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THE DETERMINATION OF STAGES IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GERMANIC LANGUAGES BY MORPHOLOGICAL CRITERIA:

An Evaluation

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

sing.	singular
pl.	plural
nom.	nominative
gen.	genitive
dat.	dative
acc.	accusative
Goth.	Gothic
IE.	Indo-European
NWGmc.	Northwest Germanic
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
OIcel.	Old Icelandic
OS	Old Saxon
PGmc.	Proto-Germanic

See also 3.2. Symbols, p. 70, and the special abbreviations used in the Rules beginning at 3.3. Noun Phrase Structure.

0

INTRODUCTION

For approximately two centuries, scholars have occupied themselves with the question of the relationship of the Germanic languages to each other. Early investigators, such as Adelung, Rask, and Grimm, suggested that certain language groups were more closely related to each other than to others. With time and with greater understanding of the processes of linguistic change, more theories have emerged, some based on phonological evidence, some based on morphological evidence, some on combinations of both. Attempts have also been made to link linguistic and archeological-anthropological evidence, and thereby to establish connections between ancient dialects and the tribal groups in the Germanic area. The first chapter deals with brief sketches of the main theories of the development and relationships of the Germanic languages, which have been proposed by previous investigators.

Recently, a number of scholars have attempted to delimit the prehistoric stages of Germanic by internal reconstruction. While most of the work has been done on the phonological level, critics have suggested that morphological evidence might be equally as valid. The purpose of this study is to consider both phonological and morphological evidence in order to determine the best means of delimiting the stages of development of the Germanic languages and thus establish their relationship to each other.

In Chapter 2, the phonological development is traced from Proto-Germanic into each of five dialects: Gothic, Old English (West Saxon), Old Saxon, Old High German (East Frankish), and Common Nordic. The study of the morphological development of the Germanic languages is based on this foundation.

Often because of inconsistency in the treatment of the various morphological systems, incompatible hypotheses have sometimes been proposed. For the purpose of avoiding contradictions and inconsistencies, a rigid methodology is to be sought. Due to an inherent inflexibility, the model of the generative grammar provides the desired methodological severity in dealing with the development of Germanic morphology. Chapter 3 contains a limited generative grammar of Proto-Germanic. Through morphophonemic transformations, the

development of the main noun, adjective, and verb paradigms is traced into the dialects mentioned above.

The final composition of the paradigmatic systems in the Germanic dialects was not entirely determined by phonological development. Other factors, such as analogy and paradigmatic leveling, also played an important role. Consequently, Chapter 4 is devoted to a comparison of the forms generated by the grammar and those actually attested in each of the dialects. Whenever the attested form differs from the generated one, an attempt is made to explain the discrepancy. In Chapter 5, the morphological evidence is compared with the evidence of phonology in order to determine the best criteria for the delimitation of the Germanic dialects and their stages of development. Finally, certain isoglosses are suggested, which mark the periods of development from Proto-Germanic to the emergence of independent dialects.

1

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The attempts during the last two hundred years to delimit the Germanic languages, to trace their development, and to express the varying relationships between them present a complex and often confusing picture. The approaches to the problem differ as greatly as the conclusions which have been drawn. In the following, I have attempted to summarize the main ideas and proposals of the various scholars.

In 1776, Karl Friedrich Fulda *(Sammlung und Abstammung Germanischer Wurzelwörter)* proposed a historical division of the Germanic languages into a "high" group and a "low" group. The former, he suggests, included the High German and Scandinavian dialects, while the latter consisted of Frisian, Low Frankish, and Saxon.[1]

Using the name "Deutsche" to designate the Germanic peoples, J. C. Adelung, another of the earliest grammarians to speculate on the division of the Germanic languages, notes in his *Umständliches Lehrgebäude der Deutschen Sprache* (1782) that the numerous tribes in the earliest history of the people had their own dialects.[2] Though Adelung recognizes the greater age of "Mœso-Gothic", he does not consider it to be the mother tongue of the Germanic dialects, as other scholars later did. Rather, he regards it as a language closely related to High German (p. 21).

Several years later in his *Mithridates* (1808), Adelung notes that the relationship between the modern Germanic languages goes far back into history. Now employing the term "Germanen", he explains its use as follows:

> Ich nehme das Wort, wie bereits andere vor mir gethan haben, in seiner weitesten Bedeutung, so dass es alle an Herkunft, Sitten und Sprache genau verwandte Völker umfasst,

[1] Karl Friedrich Fulda, *Sammlung und Abstammung Germanischer Wurzelwörter* (Halle, 1776), pp. 3—4.

[2] Johann Christoph Adelung, *Umständliches Lehrgebäude der Deutschen Sprache, zur Erläuterung der Deutschen Sprachlehre für Schulen* 1 (Leipzig, 1782), p. 17.

welche in den frühesten Zeiten von der Donau in Süden, bis in den äussersten Norden, und von dem Rheine in Westen bis an und über die Weichsel wohnten.[3]

Proceeding from the languages spoken, Adelung assumes a two-way division of the Germanic tribes, one with a "higher" and one with a "lower" language. Only the southern German area belongs to the former, while the latter encompasses northern Germany, the Netherlands, and all of the North. However, for his own purposes, Adelung divides the languages further into a southern or "German" *(Deutsch)* and a northern or Scandinavian group (p. 175). The southern Germanic tribes, according to Adelung, were divided from the very beginning into two groups, the "Swabian" in the East, who spoke the "higher" language, and the "Cimbrian" in the West, who spoke the "lower" language (pp. 176—77).

It is interesting to note that Adelung considers Gothic to be one of the older languages of the "Upper German" tribes, i.e. a "higher" language (p. 183). He believes that Scandinavia was settled by speakers of the "lower" language, but that the Goths and Herulians may have caused a mixing of the dialects (pp. 294—95). English, "eine sehr ausgeartete Germanische Tochter", developed, he says, from the language of the Angles and the Saxons, but was influenced by Danish, and is thus related both to Scandinavian and to "German" (pp. 316—17).

Rasmus Rask took offense at Adelung's calling the Nordic languages "Germanic"[4] and at his considering them part of Low German (p. 108). Rask advocates dividing the languages first into Nordic (Scandinavian) and "German" *(Deutsch, Germanisch)*, with the latter divided into two lesser groups, Lower and Upper German (p. 112). According to Rask, only one language dominated in the north, which was similar to modern Icelandic (p. 113).

In his *Vejledning til det Islandske eller gamle Nordiske Sprog* (1811), Rask proposes using the term Gothic *(Gotisk)* to designate the entire language family to which both "German" and Nordic belong. He prefers this name to "Germanic", because the latter was never used by the dwellers of the North in reference to themselves. Rask explains:

Goter derimod er det eneste betydelige Folk, hvoraf vi finde sikre Spor baade i Norden og Syden, og hvis Sprog vi paa begge Steder vide at have vaeret aegte Grene af hin store

[3] Johann Christoph Adelung, *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde* 2 (Berlin, 1809), pp. 167—68.

[4] Rasmus Kristian Rask, "Bemerkungen über die skandinavischen Sprachen, veranlasst durch das 2. Theil des Adelungschen Mithridates", *Zeitung für Litteratur und Kunst in den königl. Dänischen Staaten* 3. (Kiel, 1809), p. 14b; reprinted in Rask's *Udvalgte Afhandlinger* 2, ed., Louis Hjelmslev (Copenhagen, 1932), p. 108.

Sprogstamme; det synes derfor den eneste bekveme Foreningspunkt, hvoraf et faelles Naven kan tages.[5]

Danish, Rask explains, although strongly influenced by "German", is rightfully a daughter of Icelandic (p. xvii). As characteristics which distinguish Nordic from "German", he lists the enclitic article, a special passive form, the infinitive ending in a vowel, and lexical similarities (p. xviii).

Rask reaffirms his manner of dividing the Germanic languages in *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* (1818). Next to Old Norse there was the Germanic language, which had two branches, Saxon and German. To the former he reckons Old Frisian, modern Dutch, Low German, Anglo-Saxon, and modern English; to the latter, "Mœso-Gothic" and modern High German.[6] Anglo-Saxon was most closely related to Old Norse, Rask says, because of the influence of the Norsemen on the language of the people they conquered (pp. 81—82).

The controversy was continued with the appearance of Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik*. In the introduction to the first volume, Grimm comments about the terminology:

Ich bediene mich, wie jeder sieht, des Ausdrucks d e u t s c h allgemein, so dass er auch die nordischen Sprachen einbegreift. Viele würden das Wort g e r m a n i s c h vorgezogen und unter seine Allgemeinheit das Deutsche und Nordische als das Besondere gestellt haben. Da indessen nordische Gelehrte neuerdings förmliche Einsprache dawider thun, dass ihr Volksstamm ein germanischer sey, so soll ihnen die Theilnahme an diesem seit der Römerzeit ehrenvollen Namen so wenig aufgedrungen werden, als der von ihnen vorgeschlagene allgemeine: g o t h i s c h gebilligt werden kann. Die Gothen bilden einen sehr bestimmten Stamm, nach dem man unmöglich andere Stämme benennen darf. D e u t s c h bleibt dann die einzige allgemeine, kein einzelnes Volk bezeichnende Benennung. Von seinem Ursprung zu reden, ist hier nicht der Ort. Dass sich die Norden selbst nicht Deutsche heissen, sondern ihnen entgegensetzen, macht keinen gründlichen Einwurf, da sich auch die offenkundig aus aus [sic] Angeln und Sachsen gewanderten Englånder, weder Deutsche, noch einmal Germanen nennen.[7]

Grimm's picture of the division of the tribes is somewhat different from Rask's:

[5] "The Goths, on the other hand, are the only significant people, of whom we find sure traces both in the North and South, and whose language in both places we know to have been genuine branches of that old language trunk; it seems, therefore, the only convenient point of union, from which a common name can be taken." Rasmus Kristian Rask, *Vejledning til det Islandske eller gamle Nordiske Sprog* (Copenhagen, 1811), p. viii. Later, Rask expressed the same views in the introduction to his *Anvisning till Isländskan eller Nordiska Fornspråket* (Stockholm, 1818).

[6] Rasmus Kristian Rask, *Undersøgelse om Det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* (Copenhagen, 1818), p. 65; reprinted in *Udvalgte Afhandlinger* 1, pp. 80—81.

[7] Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik* 1, (Göttingen, 1819), p. xxxviii.

Die vier grossen Ståmme zeigen sich unter einander in mehrfachem Verhåltniss. So stehen der erste (gothische) und zweite (hochdeutsche) in unleugbar nåherer Verwandtschaft gegenůber dem dritten (niederdeutschen) und vierten (nordischen). Den Uebergang zwischen 2 und 3 vermitteln die Franken; zwischen 3 und 4 Friesen und Angeln; zwischen 1 und 2 (vermuthlich) die Quaden, Markomannen; zwischen 1 und 4 låsst sich gar kein Mittelglied erkennen, aber die grosse Vollkommenheit, worin sich in diesen beiden die alte Sprache geschichtlich erhalten hat, vermittelt die wichtigsten Berůhrungspuncte. In anderer Růcksicht darf man auch die drei ersten Ståmme dem einzigen vierten entgegenstellen (p. li).

Grimm later approached the problem by discussing both Tacitus' division of the Germanic tribes (*Invaeones* [sic], living on the ocean; *Herminones* [sic], the middle group; and *Iscaevonen* [sic], covering the rest of the Germanic tribes) and that of Pliny (*Vindili, Ingvævones* [sic], *Iscævævones* [sic], *Hermiones* [sic], *Peucini*). However, he refuses to connect them with the "German" dialects:

Fragt es sich nun nach dem unterschied deutscher dialekte, so ist klar, dasz dieser nicht weder in den dreitheiligen noch fünftheiligen der stämme aufgehn kann; sie mögen blosz nebenbei zugezogen werden, um den gang der dialekte zu ermitteln.[8]

Grimm proposes that all dialects stemmed from one source:

alle mundarten und dialekte entfalten sich vorschreitend und je weiter man in der Sprache zurückschaut, desto geringer ist ihre zahl, desto schwächer ausgeprägt sind sie. ohne diese annahme würde überhaupt der ursprung der dialekte, wie der vielheit der sprachen unbegreiflich sein. alle manigfaltigkeit ist allmählich aus einer anfänglichen einheit entsprossen und wie sämtliche deutsche dialekte zu einer gemeinschaftlichen deutschen sprache der vorzeit verhält sich die deutsche gesamtsprache wiederum als dialekt neben dem litthauischen, slavischen zu einer ältern ursprache (p. 578).

He considers Gothic to be the most archaic and richest in forms of all the Germanic dialects. In opposition to Rask, however, he perceives a connection between Scandinavian and the southern Germanic languages:

der grelle abstand der heutigen dänischen und schwedischen rede von hochdeutscher und niederländischer schwindet mit jedem schritt, den wir in das nordische alterthum zurück thun können. zwei vorstechende eigenheiten, artikelsuffix und übertritt der medialen intrasitivform in strenges passivum erscheinen früher seltner und müssen in noch tieferer vorzeit fast ganz unterblieben sein. das R der flexionen statt des goth. S, der wegfall des auslautenden N sind eben so sicher erst zu bestimmter zeit eingetretne abweichungen von dem ursprünglichen typus als die ahd. lautverschiebung auf die gothische und diese auf den getischen stand der stummen consonanten zurückweist (p. 579).

In 1837 Kaspar Zeuss also uses the testimony of Tacitus in his investigation of the relationship of the Germanic tribes and their languages. To the three groups mentioned by Tacitus, interpreted by Zeuss as the *Herminen, Ingaeven,* and *Istaeven,* he adds the *Hillevionen,* meaning the Scandinavian peoples.

[8] Jacob Grimm, *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*[4] 1, (Leipzig, 1880), p. 578.