

THE KOCH FAMILY PAPERS. PART 1: NEW INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE, WORK AND ASPIRATIONS OF GREENLAND GEO-EXPLORER LAUGE KOCH (1892–1964). Peter R. Dawes. 2012. Copenhagen: Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland. 220 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 978-87-7871-335-3. DKK 150.

Lauge Koch was a towering figure in the history of geological and geographical exploration of the world's largest island, Greenland. His work stretched over more than 50 years, from the days of dog sledging to the use of aircraft in geological exploration; from small parties to massive expeditions with hundreds of participants sometimes extending over several years. His work led to a huge number of publications and revealed the nature of hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of hitherto almost unknown land. This work also had an important international aspect as it provided a solid basis for Danish claims to the sovereignty of northeast Greenland in the 1930s. Koch was also a highly controversial character who was forced to defend his name in the courts, becoming a foremost figure in the Danish media of the time. In this respect he seems to have been unique: I know of no other geologist who has achieved this celebrity status. Geologists of many nations also took part in Koch's numerous expeditions and it is unfortunate that he is not better known internationally.

The book by Peter R. Dawes follows a work by Ries (2003), which dealt largely with this judicial confrontation. The publication does not constitute a biography of this outstanding figure. Instead it does the admirable job of bringing to the public domain knowledge of the many papers and documents held by the family, which supplement the official material held in the National Archives (*Rigsarkivet*) and other Danish and foreign institutions. Without Dawes' efforts this rich material might have been forever lost. It is a work of considerable scholarship dealing with a formidable collection of papers: many hundreds of field sketches, notebooks, maps letters and other documents. It throws much new light on Koch's career but promises to be only the first of a three-part work.

After a two page abstract, an introduction sketches out the background to this work and describes the general content of the three individual parts. Part 1 (this review) uses documents that relate to the development of Koch's career, including those concerning the sovereignty question and his role in the proceedings of the International Court of Justice at The Hague in 1933. Part 2 will deal with 200 documents relating to the mapping of north Greenland 1916–1923, arranging this material in chronological order. A summary of Part 2 appears in this volume in sections 5.3 and 5.9. Part 3 deals with Koch's role in the exploration for metalliferous ores, which resulted in the discovery of the lead-zinc deposit at Mesters Vig and the

molybdenum deposit at Malmbjerg, east Greenland. The former was worked for a number of years. Its discovery and the story of the eccentric Swede, Josef Eklund, who found it, is dealt with also in this volume (section 5.18).

This is followed by a description of existing archives, both in institutions in Denmark and overseas. It also gives an outline of the judicial process against Koch led by Professor O.B. Bøggild of the University of Copenhagen and Director Victor Madsen of the Geological Survey. The accusation against Koch was that his book *Geologie von Grönland* (Koch 1935) perpetrated scientific misconduct, even fraud. The results of the court case were equivocal, but deplored the use of courts for scientific disputes of this sort.

The following Section 3 describes the nature of the material: letters, maps, manuscripts, field notebooks, logbooks, etc., photographic material, newspaper and magazine clippings and sound recordings and its relationship to the Koch family.

Section 4 describes Koch's role in the sovereignty dispute, while Section 5 constitutes the bulk of the text (118 pages) and introduces the material in chronological order. Hitherto unknown letters and documents provide new information on the ill-fated 2nd Thule Expedition 1916–1918 and the circumstances under which Koch as a student was forced to leave a man to die in the wilderness. Finally, Section 6 contains the author's personal reflection on this rich archive.

There now follow 34 figures containing pictures of Koch at various junctions in his life and other key persons, reproductions of letters, newspaper clippings, expedition plans, etc. A section entitled 'Maps' contains 14 examples that form a background to the text and illustrate some of the principles involved in Koch's work. Finally, two tables list Koch's Greenland expeditions (23 in number, some multi-year, between 1913 and 1959) and his impressive array of international titles, medals, decorations, etc., 25 in all from nine different countries from both sides of the Atlantic.

This is a very meticulous work, written by someone who has 50 years of experience in Greenland geology and a record of documenting the history of geology and exploration of this great island. He is clearly deeply inspired by his subject and the results will be of interest, if not required reading, to all enthusiasts of the history of geology and polar exploration and I thoroughly recommend the work to such readers. (Kent Brooks, Natural History Museum of Denmark, Øster Voldgade 5–7, 1350 Copenhagen K, Denmark (Kent2039@live.com)).

References

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