

Scheuren / Krannich

Retracing the Origins of Homeopathy

Leseprobe

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Preface

The Reunification of East and West Germany revealed the birthplaces of homeopathy, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, to the German people and to the world. Ironically, few people in the East German city of Meissen knew, even during the socialist era, that Hahnemann was originally from their hometown. Occasionally, a few foreigners, e.g., from India, made a "*pilgrimage*" to the city of Kothen in search of Hahnemann's house. Such places of remembrance, however, can easily be forgotten. Commemorative plaques fade, are no longer noticed or treated as peculiar relics of local history.

In socialist East Germany, homeopathy was being phased out. Lack of education and training meant no new homeopaths and signaled the possible death of the art. Homeopathy was as insignificant to the "*scientific-technical revolution*" in the socialist East, as it was to the medical optimists in the West, who were fans of more conventional medical practice.

In 1991, when I began working as an archivist at the "*Institut für Geschichte der Medizin*" (Institute for the History of Medicine) at the Robert Bosch Stiftung (Robert Bosch Foundation) in Stuttgart, I curated the collection of unpublished works of the founder of homeopathy, the physician Samuel Hahnemann (1755 - 1843). I immediately comprehended the magnificent opportunity and wealth of information made possible by the reunification of Germany.

I lived in West Berlin long enough to become annoyed by the challenges I faced when entering

East Germany before 1989. Thus, I began contacting sources in Leipzig, Dresden and Kothen in hopes of locating what was left of the Schwabe Company library at the VEB drug company (VEB = Volkseigener Betrieb/nationally-owned enterprise) in Leipzig. In Kothen, Mrs. Streuber had already successfully started the rediscovery of Hahnemann and the lay practitioner Arthur Lutze (1813 -1870) at the local historical museum. In 1996, we had the great opportunity to present an exhibition for the bicentennial celebration of homeopathy at the "*Deutsches i-fygiene-museum*" (German Museum of Hygiene) in Dresden.

While preparing for the exhibition, the Saxon roots of homeopathy became more and more apparent. We discovered homeopathic patients' associations throughout Saxony, the historical archives of the company Schwabe of Leipzig in the state archives, and stories from people in Chemnitz about naturopaths and an elderly homeopathic doctor who was quite adored by her patients.

During the following years, interest in homeopathy grew even more as former activists from East German environmentalist groups started reviving the memory of Hahnemann and homeopathy in Meissen. One laypeople's group tracked Hahnemann and Lutze in Kothen and organized homeopathic seminars. The first travel guide, published by Klaus Thon in 1992, identified Hahnemann's laboratories. Researchers in Torgau also tracked homeopathy's founder in their city and found that Hahnemann's house had a foundation dating from the Late Middle Ages. Regrettably, despite this newfound historical evidence, the discovery made it apparent that Hahnemann's legacy had faded from local memory.

The town of Georghthal received renewed attention when researchers rediscovered the place of Hahnemann's first treatment for the mentally insane, where he used an empathetic method of communication. Additionally, the great German homeopath Constantine Hering, known as the "*father of American homeopathy*", became the focus of renewed attention in his hometown of Oschatz, where his birthplace still stands today.

In this way, various local participants worked together to return the origin of homeopathy to its proper place in local, regional and international memory. This was often aided by the efforts of West German homeopaths. I particularly remember very committed partners from Karlsruhe, Frankfurt and Berlin who made this rediscovery their personal business.

This travel guide will be of great use to people from all over the world who might ask, for example, in Stuttgart for guided tours of Hahnemann's or Hering's birthplace. Hopefully, they will follow the many suggestions in this book which provide not only nice pictures, but useful information. The book also provides a great opportunity to rediscover Germany from a historically medical perspective. I hope that the book will find many readers and that its contents will raise further questions that shed light on the past. Those who have been involved in putting together this new landscape of homeopathy are aware of how much fun such work can be. Special thanks to these very people for their efforts and achievements, and congratulations on your successful work!

Prof. Dr. Martin Dinges, Stuttgart



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