Chapter 4
Recorded, Constructed and Condensed Connectivity
The story of the connections between Frisia and other parts of the Viking world is one of moving and changing groups of people who were constantly negotiating their identity, territory and alliances. Yet some aspects persist throughout the Viking Age, such as the existence of a notion of ‘Frisia’, Frisians and Vikings and their related activities. Besides material remains, as will be discussed in the case studies of the next chapter, this has left traces in the written sources, from chronicles through normative sources to poetry, both as recordings of the connectivity and as constructs of it. In this chapter information from the various textual sources will be analysed in case studies, to see if there are there any specific recurring themes, transformative events or particular times during which the sources were written that are relevant and relate to a Viking Age horizon. This is will be explored using the various textual sources, in order to get an idea of the extent of the connectivity – as well as the nature of connectivities – and how it is used, perceived and constructed diachronically, but in relation to the Viking period. It will look into the way in which connections from before and during the Viking Age are taken up in history writing and tales from the whole North Sea area, as well as law codes from the Frisian area representing core aspects for society, from the Viking Age up to the thirteenth century. We will see that the idea of connectivity in the North Sea area is memorised, recorded, corrupted, mythologised and condensed through the process of epic concentration. Connectivity is even created by the sources referring to each other, and to Frisia and the Viking sphere. As such, we may speak of constructed connectivity, which nevertheless, to some extent, refers to a social reality.

The various sources used here, whether of Viking Age date or later, historical or legendary, all hold a relevance for the connectivity of Frisia with the Viking Age North Sea Viking world. Using these sources together, we can identify the recurring topics, relations and transformative events which are taken up in the collective memory. These events, for instance the Viking attacks and the constant dynamics between Frisians and other tribes, are used in describing Viking Age relations and in identity creation. In addition, they are used as the beginnings of stories on later transformative events, such as in the Frisian law texts. By combining these hints from different wavelengths, we can thus get an image of the surface and we can start forming more detailed ideas on what lies beneath.

Following what is established in the methodology in Chapter 3, we can for each of the sources or traditions of writing establish the relation to the three broad periods. These are A) Pre-Viking: the early medieval Germanic period of the fifth-sixth centuries, which is the time of the migrations, of Germanic legend and of wealth in Frisia in close relation to the Danish and eastern English areas, B) The Viking Age proper, starting with the important event of the incorporation of Frisia into the Frankish realm and the subsequent Viking activity and C) Post-Viking: the twelfth–thirteenth centuries, which is the period of the second Christianisation, of the writing of many of the national histories like the Gesta Danorum, the sagas and the Frisian Law texts, and the period in which identity and state formation are important. The details of all the texts and their connection to the three horizons in time are presented in Appendix 1, but we can provide some general statements
here that give us a context for the content analysis of the texts.

For the Frisian texts, we see only small remnants of the material from the first period, to which we can assign some fossilised traces. Also, the references to the earlier period of heathenism and North can be placed under the first period, but simultaneously ascribed to the second. The Anglo-Saxon texts dealing with the material from the first period appear to have been composed in period A and/or B, but were at least recorded and circulated in B, when there apparently was a social and political need and room to deal with this Germanic material. Although the discussion remains whether the stories themselves were created after the events or entirely in the second period, we can assume that the story material is from the first period and the form in which it is written down from the second period. The Irish and Norman material, on the other hand, is primarily Viking Age and runs into the tenth and eleventh centuries, indicating how the stories circulate over time and over a wide area. They take their narrative material from the Viking Age itself. From the Viking Age into the thirteenth century, we have the Scandinavian material. On the one hand we have the Viking Age panegyric, the allusion to older epic stories, and the runic carvings alluding to Frisians, whilst the sagas as well as Saxo’s work from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries provide us the later view on historical and narrative material from periods A and C.

In general, we are thus working with pre-Viking Age events written down or circulating for a Viking Age audience, Viking Age events written down in the Viking Age itself for a Viking Age audience and Viking Age events written down after the Viking Age (after having been remembered and transmitted orally) for a post-Viking Age audience. What the three periods have in common is that they are crucially formative periods in terms of state formation, identity formation and social relations. As such, they are not only taken up in the texts themselves, but the texts of the later periods also deal with the material from the earlier, formative periods, and are themselves moments of text formation or inscription.

4.1 Case study 1: The Case of the Viking Age in the Frisian Corpus
That the Viking Age and Viking Age events are reflected in the Frisian corpus, which in its existing form dates from the twelfth century onwards, is perhaps not surprising considering the layered nature of the text as set out in Chapter 3. Where the Viking Age horizon is recorded and kept becomes particularly apparent when looking into themes, events and notions connected to the Viking Age and to the idea of Vikings.

4.1.1 From nord sereda ridder to hethena hera. Vikings in Frisian sources
Vikings are a recurring topic in the Frisian sources, and it is interesting to look into when, where, why and in what form they occur and how they are described. The Vikings’ occurrence and its relevance has been noted by Dutch and German scholars of Old Frisian or Old Germanic in general (cf. Samplonius 1998; Wilts 1992), but further international awareness of the texts and their relevance to the study of Frisia in the Viking Age is often lacking. This may be due to the inaccessibility of
the corpus as a result of, for instance, the lack of English editions. However, recent and future activities within the field of Old Frisian studies seem to be aimed at precisely enlarging their accessibility to an international audience. Moreover, even with English editions it still is not an easy corpus to grasp, and consultation with experts on the Old Frisian corpus is necessary. This is why the instances of Viking presence in the Frisian laws will be listed and put into context here, before discussing the way in which the Vikings are portrayed and what it can tell us.

We encounter the following variations of the Old Frisian word for Viking; wītzing, wītzeng, wīsing, wītzend. These are found in the Vierentwintig Landrechten (Twenty-four Land Laws) in R1; Magnuskeuren (Statutes of Magnus) in D, F, J and U; in the Oudere Schoutenrecht (Older Magistrates’ Law) in D, J, R, and U; and in the Overkeuren (Superior Statutes) in F and H (Hofmann and Popkema 2008 via Taaldatabank). This means that the term ‘Viking’ has been present and attested in Old Frisian since at least the eleventh century. Wītzing is the direct equivalent or cognate of Old Norse víkingr and Old English wīcing, which is the oldest attestation of the word, meaning ‘pirate’ (Hofstra 2003, 148-9). Just like in these languages, additional terms for Vikings were used in Old Frisian as well, namely northmon (‘Northmen’), northlūide (‘people from the North’) (Hofmann and Popkema 2008 via Taaldatabank; Hofstra 2003, 151), northhiri (‘northern army’), northeska wiszegge (‘northern Viking’), northeska wigandum (‘northern fighter’) and noerdtscha diuelen (‘northern devil’), which occur in a wider range of Old Frisian texts (Wilts 1992, 197).

In all manuscripts of the Seventeen Statutes, Vikings or Northmen show up in statutes seven, ten and fourteen (thirteen), with slight variations between the manuscripts. In the Twenty-four Land Laws, the second, third and twentieth land laws mirror the fourteenth statute, but of these, the third and twentieth are the only two instances of explicit reference to Vikings. We will discuss the attestations of ‘Viking’ in more detail per instance, taking the R1-codex as the point of departure in most of the cases, following Vries (2007). After listing the relevant passages and their variation, we will discuss their significance and meaning by grouping them under recurring themes. The listing of the passages from primarily the Seventeen Statutes and Twenty four Land Laws, but also some other collections, is as follows. First the passages that are believed to be Viking Age in date of events or at least based on Viking Age material are quoted, namely the fourteenth statute and the second, third and twentieth land law. According to Bremmer (2004, 80) this material cannot be younger than 1050. Then the passages that are believed to be later in date but nonetheless reflect on earlier situations are given.

The fourteenth (thirteenth) statute
What is known as the fourteenth statute in most editions is in Codex J in fact the thirteenth, as statutes fourteen and thirteen are reversed here (Buma and Ebel

34 A case in point is the Frisian Language Database at http://tdb.fryske-akademy.eu/tdb/#
In addition, it is one of the statutes which perhaps displays most variation over the codices and one where R1 is not the most typical example. R1 reads:

“Thit is thiv fiuwertinde liodkest : sa hwersa en ungeroch kind ut of londe lat werth thruch sellonge tha thruch hirigongar, werth sin god iefta sin erue urset tha urseld, jef thet kind to londe kumth and to sina liodon, mi hit thenne bikanna brother and swester and to nomande wet sine nesta friond and sinne feder and sine moder, mi hit sines eina erues enigene ekker bikanna, sa hath thet kind thenne altheroua to gungande uter stef and uter strid and uter liodskelde and buta frana wald and buta alle erticha, thruch thet ther ne machte sin moder, ne sin stiafpeder, nach sin brother, ne sin swester, ne nen sin athom, ne nen sin halumon thes ungeroga kindis erue ursetta tha ursella, tha thet kind an tha ililenda was ; tha liode hagon him to helpande, thet thet kind oua sin ein erue kumi.”


This is the fourteenth statute: when an infant is carried off abroad, whether through sale or raid, his goods or land are pawned or sold. When the infant returns to the land and with his folk/people and can recognise his brother and sister and can name his next of kin and his father and mother and can recognise any field of his own land, then he shall take possession of it again without authenticating oath and without duel and without payment to the folk and without the authorisation of the frana 36 (the representative of the count or the judge) and without (reference to) all earlier charges, because neither the mother nor stepfather, neither brother nor sister, neither brother-in-law nor disloyal guardian had the right to pawn or sell the infant’s land when he was abroad; the folk should help him so the infant gets on his own land.

This statute explains the rights of infants who return after having been taken away from their homeland. Two possible, both involuntary, reasons for the infants’ travel abroad are mentioned, namely through sale or raid. The selling of an infant must refer to the practice of slavery, whilst being taking captive by a raiding party makes us think of Vikings. However, that the raiding parties would consist of Vikings is not made explicit in the text, therefore we have to remain careful with such an identification. Neither does explicit reference to Vikings or northerners occur in Codex H or E, the latter of which reads: *Jef hua of herenethe jefte of othere nede jetja of fengnese kemth*– ‘if someone returns from the violence of war, other violence or captivity’. While it neatly ties in with the image of the Vikings and their activity, it remains a very general statement that cannot from this text alone be connected to Vikings, only by the context of the earlier references to defence against the heathen Northmen and by the analogy of the other versions of the text.

---

36 Cf. Vries 2007, 523 (and references) and the lemma *frana* at http://tdb.fryske-akademy.eu/tdb/index-en.html# (accessed 13-1-2016). I will keep the word *frana* in the English translations of the various regulations for practical reasons. The translation given here is the same for all instances, but it must be noted that it also is related to the word *vroon* which means authority in general.
Codex F for instance reads:

"Jef thene mon Nordmon nimat and hi vrsant jefta vrseld wert, hweder nord vr hef jefta suther vr berch, jef hi sum witherkume to Ionde [...]"

(Fivelgoër Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 34).

If the Norsemen (Vikings) take someone captive and he is carried off and sold, either northwards across the sea or southwards across the mountains, and when he returns to his land [...] 

In this version, furthermore, the taking captive (in a raid) and the selling (slave trade) are combined. Here, besides being taken north one can also be taken south across the mountains (possibly the Alps) which meant ending up in a different, Continental instead of northern world.

In J, in which the same regulation is thus the thirteenth statute, we find an almost identical beginning. It is the most extensive version of the statute, because it adds that the period spent abroad may not be longer than thirty years and that if people disagree on the period then the priest should decide, indicating a Christian societal context:

"Djo trettunste kest is: lef dae Noerdmanne enen man nymat iefta wrsant werth ende hij vter need komme iefta of hereferd komme in zijn ayn land binna tritiga ierum en hi moege bikanna zijn ayn eckeren ende zijn eedele ende zijn fadirs staten ende hi sine megheen nomia moege ende sijn nesta frioend canna moege, ief zijn broer ief zijn baelemond iefta zijn stiaepfadir iefta zijn aedem, sijn sister iefta zijn bern zijn land wrbrocht habbeth iefta sield, soe aegh hi toe farane in zijn ayn goed ende op zijn eedele ayn wtor stryd ende wtor liodescheld mey alre Fresana riuchte. Tritic iera hetet avera. Komt hi to lande ende sit hy ieer ende dey buta oentaele, soe ne aegh hy nene oentaele. Mey ma dat biraedia, dat hi pabbe langera twwessen, so ne aegh hi nene oentaele oen sijn eerue. Sannath hia omme dae ieer, soe scheede hit di prester, deer hiara bedera fædir is, mey zijn tioeghe. " (Jus Municipale Fresonum, ed. Buma and Ebel 1977, 142).

The thirteenth statute is: if the Northmen take a man captive or take him away, and he gets out of imprisonment or military expedition to his own land within thirty years, and he can recognise his fields and his Stammgut (entailed estate or family goods) and his father’s residence and if he can name his kin and his closest relatives, when his brother or his disloyal guardian or his stepfather or his brother-in-law, his sister or his child have alienated or sold his land, then he can take his own property and Stammgut without legal duel or without payment to the people after the law of all Frisians. Thirty years is the period of possession. If he comes to the land and lives there a year and a day without making a claim, then he has no claim anymore. If one can prove that he was out of the country for a longer period, then he has no more claim to his inheritance. If there is dispute
This period of thirty years must be comparable to the notion that someone can still recognise his family (who must thus be alive) and land, and is above all a standardised period equally found in other legal traditions. As we shall see below, this regulation is mirrored in the second, third and twentieth land laws, and together they paint an interesting picture of what it may encompass.

**The second land law**
The second land law discusses the sale of the land of an infant by the mother, and how the child can accept or reject this sale once he has come of age. There are three exceptions to the procedure, one of which is represented in R1 as follows:

“[…] wur eyn kinth iunck worde gefangen suder ouer berm, narden ouer haft, sa mam de moder des kindes erue vorsetten, vorwesselen offt vorkopen vnd or kindt losen vnd ome des lyues helpen.”(Rüstringer Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1963, 44).

[... ] when a child at young age was taken captive and taken away southwards over the mountains, northwards over the sea, so may the mother pawn, exchange or sell the land to release her child and save his life.

It is represented in various ways in all manuscripts and, clearly, reflects the same situation as in the fourteenth land law. F and J are quite similar to R1, but E and H only state that one of the exceptions is ‘an (enemy) army’ (ed. Buma and Ebel 1967, 30; 1969, 32). Again we see the same elements of being taken either north over the sea or south over the mountains, indicating slave trade, but no specific reference to Vikings or, in fact, any other group of actors in particular.

**The third land law**
The third land law does name the Vikings as the foreign enemy taking people captive and carrying them abroad. It is represented in R1:

“Thit is thet thredde londriucht : Sa hwersa en ungeroch kind ut of londe lat werh thruch sellonge tha thruch hirigongar an tha hethena thiade, ist thanne tha kinde eskepen, thet hit to londe kumi and to liodon sinon, sa gunch hit oua sin ein erue uter stef and uter strid and uter liodskelde and uter frana wald and uter alle ertichta. Sa hwasa hit therof drifth, sa brekth hi theron tian merk with tha liode and en and twintich skillings tha frana.”

(Rüstringer Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1963, 46).

This is the third land law: when an infant is carried off abroad through sale or through raid to the heathen people, and the infant is able to return to the land
and his folk, then he can take possession of his inheritance without authenticating oath and without duel, without payment to the folk and without the authorisation of the frana and without (reference to) all earlier charges. If someone drives him away from it, then he forfeits ten mark to the folk/people and twenty shillings to the frana.

It is quite clear, though not explicit, that the heathen people here can be Vikings. Reading the other editions of this law confirms this possibility. The regulation in F is recorded as follows:

“Thet thredde londriucht is: Jef thene mon Nortmon nimat and hi vter lond fleth wert, sa hwasa sin erue then a hwile kapat, sa hi thenne wither inlendis cume, sa fare hi vppa sin ayn. Sa hwasa hine bifucht iefta birawie vppa tha erue, sa brecht hi X liudmerc witha liude and thria pund with thene frana, thet is xxj schillinga, thes keninges bon” (Fivelgoër Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 42-4).

The third land law is: if the Norsemen come and take a man captive and carry him off abroad and his land is sold in the meantime, then he will take back his goods when he gets back to his land. If someone attacks or raids him on this land, then he forfeits ten mark to the folk/people and three pounds to the frana, that is twenty-one shillings, as royal fine.

The editions J, E and H are very comparable but E adds that the Norsemen come and take a man captive and carry him abroad, uter willa and vter wald and vter werca (‘without his will, without his agreement and without his cooperation’) and H adds sunder willa and mith urwald (‘against his will and with violence’) (ed. Buma and Ebel 1967, 30; 1969, 32). The stress on the involuntary is an important addition to the regulation, as will be further explored below.

The twentieth land law
The twentieth law is found in R1 as follows:

“Thit is thet twintegoste londriucht: Sa hwersa Northman an thet lond hlapath, and hia enne mon fath and bindath and ut of londe ledath, and eft withir to londe brangath and hini therto thwingath, thet hi hus barne and wif nedgie and man sle and godishus barne and hwetsa hi to lethe dwa mi, alsa hi thenne vnndfluch ietha lesed werth, and withir to londe kumth and to liodon sinon, and hi mugi bikanna brother and swester and londethele and erue and sinera aldera hof and hus, sa fari hi oua sin ein erue uter liodskelde. Sa willath him tha liode thing toseka and sinne opawerpa thruch thet grate morth, ther hi er mith tha witsingon efremid heth. Sa mire thenne afara thene warf gunga and iechta mire tella; enne eth hach hi thenne opa tha heligon to swerande, thet hit al dede bi there nede, alsa him sin Hera bad, ther hi was liues and lethana en vnweldich mon. Sa ne thuruon him tha liode ne frana tohaldá seka ni sinna, thruch thet thi
This is the twentieth land law: when the Norsemen invade the land and they take a man captive and bind him and carry him off abroad and later take him back in the land and force him to burn down houses and rape women and kill men and burn down churches and whatever sort of evil he may do, and if he flees or is released and he comes back to his land and to his folk, and he recognises his brother and sister and Stammgut and ground and his parents’ court and house, then he can take back his own land without payment to the folk. When his people want to charge him and accuse him of a crime because of the great murdering that he had committed with the Vikings, then he may come before the assembly and plead guilty and confess; then he must swear on the relics that he had done everything because he was forced by his lord, against whom he could not voluntarily decide over his body or life. Then neither the people nor the frana can charge him as guilty or with crime, because the frana cannot secure his peace; the servant had to do what his master ordered, for his life’s sake (to save his life).

This law is often cited as it is such a beautiful and rare description of Viking activity in Frisia and what it could mean for the Frisians. Roughly the same image is painted throughout the editions, but again with some variations. To the list of crimes the Frisian commits under force, E adds the taking captive of men (Buma and Ebel 1967, 40). In addition, it specifies that the return of the man is to be within fifteen years and that he must pay for the damage if he can, but if he cannot pay, he goes free. The beginning in F is as follows:

“[…] Jefter Northmon kumath and anne mon hendat and bunden to tha skipe brengat and hi mith himman in sine ayna Ionde to ene thorpe kumpt an hi ther hus barnt ande wif a nede nimth ande mon slaith end hwet sa hi to ewela decht […]” (Fivelgoër Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 50).

[...] When the Northmen come and take away a man and bring him tied up to their ship and he comes in his own land in a village with them and he sets fire to houses and rapes women and kills men and what more evil he does [...]
This is the seventh statute, that all Frisians possess a free chair and have free speech (accusation) and free answer (defence); that privilege was granted by King Karel (Charlemagne), so that we Frisians would turn to the south and refuse to pay taxes in hard money and would be subordinate and loyal to the southern king in all levy and tithe, and pay house tax according to the decision of the asega and the people’s land law, all because we once belonged to the north to Redbad, the quarrelsome, all who were Frisian.

Here, it must be indicate that ‘suther’ and ‘suthera’, ‘south’ and ‘southern’, are referring to Frankish. The E-version adds that the Frisians not only became directed southward but also ‘cristen vrde’ – became Christian (ed. Buma and Ebel 1967, 20). This was necessary, because:

“[…] alle Fresa er north herden ouer thet hef anda grimma herna and thet al hethen was, theter Fresena was.” (Emsinger Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1967, 22)

[…] all Frisians once belonged to the north over the sea to the terrible corner and all were heathen, who were Frisian.

This is paralleled by F: alle Fresan er nord vr hef herden in tha grimma herna (ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 30) and H: alle Fresan north herden an tha grimma herna (ed. Buma and Ebel 1969, 24).

The tenth statute
The tenth statute speaks of war campaigns and the exception for Frisians to having to take part in the Frankish campaigns. In doing so, it provides an interesting sketch of where Frisian things were held and in which areas the Frisians were in charge of defence. In addition, it indicates what this defence entailed. In the R1 edition, the tenth statute is recorded as follows:

“Thit is thiv tiande liodkest, thet wi Frisa an fria stole bisitte and hebbe fria spreka and fri ondwarde ; thet urief us thi kinig Kerl, til thiv thet wi Frisa suther nigi and clipskelde urtege and wrthe tha suthera kininge hanzoch and heroch alles riuchtes tinzes and tegotha, and huslotha urgulde bi asiga dome and bi loida lond-riuchte, al with thet wi er north herdon Redbate tha unfrethmonne, al thet Frisona was.” (Rüstringer Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1963, 36; cf. ed. and trans. Vries, 85–7).
This is the tenth statute, that we Frisians neither have to go on campaign through the military service for the king nor attend an ordered thing farther (away) than westward to the Vlie, eastward to the Weser, southward to the Wapel and northwards to the seashore. Then King Karel wanted to drive the people further westward to the Sincfal and eastward to Hitzacker. Now we Frisians must keep to the regulations and statutes of our ancestors and the privileges of the king, as King Karel who ordained us on his free chair; so we can protect our land and our people from the sea and the northern army, if God wants to help us.

The E- and H-manuscripts speak of northliudem instead of northhiri (ed. Buma and Ebel 1967, 24; 1969, 26) whilst the corresponding text in F reads nordiska here (ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 34). F also has some other differences, as the last sentence reads:

“[…] et wi vse londe bihalda machte with thene salta se and thene nord sereda ridder and with thene haga helm and thene rada schild and with then nordisca here.” (Fivelgoër Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 34).

[…] so we can protect our land from the salty sea and the northern armed knight and from the high helmet and the red shield and from the northern army.

So besides the noridsca here, we encounter the same pairing of the sea and the Viking – described here as the northern armed knight – as enemies of the Frisians. In H, the regulation is structured slightly different, and next to the northliudem in the last sentence we have in the middle of the text the sentence: wither thet hef and wither there hethena here – ‘against the sea and against the heathen army (ed. Buma and Ebel 1969, 26).

**Other occurrences**

Besides the presence of Vikings in these general Frisian laws, which were valid for the entire area of Frisia (with small variations throughout the regional codices) and which are quite well known, there are some references to Vikings in other law texts as well – both pan-Frisian and more regional. One of these pan-Frisian examples is in the Higher Statutes (Overkeuren), a short text of seven statutes which is thought to be one step above the Seventeen Statutes and Twenty-four Land Laws in hierarchy and which is considered to be the oldest statute of the bond of the Upstals tree, the gathering of all the seven sea-lands of Frisia (Vries 2007, 54). It is thought to date from c. 1200 in its attested, written form, and it is preserved in H, E and F (with E being slightly different). In H we find in the second statute:

“Thi other kere alra Fresena: gef ther eng lond urherad urde, ovder fon tha
The second statute of all Frisians: when any [sea-]land would be devastated by the southern armed [knight] or the northern Viking, then the six will help the seventh, so that it may remain as strong as the other six.

In the more regional collection *Westerlauwers sendrecht* (‘synod right valid west of the Lauwers’) that is taken up in the codices F, U and D, we find the heathen northerners again. In some editions, we read of how the Frisians acquired the synod right. In J this is:

“Dat synnethriocht iouwe ws di pauwes Leo ti Rome ende heet, dat wyt alsoe feste hilde, als wy den kerstena namma halda wilde ende wy dae suderna riocht herich were, hwant wy Fresen alle noerd heerden ende alle heiden weren, ende heet, dat wyt aldus helde.”


Pope Leo in Rome gave us the synod right and commanded that we would hold on to it so much as we wanted to keep the Christian name and we would obey southern law, because we Frisians used to belong to the north and were all heathen, and he commanded us to keep this.

According to Vries (2007, 425), the North means Norsemen, which he, therefore, adds in brackets in his text edition. Another text that makes this reference to Vikings is the *Magnuskeuren* – the Statutes of Magnus. This text is of a different kind than the Seventeen Statutes or Twenty-four Land Laws. It tells the legendary story of the Frisian leader Magnus and how he fought for Charlemagne in Rome, for which, in return, the Frisians obtained freedom and privileges (known as the Magnusage). This may be a good example of how the Frisian laws, even though being directed at codifying measures for daily legal practice, can preserve traditions of another kind. It is recorded in compilations F, U, J and D. The seventh of the Statutes of Magnus gives a similar story of Pope Leo as the Sendrecht and concludes with: *hwant hia in thet northkeningrike er her den and alle hethen weren* – ‘because they used to belong to the northern kingdom and were all heathen’ (Fivelgöör Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 56). The fifth statute mirrors again what we encountered in the tenth of the seventeen statutes, namely how far the Frisians had to go to defend the land. In F we read the following as the fifth of the Statutes of Magnus:

“Tha kas Magnus thene fifta kere, that se nene herefert nelde farra fara than aster to there Wisere and west er to tha Fli, vp mitha flod an vt mitha ebba, thruch thet, that se hudat (thene ower) des ande nachtis withen nordischa kening and
with thene wilda witzend and thene deikisflod mith fif wepnum: mith swerde, mith schelde, mith spada, mith forka and mith ettegris orde.”
(Fivelgoër Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1972, 56).

Then Magnus chose the fifth statute, that they would not have to go on heervaart (military duty) further east than the Weser and west to the Vlie, land inwards on high tide and back at low tide, whilst they by day as well as by night should defend the sea shore against the northern king and the wild Viking and the daily flood with five weapons: with sword, with shield, with spade, with fork and with spearhead.

In U the Vikings against which the Frisians had to defend their coast are described as wild: thina wilda witzinges sesflod – ‘the (sea) flood of wild Vikings’ (Vries 2007, 469).

In the Oudere Schoutenrecht, we encounter yet again the same phenomenon; the free Frisian cannot be ordered by the king or the like to fight for him farther than a given distance. Here it specifically states leaving at low tide and returning home at high tide. In this version, the regulation is perhaps most clearly formulated in J:

“[…]
Ratio: truch dae need dat hij den ouwer waria schel alla daghen ienst den salta se ende ienst den wilda witzenges floed mey fyf wepenem: mey spada ende mey forka, mey schiolde ende mey swirde ende mey etkeres orde […]”
(Jus Municipale Fresonum, ed. Buma and Ebel 1977, 74).

[…]
Reason: because he needs to defend the coast every day with five weapons: with spade and with fork, with shield and with sword and with the spearhead […]

4.1.2 Recurring themes
It appears that the instances of Vikings in the law texts and the way in which they, as well as the northern world in general, are depicted is rather consistent and can be discussed according to a number of recurring themes.

‘The sea flood of wild Vikings’. Vikings attack
That Vikings raided in Frisia is primarily known from the contemporary Frankish sources, and also later taken up in, for instance, Adam of Bremen’s Gesta (drawing on the Frankish annals and vitae, see Tschan 1959, 26). But in the Frisia law codes, we have the first Frisian references to these events. It is clear that most references to Vikings in the Frisian sources are to Viking attacks and Vikings as intruding, foreign raiders. These references can be divided into two groups: the regulations concerning which area the Frisians had to defend (and why), and those dealing with what happens to someone who is kidnapped by attacking Vikings and later is able to return home.

The regulations on defence taken together make clear that the Frisians had a
special arrangement with the Frankish emperor concerning the area they were in charge of defending. Because of the nature of the Frisian coastal zone with its unrelenting threat of flooding, either by the sea or wild Vikings, there was a constant necessity of being able to defend the Frisian coast and thus of being around. Therefore, the arrangement was that the Frisians did not have to defend any other area than their own or than those that could be reached and returned from by a day’s travel. This way they could focus on their main duty of defending the Frisian coast, which initially seems to be specified as from the Sincfal in the west to the Weser in the east (greater Frisia) but later between Vlie and Weser in particular (IJssenagger 2013a, 81).

In all texts we see that the Vikings and the sea are paired as a set of connected or related enemies, which recur. In addition, there is also mention of an enemy in the form of the (southern armed) knight who is sometimes paralleled to the Viking, although the former occurs less frequently in the texts than his northern counterpart. The pairing of human enemies (Vikings and knights) with the sea is then paralleled by a pairing of defensive material in the form of weapons and tools. The Vikings and the sea, apparently, were such major threats that it justified the Frisians not going on _herferd_—the military service for the Frankish king. Reading through the Frisian law texts there is hardly any other external enemy or threat, besides the aforementioned _sutherna sereda riddere_ (‘the southern armed knight’). According to Vries (2007, 24) this can only represent the Saxons, which he states is also the case for _thene haga helm and thene rada skeld_ (‘the high helmet and the red shield’). The juxtaposition of Vikings and Saxon knights would in any case reflect two enemies from different periods of time, and thus show us a clear case of epic concentration on one horizon (Vries 2007, 24). It is abundantly clear in the sources that high helmet and red shield—enemy—illegitimate rule is a recurring triangle. Illegitimate rule may be hard to connect to the medieval Saxons in this context, so we have to keep the option open that it refers to a different kind of enemy, several enemies (one characterised by high helmets and one by red shields) or the notion of enemy in general. Alternatively, one could argue that the southern enemy represents the Franks who used to fight the Frisians in the struggle for power and conversion. In historic light, and in a particular situation of juxtaposing south and north, this may seem more likely. Whereas the Vikings are explicitly named as being the northern enemy, the southern enemy is not further specified, which could argue for it being the Franks. As we will see later, the condensed history is turned in favour of the Franks in the Frisian law codes after the moment of conversion and incorporation, but this does not mean that the Franks could not have originally been named as enemies before being turned into nameless enemies.

That the Vikings occur as the main named enemy in the law codes, and that the occurrence of the enemies (ie. _sutherna sereda riddere and thene haga helm and thene rada skeld_) which have been identified as Saxons gradually becomes more frequent, was important for the dating of the text. As pointed out by Vries (2007, 24–5) the argumentation is that we see two layers of time here, the earlier Viking layer and the later Saxon layer, both concentrated onto one horizon. Nevertheless,
The enemies that are identified as Saxon by Vries also occur in some earlier regulations, which would indicate that they occupy a similar position to non-pacified Frisians and Vikings. This would be in favour of reading an earlier enemy, who is juxtaposed to Vikings, in these regulations.

It is interesting to look at the regulation on military duties in defence against attacking enemies next to an episode in the *Annales Bertiniani*, which mentions the role of Frisians in the coastal defence of Walcheren. The Viking attack on Walcheren in 837 was quite a devastating one, despite the Frankish coastal defences being in place by then. Following the attack the emperor arranged an assembly to discuss the matter, in which it became clear that one of the reasons why the defences could not keep off the attack was that some people were disobedient and did not resist the Viking attack. To put this right, ‘energetic abbots and counts were therefore dispatched to suppress the insubordination of the Frisians’ (AB s.a. 837, ed. Waitz 1891, 14; trans. Nelson 1991, 37), indicating that ‘some people’ in fact were Frisians (IJssennagger 2013a, 82). Although a direct connection between this episode and the Frisian law is generally discarded, it may nevertheless be indicative of how, after the incorporation of Frisia into Francia and with the threat of Viking attacks, this was an issue the Franks and Frisians had to resolve. It must, in any case, have been an important enough issue to take up in the Frisian legal texts and be preserved. Although probably a standard procedure for the Franks, the fact that both counts and abbots were sent to suppress the Frisians makes it appealing to see in the insubordinate Frisians those non-pacified Frisians who did have more connections (still) with the Scandinavian north.

The fourteenth statue and the second, third and twentieth land laws show the necessity of finding a way to deal with people – be it adult men or infants – who return after having been taken captive by the Vikings. What the Vikings do on their raids, according to these regulations, is to capture an infant or man and then take him abroad either north over the sea – to Scandinavia – or south over the mountains – possibly across the Alps. One of the instances specifically adds that the captives were taken to the Vikings’ ships. The fact that the captive Frisians could either be taken north or south may be explained in different ways. First of all, we can think of the slave trade. We know that Vikings did keep and trade slaves, and it is very likely that some of the captured Frisians and other Continentals were used as slaves. This could be in Scandinavia proper, as well as in other places. Another possible explanation is that people are taken either North by their northern enemy, or South by their southern enemy, regardless of whether these are Franks, Saxons or others. It is clear in some texts that the raiders came from the north, but that the captives could be taken south as well. Perhaps those caught were taken to a larger trading settlement first, to be put on the slave market. In addition, we can imagine that those who fell into the hands of the Vikings were taken along on their further campaigns. This is what seems to have happened in the instances that the Frisian laws describe specifically, as these are directed at people who as captives were forced to plunder, rape, burn down and kill in their own Frisian area, before returning. The regulations indicate that a number of them must have returned and
that deciding how to deal with this was in fact a social reality.

There are two main legal questions that necessitated this being arranged in the law. The first one is what to do with the property that in the years of absence has been sold, pawned or the like. The second is what to do with the returning person if he was found guilty of plundering, raping, setting fire and killing amongst his own people. The answer to both questions is that if the person can declare that he did all the horrible deeds only because he was forced to do so by the Vikings, and he was thus a slave to his master, then he is regarded innocent and can get back his property. As we have noticed, sometimes a specific period of time in which someone has to return is mentioned. In other instances, we see another specification of conditions, namely that the person who has been abroad must be able to recognise his brother, sister and land and to name his father, mother and kin. Sometimes these conditions go hand in hand. Particularly in the case of an infant who has been taken away, this must be relevant. If a child was taken away at a young age and returned many years later, what connection did he still have to his kin, land and most importantly, property? Although still an heir to his parents’ property, this could not be proven unless he could name and recognise his connections. The regulation also points us to other possibilities, as not all infants would have returned, instead acculturating among the Vikings or south of the Alps. Acculturation with wherever the infant ended up – for instance, with the northern Vikings – and ‘deculturation’ from the Frisian people and land must be just as common an outcome as the return of a captured person.

The emphasis in all these cases is placed on the fact that someone had to be able to declare that he had indeed been forced. If so, then this was ample reason to go free of all charges and turn back to life and land as before the unfortunate Viking raid that led to the captivity. As has already been pointed out by others (Samplonius 1998, 98; Jesch 2004, 257; IJssennagger 2013a, 81), the emphasis on this condition implies that there must also have been cases where Frisians joined Vikings and performed the same deeds voluntarily. This is a glimpse of the non-pacified Frisians that may, perhaps, even be termed Frisian Vikings. These non-pacified Frisians are, as Pritsak (1981, 490–8) and Vries (2007, 17-18) have shown, perhaps not represented by these Christian, pacified and Frankish-oriented recordings of Old Frisian law in general, but they can certainly be found between the lines and in the older horizons of the texts. As such, the Frisian laws can inform us of both Frisian groups. Whether forced or voluntarily, the Frisian corpus shows undoubtedly that Frisians could be among the Viking warbands. This information reinforces references to Viking-Frisian cooperation and multi-ethnic warbands in other sources and presents a social and historical reality (IJssennagger 2013a). The same was the case for pacified Norsemen living amongst Frisians and Franks, as is indicated by one of the Frankish chronicles.

A question that may arise is how people were able to get free, even after many years, as this is not explicitly discussed in the scanty Frisian texts. The Frankish sources, however, point to the possibilities of escape and of being bought free by family or the clergy. The second land law of the Frisians hints at this as well, as it
states that when an infant is taken abroad, then the mother may pawn, exchange or sell the land in order to release and save her child. The pawning and selling would immediately raise money to buy the child’s freedom. Exchange of land would not raise money and help to free the child, unless perhaps the land is exchanged directly for the child, so with the Viking kidnappers. This is an interesting thought, but one that is really hard to test, even though we know Viking raids were performed as a means of pressure in many instances. Viking bands would attack an area in order to create a power base there, either by taking control of it or by being granted the area as a loan in return for protection, so the idea of kidnapping a child in order to exchange it for land does not seem impossible in that context. If it ever happened, for which there is no proof, it would mean that some northerners could acquire land in Frisia on a more or less individual basis.

The depiction of the Vikings as enemies is characterised by an emphasis on them being wild and armed. They are invaders of the Frisian area, where they kidnap, kill, rape, plunder and burn down houses and even force Frisians to do the same. In one case it is mentioned that they burn down churches, giving us a sense of time and chronology, something that in the Christian texts naturally stands out as one of the evil deeds performed. Moreover, it is stressed that Vikings come with ships from across the sea, and they come in armies. The comparison of Vikings with floods - the flood of wild Vikings - works in several ways. First, the flood creates an image of a sudden, overwhelming and damaging event. Next, it refers to the constant pairing of the sea and Vikings as the main threats and by describing Vikings as both, their danger is doubly emphasised. Finally, the flood refers to how the Vikings arrive from the seaside, from the north. Together, this creates a strong and condensed picture of how the Vikings were seen and remembered by the (pacified) Frisians.

Another text set in Frisia that is concerned with a Viking attack is the Passio sanctorum martyrum Walfridi et Radfridi filii eius (ed. Van Schaïk 1985, 136-51). It is recorded in four fifteenth-century manuscripts, although the events took place in the late tenth century and the story was probably composed around AD 1000. Following an oral tradition, it must have been put into writing around the twelfth or thirteenth century (Van Schaïk 1985, 9-41). The tale is that of Walfridus, a well-to-do farmer from Bedum in the modern province of Groningen, who lives in the marshland and successfully cultivates it. As a Christian, he walks barefoot to the nearest church in Groningen every day. At some point, he foresees a Viking attack leading to his own death, which indeed comes true not much later. A large Viking army (pirate Northmannorum magno (ed. Van Schaïk 1985, 142) attacks the area between the Lauwers and the Ems, harming many inhabitants. Once they covered this area, the Vikings go to Groningen, described as a rich town, and pil-lage and burn down the town including the church. Despite their brave resistance, the Frisians prove unable to repel the Vikings. Some Frisians, therefore, flee whilst others are killed. When on their return, the Viking attackers encounter Walfridus praying and thereby discover that he is a Christian. They take him to their ships, torture him and finally kill him. Interestingly, his relatives collect money
and buy back his body, so apparently not only living people could be bought free from Vikings. Unfortunately, there is no mention of how the relatives know where the body is and how the negotiations go, or why they are not killed too. To bury the body, the family builds a chapel at his house for Walfridus, and another one for his son, who they find killed by Vikings too. In this case, the Vikings are the background against which a local martyr could arise. What is interesting to see is that the legend has part of its imagery in common with the Frisian law codes: the attacking Northmen – who plunder, kill and burn down what they can – take hostages to their ships, they sell the hostages back (dead or alive) and the Frisians defences are concentrated on the coast. Because of his relation to the cultivation of the coastal marshland, the symbol of St Walfridus has become the spade. This, of course, reminds us of the spade mentioned in the laws as one of the defensive weapons and again points to the circumstance of living in the coastal area where one had to protect oneself against the sea.

Whereas the Vikings in the Frisian sources were thus depicted with unfavourable notions such as heathen, opposing Christianity, the horrible north and as violent raiders who are metaphorically connected to flooding and the sea, in other sources they were not only associated with floods but with other misfortunes as well. We find this in the Frankish annals where, in the entry for the year 846 (AB s.a. 846, ed. Waitz 1891, 33; trans. Nelson 1991, 62), Vikings are placed in line with northern winds, wolves and other plagues. These create a strong image of Vikings as a plague, again with reference to the north. Anglo-Saxon writings of the Viking Age also feature the comparison of Vikings with wolves. This is the case, for instance, in the writings of Symeon of Durham in the eleventh century, as a reaction to the Viking attacks. He compares Vikings to wolves who attack and kill not only animals but even clerics, which in fact makes them worse than wolves (Cavill 2001, 249-50). Another Anglo-Saxon scribe, Alcuin at the eighth-century Frankish court, writes a reaction to the first Viking attack of 793 in Lindisfarne. Shocked as he is by the events, he metaphorically calls the Vikings foxes that plunder God’s chosen vineyard (Cavill 2001, 4-5). Interestingly, where the imagery of the Frisian laws and the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish clerical writings differ is that in the Frisian sources the emphasis is on the seafaring aspect. Clearly, a different scope and a different set of images are used there. However, other Anglo-Saxon sources do compare with the Frisian image, and Wilts (1992, 200) has pointed out some instances where the use of terms between the two types of sources is very similar. Particularly interesting is the Battle of Maldon, in which Vikings are called the ‘wolves of the battle-field, who did not respect the water’ (Wilts 1992, 200).

The North

It is clear that Vikings come from the geographical north and embody the geographical north and symbolical North in the Frisian sources. This North has many negative connotations. It is located across the sea – a dangerous place in itself – and it is a terrible corner, as formulated in at least three editions of the seventh statute. One of the reasons why this is seen as such a terrible region was that it was still
heathen. This heathen area was ruled by a king, as mentioned in the Statutes of Magnus. The North thus both serves as an actual geographical and political area, as well as a metaphorical place with negative connotations. As has been noted by others (Zettel, 1977; Wilts 1992; Popkema 2013, 203) the North in a negative sense is already found in Late Antiquity, in the Bible, and in references amongst the clergy the early medieval period. It is a very general aspect that has been studied quite extensively on its own, so we need not go further into that here.

In manuscripts E, F and H we find what is called ‘Exceptions to the Sixteenth Statue’ (Uitzonderingen op de Zestiende Keur), just as we find ‘Exceptions to the Seventeenth Statue’ (Uitzonderingen op de Zeventiende Keur) in R1, E, F, H and D. In the sixteenth statute we read how all Frisians can buy off their crimes, but amongst the five exceptions to this we encounter the North. Whoever has been involved with forced entry into a church and robbery of the sanctuary – a characteristic deed of Vikings and other heathens – will be punished with ‘the northward-facing tree’. According to Wilts this must mean the gallows (1992, 197). According to Vries (2007, 24–5), however, this may in fact actually refer to a northward-facing tree, instead of being a metaphor for the gallows. As such it represents a sacral pre-Christian element that was contained in the later texts, he argues. Whereas a northward-facing gallows seems impossible due to the structure of a gallows, which consists of three interconnected standards, we can still imagine people who are hanged facing north. In either case, the North is connected to a form of punishment for a severe crime, and again we encounter how elements from various chronological horizons seem to have been concentrated and projected onto one.

Another regulation states that traitors to the country are punished by being taken north over the sea (Wilts 1992, 197), hence to that terrible corner of heathens that we encountered earlier. Of course, we can wonder if being a traitor and being banned to the north are specifically connected. According to Wilts, this must be the case, and the fact that prisoners of the Vikings are being taken north, that breaking into a church and performing treachery are punished with the northward-facing tree and with being taken north could be seen as connected. Together, they represent what he calls “der Negativbestimmung des Nordens als Richtung des Unheilvollen” and could be interpreted as having rechtsmagische implications (Wilts 1992, 197). One question that arises is what precisely being a traitor would mean in this context. Would that be the plundering of Frisia with the Vikings by the non-pacified Frisians who were not forced and thus guilty? The exceptions to the sixteenth statute specify that it concerns someone who is:

“en vreede and hi wrreth lond and liude and hi fart inur Saxenna merka and hi uthlath thene haga helm and thene rada skeld and thene sareda riddere and hi binna Fresena merkum man sleith and burga barnd, sa ach ma <hine> north inna thet hef <to ferane> and theron te sansane […]”

a traitor to the land and he betrays land and people and goes into the border region of the Saxons and gets from there the high helmet and the red shield and the armed knight and he goes into the land of the Frisians and kills men and burns strongholds, then he should be taken northwards to the sea and be thrown in the sea [...] 

This episode with the deeds mentioned is reminiscent of that of Frisians taken captive by Vikings. However, in this case the Frisian is a traitor as he voluntarily goes into the Saxon area and returns with warriors. Most likely, the Frisian has joined a Saxon or other hostile warband. Again it indicates that Frisian pirates and warriors could well join Saxon, Viking and other warbands of their own free will. Frisians joining Viking warbands voluntarily and coming back to Frisia could then just as easily be classified as traitors.

**Frisia between North and South**

The geographical position of Frisia between North and South, heathen and Christian, Viking (Danish) and Frankish is clearly reflected in the Frisian corpus, as can be seen from the sources. The dualism and juxtaposition of North and South, which is a much more widely known phenomenon (cf. Arndt 2007; Zettel 1977), is presented as one of the formative elements of the cultural identity of the Frisians in the law texts. But, it is also a political, ideological, historical and not least cultural position. For instance, belonging to the North in some cases meant being heathen, and was thus an ideological reference. But where there is reference to belonging to the northern kingdom it is also a political one. In the Frisian corpus, we read all of these intermediary positions – political, historical, ideological and cultural. They are themes in which we see a clear transition in orientation for Frisia, which is said to once have belonged to the North before becoming part of the South. This is inextricably connected to the story of obtaining the Frisian freedom: the core story of the Frisian corpus.

There are, in essence, two versions of the story of how this Frisian freedom came to be. The younger tradition is that of the Frisians fighting in Rome for Charlemagne to free Pope Leo, and being rewarded by Charlemagne making them Free Frisians. The older tradition, however, points to how the Frisians obtained their freedom from Charlemagne in exchange for Christianity, loyalty and through the transition from paying tribute to the North to now paying it to the South, to the Franks. As the Franks here are clearly identified with the notion of South, this reinforces the possibility of the southern enemy being Frankish. The seventh statute, the twenty-fourth synod right and the seventh statute of Magnus allude to how before this, Frisia belonged to this heathen region across the sea in the North. Particularly in the older tradition, the Frisians were once subordinate to this North (Vikings/Danes) before being freed by Charlemagne, who gave them privileges.

The change in tax obligations from North to South has been referred to thus: *and capaden thermithe hira etheldom and hira fria helse* – ‘and with this they bought their nobility and their freedom – their free neck’ (Nijdam 2009, 55–6). *Klipskeld*
is the name for the tribute that used to be paid to the North and which was in ‘hard cash’.

**Huslotha** is the tribute paid to the Franks, which is a tribute per house. As has been pointed out by Nijdam (2009, 56-7), in some places it is added that the coins of the klipskelde-payment had to be so heavy that they could be heard over the length of a house when thrown into a shield or bowl. This particular practice has a parallel in the *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo, as we shall see later. The paying of tribute stands for loyalty and for commendation to an overlord, from now on the Frankish ruler. From the historical sources we know that the incorporation of Frisia into the Frankish realm encountered significant resistance, showing how this again is a historical situation that has been mythologised and shaped into a contemporary historical context.

Besides the transfer in tribute, and thus overlordship and loyalty, we can explore the other areas of transformation. First of all, there is the transition from being heathen to becoming Christian. The Christianisation of Frisia mainly happened through Frankish and Anglo-Saxon missionary offensives connected to military offensives to incorporate the Frisians. Even after being converted to Christianity in name, there seems to have been a long period of syncretism or hybridism (Mostert 2005; cf. Milis 1998; Schmidt 1987; Van Schaïk 1985), which does seem to be reflected between the lines of the Frisian sources as well. In this material, conversion is ascribed only to Charlemagne; no Anglo-Saxon missionaries are mentioned. In the legal texts, the acceptance of Christianity is further connected to Rome and Pope Leo, who, in turn for their Christianity and obedience of the southern law, granted the Frisians synod right. Wilts (1992, 198) shows that because the seventh statute begins with the conversion to Christianity and ends with a reference to the period all Frisians were still heathen, it strongly indicates that the Frisian freedom, which is mostly known as a political freedom, has a religious dimension as well. Being freed from the Vikings not only meant a release from their political power, but also from religious bondage. The example Wilts gives to show this is from another Frisian text, the medieval *Rudolfsboek* (Rudolf’s book). In this text, the Vikings are called northern devils, whose dominion over the Frisians is devilish (Wilts 1992, 198). For the Frankish South, heathenness was one of the core attributes of the Vikings and Christianity was one of the most important criteria for becoming part of the Frankish community, or for being allied with it (IJssennagger 2013a, 75). This was also the case with the description of those instances where Vikings commended themselves to the Franks and were baptised.

The emphasis in the Frisian laws of how Frisians once were heathen and belonged to the North is not without implications. First of all, it tells us that in the perception of the pacified Frisians, all Frisians were once part of the heathen North. There was thus the awareness or constructed idea that historically, Frisia was connected to the North and had a different religion. It is important to stress this because it was apparently something that the Frisians at the time of composing

---

37 This could refer to the fact that in the Viking world it was the unminted silver value, silver weight and silver quality that mattered. The element *skelde* may refer to the shield in which the coins had to be thrown.
and recording the laws had to come to terms with, account for, remember and explain in the contemporary context, whilst historically this must not have been problematic at all. Or, to put it more firmly, only once Frisia becomes incorporated in the Frankish, Christian world, and later at the time of the second Christianisation, is there the need to account for a (recent) heathen past and connectivity with the northern world. This need may even be stronger when still not all Frisians swear off their former religion in order to be incorporated into the southern world, and when the connectivity continues. If the laws indeed formally represent the pacified, Christianised Frisians, then we can understand their need to create a distance between themselves and the heathen Frisians.

One way of accounting for their non-Christian past is by metaphorically implying that the Frisians at that time did not choose to be heathen, but were enslaved by the North, until they were saved by the South. This unfree status is symbolised in the texts by the *holtena wittha*, the wooden collar that Frisians had to wear around their necks. This collar is removed when the Frisians are freed from the South, and ever since the Frisians are free and called *frithals*. This image of an uncomfortable and inexpensive wooden collar is a very strong one, and a striking metaphor of enslavement, which we can trace back in later sources as well. This imagery and the involuntary enslavement by heathenism parallel the regulations on those being taken prisoner by the Vikings and being forced to perform heathen deeds. As in those regulations, the fact that the Frisians were forced was the justification and excuse, which, in fact, made the Frisians innocent. It signals that the Frisians perhaps used to be heathen beyond their guilt, but now really choose to be Christian.

In some later Frisian texts (*Rudolfboek*, *Friske Rim*), the story is even further developed in this direction by explaining that the Frisians were first Christian and then made heathen by the Danes, before being freed again by the Carolingians (Nijdam 2009, 60). This appears to be to emphasise the severance of the situation, the pressure and the possible effect of the Viking Age on religion. This need not be a completely fictional story, however, and may possibly represent the effects of the Viking Age on Frisia and refer to the second Christianisation. As these are later texts, it appears that an older motif of transition from heathen to Christian is taken up and explained in terms of the contemporary situation. Likewise, we may believe that the earlier instances of the transition from heathen to Christian could have been explained in both ways by the receiving audience and users of the text, and so present a possibility for epic concentration. The dichotomy of North and South and their connotations are naturally not restricted to Frisia. They are a universal and deep-rooted schematisation. Yet the precise interpretation in the Frisian law texts has been adapted to the Frisian register and experience, thus painting a picture of the Frisian vision.

In the *passio Walfridii* we also find clues for the story having been developed in a not entirely Christianised society, as indicated by Van Schaïk (1985, 41-5). Although following some general rules of *vitae*, the *passio* is a quite local story and composed for a non-clerical, non-literary audience. Walfridus himself is described as not literate, and he stands out as being a normal, devoted man. There are references
to family feuds and to the fact that not all his family is indeed Christian. Furthermore, the story alludes to the fact that very few churches are available in the area at the time. As Schmidt (1987) also indicates, it seems that there were relatively few churches available until the second Christianisation wave in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. However, recently the study by Mol and De Langen has made clear that late tenth-century terp churches must have existed in some places (De Langen and Mol 2016, 116), as well as that there are traces of earlier (wooden) churches elsewhere, and it is important to remember that the presence of churches and of monasteries should not be seen as the same phenomenon. The story of Walfridus beautifully fits this period of the second Christianisation and of transition between heathenism and Christianity, since it not only shows the example of a good Christian by way of a martyr, but also deals with the disruptions caused by the nasty Northmen. As such, the story is killing two birds with one stone.

**Redbad – king of the Danes?**
The transition of Frisia into the southern sphere of influence is attributed to the South, personified in Charlemagne, the most famous of the Carolingian kings, in the Frisian laws. The terrible, heathen North that Frisians once belonged to similarly becomes personified by the most famous of the Frisian ‘kings’, the heathen Redbad or Radbod. Both are quite logical. Charlemagne as perhaps the greatest of Frankish rulers was the person who is recognised for finalising the incorporation of Frisia and conversion of the Frisians. Redbad, on the other hand, is one of the few known Frisian leaders or legendary kings, even though it is uncertain what this kingship entailed, and by his refusal to be baptised, since it would mean he would not be reunited with his unbaptised ancestors in the afterlife, had become the legendary symbol of Frisian heathenism. As we shall see below, this North-South dualism is particularly personified in the story of a struggle between Charlemagne and Redbad. This has led to some discussion, because these figures were not contemporaries. Again we see the mechanism of epic concentration at work, which made it possible to juxtapose the two historical figures as symbols of North and South.

By the time of Charlemagne, Redbad (†719) is long deceased. Therefore, it has been suggested, the ‘Karel’ in the stories is not Charlemagne but Charles Martel (688-741) who is the contemporary of Redbad (Schwartz 1973, 6). This historical-chronological argument would only be valid if the rest of the text was completely historical and chronological as well, but it clearly is not. It is a mythologised version of history, in which there is a relative chronology of before and after and a very concentrated or condensed case of history. In the relative chronology of before (= Partly because it had not completely penetrated the rural society far from Rome, and partly because of the Viking disruptions.

This opposition between Charlemagne and Redbad can be compared to or juxtaposed with the opposition between Charlemagne and Widukind of the Saxons, who are portrayed as opposites and protagonists (cf. Hines 2003, 305-7; Flierman 2015, 256-7). Possibly, this narrative is even modelled om this Saxon example, see Salomon 2000, 31-34.

Or ‘mythistory’ as argued by William McNeill, who in fact argued in the 1980s that no history is purely history or myth, but all mythistory (McNeill 1986).
North/heathen/warriors/enslavement – wooden collar) and from now on (= South/ Christian/peaceful and with laws/free – frihals), Redbad personifies the before and Charlemagne the from now on (see also Nijdam 2009). By representing this dichotomy, the pacified, Christian Frisians at once distance themselves from Redbad, heathenism and Vikings. As protagonists of these two opposites, the ultimate dualism between North and South and the moment of transfer from one to the other for Frisia could only be emphasised by placing Redbad and Charlemagne in opposition. What is most likely, therefore, is that the position of Charles Martel and his opposition to Redbad were transferred to Charlemagne in this context, and merged into the one moment of absolute transition, which historically must have been connected to the events in the eighth century and up to 810. We will, therefore, keep referring to this ‘Karel’ as Charlemagne here. In the early medieval mental landscape, this reading of history was not a problem at all. Other historical elements, such as the role and position of Redbad, which the pacified Frisians had to account for or legitimise, are equally mythologised or adapted to further mould the story into the needed shape for the contemporary Frisians. Redbad, to signal the past, the North and the heathen religion, therefore had to become as northern and Viking as he could and so he became a Dane. We find this alteration of Redbad and his opposition to Charlemagne as the representation of the South most clearly expressed in another text in the Frisian corpus, probably dating to the thirteenth century in its written form and originating from Frisia west of the Lauwers. It is called De sage van Karel en Redbad, ‘The Tale of Charlemagne and Redbad’, which opens as follows:


When king Charlemagne and king Redbad of Denmark came to the land, then each of them occupied their road in the Franeker district with an army and each of them said the land was theirs.

The first part of the tale, as we can see here, tells of the struggle for possession of Frisia between Redbad (the North) and Charlemagne (the South). Wise men tried to resolve the conflict, but both kings want to fight for it. That the Franeker district is specifically mentioned is not without significance, as this is also in later times associated with kings and counts (Noomen 2001, 8). The two men decide to hold a competition: whoever can stand still the longest wins. They stand, but at one point Charlemagne drops his glove, which according to Schwartz (1973, 6) represents the claim on Frisia. Redbad picks it up and returns it to him, so Charlemagne wins the contest. Subsequently, Redbad leaves the area and Charlemagne wants to organise a thing so he needs available land. He had men sent to all the seven seaslands that comprised Frisia to buy a plot of land. Twelve men were picked amongst the Frisians to represent them and to decide or reveal Frisian law: twelve asegas
(law-speakers). As they are unable to decide or reveal Frisian law, Charlemagne lets them choose between three penalties: death, unfree status or being sent out onto the sea (=North) on a ship, and eventually he sends them to sea on a ship without oar and steer. Suddenly a thirteenth asega – often interpreted as Christ, who comes to his twelve disciples – appears, who gets the ship back to land by using a golden axe, and he teaches the asegas law.

As Vries (2007, 50) has pointed out, this last part is of particular importance as it provides a claim for Frisian law as given by God within the literary narrative, which contains literary imagery or topoi. Similarly, Schwartz (1973, 7) stresses its significance as the only self-contained account of the divine origin of law in a Germanic language. It is generally accepted that the thirteenth asega must reflect Christ and thus the divine origin of the laws. According to Schwartz (1973, 10-13), however, the thirteen asegas are not a Christian motif, but a pre-Christian Germanic one referring to the pre-Christian Aesir gods. The episode at sea with the asegas, whom Schwartz interprets as gods, represents the oldest core of the story, he assumes, and actually represents not only the origin of Frisian law-speaking, but of the Frisian nation as well. Although the thirteen gods are not identified by name or otherwise, the thirteenth must represent Wodan, according to Schwartz, and the axe was his symbol. This way, the text not only is a Frisian legal text but a narrative that functions in the wider context of Germanic mythology (Schwartz 1873, 12). The most plausible reading of the episode probably is a multi-layered one, which seems logical in the context of the Frisian corpus and the framework of transition from North to South. If indeed the core of the story was an older pre-Christian tale of twelve Aesir gods, then we can still see the thirteenth as Christ teaching them the new religion and laws. As is known from other areas of conversion, such as England and Scandinavia, the merging of heathen and pre-Christian motifs and stories was often employed to further Christianisation and remained in the culture following conversion as a result of syncretism. Pre-Christian elements were adapted to a Christian frame of reference, and people could interpret the story in either way. This fits into the whole multi-layered nature of the Frisian laws and the transition to the Frankish Christian framework that can be seen in them. In addition, we see that not only events from different times but also episodes of a different nature and text type are combined: the literary narrative and legal statements.

A number of interesting things happen in this Christian- and Frankish-influenced text with regard to what we have already seen above. First of all, it alludes to the time of conflict between the Franks and Danes over the Frisian area, a historic conflict of around 800-810, and places this in a new, Christian and slightly later context. The origin of the Frisian law codes itself, in fact, is placed in this context of Frankish-Danish conflict, and eventually Frankish rule, in the person of Charlemagne. Indeed, we know that Frisian customary law in the form of the "Lex 41 Another argument for the antiquity of these elements is the use of the word tura for turf, which comes up after the axe is thrown on land and reveals a spring (Schwartz 1973, 8-9).

42 Since the path they take is called Eeswey or Eswel and has been taken to mean ‘Asenweg’ or ‘Aesir-way’, although this is debated. See Schwartz 1973, 9 for discussion.
Frisonum was written down around 800 as commanded by Charlemagne (Siems 1980, 6-23). Although, presumably, the material itself was older, its recording in writing may stem from this period. In addition, it is placed in a sacred context, providing a divine origin and thus legitimization of Frisian law. Furthermore, we may again see indirect references to the North. The fact that the law-speakers who do not give Charlemagne the laws, making them disobedient, are punished by sending them onto the sea seems to parallel sending them to the North and thus reflects the earlier punishments we have seen in the laws. The fact that the asegas are disobedient may mean that they were not willing to accept Frankish rule and Christianity. In fact, it is only with the help of the thirteenth aseg, who is seen as Christ, that they are brought back to the land (South) and taught the laws. This explanation of the story would fit well with the idea of the necessity for the Christian Frisians to distance themselves from the heathens and the past.

Secondly and centrally, we see the aforementioned transformation of Redbad into a Danish king, as it has traditionally been read (cf. Noomen 2001, 4), or at least coming from Denmark at that time (without necessarily being Danish or being king of Denmark). This is one of the aspects where we see a clear Francisation as mentioned by Vries (2007, 25) and Pritsak (1981). It is highly significant that one of the most famous Frisians, who today is seen as a real Frisian exponent, is claimed to be a Danish king. Primarily, this must be the case because he chose to be a heathen, even when he was offered Christianity, and thus chose to belong to the North. As such Redbad is not a victim of this heathen North, but an active protagonist, and for that reason, he is demonised. As indicated by Halberstma (2000, 90-2), this must have been influenced by the events of the Viking Age and the incursions of the heathen Vikings. At least the tradition of connecting Redbad to the heathen North and to Vikings must have been older than the written versions of the law codes that we have, but readily incorporated into later representations of history. According to the Vita Dagoberti III (ed. Krusch 1888, 517), which as a text is dated between the ninth and eleventh centuries, Dagobert travelled to Frisia and stayed until it was converted, cleared of all idols and until Redbad was driven out and into Denmark (cf. Halbertsma 2000, 90-1). Similarly, in The Tale of Karel and Redbad, Redbad is driven out of the country.

As we have seen in the seventh statute, it was stressed that all Frisians once belonged to the North. It is said that: *wi er north herdon Redbate tha unfreth-monne, al thet Frisona was* (Rüstringer Recht, ed. Buma and Ebel 1963, 36), ‘we all belonged to the north to Redbad the quarrelsome, all who were Frisian.’ Here, too, Redbad is the personification of the North and the past, but he is also called the quarrelsome, an indication of his warrior-like nature. In later medieval texts on the origin of the Frisian freedom, Redbad is not only the northern king who is responsible for making the Frisians heathen, he is also the one enslaving them and having them wear those terrible wooden collars (Vries 2007, 25, 466-95). Here, we see a development in the image of Redbad over time, and most likely legendary deeds of others are attributed to and projected onto this Redbad, whether historical or not.

Besides demonising Redbad as the ultra-heathen northerner, making him a
Danish king also helps to explain or justify the Danish involvement in Frisia at the start of the Viking Age for the pacified Frisian audience. Although Frisia had been under Frankish rule since the campaigns of Charlemagne and his forebears, apparently there (still) was Danish involvement as well, from Viking attacks and their consequences to Danish lords temporarily dwelling in Frisia. Again, this may have given rise to the need to express the Frisians’ choice to align themselves with the Frankish South, and to dissociate themselves with the heathen North, which they did by placing it in the past and elsewhere, across the sea. There may have been a historical basis for the idea of Charlemagne and a Danish counterpart fighting over possession of Frisia. Despite it becoming part of the Frankish sphere, according to Einhard’s *Vita Karoli*, the Danish King Godfred claimed Frisia as part of his territory (Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ch. 14, ed. O. Holder-Egger 1911, 17; IJssennagger 2013a, 77). Similar references are found in the twelfth-century *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus. Here it is described how Godfred briefly ruled Frisia and extracted tribute in the Frisian lands in 810. This makes us wonder if the tribute imposed upon the Frisians after the attack of 810 was a single event, as generally accepted, or whether indeed it could indicate a recurring tribute. This is an interesting aspect in light of the opposing Frankish and Danish superpowers around this time, which could eventually lead to the first Viking attack on Frisia in 810 (IJssennagger 2013a, 77–8). In addition, as has been argued by Nicolay (2005, 78–85) and has been alluded to in Chapter 3, in the sixth century, with the influx of new elites and new Frisians, displaying their wealth and power with for instance bracteates, Frisia may have been within a Danish sphere of influence in that period. There seems to be some historical truth of some form in Frisia belonging to the heathen, Danish North before being incorporated by the South, and in the Danes and Franks both claiming power over it. Besides this pre-Viking age history, the long period of shifting in spheres and of Christianisation, which included periods of Danish benefices in Frisia, must have had an impact on this image and could have been projected on the same moment in time here. In any case, the necessity of stressing so clearly in this ongoing dualism between North and South that all Frisians now favour the South and Christianity can only be because it did not go without saying, and was thus not necessarily the case for all Frisians. It provided a way for them to distance themselves from heathen Frisians, both past and present. Here we very clearly see the shifting of spheres and the position of Frisia within those spheres.

**Frisian myth of origin**

The episode of the asegas at sea has been said to represent both the origin of the Frisian law-speaking and of the Frisian nation, as we have seen above. Although being a corpus of legal texts, the Frisian manuscripts, and particularly the often legendary, first regulations of individual texts, allude to the origin of the Frisian freedom, Frisian law and Frisians. These passages point to a corpus of narrative material, amongst which the stories of Charlemagne must have also been present (Bremmer 2004, 122). These must have been myths of origin, traditional stories of who the Frisians were, where they came from and how they had arrived at their
current situation, which together were used to account for and justify where they now found themselves. According to Bremmer (2004, 122-3), ‘this is how the Frisians and particularly their political elite, formed and expressed their social and cultural identity, and could account for their particular political situation which was deviant from their neighbors’. This, so it seems, was not only to account for the present political situation, but also for the past situation of the Frisians and to tie them together.

We have seen in the passages above how the Frisian law came to be written, namely on the basis of the privileges of Charlemagne, carried out by the aseas who were inspired by Christ and thus had divine origin, all within the context of the Frisian freedom and the transition from North to South. In some of the texts there also are passages about the origins of the Frisians themselves. The *Overkeuren* in manuscript H, as well as F, start with such a reference:


When all Frisians were shipped-in, then they promised that he who went ashore first, would light a barrel of pick to indicate to the others that they had gone ashore.

It thus tells the story of Frisians as a group of people, divided over several ships, who are sailing towards a new shore. Just like the thirteenth asega and proclaimer of law, the Frisian people came by open water (Schwartz 1973, 14). Vries (2007, 55) suggests that this line as found in the E-manuscript must be a short remnant of a fuller story, as is preserved in other, later texts. It can, therefore, be seen as a fossilised reference to a Frisian myth of origin which is connected to arrival by ship. According to Bremmer (2004, 129-30), the myth of origin of Frisians coming from an island and arriving in Frisia is the common story, and the burning barrel of pick here is a specific individual reference, again making the text rather graphic. Bremmer (2014, 32-4) notes that this, as well as the appealing to the past, signifies orality. This story of Frisians originating from an island is similarly found in the later medieval Gesta-cycle. All of these texts start with the three brothers Friso, Saxo and Bruno sailing from the island India to Frisia and Saxony, to become the founding fathers of those people: the Frisians, the Saxons and the Brunswijckers or perhaps Brunonen. This story can be found in many sources and has become widely known (Smithuis 2010, 78- 9; cf. Mol and Smithuis 2008), and may have been taken from Saxon sources (Salomon 2000, 9-15). The idea of three brothers as founding fathers, as well as an origin in India, is not restricted to the Frisian apocryphal sources, but is a tendency that is seen more often in the medieval world.

The central elements of the ‘myth of origin’in the Frisian tradition are that there are three people/groups who sailed over the sea – this must be on three ships then – from an island to Frisia, where they went ashore and settled. This would indeed
tie in with the story of the aseugas and their sea-going, at least concerning the core elements. This Frisian myth is thus a migration myth, like the myths of origin for many European peoples. In addition, it is of a maritime character: the Frisians are connected to the sea and to ships, in fact like the Norsemen in the Frisian corpus. There are some correspondences with the Anglo-Saxon myth of origin, as we shall explore below (cf. Salomon 2000, 12). The origin and identity of the Frisians are thus placed in a framework of the maritime world, a framework that would never be connected to the Franks.

**A Frisian Viking Age ethnicity?**

One of the questions regarding the Frisians in these sources is that of their identity, particularly their ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is used here in the modern sense of the word, meaning a group identity, not necessarily connected to race. For this period, ethnic identity clearly is a cultural phenomenon based on a number of aspects, of which kinship can be one. It has been pointed out by Moreland (2000) and Henson (2006) that for early medieval ethnic groups, kinship was very important, though this does not mean that there necessarily was a blood relation between all. (Henson 2006, 24) A number of characteristics of ethnicity have been outlined (Smith 1986, 22-31; Henson 2006, 24) that can be repeated here: 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 common culture (such as language or religion), the idea of a homeland and a sense of solidarity.

It is interesting to look at these aspects when studying the Frisian sources; they all seem to be present. First of all, the proper name – Frisian or Frisians – is there and is being used by the Frisians themselves in their laws. Even though there may have been local variations and groups, just as there are some variations in the law editions, in essence the people for whom the Frisian law texts were designed and valid are Frisian. In the law texts, we see that they speak of al het Frisona was – all who were Frisian, not all who lived in Frisia or something similar – so one can actually be Frisian. Secondly, there is the idea of a common ancestry which is clearly expressed in the Overkeuren, as well as in the later texts, namely that Frisians all stemmed from these first people who arrived in ships from across the sea. The shared historical memories are clearly recorded and condensed in the Frisian legal corpus. They not only record actual historical events (incorporation into Francia and Viking attacks) and myths (the myth of origin), but the historical events are mythologised to fit a larger framework appropriate to the thirteenth century and legitimising the past and current state of affairs. Elements of common culture around the North Sea are clearly found in the Frisian language, even up to much later times, and the Frisian law texts try very hard to show that even though all Frisians once were heathen, they now all are Christian. The final two characteristics – the idea of a homeland and a sense of solidarity – are very clear in the Frisian sources. They are seen in the myth of origin where the founding fathers of the Frisians come to the Frisian shore, which has been Frisian ever since. The first one to go ashore was to light the beacon to guide the others – they are in it together. We
also see this in the texts on defence against the sea and the Vikings: the Frisians’ territory is here even geographically determined and it is clear that it is their first priority. When one of the seven sea-lands gets attacked nonetheless, then ‘the six will help the seventh, so that it may remain as strong as the other six.’ A clearer example of solidarity is hardly possible.

A Frisian ethnic identity is currently a matter of intense discussion, particularly concerning the migration history and the seafaring nature of the Frisians and their neighbours (cf. Hines and Ijssennagger, 2017). Given the fact that Frisians had a reputation of being tradesmen and middle-men in trade, it has been suggested that the term ‘Frisian’ in fact came to denote ‘trader’ in the early medieval period (Lebecq 1990). Whilst this is entirely possible and perhaps likely, this does not mean that ‘Frisian’ could not still denote the group identity of a people who resided in this Frisian area. In fact, the material from the Frisian law-sources as well as the references to ‘Frisians’ in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian sources seem to point to that. Therefore, we can best regard ‘Frisian’ as a situational construct. Within the ethnic identity of Frisians, there are also sub-identities that can be named. We can think of the pacified, Christian Frisians that we may call Franco-Frisians and their opposite, the non-pacified, heathen Frisians that could be called Dano-Frisians.

The afterlife of Redbad and the Vikings in Frisia
The Tale of Karel and Redbad is not the only Frisian text presenting the idea of Redbad as a Danish king, who reflects an evil North opposite a Frankish and free South, and the allusion to a northern or Danish occupation of Frisia. It appears that this tradition, as found in the Frisian corpus, is still vivid in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Northern Netherlands. Besides the vita on Walfrid which we know circulated in the fifteenth century in this area, there are a number of texts about Frisian history, together known as the Gesta-cycle, that similarly reflect this tradition. According to Smithuis (2010), Frisian historiography can be divided into contemporary and mythical narratives, the Gesta-cycle representing the latter. It ‘moulds Frisian history into a Frisian mythology, showing a strong focus on the distant past and origin of the Frisian people’, so writes Smithuis (2010, 79). This is not done from scratch, but is strongly anchored in and based on the thirteenth-century traditions. The same material is also presented in related historiographical works, such as the Sicke Benninge chronicle (Noomen 2001, 8). However, the relation between these various texts is not always clear and it is tricky to try and follow the stories through these sources.

Another interesting example of how the connotations have continued is that when the Ommelanden – or areas surrounding the city of Groningen, which used to belong to Frisia and were Frisian-speaking well into the fifteenth century – were becoming independent (c. 1578) of the city of Groningen and were choosing a coat of arms, this story was still circulating (Knol 2004). This coat of arms is the one that still is visible today in the Frisian flag: eleven red harts (originally and on the Frisian flag they are ‘pumpebleden’) on a silver shield with three diagonal blue beams. In the fifteenth century this coat of arms was seen as that of the old Frisian
kings, as indicated by heraldry books (Knol 2004, 17; 2011, 13-15). In the sixteenth century, therefore, there was discussion about whether or not to include this coat of arms in the Ommelander coat. As the old coat of arms of the Frisian kings, some interpreted it as a symbol of the Frisian freedom, and thus of independence — a positive connotation. Others had more negative connotations and saw it as the emblem of the heathen King Redbad, writing that:

“dat elfherten wapen Radbodi wapen is west, de een tijran ouer de fresen is west, de oek niet lange darna worde wth gedreuen, want de fresen holten halsbanden mosten dragen vnd hoere doeren na den noerden hebben, so leerden dat se buckende, als nigende vor radbodo, wth den huse gingen.”


the eleven hearts emblem has been Radbod’s coat of arms, who was a tyrant over the Frisians, who also not long after had been driven out, because the Frisians had to bear wooden collars and to have their doors facing north, so they learned that they went bended, as to bow for Radbod, out of their homes.

The Frisian mythical narrative must have been quite widely known even after the Middle Ages. In this tradition, we immediately recognise yet another myth about the North and Norsemen. It is the myth of the so-called Noormannenpoortjes (‘the gates of the Norsemen’), which is still vivid in the provinces of Friesland and Groningen to this day. In the Northern Netherlands, there are quite a few churches that have small doors (1.5 m in height) facing North, and all have been shut off. Folk tales have it that these doors are related to the Norsemen, and that they were a way to let the Christian Frisians bow to the North (heathen) when leaving the church. Perhaps the metaphorical bowing to the North has here taken a more literal form and was seen as actual bowing. Like the wooden collar, it is metaphorical, but expressed in a more concrete and in fact, material form. Other variations have it that the doors were used to let the heathen Norsemen bow to the altar, so the other way around. In general, the story has been deemed a myth, and other explanations for the occurrence of the small doors facing North have been given, but it is interesting that we can trace the process of imagining the North and the Vikings continuously from the thirteenth century up to today. We can see that it was constantly added to and adapted in order to fit the contemporary political, cultural, ideological, social and mental framework.

Stories like these have kept the memory of the Viking Age vivid amongst the Frisians, both with positive and negative connotations. Over time, Redbad has constantly been represented as either a true Frisian hero or as horrible heathen Dane. The afterlife of Redbad continues up to today, where he is taken up as a symbol of Frisia and Frisian resistance to Christianity and Francisation in modern popular culture (cf. Van Egmond 2005, 26).
4.2 Case study 2: Viking-Frisian relations in the non-Frisian Corpus

Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Norse and Frankish sources mention the Frisians on the Viking Age horizon, but, like the Frisian texts, do not represent one coherent or complete story. The references to connections between Frisia and the rest of the North Sea world are scattered across different types of written material, from different times and from all over the North Sea world. Yet they do present some of the most important information on connections and the way in which references to the Frisian world are presented in and after the Viking Age. What is particularly striking in these sources on the Viking Age, is the frequency of travel and contact, and the apparent ease with which people travel great distances, also in connection to Frisia. This reflects that frequent contact – Vikings frequently mooring on the Frisian coast and Frisians entering the Viking Age North Sea world – was very much part of that period. Below, the most striking connections and recurring themes connected to Frisia and Frisians are looked into.

4.2.1 Back and forth between the Insular world and Frisia

One way of looking into the connectivity in these written sources is by finding traces and examples of how people, in most cases Vikings and sometimes Frisians, travelled back and forth between different areas, and how the sources mention these different areas. In this case, we will look into examples of people travelling between Frisia and the Insular world. We have to bear in mind that in the more legendary sources the chronology is constantly problematic and flexible, but they, nonetheless, also provide interesting information on connections, travels and traditions.

Rothlaib and Rodulf

According to Irish sources, primarily the Fragmentary Annals (FA), a Viking leader named Rothlaib (Eng. Rodolb) is active in Ireland from around the middle of the ninth century to 862. Frankish sources record the activities of a Viking leader named Rodulf in Frisia and beyond on the Continent from 863 or 864 onwards. As suggested by Kelly and Maas (1999, 136-7), and earlier by Vogel (1906, 196), a case can be made for Rodulf on the Continent being the same Viking as Rothlaib in Ireland. This is a case that we can develop further here.

As a Viking leader in Ireland, Rothlaib presumably has a longphort in Dunrally and a base in the Waterford harbour area. In the sources he only appears by name in three instances. It has been suggested that this is because only the victories over him are recorded to glorify the Irish, and that it is likely that more Viking activities in the sources can be ascribed to Rothlaib and his warband (Kelly and Maas 1999, 133). The first time Rothlaib appears in the Fragmentary Annals is in about the mid-850s, when Vikings have already raided in Ireland for some decades (ed. and trans. Radner 1978, 98-9; Downham 2004, 30; Kelly and Maas 1999, 132):

“Isin aimsir si acht bheag tainig Rodolbh cone shlogaibh d’innradh Osraighe. Ra

42 In Irish called Dún Rothlaib, which is believed to have become Dunrally.
Almost at this time Rodolb came with his armies to plunder Osraige. Cerball son of Dúnlang assembled an army against them, and gave them battle, and routed the Norwegians.” (Trans. Radner 1978, 99).

Osraige or Ossory was an Irish kingdom in South-East Ireland, ruled by Cerball mac Dúnlainge between 842 and 888 (Downham 2004, 27; Radner 1978, xxii). In the Viking Age it became a powerful area, and the fame of Cerball reached far. He is one of only few Irish kings whose death is recorded in the Welsh annals, and he is even remembered in the Icelandic sagas as Kjarvalr Írakonungr, exemplifying that various areas were aware of each other’s politics and events (Kelly and Maas 1999, 130; Downham 2005, 28; Ó Corráin 1998, 439-52). Several Viking bases were established in and near the kingdom in the ninth and tenth centuries, including Rodolb’s presumed longphort at Danrally in Laois, a neighbouring kingdom.

The second entry on Rothlaib (entry 281, dated between 857-61. Radner 1979, 111) describes a massacre of many of his followers by Cerball mac Dúnlainge, as a reaction to the Vikings’ plundering, slaying and taking captive of people from the community of Lethglenn, an important monastery. The third and last encounter with Rothlaib in the sources is dated to 862:


“Cerball son of Dúinlang and Cennétig son of Gáethíne (i.e. the son of Cerball’s sister) defeated Rodolb’s fleet, which had come from Norway shortly before that; and Conall Ultach was killed there and Luirgnén, and many others.” (Trans. Radner 1978, 115).

The event of 862 can also be found in the Annals of the Four Masters (AFM), which reports the sacking of Rothlaib’s fleet and the longphort that may have protected the fleet (Kelly and Maas 1999, 134).

From the entries it is clear that Rothlaib had the ability to perform various Viking activities in south-eastern Ireland. Besides having a longphort and a fleet, it is also mentioned that some of his men were mounted. Kelly and Maas (1999, 133) note that the entry in the FA right after the first mention of Rothlaib concerns another Viking attack on Cerball by two fleets of Vikings. According to the AFM, this fleet was from Port Láigre, which is Waterford. If Rothlaib was the leader at Waterford, as is suggested by Radner (1978, index), the instances where a fleet from Waterford is involved would have been Rothlaib’s fleet. Fleets passing the base would either have been under his control, or sanctioned by him (Kelly and Maas 1999, 132-3).
Adding all this up, Rothlaib must have been a serious Viking leader with resources. After the destruction of his fleet and, presumably, _longphort_, Rothlaib disappears from the Irish sources. It is likely that his defeat caused him to leave Ireland and find new grounds for his Viking activities.

New ground was perhaps found on the Continent. In 864 the Viking leader Rodulf is first mentioned by name in the _Annales Bertiniani_ (s.a. 864, ed. Waitz 1891, 67) in a Continental context:

> “Lothar, son of Lothar, raised 4 denarii from every manse in his whole kingdom, and handed over the sum in cash, plus a large quantity of flour and livestock and also wine and cider, to the Northman Rodulf, son of Harald, and his men, all this being termed a payment for service.”

According to Nelson (1991, 112 note 5), these were probably the same Northmen that sailed up the Rhine in 863. In this entry, they are called Danes and they sack Dorestad, kill many Frisian traders and take many people captive, after which they sack a villa occupied by Frisian refugees. When they reach an island and camp there, they get attacked from both sides, by Lothar and the Saxons alike. On the advice of Rodulf’s uncle Rorik, who held a benefice in Dorestad and related areas, they return (trans. Nelson 1991, 104). The correspondence of the name Rodulf with Rothlaib for a Viking leader, as well as the last occurrence of Rothlaib in Ireland in 862 and first occurrence of Rodulf in a Continental source in 863 or 864, make it quite convincing that this may well be the same Viking. This suggestion is further reinforced by the information given on Rodulf in the _Annales Xantenses_ s.a. 873 (ed. Von Simson 1909, 32), at the occasion of his death: _qui transmarinas regioned plurimas_ – ‘who attacked many regions across the sea’ – before he plundered the Continent, and so, add the Annals of Egmond, _pene totam Frisiam vastavit_ – ‘almost the whole of Frisia’ (ed. and trans. Gumbert et al. 2007, 90-1).

The Rodulf known on the Continent was the son of Harald the Younger and a nephew of Rorik, the Danish Viking ruler who took large parts of Frisia in benefice (Coupland 1998, 99-101). Rorik, who appears to have been a heathen when he first came into control of a benefice but was later converted, had a rather turbulent career in Frisia, being driven out of Frisia by people known as Cokingi, attempting to take the throne again in Denmark and finally reclaiming Frisia. Coupland (1998, 102) has argued that it is most likely that Rodulf too had some benefice in Frisia, or at least was entitled to the payment mentioned in the 864 entry. The term used for the payment, _locarium_, is used by the Carolingians to refer to rewards for mercenary or military service (Coupland 1998, 102; Wood 1987, 44). Rodulf’s father Harald had held benefices in Frisia with his brother Rorik (including Dorestad and Walcheren). As Coupland (1998, 92) stresses, according to the sources, Harald had performed Viking attacks on the West Frankish kingdom at

---

43 Identification is still uncertain, possibly people from a koog, such as on Texel or Wieringen, as proposed by Jansen and Hoppenbrouwers 1980.
the instigation of Lothar, and he and Rorik were rewarded for this with Dorestad as benefice in 841, which following Harald’s death shortly thereafter came entirely into Rorik’s hands. Equally important must have been the fact that the flooding of 838 caused the Franks to see no other option than to put the benefice in Danish hands. Possibly, a similar situation of military service and rewards was the case for Rodulf in the 860s, albeit with different Frankish rulers and borders. Another possibility is that Rodulf had inherited part of his father’s benefices, which would create a comparable outcome.

That Rodulf must have been regarded as a figure of some importance is shown by the fact that he joined his uncle Rorik in conferences with Charles the Bald. At the death of Lothar II, his territory was divided between Charles the Bald and Louis the German in the Treaty of Meerssen. Louis got, among other territories, ‘in Frisia two-thirds of the realm that Lothar had held’ whereas Charles received ‘the third part of Frisia’ (AB s.a. 870, ed. Waitz 1891, 110-1; trans. Nelson 1991, 168-9). This meant that Frisia below the Meuse was in Charles’ hands, the rest in Louis’, and that the areas controlled by Rorik were thus split up between them (Coupland 1998, 99). Not long after, Charles was having talks with Rorik, presumably because he was seen as a local leader with continuing rule over a large area, to make a treaty (Coupland 1998, 99). At two further occasions in 872, Charles held talks with both Rorik and Rodulf, who apparently also represented local leadership. The first meeting was in January, the second in October. On this second occasion the parties met in Maastricht, to which the Northmen came by boat. It is stated that Rorik had proved loyal to Charles and was therefore praised, whilst Rodulf was accused of plotting treachery against Charles and of having unreasonable demands. It even says that ‘Charles prepared his faithful men for defense against Rodulf’s treacherous attacks’ (AB s.a. 872 ed. Waitz 1891, 121; trans. Nelson 1991, 180). He could not be trusted by Charles and apparently made attacks on his realm, despite their earlier talks.

That general Frankish opinion on Rodulf later in his career was negative is illustrated by the entries in the annals on the battle leading to his death in 873. Whereas the Annales Bertiniani simply record how Rodulf dies in Louis’ realm with 500 of his men, the Annales Xantenses adds: *Quamvis baptizatus esset, caninam vitam digne morte finivit* (‘Even though he was baptised, he ended his dog’s life with a fitting death’) (AX s.a. 873, ed. Von Simson 1909, 33; Coupland 1998, 101). The Annales Fuldenses (s.a. 873, ed. Kurze 1891, 80-1; Reuter 1992, 72) record his death most elaborately:

“In June Rodulf, a certain Northman of royal stock, who had often raided Charles’s kingdom with pillage and arson, led a fleet into the kingdom of King Louis, in Albdag’s county (i.e. Ostergau in Frisia, around Dokkum), and sent messengers ahead with a demand that the inhabitants of the region should pay him tribute. When they replied that they were not bound to pay tribute to anyone except King Louis and his sons, and that they would not agree to his demands in this matter under any circumstances, he was enraged, and in his pride swore
that after all the males had been killed the women and children with all their moveable wealth should be taken off into captivity, not knowing of the revenge which was to pursue him from heaven. He at once invaded their lands and began to make war against them. They, however, invoked the Lord, who had so often preserved them from their enemies, and opposed their evil enemy in arms; battle was joined and Rudolf himself fell first, and with him eight hundred men. But the rest, since they could not reach their ships, took refuge in a certain building. The Frisians laid siege to this and took counsel with each other as to what should be done with them. Different people had said different things, when a Northman who had become a Christian and had long lived among these Frisians and was the leader of their attack, addressed the others as follows: ‘O my good fellow-soldiers, it is enough for us to have fought thus far, for it is not due to our strength but to God’s that we few have prevailed against so many enemies. You know also that we are absolutely exhausted and many of us are seriously wounded; those who lie here within are in desperation. If we begin to fight against them, we shall not defeat them without bloodshed; if they turn out to be stronger – for the outcome of battle is uncertain – then perhaps they will overcome us and depart in safety, still able to do us harm. It seems more sensible to me, therefore, that we should take hostages from them and allow some of them to leave unwounded for the ships. We will meanwhile retain the hostages until they send us all the treasure which they have in the ships, and they will first take an oath that they will never return to King Louis’s kingdom.’ The others agreed to this plan, and after taking hostages allowed for some to leave for the boats. These sent back a really immense treasure and received their hostages back, after first, as I have said, taking an oath that they would never again return to King Louis’s kingdom. Then they departed with great shame and loss, and without their dux, to their own country.” (Trans. Reuter 1992, 72).

Ostergau is the early medieval gau that is now known as the region of Oostergo in the present-day province of Friesland. Before turning to Rodulf, we need to point out that it is specifically mentioned how the Frisians are led by a Christian Northman who had been living amongst the Frisians for some time, a reference sometimes cited to indicate how Scandinavians could live in Frisia without a problem and that Frisians and Vikings could mix. In relation to Rodulf it is interesting that the AF call him a dux, which indicates his authority. In addition, it is mentioned that he is of royal stock, which is right if Rodulf is identified as the son of Harald the younger, but a reference that can also be misleading and should not be taken at face value per se.

As we have seen, the FA call Rodolb a Norwegian whilst the Frankish sources speak of Rodulf and his men as Danes and Northmen. If Rodolb and Rodulf are the same person, then historically speaking he must have been a Dane of the same

---

44 Most recently, Lewis (2016) agrees with the identification of Rothlaib as Rodulf, but with an alternative view argues that this is the same historical person as Ubba.
‘royal’ family of which most of the benefice holders and Danes commending themselves to the Franks stem. There has been much debate about the use and meaning of ethnic terms in the FA and other Irish sources, as well as in the Continental ones. The Irish texts use the terms *Dubgaill* or *Dubgenti* (dark foreigners), *Finn-gaill* or *Finngenti* (fair foreigners) and *Gall-Goidil* (foreign Irish), and the FA is the first source to equate *Dubgaill* with Danes and the *Finngaill* with Norwegians in ethnic terms (Downham 2004, 30). This identification is debatable for a number of reasons. First of all, it must be borne in mind that Danish and Norwegian in the Viking Age were not the same as Danish and Norwegian now, as people saw the geographic boundaries differently. For instance, the south of Norway around Kaupang was for quite a while part of the Danish realm. Therefore, it seems that the early raids on Ireland and establishment of the first longphuirt were carried out by Vikings from Norway’s west coast (i.e. Norwegians) and that the later developments of these places into towns, as well as the use and production of the hack-silver and Hiberno-Norse arm-rings, should be attributed to Vikings who would be called Danes, but could just as well have come from the region around Kaupang, southern Norway (Skre 2014, 246). Accordingly, it is suggested that, rather than being ethnic terms, the name *Dubgaill* is used to indicate Vikings that had been in Ireland for quite some time, whilst the *Finngaill* were the new Vikings arriving in Ireland in the mid-ninth century (Downham 2004, 32-4; Kelly and Maas 1999, 127). This fits perfectly with Rothlaib, who indeed became active in Ireland in the mid-850s. It thus seems that Rodulf is a Viking leader from the ‘royal’ Danish family that sought refuge within the Frankish empire by commendation as well as through Viking activity, who first tried his luck in Ireland but, when it failed, joined his relatives on the Continent, and in Frisia in particular.

Although it remains impossible to prove, the likelihood is high that this Rodulf can be equated with the Rothlaib of Ireland. Besides the clues in the discussed texts, circumstantial evidence on connections between Frisia and the Insular world – indications that they figured on each other’s horizon – may help to enhance the likelihood. However, this circumstantial evidence is not always easy to interpret either and often remains fragmentary and isolated. For instance, a very fragmentary Viking Age runic inscription (IR 6) from Dublin which is carved on a wooden plane may possibly be referring to something to do with Frisia or Frisians (Jesch 2001, 81). The inscription reads:

\[
\text{so[p]r miþ [f]ris......u(m)-op * sis : is-m--...}
\]
\[
\text{Sadr(?) međ(?) frís[um](()}
\]

The inscription has been translated as possibly reading: ‘A truthful man among the Frisians’. However, as the text is fragmentary and the context unclear, there is little we can further infer from it. On the other hand, as we have seen in the previous chapter, a number of archaeological finds do point to connections between the Insular world and Frisia in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, most likely via Danish (and Dano-Frisian) Viking activities. In addition, Kelly and Maas have
pointed out (1999, 135) that the way in which Rothlaib establishes his fortified base during the later years of his activity in Ireland is very consistent with the way Vikings established bases on the rivers in the Continent. Although this by no means constitutes proof that Rothlaib and Rodulf are the same person, it may indicate that Vikings both on the Continent and in Ireland were from the same tradition, group or at least performed the same activities in a similar manner. There is no reason to doubt that through this, the Insular and Frisian worlds were connected. What we can infer from this is that Frisia and Ireland played a part in the same Viking world, and that it was possible and realistic for (Danish) Vikings of some stature to travel between these areas, be connected to both and perform Viking activities and political deeds that were relevant enough to end up in the chronicles. Furthermore, the example of Rothlaib/Rodulf illustrates the point set out in the methodology, namely that the different sources together can create an image over a larger area and a longer period of time.

4.2.2 The sons of Ragnarr Loðbrók and their Frisian connection

The possibilities of travelling back and forth between, and of being connected to, various areas are also central to the legendary stories of Ragnarr Loðbrók’s sons, who are sometimes associated with Frisia, to form a motif of Frisian connection. The stories about Ragnarr and his sons must have circulated from the tenth century onwards, but did so particularly in the eleventh century, whilst they are situated in the ninth century (McTurk 1991, 1). They are recorded in various textual sources, with slight variation, over a longer period of time, indicating how historic and legendary stories were mixed and spread from the Viking Age onwards.

According to the tradition, Ragnarr Loðbrók had several sons. The first source to mention Loðbrók and one of his sons is the eleventh-century Norman writer William of Jumièges who compiled the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* in c. 1070/71 (eds. and trans. Van Houts 1992). He describes Loðbrók as an Anglo-Scandinavian king and father of Björn Ironside (ON Björn Járnþiða). Other sources mention other alleged sons, such as Ivar the Boneless (ON Ívarr hinn Beinlausi), Halfdan (ON Hálfdan Ragnarsson), Sigurd (snake-in-the-eye) (ON Sigurðr ormr í auga) and Ubbe (Hubba, Ubba, Ubbo or Ubbi). For instance, the *Annals of St Neots* (c. 1120-40, composed in Bury St Edmunds) mention Hubba as the son of Loðbrók and brother of Ivar, who also has a brother Halfdane (s.a. 870; eds. Dumville and Lapidge 1985, 57). This text draws again on the *Passio Sancti Edmundi* which was produced between 985 and 988 and focusses on the martyrdom of King Edmund, to which Hubba and his brothers are connected (eds. Dumville and Lapidge 1985, lx). Saxo mentions Ubbe as an illegitimate son. In the Icelandic-Orkney poem *Háttalykill* (c. 1145) Ragnarr is described as having five sons: Ívarr, Agnarr, Björn, Sigurd and Hvitserk. The *Tale of Ragnar’s sons* mentions Eirek and Agnar by a first wife, and Ivar, Bjorn, Hvitserk and Sigurd by a second wife, whereas the *Saga of Ragnarr Loðbrók* also names Rognvald as a son (Waggoner 2009, xxii; McTurk 1991, 39-43). According to McTurk (1991) the tradition on Ragnarr is divided into a Danish tradition and an English tradition.
Much has been written about the question of the historicity of Ragnarr Loðbrók and his sons. Interpretations of this figure's place in history and legend vary from purely historical to ultimately fictional. Ragnarr has often been equated with Reginherus or Reginheri, a Danish Viking leader whose forces attacked Paris in 845 (McTurk 1991, 1-6). This Dane seems to have been associated with Horek, the son of Godfred (who died in 810), possibly via blood-ties. Furthermore, he seems to have performed Viking deeds in Ireland in 831 and to have briefly been associated with Charles the Bald in the early 840s (McTurk 1991, 2-6). In a series of studies, Jan de Vries comes to the conclusion that there were two historic Viking kings, one called ‘Ragnar(r)’ and one called ‘Loðbrók’, whose deeds merged into those of one heroic and legendary Viking Ragnarr Loðbrók. It must be noted that the first time the full name Ragnarr Loðbrók is recorded is in the *Islendingabok* (1122-33) (McTurk 1991, 6-7). In line with this is the argumentation that Loðbrók was a woman and the mother of the above-mentioned sons of Ragnarr, for which there are a number of arguments set out by McTurk (1991, 49). According to De Vries, however, the historic Loðbrók was the father of Ivar, Ubbe and Halfdan, who gained fame in the British Isles (Van Houts 1983, 114). His theory is that William of Jumièges combined information about him with that of Ragnar or Reginherus and his son Bern (identified as Björn), inventing the story of Ragnarr Loðbrók, which was the basis for the Scandinavian *Ragnarssaga* that was recorded in the thirteenth century (Van Houts 1983, 114). However, Van Houts (1983, 114-17) makes it clear that it is more likely that William of Jumièges based his story on an Anglo-Scandinavian tradition or sources, and that he is combining different stories. Other information and stories in his work namely show Scandinavian influence as well, sometimes, for instance, directly relying on the early eleventh-century Icelandic poet Sigvatr and his contemporaries. According to Van Houts (1983, 117), Jumièges is using a tradition that is also known to Adam of Bremen (c. 1088) and present in both East Anglia and Iceland in the early twelfth century. Others have argued that Ragnarr Loðbrók is a historical ninth-century Viking leader known in the English, French and Irish sources as Lothbroc, Reginherus and Ragnall, respectively. However, in the *Historical Dictionary of the Vikings* Katherine Holman (2003, 220) describes Ragnarr Loðbrók as a ‘legendary Viking’ who seems to be ‘an amalgam of several different historical figures and pure literary inventions’. Nonetheless, his sons are historical figures, according to Holman (2003, 220). What all these interpretations have in common is that they believe that the stories are based on some core of historic truth, albeit in very different degrees, which is intertwined with myth. So despite the varying degrees of historicity recognised by historians, there clearly is a tradition on Ragnarr Loðbrók and his sons that is known across a wide area, appears in sources ranging from Norman to Orkney and persists over an extended period of time. Whether or not Ragnarr is a historical person, or a combination of many persons, the events that are connected to him as well as his sons are deemed historical. Furthermore, the tenth-, eleventh-, twelfth- and thirteenth-century audiences of the various texts considered them historical, and something that could have been true. As such, the tradition can
provide us with an idea of how the tales of Viking Age events were preserved from just after the Viking Age until when the sagas are composed. As Smyth (1977, 1) formulates it, 'much belongs to folklore, but such a study [i.e. the analysis of the stories, comm. auth.] throws light on the way in which the descendants of the invaders preserved and transmitted these traditions in early medieval England and Scandinavia', and into the periods thereafter. This includes the connection to Frisia.

In Book I of his *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* (GND), William of Jumièges relates the story of Björn, who is called 'son of the Danish king Ragnar Lodbrok'. The book starts with the Franks and the division in the Frankish realm caused by the four sons of Emperor Louis. It is said that at this time heathens came from Norse and Danish lands with Björn as the leader of their expedition, which was organised by a heathen called Hasting. According to Jumièges, Loðbrók drove out his son in order to find new areas to settle. They gather men from nearby provinces (i.e. outside of Denmark) and raid several places, particularly in France and Italy. When Björn wants to return to Denmark, he suffers a shipwreck and is only just able to reach the coast of England. From there he travels to Frisia where he dies. Hasting subsequently commends himself to the Frankish King Charles (GND Book I, Van Houts 1992, 8-27). As we have seen above, it is suspected that Ragnall in the Irish sources represents Ragnarr Loðbrók, and this is exemplified where the FA relates a different version of what is considered to essentially be the same story about Björn (Van Houts 1983, 116-17). For 867, it records the sacking of York by Danes, which occurs shortly after the events connected to Ragnall and his three sons, who travelled from Norway to the Orkneys. Here Ragnall and his youngest son stay, whilst the older sons gather a large army 'from all quarters' to attack the Franks and Saxons (FA s.a. 330, Radner 1978, 119). Notably, this does not include the Frisians. They go on to Spain and then to Africa. After nightly visions and battles with the Mauritians, they capture a group of Mauritians and bring them back to Ireland, which they reach despite shipwrecking. So the different versions connect Björn either to Ireland, or to England and Frisia. It shows that in the eleventh-century view of the Viking Age, Ireland, England and Frisia were equally realistic places to turn to for a Danish/Norwegian/Anglo-Scandinavian Viking leader, and that travel between these areas was normal. This version of the story in the FA was indeed inspired by the legendary tales of Ragnarr Loðbrók which were circulating over quite a large area in the eleventh century (Downham 2004, 29; Ó Corráin 1998, 447; Van Houts 1983, 116). The version of Jumièges is thought to derive from a Northumbrian tradition on Ragnarr and his sons, particularly on Ubbe and his link with Frisia. This may have provided a Frisian link for Björn as well.

In different sources we encounter Ubbe, Ubba, Ubbi or Hubba, the alleged son of Ragnarr Lodbrók (cf. IJssennagger 2013a, 83), and, in later medieval sources, a legendary tradition of Ubbe has come into existence. The tradition of Ubbe as *dux Fresciorum/Fresonum* is recorded in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* (HSC) (tenth century), the *Annales Lindisfarnenses et Dumelmenses* (ALD) (twelfth century) and in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* (GD); i.e. in British sources and a Danish source. Other sources also mention Ubbe, but without directly calling him a Frisian
As has been pointed out by Smyth (1977, 22-3) the English sources only deal with Ubbe in the context of his activities in England, whilst Saxo exclusively deals with Ubbe in a Danish context and does not mention him in relation to England at all. Thus, Saxo represents a Danish tradition on Ragnarr and Ubbe, in which they are connected to the island of Zealand in Denmark and to Frisia, whilst the British sources represent a different, British tradition.

The British tradition on Ubbe is centred around his invasion of England as one of the leaders of the Great Heathen Army, the taking of York and defeat of King Ælla. Ubbe does this together with his brother(s). In 865, the *mycel hæđen here* (Great Heathen Army) started a campaign in East Anglia that lasted quite a number of years. In 868 the Vikings attacked York and King Osberht and King Ælla tried to resist them, but according to the ALD the Northumbrian people and their kings were slaughtered by ‘Ubba duce Fresonum’ (ALD s.a. 868, ed. Pertz 1866, 506; cf. Bremmer 1981, 77). The HSC mentions that King Ælla had called the wrath of God on himself by stealing land from St Cuthbert, and that as a consequence ‘Ubba dux Fresciorum’ entered the kingdom with a great army of Danes. They came to York where they were met by Ælla and his army, whom they defeated (HSC entry 10, ed. South 2002, 51). A while later, the army of *Ubba dux Fresonum et Healfdena rex Denorum* that had come to England was split in three, one part settling in York, one part occupying Mercia and one part sacking in the area of the South Saxons and slaying the royals except for King Alfred (HSC entry 14 ed. South 2002, 53). In the F-version of the ASC, Ubba is identified as the brother of Ivar (Ingwær) and Halfdan (Healfdene) and the first two are recorded as having murdered the East Saxon King Edmund in 870 (ASC F-version see Swanton 1996, 70, note 2; cf. Bremmer 1981, 77), making him a martyr. Abbo of Fleury also mentions the *Dani* Ubbe (Hubba) and Ingwar (Hinguar) as leaders of the Great Heathen Army in his *Life of St Edmund* (ed. Winterbottom 1972, 71-72), and this may have been a source for the F-version of the ASC (Bremmer 1981, 77). McTurk (1991, 45-9) concludes that Inwære (Inguar, Ivar), Hubba (Ubbe), Healfdene (Albann, Halbdeni) and Sigfridus were all brothers.

The Danish tradition is represented by Saxo, *Sögubrot*, *Ragnars saga* and *Þattr af ragnars sonum* (McTurk 1991). Here, Ubbe is an illegitimate son who turns against his father for the rule in Zealand. In Saxo, we find another Ubbe who is described as a Frisian fighter. He is ravaging the coast of Jutland, but when he is defeated by Harald Wartooth of Denmark, he marries Harald’s sister and commends himself to him. This Frisian fighter is the protagonist of the battle of Bråvalla or Brávellir, a legendary battle which is said to have taken place in the eighth century. In addition to the *Gesta Danorum*, the battle is mentioned in three Norse sagas. Apart from Ubbe, other Frisians join the battle as well, besides many other Germanic and Baltic peoples. The historicity of the Battle is highly dubious, but the interest in the episode may be due to the fact it is spread over several sources and includes many different peoples. The battle may be read as a battle-list, which is also known from other Scandinavian sources. The fact that another Frisian Ubbi is mentioned makes it clear there is a tradition with this particular connection.
Whereas the HSC identifies Ubbe, dux of the Frisians, and Halfdan, king of the Danes, as the leaders, the army is described as consisting of Danes (South 2002, 51-3). In the ALD, however, it is said that the army of Ubbe, Halfdan and Ivar consisted of Danes and Frisians. This too is repeated by the early twelfth-century *Libellus de exordio* by Symeon of Durham (II.6, ed. and trans. Rollason, 94-5; cf. McLeod 2014, 133). In the ALD, in the story of Ubbe as a Frisian dux who invades East Anglia with his brothers Halfdan and Ivar, the army consisted of Dani et Frisones and they go to the Isle of Sheppey in 855 (ALD s.a. 855, ed. Pertz, 506; Smyth 1977, 195; IJssennagger 2013a, 83). According to the *Lindisfarne Annals*, they overwintered there. The same event is recorded in the ASC, but here the people making up the army are termed ‘heathen men’ in general. (ASC s.a. 855, ed. and trans. Swanton 1996, 66-7; Bremmer 1981, 76-7). In this context, it does not seem likely that this Ubbe himself was a Frisian, as he is mostly presented as a Dane and brother of Ivar and Halfdan. Of course, he could have been the son of a Frisian woman and half-brother of the aforementioned Danes. Part of his warband could have been Frisian or consisted of Danes who had previously been active in Frisia, for instance, if he were a Viking leader from the Frisian benefice under Roric and Rodulf’s control (Henderikx 1995, 87). It is quite likely that a Viking army like the Great Heathen Army consisted of multi-ethnic, or rather, multi-geographically provenanced warbands, because these bands continuously joined and split-up again, and because the Danish Viking leaders traditionally had power bases in different areas from which they could recruit Vikings. There are, for example, numerous instances in the ASC where the Viking force divides into multiple groups both geographically and organisationally, which function with dical support. They are continuously evolving, migratory communities (or polities) which have a focus on warfare (Neil Price, lecture, Oslo Vikings: Beyond Boundaries 2 Dec. 2015) Recent research by Jarman into the strontium and oxygen isotopes of the skeletons in the Viking Age mass graves at Weymouth, Oxford and Repton in England revealed that the buried groups all had diverse origins and were not from one geographical location; rather, they had spent the last couple of years together (Catrine Jarman, lecture, Oslo Vikings: Beyond Boundaries 3 Dec. 2015). Similarly, isotope analysis of the people from a Viking ring-fortress showed that many of them, who were in the Danish royal retinue, were foreigners (being either Slavonic or western-Continental) (Dobat 2015, 187). The question remains whether these were mercenaries, migrants, captives or, perhaps, some combination thereof. As has been pointed out by others, parts of the army may have been named after the area where they, or at least their leader, had been active before, where they had just come from and where they had gained fame (Downham 2009, 149; Bremmer 1981, 78). For instance, the above-mentioned Viking warband may have come to East Anglia from Frisia, where they were active before fighting in the Great Heathen Army, which is why Ubbe might be called Frisian. Another possibility, however, could be that we should reconsider the terms brother and son. Perhaps both can be read in a figurative way, and not always literally in a biological sense, indicating a different kind of close relationship.
An interesting linguistic indication for parts of the Great Heathen Army having come from or via Frisia is presented by Bremmer (1981, 78-9). In the former Danelaw, the place-names Irby and Frisby occur several times. Traditionally, attempts have been made to explain Frisby as ‘settlement of the Frisians’, but this is not possible. Irby, on the other hand, has been explained as ‘settlement of the Norsemen who came from Ireland’, and a similar explanation must be right for Frisby as well: ‘settlement of the Norsemen who came from Frisia’. This ties up perfectly with the historical suggestion of parts of the army coming via Ireland (Ivar) and Frisia (Ubbe), and may very tentatively be illustrated with archaeological finds (cf. IJssennagger 2015a and Chapter 5). Not only is it striking that we have both Irby and Frisby, but also that they are present in the Danelaw and beyond. Here, Scandinavian Viking activity in England, Ireland and Frisia is all closely tied together in two place-name types.

It has been suggested that the *Scaldingi*, referred to by the HSC (ch. 11, ed. and trans. South 2002, 50-1), are people from the area of the river Scheldt in Zeeland, the Netherlands. The term could possibly be indicating the people of Walcheren, which lay at the mouth of the Scheldt (McLeod 2014, 134; Woolf 2007, 71-2; Verhulst 1999, 51; Henderikx 1995, 87). This area, as we have seen, was granted in benefice to Rodulf’s father Harald and uncle Rorik in 841. We can question if Ubbe – if indeed he was a historical figure and a (Danish) nobleman who served as *dux* over a group of Frisians – had recruited the Frisians he commanded from Walcheren. The fact that he is not mentioned in the Frankish sources does not mean that this is impossible: we have seen that Rodulf only began to appear in the Frankish sources when he started committing Viking attacks on the Frankish realm. His overseas adventures are not recorded. This could be the case for Ubbe and his English adventures as well. As the case studies in Chapter 5 indicate, archaeological material exists which points to a link between warbands in Walcheren and East Anglia. The people that were joining the Great Heathen Army from Walcheren or other parts of Frisia could have also been multi-ethnic: Frisians, Danes or Dano-Frisians, even from a second or third generation. It seems likely that Ubbe, as such, was not a Frisian, but acquired fame in Frisia and recruited warbands there (Bremmer 1981, 78; Downham 2009, 149). Others have argued that the ‘Scaldingi’, who are referred to as ‘Skjöldungar’ in Norse skaldic poetry, would be the same as ‘Scyldings’ and refer to the idea of descendants of Scyld Scæfing (Davis 2006, 119; Frank 1997 (in Chase), 127). Scyld is the legendary first Danish king, who figures in the *Skjöldunga saga*, *Beowulf* and the *Gesta Danorum*, amongst others. This seems far less likely. However, it once again indicates how history and myth have become intertwined and how the myths of origin are formed and maintained. Scyld, who, according to later tradition on King Sceaf, arrived in a boat as a child, in Beowulf departed the earth in a boat-funeral (lines 26-52; Chickering 1989; Dobat 2015, 161-2). It is possible that these various background threads intertwine in the name *Scaldings*, and that is a combination of the geographical and mythological references: the origin in the Scheldt area, as well as the myth of origin of the Danish royal line and the connection to arrival by ship. However, if it
is difficult to see what a referral to the Scheldt area would offer in terms of value or validation if it were not an extremely important area.

Some Vikings travelled the other way around and came to Frisia after having been part of the Great Heathen Army’s activities in England (see McLeod 2014, 140; f. ex. ASC s.a. 890 (892/3), ed. and trans. Swanton 1996, 82-3). The last, presumably Danish, leader from the same royal family that provided other benefice holders in Frisia, was Godfrid. In one of the annals, those of St Vaast, he is described as Godefridus rex Danorum (Coupland 1998, 108). Before raiding the Frankish empire (mostly northern France and Belgium, but also the southern Netherlands) from the estuary of the Scheldt, Godfrid had been a leader of the Great Heathen Army, the remaining parts of which, after the defeat by King Alfred, had come from England (Wessex) in 879. In 881, Vikings ravaged Liège, Tongeren and Maastricht (Verhulst 1999, 51; Coupland 1998, 108). In 882 they established a winter camp in Ascloa, which has been suggested to be Asselt (Limburg) on the bank of the Meuse, although the identification remains uncertain. Charles the Fat (son of Louis the German) led an army there to fight the Vikings but came to terms with Godfrid and his companion Sigfrid. The latter was paid a tribute and left the kingdom, whilst Godfrid received Rorik’s former benefice in Frisia. In addition, he was baptised and married the illegitimate daughter of Lothar II, and thereby tied in with the Frankish elite (Coupland 1998, 108-9). Apparently Godfrid did settle down in his benefice, for in 884 it is reported by Regino of Prüm (Chronicon s.a. 884, ed. Kurze 1890, 122.; trans. and ann. MacLean 2009, 191) that some Danes who were with Godfrid in Kennemerland sailed up the Rhine to Duisburg, where they occupied a fort. This seems to indicate that, despite his connection to the Franks and his conversion to Christianity, Godfrid did not entirely cease the Viking raids.

Besides these Danes, as Regino called them, in Godfrid’s retinue and the Franks who he was working with, there also were Frisian counts amongst his men. Two Frisian counts, Gerulf and Gardulf, are mentioned by Regino in 885. According to him, Godfrid is asked by his brother-in-law Hugh to help him with attacks on Charles the Fat’s empire. As a reaction, Godfrid sent Gerulf and Gardulf to Charles with a counter offer: faithfulness in return for more land. Eventually, when according to Regino Godfrid is preparing his army to sail against the Franks, he and his wife are summoned to meet with the Franks and Godfrid is killed. With him, the last Danish benefice holder in Frisia is gone.

Again, these traditions concerning Ubbe and his family – regardless of which elements of them are historical or legendary, or combined from many different characters – exemplify the extent of the connections between the Frisian coastal area and the Íslandic world. These connections are even present to the extent that the traditions on Frisians in the Great Heathen Army were remembered and circulated even after the Viking Age. The ease with which the Frisian, Northern and Eastern English, Irish and Danish are connected to travelling Vikings and to each other is highly significant. Apart from the tradition on Loðbrók’s sons in relation to Frisia, which was known in Northumbria from the tenth or eleventh century onwards, a general tradition of Frisians and Danes with connections to Frisia being
among the Great Heathen Army of Vikings conquering the North of England is present as well. The same can be said for references to Frisians in England, such as Frisians being amongst the opponents of King Knútr at the battle of Brentford in England in 1016 (Jesch 2001, 83). It has been suggested that these may have been traders caught up in the fight rather than Vikings or other warriors. Either way, it attests to a presence of Frisians in England in the early eleventh century. This reference to the Battle of Brentford is found in Knútsdrápa by Óttar svarti (a friend and thus contemporary of Sighvatr), here in the edition and translation of Townend (2012, 775):

7. Fjørlaus haýkk Frísi, Játmunðar hlaut undir frideškerdir, þík gerðu, ættnishr gofígr hrættar;
- brauzt med byggðu setrí danskhr hrér skaut þá dórrum Brandfurðu þar – randa drótt, ed þá rákt flóttu.

Peace-breaker of shields [WARRIOR], I believe you made the Frisians lifeless; you destroyed Brentford there with its inhabited settlement. The noble descendant of Eadmund [Edmund Ironside] receives dangerous wounds; the Danish army then pierced the host with spears when you pursued the fleeing. (Townend 2012, 775).

Although the abovementioned stories have great variation, for instance in historicity and in the extent of mythologisation, there also are quite a few similarities. Rodulf, Ubbe and Godfrid are all connected to both the Insular world and Frisia. The situations of Rodulf and Godfrid in particular have parallels: they are Danish Viking leaders who first take their army to the British Isles, then upon their defeat travel to the Continent, raid the Meuse area and, finally, are given Frisian benefices by Frankish rulers. This makes it very clear that the Viking warbands raiding in Britain and Ireland could be the same as those in Frisia. These warbands were extremely mobile and versatile and could easily travel back and forth between these areas on either side of the North Sea. This also indicates the triangle within which these activities occur: Viking leaders from Denmark (including the Kaupang area) travelling, raiding and getting a foot on the ground in the British Isles (Ireland and particularly eastern England) and in the Continental coastal area, particularly in the Frisian coastal area and benefices. Here, we see very clear connectivity between the Viking sphere in England and Frisia. In addition, the stories about them are found in sources from different areas, and this illustrates the wide dissemination and longetivity of this legendary material.

4.3 Case study 3: Frisia within the Viking sphere

4.3.1. Frisia as part of the Danish power sphere
The benefices in hands of Danish warlords, as granted by Frankish rulers, represent a small bit of Danish rule in Frisia in the Viking Age that has long been recognised. However, the extent to which this indeed was an outspokenly Danish or Viking
rule, and what it entailed, is uncertain. Nevertheless, what does seem clear is that it
did not encompass the modern provinces of Friesland and Groningen. Putting the
information from various sources together, there is an indication that Frisia, or at
least part of Frisia, was in Danish hands at the start of the Viking Age as well. Not
as a benefice given by the Franks, but as a part of a Danish sphere paying tribute
to the Danish king.

We have seen that one of the core themes of the Old Frisian law texts is Frisia
having been part of the Danish realm before becoming part of the Christian Frankish
world. This idea that Frisia first belonged to the North until Charlemagne freed
it and tied it to the South, can be explained in two related ways. Ideologically,
Frisia used to be heathen like the North until it was converted at the instigation
of Charlemagne. This conversion went hand in hand with the incorporation of
Frisia as an area into the Frankish realm. This appears to provide the second freeing
the sources refer to, namely making the area Frankish. The Frisian law codes also
specifically name a transition from northern taxes to southern Frankish taxes, as
we have seen, which implies this switch in rulership that is also indicated in other
written sources.

In Einhard’s *Vita Karoli*, as mentioned earlier, we can read that around the time
of the first Danish attacks on Frisia due to Danish-Frankish strife, the Danish
king Godfred claimed Frisia as part of his sphere of influence. Moreover, Saxo also
refers to Godfred extending his power to areas beyond the official Danish realm.
When Charlemagne conquers Saxony, Saxo notes that the people are made Christian
and that they are much happier with this situation than under Danish rule. But
Godfred reclaimed the area and tried to restore the old ways. Additionally, he
wanted to further stretch his rule and annexed North Frisia. The area is described
as very low-lying provinces where the ocean has free play on the dykes and flat
there around 810 (GD book. VIII, 16.7-8, ed. Friis-Jensen and trans. Fisher 2015,
626-7). He also mentions that the Danish king ‘resolved to swoop down on the
further regions of Germany’ but was killed by one of his own men. We know this
story from the Frankish annals as well, which describe the situation at around 810
when Charlemagne and Godfred were in battle and the Danes attacked Frisia,
after which Godfred was killed by one of his own men. We can also wonder if the
episode of 808, recorded in the ARF (ed. , where Godfred eventually evacuates the
merchants from Reric and relocates them to Haithabu/Hedeby, is a sign of the
same. It at least appears to indicate that the Danish king had command over this
area, also during the power struggle with Charlemagne.

After claiming the area that is called North Frisia, which is said to be in Ger-
many, Godfred installed a tribute system here. This reminds us of the earlier quoted
tribute payment in 810, of which the question remains whether it is a single pay-
ment or a recurring one. The latter case would fit the picture painted here, but the

45 Modern Groß Strömkendorf (Brather 2003; Müller-Wille 2002).
options equally remains that it may refer to later Viking Age instances of raising tribute in benefices. Chances are that the area ‘North Frisia’ that is mentioned here is not what we now think of as North Frisia, but more towards Central Frisia and perhaps just east of the modern Dutch-German border – partly because it occurs in the Frisian law texts that are valid for Friesland west of the Lauwers and none of the Frisian laws are valid in North Friesland. The tributary system is described by Saxo (GD book. VIII, 16.7, ed. Frøis-Jensen and trans. Fisher 2015, 626-7) as follows:

“First a series of buildings was designed, taking up a length of 240 feet from one extremity to the other, and divided into twelve sections, each of twenty feet. At the upper end a round shield was displayed. When the Frisians wanted to pay their tribute, the custom was for them to throw their coins one by one into the cavity of the shield, but under this system of reckoning they might only be collected for the king’s revenue if the remote ears of the tax-gatherer had caught the sound of their far-off clink. So it was that the official could only count towards the tribute the money he had heard fall from his distant position; should the sound be too faint to be within earshot the amount was indeed taken for the treasury, but was not reckoned as part of the total sum demanded. Many of the thrown coins struck the shield without any ring being audible to the collector, with the result that the Frisians, wishing to discharge their set contribution, would sometime expend a large part of their income in useless payment. The records say that later on Charles relieved them of this onerous tribute.” (Trans. Fisher 2015, 626-7).

As we have seen in the discussion of the Frisian law codes, there is a reference to the northern taxes called klipskelde, which make way for the Frankish huslotha. It is made clear that the klipskelde was connected to Frisia being part of the North when Frisians were still heathens. The term klipskelde is explained by Nijdam as ‘(re)sounding debt / taxes’, and this seems consistent with the described practice. As has been noted by Nijdam (2009, 53) this tradition of tax-paying seems to have a similar origin to the taxation of wergild for wounds in Old Frisian society. The Lex Frisionum states that in the case of a wound to the head, from which splinters of bone are protruding, these splinters are used to establish the amount of compensation. If the splinters are big enough for a man who is standing twelve steps away to hear them being thrown in the boss of a shield, then they are fit for compensation. This is a practice that also appears in some other Leges Barbarorum and may thus be a more common Germanic practice. In various versions of the Old Frisian law texts, which are thus recorded and transmitted in a later period, similar episode occur but with varying distances and specifications. In some of the local traditions from Wymbritseradeel in Friesland, for instance, the shield must be red or brown. In edition U the shield is red, in J the shield is brown. Also elsewhere in the Frisian law texts red and brown shields appear. According to Vries (2007, 24), the person

46 With many thanks to Han Nijdam for providing these details.
described as ‘high helmet and red shield’ represents the Saxon, but this cannot be safely concluded from the instances in his edition. Interesting in this context is the reference in the text *Dit is ook Fries recht*, where it is stated that Frisians need to defend their land with the sword, the spear-point and the brown shield against the high helmet and the red shield and the illegitimate rule (Vries 2007, 152–3). From this we would infer that brown shield represents the Frisian ‘Self’ and the red shield infers the illegitimate ruling ‘Other’ – Danes, for instance, who had already marched upon Saxony. What this exemplifies the use of standard elements and symbols, perhaps even topoi, which we have come across earlier as well.

There are two explanations that are used to place the episode of the tax payment historically, and considering the fact that the tradition of paying taxes is mentioned for *klipskelde* and *huslotha* alike, both might seem plausible. One is that it refers to the late eighth century, to the time when Frisia first becomes incorporated in the Frankish realm. Another is that it refers to the episodes when Danes extract tribute in Frisian benefices, so in the ninth century. For the latter explanation, there are a number of problematic aspects, one being the clear reference to Charlemagne as the one bringing change in both the Frisian and the Danish versions. This may of course have been added for the sake of the story, wherein Charlemagne is the symbol for the Frankish realm in totality, but Saxo stresses that these events happened before Charlemagne. Chronologically, the situation of the benefice also hardly is a situation from which Charlemagne – who died in 814 so before most of the benefices were endowed – had to or could free the Frisians. Another aspect is that in the period of Frisian benefices in Danish hands, tribute was extracted with the consent of the Frankish rulers. It thus seems most logical that the statements on *klipskelde* refer to the period of incorporation into the Frankish realm and the episodes connected to Godfred around 810, marking the start of the Viking Age for Frisia. Nevertheless, with the Old Frisian law sources having such a flexible chronology, the events may equally have been taken together and merged into one clear distinction between the period of northern taxes (and thus northern rule) and southern taxes (meaning southern rule).

It is interesting to see that both Saxo and the Frisian laws record this same, rather curious and detailed episode on the system of tribute. It leads Nijdam (2009) to conclude that Saxo must have known the Frisian sources, but we cannot establish this with certainty. The reference in Saxo to records that say how Charlemagne relieved them of the tribute at a later time cannot be taken as proof that Saxo had read a Frisian text, but perhaps it indicates that there was an earlier or at least different written record of these events either in Denmark, Francia or Frisia. As we also see from other stories that appear in different sources throughout the North Sea world, the historical as well as the epical material seems to have travelled around and have been known in various areas. This could mean that Saxo had heard the legendary story of how the Frisians obtained freedom, for instance. Being composed around the time the Frisian laws were recorded, it at least helps us to determine the connection between the texts and the material that must have been circulating then.

Perhaps the most straightforward reference to Frisia being incorporated by
Godfred around 800 is found in the *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (Book I:16 ed. Schmeidler 1917, 19). Here, Adam of Bremen describes many of the matters that are also recorded in the Frankish annals, including some of the activities of the Danes. He states that the Danes and all others who live beyond Denmark – which must mean to the north – are called Northmen in the Frankish sources. ‘After their king, Gotafrid, had subjected the Frisians and likewise the Nordalbingians, the Abodrites and other slavic Peoples to tribute, he threatened even Charles with war’ (Trans. Tschan 1959, 20). It also records the episode of the excommunicated Danish throne-pretendent Harald, who turns to Charles’ son Louis and gets baptised in Mainz. Harald is then granted a fief across the Elbe, and, to withstand the pirates, his brother Horuch a part of Frisia. This territory the Danes still claim as if it were legitimately their own’ (i.e. Rüstringen). Trans. Tschan 1959, 22). So in the eleventh century, and probably based on the earlier Frankish sources, the idea of part of Frisia being claimed as within the Danish sphere was still present.

Also in other instances Adam refers to Danes subjecting Frisians to tribute. For instance in dealing with the years 836-37, drawing on Frankish sources, Adam refers to Northmen in Frisia, who perform piracy and subject the Frisians to tribute (Trans. Tschan 1959, 26). This, again, is the case when referring to the gesta of Saint Rimbert, which is said to have been composed by Bovo, the abbot of Corvey (GD Book I;41, ed. Schmeidler 1917, 24-3; trans. Tschan 1959, 38-9). It tells the story of the battle between the barbarians and the Christians amongst the Frisians in the district of Norden, Ostfriesland. Adam cites the story from this gesta about how the barbarians tried to raid the Frisian district of Norden close to the sea, but Rimbert was there, and he helped the Christians to victory. According to Adam, the Northmen take revenge on the whole Frankish empire for their losses in Frisia, and led by their kings Sigefrid and Godtafrid (Godfred), invade areas along the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt, even attacking King Charles himself (Book I:41; ed. Schmeidler 1917, 43; trans. Tschan 1959, 39). They then sent Halfdan and Gudröd to England where the latter conquers Northumbria. Adam, drawing on Symeon of Durham’s Historia regum, concludes: ‘And from that time Frisia and England are said to have been subject to the Danes. This is written in the Gesta of the Angles’ (Book I:41, ed. Schmeidler 1917, 43; trans. Tschan 1959, 39).

The idea of the Danes expanding their power to other areas can also be found in *Beowulf* for the Migration Period, where it is said that Scyld Scefing fights many tribes and finally makes all those living around him over the whale-road (= sea) pay him tribute (*Beowulf* lines 4-11; ed. and trans. Chickering 1989, 48). This is usually explained as Scyld taking power over all the islands of southern Scandinavia (Davis, 114). Defeating people and making them pay tribute is a recurring theme then, in Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and Frisian texts of various dates. With the episodes mentioned by Saxo, the Frisian law codes and Einhard in mind – as well as the *Finnsburh Episode* – we should not rule out the possibility that this expansion under Scyld is meant to extend beyond what we now consider southern Scandinavia, even if we consider that this is a legendary tradition.
Apart from seeing Frisia as part of a Danish sphere at a certain point, other texts hint at the fact that Frisians could join Vikings on their raids. This has already been pointed out in the discussion of Ubbe above, as well as in the discussion of the Frisian law codes and the archaeological material. It appears that this was not only the case for Frisians, but also for Anglo-Saxons. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* we find that ‘if any slave escapes from his lord and, leaving Christendom, becomes a Viking…’ which can be seen as a parallel to the line in the Frisian law codes.

### 4.3.2 Viking visits to Frisia: landscape and battle-lists

Contemporary Scandinavian sources and thirteenth-century sagas contain references to Viking visits to Frisia. One of the most detailed examples is that of Egill Skallagrimsson and his friend Pórólfr who sail from Iceland to go raiding in Frisia, as described in the *Egils Saga Skallagrimssonar*.

“En er vår kom eftir vetr þann, þá búask þeir Þórólfr ok Egill enn at fara í víking; en er þeir váru búnir þá halda þeir enn í Austrveg. En er (þeir) koma í Vikina, þá sigla (þeir) suðr fyrir Jótland ok herja þar, ok þá fara þeir til Fríslands ok dveljask mjök lengi um summerit, en þá halda (þeir) enn aptr til Danmerkr.”

(ES ch. 49, ed. Einarsson 2003, 70).

“The winter came to an end and spring arrived, and Thorolf and Egil made ready to go on Viking raids again. When they had prepared themselves they headed for the Baltic again, but on reaching Vik they sailed south past Jutland to plunder there. Afterwards they went to Frisia and stayed much of the summer there, then went back to Denmark.” (Trans. Scudder 2004, 87).

On their way back to Denmark they come to the *landamæris, þar er mætist Danmörk ok Frísland*: the borderland where Denmark and Frisia - Frisia - meet. Here they moor their ships and stay a while, as it is described that one night (implying they stayed more than one) they get visitors with a message about another Viking who is moored not far away and who plans to fight them. Although it is made quite clear that Egil and Thorolf are going on a season of Viking raiding, it is not literally stated that they are raiding in Frisia. What is said, is that they are dwelling there for quite some time during the summer, as well as explaining the route by which they sail. It is also said that they planned to go back up to Norway in the autumn. This paints a beautiful picture of Viking travel and routes, where one could go ‘on tour’ in Frisia during a summer. The routes from Norway to Jutland, as briefly described in the saga, are more elaborately described in the account of Øthhere as preserved in the Old English *Orosius*, and accompanied by the account of Wulfstan. The story of the Norwegian traveller known in his mother tongue as Ottar was told to King Alfred at his court and recorded there, which again indicates the interest Alfred had in these matters. Øthhere tells that in the south of Norway is the trading town of *Sciringes heal* (Kaupang), from which it was a three-day sail over open sea to Denmark. An additional two days of sailing would get you to the trading
town of Hedeby, which is explained as being situated between Wends, Saxons and Angles and as belonging to the Danes. It is also remarked that the Angles who had come to inhabit England originally lived in these parts, i.e. Jutland; this is the group the English are identifying themselves with, and partly why Alfred must have such an interest in this region. The Orosius text, which precedes the Othtere account, places the Frisians west of the Old Saxons, and Frisland near the mouth of the river Elbe and further west (Lund, Fell and Crumlin-Pedersen, 1984; Bately and Englert, 2007). Presumably then, this is about the area where Egil arrived.

In the *Egil's Saga* chapter after the episode described above it is said that the events happened in the time of King Athelstan of England, the grandson of Alfred the Great. Egil and Thorolf are steering southwards along Saxony and Flanders (*Saxland ok Flæmingjaland*) when they hear that the English king is recruiting men, and so they decide to go to England with their band of men. Apart from the interesting description that most people living in Northumberland are Danish or Half-Danish, that the king of Scotland came from the family of Ragnarr Loðbrók, and that the area had previously been much harried by Scots, Danes and Norsemen, and that Thorolf and Egil eventually are put in charge of the army of Athelstan as commanders, this story provides an image of the thirteenth-century idea of connections. Apparently, it was logical that whilst being somewhere along Saxony and Flanders (and Frisia), one could hear news of the English king recruiting warriors and sail over there to fight. This image, even though it may be a partly fictional account, very much coincides with the image from the contemporary sources as painted above.

The next time we hear of the Frisian area in the saga is when Arinbjorn and Egil are preparing to go Viking raiding in the spring, and recruit a band of men in Iceland (ES ch. 70, Nordal 1933; cf. Wilts 1966). Whilst they are sailing southwards with three warships, a trading ship is sent to Vik to get rid of the goods. With their warships, Arinbjorn and Egil travel all the way south along the coast, first raiding Saxland for riches in the summer. When they get ready to travel back North in the autumn, they moor their ship off the coast of Frisia. One night they sail up a large river mouth, and the ebb and tide are described. The land is flat and the fields are soaked, with small waters between them that could be crossed by planks – a description of the Frisian coastal area that would still fit today. The Vikings sail along the patches of dense trees until they come to villages where the people flee when they see them. However, most Frisians come together in the forest and here they gather three hundred men to fight the Vikings. Eventually these Frisians have to flee as well. Egil, as the protagonist of the saga, follows a number of Frisians to fight them and eventually makes it back to the ship. The description of the Frisians, eager to fight the Vikings and trying to trick them by taking away the planks across the waters, is striking. The Vikings bring aboard the booty, amongst which there are cows that they slaughter. Then they moor off, back to Denmark, and get to the Limfjord. Some travel on to Norway and Iceland and Egil stops at Vik to collect his cargo ship before sailing on. In this case, there is no mistake as to the purpose of the visit to Frisia: a Viking raid, interestingly partly connected with a trading
mission on the same trip. Frisia in this story stands out as a destination for Viking activities and possibly as a gateway to England. In any case, as a geographic unit, Frisland was well known in both Anglo-Saxon England and in Scandinavia.

As has been discussed thoroughly elsewhere (Jesch 2001, 80; Samplonius 1998; Jesch 1997; IJssennagger 2013a) a runic inscription that has often been taken as a testimony of a Viking raid to Frisia, is the inscription on an eleventh-century silver necklace found on Senja in Northern Norway:

Furu · trikia frislats a uit auks uiks fotum uir skiftum
Fórum drengja Frislands a vítr,ok vigs fóttum vór skiptum

“We travelled to meet the valiant men of Frisia, and we divided the spoils of the fight” (Samnordisk runtextdatabas N 540)

The precise meaning of this text is much debated, varying from a direct testimony of a Viking raid on Frisia, to a joint Frisian-Scandinavian raid, to a testimony of co-operation in trade between Frisians and Vikings (see Jesch 2001; Jesch 1997, Samplonius 1998; IJssennagger 2013a). These readings followed each other over time, starting with the Viking raid and ending with cooperation, displaying the changing views on Vikings and the Viking Age in scholarship. Each explanation is historically and linguistically possible, as Jesch has explained (2001; 1997). With the idea of it referring to an actual Viking attack, attempts have been made to connect the necklace to a specific attack. For instance, it has been connected to the Viking raids of Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway in the early eleventh century. In the group of stanzas known as Víkingarvísur by the Icelandic skald Sighvatr Þórdarson in praise of Óláfr Haraldsson, Oláfr’s early battles are remembered. These verses have been deemed as some of the most historical of the Scandinavian verses, not least because they are contemporary (Fell 1981, 106-7; ed. Jesch 2012, 533-56). Of his fifteen battles, the fifth is fought at kinnlimaside. Snorri in his Heimskringla (I-III, ed. Adalbjarnarson 1941-1951) places this in Frisia (Frísland) and as such it has been identified as Frisia, more specifically as the area Kennemerland (North Holland). Snorri connects the narrative and verse as follows (trans. Hollander 2009, 251):

“Then King Óláfr sailed south to Frisia and hove to before the coast of Kinnlimi in heavy weather. Then the king disembarked with his men, but the people of the land came riding against them and fought them. So says Skald Sigvat:

198. A fith fray, hard on helmets, 
hadst thou, thieves’ subduer – 
thy boats’ bows the storm did 
buffet – off Kinnlimi’s shoreline, 
when gallant foemen galloped 
grimly ‘gainst the ruler’s 
vessels, and he advances with
As Jesch (2001, 80-3) points out, Snorri is the only one placing Kinnlimasiđe in Frisia, or in fact anywhere. His identification has been doubted by Jesch because the place is described as high and this is unlikely for a place in the Netherlands (Jesch 2001, 80-3; Jesch 2012, 541-2). The counterargument of Samplonius (1998, 93) is that although the Netherlands is flat, the dunes could indeed be high nonetheless, making it possible that the reference is correct. Although there is something to say for both arguments, and Jesch’s is perhaps most convincing, there are two points that make an identification in Frisia not unlikely. First is that from there the Viking band sails west to England, straight after the battle, which would make the identification of Kennemerland entirely possible. The same would go for a number of other locations perhaps, but particularly in the battle-list of Ólafsfraða as contained in Heimskringla, the Frisian coast and England are closely placed and the Vikings sail from Frisia to England next. Secondly, it is plausible considering the Viking Age material at Snorri’s disposal – and if Snorri indeed is also the composer of Ógils Saga, he was no stranger to the Viking Age geography of the North Sea world and he must have had a good idea of Frisia, its location and also its outlook. For example, in Ólafsf saga Helga, recorded in Heimskringla, a Viking named Eyvind mentions that he went on raiding campaigns every summer, ‘sometimes to the west, sometimes to the Baltic, or south to Frísia’ (Snorri Sturluson Heimskringla, I, ch. 62, ed. Adalbjarnarson, 82 trans. Hollander 2009, 296). The location of Kinnlimasiđe remains uncertain, but at least in Heimskringla the battle that takes place there has been recorded as a battle between Óláfr and the Frisians.

What is perhaps the most interesting is that the runic text on the Senja neck-ring is in the form of verse lines. It is a stanza in fornyrdislag – one of the metres most used for epic Norse poetry. Although the stanza is not known from elsewhere, it should perhaps be read as an epic stanza. As poetic diction, it would not be referring to a particular raid known from other sources, but to the idea of raids, contact and co-operation with Frisians, and to a sphere of activities. Whether raid or cooperation, the inscription attests to Scandinavian-Frisian relations and should be seen in light of other references to Frisian-Scandinavian relations in the Viking Age and particularly in the eleventh century (Jesch 2001, 80-3). It is highly significant that someone chose to actively connect a silver necklace to Frisians and Frisia by carving the runic inscription referring to them. This way, a connection with Frisia and Frisians is established deliberately (IJssennagger 2013a). Furthermore, these instances particularly show, as pointed out by Jesch (2001, 80), that even after the Frankish annals stopped recording the bulk of Viking activity in the ninth century, raids and other expeditions (such as trade) continued into the eleventh century. This is also known from some Continental sources for the tenth and eleventh centuries (Vries 1932, 304-8).

Frisians are also mentioned in relation to Óláfr Tryggvason, where they are amongst his opponents on his expeditions abroad. They are found in the Ólafsfraða by Hallfredr vandræðrskald Óttarsson. The Ólafsfraða tells how Olaf, after
having been in Russia, comes to Wendland and marries the king’s daughter, Geira. From here he campaigns against various regions that were not loyal to Geira and wins victories in South Sweden and Gotland. Subsequently, as a result of the Saxon emperor Ötta (Otto II) trying to convert Haraldr of Denmark, Ötta and his allies, including Óláf, fight a battle around the Danevirke and at sea near Jutland, resulting in the conversion of Harald. This is not entirely historically accurate, as the battle in 974 was directed at incorporating Denmark, since Harald had already been baptised in 960 after pressure from Otto I (Hodnebø 2007, 127).

In the next stanzas of the Ólafsdrápa, stanzas 3 and 4, we read that after three years in Wendland, Geira dies, and Óláfr goes on a raiding campaign in Frísland, Frisia, Saxony and Flæmingjaland, which again is identified as Flanders (Whaley 2012, 391). The stanzas and their translation, with an explanation of the kennings, by Whaley (2012) between brackets are given here:

3. Tídhǫggvit lét tyggi Vinhróðigr gaf víða
Tryggva sonr fyr stggvan visi margra Frísa
Leiknar hest á lesti blóðku brúnt at drekka
ljótvaxinn hæ Saxa. blóð kveldriðu stóði.

The ruler, Tryggvi’s son [=Óláfr Tryggvason], had the corpses of Saxons cut down often, finally, before the edgy, ugly-grown horse of Leikn <troll-woman>[WOLF]. Far and wide the friend-exulting prince gave the black stud of the evening-rider [TROLL_WOMAN>WOLF] the dark blood of many Frisians to drink. (Whaley 2012, 394)

4. Hilmir lét at Holmi Rógs brá rekka lægir
hreskóð roðin blóði ríkr Valkera líki
-hvat of dyldi þess hólðar? - herstefnir lét hrøftium
hórð ok austr í Górdum hold Flemingjá goldit.

The prince caused hard corpse-harmers [SWORDS] to be reddened in blood at Hólmr and east in Russia; why should men conceal that? The powerful subdue of the strife of men [JUST RULER] spoiled the bodies of the Valkerar; the army-commander [RULER] caused the flesh of the Flemings to be doled out to ravens. (ed. and trans. Whaley 2012, 395-6)

The identification of Valkera may be an important point for our discussion, as it shows the difficulty with the use of ethnic, supposed ethnic and umbrella terms for groups. An important point in the prose tradition is that, as mentioned by Whaley (2012, 389), ‘Snorri seemingly did not interpret Valkera as an ethnic name referring probably to the people of Walcheren, as at least some editors do’. Indeed, in most editions Valkera is equated with people from Walcheren. Valkera in the stanza seems to indicate that the Valkerar are the people whose bodies are spoiled by
Óláfr, and this is usually identified with the people from Walcheren, who are next to the people of Flanders both in the stanza and geographically (Whaley 2012, 397; Jesch 2001, 80-4). Other suggestions for the meaning of Valkera have been made, but these are less convincing (Whaley 2012, 397). So besides the Frisians, the people from Walcheren and the Flemish are specifically named (Jesch 2001, 80). It has been argued by Fidjestøl (1982, 215) that what this mostly shows is the general knowledge of Viking geography, in which Frisians and specifically people from Walcheren thus had a place. Another example is that in ch. 86 of Haralds saga Sigurdarsonar in Heimskringla (vol. III, ed. Adalbjarnarson; trans. Hollander 2009, 650) it is told that after King Harald invaded England, Earl Tostig came north from Flanders to join him, as the earl had sought refuge there with the count, who happened to be his brother-in-law, after being banished from England. In ch. 64 of the Ólafs saga Helga about Óláfr Haraldsson, again contained in Heimskringla, Snorri relates how the Christianised area of Vík received many merchants, including Danes and Saxons, besides also making trading and raiding campaigns to the continent:

‘Also the people of Vík kept up merchant journeys to England, to Saxland, to the land of the Flemings, or to Denmark; and some engaged in freebooting expeditions and had their winter quarters in Christian lands.’


Flanders or the area of the Flemings indeed was know and visited, next to Saxony and Denmark and Frisia.

The next stanzas, stanzas 5 and 6, of the Óláfsdrapa are about Óláfr raiding in the British Isles. The raids are in various places, including the islands, with only the second tradition adding an attack in Ireland, before heading to Brittany and then further on to France and Sicily. So besides the Frisians, as well as the Flemings, being mentioned as a people that can be fought like the Saxons, British and others, significance may also be attributed to the fact that it is from here Óláfr goes on to raid in the British Isles. This underlines the geographical closeness of Frisia as a whole, and Walcheren and Flanders in particular to the British Isles, and again emphasises the ease of travel to Britain from the Frisian coast.

Turning back to the Frisian landscape, we can see how Saxo describes how the Danish Frothi wants to impress the West and decides to attack Frisia, where he gets into a fight with a Frisian pirate called Vithi (Saxo book II). It leads to a battle between Frisians and Danes, in which the Frisians are slaughtered ‘among the serpentine turns of the canals’ (flexuosos fossarum). Again, like in Egil’s Saga, we have a reference to the particular water-rich landscape that is connected to Frisia.

The Frisian landscape that is crossed by streams also appears in Adam of Bremen’s description of the Viking raid on Norden (Book I;41, ed. Schmeidler 1917, 42-3; trans. Tschan 1959, 38–9). When the Christians joined in the battle, helped by the prayers of Rimbert, more than ten thousand barbarians were slain, including those who were slain when ‘crossing the streams as they sought safety in flight’
Not only is Rimbert most highly regarded by the Frisians because of this, ‘even the hill on which the saint prayed while the battle was in progress is noted for its perpetually green turf’ (trans. Tschan 1959, 39). In this hill, we may recognise a terp made of sods.

4.3.3 Kinship and feud, alliance and rivalry

When discussing the battle at the Danevirke that precedes Olaf’s raids in Frisia, the poem *Vellekla* by Einarr skálaglamm Helgason names Frisians and Franks and Wends as being in Otto II’s army, as is also recounted in the *Ólafs saga* in *Heimskringla* (Marold 2012, 316-17; Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar ch. 26 in Heimskringla (vol. I, ed. Adalbjarnarson, 257 ; trans. Hollander 2009, 163-6). In fact, in the saga, Snorri combines the two stanzas into one narrative, with the battle at the Danevirke as ch. 26 and the expedition to Frisia mentioned above as ch. 29. The stanza in *Vellekla* is as follows:

27. Vasat í gǫgn, þótt gerði þás með fylki Frísa
    gær-Rǫgnir styrg hardan fór gunn-Vidurr sunnan
    gengilgt at ganga, (kvaddi vigs) ok Vinda
    getrásar, her þeirða, (vágs blakkridi) Frakka.

It was not easy to go against their army, although the Rǫgnir "Óđinn" of the fence of the spear-onslaught [BATTLE>SHIELD>WARRIOR = Hákon jarl] made a hard attack, when the battle-Vidurr "Óđinn" [WARRIOR = Otto II] came from the south with a host of Frisians, Franks and Wends; the rider of the horse of the wave [SHIP>SEAFARER = Hákon-jarl] called for battle.

(ed. and trans. Marold 2012, 317)

Here, we encounter the Frisians not as the victims of a Viking raid, but as allies in a larger conflict involving Saxons, Danes and Norwegians in the early eleventh century.

Besides the specific Viking raids on Frisia, these kinds of alliances, a rivalry between families, kinship and feud are frequent topics of heroic poetry from the Migration Period up to the end of the Viking Age. The most well-known case is that in *Beowulf*. Both *Beowulf* and the *Finnsburh Fragment* deal with an old family feud between Danes and Frisians, from the Danish perspective. The old feud, as related in both the fragment and an episode in *Beowulf* that is presented as a story told by the fire, is one between Danes and Frisians. Hildeburh, the sister of the Danish king Hnaef, is married to the Frisian king Finn. The Danes travel to Finnsburgh, the residence of Finn, and eventually, there is a fight. Apart from this feud, the story thus presents kinship by marriage between the Danish and the Frisian ‘royal houses’, and the travelling back and forth between the areas. As seen earlier, Davis (2006) suggests that *Beowulf* must have been written in Alfredian times, so in the late ninth century, whilst the material is from the Migration Period, which entailed the arrival of the new Frisians (as preserved in the Frisian *Overkeuren*) in
Frisia and the Anglo-Saxons in England (see the myth of origin in the ASC). As we have seen, this is debated and contested. The historical context of the recording of the story is another, in which this ancient tale of a family feud between Frisians and Danes clearly was of interest and importance. Besides this feud that is represented, we also read of a raid in Frisia in which the Geatish king Hygelac dies, and it has been argued that this is an important part of the narrative of the poem (as the raid is referred to five times) in terms of problems with the Geatish royal lineage (symbolised by the neck-ring he wore). However, it presumably is a historic event in the first half of the sixth century. Besides appearing in *Beowulf*, it can also be found in three other, largely independent sources (Biggs 2014, 139-56). According to Biggs (2014, 141), one source depends on English oral tradition, whilst one or two others depend on Frisian oral tradition, suggesting that this historic story was circulating both in Frisia and in England.47

With *Beowulf* and the *Finnsburh Fragment*, we again have a story presenting the triangle of south Scandinavia, Frisia and Anglo-Saxon England. The poem and the fragment are concerned with a story, which is recorded in Anglo-Saxon England, of the Geats and Danes, and their relationship with the Frisians. The significance of *Beowulf* is thus not only that it preserves legends of the Germanic Migration Period past, but the fact that there was a reason for these Germanic, southern Scandinavian/southern North Sea tales being recorded in England between the seventh and tenth centuries, as well as an audience for whom they were recorded. Davis argues that the most likely moment for an interest in this material is the period of settlement of the Danelaw and the treaty between Guthrum and Alfred in the late ninth century, according to which Guthrum is taken as Alfred’s godson. This circumstance, and the use of similar terms in *Beowulf* and the anglicised stories of Ohthere, makes Davis believe the story was recorded in the court of Alfred. The reason must have been that he, in using the story, is making a case for banding together with the new Danes (Davis, 119-20). Another reason for doing this is that Alfred traces his own ancestry to Scyld on his father’s side and to the Jutes, Geats and Goths on his mother’s side (Davis 2006, 123). As Niles argues, drawing on the work of Roberta Frank, a connection to the Goths was seen as most favourable in the ninth century in Europe, one of the reasons why the Goths are so positively described in Widsith (Niles 1999, 187, referring to Frank). In addition, there was an increasing political context in which the different Germanic traditions could be merged, or as Davis (2006, 126) states, ‘...towards the end of his reign, King Alfred’s expanded political horizons produced a cultural moment in which a number of traditions, from various sources – narrative and learned, Saxon, Jutish, Anglian and

47 One of which turns the Geats into Danes, possible due to the contemporary situation.
48 Interestingly, Biggs (2014) argues that the whole story is connected to the theme of succession to the throne and a contradiction between the Germanic and Christian traditions of it. The story helped to explain the problems and traditions in a period during which new Christian rule was introduced. As such, it is a parallel to the Frisian law codes, which similarly use stories of the past and connections with other Germanic people (i.e. Danes) to present the case of transition from heathen to Christian and from Northern Germanic to Frankish. In both cases, the historic Germanic, North Sea relations and events are used to explain and frame contemporary situations, and in both cases we see historic events connected to fiction and flexible chronologies.
Norse – could all be coordinated into a more comprehensive historical framework – a new tradition of the past – which could then be used in turn to enhance the agenda (or at least the self-esteem) of the royal family. Even if Beowulf is indeed older than the ninth century, as the most recent volume on the text’s date convincingly argues (Neidorf 2014), the arguments for its circulation and use, and even recording in the context of Alfred’s court still have merit, and the story would still have had ample reason for finding an audience and relevance there.

The relations between different Germanic people can be found in several sources. In the long list of tribal names of mainly Germanic tribes between the third and sixth centuries as recorded in *Widsith* (ed. and trans. Chambers 2010), we can find the Frisians, who are said to be ruled by Finn Folcwaldin. As has been pointed out by Bremmer (1981, 81), the fact that in *Widsith* the Frisians are mentioned together with the Franks shows that they somehow are related to each other in heroic lore, at least at the time of recording and before. Although this is from before the Viking Age, we also see Frisians in connection to the tribal list in the *Exeter Book*, probably compiled in the late ninth century at the court of Alfred the Great (Pritsak 1981, 114). This is the case in *Beowulf* too, where the Geats under Hygelac go on a raid against the Frisians and are eventually defeated by Frisians, Franks and the Germanic tribe *Hetware*, situated north of the Rhine. The occurrence of Frisians in battle-lists is not restricted to the Scandinavian panegyric or the Anglo-Saxon epic. It also appears in the Scandinavian and Frankish traditions from both the Viking Age itself and before, as can be seen in the panegyric for Childeric (cf. Lebecq 1983, 17-18), and in that of the Norwegian King Óláfr Tryggvason, as mentioned above.

**Myths of origin**

What *Beowulf* has in common with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the Frisian law codes, is that it represents a form of myth of origin. In each case, this is related to a first person or persons arriving in a boat. In the Frisian law texts, the reference to the Frisians in ships coming ashore must be a fossilised reference or topos from earlier times and a ‘social memory’ of the new Frisians arriving in Frisia. It may be seen as the fossilised traces of a ‘myth of origin’. As pointed out earlier, the central elements to this ‘myth of origin’ in the Frisian tradition are that there were three people/groups/ships that sailed from an island over the sea to Frisia, where they went ashore and settled. The Frisian myth of origin is thus a migration myth, just like for many other European peoples. In addition, it is of a maritime character, so the origin and identity of the Frisians are thus placed in a framework of the maritime world. This is a very different framework than that of the Frankish sphere, and it can perhaps be said to become replaced by the Frankish framework in the myth of origin of the Frisian freedom. There are some correspondences with the Anglo-Saxon myth of origin, however. The myth of origin for the Anglo-Saxons must be taken primarily from the ASC. It is a story of maritime travel, arrival on new shores, warfare and conquest that is shared for Kent, Wessex and Sussex. Another standard feature is that the Anglo-Saxons arrive in three ships. The Kentish myth of origin
is said to be the earliest and most detailed one, which came to stand for the myth of origin for all Anglo-Saxons. Primary figures in this myth (which also is recorded in Bede and the *Historia Brittonum*) are the leaders Hengest and Horsa – two names referring to horses. Some scholars have suggested these are purely mythical figures, while others believe they are historical figures and leaders of the Germanic troops in the fifth century (Henson 2006, 60). It is interesting that Hengest as a character also figures in later tales, as a Jutish leader who is associated with both Danes and Frisians (Henson 2006, 60), such as in the *Finnsburh Fragment* and in *Beowulf*. In *Beowulf*, an idea of origins connected to shipping is also found in the description of Scyld Seafaring, who arrived in Jutland alone in a boat (*Beowulf* lines 43-6; ed. and trans. Chickering 1989, 50-1). What the ASC reveals is how the English elite of Alfred’s day, and most likely his court circle, saw or needed to see their origins. Both in the Frisian and the Anglo-Saxon sources, seafaring and migrating has left fossilised traces in the later literature and other written sources.

Howe (1989) identified an Anglo-Saxon myth of migration as one of the leading and controlling political ideas. According to Niles (2007, 16-17), following the theory of Hodges on the post-Roman Germanisation of Britain, this migration myth was first and foremost a ‘projection of desire’ of the non-Roman inhabitants. Recently, it has been argued that this idea of myth of origin may also be seen in the idea of stranger kings; kings that represent the foreign. The idea developed by Andres Dobat (2015) draws upon the work of Mary Helms. Not only in texts like *Beowulf*, but possibly also in the Frisian myth of origin, this idea of stranger-kings, perhaps better described as stranger-founders, can be found. But it is also present in materialised forms, according to Dobat (2015). A case in point would be the Jellinge complex in Denmark, whilst boat-burials in general could possibly be seen as a reference to the arrival of a person, generation or nation by boat (Dobat 2015, 162). It must be stressed that unlike in Scandinavia and the British Isles, clear boat burials have not been found in Frisia, apart from one in Solleveld which is pre-Viking Age. However, boat-clinkers from Viking Age contexts and the re-use of ship timber have, indicating the possibly similar traditions at some point. Be that as it may, in the Frisian narrative material there are some elements linking up to this idea of arrival. Not only the myth of origin, but also the coming of law and of a new religion is connected to an arriving ship, as was pointed out above. Furthermore, the idea of foreign rulership in broader terms has been theorised and shown to be of importance for pre-modern societies following the idea that power is seen as something of external origin. We can clearly see this idea in the portrayal of both Redbad and Charlemagne, the latter who is indeed ‘foreign’ or external whilst the former is Frisian, but transformed into a foreign Dane. One of the characteristics of foreign rulership as identified by Dobat (2015, 164-5) is that the mythical foreign king is associated with innovations, including new laws or new forms of organisation. This is quite true for Redbad and particularly so for Charlemagne: the first is said to have made the Frisians heathen, whilst the latter is said to have made them Christian, Frank and free and granted them their laws and privileges. In a broader perspective, it is also connected to leading figures and
their followers, as well as to the incorporation of advisors, foreign warriors and the like (Dobat 2015, 165). What immediately comes to mind is the Northman who leads the Frisians in the battle against Rodulf – a ‘stranger-leader’ – as well as the multi-ethnic warbands that likely included Frisians, as discussed above. The idea of prestige and power connected to the foreign or external would amply explain why it is specifically mentioned that someone is a Frisian in an Anglo-Viking context, and why we should not think of Frisian as only denoting trader. Similarly, it may explain why Alfred is connected with technological innovations and needs to claim his Germanic ancestry. Those who are not stranger-kings themselves can use external actors, heritage and material as elements of their political strategy. This is clearly seen in the narrative materials about the early Germanic period, the myths of origin, and their use in the Viking Age and the twelfth to the thirteenth century.

Maritime mentality as part of (self-)identification

Frisia’s connection to the Viking Age North Sea sphere is centred around the sea and maritime identity, both physically and in the mind and mythology. The archaeological case studies will show that a number of typical Viking Age jewellery and dress-accessory types, both male and female, which were spread around the North Sea, particularly the Danelaw and Denmark, also occur in Frisia. Frisian examples and perhaps Frisian imitations of Anglo-Saxon and Viking objects fill the blanks spots on the map, creating an image of a coastal distribution around the entire southern North Sea coast. This archaeological image is a reflection of and reflected in the maritime identity.

As a maritime society, the Frisians are connected to seafaring and the sea, just as in what is here termed their ‘myth of origin’. But, also outside of Frisia itself, the Frisians are paired with the sea and seafaring. The most famous reference to a Frisian in Old English literature must be the passage on the Frisian sailor’s wife in the Gnomic Verses of the Exeter Book (Maxims I). The picture it paints is quite vivid and shapes our idea of a Frisian seaman. Most scholars agree that it is not the case that a Frisian wife is more loyal or faithful than others and that this is not what the verse is about. The verse paints the picture of life at sea and life at home, probably a realistic picture, and the Frisian sailor is the image chosen for it. According to Bremmer (1981, 74-5) and Shippey (1972, 154), this is because it is a picture of everyday reality and because the Anglo-Saxons care for detail in these texts. This tells us that at least the Frisian sailor was a well-known image for the Anglo-Saxon audience in the time of King Alfred (king of Wessex 871-99); the Frisians’ reputation as seamen apparently was widespread and recognisable. As has been pointed out by Whitbread (1946), this indeed was the case in the late ninth century, when we also have the references to Alfred’s fleet including Frisians. This is in the year 896 when the ASC (s.a. 896, 89-90, ed. and trans. Swanton 1996, mentions Alfred had his fleet of warships built after its own design, not Danish or Frisian, so there was awareness of a Frisian type of ship. In the list of casualties on

48 The idea that the poem paints the picture of a Frisian wife being extremely faithful was most recently put forward by Michael Pye in his popular The Edge of the World (2014) and has proved to be stubborn within popular discourse.
Alfred’s side in a sea-battle against the Danes in that same year, three Frisians are specifically mentioned; Wulfheard, Æbbe and Ælfhere. Possibly, these were Frisian mercenaries (Whitbread, 1946; Alexander, 1991) perhaps hired by for making and sailing the new warships. This appears to be historical information, which makes it logical that the Frisian seaman is chosen as a topos in the Exeter Book verse. Asser, in his Life of King Alfred, lists people of various backgrounds serving Alfred, including Franks, Frisians, Gauls, Vikings, Welshmen, Irishmen and Bretons (Swanton 1996, 91 note 11). According to Swanton (1996) and Lebecq (1983), the Frisian mercenaries could have been refugees of the Viking activity in Frisia, but this is highly speculative.

In early medieval Old English texts, the tidal area or coastal landscape, as it must have been known in Britain and Frisia alike, is represented as a liminal area. A realm between mankind and other powers, and liminal in the sense of human authority (Sobecki 2011, 90). Perhaps the coastal zone was not liminal in a literary sense alone; as great meeting places they often are beyond the direct control of authorities (Loveluck 2012, 160). The Frisians are dwellers in this liminal tidal landscape, and are directed towards the sea. This provides a combination of liminality and connectivity, and distinguishes the Frisians from the more inland-living Franks, even though they also had access to the coast and the rivers. Simultaneously, it provided the perfect opportunity for the Frisians to function as middlemen in a much wider context than just that of trade. The idea of Maritime Cultural Landscapes was formulated by Westerdahl (1992), who explains that living in the coastal zones and being active in seafaring, and having access to coastal areas elsewhere, created the maritime mentality and identity. This, in turn, is reflected in the literary products of the time, as we can see from the examples discussed here. The place of the sea in the mental world of the Anglo-Saxons has been noted by Susan Rose (1992), just as the place in the Viking mental world has been studied by Jesch (2001). From the discussion of the Frisian law codes earlier, we can safely assume that the same role of the maritime is true for the Frisian texts and the Frisian mental world.

The position of Frisians along the coast and waterways had provided their role as traders and middlemen in the early medieval period. As mentioned above, it has even been argued that the word ‘Frisian’ became synonymous with trader in this period (Lebecq 1990). Although it may be true that many Frisians were traders and that sometimes Frisian equals trader, this is certainly not always the case, as many references to Frisian and Frisia can be found that clearly are not referring to trade or traders. For instance, the episode on the Frisians – including the Frisian clergy – having to leave York after one Frisian trader killed a local, the title of dux Frisionum that is given to Ubbi, as well as the appearance of the name Frisian in battle-lists along other tribe-names and groups are all cases in point. Nonetheless, two occurrences of ‘Frisian’ in a Scandinavian context may indeed be related to trading. These are the frisa kilter mentioned on two runestones from Sigtuna in Sweden. On runestones U379 and U391 we find the following respective carvings (from the Samnordisk runtextdatabas):
Both texts were carved by Thorbjorn and have a similar structure. Members of the Frisian guild erected these stones to commemorate Thor(kel?) and Albod, who were their comrades. What the Frisian guilds entail is uncertain (see Jesch 2001), and two other runic references to guilds do not provide much information either. These runic references are from the early eleventh century when Sigtuna (founded in 970) was a booming international trading town and more than 150 runic stones were erected. Possibly, the Frisian guild was connected to this international trade, but whether ‘Frisian’ should then be seen as meaning ‘trader’ or ‘trade with Frisia’ or ‘traders from Frisia’ is uncertain.

Frisians were not only middlemen in the sense of trade, but also fulfilled the role of geographical middlemen and cultural intermediaries (Ijsennagger 2013a). Because of their geographical and cultural position, they have an intermediary position and always stand out. This intermediary position is exemplified by the process of Christianisation of Frisia and the long period of syncretism; the way in which Frisians could function in both the Frankish Christian and northern non-Christian world; and the way they could accept currency and objects from both worlds. This interesting, special position is probably the main reason why they were widely known and thus pop up in sources from many different places. This special position must have been maintained over a long period of time: the Frisians would call it ‘Frisian freedom’. And it is exactly this intermediary position that made it necessary for Frisians to choose sides in the Frisian laws.

4.4 General remarks: the textual sources considered
Looking at all the analysed sources, we can see a pattern in the moments when the sources relating to the shared history of Frisians and the Viking world were composed or recorded, and where. This ties up with the periods and moments we have established in the methodology in Chapter 3. In addition, we can highlight the most important themes and aspects that occur.

In the Anglo-Saxon context, the formation of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms seems to be an important factor. It is in this context, and mostly at the courts of King Alfred and other kings, that we see many references to Germanic people in the past and present. There apparently is a need in these circles to deal with the multi-ethnic groups living in their kingdoms, including Vikings, and a need to consolidate their power, providing a socio-political context for using and rewriting the shared myths.
and stories of the Germanic people. It is striking how many of the sources have a supposed connection to the court of Alfred, which indicates that there was fertile ground for these stories in this particular time, place and socio-political context (i.e. social reality), with the idea in mind of the foreign and external as a source of power. The legendary material of the fifth and sixth centuries – the period of Germanic migrations to England and the arrival of new Frisians, as well as the Heroic Age of Germanic legend – which was formed around the formative events of that time, has left its traces not only in the Anglo-Saxon material, but also in the Frisian. Texts, stories and objects, including their iconography, have the ability to actively form and promote an idea or ideology; therefore, these tales, with their condensed histories, seem an important way of shaping this present with the use of the past. Niles (1999, 194) argues that the ideology is particularly promoted by ‘narratives of the past, which (especially when circulated with official blessing) can be an effective instrument for the dissemination of what McNeill has called mythistories. Such stories take on the form of myths of national origin.’ This, an argument Niles developed in study of Widsith, not only holds true for the Anglo-Saxon material, but applies to the Frisian material as well. In the Old Frisian texts too, narratives of the past are used for the political present and the migration myth of origin is formed, with the arrival by boat and the origin of the Frisian laws given blessing (whether pagan or Christian). As such, these texts could help consolidate the existing or desired political unity and situation, even over a period of time and projected backwards. What is needed to accomplish this is a text that reaches its audience, and law codes as well as poetry that can be performed seem well suited to reach many people. In the case of the law codes, their official status may further help this cause.

In addition to the use of older traditions in the Viking Age and later, we have the contemporary sources that record the Viking activity itself, such as the Irish and the Frankish texts. In such a turbulent period as the ninth century, Scandinavian panegyric is also concerned with placing the Vikings and their kings in the context of the other Germanic peoples whom they were raiding and subduing, in order to justify their actions and look for a new coherence in the multi-ethnic realm. Throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries, we see traditions on Vikings and Frisians, or connections between the different areas, circulating in north-east England and in Normandy. Here, the Viking Age itself is the topic and is used for different purposes of history telling, either the history of counts or vitae.

Finally, we see that in the thirteenth century in different areas of Europe, the recording and placing of the historical material becomes important. This period was transformative for the establishment of the identity of the individual nations. Traditionally, the histories produced in this period look into a myth of origin, into the early mythological material and try to connect it to a history from the Migration Period or Viking Period onwards into the thirteenth century. At the start of and throughout the Viking Age proper, Frisian history is characterised by the constant struggle between North and South, between heathenism and Christianity, between Franks and Vikings, past and present. By the end of the Viking Age, with their
status as Christians under the Franks more firmly entrenched, the Frisians had to still deal with the legacy of the Vikings and the sea, the heathenness and the earlier alliance with this terrible North, even in law and tales. Here, we see the clear movement of spheres and Frisia’s position in it. It is most striking that the Frisian textual material is so occupied with creating a distance to the past, the North, heathenism and Vikings, whilst simultaneously showing between the lines how the Frisians and Vikings were in contact and partly still heathen. The need that was felt to create this distance must have been triggered by a social (and political) reality at the time, and this can only be explained by the fact that it could not be taken at face value that the Frisians had distanced themselves from this heathen North, Vikings and the past. So whilst shouting that they had nothing to do with either the northern world or heathenism, they point us to that, in fact, they had, and this problematic past they deal with by projecting it on the Viking world. Taken together then, the Frisian corpus does show connectivity with the ‘Viking’ North before and even after incorporation into the Frankish realm. Mostly this connectivity is depicted in a negative way, by Vikings coming to Frisia as enemies and Frisians going North as captives or as the result of a punishment. Nevertheless, between the lines, we also get the feeling that some Frisians were still more northward-oriented than others would have liked. Most of all, however, the Frisian texts reveal how the Viking North is within the horizon of Frisians from the Viking Age onward. Whilst being directed at codifying Frisian law in the contemporary context, the texts contain a version of Frisian history – not a chronological or factual history, but a constructed, condensed and mythologised one.

So what we ultimately see is Migration Period events and connections through a Viking Age lens, and Viking Age events and connections through a Viking Age and thirteenth-century filter. The focus of composition and recording of the material in these periods follows from their nature as transformative moments, which of course may vary across the North Sea world. The texts that follow from them can be said to represent collective memory, which comprises both history and myth and does so according to its own manner in time. This means that the collective memory as expressed in the sources follows different rules than our modern ideas of historical fact, authorship and chronology, resulting in the possibility of starting the history in mythological times and employing epic concentration. In addition, it should be clear that many of the sources draw from a shared pool of material and traditions spread over time and space, also sometimes drawing upon each other. What it shows is that Frisian, British, Scandinavian, Irish, Norman and Frankish traditions are all tied together in some way during the Viking Age and concerning the Viking Age. These traditions, and the combination of all the hints in the studied texts, show a recurring connectivity between Frisia and the Viking sphere. The traditional problems of studying Frisia in the Viking Age, namely that there are no contemporary sources penned by Frisian writers, very few archaeological traces of Viking activity in Frisia, and the idea persists that ‘Frisian’ is synonymous with ‘trader’, can thus partly be overcome by approaching Frisia in the Viking Age from a different angle, by thinking of the information from the various sources as an
image of a sculpted landscape picked up by radar and as bearing crucial information to our understanding of the Viking Age through different modes of relevance.

Fig. 4.1 The North Sea world in the Viking Age with highlighted areas indicated in, or of importance for, the textual sources (for instance as place of recording).