A.F. Büsching and the Place of Geographical Knowledge in the German Enlightenment, c.1740–1800

by

Dean W. Bond

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Geography
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This dissertation places geographical knowledge and practice in the German Enlightenment (Aufklärung). I illustrate something of geography’s constitutive sites and practical making by discussing the life and work of Anton Friedrich Büsching (1724–93), who made his name as one of the foremost geographers in the German lands and Europe through his Neue Erdbeschreibung (Hamburg, 1754–92), and through his geographical periodicals. I consider Büsching’s geographical project and its social, political and scientific contexts in three articles. The first concerns the making of geographical knowledge ‘at home’ in the context of Büsching’s geography of Asia (Hamburg, 1768) and the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia (1761–67) organised by Johann David Michaelis. I illustrate how Büsching and Michaelis sought to integrate knowledge of the study and the field in ways that allowed them to produce more accurate knowledge of Asia’s geography, and to legitimate the credibility of textual critique in the study. I argue that understanding the relations between the constitution of the study as an analytic site and the evaluation of knowledge from the field is crucial for understanding the making of Enlightenment geography. The second article concerns the place of geography in print,
and focusses on Büsching’s ‘learned newspaper’, the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* (Berlin, 1773–87). I argue his periodical played a central role in reshaping the moral economy of geographical knowledge in the later eighteenth century, and show that the periodicity and materiality of the periodical genre transformed the character of geography’s authors and audiences in the Aufklärung. The final article discusses the place of politics in German geography. I argue that geography was politicised through inscriptive practices of authorship, correspondence and learned journalism, and through practices of mapping and education. Moreover, I contend that Büsching’s geographical project was politicised through his work on the geography of the Holy Roman Empire and through his periodicals, because these works were a means for improving geo–literacy, and for engendering a sense of pride in both ‘Germany’ as a cultural nation and in Frederick II’s Prussia. Collectively, the dissertation demonstrates the centrality of Büsching’s geographical project to the making of geography in the Aufklärung.
Acknowledgments

As with Büsching’s geographical project, my own project cannot be understood outside the life geographies that have shaped it. At the University of Toronto, I am thankful to my supervisor, Susan Ruddick, who has provided helpful guidance throughout the project and always supported and championed my work. I am grateful for her willingness to engage with my work on its own terms, and for her willingness to help me think through the conceptual problems that occasionally impeded my progress. I am thankful for the guidance I have received from Matthew Farish, who has always engaged critically and productively with drafts of my articles. Discussing matters of historical and cultural geography with Matt has always been a delight. As someone who can get lost in details, moreover, I am grateful to both Sue and Matt for reminding me to think about the bigger picture. I would like to thank Kanishka Goonewardena, who has critically engaged with my work at various stages. Thomas Lahusen has provided valuable feedback on my work in the last phase of the project.

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Chapter 1
Introduction: A.F. Büsching and the Geographies in and of the German Enlightenment

In the winter of 1773, the geographer Anton Friedrich Büsching penned the following words in one of the earliest issues of his ‘learned newspaper’, the *Weekly Reports on Contemporary Maps and Geographical, Statistical and Historical Books and Publications* (Berlin, 1773–1787):

Without saying more about this book, I want to answer the question that is often put to me, namely whether and when I want to continue my Geography [the *Neue Erdbeschreibung*, Hamburg, 1754–1792]. I have already said in the preface to the first edition of the fifth part of the work that my present situation is absolutely not advantageous for this work, because it is not does not afford me any time for it. And so it is. I may neither hope, nor be made hopeful, that my situation [as director of the *Graues Kloster* in Berlin] will allow me to continue and complete my *Erdbeschreibung*. This is unpleasant for no one more than me, because the *Erdbeschreibung* lies closer to my heart than any other scholarly work, and because I hoped that I could spend the rest of my years and energy just on the *Erdbeschreibung*.¹

As this passage reveals, geography was central to Büsching’s life and work. Indeed, although he only spent seven years teaching geography at university, his geographical project was always his primary scholarly concern. That geography became his prime concern, and that he achieved such success with his geography, was the product of his variegated ‘life geographies’, which included cities and towns across the Holy Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Denmark-Copenhagen and the Russian Empire, along with

various churches, homes, secondary schools and universities. Yet, the story of how such geographies shaped—and were shaped by—his geographical project has received relatively little attention, despite recognition that he was one the most prominent geographers in the Age of Reason, and despite recent interest in the geographies in and of the Enlightenment. Büsching's story merits attention, however, because it helps reveal the material making and geographies of geographical practice in the German Enlightenment (Aufklärung), which have garnered comparatively little attention from geographers and historians.

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2 On life geographies, see, for example, Daniels and Nash, 'Lifepaths: geography and biography'; McGeachan et al., 'Certain subjects? Working with biography'. This dissertation supports Livingstone's claims regarding the need for biography a 'crucial tool' in the geographer's 'historiographical arsenal'. It supports his claim that 'sensitivity to the spaces of a life...could open up new and revealing ways of taking the measure of a life'. Livingstone, 'Putting geography in its place', 4.
This dissertation considers three moments in the making of Büsching’s life geographies and the geographies of the Aufklärung. It focusses on the period from about 1740 to 1790, with excursions into slightly earlier and later decades. The three chapters attempt to place Büsching’s work and ‘German Enlightenment geography’ (Aufklärungsgeographie) in relation to cultures of exploration, cultures of geographical print and the politics of geographical practice. It discusses the place of geographical
knowledge production in the context of the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia (1761–67) and Büsching’s geography of Asia (Hamburg, 1768), the place of Büsching’s periodicals in the making of Enlightenment geography’s print culture, and the place of politics in Büsching’s work and Aufklärungsgeographie more broadly. In so doing, I argue that Büsching’s geographical project was central in shaping the geographies in and of the Aufklärung, and make the case for thinking geographically about the German Enlightenment.3

In the remainder of the introduction, my aim is not to provide a detailed literature review. Such a review is unnecessary here because each chapter canvasses the relevant literatures concerning cultures of exploration, geographical print culture and the politics of early modern geography. Instead, I say a few things about the concepts of geography and Enlightenment and the literature on Büsching, and then briefly highlight the ways the dissertation contributes to broader debates in geography and other fields.

### 1.1 Historical geographies in and of Enlightenment

My concern in this dissertation is with understanding geography as both a ‘discipline’, namely ‘what contemporaries held the subject be’, and as a ‘discourse’, namely ‘those practices – observing, mapping, collecting, comparing, writing, sketching, classifying, reading, and so on – through which people came to know the world’.4 As scholars have

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3 In so doing, I draw on the line of argument in Withers, Placing the Enlightenment; and Withers and Livingstone, ‘Introduction: on geography and Enlightenment’.
4 Withers, Placing the Enlightenment, 12.
shown, such practices were thoroughly material, and were located in and shaped a diverse range of social, religious and political institutions.\(^5\) Indeed, geography in the Enlightenment was far from a university-dominated affair. Rather, geography’s Republic of Letters was populated by authors, teachers and government officials of various social origins and rank, few of whom understood themselves to be professional geographers.\(^6\) As a discipline, geography was largely entrenched in the ‘print space’ of grammars and handbooks, and was understood to be a descriptive enterprise that sought to put to order the natural and political features of the terraqueous globe.\(^7\) In putting to the globe to order, however, authors employed varying inscriptive practices, harboured varying pedagogical, political and scientific aims, wrote for various audiences, and grounded their work in varying moral economies of knowledge.\(^8\) This dissertation is concerned, in part, with revealing geography’s competing epistemological norms, diverse print spaces and political character, and in so doing advances knowledge of the geographies in and of the Enlightenment.

Recent decades have seen much debate concerning the meaning and shape of ‘the Enlightenment’. It is now widely recognised, however, that the Enlightenment was far from a homogeneous, unitary phenomenon, and that it was far more than an intellectual

\(^5\) On the diversity of sites, see Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, 213–33. On the geography of science more generally, see Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*.


\(^7\) Mayhew, ‘The character of English geography’; Mayhew, ‘Materialist hermeneutics’.

\(^8\) On geography’s diversity, see Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, 193–233. On moral economies of geographical knowledge, see Chapters 1 and 2 below.
movement rooted in universities. Rather, it was also a fundamentally practical endeavour
that sought to improve the social, religious, economic and political condition of local
communities, states and humanity through social and political reforms rooted in reason
and utility. Yet, as Porter has argued, ‘there was no public charter of the Enlightenment,
no party manifesto for the “party of humanity”’. The precise concerns that motivated
advocates of enlightened reforms varied across and within towns, cities, regions, states
and empires. Crucially, the precise social, political and intellectual concerns that gained
traction amongst proponents of Enlightenment was shaped in fundamental ways by the
geographies of Enlightenment, namely the ‘the sites and the practices in which
enlightenment, as a process, a set of ideas, was produced, debated, and consumed’. My
aim in this dissertation is, in part, to reveal how those geographies were interwoven with
the practice of geography in the German Aufklärung.

As with the broader Enlightenment, scholars now recognise the German
Aufklärung as a cultural and intellectual movement that varied geographically and
temporally. In terms of chronology, scholars have distinguished between an early
Enlightenment (c.1690–1740), and a ‘high’ or ‘late’ Enlightenment (c.1740–1800), although
the precise chronological bounds for each phase are contested. In terms of geography,
one scholar has recently claimed that ‘the polycentricity of the Aufklärung is now clearer

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9 On the diversity of the Enlightenment and discussion of historiographical trends, see, for example,
Enlightenment, 1–13; Oz-Salzberger, ‘New approaches’; Robertson, The Case for Enlightenment, 1–51;
Withers, Placing the Enlightenment, 1–6, 25–41.
12 On periodisation, see, for example, Whaley, ‘The transformation of the Aufklärung’, 163–79; Reill, The
than ever before’. These geographical differences mattered had to do with the political and religious fragmentation of the Reich, and with the lack of a political and cultural centre similar to London, Edinburgh or Paris. Yet, such differences were more than the result of fragmented political and cultural geographies. Rather, geographical differences were linked to variations in the motives and aims for the enlightened reform of society within and across towns and regions throughout the Reich. Precisely how the aims of enlightened scholarship and reform varied across places has been illustrated in studies about individual scholars, institutions and cultures of Enlightenment in particular locales. Collectively, this literature has shown that the Aufklärung had various temporal phases and ‘regional and local forms’, and that such variations mattered for what the Aufklärung was in practice. This dissertation contributes to the project of revealing how what I would call the ‘geographies of Aufklärung’ mattered for its making as a cultural, political and fundamentally geographical process.

1.2 A.F. Büsching and the geographies of Enlightenment exploration, print culture and politics

Within the annals of geography, Büsching has received far less scrutiny than his successors in the so-called classical era of geography, namely Carl Ritter and the much-
vaunted Alexander von Humboldt. That Humboldt has garnered significant attention is understandable. Amongst other things, he travelled to the Americas, conducted experiments using his body as an instrument, and provided a holistic vision of human-environment relations that still resonates with geographers. By contrast, Büsching was a rather sedentary scholar rooted in his study. He lived and worked in several towns in the Reich and spent considerable time in the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and the Russian Empire, but he was far from an explorer or voyager-naturaliste. As he explained in 1775, ‘Journeys are not my thing. They cost too much time, and I have none to spare’. His Neue Erdbeschreibung, moreover, was not a theoretical work, but rather a descriptive political geography that exemplified, in rather stark form, the Enlightenment desire to put the world to order. Such facts undoubtedly help explain why Büsching has received comparatively little attention, especially in histories driven by a presentist concern to trace geography’s emergence as a scientific discipline.

Büschor’s life and work have received some attention, however, particularly in the German-speaking literature. Most notably, he has been the subject of a monograph length study by historian Peter Hoffmann. Hoffmann’s well-researched book covers Büsching’s life and all facets of his scholarly career, but what it gains in breadth it loses in

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16 The designations ‘pre-classical’ (1750–98) and ‘classical’ (1799–1859) have been used in Beck, Geographie, and Hartshorne, The Nature of Geography, 35–84. This periodisation is significant because it has continued to shape how scholars view geography’s history. For an example of its persistence, see Tang, The Geographic Imagination of Modernity, especially 7–8, 25–55.
17 On Humboldt, see, for example, Beck, Alexander von Humboldt, Bd. 1; Beck, Alexander von Humboldt, Bd. 2; Dettelbach, ‘Humboldtian science’; Dettelbach, ‘The face of nature’; Godlewska, ‘From Enlightenment vision to modern science?’; Outram, ‘On being Perseus’; Rupke, ‘A geography of enlightenment’; Rupke, Alexander von Humboldt; Walls, The Passage to Cosmos.
18 Büsching, Beschreibung seiner Reise von Berlin (1775) Introduction, a1r.
depth. In addition, his treatment of Büsching’s geography exhibits a presentist concern with Büsching’s contribution to the scientific progress of geography.\textsuperscript{19} Plewe has perhaps offered the most substantive study of Büsching’s geography, wherein he criticised presentist readings of Büsching and rightly argued for the need to take seriously the significance of Büsching’s project in its own time.\textsuperscript{20} Collectively, the work of Plewe and Hoffmann—along with that of Kühn—has provided an illuminating and useful overview of Büsching’s project, and has gone some way towards situating his work in the broader context of Enlightenment geography.\textsuperscript{21}

Far less has been said about Büsching in the Anglophone literature. In her decidedly presentist history, Bowen provided an overview of Büsching’s geography. Bowen rightly highlighted the distinctiveness of his method and his nuanced views on culture and race, although she was primarily concerned with situating his method and views in relation to Humboldt and other modern geographers, rather than with emphasising the significance of Büsching’s geography in its own time.\textsuperscript{22} Büttner and Jäkel, for their part, have provided the best available intellectual-biographical sketch of the noted geographer. In his sweeping history, Livingstone has usefully situated Büsching’s \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung} within the physico-theological tradition.\textsuperscript{23} Within wider discussions of Enlightenment geography, moreover, others have mentioned in passing

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{19} Hoffmann, \textit{Anton Friedrich Büsching}, 145–68 (on his geography in particular).
\item\textsuperscript{20} Plewe, ‘Studien über D. Anton Friedrich Büsching’.
\item\textsuperscript{21} See Kühn, \textit{Die Neugestaltung der deutschen Geographie}, 61–81.
\item\textsuperscript{22} Bowen, \textit{Empiricism and Geographical Thought}, 154–59.
\item\textsuperscript{23} Livingstone, \textit{The Geographical Tradition}, 109. His physico-theology is also underscored in Glacken, \textit{Traces on the Rhodian Shore}, 515–17.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Büsching’s geography lectures in Göttingen, the aims and character of his *Neue Erdbeschreibung* and the prominence of his periodicals.\(^{24}\)

Yet, even when taken together, the Anglophone and Germanophone literatures do not provide an account that takes seriously enough the contexts in which Büsching practiced geography, that interweaves and reveals the ways in which his life geographies shaped various facets of his geographical project, and that considers seriously enough how his project was shaped by the geographies of politics and power. This dissertation begins to provide such an account, and in so doing it makes a significant contribution to the literatures on Büsching, the historical geographies of science, book history and Enlightenment studies.

The first chapter is concerned with the place of geographical knowledge in cultures of exploration. My emphasis, however, is not on the exploits of travellers in the field, but rather with the less glamorous practices of compilation, source criticism and correspondence through which ‘armchair’ geographers directed, conceptualised and evaluated scientific travel and its findings. It is concerned with understanding the ways geographical knowledge travelled, or failed to travel, between the study and the field. Likewise, it is concerned with understanding the epistemological norms that governed how armchair geographers sifted through and judged the truth claims of those who ventured into the field. It is concerned, too, with how such things mattered for the

\(^{24}\) Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 220, 256–57 (on periodicals); Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, 183–84, 223; Withers, ‘Kant’s Geography’, 54–55 (on Büsching as influence on Kant). Edney, ‘Reconsidering Enlightenment geography’, 170–71, has argued that ‘the prospect of achieving a universal geographical archive was held out by the construction of numerous “microarchives”’, and has cited the *Neue Erdbeschreibung* as a prime example of a microarchive.
making and maintenance of learned authority. In discussing these matters, I argue that too little attention has been paid to what I call the ‘social constitution of the study’, namely the ways epistemological norms, scholarly practices and the circulation of knowledge between the study and the field came together to shape the study as an ‘analytic site’. In drawing attention to Büsching’s place in the Danish expedition, the chapter makes the case for greater consideration of what Withers has called ‘geographically privileged persons’, namely those who did not or could not travel, but were pivotal in circulating and evaluating geographical knowledge because their ‘social and geographical situation made them credible sources’. More broadly, I argue that understanding how knowledge circulated between the study and the field and influenced the constitution of the study is crucial for understanding the character of geography in the Enlightenment.

Similar to the first chapter, the second is very much concerned with the geographies of knowledge and questions of authority, credibility and trust, although it turns from cultures of exploration to print culture. It considers how matters of epistemic credit and trust were linked to the print space of geographical periodicals, which were unique to the German lands in the second half of the eighteenth century. Drawing on examples from periodicals edited by Büsching, Johann Georg Hager and others, it illustrates how their periodicals reflected and shaped the broader print culture of Enlightenment geography. I argue that Büsching’s periodicals were crucial in shaping geography’s print culture in Aufklärung. My broader aim, moreover, is to argue for greater

25 Withers, Placing the Enlightenment, 10.
attention to what I call ‘periodical geography’, which refers to the practical making of geographical periodicals and to geographies of their making. In advancing this claim, I engage with recent scholarship on the geographies of the book and book history, which has done much to reveal the geographies, inscriptive practices and concerns with epistemic credit that have shaped the making and circulation of printed books, but has said far less about periodicals.  

The place and ‘social nature’ of geographical knowledge are prominent concerns in the final chapter as well. The chapter discusses the relations between politics, power and geography in the German Enlightenment. Geography’s links to power in this period have received little attention, and this is arguably because states in the German Reich lacked colonial possessions, and because they abstained from financing voyages of exploration that married scientific and colonial concerns, either because they lacked the finances to do so, were more concerned with exploration and colonial endeavours on the continent, or some combination of both. Yet, ‘Germans’ were tied to cultures of exploration and colonialism through the exploits of Johann Reinhold and Georg Forster on Cook’s second voyage (1772 – 1775), and through the participation—both in the field and the study—of Carsten Niebuhr, Georg Bauernfeind, Johann David Michaelis and

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26 Although book historians and historians of science have said much about the practical making and circulation of periodicals, but there has been little explicit attempt to analyse their making from a geographical perspective. Johns has perhaps paid greatest attention to questions of place and the settings of periodicals, especially in Johns, ‘Miscellaneous methods’.

27 I borrow the term ‘social nature’ from Withers, ‘The social nature of map making’.
Büsching in the Danish expedition.\textsuperscript{28} Such connections are not my concern, however. Rather, my concern is with the ways geography was politicized through print culture, patronage and what Mayhew has called ‘political languages’.\textsuperscript{29} Drawing on Büsching’s case, I argue that geographical practice had a role in the broader, fundamentally geographical process through which individual German states, the wider German \textit{Reich} and Germany as a cultural nation came to know themselves. My broader aim for the chapter is to argue that geography was politicised through inscriptive practices of authorship, epistolary geography, learned journalism, mapping and education. By advancing these claims, I contribute to broader debates on the nature of early modern German identity, and I advance debates on the place of politics and power in the making of geographies in and of the Enlightenment.

\section*{1.3 Archives and sources}

This dissertation draws on archival and printed sources from German archives and libraries, along with digitised printed sources available through German university library web sites and Google Books. Before engaging with the archival handwritten sources, I was unable to read German handwritten script. Through self-instruction and practice engaging with the sources themselves, I became proficient in reading eighteenth-century German handwriting. Büsching’s handwriting in particular is especially difficult to read

\textsuperscript{28} On the Forsters and Cook, see, for example, Uhlig, \textit{Georg Forster}, 40–95. For a nuanced discussion of Georg Forster’s views on colonialism, see Tzoref-Ashkenazi, ‘The experienced traveller’. On Forster, travel writing and colonialism, see Tautz, ‘Cutting, pasting, fabricating’.

\textsuperscript{29} See Mayhew, \textit{Enlightenment Geography}; Mayhew, ‘Geography books’.
compared with that of other contemporaries, and this made my task of making sense of the archives significantly more challenging.

My project took its current shape largely because I discovered Büsching’s correspondence with Michaelis in the Göttingen archives, which comprises 58 letters from Büsching to Michaelis and 10 letters from Michaelis to Büsching. The letters cover the period from about 1756 to 1788. After coming upon this correspondence, I realised how little had been written about Büsching in the Anglophone literature. Further investigation showed that more of Büsching’s correspondence had survived than that of most other eighteenth-century German geographers. I found Büsching’s correspondence, along with his autobiography, to be a fruitful starting point for a study of Büsching’s life geographies and Aufklärungsgeographie more broadly.

Over the course of the project I visited archives and libraries across Germany, and they are listed in the table below.

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<th>Archive</th>
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Copies of selected letters pertaining to Büsching were also retrieved in digitised form from archives that I was unable to visit, including the City Library of Dortmund (Stadtbibliothek Dortmund), the Heidelberg University Library (Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg) and Kassel University Library (Universitätsbibliothek Kassel). The only archive I visited outside Germany was the Library of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) in London, where I consulted printed geographical works, including copies of Büsching’s *Magazine for Contemporary History and Geography*.

Much of the archival material I gathered concerned the Seven Years War in Göttingen and Hanover. I had planned to write chapter on this topic, but time constraints prevented me from completing and including this chapter. Despite the wide range of archives consulted, moreover, this dissertation draws primarily on material from the Lower Saxony State and University Library in Göttingen, and specifically the Büsching-Michaelis correspondence and the personnel files for professors in the university archive. It also relies on printed correspondence between Büsching and the historian G.F. Müller, and on geography books and journals digitised by various German libraries.  

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30 For the Büsching-Müller correspondence, see Hoffmann (ed.), *Geographie, Geschichte und Bildungswesen*. Hoffmann compiled the correspondence from manuscripts in St. Petersburg and Moscow archives.
In this dissertation I do not claim to provide a complete account of the geographies in and of Aufklärung. Nor do I pretend to offer a full account of Büsching’s life and work. Such tasks are far beyond the scope of this article-centred dissertation. Instead, I narrate several moments within a broader history of the making of geographies in and of the Aufklärung, and underscore Büsching’s prominent role in their making. I begin by considering Büsching’s place in shaping the geographies in and of the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia.
Chapter 2
Enlightenment Geography in the Study: A.F. Büsching, J.D. Michaelis and the Place of Geographical Knusknowledge in the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, 1761–1767

In January 1768, the geographer Anton Friedrich Büsching wrote to his friend Johann David Michaelis to update him on his work concerning the geography of Arabia:

As an indemnity I’m sending you three new geographical pages belonging to the continuation of the description of Arabia. To my displeasure, however, the complete description of Mount Sinai and the stated rock that Moses was supposed to have smashed is not included in these pages...When the page containing this material is complete, I shall send it you by post. The [description of] Sinai has cost me much effort and time, and therefore I view my treatment of it as significant and your evaluation of it as valuable.

Büsching viewed Michaelis’s evaluation as valuable because Michaelis, a scholar of Oriental languages and biblical philology, was interested in and knowledgeable about the geography of the Bible. Indeed, geography was one of the many subjects – including the ‘natural sciences’ (Naturwissenschaften) and history – that Michaelis saw as crucial aids to understanding the Bible’s linguistic and cultural context. His belief in geography’s utility led him to edit dual language editions of geographical works by the ancient Arab

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31 A slightly modified version of this chapter was published as Dean W. Bond, ‘Enlightenment geography in the study: A.F. Büsching, J.D. Michaelis and the place of geographical knowledge in the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, 1761–1767’, Journal of Historical Geography, 51 (2016), 64–75.
32 A.F. Büsching to J.D. Michaelis, Berlin, 19 Jan. 1768, Codified Manuscript Michaelis 321, Nachlaß Johann David Michaelis, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen (hereafter NStUBG), fol. 216, ‘Zu einiger Shadloshaltung schicke ich Ewr. hier 3 neue geographische Bogen zur Fortsetzung der Beschreibung Arabiens: aber zu meiner Unlust ist die gänzliche Beschreibung des Berges Sinai und des vorgegebenen Steins, den Moses geschlagen haben soll, in diesen Bogen nicht enthalten ... Wenn der Bogen fertig ist, will ich Ewr. denselben mit der Post übersenden, den der Sinai hat mir gar zu viel Mühe und Zeit gekostet, daher ich meine Abhandlung von denselben für erheblich, und Dero Beurthelung werth halte’ (all emphasis in original). All translations from the German are my own.
33 See Reill, The German Enlightenment, 44, 82; Baack, Undying Curiosity, 31–32, 35. On Michaelis, see also Legaspi, The Death of Scripture, here 90; Löwenbrück, ‘Johann David Michaelis’; Löwenbrück, Judenfeindschaft im Zeitalter der Aufklärung.
geographer Ismael Abulfeda, and helped spur him to organise the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia (1761–1767), which sent a ‘company of learned men’ to investigate the geography and natural history of Arabia felix (Yemen) and saw only the expedition’s ‘mathematician’, Carsten Niebuhr, return.\textsuperscript{34} Michaelis’s interest in geography, moreover, motivated him to correspond with Büsching about the Arabian expedition and the fifth volume of Büsching’s magnum opus, the Neue Erdbeschreibung (New Earth Description, 11 vols., Hamburg, 1754–92), an account of Asia which first appeared in the year following the expedition’s close.\textsuperscript{35}

Büsching’s ‘geography of Asia’ and Michaelis’s Arabian expedition were part of an interwoven history. This history, however, has received little attention from geographers or historians. Geographers have suggested that Büsching helped Michaelis formulate questions for the Arabian expedition but have said little about the nature of Büsching’s involvement or his relationship to Michaelis.\textsuperscript{36} Michaelis never directly credited Büsching with helping him formulate questions, but rather only mentioned that he received help from his ‘learned friends’ in Göttingen and elsewhere in the German territories and Europe.\textsuperscript{37} Büsching had little direct influence on the expedition’s planning and undertaking, and my aim is not to argue that he did. Rather, I suggest that the story of

\textsuperscript{34} See Michaelis, Abvfeldae tabvla syriae cvm excerpt geographic ex Ibn Ol Wardii Geographia et historia natvrali. Arabice nvnc primum edidit, Latine vertit (Leipzig, 1766), Cod. Ms. Michaelis 146, NStUBG (this was Michaelis’s own copy, which is held in the Göttingen archives); J.D. Michaelis (ed.), Abvlfedae Descriptio Aegypti, arabice et latine, ex codice parisiensi edidit, latine vertit, notas adiecit (Göttingen, 1776).

\textsuperscript{35} Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5, part 1 (Hamburg, 1768). Büsching referred to the fifth volume as his ‘geography of Asia’ (Erdbeschreibung von Asien) in his letters to Michaelis. See for example Büsching to Michaelis, Altona, 7 Dec. 1765, Cod. Ms. Michaelis 321, fol. 189, NStUBG.

\textsuperscript{36} See Kühn, Die Neugestaltung der deutschen Geographie, 79. Kühn’s claims are repeated in Plewe, ‘Studien über D. Anton Friedrich Büsching’, 221; Beck, Große Reisende, 116.

\textsuperscript{37} See Michaelis, Fragen an eine Gesellschaft gelehrter Männer (1762), Preface, b2r–b2v, b5v–b6v.
the correspondence between Büsching and Michaelis, and their evaluations of the
expedition, has important implications for how we understand the study-field distinction
and Enlightenment ‘cultures of exploration’.

This is particularly important because although historians have done much to
illuminate the nature and importance of Niebuhr’s geographical fieldwork, they have
overlooked the ways Michaelis’s and Büsching’s armchair geography, a product of the
scholar in the study (Stubengelehrter), figured in the expedition’s history. Consideration
of this form of geography is necessary because it complicates understandings of the
relationship between the study, the field and learned authority in the expedition. I argue
that armchair geography is important more broadly because it sheds light on the
production and moral economy of knowledge at work in ‘German Enlightenment
geography’, or what I call Aufklärungsgeographie.

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38 I borrow the term ‘cultures of exploration’ from Driver, *Geography Militant*.
40 Aufklärungsgeographie is a neologism in German. I use this term to underscore the fundamentally
‘placed’ nature of geography and Enlightenment, rather than to suggest Büsching and Michaelis practiced a
radically different form of geography from scholars elsewhere. On the ‘placed’ nature of Enlightenment, see
Withers and Livingstone, ‘Introduction: on geography and enlightenment’; Withers, *Placing the
Enlightenment*. On the German Aufklärung, see for example Kopitzsch, ‘Sozialgeschichte der Aufklärung’.
Scholars have done important work on Enlightenment geography in England, Scotland, France, and the
early American Republic, but said far less about the German case, especially in the Anglophone literature.
For a recent review of this literature, see Withers, ‘The Enlightenment and geographies of
cosmopolitanism’. For work on German geography in English, see Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical
109, 113–117 (on Büsching and Kant); Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, 183–84, 223–24 (on geography in
Göttingen); Withers, ‘Kant’s geography’. See also Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German
states’, who has provided a broad survey of German geographical print culture, and has done much to
throw light on print geography in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In the German
literature, see especially Kühn, *Die Neugestaltung der deutschen Geographie*. This chapter marks the first
step in a broader effort to write the history of Aufklärungsgeographie and Büsching’s pivotal role in it.
In discussing the interwoven and messy histories of Büsching and Michaelis’s projects, this chapter draws on recent work concerning Enlightenment geography and the geography of early modern science. Enlightenment geography was both a ‘discipline’, namely ‘what contemporaries took geography to be’, and a ‘discourse’, namely practices such as ‘observing, mapping, collecting, comparing, writing, sketching, classifying, reading, and so on ... through which people came to know the world’.41 Enlightenment geography was, like Enlightenment science more broadly, shaped by the geographies of Enlightenment, namely places such as studies, coffee houses, libraries, lecture halls and churches ‘in which enlightenment, as a process, a set of ideas, was produced, debated, and consumed’.42 The geography of Enlightenment geography, moreover, was linked with a moral economy of knowledge, namely a web of ‘morally textured relations’ between scholars and scientists that involved ‘notions like authority and trust and the socially situated norms which identify who is to be trusted, and at what price trust is to be withheld’.43 As such, questions about the trustworthiness, authority and credibility of geography’s practitioners were bound up with questions about where knowledge was made and who made it.44

This chapter discusses how concerns with the geography and moral economy of scientific knowledge figured in Büsching and Michaelis’s geographical practice at home in

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44 On ‘moral economy’ and its relation to early modern geography, see Withers, ‘Reporting, mapping, trusting’.
the context of the Arabian expedition. The chapter is in four parts. The first discusses recent arguments in the literature concerning learned authority’s place in the Arabian expedition. The second discusses the origins of Büsching’s *Neue Erdbeschreibung* project and suggests that his effort to establish a new methodological foundation for the discipline of geography was inseparable from concerns with learned authority and its geography. It also outlines how concerns with the geography of learned authority were manifest in Büsching and Michaelis’s correspondence concerning the Danish expedition and in the first edition of Büsching’s geography of Asia. It shows that claims to authority, and recognition of the limits to authority, were closely linked and shaped Büsching and Michaelis’s study-based efforts to understand ‘the East’ and to direct the travellers sent to Arabia. The third part examines how Büsching integrated Niebuhr’s reports in subsequent editions of his geography of Asia, and how he and Michaelis evaluated Niebuhr’s printed geographical works in the learned journals they edited. In so doing it shows they believed Niebuhr’s work bolstered their claims to produce credible knowledge in the study. It demonstrates that Büsching and Michaelis sought to integrate knowledge of the study and the field in ways that allowed them to produce more accurate knowledge of Asia’s historical and contemporary geography, and to legitimate the credibility and necessity—rather than the superiority—of textual critique in the study. More broadly, I argue that understanding the relations between the historical constitution of the study, the production of geographical knowledge through correspondence, and the movement of
geographical knowledge between different print forms is crucial for understanding the making of Enlightenment geography and its moral economy.\footnote{In using the phrase ‘historical constitution of the study’, I draw on Golinski, who has argued that ‘The constructivist perspective [in the history of science] clearly opens up for exploration the historical constitution of the laboratory’. Golinski, \textit{Making Natural Knowledge}, 79, emphasis added.}

Questions about learned authority and the relations between the study and the field were central to Michaelis’s efforts to plan and evaluate the Danish expedition to Arabia. The expedition’s aim was to gather material concerning ‘geography, the ancients and the natural history of the East’ that would help resolve questions about the Exodus story and Mosaic law. Although initially proposed by Michaelis in 1753, the expedition only became possible three years later when he secured the Danish crown’s support.\footnote{Michaelis proposed the expedition at a November 1753 gathering of the Göttingen Royal Society of Sciences. The quote is from \textit{Göttingische Anzeige von Gelehrten Sachen} 139 (1753 Nov. 17) 1241–44, at 1241 [Minutes, Königliche Societät der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, 10 Nov. 1753 meeting].}

Michaelis spent the next few years planning the expedition with the help of the German-born Danish Foreign Minister, Johann Hartwig Ernst von Bernstorff. Michaelis and Bernstorff selected a ‘company of learned men’ to undertake the mission. They included a Danish philologist (Frederik Christian von Haven), a Swedish naturalist (Petrus Forsskål), a German ‘mathematician’ and surveyor (Carsten Niebuhr), a German artist (Georg Bauernfeind), and a Danish medical doctor (Christian Carl Cramer). Drawing on replies from scholars in Göttingen and other cities across Europe, along with the input of scholars the Danish crown had appointed to review his work, Michaelis put together a set of questions and instructions to guide the travellers that were eventually published as \textit{Fragen an eine Gesellschaft gelehrter Männer, die auf Befehl ihrer Majestät des Königes von Daënemark nach Arabien reisen} (Questions to a Company of Learned Men Travelling to}
Arabia at the Behest of His Majesty the King of Denmark, Frankfurt a.M., 1762). He believed that well-prepared travellers armed with these questions could produce new insights into biblical philology and other fields of knowledge. Michaelis’s vision came to fruition in January 1761 when the five men left Copenhagen for Arabia felix.\(^{47}\)

The expedition did not go as planned. Although the travellers had departed with ‘a full set of questions’ from the Paris-based *Academie Royale des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres*, a ‘lengthy paper’ from the Danish natural scientist Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein that dealt with ‘botany, zoology, especially marine biology, and the navigational sciences’, and copies of the questions that scholars from across Europe had sent to Michaelis in the expedition’s preparation phase, they had received only ‘two very brief questions’ from Michaelis before they left. After they had departed, Bernstorff sent them the remainder of Michaelis’s questions in manuscript form, which they had a complete set of by 1763.\(^{48}\)

However, shortly after the travellers arrived in Yemen in late 1762, von Haven and Forsskål died of malaria. Niebuhr, Cramer and Bauernfeind also became sick and decided to leave the Arabian peninsula for Bombay in August 1763. En route to Bombay, Bauernfeind and the party’s servant Berggren succumbed to malaria, whilst Cramer passed away after he and Niebuhr reached India. Only Niebuhr survived the journey.

In Bombay, Niebuhr finally received the printed edition of Michaelis’s *Fragen*. He stayed in India until 1765, when he began an overland trek back to Copenhagen through

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\(^{47}\) On the expedition’s organisation, see Baack, *Undying Curiosity*, 25–91. See also Rasmussen (ed.), *Den Arabiske Rejse 1761–1767*; Wiesehöfer and Conermann (eds), *Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) und seine Zeit*; Friis et al. (eds), *Early Scientific Expeditions*.

\(^{48}\) Baack, ‘From biblical philology to scientific achievement’, quote at 63; Baack, *Undying Curiosity*, 68–69. The phrase ‘two very brief questions’ is from Niebuhr, *Beschreibung von Arabien* (1772), xvi.
the Middle East and Europe. On this trek Niebuhr accomplished much of his important work in geography and ancient studies.\textsuperscript{49} He returned to Copenhagen in November 1767, and in the following years wrote his \textit{Beschreibung von Arabien} (Description of Arabia, Copenhagen, 1772) and the \textit{Reisebeschreibung von Arabien} (Travel Account of Arabia, 2 vols., Copenhagen, 1774–78). Niebuhr also edited and published the botanical and zoological notes of his deceased colleague Forsskål.\textsuperscript{50} Niebuhr's efforts to edit his deceased colleague's work and his own travel accounts show that despite setbacks in the field and organisational problems, the expedition gathered significant data concerning the botany, natural history and geography of a region Europeans knew comparatively little about.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{49} See Baack, \textit{Undying Curiosity}, 203–83.
\textsuperscript{51} Baack, 'A practical skill', 140.
Studies of the expedition have foregrounded the ways learned authority and the study-field relationship mattered to its history. Carey has addressed these matters in a recent paper on the place of Michaelis’s *Fragen* in the history of travel, where he shows that Michaelis’s ‘Arabian voyage synthesised a history of prior experience in directing travel to useful ends’. Past expeditions had drawn up questions to direct ‘action at a distance’, yet Carey argues that Michaelis’s efforts to do so differed in important ways, one of which was his emphasis on a hierarchical relationship between the travellers and
himself. According to Carey, in framing his questions Michaelis ‘stresses the superior position of the learned originator of inquiries’.\(^5\) Carey cites the following remark in Michaelis’s *Fragen* to support his claim:

> [The study-bound scholar] with books at his side could gather perhaps ten pieces of data and only be missing the eleventh that he needs to discover the truth. The eleventh piece of data could pass by the traveller’s eyes, since he cannot bring a library with him. If the European scholar makes a sufficient effort to provide the traveller with complete and thought-out questions, however, the traveller will be put in a position to accomplish what others could not.\(^5\)

For Carey, ‘[t]he traveller is thoroughly subordinated to the task of supplying this superior figure [Michaelis] with detail in which the balance of power in knowledge terms remains undisturbed’.\(^5\) Yet there is nothing in Michaelis’s passage to suggest he saw himself as ‘superior’ to the traveller. By claiming the traveller needed direction because he could not ‘bring a library with him’, Michaelis did not mean to suggest the traveller was epistemologically inferior and incapable of producing useful results under any circumstances. Rather, he was arguing that without guidance the traveller was unlikely to produce results useful for the purposes of the expedition, as Michaelis made clear in his critique of previous travellers.\(^5\)

Carey has suggested that Michaelis exhibited his belief in the sedentary scholar’s epistemological superiority when he eliminated potential questions for the travellers based on answers provided by his ‘company of learned friends’ in Göttingen. In so doing,


\(^5\) Michaelis, *Fragen*, Preface, a5r–a5v, my translation; compare Carey, ‘Arts and sciences’, 43.

\(^5\) Carey, ‘Arts and sciences’, 43.

\(^5\) For his critique of travellers, see *Göttingische Anzeige von Gelehrten Sachen*, 139 (1753 Nov. 17), 1241–44 [Minutes, KsdWG, 10 Nov. 1753 meeting]; Michaelis, *Fragen*, Preface, a2r–a6r. Carey, ‘Arts and sciences’, 42–44, mentions Michaelis’s critique of past travellers and recognises Michaelis’s emphasis on utility, but he sees utility as tied to Michaelis’s desire for superiority.
Michaelis ‘declare[d] certain things to be “known” and not in need either of further investigation or repetition of observation’. Yet Michaelis ‘rarely’ crossed out questions, and he only did so when presented with convincing 'bare facts' (blos Facta), as he considered answers rooted in probability as insufficient. Michaelis thus assumed certain facts about the field could be known in advance, but this did not necessarily mean such matters required no ‘further investigation or repetition of observation’. Instead, Michaelis eliminated questions to ensure the expedition maximised scientific gains and avoided using time and resources to duplicate knowledge of things already well documented by travellers.

Michaelis’s understanding of study-based textual critique and field-based observation as complementary endeavours underscores the problem with seeing the two as radically distinct. This distinction has been emphasised by several historians of science. Outram, for example, has highlighted this divide in her work on the early nineteenth-century French naturalist George Cuvier and the scholar-traveller Alexander von Humboldt. Cuvier saw field knowledge as ‘deeply suspect’ and believed ‘true knowledge of the order of nature came from the fact of the observer’s distance’ from the immediacy of experience in the field, while Humboldt saw the explorer’s immediate experience as

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56 Carey, ‘Arts and sciences’, 43–44.
57 Michaelis, Fragen, Preface, b5v–b6r, quote at b6r. Carey, ‘Arts and sciences’, 44, acknowledges that ‘in the absence of an example from Michaelis we cannot tell what kinds of questions he eliminated on this basis’.
58 Commenting on Niebuhr’s reports concerning the outfitting of tents in his review of Niebuhr’s Reisebeschreibung, vol. 1 (1774), Michaelis noted, ‘This is just as Arvieux and Shaw have described the matter, and as I have explained it based on the ancients, yet a new eyewitness is not superfluous’.

Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek, 7 (1774), 1–54, 29. For Michaelis’s other reviews of the Reisebeschreibung von Arabien, vol. 1 (1774), see Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek, 7 (1774), 174–78 and 8 (1775), 1–6. For his review of Niebuhr’s Beschreibung von Arabien (1772), see Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek, 4 (1773), 64–127; Göttingische Anzeige von Gelehrten Sachen, 1 (6 May 1773), 457–471 and (20 May 1773), 514–18.
crucial for the production of ‘adequate knowledge’ about the natural world.\textsuperscript{59} Given Carey’s argument about Michaelis’s superiority as a study-bound scholar, one might be tempted to think Michaelis, like Cuvier, saw the study as a superior site of knowledge production. Like Cuvier, Michaelis did see the ‘immediacy of experience’ as problematic, but he saw it as problematic for practical rather than epistemological reasons. For Michaelis, field experience was not problematic because it produced deeply suspect knowledge, but because the traveller’s confrontation with the ‘tyranny of the immediate’ (to borrow Outram’s phrase) could distract them from observing what was most important for the purposes of a particular expedition.

Similar distinctions between the field and the laboratory have been stressed in Hevly’s work on nineteenth-century debates over glacial motion between the alpinist James David Forbes and a Cambridge mathematics tutor named William Hopkins. Forbes saw direct measurement as the surest way to understand glacial motion, whilst Hopkins stressed such motion was best grasped through ‘analytical theory’ and laboratory work. For Forbes and Hopkins, direct observation and analytical theory were ‘two opposing routes to truth’.\textsuperscript{60} In contrast, the study-bound Michaelis saw direct observation and textual criticism as complementary routes to truth. Neither the study nor the field had an inherently superior epistemological value.

\textsuperscript{59} Outram, ‘On being Perseus’, especially 286–87. As Driver, Geography Militant, 13–17, has rightly argued, however, Outram overdraws this distinction, since Humboldt saw his work in the field as complementary to his work in the study.

\textsuperscript{60} Hevly, ‘The heroic science of glacier motion’, 72. On the laboratory and its relation to the field, see also Kuklick and Kohler, ‘Introduction’.
Crucial here is the nature of the questions pursued by Michaelis, and later by Cuvier and Hopkins. Cuvier and Hopkins sought data about the natural world that could be abstracted and generalised. Fundamental for the production of such knowledge were the laboratory, sedentary experimental methods and analytical theory. In contrast, Michaelis wanted travellers to collect accurate and useful knowledge concerning particular histories, geographies, cultures and languages. Empirical conditions in the field and the traveller’s bodily experience of such conditions only mattered insofar as they hindered the traveller’s ability to collect useful knowledge. Michaelis did try to impose epistemological control on the travellers’ experience via instructions, but he did not ask those travellers to impose ‘laboratory control on the natural world’ as later field scientists began to do, because his concern was not to have the travellers abstract and generalise from their findings.\(^6^1\) In short, the idiographic nature of Michaelis’s questions meant the field and the study took on a different epistemological meaning and function than did the laboratory and the field in the work of later experimental and natural scientists.\(^6^2\)

Michaelis’s case, then, underscores the importance of thinking about how contemporaries themselves understood knowledge production in the study and the field. Contemporaries did recognise a ‘distinction between knowledges of the study and the field’, between ‘cabinet geography’ and data collected on long-distance voyages. Yet, as

\(^6^1\) Richards, ‘The field’, 59.
\(^6^2\) For discussion of the laboratory and sedentary sites of natural knowledge creation, see Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 79–102. For broader discussions of the place of knowledge, see Ophir and Shapin, ‘The place of knowledge’; Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*. 
Driver has argued, this distinction ‘was far from being a fixed boundary’.\(^6\) Scholars such as Michaelis sought to bridge the gap between the study and the field through travel instructions and the textual critique of field knowledge.\(^6\) In so doing, scholars sought to produce more accurate historical and geographical descriptions, rather than to sharpen the epistemological divide between the study and field.

The remainder of the chapter outlines the ways that learned authority figured in Büsching and Michaelis’s study-bound geographical practice. I understand the study as a meaningful place for knowledge production rather than as a place ‘on the margins’ of Enlightenment science.\(^6\) I take seriously the personal relations and values that underlay geographical knowledge production. Doing so allows one to glimpse the epistemological and practical messiness of Enlightenment geography by focussing upon contemporaries’ own recognition of that messiness.\(^6\)

2.1 Writing the earth anew in the study: Büsching’s learned authority and the moral economy of geographical knowledge

To understand how geography and learned authority figured in Büsching’s geography of Asia and Michaelis’s expedition, it is important to understand the origins of Büsching’s Neue Erdbeschreibung project, as well as his friendship with Michaelis. I here suggest Büsching’s efforts to establish a new methodological foundation for geography was

\(^{63}\) Driver, Geography Militant, 11–20, quote at 13. The classic example of the cabinet geographer is d’Anville. For an excellent discussion that demonstrates the complexity of d’Anville’s armchair practices, see Haguet, ‘J.-B. d’Anville as armchair mapmaker’.

\(^{64}\) On this broader point see Driver, Geography Militant, 13.

\(^{65}\) On armchair geography as something ‘on the margins’ of Enlightenment science, see Bowen, Empiricism and Geographical Thought, 144–73.

\(^{66}\) On the importance of personal relations, see for example Withers, ‘Reporting, mapping, trusting’; Withers, ‘Writing in geography’s history’.
inseparable from concerns with learned authority and the moral economy of geographical knowledge.

Concerns with learned authority and the geography of knowledge were present from the outset of Büsching’s project. His project began when he recognised that geography books based purely on study knowledge were insufficient. Büsching’s critique of such books originated in his experience of the world outside the study. More precisely, it originated on a trip he made to St. Petersburg in 1749–1750. Büsching had gone to St. Petersburg because the Danish diplomat Count Lynar, whose son Büsching tutored at the time, had moved there from Köstritz. Büsching’s experiences travelling to St. Petersburg and his time in the city itself alerted him to the ‘great uselessness’ of the descriptions in existing geographies, such as those by Johann Hübner and Johann Georg Hager. He found such works contained particularly inadequate descriptions of the Russian Empire, and realised that to produce a more useful description of that empire, and the earth more broadly, he needed to begin gathering geographical reports from scholars and government officials. In St. Petersburg he ‘made the collection of geographical reports a primary task’. Büsching, then, had decided knowledge gathered in the field, and from

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67 Büsching, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 119–77, quote at 173. Johann Hübner’s Kurze Fragen aus der neuen und alten Geographie (1693), served as a geography textbook for many students in the German territories, including Michaelis, who praised one of his childhood tutors for ‘bringing me rather far in geography and history, particularly through Hübner’s work’. See Michaelis, Lebensbeschreibung (1793), 2–3. Hager’s handbook was titled Ausführliche Geographie, 3 vols. (Chemnitz, 1746–47). On Hübner and Hager, see Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 146–47.
scholars elsewhere, would provide a solid foundation for a new earth description and, indeed, for his geographical authority.\(^{68}\)

Büsching continued to lay the groundwork for his new project, and for this new form of geographical authority, when he returned to the German territories in late 1750. As he wrote to historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller in February 1751: ‘For some time now I have been working on a new geographical handbook, and to this end I am bringing together a large mass of the best geographical books and reports’.\(^{69}\) Büsching compiled material as he tutored Count Lynar’s son in Itzehoe, but only had access to the count’s library at the time. In early 1752, however, he completed a trial version of his new geography, namely his description of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.\(^{70}\) Several months later he visited his former teacher Eberhard David Hauber in Copenhagen, who suggested Büsching continue work on his Neue Erdbeschreibung at his home in the city and offered to support him financially. Büsching accepted Hauber’s offer and left Soröe for Copenhagen in August 1752.\(^{71}\) In Copenhagen he regularly utilised Hauber’s large map

\(^{68}\) Büsching, *Eigene Lebensgeschichte* (1789), 173. The importance of Büsching’s trip is also noted in Kühn, *Die Neugestaltung der deutschen Geographie*, 64.

\(^{69}\) Büsching to G.F. Müller, Itzehoe, 3 Feb. 1751, in Hoffmann (ed.), *Geographie, Geschichte und Bildungswesen*, 39 (Letter 1). Müller was one of Büsching’s most important correspondence partners and his primary contact in St. Petersburg. On this point, see Hoffmann, ‘Einleitung’. Müller’s organisation of the Kamchatka expeditions likely served as a model for Michaelis’s own effort to organise the Danish expedition, as Carey, ‘Arts and sciences’, 38–39, has noted. On the importance of Müller’s travel instructions and work, see Bucher, ‘Von Beschreibung der Sitten’; Vermeulen, ‘Anthropology in colonial contexts’.


\(^{71}\) Büsching, *Eigene Lebensgeschichte* (1789), 210; Büsching to G.F. Müller, Soröe, 30 Aug. 1752, in Hoffmann (ed.), *Geographie, Geschichte und Bildungswesen*, 41 (Letter 2). Hauber was a respected Lutheran pastor, polymath and geographer. When Büsching was a teenager, Hauber worked in Büsching’s hometown of Göttingen, where he offered free instruction to students at his home outside regular school hours because he saw the local school as inadequate. Büsching’s time as a pupil in Hauber’s home was particularly important, because Hauber’s moderate theological views and critical, comparative approach to geography influenced him. Büsching, *Eigene Lebensgeschichte* (1789), 32–40, 42–43, 48–49, 54–56, 62. See also
and book collection and eagerly sought his counsel on geographical matters. Büsching also used the ‘large library’ of the diplomat Johann Albrecht von Korff, ‘which consisted of books from all sciences, and especially historical ones’. With access to such libraries and ample time Büsching completed the first two volumes of the *Neue Erdbeschreibung*. At the same time he cultivated ties with Danish scholars and expanded his correspondence network, which further solidified the empirical and social grounds for his geographical authority.\(^\text{73}\)

In the *Neue Erdbeschreibung* Büsching sought to lay a new methodological foundation for geography. His effort to lay this foundation was not just a matter of methodology, however, but also of moral economy. This is evident in Büsching’s critique of existing handbooks. As several scholars have noted, Büsching critiqued existing geographies because they lacked rigour, relied on available and well-known secondary sources rather than primary sources, plagiarised material from other books and failed to judge sources impartially.\(^\text{74}\) Geography handbooks thus contained ‘countless errors and omissions’, ‘much fabulous material’ and descriptions of ‘the morals and customs of foreign peoples’ that Büsching found unsuitable for children. For Büsching, such works proved untrustworthy and had ‘little use’ – a strong critique in a *milieu* where utility

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Büsching, *Eigene Lebensgeschichte* (1789), 40, where he described Hauber as a ‘great scholar, excellent preacher, and tremendous friend of humanity’.


73 Ibid., 218–19, 226.

served as a key criterion for judging an author’s work.\textsuperscript{75} His critique, moreover, suggests he believed existing geography books were underwritten by a bankrupt moral economy of knowledge, wherein authors implicitly sanctioned shoddy scholarship, plagiarism and partisan descriptions of foreign peoples. Indeed, like other \textit{Aufklärer}, Büsching believed that how people practiced scholarship reflected their character and the values of wider learned communities.\textsuperscript{76}

Büsching’s geographical project was founded on a different moral economy of knowledge, one that valued rigour, impartiality and rational Christianity. His commitment to such values underwrote his own claims to learned authority. Those claims rested on obtaining ‘the actual and best sources themselves’, which included printed books and maps, written reports from ‘skilled and officious men from countless places near and far’, verbal reports from trusted sources and his own observations.\textsuperscript{77} His claims also rested on his commitment to critically and impartially examining sources, and to listing them carefully for his readers. It was precisely these values and his distrust of existing books that led him to proceed ‘as if no introduction to geography had been written before’.\textsuperscript{78} He saw this as the only responsible way to improve the condition of geographical knowledge and to ensure its religious, educational and political utility.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{75} On utility and Enlightenment geography, see, for example, Withers, ‘Encyclopaedism, modernism’; Mayhew, ‘The character of English geography’, 394–95, 406.
\textsuperscript{76} On this general point, see Füssel, ‘The charlatanry of the learned’; Füssel, ‘Die symbolischen Grenzen’.
\textsuperscript{77} Büsching, \textit{Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung} (1752), 7. See also Büsching, \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung}, vol. 1 (1754), 2–3, 5–6; Büsching, \textit{Eigene Lebensgeschichte} (1789), 219, 226.
\textsuperscript{78} Büsching, \textit{Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung} (1752), 7–8. For a similar remark, see Büsching, \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung}, vol. 1 (1754), 2.
\textsuperscript{79} Büsching, \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung}, vol. 1 (1754), 4.
Whilst Copenhagen served as a crucial starting point for Büsching’s project, he eventually left there to continue his work in the German territories. Upon returning in May 1754 he took up a post at Halle, where he lectured on geography. In July, however, the curator of the University of Göttingen offered Büsching a position in the faculty of philosophy as part of the university’s effort to bolster geography. In a move symbolic of Halle’s waning power and Göttingen’s emergence as the centre of the *Aufklärung*, Büsching accepted the call and left Halle for Göttingen in August 1754. In Göttingen he wrote a dissertation in theology, lectured on geography and theology, completed the third volume of the *Neue Erdbeschreibung* on the German states, and published updated editions of the book’s first two volumes. His work on the *Neue Erdbeschreibung* was aided greatly by the university’s agreement to subsidise the postage costs for his correspondence. Indeed, his decision to continue his work in the German territories proved wise.

In Göttingen Büsching made connections with the university’s prominent *Aufklärer*, including Michaelis who had moved from Halle to Göttingen in 1745. By the time Büsching arrived in August 1754, Michaelis had already built a reputation as a first-

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rate scholar and carved out his own place in Göttingen’s learned community. Büsning and Michaelis’s views on theology did much to solidify their friendship and intellectual bond. They disagreed on certain issues and Büsning demonstrated a stronger commitment to living his Protestant faith than Michaelis, yet both Aufklärer rejected dogmatic approaches to biblical criticism and Christianity. Far from fanatic, their theological stances centred on reasoned understanding and religious tolerance. Their moderate stances caused them problems, however. Swedish clerical authorities censored Michaelis’s treatise on dogmatics for its supposedly heterodox teachings. Theology faculty in Göttingen and government officials in Hanover also criticised Büsning’s 1756 doctoral dissertation, which evidenced his desire to ‘purge theology of scholastic inventions, expressions and propositions, and outline theology according only to the Holy Scriptures’. Authorities in Göttingen and Hanover found Büsning’s work so problematic they eventually barred him from lecturing on theology. Crucially, when the theology faculty sought to revoke Büsning’s privileges, Michaelis came to his defence and testified that unlike other theology professors in Göttingen, ‘students say of Mr Büsning that he thinks more freely, and seeks truth, which makes a good theologian in our enlightened times (aufgeklärten Zeiten)’. In such ‘enlightened times’, Büsning and

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82 Michaelis had lectured at Halle for three years prior to being called to Göttingen. See Michaelis, Lebensbeschreibung (1793), 40–41; Georg der Andere an der Universität zu Göttingen, Hannover, 16 Jun. 1746, Kur. 5741, Phil. Fac., J.D. Michaelis, Bl. 2, Universitätsarchiv, NStUBG. On Michaelis’s reputation, see Hübner, ‘Johann David Michaelis’, 370–71.
84 Büsning, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 289. Hoffmann also highlights this quote in Anton Friedrich Büsning, 231.
Michaelis’s shared commitment to thinking freely helped cement their friendship and respect for one another.

How, then, did Büsching’s Neue Erdbeschreibung project become linked to Michaelis’s Danish expedition, and what does their geographical correspondence reveal about the geography of learned authority?

2.2 ‘My own precise investigations’: epistolary geography and the limits to learned authority

Before, during and after the Arabian expedition Michaelis and Büsching practiced ‘epistolary geography’, or rather geography through correspondence.86 Their letters concerning the expedition and Büsching’s geography of Asia, together with Büsching’s framing of his geography, suggest that their claims to geographical authority and recognition of that authority’s limits were closely linked, and that concerns with authority shaped their study-based efforts to understand ‘the East’ and to control action at a distance.

In his expedition proposals and Fragen, Michaelis positioned himself as an authority on matters concerning historical geography. In his 1753 speech to the Royal Academy of Sciences, he argued that ‘many questions concerning geography, the ancients

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Lebensgeschichte (1789), 265. Michaelis was comparing Büsching to Christian Wilhelm Franz Walch, a member of the theology faculty.

86 For Withers, the Republic of Letters was a matter of ‘epistolary geography’ since ‘[c]orrespondence has to do with movement over space’. Withers, ‘Writing in geography’s history’, 35–36, 41, quote at 35.
and the natural history of the East ... cannot be answered except by someone who travels through Palestine and Arabia more carefully than has been the case up to now’.\textsuperscript{87} In the case of geography, scholars lacked reliable knowledge about the Jordan River area, the Dead Sea, the Red Sea, ‘famous mountains in ancient geography’ such as Seir and Pharan, and the geography of Arabia. In the case of ‘the lands on the east side of the Jordan’, geographers had fabricated the locations of biblical cities and of ‘the mountains and course of the rivers and brooks [in the region], which should be the eternal guides for the geographer’.\textsuperscript{88} In the case of the Red Sea, ancient Greek authorities provided accounts ‘in which fables and truth are so intertwined that they require a critique and explanation, and thus even more geographical knowledge of Arabia’.\textsuperscript{89} Scholars knew little about Arabia’s geography, moreover, partly because whilst Arab geographies provided details on the region’s historical geography they were ‘very incomplete’ and failed to provide information on geographical changes over time.\textsuperscript{90} By outlining the state of geographical knowledge about Arabia, the Dead Sea and other places Michaelis was staking a claim to his geographical authority concerning ‘the East’.

\textsuperscript{87} Göttingische Anzeige von Gelehrten Sachen, 139 (17 Nov. 1753), 1241 [Minutes, KSDWG, 10 Nov. 1753 meeting].
\textsuperscript{88} Göttingische Anzeige von Gelehrten Sachen, 139 (1753 Nov. 17), 1243 [Minutes, KSDWG, 10 Nov. 1753 meeting]. See also Michaelis, Fragen, 188 (Question 65), where he argued the locations of ‘famous mountains in ancient geography’, such as Seir and Pharan, were ‘typically fixed on maps according more to arbitrariness than to historical reports, never mind measurements’.
\textsuperscript{89} Michaelis to J.H.E. von Bernstorff, Göttingen, 30 Aug. 1756, Cod. Ms. Michaelis 320, fol. 215, NStUBG, ‘in der Fabeln und Wahrheiten so gemischt sind, daß sie eine Critik und Erläuterung braucht, wozu mehr geographische Kenntniß von Arabien nöthig ist’.
\textsuperscript{90} Michaelis to Bernstorff, Göttingen, 30 Aug. 1756, Cod. Ms. Michaelis 320, fol. 214–215, NStUBG, ‘sehr unzulänglich’ (fol. 215). Baack, Undying Curiosity, 28, has also noted Michaelis’s critique of Greek and Arabic geographies.
In making authoritative claims about the historical geography of Asia and the Bible, Michaelis situated himself in a geographical tradition. His positioning was explicit since he cited ancient authorities such as Strabo and Diodorus Siculus, whose accounts were staples in geography texts by the eighteenth century. His positioning was also implicit because whilst he discussed unresolved questions concerning places that figured in well-known biblical geography texts, he did not explicitly mention such texts. Geography was, however, just one of the many fields Michaelis saw as tools for understanding biblical philology, and he saw geography as no more important than natural history, for example. His interest in the subject nevertheless reflected its fundamental importance for Enlightenment contemporaries’ efforts to understand the world. As such, his interest needs to be taken seriously and situated within broader histories of Enlightenment geography.

Michaelis did not see himself as an authority comparable to Büsching or even as a geographer, so when he sought to better understand the geography of ‘the East’ he

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92 Ancient texts that contained reports on Asia were important for early modern scholars given the relative paucity of contemporary reports. See Withers, ‘On Enlightenment’s margins’; Katzer, *Araber in deutschen Augen*, 258–67. On classical authors, see Mayhew, ‘The character of English geography’, 397, 399–401.


94 On geography’s importance, see Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*; Withers and Livingstone, ‘Introduction: on geography and enlightenment’.
consulted Büsching.\textsuperscript{95} Their first exchange during the expedition’s organisational phase illustrates Michaelis’s trust in Büsching’s authority and Büsching’s own understanding of it. In 1758 Michaelis consulted Büsching about ‘the most complete’ geographies of ‘Egypt, Syria and Arabia’.\textsuperscript{96} In response, Büsching evidenced precisely the authority Michaelis expected, and he noted that the best historical accounts of Egypt, Syria and Arabia were found in the \emph{Allgemeine Welthistorie} (Universal World History, Halle, 1744–1814).\textsuperscript{97} To underscore his knowledge of the text he listed several travel accounts on which it was based, along with texts that could supplement and improve it. He argued that the accounts in the \emph{Allgemeine Welthistorie} were better than those in geography books, and in so doing extended the critique of existing handbooks he set out in the \emph{Neue Erdbeschreibung}. As he phrased it, ‘What existing geographical works say about such lands is of little value when viewed in relation to the above accounts [in the \emph{Allgemeine Welthistorie}], and because existing works are so flawed, it would not be worth the effort to improve them’. As such, Büsching concluded it was necessary to draw together and compile existing reports to produce a new, more accurate geography of Asia.\textsuperscript{98} In so doing he asserted the geographical authority that helped ground Michaelis’s trust in him.

\textsuperscript{95} Few Enlightenment contemporaries referred to themselves as geographers. Mayhew, ‘The character of English geography’, 402; Withers, \emph{Placing the Enlightenment}, 194.

\textsuperscript{96} Michaelis to Büsching, n.p. [Göttingen], n.d. [1758], Codified Manuscript Philosophie 182: J.D. Michaelis, NStUBG.


\textsuperscript{98} Büsching to Michaelis, Göttingen, n.d., Cod. Ms. Michaelis 321, fol. 169r, NStUBG, ‘Was die bekannten \emph{Geographie} um diesen Ländern haben, ist in Ansehung obigen Abhandlungen für nichts zu rechnen, und wegen denselben würde es nicht der Mühe Werth seyn, sie zu verbessern.’
Figure 3. Excerpt of a letter from Büsching to Michaelis [prior to 1761]. Source: Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, Michaelis Nachlass, Cod. Ms. Michaelis 321, fol. 165r.
Büsching’s exchange with Michaelis shows the importance of the methodological rigour that underwrote his authority. This becomes particularly clear in a written exchange concerning the geography of central Asia. In the years prior to the travellers’ departure, Michaelis wrote to Büsching to ask about the best charts and reports concerning the lands on the Caspian Sea’s eastern side. In response, Büsching confidently recommended Abraham Maas’s Nova Maris Caspii as the best available map of the region. When recommending travel reports Büsching proved more circumspect. Whilst he suggested Michaelis consult the accounts in works by Abulfeda, John Hudson, Adam Olearius, Pietro Della Valle and Engelbert Kämpfer, he hesitated to judge their quality. ‘I cannot say which travel accounts offer the best reports about these lands, since I have not precisely and fundamentally investigated this’, wrote Büsching. Several lines later he reiterated his hesitation: ‘I do not risk judgment in such cases before I have carried out my own precise investigations, and up to now I have postponed such investigations until the fifth part of my Erdbeschreibung’. Büsching proved hesitant to judge such sources precisely because his learned authority rested on his ‘own precise investigations’. By offering judgments without first conducting such investigations,

99 Büsching responded to many letters from Michaelis that have not survived, and thus the content of Michaelis’s questions must be inferred from Büsching’s responses.
100 Büsching to Michaelis, n.p., n.d. [prior to 1761], Cod. Ms. Michaelis 321, fol. 165r, NSUBG, ‘Die hommanische Chart...gezeichnet von Masio, ist die beste welche wir von denen an der Ostseits des caspischen Sees belegenen Ländern haben’. The map referred to was Abraham Maas, Nova Maris Caspii, et Regionis Usbeck cum Provincijis adjacentibus vera Delineatio in qua itinera Regia et alia notabiliora accurate denotantur (1735). Mass’s map depicts ‘Usbek’ directly on the Caspian Sea’s eastern side, whilst it depicts the northeast of Persia on the Caspian Sea’s southeastern side.
101 On these travel accounts, see Osterhammel, Die Entzauberung Asiens, 30, 99, 143, 166, 177, 191, 196, 198, 203; Katzer, Araber in deutschen Augen, 121–339.
Büsning would have undermined the moral economy of knowledge that underpinned his geographical project.

Büsning’s commitment to his project’s integrity helped prevent him from figuring prominently in Michaelis’s effort to control the travellers’ action at a distance through questions and instructions. As Michaelis composed his Fragen, Büsning was still working on the third and fourth volumes of his Neue Erdbeschreibung and had yet to begin work on the fifth volume in earnest. Büsning only completed the fourth volume in 1761, the year the travellers left Copenhagen.¹⁰³ That year he left Göttingen to take up a post as second pastor at St. Peter’s Lutheran church in St. Petersburg.¹⁰⁴ His move to St. Petersburg, his new duties and other commitments prevented him from devoting significant time to the fifth volume until several years later.¹⁰⁵ As such, though Büsning’s discussions with Michaelis proved important for Michaelis’s own efforts to understand the geography of ‘the East’, Michaelis’s Fragen exhibited little discernible trace of his consultations with Büsning, and the latter did not play a significant, measurable role in the organisation of the expedition.¹⁰⁶

Büsning finally found time to pursue his ‘own precise investigations’ into Asia’s geography once he left St. Petersburg for Altona in 1765. In November 1765, he wrote to Michaelis to inform him of his progress on his geography and to lament the scientific

¹⁰³ Büsning, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 4 (1761).
¹⁰⁴ Büsning also served as director of the school affiliated with St. Peter’s church. Büsning, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 330–502; Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsning, 67–94.
¹⁰⁵ See Büsning, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5 (1768), Preface, 2r–3r. Büsning had published an excerpt from the fifth volume two years earlier as Beschreibung des Todten Meeres in Palästina (1766).
¹⁰⁶ Michaelis does not mention Büsning in his Fragen. He does mention Kämpfer’s work, which Büsning recommended. Michaelis, Fragen (1762), Instruction §39. See also Fragen (1762), 44 (Question 25), 118, 122 (Question 38), 215–16 (Question 78).
gains forfeited by his failure to begin the work sooner. He told Michaelis that he had ‘read everything, investigated, excerpted and combined all the most important material’ on the geography of Asia. In so doing he found ‘much to answer’ Michaelis’s Fragen, whilst he also encountered ‘thousands of questions’ he could not answer. Büsching admitted he ‘wished the expedition had been postponed a few years’, because it ‘would have produced much more value if everything in printed books on Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Chaldea and so on had been compiled beforehand, because then one would have been able to better see what material is still missing’. Because he failed to do this work, and failed to supply the travellers with well-informed geographical questions, and because the travellers had not conducted such research themselves, Büsching feared many questions about Asia’s geography would remain unanswered: ‘I have almost no hope that these questions can be answered based on the reports that Herr Niebuhr and his deceased colleagues have collected, because such questions will have scarcely crossed their minds.’ Because Büsching had not completed his ‘own precise investigations’ before the travellers left, the expedition forfeited the sort of scientific gains Michaelis hoped to capture through careful planning.

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107 Büsching to Michaelis, Altona, 13 Nov. 1765, Cod. Ms. Michaelis 321, NStUBG, ‘Da ich alles gelesen, untersucht, und das Wichtigste ausgezogen habe...’ (fol. 186), ‘In dem, was ich von Asien schon ausgearbeitet habe, ist manches zur Bereicherung die Fragen, welche Ew. haben drücken laßen, zu finden’ (fol. 185v, underlining in original). Büsching repeated his claim about finding answers to Michaelis’s Fragen in the preface to his Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5 (1768), Preface, 4r.

Büsching’s remarks on the expedition’s lost utility evidenced his newly acquired knowledge of Asia’s geography and his confidence as a recognised geographical authority. It could be argued that such claims also exhibited Büsching’s desire to assert his epistemological superiority over the travellers and to position the study as the privileged locus for geographical knowledge production. In the preface to Büsching’s geography of Asia he noted, ‘Every line in my book is a question for future travellers, and I especially wish travellers would direct their attention to what I expressly indicate as unknown or as uncertain’.¹⁰⁹ The ‘superiority’ argument is complicated, however, if one reads on in his preface. After suggesting travellers should direct their attention to what he expressly identified as ‘unknown or as uncertain’, Büsching further added that, ‘If travellers cross out and add much to each page [of my geography], then my work has achieved one of my goals for its utility’.¹¹⁰ He thus saw his claims as open to empirical scrutiny rather than as unassailable truth claims. This position was consistent with the initial framing of his project, as he had already invited scholars and travellers to critically engage with his work in the preface to the first volume of his Neue Erdbeschreibung.¹¹¹ By inviting readers to critically scrutinise his claims in the study and the field, Büsching hoped to produce more useful and accurate knowledge of the terraqueous globe.

That Büsching believed his geography of Asia contributed new and useful knowledge, and that he positioned himself as a geographical authority, is clear from the preface to his geography. As he had in the preface to the Kurzgefasste Staats-

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Preface, 4r–v, quote at 4r.
Beschreibung and the Neue Erdbeschreibung, Büsching emphasised the moral economy of knowledge that distinguished him from his predecessors.\textsuperscript{112} He repeated his claims about how he could have made things easier for himself by drawing on his predecessors. He also reflected on what the increasing availability of travel account collections and universal histories meant for practicing geography. Some commentators believed that published collections of travel accounts made it less difficult ‘to describe Asia, Africa and America’. Büsching argued that to rely primarily on such works ‘is far from sufficient to the first great task for a true and industrious geographer’, who ‘requires far more sources’ to describe the earth. Moreover, he challenged those who might question the quality of his work, and suggested that if critics took the time to judge it for themselves, they would recognise its high quality and understand the basis for his claims to geographical authority.\textsuperscript{113}

Crucially, Büsching recognised that his geographical authority on Asia had limits. He knew his efforts to carefully sort through the mass of accounts on Asia were insufficient to produce ‘a proper and complete description’ because Europeans simply lacked geographical knowledge about many places and regions in ‘the East’.\textsuperscript{114} Asia was, as Withers has noted, on Enlightenment’s margins. Büsching underscored this point in 1766 when he remarked to Michaelis that ‘To draw up new maps of Asia is impossible, since we do not know the true location of places. Someone could spend their lifetime just creating

\textsuperscript{112} Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5 (1768), Preface, 3r, ‘I know full well that I could make it very easy for myself if I wanted to follow the example of those who have written geographies up to now. In so doing, however, I would not have satisfied my readers’ disposition or my own’. Also see Büsching, Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung (1752), 7.

\textsuperscript{113} Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5 (1768), Preface, 3r-v, quotes at 3r.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., Preface, 3v.
maps for my geography of Asia'.\textsuperscript{15} He acknowledged his account remained incomplete because, as his Christian faith taught him, ‘all human creations are incomplete and remain so’.\textsuperscript{16} Büsching, then, recognised that whilst scholars could collect more data and improve their knowledge of Asia, knowledge of the continent’s physical and human landforms could never be entirely mastered given the practical and intrinsic limits to human knowledge.

Recognition of the limits to authority, then, was closely linked with claims to learned authority. Whilst Michaelis made claims to geographical authority, and situated himself in a geographical tradition, he nevertheless recognised that his authority had limits and he turned to his friend Büsching for geographical counsel. At the same time, whilst Büsching was keen to assert his authority, his letters to Michaelis show that his authority rested on an earnest commitment to his project’s underlying moral economy of knowledge. His commitment prevented him from figuring more visibly in Michaelis’s efforts to control the travellers’ action at a distance. What, though, does Büsching and Michaelis’s engagement with Niebuhr’s geographical work in the expedition’s wake say about the study-field relationship and the geography of learned authority?


\textsuperscript{16} Büsching, \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung}, vol. 5 (1768), Preface, 3v.
2.3 Evaluating Niebuhr’s geography in the study

Analysis of Niebuhr’s reports took place in several ways. Büsching integrated Niebuhr’s reports into subsequent editions of the geography of Asia, whilst he and Michaelis reviewed Niebuhr’s Beschreibung and Reisebeschreibung in learned journals. Their analysis of Niebuhr’s reports suggests they believed his work bolstered their claims to produce credible rather than superior knowledge in the study.

In the second edition of his geography of Asia that appeared in 1771, Büsching sought to improve his book and bolster his authority by including unpublished material solicited from Niebuhr. Niebuhr sent him ‘all the completed maps and related engravings belonging to his important travel account’ and his answers to Michaelis’s questions. Niebuhr also commented on the first 311 pages of Büsching’s book. He corrected Büsching’s remarks on things like the use and pronunciation of Arabic words, city and town locations, the distances between places, the destruction of cities, religious sects, ruling governing officials, cultural groups in particular towns and the presence of robbers.¹¹⁷ In the text itself Büsching drew on Niebuhr’s reports, especially in his description of Arabia where Niebuhr often served as his only source.¹¹⁸ By including Niebuhr’s material and specifying what he obtained from the traveller, Büsching sought

¹¹⁷ Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5, part 1, 2nd ed. (1771), New Preface, 8r–v. For Niebuhr’s comments, see Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5 (1771), 622–27 (Appendix).
to underscore his connection to the expedition, to improve his geography of Asia and to bolster his geographical authority.\textsuperscript{119}

Faithful to the moral economy of knowledge underlying his project, Büsching subjected Niebuhr’s reports to critical scrutiny. He compared Niebuhr’s claims with those in existing accounts whenever possible, though he could only do so when Niebuhr’s reports concerned places Europeans had travelled through or spent time in, such as Egypt.\textsuperscript{120} When it came to areas unfamiliar to Europeans, Büsching faced a dilemma common to scholars and the broader learned public who engaged with travel accounts, namely how to evaluate the credibility of such reports. As Outram has argued, ‘The testimony of the explorer was, by itself, no guarantee of anything, when such testimony precisely concerned the distant, the new and the previously unseen’.\textsuperscript{121} Büsching could not base his trust on close personal knowledge of Niebuhr, as there is little evidence to suggest they knew each other well.\textsuperscript{122} He could only judge Niebuhr’s claims based on the methodological care Niebuhr evidenced in his reports and what he knew of Niebuhr’s

\textsuperscript{119} An anonymous reviewer of Niebuhr’s Beschreibung von Arabien argued that Büsching had taken all the material that was ‘useful for geography’ from Niebuhr’s then forthcoming Reisebeschreibung von Arabien and included it in the second edition of his geography of Asia. Niebuhr responded to the reviewer thusly: ‘If one investigates this, however, they will find that this material [that Büsching incorporated in his geography of Asia] only includes a few of the reports on the provinces of Yemen and Hedsja that I communicated via letter to the aforementioned learned author [Büsching], as he has also noted in his new preface’. See Niebuhr, Reisebeschreibung von Arabien, vol. 1 (1774), xv.

\textsuperscript{120} He compared Niebuhr’s reports against those from Pococke, Shaw, Abulfeda and others, and noted whether Niebuhr had gathered his information from observations or the testimony of local residents. Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5 (1771), 51–12, 516, 549–50, 570, 586, 588, 600, 616 (comparisons of Niebuhr with other sources), 515, 544–45, 550, 590, 601, 605, 617 (on Niebuhr’s sources). Also see Katzer, Araber in deutschen Augen, 278–80, 287, 324–27, who discusses sources and tropes Büsching drew on.

\textsuperscript{121} Outram, ‘On being Perseus’, 282–83. On questions of travel, trust and credibility, see also Shapin, A Social History of Truth, 243–66; Withers, ‘Reporting, mapping, trusting’; Keighren and Withers, ‘Questions of inscription and epistemology’.

\textsuperscript{122} Büsching’s time in Göttingen overlapped with Niebuhr’s, and though he does not discuss meeting Niebuhr, he probably did, especially since Niebuhr trained with his colleagues Mayer and Kästner.
reputation from Michaelis and others. By making such judgments and critically scrutinising Niebuhr’s reports, then, Büsching upheld the moral economy of knowledge that underlay his geographical authority and simultaneously sought to bolster that authority.

Concerns with authority and credibility figured in Büsching’s reviews of Niebuhr’s published work.123 His reviews added credibility to Niebuhr’s work and strengthened the authority of his own. Büsching described Niebuhr’s work as ‘very significant for descriptive and illustrative geography’. Niebuhr provided ‘a supply of reports, the likes of which no recent author of works on Arabia has delivered’. Such remarks were significant, coming not only from one of Europe’s leading geographers, but one who had recently published a geography book on Asia.124 Büsching augmented his own credibility, moreover, in his critique of Niebuhr’s work, by noting the lost utility that resulted from the expedition’s failure to harness his geographical authority. Niebuhr’s work evidenced this failure in its inclusion of information ‘already partly known from books’. Still, Büsching viewed Niebuhr’s duplication of observations as useful because such duplications provided ‘many confirmations of my own compiled reports’.125 One could argue that Büsching’s claim marked another effort to assert his superiority as an all-knowing armchair scholar, yet his claim is better read as an effort to render the

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124 WN 3 (10 Apr. 1775), 118.
125 WN 1 (4 Jan. 1773), 4; also WN 1 (15 Jan. 1773), 50.
expedition’s organisational failures productive. Niebuhr’s confirmations lent credibility to Büsching’s claims to produce reliable knowledge in the study.

Büsching’s critique contained further remarks that could be interpreted as an attempt to demonstrate his epistemological superiority as a study-bound scholar. In particular, one could point to Büsching’s claim that his geography of Asia could serve as a corrective to Niebuhr’s account. As he observed in his review of Niebuhr’s Beschreibung, ‘In my [geography of Asia] one finds more than a few places that [Niebuhr] misses, and many more reports on individual regions and places than in his work: I could also note a few places here and there in his work capable and in need of improvement’. Niebuhr had omitted places because Büsching failed to provide the travellers with a guide containing questions Büsching found important. Niebuhr’s work required ‘improvement’ because Büsching failed to coordinate his project with Michaelis’s, rather than because Niebuhr lacked sufficient scholarly acumen or failed as a traveller. Büsching’s praise for Niebuhr’s work, and particularly his claim that Niebuhr represented the ideal traveller, suggests Büsching saw Niebuhr as a capable learned traveller. Büsching desired to improve Niebuhr’s accounts because he wanted to render them more productive, rather than because he wanted to reinforce an epistemological divide between the scholar in the study and the traveller in the field.

Niebuhr’s own reflections in his Beschreibung von Arabien further underline the problem with assuming an epistemological divide separated the study and the field in the

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127 WN 3 (10 Apr. 1775), 115–16.
expedition context. In the preface to his *Beschreibung* Niebuhr admitted he wished he had access to Büsching’s geography of Asia before he left for Arabia. Büsching’s book ‘would have been a great aid to me on my journey’, remarked Niebuhr, ‘because [Büsching] has in his work compiled with great effort everything that is noteworthy that one finds in Arabic and Greek texts known in Europe and in all travel accounts of Arabia’. Likewise, Niebuhr added, Büsching’s text would have proved helpful because Büsching had compiled, compared and attempted to reconcile the various names given to places in different languages.¹²⁸ Niebuhr’s remarks suggest he viewed the relationship between the study-bound scholar and the learned traveller as productive rather than as antagonistic.

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Anton Friedrich Büschings
Wöchentliche Nachrichten
von neuen Landcharten,
geographischen, statistischen und historischen Büchern.

Des ersten Jahrgangs siebentes Stück.
Am 17ten Februar, 1773.

Berlin, bey Hau zum und Spener.

Kopenhagen.

Carsten Niebuhrs Beschreibung von Arabien.
Das erste Stück meiner Nachrichten, hat eine aus-gemeine Anzeige von diesem wunderbar schönen Werke er halten, nun folget eine genauere. Die Vorrede, er-schiebt die Anlassung, Absicht und Frucht der Reise nach Arabien, welche Herr Hauptmann Niebuhr 1761
in Gesellschaft von 4 andern Personen angetreten, siehe
dienen, welche künftig eine solche Reise unternehmen mögen, nützlichen Unterricht, derer von illustri-ten Fragen, von den arabischen Namen, welche in
dieser Landesbeschreibung vorkommen, von der neuen
Karte von Jemen, von Herrn D. Reiske vorzüglichem
Geistigkeitheit, alae arabischE Schrifte ohne Puncte, zu lesen, die hier durch Proben aus dem Niebuhrschen Werke bestätigt wird, von gewissen hebräischen und arabischen
Wörtern, denen Bedeutung Gr. P. von morgenland-ischen Juden, Christen und Muhammedanern erforscht
hat, unter welchen Erläuterungen S. XLI, die arabische Vnnerung vorkommt, daß die sonst so reiche arabische Sprache, an Namen der Steine arm sey; und
endlich von einigen Anmerkungen des verstorbenen Forschers,
In his analysis of Niebuhr’s geographical work, Michaelis, like Büsching, showed a desire to integrate knowledge from the field and the study, and to assert his geographical authority. In his review of the Reisebeschreibung von Arabien, he praised Niebuhr’s map of the Nile Delta for its precision, its grounding in Niebuhr’s own observations, and its improvements on older, imprecise and unreliable maps that ‘mix up the certain and the uncertain’. He maintained that ‘anyone familiar with geography’ should find Niebuhr’s precision and inclusion of Arabic place names in his maps of Egypt ‘pleasing’. Michaelis was so impressed with Niebuhr’s work he concluded that ‘In a single book review I cannot show how much knowledge of Egypt’s historical geography has gained’ from Niebuhr’s efforts.\textsuperscript{129} Michaelis also commended Niebuhr’s study-bound geographical work, lauding Niebuhr for comparing his observations against reports in printed works by ‘indigenous geographers among the Arabs’ such as Scherif Idris. Through his careful work in the field and the study, concluded Michaelis, Niebuhr had produced ‘a very important and new geographical description of Arabia’.\textsuperscript{130} By making such claims, Michaelis at once highlighted the expedition’s geographical value and demonstrated his own geographical authority.

Michaelis critically engaged with Niebuhr’s geographical reports as well and at times challenged their claims. Yet, what he challenged was Niebuhr’s conjectures about place names – and specifically the names ‘Hud’ and ‘Mariba’ – rather than Niebuhr’s eyewitness reports about those places. Michaelis evidenced a more antagonistic tone

\textsuperscript{129} Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek [hereafter OEB], 7 (1774), 9–10; see also OEB, 4 (1773), 115.

\textsuperscript{130} OEB, 4 (1773), 115. Michaelis similarly argued that ‘Niebuhr treated the ebb and flow of the Arabian Gulf precisely and extensively’. See OEB, 4 (1773), 126.
when he responded to Niebuhr’s suggestion that Michaelis would have translated a passage from the book of Moses differently had he first seen Niebuhr’s answers to his *Fragen*.\(^{131}\) Yet, in neither case did Michaelis challenge Niebuhr’s credibility as an observer in the field. He instead questioned Niebuhr’s linguistic skills, which Niebuhr himself admitted were limited. Michaelis acknowledged he sent Niebuhr on the expedition to perform mathematical rather than philological duties, however, and argued Niebuhr accomplished far more outside his assigned field than anyone could have expected.\(^{132}\)

Like Büsching, Michaelis believed Niebuhr’s geographical reports lent credibility to knowledge from the study. If some of Niebuhr’s reports duplicated knowledge ‘already partly known from books’, those reports also lent credibility to ancient authors’ descriptions of landscapes and place names. For instance, Niebuhr reported that ‘a Muslim from India that had been in Yemen a long time’ had told him ‘Usal was the ancient name of [the city] Sanaa’, and Michaelis concluded that this account was ‘important, because it coincides with so many ancient reports’.\(^{133}\) Similarly, he claimed Niebuhr’s account of the mouth of the Nile River as dangerous coincided with ancient descriptions:

> The dangerous mouth of the Nile River, already so faithfully and poetically described by Homer, is here described in roughly the same manner – only in a less dangerous time – as in [Robert] Wood’s *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*. I note this primarily to credit Abulfeda, who in his *Egyptian Geography* – which I published last year – also mentions the mouth of the Nile as very dangerous.\(^{134}\)

\(^{131}\) OEB, 4 (1773), 120–21 (on the translated passage and place names).
\(^{132}\) OEB, 4 (1773), 116; Michaelis, *Lebensbeschreibung* (1793), 74–75.
\(^{133}\) OEB, 4 (1773), 118.
\(^{134}\) OEB 7 (1774), 5–6. On Michaelis’s relation to Wood, see Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture*, 120–21.
In addition, Michaelis argued that Niebuhr’s reports on the fertility of the mountainous regions and steppes of Arabia supported his own description of these regions in his _Mosaisches Recht_ (6 vols., Frankfurt a.M., 1770–75).\(^\text{135}\) Niebuhr’s eyewitness reports thus bolstered the credibility and authority of Michaelis’s study-bound work on the historical geography of ‘the East’. They supported the credibility of the study as a site where, through critical analysis, reliable knowledge could be produced.

Michaelis and Büsching’s claims to authority concerning ‘the East’, and their use of Niebuhr’s reports, inevitably raise questions about how they should be understood in relation to Said’s notion of Orientalism. Their work was indeed Eurocentric insofar as they sought data about Arabia that would ‘assist in the elucidation of the Old Testament, a document of the European tradition’.\(^\text{136}\) Their work also included established early modern tropes about the poor state of Arab scholarship, the less cultivated state of Bedouins compared with sedentary Arabs and Muslims’ subservience to ancient customs and history.\(^\text{137}\) To simply assume their work was Orientalist, however, is to ignore the historical context of Said’s argument.\(^\text{138}\) Said based his argument on the work of nineteenth- and twentieth-century French, British and American intellectuals, whose

\(^{135}\) OEB 4 (1773), 82. For other examples of confirmation that concern religious conversion, the blood feud and other topics, see OEB 4 (1773), 85, 87, 91–94; OEB 7 (1774), 176.

\(^{136}\) Baack, _Undying Curiosity_, 395. Baack refers only to Michaelis, but his claim holds true for Büsching as well.

\(^{137}\) On tropes in early modern writings on Arabs, see Katzer, _Araber in deutschen Augen_, 121–339. For Michaelis’s remarks on Arabs and science, see Michaelis, _Fragen_, 6, 8 (Question 2), 46 (Question 24); _Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen_, (6 May 1773), 467–68; Michaelis, _Mosaisches Recht_, vol. 1 (1770–71), 14–15. For Büsching’s remarks on Arabs, see for example Büsching, _Neue Erdbeschreibung_, vol. 5 (1768), 417–24, 435.

\(^{138}\) Compare Hess, ‘Johann David Michaelis and the colonial imaginary’, especially 75–82; and Hess, ‘Carsten Niebuhr, Johann David Michaelis’. Crucially, see also Baack, _Undying Curiosity_, 369–77, who rightly critiques Hess’s postcolonial reading of the Danish expedition’s aims and its place in the history of European colonialism.
work he saw as bound up with modern institutionalised disciplines and colonial
endeavours in the Middle East. By contrast, Michaelis and Büsching inhabited an
academic world without modern disciplines, and a political world where none of the
German territories possessed colonies in the Middle East. To assume Said’s historically
specific argument can be applied unproblematically to Büsching and Michaelis’s case is to
ignore the particular geographies of Enlightenment that shaped their
Aufklärungsgeographie.139

2.4 Conclusion
This chapter has illustrated the sedentary cultures of exploration at work in the context of
the Danish expedition. It has shown that whilst understanding the cultures of exploration
that defined travellers’ experiences in the field is important, so too is understanding the
ways study-bound scholars in Europe sought to direct and make sense of field
observations through textual critique in the study. For Michaelis and for Büsching, efforts
to direct the Danish expedition members’ vision in the field were not motivated by
epistemological fears about the unreliability of field knowledge. Rather, they feared that
the travellers’ immersion in the ‘tyranny of the immediate’ could direct their focus to
unimportant or already known things, and thereby decrease the utility of their

139 Said had little interest in ‘German Orientalism’. He suggested ‘one of the important impulses toward the
study of the Orient in the eighteenth century was the revolution in Biblical studies stimulated by such
variously interesting pioneers as Bishop Lowth, Eichhorn, Herder and Michaelis’, but had little desire to
study how the work of Michaelis, Herder and others functioned in the Aufklärung, or to show how their
work led to German Orientalism as an institutionalized discourse. See Said, Orientalism, 17–20, quote at 17.
On Said’s relation to German Orientalism, see Jenkins, ‘German Orientalism’. 
observations and indeed the expedition.\textsuperscript{140} To produce the most useful knowledge the travellers’ vision needed to be guided. This was best done from the study, by scholars familiar with unresolved questions about the history, geography and languages of ‘the East’. Whilst practical circumstances at home and in the field ultimately prevented Michaelis and Büsching from guiding the travellers in the way they hoped, they nevertheless productively integrated Niebuhr’s reports with the realm of textual critique by framing his work within broader scholarly debates. At the same time, they used Niebuhr’s findings to legitimate the credibility of study-bound textual critique. Michaelis and Büsching thus sought to bring textual critique into a productive methodological alliance with observation in the field.

Büsching and Michaelis’s case has wider consequences for understanding the making of Enlightenment geography. It illustrates the importance of understanding what Withers has called the making of geography ‘in the margins’, namely the ways correspondence and manuscripts helped shape geographical knowledge in its final printed form, whether that be instructions to travellers, geographical compendia or periodicals.\textsuperscript{141} Though geographers have done excellent work on geography books and their ‘political languages’, and on the different ways geography books were used in different places, they have done comparatively little to excavate the practices of epistolary geography and other forms of marginal geography.\textsuperscript{142} Yet, investigating this geography and practices of textual critique is crucial if we want to understand the ways

\textsuperscript{140} Outram, ‘On being Perseus’, 286.
\textsuperscript{141} Withers, ‘Writing in geography’s history’.
\textsuperscript{142} See, for example, Mayhew, ‘The character of English geography’; Mayhew, Enlightenment Geography; Mayhew, ‘Geography books’; Brückner, The Geographic Revolution in Early America.
contemporaries navigated matters of authority and credibility. It is also crucial if we want to better understand the ways geographical knowledge travelled – and perhaps, more importantly, failed to travel – from the study into instructions for travellers, and from the study into more conventional print forms.

In calling for attention to textual critique in the study I am not suggesting that this should be privileged over attention to empirical encounter in the field. Rather, I would argue that it is only through careful attention to the ways the sedentary textual practices were related to empirical encounters in the field that we can better grasp how the study and the field were co-constituted as knowledge production sites. The study, like the laboratory, has ‘always exist[ed] in relation to an external realm’, which includes not only the field, but also ‘financial, material, and cultural resources’.143 Knowing how the study related to such external factors is crucial if we want to better grasp the various ways geographical knowledge was made and used in different places. In short, understanding what I would call the historical constitution of the study is crucial for shedding further light on the geography of Enlightenment geography’s making.

In Büsching and Michaelis’s case we see a recognition amongst Enlightenment contemporaries that the geography of knowledge mattered. They recognised that bringing together the study and the field was a difficult and messy task precisely because of the study’s links to the ‘external realm’. Indeed, the success of Michaelis’s efforts to contextualise the Old Testament and Büsching’s efforts to describe the geography of Asia

143 Golinski, Making Natural Knowledge, 91.
depended as much on personal circumstances, learned networks, communication, timing and exigencies in the field as it did on their scholarly rigour and learned authority. The process of revealing Asia’s geography to European eyes, then, was never just a matter of Niebuhr and his fellow travellers’ exploits. It was also about the ways contemporaries tried to bridge the divide between the study and the field.
Chapter 3
Plagiarists, enthusiasts and periodical geography: A.F. Büsching and geographical print culture in the German Enlightenment, c.1750–1800

In April 1759, in the pages of a well-respected review journal, the geographer Anton Friedrich Büsching penned an anonymous review of a geography book by one Johannes Klefeker, syndicus in Hamburg. Büsching’s review was mostly positive, though he criticised Klefeker for not being critical enough of the sources and maps he discussed.\textsuperscript{145}

Two weeks later, in the widely circulated \textit{Hamburg Correspondent}, an anonymous review of Klefeker’s book appeared in which the author levelled a thinly veiled, critical response to Büsching’s review. The author contested all of Büsching’s criticisms, and implied that Büsching’s critique was motivated partly by what he perceived to be Büsching’s vanity and desire to dominate the project of earth description.\textsuperscript{146} Having read the review, Büsching wrote to a Göttingen colleague to express his displeasure with the reviewer’s comportment. He described it as ‘a polemical review...which was directed at me in such an odd and laughable way’, and added, ‘No one who compares my review with [Klefeker’s] book will find it harsh and unsupportive’. Moreover, Büsching posed a simple yet pivotal

\textsuperscript{144} This chapter is a longer, modified version of Dean W. Bond, ‘Plagiarists, enthusiasts and periodical geography: A.F. Büsching and geographical print culture in the German Enlightenment, c.1750–1800, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers (forthcoming).
\textsuperscript{146} Staats- und gelehrte Zeitung des hamburgischen unpartheyischen Correspondenten, 73 (8 May 1759) unpaginated [3–4] and no. 74 (9 May 1759) unpaginated [3–4].
rhetorical question: ‘And why should the same truthfulness and impartiality not be observed with geography books that is observed with other types?’

Büscher’s concern with truthfulness and impartiality was not unique. Scholars in the Enlightenment saw impartiality and truth as essential criteria for good reviews. Indeed, editors made this clear in prefaces to learned journals, and scholars wrote essays on the topic within such journals. Büsching’s comment stands out, however, because it specifically called attention to the significance of such criteria for scholarly practice in geography. His remark raises questions about why he was so concerned with truthfulness and impartiality. Yet, it also raises broader questions about the epistemological norms and practices that governed how geographical knowledge was produced, and about how those norms and practices shaped the ways geographical knowledge made it onto the printed page of the learned journal, one of the Enlightenment’s defining print forms.

This chapter responds to recent calls for attention to the relations between print and geographical knowledge. Such calls have emanated from the growing literature on the ‘geography of the book’, which has shown that understanding where books were made, printed and read, and how books circulated within and across boundaries, is

\[147\] Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, Nachlaß Johann David Michaelis, Codified Manuscript Michaelis 321, A.F. Büsching to J.D. Michaelis, n.p., n.d. [c. Apr. 1759], fol. 164r–v, ‘...polemischen recension ...welche auf eine solche seltsame und lächerliche Weise wieder mich gerichtet war. Niemand, der meine recension mit dem Buch verglichen wird sie hart und unbillig finden...Und warum soll den bey geographischen Büchern nicht eben dieselbe Wahrheit un Unparteylichkeit beobachte[t] werden als bey andere?’ Based on the personal tone of the review and Büsching’s knowledge of the German learned world, his claim that Kléfeker authored the review seems well founded.


\[149\] See, for example, Brandes, ‘The literary marketplace’; Popkin, ‘Periodical publication and the nature of knowledge’; Raabe, ‘Die Zeitschrift als Medium der Aufklärung’.
crucial for understanding the practical and contested ways in which print and geography shaped one another.\textsuperscript{150} This literature has primarily focussed on ‘a specific material form: the printed (non-fiction) book’,\textsuperscript{151} and especially books of travel,\textsuperscript{152} geography books narrowly understood,\textsuperscript{153} atlases and books by Darwin and Newton.\textsuperscript{154} In addition, scholars have studied the place of manuscripts in the geographical print culture of the British Empire.\textsuperscript{155} Yet, despite this emphasis on books and manuscripts, one leading commentator has rightly argued ‘there is nevertheless an important opportunity to expand the range of material forms and genres which usefully can be subject to geographical interpretation’.\textsuperscript{156} Indeed, this chapter calls for greater attention to what I call ‘periodical geography’, namely the geographical knowledge contained in periodicals, and the geographies of knowledge, reading, commerce and colonialism that shaped the ways periodicals were produced, circulated and read.

The geography of the book has shown periodicals are key sources in studies of geography of reception, because they help disclose the making of contextually specific interpretations of books.\textsuperscript{157} This is one of the crucial insights from the geography of the

\textsuperscript{151} Keighren, ‘Geographies of the book’, 752.
\textsuperscript{152} See for example Driver, ‘Missionary Travels’; Henderson, ‘David Livingstone’s Missionary Travels’; Keighren et al., Travels Into Print; Rupke, ‘A geography of enlightenment’.
\textsuperscript{154} Withers, ‘Working with old maps’; Livingstone, ‘Science, religion and the geography of reading’; Livingstone, ‘Science, text and space’.
\textsuperscript{155} Ogborn, ‘Writing travels’; Ogborn, Indian Ink; Ogborn, ‘The amusements of posterity’.
\textsuperscript{156} Keighren, ‘Geographies of the book’, 752.
\textsuperscript{157} Keighren, ‘Reading the messy reception of Influences’; Keighren, Bringing Geography to Book; Livingstone, ‘Science, text and space ’; Rupke, ‘A geography of enlightenment’.
book. Yet, I want to push the engagement with periodicals further. I want to argue that attention to the ways periodicals themselves were made and circulated can reveal crucial shifts in the nature of geographical authorship and audiences. This is my broader agenda.

Historians of science have discussed the making and circulation of scientific and learned periodicals in the early modern period, and said much about much the place of science in popular and specialised periodicals in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, this literature has said little about geography. Periodical geography has received some attention from geographers and historians. Scholars have highlighted the significance of geographical periodicals in the creation of Enlightenment learned publics, discussed how maps of the Seven Years War figured in the Gentleman’s Magazine, and how images of America featured in eighteenth-century German periodicals. Others have discussed the place of geographical material in the proceedings of the Paris Academy of Sciences and surveyed the origins of German geography journals. For the modern period, scholars have highlighted the ways National Geographic helped shape modern American geographical imaginations, and discussed educational geographical periodicals.

Concerning the geography of periodicals, historians have discussed how the making and

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159 For example, see Cantor et al. (eds), Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical; Fyfe, ‘Journals, learned societies and money’; Topham, ‘Periodicals and the development of reading audiences’; Topham, ‘Anthologizing the book of nature’.
162 Rothenburg, Presenting America’s World; Schulten, The Geographical Imagination in America; Norcup, ‘Geography education, grey literature’.
circulation of various periodical forms such as broad sheets, learned journals and intelligencers were interwoven within Italian and German cities in the early modern era. Collectively, this work suggests that place matters for understanding the making of periodicals, and that periodicals are significant for understanding how scientific and popular conceptions of the terraqueous globe were shaped in both the early modern and modern era.

This chapter illustrates the potential of periodical geography as an analytic category by considering the interwoven making of geographical journals and practices of earth writing in the German Aufklärung (Enlightenment), which I understand as both a historical period and cultural process of learning, communication and reform that had its own geographies. The chapter focusses on Büsching, whose multi-volume Neue Erdbeschreibung was one of the most reprinted and widely translated geographical works in the eighteenth century. It is concerned with one of the journals he edited in Berlin, the Wöchentliche Nachrichten von neuen Landcharten und geographischen, statistischen und historischen Büchern und Schriften [Weekly reports on contemporary maps and geographical, statistical and historical books and publications, Berlin, 1773–87]. The Wöchentliche Nachrichten has received little attention from geographers, yet it provides crucial insights into how, in the Age of Reason, epistemological norms and material

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164 See the social history approach to the Aufklärung discussed in Bödeker and Herrmann (eds), Über den Prozess der Aufklärung; Kopitzsch, Grundzüge einer Sozialgeschichte; Vierhaus (ed.), Aufklärung als Prozeß. On the geography of the Enlightenment more broadly, see Withers, Placing the Enlightenment; Livingstone and Withers (eds), Geography and Enlightenment; Ogborn and Withers (eds), Georgian Geographies.
practices shaped geographical print culture, and how the periodical genre itself shaped those same norms and practices.\textsuperscript{165}

The chapter is in four parts. The first outlines recent work concerning periodicals and cultures of scientific practice. The second discusses Büsching’s agenda for reorientating geography’s moral economy of knowledge and the responses to this effort in the pages of learned review journals. The third illustrates how Büsching used his \textit{Wöchentliche Nachrichten} as a vehicle to reorientate geography’s practices and values, and underlines the ways competing periodicals challenged his credibility and authority. The fourth part discusses how Büsching’s reform efforts reshaped the moral economy of geographical knowledge in the later eighteenth century, especially in the context of what I term \textit{Aufklärungsgeographie} (German Enlightenment geography). By ‘moral economy of knowledge’, I mean the ‘morally textured relations’ between scholars that entail ‘notions like authority and trust and the socially situated norms which identify who is to be trusted, and at what price trust is to be withheld’.\textsuperscript{166} Büsching’s case, I argue, demonstrates there were competing geographies of trust, authority and credibility at work within Enlightenment geography that both reflected and shaped its print culture. Moreover, it shows that the very periodicity and materiality of the periodical genre transformed the character of geography’s authors and audiences in the \textit{Aufklärung}.

As my use of the term \textit{Aufklärungsgeographie} suggests, I understand German geography as a set of practices that were shaped by institutional geographies, biographies,
religious currents and textual traditions unique to the *Aufklärung*.\(^{167}\) Distinguishing
geographies included the University of Halle, a centre of the ‘early German
Enlightenment’ (*Frühaufklärung*) and place where many geographers were educated, and
the University of Göttingen, which housed one the earliest geographical societies in
Europe—the *Kosmographische Gesellschaft*—and the first chair in geography in the
German lands.\(^{168}\) That contemporaries had some sense of a German textual tradition is
evidenced in the work of the most prominent geographer in the *Frühaufklärung*,
Eberhard David Hauber, who reflected explicitly on the state of geography and
mapmaking in the German lands in his *Nützlicher Discours von dem gegenwärtigen
Zustand der Geographie, besonders in Deutschland* [Useful discourse on the present
condition of geography, particularly in Germany] (Ulm, 1727). As a textual tradition,
German geography also differed because authors conceptualised geography using
thematic and temporal divisions different from the traditional ‘general’ and ‘special’
geography division, which was common in British and French geography.\(^{169}\) The
geographical periodical, moreover, was a genre unique to the German context in the
eighteenth century. Still, German geography was not entirely distinct. Authors of German
geography books engaged in the humanist practice of silent copying common to
geography elsewhere, and employed the compendia format that became standard across
Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.\(^{170}\) German geography was, then,

\(^{167}\) This term is introduced in Bond, ‘Enlightenment geography in the study’, 65, although it is elaborated on
here.

\(^{168}\) On geography in Göttingen, see Kühn, *Die Neugestaltung der deutschen Geographie*.

\(^{169}\) On this division, see Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 133–49.

\(^{170}\) For examples of silent copying, see, for example, Weise, *Teutsche Staats-Geographie* (1727); Hübner,
*Vollständige Geographie*, vol. 1 (1730). On the widespread use of copying, see Mayhew, *Enlightenment*
defined by distinct geographies and textual practices whilst also being part of a longer geographical tradition.

3.1 Geography, print culture and the moral economy of knowledge

Print culture and scientific knowledge production are closely tied to issues of trust and credit. Such issues are significant partly because, as Jardine has argued, the ‘very possibility’ of producing much scientific knowledge, and indeed the existence of particular disciplines such as natural history and ethnology, hinges on ‘the accreditation of published reports of variously questionable travellers, collectors and informants’.\(^{171}\)

Studies in book history and the history of science have revealed the ways particular scholarly practices, publishing firms and patronage systems came together at times to enable, or hinder, the credibility and authority of natural knowledge, both in books and periodicals.\(^ {172}\) In geography, studies of travel accounts have demonstrated that textual authority hinged on publishers’ and authors’ editorial practices, and their claims to authenticity and authority.\(^ {173}\) Others have shown that practices of editing and translation

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\(^ {172}\) See, for example, Felton, ‘The case of self-publishing science amateurs’; Frasca-Sarda and Jardine (eds), Books and the Sciences in History; Fye, ‘Conscientious workmen or booksellers hacks?’; Goldgar, Impolite Learning, 98–114; Johns, The Nature of the Book; Kronick, ‘Authorship and authority’; Secord, Victorian Sensation; Sher, The Enlightenment and the Book; Watts, ‘We want no authors’.

were crucial in shaping the authority of Varenius’ *Geographia Generalis*.\(^{174}\) This work has been especially productive, because it has demonstrated that place—and networks of places—helped shape the interwoven making of print, scientific knowledge and the relations of trust and authority that underwrote knowledge production.

Issues of authority, print and authorship were closely linked in the Enlightenment. This is clear from Mayhew’s work on British geography, in which he has shown that the authority of the geography as a discipline hinged partly on the material format and ‘print space’ of geography books themselves. Having exhibited varied print formats prior to 1590, geography books developed over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth century a standardised format that allowed authors to accommodate the abundance of geographical information generated by European expansion.\(^{175}\) This standardised format lent geography increased authority.\(^{176}\) Yet, at the same time, ‘geographical authority was subject to repeated subversion’.\(^{177}\) It was subverted by the ‘silent copying’ of established geographical authorities fostered by the humanist tradition, and by the geography books written by ‘pens for hire’ on London’s Grub Street, where publishers ‘sought to compile marketable products and paid by the page, not according to the quality of the work’. In this milieu, authors had every incentive to copy material from existing geography books.\(^{178}\) In the British Enlightenment, then, geographical authority was at once bolstered


\(^{177}\) Ibid., 477.

and undermined by the material geographies of the print market, humanist education, colonial expansion and the print space of the book itself.

That issues of authority, print and authorship were closely interwoven has also been underlined in work on eighteenth-century maps. Rather than being based on new field surveys, such maps were produced by copying and compiling existing material from well-known geographers.\(^{179}\) Their producers often claimed to be compiled from the latest and best authorities. Such claims were intended partly to boost sales, but as Edney has rightly argued, they should not be dismissed as ‘mere commercial puffery’.\(^{180}\) Such claims also signalled that geographers, regardless of their skill level or motivation, understood that to achieve some semblance of credibility within the learned public, they needed to situate their maps within ‘the larger discourse of epistemological legitimacy’.\(^{181}\) There was a thin epistemological line between the claims of less rigorous, commercially orientated geographers, and those of a more scholarly or scientific persuasion, such as Büsching. As such, understanding how appeals to epistemological legitimacy were made, adjudicated and contested is central to understanding the social nature of Enlightenment geography.\(^{182}\) This means understanding the social and empirical bases to such claims, as well as their geography, a geography that included the printed page of the periodical.

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\(^{179}\) Edney, ‘Reconsidering Enlightenment geography’, 188. See also Withers, ‘Working with old maps’, 303–304.

\(^{180}\) Edney, ‘Reconsidering Enlightenment geography’, 188

\(^{181}\) Ibid., 188.

\(^{182}\) See Withers, ‘Reporting, mapping, trusting’; Withers, ‘The social nature of map making’. 
3.2 Geographical journals

Up to the mid eighteenth century, the project of describing and depicting the earth had been located exclusively in the print space of geographical compendia, schoolbooks and maps. This changed around 1750, when geographers in the German states began to utilise the print space and periodicity of the learned journal, whose origins lay in late seventeenth-century outlets such as the *Philosophical Transactions* and *Journal des scavans*. In 1748, the Nuremberg and later Göttingen-based *Kosmographische Gesellschaft*, which had been established to improve knowledge of the German lands through the production of more accurate, careful and methodologically rigorous maps and chorographical descriptions, published the first geographical journal, the *Kosmographische Nachrichten und Sammlungen auf das Jahr 1748* [Cosmographical reports and miscellany for the year 1748, Vienna and Nuremberg, 1750]. Yet, the *Kosmographische Nachrichten* only lasted one issue, and the Society failed to realise its plans for two other journals. More successful ventures followed. In 1764, a school rector in Chemnitz named Johann Georg Hager established a review journal dedicated to geography books that ran sporadically until 1778, namely the *Geographischer Büchersaal zum Nutzen und Vergnügen* [Geographical library for use and enjoyment, Chemnitz, 1764–78]. Soon after Hager began his periodical, Büsching established his *Magazin für die neue Historie and Geographie* (Magazine for contemporary history and geography, Hamburg and Halle 1767–88), wherein he mostly reprinted, or printed for the first time,

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183 See, for example, Kronick, A History of Scientific and Technical Periodicals; Dann, ‘Vom Journal des Scavans’.
other scholars’ material. In 1773, he began a ‘learned newspaper’ (*gelehrte Zeitung*), the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* (Berlin, 1773–87), which, like his *Magazine*, enjoyed a long, uninterrupted print run in a period in which many periodicals only lasted a few years. Many more geographical journals appeared between 1770 and 1800 as part of a broader increase in the number of specialised disciplinary journals (*Fachzeitschriften*), learned journals, moral weeklies, books and other printed material.\(^{185}\)

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Figure 5. Title page of Hager’s Geographical Library. Pictured copy held by the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen. Photo by the author.
Figure 6. Title page of Büsching’s *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*, vol. 2 (1774). Pictured copy held by the Stadtbibliothek Mainz. Photo by the author.
Geography journals were, however, a uniquely German product. Journals such as Büsching’s and Hager’s were absent in the English and French context. Rather, in England, geographical material featured in the *Philosophical Transactions* alongside various reports on experiments and discoveries.\(^{186}\) Around 1800, British geographers such as John Pinkerton began to cite reports from the *Philosophical Transactions*, along with material from ‘disciplinary journals, such as the French *Journal des Mines* (geology) and

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the *Asiatic Researches* (anthropology), and this reliance on journals reflected ‘a nascent disciplinary culture’ and increased specialisation of knowledge. In France, geographical material featured in the Paris Academy of Science’s prestigious annual publication, the *Histoire de l’Académie Royale des Sciences* (1699–1790). As Heffernan has demonstrated, geographical mémoires published in the *Histoire de l’Académie* were crucial for debates within the Academy between Guillaume Delisle and others concerning geography’s character and value. Collectively, this work suggests there was very much a distinct geography of periodical geography within the Enlightenment world.

Existing work on geographical journals has said little about epistemic credit. Rather, scholars have discussed geography journals in relation to geography’s professionalisation and development as a science. This is true for broad surveys and for studies of individual periodicals. In her recent survey of German geographical print culture, Fischer has hinted at the importance of issues of credit and authority, though she too is more concerned with how geographers ‘establish[ed] criteria for science-writing’. According to Fischer, German geographers became more concerned with the criteria for scientific writing in response to the growing number of less serious, commercially motivated writers. This is an important point. Yet, I would argue that questions of scientific status need to be understood in relation to questions of credit, authority and

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187 Mayhew, ‘British geography’s republic of letters’, 266.
188 Heffernan, ‘Geography and the Paris Academy of Sciences’, 64–70.
190 Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 190–262 (full discussion), and see especially 218–22, quote at 219.
trust, since the history of scientific practice is fundamentally tied to the ‘moral economy of science’. 192

The emergence of geography periodicals had consequences for the character of geographical print. Periodicals made geographical authorship and readership more public and dynamic. 193 They were often cheaper than grammars and handbooks, and this created a larger potential readership amongst the learned classes. 194 Reading societies furthered widened readership because they subscribed to periodicals, including geographical ones, and this allowed a single copy of a periodical to pass through several society members’ hands. 195 With a wider potential audience, geographical debates and criticism—like scholarly criticism more broadly—took on a more public character. 196

Geographical periodicals also had an inherently more open format than books, and this allowed for greater engagement between editor-authors and readers. 197 Readers could submit letters to the editor in which they contested truth claims, or submit geographical reports that the editor-author could print, with or without attribution. Periodicals’ periodicity, moreover, allowed editor-authors to respond more quickly to criticism in

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192 On this matter, see Daston, ‘The moral economy of science’; Daston and Gallison, Objectivity; Füssel, ‘The charlatanry of the learned’; Füssel, ‘On the means of becoming famous’; Livingstone, Putting Science in its Place, 135–78; Shapin, A Social History of Truth; Shapin and Schaffer, Leviathan and the Air-Pump.


194 Cheaply produced introductory textbooks cost less than some periodical subscriptions. For example, Johann Jakob Schatz’s Kern der Geographie (1774) cost nine Groschen, whilst a subscription to Büsching’s Wöchentliche Nachrichten cost two Taler (one Taler was equal to 24 Groschen). See Wöchentliche Nachrichten von neuen Landcharten und geographischen, statistischen und historischen Büchern und Schriften [hereafter WN] 2 (6 Jun. 1774), 178; WN 1 (27 Dec. 1773) Preface, 8. For a broader discussion of geographical journal audiences, see Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 192–201.


196 For example, see Broman, ‘Criticism and the circulation of news’; Dann, ‘Vom Journal des Scavans’, 73, 76–77.

competing journals or books. In all of these ways, the periodicity and print space of periodicals transformed geographical print culture in the Aufklärung. I illustrate some of these changes in the following sections.

3.3 Enlightenment print culture and Büsching’s *Neue Erdbeschreibung* project

Büsching was born in 1724 in Stadthagen, a small town in the principality of Schaumberg-Lippe. An advocate’s son, Büsching received his early education in Stadthagen. Aged nineteen, he procured a stipend to attend the Latin school in Glaucha near Halle, and a year later enrolled at the University of Halle, where he studied theology and received his *Magister* degree in 1747. Thereafter, Büsching tutored the son of the Danish diplomat Rochus zu Lynar based in Köstriz. He accompanied the family to St. Petersburg in 1749 when Lynar was named envoy to the Russian court, and there he met scholars such as the historian Georg Friedrich Müller, his long-time correspondence partner.

From October 1752 to May 1754 Büsching lived in Copenhagen, where he worked on the first part of his *Neue Erdbeschreibung* and began his first foray into periodical editing, serving as co-editor of the *Nachrichten von dem Zustande der Wissenschaften und Künste in den königlichen-dänischen Reichen und Landen* [Reports on the condition of the sciences and arts in the Royal Danish kingdoms and lands] (2 vols, Leipzig, 1754–56). After lecturing briefly in Halle in the spring of 1754, he was named *professor extraordindarius* in the philosophical faculty at the University of Göttingen. There he received his doctorate in theology. University administrators had planned for him to
teach in the theological faculty, yet this plan was aborted when they determined his theological views were problematic. He was instead named professor ordinarius in the philosophical faculty in 1759. Two years later he left for St Petersburg, where he served as second pastor and director of the school at St. Peter’s Lutheran church until June 1765. In October 1766 he moved to Berlin, where he worked as director of the newly established Graues Kloster secondary school, edited his Magazin and Wöchentliche Nachrichten, and published other works such as his Vollständige Topographie der Mark Brandenburg [Complete topography of the margrave of Brandenburg] (Berlin, 1774). He died in his Berlin home in May 1793 aged 68, survived by his second wife and three sons.198

In his Neue Erdbeschreibung, Büsching set out to describe the earth anew. His project was both a continuation of, and departure from, standard ways of doing geography. In his emphasis on description and in the print format of his book, he followed practices well established by the 1750s.199 Yet, Büsching’s project differed in its emphasis on a source critical method for the collection and comparison of geographical knowledge.200 Rather than copying material and outright plagiarising, Büsching described the earth using information he gathered through correspondence, his own observations from travelling and the best available geographical reports in printed works.201

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198 Büsching, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789); Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 17–120.
199 Mayhew, Enlightenment Geography, 36; Plewe, ‘Studien über D. Anton Friedrich Büsching’, 205, 220.
201 Büsching, Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung (1752), 5–21; Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 1 (1754), 1–24; Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 5, part 1 (1768), 3r, 4v–5r. Parallels are evident between Büsching’s practices and those of the naturalist and polymath Albrecht von Haller. Haller relied heavily on his correspondence network in his botanical work on Switzerland, and emphasised practices of critical reading and judging. And, as in Büsching’s case, Haller’s practices of reviewing carried over into his correspondence. On Haller, see Holenstein et al., ‘Introduction’, 23–39, and especially 32–36.
His emphasis on first-hand reports and critical comparison reflected in part his training at the University of Halle, his indebtedness to the physico-theology tradition, and his uptake of methodological claims in the work of his former teacher Hauber and his Göttingen colleague Johann Michael Franz.202 According to some commentators, Büsching’s critical method was his ‘essential contribution to the development of geography’.203 Yet, this presentist reading obscures questions about the social nature of Büsching’s method that are crucial for understanding the character and significance of his geographical project, and indeed Enlightenment geography more broadly.

For Büsching, the need for a rigorous source critical approach in geography was inextricably linked to matters of morality. In his eyes, the widespread practice of uncritical copying led authors to include material that was inaccurate and even morally questionable. He acknowledged he could have completed his work quicker if he had followed established copying practices, yet he believed this ‘would have been irresponsible and unhelpful’.204 He would have knowingly supported dubious truth claims, failed to advance knowledge of the globe amongst the learned public and knowingly produced descriptions that did little to reveal the true wonder of God’s creation.205 All of this led him to ‘work from the outset as if no introduction to geography

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203 Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 148. See also Baasner, ‘Unser Staatsgeographus’, 261–63; Bowen, Empiricism and Geographical Thought, 156.

204 Büsching, Kurzgefassete Staats-Beschreibung (1752), 6–7.

were written before’, because he saw this as the only responsible route to a truly useful and reliable description of the earth.\textsuperscript{206}

Resistance to Büsching’s reform efforts appeared in German-speaking learned periodicals. In particular, it was his decision to work as if he had no predecessors that generated resistance, because this move entailed a dramatic shift in the nature of the trust relations that underpinned geographical scholarship. Whereas previous authors had trusted their predecessors and repeated their claims, Büsching instead made a virtue of mistrust. An anonymous reviewer questioned Büsching’s emphasis on mistrust in an otherwise positive review of his trial version of the \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung}, namely the \textit{Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung der Herzogthümer Holstein und Schleswig} [Brief description of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein] (Büsching 1752). The reviewer worried Büsching’s decision to set aside his predecessors would lead him to produce new errors in his description, which he might have avoided if he had consulted previous geography books. That Büsching spoke with ‘such confidence’ about setting aside his predecessors ‘is the one thing that does not fully please us’, noted the reviewer.\textsuperscript{207} Büsching’s confidence would also have undoubtedly appeared as an act of incivility, as a breach in the conventional trust relations that underpinned scholarly work.\textsuperscript{208} Büsching saw the reviewer’s claim as important enough to address in the preface to the \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung}. The reviewer, argued Büsching, had ‘not properly understood’ the rationalisation for his method, and he reiterated that he mistrusted past sources because

\textsuperscript{206} Büsching, \textit{Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung} (1752), 7. See also Büsching, \textit{Neue Erdbeschreibung}, vol. 1 (1754), 2–4, 34–36; Bond, ‘Enlightenment geography in the study’, 69.

\textsuperscript{207} Göttingische Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen (16 Nov. 1752), 1122–23.

\textsuperscript{208} Shapin, \textit{A Social History of Truth}, 20, 307–309.
authors ‘did not or could not acquire the best sources, or have sometimes not used them with appropriate thoroughness and impartiality’.” In short, Büsching’s mistrust was rooted in the same moral economy of knowledge that led him to draw on reliable and impartial first-hand accounts, which is precisely what the reviewer had found so praiseworthy about his project.

Büsching’s reform efforts were also challenged by Hager, whose geographical handbook Büsching had criticised in his Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung. For Hager, Büsching’s critique of the inaccuracy of handbooks, and his emphasis on the need to mistrust, were misplaced. In the preface to his Geographischer Büchersaal, Hager noted how easy it was for an author to make errors despite their ‘effort and industriousness’.

Concerning trust, Hager wrote,

One is not all knowing. One cannot travel the entire world. One trusts his predecessors, because one has no reason for mistrust. And nevertheless through this, one will still often be deceived. One deceives, therefore, against his will and his reader's.

That Hager offered a defensive retort is not surprising, since Büsching’s critique was an affront to the very trust relations that underwrote his scholarly practice. In claiming that geographers had no reason to mistrust their predecessors, Hager was defending precisely the moral economy of knowledge that Büsching sought to undermine. Hager’s humanist moral economy could no longer be justified on methodological or moral grounds. When more accurate knowledge could be produced through rigorous source criticism, to

210 Büsching, Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung (1752), 7.
211 Geographischer Büchersaal zum Nutzen und Vergnügen [hereafter Geographischer Büchersaal], 1 (12 Feb. 1764) Preface, 4v.
212 Geographischer Büchersaal, 1 (12 Feb. 1764) Preface, 4v.
continue to blindly trust one's predecessors was, for Büsching, ‘irresponsible’.

Geography’s epistemological legitimacy thus rested in fundamental ways on the mistrust of textual sources.

That responses to Büsching’s reform program appeared in learned journals is significant. By publishing such remarks in journals, authors brought methodological debates in geography into the view of a wider learned public, who might not have been privy to such discussions had they remained in the prefaces of costly handbooks. In this way, periodicals gave geographical criticism and debate a more public character.

What the critical responses to Büsching’s work signal, moreover, is the presence of competing geographies of moral economy at work within the German territories. Hager’s geography was rooted in a profound trust in past authors and, by extension, the geographies of trust on which those authors based their books. Büsching’s position was one that, although rooted in the print format of existing geography handbooks, sought to forge new geographies of trust and credibility in the material form of correspondence networks, limited personal travel and study-bound practices such as critical comparison and letter writing, practices that, whilst not new to the learned world, had figured less commonly in earlier geographical scholarship.

3.4 Credibility, authority and the Wöchentliche Nachrichten

Circulation figures for the Wöchentliche Nachrichten have not survived. Scholars have shown, however, that periodicals of all sorts needed to sell 500 copies to remain viable,
and that learned journals and newspapers saw an average print run of 1,000 copies, occasionally reaching circulation figures over 2,000. Concerning the profitability of the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*, Büsching revealed in a 1775 letter that ‘for an entire sheet [eight pages] of the arduous *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* I receive one *Louisd’or*, or for one issue a half *Louisd’or*. He added that by working on his learned newspaper rather than the *Neue Erdbeschreibung*, he received the same income per sheet for comparatively less effort.

The *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* was printed in a small octavo format. Each issue contained eight pages, although a few double issues were printed. In its fifteen-year run it included only one image, namely a small woodcut ‘Map of the region of the city of Boston in the Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England’ (n.d., n.p.), which accompanied a 1775 report on the American War of Independence. For the pleasure of reading Büsching’s geographical fare, readers within the German lands paid two *Taler* per year for a subscription. The price was higher for foreign subscribers, and according to Büsching, ‘for this the guilt lies not with us [the publisher and editor-author], but rather with the circumstances’.

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216 WN 3 (11 Sept. 1775), 290–91. Geographical journals published closer to 1800 printed more maps and images, and on this see Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 200–201.
217 WN 1 (27 Dec. 1773) Preface, 8.
Büsching’s audience consisted of scholars and members of the educated classes (*gebildete Stände*), which included pastors, merchants and government officials. This audience was widened by reading societies, such as the *Greizer Lesegesellschaft* in Thüringen, that subscribed to his periodical.\(^{218}\) His readership extended beyond the German lands to cities such as St. Petersburg, Moscow and London.\(^{219}\) Readers encountered content that included reviews of geographical, historical and theological books, reviews and adverts for maps, occasional letters to the editor, reprints of and commentary on Prussian government treatises, reports on population and its geographical distribution in Brandenburg-Prussia, and reports on scientific and political matters from correspondents such as the pastor Karl Gottfried Woide in London, a government official in Vienna named Friedrich Wilhelm von Taube, and historian Georg Friedrich Müller in St. Petersburg and Moscow.\(^{220}\)

Like Hager before him, Büsching was the editor and primary contributor to his journal. As such, the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* was what Kronick has called an ‘independent journal’, which was a common editorial format for eighteenth-century learned journals. Büsching took responsibility for all the printed content.\(^{221}\) The reader knew when he was speaking or citing someone else. This had consequences for his authorial voice. Whilst in his *Neue Erdbeschreibung* Büsching was always careful to list his sources in the prefaces and throughout the book, his voice could get lost in the mass of

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\(^{218}\) Greiling, *Presse und Öffentlichkeit in Thüringen*, 115–16.


\(^{220}\) See, for example, *WN* 2 (12 Dec. 1774), 403–404; *WN* 2 (10 Jan. 1774), 13–16; *WN* 5 (22 Jun. 1777), 182–84.

\(^{221}\) Kronick, ‘Authorship and authority’, 266–70.
geographical facts presented. This was a function of the presentation format of the geographical grammar format. In contrast with his grammar, his periodical was meant to critically engage with geographical, historical and political works in a readable span of eight pages. In this way, the periodical form allowed him to develop a stronger authorial voice.

That matters of credibility and authority figured centrally in the \textit{Wöchentliche Nachrichten} is clear from the preface to the inaugural 1773 issue, where Büsching outlined his reasons for beginning his new periodical venture. In the years prior to the journal’s founding, Büsching had tired of reviewing books and periodicals for journals such as the \textit{Göttingische Anzeigen} and his own \textit{Magazine}. He had reached a point where, in his words, ‘no new invitation could have moved me to pick up the pen again for reviews’.\textsuperscript{222}

Yet, ‘in the mean time’, recounted Büsching,

\begin{quote}
I read many incorrect, unjust and unsupported judgements of books, and particularly statistical, geographical and historical ones, while my own collection of books concerning this type of scholarship increased yearly, and my map collection grew ever larger. I rarely found an ad for new maps – even though I had largely given up my extensive correspondence and limited myself to replies – and still often received geographical, historical and statistical news. Such reports deserved to be communicated to enthusiasts but did not suit my \textit{Magazine}, and thus remained concealed with me.\textsuperscript{223}
\end{quote}

Büsching felt a moral responsibility to intervene in a geographical print culture that evidenced precisely the sort of unjust and partial scholarly practices he saw as detrimental to the project of earth description. Enthusiasts of geographical and historical knowledge deserved accurate, just and truthful judgments, and as one of the foremost

\textsuperscript{222} WN 1 (27 Dec. 1773) Preface, 3–4, quote at 4.
\textsuperscript{223} WN 1 (27 Dec. 1773) Preface, 4–5, my emphasis. See also WN 4 (1 Jan. 1776), 8.
geographical authorities in the German states and Europe, he saw himself as well positioned to provide such judgments.224

Büsching’s prefatory remarks disclose profound claims to geographical authority. In claiming that he once maintained an extensive correspondence, and that he still received reports from his network of scholars, merchants, statesmen and clerics, he signalled to readers that he had accumulated substantial credibility in the learned world, and that he still had access to a consistent supply of new and relevant reports.225 Having a consistent supply of reports was crucial for the success of a learned journal.226 Editors of other learned journals, including Hager and Theophil Ehrmann, lacked such a supply and appealed to the reading public to furnish interesting and useful material.227 Furthermore, by claiming that he intended to rely heavily on his vast book and map collection, Büsching signalled that his authority was partly grounded in the comprehensiveness of his personal geographical archive.228 His preface, then, served to remind readers of his geographical authority and its underlying epistemological norms, and served to set his journal apart in a competitive literary marketplace.

Büsching’s claims to geographical authority were not limited to his preface, but rather were evident throughout the Wöchentliche Nachrichten. For Büsching, authority

224 See, for example, WN 4 (11 Nov. 1776), 372 [Review of Hager, Geographischer Büchersaal, issue 7].
225 On the point about credulity, see Goldgar, Impolite Learning, 29–30, 68.
226 Goldgar, Impolite Leaning, 66; Schneider, ‘Für Kenner und Liebhaber’, 149; Volmer, Presse und Frankophonie, 54.
228 On Büsching’s archive, see Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 121–44. As Büsching later noted, despite his intention to rely solely on his own archive, ‘as the weekly became more and more known, I received books and writings either from publishers or from authors themselves, and finally I had to limit my announcements to almost just those books and writings’. WN 15 (31 Dec. 1787) Beschluß dieser wöchentliche Nachrichten [‘Conclusion to these weekly reports’, hereafter ‘Beschluß’], 423–24.
was rooted in his ability to see manuscript material such as letters, book manuscripts and unpublished or difficult to access maps. The issues of epistemic credit and authority at stake here are well illustrated in a 1773 report concerning Cook’s voyages and the then forthcoming German translation of John Hawkesworth’s An account of the voyages undertaken by the order of his present majesty for making discoveries in the southern hemisphere (3 vols, London, 1773; German translation in 3 vols, Berlin, 1774). In April 1773 under the heading ‘London’, Büsching wrote,

Today, I can share with you the joy that the sight of the charts belonging to this work caused me. Yes, what a pleasure to see at once nine maps of inhabited regions of the earth, which until now one has not know at all, or rather have only been observed on universal charts of the earth’s surface through vague lines and points! These charts are at present a true rarity, not only in the German states but also in England, since they are not shown publically in London. However, the maps were sent to the Haude and Spener bookshop by Mr Hawkesworth, the editor of Mr Banks’ and Mr Solander’s travel account, to assist with the German translation that they are now being drawn for.229

Here, Büsching conveyed his experience of geographical enlightenment with enthusiasts of geography. Yet, his emphasis on the rarity of the maps and his privileged access to it were also assertions of his geographical authority. The conditions of possibility for this authority were his residency in Berlin and his connections to the Berlin-based Haude and Spener firm, who not only published the Hawkesworth translation, but also the Wöchentliche Nachrichten.

For Büsching, a scholar who travelled little in an era that ‘believed perhaps more strongly than any other that travel makes truth’, claims to have privileged access to that

229 WN 1 (26 Apr. 1773), 135.
truth in manuscript form were the most authoritative he could make.\textsuperscript{230} Of course, his privileged access to the draft maps of the South Seas and translation proofs did not eradicate the problems of trust that lay at the heart of travellers’ truth claims.\textsuperscript{231} As such, for the learned public reading Büsching’s weekly, it was a matter of trust in the word, judgment and indeed the vision of Büsching, as much as it was a matter of trust in the accuracy of the charts and reports produced by Cook and his fellow travellers. Trusting the reports in Hawkesworth’s account was itself difficult, because Hawkesworth had not taken part in Cook’s first voyage, but rather was subsequently hired to edit the journals of Cook, Byron and other participants. His work was harshly criticised in many quarters, and this was partly because he presented it as a ‘first-hand’ account.\textsuperscript{232}

Büsching’s claims to epistolary and visual authority in the \textit{Wöchentliche Nachrichten} faced challenges from other learned newspapers. Büsching’s journal was an appealing target in a market where journals often stole material to fill their pages with interesting content, reduce publishers’ costs and increase profit margins.\textsuperscript{233} Only ten weeks after the \textit{Wöchentliche Nachrichten} first rolled off the press, journals such as the \textit{Hamburgische Neue Zeitung} had already poached content. In response, Büsching requested the Hamburg paper properly attribute its content: ‘If the \textit{Hamburgische Neue Zeitung} and others take something from my journal, will they be fair and just and always

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{230} Outram, ‘On being Perseus’, 281.
\item \textsuperscript{231} Outram, ‘On being Perseus’; Shapin, \textit{A Social History of Truth}, 243–66; Withers, ‘Reporting, mapping, trusting’.
\item \textsuperscript{232} See Abbott, \textit{John Hawkesworth}, 137–86.
\item \textsuperscript{233} Gierl, ‘Compilation and the production of knowledge’, 83–84.
\end{itemize}
show where they have taken material from?" Despite Büsching’s appeal the problem continued. In the preface to the journal’s second volume he again called out periodicals in Hamburg, one of the central markets in the German states for book and periodical publishing: ‘[A]s soon as they receive my weekly, the editors of papers that are printed in Hamburg and Altona include anything that they like from it…without saying where they took it from’. This practice was not uncommon, since periodicals that contained a ‘colourful mixture of literary, geographical, historical, ethnographical and natural historical treatises or travel accounts…often concealed the sources for their reports, which were often journals such as Büsching’s’. Yet for Büsching, this practice was especially ‘offensive and irresponsible’, because when periodicals swiftly reprinted his material, those who first saw his content elsewhere viewed him as a thief. As he put it, ‘I suffer, because many believe I copy some material from other journals…even though this is completely false’. By making the reading public think he was a plagiarist, journals that stole his material undermined the credibility and authority he had worked so hard to acquire. His concern with his credibility and reputation, moreover, reflected wider concerns amongst scholars in the ‘ordered society’ (Ranggesellschaft) of the early modern German states, where honour was central to scholars’ status and identity.238

234 WN 1 (8 Mar. 1773) Nachrichten, 80, emphasis added.
235 WN 2 (19 Feb. 1775) unpaginated preface.
236 Böning, Periodische Presse, 397.
237 WN 2 (19 Feb. 1775) unpaginated preface; see also WN 2 (1 Aug. 1774), 248; WN 15 (31 Dec. 1787) Beschluß, 423–24. Periodicals elsewhere in the German states, such as the Zweibrücken-based Gazette universelle de literature, also stole material from Büsching’s journal, as he noted in WN 1 (12 Jul. 1773), 217. On the Gazette universelle, see Volmer, Presse und Frankophonie, 33–34.
3.5 Büsching’s reform efforts and German geographical print culture

The significance of Büsching’s Wöchentliche Nachrichten as a vehicle for geographical reform, and for bolstering his authority, becomes evident if we consider Büsching’s commentary on other geographical periodicals, along with the aims of periodicals he remained silent about.

Consider Büsching’s engagement with Hager’s Geographischer Büchersaal. In 1764, Hager had founded his review journal to, among other things, provide ‘a detailed report and an impartial judgment of old and new geographical works’.\textsuperscript{239} Hager envisioned his journal as a tool for writing a more complete history of geography. Büsching had supported this aim and Hager’s journal from the outset, especially since he believed its aims resembled those of the Cosmographical Society’s Beyträge zur Weltbeschreibung, a journal that never materialised because of social and economic problems within the Cosmographical Society and disruptions caused by the Seven Years War.\textsuperscript{240} Furthermore, Büsching viewed Hager’s journal as a useful supplement to his handbook, the Ausführliche Geographie (3 vols, Chemnitz 1746–47).\textsuperscript{241} In August 1764, Büsching had even contributed material to Hager’s journal. He sent Hager ‘a list of the newest and best geographical books about Portugal and Spain, which I have used in my Geography but are not well known outside these empires’.\textsuperscript{242} Hager expressed thanks for Büsching’s generosity, and noted, ‘I am pleased that my undertaking has been met with approval by

\textsuperscript{239} Geographischer Büchersaal, 1 (12 Feb. 1764) Preface, 3r.
\textsuperscript{241} WN 4 (11 Nov. 1776) 370; WN 2 (6 Jun. 1774), 177–78.
\textsuperscript{242} Geographischer Büchersaal 1 (1764) Auszug, 365.
this great expert on geography. It is an honour for this journal that he has offered to make some contributions to it.\textsuperscript{243} Hager had expressly solicited such contributions, since he lacked an extensive correspondence network and geographical archive that could provide him with a steady supply of new material.\textsuperscript{244} As well, he knew such contributions were necessary if he wanted to augment his geographical authority, especially in the wake of Büsching’s calls for more rigorous source critical geography.

Yet, despite his recognition of the need for a material basis for geographical authority, and despite his praise for Büsching’s contribution to his journal, Hager continued to practice geography in a way that both valued and subverted Büsching’s geographical authority. In November 1776, Büsching alerted readers of his *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* to Hager’s subversion, noting that in his *Geographischer Büchersaal*, Hager had copied ‘entire sections’ from Büsching’s *Magazine*, printed a 24-page ‘sketch of all the maps’ advertised in the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*, and also copied from other sources. Hager claimed he had copied material from Büsching’s *Magazine* so readers would buy Büsching’s periodical, yet Büsching argued readers would instead see this as a strategy ‘to complete his *Geographical* Library without great effort of mind’, and to lessen his workload.\textsuperscript{245}

Even more, Hager at once recognised and subverted Büsching’s authority when he reprinted an excerpt from, and appended a critique to, Büsching’s 1773 preface to the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Geographischer Büchersaal 1 (1764) Auszug, 367 [Büsching quote], 366 note ‘a’ [Hager quote].}
\footnote{Geographischer Büchersaal 1 (12 Feb. 1764) Preface, 4v–5r.}
\footnote{WN 4 (11 Nov. 1776), 370–71. See also Geographischer Büchersaal 3 (1775), 83–115, 163–217 [excerpted sections from Büsching’s *Magazine*]; Geographischer Büchersaal 3 (1776), 530–55 [material from the WN].}
\end{footnotes}
In his appended remarks, Hager argued Büsching’s weekly was too costly and his judgments often too candid. This candid style, noted Hager, led critics to call his style ‘dictatorial and harsh’.

For Büsching, such criticisms were largely rooted in misreadings of his criticisms of plagiarists and personal vendettas. Moreover, he acknowledged ‘candidness...clearly belongs to my shortcomings’, yet argued however candid his judgments might be, their credibility derived from his experience working on geography, his access to uncommon reports and his willingness to publicly acknowledge and correct his errors in his journal, a practice that ran ‘against the custom of all other reviewers’. Büsching’s engagement with Hager underscores how closely claims to authority and its subversion were intertwined in the making of geographical print culture.

It shows that authority was subverted not only in the production of geography books, travel accounts and maps, but also in the making of geographical periodicals.

As a counterpoint to Hager’s case, consider Büsching’s engagement with Johann Ernst Fabri’s Geographisches Magazin [Geographical Magazine]. Büsching alerted the learned public to Fabri’s new endeavour in January 1783. To Büsching, Fabri’s new endeavour appeared promising: ‘Fabri’s geographical elementary books make it probable that the geographical Magazine...will not be geographical hackwork, but rather contain useful information’, such as ‘reports on geographical books and maps, excerpts from travel accounts, geographical letters and novelties, and also geographical treatises, not to

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246 WN 4 (11 Nov. 1776), 371; Geographischer Büchersaal 3 (1776), 525–29 [Hager’s excerpt of Büsching’s preface and critical remarks].
mention other purposeful material’. After Fabri’s magazine hit the market, Büsching praised him for successfully carrying out his plan for a useful periodical. ‘The printed reports from handwritten sources are numerous, and support the accurate and useful knowledge of particular places and regions’, said Büsching of one 1784 issue. Likewise, speaking of the third volume of Fabri’s journal, Büsching noted that ‘geography clearly gains much’. This did not mean the journal was faultless: he criticised Fabri for including material that did not belong in such a journal, and elsewhere informed readers they should compare Fabri’s reports with reports in his own Magazine. Still, Büsching did not criticise Fabri for copying material from his journal or for offering partial and unjust judgments. For Büsching, Fabri’s journal more closely approximated his ideal for a truly useful geographical periodical than Hager’s.

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248 WN 11 (6 Jan. 1783), 5.
249 WN 12 (20 Sept. 1784), 302. See also WN 12 (15 Mar. 1784), 84.
250 WN 12 (20 Sept. 1784), 302.
251 WN 13 (21 Mar. 1785), 90–91.
Figure 8. Title page of Fabri’s Geographical Magazine, no. 1 (1783). Pictured copy held by the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen. Photo by the author.
How closely other geographical journalists adhered to Büsching’s practices and ideals is more difficult to discern. Editors certainly expressed similar concerns with the credibility and authority of sources. Writing in 1773, the editor of the *Vermischten Beyträge zur physikalischen Erdbeschreibung* [Various contributions to physical geography, 1773–87] informed readers that he only printed reports from sources ‘bearing the seal of credibility’. Theophil Ehrmann, editor of the *Magazin der Erd- und Völkerkunde* [Magazine for geography and ethnography, 1782–83], similarly argued that issues of trust and credibility were central for him as an editor, and indeed for geographical scholarship more broadly. As Ehrmann remarked elsewhere, given the poor quality of many geographical sources, ‘with every step he takes in his field of knowledge, the geographer has twice as much cause to ask himself: whom to trust?’ It is difficult to attribute Ehrmann and Otto’s concerns with trust and authority directly to Büsching’s influence, since neither Otto nor Ehrmann referred to Büsching in their prefatory remarks, and since concerns with trust and credibility, along with accuracy and precision, had become increasingly significant for scholars in the latter eighteenth-century. Still, given Büsching’s high standing in the learned world and the world of geographical scholarship in particular, it is plausible to read Otto’s and Ehrmann’s remarks, in part, as a testament to the success of Büsching’s reform efforts.

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255 See, for example, Bödeker, ‘Reisebeschreibungen im historischen Diskurs’, 286–87; Bravo, ‘Precision and curiosity’.
Büsching's weekly undoubtedly helped bolster his geographical authority. This is evidenced in commentary in German and British periodicals. In a 1783 review of the English Büsching’s *Magazine* in the London-based *A New Review*, an anonymous commentator wrote:

> It is proper that the learned in this country should be made acquainted with the nature of this publication of Professor Busching’s [sic], as the author’s reputation stands so deservedly high on account of his Geography, and the monthly magazine of geographical intelligence which he publishes at Berlin [i.e. the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*]. Know, therefore, learned reader, that this is a collection of original, authentic, and important papers.\(^{256}\)

For an anonymous author of a 1788 tribute essay to Büsching, the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* testified to Büsching’s ‘mature judgments’ concerning ‘geographical works’, as well as his extensive reading in the field.\(^{257}\) Additionally, the successful *Allgemeine geographischen Ephemeriden* underscored the significance of Büsching’s weekly when they noted the glaring absence left in print market after Büsching ended his geographical journals.\(^{258}\) In 1817, the editor of the *Neue allgemeine geographische Ephemeriden* told readers he strove to edit a ‘lasting journal’, something ‘that almost no one has managed to do since the outstandingly meritorious, late Büsching’.\(^{259}\) Much of the success of his


\(^{257}\) [Anon], ‘Denkschrift auf Büsching’, *Westphälisches Magazin zur Geographie, Historie und Statistik*, 4 (1788), 293–301, quotes at 300. For more praise for his periodicals, see [J.G. Meusel], ‘Schreiben aus D...an einen Freund in London über den gegenwärtigen Zustand der historischen Litteratur in Deutschland’, *Der Teutsche Merkur*, 2 (June 1773), 247–66, at 255; and *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 3 (Jul. 1786) columns 135–36, where in a review of Büsching’s *Magazine* (vol. 20, 1786), an anonymous commentator remarked that it ‘belongs to the few works that climbs to a significant number of volumes without losing content’ (col. 135).

\(^{258}\) Büsching ended his weekly because his health was deteriorating, along with his already poor handwriting. See *WN* 15 (31 Dec. 1787) Beschluß, 424.

periodicals owed to his earnest commitment to a moral economy of knowledge that rejected the values and practices that impelled humanist-inspired geography, along with the commercial imperatives that drove Grub Street’s ‘pens for hire’ and hack authors elsewhere.

Yet, however successful Büsching’s efforts were, they did not succeed in erasing the competing geographies of trust and authority at work in German geographical print culture. Rather, those geographies seem to have sharpened by the late eighteenth-century. In the decades around 1800, geography as a discipline and discourse gained increased prominence in the learned world, and more hack writers in the German states sought to profit from this trend. This led some to work harder to establish criteria for scientific writing, which writers often described as ‘critical geography’.260 This concern with criteria for scientific writing was the result of broader changes in the sorts of intellectual questions and debates that occupied scholars around 1800. Nevertheless, at stake were the same basic issues of epistemic credit and geographical authority that had impelled Büsching to embark on his ambitious geographical project.

3.6 Periodicals, the history of geography and the geography of the book

This chapter has argued that periodicals’ periodicity and materiality transformed the character of geographical print culture in the later eighteenth century. Drawing on the

case of Aufklärungsgeographie, it has shown that the periodical form made geographical authorship and readership more dynamic and public, and that it both strengthened and undermined geographers’ authorial voice. Periodicals’ periodicity allowed editor-authors such as Büsching to respond more quickly to criticism and cases of plagiarism, whilst periodicals’ relatively low price, and status as the central print medium of the Aufklärung, meant geographical debate and criticism developed a more public character. Periodicals strengthened geographers’ authorial voice through their inclusion of critical book reviews, commentaries and the article format. At the same time, geographers’ authorial voice was undermined by acts of plagiarism, which were undertaken to meet enthusiasts’ constant demand for new and interesting content.

This chapter has wider implications for understanding the historical geographies of science. It shows that understanding the making of periodicals is crucial for understanding the making of geography’s moral economies of knowledge. Attention to periodicals reveals new dimensions of how such moral economies were made in and by print forms. Büsching’s periodical geography, I have argued, was significant precisely because it sought to reorder the trust relations that defined geographical practice. Once grounded in trust in past authorities, Büsching established a moral economy of knowledge rooted in distrust. Yet, as in the case of seventeenth-century science, this emphasis on distrust was accompanied not by the complete rejection of trust, but rather new ways of managing trust in printed, written and spoken testimony.²⁶¹ For Büsching, the methodological means for managing trust was source criticism. This new means of

²⁶¹ Shapin A Social History of Truth, 193–242, see especially 195, 211–242 on the point about managing.
managing trust, and the corresponding scepticism concerning past authorities, were the grounds for a new ‘epistemological decorum’ and civil order in geography.262 In this order, plagiarism was—drawing on Shapin—the ‘ultimate incivility’, because it could lead to both ‘the withdrawal of trust’ in new, critically grounded truth claims about the terraqueous globe, and to the withdrawal of trust in the geographer’s ‘moral commitment to speaking truth about the world’.263 Taken together, this incivility and Büsching’s efforts to establish a new epistemological decorum shaped the making of geographical print culture in the Aufklärung.

By now, it is clear that ‘books cannot be understood outside their geographies’.264 As I have suggested here, the same is true for periodicals. Like other print forms, periodicals must be understood as the product of interwoven geographies of scientific practice, commerce and power operating across scales. Such geographies must be understood in relation to books of geography, travel writing and geographical speech.265 Yet, periodicals also create their own geographies of authorship, reading and epistemic credit through their material form and periodicity. By disclosing such geographies and their significance in shaping broader geographies of print, scrutiny of periodical geography can advance scholarship on the geography of the book. Moreover, if ‘the geography of the book is still defining its remit’,266 I have shown that its remit must encompass periodical geography.

262 Shapin, A Social History of Truth, 193–242. See also Withers, ‘Reporting, mapping, trusting’.
263 Shapin, A Social History of Truth, 36.
266 Keighren, ‘Geography of the book’, 537.
Chapter 4
For the love of the fatherland: A.F. Büsching and the place of geography, politics and power in the German Enlightenment

In August 1786, after nearly forty-six years of rule, the King of Prussia passed away at his beloved Potsdam summer palace, Sanssoucci. In the wake of his passing, the learned public reflected on Frederick II’s reign, during which he had led Prussia to great power status and had been a patron of the Francophone—and to a far lesser extent, the Germanophone—Enlightenments in Berlin, Potsdam and beyond. 267 Amongst those who reflected on the king’s life was the famed geographer Anton Friedrich Büsching, who had resided in Frederick’s Berlin since 1766. Büsching’s book, titled Character Friedrichs des zweiten, König von Preussen [The character of Frederick the second, king of Prussia] (Halle, 1788), discussed the king’s daily activities, his disposition, his learnedness and language abilities, his manner of rule, and his relation to religion, the educational system and the economy. According to Büsching, the book offered ‘a true and detailed picture’ of the king rather than a eulogy. 268 Indeed, although he praised the king’s accomplishments in state building and other matters, he criticised aspects of the king’s rule, including his lack of knowledge about the educational system in his lands. 269 That the famed geographer had produced an account of Prussia’s roi philosophe is significant, because it

267 On Frederick II and the Enlightenment, see, for example, Blanning, The Culture of Power, 212–32; Goldbaum, ‘Friedrich II. und die Berliner Aufklärung’. On Sanssouci and his death, see Blanning, Frederick the Great, 457–58. On Prussia’s emergence as a great power, see Scott, ‘Aping the great powers’; Scott, The Emergence of the Eastern Powers.
268 Büsching, Character Friedrichs des zweiten (1788), 2v.
269 Büsching, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 97; Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 176, 208–11; Neugebauer, ‘Anton Friedrich Büsching’, 76.
raises questions about the political character of his work, as well as broader questions about the political character of geography in the German Enlightenment (Aufklärung).

Much has been said about the political character of modern German geography. Scholars have written extensively about the development of geopolitical thought, the role of geographical practice in the interwar period and in the National Socialist era. Likewise, scholars have discussed geography’s role in establishing a sense of nationalism in the era of unification, the role of ethnographic maps and statistics in creating a sense of German identity, and the place of geographical societies and exploration in the making of German colonialism. Collectively, this literature has shown that geographical practice, print and institutions were closely tied to the formation of political identities and the legitimation of colonial and imperial rule.

Less has been said about the ties between geography and power in the eighteenth-century German states. Questions of geography’s relation to power have received the most attention from historians of cartography, who have done much to reveal the ways mapping projects were shaped by courtly patronage, reform policies and great power politics. Questions about the place of politics in geographical print culture and

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271 Sandner, ‘In search of identity’.

272 Hansen, Mapping the Germans.

273 Gräbel, Die Erforschung der Kolonien; Schröder, Das Wissen von der Ganzen Welt.

274 Fieseler, Der vermessene Staat; Schlögl, ‘Cartography in the service of reform policy’; Schlögl, Der planvolle Staat; Veres, ‘Putting Transylvania on the map’; Veres, ‘Redefining imperial borders’; Veres, ‘Constructing imperial spaces’; Wolfart, ‘Mapping the early modern state’.
education have received less consideration. Scholarship on Büsching has considered some of the ways Prussian and Russian politics informed Büsching’s geographical periodicals. In her survey of eighteenth-century German geography, Fischer has briefly noted the links between geographical education and patriotism. Recent work on Immanuel Kant’s lectures on physical geography has gestured towards political matters in relation to his thinking on climate, race and the practical value of geography and anthropology, but has done little to situate political questions within the broader context of Enlightenment geography. Others, moreover, have discussed the political character of Johann Gottfried Herder’s and Polycarp Leyser’s geographical thought in relation to Friedrich Ratzel and the geopolitical tradition, but have said little about the social and political contexts of Herder and Leyser’s work.

I argue that too little attention has been paid to the social, political and print geographies that shaped geography as a discourse and discipline in the early modern Holy Roman Empire (hereafter referred to as the Reich). I contend, moreover, that too little attention has been given to geography’s role in the formation of patriotic sensibilities, to the making of the Reich and individual German states as geo-cultural entities, and to the geographical biographies and power lines to the palace that shaped the forms geographical practice took.

275 Pantenius, ‘Das preußisch-russische Verhältnis’.
276 Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 228, 281–82.
277 Elden, ‘Reassessing Kant’s geography’; Günzel, ‘Geographie der Aufklärung’; Mendieta, ‘Geography is to history as man is to woman’, 357–62; Wilson, ‘The pragmatic use of Kant’s lectures’. See, however, Withers, ‘Kant’s Geography’, who says little about politics but does contextualise Kant’s geography within the field of Enlightenment geography.
My overarching aim for this chapter is to argue that geography in the German Enlightenment was politicised through inscriptive practices of authorship, epistolary geography, learned journalism, mapping and education. To support this claim, I first survey existing literature on German geography’s political character, and situate it in relation to work on the geographies in and of Enlightenment. In the second part, I illuminate how geography was politicised through the life and work of Büsching, the leading German geographer in the second half of the eighteenth century. I discuss the aims, practical making and political content of Büsching’s geography of the German Reich and his geographical periodicals, the Wöchentliche Nachrichten and Magazin für die neue Historie und Geographie. I argue that these geographical projects were politicised, first, because they were intended to facilitate Germany’s ‘coming to know itself’ as a cultural nation, and the Electorate of Hanover’s and Prussia’s getting to know themselves as states. Second, I argue Büsching’s projects were politicised because his power lines to the palaces in Hanover, Potsdam and Vienna helped shape his ability to get to know the German states, and thus to make them into legible geographical places with political significance. In the conclusion, I consider the broader significance of Büsching’s case for understanding the role of politics in German geography and debates concerning German identity.
Figure 9. Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in Central Europe, 1648. Map by A. Kunz, J.R. Moeschel and C. Heynmann, in the Digital Atlas on the History of Europe, Institute for European History (IEG), atlas-europa.de
4.1 Geography, politics and power in the Age of Reason

In the last two decades, scholars have shown that matters of politics were central to the twinned making of geography and Enlightenment. Several scholars have demonstrated that geography was politicised through mapmaking. Indeed, mapping practices were employed to support political-administrative reforms, military actions and colonial expansion in French, English, Scottish, Russian and North and South American contexts. Others have shown that geography was politicised through geographical grammars, chorographical surveys, geographical education and visions of social progress. Much of this literature has been discussed in greater detail elsewhere, and here I simply want to underscore key thematic and methodological claims concerning political identity and the context of geographical knowledge production.

Enlightenment geography was closely bound up with matters of patriotism and national identity. In America, efforts to instil ‘geo-literacy’ through geography books and children’s games contributed to the formation of political identities in the fledging republic. The early republic saw a ‘programmatic diffusion of geographical literatures that introduced the nation as a material and inherently readable form’. This diffusion

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281 Withers, Placing the Enlightenment, 167–212.
was supported by the efforts of figures such as Timothy Dwight and Thomas Jefferson, who offered Americans ‘geographical apologetics’ for, and moral visions of, the new republic and its geographies. In Scotland, knowledge of the nation and a sense of national identity were fashioned through the making of maps and atlases, but also through the survey-based chorographical descriptions of Geographer Royal Robert Sibbald and David Erskine, Earl of Buchan, along with John Sinclair’s survey-based *Statistical Account* (12 vols, 1790–99). In England, moreover, geographical grammars were linked to the making of competing politico-religious identities during the Glorious Revolution, the Restoration and the Georgian era.

In terms of method, scholars have underscored the need to understand the geographies in and through which geographical knowledge was politicised. Understanding how geography was politicised is a matter of understanding biographies, institutional settings and patronage systems. Heffernan has underscored the significance of such geographies in his work on Edme Mentelle, who wrote and taught geography as he deftly navigated changing systems of patronage and power in the tumultuous years surrounding the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon I. In his work on Peter Heylyn, Edmund Bohun and others, Mayhew has shown that understanding ‘authorial

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biographies’, ‘rhetorical contexts’ and geography’s ‘print spaces’ is crucial for grasping the reasons why, and inscriptive means through which, authors deployed ‘political languages’ in geography books.\textsuperscript{288} Withers, moreover, has shown that attention to the institutional and social contexts that enabled the production of ‘nationally useful’ geographical knowledge reveals a ‘much richer and more complex tradition of geographical enquiry in Scotland than has hitherto been allowed’.\textsuperscript{289} Collectively, this literature has shown that early modern geography has a deeper and richer history than presentist accounts have suggested, and it has done so precisely by taking seriously the social and print geographies that defined geographical practice.\textsuperscript{290} Building on this work, I argue that scrutiny of the social, print and political geographies of German geography reveals that it, too, had a richer history than commentators have acknowledged.

4.2 Geography, politics and power in the German \textit{Aufklärung}

Up to now, geographers have been concerned with situating eighteenth-century German geography in a longer intellectual trajectory. This work has largely focussed on the intellectual contexts that shaped concepts such as climactic thinking and race.\textsuperscript{291} Farinelli, too, has situated eighteenth-century geography in a longer trajectory of political


\textsuperscript{289} Withers, ‘How Scotland came to know itself’, quotes at 394, 372.

\textsuperscript{290} For critiques of presentist histories, see Livingstone, \textit{The Geographical Tradition}, 1–31; Mayhew, \textit{Enlightenment Geography}, 1–22; Withers, ‘Geography’s narratives’.

\textsuperscript{291} Günzel, ‘Geographie der Aufklärung’; Schultz, ‘Herder and Ratzel’. See also Elden, ‘Reassessing Kant’s geography’, 10–20; Mendieta, ‘Geography is to history as man is to woman’, 357–62. See also Withers, ‘The Enlightenment and geographies of cosmopolitanism’, 41–46, where he contextualises Kant’s discussion of cosmopolitanism and offers a thoughtful and important critique of Harvey’s reading of Kant’s geography and anthropology. For Harvey’s view, see Harvey, ‘Cosmopolitanism and the banality of geographical evils’. 
geography, but in so doing has obscured rather than illuminated geography’s political character. He has obscured its character through his reading of Polycarp Leyser’s 1727 argument for ‘pure geography’ and contemporary responses to it. For Farinelli, that Leyser argued for attention to natural rather than political features in an era when political features were dominant was significant, because it represented a ‘rejection of the utility of geographical knowledge’, and marked an effort to divorce politics from geography. In rejecting political divisions as the only basis for geographical order, argues Farinelli, Leyser offered a ‘criticism of the existing social order’. What is more, Leyser’s effort to divorce politics from geography laid the groundwork for the ‘civil war’ waged after 1800 by proponents of ‘geography for geography’s sake’, on one side, and advocates of politically useful geography, on the other.292

Leyser’s argument for natural geography had nothing to do with divorcing politics from geography, or with criticising the prevailing social order. Rather, his argument was rooted in a humanist understanding of geography’s utility. This is evident from the context in which he wrote the Commentatio and the language of his argument. In terms of the context, from 1719 to 1728 Leyser was professor of poetry and history in the Philosophical Faculty at the humanist-orientated University of Helmstedt.293 Leyser taught courses on universal history, literary history, Latin and German poetry and Virgil’s Aenid, and a year before the Commentatio appeared, he had lectured on the geography

292 Farinelli, ‘Friedrich Ratzel’, quotes at 944, 945, 946.
293 Bruning, Innovation in Forschung und Lehre, 55, 128–30.
and history of ‘Germany’. For Leyser, focussing on natural boundaries—and especially bodies of water—was useful because it would make it easier to locate the sites of historical events. For Leyser, moreover, focussing on natural boundaries was precisely about making geography more useful for humanist scholarship, rather than about rejecting its utility, as Farinelli has argued. What is more, Leyser’s case supports Mayhew’s contention that ‘[g]eography has served many roles unrelated to the nexus of colonialism and expansive capitalism’, one of those being its use in ‘elucidating the geographical allusions in the classical texts that were the bedrock of European education until at least the late eighteenth century’.

Leyser’s geography was not entirely divorced from politics, however. Rather, he served an indirect political function, because by teaching geography to students from aristocratic backgrounds, he helped maintain and reproduce the prevailing ‘ordered society’ in the German lands. In this regard Leyser was not alone. Many authors of geographical works including Büsching, Johann Georg Hager, Johannes Hübner, Christian Weise and Martin Zeiller taught at preparatory secondary schools (Gymnasia), ‘knight academies’ (Ritterakademien) and universities, and they too helped maintain the ordered society.

Geographical education, moreover, served a similar social function in early

\[294\] [University of Helmstedt], *Catalogus lectionum* (1723–24), fol. 53r; [University of Helmstedt], *Catalogus lectionum* (1725–26), fols. 56v–57r; [University of Helmstedt], *Catalogus lectionum* (1728), fol. 73r.


\[297\] On the ordered society see, for example, Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag*, 176–219.

\[298\] For biographical information, see Kämmel, ‘Hübner, Johann’; Schmidt, ‘Weise, Christian’; Waldberg, ‘Zeiller, Martin’.
modern France and England. That geographical education served such a function across early modern Europe testifies to its significance for the politicisation of early modern geography.

Geographical education was also politicised because it deployed political languages concerning patriotism. For educators in the later eighteenth-century German lands, geographical knowledge was ‘important in developing patriotic loyalty’. Gerhard Philipp Heinrich Norrmann, an instructor at the Johanneum Gymansium in Hamburg in the 1780s, stressed that he had ‘spent the most effort on the work on the German Reich, in order to provide Germans of all estates with an accurate and exact knowledge of their fatherland, to make its advantages better known and to thereby awake a reasoned national pride and patriotism’. Similarly, Bavarian school reformer Heinrich Braun believed geographical instruction ‘should emphasise the German Reich and Bavaria, our fatherland’. For him, it was a patriotic duty to ‘become more familiar with the fatherland [Bavaria]’, and for this reason, argued Braun, ‘the love of the fatherland must be taught early to young people’. Braun’s and Norrmann’s geography books and instruction were thus interwoven with the promotion of patriotic sentiments. Even more, I contend their

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299 Cormack, Charting an Empire, 13–14, 228; Godlewska, Geography Unbound, 29–33, 150; Mayhew, Enlightenment Geography, 33–34.
300 Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 281.
301 Norrmann Geographische und historische Handbuch der Länder-, Völker-, und Staatenkunde (1785), v–viii, quote at viii. For biographical information, see Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 173; Ratzel, ‘Norrmann, Gerhard Philipp Heinrich’.
302 Braun, Pragmatische Geschichte der Schulreformation in Baiern (1783), 186. The references to Norrmann and Braun I owe to Fischer, ‘Geography and Enlightenment in the German states’, 281, although the translations from the original sources are my own.
books and teaching were part of a broader effort to make the German public geo-literate concerning their local and imperial fatherland.

This political effort to make the learned public geo-literate was also evident at the university level. This was true, at least, at the University of Göttingen, which had endeavoured to become a centre of geographical scholarship in the 1750s. As part of this effort, the university recruited Johann Michael Franz, heir to the prestigious Nuremberg and then Göttingen-based Homann map firm, which was itself part of the effort to get to know the Reich through its sponsorship of Johann Matthias Hase’s audacious and ultimately unsuccessful effort to map the entire Reich, and through its more successful effort to produce a 125 map atlas of the Reich, which contained 32 maps based on field data. At Göttingen, Johann Michael Franz facilitated efforts to get to know the Reich through two lecture courses on the geography of Germany (die Erdbeschreibung Deutschlands), which were based partly on Hermann Conring’s Opus de finibus Imperii Germanici (Leipzig, 1693) and partly on Franz’s own work. One course illuminated changes in Germany’s borders from antiquity to the present, and the other dealt only with the modern geography of what Franz called ‘our Germany’. Germany merited significant attention because, according to Franz, one ‘speaks least about the places furthest away, either in time or space, speaks more extensively about neighbouring places, and speaks most often about our fatherland’. Franz’s courses on Germany’s

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303 On Göttingen’s efforts to become a geographical hub, see Forbes, Tobias Mayer, 84–105.
304 On Hase’s failed efforts, Franz’s visions for a map of the Reich and the Atlas Germaniae specialis (1753), see Fieseler, Der vermessene Staat, 86, 88–89; Forbes, Tobias Mayer, 63.
305 Franz, Abhandlung von den Grenzen der bekannten und unbekannten Welt (1762), 53.
306 Ibid., 58.
geography were thus closely tied to patriotic sentiments, and were part of a wider effort to make the German public more geo-literate.

At the university level, geography was linked to politics through the deployment of political languages concerning cosmopolitanism. This was true in the case of Immanuel Kant, who from 1757 onwards lectured on physical geography at the University of Königsberg for more than forty years. In his lectures on physical geography and anthropology, Kant emphasised the role of geographical knowledge in the formation of a cosmopolitan outlook and critical thinking skills.\textsuperscript{307} He viewed his lectures on geography and anthropology as offering ‘knowledge of the world’ (\textit{Weltkenntnis}), which he saw as ‘integral to the moral and political life of the citizen’\textsuperscript{308} For Kant, the development of ‘knowledge of the world’ and the ability to think for one’s self was central to the project of Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{309} As such, his geography lectures were fundamentally about the cultivation of enlightened students and citizens, and thus fundamentally political.

Geography in the German lands, then, was politicised through geographical education and geography books, political languages and mapping projects. It was linked to power through the maintenance of the ordered society and the cultivation of political identities. In serving such functions, German geography was not entirely unique, because geography served similar functions elsewhere in the early modern era. German geography was, however, shaped by particular social, cultural and political geographies that were

\textsuperscript{307} Wilson, ‘The pragmatic use of Kant’s lectures’. See also Withers, ‘The Enlightenment and geographies of cosmopolitanism’, 41–46.
\textsuperscript{308} Elden, ‘Reassessing Kant’s geography’, 10–11, quote at 11.
\textsuperscript{309} Wilson, ‘The pragmatic use of Kant’s lectures’, 164–65.
unique to the German lands, and such geographies must be considered if one wants to fully grasp the political character of geographical practice. To this end, I turn to consider the practical making and geographies of Büsching’s geographical project.

4.3 The origins and political character of Büsching’s _Neue Erdbeschreibung_

Anton Friedrich Büsching was born in 1724 in Stadthagen, a small town in the principality of Schaumberg-Lippe in the northwest of the German lands. Far from having an elite pedigree, Büsching was the son of an unsuccessful lawyer. Büsching received his early education in Stadthagen at the Latin school, and in the home of noted geographer Eberhard David Hauber, who was head pastor at St. Martin’s church. At nineteen, he procured a stipend to attend the Latin school in Glaucha near Halle, and a year later enrolled at the University of Halle, where he studied theology. After taking his _Magister_ degree in 1747, Büsching spent four years tutoring the son of Danish diplomat Count Rochus zu Lynar in Köstritz, St. Petersburg, Itzehoe and Soröe.\(^{310}\) This tutoring stint was especially significant for his scholarly trajectory, because it was during his time with the Lynar family in St. Petersburg that he developed a true passion for geography, and resolved to produce a new geography that would surpass all previous ones in quality.\(^{311}\)

\(^{310}\) Büsching, _Eigene Lebensgeschichte_ (1789), 119–212; Hoffmann, _Anton Friedrich Büsching_, 33–44.

\(^{311}\) Bond, ‘Enlightenment geography in the study’, 68; Büsching, _Eigene Lebensgeschichte_ (1789), 119–77; Hoffmann, _Anton Friedrich Büsching_, 41.
Büsching resigned from his tutoring duties in the fall of 1752. He spent the next eighteen months in Frederick V’s Copenhagen, where he worked on the first two parts of his *Neue Erdbeschreibung* at the home of his former teacher Hauber, who was pastor as St. Peter’s church. In working on his geography, Büsching had access not only to Hauber’s impressive library, but also to the library of an exiled Russian diplomat and former director of the Petersburg Academy of Sciences, and to that of a Danish government official. His geographical project was thus connected to state power in its early phases, and grew even more closely linked in the following years.

Büsching's *Neue Erdbeschreibung* was fundamentally a political geographical project. Although it dealt in part with the earth’s ‘natural condition’, his aim was to describe the ‘civil condition of the earth’s surface’. He was concerned with German scholars called the ‘constitution of the state’ (*Staatsverfassung*). For each of ‘the many and varied states’ of the earth, he sought to illuminate their forms of government, the shape and history of their boundaries, population size, forms of religion, the number and size of cities and towns, and ‘noteworthy places and institutions’. In so doing, Büsching followed in the chorographical tradition that had been initiated by Strabo and continued into the early modern era.

His geographical project differed from many others, however, because it sought to establish a new moral economy of geographical knowledge. For Büsching, existing

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313 Büsching, *Neue Erdbeschreibung*, vol. 1 (1754), 33–34, and on physical geography, see Ibid., 84–128.
314 Ibid., 33–34.
geographies were rooted in a bankrupt moral economy defined by the uncritical reading and copying of readily available works. As a result, accurate, reliable geographies were lacking. To remedy this, he wrote his geography as if it were the first ever written, drawing on geographical facts gathered through his large correspondence network, his own travels and source critical readings of the best, printed sources. In so doing, he sought to establish a new moral economy of knowledge that valued accuracy, impartiality, source criticism and engagement with primary sources.³¹⁶

Büsching’s moral economy was underpinned by his Lutheran faith, and by his belief that geography’s primary aim was to reveal the wonder of God’s creation.³¹⁷ That geography’s physico-theological utility was central to Büsching’s project has been emphasised by several commentators, and this is understandable given the prominence he accorded theological utility in the preface to the Neue Erdbeschreibung.³¹⁸ I contend, however, that a broader reading of Büsching’s work and geographical biography reveal that he took the political value of geography far more seriously than commentators have acknowledged.

Büsching harboured a pragmatic, realist conception of politics and of geography’s political utility. His understanding of politics was consistent with that found in the ‘sciences of the state’ (Staatswissenschaften), which sought to quantitatively and qualitatively measure state power, indicators of which included population, geographical

³¹⁶ Bond, ‘Enlightenment geography in the study’, 68–69. See also Chapter 2 above.
³¹⁷ Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 1 (1754), 25–30. See also Büsching, Einladungsschrift (1754), 2r–2v.
size, military strength, agricultural productivity and balance of trade. Crucially, measuring state power was an endeavour to understand the state empirically. It was an endeavour, moreover, that was shaped by, and sought to descriptively and visually map, the geographies of state power in Europe. Büsching understood the reality of those geographies, and understood that although geography had significant political utility for the state, the value of geography should not be overstated. As he put it, ‘a country has never been conquered through a geographical-political book’. Instead, it was largely the ‘power and wisdom’ of rulers that shaped the security and expansion of states.

Büsching’s conception of the political realm, then, differed from the ‘intellectual’s conception of politics’ found in the work of cosmographer Abraham Ortelius, for whom ‘the realm of politics was one of debate and discussion, drawing on history and theology in the prosecution of doctrinal arguments’. Rather, it was a pragmatic view informed by the empiricism of the state sciences and the geographies of power in Enlightenment Europe.

That Büsching took geography’s political utility seriously, and that his work was interwoven with state power, becomes apparent in the practical making of his geographical project. In what follows, I reveal some of Büsching’s connections to state

319 On the Staatswissenschaften, see, for example, Bödeker, ‘Das staatswissenschaftliche Fächersystem’; Bödeker, ‘On the origins of the “statistical gaze”’; Bödeker, “Europe” in the discourse of the sciences of state; Klueting, Die Lehre von der Macht, especially 31–137; Zande, ‘Statistik and history’.
320 Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 1 (1754), quotes at 31. Cf. Büsching, Einladungsschrift (1754), 2v, where he stressed the primacy of God’s providence in ‘the spread and limitation, the growth and the decline of the power of states’. Büsching’s claims about the limits to geography’s utility were arguably intended, at least in part, as a response to the common fear amongst sovereigns that accurate geographical knowledge, and especially maps, could be damaging to the defence and interests of the state if it fell into the wrong hands.
322 Klueting, Die Lehre von der Macht, 68–69, has also stressed Büsching’s pragmatic orientation to politics.
power and politics by considering the making, aims and reception of his geography of the
German *Reich*.

### 4.3 Getting to know the *Reich*: geography, geo-literacy and patriotism

Although he had written the first volumes of his geography in Copenhagen, in the spring
of 1754 Büsching decided that to complete his description of the *Reich*, it was best to leave
Copenhagen. Composing his geography *in the Reich*, reasoned Büsching, would make it
easier to finance and further cultivate his already large and increasingly costly
geographical correspondence.\(^{323}\) This decision had political as well as practical
significance, especially for his friend Gerhard Friedrich Müller, a historian and German
expatiate in St. Petersburg.\(^{324}\) As Müller explained to Büsching in July 1754, he saw the
geographer's return as a boon to the German nation: ‘It was a pleasure for me to note in
your last letter from Copenhagen that you were about to return to Halle, because it is
only fair that our German fatherland enjoy the fruits of your labour above all others’.\(^{325}\)
But what exactly was this ‘German fatherland’ that Müller felt should benefit from
Büsching’s industriousness?

In the eighteenth century, ‘Germany’ was used as a loose equivalent for the Holy
Roman Empire (the *Reich*), a conglomerate of roughly 360 territories whose relationship

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\(^{323}\) Büsching, *Eigene Lebensgeschichte* (1789), 226; Büsching to G.F. Müller, Göttingen, 15 Sept. 1754, in
Hoffmann (ed.), *Geographie, Geschichte und Bildungswesen*, 54 (Letter 9).

\(^{324}\) On Müller, see Bucher ‘*Von Beschreibung der Sitten*’; Hoffmann, ‘Einleitung’.

\(^{325}\) G.F. Müller to Büsching, St Petersburg, 30 July 1754, in Hoffmann (ed.), *Geographie, Geschichte und
Bildungswesen*, 52 (Letter 8).
to Vienna was defined by diverse political and legal ties (see Figure 11). The term ‘German fatherland’ referred not to a nation-state in the modern sense, but rather to ‘Germany’ as a cultural nation, whose boundaries were roughly coincident with those of the Reich. I say ‘roughly coincident’ because within the 687,000 square kilometres encompassed by the Reich one encountered a mix of cultural groups, not all of which spoke German. As a geo-cultural entity, moreover, the ‘German nation’ and ‘German fatherland’ had meaning only for portions of the learned public. ‘Enlighteners’ (Aufklärer) often identified more strongly with the culture and politics of their hometown and territory, and some saw themselves as citizens of the world. Nevertheless, that the notion of a German nation had meaning for a portion of the educated classes was significant, because it was precisely the educated classes that were the central bearers of political consciousness in the second half of the eighteenth century. Büsching was one such bearer of political consciousness, whose work on the geography of the Reich contributed to the making of the German nation.

Although the aim of Büsching’s Neue Erdbeschreibung was to describe the whole of the known earth, it was the description of his native Germany that concerned him most. As he wrote in the 1752 announcement of his project, ‘My diligence will be brought to

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326 For a recent, wide-ranging overview of culture, government, religion, economy in the Reich, see Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*.
328 The figure for the size of the Reich in the eighteenth century is given in Wilson, ‘The Empire, Austria and Prussia’, 263.
329 Sheehan, ‘What is German history?’, 9.
331 See especially Vierhaus, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, 183–201. See also Sheehan, ‘What is German history?’, 7–9.
bear on Germany in particular’. For him, such diligence was necessary because although the Hohmann Firm had produced useful maps of territories within the Reich, contemporaries still lacked a complete, accurate map of the Reich and a precise, up-to-date chorographical description of its territories. That there was such a paucity of geographical knowledge became apparent to Büsching as he wrote his geography. As he explained to Müller in May 1756, ‘It is hardly believable how little Germany is known within Germany’. In Büsching’s eyes, this lack of knowledge about the Reich was linked to a broader lack of geo-literacy. As he argued in the first part of the Neue Erdbeschreibung, ‘Many people, even educated ones, do not know their birthplace and their fatherland, never-mind other lands’. He found this especially troubling. Indeed, just as the Scottish Geographer Royal Robert Sibbald had argued it was an ‘unpardonable crime’ to lack geographical knowledge of ‘one’s native land’, for Büsching, to lack of knowledge of one’s fatherland was ‘shameful’. His description of the Reich was, in part, a means to overcoming this troubling lack of geo-literacy.

His practical efforts to overcome this lack of geo-literacy and to get to know the Reich became more entangled with state power after he moved to the burgeoning University of Göttingen in the summer of 1754. In Göttingen, his geography of the Reich

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332 Büsching, Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung (1752), 13. His emphasis on Germany is also noted by Bowen, Empiricism and Geographical Thought, 155; Neugebauer, ‘Anton Friedrich Büsching’, 91.
334 Büsching to G.F. Müller, Göttingen, 19 May 1756, in Hoffmann, Geographie, Geschichte, Bildungswesen, 75 (Letter 19). Büsching reiterated this point in the preface to his Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 3 (1765): ‘At the beginning of my geographical work, I neither knew nor believed that despite all of the geographical books [available], the German Reich is still so unfamiliar to us Germans, as I later found through the undertaking of a precise investigation’.
became a state geography through the Hanoverian government’s support. The Hanoverian university supported Büsching’s endeavour by granting him postal privileges, which covered letters and packages up to one pound. In the July 1775 letter notifying the geographer of his privileges, the Hanoverian Privy Council emphasised that his project had public value: ‘His excellency the council president [Gerlach Adolph von Münchhausen] acknowledges full well the use that both the public and the royal [Hanoverian] lands have to expect from the Professor’s planned geographical work’. Precisely how his work might be useful was left unspecified, although the Council likely believed its utility lay in its ability to facilitate more effective administration of local districts, and to make the Hanoverian public more geo-literate. Regardless of the Council’s precise motivations, the postage exemption saved him ‘many hundreds of taler’, because he wrote ‘several thousand letters annually, and received even more’. The Hanoverian government thus played a crucial role in enabling the ‘epistolary geography’ that underpinned Büsching’s endeavour to get to know—and make known—the geographies of the Reich and German nation.

337 With the Act of Settlement of 1701, the German Electress of Hanover, Sophia, and her Protestant descendants, became heirs to the British throne. In 1714, Sophia’s son Georg Ludwig was crowned George I, who served as both king of Great Britain and as Elector of Hanover in the Holy Roman Empire. The Hanoverian and British crowns were divided in 1837. For an overview of this relationship, see Riotte, ‘Britain and Hanover’, here 354.
340 Büsching, *Eigene Lebensgeschichte* (1789), 311, 319, quote at 311; see also Büsching, *Neue Erdbeschreibung*, vol. 3 (1765), iv.
341 On epistolary geography, see Bond, ‘Enlightenment geography in the study’, 70–72; Withers, ‘Writing in geography’s history’.
The Hanoverian government supported Büsching’s project to get to know the
Reich in still another way, namely by facilitating his chorographical survey of the
Hanoverian lands. Like Robert Sibbald’s chorographical surveys of Scotland, Büsching’s
was a ‘survey from above’, because reports were solicited from local district officials rather
than subjects of lower station.342 For Büsching, questionnaires were a crucial means to
gathering accurate, up-to-date geographical information, precisely the sort of information
he had criticised past geographers for failing to provide.343 To assist with his survey, the
Hanoverian government sent letters to district officials that asked them to describe each
district’s ‘size, location and natural products’, its ‘villages and church districts’, and its
forms of agriculture and foodstuffs.344 Büsching also sent questionnaires directly to local
officials, and in both instances, the reports he received were of ‘very mixed’ quality.345
Nevertheless, Büsching was grateful for the assistance from Hanoverian district officials
and the Privy Council, because they had contributed to his effort to make the Electorate
of Hanover a more ‘readable’ place within the broader geography of the Reich.346

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342 See Withers, ‘How Scotland came to know itself’, 379–82, quote at 381.
343 Bond, ‘Enlightenment geography in the study’, 69; Büsching, Kurzgefasste Staats-Beschreibung (1752),
6–7; Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 1 (1754), 1–12; Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 3 (1765), iv–v.
344 Büsching, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 313; Büsching to G.F. Müller, Göttingen, 26 Oct. 1755, in
Hoffmann (ed.), Geographie, Geschichte und Bildungswesen, 69. For an example of the requests sent out, see
‘G.A. von Münchhausen to All districts in the principalities of Callenberg, Lüneburg, Grubenhagen, and
Lauenburg, and the earldoms of Hoya and Diepholt’, Hanover, 20 Oct. 1755, Hann. 74, Medingen, Letter 54,
Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Haupstaatsarchiv Hannover (hereafter NLHH). See also ‘Acta, betr. Die
Behüf der veranstandenden Büschingschen Erdbeschreibung über die Verhältnisse des Amts Ahlden
mitgetheilten Nachrichten’, Hann. 74 Ahlden Nr. 20, NLHH; and Hann. 74 Oldenstadt, Nr 45, NLHH,
which contains material relating to the description of the Distric of Bodenteich and includes
correspondence between Büsching and local officials.
345 Büsching, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 311–13.
346 Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 3 (1765), unpaginated dedication and Preface, iii.
In Büsching’s eyes, his geography had significance not only for Hanover’s coming to know itself, but also for the German nation’s coming to know its own unwieldy geographies. For him, his effort to get to know the Reich had patriotic significance. Indeed, his work was motivated, in part, by a desire to serve that geo-cultural entity known as the ‘German nation’, whose imagined and material geographies were very much actively shaped by the writing, lecturing and teaching of Büsching and his fellow Aufklärer. This was evident in his dedication to his geography, where he assured those who contributed geographical reports that their work would be used for the ‘honour and utility of our German fatherland’. It was evident in his hope that his description would prove ‘helpful both for the higher estates of the Reich and for experienced and skilled persons’. It was evident, moreover, in his proud—though not uncritical—remarks about the prominent status of German scholarship. Indeed, the celebrated geographer harboured a sense of pride in Germany as a cultural nation, and his patriotic pride—expressed in his political languages—motivated him to describe the Reich anew.

347 See Vierhaus, Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert, 183–201.
348 Büsching, Neue Erdbeschreibung, vol. 3 (1765), unpaginated dedication. On his handwritten sources, see ibid., xli–liv.
349 Ibid., viii.
350 Ibid., 34–40. ‘In terms of scholarship, the Germans now contest the advantage of all peoples’, Büsching declared proudly, although he acknowledged the German ‘obsession with writing’ (Schreibsucht) had produced ‘a great deal of mediocre and terrible work’ (ibid., 34).
Figure 10. Title page of Büsching’s *Neue Erdbeschreibung*, vol. 3, 4th ed. (Hamburg, 1765), which included his description of the *Reich*. Digitised by GoogleBooks. In the title image, the text in the banner above the depicted city is the first part of Psalm 111:2, which reads ‘Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them’ (New International Version).
Büsching’s fellow Aufklärer believed his geography had patriotic value. As one contemporary observed in a 1757 review of his geography, with his ‘effortful description of this great and powerful state [the German Reich]’, Büsching has ‘achieved a work through which he has done an infinite service for his country people, and increased immensely the esteem for himself that the previous two volumes of his *Erdbeschreibung* have already brought’. Similarly, the patriotic worth of Büsching’s geography was emphasised by one of the leading historians and supporters of the Reich, namely Johann Jacob Moser. As Moser remarked in his *On Germany and its General State Constitution* (Stuttgart, 1766), ‘Herr Doctor Büsching has, in the third part of this Geography, described Germany in three volumes in such an excellent and exact way that the entire German nation should, in view of this, erect a monument to him’. In the eyes of Moser and the anonymous reviewer, then, the famed geographer’s endeavour to reveal the geographies of the Reich and German nation was fundamentally patriotic.

Although Büsching valued such patriotic praise, he had hoped his project might receive the ultimate acclaim that any political geography could hope for, namely the backing of the sovereign. To this end, Büsching dedicated the 1771 edition of his geography to Emperor Joseph II, a copy of which he sent to Vienna. In an accompanying note, he ‘kindly requested’ that the emperor ‘take on the geography of Germany’, an ambitious endeavour that, according to Büsching, previous emperors had passed on and

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353 Moser, *Von Teutschland und dessen Staats-Verfassung überhaupt* (1766), 24.
left for Joseph II. From the emperor and estates of the Reich, Büsching hoped to receive ‘a salary of a few thousand Gulden, postal privileges throughout all of Germany and...accurate geographical and topographical reports of the imperial lands’, which would allow him to devote the rest of his years to getting to know, and making known, the geographies of the Reich.  

In the months that followed, he was made to believe that he might receive postal privileges throughout the Reich, although he never heard this directly from Joseph II or his cabinet. At the urging of his friend Frederick von Taube, a government official in Vienna, he sent a second request to the emperor. This request was to be delivered into the Joseph II’s hands by his cabinet secretary Weber, who had once told Taube that he often found Büsching’s geography lying on the emperor’s table, and asserted that Joseph II could often be found reading from it. With Büsching’s request in hand, Weber went to speak with the emperor. As Büsching recounted, Weber ‘entered into the room precisely as the emperor was reading a part of my Erdbeschreibung’. The emperor was told that the imperial court had ‘made the author [of the Neue Erdbeschreibung] hopeful about an imperial postal privilege’. Joseph II acknowledged this, yet revealed that the prince of Thurn and Taxis had decided granting such privileges would create too great a financial burden. Upon hearing this, Weber chose not to give the geographer’s letter to the

354 Büsching, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 589–90.
355 Ibid., 591.
emperor. Büsching’s bid had failed. Instead of the title ‘imperial geographer’, Büsching received only a gold medal worth 25 Ducats.

Büsching’s bid could be interpreted as having nothing to do with politics or patriotism, and everything to do with a desire to be released from his directorial duties at the Graues Kloster, so that he could devote all his time to geographical endeavours. To interpret his bid in this way, however, would be to underestimate not only his commitment to education and pedagogy, but also the political significance he attributed to his venture to get to know the Reich and make its geographies known to the German nation. That he attributed such political significance to his geography was evident in his patriotic political languages. Yet, it also was evident in his admission that his attempt to secure patronage at the imperial scale was one of the few calculated schemes he ever undertook. One might further object, however, that his bid was motivated by a desire to bolster his reputation, but this interpretation also misses the mark, because by the time he appealed to Vienna in the early 1770s, he had already established himself as one of Europe’s foremost geographers. To be sure, his failed bid to secure imperial patronage, like his broader effort to reveal the geographies of the Reich and German nation, was an ambitious and fundamentally political endeavour.

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356 Ibid., 590–91.
357 Two years later, Büsching still dreamed he might achieve his goal of becoming imperial geographer. As he remarked in a 1773 review of Moser’s Staatsrecht, he was thankful for Moser’s high praise for his geography of Germany, although he wished instead ‘and most strongly, to receive a secure, yearly salary of a few thousand Thaler, with which I can bring my Erdbeschreibung, and especially the description of Germany, to the greatest possible degree of completion’. See WN 1 (6 Sept. 1773), 287 (incorrectly numbered as 278).
358 On his career as an educator, see Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 205–22.
359 Büsching, Eigene Lebensgeschichte (1789), 589.
Büsching’s attempted bid reveals that the project of getting to know the *Reich* had little support at highest imperial levels. In Vienna, there was seemingly little will to produce an accurate, overarching geography of the *Reich*. That Joseph II lacked interest in ‘taking on the geography of the *Reich*’ certainly had to do with his prioritisation of the interests of the Habsburg lands (see Figure X). It had little to do with an express lack of interest in geography, because there was very much a ‘geographical consciousness’ at work amongst Joseph II, his co-regent and mother Maria Theresa, and state chancellor Wenzel Anton Kaunitz.
Figure 11. The House of Habsburg – Territories in Europe, 1772. Yellow shading designates territories acquired by the Habsburgs after the first division of Poland in 1772. The red line designates the borders of the Reich. Grey shading designates the Duchy of Tuscany, which fell to Leopold, son of Maria Theresa and Emperor Franz I, after the death of the latter in 1765. Source: Detail from 'Haus Habsburg – Territorien in Europa 1772', map by A. Kunz and J.R. Moeschel, and explanation from the map's accompanying description in Digital Atlas on the History of Europe, Institute for European History (IEG), atlas-europa.de

At the Viennese court, the Habsburg government poured over maps and geographical reports to support decisions concerning imperial reform efforts, diplomacy, war and territorial management, and they actively supported geographical projects in the Habsburg lands for political ends, including the Josephinische Aufnahme, an ambitious
attempt to survey the Habsburg lands. In short, Vienna had much interest in getting to know the Habsburg lands, but seemingly little interest in getting to know the Reich and the ‘German nation’. Büsching’s work, then, was entangled with politics through its connection to one of the most powerful states in central Europe, namely Austria. Yet, his work was politicised further through its links to the other most powerful state in central Europe, namely Prussia (Figure 12).

On the geographical consciousness in Vienna, see Veres, ‘Constructing imperial spaces’; Veres, ‘Putting Transylvania on the map’. On pouring over maps, see Beales, Joseph II, 392, 408; Wolff, Inventing Eastern Europe, 148.
4.4 Periodical geography and politics in Brandenburg-Prussia

Büsching’s Wöchentliche Nachrichten and Magazin für die neue Historie und Geographie appeared in the wake of the Seven Years War, when the periodical press was becoming increasingly politicised. This politicisation both reflected and shaped a growing political
consciousness amongst the learned class.\textsuperscript{361} This consciousness had been heightened by population increases, agricultural expansion, crises in craft industries, increased government intervention in the economy, the first partition of Poland (1772–1773), Prussian-Austrian dualism, and political unrest in Geneva, the British colonies in North America and in France.\textsuperscript{362} Such developments were reported on and evaluated in literary journals such as Christoph Martin Wieland’s \textit{Teutscher Merkur} (German Mercury, 1773–1810), and in the increasing number of historical and political journals, including Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach’s widely circulated \textit{Politische Journal} (Political Journal, Hamburg, 1781–1804), and August Ludwig von Schlözer’s \textit{StatsAnzeigen} (Göttingen, 1783–93) and \textit{Briefwechsel meist statistischen Inhalts} (Correspondence mostly concerning Statistical Material, Göttingen, 1776–82).\textsuperscript{363} Collectively, the editorial practices of Schlözer, Schirach and others shifted the journal from ‘a purveyor of material for political debate to a participant in that debate’, and this gave the press a decidedly political character.\textsuperscript{364}

\textsuperscript{361} Bödeker, ‘Journals and public opinion’. See also Vierhaus, \textit{Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert}, 183–201; Vierhaus, \textit{Deutschland im Zeitalter des Absolutismus}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Göttingen, 1984), 188–89.


\textsuperscript{363} See Bödeker, ‘Journals and public opinion’; Hellmuth and Piereth, ‘Germany, 1760–1815’. On Schirach, see Popkin, ‘Political communication’.

Büsching did not view his journals as explicitly political, but rather as a means for communicating useful material to enthusiasts of geography and history. His *Magazin* included reports on the history and geography of the Russian Empire, geographical descriptions of Spain, descriptions of cities and principalities in the *Reich*, reports on the finances and population of various cities and states, and travel accounts. Much of this material was solicited from scholars and government officials, including Gerhard Friedrich Müller in St. Petersburg and Friedrich von Taube in Vienna.365 His learned

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newspaper, the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*, contained reviews of books, treatises and pamphlets concerning geography, history, politics and theology, reviews of new maps and atlases, and discussion of government reports on Prussia’s domestic and foreign affairs. Büsching generated much of this content as editor-author.\(^{366}\)

Although he did not frame his periodicals as political, they were nevertheless entangled with politics in several ways and contributed to the politicisation of the press. In the first place, Büsching’s journals were entangled with power through the censorship privileges he enjoyed. His periodicals had been freed from the purview of the relatively liberal censor that Frederick II had installed in 1767, and were instead reviewed by Ewald von Hertzberg, Frederick’s cabinet minister.\(^ {367}\) Hertzberg, an *homme de lettres* and student of the power of states in his own right, was impressed by and supported Büsching’s geographical work.\(^ {368}\) Hertzberg provided the geographer with access to government reports for his journals, along with material that assisted Büsching’s work on his biography of Frederick II.\(^ {369}\) As Büsching’s quasi-censor, Hertzberg likely demanded few changes to the material slated for publication, because Büsching would have rarely, if

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\(^{366}\) See Chapter 2. On the framing of his periodicals, see WN 1 (27 Dec. 1773) Preface, 4–5; *Magazin für die neue Historie und Geographie* 1 (1767), Preface (dated 24 Apr. 1767), 21–3v.  
\(^{367}\) WN 15 (31 Dec 1787), 420–24, at 424 ['Conclusion to these weekly reports']. On Prussian censorship in this period, see Möller, ‘Wie aufgeklärt war Preußen?’, 192–95; Sieg, *Staatsdienst, Staatsdenken und Dienstgesinnung*, 288–90.  
\(^{368}\) After Frederick II died, Hertzberg undertook reforms of the Berlin Academy and nominated several new scholars for the king’s consideration, including Büsching. For Hertzberg, Büsching was ‘the most celebrated geographer of our time, and could be of use to the Academy’ (*le plus célèbre géographe de nôtre temps, et pourra être utile à l’Academie*). Cited in Klueting, *Die Lehre von der Macht*, 237. Büsching requested from Hertzberg control over the Academy’s geographical department and a salary of 1,000 Taler, which would allow him to devote all his time to geographical work. He knew, however, the Academy would not meet his demands, and it did not. Büsching, *Eigene Lebensgeschichte* (1789), 584–85; Hoffmann, *Anton Friedrich Büsching*, 116.  
ever, produced content that Hertzberg might have viewed as damaging to Prussia’s interests. Indeed, like many Aufklärer, the celebrated geographer was a monarchist and supporter of ‘reform absolutist’ governments, including those of Frederick II and Katherine II, who he viewed as agents for the enlightened reform of society.370 His support for Frederick II and Prussian policies, for example, is evident throughout the pages of the Wöchentliche Nachrichten.371 Through his support for the Prussian monarch and his friendship with Hertzberg, then, Büsching’s periodicals were closely tied to political power in Prussia.

His periodicals had political character, moreover, because he used them to help Prussia get to know its own geographies. He supported this process primarily by printing statistical reports. Indeed, he reported on the numbers and geographical distribution of births, deaths and marriages in Berlin, the margrave of Brandenburg, and Prussia’s annexed territories, including Silesia.372 His motivation for printing such reports had to do, in part, with a sense of patriotism. He was not a native Prussian, but as a subject in Frederick II’s domain, he felt a duty to study and reveal Prussia’s geographies to the learned public.373 Hertzberg assisted the geographer’s efforts by providing him access to official statistical reports on various places within the kingdom. In this way, Büsching was

370 See Büsching, Character Friedrichs des zweiten (1788); Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 254; Panenius, ‘Das preußisch-russische Verhältnis’ 108, 110. On the strong and pervasive ties that bound Aufklärer and government, see, for example, Blanning, Reform and Revolution in Mainz, 1–45; Vierhaus, Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert, 186, 194–98.
371 See, for example, WN 2 (17 Mar. 1774), 89–91; WN 7 (1779), 91; WN 12 (9 Feb. 1784), 41–42; WN 8 (1 Feb. 1779), 33–40; WN 8 (31 May 1779), 173–78.
373 See Büsching (ed.), Vollständige Topographie der Mark Brandenburg (1775) Preface, 5v, ‘As a geographer, I was obligated to devote a part of my special effort to the margrave of Brandenburg in which I live’.
entangled with politics and power through both his power line to the palace and his patriotically motivated geo-statistical reports.

Büsching’s publishing of geo-statistical reports was crucial for the opening up of geographical knowledge in Prussia. Frederick had long opposed the publication of ‘accurate geographical and political reports’ concerning his lands, both in the form of maps and descriptions. That the king saw geographical knowledge as something to be closely guarded was symbolised in his placing of the royal map department above his bedroom. It was evident in his decision to prohibit the Nuremberg-based Hohmann map firm from selling maps of Silesia until 1750, and to prohibit afterwards the improvement of Silesia maps through fieldwork. Until Büsching arrived in Berlin, moreover, population and marriage statistics for the capital city and the margrave of Brandenburg had ‘not once appeared in the Berlin newspapers’. He had garnered the courage to publish such geo-statistics only after Frederick II had approved the publication of his Complete Topography of the Margrave of Brandenburg (Berlin, 1775), an act that signalled Frederick had begun to loosen his grip on knowledge of his territories. Büsching was not content to be the only author publishing such material, however. Rather, he also sought to ‘pave the way for other local authors to their own similar

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374 Büsching, Character Friedrichs des zweiten (1788), quote at 225. On Frederick’s geographical secrecy, see also Fieseler, Der vermessene Staat, 54–59; Greve, ‘Friedrich Wilhelm Carl von Schmettau’, 73.
375 Schlögl, Der planvolle Staat, 1.
376 Büsching, Character Friedrichs des zweiten (1788), 225.
377 Ibid., 225.
378 See also Büsching, Character Friedrichs des zweiten (1788), 225, where he noted he was further emboldened when Frederick allowed the publication of Ludewig Wilhelm Brüggeman (ed.), Ausführliche Beschreibung des gegenwärtigen Zustandes des Königl. Preußischen Herzogthums Vor- und Hinter-Pommern, 2 vols. (Stettin, 1779–84), and of Johann Friedrich Goldbeck, Vollständige Topographie des Königreichs Preussen, 2 vols. (Königsberg, Leipzig, Marienweder, 1785–89).
undertakings, and to embolden them’. What is more, in paving the way for the publication of geo-statistical knowledge in Prussia, he helped create the very possibility for the learned public to get to know the kingdom’s geographies.

4.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have revealed several ways in which geographical practice was politicised in the German Enlightenment. Geography was politicised through geographical books and education that sought to instil a love for individual German states and for the Reich, and sought to cultivate enlightened students and citizens. By teaching geography to the emerging middle classes and nobility, geography instructors and authors helped maintain the prevailing ordered society. I have argued that Büsching’s geography of the Reich was fundamentally political, because it was motivated by his devotion to Germany as a cultural nation, and by his desire to improve the geo-literacy of the learned German public and thereby inspire greater love for the ‘German nation’ and for the Creator. It was political because he received financial and logistical support from the Hanoverian state, which believed his geography had patriotic value for ‘his majesty’s royal lands’ in the Electorate of Hanover. I have argued, moreover, that Büsching’s geographical project was politicised through his Berlin periodicals, wherein he printed geo-statistical reports on Prussia that began to reveal the kingdom’s geographies to the

379 Contemporaries recognised the significant of Büsching’s move. In an anonymous review of the first two volumes of Büsching’s Magazin, the reviewer noted, ‘this magazine offers noteworthy contributions to modern geography and the study of the state, and among this material is much that had been state secrets’. Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek, appendix to vols. 1–12, part 1 (1771), 19–36, here 19. On journalism and state secrets, see also Bödeker, ‘On the origins of the “statistical gaze”’, 190–92.
Prussian public. What is more, he brought formerly protected geographical knowledge into the emerging public sphere, encouraged others to do the same, and thereby helped transform the learned public’s relationship to geographical knowledge.

My discussion of the German case has broader significance for understanding early modern geography. First, it underscores the diversity of geographies and aims that shaped how geographical practice was deployed in the service of state and nation building. In contrast to Scotland and France, where visual and descriptive geography were central to the nation and empire building, geography in the German case was primarily a means to building and getting to know regional states such as Hanover and Prussia. Second, the chapter reveals a distinction between the German and American cases. According to Brückner, the early American Republic witnessed a ‘programmatic diffusion of geographical literatures that introduced the nation as a material and inherently readable form’. Such a diffusion was absent in the German case. Büsching did introduce the Reich as ‘a material and inherently readable form’, and its geography was taught in various secondary schools and universities such as Göttingen, but such practices fell short of a concerted diffusion of knowledge. In short, examples from the German case support the claim that, despite shared concerns with patriotism and getting to know one’s nation, geography’s role in the making of the state was far from uniform, but rather shaped by diverse aims, biographies and political geographies. In this way, the chapter supports claims for the need to place geography’s relationship to state power in the ‘print spaces’ of geography books and journals, in practices of compilation and epistolary geography, and

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in the geographical biographies that shaped geographers’ desire and ability to establish power lines to the palace.

My discussion also has significance for discussions about the history of German identity. Above all, it reveals the need to account for the ways geographical practice expressed and helped shape local, regional and imperial political identities. Indeed, historiography on Germany has emphasised the significance of the fragmented political geography of the Reich and its lack of emotional and practical significance for wide swathes of ‘Germans’, and the corresponding significance of local and regional identities. Such geographies are certainly crucial, but as I have shown in this chapter, geographical practices, including the production of geographical descriptions, geo-statistical reports, elementary geography texts and geographical instruction, were part of the making of the Reich and its territories as material, readable geographies. I have provided only a partial account of how those geographies were made readable and meaningful, but I have shown that such an account is not only possible, but can throw valuable light on the historical geographies of the Reich and the ‘German nation’.
Chapter 5
Conclusions

In the late 1780s, Büsching’s health began to decline. His handwriting, already poor when he was in good health, became almost illegible. His work slowed. He could no longer sustain the conscientious and painstaking work routine he had established as a young boy working for his father in Stadthagen. In 1787, he ceased to edit the Wöchentliche Nachrichten, and the following year witnessed the last issue of his celebrated Magazin. Six years later, on 28 May 1793, Büsching passed away in his Berlin home.381

Drawing on the three moments in Büsching’s life, I have argued that Büsching’s geographical project was central in shaping the geographies in and of the Aufklärung. At the same time, I have sought to throw light on the geographies in and of the wider Enlightenment. In particular, I have tried to illuminate something of the geographies of Enlightenment exploration, print culture and politics. I have demonstrated that Büsching’s case reveals that ‘sensitivity to the spaces of a life’ not only ‘open[es] up new and revealing ways of taking the measure of a life’, but also the measure of the wider cultural, political and religious geographies at work in a given period.382 I have made several other arguments, moreover, which merit brief consideration in closing.

In the first place, I have argued that understanding the social constitution of the study is crucial for understanding Enlightenment geography. I have demonstrated this by

381 Hoffmann, Anton Friedrich Büsching, 117–19.
382 Livingstone, Putting Science in its Place, 183.
discussing the relations between knowledge of the study and the field in the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia. As I have shown, the geographies of scientific practice that mattered for the expedition extended far beyond the myriad settlements, deserts, rivers and mountains traversed by Niebuhr and his colleagues in ‘the East’. Indeed, the geographies of the expedition stretched to include the studies of Michaelis and Büsching, which served as crucial analytic sites for the production of geographical knowledge about ‘the East’. In producing knowledge in the study, Michaelis’s and Büsching’s aim was not to demonstrate the superiority of study-based knowledge over field-based knowledge, but rather to integrate the two in productive ways that would allow scholars to produce the most reliable and credible knowledge concerning distant geographies. This was not easy, however. Attempts to direct the travellers’ vision from the study were hindered by logistical failures, the death of Niebuhr’s colleagues in the field and Büsching’s move to St. Petersburg and work commitments. Yet, Michaelis and Büsching played a crucial role in evaluating and circulating Niebuhr’s geographical accounts. For them, Niebuhr’s field knowledge was significant not only because it illuminated geographies little known to Europeans, but also because it bolstered the credibility of their study-bound work on the geographies of Asia. Niebuhr’s accounts helped legitimate the study as an analytic site where credible knowledge could be produced.

In the case of the Danish Expedition, I have only gestured towards the ways power and politics shaped the expedition’s geographies. Yet, such questions merit further scrutiny if we want to better understand the expedition’s relation to broader constellations of colonialism, power and geography. The expedition has received less
critical scrutiny than other Enlightenment expeditions, and has often been framed as a purely scientific expedition. Matters of power, politics and mercantilism were certainly at work in the expedition context, but scholars have done little to critically investigate and foreground such themes. Some attention has been paid to questions of Orientalism, although far more work needs to be done to fully understand whether and how certain forms of Orientalist thinking coloured how Niebuhr, Michaelis, Büsching and others involved in the expedition envisioned ‘the East’. Such work needs to be framed in relation to the literature on eighteenth and nineteenth-century German Orientalism, and to broader discussions of Orientalism within geography and related fields. Further study of the significance of Orientalism within the expedition would not only throw greater light on the geographies of power that shaped the expedition, but would also reveal something of the diversity of the broader geographies of power that have moulded cultures of exploration.

In the second place, I have shown that understanding what I have termed ‘periodical geography’ is crucial for understanding the wider print culture of Enlightenment geography. Periodical geography is particularly important because the making of periodicals was fundamentally tied to questions of epistemic credit and trust.

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383 This view is evident, for example, in Baack, *Undying Curiosity*; Beck, *Große Reisende*, 92–117.
Büsching’s periodical geography was especially significant, I have argued, because it sought to reconfigure the trust relations that defined the practice of geography. Building on claims in the first chapter, in the second I showed that whilst geography’s moral economy of knowledge had been largely rooted in trust in past authorities, Büsching established a new moral economy based on the distrust of such authorities, and on news ways managing trust in testimony through practices of source criticism. More broadly, I have argued that the very periodicity and materiality of periodicals made geographical authorship and readership more dynamic and public, and in so doing transformed the character of geographical print culture in the later eighteenth century.

In the third place, I have revealed something of the political character of geography in the Aufklärung. I have shown that geography was politicised through inscriptive practices of authorship, epistolary geography, learned journalism, mapping and education. In so doing, I have focussed on the practical making and political content of Büsching’s geography of the Reich and his geographical periodicals. Crucially, I have shown that Büsching’s geographical work was intended to facilitate Germany’s ‘coming to know itself’ as a cultural nation, and to facilitate the Electorate of Hanover’s and Prussia’s getting to know themselves as states. For Büsching, the description of the Reich was at once a means to overcoming a troubling lack of geo-literacy amongst the learned public, and a means to engendering a sense of pride in ‘Germany’ as a cultural nation. In Berlin, moreover, he sought to aid Prussia in coming to know itself as a great power, and he was motivated to do so, in part, by a sense of territorial patriotism. He supported Prussia’s getting to know itself by printing geo-statistical reports that revealed Prussia’s population
and political geographies to the public. Furthermore, I have argued that Büsching’s publication of such information was doubly political, because prior to the 1770s, journalists who had access to such information had refrained from publishing it for fear of government reprisal. By publishing geo-statistical reports, then, Büsching helped create the very possibility for the learned public to get to know Prussia’s geographies.

My discussion of the political character of Enlightenment geography makes only a small cut into a rather broad theme. Far more could be done to situate my discussion of geography and cultural nationalism within the literature on Johann Gottfried Herder, who some have argued was central to developing a notion of cultural nationalism in the German states.\footnote{On Herder and nationalism, see, for example, Adler, ‘Nation: Johann Gottfried Herders Umgang mit Konzept und Begriff’; Barnard, \textit{Herder on Nationality}; Eggel \textit{et al.}, ‘Was Heder a nationalist?’; Schmidt, ‘Cultural nationalism in Herder’; Spencer, \textit{Heder’s Political Thought}, Ch. 5.} In terms of Prussia, more work could be done to uncover the various ways that geographical thought and practice shaped Prussia’s emergence as a great power. In addition, more could be done to situate Büsching’s geo-statistical reports in relation to the further development and use of statistics in the nineteenth-century. One scholar has recently argued that in the nineteenth-century German context, statistics and mapping became linked to questions of national identity, culture and race, and it is worth considering whether and how Büsching’s geo-statistical reports on Prussia fit into this narrative, and indeed broader narratives about the interwoven development of geography and state power in Germany.\footnote{See Hansen, \textit{Mapping the Germans}.} Similarly, more could be done to investigate whether and
how Büsching’s use of geo-statistical reports fits into the development of ‘biopolitics’ and techniques for managing and measuring populations.\footnote{388}

In the foregoing pages I have provided only a partial account of Büsching’s life geographies, and of the geographies in and of the Aufklärung. Far more could be said about the practical making of the Neue Erdbeschreibung and his periodicals, about the political character of his project and about his personal ties to power. More could be said about his connection to wider cultures of Enlightenment exploration, including his connection to the Cook voyages and the search for the Northwest Passage. More could be done to situate Büsching’s work in relation to geography in Britain, France, America and Russia. Nevertheless, in placing Büsching’s project in relation to wider geographies of exploration, print culture and politics, this study has begun to reveal something of the rich geographies that characterised the Aufklärung and Büsching’s life as an Aufklärer.

\footnote{388 On biopolitics, see, for example, Elden, ‘Governmentality, calculation, territory’; Legg, ‘Foucault’s population geographies’; Rabinow, French Modern.}
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