

Dative in language contact: the Mennonite case

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Syncretism of dative and accusative of the def. article
sg. masculine in Mennonite Low German spoken in
Mennonite colonies in the Soviet Union in 1930.

Relevance from the perspective of
Dialectology

- Role of contact in dialectology:
 - Contact between discrete varieties:
 - horizontal contact: trade, linguistic melting pots (new towns)
 - vertical contact (applies mainly to industrialized societies): contact between vernacular varieties and the standard language (on the difference between horizontal and vertical contact see Auer et al. 2011)

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Relevance from the perspective of

Dialectology

Challenge: defining discrete varieties (since dialects often form a continuum)

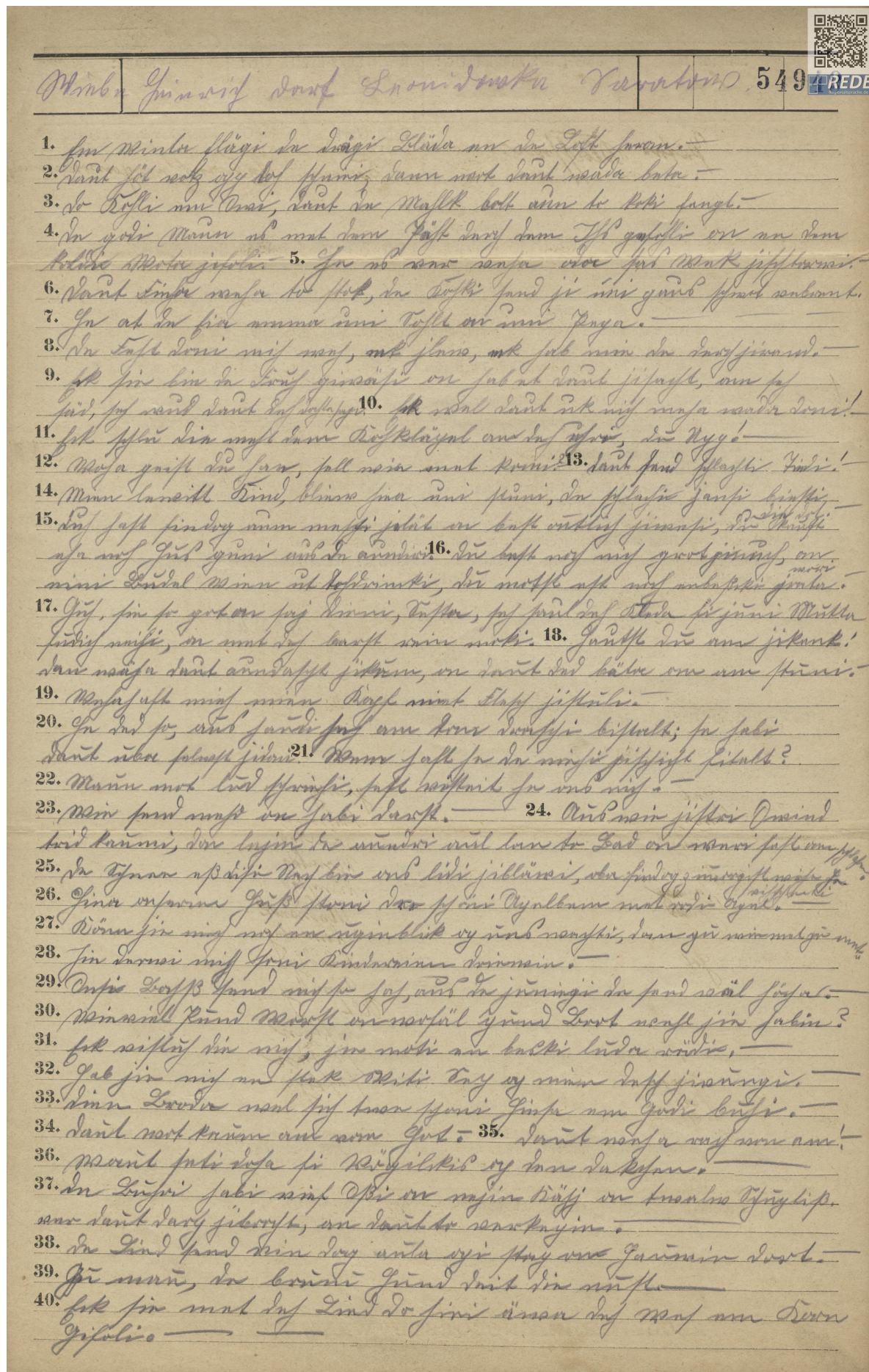
What is dialect contact:

- scenario 1: linguistic innovations spread throughout neighbouring speech communities in a wave-like fashion (*Wellentheorie*) (thanks to highly mobile individuals, cf. the social networks model).
- scenario 2: foundation of new towns by people with different dialect backgrounds -> new varieties arise.
- scenario 3: (individual) migration from one speech community to another one -> accommodation.
- Research question: Can all scenarios be subsumed under the notion of dialect contact?

Syncretism of dative and accusative of the def. article
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1. Sample: who and when?
2. Syncretism: what and where?
3. Syncretism: how?

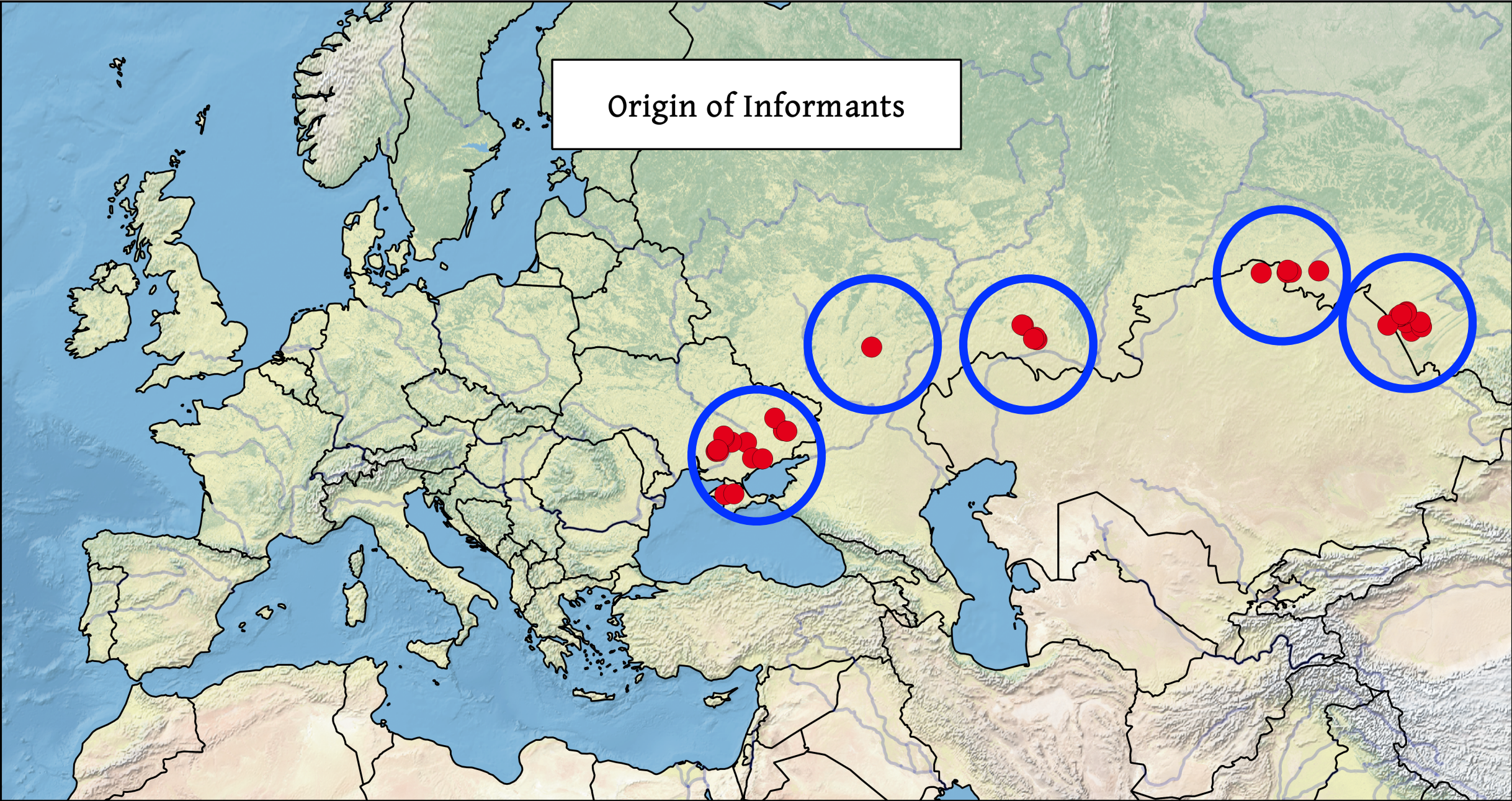
1. Sample: who and when?



The survey

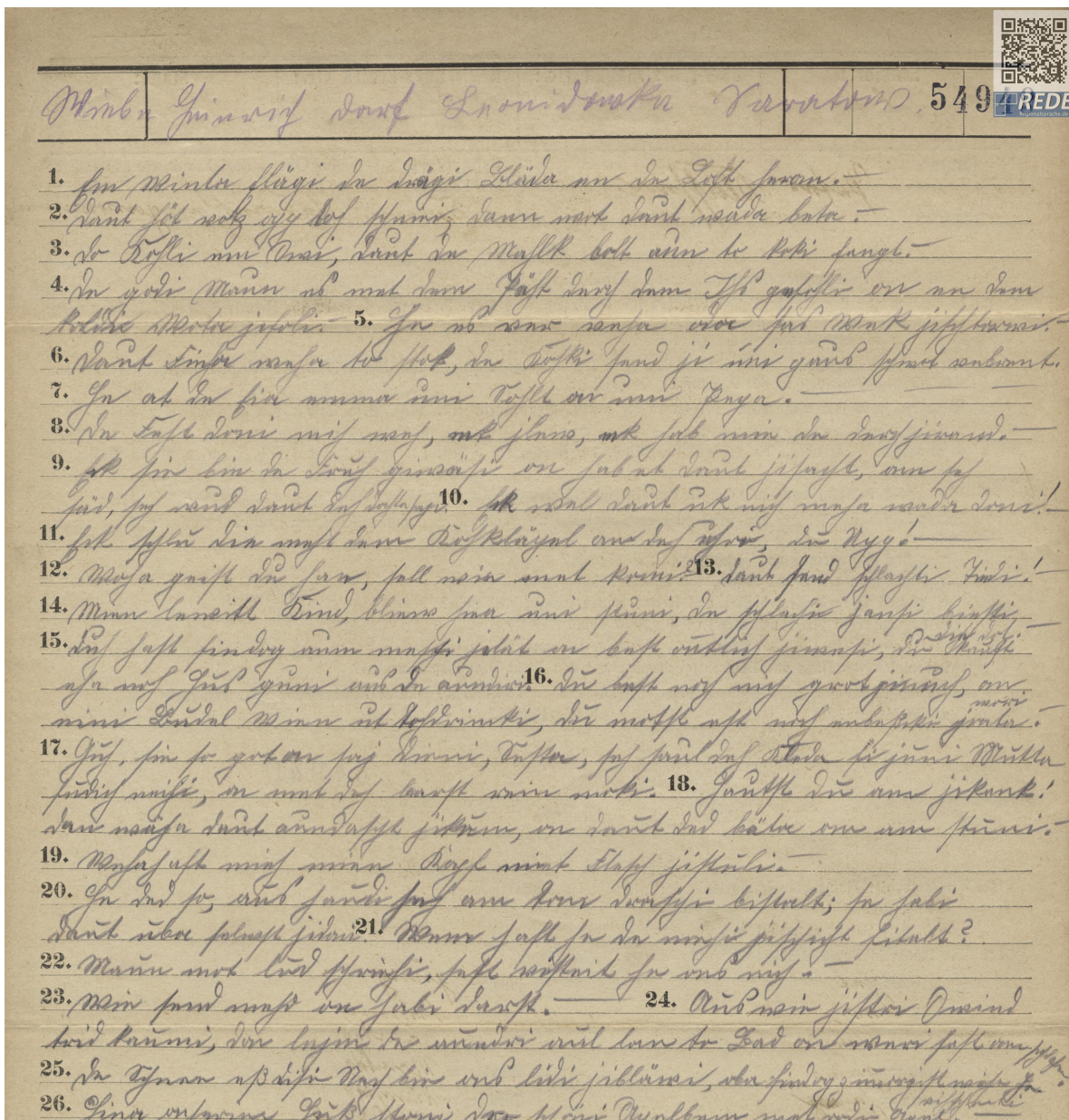
- 57 questionnaires/ informants
- Russia German Mennonites
- By Walther Mitzka, 1930, German refugee camps (Möln, Hammerstein)
- www.regionalsprache.de

1. Sample: who and when?



57 questionnaires/informants
38 places,
11+ colonies

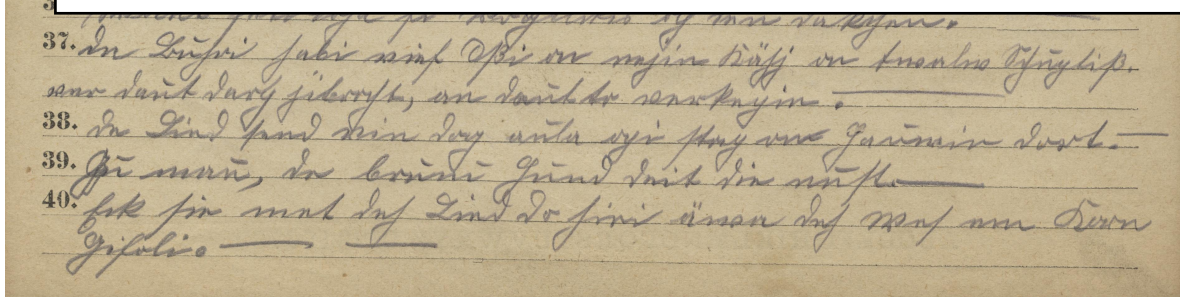
1. Sample: who and when?



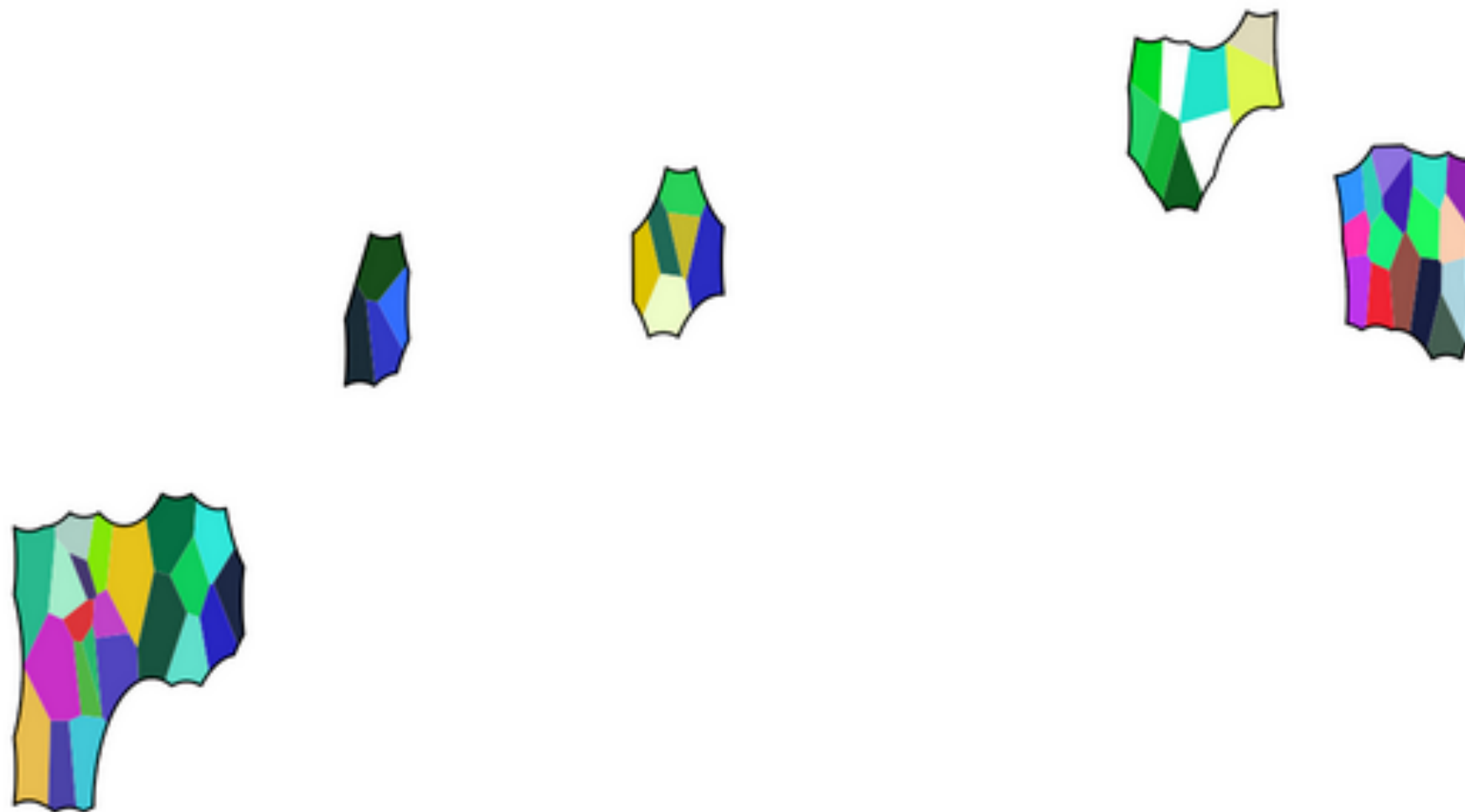
- 40 “Wenker-sentences” devised by Georg Wenker (1852-1911) for the *Sprachatlas des Deutschen Reichs*

WS03:

Thu Kohlen in den Ofen, daß die Milch bald an zu kochen fängt.
“Put coals in the oven, so the milk will soon begin to boil.”

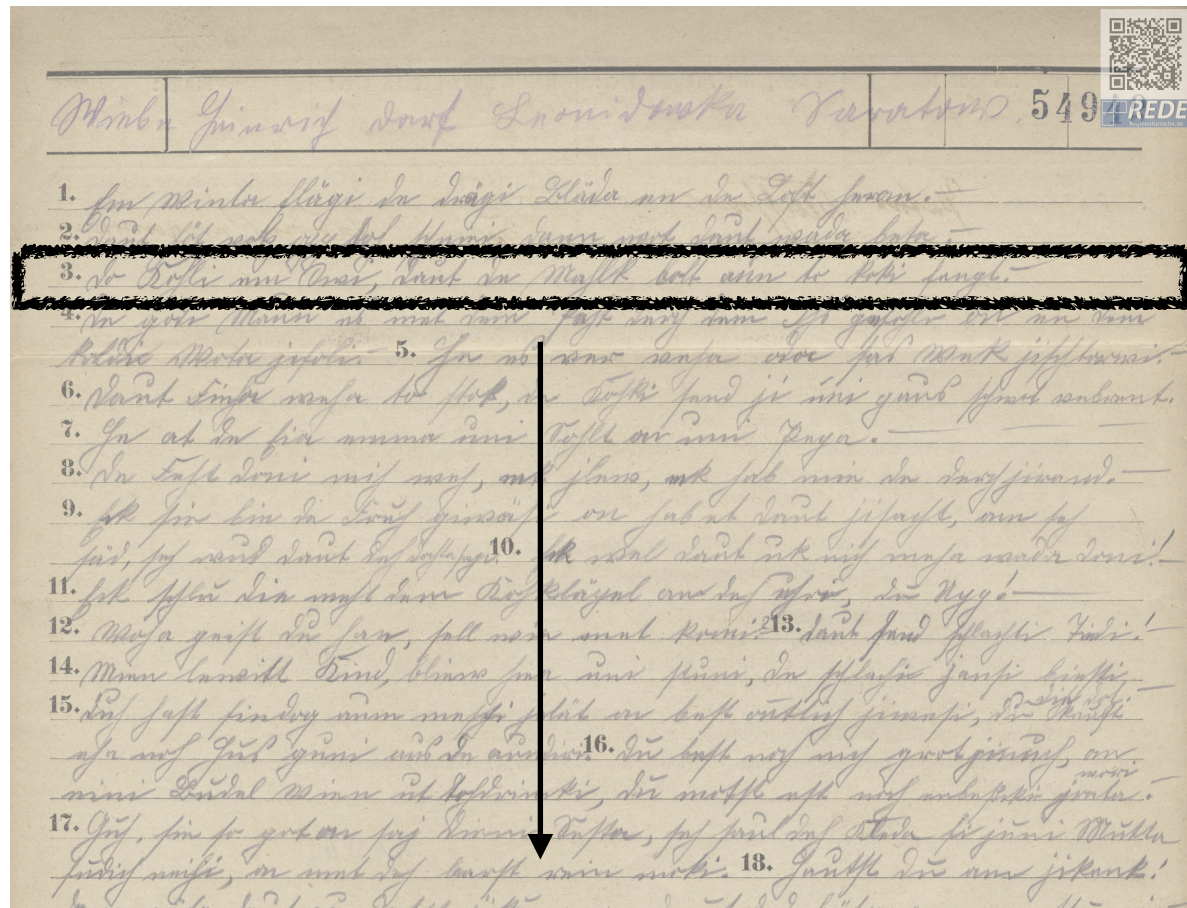


Similarity of coding: raw transliteration (all WS, 55 qs.)



Thanks to Michael Cysouw

2. Syncretism: what and where?



- 40 “Wenker-sentences” devised by Georg Wenker (1852-1911) for the *Sprachatlas des Deutschen Reich*

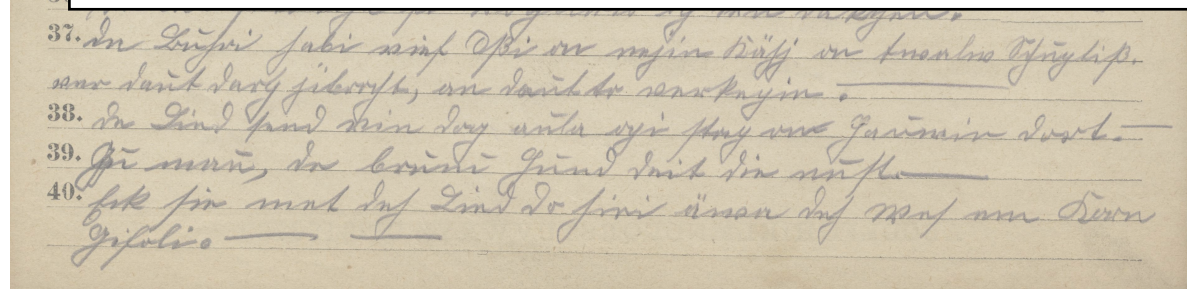
3. So Kohli em Owi, daut the Mahlk bolt aun to koki fangt.

Do Kohli **em Owi**, daut the Mahlk bolt aun to koki fangt.

WS03:

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WS03:

*Thu Kohlen **in den Ofen**, daß die Milch bald an zu kochen fängt.*

“Put coals **in the oven**, so the milk will soon begin to boil.”

in + acc -> in **den** Ofen

*Do Kohli **em Owi**, daut the Mahl bolt aun to koki fangt.*

en + dem ???

Paradigm def.art. of Mennonite Low German according to Mitzka's survey

	sg			pl		
	m	f	n	m	f	n
nom	DE 95,8% (3)	DE 98,2% (1)	DAUT 97,4% (4)	DE 95,8% (5)	DE 98,2% (1)	DE 100% (1)
dat	+M 93% (2)	DE 96,6% (2)	+M 40,4% DAUT 15,8% DE 13,2% (2)	x	x	x
acc	+M 73,7% +N 26,3% (1)	DE 80,7% (2)	DAUT 50,9% +M 20,2% +N 3,5% (4)	DE 94,7% (1)	x	DE 79,5% (3)

Case of object

Paradigm def.art. of Mennonite Low German according to Mitzka’s survey

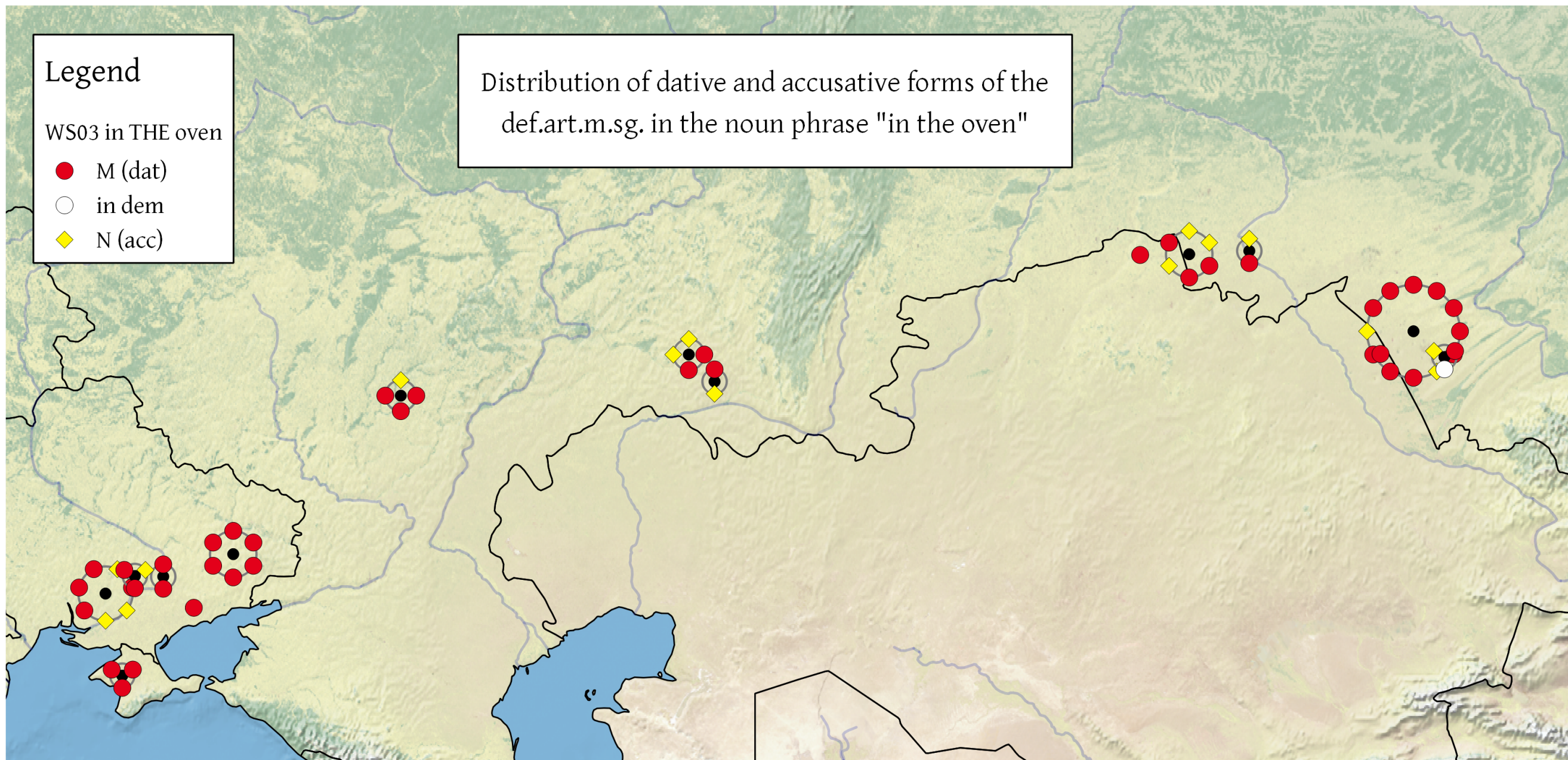
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Case of object

Zimmer (yesterday) “The dative is more prone to variation and change than nominative and accusative in Namibian German and in other German contrast varieties.”

Sorry!

2. Syncretism: what and where?



*Do Kohli **em Owi**, daut the Mahl**k** bolt aun to koki fangt.*

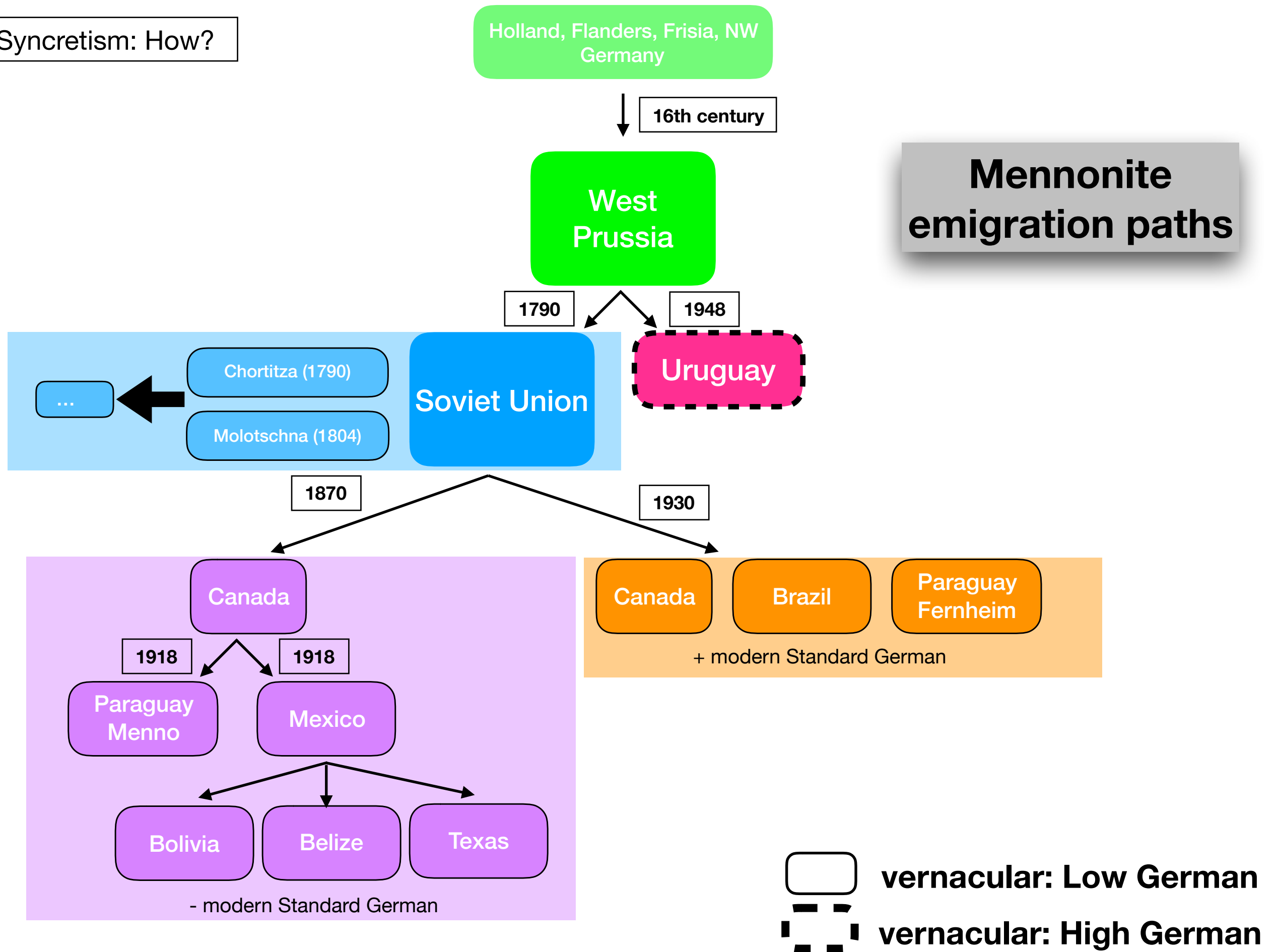
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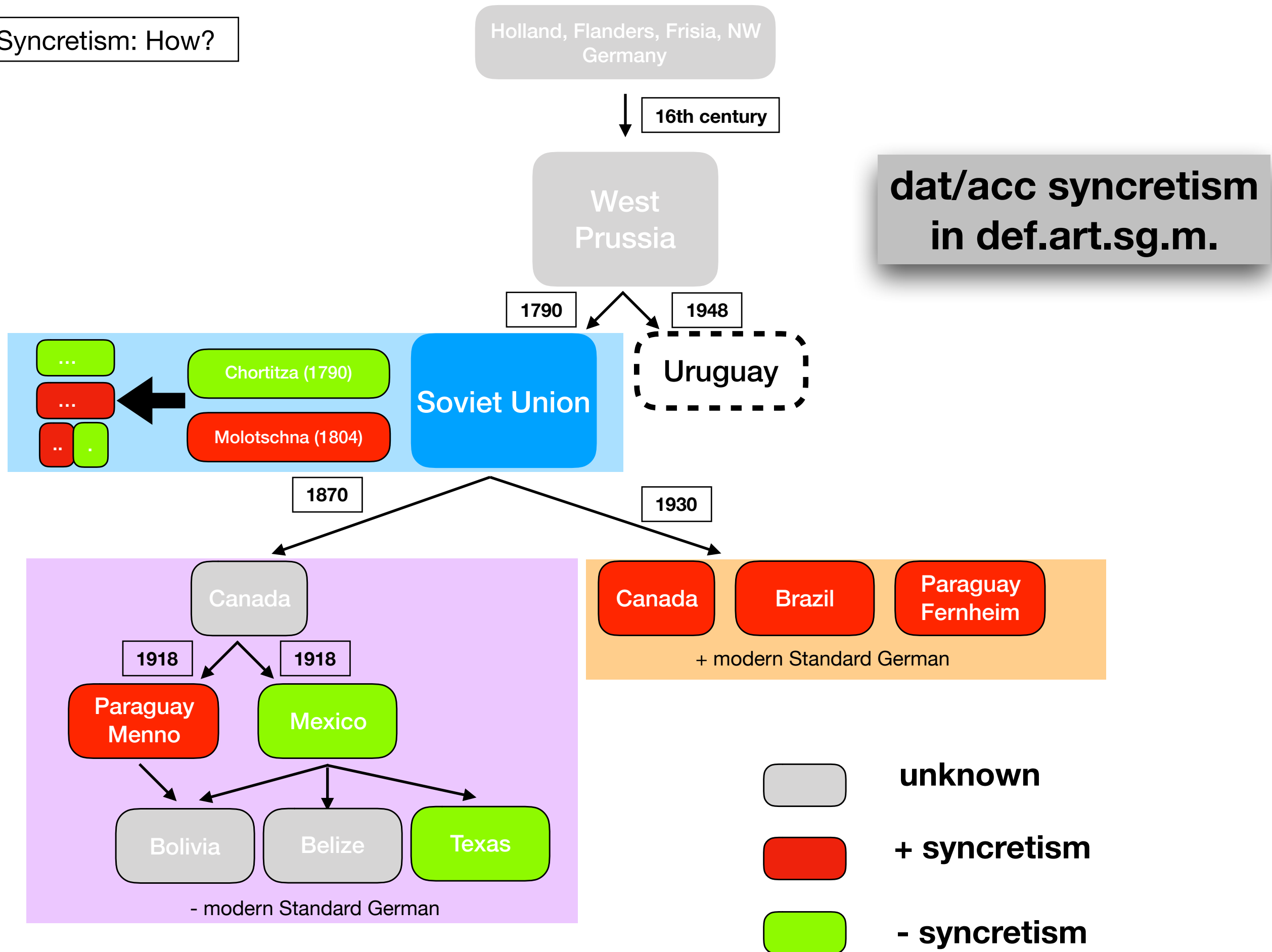
How?

1. Inheritance: Westgermanic (Low German) case syncretism (cf. Shrier 1965)
 - Not in Low Prussian (?)
2. Contact:
 - a) unrelated (Russian): bilingualism leads to insecurity of formal case marking
 - b) related (dialects):
 - i. Other: Central and Upper German (2-case-systems)
 - ii) **Low German: prestige of Molotschna variety**

3. Syncretism: How?



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Summing up

Syncretism of dative and accusative of the def. article sg. masculine in Mennonite Low German spoken in Mennonite colonies in the Soviet Union in 1930.

object case with the orig. dative from (DEM)

- ♦ originated in the Molotschna colony/after Chortitza settlement (internal), spread to
 1. secondary colonies (SU), contact with other dialect(s)
 2. tertiary colonies (CAN, USA, LatAm), contact with other dialect(s) and Standard German.

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Thank you for your attention!