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FRISIANS OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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TRACES OF A NORTH SEA GERMANIC IDIOM
IN THE FIFTH–SEVENTH CENTURIES AD

Arjen P. Versloot

The concept of 'Anglo-Frisian' as a common branch on the Germanic language tree was coined in the nineteenth century and appears prominently in the title of Theodor Siebs's (1889) dissertation Zur Geschichte der Englisch-friesischen Sprache (see also Nielsen 1985; Stiles 1995; Hines 2017). Nevertheless, people were already aware of the similarity between Frisian and English much earlier, perhaps even as early as the time of the Anglo-Saxon mission in Frisia in the seventh and eighth centuries. In the late sixteenth century, the language of parts of North-Holland is described as Half Vries, half Engels by woorden ghebroken ['Half Frisian, half English with broken words'] (Valcooch 1599, fol. A7r), Franciscus Junius, who was an early Old English philologist, visited Friesland in 1646–8 to learn Frisian and study Old Frisian. The Tegenwoordige Staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden ['The current state of the United Netherlands'] (Schouten et al. 1785), describing Friesland, contains a West Frisian text with a parallel English translation to exhibit the similarities between the languages.

Examples of English-Frisian parallels are easy to find, well known and seemingly convincing. Some older place-names and dialectal words in traditional western Dutch dialects attest to the earlier existence of some form of Anglo-Frisian far beyond the present-day western border of the province of Frislan (Tab. 12.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Frisian (West)</th>
<th>Western Dutch dialects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gans</td>
<td>gans</td>
<td>goose</td>
<td>goes</td>
<td>Goes (place-name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brachte</td>
<td>bracht</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>brocht</td>
<td>brocht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brücke</td>
<td>brug</td>
<td>bridge</td>
<td>brêge, brich</td>
<td>breg, brigge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab</td>
<td>af</td>
<td>of</td>
<td>ôf</td>
<td>of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This paper addresses the following issues. The first part is concerned with the concept of Anglo-Frisian and how it has been critiqued, and subsequently presents a new understanding of the concept. This is made possible by various new results from historical linguistics, including a new interpretation of the early phonological history of English (Versloot forthcoming a; forthcoming b); a close scrutiny of the North Sea Germanic traces in western Dutch (De Vaan 2017); fuller understanding of the early
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history of Frisian (Versloot 2014a; Versloot and de Vaan, in prep.); and better access to the dialectal nuances of Old Saxon (Tiefenbach 2010; Versloot and Adamczyk 2017). The second part aims at establishing a link between the linguistic and the archaeological evidence. Special emphasis is put on the spatial organization of the linguistic traces and the actual speakers of these idioms by an analysis of the geographical patterns in the distribution of runic inscriptions, place-names commonly linked to the migration of populations in the Early Middle Ages, and some archaeological artefacts associated with the early Frisians and Anglo-Saxons.

The deconstruction of the Anglo-Frisian hypothesis

The ‘old-school’ mode of reasoning about North Sea Germanic (including Anglo-Frisian commonalities) finds its climax in Schwarz’s (1951) Goten, Nordgermanen, Angelsachsen, where various Stämme/Völker (‘tribes/peoples’) with apparently clearly distinguishable ethnic and linguistic profiles move around, and ad hoc and in a fairly eclectic way exchange linguistic traits and features. Schwarz is very explicit about the origins of Anglofriesisch: ‘Es wird mit Recht geschlossen, daß die gemeinsamen Züge des Fries. und Ae. bereits auf dem Festlande ausgebildet waren.’ [It will be correctly concluded that the common traits of Frisian and Anglo-Saxon had been established already on the Continent.]

The Anglo-Frisian hypothesis of a common idiom that was taken to England by the Germanic invaders was severely criticized in Kuhn’s (1955) seminal article, which was in fact an expanded review of Schwarz’s book. He introduced a contrasting scheme, arguing for a fairly undifferentiated North-West Germanic language prior to the movements of the Migration Period. As in many other instances, ideas that later become mainstream can often be found long before that time. Chadwick’s (1889) account of events is entirely in line with Kuhn’s approach. Chadwick wrote (1889, 264):

In saying that none of the existing distinctions between Scandinavian, Anglo-Frisian and West Germanic go back to a period much before the beginning of the fifth century I do not mean that before that time dialectical differences were entirely wanting. Considering the size of the area over which these languages are (and were even at that time) distributed, this would be improbable. I mean rather that the divisions and dialects, which existed before that time, were probably different from those which appear later. The political events of the fourth and fifth centuries involved a general dislocation of the Germanic world; new groups were formed and old differences would naturally often be obliterated.

The relationship among and differentiation of the Germanic languages has been carefully analysed in work by Nielsen (1985; 1998; 2000; 2010), revealing a nuanced picture of various early changes, gradually deploying into the differentiation between North Germanic, North Sea West Germanic and Continental West Germanic, before, during and after the landnam of England (adventus Saxonum). A view of this delicate and complicated process, without sharp boundaries, but largely taking place in a language continuum, where different changes spread over smaller or larger areas, was also developed in Stiles (2013). Most of the ‘classical’ North Sea Germanic features fall in the
period during and after the *landnam*. Little to nothing is left of an Anglo-Frisian idiom on the Continent prior to the year 400.

Instead of a pre-*landnam* Anglo-Frisian on the Continent, Kuhn and others suggest the development of a common language in the period during and after c. 400, where Frisian and English, with the inclusion of the Dutch coastal region (see Tab. 12.1), largely developed in a parallel vein for the next two centuries. But this version of Anglo-Frisian is nowadays mostly discarded as well. To quote Stiles (1995, 211):

‘[T]he evidence does not support the notion of an ‘original Anglo-Frisian unity’ or sub-proto-language. This is because it is not possible to construct the exclusive common relative chronology that is necessary in order to be able to establish a node on a family tree.

What we end up with is a set of features that spread at different times and different pace over varying regions around the North Sea. The reconstructed timing of the events is often so different that nothing more than a vague common tendency is left. The lack of similarity in the chronologies of phonological changes between English and Frisian, as mentioned by Stiles, is illustrated in Table 12.2.

Table 12.2 Selected ‘Anglo-Frisian’ sound changes and their relative chronological ordering in English and Frisian according to the current conventional understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound changes in Old English</th>
<th>Old English dialects</th>
<th>Sound changes in Old Frisian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Raising of */æː/ &gt; /eː/</td>
<td>Mc, Nh</td>
<td>Rounding */a(:)/ &gt; /ɔ(ː)/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rounding */a(:)/ &gt; /ɔ(ː)/</td>
<td>[WS], Mc, Ke, Nh</td>
<td>Fronting */a/ - restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Monophthongization of */ai/</td>
<td>Mc, WS, Ke, Nh</td>
<td>Monophthongization of */ai/ - restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fronting */a/</td>
<td>Mc, WS, Ke, Nh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Breaking: /ɪ(ː), e(ː), æ(ː)/ &gt; io, eo, ea</td>
<td>WS, Mc, Ke, Nh</td>
<td>Monophthongization of */au/ - restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Combinative ‘breaking’ /æ/ &gt; /a/</td>
<td>Mc, Nh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Restoration of /a/</td>
<td>WS, Mc, Ke, Nh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Restoration of /a/ (partly)</td>
<td>WS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Palatal diphthongization: /e(ː), æ(ː)/ &gt; /ie, ea</td>
<td>WS, Nh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. *-Mutation</td>
<td>WS, Mc, Ke, Nh</td>
<td>i-Mutation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Smoothing &lt;io, eo, ea&gt; &gt; &lt;i, e, æ&gt;</td>
<td>Mc, Nh</td>
<td>Raising of */æː/ &gt; /eː/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations
Ke = Kentish, Mc = Mercian, Nh = Northumbrian, WS = West Saxon


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Table 12.2 illustrates that there is only a limited overlap in changes between English and Frisian and that most of the changes that are common are allocated to different places chronologically. The unavoidable conclusion is that, despite the similar outcomes, these changes were not ‘common’ in terms of timing and probably then also in terms of causation. Kortlandt (1999; 2008) suggests a common basis, with many developments actually shared in chronology and time by English and Frisian. Some of his ideas are reflected in the suggestions I will make but differ from it in other points. A full discussion goes beyond this chapter but some of my arguments can be found in Versloot (2017a, 318).

The evidence reconsidered

The archaeological evidence

The cumulative archaeological and genetic evidence (for a recent summary, see, e.g., Colleran 2016) points in the direction of a re-settlement of the southern North Sea littoral (Frisia) and a landnam by speakers of Germanic languages from a common stock of people with origins in the Elbe-Weser Triangle, the southern Jutlandic peninsula (including Angeln), with some further admixture of people from further north up into Norway (Nicolay 2005; Higham and Ryan 2015, 70–125). This potentially opens up a way back to the ‘old-school’ thinking about a common Anglo-Frisian Continental tribe, that took its language to its new homelands. However, we adhere to the linguistic reconstructions of the last decades in the spirit of Chadwick, Kuhn, Nielsen and Stiles and conclude on the basis of their research that these people spoke a fairly undifferentiated North-West Germanic at the beginning of the fifth century. The new dialectal configuration of post-migration Germanic may incidentally show linguistic traces which existed already earlier in restricted parts of the Germanic continuum but cannot be pinpointed in a one-to-one relationship to specific homelands.¹

The phonological history of English

I recently suggested an extensive reform of the earliest phonological history of English (Versloot, forthcoming a; forthcoming b). This proposal is based on an in-depth analysis of the oldest Early Old English records: Cædmon’s Hymn, Bede’s Death Song (Sweet and Whitelock 1967, 181–3), the Franks Casket (Findell 2014, 44–54), minor sources that are traditionally linked to Northumbria, and the Épinal and Erfurt Glossaries, comprising around 1,100 parallel tokens (Pheifer 1974). All of these sources are from the late seventh or early eighth centuries; only the Erfurt version of the Glossaries is usually dated somewhat later in the eighth century. Together with my analysis of the development of Proto-Germanic *ai (Versloot 2017a) they suggest a major change to the chronologies shown in Table 12.2.

The pivotal issues are the place of the Old English (OE) breaking in the relative chronology and the scope of fronting. OE breaking primarily concerns the change of short Proto-Germanic (PGmc) *a and e into ea and eo respectively, as in OE weard, weorc ‘guard’, ‘work’. Old Frisian (OFris) did not have this type of breaking and its

¹ In a similar vein, some traits of American English can be found in dialects in Britain, but there is no direct relation between geographical variation in American English and specific British English dialects (see also Trudgill 2010).
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cognates of these OE words are therefore *ward and *werk, preserving the PGmc vowel qualities. Anglo-Frisian fronting appears in words such as OE ðæt and dæg ‘that’, ‘day’, OFris thet, dei; cf. Dutch dat and dag, Old Norse pat and dagr. The current theory, which can be found in, for instance, Campbell (1959) and Hogg (2011), works with a general implementation of fronting of PGmc *a and a subsequent nearly exceptionless breaking of vowels before *rC, *IC and *x.2 The application of these two rules would predict, however, many more words with fronted or broken vowels than are in fact attested in historical OE texts. To make up for the disparity, a set of additional sound laws has been introduced (‘retraction’ and ‘smoothing’; nos. 6, 7 and 11 in Table 12.2) to account for the actually attested forms, making the chronology of OE according to the current theory extremely complicated and packed with contradictory and sometimes phonologically questionable sound changes. There are clear dialectal differences in this respect. The dialect of Wessex, commonly referred to as West Saxon, has many more broken vowels than the dialects more to the north, commonly labelled Mercian and Northumbrian. But even then, many actually attested forms, even in West Saxon, have to be ‘explained’ by positing mixtures of spelling traditions, sloppy scribal practices such as ‘scribal error(s)’ and ‘scribal confusion’, or otherwise archaic spellings at a time when no body of writing in the vernacular existed that people could take these spellings from.3

The following sequences leading from PGmc *a to e in Old English and Old Frisian in a similar phonological context, may serve as an example of the extra steps considered by the current theory for Old English.

Old English: PGmc *harwian- ‘to abuse, treat with contempt’
> *haerwian (fronting)
> *hearwian (breaking)
> herwan (Anglian i-mutation)

Old Frisian: PGmc arbijó- (form attested on the third- or fourth-century Tune stone, Norway) ‘heir’
> erva (i-mutation by earlier -ij-)

The intermediate steps posited for OE *haerw- and *hearw- do not appear in any form of early writing. Moreover, the alleged effect of i-mutation in OE, namely *ea > e, is phonologically illogical; the normal manifestation of i-mutation is directly from [a] > [e]. The ‘Frisian’ scenario is much easier and more straightforward: *a was fronted by i-mutation to e and the same could be assumed for pre-OE.

In the alternative scenario, suggested by myself and based on the relative order of events as reconstructed in Frisian, there is an only partial fronting of PGmc *a in OE,

2 ‘C’ = any consonant; ‘x’ represents Dutch and German <ch> in reconstructed forms.
3 A typical example is the frequent occurrence of <ald> ‘old’ without breaking in sections of the West Saxon Parker Chronicle from the ninth century, whereas the spelling <eald> with breaking predominates in entries describing events from the tenth century. The current theory ignores this transition in spelling as an indication of a change in pronunciation around the year 900 because breaking is supposed to have taken place three or four centuries earlier. Campbell (1977, §143) describes the variation in the chronicle only in terms of changes in ‘spelling’. Hogg (1992, §5.15) assumes that there were two contemporaneous dialects side by side, one with and one without breaking and that the older sections were written by speakers of the dialect without breaking. This equally assumes that breaking is of much earlier date than even the oldest sections of the chronicle.
under nearly identical conditions as in Frisian, and a much later date for the breaking of PGmc *a and *e. An allocation of OE breaking to the late seventh century, deploying further in the eighth and ninth centuries both geographically and in respect of phonological environments, eliminates changes 6, 7, 8 and 11 from the chronology of OE in Table 12.2. The relative order of the remaining sound laws can subsequently be adjusted, and their relative chronology brought into line with the Frisian chronology.

The linguistic shape of the Dutch coastal region
De Vaan (2017) offers the most comprehensive discussion of the potentially North Sea Germanic features in the coastal dialects of Dutch. His conclusions are sobering for the Anglo-Frisian hypothesis in that many of the features interpreted as residues of an earlier North Sea Germanic idiom in the coastal region of the Netherlands, Belgium and northern France can just as well or better be interpreted as local developments, unrelated to what happened in Frisian and English. This careful scrutiny of the evidence secures, at the same time, a number of features or relic words (often only in place-names), that can be positively identified as relics of a North Sea Germanic idiom. For the sake of this research, the latter group is of interest. De Vaan enumerates these features and identifies them clearly (2017, 515–22). They are our only access to this variety of North Sea Germanic.

The shape and extent of the North Sea Germanic idiom
The ‘slimmed’ OE chronology turns out to fit very well with the developments as reconstructed for Frisian. Many of these developments are attested in relic words and place-names in the coastal Dutch zone as well; note that almost none of them is an integral part of the mainstream phonology of traditional coastal Dutch dialects. Many of these developments can also be found in Old Saxon, in particular the central and eastern varieties spoken in the river basins of the Weser and Elbe (Versloot and Adamczyk 2017).

The evidence from those four varieties of Germanic (English, Frisian, coastal Dutch and Old Saxon) can be combined in a ‘North Sea Germanic tick-list’ containing the most prominent North Sea Germanic features. Table 12.3 presents this list and the geographical scope of the various developments by mentioning which varieties participated in which sound changes. Where necessary and reconstructable, sub-dialectal patterns have been included.

Table 12.3 illustrates two important features. First of all, there is a largely shared chronology, both relative and absolute, for English and Frisian, including most of the Dutch and Flemish coast all the way to Calais, and the North Sea-oriented varieties of Old Saxon. This strong linkage remains intact up to -i-mutation, which is a general, widespread phenomenon in North Sea Germanic, as opposed to the restricted ‘primary i-mutation’ of short PGmc *a in the Continental West Germanic varieties (Salmons 2018, 130–1). i-mutation is dated around the year 600 for English, perhaps with a slight delay in Frisian, and has a much more restricted application in Old Saxon.

I have recently identified a 48-line poem from 1643 as a likely specimen of Frisian from North Holland (Versloot 2018). Next to a one-line proverb from the Waterland region near Amsterdam, it seems to be the most extensive witness of Anglo-Frisian locally developed west of the Vlie. As far as attested in this brief text, it shows the Frisian features mentioned in Table 12.3.
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## Table 12.3: An overview of the dating and geographical spread of prominent North Sea Germanic linguistic developments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Sea Germanic changes</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Examples from modern English/modern West Frisian &lt; Proto-(West) Germanic</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rounding of /a/ and /ā/</td>
<td>fifth century</td>
<td><em>month/moaanne</em> &lt; <em>mānāþ-</em></td>
<td>OE-AK(S) OF FZH EF,WF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fronting of ā &lt; PGmc ē¹</td>
<td>fifth century</td>
<td><em>sheep/skiep</em> &lt; <em>skāpa-</em></td>
<td>OE OF FZH EF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fronting of PGmc /a//</td>
<td>fifth century</td>
<td><em>tail/teil</em> &lt; <em>tegl-</em></td>
<td>OE OF FZH [EF]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Monophthongization PGmc /ai/ &gt; ā</td>
<td>early sixth century</td>
<td><em>toe/tean</em> &lt; <em>taixwō-</em></td>
<td>OE [OF] [H]/ [ZF]? [EF, WF]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monophthongization PGmc /au/ &gt; ā</td>
<td>early sixth century</td>
<td>*beam/beam 'tree' &lt; <em>bauma-</em></td>
<td>(OE?) OF FZH [EF,WF]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Loss of nasals before spirants</td>
<td>400–600</td>
<td><em>us/ūs</em> &lt; <em>uns</em></td>
<td>OE OF FZH EF,WF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Palatalization of initial /g/ and /k/ before front vowels</td>
<td>sixth century</td>
<td><em>yield,church/ jilde,tsjerke</em> &lt; *geldan-,<em>kyrikō-</em></td>
<td>OE OF [FZH] EF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. i-mutation ('secondary')</td>
<td>c. 600</td>
<td><em>green/grien</em> &lt; <em>grōni-</em></td>
<td>OE OF FZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Rising diphthongs &lt; PGmc eu</td>
<td>early seventh century</td>
<td><em>steer/stjoere</em> &lt; <em>steurijan-</em></td>
<td>[OE] OF H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. OFris. Breaking</td>
<td>seventh century</td>
<td><em>right/rjocht</em> &lt; <em>rexta-</em></td>
<td>[OE-K] OF H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. OEng. Breaking</td>
<td>seventh–ninth centuries</td>
<td><em>heart/hert</em> &lt; <em>hertan-</em></td>
<td>OE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shortening of /ai &gt; æ</td>
<td>late seventh century</td>
<td><em>ladder/ljedder</em> &lt; <em>hlaidrō-</em></td>
<td>OF ZH EF,WF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Raising of æ (PGmc ē¹)  &gt; ē'</td>
<td>&gt; 700</td>
<td><em>meadow/miede</em> &lt; <em>māþwō-</em></td>
<td>OE-AK OF-S FZH EF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Delabialization of mutated vowels</td>
<td>eighth–tenth centuries</td>
<td><em>thin/tin</em> &lt; <em>punwi-</em></td>
<td>OE OF FZH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations**

- OE = Old English: S = Saxon, A = Anglian, K = Kentish
- OF = Old Frisian (all dialects): S = 'South Frisian' – all varieties, except for Insular North Frisian
- Traces in Dutch coastal varieties: F = Flanders, Z = Zeeland, H = Holland
- EF = Eastphalian Old Saxon; WF = Westphalian Old Saxon
- [... ] = only under specific phonological conditions or with very little attested evidence.
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Developments 4, 6, 7(?) 8, 9 in Table 12.3 – and also, in a specific North Germanic form, 10 and 11 – are also found in North Germanic (Haugen 2004, 53–70).

This shared chronology is not categorical: already before 600 we can detect differentiation between English and Frisian in the monophthongization of PGmc *ai and possibly also of *au; Old Saxon hardly participates in the fronting events, but evidence from the northern part of Saxonia is lacking. In a few instances, there is also dialectal differentiation within Old English and Old Frisian. The commonalities in the ‘inner circle’ of North Sea Germanic do not end abruptly after 600 but continue into the seventh and eighth centuries. This is very much in line with the concept of waves rather than a discrete node on the language tree. A hybrid model, combining both shared, areal phenomena as well as simultaneous gradual differentiation is sometimes called the linkage model (see e.g. Schulte 2018, 20). The coastal language of Zeeland and Flanders was not Frisian in a strict sense, perhaps already in the case of PGmc *ai, but certainly from the seventh century onwards with the lack of Frisian breaking. The whole Dutch coastal zone did, however, participate fully in the wider ‘Anglo-Frisian’ developments. Especially the varieties of Old Saxon spoken in the river basins of Weser and Elbe, which were apparently oriented more towards the North Sea than the speech of Saxons in the south-western regions near the Rhine, are involved in various of the early changes but hardly in any of the later ones mentioned in this overview. A link with North Germanic was particularly active from the sixth to the eighth centuries.

The North Sea region with strong linguistic links is archaeologically characterized by small-scale regionalization. The gradual break-up of the North Sea Germanic dialectal continuum since the seventh century goes together with the formation of larger political and cultural units, which can be understood as a period with growing inter-regional contrasts and shrinking intra-regional contrasts (for the archaeological evidence, see Nicolay 2017, passim and esp. 88): the building of larger territories in England, and Frisia and Saxonia becoming a part of the Frankish Empire, with Scandinavia remaining ‘pagan’ territory beyond those Christian kingdoms.

Is there an Anglo-Frisian node in the West Germanic family tree? Not in a strict sense, just as little as there was a West Germanic node (see the schema of differentiation of Germanic in Nielsen 2000, 287–93). But there was a period in the history of Germanic, roughly between AD 450 and 650, when varieties that later evolved into Frisian and English shared most of their innovations (see, in a similar vein, Deckers 2017, 178–9). The innovative power of this region remained active into the ninth century. Many of these innovations were at the time also found in the Dutch and Flemish coastal regions and extensive parts of present-day northern Germany, but largely disappeared from them after 800, leaving Frisian as an increasingly shrinking North Sea Germanic

5 Versloot and Adamczyk (2017) provide examples of a few more Old Saxon developments from the seventh and eighth centuries, not discussed in Table 12.3, which Old Saxon shared with Old Frisian and partly with Old English. Old Frisian and Old Saxon also share some morphological innovations not found in English, such as the productivity of the ending -u as a marker of the instrumental, the replacement of the nom.sg. ending of the ð-stems by the acc.sg. and the productivity of the i-stems, although much more limited in Frisian than in Saxon.

6 Even though English and Frisian are typologically definitely West Germanic in many aspects, they share many traits with Scandinavian that Continental West Germanic does not: traits that developed later than the typically West Germanic ones. This implies that there was not one, decisive split; see Euler (2013, 41–58) for an overview of features, with different emphases in his conclusions.

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relic language area on the Continent (Århammar 1990). As a consequence, Frisian and English are the heirs of an ‘Anglo-Frisian’ sub-group of West Germanic which encompassed a much wider geographical area than only England and Friesland at the time of its emergence in the Early Middle Ages.

On the origin of North Frisian

One of the major questions of Frisian historical linguistics has concerned the relationship between the so-called Insular North Frisian dialects, spoken on the islands of Sylt, Heligoland, Fôhr and Amrum, and the rest of Frisian. The issue boils down to the following question: does the Insular North Frisian dialect group represent a branch on the Frisian node, the result of migration from ‘South Frisia’, or does it represent an – albeit closely related – autochthonous branch of a language spoken by a pre-Migration-period population that did not move to Britain or Frisia? Although situated in the zone with tidal flats along the southern North Sea, Nordfriesland is historically not a continuation of the southern regions: it was part of the Danish kingdom from the Early Middle Ages and it is separated from the rest of Frisia by the region of Ditmarsch without any historical reference to ‘Frissianess’ or traces of the Frisian language there.

This spatial interruption is also visible in the map in Figure 12.1, showing an intermediate zone with very few place-names in *haim or *ing, and it implies that the dialects of the North Frisian islands are either an archaic relic zone or the result of historical colonization from the south.

There is quite some research on this topic and excellent discussions and summaries can be found in Hofmann (1956) and Århammar (1968; 1990; 1995; 2001). There are striking differences between the North Frisian dialects of the coast and the Halligen on the one hand and the islands listed above on the other, in historical phonology and lexicon (see the references). Moreover, the speakers of the island dialects do not identify their speech as ‘Frisian’, contrary to the speakers on the coast and Halligen. The latter group is historically attested for the first time in the twelfth century and historical geographical research points to a settlement from the south in the eleventh century (Bantelmann et al. 1995, 62); the ‘Frissianess’ of the coastal and Halligen dialects is not disputed in any way. An essential methodological issue is the question in what respects the two groups of varieties (Insular North Frisian and all other dialects, here referred to as ‘South’ Frisian, including the language of the North Frisian coast and Halligen) should be similar or differ in order to consider either of the two hypotheses as being refuted or proven. This poses the subsequent question: what makes Frisian linguistically unique, compared with all other attested Germanic languages? Such linguistic features will preferably represent linguist innovations, as archaisms do not prove a common stage of development and can be found in any Germanic variety.

Although an incentive to open this discussion, this argument bears no weight in practice: the speakers’ self-designations of the other Frisian island varieties are not ‘Frisian’ either, but simply the adjectival form of the name of the island or even of ‘islanders (speech)’. Simultaneously, dialects such as ‘Westfries’ in North Holland (Netherlands) or ‘Ostfriesisch’ in Lower Saxony (Germany) owe their names to the regions and are varieties of Dutch and Low German respectively, although the regions were historically Frisian speaking.

It should be kept in mind that the application of terms such as ‘language’, ‘dialect’ or ‘variety’ are largely interchangeable in historical linguistics. Germanic is a ‘dialect’ that developed from Proto-Indo-European, whereas it is often considered to include various ‘languages’, such as English, Dutch, Frisian etc.,
innovations that are fully and only implemented in one (group of) varieties are hard to find: most linguistic innovations spread over larger areas and it is the combination of a series of innovations and archaisms that characterize a language (group). Another complication is that the varieties under consideration are closely related under both hypotheses anyway and have been in constant contact with and influenced by other, also related, neighbouring varieties. Last but not least, the dates associated with a potential colonization scenario point to a time in history, the eighth century, when the Germanic languages were not highly differentiated anyway.

This hints at another aspect to take into consideration. The idea of an autochthonous population on the islands, speaking some form of North Sea Germanic, was brought forward based on the assumption that many of the typical North Sea Germanic features had already developed on the Continent before the Migration Period (see Schwarz 1951, discussed above). If that were correct, the island dialects could be truly relics of an otherwise vanished (emigrated) language of the southern Jutlandic peninsula. However, the current interpretation works from the reconstruction that most of these features only developed between the fifth and eighth centuries. If the island dialects developed largely parallel but not identical to Frisian and English during that period, why, for instance, did Ditmarsch or other parts of Jutland not participate, whereas the North Frisian Islands did? This consideration weakens the ‘autochthonous’ hypothesis substantially.

Every interpretation starts from the well-founded observation that the Insular North Frisian dialects’ closest genetic relatives are the ‘South’ Frisian dialects. This narrows the question to be answered down to: is there a considerable body of innovative features that are fully and only implemented in ‘South’ Frisian in comparison with any third Germanic language and which are also found in Insular North Frisian? The answer is ‘yes’. Key witnesses can be found in phonology, but also morphology and lexicon (Århammar 1995, 73–7; 2001, 533):

1. The differentiation in the monophthongization of PGmc *ai (c. 500) as demonstrated by the following examples:

   PGmc *klaþ- ‘cloth, dress’ > OE clāþ > ModE cloth; OFris clāth(ar) (pl.) > ModWFris kleaþ, ModINFris (Föhr) kluaþer ‘clothes’; ModDu. kleed;
   PGmc *staina- ‘stone’ > OE stān ‘stone’ > ModE stone; OFris stēn > ModWFris stien, ModINFris (Föhr) stian; ModDu. steen.

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* This is not to be confused with the linguistic distance among the present-day Frisian varieties. Most of these are not mutually intelligible and the distances between them are greater than among the three Scandinavian languages Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, or between Dutch and Afrikaans (Swarte et al. 2013, 297–8). Both among and even within the two North Frisian subgroups, mutual intelligibility is not obvious (Århammar 1975). The strong contrast between the modern Frisian variants (e.g. under 1., immediately below) attests to the disparate development of the varieties of Frisian varieties since the Early Middle Ages.
North Sea Germanic Idiom

The lexical distribution of forms pointing to an earlier *ā or *ē is nearly identical across ‘South’ Frisian and Insular North Frisian (Versloot 2017a, 304–5).

2. The breaking of PGmc *e before *xt to *iu, as in OFris riucht < *rexta- and instances of breaking by following *u/w as in OFris niugen < *nigun < *niun, ModWFrirs rjocht, njoggen, ModINFris (Föhr) rocht, njüügen ‘right’, ‘nine’. These breaking phenomena are also found in some varieties of Old English (e.g. incidental reoht, niogen alongside dominant riht, nigon) as well as in Old Norse, but the phonological conditioning and the actual lexical distribution of breaking phenomena is unique across all Frisian varieties.

3. Generalization of the fronting of PGmc *a in the feminine ō-stems, e.g. PGmc *talō-, OE talu, ModDu. taal, OFris tele > ModWFrirs tel(tsje), ModINFris (Sylt) tial ‘story’.

4. The ending -ar in the nominative plural of the masculine a-stems, OFris bāmar ‘trees’, ModINFris (Föhr) buumer, cf. OE bēamas, Old Saxon boumas. Frisian is the only West Germanic language with this ending (Versloot 2014b; 2017b). The ending is common in Old Norse, but in a different distribution than in Frisian. Its morphological distribution is unique for Frisian, where it appears also in the s-stems, e.g. Föhr ai – aier ‘egg(s)’, but where it is absent in Old Norse: egg (sg. and pl.).


The aggregated evidence leads to a common reconstructable ancestor for all Frisian varieties, including Insular North Frisian, that can be dated to the period somewhere between 650 and 850. This dating is based on runic inscriptions and names in early medieval Latin texts (Gysseling 1962; Versloot 2014a). The timeframe matches the archaeological evidence concerning new or strongly extended settlements in the North Frisian Islands (see Majchczack, this vol.).

The speakers of Anglo-Frisian: origins and distribution

The demographic and societal context

Assuming that the proposed reform of the Old English phonological history fits, and that Table 12.3 is an adequate interpretation of the attested linguistic facts, one may wonder whether there was any reconstructable historical reality that supports the idea that language changes were able to spread so easily and in many instances so completely across the North Sea. The reconstruction given in Table 12.3 suggests in fact that the speakers on either side of the North Sea made up one speech community, with only minor dialectal differences, for at least two hundred years (c. AD 450–650) (for archaeological evidence of such a common zone, see Nicolay 2005; 2014). This presupposes intensive language contacts. These contacts may have run primarily through close contacts at various levels and among specific groups in the society, such as trading communities, or elite and warrior classes in these early societies, including marriages (Bos and Brouwer 2005); see Deckers (2017) and Kauhanen (2017) for a modelwise
underpinning of such processes. One may assume that in a pre-feudal belligerent landnam society, more people were involved in overseas contacts than at later dates, comparable with the differences we can observe in geographical and social mobility between Viking-age Iceland and late- and post-medieval Iceland.

When considering the people speaking Anglo-Frisian, a relevant question is: where exactly did these people live and where did they come from? The Frisian marshlands were in the process of being repopulated from the late fourth century, a process that lasted until the seventh century for the easternmost region of Land Wursten (Aufderhaar 2017). The innovative, developing Proto-Frisian spread from west to east. The various stages of migrations are visible in the place-name landscape: in most of Frisia, compounds containing PGmc. *-haim are dominant, but in the east (Wangerland, Butjadingen, Land Wursten) names in *-ing- are more numerous (see also Fig. 12.1), although both exist side by side (Versloot 2011, 133–4).

In a similar vein, the anglicization of England will have taken some time, but this took place in a country with a population present. The character of the process of anglicization (the ‘how’, the speed, the numbers) is still heavily disputed (Higham and Ryan 2015, 70–125). The estimations of percentages of Germanic immigrants vary considerably. A recent study estimates ‘the proportion of Saxon ancestry in Cent./S England as very likely to be under 50%, and most likely in the range of 10–40%’ (Leslie et al. 2015, 313). Note that Leslie et al. use the term ‘Saxon’ for people associated both with northern Germany and Denmark, not distinguishing between the potential regions of origin of Angles, Saxons and Jutes (cf. below). Some studies suggest a strong gender bias among the settlers: the proportion of male DNA may have touched the mentioned upper limit, the female DNA rather the lower limit (Vonderach 2015, 284). This interpretation supports the classical view as presented, for example, in Gildas’s chronicle (Higham and Ryan 2015, 57–62) that especially the first wave of Anglo-Saxon immigrants consisted primarily of bands of male warriors, subjugating Britain and its inhabitants by military force. More research, in particular based on contemporaneous genetic material, is needed.

The warrior-like behaviour and the overall confined (not necessarily small) number of the invaders make it unlikely that the whole of what we later call England was directly Germanic-speaking from the outset of the Anglo-Saxon invasion. A period of conquest was probably followed by a much longer period of cultural and linguistic anglicization of the remaining population.

Linguistic evidence of the first Anglo-Frisian settlers

An indication of the concentration of populations speaking Anglo-Frisian varieties may come from various sources, both archaeological and linguistic. Place-names are often mentioned as an indication of earlier demographic movements, such as settlement and colonization. It is generally accepted that place-names using the PGmc suffixes *haim ‘house, village’ and *ing ‘belonging to’, often with a proper name as the first element, mark Germanic settlement from the period of the Great Migrations (Berger 1993, 13–15). Apart from those two suffixes, a few more suffixes are commonly associated with Germanic-speaking settlers of the fifth and sixth centuries: the names in leben/-lev ‘remains, legacy’, with high densities in Thüringen; place-names containing PGmc *stadi- ‘spot, locality’; and names in court and ville in France, with counterparts in hofen and wihl,weil(er) and more in German (Nielsen 2000, 303–12; König 2001, 58).
The elements *court, ville/wihl* etc. are of Romance origin. Place-names containing any of these suffixes have been gathered from a digital gazetteer and regions with dominant patterns computed (for a technical account of the sources and selection filters applied, see Appendix). The result is shown in Figure 12.1.

The special focus of Figure 12.1 is on the relation between the locations of runic finds from the fourth to sixth centuries and the place-names commonly associated with the Migration Period. Most of the latter are located south-west of the former Roman *Limes*, including Britain. The coloured areas in Figure 12.1 cover 20% of the territories of the UK, the Benelux countries, Germany and Austria, whereas 69% of all runic finds are found against the background of one of these name-types. People able to write (West Germanic) runic texts lived predominantly in those regions which place-name evidence would associate with new settlers.
Fig. 12.2 The relative proportions of the name-types in Figure 12.1 (grey: ‘overall’) and the distribution of runic finds of the third–eighth centuries correlated with the name-types. Areas and runic finds that are not associated with any of the six name-types (32 out of 103) are not included.

Fig. 12.3 The correlation between the Anglo-Frisian and Continental runic finds of the third–eighth centuries and the various name-types. Runic finds not associated with any of the six names analysed (32 out of 103) are not included.
The comparison with the six different name-types also reveals another special correlation: among these name types, the *haim and *ing names show the closest association with the runic finds. Figure 12.2 shows that, while the *haim and *ing are the most frequent types in the map among the six types investigated, the runic finds are even more strongly associated with these two name-types than following a random distribution over the six types. However, names with the *haim and *ing suffixes are not evenly associated with the various sub-groups of inscriptions. There is a clear link between Anglo-Frisian runes and *haim names on the one hand and between Continental runes and *ing names on the other, as illustrated in Figure 12.3. This correlates with the uneven geographical spread of the *haim and *ing suffixes.

This analysis confirms and underlines the close relationship between the settlers of the Migration Period and the production of runic inscriptions outside Scandinavia. Apart from Frisia, which was newly settled from the fifth century after the hiatus in the fourth century (Nicolay 2005; Nieuwhof 2016), almost all inscriptions are found on former Roman territory. Why the geographical association between runic finds and place-names is almost exclusively restricted to names with the *haim and *ing, and appears to a much lesser extent with other names that are usually considered to date to the same period, is not easy to answer. In addition, there is the question why the use of runes seems to be so heavily restricted to newly settled regions and much less to the
regions the Germanic peoples settled before. Note that the few Continental inscriptions north of the *Limes* are mostly found in or near to regions with a clear presence of one or more of the six name types investigated.

Following these observations concerning the six name-types studied, the focus was narrowed to names with the suffixes *-haim* and *-ing*, whose spread was combined in the map in Figure 12.4, again as the background to the distribution of runic finds of the fifth and sixth centuries. This distribution map confirms the observations made on the basis

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**Fig. 12.5** (above) The overall areal proportion of names ending in *-haim* or *-ing* in the West Germanic speaking countries: UK (GB), the Netherlands (NL), Belgium (B), Luxembourg (L), Germany (D) and Austria (A); (below) the proportional correlation of these points with a runic find. The y-axis represents the number of map-pixels; the x-axis represents ranges of proportions for the specific names amongst all other names within the given area. Note that >= 0 means >0–0.09 and the ranges of the bars are exclusive.
North Sea Germanic Idiom

of Figure 12.1: there are high concentrations of names with the suffixes *haim and *ing in the regions south and west of the Roman Limes (in present-day Flanders, south-western Germany and Alsace), in Friesland and in eastern England. They confirm their interpretation as settler names from the fifth and sixth centuries. The over-representation of runic finds in regions with these name types is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 12.5. The figure shows that runic finds are often located in regions with 10–50% *haim and *ing place-names, whereas such regions are altogether a rarity in the Germanic-speaking western European countries (lower bar chart).

The mapped evidence in this section implies that we now have two independent sources about language use, that are in strong agreement with each other: people writing runic texts (mostly brief inscriptions) lived in regions where many villages had a Germanic Migration Period settlement name, in particular with the suffixes *haim and *ing. This again poses the question why we have inscriptions from just these places but not (to the same degree) from other regions. People elsewhere apparently did not feel the need or were not able to write runic inscriptions. This makes sense for England and Continental regions south of the Limes, where many places were most likely still inhabited by the descendants of the Roman-period populations that had been living there before the arrival of Germanic-speaking groups. This hypothesis may particularly apply to the names in *villa, which is a Latin suffix after all. In the case of the regions north of the Limes, it has been claimed that these witnessed high levels of mobility and demographic relocation, producing relatively low population densities in northern Germany for longer or shorter periods (Siegmund 2003, 77–83; Meier 2003, 49; Dörfler 2003, 143). It seems that the elites in particular left the region in the period of the fifth–seventh centuries (Siegmund 2003, 90). Major factors were probably migrations to Frisia, Britain and the former Roman Empire as well as climatic circumstances (the Late Antique Little Ice Age, LALIA: Büntgen et al. 2016). Note also Bede's remark about Anglia (Angeln) still being deserted in the seventh century (Bede, HE, I, 15).

Combining linguistic and archaeological evidence

This section will concentrate on the Anglo-Frisian settlers in Frisia and Britain, identified by Anglo-Frisian runic inscriptions. The hypothesis of a specific regional spread of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ migrants in the fifth and sixth centuries can be compared with archaeological evidence. We have compared the spread of Migration Period place-names and runic inscriptions with the locations of various types of brooch dated to the fifth century. One such object-type is the cruciform brooch, an object of daily use in female clothing (Nicolay 2005, 74–5; Martin 2015). The earliest specimens were produced in the homelands and relatively long preserved as ‘souvenirs’ from home (Bos and Brouwer 2003). A caveat is due. The map is based on modern place-names and it is well known from diachronic evaluations of the onomastical landscape that there have been some substantial changes. Blok (1968) shows that the southern part of Holland – entirely white in Figures 12.1 and 12.4 – may have had around 25% -haim names in the Early Middle Ages but many of these names simply disappeared as a result of changes in the landscape. Such drastic changes are in particular likely where dramatic changes in the landscape occurred. Holland is such a region but far greater stability can be assumed for many other regions. Another complication is the exchange of suffixes, such as in the place-name Doksum (Fryslân), counted here as a name with the ending *-haim, but historically attested as Dockinga, which would qualify it as a member of the *-ing group.
Another type of brooch, the 'Saxon' jewellery, is usually associated with the formation of power (Nicolay 2005, 76–8, 87; see also Higham and Ryan 2015, 85–6, 107). Both types are shown against the background of the Migration Period place-names in Figure 12.6.

The distribution of the brooches in Frisia and Britain is closely linked to the Migration-Period place-names, as were the runic inscriptions. Stray finds of both types of artefact and *haim and *ing names are found in Flanders, as well as an Anglo-Frisian runic inscription from Amay (Looijenga 2003, 303; see Fig. 12.4). This inscription, from a grave near Liège, is considered to be Anglo-Frisian because it contains a specifically Anglo-Frisian runic character, but it is not necessarily Frisian in any narrower linguistic, ethnic or cultural sense. It may represent a local community that migrated there from the same area as the other 'Anglo-Frisians' and shared linguistic features, place-name types and artefacts with the nascent Frisian and Anglo-Saxon populations.

However, the *haim and *ing names are notoriously absent from the regions of origin of the settlers, where such brooches are also found. The villages from which the settlers of Frisia and Britain came apparently had different names, or were deserted – as Bede describes for Angeln – and their original names have not been preserved due to a hiatus in habitation (Siegmund 2003, 80–1). This mismatch in place-names was extensively studied by Udolph, who concluded that the Schleswig-Holstein region in
particular could not be considered a region of origin of the Anglo-Saxons, given the lack of onomastic links between that region and England (Udolph 2006, 338). However, he did not consider the possibility of a break in habitation. After the Migration Period, Angeln was taken over by the Danes, who brought now-Germanized Scandinavian place-names to the region, such as: Tastrop, Gelting, Böklund, Schuby. The low population level in this region correlates with the absence of runic inscriptions from these regions from the sixth (Fig. 12.4) and seventh centuries.

We have extended the scope for Britain by including two additional layers of information. In the first place, we have included furnished Anglo-Saxon cemeteries from the fifth–seventh centuries. We also included a set of place-names with a Celtic suffix, namely place-names in don or dun, such as in Swindon. These names are relatively frequent in England but not in the western Celtic regions Wales and Cornwall. The set of names in don or dun therefore seems to continue an earlier layer of British place-names. The result is shown in Figure 12.7.

The map and the underlying map calculations show that the concentration of names in haim and ing on the one hand and names in don or dun on the other are geographically complementary. The colours in the map are potential markers of the geographical spread of ethnicities in England in that period. The map again shows the distribution of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions of the fifth to seventh centuries.

The spatial correlation between the linguistic/onomastic evidence and the archaeological evidence of cemeteries is clearly very low (Dodgson 1966). There is positive agreement in Kent, East Anglia and Sussex, and negative agreement (no Anglo-Saxon place-names, no Anglo-Saxon graves and no runic inscriptions) in Hertfordshire. But there are also large mismatches, for example, in Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and near surroundings. At this point, it is not possible to give an explanation. It would be good to have a further differentiation in time of the cemeteries. It may be interpreted in a way that the archaeological information shows us the progress of acculturalization of the British population to the Anglo-Saxons’ burial practices. This acculturation or assimilation of Britons to Anglo-Saxon society was essential for the former to be able to function on an equal footing with the newcomers (Higham and Ryan 2015, 109–10). The contrast with the spread of the runic finds would imply that material and customary culture were adopted earlier than the language, which is in line with processes of culture and language shifts in many other places in the world.

**Excursus I: ‘Angles’, ‘Jutes’ and ‘Saxons’**

The earlier inclination to treat the populations discussed as cultural, political and linguistic unities, in the way it is applied by, inter alios, Schwarz (1951) as an example of an earlier paradigm of scholarship (see also Higham and Ryan 2015, 71), has been abandoned over the last decades. The author of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle from the late

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11 Gelling and Cole (2000) interpret Celtic *dūno-* as ‘fortified place’ while *dūn* in English place-names occurs as a generic in village names in regions where there are clusters of level-topped hills suitable for settlement sites. The lack of fortifications at English places with *dūn* names persuades Gelling and Cole that *dūn* and *dūno* cannot be associated. However, Celtic fortified oppida were situated on hill tops so that a semantic shift from ‘fortified site on a hill top’ to ‘settlement on a hill top’ is hardly implausible (cf. the semantic spread of Germanic *tūna-* to German Zaun ‘fence’, Dutch tuin ‘garden’, Icelandic *tún* ‘meadow’ and English ‘town’).
Fig. 12.7 Possible evidence of Anglo-Saxon and British populations in England during the fifth–seventh centuries. The distribution of place-names is based on a modern gazetteer (see Appendix). Using place-name databases with onomastic etymologies might improve, or even alter, the picture. (© author; distribution of cemeteries after Higham and Ryan 2015, 80).
north Sea Germanic Idiom

ninth century is said to have ‘had no reliable sources for the fifth century’ (Higham and Ryan 2015, 72). Higham and Ryan are reasonably representative of current mainstream opinion in archaeology. Bede (HE, I, 15) is the classical source for a tripartition of England between Angles, Saxons and Jutes, an account that is currently interpreted as having been ‘framed according to the geopolitics of the present’ (i.e., Bede’s time), with ‘little historical validity’ (Higham and Ryan 2015, 75). Bede’s eighth-century description of the three peoples, settling in Britain in the fifth century, is nowadays considered ‘too late to be a useful primary source’ (Higham and Ryan 2015, 72). Bede himself, however, is recognized as having ‘believed that the major kingships of the seventh century had their origins in the settlements of different Germanic tribes in the fifth century’ (Higham and Ryan 2015, 137).

The concept of clearly distinguishable peoples is replaced by the concept of occasional coalitions of ethnically diverse people, united under a leader for the purpose of a military campaign (e.g. Todd 2004, 29, 202–3). Archaeology traditionally distinguishes between Saxon and Anglian artefacts, but Higham and Ryan consistently put those designations in quotation marks, to stress their relativity (2015, 78–82). Although they acknowledge a strong correlation between ‘Anglian’ areas and cremation, and ‘Saxon’ areas and inhumation, they stress that those patterns are becoming more and more blurred with new data being available. This is supported by their maps (ibid., 80), showing different types of ‘Anglian’ and ‘Saxon’ artefacts with some geographical inclination but a large spatial overlap as well. And despite the affinity between ‘Saxon’ artefacts and practices and those found in the Elbe-Weser triangle, against overlap between ‘Anglian’ items and artefacts found north and east of the Elbe, they state that ‘these styles were already mixing on the Continent by the late fourth century, and the degree of regional conformity in England is less than was once suggested. Such is the diversity of artefacts that to date no Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been definitively tied to a specific place of origin in Germany as if the result of migration en bloc to Britain.’ (ibid., 82).

Given all these misgivings, the pattern displayed in Figure 12.8 is astonishing. It demonstrates that nearly all the runic inscriptions from the fifth–seventh centuries, except for Watchfield but including the two that are mostly considered to be of Frisian origin (Hamwic and Folkestone), have been found in or very near the territories identified by Bede as Anglian and Jutish. This spatial correlation provides independent evidence – unknown to Bede (!) – for the geographical tripartition along the lines described by Bede in the eighth century.

The implications of this correlation work in two directions. On the one hand, we may have to reconsider the refutation of Bede’s tripartition for the fifth and sixth centuries. Bede’s sketch may have more ‘historical validity’ than currently assigned to it and its rejection seems to be an example of over-application of ‘critical theory’ in the interpretation of historical sources and the relativization of their historical accuracy. A clear ethnic, ‘tribal’ or national (whichever term one prefers) identity for a settler community does not presuppose the uniform origin of all its members, but rather a clear destination territory in combination with a substantial founder community. Examples are found in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States. We do not need full regional conformity nor en bloc migration from one place in order to end up with fairly distinct cultural provinces or nations in the new settlements.

The correlation shown in Figure 12.8 also implies that the Saxons did not use/know the runic script, whereas the Angles and Jutes did. Given the dominant regions of
Fig. 12.8 The find spots of Anglo-Frisian runic inscriptions of the fifth–seventh centuries against the background of a traditional ethno-political map of England in the sixth century. The base map ‘England in 584’ has been taken from *A School Atlas of English*, ed. Samuel Rawson Gardiner 1907 (London).
North Sea Germanic Idiom

origin of these groups, south-west and north-east of the Elbe respectively, it suggests that the runic script was not much used in regions south-west of the Elbe before the Migration Period. It also implies that there was a substantial Anglian and/or Jutish contribution in the settlement of the Frisian marshlands, where runic inscriptions have been found. Figure 12.6 shows indeed various ‘Anglian’ cruciform brooches in the western Frisian terp region. Scandinavian cultural ‘input’ is particularly noticeable from the late fifth century and sixth centuries (Nicolay 2005, 78), which overlaps exactly with the increased production of runic texts in the Frisian region (see further, Excursus II, below).

The Saxons and (western) Franks apparently did not know the runic alphabet, or at least did not use it extensively on inscriptions. The majority of the Continental runes are found in the Alemannic region, and the core of this population is generally associated with the Elbe-Germanic region (Quak 2016, 316–17). This means that the origins of the West Germanic peoples making extensive use of the runic alphabet between the fourth and eighth centuries can all be associated with a region of origin roughly north and north-east of the Elbe, contiguous with Scandinavia. This geographical bias is supported by a diachronic bias: whereas runic finds are relatively common in Scandinavia from before 400, the bulk of the West Germanic inscriptions are from the fifth and especially the sixth century. Still, all this may be not that simple: first, it is questionable to what extent a concept such as ‘Elbe-Germanic’ is still supported by modern archaeology; secondly, the Alemannic people are already mentioned near the Rhine and Danube in the late third century, which is three hundred years before the bulk of the ‘South Germanic’ inscriptions in the sixth century.

Excursus II: thi koning Redbad fan Danemercum

The late-medieval Frisian text sources include a remarkable piece, known as the ‘Legend of Charlemagne and Redbad’ (Vries 2007, 50, 74–7; Bremmer 2009, 174–6; for a recently improved reconstruction of the oldest version in Codex Unia, see http://tdb.fryske-akademy.eu/temp/karel-en-redbad/). The story begins with:

Tha thi koning Karle and thi koning Redbad fan Danemercum in that land comen …

When King Charles and King Redbad from Denmark came into the country …

and tells of the victory of Charles over Redbad (Radbod) and subsequently the origin of Frisian law. ‘Karle’ is generally conceived of as being Charlemagne, who is also otherwise mentioned as the benefactor of Frisian law and Frisian freedom in the medieval Frisian tradition (Noomen 2001). In reality, it was his grandfather Charles Martel who fought a battle with the Frisian king Radbod in 716 and eventually initiated the conquest of the western parts of Frisia after Radbod’s death. Radbod is often associated with the ‘North’ as in the addition ‘fan Danemercum.’ The seventh statute of the ‘Seventeen Statutes’ (version U: Sytsema 2012) states:

That jef him thi koning Karle that truch se Cristen worden, and henzich, and herich tha sutherna koninge […] hwand alle Fresan er nord herden an tha grimma hirna.
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This [privilege] gave King Charles them [= the Frisians], because they became Christians, and obedient, and dependent on the southern King [of the Franks] … because all Frisians earlier belonged to the north in the dark outskirts [of civilization].

The ‘North’ is repeatedly mentioned in medieval sources as the origin of the Vikings and their attacks on Frisia (IJssennagger 2012, 38–40) and another OFris passage in R1 (Buma and Ebel 1963, 36–7) explicitly associates Redbad with the violent attackers from the north: *thet wi er north herdon Redbate tha unfrethemonne* ‘because we earlier belonged to the violent, northern [king] Redbad’ (see Popkema 2013, 197). So, the legend seems to contain a double anachronism: ‘Karle’ is both Charles Martel and Charlemagne while the Frisian king Redbad is associated with the Viking raids, which post-dated the reign of Charlemagne.

Noomen (2001, 15) stated that *De sége is dêrmei gjin selsstannige boarne foar de kennis fan dy wrald*, ‘the legend cannot be taken as an independent source of knowledge about the world [of the Early Middle Ages]’, but it may echo real events from earlier times. The ruling classes in Frisia in the second part of the fifth and early sixth centuries had close ties to Scandinavia (Jutland and Norway) and felt and maintained them well into the seventh century (Nicolay 2005, 78–85; 2017, 87). This brings us chronologically close to the appearance of Radbod in history. The collocation *Redbad fan Danemercum* may, therefore, not (only) reflect a late-medieval confusion between seventh-/eighth-century pagan Frisians and ninth-/tenth-century pagan Vikings, but just as well echo the self-purported Scandinavian link or even origin of the sixth- and seventh-century Frisian rulers.

Discussion and conclusions

We conclude that the North Sea region witnessed the formation of the Anglo-Frisian idiom by a series of shared innovative linguistic changes, which at that time mostly also included the coastal zone of the Low Countries and parts of the continental Saxon region. The heydays of these developments fall in the fifth–seventh centuries. The geographical spread of these changes was not monolithic and differed per feature: some spread wider than the North Sea Germanic area, including sometimes (parts of) North Germanic, sometimes also parts of the Franconian regions, others encompassed only parts of this ‘Anglo-Frisian’ Sprachbund. The question about a separate branch on the Germanic language tree or a matter of convergence is actually superfluous under a more subtle interpretation of the developments: after a period of strong linguistic convergence, divergent tendencies became more prominent from the seventh century, although common innovations could still develop in the following centuries (Hines 1995; Deckers 2017).

The Anglo-Frisian speakers were dispersed over Frisia (in its widest sense down to Calais), the (north)eastern parts of the Continental Saxon region (compare the Eastphalian involvement in most of the early sound changes in Table 12.3) and in Britain, in particular the eastern parts, in regions close to the North Sea. The language area was – certainly to begin with – no solid geographical territory, although spatial

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12 In Nicolay (2005) this is attributed to a separate wave of immigration, but Nicolay (pers. comm.) now considers it rather to be a cultural phenomenon.
concentrations existed. Anglo-Frisian in England was concentrated in some areas but otherwise rather a sociolect or ethnolect, whose speakers were foremost connected by their political and military power and their common ethnicity, including their religion (compare the position of the Goths in Italy and Spain and the Vandals in North Africa). It is revealing to see that, at least in the fifth and sixth centuries, regions such as Mercia and Wessex, later considered to be constituting the OE dialect landscape and well represented on the map with Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, seem barely to have been inhabited by speakers of Anglo-Saxon idioms, but remained numerically dominated by Romano-British descendants during the first two centuries after the landnam (cf. Grimmer 2007).

The Frisian region was largely resettled in the same period as Britain, but here the settlers found a nearly empty region. Both regions are strongly marked by the toponymic landscape and their inhabitants knew how to write runic texts. This contrasts strongly with the Elbe-Weser region from where those populations had come. There are very few *haim and *ing names there, and basically no runic inscriptions after the fifth century (Sievern, Fallward, Heide and Geltorf II are all from the fifth century). A clearer picture of the historical-geographical landscape of those days of present-day northern Germany may help us to better understand the dynamics of Anglo-Frisian on the Continent.

Appendix: Sources for the place-name mapping

The maps with place-names are based on the Geonames gazetteer: https://www.geonames.org/
The data were analysed and mapped using ILWIS 3.31 Academic GIS-software: https://www.itc.nl/ilwis/download/ilwis33/
The following text filters were applied:

TypeFilter
-court/-hofen: *hofen,*hoven,*court
-*haim: *heim,*um,*hem,*ham,*gem,*hjem
-*ingi: *ing,*ingen,*inghen,*ingh,*ingi,*inge,*ange; *ens (only for Frisia)
-leben, -lev: *leben,*lev
-*stadi: *sted,*stedt,*stett,*stede,*stead,*stätten,*städten
-*villa: *ville,*viller,*vijl*, *weil,*weiler,*wihl*

In total, 13,430 points were selected.

The map in Figure 12.1 was smoothed using a moving window of 13 x 13 pixels. Before smoothing the image, those pixels with a summed proportion of any of the six name-types >12% were selected. This is the sum of the average proportion in the entire map area plus one standard deviation. The average proportion was computed for a moving window of 21 x 21 pixels. Every pixel corresponds to one square kilometre.
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Discussion

HINES Is there any place in your model for Peter Schrijver’s ideas that Celtic substrates were present and had a significant influence on both Old Frisian and Old English?

VERSLOOT I can imagine Celtic influence in England, because of the population situation when speakers of Germanic arrived. But Frisia was largely depopulated. I don’t dispute the case that Frisia could have been Celtic-speaking in the Roman Period. But I find his arguments a bit far-fetched. I very much admire his creativity and his ability to open new windows, but on some points he is too bold. However, breaking in English could well be Celtic-influenced. Breaking is more prevalent in West Saxon than in Northumbrian Old English and Celtic influence was probably greater in the west.\(^{13}\)

HINES Without going too deeply into details of the chronology of sound changes, one of the immediate problems that appears is that the reason why breaking is put before \(i\)-mutation is because we have \(i\)-mutated broken diphthongs. How do you get around that? Do you propose that breaking is not a single process? Could there have been a West Saxon breaking that is early, and potentially Celtic-influenced? You have both primary and secondary \(i\)-mutation too.

VERSLOOT Yes, it does require very lengthy analysis. The earliest evidence I can use is non-West Saxon. This is a problem of the evidence we have. The West Saxon situation is a specific problem, but that would have been spoken very far to the west, deep into a linguistic contact zone. I see its features as a bit of a side-track, rather than central to Old English. In Northumbria and Mercia, the \(i\)-mutation product of a so-called broken vowel is a monophthong.

HINES The Old English runic inscriptions are overwhelmingly ‘Anglian’ in terms of geography. Those from Kent and the Isle of Wight are particularly challenging in terms of legibility and intelligibility. From the heart of the Saxon area there is only the Watchfield inscription from the sixth century, and in fact that whole assemblage looks strikingly Kentish in key respects. On the whole, the runic inscriptions give us really valuable evidence for Anglian dialect areas of East Anglia, Lincolnshire, and subsequently Northumbria, but very much less information outside of that zone.

VERSLOOT In Anglian dialects, it was assumed there was widespread breaking that was later undone, but I’d like to see evidence of that. There is none. There is rather much to suggest there was no early breaking.

DE LANGEN When you discussed North Frisian you said you saw influence from the south. Where is that? And is that area ‘monolithic’?

VERSLOOT Yes, from the features listed, it is a monolith.

DE LANGEN And it includes the Rhineland?

VERSLOOT It includes North-Holland.

\(^{13}\) The chronology of sound changes reconstructed for Gallo-Romance in the period AD 400–700 is revealing – including: 1. fronting of \(a/\dot{a}\); 2. palatalization of velars before fronted vowels; 3. retraction of \(æ > a\) before \(w, n\) (among other things); 4. diphthongization of \(e\) when following a palatal consonant (≈ palatal diphthongization) (Kerkhof 2018, 120). The close resemblance of these to the developments in pre-Old English sheds new light on the areal distribution of so-called ‘North Sea Germanic developments’ and their potential sources. APV
North Sea Germanic Idiom

DE LANGEN  Where is the boundary?
VERSLOOT  Somewhere south of the Oude Rijn (near Leiden).
DE LANGEN  That is interesting!
VERSLOOT  I may perhaps mention that up to now there has been no Frisian text identified from North-Holland, but I found one that was already known which can be reinterpreted as originating from there. It is about love; it has been in the newspapers. Salacious stories attract attention! That is the first piece we have (Versloot 2018). It’s also different from West Frisian, spoken in the province of Fryslân. But in terms of the early features, it shares all of those. In terms of linguistic features, the boundary between the Maas and the IJ is much more important than the Vlie.
DE LANGEN  A little bit more about the Rhineland. How much difference is there: when do the language dialects part?
VERSLOOT  Up to a given point (Tab. 12.3, point 9) we have relic features in Flanders, Zeeland and Holland. This appears to be early seventh-century to me. After that Zeeland and Flanders no longer follow, but it doesn’t mean they can’t share in innovations afterwards. The wave model allows for variability. But up to that point there seems to be a single linguistic zone, except for some differentiation a little earlier on (see the Old Saxon column in Table 12.3). Later on, it gets more problematic, when the Westphalian region diverges, but in the eighth/ninth centuries there are still common elements in Frisian and Eastphalian. The model is flexible.
DE LANGEN  The boundaries inland are clear?
VERSLOOT  We have very little data.
DE LANGEN  I’m particularly interested in the central river area.
VERSLOOT  There’s practically nothing there, except very early and difficult runic inscriptions (Bergakker and Borgharen: see Looijenga, this vol., Ch. 13), which do not contain Anglo-Frisian traces.
DE LANGEN  How much data do you really have? When a new find comes, do you see new boundaries?
VERSLOOT  Not really boundaries, but I’m sure new finds will improve the chronology. Much of it is the result of recent scrutiny of the available linguistic and onomastic material dating from c. 800 and later, including modern dialects.
MOL  Do you distinguish South- and North-Holland?
VERSLOOT  No, Holland is taken as one. The boundary between Zeeland and Holland is around the Maas.
DE LANGEN  But you see Holland as one?
VERSLOOT  Yes: it’s just that Frisian disappears from South-Holland much earlier than it does from North-Holland. When you take the single relics in place-names, though, Holland is nicely in line.
FLIERMAN  Is this diagram the totality of changes or a selection?
VERSLOOT  No, it’s a representative selection, which concentrates on vowels, which are most prominent in historical reconstructions of Germanic languages. There is more, but this is the core for the Anglo-Frisian varieties.
LOOIJENGA  In runic inscriptions, we have famous instances of the Frisian combs with, variously, kabu and kobu. How do you explain that?
VERSLOOT The development of the a+nasal consonant to o is as a gradual/reluctant change. In Old English too, it is a tendency rather than a full change: for example, we have Modern English long but also hang; comb but lamb. It’s therefore unproblematic to have both spellings.

LOOIJENGA They’re from very close to each other, with only one river between them.

VERSLOOT I don’t think the contrast should be interpreted in terms of a dialectal difference; it rather reflects the fact that the phonological status of this development was very weak.

LOOIJENGA And the ending -u? How do you explain that?

VERSLOOT I see it as an approximation of a schwa-like sound (cf. Nedoma 2018).

NIJDAM When we move into Old Frisian, there are only a few phonological changes that are exclusive to the language, in particular eht-breaking (reht > riucht) and w-breaking (singwan > siunga), which are also found in Insular North Frisian. There aren’t many distinctive features.

VERSLOOT Indeed; but also the differentiation of ai into ē and ā is important (e.g. English toe, stone; Dutch teen, steen; Old Frisian tāne, stēn). Some developments differ from Old Saxon and Old English only in the details. It is the total mix of features, some shared with Old English, some with Old Saxon, some with Old Norse, that characterizes Frisian.

NIJDAM That is my question, based on Roger Lass (1994) etc.: you say riuht appears just after 600. I thought it would only be in the late eighth century that it would have appeared. But you now see a North Sea Germanic continuum in which Frisian is distinct from the seventh century onwards?

VERSLOOT The concept of ‘Frisian’ is imposed from hindsight. I think a Germanic speaker of c. 700 would have had difficulty identifying something as ‘Frisian’; someone from the northern part of Saxonia would speak a very similar language. In hindsight we can see the changes becoming part of a ‘language’. It has to do with the family-tree model. With Franconian, there could have been a perceptible difference by about 700.

NIJDAM With things like final devoicing and loss of h etc.?

VERSLOOT Final devoicing is typical of Continental Germanic and much later in coastal areas – even in the nineteenth/twentieth centuries in Frisian.

NIJDAM Can you give us examples of how Frankish and Frisian differed?

VERSLOOT In all these things (Tab. 12.3), Frankish does not participate. Franconian is a very archaic language variant. What we find in Lex Salica is basically proto-West Germanic in form. Nothing seems to have happened. That’s also remarkable.

NICOLAY I wonder what you can say about the difference west and east of the former Vlie (between present-day Friesland and North-Holland), in relation to the habitation hiatus in the fifth century, and the sources of repopulation from the south (Frankish area) rather than the east (Anglo-Saxon Germany)? Does this fit with your model?

VERSLOOT What perhaps it does is to confirm the idea that the changes took place in situ and had nothing to do with where people came from. They came in with a quite undifferentiated West Germanic language, and once settled they began to participate in a North Sea Germanic configuration. It doesn’t matter where they came from. This confirms Kuhn’s idea that the innovations took place during and
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after the Migration Period. It’s an interesting oxymoron that immigration seems to have involved markedly distinctive groups in the archaeology while the linguistic picture is very different: more of a blank slate to start with.

DE LANGEN At the same time, you also stressed that you have a need for a certain amount of time for a change. But up to 600 the languages stayed together and then diverged. Does that give us enough time?

VERSLOOT Between c. 400 and 600 these languages share a couple of innovations.

DE LANGEN They have to accelerate at a certain stage.

VERSLOOT Basically, yes.

DE LANGEN You also stressed a boundary with the hinterland, which made me wonder where the new settlers came from to join in so quickly.

VERSLOOT I don’t really see the problem.

DE LANGEN We have a hinterland which speaks one language, and people join in from somewhere.

NICOLAY In the western Netherlands you mean?

DE LANGEN As I read this as an archaeologist, by the fifth century they had already joined up. And then they split up. But when did they join up?

VERSLOOT Between 400 and 450 we have the start of settlement in Frisia and England, and they were in contact with one another.

DE LANGEN …but not in Holland.

VERSLOOT OK. That means that they would have to catch up in a way, through a sort of course of integration.

DE LANGEN But you also need time. And then they split up again. My question is, how much time do you need?

VERSLOOT The split-up is not a problem. You need them to stay in contact.

DE LANGEN But when did they join up?

VERSLOOT 400, 450? Up to 500? That’s what I get from the archaeological story. Joining up didn’t require them to sit down together. The Anglo-Saxons were already in England, and you need North Sea Germanic contact and networks. We hear a lot about those. I’m interested also in the sociolinguistic reality of it. It’s true that there are rapid changes between 450 and 700, which we see often in languages in a dynamic situation. It’s possible for that then to freeze subsequently. It’s not a single linear thing. We see the same thing in Frisian in the fifteenth century. Around 1400 the language is typologically similar to late Old English; around 1500 it’s like the modern language.

HINES The answer to the questions on your slide, is that we should wait and see. Archaeology is developing very rapidly, and ancient DNA (aDNA) data are now becoming available as a source of study on past demography. Advances in stable isotope analysis and interpretation are proceeding in an encouraging way too. We shall be able to study population mobility much better in the course of the next ten to fifteen years, and just for now we have to be patient.

Nevertheless, the distributions of artefacts do show connected networks, and those networks absolutely presuppose contacts between people. I would draw attention to the fact that a concept that quite rapidly came to the fore in historical linguistics/languag e history about twenty years ago was the idea of ‘convergence’ between languages in contact as a major factor. Languages do not just split and diverge but can become more similar too. A more sociolinguistic viewpoint would
emphasize that the practical circumstances have to be right for particular modes of development to take place: whether that is the movement of people or just contact is an interesting point.

**FLIERMAN** I deal mostly with Latin. Can we postulate the absence or presence of a written culture as a major factor? Can a literary tradition affect innovations?

**VERSLOOT** Written language is definitely a stabilizing factor nowadays. Thus rapid changes are more likely to take place in primarily oral language circumstances. We don’t really see that stabilizing influence until the modern era.

**FLIERMAN** So, you wouldn’t use it to compare the less innovative situation in Franconia with the north.

**VERSLOOT** Too little was written in the vernacular in Franconia then to make a difference.

**KNOL** In relation to changes in the fifteenth century, I was expecting something very different. In Groningen and Ostfriesland then, Frisian was completely replaced by Saxon. Less than a century was required for complete language replacement. You could ask the same questions of that situation, but only some can be answered. Subsistence and social organization did not change in Groningen then. Frisian Freedom remains in Groningen. But the language changed, except for place and personal names. This would be a very interesting point of comparison.

**VERSLOOT** I have given this some thought. I don’t have clear answers yet as to what was going on. In light of the Frisian Freedom, external political changes cannot be identified as the cause.

**KNOL** I wasn’t aware of a change in Frisian in Friesland then, although now I hear that the Frisian language changed there too.

**VERSLOOT** It was an internal change, but towards something much closer to Middle Dutch in type. There must have been widespread bilingualism, and this explains why the cities switched to Dutch. But I don’t think it’s exactly the same. Looking at the spread of linguistic innovations or fashions of pronunciation in the Early Middle Ages is different from the fifteenth century when it’s a matter of language-shift and strong contact situations. I hadn’t thought about the relationship between the internal changes in Frisian and the concurrent language-shift in Groningen. The same phenomenon should underlie them.

**LOOIJENGA** I think the situation involves a lot more than Frisians and Anglo-Saxons alone. Britain was not an unpopulated place. There were lots of contacts with France/Gaul too. I don’t know what language they would have had. This makes the situation very complicated, and that must have sociolinguistic consequences too. It could also help explain why it was so innovative, and interesting fashions spread.

**VERSLOOT** Yes, you are right. It’s an interesting consideration; thank you (cf. fn. 13, above).

**IJSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM** Does population size matter and can you take that into account?

**VERSLOOT** The smaller the group, the easier it is for changes to spread. There are interesting network-model analyses of this: depending on the number of participants and the form of the network, changes can spread quickly.

**IJSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM** So, could it be that because the networks were originally small, in the early phase, innovations would spread more quickly?
VERSLOOT Yes.
DE LANGEN It could also be that they switched language.
VERSLOOT At that time, switching language basically meant switching accent.
NIEUWHOF That answers my question: why was the Frankish language so stable, then? It is probably because it was a large population.
VERSLOOT Yes, otherwise we're talking about a mobile situation with small numbers. The comparison with Saxon is important. Old Saxon is the most conservative form in the eighth/ninth centuries. In Franconian you do get the High German consonant-shift. Saxony remains very stable.
NIEUWHOF …while the fifth-century Frisian area had a new population forming, and so was very flexible.

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VERSLOOT  With reference to the problem of interpreting what can only be scarce evidence, and ideas of the 'deconstruction' of historical narratives, the evidence we can put together seems to me largely to be adding details to a traditional scheme that has been around for some time. Has that scheme changed fundamentally, or has it just become more precise? We are still talking about migrations, essentially. I find this quite comforting. Johan (Nicolay) is filling out the concept of migration, but not saying it is not there.

IJSSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM  I agree with that, but there's still more to it. The focus has changed; the perspective is now more anthropological. Some of the papers do try to go beyond the traditional scope. It is not about trying to throw away an old image, or even just filling it out, but a different perspective that enables us to see new things. Many of the papers were about a wider world than Radbod's.

NIJDAM  I would make two points. It is important not to forget that Boeles's idea of a fourth-century break, and the proposition that the same Frisians had not always inhabited the region, was revolutionary and unpopular in the early twentieth century. Around that time, the Frisian Movement also made use of Radbod as a figure; they would not want to see him deconstructed as a Frankish duke. Things changed in the post-World War II period. Jos Bazelmans wrote on this in the *De Vrije Fries* (2002), being surprised that this question of a long continuity of the Frisians back into the Roman Period is no longer perceived as important to Frisian identity. Moreover, new insights have been gained in recent times. Hans and Gilles's location of Radbod in North-Holland/Texel (de Langen and Mol) poses the question of what his power was over the rest of Frisia. Meanwhile, the reaction to Ian (Wood)'s public lecture does show the continuing desire for information on origins.

IJSSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM  The public may not always be happy with the answer.

HINES  We have to respect the desire to ask the question; and responding with respect will mean giving an answer that is as accurate as we can, but not necessarily the answer that is wished for. Correspondingly, there is a desire in some quarters in Wales now to validate Welsh identity precisely by emphasizing that it has gone through all the constructive processes typical of European national identities throughout history rather than somehow being eternal.

IJSSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM  It might be interesting to have a further meeting outside of what is now Friesland. There has been an internal debate in the Netherlands about how we study the northern area, with a Frisian view opposed to a Frankish one; it would be good to combine them.

NIJDAM  To explore the forging of a Dutch identity?

IJSSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM  No, not just a Dutch one.
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FLIERMAN It also strikes me that modern views of Frisians put identity back on the table. Did we work around this rather than really problematizing it? Archaeologists, for instance, use terms of this kind as typological labels but avoid assuming identities; ditto, in the study of languages. To approach the public we need to re-address that question; are we willing to do so?

NIJDAM This surprises me in a way, because I take from the presentations and discussions how layered identity is: for instance, in the case of Johan (Nicolay)’s Domburg brooches. This shows that kin groups and families go up to a middle range of identity and then there is a top-level elite. Our sources show us that identity is multi-layered; we need to tell the public that.

FLIERMAN That is one of the answers; and works in relation to speech-acts and material behaviour. Will it appeal in terms of what people are looking for?

NIJDAM Is there a tension between what we do and what the public wants? I think people want anchors, for instance, in history.

FLIERMAN As experts we have been able to present a series of pictures but I don’t think these amount to a complete definition of what it means to call someone or anything ‘Frisian’. Can we provide that?

LOOIJENGA People ask ‘where do we come from?’, and what interests me is the two-hundred-year period before Radbod, starting from the habitation hiatus. What were these people? How did they stand out from their neighbours, the Saxons and Franks? What distinguished ‘Frisians’ then? I think we need to address this in terms of origins.

IJSSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM What we’ve learnt from here is how wide in time and space the contexts in which we could look for Frisians are: should we look at that in a different perspective, but also at differences amongst the Frisians? For me the essence of the Frisians is in fact that they are mobile and dynamic, and their identity will be created both by people coming into the group and some going out.

NIEUWHOF I can speak of my own first-hand experience of Frisian identity … reactions to my book on funerary rituals and excarnation (Nieuwhof 2015) saw it as an affront to Frisian identity. You never know what will hurt and what will not hurt; we are not writing for a public that does not like new scientific insights. We must strive to improve.

MAJCHCZACK The situation is indeed very multi-layered and complex; we have a narrative, but it is not a simple one. We have to try to get that story across. Bad media experiences are typical, unfortunately. You cannot help it.

IJSSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM Do we have an idea as to whether we should always use the term ‘Frisia’, rather than ‘southern North Sea coast’? Vikings have become a ‘Viking phenomenon’. Is there an alternative?

HINES To answer that question but also to respond to the point raised by Tineke (Looijenga) concerning the same issue back in the fifth century, because the points are pertinent to one another. In a rather in-between position chronologically we have Procopius, at the other end of Europe: did he have genuine information about ‘Frisians’ in the north-west, or had he got only fragments of contemporary and historical information that are utterly garbled and allow us to conclude nothing? I now have a much stronger sense from this symposium that the re-adoption of the Frisian identity was political and came out of circumstances in the mid-seventh century; that process gave a totally new meaning to what the inherited and
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existing terms meant. Both archaeologically and linguistically, I would continue
to emphasize the close parallels either side of the North Sea. Things which are
‘Frankish’ and ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in the sixth century, we can distinguish.
VERSLOOT I have no discomfort with the relevance of the term ‘Frisian’.
Linguistically too, Frisian is indeed something that is emergent: it overlaps with the
area of Lex Frisionum, and with later areas called ‘Frisia.’ I would not say that these
people in c. 400 were ‘Frisians’, but to call this complex ‘Frisian’ is not problematic
to me. Perhaps it does help enquiring people to put question marks on things.
IJSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM I would carefully emphasize that it is not the
same as modern ‘Frisian’.
HINES We have a duty and responsibility to facilitate knowledge transfer/impact,
and not to restrict reflection to an elite which is privileged to meet here [laughter]
and have these discussions; there is a point at which a degree of internal reflection
is justified too. I’m not so surprised that we have papers which are going in one
direction and discussions in another; the nature of cross-disciplinary discussion is
always likely to move away from subtleties in individual areas towards simpler and
more old-fashioned issues.
I was struck, from the detail in the papers, and thinking again of Giorgio
(Ausenda)’s paradigm and about questions that can be asked or which can’t be
answered — there’s a point at which we look at this population like a crustacean;
we see the shell but not what’s happening underneath it. We haven’t discussed
kinship and family, as Giorgio would have insisted on. This is a field where
 cognition within the period we are looking at would be very different from modern
ideas. It comes up in relation to navigation too: externally, we have the automatic
stereotype of the Frisians as argonauts of the southern North Sea; but in their
culture that is practically invisible. On religion: I emphasize the accessible group
aspects; Annet (Nieuwhof) the aspects of individual belief, which I tend to push
into a folklore category. There are issues here that are partly source-related, partly
matters of methodology, but are also the challenges of cross-disciplinary dialogue.
IJSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM There’s a difference of langue and parole here:
this relates to Tineke (Looijenga)’s ideas on the runes.
LOOIJENGA In this way an important thing I have learnt or become aware of,
is the idea that something has to trigger the mind in relation to the very short
inscriptions; one word can trigger a whole story.
NIJDAM Let me raise a few more general points. They go back to Giorgio
Ausenda and the anthropological model he used. Ian (Wood) talked about cross-fertilization
between history and anthropology. It strikes me that Ausenda’s scheme is very
much that of a traditional anthropological monograph. This anthropological
schema had become outdated since the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1991
a monograph was published by Donald Brown on human universals. He showed
that since the 1930s a new type of anthropology emerged, which was rooted in
the nature versus nurture debate. The nurture approach won and then came to
dominate anthropology. I think we are on the brink of moving back to giving
nature its due place in this, so we can assume stem categories, for instance, what
you just said about family and kin.
A related point is about the ‘otherness’ of the Frisians. I have missed this so far: we
approached this on religion. We have not explicitly stated what we think about how
the Frisians perceived their ‘otherworld’ permeating their everyday life. We have been discussing things from a modern, non-magical perspective. I would like to reconsider Jan de Vries’s idea that ‘might’ (Proto-Germanic *mahtī-*) was in some way intangible and associated with magic (de Vries 1956/57); I see this as associated with the concept of honour.

WOOD Of course Ausenda laid down a model, but when he did so initially he had very little knowledge of the Early Middle Ages, and practically every paper written for him rebelled against his template. The model is, however, helpful in providing direction. What I have learnt from anthropology is that you cannot use ‘an’ anthropological model – every case is unique; what you can do is read the work and learn how to question a society as ‘other’. It shocks you into seeing the apparently ‘normal’ as not normal.

IJSSENNAGGER-VAN DER PLUIJM That’s very helpful. The otherness of religion takes us into the mentality question: how do we find a mind-set and see what things mean?

HINES Precious metals and elite art-styles did allow an elite to express itself and to interact with other elites; this can be linked to the law codes, which in a male-centred way define personal status (e.g., wergild) in clear monetary terms. Social recognition of a personal status/value could well involve a material practice of gift-giving which directly reflects that social identity.

In terms of the recent tradition of approaches to Germanic religion, which (I suggested) are extremely cautious over moving beyond the immediate context of the sources, perhaps I have not put myself as much out on a limb as I had thought. I am confident from the connections pointed out that this line of argument could be taken a lot further. But will it end up returning to sacral kingship? Will we then just reinvent debates of the 1930s or 1950s? If so, will that mean that those were in fact more justified than has recently been thought? Or should we try to look at this in a different way?

FLIERMAN For me it has been a big temptation always to move towards simplification to try to find common ground: e.g., Widukind – what can we say about him? Interdisciplinarity can therefore be a redefinition of one’s own field – or is that just a historian’s view, as it being almost a betrayal to engage with the questions?

HINES I would personally say ‘no’. I am conscious of terminology which in one field we take for granted but which needs careful explanation in talking outside the field. There are, for instance, technicalities – this is very clear with sound changes, as years of training are needed to understand philological details and facts, and it’s hard to present those to a wider audience. But I don’t see it as compromising the integrity of a particular field, or as simplifying things regretfully.

VERSLOOT I would add that I have a positivistic attitude. I do believe things can be discerned. I would like ten times as much evidence, and more reliably dated sources, of course. Even if much can be debated, you genuinely can reconstruct an enormous amount about a ‘lost’ language. That cannot be done in history or archaeology – you can’t design the missing evidence. I feel therefore that I am on solid ground. I don’t have to force myself in any way.

FLIERMAN Perhaps I should say instead being forced to adapt by taking the evidence in a direction you would not otherwise have taken it in?
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HINES Only in a good way, in my view.
WOOD I think historians have been far too certain that we know how to reconstruct. Traditionally most scholars just joined up the dots with direct lines, but now we are isolating the spots of evidence rather more. In a way, it's a good thing we're being forced to look at our sources a great deal more carefully.
VERSLOOT There's something similar in linguistics. What I see is that conclusions drawn from haphazard observations, and the rejection of other evidence as scribal errors, are being re-evaluated: taking corpora as they are in their entirety produces new information. But this is essentially doing the same thing as has always been the case; just doing it properly.
NIJDAM You have already yourself pointed out that the advantage of studying a language is that you can depend on the fact that you are reconstructing systems that are valid. Historians cannot do that: they are not looking for something machine-like and on the whole rarely approach their material from a certain model. This is why I am keen on the concept of human universals because that gives me cogwheels comparable to the building blocks of linguistics.

References

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