

# PRESS KIT

## REDBAD The Legend

From the makers of ADMIRAL



Gijs Naber, Loes Haverkort, Jonathan Banks, Søren Malling, Tibo Vandendorre, Lisa Smit, Martijn Fischer, Teun Kuilboer, Britte Lagcher, Huub Stapel, Peter Faber, Renée Soutendijk, Egbert-Jan Weeber, Jack Wouterse, Mark van Eeuwen, , Birgit Schuurman, Arnost Kraus, Pieter Embrechts, Flor Declair, Daphne Wellens, Nienke Brinkhuis, Nynke Heeg, Eugene Bervoets, Aus Greidanus sr., Kobi van Huffel, Simon Stenspil, Morten Rose, Adam Lld Rowheder, Camilla Gotlieb,

A Klaas de Jong Farmhouse Film production in coproductie met Bulletproof Cupid (BE) & Picturewise (DK) Screenplay by: Alex van Galen Directed by: Roel Reiné  
Domestic Release date: June 28, 2018

## REDBAD THE LEGEND

After the success of *Admiral*, Roel Reiné brings us an impressive heroic epic about the legend of Redbad and the battle to stem the advancing tide of Christianity. Nobody tells Redbad what to believe: no king, no priest, not even the stars themselves, because his land is a land of free people.

### About the film

AD 700. Northern Europe is divided into two different worlds: above the rivers are the Frisians, the Saxons and the Danes. Below the rivers, the Franks hold sway. They want to do what even the Romans never managed: conquer all of Europe. They are deploying a new weapon to subjugate the heathens: Christianity. They have their eye on the most important trade centre of Europe, ruled over by the Frisian king Aldigisl. This film is an historic epic about the rise of Christianity, the sagas and the ancient legends of REDBAD. Coming to Dutch cinemas this summer.

Redbad, the son of King Aldigisl, is having doubts about the old-fashioned rituals of his people. He clashes with his father when his girlfriend Fenne is chosen to be sacrificed to the gods. During the sacrificial ritual, the Franks attack the village. The Frisians (also known as 'the free folk') have lost Dorestad. Redbad's uncle Eibert makes a swift bid for power and blames Redbad for their defeat and his father's death. Tied up on a raft, Redbad is pushed out to sea to die. But Redbad manages to survive the journey and washes up on Viking shores. There, he learns the value of his own culture. He is slowly accepted into the clan, and after fighting with the Vikings against a rival clan of Norsemen, he marries King Wiglek's daughter. When he and his wife return to Dorestad, he discovers that his sister has been married off to the son of Frankish King Pepin of Herstal. At a fair, he sees Willibrord the priest force his sister to convert and humiliate her in public. He swears he will set her free. He cannot do this alone, but his uncle and nephew, who are now in power, do not seem to have an army powerful enough to defeat the Franks.

Producer:	Klaas de Jong (Farmhouse Film)
Executive producer:	Martijn Heijne, Christianne van Wijk
Screenplay:	Alex van Galen
Director:	Roel Reiné
Cast:	Gijs Naber, Loes Haverkort, Lisa Smit, Teun Kuilboer, Britte Lagcher, Martijn Fischer, Renée Soutendijk, Egbert-Jan Weeber, Huub Stapel, Peter Faber, Jack Wouterse, Mark van Eeuwen, Daphne Wellens, Tibo Vandenborre, Birgit Schuurman, Arnost Kraus, Pieter Embrechts, Flor Declair, Nienke Brinkhuis, Nynke Heeg, Eugene Bervoets, Aus Greidanus sr., Kobi van Huffel, Simon Stenspil, Morten Rose, Adam Lld Rowheder, Camilla Gotlieb, Søren Malling and Jonathan Banks
Genre:	Historical heroic epic
Length:	154'
Website:	<a href="http://www.redbadthemovie.com">http://www.redbadthemovie.com</a>
Facebook:	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/redbaddefilm/">https://www.facebook.com/redbaddefilm/</a> <a href="https://www.instagram.com/redbadthemovie/">https://www.instagram.com/redbadthemovie/</a>



## CAST



Photo: Ilja Keizer

### REDBAD | Gijs Naber

Gijs plays the lead in *My Foolish Heart*, a film about Chet Baker's final day. He will also be starring in a German made-for-TV movie *Der Amsterdam Krimi* as well as in a new project by the Hungarian producers of *On Body and Soul* (Oscar nominated 2018, Best Foreign Language Film).

In 2014, Naber won the Golden Calf for Best Actor for his part in *How to Avoid Everything*. Other films in which he featured include *The Heineken Kidnapping*, *Majesty*, *Het Verlangen* and Mike van Diem's *Tulipani*. In the TV series *Penzoza*, Gijs played the part of Storm for three seasons.



Photo: Bowie Verschuuren

### FREA | Loes Haverkort

Loes Haverkort appeared in TV series such as *Vechtershart*, *Celblok H*, *Bernhard*, *Scoundrel of Orange* and *De Jacht*, for which she received a Golden Calf nomination. She also starred in feature films *Voor Elkaar Gemaakt*, *Dik Trom*, *Rendez-vous* and *Schneider vs Bax*.

She was the first to play Charlotte in the successful musical *Soldaat van Oranje*.

In addition to her acting career, Loes has an Indie pop band called L O U I S V with her husband Floris. They will be back in the studio later this year.



### PEPIN | Jonathan Banks

In REDBAD, Jonathan Banks, of *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul* fame, plays the part of Pepin of Herstal, the merciless King of the Franks. We have already seen his darker side in *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*. Banks also appeared in many other American TV series such as *Cold Case*, *ER* and *Highlander*. Soon, Banks will be appearing alongside Liam Neeson in the action film *The Commuter*.



#### **CHARLES | Tibo Vandenberghe**

Belgian actor Tibo Vandenberghe landed his first major role in the television series *The Emperor of Taste* as the young Jacques Marchoul. He also appeared in *Bullhead*, *The Invader* and *The Treatment*. On stage, he danced in *Tanzung* by theatre company Bloet with Jan Decorte, Taka Shamoto and Sigrid Vinks.

In 2012 he was nominated for Best Supporting Actor in the Flemish Film Awards (*Vlaamse Filmprijzen*) for his portrayal of Kris in *The Invader*. Recently, he has also appeared in *Storm: Letters van Vuur* and *Dode Hoek*.



#### **WIGLEK | Søren Malling**

Søren Malling is a Danish actor, known for popular series such as *Borgen* and *The Killing*. He has also appeared on the big screen in films such as *A Hijacking*, *A War*, *Heartstone* and *The Man*.

## **ALSO STARRING**

The other parts are played by Dutch actors Teun Kuilboer, Lisa Smit, Derek de Lint, Britte Lagcher, Renée Soutendijk, Egbert Jan Weeber, Jack Wouterse, Mark van Eeuwen, Martijn Fischer, Huub Stapel, Aus Greidanus Sr, Birgit Schuurman, Eva Heijne, Nienke Brinkhuis, Nynke Heeg and Arnost Kraus; Belgian actors Daphne Wellens, Gene Bervoets, Pieter Embrechts, Flor Declair and Kobi van Huffel and Danish Simon Stenspil (*Rita* and *The Last Kingdom*), Morten Rose, Adam Ild Rowheder and Camilla Gotlieb.



## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION



After the massive success of *Admiral* (850,000 visitors), director Roel Reiné and producer Klaas de Jong continue their collaboration.

The production travelled from Denmark to the tidal flats and marshland “de Alde Faenen” in Friesland, from there to the rugged nature reserves of Ameland, via Apeldoorn to Bouillon Castle in Belgium, then to an old Viking settlement in Germany, finally ending up in the preHistoric Village in Eindhoven with 45 trucks, 2 trailers, 104 crew members, 1800 costumes, dozens of stunt crew and 18 horses. At a number of these locations, they were also joined by hundreds of extras.



## THE MAKERS



### Director | Roel Reiné

Roel Reiné is both the director and the Director of Photography for Redbad. After making a number of feature films in the Netherlands, including the award-winning action film *The Delivery*, he moved to Los Angeles in 2005. In the last 10 years, he has worked for the big studios, directing a great number of American films featuring many international stars. In 2015, Reiné directed action-drama *Admiral*, followed by the Netflix series *Black Sails* and the first two episodes of *Inhumans* in IMAX 3D. You can find more information about Roel Reiné on [www.roelreine.com](http://www.roelreine.com)



### Producer | Klaas de Jong

Klaas de Jong has several popular feature films to his name, including *Tuscan Wedding*, *Loving Ibiza*, *Penny's Shadow*, *The hell of '63*, *Bennie Brat*, *Storm Bound* and the successful film *Admiral*.

Klaas is the man behind the scenes. He develops a project from the initial idea to the (international) sale of the final product: the film. He gets actively involved in developing the script, bringing the right people together, putting the finances in place, overseeing the budget and taking care of the marketing. One of Klaas' focal points is achieving the highest possible production values on a relatively small budget. Before he became actively involved in producing films, he was an agent, a manager for artists and a producer of large music events.



### Screenwriter | Alex van Galen

Alex van Galen (Eindhoven, 1965) studied Literature Studies in Utrecht. He made a name for himself as a screenwriter for many popular series such as *Rozengeur & Wodka Lime*, *'t Zonnetje in Huis*, *SamSam*, *Onderweg Naar Morgen* and AVRO comedy *We Gaan Nog Niet Naar Huis*. He also wrote the screenplay – and the companion book – about legendary naval hero Michiel de Ruyter, which was also directed by Roel Reiné. At the moment, Alex is working on a screenplay about William of Orange.

## Locations

The ideal filming location for Dorestad was found in Eindhoven in its prehistoric village. Dorestad was a thriving centre of commerce in the early Middle Ages and one of the most important trade hubs in Europe. The Prehistoric Village at the Eindhoven Museum brings these long forgotten times to life again. [Click here](#) for more information:



Other locations in the Netherlands that were used include the tidal flats of Ameland and the Frisian marshland “de Alde Faenen”.



The setting of Château de Bouillon in the province of Luxembourg really evokes the spirit of the times. Bouillon Castle is one of the oldest remnants of the Belgian feudal era. There has been a castle on the rocky spur on which the castle is situated since the time of the Gauls. The present castle has had many owners through the ages and many conflicts have been settled here.

In the German state of Schleswig-Holstein there is an old Viking settlement where parts of the film were shot. The Viking houses there have been restored to their original state. The settlement has been put forward to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Filming locations in Denmark were Ertebølle, where remains from the Stone Age have been found and the village of Hvolris, where the Vikings originally had their settlements.





## **First Dutch film in 4DX and compete dolby atmos sound design**

REDBAD is the first Dutch feature film that can be seen in 4DX from the day of release. With the latest technology, 4DX takes the cinema experience to a higher, four-dimensional plane. Visitors don't just watch the film, but can truly experience the legend of Redbad. There will be twenty effects running perfectly synchronised with the action on screen in the special 4DX screens - moving chairs, weather simulations such as rain, wind, snow and thunder, and even smells.

In addition to this, REDBAD will be the first Dutch feature film with sound design completely designed, recorded and mixed in Dolby Atmos. In the numerous Dolby Atmos screens throughout the Netherlands, the sound will not just come from the front and the sides, but it will flow all around you. Dolby Atmos sound transports the audience into the world of the film through breathtakingly realistic sound that fills the entire space and that can be heard all around you.

# BACKGROUND ARTICLES

Written by Nathalie Scheenstra

**'I'd rather be in hell with my friends than in heaven with my enemies!'**

## *Short*

Most people, on hearing the name Redbad, assume that it is a Frisian corruption of the name Radboud, a name adopted by an important university and hospital in the Netherlands. Radboud University and Radboud hospital were named after Bishop Radboud, who lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, but there are rumours that Bishop Radboud may have been a great-great-grandson of Redbad, Frisian ruler from around 680 - 719. This is not such an outlandish idea. Everyone in the middle ages wanted to claim Frisian Redbad as their forefather. What many Dutch people will remember from their history lessons is that Redbad was the king who stepped back out of the baptismal font and said he would prefer to spend an eternity in Hell with his ancestors than to be in the Christian Heaven with a small group of his enemies. Redbad plays a key role in the story of the religious shift that occurred in the 8<sup>th</sup> century: the Christianisation of what is now the Netherlands. But his possible descendants and his heroic stand against the Christians are not the only things Redbad left behind. Many myths and legends have been found about this ruler, especially in North Holland, where Redbad had a number of adventures, where he lived in various periods and where his story is given a number of different endings, which show what an important historical figure Redbad truly was.

## *Main article*

*The town square is heaving. Redbad is led to the baptismal font, where the missionary Willibrord is standing. Willibrord starts the liturgy. Suddenly, Redbad interrupts him.*

*'Will I see my father again in Heaven?' Redbad looks at Willibrord intently.*

*There is a murmur in the crowd.*

*'Your father was not a Christian,' Willibrord replies.*

*'But he was a good man. A brave man who gave up his life for his people.'*

*'He was a pagan. Someone like that cannot get into Heaven.'*

*'How about Sietse, son of Boet? Hille, son of Reider? Maike, daughter of Taeke?' Redbad looks at the other Frisian clan leaders. 'Your fathers, your sons and daughters. All honourable folk who died for their people. Will I never see any of them again if I am baptised?'*

*'You can pray for their souls,' says Willibrord.*

*'Will I see him again, yes or no?'*

*'Of course not,' Willibrord snaps.*

*'I won't?' Redbad steps back out of the basin and looks around at the Frisian people.*

*'Then how can anyone convert to such a faith? I would rather be in Hell with my friends, than in Heaven with my enemies!'*

The name 'Redbad' rings a bell for many people, but not necessarily the right bell. The confusion lies in the name of a well-known Dutch university and its associated hospital. Radboud University and Radboud UMC were named after Saint Radboud of Utrecht, who was an eminent bishop, poet and academic in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The bishop's name is not entirely a coincidence. Bishop Radboud is said to have been a distant descendant of the Frisian ruler Redbad, who is the subject of the film *Redbad*, set to be released in 2018. The link that people are tempted to make between the university and the main character of the film, both currently in the public consciousness, is therefore partially correct, as reference is not being made to the Catholic bishop, but to his pagan ancestor who lived several centuries earlier.

The best-known historical story about Redbad, which is still told in history lessons today, is the story of his baptism. Some historians think Redbad set the baptism up on purpose, in order to humiliate the Chris-

tian missionaries and, as a leader, to declare the superiority of his pagan faith. Others suspect that the famous baptism scene never took place and that Redbad wanted to establish a more independent position relating to the Christian Franks. Yet others suspect that Redbad was having doubts about his own pagan faith and that he wanted to get baptised, but had cold feet at the last minute.

Redbad is the most famous historical figure of the early Middle Ages (around 500-1000). Little is known about the time of his birth. He was most likely the son of Aldigisl and succeeded him after his death in 680. Around 700, Redbad was a high ranking nobleman and a great regional leader in Friesland, on a par with Frankish leaders Pepin and his son Charles Martel. Redbad ruled over important cities such as Traiectum and Dorestad and large areas of land above the river Rhine up to what is currently German Helgoland. He was the brave leader of the motley group of Frisian people that resisted the Frankish expansion with tooth and nail.

Redbad continued to resist baptism when missionaries came to Friesland from England. Some descriptions of his character indicate that he was 'a man with a heart of stone', 'a hater and a hardened enemy of the new teaching' who drove out Christian priests and destroyed their churches. 'Far prouder and more powerful than his predecessor Aldigisl'. However, we should be careful with these character descriptions. The Christians who wrote this were quick to exaggerate and the descriptions of their 'enemies' were often not truthful. In fact, it is known that Redbad let Christian missionaries preach on Frisian soil without any repercussions. But their missions were not successful until after Redbad had been defeated by the Franks and died of an illness a year later.

It was not all fighting between the Frisians and the Franks. In an attempt to achieve some political equilibrium, Pepin's son Grimoald married Redbad's daughter Theusinda in 695. The marriage did not last long, as Grimoald died a few years later. It nevertheless shows how powerful Redbad was and the goals that both leaders were aiming for. A marriage was historically often an attempt to forge an alliance. Redbad died in 719 and the Franks finally conquered Frisian territory.

In addition to historical facts, there are hundreds of myths and stories about Redbad. The legends have their origins in Denmark and the Netherlands, particularly from Kennemerland and Egmond. In these stories, which are set in various times, Redbad takes on different roles. In one myth, he is a wandering soul who is neither pagan nor Christian and haunts a graveyard, crying out for the Germanic gods. At other times he is the brave leader in grey of the Kennemer warriors fighting the Norse men and their dragon boats. One myth says he was the king of the Rhine in 337 and protector of the Christian Lady Kunera. An old fairy tale also says that after his defeat by the Franks he escaped via the old, mysterious 'Robodes' roads, which people avoided for centuries. Over the centuries, Redbad's narrative changed. Where he was thought of as the King of the Danes in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century he was labelled a Dutch and Frisian freedom fighter.

Part of the explanation for the origin of the myths and why some of them are situated in what is now North and South Holland is because Redbad lived in Utrecht and the surrounding area *and* because all Dutch dukes wanted to be his descendants. Floris I, for example, named his castle in Medemblik 'Radboud'. But it is difficult to prove whether Redbad really did have descendants. It is unknown whether Theusinda and Grimoald's marriage resulted in any children and there is only one note of Radboud having a newborn son, who died soon after his birth. It is possible that Bubo (or Poppo) was one of Radboud's sons. As the last leader of the Frisians, who died fighting Charles Martel in 734, Bubo may well have produced more offspring, who later became important dukes and bishops. Although much remains unknown about Redbad, the speculation and myths show what a special legend Redbad was and still is.

## ***From Wodan and Donar to the Christian God***

### *Short*

The process of Christianisation, which took place in the early Middle Ages, resulted in the Germanic tribes abandoning their animist religion and adopting Christianity, as practised by the more southern Franks and the ancient Romans. Missionaries such as Willibrord and Boniface would have us believe that every Frisian was convinced and converted to the new faith in a matter of moments, but the Frisians had their own faith and must have had great trouble understanding the Christian content of the sermons preached by the foreign missionaries. They knew Walhalla instead of Heaven, and both Hell and the idea of eternal damnation were new to the Frisians. The question is how they managed to convert the Frisians to Christianity in the end, because eventually the entire people group became Christian in the Middle Ages. Many historians assume that this was due to the Franks conquering the Frisians in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century and forcing the Frisians to adopt their culture and religion. However, this trivialises the important part played by the missionaries. This also disregards the fact that some Frisians were already Christians before the missionaries and the Franks arrived, and that people were expected to go through catechism before being baptised. Clearly, the Frisians largely chose the new faith for themselves. The question remains: why?

### *Main article*

Before the Franks and the missionaries arrived, the Frisians had their own religion, in which nature, the ancestors and the Germanic gods such as Wodan, Donar and Freya played an important part. The Frisian people appeased all three through offerings and gifts in special holy temples and holy places like forests, fens and springs. These rituals brought the Frisians good fortune. Strangers appearing and preaching about one true God, the salvation of mankind and the duality of Heaven and Hell must have been rather strange to the Frisians. Giving up ancestor worship was not something they readily accepted, as the story of Redbad's baptism shows.

Missionaries such as Willibrord, and Wilfried and Wigbert before him, had made several previous attempts to Christianise the Frisian people, but with no success. Only after the victory over Dorestad and the death of Redbad did Willibrord achieve his goal. After him, more missionaries followed, who slowly, bit by bit, tried to win them over from the Germanic animist religion to the 'one true faith'. According to some, the Frisians were forced to accept Christianity, but this is most likely untrue. When Boniface was murdered, vengeance was wreaked on the Frisians in the Dokkum area, but most of them were not baptised by force. Why did the Frisians choose the new faith when their own ancient faith was perfectly adequate?

What happened was probably the following: Redbad was the Frisian ruler at the time, commerce in Dorestad became increasingly successful, the Frisian seafarers were famed far and wide and because of their trade and industry, the people had an open attitude to other cultures and influences. A more insular people such as the Saxons had a much harder and bloodier conversion to Christianity. Within Frisian society there were different social classes (the nobility, the free, the half-free and the slaves), but they shared the same faith. After some fighting back and forth, the Franks definitively conquered the most important regions of the Frisian kingdom. In this period, many members of the Frisian noble class were already converting to Christianity, possibly because they were expecting the Franks to win out in the end.

After Redbad's death and the Frankish take over, it turned out that keeping Frisian paganism did not offer as many advantages as the new faith that the Franks, the missionaries and some Frisian nobles practised. Their sons suddenly had access to education and the new Christian families were given gifts and high political office! Choosing the new faith probably also assured safety for the family, because the Frankish rulers wanted to bring the region into the fold as quickly as possible. The Christian Heaven also offered a better situation for people who had died and the new faith provided safety from human sacrifice. Missionaries such as Boniface and Wulfram were very strongly against it. After all, Jesus had already given up his life for the people on earth and a Christian's sacrifice to God was the Eucharist and every day devout living.

We know that in the beginning some Frisians thought the Christian God was just one of their animist gods who was making improvements. Other Frisians suspected that the missionaries and this Christian God had been sent by their own gods. Hence, more and more noble families chose the new faith. The free Frisians, such as the farmers, the fishermen and the merchants, were dependent on trade and good relationships with the nobility, so they chose the same path. Unfree Frisians, like the slaves, were saved from human sacrifice or donated to convents and had little say in the choice of a new religion.

The Frisians chose the new faith for strategic reasons, not because of the message of Christianity. As the years went by, the missionaries' tactics slowly filled in the gaps in the new faith. They brought miracle stories about Jesus, knowledge about the Holy Trinity, new rituals and they set up weekly meetings, new songs and stories. They also brought innovations to the area, such as church buildings, reading and writing and they very subtly but effectively changed Frisian society. They taught famous, pagan Frisian singers Christian psalms; holy, pagan ground became holy Christian ground and the old, pagan graveyard was used for the gallows.

Initially, the Frisian people did not choose Christianity because of the *content* of this new faith, but because of the material, immaterial and indirect benefits the new God and His followers gave them. The Frisians had always profited from worshipping their gods. Slowly but surely, they left the old faith and its ways behind and Christianity slowly took root in Frisian society. In the years that followed, the Christian faith acquired the content and the message that are at the heart of the values of Dutch culture as it is today.

**'And I reject all of the devil's work and words, Donar and Wodan and Saxnot and all demons that are their companions'**

### *Short*

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, before the missionaries and the Franks came, the Frisians had their own religion, based on ancient gods, the nature around them and ancestor worship. The missionaries depict this religion as 'pagan' and barbaric, full of human sacrifice and strange customs. When Frisians got baptised, they had to leave their religion and customs behind. Donar, Wodan and Saxnot, as well as Freya, the goddess of fertility and the god of justice, Thingsus, had to be renounced because in the Christian religion there was only one, almighty God. However, the pagan gods have not completely disappeared in today's culture: just think of the names of the days of the week. Redbad, leader of the Frisians between 680 and 719, and his predecessor Aldigisl gave the foreign missionaries the freedom to spread Christianity, even though they themselves did not adopt the new religion. But if we are to believe the sources, Redbad most certainly did have doubts about his old religion.

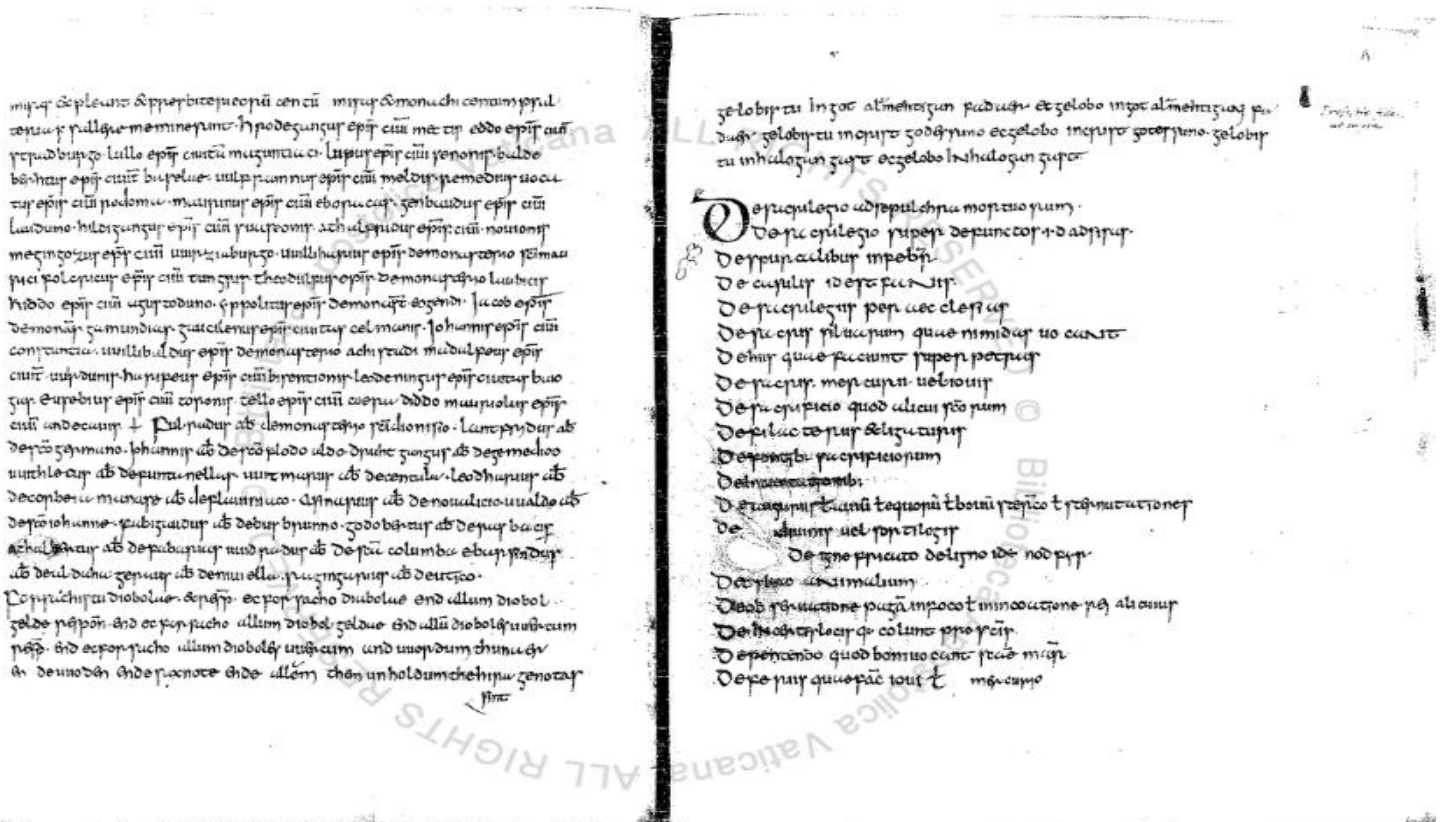
The 'Utrecht Baptismal Vows' and the small index of superstitious and pagan customs, known as *Indiculus superstitionum et paganarium*.

*Main article*

This spindly Latin writing records a turning point in Dutch history. English missionaries, the most well-known of which were Willibrord and Boniface, came to Frisia to convert the people to Christianity. But the Frisians had their own religion, which the missionaries called 'the pagan religion'. The first section of the Latin text above contains the questions and answers spoken at the baptism by a bishop and the 'pagan' Frisian who was being baptised. This went as follows:

- Do you reject the devil? *And the answer must be:* I reject the devil.
- And all the devil's money [offerings to the devil]? *The answer must be:* and I renounce all the devil's money.
- And all the devil's work? *The answer must be:* And I renounce all the devil's work and words, Donar and Wodan and Saxnot and all demons who are their companions.
- Do you believe in God the Father almighty? I believe in God the Father almighty.
- Do you believe in Christ, God's Son? I believe in Christ, God's son.
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? I believe in the Holy Spirit.

In the second part of the Latin text, there is a contents page of a text about pagan practises that the missionaries disapproved of. Some practises have come up in the article about amulets and you can also read more in the article about the Frisian's pagan customs. It is not entirely clear where the *Indiculus* was written, but most historians assume that this text was written in early medieval Utrecht. This is why the



*Indiculus* is often referred to as the 'Utrecht baptismal vows' and it is not so strange to think that the contents page was put together by Boniface or the Frisian missionary Liudger.

Originally, the Frisians believed in the worship of Germanic animist gods, gods who they had worshiped since prehistoric times. Which of these Germanic gods were popular in the 8<sup>th</sup> century is something you

can see in the *Indiculus*; Wodan, Donar and Saxnot. Wodan (also known as Odin) was an important god in the Middle Ages. He was associated with war and brought the victims of battle up to Walhalla under his protection. Donar (also known as Thor) was the god of thunder. He was always depicted with a hammer, which he used to make the thunder roll.

Saxnot is the Anglo-Saxon name for the Germanic god Tiwaz or Thingsus. The god was always depicted with just one hand. Thingsus represented justice and order and was the protector of the public assembly in early medieval times. There was another important *goddess* named Freya. She was the goddess of fertility and protector of the love between man and woman. It is likely that she was less popular in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, as few signs of Freya worship have been found. Besides the Germanic gods and goddess, a certain number of Frisian goddesses have been discovered in rune inscriptions: *Beda* and *Fimilene* and from the Roman era *Baduhenna* and *Hludana*.

In grave finds from the early Middle Ages, evidence of Wodan and Donar worship have been found. There are Frisian coins, for instance, with Wodan's face on them. On the *sceattas*, Wodan is a man with straggly hair, bulging eyes and a moustache. On the other side of the coins, there is a snake-like monster with claws and a high tail. Wodan can also be found on golden bracteates, depicted with his torso on a quadruped. In addition to this, so-called Donar pendants have been found, amulets that most probably protected the wearer against fierce thunderstorms and, as these could blight the harvest, against hunger.



Tiwaz, Wodan, Donar and Freya still exist in our everyday life. Four names of days of our week are based on them: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Sunday and Monday derive from the two most important natural elements to the Germanic people and so they have a Germanic origin too. This is different for Saturday, which can be traced back to a Roman god, Saturnus. Saturday, therefore, holds a separate place in our week. That the Germanic people did not just worship gods but also nature is not so strange; they lived close to nature, after all, and were dependent on their immediate surroundings. That is why springs were held to be sacred, but there were also holy trees, rocks and stones and holy forests, which can be seen in names such as Heiloo (holy forest).

The baptism of the Frisian ruler Redbad, which you can read more about in the [article about Christianisation](#), shows that ancestor worship was also an important element of the Frisian religion. The singer Bernlef, who helped the Frisian missionary Liudger, was very popular 'because he could sing so beautifully of the deeds of his ancestors and the battles of the kings according to the customs of his people'. This is also evident in other Germanic tribes. All manner of supernatural powers and demi-godlike qualities were ascribed to the ancestors. Redbad was unsure about getting baptised and, according to the well-known story, decided against Heaven where he would only find a small group of Christians, but instead chose damnation in Hell where his ancestors would be.

It is thought that Redbad did have doubts about his Germanic religion. Initially, he wanted to be baptised into the new religion and there are more indications that this was the case. His attitude to human sacrifice, for example. Human sacrifice was common in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the aim of appeasing the gods. But Redbad only did it because of his Frisian people and the laws of his ancestors. The Frankish missionary Wulfram managed to persuade Redbad several times to stop the sacrifice. Apparently, the Frisian ruler did not feel an ancient religious ritual was that important, or he was no longer fully convinced

by the religion of his ancestors. Whatever the case may be, he was not quite as set in his pagan ways as some sources would have us believe.

### *Redbad*

In the longhouse in Dorestad, there is a fierce discussion between different clan leaders. Redbad is sitting next to his father and occasionally looks over at Fenne, who is standing at the back of the house.

'Because of the spring tide, my clan will have nothing to eat this year', Odulf shouts, 'something *must* be done!'

'Easy for you to say,' Wulf scoffs, 'Odulf does not have any daughters of his own!'

Odulf stares at him coldly. 'My own sister was sacrificed once, with ten other girls. And nobody objected then. This is the way our ancestors have always done it,' Odulf looks at Aldigisl, 'including your father!'

A few clan leaders jump to their feet and launch into a heated argument. Redbad sees his father look at the other men with concern and shuffles closer to Aldigisl.

'Don't tell me you are seriously considering this?'

Aldigisl looks at him. 'Redbad...'

'But what good will it do?' Redbad shouts angrily. The other clan leaders catch Redbad and Aldigisl's conversation and the noise dies down. Eibert looks up at Aldigisl.

'Does Redbad have something to say as well?'

'If no one else does,' says Redbad.