



theter    nen            hus-kerl            with    sinne            hera            te    suite            ne    stride  
 that-there    no-M.NOM.SG    house man-NOM.SG    against    his-M.ACC.SG    lord-ACC.SG    too    strongly    NEG    quarrel-3SG.PRES.SBJV  
 'That no free man may quarrel too strongly with his lord'

## The position of Old Frisian

- West Germanic language attested 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century (see Table 1), though certain texts go further back<sup>1</sup>
- Primarily a legal language
- Contemporary with Middle Low German, Middle Dutch, and Middle English: There has been discussion whether it is Old or Middle Germanic<sup>2, 3</sup>
- Strong North Sea Germanic character and linguistically conservative. Often compared to Old English and Old Saxon, sharing many innovations with the former especially<sup>4</sup>
- However, an Anglo-Frisian proto-language seems untenable<sup>4</sup>
- Two main dialects: East and West (Western manuscripts generally younger)
- Lexical and grammatical interference from Middle Dutch and Middle Low German is common, more prominent toward the end of the period<sup>5, 6</sup>
- No research on adverbs of degree in Old Frisian

Sigil	Title	Dialect	Time period
R1	First Rüstringen Manuscript	East Frisian	c.a. 1300
H1	First Hunsingo Manuscript	East Frisian	1325-1350
H2	Second Hunsingo Manuscript	East Frisian	1325-1350
R2	Second Rüstringen Manuscript	East Frisian	1327
B2	Second Brokmer Manuscript	East Frisian	1345
E1	First Emsingo Manuscript	East Frisian	c.a. 1400
F	Fivelgo Manuscript	East Frisian	1427-1450
Bas	Baseler Codex	West Frisian	1440-1475
E3	Third Emsingo Manuscript	East Frisian	c.a. 1450
E2	Second Emsingo Manuscript	East Frisian	c.a. 1450
J	Jus Municipale Frisonum	West Frisian	1464
U	Codex Unia	West Frisian	1477
Ro	Codex Roorda	West Frisian	1480-1485
A	Codex Aysma	West Frisian	c.a. 1500

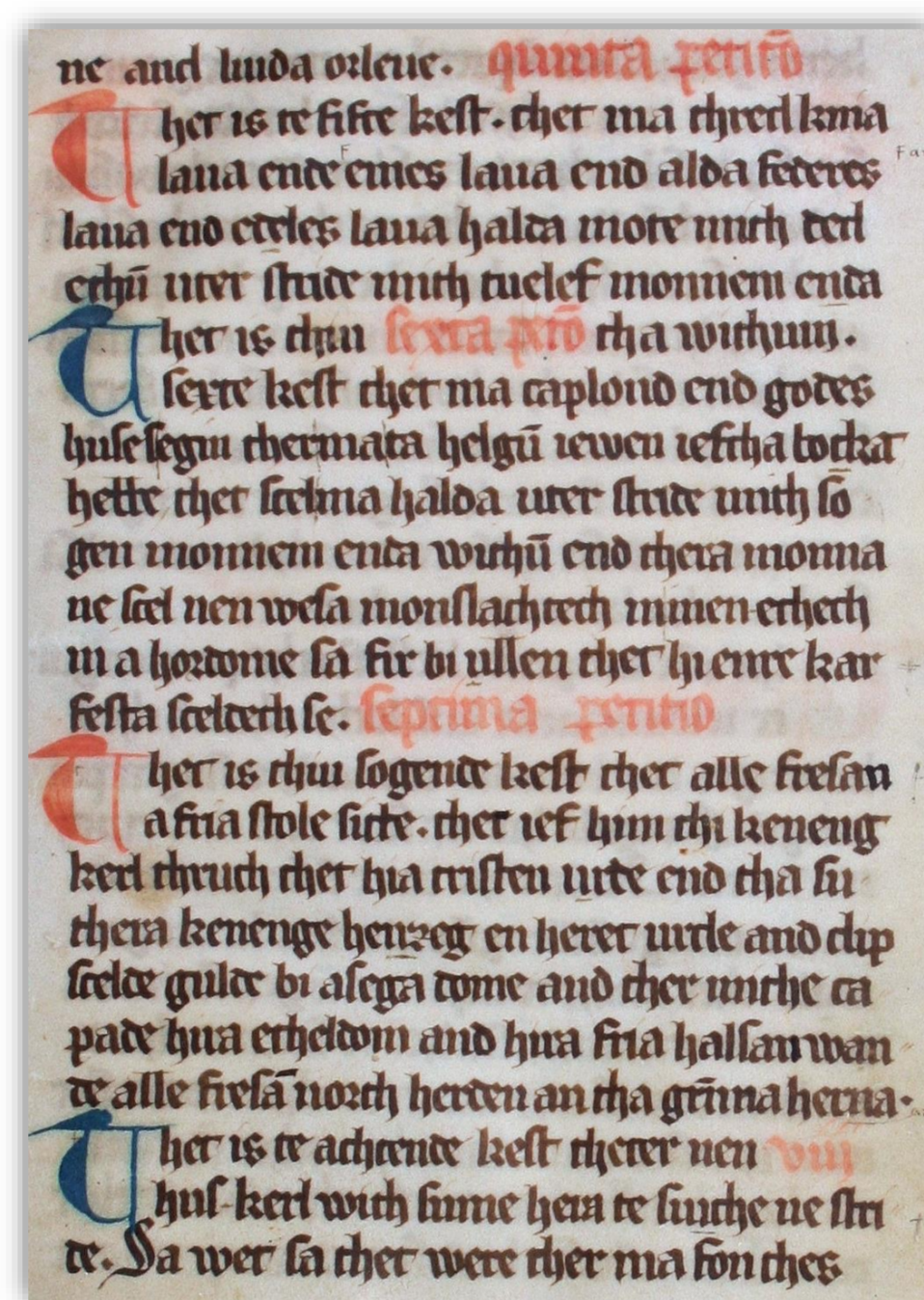


Figure 1. The H2 manuscript

Table 1. An overview of the Old Frisian manuscripts included in the analysis<sup>1</sup>

## Adverbs of degree in early West Germanic

- Clear differences between Continental West Germanic and North Sea Germanic
- Best observed when comparing Old Saxon and Middle Low German, since the system in Low German seemingly undergoes dramatic transformations in line with the loss of other North Sea Germanic features<sup>7</sup>
- In Old English and Old Saxon, the most dominant adverb is *swiþe/swiðo* 'very, strongly', not found in High German and Dutch, rare in Middle Low German
- Differences in usage: *gearwe/garo* 'fully' with perception verbs (e.g. *witan*, *cunnan* 'to know'), but with adjectives and adverbs in High German and Middle Low German
- Old/Middle High German, Middle Low German, and Middle Dutch *filu/vile/vēle* 'much, very' with comparatives, but only positives in Old English or Old Saxon
- Continental "Middle" Germanic languages display a rise of the adverb *sêre* 'very, sorely' mainly with negative words. Dominant in Middle Dutch and Middle Low German Early attestations in Old Saxon and Old High German are present.
- One adverb present everywhere is *hearde/hardo* -e/*harto* -e 'firmly, very'

## Goal

Seek to determine the position of the adverbs of degree in Old Frisian. To what degree is it North Sea Germanic? How is the language affected by Continental developments? Does it line up with Old or Middle Germanic?

## Method

- Data collected from the *Corpus Old Frisian*
- Additional material (A and charters) from the *Integrated Frisian Language Database*
- Material collected in a database: adverb, degree, modified phrase, inherent polarity, polarity of the environment, position, context, text, manuscript, and dialect
- Corpus annotations ignored when necessary
- When the same text appeared in multiple manuscripts, only the oldest version was included, unless the adverb or the modified phrase differed

## References

1. Bremmer Jr, Rolf H. 2009. *An Introduction to Old Frisian. History, Grammar, Reader, Glossary*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
2. de Haan, Germen J. 2001. Why Old Frisian is really Middle Frisian. *Folia linguistica historica* 22.1-2, 179-206.
3. Versloot, Arjen P. 2004. Why Old Frisian is still quite old. *Folia Linguistica Historica*, 25: 253-298.
4. Stiles, Patrick V. 1995. Remarks on the 'Anglo-Frisian Thesis'. In Volkert F. Faltings, Alastair G.H. Walker & Ommo Wilts (eds.), *Friesische Studien II*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 177-220.
5. Blom, Alderik H. 2007. Language admixture in the Old West Frisian *Basle Wedding Speeches*?. In Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., Stephen Laker, & Oebele Vries (eds.). *Advances in Old Frisian philology*. Leiden: Brill, 1-27.

## Results

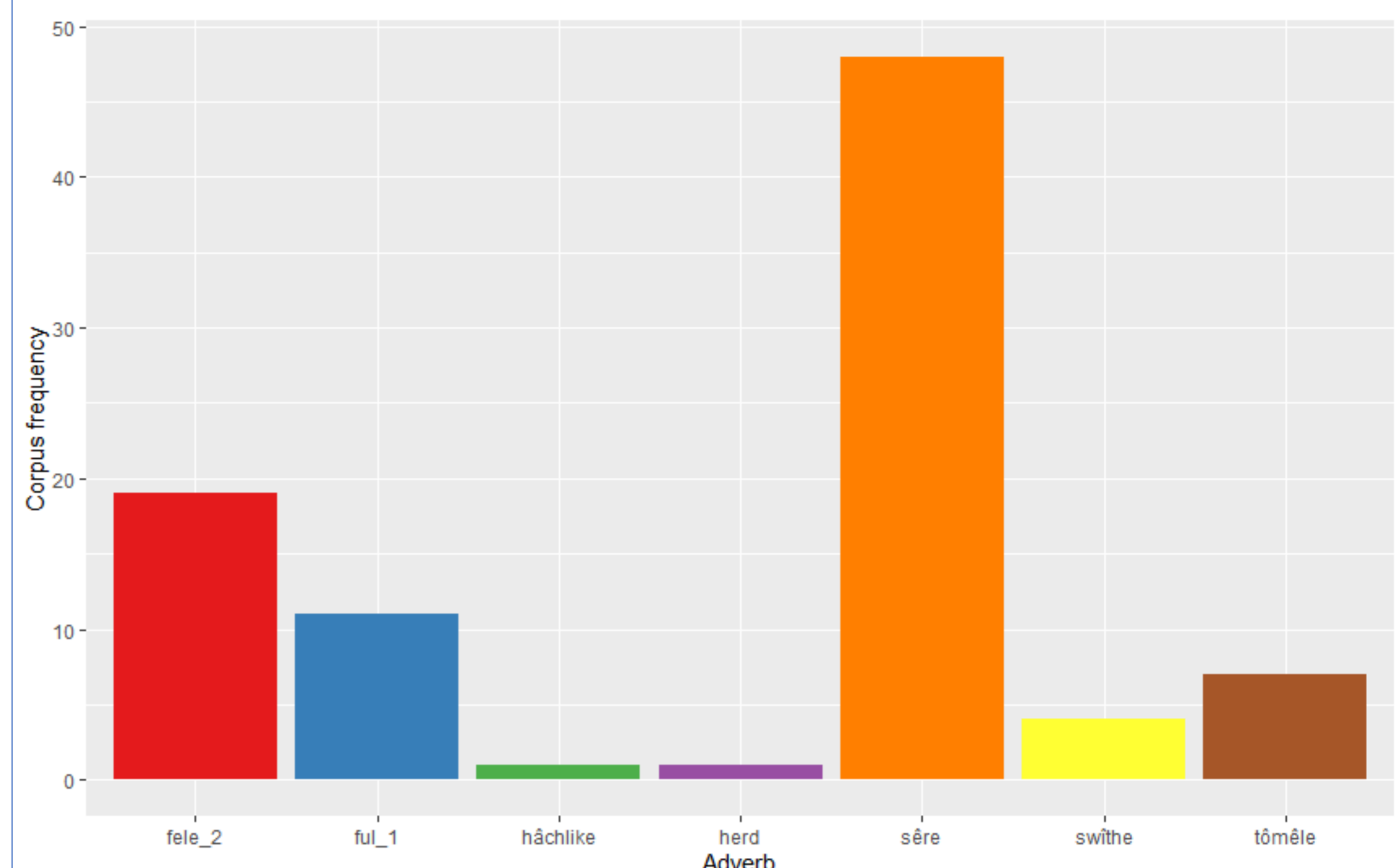


Figure 2. The frequencies of the adverbs of high degree in Old Frisian

### Swiþe

- Found in two texts: *The Seventeen Statutes* and *How the Frisians Conquered Rome*, with verbs and adjectives respectively
- Former is the earliest legal text. In all version except R1, which has *felo* 'much, very'. Earliest layers from the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>
- Latter only preserved in two later manuscripts (J, A)

### Sêre

- Most frequent adverb of high degree, like Middle Dutch and Middle Low German<sup>4</sup>
- Mostly with negative words (52%)
- Rare in the Eastern manuscripts: appears to be a lexical adverb. Modifies *werda* 'to hurt', *binda* 'to bind', and *urberna* 'to burn'. Once in F with *strîda* 'to quarrel'
- Attested with adjectives only in Old West Frisian
- Especially dominant in the 15<sup>th</sup> century *Gesta Fresonum* (A, 25x)

### Fule/fele

- Notable for its ablaut variation<sup>8</sup>
- Also rare in Old East Frisian: With adjectives only in *Fon alra Fresena Fridome* (H2, 2x with *sterk* 'strong'), which has a Western exemplar<sup>9</sup>. Possible Middle Dutch influence because of the spelling with -e<sup>8</sup>
- More common in Old West Frisian: Also found with comparatives

### Other adverbs

- *Herde* attested only once (J), though highly frequent elsewhere
- The only adverb of degree with a large number of attestation in Old East Frisian is *elle* 'all, fully'
- The second most common adverb of degree in Old English, *ful* 'fully, very' is also common in Old Frisian and blurs the line between high and absolute degree
- A cognate with Old English *gearwe*, *\*jere* conspicuously missing

## Conclusion

- Based on the above, the system of adverbs of degree bears little resemblance to Old English and Old Saxon, and it resembles Middle Dutch and Middle Low German instead, thus in line with Middle Germanic
- *Swiþe* could belong to an older register based on its distribution
- The lack of early attestations for *sêre* may indicate that it entered the language at a later time and possibly first in Old West Frisian
- The situation may be comparable to Old Saxon and Middle Low German, though not supported by a loss of other North Sea Germanic features, and we do not know what the Frisian system was like in the 9<sup>th</sup> century
- Implication: Adverbs of degree show more indications of language contact than phonological features. A general pattern?

6. Bremmer Jr, Rolf H. 2017. Language contact in Medieval Frisia: Middle Low German spelling interferences in Old East Frisian manuscripts, *Filologia Germanica - Germanic Philology* 9: 1-18.
7. Visser, Lourens. forthcoming. Old Saxon and Middle Low German adverbs of degree: A case of diachronic discontinuity?. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics*. Manuscript accepted for publication.
8. Bremmer Jr, Rolf H. 2005. Old Frisian *fule* and *felo* "much; many": An idiosyncrasy in Germanic and Frisian perspective. *NOWELE* 46/47: 31-40.
9. Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Hans. 1921. Zum altfriesischen Gedichte vom Ursprung der friesischen Freiheit. In Georg Leyh (ed.). *Aufsätze Fritz Milkau gewidmet*. Leipzig: Verlag von Karl W. Hiersemann, 339-343.