



BOOK REVIEWS

Roder, H. Ed. 2008. *Schuhtick. Von kalten Füßen und heißen Sohlen.* – Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern

A.J. Veldmeijer



These are good times for lovers of shoes and books about shoes: the exhibition "*Schuhtick. Von kalten Füßen und heißen Sohlen*" can still be visited in Bremen (until 28 March 2010), after which it moves to Mannheim (until 15 November 2010) and only Saturday 3 October, the homage-exhibition about the great pioneer of the study of leather, Olaf Goubitz, opened in the Shoe- and Leather Museum, Waalwijk (The Netherlands). Several books have been published lately, which include, besides the books on the design on footwear: "Stepping through Time. Archaeological Footwear from Prehistoric Times until 1800" by Olaf Goubitz, Carol van Driel-Murray and Willy Groenman-Van Waateringe, "The Art of the Shoe" by Marie-Josèphe

Bossan and "Shoes. A History from Sandals to Sneakers", which is edited by Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil. Examples of books that deal with footwear in a more specific setting are "*Catalogue des chaussures de l'antiquité Égyptienne*" by Véronique Montebault, "European Wooden Shoes. Their History and Diversity" by Tet de Boer, the slightly older "Treading in the Past. Sandals of the Anasazi" edited by Kathy Kankainen and the forthcoming monograph about Tutankhamun's footwear (Veldmeijer, 2009). A valuable addition to this corpus is the book that accompanies the aforementioned exhibition with the same name "*Schuhtick. Von kalten Füßen und heißen Sohlen*," edited by Hartmut Roder.

The book has a focus on the history of footwear in Germany (clearly indicated by chapters such as “*Mit Lloyd Shoes in die weite Welt – Geschichte einer deutschen Schuhfabrik*” by Hartmut Roder and “*Schuhnot in der Nachkriegszeit*” by Ulf Mohrmann), but various chapters are of a more general nature. For example, one chapter (pp. 23-30) deals with the question why animals do not wear footwear, which is a surprising and very welcome addition to the book. Another chapter is about footwear from Ethiopia (pp. 139-146) and anthropological in nature. One chapter (pp. 115-122) is remarkable: the *schuh-Krimi* seems a bit out of place, but it is a good example of the diversity of the book without the lack of organization that often goes hand-in-hand with such a diversity of topics. Of course, a book about footwear is not complete without a chapter about Salvatore Ferragamo (pp. 165-172), but if you have read the chapter in, for example, Riello & McNeil (2006: 306-325), which is also written by Stefania Ricci, the chapter has no surprises. In contrast to many of the recent books mentioned above, a relatively large part of *Schuhtick* deals with pre-Medieval footwear.

The focus of the book, however, does not mean that the value is limited; on the contrary, I found the book important for my own work (focusing on the footwear from ancient Egypt) too, which I will explain in general terms. The chapter by Petra Eisenach (“*Schuhe aus der Vergangenheit – für Archäologen seltene Objekte der Begierde*”) gives a short overview of the development of footwear in Northwest Europe. It becomes clear from this chapter that some type of shoes, such as the *opanken*, which are simple constructed shoes that are made in one piece, were invented at various points in time and space independently (*cf.* the examples from the moors of Bruinerveen and Bargercompascuum in The Netherlands at p. 42 with the finds from Qasr Ibrim [Veldmeijer & Van Driel-Murray, In preparation]). The chapter by Markus Egg and Roswitha Goedecker-Ciolek (“*Die Schuhe des Mannes aus dem Eis*”) is an important contribution: finds of such early footwear from Europe are extremely rare. The construction of the ‘Iceman’s’ shoes is unique, combining several different materials, and was clearly up to the challenge of the cold and wet environment. The chapter by Peter Knötzele on Roman footwear is important because the Romans spread their technology throughout the empire. From Egypt,

examples are known of Roman footwear with local technology (*e.g.* Leguilloux, 2006; Veldmeijer, 2008-2009: 111) and from as far south as Qasr Ibrim beautifully preserved *caligae* are known (for an example see Veldmeijer & Enderburg, 2008: 20). The chapter by Maren Gaertner-Krohn and Sven Spiong (“*Den Kaufleuten auf die Schuhe geschaut – ein Paderborner Fundkomplex am Ausgang des Mittelalters*”) nicely shows what properly excavated footwear can tell us, especially on demographic issues.

A red thread through the book, and I doubt whether this was intended, is the fact that footwear is much more than an object that protects your feet: the symbolism (including magic, superstition, fetish *etc.*) that is attached to footwear goes beyond boundaries (in time and space) and classes. Although the degree of symbolism varies, it is always present; even in fairy-tales this is apparent (“*Das Volk und die Schuhe – von nackten end beschuhten fußen in Märchen und Popularkultus*” by Dieter Richter). Always entertaining to read are the stories of or about famous people and their shoes (among which Marlene Dietrich and Kardinal Clemens August).

In conclusion I cannot but strongly recommend the book to everyone who is interested in footwear (be it as professional or amateur archaeologist, footwear designer or just because you like shoes). It is well-written (in German), beautifully illustrated and with an interesting mixture of topics, which makes it one of the best books in his kind!

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