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Discovering Old Frisian Letters.
Compounding in Old Frisian Letters

Abstract: This article deals with the word stock of private letters written in an Old Germanic language, Old Frisian, is introduced also most notable word-building trends identified in the investigated data are presented. The phenomenon of "frisianizing" borrowed words is touched upon in this paper as well. Other specific features of Old Frisian illustrated here are dialectological differences and word form distortion cases, as well as the process of elision.

One third of the Old Frisian word stock are compound words, therefore special attention is paid to compounding as a lexical tool used to produce new concept denotations. In terms of compounding, the most numerous and representative word classes are researched: nouns, verbs and adverbs.

Key words: Old Frisian, Old Frisian letters, medieval letters, compounding in Old Germanic

Аннотация: В статье анализируется словарный состав частных писем на древнегерманском, древнефризском языке и наиболее продуктивные в нем словообразовательные модели. Рассматривается феномен «фризианизации» заимствованных слов, а также другие особенности древнефризского языкового материала: диалектные различия, искажение внутренней структуры слов и процесс элизии.

Треть древнефризской лексики составляют сложные слова, потому особое внимание уделяется словосложению как средству обозначения новых понятий. Анализируются леммы наиболее значимых и численно преобладающих частей речи: существительных, глаголов, наречий.

Ключевые слова: древнефризский язык, древнефризские письма, средневековые письма, древнегерманское словосложение

In this paper, a descriptive investigation, I aim to introduce a yet non-described lexical segment of the Old Frisian word stock, namely the lexis found exclusively in Old Frisian letters. As a part of a larger research on compounding, a notably productive and old word-building tool, in Old Frisian, I would like not only to describe the word stock of letters in a lexicographical way, but also to highlight peculiarities of compounds attested in this source.

This paper is just a cut of a larger research carried out by the author in the format of a PhD-project on compounding in Old Frisian carried out at Lomonosov Moscow State

University, Philological Faculty, Department of Germanic Philology (Prof. Dr. Natalija Ganina) and Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Faculty of Arts, Minorities and Multilingualism (daily supervisor Dr. Willem Visser, promotor Prof. Dr. Goffe Jensma).

Hopefully, this paper can draw some attention to Old Frisian as a complex language inviting researchers to take a close look at the language heritage.

Frisian as a language. West, East and North Frisian are West Germanic languages nowadays spoken in the Netherlands and in Germany. Importantly, West Frisian is a minority language, but it has an official status in the Netherlands. Frisian and its historical forms are of interest not only in the framework of a historical-comparative study, but also within minority language and multilingualism research.

Having been a language surrounded by larger Germanic languages, the historical forms of Frisian have not been paid as much attention to, as, e. g., those of English or Dutch. Old Frisian is the closest relative of Old English, preserving the early features of the Anglo-Frisian language cluster, so it can draw the light to the peculiarities shared with English, as well as enrich the comparative data. By now, Frisian and English have been under the influence of Dutch and French, respectively, for centuries, so they have been driven apart to a great extent.

Old Frisian. Old Frisian is specific for several reasons. First of all, it is not comparable to the neighbouring languages in its periodization, namely Old Frisian is roughly dated between the 13th and 16th centuries, when other West Germanic languages were at their Middle stage of development. This means that we cannot assume the structural developments in Old Frisian to be parallel to those in Old/Middle English, Old/Middle Low German, etc. The data merits a separate and full-fledged investigation.

Second, Old Frisian as a whole is not paid as much attention to in Germanic studies as its relatives. Thus, research on Old Frisian is needed to fill the gap in the description of the Old Germanic languages. Third, the texts written in Old Frisian belong to the domain of law. Although legal texts are also present in Old English and Old Scandinavian, in Old Frisian they are the main genre, which makes the Old Frisian text corpus unique.

Although there have been research projects conducted on the material, the works have been dedicated mostly to legal features, etymology, lingo-cultural peculiarities, anthropological aspects or to usage of a certain word / word combination.

The Old Frisian morphological system has not been analyzed in full, therefore it merits a comprehensive study, which will allow linguists to perceive the Old Frisian word-building devices in a transparent way, just like those in other, well-studied Old Germanic languages – Gothic, Old English, Old High German, etc.

To get back to a more detailed periodization, the written tradition begins about 1200 with the Old Frisian Psalter Fragments. Before the actual tradition started, some twenty runic inscriptions were made between 500 and 800 AD. Stray words in Old Frisian are attested in *Lex Frisionum*, *Traditiones Fuldenses* (both c. 800); another set of Old Frisian words are place-names in ecclesiastical possessions.

Historically speaking, Ingvaeonic developed into, a. o., Proto-Frisian in the 6–8th centuries. Because of the split along the river Lauwers, there are two branches, Proto-Old West Frisian (OWFr) and Proto-Old East Frisian (OEFr). The main text corpus of Old Frisian is dated from between ca. 1200 and 1550 [Bremmer 2001: 602–603].

Despite all the dialectological differences, diachronically and spatially, the Old Frisian texts are considered to be the corpus of one language. It consists of: (1) legal

codices, (2) charters, (3) letters. The rest are minor categories: chronicles, sermons, poetry /rhyming texts, which are not numerous.

The corpus of Old Frisian letters. The traditional perception of Old Frisian is best described in the article "Old Frisian: a legal language in principle" [Popkema 2014: 369–395]. Most attention used to be paid to codices [Vries 2001: 594]. In terms of sources shares, the Old Frisian codices make 50% of all available texts, charters amount for 40% of the corpus, and the rest is letters.

As opposed to "official" letters, private letters are characterized by the following features:

Addressed to one or more persons (even to the extent of confidential reading);

Demonstrating use of pronouns and verbs in 2nd person Singular.

Based on these criteria, texts with similar composition and style are brought together as private letters, and separated from open letters that could have been read aloud [Gerbenzon 1967: 3–4]. Private letters, in my opinion, are of a special interest due to their unofficial nature; one can expect a less standardized and formal composition, as well as a different word stock due to a different scope of topics touched upon.

The total number of letters written in Old Frisian is 40. They all stem from the West Frisian area (Westerlauwerssch) and were written between 1489 and 1585.

General lexicological remarks. Old Frisian private letters are characterized by a significant influence of the Romance languages, as letters were written down in the period such words were being actively borrowed. Frisian has been influenced consistently due to the dominance of Dutch in the formal / legal domain, so Middle Dutch words (sometimes not even "frisianized") quite often occur in Old and Middle Frisian texts. Nevertheless, the lexical difference between Old and Middle Frisian is more visible in terms of Romance borrowings.

Lemmas given in italics are listed in the reconstructed standardized form which is not attested in the sources (based on [Hofmann / Popkema 2008]). Nominal phrases within compounds are marked with brackets in the Compound type column. Gender of each noun is given in the Lemma column.

Nouns (with gender specified) and adjectives borrowed from Romance, listed alphabetically, and followed by a list of borrowed verbs:

Lemma	Gender Word class	Translation
cancelrīe, **canselarīe**	f.	chancellery
consequentie	f.	consequence, result
inobedientie	f.	disobedience
inquisītie	f.	investigation
jūrisdictie	f.	jurisdiction, (clerical) jurisdiction, judical district
nominātie	f.	nomination
pacientie	f.	patience
processie	f.	procession
rapport, **rāport**	n.	rapport, report
recommendātie	f.	recommendation

revīsie	f.	revision
revocātie	f.	recall, revocation
aventūrlik	adj.	untrustworthy
frank	adj.	free
tirannich	adj.	tyrannic
vacēriende	adj.	vacant (about a position)

Verbs borrowed from Romance and "frisianized" as weak verbs ending in '-(r)ia':

advertēria	advertise
appoinctēria	approve
aventūria	risk
commovēria	agitate
communicēria	express oneself, consider
concipēria	design, draft
confidēria	confide
diffinēria	decide
disputēria	dispute
excusēria	excuse
expedēria	kill
forordinēria	determine, provide
insinuēria	make dependent on the court
interloquēria	make an interim judgement
logēria	accommodate
proclamēria	announce
rapportēria, *rāportēria*	report
recommandēria	recommend
recusēria	refuse

The above-listed lemmas are within the scope of formal lexis. Semantically, most of them have to do with legislation. Grammatically speaking, the borrowings are adapted with help of derivational elements ('-ie' for nouns, '-lik'/'-lich' for adjectives, '-(r)ia' for verbs).

I would like to specially discuss several lemmas that seem peculiar to me.

(A) ELISION AND SPATIAL DIFFERENCES.
DENOTATION OF "DAILY" (ADJECTIVE / ADVERB)

Westerlauwerssch (WL) stands for the territory to the west of river Lauwers (West Old Frisian).

Osterlauwerssch (OL) stands for the territory to the east of river Lauwers (East Old Frisian).

OOk stands for Charters, followed by the volume [Sipma 1927–1977] and the charter's number.

Lemma	Language	Word group	Genre (codices / charters / letters)
1. -deikes, **deikis**	OL WL	adv.	Letters (1490s)
2. **deiliks**	WL	adv.	Letters (1500s)

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3. **deis**	WL	adj.	charters (*deys* OOk I 268, II 28 (2x), *deis* OOk I 268, II 28 (1x), *deijsse* OOk IV 237)
4. **deikes**,	OL	adj.	charters (1470s) and two legal texts
deikis	WL		(The Autentica Riocht from Unia, 1470, OL and the Magnus Keuren from the Fivelgo Manuscript, 1430, WL)

Derived from *dei* "day", denotations of "daily" demonstrate spatial differences within Old Frisian. Elision, i. e. dropping of sounds, happens in the above-listed lemmas, as well as in Old Frisian words in general including compounds (e. g. *broers byrn* "brother's child" in OOk I 448 as opposed to *broderesbern* in the Fivelo Manuscript; *stēnhus* "stone house" as opposed to *stins*, attested in legal codices). Sometimes this process makes the inner relation between the constituents less transparent, as (one of) the constituents get(s) distorted and is not recognizable anymore (a well-known English example is *lord*: *hlafweard*, literally "one who guards the loaves", from *hlaf* "bread, loaf" + *weard* "keeper, guardian" > OE *hlaford* "master of a household, ruler, superior" > ME *loverd* > NE lord).

(B) MORPHOLOGICAL SYSTEM. DERIVATION. SUFFIX '-LIK' AND SUFFIX '-BAR'

The spatial split between similarly functioning morphological elements, suffixes in our case, reflects, among other processes, influences of languages on each other. Old Frisian was developing in a multilingual environment and was closely interweaving with the neighbouring languages. Keeping this in mind, the split between the suffixes '-lik' and '-bar' is a good starting point for tracking parallel formations in Old Frisian and (Middle) English, (Middle) Dutch, and (Middle) Low German. Comparing adjectives in '-lik' and '-bar' in these languages might be a useful investigation linked to the theory of convergent-divergent language development.

As a language user, I have noticed that adjectives derived from verbs with help of '-able' in New English, '-bar' in New German and '-baar' in New Dutch are more productive than those with '-lik'; I would rather assume that '-lik' is more often used to produce adjectives from nouns, although there are pairs like New German *begreifbar* and *verständlich*, both meaning "understandable". Here, I would like to give an adjective in '-lik' attested only in letters as a point of departure:

Lemma	Language	Word class	Translation
dwānlik	WL	adj.	doable

New Frisian *dwaan<u>lik</u>*

New German *tun<u>lich</u>*; also *ausfuhr<u>bar</u>*

New Dutch *doen<u>lijk</u>*; also *maak<u>baar</u>*

For comparison's sake, here are some adjectives in '-lik' attested in different Old Frisian sources:

bikenlik*, *bikanlik	WL	adj.	recognizable // NG erkennbar, sichtbar
biprōwelik*, *biproulik	WL	adj.	confirmable // NG beweisbar

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biwīslik **biwīselik**	WL	adj.	1) confirmable; 2) visible // NG 1) beweisbar, nachweisbar; 2) sichtbar
dēllik **dēlik**	WL	adj.	divisible // NG teilbar
klaglik	WL	adj.	enforceable // NG einklagbar

And here are two adjectives in '-bēr' attested in different Old Frisian sources:

ētbēr	WL	adj.	eatable // NG essbar
gangbēr	WL	adj.	valid (about coins, money) //
gankbēr, ***ganbēr***			NG gangbar, gängig, gültig

When working with the Old Frisian word stock I have noticed that there were more adjectives in '-lik' than in '-bēr' attested in the sources (22 versus 10 lemmas, not including cases like *epenbērlik* "evident, commonly known"). What also is of interest is that there are some adjectival doublets, although with a difference in the semantic scope, which is one of the examples of synonymic morphological means use in Old Frisian (e. g., prefix 'ē-' = suffix '-las' with the negative meaning "un-", "-less"):

fruchtich	WL	adj.	fruitful // NG fruchtbar, ND vruchtbaar
fruchtbēr	WL	adj.	1) fruitful (about land); 2) pregnant // NG fruchtbar

(C) MORPHOLOGICAL SYSTEM. DERIVATION. ADVERB PRODUCTION

Not widely productive, derivational suffix '-ling' is used in two cases to produce an adverb from an adjective, also with flexion '-s', which I would consider a Genitive ending with an adverbial function, or possibly '-lings' can be considered a suffix on its own:

kōrtelings	WL	adv.	recently (attested only in letters)
sunderlinge,	WL	adv.	particularly (attested in other sources)
sonderlinga, **sonderling** **sonderlings**			

These two examples can be compared to another adverbial structure attested in letters:

winterlonges	WL	adv.	during winter (attested only in letters)

Winterlonges is a compound demonstrating transition from an adverbial word phrase to an univeration-undergoing adverb. Univerbation is a complex process that is not easy to track, and has to do with the methodological and definitional question of what a compound actually is. This question will be touched upon in the next section, *Remarks on compounding*.

(D) MORPHOLOGICAL SYSTEM. CONVERSION

In this point, I just would like to point out that conversion (infinitive > noun) is attested in Old Frisian as one of the word-production devices:

forenimen	WL	n.	(subst. inf.) trial? [Hofmann/Popkema 2008: 159; *nima* ibid.: 353].

Remarks on compounding. In this section, I would like to describe compounds of several word classes attested only in Old Frisian letters.

As opposed to simplexes and derived words, which are words produced mostly through derivation or conversion, **compounds** are words consisting of two or more words combined in order to produce a new word with a meaning not necessarily induced from the sum of the constituents' meanings. The constituents are formally and semantically linked following one of the Indo-European compounding patterns, may have a linking element or a case ending modifying one of the constituents, and may show a semantic shift (namely, "contextual" specification of the compound's meaning in most cases).

The importance of compounding as a word-building device in Old Frisian can be obtained through a share analysis of the word stock. Out of 11,750 lemmas (i. e., normalized basic forms of words) 35,77% are compounds.

As we speak only of basic forms and their number not including paradigms (i. e. only the lemma count), the share of, say, articles, has nothing to do with the type-token ration, i. e. the word occurrence rate in texts.

TOTAL WORD COUNT:

Word class (as of the head constituent)	Frequency	Percentage
Nouns (N)	6114	52.03%
Verbs (V) (mostly prepositional / prefixed)	2490	21.19%
Adjectives (Adj)	1476	12.56%
Adverbs (Adv)	752	6.4%
Prepositions (Präp)	109	0.93%
Pronouns (Pron)	89	0.76%
Conjunctions (Conj)	81	0.69%
Numerals (Num)	72	0.61%
Interjections	16	0.14%
Articles	5	0.04%
Grand total	11,750	100%

TOTAL WORD CLASS FREQUENCY AMONG ATTESTED COMPOUNDS:

Word class (as of the head constituent)	Frequency	Percentage
Nouns (N)	2661	**63.31% (33% of all lemmas)**
Verbs (V) (mostly prepositional / prefixed)	906	21.56%
Adverbs (Adv)	286	6.8%
Adjectives (Adj)	267	6.35%
Conjunctions (Conj)	26	0.62%
Prepositions (Präp)	25	0.59%
Pronouns (Pron)	23	0.55%
Numerals (Num)	7	0.17%
Grand total	4203	100%

Nouns amount to half of the word stock, and nominal compounds amount to one third of the Old Frisian word stock. Based on the calculation, we can see that there are more nominal compounds than verbal, adjectival and adverbial ones as compared to the grand total of the word class lemmas (including simplexes and derivational formations).

Three word classes of compounds will be analyzed in this paper, as they are the most numerous and representative ones: nominal, verbal and adverbial compounds. A small number of adjectival and conjunctional compounds are attested only in letters, and they are in line with the general word-building trends for these word classes in Old Frisian, so I do not include them in order to pay more attention to more representative groups.

(E) NOMINAL COMPOUNDS:

As nominal compounds amount to circa 60% of the Old Frisian compound stock, which makes them the most numerous and significant group, I apply a 2-dimension analysis approach to differentiate between patterns in a more accurate way. My analysis consists of (1) a formal and (2) a semantic part.

(1) In terms of the compound's form, or structure, I consider the word groups the constituents belong to, linking elements or case endings being present, elision or other distortion processes taking place in the construction.

(2) In terms of the compound's semantics, I consider whether the compound is determinative or copulative; if determinative (which covers most cases), I then differentiate between case compounds and attributive compounds after Buhofer's *Tabellarische Übersicht über die semantischen Typen* [Buhofer 1992: 41], which are comparable to Old Indian karmadhāraya and *tatpuruṣa* types. Yet, Buhofer's classification is more precise, as it relies not only on the compound's form, but also on its inner semantics, i. e. the logical relation between the notions denoted by the constituents. In the traditional work on compounding in Old Germanic by Carr it is stated that karmadhārayas and tatpuruṣas cannot be differentiated between with confidence [Carr, 1939: 320]. Buhofer's classification not only covers the entire scope of compounds relevant to Germanic as per the Old Indian classification, but also contrasts the types in a more transparent and systematic way. Word classes of the constituents are included in Buhofer's classification as well as options within each semantic category.

Due to a small number of lemmas, just 9 compounds, they are grouped by word classes:

Noun + noun

1.	*barga-hūs*	n.	[pig (Gen. Pl.) + house]	pig stall
2.	*morn-tīd*	f.	[morning + time]	Only in: *tō morntīde* "in the morning"
3.	*sīl-jeld*	m.	[sluice + money]	sluice fee
4.	*snuttel-dōk*	m.	[snotter + kerchief]	handkerchief

Noun + noun (<verb), synthetic compound

5.	*dīk-skāwinge*	f.	[dyke + viewing]	inspection of a dyke
6.	*hers-rūter*, *ārs-rūter*	m.	[horse + rider]	mounted soldier? rear guard soldier? (or rather *ersrūter*?)

ADVERB / PREPOSITION + NOUN

7.	*fore-gebed*	n.?	[for + request]	intercession
8.	*on-slach*	m.?	[on + blow?]	plan

ADVERB / PREPOSITION + NOUN, CONVERTED VERB

9.	*efter-thinzen*	n.	[after + thinking] (subst. inf.)	suspicion

The difference between nominal compounds and synthetic compounds can be in a nutshell explained through the definition of the latter: A synthetic compound is a

structure where the base in the head element is a verb, and the modifying element is interpreted as an arguement of that verb [Lieber, Štekauer 2009: 353]. As *skāwinge* and *rūter* are nouns derived from *skāwia* "to view" and *rīda* "to ride" respectfully, they can be considered head constituents of a synthetic compound.

Semantically, lemmas 1–6 are determinative case compounds (compounds in which there is a case relation between the constituents). Lemmas 7–9 are determinative attributive compounds with adverbial modifiers. In some cases one might discuss which pattern the compound belongs to as there are no grammatical case markers: compare *dīk-skāwinge* with a clear Accusative relation with *sīl-jeld* which can be clearly interpreted semantically, but not "grammatically" ("money having to do with the sluice" does not have a one-to-one correspondence with a certain case function, which, of course, is often faced with compounds).

<div align="center">(F) VERBAL COMPOUNDS:</div>

Most of the verbs attested only in letters are prefixed verbs and prepositional-verbal compounds, just like in any other Old Frisian source. Yet, there are some verbs which might be of interest because of their inner structure, as they originated (with one or several adverbial / prepositional constituents being present) from an adverbial word phrase:

bī-ēn-ōther-krīgia,	bring together, collect
bī-ēn-ōr-krīgia	
bi-fremedia,	alienate
bi-framedia, *bi-frāmdia*	
thruch-helpa	kill
tō-hūs-halda	make someone wait at home
tō-hūs-skikka	1) (refl.) send yourself home;
	2) go home
wei-tiā	pull away
wither-reisia	travel back

I would like to mention one compound verb separately:

rēd-slā	give advice

An unprefixed verb for "advising" is attested in Old Frisian, rēdslā and Old High German, rātslagōn. Later in German it was replaced with a prefixed compound, NG *beratschlagen*, ND *beraadslagen*. To my knowledge, there is no parallel formation in English.

This verbal compound is not present in New Frisian, as it has been replaced with a borrowed verb, *advisearje*, although *rie(d)jouwing* "advice", literally "advice-giving" and *rie(d)jouwer* "adviser", literally "advice-giver" are attested in the modern language, with *riede* and *ried jaan* being originally Frisian.

Alas, there is only one incorporated verb attested solely in letters. Noun incorporation in verb is a peculiarity notable already in Old Frisian, it has developed into a frequently used word-formation device in Modern Frisian [Dijk 1997].

<div align="center">(G) ADVERBIAL COMPOUNDS</div>

Adverbial compound constructions often are not considered compounds, and when discussing compounding researchers mostly pay attention to nominals and adjectivals, less often verbs (see, for instance, [Lieber, Štekauer, 2009]). Adverbial compounds

can also be hard to interpret in their inner form, e. g., it is hard to say whether *tōjēnis* should be seen as a compound, although formally both *jēnis* and *tōjēnis* are attested as independent words meaning "against".

Some words, like *altōs* "always", suggest being a compound by analogy with other 'al-'-formations, but this lemma can hardly be split at the synchronic level of Old Frisian.

al-thā **altōs ?**	[all + then]	back then always (inner form unclear; compare to *al-jēren*, *tō aller tīde/alle tīdum, alla-tīda*)
bi-efter, **bi-after**	[by + after]	back Only in: *biefter lēta* "to betray", lit. "to leave behind"
bī-ēn-ōther, **bī-en-ōr**	[by + one + other]	together
bī-nest **bi-sonderlike**, **bi-sunderlike**	[by + next] [by + particular]	well-nigh separately
hwēr-tō	[where + to]	what... for
in-sunder	[in + particular]	particularly
jester-ēvend	[yesterday + evening]	yesterday evening
lond-wirds	[land + towards]	landwards Only in: *tō londwirds* "in the country"
thin-on-gānde, **dēn-on-gānde** (?)	[this + on + going]	in this regard
tō-jēnis-stondande	[against + standing]	Only in: (conj.) *nāt tōjēnisstondande* "regardless of..." // NE *notwithstanding*, NF *nettsjinsteande*
winter-longes	[winter + long (obj. case?)]	during winter

As adverbs like *winterlonges* undergo univerbation and glue in one word, it can be challenging to say what the inner structure of such words is:

winterlong<u>es</u> 'during the winter' [noun + [adjective + <u>suffix</u>]^{adj}]^{adv}, or [[noun + adj]^{adj} + -es.

Conclusions. As I have aimed to show in my analysis of both non-compound and compound words attested solely in letters, the latter contribute to expanding the well-known word stock of Old Frisian.

The lemmas attested only in Old Frisian letters are of interest both from the point of view of language interaction (borrowings from Romance, "frisianization") and word-building, see remarks (a)-(d) and the section on compounding. Through describing and analyzing the Old Frisian word and compound stock step-by-step I hope to identify not-yet-investigated morphological and lexical trends in Old Frisian, and to contribute to the theory of compounding in Germanic.

My on-going dissertation project on compounding in Old Frisian is designed to cover a significant and representative part of the language's word stock. Still, there are many more (Old) Frisian phenomena waiting to be looked into.

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