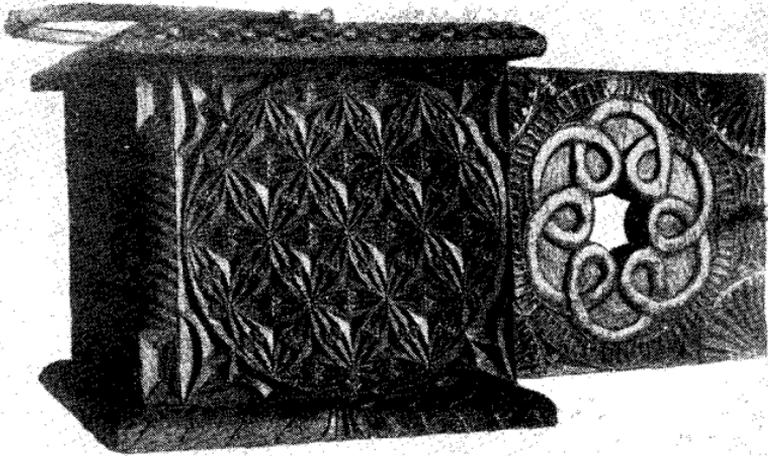


# Folksart in Friesland

Folks-Art, in its old meaning, has in the last few centuries been more and more outdone by the Art-Crafts and it looks as if, within a short time, we shall be compelled to speak of the dwindling Art-Crafts in connection with the machine technique that replaced it. But we must tame this last bogey so that it will conform to our aesthetic demands. Old Folks-Arts and Art-crafts can be found, as far as Friesland is concerned, in the museums and antique rooms that are mentioned elsewhere in this book. Yet, at the moment, an active Folks-Art is extant, also, thanks to the work of the Frisian Association for the promotion of Folks-Art (Foriening



*Old-Frisian folks-art: a foot-stove. A good specimen of chip-carving in oak*

foar Fryske Folkskunst), many a product of Frisian Craft, stamped with the mark of the F.A.F. (a leading organisation in this department) has found its way abroad. The cane-furniture from Noordwolde, the painted furniture from Hindeloopen, the pottery from Workum and Makkum, to make a chance selection, have become known outside Friesland's borders. But for the true Folks-Art we have to go back to the past. In the earliest objects from the Bronze Age (1800–1750 B.C.) we see already pure examples of it. With the coming of the Iron Age other foreign cultures also make themselves felt and throughout the centuries this has gone on until the time after the „Biedermeier“ style.

Should one desire a detailed oversight of old Frisian Folks-Art compressed into a small space, then a visit to the museum "Het Princessehof" in Leeuwarden is much to be recommended. The many thousands of objects of my extensive collection of Folks-Art has been classified by me into several groups. One is over and over again astonished at the great variety of objects which can be included in Folks-Art; things such as table-ware and cutlery, smoking utensils, objects connected with ladies' needlework, objects for household use such as mangle-boards, foot-warmers, clothes-chests, fireside-stools, fire-screens, tongs, pokers, peat-axes, peat-tongs, bed-warmers, objects that are connected with the kitchen such as gingerbread and marzipan boards, confectionery moulders, fritter pans; luxury articles such as bride's chests and jewel boxes, mirror-frames and pictures, and ornamented bags.

Sport is represented by the ornamented sledges and skates, the reins with bells and the whips; education in toys and teaching appliances, (the so-called „heilingen", children's and people's pictures which were sold for a few cents must not be forgotten), while clothing and costumes form an extensive group apart. And still we have not covered everything: the wind-vanes and grave-decorations, cramp irons, door-knockers, façade stones, keys and metal facings of furniture also fall under folks-art and craft. A very varying range of materials were used for our folks-art products: gold, silver, pewter, copper, bronze, lead, iron, oak, nut, deal, pinewood and other kinds of wood, clay, leather, horn, bone, parchment, paper, linnen, cotton, velvet, damask, fine lace, bombasine, "vijfschacht" (a wool thread of 5 strands spun, dyed and woven by hand into a thick material) and so forth. Above all, when in the 16th century and later, contact with distant lands and peoples was made and colonies were made in all parts of the world, the number of the raw materials was considerably extended. Oak became discredited for certain pieces of furniture, and it was covered with, or veneered with walnut, rosewood and lemon-wood from the East. Later also by Cuban mahogany from the West. With personal ornaments and small articles of furniture and cases, ivory and tortoise shell, coral, snake-skin, ray- and sharks-skin were used. Coconuts and nautilus shells were mounted with silver and gold and used as goblets. The Folks-art products can also be classified according to the technique used. In Friesland we find chip-carving and sculpture, engraved and beaten silver, filigree and enamelwork, paintings and pottery. Several circumstances have co-operated in the fact that in the past typical local groups came here and there into being. Hindeloopen with its painted furniture, egg-shell china, multi-coloured Chintzs local costumes, and blue-tiled rooms, gives a very forceful example of this fact. Furthermore, the whole S.W. corner of FRIESLAND and the Islands of Terschelling and Ameland had their own forms which are only to be seen in museums

and such like. Elsewhere the presence of rushes brought into being the rush mats (Eernewoude).

Folks-art developed everywhere where there was need of ornamentation and where free time was available, not only by a smoky oil-wick or a candle in a corner near the fire but also on long sea-voyages before the mast, on the step or garden-seat in long summer evenings, in the living-room as well as in the kitchen. A sharp distinction between Folks-art and Art-Craft cannot, or must, not, be made. Although the former is the older it derived inspiration, over and over again, from the second. They are the "heavenly twins".

To give you a detailed survey of Frisian Folks-art as it is represented in the collections I should have to have at my disposal as many as a thousand pages of text and certainly two thousand pictures. I can only print here one picture. I chose it because it relates to one of the most typical forms of Folks-art, the art of chip-carving in oak. He who reads Dutch can be referred to my booklet: „Het kunstambacht en de volkskunst in Friesland" (Amsterdam. Allert de Lange, 3rd Druk 1948) while in 1945 with J. Kamminga of Dokkum appeared a big picture book with Frisian text: Fryske Folkskunst.

N. OTTEMA.