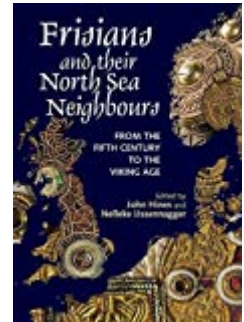


John Hines, Nelleke IJssennagger, eds. *Frisians and Their North Sea Neighbours: From the Fifth Century to the Viking Age*. Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2017. Illustrations. 320 pp. \$120.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78327-179-5.



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For scholars looking to familiarize themselves with the history, language, culture, or environmental background of early medieval Frisia and its inhabitants, the question of where to start can be a daunting one. The field of Frisian studies can appear littered with disciplinary and linguistic barriers, and particularly for the anglophone reader, it is often scattered across an equally diverse range of publications. One of the stated goals of this work, the result of a 2014 conference, is to help bridge or diminish those barriers, and in this it certainly succeeds, bringing together a wide range of scholarship in one accessible volume. The introduction and initial chapter alone provide an excellent historiographical, bibliographic, and visual orientation. Egge Knol and Nelleke IJssennagger help the reader to get their bearings in Frisia with developments in archaeological research over recent decades presented in an approachable survey of shifting settlement patterns. The visual guides to the complex and shifting geomorphology, which had such a significant impact on the settlement and development of the region, are the first of

many useful maps, charts, and illustrations throughout the volume.

Several contributions deal with aspects of what editor John Hines calls “the Anglo-Frisian question.” As he points out in his chapter, connections between Frisia and Anglo-Saxon England have been sought from so many angles and for so many reasons that sorting through the historiography is itself a puzzle. Hines does this admirably, touching on key issues in literary, linguistic, archaeological, and historical studies, while suggesting the potential value of the type of interdisciplinary comparative study, which this volume seeks to encourage. A case study of this type of approach to Anglo-Frisian interactions is provided by Hans Nijdam, who focuses on the injury tariffs, or *wergild*, in Kentish and Frisian legal texts as a comparative exercise, exploring Anglo-Frisian connections as well as those between early medieval Germanic legal traditions more broadly. The latter proves more fruitful in this case, but, to paraphrase Nijdam, further Anglo-Frisian connections always seem tantalizingly just out of reach. Tim

Pestell takes an archaeological approach, focusing on potential contacts between Frisia and the kingdom of East Anglia, taking the latter as a relatively definable geographic, political, and cultural entity from the migration period to the start of the Viking Age. East Anglia emerges as a distinct center in the trade, frequently accorded to elusive Frisian merchants, between the *emporium* of Ipswich, Dorestad, and Quentovic. This challenges both the silence in written sources regarding East Anglian contacts with the Continent and the assumption based on prior archaeological research that Kent had served as the most prominent conduit of material culture to and from the Continent.

Linguistic research occupies a prominent place in Frisian studies, and in this volume. Peter Schrijver presents a case for the early development of the Frisian language as a result of the adoption of a Germanic language by a previously Celtic-speaking populace. Gaby Waxenberger compares the early corpus of pre-Old English and Frisian runic inscriptions to identify potential similarities. The spread of shared linguistic traits in the development of Frisian are mapped along river networks by Arjen Versloot and Elżbieta Adamczyk, demonstrating the importance of these waterways in connecting inland regions with the North Sea littoral. The importance of control and development of waterways in the region similarly features in contributions in the fields of settlement and landscape archaeology, which have been important in fleshing out the skeletal and often deceptive framework left to us by written sources concerning Frisia. Iris Aufderhar presents an analysis of settlement patterns in the Weser estuary suggesting control of land and riverine communication routes during the Roman and migration periods. Menno Dijkstra and Jan de Konig provide an interdisciplinary survey of the western Netherlands coastal region, suggesting that it was a peripheral region during the fifth century, not entirely isolated but largely bypassed during the Germanic migrations to Britain. The region's impor-

tance, and visibility in surviving records, was revived alongside Merovingian interests, but as Johan Nicolay suggests, a wider cultural network of artistic production and exchange can perhaps be seen in the examination of prestige goods made of gold and silver among a disparate but connected North Sea coastal elite. Pieterjan Deckers considers linguistic and material evidence to suggest a broader "North Sea culture" which spread along the littoral regions in the late Roman period, and the final contribution by Christine Zimmermann and Hauke Jöns considers runic inscriptions as a shared means of communication in the trading arc ranging from Frisia to the Baltic while analyzing excavations from the latter region.

If there is one surprising omission from the range of contributions, it is maritime or nautical archaeology. This is a field that has seen considerable innovation in recent years, and for a people so well known not only for seafaring but also for shipbuilding as the Frisians, an updated look at evidence from this perspective would have improved an already excellent volume. As is acknowledged throughout, the role and even presence of merchants is often difficult to detect in written and material evidence, and in the case of the former the term "Frisian" may not be reliable as an ethnic descriptor. Given the themes and goals set out in this volume, those of interdisciplinary and comparative approaches to long-distance communication and trade, those elusive agents of exchange and their means of transportation seem to be a promising and important target for precisely this type of research. Readers of H-War may not find much to add to existing literature in terms of Frisian military activity and development; the Frisians who threatened the Merovingians, withstood Viking raids, and served as the maritime muscle of the Carolingians rarely make an appearance in these essays. Rather, this volume will provide a valuable up-to-date source for the physical and cultural environment from which those Frisians emerged and which they helped shape.

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