

Interaktion ohne Grenzen

Interaction without borders

Band 1 | Volume 1

Interaktion ohne Grenzen

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Interaction without borders

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Odin in Friesland

Scandinavian influences in the southern North Sea area during the Migration and Early Merovingian Periods

Johan A. W. Nicolay

In 2008, Prof. Dr Claus von Carnap-Bornheim founded the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology. This research centre is situated in Schleswig, at a historically important crossroads of cultural, political and religious relations between Scandinavia and continental Europe. In Carolingian times, Hedeby, Schleswig's predecessor, was a major gateway on the border between two distinct cultural and religious worlds: the Carolingian kingdom to the south and the Danish kingdom to the north. But earlier, in the Migration and Early Merovingian Periods, a different pattern was visible: the coastal areas of northern Germany, the northern Netherlands and south-eastern England were culturally part of the southern Scandinavian world, as is revealed by the shape and decoration of gold and silver ornaments.

This paper will focus on this earlier phase, that is, the 5th to early 7th century AD. For this period, the position of the southern North Sea area within the wider Scandinavian world is further illuminated by a new find from the present-day province of Friesland in the Netherlands: a silver square-headed brooch of Scandinavian type, belonging to Haseloff's 'Jutlandic brooch group'. After the discovery and features of this exceptional find are described, its position within the larger group of 'Jutlandic' brooches and the symbolism of its decoration will be investigated.

Interestingly, the new find is not the only Scandinavian-type ornament from Migration- and Early Merovingian-Period Friesland. By presenting the currently known finds of mainly gold and silver jewellery, including a second new find, it will be shown that the silver brooch can be assigned to a 'Scandinavian phase' in the development of material culture within the early-medieval northern Netherlands. Finally, these finds are interpreted in the context of the fascinating process of post-Roman power formation, which gave rise to regional and larger kingdoms along the southern North Sea

coasts – a process that involved the creation of a Scandinavian origin myth in which the Norse god Odin (also known as the Germanic god Wodan) played a central role.

A new square-headed brooch from Friesland

The silver, partly gilded brooch was found in two fragments by different metal detectorists, on different occasions in August 2012 and September 2015. The brooch fragments were found at a depth of *c.* 10–25 cm in the topsoil, *c.* 20 m apart. The two detectorists were searching together when the first, and also when the second fragment was found. After cleaning the second piece, they guessed that both fragments might belong to the same brooch. Two weeks later a meeting was arranged to see if the fragments would fit together. The men both clearly remember this exceptional and exciting moment, because the fragments did produce a perfect fit! They formed a near-complete brooch, of which only the pin is now missing (Fig. 1).

The brooch was found on a raised settlement site, a so-called *terp*, in the north-eastern part of the province of Friesland, in the municipality of Dongeradeel. The find-spot is located in the northernmost part of the area, east of a former estuary, the Middelzee, which once divided Friesland into a western part (Westergo) and an eastern part (Oostergo). In Oostergo the earliest *terps* were inhabited from the 6th century BC. Until the first sea dykes were constructed in the 12th or 13th century, the area was characterized by extensive salt marshes, of which even the highest parts would be flooded several times a year. As a consequence, habitation was possible only on artificially raised platforms, which over the centuries grew into larger *terps* – of which over a thousand are present in Friesland. The find-spot of the silver brooch is one of these *terps*, which is situated near the village of Holwerd; besides the brooch, other finds from this site are copper alloy

brooches and a variety of coins (e.g. Roman and Carolingian denarii, sceattas and sterling coins), pointing to habitation in the Roman period and both the Early and Late Middle Ages.

The brooch has an overall length of 5.5 cm and it weighs just 8.9 g. The front is richly decorated in a way that imitates chip-carving on wooden objects. To give the brooch a lively, colourful appearance, the deeper parts of the 'carved' motifs are gilded. When the brooch was worn, horizontally below the chin as is suggested by images on Scandinavian gold foil figures (e.g. WATT 1992, fig. 7a), the reflection of light on its many facets and the contrasting shades of silver and gold must have given this ornament a dramatic appearance – especially indoors, by flickering firelight.

The body of the brooch consists of three parts: the head-plate, the footplate and a central, connecting bow – elements that are characteristic of the so-called square-headed brooches. The *head-plate* has an oblong shape and measures 2.1 × 1.2 cm. Although all four corners are now rounded, traces of heavy wear indicate that the original shape was indeed rectangular. The plate was divided into three 'zones' framed by a narrow band, 0.1 cm wide. This band was decorated with a zigzag motif that may originally have been filled with niello. Most of this decoration, however, has disappeared through wear – especially along the outer rim. Each of the three zones is decorated in relief, the two outer zones featuring a similar design.

The central zone shows some apparently random geometrical motifs. Together, however, these form a highly stylized human head (Fig. 2), of which the following elements can be recognized: the forehead, a nose between two eyes with eyebrows, a mouth (horizontal groove) and parallel strands of a beard. The eyes are unequal in size: the right eye is much larger than the left. Both outer zones show an animal, again in a stylized way (Fig. 2). Distinguishable are the head with a central eye, the animal's back and bent fore- and hind legs. The foreleg terminates in a triangular foot or hoof that is placed in the centre of the leg's curve. Between the legs, a comb-like motif probably represents the animal's belly. The elongated triangular motifs seem to be the animal's hair or mane. The animals are both presented in the same pose, upright when the brooch was worn horizontally with the head-plate to the wearer's right.

The footplate is roughly teardrop-shaped and measures 3.1 × 1.9 cm. The centre of this plate bears a rhombic motif, with a four-pointed star in the centre. On both sides and at the bottom of the rhombus, a roundel is present, again with four-pointed stars in the middle. Two more roundels form the upper part of the footplate. Although this part is damaged because the brooch was broken in two directly below the bow, these roundels are seen to form two more animals. Both animals are turned outwards, with their heads pointing down. The animal's body (or actually its back) is formed by a double semicircular line. The head consists of three parts: a triangle with parallel grooves (indicating hair or feathers), a large

round eye below an eyebrow and an elongated, bird-like beak that is curved inwards. Again, along the outer rim, clear traces of wear can be seen, especially on the lower, intact roundel.

The flat head-plate and footplate are connected by a pronounced bow, which is hollow on the reverse. Both sides of the bow are decorated with a wide, lengthwise groove. The flat front displays some heavily abraded motifs, together forming a second human head, now shown in profile (Fig. 2). Above two horizontal lines on the left, representing lips, a central, oval eye is visible within the semicircular outline of the head. Left of the eye, a stylized nose is shown as a terminal knob of the bordering line.

On the back of the head-plate, the silver attachment loops for the pin are still present (Fig. 1). Remains of corrosion in the holes of these loops and between the loops indicate that the original pin was made of iron. This pin could be fastened by slipping its point into the silver catch plate, present on the back of the footplate.

From late-Roman-style to Scandinavian-style ornaments

The execution in gilded silver, the overall shape and especially the decorative motifs allow the newly found brooch to be assigned to the 'Jutlandic brooch group'. This group was first defined by HASELOFF (1981, 21 ff.) as an early group of ornaments that are decorated in Animal Style I. The 'Jutlandic' brooches have their origin in southern Scandinavia. Here they constitute a transitional form between ornaments of the earlier Nydam Style and those of the later Animal Styles I and II (see also PESCH 2009).

After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire an interesting development is evident in the execution of brooches and other ornaments in the former Roman provinces of Britain and in the Germanic areas north of the Rhine. Inspired by the 'chip-carved' decoration of the impressive bronze fittings of late-Roman hip-belts, metalworkers in England, Germany and Scandinavia executed different types of ornaments in regionally adapted late-Roman styles.

In south-eastern England, the Quoit Brooch Style developed with varied engraved or punched decoration on flat surfaces of brooches, belt fittings and pendants (WEBSTER 2012, 52–55). In northern Germany, within the Elbe-Weser region, the application of chip-carved decoration to existing regional-style brooches resulted in the development of the Saxon Relief Style – characteristic of supporting-arm, saucer and especially the richly decorated equal-armed brooches (NIELSEN 2003; WEBSTER 2012, 49–52). After the migration of 'Anglo-Saxons' from northern Germany to the northern Netherlands and south-eastern England, these Saxon-style ornaments were also produced within the newly settled areas. Finally, southern Scandinavia saw the appearance of the Nydam Style, also characterized by brooches with chip-carved decoration (HASELOFF 1981, 8–17). In all three styles, geometric as well as plant motifs occur; animals too are depicted, sometimes flanking a human head.



Fig. 1 The newly found, silver-gilt square-headed brooch from Friesland. Length 5,5 cm (copyright F. de Vries, Toonbeeld).

In south-eastern England, northern Germany and the northern Netherlands the late-Roman-style ornaments show no further development. Within southern Scandinavia, however, the Nydam Style brooches were gradually replaced by closely related brooches, now executed in Animal Style I (HASELOFF 1981, 26; 706). Rather than geometric and plant motifs, different types of animals or animal-like creatures now become more dominant. Characteristic of Style I is also the use of contours to outline the individual body parts of each animal. Compared to the earlier Nydam Style, human heads are more frequently shown, again usually flanked by animals. Stranger creatures appear besides the frequently occurring quadrupeds, including hybrids that combine a human head and an animal body (Haseloff's *Tiermensen*; see HASELOFF 1981, III–131; 1986, 89–95).

Within the Scandinavian group of Style I brooches four sub-phases are distinguished by HASELOFF (1981, 174–216). In the earliest phase (phase A), which immediately followed the Nydam Style phase, complete animals are shown as rounded body parts – especially along the brooch edges. In the subsequent phase B, similar animals are placed also in the central parts of the head- and footplates, their bodies now divided into flat parts decorated with parallel lines. Finally, in phases C and D only the contour lines of the torso are shown, in combination with stylized limbs; in the final phase the torso

is no more than a band of parallel lines. Outside Scandinavia, Style I showed an interesting regional development within south-eastern England and the northern Netherlands, where silver or silver-decorated brooches were produced in a Kentish, a wider East-English and a Frisian Style I (NICOLAY 2014, 244–250).

The brooches of Haseloff's phase D are at the basis of the later ornaments decorated in Animal Style II. This style also probably originated in southern Scandinavia, from where it too spread across the southern North Sea area, replacing Style I. The ribbon-like bodies of the later Style I animals have become more elongated now, often forming complex interlaced patterns. Gold filigree was especially suited to shaping the long-bodied animals and – in combination with garnet cloisonné – was now often applied to decorate brooches as well as belt fittings, pendants, drinking horns and weaponry. The animals depicted in Style II are mainly identified as eagles, horses, wolves and snakes or dragon-like creatures, but other animals may also occur (NIELSEN 2001, 471–476; 2007). Human heads are less frequently shown, but still in combination with flanking animals. Inspired by Scandinavian prototypes, south-eastern England and the northern Netherlands again saw the development of regional-style groups – represented by a large variety of ornaments decorated in Kentish Style II, East-Anglian Style II and Frisian



Fig. 2 Close-up of the human heads on the head-plate and bow and of the quadrupeds on the head-plate (copyright F. de Vries, Toonbeeld).

Style II (NICOLAY 2014, 250–261). The growing popularity of a Byzantine style, which was copied from Frankish jewellery, spelt the end of Style II in the southern North Sea area (GEAKE 1999).

According to Haseloff, the Nydam Style brooches can be roughly dated to the 5th century AD; their first appearance is dated to the early decades of this century, and the transition to brooches of Style I to around 475/480 – followed by the transition to Style II in the late 6th century (HASELOFF 1981, 170–173; 673; 1986, 68; 82). Recently, a new dating for the introduction of the Nydam Style and the Scandinavian Style I has been suggested by RAU (2010, 297–301): around 420 and 460, respectively. Items ornamented in Saxon Relief Style and the Quoit Brooch Style probably have a date similar

to those decorated in Nydam Style. Ornaments in Style II indeed have a late 6th-century origin; they were produced into the early decades of the 7th century (c.590–630/640). Roughly speaking, the Byzantine North Sea style is a 7th-century phenomenon.

Back to the newly found brooch: dating and decorative themes

As a representative of the ‘Jutlandic brooch group’, the brooch from Friesland belongs to the earliest group of ornaments that were executed in Animal Style I (phase A). On the basis of the shape of the bodies, feet, legs and heads of the depicted animals, NIELSEN (2009) refined the chronology of Style I ornamentation. By applying correspondence



Fig. 3 Photo and drawing of the silver-gilt square-headed brooch from Bifrons (grave 64), Kent. Length 13.3 cm (copyright The Kent Archaeological Society/Maidstone Museum, Maidstone; drawing after HASELOFF 1981, fig. 25).

analysis, a division of the objects from southern Scandinavia into five stylistic and chronological groups could be made. One of the oldest pieces is the Jutlandic brooch from Galsted (Denmark), which Haseloff had indeed assigned to his phase A. The latest piece is a scabbard mouth from Gudme (Denmark), a representative of Haseloff's group D.

When the 'Jutlandic' brooches that have been found in Britain and on the Continent are added, a further division of the early Style I ornaments can be made into an early group (type Engers: c. 460–510/520) and a later group (type Tournai, including its derivatives: c. 480–540/550; NIELSEN 2009, 83–84, including tab. 7 with dates of burial). Examples of early specimens are two closely related brooches from Engers (southern Germany) and Finglesham (grave D3, Kent). The animals on both brooches are typically Scandinavian, indicating that the pieces were probably imported from Scandinavia. A second brooch from Kent, found at Bifrons (grave 63), is of a transitional type: it shares features with brooches of the Engers type (shape and composition) and those of the later Tournai type (the animal's body elements, which are less naturalistic and do not always have contour lines). Most brooches of the Tournai type are probably imitations or later copies of Scandinavian prototypes. The newly found brooch, showing highly stylized animal parts without contour lines,

clearly is an example of the Tournai type – which points to a date in the late 5th or first half of the 6th century. Whether this brooch is a Scandinavian import, an imitation or a more deviating copy will be discussed in the following section.

The square-headed brooch from Friesland shows a varied decoration in relief, consisting of geometrical motifs (a rhombus, roundels and four-pointed stars), human heads and Style I animals. To understand the composition of these decorative elements, the new find can be compared to a similar brooch that was found at the Anglo-Saxon cemetery of Bifrons (grave 41) in Kent (S. Chadwick Hawkes in: HASELOFF 1981, 718–721 pl. 18–20; Fig. 3). The English specimen, also of the Tournai type, is one of the most magnificent 'Jutlandic' brooches currently known; it displays a combination of decorative themes that we know from Style I brooches found in Scandinavia as well as in Kent and on the Continent.

The head-plate of the Bifrons brooch is divided into two zones: a rectangular inner zone, on three sides surrounded by an outer zone. The outer zone shows four quadrupeds, with their mouths open. Haseloff states that the animals are shown in a striding pose, speaking of *kauernde Randtiere*. The central zone is of greater relevance to interpretation of the brooch from Friesland. It shows a highly stylized human head with eyebrows, eyes, a nose, a mouth and both a moustache



Fig. 4 Bronze square-headed brooch from Hallum (left) and silver-gilt square-headed brooch from Achlum (right), Friesland. Same scale; length of Hallum brooch 6.5 cm (copyright Fries Museum, Leeuwarden; former ARC-bv, Groningen).

and a beard. The male head is flanked by two creatures with bird-like beaks, which are looking back over their shoulders. Despite the differences in execution, the head-plates of both brooches depict a male face between animals.

The footplate of the Bifrons brooch shows a more complex composition, the different elements of which are emphasized by small holes. But the general shape of the footplate is similar to that of the new find, with a rhombus and a four-pointed cross in the centre. The central rhombus, however, is surrounded by a wide outer rim, filled with three animals, two human heads that are shown in profile and a third human head shown frontally. As the heads and animals alternate, three sets of man-between-animals can be distinguished. At the top and bottom points of the rhombus an 'isolated' animal head is shown from above. As on the new find, a roundel is present on either side of the rhombus, here filled with a human face that is shown frontally. Another similarity is the 'hanging animals' along the upper rim; these bird-like creatures have a curved body, terminating in a head with a pointed beak that curves inwards. On the Bifrons brooch, four quadrupeds are added as bordering animals, with their heads pointing towards both roundels. Together with the human heads within these roundels they form two further sets of man-between-animals.

The central bow has a large roundel, with a stylized human head in frontal view. The parallel lines of the chin may again represent a beard. This head should be seen in relation to the curved animals directly below the roundel on the footplate, forming another man-between-animals.

It is difficult to tell what type or types of animal are represented by the four-legged creatures on the footplate and head-plate of the Bifrons brooch. The central, isolated head on the upper part of the footplate might be a horse, an interpretation that is quite likely for the animals with hair or manes on the newly found brooch. The quadrupeds flanking the human head in the central part of the Bifrons head-plate have birds' heads and are hybrid creatures; the other animals may be horses or wolves.

When the ornamental themes of both brooches are compared, it is clear that the general composition is very similar. Interestingly, one theme is dominant: the human head, representing a male person, flanked by quadrupeds, bird-like creatures and hybrid animals. The new find features this theme both on the head-plate and on the bow/footplate, the Bifrons brooch once on the head-plate and no fewer than six times on the bow/footplate.

Scandinavian-style jewellery in Friesland

The newly found square-headed brooch is unique within the Netherlands, but certainly no isolated find. It is part of a larger collection of Migration-Period and Early Merovingian-Period ornaments executed in a Scandinavian style, mainly from the province of Friesland. These ornaments comprise a gilded bronze imitation of a 'Jutlandic' brooch, some silver-gilt brooches that belong to a group of 'Frisian' Style I jewellery, a larger collection of gold bracteates of various Scandinavian types, and a collection of brooches and other 'Frisian' Style II ornaments. Only the first-named specimen

was found during the excavation of a terp site in the salt marsh area of Friesland; the other pieces are stray finds from the same area or were found in quarried terp soil that was used to fertilize the adjacent peat area. Like the Migration-Period ornaments in Scandinavia, most items were probably deposited not in graves but as ritual hoards within the settlement sites (NICOLAY 2014, 296–314).

Square-headed and disc-on-bow brooches

The bronze brooch was found in one of the Migration-Period habitation layers of the terp below the present-day village of Hallum (DALEMAN et al. 2011, 167–168; Fig. 4). The 6.5-cm long brooch, fully gilded on the front, has a square head-plate, which is divided into two zones – in a similar way as on the Bifrons brooch. Compared to the English specimen, however, the decorative motifs on the head-plate are seriously debased: elements of the animals in the outer zone and of the human head with flanking animals in the inner zone are reduced to simple geometrical shapes. As a result, the images are hardly recognizable. The footplate shows the well-known rhombic centre, along the shoulders decorated with hanging, bird-like animals. Although both animals are still recognizable, they show hardly any details – with the exception of the eyes and curved beaks. The terminal knob is broken; heavy wear on the break indicates that the damaged brooch was still worn for some time before it was deposited. Repair of the needle holder on the back of the head-plate (one of the loops was replaced) also points to a prolonged period of use. A production date in the mid-6th century is most probable for this ornament.

The silver brooches are represented by one intact specimen from Achlum, and five fragments from Dronrijp, Boornbergum (from displaced terp soil), Boer, Oosterbierum and Wijnaldum – all in the province of Friesland (NICOLAY 2014, 87–88). These brooches are of the square-headed type and were recently assigned to the Achlum type (Fig. 4), which is regarded as a regionally adapted imitation of ‘Jutlandic’ brooches. The brooches are remarkably small compared to the later, gold specimens; the only intact piece has a length of 6.2 cm. They have a rectangular head-plate, connected to a teardrop-shaped footplate by a raised bow. The centre of the bow bears a small, round disc.

The footplate of the Achlum-type brooches has a kidney-shaped terminal, formed by two opposing birds’ heads. Two more animal heads decorate the footplate’s shoulders on the intact specimen. The animal heads are pointing downwards, with their bird-like beaks curved inwards. On the disc, no human face is depicted; the animals here are flanking a plain roundel. The head-plate of the intact brooch does, however, show a human face, with the ribbon-like hair on both sides of the head merging into S-shaped motifs that represent highly stylized animals. This design, as well as the overall shape and decoration of the Achlum-type brooches, was clearly inspired by the ‘Jutlandic’ brooches. A new element is

the opposing birds’ heads at the end of the footplate; a similar terminal knob is known from contemporary and later small-long brooches of the Domburg type, which were produced all along the Dutch North Sea coast in the 6th and 7th centuries (e.g. KOCH 1998, 450–454; see also DIJKSTRA 2011, 354–356). The dating of the Achlum-type brooches is uncertain; they may have been produced in the late 5th or 6th century.

In the late 6th century, the brooches of Jutlandic type and of Achlum type were replaced by gold brooches with a silver backplate, of type Hogebeintum (NICOLAY 2014, 88–89; Fig. 5). Together with a larger collection of pendants and finger rings, these brooches are executed in the ‘Frisian’ Style II. They are still of the square-headed type and show how the ‘Jutlandic’ brooches evolved into a second, later regional type within Friesland. Interestingly, it seems that not the ‘Frisian’ brooches of Achlum type but Scandinavian prototypes were the basis of this development. The mid-6th century and later ‘Gotlandic’ disc-on-bow brooches (NIELSEN 1999; 2000), with their large discs and roundels in the head-plate, are very similar to specimens of the Hogebeintum type – indicating that at least one of these brooches must have been available in Friesland as a prototype around 600. The basic shape of the ‘Jutlandic’ brooches, however, also continued to exist, with a square head-plate divided into an inner and an outer zone and a teardrop-shaped footplate with five roundels; of the central rhombus, only the lower half was retained, between the lowest roundels.

The most impressive example of the ‘Frisian’ Style II brooches is the ‘royal brooch’ from Wijnaldum (Fig. 5), which had been ploughed into many pieces before its discovery. The reconstructed brooch has a total length of 18 cm. Inspired by Frankish jewellery, the front of the head-plate and footplate is fully covered with garnet inlays. The bow was decorated with filigree; its large central disc is missing. Although the individual decorative motifs are difficult to recognize in the complex cloisonné patterns, the head-plate shows the familiar human head between two animals. The stylized face is formed by two eyes (roundels), on either side of a nose. The animals also have stylized heads; their bodies are formed by the parallel *cloisons* on the left and right side of the inner zone, terminating in both curved and bent legs. Two more animals are seen on the upper part of the footplate: two small roundels are the eyes of quadrupeds with S-shaped bodies. They have elongated, pointed mouths that are open; the lower jaws curve inwards. The feet are shown as curved ‘tails’ that are intertwined. Although the presence of a human head between the animals is heavily debated (e.g. BRUCE-MITFORD 1974, 271 fig. 46c; SCHONEVELD/ZIJLSTRA 1999, 198–199; OLSEN 2005/2006, 488), the legs of the animals at the same time may well form the eyes, moustache and beard of a male face. The further decoration of the brooch is executed in geometrical patterns.

Two other brooches of the Hogebeintum type, found at Wieuwerd and Hogebeintum, show more debased decorative



Fig. 5 Two disc-on-bow brooches and the footplate of a third disc-on-bow brooch; from left to right: found at Wijnaldum, Wieuwerd and Hogebeintum. Same scale; length of Wijnaldum brooch 18 cm (copyright Fries Museum, Leeuwarden; Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden).

motifs (Fig. 5): a highly stylized animal with an intertwined body and curved beak in filigree on the footplate of the Wieuwerd brooch, and round knobs and simple interlaced filigree patterns as rudimentary human heads and animals on the head-plate and footplate of the Hogebeintum brooch. Given the progressive debasement of the animal motifs, it is assumed that the Wijnaldum brooch is the oldest specimen (c. 600), and the Hogebeintum brooch the latest (c. 620–640). An interlaced animal design similar to that on the footplate of the Wieuwerd brooch, but without recognizable heads, also adorns other early 7th-century ornaments from Friesland and from the adjacent province of Groningen; contemporary pendants from both areas show bird-like animal heads identical in shape to the terminal knob of Achlum-type brooches (NICOLAY 2014, figs. 4.10–11; 4.17; 4.23–24). More naturalistic is the depiction of four probably horned animal heads on the triangular sides of a sword pyramid from Ezinge, in Groningen (NICOLAY 2014, fig. 4.37).

Outside Friesland and Groningen, two more Style II ornaments are known from near the Rhine estuary, both found in ‘princely graves’. The first is a rectangular, gold-decorated belt buckle with complex interlaced animal ornamentation on the buckle plate and mushroom-shaped tongue plate; the second, a gilded bronze terminal of a drinking horn in the shape of a bird’s head with a fine curved beak (DIJKSTRA 2011, 232–233; 243–245; NICOLAY 2014, 103–105). Both items are closely related to Anglo-Saxon Style II ornaments from Kent (buckle) and East Anglia (drinking horn).

Bracteates of types A, C and D

Another category of Scandinavian-type jewellery is the gold bracteates. With the exception of two gilded bronze specimens from the Frankish cemetery of Rhenen (province of Utrecht), all bracteates are made of gold and were found in the province of Friesland (NICOLAY 2014, figs. 4.15; 4.22; 5.12). One bracteate, found at Hitzum, is of type A (IK 76; Fig. 6); it can be assigned to the more specific subtype (*Formularfamilie*) A7 (PESCH 2007, 93–95). The centre of this pendant features the head of a bearded man, wearing a richly decorated diadem.

Three further bracteates, found at Dokkum (IK 46), De Valom (IK 598; displaced terp soil, Fig. 6) and possibly Achlum (hoard find, now lost), are of type C: the first two again show the head of a bearded man, above what seems to be a horse (subtype C16; PESCH 2007, 230–239). Interestingly, a triangular shape is shown attached to the front of the headdress; on the bracteate from De Valom, the triangle terminates in a bird’s head with a curved beak.

The other bracteates, of type D (subtypes D9–10; PESCH 2007, 276–292), are five specimens from the Achlum hoard (IK 404–405; Fig. 6) and two stray finds from Ferwerd (IK 415) and Peins (IK 623). On all bracteates, the ribbon-like body of an animal with teardrop-shaped hips is shown; on two of the bracteates from Achlum, human feet and human hands appear to be attached to the hips. The animals have two different types of head: horse- or wolf-like heads with an open mouth, or bird-like heads with a pointed, curved beak. A new, unpublicized find can be added to the group of



Fig. 6 A selection of gold bracteates from Friesland: type A bracteate from Hitzum (1), type B bracteate from De Valom (2) and type D bracteates from Achlum (3–4) and Echtenerbrug (5). Same scale; diameter of largest bracteate 3.1 cm (copyright Fries Museum, Leeuwarden; Streekmuseum Volkssterrenwacht, Burgum; Paulien Kaan Restauratie, Heerenveen).

type D bracteates from Friesland. This specimen was found in displaced terp soil near Echtenerbrug in 2016 (IK 668; Fig. 6)¹. The pendant shows an animal with a bird-like head, very similar to the animals on some of the other type D bracteates belonging to subtype D9; to the left of the animal, a stylized human ear is depicted, a detail that can also be seen on the bracteate from Ferwerd.

Scandinavian-type bracteates were produced within southern Scandinavia between c.440/450 and 530/540 (NICOLAY 2014, 238). With the exception of the bracteate from Hitzum, the heads and animals on the bracteates are executed in chip-carved style. This is a relatively late phenomenon, which dates their production after c.475 (AXBOE 1999). Although it cannot be excluded that one or more bracteates were imported from Scandinavia, the majority were probably produced within Friesland itself. The human hands and feet on the type D bracteates from Achlum, for example, are unique, as is a coin bracteate from the same hoard. Moreover, the discovery of bronze stamps and the use of silver and bronze for the production of bracteates in south-eastern England are proof that such pendants indeed were produced in regional workshops along the southern North Sea coast (e.g. BEHR 2010, 67–71).

If the assumption that most of the Scandinavian-type ornaments from Friesland and, in the Early Merovingian Period, also from Groningen, are products from one or more regional workshops is correct, an important question is whether the newly found brooch is a Scandinavian import or another ‘Frisian’ product. It is not easy to give a definite answer, because a wide variety exists within Haseloff’s ‘Jutlandic brooch group’. Most probably, the majority of these brooches are *not* of Scandinavian origin; they are direct imitations or later copies of Scandinavian prototypes, of which only few more or less certain specimens survived: the brooches of the Engers type and some specimens of the Tournai type (NIELSEN 2009, 64–69; 84). The other, unique brooches or brooch sets that have been found in south-eastern England (Kent) and southern Germany are most probably the products of regional workshops. The same is true for the brooch from Friesland:

1 The bracteate was found in the topsoil by means of a metal detector. Having been hit by a plough, the flan was heavily bent and the wire along the edge was partly detached. The bracteate has since been restored; only the loop is missing. Diameter 2.0–2.1 cm, weight 1.5 g.

not only its very small size but also the deviating execution of the human head and the animal motifs are clear indications of local production. Interestingly, the new find is more closely connected with the 'southern' brooches than with the Scandinavian prototypes – the cross motif, for example, being a typically southern trait.

Within the northern Netherlands the following development can be reconstructed for the currently known group of Scandinavian-style ornaments. In the late 5th and first half of the 6th century, the gold bracteates are produced in a typically Scandinavian style; only minor elements, like the human hands and feet on the type D bracteates, can be seen as regional, 'Frisian' traits. In the 6th century, the newly found 'Jutlandic' brooch was still executed in a Scandinavian style, but now as part of a southern group of ornaments – found in Kent and southern Germany. Contemporary silver specimens of the Achlum type show for the first time the development of a Scandinavian (or more southern) prototype into a truly 'Frisian' ornament, found only in Friesland; the bronze counterparts of the Domburg type have a wider distribution and are typical of the Dutch coastal area. Finally, in the late 6th century, both 'Jutlandic' brooches (general shape, roundels in the footplate and symbolic motifs) and 'Gotlandic' brooches (roundels in the head-plate, large disc on the bow) strongly influenced the development of Achlum-type brooches into the much larger, gold and silver brooches of the Hogebeintum type. This is a type that again has only been found in Friesland.

Scandinavian-style jewellery and Odin

Although the iconographic study of early medieval artefacts has received limited attention in Dutch archaeology, an attempt will be made to decipher the symbolic meaning of the Migration- and Early Merovingian-Period ornaments from Friesland. The starting point for the interpretation is the various decorative themes that are present on the Scandinavian-type ornaments. On the 'Jutlandic' brooches and the 'Frisian' Animal Style pieces in silver and gold, the image of a bearded head between animals (probably horses or wolves and birds) is a recurring theme. On gold bracteates of types A and C a similar bearded head can be seen, with an animal (probably a bird) as part of the headdress. The type D bracteates show a single animal, which can be interpreted as a quadruped with the head of a horse/wolf or bird. Bird-like creatures are dominant on the larger collection of 'Frisian' Style II ornaments. A man-animal figure is depicted only on two of the type D bracteates from the Achlum hoard (a horse-/wolf-like animal with human hands and feet); moreover, on the two stray finds of type D bracteates, a human ear is shown next to a horse/wolf- or a bird-like animal.

In an article about the Wijnaldum brooch, SCHONEVELD and ZIJLSTRA (1999) discuss the symbolic function of this exceptional, probably royal jewel. Besides the expression of power, especially through the use of red garnet, its ritual

function is emphasized. The disc-on-bow brooch is associated with the goddess Freya, whose wedding garment (worn by Thor, in an attempt to retrieve his stolen hammer) is described in the Icelandic saga of *Thrymskvida*: part of the outfit was an exceptional jewel, the *Brisingamen* (SCHONEVELD/ZIJLSTRA 1999, 196–197, with ref. to other sources in which this jewel is mentioned). Although the term *brisingamen* means 'gleaming necklace', Freya's jewel actually may have been an impressive disc-on-bow brooch that was worn below the chin. On the basis of this assumption, it is suggested that the Wijnaldum brooch played a role in the cult of Freya.

The symbolic meaning of a larger number of Scandinavian-type brooches, including those from Achlum and Wijnaldum, was studied by OLSEN (2005/2006). A central theme on both brooches is the human head flanked by animals. OLSEN'S (2005/2006, 492–493) interpretation of this theme is based on Old Norse literature of pre-Christian mythology: the male person is Odin, head of the Norse pantheon and king of the Asir gods, who is flanked by two helping spirits, embodied as horses, wolves or birds – the birds possibly representing Odin's ravens Hugin and Munin. These animals had the capacity not only to prophesy, but also to enter the world of the dead. Another attribute of Odin is his 'thumb of knowledge': biting or sucking his thumb was another way of acquiring secret knowledge. Interestingly, the thumb is often shown prominently on 'Jutlandic' brooches, as HASELOFF (1986, 67–77) has already noted. Finally, the human-animal hybrids on some of the brooches mentioned above and on the bracteates of type D are thought to represent Odin in different stages of his transformation into an animal – so that he himself could enter the other world. The high-status women who wore the Scandinavian-type ornaments, including the *Brisingamen*, are assumed to have acted as priestesses, not in the Freya cult but in that of Odin.

The association of the male heads on the 'Jutlandic' brooches, Scandinavian-type bracteates and other ornaments with Odin is also suggested by HEDEAGER (1999; 2005; 2011; see also NIELSEN 2001; 2007; and most recently PESCH 2017). Old Norse literature and the iconography of Style I and Style II ornaments suggest that shamanistic practices (in Old Norse: *seidr*) were an important aspect of Scandinavian religion in pre-Christian times. Like a shaman, Odin was capable of contacting entities in the supernatural world, through the state of ecstasy or soul journey. The animals depicted on jewellery, weaponry or other high-status objects should therefore be seen as helping spirits, or as transformations of Odin's soul that had left the body. Most of these animals are interpreted as snakes (including the underworld serpents), eagles, ravens, wild boars, wolves and bears. According to HEDEAGER (2011, 66–98) these 'wild, powerful and aggressive animals' are the species into which Odin could convert, or that might escort him to the other world.

Interestingly, she further argues that the political power of Scandinavian kings was based on the same elements that are crucial for Odin to be king of the Asir gods: political alliances (through gift-giving), wisdom (access to the supernatural world and, for example, the understanding of runes) and cosmology (by safeguarding sacred stories and origin myths; HEDEAGER 1999, 154–155).

The importance of shamanistic practices in the pre-Christian Germanic world is supported by Seebold's study of the iconography of gold bracteates of types A and C (with male heads; SEEBOLD 1992; 1994). The most important animals on these bracteates are birds and horses. The birds are depicted on bracteates of both types as complete animals with their beaks pointed towards the human head, and as part of the person's headdress (*Vogelfrisur*) or clothing (*Vogelkragen*). The horses are shown mostly as standing animals below the human head on bracteates of type C. The bird that is depicted in different shapes is interpreted as an animal that is speaking to this person, making a prophecy. For the horses, some with their mouths open and tongues lolling, a similar role is assumed. The power to communicate with animals, like the ability to read the 'magical runes' that are present on some of the bracteates, is seen as an exceptional quality not only of a god like Odin but also of earthly kings. Because of the close similarity of the human head on the earliest bracteates that show birds or birds' heads to images of Roman emperors, SEEBOLD (1994, 616–617) argues that not Odin but an idealized king, in his role as a political *and* sacral leader, is depicted.

The close man-animal linkage in the 'wider Scandinavian area' is also reflected in the decoration of the famous helmet from Sutton Hoo Mound I (c. 610–630). First of all, the helmet in itself is a human-animal hybrid: the mask, for example, shows a human head of which the mouth, nose and eyes are part of a bird with wings terminating in wild boars' heads (BRUCE-MITFORD 1978, figs. 124; 126). Moreover, not only intertwined animals and a 'rider with fallen warrior' but also 'dancing warriors' – a theme closely paralleled by scenes on Swedish helmets – are shown in the stamped foils that decorate the helmet (BRUCE-MITFORD 1978, 186–189; NIELSEN 2001, 476–477). The 'dancers' wear a headdress with impressive horns that curve inwards and terminate in inward-pointing birds' heads. If indeed dancers are depicted, the design may relate to the performance of a warrior ritual that focused on Odin – as warrior god and protector in battle (cf. DICKINSON 2005). On Swedish helmets, the theme of the 'dancing warrior' is presented in combination with that of warriors in wolfskins or with a wild boar on their helmets; these 'wolf-warriors' and 'boar-warriors' were probably part of royal elite troops, forming another clear link with the Odin cult as the 'warriors of Odin' mentioned in Old Norse literature (NIELSEN 2001; 2007, 163–164; HEDEAGER 2005, 240–241; see also SIMEK 2003, 141–142). Some of the ornaments from Mound I may depict Odin himself, such

as the 'man-between-beasts' on the gold, garnet-decorated purse mount (BRUCE-MITFORD 1978, 521–522; see below).

This association with Odin also appears from a highly interesting discovery first made by BRUCE-MITFORD (1978, 169) when examining the Sutton Hoo helmet, and recently interpreted by PRICE and MORTIMER (2014). It seems that no gold foil is present behind the garnets that decorate the left eyebrow of the mask, as is the case with the left eye of the snake-like animal head in which the tube across the helmet terminates. When the helmet was worn inside the royal hall, near a fire, the person behind the mask would present himself as missing one eye. This is another characteristic of Odin, who gave up one of his eyes in a quest to acquire wisdom and intelligence. A similar trait marks the 'man-between-beasts' on the purse mount: the person's left eye is missing and the presence of a clear gouge mark indicates that the original garnet was removed some time before burial (PRICE/MORTIMER 2014, 528). The importance of Odin to the Wuffingas, the royal family of East Anglia who buried their members at Sutton Hoo, is further shown by their genealogy: not only Caesar but also Wodan (identified with Odin) is included as a fictional ancestor (BRUCE-MITFORD 1975, 693 tab. 38). This genealogy was most probably related to an origin myth that described the divine descent of the Wuffingas, similar to the Scandinavian origin myths of other Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and some continental royal families (e.g. YORKE 2005, 15–16; HEDEAGER 2011, 44).

For Kent, where a significant cluster of 5th- and 6th-century Scandinavian-type ornaments have been found, the Jutish origin of the royal family is reflected in the choice of Hengist – a heroic war leader of the Jutes – as its founder (YORKE 2005, 15; 26). Within Kent some place names with a religious significance may point to the sites of sanctuaries where Odin and other Scandinavian deities were worshipped: Woodnesborough ('Wodan's hill'), *Thunoresblew*, on the Isle of Thanet ('Thor's hill'), and Wye ('altar'), of which the first and the last were situated near the royal villas at Eastry and Wye (BEHR 1994, 157; 163–165). Moreover, at the cemetery of Finglesham (*Pengels-ham*: 'prince's manor') a gilded bronze buckle from the late 6th or early decades of the 7th century was found, showing on the front a 'naked spear dancer' who wears a helmet with horns terminating in birds' heads (grave 95; CHADWICK HAWKES/GRAINGER 2006, 80 fig. 2.102). Another grave contained a 7th-century bronze pendant on which a similar helmet is depicted in a more stylized way (grave 138; CHADWICK HAWKES/GRAINGER 2006, 100 fig. 2.117).

Unfortunately, there is no surviving origin myth or genealogy for the royal families that ruled contemporary kingdoms along the Dutch and German North Sea coast. Yet a metal detector find from a landing place along a tributary of the Weser, at Elsfléth-Hogenkamp, supports the idea that the worship of Odin was important in the Dutch-German coastal area as well (MÜCKENBERGER 2013). Among the early

medieval metal finds is an early 6th-century, silver-gilt tongue of a buckle of Frankish type (Fig. 7). The mushroom-shaped part of the tongue is decorated with a bearded head in niello. Close examination showed that the niello fill of the right eye, which is missing, was removed on purpose. It is likely that the imported buckle originally showed an early image of Christ; this was transformed into an image of Odin by removing one of the eye-fills.

Returning to the Scandinavian-type ornaments from Friesland, their symbolism should most probably be interpreted in a similar way: the man-between-animals on the brooches is Odin with his helping spirits; the birds and horses/wolves on the gold bracteates, and probably the human ear, symbolize Odin's ability to communicate with animals and represent his helping spirits; and the man-animal hybrids on two of the bracteates show Odin in the act of transforming into an animal. The suggestion that not Odin but a king is depicted can be rejected: the brooches and later bracteates especially show a formalized image with no individual features that might refer to a specific king. Instead, the kings and their retainers (or indeed their wives) probably showed their sacral power and descent by wearing highly symbolic items that symbolized a true or fictional link with Scandinavia – and especially with Odin.

In the Merovingian Period, however, the 'Odin message' seems to have lost its significance outside Scandinavia. In the southern North Sea area, the Wijncaldum brooch, the Sutton Hoo purse and the Faversham buckle are some of the latest pieces of jewellery with a clear reference to Odin; later brooches and other Style II ornaments show a more debased design, indicating that after the early decades of the 7th century Scandinavian-type mythical scenes were no longer valued as symbolic themes. Interestingly, the much older square-headed brooch from Hallum also shows a strongly debased design, as do some of the contemporary gold bracteates from Friesland and Britain (PESCH 2007: the bracteates assigned to *Bastardgruppen*). This is a clear indication that the Old Norse mythology was especially relevant at the level of the upper elite – such as members of the royal family and their closest retinue. Lower down the social scale, the animal motifs had a different meaning. To members of the regional and local elites, who received the gold bracteates and silver brooches as gifts and probably copied such status symbols in bronze, it was not their mythical themes but their visualization of the personal bond with a patron that would have been most relevant. The symbolic language was not or not fully understood, as the deviating motifs on local copies clearly demonstrate.

Scandinavia and the North Sea elite

In the Roman period, the coastal area of the northern Netherlands, and the province of Friesland in particular, was one of the most densely populated areas of north-western Europe. In the 3rd century AD, a strong decline in population can be seen; the near absence of finds indicates that

large areas, including most of the province of Friesland, were even deserted during most of the 4th century (NIEUWHOF 2011). More to the east, in the Elbe-Weser region, cemetery sites in particular are at their most numerous in the 4th and 5th centuries, followed by a population decline that is traditionally related to the historically documented migration of Angles and Saxons.

The distribution of 'Saxon' jewellery, including brooches executed in the Saxon Relief Style, shows that the migrating 'Anglo-Saxons' settled not only in south-eastern England but also in Friesland (NICOLAY 2014, 347 fig. 13.1). While in Friesland hundreds of abandoned terp sites could be reoccupied, in south-eastern England the presence of a Romano-British population must have resulted in a tenuous situation and a mixed population. Despite the lack of evidence for a clear break in habitation, all currently known Anglo-Saxon settlement and cemetery sites were newly established – which also points to significant socio-political and cultural changes in early Migration-Period Britain. Although the takeover of power positions is difficult to prove archaeologically, the symbolic language of contemporary status symbols seems to indicate that the newcomers were the dominant group and may have occupied most of the ruling positions in the newly inhabited areas.

After the newcomers had settled, the Migration and Merovingian Periods saw a fascinating process of power formation: all along the southern North Sea coasts regional kingdoms appeared, which developed into larger, supra-regional kingdoms in the late 6th century (NICOLAY 2014, 350–361 figs. 13.2–3). Their development is historically documented for East Anglia, Essex and Kent, and on archaeological grounds can be extrapolated to the Dutch-German coastal area. Although the situation is less clear for northern Germany, at least two kingdoms existed around 600 in the Netherlands: a 'northern kingdom' that covered the coastal area of the northern Netherlands (with Wijncaldum as its probable centre), and a 'western kingdom' that extended along the coastal area of the western Netherlands (centred on the Rhine estuary).

The formation phase of 'Anglo-Saxon', 'Frisian' and 'Saxon' kingdoms saw a surprisingly uniform adaptation of cultural identities by the new elites, as reflected in the shape and decoration of gold and silver jewellery. During the 5th century, imported Roman silver had been transformed into late-Roman-style brooches in the northern Elbe-Weser region. Following the migration of Anglo-Saxons, such Saxon Relief Style brooches were also produced in Friesland and south-eastern England – alongside the British ornaments in Quoit Brooch Style. After the Roman Empire had lost its significance as a political force in western Europe, the focus of the late 5th- and 6th-century North Sea elite shifted north. Symbols of the now powerful Scandinavian kingdoms were chosen to replace the late-Roman-style jewellery. 'Jutlandic' brooches and Scandinavian-type bracteates, decorated in



Fig. 7 Elsfleth-Hogenkamp. Silver-gilt tongue of a Frankish-type buckle that probably showed the face of Christ, transformed into Odin by removing the niello fill from the left eye. Length 2.7 cm (copyright Niedersächsisches Institut für historische Küstenforschung, Wilhelmshaven).

Style I, appeared as the new insignia, and for several decades were imitated and copied at regional workshops.

This switch in the symbolic language of the leading elite is probably also the material reflection of an important ideological change. After Saxon-style ornaments had for at least half a century been treasured as symbols of their ‘Anglo-Saxon’ origin, the adaptation of Style I indicates that the North Sea elite created new and more powerful origin myths that linked true and mythical ancestors with the Old Norse pantheon. While the adapted Scandinavian decorative style on the one hand reflected a shared identity of the newly shaped kingdoms, the animal ornamentation on the other hand gave room for expressing regional identities. The Scandinavian prototypes gradually developed into regional-style jewellery, per region showing a specific ‘amalgamation’ of Scandinavian (animal motifs and, for example, the shape of the disc-on-bow brooch) and Frankish (the shape of buckles and disc brooches, and the use of garnet-cloisonné) influences.

Despite the growing power of the Frankish kingdom to the south, it is interesting to see that the 6th-century North Sea elite chose *not* simply to imitate Frankish jewellery as their new insignia. Instead, they cherished a cultural identity in which the mythical link with Scandinavia was maintained – as both the Sutton Hoo jewellery and the Wijnaldum brooch illustrate. An important aspect of this link was the incorporation of Odin (Wodan) in the royal genealogies and the worship of Scandinavian gods, like Odin, Freya and Thor. It can be assumed that (most of) these gods were similar

to older, indigenous gods of the ‘Anglo-Saxons’, who now within the southern North Sea area were incorporated into a newly adopted, Scandinavian pantheon (see also SIMEK 2003, 103–117; 144). The continuation of the cultural-ideological link with Scandinavia, also after political bonds with the Frankish royal house were established, can be explained by the expansionist nature of the Frankish kingdom: to resist Frankish annexation not only a strong military power but also a different ideology, focusing on ancestral, Scandinavian gods was required.

As a result, an ideological borderline divided north-western Europe into a Frankish-Christian and a Scandinavian-pagan part (see also HEDEAGER 1992). In contrast to the Frankish kings, royal families along the southern North Sea coasts seem to have placed themselves within a Scandinavian mythology, developed their own language (runes) and visualized their ancestral links as decorative motifs on the symbols of their status (Animal Styles I and II; for southern Scandinavia, cf. HEDEAGER 1992, 289–291). The importance of mythical links with Scandinavia must have been a thorn in the side of the early missionaries who worked in England, and even more so in the area north of the Rhine. Two well-known events nicely illustrate how hesitant ‘North Sea kings’ were to abandon their ancestors and gods in favour of Christ. Not only did the East-Anglian King Readwald refuse to give up his pagan altar after his conversion to Christianity (616 AD; SIMEK 2003, 237–238), but also a century later the ‘Frisian’ King Radbod even refused to be baptized because he did not want

to spend the afterlife in Heaven if his pagan ancestors could not (c.700; SIMEX 2003, 233). Although Christianity was first introduced in Kent under King Æthelbert (d.616) during the late 6th century, it was another five centuries before the 'Frisian', 'Saxon' and Scandinavian kings were also converted (see SIMEX 2003, 228–255) and Odin lost out to Christ as the divine patron of kings.

Conclusion

The square-headed brooch that was recently found in the province of Friesland is probably a copy of an older, direct imitation of a Scandinavian prototype that belonged to Hasehoff's 'Jutlandic brooch group'. The silver-gilt brooch was produced at a regional 'Frisian' workshop in the late 5th or, more probably, in the first half of the 6th century. The brooch is part of a larger category of Scandinavian-type ornaments, including regional-style imitations/copies, which within the Netherlands show a striking concentration in Friesland. The brooches and bracteates of this group are evidence not only of cultural but also of ideological relations with Scandinavia. The depiction of Odin in different formats indicates that the elite families who used these ornaments as their insignia were familiar with Old Norse mythology; they even included Odin in their genealogies and presented themselves as demigods with ancestral links with Scandinavia.

This 'Scandinavian phase' in the history of the southern North Sea area coincides with a process of power formation that probably was initiated by the 'Anglo-Saxon' newcomers. Within the newly evolving kingdoms, the new elites were in need of powerful insignia that reflected their exceptional qualities as political, and sacral leaders, thus legitimizing their privileged position. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Scandinavian kingdoms were considered prestigious enough to emulate: the late-Roman-style ornaments were abandoned in favour of silver square-headed brooches and gold bracteates. When more stable kingdoms were created, the development of regional-style ornaments can be seen. These displayed not only the common background, but also the individual identity of the leading families. As a reaction to the growing power of the Frankish kingdom, the ideological link of the North Sea elite with Scandinavia was continued at least into the early 7th century – when the worship of Scandinavian gods was gradually abandoned in favour of Christianity.

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Contact information

*Johan A. W. Nicolay
University of Groningen
Groningen Institute of Archaeology
Poststraat 6
NL-9712 ER Groningen
j.a.w.nicolay@rug.nl*