



Book Review

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Von Sonnenuhren, Sternwarten und Exoplaneten—Astronomie in Jena by Reinhard E. Schielicke (Verlag Dr. Bussert & Stadel, Jena-Quedlinburg, 2008).

Here is an impressive historical work that we can recommend right away to those who read German and are interested in the history of European astronomy—in this case via an astronomy “hot spot” that shared the fate of 20th-century Germany.

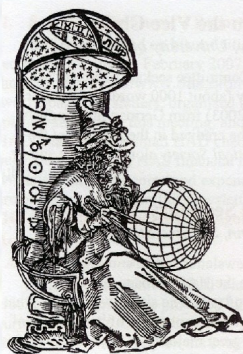
Jena is the second largest town of Thuringia, with more than 100,000 inhabitants today. First mentioned in 1182, Jena underwent different dependencies and became a strong focus of resistance to the Napoleonic occupation in the early 19th century. Jena was incorporated into the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1949. Since 1990, it has been part of the Federal Republic of Germany. A list of famous citizens includes the poets Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, the reformer Martin Luther, the philosopher Wilhelm Schlegel, as well as, closer to our interests here, Otto Schott, inventor of fireproof glass, Carl Zeiss, founder of the Zeiss Company, and the physicist Ernst Abbe.

Schielicke’s book covers the astronomy-linked activities in Jena, from the late Middle Ages (founding of the university in 1558) to current investigations of exoplanets, including the manufacturing of optical instruments at Zeiss and more public facets such as sundials in the Middle Ages and the local observatory. Abbe’s directorship of the 19th century observatory and the Karl Schwarzschild observatory are included.

The book concludes with several interesting appendices, a list of bibliographic sources, and an index of names. Probably some readers would have liked a general index as well—and this could be a suggestion for a possible second edition. The book contains many illustrations (over 370), unfortunately all in black and white. One would certainly have appreciated color for the most recent pictures.

But those two reservations do not remove anything from the intrinsic interest of this formidable historical work. One would wish similar compilations for all major astronomy centers of the world.

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