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The Old Frisian **e**-*plurals*

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1. Introduction

The plural formation pattern is fairly transparent for the majority of nouns in Old Frisian, with a clear distinction depending on gender, and the following inventory of markers: masculine *–ar*, *–an*, feminine *–a*, and neuter zero ending (long stems) or *–e* (short stems). The distribution of the nominative/accusative pl. marker (NAp)[1] in the masculine paradigm is dependent on the dialect and, accordingly, while in the eastern dialects the *–ar* marker is dominant, the *–an* ending prevails in the western material: *fiskar/fiskan* 'fish(es)'.[2] The dialect of Rüstringen, representing probably the most archaic inflectional pattern, shows predominantly *–a*, alongside *–ar*[3] (cf. Philippa[4] for a discussion of the possible origin of the Old Frisian *–ar* ending). The pattern becomes somewhat more complex when one takes a closer look at the inflection in the minor (unproductive) classes. There, the process of extensive restructuring, involving gradual analogical levelling of inflectional endings, resulted in frequent transfers of nouns to the productive declensional classes (i.e. to masculine and neuter *a*-stems and feminine ō-stems, as well as the *n*-stems). Consequently, apart from some endingless plurals in consonantal classes, which occasionally retained *i*mutation (e.g. *brōther:brōther* 'brothers', *mon:man* 'men', *tōth:tēth* 'teeth'), the inherited plural endings in classes such as the *i*-stems and *u*-stems were largely obliterated and replaced by the more common *–a(r)/ –an* markers.[5] The scant vestiges of the original pattern are to be found in the eastern manuscripts R1, R2, H, B and E1, where, for instance, the archaic *u*stem plural marker *–a* in *suna* (NAp) is attested alongside the

1 The following set of abbreviations will be used to refer to case forms: Ns, Gs, Ds and As to denote the nominative, genitive, dative, accusative singular, respectively, and Np, Gp, Dp, Ap to refer to their plural equivalents.
2 If not mentioned otherwise, the term 'plural' refers consistently in the present paper to the nominative and accusative plural (NAp).
3 R.H. Bremmer, *An introduction to Old Frisian* (Amsterdam 2009) p. 60.
4 M. Philippa, *Noord-zee-germaanse ontwikkelingen* (Alblasserdam 1987).
5 T. Siebs, 'Geschichter der friesischen Sprache', *in:* H. Paul (ed.), *Grundriss der Germanischen Philologie*, vol. 1, (Straßburg 1901), pp. 1152–1464.

innovative *–ar/–en* endings in the noun *frethe* 'peace'. As regards the class of the *i*-stems, a single secure instance of the surviving *i*stem plural ending in Old Frisian is the form *liude* 'people'.[6]

The focus of the present study is on the inflectional irregularities in the paradigm of the unproductive declensions, which cannot be unambiguously ascribed to the sway of the *a*-, ō-, or *n*-stems. These variations, found in the course of a systematic analysis of the oldest Old Frisian sources (R1, R2, B, H, E1 and U), involve the presence of the *e*-plural marker (NAp) in a number of masculine and neuter nouns, in which no plural ending was expected, e.g. *brōthere* 'brothers' (B), or *fiande* 'enemies' (U). The interpretation of these inflectional anomalies, as well as determining their origin poses some difficulties. Depending on the adopted approach, these irregular forms can be explained either as phonological or morphological innovations. The former view finds support in the fact that in some late-mediaeval Frisian manuscripts, a word final *–e* can represent a reduced historical ending *–a*.[7] The forms in question can accordingly be interpreted as reduced phonological variants. This claim, however, does not bear scrutiny in the light of the evidence provided by Versloot,[8] which proves that the reduction of word final *–a* to *–e* did not take place until deep into the fifteenth century.[9] In pre-1400 Old Frisian sources, the contrast between word final *–e* and *–a* was therefore not a matter of mere reduction, but it was phonologically and hence morphologically relevant[10] for a more detailed discussion of alternative treatments.[11] The alternative morphological interpretation of these forms appears to have considerable explanatory potential, which can be enhanced by the inclusion of some semantic criteria. An interplay of these morpho-semantic factors will be subject to a closer investigation in the present paper. Accordingly, the present study

6 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1342.

7 E.g. Siebs, 'Geschichter', pp. 1340, 1345.

8 A.P. Versloot, *Mechanisms of language change: vowel reduction in 15th century West Frisian* (Utrecht 2008).

9 Versloot, *Mechanisms*, p. 368.

10 Cf. Versloot, *Mechanisms*, pp. 205-212.

11 This relevance can be illustrated by the figures from the paradigm of *frethe* 'peace' (*u*-stem) as attested in manuscripts U and B, with the contrast between the historically inherited forms NAs *frethe* and GDs *fretha* preserved in 93% of the cases (n = 111) in the former, and in 100% (n = 37) in the latter source. Deviations from this pattern are not necessarily due to vowel reduction. This claim is confirmed by the evidence from E1, where no alternation between *–a* (NA) and *–e* (GD) exists in the paradigm of the singular. The As form *fretha* in E1 can, accordingly, be ascribed to analogy from the masculine *n*stems where *–a* was the only inflectional marker in the entire singular.

is aimed at evaluating the origin of the *e*-plurals in the oldest Old Frisian material, focusing especially on the nouns in which they can be considered innovative. The following discussion will demonstrate that the Old Frisian *e*-plurals are concentrated in the masculine *nd-*, *r*-stems and root nouns, i.e. in classes where they are historicálly not expected. It will be argued that the –*e* ending may be interpreted as a temporarily productive marker employed to denote the plural of collectives of people.[12] The emergence of this ending in minor stems is framed in a broader context of morphological restructuring of the declensional system in Old Frisian and traced back to both the historical *i*-stems and the obscure *u*-plural marker in the *r*-stems.

The scope of the present study was confined to the mediaeval stage of the Frisian language, i.e. Old Frisian. The heterogenous nature of the language is reflected in its diatopic division with three main dialect areas: West Frisian (present-day province of Fryslân in the Netherlands), East Frisian (Dutch province of Groningen and the adjacent region Ostfriesland in Germany) and, finally, the easternmost dialect area of Rüstringen, corresponding to the current Kreis Friesland and the region of Butjadingen. In the context of the restructuring process of the early Frisian nominal inflection, this dialectal diversification, reflected in phonological and morphological idiosyncrasies, turns out to be consequential, enabling to capture the niceties of the process. In compliance with the temporal boundaries sketched by Versloot,[13] Old Frisian is defined here as the language dated between the earliest attestations in the thirteenth century and c. 1410. The textual material for this period comprises several legal manuscripts which include:

12 For a special marking of collectivity, compare the Modern West Frisian contrast between the regular plural *manlju* 'men, a plurality of individuals' and *mannen*, denoting 'a group of men, belonging together'.

13 A.P. Versloot, 'Why Old Frisian is still quite old', *Folia Linguistica Historica* 25/1-2 (2004), p. 288.

1. Codex *Unia* (U) for Old West Frisian[14] (Sytsema 2012);[15]
2. Codices *Hunsingo* (H), *Emsingo* 1 (E1) and the *Brokmerbref* (B) for Old East Frisian;
3. Codices *Riustringen* 1 and 2 (R1, R2) for the Rüstringen dialect.[16]

These texts constituted the basis for the present study of the irregular *e*-plurals in the paradigm of minor stems and the final conclusions are based on the evidence provided by these sources.[17] Occasionally, however, when relevant, reference will be made also to the attestations found in the fifteenth century codices.

2. *e*-plurals and their current interpretation

The *e*-marker is the expected historical plural ending in the *i*-stems in Old Frisian. Van Helten mentions a few instances of surviving *e*-plurals in the nominative and accusative of the long-rooted feminine *i*stems, such as *dēde* 'deeds' in B and R2.[18] Siebs leaves it open whether these are historical endings, or instances of a phonological reduction of *–a*.[19] The analysis of the corpus revealed that these forms are found only in the eastern texts

14 J. Sytsema, *Diplomatic edition Codex Unia*. (2012) http://tdb.fryske-akademy.eu/tdb/index-unia-en.html#.

15 Despite the relatively late dating of the manuscript U (*Codex Unia*) (the text of the codex dated to 1477 is preserved only in a 17th c. copy), it was included in the corpus on account of the very archaic nature of most of its parts. The texts of this codex represent a number of "linguistic 'layers'", including relatively archaic ones, which can certainly be dated earlier than 1410, the oldest parts perhaps to the late 13th c. (Versloot, *Mechanisms*, pp. 7, 70).

16 These codex abbreviations will be used in the remainder of the text to refer to both the source and the dialect. The text editions used in the present paper are: Sytsema, *Diplomatic edition*: U; J. Hoekstra, *De eerste en de tweede Hunsinger codex* ('s-Gravenhage 1950): H; P. Sipma, *De eerste Emsinger Codex* ('s-Gravenhage 1943): E1; W.J. Buma, *Die Brokmer Rechtshandschriften* ('s-Gravenhage 1949): B; W.J. Buma, *De eerste Riustringer codex* ('s-Gravenhage 1961): R1; W.J. Buma, *Het tweede Rüstringer handschrift* ('s-Gravenhage 1954): R2. Cf. Bremmer, *introduction* for further information on the background, references and editions; the texts are also available in A.P. Versloot & H.A. Nijdam, *Integrated Frisian language database 1.0*. (2006) http://194.171.192.245:8020/tdbport/ and A.P. Versloot & H.A. Nijdam, *Integrated Frisian language database 2.0*. (2011) http://tdb.fryske-akademy.eu/tdb/index-en.html.

17 The present quantitative investigation draws upon a more comprehensive study of the nominal inflection conducted on the mentioned Old Frisian manuscripts. E. Adamczyk, *Disintegration of nominal inflection in early West Germanic languages* (in prep.). The subject matter of this paper was already briefly alluded to in A.P. Versloot & E. Adamczyk, 'On the Significance of Corpus Size and Composition for the Study of Old English and Old Frisian: Evidence from the Inflectional Morpology of Nouns'. Aspects of Old Frisian Philology / Amsterdamer Beiträge.

18 W.L. van Helten, *Altostfriesische Grammatik* (Leeuwarden 1890) p. 146.

19 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1343.

and their total number amounts to 12 archaic feminine instances of the NAp (out of 110 tokens, i.e. 11%) and 5 archaic masculine plurals (out of 36 tokens, i.e. 14%).[20] Despite the low percentage of the archaic forms found in the Old Frisian corpus, the evidence from other Germanic languages indicates that this inflectional pattern was at some early stage largely productive, spreading to other declensions (cf. Old High German, Old Low Franconian and Old Saxon). It seems feasible that some vestiges of this earlier productivity are to be found in Old Frisian in the irregular *e*-plurals scattered throughout the minor declensions.

The following subsections introduce the irregular instances of plurals of masculine and neuter nouns in *-e*, recorded in the oldest Old Frisian texts, including an overview of the treatments they received in earlier scholarly works.

2.1 *i-stem: 'liude'*

The only plural form in *–e* which seems pretty straightforward in its interpretation as an old *i*stem is the plurale tantum *liude/liode* 'people',[21] with 97% of tokens following the archaic pattern. It parallels the Old English *lēode*, which also consistently preserves the final vowel. In both languages, the form is not the historically expected plural, as, in compliance with the *Auslautgesetze*, the word final PGmc. –ī had regularly disappeared after a long syllable.[22] The retention of the ending *–e* after a long syllable

20 Included in this counting are the five instances of endingless plurals, such as *kest* (2 x) in R. Essentially, for the *i*stems, the alternation *–e* ~ –ø is phonologically motivated, while the alternation *–e* ~ *–a* is rather morphological. Among these few archaic forms Sjölin (1970) mentions *bēnabreke* 'bone breaches'. Most likely, however, it is a misinterpretation of the formula *trina bena breke*, where *trina bena* should be interpreted as a Gs and *breke* as a Ns, i.e. '[three bones'] breach' rather than *'three [bone breaches]'. This interpretation is corroborated by the evidence provided by Jus Municipalum Frisonum (J), a West Frisian codex from the 15th century, which attests to: *thrira benena breke* […….] *thre benbrekan, thrira benena wtgung* 'three bones' breach […] three bone breaches, three bones' exit'. This evidence legitimises the assumption that a plural form *breke* was not attested in Old Frisian. Another potential archaic *i*-stem is *helse*, the plural of *hals* 'neck' (Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1342), attested only in H in *fri(a) helse*. This form corresponds to words such as Icelandic *frelsi* 'freedom' and Old High German *frīhalsi* 'id.', and is not a plural form of *hals*, but should rather be interpreted as a singular of the feminine īn-stem *fri(a)helse*.

21 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1342.

22 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1328; A. Campbell, *Old English grammar* (Oxford 1977) §610 (7).

represents, therefore, an irregular development (see section 3.1. for a further discussion).[23]

2.2 *u-stem: 'lithe'*

The word *lith* 'limb, member' is originally a neuter *u*stem, which in many Germanic languages testifies to a transition to the *i*-stems. Its historically developed *u*-stem plural form *litha* is attested as a common plural form solely in Old West Frisian (U), where it subsequently developed into a plurale tantum *litha* > *lia* > *ljea* > *lea* 'body (= limbs)' (Modern Frisian).[24] The Old East Frisian dialects, however, show a plural form *lithe* (R *lithi*), which admits of several interpretations. Siebs[25] and Bremmer[26] interpret the –*e*-ending in *lith* as a direct effect of an analogical shift of this noun from the *u*-stems to the *a*-stems, with the –*e* ending being a regular phonological development of –*u* (cf. R *skipu*).[27] In fact, Siebs discusses the inflections of this noun (*lithe/litha/lithi*) in the section devoted to the *a*-stems rather than *i*-stems or *u*-stems.[28] For the form *lithi*, attested in R, Siebs provides a different interpretation, where he considers it to be a continuation of the original -*i* (< *-*iu*):

> Älteres -i (vor wirkung des i-Umlautes **suni* aus **suniuz*) scheint sich in *lithi* RE1 erhalten zu haben [...].[29]

23 Campbell signalizes the preservation of the word final –*e* (< PGmc. *ī) in the OE feminine *i*-stems after long syllables, which does not comply with the regular phonological development in Old English. (Campbell, *grammar*, § 604, fn.1) The same incongruence holds for Old Frisian. An example of the expected phonological development (i.e. the loss of the PGmc. *ī after a long syllable) is attested in Old Frisian in the NAp form *kest* (R1). This Ø ending form alternates with the NAp forms in –*e*: *tide* and *skelde*. D. Boutkan, *A concise grammar of the Old Frisian dialect of the first Riustring manuscript* (Odense 1996) pp. 72-4. The contrast between the forms with and without –*e* reflects a tendency to drop the final vowel after an unvoiced consonant rather than after a voiced one. For a detailed discussion of the same voice correlation in Old and Modern West Frisian, see Versloot, *Mechanisms*, pp. 134-137, 166-167).

24 In Modern West Frisian, the singular *lid* developed two new plural forms: a regular *lidden* 'limbs', attested as the second part of a compound (e.g. *eachlid* 'eyelid') and *leden*, referring to 'members (persons)', the latter being a loanword from Dutch.

25 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1340.

26 Bremmer, *Introduction*, p. 62.

27 It must be noted that –*a* was the regular plural ending (NAp) in the *u*-stems and –*u* (> –*e*) in the *a*-stems.

28 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1340.

29 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1344.

Such an interpretation of this form is, however, idiosyncratic, with no parallels found elsewhere in Old Frisian, and thus rather implausible.[30] Theoretically, one could attempt to explain this irregularity by recourse to analogical extension of the productive *a*-stem inflections. Much as such an explanation is adequate for the plural forms *lithe* in H and E, it does not hold for the form *lithi* in R. The reason for it is the phonological shape of R, namely, the fact that the full vowel qualities in short-rooted nouns are consistently retained in this manuscript and, therefore, the expected development of the *a*-stem plural of *lith* would be **lithu* and not *lithi*. Instead, the attested form fits the regular pattern of *i*stem plurals. This account may be extended to the plural forms in -*e* found in H and E, where these irregular formations may potentially be traced back to both –*u* (the "*a*-stem hypothesis") and –*i* (the "*i*-stem hypothesis"). Adopting the latter interpretation seems more compelling, as it implies that there was a potential common source for all these irregular Old East Frisian forms.

2.3 *nd-stems: 'friunde, fiande'*

The *e*-plural forms of *nd*-stems receive no special attention in historical grammars of Old Frisian. They are not mentioned in Bremmer[31] and only alluded to by Van Helten who makes no attempt at explaining them.[32] Also Siebs refers to these formations, but he is not explicit as to the origin of either *friunde* or *friunda*, stating briefly that:

> Nom. Akk. Plur. *friond* R *friund* ist regulär aus germ. **frijond(i)z*; *friunda friunde* E (*fiande* Dr?) sind Analogiebildung nach anderen Mask. [....][33]

A fairly straightforward implication of the above formulation is that Siebs considers *friunde* to be a phonological variant of *friunda*. The form *friunda* as a NAp is found in the relatively archaic texts of E2, E3 and F, dated to

30 Siebs ('Geschichter', p. 1344) adduces *i*-mutation to account for the emergence of the late-Old Frisian plural forms of the type *sennen* 'sons', etc. The fronted forms which Siebs ascribes to *i*-mutation are, in fact, instances of dental mutation (J. Hoekstra, 'Dental mutation ('Dentalumlaut') in Frisian and other languages on the North Sea Littoral', in: *North-Western European Language Evolution: NOWELE*. 50-51 (2007), pp. 43-62), which is a spontaneous, local, mostly West Frisian (South-West) development (cf. Versloot, *Mechanisms*, pp. 113-114) for the details of the distribution of OFris. plural forms of *sune* in the later sources).

31 Bremmer, *Introduction*, p. 64.

32 Van Helten, *Grammatik*, p. 160.

33 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1347.

the fifteenth century. In E1, E2, E3 it is evidently a reflection of a more general tendency to write <a> for older <e> (cf. *fretha* in section 1). The alternation *friunde/friunda* is, however, absent from the older texts.
The plurals *friunde* 'friends' and *fiande* 'enemies' are attested only in the Old West Frisian material, i.e. in manuscript U. Five potential irregular *e*-plural forms were identified, alongside four archaic endingless forms for *friund*. The most unambiguous instance is attested in the following context:

> ….*jef hi habbe thenne sijg wonnen wether sine fiande.*
> '…or he has won the victory against his enemies'
> (U: Processus Judicii)

The preposition *wether* is consistently attested in Old West Frisian with an accusative object, which renders the interpretation of this form as the Ap definitive. In the following phrase, attested twice in nearly the same wording in Unia, the reading is more ambiguous:

> …. *and j riocht al to lika thine arma and thine rika, tha sibba and thine framda, thine liawa and thine letha, tha fiande and thine friunde,…*
> '…, and Ye judge all the same (way) the poor and the rich, the relative and the stranger, the beloved and the disliked, the fiends and the friends'
> (U: Oath Formularies)

The array of persons is clearly in the accusative and the reading *tha fiande* could indeed make a proper Ap, albeit with a fairly rare –*e* plural. Although the form *tha fiande* could be interpreted as a Ds, the rest of the sentence excludes this reading. The –*e* ending in the As would be a unique instance, lacking the expected agreement with the article *tha*. The plural reading does not entirely fit in this listing, but a stylistic parallel is actually to be found in *Jus*:

> *Soe aegh hi toe delane ende toe demane dae fianden als dae frioenden...*
> 'So he has to judge and deem the fiends as well as the friends'

Therefore, the interpretation of *tha fiande* as an accusative pl. is not implausible. It becomes more problematic, however, for the phrase *thine friunde*, where *friunde* stays in line with the previous form *fiande*, but the article appears in an accusative sg. form again. Additionally, *thine* could potentially also mean 'your (thy)', which, however, fits neither the chosen pronoun *j* 'Ye' nor the word choice in the rest of the phrase. Given that the

combination *tha friande and thine fiunde* is attested twice in codex Unia, a copy error by Franciscus Junius, the 'author' of the attested copy of Unia, must be rather excluded. Altogether, it can be concluded that the interpretation of these four irregular forms as Ap is feasible and much more justified than the alternative treatments (i.e. as an As or Ds).

2.4 *r-stems: 'brothere, sustere'*

The *e*-plurals of *r*-stems are recorded in B, E_1, and H, in the words 'brother' and 'sister'. The majority of the attested instances are the plural forms of *brother* (n=17), found alongside a single form *sustere*. Bremmer[34] makes no reference to the plurals in –*e* in the *r*-stems, however, the formations are referred to by both Van Helten[35] and Siebs.[36] The former explains these forms by pointing to their Old English equivalents in *u*[37] (cf. section 3.3), whereas the latter offers the following interpretation of these irregularities:

> Nom. Akk. Plur. [....] *a*-Formen (*brôthera* R *dochtera* Ro *sustera* BEHUDr) sind Analogiebildung nach der starken Deklination; die nicht seltenen *e*-Formen (*brôthere* BEH *sustere* BE *sistere* J) können sowohl aus diesem -*a* als auch aus einer alten Akkusativform auf -*u* (vgl. ae. *bróđru*) gedeutet werden.[38]

Siebs consistently considers the option that –*e* is a phonological development of –*a*. If this was the case, the plural forms in -*e* and -*a* could be expected to have co-occurred. Such an alternating pattern is, however, not to be found in the investigated sources. Accordingly, manuscript R, where *brothera* is attested, testifies to no *e*-plurals in the *r*-stems, whereas in the other manuscripts which do show the *e*-plural forms, no –*a*-plurals for the masculine *r*stems are recorded. The morphological alternation between –*e* (< -*u*) and –*a* is attested in the feminine paradigms, where the *a*-plurals in the feminine *swester/suster* are an effect of analogical extension of the feminine ōstems. Granted the dating of the phonological reductions in Old Frisian, the origin of –*e* as a phonological variant of –*a* in both feminine and masculine nouns is unlikely in the pre-1400 sources. Another noun which could be added to this declensional class is *sundre*

34 Bremmer, *Introduction*, p. 64.
35 Van Helten, *Grammatik*.
36 Siebs, 'Geschichter'.
37 Van Helten, *Grammatik*, p. 159.
38 Siebs, 'Geschichter', p. 1346.

(B), *sunder* (E2) 'son':[39] *and senter thre svndre ieftha monegra…* 'and are there three sons or more….' (B1, 17.10). The noun was explained by Buma as an analogical *r*-stem formation from *sune* 'son'.[40] The archaic endingless plural, attested in E2, is the expected plural form, assuming that the noun belonged to the group of *r*-stems. The innovative plural in *–e* is attested twice in manuscript B.

2.5 *root nouns: 'manne'*

The irregular plural form *manne* is attested four times in the Old West Frisian corpus. In the text Processus Judicii in U from c. 1400, it appears in a phrase with a numeral *tweer*, which clearly points to the form of the Np: *Item tweer manne mogen wrwald dwaen [...]*, 'idem, two men may commit violence…' In the Synodal Law (2 x) and the Older Skeltenariucht (1 x), one finds the plural *husmanne* in a vocative case, e.g.

> *and sine sineth salma al husmanne seka*
> 'and his synode shall one, all 'house men', attend'
> (U: Synodal Law)

The form competes in Unia with one instance of *mannen* and seven endingless plurals *man/mon*. At the same time, no further traces of the impact of the productive *a*-stem inflection (potentially resulting in NAp **manna*(*r*)) are found in any of the investigated Old Frisian texts. As regards the treatment of this irregular plural in historical grammars, the forms have not been given any attention so far.[41]

2.6. *Summary of forms*

The lemma *liude* is probably most unproblematic when it comes to its interpretation; as a plurale tantum, it is consistently attested with the final *–e* in all archaic varieties of Old Frisian. For *lithe*, the justification for the interpretation as an *e*-plural (< *–i*), rather than a phonologically reduced

39 Van Helten, *Grammatik*, p. 159.
40 Buma, *Rechtshandschriften*, p. 265.
41 As Codex Unia is a copy of a copy, one could think of a potential interpretation of these forms as being a result of scribal errors, i.e. a missed nasal stroke (*<mannē> = mannen). However, the distribution of these forms, with 4 instances found in the manuscript, is too consistent to allow for treating the ending as a scribal error.

u-plural, comes from the earliest attested R-form *lithi*.[42] As regards the *e*-plurals in the *nd*-, *r*-stems and root nouns, a reduction from plural forms in *–a* is unlikely for two reasons: firstly, because of the strict distinction between the two vowels at this stage in Old Frisian, and secondly, due to the lack of parallel plural forms in *–a* in the paradigms of these words. An exception here is the class of feminine *r*stems, where the plural forms in *–a* are attested, representing the expected analogical formations from the dominant plural feminine pattern in Old Frisian. Finally, the possibility that the plurals in *–e* could be an effect of scribal errors must be dismissed, as they are too numerous and too much clustered on specific lemmas.

It can be concluded that Old Frisian had a small stock of nouns which formed their plural in *–e*. Most of the identified instances are masculine, except for the neuter *lith* (*u*-stem) and feminine *sustere* (*r*-stem). Apart from the old *i*stem *liude*, continuing the archaic inflection, and the former *u*stem *lith*, all nouns derive from classes which were characterized by lack of any marking in the NAp.

3. Potential sources for *e*-plurals in Old Frisian: Evidence from Old English

Since a straightforward explanation of these irregular plural formations seems fairly problematic, a broader perspective, entailing a recourse to the evidence from other Germanic languages may turn out to be necessary to interpret the irregular forms. In the light of the postulated Anglo-Frisian linguistic affinity, one would expect that the evidence offered by Old English may be particularly valuable. Old English, attested roughly 500 years earlier than Old Frisian, is naturally often more archaic, testifying, by and large, to the stage which Old Frisian developed from. The reconstructed Proto-Frisian forms, be it phonological or morphological, accord essentially with the Old English ones in very many cases, which means that the Old English evidence is potentially very informative about the oldest non-attested stage of Old Frisian. Therefore, a comparison of the Old Frisian instances of *e*plurals to parallel attestations in Old English may turn out to be elucidating and may offer some insights as to

42 In Wangeroogic East Frisian, which is a successor of the Rüstringen dialect, the singular form *lith* and the plural *lithen* are found. The related East Frisian dialect of Harlingerland shows a plural *lidde*, which can be derived from **litha*. However, the *e*plural in this dialect, where *–en* is the prevalent plural marker, shows up in a wide variety of nouns and there seems to be a very low correlation between the plural forms in the Harlinger dialect and Old Frisian. Altogether, these (early-)modern forms provide little compelling evidence for the historical reconstruction.

their adequate interpretation. In what follows, the irregular Old Frisian forms will be accordingly confronted with parallel forms in Old English, with a view to estimating the validity of the interpretations.

3.1 *i-stems*

The class of *i*-stems is the major group of nouns where the *e*-plural formation can be expected in Old English. The inflectional pattern with the NAp in *–e* is attested in three subgroups of nouns, including:[43]

a) regular historical short *i*-stems, with the following paradigmatic pattern:

	short-rooted	long-rooted
NAs	*wine* 'friend'	*giest* 'guest'
NAp	*wine/ –as*	*giestas*

b) nation and tribal names

Engle 'Angles', *Dēne* 'Danes', *Norþhymbre* 'Northumbrians', including loanwords, such as *Egypte* 'Egyptians', *Beornice* 'Bernicians', as well as names of dwellers, marked by the suffixes *-sæte*, *-ware*: *Cantware*, *Wihtware*

c) some collective nouns

ylde 'men', *ylfe* 'elves', *lēode* 'people'

The presence of the *e*-plural is expected only in category a), i.e. where the shape of the plural ending depends on the length of the root syllable. Accordingly, as the original Proto-Old English *–*i* disappears after a long root, the ending *–as* is introduced by analogy from the *a*stems, replacing the endingless form (**giest*). Since the archaic paradigm of the short-rooted nouns displays no singular-plural contrast (*wine-wine*), the analogical ending *–as* tends to disseminate also there already early in the early Old English period; yet, the archaic pattern of inflection is still retained in c. 30 percent of forms.[44] Given the root length-conditioned shape of the plural inflection, categories b) and c) are phonological anomalies, since

43 Campbell, *Grammar*, §610 (7).

44 E. Adamczyk, 'On morphological restructuring in the Old English and Old Saxon nominal paradigms', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 66 (2010) pp. 33-62.

they preserve the *–e* after long roots, where no ending (or a novel analogical ending) would be expected. The shape of the *i*-stem inflection in Old Frisian is reminiscent of that found in Old English, with the distribution of inflection endings being guided by the length of the root syllable as well. As mentioned earlier, the Old Frisian forms seem to show greater conservatism since they are frequently found with the archaic *–e* markers in the plural, irrespective of their metrical structure. When it comes to nation and tribe names, they are very scantily attested in Old Frisian. Some of the few recorded forms are found in R2 in the sentence: *tha hwile ther alle frisa and alle saxa and alle dana hethon weron* 'while all Frisians and all Saxons and all Danes were pagans' (R2, II.2), where the nouns are attested in the nominative plural. Theoretically, the forms in *–a* could be analogical formations from the *a*stems in this manuscript, but the other paradigm forms of *frisa* and *saxa* indicate that they should rather be interpreted as *n*stems.[45] Consequently, for the words from group b) there is positive counter-evidence in Old Frisian that they did not show *e*plurals any longer. This means that *liude* is the most explicit positive remnant continuing the historical inflectional pattern in Old Frisian, corresponding to the Old English *i*stem *e*-plurals. The other members of group c) in Old English are not attested in Old Frisian. Concluding, the parallel between Old English and Old Frisian seems to involve the retention of the word final *–e* as a marker of plurality in some nouns denoting (collective) human beings.

3.2 *nd-stems*

The historically expected plural marker in Old English *nd*-stems is a zero ending (potentially with a mutated root vowel), which is best preserved in the words *frēond* 'friend' and *fēond* 'enemy'. A deviation from this pattern, apart from the pressure of the *a*- and ō-stems, is to be found in the disyllabic forms which may show plurals in *–e*, testifying to the impact of the strong adjectival inflection,[46] e.g. NAs *hettend* 'enemy': NAp *hettende* alongside *hettend* and *hettendas*. No such innovation, involving the presence of the *e*-plural marker, is found in the monosyllabic nouns, where the dominant novel inflections are those of the *a*-stems.

In Old Frisian, in turn, there are no attestations of *e*-plurals in the NAp of the disyllabic *nd*stems. The unexpected *e*-plurals are attested exactly

45 Only E1 shows the Ds *saxe* (in: *fon tha suther saxe* 'from the southern Saxon'), which may theoretically be a continuation of the historical *i*stem, alongside the weak Gp *saxena* found in the same codex.

46 Campbell, *Grammar*, §632.

in the monosyllabic nouns *fiand* and perhaps also *friund*. This indicates clearly that the introduction of the *–e* marker in the NAp of these nouns is independent from the developments in Old English.

3.3 *r-stems*

Apart from the historically regular endingless NAp forms, a series of forms ending in *–u* is also well attested in Old English: *brōþor/brōþru* 'brothers', *mōdor/mōdru* 'mothers', *dohtor/dohtru* 'daughters', *sweostor/sweostru* 'sisters'. The novel *–u* ending has been ascribed to the influence of the assumingly neuter collective *gebrōþor*, with a plural in *–u* (which is the expected ending of short-rooted nouns, cf. *i*-stems).[47] However, **gebrōþru* itself is not attested in Old English and the numeral in the following example points to its masculine rather than neuter gender: *He* þa *gangande bi galilea sae gesæh twegen gebroþer* (C8.2.1) 'he then going along Lake Galilean saw two brothers', with *twegen* (masculine) instead of *twā* or *tū* (neuter).[48] Campbell[49] leaves the origin of these forms open, while Lehnert,[50] adducing the inflection of the *s*-stems, such as *calfru, lambru* 'calves, lambs', considers the possibility of a potential impact of the neuter *a*-stems (of the type *scipu*).[51]

Whatever the origin of the Old English forms may be, given the regular development of Proto-Frisian **–u* > OFris. *–e*, the NAp forms in *–e* in the Old Frisian *r*stems correspond to the Old English ones in *–u*. In this way, the Old Frisian *brōthere* seems to continue a common Old English/Old Frisian innovation.

While the collective nouns, such as OE *gebrōþor* or OS *giswester*[52] follow the pattern of the *r*stems, the Old Frisian forms *swesterne, susterne, sisterne* 'siblings', (plurale tantum; e.g. B *fulswesterne, halfswesterne*) represent a different formation. Both Old English and Old Saxon show, however, incidental (Dp) forms which resemble the Old Frisian formation in *-n*, namely, OE *soesternum*[53] and OS *gisustruonion* (cf. R2 *swesternon*). The Old

47 J. Wright & E.M. Wright, *Old English grammar* (London 1908) p. 196; M. Lehnert, *Altenglisches Elementarbuch* (Berlin 1965) p. 83.

48 Other attestations of the noun provide no conclusive information about its gender.

49 Campbell, *Grammar,* §630.

50 Lehnert, *Elementarbuch.*

51 Cf. K. Brunner & E. Sievers, *Altenglische Grammatik* (Tübingen 1965) pp. 239, 244.

52 J.H. Gallée e.a., *Altsächsische Grammatik* (Tübingen 1993) p. 218.

53 Campbell, *Grammar,* §630.

English form is inconclusive, whereas the Old Saxon form in *–ion* points clearly to the *i*stem or *ja*stem inflection. In either case the corresponding ending in Old Frisian is *–e*.[54]

3.4 *Summarizing the historical evidence*

The comparison with the Old English evidence results in identifying three subgroups of nouns with the *–e* marker; in two of them the *–e* ending has a historical origin (1 & 2) and in the third group it emerges as a synchronic extension of the inflectional pattern (3):

1. (some) pluralia tantum *i*stems: *liude, swesterne* with a petrified *–e* < *–*i*;
2. the *r*-stems with the *–e* < *–*u*, where the origin of *–*u* remains unclear;
3. the 'new' *–e/–i* in the *nd*stems, (*hus*)*manne*, and *lithi/lithe*.

A clear geographical patterning can be detected and, accordingly, group 1 is attested in all dialects, group 2 in the eastern texts (but not in R), while group 3 seems to be a dialect-specific development, confined to Old West Frisian and appears in the investigated corpus only in Unia. A small geographical overlap in the distribution of *e*-plurals is found in the Np form *tha friunde* in E3, which is a relatively archaic eastern text from c. 1450.

4. The *e*-plurals in Old Frisian

The analysis of historical evidence shows that Old Frisian could possess some plurals in *–e* simply as a result of a regular phonological development (cf. § 3.4, 1 & 2). In consequence of the phonological changes in unstressed syllables, this *–e* combined two different sounds into one synchronic ending. Importantly, the nouns displaying this ending were characterized by common semantic features: they referred to people and they carried a strong sense of collectivism; in fact, *liude* and *swesterne* were pluralia tantum, without a proper singular. In semantically related words, such as *swesterne* (< *–*i*) and *swestere* (< *–*u*), the historically different endings merged and could be reinterpreted as a synchronic marker (*–e*) of a collective human plurality. It seems feasible that the ending acquired some limited productivity and consequently could be added to nouns that lacked an explicit plural marking and fitted the semantic profile,

54 In the modern dialect of Mooring North Frisian the forms *brouderne, susterne, doochterne* are attested as regular plurals of 'brother', 'sister' and 'daughter'. In fact, the plural *–ne* ending is a relatively frequent marker in this dialect, which may imply that this Old Frisian formation was redirected into the modern plural ending.

such as the *nd*stems, denoting essentially agent nouns. The attested state of affairs is vaguely reminiscent of the situation in Old Low Franconian, Old Saxon and Old High German, where the *i*-stem endings became very productive exactly in the *u*-stems, *r*-stems and root nouns (although the scale of these phenomena cannot be compared).

A somewhat unclear case with respect to the *e*-plural inflection is presented by the noun *lith* (singular), which, albeit it could mark a collective of persons, denoting a 'band, group' (cf. Icel. *lið*), is only marginally recorded in this meaning in Old Frisian; instead the most commonly attested meaning is that of 'limb'. This bias may be due to the nature of the Old Frisian corpus, namely the fact that all the archaic sources are legal texts, including long lists of injury fines. In the meaning 'limb', the word developed a new plurale tantum with the archaic ending *–a* in Old West Frisian. Apparently, the collective aspect was present in the semantic space of this word and it may have triggered the emergence of the ending *–e* (*–i*) in Old East Frisian. While the form *lithi*, attested in R, must be understood as belonging to the group with *e*-plural endings, the Old East Frisian form *lithe* can as well be a regular short-rooted *a*-stem plural.

Even when the interpretation of some of the above-presented forms seems problematic and ambiguous, it must be asserted that the application of the ending *–e* was more than marginal in the discussed group of lemmas in Old Frisian: out of 92 NAp tokens attested for the mentioned lemmas representing *u*-stems, *r*-stems and root nouns (*mon* included only for Unia), 41 percent display the ending *–e*. Specifically, of all NAp forms which do not continue the historical endingless plural, 67 percent opt for the innovative *–e* ending, whereas the other 33 percent of innovations follow the pattern of the dominant *a* and ōstems. The decline of this ending in the later stage of the development of Frisian (Middle Frisian > 1410), was a consequence of later phonological developments, whereby the word final *–e* was regularly dropped. An isolated vestige of the pattern is to be found in the fifteenth-century West Frisian manuscript J, where *huus manne* is attested once.[55] In the modern dialects of Frisian no unambiguous reflexes can any longer be found.

55 W.J. Buma, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zum westerlauwersschen Jus Municipale Frisonum* (Ljouwert 1996) p. 145.