



CHRISTIANITIES IN THE TRANS-ATLANTIC WORLD

# Legacies of David Cranz's '*Historie von Grönland*' (1765)

*Edited by*  
Felicity Jensz  
Christina Petterson

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# Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World

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Felicity Jensz • Christina Petterson  
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Grönland' (1765)

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Münster, Germany  
Canberra, ACT, Australia

Felicity Jensz  
Christina Petterson

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# Introduction: More than the Sum of Its Parts: David Cranz's *Historie von Grönland*

*Felicity Jenz and Christina Petterson*

In 1938, the *Sun* newspaper in Sydney, Australia, published a report from its special representative in London, England. It stated:

When British troops occupied Philadelphia in 1777–1778, they made good use of the Public Library.

When they left, only one book borrowed by them – Cranz's "History of Greenland" (two volumes)—had not been returned. It had been borrowed by Major Trent. In 1876, however, the library received from England the missing volumes.<sup>1</sup>

The newspaper article concluded by stating that this was a world record for the longest overdue library book. This extract from an Australian

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newspaper on the fate of an English translation of a German book on missionary observations of Greenland borrowed by an English major during the American Revolutionary War perfectly illustrates the global impact and broad allure of the book under scrutiny in this edited collection. David Cranz's 1765 *Historie von Grönland*, as the German title read, was published at a time of increased European expansion into the non-European world and at a time in which European curiosity for information from distant places was awakened through the genre of travel literature.<sup>2</sup> The *Historie von Grönland* thus sat amongst other travel literature of the day, as opening up the horizons of knowledge for the European armchair reader. Images of icebergs, fantastical fish, and the curious customs of the Greenlanders pricked the imagination of those who read it. Yet it was also a book steeped in Christian theology and missiology with Cranz also describing the 30-year history of the Moravian mission in Greenland, providing impetus for evangelical Christians to discuss issues surrounding "heathen" missions. Initially published in the eighteenth century, aspects of Cranz's book complemented ideas circulating in Europe in the Age of Enlightenment, when the collection, collation, systemization, and acquisition of new knowledge underscored the value of rational thought. Both scientific and travel literature became increasingly popular throughout the eighteenth century as a means of systematizing the world through scientific knowledge as well as an indication of the imperial reach of European countries. Scientific classification systems were revolutionized in the eighteenth century, as exemplified through the Swedish botanist, Carl Linné's *Systema Naturae* (*The System of Nature*), published in 1735. This system was the basis of classification of all plants known on earth, which could be extended to include those not yet known to Europeans, with later versions extending the classification system. In the same year as Linné's first classification system, a large international scientific expedition under French leadership took on the challenge of determining what shape the earth was, sending out scientific explorers to places such as Lapland and South America to collect measurements. These two events, so argues Mary Louise Pratt, were part of a "new planetary consciousness," yet, as she notes, were also part of the European Eurocentrism and belief in the ability of Europeans to control, measure, and conquer the world and its people.<sup>3</sup> Science and exploration underscored many of the imperial voyages undertaken by the French, British, and Dutch of the time, to note just the newest arrivals onto the imperial stage, following the sea exploration undertaken by the Portuguese and Spanish from the sixteenth century. Europeans travelled with trading companies, such as the British *East India*



*Company* (established from 1600) or the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company) from 1602 to places beyond their horizons bringing back objects, people, plants, insects, spices, and knowledge. The colonization of North America, South America, and Oceania and the exploration of China and the Middle East was documented and disseminated in travel texts. Upper-class young European men of the period discovered and explored the ancient European world through the Grand Tour, popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The collection, classification, and displaying of non-European objects and the dissemination and discussion of knowledge for non-European places were deemed part of the educated European upper class, demonstrating the privileges associated with wealth and travel. Yet this was by no means just a European project, for without Indigenous peoples to provide, translate, exchange, and mediate various forms of knowledge and ways of knowing between cultures, the production of knowledge networks between Europe and other parts of the world could not have occurred. Indigenous people were not passive suppliers of information, rather they were often selective about the information they supplied to Europeans and incorporated, alternated, or rejected European knowledge into their own understanding of the world.<sup>4</sup> One group that collaborated with Indigenous people to provide knowledge about foreign parts of the world were missionaries, who often drew upon their sustained close contact with Indigenous peoples to write texts that would be used by ethnologists and other scientists in the expansion of European knowledge.

In the eighteenth century, there was an emerging tradition amongst Pietists to write and publish copious amounts of information, including that relating to their missions, many of which were newly established in the footsteps of European colonial expansion into the non-European world. Cranz belonged to a religious group inspired by Pietism, called the Moravian Church (in German, *Brüdergemeine* or *Brüder-Unität*). Like the Danish-Halle (later Danish-English-Halle Mission [DEHM]), the Moravians also sent out missionaries to convert “heathen” to Christianity in many distant places, drawing inspiration from the DEHM. The DEHM had begun around the turn of the eighteenth century to send out missionaries, particularly to Tranquebar (current Tharangambadi, Tamil Nadu, India). From 1710, texts describing the missionary work in newspapers and a specifically established periodical, the *Hallesche Berichte*, and newspaper reports began appearing to encourage European audiences to support the mission work.<sup>5</sup> Some of these reports were also translated

from German into English and published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). Such texts facilitated the dissemination of information about Protestant missionary work in foreign lands, foreign people, nature, and landscapes with the aim of gaining support for further extension of missionary work.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century, there were numerous forms of missionary publications circulating, providing edifying and scientific information to audiences beyond immediate religious groups.<sup>7</sup> The Jesuits had a large number of periodicals circulating, including the *Lettres édifiantes* and the *Neue Weltbote*. From Halle emerged the *Hallesche Berichte* and the *Neue Hallesche Berichte*. In England, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts printed annual sermons, and the Moravians had established their missionary periodical, *Periodical Accounts*, in 1790, which in turn inspired the establishment of other missionary societies.<sup>8</sup> In pietistic circles, information on missions was as one form of edifying and informative material in the Age of Enlightenment.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Age of Enlightenment has often been associated with the secularization of scientific thought, as recent scholarship has argued, this was by no means always the case.<sup>10</sup> Deeply religious people could also contribute to scientific debates, and scientists could also maintain their religious beliefs. In the context of reports on Greenland, some of the first popular narratives of Greenland and its inhabitants came from the pens of missionaries, particularly from that of the Danish-Norwegian Lutheran missionary, Hans Egede. His descriptions of Greenland were published in 1738 and expanded in 1741, under the title of *Det gamle Grønlands nye perlustration, eller Naturel-historie, og beskrivelse over det gamle Grønlands situation, luft, temperament og beskaffenhed*.<sup>11</sup> This monograph was also translated into Dutch, French, and English, providing a broad audience with some of the first detailed information about Greenland. Egede's book was a call to "restore" a past Christian society in Greenland, and as such it was a call to the Danish Crown to increase its commercial interests there through suggesting a past glorious Scandinavian history.<sup>12</sup> Egede's book was also a substantial resource for Cranz, as several of the articles in this present collection note. Cranz also referred to Hans Egede's own journal and that of his missionary son Poul, who both had their journals edited and published for public consumption. Egedes' writings were part of a flurry of publishing on Greenland in the 1740s, primarily by the missionaries Hans and Poul Egede, but also by Hans' second son, Niels, who was a merchant.<sup>13</sup> The mayor of Hamburg, Johann Anderson, also

partook of this broader trend of exploring the North Atlantic through text, publishing a book in 1746 based on the accounts of sailors' reports entitled *Nachrichten von Island, Grönland und der Strasse Davis* (*Reports from Iceland, Greenland, and the Davis Strait*).<sup>14</sup> In this book, Anderson began the almost 150-page section on Greenland and the Davis Strait by describing the life and work of Hans Egede and continued throughout the section to draw upon Egede's writings in his descriptions of Greenland's nature and inhabitants, noting his respect for this pious missionary.<sup>15</sup> Anderson does not mention the Moravians, which is not surprising given that Cranz's book was not yet published and that Anderson drew upon secondary literature rather than on personal experience. Cranz does, however, draw upon Anderson's book for his own, demonstrating the reliance on the sparse printed texts about Greenland circulating at the period.

Books on Greenland not printed in either English or German, including Jean Frédéric Bernard's 1731 *Recueil de voyages au nord contenant divers mémoires très utiles au commerce & à la navigation*, did not reach a large popular audience. Bernard's book was read in religious circles and spread the idea that Christian Norwegians settled Greenland in 896 AD. Conversely, Egede's 1741 work reached a broader audience through its 1763 German translation.<sup>16</sup> Egede's German translation appeared just as Cranz was finishing his text and almost derailed the *Historie von Grönland*, for Egede's book was introduced as a standard work in Germany on Greenland, potentially reducing Cranz's monograph to redundancy.<sup>17</sup> Although Cranz never personally met Egede, he gathered enough material to dedicate the last almost 150 pages of the first volume of his work to the man.<sup>18</sup> Cranz made no secret of the fact that his book was indebted to Egede and his sons. Interestingly, the early antagonisms between the Moravians and the Danish Lutheran Egede were not present in any way in Cranz's book, although the archival sources detail the tensions between the two parties (see Petterson's chapter). This trend is also visible in the later published versions of the Egede diaries, where there are very few references to the Moravians. A manuscript on "Intelligence on the Greenlandic Mission, Its State and Continuation," written in the shape of a journal from 1734 to 1737 by Paul Egede held in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, testifies to later editing which removed references to the Moravian Brethren and their relations.<sup>19</sup> These ameliorating publications would no doubt have contributed to a more conducive atmosphere of exchange, and indeed, according to Erich Beyreuther—the editor of a 1995 German facsimile version of Cranz's

text—this text was also an inspiration to a younger generation of Danish missionaries in Greenland interested in the natural sciences (but see Claire McLisky’s contribution).<sup>20</sup>

Cranz’s book was also steeped in the religious heritage of the Moravians. Cranz had been the secretary of the leader of the Church, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, from 1746. Under Zinzendorf’s leadership, the *Brüdergemeine* itself was formed in 1722 and decade later began sending out missionaries to convert non-Europeans to Christianity. Such activities raised interest in the evangelical missionary movement of the eighteenth century and helped inspire groups such as the Wesleyan Methodists and the Baptists to establish their foreign missionary work.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the Church Historian John Mason has postulated that Cranz’s book was one of the few contemporaneous books that were “considered essential reading for men who thought deeply about foreign missions.”<sup>22</sup> The *Historie von Grönland* provided a portrait of a missionary society that was humble in its feats and collective in its enterprise. It became a classic of the missionary awakening. In English evangelical circles it was widely read as an edifying and inspiring text.<sup>23</sup> In some ways Cranz’s 1765 two-volume work adhered to the missionary genre which would become popular in the next century, in which the promise of conversion of “heathen” peoples was always a central tenet. Cranz’s book described not only the land, nature, and people of Greenland but also the history of the Moravian mission there.<sup>24</sup> Greenland, a Danish colony at the time, was the second mission field for the Moravians, which they commenced in 1733 and remained until 1900, when they transferred their work to the Danish State Church.<sup>25</sup> Between the establishment of a Moravian mission in Greenland and the first wide-scale publication of the work of the Moravian mission in Greenland lay three decades. These decades had seen the expansion of global Moravian missionary work into locations such as southern Africa and North America, the death of Zinzendorf in 1760, and also the opening up of the Church to the outside world through publications. Thus, Cranz’s book was part of a movement to inform non-Moravians about the mission work that the Church had engaged in to help impress upon people the progress that they had achieved, but it was also more than that. In his introduction, Cranz detailed three potential audiences. The first being members of the Moravian Church and their descendants interested in the details of the mission in Greenland. A second audience he described as members of the Church who lived outside of Moravian settlements and thus had less access to Moravian information networks.<sup>26</sup> He envisaged a

third group of non-Moravians, who he thought may be able to make a more informed opinion with the book on the work of the Moravian missions than they had hitherto been able to do.<sup>27</sup> An audience to which Cranz did not allude was that of the European scientific community, which, as our current collection demonstrates, found the book important for its descriptions of the geography, oceanography, meteorology, botany, geology, and zoology of Greenland.

The scientific and religious audiences were, however, not mutually exclusive. Moravians contributed to both the collecting of natural objects for scientific purposes (see Ruhland's chapter) and using nature as part of their psysico-theology (see Kjægaard's chapter). Derick Miller has argued that "the relationship between the Moravians and the Enlightenment is a complicated one," with scholars holding different positions as to the nature of this relationship.<sup>28</sup> This anthology both demonstrates how Moravians could use the tools of the Enlightenment, such as scientific measurement and categorization (see Demarée and Ogilvie's chapter) whilst at the same time holding an ambiguous position within scientific circles (see Jenz's chapter). Cranz's book was entrenched in a Moravian tradition of religiously inspired natural world observations and in their own focus upon natural science education. However, it was also read beyond the Moravian circle reaching erudite people such as Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder, and James Cook, to mention a few, all men of science who read the work and incorporated his ideas into their own writings and lectures (see Kodzik's chapter). The book also inspired poets and novelists and perhaps even hymnists.<sup>29</sup> It helped make the Moravians known to religious as well as scientific circles beyond their own, for the revival took place not only in the scientific world but also in religious quarters. Cranz's book was written thus at a time when religiously inspired people were thinking seriously about evangelical Christian missions and scientists were looking to overseas missions for material and data for their theories and to extend their ethnographical collections. Simultaneously, it was a time of increased differentiation between religion and scientific writings, with non-Moravian versions of Cranz's work often omitting reference to the missions and concentrating on the natural and scientific observations of Greenland and its people.

Greenland, and more broadly speaking the North Atlantic, was an exotic place in the eighteenth century, to which not many continental Europeans had travelled and whose land and people were almost unknown. As Karen Oslund has noted in her work on the North Atlantic, there was

a long historical tradition of reciprocal encounters between peoples of the North Atlantic and continental Europe; however, these relationships were often asymmetrical.<sup>30</sup> As with much travel writing of the eighteenth century, it was the European traveller who wrote about the “other” coming to conclusions about foreign lands and peoples without always consulting the objects of his (for it was mostly a male enterprise at the time) observations. The categories that travellers to these places used to determine the distance between the Europe they knew and the one that they travel to were “landscape and nature, religion, technology and material culture, and literature and language.”<sup>31</sup> Cranz’s book contained all these categories and more. His book has appealed to theologians, scientists, philosophers, and army majors over two and a half centuries to varying levels, with their responses not always being positive. Against this background we have brought together scholars from ten countries and multiple disciplines who all engage with various aspects relating to the context and background of Cranz’s *Historie von Grönland* including the translation, transmission, reception, and transnational resonance of the book as well as its use in religious, political, and scientific circles. While described as an edifying and inspiring text in missionary circles, the book was much more than a launch pad for the evangelical awakening. Cranz’s book had ramifications for disciplines as varied as theology, ethnology, geography, oceanography, meteorology, geology, zoology, ornithology, botany, ichthyology, marine biology, glaciology, nautical navigation, and history. The present book does not cover all of these topics, but this list does demonstrate that the book had a certain universality, in which everyone could find something of interest. Together this edited collection aims to elucidate the multifaceted reception of the book in Cranz’s era to this day, providing a comprehensive overview of Cranz’s book in its historical perspective, as well as contextual information about the religious, scientific, and political situation in which the book was written, received, and translated. Moreover, it speaks to the broader ideas of knowledge transfer and transformation over the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and how European ideas of the far north could be extracted and applied to multiple other disciplines and places.

As this book is focused upon the reception of Cranz’s *Historie von Grönland* by Europeans and Anglo-Americans, it does not engage in a systematic way with the contributions that Greenlanders made in the gathering of information. As Karen Oslund reminds us, North Atlantic people were crucial to the creation of European knowledge about the North

Atlantic, yet that power base of these interactions remained uneven.<sup>32</sup> Cranz's text is not an exception to this. Here we do not engage in a sustained post-colonial reading of the production and exchange of knowledge that formed the basis of Cranz's book, or the letters of Greenlanders published with the original text, yet hope that our collection will be useful when this task is undertaken in the future. The Greenlanders remain mostly in our book as objects of study from which other knowledge was produced, rather than actors in their own right. These omissions remind us that the book can be (re)read in multiple ways in which different voices are accented. We are aware of our privileged access to some ways of reading the book, but also the limits of our own understanding of the complexities of cultural exchange in eighteenth-century colonized Greenland.

As the articles demonstrate, we are not just talking about one book, but multiple forms of a book. The multiple versions reflect the particularities of the book in terms of its popularity and reach, as well as more broadly the norms associated with book production and reproduction of the period.<sup>33</sup> The first version of the book was published in 1765 in German and was quickly translated into English (1767), Dutch (1767), and Swedish (1769). In 1770, a third part entitled *Fortsetzung der Historie von Grönland* (*Continuum*) was published which included the history of the mission between 1763 and 1768 as well as a continuation of the natural history aspects. This same year saw a reprint of the first two books. Cranz was requested to write a second *Continuum* around 1775; however, he died in 1777 before this assignment could be undertaken.<sup>34</sup> In 1785, a condensed Danish translation was published, which left out reference to the Moravian mission and only contained a description of Greenland and its people.<sup>35</sup> In 1810, the book was condensed and annotated in a Hungarian version (see Sz. Kristóf's chapter in current collection). In 1820, an abridged version was published in England (see Jensz's chapter). Aspects of the book were extracted, reprinted, and incorporated into other texts, both religious and secular. With so many different versions circulating, we have used the term *Historie von Grönland* in this anthology to refer to the German version of 1765, unless otherwise stated. Other titles for the book refer to the specific translations. As such, *History of Greenland* refers to the 1767 English edition, unless otherwise stated.

From its publication, the book was used to bolster political, scientific, and religious arguments, and well into the twentieth century it was still resonating, albeit quietly, in academic discussions and literary forms (see Resløkken's chapter in this volume). Precisely this is one of the reasons

why this book is so compelling, for it attempted to speak to multiple audiences from the descendants of the missionaries involved to the broader Moravian community, religious detractors, scientists, kings, queens, and military personnel. The book was not always praised; indeed, there were multiple detractors. However, as this collection demonstrates, Cranz's *Historie von Grönland* still resonates some 250 years after first being printed.

### HISTORY OF PRODUCTION

The religious group behind the publishing of the book was the Moravian Church, known as *Brüder Unität* or *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine* in German. Their mission work amongst non-Europeans had begun in 1732, with the first missionaries being sent to work with the slaves of St Thomas in the Danish West Indies. Greenland, like St Thomas, was under Danish control, with Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf having cordial political and family connections with the Danish court. Despite the novelty of Protestant missionary work in the eighteenth century, the Moravians did not publish widely on their experiences until the latter part of the century. This was due to negative attention that some of their tracts and devotional songs had received during the so-called Sifting Time of the 1740s (approximately 1743–1749), in which an increasing mysticism within the Church led to damaging criticism and anti-Moravian texts.<sup>36</sup> It was thought better to print as little as possible, lest their words be misconstrued.

In the year before he died, Zinzendorf had decided that Cranz—who was the son of a Lutheran pastor and who had converted to the Moravians—should travel to Greenland to gather information for a book on the history of the mission. Cranz had had previous experience in travel writing, with his study on Grisons, a canton in Switzerland, being the basis for Zinzendorf suggesting Cranz.<sup>37</sup> Cranz had by that time been Zinzendorf's personal secretary for almost ten years and was well versed in Moravian doctrine and history (see also Paul Peucker's contribution in this collection).<sup>38</sup> After Zinzendorf's death in 1760, Cranz reminded Church officials that he had been asked to travel to Greenland to collect information for a book on the mission there.<sup>39</sup> He arrived in Greenland on 1 August 1761 and began his return journey to Germany on 26 August 1762.<sup>40</sup> His experience of just over a year in Greenland provided him with the insights to write a first-hand account of the mission as well as the social,



geographical, and natural context in which it operated. Although Zinzendorf had supported the project during his life, the publication of the book was not secured, for it needed approval from the Synod, the highest administrative body of the Church, before it was allowed to be published. The rule still held that no books, particularly apologetic writings, were allowed to be published without the approval of the “Direction of the Unity.”<sup>41</sup> The consent of the Direction, through the Synod, was obtained through the drawing of a lot, a symbolic means for the Moravians in the eighteenth century to communicate with God.<sup>42</sup> At the 1764 Synod in Marienborn a positive lot was drawn approving the publication of this book.<sup>43</sup> The Synod had commissioned Friedrich Adam Scholler, a science lecturer at the Moravian Seminar, to critically proofread the book not only for factual mistakes, but also to ensure that the book could not be used for negative publicity against the Moravians.<sup>44</sup> Such attention to facts, particularly through the proofreading by a scientist, demonstrate also that religious groups could take science very seriously.

When the book was subsequently printed, it was the first to detail in monograph form the history of a Moravian mission field and was thus a forerunner for further Moravian missionary monographs, including Christian Oldendorp’s 1777 *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder auf den caraibischen Inseln S. Thomas, S. Croix und S. Jan*, which, like Cranz’s book, is an unsurpassed ethnological source of the contemporaneous social, political, geographic, and social conditions. As recent studies have demonstrated, Oldendorp’s book is a treasure trove of information on the Early Modern Atlantic and emerging science.<sup>45</sup> Cranz’s book, we contend, should also be seen as a treasure trove of information on the Early Modern Atlantic and emerging science, albeit taking the far north as its point of reference, rather than the Caribbean. The success of the books helped the Moravians rehabilitate their damaged reputation due to the “Sifting Time.” For Cranz, the success also secured for him the role as the history writer of the Moravians. He subsequently produced further books on request for the Moravian Church.<sup>46</sup> Cranz’s *Historie von Grönland* was expected to reach a broad audience with 3000 copies printed in the initial German print run,<sup>47</sup> being higher than the average print run of the time.<sup>48</sup> By August 1766, 1673 copies of the book had either been sold or given away amongst the Moravian community, with 200 of these copies having been sold on commission through a Leipzig bookseller.<sup>49</sup> The book proved to be so popular that it was soon sold out.<sup>50</sup> In 1770, a third part, also known as the *Continuum*, was published which continued the history of

the missions from 1763 to 1768 and included further details about the country and people of Greenland (see also Olsthoorn's chapter).<sup>51</sup>

In his introduction to the German republication of a facsimile of Cranz's text from 1995, Erich Beyreuther suggests that Cranz "hit the nerve of his time" in his Greenland text.<sup>52</sup> The late eighteenth century was a time of increased scientific rationalism and differentiation, which, combined with a decrease in printing and distribution costs, led to a dynamic scientific community being more able to purchase texts of interest.<sup>53</sup> Beyreuther's introduction focused upon the second part of the Cranz's work, that is the history of the mission; we, in contrast, have not included much detail about the actual missionary practices of the Moravians, but have rather collected articles which examine how Cranz's work was used outside of Moravian circles. In contrast to the strictly missionary focus of the Egede texts, Cranz's book moved beyond religious circles into scientific ones and beyond the axis of Germany and Greenland to be European and North American settings. The scope of the book and its application is reflected in the contributions of the present volume.

#### OVERVIEW OF CRANZ'S *HISTORIE VON GRÖNLAND*

The *Historie von Grönland* is divided into two volumes. Volume 1 contains five books with a variety of content. Book 1 is 70 pages long and deals with the geography and geology of Greenland, the "situation and nature of the land, the sea, the air, the earth, the stones, and vegetables," as Cranz himself notes. The first chapter also describes the "country in general" which amounts to the West Coast of Greenland, which was the only part undergoing colonization and missionary activity at this point. Indeed, several of the sections are devoted to the Danish settlements along the coast and the Moravian mission in Neu-Herrnhut. The second book, of beasts, birds, and fishes, is a 60-page long and very detailed description of the fauna, with most attention given to those of the sea. This is followed by the third book on the Greenlanders, which is more than 100 pages long and deals with their disposition, way of life, conduct, morals, social structure, and religion. Book 4 is an account of the history of Greenland from its discovery, via the Danish mission and up until 1733, when the Moravian mission began, and Book 5 covers the first six years of the Moravian mission up until 1739/1740. The second volume also contains five books, the first four go through the Moravian mission up until 1762, and the fifth book, Book 10, presents "the external and internal constitution of the

Greenland congregation,” which describes the everyday lives and make-up of the Indigenous congregation, including the names (sometimes only one-letter abbreviations of names) of the congregation and statements of their spiritual state from a first-person perspective. Book 10 also includes information about the German missionaries, their industry, liturgy, sacraments, and so on. Then follows two appendices, one which contains letters from Greenlanders, and the other the memoir of the late Friedrich Böhnisch. The structure of the book does not, then, immediately lend itself to a division into an “ethnographic” section and a “missionary” section, as was common in the reception history of *Historie von Grönland*, as we shall see in the various articles. The composition and structure of the book rather reflected not only the broader physico-theological framework in which it was conceived, but also a basic feature of Moravian theology, namely the infusion of religion in all parts of life.

### OVERVIEW OF THIS COLLECTION

Our collection is divided into five sections. The first part, “Religious Context and Reception,” considers the religious and theological setting in which the book was published. Following the trajectory of science from the eighteenth century, religion and theology was extracted, overlooked, or largely dismissed by later secular commentators of the book. In her chapter Christina Petterson examines Cranz’s presentation of the missionary history and his redactions of the archival material with which he was working. These revisions testify to the 30 years between the early mission and the later political and religious sensibilities of the Unity Direction. As mentioned earlier, many changes had occurred during these years, including the negative publicity of the “Sifting Time” and Zinzendorf’s death. Petterson demonstrates how *Historie von Grönland* is part of the revisionary movement of the post-Zinzendorf Moravian Church and provides examples of how the history of the mission in Greenland was rewritten to correspond to contemporaneous politics of the future Church, accommodating religious identity to an increasingly secularized world. Cranz was, as Kathrine Kjærgaard’s article reminds us, a religious man steeped within the theology of his time. She presents Cranz’s *Historie von Grönland* as an example of physico-theology, which was a theological appropriation of the results of technological progress of the second half of the seventeenth century that considered that precise scientific knowledge is the main path to knowledge about God. She presents Cranz within the history of

physico-theology and its movement from England to Germany, highlighting its context in German scientific research to reflect the broader ideas on which he drew. Together these two articles ground our understanding of the religious and theological context in which this book was written, aspects of which would be discarded, indeed even ridiculed, in subsequent secular readings of the text.

After its publication, *Historie von Grönland* was quickly translated into other European languages, including English, a language which by the end of the eighteenth century was spread around the globe as an instrument of British imperialism. The second section, “English-Language Reception and Print Culture,” examines the reception of the book in Britain and the United States from the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. It begins with Felicity Jenz’s chapter detailing two English-language translations of Cranz’s book, the first translation in 1767, and the abridged version in 1820, which coincided with a popularization of the Arctic in many other media. In the eighteenth century, the book was celebrated in the scientific community, yet the religious aspects were considered by some observers as being “a collection of absurdities.” Using archival material from the Moravian archives in London as well as numerous reviews in newspapers and periodicals of the time, Jenz compares the circumstances of publication as well as receptions of the two translations, arguing that in abridging the book, British Moravians took on the concerns of secular critics. This is followed by Jared Burkholder’s chapter, which explores the reception of the English language versions of the *History of Greenland* in North America, where it entered into an emerging North American print culture both as a devotional text and as a source-book to Native American culture. His source-material is comprised of nineteenth-century journals, ethnographic works, as well as religious books and periodicals, and literature intended for children. Through his analysis he demonstrates the way in which the content of the book in different versions helped to rehabilitate the name of the Moravians to a North American audience. Within this section it is evident that Cranz’s book was used to influence communities and debates beyond Moravian circles and that simultaneously these debates could affect the way in which the book was subsequently disseminated. The chapters in this section also underscore the importance of Cranz’s book for broader discussions and conceptualizations of Greenland as part of the Atlantic world. In doing so, these studies, akin to Karen Oslund’s 2011 book, *Iceland Imagined*, contribute to what William Cronon describes as the “mental geographies that

over the past quarter millennium have come to define the North Atlantic—and that teach us more than we might think about the rest of the world.”<sup>54</sup>

The third and longest section, “Scientific Importance and Influence,” contains four chapters that explore the production of knowledge in various settings as a result of Cranz’s book in the realms of Arctic knowledge, meteorology, anthropology, and folklore.

Joanna Kodzik’s contribution examines knowledge transfer about the Arctic from Europe and analyses the circulation of ideas between the German missionaries and the community of German intellectuals. Kodzik’s chapter showcases how Cranz’s eyewitness accounts were absorbed into German philosophy and geography, through the influential works of Enlightenment philosophers such as Johann Blumenbach, Immanuel Kant, and Johann Gottfried Herder in their constructions of ideas of Europe and others. Her article demonstrates the seriousness with which German scientific circles engaged with texts written by primarily religious men of the time. The Arctic-Europe connection is continued in the chapter by Gaston Demarée and Astrid Elisabeth Ogilvie that analyses the oldest long-term meteorological observational data from Greenland carried out by Christopher Brasen in Neu-Herrnhut, Greenland, under the patronage of Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein. These observations, published in part in Cranz’s work as well as in manuscript form, they suggest, could be some of the oldest ongoing measurements which record the North Atlantic Oscillation, a weather phenomenon subsequently identified as responsible for much of the variability of weather in the North Atlantic region. Their chapter is a demonstration of how information contained in the book can be of continuing scientific interest, in this case for historic climatology. Cranz’s book was also received further beyond the German-speaking lands in Central and northern Europe. In 1810, Reverend Mihály Dobosy produced an abridged and annotated Hungarian translation of *Historie von Grönland*. In her contribution, the ethnologist Ildikó Sz. Kristóf elucidates how this version functioned to introduce and indigenize the science of ethnography to Hungary. In doing so, the book also helped to underscore a particular Protestant scientific narrative that contrasted with the dominant Catholic narrative circulating in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and thus contributed to emerging Hungarian forms of nationalism. In Scandinavia, aspects of Cranz’s book were also used to give legitimacy to certain political interests. Åmund Norum Resløyken discusses in his chapter the reception of Cranz’s book in Norwegian ethnology of the late nineteenth century. Cranz was used to produce a

Greenlandic folk-belief and thus the temporal register (time and place) of Cranz's text is changed and his work is disconnected from its context and placed into a mythological structure. This serves both to produce a comparative folk-history and to provide grounds for Norwegian nationalism. A commonality of all of these chapters in this section is the sometimes surprising use to which Cranz's book was used to further scientific knowledge in diasporic fields, and often to underscore nationalistic aims long after the book first left the press.

The fourth section, "Cranz and the Medium of Missions," contains two chapters which consider *Historie von Grönland* in the context of missions and patronage. In his contribution, Thomas Ruhland examines the *Historie von Grönland* in the context of the competition between the missions of the Halle Pietists and Moravians in Southeast Asia. Ruhland assesses the political and scientific significance of the publication and its potential for missionaries in their struggles for recognition as such and royal privileges in particular. Furthermore, he shows how the *Historie von Grönland* served as a launch pad for the importance of collecting specimens of natural history for both missions—albeit for different reasons. Thea Olsthoorn's chapter engages with Cranz's chapter on the Labrador Inuit in the continuation of the *Historie von Grönland*, the 1770 *Fortsetzung der Historie von Grönland*. Cranz's chapter is based on Jens Haven's writings on the Labrador Inuit which was completed as Cranz was finishing his book. Cranz's reason for including this chapter was to reveal that the Labrador Inuits and the Greenlanders were basically the same people in order that the Moravians could vie for access to the Labrador Inuit. Olsthoorn, however, uses the same sources in a counter-argument to highlight some of the differences and thus demonstrate that these two peoples were actually *not* the same. Her work also underscores the notion that Cranz's book and subsequent Moravian writings contributed to the construction of an Arctic world and peoples, and also placed Greenland and Labrador within the conceptual framework of the Atlantic world. Both Ruhland's and Olsthoorn's chapters elucidate how the book was used to elicit patronage that could benefit the broader Moravian missionary enterprise beyond the specifics of Greenland.

The final section, "The Post-colonial Cranz," contains a single chapter, namely that of Claire McLisky and examines possible reasons for the limited response to Cranz's book in Greenland and its potential as a useful source for Greenlandic identity. Distinguishing between three periods in the history of Denmark and Greenland, McLisky analyses the Danish