

Generally fools have small bells sewn to their clothes in order to warn that a madman is on the way. This explanation is only partly correct since in former times madmen were supposed to have supernatural powers and were to be respected therefore. These powers enabled them to hear the deities speaking and to deliver their messages to the people. In order to do so these oracle-priests had to fall into trance by shamanic procedures such as rhythmic drum-beats and sounds of other musical instruments. – Also in the northern and western parts of Europe there were shamans. Their main representative is the German deity *Wodan/Odin*, who had to pass several steps of initiation. Among other things he had to hang for nine nights on a tree when he was seeking for a famous kind of mead, and he had to enter the interior of a mountain. Besides he also used to get furious which meant that he was able to fall into trance (the German word for fury being »Wut«: Wuot-an).



Figure 37
Fool and woman naked. Wood-cut by Peter Flötner (after 1522). Erotic scene with corresponding symbols. Ref.: E. F. Bange 1926; List-No. 213.



Figure 38
Austrian playing-card from 1575, made by Hans Förster. Fool with typical outfit: cap and shoes with bells, flute and leather cudgel (bat); the coat is partly made of patch-work. Courtesy by Deutsches Spielkarten-Museum, Leinfelden-Echterdingen

Old playing cards and engravings of the 15th and 16th centuries show the nakedness of fools, this being one of their erotic and sexual characteristics, e. g. you can find a fool and a naked woman touching each other or playing instruments (Figure 35; Rabenalt 1965–67, 3, 37, 31) or an almost naked fool with cap, bells and a staff crowned by a fool's head (Figure 36). A wood-cut by Peter Flötner made in the first half of the 16th century, showing a naked woman and a fool, has many sexual symbols (Figure 37). There is an Austrian playing-card from 1575 representing the