

Historiography of the Shoemaking and Footwear Industry in the Bohemian Lands from Economic, Social, Regional and Urban History Perspectives: State of Research and New Approaches*

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The history of shoemaking and the footwear industry is a well-established topic in Czech economic and social, as well as regional and urban historiography. A broad range of topics and approaches to this area of research can be found in Czech historiography. One drawback of the continuous interest in the history of shoemaking and the footwear industry is the lack of suitable methodology and the existence of many as yet unexplored topics, especially as regards the period after 1945. This study presents an overview, based on chronology and genre, of the existing historiographical work in the field of economic, social, regional and urban history. It also draws attention to the so-called New Product History (*Produktgeschichte*), a methodological perspective not yet established in the Czech environment. Its advantage lies in its broad contextualization of the history of a particular product by conducting a historical analysis of the product life cycle (*historische Produktlinienanalyse*).

Keywords: Shoemaking; Footwear industry; Bohemian lands; Historiography; New product history; Regional history; Urban history.

1. Introduction

The history of shoemaking and the footwear industry is a topic that has been much explored in Czech economic, social, cultural, regional and urban historiography. The general presence of the shoemaking sector across the Bohemian lands, both initially as unconcentrated small-scale craft production in towns and rural areas and, later, as mass production on a community, cooperative or factory basis in several industrial towns and regions gives reason for Czech historiography's basically continuous interest in the history of shoemaking, the footwear industry, urban and rural shoemaking centres and their leading representatives. Even though the shoemaking sector has attracted the attention of local historians not only throughout the twentieth century, but also into the new millennium, the result of this constant interest comprises a relatively large number of smaller studies of varying quality focusing on regional or city historiography, rather

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than a convolute of monographs offering an elaborated exploration of this topic from the perspective of economic and social history even in the Czech context, let alone the Central European or European context.¹ Although it might easily seem that no new information or methodological and interpretational perspectives can be contributed to this frequently explored topic, the very opposite is true. The history of the Czech shoemaking and footwear industry is stigmatized for a lack of suitable methodology, rife with gaps, and characterized by an obsessive and repetitive thematic focus on the Baťa phenomenon. It therefore raises many as yet unanswered questions, not only as regards the post-1945 period which, except in a few instances, has lain outside the sphere of academic interest.²

The objective of this generally focused study is to summarize, for the very first time, Czech historiographical work on the history of shoemaking and the footwear industry, at least that carried out over the last seventy years, during which the topic has regularly been revived by regional historians, researchers in economic and social history and in the history of footwear as a product, and those interested in the history of industry, industrial enterprises, towns and regions, led by the broad span of the history of the Baťa concern, ranging from traditional economic history to the history of Fordism and modern industrial centres. However, this study does not aim to provide merely an annotated list of the relevant historiographical works, but primarily to present an update on the history of shoemaking and the footwear industry and its potential in the context of the so-called *Produktgeschichte* (New Product History), a historiographical discipline which still has no important representatives or an established term in the Czech context, yet which can provide a sound contribution to research in the area of regional and urban history. We should start this study by mentioning that one of the most important monographs conceived on the methodologically innovative grounds of the *Produktgeschichte* was dedicated to shoemaking in the second third of the twentieth century. The voluminous monograph by German author Anne Sudrow (*1970) has credibly proven that footwear (but also other industrially produced articles) is an ideal means of demonstrating the thematization of the history of man's work, and distribution and consumption in all their economic, technological, environmental, geographical, cultural, social and political respects.³

The footwear industry and footwear itself, and its consumption, has undergone rapid development in the past two centuries, along with fundamental structural transformations that have been linked primarily to the emergence of the key historical processes that have framed modern history – especially industrialization and urbanization, the advance of economic globalization and the increasing influence of modern science and technology – and also to the disruptive changes associated with the cataclysmic global conflicts of the twentieth century and their broad impact on the economy, society, human settlements and the environment. The substantial stages in the transformation of shoemaking have been linked both to technologies, materials and design, and to the methods and forms of production, distribution, consumption and their spatial organization. In the nineteenth century, this transformation's main driving force was the belated industrialization of the shoemaking sector, which from

1 The bibliography of the history of the Bohemian lands by the CAS Institute of History now consists of 717 entries with the keyword "footwear": *Bibliografie dějin Českých zemí*, [Internet sources].

2 VALŮŠEK – SOMMER – ŠEVEČEK, *Dějiny*; SOMMER, *The 'City of Shoes'*, 215–237.

3 SUDROW, *Der Schuh*.

the urbanized and economically most advanced countries of the world, namely the United States of America,⁴ Great Britain⁵ and (especially in the Central European context) Germany,⁶ gradually came to affect other regions of the world, commencing around the end of the nineteenth century. As a result, the global dominance of concentrated industrial production became established gradually, along with the new approach to footwear as a commodity for mass production and mass consumption.

The transformations of shoemaking and the paradigmatic change of the production process, with the traditional crafting in towns and rural areas being replaced by bulk production in factories in selected industrial centres and regions, were, from the very beginning, closely linked to the needs of modern-age armies and militarized economies.⁷ The development of new concentrated forms of footwear production was stimulated by regular orders from the military. After all, footwear was not merely a civilian product for individual consumption, but always a strategic asset that was an essential part of the gear used by armies and other uniformed corps, and a fundamental piece of kit for various specialized teams working in modern industrial plants. In the era of the world wars, which saw the total mobilization of human and material resources, footwear production thus became an important industry for the war economy, which led to a variety of innovations and structural changes in this sector. In this context, it is therefore almost surprising how little attention Czech⁸ as well as worldwide historiographers have so far paid to the structural transformation of footwear under the conditions of the war economy and modern mass conflicts.⁹ We can still only imagine what contribution this research would have made to general economic and social history¹⁰ and topics relating to modern urban, regional and environmental history.¹¹

The situation is similar as regards research into the principal transformations of the territorial distribution of footwear production that relate to the rise of industrialization and urbanization: the traditional, basically omnipresent and mostly local craft production (a local cobbler as a shoemaker, seller and repairman all in one) stepped back to make room for mass production in factories, concentrated only in specific towns and regions. Globalization, especially after World War II, continued to radically change the social and geographical framework of the shoemaking industry, especially following up on the dynamic development of the national and increasingly also international division of labour. The traditional industrial producers in Europe and North America, including Czechoslovakia, which in the 1930s even became the world's leader in the international shoe trade,¹² came to lose their exclusive position

4 THOMSON, *The Path*; JOSÉ, *American Machinery and European Footwear*, 196–201.

5 MORRISON – BOND, *Built to Last?*; RIELLO, *A Foot in the Past*; PALMER, *Clarks: Made to Last*, 2013.

6 SCHÄCHTER – WAGNER, *Vom Zunfthandwerk*.

7 This fact was already emphasized by Werner Sombart (1863–1941) in his renowned work *Der moderne Kapitalismus*: SOMBART, *Der moderne Kapitalismus*, 750–760 (chapter “Der Bedarf der Heer”). See also SOMBART, *Der Krieg und Kapitalismus*, 151–173.

8 JEMELKA, *The Army*.

9 What is remarkable is the lack of interest in the topic of footwear in specialized publications on the military equipment of armies in Central Europe. The exception to this rule is the pictorial publication by HERR – NGUYEN, *Die deutsche Infanterie*.

10 KESSLER, *Děti v konzumu*, 299–321; HERC, *Obuvnická družstva*; JEMELKA, *The Cobblers' War*.

11 ŠEVEČEK, *Zrození*; JEMELKA – ŠEVEČEK, *Tovární města*.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 43, 64ff.

to Asian producers, at first gradually, and later rapidly during the globalization boom of the last three decades of the twentieth century. In 2021, 88% of the footwear produced around the world, in excess of 22 billion pairs, was manufactured in Asia. Europe's share in global production was less than just 3%, and North America, once the cradle of the shoemaking industry, made up a mere 1.4%.¹³ On the margin of these dominating processes, the continuing presence of the traditional craft-based or other transitional forms of production organization can be seen, such as the putting-out system or purchase-based system, found today especially in developing countries. These co-existed, albeit on the periphery, alongside the dominating and trend-setting industrial production and the translocation of production from the traditional and mostly urban industrial centres into non-industrialized regions, or areas up to then only slightly affected by the Industrial Revolution and industrialization.

Research into the history of the shoemaking and footwear industry is of special relevance for Czech historiography. There are at least two major reasons for this: 1) the importance of this sector for the economy of the Bohemian lands, especially some industrial towns and whole regions, dating back to pre-industrial times; 2) the important share of Czechoslovak shoemaking in the global processes that shaped the modern footwear industry. Besides the renowned period of the expansion of the Baťa concern – which, from the interwar period, was one of the world's most important enterprises in this industry, and was the pioneer of the globalization of this industry around the world and an avant-garde model for a brand new design and spatial organization of the footwear industry¹⁴ – there is also the socialist era of Czechoslovak shoe production, still unexplored and overlooked by historians and undoubtedly deserving more attention. Even after the nationalization of the Baťa concern, which had ingeniously and consistently projected its production expansion into the avant-garde environment of the so-called company towns, a setting that can be seen as a laboratory both socially and in urbanistic and architectural terms, Czechoslovakia was still one of the world's leading footwear producers and leaders of the consumer industry, with exports targeted primarily at the former Eastern Bloc countries.

2. Chronological Summary of Research

For the chronological context of the High and Late Middle Ages and Early Modern History, and the geographical context of the most important Czech cities headed by Prague, shoemaking was defined as a historiographical topic at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Zikmund Winter (1846–1912) and Čeněk Zíbrt (1864–1932). Winter, who teetered on the verge of cultural and urban history and historical fiction, focused on tanners and shoemakers especially in the setting of Prague in the Late Middle Ages.¹⁵ While working on his synthesizing book *Řemeslnictvo a živnosti XVI. věku v Čechách* [Sixteenth-Century Artisans and Crafts in Bohemia],¹⁶ he also wrote his popularizing work *Zlatá doba měst českých* [The Golden Age of Bohemian Towns] (1913) in which two chapters on crafts (VII) and morals and customs (VIII) are dedicated to shoemakers and their craft.¹⁷ Winter, combining his academic interest and story-teller's

13 *The World Footwear 2022 Yearbook*, [Internet sources].

14 LEHÁR, *The Economic Expansion*, 147–188.

15 WINTER, *Dějiny řemesel*.

16 WINTER, *Český průmysl*.

17 WINTER, *Zlatá doba*, 203, 220, 230–233.

talent, explored the development of Early Modern History professions in processing leather on the one hand, and the importance of burghers' and aristocracy's fashion for social stratification on the other. Winter's texts thematized the professionalization and professional stratification of the shoemaking craft in towns and the ubiquitousness of town guilds and crafts related to leatherworking. His books presented readers with the appealing characters of cobbler-philosophers, whose craft allowed them to take frequent breaks from their work for reflection and talk.¹⁸ It seems as if the character of the legendary Nuremberg shoemaker and writer Hans Sachs (1494–1576) emerged against the backdrop of Winter's academic interest.¹⁹

While Winter tended to accentuate the cultural and social history of shoemaking in the town environment, his student Čeněk Zíbrt presented a detailed investigation into the historiographical line of the history of production, both in the towns and in rural areas. His doctoral thesis, *Dějiny kroje v zemích českých* [History of National Costume in the Bohemian Lands] (1892),²⁰ was to be the first volume of an intended trilogy, for which chapters on Prehistory and the Middle Ages were to be prepared by Zíbrt, Modern History by Winter, and on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries again by Zíbrt.²¹ Zíbrt, unfortunately, only managed to complete the period until the Hussite Movement. Still, his *Dějiny kroje*, spanning from Prehistory to the Hussite era, is an invaluable work in which a great deal of attention is devoted to civilian, military and ritual footwear, especially as regards men's shoes, as Zíbrt's research mainly stemmed from the contemporary iconographical material which tended to portray men rather than women.²² Winter and Zíbrt's example was also followed by younger generations of interwar regional and town historians and epigones who were eye witnesses to the deep crisis in the shoemaking craft, but taking Winter's example, their attention focused on the "golden age" of traditional shoemakers' small-scale production, rather than the dramatic arrival of large-scale shoe production and the footwear industry. Examples of this are the works of the Kroměříž local historian František Václav Peřinka (1878–1949), for whom the small-town old world of Kroměříž shoemakers was more interesting than the recent industrial history of what had become one of Moravia's shoemaking centres, producing mainly slippers and rug shoes.²³

World War One substantially redrew the shoe production map in the Bohemian lands. The concentration of the production of military boots and civilian footwear into large industrial plants, especially in specialized industrial towns, with access to the war market in raw materials, considerably limited the influence of small-scale shoemaking. If small-scale manufacturers did not join the quickly expanding shoemaking cooperatives, they found themselves on the brink of destitution, or faced having to leave for the world war front. In the neighbouring German Reich, the topic of the restructuring of small-scale shoemaking production and industry and its production centres in Erfurt, Pirmasens or Weisenfels during World War I was the subject of many specialized papers, usually as doctoral theses in national economic sciences.²⁴ In post-war Czechoslovakia,

18 WINTER, *Řemeslnictvo a živnosti*.

19 POSNIAK, *Hans Sachs*.

20 ZÍBRT, *Dějiny kroje*.

21 ŠIMÁK, *Čeněk Zíbrt*, 10.

22 ZÍBRT, *Dějiny kroje*, 73–80, 90–97, 119–120, 144–147, 248–250, 265–268, 328–337, 368–369 a.o.

23 PEŘINKA, *Ze starého Kroměříže*, 22–23; PEŘINKA, *Dějiny Kroměříže*, 348, 350.

24 KOCH, *Arbeitgeber- und Arbeitnehmerfragen*; ROSENTHAL, *Die Arbeitsteilung*; WEISS, *Die Entwicklung*.

the meteoric rise of the Baťa concern lay behind an increasing interest in history and especially in the presence of the footwear industry. It started in the early 1920s though its roots also dated back to the Great War era.²⁵ In the history of Baťa-period Zlín and the business of the Baťa concern, the economic and social history of shoe production were most closely linked to urban and regional history.²⁶

Publications on the topic of Baťa business were often written by authors with links to the Baťa milieu or with close ties to Baťa's enterprise.²⁷ The first attempt to summarize the history of Baťa's enterprise can be found in Jaroslav Pagáč's book *Tomáš Baťa a 30 let jeho podnikatelské práce* [Tomáš Baťa and Thirty Years of His Entrepreneurial Work] (1926),²⁸ which set the tone and basic layout of Baťa's (self-)presentation of the company's history, including the emphasis on the urban and architectural projects that drove the firm's expansion. The central narrative figure in the company's history, following the example of the biographies of the "great figures of the West in business and industry", is Tomáš Baťa as a successful self-made man who led the enterprise through the key milestones in its history. For the social history of Baťa's business, the primary bibliography is *Železní tovaryši* [Iron Journeymen] by Stanislav Jandík (1902–1970),²⁹ convincingly depicting and evaluating the key trends in the company's history. The author paid a great deal of attention to the impact that American industrial rationalization and the new entrepreneurial system had on Baťa urban society. From the viewpoint of economic history, the founder of Baťa historiography was the politician and national economist František Xaver Hodáč (1883–1943).³⁰ His works show a deep insight into Baťa's entrepreneurial "system", gained through his knowledge of contemporary business and his expertise in the national economy, but also the fact that he had the opportunity to study the company archives, do interviews with the first generation of Baťa's colleagues and consult with leading representatives of the Baťa concern, including town planners and architects. In the context of urban and regional history, important stimuli for studies into the phenomenon of modern-era Zlín and Baťa's towns came from the sophisticated reflections of the contemporary architect and later university lecturer Vladimír Karfík (1901–1996), which he incorporated into his memoirs published by the Association of Slovak Architects in the early 1990s.³¹ After the fall of communism, the new conditions brought, besides memoirs by numerous witnesses, also the first more comprehensive works on the regional history of Zlín by the historian and archivist Zdeněk Pokluda³² and on the history of Baťa architecture by the Zlín architect and town planner Pavel Novák,³³ and several conferences and

25 The current state of research and approaches to research into the Baťa phenomenon are consistently summarized especially by MAREK, *Stav batovského bádání*, 413–443; ŠEVEČEK, *The Case of Company Towns*, 16–25; and JEMELKA – ŠEVEČEK, *Tovární města*, 17–36. A detailed overview of the extensive bibliography on this topic is available in the bibliographical database of the Baťa Information Centre, run by the Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín. As of 5 April 2023, this online bibliography contained 1,767 items: 881 books, 676 articles and 210 university theses. See *Bibliografie Baťa*, [Internet sources].

26 See Note 11 herein.

27 Cf. e.g. CEKOTA, *Baťa*; ERDÉLY, *Baťa – švec*; MIESBACH, *Die Baťa-Werke*.

28 PAGÁČ, *Tomáš Baťa*.

29 JANDÍK, *Železní tovaryši*.

30 HODÁČ, *Tomáš Baťa*.

31 KARFÍK, *Architekt si spomína*.

32 POKLUDA, *Sedm století*.

33 NOVÁK, *Zlínská architektura*.

symposiums were held by the State Gallery in Zlín, now the Regional Gallery of Fine Arts in Zlín, that laid out possible directions for further research and resulted in a series of proceedings³⁴ which still represent an important contribution to the study of the history of Baťa urbanism and architecture.

The Great Depression made a fundamental mark on the profile of the footwear industry in the Bohemian lands. The closure of leather and shoe factories that had existed in rural areas and small towns for decades prompted regional and town historians to at least generally portray their recent past and quickly waning glory. One example worth mentioning is *Dnešní průmysl v Lipníku n. B.* [Industry in Lipník nad Bečvou Today] (1931)³⁵ and *Obuvnický průmysl na Vlašimsku* [The Shoemaking Industry in the Vlašim Region] (1931),³⁶ studies in regional history that described the current crisis in the context of a retrospective treatise on its regional beginnings and development in the late nineteenth century. As materials in archival collections of companies in Czech archives were frequently discarded throughout the twentieth century, these small studies by local chroniclers and municipal historiographers are a valuable, and often the only, source of information on the conditions between the wars as well as on the oral history of shoemaking at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

While short studies by regional researchers dating back to around 1930 were intended to appeal primarily to local readers and enthusiasts of local ethnography and regional history, the editors of monographs mapping the important towns and regions in the Bohemian lands from the early 1930s were more ambitious, their publications emphasizing the economic and industrial tradition, the present and the near future. We can find synthesizing studies dedicated to the shoe industry in almost all the monographs published by the *Národohospodářská propagace Československa* [Czechoslovak National Economy Promotion], with Robert Jarušek as editor-in-chief, that were dedicated to the centres of the domestic shoe industry and were also part of the media campaign of the Czechoslovak state against the impact of the Great Depression. To mention but one, the prestigious publication *Jihlava – město a okolí* [Jihlava – the Town and Its Surroundings] (1933)³⁷ contains the chapter “Obuvnický a koželužský průmysl jihlavského kraje” [Shoe and Leather Industry of the Jihlava Region], written by a commercial councillor and director of one of Jihlava’s shoe factories, Karel Kačer, one of the numerous members of the Jewish Kačer (Katscher) family, shoe industry entrepreneurs in Brno and the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands.³⁸ The naturally interlinked history of the tanning and shoemaking industries was similarly explored in the volumes on Prostějov,³⁹ Přerov,⁴⁰ Třebíč⁴¹ and other towns in Moravia which formed part of the *Vlastivěda moravská* [Moravian Ethnography] series.

The names of Jewish entrepreneurs who worked in the leather and shoe industry can also be found in interwar monographs on Jews living in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.

34 ŠEVEČEK, *Zlínský funkcionalismus*; ŠVÁCHA, *Miroslav Lorenec*.

35 KOUT, *Dnešní průmysl*, 99–102.

36 MATĚJOVSKÝ, *Obuvnický průmysl*, 71–72.

37 BRADÁČ, *Jihlava*, 86–87.

38 KUDRNÁČ, *Adresář a popis*, 25.

39 JANOUŠEK, *Vlastivěda moravská*.

40 KREUTZ, *Vlastivěda moravská*.

41 ŠŤASTNÝ – ŠUMPELA, *Koželužství na Moravě*, 266–284.

They were also mentioned in Gold's voluminous work *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Böhmens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* [The Jews and Jewish communities of Bohemia in the past and present] (1934), which in a certain sense now serves as a tribute to the vanishing rural and small-town Jewish (religious) communities in the rural areas of Bohemia and Moravia, with their rich local entrepreneurial tradition of leather processing and shoe production.⁴² Without Gold's monograph, research into the regional history of Jews in the Bohemian lands would be practically unthinkable today. Some excellent examples of the mostly descriptive contemporary publications on the past and present of the Jews in the Bohemian lands include studies by the Prostějov-born regional economic historian Bernhard Heilig (1902–1943), who in the late 1920s and early 1930s focused on the local textile (and partially also shoe) industry, its leaders and its links to army contracts.⁴³ Without Heilig's studies, later studies on the industry in Prostějov,⁴⁴ let alone the Prostějov ghetto, the Jewish community⁴⁵ and the town as a whole would have been impossible.

The Marxist historiography brought forth new topics in the post-war economic and social history of the Bohemian lands, such as strikes and strike movements in industrial towns and regions. The belated industrialization of shoemaking, a substantial portion of which was still manual at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the onset of new production technologies shortly before World War I are connected to intense strikes in this industry, which had been characterized by its fragmented production and a low membership of professional and trade union organizations. The rise in strikes by Czech shoemaking workers prior to World War I justifiably drew the attention of the contemporary press and, in isolated cases, also that of researchers at first,⁴⁶ and later, in the 1950s, of numerous Marxist historiographers. In 1959, two studies were published focusing on shoemaking strikes in the Třebíč and Litomyšl regions. *Stávkové hnutí obuvnických dělníků r. 1906 na západní Moravě* [Strike Movement of Shoemaking Workers in 1906 in Western Moravia] describes a strike by shoe production workers in Třebíč in 1906 that spread throughout the whole of Western Moravia, and emphasizes its importance in the political mobilization of home workers from rural areas.⁴⁷ It also criticizes the "superficial" research work of Jaroslav Mejzlík, whose monograph on the Třebíč-based Budischowsky leather and shoe enterprise is explored in detail below. While the study on the striking shoe-production workers in Třebíč is focused on the climax of the mostly urban protest movement in 1906, *Stávky obuvnického dělnictva v Litomyšli před první světovou válkou* [Strikes of the Shoe Production Workers in Litomyšl Prior to World War I] covers a far wider time span, and also gives a broader description of conditions in the footwear industry in the Litomyšl region, mostly in its rural parts. This is so far the most comprehensive treatise on the history of mostly export-oriented shoe production in the Litomyšl region, an important player in the East Bohemian home and factory production of shoes, both hand-crafted and machine-made.⁴⁸ In the 1970s, it was followed up by an article on the workers' movement in Litomyšl before

42 GOLD, *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Mährens*; GOLD, *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Böhmens*.

43 HEILIG, *Příspěvek k dějinám*, 56–67; HEILIG, *Hospodářský vliv*, 27–36.

44 SOMMER – GÍMEŠ, *Z dějin*; CYDLÍK, *Historie a současnost*.

45 KLENOVSKÝ, *Židovské město*; DOKOUPÍLOVÁ, *Literatura a prameny*, 50–55, a.o.

46 VLÁSTA, *Dějiny*.

47 KONEČNÝ, *Stávkové hnutí*, 201–215.

48 RŮŽIČKA – ČERVINKA, *Stávky obuvnického dělnictva*, 175–208.

1890, which pays adequate attention to the social history of Litomyšl and the local shoe industry.⁴⁹

The economic reforms of the 1968 Prague Spring, and unquestionably the post–November–1989 restoration of the market economy, revived historiographical interest in the history of the Baťa concern. The iconic story of the Baťa phenomenon saw a real boom in bookshops. Many publications tended to be journalistic in style or sit on the borderline of non-fiction. There was in particular a surge in interest in publications on the figure of Tomáš Baťa, the company's architecture and urbanism, and its representatives. This marked a shift away from the formerly promoted history of workers and the lower echelons. Several research segments were established during the 1990s that are still of substantial importance for research into the Baťa phenomenon: the study of the Baťa management system (as part of systematic management studies),⁵⁰ research into the broader social dimensions of Baťa's business (especially in the framework of socio-historical and sociology-based approaches),⁵¹ and the topic of modern architecture, urban planning and town planning (where the history of architecture and the conservation of industrial heritage have become the prevailing perspective).⁵² While many publications have suggested the idea of the Baťa concern as a major developer, the economic history of the Baťa company has surprisingly attracted little interest amongst researchers. The new publications therefore did not add much to the knowledge from earlier periods.

In 1994, the Museum of Southeast Moravia in Zlín launched the tradition of international expert seminars, accompanied by a series of publications entitled *Obuv v historii* [Footwear in History].⁵³ As of today, nine conference proceedings have been published from these events exploring many specific and general topics from the older history of shoemaking and the topic of exhibiting shoes in museum collections. Going through these proceedings, we can see that besides an international network of researchers interested in Baťa history, there are also many Czech and foreign researchers that take an interest in the technologies, design, sale and distribution of shoes. The available research potential is proven, for instance, by an interesting article by Michal Heinrich, the curator of a unique collection of shoes at the Museum of Southeast Moravia in Zlín, who in 2021 published an essay on the production of the Baťa concern during World War II for the needs of the German Wehrmacht.⁵⁴ All in all, the army, war and footwear are topics that are naturally interlinked yet are still understudied by researchers.

3. Topics and Approaches

While we have so far explored the chronology of Czech historiographical works on the history of shoemaking and the shoe industry, it is now time to turn our attention to specific historiographical genres and the dominant methodological or thematic segments that have chosen the history of shoe production in Bohemian lands as their field of study. Were we to look into specialized bibliographical aids dedicated

49 RŮŽIČKA, *Průmysl a dělnické hnutí*, 31–40.

50 Cf. e.g. GARLÍK, *Baťovy závody*; NÁDVORNÍK, *Baťův systém řízení*; NÁDVORNÍK, *Systém řízení a organizace*.

51 CHIKUGO, *Tomáš Baťa*; PAVITT, *The Baťa Project*; SKOVAJSOVÁ, *Životní styl*; STEINFÜHRER, *Stadt und Utopie*.

52 ŠLAPETA, *Baťa*; ŠEVEČEK – ZAHŘÁDKOVÁ, *Kulturní fenomén*.

53 *Obuv v historii*, [Internet sources].

54 HEINRICH, *Manufacturing for Wehrmacht*, 30–33.

to economic, social, regional or urban history published prior to 1989, we would be surprised at what an unimportant role the shoe industry played whenever it was mentioned.⁵⁵ This is even more surprising when we see how great a role the shoe industry played in the export segment of the Czechoslovak state socialist economy after 1945 and in the process of restructuring entire industrial regions.⁵⁶ The digitization of bibliographical data has greatly facilitated the search for specific publications, including individual essays and articles.⁵⁷ However, summarizing, or at least presenting an overview of the existing historiography on the history of shoe production involves a considerable degree of generalization.

3.1 The History of Enterprises

Despite all the ideological ballast, in the field of economic, social, regional and urban history Marxist historiography brought a number of innovative impulses, even in that field of research originally dedicated to enthusiastic amateur chroniclers, historians and documenters that arose among the working class:⁵⁸ the so-called *history of factories*, so crucial to the production of monographs on the history of the most important industrial enterprises, as well as industrial regions and towns. Research results were published on the history of the shoe industry that can be unmistakably classed as prestigious in this historiographical sub-discipline. The principal work is the monograph by Bohumil Lehár (*1930) *Dějiny Baťova koncernu* [History of the Baťa Concern] (1960).⁵⁹ This work, although published more than sixty years ago, is still the only comprehensive depiction of the first fifty years of the Baťa company, an astonishingly incomprehensible paradox given the frequency at which the topic of Baťa appears in the Czech historiography. An attempt at reinterpreting the Baťa story has only recently been made by the middle-generation North American historian Zachary Austin Doleshal, who approached the Baťa phenomenon from the perspective of *global history*.⁶⁰ The works by Bohumil Lehár⁶¹ have not been surpassed in the academic literature on the history of the Baťa concern, and still serve anyone interested in the history of the Baťa business and Baťa company towns as the elementary source of information. Despite being couched within Marxist doctrines that accentuate the class struggle and exploitation aspects of Baťa's business, his texts are based on the solid positivist foundations of a chronological layout. With his methodology, the author joined the broader stream of critical literature that had accompanied reflection on the Baťa concern back before World War I, at first in the contemporary shoemaking press and subsequently in the slowly growing stream of socio-critical bibliography focusing on the adverse aspects of the company's work.⁶² Perhaps only the urbanistic and architectural ambitions and realizations of the company's building department

55 LEHÁR – MYŠKA, *The Study*, 335–354.

56 BEZDĚKOVÁ, *Výběrová bibliografie*, 1982, pp. 46, 143–144, 168; BEZDĚKOVÁ, *Výběrová bibliografie*, 1984, p. 46.

57 *Bibliografie dějin Českých zemí*, [Internet sources].

58 LEHÁR, *Dějiny závodů*; PUBAL – ROHLENA, *Dějiny závodů*; MYŠKA, *Problémy a metody*, 136–139.

59 LEHÁR, *Dějiny koncernu Baťa*.

60 DOLESHAL, *In the Kingdom*.

61 LEHÁR, *The Economic Expansion*; LEHÁR, *Přehledné dějiny*; LEHÁR, *Ke stávce dělnictva*.

62 SVATOPLUK, *Botastroj*; PHILIPP, *Stiefel der Diktatur*; VON HAAN – KUČERA, *Batismus – ideologie sociálfašismu*; DVOŘÁKOVÁ, *Batismus a baťovci*.

escaped criticism, while the projects of the concern's company towns were debated by a whole band of left-wing reformers and intellectuals, headed by the international architectural avant-garde icon, Charles Édouard Jeanneret – Le Corbusier (1887–1965).⁶³

Lehár's monograph is one of the most valuable results of the national effort to chart the comprehensive history of factories from the perspective of Marxist historiography. His careful heuristics and convincing arguments proved so influential that a great number of other publications would not exist without them, from those focused on the history of the shoe industry to the war economy of World War I, not to mention the history of Zlín.⁶⁴ More than ten years after Lehár, a monograph on Budischowsky, the vast Třebíč-based tanning and shoe complex that became Baťa's first big acquisition during the Great Depression, was published by Jaroslav Mejzlík (1922–2003), a historian of the workers' and anti-fascist movements and a regional historian specializing in southwest Moravia and the town of Třebíč. As the director of the academy of trade in Třebíč, he split his time between his school duties and regional history. In spite of the criticism of his works on the workers' movement in the Třebíč region, he devoted a great deal of effort to his *Dějiny Závodů Gustava Klimenta Třebíč-Borovina* [History of the Gustav Kliment Factories in Třebíč-Borovina] (1972). Mejzlík's greatest work, however, suffers from many shortcomings as regards heuristics and contextualization. To give but one example, let us mention the key chapter on World War I, during which the Budischowsky concern provided supplies for the Austrian state as a contractual supplier of leather gear and boots. Instead of an accurate analysis of the company's heyday, which was followed after the Great War by nothing more than a protracted crisis that led to bankruptcy, the subsequent Baťa period (1930–1945) and nationalization (1945), readers will find Lehár's (!) paragraphs on the competing Baťa company from Zlín during World War I. Mejzlík's book, however, also covers the most recent history of Třebíč and its region. Let it be said in Mejzlík's defence that younger-generation historians at more prestigious academic institutions have also "succumbed" to the appeal and convincing nature of Lehár's arguments. First was Zdeněk Jindra (1931–2023) in his didactic monograph on World War I,⁶⁵ and one generation later, Ivan Šedivý (*1959) in a prestigious monograph on the Great War.⁶⁶ Both of them used Lehár's description of the Baťa concern's involvement as an exemplary enterprise working for the state and its war economy.

One result of many years of interest in the history of enterprise that peaked in the 1970s and 1980s was the long-awaited publication *Ševci a boty ve Žďáře* [Shoemakers and Shoes in Žďár] by the teacher and chronicler of Žďár nad Sázavou, František Mokřý (1891–1992), edited by Vladimír Trojánek and published by the Matěj Josef Sychra Library in Žďár nad Sázavou in 2012. It was in fact conceived in the late 1960s and

63 After his visit to Zlín in 1935, Le Corbusier declared that he was delighted by the town, and referred to it as a "shining phenomenon" in his letter to Jan Antonín Baťa and his colleagues. He was enchanted with the Baťa world of serial housing development so much that in the late 1930s he became involved in several architectural designs and urban projects of the concern's building department. Cf. COHEN, *An Industrial Republic*, 42–45; COHEN, "Unser Kunde ist unser Herr", 122–133.

64 The importance of the conclusions of Lehár's research for all newer publications on the history of Zlín is soon evident when looking at the footnotes of the three most important works: POKLUDA, *Sedm století; ŠEVEČEK, Zrození*; VALŮŠEK – SOMMER – ŠEVEČEK, *Dějiny*.

65 JINDRA, *První světová válka*, 196f.

66 ŠEDIVÝ, *Češi*, 219–229.

first offered for print in 1972, and for the second time in a reworked edition in 1979.⁶⁷ Neither the national enterprise Botana Skuteč nor the General Directorship of the Shoe Industry in Gottwaldov showed any sincere interest in publishing the manuscript when it was completed, during the so-called normalization of society in Czechoslovakia. The manuscript focused closely on small-scale entrepreneurs in the shoe industry, was less than flattering about some players in the post-war party structures in the Žďár region, and was especially critical of the socialist industrialization of the town of Žďár nad Sázavou and the surrounding region, where the local small-scale production of shoes, and eventually the whole regional shoe industry, had fallen victim to engineering production back in the 1950s. The conditions under which the publication was created did not help either; today they would be remotely reminiscent of the *oral history* method – the author contacted and interviewed dozens of people who recalled the former glory of shoemaking in the Žďár region.⁶⁸ Although there are many things we could criticize about Mokřý's monograph on shoemaking in the Žďár region, such as the lack of footnotes with references to particular archival material, it offers a consistent overview of the local small-scale shoemaking and industry, including fragments of memoirs from the time and documents that provide a colourful addition to Mokřý's well-founded and involved depiction. Mokřý's publication is of course also a significant contribution to the local regional and urban history.

Research into the past of shoemaking has been explored in a series of smaller studies in the past decades, dedicated to both small producers⁶⁹ and renowned companies that have, surprisingly, not yet been covered by a comprehensive monograph, such as Feldmann in Kolín,⁷⁰ Kompert in Mnichovo Hradiště,⁷¹ and Strakosch in Kutná Hora.⁷²

3.2 The History of Design and Production

Notwithstanding professional publications on leather-processing and shoe-production technologies, including a brief description of their past, intended primarily for the education of future staff in the leather and shoe industries,⁷³ the comprehensive history of shoe production and leather processing is represented in Czech historiography by three recent works from after the year 2000. In particular, these comprise two monographs by Miroslava Štýbrová (*1955), who served as curator of the Southeast Moravia Museum in Zlín for many years, where she was in charge of their unique collection of shoes and also organized the international conferences *Obuv*

67 MOKŘÝ, *Ševci a boty*.

68 Ibidem, 17–18: "As witnesses to the former glory of shoemaking in Žďár disappear, I want the following few papers to portray the history of the shoemakers of Žďár, the whole story from the very beginning, the expansion, overview and development of each plant, and finally the period of decline to the present day. I have called upon workers from the factories, travelled around to the rural houses they live or lived in, spoken to the former manufacturers, both large and small, or their widows, sons and daughters. Many were keen to enlighten me, glad to talk, and allowed me to take notes. But some were reluctant to tell even dates of birth or death, let alone talk about production, details, destinies, successes or crises. Although I spent several years collecting the materials, some parts of the text are still not detailed or complete enough. But if nothing is set down now while at least some who were directly involved and bore witness still live, the history of the shoemakers of Žďár will be lost forever."

69 CHLEBEC, *Historie téměř detektivní*, 9.

70 JOUZA – JOUZOVÁ, "Kolínská obuv je nejlepší", 137–159.

71 ALTMAN, *Kompertovka neboli ševcárna*, 41–48.

72 PROVAZ, *Z dějin firmy "H. Strakosch"*, 8ff.

73 ŠNAJDR, *Technologie mechanické výroby*, 2–12 a.o.

v *historii* [Footwear in History]. The Museum's collection of historical footwear defined the structure and content of her later publication, *Docela obyčejné boty* [Quite Ordinary Shoes] (2017),⁷⁴ basically a catalogue showcasing the finest articles of historical footwear from the Zlín Museum collections. Besides examples of traditional European footwear and footwear from outside Europe, the publication provides information on the history of the collection, the craft of shoemaking and shoe industry terminology. The author places greatest emphasis on the design and visual components of footwear, possibly inspired by Linda O'Keefe's pictorial work published in English in 1997,⁷⁵ which popularizes the history of shoe design, including art-, fetish- and politically-motivated shoes. Štýbrová also showed an in-depth knowledge of the Czech history of footwear in her extensive 2009 work which follows the development of technologies, the organization of production and the cultural values and symbolic meanings of footwear from ancient times to the present day. Her publication *Boty, botky, botičky* [Little and Big Shoes] also includes a glossary of professional terms and relevant bibliography showing that she drew inspiration from the *Obuv v historii* conferences in Zlín.⁷⁶ The publication *Kůže* [Leather] by Olga Floriánová, a substantial part of which is dedicated to shoemaking, footwear and shoemaking workshops, is intended to appeal to a wider audience.⁷⁷ Neither of these monographs, however, gives a comprehensive overview of the topic of shoemaking in the Bohemian lands, its regional presence and its leaders, especially in the high industrial era, from approximately 1890 to 1990.

3.3 Encyclopaedias and Summarizing Works

Shoemaking and the shoemaking industry have been at least marginally touched upon in various works summarizing the history of material culture,⁷⁸ production,⁷⁹ tools⁸⁰ and folk costumes.⁸¹ The topic of the regional distribution of the modern footwear industry in the Bohemian lands prior to World War I can be found in monographs from the 1970s and 1980s that, drawing on macroeconomic, statistical and geographical data, reconstructed the localization of various industries in the Bohemian lands.⁸² The names of entrepreneurs in the footwear industry and the related disciplines, principally the leather industry, are available in various biographical lexicons,⁸³ and naturally in the two volumes of the *Historická encyklopedie podnikatelů Čech, Moravy a Slezska* [Historical Encyclopaedia of Entrepreneurs in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia] by a team of authors headed by Milan Myška (1933–2016). While the first volume presents the biographies of the most important shoe-factory owners and also the influential

74 ŠTÝBROVÁ, *Docela obyčejné boty*.

75 O'KEEFOVÁ, *Boty*.

76 ŠTÝBROVÁ, *Boty*.

77 FLORIÁNOVÁ, *Kůže*.

78 PETRÁŇ, *Dějiny hmotné kultury I/1*, 200, 221, 288, 320; PETRÁŇ, *Dějiny hmotné kultury I/2*, 888–895; PETRÁŇ, *Dějiny hmotné kultury II/2*, 847, 861, 901ff.

79 JANÁČEK, *Řemeslná výroba*; JANÁČEK, *Přehled vývoje*; ČECHOVÁ – HALÍKOVÁ, *Dějiny odívání*; PŘÍHODOVÁ – TALAŠ – ŠTÝBROVÁ, *Textil*.

80 NOVÁK, *Encyklopedie nářadí*, 12, 16, 18, 68, 71, 77 a.o.

81 KYBALOVÁ, *Dějiny odívání*, I–V; LUDVÍKOVÁ, *Moravské a slezské kroje*; LANGHAMEROVÁ, *České lidové kroje*; LANGHAMEROVÁ, *Lidové kroje*, a.o.

82 BEČVÁŘ, *Rozmístění průmyslu*; MAREŠ, *Vývoj rozmístění průmyslu*; ZWETTLER, *Historicko-geografický obraz*.

83 PRCHAL, *Biografický slovník Polenska*.

community and regional politicians Tomáš and Jan Antonín Baťa and Bedřich Václav Popper,⁸⁴ the authors of the second volume focused their attention on four lesser-known entrepreneurs from the Czech-Moravian Highlands.⁸⁵ The research potential for biographical works on entrepreneurs (in the footwear and leather industries) has still not been exhausted, and the two-volume encyclopaedia calls for a follow-up that could also focus on the role of female entrepreneurs, not only in shoemaking but especially in the shoe trade. Just as important as the biographical lexicons and encyclopaedias of entrepreneurial personalities and their families are the encyclopaedic works on technical monuments. So far, the greatest progress in research into shoemaking factories as industrial and cultural heritage has been seen with the series *Industriální topografie* [Industrial Topography],⁸⁶ which is also available online.⁸⁷ As of now, the database contains 58 entries of the premises of shoe and leather factories and the related branches of production across the Bohemian lands. Entries for the leading shoemaking factories Baťa, Feldmann (Kolín) and Popper (Chrudim) are available; the database, however, also mentions much smaller enterprises and their principal importance for the industrialization of rural regions outside of large industrial areas and agglomerations.⁸⁸

3.4 Regional Literature

Regional, academic and popular academic periodicals are important sources of often brief yet invaluable research information and reports, hidden in the pages of case studies. As an example, *Chrudimské vlastivědné listy* published a series by Adam Židek on the F. L. Popper company which,⁸⁹ together with Budischowsky of Třebíč and Baťa of Zlín, made up the trio of the most important companies producing footwear in factories at the time of World War I.⁹⁰ A less extensive biographical study, including numerous memoirs, on another Jewish factory owner, Siegfried Lipa (Lípa) of Bystré u Poličky, verges upon being a biographical study and an essay in business history, as do studies by Židek on the Popper family and their business.⁹¹ Articles like this also have to be sought in the contemporary or current regional press, to which local researchers and chroniclers have always contributed free of charge, often after thorough research in local memory institutions.⁹²

At the level of whole regions, whether mostly industrial or more agrarian, a crucial role in the mapping of small-scale shoemaking production and footwear history was played by the editorial series *Historie a současnost podnikání* [Business Past and Present], and we are grateful to the authors, mostly archivists, local historians and regional university teachers, for this attempt at a comprehensive elaboration on recent business history and contemporary enterprise after 2000. Those interested in the history of small-scale shoemaking and the factory production of footwear can hardly

84 MYŠKA, *Historická encyklopedie*, 35f., 346f.

85 MYŠKA, *Historická encyklopedie*, II, 352–355, 374, 383f., 414.

86 BERAN – VALCHÁŘOVÁ – ZIKMUND, *Industriální topografie*, a.o.

87 *Industriální topografie. Průmyslová architektura a technické stavby*, [Internet sources].

88 Ibidem.

89 ŽIDEK, *Podnikatelská rodina Popperů*.

90 ŽIDEK, *Sága rodiny Popperů*, 7–10; HOŘEJŠ, *Sociální aspekty*, 233–248.

91 KUKLA, *Příběh bysterského ševce*, 88–91.

92 BOČKOVÁ, *Zaváté stopy*, 9.

work without these compendia,⁹³ despite a significant variation in quality between the volumes, the lack of academic notes and the fact that some volumes completely overlook the once influential footwear industry (Jihlava region).⁹⁴ Their authors apparently did not access older case studies that would have compensated for the otherwise essential archival research.

However, even the series *Historie a současnost podnikání*, the quality of which varies, did not fill the gap in the regional historiography of shoemaking and the footwear industry in the Bohemian lands, especially when considering small-scale shoe production and factory production in entire regions. The history of shoemaking in the Czech-Moravian Highlands, the submontane areas of the Orlické Mountains, and Central and East Moravia, whether in a broader chronological or geographical framework, has yet to be explored. The same goes for the history of modern footwear production in the industrial centres of Brno and Prague.

3.5 Urban History

The development and growth of modern industry and the related changes in human settlements, the urban way of life and everydayness is one of the emblematic topics of urban history. The footwear industry and the way it overlapped with the transformation of urban environment have become the subject of several extensive works that, unsurprisingly, have focused mostly on the activities of the world-famous Baťa concern and the rapid transformation of Zlín into the concern's headquarters, or have explored other Baťa company towns, built along the same lines from the late 1920s.

A detailed analysis of the structural transformations of Zlín in the initial dynamic stages of its industrialization is given in the published dissertation by Ondřej Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole* [The Birth of Baťa's Industrial Metropolis].⁹⁵ It draws on an extensive analysis of historical statistical data that serve as the basis for investigating the key demographic, social and spatial aspects of the transformation of the urban environment in its links to the development of the footwear industry. It shows the possible benefits of quantitative social history analyses for the study of rapidly changing industrial localities. In its time, it added an innovative social and demographic dimension to the existing literature, accentuating the architectural, urban and construction aspects of Zlín's urban transformation. In typological terms, the book is set within the context of international research into industrial settlements built and managed by a single enterprise – the so-called company towns. It is thus the first Czech publication to work more consistently with this typological characteristic, also establishing it in Czech urban historical research. In addition, however, it naturally focused on comparison of the transformation of Zlín into a company town with the developments of other company towns. In its analytical parts, the work unfortunately lacks a consistent analysis of the anthropological and cultural dimensions

93 JOUZA, *Historie a současnost podnikání na Kolínsku*, 88f.; TRČKA – RIPPELOVÁ, *Historie a současnost*, 32f., 57–60; POUZAR – PAVLOVSKÝ – BLAŽEK, *Historie a současnost*, 65, 79; FIKELJ, *Historie a současnost podnikání na Svitavsku*, 90–99, 111ff., 124, 134; BEČKOVÁ, *Historie a současnost podnikání na Třebíčsku*, 21, 77, 81–97; FROLÍK – GRULICH – KŘIVÁNKOVÁ – ŠULC – PLESKOTOVÁ, *Historie a současnost podnikání na Chrudimsku*; FILKA, *Historie a současnost podnikání na Žďársku*, 22, 59, 70f., 83, 88f., 114–118, 123; BOROVEC, *Historie a současnost podnikání na Pardubicku*, 14, 26, 71–77.

94 JAROŠ, *Historie a současnost*.

95 ŠEVEČEK, *Zrození*.

of the urbanization process, including the changes in everyday life influenced by the development of serial industrial production and the Ford-style organization of industry.⁹⁶

An extensive monograph by Martin Jemelka and Ondřej Ševeček, *Tovární města Baťova koncernu* [Company Towns of the Baťa Concern],⁹⁷ explores the social dimensions of Baťa's business as seen from the perspective of the development of sixteen company towns in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The authors combine urban history, business history and the history of economic globalization. The unifying framework of their conceptualization of the history of the Baťa concern is the study of the social impact of development and growth in the specific environment of company towns. The publication treats them as an experimental setting that saw important modernization processes take place that were bound to the Ford-style organization of industrial production. It elaborates on their influence on the urban space and society, from architecture, urban planning and habitation, through work in factories, to new technologies, forms of communication, media and everyday life and consumerism. When interpreting Baťa's urban projects, it emphasizes the inner logic behind the concern's entrepreneurial model, which combined the Ford technological scheme with radical social interventions and a wide range of control and disciplining mechanisms. The monograph shows how Baťa's urban programme was influenced by the practice of American company towns and the ideas of Fordism that were creatively developed in the concern, respecting its specific needs as determined by its production programme and the footwear industry, in which, despite the use of up-to-date technologies, the human element still played a massive role in production. The conclusions of extensive research make it apparent that even the study of this specific corporate model of urbanization (despite its specifics) allows us to understand and interpret many substantial facts regarding the dynamics of the social, economic and cultural processes that were set in motion by big industrial organizations formed on the basis of Fordism between 1900 and 1950.

The latest research work on this topic was written by a large team of authors in a two-volume synthesis on the history of Zlín. Volume two, entitled *Moderní město* [Modern Town],⁹⁸ is focused on the dynamic period of the nascent and growing Mecca of the Czechoslovak footwear industry from the outbreak of World War I (1914) to its post-socialist transformation. By combining a chronological and thematic layout, the book follows the expansion and development of the local industry, accompanied by growth and the radical transformation of the town and its society. The first six chapters, which follow the traditional chronological line, explore the development of the town from the perspective of both political events and economic, social and administrative history. In the seventh and final chapter, "Constants and Variables", the authors add a more comprehensive thematic text, and in five sub-chapters they analyse the transformations of the industrial town's setting as seen from the perspective of five important phenomena not only of the modern time (Landscape and Space; Work; Society and Religious Life; Leisure Time; Media and Communication). It is important to note

96 More comprehensive and extensive research into the ideological, cultural and anthropological dimensions of the transformation is still lacking in the available bibliography. Partially, these important topics are thematized (or conceptualized) in several studies: STEINFÜHRER, *Stadt*, 33–73; SZCZEPANIK, *Modernism*, 349–376; HOLUBEC, *Silní milují život*, 30–55; MAREŠ, *Sonda*, 681–701; JEMELKA – ŠEVEČEK, *The Utopian Industrial City*, 235–262.

97 JEMELKA – ŠEVEČEK, *Tovární města*.

98 VALŮŠEK – SOMMER – ŠEVEČEK, *Dějiny*.

from a historiographical perspective that this book is the very first to provide a more complex elaboration on the socialist and post-socialist period in Zlín's history. It shows the complicated development of the town after the nationalization of the local industry and the seizure of power by the communists, which was supposed to put a definite end to the town's links to its capitalist past. The research results it presents, however, also show a continuity between the Baťa period and state socialism. They conclude that the Baťa managerial model continued to be relevant in the nationalized industry too, and that the local communists tried to instil Baťa's ethos of hard work and performance under the conditions of socialist development. Gottwaldov was supposed to become an exemplary town,⁹⁹ this time a socialist one. There was also an apparent continuity in the urban space, and many components of the original Baťa programme were smoothly adapted by the new systems irrespective of the changing political regimes. From the viewpoint of urban history and changes in the urban structure, the authors emphasize the groundbreaking importance of Zlín's post-socialist transformation in the 1990s, linked to the rise of the de-industrialization that later led to the collapse of mass footwear production and the subsequent loss of the status of a trans-regional industrial town, the determining factor for the town over the entire preceding period. The history of Zlín shows that the study of the transformational period may offer very fertile ground for the further development of research in urban history and may also greatly help to portray the key development dynamics of Czech towns and regions.

The inherent link between shoemaking and the footwear industry on the one hand, and modern urban transformational processes on the other, has also been partially explored in monographs dedicated to other towns, such as Prostějov¹⁰⁰ and Žďár nad Sázavou.¹⁰¹ Without lengthy passages and entire chapters on the footwear industry, books on the history of Bílovec, Silesia¹⁰² and Vlašim, Central Bohemia,¹⁰³ as well as smaller towns in the Czech-Moravian Highlands, such as Bystré u Poličky,¹⁰⁴ Chrast¹⁰⁵ and Polná,¹⁰⁶ could also not have been written. The town of Litomyšl in East Bohemia is an apt example of a town whose historiography paid adequate attention to the footwear industry in every monograph on the town's history.¹⁰⁷ However, the attentive reader will find recurrences of the facts already published in the study *O litomyšlských ševcích* [On the Shoemakers of Litomyšl]¹⁰⁸ in 1927, rather than a deeper insight into or even a reinterpretation of the information already collated. A similar content and structure can be found in a later study, "Zámečnickova továrna na obuv v Poličce" [The Zámečník Shoe Factory in Polička] (1943), published in East Bohemia's important

99 The city of Zlín, whose name was inextricably linked with the famous business of the Baťa family, was renamed Gottwaldov at the beginning of 1949, in honour of the first communist president, Klement Gottwald (1896–1953).

100 KLENOVSKÝ, *Židovské město*; MAREK, *Prostějov*; ROHÁČKOVÁ, *Prostějovské firemní veduty*.

101 ZEMEK – BARTUŠEK, *Dějiny Žďáru*.

102 VALEŠ, *Příběhy bíloveckých domů*.

103 PREISLEROVÁ, *Vlašim*, 33, 91f., 142ff.

104 ZÁMEČNÍK, *Bystré*; DITTRICH – STAŇA, *Bystré*.

105 MACHALA, *Historie továrního průmyslu*, 3f.

106 ŠUP, *Polenští ševci*; KUBA – PRCHAL, *Továrna na obuv*.

107 NEJEDLÝ, *Litomyšl*, 208; LAŠEK, *Oživené litomyšlské paměti*, 126f.; SKŘIVÁNEK, *Litomyšl 1259–2009*, 270–276; KAPUSTA, *Litomyšl a její tradice nevázně i vážně*, 19–23.

108 ŠKORPIL, *O litomyšlských ševcích*, 72–75.

interwar local history periodical, *Od Trstenické stezky* [From the Trstenicka Trail]. None of these monographs or monographic studies, however, can compare to Zlín's urban historiography, in which shoemaking always played a key role.¹⁰⁹

3.6 Memoir Literature

Memoir literature on shoemaking in the Bohemian lands is clearly dominated by the memoirs of the leading staff of the Baťa concern. The series of Baťa memoirs was launched with a publication containing the memoirs and speeches of Tomáš Baťa, entitled *Úvahy a projevy* [Reflections and Speeches] (1932). This was followed by the extraordinarily extensive memoirs of Baťa's step-brother Jan Antonín,¹¹⁰ and also those by Baťa's son Tomáš Jan¹¹¹ and others of the concern's directors, such as Dominik Čipera¹¹² and Hugo Vavrečka.¹¹³ In the influx of Baťa memoir literature, the aforementioned recollections of the architect and urbanist Vladimír Karfík (1901–1996) are especially worthy of note and keep a critical distance from Baťa's cult, his work as an entrepreneur and his followers. Karfík puts the versatility of Baťa's business in a context which goes far beyond the boundaries of the narrow profession-based approach by a leading representative of the company's building department.¹¹⁴ Rare memories of Jan Antonín Baťa, the world of the upper floors of the skyscraper in Zlín and the concern's hierarchy at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s are presented by the lawyer Vladimír Krejčí (1908–1993), J. A. Baťa's last personal secretary before he moved abroad. The memoirs reveal not only the author's literary ambitions but also his keen talent of observation, enabling him to witness many details from behind the scenes in the global shoemaking concern, including J. A. Baťa's role in designing the concept and promoting the concern's model of company towns.¹¹⁵ We could spend a long time listing Baťa memoir literature.¹¹⁶ What is remarkable, besides the often uncritical approach to the Baťa phenomenon, is the absence of the memoirs of ordinary labourers,¹¹⁷ let alone women,¹¹⁸ who played an important role at various levels of the company's hierarchy. We can only conclude that the intensifying memoir discussion in the Bohemian lands still lacks suitable examples from the Baťa environment across the company's hierarchy.¹¹⁹

One publication that comes close to Baťa memoir literature is the memoirs of the factory owner and mayor of Slavičín, Jan Pivečka (1886–1961),¹²⁰ who during World War I was involved in the construction of the tanneries for the Baťa company

109 POKLUDA, *Sedm století*.

110 BAŤA, *Těžké časy*; BAŤA, *Román života*; BAŤA, *Uloupené dílo*; BAŤA, *Nové knížectví*.

111 BAŤA – SINCLAIROVÁ, *Baťa*.

112 ČIPERA, *Ve službách práce a lidu*.

113 VAVRIS (VAVREČKA), *Život*.

114 KARFÍK, *Vzpomínky*, 139–153 a.o.

115 KREJČÍ, *Poznamenaný*.

116 KŘEČEK, *Má dáti*.

117 VACULÍK, „Milí spolužáci!“.

118 ANDĚLOVÁ, *Kam až došlo děvče z Hané*.

119 For a detailed look at Baťa memoirs, see JEMELKA, *Deset měsíců*, 9–16.

120 PIVEČKA, *80 let*.

in Malenovice, and who launched his own shoe production after the war.¹²¹ Members of the Jewish Schönbach family intended to match the entrepreneurial success of the Baťa brothers, running a leather and shoe business in Černovice, North Bohemia. The short book entitled *Černovický Baťa* also includes the memoirs and recollections of Schönbach's childhood friend Josef Hrdlička.¹²²

During the Protectorate, the painter Josef Lada took advantage of the little room in a rural house in Hrusice, Central Bohemia where he was born, which served both as a shoemaker's workshop and the only living room,¹²³ not only to portray the melancholic images of his childhood but also to give an accurate description of the shoemaker's milieu (*Kronika mého života* [Chronicle of My Life], 1942). In Lada's sensitive and highly readable description, the world of poor rural folk condemned to be shoemakers and itinerants is depicted alongside the specific working habits and usual traits of shoemakers, particularly unpopular children's errands returning finished shoes and the use of shoemaking tools for (dangerous) children's games, merry carnival rituals and frequent corporal punishment with the shoemaker's belt.¹²⁴ The accuracy of Lada's depiction is confirmed by other memoirs, such as of the childhood of the Moravian-Silesian social democrat and long-time mayor of Moravská Ostrava, Jan Prokeš (1873–1935) who, like Lada, came from a poor Central Moravian rural environment, and fled a life of shoemaking first to go into journalism, and eventually to become a professional politician.¹²⁵

After the change in the political and societal system following the February 1948 coup d'état, the spirit of class struggle entered the poor workshops of the municipal and rural shoemaking proletariat. One example of this is outlined in a short book entitled *Z mých vzpomínek* [From My Memories] (1984) by Josef Buben (1907–1985), an interwar Communist Party member, a victim of the Nazi persecution, and the post-war chairman of the district (1951) and municipal (1960) council in Litomyšl. A native of Lubná, near Litomyšl, and the bearer of the Order of Labour and Order of the Victorious February, he gave a detailed description of a rural workshop which served as the living room, dining room and workroom in one, and painted a credible picture of the atmosphere during World War I and its specific demands for civilian shoes and military boots; however, for him the setting of a rural house and village in the northeastern tip of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands primarily set the scene for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat in the village, headed by a small band of local communists.¹²⁶ There are obviously countless similar publications in the Czech environment. Their monologue-based storytelling and sole focus on the traditions of the revolutionary and trade union movement, along with their uncritical adoration of the communist party as the leader, however, do not appeal to today's readers.

121 MACKOVÁ, *V koželužské zástěře*. For the life of Pivečka's son Jan (1919–2004), a long-time employee of the Baťa concern, see ŠVIHÁLEK – TARABUSOVÁ, *Jan Pivečka*.

122 DOHNALOVÁ, *Černovický Baťa*.

123 LADA, *Kronika*, 26–29, 31f.

124 *Ibidem*, 19–24, 53ff., 40f., 70, 76, 118f., 136f.

125 VODIČKA, *Starý učitel*, 55–56.

126 BUBEN, *Z mých vzpomínek*.

3.7 Student Graduation Theses

The thematic gaps, apparent shortcomings in content and methodological limits of the aforementioned relevant bibliography are often compensated for, and at least partially remedied by graduation theses by university students of history and the related disciplines, including marketing and the technical sciences, focusing on leather processing and shoe production. It is obvious that graduation theses on the history of shoemaking and the footwear industry vary greatly in quality and are usually limited in their regional or thematic scope. However, the authors of these works often carry out detailed research in regional memory institutions, and their works open and explore topics overlooked by large monographic studies and specialized academic works. The classification of students' graduation theses on shoemaking and the shoemaking industry in the twentieth century is only possible with a considerable degree of generalization. The online bibliographical database at tomasbata.org alone contains 210 graduation works on the Baťa phenomenon.¹²⁷ Despite that, the topics can at least be divided into several basic thematic groups.

Most importantly, these are works on the history of towns or regions which had a shoemaking industry, whether approached from the perspective of political,¹²⁸ economic¹²⁹ or urban history.¹³⁰ The involvement of many shoe-factory owners in local politics and the role they played in building modern infrastructure and industrial architecture¹³¹ is an attractive topic for a number of graduation theses. The considerable proportion of Jewish entrepreneurs in the shoemaking industry in the Bohemian lands is reflected in how frequently they appear in graduation works on the history of Jewish communities in what is now the Czech Republic.¹³² In recent years, fortunately, works on the actual history of shoemaking have also begun to emerge, focusing both on factory production¹³³ and on cooperative and community production.¹³⁴ Further great benefit is also offered by works dedicated to the presentation of footwear currently produced and presented at shoe fairs,¹³⁵ as well as historical footwear in museum collections.¹³⁶ We are grateful to students for their fine studies on the topic of the tanning works in Slavičín (the Pivečka family)¹³⁷ and in Třebechovice pod Orebem, East Bohemia,¹³⁸ not to mention the specific production of semi-wooden or wooden shoes in Třešť, West

127 *Bibliografie Baťa*, [Internet sources].

128 BEROUN, *Moravské Budějovice*; RYBENSKÁ, *Chrudim*; POSPÍŠILOVÁ, *Poválečné osudy*; KRÁLOVÁ, *Historie a současnost*.

129 LOSERT, *Hospodářský obraz*; VLASÁK, *Módní a obuvnická reklama*; KVASNIČKOVÁ, *Historie a současnost*; JAKŠÍK, *Kapitoly*; SCHIEBELOVÁ, *Sociální struktura*, a.o.

130 KOPECKÁ, *Architektura*.

131 BLAHOVÁ, *Továrna Mnichovo Hradiště*.

132 ALTMAN, *Němci a Židé*; GROHOVÁ, *Demografický rozbor*; KUNDRÁTOVÁ, *Židé v Chrasti*; RYŠAVÁ, *Židé v Kroměříži*, a.o.

133 ODVÁRKOVÁ, *Továrna na obuv*.

134 HAVLÍČKOVÁ, *Koželužské organizace*; PODOLSKÁ, *Živnostenské společenstvo*; KREJČÍ, *Obuvnictví na Skutečsku*; KUBOVÁ, *Obuvnictví, společenstva obuvníků*; NOVÁKOVÁ, *Obuvnictví na Jičinsku*; SOBEK, *Cechovní a živnostenské korporace*; STODOLOVÁ, *Živnostenská společenstva*, a.o.

135 TRČÁLKOVÁ, *Prezentace obuvi*; TRČÁLKOVÁ, *Design obuvi*.

136 BLÁHOVÁ, *Muzeum obuvi*.

137 GOLDBACH, *Rodina Pivečků*.

138 JAHNOVÁ, *Koželuzi a koželuzství*.

Moravia.¹³⁹ In the last two decades, many graduation theses have been written on the history of the Baťa company. In the footnotes, let us mention at least some of the more convincing graduation theses on the history of architecture and urban planning,¹⁴⁰ and the history of the Baťa concern's plants in Czechoslovakia,¹⁴¹ and also in the whole of Europe and overseas.¹⁴²

4. A New Methodology?

The convolute of existing Czech bibliography on the history of shoemaking and the shoemaking industry is surprisingly extensive and diverse. It is apparent from the preceding overview by chronology and genre that it comprises a variety of assorted topics, genres and approaches, from the traditional history of products, plants and regions, to biographies of leading figures in the shoemaking business and the history of towns, especially industrial and company towns. Let us now ask one wholly fundamental question, that is, can the existing knowledge, rather fragmentary in nature, can be summarized and synthesized, and if so, how? One of the key problems with the existing Czech historiography is actually the lack of an adequate methodology. The available studies are typically descriptive, lacking the ambition to offer a deeper insight into the relevant historical processes, trends or the more general context of how shoemaking as the basic traditional-economy industry was transformed into a modern-industrial-era mass-production industry. Along with rapid organizational, technological, logistical and production innovations, shoemaking saw a fundamental change in its geography and spatial organization of work. These complex structural processes, conditional upon and also borne by the transformation of social and economic relations, had a major impact on the newly emerging international division of labour and the nascent global production and distribution chains, and these transformations then made a prominent mark on, amongst other things, the character and the transformations of the traditional shoemaking regions and towns. The production of footwear, the conditions in which it was manufactured and footwear itself have more than once become the subject of general considerations reflecting the transition of production to the modern industrial era. Being one of the referential points, footwear and shoemaking made their way into works written by the founders of the modern science of national economy and economic history.¹⁴³ In this sense, the available Czech historiography finds itself in a paradoxical situation: despite the significant role of shoemaking in the economic and social development of the Bohemian lands in both the industrial and pre-industrial eras, and despite the numerous factual studies and some works that can provide methodological guidance and inspiration for contemporary research, such as the results of research into the company towns of the Baťa concern, no systematic and comprehensive work on the history of shoemaking in the Bohemian lands has yet been written.

139 GUTWALDOVÁ, *Zpracovatelský průmysl*.

140 ELIÁŠOVÁ, *Architektura a urbanismus*; HAVLÍČKOVÁ, *Busi*, a. s.; ŘÍHOVÁ, *Šumné Sezimovo Ústí*; DORŇÁKOVÁ, *Obchodní domy*, a.o.

141 BENEŠOVÁ, *Moderní výstavba*; SMETKOVÁ, *Hnědouhelné doly*; CETKOVSKÝ, *Stavební vývoj*; CETKOVSKÝ, *Hospodářský a sociální vývoj*; SMETKOVÁ, *Podnikatelské aktivity*; SMETKOVÁ, *Působení Baťova koncernu*, a.o.

142 MAREŠOVÁ, *Vliv Baťova podnikání*.

143 Cf. e.g. BÜCHER, *Die Entstehung*; SOMBART, *Wirtschaft und Mode*.

When speaking about the lack of an adequate methodology in the existing research, we should ask whether a solution can be found, and whether the present researchers can be offered some new and promising perspective. We believe that the aforementioned methodologically innovative work by Anne Sudrow from 2010 can be inspirational.¹⁴⁴ Her research projects illustrate the considerable potential of the approach referred to as *New Product History*.¹⁴⁵ This notion emphasizes how this approach differs from the hitherto prevalent “old” product history that focuses on the production-related, technological or strictly economic aspects. *New Product History*, on the contrary, offers a synthesizing methodological approach to history and historical processes which are seen, learned or explained from the perspective of a specific thing – a product. In modern industrial history, it logically accentuates especially the importance of industry and industrial products, although from the methodological point of view, any things (in the broad sense) that serve human needs may become the subject of research, including various traded commodities and raw materials.

This basis is not new in the social sciences and historiography. It is one of the natural starting points for the researcher’s imagination and efforts to formulate the basic questions in many of the social sciences. In his influential introduction to sociology,¹⁴⁶ Anthony Giddens (†1938), the doyen of British sociology, showed that sociological imagination can be invoked, for instance, by an interest in the mere act of drinking coffee, which takes on a special aspect in the researcher’s eyes. Questions come to the researcher’s mind: What social rituals are linked to the consumption of this product? How does this product link us to global economic and social processes? What is its history? Historians also find themselves in a similarly inspirational micro-universe, as shown for instance by the Czech historian František Kutnar (1903–1983) in his *Malé dějiny brambor* [A Short History of Potatoes].¹⁴⁷ We should at least mention that anthropology has also traditionally made some important contributions to studies of human interaction (transactions in human culture and their motivations). In some fundamental respects, the results of its research and approaches have also inspired historiography in its methodology, especially as regards historical anthropology, microhistory and the history of material culture. What appears especially important in the relevant context are the anthropology-based conceptualizations of the “social life of things” (Arjun Appadurai) or studies into the “cultural biography of things” (Igor Kopytoff).¹⁴⁸ There are perspectives which in anthropology-based historiography are

144 SUDROW, *Der Schuh*.

145 SUDROW, *Der Schuh*, 11–44: The author undertook to elaborate on the countless descriptions and conceptualizations of the history of national socialism and its impact on German society from the perspective of material culture, moreover from a comparative perspective (Great Britain and the USA). For this purpose she uses the “total history” of one product – footwear. In her approach, the selected perspective focusing on a single product and segment of social and economic practice integrates various, usually separate social segments: politics and everyday life, the economy, and science and technology, as well as the world of material culture and consumerism. It stems from the conviction that “everyday objects”, just like other social institutions and structures, have to be included in research into political, economic and social changes. She chose footwear as the ideal subject of her research, as on the one hand it is part of military gear (military boots) and on the other it is a basic and universal consumer article (civilian shoes). Sudrow’s research strives to elaborate on and map the comprehensive links between political history and material culture in the interaction between consumption and production, taking the example of footwear as a specific everyday object.

146 GIDDENS, *Sociologie*, 18.

147 KUTNAR, *Malé dějiny*.

148 For details on these conceptualizations, see the pioneering work APPADURAI, *The Social Life of Things*.

often defined in opposition to the approaches taken by research with a macrostructural focus on exploring so-called great historical processes, such as industrialization or urbanization; however, the perspective and method offered by *New Product History* could help to integrate the two poles of research, up to now somewhat separated. It is apparent that footwear, too, which is in principle a universal asset of human culture, as well as any other product of material culture, may become the solid point, as it were, in the universe of historical facts and an important basis for new perspectives for learning historical facts.

What perspectives are actually involved in *New Product History*? Interest is not focused on mere transformations of design, technology or materials, which are the usual topics for traditional works on the history of various products (such as clothing, cars, home appliances, etc.).¹⁴⁹ This new approach is an attempt to transcend the artificial boundary of the traditional analytical categories, and offer the most comprehensive look at the "world" of each product in its broad cultural, structural, social, spatial and environmental contexts. Speaking of methodology and bases, it is also important to focus on the methods that influence the design of specific research projects, hence also their results. For Sudrow, for instance, it was the method she calls *historical analysis of the product life cycle (historische Produktlinienanalyse)*.¹⁵⁰ This is a perspective inspired by the environmentally-focused economy that at least since the 1980s has striven to establish new analytical approaches that expand our existing view of products. This is especially true in assessing the broader non-monetary aspects of the product life cycle and the study of important adverse external factors in production chains, including emissions or their social impact in specific environments.¹⁵¹ It is basically an effort to exploit the recognition value of the broadly conceived historical analysis of a specific product (as an ideal type) in a specific heuristic situation including creation and design, raw material inputs, technologies, actual production, distribution, consumption, disposal, recycling and reuse. The analyses of individual segments of the product life cycle are moreover framed within an effort to place the phenomena in question into the broadest possible cultural, social, spatial, environmental and also economic contexts. In this approach, the product's journey between the agents involved in its life cycle (clients – manufacturers – sellers, consumers – recyclers), various places, environments or regions (factory – warehouse – shop – landfill, or industrial town – village – metropolis, etc.) therefore also becomes a way to learn, one that allows us to

149 Cf. e.g. traditional bibliographies on product history: BRAUN – BINGER – GILLES, *Vom Mieder zum Dessous*; KUHLGATZ, *Bosch Automotive*; PARISSIEN, *The Life of the Automobile*; PEAVITT, *Refrigerator*; or on the general history of product design: LINDBECK, *Product Design*; RAIZMAN, *History of Modern Design*.

150 Cf. SUDROW, *Der Schuh*, 34–44.

151 CURRAN, *Life Cycle Assessment*: The interest in a more comprehensive survey on the *Product Life Cycle* has gradually spread in economics and the related disciplines, found an array of possible uses, and become the basis for various research projects that make the most of the potential offered by new analytical methods. We most often encounter the product life cycle study in connection with the growing importance of questions regarding the environmental impact of the product (produce as well as services) and the discussion concerning various methods of assessment (*Life Cycle Assessment*, *LCA*). New approaches are also used which focus on assessing the social impact of the life cycle of products and services (*Social Life Cycle Assessment*, *S-LCA*). This assessment aims to identify the product's real as well as potential impacts on society in the framework of its life cycle, and the various actors involved in the value and production chain, for instance in working conditions, fair remuneration and other social imprints. A parallel stream of analyses focuses primarily on innovation processes at the company and marketing levels. It explores the product life in the narrower framework of the factory, from introduction to the market through the innovation cycle, to the decline in demand and withdrawal of the product. Cf. e.g. HOFBAUER, *Marketing von Innovationen*.

analyse new links between historical phenomena and study the key historical processes and trends from a new perspective. This methodological perspective means that the segments of production and consumption (*Produktgeschichte*), usually elaborated upon and analysed separately in economic history, can also be integrated, a fact that is unquestionably beneficial for studying the item in question.

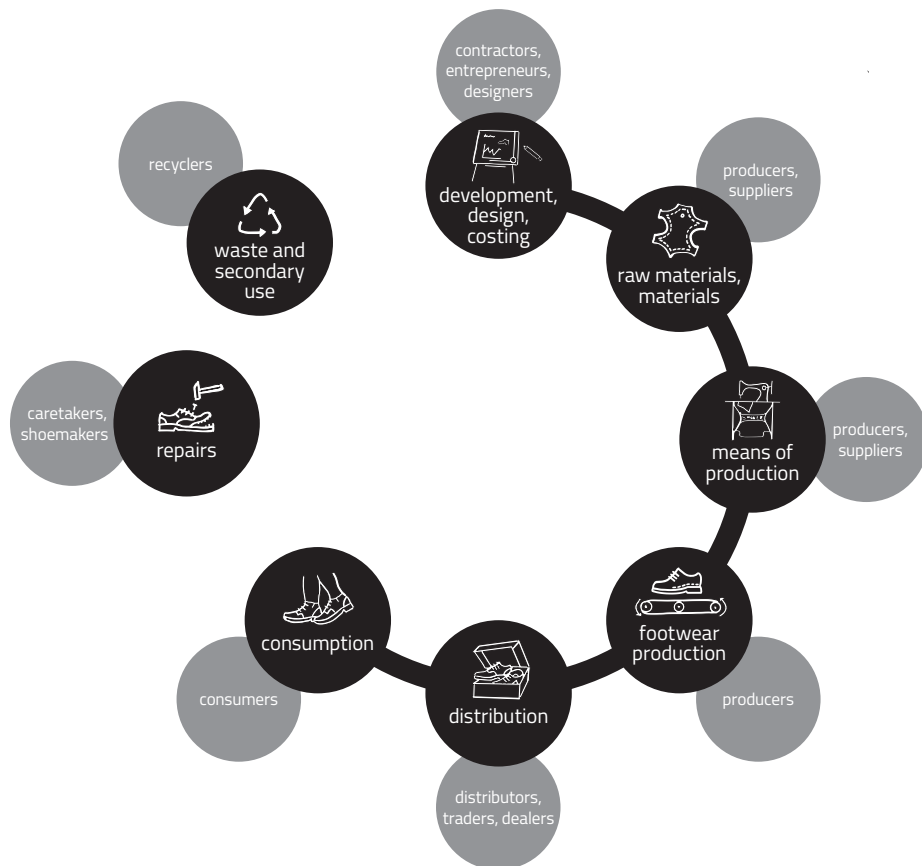


Figure 1: New Product History Heuristic Diagram

What this approach can offer to economic history is therefore a highly comprehensive view of the observed economic phenomena. It is apparent that this approach, surprisingly little used by historians, may prompt the further development of economic history and trigger methodological innovations and the desired interdisciplinary approach in other areas of contemporary historiography, especially in social, urban and environmental history. *New Product History* may enrich Czech and European historiography in several different ways:

- 1) It offers a new perspective and new analytical tools for economic history which, owing to its integratory and explanatory potential, naturally transcend the boundaries of states, economic segments and cultures, as well as the established academic specializations and disciplines.
- 2) It presents a comprehensive, integratory and at the same time brand new look at areas of the modern economy often only researched by segments, or traditionally defined fields of research, such as the study of important historical processes, including industrialization.
- 3) It expands the scope of research to business history in the era of the globalized economy, especially in studies of transnational entrepreneurship and corporations that are linked to the emergence of comprehensive and otherwise blurred transnational production and distribution chains and relations.
- 4) Its methodology is applied as interdisciplinary and can naturally link economic history with other disciplines, such as when there is the need to combine economic history with environmental history, the history of technology, urban history or cultural history.
- 5) By analysing comprehensive relationships between the production and value chains of the global economy, it can transcend the often narrow local or regional explanatory frameworks, and support progressive trends in contemporary historiography that strive to offer a critical reflection on the occidental approach to economic history (amongst other things by reconsidering the relationship between the centre and periphery).
- 6) It possesses considerable potential for the development of research in regional history, especially for innovative analyses of the spatial division of labour in the era of economic globalization. It does a great deal to complement the explanatory framework for the recognition of complicated processes that influence the economic and social development of regions and settlements, including their economic transformation, de-industrialization, etc.
- 7) It can enrich the traditionally interdisciplinary and eclectic character of urban history by adding perspectives that explain important development contexts and aspects of the urban economy, including charting and reconstructing economic, social and environmental links that are still underappreciated and not yet analysed, including the links between the segments of production, trade, the market and consumption. At the same time, as part of the study of urbanization, it can show new hierarchies and links in the settlement structure, while this does not only involve the study of industrial towns and their mutual economic relations but also the links between the town and its hinterland.

There are a number of highly traditional research areas in economic history. These include, for instance, economic growth, the course of the national economy, the global economy, the rise or fall of economic globalization, development and forms of entrepreneurial activity, transformations in the organization of trade, production and labour, and many others. The discipline is therefore traditionally a very broad field, open to many approaches and methodological stimuli. At the same time, economic history is the natural link connecting history and economy, as it is the bordering platform for communication between the academic communities of historians and economists, a factor which undoubtedly features prominently in the history of this discipline and its varied development. It turns out to be fertile ground for both sides in preparing the

specific empirical research tasks inspired by economic theory, which in turn is prompted and verified by the wealth of materials in case studies. The approach presented here, which can be referred to as *New Product History*, owes its creation to the methodological stimuli of an environmentally focused economic science that strives to expand the traditional perception of products, hence offering brand new perspectives for historic research as well. For the community of urban historians, as we have attempted to demonstrate, *New Product History* offers numerous new perspectives that, in certain respects, are also a response to contemporary visions of the sustainable development of towns, based on knowledge, networking and the circular economy. It is *New Product History* which seeks to draw on historical materials to analyse and clarify the topics that form the core of these visions.

5. Conclusion

Ten years after the end of World War I, the Sfinx publishing house in Prague published a short novel by a Czech-German writer, the Jewish journalist and reviewer Ludwig Winder (1889–1946), entitled *Upír* [Vampire] (*Unter der Reitpeitsche*). This member of the so-called Prague Circle chose Adam Dupič, an unscrupulous wartime profiteer who immorally profited from state orders and speculated with leather, as the main antagonist of his novel, which is set during the breakup of the old monarchy. At the time the novel was published, it was common gossip that when Winder conceived the protagonist of his appealing literary work, he based him on the factory owner Tomáš Baťa of Zlín and his involvement in state leather and footwear contracts. Whether this is true or not, the literary licence allowed Winder to create the beastly figure of a wartime profiteer. Dupič's amoral entrepreneurial methods and manners are an accusation directed against the old world which, according to Winder, himself a left-wing intellectual, should have been defeated once and for all. Just as in many aspects and context Winder's Vampire portrayed the cataclysm of World War I and the breakdown of the Danube monarchy,¹⁵² *New Product History*, when it takes a specific object, can create a comprehensive picture of its existence in a variety of economic, social, spatial, ecological, environmental and cultural contexts. Footwear as a physical constant in the material existence of man and human society is an ideal object to provide such a comprehensive picture. If we were to seek a suitable interpretational concept and methodological instrument to describe and analyse the importance and role of footwear in modern industrial society, *New Product History* offers itself as the ideal framework.

Were we to eventually pose the question of whether or not the history of shoemaking and the shoemaking industry in the Bohemian lands is a topical issue, we don't have to look far to find a positive answer. The Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia–Ukraine war and the related energy and economic crises have shaken the foundations of the existing model of economic globalization that had localized many strategic industries away from the traditional production centres of continental Europe, thus exposing it to a dangerous dependence on non-European products. As a result of the disruption of global production chains caused by geo-political instability and the rising costs of production and transfer, the international division of labour may be reconsidered and some industries may be relocated back to Europe. What the next chapter in the history of the shoemaking industry in the Bohemian lands will be like is a question that can only be answered in the future. So far, the press has been rife with reports on the

152 WINDER, *Upír*.

acquisition of one of the greatest Czech footwear manufacturers, Botana, of Skuteč, by its Zlín competitor, Vasky.¹⁵³ Newspaper headlines have already been highlighting the interwar parallels with the mass acquisition of bankrupt shoemaking factories by the huge Baťa concern during the Great Depression.

Contemporary Czech historiography is thus again witnessing the crisis, demise and restructuring of the Czech shoemaking industry, events which await the new generation of historians and readers of economic, social, cultural, urban or regional history, requiring partial or comprehensive research into a number of hitherto neglected topics. The family clans of the industrial tycoons Baťa, Budischowsky and Popper still await their biographies, let alone the smaller entrepreneurial families from the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands or central Moravia, often of Jewish descent. Another topic that has been completely overlooked is the history of the shoemaking industry in Prague, Brno and Vienna, while their urban frameworks offer the opportunity to elaborate on the key social and spatial transfers of modern times, taking shoemaking and its impact on the transformation of the urban environment and the social or economic structures of entire regions as an example. Vocational training in shoemaking, production cooperatives and communities, and joint stocks dealing in the production and sale of footwear are also entities that have so far evaded attention. Researchers' obsession with the iconic success of the Baťa concern, with the only focal point being the interwar era of its continuous growth, has led to the development of shoemaking and its globalization after 1945 being ignored, not to mention the close links between shoemaking, the shoemaking industry and the army, especially during the world wars. Without knowledge of the transformation processes and stages of the transition between political and economic regimes, it is impossible to understand the workings of large industrial concerns and the shoemaking industry as a whole, consumer culture and international relations. And this awaits researchers who will approach it from a broader chronological, geographical and thematic perspective, such as through *New Product History*.

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¹⁵³ *Legendární značku Botas koupila zlínská obuvnická firma Vasky*, [Internet sources].

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