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THE HERITAGE OF NEW COMERS – FINNISH FEATURES IN THE TRADITION OF THE NEW COMERS (MAINLY BUILDINGS)

Buildings

The building culture of the Forest Finns is known quite well owing to Albert Hämäläinen's monograph on the subject, although it became partly outdated in the light of further research carried out by the beginning of the 1960s.

Finland belongs to the Northern European area of corner-timbered houses that takes in Norway, Northern Sweden, the Baltic countries, Central and Northern Russia. The framed horizontal planked wall structures were not unknown, but it was seldom used for entire buildings. The interlocking technique was chiefly used for building inside walls between hallways, sheds, cowsheds, etc.

In the earlier times the houses were usually built of round, and in the 17th century from hewn pine logs in the western parts of the country. The scribing of the logs was done with a special tool, a log scribe. After scribing, the bottom of the log is given a cope, that is, a half moon-shaped groove following the lines drawn by the log scribe. Scribing allows a good fit between the logs.

In the case of the Forest Finns, interest mostly focused on the chimneyless cabin, threshing shed and sauna, which were regarded as typical of them. In Swedish sources and literature the chimneyless cabin or house is called alternatively *rökpörte* or *rökstuga*. The terminology of the Forest Finns is quite distinct: the dwelling room, known as *tupa* (< Sw. *stuga*), had a masonry oven with a level platform part (*pankko* < SW. *bänk*. bench), and a high foundation of corner-joined timber or set stones. It often also had a pillar or post (*pahas*) in the oven corner supporting beams running lengthwise and crosswise over the room. This, too, is probably of medieval origin. The oven is thus the typical East Finnish–Savo oven of the chimneyless cabins.

An interesting detail in this connection is the history of the profiled *koniskalauta* board decorating the end part of the hearth. This term is derived from the Russian *konb* for 'horse' (> Finnish *koni* 'poor horse'). This term is interpreted as meaning that occasionally the board had a horse-head shape as in the bed benches of South Russian dwelling rooms.

In the European heritage of beliefs the horse's head has since time immemorial been of apotrophic nature, i.e. repelling evil. Also in Finland there has been the belief that a horse's skull should be buried under the oven to prevent anything evil from entering the room, or from any accidents befalling the horses of the household. Horse skulls have occasionally been found in the foundations of old ovens.

For an understanding of the older history of the *koniskalauta* board it is important to note that two different types of hearth ovens can be distinguished on the basis of the hearth bench or ledge. In one type the hearth consisted of a box-like ledge with a *koniskalauta* board at one end which does not extend at all to the floor.

The distribution of this model is a southern one, extending to the district of Novgorod, Tver and the valley of the River Volga. The other model has an end board reaching all the way down to the floor and having a profiled upper part.

This design is known from the northern reaches of the River Dvina and the Mezen. The wide plank-shaped oven pillars of the South Zyrians, the Russians of the Arkhangelsk district, Eastern Karelia and related parishes in Finland.

In assessing the chronological relationships of the hearth-end boards and the *koniskalauta* boards it seems probably that the northern and southern marginal areas preserved the old tradition in the same way as the *kolpitsa* types. It can be assumed that as the low hearth of the Iron Age gradually grew higher for reasons of ergonomics and evolved for practical reasons into an oven with a projecting hearth, the hearth-end plank was transformed into the shirt *koniskalauta* board. Judging from its large area of distribution, the projecting hearth box was already adopted in the Middle Ages.

The question of the origin of the *koniskalauta* board gains even further interest in view of the fact that almost similar long profiled hearth-end planks occur in both North Russia and in West Norwegian smoke ovens.

Similar profiled designs are also found in the upright side boards of archaic Norwegian and Swedish beds deriving from the Middle Ages.

This observation raises the previously discussed problem of whether Scandinavia or Russia represents the old original home of the smoke oven. Did contacts pass via the Arctic Ocean or the Baltic Sea? Or were the origins of both hearth-end board types simply in Romanesque art and were received independently in both areas as separate impulses from the south? There has been no lack of attempted interpretations.

The Forest Finns did not use the term *pirtti* for the chimneyless cabin or the sauna, and this word is completely absent from place-names in Värmland, although it is present in those in the presumed areas of origin. The Forest Finns also employed other terms of importance for the study of vernacular building practices, such as *laipio* (ceiling), *lakka* (attic) and *karsina* (the area between the oven and the rear wall in a cabin). The Swedish influence is reflected in the name for the oven and its parts: *uuni* (Sw. *ugn*, oven), *holvi* (< Norwegian *holfinn*, vault) and *arin* (Sw. *äril*, grate). It was just the masonry oven that gave to this cabin the name *tupa*, *stuga*. The original *pirtti*-smoke cottage had a stove made of natural stones piled on top of the other.

The dwellings of the Forest Finns support the suggestion (Valonen 1963) that the chimneyless cabin with its masonry oven and cooking platform had spread during the Middle Ages to the areas of origin of the Forest Finns before the migration that began in the 1580s. The high foundation of the oven, which has no parallels in the west or the south (e.g. Estonia) but instead in Karelia and North Russia, has been explained as a late feature. This has been attributed to the fact that a higher working level was more practical when oven-cooked dishes began to be made. This explanation has always seemed less than convincing, because oven-cooked dishes were not as common even in the East Finnish regions as previously suggested, and they were practically unknown among the Forest Finns, as I will mention below.

The ceilings in the new cottages equipped with chimneys were from the 17th century onwards three-hipped, and in the smaller cottages two. On top of the ceiling was usually a thick layer of filler. Flat ceilings came into use in the 19th century, to begin within bedchambers.

All the buildings, both houses and outbuildings, had a ridged roof. In houses it was usually supported on an edge jointed pediment. Some medieval houses had roof-trees resting on birch-bark. This construction was widely used later for storehouses, lofts, stables and bathhouses. The birch-bark roof was over-laid with round poles. The only tool necessary to built eastern model are the knife and axe. The wood used is usually small in dimension and requires mainly peeling, splitting and cutting, Work can therefore be done by a single person. Poles keep the birch bark in place and protect it from mechanical ware and the degradation caused by ultraviolet radiation from the sun. The western model required the use of an auger to make the holes for the beam (crossing poles).

The dwellings of the Forest Finns changed at an apparently quick pace under the influence of Swedish building culture, especially since the 18th century. New features now included a entrance space joined to the chimneyless cabin with a small closet known as *kove* containing an open fireplace with a chimney (*piisi* < Sw. *spis*).

Alongside this type of single room cabin, there appeared the West Swedish *sidokammarstuga*, or side-room cabin, not to be confused with the similarly named Ostrobothnian house type. The door to the cabin was on its long wall and next to the main room was a bedroom of the width of the house, which was sometimes divided in two with a partition.

The most important factor affecting the peasant, gentry and townsfolk dwellings was no doubt the spread of the two-roomed cottage from the 16th century. Also the so-called twin cabin (Sw. *parstuga*), which is already mentioned from Fryksände in Värmland in the 1660s in the diary of P. Gyllenius came to the Forest Finns from the Swedes. The symmetrical two-roomed cottage spread through the rural areas from the end of the 17th century and throughout the 18th. It quickly became common at the larger Finnish farmsteads from the 18th century onwards. At the time, even large twin cabins were built, in which the chimneyless room and the chimneyed *piisitupa* were usually separated by a porch space with a bedroom. The predecessors of the two-roomed cottage and parallel phenomena were, however, the countless combinations of various types of cottages to be found in both peasant and parsonage buildings.

Some of the outbuildings of the Forest Finns are also interesting with regard to the history of vernacular architecture. The *sauna* heated with a stove of piled stones (*kiugoa*) was used for bathing and for various drying purposes. The corresponding buildings of the Swedes in the province of Central and Northern Sweden were, however, functionally drying spaces (*bastu*, *torkhus*). A structurally noteworthy feature is the fact that in the saunas of Forest Finns, the word for the platform for sitting (*lauvo*), its construction (on beams) and location at the rear wall of the sauna are typically West Finnish features of the Finnish heritage of

sauna building. In the East Finnish–Savo sauna type, the platform (*lavo, lautaset*) is a so-called post platform, which is placed against the side wall next to the stove.

The threshing barn (*riihi*) of the Forest Finn regions is a building that is generally unknown among the Swedes. Except for the Gästrikland threshing barn with a stove separated by a wall from the rest of the space, and few rare barns with both spaces for both threshing and storage, the threshing barn of the Forest Finns was a one room threshing barn with a small room for storing husks and chaff on a side wall (*kylkiäinen*). There are 2-4 beams supporting the balks, while in East Finland there were generally only two of them. The board for filling the barn (*ahdinlauta, astinlauta*) as used in East Finland is not known (except for one item of information from Bingsjö in Dalecarlia). In Värmland and Västmanland the structure was heated solely with a stove of piled stones as in the sauna, although there is information from other provinces on stoves with plastered or protected upper parts. In East Finland, the threshing barn stove was not made with piled stones and was usually fitted with flues and a smoke hood.

There are also other outbuildings of historical interest with regard to vernacular architecture. The two-level stable (*kokkitalli*) of the Forest Finns appears to be genetically related to the Central Finnish vernacular heritage. Also the so-called dung cowshelter represents an older tradition, while the cowshelter with a floor, stalls (Fi. *puosa*, SW. *bås*) and a dung chute (Fi. *luon*, Sw. *flor*) appears to be of West Swedish origin, if – as assumed – the dung cowshelter was adopted in Ostrobothnia in Finland in the 17th century. The construction and related terminology of the simple water mill, or so-called foot or post mill (*pato* = dam, *kuurna* = chute, *siipi* = blade, *kaha* = funnel, *siili* = millstone iron post etc.) represents an obviously old tradition, while the water-wheel mill, which was rare, only came to be known in Sweden. A number of other outbuildings can be clearly linked to the Swedish heritage, such of loft sheds (although Hämäläinen presented parallels as far as the Cheremiss regions), hay barns, cabins with cellars, so-called small cabins (Sw. *lillstuga*), the above-mentioned summer cattle sheds and corner-joined cooking shelters with masonry stoves and large cauldrons for heating water.

The buildings were scattered irregularly over the plot, yet usually so that the living house was situated facing the cowshed and storehouses, while the drying barn, the bathhouse, and in most cases also the corn shed were, because of the danger of fire, placed farther away outside the farmyard, but usually so, that they could be observed from the main dwelling. The undivided square yard, which was really a household yard in Northern Swedish style, but less compact, dominated in northern and eastern Finland north of a line running from Vaasa to Kotka. The livestock was herded from the sheds into the pastures and back again along a track with a traditional wooden fence on both sides.

Cooking and alimentation

As is known, vernacular cuisine is a very conservative area of folk culture, and for this reason alone, the cooking traditions of the Forest Finns provide interesting information. The older tradition preserved a number of quite primitive features, such as simple flour-based dishes that spread in Sweden and Norway from the Forest Finn areas. This was not due to normal cultural contacts but to the fact that, like the other poorer inhabitants of the northern provinces, the Forest Finns began in the mid-19th century to move as seasonal labourers far beyond their own regions in logging and timber-floating work.

Simple flour-based dishes, often with extensive livelihoods as background factors, were suitable and easily prepared at logging cabins and campfires along timber floating routes. These foods included e.g. *mutti*, the name of which has several variants in Swedish and Norwegian. Known in Swedish as *nävgröt* it was a thick porridge made of flour that was dipped in fat when eaten. Even more primitive dishes were *pepu*, made by mixing flour with cold water (also known under various names in Swedish), jam made by mixing flour and berries of the forest, and *mamma* made of flour and malts and often mixed with berries or sometimes with blood and cooked in an oven. On the other hand, the mixed roasted flour dish called *talkkuna* in Finnish and its preparation were unknown among the Forest Finns. Porridge was known as *huttu*, while the Finnish work for porridge – *puuro* – was unknown.

Although the ovens in the dwellings of the Forest Finns were typically of East Finnish type, the baking of bread changed in the Swedish environment. Western and Northern Sweden are the area of bread baked with a hole for drying and thin bread (*tunnbröd*). As a result, sour and soft rye bread ceased to be baked by the Forest Finns in the 19th century, and it is mentioned only rarely in even earlier records (Segerstedt, Skogman). In addition to the perforated and thin bread, the Forest Finns also adopted West Swedish pea-meal bread and sweet and sour mixed bread (Fi. *setsuuri*, Sw. *sötsur*). The change in bread habits may seem surprising, but presumably the soft, sour rye bread did not predominate even at an earlier stage. It appears that soft barley bread made to be consumed directly (Fi. *rieska*) was always significant. It is widely known in tradition, and its name has also spread in different variants (*resk*) into dialects of Swedish. Along with the lack of sour rye bread it is also noteworthy that fish baked in rye dough (Fi. *kalakukko*) and pasties regarded as typical East Finnish and Savo fare were not known – nor oat fool. Mushrooms were also unknown as items of cuisine.

With regard to dairy products, there was thorough adaptation to the local Swedish tradition. This included not only the preparation and consumption of soured milk and especially the making of cheese in both its primitive form (sour milk cheese, cf. the *pultost* cheese of Värmland) and in the more evolved rennet-based form. In local depictions of folk life, the good cheeses made by the Forest Finns of Värmland are often mentioned.

The problematic of the folk culture of the Forest Finns

The wilderness parishes inhabited by Savo Finns and especially the parish of Greater Rautalampi have generally been regarded as the areas of origin of the Forest Finns. No doubt the Finnish dialect of the Forest Finns, many features of their folk culture and information in historical documents all support this view. On the other hand, there are also features that are not known from later East Finnish folk culture. While there are definite old Savo Finnish features in the folk culture of the Forest Finns it falls, in a sense, in between later "West Finnishness" and later "Savo Finnishness" respectively. This aspect in particular underlines the significance of the folk culture of the Forest Finns for the historical study of Finnish folk culture in general. Almost all the above-mentioned examples would require more detailed investigation. There is also the problem that the folk culture of the Savo Finns has been studied to only a small degree. With regard to the Forest Finns, research would also require knowledge of local Swedish and Norwegian folk culture and its history in particular. In the respect, researchers, however, will find only limited support in Swedish-Norwegian research at the local level.

Especially in older texts and studies on the Forest Finns there is a considerable amount of generalization and romanticized and stereotypical views. On the other hand, Finnish research has presented the Forest Finn material (for the most part solely from Värmland) as if information on the phenomena of folk culture represented permanent and unchanging features. The conditions of the Forest Finns, however, have changed considerably over the centuries, by no means least in Värmland, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries. In this connection, folk culture has also changed, with material culture changing perhaps less than the non-material sphere. With regard to the non-material heritage in Värmland, this aspect has most recently been aptly analysed by R. Broberg.

Research into the folk culture of the Forest Finns would definitely be a rewarding and necessary task with regard to the historical development and regional evolution of Finnish folk culture. Reliable results, however, can be obtained only when the history of the Forest Finn regions and local Swedish-Norwegian folk culture are taken into account. It is precisely as a problem of acculturation that the study of the folk culture of the Forest Finns would provide points of interest also for Swedish and Norwegian research.

Returning to the above-mentioned similarities and differences of the folk culture of the Forest Finns and the Savo Finns, we must ask how they can be explained. Considering possible alternatives – which cannot be discussed further in this connection – we must first of all remember that when making comparisons the concept of "Savo Finnish folk culture" cannot be paralleled with the later East Finnish–Savo folk culture. The starting point, and point of comparison, can only be the Savo culture of the 16th and early 17th centuries prior to emigration in the period from the 1580s to the 1630s. It is precisely in this respect that the study of the folk culture of the Forest Finns could shed light on the situation in the Savo Finnish regions of Central Finland.

Some features of culture regarded as typical of the Savo Finns were not known among the Forest Finns. Only some of the most important ones were mentioned above, such as features associated with burn clearing, the type of sauna, details of the threshing barn and the absence of, for example, fish baked in rye dough (*kalakukko*) and pasties from cuisine. The list could be expanded to other areas of folk culture, but suffice it to mention here the Western hand-quern type used by the Forest Finns and their West-Finnish work sledge type, both of which are well-known examples from the study of Finnish folk culture.

Considering alternative explanations, we must remember that the above features are not temporary but instead highly integrated and typical features of East Finnish folk culture. Therefore, the easiest and also simplest explanation would be that the features not known to the Forest Finns would have disappeared later from their culture. While this was no doubt the case in many situations, how is it to be understood that some East Finnish–Savo features have survived well, while others, sometimes even very close to the former, have disappeared without leaving any traces in vocabulary, place-names, historical sources or heritage-related information?

The second alternative, which readily comes to mind but is difficult to prove, is that a considerable proportion of the immigrants came from the West Finnish region, which would thus explain the West Finnish features of culture. Although the immigrants included some West Finns and Karelians – as shown for example by studies of personal and place names – some of the main features of folk culture, such as the chimneyless cabin and the ard plough etc. are typically Savo Finnish, at least in Värmland and Norway, and it is difficult to imagine how other features of folk culture in the same economy would derive from the West Finnish heritage.

However, the most plausible and also most interesting explanation with regard to the history of Finnish folk culture is the third alternative: some of the phenomena of folk culture not known to the Forest Finns but regarded as old Savo–East Finnish features might not be as old as assumed or common in the regions of the Savo Finns. In other words, they were still unknown in the areas of origin at least at the time of migration. At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, these "typically eastern" features may still have been of "Karelian" distribution and not just "Karelian innovations" known in the eastern and southern margins of the territory of the Savo Finns. On the other hand, typically "western" features in the folk culture of the Forest Finns were mostly receding phenomena, which were nonetheless still known in the immigrants' area of origin at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. This would mean that the "Savo Finnish culture" in this area contained in some respects partly the same basic features as the folk culture of West Finland. Whether this "western cultural basis" was broader in the Savo regions is a highly interesting question that is also related to the results of archaeological research and one that will present broader problems such as "basic Savo Finnish identity" and the cultural relations between the West and Savo Finns and the Savo Finns and the Karelians.

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