

## The Follow-up Seminar of the 24<sup>th</sup> International Baltic Conference on the History of Science

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The 24<sup>th</sup> International Baltic Conference on the History of Science, held on 8–9 October 2010, was a special event in many respects. It was the first conference that was organized in Tallinn, as well as the first one hosted by the Tallinn University of Technology (TUT) (Talts & Kulasalu, 2011, p. 114). Immediately after the conference it was decided to give the participants a chance to submit their articles that were based on the conference talks actually delivered at the 24<sup>th</sup> Baltic Conference on the History of Science for a special issue of the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Baltic Journal of European Studies* (formerly known as *Proceedings of the Institute for European Studies*) published by TUT Department of International Relations. But last but not least, in addition to above-mentioned, the conference was the first one which ever had a follow-up seminar approximately two months later (on 17 December 2010). The topic of the seminar was plain and simple – ‘Some aspects of the history of natural sciences in Russia, Finland and the Baltics’, since the organizers strived to keep it accessible to as many researchers as possible.

There were two major incentives to arrange such an event. On the one hand, some guests of the main conference who did not present a paper at the main conference, presumably representing the younger generation of researchers, expressed their wish to be given an opportunity to make such presentations in the nearest future as well as to get acquainted with researchers working in the similar field. On the other hand, the Department of International Relations of the Tallinn School of Economics and Business Administration, as the main organizer of the conference, also decided to do something in turn to revive the activities of the Baltic and Estonian Associations of the History and Philosophy of Science (BAHPS and EAHPS) between the larger international conferences usually held in every two or three years. In early November 2010, the webpage of the BAHPS<sup>1</sup> was created for this reason on the initiative of the TUT Department of International Relations.

<sup>1</sup> See further at <http://www.bahps.org/>

Figure 1. Marina Loskutova reading her paper at the seminar (Photo by Nadezha Slepikova – St Petersburg)



The main idea behind that was at least to try to give new impetus to the activities of the Estonian Association of the History and Philosophy of Science, to increase the frequency of contacts between actual researchers, create new cooperation initiatives, as well as to give a kind of positive example for our Latvian and Lithuanian colleagues. Since some of the first volunteers who were willing to speak at the seminar discussed the issues related to the history of scientific organizations working in the field of natural sciences it was decided to dedicate this event to issues of the history of natural sciences. However, surprisingly it turned out to be an event on the conjunction of the natural sciences and the humanities or even the social sciences, since most of the presentations focused also on the social aspects of scientific cooperation in the research of natural sciences (i.e. the buildup and functioning of scientific organizations).

The seminar took place on 17 December 2010 at the Tallinn School of Economics and Business Administration (Akadeemia tee 3, Tallinn, Estonia) and was attended by researchers from Russia (St Petersburg), Finland (Helsinki) and Estonia (Tallinn and Tartu). The very next day, the guests from St Petersburg had an opportunity to meet some younger researchers from Tartu who had not been able to take part of the seminar on the previous day due to their obligations in lecturing.

The seminar opened with the presentation of the senior researcher **Marina Loskutova** (Fig. 1) from the St Petersburg branch of the S. I. Vavilov Institute for the History of Science and Technology at the Russian Academy of Sciences (St Petersburg, Russia). She discussed an interesting topic ‘Congresses of



Figure 2. Johanna Lilja (Photo by Nadezha Slepikova – St Petersburg)

Russian naturalists and physicians as a means to explore the academic community in its making' (Loskutova, 2011). The congresses of Russian naturalists and physicians were organized from 1867 to 1913 in different parts of the Russian Empire: the first in December 1867–January 1868 in St Petersburg, the last, 13<sup>th</sup> in Tiflis (now Tbilisi), and were intended first and foremost for establishing contacts between scientists and enthusiast laymen researchers (such as school teachers, physicians, etc.). The presenter made some statistical conclusions on the geography of people attending the congresses, whilst giving also an analysis of the participation of the researchers from Russia's Western provinces of that time (Finland, the Baltics, Poland, and the Ukraine, etc.). Characteristically of these times the congresses of Russia's

naturalists were male-dominated: for example, at the 10<sup>th</sup> congress (held in 1898 in Kiev) there were 55 women among the 1,089 participants and at the 12<sup>th</sup> congress (held in 1909/1910 in Moscow) the women delivered 10 speeches out of the 476 actually held during the conference.

The secretary of the Finnish Society for the History of Science and Learning (Helsinki, Finland) and doctoral student of Tampere University **Johanna Lilja** (Fig. 2) delivered a paper on the topic 'The exchange of publications of the Finnish learned societies in 1821–1939 with a special emphasis on relations between Finland and Russia.' She focused on three older Finnish scientific societies: *Societas pro Fauna et Flora Fennica* (established in 1821), the Finnish Literary Society (est. 1831) and the Finnish Antiquarian Society (est. 1870). Analyzing their foreign exchange relations with other scientific societies in Europe and beyond, she indicated that the scientific network was based on an ethos inherited from the dawn of modern science, which is often described by the phrase 'the Republic of Letters'. This ethos alleviated the so-called St Matthew's effect – i.e. the accumulation of scientific resources ('For unto every one that hath shall be given,

and he shall have abundance” [Matt 25:29], see also Lilja, 2010). Ethical principles of neutrality and mutual aid were sustained also in the politically difficult years and they made the learned communication possible despite the political upheavals.

**Renata Sõukand and Raivo Kalle**, researchers at the Estonian Literary Museum (Tartu, Estonia) gave a comprehensive overview on the topic ‘Formation of Estonian ethnobotanical collections’. The history of ethnobotanical research in Estonia can be divided into two periods: the Baltic German and the Estonian period (see Kalle & Sõukand, 2011). The most unexpected was the fact that half of the folk botanical knowledge of the

‘Estonian period’ has been gathered by people involved in the humanities and the other half by a single person – the botanist Gustav Vilbaste (Vilberg, 1885–1967), a remarkable figure in Estonian science. The following discussion revealed an interesting tendency – while some species of plants have an enormous number of vernacular names (e.g., *Primula veris* has more than one hundred names!), there are also recorded cases that some vernacular names have been used to denote several different species, which of course have created confusion among the collectors of folk botanical knowledge.

**Tarmo Kiik**, doctoral student at the University of Tartu (Estonia) gave an interesting report entitled ‘Adam Johann von Krusenstern’s contacts with various seafarers and scientists’ based on von Krusenstern’s correspondence found in the collections of the Estonian Historical Archives (Tartu). Kiik found that von Krusenstern (1770–1846, Fig. 3) was not only a famous Baltic-German seafarer, but also a person skilled in many languages with a vast circle of contacts. Next to his Russian and German friends, he had correspondence with English, American, French, Belgian and Danish scientists, seafarers and high officials on a wide range of topics from



Figure 3. Adam Johann von Krusenstern (*Atlas de l’océan Pacifique* 1823)





Figure 4. Maria Feodorovna (Oil painting by Jean-Louis Voille).

the natural sciences to historical matters. The correspondence was active, reciprocal and enabled Krustenstern to complement and revise his cartographic collections.

Senior researcher at the Estonian University of Life Sciences (Tartu, Estonia), **Heldur Sander** focused on 'The contribution of Russia's botanists to the development of the Botanical Garden of the University of Tartu in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century' (Sander & Meikar, 2011). The presenter concentrated on the establishment of

the Botanical Garden of the University of Tartu (Dorpat) in 1803 and the early development of its collections. Fortunately for us, the manuscript of plants and seeds that the botanical garden received during 1823–1832, 1839–1841 and 1846–1852 still exists. Among the contributors there were many botanists of international acclaim, but also some interesting persons such as Grand Duchess Maria Fedorovna of Russia (Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg, 1759–1828, Fig. 4), mother of tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I.

The paper 'The kinship of the famous nature explorers and the founders of parks from Baltic region' by the botanist and the researcher of the history of botany **Mati Laane** (Tallinn, Estonia) revealed fascinating facts, among these the claim that a large number of the founders of Estonian manor parks are related to each other and were closer relatives of some famous nature explorers. The same tendency (that specific talents seem to be hereditary, at least to some extent) can be observed among the famous Baltic-German artists as well.

And, finally, the researcher of the St Petersburg branch of the S.I. Vavilov Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of

Sciences (St Petersburg, Russia), and one of the editors of the bilingual journal *Studies in the History of Biology/Историко-биологические исследования*, **Anastasia Fedotova** introduced the journal to the seminar participants. The bilingual quarterly journal, published in English and Russian, was founded in 2009 and accepts contributions from scholars in the entire Baltic region.

Already during the seminar it was decided that a proposal will be made to the participants of the seminar to submit their articles for a special issue of the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Baltic Journal of European Studies*, the opportunity which was used by approximately half of the participants (see Kalle & Sõukand, 2011; Loskutova, 2011; Sander & Meikar, 2011).

During the seminar many new contacts between the researchers from different countries were created. In order to make these contacts more frequent, the Finnish Society for the History of Science and Learning together with the Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Tallinn School of Economics and Business Administration, as well as the Estonian Association of the History and Philosophy of Science decided that a one-day seminar 'Sciences in Russia, Finland and the Baltics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century' will be held in Helsinki, Finland on 27 June 2011. This is an indication of enduring fruitful cooperation between the abovementioned institutions, which has been noticed already by the researchers from other Baltic countries.

## References:

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