

Euler to Wettstein  
Berlin, 16 July 1746  
Letter 249 (2750)

[...] I have differed a reply to your first letter of 6 June, until the posting of our almanacs, the printing of which will be finished soon; however, your last letter of 10 June has insisted that I tell you everything that I have learned concerning the Russian expedition to the Pacific even though I know nothing more than what some of my friends who have returned to the Saint Petersburg Academy have said to me. Captain Spangenberg having followed the route to Kamtschatka towards the south and having arrived to the islands of Japan, the Command was under Captain Bering sailed to the east where after having sailed about 50 German miles a great body of land which he had seen previously and guessed that he found a part of California. He found that this land was inhabited; however he was not able to approach it sufficiently to make a landing. He followed this coast which went to the north-west which allowed him to come to the northeast tip of Asia. He finally arrived at the mouth of a great river which spilled from into the sea from the coast into which he sent a longboat with a well-armed dozen men to travel upriver and to scout the land at the same time ordering them not to travel too far and to return shortly. Despite this no one returned. He then sent another longboat which did not return either, from which he concluded that his crew had been massacred by the natives, which stopped him from making further efforts to scout the interior of the country. He continued his course along the North-west coast which came close to the eastern coasts of Asia where the natives are called the Eschalette who are not Russian subjects and where he encountered many small boats which traveled from one country to the other, which allows one to believe that the first inhabitants of

America used the same route to go from Asia to America.. One should also note that the way in which the inhabitants of northern America live appears to be similar to those who live at the end of Asia, and we are quite sure that the Asian countries from Irkutsk to the North-east were at one time densely populated, however now there is no one. Perhaps these peoples were driven from their lands by the Tartars and forced to migrate to America. Captain Bering was unfortunately cast onto a sand bank where he perished with most of his crew, the survivors having made it to a deserted island where they lived through a miserable winter and from the wreckage of their ship they constructed a boat on which they traveled back to Kamtschatka. Let us suppose that this discovery might be a continent of California, the question then is whether it is separate from North America or not? In the first case one might have hoped to arrive at Hudson's Bay by passage through the Pacific sea, if one exists between California and Northern America; however, in the case that California is not an island and that it extends all the way to the northernmost tip of Asia one would not be able to enter through the Hudson Bay except through the frozen sea which the northern most part of Asia. However, the discoveries that we are going to make in these places will be of the utmost importance in geography even if there is nothing to be gained commercially. The research that we are currently undertaking in Russia to find a passage to Northeast Asia is entirely different from the ones I have just discussed. We began in Archangel to which we arrived by traveling the coast in the Wegatz to the mouth of the Obi and from there we followed the passage between Asia and Nova Zemla to mouth of the Yangtze and at the third attempt we arrived from that place to the river Lena, from which we concluded that Nova Zemla is an island. From there we went from the mouth of the Lena around the northeast tip of Asia to Kamtschatka and that way one is assured that Asia is in no way connected to

America.

Along with the almanacs I will have the pleasure of sending you some copies of my new lunar tables the corrections are based on the observations which according to me should be in perfect agreement with the true movement of the moon, I know that the deceased Mr. Halley worked on lunar tables, but I did not know that they had been published; I am extremely curious them since I am not aware of any tables that have been published in England and that had followed Newton's theory except for those of that Leadbetter and Brent had provided. As for the rest, I am extremely obliged to Mr. Bradley for the very favorable feelings that he has shown to me. I would appreciate it if you would convey such to him., and to inform him that he has been inducted as a member of our Academy as have Messrs Folkes and Sterling. . The later gentleman had once offered to make me a member of the Royal Society of London; however I did not wish to cause him an inconvenience which often happens when there is a reception. And at this time, I have more concerns to be your friend and unfortunately I must be careful that I am not accused of ambitiously seeking to advance myself, which is a crime that I would not want to be labeled with. I am forever grateful for your best intentions in my favor, and if this could be done without arising suspicions that I wished for it then I will be very happy. Your care in obtaining some good tobacco demands the utmost thanks from me, even though I have not received any yet which really surprises me since I should have received a package before your first letter: I would really like to know to who Mr. Andrie addressed it.

As for news concerning electricity, nothing has been done here for a long time; however I have read through the newspapers that absolutely marvelous experiments are being conducted in Paris, Vienna, and Holland, which have undoubtedly come to your attention. I am also indebted to you concerning your well intended remarks concerning

the almanacs if they had not already been at the presses and to have added the old style dating system instead of the astrological predictions which was placed for the people who do not even purchase them and should in the future be omitted.

My family covers you with well wishes and I am very touched by your goodness and your friendship, I have the honor to be in the most perfect consideration [...]

1<sup>st</sup> Edit 11/30/03