# 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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### Dialectology

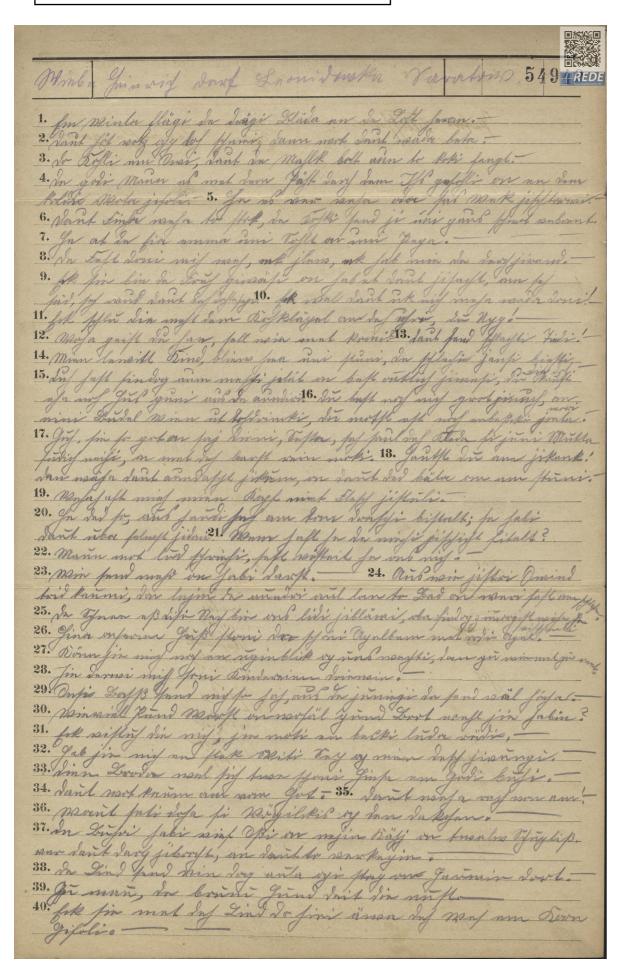
Challenge: defining discrete varieties (since dialects often form a continuum)

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?

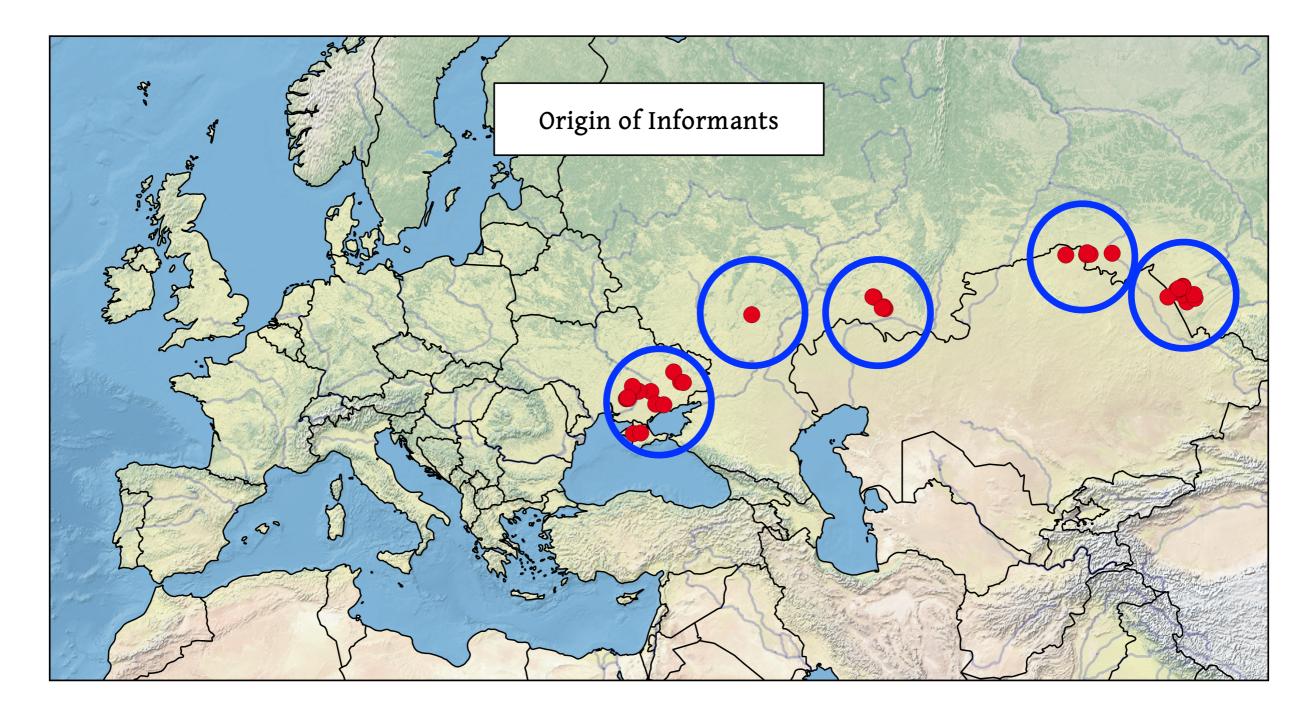
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- 1. Sample: who and when?
- 2. Syncretism: what and were?
- 3. Syncretism: how?



## The survey

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



57 questionnaires/informants 38 places, 11+ colonies

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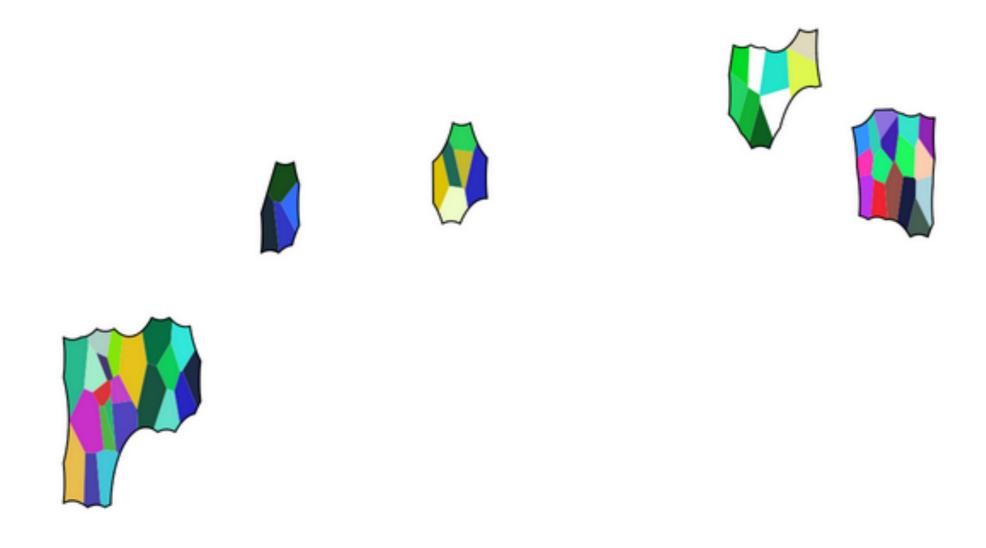
 40 "Wenker-sentences" devised by Georg Wenker (1852-1911) for the Sprachatlas des Deutschen Reichs

#### WS03:

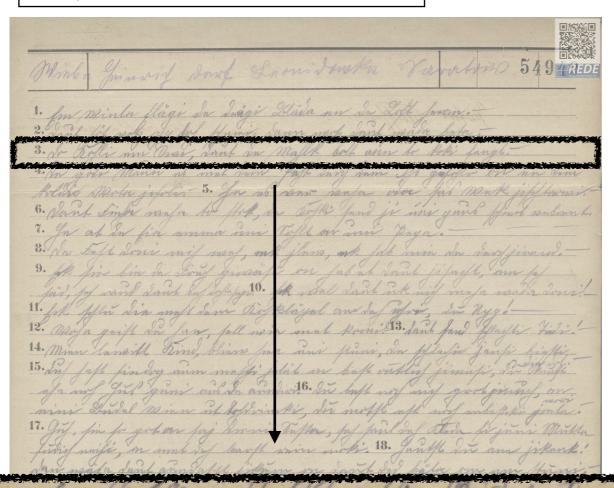
Thu Kohlen in den Ofen, daß die Milch bald an zu kochen fängt. "Put coals in the oven, so the milk will soon begin to boil."

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



Thanks to Michael Cysouw



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

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in + acc -> in den Ofen

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en + dem ???

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

		\$g	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** 

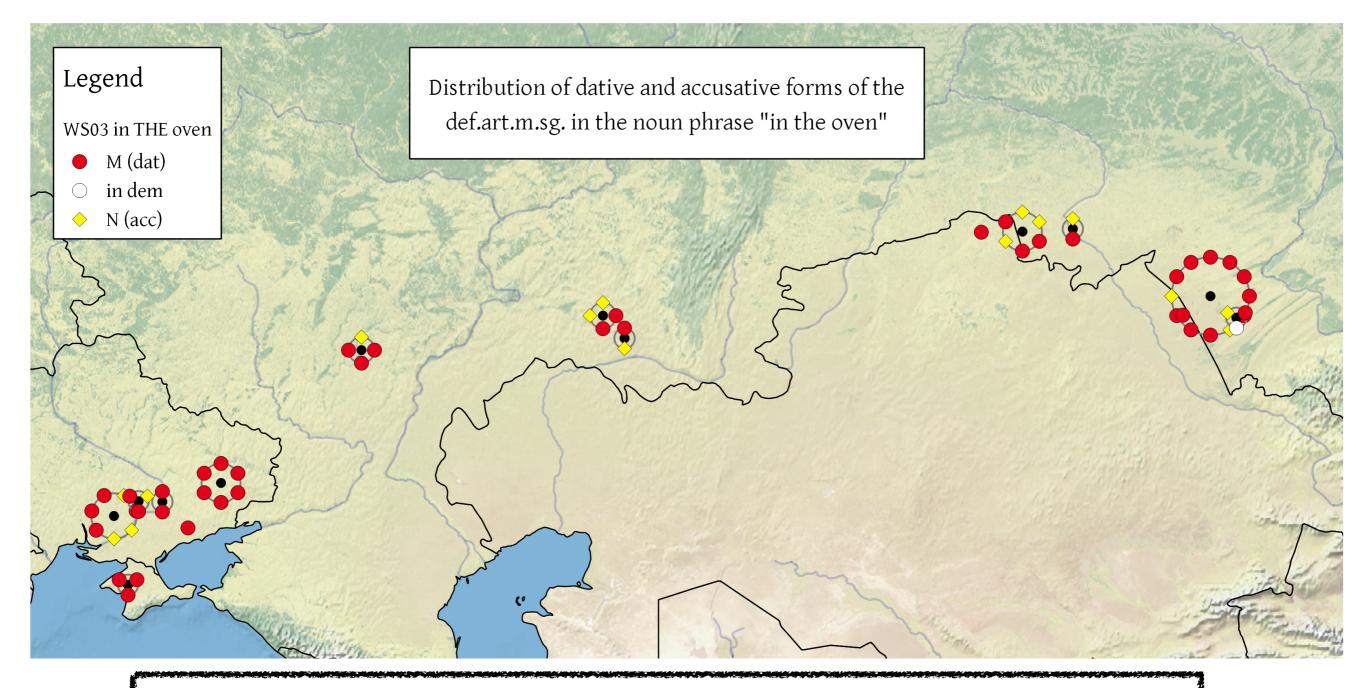
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#### **Case of object**

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!



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

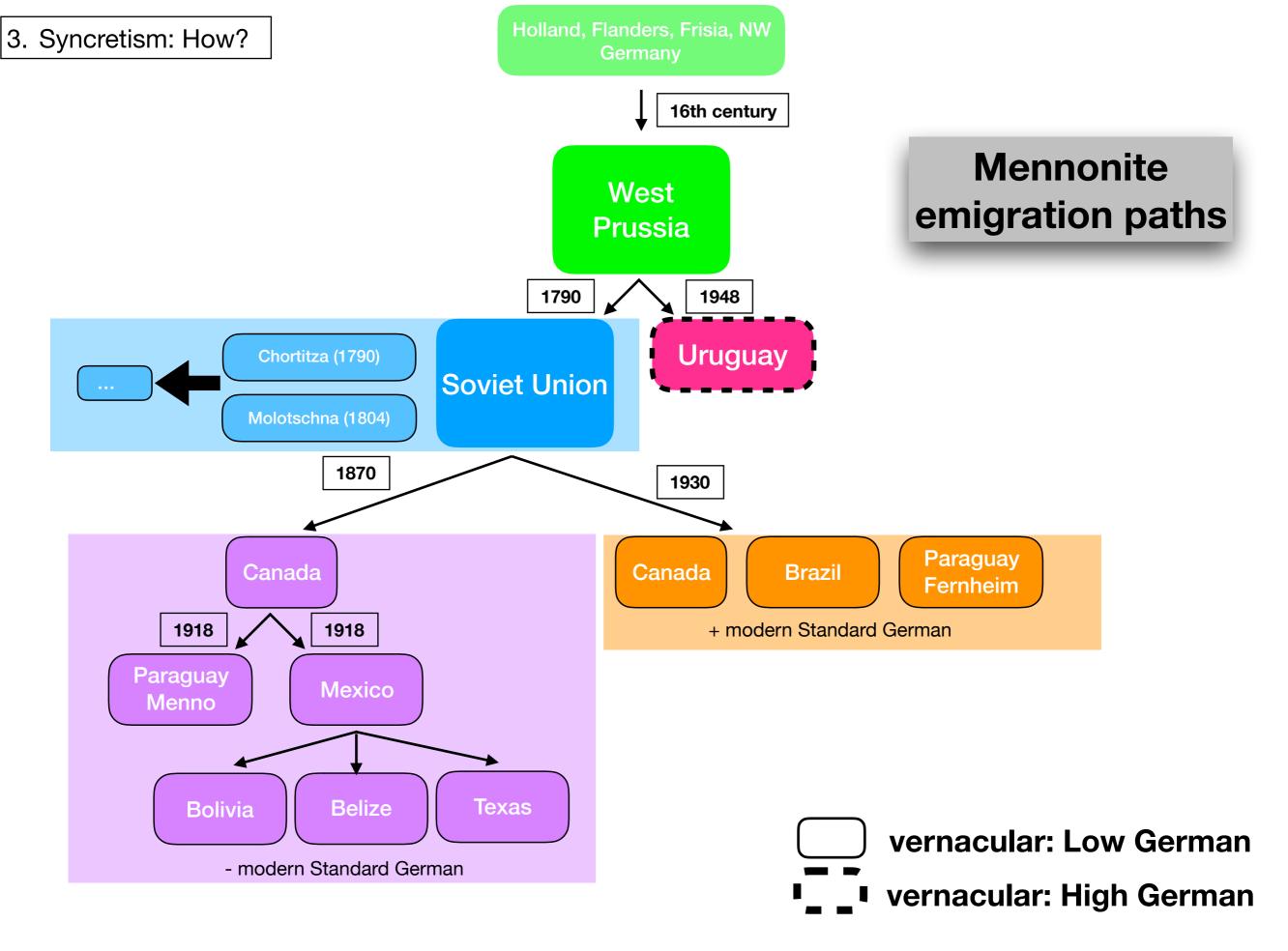
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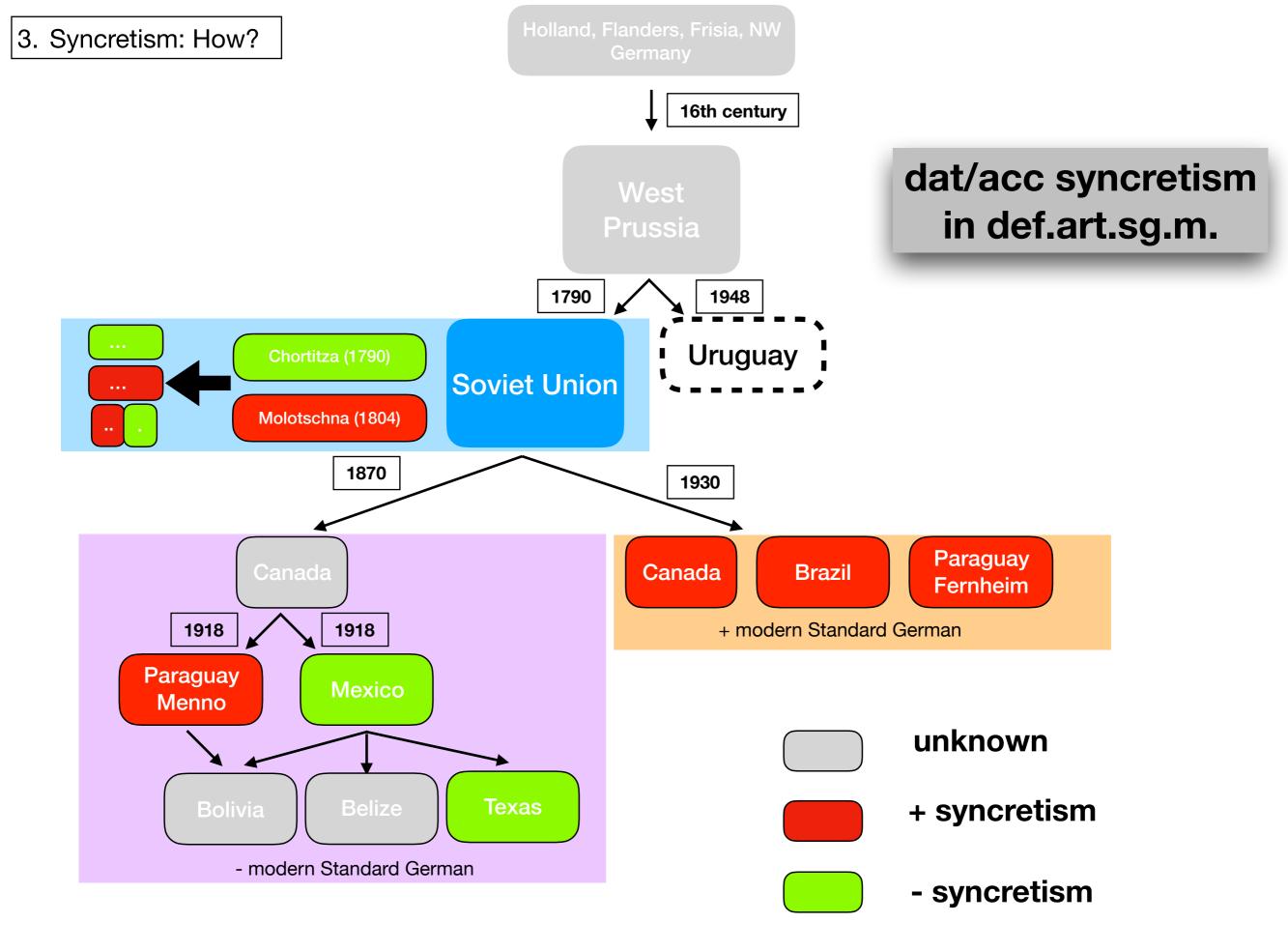
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3. Syncretism: How?

# How?

- 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





## 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!