

Chapter 8. The politics of place names: a summation²⁵

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Abstract

Remarks at the conclusion of a workshop, sponsored by the U.S. National Science Foundation, and held in Oslo, Norway, from 12-13 May 2015, to discuss the historic place names of the High Arctic archipelago of Franz Josef Land. Discussed are new approaches to toponymic research suggested at the workshop, as well as perspective based in the author's research on the toponymic history of Kong Karls Land in Svalbard.

Keywords

Franz Josef Land, polar exploration, Oslo NSF workshop, Kong Karls Land, Svalbard, Spitsbergen

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7557/5.3585>

First of all I would like to say thank you for the invitation to this impressive gathering. We discussed a bit yesterday this idea of the way forward with the materials we have seen here in Oslo. I have been working for several years now for The Arctic University of Norway's Kirkenes campus, where my teaching and research has been partly in different but also in related circles, including contemporary issues of interdisciplinary research in northern studies and the borderlands of Europe. And, as we all know, there is a fair amount of politics going on in the borderlands with Russia today, so I agree that the historical material we have seen and heard about here, the historical naming of what is since 1926 (at first disputed) a Russian Arctic archipelago, should be handled with sensitivity, especially with regard to modern media that might ask you one question but use your answer for an entirely different purpose.

This makes the historical place naming of Franz Josef Land somewhat different from, for example, Antarctica, or even Svalbard, amplified by Russia's recent commitment to devote some hundreds of millions to a new program of Arctic research and nuclear icebreakers (see, for example, "Russia plans new floating Arctic research station," *Barents Observer*, March 18, 2015, and "Keel laying for new nuclear icebreaker," *Barents Observer*, May 27, 2015).

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²⁶ About the author: Urban Wråkberg is professor of Northern Studies at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. He conducts research on social, political and scientific issues of the north, with a focus on the Euroarctic and the borderlands of the Barents Region, i.e. the northern counties of Norway, Sweden, Finland and of the north-west of Russia. He has published in English, Swedish, Norwegian, and Russian on the history and ideology of polar exploration. Urban's work includes particularly influential articles on toponymic studies in the polar regions such as "Delineating a Continent of Ice and Snow: Cartographic Claims of Knowledge and Territory in Antarctica in the 19th and Early 20th Century," and "The Politics of Naming: Contested Observations and the Shaping of Geographical Knowledge."

However, more than just these technologies will be required, given that the present political situation calls for close observation. Thorough historical reviews of related matters take on new significance. It is worth noticing that Antarctic toponymy and the procedures of issuing new place-names there today, is a quite elaborate and since long institutionalized process under the Antarctic Treaty. In resemblance with 19th century colonial geography, while ensuing apparently neutral nature-descriptive names as well as nationally laden ones to new geographical features entered into official maps, it tries to handle the geopolitical tension still making itself felt among the signatory nations in particular those with dormant but overlapping Antarctic land-claims. This is done emulating the socio-scientific process of meting out due recognition among peers in any subject by naming scientific features, phenomena and natural-laws after a researcher, on less politically heated issues—as Aant Elzinga here present has discussed in his research on Antarctic politics and research.

Attempting to handle geopolitically related issues partly by scientists, within their communities and by their procedures, is sometimes successful like in the science-based regulating of fishing in the Barents Sea between Russia and Norway today, but oftentimes reaching consensus at the cutting edge of on-going international research especially under political pressures, has proved difficult, in the present as well as in the past, as of course professional experts themselves are citizens of various nations and committed to many different interests beside the neutrality of science.

I would like to take this time to discuss some of my work on the discovery, construction, and deconstruction of a specific polar region and its place name, that of King Charles Land in Svalbard, which went on between 1625-1900. In those days the islands were an unclaimed *terra nullius* called Spitsbergen, a name I will use in the following for the historical period in which it is relevant. After Norwegian sovereignty was agreed upon in the negotiations following WWI the official name was altered to Svalbard. The expeditions taking place during preceding years, destined to or passing to the south or north of the ice-infested waters to the immediate east of Spitsbergen, were most intensively engaged in geographical debate in the 1870s. The rather animated exchange of ideas then among Arctic geographers, and their frequent publication of maps containing major revisions of earlier or still upheld competing observations by colleagues, may seem puzzling today if we only base ourselves on the contemporary understanding of the islands found in this region—which is that they are insignificant in all respects but the environmental one. Today King Charles Land, or as the present name is: Kong Karls Land, is a desolate Arctic nature reserve were only the staff of the Governor of Svalbard is allowed to land.

We need to set the events of the 1870s in historical and geopolitical context and recognize the power of the then vast unknown to the east of Spitsbergen. We also need to familiarize ourselves a bit with the workings of 19th century global colonialism. Sightings of supposedly new land were often reported then by members of returning polar expeditions. Such

were led and organized not so often actually by scientists but by naval officers, wealthy Arctic tourists, and hard-working skippers of sealing and whaling ships. Thus, sightings and claims to priorities of geographical discoveries were often based on observations of variable geodetic quality and at variance with each other. They could be based on binocular observations from rolling ship-decks made on rare occasions of good visibility, or more precise sightings measured by state-of-the-art portable geodetic instruments. The first publicly announced sightings of land to the east of mainland Spitsbergen were made from mountaintops on its eastern coast. They reported of stretches of coasts far off in the un-navigable sunlit ice-fields; coast-lines and horizons of land often distorted by mirages and/or revealed suddenly and temporarily in drifting fogs and clouds.

For all knowledge held by anyone in the 1860s and 70s—geographers, Arctic indigenous people (Svalbard was uninhabited when discovered in AD 1596 by a Dutch expedition on which Willem Barents served as ice-pilot), naval officers, sealing skippers and whalers alike—such sightings might well have been of the westernmost promontory of a major Arctic island, even an unknown continent. Nevertheless, to be science of enduring geopolitical weight, observations and new maps based on them had to be agreed upon among international geographers. The signs of success in that regard included being favorably reviewed in the major geographical journals of the time, and further publicized in one of the major Western languages: English, German or French. Such a process would bestow not only fame on the single individual of the right social standing often identified/constructed afterwards as the sole person to hold the honor of the observation, but also on the sponsors or navy behind the expedition in question and the nation that might claim or was handed some kind of ownership of it.

When it was realized stepwise over the following decades that no great geographical discovery was to be made in the immediate east of Spitsbergen the great drama of the matter cooled off. The geographical and geopolitical field of vision moved further east and north and came to include the first observations and the ensuing work on the cartography of Franz Josef Land—what has been presented in new historical detail at this Oslo workshop. Another driver behind all this before 1909 was the media, the reading public's interest for the race towards the North Pole. Scrutinizing maps and documents of the international world of science from this process enables us I think to see a typical pattern that can inform our general understanding today of how new knowledge is built in a real context of economic, geopolitical and media interests.

In my study of the lengthy process of “discovery” of unknown land in the region of what turned out to be the islands of King Charles Land I worked along the same lines that several colleagues here present have done in their research on other polar regions, some of which has been presented at this gathering in Oslo. I interested myself foremost for the building of new scientific/geographical knowledge that was made publicly accessible. Thus I didn't go looking for information possibly held confidentially in naval records or as business secrets among

whalers and seal hunters. I largely focused on published material—but in detail and international in scope. As such, it carried little weight in the eyes of the professional historian, including those designated historians of science, when I began my research on this at Uppsala University in the previous century. They all followed the prestige road into the archives, hunting for unpublished letters and once secret political agendas by which to disclose the master story behind it all that they imagined to exist.

Alas, in Scandinavia at least, such archives are few and far between and sadly meager in juicy details. I did not so much either apply a biographical focus on the individuals involved, e.g. psychologizing on the importance of childhood events on the personality of the great explorers and their style of leadership—as speculated on in an endless row of best-selling polar narratives published since the invention of the polar travelogue, the armchair traveler and the arctic sublime in England in the early 19th century.

Particularly important aspects among those we have presented at this workshop are the careful attention to time-sequences, the real order of events, the guiding effects of major sponsorships, the importance of arctic tourism and the international scope of polar research and the details of its collective management and accumulation of new data. The historiographical basics of interpretation call for persistent attention. It is easier to state awareness of this than to always avoid e.g. social or national bias, heroism and teleological reasoning—acknowledging that outcomes of events seldom followed by necessity from anything; that things might have turned out differently if anything from weather and field conditions during single moments of observation to the funding of expeditions and ensuing research and publication had evolved otherwise; if global media attention and big politics had shifted differently.

Discoveries of what were later regarded as simple facts had their origin in odd combinations of skills and luck, and were contingent on the process of deconstruction and re-interpretation of the events afterwards that posterity has projected on the past—this of course includes our own presentations at this workshop. The responsibility of the professional historian and the importance of up-to-date methodology and an international scholarly ethos is worth stressing. It sits in a tight corner today in many chauvinist camps where academic opportunists and politicians have taken over the construction of heroic pasts and use them freely in manipulating collective memory and in dangerous geopolitical myth-making.



Fig. 2. Contemporary map of Kong Karls Land including some of its official geographical names in Norwegian. The distance from the west-coast of Svenskøya (formerly Swedish Foreland) to the north-easternmost point of Abeløya (Kapp Brühl) is about 80km. Source: the public website of the Norwegian Polar Institute.

Two modern charts of the Arctic including eastern Svalbard are presented as a start here not as yardsticks by which to evaluate in hindsight who was “right or wrong” among polar explorer of the past, but to facilitate attempts to relate some of their observations to the space of our own knowledge of this region. In my visually oriented and rather brief discussion below I will consider a chronological set of old maps produced from field observations of various mariners and explorers, and made public by scientific and some other publishers. Identification is given in the captions, along with comments relating to my specific points here, for further bibliographic details I refer to the sources in the list of literature and to my articles specified in it.

One main conclusion from this research, which corroborate the findings of several previous modern studies in the sociology and history of science, is the importance of scientific metropolitan centers in the evaluation and integration of field data into the accepted body of

knowledge of any geographical region. Institutions like the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences during the 19th century and in the following century the Norwegian Agency for the Exploration of Svalbard and the Arctic Seas (predecessor of the contemporary Norwegian Polar Institute) were certainly internationally respected and creative initiators of polar research as well as nationally efficient promoters of it, but they were restricted in their global scientific influence by their then use of native languages in their publications and the small size of their national community of researchers. The British Royal Geographical Society, its French and American counterparts and until the 1930s the German scientific societies, engaged broadly in Arctic and Antarctic research as institutional components of colonial powers of global influence.

In the second line of promoters of polar science and Arctic humanities we find the universities in many countries, including already in the 19th and early 20th century nations like Italy and Russia. The university was always a crucial provider of expertise, educator of young professionals for physically demanding field-work, and a steadfast producer of science and scholarship that represented continuity through the ups and downs in the interests for polar research in various national settings as also on the international scene. What can be seen more strikingly in studying the formation of knowledge at the time of controversy regarding King Charles Land is the importance of mapmaking and scientific publishing as a fourth component beside the scientific academies, the geographical societies, and the universities.

The business of whaling around Spitsbergen was very profitable during the 17th century but dwindled already in the following century due to overfishing and temporary climate change. Trappers and walrus hunters from the White Sea region in north-west Russia were active on the islands in the first half of the 19th century, while British naval expeditions were dispatched then and at the end of the 18th century to the islands to conduct among other pioneering geomagnetic and geodetic research. One of these naval expeditions were able to set a northern record that held for many years by having a team marching in the late spring of 1827, under the command of Edward Parry, on the sea-ice to the north of Spitsbergen, turning back at 82° 45' North. Paul Gaimard led a French expedition under royal auspices to Spitsbergen in 1838 and 1839. It is still remembered today by some for its outstanding engravings, made based on the work of the eminent draftsmen Gaimard brought along, showing landscapes and sceneries from Spitsbergen and northern Norway. These appeared originally in the scholarly and scientific results of the expedition that were then still published the old way, long after the expedition had returned to its home port, as a joint, stand-alone magnificent set of illuminated tomes that most university libraries could not afford to buy. Exemplars of it were offered as princely gifts on great occasions involving diplomats and high echelons of the State of France.

Already in 1827 the Norwegian geologist Mathias Keilhau managed to make scientific observations not of Kong Karls Land but at Bear Island in the south-west, and on land in the south-eastern parts of Spitsbergen, by sharing the costs of chartering a Norwegian sealing sloop *Gud Mit Haab* in Hammerfest, including crew, with the German gentleman tourist Bartho von Löwenigh. In

1837 the Swedish marine biologist Sven Lovén joined—as scientific passenger—a Norwegian sealer in Hammerfest that was bound for Svalbard waters. He became a successful lobbyist of polar research later on in his career as professor at the Swedish Museum of Natural History, promoting national interest in Stockholm and Gothenburg to embark on funding a series of polar expeditions to Spitsbergen during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

At that time the practice of scientific publishing, including such from geographically significant journeys, had shifted towards the standard format of the journal article; not least to remedy the high costs and long delay of producing glossy joint publications aimed at furthering the importance of just one expedition. Given that the Academy of Sciences in Stockholm acted itself as a publisher in Swedish, and to some extent in other languages (mainly German), its proceedings and bewildering array of various series of publications issued throughout the 19th century carried less and less weight in the international world of science. No scientific publisher appeared in Sweden that could equal those of the major language areas and their metropolitan centers of learning.

To excel in northern field research and naval Arctic exploration like the British Admiralty did initially and the Academy of Sciences in Sweden tried to do later, based on the seamanship of its navy but mainly that of north Norwegian sealing skippers, was one way of contributing to science readily accessible to the Scandinavian scientific communities. Another way of gaining importance in international science was followed by German publishers, actually mainly settled outside of that country's main academic centers. As Jane Camerini has demonstrated in her historical research, German publishers like Heinrich Berghaus and Justus Perthes managed, by swift and competent editorial work, eminent map-design, and high-quality printing, to establish world leadership in the business of science publishing in the 19th century. Not only did they shape a style of maps that continues to be influential but also a typical Western belief in the map as a means of communicating almost all important facts on a region and its inhabitants, its future potential, culture, economic value, and geopolitical significance.

This is the reason why we need to point to the work of August Petermann in the process of constructing, deconstructing, and settling the geography and place name(s) of King Charles Land. He was obviously very important in German polar history, as editorial leader of the geographical journal that was later named after him: *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*. Situated in the little town of Gotha in central Germany it functioned in his time and for several following decades as an international clearinghouse for cartographic presentations and facts related to the geography of the world including its polar regions. By following these maps in chronological order you can see how, in these cases, “Giles Land,” an old Dutch observation, or even Greenland itself, were shaped in an international context before they were fully known and described. In this way, rich interpretive possibilities open to the researcher, including, as many of us here have done, actual visits to these sites in an attempt to sort through the many issues presented by the historical context.

The ways in which these places were discussed, for example, in Petermann's *Mitteilungen*, based upon the Swedish observations and on the German expedition to eastern Spitsbergen of Theodor von Heuglin's in 1870, but also upon the observations of sealers, you get very interesting constructions of observed points or angles of connections to and from islands, as at the Swedish Foreland, and by this we today can follow also the details of the attempt to open, restart, and close discussions in the past on the priority of discovery of a particular place and, further, the initiative to launch a new place name or re-locate an old one.

These issues were codified by powerful individuals and groups, but at mid-19th century the field was dominated, reasonably so, by Petermann—who happened to take a personal interest in the exploration of the Polar Regions—and his *Mitteilungen*. This was based on the superior quality of its maps and their ability to create a particular view, and facilitated further by a wide public able to read German. As Adolf E. Nordenskiöld, the foremost Swedish polar explorer at the time, of Finnish decent, himself wrote to Petermann: “people in Sweden get to know about my expeditions through your journal so thank you for publishing news, report as well as articles on them!” The geographical journals had a much wider readership in the heydays of Western colonialism than today.

Around 1871 we find many other articles, also published in the *Mitteilungen*, that describe the remote area of the southern and eastern sectors of Spitsbergen. They show different versions and steps in the evolving representations of this area, as we will see in the following, in their views produced from data from Norwegian sealers and from the voyage of Benjamin Leigh Smith.

There are clashes of interests and contradictions in details and interpretations of predecessors work in the charts produced for Petermann's *Mitteilungen* with maps of the same area produced by Nordenskiöld and his Swedish colleagues. The Arctic place names suggested and settled by Western geographers in general in this period were typically nature-descriptive or bestowing honor on significant Western individuals by using their personal name. The latter class of place names also contributed a national statement by the nationality of the individual it referred to. Swedish geographers were able to get accepted e.g. the name of Retziusfjellet on one of the major mountains on Kong Karls Land after the Stockholm anthropologist Gustaf Retzius who was an influential figure at the Academy of Sciences at the time. Dr. Petermann and later continental geographers also accepted geographical place-names after North-Norwegian skippers like in the name of a nearby mountain on Kong Karls Land Tordenskjøldberget. The wide sounds between the main islands of Kong Karls Land Rivalensundet and Lydianasundet were named after yachts used by Norwegian hunters of seals, polar bears, and walrus along the shores of Svalbard. August Petermann was in favor of distributing honors on past scientists in setting geographical names and used in practice a more international list than the chauvinist Swedes employed. Nevertheless, the place names entered on new maps produced by Petermann from von Heuglin's travels and surveys in Svalbard mainly included names of prominent geo-scientists

from the German-speaking world. In other work I have also pondered the origins of a third class of names found on Svalbard which today might seem obscure or based on perceived features in the landscape, as I wrote on this a few years back:

“there remains a class of names given to pristine bays, fjords and mountains, which had sometimes never before been charted and described, where all other codes of naming for some reason seem to have been used up or ruled out at the moment of baptism. In these cases, the field geographer instead resorted to the principle of naming based on the apparent similarity of the natural feature, in his eyes, to something which was, even just remotely, familiar to him.

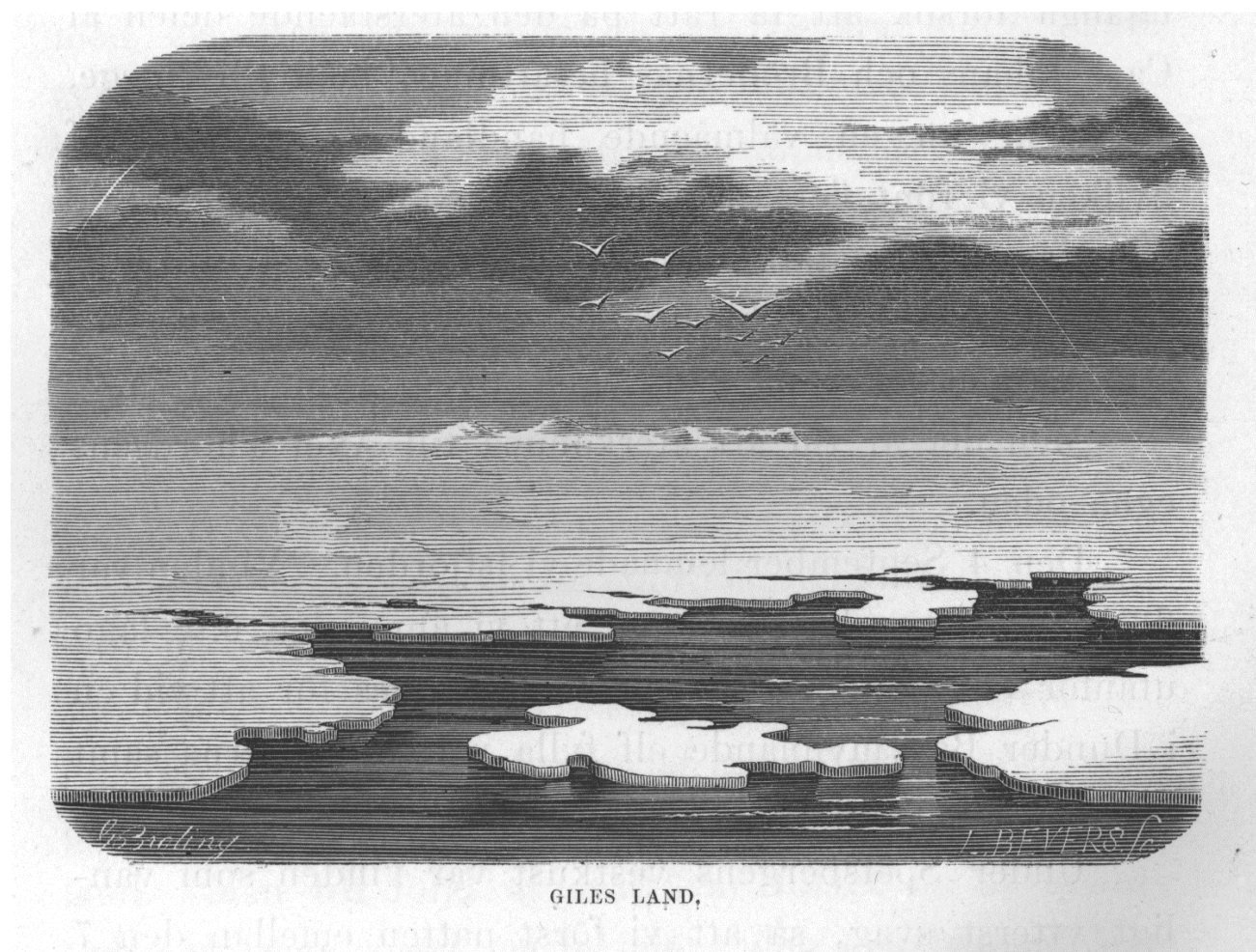


Fig. 4. A wood-cut from the travelogue of the Swedish Arctic expedition of 1864. It illustrates the participating geologists Nils Dunér and Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld’s view from White Mountain on eastern Spitsbergen towards King Charles Land, or Giles Land—as they called it, to start with following earlier Dutch statements on land in this direction. The flying birds in the image were put in because such had been observed flying north and east and this was interpreted as a sign of unknown land further north.

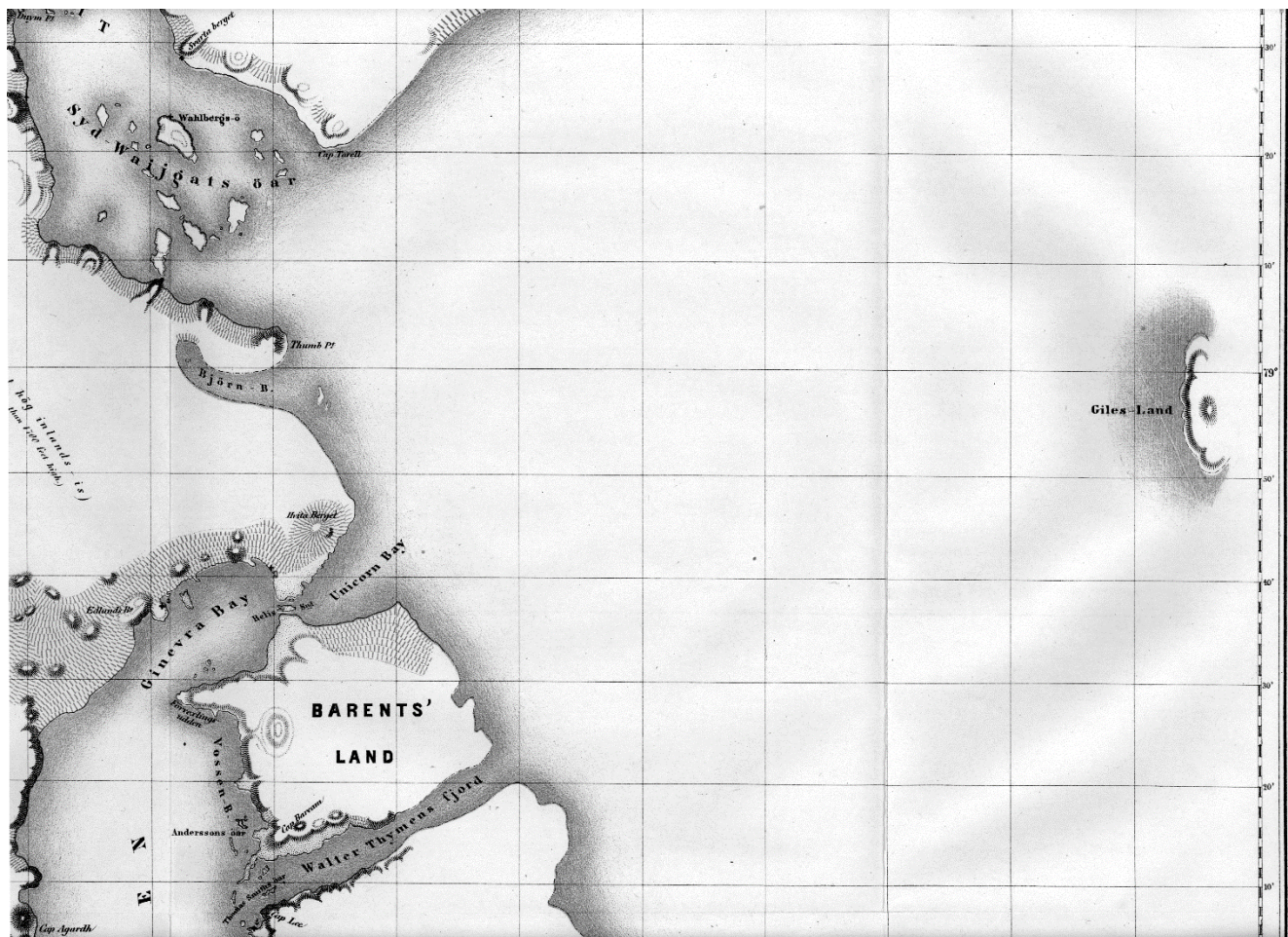


Fig. 5. Detail of a map of Spitsbergen published in 1865 in the *Proceedings of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences* based on Swedish expeditions made in 1861 and 1864 and the sightings during the latter of these towards the east from White Mountain (Hvita Berget). This part of the map shows the new promontory of land in the east placed close to its eastern margin which coincides with longitude 29° E.

“Thus we find in ... Spitsbergen 19th century Swedish geographers named mountains: The Temple, Mt Sphinx, Mt Capitol and Mt Colosseum, based on their supposed similarity to gothic or classical buildings. This demonstrates the dependence of perception on identification: the observer’s practice of seeing, recognising and naming what is new by its resemblance to something familiar even including fantasy and the imagined” (Wråkberg 2007).

Below is a chronologically ordered set of maps, which I specify and also comment some in the captions; further interpretations are in the intermingled paragraphs of the following text.

What followed after the Swedish 1864 Arctic expedition was a kind of negotiation, with longer or shorter delays, among experts in geographical societies and academies in Britain and to

some extent France. It involved centrally the editors of leading German journals like *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*. It is instructive in this context to study the annual reviews of *Geographisches Jahrbuch* with their detailed reports on “progress in arctic geography”. Influential counterparts can be found in the *Proceedings* and *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, and perhaps also *La Géographie* and the *Scottish Geographical Journal* given that these were published in major languages. American geographical periodicals like the *Journal of the American Geographical Society* were growing in influence but not yet as global in scope.

The next image (Fig. 6) presents a circum-polar synthesis of all knowledge held by the editors and mapmakers of Petermann’s *Mitteilungen* based on the repository of geographical information accumulated in Gotha. This Arctic map of 1869 introduces information also from non-professional northern geographical observers.

The whalers and seal hunters active far north were certainly the most experienced of High Arctic conditions but relied for positioning and sightings on what they needed for their main business—which was ship’s navigating tools of standard geodetic-design and precision.

A coast sighted by Dutch whalers in the 17th century, placed somewhere in the northeast of Spitsbergen and called Giles Land seemed a promising indication of major unknown land further east, as did the extensive western coast of Wyches Lande on the old map of the Muscovy Company. In disagreement with Petermann, Adolf Nordenskiöld, the leader of the 1864 expedition, moved the name of Giles Land to the more southern observation he and others had made that year, implying that this must be the coast also that the Dutch had observed back in the 17th century but misplaced on their map. On the 1869 map, Petermann dismissed this idea and kept Giles Land in its original northern position, while the Swedish sighting of 1864 was indicated as a promontory of new land and as such continuously drawn as part of a much larger hinterland.

The following year, the German zoologist and explorer of Africa, Theodor von Heuglin, made an expedition on a Norwegian sealing ship to Spitsbergen accompanied by his compatriot, marine lieutenant Carl von Zeil. Ice conditions in eastern Spitsbergen waters were fairly good so von Heuglin and von Zeil were able to sail up the eastern shore of the wide fjord or bay today named Storfjord. They landed at Cape Lee on Edges Land and made excursions on foot along the shores of Freeman Strait separating Barents Land and Edges Land. Based on sightings made by von Heuglin in the summer of 1870 from the top of what was later named Mt. Middendorff, Petermann published a map where Nordenskiöld’s claims to priority based on his sightings of 1864 were deconstructed, as can be seen in Fig. 7 and in detail in Fig. 8.



Fig. 6. State of the geographical knowledge of the Arctic published in: *Petermanns Geographische Mittheilungen* in 1869. This map demonstrates the inconclusive state of knowledge on the basic distribution of land and sea in the Arctic at this time. Features that look speculative here, like the extension of Greenland into the central Arctic, were based on scientific theory that was seriously debated internationally at the time.

Nordenskiöld's 1864 sighting was of course kept in place but now drawn as separate from von Heuglin's sightings which were of a longer coast stretching further south and east. It was given the name *König Karl Land* (King Karl Land) as a gesture of honor toward king Karl I

of Württemberg, a southern German kingdom of which von Heuglin and von Zeil were both citizens (at this time several small states and duchies of German speakers were united into the second *Reich* under the leadership of Prussia). Nordenskiöld's sighting of land was regarded to be of an island in front of König Karl Land and named *Swedisches Vorland*, the Swedish Foreland.

In following maps of this region published in Sweden, exemplified in Fig. 9, Swedish geographers tried to extend the priority of discovery of what was observed in the east by the 1864 expedition by referring to probable errors made by everyone in positioning in the distance parts of what was claimed to be the same coast, but this line of reasoning seems conceived to secure Nordenskiöld as the original discoverer of the main land/island of King Charles Land in the position reported by von Heuglin.

Meanwhile, in Norway, Henrik Mohn—then director of the Norwegian Meteorological Institute in Oslo—embarked on systematic collection of oral and written records from a number of North-Norwegian Arctic skippers. The results were published in a map and article in 1872 in a Norwegian scientific journal, and the following year in Petermann's *Mitteilungen*. Some of these mariners could confirm that there were actually several different but smaller islands in this region and that these could be visible one at the time depending on clouds and fog. The most brilliant idea of professor Mohn in securing support for his new map was however his way of reasoning concerning the name of the land. Mohn retained the name König Karl-Land adding that it should/could also/ be seen to refer to Karl XV (1826-1872), king of both Sweden and Norway in 1859-1872. According to Mohn's investigations, in the last year of his reign a first landing had allegedly been made on one of these by captain Johannes Nilsen from the town of Hammerfest in northernmost Norway.

During the winter most of Svalbard seas are blocked by ice and during several following summers' lack of funding, fog, and heavy drift-ice ruled out any professional geographical exploration in the east. The issue of Kong Karls Land started out as the disputed discovery of a tip of a land or a continent, before it eventually resolved into some relatively insignificant islands, a very similar process that we see again with the non-existent Petermann Land and indeed Franz Josef Land itself further in the north-east.

Clearly no amateur or even professional of science possessed the means to settled the matter of King Charles Land at a single instance: during a moment of discovery in the field, nor by theory, neither by superior mapmaking or publishing given that the latter way seemed the more efficient. In Fig. 10 is exemplified the confusion produced still in 1889 in the region of Kong Karls Land by reports from skippers operating regularly in these seas. In this map, as in the 1872 map compiled by Mohn (not shown here), the longitudinal positioning of the islands in this group, their relative size and location in the sea are all grossly at variance with what we know today.



Fig. 7. Map published by August Petermann in 1872 presenting a deconstruction of King Charles Land. Here both the sightings of Elling Carlsen, and Dunér and Nordenskiöld, are kept apart from Heuglin's observation in 1870.

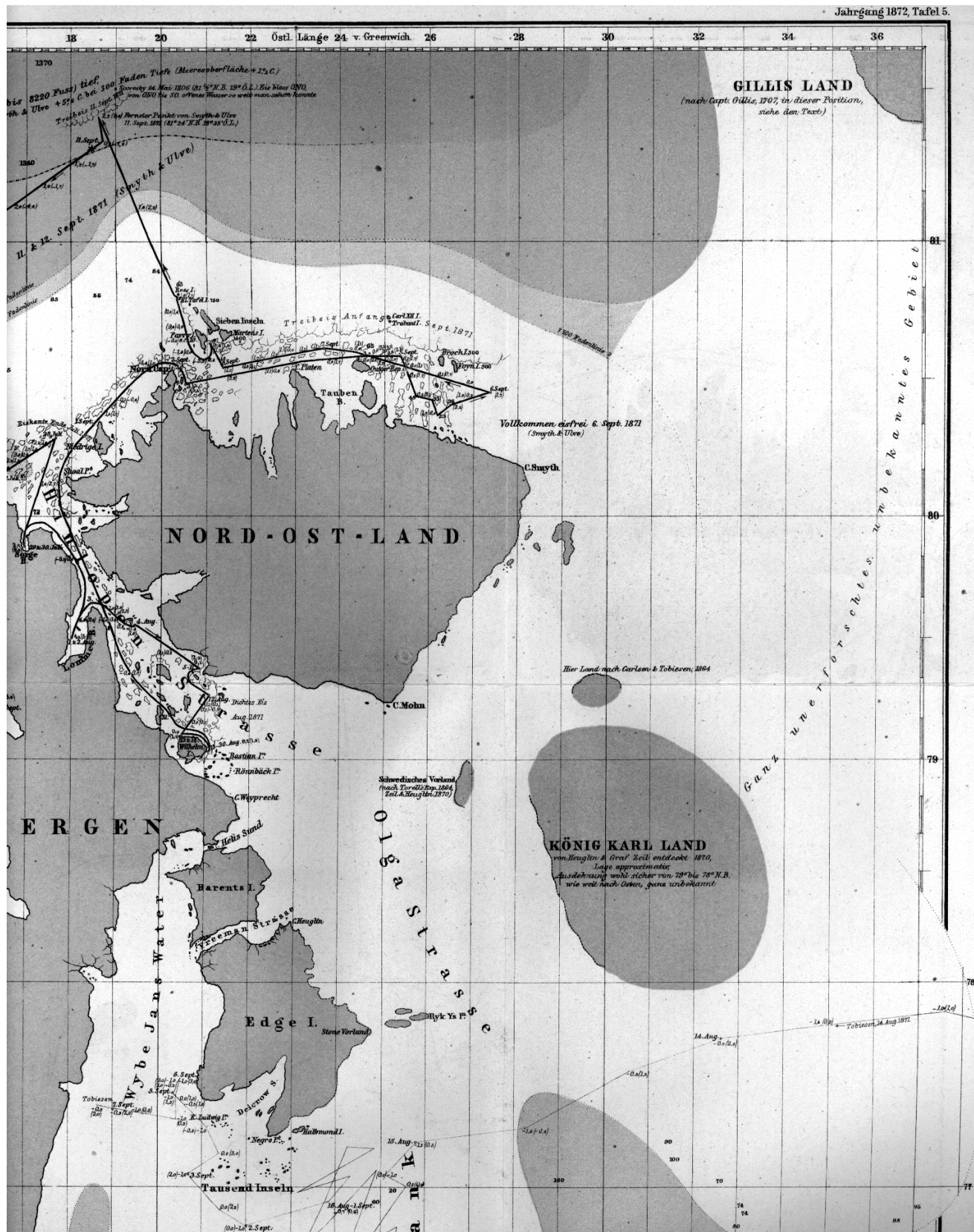


Fig. 8. Detail of the previous map of Spitsbergen and recent observations to the east of it.

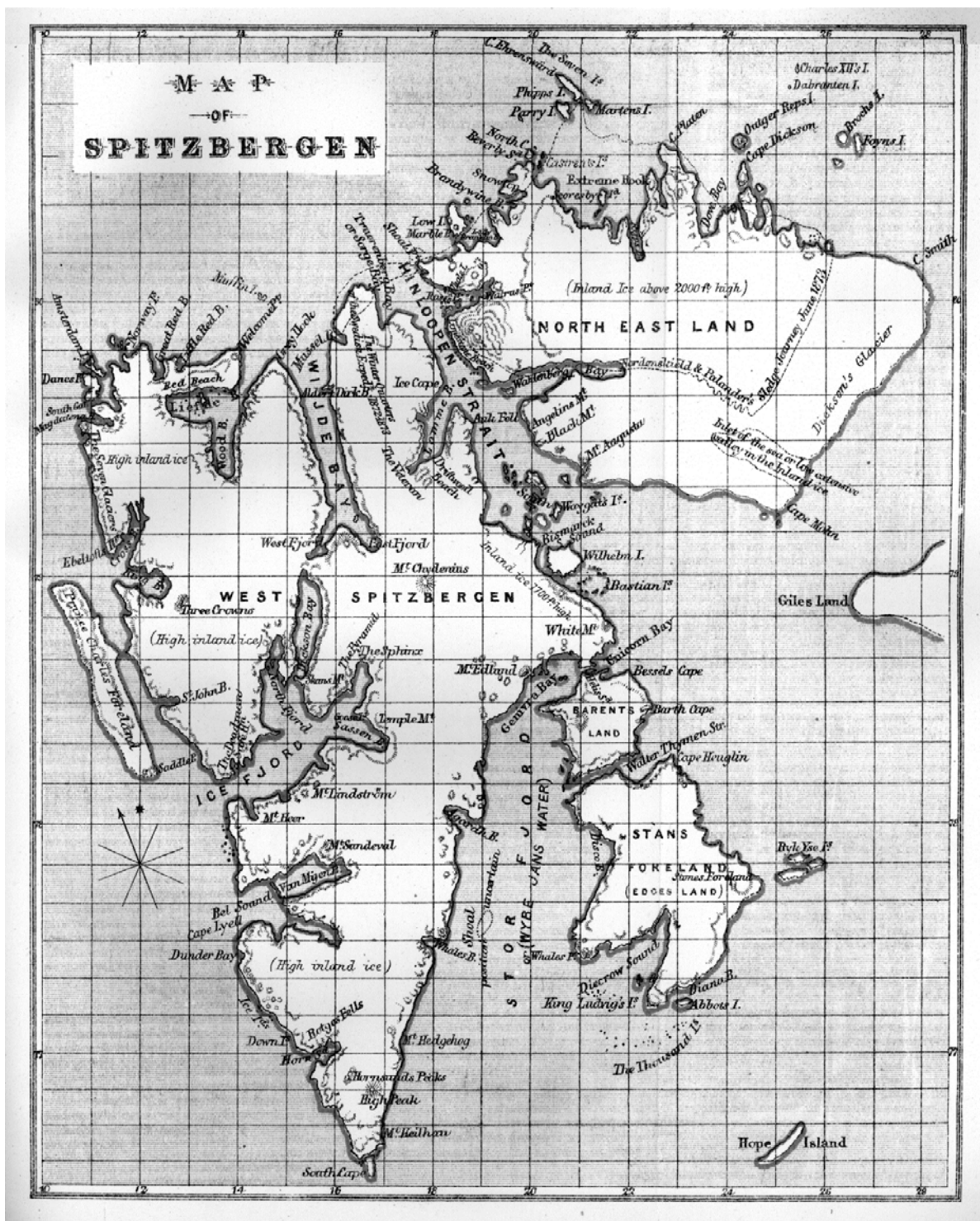


Fig. 9. Swedish map of Spitsbergen from 1879. Notice the closed coastline of King Charles Land, here still called Giles Land. By closing the coast, the priority of Dunér and Nordenskiöld's possible discovery in 1864 of all of King Charles Land could be defended more effectively. Map from Alexander Leslie's book on A. E. Nordenskiöld's polar expeditions up to 1879.

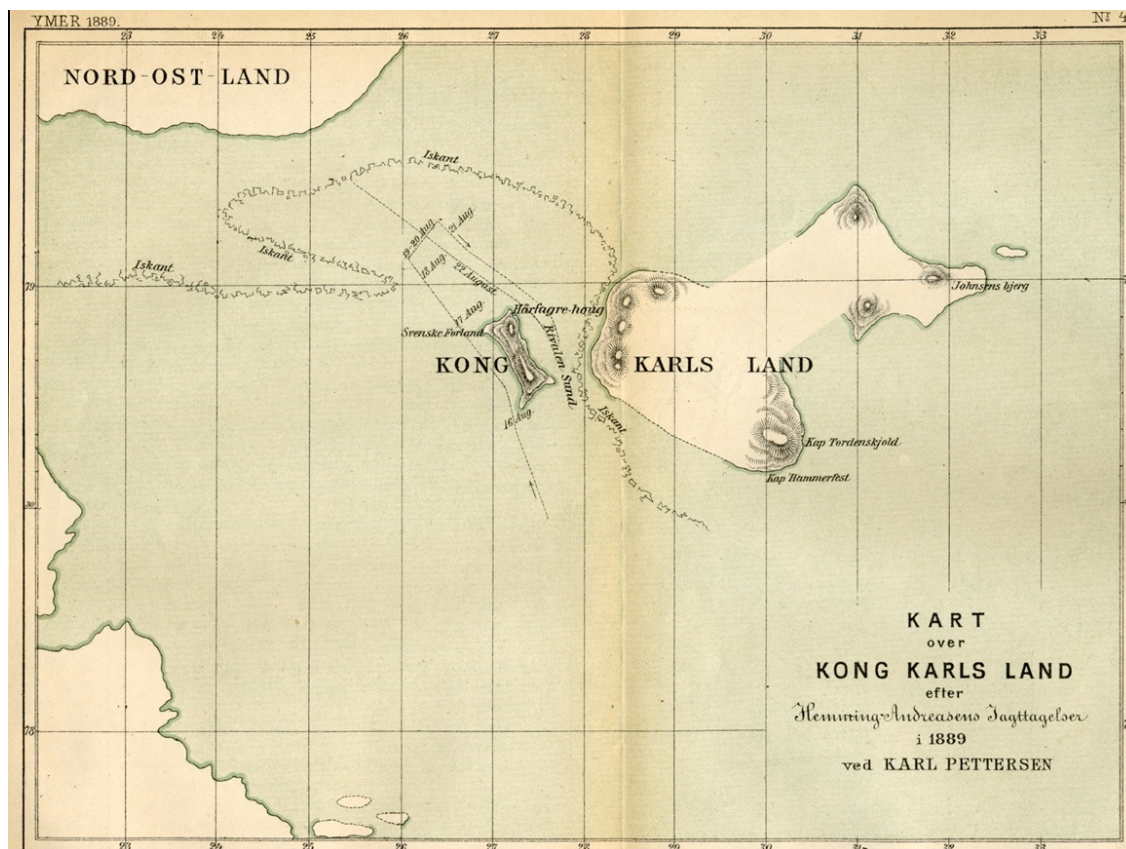


Fig. 10. Map of Kong Karls Land based on the sealing skipper Hemming Andreasen's observations made while approaching the islands in 1889. Source: the journal *Ymer* published by the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography.

Establishing a geographic position in the east-westerly direction on the face of the Earth was very difficult using only the chronometers and navigational instruments carried on board any regular ship throughout the 19th century.

As leader of a rescue-mission on the steam-barque *Antarctic*, dispatched yet a decade later following the disappearance in 1897 of S.A. Andrée's fatal balloon expedition towards the North Pole, Alfred Nathorst was able to bring along a fair team of scientists. They were lucky with weather and ice-conditions and able to make detailed survey based on several landings on the islands of Kong Karls Land. His research team produced several publications from the expedition while Nathorst himself, a paleontologist, contributed a chauvinistically biased overview in its travelogue of the history of the exploration of King Charles Land, based on systematic hindsight reasoning, in which most other methodological mistakes of history writing are exemplified.

Some of my research presented above was done before I had the resources to actually go out into the field and climb e.g. the mountain where von Heuglin made his significant sightings of Kong Karls Land in 1870. Once doing this research, it would have been better to have much

more time to be able, as Tyrone Martinsson has done, to record these locations and vistas in something approaching the precise conditions as were experienced by the original travelers. During the so-called Swedarcic expedition in 1997-2000, we had typically a few hours or an afternoon available at most sites, and while very valuable this of course limited the amount of comparisons with the original maps and other sources we could do.

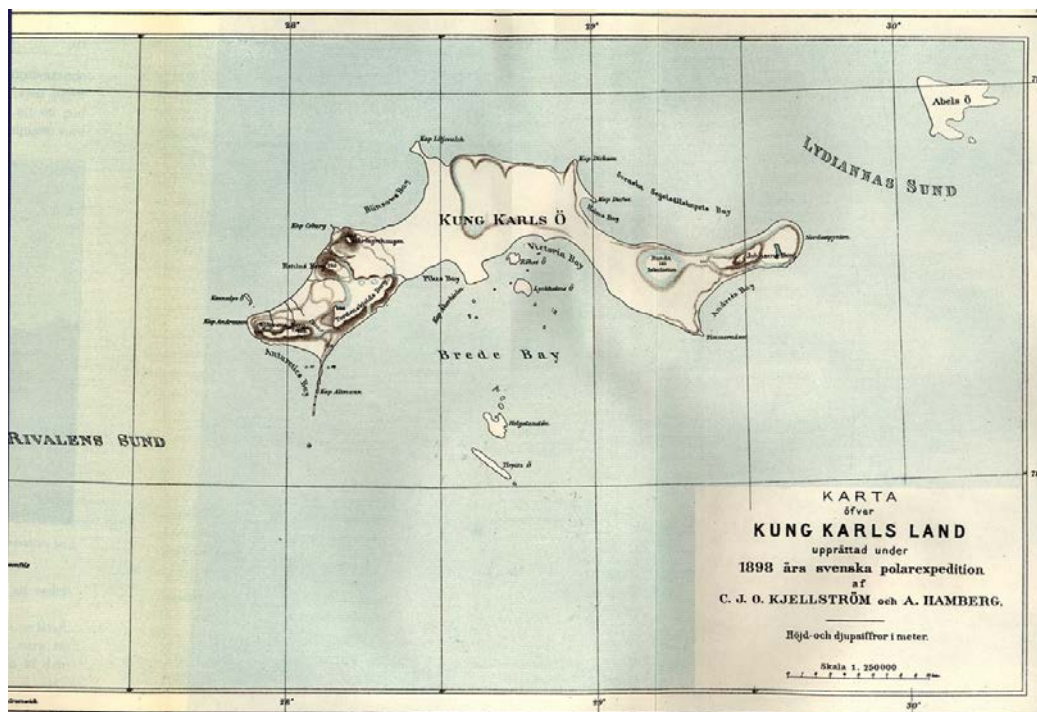


Fig. 11. Detail of map published in 1898 showing the central island in the group of three islands surveyed the same year by Axel Hamberg and Otto Kjellström. They were among the scientists on-board Alfred Nathorst's rescue-expedition for August Andrée. Some of the new place-names entered on the above map have survived and can be found on the contemporary map in Fig. 2. In resemblance with the toponomy of Franz Josef Land Kong Karls Land has several place-names attributable to Arctic sponsors esp. of Nathorst's 1898 expedition. These include: Friedrich Bünsow, industrial investor; George Douglas Kennedy, Gothenburg shipowner of Scottish decent; David Lyckholm, brewer; Oscar Dickson, "timber baron" and big sponsor of nearly all of A.E. Nordenskiöld's polar expeditions. Cape Liljevalch was baptized by Nathorst after Carl Fredrik Liljevalch industrialist and benefactor (still know today in Sweden in the name of the Stockholm art gallery *Liljevalchs konsthall*) but later renamed Teistpynten (Black Guillemont Point); Liljevalch is duly remembered in the names of one mountain and a peninsula elsewhere on Svalbard. Map from (Nathorst 1900).

In the year 2000 we approached Kong Karls Land, but did not have permission to land, as this is now a sanctuary for polar bears. We were able to see the kind of mirage that forms above the islands and the ways such phenomena distort the topographical profile from a distance and inhibit taking a reliable bearing esp. towards land's ends of little elevation. In this way, it was possible to gain an appreciation for earlier voyagers and their attempts to get an estimate of where the land begins and how to record the positions of land and the features on it, from a

distance, as would have often been done in earlier days.



Fig. 12. Panoramic view made of a set of photos taken on September 2, 2000, from the north towards the middle island of King Charles Land, i.e. King Charles Island, today Kongsøya. The distance is some 20 km. By zooming in on this image (if you are viewing a PDF-version of this presentation) three mountains on the right are possible to discern, counting from the left (east) they are: Hårfagrehaugen, Retziusfjellet and Sjögrenfjellet. In the left (eastern) half of the panorama the distorting effects of mirages can be noticed. From the Swedarctic 2000 expedition to Svalbard (© Urban Wråkberg).

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Discussion

- Capelotti: I think what made this research of Urban's so interesting is that he made the direct connection between the battles over the names in Spitsbergen and those in Franz Josef Land. The center of gravity shifted, as the geography of Spitsbergen became fairly clear by 1880, and with it the realization that Spitsbergen was not a land road to the Pole, but perhaps Franz Josef Land was. The fight over names and naming both shifted east, to Franz Josef Land, and west, to Greenland. Wellman, for example, writes an article in 1898 entitled "Where is Andrée?" where he makes very clear his view that Andrée is in one of two places: either in the ocean or in Franz Josef Land and that if he was in Franz Josef Land he would be found. Of course, as we know, Andrée came down on the ocean, albeit the frozen ocean, and ended, for all intents, in between Spitsbergen and Franz Josef Land at Kvitøya.
- Forsberg: Wellman realizes, after nearly dying in Spitsbergen in 1894, that flying is the way to get to the North Pole. So why in 1898 did he make the attempt on the Pole from Franz Josef Land over the ice, instead of flying? I think the main drivers were, he knew that if he could find Andrée there, he would be a rich man, like Nansen, by creating a kind of Stanley and Livingstone moment.
- Capelotti: Wellman's 1898 expedition can be seen, in that light, as an almost exclusively journalistic undertaking. There were two huge and interconnected events in journalism that preceded it, and you've mentioned them. The meeting with Livingstone in 1871 had made Stanley famous, but much more recent was Nansen and Jackson in 1896, which occurred under Jackson's sponsorship by the tabloid newspaper pioneer Alfred Harmsworth. So you can tell, in the fall of 1898, both from his letters and in a photograph taken of him at Cape Tegetthoff, that he was tremendously demoralized, because nothing was going right. And, of course, the big thing that wasn't going right is that he had failed to find Andrée. Wellman was, after all, a journalist, and he wanted a big story, and as everyone learned when Andrée was finally found in 1930, it was a massive story, and would have made him world famous.
- Forsberg: Wellman had two cards in his pocket: finding the North Pole, and finding Andrée.
- Capelotti: Personally, I don't think he would have even tried seriously to reach the North Pole had he found Andrée in 1898. He could have gone home, written his book, and that would have been it.

- Wråkberg: But that's very important, to understand the dynamic behind the actions of the main actors.
- Capelotti: And speaking of place names, Cape Kohlsatt, on Graham Bell Island. I think he was from Boston, and he was one of the people who provided money for the 1898 expedition. Kohlsatt was, supposedly, in Paris when Wellman returned from Spitsbergen in 1894, had just sold his newspaper and had piles of money, and according to Wellman, they just missed connections there or else Wellman would have had the money to buy a balloon and try for the Pole in a balloon even before *Andrée*. In the end, he tried over the ice in 1898 because he did not have nearly enough money to try in any other way. But in the context of place names research, Cape Kohlsatt is a perfect example of why the context of these names is so critical. You need to understand both that Kohlsatt was an actual sponsor of Wellman's 1898 expedition to Franz Josef Land, but also a potential sponsor of Wellman's apparent post-1894 plans to fly a balloon towards the North Pole.
- Forsberg: He had not even made a plan for getting himself out of Franz Josef Land, so I think he was hoping so badly that *Andrée* was to be found sitting at either Cape Flora or at Eira Lodge in the summer of 1898 and he could have ended the expedition right there.
- Capelotti: And nobody would have even questioned, at the point, why he didn't try for the North Pole, because everyone would have been overwhelmed with the finding of *Andrée*.
- Umbreit: But why did they set up their camp in the southeast of the islands?
- Forsberg: Ice. They couldn't get any farther north.
- Umbreit: But wouldn't Alexandra Land have been a much better area to search for *Andrée*?
- Capelotti: I'm not sure they had the ability to get even close to the northern coast of Alexandra Land.
- Forsberg: And it was the supplies. The supplies that *Windward* had left for *Andrée* to survive on had been left at Cape Flora and Eira Lodge. Those were the obvious places for *Andrée* to try to reach. Those were his only real options to survive a winter on Franz Josef Land.
- Wråkberg: There is no question that *Andrée* knew of the supplies at Cape Flora and that if he was in that area he would make for those supplies. And the Swedish expeditions that search for *Andrée* in both Spitsbergen and Greenland go through all the

known huts in which they might have survived or left messages behind. They don't get to Franz Josef Land but they meet people coming back from that area.

- Forsberg: They meet *Frithjof*, for example, in Kong Karls Land and it was then that they realizes that Franz Josef Land had been searched and there was no reason to go there.
- Umbreit: So Wellman went to these two places and basically gave up when he didn't find Andrée there?
- Capelotti: Not entirely, because there's a panic on board when they get to Hall Island, and they see footprints. And by now, Evelyn Baldwin's mind was racing and he was certain that these were from Andrée. They were almost certainly from sealers and walrus-hunters who had been there that same summer and when they went ashore they of course found no trace of Andrée. Now that could possibly have influenced why they stayed there and set up camp there, as perhaps they thought that if they searched a bit more in that area they would find the Swedes.
- Umbreit: To return to Spitsbergen for a moment, the Swedish 'Kong Karls Land' and the German 'Kung Karls Land' are two different persons?
- Wråkberg: The Norwegian professor, Henrik Mohn, makes a kind of Rorschach image with the name and he comes up with the idea that we use the name 'Kong Karls Land' in the Swedish-Norwegian context that it is understood to be a Swedish king, but we also keep this name based on the contribution from the German side.
- Forsberg: Very politically correct!
- Wråkberg: That is the genius of Professor Mohn, to crack this issue out of the historical fabric.
- Elzinga: In science studies we call this 'interpretive flexibility.' There's a whole field now of 'science diplomacy,' and this is an early form of it.
- Capelotti: In the 1865 chart Urban showed I would like to point out Ginevra Bay, attached to the area by James Lamont only a few years previous and named for his ship. It's a 'bay' because they did not get close enough to see that the 'bay' is actually a strait that connects to another bay on the opposite side of Barentsoya. Also, the 1871 Leigh Smith chart is apparently the first time we see 'Cape Mohn' appearing on a map in Svalbard, a testament, perhaps, to Mohn's growing influence in the politics of place names in what would eventually become the Norwegian Arctic.