
FAMOUS ORIENTALISTS: LIFE AND ASSESSMENTS

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CHRISTIAN MARTIN JOACHIM V. FRAEHN: HIS LIFE AS DOCUMENTED BY THE RECORDS IN GERMAN ARCHIVES*

Discendae studio pugnavi.
Fraehn, 1805.

The history of academic migration opens up a vast field of research to elucidate the history of academic institutions. However, not only the academic migration, caused by wars or social conflicts, can be a subject of research. In some special meaning biographies are telling the story of an energetic individual, endowed with a vivid and resourceful mind, the individual who is ready to begin a new life in a foreign country. Such is the story of Christian Martin Joachim von Fraehn, who was born of the family of a tailor on June 4th, 1782 in Rostock, the famous harbour city on the German coast of the Baltic Sea. But it was not in Germany where Chr. Fraehn had won his fame. He turned to have been the founder of one of the most famous European academic institutions in St. Petersburg (Russia). Here he died on August 28th, 1851 after a scholarly life, which brought him the highest international reputation and introduced him into the rows of Russian aristocracy.

About the zenith of Fraehn's academic life many details exist (see below) [1], and this essay concentrates on unveiling some personal details as documented by the records in German archives. The Archives of the City and the University of Rostock are of special importance. A preliminary information based on these records is published in this es-

say. The author's interest in Fraehn appeared as a result of her previous research dealing with the mapping and describing of German medieval cities: Fraehn was among those who edited some early Arabic records concerning the city of Mainz (Germany), and his essay, published in St. Petersburg in 1834 [2], has not lost its value even today [3].

Materials on Fraehn's biography are kept partly in Germany (mostly in the archives of Rostock) and partly in Russia, at the St. Petersburg Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences, so only few possess the whole of information about his biography. It demonstrates a general feature of many other biographies of his time and of later period: like many others in his generation he left his native country to continue his scholarly career in another place which he hardly knew well previously [4]. The features of such an international scholarly career in the first half of nineteenth century are overshadowed by the later history of the twentieth century. Therefore, the investigation of the nineteenth-century period can offer a contribution to the reconstruction of the history of international German-Russian and European scholarship, the roots of which one may trace to the eighteenth century [5].

The records

The selected records discussed in this essay are from the University Archive of Rostock and the City of Rostock archive. The material contains information about the par-

ents of Fraehn, his education and first years of his scholarly career [6]. The archives also include material on Fraehn, dating to some decades after his death (beginning of the

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