Frisian place-names and place-names in Friesland

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1. Introduction

1.1. Extent and scope of the Frisian language: nowadays and earlier

Frisian is a West Germanic language and the smallest one among the West Germanic varieties that reached some form of codification as a standardized language. Historically it is closely related to English (Nielsen, 2001), which can be illustrated by words such as Frisian tsjerke [ˈtʃɜrkə]: English church, Dutch kerk, High German Kirche, and the Frisian word sliepe [ˈslɪ.əpə]: English to sleep, Dutch slapen, High German schlafen. Modern Frisian and English, however, have drifted widely apart.

The Frisian language is nowadays divided into three separate speech communities: West Frisian in the Netherlands (c. 450,000 speakers of which two-third speak the language as their first language), the other two in Germany: East Frisian in the Low Saxon municipality of Saterland (c. 1000 speakers, mostly older people) and North Frisian in Schleswig Holstein (c. 5000 speakers, mostly older people). The West and East Frisian regions are relics from an earlier larger continuous Frisian-speaking zone along the southern littoral of the North Sea. Proto-Frisian was spoken even further to the south-west in the aftermath of the Great Migrations that brought the Anglo-Saxons to Britain. The North Frisian language area is the result of later migrations. Frisians settled the region in two surges, one in the 8th and one in the 11th century, which caused a dialectal contrast between the North Frisian dialects from the islands and the coast.
The oldest attestations to Frisian are found in a small corpus of 19 rune inscriptions (Looijenga 2003), the oldest from the 6th century. It is not until the late 13th century that Frisian is used in writing, predominantly in judicial texts (Bremmer 2004). From the 13th till the late 15th century, West and East Friesland comprised of a group of self-ruling counties only recognizing the German emperor (*Reichsunmittelbar*), comparable with Switzerland at that time. This self-government was successively lost in the 15th century. In West Friesland, Frisian obtained some status as the first language of administration in the 15th century but lost this position after the usurpation of Albright of Saxony in 1498. In the regions towards the east and in North Friesland, Low Saxon directly replaced Latin as the primary language of commerce and culture. No mediaeval Frisian texts are attested from the western part of the Netherlands (Holland *stricto sensu*) and North Friesland. Friesland did not develop an administrative or cultural centre where an overarching written standard could emerge.

The geographical discontinuity and the lack of a written standard have definitely contributed to the linguistic fragmentation of the several varieties of Frisian. The three main groups are mutually unintelligible, as are most of the 7 (somewhat) surviving North Frisian dialects. The
differences among the Frisian varieties are larger than those between e.g. Norwegian and Swedish. Still, it is common practice to label them all as Frisian dialects. Each dialect developed some written materials—including spelling regulations—in the last 50 years, but only West Frisian, used by far the largest speech community, saw the birth of a well-equipped and established standard language. This standard is not in use among the speakers of Frisian in Germany. Unless otherwise mentioned, citations of Frisian language forms are taken from the West Frisian standard language. West Frisian is the second official language in the Dutch province of Fryslân.\footnote{Note that the endonym Fryslân will be used for the modern Dutch province only. Otherwise the international name Friesland is used.} Frisian has been recognised as a minority language in Germany.

1.2. The object definition

The object of ‘Frisian’ place-names is not entirely unambiguous in its definition. There is no Frisian state that offers a default framework for the definition of Frisian in a geographical sense. Apart from the Dutch province of Fryslân—a historical unit and largely Frisian speaking—there are no clear territorial configurations that could offer such a framework. As Frisian is a West Germanic language, basically all the onomastic material is simply common Germanic, such as places names in Proto-Germanic -haim and -ing-, which are widespread over the Germania (cf. section 2). Nevertheless, some names can be identified as Frisian because they exhibit specific Frisian phonological or semantic developments. An example of a restricted Frisian phonological change is -ungi > -ens, such as in Wûns < Wildinge.

As Frisian has always been confined to the littoral lowlands, there is a strong correlation between landscape types, settlement history and names. This produces an onomastic cocktail of names and name types, defined as Frisian partly by their linguistic shape, partly by their relative frequency—some Germanic name types are relatively frequent in the (formerly) Frisian speaking regions—and partly by the typical appellatives of the lowland regions, such as words denoting marsh and peat land or artificial dwelling mounds and dykes.

Place-names exhibiting such Frisian characteristics are found in the entire former Frisian speaking region, including Groningen...
(Netherlands) and Ostfriesland (the adjacent region in Germany) —both once part of the East Frisian (language) region—and to a lesser extent in North Holland.

2. The onomastic landscape and settlement history

The Frisian coastal region is characterised by extensive marsh lands situated slightly higher than the normal high tide level, leaving them vulnerable in case of storm surges. Settlement conditions are heavily subjected to sea level fluctuations. In the 6th century BC, the sea was relatively quiet and people occupied the natural marsh ridges slightly higher than sea level. The first settlements were flatland settlements (Flachsiedlung). The continuous presence of people led to a gradual rise of the village level, finally resulting into dwelling mounds (cf. e.g. Griede 1978: 94 ff.; Schroor 1993: 21 ff.).

The oldest name layers in Friesland are composed of transparent compositions of a person’s name plus one of the suffixes: Germanic -haim (> Mod. Fr. -um) ‘house, town’, -ungi ‘land belonging to’ (> Mod. Fr. -ens), -wurb- (> Mod. Fr. -wert and -aard) ‘place surrounded by water’ and -hwerb- (> Mod. Fr. wier) ‘elevated place’, with the latter two designating artificial dwelling mounds (Gildemacher 2007: 13-14; Philippa e.a. 2009).

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The Frisian regions were largely depopulated in the 3rd and 4th century as a result of marine transgression. The onomastic landscape of East and West Friesland bears witness of this depopulation and subsequent settlement (or resettlement) of the region in the aftermath of the Great Migrations in the 4th and 5th century. Pre-Germanic place and water names which are evidence for continuous settlement—such as in nearby Drenthe—are nearly absent in Friesland (cf. Gildemacher 1993 and 2007: 14 for the province of Fryslân). Other proof lies in the high density of names formed from a proper name and the Germanic suffixes -haim ‘house, town’ and -ungi ‘land belonging to’. In a Frisian context they regularly appear as –um (< -haim) and –ens (< -ungi). These suffixes are pretty common throughout the Germania, such as in British place-names Lewisham, Reading or German Walheim and Emlingen (Alsace, France). Figure 2 shows the spread of names in -haim throughout north-western Europe. This name type is found in high concentrations in regions south of the Roman Limes and in the eastern part of England that have only been occupied
by Germanic speaking people during, and briefly after, the Great Migrations (cf. Schwarz 1988: 188). The concentration in Friesland suggests that this region was also settled or resettled by Germanic speaking people during the same period.

Figure 3 shows the spread of both the suffix –haim and -ingi in the Frisian regions. Names in -haim are very frequent in Friesland but certainly not confined to that region. In (former) Frisian speaking regions the suffix appears in the reduced shape -um but this suffix form is not exclusive to Frisian as fig. 2 illustrates. Among the names in -um one may find some instances of an old dative plural used as a

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5 Place-names data from http://www.mapcruzin.com/
The names have been taken from the Geonames-website: www.geonames.org

Bremmer (2009: 60) suggests that this was the result of the following -i, the old locative sg. ending.

Locative, such as in Huizum and Husum (Old Frisian hūs ‘house’) or Wirdum (Old Frisian werd ‘dwelling mound’). Purely exclusive to Frisian is the development of -ingi > -ens.

Figure 3 shows an absolute high density of names in -haim (> -um) and -ingi (> -ens) in Friesland and adjacent regions. They have not been checked for etymology, which means that triangles (-ens) specifically outside the Frisian regions are most likely to have a different etymology.

Figure 3. The spread of places names ending in -haim (> -um) and -ingi (> -ens) in Friesland and adjacent regions. They have not been checked for etymology, which means that triangles (-ens) specifically outside the Frisian regions are most likely to have a different etymology.
Frisian marsh land regions are well represented. Names in –*ingi* (Frisian –*ens*) are not specifically Frisian considering their relative density (fig. 5), except for the easternmost part of East Friesland, the region of Riestringen, which also shows—remarkably enough—a quite distinct dialectal profile in Old Frisian. The combined evidence from names in –*haim* and –*ing* indicates the idea of a massive resettlement of the Frisian coastal regions during or briefly after the Great Migrations, a thought that is supported by archaeological evidence (Bos 2001: 488-490).
Two elements refer to erected dwelling mounds: Proto-Germanic -wur∫- and -hwer∫-. The former is the oldest stock with modern names ending in -werd(en)/-ward(en)/-aard/-wert. They are found in two specific landscape types. First are the lower clay marshes, which were inundated more frequently because the zone with higher marsh ridges blocked the water runoff. Second is the cluster formed by the lower Weser region, where villages were erected near the river bed.

The second element is Old Frisian werf, which shows a regular phonological development to weer > wier in West and Middle Friesland. In the east, the forms of warf- are the regular forms. Very often the places with these names are smaller localities. They are secondary settlements from a later stage. Since the 10th century, after the erection of protective dikes, villages were no longer built on dwelling mounds. However, occasionally dikes were destroyed, such as in the Dollard region in North Friesland and in Holland (Marken) and reconstruction of the dikes had become (temporarily) impossible. In such cases,
houses could be built upon artificial dwelling mounds again. The North Frisian cluster on the Halligen islands is the most outstanding example of this. The Halligen are remnants of earlier diked regions, now without dikes and with farms built upon mounds.

The interior parts of the Frisian coastal region were earlier covered with peat bogs which have gradually been cultivated. Many of the place-names bear witness of the original landscape, e.g. wâld(e)/woud(e)/wald ‘forest, i.e. tree grown peat bogs’: very common in Middle and West Friesland. Others may refer to cultivation methods and practices, e.g. sweach/zwaag ‘pasture land’, syl/zijl siel ‘sluice, water outlet through a dike’. For a more detailed account of different name types and their history see Gildemacher (2001) for West Friesland, Timmerman (2001, esp. 371 ff.) for North Friesland and Ebeling (2001) for East Friesland.

Figure 6. The spread of place-names ending in -werd(en)/-ward(en)/aard/-wert and -werf/-wier in Friesland and adjacent regions.
The names in North Friesland bear witness of intense language contact with the former North Germanic (Danish) speaking population residing there prior to the arrival of the Frisians. The first colonists (7th / 8th c.) settled on the large islands in the north (Sylt, Föhr and Amrum), leaving their trace in the dense concentration of names ending in -um, especially on Föhr. The second group of Frisians, cultivating the marsh and peat lands behind the more fragile dune ridge to the south, will have been adjacent to substantial Danish populations on the sandy periglacial soils on the coast. Here the suffix -büll from Old Nors bóll/býli ‘dwelling place’, Modern Danish -boll appears frequently. The suffix is derived from the same root as English to build and has no cognate in German. The form -büll as it appears in current official place-names in Germany is a loaned element. Examples are (Germ./Fr.) Wobbenbüll/Wååbel, Poppenbüll. Even when the suffix is of Danish origin, the personal names in many of the compounds’ first elements show that the suffix was likely adopted by Frisian settlers: Wobbe and Popke, for example, are Frisian person names in West Frisian up till now (cf. Panten 1995: 60-61). The suffix can be further applied to later settlements, such as in Niebüll/Naibel ‘new town’.

Figure 7 illustrates the Frisian büll-region being only loosely connected to the Danish instances of names ending in –bol. It pretty firmly matches the former linguistic boundary of Frisian. However, this does not imply that all names in -büll reflect purely Frisian settlements only. A name such as Trollebüll/Troolebel contains the Danish first element trolld (Old Norse troll) ‘demon, troll’. The village name Schobüll/Schööbel contains Danish skov (Old Nors skógr) as first element. The oldest attestation (1438) to the name is Schoubu, not with -büll but with -bu (Modern Danish by ‘village’), with later suffix adjustment to other names in -büll (Timmermann 2001: 375). The frequent appearance of the suffix -büll in North Friesland should therefore be taken as proof of intensive language contact and population mixture between Danes and Frisians on the western fringes of Schleswig’s higher sandy soils.

The reflexes of a Danish substratum population is also found in names in -(t)rup < Old Norse horp (cf. English placenames in -thorp, Viereck 2002: 58-59). The German cognate is -dorf which is nowadays also generally applied to official place-names in the Low Saxon region where -dorp was the common form in the past. They appear in the Danish form -(trup) in the former Danish speaking part of northern
Germany (figure 8; cf. the linguistic boundary in figure 7) and once in the name Braderup on the island of Sylt (not in map 8). The distribution of -dorf in northern Germany reflects the linguistic boundary as it was in the early 19th century, with some southern relics of -trup. In Nordfriesland, we find names in the Germanised form, such as in Drelsdorf und Almdorf. The Frisian endonyms reveal the Danish origin: Trölstrup, Aalmtoorp. The first element in Drelsdorf/Trölstrup is
Old Norse þrell ‘slave’, indicating that the village was founded by a Danish speaking population. The endonyms of the Amrum villages Norddorf and Süddorf are Noorsaarpp and Sössaarp, with the regular development of Old Frisian þorð, þerp ‘village’. Names in -þorð/þerp are pretty rare in Frisian, especially among the oldest settlement names (Gildemacher 2007: 12). Porp was a very commonly applied appellative in North Germanic and the Amrum village names may already have been coined by North Germanic people before the arrival of the Frisians (Timmermann 2001: 378).

Figure 8. The spread of the suffix -(t)røp, -trop and -dørf in Danmark, southern Sweden and northern Germany. The forms with <t> belong to the North Germanic realm (with a secondary distribution in Low Saxon, specifically in Westphalia); the forms with <d> are of German origin. All instances of historical Low Saxon -dørp have been standardised to High German -dørf.
3. Adaption of Frisian names in adjacent languages

Both in the regions where Frisian is still spoken and the regions where the language has been lost, place-names have developed a form which is more or less adapted to the dominant languages Dutch or (Low) German. This adaption comprises two main strategies. One is by petrification of an older Frisian form, the other by (partial) translation, especially of appellative elements. This means that in the regions where Frisian is still spoken there are name pairs consisting of a mostly oral local Frisian endonym and a supra-local exonym which regularly appears in written form, such as on maps. It should be noted that various name pairs only differ in spelling, hardly in pronunciation. This is by and large similar to the status of German names in the Alsace.

All instances will be illustrated by examples from West Frisian. This region still has active users of Frisian and it is the region with the oldest written sources, enabling a diachronic comparison of the bilingual approach. Name pairs are given in the order Frisian – Dutch.

Examples of primarily spelling differences are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frisian</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>older forms in Frisian sources</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hilaard</td>
<td>Hijlaard</td>
<td>Elawerth (1275); Hilaerd (1509), Hylaerd (1512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garyp</td>
<td>Garijp</td>
<td>Garyp (1422)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitsum</td>
<td>Hitzum</td>
<td>Hitzum (1407)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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An example of partial translation is found in the name pair Easterwierrum – Oosterwierum. Frisian east means ‘east’, being oost in Dutch. The oldest attestation of the Frisian form is from 1441: Aesterwerim, with Old Frisian /aː/ which later developed into /ɛː/ > /ɛː/ > /ɛː/. The Dutch variant appears as early as 1440: Oesterwerum. Another example is Hegebeintum – Hogebeintum. The name was formerly Westerbyn tym (1417) and the present compound only appears in 1481: Hegha beyntem. The element hegha (Old Frisian hāg, Dutch hoog) means ‘high’ and its dwelling mound is with 8.8 metres the highest in Fryslân. The translation was not applied consistently, as the name of the village Heech – Heeg illustrates, which has no Dutch counterpart *Hoog. The name was attested as Hagh in Frisian in 1466. The modern vowel appears in 1515: Heeg. Dutch simply adopted this early 16th century Frisian form without translation.
The larger the town, the earlier the name was adopted in Dutch. One example is the city of Harns – Harlingen. The Dutch form is in fact the Old Frisian one. The oldest attestation in a Frisian charter is from 1426: *Herlenze*, already showing further phonological development. Contrary to the name of the small village Heech – Heeg, which was adopted in its 16th century form, Dutch already absorbed the older version of the name from the 14th century. In 1455, the fully contracted form *Harns* appears, which is now the modern Frisian form. But in an original Frisian charter from 1470, one encounters the form *Harlinghen*, illustrating the competing application of the old/Dutch and modern/Frisian forms.

A similar case is the name of the city of Frjentsjer – Franeker, the major West Frisian city in the late Middle Ages. In a Frisian text from c. 1300, it is written *Franeker*. It is a compound of *frāna – eker* ‘lord’s – field (= acre)’. In 1378 it already appears in Frisian in the contracted form *Fraenker*, but this form was not considered any more by users of Dutch. A (partial) Dutch translation appears e.g. in 1402: *Fromeker* (Old Frisian *frāna* = Middle Dutch *vroon*). The Frisian form develops further: 1456 *Frencker* > 1655 *Frentjer* > 1837 *Frjentjer* > modern form *Frjentsjer*.

One final example illustrates both an inconsistent translation strategy of appellatives and a Frisian name influenced by Dutch. In the north of Fryslân, a cluster of names ending in *-tsjerk/-kerk* can be found. In Frisian all these names end in *-tsjerk*, in Dutch in *-kerk* (such as Aldtsjerk – Oudkerk, Readtsjerk – Roodkerk) except for Tytsjerk – Tietjerk, where Dutch stays close to the Frisian form of ‘church’. The first element of this name, pronounced [ti] but with different spellings in the two systems, is an old proper name, Old Frisian *Thiād*. The name appears as *Thiatzerk* in a text from 1457. Truly Dutch (Franconian) would be *Diet*: compare Luxembourgish *Diekirch*. A Frisian source from 1677 reads *Tjietjerk* and in the 1718 Atlas by Schotanus-Halma the expected Frisian form is also found: *Tjetjerk* with initial [tj]. But since the 19th century, the spelling <Ty-> appears in Frisian, representing [ti] in the first syllable as the dutchified form of the first element. Summary: ‘Dutch’ *Tietjerk* consists of a Dutch pronunciation form of the Old Frisian name *Thiād*, followed by the

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The ‘Frisian’ form Tytsjerk has the modern Frisian pronunciation of the word for ‘church’ realised in the spelling, and the dutchified realisation of the first element, instead of the older genuine Frisian shape Tje-.

In general, apart from overt translations and spelling adaptions, the ‘Dutch’ names represent forms from the 14th-16th century. Frisian name versions exhibit later phonological developments. The same holds true for place-names in North Friesland, such as in Naibel – Niebüll with later /ai/ < /i:/ and reduction of /ø/ > /ə/. In regions where Frisian is no longer spoken, endonyms are found rooting in the regional varieties of Dutch and Low Saxon that replaced Frisian.

4. Present day position of Frisian names in judicial terms

Nowadays the Frisian speech communities are all protected under the European Charter of Minority and Regional Languages9, issued by the Council of Europe: West Frisian by the Dutch state, East Frisian (Saterfrisian) by the German Land Niedersachsen and North Frisian by the Land Schleswig-Holstein. This charter contains the following article relevant for place-names:

article 10.2.g: Parties undertake to allow and/or encourage……. the use or adoption, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s), of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages.

Only the Netherlands signed this specific article. That means that in Germany, Frisian place-names can only have an additional status.

4.1. West Friesland

In West Friesland, Frisian is (still) the mother tongue of a narrow majority of the population. Even when Dutch is dominant in Fryslân in public life, Frisian is widely used especially in informal situations. The emancipation of Frisian and Frisian endonyms in public life started in the 1950s (cf. Ormeling & Versloot 2008: 15-17; Van der Goot 2003: 90,100-103). Local authorities placed bilingual signs at

9 http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Default_en.asp
the village entrances and many streets were given a Frisian name only. At that time, the Dutch government formulated an official policy: in case of bilingual name application by local authorities the Dutch version remains the only and solely applied version in official public records. The consequence was that the visibility of Frisian place-names was restricted to the village entrance only.

In the 1980s, an ambitious program to propagate the use of Frisian in public and official spheres was initiated by the provincial and several local authorities. One aspect was the implementation of Frisian names for municipalities, villages, water courses and the province itself. In a reorganisation of municipalities in 1984, 8 out of 31 municipalities received a Frisian name. For 11 out of 31 municipalities, Frisian names are not or hardly relevant, given the fact that their inhabitants have traditionally not been speaking Frisian since the Middle Ages. The change of the province name had to wait for an adjustment of the law on the provinces, which was done in 1994. Per 1997, the official name of the province was changed from Dutch Friesland to Frisian Fryslân. State authorities are supposed to follow that change, but many private or semi-private institutions stick to the old name. The largest regional newspaper, the Leeuwarder Courant (> 95% Dutch texts) uses the Frisian name to refer to the provincial government, but the Dutch name for the province as a territorial unit.

In 1989, the names of the villages in two municipalities were officially changed from Dutch to Frisian. The adjustments ranged from minor spelling adjustments, such as Grouw > Grou, to more extensive changes, such as Oudkerk > Aldtsjerk, leading to a change in the alphabetical ordering. That was especially important at the time since people relied on printed telephone and zip code books to find addresses. While signs for place-names and roads were changed, the postal and telephone company refused to include the change and asked for enormous amounts of money to make any adjustment. As a compromise, the municipalities paid for brief cross-references from the official Frisian to the Dutch name forms in telephone books. The municipalities went to court and received the verdict that giving names was their official jurisdiction. However, it was also settled that private persons and companies could not be forced to use those official names. This was quite bizarre for several reasons. The postal and telephone service was a monopolist and had only recently been privatised technically with
100% of the shares owned by the state. However, the minister refused to use her influence in this case and took a purely formal position.

A lot of irritation was caused by the limited acceptance by state authorities and the refusal of the post and telephone services with their great impact on address spelling and finding. This happened not only outside the province, but rather even within, as commercial firms were especially afraid of damage to their business. The consequence was that instead of a boost for Frisian language policy, the place-names became a furiously disputed topic in the province. It evoked intensive and emotional debates about Frisian identity and language status, where mother tongue was far from decisive in people’s personal opinions. At the end of the day, only a minority of the people supported the decisions of the municipality councils. Only two municipalities followed the new name policy in the nineties, and only because they had formulated the intention before the intense debates in the first
two cases had started. However, as a consequence of privatising postal and telephone services, more companies became involved and they decided to use official names only. In addition, the state demanded the application of official names for their internal administration (including the tax office) from the postal service in 1992, but its implementation went slowly. In the course of the nineties, the official Frisian place-names became more and more used in administrative and business matters. The postal service followed as one of the last in 2000. The census bureau CBS still applies a hybrid policy towards the name of the province and place-names. Nowadays, people can use both names, e.g. when searching online for a telephone number or using an online navigation planner. After failed initiatives to declare the Frisian names to be the official ones in Wûnserad iel en Achtkar-spelen in the nineties, successful initiatives were taken in Dantumadiel (2009) Leeuwarderadeel (2009) and Menameradiel (2010). At this moment in 7 out of 20 relevant municipalities, the place-names are officially in Frisian.

Much less disputed was the application of official Frisian names for nearly all water bodies in the province in 2007. Since 1979 official names of various objects, being in Dutch or Frisian, are included on maps by the official mapping agency, nowadays Kadaster.

4.2. East and North Friesland

The speech communities in Germany are heavily threatened in their existence and the language plays no significant role in public life anymore. Hence, Frisian endonyms are only used as a second name on

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10 Intriguing difference is that the motor club (ANWB) allows both Frisian and Dutch names for every village in Fryslân, while the telephone number search allows Frisian and Dutch for place-names that are officially Frisian, but no Frisian names for place-names that are officially Dutch.

11 Also the municipality of Wymbritseradiel approved the adaption of Frisian place-names per 1-1-2009 but due to protests from some entrepreneurs it was never implemented. From 1-1-2011 the municipality is part of the new large municipality Südwest-Fryslân, comprising also: Sneek, Bolsward, Wûnserad iel, Nijefurd. The place-name policy of this new municipality has to be formulated yet.

12 In practice, a lot can go wrong, but at least the intention was there and the mapping agency is getting more and more grip on the matter (Ormel ing & Versloot 2008: 7 ff.).
Figure 10-11-12. The use of Frisian endonyms on place-name signs in East Friesland (Saterland; 10), North Friesland (11) and on platform signs for the train in Dagebüll (North Friesland; 12).
local village signs, alongside the official name. Their status is secondary (Walker 2001: 276-277) and nearly folkloristic. Monolingual street names are more common in North Friesland, especially on Sylt and Amrum.

5. Findings and Conclusions

As known from many other studies, place-names prove to be extremely helpful in the reconstruction of settlement history, i.e. of Friesland. Developments such as primary settlement (names in –haim and -ingi) and population mixture in later colonised regions (such as the North Frisian names of Danish origin in -büll and -trup/-dorf) can be distilled from the analysis of name distributional patterns. They provide knowledge about the early Middle Ages, which are low on written sources, and add to the evidence from archeology and linguistics and more recently, genetics. Extensive studies are available on individual place-names in Friesland. The wide availability of digital information sources in onomastics (e.g. the used datasets here), geography (e.g. Google-earth) and archeology offer opportunities for more detailed understanding of Friesland’s dark Middle Ages.

Given the fact that Frisian throughout its history has until recently been a non-standardised language that was open to linguistic influence from other cultural centres, the shape of names in Friesland has often gone through several borrowing processes. The consequence is that the synchronic perception of what is a Frisian endonym and what an exonym from a neighbouring language does often not match the linguistic derivation. The most telling example given here was the pair Frisian – Dutch Tytsjerk – Tietjerk.

The synchronic perception of what is a Frisian name and a non-Frisian form finds its expression in the discussion about official name policies. As known from various other places in Europe with minority languages, names explicitly signalise identities and can evoke intense and emotional debates. Visibility of a minority language can be perceived as very threatening: both by central state authorities, as well as by individual citizens in the actual region who are attached to the status of the majority language. Even when onomastics can provide background knowledge on the origin of names, the core of this debate is subject to disciplines such as mass-psychology, rather than to onomastics.
6. References


Summary: Frisian place-names and place-names in Friesland

This article sketches etymological, distributional and judicial aspects of place-names in the Frisian regions of the Netherlands and Germany. As a result of settlement history, a number of name suffixes is overrepresented in the Frisian regions: -haim, -ing > -ens, -werd, -werf and additionally –büll in North Friesland. The Frisian onomastic landscape is not unique in the application of these name types, but rather in the specific cocktail of the types and their high densities. Friesland’s names bear witness of a massive resettlement in the aftermath of the Great Migrations.

The second part of the article shows how Frisian names are linguistically adopted and partly assimilated in the adjacent languages Dutch and German. Dutch and German exonyms for Frisian place-names show a mixture of archaic forms and superficial phonological and morphological replacement. The trend seems to be: the larger the place, the older the exonym.
As Frisian has had the status of a minority language since many centuries, Frisian endonyms are hardly used as official names in the Netherlands and Germany. An exception is found in the Dutch province of Fryslân, where Frisian endonyms have been adopted as official names since the fifties of the last century. Although highly symbolic in its impact, this aspect of language emancipation has been the object of severe debates and reluctant acceptance by Dutch state authorities.

Résumé: Noms de lieux frisons et noms de lieux en Frise

L’article esquisse des aspects étymologiques, aréologiques et judiciaires des noms de lieux dans les régions frisonnes des Pays-Bas et d’Allemagne. Issus de l’histoire du peuplement, un certain nombre de suffixes toponymiques est surreprésenté dans ces régions: haim, -ing > -ens, werd, werf et aussi -büll en Frise du Nord. Si la toponymie frisonne n’est pas la seule à présenter ces types de noms, elle a pour spécificité leur mélange et leur forte densité. Les noms frisons témoignent d’un repeuplement massif au lendemain des Grandes Migrations.

La seconde partie de l’article montre comment les noms frisons sont linguistiquement adoptés et partiellement assimilés dans les langues hollandaise et allemande voisines. Les exonymes hollandais et allemands pour les noms de lieux frisons révèlent un mélange de formes archaïques et de remplacement phonologique et morphologique superficiel. La tendance semble être la suivante: plus le lieu est grand, plus l’exonyme est ancien.

Dans la mesure où le frison a eu le statut d’une langue minoritaire pendant des siècles, les endonymes frisons ne semblent guère usités comme noms officiels dans les Pays-Bas et en Allemagne. On en trouve une exception dans la province néerlandaise de Frise, où les endonymes frisons ont été adoptés comme noms officiels depuis les années 1950. Bien que fort symbolique dans son impact, cet aspect de l’émancipation langagière a fait l’objet de sévères débats et d’une acceptation réticente par les autorités publiques néerlandaises.

Zusammenfassung: Friesische Ortsnamen und Ortsnamen in Friesland


Der zweite Teil des Artikels zeigt, wie friesische Namen sprachlich adaptiert und teilweise an die benachbarten Sprachen Niederländisch und Deutsch
assimiliert werden. Deutsche und niederländische Exonyme für friesische Ortanken weisen eine Mischung aus archaischen Formen und oberflächlicher phonologischer und morphologischer Substitution auf. Es ergibt sich scheinbar folgende Tendenz: je größer die Siedlung, umso älter das Exonym.