

# Willem Schoorstra

## Rêdbâd. Chronicles of a King

The life and times of a legendary Frisian king

**Little is known about the historical Rêdbâd, king of the once extensive Frisia. A biography of the early mediaeval monarch based on facts alone would be short and not bring him any closer to us. But the narrative talent with which Willem Schoorstra mixes historical knowledge with imagination brings the legendary Rêdbâd back to life in a novel as exciting as it is voluminous.**

The story is told in retrospect by the elderly Hadagrim, who has been Rêdbâd's confidant. He sets himself this final task because 'history has never, ever known a king like Rêdbâd'. It is a story full of political and military intrigues, with the Frankish Pepin of Herstal as Rêdbâd's great enemy. But at the same time Hadagrim offers a subtle psychological portrait of the Frisian king and tells of his personal ups and downs. It makes an almost mythical ruler a person of flesh and blood once again.

Rêdbâd is a man of passions, who does not shrink from atrocities and violence.

The novel paints a picture in vivid colour of how Rêdbâd hastens the death of his father Aldgillis, how he rapes Fredou, the woman he desires, how his wife Thiada deceives him, how the daughter whose marriage he arranged commits suicide. Bright red is the blood that flows so liberally, especially in the battles against the Franks, which eventually make an invalid of Rêdbâd. After his death he turns out to have conceived a son with Fredou who, it is suggested, will continue his dynasty.

As legend would have it, Rêdbâd refused at the last moment to have himself baptized when he realized that in a Christian afterlife he would not meet his heathen ancestors. This legend symbolizes the change and uncertainty that mark Rêdbâd's era, caused by a world outside Frisia. Schoorstra depicts Rêdbâd's life and times by placing his hero's contemplations and deeds in a broader historical context. The result is a captivating, multi-layered novel, a real page-turner.

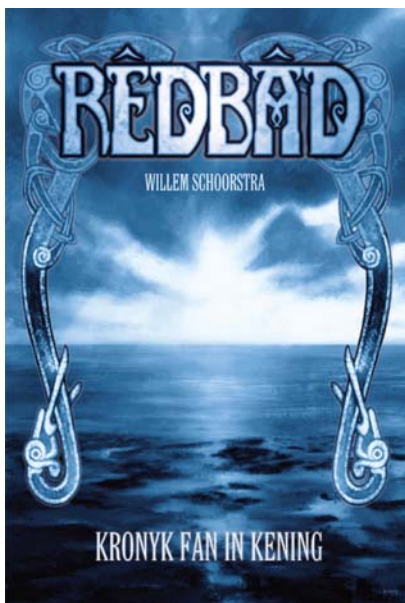


### Publishing details

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**Willem Schoorstra** (b. 1959) began as a poet but since his story collection *Berjochten út Babel* (Messages from Babel, 2002) he has developed as a writer of prose. The novel *Swarte ingels* (Black Angels), about an incestuous relationship, won him the Fedde Schurer Prize, awarded to the best debut, and was translated into Dutch. A second novel about relationships, *De ôfreakken* (The Settlement), was followed by *Rêdbâd* and *Pier*, about the late mediaeval Frisian avenger Pier Gerlofs Donia.

'Anyone reading this book will sooner or later fall under the spell of Willem Schoorstra's clever writing. He has managed to give an impression of what life was like thirteen centuries ago.'

– *Leeuwarder Courant*

'With *Rêdbâd* Willem Schoorstra has written his magnum opus.'

– *Ensafh*

'The way the book is written takes the reader back to the old days. A book to read more than once. Great, fantastic novel.'

– *Goodreads*

Photo: Angela Dekens