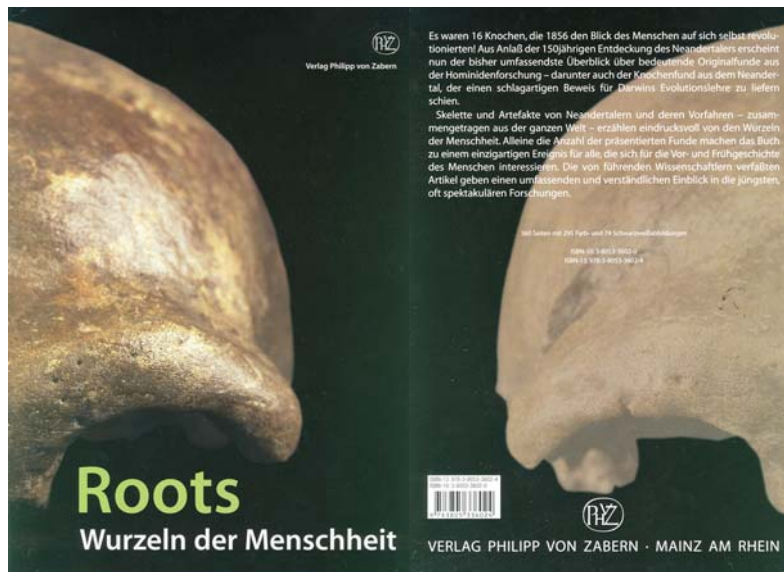


**Uelsberg, G. Ed. 2006. Roots. Wurzeln der Menschheit. – Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern**

Book review by A. van Heteren



Although the title of this book suggests that it deals with all of the history of mankind, in fact it deals mainly with the history of Neanderthals. This makes sense, because the book was published in conjunction with the Roots exposition in Bonn, which was dedicated to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Neanderthal find.

The book is written in German, but almost every chapter has a short summary in English. The only exceptions are the chapter by Ruth Omphalius about the ZDF- Documentary and the chapter by Thorsten Uthmeier about the living location of the Neanderthals. Unfortunately the captions of the figures are only given in German and not in both languages, which could be a problem for people who do not understand German at all. In general the book is written rather popularly, which makes it easy to read, but sometimes confusing as well when scientific names are being avoided.

'Roots' consists of several chapters of which most deal with Neanderthals. Manfred Hutter gives a very nice introduction dealing with the traditional and mythical versions of how mankind came to be what it is today. In the second and third chapters the real roots of mankind are being exposed in Africa and Asia. From this point onward there are several chapters dealing with Neanderthals from several different point of view. This includes, for example, chapters on climate change (Thomas Kaiser), plants (Thomas Litt), and animals (Wighart Koeningswald) as a proxy for the paleoenvironment.

After this 'Roots' deals with the scientific history of the Neanderthal discovery and the way this has influenced the scientific view on hominid evolution. Emphasis lies on the question about whether Neanderthals were our ancestors or just a side branch of the human family tree.

Of course, new developments in the Neanderthal research are included. Christoph Zollikofer and Marcia Ponce de León explain how digital 3D imaging helps understand the morphology of Neanderthals. DNA research also plays a very important role at the moment, if not the most important (Michael Hofreiter). Further subjects dealt with in this book are the development of the human thought pattern, the development of culture and the replacement of Neanderthals by modern humans.

The photographs in the book are beautiful, but it is a pity that not all are made of the real specimens: some are made of casts. The book goes for € 34.90 in Germany which is a fairly reasonable price for such a beautiful and complete book. For people dealing with human evolution this is a very interesting book and I would surely recommend it. It gives a good overview of fossil human finds from Europe, but also deals with the other regions of the world. For people who are not dealing with or interested in hominid evolution this book is probably still interesting, but perhaps not worth the money.

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