



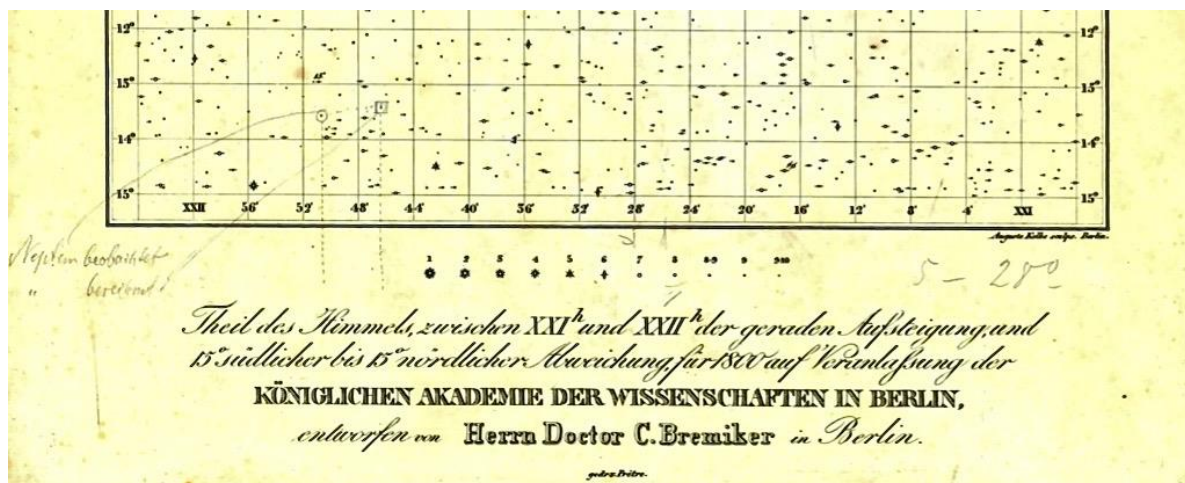
VIDEO Colloquium:

‘That star is not on the map’ – Prediction, location and controversies around the discovery of Neptune.

Tuesday, 9 February, 2021

Webcast 16:45 h

Davor Krajnovic (AIP Potsdam)



Neptune was telescopically discovered by Johann Gottfried Galle and Heinrich Louis d'Arrest in Berlin on 23rd September 1846, based on the prediction by Urbain Jean Joseph Le Verrier that reached Berlin on that same day. A few days later, the world was stunned by the remarkable discovery, by the precision of the prediction and by the unassailable validity of the Newtonian gravitation. Then, the controversy started: John Couch Adams had an equally good prediction over a year earlier, the Berlin discovery interrupted a secretive search for the planet in Cambridge. How should the new planet be called and who gets to name it? Was this actually just a "happy accident" and the discovered planet was not the same as the predicted planet? What actually happened on the discovery night, and what was the role of the mysterious sky chart that only the Berlin Observatory had? Even 150 years after the discovery, when crucial documents were "misplaced", questions were raised if the British "stole" Neptune from the French. All this overshadowed the role German astronomers played in the discovery. I will argue that their role was crucial, not only in bringing about the discovery in the first place, but also in preparing the way and in resolving some of the post-discovery controversies.

Zoom connection details:

Meeting ID: 996 1652 8733

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