

SYNOPSIS

In night and ice – Man in the Arctic

The Arctic's nature is characterized by coldness, solitude and little vegetation. In contrast to this, there are natural resources, a manifold wildlife and huge blank spots on the map for a long time.

The collection embraces the period from 1817 to 1939 and is divided into three subject areas which reflect the variety of an Arctic display:

Life and Survival
Research and Investigation
Tourism – The lure of the unknown

This exhibit follows a social-geographic selection of topics.

For me it is important to have a look on the aspects behind the reference samples. This collection tries to convey the fascination of the history of letter-writers and letter-receivers: Why do some people expose themselves to tremendous stresses and strains by choice – for humanitarian, economical, scientific or even personal reasons?

Chapter 1

The Arctic is the world's northernmost area and dominated by oceans and ice. In spite of those partly hostile conditions, human beings are living in Greenland since more than 4000 years. The search for new sea routes to India and the Far East by the Europeans in the 15th century initiated the intensive use and the exploitation of natural resources because of the discovery of fishing grounds for sea mammals, distribution of fur-bearing animals or mineral resources.

Missing or poor infrastructure, extreme climatic conditions and complete isolation during the winter months were huge threats that the outposts of the civilization had to deal with. The supply of the population was almost entirely carried out by ship, only later the plane became prevalent. In the dark months during the polar night dog sleds often were the only way of conveyance.

Chapter 2

Since the 15th century numerous expeditions pursued the goal to find a northern sea route between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Just since the middle of the 19th century those trips served scientific purposes: in the first instance they were used to discover the assumed open polar sea, later on for the conquest of the North Pole and finally to explore flora and fauna. The main focuses of the collection are documents of polar flights: their beginning can be dated to the year 1896 when the Swede S. A. Andrée attempted to reach the North Pole by aerostat (hot-air balloon), starting from Spitsbergen (Svalbard).