dialectology & sociolinguistics

roots of eco-linguistics

language variation

- Not everyone speaks the same language the same way. There is variation in every language.

- Dialectology developed from the observation that there are regional varieties, such that people in one area speak the language similarly, whereas people in another area speak the language differently.

- Dialectologists began to study the phonological, lexical, and grammatical differences from one area to another.

synchrony: mutual intelligibility

- In order to decide whether two ways of speaking are two completely different languages or whether they are two different dialects of the same language, linguists developed the idea of **mutual intelligibility**.

- If the people of one town and the people of another town can understand each other's speech, then the people of both towns speak the same language, even if they speak that language differently.

- The different English dialects of southern England are **mutually intelligible** at the present time. **Synchronic** linguistics focuses on the similarities of dialects "spoken at the same time".

synchrony: isoglosses

- Dialectologists began to map **dialect areas**.

- The lines between dialect areas are called **isoglosses**.

- The Benrath Line (red) is the *maken~machen* isogloss. South of the line, the Germans say *machen*, and, North of the line, they say *maken*.

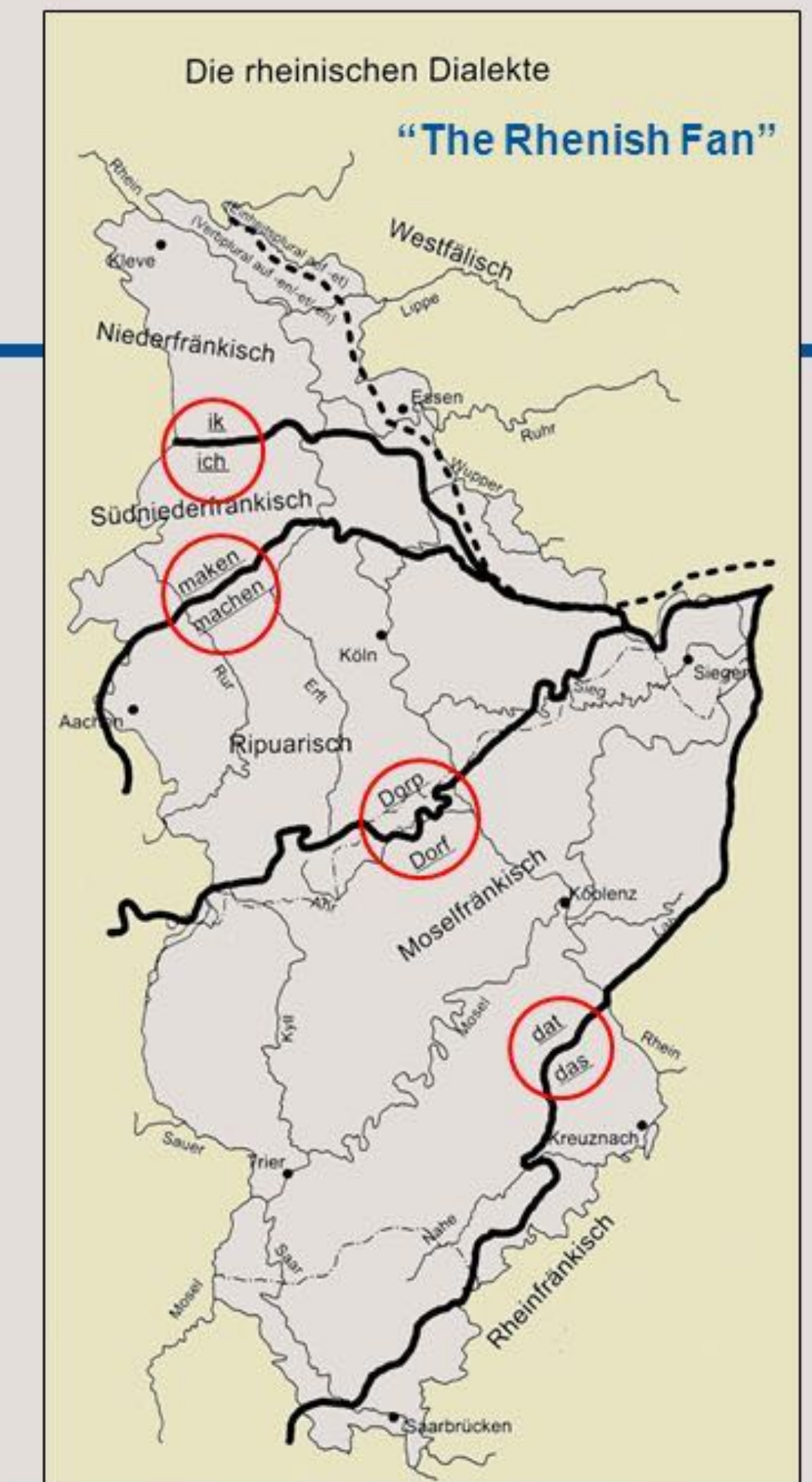- The Speyer Line (orange) is the *Appel~Apfel* isogloss. North of the line, the Germans say *Appel*.

a dialect continuum

- The Rhenish Fan is a famous illustration of the German dialects of the Rhein area.

- If someone walks from the area of the Rheinfränkisch dialect to the area of the Niederfränkisch dialect, the gradual change in German speech observed is an example of a **dialect continuum**.

Isoglosses

❑ Dialects can be mapped using isoglosses
  - Lines on a map mark the boundary between different linguistic items
  - Usually no clear boundary between dialects
❑ The Rhenish Fan in Germany
  - Varieties: Low, Middle and High German
  - Linguistic items: 'ik~ich', 'Dorp~Dorf', 'dat~das'

'I'	'make'	'village'	'that'	'apple'	'pound'	
ik	maken	dorp	dat	appel	pund	Low German
ich	maken	dorp	dat	appel	pund	
ich	machen	dorp	dat	appel	pund	Middle German
ich	machen	dorf	dat	appel	pund	
ich	machen	dorf	das	appel	pund	
ich	machen	dorf	das	apfel	pund	
ich	machen	dorf	das	apfel	pfund	High German

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Steve Pepper

Die rheinischen Dialekte

"The Rhenish Fan"

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dialect continua of Europe

- Europe has several dialect continua:

  the Scandinavian dialect continuum

  the West Germanic dialect continuum

  the North Slavic dialect continuum

  the South Slavic dialect continuum

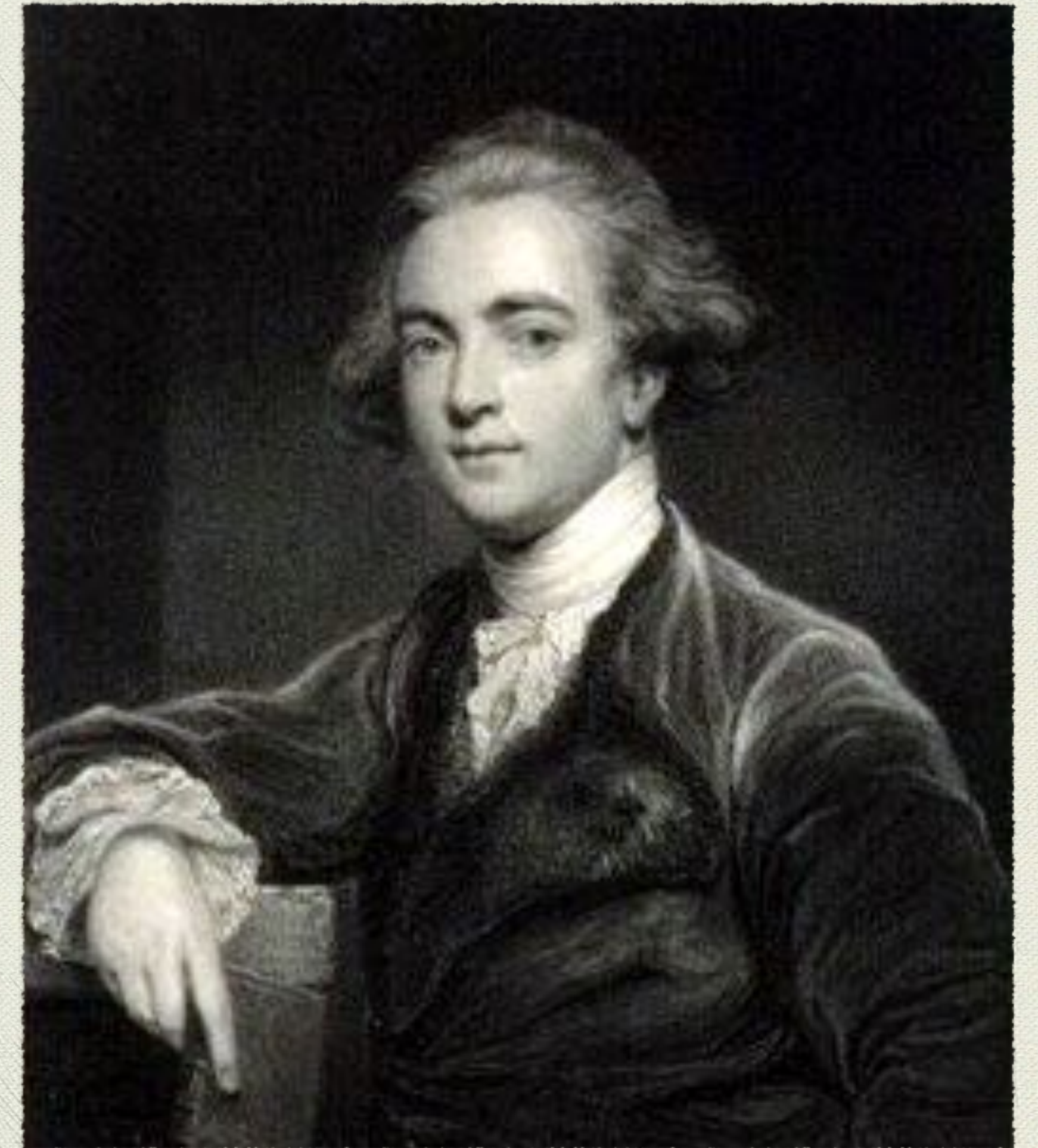 the West Romance dialect continuum

  the East Romance dialect continuum

striking similarities of distant languages

- As Europeans traveled to India, they noticed striking similarities between languages that were geographically **distant** and also mutually **incomprehensible**.

- In 1583, Thomas Stephens noted similarities between the Indian languages he was studying and ancient Greek and Latin.

- In 1585, Filippo Sassetti noted Italian and Sanskrit lexical similarities.

- In 1647, Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn hypothesized that various European and Asian languages were **derived from a common language**.

"sprung from some common source"

- In 1786, **Sir William Jones** made one of the most famous statements in the history of linguistics:

  "The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have **sprung from some common source**, which, perhaps, no longer exists."
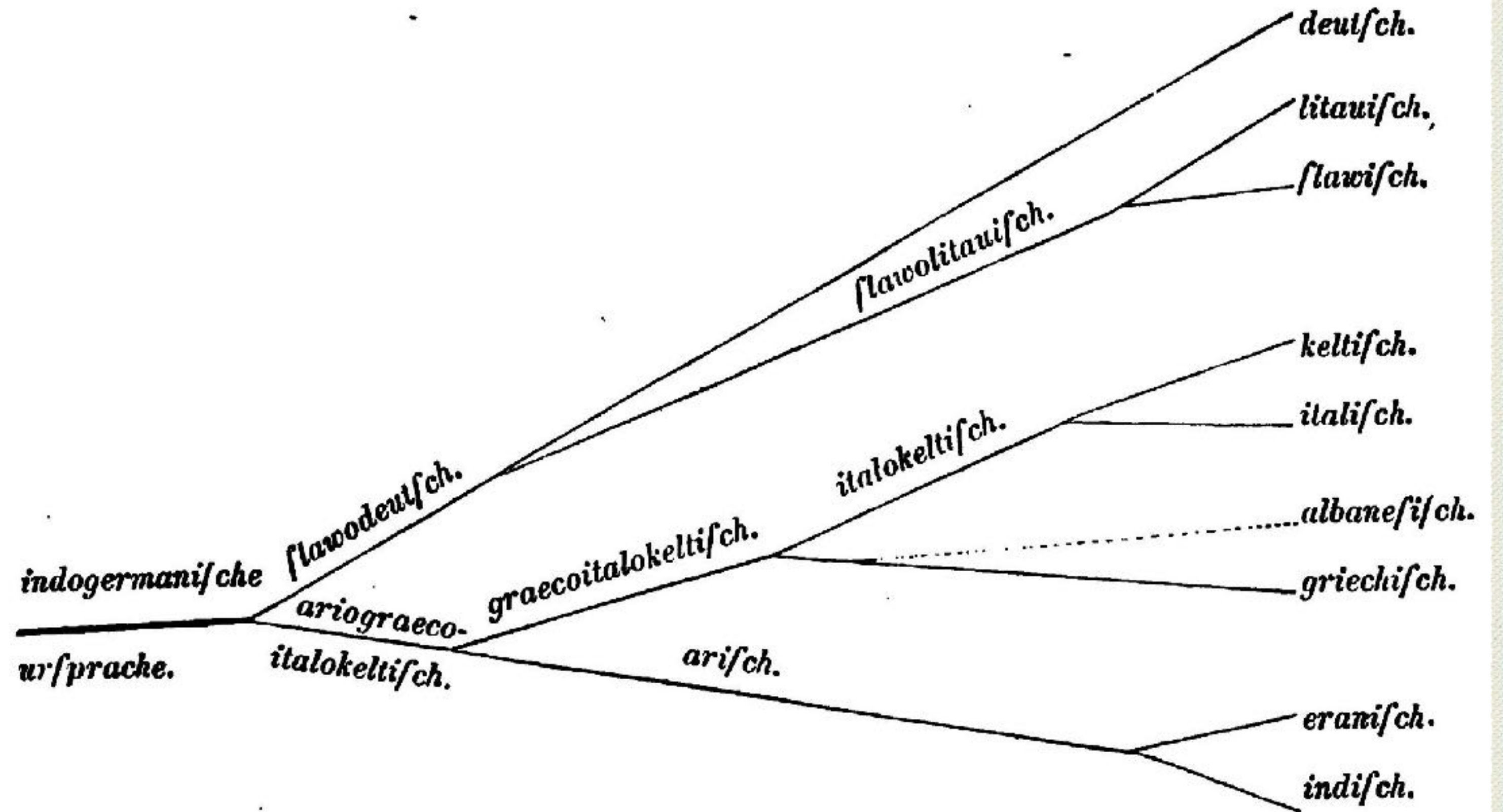
diachrony and Comparative Grammar

* Franz Bopp **compared** Greek, Latin, Persian, and Germanic languages.

* Dialectologists and philologists realized that synchronic differences were evidence of change over time, and **diachronic** linguistics research grew.

* Mutually unintelligible languages, such as English, Norwegian, and German were sometimes called "dialects" because they were **historically descended** from **an older common language**.
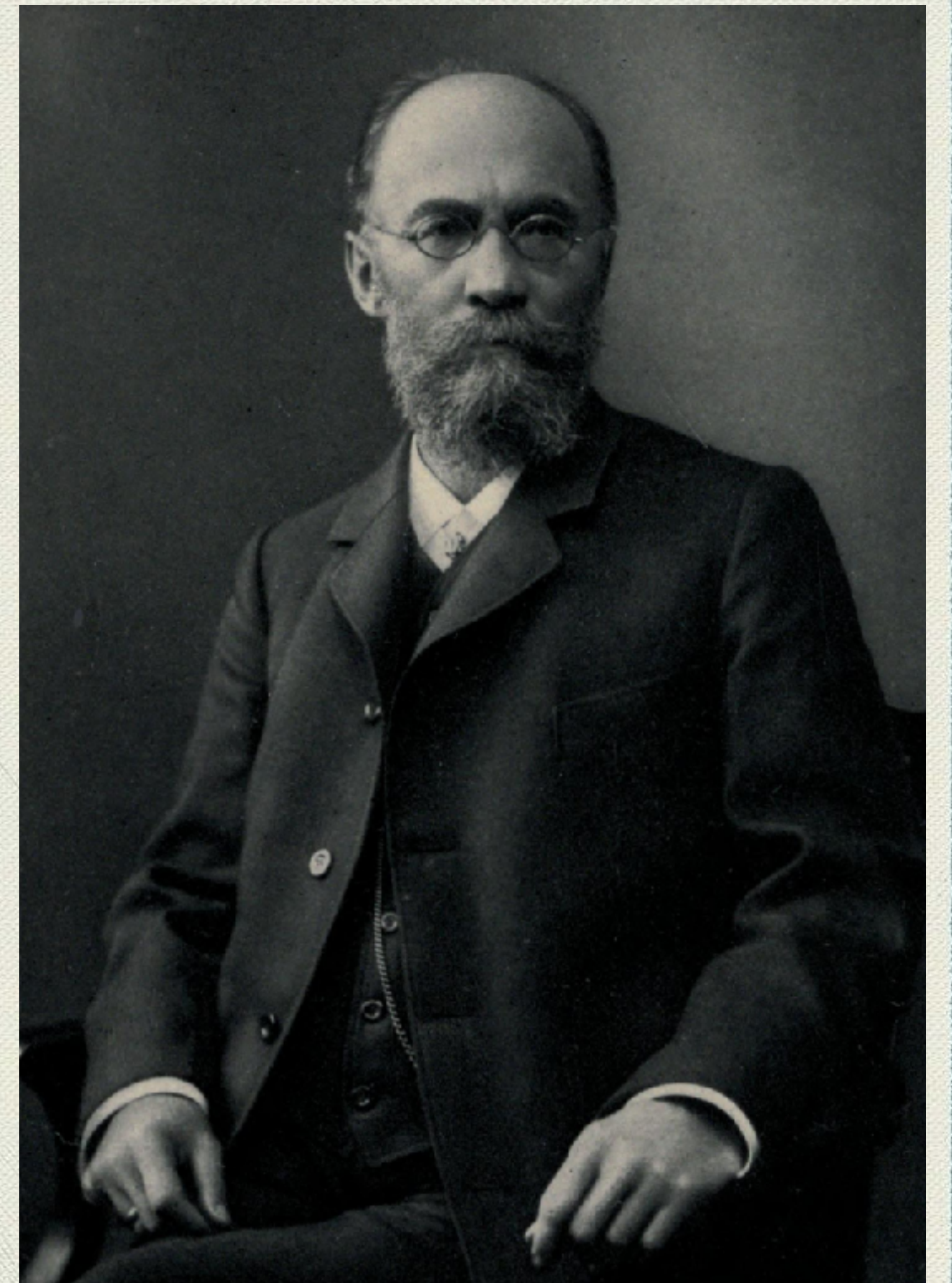
diachronic linguistics

* August Schleicher first used the **language tree** (Stammbaum) model of dialect genesis, which became the standard explanation of the similarity of dialects from Icelandic to Bengali hypothesized to have a common ancestral language.
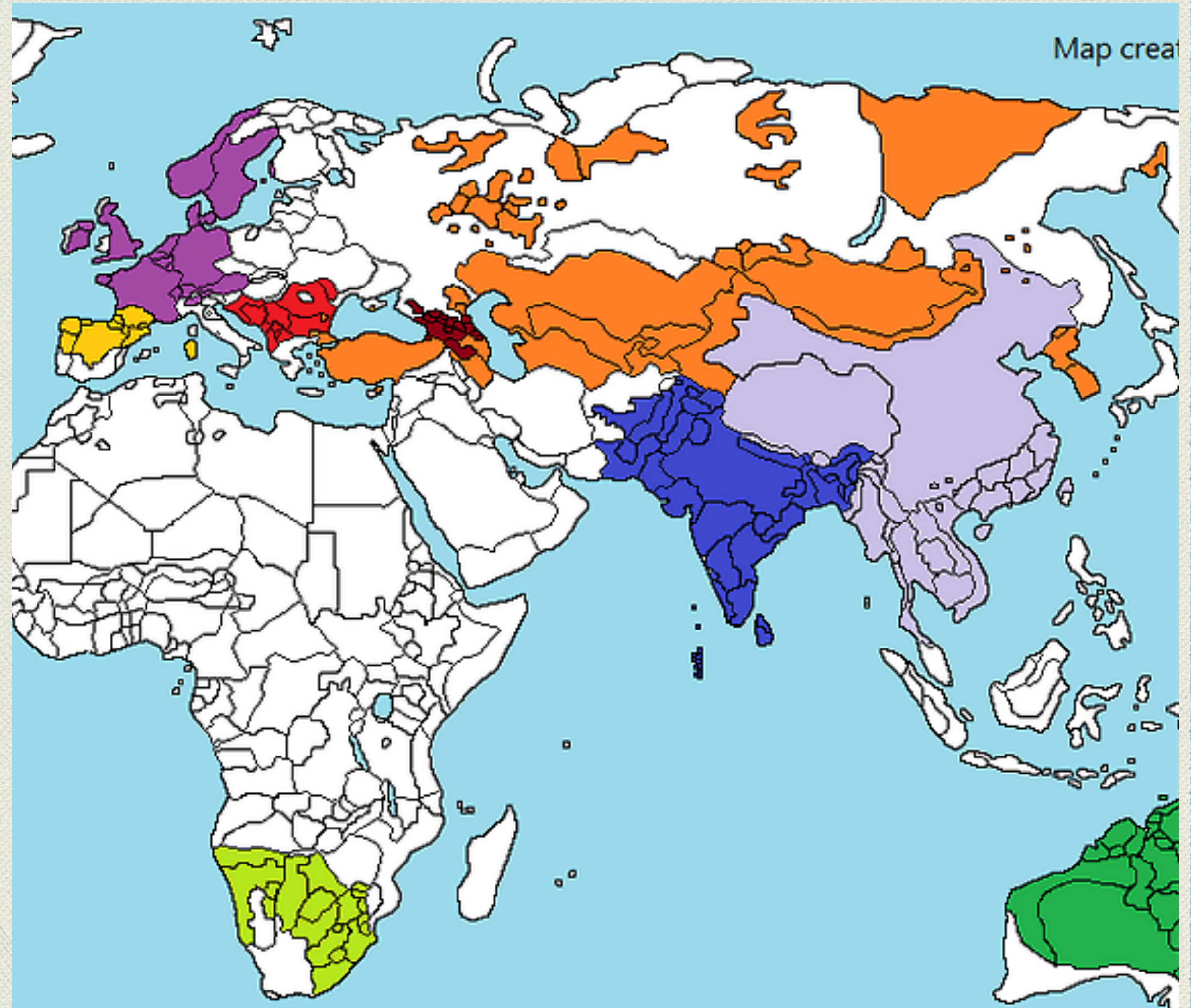
The Comparative Method

- Karl Brugmann and the Neogrammarians developed the Comparative Method of historical language reconstruction.

- The **regularity of sound change** was recognized.

- Exceptions to regular sound change was to be explained by borrowing, sporadic phonetic changes, and analogy.

- (For an update on scholarly opinion, cf. *The Comparative Method Reviewed: Regularity and irregularity in language change,* Mark Durie & Malcolm Ross, eds., 1996.)

a sprachbund

- Linguists eventually realized that some widespread language similarities were the result of widespread areal borrowing, not genetic inheritance.

- A sprachbund, or "linguistic area", or "area of linguistic convergence", or "diffusion area", or "language crossroads" is a group of languages that have common features resulting from geographical proximity and language contact.

- Various sprachbunds have been identified in the world.

Map crea

social splitting vs cultural borrowing

* The **tree model** of language change suggests that language communities split and subsequently develop differently.

* The **wave model** of language change is an alternative theory that can better explain the way certain language innovations can spread through a dialect continuum or through a sprachbund as cultural borrowings.
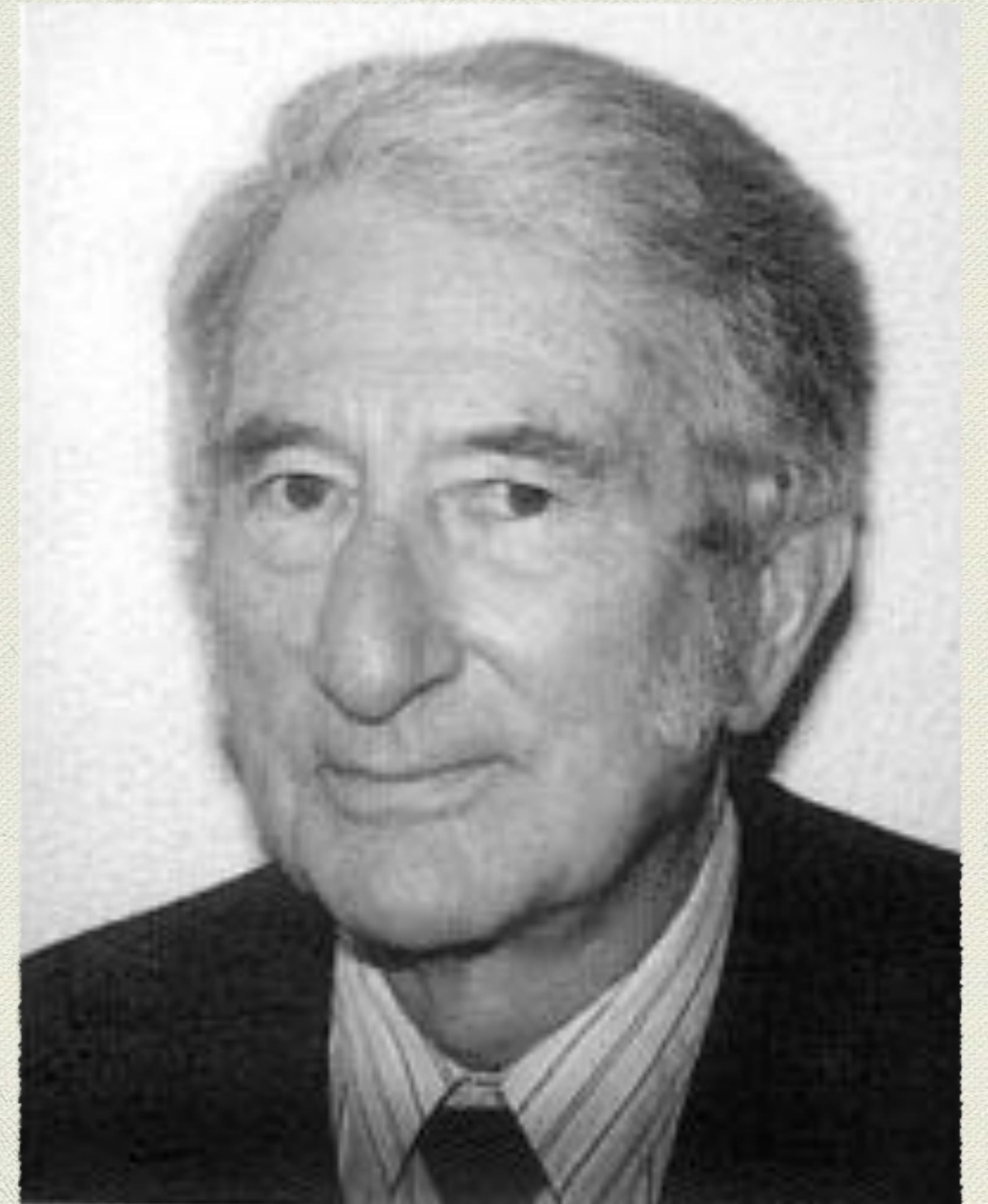
Language in society

- Franz Boas created modern American anthropology by placing **linguistics** as an equal science together with **archeology**, **physical anthropology**, and **ethnology**.

- Boas understood the concept of phonological **contrast**, and his students developed the **emic/etic** distinction, a fundamental linguistic concept, and arguably the most important tool in the exploration of human cognition.

- Language as an important element of human ecology was eventually recognized.

linguistic ecology, eco-linguistics

* Linguistic ecology now understands language as more than "dialectology" or "areal linguistics" or "language in society". We also want to know how different ways of speaking relate to "other stuff".

* Language ecology first considered the sociolinguistic causes of language variation. However, linguistic differences can have nonlinguistic causes.

* Michael Halliday has also carefully noted that nonlinguistic changes can have linguistic causes.

next week: Scandinavia

- Next week, we will consider the Scandinavian language situation.