

German travellers, explorers, missionaries and scholars produced significant new knowledge about the Arctic in Europe and elsewhere from the 17th until the 19th century. However, until now, no English-language study or collective volume has been dedicated to their representations of the Arctic.

Possibly due to linguistic barriers, this corpus has not been sufficiently taken into account in transnational and circumpolar approaches to the fast-growing field of Arctic Studies. This volume serves to heighten awareness about the importance of these writings in view of the history of the Far North.

The chapters gathered here offer critical readings of manuscripts and publications, including travelogues, natural histories of the Arctic, newspaper articles and scholarly texts based on first-hand observations, as well as works of fiction. The sources are considered in their historical context, as political, religious, social, economic and cultural aspects are discussed in relation to discourses about the Arctic in general.

The volume opens with a spirited preface by Professor Jean Malaurie, France's most distinguished Arctic specialist and author of *The Last Kings of Thule* (1955).

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**Cover image** Friedrich Emanuel Kleinschmidt, *Ansicht von Noorliit [Neuherrnhut] in Grönland*, 300 x 210 mm, coloured pencil drawing, 1850, Moravian Archives, Herrnhut, Germany.



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German Representations of the  
Far North (17th-19th Centuries)

Jan Borm  
Joanna Kodzik



*Neu Herrnhut*

## German Representations of the Far North (17th-19th Centuries)

*Writing the Arctic*

Edited by Jan Borm and Joanna Kodzik

*With a Preface by Jean Malaurie*

German Representations  
of the Far North  
(17th-19th Centuries)

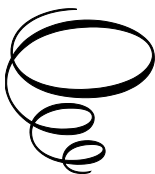
# German Representations of the Far North (17th-19th Centuries):

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## CHAPTER SIX

# GERMANS IN THE NORTH PACIFIC: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION BEFORE 1867. A PUBLISHING PROJECT

VIOLA KÖNIG

### **German participants in the early Russian explorations of the North**

Two men are credited with the discovery of the Americas: Christopher Columbus as the first European to touch American soil on the Caribbean Islands in 1492, and the German scholar Alexander von Humboldt as the Scientific Discoverer of America. Both claims suppress the two facts that the Norse Leif Erikson (about 970-1020) arrived at Vinland, or Newfoundland on the North Eastern corner of North America 500 years prior to Columbus, while the German naturalist Georg Wilhelm Steller (1709-1746) sailing with Vitus Bering's Second Kamchatka Expedition, also called the "Great Northern Expedition" (1733–1743), was the first European to touch North America's soil on Kayak Island, Alaska on July 20, 1741 (Steller 1793).

Thirty-seven years before James Cook and fifty-eight years before von Humboldt, Steller described North American flora and fauna such as Steller's jay, Steller's sea cow, Steller's sea lion, Steller's eider and Steller's sea eagle (see the chapter on Steller in this volume). But Steller was not the first German scholar to explore the North of the Globe. From the early 18<sup>th</sup> century on, German travellers have taken an active part in the scientific exploration of Northern Asia, the North Pacific, and North America, travelling on both sides of the Bering Strait. The scientific exploration of Siberia in particular remained almost completely in the responsibility of German or German-Baltic scholars.

As early as 1718, naturalist Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt (1685-1735) was hired by Tsar Peter I to collect and explore the fauna and flora of unknown Siberia. However, his rich results and documentation fell victim to imperial censorship. Nonetheless, many known scholars used his work, like, for instance, the German naturalist and geographer Peter Simon Pallas (1741-1811) who also published some of Messerschmidt's materials in 1782. Pallas, who was born and died in Berlin, is a most prominent personality in the history of the scientific exploration of the North under Russian command. He left a long list of published works ([www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/entity/118591371](http://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/entity/118591371), accessed 8/31/2018). Vermeulen provides details on Messerschmidt's only partly published work up until today (2016, 124-130).

In 1736, the historian and ethnographer Gerhardt Friedrich Müller (1705-1783) discovered documents in Yakutsk referring to an even earlier discovery of the Bering Strait between Asia and America by Semon Dezhnev (1605-1673) in 1648 (Müller 1758).

Müller's work exemplifies problems of availability and translation discussed below. Following "two inadequate and incomplete" English publications in 1761 and 1764, the third of 1986 "seems to be satisfactory" wrote Basil Dmytryshyn in a review (1988) on Urness' English edition (1986).

However, when I started my own research on the early participation of German scholars in the exploration of Russian America in the mid-1980s, I had to consult Fisher's (1981) and Ray's (1975) English commentaries. At that time, the 1986 and other English translations were sold in Alaska only (König 1993). Since 2002, a German facsimile edition is available online ([www.gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN331635313](http://www.gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN331635313), accessed 8/31/2018).

The German naturalist Johann Georg Gmelin (1709-1755), historian and linguist Johann Eberhard Fischer (1697-1711) who both had been members of the "Great Northern Expedition" like Müller and Steller, botanist and pharmacist Johann Gottlieb Georgi (1729-1802), who travelled with Pallas, as well as the German-Baltic naturalists Aleksandr Fyodorovich Middendorf (1843-1845), Richard Karlowitsch Maack (1825-1886) and Leopold von Schrenck (1826-1894), to name but the best-known, all followed Messerschmidt in the exploration of Siberia by Russian order and left a written legacy in several languages.

Research in the North Pacific and on the American Pacific coast continued to be carried out by international, mainly German-language scholars. The well-known couple of father and son Johann Reinhold (1729-1798) and Georg Forster (1754-1794) participated in Cook's famous 2<sup>nd</sup>



voyage. Their collections as well as some objects of the widespread Cook collection from Northwest America ended up in German museums.

Not much is known about the role of the German-Baltic Governor of Kamtchatka, the richly deserved Magnus Karl von Behm (1727-1806). He offered himself to take the logbook, charts, and reports left by murdered Captain Cook to Saint-Petersburg after the death, near the coast of Kamchatka, of Charles Clerke (1741-1779), the person who replaced Cook as Captain after the former's death. Von Behm travelled overland and sent the documents to the Ambassador of England, Sir James Howard Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury (1746-1820), who allowed Simon Pallas to see them. Pallas published the material in Berlin in 1781, before the remaining members of the Cook expedition had come back to England. It was the end of the Russian policy of secrecy and economic dominance in the North Pacific. More importantly, Behm secured the documents of Cook's third expedition for the world and donated the collection of ethnographic objects from that expedition, which he had received as a personal gift from Clerke. It is housed today in the *Kunstkamera* in Saint Petersburg (O'Grady 1989; Pallas quoted in Wendland 1992 I, 634; Werrett 2004, 182-83).

One of the surviving participants of Cook's last voyage from 1776-80, the English officer Joseph Billings (1758-1806), was commissioned by Empress Catherine II to lead a new expedition in search for the Northeast Passage. Named after Billings and his deputy Gavril Sarychev (1763-1831), the Billings-Sarychev-Expedition took nine years to explore the North Pacific. Carl Heinrich Merck (1761-1799), member of the pharmacy dynasty of Darmstadt served as a physician and naturalist. Merck was mentioned in several publications on the Billings-Sarychev-Expedition (Donnert 2002, 1031). He and his colleagues Michael Rohbeck and Michael Krebs were the first to collect valuable linguistic data and ethnographic materials from the Chukchi (Merck 2014).

Merck left his own legacy of written materials as well as botanical, zoological and ethnographic collections. He gave most of it to Pallas, but some objects ended up in Göttingen via Baron von Asch's collection (1729-1807).

I first found out about Merck when working with the von Asch collection in Göttingen before 1990, which turned out to be the Merck collection (Blumenbach 1798). I was happy to find a summary of Merck's diary by Ernst Jacobi (1937) and the complete English translation of 1980 (Merck 1980; König 1993, 37, 52-54). 16 years later, Dahlmann confirmed my impression of the deficiencies of a too simple translation into modern English. He also mentions his and Bucher's scepticism as to the origin of

von Asch collection's to be completely identical with Merck's (Dahlmann et al. in Merck 2009, 67-68; Bucher 2007, 151-165).

But why did all these scholars trained in German universities such as Göttingen, Halle etc. go to Russia? This movement goes back to Tsar Peter the Great and his chief advisor, German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) who had convinced Peter to create the Russian Academy of Science, following the model of the Berlin Academy. After Leibniz' death, Peter consulted German philosopher Christian Wolff of Halle (1679-1754). However, when the Russian Academy was finally founded in 1724, only a few scholars of Russian descent were available for employment. During the first fifty years, most members of the Academy were German speaking. Even the Academy's presidents came from the above-mentioned German-Baltic community (König 1993, 35-36; Dahlmann 1999, 16-18). As O'Grady observes:

The motivation behind Russia's generosity lay in her sustained need for educated, skilled and disciplined Westerners, who could serve Russia as professional officers and administrators. Thus, the dominant élite drawn from the comfortable proximity of the Russian borderlands were the obvious solution to a problem that was chronic. (1994, 323).

The well-educated German-Baltic aristocratic families, as well as imported German senior and even chief officials were of great influence at the Russian imperial court. In 1784, the new colony of Russian America was established. Two German-Baltic personalities were among the group of governors: Ludwig August von Hagemeister (1780-1833) and distinguished Baron Ferdinand Friedrich Georg Ludwig von Wrangell (Wrangel 1796-1870). The latter was appointed Governor to Russian America in 1829, having previously been a multidisciplinary explorer in the Chukchi Sea and the Far North as well as Commander of the Krotky world circumnavigation in the years 1825-1827. During the five years of his administration at the capital New Archangelsk (later called Sitka), he not only conducted extensive scientific research in the area, but implemented many important reforms, while his wife Elizabeth took care of the wellbeing and education of the local Indigenous, Russian and Creole population. Even before the couple returned to Russia, Elizabeth's father, Baron Wilhelm von Rossillon, donated part of the Wrangell collection from Alaska to the Senckenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft (Senckenberg Society for Natural History) in Frankfurt am Main. Today, it is housed in the city's Museum der Weltkulturen (Bucher 2009: 154)<sup>1</sup>.



Figure 1. Elizabeth Theodora Natalie Karoline von Wrangell de Rossillon (1910-1854), wife of Admiral Ferdinand von Wrangell, Governor of Russian Alaska (Photo owned by Wrangell family, published by Cornelia von Wrangell, 05.04.2019 <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/reise/auf-den-spuren-der-polarforscher-in-alaska-16119153.html> ).

Wrangell's report entitled *Statistische und ethnographische Nachrichten über die Russischen Besitzungen an der Nordwestküste von Amerika* (1839) (*Russian America* 1980) was integrated into the first part of Karl Ernst von Baer's (1792-1876) series *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Russischen Reiches* (*Contributions to Knowledge About the Russian Empire*), Saint Petersburg, 1839-1900, 45 volumes. Naturalist, biologist, geologist, meteorologist, and geographer von Baer whom some scholars have called the "Alexander von

Humboldt of the North” is also known as the founder of the scientific exploration of the Arctic.

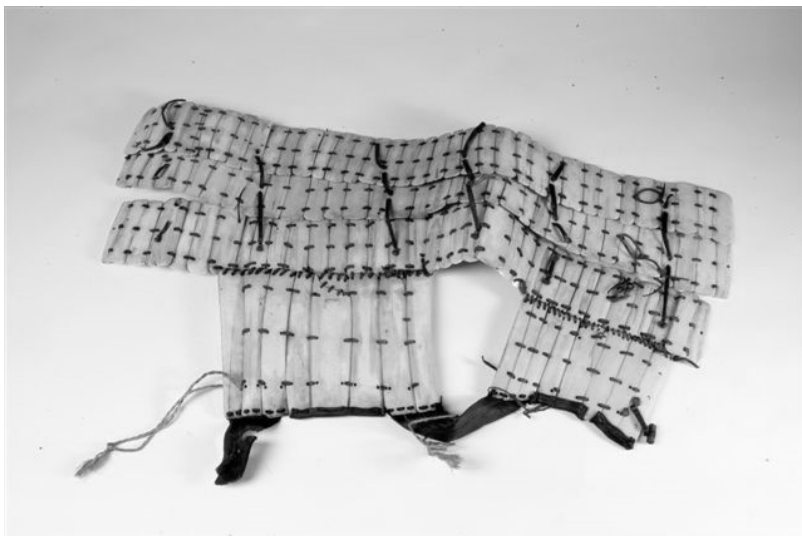


Figure 2. Slat armour made from whalebone collected by Ivan Antonovich Kupreyanov (Kupreanof, 1794-1857), head of the Russian-American Company (Photo Landesmuseum Natur und Mensch, Oldenburg).

Wrangell’s is not the only case of a Russian America Governor’s collection ending up in a German museum. Known to just a few specialists, the Landesmuseum Natur und Mensch (Regional Museum Environment and Man) in Oldenburg houses a collection going directly back to Governor Antonovich Kupreyanov (Kupreanof, 1794-1857), who had followed Wrangell as Governor in Sitka, as result of what I have called the “dynastic relationships” between well-connected members of the Tzar’s court in Saint Petersburg and the German nobility. The Grand Duke of Oldenburg maintained close relations with his Russian aristocratic relatives. In order to provide objects for the newly founded natural history museum in Oldenburg, Chamberlain Alexander von Rennenkampff (1783-1853) asked for a collection from one of the returning Russian expeditions. In 1841, the Russian Earl Pawel Dmitriewitsch Tolstoy, Prince Peter of Oldenburg’s Privy Councillor at the court of Saint Petersburg, sent four boxes of objects with an accompanying letter and a list of objects written in French to Rennenkampff (König 1993, 54-59; Bucher 2009, 154-160). The letter and

list still exist. 137 objects had been sent to Oldenburg, among those 98 ethnographic artefacts of which 31 can be retraced in the museum. Still, more research on the origin of this collection is needed.



Figure 3. Natives of Sitka Island. Pl. 5 in “Denkwürdigkeiten einer Reise nach dem russischen Amerika, nach Mikronesien und durch Kamtschatka” (1858), adapted from a drawing by Friedrich Heinrich von Kittlitz (1799-1874).

## Germans serving in Russian circumnavigations of the world

German scholars were important participants in the first Russian circumnavigation of the world (1803-1806) under the command of German-Baltic Baron Adam Johann Ritter von Krusenstern (Ivan Fyodorovich Kruzenshtern 1770-1846). Sailing on the two ships *Nadezhda* and *Neva*, the latter under the command of Yuri F. Lisianski (1773-1837), the scientific crew included well-known scholars such as Wilhelm Gottlieb Tilesius von

Tilenau (1769-1857), naturalist and physician Freiherr Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff (1744-1852), Fabian Gottlieb Thaddeus von Bellingshausen (1778-1852), physician Karl Espenberg (1761-1822), the later Commander Otto von Kotzebue (1767-1846), and later Governor Ludwig August von Hagemeister (1780-1833).

Krusenstern's two-volume *Reise um die Welt in den Jahren 1803, 1804, 1805 und 1806 auf Befehl Seiner Kaiserlichen Majestät Alexanders des Ersten auf den Schiffen Nadeschda und Newa*, first published in Saint Petersburg in 1810 and in Berlin 1811-1812 became very famous. The English edition entitled *Voyage Round the World in the Years 1803, 1804, 1805 and 1806 By Order of His Imperial Majesty Alexander I. on Board the Ships Nadeshda and Neva* was published in London in 1813, with other translations in a number of languages to follow. The two volumes of Krusenstern's *Atlas de l'océan Pacifique (Atlas of the Pacific Ocean)*, published in Saint Petersburg 1824-1827, made with the assistance of Wilhelm Gottlieb Tilesius von Tilenau, are less well-known<sup>2</sup>.

Freiherr Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff's report on his studies made on Kamchatka, the Aleutian Islands, and in Russian America on Kodiak Island and in Sitka was included in the first part of his two-volume account *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise um die Welt in den Jahren 1803 bis 1807* published in Frankfurt/Main in 1812 (*Remarks and Observations on a Voyage around the World from 1803 to 1807*, Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1993). Krusenstern's and Langsdorff's works have been reedited and are available online.

Like the Wrangell and Kupreyanov objects, some of the artefacts from this expedition ended up in a German aristocratic collection. In 1821, Langsdorff donated 113 ethnographic objects to King Maximilian I of Bavaria. Registered under the name of Krusenstern, the collection is housed today in the Museum Fünf Kontinente (Museum Five Continents) in Munich which also holds a Cook collection and the Leuchtenberg collection of the 1820s including objects from the North Pacific going back to the Dukes of Leuchtenberg, another aristocratic family with a Russian connection (Rousselot 2007, 74-77).

The Russians were secretive about their scientific expeditions to protect their economic and strategic interests. Therefore, publications were censored. But among the almost forgotten manuscripts, we find some uncensored passages. As Sondermann points out:

It is always interesting to compare contemporary official – and therefore censored – edited accounts of this voyage with the unofficial=uncensored material (Hermann Ludwig von Löwenstern, Makar Ivanovich Ratmanov and Tilesius) (Sondermann 2013 [2018], 1).

Eight of the 28 Russian circumnavigations between 1803 and 1866 were under German-Baltic command. Regarding scientific output by German scholars, the second and 12<sup>th</sup> journeys are worth mentioning in particular: Otto von Kotzebue (1767-1846) commanded the “Rurik Expedition” (1815-1818) with naturalist Johann Friedrich Gustav von Escholtz (1793-1831) on board as well as the famous naturalist and poet of French origin Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838) from Berlin, and German-Russian painter Ludwig (Louis) Choris (1795-1828). Chamisso’s botanical collection is housed today in the Museum für Naturkunde (Museum of Natural History) Berlin, Escholtz’s in the University of Tartu.

Fyodor Petrovich Litke, (Friedrich Benjamin Lütke 1797-1882) was the Commander on the “Senyavin” cruising the world between 1826-1829. Thanks to the collaborative work of three German scholars, ornithologist Heinrich von Kittlitz (1799-1874), botanist Karl Heinrich Mertens (1796-1830) and mineralogist and draughtsman Alexander Postels (1801–1871), this journey has become famous for its enormous output of research, including valuable ethnographic descriptions and huge collections (Litke 1835; König 2011, VIII).

To sum up, Krusenstern, Langsdorff, Kotzebue, Lütke, Kittlitz and many more of the above-mentioned scholars have left written reports, travelogues, scientific descriptions, sketches and drawings they made during their journeys. Some were published immediately, others many years after in German, Russian, and French. In some cases, the accounts have been integrated into the book of another author, for example Messerschmidt’s, Wrangell’s, and Escholtz’s. At least a part of the collections from Russian expeditions had to be transferred immediately to the *Kunstkamera* or the Museum of the Admiralty in Saint Petersburg ([www.kunstkamera.ru/en/museum/kunst\\_hist/5/5\\_12/](http://www.kunstkamera.ru/en/museum/kunst_hist/5/5_12/), accessed 09/5/2018). However, some were split up and taken by its collectors to Germany.

German geoscientist and physician Georg Adolf Erman’s (1806-1877) is a special case. He financed a journey round the world from 1828 to 1830 by his own means. Shortly after his return, he published the results in his *Reise um die Erde durch Nordasien und die beiden Ozeane (Journey around the World through Northern Asia and both Oceans)* (1833-1848). In 1841, only three years after von Baer’s mentioned above, Erman started to edit a new series: *Archiv für wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland (Archive for Scientific Knowledge About Russia)*, with 25 volumes published until 1865. Since 2002, the series has been completely digitalized ([www.gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN332924793](http://www.gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN332924793), accessed 08/31/2018). These rich volumes have remained almost unknown to Anglophone readers until the present day.

## **History of research before and after the “Cold War”**

The German contribution to the History of Siberia and Alaska before its sale to the United States of America has still not been fully reported in the official works until today. Before the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, research on the material kept in Russian archives was only available to Russian or German scholars of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). A few accounts were translated into English and published in Alaska. Before the beginning of the digitalization process after the turn of the millennium, resulting in online access of the scanned original works, historians had focused on German-Russian history. Research on published and archive materials, such as reports, travelogues, letters, etc., resulted in a large repertoire of German-Russian studies. Studies made in Alaska and the US on the other hand focused on the US-Russian connections, paying little attention to the corpus in German.

After the end of the Cold War, in the early 1990s, Eastern-Western collaborations soon touched base, resulting in conferences and workshops. Still, during the next decade, publications on the German participation in the Russian exploration of the North Pacific and Alaska remained rare (König 1993; O’Grady 1994). Paradoxically enough, O’Grady’s and my own full-length articles have been mostly ignored in the considerable number of German publications released after the turn of the millennium (Bucher 2002; Donnert 2002; Hoffmann 2005; Kasten 2011; Vermeulen 2016; Ordubadi 2016; Bucher 2017). Likewise, the German publications are not referenced in US and Canadian publications.

To sum up, before the sale of Russia’s American colony to the US in 1867, two groups of German Native mother-tongue participants were involved in Russian ventures in North Asia, the North Pacific and North America: 1) unemployed German scholars trained in German universities, 2) members of the well-connected German-Baltic community, sons of a city rooted élite as well as the landed gentry. Despite the Russian policy of secrecy, their legacy, a multilingual corpus of diverse materials, became internationally known at that time.

### **The challenge: Putting together written sources and collections**

More international research is needed today. I postulate an edition-translation program (1) and inclusion of existing relationships between texts and collections (2).



As exemplified in this paper, the German rooted navigators, explorers, scholars and governors not only produced texts, but they also collected all kinds of specimen and ethnographic objects. Sooner or later these collections ended up in public institutions, mostly museums. In some cases, the collections were moved around and subject to different ownerships<sup>3</sup>. In many cases, the accompanying documentation – if any – was insufficient.

When I began to study the old collections from the Pacific Northwest Coast and Alaska in German museums in the mid-1980s, I found the information on the museum files to be highly insufficient. Even though I was able to locate the existence of original texts connected to the objects, access was difficult then. It was easier to find von Baer's edition of Wrangell's text as an English translation than reprints of the original text *Statistische und ethnographische Nachrichten über die russischen Besitzungen an der Nordwestküste von Amerika* (1968)<sup>4</sup>. Canadian scholar Alix O'Grady discovered the diaries of Ferdinand von Wrangell's wife Elizabeth in Tallin. She copyedited and translated the texts into English and published them (1995). Until now, these manuscripts have not been published in their original German version.

The same is true for Heinrich Merck. As discussed above, a lot of research on his written legacy has recently been done, but it is still not clear how many ethnographic objects in the von Asch collection in Göttingen were collected by him. A proper new translation of the corpus of his works into English is missing as well. The same is true with other German translations. The poorly or uncommented English re-editions of German texts prove to be tricky, particularly with regard to the translations of Russian and native terms included in the original manuscripts.

But there are exceptions: Victoria Joan Moessner's beautiful edition of the above quoted unofficial German diary by Hermann Ludwig von Löwenstern was published in English in 2003 (*The Diaries of Herman Ludwig von Löwenstern*, 2014), followed by a commented German edition (2005). Moessner warned that existing transcriptions were not reliable and that translation into contemporary English could be an "adventure":

Löwenstern wrote German as spoken at that time in Estonia or among German speakers serving in the Russian Navy, but with an admixture of the other languages he knew or were spoken where he happened to be. Thus, his uses of grammar as well as orthography and punctuation often do not correspond to practices of published works of the period and certainly not to modern standard usages (Moessner in Löwenstern 2003, XXIII).

The translators of Steller's diary, Karen E. Willmore and Margritt A. Engel, describe similar problems. They had no copyedited version at hand

to compare with the original manuscript and struggled with Steller's personal style of writing Russian, Latin, and Indigenous terms plus the toponyms of a yet unexplored geographical region (Willmore and Engel 2002, 979-981).

My identification of the Aleut hunting hat, which Steller had described in his diary, was published in that same volume. I discovered it to be housed at the Kunstkamera in Saint Petersburg today and was lucky to study Steller's report in my mother tongue. Later on, my Russian descendant American colleague Lydia Black, who fluently read and spoke Russian, English and German, confirmed my identification. However, she had started the other way around with her study of the collection at Saint Petersburg (König 2002, 1056-58). Still today the files of the Kunstkamera do not mention Steller to be the collector of this object (online catalogue MAE No. 2868-23 <http://collection.kunstkamera.ru>).

### **The editorial project “Germans in the North Pacific. German Travelers and Investigators in Alaska, on the Northwest Coast of America and adjacent areas”**

Given the wild mixture of available and unavailable original texts, some of them published and/or translated, I started to outline a project involving 1.) Reprints of German texts difficult to access, 2.) Additional supplements of introductions and commentaries, 3.) English translations, 4.) Comparative analyses of the texts and the associated museum collections, 5.) Collaborative discussions of results together with Indigenous communities of the North.

Bernhard Fabian, the main editor of the editorial programme “Historia Scientiarum” of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation “on the history of science in Germany” (“zur Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Deutschland”), agreed to integrate a new sub-series under the title *Deutsche im Nordpazifik. Beiträge zur Entdeckung und Erforschung des nordpazifischen Raumes (Germans in the North Pacific. Contributions to the discovery and exploration of the North Pacific)*.

The volumes to be reprinted have been selected according to three criteria: 1.) The German edition is not available as a reprint, 2.) Selected texts include some ethnographic information on Northwest America and/or the North Pacific regions, 3.) The volumes bear a relationship with collections in German museums or institutions.

However, when the first volumes were ready for print, university libraries had just begun to scan travel reports and upload them online. But in most of the cases, these digital facsimile editions were lacking introductions

and commentary on the contents, and they were hard to read. Thus, the publisher Georg Olms decided to proceed with the hardcopy editions.

My original list of reprints with a commentary by the editor comprised 18 titles. Later, the list was reduced to 12 titles plus an additional general volume to include commentaries on the omitted works and those available online.

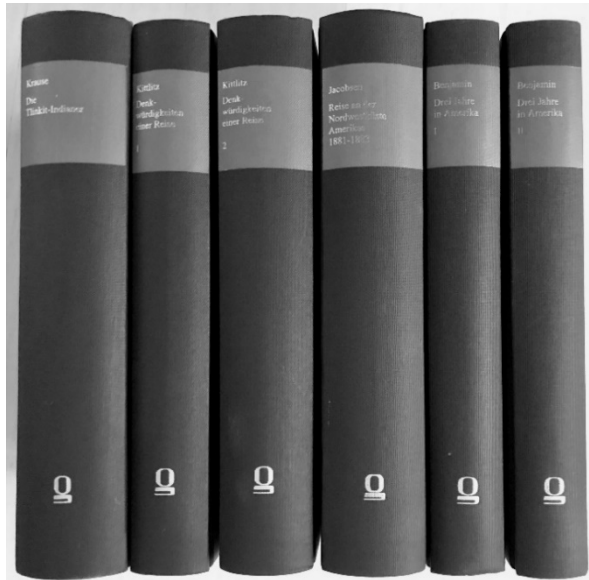


Figure 4. Six volumes by four authors, edited as reprints with new commentaries in “Historia Scientiarum, Deutsche im Nordpazifik. Beiträge zur Entdeckung und Erforschung des nordpazifischen Raumes, edited by Viola König” (Photo Viola König).

I decided to start with volumes badly needed for the study of collections, and I added ‘forgotten’ single articles by the same authors showing a direct relationship with the monographs and collections. Of the Russian period discussed in this chapter, I have edited the two volumes by Heinrich von Kittlitz, which are less known than his Commander Litke’s four volumes *Voyage autour du monde* (Paris 1835-37).

Unfortunately, due to the end of sponsoring by the Thyssen Foundation, the series stopped after the release of works by Aurel Krause (2011), Friedrich Heinrich von Kittlitz (2011), Adrian Jacobsen (2013), and Israel Joseph Benjamin (2016). We tried hard but did not manage to re-edit

Kotzebue's "édition de luxe" of his three-volume original report *Entdeckungs-Reise in die Süd-See und nach der Berings-Straße zur Erforschung einer nordöstlichen Durchfahrt*, 1821 (*A Voyage to the South Sea and Beering's Straits*, 1821), the third volume having been written by Chamisso, the second and third including the reports by naturalist Johann Friedrich Gustav von Escholtz. But first and foremost, we wanted to reprint the fantastic illustrations by artist Ludwig (Louis) Choris. This great work remains a most rare item hard to find even in libraries.

To complete the editorial project, two more volumes should be published: a special selection of the work by Adolf Erman and the general volume of selected texts being connected to collections housed in German museums, both mentioned above.

From the very beginning, the costly project had three principal goals: 1.) to connect the unstudied collections in German museums and separate reports by their collectors. 2.) to provide copyedited texts for future professional English translations. 3.) Such English editions should not exclusively be published for English speaking scholars but help Indigenous communities to trace information on their past provided in German texts and collections they do not know about.

## **The restitution of artifacts from Berlin to the Chugach Alaska Corporation**

Quite unexpectedly, the editorial project led to restitution initiatives. On May 16, 2018, the New York Times, among many other media published an article "Berlin Museum Returns Artifacts to Indigenous People of Alaska". The text details:

Berlin. The foundation overseeing state museums in Berlin returned nine artifacts to Indigenous communities in Alaska this week after it determined that they had been taken from a burial site in the 1880s. The items, which included several masks, a wooden idol and a baby basket, had been in the collection of Berlin's Ethnographic Museum, though they were never exhibited publicly. From 1882 to 1884, they were taken by Johan Adrian Jacobsen, a Norwegian adventurer and amateur ethnographer acting on behalf of the museum (Christopher F. Schütze in the New York Times, May 16, 2018).

While the Berlin and Chugach Alaska Corporation's representatives had their own political interests in this restitution case, the reasons why it could successfully be accomplished were not even mentioned at the press conference. John Johnson, representing the Chugach Alaska Corporation of

Alaska, had been visiting the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin on a European museum tour in 2015 during which he looked at the collections and asked for possibly existing human remains from Prince William Sound, Alaska. But such remains of the Chugach, or Sugpiaq people could not be identified in the Berlin collection<sup>5</sup>.

However, as I had published just recently my detailed introduction to the new edition of Johan Adrian Jacobsen's diary, I remembered details of removed funerary objects and left fragile mummies from Chenega Island at Kachemak Bay in southwest Alaska (König 2013). They were among the 7,000 objects Jacobsen had collected on the Northwest coast and in Alaska in 1881 to 1883. I copied the respective pages for Johnson and added the English summary from Erna Gunther's abridged translation (1977).



Figure 5. Three of the nine artefacts, the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin which were formally restituted to the Chugach Alaska Corporation in 2017-2018 (Photo Viola König, taken at the Press Conference May 16, 2018).

In a joint collaboration, Johnson and myself as Director of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin at the time, started to systematically prepare the formal repatriation in a step by step procedure. End of June 2017, a few months before I left the museum, legal German institutions that needed to be involved had approved, leaving the matter as a technicality from then on<sup>6</sup>.

To sum up, the restitution of the nine objects to the Chugach Corporation of Alaska in 2017-18 could be accomplished, because Jacobsen's travelogue and a commentary was available, linking his huge collection to the details of acquisition.

## Conclusion

Overseeing twenty years of corporation with Alaskan, Canadian and French institutions and scholars, the gap between international "Western" researchers and the national "(North)-Eastern" oriented German scholars continues. Even though international multidisciplinary research projects and exhibitions have shown a growing interest in the subject (e.g. König 2013b), notwithstanding Vermeulen's continuous efforts (2006, 2015), I see little interest to link the work of the national group of German historians to the research of their American colleagues. At the same time, not yet translated German texts remain a barrier to English reading scholars. The ideas and plans that Lydia Black and I shared in the early 1990s are still waiting for completion.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bucher refers to Barbara Johanna's master thesis "Die Alaska Sammlung des Baron Ferdinand P. von Wrangell im Museum für Völkerkunde Frankfurt", Frankfurt 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Tilesius' original drawings from the voyage are preserved in the collections of the University of Leipzig (Moessner 2003, XXVI).

<sup>3</sup> For example, the so-called von Asch collection housed in the University collection Göttingen including objects collected by Karl Heinrich Merck, or the Krusenstern collection of Munich housed in the Museum Fünf Kontinente, donated and/or collected by Heinrich von Langsdorff.

<sup>4</sup> New reprint 50 years later by Forgotten Books (2018).

<sup>5</sup> In 2002, Janet Klein studied part of the Jacobsen collection in Berlin (Kachemak Bay Communities: Their Histories Their Mysteries, Homer AK 2008). A decade later, in 2012, Medeia Csoba DeHass studied the collection and uploaded the objects online (nanwalekhistory.com).

<sup>6</sup> Andreas Schlothauer has commented on this restitution case from his own point of view in *Kunst & Kontext*, no. 15, December 2018, p. 6: [http://www.kunst-und-kontext.de/texte/kunst\\_und\\_kontext\\_15.pdf](http://www.kunst-und-kontext.de/texte/kunst_und_kontext_15.pdf) (accessed 08/25/2020).

