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From Timor to Brazil with the Support of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung

In 1860 the Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Science (Russia) contributed 1000 silver Prussian Taler to the just established Humboldt-Stiftung in Berlin (Prussia). In the late XIX century Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung supported scientific expeditions to distant regions. German travelers Otto Finsch, Karl von den Steinen, Georg Thilenius, Leo Frobenius, etc. collected ethnographical exhibits, and several foreign museums, including the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (hereinafter – MAE) in Saint Petersburg (Russia), now keep their collections (Soboleva 2011).

As a Humboldt-Stiftung scholar the author visited many ethnographic museums to study collections from different luzophonic countries, met the Portuguese speaking people in many regions of Asia – Timor Leste, India, Sri Lanka, Macau, etc. (Soboleva 2015). It happened so that the first ethnographic items from East Timor arrived to Russia (Moscow) in 1862 (Soboleva 1995, 2003). Reciprocally, in 2019 the MAE provided the traveling photo-exhibition in Timor Leste with the images of Timorese items from the Museum’s early collections.

The history of the First (1821-1828) and Second (1914-1915) Russian scientific expeditions to Brazil are currently in international focus. The results[[1]](#footnote-1) of these enterprises can be appreciated later when the full set of archival and museum materials now spread between Russia, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, etc., would be discovered and studied.

The idea of Alexander von Humboldt on the universal solidarity of scientists and mutual help has manifested itself in the past. Support has been and is being provided to researchers in the field, especially when the Alexander von Humboldt symbols are available. Several times the brand of A. von Humboldt-Stiftung – a pocket calendar with the logotype – strengthened the relationship on the spot in foreign countries.

1. The Russian Contribution to the Creation of Humboldt Foundation

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) activities were highly appreciated by the contemporary scientists. Russian academicians, in particular, recognizing his prominent role in the studies of Russia and responded positively to the call of their German colleagues to perpetuate the memory of A. von Humboldt "in the most practical way."

Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Alexander Freiherr von Humboldt died on May 6, 1859 at the 89th year of his life. Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften expressed a desire to create a fund named after him with the aim of helping young researchers, in order to continue his efforts to support young scientists.

A. von Humboldt was elected to the Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (1800), Prussian (1805) and Bavarian Academies of Sciences, he became a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (1810), the Royal Society and many scientific societies in different countries. On February 11, 1818, he was elected a foreign honorary member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg. In 1829 A. von Humboldt traveled across Russia together with Gustav Rose and Christian Gottfried Ehrenberg, and both scientists in 1829 were elected foreign corresponding members of the Imperial Academy of Sciences.

In the 1850-1860s the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences (Königlichen Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin) as an authoritative scientific institution had departments of Physics and Mathematics, Philosophy and History. In the mid-XIX century Academies of Sciences of different countries had established fruitful contacts.

On December 9, 1859, the Department of Physics and Mathematics of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg (hereinafter – IAS) received the standard letter from the director of the Berlin Observatory Johann Franz Encke, dated November 17, 1859, sent by the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences to the Academies and Scholarly Societies associated with it, on behalf of the Committee for the Establishment of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for Nature Research and Travel (das Comité zur Gründung einer A. von Humboldtstiftung für Naturforschung und Reisen). At the same time, the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences recommended the scientists to support the plans of the named Committee "for benevolent cooperation ... for scientific purposes". J.F. Encke was sure that "the title and the purpose of the Foundation belong to all Academies", and pointed out that for this Memorial "many more components are still required" (SPB ARAS. F. 1. Inv. 1-1959. Unit 14. P. 1.).

Attached to the message was another standard letter signed by all members of the Organizing Committee of the prospective Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for Nature Research and Travel, dated November 3, 1859 (§379).

The name of a specific addressee was entered into the text be hand. The appeal said that

"Alexander von Humboldt, whose enormous activity spread across the countries of the world and vividly penetrated into the most diverse circles of activity, belongs in an excellent sense to the Academies and scientific societies of all enlightened peoples". In all the Academies “there are people who have personally assisted him and were closely associated [with him], or who are grateful to him for his assistance in their scientific path. Therefore, all the Academies will have to keep a grateful memory of him and pass on the legacy as a living sign to future generations."

The organizing committee hoped to "find the approval of all scientific societies" and, in particular, recommended the Imperial Academy of Sciences to create an effective Center for this Foundation in its environment. (SPB ARAS. F. 1. Inv. 1-1959. Unit 14. P. 2-3.)

21 prominent persons signed the invitation. In Berlin, the Organizing Committee included the initiators of the Foundation Gustav Magnus (1802-1870), August Böckh (1785-1867), Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg (1802-1872), Johann Franz Encke (1791-1865), Christian Gottfried Ehrenberg (1795-1876), Moriz Haupt (1808-1874), Karl Richard Lepsius (1810-1884), Heinrich Wilhelm Dove (1803-1879), Emil du Bois-Reymond (1818-1896), as well as Privy Councilor Heinrich Abecken (official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), August von Bethmann-Holweg (Prussian Minister of Education, Culture and Medicine in 1858-1862), Eduard Heinrich Flottvel (in 1859 – Minister of State of the Interior of Prussia), Heinrich Wilhelm Krausnik (in 1859 – mayor of Berlin), Privy Commercial Councilor Alexander Mendelssohn (banker and philanthropist), Commercial Councilor Leonor Reichenheim (manufacturer, member of the House of Representatives of Prussia), Prince Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Radziwill (commander of the 3rd Army Corps in Berlin), Karl Wilhelm Baron von Willissen (Lieutenant General), Joachim Heinrich Wilhelm Wagener (banker, Swedish and Norwegian consul), and others.

A notable experimental scientist, member of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences Gustav Magnus became the Chairman of the Organizing Committee, and Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, the Secretary of the Academy, became the Secretary of the Organizing Committee. Gustav Magnus, a corresponding member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences (1854), wrote a letter, that the Physics and Mathematics Department of the Imperial Academy of Sciences got on February 16, 1860. His idea found full understanding among Russian elites. On March 15, 1860, the President of the Imperial Academy of Sciences (1855-1864) Count Dmitry Nikolaevich Bludov (1785-1864) reported to the Minister of Public Education (1858-1861) of the Russian Empire Evgraf Petrovich Kovalevski (1790-1867) the proposal of the participation of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in the “capital established under the name Humboldt-Stiftung”. E.P. Kovalevsky, also a honorary member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences (1856), in a reply letter on March 31, 1860, informed Count Bludov that

"The Sovereign Emperor, according to my most submissive report on the 24th day of this March, deigned to command: the Imperial Academy of Sciences to make from its economic sums an offering of about a thousand Rubles in silver, into the capital established under the name Humboldt-Stiftung".

The Tzar Alexander II ordered the funds to be allocated as soon as possible. How exactly the allocated funds were supposed to be delivered to their destination is known from the letter of the ordinary academician (1859), Perpetual Secretary (1857-1890) Konstantin Stepanovich Veselovsky (1819-1901), dated April 14, 1860, to the Board Committee of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. Veselovsky asked "from the Academy's economic sums, one thousand Prussian Taler, at the rate of one thousand forty silver Rubles, for the transfer of these, by means of a bill, to Berlin in the name of the Committee, established to manage the compiled capital in honor of Humboldt". On April 14, 1860, the Perpetual Secretary K.S. Veselovsky notified G. Magnus that the above-mentioned amount had been transferred to the Committee, and asked to "notify the Academy about the receipt of this bill". The Russian Academy was "convinced that the wonderful work started by the Committee, with the growing participation of all educated [people] and under the careful guidance of such excellent people, will develop further with benefit and will bear fruit, which are worthy of an immortal master".(SPB ARAS. F. 1. Inv. 1-1959. Unit 14. P. 10.) Magnus, Dove, Trendelenburg and Haupt on May 4, 1860, asked K.S. Veselovski to express their deep gratitude to the Imperial Academy of Sciences (SPB ARAS. F. 1. Inv. 1-1959. Unit 14. P. 12.).

Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung was formed 18 months after the death of the scientist, in 1860. At the beginning of 1864, the Foundation collected about 150 thousand German Marks. The London's Royal Society for the Advancement of Nature Knowledge, for example, donated 50 guineas (over £ 50). (Dunken 1959: 164)

A. von Humboldt-Stiftung in 1863-1898 supported 20 long-term scientific expeditions abroad. In 1878 Dr. Otto Finsch was sent to Micronesia to collect zoological and ethnographic collections, in 1888 Prof. Dr. Karl von den Steinen went to Brazil, in 1890-1898 Dr. Georg Thilenius studied New Zealand, in 1908 Prof. Leo Frobenius traveled to German Inner-Africa (Dunkel 1959: 166, 171). These travelers contributed to the formation of the scientific base of the academic Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Saint Petersburg (Soboleva 2011). Participants of these expeditions and their followers donated to German museum their collections, the active international exchange of objects between the museums took place, directors and scientists implemented some joint projects with the MAE.

The Russian contribution to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation has contributed to the development of world science, the formation of its material base and scientific personnel.

1. Travels in Latin America

Descriptions of the countries visited by Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland gave samples of scientific regional studies. A. von Humboldt's method of geographical research became a model for scientific expeditions in the XIXth century. He theoretically generalized observations in physical geography and successfully established interconnections between various geographical phenomena and their distribution on Earth. A. von Humboldt, an outstanding historian of geographical discoveries, climatologist, oceanographer, cartographer and magnetologist, became one of the founders of modern phytogeography. Humboldt's thinking did not fit into the usual notions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. The works, ideas and travels of this versatile scientist made a noticeable impact on the studies of Russian scholars (Lukin 1973).

At the very beginning of the XIXth century Alexander von Humboldt made significant contributions to the study of South America. Together with the botanist Aimé Jacques Alexander Bonpland (1773-1858), he made a journey that lasted five years (1799-1804). The results of Humboldt's research in South America were impressive. He mapped vast parts of the continent, determined the astronomical position of more than 200 points, made many barometric and hypsometric measurements, described the minerals of Peru and Mexico, and summed much more information (Botting 1973).

A foreign member and correspondent of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences Georg Heinrich Freiherr (in Russia – Grigory Ivanovich) von Langsdorff (1774–1852) was born in Germany, studied at the University of Göttingen under Professor J.F. Blumenbach (1752-1840), a famous anatomist, physiologist, anthropologist and connoisseur of the history of travel of different eras, the head of the school of naturalists and ethnographers, who had a great influence on the formation of his students (Komissarov 1975: 83; Komissarov 2009: 33). Both Humboldt and Langsdorff dreamed of travel and managed to conduct research in America, each passing its own Brazilian route.

G.H. von Langsdorff, being an extremely versatile person, made significant contributions to botany, zoology, geography, ethnography and many other branches of science. In 1797, under the direction of J.F. Blumenbach, he defended his dissertation, becoming a Doctor of Medicine. As the personal physician of Christian August, Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont, commander of the army of the Portuguese kingdom, he ended up in Portugal, where after the death of wounded in battles Christian August von Waldeck-Pyrmont (1798), he turned to private medical practice. He spent almost six years in Portugal, also studying natural science, in particular, ichthyology.

While A. von Humboldt traveled to South America (1799-1804), G.H. von Langsdorff in 1803 was elected a foreign corresponding member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. He joined the first Russian circumnavigation expedition (1803–1807) under the command of Adam Johann (in Russia – Ivan Fyodorovich) von Krusenstern, being accepted as a naturalist and physician on the sloop "Nadezhda". In 1803-1804 he conducted observations on the Brazilian island of Santa Catarina, summarized the results in the work "Remarks on travel around the world in 1803-1807". He conducted ethnographic, anthropological and linguistic studies of the peoples of Brazil, Oceania, North America and Japan, was interested in the origin of the Ainu and other problems(Langsdorff 1813). In 1807-1808 Langsdorff returned by land from Okhotsk to Saint Petersburg (Komissarov 1975: 83-84). In 1812 he was elected an extraordinary academician of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences and was nominated consul general of Russia in Brazil. Langsdorff arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1813 and spent the next 17 years in Brazil, created a Russian consular network, and contributed to the development of direct Russian-Brazilian trade. In his estate "Mandioca" Langsdorff founded a scientific center, unique for South America at that time, which was visited by both European scientists-travelers and Russian navigators (Komissarov 2009: 36). Of particular interest to him were the "manners, customs and languages" of the population.

Langsdorff sent his entomological and zoological collections academic to Zoological Museum in Saint Petersburg and to Moscow Society of Naturalists (1818)(Bogoraz 1928).

In 1821 Langsdorff proposed to the Tzar Alexander I and to the Russian Academy of Sciences the project of an expedition inland. Specialists from different fields of knowledge were invited to participate: cartographer and astronomer N.G. Rubtsov, botanist L. Riedel, zoologists É.P. Ménétries and Ch. Hasse, artists J.M. Rugendas, H. Florence and A.-A. Taunay (the scientists joined and left the team). Langsdorff carefully prepared for the expedition and studied the works of his predecessors, trying not to repeat their routes. In 1824-26 the team explored the little-studied areas of the provinces of Minas Gerais and São Paulo. In 1827 they traveled through Mato Grosso, then, divided into two detachments, across the Amazon. During the trip, Langsdorff's employees carried out the first comprehensive study of the Brazilian Highlands, visited about 300 villages and cities in Brazil. The sorrowful result of the expedition was that in January 1828 the painter and draftsmen Adrien Taunay drowned in the river Guapuré, and at the end of March 1828 Langsdorff himself fell ill with a severe form of tropical fever and fell into unconsciousness. Since 1830 Langsdorff lived in the German city of Freiburg, where he died in 1852 (Komissarov 1965).

The uneasy relationship between Langsdorff and the artist of the expedition J.M. Rugendas was overshadowed by the fact that the latter published in 1827 an album of prints belonging to the expedition. Since then, the prints have been reprinted without mention of Langsdorff's expedition. The nephew of the deceased Adrien Taunay, A.A. Taunay, becoming a historian and writer, considered Langsdorff to be indirectly responsible for the death of his uncle. Since Langsdorff's legacy was lost in the 1830s, nothing prevented such a statement (Komissarov 2009: 37-38). The expedition was almost forgotten. Nevertheless, some Brazilian drawings from H. Florence acquired Karl von den Steinen. Ludwig Riedel was sent from Russia back to Rio de Janeiro to found a “pharmaceutical” botanical garden and to study local medicinal plants (Strelnikov 1930:759).

Only at the beginning of the XXth century the archive of the first Russian expedition to Brazil was found out in Russia (Sprintzin 1947). It contains more than 4000 pages of manuscripts, more than 600 drawings, dozens of maps and plans. "This is the last classic collection about Brazil not yet included into science and culture" (Komissarov 1975: 91). Extensive natural science (entomological, herpetological, ichthyological, ornithological, etc.) collections in 1822–1830 in batches came to Saint Petersburg academic institutions – the universal museum “Kunstkamera” and the Botanical Garden of the Imperial Academy of Sciences (Russian Academician 2016: 130).

March 29, 1914 an album of Langsdorff's drawings showing the life of the Bororo tribe in South America was transferred from the archive of the Conference (General Assembly) of Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences to the Department of Images of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography named after the Emperor Peter the Great (SPB ARAS. F. 2. Inv. 1-1914. Unit 8. P. 25). Head of the Department of Central and South America Karl Hilzen found the objects labeled "Langsdorff", but no one in the MAE had any idea of their origin. The discovery of the Langsdorff expedition was actually made later by the young scientist Heinrich Manizer, participant of the second Russian (students’) expedition to South America in 1914-1915 (Komissarov 1965).

Heinrich Manizer (1889-1916), the eldest son of the painter H.M. Manizer, was well educated in music (he professionally played violin), drawing and painting. In 1907, he entered simultaneously two faculties of Imperial Saint Petersburg University (Faculty of History and Philology and Faculty of Physics and Mathematics), in the fall of 1912 he passed the state exams in the group of Geography at the Natural Sciences Department (SPB ARAS. F. IV. Inv. 1. Unit 644. P. 1). Having met the senior ethnographer of the MAE Leo Sternberg, Heinrich Manizer and his fellow student Theodor Fjelstrup decided to complete an internship at the MAE. Later, in 1915, while staying at the Museo Nacional da Universidade Federal in Rio de Janeiro, H.H. Manizer drew attention to Indian ethnographic objects – feather ornaments, similar to those seen in the MAE – and became interested in "some kind of Russian expedition" of the early 19th century to Brazil (Manizer 1948: 15).

The plan of a trip to South America for ethnographic and biological work was developed by the members of the "Young Biologists" circle at the P.F. Lesgaft Biological Laboratory. Five students went across the Atlantic ocean at their own expense: ethnographers Heinrich H. Manizer, Theodor A. Fjelstrup, Sergei V. Geiman, zoologists Ivan D. Strelnikov, Nikolai P. Tanassičuk. Young Russian scientists carefully studied the works of travelers in order to go to the then unexplored regions of the New World. This is evidenced by a set of books (in Russian) they read before the voyage. Nina, the daughter of I.D. Strelnikov, preserved her father’s volumes of the popular Russian magazine "Magazine of geography and travel" (T. V, 1858), Élisée Reclus "The Earth and its inhabitants. The universal geography. Volume XVIII. South America. Region of the Andes" (1896), C.F. Appun “Under the tropics. Wandering in Venezuela, Orinoco, British Guiana and the Amazon from 1845 to 1868 by Сarl Ferdinand Appun” (1874) and other books about South America. The expedition was supported by equipment and small funds from the Imperial Academy of Science museums (MAE and Zoological), Peter F. Lesgaft Biological Laboratory, St. Petersburg and Moscow Universities, the Pedagogical Museum of Military Training Aids, the Imperial Botanical Gardens in Saint Petersburg and Batumi, as well as patrons (Emanuel L. Nobel and Nikolai V. Meshkov). The students’ budget did not exceed 3000 rubles. But young scientists were welcomed by local colleagues everywhere – in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile.

The young travelers set off from Saint Petersburg on April 8, 1914 and reached their destination – Corumbá in the state of Mato Grosso (Brazil) – on June 30, 1914. There, the members of the expedition split up. Zoologists I.D. Strelnikov and N.P. Tanassičuk worked in the surrounding areas of Bolivia and for eight months in Paraguay. Ethnographers H.H. Manizer, Th.A. Fjelstrup, S.V. Geiman headed for the southern part of Mato Grosso. After visiting the Indians Cadiuveo and Xavantes, together with his comrades, H.H. Manizer first studied the Kaingang tribe in the Brazilian state of São Paulo, and then studied Botocudas for six months at the Indian Protection Service posts of SPI Pankas in the state of Espiritu Santo and SPI Lajão in the state of Minas Gerais (Soboleva 2016).

Only in the fall of 1915, because of the First World War, the students managed to return to Russia one by one and to transfer there the collected items. In November 1915, H.H. Manizer immediately started processing his materials in the MAE, dismantled and exhibited the items obtained by him, Th.A. Fjelstrup and S.V. Geiman to the MAE (SPB ARAS. F. IV. Op. 1. Unit 644. P. 3.). The Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences keeps more than 500 items delivered by the expedition members (Korsun 2015). Two articles by H.H. Manizer on the Boruns-Botokudo Indians (Manizer 1916) and about the musical instruments and music of the Indians (Manizer 1918) were published in Russian, and translated into French (Manizer 1919) and Portuguese (Manizer 1934) in Brazil. The article on the Kaingang Indians has been completed, but not published in Russian, but luckily we have translations into French (Manizer 1930) and Portuguese (Manizer 2006).

K.K. Hilzen stated that on his return from Brasil, in Petrograd, H.H. Manizer personally came across a rich and extremely rare collection of unknown origin kept in the MAE, which turned out to be a collection brought from Brazil by a "Russian expedition" at the initiative and under the supervision of Academician Langsdorff. H.H. Manizer singled out the early Brazilian objects in the Langsdorff collection from the general South-American collection and attributed the items. In the Archives of the IAS Conference (General Assembly), a set of watercolors was found pertaining to the same expedition, and H.H. Manizer made the list of these valuable pieces, an inventory number 2599, in French ("South America, Brazil. Drawings by the Langsdorff expedition artists – Rugendas, Hercule Florence and Adrien Taunay, relating to ethnography, as well as expedition items. Registered by H. Manizer") (SPF ARAS. F. 985. Op. 1. Unit 74.). All these discoveries gave a new impetus to further research of data on the Langsdorf expedition. Together with K.K. Hilzen, H.H. Manizer found Langsdorff's letters, notes and other valuable materials in the Archives of the IAS Conference. Being fluent in Portuguese, Manizer also used Portuguese sources to study the history of the expedition. The result was a compilation in three parts on the life of G. von Langsdorff, incluning the history of the first Russian round-the-world expedition under the command of Ivan F. Kruzenshtern and Yuri F. Lisyansky, under the title “Life and Travels of Academician Grigory Ivanovich Langsdorff”, with a bibliography of his printed works, a description of ethnographic materials, a map of the expedition (SPB ARAS. F. IV. Op. 1. Unit 645.). The manuscript was handed over in a completely finished form on the eve of H.H. Manizer’s departure to the Romanian front, where he died of typhus on June 21, 1916. This work was published in Russian in 1948, edited by Noemi G. Sprintzin and supplemented with scientific commentary (Manizer 1948), translated into Portuguese in 1967 (Manizer 1967).

K.K. Hilzen wrote in his obituary that “We owe to Manizer that such an outstanding and well-equipped Russian expedition to Brazil at the beginning of the last century under the leadership of our academician Langsdorff, which, literally, was forgotten by all Russians, has now been resurrected, thanks to Manizer's work (SPB ARAS. F. 46. Op. 1. Unit 84. P. 2-2ob.)."

Before enlisting for the army Heinrich Manizer gave his field notes to Ivan D. Strelnikov, and some of them were published (Strelnikov 1928). The head of the MAE Department of South America V.G. Bogoraz-Tan reported on the discovery of materials from the Langsdorff expedition at the XXII International Congress of Americanists in Rome 1926 (Bogoraz 1928). Another participant of the expedition I.D. Strelnikov published an article on Langsdorff’s expedition at the XXIII International Congress of Americanists in New York 1928 (Strelnikov 1930).

The materials of the First and Second Russian scientific expeditions to Brazil are now spread between many museums and archives in Russia, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, etc. It was found out that the objects collected by Georg Langsdorff (1821-1828) and Heinrich Manizer (1914-1915) for Russia are analogous to the ones they donated to the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), that makes it possible to reconstruct the structure of these collections lost in the fire in 2018 (Soboleva 2020). The same objects were donated by the members of the expedition to the Museo etnográfico de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina). "The Brazilian Diary" of Heinrich Manizer who stayed with the Indios Botocudos about eight months is published in full in Russian by the MAE (Soboleva 2016).

About 100 ethnographic objects from the Langsdorff expedition were found in the MAE. This collection is unique in its composition and is collected among the Brazilian Indians Apiacá, Munduruku, Bororo, Caripuna and Guató. It consists mainly of Indian feather ornaments with ritual meaning. Similar feather products from the early XIXth century are rarely found in museums around the world. Of particular note is the Mundurukú feather ornaments which represent the whole ceremonial costume of the Indian warrior, which can be considered unique, given the time of its acquisition (Soboleva, Sorokina 2020).

In 2020 Dora Tanassičuk donated the family archives to the MAE. They testify that like A. von Humboldt the Russian naturalists accurately filled the diaries. Every day several times they measured the temperature of water and air, listed the encountered birds, fish, animals. These notes reflect the biodiversity of the regions studied. In Paraguay the naturalists I.D. Strelnikov and N.P. Tanassičuk were accommodated by Moises Berton at his biological station. They stayed in Puerto Bertoni and surroundings from November 4, 1914 till July 6, 1915.

The writings of the travelers of the past are excellent in style and scientific precision. Nikolai P. Tanassičuk confessed in his field diaries how difficult it was for him to find words to express impressions of the surrounding nature every day:

"Describing what a virgin forest really is will always be a very difficult task. But if the person who describes turns to people who have never seen this forest, the difficulty turns into an impossibility,” says a subtle connoisseur of the virgin forest, Dr. Bertoni, who has lived under its shade for 30 years. I will try to give only an artless, weak transmission of what I saw and felt during my 8-month life in this forest, and I do not know how I can cope with this task. Even such geniuses of the human mind, colossus of thought, like Humboldt, Chateaubriand – people in whose hearts a divine spark burned – and those, in their brilliant, charming descriptions of the virgin forest, only partially coped with their task – so brightly, so mighty forces of nature colorfully manifest themselves in the primeval tropical forest."

The interdisciplinary method of thinking of Alexander von Humboldt is visible in H.H. Manizer’s field notes. In Brazilian diaries H.H. Manizer recorded his reflections on major philosophical problems. He used his stay in the nature to observe and to contempleate. That can be seen from the following notes:

a) "What America Gives to the Question of the "Origin" and "Emergence" of the Human from the Anthropoid Mammalian?"

1. The gap between “man” and animals and the connection between “human” and speech = thought (puzzle). It is impossible to talk about the subhuman and about the human, introducing into the definition of "human" the thought about any species. Monkey societies and the possibility of traditions (in a cage = in a forest?), voice data.

2. American Indians – diversity of languages and unity in other respects – tangible novelty of the language in comparison with other aspects, "unimportance of language", the role of language in life in the forest and insignificance of this role in comparison with other "blessings". Therefore, conservatism, but not antiquity?

A) Race is a very ancient unity – the amplitude of individual fluctuations? (paucity? mixture?)

B) Expressive movements, screaming, crying, treating the dead, shaving hair.

C) Nutrition and reproduction – ways of feeding, carrying children, etc. Beginning of using bast, stick (tolete), dyeing urukú, genipapo, medical ligatures.

C) The initial appearance of the pre-language is the phonetic background. Undifferentiated art (music, dance), laughter, lack of brakes (cf. presence?).

D) Languages and confusion of bi-trilingual – and family languages. Syntax – general – position of negation! Addicting!

E) Exceptions to prove the rule (Bororo etc. – Melanesia!). Convergence (bags (cf. Australia) – weaving, pottery, sculptures, human sacrifices, etc. among the "civilized" ones – Calchaki, Peru, Mexico City, Marajó.

b) How to fill the gap between the "mind" of man and animals?

Anatomy and physiology did not find any difficulty in assigning a certain place to a person in the animal system, and its origin is as clear as the origin of a horse, a bear, and even clear origins, for example, birds or marsupials.

In general, it has already been expressed many times that everything that is called "mental manifestations in man" is also of animal origin, but there has never been anything definite and proven in this respect. It was very stubbornly repeated that there can be no transition from the unreasonable to the reasonable – and this is of course absolutely correct, so that only puzzles should and will appear on the path of interpretations in this direction. As soon as "mind", "thought", "psyche" are squeezed into the field of research, it becomes metaphysical ranting, not objective study.

Refusal from reasoning about intellect and the decision to deal only with immanent objects of experience entails the obligation to determine what exactly will constitute the object of studying the relationship between man and animals not in the field of structure, but in the field of functions of the predominantly nervous system.

The new point of view will have to develop new terminology (concepts) in accordance with the new grouping of "human phenomena" according to the requirements of scientific methods.

Here is a listing of what needs to be revisited:

1. Behavior of monkeys. Their application to the study of the same methods that were applied to the study of human behavior – for example, phenotype – the study of pathicularia, the physiology of the nervous system – the study of the ability to distinguish, memory, etc. (as in "psychological" laboratories), the study of the history of the formation of conditioned reflexes, as well as – ethnography and sociology of monkeys – monkey society in the wild and in a cage (cf. madhouse), monkey traditions – conditioned sounds and signs in this group, etc.

2) In the study of human behavior, psychological terminology should be abandoned and this will entail the discovery of a lot of new and probably unexpected, which will facilitate the work that now seems to be an insurmountable difficulty – the exact clarification of the origin of human activities, their roots in the inherited stock, the laws of tradition and succession of generations, etc. The terribly difficult question of the primary and the later must be resolved on the basis of laws, and not other considerations or base motives." (Archive of the Russian Geographical Society. F. 120. Inv. 4. Unit. 10. P. 1-2.)

Manizer reinforced his thoughts with practice. He got two monkeys and observed their behavior, these entries in the diary take up a lot of space. Unfortunately the young promising talented scientist died in the First world war. The task is to introduce his ideas, texts and drawings into scientific circulation.

Unlike G. von Langsdorff, A. von Humboldt was never forgotten or disappeared from the sphere of scientific knowledge. His books were among the sources obligatory for self-education of naturalists. The MAE library contained the main modern sources for scientists, among them the Russian edition of A. von Humboldt "Cosmos. The Experience of Physical World Description" (1851). Later were published in Russian his "Journey to the Equinox Regions of the New World" (1963, 1964, 1969) and "The New Discovery of America" (2012).

Among the transparencies donated to the MAE by Prof. Nina Strelnikova, there are photographs from two drawings by Adrien Taunay: MAE No. 7703-21 ("View of the village of Bororo Indians called Pau-Seco") and MAE No. 7703-22 ("Several Bororo Indians visit Messrs. Riedel and Taunay"). A MAE transparency No. 7703-148 was made from a drawing pinned to the wall with buttons: this is H. Florence "Chute du Juruenna dite Salto-Augusto. 2.me feuille", the place where Langsdorff, afflicted with malaria, made the last entries in his diary. This drawing I.D. Strelnikov discovered somewhere in America during the expedition.

Langsdorff's "return" lasted for more than a century and a half (Komissarov 1965) and it continues to the present. Through the efforts of Prof. Boris N. Komissarov, work on this topic continues in both Russia and Brazil. Materials by H.H. Manizer, Th.A. Fjelstrup, S.V. Geiman, I.D. Strelnikov, N.P. Tanassičuk in its entirety has yet to be introduced into scientific circulation.

A. von Humboldt became the founder of ecological and geoecological thinking. He tried to create as many zones of mutual contacts, transitions and exchange of views as possible (Ette 2018: 149). This method was followed by the participants of the First and Second Russian expeditions to South America, realizing their scientific potential in research travels across the continent in the 19th – early 20th centuries.

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