

Abstract

**Frisian Dialects in the Middle Ages**

Christoph Hössel

Not more than 17 manuscripts written in the Old Frisian language and one incunable print in nine copies from the time between c.1300 and c.1500 have come down to us. Traditionally these manuscripts are seen to attest different dialects. Bo Sjölin criticised this interpretation in 1966 referring to unclear provenance of most of the manuscripts and to major chronological distances between them and caused thereby a scientific controversy. Modern linguistics seem to argue against Sjölin's objections and point to characteristic phonological, morphological and lexical features in the different manuscripts. Especially the development of PWGmc *\*a* before nasal is a main criterion to classify different Old Frisian dialects.

In my presentation I will discuss the problem primarily from a philological point of view. The Old Frisian manuscripts can be roughly subdivided into two groups. Within these groups each manuscript contains basically the same corpus of texts. Despite the fact that single texts exist in up to seven versions all critical editions of the second half of the 20th century edit solely the text of individual manuscripts (diplomatic editions). Yet it is important to consider how possible sources and archetypes can have an effect on the variants of the Old Frisian witnesses.

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