

BOOK REVIEW

WALRAVENS, Hartmut: *Johann Redowskys Reise von Irkutsk nach Kamtschatka (1806–1807) im Auftrag der Akademie der Wissenschaften. Das wissenschaftliche Tagebuch des Forschers – Botanik – Geologie – Ethnographie der Jakuten und Tungusen.* Norderstedt: Books on Demand (BoD), 2018, 165 pp., ISBN 9783748188971.

Reviewed by Michael Knüppel
Liaocheng University, Liaocheng
e-mail: michaelknueppel@gmx.net

Received: December 9, 2019 • Accepted: August 30, 2020

© 2020 Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest



Who in our time knows or has respectively ever heard about the medical scientist, botanist and geologist Johann Redowsky (1774–1807) before he was recollected by H. Walravens through some of his works of the last decade?¹ For the few ones who ever heard about him, he was especially known as a naturalist, who was sent to Siberia because of scientific purposes. The fact that Redowsky also dealt with the material as well as the spiritual cultures of Siberian peoples at the turn to the 19th century, was either nearly unknown or for the few ones who ever read about this at best familiar as a marginal note in old Russian treatises of the Academy of Sciences, since nearly nobody was informed about the existence of Redowsky's ethnographical records till the editorial efforts of H. Walravens.

In his edition of the travel account² under review here the editor gives a biographical sketch of Johann Redowsky (pp. 7–12) in the introduction, after that he figures the travel account (“Reise-journal”) itself (pp. 12–16) and gives a useful compilation of the literature about the Yakuts at the

¹ WALRAVENS, Hartmut 2015. ‘Johann Redowskys Reise von Irkutsk nach Kamtschatka.’ In: Ingrid KÄSTNER / Jürgen KIEFER (eds.) *Reisen von Ärzten und Apothekern im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. [Europäische Wissenschaftsbeziehungen 10.] Aachen: Shaker, 103–134; WALRAVENS, Hartmut 2016. ‘Johann Redowskys Beschreibung der Jakuten (1807). Eine frühe, bisher unveröffentlichte Monographie.’ In: Ingrid KÄSTNER / Wolfgang GEIER (eds.) 2016. *Deutsch-russische kulturelle und wissenschaftliche Wahrnehmungen und Wechselseitigkeiten vom 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert*. [Europäische Wissenschaftsbeziehungen 11.] Aachen: Shaker, 133–165; WALRAVENS, Hartmut 2017. ‘Die Forschungsreise des Memeler Arztes Johann Redowsky von Jakutsk nach Ochotsk im Auftrage der St. Petersburgs Akademie der Wissenschaften (1806). Dritter Teil.’ In: Ingrid KÄSTNER / Michael SCHIPPAN (eds.) *Deutsch-russische Zusammenarbeit wissenschaftlicher und kultureller Institutionen vom 18. zum 20. Jahrhundert*. [Europäische Wissenschaftsbeziehungen 14.] Aachen: Shaker, 73–104.

² The manuscript most likely is a transcription of an original, which is kept in St. Petersburg. This copy ended up by the estate of Joseph Rehmann in the inventory of the Fürstlich-Fürstenbergische Hofbibliothek Donaueschingen in the section of manuscripts of the Württembergische Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart, where it is registered under the shelfmark “Cod. Don. C I 11”.

turn of 18th to 19th century (pp. 16–21). The scholarly research of the Yakuts was not started by J. G. Gmelin, of course, as mentioned on p. 16, since N. C. Witsen already provided the first substantial information on them. Regarding the language of the Yakuts, for example, Ph. J. v. Strahlenberg, about whom the author writes in the introduction that “[a]lthough Strahlenberg had already given valuable information. [...]” (“zwar hatte schon Strahlenberg wertvolle Hinweise gegeben [...]”) (ibid.), has been of much more importance than Gmelin, since he provided us with extensive material in the form of a rich vocabulary. In addition, C. H. Merck, who participated in the Billings-Sarychev-expedition as a medical doctor – actually the “Secret astronomical and geographical expedition for the discovery of Eastern Siberia and Alaska” (“Geheime astronomische und geographische Expedition zur Erforschung Ostsibiriens und Alaskas”) – of the years 1785–1794, is especially to be mentioned because the information given in the work of J. Billings, but also of G. A. Sarychev, were based on the material gathered by Merck (as well as other participants of the expedition – mainly M. Sauer and M. Rohbeck). By the way, Merck’s ethnographical records about the Yakuts were published for the first time in 1806,³ later once again in 1823.⁴ To complete all this, the names of some further authors of that time could be added (e. g. G. F. Müller, P. S. Pallas or H. J. (v.) Klaproth); however, the literature should not be supplemented at this point – especially since H. Walravens on the one hand does not claim to give a complete sketch of the Yakutological literature of the period in question, and on the other hand focuses on the ethnographic research of that time and not on the history of Yakut language research.

The introduction is not completely free of minor mistakes: regarding Ph. J. v. Strahlenberg we have to note that the order of his personal names are confused on p. 16, his title is omitted (till 1707 his name was “Tabbert”, thereafter “von Stralenberg”, a name that he later transferred into the German spelling “von Strahlenberg”), and in the title of his work we have to read “Ostliche” instead of “östliche” as given here. On p. 7, “Jakutien” has to be given in brackets, because Gizhiginsk is not located in that greater area, but at the shore of the Okhotsk Sea. In note 28 read “Chodzidło” instead of “Chodzidlo”. In footnote 2, the editor writes: “The mother’s name was Luise Koch, so the tradition quoted must be dismissed as a legend.” (“Die Mutter hieß Luise Koch, so daß die zitierte Überlieferung als Legende abzutun ist.”) – what the “tradition quoted” (“zitierte Überlieferung”) refers to remains somehow unclear. On p. 158, the name of the Yakut prince *Moscheul* (mentioned on p. 138) has to be added and on p. 19, lines 17–22 are accidentally given nearly word by word once again on p. 20, lines 7–12.

The pages 25–156 follow the edition of the “Record of the journey from Irkuzk to Kamdschadka” (“Tagebuchs der Reise von Irkuzk nach Kamschadka”). Of course, there is a slight lack of references to the previous partial editions by the editor – this is due, however, to the fact that the present version extends beyond the previous contributions and also has numerous improvements to show. The edition itself – in which formal information on the original manuscript (with information on legibility of the text, line breaks, number of lines, state of preservation, etc.) was deliberately largely omitted – was apparently completely read or “deciphered”, so that only very few references to uncertain readings or omissions have to be made. In addition, it should be noted that the diary consists of two parts (I: 1^r–45^r and II: 1^r–80^v) and that the inventory also contains a

³ MERCK, Carl Heinrich (1806/2014): ‘Von der Herkunft, dem Glauben und den Bräuchen der Jakuten (translated by Natalia Astrin).’ In: Dittmar DAHLMANN / Diana ORDUBADI / Helena PIVOVAR (eds.) Carl Heinrich MERCK: „Beschreibung der Tschuktschi, von ihren Gebräuchen und Lebensart“ sowie weitere Berichte und Materialien. Göttingen: Wallstein, 328–352.

⁴ [MERCK, Carl Heinrich] 1823. ‘Schilderung der Jakuten.’ *St. Petersburgische Zeitschrift* 9: 190–226.



“fair copy” (“Reinschrift”) (by another hand) with numerous corrections (III: 1^r–79^r).⁵ Of course, hardly anything can be said about the possible improvements to the reading by the editor without consulting of the original manuscript, even though we can find some writings, that most likely reflect slips of the pen, e. g. read on p. 78, line 25 “Gebete” instead of “Gebote”.

The volume is closed by a register of persons (pp. 157–159), a botanical register (pp. 161–164), as well as a compilation of the stations of the journey (p. 165). The readers would have also wished to have a subject index or at least indices of the Russian, Tungus and Yakut forms used in the diary – but it is probably in the nature of working on manuscripts such as the travel diary made available here that almost every reader desires something else. To the fact that further processing had to be omitted, is already pointed out by the edition of the volume under review (p. 16) and the editor also expresses his wish that other experts should treat the historical and ethnographic study of the material in more detailed manner (pp. 19–20) – the reviewer at least will deal with the Tungus and Yakut linguistic materials on another occasion more extensively. Because of this, further remarks are omitted here.

The edition presented by Hartmut Walravens for sure is one of the really important publications on the history of Yakut studies, because he provides a mosaic piece that is significant in many respects. The author / editor is right here with his appropriate but a little bit too modest statement that “the study of the Yakuts started with Johann Georg Gmelin [...] Reviewing the following chronological compilation, it becomes obvious, that the next comprehensive description of value [as a source] was that of von Middendorff. [...] This chronological gap has now been filled by Redowsky” (“Die Erforschung der Jakuten beginnt mit Johann Georg Gmelin [...] Überblickt man die folgende chronologische Zusammenstellung, so wird deutlich, daß die nächste umfassende Darstellung mit bedeutendem Quellenwert die von Middendorff ist. [...] Diese zeitliche Lücke füllt nun Redowsky.”) (p. 16; in a similar way in the case of the Tungusology – in this case it is the assumed gap between J. G. Georgi and von Middendorff – p. 21). In conjunction with the other sources given by the author in the introduction, the diary does actually not only form a transition between the records, originating from the Billings–Sarychev-expedition (resp. Georgi) and von Middendorff’s studies, but also forms a rich source text that must be evaluated in the context of other contemporary reports and records. To have made them accessible to us – and to have made them known for the first time – is the merit of Hartmut Walravens, who once again impressively demonstrated his extraordinary instinct for finding and preparing treasures, kept in the divisions of manuscripts of libraries, collections or archives, and pluck them from the claws of oblivion. The fact that we are dealing with an important testimony of Sibiristics from the first years of the 19th century here should, of course, not only please the reviewer – and one can justifiably say that not only J. Redowsky but also the author / editor himself immortalized his name in the book of Yakut research history with this edition.

⁵ LIMBECK, Sven: *Die Handschriften der Fürstlich Fürstenbergischen Hofbibliothek Donaueschingen in der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart: „Nachtragsbestand“ Cod. Don. A 11 – Cod. Don. G III 1* (in print).

