The development of Old Frisian unstressed –u in the Ns of feminine ō-stems

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF OLD FRISIAN UNSTRESSED *-u* IN THE NS OF FEMININE *ō*-STEMS

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1 Introduction

Old Frisian preserves three different vowel qualities in unstressed syllables: /e/, /a/ and, only in the ending of the Dp[1], /u/, e.g. *seke* 'case (sg.)', *seka* (NAp), *sekum* (Dp). A special situation is found in the Old Frisian dialect of the former *Riostring* region, north of the city of Oldenburg, around the current city of Wilhelmshaven in East Friesland (Germany). This Old Frisian dialect (R-OF) – as attested in two manuscripts from the early 14th century (R_1 and R_2) and two later fragments (R_3 and R_4) – preserved <i, e, a, o, u> in unstressed syllables, where /i ~ e/ and /o ~ u/ are interdependent (Boutkan 1996: 27). The situation in the Riostring dialect is supposed to represent an older stage of the Old Frisian language. In all other dialects, /i ~ e/ and /o ~ u/ coalesced into /e/ (except for the Dp-ending), such as R-OF *fretho*, otherwise *frethe* 'peace (NAs)', or R-OF *skipu*, otherwise *skipe* 'ships (NAp)'.

There are no examples with /o ~ u/ for one morphological category where this ending could be expected in Riostring Old Frisian: the Ns of feminine *ō*-stems. In those texts the ending /i ~ e/ is found, e.g. in the Ns: *were* 'lip' instead of **wero*. The analysis of runic Frisian inscriptions suggests that Frisian levelled the As ending of the *ō*-stems to the Ns at an early date, a development that is paralleled in Old Saxon and Old High German (Versloot 2016a). If this is correct, the lack of instances with /o ~ u/ in the Ns of feminine *ō*-stems in R-Old Frisian is not a coincidence, but reflects an older morphological restructuring in Frisian. The developments of this specific case form will be investigated in this article.

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[1] Case in capital letter; number in lower case, so Dp stands for dative plural (*passim*). I = instrumental.

2 The ending of the Ns *ō*-stems in Frisian

In this section various sources of information about the status of the ending in the Ns of the feminine *ō*-stems in Old Frisian will be examined. First, the evidence from the Riostring dialect is evaluated (section 2.1). The endings of the Ns *ō*-stems in the rest of Old Frisian will be analysed in section 2.2. Of particular interest here will be the question to what extend the Ns-ending in the Old Frisian *ō*-stems shows an alternation between heavy and light syllable stems that is similar to the Old English *ō*-stems. The evidence from Runic Frisian is presented in section 2.3; section 2.4 will propose an analysis of the situation in the 19th century East Frisian dialect of Wangerooge, an almost direct descendant of Riostring Old Frisian.

2.1 The ending /o ~ u/ in Riostring Old Frisian

For information about the appearance of word final *-u* in R-Old Frisian, we turn to the grammar of Old English, since both languages are similar in many respects. According to the Old English grammar, word final *-u/-o* can be expected in Riostring Old Frisian in light syllables in a number of inflectional contexts. Table 1 shows some examples from Riostring Old Frisian, complemented by examples from the well-attested early-modern dialect of Wangerooge (henceforward Wang.; 19th c.; Versloot 1995, Ehrentraut 1849, 1854, Ehrentraut & Versloot 1996). This dialect may be expected to provide additional information about the R-Old Frisian endings since it was a modern continuation of R-Old Frisian and retained full vowels in unstressed syllables (Versloot 2001).

		R-Old Frisian	Wang. Frisian	Old English
(1)	NAp neut. -*a*-stems	*skipu* 'ships'	*schüüpuu*	*scipu*
(2)	Ns masc./neut. -*wa*-stems	**melo* 'flower'	*millii*	*melu*
(3)	Ns fem. -*ō*-stems	**sugu* 'sow', *were* 'lip'	*suuguu*	*sugu*
(4)	Ns fem. -*wō*-stems	*sinu*- (simplex: *sini*) 'sinew'	*Sinnu* (18th c.)	*sinu*
(5)	Ns masc./fem. -*u*-stems	masc. *sunu* / fem. *nosi* (not **nosu*)	*suunuu* / *naazii*	*sunu* / *nosu*
(6)	NAs fem. root nouns	**hnutu*[2]	[*nutte* = plural form < **hnuta*]	*hnutu*

Table 1. Historically expected morphological distribution of word final -*u* in R-Old Frisian in comparison with its later descendant Wangerooge Frisian and the closely related Old English.

Old English sees the analogous introduction of the -*u*-ending in the Ns of the *n*-stems, such as in *wucu* 'week'. This category of endings becomes especially relevant when we take the Wangerooge material into consideration: *wüükuu* 'week'. Various categories are attested in the R-Old Frisian material, but for the categories (2), (3) and (6), examples with -*u* are missing, while the example with -*u* in category (4) is only found in a compound, against other forms without -*u*. It is particularly remarkable that no feminine noun with a Ns ending -*u* is found in Riostring Old Frisian. This could be because the ending could only appear in the Ns. In fact, there are only six lemmas in the entire material that can attest to the existence of the ending -*u* in the Ns of fem. nouns. They will be discussed in detail here.

First, however, a few remarks about the distribution of <o> versus <u> in Riostring Old Frisian are in order. R-Old Frisian knew both a vowel balance and a vowel harmony rule (Boutkan 1996: 27). Together with the vowel balance rules in West-Germanic, which led to the apocope of word final -*i* and -*u* after heavy syllables, we find /u/ only after light syllable stems in R-Old Frisian. With root syllable vowel /e/ or /o/, the ending turned into -*o*; with stem vowel /i/, /a/ or

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[2] Modern West Frisian forms such as *nút* 'nut' and *nyt* 'nit' attest to the development of the root vowels in open syllable, hence OF **hnute, **hnite*. Originally, the ending of the Ns of root nouns was –Ø, but in the short rooted nouns, the ending -*u* was levelled from the As (Campbell 1977: § 625), cf. OE *hnutu, hnitu*, so any other vowel than -*u* is unlikely for Proto-Frisian.

/u/, the ending remained -*u*. Examples are: *skipu* 'ships', *sunu* 'son', versus *fretho* 'peace', *bodo* 'commandments'. A similar rule also holds for /i ~ e/, but this ending was only systematically affected by the root syllable vowel /e/: *hiri* 'her', *clagi* 'complaint' vs. *kere* 'choice'. With root syllable vowel /o/, we still see -*i*, cf. *nosi* 'nose', *houi* Ds of *hof* 'court'. Below the exhaustive list of words in R_1 where the ending -*u* (-*o*) is etymologically expected:

> *were* 'lip' fem. *ō*-stem < PGmc. **werō*. The word is attested once, only in the Ns. The word is not found in later variants of Frisian.
>
> *sini* 'sinew' fem. *wō*-stem < PGmc. **sinwō*. In the largest manuscript R_1, there is the simplex *sini* 'sinew' next to the compound *sinu-werdene*. The compound *sini skredene* (R_2 <*sim skredene*>) is found in R_2 and R_3 together with the simplex *sini*. These forms suggest that the -*u* was not the regular ending in the Ns, but rather a remnant of the stem element -*w*- that was preserved in the compound.
>
> *nosi* 'nose' fem. *u*-stem > *ō*-stem, PGmc. **nosuz*. This former *u*-stem appears as an *ō*-stem in Old Frisian (Van Helten 1890: 148, Versloot & Adamczyk 2014: 562).
>
> *widue* 'widow' fem. *w-n*-stem < PGmc. **widuwō(n)*. The word is clearly an *n*-stem in Old Saxon and Old English and also in the Old Frisian manuscript from the region Fivelgo (F): Ns *wide*, oblique cases sg. *wida*.[3] In the R-Old Frisian form the case ending is -*e* and clearly not *-*u*. The -*u* represents the stem element -*w*-.
>
> *widu*- 'collar' fem. *u*-stem < PGmc. **widuz*. The word is only attested in *widuben* 'with-bone' (R_1, R_3). In ms. R_2 the form is *wideben*.
>
> *fremo* 'profit' fem. *ō*-stem < PGmc. **framō(n)*. Although labelled a noun in the dictionaries, it only occurs in two fixed adverbial phrases in R_1: *fremo ieftha/and fere* 'useful or/and convenient'. In that sense it may be compared to the neuter *u*-stem noun *felo*, which is used as an indefinite numeral ('much, a lot of').

On the basis of the evidence presented above, it seems safe to say that only the

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[3] Note that Modern West Frisian *widdo* < Du. *weduwe*, the expected form would be *wiid.

petrified forms in adverbs (*fremo*) or in compounds (*widu-*) attest to the earlier presence of the -*u* in Old Frisian feminine nouns. Regular Ns nouns such as *were* and *nosi* do not show the ending -*u*. The origin of their endings -*i/-e* will be discussed in the next section. The -*u* in *sinu-* and *widue* represents the stem element -*w-*, rather than the Ns ending -*u*, as can be seen in Modern English *widow, sinew, swallow, snow*, where *w* is definitely not a case ending. The parallel forms *sini-skredene* and *wideben* show that the forms with -*u* were bound to be replaced in analogy to the simplex that did not have the -*u* ending (anymore).

This lack of -*u/-o* in the Ns of feminine *ō*-stems was mentioned as early as 1890 by Van Helten, who considered the -*e*-ending to be the original accusative ending: "[...] nominative, wie *were, irthbivinge, lemithe* in R [weisen] enschieden auf die verdrängung des urspr. -*u* durch die end[ung] des acc." (1890: 138). Note that, parallel to Old English, Van Helten expects the ending -*u/-o* also in trisyllabic nouns.

2.2 The ending of the Ns ō-stems in other variants of Old Frisian

Old Frisian exhibits a syllable weight controlled apocope of historical -*u*, just as Old English does (Campbell 1977: §345, 588). Any such alternation of the ending -*e* in the Ns of feminine *ō*-stems in Old Frisian would confirm its origin in older *-*u*. In fact, Van Helten (1890: 137), Siebs (1901: 1341) and Bremmer Jr (2009: 62) all claim that this was the case.

The most precise description of the situation with respect to the ending of the Ns comes from Van Helten 1890: 137,138). First of all, he clearly states that the 'normal' ending of the Ns is -*e*, which he considers to be the result of analogical levelling from the As (cf. Siebs 1901: 1341). Endingless forms of nouns with a heavy syllable – which would echo the original ending -*u* – are exceptions. Van Helten lists a series of endingless Ns forms from the manuscripts from Emsingo, (E$_2$, E$_3$) and Fivelgo (F) and a single case from the Hunsingo manuscript (H) – *haudlemeth* 'head injury' – which he considers to be early instances of apocope. These are not his key-witnesses, however, since manuscripts E$_2$, E$_3$ and F do not belong to the core of archaic, Old Frisian texts (Versloot & Adamczyk 2014: 548). The examples comprise instances with a heavy syllable, such as *tān* < *tāne* 'toe',

and some with an original light syllable, with a lengthened vowel in open syllables, such as *seeck* 'sake' and *weir* 'good'.

Van Helten derives the evidence for endingless Ns forms from only 5 lemmas (with 7 tokens): *merc* 'coin', *stō* 'place', *sward* 'Kopfhaut', Ns (E_1) and as Ds (E_3), *stund* 'time' Ds (E_2) and *wīs* 'way, method' DAs (R_1, H, E_1, E_2). *Merc*, however, is in fact a root noun (Griepentrog 1995:265 ff) and *stō* ends in a long stressed vowel and is not expected to show an ending *-e*: **stōe*. Note that only one out of the seven remaining examples is in fact a Ns. Siebs (1901: 1341) adds *sīd* 'side' and *vnd* 'wound', both from (E_3) to the list. Below are some examples:

> *to alre <u>stund</u>, Amen.* 'at every moment, Amen' (E_2)
> *thiu en <u>sid</u> ol lom* 'the one side all paralysed' (E_3)
> *thiu <u>vnd</u> is...* 'the wound is...' (E_3)
> *to likere <u>wis</u> and..* 'in the same way and.. (R_1; similar collocation in H and E_2)

In view of the evidence presented above, it can be concluded that: 1) in fact very few endingless forms appear in the oldest texts; they rather occur in younger ones (E_2, E_3, F), while an archaism is expected in the oldest sources; 2) very few of the examples mentioned are in fact real Ns-forms – the apocope is just as common in the other cases; 3) in quite a few instances, the endingless forms appear before a following vowel, which is a phonological trigger for prosodic apocope of unstressed *-e*.[4]

Therefore, it can be argued that there is no evidence for the claim that the oldest sources of Old Frisian echo an alternation in the Ns between the ending *-e* in light syllable stems and endingless forms in heavy syllable stems. In all cases the endingless forms of *ō*-stems in the singular represent instances of early apocope of final *-e*, which becomes current in the late 14th and the 15th century. The ending *-e* of the Ns of heavy syllable words is the result of levelling from other cases – e.g. the As – and is older than the earliest evidence in Old Frisian.

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[4] It is hypothesized in § 2.3 that Frisian, parallel to Old Saxon and Old High German, used the original instrumental ending PGmc. **-ō > -u* as the common dative ending. This *-u* is expected to be lost after heavy syllables. Collocations such as *to likere wis* and *to alre stund* may represent this endingless Ds form. However, in general, Old Frisian has the ending *-e* in the entire singular paradigm of fem. *ō*-stems.

An important additional observation is that the stem weight selective apocope of *-u* < *-ō* was not an ideal Neogrammarian sound law. There are various morphological categories where the ending was retained (Boutkan 1995: 186, 228, 309):

- 1st sg.ind.prs. of verbs (WGerm.): OE *hātu*, OS *hētu* OHG *heizo* 'I command, call';
- Ds of *ō*-stems in Old Saxon and Old High German, e.g. OS *geƀu*, OHG *gebu* 'gift'
- Is in Old Saxon, OHD, e.g. OS *uuordu*, OHG *uuortu* 'word'

However, this sound law works fairly consistently in nominal inflexion in Old English (Campbell 1977: § 346), just as it does in Old Frisian *u*-stems: *hond* 'hand' vs. *sunu* 'son'.

R-Old Frisian shows no retained *-u* of any origin after heavy syllables.[5] In the (scarcely) attested 1st sg.ind.prs. of verbs – where Old English sees the morphologically motivated retention of *-u* (at least in some dialects) – R-Old Frisian has *-e* (*nomie, [h]ebbe*). Wang. shows no traces of *-u* here either, only *-e* after short syllables < R-OF *-e*, e.g. *kumme* 'I come'. It could, therefore, be hypothesized that Proto-Frisian *-u* < PGmc. *-ō*, was reduced to *-e* in R-Old Frisian if it was, for any reason, not lost after a heavy syllable. The ending *-e* of both the 1st sg.ind.prs. and the heavy syllable *ō*-stems could be ascribed to such a development. One would have to assume, then, that the light syllable stems adopted the ending from the far more frequent heavy syllable words. This is not an impossible course of events but cannot be reconciled with the – albeit scarce – evidence from Runic Frisian.

2.3 Evidence from Runic Frisian

The Runic Frisian evidence comprises two words that may be interpreted as a Ns of fem. *ō*-stems: **jibăda**[6] 'fortune', OS *gibada* and **katæ** 'knuckle', OF *kāte*. Despite the fact that word final *-u* is preserved in a feminine *ō*-stem word in Runic Frisian (**jisuh[i]ldu**, fem. Personal Name, Ds or Is), the instances of the Ns forms men-

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[5] This is contrary to Boutkan (1996:27), who incorrectly considers *skero* to have a long vowel, cf. Philippa et al. (2003:s.v. *schaar*).
[6] The **ă** in **jibăda** is interpreted as a front vowel [æ], **ji-** is an unstressed prefix.

tioned do not end in *-u*. They are etymologically interpreted as As forms. This levelling of the As ending to the Ns in the *(w)ō-stems* has a parallel in Old Saxon and Old High German, e.g. in *geba* 'gift'. Both Old Saxon (Gallée 1993: §307, Anm.1) and Old High German (Braune & Reiffenstein 2004: § 207, Anm. 2) attest to incidental relics with *-u/-o* in the Ns of *ō-stems*. Unfortunately, the information from the Continental Runic corpus is rather ambiguous for the time before the year 800 (see Findell 2012: 147–165). Note that the generalisation of the former Is ending *-u* to the Ds ending – as shown by RF **jisuh[i]ldu** and perhaps also **habuku** (PN) -, is also an innovation that is shared by Runic Frisian, Old Saxon and Old High German (for an extensive discussion, see Versloot 2016a).

2.4 Wangerooge

The well-attested early-modern dialect of Wangerooge (19th c., currently extinguished) may be expected to provide more information about the R-Old Frisian ending in the Ns of the feminine *ō-stems* (Ehrentraut 1849, 1854, Ehrentraut & Versloot 1996). This dialect is a modern continuation of R-Old Frisian and maintained full vowels in unstressed syllables. In the Wangerooge dialect the majority of historical *ō-stems* have the ending *-ii*, such as *hittii* < R-OF *hēte* 'warmth' or *narii* < R-OF **nari* < PGmc. **narwō-* 'scar'. A few historical *n-stems* end in *-uu*, such as *wüükuu* 'week' (OE *wucu*), and a few *wō-stems*, such as *wüüduu* < R-OF *widue*, where the *-uu* continues the OF *-w-*. Only one noun in *-uu* in Wang. Frisian unambiguously is a historical *ō-stem*: *suuguu* 'sow'. This suggests that R-Old Frisian indeed had the ending /o ~ u/ in at least a part of the *ō-stems* and that it is only by chance that we find no evidence of this, neither in R-Old Frisian, nor in the (small) runic Frisian corpus.

However, there is some counter-evidence against the Wangerooge cases with *-uu* from two sources: 1) another daughter language of R-Old Frisian, the Wursten Frisian dialect (attested only in two wordlists from the late 17th and early 18th century; Möllencamp 1968), and 2) a wordlist containing appr. 550 words in the Wangerooge dialect from the late 18th c. (Versloot 1995). The latter, in particular, is most telling, because the list derives from the same dialect, positioned in the timeline between R-Old Frisian and the 19th c. attestations to Wangeroog Frisian.

A typical example is the word *düülu̱u̱ng* 'today', which occurs as *tli̱nge* (sic) and *duli̱ng* in the sources mentioned in 1) and 2). Here the original vowel quality /i/ of the suffix is supported by comparative evidence from other Frisian varieties. In view of the evidence from these sources – which unfortunately both have their limitations when it comes to size – it may be concluded that word final -*uu* in 19th c. Wangerooge Frisian was at least partly the result of a productive synchronic phonological vowel harmony pattern. This account will be the topic of a more extensive, separate discussion.

3 The reconstruction of the feminine *ō*-stem paradigm in Old Frisian

According to Hogg & Fulk (2011: 30, 31), the paradigm of the singular forms of feminine *ō*-stems, such as *faru* 'journey', in prehistoric Old English and early Old English was as follows:

	Prehist.	Early Old English
Ns	*faru	faru
Gs	*farō	faræ/fara
Ds	*farai	færæ
As	*fara	færæ

Table 2: Vowel alternation in the *ō*-stem paradigm in Early Old English. [7]

The Gs shows levelling from the other oblique cases; the ending -*a* represents the regular development, but it is rare. A similar shift can be found in Old Saxon and Old High German with the ending -*a* levelled from the As instead of expected -*o* (Boer 1924: 181,182). The early Old English paradigm shows the root vowel alternation of fronted PGmc. *a before front vowels, but retraction in the Ns and Gs before back vowels (Campbell 1977: § 157). The *a* has been restored in the entire paradigm in classical Old English in words with a historical root vowel *a (Hogg & Fulk 2011: 113). In heavy syllable words, the ending -*u* was lost, which gives rise to the alternation between endingless Ns and light syllable nouns with a Ns in -*u*. This ending -*u* became somewhat prolific in Old English and spread also

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[7] NB. Not all forms are exactly found in the presented forms, but there is evidence for most endings for the lemma *faru*.

to the light syllable *n*-stems and to the As forms.

Starting from the close kinship between English and Frisian, these developments offer two possibilities to find out more about the origin of the ending of the Ns in Old Frisian:

1. Old Frisian also exhibits a syllable weight controlled apocope of historical -*u*. If there is any such alternation of the ending -*e* in the Ns of feminine *ō*-stems in Old Frisian, it would confirm its origin in older *-*u*. In fact, Van Helten (1890: 137), Siebs (1901: 1341) and Bremmer Jr (2009: 62) all claim that this is the case.
2. The interpretations of potential application of fronting of PGmc. *a* are diverse; some scholars claim a similar development to Old English, with the fronting of PGmc. *a* in open syllable being blocked by a following back vowel. This development in the paradigm of the feminine *ō*-stems would also have influenced Frisian. On this matter, however, opinions are more diverse.

The first point has already been discussed in section 2.2 and shown not to apply to Old Frisian. The other point will be examined in detail below.

Early Old English shows a contrast of the root vowel between fronted PGmc. *a* in the DAs against restored *a* in the NGs through the impact of the back vowel -*u* and -*a*. However, in the bulk of the evidence, the non-fronted form appears in the entire paradigm as the result of analogical levelling. The original ending of the Ns -*u* might have left its traces in the lack of fronting in feminine *ō*-stems in Old Frisian as well. To establish whether this is the case, the application of fronting in open syllable has to be evaluated first. Grammars are quite diverse in their opinions on this matter. Van Helten (1890: 4) considers *a* to be the regular development of PGmc. *a* in an open syllable, when it is not followed by a nasal or an *i*-mutation factor. He considers verb forms such as *drega* 'to carry', or the noun *seke* 'sake', to be the result of levelling of the mutated vowel from the optative, respectively the Ds (where he assumes -*e* < PGmc. *-ai* as in Old English). Siebs (1901: 1179) concurs, but he offers no explanation for forms such as *seke* 'sake' and *tele* 'tale'. Århammar (1968: 56;1995: 76) considers the appearance of the root vowel *e* in these words to be the result of paradigmatic levelling, which differs from Old

English but forms a pan-Frisian feature. It also appears in Insular North Frisian, which dates this levelling to the period before the year 700, when Frisians settled on the North Frisian Islands of Heligoland, Sylt, Föhr and Amrum. Århammar (1990: 22) mentions that fronting could take place in open syllable in words such as *feder* 'father' and *weter* 'water', contesting the interpretations of Van Helten and Siebs and leaving open the possibility that the *e* in *seke, tele*, etc. might be the result of regular fronting. This stance is explicitly taken by Bremmer Jr , who states that "[s]hort *a* was fronted (or raised) to <e> /æ/ in both closed and open syllables, also when followed by a back vowel" (2009: 29). Bremmer does, however, not comment on forms such as *knapa* 'boy', *stapul* 'scaffold' or *fara* 'to go, sail'.

In order to settle this dispute, I have built a database of more than 60 examples of words that show PGmc. **a* in open syllable without *i*-mutation from examples in Van Helten, Siebs and Bremmer. Since fronting is a fairly old development – runic evidence points to at least the 6th century (Waxenberger 2013: 30) – one has to start from the phonological value of vowels at that time. This was correctly signalled by Bremmer, who used e.g. Old Frisian *smel* 'narrow' from PGmc. **smala-*. For the quality of the unstressed vowels, I employed the reconstructed value in Runic Frisian (Versloot 2016a).

Proto-Gmc.	Runic Frisian	Old Frisian	PGmc. *-a*C+ > Old Frisian
*-az	*-ə*	--	*-e-*: **bakaⁿ > bek* 'back'
*-ē	*-e*	*-e*	*-e-*: *faðēr > feder* 'father'
*-ana	*-ã*	*-a*	*-e-*: **malana > mela* 'to grain'
*-ōn#	*-æ (< -a)*	*-e*	*-e-*: **faþōn > fethe* 'aunt' *-a-*: **staþōn > stathe* 'house'
*-ō-	*-ɔ (< -o)*	*-a*	*-a-*: **makōiana > makia* 'to make' *-a/e-*: **dagōz > *dagar/degar*
*-w- and **-u*	*-u*	*-e/-u* (R)	*-a-*: **waluz > walu-* 'staf' *-a-*: **starwa- > staru-* 'cataract'

Table 3: The development of PGmc. short *a* in open syllable in Old Frisian.

In the fields above the double line, OF *-e-* seems to be the regular development. In the group of infinitives (row three), there is a single exception: *fara* 'to travel'. In the group of fem. *n*-stems (row four), the vowel *-a-* prevails with three examples against

only *fethe* 'aunt' with -*e*- The rest of the paradigm, however, shows the unstressed vowel -*ɔ* (< -*o*) (as in row 5), where regular -*a*- would be expected. Apparently, the Ns-vowel prevailed only in the word for 'aunt', an animate noun, which appears more frequently in the nominative than inanimate nouns. It may be argued, then, that it was the frequency of the individual morpho-syntactic categories that directed the paradigmatic levelling of the root vowel in the feminine *n*-stems. This implies that -*e*- is the regular development of PGmc. -*a*- before *-*ōn#*, while -*a*- derives from the other case forms. A similar instance of paradigmatic levelling is the plural *degar* 'days' < PGmc. **dagōz* (singular Runic Frisian was **dægə* < PGmc. **dagaz*, with a regularly fronted vowel). The Insular North Frisian form *daar* < **dagar* attests to the original vowel quality in the plural (Århammar 1995: 81).

A phonologically plausible interpretation can be found if we take the Runic Frisian vowel qualities as a starting point. In that case, a rule can be formulated for PGmc. **a*- > OF -*a*- before a rounded back vowel in Runic Frisian. This stage of vowel qualities in Runic Frisian can be dated to the time after the monophthong-isation of PGmc. **ai* > *ā* in the 6th century. This is so because of the conditioning for this process that 'needs' the PGmc. quality *-*ō*- or PWGmc. *-*u* (in row 4) to be phonologically plausible; see Versloot (2016b). . I will come back to this dating issue later.

With the phonological conditioning of Table 3 in mind, we will look into the forms ending in PGmc. -*ō*, Runic Frisian -*u*.

*-ō#	-u	1. -u/o 2. -e	-e-: *skarō > skero 'ploughshares' NApn a-stem -e-: *sakō > seke 'sake' Nsf ō-stem

Contrary to expectations, -*e*- occurs in all instances in Old Frisian. The forms of the NAp neuter *a*-stems can be interpreted as analogical – just like the Np masc *degar* – because of the -*e*- in the much more frequent singular form. Analogical levelling in the feminine *ō*-stems towards -*e*- could only come from the DAs (see Table 2). Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that Old English generalized the -*a*- throughout the paradigm of the feminine *ō*-stems, because the -*a*- was present in the more frequent Ns and the entire plural. The Ds had probably -*u* in Runic Frisian from the instrumental (as mentioned in 2.3), leaving hardly any

space for the -*e*- vowel in the paradigm – if the ending of the Ns was indeed -*u*.[8]
However, if other evidence from Runic Frisian is taken into consideration with
RF -*æ* < -*a* (**jibăda**, **katæ**), the root vowel quality in the Ns is consistent with the
pattern in Table 3: before RF -*æ* < -*a*, one would expect fronting of PGmc. **a*.
With a regular fronted root vowel in the NAs forms in the paradigm – together
the most frequent case forms for most words – a levelling of -*e*- to the entire
paradigm is a logical next step. The Insular North Frisian forms show that this
levelling from the As to the Ns must have taken place at least before around 700,
when the North Frisian Islands were colonised by Frisians from West and East
Frisia, because Insular North Frisian is in line with the rest of Frisian. The relative
order of events requires that the levelling from the As to the Ns took place before
the levelling of one root vowel to all other case forms. The existence of (a few)
early Old English (8th c.) forms shows that paradigms with root alternations were
used for quite some time after the introduction of the fronting and retraction.
Findell (2012: 164) concludes that the levelling of the As form to the Ns was on
its way in Pre-Old High German in the 6th century, with a competition between -*u*
and -*a*. Gallée (1993: § 306, Anm. 1 & 2) mentions a few relics with -*o* even in 9th c.
Old Saxon. This makes it unlikely that the levelling of the As to the Ns was com-
pleted in Proto-Frisian before the fronting of PGmc. short *a* in the (early) 6th cen-
tury.

The stages can be represented chronologically:

1. Fronting of PGmc. short **-a-* > -*æ*- not later than the 6th century, probably
   even during the 5th;
2. Monophthongisation of PGmc. **ai* > *ā* in the early part of the 6th century,
   testifying to the presence of the ending **-u* < PGmc. **-ō* in the Ns of feminine
   ō-stem words;
3. Analogical levelling in feminine *ō*-stem words of the As ending to the Ns in

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[8] This reasoning is based on the assumption that the Ds was indeed RF **-u*. There is, to the best of
my knowledge, not more evidence for an earlier Ds ending -*u* in Old Frisian than the one mentioned
in fn. 5. R-Old Frisian could have such forms in -*u* in light syllable stems, but has only forms such as
clagi, (with -*i* < -*e* through vowel balance and vowel harmony). The -*u* was regularly lost after heavy
syllables before the Old Frisian period. That may have been the moment where -*e* was (re)introduced
from the other singular forms.

Pre-Old High German, Pre-Old Saxon and Proto-Frisian in the 6th or 7th century, but later than 2;

4. Retraction of *-æ-* (< PGmc. *-a-* through fronting) in open syllable before Runic Frisian rounded back vowels *-ɔ* and *-u*;

5. Levelling of the non-retracted vowel of the NAs through the entire paradigm of feminine *ō*-stem words.

4 Conclusion

In Old Frisian, Old Saxon and Old High German the ending *-u* in the Ns of feminine *ō*-stem nouns was replaced by the As ending, Runic Frisian *-æ* > OF *-e*. The shift possibly took place in the 6th c. in Pre-Old High German; for Frisian, the process must have been finished before around 700, as it is shared by all Frisian dialects and preceded the analogical levelling of the root vowel in the paradigm. The transfer complies with the following three observations:

1. The levelling from the As explains the fronting of PGmc. *a* in Old Frisian in e.g. *seke*, as opposed to OE Ns *sacu* 'sac'. This direction of root vowel levelling is pan-Frisian, but the levelling itself (stage 5 in section 3) may have taken place after the emigration of the Insular North Frisians.

2. There is evidence from Runic Frisian which had a few likely Ns feminine *ō*-stems ending in **-a/-æ** and non in *-**u.**

3. The attested Old Frisian Ns feminine *ō*-stems ending *-e* appears irrespective of syllable weight of the root, which fits to Runic Frisian *-æ*, but not to *-u*.

The ending *-u* left a trace in Old Frisian in the noun *fremo*, which was lexicalised as an adverb. The appearance of *-u* in Riostring Old Frisian in former *wo-* (and potentially also masc. *wa-*) stems must be separated from the original case ending *-u*. The Wangerooge Frisian form *suuguu* 'sow' points to an earlier *sugu*. The word may have joined the light syllable root nouns *hnutu* 'nut' and *hnitu* 'nit', as this class contained various feminine words for cattle, such as 'cow', 'ewe' and 'goat'.[9] But the ending may also be a pseudo-archaism in Wangerooge Frisian and

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[9] These words had *-u* in the Ns and As, just as the light syllable *-u*-stems. The word *sugu* seems to be attested once in the As in Old English, where it was written *sugu*.

result from a 19th c. vowel harmony pattern. This would be similar to various other feminine nouns (both historical *ō*-stems and *n*-stems) such as *wüükuu* < OF *wike*. Still, an incidental survival of -*u* in originally *ō*-stem nouns cannot be entirely excluded.

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