

BOOK REVIEW: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PHARMACOHISTORY OF TRANSYLVANIA. PHARMACIES OF SIBIU COUNTY – BY OVIDIU N. MAIOR

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As the distinguished author, Dr. Pharm. Ovidiu N. Maior (Gneisenaustr. 11 - 66119 Saarbrücken - Germany) confesses in the *Foreword*, "this book reproduces to a large extent the doctoral thesis under the scientific supervision of Prof. Dr. Doc. Iosif Spielmann, defended at the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy of Târgu-Mureş in 1979".

The book is extremely interesting. The first 180 pages make up *Part I*, structured into four chapters: *Beginnings of pharmacy in Sibiu, the free profession period, Pharmacy between 1750-1876, health care centralization, Pharmacy between 1876-1918, Professional unity, the fruit of national unity, 1918-1949/53*, and closes with an extensive bibliographic list, including 199 references.

A good connoisseur of the past glory of the city in central Romania, the author collects, processes and integrates the historical data with great dedication and commitment. He mentions, then provides documentary proofs of Sibiu as the place of creation of the first *hospital* in 1292 and of the activity of the first doctors and pharmacists on the present territory of Romania. He highlights the fact that the first and oldest public pharmacy was founded in 1494 and developed in Sibiu. The author describes and evidences the favorable historical reality for the development of the city, which entailed the need for adequate health care organization. Then, he shows that in the early 17th century Sibiu became the first city with two public pharmacies. And when at the end of the same 17th century it was invested with the role of capital of the Great Autonomous Principality of Transylvania, it became the center from which the entire medical and pharmaceutical activity in the territory was conducted. The author shows that the Sibiu archives from this period hold "documents of utmost importance in all fields of activity, including pharmacy. Studying documents of pharmaceutical interest, some of which unknown before, evidencing their value, clarifying some facts and inconsistencies, interpreting them and assigning them to the different historical development stages of pharmacy were the main objectives of research included in the first part of the book".

In *Part II*, entitled *Pharmacies of Sibiu county, monographs*, the pharmacies are ordered according to the year of their creation on the territory of the current

Sibiu county, with the mention that "similarly, they are classified according to the four chapters of the first part of the book". The presence of a bibliographic list completing the monograph of each pharmacy is noteworthy. These lists are frequently extensive and in the case of the monograph of the first pharmacy, the city pharmacy that became the "*Black Eagle*", created in 1494, the thorough list includes 38 indices.

In the monograph of each pharmacy, the author follows a plan that renders the history of various changes in the national and local administration, also marking the transfer from one owner to another. Proper attention is paid to the main biographical data of pharmacists and to their professional-scientific achievements. In the same spirit, the author expresses his hope to save from oblivion the "activity of many pharmacists who contributed by their work to the advancement of the profession, to the improvement of the population's health in towns and villages, to the development of the cultural level".

A study as extensive as that presented in this book is extremely important for the history of pharmacy on the territory of Romania, because the preparation of drugs and their supply to the population were different in the Great Autonomous Principality of Transylvania compared to the Danubian Principalities. The creation of pharmacies on the territory of Romania was entirely dependent on the evolution of these two regions, on the rate at which urbanization was carried out and state administration was organized. Thus, in Transylvania, the authorities of Sibiu city took into possession the "Black Eagle" Pharmacy in 1494, while in Wallachia and Moldavia, the first pharmacies were the "Colţea" Hospital Pharmacy opened in Bucharest in 1704 and "Saint Spyridon" Hospital Pharmacy, founded in Iaşi in 1757.

The book is also interesting to read because, while keeping focus on Sibiu, we can discover many names that became well known in the development of the profession. This is the case of the "Black Eagle" Pharmacy, which belonged for 140 years, between 1809 and 1949, to a dynasty named Müller, an elite of the organization and practice of drug preparation, participants and dignitaries in the social life of the city.

The last data in the monograph of each pharmacy integrate the unit and its staff in the events of the years 1949 and 1953, corresponding to the nationalization of urban and rural pharmacies, respectively. As a result of nationalization, pharmacists dispossessed of their assets became state employees, which ended the practice of pharmacy as a free profession in Romania.

Two map drawings are placed at the beginning of the two parts of the volume. The first presents the delimitation of Transylvania as a province of the Romanian state, significantly reduced compared to the historical *Great Autonomous Principality of Transylvania*, which included the regions of Banat, Crişana and Maramureş. The second map shows the territory of Sibiu county, on which the localities with pharmacies are marked.

Throughout the book, many photographs representing portraits of pharmacists, premises of pharmacies, interior images and scenes, personalized labels, copies of numerous original documents are reproduced.

The *Index of names* with its approximately 900 entries that complements the book is noteworthy, being an important working instrument for readers as well as documentalists.

The Contents at the end of the book is also extremely useful, because for *Part II*, it is a chronological ordering of the 52 pharmacies.

Honorius Popescu