Old Frisian *kede, kathene, keten*:
Latin Chains and Frisian Bondage

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the corpus of Old Frisian texts, Frisian reflexes of Latin *cātēna* (*fem.*), ‘chain used as fetter, shackle’, ‘closing chain’, ‘ornamental chain’, are attested five times, in three different phonological variations, in five different manuscripts but in only two different texts.¹ Four out of five of these attestations occur in versions of a single text entitled *Haet is riucht*, a historical introduction to the Old Frisian laws in which Emperor Augustus leads captive kings tied with golden chains to his triumphal chariot. A single instance of *kede* (*fem.*) occurs in the incunable edition of the Old Frisian Land Laws (D):

> Hwa bande dine aersta ferdaban oenda wrald. Octauianus di keyser: da romera heren al da wrald fan aesta to westa. fan noerda to suda. ende alle da eylend bi heues muda mit heerschielde bituongen heden: ende octauianus dine lesta ferdaban fan pardland brochte. da hy mit goldena waynen to roem in foer. ende by da waynen trowaden koninghen spand mit goldena *keden*: (Druk, a iii)² [Who proclaimed the first peace injunction? The emperor Octavian, when the Roman armies had conquered with military might all the world, from east to west and north to south, and all the islands by the seashore. And Octavian brought the last peace injunction from Parthia, when he rode into Rome with chariots of gold, and along the chariots ran kings fettered with golden chains:]

Three instances of *katene* (*fem.*) occur in the same text, i.e. *Haet is riucht*: (1) in the manuscript known as *Jus municipale Frisionum* (J),

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¹ Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 301, s.v. *cātēna*, list the following meanings: ‘wooden bracket, brace’, ‘a chain used as a fetter, shackle’, ‘a chain stopping the entrance of a harbour’, ‘a constraint, fetter, barrier, bond’, ‘a chain of gold or silver worn by women as an ornament’. Diacritics indicating long and short vowels will be given only where necessary.

² The incunable edition of the Frisian Land Laws, printed between 1483 and 1488. For bibliographical information and for a digital facsimile, see <http://schatkamer.tresoar.nl/landriucht/index.html> in which this fragment occurs on p. 24.
... dae hij mey goldena weynem toe Rome jnfoer ende bij dae weynem trouwaden conynghen, spanneth mit goldena **cathenem** (Jus II, 3a),\(^3\)

(2) in MS Unia (U),

... tha mith gildena wainum to Rome in foer and bi tha wainum threwa-\n\n
d den koningan spenned mit goldena **cathenen** (Unia),\(^4\)

and (3) in MS Roorda (Ro),

... da hy mey goldena waynem to roem in foer/ ende by da waynem\n\n
trowaden koningen spand myt goldena **kathenam**.\(^5\)

Finally, a single instance of **keten** occurs in the Old Frisian charters, in the accounts of the church of Bozum:

*Item* utjown I fl. Tijalke smijt fan iserwerk **keten** XI st. jown Joris slot-\n\nmaker fan slotten (Oork. III.102).\(^6\) [*Item* one florin paid to Tjalke the \n\nblacksmith for one ... chain; nine shillings given to Joris the locksmith \n\nfor locks]

With these five divergent attestations: **keden**, **cathenem**, **kathenen**, **kathenam** and **keten**, the borrowing of *catena* in Old Frisian displays a relatively low number of attestations combined with a remarkably high number of different forms. Moreover, the vocalism of the forms is very diverse, and the Frisian reflexes differ as a group from those in the surrounding Germanic languages: Dutch, Low German and English. In previous discussions of Latin loan words in Old Frisian and Germanic the emphasis has always \n\nbeen on *kede* in Druk, which has been presented as evidence for the \n\nassumption that Latin *catena* had been borrowed into Frisian at an ‘early’ \n\nstage.\(^7\) The other forms have remained undiscussed.

Reconstructing the borrowing history of such a diverse group of forms \n\ndepends on a variety of factors. Latin loan words in the Old Germanic languages have provided a looking glass into the language and culture of a distant past, from which we have hardly any written evidence. The earliest

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\(^{5}\) Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Collectie Richthofen 6, p. 3. For a digital facsimile, see <http://www2.tresoar.nl/digicollectie/object.php?object=271&zveld=&volg=11>.

\(^{6}\) ‘Kerkrekeningboek van Bozum’, *Oudfriesche oorkonden* III, ed. Sipma, 102; Breuker, ‘Mr. Edo Walikama en syn Boazumer tsjerkerekenboek’, 114.