

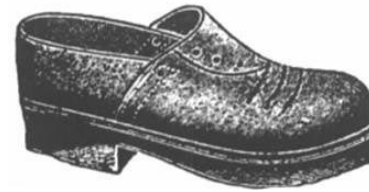


Klompemuseum Gebr. Wietzes  
PP Box 13, 9765 ZG Paterswolde  
Wolfhorn 1a, 9761 BA Eelde  
The Netherlands  
Phone: 0031 50 - 3091181  
www.klompemuseum.nl

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Adolf Sommerfeld "Die Holzsohlen-Fußbekleidung" 1940 Berlin

## History of footwear with wooden soles

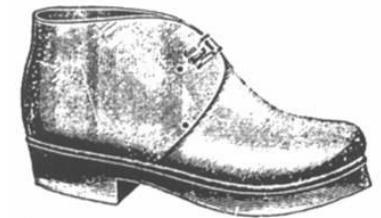
To footwear with wooden soles we reckon three items which are often misleading in their meaning: the wooden slipper or clog, the shoe with a wooden sole and the wooden shoe. That the covering



Pict. 1. Galoche without lining

with wooden soles is underestimated by public opinion is a fact that cannot be justified and is therefore so much more regrettable. Shoes with wooden soles are usually called wooden shoes too but this name is misleading as it is also used for shoes which are completely made of wood and which are mainly worn in

Holland. The pictures 1-14 show the most important ways of production of shoes with wooden soles, clogs and wooden shoes. Semi-high shoes with wooden soles are usually called "galoches" (picture 1). Footwear with wooden soles especially the clog has a big resemblance to one of the oldest shoes the sandal.



Pict. 2. Shoe with a wooden sole and one buckle

The archetype shoe of mankind was probably a wrapping of animal skin without a sole which was tightened to the ankle like a pouch. However, the sandal also appeared early; it existed of a leather sole, animal skin, wood, tree-bark or palm leaves which were fastened to the foot by sinews, belts, bast or other vegetable fibres.

Already thousands of years B.C. the southern peoples in particular wore sandals, for instance the Egyptians, the Persians, the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

From the sandal to the slipper was not a big step because instead of a belt only a top needed to be attached to the sole. Greek women

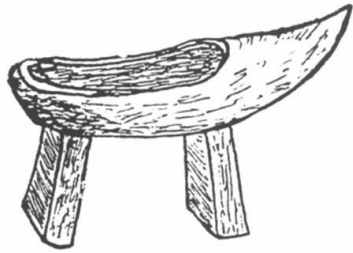
already wore slippers which looked like a shoe just as the Romans. Sometimes the top was worn attached to the instep instead of belts across the front part of the foot. Roman actors wore the so-called "Kothurn", a shoe on stilts which had a sole of wood or cork so that they were better visible on the stage. The German word sole stems from Latin, the Romans called sandals "solea". A Roman sandal was found in the Roman castle at Saalburg on the river Limes and is shown in the book by Jacobi: "The Roman castle Saalburg near Homburg in the Höhe" on index 80 and described on page 496 as follows: "The sandal is 26 cm long, has a 6 cm high heel and near the balls of the foot a stud which largely formed two triangles as the result of a notch made towards the inside; because of the hollowing two extended parts were formed on the side. Five holes were bored on the sides for fixing belts. The manufacturer has described this wooden sandal in a drawing (picture 15). They were probably worn outdoors. Such wooden sandals were also worn by Roman slaves in the fields.



Pict. 3. Shoe with a wooden sole and two buckles

Footwear worn by the Germans was made of a piece of leather which was drawn over the foot with the unprocessed hair-side on the inside and was strapped near the ankles. The influence of Rome on the German footwear started when the Romans appeared at the river Rhine and the time-expired Roman soldiers settled as artisans in and near the

castles. The shoemaker was one of the first German artisans who were already mentioned in Charlemagne's days. When the time of the guildes began shoemakers, slipper makers and tanners often formed one. Pictures on cabinet-work show the rights of the shoe- and slipper makers in the hall on the New Market of Cologne in which the shoemaker benches were kept. Every craft watched jealously over the other so no-body executed any activity which did not belong to its own craft and often the authorities had to take



Pict. 21. Stilt shoe from Korea

of a hollow wooden shoe placed on two high stilts (picture 21) and can be seen in the Rautenstrauch Museum in Cologne.

The most important wooden shoe worn in Germany can be seen on pictures 11-15. The wooden shoes on picture 13 are called "Holländer" even in professional circles, the

shoes on picture 14 form the lower part for clog - boots, which are worn in the swamps of Friesland. A high leather leg should still be nailed to the milled edge of this wooden shoe.

action in accordance with regulations. The slipper maker was not allowed to make boots, the shoemaker could not tan leather. The slipper makers usually made leather slippers. The story goes that the clipper makers of Bremen were inspected thoroughly whether they used leather or cork and did not use bark or any other trickery ("nenen baste borken edder sunst andere



Pict. 4. Boots with boot-laces and eyelets

bedregerie darin gebrucken"). In the Middle Ages wooden shoes were worn partly as an overshoe for the leather shoe in very wet weather. So wooden scooped-out span soles were worn under the beak-shoes on which a strap was fastened instead of an instep under which the foot slipped inside. Women also wore these cover-slippers called "trippen" (pattens). They made a lot of noise which was often done on purpose as Herman Weiss writes in his book "Kostumkunde" (Art of Costumes): "Not only in winter which, would often be an excuse, but also in mid-summer one should be



Pict. 5. Leg boots

able to sneak nearby on slippers and young men dragged them on their feet and tapped like old women".

Especially in Western Europe overshoes (galoches) with wooden soles were worn regularly; they already had a heel and under the sole at the ball of the foot a thickening, on top was the leather strap mentioned (pictures 16 and 17).

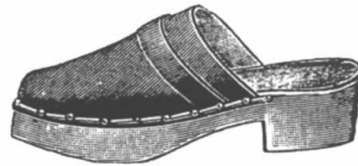
In the Middle Ages the dirt in the streets of the cities was enormous.



Pict. 6. Boot with three buckles

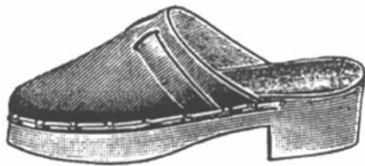
In Paris in the 14th century dirty water could be thrown from a window onto the street at any time of the day when you had called three times in advance: "garde léau" (take care water). At the beginning of the 17th century half of Berlin must still have been a mud slough, the King's road (Königsstrasse) was only paved around 1684. Small wonder that overshoes (galoches) with

wooden soles were necessary and that the craft of wooden shoemakers was very important. The German family name "Hölscher" can be derived from wooden shoemaker. In Brandenburg during the time of the Great Elector the wooden slippers or clogs in their present design were imported by French refugees the Huguenots.



Pict. 7. Slipper for blacksmiths, painters, brewers etc.

The local wooden shoe makers must have been quite surprised when this footwear was shown to them for the first time. After a finished period of training and a three year period as a wandering journeyman they had to prove that they descended from German and not Wendish parentage and now had to watch how the foreigners, who did not have to show a birth certificate, were given privileges in trade and



Pict. 8. Slipper with strap

craft. In Berlin and other cities the French established wooden shoe factories and soon a lively trade developed in this new footwear. The native wooden shoe makers kept quiet for the time being as long as the "novelties" were only worn by people who usually went

wooden shoes favourably in Holland. As the manager of the Wallraf-Richartz- Museum in Cologne told the author the existence of Roman wooden sandals in the Netherlands, which partly belonged to the Roman Rhineland, must definitely be assumed. The wooden shoe could only develop further from the wooden sandal when the craftsmen improved and refined in such a way that the shoe could be worked from the whole block. The hollowed-out sole over the instep, which were worn, often had an upturned beak so that can be assumed that the wooden shoe originated from this sole (spanzool).

However, the mechanical production of the wooden shoe started much later when the lathes for the shoe - lasts were developed. Professor Baylich from Kaiserslautern built the first lathe for lasts; it was simple and perfect. The shoe lasts still had to be finished by draw - knives, rasps, glass and precision drawing knives. This lathe was also exported to America where it was soon improved. Afterwards it was taken back to Germany by the Spenlé brothers who emigrated to America in 1864 but returned to their native region of Ludenbach near Münster in the Alsace when the Franco - German war had ended.

One of the brothers M. Spenlé was a trained wooden shoe maker and a bandmaster with the French Riflemen. On the initiative of Messrs. G. Behrens he went to Ellrich in the Harz in 1874. But already in 1875 M. Spenlé and Behrens separated and Spenlé started his own factory in Ellrich while Behrens used Spenlé's lathe for lasts in Alfeld on the river Leine. The lathe they both used worked just like the present copying machines. M. Spenlé's brother also started a lasts factory in Sachsenhausen near Frankfurt on Main but it did not exist long. Messrs. Behrens in Alfeld on the river Leine grew excellently and is at the moment one of the most important lasts factories in Germany even in Europe.

In countries outside Europe wooden shoes are seldom found. The stilt wooden shoe which is worn on the Korean peninsula has a big resemblance to the wooden shoe. This Korean wooden shoe consists

Salmanassar III; it is worn by Jehu and his entourage, who takes the tribute (homage and/or taxes) to the Assyrian King in 841 B.C. People have always liked shoes with pointed tips, even today they are still popular in ladies shoes. So what is more obvious than to make the tip as long as possible and to bend them upwards because otherwise they make walking inconvenient.

It is said that the wearing of beak shoes was introduced in the Middle Ages in 1089 by the Duke of Anjou who had a deformed foot and tried to hide the swelling by making the tip really long. According to another tradition King Henry II of England, when still prince, must have introduced the beak-shoe in the year before his accession to the throne (1151) because of a large deformation to one of his feet. The citizens copied the manners of the kings and nobility so that this peculiar wear developed. Sometimes the tips were made 50 cm long and were bent upwards and fastened above the knee by small golden or silver chains. State and Church, especially the French and English Bishops, opposed to this excess of fashion. In 1353 the Aldermen of Zittau in Saksen issued the following order: "Those who want to be citizens of this town will not wear shoes with tips. To those who ignore this the tips will be chopped off and they will pay the town a five "groschen" fine".

It can certainly be assumed that wooden shoes originated in Holland. From here they spread farther to Belgium, France and Germany. In Germany they are mainly worn in the Rhineland, Westphalia, Hessen, Friesland and in general along the entire North Sea coast and in places in Brandenburg. Here they were imported by Dutch colonists; the Great Elector, who had lived in the Netherlands for several years, made them come to his country with the support of his wife

Louise Henriëtte who came from Holland and after whom the town of Oranienburg near Berlin was named. Situated on the sea the moist climate and the wet soil have influenced the development of



Pict. 20.  
Light Japanese wooden sandal

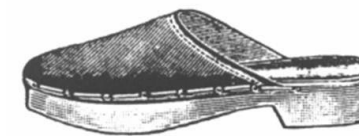
barefoot. But when the farmers started to wear wooden shoes as well, the patience of the wooden shoe makers ended and they went into opposition. It took a long time before they were heard.

Frederik Wilhelm I took pity on the wooden shoe makers and issued a strong decree against wearing wooden shoes only on 7 December 1726. But that was already too late the new footwear had become popular and even large numbers of craftsmen produced pattens. It is clear that as the making of footwear developed the wooden slipper or clog got a more practical sole-form and the upper half was more and more adapted to the leather shoe.

Nevertheless this footwear can never obtain the external elegance of a modern shoe due to its own character and use. The clog and shoe with wooden sole were meant for work and wearing on weekdays not on Sundays. Only in the pure rural areas of Germany, for example in the Untermark in Pommeren, wooden



Pict. 9. Slipper with shoe-soles



Pict. 10. Wooden slipper

shoes were still worn with pride before the war by girls when going out on Sundays. For this purpose the edge of the light wooden soles were made black and on the reverse was a piece of black oil-cloth with colourful pictures of love mottos.



Pict. 11. Low wooden shoe without leather cushion

The cloth on the front was often made of silk which was bordered with a colourful string and embroidered with silk. This image has changed substantially though wooden slippers or clogs have always remained the people's footwear. Clogs and wooden shoes



Pict. 12. Low wooden shoe with leather cushion

are not only worn in Germany, but also in many other European countries. The clogs in Denmark are an intermediate form between



Pict. 13. Chopped wooden shoe

the German clog and wooden shoe. They have a leather cap at the front but have, however, a deep hollow at the back so that the heel is surrounded by a wooden rim. On a later picture (83) these Danish wooden soles have been drawn lying next to a drilling machine. Wooden sandals were also worn in many countries outside Europe. For instance Egyptian women wore a very typical wooden sandal the so-called "Rubkab", a shoe on ebony stilts with mother of pearl inlays, which was about 10 cm high had in the "Kothurn" its classic example. The stilts run diagonally from the sole under the ball of the foot to the heel

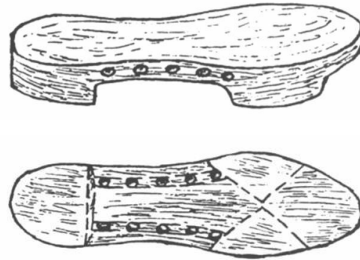


Pict. 14. Wooden shoe for the leg of a boot

at the back. They were sometimes cut out of the wood together with the sole or were placed in the sole. A similar sandal on stilts is also worn in Syria and Arabia and in a somewhat coarser and heavier version in Japan.

According to Dr. Heilbron the wooden sandals of many peoples in India had a wooden knob between the big toe and the second toe to give more support to the foot. The same can be seen with sandals which are worn in Syria and Arabia, but instead of a wooden knob a leather strip or a strip belt runs from the instep downwards to the flat of the foot to which it is attached. Often these strip belts are sown together into a small cylinder so that they do not cut into the flesh and hurt. In Japan besides wooden sandals on stilts low wooden sandals are often worn; they have a 10 -12 cm thick sole and are completely flat

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Pict. 15. Roman wooden sandal found on the river Limes



Pict. 16. Sole over the instep under a beak-shoe



Pict. 17. Anti dirt shoe from the Middle Ages

so without a heel. However, in order to unroll the foot better the front part of the sole towards the middle consists of narrow cross-bars which were held together by a leather sole.

### Wooden shoes

The Dutch call it wooden shoe, an expression which is connected with the German name mentioned and which indicates the massive and coarse heaviness of this footwear. The name *Elb- and Oderkähne* developed as a result of the shape of the wooden shoe, because the total shape resembles a barge, even the front part resembles a bow. This bow, which is lacking in some shoes, is only a decoration for the shoe and does not serve any practical purpose. Dr. Heilbron does mention in his book "Völkerkunde" that the Navaho moccasins in New America (Althapasken) have the shape of a beaklike shoe with a broad, upturned



Pict. 18. Heavy wooden Japanese sandal



Pict. 19. Stilt sandal in Syria

beak to protect against the spines of cactuses, but on the whole beaklike shoes are made for vanity and fashion respectively. It is often said that the beak-shoe only came about around the year 1100 but that is a mistake. The beak-shoe can already be found on the black obelisk of