

## **Sebastian FISCHER (1806–1871), physician and naturalist in Munich, Cairo and St. Petersburg**

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*Paradoxostoma fischeri* (SARS, 1866), *Loxocorniculum fischeri* (BRADY, 1869), and *Stenocypria fischeri* (LILLJEBORG, 1883) – these are three ostracod species dedicated to a multi-talented physician and naturalist, whose traces had almost been lost. While one of us (D.D.) began looking for Fischer as early as 1960 – with limited success – a new, now joint attempt in 2010 was a breakthrough. After locating FISCHER's resting place in a historical cemetery in Munich, it was possible to get in contact with his descendants. Additional research in various Bavarian archives revealed interesting details on FISCHER's life so that finally a colourful biography emerged.

Sebastian FISCHER (1806–1871) had access to higher education despite his parents lacking worldly goods; however, he contributed to the family's budget with hourly wages he had to earn beside high school. After finishing his medical studies at the Ludwig-Maximilian-University in Munich in 1830, Dr. FISCHER joined the Russian General OSTERMANN-TOLSTOY (1770–1837) as personal physician on a military mission to Egypt. During a ten-year stay in Egypt, FISCHER worked as physician-major of the Egyptian army in Damietta, became Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at Cairo's medical school in Abu-Zabel (Egypt's first medical school), was subsequently appointed chief of the army medical corps, and became director of the Central Military Hospital at Qasr Al-Eini. During this impressive career, he continued botanical and zoological studies begun in his university years. A beautiful collection of insects has been acknowledged by specialists (GISTEL 1846). From his Egyptian experiences, he published various papers on medical topics and on children's physical education. Beside, FISCHER learned and practiced many different languages and was known to even speak several Arabic dialects.

Back to Germany, FISCHER became the family physician in 1841 for Herzog (Duke) MAXIMILIAN von Leuchtenberg (1817–1852), grandson of NAPOLEON's JOSEPHINE de Beauharnais. MAXIMILIAN married the eldest daughter of Czar NICHOLAS I and took FISCHER to St. Petersburg. The physician accompanied the Duke, president of the Mining Engineering Institute, on inspection journeys to all Russian mining districts. FISCHER's research on the lower crustaceans of Russia came from these adventures (FISCHER 1848, 1849, 1851a, b, c, 1853, 1854a, b, c, 1855, 1860). Other journeys led MAXIMILIAN and his respected physician to Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Egypt, Sicily, and Madeira.

The cladoceran *Diaphanosoma leuchtenbergianum* FISCHER, 1854 was named after his patron.

FISCHER became member of the Imperial Society of Naturalists of Moscow, the Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, corresponding member of the Royal Bavarian Academy of Sciences and the Royal Bavarian Botanical Society. He published studies of high impact on copepods, cladocerans and ostracods; in the latter field, his contributions included the description of one new genus (*Paradoxostoma* FISCHER, 1855) and 31 new species. He was friends with Karl Ernst von BAER (1792–1867), Carl Friedrich MARTIUS (1794–1868) and Franz von KOBELL (1803–1882).

Between 1854 and his sudden death in 1871, FISCHER settled as a practicing physician in his home town, enjoying his four sons and his garden. His interest in natural sciences never ceased, as did his wish to help his patients in any possible way.

Today, research funding agencies assemble, and let researchers sign, “policies of good scientific practice”. FISCHER, called a person of noble and antique spirit by his friends, anticipated a good scientific practice already in 1848: “*If my specifications often contradict those of [other] authors, I would like to assure that I only give them following my own manifold convictions, and without the desire to out-do anyone. Should I later become aware of any mistakes from my side, I will surely be the first to admit them and to correct them, if possible*” (translated from FISCHER 1848).

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