

# HERPETOLOGICAL HISTORY

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## The First Frog Logo in Advertising

The use of non-human animals to transmit human values is commonplace in the popular media and advertising. Animals thus speak or otherwise behave like humans, and it has been argued that humans subconsciously bond with animals, whether symbolic or real, a reflection of “innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes” (i.e., the Biophilia Hypothesis of Kellert and Wilson 1993). Further, zoomorphic figures may be acceptable to a large audience (including children) and enable the transmission of messages that bypass censorship rules and favorably represent multicultural societies (Williams 2014). Nevertheless, some media materials have been labeled anthropomorphic and may even be harmful for species conservation (Schneider 2012). Amphibians, particularly frogs, have featured prominently in human cultures worldwide (Adler 2003; Das 2011; Crump 2015), and some of the earliest use of amphibians in product advertisement can be found in the Victorian Era, chiefly the late 1800s, for European and U.S. products, ranging from throat lozenges to wines and liquors (see examples in Donaldson 1980). In this article, I discuss early use of frogs in product advertisement by Werner & Mertz, a German shoe-polish company, and arguably, the first use of a frog logo.

The most widely known frogs associated with a product must be the trio used by Budweiser Beer (Gentile et al. 2001). Introduced during the 1995 Super Bowl XXIX, the beer commercial is considered a classic, has a Wikipedia entry, and won several Clio Awards and a Silver Lion Award at the Cannes Film Festival. On the flip side, Chen et al. (2005) argued that perceived likeability of such advertisements, often involving animals, are a function of the positive affective responses evoked by such elements, and may predispose young people to consume alcohol.

The task of promoting beer was not the first, nor the only one, for amphibians in advertising. Frogs, and less frequently salamanders, have been used to sell a variety of products—from shoe polish (Erdal), shoes (Salamander), cars (BMW), car safety belts (Mazda), to wines (Le Faux Frog, Frog’s Leap, Toad Hollow), salsa (Frog Bone), cupcakes (Coqui), beer (Bad Frog, Blue Toad, Bullfrog, Hoppin’ Frog), software (G. Graphics), furniture (Rana), and many others (see examples in Fig. 1). Not all frog-related advertisements have been successful. When Coca-Cola was launched in China in the 1920s, it was not enthusiastically

received, the first translated phonetically phrased name being “bite the wax tadpole” (Alon et al. 2010).

Werner & Mertz was registered as a trading company in 1867 based in Mainz, Germany, for the manufacture of waxware. The company currently manufactures cleaning, personal care, and conservation products, with branches in Europe and the United States. After a series of fires that destroyed the factory, it was moved to Ingelheimer Aue on the left bank of Mainz in 1917 and, in the following year, the “Froschturm” (“frog tower” in German)



FIG. 1. Amphibians in product logos on a postcard issued to commemorate the Fifth International Bornean Frog Race, 2016.

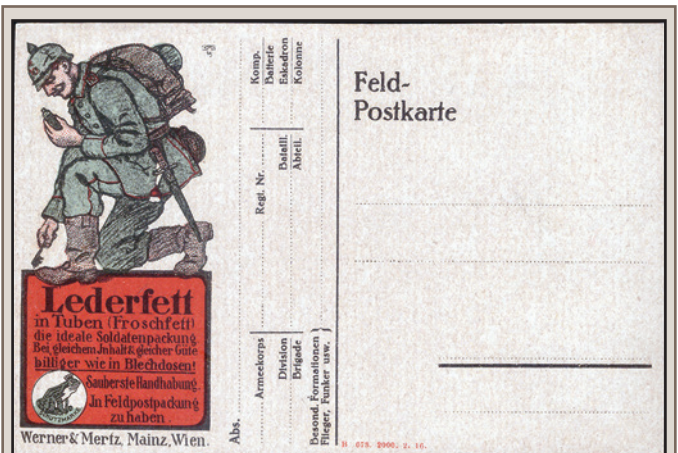


FIG. 2. A World War I-era field postcard from Werner and Mertz, featuring a German soldier cleaning his boots using Erdal shoe polish.

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FIG. 3. The red frog logo of Erdal from Werner and Mertz on a business cover, from 1927.

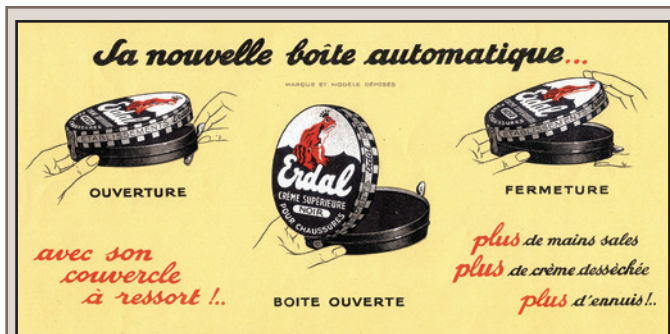


FIG. 4. Label from an Erdal shoe polish can, 1930, with instructions on removing the lid.

was built. Towards the end of the 19th century, the company's expertise in wax processing helped them develop a novel wax-based shoe polish and, in 1901, the Erdal trademark was filed with the Berlin Patent Office. The logo selected in 1903 depicted the frog in green (until World War I), with the product dispensed in a tin can. Thereafter, a red frog was used in promotion (Hödl 2000). The Frosch (German for "frog") brand was introduced in 1986 for household cleaners without phosphates. According to the company's website, its shoe polish contains real beeswax and "... nurtures all kinds of robust and smooth leathers. The rich formula keeps leather soft and supple and provides it with a silky gloss. It also revives colors and protects the leather from environmental effects. Solvent-free..." In contemporary advertisements (Mazzali-Lurati and Pollaroli 2016), the company associates shiny shoes with rear-view mirrors and businessmen (hence financial success) coupled with the Erdal frog that was originally associated with cleanliness.

The Erdal frog logo appears on "field postcards" that date to World War I (Fig. 2), official covers from the company (Fig. 3), and on labels for shoe polish (Fig. 4). Meter marks of the company, which are for promotional activities typically in collaboration between industry and the postal agencies that depict the logo, have appeared on covers at least until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fig. 5).

Below, I describe the early 1900s promotional labels (issued with products, the labels at present forming valuable

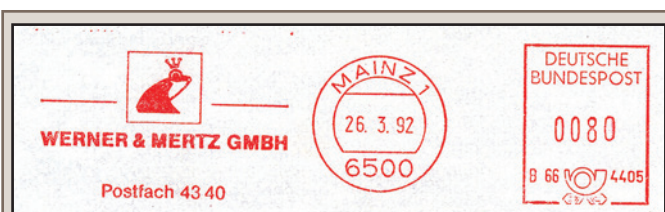


FIG. 5. Meter mark from Werner and Mertz from a cover from 1992, showing the Erdal frog logo.



FIG. 6. The frog logo from an Erdal product label (left), as well as post-stamp labels (center and right), dating to the early 1900s

collectibles) depicting the frog prince from Erdal and an alphabetical series of frog stamps. These were referred to as propaganda or advertisement labels or cinderella stamps and were eventually replaced by meter marks for convenience and economy.

The most widely known of the stamp labels show the frog with a crown (Fig. 6), a depiction of the company's logo from the statue in the tower of its original building. The crown is assumed to refer to the "Princess and the Frog" story written by the German brothers Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Carl Grimm (1786–1859), a popular tale of a promise kept and the reward therein (Das 2011).

A large (at least 25) series of stamp labels were produced by Erdal around 1913 depicting frogs in alphabetical letters from A to Z (Fig. 7). Each stamp measures 55 x 65 mm and is perforated. The corresponding item for the letter 'T' cannot be found in the records or with dealers and may have been withdrawn for unknown reasons. Each frog illustration makes a statement, usually referring to the importance of shoe polish and the superiority of Erdal over other brands. The short captions at the bottom of the stamps use the alphabet as either a noun, an article, or a verb, although it appears that the designers had to struggle with the letter "X" which was used to refer to Xanthippe (5th–4th century BCE), the wife of the Greek philosopher Socrates (circa. 470–399 BCE) who was described as "the hardest to get along with of all the women there are" (Xenophon et al. 1979). The text appears influenced by the morals of the day, and some may raise eyebrows for its treatment of spouses and employees. Psychologists and others may put forth the additional charge of anthropomorphism, with the obvious attribution of human behavior, emotions, or intentions to amphibians.

The design for the series has been attributed to Eduard Hans Beyer-Preusser and Fritz P. Glaseman, whose studio BPG (Beyer-Preusser-Glasemann) in Niedernhausen (Taunus), continued until at least 1938.

A - Alt und Jung nimmt allemal Nur als Schuhputz das Erdal / Old and young always only use Erdal as shoeshine.





FIG. 7. The alphabetical stamp labels produced by Werner and Mertz for Erdal shoe polish. Note that the letter 'T' is missing from all collections examined, and may have been withdrawn.

B- Der Bauer lobt den Erdal Putz Der's Leder Schütat von Näss' und Schmutz / The farmer praises Erdal plaster, whose leather protects against moisture and dirt.

C- Zu Seines Schuhwerks Pfleg und Zier Nimmt nur Erdal der Cavalier / Only Erdal the Cavalier takes care of his shoes.

D- Der Diener schwört auf Erdal Crème Sie macht die Arbeit angenehm / The servant swears by Erdal cream. It makes work pleasant.

E- Erzielt wird höchste Eleganz der Schuhe nur durch Erdal Glanz / The highest elegance of the shoes is only achieved through Erdal shine.

F- Frida's Freude ist sehr gross- denn Erdal Schuhcrème putzt famos / Frida's joy is huge because Erdal shoe polish cleans great.

G- Durch nalle Schuh' bekam er Gicht, Putz mit Erdal dann gibt's das nicht / With wet shoes, he got gout. Plaster with Erdal, there's no such thing.

H- Mit Erdal putet die Stiefel gern der Hausbursch für des HausesHerrn / The houseboy pleasures in the use of Erdal to clean the boots for the house owner.

(I) unissued or recalled.

J- Du dummer Junge merk' dir's mal die Stiefel putzt man mit Erdal / You stupid boy, remember you'll shine your boots with Erdal.

K- Voll Neid ruft Karlchen - Sag' mir mal, Du nimmst als Schuhputz wohl Erdal / Karlchen (Charlie) calls with envy - Tell me, you're probably using Erdal as a shoeshine.

L- Der Lehrling hat ein leichtes Leben seit man ihm

Erdal-Crème gegeben / The apprentice has had an easy life since Erdal cream was given to him.

M- Für Mädchen Steisel klein und fein Kann nur Erdal das Beste fein / For girls, small and fine, only Erdal can do the best.

N- Neunmal neunundneununzig Schuh putzt man mit Erdal im Nu / Nine times ninety-nine shoes can be cleaned with Erdal in no time.

O- Der Onkel ist gut aufgelegt Seit er die Schuh mit Erdal pflegt / The uncle is in a good mood since he shines his shoe with Erdal.

P- Die Politur erhält im nu dermit Erdal geputzte Schuh / The polish gets the shoe cleaned with Erdal in no time.

Q- Das Stiefelputzen einst ne Qual, zur Spielerei ward's mit Erdal! / Boot cleaning was once a pain, it is a breeze with Erdal!

R- Das Rennen um der Hausfrauen Preis gewann Erdal schwarz-gelb-braun-weiß / Erdal in black-yellow-brown-white won the race for the Housewives Prize.

S- Siehst du, sauber sind sie schon, putzt du mit Erdal mein Sohn / You see, they are already clean, if you clean with Erdal, my son.

T- Wie wandert der Tourist bequem-pflegt er die Schuh mit Erdal-Crème / How does the tourist hike comfortably? He shines his shoe with Erdal crème.

U- Bei Unwetter und Regenpfützen kann nur Erdal die Schuh' beschützen / In the event of bad weather and puddles, only Erdal can protect the shoe.

V- Der Vater Erdal Schuh-Crème lobt, viel spart er, seit er sie

erprobt! / The father praises Erdal shoe-cream; he has saved a lot since he tried it out!

W- Der Weihnachtsmann wird hoch geehrt, wenn er Erdal Schuh-Creme beschert / Santa Claus is honored when he gives Erdal shoe polish.

X- Xanthippe schalt von spät bis früh, nur Erdal-Schuhputz lobte sie / Xanthippe (wife of Socrates) scolded from late to early, only Erdal shoe cleaning she praised.

Y- Der Yankee, der sehr praktisch ist, als Schuhputz nie Erdal vergißt / The Yankee, who is very practical, never forgets Erdal shoeshine.

Z- Die Zeitung zeigt es zeitig an Schuhcreme Erdal braucht jedermann! / The newspaper shows it early, that everyone needs Erdal shoe polish!

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