

[1588] **The Old Frisian *Five Keys of Wisdom* and its Background**

Claudio Cataldi

Abstract. *The literary motif of the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ developed in the Early Middle Ages around the enumeration of precepts for ‘unlocking’ true knowledge. This motif is found in many medieval didactic and grammatical works, both in prose and poetry. It also forms the basis of an Old Frisian text, known as Five Keys of Wisdom. The Old Frisian text mentions the definition of the five ‘Keys of Wisdom’ in Latin, each followed by a comment in the vernacular, with an exposition befitting the legal context of the manuscripts in which it occurs. In this study, I argue that the Latin elements of this text descend from a list of five ‘Keys of Wisdom’ that was widely attested to in the Middle Ages.*

1. Introduction

Old Frisian literature frequently employs what has been called the “enumerative style”, that is, the “habit of couching fact, lore and wisdom in enumerative form”.¹ Originating from the wisdom passages of the Old Testament, the “enumerative style” was frequently adopted in the writings of the Church Fathers. It gradually found its way into early medieval literature and eventually gained a renewed impetus from Scholasticism.² This stylistic feature fits in well with the corpus of legal texts which, as is well known, constitutes the bulk of the surviving literature in Old Frisian. There it served above all the purpose of easing memorisation. The *Seventeen Statutes* and *Twenty-Four Landlaws* are the most prominent examples of this taste for enumeration,³ but one might also think of the *Five Exceptions to the Right of Swearing Innocence* (ed. Bremmer 2009: 148-150) or the *Fifteen Causes to Disinherit a Son*.⁴ The “enumerative style” is also encountered in repre-

1. Wright 1993: 21.

2. Wright 1993: 49-50. See also Curtius 1953: 510-514, who defines this *topos* as “numerical apophthegm”.

3. On the significance of the numbers seventeen and twenty-four in Old Frisian texts, see Bremmer 2021: 105-109.

4. See the diplomatic edition of Codex Unia by Sytsema 2012, available at <<https://tdb.fryske-akademy.eu/tdb/index-unia-en.html>>. The text is also found in Codex Aysma: in this version, there are listed eleven causes to disinherit a son. See Buma, Gerbenzon and Tragter-Schubert 1993: 216-219.

sentatives of Old Frisian religious literature.⁵ The several versions of the Ten Commandments recorded in Old Frisian are a case in point, as is the *Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday*. Both concern texts in which the boundaries between religious and legal literature are blurred.⁶ Further Frisian examples of the “enumerative style” range from the *Seven Things that God Hates* and the *Seven Virtues of the Mass* to the *Ten Signs in the Host* and the *Five Keys of Wisdom*.⁷ The last of these texts describes five ‘keys’ that unlock the door to wisdom. Previous scholars have discussed possible sources of this Old Frisian text.⁸ However, some steps are possibly missing from past reconstructions. In particular, as I shall argue, the Old Frisian piece has its closest antecedents in lists of *claves sapientiae* found in grammatical treatises. It is my purpose, therefore, to further analyse the tradition of the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ in order to better contextualise the Old Frisian text. To do so, I shall first introduce the Old Frisian *Five Keys of Wisdom* and its manuscript context; next, I discuss a group of grammatical and didactic works which may have inspired the author in his presentation.

2. *The Old Frisian Five Keys of Wisdom*

The Old Frisian *Five Keys of Wisdom* is preserved in two mid-fourteenth-century manuscripts: the First Hunsingo Manuscript (Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Hs R2, c.1325–50: H1), pp. 70-72, and the Second Hunsingo Manuscript (Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Hs R3, c.1325–50: H2), pp. 18-20. H2 shares most of its material with H1, although in a different order and with the addition of Latin versions of the major Old Frisian law texts.⁹ Both H1 and H2 originate from east of the River Lauwers and include staples of Frisian legal literature such as the *Seventeen Statutes* and *Twenty-Four Landlaws*, the *General Register of Compensations*, the *Superior Statutes*, as well as one of the Old Frisian versions of the *Ten Commandments*.¹⁰ The two manuscript versions of the *Five Keys of Wisdom* do not display remarkable differences between

5. See especially Giliberto 2007: 150-152; Ead. 2015: 152-153.

6. Giliberto 2007: 150-152.

7. The Frisian text has traditionally been titled *Five Keys to Wisdom*, rather than *Five Keys of Wisdom*. However, because it ultimately descends from a motif based on a list of *claves sapientiae*, I prefer the translation *Five Keys of Wisdom*.

8. See, in particular, Buma 1950; 1961.

9. Bremmer 2009: 13. Editions of the First and Second Hunsingo Manuscripts are Hoekstra 1950; Buma and Ebel 1969.

10. Cf. Johnston 2001: 575; Bremmer 2009: 10-15.

each other.¹¹ Although the Old Frisian text addresses religious and didactic topics, it also fits the legal content of the manuscripts. Below I quote the full text of the Old Frisian *Five Keys of Wisdom* as edited by Bremmer 2009: 135.

Thet sprec thi wisa Salomon, ther was allera ertheskera monna wisest, thet ma alle wished age te undslutane mith fif keiem. Thera fif keia heth allera ec sinne noma end ene sunderge wald.

Thi forma kei is *assiduitas legendi*: Nu ther alle wished is fon Gode iebeden ande risen and efter in tha bokem scriven, thet ma tha boc minnie ende tha gerne lese ande theron thene wisdom. Hwande this is thi forma kei there wishede. Ande hwasas thene orne wite, sa rede thi, ther kunne.

Thi other kei het *memoria retinendi*: Thet is thi thochta, thet'ti mon alle thes thenzie, ther hi gelesen hebbe. Ande thet hi riucht ieve and riucht nime.

Thi thredda kei is geheten *frequens interrogatio*: Thet ma gerne fregie allera godera wenda, ther bethe tha live and there sele dege. End also thet en selich mon al befregad hebbe and efter gelernad, thetti gerne a riuchtlike thingum fulwunige.

Thi fiarda kei is geheten *contemptus diuitiarum*: Thet allera godera monna hwelic forsmage unriuchte rikedomar, thetti nene heva ni somnie fon rave ni fon thiufthem, fon nene meidem ni fon grate wokere. Wera fon Godes ievem and riuchtere tilathe scel ma bethe lif ande sele nera, ande therunder riucht nima and riucht utieva.

Thi fifta kei is geheten *honor magistris*: thetter allera monna hwelic erie sinne mester ande minnie, ande thereafter alle mesterskipe, ther him fon Godes halvem to geset se. Thet is ferest sin biscop and sin prester, hia se hwelikere meta sa se se. Hwande hia him crisma ande cristenede ieven hebbath and mith hira Godes wisdom alle liude ti himelrike skelen leda. *Amen*.

(Thus spoke the wise Solomon, who was the wisest of all earthly men, that one has to unlock all wisdom with five keys. Each of these five keys has its own name and a special power.

The first key is *assiduitas legendi*: because all wisdom is offered by and originated from God and afterwards written in books, then one

11. Editions of the *Five Keys of Wisdom* are in Hoekstra 1950: 56-57 (based on H2, with variants from H1); Buma and Ebel 1969: 44-45 (based on H2 with a facing German translation); Bremmer 2009: 134-136 (based on H2).

must love the book and eagerly read it and the wisdom therein. Because this is the first key to wisdom, and he who knows the second one, let him speak who can.

The second key is called *memoria retinendi*: that is memory, that one remembers everything that he has read, and that he gives what is right and takes what is right.

The third key is called *frequens interrogatio*: that one should eagerly inquire all good things that avail both body and soul. And all that a pious man has completely inquired and afterwards learnt, that he may eagerly persist in legal issues.

The fourth key is called *contemptus diuitiarum*: that every good man rejects unlawful riches, that he does not gather any goods through robbery nor through theft, nor through bribes nor through great usury. But from God's gifts and right labour he must feed both body and soul, and meanwhile take what is right and give what is right.

The fifth key is called *honor magistri*: that every man should honour and love his master, and next every authority that is set to him on God's behalf. This is first his bishop and his priest, of whatever quality they may be. Because they gave him the sacrament of chrism and baptism and with their wisdom of God, they must lead all people to the heavenly realm. *Amen.*)¹²

The structure of the text is based on the enumeration of the 'Keys of Wisdom', which are quoted in Latin and then commented on in the vernacular. The Latin material embedded in the text points towards a cultured environment.¹³ The commentary, in turn, is a kind of exegesis of the Latin. A brief introduction precedes the enumeration and claims for it the authority of Solomon, who is considered the wisest man that ever was: a hyperbole that finds its roots in the Bible, where it is also stated that the wisdom of Solomon was a gift from God Himself (1 Kings 4:29-31).¹⁴ The vernacular exposition dwells on juridical aspects, such as knowledge of legal matters, just retribution, unlawful acquisition of goods and money, decent work and

12. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

13. Bremmer 2014: 26.

14. "And God gave to Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart as the sand that is on the sea shore. And the wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the Orientals, and of the Egyptians, And he was wiser than all men: wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Dorda the sons of Mahol, and he was renowned in all nations round about" (Douay-Rheims). See also 1 Kings 3:5-12.

respect for the clergy. Therefore, the *Five Keys of Wisdom* seems to be a sort of didactic addendum to the legal texts in H1 and H2. Bremmer has already suggested that “the Frisian version is tailored to serve trainees for legal offices”.¹⁵ Such a purpose finds analogues in other vernaculars of medieval Europe: for example, a Welsh collection of laws lists “five keys to the office of a judge”:¹⁶

Pump allwed ygneitaeth yssyd. Un yw ofyn dy athro ae garu; eil yw mynych ouyn dy dysc; trydyd yw cadw genhyt y dysc a geffych; petweryd yw tremygu golut; pymhet yw cassau kelwyd a charu guiryoned, rac ofyn duw.

(There are five keys to the office of a judge. One is the fear of thy teacher and the love of him. The second is frequent asking for thy instruction. The third is retaining the instruction which thou dost receive. The fourth is despising riches. The fifth is hating falsehood and loving truth for the fear of God.)¹⁷

Four out of five keys overlap with those in the Frisian text, with the exception of zeal in reading, which is not found in the Welsh counterpart. The latter, in turn, includes the fear of God, which the Old Frisian text does not mention. The Welsh text simply enumerates the keys without much ‘legal’ commentary, unlike the Old Frisian text, which elucidates each ‘key’ in detail. Overall, both the Welsh text and the Latin phrases in the Old Frisian text ultimately stem from a multi-faceted Latin tradition of cataloguing ‘Keys of Wisdom’, a tradition that will be outlined below.

3. *The Origin of the Keys of Wisdom*

As suggested by the first ‘key’ of the Old Frisian text (that is, diligence in reading), the motif of the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ originates from methodological instructions, employed in school teaching, that gave prominence to memorising what was read.¹⁸ As Bremmer sums up, “originating in the monastic school and focused on the *lectio divina* (the reading of holy texts), the

15. Bremmer 2014: 26.

16. Cf. Emanuel 1970: 36; Bremmer 2014: 26-27. On this Welsh collection of laws, its recensions and its manuscript tradition, see Roberts 2011, especially pp. 156-157, 307.

17. Text and translation from Emanuel 1970: 36.

18. The very notion of *claves scientiae* is biblical and found, for example, in Luke 11:52: “Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in, you have hindered” (Douay-Rheims). See Emanuel 1970: 37-38.

notion of keys of wisdom/knowledge gradually found its way to cathedral schools and other institutions of instruction, eventually to become a widely familiar text both in Latin and in several vernaculars”.¹⁹ In fact, this motif is mostly found in didactic literature (that is, works aimed at providing guidance towards learning specific subjects) and grammatical treatises (aimed at learning and mastering Latin), both in prose and verse. The number of the ‘keys’ varies, but it is possible to distinguish three main traditions that enumerate four, five, and seven keys, respectively.²⁰

The tradition of ‘four keys’ seems to be the earliest. It dates back to at least the eighth century, when it was recorded in the *Liber de numeris* – which presumably includes the first-ever mention of the motif –²¹ and in the *Collectanea* of Pseudo-Bede.²² The *Liber de numeris* features this passage: “Quattuor claves sapientiae hec sunt: sedulitas legendi, adsiduitas rogandi, honor magistri, contemptio mundi” (The four keys of wisdom are these ones: zeal in reading, frequency in questioning, respect for the teacher, contempt of this world).²³ The *Collectanea* offers a slightly different formulation of the same keys, and one that is closer to the Old Frisian text: “Quattuor claves sunt: sapientia uel industria legendi, assiduitas interrogandi, honor doctoris, contemptio facultatum”²⁴ (There are four keys: wisdom or zeal in reading, persistence in questioning, respect for the teacher and contempt

19. Bremmer 2014: 26. Cf. also Emanuel 1970: 41. Curtius 1953: 510 observes that “The pedagogical technique of classifying and memorizing made the numerical apothegm and, more generally, enumerational technique extremely popular”.

20. The motif of the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ has been thoroughly discussed by Avesani 1965, revised and reprinted in Avesani 2019. Law 1995: 126-127 lists several manuscripts that preserve texts featuring this motif.

21. The *Liber de numeris* is a mid/late eight-century Latin collection of miscellaneous material organised according to their relevance to certain numerical subjects: for example, the five senses, the ‘ten windows of the soul’, and the ‘four keys of wisdom’. On the *Liber de numeris*, see McNally 1957.

22. The *Collectanea*, once attributed to Bede, comprise a miscellany of short Latin texts including items arranged according to their numerical pattern. No manuscripts of the *Collectanea* have survived; the collection is known from its first printed edition in 1563. See especially Wright 1993: 56-57 and Bayless and Lapidge 1998: 208-209.

23. Latin text quoted from Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 14497 (s. viii^{ex}), fol. 14r. Digital edition available at <<https://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/0004/bsb00046298/images/index.html?id=00046298&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=30>>.

24. Bayless and Lapidge 1998: 124. The CPL 1995: no. 1129 dates the *Collectanea* to s. viii. Bayless and Lapidge 1998: 7-8 suggest the same date for the section of the *Collectanea* that includes the ‘Keys of Wisdom’.

for wealth). The four keys in the *Collectanea* correspond to four out of the five in the Old Frisian *Five Keys of Wisdom*; absent is *memoria retinendi* “preservation of memory”. In fact, Pseudo-Bede has been proposed as a possible source for the Frisian *Five Keys of Wisdom*.²⁵ The same four keys as found in the *Collectanea* are included in the *Collectaneum miscellaneum* by Sedulius Scottus: “Quatuor claves sunt sapientiae: industria legendi, assiduitas interrogandi, contemptus pecuniarum, honorificatio doctorum”²⁶ (There are four keys of wisdom: zeal in reading, frequency in questioning, contempt of wealth, respect for teachers). Other Insular sources contain Latin formulas that resemble those in the Frisian text.²⁷ As a matter of fact, most of the earliest witnesses of the ‘four keys’ (the *Liber de numeris*, the *Collectanea* of Pseudo-Bede, Sedulius Scottus) have demonstrable ties with Ireland.²⁸ The current evidence therefore suggests that the motif of the *claves sapientiae* is a product of the Hiberno-Latin culture that is also frequently associated with the “enumerative style”. The mention of the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ in the Welsh collection of laws quoted above further witnesses to the circulation of the motif in the British Isles.

4. *Ars rivipullensis* and analogous Lists

The motif soon found its way to the Continent, and eventually entered grammatical compilations.²⁹ The five ‘Keys of Wisdom’ featured in a Carolingian grammatical treatise called *Ars rivipullensis*, a commentary on Donatus’s *Ars minor*.³⁰ This treatise is preserved in two manuscripts: Barcelona, Archivo de la Corona de Aragon, MS Ripoll 46 (s. ix), fols 42r-50v, and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 3318 (s. x), fols 41r-56v.³¹ Ripoll 46 originates from Catalonia. It opens with Bede’s *De arte metrica* and collects grammatical material, such as Donatus’s *Ars maior*

25. Buma 1961: 50; Bremmer 2009: 134-135.

26. CCCM 67: 11.

27. Cf. Sims-Williams 1990: 334-335; Bayless and Lapidge 1998: 208-209.

28. On the tradition of the four keys, cf. Wright 1993: 56-57; Bayless and Lapidge 1998: 208-209; Gallo 2019a: 70-71. On the seven keys, see Emanuel 1970.

29. For example, the four ‘Keys of Wisdom’ are added as a gloss to one of the manuscripts of Priscianus’s *Ars*: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 109 (s. ix), fol. 1r; see Rosellini 2015: xxxix. See also *infra*.

30. The *Ars minor* is a Latin treatise on the parts of speech by the late-Antique grammarian Donatus (s. iv). Along with its companion piece *Ars maior*, it immensely influenced medieval treatises on Latin grammar.

31. See Jeudy 1978, who edits the text from the Ripoll manuscript. A critical edition is in Gallo 2019a.

and *Ars minor*, the *Artis grammaticae introductiones* by Usuard of Saint-Germain-des Prés (d. 877) as well as anonymous commentaries on Donatus and an excerpt from Isidore's *Etymologiae* I.xxvii, dealing with orthography.³² The other manuscript, Vat. Lat. 3318, probably has a French origin. It is likewise a grammatical miscellany, mainly devoted to Donatus and Priscian, and shares several of its contents with Ripoll 46,³³ which seems to have been its model.³⁴

The *Ars rivipullensis* provides an early example of a list of *claves sapientiae* that will enjoy a large circulation. Daniela Gallo argues that the *Ars rivipullensis* was compiled in France, perhaps at Fleury Abbey.³⁵ It draws its contents from Donatus's *Ars minor* as well as from Priscian's *Institutio de nomine, pronomine et verbo*, Isidore's *Etymologiae*, and from several other sources, such as Remigius of Auxerre's commentary on Donatus.³⁶ Like Donatus's *Ars minor*, the *Ars rivipullensis* is arranged as a dialogue and addresses several topics, including the 'Keys of Wisdom'. I quote the relevant passage from Vat. Lat. 3318, fol. 42r:³⁷ "Quot sunt claves sapientie? V. Que? Assiduitas legendi, memoria retinendi, contemptus diuiciarum, honor magistri, cotidiana interrogatio" (How many are the keys of wisdom? Five. Which ones? Diligence in reading, retention in memory, contempt of wealth, respect for the teacher, daily questioning). The passage is almost identical to the Latin phrases in the Frisian text. The only difference is that *interrogatio* is modified by the adjective *cotidiana* ('daily') instead of *frequens*, as in the Frisian counterpart. *Interrogatio* also occupies the third place in the Frisian list (and not the fifth, as in the *Ars rivipullensis*). The Vatican version furthermore includes an interlinear gloss *sedulitas interrogandi* ('assiduity in asking questions')³⁸ written above the phrase *me-*

32. Cf. Jeudy 1978. Description and digital edition available at *Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)*, <http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/2345583>>.

33. See Jeudy 1972: 140-141. Cf. *Biblissima*, available at <<https://portail.biblissima.fr/en/ark:/43093/mdatac9c9f6e928d9ef9605a162146b0059b1775783f0>>.

34. See Jeudy 1978: 74-75; Gallo 2019a: xxix-xxx.

35. Gallo 2019a: xxxviii-xli.

36. Gallo 2019a: xxxii-xxxviii. See also Gallo 2019b.

37. A digital reproduction of the manuscript is available at *DVL – Digital Vatican Library*, <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3318>.

38. The phrase *sedulitas interrogandi* is also found in an eighth-century miscellany preserved in Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS Rheinau 140: see Sims-Williams 1990: 335-336, who notes that this miscellany seems related to Irish material such as that found in the *Liber de numeris*.

moria retinendi. This interlinear addition shows that the key of *interrogatio* tended to vary amongst versions, in terms of both position and formulation.

We cannot know whether the author of the *Ars rivipullensis* made use of a ready-at-hand list of ‘keys’ that was already popular at the time, or whether this list represents a fresh elaboration, perhaps resulting from the combination of originally discrete sources. In fact, our records show that this specific list of ‘Keys of Wisdom’ also circulated on its own, which suggests that whoever compiled the *Ars rivipullensis* knew it by heart. A tenth-century Latin-Arabic glossary originating from Spain includes a list of the five keys (not translated into Arabic) that parallels that of the *Ars rivipullensis*.³⁹ Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS Lat. Z. 497 (1811) (s. xi/xii) preserves a copy of Donatus’s two grammars. At the beginning of the *Ars minor* we find the list of the five ‘Keys of Wisdom’ (fol. 3v): “Quinque sunt claves sapientiae: assiduitas legendi, memoria retinendi, contemptus divitiarum, honor magistri, cotidiana interrogatio”⁴⁰ (The keys of wisdom are five: diligence in reading, retention in memory, contempt of wealth, respect for the teacher, daily questioning). The list is the same as that in the *Ars rivipullensis*, but the Venice interpolation is not presented in a question-and-answer format.⁴¹ Further evidence of independent circulation comes from a note added onto a blank page in a twelfth-century manuscript now held in Cremona:⁴² “Quinque sunt claves sapientie. Que? Assiduitas legendi, memoria retinendi, honor magistris, contemptus divitiarum, cotidiana interrogatio”⁴³ (The keys of wisdom are five. Which ones? Diligence in reading, retention in memory, respect for the teacher, contempt of wealth, daily questioning). Compared to the *Ars rivipullensis*, the inversion of *contemptus divitiarum* and *honor magistri* in the Cremona note further demonstrates that the order of the five keys was subject to variation. Another example comes from a twelfth-century addition to a ninth-century collection of Latin homilies now in Karlsruhe: “Quinque claves sapientie sunt. prima clavis est cottidiana lectio. secunda clavis est assidua meditatio. Tertia clavis est frequens interrogatio. IIIa clavis est

39. Today Leiden, University Library, MS Or. 231. See Seybold 1900: 553-554.

40. Quoted from the manuscript. Cf. Law 1995: 126.

41. On the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ and grammatical treatises, see also Irvine 1994: 461-462.

42. Cremona, Biblioteca Statale (*olim* Biblioteca Governativa e Libreria Civica), 79, fol. 99v (s. xii).

43. Avesani 2019: 26. This independent circulation may also explain the interpolation of the passage on the ‘five keys’ into a fifteenth-century copy of Remigius of Auxerre’s commentary on Donatus, discussed by Avesani 2019: 34-35.

memoria retinendi. Va clavis est timor et honor magistri”⁴⁴ (There are five keys of wisdom. The first key is daily reading. The second key is diligent pondering. The third key is frequent questioning. The fourth key is retention in memory. The fifth key is fear and respect of the teacher). One might note that *interrogatio* is given the adjective *frequens*, as in the Old Frisian text, but, on the other hand, *assidua meditatio* replaces *contemptus divitiarum*. This example offers further evidence of the popularity and the variability (in terms of both order and phrasing) of the ‘Keys of Wisdom’.⁴⁵ The fact that it was used in a homiletic collection must not come as a surprise, given that these instructions for learning could serve purposes as diverse as learning grammar and approaching holy texts. Last, a twelfth-century collection of glosses preserved in a German manuscript also includes our list: “Quatuor uel quinque sunt claves sapientie: industria legendi, assiduitas interrogandi, memoria retinendi, honor magistri, contemptus divitiarum”⁴⁶ (The keys of wisdom are four or five: zeal in reading, frequency in questioning, retention in memory, respect of the teacher, contempt of wealth). The compiler of the list was unsure about the exact number of keys, which shows that the tradition of the ‘four keys’ circulated along with that of ‘five keys’, and that the keys were not clearly fixed in terms of number and order.

5. *Development of the Tradition of the Five ‘Keys of Wisdom’*

From the tenth century onwards, several Latin works are devoted to the five ‘Keys of Wisdom’, works which are more developed than the ready-at-hand lists quoted above. An overview of these texts might be useful to provide the Old Frisian text with a frame of further references. In his discussion of the *topos* of the “numerical apothegm” Ernst Robert Curtius includes the epigram below:

Quinque sacre claves dicuntur stare sophie;
Prima frequens studium, finem nescitque legendi.
Alter: que relegis memori committere menti.
Tertia: que nescis percrebra rogatio rerum.
Quarta est verus honor sincero corde magistri.

44. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS Aug. Perg. 15, fol. 34r; quoted from the manuscript. Digital edition available at <<https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/content/pageview/442662>>. Cf. Holder 1906: 45.

45. A comparison amongst various lists of *claves sapientiae* is provided at the end of this study.

46. Quoted from Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Pal. Lat. 883, fol. 61r, available online at <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/bav_pal_lat_883>.

Quinta iubet vanas mundi contempnere gazas.⁴⁷

(It is said that there are five keys of holy wisdom; the first one is diligent study and not knowing the end of reading. The second one: commit to memory what you re-read. The third: frequently asking of what you do not know. The fourth is true respect for the teacher with sincere heart. The fifth commands to despise the various follies of the world).

The content of the *claves* is the same as the *Ars rivipullensis*, but the formulation does not follow this text *verbatim*. Curtius provides neither a date nor manuscript details for this short poem, which is preserved in two manuscripts from Germany.⁴⁸ Furthermore, another copy of this epigram was interpolated in one of the manuscripts of Bede's *De arte metrica*⁴⁹ and combined with an acrostic poem on Bede which, according to Andy Orchard, is "little more than an Aldhelmian pastiche".⁵⁰

The 'Five Keys of Wisdom' also posed a challenge to poets. Egbert of Liège, an eleventh-century teacher at the cathedral school of Liège, included a verse rendition in his *Fecunda ratis* ('The Richly Laden Ship'). This poem, which survives in a single manuscript,⁵¹ consists of two parts: one contains a collection of proverbs and folk tales, the other excerpts from the Bible and the Fathers. Again, the passage on the 'Keys of Wisdom' (*Fecunda ratis*, lines 410-415)⁵² shares its content with both the *Ars rivipullensis* and the Old Frisian text, but differences in wording indicate a shared use of the same motif rather than direct borrowing. The same applies to a passage in the *Facetus*, a twelfth-century didactic poem in hexameters, which mentions the 'Keys of Wisdom' (distich 98) as follows: "Quaere, recordare, retine, lege saepe relecta; | sic omnes claves tibi dat sapientia recta"⁵³ (Ask, remember, retain, read often what has been re-read: in this way, the correct wisdom gives you all the keys). The *Facetus* enjoyed a

47. Curtius 1953: 512.

48. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 19451 (s. x), fol. 14v, and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 15611 (s. xv), fol. 85v. See Schaller and Könsgen 1977: No. 13621.

49. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Ott. Lat. 1354, s. xi-xii, fol. 58r.

50. Orchard 1992: 124-126. See Schaller and Könsgen 1977: No. 1633.

51. Cologne, Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek, MS 196 [Darmst. 2440], c. 1050.

52. Voigt 1889: 229.

53. Schroeder 1911: 21. The name *Facetus* refers to two different texts. The text under discussion begins "Cum nichil utilius humane credo saluti | Quam morum novisse modos et moribus uti". See *Arlima* <www.arlima.net/eh/facetust.html>; Avesani 2019: 33-34.

large circulation in medieval Europe. Copies are attested both in England⁵⁴ and on the Continent, where it was translated into Middle High German, Middle Low German, and Middle Dutch.⁵⁵ The Middle High German translation beginning “Mir hat gesagt daz herze min”⁵⁶ also includes a rendition of the passage quoted above (*stanza* 37):⁵⁷

Vrage unde daz behalt
und lerne di letzen balt;
so gibet dir di wisheit
di slüzzel der behendicheit.⁵⁸

(Ask and remember this, and learn the lesson quickly; in this way,
the wisdom gives you the key to skilfulness).

In another manuscript,⁵⁹ the text of the Latin *Facetus* is introduced by a verse preamble (in German) where Solomon is mentioned (distich 35): “Daz selbe schribet auch vil schon | Der wise meister Salomon”⁶⁰ (The wise teacher Solomon writes the same splendidly). These passages are therefore analogous to the opening line of the Frisian text, although the differences amongst the Frisian and the German vernacular works point towards the use of discrete sources.

A promising parallel to the Latin material of the Frisian text is found, once again, in an influential grammatical treatise: that is, the thirteenth-century *Summa grammaticae* by Pietro da Isolella.⁶¹ Also known as *Notulae grammaticales* or *Notulae in summam grammaticae*, this work is recorded in more than forty manuscripts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, mostly originating from England, Flanders and Northern Italy.⁶² Buma

54. On the English tradition, see Hunt 1991: I, 70, 76-77.

55. Bremmer 2009. The German translations are edited by Schroeder 1911. For a recent edition of the Middle Dutch translation see Brinkman-Schenkel 1997: 1144-1156.

56. Preserved in Vienna, K.K. Hofbibliothek, MS 204 (s. xv^{mid}).

57. The Middle Dutch version also includes the passage on the ‘Keys of Wisdom’, on which see Buma 1950: 30-31.

58. Schroeder 1911: 46.

59. Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek der Universität Erfurt, Cod. Chart. A 216 (s. xiv).

60. Schroeder 1911: 30.

61. Thirteenth-century Italian grammarian, presumably from Cremona, whose *Summa grammaticae* was widely used in England and the Continent. See Hunt 1980: 148; Avesani 2019: 27-30.

62. See *Mirabile*, <www.mirabileweb.it/title/notulae-in-summam-grammaticae-petri-de-isoellis-title/26531>. See also <www.mirabileweb.it/title/summa-grammaticae-title/783>; <www.mirabileweb.it/calma/caesar-saec-xiii/1168>. Some manuscripts attribute the treatise to a ‘Magister Caesar’.

suggested that its opening section may have been a source for the Frisian *Five Keys of Wisdom*.⁶³

Ut ad sapientiam per Grammaticam venire possimus, sciendum est quod quinque sunt claves sapientie. Prima est timor Domini; secunda honor magistri; tertia assiduitas legendi; quarta frequens interrogatio; quinta memoria retinendi.⁶⁴

(To attain wisdom by means of grammar, we must know that there are five keys of wisdom. The first one is fear of God; the second [is] respect for the teacher; the third [is] diligence in reading; the fourth [is] frequency in questioning; the fifth [is] retention in memory).

Four out of five keys overlap with those of the *Ars rivipullensis* and the Frisian text. *Timor Domini*, however, is absent from the Frisian version,⁶⁵ while Pietro da Isolella does not mention *contemptus divitiarum*.⁶⁶ Pietro continues with a series of authorities (the Psalms, Cato, Horace, and Seneca) for each ‘Key to Wisdom’.⁶⁷

The motif of the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ was furthermore exploited by didactic poetry. A good example is the *Rudium doctrina*, also known as *Liber quinque clavium sapientiae*.⁶⁸ This poem, composed between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, is preserved in more than thirty manuscripts, mostly from Germany, Bohemia, and Italy.⁶⁹ The *Rudium doctrina* is a lengthy exposition of the five ‘Keys of Wisdom’, which explicitly harks back to a centuries-long tradition (lines 29-20): “Ut tradunt veteres, sapiencia quinque seratur | clavibus. hoc statuit Omnipotentis opus”⁷⁰ (As the ancients hand down to us, wisdom is locked by five keys. This was established by the work of the Almighty). Like the *Facetus* and the epigram quoted by Curtius, the keys of the *Rudium doctrina* do not

63. Buma 1961.

64. Quoted from Fierville 1886: 7.

65. Note that the tradition of the *timor Domini* eventually influenced the Welsh text quoted above.

66. The four keys, in turn, do not overlap with those in Pseudo-Bede. Diligence in reading, frequent questioning and respect for the teacher are shared amongst Pseudo-Bede, Pietro da Isolella and the Old Frisian text; contempt of wealth is shared between the *Collectanea* and the Old Frisian text only, while retention in memory is found in Old Frisian and Pietro da Isolella, but not in the *Collectanea*.

67. Cf. Fierville 1886: 7.

68. Critical edition by Vidmanová-Schmidtová 1969. On the *Rudium doctrina* see also Vidmanová-Schmidtová 1964.

69. See Vidmanová-Schmidtová 1969: viii-xxi.

70. Vidmanová-Schmidtová 1969: 7.

parallel the keys of the Frisian text *verbatim*, but elucidate the same five precepts. Furthermore, in Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 1568 (s. xiv-xv) a scribe added rubrics to signal the nature of the *claves sapientiae*, and these rubrics show remarkable similarities with the Frisian text: the second key is introduced by “secunda clavis est memoria retinendi” (the second key is retention in memory) and the fourth by “contentus diviciarum est 4 clavis” (contempt of wealth is the fourth key).⁷¹ Last, one of the copies of the *Rudium doctrina* is followed by an epigram on the ‘Keys of Wisdom’ in leonine rhyme, beginning “Clavis prima datur si lectio continuatur”.⁷²

6. Further Developments

Towards the close of the Middle Ages, the various traditions start to interfere. *De vita scholastica* by Bonvesin de la Riva⁷³ is a rework of the *Rudium doctrina* that was also influenced by the *Summa grammaticae*. Bonvesin, in other words, had both texts at his disposal when working on his *De vita scholastica*. His list of keys opens with *timor Domini* (as in Pietro da Isolella’s treatise), which replaces the *contemptus divitiarum* of the *Rudium doctrina*.⁷⁴ The fifteenth-century grammatical treatise *Dictamina in arte grammaticali ad instructionem scolarium*, attributed to a Corradino da Pontremoli, begins with a list of five keys that echoes its formulation in the *Ars rivipullensis*.⁷⁵ I quote the relevant passage from manuscript New Haven, CT, Yale University Library, Beinecke 1028 (s. xvⁱⁿ), fol. 1r:⁷⁶ “Quot sunt claves sapientie? Quinque. Que? Timor Domini, honor magistri, assiduitas legendi, frequens interrogatio et memoria retinendi” (How many are the keys of wisdom? Five. Which ones? Fear of the Lord, respect for the teacher, diligence in reading, frequent questioning and retention in memory). *Timor Domini* (as in Pietro da Isolella) replaces *contemptum divitiarum*; on the other hand, the question-and-answer format evidently

71. The rubric to the fifth key is not readable anymore in the manuscript: cf. Vidmanová-Schmidtová 1969: 14.

72. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 303 (s. xiii^{ex}). See Avesani 2019: 26.

73. Bonvesin de la Riva (1250-c.1313/1315), from Milan, was an author of didactic poems, both in Latin and in the Lombard vernacular. *De vita scholastica* accounts for the popularity of the motif of the *claves sapientiae* in the time of Dante.

74. Avesani 1965 / 2019. Critical edition of *De vita scholastica* by Vidmanová-Schmidtová 1969.

75. Cf. Law 1995: 126; Avesani 2019: 35. For a list of manuscripts, see CALMA II.6: 669; Polak 2015: 16, 236, 670, 682-683. Add: Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 1455, s. xvi, fol. 1r-1v (fragm.), hitherto unnoticed.

76. Digital edition available at <<https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10621948>>.

recalls the *Ars rivipullensis*. Like the *Ars rivipullensis*, Corradino da Pontremoli's *Dictamina* assembles a variety of grammatical material, especially from Donatus and medieval commentaries on Donatus's *Ars minor*. The same list of *claves sapientiae* – but not in question-and-answer format – opens another miscellaneous grammatical treatise, attributed to a Julius Ferrariensis.⁷⁷ These later works show that the five 'Keys of Wisdom' continued to circulate in a memory-friendly formula in grammatical treatises to well into the fifteenth century.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, a fresh study of the surviving evidence shows that the motif of the 'Keys of Wisdom' enjoyed a popularity that was not confined within didactic poetry such as the *Facetus* or the *Rudium doctrina*, but is also witnessed by grammatical treatises. A number of these treatises (such as the *Ars rivipullensis* and the interpolation in the Venice copy of Donatus) include ready-at-hand lists of five 'Keys of Wisdom'. Pupils introduced to Latin grammar were hence confronted with the list of the *claves sapientiae*, which they presumably memorised as a set of didactic principles.

A question that remains unanswered is how this list of the five 'Keys of Wisdom' reached Frisia. Although we do possess grammatical treatises that are preserved in manuscripts from the Frisian area,⁷⁸ none of them apparently includes the list of the *claves sapientiae*. The most plausible hypothesis remains that of a tradition based on memorisation, as suggested by the fact that of our records vary in terms of content and order. In Frisia, someone – presumably a learned monk – seized the opportunity to supplement the familiar list with a vernacular commentary possibly aimed at judges-to-be. Collectively, the exegetical remarks added to the Latin *claves sapientiae*, as well as their legal content, confirm that the *Five Keys of Wisdom* is the product of a cultured milieu, and that this Old Frisian text was meant to offer moral guidance to those being prepared to the practice of law.⁷⁹

77. Preserved in Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, MS G.IX.42 (s. xv), fols 1r-89r. Cf. Bursill-Hall 1978: 457.

78. For example, a treaty *De arte grammatica* is in Emden, Bibliothek der Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst und vaterländische Altertümer, MS 76 (s. xv), fols 3r-27r (Stahl 1993: 54).

79. I am grateful to Professor Rolf H. Bremmer Jr and to Professor Patrizia Lendinara for commenting on an earlier draft of this essay and suggesting improvements. I am most thankful to the Biblioteca Casanatense of Rome, to the Biblioteca Marciana of Venice and to the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati of Siena for having provided me with

Table 1. The ‘Keys of Wisdom’

Old Frisian Text	<i>Liber de Numeris</i>	<i>Collectanea</i>	Sedulius Scottus	<i>Ars rivi-pullensis</i>	Venice interpolation	Karlsruhe note	Pietro da Isolella, <i>Summa grammaticae</i>	Corradino da Pontremoli, <i>Dic-tamina</i>
1. assiduitas legendi	1. sedulitas legendi	1. sapientia uel industria legendi	1. industria legendi	1. assiduitas legendi	1. assiduitas legendi	1. cotidiana lectio	3. assiduitas legendi	3. assiduitas legendi
2. memoria retinendi				2. memoria retinendi	2. memoria retinendi	4. memoria retinendi	5. memoria retinendi	5. memoria retinendi
3. frequens interrogatio	2. adsi-duitas rogandi	2. assiduitas interrogandi	2. asiduitas interrogandi	5. cotidiana interrogatio	5. cotidiana interrogatio	3. frequens interrogatio	4. frequens interrogatio	4. frequens interrogatio
4. contemptus diuitiarum	4 contemptio mundi	4. contemptio facultatum	3. contemptus pecuniarum	3. contemptus diuitiarum	3. contemptus diuitiarum			
5. honor magistri	3. honor magistri	3. honor doctoris	4. honorificatio doctorum	4. honor magistri	4. honor magistri	5. timor et honor magistri	2. honor magistri	2. honor magistri
							1. timor Domini	1. timor Domini
						2. assidua meditatio		

University of Palermo
Department of Humanities
claudio.cataldi@unipa.it

scans of the relevant folios of MSS Roma, Biblioteca Casanatense, 1455, Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Lat. Z. 497 (1811) and Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, G.IX.42, respectively.

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