

Frisian runes revisited¹

1. Frisia

Recent archaeological research (1995 – 2013) has led to new views on the settlement history of Frisia² in the Roman imperial period and the Migration Period. This research revealed a sharp decline in habitation followed by a habitation hiatus in the coastal area of the Low Countries, mainly during the 4th century AD. This development started in the 3^d century. For some reasons (demographic, political³; perhaps because of increased flooding, or possibly because of drainage problems), the population of Frisia left their homesteads on the platforms (*terpen*) – until large parts of the area were abandoned and remained abandoned for a long time, about a century⁴. This certainly concerned the present province of North Holland and Central Frisian Westergo, and in a less degree Oostergo and the present province of Groningen (map 1 below). Those regions were less isolated from the Pleistocene Hinterland; Ezinge for example remained inhabited, perhaps due to continuous links with Northern Drenthe.

The situation lasted until in the 5th century new inhabitants began to occupy the area; people coming along the coast from easterly regions: Denmark, Schleswig Holstein, Northern Germany: the area between the estuaries of Elbe – Weser - Ems. They settled on the abandoned *terpen* – since these clearly were suited for habitation, better than the land and marshes in between. At the same time Frisia was repopulated, groups from the same easterly regions invaded England in a series of movements that is called *Adventus Saxonum*. Both migrations belong to that same *Adventus* in a sense that part of the westwards migrating people stayed behind in Frisia while another part went on to Britain⁵. Frisia still was known as Frisia – the name was kept alive in classic sources, known and studied by Merovingian and Frankish scholars. The new inhabitants accordingly were called Frisians, after the land the newcomers occupied, but who initially were part of larger groups that went under the name of *Saxones*, indicating a variety of tribes and people, in changing compositions.

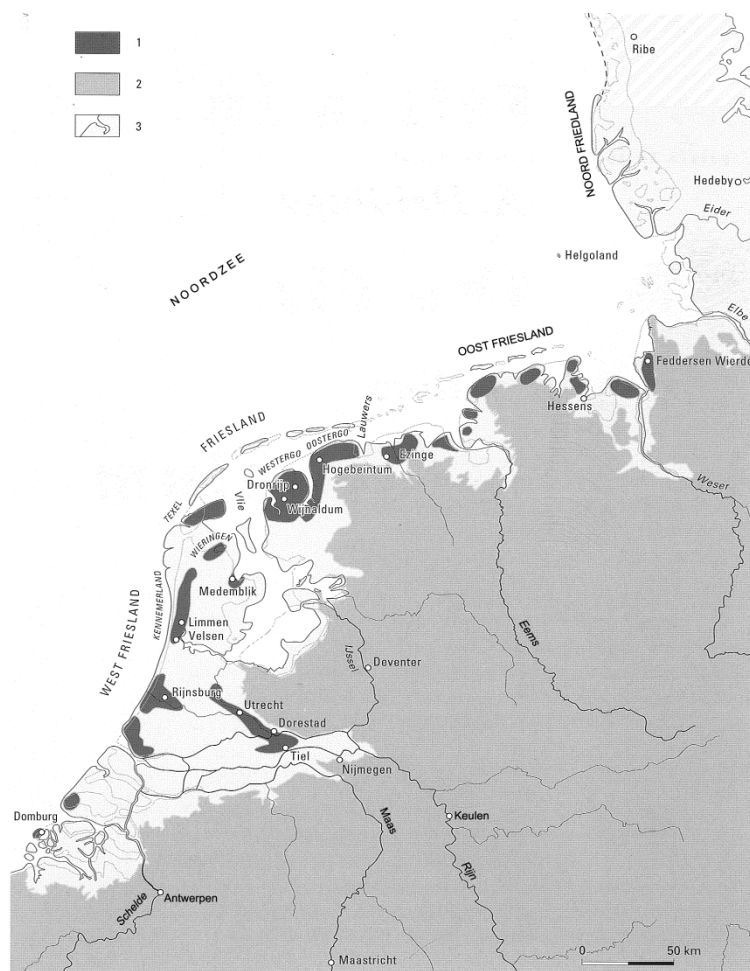
1 I owe a lot to the discussions with John Hines, Gaby Waxenberger, Kerstin Kazzazi and Hans Frede Nielsen, and their friendly and scholarly comments. All conclusions in this paper though, and possible wrong assumptions are mine.

2 Frisia is the general term indicating the area north of the Rhine estuary; which included nowadays North Holland, northern Utrecht, Flevoland/IJsselmeer, the island of Texel, and the provinces of Groningen and Friesland.

3 In the middle of the third century the northern border of the Roman Empire became instabile. Also, Roman troops had to be moved from the Rhine border to other regions to act against Barbarians threatening the eastern parts of the Empire. Moreover, German tribes crossed the Rhine and harassed Southern Netherlands and Belgium (Taayke 2013).

4 This has been discussed in various publications, for instance Taayke 2003; Nicolay 2005, Gerrets 2010; Lanting & Van der Plicht 2009/10, Nieuwhof 2011.

5 It appears that there was a sort of a reverse or secondary migration as well, by Anglo-Saxons from England back to the Continent, *in casu* Frisia (pers. com. John Hines).



Map 1. Source: D.A.Gerrets, 2010, *Op de Grens van Land en Water*, afb 1.2, p. 3. Frisia in the 7th/8th centuries. 1. “Frisian” core-region, 2. Pleistocene Hinterland, 3. Holocene coastal plain.

At the end of the 3d century, a string of fortifications was built by Emperor Constantius Chlorus: the famous *Litus Saxonicum*. From then onwards these Saxones are mentioned in classic sources, as living near the Franci and Chauci, next to the sea and acting as pirates. According to De Boone (1954:16) it would seem highly improbable that the Frisians would have been able to retain an independent position between Saxones and Franci; their name is not mentioned anymore in the 4th and 5th centuries. Archaeologically, the material culture in Frisia is deeply influenced by a “Saxon” style in the 5th century, whereas the “Frisian” pottery style already disappeared in the 3d century (Taayke, 2013:163f.).

Consequently, the new Frisians who resettled the coastal area in the 5th c were not related to the people who left during the 3d and 4th centuries. The migrating people along the North Sea shores became known in history as Anglo-Saxons. Depopulation of the source regions on the south-eastern part of the North Sea coast (the German Bight) has only archaeologically been demonstrated (any historical documents about these population movements are lacking). It probably does not concern mass emigration, but even with small amounts of invading people important cultural changes can occur. The *Adventus Saxonum* is part of the Migration Period,

a complex affair during which many and a variation of societal and cultural shifts occur, not only around the North Sea, but in the whole of Europe following the decline of the Roman Empire.

One of the typical features these Anglo-Saxons brought with them was the knowledge of runes. Even if we have very few attestations left, the evidence is clear. Runic objects from the 5th century onwards are found in the eastern and southern parts of England. As regards Frisia, all finds are without a context – the tiny objects are stray finds from the *terpen*, occasionally found during excavations of the mounds for the fertile soil in the three decades before and after 1900. Some objects did not emerge from Frisian soil, but are recorded from elsewhere: from England and Ostfriesland. These objects are considered Frisian because of some characteristic traits, which we will discuss below.

As is well-known, the Anglo-Saxon-Frisian (ASF) inscriptions are initially characterized by two graphic innovations: new runes for the sounds /o/ and /a/. The question why this was necessary has recently been discussed by Gaby Waxenberger who assumes that several changes in the spoken language required for new, or rather, adjusted, graphs. The changes in language and subsequently the runic graphemes took some time, during which she supposes an allophonic phase took place. A change in pronunciation affected the writing down of the language. The act of designing ‘new’ runes (in fact, adjusting old runes with one or two extra strokes) must have taken place on a certain location by people who were aware of the need of having a ‘perfect fit’ between the spoken and written word. This presupposes rather literate persons. One might wonder if these people had connections with the Latin-speaking world, such as the important man who was buried with his Roman paraphernalia in a 5th-century boat-grave in Fallward, on the east coast of the Weser mouth (cf note 10). I return to this question below. All in all, some twenty inscriptions are counted as ‘Frisian’. I do not include the bracteate from Hitsum. Five pieces are found outside Frisia: a solidus in Ostfriesland, two solidi in England, a comb in Belgium, an astragalus in England.

2. The Bergakker find in the Rhine estuary

In Batavian territory, in the Rhine delta, one special runic item has been found that is not “Frisian” or “Anglosaxon” but nevertheless deserves our greatest attention: the early-5th century Bergakker scabbard mount with a late Roman ornamental pattern: half-circles and points, ridges and grooves. It was found in 1996, published by myself and the archeologist Arjen Bosman in the same year, and discussed more broadly in a volume of 1999: Pforzen

und Bergakker and by myself (Looijenga 2003:317-322).



Fig. 2 The Bergakker scabbard mount, front. Photo Thijn van de Ven, Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen.

Unfortunately, there was no follow-up on the discussion. But in the context of this paper it is important to look at Bergakker more closely again. It might contribute to our understanding of the spread of runic knowledge in the crucial 4th and 5th centuries, the age of the Migrations and the Frankish expansion. In this discussion one other inscription must be discussed; it is from the same period: Fallward (early 5th c., footstool with runes in the grave of a Germanic-Roman veteran). The reason to treat these two objects together is because they both have a Roman military connection and they are dated into the first half of the 5th century, a period from which few runic objects are known, apart from bracteates.

The Bergakker legend displays one Germanic name, one Gmc verbform and two possibly Latin words (for different readings and interpretations, see Pforzen und Bergakker 1999). The Fallward inscription has one Germanic name and one Latin word. It may be useful to strongly emphasize that Bergakker has nothing to do with any old or new Frisians – the first having disappeared from history and the latter had not yet arrived on the stage. One thing is clear: neither Bergakker nor Fallward display ASF runic innovations.

The area around Bergakker near Tiel on the “Batavian island” was Romanized in the early 5th century; people were not only speaking but also writing in Latin, witnessed by the finds of

hundreds of wooden tablets and sealboxes in the Rhine delta. These point to correspondence between soldiers and possibly their families (Derks & Roymans 2007:131-136). Roman and Germanic culture met and merged in the Lower Rhine area. I imagine that the correspondence between soldiers may have enhanced their interest in writing, perhaps also in runes, although Roman culture was the prestigious and leading one. Writing in Latin was the fashion, runic writing belonged to quite another circuit.

Integration of “Barbarians” into Roman society went smoothly. For instance Frankish kings such as Mallobaudes, Fraomar, Merobaudes, Bauto, Arbogast and other leaders took a high-ranking position in the Roman army and their troupes went with them – as *voluntarii* – (on the expansion of the Franks, see Dierkens & Périn 2003:165-193). They became official Roman soldiers from Germanic descent, *auxilia*, according to Böhme (1996:101) and no independent free operating warriors. In that way, these Franks settled with their families especially in Germania II and Belgica II and their acculturation went well, although some of the women kept to their typical *Tracht* with fibulae. On the other hand, this settling of several Frankish tribes in North Gallia led to a “Barbarisierung” (Böhme 1996:101) which changed ethnic and social structures – at last ending in the establishment of a Frankish kingdom at the end of the 5th century. This Frankish self-consciousness did not lead to a Germanic society including the writing in runes – on the contrary, the Franks romanized. There are almost no “Frankish” runic objects⁶.

Bergakker contains an unknown runic graph which seems to reflect a vowel. Unfortunately, there is no common agreement on the transliteration, which is due to the fact that this graph is read as either /e/ or /u/. But one word in the inscription is agreed upon by everybody: ‘ann’ 1st or 3^d pers. sing. pres. of the verb *unnan* ‘to grant, to give’ or also ‘to like, to desire’ (see Pforzen und Bergakker 1999). The object is probably made in Gallo-Roman workshops in Northern Gaul (Böhme 1994:77) and has parallels in Roman type girdle mounts and buckles (Böhme’s “einfache Gürtelgarnituren des mittleren Drittel 5. Jahrhunderts” 1996:100), such as have been found in the graveyard of Rhenen (“Donderberg”). Rhenen lies on the north bank of the Rhine, between Tiel and Nijmegen (both on the river Waal. The distance between Tiel and Rhenen is approximately 17 kms; between Rhenen and Nijmegen appr. 31 kms.

⁶ In the Frankish territory in northern Gaul of the 5th and 6th centuries we may count Chéhéry with Latin capitalis and runes, the recently discovered ringsword from St Dizier ALU (Fischer 2013), and Borgharen/Maastricht BOBO to possibly “Frankish” runic objects (Looijenga 2003:322f.).

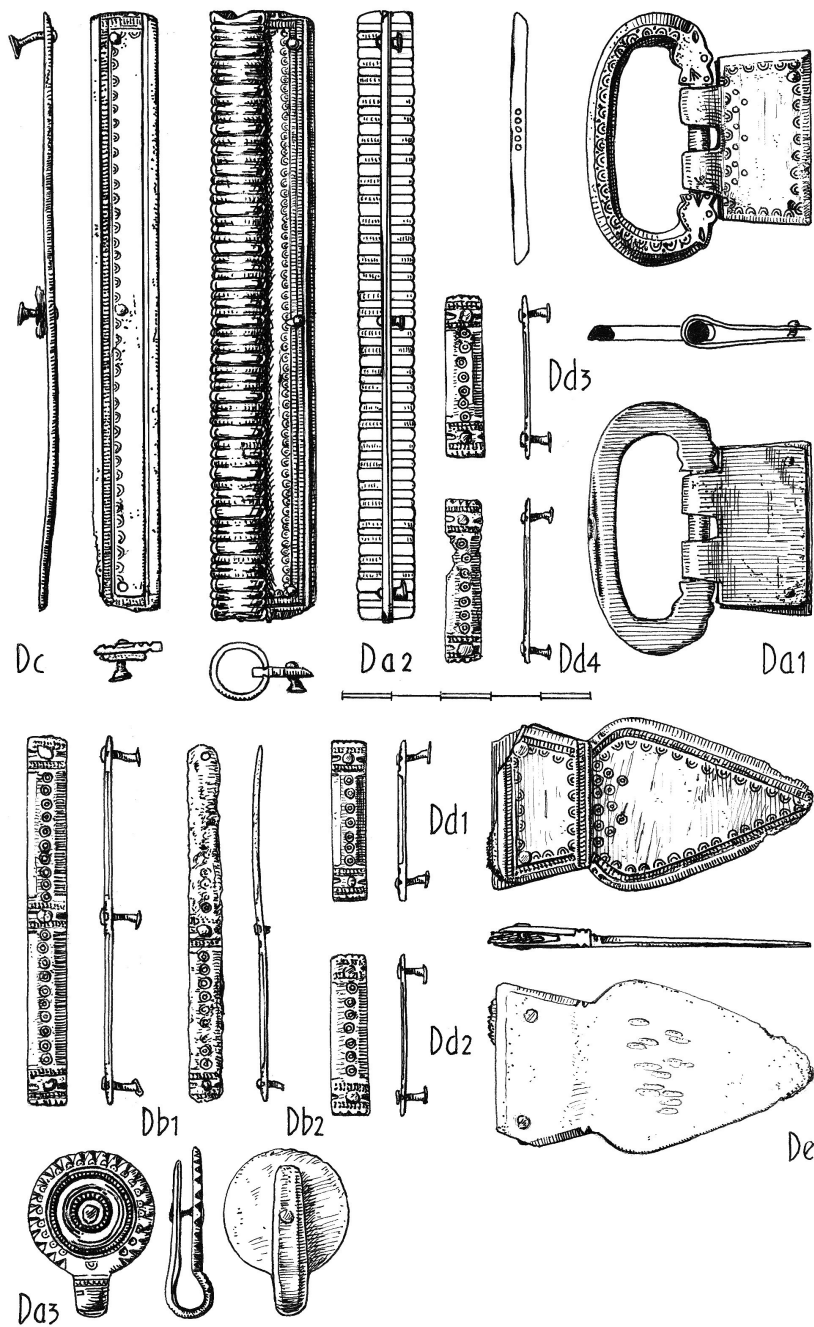


Fig. 3. Grave 833 from the Donderberg, Rhenen. (Wagner & Ypey, 2011:602)

This extraordinary large graveyard was already discovered and excavated in the early fifties of last century, but the publication of the finds took several decennia. The west-side of this graveyard is the oldest part, and we find our parallels for Bergakker in grave 833 of this western part (Wagner & Ypey 2011: 600-604). The grave can be dated into Fundgruppe B (Böhme 1996, Wagner & Ypey 2011: 32f). There are parallels with a man's grave, nr 143A, in Vron, dép. Somme (Böhme 1996:96), and from grave 6 from Samson, prov. Namur (Böhme 1994:78), all dated second third 5th century (Böhme 1996:96), that is between 435 - 465.

Bergakker was part of a hoard or deposit which was buried shortly after 500, since no object in that hoard can be dated later than 500. The Rhine estuary was still under Roman influence at that time, the Rhine border stayed intact at least until 455 (Lanting & Van der Plicht 2009/10: 83-85). Roman military structure was kept alive in the whole Middle Rhine area until 455/59 when the region came under Frankish rule with a King in Cologne. In Germania II Frankish foederati were active since some time already. The question is therefore: who made the runic inscription on the Bergakker mount? Not the maker of the mount, who was a fine craftsman⁷. Maybe somebody local – although apparently no runes were used in the wide surroundings⁸. It must have been somebody who knew both Latin and Germanic. The coastal area and the Rhine estuary were a multi-cultural region where all kinds of ethnic exchange took place. Who could write runes in the early 5th century?

Both Fallward and Bergakker show that Germanic people were somehow integrated into Roman civilization, but they also kept their Germanic identity, which is typical for the period. The recent excavations in the Betuwe area (urged by the construction of a railway from Rotterdam to the Ruhr area) have shown that the Germanic and Celtic tribes who were living there became integrated into Roman culture. Their material culture changed deeply under Roman influence, but on the other hand all kinds of local traditions were kept alive⁹. The area of Fallward, *Landkreis Cuxhaven*, is outstanding for the amount of Roman finds, especially late Roman military girdle mounts and tutulus fibulae (Schön 2003:35ff.). The personal equipment of Roman veterans was brought home by their owners after 25 years' service in the Roman army. They were buried with it.

3. Saxones and Franci

7 According to Böhme (1994:78f.) the military equipment – where this scabbard mount was part of – was made in late antique workshops probably in Northern Gaul. At the time this equipment was made and used, the Roman military organization in Northern Gaul, under supervision of Aëtius, was still totally intact.

8 There is the Liebenau disc from the 4th century, possibly part of a sword belt. The runes are very difficult to identify. Except for the Aalen neckring, reading NORU and dated 1st half 5th century, all other Continental runic objects date from the 6th century or later.

9 Two altarstones and their inscriptions may witness this assumption. On the Bergakker site a Roman altarstone was found, dedicated to the goddess Hurstrga. A second Roman altarstone has been found near Tiel as well, in Zennewijnen, a place on a filled-up stream called Zenne, a tributary to the Waal. This altar bears the text: Deae / Seneucaege / Ulfenus beneficiaries tribuni / legionis Tricesimae Ulpiae Victricis Severiane / [Alexandriane...] / aram cum ede sua a se (or: a solo) / refecit. Votum solvit libens merito imperatore / domino nostro Severo / [Alexandro]. (Toorians 2007:137-143). The dating is between AD 222 and 235. In the context of this paper it is interesting that a mix of three languages/cultures is shown in the inscription: Latin, Germanic and Celtic. This agrees completely with the area in which this goddess was worshipped. Celtic was used centuries before the Romans came, and kept being in use for some time, especially in matters of local religion (for instance the cult of Hercules Magusanus in the same river delta). The man who placed the altar had a Germanic name, Ulfenus, the Goddess was Celtic, the inscription is in Latin.

The question arises how runic literacy must be understood in these Romanized contexts, in the early 5th century, shortly before or during the migrations that brought runes from Denmark and North Germany to southern and western regions. It may be that the spread of runic knowledge went through contacts between Germanic soldiers in the Roman army. Anyhow, the source region was northern Germany or southern Denmark. Therefore I suggest to look especially to the Saxones. They are mentioned in the historical sources for the first time in 356 by Julianus in a panegyric for Constantius II. Also they are mentioned as attackers in contemporary Noord Brabant in 370 by Hieronymus, *Chronicon* 373; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVIII, 5, and XXX, 7, 8., and by Eunapius *Brevarium*, commissioned by Emperor Valens (364-378). Their name is used for pirates in British and Gaulic coastal regions until 440, when Saxon *auxilia* in the British army revolted and claimed parts of Britannia to found small kingdoms of their own (Lanting & Van der Plicht 2009/10:70). The Franks, on the contrary, did not come from any runic source region. But the lack of runic finds of the 4th century south and west of the North Germanic source regions and the extreme rarity of 5th century finds provide not enough evidence for either Saxones or Franks or whosoever as diffusers of runic literacy. The fact that runic objects are missing from the wide area between North Germany and South Germany until the 6th-7th centuries, might be due to burial customs (Böhme 1999). Cremation was customary among the Saxons living in the area now called Westfalen. In South Germany the custom of corpse burials in the 6th – 7th century yielded a notable amount of runic objects, all found in graves.

4. But let us return to the question of this paper.

This question is: should the ‘Frisian’ corpus be regarded as different from the early English runic corpus? In what way are their inscriptions different? And if not, can we regard the runic Anglo-Saxon-Frisian objects as one corpus? In that case we might be able to compose a coherent study based on a series of connected features shared by the whole group of ASF runic texts. The runic tradition of the Anglo-Saxons-Frisians started as a common tradition, and has its origin in the older North Gmc tradition¹⁰. Bos/Brouwer (2005) and Nicolay (2005) consider the migrating Anglo-Saxons at first still bound with rather strong links to their homelands during the first phase of the migrations. During a later phase they became more and more independent and started to develop their own products and styles. This can be seen in pottery and metalwork, and I should like to add, in their runic usage, from the sixth century onwards. The first stream of colonists brought typical cruciform brooches with them, made in their homeland. These brooches are found in East England and Frisia and they are very much alike. The brooches were in all probability made in Schleswig-Holstein and the area between Elbe and Weser (Bos/Brouwer 2005:18). After *ca* 450 these brooches appear in a larger area: Frisia, England, North Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Also Nicolay (2005:73) argues that the strong similarities in material culture between England and Frisia points to a common homeland of the immigrants. Bede was right, he says, in mentioning

¹⁰ The Fallward inscription of *ca* 425 on the footstool KSAMELLA [A]LGUSKApI rather belongs to the North Gmc runic tradition. We only have *alguskapi* to consider (*ksamella* or rather *scamellus* is Latin). This is a North Gmc name.

Jutland, Schleswig-Holstein and the area between Elbe and Weser as homelands of Jutes, Angles and Saxons. A second phase in the migrations is witnessed by the import of bracteates out of Scandinavia, mainly in the sixth century (the mysterious Undley bracteate is dated AD 450). In 6th century Frisia relations with Jutland seem strongest. Seebold (2003:29f.) points to the remarkable fact that Frisian and Jutes sometimes were considered as similar in ancient sources: Venantius Fortunatus mention ‘Euten’ and ‘Sachsen’ together as adversaries of the Franks. Seebold (2003:30) is of the opinion that this only makes sense if the ‘Euten’ were Frisians. And: “Im Beowulf wurden die gleichen Leute teils Friesen, teils Euten genannt, und schliesslich nennt der Frankenkönig Theudebert¹¹ I in einem Brief an Kaiser Justinian *eutische Sachsen (cum Saxonibus Euciis, qui se nobis voluntate propria tradiderunt)*”. Jutland may have been the source region of a second stream of colonists who partly settled in Frisia.

The first group of immigrants in the coastal area of former Frisia (round 440) came from Schleswig-Holstein and the area between Weser and Elbe, the second (after 500) from Scandinavia, especially from Jutland. Bracteates and other golden objects in Frisia are found in deposits, not in graves, and belong thus to the central South Scandinavian world, where there are ritual deposits in a settlement context. (Outside this central area, bracteates are found in graves, in England, Norway and the Continent). This means according to Nicolay (2005:85) that the relation with the homelands were both cultural and ideological.

In this paper I seek to reflect on Page’s article of 1996 which he presented at the First International Symposium on Frisian Runes, in 1994. He used the term “baffling” for the Frisian runes, and this is still appropriate. In his article he clearly develops a taste for the Frisian runic objects being not typically Frisian. He ends up in despair: “I begin to wonder, not only if there ever was an early Frisian language, but even if there was a region called Frisia at all” (1996:147/8). Well, I wonder whether there was a Frisian runic tradition at all!

Earlier in his paper he is still looking for a possibility to distinguish the Frisian from the English corpus, and, after examining the often listed diagnostic differences (the *-u* ending and the *ā < Gmc * au*) he rejects these features because they prove not to be typically Frisian. But he suggests “one way in which we could fruitfully probe the evidence of the English and Frisian runic inscriptions: to seek if they demonstrate similar practices in presenting their messages; if such practices differ from those of the rest of the early runic world” (Page 1996:147). In his paper he already treats some of the differences in practices between the OF and OE corpora, so I will not repeat them here. One conclusion however is striking: the reason that the runes became more popular among the Anglo-Saxons in England is that there was a genuine need in daily use for a vernacular script. “If so, are the [...] not very informative Frisian inscriptions an indication of the only desultory use of the script in that region, because for them it served no obvious commercial or practical purpose” (Page 1996:147).

¹¹ Theudebert I lived in the first half of the sixth c., more than a century later than the first stream of colonists.

Traditionally, the Old English and Old Frisian runic corpora were distinguished on the ground of two linguistic differences. This regards sound changes that could be associated with Old Frisian rather than Old English: the monophthongisation of *au* > *ā* and the ending *-u*¹² both found for instance in the legend SKANOMODU with *ā* < **au* and *-u* < **az/-*an*. The first change is in fact ‘ingvaeonic’ e.g. OS, OF and OE. About the second change see below.

Especially Nielsen has tried to demonstrate in several publications that the ending *-u* is not a Frisian linguistic feature in any strict sense. In his 1996 paper he states that “Formally, *-u* could be a reflex of the *ō*-stem nominative suffix, Germanic **-ō*, the regular reflex of which in all North and West Germanic languages would be *-u*, cf. e.g. early runic (nsf.) *ō*-stem *lapu* ‘invitation’ (Darum bracteate I).” He suggests further on that *skanomodu* might be a woman’s name, since “Old Saxon feminine names in *mōd* outnumber masculine ones”. The final *-u* must be taken as reflecting a *Murmelvokal* (Düwel/Tempel 1968:382, 390) and not as a reflex of West Gmc *n/asm a*-stem suffixes **-az/*an* (Nielsen 1996:128 f.). Nielsen adds that “scholars would be wise to look for other sources”. I do agree: the final *-u* reflects an unstressed /ə/. Besides, Page remarks that “some undoubtedly English inscriptions [...] have ‘u’ in final and unexplained place [...] ‘giuþeasu’ and ‘flodu’ on the Franks casket, [...] and the element ‘benu’ on the early runic coins.” (Page 1996:141).

Nielsen (1999:51 and 1984:18, note 1) claims that the development *ā* < *au* (cf. *skanomodu* with *skān-* < **skaun-*) not is restricted to Old Frisian but also is found in Old Saxon (Heliand). Even *kataē* (Hamwic) might not be Old Frisian after all (*kataē* < **kautōn*). Final *æ* seems to point to England, where an abundance of this feature in runic legends occur (Waxenberger 2006:278ff. See for instance her list A.2: D.Sg. of masc. and fem. nouns in *-æ*). She refers to Campbell 1959 § 369: “*æ*, *e*, and *i* fell together in a sound written *e* in unaccented syllables. *æ* and *i* remain undisturbed only in very early texts”. Gaby Waxenberger (2006) lists a number of instances which makes me wonder if the OE final *æ* had its counterpart in the final *u* of the OF inscriptions. In both OE and OF *æ* and *u* represent vowels in unstressed syllables, such as can be found in HABUKU and ÆNIWULUFU, both presenting final *-u* and both have a unstressed vowel *-u-* in the middle (in ÆNIWULUFU it may be a parasite vowel). But there is no consensus to the form: are they nominatives or datives? A nominative or a dative is in both cases possible: ÆNIWULUFU is most likely a PN, perhaps a dative, *a*-stem **æniwulfaz*. HABUKU as a PN can be nsf of an *a*-stem in **habukaz* or of an *ō*-stem *habuko*; . HABUKU may also be the object of the sentence and is then a dative, sing. fem. *ō* stem “for HABUKU (*Habækæ*, *Habeke*)”. To illustrate this name form I like to point to the much later attestations of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. Here we find in records about the estates of the ‘Groninger Jonkers’ (local rulers) an abundance of names ending in *-eke* /əka/¹³.

According to Kortlandt (1999) there are common sound changes in Frisian and Anglian (Kortlandt 1999:48). “Anglian shared the development of Frisian on the continent, in particular the raising of long *æ*: to long *ē* which had been preceded by the Anglo-Frisian retraction of long *æ* to long *ā* before *w* (cf. Fulk 1998:141). [...] After the “Anglian” migration, Frisian fronted *ā* (from **ai*) to long *æ* unless it was followed by a back vowel in

12 Cf for instance Nielsen 1996: 123-129, and Page (same volume).

the following syllable and monophthongized **au* to *ā*". Kortlandt posed the question "Did the Old English dialects first diverge in Britain or on the Continent?" His conclusion is that "neither view is correct [...] and that the early divergences are the result of a chronological difference between two waves of migration from the same dialectal area in northern Germany, an earlier "Saxon" invasion in the fifth c and a later "Anglian" invasion around the middle of the sixth c." I would like to know whether archaeologists can support this conception¹⁴.

Since the runic innovations are found in both Frisia and Britain, we can safely conclude they had at first¹⁵ a common, uniform, writing system. There may have been differences in pronunciation, and there were probably dialects. Besides the shared *futhork* with two new runes for /o/ and /a/, we find different, enigmatic, runic forms, such as can be found in Westeremden B, Britsum and Wijnaldum. These forms seem to point to Scandinavia, which is quite possible in view of the networks people participated in and in view of the composition of the inhabitants of Frisia after the Migration Period. Page, Nielsen and myself have observed that several runic traditions may be reflected in the Old Frisian corpus. This should not wonder us, Frisia being on a cross-roads at the coast of the North Sea between Scandinavia, North Germany and Britain.

This cross-roads concept may be illustrated by a recent report of the British student Ellen McManus, who executed an investigation into "stable isotopes of strontium (Sr) on several skeletal remains (teeth and bones) from the cemetery of Oosterbeintum", excavated in 1988 and 1989, and dated to the early Middle Ages.

MacManus finds that a 20-30 year old man and two more than 45 year old individuals from a double grave originated from areas with a much higher $87\text{Sr}/86\text{Sr}$ relation than that of the other buried individuals and animals. These areas have very old rocks such as there are in Scandinavia. This double grave is one of the earliest burials of the grave field, dated 440-485. Some five other individuals also display high $87\text{Sr}/86\text{Sr}$ values and might originate from North Denmark. This however is speculative although in accordance with archaeological evidence.

13 Names are taken from Formsma et al. *De Ommelander Borgen en Steenhuizen 1987*. These diminutive names form a minority, but are nevertheless illustrating for name-giving in Groningen. Instances are: Ripeke Aykema, Beteke Aykema, Dodeke Allersma, Emeke Asinga, Doedeke Boeltzertzema, Dodeke and Popeke ter Borch, Reneke Busch, Emeke Dodekema, Renneke Elama, Teteke Entens, Abeke (!) van Ewsum, Reneke Fraylema, Reneke Gaykinga, Edzeko to Garreweer, Dydeke toe Godlinze, Doke te Godlinze, Vrouweke to Godlinze, Dodeke (Doeko) Grevinge, Reneka Han kema, Popeke Herathema, Elteke ten Holte, Teteke Jarges, Reweke to Kantens, Ludeke Clant, Reneke Busch de Marees van Swinderen, Ludeca de Mepsche, Abeko te Mude, Abeke Onsta, Hiddeke van Oosterwiltwerd, Reindeke Reynsma, Unico Ripperda, Beteke Scheltkema, Elteke de Sighers (all pet names, both masculine and feminine).

14 According to John Hines "archaeology really cannot support the idea of an earlier Saxon invasion and a later Anglian one" (pers. comm).

15 According to Gijsseling Frisian as a specific language came into being in the 8th. See: *Het oudste Fries*, in: *It Beaken*, XXIV (1962).

Let us have a look at the corpus itself. There are some new views: the solidi from Harlingen and Schweindorf might be dated rather later than usually is assumed: in the 7th century. Moreover, the Schweindorf legend clearly represents 5 runes instead of 6: WELAD and no final rune U such as repeatedly has been put forward by several authors (Looijenga 2003:431). All solidi may be regarded "either English or Frisian, although England has a numismatic context for coins, which lacks in Frisia at this date. In fact SKAN- (in SKANOMODU) is probably the clearest piece of evidence for the 'Frisianness' of this group of coins, if it is a group and if they are coins" concluded Ray Page in 1996:141 after a long overview of the coins and their legends.



Fig. 4 Schweindorf solidus. The runes run from right to left WELAD. Photo Christina Kohnen©, Ostfriesische Landschaft Aurich.

A random comparison between some inscriptions of the early OF (left column) and OE (right column) corpora dated to the 5th – 8th centuries and consisting of personal names and names of objects may give us an impression of the similarity of both corpora (the more or less enigmatic ones excluded).

em ura	<i>em sigimer</i>
aib kabu deda habuku, katae	<i>gæggogæ maga medu, luda gibcetae sigilæ, helipæ</i>
kobu, skanomodu	<i>medu, alu, benu</i>
welad	<i>sipabad</i>
æniwulufu	<i>godaluwaludo</i>
oka, edæ boda	<i>æko ?æri</i>

adugislu me gisuhldu	hariboki wusa
aha:k	raihan
tuda	luda, pada, desaiona
æpa	epa, æpa

Observations:

The legends show no very specific differences in length or degree of information; resemblances seem to be there nevertheless, although sometimes in the absence of meaningfulness. There are names of persons and objects, a few verbs, and of some words we do not know what they mean. Some short plain sentences: Luda repaired the brooch and Aib or Habuku made the comb. In fact, you could well exchange the one (OF) for the other (OE).

Common to all older runic texts is the shortness, the laconic tone, which makes us wonder whether this specific script was designed for simple, plain messages like these? Or is what we see just a small and insignificant part of something much grander and more elaborate? These astonished considerations are made by every researcher of runes; although it might not be so peculiar, because if we compare this kind of inscriptions to contemporary Roman use for instance, there is not much difference. Everyday Roman use is also restricted to names: makers' formulae, naming the object or the owner, etcetera. Even if compared to what we ourselves in the 20th century did: writing personal names on all kinds of objects, naming the object : mug on a mug, and so on. And pilgrims writing their names in runes on the walls of Roman churches and catacombs show that runes were in general use, at least from the 8th, 9th centuries onwards. Remarkable is the explicit mentioning of the object the runes are carved in. We find combs, bones, brooches (*sil, sigil*). Recently, a fourth comb with the title 'comb' has been found¹⁶. Behind and besides this childish behavior is a large application of script. Only, all we have found of early runic usage is mostly restricted to objects with one or two words or cryptic texts. This is mainly due to circumstances: archeology and coincidence. Why would somebody want to write the object's name whereas everyone could see what the object was? Some would like to call this 'magic'; I cannot decide upon this matter, but it seems somehow to have had some impact to the owner or the maker of the comb. When looking at the oldest ASF inscriptions in runes, there is no clear added value whatsoever. Nevertheless, if compared to the later Old English and Scandinavian runic texts there is an enormous

16 The recently found comb from Friestedt has a runic inscription reading KABA. Two combs from Frisia (now province Groningen) have KABU (Oostum) and KOBU (Toornwerd). A comb from Elisenhof has KABR. The legends distinguish West Gmc KABA and Old Norse KABR. The Friestedt comb has been found near Erfurt, but according to its type it can have been made in a large area, of Rhine and Meuse, in Frisia and Saxony, England, even Switzerland (see Roes 1963:10ff Esp. plates VI – X). Elisenhof is in Schleswig Holstein.

difference between older and newer runic usage, the latter clearly representing another culture.

Interesting similarities can be noticed in endings: personal names ending in *-a* and *-u*, names of objects ending in *-u*, very short sentences with subject, verb and object. In two cases a rune appears that is not in the “standard” ASF fuþork; the rune *ƿ* in Chessell Down ÆKO ʔÆRI has the same form as the rune transliterated as ‘o’ in Britsum BOROD¹⁷. This rune form reminds of a form found in some inscriptions near Lund, Skåne, for instance on the Skårby stone, now in the garden of “Kulturen” in Lund. We find several times the form *h* and the same one downside up *ƿ*, denoting ‘s’. In Britsum this form has been taken to denote a vowel, perhaps ‘o’, for readability’s sake. And because it might be a variant of the new *ōs* rune.

The early use of runes seems to be restricted to a personal, private, area. This may not be so curious to understand if we realize that during Christianization in western Europe people were allowed to keep to their usual name giving: Germanic names kept being in use, as we can see from names such as Alcuin, Hraban, Angilbert, Theodulf, Einhart and the many Germanic names (for instance Hariulfus, Unfachus, Aldualuhus, Modoaldus) on otherwise Latin inscribed gravestones from the late Roman period. If a personal, vernacular, sphere was allowed for, runes fitted in. Runes in Merovingian and Carolingian times were often used in a secretive way: on the back of brooches, weapons, and so on. Only in places where Christendom was at a distance (Scandinavia), open use of runes could be used in elaborate texts in the public domain. But remarkably, in England runes did not disappear after Christianization, on the contrary, they seem to be widely used in the ecclesiastical sphere. On the Continent however, runes disappeared rapidly after the Christian reform of the Carolingians.

As a conclusion to this paper I suggest to combine both OE and OF corpora, for joint research. I am convinced that the early OE and OF runic inscriptions belong to an inseparable and common tradition, a purely Anglo-Saxon phenomenon. The conclusion that there exists a Frisian runic corpus because runic objects have been found in Frisia is not satisfactory. It suggests that there existed something that probably did not: a specific Frisian runic culture. If the new runic innovations: the development of *āc* and *ōs* runes took place in England, then there is no reason to give Frisian runes a *status aparte*¹⁸.

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17 The Britsum inscription reads: *poniaberetdud //n borodmi LIU*.

18 We need to define more clearly the grounds on which to decide the “Frisianness” or “Anglo-Saxonness” or “Frankishness” of runic inscriptions. Why is there a need to label an inscription according to ethnicity? Isn’t there a better way to describe runic culture and runic usage?

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Appendices

1. The oldest attestations of the name of the Frisians

Plinius and Tacitus use both the name Frisii and Frisia. Cassius Dio writes about Phreisioi, Phrisioi and Ptolemeus mentions Phrisioi, Phrissioi, and Procopius has Phrissones¹⁹. A third century Roman inscription has Frisiones. Plinius mentions further the Frisiavones, maybe not a Germanic form (Nielsen 1999:35). In short, according to Tacitus we have the Frisii maiores and Frisii minores, and the Frisiavones. The first lived in Central Frisia, the second in Holland and the third in *Helinium*, initially the area between the three river branches of the Rhine-mouth, the *Oer-IJ*, *Utrechtse Vecht* and *Oude Rijn*; later Helinium was used to indicate the mouth of the *Maas* and *Schelde*). Remarkably, Beda does not mention Frisians among the invaders of England. He only speaks of Angles, Saxons and Jutes. Frisians are not mentioned in any Roman or Frankish source between 293 and 553 (Procopius, History of the wars, Book VIII).

2. What happened to the old Frisians?

During the 3d century emigration began in Westergo, probably induced by several reasons: strong population growth, scarcity of resources, drainage problems due to the shrinking of the peat moors in the Hinterland and drastic changes in the Limes area of the Roman Empire. Frisii and other tribesmen such as Chauci, Chamavi and Saxones are recorded as pirates along the coast. It is conceivable that Frisii, Chauci and other coastal inhabitants were regarded as *Franci*, the latter being an umbrella term, used by the Romans. Franci are first mentioned in 291 (Panegyrici Latini XI) and it seems that their name must be understood as an overall term for tribes such as Chauci, Chamavi, Frisii, Bructeri, Salii and others (Lanting & Van der Plicht 2009/10:66f.). Frisii are recorded from Northern Gaul in 297. During the period following Septimus Severus prosperity increased there, which may have attracted immigrants from northern regions. Late 3d and early 4th century earthenware found in Zelle in East Flanders points to the presence of Frisii in the Scheldt area. Again, it is conceivable that Frisii merged with the Franci, and went with them to North Gallia.

19 In History of the Wars VIII, xx, 7-8. He writes that the island of Brittia is inhabited by Angloi, Frisones and Brittanos (ibid. 47-58). Procopius is quite ambiguous about what he heard about the island Brittia, since the stories would be on the verge of mythology (ibid. 42-46).

The old Frisians are mentioned one last time in a Roman source (Pan. Lat. VIIIIO (V) 9.3 Eumenius, Pan. Constantio Caesari) of around 297, when a rather large group was captured by the Romans near the Schelde and set to work as ploughmen in Gallia as *dediticii* “serfs”. Another group may have been selected for service in the Roman army. A fact worth mentioning is that a contingent Frisians were stationed as military at the Hadrian Wall in the 3d century. We cannot esteem how many Frisians chose for a military career in the Roman army, but this may be one of the incentives for leaving homeland and homestead. For instance, of the *Civitas Cananefates*, a tribe living in or next to the Frisian area in North Holland, a thousand young men were recruited to serve in the Roman Army, which must have been a severe burden to the tribe (Lanting & Van der Plicht, 2009/10 p.56).

During the 4th century only Saxons lived along the North Sea coast and it were probably Saxons who recolonized the old Frisian *terpen* region, revitalizing the very homesteads the Frisians left behind. Among their material culture no traces of the old population is found. (Taayke 2013). From *ca* 440 onwards pottery and brooches appear in Frisia which have their origin in “Saxon” regions (Lanting & Van der Plicht 2009/10, p.76). Saxones seems to be a collective name for several tribes, just like the name Franci. Incidentally, the name *Angli Saxones* seems to have been used for the first time by Paulus Diacones († 790/95) in his *Historia Langobardum* as an indication for “English Saxons” to be distinguished from the *Antiqui Saxones*, who still lived in northern Germany (mainly Westfalen) .

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