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BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN HINES and NELLEKE IJSSENNAGGER (eds.), *Frisians and their North Sea Neighbours: From the Fifth Century to the Viking Age* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 299 pp. ISBN 978 1 7832 7179 5 (hardback), £75.00. ISBN 978 1 7874 4063 0 (ebook), £19.99

These conference proceedings are based on papers held at an international conference from 5 to 8 July 2014 at the Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Netherlands. The conference, 'Across the North Sea: North Sea Connections from AD 400 into the Viking Age. Second Interdisciplinary Symposium on Runes and Related Topics in Frisia', was organized by John Hines, Nelleke IJssenagger, Tim Pestell, Tineke Looijenga, Gaby Waxenberger, Kerstin Kazazzi, and Han Nijdam. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the 'First International Symposium on Frisian Runes and Neighbouring Traditions' that took place in 1994, also at the Fries Museum, the organizers opened up the conference to a broader approach, providing a newly interdisciplinary perspective.

As a result, the thirteen essays included in the book come from a variety of research fields, but all of them touch upon aspects of early medieval Frisian identities and cultures and the maritime networks involving Frisian people at this period. Particular weight is given to the interactions of the Frisians with their immediate neighbours. The editors, John Hines and Nelleke IJssenagger, introduce the book with a general overview of the topic and of Frisian history between the fifth century and the Viking era, explaining the book's theoretical approach to concepts of ethnic groups and the historical development of the Frisians in the Early Middle Ages, before examining how Frisians viewed and described 'outsiders' along with the interactions that took place across their geographical settlement area.

Egge Knol and Nelleke IJssenagger discuss how Frisians adapted in different ways to the different landscapes they inhabited, as the geography of Frisia varied noticeably between the west and the north east. Adaptation strategies included highly specialized economic

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activities, but also specialized settlement types, the 'terpens' and 'wharves' or 'dwelling mounds'. Noting the necessity of distinguishing 'Friesland' as a geographic region from 'the Frisians' as an ethnic category, the authors discuss Pliny the Elder's early mention of certain inhabitants of the North Sea coast. The fact that Pliny never names these inhabitants, the authors argue, shows how difficult it is to differentiate between the Frisians and their immediate neighbours, the Chauks, a differentiation not always possible even from archaeological findings. What the material does demonstrate is a break that seems to have occurred in settlement patterns in the fourth century AD, although the eastern part of Frisia shows greater continuity while the break becomes more apparent towards the west. There is evidence of resettlement from the fifth century on, although the authors state merely that these new settlers came 'from various places along the North Sea coast'. A more specific description would have been useful here.

In the course of the early medieval period, smaller regions, from this time on identifiable by name, began to emerge with their own leaders and leading families. At the same time, the transition from the Merovingian to the Carolingian period sees a notable increase in archaeological evidence. Finally, the authors turn to the Viking era, which in the Netherlands even now is still not recognized as a historical period in its own right. Our primary source of information from this time are Latin documents, but there are not many Viking finds available, which in part is due to a lack of a national centre for recording archaeological finds in the Netherlands.

Similarities between Frisian and English cultures are under-researched, as John Hines notes in his contribution on the 'Anglo-Frisian Question'. Yet, as Hines goes on to show on the basis of evidence from language, runology, archaeology, and history, such a cultural affinity becomes obvious if we look at the early medieval period. As early as the seventeenth century, the philologist Franciscus Junius the Younger developed the theory of Anglo-Frisian as an independent branch of the Germanic language family, based on the similarity between Old/Middle English and Old Frisian. The theory was taken up by Vlitius in the seventeenth century and Halbertsma in the nineteenth, and in 1981 Hans Frede Nielsen demonstrated its probability through comparing the similarity between Old English and Old Frisian with the related, but more distant Scandinavian and

Continental Germanic languages. These observations are confirmed by, for instance, similar developments of Old English *fuþark* and Old Frisian *fuþorc*. In the field of runology, these are sometimes considered to be connected, even though there are also contrary opinions and alternative models. Hines presents further examples from the field of archaeology, based on the exploration of *sceattas*, and from the field of history, based on a broader analysis of sources in English-Frisian historiography and literature.

Possible linguistic contact between Frisians, Celts, and Romans is discussed by Peter Schrijver in a consideration of two different models of language distribution and the early history of the Frisian languages in the region between the Rhine and the Ems from Roman times until the Early Middle Ages. Looking at the possibility of linguistic contact in this region and Celtic influences on Frisian, he compares the Celtic vowel system—represented by British Celtic and Northern Gallic—with early medieval Frisian. He argues that the land between the Rhine and the Ems was inhabited in Roman times by a Celtic-speaking people that eventually began to speak a Germanic language. As a result, early medieval Frisian was characterized by the introduction of a Celtic accent. Schrijver's contribution ends with a hypothesis, so that it would have been helpful to know more about the discussion that took place at the conference on this subject.

Menno Dijkstra and Jan de Koning present a general overview of their research in connection with the Frisia Project on the settlement history of West Frisia and the Fryslân province, an area that they term 'Middle Frisia'. They note that there is no early medieval settlement legend from which we could deduce more about the conditions of the time, and no coherent historical record of the make-up of the population along what is now the Dutch coast. However, archaeological evidence shows that the population had diminished between the third and fifth centuries possibly to between 10 per cent and almost 0 per cent of what it had been during the Roman period, and did not rise again until the second half of the fifth century AD, perhaps in part as a result of increased immigration from neighbouring regions. Archaeological finds also reveal cultural exchange with Franks, Anglo-Saxons, and Old Saxons as well as clear evidence of intra-Frisian communication, for example, relating to burials and the emergence of elite networks or miniature kingdoms. The two authors

conclude that in contrast to Frisia and Groningen, for example, the western coastal region was not occupied by Anglo-Saxon groups but was more significantly influenced by the Frankish hinterland and the Rhine–Maas region.

Johan Nicolay uses examples of gold and silver jewellery to sketch five phases in the development of elite societies and networks on the southern North Sea coast. From 390 to 500, Saxon, Anglian (from Anglia, that is, the peninsula in what is now Schleswig-Holstein, Germany), and perhaps Scandinavian people passing through this landscape on their way to Britain influenced the style of this period in the Frisian territories. This initial phase was followed from 475 to 550 by a period in which Roman gold, which had probably come to Northern Europe in the form of tribute, was made into regional jewellery and adornments that expressed a new confidence on the part of local powers. From the late fifth century and throughout the sixth, however, local kingdoms on the Elbe, the Dutch coast, and even as far north as Kent and Norfolk used ornaments from southern Scandinavia to represent their status. Regional elites in particular, who developed their own, localized adornment styles, are typical for the period from around 590 to 630/40, although their local character also reveals a clear affinity with the Scandinavian and Frankish world. The final phase (600–700) was dominated by Byzantine-inspired jewellery that became the new form of status symbol among the North Sea elites.

Referring to current discussions on a possible ‘Anglo-Frisian unity’, Gaby Waxenberger begins by examining difficulties in comparing the rune corpus. While Pre-Old English and Pre-Old Frisian were contemporaneous (both prevalent from around 410 to 610/50), Old English (650–1100) and Old Frisian (1200–1500) are chronologically distant from each other. The author goes on to show the challenges presented by the Frisian rune corpus and describes, using a variety of rune inscriptions and the internal development of *fuporc* (so called to distinguish it from the otherwise pan-Germanic *fupark*), in both languages and their similarities.

Arjen Versloot and Elżbieta Adamczyk examine the spread of linguistic innovation by looking at the main geographical factors that contributed to changes in Old Saxon as a result of North Sea Germanic linguistic influences. In what is now Belgium and the Netherlands, North Sea Germanic (Ingwaonic) spread inland only to a distance of

50 km, but because of a geographical bulge this meant that it penetrated to Eastphalian Old Saxony. Significant factors affecting its distribution were often geographical; rivers, in particular, served as axes for transport and communication just as natural barriers tended to prevent the latter. On the basis of linguistic features found in written sources and place names, the authors have cautiously mapped the areas in which North Sea Germanic may have influenced Old Saxon. An appendix discusses the linguistic characteristics typical of North Sea Germanic.

Iris Aufderhaar shows that archaeology supports the theory of a complex system of central locations and shipping hubs, and of hinterland connections between the Elbe and the Weser, from as early as the first century to as late as around AD 500. Rivers, of course, were a means of communication and transport from late antiquity and the migration period onwards, and the Elbe–Weser triangle formed an important connection between Scandinavia, the Rhine region, and south and east England. Sievern and Gudendorf, in particular, due to their geographical position near the coast, were at the centre of infrastructure networks between the land and the sea.

With a focus on the Flandrian coast, Pieterjan Deckers examines two categories of material culture: the main pottery type and house-building. Based on archaeological findings in these two areas, he develops the theories of John Hines and Malcom Ross in arguing that innovations in pottery and house-building tend to take place at the same time as linguistic developments. Deckers identifies a ‘correspondence with developments in material cultures’ in a period of Ingwaonic convergence (koineization) which began in the fifth/sixth century and ended in the eighth. However, convergence speeds in these three different forms of cultural expression (language, house-building, pottery) are different; language and house-building assimilated only imperfectly until the eighth century, while pottery shows a generally similar convergence ‘already in the course of the 6th century’ (p. 183). From the eighth century, various forms of houses are replaced by more homogenous traditions, while organic-tempered pottery has been completely replaced by sand-tempered pottery by the mid eighth century. Unfortunately, it is difficult for a non-specialist reader to follow the argument of this otherwise very interesting contribution, as many of the specialist terms used are not explained.

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Tim Pestell has chosen East Anglia (the region bearing this name today in the east of England) as the focus of his overview of connections between Britain and inhabitants of the southern North Sea coast in the early medieval period. He begins by noting that early medieval scribes such as Procopius and Bede record political exchanges and other forms of contact between inhabitants on both sides of the North Sea. Citing coin hoards, brooches, belts, belt buckles, and pottery, he shows that such historical reports of intercultural exchange and trade are reflected in archaeological findings between the seventh and ninth century. He is particularly interested in Frisian trade patterns that brought Continental goods to England, especially as these can also be geographically determined on the basis of where Anglo-Frisian *scattas* coins have been found.

The next contribution discusses the nature of wergeld payments in relation to death and injury, and how such payments were based on a concept of honour. Comparing the Kentish law of King Ethelbert with the Lex Frisionum and later developments of its tradition in Old Frisian legislation of the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, Han Nijdam shows how written law aimed to prevent blood feuds through substituting a system of financial compensation. Following an overview of how such legislation was structured and the history of research in this field, the author analyses wergeld compensation rates in terms of their technical legal names, the assigning of different values to different parts of the body, and the mechanisms for determining value set out in the texts. In summary, he argues that Kentish and Frisian legislation developed separately but that both may have a basis in codes and practices found across wide areas of the Germanic world. However, he does not fully reject the possibility of an Anglo-Frisian or Ingwaonic sphere of influence. Finally, he lobbies for more in-depth research on wergeld rates in their universal and individual significance as a part of Germanic culture.

The question of communication networks along the nordic arc – that is, the trading region between the North Sea and Russia – is the focus of the essay by Christiane Zimmermann and Hauke Jöns. As historical records have nothing to say on this point, we can generally only speculate on how trade in this region took place. For the eighth and ninth centuries we can assume that the different Germanic dialects in northern Europe were still similar enough for speakers to understand each other without the need for a lingua franca or inter-

preters. This implies that the region was a milieu characterized by different languages that nevertheless were mutually understood, whether in written or in spoken form, along with two contemporaneous rune corpora (*fuþark* and *fuþorc*) that were used by a variety of speakers in this period. Considering whether Reric/Groß Strömken-dorf formed a hub for trade between the North Sea and the Baltic regions, the authors use archaeological findings to demonstrate the cultural exchange that took place here and its unique role among trading places on the Baltic coast. Against this backdrop, the authors focus more closely on a comb inscribed with runes from around 770 from the town's artisan quarter, analysing its inscription and attempting to translate it. They find that the runes cannot be assigned to any particular corpus of the time, but are closest to what are known as 'Scandinavian inscriptions on the Continent'. This means that we now have archaeological evidence of an artefact made in the North Sea region, inscribed with runes from the early Scandinavian Viking period, and finally making its way to the Baltic region.

As these conference proceedings impressively show, international and interdisciplinary approaches can lead to valuable findings in Frisian research. We possess relatively few written records for early medieval Frisians, and what we do have is written entirely from an external (and usually one-sided) point of view. This makes an interdisciplinary approach essential if we are to research further aspects of Frisian history and culture. All too often, such research tends to be limited by today's geographical and linguistic borders, as Oebele Vries already noted some years ago in the *Handbook of Frisian Studies / Handbuch des Friesischen* (2013). This is also recognized by John Hines in the current book. International and interdisciplinary conferences, such as the conference that formed the basis for this book, help to fill this gap and allow us to look more closely into Frisian lives and the Frisian environment beyond the written sources. Researchers in this area would do well to extend such an approach to the end of the Early Middle Ages, as research on important Frisian developments – such as the settlement of North Frisia and the expansion of Frisian trade – is at present patchy and unsatisfactory. However, this collection of essays on the Frisians and their neighbours in the North Sea region now offers an excellent foundation for research on subsequent periods from a variety of perspectives and disciplines.

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JENS BOYE VOLQUARTZ is writing his dissertation on late medieval castles in North Frisia and Dithmarschen (title: 'Im Spannungsfeld zwischen herrschaftlichem Zugriff und bäuerlicher Selbstbestimmung: Spätmittelalterliche Burgen in Dithmarschen und Nordfriesland') at the Department of Regional History with a Focus on the History of Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel University. In addition to this, one of his fields of research is Frisian Studies in the Early Middle Ages, and his publications on this topic include *Friesische Händler am Oberrhein im Frühmittelalter* (2017) and *Der fränkisch-friesische Konflikt (690–734) aus Sicht mittelalterlicher Quellen* (2018).