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## **Rasmus Rask in St Petersburg 1818–1819: Russian-Scandinavian Scholarly Networks and the Old Norse Sources of Medieval Russia\***

### **Abstract**

Rasmus Rask, nowadays regarded as one of the founders of comparative philology, travelled to St Petersburg in 1818. During his stay, he attempted to draw the attention of local scholars to the Scandinavian languages. In doing so, he forged important connections with benefactors, such as Count Rumiantsev, as well as historians and philologists of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. However, the most important friendship he formed was with Ivan Loboiko, who acquired from Rask an intimate acquaintance with Old Norse literature. Loboiko went on to become one of the first Russian scholars to study Old Norse sources in the original and use them to throw light on early Russian history at a time, when romantic nationalism's interest in the medieval past reigned supreme in Russian literature and scholarship. This article will map for the first time the extent, nature, and influence of Rask's connections in St Petersburg.

### **Keywords**

Philology, Scandinavia, Russia, Romantic Nationalism, Scholarly Networks

### **Introduction**

In his autobiography, written towards the end of his life, the Russian scholar Ivan Nikolaevich Loboiko (1786/7–1861) describes his growing recognition during the 1810s of the need of Scandinavian sources for the proper understanding of early Russian history:

Русская история давно уже чувствовала нужду в Скандинавии, но вопросы, к ней относящиеся, решались обыкновенно по русским источникам. Скандинавская литература была вовсе для нас недоступною. Для этого необходимо было знать датский язык, на

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который с исландского переведены все памятники скандинавской древности. Я первый из русских решился учиться датскому языку, чтоб поднять эту задачу.

[Russian historiography has for a long time felt the need for Scandinavia, but the questions it involves have usually been solved with the help of Russian sources. Scandinavian literature was completely unattainable for us. For this, it was necessary to know Danish, into which all the monuments of Scandinavian antiquity had been translated from the Icelandic. I was the first Russian, who decided to learn Danish in order to take up this task.]<sup>1</sup>

The person, who was to provide access to this much sought-after knowledge was the Danish philologist Rasmus Christian Rask (1787–1832). On 27 March 1818, Rask arrived in St Petersburg by boat after an emotional farewell from Finland. It proved to be the next stage in his long journey of linguistic discovery which would end in the Indian subcontinent, from where he finally returned to Denmark only in 1823.<sup>2</sup> Rask stayed in St Petersburg from March 1818 till 13 June 1819. As a substantial period in his scholarly life, however, Rask's Russian sojourn has, to date hardly received attention. Even so, during this stay, important connections were formed with fellow scholars, especially from the circles of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, leading to scholarly connections between Russia and Denmark and, through Loboiko, to direct access to, and a full appreciation of, the value of Old Norse literature for the study of medieval Russia.

The intense interest in the Scandinavian past of early medieval Russia which haunted early nineteenth-century scholars such as Loboiko, reflected Russia's contemporary awareness of its own identity as a 'Northern' culture, and can be situated within the general context of European national romanticism. This movement constituted a form of nationalism in which the state is to derive its political legitimacy as an organic consequence of the unity of those it governs: a 'nation' supposedly rooted in a shared culture of language, race, religion, folk

1 Ivan N. Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia, Moi zapiski*, ed. A. Reitblat (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2013), 142.

2 For general biographical accounts of Rask's life, see N. H. Petersen, 'Bidrag til Rasks Levned', in *Samlede tildels utrykte Afhandlinger af R. K. Rask udgivne efter Forfatterens Død*, ed. Hans Kristian Rask (Copenhagen: Poppeske Bogtrykkeri, 1834), 1–115; Frederik Rønning, *Rasmus Kristian Rask. Et Mindeskrift i Anledning af Hundredårsdagen for hans Fødsel* (Copenhagen: Schönberg, 1887); Björn Magnússon Olsen, 'Rasmus Kristján Rask 1787–1887: Fyrirlestur fluttur á fundi í deild hins íslenska bókmenntafélags í Reykjavík 2. januar 1888', *Tímarit hins íslenska bókmenntafélags* 9 (1888), 1–53; Louis Hjelmslev, 'Commentaires sur la vie et l'œuvre de Rasmus Rask', in *Portraits of Linguists. A Biographical Sourcebook for the History of Western Linguistics 1746–1963*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 179–199; Jørgen Rischel, *Sproggranskeren Rasmus Kristian Rask. Forskerbedrifter og bristede forhåbninger* (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1987); Kirsten Rask, *Rasmus Rask. Store tanker i et lille land. En biografi* (Copenhagen: Gad, 2002).

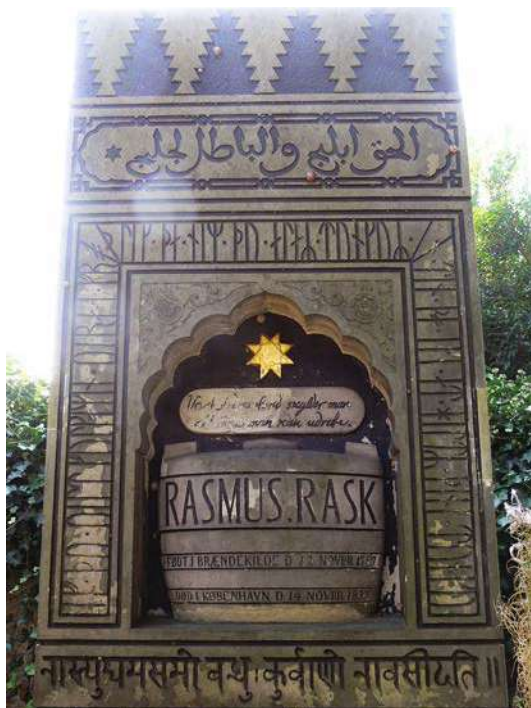


Fig. 1: Rasmus Rask's tombstone in Copenhagen with inscriptions in Danish, Arabic, Icelandic and Sanskrit.

customs, and national epic.<sup>3</sup> Russia's awareness of its 'Northern' identity can be traced directly to its defeat of Sweden in the early eighteenth century, after which Russia's strategic interests focused primarily on control over the Baltic, and was underscored by the foundation of its new capital, St Petersburg.<sup>4</sup> However, several German scholars working in Russia in the second half of the eighteenth century, such as Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705–1783) and August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735–1809), had previously, but controversially, emphasised the role of Scandinavians in early Russian history. According to their 'Normanist' theories, the Scandinavians, and more precisely the Varangians, were the creators of the medieval Russian state, whereas the 'anti-Normanist' camp, headed by Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–1765), privileged the Slav influence and wished to

3 Joep Leerssen, 'Notes towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism', *Romantik: Journal for the Study of Romanticisms* 2 (2013): 9–35, doi: 10.7146/rom.v2i1.20191.

4 Otto Boele, *The North in Russian Romantic Literature* (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 22–31.

consider the Varangians instead as Western Slavs.<sup>5</sup> Even so, none of these scholars had direct access to the original Old Norse sources, with von Schlözer even deprecating the historical value of the *Eddas*, the Icelandic sagas, and Old Norse poetry.<sup>6</sup>

A further impetus to the discovery of Russia's 'Northern' identity was the popularity of the Ossianic poems, through a flood of translations, adaptations, and reworkings. Ossian joined forces with the medieval Scandinavian poetry, revealed by Paul Henri Mallet (1730–1807), whose works *Introduction à l'histoire du Danemarck* of 1755, and *Monuments de la mythologie et de la poésie des Celtes, et particulièrement des anciens Scandinaves* of 1756, were published in Russian translation in 1785, so as to provide the model for a new 'Northern' poetry, different from, but not inferior to, the classical Mediterranean model.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the newly discovered *Slovo o polku Igoreve* [Tale of Igor's Campaign], medieval Russia's primary epic poem, was immediately regarded, together with Ossian and the poetry from Mallet, as belonging together as primitive 'Northern' epics, full of heroism and melancholy. Thus, Russia's perception of itself as a 'Northern' country, and its consequent preoccupation with Scandinavian themes, is widely reflected in the romantic literature of the first half of the nineteenth century, as well as in the work of contemporary scholars of history.<sup>8</sup> The combination of this literary fashion for 'Northern' themes and scholarly historiography culminates in the figure of Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin (1766–1826), who, as will be seen below, was an acquaintance of Loboiko's. Karamzin's early works of fiction, such as *Bornholm Island* and *Iliia Muromets*, had been primarily inspired by Ossian and romantic nationalism, but his later, scholarly work *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo* [History of the Russian State] (1816–1826) took into account several medieval Scandinavian sources, even if only in as far as these were available in the major European languages.<sup>9</sup>

The collection and study of medieval manuscripts resulting from this intensified interest in the medieval past fired an urgent need for engagement with the Scandinavian sources. Indeed, one of the main collectors of this kind of material was Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumiantsev (1754–1826), who will feature prominently in the account below. He repeatedly asked colleagues, among them

5 Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, 'The Norman Theory of the Origin of the Russian State', *Russian Review* 1 (Autumn 1947): 96–110.

6 D. M. Sharypkin, 'Skandinavskaiia tema v russkoi romanticheskoi literature', in *Rannie romanticheskie veianiia. Iz istorii mezhdunarodnykh sviazei russkoi literatury* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972): 131 fn. 59.

7 Sharypkin, 'Skandinavskaiia tema', 97–114; Iurii D. Levin, *Ossian v russkoi literature: konets XVIII – pervaiia tret' XIX veka* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980), *passim*.

8 Sharypkin, 'Skandinavskaiia tema', 114–115.

9 *Ibid.*, 125–135.

the philologist Aleksandr Khristoforovich Vostokov (1781–1864), to translate for him from the Icelandic sagas everything that related to Russian history.<sup>10</sup> Still, even such a competent scholar as Vostokov, primarily a Slavic philologist, did not know Icelandic and had to make do with Friedrich David Gräter's (1768–1830) German translations of the *Edda*.<sup>11</sup>

The need, then, expressed so ardently by Loboiko, to gain access to the original Old Norse sources, in order to uncover the roots of Russia's early history, was widely felt around the time when Rask, an internationally acknowledged expert in this very field, arrived in St Petersburg. Since he could not have visited Russia at a more opportune moment, Rask's sojourn merits closer scrutiny. In the following, I therefore aim to map the nature and extent of the scholarly network that Rask built up during his stay in St Petersburg, subsequently focusing on his connections with Loboiko.

### Social Context and Scholarly Networks

A dominant theme in Rask's correspondence during this year is financial worry and his anxiety and uncertainty about where to travel next. However, in between these, sometimes despairing, passages are found remarks on Rask's situation in St Petersburg. Several times he comments on his social life, for example to one of his benefactors, the librarian and scholar Rasmus Nyerup (1759–1829), who was a central and internationally respected figure in the study of the Scandinavian past. Rask's *milieu* appears to have consisted primarily of scholarly contacts, mostly Germans, for whom he felt considerable reserve.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in a letter to the Swedish scholar Arvid August Afzelius (1785–1871), written only a few weeks after his arrival, he confided not to be taken with St Petersburg in general, while 'här är för mycket prakt och konst – dock är jag ännu så litet bekant, att jag egentligen ingen dom bör fälla' [there is too much glitter and circumstance here – but I'm still so unfamiliar that I oughtn't really cast judgement].<sup>13</sup> To another Copenhagen colleague, who had asked him for news concerning scholars and learned men in St Petersburg, Rask quips rather archly that 'her ere egentlig ingen Lærde, men Herrer og S. ere de to Klasser, hvortil enhver maa henføres' [there aren't really any real scholars here, but gentlemen and s[erfs?] are the two

10 Rumiantsev to Vostokov, 13 January 1825, cited in Sharypkin, 'Skandinavskaja tema', 135 fn. 3.

11 Sharypkin, 'Skandinavskaja tema', 135–136.

12 Rask to Nyerup, 3 May 1818, in *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask*, ed. Louis Hjelmslev and Marie Bjerrum, 3 vols. in 4 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1941–1968), 309 and Rask to Nyerup, 12 November 1818, in *Breve*, 1:357.

13 Rask to Afzelius, 3 April 1818, in *Breve*, 1:304.

classes into which anyone is placed].<sup>14</sup> And later that year, when the Finnish philologist Anders Johan Sjögren (1792–1855) asked him for introductions to any useful local acquaintances, he replies: ‘mina bekantskaper här äro hvarken talrike eller lysande; ty den fina verlden är här alltför glänsande för mig, så at hvarken min pung eller tid tillåtit mig på något vis att inlåta mig med andra än några få (mäst tyska) lärde’ [My acquaintances here are neither many nor illustrious; for the refined world here is a bit too glamorous for me, so that neither my purse nor the available time allows me to be involved with anybody else than a few, mostly German, scholars].<sup>15</sup> Disgruntled with his surroundings as he ever was, Rask noted about a year later, in spring 1819, that ‘endnu synes Flygtighed, Forfængelighed og især Egennytte og Vindesyge at utgøre Hovedtræk i den russiske Tænkemåde’ [and yet, volatility, vanity, and selfishness in particular seem to constitute the main traits of the Russian mentality] and furthermore, that even though he has found several learned men in St Petersburg, it did not at all compare to what Rask had found in Sweden.<sup>16</sup> However, the connections he made are impressive enough, and in the remainder of this section they will each be introduced briefly, before focusing specifically on Loboiko.

The connections discussed in the following section are hinted at in Loboiko’s autobiographic reminiscences of Rask’s Russian sojourn: ‘В мое время в числе петербургских его корреспондентов самыми усердными были тайный советник Аделунг; академики Круг, Френ ... пастор Гишпинг’ [During my time among his [i. e. Rask’s] correspondents in St Petersburg, the most assiduous were privy councillor Adlung, the academicians Krug [and] Frähn [and] pastor Hipping].<sup>17</sup>

Mentioned last here by Loboiko, but the first to meet Rask on arrival, was Anders Johan Hipping (1788–1862), for whom Rask was carrying a letter of introduction.<sup>18</sup> He was Finnish clergy and historian, appointed as a religious instructor for Finns residing in St Petersburg at the local *gymnasium* before returning to his home country in 1823 to become a man of the church in the Åbo diocese. From 1820 till 1823, however, he also served as librarian for the Chancellor, Count Rumiantsev, and he had by then also become a member of the *Skandinaviske Litteraturselskab* in Copenhagen, one of the most important pan-Scandinavian literary and scientific societies in the early nineteenth century, probably at the instigation of Rask.<sup>19</sup> He turned out to be a most helpful and generous man, and he and Rask became good friends.<sup>20</sup> Hipping first taught

14 Rask to Degen, 18 February 1819, in *Breve*, 1:393.

15 Rask to Sjögren, 25 April 1819, in *Breve*, 1:417.

16 Rask to Nyerup, 1819 [undated], in *Breve*, 1:371.

17 Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 135.

18 Rønning, *Rask*, 71.

19 For biographical information, see *Breve*, vol. 3:350–351 (2nd part of the volume).

20 Surprisingly, while Hipping is mentioned in many letters written by Rask, and several of

Rask Russian on arrival in St Petersburg, even if later on, Loboiko took over from him.<sup>21</sup> Most importantly, however, it was through Hipping that Rask became involved with renowned scholars of the Imperial Academy of Sciences.

Among these was Christian Martin Joachim Frähn (1782–1851), a German and Russian numismatist and historian born at Rostock. He attended university there, as well as in Göttingen and Tübingen before being appointed professor of Eastern languages at the University of Kazan in 1807, but, stopping by St Petersburg in 1815 on the way to his next appointment in Rostock, he prepared a catalogue of the Imperial Academy's numismatic collections, joining the Academy itself in 1817. Thereupon he was showered with titles and rewards, including the honorary librarianship of the Imperial Library, so that he gave up his Rostock professorship altogether and stayed in St Petersburg. There he founded the Asian Museum of the Imperial Academy in 1818 and was appointed *Staatsrat* in 1829. Frähn was a great expert in Arabic history, palaeography, and numismatics, on which he published widely in German and Latin, and is widely regarded as the founding father of the academic study of Oriental languages in Russia.<sup>22</sup> Most importantly, however, he translated into German the tenth-century Arabic traveller Ahmad ibn Fadlan's account of his travels in Russia.<sup>23</sup>

Frähn kept up a correspondence with Rask, in German, during the latter's travels through Russia after leaving St Petersburg in 1819, arranging introductions for him in Astrakhan.<sup>24</sup> A later missive from 1821 mentions earlier letters that have not survived. Letters from Sjögren as late as 1831 convey greetings from Frähn, but it seems as if direct contact between the two had ceased some time before that.<sup>25</sup> However, Rask did bring him into contact with Danish scholars: in a letter to his friend and benefactor Peter Erasmus Müller (1776–1834), a bishop, historian, and philologist with an extensive and powerful international network, he writes: 'foruden ... har jeg anbefalet ... Prof[essor] Frähn, men han er tysk og Orientalist, og ønsker blot Lat[inske] ell[er] tyske Sager fra K[øben]havn og Lund' [additionally ... I have recommended ... professor

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Hipping's letters to Rask have survived, they have not been included in Rask's edited correspondence. Hipping is also mentioned in a letter to Asmus Larsen (1788–1842) not included in *Breve*: Rask to Larsen, 28 September 1818, in Marius Kristensen, 'To Breve fra Rasmus Rask', *Danske Studier* (1924): 32.

21 Petersen, 'Bidrag', 38.

22 For biographical details, see *Breve*, vol. 3:332 (2nd part of the volume); see also Heinrich Klentz, 'Frähn, Christian', in *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, vol. 48 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1904), 674–676; Johann W. Fück, 'Frähn, Christian Martin Joachim', in *Neue deutsche Biographie*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1961), 309.

23 Christian Martin Frähn, *Ibn Foszlän und andere Araber Berichte über die Russen älterer Zeit. Text und Übersetzung mit kritisch-philologischen Anmerkungen* (St Petersburg: Buchdruckerei der Akademie, 1823).

24 Rask to Frähn, 23 August 1819 and Frähn to Rask, 9 October 1819, in *Breve*, 1:447–450.

25 Sjögren to Rask, 1 February 1831, in *Breve*, 2:254.

Frähn, but he is German and also an orientalist, and he requires only Latin or German items from Copenhagen and Lund], adding nonetheless that he and some others ‘kunne blive yderst vigtige for Literaturen og Boghandelen’ [could become most important for literature and the book trade], which, as will become evident, were Rask’s main goals during his stay in St Petersburg.<sup>26</sup>

Another connection forged in St Petersburg was with Johann Phillip Krug (1764–1844). This was another German numismatist and historian, born in Halle. He had travelled to Russia in 1789 to become mentor to the children of Countess Orlova. Krug studied Russian, archaeology, and history, and he exchanged a learned correspondence with Karamzin.<sup>27</sup> Since 1803, he had been working at the Hermitage Library in St Petersburg, and from 1805 he had been affiliated to the Imperial Academy.<sup>28</sup> His most fundamental work deals with the minutiae of Byzantine chronology and its connections with medieval Russian history.<sup>29</sup> Even though he published mostly in German, it is interesting to note that the one surviving letter from Rask to him, written to thank Krug for his hospitality after one of their early meetings, is written in Russian.<sup>30</sup> At one of these meetings, Rask met Frähn.<sup>31</sup> From a letter to Nyerup in early 1819 it appears that Rask brought Krug into contact specifically with the Danish archaeologist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788–1865), who has often been described as a founder of modern, ‘scientific’ archaeology.<sup>32</sup> Krug was also instrumental in arranging the publication of Gustaf Renvall’s (1781–1841) pioneering Finnish dictionary, after the necessary funds had been provided by Count Rumiantsev.<sup>33</sup>

The most influential Academy Fellow, with whom Rask became acquainted, however, was Friedrich (von) Adelung (1768–1843). He was a German jurist, historian, and philologist, nephew of the more famous philologist Johann

26 Rask to Müller, 27 November 1818, in *Breve*, 1:366.

27 See Gerda S. Panofsky, *Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin in Germany. Fictions as Facts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 132–153, for biographical information and a catalogue of letters exchanged between Karamzin and Krug.

28 *Breve*, vol. 3:369 (2nd part of the volume).

29 Phillip Krug, *Kritischer Versuch zur Aufklärung der byzantinischen Chronologie mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die frühere Geschichte Russlands* (St Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1810).

30 Rask to Krug(?), undated, in *Breve*, 1:369.

31 Petersen, ‘Bidrag’, 39.

32 Rask to Nyerup, 29 January 1819, in *Breve*, 1:391–392. Jürgensen Thomsen published a short essay entitled *Kortfattet Udsigt over Mindesmærker og Oldsager fra Nordens Fortid* [Brief outlook on monuments and antiquities from the nordic past] in 1837. This essay has become something akin to a *Magna Carta* of the kind of research that became more dominant in the time that followed, ending the long era of antiquarianism.

33 Petersen, ‘Bidrag’, 39. In the preface of Gustaf Renvall, *Suomalainen Sana-kirja: Lexicon linguae fennicae, cum interpretatione duplici copiosiore latina, brevior germanica* (Åbo: typis Frenckellianis, 1826), i, Rask is explicitly thanked, together with Rumiantsev and Krug.



Christoph Adelung (1732–1806), whose work *Mithridates* Rask had criticised vehemently in the past.<sup>34</sup> This, however, evidently did not obstruct the growing of friendship between the two men in St Petersburg.<sup>35</sup> Born in Stettin, after studying law in Leipzig he had departed in 1793 for St Petersburg via Mitau and Riga, eventually to become the tutor of Tsar Alexander I's brothers Nicholas and Michael in 1803.

Adelung had been appointed as honorary professor at both Kharkov and Dorpat Universities by 1809. In 1819 he joined the Foreign Ministry service, and in 1825 assumed control of its Institute of Oriental Languages, at that time the only college in Europe offering studies in Persian and Turkish. Like Frähn, he was appointed Russian *Staatsrat* in 1811, and since 1813 he had been closely connected to Count Rumiantsev, helping him with many literary and research tasks. He became president of the Imperial Academy in 1825.<sup>36</sup> All works by Adelung were originally written and published in German, one of the most important ones being a history of Sanskrit literature.<sup>37</sup> Rask mentions in a letter to Nyerup from 1819 that he had advised Adelung in his preparations for this book, and the *Versuch* shows that Adelung had indeed taken over Rask's division of the languages of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>38</sup> However, Adelung, too, took a keen interest in the history of Russia: his crowning achievement was *Kritisch-literarische Übersicht der Reisenden in Rußland bis 1700* [Critical and literary review of travellers to Russia before 1700], published posthumously in 1846.

34 He had vehemently criticised Adelung's classification of the Scandinavian languages in Rasmus Rask, 'Bemerkungen über die skandinavischen Sprachen veranlaßt durch den zweiten Teil des Adelung'schen Mithridates', *Zeitschrift für Literatur und Kunst* 3,1 (1809): 13a–5b and 17a–24a, for which he was taken to task in, for example, Christian Friedrich Rühls, *Die Edda, nebst einer Einleitung über nordische Poesie und Mythologie* (Berlin: Realbuchhandlung, 1812), 7 for his 'durchaus unwürdige Art mit dem verewigten Adelung zu polemisieren'. The polemic started Rask's lifelong aversion to the pretensions of German scholarship, for which see Joep Leerssen, 'Van Babylonische spraakverwarring naar Germaanse taalwetenschap: Jacob Grimm ontbabelt Europa', in *Het Babylonische Europa. Opstellen over veelaligheid*, ed. Annemarie van Heerikhuizen et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 41–57.

35 Rask to Nyerup, 3 May 1818, in *Breve*, 1:309.

36 Anon., 'Von Adelung (Friedrich)', in *Allgemeines Schriftsteller- und Gelehrten-Lexikon der Provinzen Livland, Estland und Lettland*, ed. Johann Friedrich von Recke and Carl Eduard Napiersky, vol. 1 (Mitau: Johann Friedrich Steffenhagen und Sohn, 1827), 4–10; August Leskien, 'Adelung, Friedrich v.', in *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875), 80; Hans Joachim Kissling, 'Adelung, Friedrich Georg', in *Neue deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953), 63.

37 Friedrich Adelung, *Versuch einer Literatur der Sanskrit-Sprache* (St Petersburg: Karl Kray, 1830); cf. Ernst Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit Philologie und Indische Althertumskunde*, vol. 1 (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1917), 96.

38 Rask to Nyerup, 29 January 1819, in *Breve*, 1:391.

Rask had met Adelung early in 1818 but describes him most fully in a letter from 1819: ‘Adelung er saa vidt jeg kan skjønne en fortræffelig Mand, som forener Lærdom og Arbejdsomhed med Levemaade og et godt Hjerte, han er koparret i Ansigtet og synes af have nogen Skade i Øjnene, men er ellers Ganske velskabt og tækkelig i sit hele Væsen’ [As far as I can judge, Adelung is an excellent man, who combines learning and industry with good manners and a good heart. He is pockmarked in his face and seems to have some injury to the eyes, but is otherwise very well-built and good-looking in his whole being].<sup>39</sup> One letter from Adelung to Rask survives from not too long after Rask’s departure from Astrakhan, conveying greetings from all his St Petersburg acquaintances and news about recent Scandinavian publications.<sup>40</sup> Even so, connections appear to have ceased after that.

However, the centre of this circle of historians, antiquarians, and philologists doubtlessly was an amateur scholar: Count Rumiantsev, man of state and patron. As a young man, he had been a diplomat in Germany, served as Minister of Trade 1802–1807, as Minister of Foreign Affairs 1807–1809, and as Imperial Chancellor until 1812 during the run-up to Napoleon’s invasion of Russia. However, since his retirement he had primarily been a fosterer of scholarly research. For example, at Rask’s prompting, he personally financed the preparation and publication of Renvall’s Finnish dictionary, and he had been in frequent contact with the Slavonic linguist Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829) in Prague.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, his appointment of the Finno-Ugric linguist Sjögren as his librarian in 1823 enabled the latter to pursue his ground-breaking linguistic research. Rumiantsev also provided the financial support for Otto von Kotzebue’s (1787–1846) famed *Rurik* expedition, the first Russian circumnavigation of the globe.<sup>42</sup> Rask, who visited this very ship together with Hipping and Loboiko, got to know the entire crew and took the opportunity to interview some Aleut speakers of Yakut, resulting in a small handwritten dictionary.<sup>43</sup> Rumiantsev tirelessly gathered information on the history of Russia, and his priceless collection of books, coins, and minerals were later to become the *Rumiantsevskii Muzei* in Moscow, subsequently transformed into the Russian State Library. As said before, being keenly interested in Russian history, he oversaw the first printed publication of several Old Russian chronicles and ancient literary monuments of

39 Rask to Degen, 18 February 1819, in *Breve*, 1:394.

40 Adelung to Rask, 31 October 1819, in *Breve*, 1:451–452.

41 Also recounted in Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 137.

42 Petersen, ‘Bidrag’, 38–40 discusses Rumiantsev’s activities as a benefactor; for the *Rurik* expedition see Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 135.

43 Rønning, *Rask*, 74–75.

the Eastern Slavs.<sup>44</sup> He, therefore, was the central figure in historical and philological research in St Petersburg during Rask's visit.

Rask was invited to the Count's almost every week and there met with great warmth and generosity, writing to Müller: 'jeg er næsten hver Mandag hos ham i Selskab med Adelung og Krug' [I spend almost every Monday at his [house] together with Adelung and Krug].<sup>45</sup> Early during his stay in St Petersburg, Rask wrote a short notice to Rumiantsev in answer to his enquiry whether the eleventh-century Prince Jaroslav I occurs in medieval Danish and Norwegian chronicles, an account which was subsequently translated into Russian by Loboiko. Rask also ordered and catalogued the Count's books on Nordic subjects, for which he was rewarded with a precious little gold box.<sup>46</sup> However, after leaving St Petersburg most of Rask's contact with Rumiantsev seems to have taken place via other people, such as Loboiko, who delivers his greetings. From a letter to his old enemy Christian Molbech (1783–1857), it is evident that Rumiantsev had asked Rask to inquire from colleagues in Copenhagen whether there was any material in the libraries and archives there relating to the Danish history of the Baltic provinces, especially Estonia, which were now part of Russia.<sup>47</sup> The Count also seems to have been directly in contact with Müller about the Scandinavian background of Novgorod's early history.<sup>48</sup> Still, only four of the Count's letters to Rask have survived, all written in French.<sup>49</sup> The published two letters both date from 1824 and refer to the exchange of scholarly works and news, and Rumiantsev's curiosity as to the results of Rask's long journey.<sup>50</sup>

It is clear from the above that, through Hipping, Rask rapidly became acquainted with the main players in the scholarly world of St Petersburg, and immediately set out to foster connections between them and members of his extensive Scandinavian network. Whereas he shared his core interest, comparative philology, with Adelung, scholars such as Frähn, Krug, and Rumiantsev were rather more interested in native and foreign (Byzantine, Arabic) sources for the medieval history of Russia. So, apart from forging fruitful connections between scholars in Russia and Scandinavia, Rask was also to provide direct access to a third group of medieval sources: Old Norse. He imparted his ex-

44 Nikolai Prokov'evich Vasilenko, 'Rumiantsev, Nikolai Petrovich', in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, ed. P. A. Brockhaus and I. A. Efron, vol. 27 (St Petersburg: Tip[ografiia] akts[i]onernova] obtsch[estva] Izdat[el'stva] 'Delo', 1899), 286; Petr Mikhailovich Maikov, 'Rumiantsov, Nikolai Petrovich', in *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, ed. Aleksandr Aleksandrevich Polovtsov, vol. 17 (Petrograd: Tip[ografiia] akts[i]onernova] obtsch[estva] 'Kadima', 1918), 493–521.

45 Rask to Müller, 27 November 1818, in *Breve*, 1:364; Petersen, 'Bidrag', 38.

46 Petersen, 'Bidrag', 39. Also remembered in Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 137.

47 Rask to Molbech, 20 October 1818, in *Breve*, 1:358.

48 Müller to Rask, 13 April 1819, in *Breve*, 1:411.

49 *Breve*, vol. 3:415 (2nd part of the volume).

50 Rumiantsev to Rask, 19 April 1824, in *Breve*, 2:91–92.

expertise in medieval Scandinavian literature especially to a young Russian scholar who also had many connections in the literary world – Ivan Loboiko.

## Rask and Loboiko

Ivan Nikolaevich Loboiko was a Russian philologist, translator, historian, and pedagogue. He was educated at the University of Kharkov, from where he graduated in 1810. After various teaching jobs at different *gymnasia*, he went to Warsaw to work with the Polish lexicographer and philologist Samuel Bogumił Linde (1771–1841) on the comparative grammar of the Slavonic languages. There, he also got in touch with the Polish historian and polyglot Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861), as is clear from their extant correspondence.<sup>51</sup> Soon after, however, in early 1816, he was forced to go to St Petersburg, where he connected with members of the Imperial Academy, and so met Adelung.<sup>52</sup> From around 1818, he also became involved with the great Russian *literati* of the period, such as A. S. Shishkov, I. A. Krylov, V. A. Zhukovskii, N. M. Karamzin, and K. F. Ryleev. He attended meetings with them regularly until he was appointed in Vilnius.<sup>53</sup> His connections with Count Rumiantsev finally proved instrumental in his appointment as professor of Russian language, literature, and history at the University of Vilnius.

Leaving for Vilnius in 1821, at that time part of the Russian Empire, where he also taught Old Church Slavonic, he continued to liaise with Moscow and St Petersburg writers and scholars, primarily through intensive correspondence, in particular with Count Rumiantsev.<sup>54</sup> Loboiko was also interested in the local Lithuanian language and stimulated his Lithuanian students to write, collect, and publish in that language; he even argued, albeit in vain, for the introduction of the language in the curriculum of the University.<sup>55</sup> He kept up his interest in things

51 B. S. Popkov, 'Ioakhim Lelewel' i russkie uchenye: novye materialy iz sovetskikh arkhivov', *Slavianskii arkhiv. Sbornik statei i materialov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963), 215–227.

52 Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 126.

53 Rimantas Sidervacius, 'Pis'ma russkikh literatorov professoru I. N. Loboiko', *Nauchnye trudy. Literatura = Rusistica Vilnensis. Mokslo darbai. Literatūra* 50.2 (2008): 92.

54 Ana Kaupuzh, 'XIX a. pradžios Lietuvos kultūros veikėjai pagal prof. I. N. Loboikos susirašinėimą su N. P. Rumiancevui', *Nauchnye trudy vysshikh uchebnykh zavedenii Litovskoi SSR: Literatura = Lietuvos TSR aukštųjų mokyklų mokslo darbai: Literatūra* 10 (1967): 165–199.

55 Ana Kaupuzh, 'Vklad I. N. Loboiko v razvitie russko-pol'sko-litovskikh kul'turnykh svyazei v pervoi chetverti XIX veka', *Nauchnye trudy vysshikh uchebnykh zavedenii Litovskoi SSR: lazykoznanie = Lietuvos TSR aukštųjų mokyklų mokslo darbai: Kalbotyra* 7 (1963): 45–61; Ana Kaupuzh, 'Nekotorye dopolnitel'nye svedeniia o litovskikh deiateliakh kul'tury nachala XIX veka v pis'makh professora russkoi slovesnosti Vilenskogo universiteta I. N. Loboiko',

Polish and sent the poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) a letter of congratulation on his work.<sup>56</sup> It is during this period in Vilnius that his main work was produced.<sup>57</sup> Loboiko stayed on in Vilnius, when the university was closed down in 1832 by Tsar Nicholas I, teaching at various schools and institutions. In 1843, he began to write his memoirs, which were left unfinished and were published only in 2013.<sup>58</sup>

From his memoirs, and extant correspondence, it is clear that Loboiko's network included many *literati*, which included, apart from the Russian intellectuals mentioned above, the philologists Lelewel from Poland, Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864) from Serbia, and Franc Miklošič (1813–1891) from Slovenia, the Russian historian Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin (1800–1875), and the romantic Polish poet Mickiewicz. He was also elected to antiquarian societies in Moscow and Copenhagen and corresponded with Scandinavian scholars, such as Nyerup, Carl Christian Rafn (1795–1864), and Sjögren.<sup>59</sup> Thus, Loboiko straddled both the Germanophone world of the Imperial Academy and the Russian-speaking intellectual *milieu* of St Petersburg and Moscow; he was involved in the scholarly and literary life of Poland, Lithuania, and the Slavonic-speaking world at large and, through Rask, became connected with the wide-ranging Scandinavian networks of Nyerup and Rafn. His main publications concern Russian history, language, and literature. Most importantly for our present purposes, however, is his work on Old Norse literature and the study of Scandinavian sources for medieval Russia. It will become evident, that this work resulted directly from Loboiko's acquaintance with Rask, to which I now turn.

Having studied Russian for a while, Rask had inquired after a new Russian tutor, and was introduced to Loboiko. Rask himself mentions having met Loboiko to Müller in a letter of 5 August 1818 and claims to have inspired him with a great interest in Danish and Icelandic literature, and even having taught him a little Danish already.<sup>60</sup> Loboiko eagerly seized the opportunity of Rask's visit to do so

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*Nauchnye trudy vysshikh uchebnykh zavedenii Litovskoi SSR: Literatura = Lietuvos TSR aukštųjų mokyklų mokslo darbai: Literatūra* 6 (1963): 207–22.

56 Sidervacius, 'Pis'ma', 90; Maria Prussak, 'Kłopoty z Iwanem Łabojką', in *Stolice i prowincje kultury. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana profesor Alinie Kowalczykowej*, ed. Jack Brzozowski et al. (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, Wydawnictwo, 2012), 85–94.

57 Juozas Lebenka, 'Zhizn' i nauchnaia deiatel'nost' I. N. Loboiko v Litve', *Nauchnye trudy vysshikh uchebnykh zavedenii Litovskoi SSR: Literatura = Lietuvos TSR aukštųjų mokyklų mokslo darbai: Literatūra* 9 (1966): 85–110; Reda Griškaitė, 'Ivanas Loboika istorijoje ir istoriografijoje', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis* 2009.1 (2010): 89–106.

58 Loboiko, *Op. cit.* His papers are now kept in the *Pushkinskii Dom* museum, the Russian Literature Institute in Moscow, see <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=1597>.

59 See Natalia Gorbanevskaia, 'Ioakhim Lelewel' i Ivan Loboiko', *Novaia Pol'sha* (2009.1): <http://www.novpol.ru/index.php?id=1104>; D. Matveichik and P. Labvrints, 'Pis'ma I. Loboiko I. Leleweliu', in *Vil'na 1823–1824: Perekrestki Pamiati*, ed. A. I. Fedut et al. (Minsk: Limarius, 2008), 179–201.

60 Rask to Müller, 5 August 1818, in *Breve*, 1:328.

and to familiarize himself with the latest secondary literature on the subject. Moreover, Loboiko writes that ‘Раск поставил меня в близкое сношение с Копенгагеном, с профессорами Нерупом и Рафном, с Обществом северных древностей и с датскими книгопродавцами. Я получал от них все новости’ [Rask put me in close acquaintance with Copenhagen, with professors Nyerup and Rafn, with the *Skandinaviske [Litteratur]selskab* and with Danish booksellers: from them I received all the latest news.]<sup>61</sup> Not surprisingly, perhaps, he was deeply impressed by Rask:

Он сообщал мне столько новых сведений, столь важных, что я, возвращаясь от него из Шведского подворья ночью домой, плакал от радости ... и счастья. На все вопросы мои, на которые не отвечали ни русские, ни немецкие, ни французские литераторы, давал он решительные объяснения и озарял сей мрак необыкновенным светом.

[He provided me with so much new information of such importance, that I came back home at night [from visiting] him at the Swedish lodging house, weeping with joy ... and happiness. To all my questions that had not been answered [by] either Russian, or German, or French writers he gave decisive explanations, and illuminated this darkness with unusual light.]<sup>62</sup>

The sentiment, described by Loboiko in his autobiography, found a rather more dry echo in Rask’s description of Loboiko’s somewhat excitable character as ‘en ung Mand af en aaben Karakter og megen Ild og Iver for det Sande og Gode’ [a young man of open character with a fire and zeal for that which is true and good], and in a slightly later letter to Nyerup, that ‘han blev aldeles enthusiastisk efter den Russ[iske] Natsionalkarakter’ [he became altogether enthusiastic according to the Russian national character].<sup>63</sup> Indeed, such was Loboiko’s enthusiasm and conviction of the importance of Scandinavian literature, not just for the scholarly study of history, but also for literary inspiration, that he remembered in later life trying to get the famous poet Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii (1783–1852), who intended to use subjects from Scandinavian mythology and asked for books and guidance, to read the *Edda* in 1821. Zhukovskii had already tried his hand at ‘Northern’ themes before: an unfinished prose romance *Vadim* (1803) in Ossianic style had been devoted to Novgorod’s hero against the Viking rule of Rurik.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, Zhukovskii abandoned this enterprise.<sup>65</sup>

Most important, however, were Loboiko’s scholarly contributions, in Russian, to the study of Old Norse literature and history. A preliminary article, *Ob is-*

61 Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 142.

62 *Ibid.*, 135–136.

63 Rask to Müller, 5 August 1818, in *Breve*, 1:328.

64 Peter France, ‘Fingal in Russia’, in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, ed. Howard Gaskill (London: Continuum, 2004), 260–262; Sharypkin, ‘Skandinavskaia tema’, 146–147.

65 Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 143.

*tochnikakh severnoi istorii* [About the sources of Northern History], was published as early as 1818.<sup>66</sup> It is characterised by its objective and academic approach, as compared to some earlier attempts to use Scandinavian sources, even if it still relied, for the greater part, on Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, a medieval Latin source, and Mallet.<sup>67</sup> Still, his crowning achievement in this field surely was *Vzgliad na drevniuiu slovestnost' skandinavskogo severa* [A Survey of the Ancient Literature of the Scandinavian North] of 1821, which amounts to no less than the first introduction and survey of Old Norse literature in Russian.<sup>68</sup> In it, Rask is explicitly thanked for his generosity and friendship.<sup>69</sup> Thus, in these studies, Loboiko screened medieval Scandinavian texts for the history of medieval Russia, just as Frähn, Krug, and Adelung used Byzantine, Arabic, and Western-European sources. It is interesting to note that Loboiko's Scandinavian connections soon followed suit, when Rask's colleagues Rafn and Finnur Magnússon (1781–1847) built up a 'section russe' in the collections of the Danish Royal Society.<sup>70</sup>

Loboiko's gratitude to Rask lasted until the latter's death and beyond. This is clear from the letters he wrote to Rask in Danish, but mostly so from his autobiography. As he hints there, Rask commended him to various scholars in Copenhagen and ordered books on behalf of Loboiko.<sup>71</sup> He also proposed to make him a corresponding member of the *Skandinaviske Litteraturselskab*, because 'som den første og eneste Russer, der arbejder paa at kjende og udbrede vor Literatur i sit Fædreland er han vel denne Ære værd, og det vil opmuntre han usigelig, det véd jeg' [as the first and only Russian who works at understanding and spreading our literature in his native country he is certainly worthy of that honour, and it will encourage him very much indeed, of that I'm sure].<sup>72</sup> And, indeed, Loboiko was elected an official member of the *Skandinaviske Litteraturselskab* in 1825.<sup>73</sup>

However, the most important result of his connection with Rask certainly was the aforementioned, long article on the history of Icelandic literature. Indeed, his autobiography suggests that in some ways Loboiko thought he owed his ap-

66 Ivan N. Loboiko, 'Ob istochnikakh severnoi istorii', *Sovernovatel' prosveshcheniia i blagotvoreniiia* (1818.3): 231–239.

67 Sharypkin, 'Skandinavskaia tema', 152.

68 Ivan N. Loboiko, 'Vzgliad na drevniuiu slovestnost' skandinavskogo severa', *Syn otechestva* 67–68 (1821): 245–263 and 293–304.

69 Sharypkin, 'Skandinavskaia tema', 157.

70 I thank Kim Simonsen for this information.

71 Rask to Müller, 5 August 1818, in *Breve*, 1:328.

72 *Ibid.*, 330.

73 Inger Jensen and Jørgen Steen Jensen, 'Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskabs breve 1825–1864. Dansk kulturformidling på verdensplan', *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1988): 211–273.

pointment in Vilnius, and thus his very career, to this article, as Count Rumiantsev offered his powerful support after finding out that Loboiko was the author of this book-length study.<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

Rask's main preoccupation in St Petersburg, apart from the study of languages, was to spread knowledge of Scandinavian literature and scholarship. Thus, together with the Danish consul in St Petersburg, Rask was trying to set up connections to make Copenhagen the centre of the book trade for Nordic subjects – unfortunately without too many results.<sup>75</sup> Together with Loboiko, he had hopes for setting up a Danish reading club and library.<sup>76</sup> These failed attempts caused his subsequently expressed irritation about the ignorance of Danish literature and scholarship among the, primarily German-speaking, scholars in St Petersburg. Indeed, according to Rask, it was mainly because of the dominance of the German language that Danish was virtually unknown in Russia.<sup>77</sup> But then, Rask was frustrated in general by lack of linguistic interest, agreeing with Müller that no one in Copenhagen knew Russian either, or for that matter, was even interested in Swedish.<sup>78</sup> However, it was shown that he managed to get several people in St Petersburg interested in Danish – apart from Loboiko, there was a young, learned Russian called Gariski who studied Danish with Rask, and a Baron Rosenkampf, from Livonia, ordered Danish books on history and law through him.<sup>79</sup> In fact, he put so much effort into this that his mentor and benefactor, Müller, felt he had to remind him that the Danish book trade in Russia was not the real reason why he was there.<sup>80</sup>

While it might (could), therefore, be argued that the goals Rask had set himself in St Petersburg were not achieved; in the long run, it proved far more important that he was instrumental in making various scholarly connections between Scandinavia and Russia. He secured the funds needed for the publication of Renvall's Finnish dictionary, with the help of Krug, from Rumiantsev.<sup>81</sup> He also brought Sjögren in contact with the latter, telling him about the *Rurik* expedition.<sup>82</sup>

74 Loboiko, *Moi vospominaniia*, 143.

75 Rask to Müller, 27 November 1818, in *Breve*, 1:365; Petersen, 'Bidrag', 39.

76 Rønning, *Rask*, 74.

77 Rask to Müller, 5 August 1818, in *Breve*, 1:328–329.

78 Müller to Rask, 6 March 1819, in *Breve*, 1:409.

79 Petersen, 'Bidrag', 39.

80 Müller to Rask, 30 October 1818, in *Breve*, 1:362; Rønning, *Rask*, 72.

81 Renvall to Rask, 23 September 1818, in *Breve*, 1:344 and 346.

82 Rask to Sjögren, 25 April 1819, in *Breve*, 1:417.



In his letters to Müller and Nyerup, Rask often implies that scholars such as Loboiko have included their own letters,<sup>83</sup> while other letters attest to established contacts between Danish and Russian scholars fostered by Rask.<sup>84</sup> Finally, Rask suggested to Müller that Hipping, Frähn, and Loboiko be made corresponding members of the *Skandinaviske Litteraturselskab* in Copenhagen.<sup>85</sup> While these connections in the end did not prove as enduring or influential as the ones he made in Iceland or Sweden, this first enquiry into Rask's St Petersburg sojourn has revealed that here, also, he formed connections with leading historians and philologists, many eminent figures in the history of scholarship, some of which he directly influenced and encouraged, or whose careers he fostered.<sup>86</sup>

Most important, however, is the friendship he formed with Ivan Loboiko who acquired from Rask an intimate acquaintance with Old Norse literature. Through his patronage, we find that Rask stood at the cradle of the scholarly study of Nordic literature and history in Russia: Loboiko went on to become one of the first Russian scholars to study Old Norse sources in the original and use them to throw light on early Russian literature and history at a time, when romantic nationalism's interest in the medieval past reigned supreme in Russian literature and scholarship.

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83 Rask to Müller, 28 September 1818, in *Breve*, 1:349.

84 Rask to Nyerup, 29 January 1819, in *Breve*, 1:391–392 mentions contacts between Krug, Rumiantsev, and Loboiko and Danish scholars.

85 Rask to Müller, 27 November 1818, in *Breve*, 1:366.

86 For Sweden, see Alderik H. Blom, 'Rasmus Rask and Romanticism', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* 23.2 (2013): 241–74; for Iceland, see Alderik H. Blom, 'Rasmus Rask and Icelandic', in *Icelandic Philology and National Culture 1780–1918*, ed. Clarence E. Glad and Gylfi Gunnlaugsson (forthcoming).