared the experience with being committed to prison for ten years. He received a "barrack education" of parades and discipline enforced by the rod and survived on niggardly rations. Only the friendships he developed among the students made the experience tolerable, and readings in geography and natural history provided his only intellectual substance. He read Humboldt's *Cosmos*, and works on zoology, botany, and land

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> I am indebted to Seymour Becker for making available his brief but incisive unpublished essay on Veniukov, "Mikhail Ivanovich Veniukov (1832-1901) Liberal Proponent of Empire."

M. I. Veniukov, Iz vospominanii: kniga pervaia: 1832-1867 (Amsterdam: n.p., 1895).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1-6, 30-1, 34-5.

surveying. In his last year he devoted himself to mineralogy and meteorology as well as to the reading of Liebig's "History of Chemistry." <sup>39</sup>

Veniukov had hoped to study at the Mining Institute, but to his disappointment he was assigned in 1850 to serve as an artillery officer in the provincial town of Serphukov in Moscow Province. There he found diversion in his readings—Liebig's Letters on Chemistry, Herzen's Letters on the Study of Nature, Humboldt's Pictures of Nature, and Litke's Voyage. He claimed that he liberated himself "thanks to science, physics, chemistry, and zoology from absurd ideas about the heavenly origin of earthly things, about some good-fornothing everlasting creator of an eternal world."

In this period he also turned his attention to current social problems, particularly to the ideas of freedom and equality as the basis for human happiness. Herzen's novel, *Who Is to Blame*?, made him aware of the absence of "luminaries" (*svetlye lichnosti*) who could spread light in the darkness." Like the hero of Herzen's novel, he felt isolated in provincial society, far from the universities where he yearned to study. It was at this time, he recalled, that he developed a strong aversion to the principle of command and authority that dominated Russian life under Nicholas I.<sup>40</sup>

In 1853, Veniukov returned to Petersburg, where he led a penurious existence, selling his pocket watch and all of his books except Humboldt's *Cosmos* in order to survive. He began a course of study at the university and dreamed of achieving the rank of academician and also of becoming an explorer, like Peter Simon Pallas and Humboldt.<sup>41</sup> He studied at the General Staff Academy, where he learned cartography, surveying, and tactics, all of which made clear to him the incompetence of the generals in the Crimean War, who lacked a plan. None of the battles of the war, however, had been explained to them at the Institute, because of fear of "the spirit of criticism."<sup>42</sup>

After graduating from the Academy in 1856, he was appointed adjutant to Nikolai Murav'ev and assigned at the age of twenty-four to lead an expedition to find the source of the Ussuri river. In Petersburg he had made the acquaintance of Nevel'skoi, who visited him in his apartment and held forth in detail about the Amur and Ussuri regions. Veniukov felt himself following

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Ibid., 55-62, 72-7, 97-101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Ibid., 125-9.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 140, 151-2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 181-2.

the examples of the great explorers of the past, the discoverers of America described in the accounts of Washington Irving and Walter Prescott, which, he indicated, all educated young people read in the 1840s and 1850s. They also read Humboldt's descriptions of his travels in South America. "It is no wonder that those of us who first saw the Amur experienced the sense felt by Balboa when he first beheld the Pacific from the heights of the isthmus of Panama."

Veniukov's response to the Amur land was different from Nevel'skoi's, who saw the region as one inhabited by natives, whom Russians could instruct. Instead, he saw the Amur as a land already inhabited by Russians. These inhabitants were principally Cossacks, the advance guard of Russian colonization, leading the process of the conquest of the new territories. He felt a sense of kinship with them—that they were all "members of one great Russian family." The region, he recalled, was already Russian, "undoubtedly Russian." He felt the prevalent hopes for the Amur region—that the Pacific Ocean was to become the new Mediterranean and the rivers flowing into it, like the Amur, possible routes for trade.

The colonization, however, was unsuccessful, and Veniukov experienced the general disappointment with the prospects of the Amur region after its discovery. His explanation followed from his belief in the arbitrariness and incompetence of the authorities. Veniukov continued his work as a geographer in the Central Asian borderland and the northwest Caucasus. His work in the Caucasus from 1861 to 1863 again allowed him to observe the process of Russian resettlement, which seemed to open great possibilities after the Emancipation. The Don territories and the Kuban region also seemed to offer plentiful land. This movement, together with what he witnessed in Siberia and Turkestan, he wrote, showed "the great rise of historical pulse in Russia" and promised a brilliant future for the new Russian colonies.

Although Veniukov continued to criticize the tsarist administration, he was enthusiastic about the conquest of the Caucasus and the possibilities it opened for further Russian colonization. A speech of 1873, which he cited in his memoirs, described the conquest as the forward march of civilization. Its true

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Ibid., 213-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Ibid., 225-6; Bassin, Imperial Visions, 269.

<sup>46</sup> See Bassin, Imperial Visions, 233-60.

Veniukov, Iz vospominanii: kniga pervaia, 228-39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Ibid., 283-4.

#### PART III. EXPLORATIONS AND EMPIRE

conquerors were not the generals, but the Russian soldiers, whose endurance and courage not only defeated the native peoples, but ensured that "the Caucasus became Russian land." They triumphed in a region where "without the arrival of Russians barbarism would rule forever."<sup>49</sup> Veniukov believed that Russian settlements could provide these peoples with models of civilized life and thought that this was already beginning to take place. In this way, Russia could follow the example of the United States, France, and England, imperial polities that incorporated various nationalities into nation states.<sup>50</sup>

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Russia's most illustrious explorer of the nineteenth century, Nikolai Przheval'skii, was also the most consistent and impassioned devotee of an explorer ethos. A nobleman who felt uncomfortable in civilized and official settings, he loved the thrill of conquest of difficult and exotic realms, the feeling of confronting danger alone in nature. As a young man he read about the accounts of Russian explorers. He served as a non-commissioned officer in an infantry regiment, then began to study at the General Staff Academy. There he wrote a well-received scientific study of the Amur region, and dreamed of seeing the Amur. For several years he taught at a gymnasium in Warsaw, and then, to his great delight, was assigned to the Amur region. Siberia and the Amur enchanted him: "I was delighted by everything—the ferocity, the expanse."51 After a mostly self-financed expedition to the Ussuri region in 1866-67, Przheval'skii launched the first of four forays to the lands of Central Asia, Turkestan, and beyond, areas under Chinese suzerainty that had not been explored or charted, and to Tibet. These explorations were financed largely by the Russian Geographical Society under the aegis of Peter Semenov.

Przheval'skii shared the earlier explorers' interest in natural science and geology, and their determination to penetrate the unknown reaches of the empire and beyond, but he, more than they, experienced the uplift and thrill of venturing into wild and dangerous regions. His memoirs recall his early joy in solitary wandering in "the wild woods" on his Smolensk estate. "I grew up in the country as a savage," he wrote. He dwelled on his early love for hunting,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Ibid., 336-8.

Becker, "Russia Between East and West: The Intelligentsia, Russian National Identity and the Asian Borderlands," *Central Asian Survey* vol. 10, no. 4 (1991): 4-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> "Nicholas Mikhailovich Przheval'skii," Russkaia Starina 60 (1888): 536.

fishing, and horseback riding.<sup>52</sup> Later, he felt not a sentimental attachment for the quiet and beauty of nature, but exhilaration with wilderness and delight in the hunt—the stalking and the kill. Inspired by a novel, *A Warrior without Fear*, in 1855, at age sixteen, he began to serve in an infantry regiment, convinced that "only in this way could one do good." However, he was revolted by the coarse and dissolute ways of the "rabble" of the officer corps and the dreadful food, especially the foul cabbage soup (*shchi*). He had higher goals in mind, and successfully passed the entry examination for the General Staff Academy, where he first attained distinction with the publication of his study of the Amur region.<sup>53</sup>

Although Przheval'skii did not attend the university, he read extensively in history, natural sciences, and geology. His favorite books were Humboldt's Pictures of Nature and Ritter's massive study of Asia. Scientific discoveries were among the explicit objectives of all expeditions, where he collected thousands of specimens of the geology, and flora and fauna of the lands he explored.<sup>54</sup> But after his initial work on the Amur, he did not devote himself to lengthy scientific studies. He sought to emulate the explorers of Africa he had read about as a boy, and David Livingstone, whose memoirs appeared in Russian in the 1860s.<sup>55</sup> His passion was for exploration itself, for steeling his muscles and will to plunge into new wild areas, to endure difficult, dire physical tests in order to discover the unknown and exotic. In the introduction to the account of his fourth and last exploration to China and Tibet, he laid out the requirements for individuals participating in a successful expedition, among them "flourishing healthy muscles," scientific preparation and a disposition unspoiled by civilization and demanding hard, dirty work. The members of the expedition had to be organized as a "military detachment," subject to "inexorable discipline" along with "brotherly relations" between the commander and his subordinates. He preferred those "inexperienced in life, who are always more energetic, honest, selfless, and more enthusiastic about the matter. They live more amicably with one another, don't become homesick."

Ibid., 529-30; N. F. Dubrovin, Nikolai Mikhailovich Przheval'skii: biograficheskii ocherk (St. Petersburg: Voennaia tipografiia, 1890), 9-18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> "Nikolai Mikhailovich Przheval'skii," 531-4; Dubrovin, 21-7.

On Przheval'skii's devotion to science and positivist conception of progress, see Daniel Brower, "Imperial Russia and Its Orient: The Renown of Nikolai Przhevalsky," *The Russian Review* vol. 53, no. 3 (July 1994): 370-1.

<sup>55</sup> Dubrovin, Nikolai Mikhailovich Przheval'skii, 33-5, 41-2.

The best suited were boys from rural areas, far from railroads and very poor, those who served as soldiers and especially Cossacks, who were bold and sturdy, not given to whining, and could be easily disciplined, and of course subject to his will.<sup>56</sup> He succeeded, he asserted, "in studying a region where no European has ever set foot and to become acquainted with a people that had been unknown until that time and that had very interesting features from an anthropological viewpoint."<sup>57</sup>

This statement expressed the belief that he, a Russian explorer and scientist, had achieved a feat that equaled or surpassed his European counterparts. Like his predecessors, Przheval'skii asserted his national identity by emulating European examples of heroic explorers bringing civilization to the Far East, thereby placing a Russian in their number. Przheval'skii's aims for exploration and the extension of Russia's power were more far-reaching and ambitious than Semenov's and Veniukov's. They had promoted exploration and colonization of the borderlands and adjacent areas of Russian empire. Przheval'skii entertained an explicitly imperialist vision. He foresaw Russia's might and influence advancing far beyond Russia's borders into China and Tibet, thus entering Russia into Great-Power rivalry, particularly with Britain. After his first Central Asian expeditions in the 1870s, he was received as a national hero, acclaimed at public lectures, where he declared that historical circumstances had compelled Russia to take on the task of bringing civilization to Asian peoples beyond the Russian empire. 58

He presented himself as a liberator of Chinese subjects from "the yoke of Chinese power," who, as agent of the Russian monarch, would introduce legality "in countries so recently being the arena of the broadest despotism of their rulers." He wrote that the "nomadic Mongols, the Muslim Chinese, and inhabitants of East Turkestan all yearn to become subjects of the White Tsar, whose name like the Dalai Lama's appears in the eyes of the Asiatic Masses in a halo of mystic light." By 1886, Semenov, a revered figure, a Senator and chair of the Statistical Council of the Geographical Society, had been enthralled by Przheval'skii's achievements and designs, praising

N. M. Przheval'skii, Ot Kiakhty na istoki zheltoi reki (St. Petersburg: V. S. Balashov, 1888), 2-7.

Nicholas Mikhailovich Przheval'skii," 540.

On Przheval'skii's as national hero, see Brower, "Imperial Russia and Its Orient," 372-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Przheval'skii, 509-10.

him as "a pioneer gathering the scientific material that is necessary for the definitive conquest of these [Asian] lands for culture and civilization." 60

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The Russian naval officers who ventured to the Pacific, the Amur, and Central Asia in the nineteenth century shared an ethos that moved them to devote themselves to science and exploration in the service of the Russian monarch, state, and nation. Their expeditions and scientific discoveries defined their identities, both as noble servitors of the throne and as European explorers, asserting Russia's international significance and national destiny. Krusenstern, Golovnin, and Litke asserted their European identity by organizing sea explorations and scientific investigation in the northern Pacific. Taking Captain Cook as their model, they explored the islands of the Pacific and established settlements in North America. They thus played their role in the scenarios of Catherine the Great and Alexander I, which portrayed Russia as a European Empire ruled by emperors and noblemen equal in their achievement to their western counterparts.

Semenov and Veniukov understood exploration as service to the Russian nation. They responded to the national orientation of Nicholas I's scenario by pursuing the study of Russia itself. Their exemplar was the noble scientistexplorer, Alexander von Humboldt. The science of geography promised answers to the problem of national identity posed by Nicholas's scenario and the dominant German philosophies of the day. Cherishing attachments to family estates, they felt a bond with the land, and geography for them was an act of discovery of the nature and true extent of the Russian land. They pursued exploration as a means to learn about the Far East and Asian borderlands of Russia, lands that could become the object of colonization by the Russian people. "Asian borderlands," Seymour Becker wrote, "were perceived by the intelligentsia not as a threat to Russia's European identity but rather as an opportunity to prove that identity."61 For Semenov and Veniukov, exploration asserted their identity as Russians and Europeans. In their eyes, the expansion of the empire, through science and the force of arms, was the expansion of the nation. They conflated the land with the people and the Russian nation with the Russian empire—Semenov with the existing empire, Veniukov with an empire envisioned as a nascent, liberal nation state. They

<sup>60</sup> Brower, "Imperial Russia and Its Orient," 378.

<sup>61</sup> Seymour Becker, "Russia Between East and West," 61.

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asserted their European identity by proving the belonging or desire to belong to a state expressing the interests of its people. $^{62}$ 

Both Semenov and Veniukov sought to extend Russia's borders in Asia for the purpose of colonization by Russians. They assumed that their explorations would be limited to areas adjacent to the empire, where boundaries were vague, which could reasonably be incorporated into a Russian imperial nation. Przheval'skii was inspired by European explorers of Africa, whose courage, knowledge, and will made possible the subjugation of distant native peoples by dint of their superior knowledge and power. His gaze fixed on lands of Asia beyond the borders of Russia, regions not contiguous to and not contemplated as borderlands of the Russian empire. The audacious disdain for borders and determination to extend Russia's influence displayed by earlier explorers now took the form of an imperialistic drive for domination, arrogant and boundless, what David Schimmelpenninck has aptly described as "conquistador imperialism."63 "No matter what," Przheval'skii wrote "we will have to settle old accounts and give tangible proof to our haughty neighbor [China] that the Russian spirit and Russian bravery are equally powerful in Great Russia and in the far east of Asia."64 He impressed this notion of Russia's proud destiny in the East on the young tsarevich, Nicholas Aleksandrovich, the future Nicholas II. "In lessons he gave Nicholas on Central Asia, and vivid reports shown to him on his experiences during his fourth expedition to the East, Prezheval'skii conveyed a sense of native invincibility and courage that could enable Russia to join other Great Powers in subjecting the remote reaches of Asia. The ethos of exploration had modulated into an ethos of conquest that would prepare the way for the disastrous confrontation with Japan in the first years of the twentieth century.65

On the tendency to imagine the Russian Empire as a nation state, see Vera Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London: Arnold, 2001), Chapter 5.

Oavid Schimmelpenninck Van Der Oye, Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 24-41.

<sup>64</sup> Przheval'skii, Ot Kiakhty na istoki zheltoi reki, 536.

<sup>65</sup> Schimmelpenninck Van Der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun*, 38-9, 196-201; *Scenarios of Power*, 2: 323-4, 366-7, 390-1.