

## Theodor Siebert: A Biography

By Bernd Wedemeyer

Translated by David Chapman

Adolf Eduard Theodor Friedrich Siebert was born on October 25, 1866 in Weißenfels on the River Saale and was baptized on November 16 in the Evangelical Church of St. Mary. His father was a tenant brewer and merchant named Christoph Gottlieb Siebert (died 1872). His mother's name was Amalie (née Weilßhahn).

As was usual at this time, Christoph Siebert invited several godfathers to the baptism: Adolf Papian, a person of independent means from Merseburg, the landowner Eduard Weißhahn from Schaditz, the merchant Franz Arendt, and the homeowner Friedrich Siebert from Querfurt. And from these men Theodor got three of his first names. To judge from the professions and the familial relationships which they imply, the Sieberts were a relatively respectable and at the least an adequately prosperous family. Christoph Siebert was financially secure and had leased a brewery; a relative of his wife, perhaps her father, owned an estate.<sup>1</sup>

The Siebert family moved relatively frequently: before they came to Weißenfels about 1865-66, they lived in Kreypau near Merseburg and in Wadendorf, the birthplace of Christoph Siebert's wife. Likewise, they remained in Weißenfels only a few years; soon after 1868 they had already left the place in order to return to Kreypau once more. However, Christoph Siebert died suddenly. According to his son, Theodor Siebert, his father's demise came about in the year 1872 "as a result

of a tragedy [involving] the collapse of a building." His mother apparently remarried after this, because Siebert mentions a stepfather.

Theodor was not Christoph and Amalie's only child. He had an older brother who, beginning around 1899, is reported to have lived in South America and in New Guinea, but as Theodor later reveals, he only had minimal contact with his sibling. A third Siebert child was born on March 18, 1868 but the infant died seven days after its birth.<sup>2</sup>

Hardly anything is known about Siebert's childhood. He himself wrote in 1898: "From my youth . . . I was frail and puny, and this did not aid in my great desire to learn how to develop my body effectively." In addition to twelve years in this condition, Siebert claimed that he also suffered from a "chronic catarrh of the upper lung" which handicapped him physically so much that at the age of 14 upon completion of his schooling in the year 1880, he weighed barely 41 kilograms (90 pounds).<sup>3</sup> It should be noted, however that Siebert's remarks on his alleged physical disabilities during his childhood and youth are to be reviewed with caution; passages of this type appear in many autobiographies of later health reformers. These stories are usually mere stereotypes that are used as rhetorical devices in order to be able to present even more effectively the positive developments based on one's own self-designed health-restoration methods which occurred later.<sup>4</sup>

To judge from his statements, Siebert's school-days gave hints of what was to come, since he claims that his "unusual mania for reading" was formed primarily due to his "desire and love for physical exercises." In retrospect, Siebert lamented that because of the shortage of state trained gymnastics instructors and because of the extremely poor gymnastics instruction, he could pursue this passion no further. Thus, a few sporadic school gymnastics had to suffice for the time being.

In the year 1880 Siebert left the school and began an apprenticeship in commerce, but after one and a half years he switched to learning the trade of beer brewing on the advice of his stepfather. When he was eighteen, he took his "first trip to Berlin as a skilled worker." From 1885-86, he finally began his years of practical learning and traveling, when he went to Leipzig, Dresden and German-speaking Switzerland, and Pilsen. He wandered to Munich, Salzburg, Linz and all the way to Vienna. Siebert described the heavy work in the brewery as "bone crushing: sixteen-hour work days during the week with three one-hour breaks; Sundays only ten-hour days . . . for several weeks my bones trembled and I could not sleep."<sup>5</sup>

By 1886 Siebert was working in Vienna and Jedlersee as a brewer, and it was there that he had "his first impressions of strength sports" which were destined never to leave him. "We had many Bavarians there among the 130 brewers, and the best of them performed and showed off all kinds of strength stunts. . . . A fellow named Pongratz, who was only a moderate-sized man, hooked his middle finger into the wide leather work belts worn by two of the young men, and in this way he yanked them hither and yon. He pulled an empty beer wagon in the same way."<sup>6</sup>

These experiences give an authentic picture of the strongman scene as it was then: heavy athletics and feats of strength were especially popular about 1880-90 particularly among craftsmen, laborers and brewers, and it was precisely the brewing centers of Munich and Vienna that gradually became bastions of strength athletics.

Siebert's passport expired early in March of 1886 however, and since he would soon be inducted into the military anyway, he returned home. Impressed by his experiences in Jedlersee, Siebert assembled at home

his first set of barbells—which consisted of a wagon axle and two 50-pound-weights—and began weightlifting for the first time. His national service interrupted this activity, and in November 1887 Siebert was transferred to the 5th company of the 137th infantry regiment and was stationed in Strasbourg and in Alsace. His last year of military service ended in 1889-90.<sup>7</sup>

Siebert returned home after completion of his military duty. Shortly afterwards, as he later reported, "I got news of the loss of my father and his estate." His natural father had died in 1872, well before his stepfather. Thus in the year 1892, Siebert opened his own brewery and restaurant with the "profits from the paternal business," so with this enterprise he maintained the family tradition. The location of this first business is not known, although it had to have been in Kreypau or Merseburg.<sup>8</sup>

Up to this time, Siebert seems to have led a conventional life appropriate to his status. Siebert's eventual break with his solid, middle-class profession and his turn to writing, independent publishing and gymnasium ownership was quite unconventional for this time. Judging from his previous behavior, it would be difficult to foresee this switch although he had clearly broken away because of the unique events in his formerly conventional life. Siebert had begun to devote himself to theosophy and the occult. In the year 1898, he remarked in an informal note that he had become "aware in his 18th year . . . of the teachings of the vegetarians as well as spiritualism." Moreover, he declared in 1922 that as a young man he "had devoted nearly all his free time to the study of occult books." Siebert reported in a 1912 article in the occult magazine *Prana* that as a 21-year-old he had placed himself under the care of the hypnotist Albin Krause, who practiced as a medium in his hometown. In the year 1911, Siebert officially declared himself to be a theosophist.<sup>9</sup> This now meant that as a lower-middle-class, small town resident, Siebert devoted himself to vegetarianism, spiritualism and theosophy, all of which in the early 1880's were still quite out of the ordinary.<sup>10</sup>

The first "Theosophical Society" was established in 1875 in America; starting in the late 1870's the first small groups had also formed in the German empire. It was not until 1884-1886 that the "Germania"

Theosophical Society came into existence in Elberfeld; Dr. Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden became its president. He then established the “German Theosophical Society” in Berlin in 1894. After a very short time however, the movement split and regional groups and individual lodges arose. For example, in 1897 the Society came under the control of Dr. Franz Hartmann (1838-1912) with the foundation in Munich of the *Internationalen Theosophischen Verbrüderung* (International Theosophical Brotherhood) or ITV, and this became an offshoot group from the original society. These so-called “Hartmannists” moved their headquarters to Leipzig in 1898 and then named themselves the “Theosophical Society of Germany.” From about 1900, the different lodges and branches which were connected in the European section tried to overcome their divisions and to establish a common German organization. In the course of this development, the formation of the “German section of the theosophical society” was begun in 1902; Dr. Rudolf Steiner became the Secretary-general.<sup>11</sup>

It is unclear where Siebert aligned himself in these theosophical groups. If he had felt affiliated with the ITV, the headquarters in Leipzig would have been responsible for the city and district of Halle as well as Saxony. This information would have been held in the ITV’s “Central Theosophical Archives” but records no longer exist of this province, so it is impossible to make a statement about Siebert’s possible official membership.<sup>12</sup>

Around 1885, Siebert was also attracted to vegetarianism which was likewise absolutely unacceptable socially and was practiced by only a few people who functioned at the fringes of society.<sup>13</sup> Thus the question arises, where and how was Siebert exposed to these various practices for the first time and how did he continue for as long as he did? Apart from some early encounters in his hometown, it seems likely that he experienced many such ideas starting about 1887 during his years of traveling in Berlin and Vienna. The answers to these questions are not insignificant in their implications, for despite the vagueness of his early, traditional values concerning his impressions of vegetarianism and spiritualism and the ways they are connected with physical culture, the reason for some of his later activities and theo-

ries are already discernable.

Sometime between 1892 and 1894—Siebert himself made contradictory statements—he once more began (and this time it was destined to last a long time) “to become active in strength sports and heavy athletics in a practical and theoretical way” and to become (as it was then termed) a “self-taught scholar.” Siebert wrote in 1926, that he met Josef Haupt (1865/66-1935), editor of the *Münchener Illustrierten Athletik-Zeitung* [*Munich Illustrated Athletic News*] in the year 1892. Haupt published his internationally renowned newspaper from 1891 to 1901; however, Siebert himself declared in 1936 (as well as in 1919) that he had written for a paper in the years 1892 and 1893. On the other hand, he had written in 1898, that it was only “through sheer coincidence that I became aware of the *Münchener Athleten-Zeitung* and of Mr. Haupt in the year 1894.” Siebert began writing for the athletic newspaper sometime between 1894 and 1895, so he certainly gained practical and theoretical experience for close to half a year prior the appearance of his early and profound articles. On the other hand, this gives evidence of his activities in his earliest years of strength training and shows the difference between his later years and his formative attempts. Possibly he wanted to illustrate his monopoly as well as his influence on the development of strength sports and thereby to make his contributions seem more than they actually were.<sup>14</sup>

Discussions about these minutiae are not mere “number crunching”; rather, they relate to the early development of weight training and its influences. The first club devoted to strength sports was established in 1879 in Hamburg and was called the “Wandsbecker Athletenklub.” In the 1880’s, a few more opened up, but not very many clubs were founded in the succeeding years. The first national organization for nonmilitary citizens, the *Deutscher Athleten-Verband* (DAV) [German Athletic Association], did not appear until 1891, the same year Haupt began his athletic newspaper in Munich.

These early attempts to build strength were still carried out in a relatively haphazard manner; they used primitive equipment and were conducted without knowledge of training methods or nutritional theories. On the basis of numerous empirical experiments on themselves,

athletes in the 1890's gradually began to develop their own training techniques. Siebert combined the earlier, empirically tested training observations done by himself and others together with scientifically sound anthropometric information from physiologists. With the appearance of his definitive work *The Catechism of Athletics* in 1898, Siebert published the first comprehensive technical training system based on practical experience. Because he started so early with his experiments, Siebert is therefore entitled to be considered a true pioneer.<sup>15</sup>

Virtually at the same time as his first inclusion in the *Illustrierten Athletik-Zeitung* and his acquaintance with Haupt (circa 1894), Siebert began to lift weights regularly once more: "In a lonely little village, cut off from all sporting life, I procured for myself two old 25 kg. (55 pound) weights and was glad when I could press the same, one in each hand; then after several months, I could go five or six times with both arms."<sup>16</sup>

Three significant events occurred for Siebert in the years 1893-95. On October 24, 1893—which was thus a day before his birthday—he married Alma Jenni Müller in Pleismar near Naumburg. Alma was born on October 8, 1865 in Werdau and would die on September 24, 1920 in Halle. It is not known how and under what circumstances Siebert met his wife, but in his occult autobiography in *Prana*, he wrote that around 1887 he had "seen my future bride [whom he would marry only six years later] in a hand-held mirror," during an "experiment with magical smoke." Their daughter Elsa Alma Helene Siebert—she was always called Else—came into the world on the January 4, 1895 and would remain his only child. She was also born in Pleismar near Naumburg.<sup>17</sup>

It is most remarkable however that in the year 1895 the Siebert family moved to Alsleben-on-the-Saale, a small town consisting of some two thousand inhabitants and which Siebert was not destined to leave until 1913. During this period, Siebert's most intense period of theoretical and practical activity related to weight training and *Lebensreform* undoubtedly declined.<sup>18</sup> Returning to his first professional activity, Theodor Siebert purchased from A.T. Schieferdecker the brewery and bottling works in Alsleben which was located at number 2 Fischerstraße near the banks of the Saale. In 1891, the local newspaper in Alsleben, *Der*

*Beobachter an der Saale* (The Observer on the Saale) had called for the foundation of an athletic club, however it was only through Siebert's commitment that the "Gymnastics and Athletic Club of Alsleben-on-the-Saale" come into existence on November 5, 1896. It was located in "Siebert's Beer Hall." Siebert became its first chairman in 1897, and in 1898 he organized the first anniversary party of the young club.<sup>19</sup> It was common at this time for weight-training clubs to be organized and run in beer halls or inns where both the meetings and the training could take place. Because of their strength, brewers were frequently among the best of the heavy lifters, anyway. There was sufficient room in restaurants for training. In addition, there was a great deal of wine and beer consumed, not only after, but also during training. Many club members retired to a tavern after their workouts, and there they fostered comradeship and good fellowship.

Under Siebert's management the gymnastics and athletics organization developed into a regional union which was quite successful, and to which large numbers of members belonged. In 1901 the weight training section of the club broke away and established an independent "strength sport club." Here, the disciplines typical of heavy training were pursued: weight-lifting, wrestling and feats of strength were all practiced. The athletes then demonstrated these activities at fairs or circuses. Thanks to these activities, Alsleben gradually developed into a regional center for professional wrestling; local wrestlers from Alsleben as well as nationally famous professionals also gathered there. Generally speaking, from approximately 1880 onward professional wrestling was one of the most constant, most lasting and most lucrative components of the entertainment industry, and thus found in Alsleben both assets and adherents.<sup>20</sup>

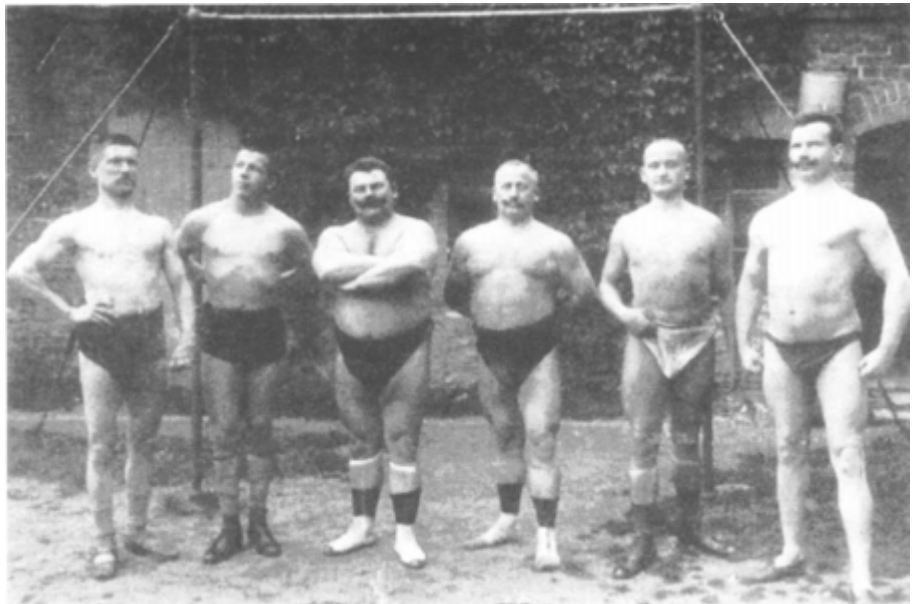
In 1910 the two Alsleben clubs split once more. A sporting club for working people broke away from the middle-class gymnastics club, and the heavy weight training club got lasting competition from the "Siegfried Workers Athletic Union." Siebert himself switched over to the workers athletic club "Siegfried," and he later became first chairperson of this organization in 1910, a fact which he reported in the minutes of the club's general meeting. Siebert remained connected to both mid-

dle-class sport as well as worker-sport in later years. He aligned himself continually on the side of his co-workers at the middle-class athletics magazines; however, he repeatedly wrote articles also for the other side which appeared in *Die Athletik*, the workers' athletic journal which was founded in 1921.<sup>21</sup>

In 1898 Siebert published his first book, *The Catechism of Athletics*, which became a standard work for the study of training in strength sports. In the same year, Siebert traveled to the sports exhibition in Vienna. Here he would meet two significant personalities which would change the rest of his life. The first was Dr. Vladislav von Krayevski, a physician and strength athlete from St. Petersburg (1841-1901) who owned and operated a famous private gymnasium in the Russian capital where he trained amateur weight lifters as well as professional wrestlers and circus strongmen. As a doctor, Krayevski was in a position to target and develop scientific training methods which were far superior to the self-taught attempts of many weight lifters of the time. His articles were also published by Joseph Haupt in his Munich sporting journal.

The other person that Siebert encountered was the Estonian professional wrestler, *Lebensreform* advocate and future esoteric writer George Hackenschmidt, with whom Siebert formed a lifelong friendship and with whom he would later develop training techniques, nutritional theories and *Lebensreform* methods. Thanks to his success in sport, Hackenschmidt became a millionaire. After completing his athletic career, he retired to London in the 1930's and from there authored several books on philosophy.<sup>22</sup>

After the successful publication of Siebert's book, the number of sportsmen who appealed to him for advice about becoming strong increased; at this time, Siebert's book was the only sensible training instruction for strength athletes. He was also able to record his practical opinions on scientific training and *Lebensreform*;



Siebert, left, with five athletes at his training school.

soon however, Siebert's involvement in the Alsleben Athletic Organization no longer offered him a sufficient forum. So around the middle of the year 1901 he opened the "first training school for athletics and physical culture in Germany" at 2 Fischerstraße in Alsleben. This school was organized along commercial lines and in addition, patients could choose not only from full-care and training regimens, but exercise areas, sunbathing facilities, as well as lodging and meals were all available. Of course, such things as overnight lodgings and meals presented no problem to an innkeeper like Siebert. Thanks to this extensive array of training and rejuvenation, the school was consequently a typical—albeit early—example of a *Lebensreform* institution, at least as it was described again and again in theoretical writings at the turn of the century (but only rarely put into practice).<sup>23</sup>

Virtually at the same time, Siebert initiated another enterprise, a "monthly magazine for physical culture and mental improvement" which he named *Siegfried*; however, it only lasted for two issues and ceased publication in 1902.<sup>24</sup>

His publishing and literary ambitions automatically led Siebert to consider establishing his own publishing house. He had already started his magazine *Siegfried* in 1902 at his own expense and had it printed

by M. Schulze in Alsleben. In addition, he had announced officially that starting on March 4, 1904 he conducted a business in Alsleben selling sporting books and equipment in the office of his pub at 2 Fischerstraße. However, to judge from a report in the *Illustrierten Athletik-Sportzeitung*, he had already been selling self-published athletic postcards and books at least as early as 1902. Starting on November 15, 1910, the retail outlet of his bookstore was in a former bakery at 14 Fischerstraße. On June 1, 1904, Siebert finally established a publishing business which was listed under the name of “Theodor Siebert” in the directory of the German Book Dealers’ Association.<sup>25</sup> Thus, an extremely creative phase of literary activity began for Siebert during his time in Alsleben; besides numerous articles for various newspapers and magazines he also published such books and brochures as *Be strong!* (1905), *The Way to Strength*, (1906/07 and also 1910), *Strength-Sports* (1907), which was an enlarged edition of his *Catechism* as well as, *Under Which System Should I Train?* (1910).<sup>26</sup>

However, after “a twelve-year sojourn,” as Siebert wrote in 1936, “unfortunately, in the autumn of 1913 I closed up my house and left Alsleben, the place that had become my second home.” Because of growing competition from other restaurants, he could no longer keep his beer-pub. The necessary auction occurred in 1913; his successor changed his bookstore into a summer-cafe with a garden.<sup>27</sup> Siebert left the city and moved to Bernburg for a short time. There, starting in December of 1913 he conducted a sort of physical culture correspondence school in which he offered to men, women and children “people’s courses,” but for professional athletes, he taught “individualized courses.” Apparently, it was also possible to take a class directly on the spot in Bernburg at his residence at 27 Market Street. However, Siebert remained only about half a year in the city, and he left in the early summer of 1914.<sup>28</sup>

In 1914 Siebert moved to Halle where he remained until his death in the year 1961. At first his business was located at various transitory addresses: first he moved to Trothaerstraße 271 and then to Friedrichstraße 6—later August-Bebel-Platz 6—in a house that apparently belonged to the Sieberts them-

selves. His mail-order book and sports equipment business that between the years 1916 and 1923 had still been located in Viktor-Scheffel-Straße 4, were brought together in his ground floor apartment.<sup>29</sup> Theodor Siebert’s publishing house was established in Halle from June 4, 1914 under the name “E. Siebert”; Mrs. Alma Siebert née Müller is listed as the owner. The company name changed back to “Theodor Siebert” in 1920 after the death of his wife. Although the publishing business declined in the Thirties, Siebert still managed his bookstore up until the year 1952.<sup>30</sup>

In the intervening time, Theodor Siebert indeed published more in his publishing house; from then on, however, he published his writings on strength sports with one exception outside the family business. *Should I Become a Professional Athlete or Wrestler?* was brought out in 1919 at “E. Siebert Publishers,” but his other works and brochures such as *Training Methods: Be Strong!* and *The New Strength Sports*, (both 1923) were published at Dr. Fritz Frommel’s athletic publishing house in Ludwigsburg. *The Healthy Body Movement* appeared in 1931; this was a book that Siebert wrote along with a doctor from Coburg, Dr. August Kühner, who (under the pseudonym of Henry Waldow) had written several manuals for healthy living.<sup>31</sup> It appeared at the G.A. Publishing House in Dresden after an attempt to publish it with the renowned Eugen Diedrichs Verlag in Jena fell through.<sup>32</sup>

Siebert produced only one book in his own publishing house: *Leaders of Practical Occultism*, which appeared in 1921. Although Siebert had earlier devoted much time to occult phenomena and had written about it in essays, he returned to this complex topic which, however, he dealt with just as skillfully as he did his other interests. Siebert also served as editor for two occult novels in addition to contributing two original introductions. Between 1919 and 1935, he published at Globus Publishers in Berlin, *The Secret of Hildburghausen*, by Albert Emil Brachvogel (1824-1878) and in 1925, he served as editor for the novel *Zanoni* by Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873). His bookstore specialized in sports, *Lebensreform* and self-improvement, but most of all in books on the occult.<sup>33</sup>

At this point the question arises whether the reason for Siebert’s decisive turn to esoterica and occultism

was really a result of his failure to reach the goals in the area of strength sports (especially after 1945) which he envisaged for himself. Admittedly, he was gradually acknowledged as a leader in the profession (at least to a certain extent), yet this did not ultimately lead to financial security or even to an official position in the field of sports. In a 1936 interview in the *Halle Zeitung* Siebert referred to himself as, “an extremely unfortunate fellow”; his friends Karl Labbert and Edgar Müller (1898-1979) later remarked repeatedly that Siebert was regarded highly in the profession, but he had attained no material benefits from it.<sup>34</sup> So the self-educated Siebert increasingly retreated from active participation and concentrated more strongly after about 1920 on occult and esoteric fields.<sup>35</sup> This withdrawal from active reform to an isolated spirituality was typical of many contemporary reformers who retreated from disappointment over their lack of political success into esoteric introspection or self-absorbed philosophies. The former revolutionaries and Social reformers Georg von Langsdorff, Gustav Struve, Eduard Baltzer or Johannes Gutzzeit (1853-1935) may serve here as examples.<sup>36</sup>

Siebert was the recipient of additional financial and personal difficulties after the takeover of the National Socialists. Klaus Schober reports that Else Siebert had told him in 1965 that during the Third Reich her father was denounced and forced to get rid of the books in his bookstore by “undesirable” authors, an occurrence that Else Siebert also mentions in her letters to Delaitte. Although Siebert described himself as “apolitical,” as Schober further reports, Siebert gave assistance to various opponents of the Nazis. Because of his beliefs he was denied an opportunity in 1935 to become an honorary official of Alsleben.<sup>37</sup>

Even after 1945, Theodor Siebert continued to live in straitened circumstances. He was the sole support of his daughter Else, who was unmarried and still resided with him. Because of his advanced age, he also had to close his used book store in 1950, and in 1952 he gave up his book business entirely. After the closing, Siebert and his daughter survived on a small pension that covered only about one fourth of his living costs, and they lived on the revenues from Else Siebert’s dog breeding and from the rental of a room in their house. They were supported by old friends of the Sieberts like

Karl Labbert, who in the Fifties tried to persuade the East German Sports Authority to help Siebert financially because of his contributions in the past. Labbert’s involvement came to naught however. Theodor Siebert died while waiting for governmental assistance on April 12, 1961. He was blind and very weak physically. His daughter Else followed him on October 7, 1971.<sup>38</sup>

#### Notes:

1. See the baptismal records of the Protestant parish church of St. Mary in Weißenfels, Jg. 1855, S. 285, Nr. 1.
2. See the admittedly occult-oriented but nevertheless essentially factual account of Siebert’s life in Th. S. Wirtimtal’s [i.e. Theodor Siebert], “Das zweite Gesicht: Merkwürdige Ereignisse aus meinem Leben.” In *Prana: Organ für angewandte Geheimwissenschaften*, 4 (3 Jg.) 1911/12, 137-139, 128; Theodor Siebert: “Dem Andenken August Bethmanns” in *Beobachter an der Saale* of November 7, 1906; See also the corresponding church registry from the parish of Weißenfels.
3. See Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus der Athletik*, Weißenfels 1898, 41; See also the autobiographical précis in Theodor Siebert, “Wie ich ‘Athletenvater’ wurde” in *Die Athletik: Illustrierte Monatsschrift für volkstümlichen Sport* 8 (2. Jg.) 1921/22, 63.
4. Compare, for instance, this statement by Eugen Sandow from *Kraft und wie man sie erlangt*, Berlin 1904, 112 ff. “So bleib ich bis zum 18ten Jahre zart.” Similar passages are in the work of the right-wing naturist writer Richard Ungewitter, *Die Eiweißtheorie*, Stuttgart, 1908, 210 (“ich als schwächlich veranlagter Knabe”), or as with the naturopath Adolf Just in *Die Heilerde*, Blankenburg 1919, 16, who claimed that he “äußerster Krankheitsnot, bei schweren Nervenleiden,” and that he found his salvation in cures from Mother Earth. Siebert’s unverifiable claims of sickness as a child were thus accepted uncritically by readers of similar works in the genre.
5. Theodor Siebert, “Wie ich ‘Athletenvater’ wurde”; A.A.F., Th. Sieberts’ sechzigster Geburtstag.; Th. S. Wirtimtal, “Das zwite Gesicht.”
6. Theodor Siebert, “Wie ich ‘Athletenvater’ wurde” (2<sup>nd</sup> installment) in *Die Athletik: Illustrierte Monatsschrift für volkstümlichen Sport* 9 (2. Jg.) 1921/22, 17; A.A.F., Th. Sieberts’ sechzigster Geburtstag.

7. See Theodor Siebert "Wie ich 'Athletenvater' wurde," (second installment); A.A.F., Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag, 74; Th. S. Wirtimtal, "Das Zweite Gesicht," 137ff; Theodore Siebert, *Katechismus*, 42; Ernst August Kampmann, *Aus der Geschichte des deutschen Kraftsports*, Kassel 1950, 58.
8. See A.A.F., "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag," 74; Th.S. Wirtimtal, "Das zweite Gesicht," 137; Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 42ff, v.G. [i.e. Adolf von Guretzki], "Theodor Siebert 88 Jahre," in *Athletik* 21 (7 Jg.) 1954, 16.
9. See Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 42ff; Theodor Siebert, "Wie ich 'Athletenvater' wurde"; Th. S. Wirtimtal, "Das zweite Gesicht; Kürschners Deutscher Literatur-Kalender auf das Jahr 1911, Spalte 1999.
10. Compare to the general situation in the late nineteenth century in Helmut Möller and Ellic Howe, *Merlin Peregrinus: Vom Untergrund des Abendlandes*. Würzburg 1986., 11ff.
11. See Norbert Klan, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie*. Göttingen 1993, 61 ff.; Horst E. Miers, *Lexikon des Geheimwissens*, Munich, 1993, 617ff.
12. Information obtained through the kindness of Frank Reitemeyer, Theosophical Central Archives, Berlin (letter of November 17, 1998); see above all the more extensive 2.3.
13. See Hans Teuteberg, "Zur Sozialgeschichte des Vegetarismus" in *Vierteljahresschrift zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgechichte* 1, 1994, 33-63; Eva Barlösius, *Naturgemäße Lebensführung*. Frankfurt 1997.
14. See Theodor Siebert, "Meine Athletenschule in Alsleben an der Saale" in *Festbuch der Stadt Alsleben*, Alsleben, 1936, 59-60, 59; A.A.F., "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag," 74; Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 43; Theodor Siebert, *Wie werde ich Berufsathlet oder Ringer?* Halle, 1919, 3.
15. See the history of weightlifting as found for example in Hilmar Bürger/Klaus Weidt, *Kraftproben: Starke Männer einst und jetzt*, East Berlin, 1985; on the history of training techniques, see Bernd Wedemeyer, "Bodybuilding Training Systems: Historical Aspects" in Arnd Krüger/Angela Taja (eds.) *La Comune Eredità dello Sport in Europa*, Rome 1997, 130-133.
16. See Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 43ff. The "lonely little village" might have been Bad Kösen near Naumburg; in July 1895 Siebert signed his series of articles "Körperliche Kraft und Ausdauer" with the name "Kösen."
17. See Th. S. Wirtimtal, "Das zweite Gesicht," 138; the death certificate for Alma Siebert (net Müller) dated September 24, 1920 and for Elsa Alma Helene Siebert dated October 7, 1971 (Registry office Halle, Saale) and the marriage certificate of Siebert and Alma Müller graciously supplied by the registry office in Bad Kösen on December 16, 1998.
18. The German *Lebensreform* or "Life Reform" Movement was a major social crusade that flourished in the early twentieth century. The movement attempted to get back to nature and the so-called genuine forces of life. Believers wanted to regenerate man and society through vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, naturism, nature-healing, land-reform, and the advocacy of a more natural lifestyle in rural settlements. Cities were condemned as breeding grounds of immorality and moral sickness. Lebensreformers believed in the innate superiority of the countryside where people could indulge in fresh air, pure food, and wear clothing which contained little or no synthetic fibers—or better yet, no clothing whatsoever.
19. See Brigitte Haberland, *Chronik der Stadt Alsleben*, Alsleben 1997, 422-428 in addition to the club records in the *Illustrierte Deutsche Athleten-Zeitung*, 226 (vol. 6) 1897, 7, also 265, 268 (vol. 7) 1898, as well as 5 and 6; see also the annotated bibliography.
20. See Brigitte Haberland, *Chronik*, 422-428; on the history of professional wrestling, see Bernd Wedemeyer, "Jeder Griff erlaubt: Aspekte zur Geschichte des deutschen Berufsringkampfes und seiner Verbände" in *Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte des Sports* 3 (vol. 11) 1997, 7-28.
21. See Th. S. [i.e. Theodor Siebert], "Generalversammlung des Athletenclubs Siegfried" in *Illustrierte Sportzeitung* 8 (vol. 19) 1910, 188; also see the bibliography.
22. See Theodor Siebert, *Wie werde ich Berufsathlet*, 4; A.A.F. "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag"; on Krayevski and Hackenschmidt see David Webster, *The Iron Game*, Irvine 1976, 48-54. A biography of the influential Hackenschmidt can be found in George Hackenschmidt, *Der Weg zur Kraft*, Leipzig, 1909; another work which contains biographical information is George Hackenschmidt *Entthronung des Hirns: Grundlagen für die Wiederherstellung der Einigkeit und des Friedens der Menschen und der Menschheit*, Leipzig 1932.
23. For further documentation, consult the chapter on Siebert's *Trainerschule* in the present work.
24. See *Siegfried: Monatsschrift für Körper- und Geistesveredelung* 1 and 2 (vol. 1) 1902. The issues date from



July 15 and August 15 of 1902; see also more below the section on Siebert's publishing house.

25. See the publication information in the journal *Siegfried*; also see the Alsleben city archives III/534/1892 (for this source I thank Brigitte Haberland, Alsleben). I got the information in the address books of the German Booksellers Association from Carola Staniek of the Deutschen Buch- und Schriftmuseum in Leipzig.

26. The publication dates of some brochures are uncertain since they were not available to the author. In addition, multiple editions probably existed according to all appearances, but this cannot now be confirmed. The publication date that appears in bibliographies was listed here in each case. The listings for Siebert in *Kürschners Literaturlexikon* were also listed; see above all the notations in the bibliography as well as the section about Siebert's publishing activity.

27. See Theodor Siebert, *Meine Athletenschule*, 60; Brigitte Haberland. "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert" (four-page unpublished, undated manuscript; copy in the author's possession). The history of the "Trainerschule" is dealt with extensively in chapter 3.1 of the present work.

28. See A.A.F., "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag," as well as advertisements in the *Illustrierten Sportzeitung* for December 4, 1913, 49 (vol. 22) 1913, 1173, as well as in the 4-page prospectus, "Theodor Siebert, Schriftsteller und Lehrer für Körperkultur . . . Bernburg a. S., Markt 27" (from the collection of Albert Delaitte, copy in the author's possession); also see the bibliography in the appendix and especially the articles for the February and April issues of the magazine *Die Athletik* written by him and signed "Th. S., B" (the B stands for Bernburg).

29. See Brigitte Haberland, "Chronik"; A.A.F. "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag."

30. The publishing and home addresses are found in Brigitte Haberland, "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert"; Halle city archives. *Adreßbuchbücher der Stadt Halle* (letter to the author dated November 8, 1997); Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum, Leipzig, *Adreßbuchbücher des Deutschen Buchhandels* (letter to the author dated November 4, 1998).

31. Neither Kühner's birth and death dates nor his dissertation were available.

32. Compare the bibliography to the one in the appendix as well as the section about his publishing activity. The vain

attempt to find accomodation at Diedrichs' is vividly depicted by Eugen Diederichs, *Der deutsche Buchhandel der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, Leipzig, 1927, 81; See also p. 182.

33. See more details in chapter 3.2 of the present book.

34. See the *Hallesche Zeitung* for October 26, 1936, 251; Karl Labbert, "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert zum Gruß" (undated manuscript, ca. 1957, in the Delaitte collection; copy in the author's possession); K.L. [i.e. Karl Labbert] "Die 'starken Männer' der Welt lernten bei ihm: Theodor Siebert zum 90. Geburtstag," in *Athletik*, 2 (vol. 10) 1957, 8; Edgar Müller, "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert mit 95 Jahren verstorben" in *Athletik* vol. 12713 814, 1961, 31.

35. It is no longer fashionable for sport historians to comment on Siebert's occult topics; see also the section on Siebert's publishing activity as well as the bibliography.

36. See Gunda Wegner on Georg von Langsdorff; Janos Frecot on Johann Friedrich Geist; and Diethart Kerbs on Fidus, 25 and 32 ff.

37. See Klaus Schober, *Die erste Trainerschule für Körperkultur in Deutschland*. (unpublished thesis, University of Halle, East Germany). Halle 1965, 61 ff.

38. See Klaus Schober, "Die erste Trainerschule," 61 ff; see Chapter 4 of the present volume for more information about the years after 1945.

