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Reviewed by Jasmin Higgs

Livia Kaiser's *Runes Across the North Sea from the Migration Period and Beyond: An Annotated Edition of the Old Frisian Runic Corpus* is the newest major contribution to the discussion of the Old Frisian runic corpus. It was produced as part of the RuneS project, "Runische Schriftlichkeit in den Germanischen Sprachen", which is an undertaking that aims to describe and analyse runic writing comprehensively with a particular focus on graphemic and text-pragmatic aspects. The goal of the book is to produce an edition of the Frisian material that uniformly and systematically records all inscriptions thought to belong to the corpus. This aim necessarily entails a reassessment of the definition of the Frisian corpus, especially in relation to the Old English runic corpus, asking whether these are separate runic traditions, or whether we should speak of a North Sea runic tradition.

This book builds upon a small number of previous themed contributions; whilst the work of Tineke Looijenga ("Checklist Frisian Runic Inscriptions" and "On the Origin of the Anglo-Frisian Runic Innovations", both in *Frisian Runes and Neighbouring Traditions*, pp. 91–108, 109–22 [Amsterdam, 1996]; *Texts & Contexts of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions* [Leiden, 2003]; and "Runic Literacy in North-West Europe, with a Focus on Frisia" in *Frisians of the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 375–400 [Woodbridge, 2021]) is the backbone of discussion of the Frisian material, Looijenga's chapter in *Texts & Contexts* (2003, 299–328) was, until Kaiser in 2021, the closest we had to a corpus edition. Thus, Kaiser's work is very welcome in providing the first comprehensive critical edition. The book is separated into three parts: "1. Preliminaries", "2. Linguistic Analyses", and "3. The OFRC [Kaiser's abbreviation for 'Old Frisian Runic Corpus'] Edition". Each part is then subdivided into chapters, each with a clear heading and supportive visual design which includes clear tables, diagrams and additional images which aid in the comprehension of the chapter.

"Part 1. Preliminaries" deals with all the information needed to comprehend Kaiser's study of the Old Frisian corpus, including previous editions and their methodological issues, an understanding of how Old Frisian relates to other Germanic

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languages, and the archaeological context of Frisia and discovery of the inscriptions. The first chapter in “Preliminaries” is titled “The Old Frisian Runic Corpus Edition” and has three main aims: to define runology and provide an overview of the methods used in the discipline; to detail the previous editions of the material; and to state the methodological problems with working with the present edition. What stands out in this chapter is the outline of runological methodologies and the subsequent “uncertainty factors”. Kaiser provides an outline of each step in the traditional runological methodology and lists factors which may contribute to the reading of the inscription and cause variety in interpretation. This then explains to the reader why certain readings of inscriptions are different, and how each runic inscription can be influenced by the “uncertainty factors” impacting the interpretations. “Uncertainty factors” are wide-ranging and inform both the viewing of the inscription by the runologist and the subsequent philological and linguistic analysis. They include, for example, dependence on technology and equipment such as cameras and 3D scans to record the inscription, validity and accuracy of archaeological dating methods, or reliability of descriptive grammars. Transparency in research is provided by pointing to “uncertainty factors” which may arise during the process of runological interpretation; this is a welcome discussion of the difficulties in runology, though no solution to the “uncertainty factors” is offered. The second chapter, “Germanic Language Models and Periodization”, is divided into two sections, focusing firstly on the Germanic language models and secondly on the periodisation of the Old Frisian runic corpus. Kaiser reviews the different language models which position Old Frisian in relation to other Germanic languages; she considers the traditional “Anglo-Frisian model”, the “Ingvaonic or North Sea Germanic model”, and the “Convergence model”. This is followed by a section on the development of the Old English *fuforc*, which leads to a discussion of North Sea Germanic innovations. The final part of the chapter is a discussion of the periodisation of Old Frisian, comparing periodisation attempts by different scholars such as Bo Sjölin (*Einführung in das Friesische* [Stuttgart, 1969]), Thomas L. Markey (*Frisian* [Berlin, 1980]), Hans Frede Nielsen (“Ante Old-Frisian: A Review”, *NOWELE* 24 [1994]: 91–136), Germen J. De Haan (“Why Old-Frisian is Really Middle-Frisian”, *Folia Linguistica Historica* 22 [2001]: 179–206) and Arjen P. Versloot (“Why Old Frisian is Still Quite Old”, *Folia Linguistica Historica* 25 [2004]: 253–98). Kaiser concludes that Waxenberger’s periodisation of Old Frisian (“How ‘English’ is the Early Frisian Runic Corpus”, in *Frisians and their North Sea Neighbours* [Woodbridge, 2017], pp. 93–124), which is modelled after Old English, is the best fit for Old Frisian. This results in the following periodisation: c. 400–600 CE Pre-Old Frisian, c. 600–900 CE Early Runic Frisian, and c. 1200–1550 CE Old Frisian. It should be noted that Waxenberger’s model has the period of 900–1200 CE missing. This periodisation is preferred by Kaiser because it uses contemporary runic evidence in its formation. The final chapter of this section is “Historical and Archaeological Framework”, which provides an overview of the history and archaeology of the area around the find spots of the items in the corpus.

In discussing the archaeological chronology and periodisation, there is a critical overview of the use of archaeological evidence when discussing the Old Frisian corpus, noting in particular challenges posed for the dating of these objects due to the archaeological conditions, most of them being stray finds or found during commercial digging of *terpen* ('artificial dwelling mounds').

"Part 2. Linguistic Analyses" takes a three-fold approach to the corpus, with phonological, graphemic and pragmatic discussions. The chapter on the phonological discussion opens by outlining why only some of the runic inscriptions from the corpus are analysed phonologically, citing issues with uncertainty in interpretation due to incomplete or insufficient evidence, uncertain readings and segmentations, and attribution to different corpora. She goes on to discuss the representation of vowels in both stressed and unstressed syllables, comparing the Old Frisian corpus with the Early Old English and Old English runic corpus. The graphemic study of the corpus follows this section, aiming to reconstruct the Frisian *fuporc*. This chapter again, like that of "Germanic Language Models and Periodization", provides an account of definitions frequently used in the discussion of the topic; for her graphemic analysis, Kaiser follows Michelle Waldspüh'l's model (*Schreibpraktiken und Schriftwissen in südgermanischen Runeninschriften* [Zürich, 2013, 70–78]).

The third and final chapter of Part 2 is that of the "Pragmatic Discussion of the OFRC", where the author presents original concepts in terms of dealing with runology and the discipline of pragmatics. The chapter starts with an overview of the previous approaches to the pragmatic interpretation of runic inscriptions. The discussion of the communicative potential of runic inscriptions started with the "imaginative" vs. "sceptical" runological approaches to the communicative functions of inscriptions, as outlined by R. I. Page in *An Introduction to English Runes* (pp. 12 f. [Woodbridge, 21999]). Pragmatic analyses expanded beyond this dichotomy, and Kaiser provides a detailed discussion of previous literature related to pragmatics and runology, primarily citing Stephen E. Flowers, "How to Do Things with Runes: A Semiotic Approach to Operative Communication" (in *Runes and their Secrets: Studies in Runology*, pp. 65–82 [Copenhagen, 2006]) and Christiane Zimmermann, "Runeninschriften als Sprechakte? Vorüberlegungen zu einer pragmalinguistischen Untersuchung der Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark" (in *Das Futhark und seine einzelsprachlichen Weiterentwicklungen*, pp. 434–52 [Berlin, 2006]). She discusses especially Zimmermann's use of John L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962) and John R. Searle's *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, 1969), and in particular Dieter Wunderlich's application of speech act theory to the Danish fibulae inscriptions in his *Studien zur Sprechaktheorie* (Frankfurt, 1976, 77). Speech act theory aims to investigate the communicative intentions of the speech producer through the study of their utterances; all utterances have three parts: locution (physical, phonetic realisation), illocution (i.e. communicative intention delivered by the locution) and perlocution (i.e. effect of the illocution and consequences), with speech act theory focusing on the illocutionary part of the utterance. After

outlining Zimmermann's (pp. 441–43) conditions for the successful application of speech act theory to runic data, which include that the inscription must not be deficient (fragmentary, non-lexical, etc.) and that it must be within the conventionalized linguistic framework, Kaiser notes that despite speech act theory appearing to be a suitable model for the interpretation of communicative intention for Zimmermann's work, it is not applicable to the Old Frisian runic corpus. Specifically, the material does not meet the relevant preconditions: verb forms are necessary as illocutionary indicators, but the corpus has only one confirmed verb form as attested in the Oostum comb inscription [OFRC6, **deda**]; multiple inscriptions lack "satisfactory interpretation" (p. 121); and there are also fragmentary inscriptions. Kaiser concludes that a different approach to pragmatic analysis is needed. She places the focus on a structural, syntactic description of the inscriptions with the aim of tracing underlying text formulae. The formulae-focused approach follows Gaby Waxenberger's "Text Types and Formulas on Display: The Old English Rune Stone Monuments in England" (in *Vindærinne wunderbærer mære: Gedenkschrift für Ute Schwab*, pp. 495–528 [Wien, 2013]), a work tracing Old English formulae which concentrated on identifying formulae for loco-mobile inscriptions. This textual analysis is accompanied by both an extra-linguistic and wider socio-cultural context framework as outlined by Klaus Düwel (*Runenkunde* [Stuttgart, 42008], pp. 16 f.) and Waldispühl (*Schreibpraktiken und Schriftwissen* [2013, see above], pp. 106–10), creating a comprehensive pragmatic model. The chapter is completed by a brief discussion and a table featuring the Old Frisian runic corpus formulae assigned to each inscription, which forms a useful guide to the pragmatic analysis of the material. It appears that the corpus attests primarily single-word inscriptions, usually personal names, which may serve as name tags, and self-referential inscriptions, whose function is still debatable and requires further research. Nonetheless, there are non-lexical inscriptions which are not assigned functions via Kaiser's formulae approach. It was specified in the detailed discussion of speech act theory referenced above that the theory was unsuitable for the Frisian corpus, largely due to the high number of non-lexical and fragmentary inscriptions, as well as single-word inscriptions lacking verbs. These characteristics similarly limit the new pragmatic model for the corpus created by Kaiser, the suitability of which declines when textual functions are not assigned to non-lexical inscriptions, which comprise a notable part of the material. Perhaps more consideration could have been given to how to remedy the lack of functions assigned to the non-lexical data. Despite this shortcoming, the use of the formulaic approach in the pragmatic analysis is suitable for much of the Old Frisian corpus due to the occurrence of large numbers of personal names and nouns. For the first time in runology, the pragmatic analysis has been wholly tailored to the data, i.e. the Old Frisian runic corpus, and exemplifies the use of pragmatics with runological data, which hopefully the RuneS project will further expand upon.

The final section of the book is "Part 3: The OFRC Edition". The corpus is broken down into smaller sub-corpora based on the rune-bearing objects; the

groupings are combs, coins and bracteates, other metal objects, yew objects, and bone objects. These objects are assigned to separate archaeological (site-specific and typological), linguistic (etymological, phonological, morphological) and runological (graphemic) categories and evaluated to determine their attribution to a Frisian corpus. Corpus entries include pictures and additional drawings and images to facilitate discussion of each inscription, and well-laid-out tables organise information clearly and concisely.

Kaiser's final chapter, "Conclusions: A Frisian or North-Sea Corpus?", provides summaries of all three parts of the book and then details the results of each analysis. Whilst noting the issues involved in clearly separating the Old Frisian and Old English corpora, she concludes that from her reassessment of archaeological and linguistic criteria, there are only five inscriptions which can be definitely determined to be Old Frisian: Oostum [OFRC6], Arum [OFRC16], Britsum [OFRC17], Westeremden A [OFRC18], and Hantum [OFRC23]. The remaining inscriptions are categorised differently: nine can be placed within a wider "North Sea Germanic context", whilst the other six "elude reliable interpretations" (p. 405). Furthermore, she excludes several inscriptions by assigning them to different runic corpora. She concludes that by considering a "North Sea Germanic Runic Corpus" instead of an Old Frisian one, all twenty-four inscriptions could be looked at in their wider mobile world of exchange and cultural interaction.

Kaiser's *Runes Across the North Sea from the Migration Period and Beyond: An Annotated Edition of the Old Frisian Runic Corpus* achieves its goal of providing a critical edition of the Old Frisian runic inscriptions. It not only considers new research in the area of Frisian studies but also challenges conceptions of the existence of a Frisian corpus through a thorough archaeological and linguistic analysis, dealing with the corpus systematically and with originality. Highlights include the discussion of uncertainty factors in runology and the specialised pragmatic methodology. This edition indeed provides, as Kaiser hopes (p. 406), "a comprehensive resource and starting-point for future exploration of runic writing traditions", and is suitable for those making a first acquaintance with the material and well-read runologists alike.