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The Ambassador and Arbiter of Taste. Minister State Secretary, Count Alexander Armfelt as intermediary cultural agent

> *Minister State Secretary, Count Armfelt felt it quite easier to be a rapporteur in front of the Emperor Nicholas, who always said outright what he felt and thought in front of his gentle, but taciturn successor* [*the future Alexander II*] *<...> Armfelt told, that if he had sat between the two chairs, "I would have had both father and son against me"*[1].

As noted in this epigraph, the period of influence of one of the most influential diplomats of the Finnish history, count Alexander Armfelt, stretched over the 'old' and 'new' generations (the pre- and post-reform periods). With a typical mode of operation of the reform era authorities, Armfelt, himself a child of the 'parasitic' era, belonging to the 'delicate', idealistic liberals of the gentry, artfully balanced between the two eras[2], promoting the *glasnost*, but on the other hand, not letting things go 'out of hand'[3].

Indeed, Count Armfelt has been primarily examined in basis of his political agency in Finland's political, juridical, economic life, perhaps losing sight of the complexities of his fused political and cultural services[4]. Several fragments of Armfelt's correspondence from St Petersburg to *the Finnish Art Society* (in early Russian sources also titled the *Finnish Society of Art Lovers*), founded in 1846, later shaped into a national museum[5], and traces that Armfelt has left in the primary archival materials of his personal contacts, share light also on Armfelt's cultural agency. This article will

focus on some previously uncharted aspects of Armfelt's and Emperor Alexander II's engagement in the Grand Duchy's cultural and material history. In this regard, referring to Armfelt's position as the Emperor Alexander II's aide, I wish to elicit the concept of 'intimacy', a particular method of governance in this particular time and place (the later imperial period), but applying it here to the field of culture[6].

Firstly, I will bring in light some previously unconsidered aspects in the birth of the Finnish Art Society regarding its possible earlier prototype, and then move specifically on Armfelt as the key figure in the construction of the nucleus of a national cultural patrimony and the foundation for art activities in Finland. Some overall points should be noted regarding the methodological approach in this study. Overall, the basic framework of analysis for national movements regarding institutional histories of cultural and museum organizations in Finland has traditionally diverged from that used in Finnish general academic historiography, producing and perhaps emphasising a picture of the early museum landscape in Finland as a kind of 'container' or 'vacuum' without contacts or networks between nations or other social spaces.

Starting from the late nineteenth century, the birth of the idea of the Finnish Art Society, was connected exclusively to the Western models, either Swedish or German associational influences: "It was in these circumstances and perhaps under the influence of the establishment of the Art Society in Stockholm in 1832 that the first idea of the formation of an art association in Finland arose"[7]. This paradigm seems to have perpetuated in all subsequent works[8]. The present article, among other questions, raises the question, what was the Finnish Art Society's most prominent and effective early prototype? Were there other significant parallels or precedents as models than the 'canonical' interpretative version? Recently, I have added to the traditional interpretative schemes of the Finnish Art Society also the 'larger picture' of the early sphere of associational culture in the Empire, including the geography (proximity between 'core' and 'periphery'), contemporary political alliances (requisite of hybrid cultural forms), chronology, and in many cases social and professional circumstances (state servants, bureaucracy) of the few cultural figures in contemporary Finland[9].

Earlier source of inspiration?

The most significant and decisive role in the development of the artistic sphere in mid-nineteenth-century St Petersburg was played by *the* [*Imperial*] *Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts* (Russia, founded in 1820, henceforth *Russian Society*)[10], and this is the case in Finland too; the establishment of the *Society* in Finland formed the material foundation for the development of the fine arts, and was a major channel of spreading cultural values in the society.

Central government set directions to the *Russian Society* in 28 April 1833, approved by Nicholas I[11]. Alexander Armfelt started as an assistant of the minister state secretary Robert Rehbinder in St Petersburg in 1834[12], and was appointed as

minister state secretary in 1841. Although it may be a pure coincidence, the first known proposal for the establishment of the *Finnish Society* was announced in the same year when Armfelt assumed his office, in 18 June 1834[13]. It is also worth noting the chronological proximity between the Nicholas I's Statute of the Russian Society for the Encouragement of Arts in 1833, and the first proposal of the *Finnish Society* of 1834. Although this first plan of 1834 soon declined (being awakened only in 1846), the terminology of the plan included the word *Comité*, which is consistent with the French version of the Society of the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the Kingdom of Poland[14], established much later, in 1860[15]. From the comparative perspective these societies are interesting, as they all represent semi-public or non-governmental, primarily learned societies, voluntary or philanthropic associations, founded by the Emperor, and on the other hand or perhaps for this reasons can also be considered as administrative tools of the sovereign.

The essential prerequisite for further implementation of the first proposal of the Finnish Society was the 'public interest', which at the time was not wide enough for further action and the plan soon declined: "If the public is awakened, and the proposal <...> will gain success, a *Comité* shall soon be formed for a closer determination of the Society's activities, which essentially will be in support of domestic artistic talents"[16]. In Finnish interpretations the 'fault' regarding the decline of the first proposal is hitherto unequivocally placed on the lack of enthusiasm or reluctance by the imperial governmental authority[17]. In light of the content of the first statute this may however not be true, as the realization of the first plan seems to have encountered some internal communicational problems inside the Finnish bureaucracy too, and even doubts by local (Finnish) authorities; one Finnish official is noted to have kept the first proposal in his table for two years before its submission[18].

Furthermore, the presence of different variations of the name of the *Finnish Society* in the documentation makes it possible to observe how the early initiative was perceived from 'inside' and 'outside'. It also may provide some clues of the possible earlier model of the society. In the early correspondence, the Russian version of the title of the Finnish Art Society slightly varies in basis of different senders. When the Imperial Academy of Arts approached the Society, it used the version 'Finnish Society of Art Lovers' [Финляндское общество любителей искусства][19] or 'Finnish Society of Fine Art Lovers' [Финляндское общество любителей изящных искусств][20]. When the Grand Duke Alexander Alexandrovich approached the *Finnish Society*, in the letter we can observe the simple version of Finnish Art Society [Финляндское общество художеств][21]. When the Society of the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the Kingdom of Poland approached the *Finnish Society*, it used nearly identical title of the *Finnish Society*, '*Comité de la Société finlandaise des Beaux Arts*'[22]. The Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Poland addressed the *Finnish Society* in 1873 to set up in conjunction with other societies of Fine Arts in the Empire. The two Societies 'confraternally' exchanged annual reports, minutes, and 'shares' or 'actions' of the Societies[23]. It is not known, when

and by whom the short version of the title, short version, 'Finnish Art Society', was established and became the norm. The major part of the early correspondence of the Society was written in Swedish and the short version, in Swedish *Finska Konstföreningen* gradually became the norm.

The 'legal recognition' of the imperial patronage to the Finnish Society arrived in 1843[24], which makes it possible to observe the early associational life of this society, its earliest statute and purposes. Although the establishment of the Society was officially bestowed in 1843, yet no subsidy from public funds was granted by the senate: "Although His Majesty [Nicholas I] however, finds the initiative good, no subsidy from public funds is granted"[25]. From 1846 onwards, it is possible to identify the Society's formal and legal relationship with political authority, as also attested by the fragmentary correspondence between Armfelt and the Society. From 1846, Tsarevich Alexander Nicholaevich (the future Alexander II) supports the Society in the name of the one-year-old heir to the throne, Alexander Alexandrovich (the future Alexander III)[26]. Here Tsarevich Alexander not only accepted on behalf of the future Alexander III the title of Supreme Patron of the Society but also extended financial support to the Society "for its own purposes", through Count Alexander Armfelt, who acted as an intermediary[27].

The Finnish Society received subsidy of quite different proportions than its Russian counterpart. As noted above, the first documented donation by the Imperial Cabinet was given in 1846, 250 rubles[28]. Subsequently, in 1865 both the Tsarevich Alexander Alexandrovich donated 500 rubles[29] and Emperor Alexander II 300 rubles to the Finnish Art Society[30]. In 1873, the Tsarevich Alexander Alexandrovich donated 1000 rubles[31]. In comparison with the Russian Society, the Cabinet of His Majesty gave to the Russian Society an annual subsidy of 5000 rubles in 1822, and 10 000 rubles in 1826[32].

However, beyond monetary allocations, the archival material refers to other significant forms of cultural patronage, such as purchases of works of 'domestic' (Finnish) art or an entire collection[33]. In one example, the representatives of the Finnish Society respond to Armfelt, and promise to "complete what He [Emperor] has started". The society's early members guarantee that Emperor's "memory will forever be cherished in Finland, even if one day the Society ceased to exist"[34]. Perhaps most significantly, these documents expose the 'first' official 'recognition' of Finland's domestic art, as mediated by Armfelt. In 1854 Armfelt notes in a letter, that His Imperial Highness (Alexander II) felt "exceptional interest in the domestic art [of Finland] — including its encouragement"[35]. In this statement there is considerable similarity with the spirit of the much earlier canonical oath by the Emperor Alexander I, during Porvoo Diet in 1809, in which he famously elevated Finland as nation 'among the nations'[36]. The rhetoric of 'recognition' of Finnish art continued also in the letter by the adolescent Tsarevich Alexander Alexandrovich, who in 1860 expressed his wishes that "this useful institution would flourish and its actions contribute to the development of the arts in Finland"[37].

In some cases, a patronage-like relationship[38] between an artist and the Emperor was also formulated, as in the case of the brothers Ferdinand and Magnus von Wright, ornithologists and painters[39]. In basis of survived documents or diaries (von Wright), also behind these actions there was the perpetual presence of Armfelt; Armfelt seems to have offered (by proxy on behalf of Alexander II) and generously granted painters Magnus and Ferdinand von Wright a unique opportunity to visit some prominent contemporary St Petersburgian private collections (private collections of Fedor Pryanishnikov, Stroganov and Yusupov families)[40]. It may also not be coincidence that the Tsarevich Alexander Nikolaevich purchased in 1851 the entire collection owned by the main 'idealist' and signatory of the first plan of 1834 to establish the Finnish Society, the Baron Otto Wilhelm Klinckowström[41]. Soon after this purchase, Tsarevich Alexander Nikolaevich presented the collection to the Society on behalf of his son, the Supreme Patron, Alexander Alexandrovich[42]. Examination of the early documentation regarding this purchase suggests that Emperor's act was directly connected to the fifth anniversary of the Society. In other words, Emperor bought and donated this collection as a tribute to the Society's existence and as a sign of the intrinsic bond between the Society and its imperial sponsors. Armfelt wrote: "Already five years have passed since the Finnish Art Society, established in the capital of Finland, came into existence under the gracious protection of the High son of His Imperial Highness"[43].

From the cultural strategy point of view, herein should be noted that Armfelt's colleague, Count Sergei Uvarov (1786–1855) became minister nearly precisely at the same period as Count Armfelt, as Deputy Minister for Public Enlightenment in 1832, and working as minister from 1833 to 1849. Indeed, in the Finnish Art Society's correspondence quite many of the core 'Uvarovian' concepts concerning the official nationality[44], the inspiration of *loyalty* in the interstate relations, the manifestation of *paternalism* that characterised the reigns of both Nicholas I and Alexander II, are present. The rhetoric applied in the documents exposes also the concept of patriotism and usefulness to state.

The Chameleon

As has been said, it seems thus natural to what direction Armfelt looked in his intermediator's role. Indeed, loyalty was Armfelt's most defining trait. He had a talent for adapting to the demands of his patron(s), and this character trait seems to have defined Armfelt's agency also in cultural sector. For a cultural actor, it was opportune to have tight connections to the state and to know about major political developments. Central feature in Armfelt's actions and cultural behaviour in fact seems to come from the world of diplomacy. In a very narrow scale, Armfelt seems to have created a network of administrative correspondence, as attested through his letters to the Finnish Art Society. It is possible that these letters were necessary for Armfelt

to coordinate his political activities, to transmit his and his patron's political, intellectual and cultural ideas. For example, most presumably it was Armfelt who introduced his patron to several Finnish artists such as von Wright artist brothers, who are present day considered the foremost national painters.

Similarly to his political and administrative tasks, Armfelt may have used the concept of 'discretion', a term closely associated with patience, consideration, and tact, in the cultural sphere too, emphasising rather careful, quiet and paternalistic policies. Overall, the organizational thought of these societies in different parts of the Empire may actually reflect more the European (including Russian) political culture, and the practices of modern diplomacy than the sole and exclusive sphere of *arts*.

The early life of the *Society* and Armfelt's agency cannot be adequately examined without taking into account another simultaneous initiative by the imperial patron; the collection-project of the Imperial Palace in Finland, presently housed in the Presidential Palace[45]. Out of the twenty-eight paintings of this collection, nineteen were purchased during Alexander II's reign[46]. These purchases followed the same 'pattern' or 'hierarchy' as purchases made to support the Finnish Art Society. Also in this project, Alexander Armfelt was a central figure[47]. At times, in these actions was present also Armfelt's brother, Gustaf Magnus Armfelt who was the Custodian of the Imperial Palace during the central years of the evolution of this collection, in 1850–1856.

In fact, if we bestow the status of 'direct evidence' and primary source, besides archival material, also to these two proto-national collections patronized by the imperial authority, then 'power' on the practice of 'imagining' the nation, besides the Finnish subjects, belonged also to the ruling dynasty and to the Emperor. Emperor purchased paintings by Ferdinand von Wright (purchases made in 1857 and 1860), Werner Holmberg (purchases made in 1858 and 1861), Hjalmar Munsterhjelm (purchase in 1871), Berndt Lindholm (purchase in 1876). Emperor also supported two contemporary women artists (Victoria Åberg, purchases in 1866 and 1871) and Alexandra Frosterus-Såltin (purchase in 1864).

To summarize, besides being a political advisor, Armfelt may have acted as an artistic advisor to the Emperor in the issues of 'local' art. The traces that Armfelt has left in the correspondences expose this changing role, 'chameleon-like' versatility in either political or cultural relationship, depending on his patron (imperial authority) or 'clients' (colleagues, painters) desires. It also seems, that diverse individuals in the scene were involved in multiple modes of cultural and political transfer: the 'ambassador' Armfelt acting as art intermediary, bureaucrats (such as Klinckowström) as collectors or fellow cultural agents, and painters (von Wrights' and other sponsored painters) and court entertainers at times acting even as political agents[48]. Armfelt was highly flexible in this role switching, and he seems to have had various uses of the same network.

Armfelt was highly influential on what 'version' of culture was to be promoted at this period. Similarly, with his correspondence, Armfelt's cultural gestures show that he aimed to establish a balanced cultural communication, instead of separating,

through unifying, inter imperial diversities. In addition, the examples of 'national' art which Nicholas I and Alexander II either donated or purchased directly to the Finnish Art Society or to the Imperial Collection of the Presidential Palace enable us to delineate how Finland became imagined in the eyes of the Emperor during the early imperial period. If not an actual 'arbiter of taste', Armfelt may have presented and suggested vision and imaginary of Finland to the Emperor. In this system of cultural communication, the gifts of art, such as purchases of paintings or collections provided inspiration for political discourse and negotiation, suggesting in their depicted subjects (major political events, battle scenes, landscapes, flora and fauna, 'cultural specificity' of Finland) analogies to contemporary political developments[49]. The pictorial representation of paintings in both organisations (in particular those items that were under Emperor's patronage and at his discretion) can indeed be understood as exempla of visual rhetoric by their both viewers: Emperor Alexander II and Alexander Armfelt. The birth of the Finnish Art Society itself, I suggest, was an act of cementing ties between the Empire and the Grand Duchy of Finland.

For the later development of the Finnish Art Society, herein should be noted, that Scandinavia is often considered as one of the earliest examples where the activity named as 'antiquarianism' in these associations started to be utilized particularly forcefully as a political or administrative medium, for purposes of national identity construction[50]. The period of focus of this study ends up to the death of Alexander II, and the phase of institutionalisation or the 'national' phase of the Finnish Art Society started. Indeed, if we consider these societies in their metaphorical sense as 'museums', they seem to have gone through different stages or metamorphosis in their life-cycle: they were initially in their 'primitive' or 'proto-national' phase, which is the case of this study, the most largely uncharted and omitted phase (the stage of the 'imperial society'). Then they entered to the 'national' phase, that is, the phase of institutionalisation (museumification) as national museums, and subsequently to the 'post-national' stages. The last two stages are naturally their most studied phases.

Indeed, besides initially acting for the mutual benefit of artists and society at large, the societies in the Empire noted in this article may well exemplify the various roles these proto-national institutions held during their lifecycle, initially, they can be considered as an administrative tool, acting in the interests of the state, or perhaps protecting the state (core), and later on as the political setting changed, increasingly promoting and celebrating the 'cult' of a nation (periphery)[51].

Conclusion

If we approach the early material culture in the Grand Duchy of Finland from a more philosophical perspective, and implement a theory that has become classic in interpreting patronage (philosopher, socio-cultural historian Krzysztof Pomian's theory), institutions and culture in Europe, then, instead of thinking or explaining why

this or that detail, object or act would be more relevant than another in a particular context, more necessary it may be to examine how direct or indirect was the 'route' for the wider population and common people to the access of material culture. How direct was the route to the individual (whether Emperor, Pope, King, Duke etc.) who held the access to the 'invisible' knowledge and himself represented the 'invisible' knowledge (material and immaterial culture as a sign of the possession of knowledge and 'powers' of the head of state)?[52] Did the society in question (Russian Empire) at this particular time provide access for the 'commoners' to the 'invisible knowledge', possessed generally by the highest in power?[53] In basis of the primary archival material of this study, the Romanovs' patronage of the early field of art of Finland[54], and the establishment of the Finnish Society of Art Lovers (the Finnish Art Society) seems an archetypal example of realization of Pomian's theory. The whole establishment of the Society can be interpreted as facilitating access to the 'invisible' and to the access of culture. The patronage of local cultural 'specificity' (Finnish) by the imperial authority also quite explicitly elucidates, what type of cultural values and cultural behaviour the society (Russian Empire) encouraged and valued at this particular time. It also shows what the Russian society and its central authorities saw as meaningful, which themes and objects he prized the most and what type of behaviour these actions demanded from the individuals whether they were in the highest place in the social hierarchy or from the 'common' citizens. To put it differently, the foundation of these Societies and related patronage provided opportunities for *expressing individual differences* (through stimulation of artistic work, and creating infrastructures).

Actually, the Finnish subjects' proximity to the one who was most remote from the utilitarian activities in society (Emperor)[55] may not be as distant as it was in many other contemporary European and North-European societies at the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Quite the contrast, the route to the material culture and the connection to the 'invisible knowledge' was greatly facilitated via the foundation of the Societies of Encouragement of Arts in the Empire.

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1 National Library of Finland, Manuscript Collections (henceforth NLF/MC). Col. 37.7. Historier, anekdoter och squaller från hofvet i St Petersburg [undated, unpaginated account book]. Alexander Collan.

2 *Schweitzer R.* Alexander Armfelt: Ministerstatssekreterare i St Petersburg // Källan, Svenska litteratursällskapet informerar. 2010. N 2. S. 42.

3 Armfelt's main lines in politics encompassed the rationalist-realistic policy, and the policy of silence with passive elements and timely concessions; *Klinge M.* Ylioppilaskunnan historia. Ensimmäinen osa 1828–1852. Porvoo, 1967; *Härkönen M.* Alexander Armfeltin ja fennomaanien näkemykset Suomen asemasta keisarikunnassa: rationaalis-realistisen ja suomalais-kansallisen ajattelutavan ristiriita // Historiallinen Aikakauskirja. 1984. N 82. S. 53–56. On Finnish administrative history and its relationship with the Russian Empire more generally, see: *Kalleinen K.* 1) Suomen kenraalikuvernementti. Kenraalikuvernöörin asema ja merkitys Suomen asioiden esittelyssä. Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1994; 2) Isänmaani onni on kuulua Venäjälle. Vapaaherra Lars Gabriel von Haartmanin elämä. Helsinki, 2001; 3) Suuriruhtinaskunnan etuvartiossa. Ministerivaltiosihteeri R. H. Rehbinder Suomen etujen puolustajana Pietarissa 1811–1841. Helsinki, 2017.

4 *Hirn H.* Alexander Armfelt: Början av en statsmannabana 1832–1841. Helsingfors, 1948; *Härkönen M.* Alexander Armfeltin ja fennomaanien näkemykset Suomen asemasta

keisarikunnassa: rationaalis-realistisen ja suomalais-kansallisen ajattelutavan ristiriita. S. 53–56; *Jussila O.* Suomen Suuriruhtinaskunta 1809–1917. Helsinki, 2004; *Schweitzer R.* Slutrapport för projektet 'Alexander Armfelts biografi'. Helsinki, 2011; *Schweitzer R.* Alexander Armfelt: Ministerstatssekreterare i St Petersburg. S. 39–42.

5 Minutes, appendixes, acts and correspondence of the Finnish National Gallery, Archive of the Finnish Art Society, Archive Collections (henceforth FNG/FAS/AC). This Society is the precursor to the present day National Gallery.

6 Matti Klinge has referred to the unconditional admiration between Alexander II and his Finnish subjects, calling it *faiblesse*. Here manifestations of this special liaison are seen in the form of his patronage of the early Finnish cultural infrastructures; *Klinge M.* 1) Ylioppilaskunnan historia. Ensimmäinen osa 1828–1852; 2) Keisarin Suomi. Helsinki, 1997. S. 249, 286.

7 *Tikkanen J.* Finska Konstföreningen, 1846–1896. Helsingfors, 1896. S. 7.

8 *Pettersson S.* 1) National Museums in Finland // P. Aronsson, G. Elgenius (eds.) Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010. Conference Proceedings from European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen. Linköping, 2011. S. 262; 2) Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin. Fredrik Cygnaeus, Carl Gustaf Estlander ja taidekokoelman roolit. Helsinki, 2008. S. 56, 298.

9 *Sopo E.* A forgotten legacy: The Romanov patronage of Finland's early art collections // The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms. 2016. N 21:3. S. 310–323.

10 Even if the artistic life of St Petersburg was determined and dominated by the 'will' of the Imperial Academy of Arts until the mid-nineteenth century, the parallel existence of this non-governmental organization, founded by patriots from the gentry, the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, had a significant impact on the shaping of the field of arts in Russia. *Северухин Д. Я., Лейкинд О.* Золотой век художественных объединений в России и СССР (1820–1932). СПб., 1992; *Северухин Д. Я.* История развития петербургского художественного рынка XVIII — первых двух десятилетий XX в. Дис. ... канд. ист. наук. СПб., 2005. С. 1–100; *Собко Н. П.* Краткий исторический очерк Общества поощрения художеств 1820–1890. СПб., 1890.

11 National Library of the Russian Federation. Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire. 1833. S. 238–243.

12 Armfelt had ministerial status from this moment, and possibility to acquaint himself with work of different Russian ministers: *Jussila O.* 1) Finland and the Russian Duma // Journal of Baltic Studies. 1988. N 19:3. P. 241–248. 2) Suomen Suuriruhtinaskunta 1809–1917. S. 118.

13 FNG/FAS/AC. The First plan of establishment of the Finnish Art Society, 1834.

14 FNG/FAS/AC. The Comité de la société d'encouragement des beaux arts dans la Royame de Pologne.

15 On the equivalent Society in the Kingdom of Poland, see *Świtek G.* Historia Gmachu Zachęty 1860–1945 // Zachęta 1860–2000. Warsaw, 2003; *Wiercińska J.* Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych. Początki organizacji // Zachęta 1860–2000. Warsaw: Zachęta Nar. Galeria Sztuki, 2003.

16 "Hereby, if the public is awakened, and this proposal / suggestion, already including several benevolent individuals, will gain success, a Comité shall soon be formed for a closer determination of the Society's activities, which essentially will be in support of domestic artistic talents". Helsinki, on 18 June 1834 // FNG/FAS/AC.

17 *Pettersson S.* Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin. Fredrik Cygnaeus, Carl Gustaf Estlander ja taidekokoelman roolit.

18 *Tikkanen J.* Finska Konstföreningen, 1846–1896. S. 7–10.

19 FNG/FAS/AC. Imperial Academy of Arts to the Finnish Society of Art Lovers, 19 August 1876.

20 FNG/FAS/AC. Imperial Academy of Arts to the Finnish Society of Fine Art Lovers, 14 June 1876.

21 Nikolai Zinoviev, on behalf of Grand Duke Alexandr Alexandrovich, to Count Fedor Fedorovich Berg, Governor General of Finland, 24 September 1860 // FNG/FAS/AC.

[22] Letter from the Comité de la société d'encouragement des beaux arts dans la Royame de Pologne, 25 May / 6 June 1874, Vice President of the Society, Stanislaus Kossakovsky // FNG/FAS/AC.
[23] The Societies organized lotteries to fund their activities. The Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Poland to the Finnish Art Society, 21 May / 2 June 1873, Count and Vice President of the Society, Stanislaus Kossakovsky // FNG/FAS/AC.
[24] The statute was written and sent to the senate's rectification on 24 February 1843 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[25] Response letter from the senate, 23 May 1843 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[26] Memorial to H.I.M. the Grand Duke, Tsarevich and the Heir to the Throne. Undated, February 1846 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[27] Memorial, signed by Alexander Armfelt. A payment of 250 silver rubles in 50 shares for the first year to "support the Society's own purposes". St Petersburg, 10/22 April 1846 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[28] Ibid.
[29] 500 silver rubles by the Tsarevich Alexander Alexandrovich, 1 December 1865, signed by Alexander Armfelt // FNG/FAS/AC.
[30] 300 silver rubles by the Emperor Alexander II, 4 December 1865, signed by Alexander Armfelt // FNG/FAS/AC.
[31] 1000 silver rubles by the Tsarevich Alexander Alexandrovich, 12/24 April 1873 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[32] *Северухин Д. Я.* История развития петербургского художественного рынка... С. 1–100.
[33] Memorial, signed by Alexander Armfelt. 26 May / 7 June 1851 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[34] Helsinki, on 17/29 April 1846 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[35] Helsinki, on 4/16 March 1854, Alexander Armfelt // FNG/FAS/AC.
[36] *Jussila O.* Suomen Suuriruhtinaskunta 1809–1917.
[37] 24 September 1860 // FNG/FAS/AC.
[38] *Relas J.* Keisarillinen Taidekokoelma Suomessa. Keuruu: Otava, 2009. S. 24–78; *Sopo E.* A forgotten legacy: the Romanov patronage of Finland's early art collections. P. 310–323.
[39] *Von Wright M.* 1) Dagbok 1850–1862 / Eds. A. Leikola, J. Lokki, T. Stjernberg, J. Ulfvens. Helsinki, 2001. S. 12–15, 73, 143–144; 2) Dagbok 1841–1849 / Eds. A. Leikola, J. Lokki, T. Stjernberg, J. Ulfvens. Helsinki, 1999. S. 74; *Sopo E.* Magnus von Wrightin sosiaalisista verkostoista 1840–1860-luvuilla. Vuorovaikutuksen sisällön tarkastelua // Historian Tietosanomat Ennen ja Nyt. 2015. N 3.
[40] *Sopo E.* A forgotten legacy: the Romanov patronage of Finland's early art collections. P. 310–323; Ferdinand von Wright was unable to participate to the journey between 18 January and 8 February 1850; *Von Wright M.* Dagbok 1850–1862 / Eds. A. Leikola, J. Lokki, T. Stjernberg, J. Ulfvens. S. 12.
[41] Klinckowström was a member of the Senate, and the first Palace Custodian of the Imperial Palace in Helsinki from 1837 to 1850.
[42] Memorial, May 26 / June 7, 1851, signed by Alexander Armfelt // FNG/FAS/AC. I have considered this purchase and donation of the collection Gallery to the Society as the nucleus or a symbolic beginning of amassing the institution's collections in *Sopo E.* A forgotten legacy: the Romanov patronage of Finland's early art collections. S. 310–323.
[43] Memorial, May 26 / June 7, 1851, signed by Alexander Armfelt // FNG/FAS/AC44; *Miller A.* The Romanov Empire and Nationalism: Essays in the Methodology of Historical Research. New York, 2008.
[45] *Relas J.* Keisarillinen Taidekokoelma Suomessa.
[46] *Relas J.* Valta, Tyyli ja Tila. Keisarien ja Presidenttien Residenssi Helsingissä 1837–1940. Helsinki, 2013. S. 87.
[47] *Relas J.* Keisarillinen Taidekokoelma Suomessa. S. 13.
[48] *Keblusek M., Noldus B. V.* Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe. Leiden, 2011. S. 1–11.
[49] Ibid.

[50] *MacGregor A.* Curiosity and Enlightenment. Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. P. 253–254, 281–286; *Impey O., MacGregor A.* The Origins of Museums. The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe. Oxford, 1985.

[51] *Sopo E.* The periodization and typology of the history of collecting as a methodological approach to collecting in the Russian Empire // Journal of the History of Collections. 2016b. N 29:1. S. 33–43.

[52] According to Krzysztof Pomian the question how the society is organized, the degree of its development, both technological and intellectual, is what defines the emergence of and access to the material culture in a specific area; *Pomian K.* Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500–1800. Cambridge, 1990a. S. 32–34; *Pomian K.* L'Europe et ses nations. Paris, 1990.

[53] This is the case in all highly hierarchical societies. Most European societies of the nineteenth century are examples of this phenomenon.

[54] *Sopo E.* The periodization and typology of the history of collecting as a methodological approach to collecting in the Russian Empire. P. 33–43; *Sopo E.* A forgotten legacy: the Romanov patronage of Finland's early art collections. P. 310–323.

[55] Emperor can (collecting-philosophically) be considered the so-called 'semiophore-man', who has dual appearance; he is surrounded by 'signifying' objects (semiophores or signifiers), which symbolically represent his possession of the 'invisible knowledge'. On the other hand, Emperor himself represents the 'invisibility', and the route to the invisible world, through signifiers amassed and displayed around him; *Pomian K.* Collectors and Curiosities: Paris; Venice 1500–1800. S. 32–34.

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Elina Sopo. The Ambassador and Arbiter of Taste.
Minister State Secretary, Count Alexander Armfelt as intermediary cultural agent

This article focuses on some previously unconsidered dimensions of one of the most influential diplomats of the Finnish history, minister and count Alexander Armfelt (1794–1876), not only as a mediator of political and intellectual, but also of cultural ideas. Armfelt, who had tight connections to the state and who knew about major political developments, had an optimal belvedere position to the nineteenth century sphere of culture. Bringing the concept of 'intimacy' from the world of politics to the setting of culture, this article shows how influential role Armfelt possessed in presenting and 'imagining' Finland to the eyes of the Emperor Alexander II, acting, besides as a political advisor, also as an 'arbiter of taste' in the issues of Finnish culture. In terms of institutional history, the decade-long process of the birth of the Finnish Art Society (1846) can be understood as a result of Armfelt's intermediary talents, and as an act of cementing ties between the Empire and the Grand Duchy of Finland. Differing from the earlier models of interpretation, this article indicates the Finnish Society's possible earlier prototype and model as the [Imperial] Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts (1820). Overall, these imperial societies might require a deeper evaluation of their organizational status, as they may reflect more the European (including Russian) political culture, and the practices of modern diplomacy than the sole and exclusive sphere of arts.

Key words: Russia, Europe, cultural relations, politics, government, diplomats, cultural agents, foreign agents, history.

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