THE 17TH CENTURY FRISIAN BURMANIA-PROVERBS: INTERNATIONAL OR HOME-MADE?¹

In 1641 there appeared in the Frisian university town of Franeker a small anonymous book under the Dutch title Oude Friesche Spreeck-woorden, Gelijk die selve huyden daegs by haer/ in haer eyghen Vaderlant / gebruyckt ende gesproken worden/ by die Letter: A.B.C. ghestelt (= old Frisian proverbs like these nowadays are used and spoken among them, in their own fatherland, alphabetically ordered). The booklet corresponded in general with an earlier manuscript from 1614 which was attributed to the rich and educated Frisian nobleman Georgius van Burmania² (ca. 1573-1634); the contents were thus also referred to as the Burmania-proverbs. It was a collection of almost twelve hundred proverbs and expressions in the Frisian language,³ alphabetically arranged according to the first letter of each proverb, and within the first word of each proverb after the second letter, and so on. The Burmania-proverbs are presented without translation or explanation. Only in very exceptional cases here and there does a Latin annotation appear giving a paraphrase or indication for appropriate usage of the proverb. Such a bare summation of proverbs was not unusual and may also be found in the collections of for instance Friedrich Petri, Der Teutschen Weißheit from 1604/1605 or Janus Gruterus in his Florilegium ethico-politicum from 1610-1612.

The appearance in 16th and 17th century Europe of a collection of proverbs in the vernacular rather than in Latin, the language of church, administration, education and science, was not uncommon. However, given the extremely marginal position of Frisian as a written language at the time, it may be reasonably claimed that the appearance in print of a Frisian language proverb-collection was a remarkable occurrence. The title of the booklet states that the proverbs were in living use. It may be deduced from this that the Frisians during the first half of the 17th century had a living verbal language, rich and varied in idiom. This seems to be in contradiction to the negative view

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over the Frisian language in the first half of the 17th century those days. There existed among Dutch linguists two divergent views: a quite negative view of Frisian as an extinct language and a more positive view of Frisian as an ancient language, perhaps the oldest in The Netherlands, and closely related to English.

Linguistic pride may also be detected in the title: the Frisian people have old proverbs in their own language and these are in use and spoken among them (and nobody else, as the title of the manuscript from 1614 appends) in their own fatherland. So interpreted, the Burmania-collection takes its place within the humanist tradition of love of study and description of a characteristic and own culture. The humanists wished to demonstrate that their own culture aspired at least to the same level as that of classical Latin. So that in proverb-collections indigenous proverbs were juxtaposed with equivalents of classical origin and sometimes exceeded these in number. In the Burmania-collection no comparison is made between Frisian and classical proverbs but with the relatively large number, consciously or unconsciously, some evidence of linguistic richness is submitted.

The Burmania-text consists not only of a collection of proverbs but also of a couple of supplements which do contain an alphabetical list of Frisian masculine names and one with feminine names, a summary of dishes served at a Frisian banquet or festive occasion and two rhyming proverbs brought into the contemporary perspective of 15th and 16th century Friesland. These supplements fit entirely within the humanist tradition of love for and study and description of ones own language, customs and history. Humanists deal mostly in their work with only one of these facets of their own culture but already in the 16th century Frisian humanists like Reyner Bogerman and Botte van Holdinga treated them all simultaneously within a single piece of work.

Because of the lack of clear evidence one can only be speculative about the function of the booklet from 1641. Nevertheless, according to the title of the collection, one might expect an ideological intention, perhaps of one group in particular, the nobility. In the 17th century and also later on sometimes it has been claimed that the preservation of the
Frisian language was due to the Frisian nobility. The question whether or how the booklet has functioned in daily Frisian life may be answered by pointing at the frontispiece of Vlittius’ *Bredaesche Almanac* from 1664 (he published 57 of the Burmania-proverbs in there). There we see a street-trader in the Frisian city of Leeuwarden who offers books for sale, probably relatively cheap booklets like almanacs, and literally advertises Frisian proverbs. So the booklet from 1641 might also be intended for the more or less lettered Frisian mass.

Compared to other Frisian language texts from the beginning of the 17th century, the Burmania-collection is not only a sizeable, but also a rather unique document. The fact that practically no contemporary Frisian material other than the Burmania-collection survives to us is a deciding factor in its significance as a subject of study. Since the appearance of the booklet in 1641 some of the proverbs have indeed been subjected to linguistic study and several times the text of the proverbs has been published, but the complete text has for the first time been elucidated in Van der Kuip (2003).

Until now I have spoken of proverbs in a 16/17th century way; a proverb was broadly defined then as a common saying, as something that people used to say. Nowadays one makes a distinction between proverbs (about 460 in the Burmania-collection) and expressions (about 660). Also differentiated from proverbs are Wellerisms (36 in the Burmania-collection) and weather proverbs (7).

The remainder of the Burmania-collection consists of exclamations and curses (6), insults (5) and items which have in themselves no figurative significance or which speak for themselves, such as shibboleths (3), a riddle, opening lines of verse (3) and references to Frisian customs and historical facts (11). That such items appear in a proverb-collection may be explained by the extrapolated nature of the concept of what constituted a proverb in the 16th and 17th century. A curse, for example, might then have been called something that people used to say. The same went for the opening lines of verses which often hung most in the memory. Further, it is a small step from something that people are used to saying, to something often spoken about or generally known. And it is in this light that references to
Frisian customs and historical facts should, according to me, be seen.

There are two remarkable things concerning the content of the Burmania-collection. I have found equivalents or variations in Dutch, German or English for at least 70% of the Burmania-proverbs, most of these contemporary with them. Of the remaining 30% which, so far as I have ascertained, appear only in the Burmania-collection, not even fifty cases eventually remain of which it may be said with some certainty that they were in use only in Friesland. It may be concluded that the 30% of the Burmania-collection for which no parallels have been found constitute the typical Frisian proverbs as announced in the title. But such a conclusion must be guarded. To begin with, it is to some degree coincidental what historical source material has come down to us. Further, it may be that most of the proverbs functioned within another language even when they didn't have any direct equivalent or variant in it. After all, proverbs state rules of conduct or worldly wisdom of a general nature. And expressions which have themselves no direct equivalent in another language, seem often yet to comply with other idiomatic or metaphorical usage within it.

Let me illustrate this with a few examples, starting with the Burmania-proverb Altijden frieye de rjcke loe, hoe de ørme oont goed komme (always the rich ask how the poor come by their good or goods). It means: always the rich think that the poor don't come honestly by their good(s). I cannot imagine that such a suspicion only existed in Friesland.

Something similar can be said of the expression Hy is al abt, eerer to klæster komt (he is already abbot, before he enters the monastery). It has an ironic connotation and probably it means: he thinks he just at once is the best, or: he thinks he just at once has fixed things up. Although I couldn't find any equivalent of this expression, in the Dutch proverb collection of Johan de Brune Nieuwe wyn in oude Le'erzackyen from 1636 one can read on page 153 this rhyming proverb: 'Gheen wijzer apt, of meer ghevreest, / Als die eerst Munninck heeft gheeweest' (no wiser abbot, or more feared, who first has been monk). It means: he that has not served knows not how to command (Cox 2000:236).

Another example is the expression Jck wit wol wier dy kloot græslet. Literally here stands: I know well where the testicle is
grazing. It means: I know well how to find sexual satisfaction. The overtness of the expression might be a reason why it is not written down all around. Nevertheless, I really should wonder if this expression had not been in use elsewhere. In Dutch for instance the equivalent words *kloot* and *grazelen* had a sexual connotation too; also there existed at the end of the 16th century a Dutch expression with a similar choice of words: 'Hij weet wel ware syne kullekens hanghen' (he knows well where his testicles are hanging), meaning: he is very cunning, sly, clever (WNT, XXV, 1993).

So there finally remain not fifty cases having no direct equivalent or direct variant in another language of which it may be said with some certainty that they were in use only in Friesland. These concern proverbs, expressions and other phrases which in one way or another refer to Frisian conditions (see appendix). However, referring to Frisian conditions cannot always automatically lead to the assumption that they are typically Frisian. Take for instance the proverb *Blauwe Fedde stiet om de doars herne* (blue Fedde stands around the corner of the door), meaning: death is always near with us. The idea that death or the 'grim reaper' waits just around the corner is not typically Frisian but only the proper name *Fedde* is. A similar case we have with the proverb *Woeble ken Haye wol* (Oebele knows Haaie well), meaning: villains are well matched and don't need to fool each other. This is simply one of the variants of a well-known 16/17th century Dutch proverb, only now using the Frisian proper names *Oebele* and *Haaie*.

Van der Kooi (1984:152) employed similar reasoning in regard to Frisian folk-tales. He discriminated between stories which were also known outside Friesland and those known only within it. Stories which were known only in Friesland he subdivided once again into stories which, given their content, might also be possible outside Friesland and those which were only possible within it. And he too warned against too easily assigning a story to the latter category, for flexibility in terms of time, space and circumstance are precisely characteristic of folk-tales.

In short, it may be said that the majority of Burmania-proverbs belong to an international, or better said, a European idiomatic treasury. The great question that then arises is whether
the majority of the Burmania-proverbs originate from Frisian sources or whether they are rendered from Frisian popular speech. Georgius van Burmania was himself a university-educated man from a humanist background and one may take it that the man who compiled the Burmania-proverbs knew the *Adagia* by Erasmus or other comparable collections. Regarding the Burmania-proverbs, Brouwer (1940:24-25) pointed to equivalents or variants of them in the Dutch language collections *Proverbia Communia* (ca. 1495), Spiegel's *Byspraax almanack* (ca. 1606) and, in particular, *Gemeene Duytsche Spreckwoorden* (1550). There are other indications that the compiler used non-Frisian sources, such as adjustment of or changes to the rhyming of some proverbs.\(^9\)

Even if it is now established that the majority of the Burmania-proverbs are international, the question remains as to whether the Burmania-proverbs were all rendered from non-Frisian sources. Is it all literature or may one yet take it that the proverbs were derived from the spoken Frisian language? Brouwer (1940:25) suggests that the compiler of the Burmania-collection translated just those proverbs with which he was familiar in a Frisian form. What Brouwer’s reasoning amounts to is that the Burmania-proverbs are in fact derived from spoken Frisian, but this he can not prove.

Yet there are some indications that the Burmania-proverbs were indeed in verbal use amongst the Frisians. Evidence for this is found in the form in which they are sometimes presented. Here I refer not to the local, truly Frisian character of some of the proverbs, but to their linguistic form. A reasonably large number of proverbs and expressions are in the imperative or in the first or second person. They thus make a less formal impression than they would were they to begin with, for example, *men* (people) or *wa't* (who) or if they were in the infinitive, as is the convention in dictionaries. They seem rather, so to speak, to roll directly off the tongue of the 17th century Frisian speaker. However, it may also be seen in Dutch language collections (and here I refer not to collections of rhyming proverbs, which make a more literary impression) that the proverbs contained there are sometimes presented in a more verbal context (Meadow 1993:212). Still there appear in the Burmania-collection expressions having no direct equivalent or direct variant but
which nevertheless occur in popular dialogues in Frisian texts of the same era. Examples of such seemingly popularly-derived idioms are, however, rather few and far between.

Up until now we have looked at the Burmania-collection within the context of our own time. Today we know that the majority of Burmania-proverbs are international proverbs and that they were possibly translated from non-Frisian sources, but 17th century man probably did not possess this knowledge. For him they are and remain simply Frisian proverbs. Does the title not state that the proverbs belong to the Frisians and to nobody else? As a matter of fact, we may discern exactly the same phenomenon today. Many people experience inscriptions on wall-plaques (for example, *East west, Home’s best*) as being old proverbs belonging to their own culture, whilst these also arise in other European languages. The decisive factor as regards the Burmania-proverbs is apparently the fact that the proverbs were in use by Frisians and that this was possible only in their own language. The language is the criterion which counts, even if it is known that the 'own' Frisian proverbs occur also in other languages. Compare in this connection the Dutch collector Johan de Brune, who in his collection of 1636 took up in translation many proverbs from other languages. That hereby the original proverbs lost none of their own character was for him evidence precisely of the richness of the Dutch language, or, as he said metaphorically in his foreword (f. A9v):

't Is waer, dat elck volck, en elcke taele haer eyghenschap heeft; en dat vele aerdigheyden van land veranderende, zeer licht versterven; even-wel bevind' ick, dat de lucht van ons vaderland daer in zo gheluckigh is, dat allerley ghewas haer kan verdraghen, ten minsten ter degen gesnoeyt, en wat ghekandelaert zijnde.

(It is true that any people and any language has its individual character; and that many pleasant sayings easily will wither when changing country; however, I sense that the air of our fatherland is so fortunate in a way that all sorts of vegetation can stand it, at least being properly trimmed and somewhat shaped.)
Appendix: local coloured proverbs, expressions and other phrases having no equivalents or variants in other languages

1 **Proverbs**

1.1 *Aadmoer Ock koacket loock to schorstien uyt*
   Grandmother Ok cooks luck through the chimney outwards = having grandmother in one's house brings bad luck, or: women ruin men (*Ok* is a Frisian proper name).

1.2 *Better ien poe hey, dan t'kriusken alle dey*
   Better one hoo-ha than to cross oneself all day = it is better to strike back firmly one time than to tolerate everything all the time (attributed to a Frisian historical person, the thoroughgoing Abe Sjucksma, ca. 1520, see also 3.1).

1.3 *Billert en Wab, Coster en Lolck is al ien folck*
   Whore-hopper and Wab, brothel-keeper and Lolk, it's all one and the same people = there is no difference between whore-hoppers, whores and pimps (*Wab* and *Lolk* are Frisian proper names, *billert* means lit. fucker).

1.4 *Hab jimmet naet oont iet, soo nimmet oont wiet*
   If you don't have food, than take the liquid = you may have nothing to eat, but you always can drink (attributed to a 16th century Frisian historical person).

1.5 *Oone friesche peteele is de folle bijt*
   At the Frisian dish is the full bite = one can eat one's fill of the Frisian banquet (a Frisian custom, a festive dish of 13 courses consisting of pork, mutton and poultry).

1.6 *Potmarge is de man*
   Barley pudding is the man = barley pudding is the best food there is (potmarge is the name of a Frisian barley pudding with butter or fat and eventually raisins or prunes).

1.7 *Potmarge is hæglanders fisck*
   Barley pudding is highlander fish = barley pudding is like fish for highlanders, an unusual, festive meal (see also 1.6,
highlanders were German seasonal workers, probably not used to the richness of water and fish in Friesland).

1.8 *Ritzert sægh op writzert*
Ritsert looked at Writsert = one blames the other for the faults of oneself (*Ritsert* and *Writsert* are Frisian proper names, both with the connotation of a horny fellow).

2 *Wellerisms*

2.1 *Al toe tijge sey Maester Ouge en berd ien Philips goune voor ien botzen*
By far too good, said master Oege, and received a Philip guilder for a half stiver (*Oege* is a Frisian proper name).

2.2 *Ælen ist sey Nolcke, en sægh de Prester op zijn Wijf*
It's behaving half-wittedly, said Nolke, and saw the priest upon his wife (*Nolke* is a Frisian proper name, *Ælen* has the connotation of frolicing, flirting).

2.3 *Bomke boppe zey die Borgemaester fin Frencker t'jen Sijn Excel. Mauritius*
Here's to you, said the mayor of Frjentsjer/Ernstker to His Exc. Maurits (connected to a Frisian historical fact (1594): the mayor had emptied a goblet at one draught before other guests had the chance to drink, *bomke boppe* means lit. bottom up).

2.4 *Dat is ien oppe ny, sey Wijtse taper, en sloeck sijn wijf op Pæssche Monne dey*
There you have another one, said innkeeper Wytse, and beat his wife on Easter Monday (*Wytse* is a Frisian proper name).

2.5 *Mey ghemack sey Goffe Roorda, en krigge ien fiwst ijnt ægh*
With ease, said Goffe Roarda, and got a fist in his eye (probably connected to a Frisian historical person, ca. 1500).

2.6 *Moorn æck ijte, zey Douwe Bouwezen*
Tomorrow one has to eat too, said Douwe Bouwes (*Bouwes* means son of *Bouwe, Douwe* and *Bouwe* are Frisian proper names).
2.7 Nobis Syphringe en tousen droes mannen sey Jou Jousma
Nobis syphringe and thousand servants of the devil, said
Jou Jousma (Jou Jousma could be a Frisian historical
person, ca. 1500, nobis syphringe is imaginary Latin and
probably means devil's arse).

2.8 Non estis sey heer Duco, en hie nin troef
Non estis, said Sir Duke, and held no trump (Duke is a
Frisian proper name).

2.9 PAsboerd sey Hertoch
Passport, said the Duke (probably connected to one of the
Dukes of Saxony who made an end to the internal
struggles in Friesland, ca. 1500).

2.10 Tis goed dattet soo besloegh, sey Goffe Roorda, en krijge
en slicke oone poot
It's good that it ended up that way, said Goffe Roorda, and
got a blow against his head (probably connected to a
Frisian historical person, ca. 1500, the root of besloegh
means lit. hitted).

3 Expressions

3.1 Aabe Sjucksma luimen
Abe Sjukma's caprices = these are caprices like Abe
Sjukisma used to have (probably connected to a Frisian
historical person, ca. 1520, see also 1.2).

3.2 Abe schilt wol werre wirde
Abe will become aware of it = one will feel it (Abe is a
Frisian proper name).

3.3 Boseme Raam
Boazum/Bozum measure = a very great measure
(originally a local land measure in the Frisian village of
Boazum).

3.4 Blauwe Fedde meye blauwe longen
Blue Fedde with the blue lungs = the black death, the
plague; a fatal, infectious disease (Fedde is a Frisian
proper name).
3.5 Deer dit nàet mey, gongh to Persinnes

3.6 WA dit nàet mey gongh to Persinnes
Who can't do this, let him go the the priest, for help or advice (persinne is the Old Frisian word for Latin persona (= priest) that could function here as a proper name).

3.7 Harcke siet oppe tjerccke
Harke sat on the church = probably a reaction on someone who says: I have heard that (Harke is a Frisian proper name and also a past participle which means 'heard').

3.8 Hy het ning lijck sint scherne Wibe dæ
He has not his equal since the death of shaved Wibe = no-one is able to match him (connected to a Frisian historical person, the heroic Wibe Sjoerds Grovestins, died 1482, see also 9.6).

3.9 Hy stiet op him selm, as aade houster toer
Hy stands alone like the tower of Aldehou/Oldehove = he is managing it alone (Aldehou is a Frisian toponym, its tower is without church).

3.10 Mannen ven Boxum dat wieren mannen
Men of Boksum, they were men = the men who fought in Boksum, that's what I call real men (probably said as a reaction on a heroic story; connected to a Frisian historical fact, 1586).

3.11 Op grijn om move roch aeyen
On Gryn/Griend for nice eggs of rays = being sent on a fake errand (Gryn is the name of a little Frisian island).

3.12 Sicke Gratinga hosck dat wieghe vol
Sikke Gratinga courteous? or: despised? that would be brimful = that would be the limit! (probably connected to a Frisian historical person, ca. 1500).

3.13 Sit oppe eers as de houn to Lieouwert
Sit upon the arse like the dog at Ljouwert/Leeuwarden = be very submissive (Ljouwert is a Frisian toponym, the dog can be connected to the lion who holds the city arms upon the whipping post).
3.14 *Snap gau op, eer Sioerd ijn komt*
Eat up quickly, before Sjoerd enters = get hold of it, before another is doing it, don't miss the opportunity (*Sjoerd* is a Frisian proper name).

3.15 *Swobs Laauwe*
Faith of Swob = Punic faith, disloyalty (connected to a Frisian historical person, the treacherous Swob Sjaardema, ca. 1480).

3.16 *Soo gheleerd as latijnse heer Aern, dir A.B. koe, disse heer Aern wier Persinne to wijns*
As learned as the Latin Sir Aarn who knows the alphabet (this sir was priest at Wyns/Wijns) = totally unlettered (probably connected to a Frisian historical person, ca. 1510).

3.17 *Spreck dat ien biltkert oon*
Fool and inhabitant of It Bilt/Het Bildt into believing that = tell that to the marines! don't fool me! (*It Bilt* is a Frisian toponym, their inhabitants were not of Frisian origin).

3.18 *Tis soo quae naet, as Heer Gabbe wol preeckt*
It 's not that bad as Sir Gabbe preaches = it's far from being so bad as the Church preaches (*Gabbe* is a Frisian proper name).

3.19 *Wacht dy voor Wize, hy het stienen ijne muutze*
Beware of Oedse, he has stones in his bonnet = beware of the treacherous one (derived from a person named *Oedse* in a Frisian historic chronicle, 1609).

4 *Curses*

4.1 *Mari Bauck hæt seyste*
Mary! Bauk, what do you tell me now? or: by the belly of Mary! what do you tell me now? (*Bauk* is a Frisian proper name and also a corruption of the Frisian word for belly).

4.2 *Myri Bauck, hat ien schoer het ouws Auck*
Mary! Bauk, what a slit (big mouth?) has our Auk! or: by the belly of Mary and the big vagina of Auk! (*Bauk* and *Auk* are Frisian proper names).
5 Insults

5.1 Deynumer supetapers
Deinum buttermilk sellers = misers (said of the inhabitants of Deinum; Deinum is a Frisian toponym).

5.2 Hermana bænijters
Hermana bean eaters = idiots, fools (said of the Hermana's; Hermana is the name of a Frisian noble family).

5.3 Hottingha wighijters
Hottinga wedge eaters = gourmets, or: spoilt people (said of the Hottinga's; Hottinga is the name of a Frisian noble family).

5.4 Roorda Bry-ijters
Roarda porridge eaters = simple people (said of the Roarda's; Roarda is a the name of a Frisian noble family).

6 Shibboleths

6.1 Bange bæne brecke als bry
Frightened beans break like porridge (only possible in the Frisian phonological system?).

6.2 Buyter en Bræ en t'zijs, t'is goe Huwsmanne spijs
Butter, bread and cheese, it is good peasant food (probably connected to a Frisian historical person, ca. 1500).

6.3 Op ous finne herne, lisse fiour klær lotter leep aeyen ijin ien nest
In a corner of our pasture are laying four pure, not set lapwing's eggs in one nest (connected to a Frisian historical fact, 1500).

7 Riddle

Gercke foel fin de tour oppe tjercke, fin de tjercke oppe ierd, jette waard Gercke netà verfiertd
Gerke fell from the tower on the church, from the church on the earth, yet Gerke became not frightened, or: yet Gerke was not carried away (because he laid already on the burial ground)
(Gerke is a Frisian proper name, the point of the riddle is in the homonymy of the Frisian word verfierd)

8 Opening lines of verse

Hab jimme uws kellen nät sioen?
Haven't you seen our calfs? (opening line of a Frisian children's song).

9 References to Frisian customs and historical facts

9.1 Bayeme font
Baaium/Baijum font (very large font in the Frisian village of Baaium).

9.2 Een donger polsche, is ien roun panse mey Flasck, koecke rosynen, moal ende oors fold
A Dongeradiel/Dongeradeel porridge, it's a round paunch filled with meat, cake, raisins, flower and otherwise (regional dish from the Frisian district of Dongeradiel).

9.3 Friesche moer Goodts
Frisian mother of God (Frisian regional cult).

9.4 Heylich kriows to Snits
Holy Cross at Snits/Sneek (Frisian regional cult).

9.5 Lieffrou to laamwirt
Our Lady in the country, in the fields (Frisian regional cult).

9.6 Scherne Wijbe dy de lioe ghoed en quë baë
Shaved Wibe who did good and harm to the people (connected to a Frisian historical person, died 1482, see also 3.8).

9.7 Sint Steffens hoorn
St Stephen's horn (Frisian toast on December 26).

9.8 Sint Jans kruyck
St John's jar (Frisian toast on December 27).

9.9 To Berltzum ijne ku
At Berltzum/Berlikum in the cow (probably a house or inn in the Frisian village of Berltsum).
All items are quoted from the edited text in Van der Kuip (2003), on the understanding that emendations are not given account of, the slashes or German comma's are replaced by ordinary comma's and the e-cedilla's which sometimes were used in the text instead of ae-ligature's, by ligature's.

Notes

1 This article is based on chapter 4 of my dissertation De Burmania-sprekwurden. Santjinde-ienske Fryiske sprekwurden ferkleare en yn har tid besjoen from 2003 (reviewed by Wolfgang Mieder in Proverbia 2004, pp. 429-435). I wish to thank my colleague Pieter Duijff for his comments on an earlier draft of this article.

2 It is not for sure whether Georgius van Burmania himself is the compiler or only the possessor of the manuscript.

3 To be precise, the Frisian language as spoken in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands and not the variants as spoken in some northern parts of Germany.

4 Proverbs can be defined as fairly unchanging formulations enshrining a piece of general worldly wisdom or moral implication, see Van Gestel (1968:313), Van Dale (1999:3177), Cox (2000:10) or Röhrich & Mieder (1977:3): 'Sprichwörter sind allgemein bekannte, festgeprägte Sätze, die eine Lebensregel oder Weisheit in prägnanter, kurzer Form ausdrücken.' Expressions may be described as fixed or idiomatic combinations of words giving voice either figuratively or literally to a certain concept, see Van Dale (1984:3027, 3480). Within this category of expressions I make no further differentiation. The naming of fixed or idiomatic expressions is still the subject of differing opinion. Röhrich (1991:12-13) speaks here of a terminological chaos. He for himself uses the term of sprichwörtliche Redensart which not only includes the above named expressions, but also exclamations, cliché's, watch-words, devices and so on.

5 See Kruyskamp (1947:2-5) who defines a Wellerism as a certain quotation put into the mouth of somebody whether or not they find themselves in a certain situation. Through the speaker and/or the situation described the quotation then acquires authority or is given a comic twist. The quotation concerned is often a proverb or expression.

6 Weather proverbs may not be defined as proverbs in their own right because they do not offer any rule of conduct or worldly wisdom. They are statements on weather phenomena with the textual qualities of proverbs (Arora 1991:1-17, Dundes 1984:39-46). Only when used figuratively may they be called a proverb. For instance the Burmania-proverb 'Ney mooy waer komt leelck waar' is literally a weather proverb (= bad weather follows fine) and figuratively a proverb (= bad times follow good).
7 In the same way Cox (2000:836) doubts whether Dutch proverbs without equivalents really are of Dutch origin.

8 The Dutch proverb has several variants: Aagt kent Trui well (Aagt knows Trui well) (Harrebomée 1858:1, Stoett 1923:508), Hannen kent Lijsen (Hannen knows Lijsen well) (Meadow et al. 2003:99, 206), Huig kent Haag wel (Huig knows Haag well) (Harrebomée 1858:264, Stoett 1923:508), Mat kent Trui wel (Mat knows Trui well) (Harrebomée 1858:1), Peeter kent Pauwels (Peter knows Pauwels well) (Meadow et al. 2003:99, 206).

9 For example, in the proverb Heller en steller habbe allycke goe deel (receiver and stealer are equally involved, meaning: the receiver is as bad as the thief) stands the incorrect Frisian form heller (lit. the one who fetches), rhyming with the Frisian word steller (stealer). Both Dutch and German parallels have two correct forms here, heler/steler and Hehler/Stehler. In addition to this it must immediately be said that the opposite also appears sometimes. In the proverb Droncken muwe spreckt hertsen grouw (drunken mouth speaks from the bottom of the heart, meaning: what sobriety conceals, drunkenness reveals) the word grouw (bottom) doesn't rhyme with muwe (mouth) whereas in the Dutch and German parallels these words do rhyme with each other, mond/grond and Mund/Grund.

10 For example, the expressions Spreck dat ien bilkert oon (see appendix 3.17) and Tis soo que neet, as Heer Gabbe wol preekt (see appendix 3.18) also appear in J. van Hichtum's wedding rhyme Ansck in Houck from 1639, p. 6: 'Spreck dat in Bilkirt oon' and, as a variant, p. 8: ‘It is niet häl so quæd, Als Heer-Ome wol preekt.'

11 Cox (2000:381) gives equivalents and variants in Dutch, English and German and also variants in French, Spanish and Latin.

12 According to Koning (1990:99-100), he had derived them from the German, English, French, Spanish and Italian collections of Gruterus in his Florilegium ethico-politicum from 1610-1612. Because De Brune spoke in his foreword not only of German, English, French and Spanish proverbs, but also of Hebrew, Arabic, Greek and Roman ones, he could had used the polyglot collection of Hieronymus Megiserus from 1605 as well.

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Frits van der Kuip
Department of Linguistics
Fryske Akademy
Postbus 54
8900 AB Ljouwert (Leeuwarden).
The Netherlands
E-mail: fvdkuip@fa.knaw.nl