From Makiling to Rosales

Philippine Literary Studies in Russia

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Abstract

Systematic Philippine philological studies in then Soviet Russia started in the mid-twentieth century, almost two decades before the establishment of the Philippines-USSR diplomatic relations. Attempts have been recently made to overview the impact of the Russian scholars in the Philippine historical and linguistic studies (see Makarenko 2002, Zabolotnaya 2006, Stanyukovich 2011). However, the scope of the Philippine literary studies undertaken by the pioneering Russian Philippinists and their alumni have not yet received enough attention. The present paper aims to provide an overview of Philippine literary studies in Russia during the last fifty years, studies that are concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Keywords

Philippine studies in Russia, Philippine literary studies, Russian oriental studies, translation of Philippine literature

First Steps to Philippine Literary Studies in Russia

The first data on the Philippines found in Russian sources trace back to the seventeenth century (Braginsky and Diakonova 74). Later on, in 1787, wordlists from several regional Philippine languages were included in the "comparative dictionaries of all the languages and dialects" (Pallas, *Linguarum totius*), compiled by a world-famous Prussian natural scientist, academician Peter Simon Pallas who served Empress of Russia Catherine the Great (Makarenko, "Filippinskaya Literatura" 74). However, until the middle of the twentieth century, Philippine philological studies in then Soviet Russia were yet to be undertaken fully. Since then the two centers for Philippine studies in Russia have been Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Dr. Ludmila Mervart (1888–1965), a leading orientalist from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in 1924 became the Head of the Indonesian Sector in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) of the Academy of Sciences. She is considered the first scholar in the USSR to study professionally Austronesian linguistics including the Tagalog language. Due to political repression in Leningrad she moved to Moscow, where she organized a circle of Tagalog linguistic scholars at her home (Stanyukovich, "Philippine Studies in Russia..." 45-46). Later, Philippine linguistics would become the major focus of study by one of the pioneering Moscow Philippinists, **Dr. Lina Shkarban** (1937-2018), a future Principal Research Associate at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Science.

In Moscow in 1937 the would-be Soviet academician and the "founding father" of Philippine History studies in Russia **Dr. Alexander Guber** (1902–1971) published a biography of the Philippine National hero Dr. Jose Rizal (Guber and Rykovskaya 1937). In 1961, another Soviet historian, Georgy Levinson, edited a collection of Rizal's articles translated into Russian, and in 1963 Guber wrote an article on Jose Rizal's creative writing as an introduction to the Russian translation of his masterpiece novel *Noli Me Tangere*. But even such highly enlightened pioneers as Guber or Levinson could not do much within the conditions of the Iron Curtain: they could not visit the Philippines, study Philippine languages in person, nor grasp the knowledge of Philippine literature and culture from the country itself. Those books in

Spanish or English accessible to them were not a big help either in understanding Filipino life or profound studies of Philippine literature.

Two pillars of evolving Philippine literary studies in Russia— Dr. Vladimir Makarenko and DSc Igor Podberezsky-entered the world of Philology later, in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. However, they also had to start studying the Philippines through books. Though "granted" independence from the USA in 1946, the Philippines still stayed in the wake of American politics and did not enter diplomatic relations with the USSR for another thirty years (Sumsky 140). So it was good luck when in 1956 a Philippine political emigrant Teodoro Lansang (under the name of Manuel Cruz) arrived in Moscow and became the teacher for the first ever group of Russian students learning Tagalog at the Moscow Institute of International Relations, or MGIMO (Zabolotnaya 3). Among his students were the pioneering Russian Philippinist Igor Podberezsky as well as his future co-author of the first Tagalog-Russian (1959) and Russian-Tagalog (1965) dictionaries and a talented translator of Philippine literature, Sergey P. Ignashev. The editor of those first dictionaries was Dr. Vladimir Makarenko.

Russian Pioneers of Philippine Philology

Dr. Vladimir A. Makarenko (1933–2008) is considered one of the founding fathers of Philippine Philology studies in Russia, and a leading specialist in Tagalog linguistics and Philippine literature. A graduate from the Economy Department of Lomonosov Moscow State University, from 1957 until 1964, he had been working as an editor of the State Publishing of Foreign and National Dictionaries where he had taken interest in Oriental studies. Makarenko taught himself Tamil and then Tagalog and defended his thesis on Tagalog Morphology in 1965 at the Institute of Oriental Languages (now the Institute of Asian and African Studies, or IAAS), Lomonosov Moscow State University (Pogadaev 84-85). Makarenko started to teach Tagalog and Philippine linguistics at the Institute of Oriental Languages in 1959. He had also prepared and taught a course on the History of Philippine Literature as an integral part of the Philippine studies curriculum at the MSU. Sadly, Philippine studies were discontinued at the MSU for more than a decade



Fig. 1. Dr. Vladimir Makarenko, a pioneer of the Philippine Linguistics and Literary Studies in Moscow (MSU). en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir Makarenko.

(1985-1997), during which period Makarenko had to shift to the Institute of Scientific Information in Social Sciences of the Academy of Sciences. He resumed teaching Tagalog, Philippine Literature and Linguistics at the IAAS of MSU in 1997 (until his untimely death in 2008), in cooperation with his former graduate Elena Frolova and later with their alumnus Ekaterina Baklanova. Makarenko is the author of more than sixty works in linguistics (in Russian, English, and Tagalog), more than 100 scientific reviews, research and popular science articles, including those for different encyclopedia. He enjoyed a friendship with the renowned Philippine linguist Bro. Andrew Gonzalez and with the writer and literary critic E. San Juan, Jr., among others, and had been a life member of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines.

A pioneering Russian researcher on Philippine literature as well, Makarenko became an editor and translator of twelve collections of Philippine prose and poetry in Russian (see below a list of the Philippine writers included in the Russian collections). In 1971, in cooperation with Manuel Cruz's alumnus Sergey Ignashev and a talented Russian poet Alexander Revich, he published in Russian a collection (Rice Grains) of translated poems by National Artist in Literature Amado V. Hernandez, dubbed as one of the biggest figures in Philippine literature of the American colonial period (Lumbera and Lumbera 183). In 1976 with his co-author Ignashev, he translated for Soviet readers Amado Hernandez's novel Mga Ibong Mandaragit (Birds of Prey). Dr. Makarenko's series of articles on Philippine Literature of different periods in the eight-volume Russian edition, The History of World Literature (Makarenko 1983-1994), has provided the groundwork for the following Philippine researches in Russia. His papers and lectures are based on the profound works by such Philippine experts in literature as C. Panganiban, L. Casper, T. Castillo y Tuazon, V. Almario, B. Lumbera, E. San Juan Jr., F. Sionil Jose, among others. As the author of academic courses and various articles on Philippine literature, along with the translations of Philippine poetry and fiction, Dr. Vladimir Makarenko has laid the foundation for Philippine literary studies in Russia.

Another pillar of the pioneering Philippine studies was **Igor V. Podberezsky** (1937-2014), a famous scholar and translator, who became the pioneer in the field of Philippine literature and culture studies in Russia. A talented MGIMO student of Tagalog in the aforementioned Manuel Cruz group in the 1950s, Podberezsky, while still an undergraduate, succeeded M. Cruz as a teacher of Tagalog at MGIMO as early as the 1960s. He defended his PhD thesis on Philippine Linguistics in 1967, and in 1976 published the first comprehensive textbook of Tagalog in Russian for Soviet universities.

Dr. Podberezsky held leading positions at the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In the early 1960s, official Manila-Moscow ties began to develop (resulting in the establishment of Philippines-USSR diplomatic relations in 1976), and the countries exchanged several cultural delegations. Thus in 1967 Philippine National Artist in Literature



Fig. 2. Dr. Igor Podberezsky (center), a pioneer of the Philippine Literary Studies in Moscow (MGIMO), awarded the Presidential Medal by former Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. interaffairs.ru/i/pdf_asean/16.pdf.

Francisco Sionil Jose visited Moscow and, as Victor Sumsky writes, their first meeting there with Podberezsky was "the start of half a lifetime of friendship" (Sumsky 141). It turned out to be very fruitful for Philippine literary studies in the USSR: many short stories by Sionil Jose, along with three of his five novels from the so-called "Rosales saga" were published in Russia in Podberezsky's translation (*Pretenders* in 1971, *Tree* and *My Brother*, *My Executioner* in 1983), followed by their publication in Latvian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian. In 1974, Podberezsky was also a co-translator of the novel *A Season of Grace* by another National Artist, N.V.M. Gonzales. The famous novels by another master of Philippine English fiction, Nick Joaquin, whom Podberezsky rated as a "Nobel-caliber writer" (Sumsky 144), were translated by the Russian scholar in 1988. Podberezsky's postdoctoral research has been dedicated to the literature of the Philippines, with his postdoc thesis on the

evolution of the creative writing by the Philippine National Hero, Dr. Jose Rizal (Podberezsky 1982, in Russian), defended in 1982. In his comprehensive monograph, Podberezsky presents his survey on the factors and various directions of Jose Rizal's evolution as an outstanding Philippine writer who has paved the way for realism in Philippine literature. As Podberezsky stresses, Rizal is the first cultural figure to articulate the incompatibility of the historical destinies of Spain and the Philippines. Chapter 1 of the monograph, "The Pre-Rizal Philippines and Philippine Literature," is also the first ever Russian scientific review of Philippine literature since pre-Hispanic times until the mid-19th century. The author shows that by the 16th century, Philippine folklore had developed forms of labor and ritual songs, folktales, riddles, proverbs, as well as epic and lyrical epic; the demythologization process and social motives began to evolve. Analyzing the strong influence of the Spanish folk epic on Philippine epic and lore, Podberezsky points out that those subjects and motives which contradicted Philippine ethical views were restricted from being borrowed (e.g. the motive of killing a relative). Philippine literature in the early 19th century, though much influenced by Spanish and Catholic literature, featured "the Philippine essence" in its characters and plot ornamentation. As Podberezsky stresses, Jose Rizal was first to introduce the true Philippine reality as a literary object into Philippine literature. In the second chapter of the monograph, the formation of Rizal's poetry is analyzed. The author points out that though Hispanized, Rizal's aesthetics also reflect the influence of the Philippine folktales. Podberezsky describes Rizal's poetic style as "baroque," flamboyant, which he attributes to one of the principles of Philippine aesthetics. The third chapter of Podberezsky's monograph is dedicated to Jose Rizal's becoming a European scale scientist as well as the best Philippine poet, a leading public and Propaganda Movement figure. Analyzing Rizal's novel Noli Me Tangere, Podberezsky notices Voltaire's influence on the novel in terms of its satire and sarcasm towards Catholic orders and their local henchmen as an obstacle to the development of the Philippines, as well as Rizal's idea of the invincibility of the progress. The researcher also points out to another Philippine aesthetic principle in Rizal's creative writing—"the fullness of literary space"

where an art pause or a lack of action is regarded as a flaw and emptiness. In spite of the traditional didacticism of the novel and uniformity of its characters, Podberezsky attributes the Noli to critical realism. Indeed, Rizal is the first to introduce real contemporary Philippine space and time in the native literature; he showed social evil, as well as the evolving national consciousness of the Filipinos. In the last two chapters of the monograph, Podberezsky analyzes the evolution of Rizal's creative writing since the late 1880s due to his disillusionment in Spanish colonial rule and possibility of the reforms. He describes J. Rizal's El Filibusterismo as a truly realistic novel which, regardless of some flaws in the plot, boasts of more multifaceted characters, psychologism and realistic details. Podberezsky calls the Noli "a diagnosis novel" and the Fili "a prognosis novel" in terms of Philippine social history. Podberezsky's postdoc monograph (1982) presents an in-depth analysis of the evolution of Jose Rizal's creative writing in the context of his biography and socio-political activity.

As the author of more than a hundred papers on Philippine culture and literature and as the editor or translator of eleven books of Philippine fiction, Podberezsky has laid a solid foundation for Philippine studies in Russia. In June 2009, during the former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's visit to Moscow, this author and others were invited to the ceremony of awarding Igor Podberezsky with the Presidential Medal of Merit for his pioneering studies of Philippine culture.

The other center of Philippine studies in Russia is the Oriental Faculty of the St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) State University (SPbU) and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of the Academy of Science (MAE RAS). The founding father of Philippine studies in SPbU was Gennadiy Ye. Rachkov (1929-2016)—a prominent scholar in Korean and Philippine philology and linguistics. In 1967 he became the founder and the Head of the Tagalog Department of Philology at the Oriental Faculty of then Leningrad State University. An outstanding specialist in Tagalog linguistics, he has published numerous papers, and a fundamental PhD monograph on the morphology of contemporary Tagalog in 1981, as well as the first and only



Fig. 3. Dr. Gennadiy Rachkov, the pioneer of the Philippine Linguistics in Saint Petersburg (SPbGU). www. orientalstudies.ru/rus/index.php?option=com_ personalities&Itemid=74&person=183

Big Russian-Tagalog and Tagalog-Russian Dictionaries (Rachkov 2012). He has also contributed to the translation of some Philippine short stories. According to one of the first of Dr. Rachkov's alumnus, the leading Russian specialist in Philippine ethnography and folklore Dr. Maria V. Stanyukovich, G. Rachkov is "the teacher of all the present-day specialists on the Philippines in St. Petersburg." (Stanyukovich, "Pilipinas Muna!" 48). From 1967 to 2011, Dr. Rachkov was the only staff teacher of the Tagalog Department and was in charge of lectures both on Philippine linguistics and on the folklore, literature, and history of the Archipelago One of the first graduates of the then Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, Rostislav L. Rybkin (1934–2010) was a famous Russian translator and literary editor. He has translated folklore and fiction from more than fifteen languages including Tagalog and Indonesian. Among his publications on Philippine literature are collections of Philippine short stories (e.g. Rybkin 1970) and folktales. Thus,

Rybkin's first comprehensive Russian anthology Folktales and Myths of the Peoples of the Philippines (1975) is a collection of the narrative folklore pieces of nineteen Philippine peoples in the three main parts of the archipelago. The anthology has become a significant contribution in Russian folklore studies. The introduction to Rybkin's anthology, as well as to other translations of Philippine literature, is written by DSc Boris B. Parnickel (1934-2004), a MGIMO University graduate and one of the pioneering Russian specialists in Malay literature and the history of the Nusantara literatures (Ogloblin 5). One of his fundamental works is The Introduction to the Literary History of Nusantara, IX-XIX cent., in Russian (Parnickel 1980). B. Parnickel is the founder of the Russian scientific society "Nusantara" in 1990, which since then, has been uniting the Russian scholars studying the vast region populated by Austronesians (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Phili ppines, Timor Leste, Madagascar, Oceania), including countries with some Austronesian minorities such as Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan.¹

One of the current leading Russian specialists on Philippine modern history, Director of the ASEAN Center of MGIMO University DSc Victor V. Sumsky called the period between the early 1970s and the late 1980s "a true Golden Age for Philippines studies in Soviet Russia" (Sumsky 145). Indeed, while the country was commonly believed to be plunged in "stagnation," Soviet research works on the Philippines—various books by pioneering Philippinists—came out in quick succession. The majority of the Philippine literature translations by different Russian philologists was published during that period. According to P. Kisseleva's comprehensive Russian-English bibliography of the Philippine literary translations into Russian (Kisseleva 110-119), in the years 1974-1996 Soviet and Russian readers were presented with 6 books of Philippine poems by more than 100 poets (translations from Tagalog, Spanish, and English); eleven collections of Philippine short stories by almost fifty fictionists, three books of folktales and myths, and fifteen novels by various Philippine writers—from B. Appel, C. Carunungan, C. Poncela, and W. Pomeroy to such masters of Philippine prose as Jose Rizal, Amado Hernandez, N.V.M. Gonzales, F. Sionil Jose, and Nick Joaquin,

whose large literary heritage including poetry, short stories, and essays have also been translated into Russian.

It was in the 1990s that a stagnation in the Russian humanities science came, with lack of funds assigned for researches and publications. The new edition in 2001 of Igor Podberezsky's translation of *Cave and Shadows* by Nick Joaquin was among the last Philippine literary works published in Russian so far. Unfortunately, his brilliant translations of two more of the five novels that make up Sionil Jose's "Rosales Saga" are still awaiting a publication sponsorship. However, the Moscow and St. Petersburg academic schools keep the Philippine studies going and strive to raise a new generation of Philippinists in Russia.

The Present State of Philippine Literary Studies in Russia

Dr. V. Makarenko's alumni Dr. Elena Frolova and Dr. Ekaterina Baklanova now continue to teach and conduct research studies on Tagalog (Filipino), Philippine literature, and linguistics at the IAAS of Moscow State University. An IAAS graduate Nikolay V. Sadokov has defended a PhD Thesis in Russian on "The Main Stages of Formation and Development of the Philippine Literature" in 2005. The work presents a general overview of Philippine literature from Pre-Hispanic times until the late 1980s, and appears to be largely compilative as it uses extensively the papers and unpublished lectures by V. Makarenko, I. Podberezsky, B. Parnickel, M. Stanyukovich and other Russian scholars, as well as Philippine literary researches by L. Casper, T. Castillo y Tuazon, B. Lumbera, and L. Santos, among others. During the last decade, two more graduates of the Philippine Department of IAAS MSU have defended their MA thesis (in Russian) on Philippine literature in English, covering the creative writing by two National Artists of the Philippines: Alyona Greshnova studied the novels of Francisco Sionil Jose while the above mentioned Polina Kisseleva did her research on the fiction of Nicomedes Joaquin (the novels of both Philippine masters were translated into Russian by Podberezsky). Their MA research studies had been supervised by another pioneering Philippinist, the leading specialist in Philippine history and Director of the ASEAN Center of MGIMO, DSc



Fig. 4. Russian translations of the novels by F. Sionil Jose, N. Joaquin, N.V.M. Gonzalez, and B. Appel. From the author's personal collection.

Victor V. Sumsky. Some attempts have been made to fill the gap in the Russian studies of contemporary Philippine literature of the 1980s-2010s (e.g. Baklanova 2015). Two BA Theses in Philippine Literature have been done on the evolution of the Tagalog short story in the twentieth century and on the creative writing of Genoveva Edroza Matute, accompanied by full Russian translations of several Tagalog short stories. Presently, the Philippine Literature course at the IAAS of MSU includes both lectures and reading assignments, and also literary translation of Filipino fiction. Thus, a number of short stories by such prominent Filipino writers as G. Edroza Matute, S. Guinigundo, M. Pineda, E. Abueg, Ed. Reyes, R. Sicat, and J. Cruz Reyes have been translated into Russian; these pieces still wait in the wings to find a publisher. An attempt to make subtitles for a Philippine play has also been made (*Ang Paglilitis* 2019). Various Filipino movies based on the

fiction by Luwalhati Bautista, Edgardo Reyes, Ricardo Lee, as well as films by Lino Brocka, Mario O'Hara, Lav Diaz are demonstrated to the students of IAAS MSU within the frames of the Philippine Literature course.²

In St. Petersburg, Dr. Maria V. Stanyukovich holds high the banner of Russian Philippine studies. She has been teaching in the Department of Tagalog Philology of St. Petersburg University for more than thirty years. She is also the Chair of the Department of Australia, Oceania and Indonesia at Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Science. Dr. Stanyukovich specializes in the Philippine epic and ritual, particularly of the Ifugao people, as well as Philippine oral literature, anthropology, ethnolinguistics, and ethnobotany. She is the only Russian expert on the Ifugao hudhud epics; she also leads the work on the electronic corpus of Philippine folklore ritual texts (see Stanyukovich 2000; 2013). Among Stanyukovich's graduates are Olga Koltyga, who worked as a Professor of Philippine Literature and is presently doing her PhD research on Francisco Balagtas' creative writing, as well as other Philippine poetry of the Spanish colonial period (e.g. Koltyga 2017), and Sergey Yatsenko who has made his MA Thesis on the Ilocano epic Biag Ni Lam-Ang (Life of Lam-Ang). Dr. Stanyukovich has compiled and edited the first-ever multifaceted representation of Philippine studies in Russia, "Pilipinas Muna! The Philippines is a Priority!" as proceedings to the International Philippine Studies Conference of the same title held on September 14-15, 2009 in St. Petersburg. The collection consists of articles by Russian, Philippine, and Western scholars in such areas of Philippine studies as the history of the Russia-Philippines contacts, folklore and literature, linguistics, anthropology and ethnology, as well as the representation of the Philippines in the Russian art and museums. The Philippine Folklore and Literature section includes articles (in Russian) by the following scholars: Yuri E. Berezkin's "Four Folklore Motifs Related to Three Epochs in History of the Philippines and Indonesia" (136-172), Sergey I. Yatsenko's "Ilocano Epic The Life of Lam-ang: History of Studies and Analysis of Contents" (173-195) and "Verse Organization in the Ilocano Epic The Life of Lam-ang" (203-232), Artyom V. Kozmin's "Metrics of the Iloko and Mongolian Epic Verse: a Comparison"



Fig. 5. The Russian edition of Francisco Balagtas' Florante at Laura, translated from Tagalog by H.E. Valery Sorokin. From the author's personal collection.

(196-202), and Olga V. Koltyga's "History and Evolution of Fransisco Balagtas Studies in the Philippines and in Russia" (233-247). Full texts of the articles (in Russian) and abstracts and biodata of the authors (in English) are available online (Stanyukovich, "Pilipinas Muna!").

Philippine literature finds a lively response in Russian hearts and minds. To illustrate the assumption, here is an extract of the review by a random Russian reader on Nick Joaquins' two novels masterly translated into Russian by Podberezsky. The full review in Russian is easily accessible (translation mine):

Frankly, my acquaintance with this author [Nick Joaquin] is really inspiring while also disappointing because [besides these novels and a few short

stories] there is only one more long piece translated [into Russian]—*The Portrait of an Artist as Filipino* <...> Joaquin's prose is unique. He masterly merges original scenes, fresh images, colorful descriptions and lively dialogues. His characters are real, his plots are smooth, and his finals are mostly ideal" (*Russian Reader's Review*).

An invaluable gift for any Russian interested in the Philippines has been the recent publication of a talented translation of the classical Tagalog poem by Francisco Balagtas "Florante and Laura." The author is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia Mr. Valery Sorokin.³ The book was published in 2017 by the ASEAN Center of MGIMO University with a comprehensive introduction by Dr. Elena Frolova (Balagtas 2017).

Conclusion

The Russian studies of Philippine literature started by the pioneers (Makarenko, Podberezsky, Rachkov) in the 1960s have resulted in various lectures and publications on the history of Philippine literature, as well as on its prominent figures from Francisco Balagtas to the most contemporary writers. The works by Jose Rizal have been studied extensively; translations of poetry by more than 100 Philippine authors (in Tagalog, Spanish, and English), and of fiction (Tagalog, English) by almost fifty writers of the 1900s-1970s have been published in the second half of the twentieth century.

At present, Philippine literary studies in Russia are being developed by the pioneers' alumni in Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities. Researches are done on Philippine folklore (Stanyukovich, Yatsenko), classical literature of the Spanish period (Koltyga), and contemporary Philippine fiction and poetry (Baklanova with IAAS graduates). There is still much to be done for the study of Philippine creative writing and the description of Philippine literature at its different historic milestones, particularly in the fields of poetry and Philippine regional literatures. A cooperation with Philippine and other foreign specialists on Philippine literature could be very fruitful. There is also quite a number of brilliant contemporary Philippine writers totally unknown to Russian readers. Thus, another challenge is to find the means to fill this gap, too.

Notes

- Some trivia on the Nusantara Society available at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Nusantara_Society.
- 2. E. Baklanova as the professor of the Philippine Literature course would like to thank the Ambassador of the Philippine Embassy in Moscow H.E. Carlos Sorreta and Third Secretary and Vice Consul Ms. Catherine Alpay for their kind support in organizing the Filipino film screenings.
- Translation of PHL Literary Classic Published in Russia available at www.dfa. gov.ph/dfa-news/news-from-our-foreign-service-postsupdate/13833-translation-of-phl-literary-classic-published-in-russia.

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