

Title VIII Combined Research and Language Training Program

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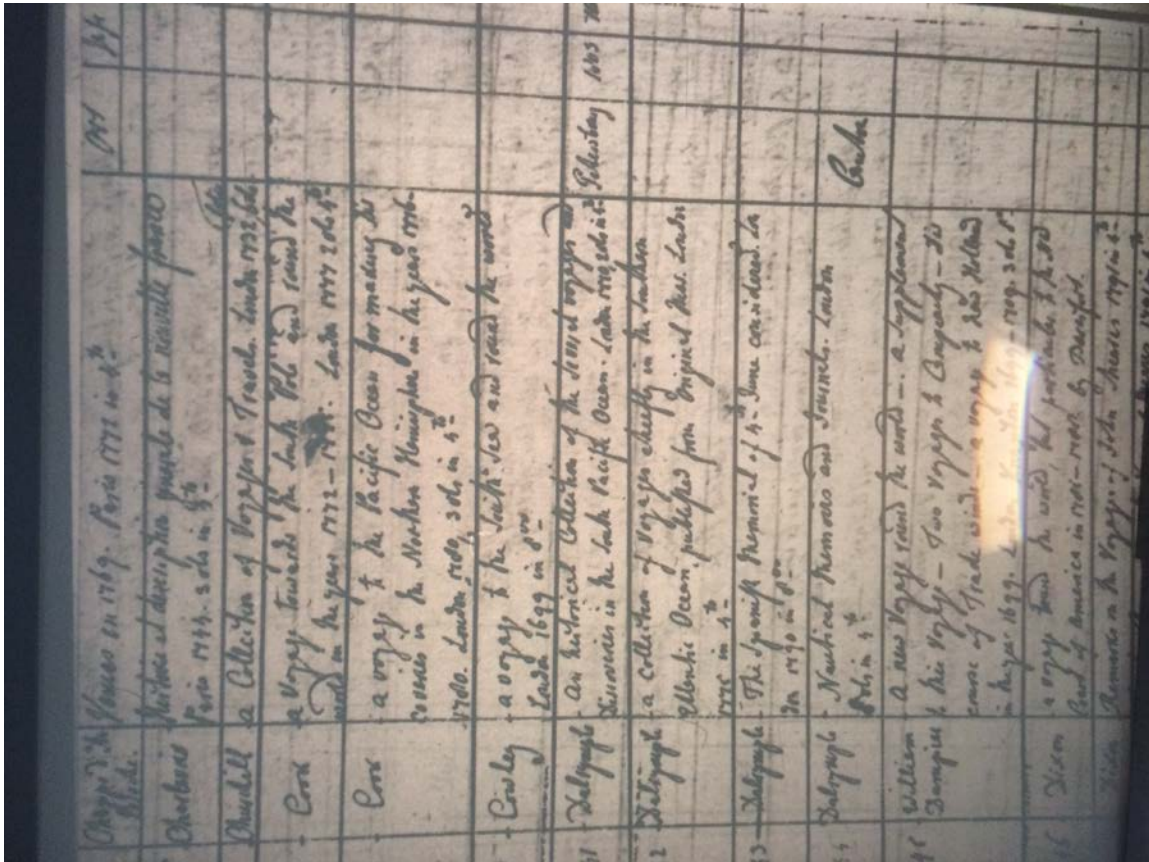
To Serve the Empire: Adam Johann von Krusenstern, Institutional Expertise, and
Russia's first Circumnavigation

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Research Abstract

My research examined the career of Russia's first circumnavigator, Adam Johann von Krusenstern, in order to understand how he accomplished his feat and worked within the Russian Empire's restrictive autocratic system. I argue that institutions empowered certain servitors in the empire to critique imperial policies in order to implement their own vision. Hence, Krusenstern criticized the empire's laissez faire economic policy in the Far East, and used his experience in British service to propose reforming Russia's own Navy. These ideas were expanded on in his navigation journal, which he used as a platform to diagnose the problems he perceived with developing commerce in the region and protecting Russia's territorial sovereignty. He envisioned Russian Kamchatka and the Pacific islands as Russia's own 'East India,' and he claimed that only the will of the monarch was needed to invest enough money and manpower to fully exploit the region. Reaching this far back into the history of Russia's Navy is not arbitrary, but rather an attempt

to show how institutional knowledge and affiliation eventually undermined absolute autocratic power. In that case it can help us think about the Decembrist revolt, the Kronstadt rebellion, and other Naval uprisings towards the end of the empire.



A copy of a section of Krusenstern's personal book collection. This is the page that includes Captain Cook's journals.

Research Goals

The goals of my research were to try to find out information about Russia's first circumnavigator, who set off a series of other expeditions around the world in the first half of the nineteenth century. The purpose was to see what factors

influenced the way they interacted with the world, and if it could tell us anything about how the empire functioned, and how authority was created, given, and exercised in the empire. My original idea was that, because the Navy has been associated with the Decembrist revolt in 1825 and rebellions in 1917, studying its early progenitors could shed light on how dissidence could manifest.

I set the goal of exploring, as much as possible, the entire Krusenstern fond in the Russian Naval archive. However, with only three months, I had to move through certain documents fairly quickly, especially since the more I read the more supplementary sources I wanted to access.

My other goal was to gain of sense of the literature published on Krusenstern after his death, and how he was remembered. These were easily accessible in the National Library.

My final goal was to train my Russian language skills to a point where I could read old Russian syntax and style. Thus I participated in classes every week, where I read texts out loud and spoke to a private teacher.

Research Activities

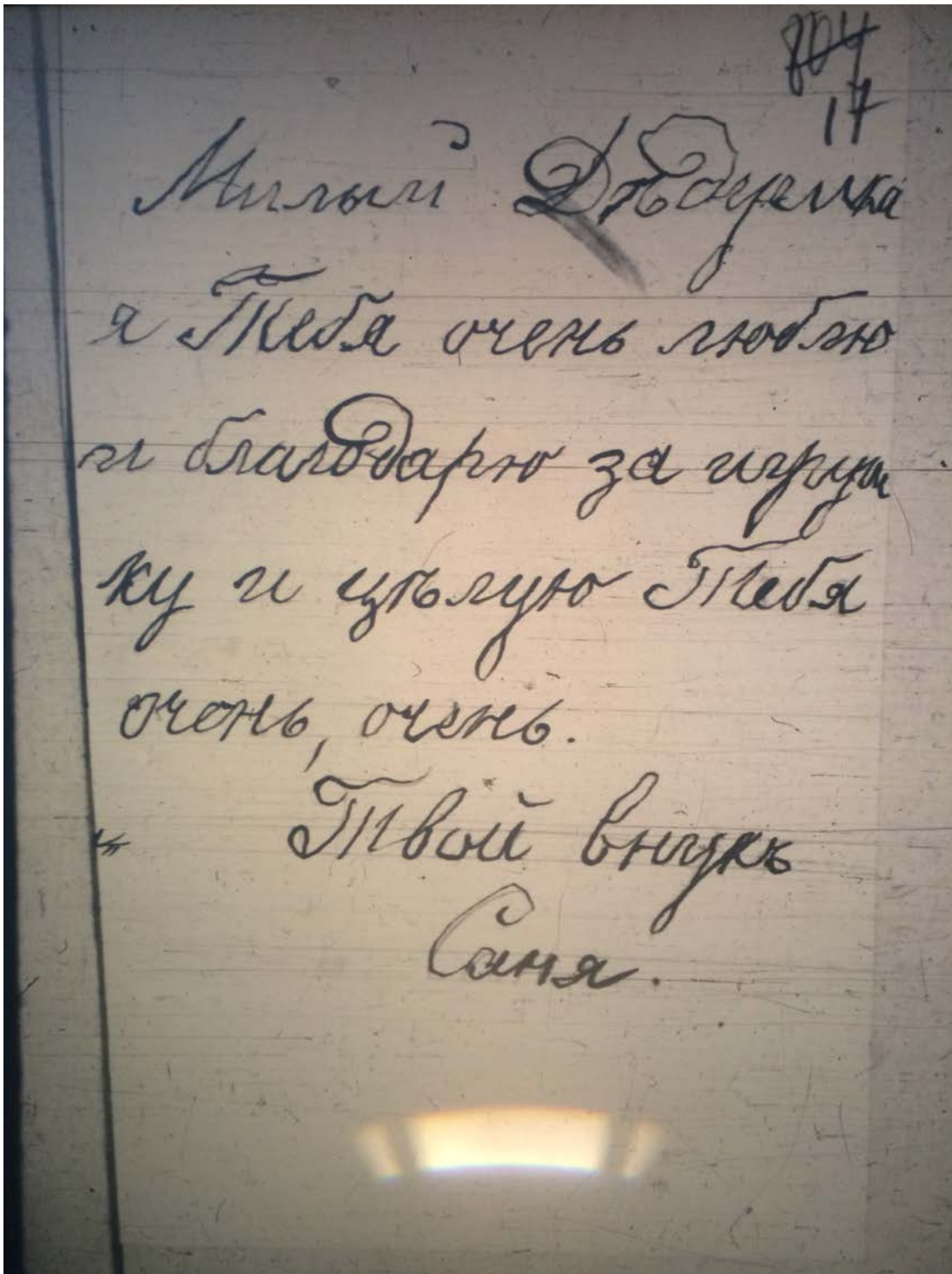
The first two months of my visit were spent looking at the Russian State Naval Archive (RGAMF), particularly the files of Adam Krusenstern, Vasili Golovnin, and Fydor Litke. The purpose of looking at their files was to compare these navigators in order to ascertain whether using Krusenstern as a paradigmatic example was a valid exercise. Much has been written about Krusenstern's

expedition, but surprisingly little has been published about Golovnin and Litke, so I wanted to compare and contrast them. Among the topics typically discussed concerning 19th century European navigators, including their training, their encounters around the world, and their patronage networks, I also got a glimpse into the less well-known aspect of their careers. Mainly, I noticed their very particular training in the British Navy, and their commitment to the ocean and nautical science. For example, Litke's and Krusenstern's files contain numerous letters from their family members. This was a reminder that service in the Navy, which required long durations at sea, necessitated that navigators (men) leave their wives, children, and grand children. Thus, the institution rested on a level of commitment that put service and life at sea on equal footing with family. This is important for understanding how specialized institutions require a level of commitment that encapsulates both service and personal interests.

I spent the final month of my stay working at the National Library on Ostrovsky square, which holds the pre-1950 publications. Here I tried to gain a sense of the literature published on Krusenstern and Golovnin in order to ascertain what has been said about them. Again, I noticed two types of publications—one from naval journals, and another from scientific journals. Both tried to claim the legacy of Krusenstern for its own purpose. For example, publications from the academy of sciences claimed that Krusenstern was a great man committed to world-wide science, and sought to improve the world's knowledge of the Pacific through his own unceasing devotion to nautical science and navigation. Naval publications,



on the other hand, claimed Krusenstern to be a great naval reformer who was determined to improve the training and discipline of Russia's naval officers. Perhaps both descriptions are correct, but the fact that the two institutions envisioned Krusenstern's legacy differently suggests that even institutions within the autocratic state competed and talked past each other.



This is a fun example of a document that exemplifies the point of sacrifice. This is a copy of a letter from Fyodor Litke's grandson, which reads "Dear Grandfather I really love you and thank you for the toy and kiss you very, very. Your grandson, Sanya."

Research Findings

The bulk of my research findings relate to how Krusenstern and others devoted their life to sea service, and the sacrifices it forced them to make. For example, Krusenstern was forced to leave his family and devote his full attention to improving imperial commerce and naval training. The archive had letters from his wife and son, as well as other intimate documents that describe the sacrifices associated with serving the empire.

Part of that service also required knowledge that took time to cultivate. The archive also holds Krusenstern's personal notes while training in British service. For example, his hand-copied passages from Cook's journal, notes on astronomy, and comparisons between the French and British navies.

I also realized that in order to understand Krusenstern's project, I had to study his colleagues and other Russian explorers. Thus I had a bit of time to look at the fonds of Vasili Golovnin and Fydor Litke, other captains who also readily demonstrated their command of nautical science and navigation. Again, sacrifice to execute one's duty came through their sources. Attached is a photo of a letter written by Litke's grandson, which I believe best exemplifies this point. His grandson knew him as a distant grandfather engaged in service for the empire. One can only imagine the responsibilities that led someone to frequently leave family and friends behind.

Besides the archives I managed to look at many of the pre-1955 publications regarding Krusensten. As mentioned above, his legacy was contested between the two institutional bodies that he identified with.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

So far, my research implies that we need to study the structure of institutions that yield an intense amount of authority more. Power in Russia is often considered as operating vertically, which may be true, but it leaves out the ways in which authority is exercised horizontally through expertise and institutional knowledge. Hence, I recommend that when looking at the Russian Navy, Army, or any other defense institution that operates as its own branch of service, one should look at how that institution is structured, and where the sources of authority are derived. Instead of looking at the sources of power (not to be confused with authority), it might be more constructive to study the various forms of representation and origins of authority. In other words, if the goal is to de-legitimize a power, we should look at the sources of authority on which that power is erected. Krusenstern is a great example of this because he had authority as a navigator and admiral, and his authority promoted the power of the autocracy.

Co-Curricular Activity

I did not give any talks or lectures while in St. Petersburg, but I did network extensively. In the national library I met historian Paul Werth, who has written extensively on confessional policy in the empire.

I also met with Russian historian Alexandra Bashkova, who is also working on the history of Russia's navigators, but through the perspective of patronage channels. I suggested that, if I am advanced to candidacy for my PhD, I may be able to include her as a faculty advisor.



Photo of the main hall of St. Petersburg's newly constructed Naval History Museum.

Plans for Future Research Agenda/ Presentations and Publications

The summer was crucial in helping me realize the limitations of my own research and the archives available in Russia. Hence, in the future, I need to explore the archival holdings in Britain, which contain correspondence and notes from Russian officers in training. I also need to visit the Estonian National Archive, which holds the personal family archive of the Krusenstern family. The folder on Krusenstern in Russia's naval archive did not contain any information about his mother, father, or siblings. I would like to contextualize his life and ideas within his familial background, which I am unable to do without further research.

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