



# Language Change

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# Questions

- What is Middle High German?
- What is Modern German?
- In which ways can a language change?
  - Phonological
  - Morphological
  - Syntactic
  - Lexical
- In what ways might cultural/political context influence change?

# PIE–WGmc

## **Germanic:**

**East** (Gothic)

**West** (German, Dutch, English)

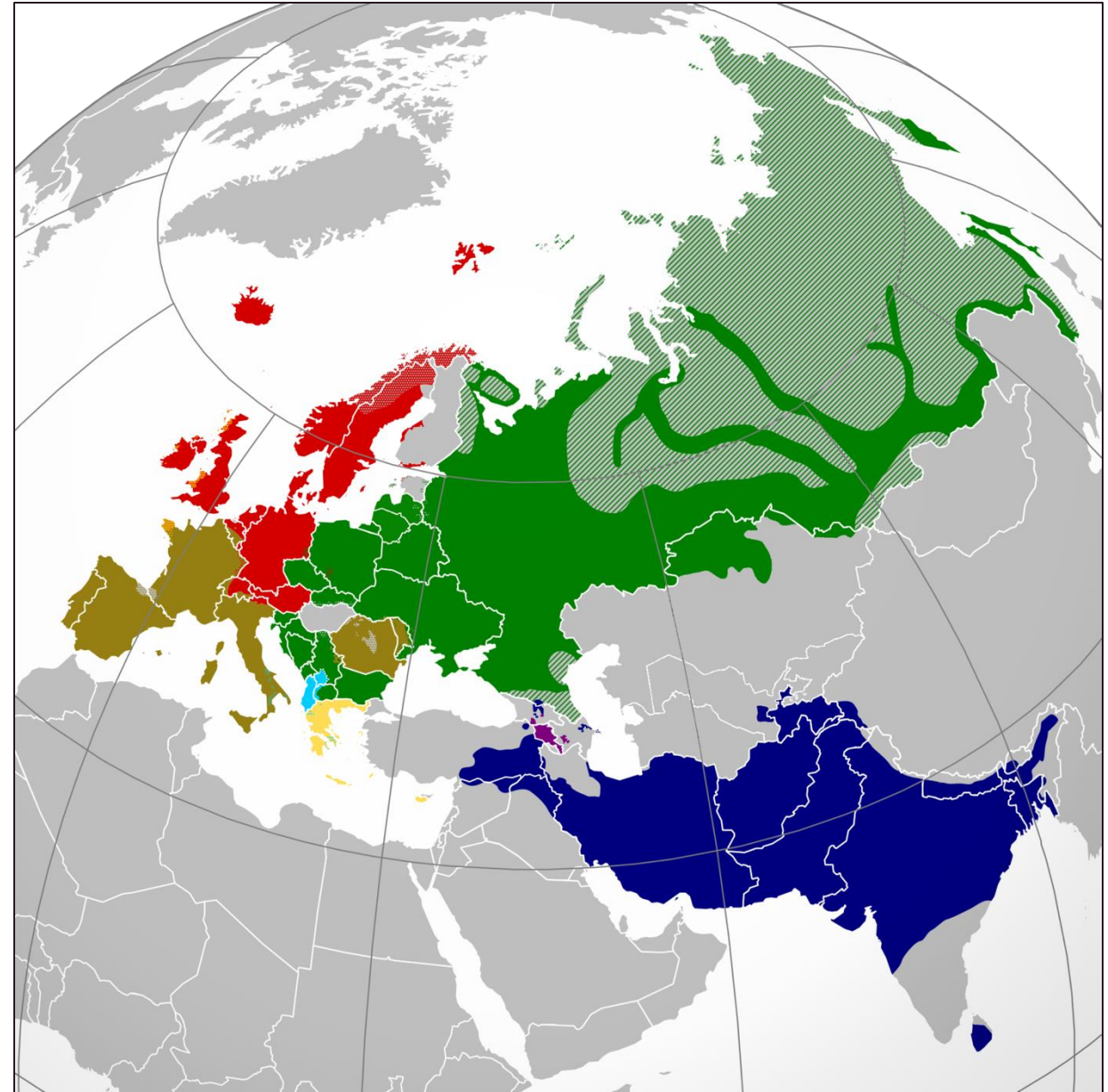
**North** (Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian)

## **Old High German:**

Old Alemannic (Notker), Old Bavarian, Modern Alemannic dialects, Swabian, Bavarian dialects &c.

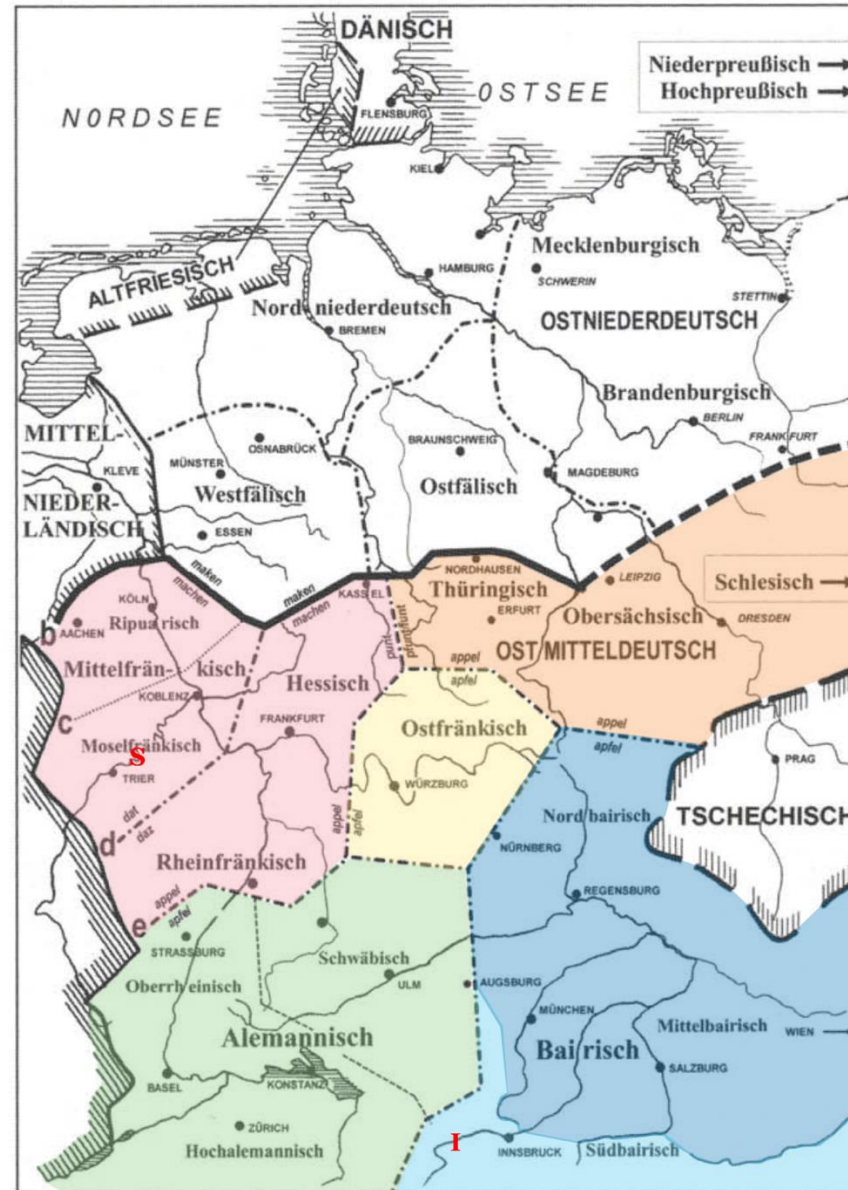
## **Old Norse:**

Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish



# MHG

- PIE
- PGmc
- WGmc
- Pre-OHG c. 500
- OHG c. 750
- MHG c. 1050
- eNHG c. 1350
- NHG c. 1650



# Phonological Changes

## 'eNHG' Diphthongisation

mîn niuwez hûs

>

mein neues Haus

m[i:]n n[y:]wez h[u:]s >

m[ai]n n[ɔɪ]es H[au]s

## 'eNHG' Monophthongisation

liebe müede bruoeder >

>

Liebe müde Bruder

l[iə]be m[yə]de br[uə]der >

>

L[i:]be m[y:]de Br[u:]der

## Schwa loss (apocope and syncope)

Word-medially: 'syncope'

MHG *saget* > NHG *sagt* 'says'

Word-finally: 'apocope'

MHG *vorhte* > NHG *Furcht* 'fright'

\*N.B. This is a separate process to the reduction of unstressed syllables which began in late OHG and is characteristic of MHG (as opposed to schwa apocope and syncope, which started in late MHG and are characteristic of NHG).

# Phonological Changes

		V: <sub>[HIGH]</sub>		V) <sub>σ</sub>		
OHG	i: swi:n	i <u>u</u> /u:(...) <u>i</u> li <u>u</u> ti/hu: <u>t</u> i	u: hu:s	i bi:bar	y lu:gi:	u stu:ba
IOHG/ eMHG	i: swi:n	y: ly:tə/hy:tə	u: hu:s	i bi:bər	y lu:gə	u stu:bə
IMHG/ eNHG	e <u>i</u> swe <u>i</u> n	ø <u>y</u> lø <u>y</u> tə/hø <u>y</u> tə	ou <u>u</u> hou <u>u</u> s	i: bi:bər	y: ly:gə	u: stu:bə
NHG	a <u>i</u> ʃva <u>i</u> n	ɔ <u>i</u> lɔ: <u>i</u> tə/hɔ: <u>i</u> tə	a <u>u</u> ha <u>u</u> s	i: *a <u>i</u> bi:bə *ba <u>i</u> bə	y: *ɔ <u>i</u> ly:gə *lɔ: <u>i</u> gə	u: *a <u>u</u> ʃtu:bə *ʃta <u>u</u> bə
Gloss	‘swine, pig’	‘people’/‘hides’	‘house’	‘beaver’	‘lie’	‘room, parlour’

# Phonological Changes

## Open syllable lengthening (OSL)

Lengthened stressed short vowels in open syllables

MHG *tage* [t**a**.gə] > NHG *Tage* [t**aː**.gə] ‘days’

Blocked by medial geminate consonants (which have since been shortened)

MHG *machen* [m**a**x.xən] > NHG *machen* [m**aː**x̩] ‘to do, make’

Often resulted in length alternations within paradigms, since levelled out via analogy (usually in favour of the long vowel)

	SG	PL
MHG (pre-OSL)	stap	'stæ.bə
	ra t	'ræ t̩ə
MHG (post-OSL)	stap	'st <b>æː</b> .bə
	ra t	'ræ t̩ə
NHG	ʃt <b>aː</b> p	ʃtɛ ɔ̩bə
	ɪa t	ɛ t̩ə

# Phonological Changes

## Degemination

MHG double consonants were actually long (geminate)

They have been shortened to single consonants in NHG, where the double spelling has been reinterpreted as indicating a preceding short vowel:

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OHG□	<i>fallan</i> [fal.lan]□	<i>offan</i> [ɔf.fan]□	<i>zeihhan</i> [ʰseɪx.xan]□
MHG□	<i>fallen</i> [fal.lən]□	<i>offen</i> [ɔf.fən]□	<i>zeichen</i> [ʰseɪx.xən]□
NHG□	<i>fallen</i> [ˈfalən]□	<i>offen</i> [ɔfən]□	<i>Zeichen</i> [ˈsaɪçən]□

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## More minor (mostly segmental) changes

These are more restricted and mostly segmental, e.g.: rounding, unrounding or lowering of certain vowels; merger of /æ, ɛ, e/, /s, ʃ/ and /f, v/; /w/ > /v/ etc., but also closed syllable shortening



# Morphological Changes

## Analogical levelling

	INFINITIVE	1SG.PRESENT	3SG.PRETERITE	3PL.PRETERITE	PAST PARTICIPLE
OHG	biogan	biugu	boug	bugum	gibogan
MHG	biegen	biuge	bouc	bugen	gebogen
NHG	biegen	biege	bog	bogen	gebogen

			OHG	MHG	NHG
PRESENT	SG	1	nimu	nime	nehme
		2	nimis, (-st)	nimest	nimmst
		3	nimit	nimet	nimmt
PL	1	nememēs, (-ēm, -ën)		nemen	nehmen
		2	nemet	nemet	nehm(e)t
		3	nant	nement	nehmen

	INFINITIVE	1SG.PRESENT	3SG.PRETERITE	3PL.PRETERITE	PAST PARTICIPLE
OHG	neman	nimu	nam	nāmum, (-un, -umēs)	ginoman
MHG	nemen	nime	nam	nāmen	genomen
NHG	nehmen	nehme	nahm	nahmen	genommen

## Noun declensions/genders

Loss of weak declension for feminine & neuter (with the exception of *das Herz*)

Changes of declension/gender

Other changes to nominal/adjectival inflexional paradigms

## Changes to the definite article

		M	F	N
SG	NOM	der	diu	daz
	ACC	den	die	daz
	GEN	des	der(e)	des
	DAT	dem(e)	der(e)	dem(e)
PL	NOM	die	die	diu
	ACC	die	die	diu
	GEN	der(e)	der(e)	der(e)
	DAT	den	den	den

## Verbal Morphology

e.g. the use of *ge-* as a perfective / emphatic prefix (verbs with an already perfective meaning do not use it to form the past participle)

# Syntactic Changes

## Grammaticalisation

→ Increased use of periphrastic constructions, e.g. the use of *werden* expressing the future tense, passive voice and conditional meaning

## Tense

Changes in expressing the future tense

Use of the preterite vs. *hân/sîn* + past participle

*Sîn* + present participle for continuous action

# Syntactic Changes

## **Mood**

The subjunctive is much more widely used in MHG

e.g. after indefinite pronouns: *swer daz tuo* 'whoever does that'

## **Case**

Much more widespread use of the genitive

e.g. following the comparative, impersonal verbs, interjections, in a predicative sense (*sît si des goteshûses sint*) etc.

# Borrowing in MHG

*birsen* — diser birste (pirset A): wirste 964.  
*brûnât* 1345.  
*buhurdiern* (buhurdieren B) 927.  
*deu* s. die Redensarten.  
*galander* — sitiche und g.: einander 1886.  
*gollier* — daz g. (goller A) 185.  
*ketenwambîs* 149.  
*collier* s. *gollier*.  
*compân* — einen c. (kumpan B): gewan 1215.  
*korrûn* — von k. (schûch vnd karraun B): zûn 321.  
*creatûre* — alliu c. (creatur A) 550.  
*kristalle* — von k.: gevalle 194.  
*kroyieren* (kroyren A, grogiere B) 1025. nû kroyiert (kroyeret A, grogiert B) man 1027.  
*kumpân* s. *compân*.  
*Narrîe* — von Nônarre N. (Nareye A, hylarie B): frîe 220.  
*prîsen*: rîsen 1335.  
*prüefen* — geprüefet 105.  
*sal* s. die Redensarten.  
*scharlât* — mit s. (scharlach B, schatlar A) 1347.  
*seit* — nie seit sô guoter 140.  
*spargolze* — spargolzen: stolzen 224.  
*tanz* — ein t.: glanz 95. bî tanze 98. bî dem tanze: glanze 204.  
einem t. (tantze B): glanz 514. einen t. 940.  
*tanzen* — ich tanzte (tantzt B) 576. si tanzten 953.  
*turn* — die türne 52.

*turnei* — die alten t. 1023.  
*fritschâl* (fritschat B) 1345.  
*wambîs* (wammes A) 672. 1449.  
*warkus* — einen w.: sus 157. an sînen w. 189.

## Französische Redensarten.

*deu* (deus B) *sal*: zal 726: sal 755. (Deus sal B, Deuol A) 1713.

# Borrowing in MHG

## Is this too simplistic?

The shift of stress from the initial syllable (OHG) to the end of the word (NHG) began in MHG

Most notably in OF loans ending in *-ieren* and *-îe* (NHG *-ieren* [-i:ʁən, -i:ɛn] & *-ei* [-aɪ])

(cf. Vennemann 1995; Booth & Lahiri 2023)

‘One lasting impression made by French is in the area of suffixes’

(Young and Gloning 2004[2013], 127)

*-î(e)* must have been integrated into the system at an early stage (with stress), having undergone diphthongisation:

MHG *erzenîe* > NHG *Arznei*

Both appear in loans, **but also** with native stems:

*zouber+îe* (< *zouber* ‘magic’); *hof+ieren* (‘to enjoy courtly entertainment’).

→ They must have been morphologically decomposed

Most *-ieren* verbs actually come from OF *-er* verbs, not *-ier*, e.g. *tjostieren* (< OF *joster*)

# Borrowing in MHG

## Is this too simplistic?

Productivity began in C12<sup>th</sup> courtly literature, but the suffixes became fully nativised

Widespread use outside of the courtly domain as early as C13<sup>th</sup>, appearing in various contexts and registers, e.g. charters and mystical writing

Berthold von Regensburg uses them in sermons directed at a lay (presumably illiterate) congregation in 1260-70 presumes their familiarity

(cf. Frisch 1979, 195)

*-ier* occurred most frequently in terminology related to various types of armour, disappearing with courtly culture.

However, in the form *-ierre* (or *-ierære*) enjoyed great productivity across diverse contexts (a combination of OF *-ier* and inherited *-ære* suffixes)

(cf. Rosenqvist 1954, 113)

# Helmbrecht

«Lieber sun, belîp bî mir.  
ich weiz wol, ez wil geben dir  
der meier Ruoprecht sîn kint,  
vil schâfe, swîne und zehen rint,  
alter unde junger.  
ze hove hâstu hunger  
und muost dar zuo vil harte ligen  
und aller gnaden sîn verzigen.  
nû volge mîner lêre,  
des hâstu frum und êre;  
wan selten im gelinget,

der wider sînen orden ringet.  
dîn ordenunge ist der phluoc.  
dû vindest hoveliute genuoc,  
swelchez ende dû kêrest.  
dîn laster dû gemêrest,  
sun, des swer ich dir bî got;  
der rehten hoveliute spot  
wirdestû, vil liebez kint.  
dû solt mir volgen und erwint.»