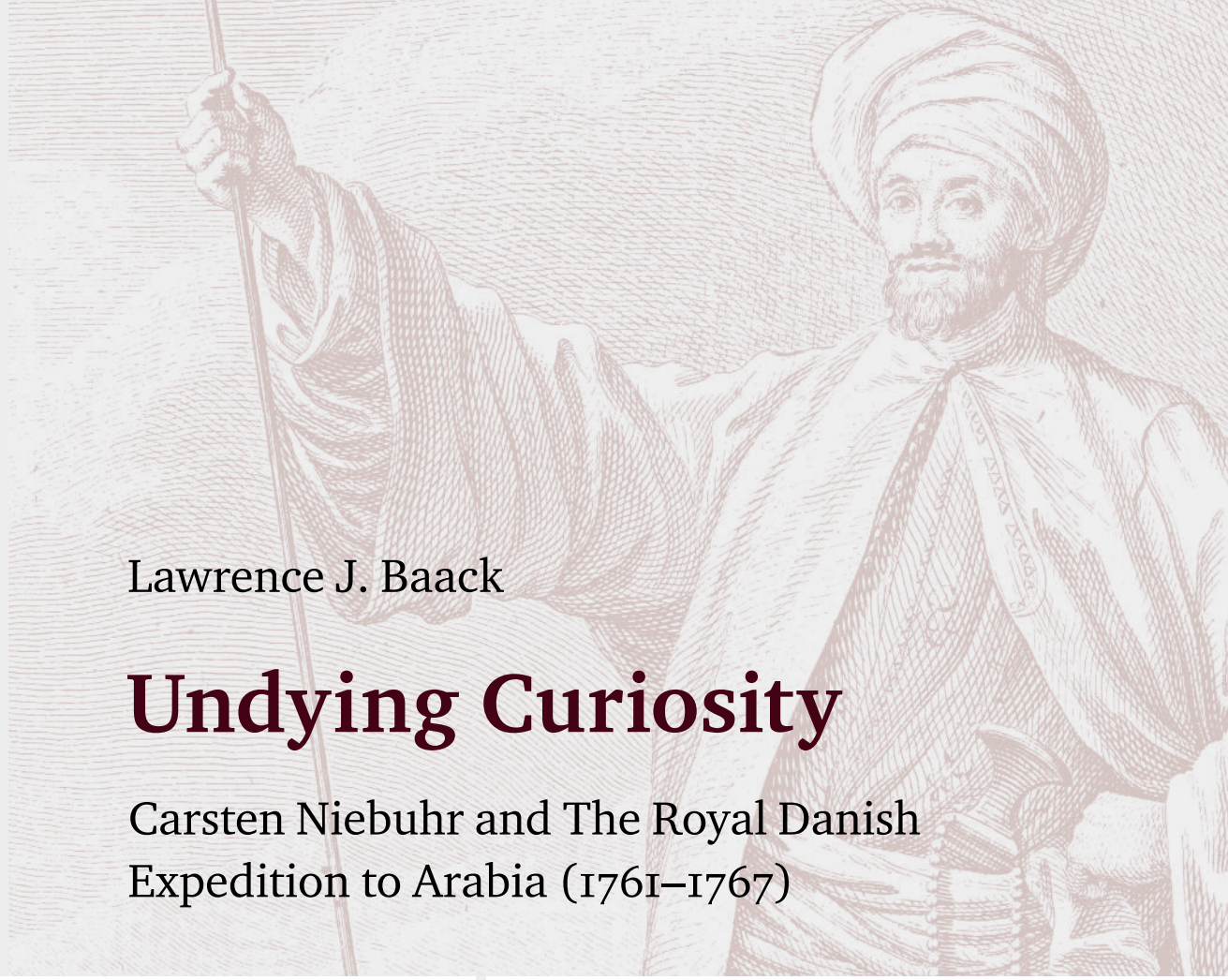

Lawrence J. Baack

Undying Curiosity

Carsten Niebuhr and The Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia (1761–1767)

History

Oriens et Occidens 22

Franz Steiner Verlag

Lawrence J. Baack
Undying Curiosity

ORIENS ET OCCIDENS

Studien zu antiken Kulturkontakten und ihrem Nachleben

Herausgegeben von Josef Wiesehöfer

in Zusammenarbeit mit Pierre Briant, Amélie Kuhrt,

Fergus Millar und Robert Rollinger

Band 22

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Cover illustration: Carsten Niebuhr in the attire of a distinguished Arab in Yemen, the clothing a gift from al-Mahdī 'Abbās, Imam of Yemen, drawn in Copenhagen, from Carsten Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern,* 2 vols. Copenhagen (1774–1778), Vol. I, Tab. LXXI.

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To Jane,

With much Love in celebration of our Golden Wedding Anniversary

September 12, 2014

Contents

Acknowledgments

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siasm for and interest in the project, and, of course, his marvelous support as the main Editor of the series *Oriens et Occidens*. Jürgen Osterhammel, Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Konstanz, also took time to critically evaluate the draft manuscript, bringing to bear on the subject his extraordinarily broad and stimulating perspective on the character of the European travel and exploration experience in Asia during the closing decades of the eighteenth Century. I am very grateful for his comments and encouragement. Stig Rasmussen, recently retired Head of the Department of Orientalia and Judaica at the wonderful Royal Library in Copenhagen, who did pioneering work on the history of the expedition and its scientific results, carefully read the entire manuscript and was very helpful in many other ways, including making available a sample of the valuable manuscripts Haven purchased during the expedition, as well as the manuscript of Haven's travel diary. I very much appreciate his support of this study. The book also benefitted from the helpful comments and interest of Michael Harbsmeier, Professor at the Department of Culture and Identity at Roskilde University. He took the time to read the entire manuscript. Here in Berkeley, I want to express my thanks to Ira Lapidus, Professor of Middle Eastern History, Emeritus, who was kind enough to read all of the sections dealing with the descriptions of Islamic societies, helping me to avoid obvious errors. Also Robert Middlekauff, Preston Hotchkis Professor of American History, Emeritus, was very supportive of my work on the project, read most of the manuscript and was extremely helpful in a number of other very important ways. It is a special pleasure to express my gratitude to him. Finally, I also want to thank Søren Møller Christensen at Forlaget Vandkunsten who took a very early interest in this project and has been very helpful in a number of ways including very generously sharing the high quality images of some of the illustrations in this book.

Obviously, the natural sciences were a very important part of the work of the expedition and thus a central component of an examination of it. Not being a botanist or zoologist, I have been dependent on the knowledge of others for the evaluation of my discusssion of those topics. No one has been more helpful in this regard than Ib Friis, Professor of Botany at the University of Copenhagen and the Natural History Museum of Denmark, Botanical Museum. He reviewed many sections of the manuscript and helped me navigate through some of the technical aspects of Forsskål's research, of which he has unparalled knowledge. He also took time to show me Forsskål's large Herbarium at the Botanical Museum, and together with Peter Rask Møller, Curator of Fishes and Associate Professor of Zoology, Zoological Museum, to whom I am also grateful, Forsskål's fish herbarium and the other remaining preserved specimens from the expedition. Regarding Forsskål, I would also like to thank Lars Hansen of the IK Foundation and Editor-in-Chief of the very valuable Linnaeus Apostles project for commenting on the first chapters of the manuscript, for being helpful in a variety of other ways, and for granting permission to use a passage from their translation of Forsskål's Journal.

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Introduction

On November 10, 1753, the members of the *Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* (The Royal Society, later Academy, of Sciences) in Göttingen, gathered, as they did each year at this time, to celebrate the endowment of the Society by the Elector of Hanover. A thirty-six year old professor of philosophy, Johann David Michaelis, gave the main address. His talk focused on the need to send a scholar, fully conversant in Arabic, to Palestine and Arabia to investigate the geography, natural history and language of the region in order to better understand the Bible as a cultural document of the ancient Israelite civilization. His attention was drawn especially to Arabia, which he judged had been little affected through the centuries by foreign conquest or foreign trade. There he believed "the old customs of the House of Abraham" would be still discernible.[1] Around the same time, under less exalted circumstances, a young man of rural background was working on his relatives' farm located on the North Sea coast, near the mouth of the Elbe River. His education at the school in the local town had been interrupted by the early death of his father (his mother had already died when he was six weeks old). His name was Carsten Niebuhr.[2] He was an unlikely candidate to carry out Michaelis' call for new scholarship on the Hebrew Bible in the Middle East.

1 *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, 139 (17 November 1753): 1241–1244.

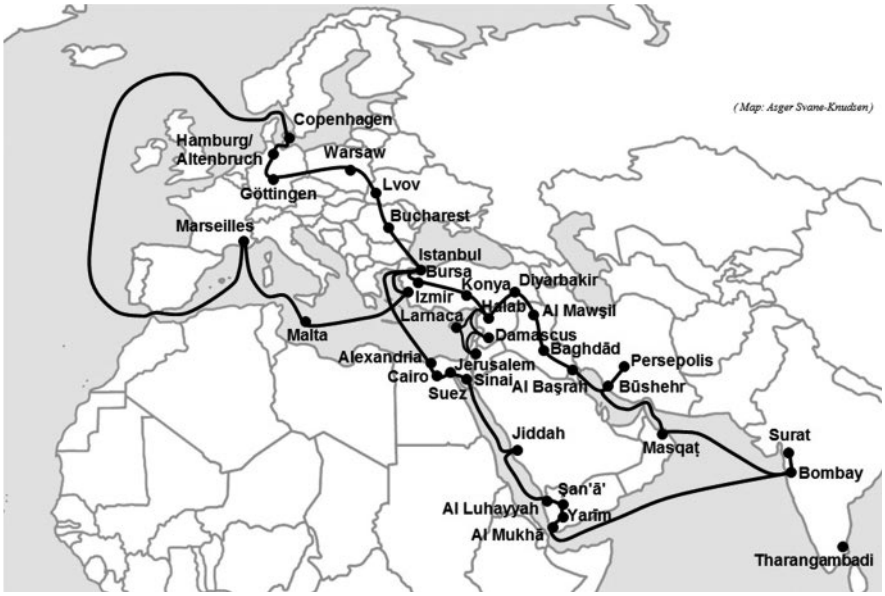
2 Dieter Lohmeier, "Heinrich Wilhelm Schmeelkes Biographie seines Onkels Carsten Niebuhr,"

How the professor of philosophy and the farm boy came together with the help of the King of Denmark-Norway to produce one of the great journeys of exploration and investigation in the Eighteenth Century is the subject of this study. The study has two themes. One is the idea of an expedition; not only what the idea represented, but also how it evolved and was transformed by the influences of others and by the difficult realities of an expedition. The other is the life story of the young man and the expedition – an account of exploration, adventure, tragedy, courage and, above all else, curiosity. Both played out in the changing environment of the Northern European Enlightenment and the stimulating setting of the Middle East. The journey that resulted from the intertwining of these two themes within the milieu of 18th Century Europe and the lands of the Arab world was the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, or in Denmark usually, *Den Arabiske Rejse*, The Arabian Journey.

Funded by the King of Denmark-Norway, Frederik V (1723–1766), the expedition brought together a team of six men – a philologist, a botanist/zoologist, a cartographer/astronomer, a physician, a professional illustrator and an orderly. It was a truly Northern European group – two Danes, two Germans and two Swedes. The party left Copenhagen in January 1761, and in that year traveled by ship to Istanbul and Alexandria. They then visited Cairo and the Sinai Peninsula before traversing the Red Sea via Jiddah to Yemen, which was the group's main destination. After investigating Yemen the journey took the expedition across the Arabian Sea to Bombay before entering the Persian Gulf and visiting Shīrāz, Persepolis, al Başrah (Basra), Baghdād, al Mawşil (Mosul), Halab (Aleppo), Damascus, Jerusalem and Cyprus. Thus, the expedition circumnavigated the Arabian Peninsula, and touched upon a number of neighboring territories, and India, along the way. The return trip overland crossed Anatolia to Istanbul, and then home by way of Bucharest and Warsaw to Copenhagen, returning in November of 1767. The expedition lasted almost seven years, and of the original six participants, only one, Carsten Niebuhr, survived through the fourth year. For the remaining years he continued the work of the expedition as a solitary explorer.

As an historical event, the expedition stands out for a number of reasons. At the human level it is simply an incredible tale of personal courage and unrelenting intellectual curiosity. As an endeavor in exploration, it was the only major scientific expedition to emanate from Scandinavia and Germany in the entire 18th Century, and it was primarily land-based, less common in an era noted for seaborne exploration, principally in the Pacific. Institutionally it was unique because its purpose, methodologies and organization were shaped by the universities of Northern Europe, namely Göttingen, Copenhagen and Uppsala. It operated solely as a scholarly endeavor. It was always called "*die gelehrte Gesellschaft*," "the scholarly party or association". It was not part of a military unit or some other government agency; and

Jahrbuch der Männer vom Morgenstern 88 (2009): 193–194. Also see Barthold Georg Niebuhr, *Carsten Niebuhrs Leben*, in his *Kleine Schriften* (Bonn, 1828), 5–7.



The Route of the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia 1761–1767*

despite many difficulties, the expedition produced an abundance of valuable scientific results that were applauded in the 18th Century, and are still impressive today. Its cultural and geographic descriptions of Arabia and parts of the Ottoman Empire with their emphasis on people and religions, were the most comprehensive, accurate and unbiased available in that era. Its maps constituted the most important contribution to the cartography of the region produced in the 18th Century. It greatly advanced the science of navigational astronomy, particularly its use in hydrography and cartography, and the determination of longitude. Its work in the natural sciences – botany and zoology (especially marine biology) – led to important scientific discoveries pioneering for the times, that are still valued today in those fields. Finally, its meticulous examination of various antiquities introduced new scholarly standards to that kind of work and contributed to the understanding of several ancient languages.[3]

* From, with permission, Asger Svane-Knudsen, "Den Arabiske Rejse og Asiatiske Kompagni 1763–1766. Fire breve og den veksel fra Carsten Niebuhr i Bombay til guvernør Abbestée i Trankebar." *Danske Magazin* 51/2 (2012): 483–513.

3 Its significance is summarized in Stig T. Rasmussen, "'Niebuhriana' in Kopenhagen," in *Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) und seine Zeit*, ed. Josef Wiesehöfer and Stephan Conermann (Stuttgart, 2002); Dietmar Henze, "Carsten Niebuhr und sein Beitrag zur Erforschung des Orients," the Foreword to the reprint of Carsten Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und den umliegenden Ländern*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen/Hamburg, 1774–1837), reprint ed. (Graz, 1968), I, pp. III–XXII; the same author's "Carsten Niebuhrs Bedeutung für die Erdkunde von Arabien," Foreword to the reprint of Carsten Niebuhr, *Beschreibung von Arabien* (Copenhagen, 1772), reprint ed. (Graz,

Modern popular interest in the expedition was awakened first by the entertaining historical novel, *Det Lykkelige Arabien*, by Thorkild Hansen, published in Denmark in 1962.[4] In more recent years there also has been renewed scholarly interest in the expedition in Denmark and Germany. This was first stimulated by an exhibition in Riyadh organized by the *Kongelige Bibliotek* (Royal Library) in Copenhagen and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon the occasion of the visit of Queen Margrethe II to Saudi Arabia in 1984. The exhibit subsequently was expanded and then shown at the *Kongelige Bibliotek* in Copenhagen, the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek* in Kiel and the *Dithmarscher Landesmuseum* in Meldorf in 1986 and 1987. The exhibition included a substantial scholarly catalog.[5] In 1990, Stig Rasmussen, the author of the exhibition catalog, produced a handsome volume on the expedition concentrating especially on a fuller discussion of its results and significance. It included chapters by specialists in a variety of fields and was published in cooperation with the *Kongelige Bibliotek* with support from the crown.[6] This scholarly activity in Denmark has been complemented by work in Germany. The Center for Asiatic and African Studies at the Christian-Albrechts University in Kiel convened in Eutin a symposium entitled "*Carsten Niebuhr und seine Zeit*." It brought together scholars on the Middle East, geographers, natural scientists, philologists, theologians and historians. The proceedings of the symposium, edited by Josef Wiesehöfer and Stephan Conermann and published in 2002, included an outstanding group of specialized papers on the expedition and its meaning.[7] Individual scholars in Germany have also produced a number of very valuable works. These have included especially Dieter Lohmeier, who has published a series of important essays and collections of letters on Niebuhr and the expedition, based on extensive work in the archives.[8] In addition, the fine book publisher, Forlaget Vandkunsten,

1969), pp. III–XIII; and Stephan Conermann, "Carsten Niebuhr und das *orientalistische Potential* des Aufklärungsdiskurses – oder: Ist das Sammeln von Daten unverdächtig?" in *Carsten Niebuhr*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Conermann, pp. 404–405.

4 Thorkild Hansen, *Det Lykkelige Arabien* (Copenhagen, 1962). It was translated into English in 1964 by James and Kathleen McFarlane, and published as *Arabia Felix. The Danish Expedition of 1761–1767* (New York, 1964). It is the only extensive account of the expedition in English. While lively and interesting as a novel, Hansen's work is not reliable as a historical study.

5 Stig T. Rasmussen, *Carsten Niebuhr und die Arabische Reise 1761–1767. Ausstellung der Königlichen Bibliothek Kopenhagen in Zusammenhang mit dem Kultusministerium des Landes Schleswig-Holstein* (Heide, 1986).

6 Stig T. Rasmussen, ed., *Den Arabiske Rejse 1761–1767. En dansk ekspedition set i vedenskabshistorisk perspektiv* (Copenhagen, 1990).

7 Wiesehöfer and Conermann, eds., *Carsten Niebuhr.*

8 Dieter Lohmeier, "Ein Leben im Zeichen der Arabischen Reise: Carsten Niebuhr," in his collection of essays entitled, *Die weltliterarische Provinz. Studien zur Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte Schleswig-Holsteins um 1800* (Heide, 2005), 187–244; the same author's "Gregorius Wiedemann (1735–1762). Ein unbekannter Schüler Carl von Linnés und Freund Carsten Niebuhrs aus Kopenhagen," *Fund og Forskning* 41 (2007): 57–87; "Carsten Niebuhr, Tobias Mayer und die Längengrade," *Fund og Forskning*, 42 (2008): 73–114; "Monddistanzen und Längengrade.

in cooperation with the University of Copenhagen and the C.L. Davids Foundation, has published new Danish translations of Niebuhr's main works and an excellent critical edition of the diary of one of the other participants.[9] That same publisher will also be issuing a new, scholarly, English translation of Niebuhr's major work, which is badly needed. Finally, there has been continuing interest in the natural history results of the expedition. In 1994, The Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, and the Botanical Museum, Copenhagen, published a detailed update of the pioneering botanical studies completed by the expedition's Swedish naturalist, Peter Forsskål, entitled *The Plants of Pehr Forsskål's 'Flora Aegyptiaco-Arabica'*, by F. Nigel Hepper and Ib Friis. Most recently, the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters has issued an analysis of the very valuable use of Arabic in Forrskål's description of Middle Eastern flora, entitled *The Arabic Plant Names of Peter Forsskål's flora Aegyptiaco-Arabica*, by Philippe Provençal.[10]

The history of the expedition is noteworthy because it provides so many opportunities for useful analysis of the period. For example, the Danish project took place at a time in Europe that saw the integration on a new scale of exploration and the sciences. By the 18th Century much of the world had been explored by Europeans in the most basic sense. With the notable exception of the far reaches of the Pacific and Antarctica, and isolated regions such as Siberia and Arabia, the configuration of the world's land masses at their peripheries in the most general sense was known. What the 18th Century experienced was the deployment of a range of scientific disciplines in support of more detailed exploration of areas already known in only a superficial way by Europeans. The three voyages of James Cook to the Pacific, the imperial Russian expeditions to Siberia, Kamchatka and the Caucasus, the Spanish royal scientific expeditions to South America, and indeed, the Lewis and Clark expedition to the American West at the end of our period, all had a strong, but certainly not exclusive, scientific focus and usually were staffed with men professionally trained in the natural sciences and other disciplines. In another arena, some

Der Briefwechsel zwischen Carsten Niebuhr und Tobias Mayer 1761," *Fund og Forskning* 49 (2010): 135–165; and his "Carsten Niebuhr: Briefe von der Arabischen Reise," *Dithmarschen*, 13 installments, 2004–2009, whose accompanying commentaries provide a great deal of detailed information about the expedition. This last work has been expanded and elaborated in a book-length study entitled *Mit Carsten Niebuhr im Orient. Zwanzig Briefe von der Arabischen Reise 1760–1767* (Heide, 2011), and is an essential work on the expedition. Finally see his aricle, co-authored with Stig Rasmussen, "Carsten Niebuhrs Stambog," *Fund og Forskning* 49 (2010):103–133.

9 See Carsten Niebuhr, *Rejsebeskrivelse fra Arabien og andre omkringliggende lande*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 2003), which includes an informative Introduction by Michael Harbsmeier, and *Beskrivelse af Arabien ud fra egne iagttagelser og i landet selv samlede efterretninger* (Copenhagen, 2009); also Anne Haslund Hansen and Stig T. Rasmussen, eds., *Min Sundheds Forliis. Frederik Christian von Havens Rejsejournal fra Den Arabiske Rejse 1760–1763* (Copenhagen, 2005).

10 F. Nigel Hepper and Ib Friis, *The Plants of Pehr Forsskål's 'Flora Aegyptiaco-Arabica'. Collected on the Royal Danish Expedition to Egypt and Yemen 1761–63* (Kew, 1994); and Philippe Provençal, *The Arabic Plant Names of Peter Forsskål's flora Aegyptiaco-Arabica* (Copenhagen, 2010).

nineteen students of the great Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, sometimes attached individually as a kind of one-person scientific team to various exploratory and commercial ventures that touched many parts of the globe, were experimenting with a new kind of scientific travel.[11] Peter Forsskål, the naturalist for the Danish expedition, was one of Linnaeus' most capable students. In this setting of scientific exploration and travel the Danish expedition provides opportunities for comparative analysis with other expeditions of this era and particularly distinguishes itself. It assembled a multi-disciplinary team of scholars who prepared specifically for the trip, and the role of the university as an institution in the expedition is particularly noteworthy and precedent setting. It was not predominantly ship-based, nor in the field part of a European military presence or other manifestation of European power. Its findings were unusually broad and scientifically rigorous. Indeed because there is no evidence that territorial, military, commercial or proselytizing objectives were behind its sponsorship, it has been called by some the first modern, purely scientific or scholarly expedition in history.[12]

It is precisely its essentially scientific or scholarly character that has led some scholars to see the Danish expedition as a prime example of what Mary Louise Pratt has articulated as the Enlightenment's "anti-conquest conquest" of non-European lands through the phenomenon of European scientific travel. Exploring the relationship between scientific research and European imperialism, she argues that what is notable about such travel is that "within its innocence the naturalist's quest does embody … an image of conquest and possession."[13] Then utilizing Pratt's analysis the expedition has been described by other scholars as "an ideological exercise in domination."[14] Our examination of the Danish Arabian journey as a case study of 18th Century exploration concludes that this is an incorrect characterization of the expedition. It simply does not present most of the essential elements of Pratt's thesis. As the obliteration of local language and culture is a central consequence of scientific travel according to Pratt, the expedition by way of contrast, in its method-

11 For the students of Linnaeus see the important multi-volume project, *The Linnaeus Apostles. Global Science and Adventure*, edited by Lars Hansen, 8 vols. in 11 (London, 2009–2012), which has published in English translation the scientific foreign travel journals of the students of Linnaeus.

12 See Wiesehöfer and Conermann, Preface, and Lohmeier, "Carsten Niebuhr. Ein Leben im Zeichen der Arabischen Reise," both *Carsten Niebuhr*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Conermann, 11 and 17 respectively. Also see Hanno Beck, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1959–1961), I: 3 and 85.

13 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (London, 2008), 55, and see especially Chapters 3 and 4. She does not specifically reference the Danish Expedition, but is especially interested in the scientific travel inspired by Linnaeus.

14 Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible. Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, 2005), 197; and Jonathan M. Hess, "Johann David Michaelis and the Colonial Imaginary: Orientalism and the Emergence of Racial Antisemitism in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (2000): 80. This article also comprises Chapter Two in his *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven, 2002), and see specifically 78.

ologies of investigation, and its written accounts and findings, is notable for its retention of local language usage, its acknowledgment of local inhabitants as the sources for its information and its respect for rural peoples and cultures.

The expedition also was a quintessential endeavor of the Enlightenment in Northern Europe, integrating different intellectual developments that were taking place in Germany, Denmark and Sweden. As a historical concept the meaning of the Enlightenment is much debated, and a discussion of that debate is well beyond the scope of this study.[15] But briefly within that discussion, an examination of both the experience and the intellectual products of the expedition supports a pluralistic view both of scientific exploration as an activitiy and institutional manifestation of the Enlightenment process, and of the Enlightenment itself in a broader context. At the same time it also exhibits some of the core beliefs identified typically with the Enlightenment such as a robust curiosity about the wider world in its many dimensions, empiricism, religious toleration, cosmopolitanism, opposition to oppression and respect for human dignity. More specifically, the expedition pursued three broad lines of inquiry that were especially representative of the Enlightenment project – namely in neologist biblical philology, geography broadly defined (that is including navigational astronomy, cartography and cultural geography) and the natural sciences, principally botany and zoology. It also reflected broad shifts in the nature of European inquiry about the non-European world, especially regarding the notions of curiosity, open-mindedness and the character of cultural description. For example, in their important work, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750*, Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park identified the disaggregation in the Eighteenth Century of the notions of "curiosity" and "wonder", terms whose integration was so characteristic of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. [16] They argue that "wonder," "the marvelous," or "the miraculous" were relegated as concepts to the quaint, the unsophisticated, or even the vulgar in the emerging intellectual environment of the 18th Century. "Curiosity," in their view, now stood alone, but was changed in meaning, losing its aspect of "delight." Now it focused, according to David Hume in his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), on "the love of truth," and was characterized in the words of the *Encyclopédie* as "continuous work and

15 There are numerous discussions of the changing landscape of historical interpretation of the Enlightenment. Some of the ones that I have found useful are the thoughtful essays in Keith Michael Baker and Peter Hanns Reill, eds., *What's left of enlightenment? A post modern question* (Stanford, 2001); and the summary discussions in John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples 1680–1760* (Cambridge, 2005), 1–28; Charles W.J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment. Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago, 2007), 25–41 (especially relevant for this study); and Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge, 2005), 1–10.

16 See Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York, 1998), 13–20. This point is also developed in the essay by Michael Harbsmeier, "Orientreisen im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Carsten Niebuhr*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Conermann, 64–66.

application." Inquiry was now based on a "diligent curiosity".[17] It had become systematized and sober. For example, Forsskål, we know, was much influenced by the philosophy of Hume. In short, the Danish expedition demonstrates the validity of this analysis and brings out its nuances in some detail. The scholarly investigations of Peter Forsskål and Carsten Niebuhr are a striking example of precisely what is meant by "diligent curiosity."

Some of these developments are seen particularly in the encounters of Europeans with the cultures of Asia. As was the case with the Danish expedition, a variety of disciplines were used by European visitors to further what Jürgen Osterhammel has called being "freed from enchantment" with Asia in the 18th Century, by which he meant a sort of demystification of the mature cultures of the region in the minds of Europeans. According to Osterhammel, this was a time-specific development that occurred during the second half of the 18th Century in Europe. It was characterized by a kind of straightforward, non-embellished, but detailed, pre-orientalist (in the sense of Edward Said) approach to describing and understanding Middle Eastern and Asian societies. It was a period when some of the disciplines mentioned previously were used frequently by practitioners for whom cosmopolitanism and a degree of open mindedness were meaningful elements in their perspective on other cultures, by individuals to whom the "ambivalence of *Entzauberung* was clear and who sought to place the intrinsic harmony and conflict of cultures in a rational relationship to each other."[18] In this context, the Danish expedition and the character of its cross-cultural encounters and Niebuhr's accounts provide a clear, rich and instructive supporting example of Osterhammel's overall thesis.

Finally, during this period Copenhagen had close ties to other intellectual centers in Northern Europe such as Uppsala and Göttingen, and was especially influenced by cultural developments taking place in Germany. Thus the expedition not only brought together members from Denmark, Germany and Sweden, it also integrated and parallels intellectual and academic developments that were taking place in the region. It provides a prism through which to see the operation of vigorous networks of intellectual exchange between localities such as Göttingen and Copenhagen, as well the evolving character of various disciplines from botany, marine biology and navigational astronomy to philology, cultural geography and ethnography, in the second half of the 18th Century in Northern Europe. It presents us with periodic glimpses characteristic of the beginning of the Late Enlightenment, of the tension, notably, but not exclusively, in cultural studies between the identification of the universal and the importance, or validity of the particular. In the history of the expedition these processes play out in a specific geographic region – predominantly the Arab lands, the Islamic societies of the Middle East. The deployment of these disciplines enabled the expedition to present knowledge and perspec-

17 Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 326–328, and 355.
18 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens, Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1998), 13. There is also a new edition (Munich, 2010).

tives on the lands and peoples of the Middle East that were new to Europe and of great importance in the 18th Century. They have been valued highly down to the present time.

Fortunately, a rich documentary record exists of both the prehistory and the actual course of the Expedition. Thus this study is able to describe in detail the origins of the venture and to appreciate the realities encountered in trying to carry out a scientific enterprise of this nature in the Middle East during the 18th Century. The challenges faced by these scholars were not trivial, and in the end the expedition saw much tragedy. But the human story of investigation is a remarkable one and the encounters with the peoples and physical environments of the Middle East and India are filled with many experiences that are memorable and instructive.

To summarize, the study has several purposes. In the most general sense, it presents an integrated account and analysis of the expedition based on the author's research in the archival collections located in Copenhagen, Göttingen, Kiel, Berlin and Meldorf, as well as the work of scholars in a wide variety of fields.[19] More specifically, it places the idea of the expedition within the context of European intellectual developments during the Enlightenment. Second, it aims to bring alive the actual phenomenon of exploration as experienced by the expedition's members, based in particular on the use of the expedition's manuscript records, correspondence, journals and field notebooks. Third, it takes the science of the expedition seriously, and presents the findings of the journey in all of its fields of inquiry, defining their significance in the 18th Century. Finally, it analyzes the expedition's distinctive features and comparative place in the wider discussion of European scientific exploration and cultural inquiry. Thus the book has a simple structure that flows from these purposes.

19 The most important documents are in the Rigsarkiv, in Copenhagen. The main collection is contained in three cases under the title: Tyske Kancelli. Udenrigske Afdeling-Arkiv 301. Almindelig Del III, Nrs. 3–003, 3–004, and 3–005. These will be cited as RaK (Rigsarkivet København), AR (Arabiske Rejse). Also important is the correspondence of the embassy in Constantinople. See Tyske Kancelli Udenrigske Afdeling. Topografisk henlagte saager: Tyrkiet, especially Cartons 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16 and 18. These are cited as RaK, Tyrkiet. The materials in the archives of the Niedersächsische Staats-und Universitäts-Bibliothek in Göttingen are essential for an understanding of the prehistory of the expedition. The archive holds the private papers of Johann David Michaelis, as well as other important correspondence. All of these materials are cited as NSuUG. The Library of the Christian-Albrechts Universität in Kiel is the depository for most of Niebuhr's private papers. These are collected in five cartons under Nachlass Carsten Niebuhr. The Nachlass includes fragments of his journals for the expedition, the drafts and research for his publications, and correspondence. These are cited as UB (Universitäts-Bibliothek) Kiel. Also the Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften holds many of Niebuhr's family papers as well as a collection of his scholarly works after he returned from Arabia. This is housed in 38 files under Nachlass C. Niebuhr. All of these materials are cited as BBAW. Finally, the archives of the Dithmarscher Landesmuseum in Meldorf contain the only original copy of the Royal Instructions for the expedition, as well as some of Niebuhr's instruments and a variety of other materials relevant to the topic.

The first chapter analyzes the genesis of the expedition and the preparations for it. This discussion is about ideas and people. It introduces the expedition's protagonists and lays out the three initial lines of Enlightenment scholarly inquiry (philology, geography and the natural sciences) that shape the research agenda of the expedition. Chapters Two and Three tell the story of the expedition itself. Drawing on letters, reports and diaries it tries to capture the actual experiences of the members as they learned about the peoples of the Middle East and did their scientific work. These two chapters, which form the heart of the book, will be of special interest to readers most intrigued by the saga of exploration. Chapter Four evaluates the scholarly accomplishments of the expedition in the three main arenas of inquiry, mentioned above, and adds as a fourth category, archeology and paleography which emerged organically in the course of the expedition by virtue of the personalities and events of the expedition, supplanting philology in importance. Integrating the personal experience with the scientific findings, the study concludes in its final chapter with analysis of the expedition within the context of a cluster of related interpretive issues and questions mentioned earlier in this introduction. These include comparing the Danish expedition to other scientific expeditions in the 18th Century to better understand what makes it important and distinctive. Our comparative analysis focuses in particular on the voyages of James Cook, the most famous example of scientific exploration in the 18th Century. This discussion leads naturally to examining in the context of the Danish expedition, the question of the relationship of Enlightenment scientific inquiry, as seen in the phenomenon of European scientific exploration, to European imperialism. Next, using the expedition and Niebuhr as the context, the chapter explores the nature of European inquiry from several perspectives – the changing character of curiosity, the momentary emergence of a more open-minded, less Eurocentric approach to the investigation of Asia, and the issue of orientalism. It also looks at the alignment of the expedition's multi-disciplinary field research with the evolving landscape of a variety of disciplines of inquiry during the later decades of the Enlightenment in Northern Europe, and ends with a brief analysis of the notions of universalism, pluralism and cultural interpretation as seen in the thinking of Herder and Niebuhr. As 2011 marked the 250th Anniversary of the beginning of the trip, and 2015 is the 200th Anniversary of the death of Carsten Niebuhr, perhaps this is an appropriate time to reflect upon the work of Niebuhr and his fellow adventurers, and of those who conceived and supported this pioneering scientific endeavor.

CHAPTER ONE

The Idea of the Expedition: "Benefit for the World of Scholarship"

In 1756, Johann David Michaelis, the young professor of philosophy at the University of Göttingen, decided to pursue the idea he had first raised in his speech to the *Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* in Göttingen. In a letter written in May of that year to Johann Hartwig Ernst Freiherr von Bernstorff, the Foreign Minister of Denmark-Norway, he outlined his proposal for how Denmark could make an important contribution to biblical scholarship. He suggested that the King sponsor the sending of a scholar, fluent in Arabic, to Yemen to undertake research in biblical philology, the natural sciences and geography. The trip would be an especially "distinctive" opportunity for Denmark as Yemen heretofore had been ignored by scholars because they could not speak Arabic. The proposed scholar, he added, could be inexpensively based out of the Danish trading and missionary settlement at Tharangambadi (Tranquebar), on the Coromandel Coast of India. The resulting scholarly work would not only be of the greatest value to theology, but would also contribute to the broader understanding of the natural sciences, and in this way would bring fame to the Danish nation.

Included in his letter was a related request for several years of support from the Danish crown for two students from the Danish-Norwegian Kingdom studying oriental philology under Michaelis in Göttingen. This support would enable them to master Arabic, and to then come to Copenhagen to help train a scholar to undertake the voyage to Arabia, or perhaps even to embark on such a journey themselves. The students were Jens Henrik Ström from Norway and Frederik Christian

von Haven from Denmark.[1] Bernstorff replied on August 3, 1756, and much to Michaelis' satisfaction, he agreed to help obtain support for the two students, and concurred that sending someone "who was already fluent in Arabic to Tharangambadi and from there to Arabia could produce nothing but benefit for the world of scholarship."[2] He asked Michaelis to submit a fully developed proposal which he indicated he would consider sympathetically. Thus was set in motion a nearly five year process of planning and preparation that would end in the departure of a team of scholars to the Middle East, fully supported by the Danish crown. This chapter explores the idea of the expedition in some detail because it is in the elaboration of that idea that its numerous and specific connections to major threads of Enlightenment inquiry are made clear and the origins of distinct features of the expedition are identified.

Michaelis' Proposal: Arabia and the Search for Meaning in the Bible

Buoyed by Bernstorff's encouraging response, Michaelis quickly crafted a twenty-page outline of the project which he sent to Bernstorff on August 30, 1756.[3] This proposal encapsulates the initial orientation of the subsequent Arabian Expedition. First, Michaelis set forth a number of prerequisites for the success of the venture. The scholar must have a thorough knowledge of both academic and colloquial Arabic upon arrival. He needed to be well versed in many fields – botany, paleontology, oriental and biblical philology, travel literature on the Middle East, celestial navigation, mathematics, cartography and geography. Above all he should understand how the language and customs of Arabia could be used to explain the Old Testament.

Michaelis acknowledged it might be difficult to find such a person, but fortunately one of the very students he had mentioned to Bernstorff, Ström, had the ability to take on the assignment. Michaelis suggested that if Ström had "two years time and support, and studied hard, without a break, in these disciplines, then he would be the best candidate that one could hope for."[4] Michaelis also seized the opportunity to try to expand the effort slightly by proposing the addition of an assistant who could illustrate and also knew Arabic. As added insurance such a person could retain the papers and other records of the trip in case the principal participant died. To make sure the effort was supported with the appropriate scholarly resources, he recommended that the expedition be equipped with a small number

1 Michaelis to Bernstorff, 20 May 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 1a-b.

2 Bernstorff to Michaelis, 3 August 1756, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320, Bl. 211. Also Ström to Michaelis, 18 May 1756, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 329, Bl. 178–179; and Ström to Michaelis, 7 August 1756, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 329, Bl. 180–181.

3 Michaelis to Bernstorff, 30 August 1756, 2 Drafts, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320, Bl. 212–230.

4 Ibid., Bl. 213.

of books, such as Samuel Bochart's *Hierozoicon*, the famous treatise on biblical zoology, and Olof Celsius' study of the plants of the Bible, his *Hierobotanicon*, as well as excerpts from books in Arabic on botany and geography.[5]

With this introduction he proceeded to set forth the objectives of the trip. The first goal was to provide better information on the plants and fossils of Yemen to European scholars. Biblical scholars, he noted, were constantly hindered in their work by their inability to properly identify the many plants referred to in the Old Testament. Here the linguistic relatedness of Arabic to Hebrew provided a useful mechanism for addressing this problem. "Hebrew and Arabic," he wrote with considerable exaggeration, "were just different dialects of the same language, and despite the great span of time there was still spoken in Arabia a language that was more closely related to ancient Hebrew than, for example, Upper Saxon was to Lower Saxon."[6] Thus, following Michaelis' reasoning, contemporary Arabic provided a marvelous opportunity to identify almost all of the names of plants in the Bible. However, as Arabian botanists tended to describe plants according to their medicinal use, not their botanical classification, it was important in order to be consistent to obtain proper botanical descriptions according to current systems of classification, such as those of Linnaeus or von Haller, supplemented with preserved specimens and illustrations. Conducted in this careful manner, the field work would be of great value to those studying the textual history of the Bible.

The second goal was to describe as fully as possible the customs and general way of life of the people of Yemen. This also was driven by his interest in the historical context of the Bible, for he wrote "it would be hard to find a people whose customs have remained unchanged for so long as the Arabs. This is because they were never conquered by other nations. Based on what we know, their customs appear to match so closely the oldest customs of the Israelites that they provide for rich and bright elucidations into the Bible."[7] He was especially intrigued by the huts and tents of Bedouins who lived in the desert, and how knowledge of them might help to better interpret the many places in the Bible that make reference to structures and nomadic life. He was also interested in any special linguistic charac-

5 See Samuel Bochart, *Hierozoicon sive bipartitum opus animalibus sacrae scripturae*, 2 vols. (London, 1663), and Olof Celsius, *Hierobotanicon, sive de plantis sacrae scripturae* (Uppsala, 1745–1747).

6 Michaelis to Bernstorff, 30 August 1756, 2 Drafts, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320, Bl. 214. The classification of the Semitic Languages by subgroup has been the subject of some disagreement over time. But the consensus is that the Central Semitic subgroup includes the languages, not dialects, of Canaanite (and subsequently Biblical Hebrew), Classical Arabic, Old Aramaic and perhaps Epigraphic South Arabian. See Robert Hetzron, "La Division des Languages Sémitiques," in *Actes du Premier Congrès International de Linguistique Sémitique et Chamito-Sémitiques, Paris 16–19 juillet 1969*, ed. André Caquot and David Cohen (The Hague, 1974), 181–194; Aaron D. Rubin, *Studies in Semitic Grammaticalization* (Winona Lake, 2005), esp. Chapter 2, "Classification of Semitic," pp. 11–16; and Rainer M. Voigt, "The Classification of Central Semitic," *Semitic Studies* 32 (1987): 1–21.

7 Michaelis to Bernstorff, 30 August 1756, 2 drafts, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320, Bl. 214–215.

teristics of the Arabic spoken in Yemen that would shed new light on the vocabulary of the Bible.

Third, the expedition should gather as much geographical data as possible. Geographical studies by Arab scholars, he asserted, were very incomplete. For example, little was known of the Red Sea coasts and of the Red Sea itself. Better knowledge of the area would help to resolve the controversy over the conditions in the Red Sea at the time of the exodus of the Israelites. "Exact information on not whether there are tides, but on the extent of the tides, could settle this dispute once and for all."[8]

The fourth goal was to obtain historical information about Yemen, particularly about different Arab sects that may have existed over time. History reveals the soul or spirit of a people, Michaelis wrote, and thus his interest focused again on early Jewish and Christian communities that may have lived in the area. Discovering their rules and regulations would help, in particular, the understanding of Mosaic Law. The fifth and last goal was to purchase or copy significant works in Arabic on history, the natural sciences and geography. Poetry was of special value because it most authentically retained the old values of a people. Copies of the Bible in Greek and Hebrew would also be valuable.

Having outlined the main goals of the trip, Michaelis turned his attention to operational issues. First, the expedition must have a formal Instruction, which set forth the purpose of the endeavor and the responsibilities of the scholar. The participant was to send regular reports to Europe on his findings, keep a careful journal of his travels and send it to Europe periodically as well. Finally, Michaelis suggested a kind of scholarly dialog from afar that would focus on resolving specific academic questions. He proposed gathering questions from scholars in oriental philology which, in turn, were to be incorporated into the instructions and then would direct the detailed work of the scholar. Then, especially if the length of the trip was sufficient (he proposed three years, but was hoping for five), the investigator in the field would send back his answers to the relevant experts, these would be evaluated for accuracy and completeness, and new or revised questions would be transmitted back to further guide the work in the field. Regarding this interesting innovation, he discussed various options for basing the scholar on a seasonal basis out of Tharangambadi, which would reduce the cost of the trip, and provide for the regular exchange of correspondence with Europe. He also suggested the idea of assigning a physician from the missionary settlement to initially support the work of the scholar. Doctors were valued throughout the Middle East, he wrote, and would help the scholar safely gain entry to the community.

Above all, he emphasized that the scholar must be energetic and well-prepared. He had to learn to speak the language fluently, gather all the specified information, record it carefully using the correct Arabic letters, and answer the questions posed by scholars. This was not to be a lackadaisical trip, but one requiring dedication and commitment. He was aware that the trip would be demanding and that the scholar

8 Ibid, Bl. 215–216.

might not survive. He concluded with a discussion of the cost of the trip to the King of Denmark-Norway, which he estimated at 2,000–3,000 Reichsthalers, depending on the length of the stay. Obviously he added, it made sense that "the nation, whose king is supporting this journey, should get the acclaim that would derive from it," and it would be best if the person selected came from the Danish Kingdom.[9]

One month later, Bernstorff replied to Michaelis' proposal, "I have the pleasure to report that the King has fully approved your very intelligently crafted proposal for a trip to Yemen, and in view of your good recommendation, has selected the student Ström for it." Bernstorff concluded that the King wished to add an "industrious and intelligent botanist" to work with Ström on the trip, and he asked Michaelis to identify such a person. Ström was directed to return immediately to Göttingen to begin his studies under the guidance of Michaelis for as long as necessary to fully prepare him for the journey. Bernstorff also asked Michaelis to undertake all of the preparations necessary to move the project along successfully.[10] Thus began the Danish minister's intense involvement in the project, and during the next four years it resulted in a supporting correspondence with Michaelis of over 50 letters, with numerous attached documents. All of the communications were conducted by mail. There is no evidence they ever met face-to-face.

Michaelis' proposal to Bernstorff determined the fundamental character and initial focus of the expedition. As Michaelis wrote in his memoirs, its purpose was scholarship. It was not to have any missionary intent. And although it was, as he later wrote, "a very small project that soon grew under Bernstorff's hand,"[11] Michaelis was, without a doubt, its intellectual father. Given the central role that Michaelis would now play in crafting the details of the expedition, and that it was through him, and his association with Göttingen, that the intellectual environment of the German Enlightenment exerted its influence on the character of the expedition, it is important to know more about him as a scholar, and about the University in Göttingen as an institution. In the same vein, it is essential to understand why Michaelis suggested this idea to the Danish government, and not to his own in Hanover, and equally important to appreciate why Bernstorff recommended approval of this obscure project to King Frederik V, for it is through these avenues that intellectual developments in Denmark and Sweden were brought to bear upon the expedition.

9 Ibid., Bl. 220.

10 Bernstorff to Michaelis, 2 October 1756, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320, Bl. 231–232.

11 Johann David Michaelis, *Lebensbeschreibung von ihm selbst abgefasst* (Leipzig, 1793), 65–67.

Johann David Michaelis and the *Georgia Augusta* University in Göttingen

At the peak of his career, in the middle of the 18th Century, Johann David Michaelis was considered one of the foremost biblical scholars and specialists in ancient near eastern languages in Europe. Some of the scholarly questions that occupied him throughout his long career were apparent during his education and subsequent early years in Göttingen, and these in turn had a direct influence on determining the specific elements or characteristics of the Danish Expedition.[12] As one historian of the German Enlightenment has written, "The most potent and deeply ingrained set of symbols for the *Aufklärers* was still the biblical. As sons of pastors, teachers, professors, and merchants, the *Aufklärers* were brought up on the Bible and stories from it."[13] This was certainly true for Michaelis. Both his great-uncle and his father were professors of theology and oriental languages at the University of Halle and both played important roles in the pietistic institutions in Halle that prepared young theologians for missionary work.[14] Thus Michaelis grew up in an environment that was permeated by biblical scholarship, and this subject, plus oriental languages, was the focus of his studies at the university there. Upon reflection, he considered his education to be traditional and his religious beliefs to

12 For an overview of Michaelis' entire career see the excellent studies of Anna-Ruth Löwenbrück, including "Johann David Michaelis' Verdienst um die philologisch-historische Bibelkritik," in *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow, Walter Sparn and John Woodbridge (Wiesbaden, 1988), 157–170; "Johann David Michaelis et les débuts de la critique biblique," in *La siècle des Lumières et la Bible*, ed. Yvon Belavel and Dominique Bourel (Paris, 1986), 113–128; and her more comprehensive work, *Judenfeindschaft im Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Eine Studie zur Vorgeschichte des modernen Antisemitismus am Beispiel des Göttinger Theologen und Orientalisten Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1995). Also see the thorough review by Ulrich Hübner, "Johann David Michaelis und die Arabien-Expedition 1761–1767," in *Carsten Niebuhr*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Conermann, 364–376.

13 Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley, 1975), 77.

14 Michaelis' great-uncle was Johann Heinrich Michaelis (1668–1738), who, in addition to his work at the University, was director of the *Collegium orientale theologium*, founded by the great pietist August Hermann Francke as part of his famous Waisenhaus. The institute offered instruction in Chaldean, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopian and Persian. As director, J.H. Michaelis led a team of thirteen scholars who worked from 1702–1720 to produce the first critical edition of the Old Testament in Germany, his *Biblia Hebraica*. J.D. Michaelis' father was Christian Benedikt Michaelis (1680–1764), who worked at the *Institutum Judaicum* with its founder, Johann Heinrich Callenberg. It trained theological students to work as missionaries, especially in Jewish communities. See Dominique Bourel, "Die deutsche Orientalistik im 18. Jahrhundert. Von der Mission zur Wissenschaft," in *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung*, ed. Reventlow, Sparn and Woodbridge, 116; Christoph Bochinger, "Arabischstudien und Islamkunde im Hallenser Pietismus des 18. Jhs.," in *Annäherung an das Fremde*, ed. Holger Preissler und Heidi Stein (Stuttgart, 1998), 47–54; and Hendrik Budde and Mondechay Lewy, eds., *Halle – ein Zentrum der Palaestinakunde im 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Halle, 1994), esp. 10–11, 49–50, and 52–53.

be unsettled by the time he finished his education in 1740.[15] However, after completing his dissertations (he did two of them), he was exposed to a number of new developments in biblical scholarship and as a result, certain features of his proposal to Bernstorff reflect specific intellectual experiences during this period, 1740–1756. For example, his selection of Yemen as the destination for the expedition, and his discussion of the relationship of biblical Hebrew to Arabic come directly from his meeting at the University of Leiden with the Dutch scholar Albert Schultens. Schultens was the first to unequivocally define Hebrew as a semitic language, and to argue that Arabic, as the most pure of the semitic languages, offered the best new path for the grammatical and lexicographical investigation of ancient Hebrew.[16] Yemen made particular sense because it was thought that the interior of Yemen was the most isolated populated region in Arabia and the Arabic spoken there would be the least altered from biblical times. In that same sense, exposure to English theologians during a visit to Oxford opened Michaelis to the importance of broader, more contextual approaches to biblical interpretation and introduced him to the significance of sacred Hebrew poetry.[17] Thus, in Michaelis' proposal Yemen was important because the isolation of its highlands might have preserved language usage and a way of life that more closely resembled the way people lived in biblical times. Research there could inform a better understanding of the historical context of the bible. His emphasis on the importance of tales, fables and poetry, and his desire to acquire more specimens of Arab poetry supported this same objective.[18] All of this reflected his more highly developed interest in historical analysis. As he later wrote in his memoirs, although he concentrated on theology and oriental languages at the University of Halle, "History actually would have been my favorite subject."[19]

A number of scholars have called Michaelis a Neologist, that is a thinker of the Enlightenment who according to Peter Hanns Reill, "sought to redefine the nature of Christian and religious belief with the aid of historical analysis." Neologists tried

15 Michaelis, *Lebensbeschreibung*, 1–20.

16 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 3rd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982), 81–82; and Rudolf Smend, "Johann David Michaelis und Johann Gottfried Eichhorn – zwei Orientalisten am Rande der Theologie," in *Theologie in Göttingen*, ed. Bernd Möller (Göttingen, 1987), 65. Schultens, however, was incorrect on a number of points. See the critique by Johann Fück, *Die Arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1955), 105–107.

17 See Löwenbrück, "Johann David Michaelis' Verdienst um die philologisch-historische Bibelkritik," 159–160, esp. n. 21; and Bourel, "Die deutsche Orientalistik im 18. Jahrhundert," 118, esp. n. 18.

18 For a more detailed discussion of this topic see, Jacques Ryckmans, "Biblical and Old South Arabian Institutions: Some Parallels," in, *Arabian and Islamic Studies. Articles presented to R. B. Serjeant on the occasion of his retirement from the Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic at the University of Cambridge*, ed. R.L. Bidwell and G.R. Smith (London, 1983), 14–25.

19 Michaelis, *Lebensbeschreibungen*, 17.

to apply "all of the historical and philological tools at their disposal in an effort to understand the religious and social milieu in which the Old and New Testaments were composed."[20] Michaelis' entire career was dedicated to this task. More recently, his scholarly work and the Danish Expedition, as one of his brainchilds, have been revisited in three related contexts: first, his central role in crafting "The Enlightenment Bible," variously described as "The Cultural Bible" or the "Modern Academic Bible;"[21] second, his participation, somewhat more broadly defined in what has been called the development of the "Science of Culture" in the second half of the Eighteenth Century;[22] and third, his contribution to the 18th Century origins of anti-semitism in Germany.[23] All three are substantial topics about which scholars have developed differing interpretations. But except as some of these relate to interpretations of the expedition itself, they are beyond the scope of this study. However, certainly the mobilization of a wide range of disciplines, some in their infancy, to examine the dimensions of culture, as described thoughtfully by Michael Carhart, is important to understanding the context of Michaelis' proposal. In the same sense, Michaelis' attempt to revivify the Bible as a literary and philosophical artifact of a hypothesized classical ancient Israelite civilization, manifested in his thinking about the Arabian trip, helps to define more precisely the theoretical basis for the expedition. Certainly, Michaelis cannot be discussed separately from his multidisciplinary approach to the study of the Bible. As Michael Legaspi concluded, "The growth and unification of these disciplines – ethnography, history, comparative Semitics, textual science, and biblical poetics – constitute the durable legacy of Michaelis. Anyone who has studied the Bible at a modern university will recognize the success of Michaelis' methodological achievement."[24] As the overwhelming majority of Michaelis' seminal works were written and published after 1756, we cannot necessarily argue that the themes set forth in them appear directly in the proposal for the trip to Yemen. However we can certainly see his emerging approach to biblical scholarship and we can identify the influence of that approach on the initial plan for the trip. In a way, the proposal of August 30, 1756, was a presen-

20 Reill, *The German Enlightenment*, 44. Also see Löwenbrück, "Johann David Michaelis' Verdienst um die philologisch-historische Bibelkritik," 170. On his deployment of philological tools see, Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 98. Also see Marie Rosa Antognazza, "Revealed Religion: The Continental European Debate," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, 2006), 673–676.

21 Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*; and the very interesting study by Michael C. Legaspi., *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford, 2010).

22 Michael C. Carhart, *The Science of Culture in Enlightenment Germany* (Cambridge, 2007).

23 See especially, Löwenbrück, *Judenfeindschaft im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, and Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity.*

24 Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture*, 165.

timent of his later scholarship, and contextually articulates the role of an important dimension of Enlightenment philological inquiry in the genesis of the expedition.[25]

A discussion of Michaelis' work naturally leads us to the context spatially in which much of his thinking took place, namely the newly established *Georgia Augusta* University in Göttingen. There is no doubt that the Danish Expedition bears the imprint of the pedagogic and scholarly characteristics of this institution. The proposal's emphasis on direct field work and the deployment of many scientific disciplines derived from both the character of the University and Michaelis' own role at it. Founded in 1737, Göttingen was, until the establishment of the University of Berlin, Germany's most progressive institution of higher education.[26] Its founder and first Curator, Gerlach Adolf Freiherr von Münchhausen, was determined to create a University which emphasized a wide range of scientific and practical disciplines, such as Medicine, Law and the *Staatswissenschaften*, free from the domination of the theological faculty. His primary goals were to establish a University of which the Electorate of Hanover could be proud and an institution which would effectively train the future officials of the state. Professors were given wide latitude to pursue their research interests unrestricted by departmental affiliation. As Charles McClelland has pointed out, "Göttingen's freedom to think, write and publish was unsurpassed in Germany."[27] Many Professors worked in different disciplines simultaneously. Because of this multi-disciplinary freedom, their scholarly interests and student lectures ranged widely from physics, the natural sciences, chemistry, anatomy, and medicine to law, history, the *Staatwissenschaften* and geography. For example, Albrecht von Haller pursued the fields of medicine, the natural

25 For his most important works, see especially his *Mosaisches Recht*, 6 vols. (Frankfurt am Mayn, 1770–1775), *Deutsche Übersetzung des Alten Testaments mit Anmerkungen für Ungelehrte*, 13 vols. (Göttingen, 1769–1785), and his own journal, the *Orientalische und Exegetische Bibliothek*, 24 vols. (Frankfurt am Mayn, 1771–1785).

26 For the history of the University during this period see the standard work by Götz von Selle, *Die Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen, 1737–1937* (Göttingen, 1937), 5–128. Michaelis is discussed on pp. 84–92. Also see Hans-Günther Schlotter, *Die Geschichte der Verfassung und der Fachbereiche der Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1994); Gerhard Lutz, "Geographie und Statistik im 18. Jahrhundert. Zu Neugliederung und Inhalten von 'Fächern' im Bereich der historischen Wissenschaften," in *Statistik und Staatsbeschreibung in der Neuzeit, vornehmlich in 16.–18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Mohammed Rassem and Justin Stagl (Paderborn, 1980), 249–263; and Anne Saada, "Die Universität Göttingen. Traditionen und Innovationen gelehrter Praktiken," in *Die Wissenschaft vom Menschen in Göttingen um 1800. Wissenschaftliche Praktiken, institutionelle Geographie, europäische Netzweke*, ed. Hans Erich Bödeker, Phillipe Büttgen and Michel Espagne (Göttingen, 2008), 23–46. In 1756, the University had about 600 students and 50 members of the faculty, Rudolf Vierhaus, "Göttingen vom Ende des Dreißigjährigen Krieges bis zur Zeit der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons," in *Göttingen: Geschichte eine Universitätsstadt*, Vol. 2, ed. Ernst Böhme and Rudolf Vierhaus, (Göttingen, 2002), 31. Also see the discussion on Göttingen in Charles E. McClelland, *State, society and university in Germany 1700–1914* (Cambridge, 1980), esp. 34–57; and Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture*, 27–78.

27 McClelland, *State, Society and University in Germany*, 39.

sciences (especially botany), and literature. This was not unusual. These disciplines were supported by a University Library that received substantial resources and by the end of the 18th Century had grown to become one of the most important scholarly libraries in Europe with 133,000 volumes.[28]In addition, some Professors such as Gottfred Achenwall (law, economics, history and *Statistik*) and von Haller pioneered the practice of taking students on field trips to gather botanical specimens, develop their skills of observation or to experience directly certain activities, such as mining.[29] At a different level, the establishment of the *Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, connected the University with other scientific and scholarly societies throughout Europe, institutions which, as we know, played a dramatic and dynamic role in the dissemination of scientific information and the exchange of ideas in the 18th Century.[30] The creation of the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, which became one of Europe's leading scholarly journals, added to the University's prestige and connections in Europe.[31] Thus in the broadest sense, Göttingen was especially conducive to the spawning of a multidisciplinary field expedition to the Middle East. It was a locality of Enlightenment activity, or a "center of calculation," in Bruno Latour's sense, connected dynamically to a network of other localities in Northern Europe, such as Copenhagen, Uppsala and Halle, and beyond to Europe as a whole.[32]

28 See Graham Jefcoate, "Die Göttinger Universitätsbibliothek und die Beziehungen zwischen Hannover und Grossbritannien im 18. Jahrhundert," in *"Eine Welt allein ist nicht genug," Grossbritannien, Hannover und Göttingen 1714–1837*, ed. Elmar Mittler (Göttingen, 2005), 342. Also see William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago, 2006), 316–325, for a good discussion of the importance of the Library. He quotes the size of the collection in 1800 as 200,000 volumes and calls it probably the largest academic library in the world at that time. See 317.

29 Reimer Eck, "Christlob Mylius und Carsten Niebuhr. Aus den Anfängen der Wissenschaftlichen Forschungsreise an der Universität Göttingen," *Göttinger Jahrbuch 1986* (Göttingen, 1986), 11–12.

30 Ludwig Hammermayer, "Akademiebewegung und Wissenschaftsorganisation. Formen, Tendenzen und Wandel in Europa während der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaften, Akademien und Hochschulen im 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Erik Amburger, Michal Ciesla and Laszlo Sziklay (Berlin, 1976), 1–84. The importance in the 18th Century of societies with a scientific focus is discussed in James E. McClellan III, *Science Reorganized. Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1985). The Göttingen society and its close relationship with the University is described on pp. 114–116. For the Göttingen society specifically, see Rudolf Smend, "Die Göttinger Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften," in *Festschrift zur Feier des zweihundertjährigen Bestehens der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (Berlin, 1951), v.–xix; and Otto Sonntag, "Albrecht von Haller on Academies and the Advancement of Science: The Case of Göttingen," *Annals of Science* 32 (1975): 379–91.

31 Albrecht von Haller was its first editor. For an outstanding study of his connections see Martin Stuber, Stefan Hächter and Luc Lienhard, eds., *Hallers Netz. Ein europäischer Gelehrtenbriefwechsel zur Zeit der Aufklärung*. (Basel, 2005).

32 On this important point, see especially the stimulating study by Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, 9, 41–42 and 63–76.

The potential influence of the institution on the expedition was made real through Michaelis, whose emerging role at Göttingen was as multifarious and energetic as any member of the faculty at that time.[33] Appointed to the University in 1745 at the age of 28, he was quickly promoted to an *Ordentlicher* Professor of Philosophy in 1750. He liked to emphasize that he never was a Professor of Theology at Göttingen. In 1751, Albrecht von Haller asked him to be the Secretary of the *Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, and in 1753 he became the Director and Editor of the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*. In this dual capacity he was the focal point for submissions of scholarly materials from many disciplines at the University, and he corresponded with scholars throughout Europe, receiving books and articles in almost all fields of learning.[34] Indeed it is likely that his idea of a scholarly conversation between the researcher in the field and scholars in Europe, as mentioned in the proposal, came from his experience as the editor of the journal and secretary of the *Société*. Today his personal archive in the *Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek* in Göttingen is a mammoth collection of letters and scholarly papers. It documents his wide ranging interests, great curiosity and sometimes frenetic level of activity.[35] Because of his responsibilities and inquiring nature, he followed research in the natural sciences, mathematics, astronomy (in which he took special interest), history, geography, S*tatistik*, and, of course, his own fields of biblical philology and oriental languages. His interest in areas outside his own concentration caused one contemporary observer to note, "that his manner was more that of a natural scientist or a businessman than a biblical scholar."[36] Until the late 1760's he had a close relationship with Münchhausen, and he came to wield great influence over academic appointments. Some even called him the "Regent of Göttingen."[37] Over time he became well-known throughout Germany and Europe and drew in many prominent visitors to his home including Georg Forster,

33 For his responsibilities at Göttingen, see Michaelis, *Lebensbeschreibungen*, 41–60; Selle, *Die Georg-August Universität zu Göttingen*, 84–93; and Tilman Nagel, "Die Arabistik an der Georg-August-Universität," in *Begegnung mit Arabien. 250 Jahre Arabistik in Göttingen*, ed. Tilman Nagel (Göttingen, 1998), 13–14.

34 For example, the first known correspondence between Bernstorff and Michaelis concerned the *Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften.* See Bernstorff to Michaelis, 19 June 1753, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320, Bl. 210.

35 For a detailed description of this collection see Wilhelm Mayer, ed., *Die Handschriften in Göttingen*, Vol. 3 (Berlin 1894), 181–245. When Michaelis was editor of the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, about 700–900 reviews appeared annually. His correspondence appears to have been very similar to von Haller's, which has been analyzed in great detail. Von Haller's comprised 17,000 letters from 1200 correspondents. For an outstanding study of the nature, distribution and function of a large European scholarly correspondence of this period, see the excellent analysis of Stuber, Hächter and Lienhard, eds., *Hallers Netz*, xxii–xxix. It provides striking data on what being a member of the so-called "Republic of Letters" really meant.

36 Smend, "Johann David Michaelis und Johann Gottfried Eichhorn," 67.

37 Rudolf Smend. *Festrede im Namen der Georg-Augusts-Universität zur Akademischen Preisvertheilung. Johann David Michaelis* (Göttingen, 1898), 12.

Benjamin Franklin, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (who in his youth wanted to study with him), Alexander von Humboldt, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Friedrich Nicolai.[38] In the 1750's and 1760's he was an immensely popular lecturer with a flamboyant and dramatic style.[39] Michaelis was the perfect vehicle for incorporating the strengths of Göttingen as an institution into the theoretical foundation of the trip. Moreover, his energy, breadth of interests, respect for disciplines other than his own, and connections throughout Europe made him the ideal creative initiator of the project.

Why Denmark and Johann Hartwig Ernst von Bernstorff?

At first glance it may appear curious that Michaelis did not propose this trip to Münchhausen, who, in addition to being the head of the university, was a member of the Privy Council in Hanover, and later was King George II's Chief Minister in the Electorate. But probably any hope of local sponsorship was unrealistic because of the recent memory of the embarrassing Mylius venture. In 1752, Albrecht von Haller got involved in organizing an effort to send a "*Philosoph und Naturforscher*" to America to gather scientific information about the people and the natural environment of the American colonies.[40] Financial support came from a society of subscribers who contributed to the cost of the journey and in return were to receive specimens (seeds, plants, etc.) and a copy of the published account of the findings of the researcher. The budget for the three-year trip was 3,000 Reichstalers. Haller had been roped into this project by Christlob Mylius, a young scientific journalist and scholar from Berlin, who wanted to undertake the trip.

38 Hübner, "Johann David Michaelis," 370.

39 One student described him as "A man with a splendid build, dressed like a cavalier, with laced garments, wearing boots and spurs, his sword at his side, elegant in his gait, an exalted demeanor that at once revealed a great intellect and boldness, with fiery eyes that were so penetrating that one did not want long to stare at them – thus he entered into the auditorium, the Bible under his arm …. He had no podium, but leaned very casually on a small table. Soon he was pacing back and forth in the lecture hall, calculating exactly his behavior according to his topic and delivery. As an actor he would have been able to play perfectly any role …. As he then explained the 26. and 137. Psalms, everyone was moved to tears." in Smend, *Festrede*, 10–11. For a more concise and critical assessment of Michaelis later in his career, see Georg Christoph Lichtenberg's comment, "The man really wanders about in his theories and biblical interpretations, but despite all of his foolery, it seems to me the great man always shines through." Lichtenberg to Johann Andreas Schernhagen, Göttingen, 19 June 1783, in Georg C. Lichtenberg, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Ulrich Joost and Albrecht Schöne, 4 vols. (Munich, 1983–92), 2: 631. He also provoked much controversy because of constant disputes with the theological faculty and students, and later in life his egotism, arrogance and propensity for intrigue damaged his reputation. His influence waned and the quality of his lectures declined.

40 For a full discussion of the Mylius venture see Eck, "Christlob Mylius und Carsten Niebuhr," 13–18. It appears likely that Haller's project was a product of his rivalry with Linnaeus, who had just sent one of his students, Per Kalm, on a similar trip to the North American colonies.

Haller never met Mylius and the young man's credentials for such an adventure seem somewhat questionable. But Mylius was Lessing's cousin, well-connected socially and somewhat known professionally through his publications and work for various journals.[41] The subscription was promoted by Haller in the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, by Lessing in the *Berlinischen Privilgierten Staats- und Gelehrten-Zeitung* and by another colleague in Leipzig. From the start Mylius proved to be a poor choice. Before leaving Berlin he spent a good portion of his first year's budget on clothes for the trip. Following instructions prepared by Haller he then proceeded to London where he was to formally prepare for his journey. But in London he was easily distracted. Instead of doing research at the Botanical Gardens, he appears to have been more interested in the theater, boat trips, cockfights and horse racing. He never left London, wasted 1,500 Reichtalers and died in March 1754 from some illness in a run-down part of the city. The desultory end of the proposed expedition was soon well-known throughout Germany and indeed elsewhere in Europe. It killed any prospects that the subscription method of financing could be used again in the near term, and it certainly ended any chance that Münchhausen would support a similar undertaking just two years later.

Moreover, the beginning of the Seven Years War in 1756 had immediate repercussions for Hanover because of its connection to Great Britain, as a result of which it was immediately drawn into the conflict. Göttingen, for example, was occupied by French forces only one year later in 1757. Thus support from the Hanoverian government was simply not an option for Michaelis. If Michaelis wanted to proceed he would have to look to some other country, and to a funding strategy that was both more secure and less exposed to wide embarrassment in case of failure than the subscription method.

This leads to the question of why he approached the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and why Bernstorff would recommend approval? It appears that Michaelis' interest specifically in Denmark was awakened by the publication one year earlier of the account of the voyage of the Danish Naval Captain Frederik Ludvig Norden to Egypt in 1737–38.[42] Aiming to expand trade to Egypt and to

41 For Lessing's connection to Mylius and his interest in America, see Heinrich Schneider, *Lessing. Zwölf biographische Studien* (Munich, 1951), 198–199.

42 See Frederic Louis Norden, *Voyage d'Égypte et de Nubie par Mr. Frederic Louis Norden, Capitaine des Vaisseaux du Roi. Ouvrage enrichi de Cartes et des Figures dessinées sur les lieux, par l'Auteur même. (Tome Premier. Tome Second). Á Copenhague, d'Imprimerie de la Maison Royale des Orphelins. MDCCLV.* Norden's work has recently been reissued in a beautiful edition under the sponsorship of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in a Danish translation in honor of Queen Margethe II, on the occasion of her 70th birthday. Published by Forlaget Vandkunsten, it includes an introduction by Paul John Frandsen. See *Rejse i Egypten og Nubien Af Frederik Ludvig Norden Kaptajn i den Kongelige Flåde*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 2010). For Norden's trip and the publication of the account, also see Frits Hammer Kjølsen, *Capitain F. L. Norden og Hans Rejse til Aegypten 1737–38* (Copenhagen, 1965), and Olaf Pedersen, *Lovers of Learning. A History of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters 1742–1992* (Copenhagen, 1992), 66–67.

extend commercial contacts into Ethiopia, the King of Denmark-Norway, Christian VI, sent Norden to Egypt to explore the length of the Nile. The trip encountered many difficulties and was cut short, but Norden was still able to gather much valuable information and execute many handsome drawings and charts. He returned to Copenhagen in 1738, but died a few years later at the age of 32 from complications of an illness he had contracted in Egypt. The publication of his report was then delayed many years but finally appeared in French in a beautiful two-volume set with magnificent illustrations as a publication of the Royal Academy of Sciences. We know that Michaelis had seen the two volumes just prior to contacting Bernstorff, so at a time when he was shopping around for a sponsor for his idea, Denmark's support of a similar undertaking years earlier was brought to his attention.[43]

Denmark also seemed a well-positioned and logical prospect for another reason. Michaelis was aware of the Danish missionary settlement at Tharangambadi. Originally established as a trading station in the 17th Century, it added a missionary community in 1705. Organized through the leadership of the court chaplain in Copenhagen and August Hermann Francke in Halle, and supported by the Danish crown, the *Dänisch-Hallische Mission* became a well-known model for protestant missionary efforts in the 18th Century. The reports of the missionaries and the accounts of individuals such as Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, published in Halle, were important sources of information on India.[44] Michaelis, as a voracious reader of travel literature, was aware of these materials and, as certain passages in his proposal indicate, he was quite familiar with the mission's operations and staff. Tharangambadi's location almost across the Arabian Sea from Arabia made it a convenient jumping off point for work in Yemen.

Finally, there was at least one other compelling reason to look to Denmark and its foreign minister: Bernstorff was a Hanoverian, born in the city of Hanover in 1712. His family was one of the most prominent in the Electorate and maintained its residence at the vast estate of Gartow, east of Celle, not far from Göttingen.[45]

43 The books were reviewed in the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, February 1756. There it was noted that Norden made many orthographical errors in recording place names on his charts because he did not know Arabic. This criticism was repeated in Michaelis' proposal, see Bl. 217–218, see fn. 3.

44 For the history of the Dänisch-Hallische Mission see Anders Nørgård, *Mission und Obrigkeit. Die Dänisch-hallische Mission in Tranquebar 1706–1845* (Gütersloh, 1988); Raabe, *Pietas Hallensis Universalis*, 61–84; and Brijraj Singh, *The First Protestant Missionary to India. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1683–1719)* (Oxford, 1999). For its trading activities during this period, see Martin Krieger, *Kaufleute, Seeräuber und Diplomaten. Der dänische Handel auf dem Indischen Ozean (1620–1868)* (Cologne, 1998), 132–146.

45 The only detailed, but unfortunately incomplete, treatment of the Bernstorff family during this period is Aage Friis, *Bernstorfferne og Danmark*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1903–1919). It is also available in a German translation; the first volume is entitled *Die Bernstorffs* (Leipzig, 1905), and the second, *Die Bernstorffs und Dänemark* (Bentheim, 1979). For a selection of the family papers

Bernstorff's grandfather, Andreas Gottlieb von Bernstorff, was the *premierminister* to the Elector Georg Louis and remained his chief German advisor when the Elector became George I of Great Britain and Ireland. Bernstorff's older brother was one of the most respected members of the local *Landtag*. Bernstorff's nephew, protégé and successor in Denmark, Andreas Peter von Bernstorff, had just completed his studies in the *Staatswissenschaften* at Göttingen in 1755. Thus Bernstorff was closely identified with Hanover, and in addition Michaelis was already corresponding with him on other matters. All of these many connections and Europe's pronounced cosmopolitan values made Michaelis' letter to Bernstorff a natural and logical approach. But did these same connections to Hanover play the decisive role in Bernstorff's decision to say yes? The answer to that question is probably no.[46] Rather, he recommended approval to the King, and that approval was easily gained, because such a project was consistent with the cultural policies of the monarchy and coincided with Bernstorff's own academic and religious interests.

In order to understand the political environment in Denmark at the time of the expedition, it is necessary to provide some background on the Danish government and its policies during the middle of the 18th Century. The reign of Frederik V, from 1746–1766, was a twenty year period of unbroken peace and prosperity for the absolute monarchy of Denmark-Norway. This stability, however, was not attributable to the capable leadership of the King. Frederik was a benign ruler, but, unfortunately, also a heavy drinker with many bad habits and few serious talents for governing. His greatest strengths were an ill-defined interest in European culture and science, mainly to enhance his legacy as a monarch, and his willingness to let a dedicated and gifted team of cosmopolitan, mostly German, officials run the country.[47] His trusted personal advisor, and the most influential minister within the government, was the *Oberhofmarschall* Adam Gottlieb Graf von Moltke, from Mecklenburg. Wise and restrained in the exercise of his considerable power and careful in controlling expenditures from the King's special account, Moltke protected the King

see Aage Friis, ed., *Bernstorffske Papirer*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen, 1904–1913). For an analysis of the Bernstorffs in the 18th Century see the following studies by Lawrence J. Baack: "State Service in the Eighteenth Century: the Bernstorffs in Hanover and Denmark," *The International History Review* 1 (1979): 323–348; *Agrarian Reform in Eighteenth-Century Denmark* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1977); and *Christian Bernstorff and Prussia: Diplomacy and Reform Conservatism 1818–1832* (New Brunswick, 1980), 1–6.

46 Indeed Bernstorff's support may have been inspite of, not because of, any formal connections to Hanover. He disliked and distrusted Münchhausen who had caused him many problems during his assignment as a special envoy to Hanover early in his career. Friis, *Die Bernstorffs*, esp. 94–121.

47 The literature on Denmark during this period is extensive. For an overview see Ole Feldbæk, *Tiden 1730–1814. Danmarks Historie* (Copenhagen, 1982). Still useful is the work by Edvard Holm, *Danmark- Norges Historie fra den store Nordiske Krigs Slutning til Rigernes Adskillelse 1720–1814*, 7 vols. (Copenhagen, 1891–1912, esp. vol. 3. Also see Friis, *Bernstorfferne og Danmark*, Vol. 2, which covers the period up to 1770.

and facilitated the smooth and effective operation of government during Frederik's reign. Moltke worked especially closely with Bernstorff, who held one of the most important positions in the state.[48] As *Obersekretaire* of the German Chancellery, Minister for Foreign Affairs and a member of the *Kommerzkollegium* since 1751, he crafted Denmark's foreign policy, oversaw the administration of the monarchy's German speaking principalities and participated in shaping Denmark's economic strategy.[49] He brought to this task a first-rate education from the University of Tübingen and seventeen years of diplomatic experience at various posts in Germany and as Denmark's minister to France. As foreign minister, his greatest contribution was his success in keeping Denmark out of war during Frederik's reign. Bernstorff's ability to safeguard Denmark's neutrality during the Seven Years War and to resolve effectively a number of sensitive and convoluted diplomatic problems during his twenty years in office ensured for Denmark an international position by which its trade could flourish and its economy prosper.[50] As a consequence, revenues for the crown were abundant and the king could afford to be generous.

48 The best description of Moltke and Bernstorff's relationship is Friis, *Die Bernstorffs und Dänemark*, 13–37.

49 By way of explanation, the central government of the multinational Danish monarchy was made up of two regional agencies; the Danish Chancellery, which administered Denmark, Norway, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland, and the German Chancellery, which administered the ancestral territories of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst, the Duchy of Slesvig and the so-called 'royal portion' of Holstein (which was also part of the Holy Roman Empire). In addition, several specialized boards directed the military, financial and economic affairs of the entire kingdom. Under this organization, the *Obersekretaire* of the German Chancellery was also the foreign minister for the state as a whole, and diplomatic business was conducted out of a separate department within the chancellery. Language usage within the government reflected the fact that its bureaucrats, diplomats and officers came from different parts of Europe. German, French and Danish were used interchangeably. For example, in the Danish Chancellery and the administration of the navy, affairs were usually conducted in Danish; in the German Chancellery and the army, the language was German, and within the foreign department, naturally, French as well. The *Kommerzkollegium* used both German and Danish, while the Department of Manufacturing within it frequently used French. In the meetings of the Privy Council it appears that German and Danish were used interchangeably. No attempt was made to impose uniformity of usage. Ibid., 66. On language usage also see Vibeke Winge, *Dänische Deutsche – deutsche Dänen. Geschichte der deutschen Sprache in Dänemark 1300–1800 mit einem Ausblick auf das 19. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg, 1992). The King, Frederik V, whose mother was Sophia Magdalene of Brandenburg-Kulmbach, was raised speaking German. Winge, 193. For a full discussion of issues of national identity and language, see Ole Feldbæk, ed., *Dansk Identitetshistorie*. Vol. 1. *Fæderland og Modersmål 1536–1789* (Copenhagen, 1991), 89–230.

50 The most up-to-date analysis of Denmark's foreign policy during this period is Knud J.V. Jesperson and Ole Feldbæk, *Revanche og Neutralitet 1648–1814*, Vol. 2 of the *Dansk udenrigspolitiks Historie* (Copenhagen, 2002), esp. 203–347. Also see Holm, *Danmark-Norges Historie*, vol. 3, pt. 1; Jørgen Schoube, "J.H.E. Bernstorffs udenrigspolitik i dansk forskning," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 12 (1966): 535–607; Otto Brandt, "Das Problem der 'Ruhe des Nordens' im 18. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 140 (1929): 550–564; and Walther Hubatsch, "Die 'Ruhe des Nordens' als voraus-

It is in this political and economic context that Moltke and Bernstorff pursued their strong and sincere interest in making real Frederik's fuzzy notion of emulating the artistic and scientific renown of the other more powerful and well-known absolute monarchs of Europe – Maria Theresia, Elizabeth of Russia, Louis XV, and, above all, Frederick II of Prussia. It was these two officials who enriched the cultural milieu of Copenhagen, a city of some 80,000 inhabitants, with artists, writers and scientists from all over Europe.[51] Moltke focused mainly on the arts attracting to Denmark talented painters, engravers, sculptors and architects from France, Italy, Sweden and Germany. He ensured that the crown endowed the new School, later Academy, of Art with permanent funding. However, he also shared with Bernstorff a strong interest in the natural sciences which he wanted to strengthen in Denmark, partly, it is likely, because of a quiet competition in the sciences with Sweden, where the work of Linnaeus, in particular, was commanding so much attention. As the University of Copenhagen was notably conservative in the natural sciences, Moltke pushed for the establishment of a new Botanical Garden and the maintenance of the crown's own collection of natural history specimens at the palace of Charlottenborg.[52]

Bernstorff's interest lay elsewhere. He wanted to connect Denmark intellectually to the rest of Europe, especially Germany and France, and reciprocally, to make Denmark better known and culturally respected beyond its borders. He recruited

setzung der Adelskultur des dänischen Gesamtstaats," in *Staatsdienst und Menschlichkeit*, ed. Christian Degn and Dieter Lohmeier (Neumünster, 1980), 11–22.

51 The best discussion of cultural developments in Copenhagen, particularly the connections to Germany is Dieter Lohmeier, "Kopenhagen als deutsches Kulturzentrum des 18. Jahrhunderts," in Dietrich Jöns and Dieter Lohmeier, eds., *Festschrift für Erich Trunz zum 90. Geburtstag. Vierzehn Beiträge zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte (*Neumünster, 1998), 167–198. Also excellent is Ole Feldbæk, "Aufklärung und Absolutismus. Die Kulturpolitik Friedrichs V," in Klaus Bohnen and Per Øhrgaard, eds., *Aufklärung als Problem und Aufgabe. Festschrift für Sven-Aage Jørgensen zum 65. Geburtstag* (Munich, 1994), 26–37, and his "Dänisch und Deutsch im dänischen Gesamtstaat im Zeitalter der Aufklärung," in *Der Dänische Gesamtstaat*, *Kopenhagen, Kiel, Altona*, ed. Klaus Bohnen and Sven-Aage Jørgensen (Tübingen, 1992), 7–22. In addition see Klaus Bohnen, "Der Kopenhagener Kreis und der Nordische Aufseher," also in *Der Dänische Gesamtstaat*, ed. Bohnen and Jørgensen, 161–179. and the still useful older works of Leopold Magon, *Ein Jahrhundert geistiger und literarischer Beziehung zwischen Deutschland und Skandinavien 1750–1850* (Dortmund, 1926); J.W. Eaton, *The German Influence in Danish Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1929); and by the same author, "The French Influence in Denmark in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The Germanic Review* 6 (1931): 321–362. The population of Copenhagen according to the census of 1769 was 83,000, and for Denmark proper (not the non-Danish parts) approximately 810, 000. See Aksel Lassen, "The Population of Denmark 1660–1960," *The Scandinavian Economic History Review* 14 (1966): 134–157.

52 This interest is summarized in Lohmeier, "Gregorius Wiedemann," 65–66. Also see Carl Christensen, *Den Dansk Botaniks Historie med tilhørende Bibliografi, Vol. I, Den Danske Botaniks Historie fra de ældste Tider til 1912* (Copenhagen, 1924–26), 63–79; and Holger Hansen, "Natural-og Husholdnings-Kabinettet paa Charlottenborg," *Historiske Meddelelser om København* 5 (1915): 181–201.

many writers from Germany and France and encouraged their work. The most famous was Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock for whom he secured a life-long royal pension to support his writing of the *Messias* during his twenty year stay in Copenhagen.[53] He supported at least three journals, written in French and German, which made available to readers in Denmark articles on literary and political developments elsewhere in Europe. He arranged for a young French historian, Paul-Henri Mallet, to receive a professorial appointment at the University of Copenhagen paid for by the crown. Mallet was charged with the task of writing a history of Denmark for a wider European audience. Working quickly he published his *Introduction á l'histoire de Dannemarc* and his *Monumens de la mythologie et de la poésie des anciens Scandinaves* in 1755. It was also Bernstorff who got the botanist Georg Christian Oeder to come to Copenhagen. With the full support of the crown, Oeder embarked on his monumental project to catalog the plants of Denmark, Norway and Iceland, the famous *Flora Danica*, as well as assuming the directorship of the Botanical Gardens. The first volume of the *Flora Danica* appeared in 1761. These publications, combined with others such as the aforementioned issue of the account of Norden's voyage to Egypt, demonstrated the Danish government's interest in history and the sciences. In short, Moltke and Bernstorff formed a powerful team who initiated and nurtured an unprecedented blossoming of European culture in the somewhat distant and parochial city that was the Danish Royal capital. Bernstorff we know, because of his frequent use of the term, saw himself as a facilitator of the "Republic of Letters." Seen in this context Bernstorff's affirmative response to Michaelis' proposal was simply a further manifestation of the government's cultural policies and an indication of Copenhagen's strengthened role as a center of Enlightenment activity.

Still, a proposal to send an expedition to Yemen, of all places, focusing on obscure biblical scholarship, was not an everyday project even in these prosperous and culturally sympathetic times. And looking ahead to the entire history of the expedition, Bernstorff's devotion of fourteen years of attention to the details of this enterprise, an effort that in the end was greater than Michaelis', surely went beyond a routine interest in government-sponsored cultural activities that would enhance the reputation of the Kingdom. No, this project had to have captured the imagination of Bernstorff himself in order to garner such sustained involvement and very substantial financial support. Not only was Michaelis' venture compatible with Frederik's *Kulturpolitik*, the ideas behind it coincided with Bernstorff's own personal interests. Bernstorff was highly religious in a non-dogmatic, but sincerely devout way. His extended family was heavily influenced by the Halle pietists and adhered to a simple, very personal Lutheran Christianity. His faith may have been

53 For Bernstorff's important support of Klopstock while he finished his historic poem, and his inclusion of the poet in his social circles, see Klaus Hurlebusch, "Dänemark – Klopstocks 'zweites Vaterland'?" in *Deutsch-Dänische Literaturbeziehungen im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Klaus Bohnen, Sven-Aage Jørgensen and Friedrich Schmöe (Munich, 1979), 75–104.

simple, but his interest in matters theological was not. He conducted an extensive correspondence with pastors and theologians in Geneva, Germany and England, with clergy, as he wrote, "who love both godliness and knowledge."[54] Tolerant on issues of faith, he frowned on sectarian disputes that obstructed a clear appreciation of fundamental Christian beliefs as communicated by the Bible. His piety was combined with a broad thirst for knowledge and a robust curiosity. Some of this was awakened by his service as the Danish minister to the Court of Louis XV. He relished his participation in the literary salons of Paris, meeting many of the leading *philosophes* of the day. He became an earnest reader of literature, drama, science, theology, medicine, art history, economics and philosophy. Friends in England, Holland and Italy, in addition to France, sought out books for his ever-expanding library.[55] His interests in scholarship in a wide range of fields and his unquestioned Christian faith made him intellectually sympathetic to, and intrigued by, Michaelis' proposal. Here was an opportunity to use science to gain a clearer understanding of the Bible. What could be more perfect?

Thus, the evolution of Michaelis' initial rather brief idea of some sort of scholarly investigation in Southern Arabia into a formal commitment by the Crown to a serious scientific trip to Yemen reflected a number of institutional and intellectual characteristics of Denmark and Germany in the middle of the 18th Century. For his part, Michaelis was certainly pleased with the King's approval of the project. He extolled Frederik's promotion of learning, free from what he called the calculation of any commercial or financial benefits. He wrote Bernstorff that he would get busy preparing Ström for the trip, a process that would take one to two years.[56] But in an early indication of the many complications that would emerge before the expedition was launched, Ström was surprised by his appointment and quickly withdrew because he was simply afraid to go on the trip.[57] Michaelis immediately recommended that Frederik Christian von Haven, the other Danish student mentioned in his initial proposal, take over the assignment and prepare for the trip, as Ström was to have done. At the time, Michaelis noted that Haven had been intensely jealous of Ström's opportunity to go on the expedition. In a case of what would prove to be mistaken judgment, Michaelis took this "passion of Herr von Haven as a good omen for the enterprise."[58]

54 Friis, *Die Bernstorffs*, 250.

55 For Bernstorff's very extensive library see *Catalogus Alphabeticus Bibliothecae Bernstorfianae* (333 folio pages), and *Bibliotheca Bernstorfiana, Ordine Scientiarum Digesta* (554 folio pages), both Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, KB Arkiv E 69 and 68.

56 Michaelis to Bernstorff, 14 October 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 6; and NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320 (Draft), Bl. 232 and 234.

57 Ström to Michaelis, 5 October 1756, and 12 December 1756, both NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 329, Bl. 182–185; and Michaelis to Bernstorff, 18 October 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 6c. Born in Norway, Ström (1729–1800), went on to a distinguished career ending up as the Mayor of Oslo, then Kristiania. *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*, vol. 14 (Copenhagen, 1983), 160.

58 Michaelis to Bernstorff, 18 October 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 6c; Haven also wrote

Assembling the Team: The Philologist – Frederik Christian von Haven

Haven's appointment, with a stipend of 500 Danish Rigstalers (rtlrs) per year was quickly approved. Bernstorff told Haven that the trip provided an opportunity for him to stand out among "the Republic of Letters."[59] In terms of background and training, Haven appeared, at first glance, to be a good choice.[60]

We know very little about his early life. He was born on 26 June 1727 in Vester Skerninge, on the Island of Fyn, where his father was the pastor. The family was originally from northern Germany, but had been in Denmark for generations, active as architects, painters and clergymen. Apparently the family was not in a strong economic position, a condition that worsened with his father's death in 1738 when Haven was still a boy. With support from relatives he was able to go to school in Odense. At the University of Copenhagen, where he studied theology for five years, he received two scholarships and obtained the equivalent of a bachelor's and master's degree. He also attended the famous Academy at Sorø. [61] In June 1751, he began

directly to Bernstorff to ask for the assignment, as he had previously done to try to get scholarship support. Haven to Bernstorff, 18 October 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 6e, and Haven to Bernstorff, 18 August 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 2a. Over time the possibility of other candidates for Haven's position have been investigated. For a good summary, see Hübner, "Johann David Michaelis," 380–382. By far the most capable would have been Johann Jakob Reiske (1716–1774), Germany's foremost Arabist whom Michaelis knew from his days in Halle, and someone who befriended Niebuhr upon his return from the journey. Michaelis approached Reiske about the expedition in 1756, but Reiske declined, writing that he considered himself "zu alt, zu stumpf und zu verdrossen" to take on such a difficult assignment. Reiske to Michaelis, 20 December 1756, *Literarische Briefwechsel von Johann David Michaelis*, 1:71–72. In any case, the relationship between the two men soured over an academic appointment Reiske was seeking. Reiske's many accomplishments in Arabic Studies are summarized in Fück, *Die Arabischen Studien in Europa*, 108–124. His discussion includes a scathing evaluation of Michaelis. The name of August Ludwig Schlözer, later a member of the Göttingen faculty, has also been mentioned, but his name does not appear as a possibility in the correspondence of Michaelis with Bernstorff, nor is there any evidence that Michaelis discussed the matter with Schlözer. Well after the expedition's departure, Johann Reinhold Forster, later the naturalist for Cook's Second Voyage, also expressed interest in the expedition to Michaelis. See Michael E. Hoare, *The Tactless Philosopher: Johann Reinhold Forster (1729–1798)* (Melbourne, 1975), 24.

59 Bernstorff to Michaelis, 2 November 1756, NSuUG, Cod. Ms. Mich. 320, Bl. 236, and RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 6 (Draft); and Bernstorff to von Haven, 2 November 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 5.

60 The best information on Haven's early life is in the Introduction by Anne Haslund Hansen to his travel diary of the expedition. See Hansen and Rasmussen, eds., *Min Sundheds Forliis.* Also see Vello Helk, *Dansk-Norske Studierejser 1661–1813 II Matrikel over studerende i udlandet* (Odense, 1980), 135.

61 Haven to Bernstorff, 18 August 1756, RaK, AR, Case 3–003, Nr. 2a.