APPENDIX 1
The Textual Corpus
Since the written references to Frisia and Frisians in relation to the Viking Age and in the North Sea world are found in sources from different times, areas and traditions, the corpus can be built up and divided in several ways. The present corpus, which is presented below according to the area of provenance, is formed on the basis of a number of deliberate, and sometimes practical, choices.

First of all, the Frankish historical sources are not part of the core textual corpus that is analysed extensively, but their well-studied information is merely used in comparison to other sources to provide contextual information. For this reason, they are still briefly discussed here as a source type. As this first decision leaves us with a group of vernacular and Latin texts connected with different regions around the North Sea as our core corpus, it has been decided that both texts in the vernacular and in Latin can be included. Where possible these are consulted in their original language but sometimes they are consulted only in translation out of necessity. Moreover, the choice was made to include Norman sources, despite the fact that Normandy is not one of our research areas. This has been done based on the argumentation that Normandy can be seen as part of the Viking world or as strongly related to it, and, most importantly, because the Norman sources hold interesting and relevant information on our topic. In addition, all types and genres of text can be included, as text-typological criteria are not of primary importance in this study. The result of this is that there is a wide range of textual material included in the corpus, which needs to be looked at in its own right. Finally, texts from a variety of periods are included, as long as they have an established relevance to the Viking Age and we can determine where exactly this relevance lies. Here, contemporaneity is not fundamental and it is recognised that the representations of the Viking Age as layered, textualised social memory are just as important.

On the other hand, the current choices also mean that a number of sources from larger bodies of text types are not discussed, with only a few being picked out. For instance from the body of vitae and legends connected to (martyrs through) Viking activity, examples of which are the holy Sunniva in Bergen, Norway or the holy Agatha, who came to rescue a girl that was harassed by the Danish Rorik where Beverwijk now is, only some, like the vita of Walfridus and Radfridus, are used as the most informative and well-documented examples for our topic.

The main reasoning that governs these choices is that the textual evidence for the Viking Age connectivity of Frisia and the North Sea World is relatively scarce but, above all, extremely scattered and fragmentary. For instance, due to the history of writing in Frisia, Frisian sources consist of a small corpus of post-Viking Age law codes that bear reminders of the Viking Age and the relation between Frisia and the Viking world, including Viking attacks. On the other hand, the Frisians and Frisia are a recurring topic in the Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and Frankish sources, and are also sometimes referred to in Irish and Norman sources. Therefore, we need to look for these glimpses of information and use them in combination with each other.

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99 This particularly goes for the Old Irish chronicles, but also some Latin texts.
Below, the textual corpus and its Viking Age relevance will be introduced, in order to provide the necessary background information for the content analysis of Chapter 4. The Viking Age relevance of the sources can be seen by the combination of the layers or moments in a text’s life span in relation to the Viking Age and surrounding periods, as set out in Chapter 3:

1. Moment of events (real or imaginary)
2. Moment of composition (this may be a single moment or last centuries)
3. Moment of recording (or moment of inscription).

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

Again it must be stressed that what is presented here is by no means a full corpus of texts relevant for the Viking Age, but a short discussion of those sources that are selected for analysis in the case studies of Chapter 4. Since the Frisian corpus is less well known to the non-Frisian audience than the Scandinavian and British sources, and least extensively discussed elsewhere in relation to Viking studies, it will get the fullest discussion here.

**Frisian sources**


In comparison to the other regions discussed here, the vernacular textual literary tradition in Frisia started relatively late. From the period up to the twelfth century, which is called the Proto Old-Frisian period, the Frisian corpus consists of a number of Anglo-Frisian runic inscriptions which do not date later than the ninth century (Looijenga and Knol 1990; Looijenga 2003, 325-8). Before the vernacular tradition of writing commenced, we can expect a period of oral transmission of stories, laws and other narratives (see Bremmer 2014 for a fuller study of the orality of the Frisian laws). It was Charlemagne who, at the incorporation of Frisia around 800, initiated the first recording of Frisian law codes in writing, the *Lex Frisionum*, as was the case for other incorporated people in the other *Leges Barbarorum*. Next to these Latin texts, there are a number of Old Frisian glosses, which are considered the oldest fragments in Old Frisian. The oldest fragment known to date is a recently discovered fragment with Old Frisian glosses dating to about 1125 (Langbroek 2015).

The Old Frisian period, which lasts up to c. 1550, is the period in which the texts that are of interest to us were written down. Almost all of these texts are collections of law codes or texts related to Frisian law, which incorporate legendary, mythological and ideological material. The laws are sometimes valid for the entire Frisian area, while sometimes they are specifically connected to a Frisian region. For example, ten of sixteen codices containing Old Frisian law texts are related to the area between the Lauwers and the Weser rivers (Vries 2007, 11-13). The different
surviving textual representations of Old Frisian law also originated or survived in different parts of the Frisian area and are named accordingly: First Rüstringer Codex (R1), Second Rüstringer Codex (R2), First and Second Brookmer Codex (B1 and B2), First, Second and Third Emsinger Codex (E1, E2 and E3), Fivelgoër Codex (F), First and Second Hunsinger Codex (H1 and H2). Six other codices were name after their owners, such as Codex Unia (U), Jus Municipale Fresonum (J) and Roorda (R), or after their form in print such as Druk (D) (Vries 2007, 12). Of these, the R1 and B1 are the oldest, written around 1300 or shortly before.

Most notable of the Frisian law collections in these codices are the *Zeventien Keuren* (Seventeen Statutes) and *Vierentwintig Landrechten* (Twenty-four Land Laws), which are very often bracketed together and called the core of Frisian vernacular law. One of the reasons for this status is the fact that they are valid for the entire Frisian area, even though there are several redactions of the text which bear small differences in details (Vries 2007, 51). Another reason may be that they are not as influenced by Roman and canon law, or the Frankish cultural filter, as some other collections of regulations. Both of these collections were formed over a longer period of time, possibly starting not long after the Frankish conquest of the eighth century, and have contained and kept some of the early regulations and information (Vries 2007, 11-25). In the *Vierentwintig Landrechten*, we even encounter two regulations that are recorded in an oral structure, as if they were being spoken at the thing (Vries, 54; Bremmer 2014). As noted by Bremmer (2014, 5), these collections were also formed from the bottom up and not the top down as often was the case elsewhere. Where the *Vierentwintig Landrechten* differs from the *Zeventien Keuren* – both of which are rather eclectic collections – is that it is only concerned with internal Frisian matters, and not with the Franks, counts or others. This text is presumed to be slightly younger than the *Zeventien Keuren* but there are a number of regulations that bear a resemblance (Vries 2007, 54). Other specific collections that are important in relation to our topic are the *Magnuskeuren* (Statutes of Magnus), the *Overkeuren* (Superior Statutes) and the *Oudere Schoutenrecht* (Older Magistrates’ Law).

It is interesting to note that the first written texts in the Frisian vernacular were thus texts relating to Frisian law, at least as far as we can tell from the surviving material. In addition, these were written down in the vernacular since the beginning. Although they were first recorded in the thirteenth century, the origin of the contents of the different collections of law codes and related texts may be earlier (before 1050), and not confined to one time period. First of all, we can expect a period of oral transmission of the content, an idea that may be reinforced by the presence of rhyme in the text and by instances of reference to ‘as ancestors did’ (Bremmer 2004, 67; 2014). In general, collections of law codes have a rather

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100 The Statutes and Land Laws in many manuscripts are preceded by a prologue. In this prologue, which is meant to give a context to the laws, Frisian law writing is placed in the context of God as giver of these laws. In addition, this is placed in the chronology of the history of rulers, starting with Julius Caesar, who all underscribed these laws of God. Hereafter, a list of kings since Roman times is given, including famous figures such as Atilla the Hun (Bremmer 2004, 114-8; Vries 2007, 51).
organic mode of coming into existence, growing when laws are added. It seems easier to add a new law than to remove an old one – even today this is the case. Through this process, they become layered, and this is the same for law collections elsewhere (cf. Brink 2013). Given the nature of the law texts, which was highly static once formed, they are believed to preserve a core of older regulations that perhaps first were transmitted orally by asegas – the law speakers – at the thing. Possibly because Frisia remained a region with a certain amount of autonomy – the Frisian freedom – the law codes developed slightly different here than in neighbouring areas. Elsewhere the Germanic law codes gradually gave way to more territorially based law codes, whereas in Frisia it seems that the personal and territorial aspects gradually integrated. Since Frisia still had its own law-speaking practice, new laws and older laws were able to survive, meaning that much of the Frisian juridical corpus was based on evolved Germanic law. Collections of early medieval Germanic law, or the Leges Barbarorum, were all tribal rights, based on the principle of personality. Some aspects of these old legal rules and practices became fossilised into later law writing. In addition, this setting of free Frisian men practicing law at a thing, which must have been the practice since early medieval times, seemed to remain largely the same. This could explain the continuity of old legal material into the thirteenth century (Nijdam 2009, 47; Vries 2007, 17-18).

Secondly, some of the law codes seem to date from not long after the Frankish conquest of Frisia, and thus from around the same time as the Lex Frisionum. In any case, some codes at least seem to provide a terminus ante quem, the instances where Viking activity is mentioned would have to date from at least the end of the period of Viking activity in the area, which was shortly after 1000. Some other texts that do not incorporate specific older laws may nonetheless contain older information that has been transmitted and survived through many generations. They allude to a Frisia in which Vikings, Franks and maritime environments are important agents and aspects. It has been stressed before, although perhaps not enough and not linked to international Viking Studies per se, how essential it is that Vikings figure in the Frisian law text, under various names, amongst which wītzing and northmon, for the study of the Viking Age. First of all, this is because it is one of the few instances where we have Vikings in the vernacular texts, which, as discussed above, is important for the estimated date of the texts. But the main reason has to do with the nature of the texts, namely law codes, which have a different purpose than prose and poetry. The essence of the law texts is the codification of general matters that, in terms of law-speaking, are relevant, important and recurrent enough in daily life for the community of the time to take measures against and to codify. As the Frisian legal texts codify law from a Frisian perspective, but within a larger Frankish framework, Vikings often seem to be exclusively in

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101 Meaning that people were judged according to their group of origin instead of the region in which they were presently located, i.e. Frisians were under Frisian law, Saxons under Saxon law etc. This means that within one territory there was legal plurality.

102 This is the reason why Rolf Bremmer (2004, 80; 2014) proposes these laws cannot be younger than 1050.

103 See Chapter 4 for the full list of names under which Vikings occur in the Frisian sources.
opposition to the Frisians. However, on close reading the texts’ multiple layers, other aspects and possibilities appear, such as cooperation. Furthermore, some stylistics aspects and the way in which facts are transformed can be tied to a more oral and poetic tradition, and we shall discuss the function and ‘mythologisation’ of the information below. Here we encounter a number of things that we would not classify as factual now, such as the transposition of known kings to a different time and place, as well as some stylistic devices such as *kennings* and metaphors, which seem to be more suited to a poetic tradition. What poetic texts and law collections, despite their different form and type, have in common, however, is their role in containing elements, traditions, information and events, albeit in a different way. This means that poetry, prose and legal texts may all reflect Viking Age events and connections. One way or the other, the fact that Vikings are given a place, and a prominent one, in these Frisian law texts does tell us how present they were in Frisian society (Wilts 1980, 196-7) and in the mental world of that society. In addition, the occurrence of Vikings as a central aspect in the Frisian laws has preserved the idea of Vikings for centuries, and many texts and traditions in medieval and later times have reverted to these texts because of that.

One of the problematic aspects when using the Frisian corpus, besides the distance between the time of the events and the time of recording, is the extent to which it is influenced by the Christian Frankish historiography. This appears to differ per text. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the *Lex Frisionum* was written down in Latin as commanded by Charlemagne, and is therefore clearly recorded within a Frankish power framework, but within the Frisian cultural sphere. Nonetheless, it is uncertain by whom and for whom exactly the text is recorded. For the texts in the vernacular, the contextual situation of recording is more difficult to establish. The texts are clearly recorded in Old Frisian and in a Frisian cultural context, but as shown by Vries (2007, 25) the mental world of the Frisians as expressed in the texts is influenced by the Franks. This is at least the case for the contemporary situation that the law codes record, one of Frisia in a Frankish and Christian world, but otherwise the texts record many Frisian historical and mythological elements. In the way the law codes sometimes use this historical and mythological material, we can see reference to the Frankish world. Specifically, this is conveyed through positive descriptions of this ‘southern world’, and painting a negative picture of the heathen, Viking North. It appears that the vernacular laws in their written form – aside from their more ‘Frisian’ core – not only record this Frankish-influenced view of Frisian history, but were also used to enforce this view. Be that as it may, the Frisian law texts still give us a different perspective than the Frankish annals and chronicles.

The Frisian laws represent the experiences of the Frisian people, such as Viking attacks and heathenism, and the way they are trying to regulate these experiences, even within a now Frankish or ‘Franquilised’ framework. The fact that we know most texts from the thirteenth century may also argue for the Frankish influence on the Frisian laws. The thirteenth century was a formative period for the Frisian freedom, which in the texts is perhaps surprisingly connected to this Francisation
or ‘Franquilisation’ of Frisia, and the period following the second Christianisation. This process, which started with the appearance of the monasteries, was necessary to definitively Christianise all of Frisia since, according to Schmidt (1987), the earlier Christianisation process was not entirely successful due to the Viking disruptions. The recording of the laws in the thirteenth century may thus not surprise us, since it was such an important, formative period. It must be connected to the specific political situation of the time, which meant that Frisia, as one of few areas in north-western Europe, was not formally ruled by an external landlord, but arranged its own matters as the seven areas of Frisia (Bremmer 2004, 114). This can be called a form of autonomy that needed to be codified, explained and justified. The Frisian freedom is also the core of the Frisian corpus, and most texts are in some way concerned with it. This is why Nijdam has termed the Frisian law codes ‘a pamphlet for the freedom ideology’ (Nijdam 2009, 55).

Whereas together, the law texts represent the entire Frisian area from Weser to Zwin, they do not necessarily represent all Frisians. In his study of the Vikings in the East, Pritsak (1981) points out that the Frisian laws clearly are the laws of the pacified, Christian Frisians. This means those Frisians who were allied with Francia and with Rome, as it is also reflected in some of the texts (Pritsak 1981, 491-8). We can, therefore, perhaps call them Franco-Frisians. It should be noted that Pritsak, like Vries, points to the Frankish-influenced view expressed in the sources, but only for a group of Frisians. According to him, the pacified Frisians who are represented by these laws should be distinguished from the non-pacified Frisians, the independent merchants travelling north and east on trading campaigns (Pritsak 1981, 491-8). These we can perhaps call Frisians or ‘Scando-Frisians’ or ‘Dano-Frisians’ and ‘Anglo-Frisians’. Ultimately then, the Frisian law texts seem to present us with very layered stories, containing elements from the beginning of the Viking Age, and perhaps even earlier, up to the thirteenth century. The older, heathen Frisian core is sometimes still there between the lines, but is covered by a thick layer of the Christian, pacified and Frankish-influenced view. In some cases, these later layers are in fact referring to the older core, for instance to come to terms with it. The time scale that the Frisian corpus seems to function on is one of past and present, but it is a mythologised time, as well as one that sometimes places people next to each other who were not contemporaries. These characteristics make the texts very interesting, multi-layered sources that can tell us of Viking Age connectivity and the image of the Self and Other.

The idea of the special status of Frisia as a free area as granted by Charlemagne was also called upon in the early thirteenth-century lives of abbots at the monasteries of Mariengarde and Bloemhof in the Frisian area (see Algra 1991, 131). Besides the thirteenth-century law texts, we find a number of Frisian historiographical and apocryphal works in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries incorporating material from these traditions and reworking it into Frisian historical writings. This happens in Latin as well as in Frisian. It is interesting to see how these often-related texts use the Viking Age past. These texts, together known as the Gesta-cycle, similarly reflect this tradition of Frisian mythologised history that is also seen
in the law texts. According to Smithuis, Frisian historiography can be divided into contemporary and mythical narratives, the *Gesta-cycle* representing the latter, which 'moulds Frisian history into a Frisian mythology, showing a strong focus on the distant past and origin of the Frisian people' (2010, 79). Other apocryphal texts from the same period may also incorporate the same material, such as Sicke Benninge and Ocko Scharlensis.

In this study, the *Altfriesische Rechtsquellen* editions of the different Old Frisian texts by Buma and Ebel (1963-77) are used, besides the most recent editions of some texts as presented by Vries (2007). Differences between the different codices and editions may be pointed out where relevant. Since no full English editions of the Frisian law corpus yet exist, the translations into English are my own, based on the Old Frisian texts, including those found in the *Taal.databank*, and translations in Dutch and German by Vries and Buma and Ebel.

Frisian *vita* 1. B; 2. B/C; 3. C

In addition to the Frisian law codes, there is an interesting vita of a local saint whose martyrdom is ascribed to the attacking Vikings that we can see as part of the corpus from Frisia. This vita, often called *Passio s. Walfridi et Radfridi*, is preserved in four fifteenth-century manuscripts and has been edited and published by Remi van Schaïk (1985). It is uncertain who the author of the story is or when it was first written down, but again it is generally accepted that it was first transmitted orally for some time (Van Schaïk 1985, 13-19). Because of the content of the text, particularly the elements of the Viking attacks and the cultivation of the land that is described, as well as the age of the churches mentioned in the vita, Van Schaïk suggests that it was written sometime around AD 1100 (Van Schaïk 1985, 19-27). Although Walfrid and his son Radfrid are local saints of Bedum in the province of Groningen, the surviving manuscripts, which can be divided into a 'northern' and a 'southern' group (Van Schaïk 1985, 16), as well as the find of a fifteenth-century pilgrim’s badge of Walfrid in the Oosterschelde, attest that the story was known outside Bedum as well. Van Schaïk points out that it is quite unusual that this story was transmitted over such a long period of time in a largely Protestant area. This must mean that the story appealed to the people of Bedum and beyond in such a way that ensured the story’s preservation.

**Scandinavian sources**

The Scandinavian material that has some relevance for the discussion of Frisia in a Viking Age context can be divided into skaldic poetry, sagas and related tales and one gesta. The skaldic poetry is mostly contained in sagas, many of which again are contained in Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla*. Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) is well known for being the presumed author of *Heimskringla*, the *Prose Edda* and possibly *Egil’s saga* and can list Egill Skallagrimssonar as one of his forefathers.


*Heimskringla*, or ‘the Circle of the World’, is a cycle of sixteen sagas and a compilation of material from various sources, which records history from prehistory to Snorri’s time (late twelfth–early thirteenth century) (Whaley, 1991, 10-11). Although *Heimskringla* as we know it is anonymous, most scholars agree that Snorri must have been its composer (Whaley 1991, 14-17). Snorri was a rich and powerful layman, who also functioned as law-speaker at the thing and attained a high position at the Norwegian court, where he also composed panegyric poetry (Whaley 1991, 9). He himself figured in a number of sagas, particularly the Sturlunga saga collection about his family, composed by his nephew.

The compilation *Heimskringla* – a later title inferred from the first two words of the text – consists of sixteen individual sagas divided into chapters, which include prose and poetry from various sources. The first chapters start with the mythological prehistory and the Norwegian royal dynasty, which starts with Odin, who comes with his people to Scandinavia from the East. Following this are the sagas of various rulers, up to the twelfth century. As such, it ties up a distant mythological past with a nearer Viking and medieval past in a chronological manner. Frisia and Frisians appear in the Viking Age tales connected to a number of rulers, as we will see below when discussing the individual sagas and poems, which also may be contained in other manuscripts.

As it was written in the early thirteenth century, *Heimskringla* must be placed in the context of its own time. Like with the Frisian corpus, it was a period of transformation in Iceland that may partly account for the interest in the history of the Icelanders as transmitted in tales. Having been converted to Christianity around 1000, the ecclesiastical institution was still developing, and under the control of the archbishops of Lund and later Nidaróss (Whaley 1991, 24-6). Strong bonds with Norway also still existed in secular matters such as trade and service, as many Icelanders joined the retinues of Norwegian kings. Snorri, for instance, paid several visits to the Scandinavian mainland himself. Finally, in 1262, Iceland came under the rule of the Norwegian crown (Whaley 1991, 26–9).

Ultimately, *Heimskringla* is both the story of individual kings and a national history for the Icelanders and for the Norwegians. Snorri not only composed Heimskringla and separate sagas, but also the Snorra Edda, which is a treatise on myth and poetry. This shows how closely these types of material are connected. His work must have circulated and become quite popular since so many copies survive. The oldest version of *Heimskringla*-text is the manuscript Kringla which was written c. 1258-64, but which now, apart from one single page, survives only in paper copies as the manuscript was victim to the fire in Copenhagen in 1728 (Nordal 2001, 121). Five further major manuscripts exist and are used for most editions (Whaley 1991, 41-2). Although some elements are unique to *Heimskringla*, others have parallels elsewhere, which shows that the work is part of a tradition and that Snorri could rely on sources. Snorri himself claims at the beginning of the text that

it is based on traditions from wise men (Whaley 1991, 63-5), suggesting an oral basis. Within the sagas that are prose texts, much poetry is preserved, including panegyric poetry and battle lists. These snippets of poetry – in connection with the prose surrounding them, which indicates their context as perceived by Snorri and perhaps by tradition – portray Frisia as an element in the history of the Viking world of the Icelanders and Norwegians.

The Frisians are mentioned in a battle list in the Ólafsdrápa by Hallfredr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson in praise of King Óláfr Tryggvason (reign c. 995-1000) (Whaley 2012, 386). The Icelandic Hallfredr was court poet for Óláfr and most of his works are panegyrics for this king. Óláfr Tryggvason was later known as St Olaf and was one of the leading figures in Norway’s conversion to Christianity. It is believed that Hallfredr also became Christian under his influence. Apparently as a poet it was troublesome to change from pagan to Christian, resulting in his nickname ‘vandræðaskáld’, ‘troublesome-poet’ (Whaley 2012, 386).

Ólafsdrápa (often referred to as Hfr Óldr) consists of twenty-seven complete stanzas and ten helmingar (half-stanzas), describing Óláfr’s career including his Viking exploits (Whaley 2012, 387). The main component of the poem is a catalogue of the campaigns and triumphs of the king. It is the only contemporary skaldic poetry about Óláfr’s early Viking career and as such contains important historical value (Whaley 2012, 387). It remains uncertain whether it is one poem or if there were originally two. As with many other texts, the poem is contained in a number of sources, which have slight variations, particularly in the sequence of stanzas and the way in which prose narrative is combined with it. Whaley (2012, 387-9), therefore, distinguishes two medieval traditions, one contained in Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla and the Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar í mesta – which is the tradition interspersed with prose – and the other in the Fagrskinna and a version (MS 310) of the Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar by Oddr Snorrason. Altogether, both traditions of the drápa paint the same picture of raiding campaigns from Russia and the Baltic to the British Isles, including the southern North Sea area and Denmark and Norway, in a geographically logical way, despite the fact that the exact order of the original stanzas is unknown.

The Víkingarvísur – or verses about Viking voyages, a modern title – by the Icelandic skald Sighvatr Þórdarson in praise of Óláfr Haraldsson (reign c. 1015-28) of Norway are fifteen verses that are preserved together in the long and short versions of Óláfssaga by Snorri Sturluson (c. 1225-30). Although they are combined with prose, there is no doubt they belong together as a sequence (Fell 1981, 106). The verses are often included in the material with relevance for Frisia, despite the fact that Frisia or Frisians are not mentioned specifically (Jesch 2001, 82). The place kinnlimaside in one of the stanzas has often been equated with Kennemerland along the Frisian coast (present-day North Holland), following Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla and discussed in connection to the runic inscription from Senja (N 540) mentioning the Frisians. The verses have been deemed as some of the most historical of the Scandinavian verses, not least because they are contemporary, and as such are an interesting source for the Viking Age (Fell 1981, 106-07; ed. Jesch
Knútsdrápa, by Óttar svarti, was composed in honour of Cnut the Great and is preserved in Knýtlingasaga, some parts are also preserved in other texts, such as (again) the two Óláfs sagas by Snorri (Townend 2012, 767). Óttar – nicknamed the black – was an eleventh-century Icelandic skald who composed panegyric for several kings and patrons, including Cnut (Townend 2012, 738). The drápa for this king was probably composed c. 1027 (Townend 2012, 767; 2001, 157-61).

Another skaldic poem mentioning Frisians in a Viking Age context is Vellekla, or ‘Lack of Gold’ by the Icelandic skald Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, who must have lived c. 940-90. He appears to have been a friend of Egill Skallagrimssonar, but spent most of his time in Norway at the court of Hákon jarl Sigurðrson, for whom Vellekla is composed (Marold 2012, 278-80). It is a very long panegyric poem of thirty-seven stanzas that is preserved in various manuscripts, including Heimskringla (eighteen whole and four half-stanzas (Fidjestøl 1982, 97)) but in none of the manuscripts is it complete. Some of the stanzas are cited in biographies, such as that of Óláfr Tryggvason in Heimskringla (Marold 2012, 280). As such, there is some uncertainty as to whether all stanzas indeed belong to Vellekla or whether some are perhaps lausavísar. The poem is a drápa and has a clear structure with an introduction and then the various battles. Stanzas 25-28 are about the battle at the Danevirke, between the German Emperor Otto II and the Danish King Haraldr bláðǫnn, and it is here (in stanza 27) that we encounter the Frisians.


From the rich Scandinavian – mostly Icelandic – saga material, sagas about two characters are interesting in connection to Frisia and the Viking Age: Egill Skallagrimssonar and Ragnarr Loðbrók. Egils saga Skallagrimssonar is an early thirteenth-century Icelandic saga. The sagas main protagonist is, as the title indicates, Egill Skallagrimsson, who was a ninth- to tenth-century Viking and skald. As such, the story was written some three hundred years after the events described (Óskarsdóttir 2004, vii). Although the saga text itself is anonymous, scholars have suggested that it was likely composed by Snorri, as mentioned above.

The saga, which starts with the tale of his forefathers, tells of Egill’s many travels and dealings abroad. Although Egill is an Icelander of Norwegian descent, most of the saga takes place abroad in England, Scandinavia and on the Continent. The narrative is built into a historical framework and refers to political events in England and Norway, although not always exactly accurately (Óskarsdóttir, xi-xii). In addition, the narrative contains the various poems that are believed by most scholars to have been composed by the historical Egill, and are mostly, though not all, indeed thought to date to the tenth century (Óskarsdóttir 2004, xiii; Einarsson 2003, 186). These are an integral part of the narrative, and are skaldic verse. However, scholars still do not entirely agree on whether and to what extent the poems indeed are ninth- and tenth-century compositions handed down by oral tradition, or an integral part of the saga’s thirteenth-century composition as a whole (Einarsson 2003, 186).
According to Óskarsdóttir (2004, xii-xiii) the author must have drawn from oral accounts as well as on information from other written sources such as Landnámanbók. The oldest manuscript fragments of the saga are from the second half of the thirteenth century and the first full text is found in the Mödruvallabók (AM 132 fol.) from c. 1330-70 (Óskarsdóttir 2004, xiii; Einarsson 2003, ix-x). The saga is found in other, later manuscripts too, and in each manuscript the saga is divided into chapters, but not always in the same way (Einarsson 2003, ix-x).

Icelandic sagas can be divided into several types, and Egils saga (ES) belongs to the sagas of the Icelanders. As an early thirteenth-century saga, Egils saga may have been one of the first sagas of the Icelanders to have been written down. As their name suggest, these sagas deal with Icelanders and Icelandic families and are seen as a more historical type of saga than others (Meulengracht-Sørensen 1993, 172-81; Einarsson 2003, 183). Despite its historical value, as it concerns a historical character whose original poetry is recorded, the saga is permeated with humour and poetic diction, and is very much a product of the Christian and changing thirteenth-century Icelandic society and coloured by its author (Meulengracht-Sørensen 1993, 172-81). Authors of the Icelanders’ sagas were free to rework the stories and material on Icelanders who lived in the ninth and tenth centuries, and as such these sagas reflect both those early events as well as thirteenth-century views (Nordal 1992, 2). They thus have the layering in these different periods in common with various other sources discussed here. Some of the thirteenth-century sagas were, like the history writing and law codes from this same period dealing with earlier material, also used as a way to connect the past with the present and to place both in perspective and context. For instance, when discussing kingship in the Egils saga, Hines (1992, 32) stresses that:

“[…]we can claim to see the literary character of Egill, in his relations with kings, playing an active role in the efforts of the 13th-century Icelanders to express their relationship both with their past and with their present.”

Nonetheless, the saga sketches the Viking world of the ninth and tenth centuries and is well informed. Of the sagas of the Icelanders – also called family sagas – Egils saga is the one that has the most affinity with the history of Norway and England as described in other sources, most notably Heimskringla (Einarsson 2003, 183-84). It may be worth pointing out that whereas Egils saga deals with relations with Norway and England and raids in Frisia and Saxony, other sagas of the Icelanders such as the Njáls saga and the Laxdœla saga tell of connections with Celts in Ireland, Scotland and the Isles (Robinson 1992, 125-39), so foreign connections and expeditions are a recurring theme in these sagas about the Vikings.

The material on Ragnarr Lodbrok, a legendary Viking active in the ninth century, and his sons is divided over various sagas and tales from different regions, which will not all be named here. According to McTurk (1991) the tradition on Ragnarr is divided into a Danish tradition and an English tradition. Taken together, all these variations exemplify how problematic the tradition on Ragnarr and his sons
is, with widely spread material and a flexible chronology. *Ragnars saga Lodrókar* was mostly likely written around 1230 and is found in two manuscripts that date from c. 1400 and the second half of the fifteenth century respectively (McTurk 1991, 54-55; Waggoner 2009). Both are prose texts but include some verse. The *Ragnarssona þátrr* (or *þátrr af Ragnars sonum*) was composed in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, possibly by Haukr Erlendsson. It is in any case preserved in the *Hauksbók* from the early fourteenth century. Again, it is prose containing some verse (McTurk 1991, 56-7). Besides these prose texts, two skaldic poems on Ragnarr are known: *Krakumál* from c. 1200 and *Ragnarsdrápa*, from presumably the ninth century and from the hand of Bragi Boddason. These skaldic poems have the same relevance to the Viking horizon as the skaldic poetry mentioned above (1. B; 2. B; 3. B,C) and thus differ from the saga tradition on Ragnarr.

*Gesta Danorum* 1. A,B,C; 2. C (with use of A and B material); 3. C

The *Gesta Danorum* (GD) or History of the Danes was composed by Saxo Grammaticus between 1188 and sometime in or after 1208, finishing with the preface which must have been from between 1208 and 1218 (Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015, xxxv; Ellis Davidson and Fisher 1998, I). Saxo was the secretary of Absalon, the archbishop of Lund, who had died before Saxo finished the *Gesta Danorum*. It is suggested that Saxo, like Absalon, was from Zealand (Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015, xxxii; xxxvi). The *Gesta Danorum* consists of sixteen books, which are usually divided into two sections. The first contains books one to nine about the Norse mythology and early kings, the second contains books ten to sixteen about the High Middle Ages (Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015, xxxvi-xxxix). The text is thus structured chronologically, although the chronology is not strict. In book five the birth of Christ is mentioned, whilst book eight features the Christianisation of the Saxons by Charlemagne, so books one through four are considered to deal with the heathen times before the birth of Christ, and books five through eight the heathen times in northern Europe. As a late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century source, it is contemporary with the recorded versions of the Frisian Law Codes and the *Egils saga*.

**Anglo-Saxon sources**

From the Anglo-Saxon sphere, there are a number of sources that are contemporary with or from just after the Viking Age – at least in their earliest-known written form. The most well-known Anglo-Saxon source, which happens to mention Frisians, is no doubt *Beowulf*.


This epic poem in Old English consists of 3182 lines and survives in a number of manuscripts from various dates, the earliest being from the late tenth or early eleventh century (Chickeing 1989). Many attempts have been made to date the original of the poem. Some scholars are much in favour of dating the composition of the poem to the tenth century, just like the manuscript, although there is a
difference between seeing the entire composition around this date or the composition as we know it, which may have earlier archetypes (Niles 2007, 15 note 5, 30-9.; cf. Chase (ed.) 1997). Niles (2007, 30-9) lists seven arguments for dating the making of Beowulf as we know it in the period after the ninth-century Viking invasions, which was a period of nation building. These include the role and manner of description of the Danes – an argument that has also been used to prove a pre-Viking date (Whitelock 1951; contested by Page 1997).

Other arguments seem to be in favour of a dating in the late ninth century, and a composition or recording in a court circle, probably of Alfred the Great. The material used for the composition is older and describes Migration Period events, but put to use for a ninth-century audience in this view (Davis 2006). However, linguists seem to be determined that on linguistic grounds, which seem rather convincing, the text itself cannot be later than the eighth century (Fulk 2014, 19-20). Hedeager (2011, 182) summarises it safely as an epic composed somewhere between the middle of the seventh and the end of the tenth century, but points out that the objects described in Beowulf are typical of the Scandinavian Migration Period, indicating that the story must have originally been composed when there was still knowledge of these and may have served to recreate a glorious past.

In a recent edited volume, Neidorf (2014) studies the presence of the heroic-legendary material that is incorporated in and other sources, to test when the epic could have been composed. In early scholarship, the idea was that the material for the heroic-legendary tales included in Beowulf was orally transmitted to England by the Germanic newcomers who arrived in the fifth to seventh centuries. These ideas could later, in the tenth century, have been used in the composition of Beowulf. Neidorf (2014, 39-40), however, convincingly shows that at this time (i.e. the tenth century), the traditions were not so widely known anymore arguing for an earlier dating. Subsequently, this view was challenged by the idea that the incoming Scandinavians and/or Carolingians brought the material as presented in Beowulf to England by means of oral transmission in the ninth and tenth centuries. According to Davis (2006), the material of the story would have to have been brought to England by Danish Vikings, who thought themselves to descend from Scyld Scefing, or at least wanted to present it that way. Although dealing with Migration Period material, Beowulf thus was composed, written down or at least transferred to England in the Viking Age, in an Anglo-Scandinavian context and for a Viking Age public according to this reading. Davis suggests that Beowulf must have been written in Alfredian times, so in the late ninth century. Yet the material of the story, the topic and time of events is from another period. Similarly, Frank (1997, 129) argues that the ‘political geography of Beowulf fits comfortably into the period between Alfred and Æthelweard’. Neidorf challenges this view, by showing that the tale’s material was already present in England before the eighth century, and thus did not have to have been brought by Scandinavian Vikings (Neidorf 2014, 39-40; 53-7). His hypothesis is:

“That Germanic heroic-legendary traditions were orally transmitted to
England by migrants during the fifth and sixth centuries; that these legendary traditions circulated vigorously during the seventh and eighth centuries, but declined in prominence during the ninth century and ceased to be widely known during the tenth century.” (Neidorf 2014, 54)

Altogether a good case could be made for the idea that even though the material was already present in England before the eighth century – probably a few centuries earlier, in fact – and as such used to compose a poem like *Beowulf*, it may have been material that was shared with other regions or that because of its allusion to earlier shared traditions, got a new meaning, new audience and new relevance in the late ninth and early tenth centuries with the Scandinavian and Continental contacts. This would account for its being put to parchment there and then. Indeed the material alludes to old connections between the Germanic peoples, which is why the Frisians occur (Neidorf 2014, 44). Agreeing that the material was in England before the Viking Age, we still can say that there was an audience and need for the stories in the Viking Age, for instance in the circles of Alfred the Great. The fact that traditions were declining means that they were nonetheless still circulating, and this can contribute to the idea of transmitting the oral stories to parchment and putting them to use in new contexts. If we imagine that the material for these tales dates from the fifth or sixth century, then this is the time that the new Frisians were arriving in Frisia (as fossilised in the Frisian *Overkeuren*, see Chapter 4) and creating their power base there, but were still closely related to the elites of their home areas like Denmark. It is also the period during which the Anglo-Saxons came to England (see the myth of origin in the ASC) and England became part of the North Sea cultural zone (cf. Niles 2007, 18). This is the historical context of the tale’s material, a transformative period characterised by a great mobility of people. The historical context of the recording is another, whether indeed a seventh- or eighth-century context, a ninth-century Alfredian circle or a tenth-century context in which this ancient tale of a family feud between Frisians and Danes clearly was of interest and importance and something an audience could connect to. As such, I agree with Niles (2007, 15) when he states that ‘Rather than reflecting the static conditions of a single or simple age, Beowulf represents a broad collective response to changes that affected a complex society during a period of major transformations.’

In the *Beowulf* epic, reference is made to a battle between Frisians and Danes, known as the *Finnsburh Episode*. This episode is also recorded in the *Finnsburh Fragment*, one of the oldest Anglo-Saxon heroic plays that only survived in fragments, which is usually dated to the eighth century (cf. Pritsak 1981, 112).

**Widsith**


Like *Beowulf*, the poem *Widsith* is known from a tenth-century transcription, and refers to a number of Germanic heroes and tribes from the third to sixth centuries (Neidorf 2014, 46). The poem consists of 143 lines and is regarded as the oldest verse in English (Alexander 1991, 9; Hedeager 2011, 183). It is contained, and only survives, in the manuscript known as the *Exeter Book* (Codex Exoniensis), where
most Anglo-Saxon poetry is found. The manuscript also contains what is known as Maxims I or the Gnomic verses, famous for the passage on the Frisian sailor. Again, the dating is much debated, and the composition of *Widsith* has been placed in connection to the court of Alfred, or shortly thereafter. Other scholars have placed it entirely in the early medieval period (late sixth or early seventh century) (Hedeager 2011, 181-4). Alexander (1991, 9-10) sees its composition possibly in seventh-century Mercia, but according to Pritsak (1981, 114) the entire *Exeter Book* itself was compiled in the court of Alfred the Great in the late ninth century. John D. Niles (1999) places *Widsith*’s composition in early tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England, so just after the reign of King Alfred and before the recording in the late tenth century *Exeter Book*. Hedeager (2011, 182) argues that the material must be from not long after the situation described, but that its composition may be later, based on older plays. Finally, Neidorf (2014, 46) argues that on the basis of evidence from orthography, vocabulary and semantics the poem must be dated in the seventh or eighth century. He thus postulates a very similar dating and transmission for both *Beowulf* and *Widsith*.

*Widsith* means ‘wide-traveller’ or ‘far journey’ and indeed the verses show a realistic, as well as legendary, geography in an elastic chronology around the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. According to Alexander (1991, 10-11), the list of tribes and areas – including Frisians with their king Finn as in *Beowulf* – is a serious reflection of the Anglians’ memory of their continental origin. One of the reasons why a connection to Viking times has been assumed is that one of the peoples listed is the *Wicinga cynn*, which could be seen as the earliest reference to Vikings. The poem refers to some names also known in *Beowulf* and in the *Finnsburh Fragment*, and thus to shared material of legend and history. Despite this shared material, the poem is completely different in that there is no storyline, but merely a recording of tribes. According to Hedeager (2011, 182-3), it therefore belongs to an old skaldic tradition. This tradition must have been fading away at the time of composition, and therefore it seems likely that the poem was composed of older plays. That the heroic-legendary tales of Germanic tribes and migrations circulated widely in the seventh and eighth centuries is seen by their incorporation in various texts and in the genealogies of kings in England. The legendary Frisian King Finn who appears in *Beowulf* and *Widsith* is also taken up in the genealogy of King Aldfriđ of Lindsey, for instance, who ruled in Northumbria between 685 and 704/5 (Neidorf 2014, 49).

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Beowulf*, *Widsith* and Othere’s voyages have all been connected to the court of King Alfred of Wessex. They are connected to his court in terms of composition, but for *Beowulf* and *Widsith* this is contested on good grounds. Nonetheless, in the manuscripts and forms that we know them, they can in some cases still be connected to this context. If indeed these stories can in some way be connected to Alfred’s court, than they clearly show with what topics this court was occupied and how it saw its ancestry in the light of contemporary political and social events. This is very plausible, as those connecting the texts to the court have shown. As Niles (2007, 28) argues, this poetry was not history but
a form of history, which reconstructed in imaginary form that period of the past that was felt to have genealogical continuity with the present, as people wanted the present to be. All in all, it is fair to say that in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, there is an interest in these topics, which is why the stories and poems on historical Germanic, North Sea relations are recorded then. *Widsith* and *Beowulf*, amongst other Migration Era legends, circulated widely in the eighth century and had a political significance into the ninth century at least (Neidorf 2014, 49-53).

As indicated by Hedeager (2011, 182) there was a status connected to ancient plays in the tenth century, and this can explain their recording and provides an example of their connection to the Viking Age.

Orosius and Ohthere

The account of the merchant Ohthere, and along similar lines that of Wulfstan, is one of travels in the Viking Age. Ohthere travels from Northern Norway where he lived, to Hedeby and elsewhere, and the text is an indication of the amount of travel in Viking Age Europe. The account is preserved in a manuscript with the works of Orosius, who describes many areas and peoples including the Frisians and Frisia, that had been translated into Old English at the instigation of King Alfred the Great (Lund, Fell and Crumlin-Pedersen 1984, 5-6). The story of Ohthere is placed next to the account of Wulfstan on his journeys, which take him to Truso. Both their accounts are presented as orally performed at the court of King Alfred, but it is clearly written down and adapted by an English scribe (Lund, Fell and Crumlin-Pedersen, 1984; Bately and Englert, 2007).

**Anglo-Saxon Chronicle**

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC) was initiated with the approval of King Alfred (Niles 2007, 24), who was interested in the Carolingian model of keeping of a chronicle for a political purpose. In addition, the Life of King Alfred (*De rebus gestis Ælfredi* or *Vita Ælfredi regis Angul Saxonum*), written by Asser (see below), was based on the model of Einhard’s *Life of Charlemagne* (*Vita Karoli*) (Niles 2007, 25). The ASC is composed in Old English and presumably started near the end of the ninth century. The original manuscript was indeed from the ninth century, probably made in Wessex at the time of Alfred the Great. There are five manuscripts and a number of fragments of the ASC, each with variation (Swanton 1996, xxi –xxxv). As such, ‘The’ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does not exist, but various chronicles with the same core but varying years they cover constitute the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Whitelock 1955, 135). Individual chronicles were updated up to the eleventh and even early twelfth centuries. According to Swanton (1996, xix), it may be possible that some information had been circulating orally since the seventh century. In addition, other material and sources, including Continental ones, may have been used.

**Life of King Alfred**

Asser, a Welshman, wrote the *Life of King Alfred* (*De rebus gestis Ælfredi* or *Vita
Ælfredi regis Angul Saxonum) (reign 871-99) in 893 (Dumville and Lapidge 1985, xxxix) and as such it is the earliest biography of an Anglo-Saxon king (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 48). It includes some of the Chronicle entries in translation, especially for the period up to 887, supplemented with further information (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 55). As the text suddenly stops after 106 ‘chapters’, it seems the work is unfinished. According to Keynes and Lapidge (1983, 56-7), the text was written for a Welsh audience, including more explanations than Anglo-Saxon readers or listeners would have needed. Although the text was unfinished and probably only survived in two manuscripts, it was picked up and used by eleventh- and twelfth-century writers (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 58). Besides providing the biography of Alfred, it also describes the events in Wessex during his reign, primarily the arrival of the Great Heathen Army and the struggles that followed (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 9-13).

Annals of St Neots

The Annals of St Neots is a text that was composed in Bury St Edmunds between c. 1120 and 1140 and that incorporates the years 60 BC to AD 914. The annals are preserved in one unique manuscript in a codex of miscellaneous items that was presumably created in the sixteenth century. There are five copies of this codex, of which three are complete. The hands of two scribes have been identified, as well as a clear influence of Abbo of Fleury’s Passio Sancti Edmundi, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Asser’s Life of King Alfred, Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum and the Norman Annals, possibly in combination with some other texts (Dumville and Lapidge 1985, xv-I; xxviii-lxiv). Particularly Asser’s work, which was also composed in chronicle form, is incorporated quite fully in the annals (Dumville and Lapidge 1985, xxxix). For the events around 870 (869), that is the death of King Edmund which is connected to Ubba the Frisian, the annals drew upon the Passio sancti Edmundi in full (Dumville and Lapidge 1985, lx). The Passio Sancti Edmundi by Abbo of Fleury was written in Ramsay Abbey and is the account of the martyrdom of King Edmund of East Anglia in 869. It was written between 985 and 988 and survives in quite a number of later medieval manuscripts, which attests to its wide circulation (Dumville and Lapidge 1985, lix). The story is that Abbo heard it second-hand, from a man who in his youth had heard the story from an eyewitness who was with King Edmund on the day he died (Winterbottom 1972, 4-5).

Historia de Sancto Cuthberto

The history of St Cuthbert (HSC) is a Latin text from the late Anglo-Saxon or earliest Norman period (probably the tenth century or possibly the eleventh) from the community of St Cuthbert, which relocated from Lindisfarne to Chester-le-Street and later to Durham (South 2002, 1-3). The earliest surviving manuscript

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106 The name Annals of St Neots comes from the fact that the text was found there and not in Bury St Edmunds.
107 This is a general title for several chronicles relating to Norman history, one of which is the Annals by William of Jumièges (Dumville and Lapidge 1985, xlv).
is from the late eleventh century, two others are later (South 2002, 14). It is not a continuous, chronological narrative, but a text focussing on various aspects of
the cult of St Cuthbert (South 2002, 1-3). It incorporates the coming of Vikings
and the roles of King Alfred – to whom Cuthbert appears in a dream – and the
kings Ælla, Athelstan, Edmund and Guthred. It is in connection to this, and the
conquest of York by the Great Heathen Army, that the sons of Ragnarr Lodbrók
appear.

Lindisfarne Annals    1. A,B,C; 2. C; 3. C
The Annales Lindisfarnenses et Dumelmenses (ALD), like the HSC, were written
in Durham, presumably by Symeon of Durham and other scribes, who later com-
posed the Libellus de exordi (McLeod 2014, 133). Although it earlier was assumed
that it was started in the ninth century and was a source for later chroniclers, there
is agreement now that it was written later, probably in the twelfth century, and
draws much on the Historia de Sancto Cuthberto and earlier short annals. The text
covers the years 532-1199 (Story 2005, 102).

A number of chronicles are known from Ireland which cover the early medieval
and Viking period. One of them is a text known as the Fragmentary Annals of
Ireland, or Fragmentary Annals (FA). The only surviving copy is preserved in a
seventeenth-century manuscript (MS 5301-5320) in the Royal Library in Brussels,
and the manuscript itself says it is a copy of a transcript made from an older ‘broken
book’ (Radner 1978, viii). As a narrative it is dated to the eleventh century and can
be seen in the tradition of eleventh- and twelfth-century Irish writings in which
the earlier Irish kings’ (such as Cerball’s) victories over Vikings are celebrated to
glorify the later kings in a period of developing Irish identity (Downham 2004,
27-28).

The Fragmentary Annals is a compilation of material which is indeed frag-
mentary, with gaps for certain years. It is composed of short annalistic entries and
longer descriptions that have been called ‘pseudo-historical narratives’ (Downham
2004, 27). The latter are based on chronicle material from the ninth century and
have been consciously combined with the annalistic entries by the compiler (Radner
1978, x). The FA is therefore of a quite eclectic nature, most likely combining
information from several different kinds of sources – from myth to historical fact.
The text is made up of five sections, each covering a specific period between 573
and 914 AD. Sections IV and V, covering 849-73 and 906-14, respectively, deal
with events of the Viking Age (Radner 1978, x). According to Radner (1978, xii)
there is not only a gap of 112 years between sections III and IV, but also a difference
in narrative between the first three and last two sections, which could suggest that
they are based on different sources. Whereas sections I-III are of a more legendary
character in which possible historical facts are intertwined with fiction, sections

108Two of the main components in section IV have been identified as what is called ‘The Osraige Chronicle’ and the
IV and V are more historical chronicling, even though historical material here also is embedded in more traditional motifs and patterns (Radner 1978, iixx). The division in material and how it has been dealt with reminds us of the way Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* is built up, and reminds us that for the Irish, Danish and Frisian cultural spheres in the eleventh to the thirteenth century, the written sources were concerned with identity, history and myth.

It must be noted that the annals in sections IV and V are particularly concerned with south-eastern Ireland, for instance with the kingdom of Osraige, which was ruled by Cerball mac Dúinlainge from 842 to 888 (Downham 2004, 27; Radner 1978, xxii). In addition, these sections are concerned with the activities of the Dublin Vikings and the Vikings in south-eastern Ireland. According to Radner (1978, xxiv-xxvi) and Downham (2004, 27), this part of the FA could have been compiled within living memory of Cerball’s reign (i.e. in the Viking Age) and possibly sponsored by his descendant Donchad of Osraige. The information on the Vikings is quite detailed and fits with what we know from other chronicles, even though the information is again reworked like in the rest of the compilation. However, the information for this part of the annals at least seems to have been assembled in the Viking Age, making it contemporary (Radner 1978, xxv). Section IV is of most interest to us as it provides an example of a Viking travelling between Ireland and Frisia.

A source that shares some information with the FA is a text known as the *Annals of the Four Masters* (AFM). This is a seventeenth-century chronicle in Irish based on earlier sources, such as south-eastern Irish annals similar to those used as a source for the FA, which are now lost (Kelly and Maas 1999, 132 and note 48). As such, parts of the AFM and FA invite a side-by-side comparison, and can be used to supplement each other. Here, I will use the edition of Radner (1978) for both sources, supplemented with information from secondary sources.

**Norman sources**  
1. A,B (with addition of C); 2. B/C; 3. B/C

Two closely connected Norman sources are of particular interest for the Viking Age and the relations in the North Sea world. These are Dudo of Saint Quentin’s *De Moribus et actis primorum Normanniae* and William of Jumièges’ *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* (GND). Dudo composed his ‘national history’ of Normandy between 996 and 1015 at the request of Duke Richard I, who was the grandson of the Viking invader Rollo (Van Houts 1992, xix-xx, Van Houts 1983, 109). This text was reworked and updated with the accounts of four further dukes by William of Jumièges starting in the 1050s and continuing up to about 1070, resulting in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*. The first version of this text was finished by 1060, but the conquest of England was added up to c. 1070, probably at the request of the king (Van Houts 1992, xx).

According to Van Houts (1992, xx), Dudo’s chronicle was aimed at legitimising the Viking settlement in Normandy and, as such, contains some unreliable legends, in addition to its more reliable information on the reigns of Duke Richard and his father in tenth-century Normandy. It was Richard’s half-brother Radulf who was
Dudo’s main informant. The author used people’s memories of the recent past and contemporary eyewitness accounts (Van Houts 1983, 110). Whereas the political history may be less reliable, the descriptions of Scandinavian customs are taken to be reliable (Van Houts 1983, 109).

William of Jumièges used Dudo’s work as a basis, but he was influenced by Scandinavian legend that arrived via England, and so by both English and Scandinavian tradition (Van Houts 1983, 112). His version of the history of Normandy is, therefore, different from that of Dudo; whereas Dudo starts with Hastingus as the main character in the story of Scandinavian settlement, William emphasises the role of Björn Ironside, who is the son of Ragnarr Loðbrók (Van Houts 1983, 112). However, he seems to share other material with Sigvatr’s *Víkingarvísur* (Van Houts 1983, 118–19), and thus represents Scandinavian tradition. What is stressed by Van Houts (1983) is that throughout the eleventh century, there were still close contacts between Normandy and the Scandinavian world and therefore cultural transmission, particularly in written sources. To a certain degree, there is shared material with sources from other areas. As Van Houts (1983, 121) concludes, ‘… in Normandy, just like in England, in the eleventh century, Scandinavian saga motifs were incorporated in literature, thus proving that the Normans still paid cultural and literary tribute to their Scandinavian past.’

The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* in turn was used, revised and elaborated by later authors. That both this text and Dudo’s work must have been widely known and used in the medieval period is shown by this reworking and by the fact that fourteen manuscripts of Dudo’s text and forty-seven of William’s text are still known today (Van Houts 1992, xxii).

**Other Continental sources**

1. (A), B; 2. B; 3. B

The contemporary Frankish annals, chronicles and *vitae* form a big part of the written source material on the Viking Age and Frisia. The annals and chronicles were one of the main media for history writing in the Frankish empire and were produced within a Christian framework and in Latin. The Carolingian writing of history produced much work and information in general (Innes and McKitterick 1994, 193), and the resulting works have been the subject of intensive study over the years. Here, the information from these sources is used as a historical framework, as well as to supplement or complement information from other written sources in the case studies. Although we cannot discuss the Carolingian works at length here, it is important to sketch their nature in relation to the other sources. As contemporary texts, aimed at recording history and deeds within the Frankish empire, the annals and chronicles in particular have been deemed reliable historical sources, although it is recognised that they too have their own political goals and may be propagandistic (i.e. ‘the Carolingian version of Carolingian history’, Scholz 1970, 5) to justify contemporary actions (cf. Moreland 2001, 90-3). In any case, like other written sources, they were not only a record but also an attempt to make the past and the events in it ‘comprehensible and to relate it in some way to the present’ (Innes and McKitterick 1994, 193). In addition, the sources were influenced
by other stories. As such, they can be seen as collective memories in narrative form, written under a form of patronage in court circles and monasteries. Annals, in particular, are structured by a yearly cycle, and as a narrative, they provide the possibility to include local and individual events within a broader framework of the Christian world and to connect them. Even though many of the annals are attached to a certain place or circle, such as a court or bishopric, they often described events from a wider world and connected their local events to it (Innes and McKitterick 1994, 201-202). Innes and McKitterick (1994, 216-217) summarise it thus: ‘The chronicles, annals, epic poems, historical narratives and imperial biographies reveal a preoccupation with noting important facts and events in one literary form or another, and situating events in time within the Christian chronological framework. There is a keen sense both of the relevance of the past and the importance of providing record for posterity. There is an urgent political purpose in the interpretation of contemporary events.’ Elsewhere, McKitterick (2004, 8) stresses that the works show ‘the interplay between memory, forms of historical record and the writing of history’.

The *Annales regni Francorum* (ARF), which were written by various clerics from the circles around the royal court, cover the period from 741 (Charles Martel’s death) to 829 (Scholz 1970, 4-6) in at least some of the versions. There are five versions in total, with some variety and a great many manuscripts among them (McKitterick 2004, 19). They were most likely written at the royal Frankish court, and, particularly in the first part of the annals, internal problems and disasters, which are filled out in later versions, seem to have been left out of the earlier versions (Scholz 1970, 8-9). The existence of various versions with variations points out that, above all, there are a number of different histories and memories of the Frankish past available and recorded (McKitterick 2004, 20).

The recording of history that was started in the ARF is continued in the *Annales Bertiniani* (AB), *Annales Fuldenses* (AF) and *Annales Xantenses* (AX) after 829. These all focus on events in particular parts of the empire, in accordance with the political instability and later division of the empire, which resulted in the Treaty of Verdun in 843. The AB are mostly concerned with the West-Frankish empire of Charles the Bald, the AF with the East-Frankish realm and the AX with the central part of the Frankish empire. Like the ARF, they are mostly composite in nature and thus written by various authors, as well as contained in several manuscripts. The *Annales Bertiniani* have a broad scope similar to the ARF but from a West-Frankish perspective, and with more public events and individual responses. Furthermore, they are particularly well informed about the sphere of Charles the Bald, although the first part is sympathetic towards Louis the Pious, and it has been suggested that this part of the annals was produced at his court (Nelson 1991, 2). The *Annales Fuldenses* are seen as the main narrative for the eastern Frankish empire. The AF is seen as having been produced at the East-Frankish royal chapel and is comparable to the other annals in its selecting of and dealing with material. These annals, in addition, have some focus on natural disasters and more miraculous events, besides their political scope (Reuter 1992, 1-6; McKitterick 2004,
33–5). As annals focussing on the central Frankish sphere, the *Annales Xantenses* include Frisia. The AX are continued in the *Annales Vedastini*, the annals of St Vaast, named after where they were written.

One Carolingian source that is referred to in the case studies on several occasions is Einhard’s *Vita Karoli* (VK). This *Life of Charlemagne* was written in c. 817 according to Innes and McKitterick (Innes 1994, 203–8; McKitterick 2004, 29–30) and would have had a role in consolidating the position of Louis the Pious as Charlemagne’s heir. Einhard was a scholar in the court of Charlemagne and dedicated to him and his son Louis. The text of the *Vita Karoli* is found together with the ARF in the manuscripts from the ninth and tenth centuries. The later *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* by William of Jumièges is also often included with the *Vita Karoli* and earlier texts in manuscripts, which results in the Normans being positioned as the legitimate successors of the Carolingian rulers (McKitterick 2004, 57). As stressed by McKitterick (2004, 30), the *Vita Karoli* is dedicated to portraying Charlemagne, but has also, especially later, come to be a model portrait of a ruler in a rather classical manner. Einhard’s work is classified as a secular biography and is thus of a different genre than the annals, although the narrative also includes documentary evidence to give it more historical authenticity (Innes and McKitterick 1994, 203–5). Overall, the VK is considered a mostly trustworthy historical account of the life of Charlemagne.


A further continental source from a slightly later date is the *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (GH) or the History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen by chronicler Adam of Bremen. It was written in the years between 1072 and 1076, after which Adam kept making additions until his death sometime between 1081 and 1085 (Tschan 1959, xv-xvi). It appears that Adam, once he was posted in Bremen in 1066 or 1067, decided to record the deeds of the bishops to make sure they were not lost to history. The focus is on the missionary activity of the Hamburg-Bremen See: Adam wanted to record the archbishops’ work in the conversion of the Slavic and Scandinavian people. Apart from the deeds of the diocese, the material is very much concerned with geographical and ethnographical aspects, including ‘exotic’ phenomena such as imaginary beings. One of the reasons why there is so much information on these themes and on political, social and religious matters of various groups of people in northern Europe, is the fact that Adam wrote this as an outsider. According to Carl F. Hallencreutz (1984, 5–6), this is the main difference between Adam and Bede, to whose *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (730s) the *Gesta Hammaburgensis* often is compared. Nonetheless, the GH was initiated as an institutional history.

The *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, which is dedicated to Archbishop Liemar (from 1072–1101), starts in the late eighth century and continues into the eleventh and is chronologically divided over four books, a prologue and an epilogue. It is particularly in the last book that the ethnographic aspects are dealt with. The first book is where we encounter most references to Frisia and Vikings. Written in the eleventh
century, the text is partly contemporary with the Viking Age and at least written in a time when information about Viking Age events was more available than today. On a visit to the Danish King Svein Estrithson (1019-74/76), Adam gained firsthand information of the situation in the north (Hallencreutz 1984, 10; Tschan 1959 xiii-xv). In addition, he had other oral sources and earlier written works at his disposal, such as the lives of early missionaries, the Vita Karoli of Einhard, Rimbert’s Vita Ansgari, the Historia Francorum by Gregory of Tours and the Annales Fuldenses, amongst others (Hallencreutz 1984, 6-7; Tschan 1959, xvii).

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109 Boniface, Ansgar, Liudger, Radbod, Rimbert, Willehad and Willibrord according to Tschan (1959, xvii).