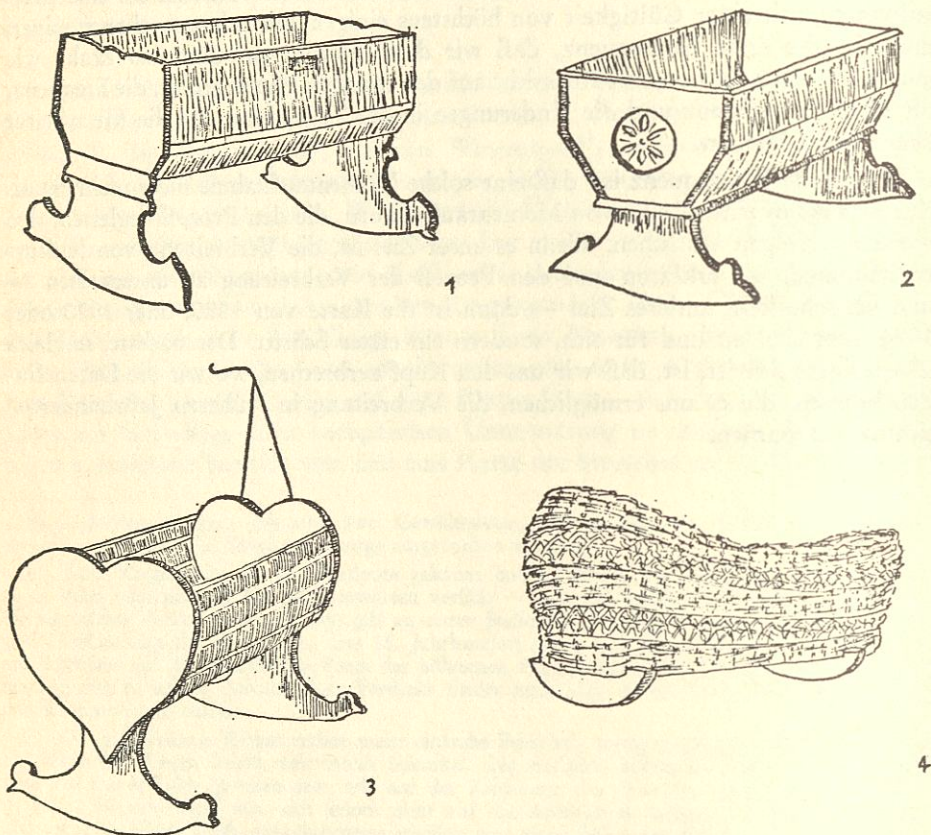


## Problems in Mapping the Italian Types of Cradle\*

THE FIRST PROBLEM in mapping the Italian types of cradle is that of the availability and quality of the data. As far as I know, there is no specific and systematic study concerning Italy or any of its single provinces. Data are mostly fortuitous, not very analytical and often vague. Furthermore the study of the traditional cradle has been dealt with exclusively from two points of view:

a) the cradle has been considered as a work of art: thus much more importance has been given to its aesthetic aspects, as in Liana Barendson Franciosa's and Paolo Toschi's basic papers<sup>1</sup>.



Pl. 1: Wooden and straw Italian cradles (from Bottiglioni, ALEIC, map. 446)

1. Campania

2. Abruzzi

3. Calabria

4. Tuscany

\* Vortrag auf der 5. Arbeitstagung des Volkskundatlas und seiner Nachbarländer, Sept. 1974 in Visegrád/Ungarn.

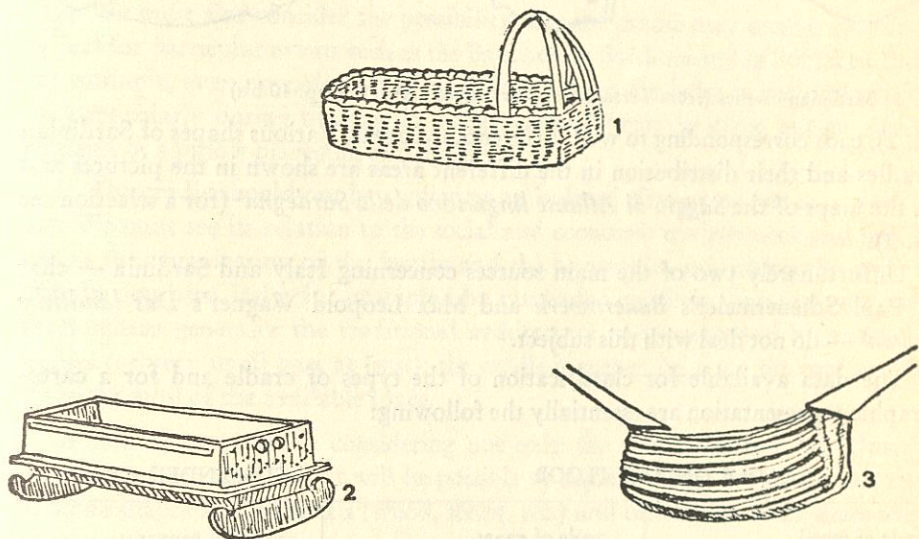
1. L. Barendson Franciosa, La culla nell'arte popolare italiana in *Lares* XIII (1942), n. 2, pp. 76—79: no picture is added; P. Toschi, *Arte popolare italiana*, Roma 1960, chap. „Mobili“, pp. 109 and following and many figures.



This is the subdivision suggested by Toschi:

"As for the cradle, the first and fundamental distinction of the various shapes in the different provinces is given by the two names by which it is indicated. While all around Northern and Central Italy (where we find the usual type with rockers standing on the floor) the cradle derives its name from the Latin *cuna* (diminutive *cunnula*); in a large area of Southern Italy and Sicily it is called *naca* from the Greek *ναχη*, ram fleece. In times past in fact, it was made from a sheep fleece, now replaced by canvas. It is suspended from the roof so that the mother can rock the baby by just pulling a string without leaving her housework."

b) the interest in the cradle is essentially linguistic; the inquiry is, therefore, quite exclusively limited to the variety of the dialectal names. Such is the case of the linguistic Atlases that give ethnographic data as well. A picture of Corsican, Sardinian, Sicilian, Campanian and Tuscan cradles is included in the *Atlante*



Pl. 2: Typology of Italian cradle according to Jaberg and Jud, AIS map. 61.

1. Korbwiege

2. Holzwiege

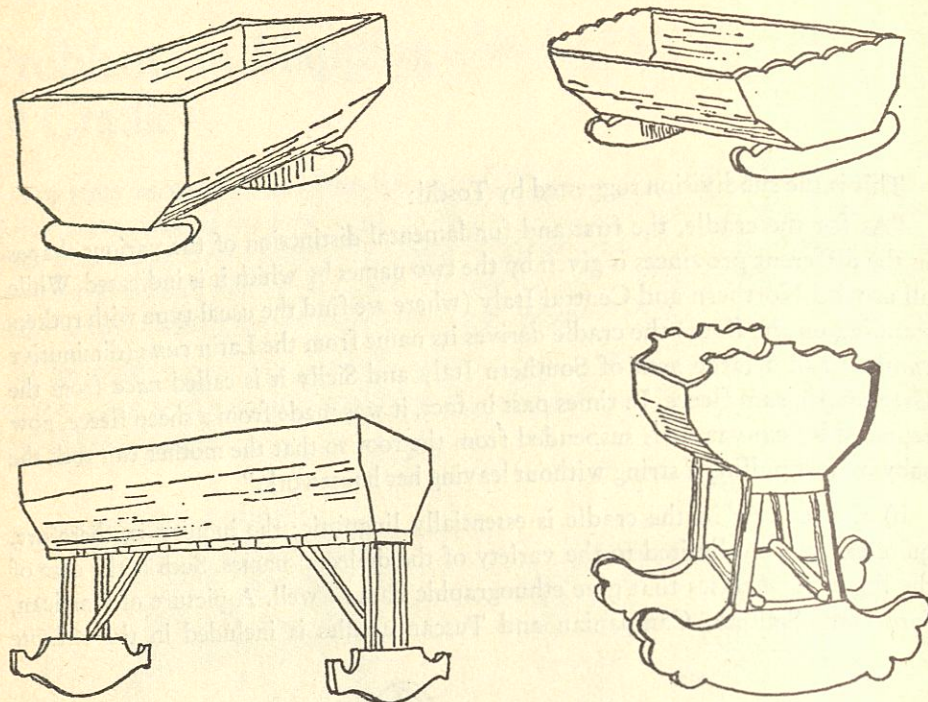
3. Hängewiege

*linguistico-etnografico italiano della Corsica* by Gino Bottiglioni<sup>2</sup> (for a selection see pl. 1). More precise and helpful for cartographic work are the data given by Jaberg and Jud on Italy and Italian Switzerland<sup>3</sup>. Three types of cradle are considered (*Korbwiege*, of straw, *Holzwiege*, of wood, *Hängewiege*, suspended; see

2. G. Bottiglioni, *Atlante linguistico-etnografico italiano della Corsica* (ALEIC), Pisa 1933 to 1940, map 446, "mettere il bambino nella culla".

3. K. Jaberg and J. Jud, *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz* (AIS), Zofingen 1928—1940, map 61, "La culla".





Pl. 3: Sardinian cradles (from Terracini and Franceschi, ALI/S, map. 40 bis)

pl. 2), each corresponding to well differentiated areas. Various shapes of Sardinian cradles and their distribution in the different areas are shown in the pictures and in the maps of the *Saggio di Atlante linguistico della Sardegna*<sup>4</sup> (for a selection see pl. 3).

Unfortunately two of the main sources concerning Italy and Sardinia — that is Paul Scheuermeier's *Bauernwerk* and Max Leopold Wagner's *Das ländliche Leben*<sup>5</sup> — do not deal with this subject.

The data available for classification of the types of cradle and for a cartographic representation are essentially the following:

CRADLE ON THE FLOOR		SUSPENDED CRADLE
made of wood	made of straw	made of canvas (formerly fleece)
with short legs or long legs and rockers	perhaps only with short legs rockers?	—
distributed in Northern Italy, Central-Southern Italy, Sardinia	distributed in  Central Italy but also in other areas	distributed in  Southern Italy (Apulia, Calabria, Basilicata, Sicily)

4. B. Terracini and T. Franceschi, *Saggio di Atlante linguistico della Sardegna* (ALI/S), Torino 1964, maps 40, 40 bis, „Culla“.

5. P. Scheuermeier, *Bauernwerk in Italien, der italienischen und rätoromanischen Schweiz*, Zürich-Bern, 1943—1956; M. L. Wagner, *Das ländliche Leben Sardiniens im Spiegel der Sprache*, Heidelberg 1921.



The above mentioned data and the classification derived from them are not good enough as a serious work of cartography. They are not analytical and sometimes they generalize arbitrarily (one must remember that the Italian peninsula presents great variations in ethnography due to its geographical environment and the historical background to the individual provinces). Furthermore they do not allow us to see the changes produced in a certain period of time and their relation to the changes of the whole system of life.

Systematic field-work is necessary, therefore, for a real ethnographic perspective. Only then can we give an exact classification, specifying types and subtypes and make good maps.

IN SUCH A CONTEXT I think we must keep in mind the following points:

1. The phenomenon belongs to the past, even though to the recent past. The most interesting period for which it is still possible to find data is that between the two wars (1920—1940 approximately).

2. We must also consider the possibility that the cradle may not be used at all or just for particular events such as the Baptism. In Sardinia and in Southern Italy, for example, even nowadays, it is quite usual to put the baby in the parent's bed or, particularly during the day, in a shakedown (it may be often put on a small mattress or a pillow placed on two chairs).

3. The cradle should not be studied as an isolated element or just as a work of art. We must see its relation to the social and economic environment and link its use to the organization of the family and the ceremonies concerning the cycle of life. In Southern Italy, for example, the suspended cradle is found in very poor areas where generally the traditional architecture is characterized by one-room houses (or very small ones at least); the cradle is suspended from the roof so as to make the most of the available space.

In such a way, that is considering not only the single elements but also the connection between them, it will be possible to explain the spread and persistence of some shapes and materials (wood, straw, etc.) and contribute to the knowledge of the culture of the lower classes.