

The English (and the Americans) as colonists of the Old Frisian mother tribe

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Though a Mennonite minister by profession, Joost Halbertsma (1789–1869) was mainly active in the fields of literature, linguistics, lexicography and folklore, in all of which his mother tongue, Frisian, was his point of reference.

His *magnum opus* is no doubt the *Lexicon Frisicum* (1872), his Latin dictionary of Frisian, even if he did not live to complete it. He wrote his dictionary for an international audience of linguists. The dictionary reflects his many cultural-historical interests, rendering it sometimes more an encyclopaedia than a dictionary.

Halbertsma's rather chauvinistic ideas about Friesland and the Frisians are expressed in many of his publications and manuscripts. Sometimes he likes to see things big:

Among these peoples between the river Elbe and the corner of Jutland was the restlessness of the Frisian clockwork. The concealed fire, the boldness and the spirit of enterprise of the Frisian character were gathered here as in a common focus. From here our people first extended over the sea, and obtained through its inborn love of freedom and fatherland, names meaning the same, a superior civilization and leadership, which with an ever urging and growing resilience decides the fate of two continents Europe and America. Where the Anglo-Frisian race rules, the Anglo-Frisian language rules. And at what corner of the earth this race does not rule? (my translation)

From his son's preface to the dictionary we know that one of the main goals of the *Lexicon Frisicum* was to show that it were not only Angles and Saxons who invaded Britain, but no doubt also a considerable number of Frisians. In his dictionary Halbertsma even assumes that the Frisians share their national character with the English, be it that the Frisians have much more of it:

BYNEI [...] Di Friezen habbe hin ind binei sa folle jild ind macht nat as the Ingilscen, mar rom sa folle fen di âlde aert.

[BYNEI (almost, nearly) [...] The Frisians by no means have as much money and power as the English, but they certainly have much more of the old character]

The relationship between English and Frisian is underlined in the shibboleth that Halbertsma gives s.v. *buterje* (to butter): 'Buter, bréad ind griene tsjiis Is goed Ingelsk ind goed Friisk. Ang. Butter, bread and green cheese Is good English and good Frisick'.

In my paper, I will show how Halbertsma used the *Lexicon Frisicum* to demonstrate the close affinity between English and Frisian. To him that affinity is so close indeed that Frisian may rightfully be considered the origin of English. Consequently, the English (and the Americans) are really "colonists of the old Frisian mother tribe".