Chapter 3
Theory and methodology
Finding the Viking Age horizon and boundary
The aspects that underlie cross-cultural contact and connectivity are diverse. Equally diverse are the traces they leave, which are spread over different sources from various areas and times. Despite being from different periods and places, the sources in the corpus that is studied in the next chapters are all related to the Viking Age time horizon in some way, and this relation to the Viking Age horizon needs to be established. Once the relation is established, the sources can reveal a great deal of information on Viking Age events, materials, mentalities and how they were perceived again after the Viking Age. Furthermore, the material and textual sources that form the corpus of the present study may shed new light on the connectivity and its effect on people and cultural expressions when they are considered together, even though they are of different types. The study, therefore, is neither archaeological, nor historical, nor literary, but at the crossroads of all three. This scope is important because none of these approaches in themselves can present a full picture of connectivity.

This chapter is devoted to outlining the interdisciplinary framework and, following from it, the methodology for the present study of Frisia in the Viking Age North Sea world. The theoretical framework, which is introduced first, is based on a number of aspects, concepts and ideas from various disciplines and fields of study. Secondly, the presented methodology is particularly aimed at establishing the sources’ relation to the Viking Age horizon in time and finding a mode in which the very different sources can be studied together and in relation to each other. It has been stated that ‘all historical archaeologies have to confront the problem of the relationship between artifacts and texts’ (Moreland 2001, 10), and it is the manner in which you see or confront this relationship that sets out your methodology. Here we must take into account that the textual and material sources have a different relation to the Viking horizon, a different dynamic and a different temporality. For the written sources we must address the layering of the texts (diachronic or vertical), whilst for the material evidence that is plotted on distribution maps, we must remember that they present a general image of the Viking Age horizon (horizontal). Within each of these, there is a particular relevance for the study of the Viking Age. Once we have established this relevance for the layered written sources, we can extract the information from the sources and create an interpretative frame for the material culture, and vice versa. As the case studies will make clear, in quite a number of cases the material evidence will fit the broad frame as set by the texts, and the material traces will provide a framework in which we can understand the textual references. This dialectical process will add to creating a general picture of the extent of connectivity at the time.

As such, a study that is simultaneously historical, literary and archaeological can perhaps be seen as a form of contextual archaeology, in which the main task is to

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19 The extent to which you can truly use sources interdisciplinarily is a matter of debate, particularly for historical-archaeological matters. See Van Oosten 2015 (historical and archaeological sources), Hines 2004 (literature and archaeology) and Moreland 2001 (archaeology and text) - and references within them - for interesting discussions and viewpoints. Multidisciplinary may therefore often be a more fitting term.

20 With the plural historical archaeologies, Moreland means the range of sub-disciplines that deal with archaeological artefacts in the historical past, also in different areas.
situate an artefact or group of artefacts within its contemporary context by seeking out the range of similarities and differences it shares with other artefact groups. Meaning is not inherent in any individual object of material culture but derives from its relationships with other objects (Moreland 2001, 82) and with people. At the same time, a study of this kind can be seen as a broader and comprehensive cultural history (Hines 2004, 34-5). The information from the case studies is namely combined to answer many of the questions of how, where, when and by whom connectivity existed, as well as how identities, memories, mentalities and histories were shaped through it, and in return shaped the connectivity.

3.1 Theoretical framework

3.1.1 Connectivity and the dynamics of cross-cultural connections

The Viking Age, during which regions in north-western Europe were connected through complex networks and relations, is particularly permeated by what we call *connectivity* (Sindbaek 2007, 59-74; Bentley 1993, 110). As a concept, connectivity was introduced by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell in a study of the Mediterranean (2000) as a socio-cultural and spatial adaptation of graph theory, and is described as:

“...the various ways in which microregions cohere, both internally and also one with another — in aggregates that may range in size from small clusters to something approaching the entire Mediterranean.”

(Horden and Purcell 2000, 123)

Following from this, the phenomenon thus encompasses the coherence between various people and areas. Further building on this, the concept of connectivity in the present PhD thesis is defined as the extent to and ways in which areas and people are connected and cohere so as to become socially meaningful aspects of those societies involved. Moreover, it is considered as a phenomenon that is socially embedded and determining, which is connected to the high degree of mobility and use of mobility via a particular infrastructure, in this case around the North Sea. Connectivity is thus not about events and extraordinary encounters that make it to the written records, it is about the embedded and structuring social connections that become socially meaningful and about the nature of the infrastructure itself. When studying an area in terms of connectivity, we are looking at the unity of a chosen region, its continuity and how it subsisted over a period of time (Horden and Purcell 2000, 1). The idea behind this thesis is that despite regional variation, the unity should be sought in traces of shared world views, shared histories, shared activities, intensive travel and contact, exchange of or shared cultural traits and

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21 With microregions, Horden and Purcell indicate the many local differences within the Mediterranean area, particularly in terms of landscape, and no micro-region is comparable in size or shape or character. These local aspects always are part of the larger entity, in their case the Mediterranean; the Mediterranean world is thus simultaneously subject to fragmentation and connectivity. In this dissertation, we will not work with the term of microregions as Horden and Purcell do, but we do look into core areas and terp-sites of interest within Frisia, and connecting them to the entire North Sea area as entity, whilst recognising their variation.
both material and intangible traces of an overlapping of spheres. This unity of an area does not follow the boundaries or geographical borders we know today, but can be a different region, such as a North Sea region.

The degree of connectivity around the North Sea has been looked at primarily from a trade-network perspective. It can be postulated, however, that connectivity was present on many different scales and in different networks simultaneously, which thus need to be studied to get an idea of the full connectivity. For Horden and Purcell, the Mediterranean Sea is the provider of connectivity, but the North Sea, Atlantic and other related waterways likewise provide it. In fact, not only waterways but other geographical features, like the Sahara Desert, may see a similar phenomenon as well (cf. Lydon, 2009). The conceptual challenge of connectivity here is to study these connected areas and connecting relations together, and not as isolated units. By shifting the focus from a given network of exchange (mainly economic history) to the connections between multiple areas on various levels, a new and fuller picture emerges, which opens the possibility of studying different aspects within one framework. It also allows the researcher to use a wide range of sources in an analysis. Studying connectivity should not be seen as a method or a rule to follow, but rather as a particular way of looking at the early medieval world. In fact, besides being a historical reality, connectivity can also be projected beyond that. For instance, it is reflected in stories and legends of the Viking Age, and can perhaps even be seen as a discourse (for instance in relation to boat graves) (cf. Dobat 2015). This occurrence in texts is, on the one hand, connected to expressions of collective memory and history (both real and invented); and on the other, to perceptions of distance and time and stories about travelling.

When speaking of connectivity in an area as large as the North Sea world, it is important to note that most of the contacts happened in a number of specific places or areas, such as trading sites which functioned primarily as hubs, as archaeologist Søren Sindbæk (2007, 60) argues. In a study which uses network theory to map contacts, he further points out that when, for example, a shared artefact type is found in two sites, this does not automatically represent communication between the two sites. Rather it indicates that they are in connection through the same group of interlinked sites, displaying connectivity (Sindbæk 2007, 66). This connectivity is therefore not only about direct contact but also about indirect contact and transferred connectivity. So we have to bear in mind that if an object occurs in A and in B, it does not have to have come to B from A, not even if there are regular and close connections between them. Possibly, both A and B get their objects and inspiration from the shared pool of objects and ideas that is C. This is exactly why it is fruitful to look at distribution across a wider North Sea world when studying the connectivity here.

As the focus in the present study is not on trade and trade routes, we must consider core areas where contacts were mostly occurring and which seem most

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22 To me this is a positive possibility, but it is put negatively by G. Algazi in a review of Horden and Purcell’s book: “Connectivity’ and ‘redistribution’ are vague enough to be used with very different sorts of evidence, from pottery to poetry.” http://www.tau.ac.il/~algazi/texts/Rev--CS.pdf (Mediterranean Historical Review, 241) accessed 21/9/2012.
interconnected, rather than trade hubs. These may perhaps be called hubs as well, but it is important to note that these may include areas or regions besides specific locations and towns. As suggested by Loveluck and Tys (2006), especially in the coastal zones, this may be more scattered as the result of free, less centralised people and power. Also in these cases, the occurrence of people and objects in two or more areas does not necessarily signal direct contact, but indicates that they are in connection via a shared network. Nonetheless, these core areas and potential networks may be mapped using the archaeological finds and their dispersal, after which they can be tested against references from the written sources. Here, the idea of a sphere is very useful, as it does not identify the precise locations or routes, but the extent or reach of a particular phenomenon or cultural influence. And it is precisely the extent to which these spheres reach and the extent to which they display connectivity that is central in this PhD thesis.

Contact
Connectivity is about cross-cultural connections, and where (groups of) people meet and mingle, there are interesting dynamics. Contact is a true umbrella term since there are many types of contact. For the Viking Age, those that immediately come to mind are the specific cases of raid, trade and migration. But alliances were also formed on different levels. It is tempting to divide contact situations into hostile and friendly, or into categories like raid and trade, but this is almost impossible. More often than not, these are closely linked and hardly discernible. For instance, is a trading mission that eventually leads to a raid or confiscation of property, like the possibly first Viking ‘raid’ in Dorset, to be classified as hostile in nature? Moreover, even within such a ‘category’ of, for example, Viking raids, many differences can be found. Whereas the first Viking attack on Frisia in 810 was the consequence of a political conflict between mainly Franks and Danes, the attack of 852 was successfully aimed at extracting a sum of silver. It is thus safe to say that, in general, the contact-situation and its outcome are dependent on a number of variables. These include the motives for contact, where it took place (i.e. on whose territory), what the time span or frequency was, and which people were involved (Bochner 1982, 8).

Particularly the motives which underlie the cross-cultural encounters and travelling can be very complex, multiple and difficult to separate. Often the motives appear diffuse, and behind a supposedly clear motive, like raid or trade, there may lie less traceable motives. Anthropologist Mary Helms (1988, 67) lists a few possible motives: the search for or display of objects, the sense of adventure or curiosity, or the wish for self-realisation, fame or prestige. These do not necessarily coincide with short- and long-term exchange, as all of these may, besides being an individual aim, have a role in the establishment of what is called ‘socio-cosmological’ order. This often-used term is hardly ever defined, but in this study, it will be seen as a society’s system of values and knowledge or beliefs about the universe and the place of the people in it. It also contains knowledge of (assumed or wanted) origins. Thus, the socio-cosmological order is clearly connected to perceptions of time and space.
In general, the motives for travel contain elements of self-realisation and personal benefit as well as political, ideological and economic benefits for the group. The individual reasons for crossing the North Sea to meet others are dependent on the circumstances. These reflect aspects important to society, such as social, ecological and political environments, and can thus help to trace the world view and circumstances of groups in the Viking Age (Helms 1988, 67-8).

As many authors have stressed, in pre-modern societies contact and relations are not restricted to living people, but can also involve the dead, spirits, ancestors, gods, animals and objects (see amongst others Hedeager 2011; Bazelmans 1996; Olsen 2003, 87-104). In addition, values attributed to them are appropriated. Examples from early medieval texts, in which a hero has a sword with human characteristics, where people meet with animals or where spirits have conversations with a protagonist, are often quoted to illustrate this. Moreover, fluctuating boundaries between animals and people are clearly visible in iconography and mythology (Hedeager 2011, 50-2). In archaeology, the grave goods that are given to the deceased for their afterlife are a case in point. In this way, objects too are imbued with meaning and agency, which is determined by the contemporary notion of human-material culture relations (Theuws 1995, 144-6). This also signifies that ideas about time, chronology and the division between the real and mythological world were different in the past than in our time, something we need to bear in mind when dealing with sources from past eras.

Time and space
Cross-cultural encounters are about travelling and about crossing or covering geographical and/or social/mental distance and about being connected across this distance. Therefore, it is important to look into what this distance meant, both in the physical world and cognitively – that is, the connotations related to it and the idea of mental distance. The introduction of the sail was an important factor that facilitated the increased cross-North Sea contact that characterises the Viking Age. Analyses have shown that this and other developments created a closely connected northern European world of exchange in this period (Sindbæk 2007, 59), which had already been in close contact since the Migration Period. In turn, this must have had an influence on the cognitive perception of distance, time and travelling, as it became increasingly part of society and daily life.

Viking Age people, and later medieval people writing about the Viking Age, undoubtedly had different perceptions of time and space than we have today, and perhaps from each other. Furthermore, from a Christian perspective, cultural distance and time must have been rather different than from a non-Christian perspective. Helms (1988, 3-17) argues that in pre-modern societies horizontal distance often equals a vertical distance. This means that what is far away geographically can also be far away cosmologically. Far-away places can be connected to other times, other people and thus may have a special significance or may be used to create an image of distance. It also means that a person who travels far thus acquires some special status for travelling. Hedeager (2011, 145) likewise states that it is ‘highly unlikely
that any prehistoric society ever saw activities and objects associated with distant origins in a neutral light’. We may, therefore, hypothesise that there is a significance of distance in the value of people, raw materials and crafted goods from distant areas, even if we have to remember that much is acquired down the line, but what the significance exactly entails remains uncertain and relative for each society. This, then, is a reason why people would be looking for distant origins and imports, and how these objects would be authenticated. Although this is not easily measurable for a historic society like that of Viking Age, where a lot of people actually travelled far and perhaps more so than in the period before, the anthropologically well-attested practice of according value to geographical distance and being in connection with it seems undeniably present (Helms 1988, 21). In the Viking Age, this is exemplified by the fact that warbands derived their status from their travels and the physical objects they acquired on their travels, which could symbolise the travel itself. Travelling and having connections may present a form of social capital, which can be reflected in textual expressions and in material expression, or even in souvenirs. Again, it is also taken up in stories, memory and origin myths. Epic tales of heroic adventures and a hero coming home wiser, better and richer are numerous. Sometimes the story and object are even combined, as is the case with rune stones and runic inscriptions on some objects.

Within the process of (group)identity-formation, the fundamental role of distance and time is often stressed. In the introductory statement to her work Access to Origins, Helms (1998, 3) argues that:

“Fundamental constructions of human society seem to rest upon relatively few basic premises. These include individual and group identifications of Us and not-Us, or Other, and conceptualizations of spatial/temporal parameters that contrast the here- and-now with there-and-then.”

Although her work is mainly based on ethnographic case studies, it explores general human premises which are also quite applicable to historical cases (see Hedeager 2011). Within the historical cases, with their different perception of time, there indeed is a clear tendency to view a present situation and mould the historical situation around it. For instance, in the eighth century, Bede mentions the Frisians as among the first Germanic settlers of Britain, but this has been deemed not entirely true by modern scholars. If Frisians were among them then this has in any case not left any recognisable traces (Bremmer 1981). This may be an eighth-century perspective on the contemporary Germanic groups and their coherence, for which Bede may be providing an explanation in historical light (cf. Hills 2003), which would mean that in the eighth century the presence of Frisians was recognised and had to be put in perspective. Moreover, Bede may also have been referring to people coming from or through the Frisian lands, i.e. the coastal area between Denmark and Flanders. Connecting these elements is a strategy that is continuously encountered in the written sources, and one that we need to look at closely. Besides showing the context and coherence of other groups to which specific groups relate, as Bede does
by mentioning and thus distinguishing between the various people, the identity of the ‘self’ of that group is also formed against the identity of the others. In the textual material, we see a constant negotiation of these aspects.

Although time is presented as linear in the sources in our corpus as well, there is a much more flexible view of time in which, eventually, the past links to mythological times. In addition, events and people from various times can become contemporary in the representations in the sources, or at least become powerful and present agents. To give an example mentioned by Moreland (2004, 148) referring to Howe (1989):

“The presence of Germanic gods in the genealogies of 8th- and 9th-century Anglo-Saxon kings and of Germanic myths alongside stories from the Christian tradition on the Franks Casket demonstrate that these ancestral memories remained a potent force in 8th-century England.”

This use of flexible chronologies and projection of aspects from various times onto one moment in time we may term ‘condensed history’ or ‘epic concentration’.

This process can be readily seen in the written sources under discussion here and it shows how history is seen and perceived by the Viking Age and medieval societies around the North Sea. The call for contemporaneity of sources and events, in order to do any reliable analysis, that is often heard in historic studies disregards this significance of memory and poetic diction. It also disregards the difference between history writing then and now, a difference which would have been particularly pronounced in the way that non-literary societies would have represented their past. As has been argued by Moreland (2001, 26), a problem with historical archaeologies is that they look at both written sources and artefacts as evidence about the past, whereas they are texts and objects made in the past. As such, they function differently than modern sources. Furthermore, following the idea of mentalities, it is not necessarily relevant to know how historical these sources actually are. What is important apart from the historical facts is that they reflect a mentality from the Viking Age and onwards, a common memory of a group of people, in which these contacts across the North Sea are remembered and sometimes even stressed. They thus represent a social memory (see for instance Hedeager 2011, 28). Each generation will interpret its heritage in its own way, adapting it where necessary to changing circumstances and convictions.

Thinking of space, we may also consider the role of landscape in cross-cultural encounters, which we can partly grasp in a physical sense by looking at paleo-geographical maps and landscape reconstructions. Furthermore, it has been argued

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23 In Dutch the term epische verdichting or concentration (‘epic condensing’ or ‘concentration’) refers to the phenomenon that in epic literature events, actions and historical figures that historically were not contemporary do figure as contemporary in the written sources. In a German study on the phenomenon of news in the Middle Ages, Zwierlein (2010, 3-4) describes a related phenomenon which he calls Gegenwartshorizonte: “Ich spreche hier von der historischen Größe des »Gegenwartshorizontes« einer Gesellschaft oder einer Epoche: Mit diesem Begriff soll der Wahrnehmungseffekt gemeint sein, »wie und mit welcher ›Struktur‹ die Wirklichkeit als gegenwärtig in Abhängigkeit von der medialen Situation sich aufbaut oder ›konstruiert‹ wird [...]".
that (cognitive) landscape played an important role in establishing or forming the central places where valuable objects are often created and exchanged (Hedeager 2011, 172–3). Objects may, therefore, be related to specific places in the landscape, such as the sacrificing of objects in or near water and the burying of wealth near boundaries. Especially this last example may be an interesting aspect in the light of cross-cultural contact, and it also points us to how in general the dispersion of certain objects may indicate boundaries other than the formal boundaries. This is why we can use distribution maps to map spheres and areas of coherence that do not necessarily coincide with modern ideas of geographical or political boundaries. Another aspect of this cross-cultural landscape to consider is, of course, the sea itself, which is not just central but a prerequisite for the contact. Crossing the sea, just like crossing cultural or political boundaries, must have had a different significance for people then it does now. According to Van Gennep (1960, 13), the crossing of boundaries which traditionally are marked by natural phenomena such as trees, water or the like, or by placed landmarks, is a kind of rite of passage which has what he calls a ‘magico-religious’ aspect (1960, 15–22). The sea in early medieval mentality seems to be full of scary creatures and other dangers, so crossing it thus equals the conquering of dangers. Different aspects of the sea are used as motifs, sometimes referred to in general as maritime motifs (Rudolf 2011, 33), in many stories of the period. The Old English poems Beowulf and The Seafarer, as well as the Old Frisian laws, are cases in point. Similarly, the landscapes and waterscapes that characterise the North Sea coastal regions can be found described in the various written sources and help us identify core areas. Particular connotations can be found in these same sources for specific areas or directions, such as north and south. A clear distinction between north and south with strong connotations is not unique for the Viking Age or the North Sea area, but is rather universal (Arndt 2007). The specific connotations to it, however, are time and place dependent, and can be found, for instance, exemplified in the Frisian and Scandinavian corpus, in relation to the Viking Age and medieval situation.

Identity

In an era of intensifying contact, the dialectics between different groups of people are interesting, since they mutually constitute each other. A fundamental aspect of these dialectics is identity or, rather, identities, as was already touched upon in Chapter 1. Identity can take shape on several levels or can be seen as multiple, overlapping identities, such as the personal, the group, the cultural and the ethnic (Innes 2000, 67). A seemingly static concept like ethnic identity must have been a multi-layered and dynamic phenomenon, and identity changed according to circumstances, even leading to hybrid identities. Therefore, it may often be more fitting to speak of cultural and situational identities than ethnic. In addition, an individual can view his own identity in a different way than others do, making it a

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24 Van Gennep defines this as a combination of theory (religion: ideas about the world and its powers) and practice (magic: the ceremonies, rites etc. constituted by the religion).
difficult aspect to grasp. Yet it is important because looking at expressions of identity gives insight into the process of contact. Identity is not always clearly expressed in the written and material evidence, but styles, uses, perceptions, representations and images might clarify it. Especially decoration on material objects, which could be used to manifest identity basically anywhere, could be used to express and take along identity (Abrams 2012, 24). This is also clear in the work of Kershaw, who shows that brooches related to Viking female dress were used to convey, keep, express and shape Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian identity in Viking Age England (Kershaw 2013). As portable and visual expressions of culture, style, status and background, dress accessories/jewellery are particularly appealing to study in relation to cross-cultural contacts in general. Since the specific brooches looked at here are not the typically traded ware but more personal items, they are an especially interesting category of objects to study this. According to Hedeager (2011, 14) style, symbolic objects, rituals, myth and legend together are what embodies a group’s identity, making it logical to study them together. Similarly, Moreland (2001, 96; 1998) states that ‘people in the past constructed their identities through an engagement with memory, texts and the material world’. Creating and maintaining these identities was thus an important matter, and probably part of a group’s (elite) strategy. This is part of what we can try to trace when looking at both the material and the non-material sources.

Different parts of identity are more prominent in different situations, making identity quite a flexible and formable concept. The individual’s identity is constantly in dialogue with the identity of the group the person belongs to or identifies him- or herself with. The same can be said for social status, which is primarily reliant on the relative relation to other people within the group. Group identity is fundamentally based on a number of aspects, amongst which the relation to other groups and the knowledge of origin. It is often formed around origin myths and common knowledge of the past (Hedeager 2011, 14; Cohen 1985, 99-103). Although shared origins were very important for the self-definition of a group, this does not necessarily reflect historic reality but rather is a way to shape and express a commonality, a discourse. Common origins and common history can be conceived at any time. Even ethnic identity, which in the minds of many is a static concept, is based on these subjective and changing identifications of what is termed Self and Other. It is, therefore, a construct. In her book *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, Jones (1997, 1-13) argues for the reconceptualisation of ethnic identity as one aspect of social organisation. Ethnic identity, in that case, is related to both political and economic relations, and especially inter-group competition. It is thus active in keeping and creating cultural boundaries in processes of interaction. This explanation is dependent on Jones’ definition of ethnic identity, which is:

“that aspect of a person’s self-conceptualization which results from identification with a broader group in opposition to others on the basis of perceived cultural differentiation and/or common descent.” (Jones 1997, xiii)
Although this definition is somewhat modern in its individualism, the applicability of which to our topic and period we can question, the idea of the perceived cultural affiliation and shared descent seems key in the historic reality. As such, it is only one of the aspects of identity, based on perceived unity and shared characteristics, whether or not these perceptions are real. This is, perhaps, more important than biological affinity (Trafford 2000, 19), but this does not mean we should think of peoples in the early Middle Ages as ‘ethnically’ homogenous groups. On the contrary, the peoples were anything but homogenous, especially in times of migration, travel and perhaps, in turn, cross-cultural contact. In early medieval societies such as those of the Franks and Frisians, ethnicity was often ambiguous, and people of what we would call different ethnic backgrounds could mix. Moreover, people who belonged to the same group might carry symbols of other ethnic groups or have different expressions of the various identities within that group, for instance according to social status and age. This his mixing and shaping of different identities is particularly the case in the Viking Age with the formation of multi-ethnic and mobile warbands (Raffield et al. 2016). Members of these warbands could become known based on the ethnic identity of their leader, or be referred to by the area where they had just come from or had their power-bases in; in addition, they could have individual identifications like ‘the Frisian’ or ‘the Dane’. Identity here was dependent upon the situation, and more often than not the word ‘ethnic’ could be replaced with ‘geographical origin’ – whether by birth, in long-term perspective and family line or simply by referring to the area one just came from (see also Chapter 2, note 8). For this reason, ethnic identity can, in general, be classified as a ‘situational construct’, which could be constructed by a process called ethnogenesis (Geary 1983; 2003; Pohl 1998, 15-17; 2015; Pohl and Reimitz 1998). In addition, ethnicity becomes juridical through the recording of the laws of the different groups of people (Stammrecht).

That the people from various backgrounds could mix to such an extent as to becoming difficult to distinguish is shown by DNA-research into the Migration Period and Viking impact in England. For instance, research into Y-Chromosome relations in male populations showed a very close affinity between modern samples from Central England and Frisia (Weale et al. 2002, 1008-21). A comparison between the male populations of North Wales, Central England, Norway and Friesland, in fact, shows that Central England and Friesland are almost indistinguishable, whilst Wales is completely different. Moreover, very few traces of Norwegian DNA are found among the British samples in general. The researchers conclude that there is no positive evidence of ‘a (Norwegian) Viking contribution to the Central English gene pool that could not be explained by a substantial contribution originating in Friesland only’ (Weale et al., 2002, 1017-18). The problem with this conclusion, as the authors themselves recognise, is that Vikings in this area were primarily Danes. Because of the close affinities in the Migration Period and the Viking Age, the DNA-material of Frisians and Danes became very closely connected and mixed, making it very hard to distinguish between them – harder than between Norwegian and Frisian samples.
Clearly, myths of origin, collective memory and common knowledge of the past are fundamental for identity. It is interesting that most of the Western histories of origin can be traced back to some notion of migration or even (barbaric) invasion, sometimes involving non-human beings like giants and gods (see the work of Anthony Smith, especially 1986, 1999). Many groups link their origin, identity and self-perception to the North, regardless of whether or not they actually originated there (Hedeager 2011, 37), whilst northern origin myths sometimes referred back to Troy or even India. Conversely, stories are known from the medieval Scandinavian world, namely from the Faroe Islands and Iceland, in which the inhabitants have origins in the Frisian area or at least on the Continent. This is exemplified by the Faroese text Frísa kvæði and the Icelandic Frísí visa (Hoekema 1962). The British Isles have a long history of migrations and invasions from across Europe, and the Anglo-Saxon world goes back to the Adventus Saxorum. The Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon and Frisian worlds are comparable in the sense of having these stories of origins. The Frankish world, in contrast, does not have such a myth (Hedeager 2011, 48). Instead, contemporary authors placed the origin of the Franks in Troy, but different traditions existed as well (Wood 1995, 47-57). In any case, oral history transmission and the later recording and moulding of the stories are clearly very important for identity. Both the stories of friends and those of enemies are relevant to it and can play a formative role. In our historic situation, we expect a role for the Frisians, Vikings, Franks and Anglo-Saxons in moulding each other’s identities. In a similar way material culture can play a crucial part in expressing and creating identity, and perhaps even in the materialisation and furthering of a myth of origin or a shared history.

Identity and contact between people embody perception of the Self and Other, because central to this perception is the subjective process of identifying the own compared to others. Otherness is a cognitive category, which makes it hard to grasp, but traces are reflected in expressions in different sources, mainly the written ones. Within our research area, this exposition is inextricably connected to the Frankish historiography and the Frankish Self. The dynamics between the Frankish, Frisian and Scandinavian people from a Frankish perspective and the grounds on which they are discerned help us to analyse the role of the written sources from the

25 Although this is not at all researched, there is also a possibility that this idea is connected to the imaginary island of Frisland, as it appeared south of Iceland on sixteenth-century maps. The Icelandic ballad is about Frisian pirates visiting the island and threatening to take away a girl. The first line is: Frísar leggja arar í sjógv, so vildu teir frá landi ro (The Frisians lay their oars in the sea, so they wanted to row away from the land). Possibly, this is connected to thirteenth-century events, but this is very uncertain. The Faroe story is about the fact that a couple of Frisians lived on Akraberg on Sudurey. When the Black Death arrives, all Frisians except one are killed. The Frisian who stays alive is called the Farmer of Akraberg, and it is said that during his lifetime the fundaments of the church ruin in Kirkjubø are built. This must have been after AD 1300, whilst other reports from the eighteenth century say that Frisian colonists were in the Faroe Islands at the same time as Irish hermits, so before the Vikings arrived in 825, or that they arrived as Frisian pirates, or that they came a long time after the Vikings. In addition, medieval and later chroniclers and map makers have identified the Faroe Islands and the Frisian inhabitants with Frislanda, an island that was placed north of Britain. Many identifications have been made, but today it is regarded as a phantom island. In any case, these things together have led Hoekema to conclude that these are indications that Frisian settlers once lived in the Faroe Islands in the past. Whether or not this is true and in which time period this would have then been, the Frisians are also a topos in relation to the sea in these regions. By the later medieval period, the name and fame of the Frisians had extended in such a way that they appeared in other areas as well. The maritime identity of Frisia has been mythologised in post-medieval history.
Continent (IJssennagger 2012; 2013a). More difficult are the dynamics between Frisians, Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons. This is mainly due to the lack of contemporary written sources. Therefore, it would be very interesting to see if these dynamics can be mapped out by analysing the various sources taken up here.

Fundamental to the formation of the own (group) identity are history, religion and law. A shared history with others can be stressed or changed in favour of the current political and social situation and used to form the current identity. Similarly, religion is an important part of identity-formation and expression, and in this case represents a choice between heathen and Christian. Both heathen and Christian have their own implications, their own rules and practices, and their own group of fellow heathens or Christians. Particularly in a period of transition from heathen to Christian, these are very important, and it can be expected that people who become Christian need to find a way to deal with the heathen past and with their former fellow-heathens. Laws can be a tool for this, whilst simultaneously representing the core aspects and practices of the society in which they are formed, just like poetry and narrative.

Another important aspect for group identity is the idea of kinship. What needs to be borne in mind is that in the sources, kinship can either be real or imagined and does not have to be based on blood ties per se (Moreland 2000; Henson 2006, 24; Raffield et al. 2016, 37-8). There are various forms of kinship: kinship by blood, but also kinship by marriage, appropriation or alliance. The characteristics of ethnicity as they have been outlined by some researchers (Smith 1986, 22-31; Henson 2006, 24) are the occurrence of a common proper name; the idea or feeling of a common ancestry; shared historical memories, which may be actual events as well as myths; element(s) of a common culture, such as language or religion; the idea of a homeland; and a sense of solidarity, which is not necessarily the same as ethnic identity, a situational construct in itself (see Geary 2003). Kinship and descent are often imagined and constructed, as part of the process of ethnogenesis. For example, based on the shared history, shared stories and the shared religion, as well as perhaps a shared adversary in the Franks, there may have been some idea of kinship between some Frisians and Danes. As stated by Raffield et al. (2016, 38) the idea of kinship or group-identity could originate in pre-existing links and social relations, as well as be developed through shared experiences. This, then, could range from the shared relations and experiences of a large group of people and big historic developments (such as ‘Frisians’ and the migrations) to small-scale bands of people and single events (warbands on an expedition). The idea of an imagined community comes into play here. Aside from this, the role of myths and legends is vital and, according to Henson (2006, 31), apart from the cases where the texts are concerned with myths of origin, the focus is usually more on the connection between generations then on descent. Genealogies are written with this idea in mind, to legitimise power and to create a link between past (a glorious past) and present to legitimise the latter (Spiegel 1990, 79-80).

The problem with terms like Frisians, Danes, Vikings and Anglo-Saxons as umbrella terms for highly heterogeneous groups in this context has often been
pointed out and was already alluded to above. Another problem with the terms for these groups in particular is that they were all highly mobile groups of people, with a long shared history. This makes the connection between these ‘ethnic’ or ‘group’-labels and a geographic area especially tricky. A case in point are the Danish Vikings who arrived in England as part of the Great Heathen Army, after having been in Frisia for a while. Are they more naturally referred to as Danes, Vikings, Frisians or perhaps Danes but rulers of Frisia? And if this group consists of both Danes and Frisians and ‘Dano-Frisians’ or ‘Friso-Danes’, what would the logical term be? Another question we may ask, is what the terminology of the Frisians themselves was. Compared to the Angles, Saxons, Anglo-Saxons and Danes, there is not much variety in the use of the term, despite the fact that we know its meaning and the people referred to with it change over time. Perhaps we can also label different sub-groups of Frisians, like western Frisians and eastern Frisians, Insular and Continental Frisians, to name a few possibilities. It has been inferred from their use of rex for the Frisian ruler, instead of the Franks’ term of choice dux, that for the Anglo-Saxons, Frisians were a tribe and Frisia an area ruled by one king (Bremmer 1981, 84), but the historical situation was much more complex. In addition, the case of the word rex and its use in general is complex already, especially in or applied to the northern world (cf. Hedeager 1992; Sonne 2014). However, this idea of Frisians as one group under one leader or king must also be the case for Finn and the Frescyning in Beowulf. According to Roberta Frank (1982) the poet of Beowulf intended to create an ideological basis for the idea of a ‘national unity’ with a single king ruling over a multi-tribal people (Davis 2006, 114). Even within groups of a multi-ethnic or multi-geographical origin, there can be a sense of kinship based on other facts, such as shared myths and stories, and a shared myth of origin.

Processes of inclusion and exclusion
Group identity can only come into existence through the social relations between a group of people. Social relations structure society and are a prerequisite for a person to be included in society. From the stories transmitted to us from the early medieval and Viking Age societies, we know that this definitely was the case for them. In Scandinavian sagas, the outlaw is a famous character, a person who is placed outside society and whose social bonds are cut. Being an outlaw usually meant facing death, through violence or by starvation, and outlawry was used as a punishment for severe crimes. In his analysis of Beowulf, Bazelmans (1996, 182-3) points out how the monster Grendel is described as always being alone, having no social relations whatsoever. In contrast, new protagonists in the stories are introduced by listing their relations, thus showing their place in society. Inclusion within a certain societal group can be of importance for one’s career as well. For a young warrior, being accepted as part of a warband or a Gefolgschaft is crucial. Since it is a special group, membership is not a clear option for everyone. Becoming part of it is thus

26 For instance the Gísli Sursson Saga.
restricted by conditions, oaths (such as an oath of loyalty to the leader) or rituals, and membership could even be displayed with certain items of material culture (such as swords and golden rings). Warbands were typically composed of (young) men and could very often be multi-ethnic and flexible.

During cross-cultural contact, inclusion or exclusion may be important for establishing certain relations, especially alliances (including warbands), or when aspiring to hold a certain position. Newcomers in a group or society do not have to have relations within that group but may be included nonetheless. This inclusion could come of, for instance, establishing relations through marriage, oaths or other -wise – even memory of a shared history. In these processes, the negotiation of identity and culture may result in the Other become more like or more closely affiliated with the Self. Between groups in contact, one process of inclusion can be acculturation. Included under this term, I understand the taking over of elements of one cultural sphere, tradition or register, by people from other cultural backgrounds. Very often, this happens when there is a dominant culture into which a non-dominant culture is integrated during long-term contact, such as migration. But in theory, this process is just as likely when cultures are in contact over shorter periods of time and when there is not one clear dominant actor – and the results may even be temporary. The process can also occur when people of various backgrounds in new environments together form a new identity, like a group identity as a warband. This is not necessarily connected to one cultural or ‘ethnic’ background but is focussed on very different aspects, like seafaring and warfare. When the special composition of warbands leads to the creation of specific material cultural expressions and variations of styles, a visual group identity may even develop in the process. As such, acculturation and formation of new group identities are an indication of cultural contact. In all these processes of inclusion, objects and non-material culture can play a key role.

3.1.2 Travelling things. Distribution of material culture in the light of cross-cultural exchange

Boundaries provide contact with other groups and access to their products (Helms 1998, 112). Indeed, in the process of cross-cultural contact the material and non-material, objects, ideas, styles, people and so on, are exchanged and distributed. The result of this distribution across formal boundaries creates its own boundaries in turn, which we can try to visualise through distribution maps.

The distribution mechanisms behind this spread of objects and ideas are various and complex. This spread can occur, for example, via trading networks, through personal relations in the form of gifts, or in an act of raiding. Other possibilities for the circulation of objects are migration or the movement of individuals taking objects or styles with them (which can then also be produced in a new environment) and movement in wars or during religious missions (Mikkelsen 2002, 94). Besides being physical, processes of exchange are also cognitive processes, as imports need to be accepted before they can be used (Theuws 1995, 143-4). In the process, they can switch the sphere or register in which they function (for instance
from economic to religious). As such, these exchanged materials reflect aspects of cognition. Therefore, it can be argued that material culture holds many clues to the people’s attitudes towards encounters and exchange. These attitudes can be found in the choice and mix of styles, the choice of objects, the use of objects, the dispersion of objects, the meaning assigned to them, the role ascribed to them in texts and whether or not objects have undergone a transformation in new contexts. New ideas and styles are materialised through objects with symbolic meaning and the coining of oral and textual traditions alike. With objects, ideas may be spread as well, although we must remember that different people likely held different ideas about the same objects.

A variety of types of exchange and spheres of exchange can be discerned for our period, and ‘the sphere of exchange’ in general can be said to consist of various sub-spheres (Theuws 2004, 124). Objects can be part of various spheres of exchange, and it is not often possible to deduce from the object itself in which sphere it was exchanged (Theuws 2004, 125). It is important to realise that the spheres of exchange do not merely exist next to each other, but constantly interact. A distinction can, on the one hand, be made between short- and long-term exchange. The first, short-term exchange as it is named by Bloch and Parry (1989, 28-30) is the domain of individual behaviour, which is concerned with acquisition and rational calculation. The second, long-term exchange, happens on a larger scale and is directed at reproducing and controlling the socio-cosmological order. It thus strives for a more lasting effect (Bazelmans 1996, 249). Arguably, these two types often go hand in hand. Individual acquisition could, for instance, play a role in the establishment of the socio-cosmological order. Further types or categorisations of exchange that can be named are closely related to contact situations, such as raid, trade or processes of gift exchange in situations of formation of alliances (such as warbands), which are not always easily distinguished. Moreover, objects change their transactional sphere all the time, so one type of object is not restricted to one type of sphere of exchange. As has been argued by Frans Theuws (2004), exchange is always related to an imaginary world from which ‘value’ is derived, so every sphere of exchange is connected to a specific set of norms and values. Because the spheres cannot always be separated, we often use sphere of exchange and/or sphere of silver instead of the economic sphere as terms.

At the same time, not all objects should or can be exchanged to the same extent. Weiner (1992) introduced the concept of ‘inalienable possessions’ and ‘keeping-while-giving’ as part of the scale of alienability of objects. Her argument is that some objects can be exchanged without remaining connected to the original relation, and some cannot be exchanged at all. The reason is that they often are essential for maintaining a groups’ identity (Godelier 1999, 8–9, 32-34). They can secure continuity between past and present since they display a culmination of history and past owners. This does not only concern actual objects but may also concern myths, knowledge, aspects of decoration and so on (Bazelmans 1996, 71-4; Theuws 2004, 129). It is the combination of all this that is important for the identity of group and individual and that creates a cosmological authentication (Theuws 2004, 129). The
three possible spheres or degrees of alienability according to Weiner are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movable</th>
<th>Alienable objects</th>
<th>Can be sold and given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inalienable objects</td>
<td>Can be given, but the relation it represents and the relation with the giver are inalienable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmovable</td>
<td>Sacred</td>
<td>Can never be given or sold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example of the movable, inalienable objects may be those where the name of the manufacturer or creator of the object is kept connected to the object. The object exists because of the agency of the artisan who made it, and therefore they can share a social relationship (Gell 1998, 23). In addition, there also is a social relation with the recipient or public, at least in the case of forms of art. The same can be said for previous owners of an object, which contribute to the object’s biography or curriculum vitae. Many objects can be movable and given or taken, yet remain attached to the sphere of culture they originated in through their form and decoration, and as such also add something of value to the new owner. As has been argued by Moreland (2004, 148-9), particularly inalienable objects by definition cannot function within a reciprocal system, and even if they are inalienable they can be acquired, for instance by plunder. This is a vital distinction in the context of the Viking Age, where plunder is a well-known means of acquiring items, including church treasure and even people – who should be seen as inalienable even if they can be offered as a ‘gift’ in marriage in order to create an alliance. This means that even though they are taken away, they remain attached to their place of origin in some way, whether visible or not. The same goes, in fact, for migration in general, as we see throughout the written sources. In addition, there are certain objects that are more neutral in the sense that they are trade commodities, whilst other objects are deemed more personal – such as copper-alloy brooches – and are less likely to be tradeware (Wamers 2011; Kershaw 2013), whilst simultaneously also being more visibly linked to a cultural background.

**The transformation of objects**

Objects, styles and other alien forms that are exchanged or ‘imported’ do not just cross cultural borders or borders of transactional spheres, but change when doing so. Naturally, this change can be in many different ways, forms and stages. Usually there is a process of syncretism or hybridism, where old and new go together and as such get new meaning (Cohen 1985, 37). The transformation of objects can either be physical or, by giving the object new or altered value, something that is not always visible. Already by simply being in a different (cultural) context, the object acquires a different role, as in each value system, objects may get different meanings.
For instance, an Arabic coin or dirham, which is a symbol for a system of currency, a cultural area and a specific ruler through its bearing a particular text, can become a mere piece of silver immediately upon crossing the cultural border with the Viking world, as is reflected in the chopping up of dirhams and their use as hack-silver. Similarly, pieces of ecclesiastical Insular metalwork are incorporated into the Viking decorative portable metalwork to form new stylistic features. Since each sphere of exchange is connected to norms and values related to an imaginary world in a specific sphere of culture, going from one sphere to another automatically means a change to the role and value of the object, even if the object itself does not change. Egon Wamers (1983, 282; 1985), who has looked at Carolingian and Insular imports in Scandinavia in the Viking Age, has established that about two-thirds of the Insular objects found in Scandinavia from the Viking period have been reworked into a secondary form and given a secondary use (Baastrup 2012). This is a clear physical alteration, but behind it may be a cognitive process of transformation as well. These processes of transformation, in which objects or elements acquire new meanings by being placed in a new context or by physically being changed, hold many clues to cross-cultural relations, exchange and attitudes towards the objects and their connotations.

Within material culture studies, there is a shared belief in the crucial role of material culture in the construction of social identities. According to Miller (1996, 5), the interdisciplinary focus of his field is on ‘the ways in which artefacts are implicated in the construction, maintenance and transformation of social identities.’ This happens in a process of dialectics, we believe, in which both objects and identities get their shapes. The object as material culture, as well as the social and cultural meaning of the object, is thus central to this approach. Similarly, Jones (1997) looks at the possibilities and problems of studying ethnic identity in historical periods from archaeology. Like collective memory, material culture is used in structuring and signifying ethnic affiliation, she argues (Jones, 1997; see also Hedeager 2011, 40). For the different identities of persons and groups are demarcated by symbols in the form of material culture. Thinking of historic examples of this, we may turn to the (multi-ethnic) warband again. When engaged in warfare, wearing a helmet or battle-axe signified being part of a warband, and decorative mounts and other items may have more specifically signalled which warband one belonged to – more so than an ethnic affiliation. In addition, social status could be expressed by displaying wealth and worth, for instance through wearing the most elaborate jewellery, and through rituals, symbols and stories, either oral or in written form. Like texts, objects also present histories and could have been used to remember, contain and reflect real or imagined history. They could also be used to create memories of the past, and the objects could again become the subject of histories told about them (Moreland 2001, 38). Therefore, it is most interesting to study them both.

When material culture is used to mark membership in the communities mentioned in the written sources, they signal the membership of a group as symbolic markers (Henson 2006, 41–3). These markers can, in turn, be used to actively manipulate and shape this identity again (cf. Moreland 2001, 80–2) and become
identity makers. The spread of these objects that function as identity markers (or makers) can signal the range of the network in contact with communities. This idea of unity is represented by the extent of cultural spheres in which certain objects are distributed, and this can be put on a distribution map. The shared cultural codes of people create an idea of unity, also in world view, which can be particularly pronounced — physically or in stories — in times of war and other types of social stress, but also in a situation of extensive contact with others and periods of much change: formative periods. On the other hand, political division can be expressed in a process much the opposite. Symbolic manipulation of existing similarities and traditions in order to create a community apart from another may occur as well (Cohen 1985, 29). Symbols and rituals further play an important role in interaction, since they can help put forward social differences or similarities, and simultaneously structure the social positions of people and the relations between them. To give an example, in a cross-cultural interaction context it helps both parties to determine with whom they are dealing, and whether the person(s) they are interacting with are situated above or below themselves on the social ladder, provided they both understand the code system. This determines the negotiation of culture and exchange. However, these symbols and rituals are also liable to change as a consequence of the inter-cultural contact as expressed above. By encountering other people with other symbols, objects and rituals, the wish to use or refer to their symbols and rituals might occur. As Bazelmans (1996, 71) states, exchange can also result in the use of aspects of the identity of other groups, including redefining them: we can call this appropriation. Consequently, exchange, transformation and appropriation of material culture are highly dynamic processes central to cross-North Sea connectivity. Within these process, not all choices will be based on the wish to express identity or use symbolic markers; we must also consider the role of taste, wishes and pragmatism.

Identity markers or identity makers?
That material culture is used in social relations and to signify social identities, both as part of a group and in terms of self-identification, is thus widely recognised (cf. Díaz-Andreu, 23). An interesting question that follows from the function of objects, symbols and styles — but also stories and imagery — in relation to identity and the possibility to consciously transform them, is whether they are used to reflect an existing identity or whether they are actively involved in creating a new identity. In other words, are they identity markers or identity makers, or both? Theoretically, it can be argued that (imported) objects indeed can be used as both. Considering the presupposed transcendental quality of objects, they must have the ability to shape identity, as becomes apparent from the written sources in which objects can have special meanings, powers, histories and characteristics. But how we can find the possible role of objects as identity markers and makers in cross-cultural encounters in the archaeological record needs to be established.

Objects that recognisably have a relation to a different cultural sphere, and through that are inalienable or inextricably connected to that sphere, are a promising category for analysing this role of objects and connections in general. In the
present context it does not concern trade commodities per se but focuses on the objects and styles that one puts to personal use, that may have been exchanged as gifts and that signal characteristics in objects and exchange typical of the Viking sphere. These are traditional items used to convey identity, including social status, of which jewellery and dress accessories are the largest categories. They may show affinity with peoples, groups and areas by means of form and style. Thinking of the Viking Age, there can be different types of affinities: having raided an area, being colleagues in raiding (a warband; cf. Raffield et al. 2016, 40-3) or having a political alliance, a personal alliance, or perhaps even a trading alliance. According to Chris Fowler (2004, 54), the exchanged objects in the case of gift exchange then mediate these relations and become markers of the connections between the involved people (this may be individuals, collective persons or even non-humans). As such, they become the material embodiment of social relations and of connectivity between spheres. In the same way that objects can reflect and shape an identity or social relations, so too can stories. Transformative events, historic actions, heroes from the past and the way in which this material is shaped and turned into stories, can all function as important aspects of both creating and expressing an identity and unity, whether real or perceived. A group’s own history or tales about it can thus be used as identity makers and identity markers, also through time and in retrospect. As such, both material culture and myths and tales are powerful tools in creating, expressing and maintaining group identity, power bases and territorial claims. This also goes for sharing history, both in a negative and a positive way.

As material embodiments of exchange and coherence, material remains can offer a glimpse into relations, mentalities and identities. This is because they can help create and express unity and connectivity over time and shape it in the present. However, some imported items may also simply be wanted for their exotic aspect or aesthetic or even practical value, and do not necessarily express a relation or an (assumed) identity. Furthermore, we may question what happens to the connotations of objects when they are passed on again to other people, and perhaps through time. One of the characteristics of these gifts, as argued by anthropologists, is that they never can really be owned but continue circulating (Fowler 2004, 55). That objects do not always directly reflect an ethnic identity has long been recognised and must always be borne in mind. Ideally, therefore, we must look at the cultural spheres objects function in and refer to, to get an idea of the connectivity between those spheres and the meaning attached to it. This is done by studying stylistic aspects of objects, as well as by plotting them on distribution maps to determine their dispersal, and what this may mean. The combined distribution maps of various types of objects and the signalling of further object categories can then be seen as an image, like a radar, of the materialised connectivity.

**Style and cultural affiliation**

The cultural background of an item, such as a background in the North Sea Viking world, is sometimes quite determinable on stylistic grounds, and styles and their adaptations are often traceable. This is also true for the finds in Frisia, which can be
identified with reference to a set of well-known types and examples in Scandinavia and the British Isles - the Viking sphere of the North Sea. In addition, it is clear that the choice of jewellery and dress items, and particularly the choice of adapting them to other traditions, is a conscious one, revealing ideas and perceptions.

The notion of ‘style of an object’ as used here may encompass its form, shape, decoration, composition, manufacture and use. Together these aspects determine whether or not an item is ‘Viking’, sometimes even whether it is, for example, Scandinavian or British, and which classification it gets. Besides standard types, sub-types and hybrid decoration styles also occur in the Viking Age, and sometimes this is possible to determine as well. Style may have been actively manipulated for several reasons, for instance to stimulate or signal change or as a process of appropriation or acculturation. Over time new types and styles may also develop due to acculturation processes, especially in new environments, as is the case in the Danelaw. These can have a social function and may reflect and strengthen social relationships. Therefore they are of interest when studying connections and contact (Kershaw 2013, 10), even in the case of a small corpus with single finds. Here the question must be asked if there are signs of manipulation or hybridisation, or even the emergence of new styles, and what these signs may mean.

In many instances, the term Viking is used to classify an object and this refers to the cultural context of the object – that is, to the direct or indirect background in the cultural Viking sphere and not to an ethnic or geographic background, as was explained in Chapter 1. A Viking object is one displaying typical characteristics which are found in the Viking world, for instance in decoration and manufacture. A brooch classified as Viking falls within the greater cultural sphere of the Viking world, and thus includes objects which, for instance, are made and found in England, but decorated in Viking styles (Kershaw 2013, British Museum). This automatically means that Viking is not the same as Scandinavian, which is the centre of the Viking world. Sometimes it is actually possible to say that an object originated in Viking Age Scandinavia or another specific place, but often not. This is not a problem. For the purpose of the present study, it suffices to be able to determine that an object derives from the Viking world or is related to the Viking world by, for instance, being a copy of a Viking object. Moreover, bearing in mind the argument of Sindbæk that finding something both here and there does not represent a direct link, we can only determine that it comes from the same shared and connected sphere. The overall distribution of a type of object with exact parallels to finds in Frisia gives insight into the range of the network the object circulated in, and how much similar networks might have penetrated Frisia. What this does not show us, however, is how an object came to Frisia. Sometimes the contextual evidence nevertheless allows us to speculate on the spheres of exchange or means that brought the object to the Frisian coast.

**Objects and gender**

Besides revealing a cultural connection or background, objects can sometimes also be connected to a specific gender. This may particularly be true for items of dress
and jewellery. Although we do not mean to apply gender theory in general to this present study, it is necessary to discuss the implications of attributing objects to owners of either gender when analysing them in the case studies and extracting significance for the interconnectivity.

Gender as part of identity is important in social relations. Men and women may have different roles within society, and use different media and objects for these roles, or use material culture in different ways. This is important to bear in mind when looking at the archaeology. For instance, Kershaw (2013) observed that the cultural affiliation with Scandinavia of Scandinavian immigrants in the Viking Age Danelaw was mostly expressed through female dress items, particularly brooches, as referred to above. Similarly, these brooches are the objects that started to display Anglo-Scandinavian or hybrid styles after a period of intensive contact. Therefore, she concluded it is likely that an important part of the expression of cultural identity in this context happened through female dress.

In Viking Age archaeology, the disc brooches and tortoise brooches in particular are typically associated with the female gender. In addition, some of the pins we consider clothing- or hairpins are considered to have been worn by women. Typical items related to male dress, in contrast, are the larger ring-pins and penannular brooches, as well as the belt and its decoration (Thunmark-Nylén 1984, 5). This association of certain types of dress items with a particular gender is also reflected in some of the Scandinavian sagas, which describe women wearing brooches and men wearing pins. The distinction can even be found in the Old Icelandic language itself, in which dálkr – a male noun – means a pin (to fasten a cloak with) or a dagger, whilst the female noun kinga means brooch (cf. Zoëga 2004).

Of course we cannot be sure that when crossing cultural borders objects were not used in a different gender context, and the same objects may also have started with different uses and gender associations in various spheres. For instance, Viking disc brooches may thus be classified as associated with the female gender; on the Continent, however, male cloaks may also have been fastened with disc brooches (Kershaw 2013, 171). An example of the transformation of use in a different context is the adaptation of the trefoil-formed mounts that were worn as belt-mounts by men in a Carolingian context, which in Scandinavia were transformed into the trefoil brooch that is associated with female costume (Kershaw 2013, 79; Maixner 2005, 24-9; Hårdh 1984, 85-94). Another example is the first imported Insular ring-pins: they are found in female graves, whilst they were worn by men in their original context, as were the later, local copies in Scandinavia (Tsigridou Glørstad 2012, 34). It may, therefore, not always be possible to attribute an object to a particular gender, which can also be said for other objects which are not related to dress. Furthermore, attributing objects to a gender in historic and archaeological research based on current – or perhaps even somewhat outdated – perceptions of gender is not without complications. This is illustrated by the pre-Viking Age burial of an individual in grave 398 at the early medieval cemetery of Oosterbeintum, Friesland (Knol et al. 1995/6, 301-2). Osteological analysis resulted in the conclusion that this individual was a male, whilst archaeologists interpret the grave goods as
typically female and assign the objects to the female gender. Possibly, if the osteological analysis is correct, we are dealing with a different gender concept than our modern one, or with gender versus sex, and this is something we can bear in mind.

Problematic for most of the material in the case studies in general, but also for establishing the gender associations of the object, is the lack of context for the objects. Most are single finds, and even when uncovered in excavation they are often not found associated with a buried individual. This makes it very hard to say whether an object was associated with a male or female; all we can say is what the traditional gender association of these objects is in the wider Viking world and extrapolate it. When in the present study objects are described as attributed to the male or female gender, this is thus solely on the basis of archaeological and historical aspects of the corpus of similar finds from the wider Viking world.

**Distribution processes in focus**

When we plot the distribution of material traces of connectivity between the Frisian and Viking sphere, or even if we look into the general distribution of categories of finds within Frisia, we can also look for the underlying distribution mechanisms. According to Loveluck and Tys (2006, 141-2), recent discoveries emphasise the complexity of social networks, including networks of exchange, in the coastal areas from the seventh to eleventh centuries. In the past few decades, there has become more awareness of the regional and local dynamics in exchange. Moreover, the possible role of individual agents in social change has been recognised, and this is now incorporated in the larger models and frameworks (2006, 142-3). The idea that emerges is that there were all sorts of processes and exchanges going on in the southern North Sea coastal zone, which do not entirely seem to be under Frankish control or regulation. It appears to be free farmers, producers and peasants who were carrying out this trade, as was also highlighted above. Loveluck and Tys further argue that the Frisians were not aristocracy, as is often thought from the stories of legendary Frisian kings and finds of precious metal, but free peasants or merchants (Loveluck and Tys 2006, 147). In contrast, for the early medieval period up to the eighth century, Johan Nicolay argues that there is a clear aristocracy traceable through some very high-status metalwork like the famous brooch of Wijnaldum from the early seventh century (2014; 2006, 86). The possibility remains that they were both: more or less free peasants, merchants and local rulers which – perhaps by means of this trade – were as wealthy as the royal elite elsewhere. At least for the period after the Frankish conquest, when Frisian rulers made various alliances with Frankish rulers, this seems likely (Henstra 2012, 20-30). We must in any case be aware that owning many riches, such as gold and silver, does not necessarily have to be equated with being royal: there may be other systems for acquiring wealth as well, and we are still in the dark about the nature of the early medieval kingship. Nevertheless, it was most likely the Frisian merchants and seamen who established trading contacts and meeting places along the southern North Sea coast, such as the one we know as Dorestad, where a multitude of groups were present and involved, as we saw in Chapter 2. Because they flourished over the course of time,
these places and networks became of interest to the Merovingians, and later to the Carolingians (Henstra 2012, 19; Lebecq 1992). The Frisian merchants most likely played an important role as middlemen (Lebecq 1990, 85–9). The coastal exchange network in which the Frisians were a big player may thus have been a network that was little controlled by an external force. Because of the close connections established through this network, the coastal dwellers may have felt more affiliated with groups across the sea than with an inland power. As a consequence, they may have been willing to co-operate and incorporate new influences from the other side of the North Sea, at least by the tenth century (Loveluck and Tys 2006, 154). The shared history of connections, of ideas on origin, mythology and shared stories – often taken together as ‘North Sea Culture’ in the pre-Viking Age – must have all contributed to this.

One of the most frequent means of getting an object from one cultural sphere to another in the Viking Age, judging from the written sources. Not only is the list of Viking raids on the Frisian and Anglo-Saxon areas extensive and are there indications that Frisians may have joined in Viking activity on a small scale (Ijssennagger 2013a), the amount of Anglo-Saxon and Continental imports in Viking Age Scandinavia point to it as well (Wamers 2005; 1985). In the written sources, tributes and booty are often named, including silver, people, wine and cattle. As we have established earlier, not all raids were driven primarily by the desire for material gain. The motivation could have just as well have been non-material gain, such as political ascendancy. In cases of material gain, we can think in terms of economic value as well as political, cultural or symbolic value. In these latter cases, it is interesting to look at the role of raided objects. Are they used by their new owners in the same way as by their previous owners? Are they made a trophy, and therefore physically marked so that this new role is clear? What social meaning can raided goods obtain, and how are they used to reflect the cross-cultural encounters? In many cases, however, it might not be clear whether an object was actually raided or exchanged in a different way. In these cases, we can only deduce the possibility that it was raided from the type of object (such as obviously Christian objects), the use or the context – and the context of Viking raids is constantly present. The other way around, we can also question raid as a means of exchange in many cases, even cases where it appears very likely. Does an object that is said by contemporaries to have been raided, for example through a runic inscription mentioning this, actually have to have be raided? If cross-North Sea travel and especially raid were imbued with some form of special meaning and prestige, then assigning such an origin to an object can perhaps be seen in the same light as coining a common origin or history for people – a myth of origin. Although it is hard to prove, the idea is an intriguing one that should not necessarily be dismissed outright. The interesting question, then, is why people wanted to assign a specific origin to an object, and when and how some myths of origins and perceptions of unity and contact were created.

An object can also be exchanged in return for someone’s loyalty or friendship, which is classified as gift-giving. Giving a gift is a more or less voluntary act, which
separates it from taxes or other forms of extortion, although it may be equally obligatory in a social respect (Godelier 1999, 14). From written sources, we know that gift-giving was a key instrument in creating and maintaining social and political alliances either between groups, or within a group, for instance between lord and retinue. It is a central theme in stories of the period (Hedeager 2011, 144). According to the records, when establishing alliances between the Frankish and Danish elite, gifts were exchanged. For this type of exchange between Frisian and Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon people (from the Migration Period to the Viking Age), we have no direct written evidence, but the types of objects found in Frisia and written sources like *Beowulf* make clear that this is a likely option (Bazelmans 1996; IJssennagger 2012; 2013).

Central to the idea of gift-giving is that a gift is never free of consequence or meaning. The practice is one of reciprocity and of obligation. Accepting a gift from someone creates obligations, for instance to give back something even better. Most importantly, it creates a relation between the giver and receiver, which is symbolised by the exchanged object. According to Maurice Godelier (1999, 12-13), giving creates two types of relations: one of solidarity, since one shares a gift, and one of superiority, as the receiver now is in debt to the giver. It is, therefore, important to take into account the relation between givers and receivers before the gift, as gift-giving changes it (see the various contributions in Davies and Fouracre 2010). This changing of relations and of placing people in new positions in regard to each other has an impact on social life. Gift-giving is thus a social phenomenon, reflecting relations and social status. The objects exchanged in this process themselves become tokens of the gift-giving and the relations established in it. The fact that objects – in early medieval society often golden rings and other precious jewellery, or other precious items (Hedeager 2011, 144; see also Bazelmans and the work of Hårdh) – become physical manifestations or symbols of the social relations established with them, also comes back in our current vocabulary of social relations in some of the Germanis languages: to forge relations, ties or treaties, and to weave ties. Hence, this refers to a something that surpasses the meaning or value of the object alone. They clearly are closely related to the process of creating objects: forging relates to the metalworking, usually performed by males, and weaving to the textile production, typically performed by females. Gift-giving is a central motif in the written sources, but the question is how can we trace gift-giving in the archaeological record. From the written sources, it sometimes becomes clear what types of objects are exchanged in particular situations of types of exchange; for instance, that golden rings were one of the most central items in gift exchange (Hedeager 2011; Bazelmans 1996). From this and from the context of material remains, we may sometimes deduce the possibility that an item was exchanged as a gift.

**Material choices**

The choice of material for the objects is sometimes prescribed by the type and intended use of the object. In addition, it may also have been determined by the availability of material, by the scale of production, by the status of the object and...
owner, by trends and by the symbolic functions of the material.

Transactions (of various kinds) in Viking society are usually considered to be determined by the exchange of silver bullion. Gold was also available and sometimes used as hack-gold, but more often it was used for jewellery like arm- and finger rings. Silver was used for all types of jewellery as well, and sometimes gilding and silvering can also be found. The silver that would come into circulation from the Arabic world in the form of dirhams was pure silver, whilst later, Viking objects could be of a highly debased silver. For many everyday objects and bulk production, copper-alloys of different compositions were most used. The metal used can thus tell us something of the use, purpose and context of the object. Simultaneously, use of material is also governed by availability and trends, and with future research into the use of metal and compositional qualities, trends over time and across geographical areas can be better understood. Similarly, it can tell us more of production, organisation of production and circulation (Roxburgh 2013 unpublished).

Increasingly, cultural affiliation and sphere of production are investigated through material technical research, such as through the use of XRF-techniques to establish the chemical composition of the material used for creating the object. Such investigation was not part of this project and has not been performed on the corpus. However, some of the items in the case studies have been analysed for their composition in the context of other projects, and the results have been included in the discussion. In the future, XRF-analyses may help to further classify the objects and distinguish between local manufactures and imports, in order to get an even better grip on the dynamics of materialised connectivity. In the present thesis, we will mostly rely upon aspects of form, style and decoration for determining the background and classification.

Distribution patterns
Similarly complex as the networks of exchange are the results of distribution, which leave us with a distribution pattern of objects. First of all, we only see those objects that A) ended up in the soil (coincidentally or by conscious choice), B) have been preserved there, C) have been found, D) were preserved thereafter and E) have come to our attention through, for instance, publication or as part of a collection. Furthermore, geographical distribution of material remains is a problematic matter to interpret, especially along the southern North Sea coast. The preservation circumstances in the soggy coastal rim are very different than those more inland. Along the coast, we are dealing with settlement contexts more than inland, whereas inland the context of archaeological finds is predominantly grave finds. For the Viking Age, the bulk of objects in this area are single finds, from the terpen or terp soil. Raised and inhabited over the course of centuries, the terps – which are called wierden in the province of Groningen and Würten in Germany – contain many archaeological remains. In Germany, these mounds are mostly preserved and still standing. Their Dutch counterparts, however, have to a large extent been dug away when it was found out how the soil, being built up of house waste, was very fertile and thus suitable as fertiliser for agricultural land. In the nineteenth and
twentieth centuries, a large number of these mounds were excavated, and the soil sold to farmers in the area who spread it across their fields further inland. The period between 1845 and 1945 saw most of this commercial levelling. Archaeological objects turned up frequently during the diggings and were reported and collected by interested individuals, most notably members of the Fries Genootschap. Due to the digging away of the mounds for their fertile ground, which was subsequently spread over the arable land in Frisia, finds may also have been spread out over the area. As such, it is often unclear whether a find-spot is the location of deposition or a secondary location. However, the secondary location often is still in Frisia, where the fertile terp soil was predominantly used. Moreover, like in other areas, most finds of metal objects that have come to light in recent years are metal-detected finds and as such usually have little context in general that can help tell the story, so we are left with single finds and find-spots.

Moreover, the laws, regulations and practices regarding metal detection, which is nowadays a very important source for object collection, vary throughout the former Frisia and beyond. In the Netherlands, the Heritage Act of 2016 has legalised metal detecting to a certain extent. In the German part of Frisia, metal detecting has only recently become permitted under certain conditions, such as by obtaining a permit. In Germany, each state has its own law regarding monuments, and within states there are local counties with their own rules. Quite recently, local projects have started with metal detecting and new finds are appearing, as Martin Segschneider indicates, but the present situation prevents these finds from being integrated into a wider survey. Within the Netherlands, there is tremendous variation in the level of activity, organisation, reporting and processing of metal detecting and metal-detected finds, further complicating the picture. This will in the future hopefully be less and less the case, with recording schemes arising in more and more countries in the North Sea area, including the upcoming PAN in the Netherlands.

Together, however, this makes the distribution pattern – which in Chapter 5 will be explored through case studies, the two most prominent of which are plotted on distribution maps – hard to read at times. Nonetheless, we can still use the distribution and deposition pattern as a relevant image of the distribution on a larger scale, while bearing in mind that A) the number finds that can be plotted on a distribution map is always the smallest possible number of finds of a certain type and thus presents a minimal image, B) the finds are found in Frisia, even though within Frisia they might have a primary or secondary location (which in some cases can even be established) and C) distribution maps never present a historic reality, but an impression of it, and as such are always a schematised overview from which we can extract information about a period. We can again refer to the observation that a shared artefact type in two sites does not automatically represent direct communication between these two sites, but rather indicates that they are

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27 This is up to 30 cm below topsoil, and outside areas that are marked as archaeological monuments. In addition, permission of the landowner is necessary and finds of interest from before 1500 need to be reported to local authorities. Detailed information can be found at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands.

28 Personal communication with Martin Segschneider, 2017. See also Segschneider 2008.
in connection via a shared network, and as such display connectivity and its extent (Sindbæk 2007, 66). This connectivity is what the distribution maps, despite the biases, ultimately display.

3.1.3 Mythologies, mentalities and authentication

Behind objects and their exchange, there are mental and mythological categories, processes and authentications. Authentication of objects can happen over a horizontal or vertical axis. In the latter case, the items are given some sort of valorisation or meaning of the cosmological type, thus referring to the worlds of gods and other cosmological beings like spirits and giants. But in a period of cross-cultural exchange like the Viking Age, there clearly also is a case for horizontal authentication on the basis of geographical distance. This idea was broadly investigated by anthropologists, including Helms (1988) for traditional societies and Bentley (1993) for pre-modern times. As we have already seen, there is a case for seeing geographical distance as a form of cosmological distance and similarly, there can be the idea of a historical distance. Van Gennep (1960, 25-9) stresses the attraction of strangers and their special position, which may be transferred to their material culture. These people and their objects may be seen as sacred or imbued with special power, therefore they are sometimes treated with caution or are subject to rites, even if these rites may not be as formalised and visible as the word indicates. Visiting strangers have crossed borders and are thus in a transitional position, whether this is expressed or not. Meeting with strangers may also first be a transitional period, in which, for example, gifts can be exchanged, and lead to acceptance or incorporation in the end, if only temporarily. This idea of transitional position touches upon the state of liminality, as was already mentioned in Chapter 1, and has been primarily explained in this conceptual way. But if we take liminality out of its ritual frame, then we can apply it to describe a state or stage in a process of contact and connections in a more general way. As stressed in the first chapter, liminality is here considered as the position of being ‘in between’ and being able to communicate with various spheres, whilst not fully being part of them, and this is an important aspect of cross-cultural contact.

Besides this idea of geographical and cosmological distance, the suspected underlying mechanism here is the fact that the more exotic an item, the more precious, special and desirable it may become – even if it may be alienating at the same time. The reason is that it is less available. What is perhaps most interesting about this mechanism, is that it also reflects on the object’s owner. Since not everybody had access to foreign goods, at least not first hand, having access to these desirable items placed one in a special position in society. So for instance, if one had travelled abroad, one could return with an item from there as a form of materialised memory of the travel and connections. In that sense those with access to exotic items are comparable to artisans who had access to objects by being able to make them from a raw material. The artisan then is a sort of a mediator of supernatural power, like the person with access to foreign goods (Bazelmans 1996, 72), although we should probably not overemphasise this role as magical (Theuws
The people with access to foreign goods are first of all merchants and other travellers such as Vikings and travelling elite, and the same idea of geographical distance as cosmological distance and distance in time can be encountered in the written sources about them. Simultaneously, we must bear in mind that especially in times or cases of opposing powers and religions, the acquisition of objects connected to an imaginary world and the values connected to those objects were perhaps not favourable at all. If these objects were acquired, this may have been for very different reasons and they would perhaps be imbued with very different meanings and connotations. For instance, we can imagine that the acquisition of precious metal with pagan expressions by Christian Franks would primarily lead to the melting down of the objects, and turning them into raw material, rather than keeping them as a special object from a different sphere. So time and again, we must keep in mind that different groups of people had different ways of dealing with objects, and attached varying values to them. Thus if we look at a distribution map of, for instance, dirhams and we see that their distribution stops at the border between Frisia and Francia, it does not mean that they never came to Francia, but only that they did not remain there unchanged. They may have come to Francia, but were then remelted and transformed into something else, whilst in Frisia they were accepted in the same way as in Scandinavia. This shows us a material border but also a cognitive and therefore often invisible border.

**Agency and qualities of objects**

Since objects can be the materialisation of an idea or world view, either directly or indirectly, they can be imbued with a specific meaning. Here, we can think of religious symbols – such as the Christian cross or the pagan Thor’s hammer – as physical manifestations of the world view. Another example might be the in the common Viking Age practice in Scandinavia of burying wealth, which possibly reflects the ‘law of Odin’. This law, which is recorded in sagas, was said to have been devised by Odin and states that any silver or gold a man buries, he can use freely in the afterlife. Besides reflecting the thin line between idea, story and material culture, it also indicates the fine line between the world of the living and the afterlife. Material culture was transportable into the afterlife by burying it in the ground (like burying a dead person). Objects also play an interesting role in the cosmological world that we know from the poetry and sagas and sometimes see reflected in the material culture. Here, objects tend to be personified and may have a form of social life and a biography: this biography accumulates over the life of the object. Moreover, the owners of an object may have imbued it with additional values.

This aspect of objects having active functions is often referred to as the agency of objects. In the past decades, there has been a trend towards considering objects as active agents, things that have an active role in social life. In his anthropological theory on the agency of art, Alfred Gell (1998, 5) shows how social agents do

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29 Here Bazelmans strongly draws on the work of Weiner. The role of travellers and smiths is also elaborated on in the work of Mary Helms. Whereas smiths can be seen as mediators between the supernatural (spiritual, ancestral) and the here and now, so can travellers be seen as mediators between the Other (distant, historical) and the Self.
not always have to be people, but can be art and objects of art as well. He sees a practical mediatory role of art objects in social processes, by which these objects become agents. Gell (1998, 7-17) therefore distinguishes between person-agents and thing-agents, and stresses that in a social relation the other party does not necessarily have to be a person-agent. However, things do not become agents out of the blue. This happens because people consciously or subconsciously ascribe certain values or qualities to the object. Nevertheless, this idea of agency is debated. Agency as Gell describes it is context-dependent. A brooch, for instance, is not an actor as such, but in a specific relation to people in a particular context, it can become one (Gell 1998, 22-3). Sometimes the object is more a token of an activity, and not the activity itself, but by being the token it creates action and is an actor. Here, we can also expect a symbolic role of objects and of art, which may be meaningful in the actions that objects figure in. A symbolic role of objects is rejected by Gell, who emphasises the action, causation and transformation, rather than symbolic meaning. But he does recognise the role of representations in both visual and other forms. In my view, we can argue that action and symbolic meaning or representation are two different sides of the possible role of objects and art, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Within this register of symbols and symbolic meaning, the object or art may be an intermediary between agents.\(^\text{30}\)

It is possible that certain images or stylistic features were imbued with agency in a similar way to objects. Perhaps some motifs had a special meaning, giving the object on which they were used a special significance. An example of this idea of agency is presented by Kristoffersen (2017 in press), who studied the decoration on Scandinavian brooches, and discovered that the figure of the head on the bottom of these types of jewellery has an extra feature hardly visible. It appears that they are blowing – air seems to be coming out of their mouths. Since this is an almost invisible feature, it is most likely not made in order to give the fibulae a particular look or design. Rather, it must be there to do something active to the object, to transform it in another way. One theory that immediately comes to mind here is that it must represent giving life to the object, for in the pagan Scandinavian cosmology life was given to the first beings by a breath. The close relationship between mythology, tales and material culture (see also Hedeager 2011) becomes apparent here.

In the context of exchange and distribution of these objects, the most important question is to what extent this intended imagery was understood. That in the context of Viking Age Scandinavia, the imagery related to the Norse pantheon and their mythological tales, is easily believed. But what about their Germanic neighbours in the Insular and Continental areas? We can wonder if these people who once shared a similar pre-Christian belief could still relate to these images and understand them, or if they only generally understood that they reflected this past and the northern world. Moreover, we can question if in the new situation of Christianity this imagery could be appropriate or offensive, and if there is a difference in whether

\(^{30}\) This intermediary role is recognised by Gell, who calls the objects with this role 'passive agents'. However, in his theory this is not related to any symbolic meaning whatsoever.
this imagery was accepted or not between, for instance, Frisians and Franks. The latter seems to have been the case to some extent and seems to be an important factor that shaped the distribution maps as we can see them today.

Myths and mythology and the writing of history
The role of systems of belief, cosmology and common mythology in the identity-formation of groups is not to be underestimated, as has been stressed before. Mythology can be defined as the body of myths connected to a group or multiple groups. Myth is a cultural phenomenon which has different, interrelated functions. Characteristic of myth is that it is a narrative of events and this narrative may have a sacred quality. The communication in and of myth is in symbolic form, and some of the events or objects within it only exist in myth and not in the world outside of it. Often, myth is concerned with dramatic references to origins and to transformation, and it can be seen as a symbolic statement of social structure or a means to shape and maintain this structure. As such, myth expresses world views and plays an important role in the structuring of socio-cosmological life. Due to its character, it is slightly deviant from other sets of ideas like cosmology, legend or history (Cohen 1969, 337-8). Nonetheless, all of these often become intertwined and can even create a mythologised and legendary version of history.

In his article ‘An ethnic dating of Beowulf’, which uses ethnogenesis theory to create an idea of the dating of the famous epic poem, Craig R. Davis (2006, 113) indicates that it is generally agreed that poets, storytellers and the like try to ‘conserve a certain core of archaic ethnic tradition’ or feel that they do, whilst they at the same time change this tradition in light of current political relations. This is what Spiegel calls the moment of inscription. Sometimes they even create new traditions of a collective past (Davis 2006, 113). We can probably suggest that the Frisian law texts – though not necessarily, or even most likely, created by a poet or storyteller – were subject to a similar process, and of course were just as central and related to the core of society. These texts too are the condensation of a long (oral) process of the forming and reshaping of customary law. The idea of dealing with tradition and ethnicity and shaping them to fit current political relations, which is also endorsed by Spiegel (1990), may be a good example of the processes of creating identity and of mythologising and constructing connectivities. Transformative events were turned into myths and legends (Hedeager 2001, 181) and the impact of these events, of often new phenomena without precedent, may have caused people to remember them in this way (Bazelmans 1996, 252). As such they could be structuring elements in society and important in connectivity.

Across the North Sea world, we can assume a shared, pre-Christian cosmology, which is expressed in stories and in iconography and objects. In the Viking Age, at least Scandinavia and Frisia still partly clung to this belief. Although it is a matter of a shared belief in a pantheon and a shared world view, there is no single, organised religion. Therefore, it is better to speak of a ‘belief-system’ or a world view – a way

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31 Frisian law codes are a combination of two traditions: Frisian vernacular law (volksrecht) and canonical law. Nijdam 2008, 23.
of looking at the world – than of religion (Hedeager 2011, 4). This does not mean that the myths are exactly the same across the North Sea region, but some elements or motifs may be common, and in displaying common memory the stories may refer to groups on the other side of the sea. Different parts of the North Sea world saw conversion and (partial) Christianisation before (the British Isles and large parts of Frisia), during (parts of Frisia) or at the end (Scandinavia) of the Viking Age. This means that the circumstances in these areas were different from each other throughout the period, and that they changed over time. It is important to note, however, that the central myths and knowledge of the pre-Christian world were preserved and stayed stable in new contexts and meanings. They still reflected central ideas of life and death which remained relevant after conversion, although the perception of matters like time and space may have altered. The written sources could therefore be used to connect the past with the present, and to contextualise and explain changes for a contemporary audience. Ultimately, the myths and knowledge were used to create a continuity between the past and the present. As such, the chronologies in the texts can be very flexible and condensed to form new versions of the historic events, and this is what we have termed ‘condensed history’ or ‘epic concentration’ above. As has been argued (Niles 2007, 28), the heroic and epic poetry that presents historical information from the Migration Period for a later audience is not history per se, but a form of history that was put to use as it reconstructed, in imaginary form, a past period that people felt continuity with for the present. This form of condensed history and epic concentration is present in most of the history writing of earlier periods, which indicates how different the perception and presentation of history was then from what we see as history writing today.

The textual sources and the material sources represent two different aspects of the Viking Age connectivity and how it is reflected in the sources, and thus two different modes and temporalities. They represent memory and materiality, respectively, which can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Here, material remains are the tangible traces of a moment in time, filtered through time by many factors, ranging from human action to natural circumstances. The choices in production and use of the material culture are related to ideas of kinship, history, heroes, gods and identity – even if this is not always directly visible. On the other side, in the re-presentation of stories and in the recording of history, the ideas of kinship, of some shared origin or origin myth and of shared heroes are important and put to use. The history of a shared experience links past to present and identifies groups. The tales are a transmission of myths of origin and shared experiences to subsequent generations, and each generation interprets and uses this history in its own way in light of its contemporary situation and needs. It is this process that allows the tales of a Germanic past to be recorded or composed in the Viking Age, and tales of the Viking Age to be recorded and re-used in the thirteenth century, which is relevant for the study of the Viking Age horizon. The historic context of composing and

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32 See for an argued example Samplonius 2013.
recording the tales is a context of manipulation of the material to fit contemporary needs. The myths of origin, the heroes of the tales, the idea of migration: these are all elements that stand out in the sources, and they were all important elements for the contemporary situation.

Myths can then be said to be a combination of historical facts and manipulation of legendary material. They are used to create a specific identity and to legitimise and justify claims on, for instance, territory, status or power (Henson 2006, 32), or to explain a present situation. According to Smith (1990), this is why ethnic myths especially emerge at certain times of conflict and change. Henson (2006, 33) indicates that many stories share the idea of a ‘golden age’, a time of the group’s existence as a free nation with an own identity. Indeed, this is what we see in the Frisian laws when they describe the time of transfer from the north to south and becoming free, Christian people. We also see it for the Anglo-Saxons in relation to the Germanic period and for the Scandinavians in the thirteenth-century sagas about the Viking Age. So was this Viking Age which echoed the historic Migration Age a golden age, or did it first become a golden age when the thirteenth-century scribes and historians were looking back on it as a free an heroic period? It is, therefore, interesting to take into account how the Viking Age was pictured when it was first described in the Frisian sources.

3.2 Towards a methodology. Finding the Viking Age horizon and connecting the sources

Following from the discussion of concepts and aspects in the theoretical framework is the question of what the distribution maps that we can create actually tell us about the Viking Age situation. Connected to this is the question of what the significance of the occurrence of Frisians, Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons in the written sources of the Viking Age and about the Viking Age is, and how we can study this significance. Reading the various sources and looking at the distribution maps of finds also make us wonder why and in what manner the Migration Period events and relations between the different peoples were remembered into the Viking Age, and specifically recorded for a Viking Age and later medieval audience in the North Sea region. The same goes for the Viking Age events that were recorded for later medieval audiences in Frisia and Scandinavia: how and why were these remembered throughout the area and through several centuries? These are all questions that need to be addressed in a methodological manner, in order to analyse the sources’ content. The questions are not about the historical contents per se, but about their relevance for the Viking Age, the processes connected to them and the representation of connections through various modes. As outlined by Moreland (2001, 78) we must ‘consider more carefully how words and things were used, manipulated and imposed in the past.’

Cross-cultural contact and exchange thus constantly negotiate and define people, groups, identities, world view and culture. These processes are both physical and cognitive, and in the minds of both contemporary and later peoples. This negotiation is reflected in exchanged objects and styles, and in texts. By taking these sources
together we can trace the tangible and the cognitive processes and study their results. Together, these sources, therefore, hold the clues to the cross-North Sea connectivity and its social significance. We have seen, however, that the sources represent different temporalities and modes. The information on connectivity is fragmentary and scattered over several layers. Studying these layers may help us to find an answer to the questions posed above and find the relevance for the Viking Age, as will be set out below, after which the sources can be used to study the Viking Age connectivity of Frisia and the North Sea world. It will be set out how very different sources of different ages can hold relevance for the Viking Age. Doing so opens the possibility of using more and more diverse sources on Frisia in relation to the Viking Age North Sea world – a topic that is usually regarded to be represented in very few sources – and of studying it in a multidisciplinary way. To be able to do so, we need to take the common grounds of the various sources into consideration, as well as their differences and interdependence. To put this more simply: the material culture (on a distribution map) is a, more or less, static image of the past, which reflects the Viking Age horizon. This is a ‘horizontal’ image, even though we see it through a filter of time and bias. The written sources, on the other hand, are a condensed image of the past and continuity to present, and thus represents a more ‘vertical’ or diachronic image, in which the Viking Age horizon is included and connected to other times. This layering of time, which can be very condensed, is the filter we need to work with here, and which has given the Viking Age horizon meaning. In a dialectic process, we can confront these two image types, which together will create a very dynamic image of Viking Age spheres, activity and connectivity.

Point of departure: source analysis as a radar?
The analysis of the written sources starts with the realisation that history and history-writing in earlier periods were different than they are today. Whereas today we want history to only include verifiable facts and follow our linear chronology, in the medieval period history writing connected a mythological past with the present in a flexible chronology, in which legend could be taken up as easily as fact. If on these grounds we immediately dismiss medieval sources as containing no reliable historical information, then we miss out on the historical information these sources contain on both the periods they describe as well as on the periods in which they are composed. However, if we recognise that these sources are composed following different rules and mental processes than we would employ today, and study the sources along those lines, then we get glimpses of both the distant past the sources deal with, as well as the perception of this past at the time of composition (up to the thirteenth century).

In contrast, as was stressed above, the analysis of the archaeological sources works with a very different time frame. It concerns objects found from the nineteenth century up to today, but that we can establish are from the Viking Age and related to the Viking sphere. The distribution maps this presents us with represent neither a hard factual or historical truth, but are equally as biased as the written
sources. Just as with the written sources, if we allow ourselves to approach these sources as such and realise that they are just the tip of the iceberg, but that they can at least give us an idea of the networks, ranges, movements, types of objects and styles involved, then we can gain information that otherwise would remain hidden. So if we recognise that both the written texts and the archaeological traces are remnants of a historic reality, picked up and put into a frame in later times, and that what they present is ultimately an interplay between historical material, contemporary situations and personal or collective memory, we can study the historic horizons that they enclose.

To illustrate how the various kinds of sources are used in this thesis, we can make an analogy with radar. As is well known, radar is a system for object detection. When we ourselves cannot look beneath a surface or oversee a large area, we can use radar to present us with a picture of what it detects. Using radio waves, which penetrate an area and bump into items at various depths, it determines and shows where an object is, how big it is and in which direction it is moving. The radar image is not a photograph or naturalistic picture of this whole area and the objects in it, but a schematised recording of phenomena at a certain moment, leaving further interpretation to the reader. In the end, it gives a sense of objects and phenomena, where they occur and how deep they are situated. If we imagine that the various entrances into the past we have are the radio waves, then what they reflect are the various objects and phenomena they detect, their whereabouts and their relative position in connection to each other. This is never a full picture, but the mere schematised result of what the radar is able to pick up in different areas and in different layers. All the sources together, both written and archaeological, form the image provided by the Viking Age radar. Even though they represent phenomena detected by different frequencies, and thus at different locations and depths, their results can be used together to create as detailed a picture as possible. This radar picks up objects and phenomena, their size, contours, and their position. It presents static images of the situation every so often and does not show the movement itself, but shows the direction and the distance. If we combine various radar pictures, however, we do get a dynamic picture and are able to see movement. This is exactly how the sources function as well. The archaeological sources represent objects in places where they originate as well as where they end up, but not the movement itself. Putting the objects and their parallels on the map, we thus get a radar picture representing the material outcome of connectivity. Again it must be stressed that this image indicates that the areas are in connection via a shared network and as such display connectivity, and it must be stressed that what ends up on the distribution maps is biased by several factors, as explained above. Equally, the written sources can be seen as radar images. Biased by what is transmitted orally, written down, manipulated and finally has survived to the present day, these sources also represent an impression of historic reality that we can use to extract information from. For instance, they give insight into where particular people, events or phenomena appear and thus how far they reached or travelled, as well as how people wanted or needed to remember, forget or stress some of them.
Following this comparison to radar, we must realise that all sources use their own frequency and therefore sometimes give very blurred pictures. What we want is to get an as clear as possible picture of the Viking Age horizon, its phenomena and connectivity. In order to do so, we need to establish the wavelength of each source, and thus how it relates to the Viking Age, and study the sources accordingly before combining them into a picture that consists of various layers or horizons.

3.2.1 The Viking Age horizon in textual sources

The written sources that have been selected for the case studies are presented as a corpus in Appendix 1. They Aside from being of different types and from different regions, they also stem from various periods of time. Yet these sources have been selected because they hold relevant information for the same Viking Age horizon as the archaeological objects, only in different and multiple layers. One aspect on the basis of which distinctions between these phenomena are often made is that of ‘reality’ (factuality or historicity). A history consisting of historic events and chronicles, as well as tangible objects, is in such a view considered real and historic. Literary texts, however, are not. As Gabrielle Spiegel has argued (1990, 75) this can also be argued the other way round. Literary texts are given objectives – existing entities or, as Spiegel calls them, ‘artefacts’. History, on the contrary, does not exist as an objective but must be constructed or constituted first by the historian. As such, a literary text can be more ‘real’ than the object of historical studies. As Spiegel points out, ‘History as a given chronicle or unproblematic “truth” simply does not exist.’ In this view of history, literary works and historicity, there is not one great historical narrative into which the texts can be placed. History, text and objects are all constructed, but they all refer to a context of social and historical reality and it is this relation to social reality (rather than historical reality, perhaps) that makes each an interesting object for study. In addition, this relation to the context of social and historical reality is what makes them interdependent as part of that context, creating the need to establish these relations between them and with reality in order to use them. What follows from this, as others have said, is that history is not a text, and a text is not history, but both can be studied by analysing historical, literary texts.

Each of the textual sources can represent multiple layers of time, which we can call horizons, including the Viking Age. For each text, it is different where this Viking Age horizon is situated in relation to the other layers of time represented by the text. The Viking Age can be the topic or point of reference of the text, but it can also be the time in which a text is composed or recorded. In each case, the texts hold at least one layer connected to the Viking Age, and thus a relevance for the Viking Age horizon. The relevance for each source is different and needs to be established before using the information from the source to study the Viking Age itself. For instance, it is noteworthy that Migration Period events and relations between various Germanic people are remembered well into the Viking Age, sometimes being recorded or at least circulating and being copied then. Apparently, there is relevancy in the Viking Age in referring to this material, and the challenge for
us is to find that relevancy. Equally noteworthy is the fact that the Viking activities in Frisia are remembered and recorded in thirteenth-century Frisian law texts, dealing with something as important as the Frisian freedom. Apparently, the Viking Age horizon is relevant in this Frisian history, and the law texts point us to it.

There are three important moments in the life of textual sources, which form the main layers of the text. First of all, there is the date of the events that are described in the texts. Secondly, there is the date of composition of the text, which can also be a longer moment as material is transmitted and transformed orally over time. Then finally, there is the moment of recording of the text, which often happens in a very specific period of time. This is always related to the specific text one is looking at, so it is not restricted to original texts, but can include copies. It must be noted that these three moments can be unequally spread over time and place, ranging from all taking place contemporarily in the same place to taking place over the course of centuries and in different cultural areas. In some cases, like many of the Frankish annals and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the date of events, date of composition and date of recording more or less coincide. Other sources, like thirteenth-century sagas, have a date of recording many centuries after the date of events. The same can be said for Beowulf, an Old English epic composed between the seventh and late tenth century in England but dealing with Migration Period events in Scandinavia. In addition, there are many cases in which it still is (somewhat) uncertain when and where a text was created and recorded.

The historicity of texts, that is their historical factuality and accuracy, is an often-used criterion for the selection of historical sources in studies. Contemporaneity of texts and events are seen as an important part of what determines the historicity, i.e., the longer the gap between events and recording, the less historically accurate the source can be. Yet it is also agreed that even those sources that appear to display historicity are always in some way biased or corrupted. This does not have to be a problem for historic research, but it does determine which questions can be asked of the sources. We cannot find out ‘wie es eigentlich gewesen’, especially not for an entire group or area, but we can find out how events have been recorded, how images have formed, how mentalities arose and what meaning was given to certain areas, people and events. What is proposed here, is that ‘historicity’ – which according to Spiegel thus does not exist – and contemporaneity are only two types of relevance of a text in relation to a historic period. It is argued that texts that show little historicity and contemporaneity can be equally relevant and meaningful for the study of a period (cf. Vohra 2016, 209). They can show us social memory (the active choice to remember, forget and transform certain historical episodes), mentalities, representations and the mythologisation of history, as well as myths and stories which are shared with other texts and sometimes other areas. Through that, they show us the Viking Age. Besides the relation between events and sources in time, there is also the relation to the author/composer/scribe and his intention, as well as the audience a text is aimed at: the context. Taken together, these aspects decide the particular relevance of a text for the study of specific aspects of the Viking Age.
An example: The Saga Debate

The Icelandic sagas, which have been divided into several types, and how to use them as a source have been a topic of debate between various academic disciplines for centuries. As a debate on thirteenth-century sources about earlier times and with elements that claim to be original, it can be extrapolated to other written sources with a similar history, chronology or biography, such as several of the sources used in this thesis. Therefore, it is worth sketching the debate and its implications, as it will help with the methodology for the further corpus here.

The surviving corpus coming out of the Icelandic saga-writing tradition has been approached in a variety of ways over the past two centuries. Whereas the nineteenth century Romantics saw the sagas as both poetry and history simultaneously, in the twentieth century the debate has been between believers of the ‘free-prose’ theories, regarding sagas as works of history and the ‘book-prose’ theory, seeing sagas as works of poetry and prose (Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, 173–4; Sigurdsson 2004, 17–21). The free-prose adepts argued that the sagas and related texts like the Eddas were the result of an old, Germanic oral tradition and the written versions are the mere recording of it, whereas the book-prose adepts are convinced the sagas are works by an individual thirteenth-century author, and thus a literary creation (Sigurdsson 2004, 17–21). The use of both theories was not without a sense of nationalism and was related to ideas about to whom these stories belonged (i.e. Icelandic writers or Scandinavian (Norwegian) people) (Sigurdsson 2004, 17–21).

In addition, academics from different disciplines hold different approaches to the body of texts and how to study them. Whilst philologists study the texts themselves, in search of what Meulengracht Sørensen calls the reality in the texts (1993, 172), historians instead look at what kind of reality there is behind the text. Literary historians view the sagas as literary compositions by an author, which can be analysed in the same way as other written compositions (Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, 173). Social anthropologists, whose work has also entered the realms of history and archaeology, have contributed to the study of sagas by focussing on processes of sagas related to society and on oral tradition in general (Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, 175–8; Sigurdsson 2004, 46–8). As such, many attempts have been made to assess the primary value of the sagas and to determine to what extent they were written sources or the record of oral tradition, how much they represent the time of events described or time of recording or composition, and to determine what is historical fact and what is fiction.

The rigid divide between either poetic diction or historical factuality is on the retreat, and has been at least since the 1990s, and we are returning to a view in which sagas are again poetry and history simultaneously. Meulengracht Sørensen (1993, 179–80) proposes that the sagas be viewed in their totality, so both for their content and the mode of expression, and as processes which essentially are ‘a moulding by different ages and different outlooks’. This underlines the idea of chronological layering of the texts like sagas, in the same way as it is underlined by Whaley (1991, 19) in a discussion of the Old Norse kings’ saga Heimskringla: ‘The individual text is not so much a fixed entity as a stage in a process […]’
What research into oral traditions has shown, is that there may well have been a living oral tradition in Iceland in the thirteenth century – something that we can also assume for Frisia – that the saga writers could make direct use of as a source of history. As Meulengracht Sørensen (1993, 174-5) rightly states, it is particularly hard for historians to see the sagas as the historic recording of past events and facts, as the sagas themselves claim, because they operate with a different notion of factuality and historic truth. This also goes for ideas of time and chronology, which were perceived differently at the time that the sagas and also some sources in our corpus were written than they are today, leading to flexible and condensed histories. Historical matters were presented in a contemporary frame and adapted to a contemporary view or even purpose. In addition, authorship as such was different in nature than authorship today, namely less individualistic and not primarily aimed at originality and personal expression (Whaley 1991, 17-19).

In the present study, the sagas’ literary character is seen as a form in which history, historical facts and collective memory are recorded, remembered, moulded and told. As such, they are not conflicting but go together. Again, it is not at all uncommon that history and myth or legend become intertwined and condensed, eventually having their own dynamics and being both history and myth. The saga as a literary work is the form in which history is perceived, memorised and expressed to a thirteenth-century audience. The same view can be applied to other thirteenth-century sources that convey some form of history, in our case the Frisian law codes and the various gestas from different areas. The fact that the thirteenth-century sources were composed in a time of Christianity, whilst they include or primarily share stories of a pre-Christian past, need not be problematic. Naturally, the material is placed in a thirteenth-century frame that is a Christian one, sometimes quite clearly visible, but the continuity of the history as remembered is not necessarily changed. In the present study I propose, therefore, to view these sources as both literary works and means of writing history, and as displaying multiple layers of time, tradition, memory, history and diction. Seeing the sources as consisting of these different layers or horizons simultaneously, we recognise that they have a relevance to each of the layers in their own way.

3.2.2 From theory to practice. Establishing layers and horizons in texts
In order to find the relevance of the texts for our purpose, we will first try to identify where in time and place the three moments of the texts are situated and how this relates to the Viking Age. In fact, we try to establish the texts’ biography. For each text, we can visualise these different layers and relate them to the Viking Age, which in itself is not really one horizon, but a period which can again be divided into smaller time frames. If we list the three moments, we may call them:

1. Moment of events (real or imaginary)
2. Moment of composition (this may be a single moment or last centuries)
3. Moment of recording (or moment of inscription).
Ultimately, when looking at a written text, we are always faced with the moment of recording or inscription, and the challenge is to find where the other moments are situated in relation to it. It can be that the three moments coincide, but they can equally be miles apart. As long as one of these three moments is situated in a Viking Age context, we can argue that there is a relevance for Viking Age history and thus that the text is useful in our analysis. The moment the tales are being composed and recorded in the form that we know is when it comes to descent and to creating a link between the alliance of groups in history and the political and social present. It is that context, which by Spiegel is identified as the moment of inscription, that provides information on the Viking Age horizon. In addition to these three moments in each of the texts’ individual lives, we can discern three rough periods or horizons to which they can be connected:

A) Pre-Viking Age (i.e. mythological times and Migration Period)  
B) (Long) Viking Age (which can range from early (800) to late (post 1000))  
C) Post-Viking Age (mainly twelfth – thirteenth centuries)

The precise relevance for the Viking Age horizon is in addition determined by location, as well as authorship, intent and audience. Also in relation to location, there is a layering possible in texts. In order to be able to use these written sources next to the archaeological finds, it is necessary to establish their relation to the Viking Age horizon both in time and space. Another important aspect of texts which must not be omitted, is the text type. The source material for the Viking Age ranges from law texts to panegyrics, each composed with its own goal, authorship and audience in mind, and often as a result of long processes. Although it is necessary to take the typology of the text into consideration when using the sources here, the selection of the corpus is not based on text typological criteria. Following the idea of the textual layers in relation to the Viking Age as set out above, the different types of texts can all be used and included on their own merits. Here, it becomes clear that horizontal and vertical authentication is a process just as connected to written sources as to objects.

The several layers of the text include not only those in time and thus in people dealing with the material, but also in content. The historic events that gave rise to the stories, people’s perception of these events at the time and their transmission to later generations, who from their own perspective and context found meaning in and had the motivation to record these stories. As such, it presents neither mere history nor mere interpretation. It is a layering of several of these, which can carefully be pulled apart. Moreover, it is the combination of these layers and interplay between them that in particular reveals the Viking Age horizon and the mode of relevance.

In order to establish these layers, we can try to determine how moments 1, 2 and 3 are connected to periods A, B and C. To give an example, a Viking Age event described in a Viking Age composition and recorded then, would have the following scheme:
The Frisian Law Texts, however, which are composed and recorded during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but discuss the pre-Viking, Viking and post-Viking Age and its orally transmitted material, would have a more obscure scheme:

1A,B,C (=Pre-Viking Age, Viking Age and post-Viking Age events)
2B,C (=Viking Age and post-Viking Age composition)
3C (=Post-Viking Age inscription)

Naturally, this scheme of time should be accompanied by the elements of place and perspective that are inherent to each source as well. What this scheme immediately makes clear is that contemporaneity with the events as a criterion for selection of historic sources for studies on a particular period is indeed only one of the possible modes of relevance for studying the Viking Age, as expressed earlier. What is significant in the Viking Age and the periods just before and after is the role of memory, poetic diction and myth, which can lead to the flexible chronologies. These aspects are applied as a way to remember earlier, transformative events and relations with others, and they are consciously used and manipulated to contextualise, explain or legitimise current social and political realities. Both in remembering and in transforming Viking Age events for later audiences, or earlier events for Viking Age audiences, they can provide significant information. In the search for examples of how Frisia is connected to the wider North Sea Viking world in the Viking Age, it is interesting to look into when, where, why and in what form Frisians appear on the horizon and references to Frisia are made. It is equally interesting that some stories, phenomena or even specific people occur in different kinds of sources from different areas. Together, therefore, they can give us an idea of the Viking Age events and circulation of people and stories well into the High Middle Ages. In the presentation of the corpus in Appendix 1, each written source is looked at from this perspective, to establish the relation to the Viking Age horizon and its potential relevance. This forms the basis for the case studies in which the information on the content of the sources and how it relates to Frisian-Viking connections is analysed. From this analysis, we get a glimpse of the extent of connectivity between Frisia and the Viking sphere, and how far the Viking cultural sphere, and the Frisian sphere, stretched in terms of such aspects as power, Viking activities, religion and exchange. In addition, the analysis of the written sources provides us an insight into how this material was dealt with in later time periods, and helps us establish a sense of the importance, relevance and extent of the phenomena. This cannot be mapped, as opposed to the spheres themselves, but can and should be taken into account to understand the extent of spheres and connectivity, and should be used when discussing these.
3.2.3 The Viking Age horizon in distribution maps of material culture

Although there are many uncertainties about the archaeological finds discussed in this study, as mentioned above, what is quite certain is that they are from the Viking Age and thus represent the Viking Age horizon in time. The choices for object selection are discussed in detail in Appendix 2, containing the corpus, but in general, their Viking Age date, in combination with the fact that the objects inform us about the relations between the Frisian coastal area and the Viking Age North Sea world, is the reason for selecting these objects for the case studies.

How can we use case studies of archaeological sources, which here consist of movable, metal objects, to provide an image of the Viking Age connectivity? The point of departure in the present study is taken in finds from Frisia from the Viking Age, to follow the leads they present us with and identify their parallels. After studying their characteristics, typologies, dating within the Viking Age and connections, they can be plotted on a map to provide us with a general image of the range of the object distribution and areas with which they are connected. By doing so, the finds from Frisia are placed in their wider context of similar known finds. Even with all the precautions mentioned above, they present us with a general image of the geographical range in which a specific type of object is found. Although our search started in Frisia, the distribution maps are not meant to present the Frisian situation in its entirety – which would include many more Continental objects, providing a very different map as it relates to the Continental sphere – but the distributional situation for a specific group of objects that is related to the Viking Age. Here, it becomes very clear what the objective or framework for our study is; by zooming out of Frisia in its Continental perspective and homing in on Frisia in its North Sea perspective, the spheres it displays connectivity with there come into focus.

In addition to presenting the general image of connectivity, the distribution maps can reveal further specific information. As many of the objects can – based on stylistic features and topologies – be dated more specifically within the Viking Age, we can also get an idea of these periods in which the connectivity may have occurred. Similarly, we may sometimes see a particular sphere (economic sphere, the sphere of the benefices, the Great Army) to which the finds can be assigned, particularly in relation with the information from written sources. Furthermore, the maps may tentatively point us to core areas in which objects are found and which may have been particularly involved in contact, although, since our corpus is not at all complete, we must be very careful with this.

If we focus on this process of tracing and mapping for a number of Viking Age objects that are known from Frisia, and we later combine these maps, we get an idea of the range of objects and how Frisia in this context is related to the Viking Age North Sea world. In addition, we can test the objects and their distributions against each other, to see if they may relate to a similar pattern. Again, it must be

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31 Even though objects can have a longer lifespan than this period and may have been used into later times, but this is only rarely the case.
stressed that this will not provide a full image of the Viking Age finds in Frisia, or of the material culture in general, but rather a picture of the connections in the Viking Age based on a few find categories. Most of all, the distribution maps provide us with information on the possible extent of connectivity, as well as detailed information on selected finds from Frisia and their international context. This way, the relatively few finds from Frisia get relevance in a wider context and gain importance. Naturally, when presenting a map of a particular Viking find-type, this does not, for instance, say anything about the number of Frankish/Continental counterparts and their distribution.

The distribution maps that are created in the case studies can subsequently be confronted or combined with the information on the spheres and activities that we gain from the textual analysis, as will be done in the Conclusion.