Twee eeuwen Friese geschiedschrijving. Opkomst, bloei en verval van de Friese historiografie in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw
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SUMMARY.

This study deals with the Frisian historians of the 16th and 17th centuries. Part I, in three chapters, contains a description of the causes which led them to historical reflection; part II, also in three chapters, dealing with the same period and persons as the three chapters of part I, considers the development of a historical sense and historical criticism.

It was after 1524 in particular that many took to writing, when party-hatred was subsiding. They were defining their attitude to the absolutism of Charles V. In East-Friesland, on the other hand, it was humanism that led to historical reflection.

Humanism strengthened national unity. Although this sense of unity existed in the Middle Ages also, humanistic nationalism was more conscious and was distinguished by all sorts of gradations. The Greater-Frisia idea of race-consciousness is subordinated to a wider Germanic consciousness in lesser degree than in Holland and Zeeland. The distinctive traits of the Frisians, particularly of their language, are fully emphasized. It is not until the end of the 17th century that the Greater-Frisian sense of unity declined, and the bond with the Netherlands grew stronger.

From this love of native things arose a sense of obligation to study them and also their past history. This produced all kinds of new types of historical writing.

Typical of this new nationalism is the lack of restraint with which it is declared, manifested, for instance, in the desire for glory. To this is unquestionably due the peculiar variety of wild and fictitious history, seen most fully displayed in the so-called Chronicle of Ocko Scharlensis. There are indications that the Chronicle is of humanistic origin and a deliberate fiction. This was not unusual, but while in Holland proper, for example, the type was stifled at birth, this did not happen in Friesland. National pride and the aristocratic character of Ocko’s story may account for this. There are points which suggest that the Chronicle is voicing the opinions of a group of nobility suffering from a sense of neglect following the emancipation of the towns. The first official historiographer of Friesland, Suffridus Petrus, shares this aristocratic point of view, in contrast to Ubbo Emmius, the greatest of Frisian historians.
...tions of the 16th and 17th centuries a description of the Frisian approach to writing, when defining their attitude to the past, particularly of their own. The first part is devoted to the description of a historical sense of Obligation to History. Although this sense of nationalistic nationalism was by all sorts of gradations. National pride is subordinated to a degree than in Holland and Friesland, on the other hand, more by reflection.

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Winsemius has the insight to perceive that there is a relationship between human psychology and external circumstances.

Not only the politician but also the reader in general must profit by history. Thus, it is often possible to detect a moralizing tendency, while the point of view of orthodox Christianity can also be observed in the narrative.

Nothing was allowed to hamper the search for truth in order to attain all these objects. For that reason Emmius advocates freedom of criticism and free admittance to archives. He fiercely lashes opponents whom he thinks to be suppressing the truth. His violence is, indeed, not connected with the fact that the writing of history and politics are closely interconnected.

From the Twelve Years' Truce onwards, the aggressive tone in...
historical writing becomes less loud. The theocratic conception of history is gaining ground. Schotanus is a striking example of this. There are many signs that humanistic inspiration is on the wane. Writers are now addressing a different audience. Creative force fades. Historiography broadly based upon tribal relationship, the humanistic starting-point and aim, is abandoned. Not until the 19th century will Romanticism rekindle interest in Frisian past.

II.

About 1500 a new age is in evidence. The Frisian writers are aware of this and attest the fact. New material rouses interest, and the treatment of it must satisfy new requirements. A more critical attitude towards sources can be discerned. Doubt is beginning to be felt in regard to the vast number of stories about the remote Frisian past. There is a greater desire for facts as distinct from tradition.

Contact with classical authors leads to still greater scepticism. The fact that the writer is conscious of an audience also helps to advance historical criticism. He seeks to guard himself against detractors. The interest in geography also has a particularly stimulating effect upon the critical sense of our writers. Personal observation comes to be highly esteemed, while there is an awareness of impending change. A rational, causal method of explaining phenomena is developing. The number of available documents increases; charters are more frequently consulted; the idea of the "historical record" acquires a wider sense.

The Chronicle of Ocko may be regarded as a reaction against humanistic scepticism. Suffridus Petrus, of great renown in his day, appears as a defender of the Chronicle. He opposes the fastidious humanists, who turn up their noses at everything that the Middle Ages, the "aetas barbara", have achieved. As a collector of Frisian historical documents and as editor of medieval chronicles, Suffridus Petrus is a man of great merit. For him the classics are no longer sacrosanct; he believes implicitly in the native Frisian writers and in Frisian tradition. Later writers of fictitious histories, such as Furmerius and Winsemius, no longer show quite the same confidence in Ocko's version of history; several turn away from it altogether.
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The Frisian writers are beginning to discern the material rouses interest, and there is a greater desire for facts as requirements. A more discerned. Doubt is becoming a particularly greater scepticism. An audience also helps to guard himself against error. It also has a particularly great renown in his chronicle. He opposes the number of available stories about the number of available stories. His view is that history must be based on actual documents and he firmly turns his back upon native writing and tradition. In treating his sources, he discriminates consistently between them according to the date of their composition and inquires into the attitude of their writer. Events must fit the framework of their age; separate periods are to be distinguished. Political changes are attended by new cultural standards; change is gradual and brought about by natural causes.

Many other writers are beginning to realise the same thing. Emmius is a pioneer in the study of charters. Furmerius too is important as a student of charters, medieval, authentic records, and as a collector. Owing to his use of the "leges barbarorum" Sicca comes to write social history, if only in his notes to an edition of the text.

Schotanus' theocratic and Calvinist view of history yields profit as well as loss. His outlook changes considerably, but his criticism becomes less "enlightened", though he retains much of the outlook of his predecessors. This is also true of Gabbema, whose critical acumen is again somewhat dulled. But as collectors these two writers have bequeathed us a notable legacy, Schotanus in the Tablinum, printed at the end of his "Geschiedenissen", Gabbema in his editions of letters. Later generations will indeed be grateful to them.

In the fourth quarter of the 17th century the uncritical type of history emerges again, and once more for reasons not unconnected with the spirit of the age.

Frisian historiography meanwhile reached its zenith about 1600, especially in Ubbo Emmius. Emmius in Groningen keeps closer than Dousa in Leiden to the humanistic requirements in the aesthetic of historical narrative, though he will not sacrifice clarity and accuracy to form. But like Dousa, Emmius stands out as the adversary of mythography. His view is that history must be based on actual documents and he firmly turns his back upon native writing and tradition. In treating his sources, he discriminates consistently between them according to the date of their composition and inquires into the attitude of their writer. Events must fit the framework of their age; separate periods are to be distinguished. Political changes are attended by new cultural standards; change is gradual and brought about by natural causes.

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