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# The Grouping of the Germanic Languages: A Critical Review

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# The Grouping of the Germanic Languages: A Critical Review

by

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## Abstract

The literature regarding the grouping of the Germanic languages will be reviewed and a potential solution to the problems of the division of the Germanic languages will be proposed. Most of the Germanic languages share a great number of similarities, and individual languages often have features common to more than one which complicates the grouping. The grouping of the Germanic languages has been debated by linguists since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and there are still dissenting views on this topic. Old English, Old Low Franconian and Old Saxon pose significant issues with regard to grouping, and the research for this thesis will attempt to clarify where these languages fit with other Germanic languages and what the best classification of the Germanic languages would be. The *Stammbaum* model and *Wellentheorie* will be reviewed among other methods such as dialect geography and ethnography, but the listing of isoglosses of shared features will be the primary method employed in this study. The Germanic languages exist on a (dialect) continuum, and the divisions are much more fluid than the previous attempts at grouping would imply, especially within West Germanic. This continuum is not as precise as the modern dialect continua due to the relative lack of local data in the old Germanic languages. Anglo-Frisian has the largest concentration of North Sea Germanic traits (but Old Saxon has these traits too along with some Elbe Germanic traits), Old Middle German (Franconian), Old Saxon and Old Low Franconian form a transition zone, and Upper Old High German constitutes Elbe Germanic.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction, History, Methodology

The grouping of the Germanic languages is much more complex and difficult than it appears on the surface. Most of the Germanic languages have a great deal of similarities, and individual members often have features common to more than one group. Old Frisian, Old Saxon, Old Low Franconian, and Old English are examples of languages that make categorization much more complex. The topic of grouping Germanic languages has been debated by linguists since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and there are still dissenting views on how the grouping should be done. Traditionally, the Germanic languages are categorized as either East, North, or West Germanic. August Schleicher was the first to publish the *Stammbaum* model for Germanic languages and it had this three-way division (Stiles 6). Schleicher proposed that a parent language splits into two or three daughter languages (90, 94). However, language change and development is not that simple. Some daughter languages develop at different times, as clearly seen in the early attestation of Gothic relative to the other Germanic languages. The *Wellentheorie* is another method that could be used for grouping Germanic languages, but it is primarily used in dialectology. Schmidt developed this theory in his book *Die Verwandtschaftsverhältnisse der indogermanischen Sprachen*, which claims that language changes spread from one dialect group to others with which it is in contact (Schmidt 28). The reason that this theory is not very useful in

the grouping of the Germanic languages is the fact that a dialect continuum cannot be constructed to the extent that modern dialect continua are constructed. This is due to the insufficiency of material. There were several major centers for writing in the various Germanic languages historically, but only a small fraction of the geographical areas actually have texts from these areas. Therefore, the origin of innovations could have started in areas in which there are no texts, so the spread cannot be reconstructed in a detailed manner.

The *Wellentheorie* is fairly useful in the sub-grouping of the West Germanic languages because they seem to exist on a language continuum, and they can be thought of as West Germanic dialects. Furthermore, Elmer Antonsen proposes a Northwest Germanic stage in his article “On Defining Stages in Prehistoric Germanic,” Hans Kuhn proposes in his article “Zur Gliederung der germanischen Sprachen.” (Antonsen 30 ; Kuhn 45-52). Elmar Seebold refers to Northwest Germanic as “Restgermanisch,” and he believes that it was a continuum of dialects rather than a group of languages (60). The runic inscriptions provide key evidence for the existence of a Northwest Germanic stage of development. Nielsen states, “It can be immediately established that the runic language exhibits a number of features which are common to all North and West Germanic dialects (6). These runic inscriptions are from elder futhark, which predates the texts from the North and West Germanic languages, showing that there was a common language between North and West Germanic tribes before their respective literary texts were first attested. Therefore, Northwest Germanic was an intermediate stage between the development from Proto-Germanic and the divide between West and North Germanic.

This, however, has not always been the way in which the Germanic languages were classified. Earlier, it was believed that the North Germanic languages were more closely related to Gothic, and this group was called Gotho-Nordic. Ernst Schwarz makes this proposal in his book *Goten, Nordgermanen, Angelsachsen*. Ernst Schwarz combined historical and archaeological evidence with linguistic evidence (largely lexical) in his theory that Gothic and Nordic were more closely related than North and West Germanic were. He points out that the Goths probably came from Southern Sweden, particularly the island of Gotland, and this close contact led to a common Gotho-Nordic language (15). Modern scholars, on the other hand, disagree with this assertion. They argue that the similarities between Gothic and the North Germanic languages are retentions of Common Germanic features rather than innovations common to both groups of languages (Kuhn 15; Nielsen 87; Stiles 7). Hans Kuhn was very much against the idea of a Gotho-Nordic grouping. He even refers to it as “das Sorgenkind Gotonordisch” (8). With regard to the origin of the East Germanic people and their language, Kuhn writes, “Diese Herleitung ist jedoch nicht sicher, und es ist, wenn sie stimmt, auch denkbar, daß in dieser ersten Heimat der Goten in Anfang – vorausgesetzt daß diese Sprachteilung schon damals bestanden hat – nicht Nordisch, sondern eben Ostgermanisch gesprochen ist” (9). Kuhn continues, “Dann wäre die spätere Sprache dieses Landes Nordisch aus Nordgermanischem Substrat” (9). Kuhn also points out that English and Danish are not very closely related, even though the Anglo-Saxons mostly came from Denmark, and the Danes now live in Denmark. Therefore, linguistic features of a certain geographic region, particularly of one which was vacated and settled by another people, cannot be reliably used to establish linguistic relationships (9). In addition to harshly criticizing Ernst



Schwarz, Kuhn also proposes that North and West Germanic are more closely related than Gothic is to North Germanic (12, 15). He points out a number of common innovations including umlaut, rhotacism, and intensified demonstratives, among a number of others (15).

The label Northwest Germanic implies that there was a secondary split between North and West Germanic. One example of a feature that indicates this split is the West Germanic gemination. Lass states, “This change...in its most extensive form is characteristic only of WGmc (though there are sporadic similar developments in NGmc); it therefore can be taken as dating back to the split of NWGmc into the later N and W branches (probably in the early Christian era)” (34). With regard to grouping, the East Germanic languages, primarily Gothic, are different enough from the other Germanic languages that they can easily be distinguished and are therefore easily classified. One such difference is the morphologically distinct Class IV weak verbs, which are only attested in their morphologically distinct forms in Gothic (Lass 169). Members of this class of weak verbs were re-categorized, that is to say they joined other weak classes, in the other Germanic languages, but the characteristic /n/ was sometimes retained (Lass 169). Furthermore, the Germanic diphthongs *ai* and *au* were mostly preserved according to the traditional view (Prokosch 105). The traditional view is that <ai> and <au> were digraphs for monophthongs before /h/ and /r/ but otherwise reflected retained diphthongs in Gothic (Prokosch 105). Old High German and Old Norse were also fairly conservative with regard to these diphthongs. Compare Gothic *stains* with Old High German *stein* and Old Norse *steinn* (Prokosch 106). This is just one of the many distinctive features of the Gothic language. However, this is not the case for the other languages. The Germanic *ai*

monophthongized in Anglo-Frisian and Old Saxon, and the Germanic *au* monophthongized in Old Frisian and Old Saxon and developed into *ēa* in Old English (Millward 90; Prokosch 106). On the other hand, one must be careful because “many differences between East Gmc and Northwest Gmc reflect the fact that East Gmc separated from the rest of Gmc early and was recorded early, and so retains archaic features” and lacks later innovations (Harbert 150). One of these innovations which Gothic lacks is *i*-umlaut (Prokosch 109). According to Rösel, there was no collapse of the oblique case endings in the masculine n-stems in both Gothic and Old High German unlike the other Germanic languages (85). Rösel also points out the Bavarian Old High German had dual forms in neuter pronouns (111). However, this is a rather insignificant observation, since dual pronouns appear throughout many of the Germanic languages.

Within West Germanic, a further split is traditionally posited. This sub-categorization is large based on Tacitus’ *Germania* and the works of Pliny the Elder (Stiles 11). Tacitus identifies three different major tribes of West Germanic people: the Ingvaeones, the Erminones, and the Istvaeones. Even though it is not known what these names correspond to, “they...serve to mark out some important geographical distributions that correspond to later dialect groups” (Lass 14). Ingvaeonic, also known as North Sea Germanic, can be broken down even further into two different groups: “Anglo-Frisian (English and Frisian) and Low German (Old Saxon and its descendants, Middle Low German and modern Low German dialects)” (Lass 14). Ferdinand Wrede considered West Germanic to be Ingvaeonic originally, and then High German was created through the Bavarians and their contact with the Goths, as he puts it, “ein gotisiertes Westgermanisch” (1924=1963: 380). However, the Alemannic features that are similar to

North Sea Germanic, such loss of nasals before spirants and a uniform plural verb form, did not exist in the Old High German period, and thus his argument is based on a fallacy (Stiles 12). There were also critics of West Germanic. One such critic was Friedrich Maurer. Maurer claims, “Kein altes ‘Westgermanentum’, keine alte germanische Andersartigkeit, sondern altes Germanentum lebt im Süden, im Alemannentum weiter bis heute, in vielen Punkten ebenso rein wie im Norden” (174). Maurer is not entirely wrong here, in that there was very likely a common language between the North and West Germanic people, and the existence of a Proto-West Germanic stage is debatable. Maurer sets up a five-member grouping of the Germanic languages, essentially treating the three traditional sub-groups of West Germanic as individual entities, but as evidenced by Old Low Franconian and Old Saxon (which show traits of both North Sea Germanic and Elbe Germanic) this is unlikely to be the case (Stiles 12).

Precedence will be given to the comparison of individual languages with respect to both phonology and morphology. That is to say, phonological and morphological isoglosses will be primarily used. As Walter Porzig explains with regard to the grouping of Indo-European languages, “Wie sich nun die geographische Lage der idg. Sprachen in geschichtlicher Zeit zur Lage ihrer Herkunftsgebiete im idg. Raum verhält, muß die Untersuchung der alten Isoglossen ergeben” (64). This statement is intended to be used in the context of Indo-European in general, but the same idea applies to the grouping of Germanic languages. The isoglosses can give a lot of information, when analyzed carefully, about the relationship of individual languages. These two aspects, phonology and morphology, have been chosen because they are the most stable elements of language, and word order only has six different possibilities, SOV, SVO, OSV, OVS,

VSO, and VOS. Therefore, similarities between unrelated languages with regard to syntax is very likely to occur, misleading the researcher. Semantics and lexical comparisons are interesting, but they change far too quickly to be useful, and there is significant borrowing between languages, even unrelated ones. Furthermore, the *Stammbaum* model will not be used because it is overly simplistic. The wave theory will not be used to the extent of the uses of isoglosses, since isoglosses are more directly related to the grouping of Germanic languages. In addition, the listing of parallels in the Germanic languages is a method employed by Hans Kuhn in his grouping of the Germanic languages. Loewe also endorses the use of parallels in the grouping of the Germanic languages (1899:1 ; 1911: 8).

The grouping of the Germanic languages is important because it can be used as a tool for orientation in comparative and historical research. It allows one to immediately expect certain features common to a group of languages, and it can highlight anomalies found in individual languages. Perhaps the source of these anomalies can be discovered in the features of one of the other groups. Furthermore, the grouping of languages through isoglosses could give insight into the level of mutual intelligibility between native speakers of these languages. The more closely related languages are, or the more isoglosses the languages have, the greater the intelligibility there is between the languages' speakers.

## Chapter 2

### East Germanic

#### 1) Introduction

Gothic is the oldest attested Germanic language aside from the Runic inscriptions. The main text in this language is the Wulfila Bible translation. The original was written in the fourth century A.D., but the text modern scholars have is a copy written in the sixth century. The most important manuscript is the Codex Argenteus (Robinson 48). It is important to note the earlier attestation of Gothic. This explains many of the retentions. Wulfila was a Visigothic bishop, consecrated in 341, and missionary in the Arian Christian church in the fourth century (Robinson 48).

The origin of the Gothic people is disputed among scholars. However, it is very likely that they originated from southern Sweden. Nielsen claims, “Apart from the information provided by Jordanes, such a place of origin is compatible with the onomastic evidence: names like *götar*, *Götland* (ON *gaut-*) and *Got(land)* are etymologically related to *Got(h)ones* (Tacitus) and Got. *Gut(piuda)*” (37-38). The Goths went east to southern Russia, and their presence there was first recorded in 214 A.D. (Nielsen 38). It is also unknown whether the Visigoth (West)/Ostrogoth (East)

distinction came from the Goths being two different tribes originally, or powerful family disputes or rivalry led to this distinction (Nielsen 39; Robinson 45). Regardless of the origin of this distinction, the Visigoths and Ostroths “led separate existences after about 270” (Robinson 45). The Visigoths settled to the west of the Dniester river, and the Ostrogoths “settled on the plains between the rivers Don and Dniester” (Nielsen 39).

## 2) East Germanic features

Gothic has a number of features, which distinguish it from the other Germanic languages. For one, there is no *i*-umlaut attested. The following words display this: Gothic *framjan* compared to Old Norse *fremja*, Old English *fremmen*, Old Frisian *fremja*, Old Saxon *fremmian*, and Old High German *fremman*, Got. *hailjan* compared to OE *hǣlan*, Got. *narjan* compared to OE *nerian*, etc (Lass 64). This development can be explained by the speakers’ anticipation of the high front vowel *i*, which causes the vowel in the root to be raised or moved closer to *i*. The *i*-umlauted *u* in the North and West Germanic languages is actually a rounded *i*. The phoneme *u* cannot be raised further, so the vowel is articulated closer to *i* through fronting. The back vowel *o* also fronts while *i*-umlauted. There is also no rhotacism present in Gothic. Rhotacism is the change of the voiced sibilant *z* to the liquid *r*. Compare the Gothic *dīus* (which displays final devoicing as seen in the genitive singular form *dīuzis*), Old Norse *dýr*, Old English *dēor*, Old Frisian *dīer*, Old Saxon *dior*, Old High German *tior*.

Sharpening of Germanic *jj* and *ww* to *ddj* and *ggw* respectively is another distinguishing feature of Gothic, particularly of the palatal semivowel (Krause 110). Old Norse also shows this change, but the products were slightly different. The sharpening of

Germanic *jj* is clearly seen in the following examples: Got. *twaddje* ‘of two’ vs. OHG *zweio* and Got. *daddjan* ‘to suckle’ vs. OHG *tāju* ‘I suckle’, and Got. *iddja* ‘went’ (possibly related to OE *eode* ‘went’) (Krause 110). However, there were exceptions in Gothic. Compare Got. *prije* ‘of three’ and ON *þriggja*. Old Norse has sharpening here, but Gothic does not. Further examples of exceptions to sharpening in Gothic include: *diwano* ‘the dead one’, *qius* ‘alive’, *frijon* ‘to love’, and *freis* (from Germanic *\*frijaz*) ‘free’ (Krause 110). The sharpening of Germanic *ww* is illustrated in the following words: Got. *triggws* ‘true/faithful’ vs. OHG *gitriuwi*, Got. *glaggwuba* ‘precisely’ vs. dialectal NHG *glau*, Got. *skuggwa* ‘mirror’ vs. OHG *scuwo* ‘shadows’, and Got. *bligwan* ‘to beat’ vs. OHG *bliuwan* (akin to MnE. *blow* as in ‘to strike a blow’) (Krause 111).

An additional phonological feature that differentiates East Germanic, Gothic for the purpose of this study, from the rest of Germanic is the development of Germanic consonant cluster *fl* into *þl*. In the other Germanic languages, Germanic *fl* was retained (Robinson 59-60). An example that illustrates this phonological change is Got. *þliuhan* ‘to flee’ compared to OHG *fliohan* and Got. *gaþláihan* ‘to console’ (Robinson 60 ; Braune 1981: 59).

With regard to morphology Gothic is the only old Germanic language that did not have an intensified demonstrative. The intensified demonstrative in the other Germanic languages was formed by adding the suffix *-si-* to the regular demonstratives (Robinson 124). Examples of the intensified demonstratives are ON *þessir* ‘these’, OS *these* ‘this’, OE *þes* ‘this’, OF *this* ‘this’, and OHG *desēr*. It is very likely that Old Low Franconian

had intensified demonstratives, but they do not appear in the very small amount of discovered texts (Robinson 214).

On the other hand, Gothic had dual pronouns and dual verbal forms. Dual means there are two subjects, but it is extant only in the first and second persons. For example, Gothic *wit* means ‘we two’ and Gothic *igqara* means ‘of you two’ (Braune 1928: 86). In addition Braune claims, “Das Fehlen der 3. p. du. ist durch das Verschwinden des Duals in der nominalen und pronominalen Declination verursacht” (1928: 94). The following present, active, indicative forms display the dual: Got. *nimôš* ‘we two take’, *nimats* ‘you two take’, *biudôš* ‘we two offer’, *biudats* ‘you two offer’, *haitôš* ‘we two name/call’, *haitats* ‘you two name/call’ (Braune 1981: 107, 109-111).

Furthermore, Gothic is the only Germanic language to have a synthetic passive voice. Old Norse has a medio-passive voice rather than a passive voice. There are, however, relics of the passive voice in the other Germanic languages. For example, Old English has the form *hätte*. The verbal paradigm of the Gothic passive can be seen in the following example: *niman*, present, passive, indicative *nimada*, *nimaza*, *nimada*, *nimanda*, and the present, passive, optative *nimaidau*, *nimaizau*, *nimaidau*, and *nimaindau* (Braune 1925: 96-97 ; Braune 1981: 106, 109-111). Two further examples of these conjugations can be seen in *biudan* and *haitan*. The present, passive, indicative conjugation of *biudan* includes *biudada*, *biudaza*, *biudada*, and *biudanda*, and the present, passive, indicative forms include *biudaidau*, *biudaizau*, *biudaidau*, and *biudaindau* (Braune 1925: 96-97 ; Krause 253). As an additional example, the present, passive, indicative conjugation of *haitan* includes *haitada*, *haitaza*, *haitada*, and



*haitanda*, and the present, passive, subjunctive forms include *haitaidau*, *haitaizau*, *haitaidau*, and *haitaindau* (Braune 1925: 96-97 ; Krause 253). From these examples, the construction can be clearly seen. According to Braune, the formation of the present, passive, indicative forms is stem plus linking vowel (NHG *Bindevokal*) plus the ending, and the formation of the present, passive, optative forms is stem plus linking vowel plus optative suffix (-i-) plus the ending (1925: 96). It is worth noting that there was no preterite, passive forms in Gothic (Braune 1981: 106).

Additionally, Gothic has reduplication in its Class VII strong verbs. According to Lass, reduplication is “an inflectional or derivational device in which a syllable or portion of a syllable is copied...” (267). Reduplication in Gothic goes back to the Indo-European perfect. This can be seen in verb forms like *haihait* and *laiłait*. However, there are traces of reduplication in other Germanic languages, but these forms are very rare and are simply fossilized forms. Old English has two such examples: *hehte* ‘called/ordered’ and *leolc* ‘played’. Both of these forms show e-grade in the root and a zero-grade in the reduplicated root. It is also important to note that there were alternate forms of these verbs, which were not reduplicated. Old Norse also shows reduplication in a few cases. Examples of this include, *róa/veri* ‘rowed’, *sá/seri* ‘sowed’, *snúa/sneri* ‘turned’. The reduplication in the latter two is hidden by rhotacism. The comparison of Got. *saiso* with ON *seri* provides further evidence for the aforementioned, hidden reduplication. The Gothic Class VII verbs did not only have reduplication, but rather some Class VII verbs had an ablaut series as well. This ablaut series is  $\bar{e}$  (*ai*): $\bar{o}$ , as observed in Got. *lêtan* ‘to allow, let’, *laiłôt* (Krause 105 ; Braune 1928: 103). The Gothic *ai* was probably a digraph for  $\hat{e}$  in this case. These Class VII verbs that showed ablaut can be categorized in two

subgroups. One sub-group had stems that ended with a consonant, and these verbs followed the  $\bar{e}:\bar{o}$  ablaut series (Braune 1925: 103). The Gothic verb forms *grêtan* ‘to cry’, *gaiêgrôt*, *têkan* ‘to touch’ and *taitôk* exemplify this sub-group. The other sub-group of reduplicating (Class VII) strong verbs that also show ablaut consisted of verbs whose stem ended with a vowel, and the ablaut series was *ai: ô* (Braune 1925: 103). In addition to these two sub-groups, there were five additional sub-groups in Gothic. Braune states, “Man kann die reduplicierenden Verba nach ihrem Wurzelvocale in fünf Klassen teilen... 1. *a* (*á*) 2. *ê* 3. *aí* 4. *ô* 5. *au*” (1925: 102). Furthermore, the root vowels do not change in the principal parts. In other words, there is no ablaut in these verbs, even though they are strong verbs. The first sub-group mentioned here is exemplified by the forms *fâhan* ‘to catch’ and *faifâh*. *Haldan* ‘to hold’, *falpan* ‘to fold’, *ga-staldan* ‘to possess’, and *hâhan* ‘to hang’ are members of this subgroup. An example of the second sub-class is *slêpan* ‘to sleep’, which has a preterite form *slaislêp*. Examples of members of the third sub-class include: *af-aikan* ‘to deny’, *fraisan* ‘to try, attempt’, *haitan* ‘to call’, *laikan* ‘to jump’, *maitan* ‘to cut off’, *skaidan* ‘to separate’ (Braune 1925: 102). The third person, singular, preterite, indicative forms of these verbs are *afaiaik*, *faifrais*, *haihait*, *lailaik*, *maimait*, *skaiskaiþ* respectively. The Gothic verbs *hûpan* ‘to boast’ and *flôkan* ‘to complain’, with the preterite forms *hwiûôk* and *faiflôk* respectively, are good representatives of the fourth sub-class. Finally, Braune gives *aukan* ‘to increase’ as an example of the fifth sub-class, which has a preterite form *aiauk* (1925: 103).

An additional morphological feature of Gothic is the morphologically distinct Class 4 weak verbs, which are only attested in their morphologically distinct forms in Gothic (Lass 169). Regarding Class 4 weak verbs Lass writes, “The marker is IE \*/-no-,

-*na-*/, and the semantics is most often involve inchoativeness or causativity” (169). That is to say, they usually mean to become x, with x usually being an adjective (Robinson 62). More specifically to Gothic, the present tense forms of these verbs had the suffix *-n-* or *-no-*, while the preterite forms had the suffix *-nô-* (Robinson 62). Furthermore, most of these verbs are derived from adjectives or participles, but as Robinson points out, participles are adjectives in Gothic and in the old Germanic languages in general (Robinson 62). An example of this derivation can be clearly seen when comparing the Gothic adjective *fulls* ‘full’ and *fullnan* ‘to fill’ (Lass 169). When one fills a glass with water, for example, he causes the glass to become full. Krause provides the further examples: *af-lifnan* ‘to remain/be left’, *dis-skritnan* ‘to be torn apart’, *us-gutnan* ‘to be poured out’, *fra-lusnan* ‘to be lost’, *ga-waknan* ‘to be awake’, among many others (247). In fact, the Class 4 weak verbs were very productive in Gothic. However, there are traces of these verbs in other Germanic languages. For example, Old Norse had the weak verb *vakna* ‘to awake’ and Old English had the weak verb *wæcnian* ‘to awake’. The characteristic suffices *-na-* and *-n-* are clearly seen in these forms respectively, and interestingly these verbs both fell into Class 2 weak verbs (Lass 169). Likewise, the remnants of Class 4 weak verbs in the other Germanic languages “fell into other classes” (Lass 169).

1. No umlaut
2. No rhotacism
3. Sharpening of Gmc. *-jj-* and *-ww-* to *-ddj-* and *-ggw-*
4. Gmc. *fl* became *pl*
5. Dual pronouns and verb forms
6. Synthetic passive forms
7. Full class of reduplicating verbs
8. Full Class 4 weak verbs
9. No intensified demonstrative

Figure 2.1 Distinguishing Traits of East Germanic (Gothic)

Table 2.1 Sample of Strong and Weak Verb Present and Preterite, Indicative Conjugation with Dual Forms and Reduplication

Infinitive: haitan, fullnan

Present		Preterite	
Sg. 1 haita	fullna	haíhait	fullnôda
2 haitis	fullnis	haíhaist	fullnôda
3 haitiḅ	fullniḅ	haíhait	fullnôdês
Du. 1 haitôs	fullnôs	[haíhaitu]	[fullnôdêdu]
2 haitats	fullnats	haíhaituts	fullnôdêduts
Pl. 1 haitam	fullnam	haíhaitum	fullnôdêdum
2 haitiḅ	fullniḅ	haíhaituḅ	fullnôdêduḅ
3 haitand	fullnand	haíhaitun	fullnôdêdun

Table 2.2 Sample of Passive Verbal Forms

Sg. 1	haitada
2	haitaza
Pl. 1 2 3	haitanda

## Chapter 3

### North Germanic

#### 1) Introduction

The North Germanic tribes stayed the closest to the Germanic homeland. This does not mean that they remained stationary though. A group of Swedes called the Rus established trading towns on the Baltic through much of Russia, which is named after them. In addition to this, the Norsemen, including the Danes, raided and conquered much of Western Europe, beginning in the middle of the eighth century A.D. These Norsemen are referred to as Vikings. Although the Vikings are remembered so well for their piracy and conquests, they were also explorers. They discovered and settled the Faroe islands, Iceland, Greenland, and part of North America.

The term Old Norse is a cover term for the old Scandinavian languages, including the languages of the Vikings. The earliest recorded Old Norse was runic inscriptions, which were usually very short. The oldest runic inscriptions were inscribed in the older futhork runic alphabet, which is representative of Northwest Germanic, and the younger inscriptions, which represented Norse Common Germanic, were inscribed in the younger futhork runic alphabet. After the Christianization of the Old Norse speakers, written texts began to emerge. These texts are relatively young in comparison to the other Germanic

texts, with the exception of Old Frisian, due to this late Christianization of the Scandinavians and the literacy that came with it. The Old Norse manuscripts were first written in the early twelfth century. The Old Norse literary texts were both numerous and rich, compared to the other Germanic languages. These texts included eddic poetry, skaldic verse, religious works, histories, sagas, and ballads (which marks the end of classical Old Norse literature). Of the Old Norse authors, Snorri Sturluson was the most famous. He wrote the Prose Edda around 1220, and he even wrote a textbook for skaldic verse.

## 2) Phonology

Old Norse had sharpening of Germanic *-jj-* and *-ww-* to *-ggj-* and *-ggv-* respectively. Some examples of this change can be seen in the words: ON *tveggja* ‘of two’ compared to Got. *twaddjê* and OHG *zweio*, ON *eggjom* (dative plural) ‘eggs’ compared to OHG *ei* (nominative, singular) ‘egg’, ON *þriggia* ‘of three’ versus OHG *dreio*, ON *Friggiar* ‘of Freja’ vs. OHG *Frīa* (Nominative singular), and Old Swedish *dægga* ‘to suckle’ vs. Got. *daddjan* (Noreen 93; Gutenbrunner 71; Braune 2004: 188). These sharpening products differ from those in Gothic, but *-ggv-* is quite close to the Gothic *-ggw-*. The difference here can be easily explained. The Germanic *w* spirantized to *v* in Old Norse. The following words display sharpening of Germanic *-ww-*: ON *tryggvan* (accusative singular) ‘true, faithful, loyal’ compared to Got. *triggws* and OHG *(gi)triuwi*, *gløggvan* (accusative singular) ‘clear’ like Gothic *glaggwus* ‘accurately’, *hryggva* ‘to make sorrowful’ versus OHG *hriuwan* ‘to grieve, feel sorrow’, and ON *byggve* (dative singular) ‘barley’ versus OE *beow* ‘barley’, etc. Just as there were

exceptions in Gothic, there were also exceptions in Old Norse. Noreen states, “Vor einem Consonanten ist *gg* zu *g* geworden in *skygn* ‘klarsehend’, *skygna* ‘genau beobachten’ (vgl. nhd. *schauen*), *ugla* (ahd. *ûwila*) ‘Eule’” (93). The *gg* clusters observed in the sharpening products in Old Norse could have resulted in phonological leveling from analogy. That is to say, the *ddj* cluster, as seen in Gothic, could have been changed to *ggj* to make it closer to the other sharpening product *ggv*.

Another phonological feature that distinguishes Old Norse as a North Germanic language, separate from both East and West Germanic, is limited gemination. West Germanic has gemination after *l*, *w* (or *v*), *r*, and *j*, and Gothic does not exhibit this feature. However, gemination in Old Norse is limited to the velar stops *g* and *k*. Furthermore, these consonants had to be preceded by a short vowel and followed by a *j* or *w*. These types of gemination are called *j*- and *w*-gemination respectively. However, as Noreen points out, there are traces of *l*-gemination. Furthermore, *w*-gemination only affected the voiceless velar stop *k*. Examples of *j*-gemination in Old Norse include the following: ON *liggia* ‘to lie’, ON *leggja* ‘to lay’ versus Got. *lagjan*, ON *hyggia* ‘to think’ versus Got. *hugjan*, ON *lykkia* ‘loop’, ON *bekkr* ‘brook’, etc. (Noreen 82 ; Gutenbrunner 77). *W*-gemination can be observed in the following words: ON *þykkir* (accusative, masculine, singular *þykkvan*) ‘thick’, ON *nøkkve* ‘barque’, ON *røk(k)r* ‘darkness’ compared to Got. *riqis*, *røk(k)va* ‘to become dark’, ON *nøk(k)veðr* ‘naked’ compared to Got. *naqaps*, etc. (Noreen 82 ; Gutenbrunner 77). As previously mentioned there were only traces of *l*-gemination in Old Norse, and these cases were rather rare. An example is the accusative, masculine, singular ON adjective *mikklan* ‘great, large’; however, this form was rare and the *miklan* was the pre-dominant form (Noreen 82).

Regarding the formation of geminates, Old Norse is unparalleled among other Germanic languages in how many geminates are formed through assimilation (Robinson 88). In Old Norse, particularly Old Icelandic, the nasals *m*, *n*, and *ŋ* assimilated to the following voiceless plosives, *p*, *t*, *k*, when in consonant clusters with them. According to Gutenbrunner, the changes from *mp*, *nt*, *nk/ŋk* to *p*, *t*, *k* respectively is a feature of West Old Norse (74). These points are illustrated with the following words: ON *kapp* ‘fight’ compared to OHG *kampf*, West ON *kleppr* ‘lump’ versus Swedish *klimp*, West ON *kroppenn* ‘shriveled’ versus Old Swedish *krumpen*, West ON *skreppa* ‘to slide’ versus Swedish *skrympa*, West ON *svøppr* ‘sponge’ versus MHG *swamp*, West Old Norse *batt* ‘bound’ versus OHG *bant*, West ON *stuttr* ‘short’ versus Old Swedish *stunter*, West ON *klettr* ‘cliff’ versus Old Swedish *klinter*, West ON *vøttr* ‘glove, mitten’ versus Old Swedish *vanter*, West Old Norse *brattr* ‘steep’ versus Old Swedish *branter*, ON *drekka* ‘to drink’ versus OE *drincan*, West Old Norse *þokke* ‘good will’ versus Old Gutnish *þunki*, and ON *døkk* ‘dark’ versus OF *djunk*, among many others (Noreen 76-77 ; Gutenbrunner 74; Braune 2004: 280; Gordon 282-283). Another gemination through the assimilation of two different consonants in a cluster in Old Norse is the assimilation of *þ* to *l* in *lþ* clusters. This assimilation is observed in the following examples, ON *gull* ‘gold’ compared to Got. *gulþ*, ON *hollr* ‘faithful, loyal’ vs. Got. *hulþs*, ON *ellre* ‘older’ vs. Got. *alpizu*, and ON *hallr* ‘inclined’ vs. Got. *halþei* ‘inclination’ (Noreen 79). Another such assimilation is the assimilation of the dental fricative *þ* with the nasal *n* in *nþ* consonant clusters. This assimilation is exhibited in the following words: ON *annarr* ‘the other, second’ vs. Got. *anþar*, ON *munnr* ‘mouth’ vs. Got. *munþs*, ON *unnr* ‘wave’ vs. OHG *undea* (note that *þ* occluded to *d* or *t* early in Old High German), ON *finna* ‘to find’ vs.



Got. *finþan*, ON *sinn* ‘way, path’ vs. Got. *sinþs*, ON *kunna* ‘could’ vs. Got. *kunþa*, ON *nenna* ‘to venture, risk, dare’ vs. Got. *nanþjan*, and ON *tǫnn* ‘tooth’ vs. Got. *tunþus* (Noreen 79 ; Robinson 88 ; Gutenbrunner 74-75). The final Old Norse assimilation that will be discussed here is the assimilation of *h* to *t* in *ht* consonant clusters. Noreen writes, “*ht* wird zu *tt*, wobei es auffallend ist, dass auch Ersatzdehnung des vorhergehenden Vocals stattfindet...” (77). Examples of this change include the following: ON *dóttar* ‘daughter’ vs. OHG *tohter*, ON *rétta* ‘to straighten’ vs. OE (*ge*)*rihtan* ‘to correct’, ON *nótt* ‘night’ vs. OHG *naht*, ON *átta* ‘eight’ vs. OHG *ahto*, and ON *þótti* ‘seemed’ vs. Got. *þúhta* (Noreen 77 ; Braune 2004: 213, 217, 235 ; Mitchell and Robinson 392). The Old Norse words *dóttar*, *rétta*, *nótt*, and *átta* clearly show the compensatory lengthening caused by the assimilation when compared to the other Germanic forms. There are more assimilations that occurred in Old Norse, resulting in geminates, than have been discussed here, but the ones discussed here are the most important ones.

### 3) Morphology

With regard to morphology, Old Norse has the unique feature of enclitic definite articles. This means that the definite articles were attached to the ends of the nouns that they modify. The direct articles themselves are also unique in Old Norse in that they come from a different source than those in the other Germanic languages (Robinson 89). The nominative singular forms were *inn* (masculine), *in* (feminine), and *it/et* (Noreen 151 ; Gutenbrunner 115). Compare these forms to Got. *sa*, *so*, *þata* and OHG *der*, *diu*, *daz* (Braune 2004: 247 ; Krause 195 ; Gordon 295-296). From these examples, it is clear that the Old High German definite articles came from the neuter form seen in Gothic and that

the Old Norse definite article came from a different source entirely. Gutenbrunner proposes that ON *inn* ‘the’ is related to OHG *ēner* ‘that’ and Got *jains* (115). This is certainly a plausible proposal. The Old English nominative, neuter, singular definite article *þæt* was used for both “the” and “that” (Mitchell and Robinson 18).

The direct articles in Old Norse were only attached to nouns. Before an adjective, they were written as separate words. Examples of this are the phrases: ON *Hákon inn góði* ‘Hakon the good’, ON *inn yngri* ‘the younger’ (Gutenbrunner 117 ; Noreen 151). With nouns, the definite articles were enclitic and acted like suffixes. This is the case in modern Scandinavian languages (Gutenbrunner 115). The enclitic definite article in Old Norse can be seen in the following examples: ON *armr-enn* ‘the arm’, ON *laug-en* ‘bath’, and ON *borðet* (Gutenbrunner 116 ; Noreen 152 ; Gordon 295-296). This morphological development is not a very old one. Gutenbrunner states regarding Old Norse enclitic definite articles, “Er fehlt noch dem Urn. und Spätur., ja selbst den wikingzeitlichen Inschriften, und ist in der Dichtersprache gemieden” (115). Therefore, this is a late innovation.

Another morphological feature that is unique to Old Norse is the medio-passive voice. The medio-passive voice mostly indicated “that the subject was also included in the field of action” and had three different main uses: passive, reflexive, and reciprocal (only in plural forms) (Noreen 185 ; Gordon 313). There was also “a benefactive use in the form *eignask* ‘possess (for oneself)’ for example” (Robinson 91). Regarding the construction of the medio-passive forms, the reflexive pronouns *mik* and *sik* were encliticized, and the vowel in these enclitic reflexive pronouns were lost through apocope

(Noreen 185 ; Gutenbrunner 162). An example of a verb conjugation in the medio-passive is the following: ON inf. *lúkask* ‘to be closed (by someone)’; present, medio-passive, indicative *lúkomk*, *lýksk*, *lúkom(s)k*, *lúkezk*, and *lúkesk* (Noreen 187). From these examples, it is relatively clear that these endings come from the reflexives *sik* and *mik* as discussed previously. Furthermore, *mik* was encliticized in the first person forms, and *sik* was encliticized in the other forms (Gutenbrunner 162). This development goes back to the Viking times. According to Gutenbrunner, “Belegt ist das neue Mediopassiv aber erst in der Wikingzeit durch Runendenkmäler aus dem 10. J.h.: *aitapis* (Högby, Schw.) = aisl. *andapesk* ‘starb’ ...” (162).

#### 4) East/West Old Norse

Within Old Norse itself, there is the further grouping of West and East Old Norse. West Old Norse includes Old Icelandic, Old Faroese, and Old Norwegian, while East Old Norse includes Old Swedish, Old Danish, and Old Gutnish. There were are number of features that distinguish these two sub-groups. Umlaut of different kinds was much more abundant in West Old Norse than East Old Norse. For example, West Old Norse had the words *være* ‘would/might be’, *ígær* ‘yesterday’, and *lǫnd* ‘lands, countries’, while East Old Norse had the words *vāre*, *īgār*, and *land* (Gutenbrunner 13). The first and second examples display *i*-umlaut in the West Old Norse forms, and the last example displays *u*-umlaut. Another distinguishing trait of West Old Norse is the transition of *i*, *e*, and *y* to *j*, before low and back vowels, i.e. *a*, *o*, and *u*, as illustrated in the West ON *siá* ‘to see’ versus East ON *sēa* (Gutenbrunner 13). The *j* is hidden in the *i* in *siá*. These examples also display a stress shift in the diphthongs. As mentioned previously, the assimilation of

*mp, nt, nk* with the resulting geminates *pp, tt, and kk* was a trait specific to West Old Norse. Furthermore, the retention of reduplicating forms like *sera* ‘sowed’, versus the East ON *sāþe* were retained in West Old Norse, but Old East Norse formed these verbs without reduplication and a new ablaut series, as did the West Germanic languages (with some traces of reduplication) (Gutenbrunner 14). It is also important to note that this verb was recategorized as a weak verb rather than a class VII strong verb in East Old Norse.

1. Enclitic definite articles
2. Definite articles come from a different source
3. medio-passive forms (enclitic reflexive *mik/sik*)
4. 2<sup>nd</sup> person, preterite, indicative ending with -t
5. Limited gemination
6. Sharpening with the products *ggj* and *ggv*
7. Consistent gemination through assimilation

Figure 2.1 Features of North Germanic

	West Old Norse	East Old Norse
Umlaut	more	less
transition of <i>i, e, and y</i> to <i>j</i> , before low and back vowels	yes	no
Relics of reduplication	more	less

Figure 2.2 East vs. West Old Norse

## Chapter 4

### West Germanic and its Sub-groupings

#### 1) Introduction

Old Frisian texts did not appear until about 1300, and a vast majority of these texts were legal texts (Bremmer 8). Old Low Franconian texts, of which four are known, all came from the Wachtendonck Codex (Robinson 203). In contrast to this, Old English was quite rich in literary texts: both in prose and poetry. *Beowulf* was the only heroic epic, but there were numerous religious works, including poetry like *The Dream of the Rood*. In addition, there a number of historical works, including the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Furthermore, there were a number of riddles and gnomic texts and elegiac poetry like *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*. There was also historical poetry, like *The Battle of Maldon* (Mitchell and Robinson 128-136). Old High German had more texts than Old Saxon, Old Low Franconian, and Old Frisian, but its corpus is much smaller than that of Old English. It includes heroic poetry, like *Hildebrandslied* (which is really a mixture of Old Saxon and Old High German), religious works, and charms (Braune 2004: 2). The earliest Old English texts are about a century older than the earliest Old High German texts, which is largely due to the earlier Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons. Old Saxon, like Old Frisian and Old Low Franconian has a relatively limited literary corpus, but the Old Saxon and Old Low Franconian texts are older. The main two texts

are the *Heliand*, from the ninth or tenth century, and the other is the *Genesis* fragment, from the ninth century (Rauch 1).

## B) West Germanic Characteristics

There are a number of phonological and morphological features that make the West Germanic languages stand out. One major phonological development of West Germanic is the West Germanic gemination. Gemination was discussed in the North Germanic chapter, but this development is not as restricted as that of North Germanic. There are four types gemination with in the West Germanic gemination: *j-*, *w-*, *r-*, and *l-* gemination. *J*-gemination was the most common type of germination followed by *r*-gemination, while *l-* and *w*-gemination were much less common.

In *J*-gemination, simplex consonants, with the exception of *r*, were geminated “after a short vowel before a following *j*” (Wright 1934: 136 ; Sievers 115-116 ; Bright 21). Furthermore, the *j* caused i-umlaut and was lost in most cases in Old English and Old High German, usually retained in Old Saxon, and lost completely in Old Frisian (Wright 1934: 136 ; Sievers 115-116 ; Braune 2004: 98-99 ; Bright 21 ; Bremmer 23). Examples of *j*-gemination are: OE *hliehhan* ‘to laugh’, OS *\*hlahhian*, OHG *hlahhen* (compare to Got. *hlahjan*), OE *lecgan* ‘to lay’, OS *leggian*, OHG *leggen* (compared to Got. *lagjan*), OE *settan* ‘to set’, OS *settian*, OHG *setzen* (compared to Got. *satjan*), OE *scieppan* ‘to create’, OS *skeppian*, OHG *skephen* (versus Got. *skapjan*), but OE and OS *nerian* ‘to save’, OF *nera*, and OHG *nerien* (compared to Got. *nasjan*) (Wright 1934: 136 ; Sievers 115-116 ; Braune 2004: 98-99 ; Bremmer 23). From the last examples OE and OS *nerian*, OHG *nerien*, OF *nera*, and Got. *nasjan*, there are a few important things to note. For one,

the *j* is dropped in Old Frisian in the environments for gemination, whether it causes germination or not (Bremmer 23). Secondly, the rhotacism must have occurred after the gemination could have taken place. Thirdly, Old Saxon is the most phonologically conservative West Germanic language with regard to *j*-gemination in that it is the only one to consistently retain the *j* or *i*.

The second type of gemination, *r*-gemination, was also a fairly common phenomenon, especially compared to *l*- and *w*-gemination. Only *p*, *t*, *k*, and *h* were geminated “in West Germanic before a following *r* or *l*” (Wright 1934: 137). The gemination of *h* was attested in the Northumbrian dialect of Old English. Some examples of this are the following: OE *tēar* ‘tear’ versus Northumbrian *tæhhres*, OE *ēar* ‘ear of corn’ versus Northumbrian *æhher*, and OE *gēol* ‘Yule, Christmas’ versus Northumbrian *geohhol* (Wright 137). Wright continues, the gemination “regularly took place in inflected forms...and was extended to the uninflected forms by levelling...” (1934: 137). Examples of the *r*-gemination are the following genitive singular forms: OE, OS, and OHG *bittres* ‘of bitter’, OE *æpples* ‘of the apple’, OS *apples*, and OHG *aphles*. The latter is exemplified by the following: OS and OHG *bittar* ‘bitter’ compared to Got. *báitrs*. Old English displays less *l*- and *r*-gemination than Old Saxon and Old High German. This point can be seen in the following words: OS *akkar* ‘field’ and OHG *ackar* beside OE *æcer*, and OS *lutil* ‘little’ and OHG *lutil* beside OE *lýtél* (Wright 1934: 137). An example of *w*-gemination is OHG *nackod* compared to Got. *naqaps*. Another phonological trait of the Western Germanic languages is the simplification of the Germanic consonant cluster *ngw* to *ng* (Robinson 235). Compare Got. *siggwan*, ON *singva*, OE *singan*, OHG *singan*, and OS *singan* (Krause 309 ; Sievers 308 ; Gallée 333).

The loss of the *w* in this consonant cluster prevented *w*-gemination from occurring in the words that used to have this consonant cluster.

There are also morphological features that set the West Germanic languages apart from the other Germanic languages. One such feature is the second person, singular, preterite, active, indicative ending *-i*. However, this is not the case for Old Frisian, which has the ending *-(e)st*. This ending comes from the second person, singular, present, active indicative ending by analogy (Bremmer 84). For example, compare the following: OHG *nāmi* ‘you took’, OF *nōmest*, OE *nāme/nōme*, and OS *nāmi*. An additional feature of the West Germanic languages is the contraction of the verbs “to stand” and “to go”. Compare the following forms: Go. *standan* ‘to stand’ and *gaggan* ‘to go’, ON *standa* and *ganga*, OS *stân* and *gân* (the uncontracted forms occur more frequently), OF *stân* and *gân* (the uncontracted forms, like Old Saxon, occur more frequently), OHG and OLF *gân* and *stân* (Both languages also have the uncontracted forms.) (Krause 293, 310 ; Gallée 302, 337 ; Braune 2004: 311 ; Robinson 215). OE is unique within West Germanic in that it does not have a contracted form of *standan* (Wright 1934: 272). Additionally, the West Germanic languages “developed the verbal infinitive into something approaching a true noun (the so-called gerund)” (Robinson 125). Being a true noun, gerunds could be and were in fact inflected. In these languages they were commonly used in prepositional phrases, particularly with OHG *zi* and OE *tō* for example. Examples of these constructions are the following: OE *tō sēonne* ‘for seeing’ OS *te githenkeanne* ‘for thinking’, OHG *zi nēmanne* ‘for taking’, OF *to metande* ‘to measure/for measuring’ (Mitchell and Robinson 45 ; Rauch 204 ; Wright 1906: 71 ; Bremmer 84). It is important



to note that all attestations of the gerund in the Old Saxon texts *Heliand* and *Genesis* were in the dative case (Rauch 204).

### C) North Sea Germanic

The North Sea Germanic languages, also called Ingvaeonic languages, have a number of features that distinguish them from the other West Germanic languages. These languages are Old English, Old Frisian, and Old Saxon. One phonological change that is characteristic of the North Sea Germanic languages is the loss of nasals before fricatives. In the case of Old English, “*m* disappeared in prehistoric OE before *f*, *s* with lengthening of the preceding vowel” (Wright 1925: 150). Examples of this are OE *fiƿ* ‘five’ compared to Got. and OHG *fiṃf*, OE *ōsle* ‘ouzel’ compared to OHG *amsala*, OE *sōfte* ‘softly’ versus OHG *samfte*. The conditions for the loss of the nasal *n* was slightly different, in that it was lost before *þ* and *s* rather than *f*, *s*, but there was compensatory lengthening of preceding vowels just as with the loss of *m* (Wright 1925: 151). The following examples show the loss of *n* before spirants and compensatory lengthening: OE *cūþ* ‘known’ versus Got. *kunþs* and OHG *kund*, OE *ēst* ‘favor’ versus OHG *anst*, OE *ōþer* ‘other’ versus Got. *anþar* and OHG *andar*, and OE *ūs* ‘us’ versus OHG *uns* (Wright 1925: 151). With regard to Old Saxon, Gallée writes, “Ausfall von *m* vor labialem Spirant findet sich in *fiƿ*, *hâf*, *sâfter*” (155). Regarding the loss of the nasal *n* before spirants, Gallée states, “Schwund des Nasals findet vor tautosillabischer Spirans statt. Wo dagegen die Spirans sekundär ist, wie in *kanst*, *konsta* u. a. bleibt *n* bestehen” (157). There was compensatory lengthening in Old Saxon as well. OS *ôðar* ‘other’ and *cûth* ‘known’ are examples of this change (Gallée 157).

These particular phonological innovations contributed to a morphological innovation, the uniform plural verbal endings, within North Sea Germanic. With regard to the uniform plural verb forms in Old English, Wright asserts, “The forms of the first and second pers. plural had disappeared already in the oldest period of the language, their place having been taken by the form of the third person” (Wright 1925: 258). Lass takes the third person plural, present, indicative ending back to the reconstructed form *-anþi* (Lass 172). Stiles takes the uniform plural verb forms of North Sea Germanic languages back to the loss of nasals before spirants, *þ* in this case (Stiles 19). This is certainly logical for the second and third person plurals. As in Old Saxon and Old Frisian, Old English did not have compensatory lengthening in unstressed positions (Gallée 158 ; Bremmer 26). Comparing the Old High German personal endings *-et/-at* and *-ant* to the Old English uniform plural personal ending *-aþ* (in the present, active, indicative) and the knowledge that occlusion of *þ* to *t* occurred rather early in Old High German, it is apparent that the distinction between the second and third person plural present personal endings were already quite similar after the loss of the nasal in the third person ending (Braune 2004: 263-264). The first person plural form was simply levelled out so that there was a uniform plural rather than two different plural forms. Old Saxon had the plural form was *-ađ/-ođ* in the present, indicative, and Old Frisian had the plural form was *-at(h)/-et(h)* in the present, indicative (Gallée 246 ; Bremmer 76). The uniform plural can be seen in the following examples: OF *nimath* ‘we/you (all)/they take’, OE *nimaþ*, OS *nimađ*, vs. OHG *nēmumēs* ‘we take’, *nēmet* ‘you (all) take’, and *nēmant*.

An additional North Sea Germanic verbal innovation is the rebuilding of the inflection of Class II and III weak verbs and extensive reduction of Class III weak verbs

are also Ingvaemonic features (Stiles 18-19). For example, Mitchell and Robinson write about OE, “All weak verbs of class 2 have an infinitive ending in -ian...Class 3 contains three weak verbs – *habban* ‘have’, *libban* ‘live’, *secgan* ‘say’, and *hycgan* ‘think’” (50). According to Bremmer, the infinitives of Old Frisian class 2 weak verbs usually end with *-ia*, and there was no distinguishable class 3 weak verbs (78, 80). With regard to Old Saxon, the remodeling observed in Old Frisian and Old English did not take place, but Class 3 weak verbs made up a relic class with with the four verbs: *hebbian* ‘to have’, *huggian* ‘to think, remember, consider’, *libbian* ‘to live’, and *seggian* ‘to say’ (Gallée 266). If one were to compare the second and third classes of weak verbs in Old English and second class of Old Frisian weak verbs to their respective classes in a non-Ingvaemonic, Germanic language, such as Old High German, it would be apparent that the formation of Class 2 and Class 3 weak verbs in Old English and other Ingvaemonic languages is innovative. The class 2 weak verbs in Old High German had the infinitival ending *-ōn*, and the class 3 weak verbs had the infinitival ending *-ēn* (Braune 2004 301-302).

There were also North Sea Germanic innovations involving pronouns. One such innovation is the loss of the reflexive pronoun. Wright writes, “...the prim. Germanic reflexive pronoun of the third person \*sek, unaccented \*sik (Goth. *sik*, OHG *sih*) disappeared in OE...When the personal pronouns were used reflexively *self* ‘self’ (declined strong and weak) was often added to emphasize them” (1925: 243). Personal pronouns were also used in Old English to take up the function of reflexive pronouns, like in the phrase *ic brægde mē net* ‘I make nets for myself.’ Furthermore, Old Saxon did not have reflexive pronouns, and the personal pronouns were used instead (Gallée 237 ;

Robinson 123). Regarding the reflexive pronouns in Old Frisian, Bremmer states, “There are no reflexive pronouns; instead, the accusative forms function as such” (56). Bremmer is referring to the accusative forms of the personal pronouns here, so it is evident that the personal pronouns took the place of reflexive pronouns in all the North Sea Germanic languages.

An additional North Sea Germanic pronominal innovation is the merger of the accusative and dative, first and second person pronouns. These pronouns were *mī* ‘me’ and *thī* ‘you’, and in these pronouns were *mē* ‘me’ and *pē* ‘you’ in OF and OE respectively (Bremmer 55 ; Mitchell and Robinson 19). However, Old English did have the accusative pronouns *meċ* and *peċ*, but these forms were emphatic and rare (Mitchell and Robinson 19). Old Saxon, on the other hand, had the distinctly different first and second person, accusative dative forms: *mik/me/mī* ‘me’, *mī* ‘me’, *thī*, *thī/thic* ‘you’ (Gallée 236). However, “most Old Saxon texts do not distinguish between accusative and dative in the first and second person singular personal pronouns” (Robinson 123). A significant nominal innovation of the North Sea Germanic languages is the plural endings of the masculine *a*-stems, vowel (*a* or *o*) plus *s* endings. In Old English the ending was *-as*, in Old Frisian the ending underwent rhotacism and usually took the form *-ar*, and Old Saxon usually had the ending *-as* or *-os* (Wright 1925: 175 ; Bremmer 61 ; Gallée 195). The following examples display this plural formation OE *dagas* ‘days’, OF *degar* ‘days’, OS *dagas*, OE *stānas* ‘stones’, and OF *bāmar* ‘trees’ (Wright 1925: 175 ; Bremmer 61 ; Gallée 195).

## D) Anglo-Frisian

A vowel change that is characteristic of Anglo-Frisian, is fronting. Regarding Old Frisian fronting, Bremmer writes that the West Germanic  $\bar{a}$  was fronted to  $\bar{e}$ , “unless it was followed by a nasal in which case it had been rounded” (27). Additionally, West Germanic  $a$  was fronted to  $e$  (Bremmer 29). Examples this are *dei* ‘day’ vs. OHG *tac*, *weter* ‘water’, *serk* vs. OHG *sarch*, and *erm* ‘arm’ (Bremmer 29). The words *garda* ‘landed property’ and *flarde* ‘(individual) lung’ are quite problematic, since they resisted the Anglo-Frisian fronting (Bremmer 29). However, there were other exceptions to this change as well. The exceptions were the following: preceding nasals in accented syllables, in the sequence (-)warC-, preceding h(C), preceding lC, and in a few unaccented words (Bremmer 29). Examples of these exception are as follows: *lond* ‘land’, *song* ‘song’, *swart* ‘black’, *warm* ‘warm’, *achta* ‘eight’, *nacht* ‘night’, *ald* ‘old’, *kald* ‘cold’, *half* ‘half’, and *was* ‘was’ (Bremmer 29). Old English similarly had fronting. In Old English Germanic  $a$  fronted to  $\text{æ}$  in closed syllables and “in open syllables when followed by a palatal vowel or vocalic nasal or liquid in the next syllable” (Wright 1925: 76-77). Examples of the former are *dæg* ‘day’, *bær* ‘he/she/it bore’, and *sæt* ‘he/she/it sat’, and examples of the latter are *æcer* ‘field’, *fæder* ‘father’, *fæþm* ‘fathom or embrace’, and *hægl* ‘hail’ (Wright 1925: 76-77). Furthermore,  $\bar{a}$  in early Latin loanwords fronted to  $\bar{æ}$ , as illustrated in OE *næp* ‘turnip’ vs. Latin *nāpus* and *stræt* ‘street’ vs. Latin *stratus* (Wright 1925: 79).

One such feature that separates Anglo-Frisian and Old Saxon is the monophthongization products of Gmc. *ai*. In Old Frisian, /ai/ monophthongized to  $\bar{a}$  and

less commonly to  $\bar{e}$ , as illustrated in the words  $\bar{a}ga$  ‘to own’,  $\bar{a}thum$  ‘son-in-law’,  $f\bar{a}ch$  ‘outlawed’,  $f\bar{a}d$  ‘counterfeit’,  $fr\bar{a}se$  ‘danger’,  $g\bar{a}d$  ‘lack’,  $w\bar{e}t$  ‘knew’ and  $st\bar{e}n$  ‘stone’ (Bremmer 28). Old Saxon similarly monophthongizes  $ai$  to  $\bar{e}$ , as seen in the words  $w\bar{e}t$  and  $st\bar{e}n$  (Prokosch 106). Furthermore, Old English also monophthongized  $ai$ , and it became  $/\bar{a}/$  (Prokosch 106), so the OE words corresponding to the previous examples are  $w\bar{a}t$  and  $st\bar{a}n$ . Another North Sea Germanic monophthongization is that of Gmc.  $au$ . This claim is not without controversy though. The Germanic  $au$  developed into Old English  $\bar{e}a$ . For example the following words show that Old English is the odd one out here: OE  $\bar{e}age$ , OF  $\bar{a}$ , and OS  $\bar{o}ga$  compared to OHG  $ouga$  (Prokosch 106 ; Braune 2004: 381). However, this anomaly can be explained. The change from  $au$  to  $\bar{e}a$  displays smoothing of vowel height, which suggests that this is an intermediate step to monophthongization, which does in fact happen later on in the history of the language. For example, OE had the words  $d\bar{e}ap$ ,  $h\bar{e}afod$ , and  $r\bar{e}ad$  compared to Present Day English  $death$ ,  $head$ , and  $red$  (Wright 1925: 83). Furthermore monophthongization is a trend in North Sea Germanic, as seen when it is compared with Old High German and its limited monophthongization of  $ai$  and  $au$ .

A further Anglo-Frisian characteristic is what Laker calls the ‘Ingvaenic palatalization.’ This is a palatalization of velars and involves contact with front vowels (Laker 166). This is a key development in the consonant systems of Anglo-Frisian, which are otherwise fairly conservative. According to Laker, initial velar stops,  $k$  and  $g$ , underwent palatalization in Old Frisian and Old English, when followed by a front vowel or  $j$  “except front vowels resulting from  $i$ -umlaut, a condition which holds for velar palatalizations in all positions” (Laker 166). A second environment for palatalization in

Old English and Old Frisian involves medial velar stops. According to Laker both *-k(k)-* and *-gg-* underwent palatalization when preceding *i* or *j*, and *-g-* was palatalized “between all front vowels” (166). In the final position, the language differed in the palatalization of *-k*. Palatalization of final *-k* took place in Old English when it was preceded by a front vowel, but palatalization of final *-k* did not occur in Old Frisian (Laker 166). On the other hand, preceding front vowels palatalized final *-g* in both languages (Laker 166). Furthermore, the consonant clusters *sk* and *gg* were usually palatalized, with the exception of *ascian* ‘to ask’ (Mitchell and Robinson 16). However, this example is simply a coincidence, which resulted from metathesis. In contrast to Old English, the consonant cluster *sk* was not palatalized in Old Frisian (Bremmer 30). Regarding the orthography of Old English and Old Frisian, these palatalizations were not generally marked as such in Old English unlike Old Frisian (Laker 166). Some examples of palatalization are OE *scip* ‘ship’ vs. OF *skip*, OE *ecg* ‘edge’, OE *ċiriċe* ‘church’, OF *tzerke* ‘church’, and OF *eg* ‘edge’ (Mitchell and Robinson 16, 350; Bremmer 30, 193, 214).

#### E) Rhine-Weser Germanic

A second traditional sub-group of West Germanic is Rhine-Weser Germanic, or Istvaeonic, which consists of Old Low Franconian and Franconian in general. There are a few traits features that are unique to Old Low Franconian among the West Germanic languages, but for the most part, its features are mixture of that of both North Sea Germanic and Elbe Germanic. One unique feature is the first person, singular, present indicative ending *-on*, as seen in the form *singon* ‘I sing’ for example, which is in

opposition to the typical West Germanic ending *-e* as in OE *singe* (Robinson 215). This could possibly go back to the *-mi* verbs from Indo-European. For example, OHG had a few verbs that had a nasal ending rather than the typical *-e*: *bin/bim* ‘I am’, *tuam/tuon* ‘I do’ (the oldest form was *tōm*), *gām/gēm*, *gān*, *gēn* ‘I go’, and *stān* ‘I stand’ (Braune 2004: 308-311). Perhaps the endings from this class was generalized for the present paradigm in Old Low Franconian. These verbs are commonly used after all. The other major innovation in Old Low Franconian was a phonological one. The fricative *f* sometimes became *h*, which was a voiceless, velar fricative, in *ft* consonant cluster, but the spellings were inconsistent. An example of this the variants *eft* and *eht* ‘again’ (Robinson 213-214). This alternation could in orthography could be indicative of the onset of this phonological change. In other words, this change could have started around the times of the texts. The North Sea Germanic and Elbe Germanic traits displayed in Old Low Franconian will be discussed in detail in the next section.

#### E) Elbe Germanic

The third West Germanic sub-group is Elbe Germanic, also known as Irminomic. The sole member is the Upper German dialects, Bavarian and Alemannic, of Old High German. Although one could separate Old High German into Middle German and Upper German, but these are dialect groups rather than different languages. The most important innovation in Old High German is the second, or High German, consonant shift. Upper German had a complete shift, and Franconian was a transition area with regard to the shift. In the High German Consonant Shift Germanic *p*, *t*, *k* shifted to *f/pf* (*ph* is an orthographic variant for *pf*), *ʒ/z* [ts]. Regarding the affrication in this consonant



shift, Braune states, “Im Anlaut sowie im In- und Auslaut nach Sonanten (Liquiden, Nasalen) und in der Geminatio werden *p, t, k* nur bis zur Affrikata verschoben...” (2004: 85). Examples of the shift of the voiceless plosives to voiceless fricatives are seen in the following examples: OS *opan* ‘open’, *slāpan* ‘to sleep’, *skip* ‘ship’, compared to OHG *offan*, *slāffan*, *skif*, OS *etan* ‘to eat’, *lātan* ‘to let’, *hwat* ‘what’ versus OHG *ëzzan*, *lāzzan*, *hwaʒ*, and OS *makōn* ‘to make’, *tēkan* ‘sign’, *ik* ‘I’ compared to OHG *mahhōn*, *zeihhan*, and *ih* (Braune 2004: 84). Examples of the affrication in the High German Consonant shift are as follows: OS *plēgan* ‘to vouch for’, *penning* ‘penny’, *skeppian* ‘to create’, *hēlpān* ‘to help’, *thorp* ‘village’ compared to OHG *pflēgan* ‘to take care of’, *pffenning*, *skepfen*, *hēlpfan*, *thorpf*, OS *tiohan* ‘to pull’, *herta* ‘heart’, *holt* ‘wood’, *settian* ‘to set’ versus OHG *ziohan*, *hërza*, *setzen/sezzen*, and OS *korn* ‘grain’, *wërk* ‘work’, *wekkian* ‘to wake’ versus Upper German dialects of OHG *khorn/chorn*, *wërch*, and *wechen/wecchen* (Braune 2004: 85). An additional phonological change within Old High German was the occlusion of the voiceless dental fricative *þ* to *d*, which developed rather early and eventually spread to all Old High German dialects (Braune 2004: 84). In addition to the High German consonant shift, Old High German did not lose nasals before spirants as seen in the words *fimf* and *kunft* for example (Braune 2004: 121). A further change that is part of the High German Consonant Shift is the change in the series *β, ð, γ* to *b, d, g* (Braune 2004: 91; Goblirsch 2002: 207f.)

With regard to vowels, Old High German was remarkably conservative of short monophthongs in unaccented positions. However, there were changes in the vowels with regard to some diphthongs and long monophthongs. For example, *ō* diphthongized to *uo* and its variants and *ē<sub>2</sub>* diphthongized to *ie* and its variants, as seen in the words OHG *hier*

‘here’ versus Goth. *hēr* and OHG *fuoz* ‘foot’ versus Goth. *fōtus* (Braune 2004: 38-39). Regarding diphthongs, *ai* and *au* were monophthongized in certain phonological environments. In the case of the former, it monophthongized to *ē* before “*h, w, r,* and, in some interjections, at the end of the word” (Robinson 235). Examples of this are OHG *sē* ‘sea’ versus Goth. *saiws* and OHG *mēro* ‘more’ versus Goth. *maiza*. However, this monophthongization also occurred in the thematic vowel of class 3 weak verbs, which are quite abundant in OHG unlike the other West Germanic languages. Compare Goth. *haibada* ‘had’ to OHG *habēta* and this monophthongization is quite apparent. The environment for the diphthongization of Germanic *ō* to OHG *uo* and its variants was a following *h* or dental consonant. Examples of this are OHG *hōren* ‘to hear’ versus Goth. *hausjan* and OHG *hōh* ‘high’ versus Goth. *hauhs* (Robinson 235). Old High German also has *i*-mutation in the plural forms of the reflexes of the s-stems; compare Anglian Old English *lombur* and Old High German *lombiro* (Stiles 18, 25). Among other innovations or differences between Old High German and other Germanic languages there is simplification of \*-mm-, as evidenced by the comparison Old High German *dēmu* and Gothic *Pamma*. With regard to verbal morphology, Stiles points out that the Old High German first person, plural ending *-mēs* is “unparalleled in Germanic” (25). Stiles considers the third person, singular pronoun *hē/hī* as opposed to Modern High German *er* (*ir*) to be an Ingvaemonic trait (Stiles 18). However, this assertion is not likely true based on the Old High German third person singular pronoun *hēr*. The *h-* in the Old High German pronoun was later lost, but it was present in the first place, and Old High German has never been considered an Ingvaemonic language. *Her* as the nominative, masculine, singular pronoun is a Franconian feature (Braune 2004: 243). Furthermore, *hē* appears six

times in the Tatian translation and one time in both the second *Merseburger Zauberspruch* and *Ludwigslied* among other texts (Braune 2004 243).

1. West Germanic gemination
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, preterite, indicative ending *i* (except Frisian)
3. The development of a gerund
4. Loss of *w* after *ng*
5. Contracted forms of 'stand' and 'go'

Figure 4.1 Features of West Germanic

1. Palatalization (Anglo-Frisian)
2. Fronting (Anglo-Frisian)
3. Monophthongization of Germanic *ai*
4. Monophthongization of Germanic *au*
5. Merger of dative and accusative 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns
6. Uniform plural verb forms
7. Loss of nasals before spirants
8. Reduction of Class 3 weak verbs and rebuilding of the weak verb classes
9. Loss of the reflexive pronoun
10. The vowel + *s* plural forms in *a*-stems

Figure 4.2 Features of North Sea Germanic

1. First person, singular, present, indicative ending *-on*
2. *f* sometimes *h* before *t*
3. Mixture of North Sea and Elbe Germanic features

Figure 4.3 Features of Rhine-Weser Germanic

1. Completed second consonant shift
2.  $\bar{o}, \bar{e}_2 > uo, ie$
3. No loss of nasals before spirants
4. Occlusion of Gmc. *þ*
5.  $\gamma, \beta, \delta > g, b, d$

Figure 4.4 Features of Elbe Germanic

## Chapter 5

### Problems with the Grouping

#### A) Parallels between Old Norse and Anglo-Frisian

Old English and Old Frisian present a bit of a problem with grouping due to their similarities to Old Norse. One such problem is the -s plural in *a*-stem nouns. For example, these endings are displayed in the following words: ON *armar* ‘arms’, OE *stānas*, and Old Frisian *bāmar* ‘trees’ (Bremmer 60 ; Mitchell and Robinson 22 ; Noreen 108). Rhotacism is reflected in both Old Frisian and Old Norse in these endings. Regarding verbal endings, both Old Norse and Old Frisian dropped the *-n* in the infinitival ending -- compare ON *koma* ‘to come’, OF *kuma*, and OHG *quëman* (Braune 2004: 283 ; Bremmer 75 ; Noreen 164). However, this can be explained with apocope, which is even observed in New High German dialects and colloquial speech. A phonological similarity between Old Norse on one side and Old Frisian and Old English on the other side is the loss of nasals before spirants. Although this is a very limited process in Old Norse. The spirant that caused the loss of a preceding nasal was *s*, as exemplified by the ON pronoun *oss* ‘us’ (Robinson 250-251 ; Noreen 25). A further phonological similarity according to Robinson is the retention of the Germanic long monophthongs  $\bar{e}_2$  and  $\bar{o}$  (250-251).

## B) The North Sea-Elbe Germanic Transition Zone

Old Saxon and Old Low Franconian are another two languages that present some difficulty in their grouping. One major problem with Old Low Franconian is its extremely limited literary corpus. It may very well have features that are simply unattested due to the insufficient amount of texts (Robinson 214). Old Saxon presents a similar situation, though its corpus is larger than that of Old Low Franconian. One of its major literary texts, the *Heliand*, presents a problem in that there was probably some Old High German contamination in the text (Stiles 20). Part of what contributed to this language mixture is that it was written by Franconian monks for the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity (Cathey 17). However, this does not necessarily mean that many of the Old High German features found in the *Heliand* were completely of Old High German origin. It is likely that many of these features were part of the southern dialects of Old Saxon. Old High German and Old Saxon were certainly close together geographically, and language contact was probably extensive, especially after Charlemagne led military campaigns in Old Saxon territory. However, there was a manuscript copy of the *Heliand* found in Straubing, Bavaria that displayed more Ingvaemonic traits than the other manuscript (Nielsen 100). On the other hand, this manuscript is also from High German territory, if it was in fact written in Bavaria. Perhaps this manuscript was written to convert the Northern Saxons and is thus written in a northern dialect of Old Saxon. This would make sense in that the northern dialects of Old Saxon are closer geographically to Anglo-Frisian territory and would thus have more language contact. In fact, the different areas of Saxon territory were conquered and the people were converted at different times, which

may explain the existence of two manuscripts of the same text with different linguistic features (Cathey 11).

An additional problem with the grouping of Old Low Franconian and Old Saxon is that both these languages exhibit North Sea Germanic traits along with Elbe Germanic traits. One such trait is the merger of the first and second person, singular, accusative and dative personal pronouns *mi* and *thi* in Old Low Franconian and *mî* and *thî* in Old Saxon (Rösel 96 ; Robinson 123, 214). An additional North Sea Germanic trait in Old Low Franconian is the loss of the nasal *n* before fricatives *s* (Rösel 96). Like Old Norse, this development is quite limited compared to loss of nasals, *m* and *n*, before the fricatives *f*, *þ*, and *s*. There is also a North Sea Germanic verbal trait that is only in the Northern dialects of Old Low Franconian. This trait is the uniform plural verb form (Rösel 96). Rösel claims, “Es hat hier wohl eine Vermengung fries. und frk. Sprachform Einheitsplural, dieser aber die frk. Lautung *-en* (13. Jh. hieß es noch *-ath*) übernommen haben” (96). This among other features suggests that Old Low Franconian is part of a transition zone between North Sea Germanic on one side and Elbe Germanic on the other. On a similar note, it seems that Old Low Franconian did not originally have reflexive pronouns, as was the case with Old Saxon. Robinson asserts, “There is a reflexive pronoun *sig* in Old Low Franconian. Its form, with *g*...instead of *k*, betrays its borrowing from a High German dialect (214). However, the last trait is only attested in Northern Holland. Part of the reason for these Ingvaemonic traits in Dutch is undoubtedly contact with Old Saxon and the existence of Saxon dialects within Dutch, but the Frisian substratum in Northern Holland played a more major role in this since it covered a larger area than that of Saxon (Bremmer 9).

As mentioned before, there are Elbe Germanic traits in Old Saxon, Old Low Franconian, and the Franconian dialects of Old High German in addition to the North Sea Germanic traits discussed. One such trait is the lack of fronting of Germanic  $\bar{e}_1$ , which is characteristic of all Germanic languages except Anglo-Frisian (Robinson 250-251). Additionally, *Verdumpfung* before nasals did not take place in Old Low Franconian and Old Saxon (Robinson 250-251). Furthermore, what Laker calls the “Ingvaemonic Palatalization” did not take place in either Old Saxon or Old Low Franconian. That is to say, the velar consonants did not undergo assibilation (Prokosch 90). From these lists of isoglosses given, it seems that Old Saxon is more related to Old Low Franconian than is traditionally acknowledged. These languages show traits of their Germanic neighbors, and seem to form a North Sea-Elbe Germanic transition zone. Old Saxon displays a continuum quite nicely. For example, the OS feminine, nominative and accusative, singular and plural, personal pronouns, which include nom. sg. *siu* ‘she’ and acc. sg. and nom. and acc. pl. *sia* ‘her’, clearly resemble those of Old High German, which are *siu* and *sio* respectively. Compare this to OE *hēo* and *hīa* respectively. The third person pronouns in Old Saxon resemble those of Old High German more than those of Old English, but there are some variants, like *him* ‘to/for him’, that are closer to Old English. In conclusion with Old Saxon, one must be careful when analyzing the minor Old Saxon texts because Frisians occupied territory in modern Low German territory (Bremmer 3). Therefore, there could have been a Frisian substratum in Northwest Saxony as well. It is known that there were disputes between the Frisians and Old Saxon counts for this territory (Bremmer 3).

In the case of the Franconian dialects of Old High German, the second consonant shift was not complete, as is the case today with the exception of East Franconian, probably due to the fact that the second consonant shift was an Elbe Germanic trait that spread to the Franconian dialects. Compare the following words: Franconian OHG *korn* ‘grain’, *wërk* ‘work’, *wecken* ‘to awaken’ opposed to Upper Old High German *khorn*, *wërch*, and *wechen*. However, Franconian probably shifted *k* to *kh*, but it was reversed. As mentioned previously, Franconian Old High German is a transition zone. This can be seen in the following examples in conjunction to the previous example: Upper (UG) and East Franconian (EF) Old High *pflëgan* ‘to tend to’ vs. Rhenish (RF) and Middle Franconian (MF) *plëgan*, UG and EF *pfëning* ‘penny’ vs. RF and MF *penning*, UG and EF *skepfan* ‘to create’ vs. OS *skeppen*; UG, EF, and RF *hëlpfan* ‘to help’ and *thorpf* ‘village’ versus MF *hëlpan* and *thorp*; but all dialects of OHG *ziohan* ‘to pull’, *hërza* ‘heart’, and *holz* ‘wood’ vs. OS *tiohan*, *herta*, and *holt* (Braune 2004: 85). From these examples it is clear that the second consonant shift spread to the Franconian dialects to varying degrees. East Franconian has the most complete second consonant shift, followed by Rhenish Franconian, and the least in Middle Franconian. Therefore, there is a continuum within the Franconian dialects.

### C) Review of Parallels between Old Norse and Gothic and Gothic and Old High German

As mentioned earlier, Germanic languages from different groups or sub-groups are not completely divided and cut off from each other. There are still relationships between these languages based on common retentions. This is the case for Old Norse and Gothic for example. One feature common to Old Norse and Gothic is sharpening, as



mentioned in the North Germanic and East Germanic chapters. There are several other similarities as well. Some of these are the following: the passive voice (Gothic) / medio-passive voice (Old Norse), *-na(n)* verbs, no gerund, no contracted infinitives of ‘stand’ and ‘go’, and the second person, singular, preterite, indicative ending *-t*. There are also a number of retentions in Old High German that are common to Gothic. The archaisms include the following: “a more complex vowel system, with distinction of long and short vowels [in unaccented positions], and five instead of four short-vowel qualities,” full vowels in unaccented positions, and the retention of Class III weak verbs, among others (Stiles 25).

## Chapter 6

### Closing Remarks

In conclusion, there are three separate branches of Germanic: East, North, and West Germanic, with the latter two having been a single branch at one time. A further division of West Germanic into sub-groups is as follows: North Sea Germanic (Anglo-Frisian), the North Sea-Elbe Germanic transition zone (Old Saxon and Old Low Franconian), and Elbe Germanic (Old High German). However, these sub-groupings and even macro-groupings do not mean that these languages are unrelated and do not share numerous similarities. These languages exist on a language continuum that has evolved over many centuries, even though we do not have detailed geographic data the way we do for modern dialects, and the picture is further complicated by language contact and historical events causing language changes.

East Germanic: Gothic

North Germanic: Old Norse

West Germanic

North Sea Germanic: Old English, Old Frisian, and Old Saxon (with some Elbe Germanic traits)  
North Sea-Elbe Germanic Transition Zone: Old Low Franconian, and Franconian dialects of Old High German

Elbe Germanic: Upper German dialects of Old High German

Figure 6.1 Proposed Grouping of the Germanic Languages

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