

Book Review

Benecke, N. (1994). *Der Mensch und seine Haustiere. Die Geschichte einer Jahrtausendenalten Beziehung*. Theiss, Stuttgart. 470 pages, 32 tables, 263 photos and drawings, hard cover with jacket. DM 128, till 31-12-1994 DM 98.

This book is certainly not the first comprehensive history of domestic animals (Keller, 1902, 1905, 1919; Hilzheimer, 1926; Zeuner, 1963) and it will probably not be the last, but it is a good, scholarly written and readable book, with a wealth of information.

It was Keller who in the early 20th century (1902, 1905, 1909) wrote about domestic animals and more specifically about their history which was at that time not yet clear for several species. Nowadays this is no longer a question but a known fact in most cases. This book shows the progress of the discipline of *Archaeozoology* which at the turn of the century was known in the German speaking world as *Haustierkunde*, the study of domestic animals.

In the first chapter, *Quellen zur Haustiergeschichte's* (sources of the history of domestic animals), Benecke gives a short summary of the way in which archaeozoologists obtain data. This is basically made by studying subfossil animal remains. Firstly, the species are identified, secondly, whenever possible, the specimens are aged and sexed and thirdly they are quantified. Different quantification methods are available, i.e. bone weight, number of bones and the estimation of minimum numbers of individuals. He also comments on the possibility of direct dating of bone by C¹⁴ and the indirect dating of bone assemblages by their archaeological or geological context. Finally, descriptions of the contemporaneous domestic species are another important source to understand their role in the past.

In the following chapter Benecke discusses the zoological aspects of domestic animals. In the first place he deals with the question of what constitutes a domestic animal and the different aspects of domestication, taming and the use of tamed animals. One point of interest here is the observation that in Moravian there are indications that as early as the Late Palaeolithic wolves lived among the inhabitants of Dolni Vestonica Pretnosti and Mezin. Although not truly domesticated, such animals lived together with people in an environment created by man.

In the third chapter Benecke discusses the role of human hunters and early domestication in the Near East, Asia and South America. A substantial part of the book is devoted to the beginning of animal husbandry in southern Europe, the colonisation of Europe by farmers in the Neolithic, and the subsequent history up to the Middle Ages. Much attention is given to the composition of the domestic species and the percentages of wild and domestic species in faunal assemblages from archaeological sites. Benecke stresses that in southern Europe stockbreeding retained its Near Eastern form with predominantly sheep/goat, which by the Bandceramic stockbreeders was adapted to Mid- and Northwest-European conditions with an emphasis on cattle. He deals with the use of domestic animals by man, first as providers of meat, fat, hides, bone and horn, and later of milk, wool and traction. The ways in which domestic animals were kept, bred and what their phenotype was, is also discussed.

This chapter is followed by descriptions of each of the domesticated animal species, including birds, fishes and insects.

In the 5th chapter the newly domesticated Elk, Fallow deer, and Musk ox

are described, while the last chapter discusses the use of tamed animals such as Elephants, Cheetahs, Mongooses, Cormorants and birds of prey.

One misses a discussion about the fact that animals were not domesticated in North America and the fact that stockbreeding reached Japan at a late date, ca. 100 BC, although the inhabitants of the Japanese islands had produced and used pottery and lived a sedentary life since 7000 BC. Why did this Jomon period lasted for so long and why hunting-gathering was abandoned virtually overnight by animal husbandry and the cultivation of rice some 2000 years ago?.

It is annoying to see that of the literature on which the book is based only part is to be found in the references, so that in many instances it is impossible to find the publications if one wants to use the information in another context. However, for readability it is a good formula to quote every reference within the text.

All in all as I mentioned at the beginning, *Der Mensch und seine Haustiere* is a good reference providing excellent overview of archaeozoological knowledge at the end of the twentieth century. I wish that this work could be translated into English in the way that Zeuner's work was translated from English into German in the sixties, but preferably with a more complete bibliography than in the present edition.

Literature

- Hilzheimer, M. (1926). *Natürliche Rassengeschichte der Haussäugetiere*. Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin.
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- Keller, C. (1919). *Die Stammesgeschichte unserer Haustiere*. 2. Aufl. Leipzig.
- Zeuner, F.E. (1963). *A history of domesticated animals*. Hutchinson and Co Ltd., London.

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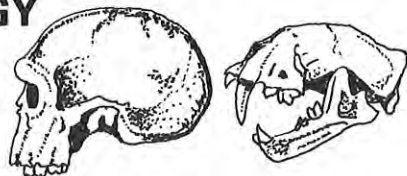
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