

Research into the History of Material Culture

Between Interpretation and Statistics

Uwe Meiners

Meiners, Uwe 1990: Research into the History of Material Culture. Between Interpretation and Statistics. – *Ethnologia Europaea* XX: 15–34.

This paper presents the problems of methods and the developments in historically-orientated ethnological material culture research activity during the period 1950–1990.

After the end of the Second World War, research into material culture gained ground in the aftermath of an altered scientific understanding in German ethnology. Alongside individually planned research projects of the Göttingen School, there stood above all the investigations of the “Atlas of German Ethnology” between 1965–1970, through which the complex world of the culture of agricultural work and implements was documented by making use of correspondents. Whilst this approach, in terms of method, lay close to research into cultural areas and thus gave priority to questions concerning spatial data, nevertheless, from the 1970s, the kind of systematic, quantifying research into inventories that was starting concentrated more strongly on research into questions of process in material culture. Finally, the belief that historical material culture research cannot be carried out without including surviving artefacts was stressed in the 1980s by many museums; it led to the first successful quantitative approaches to research into material culture and archives, carried out in the Open Air Museum of Cloppenburg in Lower Saxony.

Museumsdirektor Dr. Uwe Meiners, Schlossmuseum Jever, Postfach 135, D-2942 Jever, Germany.

In 1965, Wolfgang Jacobeit stated in a summary that after the breakdown of National Socialism in both German states, German ethnology had passed beyond the phase of “neoromantic national” and had burst through to new bounds¹. The direction he had in mind involved breaking away from a definition, with a nonmaterial emphasis, of the subject of research, and aiming at an ethnology with a socio-historical orientation. Here Jacobeit was referring to Heinz Maus², who as a sociologist criticised the lack of historical-empirical methods in ethnology and rightly pointed out that nearly all forms of *work* as the most important social category, as it were, of human activity, had been neglected in research. Jacobeit could the more readily subscribe to this argument since he established, in his scientific-historical

investigations into the status of “rural work and economy” in ethnology, that the very flagship of the subject since the 1930s, the “Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde”, had not taken ergological questions into account³.

It was not only from a historical-materialistic view that such a renunciation was to be criticised. How should it be possible adequately to investigate the ways of behaviour and manifestations of the life of farmers, standing as they do in the centrepiece of ethnological research, when the most important domain of people active in the primary sector – namely work – was disregarded?

A change of view in this direction set in only after the War. Will-Erich Peuckert’s concept of ethnology as a historical science led to the founding of the “Göttingen School” in the Fed-

eral Republic. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, there appeared a whole series of works concerned with agricultural instruments of production⁴. Afterwards, as before, the rural population stood in the centrepoint of ethnological interest, but this was now directed towards exploring its material basis. The link with agrarian history was intensified⁵, and the history of agricultural working tools and equipment was finally relieved of its race – and soil – mysticism.

I.

When the Atlas material was moved from Berlin to Bonn, account was taken of more than just technical and organisational needs. It was also hoped that the spatially wide-reaching data from the Berlin Atlas undertaking could be scientifically synthesised with the systematic research into cultural areas (after the Bonn pattern), that had been going on. Matthias Zender recognised the desirability of research into material aspects of folk culture⁶, and after many deliberations, ventured on “documentation of the traditional farming tasks through the recollections of old people”⁷.

Just as in the German Democratic Republic (DDR), where an attempt was made to make up for the scientific neglect of the past by systematic documentation of objects preserved in museums⁸, the investigation of material folk culture at first related to the tools and implements of agricultural production⁹; the concept of “material folk culture”¹⁰ had not as yet attained full validity. In ethnology – and this is true to a great extent today – it was more common to speak of “concrete objects” (Sachgüter) and, in a wider connection, of “material culture” (Sachkultur)¹¹.

Whilst the tradition of a far-reaching, undiscussed ethnological ideologem is reflected in the original restriction to farming culture¹² – research into the proletariat and its material culture still playing no appreciable role in the ethnology of the DDR either¹³ – the grasping of the world of farm equipment was above all pragmatically determined. It offered a certain means of entry to the neglected world of work. Other fields of material culture (eg house, fur-

niture, clothing)¹⁴, on the other hand, had never fallen below the ethnological horizon.

One sign of the intensified care for the subject of rural production was the 11th German Ethnological Congress in Marburg in 1965, initiated by Gerhard Heilfurth; it was entirely devoted to “work and the life of the people” (Arbeit und Volksleben)¹⁵.

Here Günter Wiegelmann gave greater publicity to the most recent investigation of the Atlas of German Ethnology¹⁶. Its value lay in closing the wide gaps in tool and implement research in Middle Europe, in terms of space as much as in time¹⁷. The traditional farming jobs and agricultural tools common around 1900 were to be recorded through the recollections of informants answering the questionnaires.

There was no lack of critical voices, but the doubts raised about the technical feasibility of the undertaking were firmly overcome. Over 3000 completed questionnaire volumes had been produced by about two years after the first inquiry of 1965. Admittedly, the quality of the answers declined in proportion to the difficulty of the questions. Usable work descriptions appeared in only one out of two, and detailed sketches in no more than one out of three of four volumes¹⁸. Yet this was made up for by the many spontaneous reports and the detailed descriptions of the environment and way of life, which made it possible to draw conclusions about socio-cultural circumstances and offered an outstanding complement to questions dealing only with objects.

At all events, more important as methodology was the argument that ethnology was here once again pursuing disappearing cultural remains at the last minute and with excessive effort. If such a criticism could also be less disassociated from the scientific-historical necessity of the measure, then also from the old pattern of surveys carried out, in which the interview partner was chosen not on the basis of socio-scientific criteria, but of his presumed competence¹⁹. “Professionals” – employed teachers, local historians and old farmers – moved once again into the centrepoint of ethnological informant activities. It is to be doubted if a form of objectivity, specific to social stratification and doing justice to all the questions,

was possible for implement culture "to present the exact validity of the main forms and thus provide an indispensable basis for their history on a spatially differentiated basis". By synthesising the pictures from several maps it should be possible to aim at the construction of a network of cultural regions, of centres and directions of influence, and of stable and unstable zones. On the basis of these separately formulated requirements, the higher aim of the investigation became clear, namely to achieve, by means of a series of maps, new insights into the articulation of Middle European cultural regions²².

The enquiry produced comprehensive responses with material of high information value. With detailed knowledge about the precise distribution in time and space of traditional work tools and implements and more recent agricultural machinery, was associated new information about working habits, to which an astonishing degree of constancy must be accorded in the agricultural production process²³, and which were often more important for the understanding of work procedures than the simple establishment of the almost endlessly variable individual forms of implements.

Of course there is more limited value in knowing about the different lengths of the siple of the flail than about the existence of different threshing methods at the time of the introduction of machine threshing. There were indeed in 1890–1900 no areas where the flail was not known, but besides this, there were regions (eg Lower Saxony) where the threshing of sheaves on trestles was common²⁴. In South West Germany, on the other hand, threshing of certain grain types by treading with animals prevailed, and in the 19th century even the use of cylindrical threshing rollers cropped up. That huge, conical threshing rollers used for threshing in North West German coastal marsh lands had indeed long been known, but the fact that this remarkable innovation, the use of which saved much manpower, had not been able to make its way from the East-Friesian-Oldenburg coastal regions to other parts of North Germany (about Schleswig-Holstein or Mecklenburg) was a matter of

surprise and did not fit into the picture of a North West that welcomed progress.

Here the question of the "why" of this spatial situation came to the fore. The simultaneous occurrence of the non-contemporary – the use of the conical threshing roller as a semi-mechanical means of pressing out cereal grains and of the simple threshing trestle for lashing out seed corn by hand – marks the association of work procedures in different economic systems. Even if the secondary operation of the threshing trestle is to be functionally explained by its continued further use for getting seed and long straw, it still in the final analysis points to a principle of working with the stamp of a subsistence economy that had already become absolutely foreign to the export-orientated marsh farmers on the coast. They bought their seed in this area, and roofed their houses with tiles, even though straw and reeds were available in sufficient quantities.

It was less the rigid dominance of traditional ways of work that led to the continuation of "out-of-date" implements, than the economic pressure that forced small- and medium-sized farming concerns to make use of the resources at their disposal. Let us stay with the example of the conical threshing roller: its non-use on the estate farms of the East Elbe had less to do with the basic conservatism of the owners than with the nature of the social structure of this region, where up till the early 19th century, a restricted status of landowners could fall back on the worker potential of dependent farmers and day-labourers. The readily available manpower was cheaper than the relatively expensive innovation of the threshing roller. Only with the enforced change from feudal to capitalistic circumstances of production during the 19th century was mechanisation of the East Elbe agricultural economy decisively promulgated to reduce labour costs for the landed proprietors²⁵. In the critical examination of the "innovation centres and relict areas"²⁶ that Günter Wiegelmann investigated on the basis of published atlas material for the rural material culture of Middle Europe, different opinions arose as to what research dealing with cultural regions was able to accomplish²⁷. That the circumstances enquired about and their

representation on the map present only a synchronic cross-section of cultural life, is really to be judged as a shortcoming for investigations aimed at the working out of cultural processes. It is not without problems, therefore, to draw conclusions from the distribution of specific forms of culture around 1900 about previous historical conditions, all the more because, as a rule, no comparable synchronic cross-sections exist for earlier times²⁸.

Günter Wiegelmann conjectured in his 1970 study²⁹ that the modern innovation centres of farm-implement culture are not to be sought in South Germany, with its small to medium structure of regions, but in the Eastern Maritime provinces (East Holstein, Mecklenburg, Pomerania) with their areas of large-scale enterprises. In looking for criteria to support such a finding, Wiegelmann mentioned for the East Elbe innovation centres of the 16th-18th centuries the increase in size of the flail, the possibility of changing horses during ploughing and leading of the harvest, dairying improvements (dairy-farms: "Holländerei") and the reaping of winter grain with the scythe. The late Ulrich Bentzien, who criticised the results of such "an individual combination of cultural-geographical and agrarian historical source investigations"³⁰, came to quite other conclusions because he adduced other material criteria for establishing an innovation centre, namely fallow summering of fields, the use of the fourth furrow in winter sowing, the oneway plough, the curved mould board, the field roller, the cultivation of market crops and selective cattle-breeding. All these developments, according to Bentzien, bypassed the Eastern Maritime provinces in the 16th century and later.

Even if Bentzien's argumentation can be accepted in many points (eg especially his ascertainment of the fact that the estate farms of the East Elbe first developed a real vanguard position in farming improvements in the 19th century³¹), nevertheless the way of proceeding by wanting to throw new light on the subject of the hypothesis by means of an exchange of evaluation criteria, remains problematic. From the cultural-historical point of view, the question of whether "selective cattle breeding" is to be valued more highly than "improvement in

dairying", or the use of the one-way plough to be acknowledged as a more progressive element than that of the frame scythe for cutting winter grain, is at least open to discussion.

Such a pattern of cultural assessment through selection brings us face to face with a basic pattern in research into cultural regions³². By whatever criteria cultural regions are to be ascertained – and if so why – are the objective criteria of the researcher to be judged differently from the subjective criteria of the people living in a region, when the question is one of assessing a cultural region?

The putting of this problem already leads us beyond the subject under discussion. With hindsight the question relates to the limitations of the spatial method. It touches on the problem of whether the observable characteristics of a map, which above all shows neither more nor less than a synchronic cross-section of cultural life, can serve as an adequate basis for the interpretation of process. The demand for the inclusion of source material to widen the range of aspects, in which not only the complementary study of recent objects themselves is to be understood, therefore appears to be justified. With such questions about the social-historical circumstances of implement culture, the requirements in methods and in source material increase.

In spatially-orientated object research this leads on the one hand to a revival of the "words and things" (Wörter und Sachen) research principle³³, and on the other to intensification of the study of archival sources – in particular to advance by means of the synchronic survey towards the description of process in material culture.

II.

"Ethnology is a historical science", declared Will-Erich Peuckert³⁴ in 1951, and gave it not so much a new vision as a new analytical direction. Working on ethnological themes brought ethnology -as indicated above – closer to agrarian history, but other investigations into material culture brought about a separation from the individual disciplines of economic – and social history. The traditional link with Ger-

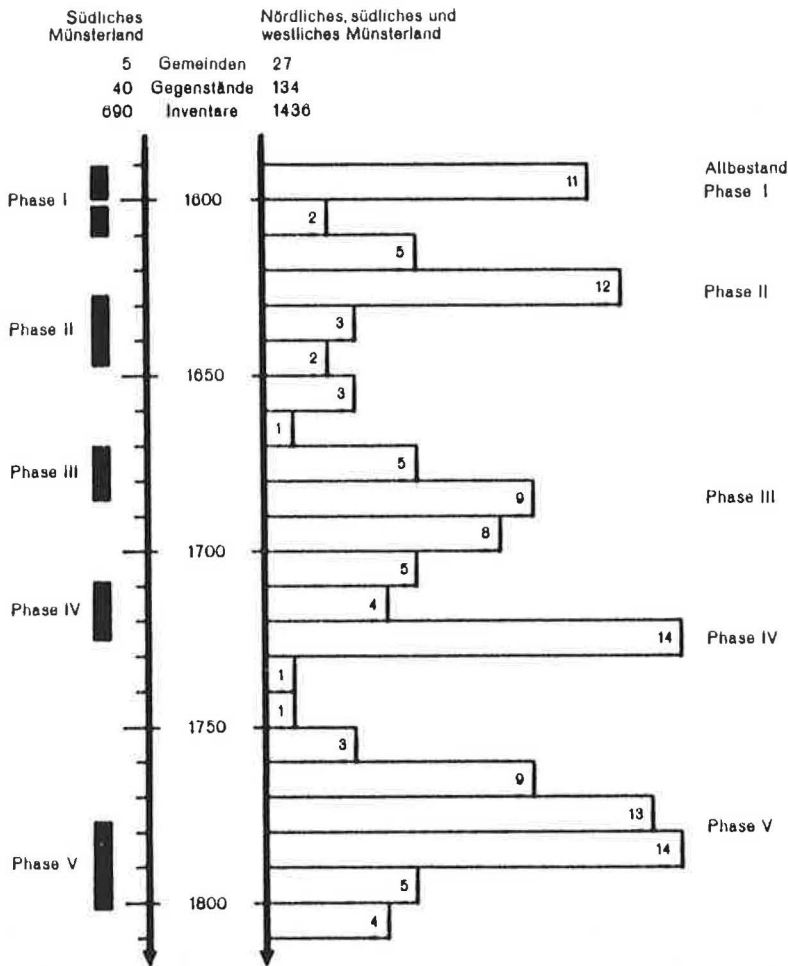


Fig. 2. First mention of objects belonging to the living-equipment (per decade) in peasant inventories of the Münsterland-region. – The numbers in square boxes name the amount of innovations. The vertical, black columns (phase I – phase V) specify the length of the innovation phases.

From Klaus Roth, *Neuerungen in der bäuerlichen Wohnausstattung. Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Innovationsvorgänge*. In: *Volkskundliche Kulturraumforschung heute*, hg. von H. L. Cox u. G. Wiegmann, Münster 1984, fig. 1.

manistics lost its vigour, being thrust into the background by methods of investigation borrowed from dialect research.

On the other hand, visits by ethnologists to archives increased in number. Hans Moser³⁵ and Karl-Sigismund Kramer³⁶ set new emphases in the 1950s when they gave first place to the donkeywork of archival source investigation in research into historical folk life. Local authority accounts, legal records and criminal registers turned out to be real storehouses for folk culture research. But ways had to be found of evaluating them in spite of the great num-

ber of individual characters of sources, which of necessity led to a preference for qualitative-hermeneutic interpretation methods. But which sources lay themselves open to a quantifying treatment, which manuscript sources of evidence for material culture are so homogeneous in their composition that their contents can be processed statistically³⁷?

The inventories seem to correspond primarily to this demand, as a type of source whose complexity requires quantifying treatment. Most archives hold them not only in great quantities but also in longer series. Besides,

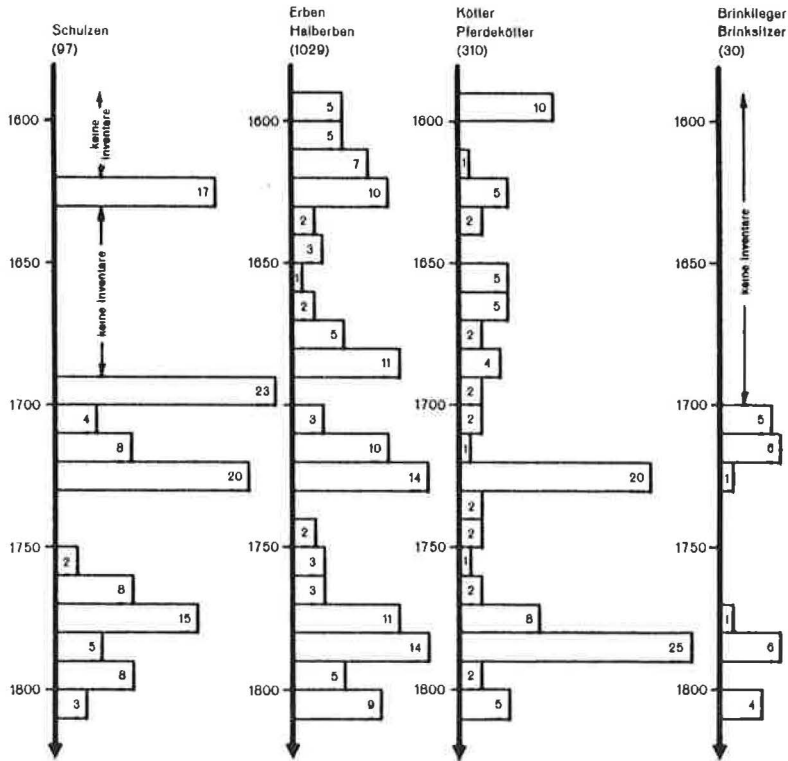


Fig. 3. First mention of objects belonging to the living-equipment in four peasant classes, Münsterland-region. From: Klaus Roth, *Neuerungen*, fig. 2.

the individual inventories have a high informative value, because they also record all the fixed and movable possessions of a house or farm, person or institution³⁸.

Inventories or probate records had in no way remained unknown in Middle Europe, but seemingly a thrust from outside was needed for their value as evidence to be recognised. The Scandinavian ethnologist Gösta Berg drew the attention of German colleagues in the early 1970s to the fact that it was improper to keep on printing bulk sources such as inventories as single examples in journals³⁹. His challenge that sources surviving in great quantity should be processed statistically was at that time resisted on the grounds that an argument relevant to Sweden could not be transferred to Middle European circumstances, where inventories occurred sporadically and with great gaps.

Such scepticism seemed all the more strange about this time because the Austrian Hans

Koren had already about 1950 surveyed hundreds of inventories – of course still in relation to a quite specific enquiry⁴⁰. The “Inventuren und Teilungen” of Württemberg have also been the basis for individual studies⁴¹. At the same time there appeared in individual cases a considerable body of data, which seemed to make comprehensive analysis difficult, if not impossible. In fact systematic analysis of inventories was really first begun when computer techniques made processing procedures available that were adequate for socio-scientific demands⁴².

In the Münster research project, “Diffusion of Urban-Bourgeois Culture from the 17th to the 20th Centuries”⁴³, completed under the leadership of Günter Wiegelmann in 1986, inventories quickly took the primary role in the central question, as people recognised their wide-reaching coverage in time and space. The higher aim of the project was to investigate the spread of urban bourgeois culture to the coun-

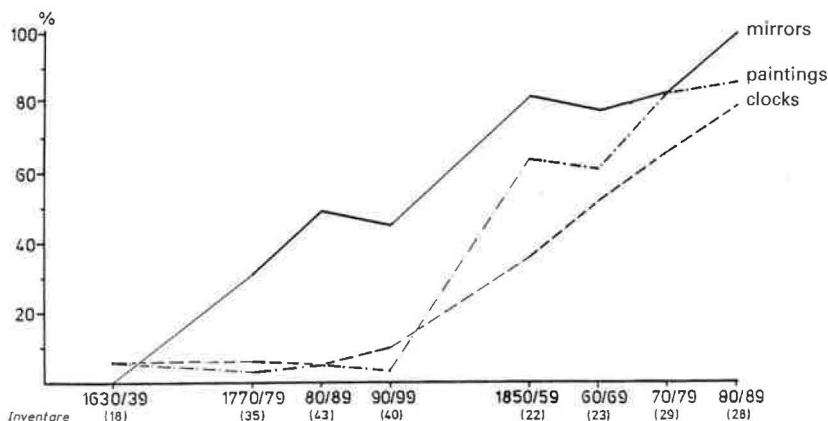


Fig. 4. Diffusion of wall-decoration (mirrors, paintings, clocks) in households of Nürtingen, Württemberg (1630–1639, 1770–1799, 1850–1889).

From: Uwe Meiners, *Wohnkultur in süddeutschen Kleinstädten vom 17. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert. Soziale Unterschiede und Wertestrukturen*. In: *Nord-Süd-Unterschiede in der städtischen und ländlichen Kultur Mitteleuropas*, hg. von G. Wiegmann, Münster 1985, fig. 6.

tryside around in the different historical situations and structural constellations of modern times. In terms of concrete historical material, the relationship between urban and rural culture was investigated on the basis of the dwelling and of eating habits, through which in particular research into cultural change in its variations arising from time, space and social milieu stood in the foreground of interest in the findings.

The question of the diffusion process of domestic material culture was put along the lines of the classical “3-D concept” of culture. Alongside the question of the distribution in space of cultural phenomena stood that of their appearance in time as well as of their social differentiation. Allied with this was a micro-analytical research emphasis. The sources raised the possibility of investigating domestic material culture in its historical micro-structure⁴⁴. Behind that stood the idea of drawing inferences from the objects about the value concepts and dominant interests of different social groups.

As against such research aims stood the concept that with inventory analyses just as with written questionnaires it should be possible to press towards broad regional cultural differentiations⁴⁵, bit by bit in the second stage of the research plan. Besides, because of the amount of material, a spatial limitation was unavoidable. For that reason research went into depth

in time. In particularly favourable cases the sources went back to the 16th century. In order to follow processes of change in material culture over a longer period of time, the material investigations concentrated on the former Duchy of Braunschweig⁴⁶ and the prince-bishopric of Münster⁴⁷ as well as parts of the regions of Old Württemberg and Middle Franconia⁴⁸.

After the justifiable hope of being able to assemble a large amount of information and findings from a network of sources, there followed a certain disillusionment brought about by the heterogeneous nature of the sources. It turned out in this way because the “inventories” were in no way as profitably homogeneous as had been assumed at first. The legal reason that led to the taking of an inventory in each case resulted in a specific way of recording that varied greatly regionally, in time, and in its own special nature⁴⁹.

As a result, there developed a certain methodological scepticism in relation to the material. Were the data deriving from the inventories really so uniform and reliable that they could be used for serial analyses? Did they reflect the material realities of the day so precisely that the use of quantifying methods was meaningful? It was not so much the question of the quantifiability of the material that caused a headache, as that of the interpretability of the quantified data⁵⁰, for sometimes the in-

vestigations produced results that had been neatly worked statistically, but that nevertheless gave a doubtful representation of historical reality. The absence of certain objects in the sources over a more extended period of time is not necessarily a "cultural lacuna" specific to a region, but could be interpreted as an omission in recording due to the instructions of the officially sworn valuer⁵¹.

In cases where system-bound ways of recording put the "completeness" of the inventories in doubt, considerations about the interpretability of the quantified data are not invalidated by the inevitable reference to the high number of sources. The use of statistical quantifying methods demands all the more a critically aware relationship with the sources, the greater the system-conditioned differences are in the network of sources itself.

At least the international discussion about "inventories" led to great strides in the field of methodology⁵². Of the various scientific disciplines that make use of this network of sources, furniture research was not slow to profit from it⁵³. Electronic data processing made it possible to encompass without trouble the great detail in which furniture was often described in the lists. Information about individual objects could be called up and listed individually or quantitatively according to the question being put. Often the listed item can be assessed very exactly through its designation, material, colour, technique of working, form of construction, state of preservation, and position in the house, as well as through its specified contents, valuation, origin and owners, and references to its function and position in use⁵⁴.

Admittedly, information about an individual object did not always appear in all these details. "A black painted clothes cupboard with two doors and drawers", standing on the floor, holding substantial stocks of linen and valued at 20 dollars (rtl) as the cupboard for the trousseau of the late spouse when the inventory was taken, is an example of an above average range of information about an object. As a rule the data flow more meagrely and sometimes do not even suffice to give a firm idea of the specified concept. The word read in the source is

not always the key to a concrete visualising of the material concept indicated⁵⁵. Yet the semantic problems lie much less on the test bench of ethnological inventory research than the question of whether and to what extent the inclusion of statistically obtained findings succeed within the broad theoretical concepts of the theories of cultural fixation, civilisation or town-and-country⁵⁶.

The Münster Research Project, indeed, did not in this endeavour move back from its pre-conceived research aims, but as its content developed, questions came to the forefront that also tested the social history indicator function of the objects investigated. Allied to the tracking down of the diffusion process, the working out of frameworks of periodisation and the construction of interpretation models of material culture, was the question of the symbolic nature of the objects. The fact is that the household world of material culture appears not only as a functionally articulated whole that differs more or less according to the environment of space, time and society, but also as a process made visible, in which social transactions, patterns of interaction and value concepts play their roles in relation to the people who move among the objects. To decode the "prescribed" objectifications in their function as indicators demands careful interpretation, but such a purpose pays off all the more when it can convey new impulses in material culture research. Here I can refer to an example from the research of Ruth-E Mohrmann, which illustrates the meaningful synthesis of quantitative survey methods and careful interpretation of detail⁵⁷.

There is a council edict of 1653 from the town of Braunschweig, the contents of which deal with the arrangement of bridal furniture. It records a "large valuable cupboard, decorated in the best way with gold and colours, carving and other similar artistic work". This was brought into the marriage by the brides of Braunschweig as a piece of prestige furniture; its colouring functions as an indicator to the extent that marriage cupboards were included amongst furniture prepared with polychrome. According to this, red was kept for the first level, red and green for the second, for the

third light and dark green and for the fourth only two more modest colours were allowed.

That such substantiated levels of regimentation are not found again amongst the goods and furnishing of Braunschweig citizens, as identifiable from inventories, is scarcely a matter of surprise for the cultural historian. In fact the decrees of authority, insofar as they were aimed at the arrangements of cultural life, produced as a rule no effect. It can be shown that for the inhabitants of the town of Braunschweig, the lower orders did not renounce red furniture nor did the upper orders content themselves with red or red and green furniture. "The symbolic function of painted furniture is neither respected by the one or used by the other"⁵⁸.

In what do the reasons lie for such a way of behaving? Colour clearly did not (or not any longer) satisfy the symbolism that had been decreed from above. When in the upper classes social status was to be indicated through bridal furniture, then the furniture was fitted with coats-of-arms marking descent and family. Even more evident, however, seems to be the discrepancy between official injunctions and social reality as regards the conditions of quality and quantity that prevailed in the realm of objects and make it clear that furniture was much less a marker of social position than what is contained or displayed in it, namely underclothes, clothing and table-ware.

But access to the people comes not only through objects, but also through the rooms in which objects determine the proceedings of the people from both a functional and a social point of view⁵⁹. In the record of differentiation between dwelling rooms that becomes even clearer from the 16th century, there appears not only specialisation in the structure of living itself, but also an internal differentiation between the individual members of the household⁶⁰. In judging this process, the interpretation of inventories that list room contents offers a considerable increase in knowledge. As far as concerns the widespread view that servants had been a fully integrated element of the great household family⁶¹, the available source material from the see of Münster raises the question of how the living in common of

masters and servants had been organised in a bourgeois home of the 17th and 18th centuries⁶².

First we must get rid of the idea that the bourgeois family shared a common bedroom with their household dependents. This at least presumed custom at the time of the outgoing late Middle Ages, which objectively found its expression in the large spaces of the extensive, undifferentiated living structure of the bourgeois houses, existed no more at the beginning of the 17th century in Münster. Certainly there existed in the upper middle class houses preferred sleeping spaces like the "chamber" (Laube) on the upper floor or the "principal chamber" on the ground floor, but these prestige rooms were reserved for the master and mistress. These privileged bedrooms contrasted with small chambers in the entresol area or in the loft for the household servants. These were furnished in a decidedly spartan manner. The furnishing consisted mostly only of a bed space and the accompanying bedding; it was rare that there was even something to sit on also. This may be explained by the fact that in the chamber, which in any case was tight for space, room had to be made for the servant's own furniture, especially the obligatory chest, and perhaps also because the needs of the servants for living arrangements could be met by the possibility of sharing storage rooms (hall, kitchen).

The behaviour of the master and mistress in carrying out their duty towards all the inhabitants of the household stopped, it seems, at providing for the nightly sleeping comfort of the servants bedding of the same quality as for themselves. The question of how comfortable the sleeping arrangements for the servants were, was indeed less one of the purse than, to a far greater extent, of the mental attitude towards household dependents.

Whilst the differences in quality between family- and servants' beds were clearly documented up to the mid-18th century, they began to wear out towards the end of the century. Does this mean that amongst the prosperous citizens the attitude to servants had changed, and that they were trying to apply a greater degree of social awareness to them? To judge

by the endless complaints of the landed bourgeoisie about the unreliability and disloyalty of servants, no importance can be accorded to this point of view.

The improved room arrangements expressed much more the changed bourgeois attitude to daily living itself⁶³, which also allotted to the servants a certain elevation in quality of their domestic needs. The natural demands for comfort and the increasing tendency to seek privacy within the household, and the related differentiation in spatial function, gave the maid-servants' rooms their quite specific appearance about 1800. This led indeed objectively to better equipping of the chambers, and subjectively to a diminution of the social interaction between servants and family. Furnishings that include table, chairs and cupboard besides the obligatory bed point not only to the adoption of new patterns of living, but also give evidence for internal social differentiation. This seemingly went so far that certain evening domestic tasks given over to the female servants were carried out in the seclusion of their rooms and no longer in the communally used living rooms. On the one hand this documents the reduced esteem of the household tasks based on efforts towards self sufficiency, and on the other the modified standards of value in the domestic co-existence of the individual members of the family. A household orientated towards a common form of living and economy was gradually put in question by being increasingly supplied from the market, by the strengthening consumption orientation at the beginning of the 19th century, and by the now more frequently encountered division between living- and workplace amongst the house-owning bourgeoisie.

In such efforts at interpretation, inventory analysis begins to slacken itself from object-orientated material culture research, and objects and groups of objects are conceived as indicators whose decipherment⁶⁴ is possible through the context of the source. The ability of the inventories to make statements is for this reason directed much less towards the evaluation method than towards the formulation of questions. There is a difference in whether an attempt is made to illustrate pro-

cess through serial analyses and in that way to use quantifying methods, or to examine specifically the furnishing pattern of individual houses and so give preference to interpretative statements. Statistical-quantifying methods thus have their justification as much as hermeneutical-interpretative methods, the more so since their mutual complementarity leads to fruitful results.

III.

Amongst all the justifiable euphoria about the diversity of possibilities for formulating questions and interpreting that are available to material culture research through inventory analyses, it should not be forgotten that the clarity that recent items of material culture and illustrative material can provide, is lacking in the surviving written sources that refer to objects. The reproach that process analyses of material culture, established from inventories, really researched the history of words and not of things operates hypothetically indeed, but it rests at the same time on a basic demand that can be attributed to material culture research: namely to achieve a complex conception of things through concern with things. In fact, in the first instance, inventories provide the material culture researcher with no more than the certainty of the existence of an object, and with nothing or at least very little about its actual size, form and decoration. From this deficiency of information, which makes difficult the realistic visualising of the researched object within its cultural connections, comes the demand for the inclusion of the thing itself. What may perhaps be seen as obvious, in the link between the object-orientated material investigation and the study of archival-empirical sources, is relatively rarely to be found as a research reality. In this desideratum there clearly appears a problem deriving from the different emphases in the areas of attention of the traditional research institutions: the study of written sources in the universities and of objects in the museums. The same museums have broken through this pragmatic division in their duties by setting research on objects alongside their cardinal task of collecting and

displaying objects, in a relatively recent development. This may be demonstrated conclusively by the plan of the Lower Saxony Open Air Museum at Cloppenburg⁶⁵. When in 1954 Heinrich Ottenjann brought together in a publication the furniture collected up till then in the Museum Village of Cloppenburg⁶⁶, he did so under the claim of going beyond the methodological constraints of typology construction and of comparison, to the first basic conclusions about the furniture culture of a region (the Oldenburg Münsterland). Limits were set from the beginning to this scheme, which was exclusively based on the material, insofar as it concerned the furniture producers or consumers. In these regards the pieces remained “dumb”.

Under this imprint, Helmut Ottenjann formulated an important statement in 1978⁶⁷, evolved on the basis of regional furniture studies, but which can be transferred to the whole field of research into material culture.

1. Traditional furniture in the country and in the town cannot be judged on the basis of the contemporary museum position, which has to do to a greater or lesser degree with fortuitously collected items. This means that folk museums wanting to make specific statements about space, time and social levels through “movable goods”, must, over and above the furniture in museums, work up the evidence still to be found in the surrounding countryside by a systematic, and if possible comprehensive survey to achieve scientific documentation and analyses.
2. The manuscript sources deposited in great numbers in national, municipal, church and private archives (of townsmen, farmers and hand workers), which can be used in the interpretation of material culture and as a folklore source of material goods and chatels, provide a for long almost untouched treasure house of many-sided interpretational possibilities⁶⁸.

With this statement Ottenjann expressed the hope that “the combination of both approaches (quantitative analysis of material goods and as far as possible a quantifying evaluation of ar-

chival source materials) must produce “revolutionary new knowledge” for material culture research⁶⁹.

The stress lies on *quantitative* cultural analysis. In this respect pioneering work was carried out in Cloppenburg⁷⁰, at least for the comprehensive inventorisation of traditional assemblages of material culture. On the premise that museum collections alone allowed no certain statement to be made about the real quantitative situation of the assemblages of the farming people’s goods, a systematic survey of the privately held furniture in a small region (the Osnabrück Artland) was undertaken. There resulted from this total documentation an enormously widened source base, a basis for all further investigations into furniture production in a small area. The methodological way of comparison continued to be realistic, because an early furniture photographic record for the Ammerland was established; with its c. 543 items it has exceptional value⁷¹. More than 80% of the items are dated by the incised year number and can be localised exactly because they bear the name and dwelling place of those who brought the furniture as a dowry into their marriage⁷².

It would be possible to quantify the assembled material from statistical points of view and to characterise it as “cliometrically” applied enumeration⁷³. This reproach would apply, however, if such a survey were carried out without bringing in the socio-historical context. For – if we stay with the example of the quantified furniture material from the Ammerland – the simple counting of the dated material culture assemblage and its logging on a scale along the time axis is in the last analysis not without results, if the diagram of curves is allowed to speak not only for itself, but is also correlated in its graphic presentation with the social, political and demographic developments in the region, so as to give a push to meaningful attempts at interpretation.

When Helmut Ottenjann presented the cumulative results of the Cloppenburg documentation activities at a meeting on the subject in Würzburg in 1986⁷⁴, the studies had long outgrown their pilot level and in their pioneering character had stimulated similar investiga-

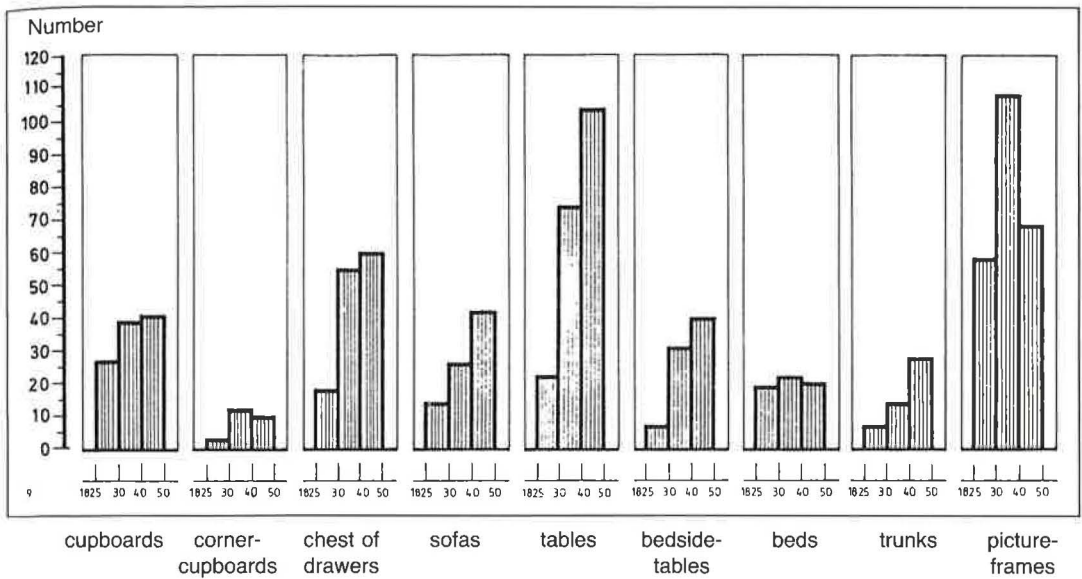


Fig. 5. Different types of furniture from the joinery Brickwede/von der Heyde in Grothe, parish Badbergen, Bersenbrück (North-Germany) 1825-1850.

From: Helmut Ottenjann, *Buchführungssysteme ländlicher Werkstätten. Zum Biedermeiertrend in der Möbelkultur des Osnabrücker Artlandes*. In: *Alte Tagebücher und Anschreibebücher. Quellen zum Alltag der ländlichen Bevölkerung in Nordwesteuropa*, hg. von H. Ottenjann u. G. Wiegmann, Münster 1982, fig. 15.

tions⁷⁵. The thesis that meaningful material culture research could only be expressed through a union of object studies and work in archives, found here impressive confirmation. The phenomenon frequently seen in older ethnological furniture research, that the results depended exclusively on the description of furniture "landscapes" and migrations in style and decoration, was modified to this extent, that through the evaluation of tradesmen's account books, producers and consumers were included, and deeper illumination thereby given to the historical context.

The widespread concept of the illiteracy of the rural levels of population in pre-industrial times is refuted not least of all by a stronger inclusion of writings originating from the private sector (like diaries and account books)⁷⁶. Besides, there grew in the "private archives" of the upper levels of farmers a profusion of loose pieces of paper (accounts, contracts, correspondence)⁷⁷, which had been taken just as little notice of as the records arising from the complex accounting system of rural craftsmen.

The producer and consumer sides must certainly be given equal treatment in the inter-

play of supply and demand as well as in relation to the development of a regional furniture culture. Available purchasing power first made it possible for the makers to have the space needed for differentiated production. On the other hand, the shaping of a popular material culture depends not only on the wishes of the consumers, but also on the efficiency, orientation and salesmanship of the producers⁷⁸.

Against the background of the mutual influence of buyer and seller, the source "craftsman's account book" forms an extremely important element in assessing the history and development of regional cultural phenomena. By comparing furniture recorded in documents and actually produced, as can be recorded through surviving account books for a specific period of time at least for an individual workshop, it becomes clear how justifiable and necessary the requirement to include documentary source material is.

Meanwhile, a large number of workshop books of the 18th-19th centuries from the old district of Bersenbrück were archived in the Museum Village of Cloppenburg⁷⁹. The evaluation of two journals from the joiner's work-

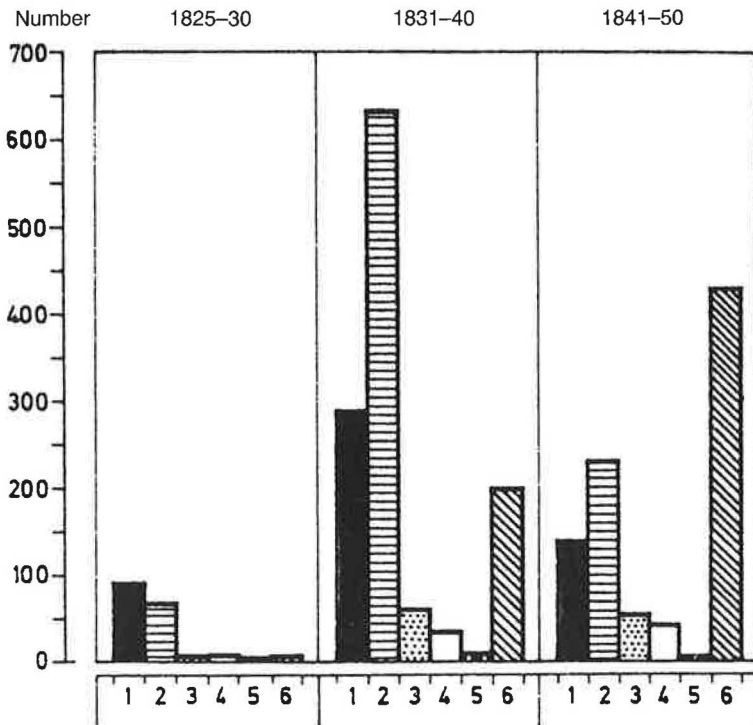


Fig. 6. Changes in the use of wood for furniture 1825-50 in the joinery Brickwede/von der Heyde in Grothe, parish Badbergen, Bersenbrück (North-Germany). 1: mahogany, 2: cherry, 3: oak, 4: fir, 5: walnut, 6: ash. From: Helmut Ottenjann, Buchführungssystem, fig. 17b.

shop of Brickwede/von der Heyde in Grothe by Badbergen produced for the period 1825-50 a multifaceted insight into rural furniture production. Over a period of 25 years, over 3590 new pieces of furniture were made in the workshop. The family of joiners was able to satisfy the demands of people in town and country over a radius of 25 km around their workshop. Furniture was for more luxury purposes as well as for simple use. The enormous range of types of production was reflected in over 35 furniture varieties, the individual examples of which vary according to the order in size, decoration and kind of wood used.

But analysis is not exhausted by the simple listing of quantities. Taking as a starting point the fact that till about 1800 a traditional furniture assemblage made overwhelmingly of oak, predominated, then the produce of the joinery shop of Brickwede marks a decisive breakthrough in the position of rural furnishings. Individual pieces of furniture made of oak no longer set the tone at well-to-do farms, but rather the furniture ensembles of the gentlemen farmers, arranged in "living islands" that

fittingly harmonised with each other. In the use of lightcoloured woods (cherry, pear, ash, birch, elm) as well as mahogany, a supra-regional trend in furniture production could be distinguished. By picking up this style, rural craftsmen mark a flexibility in production that has scarcely been conceded to them in research hitherto. That they actually could sell such furniture in the countryside is shown by new patterns of orientation amongst the rural upper levels, where in the 1820s the "gentleman farmers' homes", intended for comfort, made strides as the embodiment of the cult of domestic prestige. Such analyses, as far as they can be constructed from serial sources, are suitable for establishing a periodisation of folk culture⁸⁰. They serve a useful purpose above all because they break the concept of the static nature of folk culture, which has been hard to displace. In the cultural objectifications of people, ways of behaving appear that relate to the ongoing process of both endogenous and exogenous factors in the countryside.

To view historical material evidence as aesthetic remains of past times is one thing. To

conceive of it as an indicator of facts of a political, religious, community, economic and technicalities of communications nature is another. To give a final example: in the custom of applying the initials of the bride and the date of marriage to furniture that was part of the marriage portion, there was later seen to be, at the period of display of such pieces in museums, an important criterion for assessing the realisation of folk art production. In the continuity of this custom, a glimpse was caught above all of the symbolization of the farmers' awareness of tradition. But the fact that the more frequent dating of the Ammerland bridal chests only started after 1693 and was nothing more than a reflex of improved socio-legal conditions in that after the cessation of death duties the dating of the furniture assemblage no longer carried any tax disadvantage, is to be judged as a mark of recognition of the importance of critically planned object research⁸¹.

In this paper, it has been possible only to touch on which directions historical material culture research has taken in the last decades. It would exceed the bounds of this report to describe them in every detail, to sketch them out through every partially related discipline; and shortage of space has led to lack of mention of many more recent works on material culture research. The purpose has been to demonstrate new methodological assessments, which are mainly to be found in project-related research. In terms of content there comes to light – chronologically considered – a change of emphasis from ergological themes to the complexes marked by dwelling and furnishings; in more recent times historical dress research has returned to the field⁸².

Certainly the changes in the area of methodology are more important. The exercise of grasping historical circumstances in a cross-sectional way has been increasingly superseded by efforts to investigate culture as a process. This was the step from "cross-sectional analysis to serial analysis"⁸³. The changed means of visualising the material and results correspond to this change in the paradigm. Whilst in spatially structured investigations the map played a leading role as a technical aid, the picture is dominated by diagrams and

tables in the diachronically structured tasks. The availability of electronic data-processing methods finally pushed ethnology too into the sector of knowledge of a statistical-quantifying social science.

That the adoption of new methods in research engages new perceptions, is indeed nothing unusual. A growth in knowledge was to be expected from a quantifyingly-structured material culture research that utilises the immense stock of surviving material objects as well as the archival wealth of serial sources for statistical analysis. However, if it were only a growth in the quantitative sector, in knowledge of numbers produced and used, about relative proportions and structural differences, the increase in knowledge would scarcely result in possession of trustworthy material culture statistics.

But the sense or lack of sense in a method used ultimately decides the formulation of the question. Only with the question, *what* people employ in the way of things for mastering their living situation, might the knowledge-seeking goal of quantifyingly-structured material culture research be reduced to the description of conditions. Only with the question, *how* objects and what is associated with them thereby determine the life of mankind in its specific regional, temporal and social circumstances, is the way cleared for seeking knowledge derived from acceptance of things in the function of indicators⁸⁴.

However, in order to make for oneself a picture of the "dominance of things in social structures"⁸⁵, and to grasp the symbolic quality of things at social and historical levels, the deciphering of objects themselves "in so far as the traces of ways of life can be read from them"⁸⁶, is not adequate. Gottfried Korff, in his study of "sleep culture", makes a call – certainly not new – for using a combination of sources in objects research. This he does primarily in relation to the attempt to "include the object assemblage in the processes of the history of civilisation"⁸⁷, in order to raise the question, from this level, of connections between the history of civilisation and mentality. Nevertheless the problem is less one of whether such ambitious goals in knowledge can be realised with the

question of the *how* of historical material culture – for in this connection all the possibilities of source combinations are far from having been brought into play –, than of whether anyone is prepared to undertake the donkey work of the associated labour of documentation and archiving. For only with systematic source investigation and analysis can the historical world of things be so made to speak that it facilitates realistic entry to the thought structures and value patterns of humanity, by means of whose material remains the research of today seeks to track down the realities of the life of former days.

Translated by Alexander Fenton.

Notes

The article was first printed under the title »Forschungen zur historischen Sachkultur. Zwischen Interpretation und Statistik«. In: *Der Deutschunterricht VI, 1987* (= *Volkskunde als empirische Wissenschaft*, hg. von H. Bausinger), p. 17–36.

1. Wolfgang Jacobeit, *Bäuerliche Arbeit und Wirtschaft. Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der deutschen Volkskunde*. Berlin-Ost 1965, p. 144.
2. Heinz Maus, Zur Situation der deutschen Volkskunde. In: *Die Umschau. Internationale Revue* 1 (1946), p. 349 ff.
3. W. Jacobeit, *Bäuerliche Arbeit und Wirtschaft* (as Note 1), p. 132 ff.
4. Heinz Kothe, *Zur Geschichte und Verbreitung des Pfluges, dargestellt vornehmlich für den mitteleuropäischen Raum*. Diss. Göttingen 1948. – Arnold Lühning, *Die schneidenden Erntegeräte. Technologie, Entwicklung und Verbreitung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Nordwestdeutschlands*. Diss. Göttingen 1951.
5. Günter Wiegelmann, Der »Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde« als Quelle für die Agrargeschichte. In: *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* 12 (1964), p. 164–180.
6. Cf. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Deutsche Volkskunde zwischen Germanistik und Sozialwissenschaften*. Stuttgart 1969, p. 68 ff.
7. Günter Wiegelmann, Erste Ergebnisse der ADV-Umfragen zur alten bäuerlichen Arbeit. In: *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 33 (1969), p. 208–262.
8. Cf. Wolfgang Jacobeit, Das bäuerliche Arbeitsgerät in den Museen der DDR. In: *Neue Museumskunde* 6 (1963), p. 145 ff. – idem a. Rudolf Quietzsch, Forschungen zur bäuerlichen Arbeit und Wirtschaft im Institut für deutsche Volkskunde Berlin. In: *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 11 (1965), p. 59–82.
9. Günter Wiegelmann, Zur Erfassung bäuerlicher Sachgüter und Arbeitsverfahren. Möglichkeiten und Probleme eines Fragebogens. In: *Protokollmanuskript über die 3. Arbeitstagung über Fragen des Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* vom 27. April bis 29. April 1961 (Bonn 1961), p. 19 ff. idem. Zur Sachforschung im bäuerlichen Bereich. Möglichkeiten und Probleme von Übersichtsbefragung und Dorfmonographie. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 58 (1962), p. 99–113.
10. Günter Wiegelmann, Materielle und »Geistige« Volkskultur. Zu den Gliederungsprinzipien der Volkskunde. In: *Ethnologia Europaea* 4 (1970), p. 187–193.
11. Cf. for example the title: Helmut Ottenjann, Zur historischen Sachkultur im Oldenburger Land. In: *Geschichte des Landes Oldenburg. Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Albrecht Eckhardt in cooperation with Heinrich Schmidt. Oldenburg 1987, p. 897–926.
12. Cf. also Wolfgang Emmerich, *Zur Kritik der Volkstumsideologie*. Frankfurt 1971. p. 9 ff.: p. 162 ff.
13. Cf. Wolfgang Steinitz, Aufgaben der deutschen Volkskunde. In: *Aufbau* 9 (1953), p. 963 ff. Quoted from Jacobeit, *Bäuerliche Arbeit und Wirtschaft* (as Note 1), p. 147.
14. Cf. also Edith Wurmbach, *Das Wohnungs- und Kleidungswesen des Kölner Bürgertums*. Bonn 1932. – Maria Schmidt, *Das Wohnungswesen der Stadt Münster im 17. Jahrhundert*. Münster 1965.
15. *Arbeit und Volksleben. Deutscher Volkskongress 1965 in Marburg*, ed. by Gerhard Heilfurth a. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann. Marburg 1967. – Also the Commission's conference »Arbeit und Gerät in volkskundlicher Dokumentation«; its papers were edited by Wilhelm Hansen in Münster in 1969.
16. Günter Wiegelmann, Die räumliche Methode in der Geräteforschung. In: *Arbeit und Volksleben* (as Note 15), p. 140–145.
17. Günter Wiegelmann, Erste Ergebnisse der ADV-Umfragen zur alten bäuerlichen Arbeit. In: *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 33 (1969), p. 209.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
19. For a criticism cf. generally Rudolf Schenda, Einheitlich – urtümlich – noch heute. Probleme der volkskundlichen Befragung. In: *Abschied vom Volksleben*. Ed. by Klaus Geiger et al., Tübingen 1970, p. 124–154.
20. On this controversial discussion, cf. Karl-S. Kramer, Historische Methode und Gegenwartsforschung in der Volkskunde. In: *Populus revisus. Beiträge zur Erforschung der Gegenwart*. Tübingen 1966, p. 7–14. – idem, Zur Erforschung der historischen Volkskultur. Prinzipielles und Methodisches. In: *Rheinisches Jahr-*

- buch für Volkskunde* 19 (1968), p. 7–41. – Hermann Bausinger, Zur Problematik historischer Volkskunde. In: *Abschied vom Volksleben* (as Note 19), p. 155–172. – Karl-S. Kramer, Zur Problematik historischer Volkskunde: einige Bemerkungen zu Hermann Bausingers gleichnamigem Aufsatz in »Abschied vom Volksleben«. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 67 (1971), p. 51–62.
21. For the following, cf. Günter Wiegemann, Die räumliche Methode (as Note 16), p. 140f.
 22. Günter Wiegemann, Erste Ergebnisse (as Note 17), p. 260.
 23. Cf. Günter Wiegemann, Zum Problem der bäuerlichen Arbeitsteilung in Mitteleuropa. In: *Aus Geschichte und Landeskunde. Forschungen und Darstellungen*. Franz Steinbach zum 65. Geburtstag. Bonn 1960, p. 637 ff.
 24. Wiegemann, Erste Ergebnisse (as Note 17), p. 238 ff.
 25. Cf. Ulrich Bentzien, *Landbevölkerung und agrartechnischer Fortschritt in Mecklenburg vom Ende des 18. bis zum Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine volkskundliche Untersuchung*. Berlin 1983, p. 84.
 26. Günter Wiegemann, Innovationszentren in der ländlichen Sachkultur Mitteleuropas. In: *Volkskultur und Geschichte. Festgabe für Josef Dünninger zum 65. Geburtstag*. Ed. by Dieter Harmenting et al., Berlin 1970, p. 120–136.
 27. Günter Wiegemann, Probleme einer kultur-räumlichen Gliederung im volkskundlichen Bereich. In: *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 33 (1965), p. 95–117. – Cf. also the volume »Volkskundliche Kulturraumforschung heute«. Beiträge eines internationalen Symposiums in Bonn vom 21. bis 24. April 1982, ed. by H. L. Cox a. Günter Wiegemann. Münster 1984.
 28. Uwe Meiners, Erhebungen des Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde und historische Quellen. Möglichkeiten der Quellenkombination am Beispiel der Kornfege. In: *Volkskundliche Kulturraumforschung heute* (as Note 27), p. 131. – A successful attempt to use synchronously structured Atlas investigations from different periods for a process analysis was undertaken by J. J. Voskuil, Volkskundliche Karten und das Rekonstruieren kultureller Prozesse am Beispiel einer Karte des Brotkonsums in den Niederlanden um 1910. In: *Volkskundliche Kulturraumforschung heute* (as Note 27), p. 113–127.
 29. Günter Wiegemann, Innovationszentren (as Note 26), p. 123 ff.
 30. Ulrich Bentzien, *Bauernarbeit im Feudalismus. Landwirtschaftliche Arbeitsgeräte und -verfahren in Deutschland von der Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends u. Z. bis um 1800*. Berlin 1980, p. 126 ff.
 31. Ulrich Bentzien, Landmaschinenteknik in Mecklenburg (1800–1959). In: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1965, Pt. 3, p. 54–81.
 32. Cf. also Hermann Bausinger, *Volkskunde. Von der Altertumsforschung zur Kulturanalyse*. Darmstadt 1979, p. 115 ff.
 33. Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand, Neue Ansätze im Bereich »Wörter und Sachen«. In: *Geschichte der Alltagskultur. Aufgaben und neue Ansätze*, ed. by Günter Wiegemann, Münster 1980, p. 87–102. – Uwe Meiners, *Die Kornfege in Mitteleuropa. Wort- und sachkundliche Studien zur Geschichte einer frühen landwirtschaftlichen Maschine*. Münster 1983.
 34. Will-Erich Peuckert/Otto Lauffer, *Volkskunde. Quellen und Forschungen seit 1930*. Bern 1951, p. 24.
 35. Hans Moser, Gedanken zur heutigen Volkskunde. Ihre Situation, ihre Problematik, ihre Aufgaben. In: *Bayerisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 1954, p. 208 ff.
 36. Karl-Sigismund Kramer, Bauern und Bürger im nachmittelalterlichen Unterfranken. Eine Volkskunde auf Grund archivalischer Quellen. Würzburg 1957. – idem, Archivalische Quellenforschung. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 55 (1959), p. 91–98.
 37. On this question cf. also Ruth-E. Mohrmann, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen quantitativer Analysen zur städtischen Volkskultur. Drei norddeutsche Fallbeispiele. In: *Ethnologia Europaea* XIV (1984), p. 65–79.
 38. Peter Löffler, Inventare. Historische Entwicklung und rechtliche Grundlagen. In: *Rheinisch-westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 23 (1977), p. 120–131, here p. 120 – Ruth-E. Mohrmann, Archivalische Quellen zur Sachkultur. In: *Geschichte der Alltagskultur*, ed. by Günter Wiegemann. Münster 1980, p. 69–86, here p. 71.
 39. Günter Wiegemann, Von der Querschnittanalyse zur seriellen Analyse. Arbeitsbericht des Projekts »Diffusion städtisch-bürgerlicher Kultur vom 17. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert«. In: *Rheinisch-westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 26/27 (1981/82), p. 235–248, here p. 243.
 40. Hanns Koren, *Pflug und Arl. Ein Beitrag zur Volkskunde der Ackergeräte*. Salzburg 1950.
 41. Cf. also the work of Hildegard Neumann, who investigated the books owned by the citizens of Tübingen from 1750 to 1850. (Diss. Tübingen 1955, new printed München 1978). – Angelika Bischoff-Luithlen, *Auszüge aus den Inventur- und Teilungsakten der Gemeinde Feldstetten Kreis Münsingen über den Besitz an Büchern*. Tübingen 1964. – Also Utz Jeggle, *Kiebingen – eine Heimatgeschichte. Zum Prozeß der Zivilisation in einem schwäbischen Dorf*. Tübingen 1977. – In the following period this network of sources was also used by social historians in increased measure: cf. inter alia Peter Borscheid, Familie – Wirtschaft – Gesellschaft. Materialien zu einer Sozialgeschichte der Familie in Deutschland. In: *Probate Inventories. A new source for the historical study of wealth, material*

- culture an agricultural development*, ed. by Ad van der Woude and Anton Schuurman. Wageningen 1980, p. 83–95.
42. Cf. Matti Sarmela, Die Anwendung quantitativer Methoden auf das Archivmaterial der Ethnologie Europas. in: *Ethnologia Europaea VI* (1972), p. 5–55. – Klaus Roth, Historische Volkskunde und Quantifizierung. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* (1980), p. 37–57.
 43. Cf. Günter Wiegelmann, Von der Querschnittanalyse zur seriellen Analyse (as Note 39). – On the neighbouring project A4 in SFB 164, which used inventories as sources in the same way, cf. Karoline Terlau/Fred Kaspar, Städtisches Bauen und Wohnen des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. In: *Rheinisch-westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 26/27 (1981/82), p. 257–264.
 44. Tamás Hofer, Gegenstände in dörflichem und städtischem Milieu. Zu einigen Grundfragen der mikroanalytischen Sachforschung In: *Gemeinde im Wandel. Volkskundliche Gemeindestudien in Europa*. Beiträge des 21. Deutschen Volkskundekongresses in Braunschweig vom 5.–9. September 1977, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann, Münster 1979, p. 113–135.
 45. A Conference with this emphasis was held in Münster in 1983, at which by different disciplines the question of a regional cultural division of Middle Europe was again raised and controversially discussed. Cf. also the résumé by Walter Hartinger in the Conference volume: *Nord-Süd-Unterschiede in der städtischen und ländlichen Kultur Mitteleuropas*, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1985, p. 405–408.
 46. Ruth-E. Mohrmann, Die Eingliederung städtischen Mobiliars in braunschweigischen Dörfern, nach Inventaren des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts. In: *Kulturelle Stadt-Land-Beziehungen*, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1978, p. 297–337. – idem, Ländliches Wohnverhalten im südlichen Niedersachsen von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis um 1930. In: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 18 (1979), p. 425–457. – idem, Alltagswelt im Land Braunschweig. Städtische und ländliche Wohnkultur vom 16. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert (in the press).
 47. Klaus Roth, Die Eingliederung neuen Mobiliars und Hausrats im südlichen Münsterland vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert. In: *Kulturelle Stadt-Land-Beziehungen*, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1978, p. 249–296. – idem, Ländliches Wohninventar im Münsterland um 1800. In: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 18 (1979), p. 389–423. – Uwe Meiners, Stufen des Wandels. Aspekte zur Periodisierung der bürgerlichen und bäuerlichen Kultur im Münsterland (1550–1800). In *Wandel der Alltagskultur seit dem Mittelalter*, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1987, p. 275–308.
 48. Uwe Meiners, Wohnkultur in süddeutschen Kleinstädten vom 17. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert. Soziale Unterschiede und Wertestrukturen. In: *Nord-Süd-Unterschiede in der städtischen und ländlichen Kultur Mitteleuropas*, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann, Münster 1985, p. 157–221. – Peter Höher, »Stul, benck und sidel mus man han.« Wohnen in der Reichsstadt Weißenburg vor dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg. In: *Wiss. Begleitwerk zur Ausstellung »Reichsstädte in Franken«*, Rothenburg o. T., ed. by the Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte. München 1987. – idem, Konstanz und Wandel in Wohnausstattung und Hauswirtschaft. Das Beispiel Nürtingen am Neckar. In: *Wandel der Alltagskultur seit dem Mittelalter*, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1987, p. 309–336.
 49. Cf. Ruth-E. Mohrmann, Archivalische Quellen zur Sachkultur (as Note 38), p. 72.
 50. Karl-S. Kramer in particular reacted critically to the quantifying assessment.
 51. Christiane Homoet/Dietmar Sauer mann/Joaachim Schepers, *Sterbfallinventare des Stifts Quernheim (1525–1808). Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung zur Diffusionsforschung*. Münster 1982.
 52. Cf. also the various papers presented in 1980 at the Conference in Wageningen on inventory research: *Probate Inventories. A new source for the historical study of wealth, material culture and agricultural development*, ed. by Ad van der Woude and Anton Schuurman. Wageningen 1980.
 53. Cf. Christoph Daxelmüller, Möbel, Mobiliar und Alltag. Anmerkungen zu Aufgaben und Zielen volkskundlicher Möbelforschung. In: *Rheinisch-westfäl. Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 29 (1984), p. 89–106.
 54. Wolfgang Brückner at least judged the evidence value of inventories optimistically in this way, in reference to systematic furniture research, in his résumé of the Conference »Kulturgeschichtliche Möbelforschung. VW-Symposium in Würzburg vom 16.–19.10. 1986. In: *Bayerische Blätter für Volkskunde* 14/1 (1987), p. 1–18, here p. 14.
 55. Also similarly critical was Christoph Daxelmüller (as Note 53), p. 14.
 56. Wolfgang Brückner, Kulturgeschichtliche Möbelforschung (as Note 54), p. 14.
 57. The following according to Ruth-E. Mohrmann, Wohnen und Wohnkultur in nordwestdeutschen Städten im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. In: *Stadt im Wandel. Kunst und Kultur des Bürgertums in Nordwestdeutschland 1150–1650*, Vol 3, ed. by Cord Meckseper. Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt 1985, p. 516 f.
 58. *Ibid.*, p. 516.
 59. Cf. on this Konrad Bedal, Gefüge und Struktur. Zu Standort und Arbeitsweise volkskundlicher Hausforschung. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 72 (1976), p. 161–176. – Also Fred Kaspar, *Bauen und Wohnen in einer alten Hansestadt*.

- Zur Nutzung von Wohnbauten zwischen dem 16. und 19. Jahrhundert, dargestellt am Beispiel der Stadt Lemgo. Bonn 1985, esp. p. 155 ff.
60. Cf. Hermann Zinn, Entstehung und Wandel bürgerlicher Wohngewohnheiten und Wohnstrukturen. In: *Wohnen im Wandel. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, ed. by Lutz Niethammer. Wuppertal 1979, p. 13–27.
 61. Cf. also Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation, Vol. 1: Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes*. Bern 1969, p. 222.
 62. The following arguments after Uwe Meiners, Wohnen und soziale Binnendifferenzierung in Münster. Lecture read at the 37th Meeting of the Arbeitskreis für Hausforschung, 19–23 June in Münster. The investigations rest on analysis of inventories of the late 16th-early 19th centuries, deposited together in the Town Archive of Münster: SDAM, store B VII (Guardianship Acts).
 63. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, Die gute Kinderstube. Zur Geschichte des Wohnens von Bürgerkindern. In: *Wohnen im Wandel. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, ed. by Lutz Niethammer, Wuppertal 1979, p. 44–64, esp. p. 45 ff. – Cf. also Gottfried Korff, Einige Bemerkungen zum Wandel des Bettes. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 77 (1981), p. 1–16, here p. 7 f.
 64. Cf. Helge Gerndt, Möbel als kultureller Wert. In: *Volkstümliche Möbel aus Altbayern*, ed. by Bayerisches Nationalmuseum. München 1975, p. 14–18.
 65. An informative overview of the researches of this institution is given in Helmut Ottenjann's paper, Zur historischen Sachkultur im Oldenburger Land (as Note 11). – That other open air museums also follow the research injunction to some degree is here at least documented by two further examples: firstly through the VW-project, »The Old Farming Equipment in Oberbayern«, based on the Open-Air Museum of the district of Upper Bavaria, Grossweil, about which a publication has appeared: Jürgen Heinrich Mestemacher, *Altes bäuerliches Arbeitsgerät in Oberbayern. Materialien und Erträge eines Forschungsvorhabens*. München 1985; secondly through two studies originating at the Frankish Open-Air Museum of Bad Windsheim: *Bemalte Möbel aus Franken*. Bad Windsheim 1980. – *Göpel und Dreschmaschine. Zur Mechanisierung der bäuerlichen Arbeit in Franken*. Bad Windsheim 1981.
 66. Heinrich Ottenjann, *Alte deutsche Bauernmöbel. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte des Oldenburger Münsterlandes*. Hannover 1954.
 67. Helmut Ottenjann, Dokumentation und Forschung im volkskundlichen Landesmuseum. Alte Aufgaben und neue Ansätze. In: *Geschichte der Alltagskultur*, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1980, p. 103–123, here p. 115.
 68. Ibidem.
 69. Ottenjann already showed in previous publications that the earlier randomly gathered museum collections could not serve as a basis for well-grounded long term analyses. Elfriede Heinemeyer/Helmut Ottenjann, Alte Bauernmöbel aus dem nordwestlichen Niedersachsen. Städtische Einflüsse und ländliches Eigenverhalten. In: *Museum und Kulturgeschichte. Festschrift für Wilhelm Hansen*, ed. by Martha Bringemeier et al. Münster 1978, p. 197–216.
 70. Cf. Hermann Dettmer, Flächendeckende Inventarisierung volkstümlicher Möbel und Geräte im Altkreis Bersenbrück. In: *Rheinisch-westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 27/28 (1981/82), p. 277–281. – idem, *Volkstümliche Möbel aus dem Artland. Stollentruhen, Kastentruhen, Koffertruhen, Laden*. Text- und Bildteil. Cloppenburg 1982. – idem, *Volkstümliche Möbel aus dem Artland und den angrenzenden Gebieten: Wirtschaftsschränke, Brotschränke, Hängeschränke, Milchschränke*. Cloppenburg 1986.
 71. Friedrich W. Jaspers/Helmut Ottenjann, *Volkstümliche Möbel aus dem Ammerland: Stollentruhen, Kastentruhen, Koffertruhen. Text- und Bildteil*. Cloppenburg 1982.
 72. Helmut Ottenjann, Dokumentation und Forschung (as Note 67), p. 118.
 73. Thus at least Gottfried Korff, Wie man sich bettet, so liegt man. Überlegungen zur Schlafkultur auf der Grundlage des Bettenbestandes des Rheinischen Freilichtmuseums Kommern. Adalhard Zippelius zum 20.6.1986. In: *Freilichtmuseum und Sozialgeschichte*. Referate des Symposiums am Fränkischen Freilandmuseum vom 7. bis 8. November 1985, ed. by Konrad Bedal and Hermann Heidrich. Bad Windsheim 1986, p. 57–75, here 72.
 74. For this cf. first of all the conference paper of Wolfgang Brückner, Kulturgeschichtliche Möbelforschung (as Note 54), p. 16 ff.
 75. Ibidem, p. 4 ff.
 76. Rudolf Schenda, *Volk ohne Buch. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der populären Lesestoffe 1790–1910*. Frankfurt a. M., München 1970. – Ernst Hinrichs, Wie viele Menschen konnten um 1800 lesen und schreiben? In: *Alte Tagebücher und Anschreibebücher. Quellen zum Alltag der ländlichen Bevölkerung in Nordwesteuropa*, ed. by Helmut Ottenjann and Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1982, p. 85–103, esp. p. 89 ff.
 77. Helmut Ottenjann, Buchführungssysteme ländlicher Werkstätten. Zum Biedermeiertrend in der Möbelkultur des Osnabrücker Artlandes. In: *Alte Tagebücher und Anschreibebücher* (as Note 76), p. 151–204, here p. 153. – idem, *Anschreibebücher als ergänzendes Quellenmaterial zur Produktion und Konsumtion handwerklicher Erzeugnisse. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der In-*

- terpretation, aufgezeigt am Beispiel einiger Tischler-Rechnungsbücher. In: *Kieler Blätter zur Volkskunde* 17 (1985), p. 85–123.
78. Ibidem, p. 154.
79. Again cf. Ottenjann, *Buchführungssysteme* (as Note 77), p. 155 ff.
80. Walter Hartinger, *Epochen der deutschen Volkskultur*. In: *Ethnologia Europaea* XV (1985), Pt. 1. – Günter Wiegelmann, *Novationsphasen der ländlichen Sachkultur Nordwestdeutschlands seit 1500*. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* (1976), p. 177–200. – Cf. further the volume: »Wandel der Alltagskultur seit dem Mittelalter«, ed. by Günter Wiegelmann. Münster 1987.
81. Helmut Ottenjann, *Dokumentation und Forschung* (as Note 72), p. 120 f.
82. Amongst the more recent works may be mentioned: Helmut Ottenjann, *Lebensbilder aus dem ländlichen Biedermeier. Sonntagskleidung auf dem Lande. Die Scherenschnitte des Silhouettours Dilly aus dem nordwestlichen Niedersachsen*. Cloppenburg 1985. – idem (ED.), *Mode, Tracht, Regionale Identität. Historische Kleidungsforschung heute*. Cloppenburg 1985. – Gitta Böth »Selbst gesponnen, selbst gemacht...« *Wer hat sich das nur ausgedacht? Trachtenforschung gestern, Kleidungsforschung heute*. Cloppenburg 1986.
83. Günter Wiegelmann, *Von der Querschnittanalyse zur seriellen Analyse* (as Note 39), p. 235 ff.
84. It is not the phenomenological inspection of the thing itself that can be the task of historical objects research, but the analysis of the actions and behaviour of humanity that are caused by and through objects. The 23rd Deutsche Volkskundekongress in Regensburg, 6–11 Oct. 1981, was based on this approach. Cf. the Conference volume, »Umgang mit Sachen. Zur Kulturgeschichte des Dinggebrauchs«, ed. by Konrad Köstlin and Hermann Bausinger. Regensburg 1983.
85. Hans Linde, *Sachdominanz in Sozialstrukturen*. Tübingen 1972.
86. Gottfried Korff, *Wie man sich bettet...* (as Note 73), p. 61.