

УДК 910.4(571.65/.66)+(739.8)

**THE SEARCH FOR THE NORTHEAST PASSAGE: THE FIRST AND THE
SECOND KAMCHATKA EXPEDITIONS IN THE YEARS 1725-1743.**

**The Russian Columbus (Vitus Jonassen Bering),
the expansion of the Russian Empire, the scientific breakthroughs
and the consequences of the geographical discoveries**

Christensen C.S.

In the beginning of the 1700s Tsar Peter the Great ordered the First Kamchatka expedition to take place. Russia was going through a period where changes both economical connections and geographical discoveries took place. Peter the Great was organizing a new imperial Russian Navy. However, why was this First Kamchatka expedition undertaken? Economic, scientific or political reasons? The expedition, which was headed by Vitus Bering, proved the separation of Asia and America (Alaska). Furthermore, Bering's map showed northeast Asia in its true dimensions, both in longitude and latitude. On his return to St. Petersburg, Bering was met with much scepticism, which, after his own proposals, led to the Second Kamchatka expedition, better known as the Great Northern expedition of 1733-1743. Why such scepticism, and why is it still being shown? This article tries to give answers on abovementioned questions and to put the work of Vitus Bering into a broader perspective, to show how important these expeditions were for modern Russia.

Keywords: Vitus Bering, Semyon Dezhnev, the Northeast Passage, Okhotsk, Tsar Peter the Great, the First Kamchatka expedition, Martin Spangenberg, Great Northern expedition, Aleksei Chirikov, Georg Wilhelm Steller, Russian Columbus, Alaska, the Bering Strait, Bering Island.

ПОИСКИ СЕВЕРО-ВОСТОЧНОГО ПРОХОДА: ПЕРВАЯ И ВТОРАЯ КАМЧАТСКИЕ ЭКСПЕДИЦИИ 1725-1743 ГГ.

Русский Колумб (Витус Ионассен Беринг), расширение Российской империи, научные прорывы и последствия географических открытий

Христенсен К.С.

В начале 1700-х годов царь Петр I приказал провести Первую Камчатскую экспедицию. Россия переживала период, когда происходили перемены в экономике и совершались географические открытия. Петр Великий организовывал новый имперский русский флот. Однако почему же была предпринята Первая Камчатская экспедиция? По каким причинам: экономическим, научным или политическим? Экспедиция, которую возглавил Витус Беринг, доказала наличие пролива между Азией и Америкой (Аляской). Кроме того, составленная Берингом карта отражала Северо-Восточную Азию в ее истинных размерах, как по длине, так и по широте. По возвращении Беринга в Петербург результаты его экспедиции были встречены с большим скептицизмом. Это в итоге привело ко Второй Камчатской экспедиции, более известной как Великая Северная экспедиция 1733-1743 гг. Откуда такой скептицизм, и почему он до сих пор проявляется? В данной статье предпринята попытка дать ответы на вышеперечисленные вопросы и представить работу Витуса Беринга в более широком ракурсе, показать, насколько важны были эти экспедиции для современной России.

Ключевые слова: Витус Беринг, Семен Дежнев, Северо-Восточный проход, Охотск, царь Петр Великий, первая Камчатская экспедиция, Мартин Шпангсберг, Великая Северная экспедиция, Алексей Чириков, Георг Вильгельм Стеллер, русский Колумб, Аляска, Берингов пролив, остров Беринга.

The Russian Columbus

The Russian Columbus is actually a Dane named Vitus Jonassen Bering, in Russian Ivan Ivanovich Bering, and he was born on August 5 in 1681 in the Danish city of Horsens in the then Dano-Norwegian kingdom, and died in December in 1741 on Bering Island. He went to sea in an early age, travelling mostly to the West Indies and East India. In 1702 or the year after Vitus Bering had the good fortune to meet the Norwegian-Dutch Vice Admiral of the imperial Russian Navy, Cornelius Cruys (born as Niels Olufsen in Stavanger), in Amsterdam. In 1704 Vitus Bering became employed by Tsar Peter the Great and was given the rank of sub-lieutenant and then captain in the Russian navy. In 1704 Vitus Bering also became part of the Great Northern War campaigns, where he achieved great honours and the attention of Tsar Peter the Great. At the end of the Great Northern War in 1721 Russia was the most important power in the Baltic Sea and the Swedish imperialist dreams in the region were turned off forever [5, s. 63-65].

As the Swedish threat no longer existed and when the supremacy of the Baltic was Russian, it was time to conquer and explore other parts of the empire. Therefore, it became possible for Russia to search for the Northeast Passage and to find out whether Asia and America was one continent. After a controversy about not getting a higher officer rank to Vitus Bering, Tsar Peter the Great contacted the Dane, who lived in Vyborg in Karelia. In 1724 Bering was selected by Peter the Great to be captain and commissioned to lead the First Kamchatka expedition.

The term the *Russian Columbus* derives from a poem written by the Russian poet and polymath, Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765), a poet, who fundamentally influenced Russian poetry for centuries and the first Russian in 1745 to be appointed professor at the Russian Academy of Sciences in the newly founded city (1703) of Saint Petersburg:

*In vain does stern Nature
Hide from us the entrance
To the shore of the evening in the east
I see with wise eyes:*

A Russian Columbus speeding between ice floes

Defying the mystery of the ages.

(Mikhail Lomonosov, 1747)

The term the *Russian Columbus* gained a foothold in the Russian society of the time and in the Russian language. It was in the spirit of the 18th century to give Vitus Bering's sail to Alaska a kind of equalizing repetition from the Russian side of a European grand deed. Russian state patriotism in the 1700s was widely expressed as a pride in having brought it as far as the Western European nations or even beyond.

Northeast Passage and other voyages of discoveries

As well, the First as the Second Kamchatka expeditions were completely in the spirit of the time, too. In the 1300s, the 1400s and the 1500s, it had especially been the Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese who sought quicker routes to the riches of the Orient or America. Marco Polo (1271-1295), Christopher Columbus (1492), Vasco da Gama (1497), Hernan Cortes (1519) and Ferdinand Magellan (1521) are all examples of this fact. The Dano-Norwegian navigator and explorer Jens Munk (1579-1628) was very close to finding the Northwest Passage in 1620, but harsh climate, aggressive natives, scurvy and a somewhat unsuccessful expedition around the Hudson Bay meant he had to return to Denmark the same year.

Furthermore, during the 17th century the Dano-Norwegian merchant fleet built up its renown, challenging the Dutch and the English in Indian, South American and African sea areas. Successful whaling was also undertaken in the Arctic Sea area around Greenland and Svalbard. The Northwest Passage and Northeast Passage expeditions of the early 17th century must be seen in the light of this wish to expand commercial links even further. The Dano-Norwegian involvement in the Age of Discovery and the accompanying fact-finding led eventually to the first professorship in geography at Copenhagen University in 1635. This fact and the fact that Danish polar journeys and the exploration of Greenland were expanding in the 1700s and that Denmark-Norway was allied with which the Russian Empire play a very important role in the Dano-Russian relationship in the 1700s. On August 15, 1562 had already given the Danish Sea merchants the right to free trade in all of the Russian Arctic

area and the rest of Russia, must be taken into consideration to understand, why Tsar Peter the Great chose a Danish cartographer and explorer as captain of the First Kamchatka expedition [9, s. 88-93].

Unlike the icebound route of the Northwest Passage, the Northeast Passage is more navigable. The finding of the Northeast Passage is very old. Russian settlers and traders on the coast of the White Sea, the tribe of the Pomors, had been exploring parts of the route as early as the 11th century until the 1600s. The Pomors are not considered as a separate ethnic group of people but more as Russian traders and trappers. However, a Danish merchant trading in the Arctic in the 1600s could have told us more about the Pomors.

The Russian diplomat and philologist Dmitry Gerasimov (1465-1535) first proposed the first idea of a possible seaway connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans in 1525. In the 17th century Russian traders had established a continuous sea route to the Yamal peninsula and the Gulf of Ob, more than 1,500 Kilometres east of Arkhangelsk. However, the idea of the famous Northwest Passage constantly haunted the Russian government and changing tsars in both the 17th and 18th centuries. And after the Russians cleared the worst enemy of the road, Sweden, the world was now open to the east. Yet it was the Russian Columbus, who probed the northernmost reaches of the Pacific to discover that Asia and America were not connected. Compared to the abovementioned world famous Southern European, Vitus Bering's achievements were all the more magnificent when one considers the climatic and topographic difficulties.

Expansion of the Russian Empire and Semyon Dezhnev

Russia's conquest of the great lands of Siberia is one of recent history and has several parallels to the colonization of the North American continent. During all of the 1600s the Russians had extended their own eastern frontier, reaching the East Siberian coast and the Sea of Okhotsk by 1638. There were, however, inevitable border conflicts with China, the southern neighbour. In 1689 the expansionist Chinese Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) forced the Russians to concede the Amur Basin.

Nevertheless, Chinese imperialism never reached, as far north as the Kamchatka Peninsula and the peninsula has remained Russian since the year 1679. A little peculiar of all, however, is the fact that the documentation and the write-down on maps of the discovery of the Northeast Passage and the accurate mapping of the northeast coast of Asia was largely due to the ingenious work of a man who ironically came from the far side of the Eurasian continent, the Russian Columbus, Vitus Bering [1, s. 35].

Marauding parties of Cossack fur-trappers achieved this first pioneer work of discovering the most eastern parts of the vast empire. Russian knowledge, based on reports by the Cossacks, was in many ways better founded, but even so, there were many questions that needed to be answered. In reality, Vitus Bering was not the man who first discovered the later Bering Street. The name of this man was Semyon Ivanovich Dezhnev (1605-1673). He was Russian and a Pomor of origin and a fur-trapper and a Russian explorer. Nevertheless, he was illiterate and not a cartographer at all and did probably not understand nor what he had done or nor the importance of the scope of his discoveries.

In 1641 Semyon Dezhnev and his fellow Russian explorer Mikhail Stadukhin (died 1666) and a fellow northerner and Cossack reached the delta of the Indigirka River. Mikhail Stadukhin had been travelling around in Siberia since 1630. In 1643 Stadukhin reached the delta of the Kolyma River and was the founding father of one of first Russian settlements, Srednekolymsk on an island in the river, in this part of Siberia. Srednekolymsk was at first a so-called “ostrog”, and here the two explorers planned the journey from the Kolyma River to the Anadyr River, a river the local people have heard about. In 1648 Semyon Dezhnev’s journey began. The year after he reached the delta of the Anadyr River. Today the only visible thing in the landscape regarding his journey through the later Bering Street is the name of Cape Dezhnev. Cape Dezhnev is a cape that forms the eastern most mainland point of Asia and it is located on the Chukchi Peninsula [4, p. 28-29].

Seventy years later Tsar Peter the Great, who had travelled widely himself and who had been sent to London, Paris and Amsterdam on study and education trips,

sent an expedition off to the Kamchatka area. Furthermore, the Tsar was the first to insist on geodetic measurements on as well this small expedition as on the First Kamchatka expedition. The two Russians, the geodesist and explorer Ivan Yevrinov (1694-1724) and the geodesist and cartographer Fyodor Lushin (died 1727) led the expedition. In 1720 they reached the shores of Kamchatka. The reason for this expedition was the fear of the Tsar of English or Dutch colonizing of the basins and estuaries of the big Russian and Siberian, that emptied out into the Arctic Ocean. This stimulated his desire to unfold the mysteries to discover the Northeast Passage to China and America. Furthermore, in a way, the Russian Tsar, foresaw a so-called snowballing effect, of what a discovery of the Northeast Passage in northernmost sea of the Pacific Ocean could cause for Russian trade and power in the region.

The First Kamchatka expedition (1725-1730)

Finally, everything was ready to dispatch the expedition. Peter the Great signed the scientific project on December 23, 1724. He died only five weeks later. Peter the Great thought throughout his entire life great, but without regard to human costs. Many of the projects that have not been completed today seem like pure fantasies, but many of these projects were actually completed as well. It was characteristic of his ideas about the expanding of the Russian empire that he had almost unlimited confidence in what could be achieved through a unification of the navy, science and weaponry, if only the matter was tackled with the necessary energy.

Naval sailing, construction tasks and an almost inhumane pile of work. The first Kamchatka expedition contained all of Peter the Great's ingredients for exploration, conquest and mapping of major lands area. Furthermore, before the exploration of the coast could begin, it was necessary for him and his crew and scientific staff to traverse the whole of Siberia and build the necessary ships on the East Siberian coast near the city of Okhotsk and on the shore of Kamchatka [2, s. 134].

In three short points on January 6, 1725 Peter the Great points out his idea of sending out an expedition, which, in addition to geodesics with experience from Siberia, should include naval officers, sailors, ship carpenters and sailors. The expedition was to bring the necessary equipment for shipbuilding, incl. ropes, hoists,

small ship guns and ammunition all the long way out to the Pacific coast many thousands of miles to the east. It was simply Russia's new technology and the expensive boys of the sea, as well as the highly experienced foreign officers and captains, the Tsar set out in the struggle to find the Northeast Passage.

Where exactly the expedition ship should sail, when it was first built, is much discussed. No one quite knew which coasts he or she were sailing towards. Judging by Peter the Great's brief three-point instruction to Vitus Bering, the Tsar did not even believe that a strait existed between Asia and America. It is conceivable that Peter the Great imagined that the expedition would reach Spanish, English or French possessions in America if it began to sail north along Russia's east coast, and continued to follow the coast for a long time.

An obvious unrealistic phrase. For the simple reason that the mapmakers of the time did not know at all where the land-water boundary of the time went in the northern parts of the Pacific Ocean in the beginning of the 18th century. On the other hand the maps of the ancient day were filled with islands and land areas that you supposedly lay in straits and belts. Seen with European glasses, this unexplored area also constituted a political void, the card drawers knew even less where the state borders were to be placed. Not least as far as the latter was concerned Peter the Great undoubtedly wanted to contribute to the clarity of the future's boundaries in the northeastern corner of the empire.

The brief three-point instructions Tsar Peter the Great gave for the expedition have been the subject of different interpretations. The instructions read as follows partly in Evgeniy G. Kusharev's "Bering's search for the Strait: The First Kamchatka expedition 1725-1730 (North Pacific studies)" translated by E.A.P. Crownhart-Vaughan:

1. You are to build one or two sailing vessels, with decks, either on the coastline of Kamchatka or in some other place.

2. You are to proceed in those boats along the land that lies to the north, and according to the expectations (since the end is not known), it appears that land (is) part of America.

3. You are to search for the place where it is joined to America, and proceed to some settlement that belongs to a European power; or if you sight some European ship, find out from it what coast is called, and write it down; go ashore yourself and obtain accurate information; locate it on the map and return here.

Peter the Great's three points have prompted scholars to discuss the true intent of them. There are very different perceptions. The first researchers in the 1900s assumed that the two reasons for the expeditions were 1) to explore the eastern end of a possible Northeast Passage from Asia to the east or 2) that the purpose of the expedition was to find a route to America from Kamchatka. The expedition was simply to explore the land area called "Incognita" on the available maps of the eastern parts of Russia around 1725. The American researcher Carol Urness claims that the primary purpose of the expedition was mapping. Furthermore, she questions whether the discovery of the Northeast Passage was at all on Vitus Bering's agenda when he left Saint Petersburg in 1725. She bases this on the fact that there are not many scientific articles or dissertations focusing on the passage in the years until 1733. Especially from Tobolsk and eastward. Vitus Bering was a cartographer; the expedition did not attempt to find America and did not view America on their passage through the later Bering Strait [14, p. 17-20].

In 1977 the American Raymond H. Fischer published a book "Bering's voyages: whither and why?" [3]. The book that built on earlier research and writing by the Russian researcher Boris P. Polevoy, declared the longstanding belief that the First Kamchatka expedition was ordered to explore the North Pacific as part of a search for a Northeast Passage wrong. Instead Raymond H. Fisher proposed the thesis that Peter the Great had wanted Bering to sail to America, by a route southeast along a land called Essonis (or Jedso, Jesso) – an imaginary land or island area that existed on maps in the 1700s. In this case, however, the fact that Vitus Bering and his crew had gone against the aforementioned three short points from Peter the Great must be recalculated. Since Vitus Bering was given an explicit order to sail north, it must be regarded as mutiny against the Tsar's orders and very dangerous for Bering. Therefore, this thesis is doubtful [3, p. 77].

The facts, on the other hand, are that Aleksei Chirikov (1703-1748), Russian naval officer and second-in-command of the expedition, believed that Bering should order the members of the expedition to winter in the Kamchatka Peninsula for another winter, as the northeast passage could be considered proven if they reached the Kolyma River or the Arctic Ocean ice. However, Bering did not follow Chirikov's advice, but his Danish second-in-command Martin Spangsborg's (1696-1761) statements and returned to Saint Petersburg, whereby the proof of the passage was not definitively confirmed on the first expedition. This also earned Vitus Bering a reputation for annoyance and lack of exploration, for the rest of his life.

In his final report on the expedition Bering made a number of proposals to improve the efficiency of the management of these remote areas, the exploitation of the area's raw resources and the establishment of production and the improvement of living conditions for the local population. In addition, Bering called for greater self-discipline among the area's Cossacks and greater fairness among tax collectors, and he proposed a Russian governor sent to the Region to regulate these matters. Hostilities between the indigenous peoples such as the Koryaks and the Chukchi people were to be prevented through settlements and orderly trade.

Based on his knowledge of the Yakutsk's knowledge of the manufacture and use of iron, Bering proposed the establishment of actual iron extraction and iron production in Siberia, so that the need for long transports of iron for example shipbuilding disappeared. Production of resin and the like in Siberia and Kamchatka was another innovative proposal for the development of the new rural areas. The same was a proposal for the cultivation of livestock and agricultural production at Okhotsk and on parts of Kamchatka, which were also tried during expeditions in the said areas. Bering also found the area at the mouth of the Kamchatka River near the present city of Ust-Kamchatsk suitable for shipbuilding with a draft of eight to nine feet, so that the sea opportunities could be exploited. By extension, he proposed establishing a seaman's education for the local Cossack children and more generally establishing schools for the children of the indigenous population.

In Saint Petersburg the opinions of the whole tag about the expedition's results were very much discussed among scientists and navy officers. It was clear to everyone that Bering had not provided direct evidence that the Northeast Passage existed at all. Sceptics claimed he had therefore not proved anything. Officially, both official Russian government officials and Empress Anna Ioannovna (Anna of Russia) (1718-1746) welcomed the results of the secret expedition, which was revealed in the official government newspaper "Sankt-Peterburgskije Vedomosti", on March 16, 1730. Bering's almost epochal revealing of a possible Northeast Passage was later printed in a Copenhagen newspaper on April 20 of the same year with the words "...you can come by ship to Kamchatka and from there you can sail to China, Japan and the East Indies" [10, s. 26-27].

The Second Kamchatka expedition (1733-1743)

The work on the results of the First Kamchatka expedition pulled in long stretches, actually several years, and eventually slipped into the planning of the Second Kamchatka expedition proposed by Bering. In 1733 Bering was assigned to lead the Second Kamchatka expedition also called the Great Nordic expedition. It was one of the greatest expeditions of the 1700s and was characterized by the fact that Russia had a got a brand new Scientific Academy which puts its mark on the purpose of the second expedition in the northeastern parts of Russia. The expedition had different purposes: 1) to explore the north coast of Asia over several thousand kilometres, 2) to explore the still unknown Siberia and its vast expanses, nature and ethnography, 3) to assert Russian territorial claims on yet unknown land, and 4) to make trips across the unknown sea to America and Japan.

The scientific travel super team consisted of two well-known German professors: the historian and archaeologist Gerard Friederich Müller (1705-1783), the naturalist and chemist Johann Georg Gmelin (1709-1755) and two well-known Frenchman professors Louis De l'Isle Delacroyere (1685-1741), astronomer and his brother Joseph Nicolas De l'Isle (1688-1748), astronomer too. Among the Russian scientists Stepan Krasheninnikov (1711-1755) is worth mentioning. Together with the German botanist and zoologist Georg Wilhelm Steller (1709-1746),

Krashennnikov was a naturalist and geographer, who is famous for the first scientific records about the peninsula of Kamchatka. The travel journals of Georg Wilhelm Steller “Reise von Kamchatka nach Amerika mit dem Commandeur Capitän Bering” from the Second Kamchatka expedition are maybe the best known and well documented descriptions of the scientific epochal expedition [7, p. 171-172].

In addition, the Russians set high expectations about the final proof of the existence of the Northeast Passage. In addition to finding a shorter and faster route to India than the Spaniards and Portuguese had found south of Africa to increase trade, there was another reason for interest in the northeastern part of the vast empire. There was a need to secure both domestic trade relations and a clear system of state control and administration in a country that stretched for thousands of miles. In other words, a fast sea link between Russia's European territories and its far-eastern possessions was a clear advantage for the Russian state.

The expedition was extremely long. Officially it lasted about 10 years from 1733 to 1743, but in addition several years were added to the settlement of it. It began under the aforementioned Empress Anna Ioannovna and was one of her reign's (1730-1740) most prestigious prestige projects. But as time went on and the money rolled out of the treasury, without the real messages of epoch-making economic discoveries and major new markets coming in, a sneaking feeling in the government circles that it was all a costly failure. It was considered several times in the Russian state administration whether to replace Vitus Bering with a new expedition leader, but there were no obvious candidates who could do better. At the death of Empress Anna in 1740 the mood did not improve. The successor Empress Elizabeth I of Russia (1709-1762) has hardly had any personal interest in continuing the soon to be eight year old expedition. Incidentally, the War of the Austrian Succession was broken out in Europe in 1740 and it lasted until 1748. It was more important to take part in the war than in an expensive scientific expedition, it was believed in the government offices in Saint Petersburg. At the announcement of the death of Vitus Bering in 1741, but which took some time, almost 1½ year, to reach the Russian

capital, the final settlement of the second Kamchatka expedition, September 24, 1743, was at last adopted [11, s. 238-239].

There was no particular satisfaction in the Russian corridors of power with the result achieved. The Russian Senate wrote in a statement that the expedition had not met the objectives of the expedition. The actual conduct of the Second Kamchatka expedition and the return of the expedition's members seemed like a beaten army. In scattered order, the many participants returned home in small groups to Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Several of the participants were so marked by the effort that they died during their return journey or shortly afterwards, among other people, Georg Wilhelm Steller. In 1745 Bering's Danish next commander, Martin Spangsborg, who had made a trip to Japan, reached Saint Petersburg, where he was arrested for having left Siberia without proper permission. In other words the crew did not gain much recognition for their epoch-making scientific voyage around in the Bering Sea area, Alaska and Japan.

The Russian power elite, the Senate's sad finding, and great dissatisfaction with the results of the great expedition are an indication of the spirit of the time if all expeditions should end with increased market areas for Russian merchants in Asia and America. It must, however, be noted that these findings were an expression of a short-term, simultaneous consideration, with particular regard to the current state of the state finances. A more reasonable assessment, which has gradually emerged in the Russian government, would have noticed, not only the many geographical and zoological discoveries, the extremely extensive mapping of unprecedented Russian lands that removed many white spots on contemporary maps of Asia coasts and the North Pacific. It would also have noted that in 1745 Russia had become a solid Pacific power with a foothold in the Kuril Islands, Aleutians and Alaska. A tract of land that was first sold in 1867 to the United States for \$ 7.2 million.

Nor would it have ignored the importance of expeditions to the development of Siberia in such diverse areas as urban construction, including Kamchatka's largest port and capital, Petropavlovsk, which was built by Vitus Bering in 1740 and today

has nearly 200,000 inhabitants, shipbuilding, ironworks, schools, transport and postal services.

Changing images of Vitus Bering

“I returned with few results and useful discoveries, not through any fault of mine but because the Captain-Commander kept his promise to me so poorly that I was shown the mainland only from a distance and was finally put ashore for a few hours on three islands”. In 1741 Georg Wilhelm Steller makes no secret of what he means when he should characterize Vitus Bering leadership of the Second Kamchatka expedition. The sentence you can read in Steller’s travel Journals. “It is incomprehensible that there was no thought of real exploration and taking possession of the land discovered; one might almost conjecture that the general instructions issued must have been insufficient, or that in so distant parts all subordination and discipline had vanished.” Vitus Bering died in mid-December 1741 on the present Bering Island and therefore could not defend himself against Stellar's claims of his inability to lead and the lack of finger tips for the scientific purpose of the voyage. In addition to Georg Wilhelm Stellar's above statement, other participants in the expedition were also critical of Bering [13, p. 48-50].

In the 1750s two great travel descriptions came about the journey. Johann Georg Gmelin wrote the first “Reise durch Sibirien, von dem Jahr 1723 bis 1743”. A huge four-volume work that was a detailed account of the academic group's travels and studies on the Second Kamchatka expedition. A huge four-volume work that was a detailed account of the academic group's travels and studies on the Second Kamchatka expedition. Besides being written illegally by agreement with the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in 1751 and 1752, the Russian authority was not happy about content, critics of Bering and books either.

The other work, published in 1752, was “Explication de la carte des nouvelles découvertes au Nord de la Mer du Sud”. Joseph Nicolas Delisle was the author. In 1750 he had returned to Paris, where he in Paris’ Academy of Science presented the thought of the book. In his writing Delisle claimed to be the original originator of the second Kamchatka expedition when, with the presentation in 1731 of his map of the

North Pacific, he had led the Russians to launch a new expedition and, following Delisle's plans, to send Vitus Bering to the waters east of Kamchatka. Russian officials, however, violently argued with the Frenchman's description of the situation and asserted that both Joseph Nicolas De l'Isle and his brother Louis De l'Isle Delacroyere and their roles in the expedition were vastly exaggerated at the expense of Bering and Chirikov. According to de L'Isle, Bering was to be lost on Bering Island in the beginning of America's voyage, and Chirikov was mentioned only with the brother with such consequence that the discovery of America was due to Louis De l'Isle Delacroyere and Chirikov [5, s. 268-270].

Not least with the claim to be the originator of the whole expedition, Joseph Nicolas Delisle had taken more than steps too far. The reactions also did not appear at European level. In 1753 in a French and German edition, respectively, an anonymous Russian naval officer who vehemently opposed de l'Isle's claims issued a printed anonymous letter. The letter writer, presumed to be the historian Gerhard Friederich Müller, concluded that the Frenchman had neither inspired nor planned anything in connection with the second Kamchatka expedition, but on his own had done what he had been ordered to do. In 1754 the letter was published in English in London. Likewise, on Russian demand. Russian officials would not doubt what they thought about the Frenchman and his outrageous claims. In his own travel journals, Georg Friedrich Müller gave credit to Vitus Bering as leader of the two expeditions, although the German also had mixed feelings towards the Danish Captain-Commander. The positive characteristics outweigh the negatives ones [12, s. 85-87].

In the beginning of the 1800s came the first Russian books about the two expeditions. The Russian naval officer and historian Vasily Nikolaevich Berkh (1781-1834) published in 1823 the small monograph: "The First Sea Voyage by the Russians". Berkh had been to Russian America with Captain Lysyanskii on the first circumnavigation of the globe (1803-1806). Berkh compares Vitus Bering with Christopher Columbus, asserting that he had the same right to gratitude from those who used him in their service. Vitus Bering became part of the Russian patriotism and navy enthusiasm in the small monograph. The whole world has Christopher

Columbus, Great Britain has James Cook and Russia has Vitus Bering, wrote Berkh. The esteemed man, the worthy man and this famous man were repeated in the monograph. In 1833, ten years later, Berkh stated this view upon Bering in a new biography: “Biographies of the first Russian Admirals”.

Also the world famous British explorer James Cook (1728-1799), who made detailed maps of Newfoundland prior to making three voyages to the Pacific Ocean, during which he achieved the first recorded European contact with the eastern coastline of Australia and the Hawaiian Islands, and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand, was a great fan of Vitus Bering. What he admired most were the conditions under which Bering had conducted the two expeditions. The first where expedition participants had to cross more than three-quarters of Russia to reach Okhotsk. Furthermore, under the climatic conditions the expeditions were carried out. Indeed, it was the famous English navigator and explorer, Captain James Cook, who later that same century insisted that the strait separating the world's two greatest continents be named after Bering. Cook, in particular, had been a great admirer of Bering's bravery, endurance and map-work.

In Bering's own motherland, Denmark, the very first biography “Vitus Bering: the discoverer of Bering Strait” was published in 1885 by the Danish scholar and author Peter Lauridsen (1846-1923). In his biography Lauridsen combined the civilized and humane component of Bering's character with other items from the literary stuck. Lauridsen's task was to erect a memorial to Bering in the form of an outline of his life and work. The author's conclusion was that the Danish Captain-Commander in many ways was a little unfit for leadership of such an undertaking in a barbaric land, but he was not a poor leader, on the contrary [8, s. 94-95].

Perhaps the Danish author Thorkild Hansen (1928-1989) in the book “Resonance” from 2001, published after his dead, hits the nail on the head, when he writes that he found it surprising that lack of resolution and drive should characterise a man who devoted so much energy and so many years of his life to some extremely difficult voyages in remote regions. But on the other hand, an inner fracture of Vitus Bering's firm determination something comparable to what we today would call

metal fatigue suddenly showed itself. In other words, Bering preserved his Danishness even as an expatriate, for better and for worse [6, s. 51-58].

The broader perspective

Overall, the First and Second Kamchatka expeditions yielded a significantly greater benefit to Russia than was apparent from the immediate assessment of the time. Firstly, they allowed the Russian Empire to cement its supremacy in Siberia east of Ural and contributed to the building of the first real foundation of Siberia development. Secondly, the expeditions formed the basis of a series of valuable scientific descriptions of Siberia's geography, flora and fauna, ethnographic records, culture, peoples and history. Something that later set a precedent for future voyages of discovery, in which the sciences also played a significant role. Thirdly, they brought with it a number of geographical records and discoveries that led to a mapping of the Arctic coast, eastern Asia's northeastern coast and of the North Pacific, which removed white spots on the world map of the time. Finally, fourthly, they positioned Russia as the future Pacific superpower based on East Asia's northeastern coasts, as well as a foothold on the Kurils, Aleutians and Alaska [5, s. 265-266].

Therefore, although most of the expeditions' ambitious goals in the unknown land were actually achieved. On the other hand, from the mercantile thinking of the time, they were a great failure. None of the gains had made it possible to trade in new major marketplaces or got contact with US, French or Spanish merchants. Yes, the expeditions were probably only a waste of time, according to Russian officials. The facts, however, are that it took several centuries before the results were truly recognized. The two Kamchatka expeditions are still the subject of research in Denmark and Russia to this day in 2019, and as the Russian archives are opened, new aspects of the landmark history for Russia are still being revealed.

Conclusion

The story of the two Russian expeditions to Kamchatka, Alaska and Japan is a unique drama that contains all the essential ingredients of good history. Here are highs and lows, heroes and villains, the will of the state and great visions, small

people and intrigues on many levels, a mighty and violent nature, unimaginable stubbornness and deprivation, suffering and death, but also heroism, toughness and survival despite. The executing force was the Russian state and a very far-sighted Tsar Peter the Great, who must be seen as a kind of a pioneer in cartography. Initially, the expeditions are Russian history, but due to the gigantic area of operation and the many nationalities (Danish, French, German and Russian) who participated in the two expeditions, the history is also international. The two Kamchatka expeditions, of course, have a place in the history of geography, botany, cartography, science and shipping.

The purpose of the expeditions was from the outset scientific and ethnographic, but in the end, the mercantile thought triumphed and threw the expeditions into the excesses of oblivion of the Siberian mists. The disappointment of the Russian officials and the Tsarinas were painted in their faces as no new markets or peoples could be found. Therefore, during and after the two expeditions with scepticism, there were also the results of the expensive journeys in the unknown land. However, the last centuries has shown that the two journeys laid the foundation for Russia to become the second most powerful superpower on earth. Just like a modern Russian state was a result of the travels. Despite the criticism, Vitus Bering can rightly be called Russia's Christopher Columbus.

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Data about the author:

Christensen Carsten Sander – Doctor of History (PhD), curator of Billund Museum (Billund, Denmark).

Сведения об авторе:

Христенсен Карстен Сандер – доктор истории (PhD), куратор Музея Биллунда (Биллунд, Дания).

E-mail: csc@billund.dk.