

The encyclopedic forest: Reading J. G. Krünitz on wood

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Wood was the key resource at the beginning of the 19th century, for both fuel and as a construction material. It can be expected that by the end of the "Wooden Age" a large amount of knowledge about wood production and various uses of wood had been gathered.

At the same time the end of the 18th century was the height of the encyclopedia since a compilation of the entire knowledge accessible to a broad circle of interested readers was in accordance with the objectives of the Age of Enlightenment. Based upon the entries in the 'Oeconomisch-technologischen Enzyklopädie' by Johann Georg Krünitz (see below) in the present master thesis the question which knowledge about the material wood can be found in such an encyclopedia and in which way the information is presented is investigated.

The entry „Wood“

lends itself to finding a first approach to wood knowledge. It is very detailed and covers 494 pages – more than the half of volume 24. The entry starts with the meaning of the words "Holz" (wood) and "hölzern" (wooden). Krünitz lists more than 70 word meanings, word compositions and metaphors.

Further topics of the article „Wood“ are:

- Types of wood
- Tree cultivation
- Tree reproduction
- Soil science, issues of habitat
- Forest maintenance, forest pest
- Felling trees
- Lack of wood, saving wood, wood theft
- Wood trade, wood price
- Forestry law

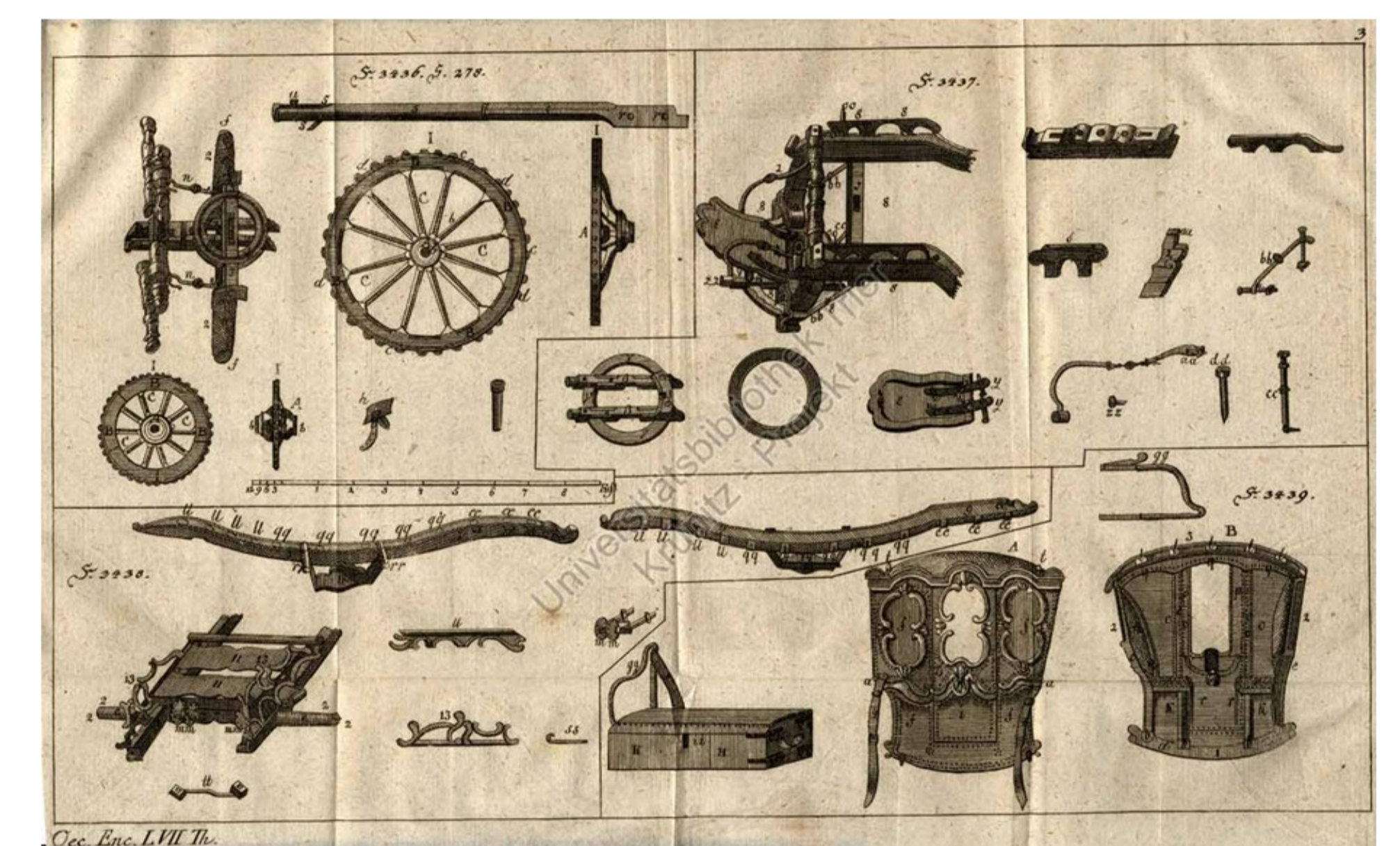
The entry „wood“ is not very rewarding in terms of the characteristic or uses of specific types of woods. More information can be found in the entries on the specific trees and shrubs.

Trees and Shrubs

There are at least 41 genera of local trees and shrubs, all of which are described in entries in the Krünitz. The entries are not consistently structured, yet all of them contain a section on the characteristic of the respective type of wood and its use. Sometimes a single sentence covers the relevant information (e.g. *rubus*, *berberis* or *hedera*), sometimes a longer section deals with the subject, e.g. in the case of trees like *acer*, *fagus*, *quercus*, *fraxinus*, *pinus*, *larix*, *carpinus* or *betula*.

Wood products

Further information can be found in entries on products, which have been made entirely or partly of wood. Krünitz states the type of wood which is most suitable for the product, yet often mentions alternatives, in case the apt type of wood is not available. Apparently craftspersons often had to switch to less suitable material.



Constituent parts of a carriage.

Detailed information on which type of wood should be used for which part can be found in the entry "Kutsche" (carriage).

Silviculture

The entry „wood“ already provides a certain insight into the forestry at the end of the 18th century. Further information on the topic can be found in the entries "Forst-Cameralwesen" and "Forst-Regal". Krünitz considered the emergence of silviculture to be a significant development, much needed at the time given the already large and rising demand for wood. Wood's contemporary significance is demonstrated by the many articles on the cultivation and harvesting of timber contained within the work. Krünitz placed high priority on the systematic and structured cultivation of trees and opposed the traditional utilization of wood in the pre-industrial peasant economy. According to Krünitz, with the exception of hunting, forests and woodland were a resource to be used exclusively for timber and firewood production.

Krünitz was not preoccupied by the growing concerns of the late Eighteenth Century that existing woodland might not be able to deliver sufficient amounts of wood to meet demand. He was convinced that timber supply could be guaranteed for future generations by new and more economical methods of forestry management, if the authorities took appropriate corrective action.

And last not least: reading "The Krünitz" is not only a valuable source of historical information but can also be highly entertaining.

In 1773 the first volume of the „Oekonomische Enzyklopädie, oder System der Land- Haus- und Staatswirtschaft, in alphabetischer Ordnung“ was published in Berlin. Initially planned as a translation of an encyclopedia by Diderot and d'Alembert published in Switzerland, Johann Georg Krünitz (1728-1796), a Berlin physician and writer, soon made it into an independent opus. Within 23 years he wrote the first 74 volumes, approximately 50000 pages, of the encyclopedia. He finished entries A to L and died while working on the entry "Leiche" (corpse).

Other authors (F. J. Floerken, H. G. Flörke, W. D. Korth und C. O. Hoffmann) continued. It took 85 years – 62 years after Johann Georg Krünitz's death – to complete the opus. At the end of this period the encyclopedia compiled 242 volumes with almost 144 000 pages.



Johann Georg Krünitz
(1728 – 1796)

Author of the first 72 volumes,
edited 1773–1796 (Aa–Le)

Oeconomische
Enzyklopädie,
oder
allgemeines System
der
Land-, Haus- und Staats-Wirtschaft,
in alphabetischer Ordnung;
aus dem Französischen überfetzt,
und mit Bemerkungen und Zusätzen vermehrt,
nach nöthigen Stufen vertheilt,
von
D. Johann Georg Krünitz.



Erster Theil,
von Aa bis Am.
Mit Kupf. Vertheilt und Separat. Gedruckt
Berlin, 1773.
bei Joachim Pauli, Buchhändler.

Digitalisation

The University Library Trier issued a digital version of the entire encyclopedia including the numerous illustrations. Since the capturing of the text by means of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) did not lead to satisfying results the entire text was typed manually. This production step was outsourced to China.

In addition the entire text was tagged according to the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC). The DDC is an internationally widely spread universal classification system categorizing library stock according to field of knowledge.

Today the full text of the encyclopedia – already known as "The Krünitz" in the author's lifetime – is freely accessible online at <http://www.kruenitz1.uni-trier.de>.

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<http://www.kruenitz1.uni-trier.de/>

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