

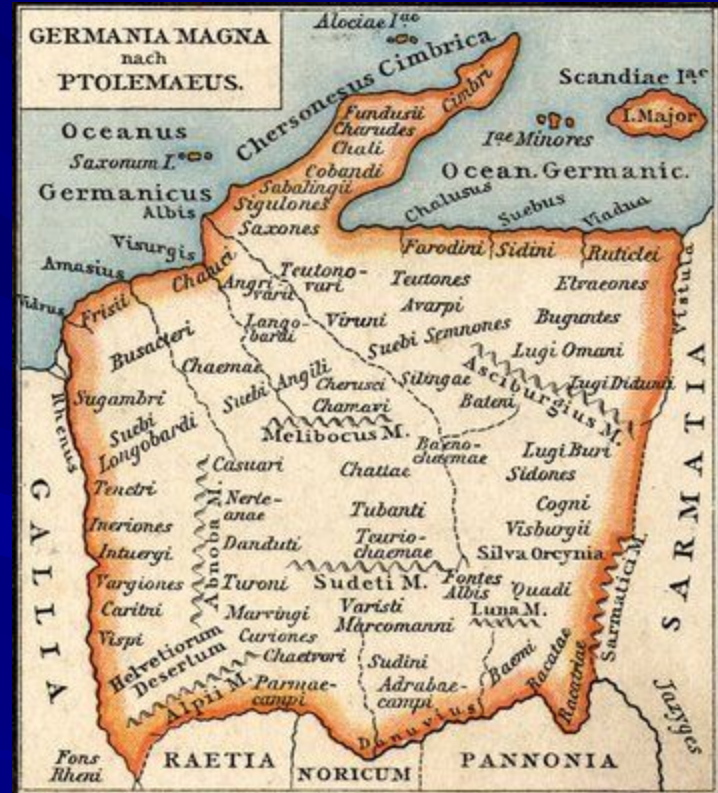
We are family: A brief language history of the Germanic family

Dr. M. Putnam

English 270/German 320

Carson-Newman College

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Startling similarities between English and German

Lexical similarities:

German

English

Mann

man

Maus

mouse

singen

sing

Gast

guest

grün

green

haben

have

Vater

father

A little less obvious lexical similarities

German

English

Pfeffer

pepper

Herz

heart

liegen

lie

lachen

laugh

Hund 'dog'

hound

Knecht 'servant'

knight

Weib 'woman'

wife

Zeit 'time'

tide (notice '*eventide*')

Grammatical correspondences between German and English

Formation of comparative and superlative forms

German

English

dick

thick

dicker

thicker

(am) dickst(en)

thickest

Irregular comparative and superlative patterns

German

gut

besser

(am) best(en)

English

good

better

best

Verb system: past tense of regular verbs

German

lachen-lachte

hassen-hasste

lieben-liebte

English

laugh-laughed

hate-hated

love-loved

Irregular forms:

German

denken-dachte

bringen-brachte

English

think-thought

bring-brought

Vowel allophony (ablaut) in strong verbs

German

English

singen-sang-gesungen

sing-sang-sung

geben-gab-gegeben

give-gave-given

fall-fiel-gefallen

fall-fell-fallen

How do we account for these similarities?

Option 1: These two languages have, at some time in the past, borrowed heavily from one another (or that both of them have borrowed heavily from some third language).

This has happened in the history of English before – case in point, relationship between English and French since the Norman Invasion of England in 1066

crown country people baron color war

peace officer judge court crime marry

religion altar virtue beef pork joy

Difference in the English-German and English-French relationships

English (by in large) only borrowed vocabulary forms from French and not general grammatical patterns

Correspondences between English and German are all encompassing (lexical and grammatical)

Conclusion: **Option 1** is a bust

Let's try another option...

Option 2: We may speculate that, at some time in the distant past, the ancestors of English and German were merely dialects of *the same language*.

Differences in the modern languages (i.e., English and German) are due to changes (e.g., lexical borrowing, sound changes, grammatical paradigms, word order (syntax), etc.)

Proto-Indo-European (PIE)

Dates back to 2500-2000 B.C.E.

Geographically: located for the most part in the lands that extend from India to Europe

12 major divisions: Albanian, Armenian, Baltic, Celtic, Germanic, Hittite, Indic, Iranian, Italic, Slavic, Tocharian,

Important note: We have no attested written documents in PIE. The PIE language is a **“reconstructed”** proto-form (usually indicated with a star - *dagas (days))

Linguistic reconstruction – The comparative method:

When two languages can be traced back to a common ancestor language, we say that they are *genetically related*.

Relationships: Proto/Parent language
Daughter language/dialect

Related words are referred to as *cognates*.

The Comparative Method

An example

<u>OE</u>	<u>OHG</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>Gothic</u>	<u>ModE</u>
fæder	fater	faðir	fadar	father
fōt	fuoz	fótr	fôtus	foot
þrīe	drî	þrír	þreis	three
þú	dû	þú	þu	thou
cūðe	konda	kunna	kunþa	could
ōðer	andar	annarr	anþar	other

Question: What is the relationship between /d/ and /p/? Which is the proto-form?

The Germanic Sound Shift (Grimm's Law)

PIE

Germanic

Voiceless stops: p, t, k

Voiceless spirants: f, þ, x

Voiced aspirated stops: bh, dh, gh
(becoming) the voiced

Voiced spirants:

unaspirated stops b, d, g

in certain phonetic

environments in the

historical daughter

languages)

Voiced unaspirated stops: b, d, g Voiceless unaspirated
stops: p, t, k

Example: PIE voiceless stops p, t, k became the Proto-Germanic corresponding voiceless spirants f, þ, χ:

Latin

pecu

três

cornû

Gothic

faíhu “cattle”

þreis “three”

haúrn “horn”

(Gothic *h* equals χ)

Exceptions to the rule: Verner's Law

Latin

septem

centum

dux

Gothic

sibun “seven”

hund “hundred”

(OE heretoga) “duke”

As noted by Karl Verner (1875) was the crucial factor of accent in combination with surrounding sounds: On the basis of evidence from PIE languages such as Sanskrit and Greek, Verner was able to show that all the words in PIE **p* had changed in Germanic to *f* either had that **p* as the first sound in the word, or >>

Verner's Law (con't)

>> had the accent on the syllable immediately preceding ***p**, as in the examples below:

IE ***p**ətér > Gothic **f**adar “father”

IE *né**p**ôt > ON **n**efi “nefi”

On the other hand, those ***p**'s that eventually became German **b** where those that had NOT stood in initial position and that had not had the accent on the immediately preceding syllable, as in the example below:

IE *se**p**(t)m > Gothic si**b**un “seven”

IE *u**p**éri > OHG u**b**ar “over”

Linguistics, Archeology, and History

Language groups should **never** be confused with ethnic groups.

The Indo-Europeans appear to have been organized into rather small groups or clans, based on the fact that there is no widespread cognate with the constructed meaning “king” (though a word for “clan chieftian” does exist).

Heavy reliance on hunting and animal husbandry for food; metals were virtually unknown.

Reconstructed cognates for “winter” and “snow” suggest the Indo-Europeans didn’t live too far south.

Final notes on the Indo-Europeans

Beach tree – If this reconstructed form is correct, then it is significant for the location of the Indo-European homeland, since in prehistoric times the beech was apparently not indigenous to any areas east of a line drawn from Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg) in the western Soviet Union to the Crimea, north of the Black Sea.

Kurgan Culture – potential archeological link between Indo-Europeans and a culture (fifth millennium B.C.E.) located north of the Black Sea.

The Germanic Tribes

The weight of the evidence points to an ancient homeland in modern Denmark and southern Sweden.

“Battle-ax Culture” from roughly third millennium B.C.E.

Only at a relatively late era is there evidence about the Germanic people that is neither linguistic nor archeological. About 200 B.C.E. Greek and Roman historians wrote about the Germanic tribes.

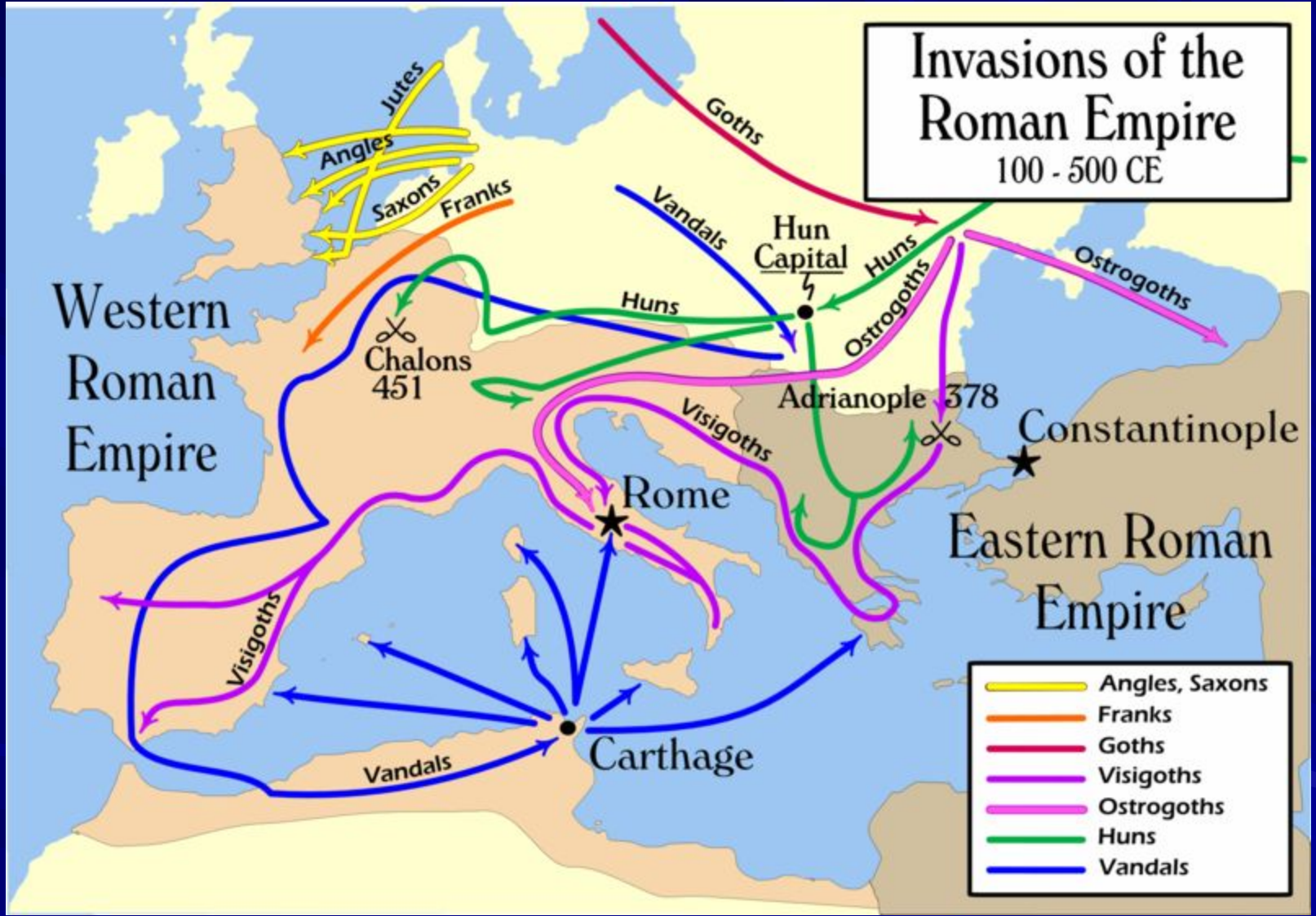
Runic inscriptions – after the second half of the second century, we have written evidence from the Germanic peoples themselves.

Völkerwanderung

We may reconstruct a gradual splitting-up of the Germanic people and their languages, along with a migration southward out of their original homeland in southern Scandinavia.

By 200 B.C.E., Germanic tribes had apparently spread across the area show below (see map), from northern Belgium in the west to the Vistula in the east, and south as far as the upper Elbe.

Invasions of the Roman Empire 100 - 500 CE



Western Roman Empire

Eastern Roman Empire

- Angles, Saxons
- Franks
- Goths
- Visigoths
- Ostrogoths
- Huns
- Vandals

5 Distinct Groups

North Germanic – remained mostly in Scandinavia

East Germanic – (Gothic) East of the Oder, and spread along the Baltic Coast

West Germanic – west of the Oder, and spread out as far as modern Belgium

Istvaeones (Weser-Rhein Group)

Irinones (Elbe Group)

Germania – Roman historian Tacitus (98 A.D.)