

Ethnological Interpretations of Implements

The Hayrake as an Example

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Cultural-historical reconstruction, based on typologies of artefacts, played an important part in early ethnology. In this article various models of interpretation used by ethnologists for this purpose are reviewed and discussed, with some German, Austrian and Swedish studies of the hayrake as the point of departure. A typological series might be used directly to reconstruct the evolution of the implement. Round 1900, German scholars explained early observations of regional differences by ascribing different rake forms to certain Germanic tribes. Some decades later Swedish ethnologists developed a diffusionist model of interpretation, based on detailed mapping of implements and other features of material culture. These “historical-geographical” studies of the hayrake are critically reviewed, some of their results are questioned and an alternative model for the interpretation of the geographical variations, based on the principles of cultural classification, is suggested.

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Typology and cultural history

In the formative period of history as a scholarly discipline in the course of the 19th century, political history was the preferred field of study, and it was based almost exclusively on written sources. To these one could apply the “source criticism” that was to become the hallmark of the new subject. For the discipline of history, the material remains of the past took a definitive second place.

Matters were otherwise with another of the innovations of the century in the area of research, *archaeology*, which was obliged to reconstruct the societies and cultures of the past solely on the basis of the objects that the spade turned up from the earth. Another two of the many new disciplines, *ethnography* and *folklife research*, concerned themselves with human life in more recent periods, but shared with

archaeology the fact that they studied “societies with no history”.

Here cultural history had to take the place of political history, and for these disciplines the “actors” in history became the cultures of which the anonymous masses had been the bearers. The study of such cultures in time and space became the aim of ethnography and folk-life research, and in this effort historical source criticism was no help: the disciplines had to work out their own methodologies, based to a great extent precisely on the systematic exploitation of the remains of material culture.

Faced with the mass of objects that were collected in the museums of cultural history, it seemed natural to resort to the well-tried approach of the natural sciences: to establish a typology – that is, to sort the material according to formal criteria. Such a typology of objects, if combined with the favourite explanatory model of the century, the theory of evolu-

tion, could become an important working tool. The Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius, who more than anyone developed the typological method, called this approach "evolutionary theory adapted to human work" (Svensson 1966: 42). The evolutionary model could be applied not only to higher-order units like economy, society and religion; it could also be used directly in the study of individual groups of objects. The method was predicated on the assumption that in all products of culture one could read a development from lower (i.e. simpler) to higher (i.e. more composite and complex) forms.

Thus, on the basis of this thesis, the cultural researcher, by sorting his material according to formal criteria, could discover a process of development, thereby building up the skeleton of a relative chronology which would of course be particularly indispensable to the archaeologist.

Alongside the idea of general cultural development, the great migrations played a major role in older research, whether the studies were global or European. Much ingenuity and industry went into pointing out that certain types of objects were characteristic of particular ethnic groups. The movements of an object in geographical space thus became a means of mapping the migrations.

It is well known that the next step in the history of research is the realization of the importance of cultural loans – the fact that the cultural elements can "migrate" independently of their bearers. This realization became the basis of the diffusionist school of cultural research. To the establishment of an evolutionary series it added the mapping of spatial diffusion. The typology of objects was supplemented by the geography of objects, and a set of tools had thus been developed that was to assume a central position in the cultural research of half a century.

In the cultural historical research tradition that has been very roughly outlined here it was often not the implements as such that were of interest; they were rather used as indicators of the development and diffusion of culture. Consequently even small and intrinsically rather insignificant implements might

play a role, and it is an example of this – the hayrake in ethnological research – that in the following will form the point of departure for a critical review of some of the explanatory models used in this research tradition.

Rake forms and tribes

The German pioneers who took up material culture as an object of systematic study in cultural history in the decades around 1900 had rather varied scholarly backgrounds. They came from philology, from a combination of history and geography, or from practical agricultural science.

To the last category belongs *Richard Braungart*, who was one of the first to take an interest in the fact that the hayrake had different forms in the different regions of Germany. He was a professor of agriculture in Bavaria, and for him – as for several others – the work of rationalizing agriculture and improving it with new implements was combined with an interest in the historical development of farming. As a cultural historian he was somewhat fanciful; his ruling idea was that the Germanic tribes had invented and developed agriculture, and that each of the tribes had its special forms of farming implements: »Zeige mir Deinen Pflug und Deine Egge, und ich will Dir sagen, was Du für ein Landmann und ein Landsmann bist« (Show me your plough and your harrow, and I will tell you what kind of farmer and what countryman you are), he wrote in *Die Urheimat der Landwirtschaft*, 1912 (Jacobeit 1965: 180). But as early as 1881 he had attempted, in a book on farming implements (Braungart 1881) to interpret some of them – including the rake – "ethnographically", that is to relate them to the various migrating tribes in Northern Europe.

Braungart was not alone in his concern with "ethnographic" problems of this kind. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century there appeared several large-scale surveys of the diffusion of cultural forms and their supposed connections with the Germanic tribes, among which August Meitzen's studies of settlement and house forms (Meitzen 1882 and 1895) should be particularly stressed.

For *Karl Rhamm*, too, research on houses was a central issue; but in his large, uncompleted work *Ethnographische Beiträge* (Rhamm 1905–10) he also discussed other cultural elements including implements, and directed harsh criticism at Braungart's rash inferences on tribal migrations on the basis of occurrences of plough, harrow and rake. He drew up his own rake typology based on the attachment of head to handle, which was important for later studies in this field. He distinguished three or four types: the *Gabelrechen* or fork rake, where the handle is attached to the head with a natural tree fork; the *Spaltrechen* or split-handled rake, where the end of the handle is split in two (the boundaries between these two are fluid); the *Bügelrechen* or bow rake, whose straight handle was supported by a bow; and finally, the *Blattrechen* or bladehandled rake, where the end of the handle is expanded into a blade which is embedded in the head (Rhamm 1905–10: 00).

His brief overview of the distribution of these types of rake deserves to be quoted, as it gives a good impression of the thinking and working method of these early "ethnographic" studies: "The split-handled rake is most widespread in our area; it dominates almost all of Central and Northern Germany and thrusts westward, like other Frankish phenomena, deep into Alemannic territory. The blade-handled rake is almost exclusively confined to the Bavarian area, which however it does not quite dominate, for German Carinthia and the eastern reaches of Styria have the split-handled rake, which also extends as far as Tyrolean Inntal. Only the easily-recognizable Alemannic bow rake, which has four or five thin bows (now sometimes replaced by wires) – while the other bow rakes occurring in Germany, those of Baden-gau and Oberpfalz, content themselves with two or even a single bow – is not found in our area, even though it still holds away in Vorarlberg. The blade-handled rake also predominates in the Southern Tyrol and Upper Styria, which is no proof, however, of Bavarian origin, as the same rake occurs in Norway – and in Swedish regions like Värmland and Västergötland (Rhamm 1905/10: 00).

"The geography of peasant culture"

Scholars like Meitzen and Rhamm were of limited importance to the burgeoning German *Volkskunde*, which to an overwhelming degree was to concern itself with the "mental" aspects of folk culture (Jacobeit 1965). Rhamm did however play a not insignificant role for the studies of buildings and implements that assumed a central position in the Scandinavian ethnology that took form in the first half of the twentieth century. Here, however, the historical-geographical studies wholly emancipated themselves from the tribal theories that had more or less typified older German research.

The pioneer in the field was the Swede *Nils Lithberg*, who, in a long article in the journal *Rig* entitled »Till allmogekulturens geografi« ("On the geography of peasant culture", Lithberg 1918), analysed the diffusion of a few simple utility objects in Sweden, presenting at the same time a programme for a new scholarly methodology. In Lithberg's article both the strengths and the weaknesses of the diffusionist method are clearly demonstrated: the objects analysed are viewed in isolation from their contexts, and the way their diffusion is described they almost seem to be independent agents.

Thus it is said of a form of candlestick: "It starts off in Halland and spreads from there to the inland areas geographically connected with Halland. In so doing it does not manage to eliminate the older types in the periphery, and to some extent it will also have driven them before it." A little later he writes: "When a new form arrives, it spreads and crowds out older forms. But here one must also reckon with the tenacity of existing traditions. These do not always completely succumb. Instead, hybrid forms between new and old arise."

Yet another, final quote to illustrate his descriptive style: "It is also by way of these constant compromise forms that some very old practices manage to survive in remote areas. When the new initiative finally arrives here, its expansive impetus has been so depleted that it is no longer capable of more couplings, and the old ways are allowed to linger. The

Dalecarlian culture has this to thank for many of its archaic features."

But surely this is not to be taken seriously, one replies – it is simply metaphor. And one must concede that Lithberg, with his mechanical and biological metaphors, manages to breathe life into the diffusion processes he describes. Yet unproblematical it is not: one cannot ignore the fact that one thinks through language, and that a descriptive practice of the type exemplified here – which most diffusionists employed with varying degrees of virtuosity – can easily set up obstacles to other ways of thinking, other ways of analysing the material.

Nils Lithberg cites a body of Swedish material which by and large consists only of objects in the museums of cultural history, and interprets it with an eye to other European countries where familiarity with the phenomena analysed is however very fragmentary. If he finds parallel forms elsewhere, he very often makes inferences about cultural connections. This way certain major cultural arteries are outlined: one from the west along the North Sea and one from the south or east over the Baltic, which also plays a role in the interpretations of early Danish ethnology.

On the whole Lithberg sketches out several of the main ideas that were to typify the historical-geographical research of the next few decades. When we find in the Alpine areas many of the cultural elements that are characteristic of the Scandinavian peninsula – for example, storehouses on pillars and certain types of fence, these similarities are inevitably explained as traces of an originally continuous diffusion area. Only in the case of the most elementary phenomena is there any question of parallel development in the same geographical and climatic conditions.

The method Lithberg outlines in his article opens up – he says – wide perspectives for European cultural research. The typology became the most important aid to the establishment of an archaeological chronology; but here of course the chronological periods lay as strata on top of one another: "If one wants to establish chronological reference points for the ethnographical material, it must be dealt with ge-

ographically too, since here the chronological periods can lie beside one another like the rings in a tree trunk. And at the same time the possibility is created of lifting the veil from a body of prehistoric material which for obvious reasons could not be preserved for the archaeologist's spade." Indeed, one also has the possibility of penetrating to strata belonging to primeval European culture.

Nils Lithberg concludes this programmatic article with the words "It is an alliance of archaeology and ethnography that will point the way to the sources of human cultivation", thus ushering in almost half a century of ethnological research on historical-geographical principles.

Rake forms and cultural diffusion

The next year, after publishing the article on "the geography of peasant culture", Nils Lithberg took up a newly-established chair of *folkelivsforskning* (ethnology) at Stockholm University. However, it was *Sigurd Erixon*, who succeeded Lithberg as Professor on the latter's death in 1934, who was to realize the research programme his predecessor had outlined. Erixon was a great organizer and initiator, and under his leadership an extensive ethnological survey effort was set in motion. The principal results of this work were presented in 1957, collected in *Atlas över svensk folkkultur I. Materiell och social kultur*.

At first Sigurd Erixon's own studies were focused on settlement forms and the culture of buildings. As early as 1919 he had produced a tentative overview of Swedish farm types (Erixon 1919) and in this one finds both inspiration from and criticism of Karl Rhamm.

His research on implements only started in earnest in the 1930s, and began with a small treatise on "The farmer's light implements" (*Lantmannens lätta redskap*, Erixon 1931), which was a first attempt to draw up typologies for and to illustrate the spread of the sickle, scythe, rake and flail. Here too inspiration from Rhamm cannot be ruled out: at least, Erixon's Swedish rake types fairly accurately match the typology established by Rhamm.

He classifies the Swedish material into the

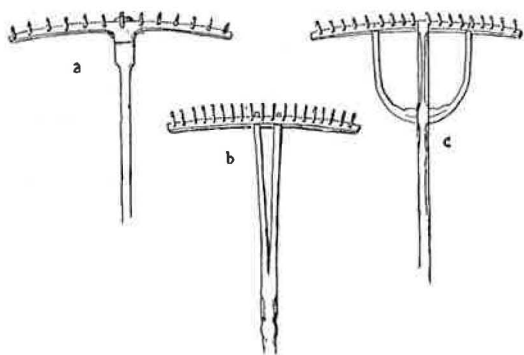


Fig. 1. Examples of Sigurd Erixon's three rake types:
 a. Rake with one-piece handle (Närke);
 b. Rake with split handle (Bohuslän);
 c. Rake, with braced handle (Scania). After Erixon 1931.

three main types seen in Fig. 1: Type A (Rhamm's *Blatträchen*) has the handle embedded in the head without splitting or reinforcement and is found all over northern Sweden. In the western and southwestern parts of the country one finds Type B, whose handle is split or forked (Rhamm's *Spaltrechen* and *Gabelrechen*). The third form, Type C, where the handle is strengthened by bows or straight braces (Rhamm's *Bügelrechen*) dominates in southern and central Scania and on the island of Gotland, but also occurs in some places in Blekinge and Halland.

Erixon now places the geographical distribution of the main types throughout Sweden, which appears in the map in Fig. 2, in a European context: the blade-handled rake completely dominates in Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands; on the island of Åland, in Finland, in Outer Karelia and the adjacent parts of Russia. The rake with the split handle is first and foremost found in a belt south of the blade-handled rakes, but also side by side with the bow rakes in the great Continental area. This form of rake is concentrated more to the west, in Middle and Western Europe. It is not improbable, adds Erixon, that this distribution, which to some extent matches the Swedish one, also represents a process of typological development.

These rake types, with many other phenomena of material culture, were to figure in the cartographical material presented in the *Atlas*

över svensk folkkultur. The brief text which accompanies the atlas map of the rake types (Fig. 3), is a summary of a more detailed treatment of these implements that Erixon had published the previous year in the volume of *Nordisk Kultur* dealing with agriculture (Erixon 1956).

In this account, where he is able to draw on far more comprehensive material, Erixon has in the main kept to his 1931 view, but speaks with more assurance of the process of cultural development: the blade-handled rake, with its handle in one piece, is the oldest type, known from Iron Age finds. In the course of time it was replaced by other types in southern Sweden, but occurs as a relic in northwestern Scania. The rake with the split handle is younger; it was once widespread in Denmark, was superseded by the reinforced rake, but held its own in Funen and Jutland. The youngest and technically best is the reinforced (bow) rake, which must have been specially developed for the corn harvest on the great Western Eu-

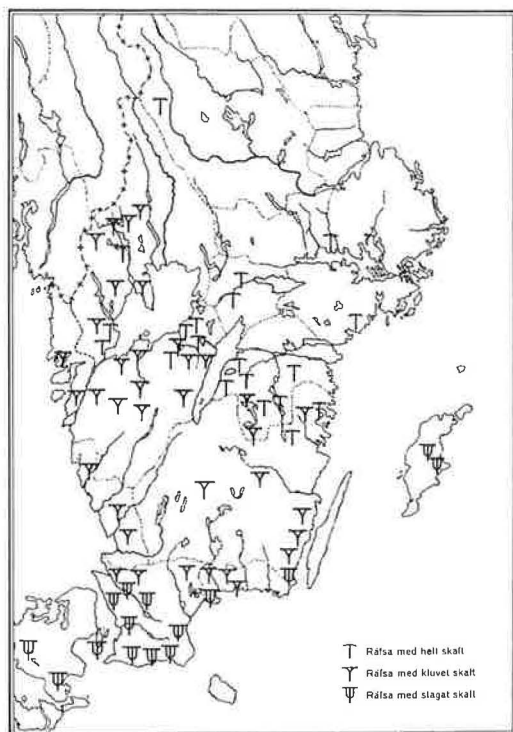


Fig. 2. Sigurd Erixon's first map of the three rake types in Sweden. After Erixon 1931.

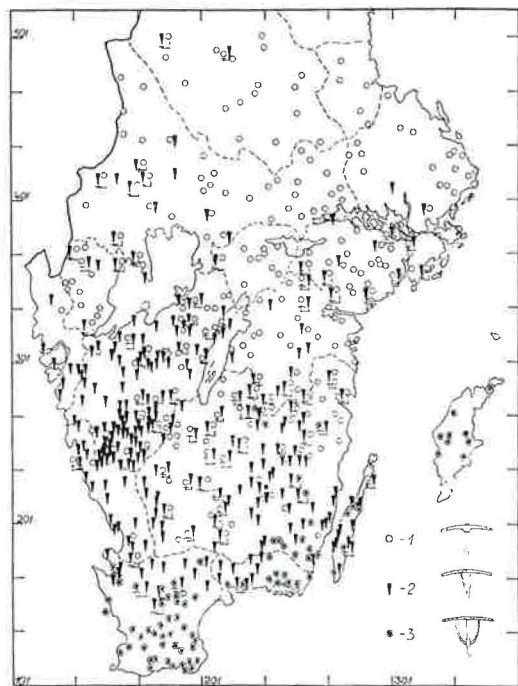


Fig. 3. Map of the distribution of the rake types in the Swedish ethnological atlas, 1957.

ropean arable plains in the later Middle Ages. It presumably penetrated into Denmark in the transitional period between Late Gothic and Renaissance. Its European distribution is like that of the split-handled rake it superseded, but to the east it reached no farther than Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

The map itself, with the blade-handled rake to the north, the split-handled rake in a belt across the middle and the reinforced rake to the south, makes it possible to infer a relative chronology from their spatial distribution: we have the oldest rake form up in the north, farthest from the pace-setting European Continent; we find the youngest type, however, in the southernmost part of Sweden. To convert this relative chronology into a more absolute one we need some fixed reference points – dated rakes or representations of rakes. Erixon's reference points are few: some Iron Age finds and some pictures from the Middle Ages and more recent times.

In the good thirty years that have passed since Erixon's last treatment of the subject, a number of new archaeological finds of rakes

have been made. This material forms the point of departure for the most recent treatment of the Scandinavian rake forms and their chronology, by Janken Myrdal (Myrdal 1984). In the article Myrdal wishes partly to trace the origins of the hayrake to Northern Europe, partly to discuss the main rake types in Sweden. In the first part of the article, with which we will not deal in detail here, he attempts to show that there is a connection between the introduction of the scythe and the hayrake and the transition to winter stalling of the cattle – a plausible hypothesis, if difficult to verify.

In the second part of the article he criticizes a few points in Erixon's classic rake typology. The introduction of the bow rake into Scania had been attributed to the eighteenth century by Erixon, but now, with the support of a fresco of 1525, it was redated to the period Erixon had supposed saw its introduction to the Danish islands: the transition between the Later Middle and Modern Ages.

The other criticism concerned the rake type Erixon had considered oldest: the blade-handled rake, with its one-piece handle. Janken

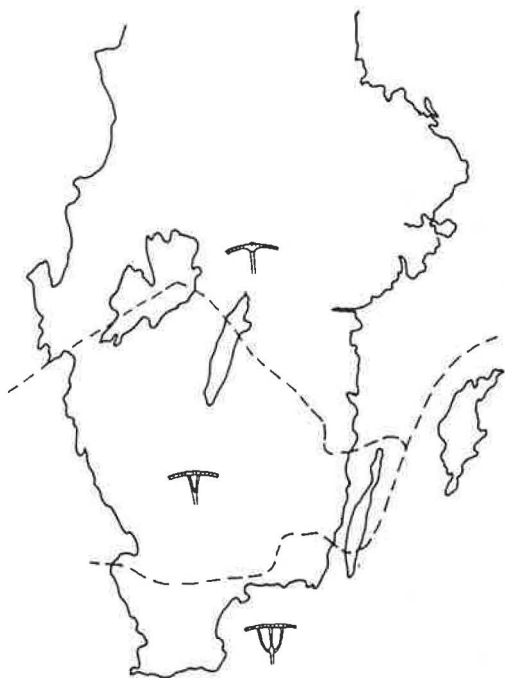


Fig. 4. Janken Myrdal's simplified overview map of the distribution of the three rake types. After Myrdal 1984.

Myrdal rightly criticizes the fact that this rake is equated with the Iron Age rake finds, whose construction is rather unstable, and whose function is uncertain. For the northern Swedish rakes of the modern age, with the blade-like protuberance on the handle where it is inserted in the head, have a stability that is a match for that of the splithandled rake.

In Myrdal's view the northern Swedish blade-handled rake is not necessarily any older than the central Swedish split-handled rake, nor does it necessarily have any genetic relationship with the Middle European rakes of the same type. In support of this he cited the finding of a split rake handle from Leksand in the Dalecarlian region, dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. "This indicates", says Myrdal, "that the split-handled rake had a wider distribution in the Middle Ages than in the nineteenth century, and that it was later forced to retreat by the blade-handled rake." Here Myrdal overlooks the fact that the atlas map (Fig. 3) does in fact have examples of split-handled rakes from Dalecarlia, although they are in a minority compared with the blade-handled rakes; so there seems to be no basis in this tenuous material for supposing that developments took the opposite course from that assumed by Erixon.

But – apart from this, the Leksand example shows that Janken Myrdal's criticism may well affect some of Erixon's examples, but not his premisses. Myrdal accepts without discussion the analytical and explanatory model on which Erixon's rake studies are based.

Critique of the diffusionist interpretation

It is characteristic of most historical-geographical investigations that they build on very detailed material from a well-defined area in a given period. By contrast, the chronological example material on which a reconstruction of the development of geographical distribution is based is of a far more sporadic and random nature. This is also true of Erixon's rake studies.

When it comes to formal variations over a largish geographical area, the ordering into

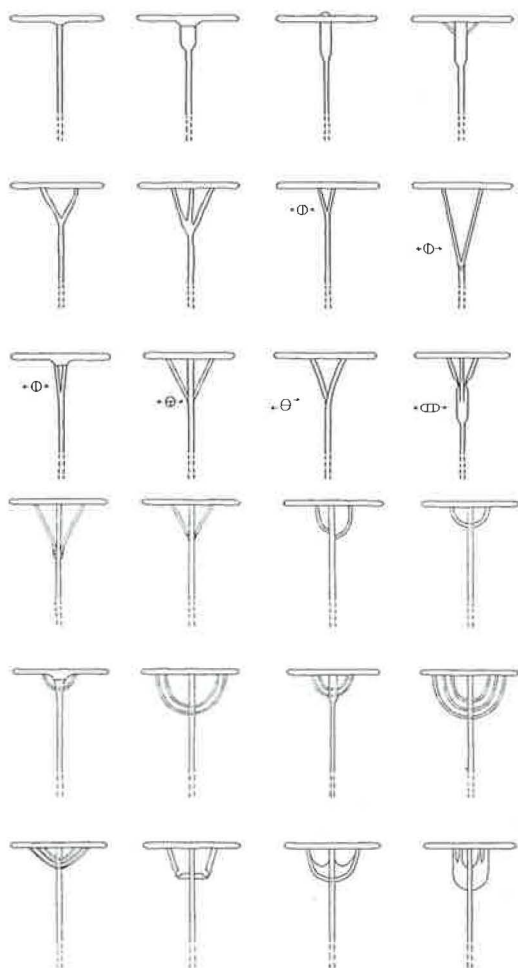


Fig. 5. European rake types, drawn on the basis of a selection of the European literature.

the three main types with which Erixon, and Rhamm before him, operated, seems rather a random choice within a continuum of forms of construction. Reviewing some of the European literature on material culture, I have picked out a bouquet of rake forms that I have juxtaposed in a number of schematic drawings (Fig. 5). In the drawings I was solely interested in the variations in the handle-head assembly that have formed the point of departure for setting up the rake typologies. It should be mentioned in passing that there are other, quite striking regional variations that I have not considered. For example, in some places rakes are used with teeth on both sides of the head, and some rake types are asymmetrical,

with a handle attached to the head at an oblique angle. The material, moreover, makes no claim to being exhaustive, and I have taken no interest in the frequency of the various forms; clearly, some of the assemblies shown are rarer than others. The aim of the sketches is simply to show the wide spectrum of technical approaches actually taken to the problem of joining handle and head.

Previous rake studies have assumed that there is normally one and only one way of attaching head to handle in a given area. Whenever the maps do in fact show forms side by side, the explanation given is that a more recent form is in the process of replacing an older one.

In Erixon's oldest map of the rake types – the one from 1931 – the map symbols are few and the picture is simple: the three forms are neatly distributed over the Swedish countryside, each with its own regional prevalence. The situation is further simplified in Janken Myrdal's map; here each of the three types is marked with a single symbol, and the boundaries of their distribution areas are given with broken lines (Fig. 4).

Closer to reality, however, is the map in the *Atlas över svensk folkkultur* (Fig. 3). Here the whole large corpus of collected material is used, and the map symbols are very dense. There are still areas where one of the three forms reigns supreme. But across most of Sweden two, and in some cases all three, of the forms occur side by side. Erixon's comments on this map are very summary, and he does not go into whether the view holds good that in such cases the maps reflect a struggle between older and younger forms.

However, moving from these brief overviews to some of the few more detailed analyses at the regional or local level, one sees that the forms not only occur side by side, but that they also form part of the same pattern, with well-defined interrelationships.

Nils-Arvid Bringéus has done a study of a Swedish rake-maker and the implements he produced both for people in his own community and for sale in neighbouring areas (Bringéus 1964). Among his products was a rake where the handle was reinforced with a bow. It was

not sold in northern Scania, but was made for the Scanian plains, which is why it was called the *släboriva* ("plain-dweller rake"). So here we have a clear example of a regionally demarcated form that is rejected by the neighbouring community. The rake-makers of Gotland made a variant of this rake type with several bows above one another; however, these rakes were unsaleable on the mainland (Bringéus 1963).

In the northern Scanian rake-maker's own community two other rake forms were used: *räfsrivor* ("raking rakes") and *bärrivor* ("carrying rakes"). The names indicate that the two kinds of rake were used for somewhat different types of work: the first was mainly for raking material together, the other for carrying when the hay was to be stacked. A *räfsriva* had a split handle and was also called a *fruntimmer-riva* ("woman's rake") because it was a typical woman's implement. The *bärriva*, also called *blad-riva* or "blade rake", on the other hand, had a one-piece handle; it was also called the *karariva* ("man's rake") because it was the men who used it (Bringéus 1964).

We thus have a specific example here of how two rake forms co-exist, each with its function and one used by each sex. Oskar Moser, who has published a monograph on rake forms in Carinthia (Moser 1952), gives similar examples. The one-piece rake was used in the high Upper Carinthia, at whose borders people scorned the fork-handled rake as a *Ländner-rechen* – that is, a valley peasant's rake. They claimed it was not strong enough to use in the mountains. Nevertheless, the opposite situation was found in the Gasteiner Tal in Salzburg. Here two rake forms were used side by side: a heavy, one-piece blade-handled rake, everywhere called the *Weiberrechen* or "woman's rake", for the haying work in the valley bottom, while the men used a lighter fork-handled rake for the hay harvest in the mountains.

Oskar Moser makes the following comment on these examples: "Thus, behind the popular views of what is expedient and useful, there often lie quite different, deeper-rooted laws of material culture" (Moser 1952: 471).

It is such "deeper-rooted laws", which we will here call cultural factors, that will be given closer scrutiny here.

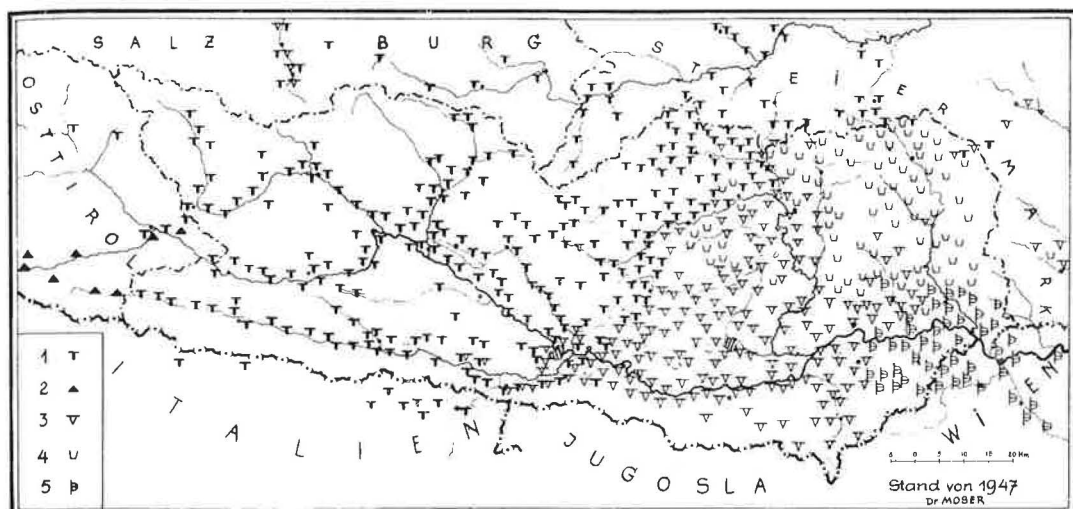


Fig. 6. Oskar Moser's map of rake types in Carinthia, Austria, 1947.

Map symbols: 1. Blade-handled rake. 2. Blade-handled rake with short diagonal braces. 3. Simple split-handled rake. 4. Forked rake with natural handle, mostly of small birch trunks. 5. Simple bow rake. After Moser 1952.

Rake forms and cultural classification

In the foregoing sections we questioned whether it is possible – as the historically and geographically orientated ethnologists thought – to make inferences about cultural evolution and diffusion on the basis of formal variations in a simple implement like the rake. If not, how then are we to explain the striking geographical differences in form in the recorded material? We will here attempt to outline an alternative explanatory model, beginning with cultural classification and its rules.

In any well-integrated community the forms of material culture will not manifest themselves intermixed at random; they will be sorted according to a set of ordered principles. Thus in the case of house construction, for example, there will be a tendency to select one mode of construction as the right one; or, if several modes are used side by side, to set out fixed rules for how to build which kinds of house (Stoklund 1980: 122).

The material presented here indicates that similar factors apply to an implement like the rake: among the many possible solutions outlined in Fig. 5, people in a given area have

chosen one or two forms as the “right”, i.e. culturally accepted forms.

Crucial to the choice made in a given place are – first and foremost – ecological limitations. Or, to put it differently, what materials were available when one had to make a rake? It makes immediate sense that we primarily find the blade-handled rake in the conifer region, while the fork-handled and bow rakes belong in the regions of deciduous forest and plains.

The regional differentiation of the rake forms constitute the basis for a consciousness of what is the “right” rake or “our” rake as opposed to that of “the others”. So the rake forms are ordered according to one of the primary principles of cultural classification – that is, the opposition between “us” and “the others”. By looking at the rakes from this point of view we have moved from *scholarly typology* to *popular classification*. The two systems build on the same variations in form, but order them differently. The former system claims universal validity, while the different forms may have widely differing slots in the popular system of classification depending on where we are in Europe.

It is characteristic of the two regions (Sweden and Carinthia) from which we have taken

our empirical material so far that regions with just one rake form alternate with regions where the two forms exist side by side. We find the same situation elsewhere: in northern Denmark the bow rake and its more recent variant with two diagonal braces reign supreme. In Funen and in most of Zealand, on the other hand, we encounter this rake type alongside the forked or split rake. We find a quite similar situation in the Soviet atlas of the Baltic Republics: here too the split-handled and bow rakes either appear separately or side by side (Ist.-étnogr. Atlas 1985, Map 25).

Where two different ways of attaching handle to head are in use in the same area, they will as a rule be subsumed under another binary system of classification: male as against female. One form is accounted a men's rake, the other a women's rake, as we have already seen in the examples from Carinthia and Scania. We can find the same classification in the Danish material. In northern Zealand, where only the reinforced rake was in use, the variant with two braces was the man's rake, while the woman's rake had a bow. In Funen, where both main types were used, the "man's rake" had a handle made from a hazel fork, while the handle of the "woman's rake" was braced by a hoop of oak or ash. When we hear from one of the respondents from this area that it was "humiliating for a man to use a girl's rake" we can see that here – as elsewhere – it was more of a stigma for a man than for a girl to transgress the gender role boundary.

I have attempted to show here that the regional variations in form, which ethnologists have used in various ways for purposes of reconstructing cultural history, are best explained in terms of the ordering and classifying principles that are part of the essence of culture. Here, where it is a matter of a functionally secondary feature like the head-handle attachment, the choice of form and attribution of meaning are arbitrary, although this takes place within a framework delimited by ecological conditions.

Against this explanatory model one can object that it is static and synchronic, and has neither room nor potential for change. Yet this

is not quite true. All it excludes is that mechanical kind of change – in a vacuum, as it were – from one form to another which both evolutionism and diffusionism in reality took for granted.

Translated by James Manley.

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