

HISTORY

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Konoplev V.A. El Dorado of Russian America: search of fur wealth to the south of Aleutian archipelago

The quest of mythical “Land of gold” which named El Dorado is one of symbols of the colonization of American continent. However, the myths like El Dorado were not specific feature of only Spanish colonization. The main aim of the article is to consider the one of little-known problem of the geographical exploration of the Pacific North. This is the myth about the sea otter and seal wealth Islands to the south of Aleutian Islands. This belief had arisen among the Russian “promishlenniks” in early days of fur trade expeditions to the Commander and Aleutian Islands and it had been existing until 1840. Author outlines the stages of development of that legend, its elements and tries to give rational explanation to the facts that were treated by the “promishlenniks” and some Russian explorers as evidences of existence of the land to the south of Aleutian Islands. The main reason of the islands existence is known as a yearly migration of fur seals. Indeed, according to the last research, fur seals spend winter in the open sea, so the myth of the islands, located to the south of the Aleutians, can be finally unveiled by the early XX century.

Keywords: geographical myths, Russian America, the Aleutian Islands, geographical explorations.

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