

The French language and French cultural model in the Russian nobility: a case study on the Vorontsovs

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Attached to the AHRC-funded multidisciplinary 'French in Russia' research project
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Why?

Several academics, mainly from Russia and the US, have conducted research on Dashkova and the rest of the Vorontsov family, but the influence of French language and culture does not appear to have ever been a focus. This case study is designed to stand alone as my PhD project but should also complement the findings of a wider project at Bristol University.

Emerging research questions

French v. other languages and cultures

- What role did other languages play in the Vorontsovs' lives? How did Dashkova's Russian, German, English and Italian compare with her French?
- What influence did Dashkova and her brothers' foreign travel and acquaintances have on their attitude towards languages and culture?
- To what extent did the family's anglophilia influence its gallophobia, or vice versa?
- Why did Aleksandr and Semion continue to use French when serving as ambassadors in England?



Dashkova on a 1996 Russian stamp as part of a series commemorating "famous women"

Linguistic identity

- Did the Vorontsovs consciously associate the French language with the French people and culture?
- What was the impact of Dashkova's official role as head of two Russian Academies on her francophonie? Was there a difference between her private and public use of language?

French over the generations

- How did Dashkova's command and use of various languages compare with that of her brothers Aleksandr and Semion, and her sister Elizaveta?
- How did the family's attitude towards, and use of, French change over time?

The French cultural model

- How did Dashkova's interest in music compare with that of her younger female relatives Kurakina & Siniavina?
- Were these women influenced by French, Italian or wider European culture in their musical activities?
- How does their use of language in songs they composed and performed compare?

Emerging hypotheses

- Dashkova's public profile in Russia and abroad, in particular her official position as Head of the Russian Language Academy, meant she was more conscious of linguistic identity and of the need to use her native language than other Russian francophone noblemen and women.
- The rest of Dashkova's family, including her brothers who served as foreign ambassadors, also seem to have been more unconscious of language than Dashkova, mostly making language choices based on convenience or etiquette.
- It seems that Dashkova was more inventive in her use of language in songs than her female relatives, probably thanks to her command of several languages but perhaps also because she had not been as influenced by French or Italian music teachers in childhood and so was more open-minded.



Street in St. John's Wood where Semion lived, named in his honour after his death



2002 CD recording of songs in French, Russian & Italian, including compositions by Kurakina and Siniavina

Members of the Vorontsov/Dashkov family likely to feature in research

Generation born before 1750

- Princess Ekaterina Dashkova, née Vorontsova (1743-1810), confidante of Catherine II, head of Russian Academies of Science and Language
- Dashkova's brothers, Counts Aleksandr (1741-1805) and Semion (1744-1832), Ambassadors in London, francophone but anglophile
- E.A. Vorontsova, née Siniavina (?-1784), wife of Semion, musician

Generation born after 1760

- Dashkova's son Pavel (1763-1807), graduate of Edinburgh University
- N.A. Kurakina (1768-1831), Dashkova's relation by Panin line, musician
- Semion's son Mikhail (1782-1856), served in Napoleonic Wars

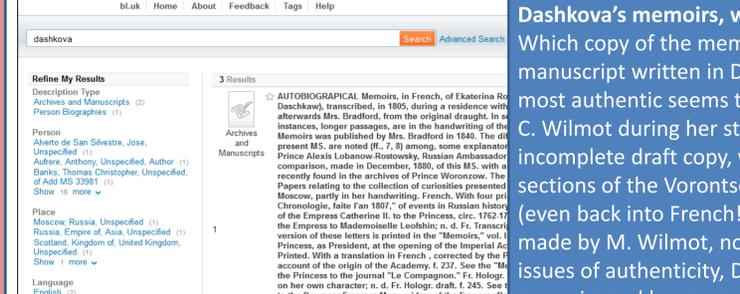
Generation born in early-mid 19th century

- Sofiia Shuvalova, née Vorontsova (1825-1879), Mikhail's daughter
- Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov (1837-1916), Governor of Caucasus



Left to right:
Dashkova; Semion;
Siniavina; Mikhail;
and Illarion.

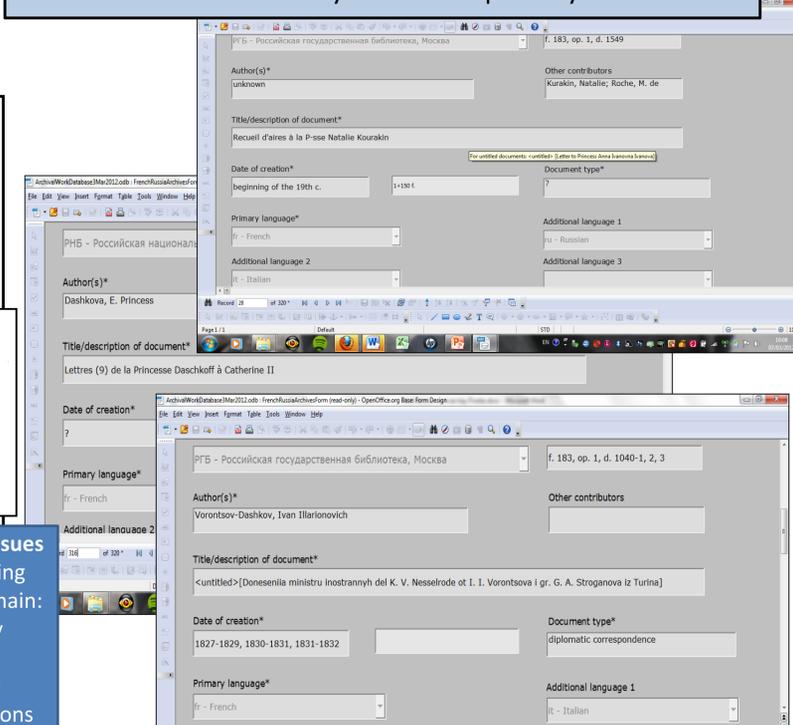
Full Record	Select	Title	Year	Copies / Click link for...
1		Mémoires de la princesse Daschkoff, dame d'honneur de Catherine II, Impératrice de toutes les Russies.	1859	SSEES (copies)
2		The memoirs of Princess Dashkov / translated and edited by Kyril Fitzlyon.	1958	SSEES (copies)
3		The memoirs of Princess Dashkova / translated and edited by Kyril Fitzlyon; introduction by Jehanne M Gheith; afterword by A. Woronzoff-Dashkoff.	1995	SSEES (copies)
4		Memoirs of the Princess Daschkaw: lady of honour to Catherine II, Empress of all the Russias / Written by herself, comprising letters of the Empress and other correspondence. Edited from the originals by Mrs. W. Bradford.	1840	SSEES (copies)
5		Vospominaniia kniagini E.R. Dashkovoï: pisaniiaia u samoi. - 3-e izd.	1876	SSEES (copies)
6		Zapiski kniagini: vospominaniia, memuary / Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova.	2003	SSEES (copies)



Dashkova's memoirs, written in French in 1804-5: reliability issues
Which copy of the memoirs is most reliable? There is no surviving manuscript written in Dashkova's hand. Two French copies remain: most authentic seems to be one in the British Library, made by C. Wilmot during her stay with Dashkova; and a seemingly incomplete draft copy, which was published in 1881 with other sections of the Vorontsov archives. Many editions and translations (even back into French!) derive from the English-language version made by M. Wilmot, not published until 1840. Aside from these issues of authenticity, Dashkova had several agendas in writing her memoirs and her memory often seems unreliable.

Primary sources

- Correspondence by Vorontsov family between one another, with other nobles, rulers (especially Catherine II), the French (e.g., Voltaire, Diderot), other foreigners (e.g., Irish Wilmot sisters, Mrs Hamilton, Ambassadors), tutors, musicians (e.g. Paisiello, Sarti, any French?).
- Memoirs and diaries (published and unpublished) of family members, other nobles/monarchy, foreign acquaintances, servants, e.g., Dashkova, Wilmots, Voltaire, Diderot, Golitsyns, Iusupovs, Catherine II.
- Dashkova's essays, speeches and reports as Head of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Russian Academy.
- Other official reports and speeches by the Vorontsovs.
- Musical notebooks by Dashkova, Kurakina and Siniavina.
- Reports in contemporary press, e.g., *Kamer-fur'erskii zhurnal* 1776, local press where Vorontsovs were staying.
- Location of sources: some in published Vorontsov archives, original manuscripts in Russia (RGB, RGIA, RNB, RGADA, GARF), Dublin (Dashkova's Irish friends) and Paris. SSEES and British Library hold some primary sources.



Above: pages from the project database in which Vladislav Rjéoutski recorded findings from his archival visit to Russia in spring 2012. I will follow up relevant sources during my trip to Russia in the summer.