

# Joachim Johann Nepomuk Spalowsky

## *Prodromus in systema historicum testaceorum*

### (1795 [1801 issue])



## Introduction

The Smithsonian Institution Libraries' copy is an 1801 re-issue of Spalowsky's book, originally published in 1795. Dedicatory materials constitute the only difference between the two issues.

Spalowsky seems not to have found a sponsor for the original publication of the *Prodromus*, and although a dedicatory frontispiece had been prepared and included in the 1795 issue of the book, the central panels in the illustration - meant to hold a portrait and coat of arms of the patron - had been left blank. It was quite common in this period for authors to seek the financial assistance of a patron or sponsor and to dedicate the published work to him or her. Royalty, nobility, and other prominent, wealthy people were frequently courted for such purposes. Another of Spalowsky's books is dedicated to Franz II and Maria-Theresa of Austria, for example, with ornate frontispiece portraits and an extended dedicatory address. After Spalowsky died in 1797, his widow, Anna von Spalowsky, held unsold copies of the work and continued to promote it. She succeeded in finding a noble sponsor, the Prinz Carl Ludwig, and thus in 1801 she added a dedication page, a letter, and a re-worked frontispiece, now including the Prince's portrait and arms, to the remaining copies and re-issued the book. Dr. Alan Kabat's article in the *Archives of Natural History* (1996) discusses SIL's copy of the work and the changes to the frontispiece in some detail.

Although it is not signed, the dedication frontispiece is attributed by Nissen to the engraver Paul Weindl (1771-1811). The portrait added to it for the 1801 re-issue was engraved by Samuel Czetter (or Tzetter, or Zetter) of Vienna after a drawing by Gandolf Steinhauser (or Stainhauser, 1766-1805) of Treuberg, a painter known for his portraits of Austrian aristocrats.

The *Prodromus*, in either issue, is among the rarest of published books on shells. The work is not listed in the *National Union Catalogue: Pre-1956 Imprints* (vol.560) or in the catalog database RLIN. The database OCLC lists only 2 copies in the United States: that at the Smithsonian and one (the 1801 issue in a large-paper copy) at Harvard University's Houghton Library. In addition, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia holds a copy of the original 1795 issue. Dr. Kabat has located about a dozen copies in the U.S. and Europe, both in libraries (including these 3) and privately held. A review of the annual reference works on books sold at auction, *American Book Prices Current* and the *Jahrbuch der Auktionspreise*, shows no listings for the title since 1974.

## The Book

Joachim Johann Nepomuk Anton Spalowsky. *Prodromus in Systema Historicum Testaceorum / Vorschmack einer Vollständigen Systematischen Geschichte der Schalthiergehäuse* [Introduction to a systematic history of shelled animals]. Vienna: Ignaz Alberti's Wittwe, 1795 (1801 issue). fQL404.S734 1795 SCDIRB

**Pagination:** [14], iv, 88 pp.; 1 pl. (engraving), 13 pls. (engravings, hand-colored, with captions on facing tissue guards). 41.6 cm.

**Collation:** \*2 (\*1+Z<sup>2</sup>) \*\*2 \*\*\*1 )<sup>2</sup> A-Y<sup>2</sup> ; 1 l. pl., 13 lvs.tissue, 13 lvs.pls.

Front cover; verso: Front paste-down  
Front free endpaper; verso blank

*[1]	---	Title page ; verso blank
---	---	Dedication frontispiece ; recto blank
℥[1]	---	Dedication; verso blank
℥[2]	---	Dedicatory letter (2 pp.)
*2 - ***1	---	"Praefatio/Vorrede" (8 pp.)
) <sup>2</sup>	p. I - IV	"Index/Inhalt"
A-Y <sup>2</sup>	p. 1-88	Text
---	I-XIII	Tissue guards: all rectos blank, text on versos
alternating with:		
---	I-XIII	Plates; all versos blank
		Back free endpaper; verso blank
		Back paste-down; verso: Back cover

The title page (leaf \*1, inferred) is conjugate with leaf \*2. It is clear from an examination of their paper and conjugacy that the dedicatory leaves are extraneous to the original printing and collation of the letterpress; thus they have been identified in the collation formula above as an unsigned ℥ signature of 2 leaves inserted between leaf [\*1] and leaf \*2. The dedicatory frontispiece is a separate plate and is not included in the formula but is listed after it in the plate statement; the tissue guard originally present has been torn out, and only fragments along the gutter margin remain.

The tissue guards of the 13 shell plates, though sewn in and carrying letterpress in the form of captions listing the species depicted, are not signed and were presumably printed individually as broadsides.

The 13 plates are engraved and are beautifully colored by hand with watercolor, gouache, and gold and silver leaf. These last touches were applied under the colors to produce a remarkable effect of iridescence in plates VIII (figures 1b, 2a, 5, 6), IX (fig. 7), and XIII (fig.6b). The engraver(s?) of the plates is not known: they are not signed, and Nissen provides no attribution for them. The engraver of the frontispiece, Paul Weindl, was known for his scientific (especially anatomical) book illustrations, and it is tempting to think that he did the plates of the shells as well, but this cannot presently be asserted.

The text is sewn on 6 cords and is in a contemporary binding: full paper, speckled yellow-green on brownish-gray, over paste-board. The spine cover is smooth, divided by gilt fillets (which do not correspond with the sewing stations) into 8 compartments, with a terminal fillet at the head and tail. The second compartment from the top contains the German title stamped in gilt: "Vorsmack / e. Geschichte / d. Schalthier / Gehaeuse / v. Spalowsky". The edges of the text-block are plain and uncolored.

## Provenance

The volume bears the following indications of previous ownership:

- in the bottom-most compartment of the spine cover are the gilt-stamped numbers "I.11.294", possibly a shelfmark of an early owner;
- the front board has an armorial paper label in the upper left-hand corner: below the heraldic image of a crowned lion passant standing on 3 peaks, are the numbers "10.132" hand-written in ink, a shelfmark from the library of the Schönborn Buchheim family;
- on the front paste-down is the armorial bookplate of the Schönborn Buchheim library: in a central circle a crowned lion passant standing on 3 peaks, the circle surmounted by a crown; under the circle a ribbon bearing the word "BIBLIOTHEQUE", and below that the words "des Herrn Grafen von / Schönborn Buchheim".

The Schönborn family is first noted as a feudal Rhenish house in the 15th century, according to the *Almanach de Gotha*. Barons and, later, Counts (Grafen in German, Earls in English usage), the family added the name, arms, and lands of the last Count of Buchheim (or Puchheim) by inheritance in the early 1700s. Later in that century the family divided into 3 branches: the eldest of 3 brothers, Franz Philipp (1768-1841) headed the Schönborn-Buchheim branch, based in lower Austria and Vienna.

The Schönborn-Buchheim coat of arms incorporates, among many other things, a central shield ("escutcheon") showing a crowned lion seen from the side with one foot in the air, as if walking ("passant"),

its 3 grounded feet each standing on a triangular peak (as of a mountain range), and the whole surmounted by a crown. (Interestingly, the crowns depicted on the front label and the bookplate differ; and since heraldic crown iconography traditionally differentiates between aristocratic ranks, this would seem to indicate a change the Schönborn-Buchheims' status.) The position of this design on the central escutcheon may represent the Buchheim graft to the family tree, and it is this, rather than a crest, that is depicted in the bookplate and the shelf label to symbolize the Buchheim branch of the Schönborn family.

In addition to the bookplate, there are several pencilled markings on the paste-downs:

- in the upper left-hand corner of the front paste-down is the note "Db / 19 000" (probably a bookseller's price code); and
- in the upper section of the back paste-down, several annotations have been erased and are now indecipherable (possibly a bookseller's bibliographical notes).

The SIL copy of the *Prodromus* was purchased in 1994 through a grant from the Smithsonian Institution Collections Acquisition Fund with additional funds from the Libraries' Special Collections Endowment and the National Museum of Natural History's Division of Mollusks. We would like in this regard to acknowledge the assistance and expertise of Dr. M.G. Harasewych, Research Zoologist, Division of Mollusks.

## Sources

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And the bibliographic catalogs and databases: *National Union Catalogue: Pre-1956 Imprints*, OCLC, and RLIN.

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