



Aurora Borealis in Danzig (Polen), 17. März 1716

Arctic in Eastern Europe. Knowledge, Perception and Communication in 18th -19th century

International and interdisciplinary conference organised by the
Maurice Institute for Arctic Research Monaco-UVSQ
at the University of Versailles Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines/ University of Paris/Saclay
and the
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland)

Venue: Toruń (Poland)

Date: 8-11 May 2024

The voyages of discovery, whaling, missionary work, colonisation and trade journeys up to the scientific voyages at the beginning of the 19th century drove a circulation of people, ideas and goods between Europe and her peripheries in the far north such as Greenland, Spitsbergen, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Lapland. This process of cultural mobility and communication involved actors - travellers as well as scholars and nobles - from Eastern Europe.

While the initiative for Arctic voyages, missions and expeditions often originated in Western European countries, only a few adventurers and scholars from Eastern Europe took part in such voyages and produced eyewitness accounts. Nevertheless, knowledge from the Arctic was received in the East. The travel reports and compilations found their place in aristocratic libraries, the depictions of nature and people were consulted in scientific debates, objects filled the curiosity chambers of scholars and aristocrats and the reading public desired to stay up to date with world events, not least because of economic profits.

The conference asks the general question about the concept of the reception of knowledge from the Arctic in Eastern Europe. Were there differences or similarities in the reception of knowledge from the Arctic in individual Eastern European countries (Royal Prussia, Poland-Lithuania with Ukraine, Courland, Czech Republic, Hungary) or target groups (e.g. nobility, scholars, representatives of different denominations, representatives of different language communities between German and/or French).

The interest of the conference is to explain the different reasons why various groups - scholars, merchants, newspaper makers or aristocrats - were interested in the Arctic regions, e.g. scientific progress, trade profit, status representation through objects, topicality of news, medicine/health, which could be promoted through products from the Arctic, etc. The conference will focus on the importance of scientific, economic, and cultural aspects. The significance of scientific, economic, (inter)confessional networks, mobility, education, religious minorities, the press and/or trade for the circulation of knowledge will be examined.