

Johann August Miertsching and his circum-continental Travel as Inuit Language Interpreter on Board H.M.S. *Investigator*

Gaston R. DEMARÉE¹, Yoshio TAGAMI² and Astrid E. J. OGILVIE^{3,4}

¹Royal Meteorological Institute of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium

²Faculty of Human Development, University of Toyama, Toyama, Japan

³Stefansson Arctic Institute, Akureyri, Iceland

⁴Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, U.S.A.

(Received October 14, 2024; Revised manuscript accepted January 13, 2025)

Abstract

Johann August Miertsching (1817-1875) was translator of the Inuit language at H.M.S. *Investigator* in a polar Expedition in search of the lost Sir John Franklin Expedition. Miertsching's voyage took 4 years and 8 months, overwintering three consecutive years in the polar seas and as such being part of the first circum-American continental travel. Monthly mean temperature and atmospheric pressure data on board of the *Investigator* are among the early meteorological observations in the Polar Region.

Key words: Miertsching, interpreter, Inuit, *Investigator*, John Franklin, polar expedition, Capt. Mac Clure

1. Introduction

On May 19, 1845, Captain Sir John Franklin¹ left England on board of the H.M.S. *Erebus* and H.M.S. *Terror* trying to determine the North-West Passage, exploring the Canadian Arctic and recording magnetic observations that could help navigation in polar areas. They wintered 1845-1846 and 1846-1847 being trapped in ice; the ships were abandoned in April 1848 and the survivors tried to reach Canadian mainland but disappeared. Jane, Lady Franklin, pushed the Admiralty to launch Arctic expeditions to search for Franklin's lost expedition. An expedition was launched in 1850, by Captain Richard Collinson, H.M.S. *Enterprise*, and Commander Mac Clure, HMS *Investigator*, in this context of the search.

Johann August Miertsching, a Moravian Brethren missionary in Labrador, was aboard the *Investigator* as translator of the Inuit language. As a matter of fact, the *Investigator* had to be abandoned itself after overwintering 3 consecutive years in the Arctic, and the crew was saved by a sledge-party to the *Resolute* and the *Intrepid*, Capt. Kellett at Dealy Island, near the south coast of Melville Island. Later on, they went in sledge parties to the *North Star*, at Beechey Island, becoming in this way the first circum-continental travelers.

2. Johann August Miertsching: a life picture

Johann August Miertsching (in Upper Sorbian language² *Jan Awgust Měrcink*) was born on 21 August 1817 in Gröditz, near Weißenberg, Saxony, Germany. Miertsching's father, Johann Miertsching, was a cottager working as a carpenter; he died when Johann August was only 2 ½ years old. Johann August Miertsching learned the shoemaker's trade at the school of the Moravian Brethren in Kleinwelka³ near Bautzen. He was admitted to the Moravian Brethren Community on March 25, 1841, and took over the master's office in the shoemaking school in Kleinwelka in May 1841. In the autumn of 1843, the Unity Elders Conference – in German: Unitäts-Ältesten-Conferenz (UAC) – decided to send three single Brethren to Labrador and J.A. Miertsching was one of them; in February 1844 he was designated by the decision of the lot. He travelled from Kleinwelka to London, arriving there on June 3, 1844.⁴ The missionaries destined for Labrador were present at the half-yearly meeting of the Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel (SFG) on the next day;⁵ they departed on the mission ship *Harmony III* in the morning of June 11, 1844.

Brother Miertsching reached his destination, the missionary station Okak [Okkak], on August 11, 1844.⁶ Among the presents of mission friends brought by the

¹ Sir John Franklin (1786-1847), a British Royal Navy officer, explorer and colonial administrator.

² Upper Sorbian language: also named Wendish, a minority language belonging to the West Slavic branch, spoken by the Sorbs in Upper Lusatia, Saxony, Germany.

³ Kleinwelka: a subdivision of the city of Bautzen, in eastern Saxony, site of a settlement of the Moravian missionaries; for many years it was the seat of a boarding

school for the children of Moravian missionaries from all over the world.

⁴ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XVII, p. 47-48; Journal de l'Unité des Frères, 9^e année, 1844, p. 292.

⁵ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XVII, 1844/1846, p. 46-47.

⁶ Nachrichten aus der Brüder-Gemeine, 30^{ster} Jahrgang, 1848, p. 406.

Harmony was a new organ which was technically installed and musically tuned by Miertsching and which was much appreciated by the Inuit.⁷ Miertsching had to endure extreme winter temperatures like in the winter 1844-1845, ‘the thermometer often fell to 36 degrees under zero of Fahrenheit’ [-37,8° C].⁸ Miertsching undertook his first travel by dog sled in April 1846 as Br. Glitsch ‘was seriously ill at the mission station Hebron and wanted the medical aid of Br. Herzberg’. As Herzberg ‘was not being able to travel alone on account of his delicate state of health, Miertsching was appointed to accompany him’. During the journey, ‘the cold was intense (45 degrees Fahrenheit below freezing point’ [-42,8° C]).⁹

A letter by Br. Gregor of the UAC to Lundberg, Superintendent of the Labrador mission, includes the instruction to send one of the single Brethren to Germany in order to get married. Ultimately, the designation of Miertsching was most probably based upon his more liberal and solidarity views on the missionary activity with the Inuit in Labrador. The *Harmony* ‘took her departure from Okak September 19, 1849, and after a somewhat tedious and boisterous passage, casting anchor at Horselydown¹⁰ on the 23rd of October’;¹¹ from there Miertsching travelled by ferry to Rotterdam and train to Magdeburg, finally reaching Kleinwelka on November 24, 1849 (M. & W. Opel, 2022, p. 125).

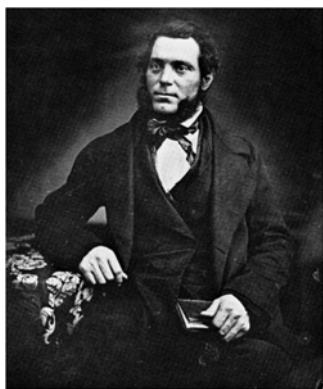


Fig. 1 Portrait of J.A. Miertsching (1817-1875)
(Collection Jannasch, M. & W. Opel, 2022).

⁷ Nachrichten aus der Brüder-Gemeine, 30^{ster} Jahrgang, No. 1, Januar 1849, p. 8-10; Nachrichten aus der Brüder-Gemeine, 30^{ster} Jahrgang, 1848, p. 407.

⁸ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XVII, 1844/1846, p. 313.

⁹ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XVIII, 1844/1846, p. 80-81.

¹⁰ Horselydown / Horsleydown, a location on the southern bank of the Thames, by the 19th century an area crowded with business of all kinds.

¹¹ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XIX, p. 215-216; Journal de l'Unité des Frères, 15^e année, 1850, p. 31-32.

¹² Periodical Accounts, Vol. XXI, 1853/1856, p. 267.

In the years 1850-1854, Miertsching took part in the expedition as translator of Inuktitut in the *Enterprise*, Capt. Collinson, and the *Investigator*, Commander Mac Clure, Arctic Expedition searching for the lost expedition of Sir John Franklin (see chapter 3).

On Saturday October 7, 1854, at 8 o'clock in the evening, when it was already completely dark, the North Star anchored in the naval harbor of Sheerness, Miertsching ‘having been absent four years, eight months, and eighteen days’.¹² This is the end of the polar expedition of Collinson and McClure searching for Sir John Franklin. In this regard, the expedition was unsuccessful, but the first circum-continental voyage was carried out and large areas in the Canadian polar areas were discovered by ship and by extensive man-carried sledge travels over land and sea ice. Figure 1 shows a daguerreotype of Miertsching taken in London.

Finally, in November 1854, Miertsching arrived at home in Gröditz and met his family. The UAC in Berthelsdorf, near Herrnhut, Saxony, decided not to send Miertsching again to Labrador and he ‘received a call to the service of the Mission in South Africa’ mid 1856. Johann August Miertsching married Sister Clementine Auguste Erleben on October 7, 1856, and, already on the 20th they sailed from Altona, heading for the Cape of Good Hope, in the ship *San Francisco*¹³; they reached their destination on Sylvester 1856.

Miertsching’s first task as a missionary in South-Africa was doing the trade and keeping the shop in Elim.¹⁴ In 1861, the family was sent to the Moravian mission settlement Gnadenthal. They left South Africa in April 1869¹⁵ and settled at Kleinwelka, Saxony, where Clementine died on December 21, 1869, and Johann August Miertsching on March 30, 1875.¹⁶

3. The narrative of Miertsching’s circum-continental journey

John Richardson¹⁷ strongly suggested the appointment of a missionary of the Moravian Brethren to accompany Capt. Collinson’s Arctic Expedition as interpreter of the Esquimaux language. The person selected would be capable to have friendly interactions with the Inuit and possibly might obtain from them relevant information on the lost John Franklin expedition

¹³ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XXII, 1856/1858, p. 143-144; Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine, N° 10, October 1856, p. 186; Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine, N° 12, December 1856, p. 225.

¹⁴ Elim is a village on the Agulhas Plain in the Western Cape of South Africa. It was established in 1824 by German missionaries as a Moravian Brethren mission station.

¹⁵ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XXVII, 1868/1871, p. 208.

¹⁶ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XXIX, 1873/1876, p. 360.

¹⁷ John Richardson (1787-1865), a Scottish naval surgeon, naturalist and Arctic explorer.

(The Athenaeum, 1850, p. 310). It was not until December 22, 1849, that the Admiralty commissioned Edward Parry¹⁸ to enter negotiations with Peter Latrobe, secretary of the Moravian Mission Society in London,¹⁹ to look for an Inuktitut translator among the Greenland or Labrador missionaries to accompany the Collinson-Mac Clure Expedition (Brandes, 1854, p. 92). The UAC at Berthelsdorf discussed the subject. J.A. Miertsching, although initially reserved, accepted the decision of the lot of January 5, 1850, and departed immediately to London²⁰ where he arrived in all haste on January 16. Baillie-Hamilton²¹ wrote to Capt. Collinson on January 17: ‘*I am commanded by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that they consider Mr. Miertsching (the Eskimo interpreter) as placed under your special protection; that Mr. Miertsching is to mess at the gun-room table; and you are from time to time, as you may deem necessary to supply any reasonable sums for this gentlemen’s mess, or other necessary expenses.*’ (Brandes, 1854, p. 93) Highly respectable for the shoemaker!

Miertsching traveled from London, to Devonport, Plymouth. A boat was rented which brought them to the *Investigator* in Plymouth Sound where he met Captain Collinson, *Enterprise*, and Commodore Mac Clure, *Investigator*. Since there was no cabin free on the *Enterprise*, he got his cabin on the *Investigator*, but it was planned that he would be transferred to the *Enterprise* in Valparaíso (Opel, M. & W., 2022, p. 133). On Sunday, January 20, 1850, at 6 h in the morning, the anchor was lifted in good winds and the long lasting journey started.

Mid-April 1850, the *Gorgon* towed both Arctic Expedition ships through the Magellan Strait to the Pacific Ocean where they set sail for the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). When Capt. Mac Clure arrived off Honolulu on 1 July, he found that the *Enterprise* had gone on at once ahead of him, fearful of losing the short remains of the summer. Mac Clure decided to stay only 4 days at Oahu and sailed straight lines north to The Bering Strait that he reached without problems on July, 27. Meanwhile Collinson sailed the conventional but longer way. The *Enterprise* and the *Investigator* had

finally parted ways in the expedition - they would never meet again. On July 29, the *Plover*, Capt. Moore²², was met and on July 31, also the *Herald*, Capt. Kellett.²³ On this occasion, Miertsching informed the Moravian Brethren by letter, dated July 30th, from Cape Lisburne, which was published in missionary journals.²⁴ Finally, having missed the rendezvous with Capt. Collinson and without any information on the *Enterprise*, Mac Clure decided, on his own responsibility, to enter the Polar Sea in contrast to Kellett’s point of view. Figure 2 shows the map of the Arctic Archipelago and northern Alaska and Canada while Fig. 3 shows the track of the *Investigator* from England in January 1850 to the Prince of Wales Strait in September 1850, the place of its first overwintering.

August 1850, Capt. Mac Clure interacted with Capt. Kellett, of the *Herald*, in Behring’s Straits, and sent letters to Europe by him. On August 7, the *Investigator* sailed around Point Barrow, and was now east of this headland, at a location no ship had ever reached before, and, on August the 8th, the crew met with some Esquimaux on the Colville River. “On the 20th, we reached the Mackenzie River, and, passing Cape Bathurst, we arrived in Franklin’s Bay on September the 1st, 1850.” As often as circumstances permitted, Miertsching went ashore and conversed with the Esquimaux, whose language he found to be the very same as that spoken on the coast of Labrador. “From Cape Parry, in Franklin’s Bay, we sailed towards the North, surrounded by heavy masses of ice, and discovered land on the 7th of September, to which the name of *Baring’s Island* was given. Passing through a channel of moderate width, named *Prince of Wales’s Strait*, between *Baring Island* and *Prince Albert’s Land* to the eastward, our ship was frozen in, on September 24th, 1850, at lat. 72° 47’ N, and 118° 12’ W. On October 10, 1850, the British flag was hoisted on the newly discovered land which was named *Prince Albert’s Land*.” (Miertsching, 1855, p. 56)

Capt. Mac Clure went with a sledge-party to Point Russell, the extreme point of Baring Island, from which, on October 26th, 1850, he saw the entrance into Parry’s Sound and Barrow Strait, thus discovering the long

¹⁸ William Edward Parry (1790-1855), a Royal Navy officer and explorer known for his 1819–1820 expedition through the Parry Channel.

¹⁹ Berigten uit de Heiden-Wereld, 1850, p. 61-63.

²⁰ Journal de l’Unité des Frères, 1850, p. 127-128; Journal de l’Unité des Frères, 1851, p. 85-86.

²¹ William Alexander Baillie-Hamilton (1803-1881), a Scottish naval commander, Second Secretary to the Admiralty, serving on the Arctic Council when it was searching for Sir John Franklin.

²² Thomas Edward Laws Moore (circa 1820-1872), a Royal Navy officer and explorer. From 1847 to 1852, he

commanded HMS *Plover*, which was searching for Franklin’s lost expedition.

²³ Henry Kellett (1806-1875), a Royal Navy officer, oceanographer and arctic explorer. Kellett commanded the *Herald* in the Arctic in search of the lost Franklin expedition (Dictionary of Canadian Biography).

²⁴ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XX, 1851/1853, p. 168-169; Nachrichten aus der Brüder-Gemeine, 33^{ster} Jahrgang, Fünftes Heft, 1851, p. 713; Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine, Funfzehnter Jahrgang, 1851, No. 3, p. 56-60; Journal de l’Unité des Frères, 17^e année, février 1852, p. 53-54; Berigten uit de Heiden-Wereld, 1851, N^o. 8, p. 122.

sought North-West Passage. As the entrance into Parry Sound continued to be blocked up by ice, the *Investigator* sailed south in the summer of 1851, sailing around Baring Island. In April 1851, three sledge parties were sent out, the first one to Wollaston Land in the south; the second to Banks Land in the north-west and the third in the direction of Cape Walker, in the north-east. Miertsching accompanied Mac Clure to Wollaston where many Inuit were found. On September 24th, 1851, the *Investigator* was frozen in on the north side of Baring Island, in the Bay of Mercy, in lat. 74° 6' N., long. 117° 54' W. On April 11, 1852, Capt. Mac Clure and a sledge party reached Winter Harbour on Melville Island, where Capt. Edward Parry overwintered in 1820. He left a message under a pile of stones and arrived back on the *Investigator* on May 9th. As the ice didn't break up in the summer of 1852, they were under the painful necessity of a second wintering on the same spot. The conditions on the *Investigator* became more and more precarious and the daily allowance was only two-thirds of the usual rations, having weakened many members of the crew. As the provisions would not last until November 1853, Mac Clure decided to send two sledge parties, one to Port Leopold, another one, including Miertsching, to the Mackenzie River. In all probability, these parties would follow the fate of the lost Franklin expedition. The departure day was fixed on April 15, 1853, but fortunately, on April 10th, a party led by Lieutenant Pim²⁵ from the *Resolute*, Capt. Kellett, brought the good news that two ships were waiting to receive them at Dealy Island, near Melville Island.²⁶ The rescue had been induced by the fact that the party directed by Lieutenant Mechem of the *Resolute* had found the hand written message from the *Investigator* and that Capt. Kellett sent a sledge party in March 1853 to find the *Investigator*. On June 17th, 1853, the full crew of the *Investigator* had moved to the *Resolute* and Capt. Mac Clure had abandoned the *Investigator*.²⁷

In August 1853, Capt. Kellett's ships got loose from the ice, drifted among the ice field but became again stationary on November 13th, at lat. 74° 41' N, long. 101° 22' W, remaining there till April 1854, when Sir Edward Belcher, wintering in Wellington Channel, ordered to abandon the two ships. Mac Clure and the remaining crew of the *Investigator*, among them Miertsching, started on April 14th a sledge-party, over a distance of nearly two hundred miles across the ice to Beechey Island, where they were received on board the *North Star* on April 28th. In this vessel, J. A. Miertsching and the

remaining crew of the *Investigator* sailed for England on August 27th, and landed at Sheerness, October 8th, 1854, having been absent four years, eight months, and eighteen days.²⁸



Fig. 2 Map of the Arctic Archipelago, according to the latest discoveries of the Franklin Expeditions. Edited and drawn by H. Lange (Brandes, 1854).



Fig. 3 Track of the voyage of the *Investigator* from England in January 1850 till September 1850, the place its wintering (1850-1851) in the Prince of Wales Strait.

4. The genesis of the narrative

Besides Miertsching being present at the meeting of the Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel at the Brethren's Chapel in Fetter-Lane on November 6, 1854, where he was heartily welcomed and where he referenced to the circumstances of his long and perilous journey to the Arctic expedition, he received invitations to give lectures about his polar experiences in many of the Brethren's settlements; he even traveled to Fulneck

²⁵ Bedford Clapperton Trevelyan Pim (1826-1886), a Royal Navy officer, Arctic explorer and author.

²⁶ Letter of Miertsching dated Dealy Island, May 4th, 1853, brought to England by Lieut. Cresswell on Oct. 11th, 1853: *Journal de l'Unité des Frères*, 19^e année, 1854, p. 90; *Periodical Accounts*, Vol. XXI, 1853/1856, p. 47-48; *Berigten uit de Heiden-Wereld*, 1853, N^o. 8, p. 140-146.

²⁷ The sunken wreck of the *H.M.S. Investigator* was discovered by a team of *Parks Canada* scientists in July 2010.

²⁸ *Periodical Accounts*, Vol. XXI, 1853/1856, p. 48-49; *Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine vom Jahre 1853*, N^o 9, September 1853, p. 205-212; *Das Calwer Missionsblatt*, 1854, Nro. 21 und 23, p. 103.

in Yorkshire in company of William Mallalieu, treasurer of the Moravian Mission Society in London. While he was in London, Miertsching talked to Daniel Benham, an author associated with the Moravian Brethren, and at the end of November 1854, a ‘*Sketch of Life of Jan August Miertsching*’ was published (Benham, 1854). Miertsching published a letter, dated November 3, 1854, on the North Pole expedition in *Das Calwer Missionsblatt* (Miertsching, 1855a).

In the spring of 1855, Miertsching worked at Gröditz on the travel report and presented his voluminous manuscript to the UAC. The UAC requested Ottomar Gemusens, editor of the *Nachrichten aus der Brüdergemeine*, to edit the manuscript version.²⁹ However, the *Reise-Tagebuch* edition shows quite a few differences to the existing handwritten manuscript (M. & W. Opel, 2022, p. 362). A first edition of the travel diary of Miertsching was published in the autumn of 1855 at Gnadau,³⁰ the second edition (1856) comprises an addition about the Inuit (Miertsching, 1855b).

The interaction that Miertsching had with the Inuit tribes during his polar travel was seen as a ‘desire that a Mission should be commenced in high northern latitudes, could not, at least for the present, acceded to on account of the evident possibility of maintaining communication with those regions’.³¹

5. The meteorological observations on board of the *Investigator*

Miertsching’s *Reise-Tagebuch* mentions the following meteorological and geographical instructions: “The daily temperature observations are expressed in degrees Fahrenheit (°F) and are usually an average temperature over 24 hours. The latitude and longitude (westerly of Greenwich), in degrees and minutes, were observed at noon 12 hours.” The *Reise-Tagebuch* contains also maximum, minimum and medium monthly temperatures. These are most probably copied from Capt. Mac Clure’s ship log which Miertsching was allowed to consult as he had to leave his notes behind when the *Investigator* was abandoned (Miertsching, 1855, p. 1).

Figures 4 and 5 represent respectively daily mean temperature from 23 January to 27 July 1850 and from 27 July till 7 October 1850. The first period corresponds from the departure from Plymouth, England, of the *Investigator* until its passage of the Saint Lawrence Island, Alaska, U.S.A. (Fig. 4). This period comprises

the travel of the *Investigator* through the Atlantic Ocean, the passage through the Magellan Straits and its travel in the Pacific Ocean, a brief stop at Honolulu, Hawaii, and continuing till Behring’s Straits.

Figure 5 shows the decrease in temperature in function of the day of the year. On October 7th, 1850, the *Investigator* was frozen in the ice at latitude 72° 46’ N and longitude 118° 12’ W.

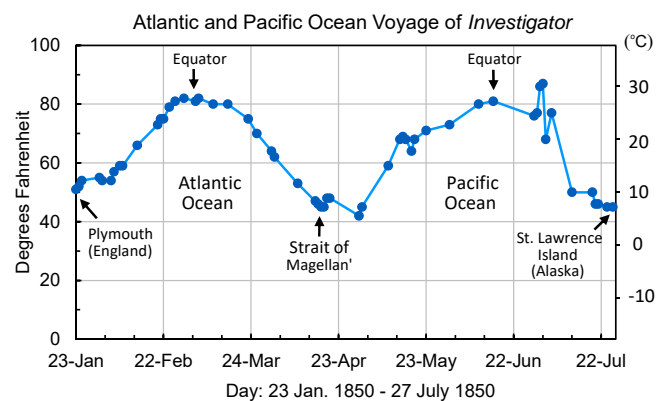


Fig. 4 Daily mean temperature in °F (on the left) and in °C (on the right) on board of the *Investigator* from 23 January till 27 July 1850.

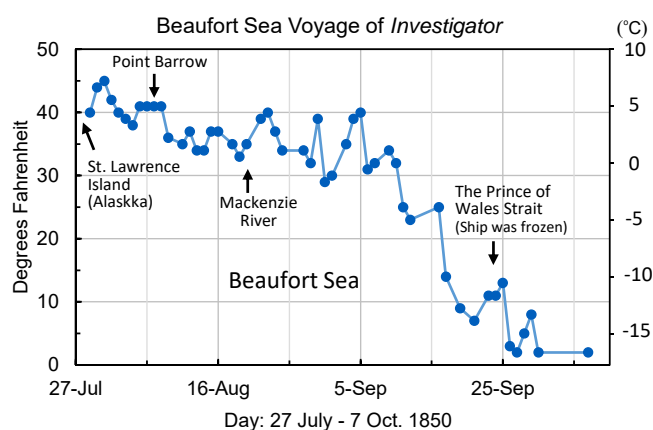


Fig. 5 Daily mean temperature in °F (on the left) and in °C (on the right) on board of the *Investigator* from 27 July till 7 October 1850.

Alexander Armstrong, Surgeon at the *Investigator*, published an *Abstract of Meteorological Journal kept on board H.M.S. Investigator, from January 1850 to March 1853*. The abstract comprises maximum, minimum and monthly mean values of the marine barometer, the aneroid barometer, the sympiesometer³², the temperature

²⁹ Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine vom Jahre 1855, Neunzehnter Jahrgang, N° 9, September 1855, p. 148.

³⁰ Nachrichten aus der Brüder-Gemeine, 37^{ster} Jahrgang, Sechstes Heft, 1855, Gnadau, p. 982; Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine vom Jahre 1855, Neunzehnter Jahrgang, N° 12, December 1855, p. 219.

³¹ Periodical Accounts, Vol. XXII, 1856/1858, p. 366; Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine, N° 12, December

1853, p. 213-230; Jahresbericht von dem Missionswerk der evangelischen Brüder-Gemeine, 1854, p. 5-7; Journal des Missions évangéliques, 1855, p. 424; Berigten uit de Heiden-Wereld, 1854, p. 7-25.

³² A sympiesometer is a compact and lightweight type of barometer that was widely used on ships in the 19th century.

of the air, the temperature of sea-water, the mean force of wind and the prevailing winds (Armstrong, 1857, Appendix). Figure 6 shows the maximum, minimum and monthly mean temperature at the *Investigator* from January 1850 (England) till March 1853 (Bay of Mercy, Baring Island). Figure 7 shows the maximum, minimum and monthly mean atmospheric pressure from February 1850 till March 1853 on board of the *Investigator*. As mentioned above, the data in Fig. 6 and 7 of the first 7 months correspond to the journey from England to Saint Lawrence Island, Alaska, U.S.A.

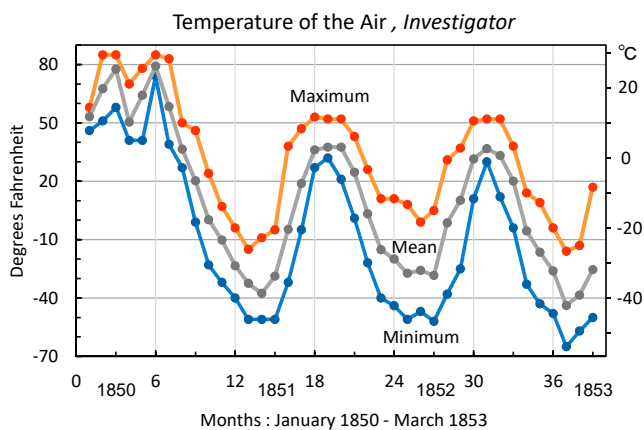


Fig. 6 Maximum, minimum and monthly mean temperature of the air in °F (on the left) and in °C (on the right), observed at the *Investigator*, from January 1850 till March 1853.

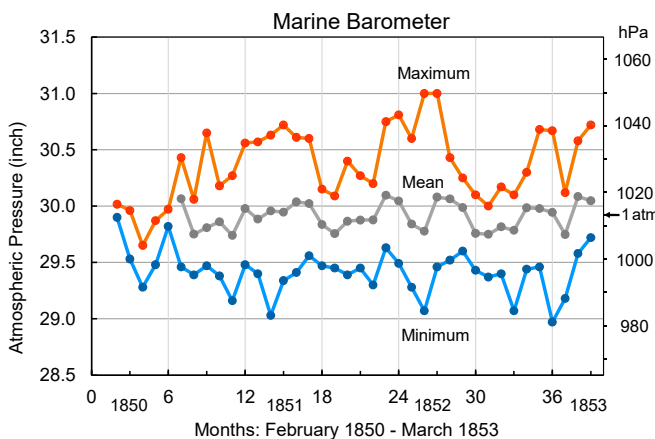


Fig. 7 Maximum, minimum and monthly mean atmospheric pressure, in inches (on the left) and in hPa (on the right), at the *Investigator* from February 1850 till March 1853.

6. Conclusion

J.A. Miertsching, translator, was able to interact with Inuit during the Arctic Expedition of the *Investigator* using the Labrador Inuit language.

Capt. Mac Clure discovered the North-West Passage

on October 26, 1850. ‘*Here I stood on Melville Island*’, Miertsching wrote, ‘*that I am the only Sorbian in these polar regions and that I am taking part in the North-West Passage that we have now discovered and has been looking for more than 300 years.*’ (Miertsching’s manuscript version, not in the published *Reise-Tagebuch*, on Sunday, 23 April 1853 – see M. & W. Opel, 2022, p. 295).

The *Investigator* was unsuccessful in the search for the lost Sir John Franklin Expedition.

The European missionary journals provide a good overview of Miertsching’s travel to the Arctic. Their material is based upon a couple of Miertsching’s personal letters, information from official sources such as the Admiralty, English newspapers like *The Times*, Miertsching’s presentations after his return from the Arctic, and finally his *Reise-Tagebuch*; all of the information being strongly embedded in the deep religious belief of the Moravian Brethren.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful for the constructive remarks and suggestions of the Reviewers. Sincere thanks are due to Prof. Dr. Shuhei Takahashi for his precious help and guidance in the writing and editing of this paper. Dr. Thea Olsthoorn’s knowledge of the history of the Moravian Brethren was helpful for text editing.

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Summary in Japanese

和文要約

イヌイット語通訳者としてインベスティゲーター号に 乗船したヨハン・アウグスト・ミールチングの アメリカ大陸周回旅行

Gaston R. DEMARÉE¹, 田上善夫²,
Astrid E.J. OGILVIE^{3,4}

¹ベルギー王立気象研究所, ²富山大学, ³ステファンソン北極研究所, ⁴コロラド大学北極・アルプス研究所

ヨハン・アウグスト・ミールチング (1817-1875) は、行方不明となったジョン・フランクリン北西航路遠征隊 (1845 年出港) の捜索のための H.M.S. インベスティゲーター号に、イヌイット語通訳として乗船した。ミールチングの航海は、1850 年にイギリスを出港し、米大陸南端を回って太平洋からベーリング海峡を通過して北西航路西側のボーフォート海に入り、3 度の越冬を経て 4 年 8 ヶ月に渡った。3 度目の越冬後、船は放棄され、東から来たレズリュート号に助けられ、最後は陸地を徒歩で横断したが、彼らは初のアメリカ大陸を周回した隊となった。インベスティゲーター号による月平均気温と気圧のデータは、極地における気象観測の最も古い記録の一つである。

Correspondence to: G. R. Demarée,
gaston.demaree@meteo.be

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