Gertjan Postma
Meertens Instituut

Lasch's "intrusion" of past subjunctive forms in past indicative plural in European Pomeranian (EP)

For Brazilian Pomeranian (BP) as spoken in Brazil, the following generalization was made in Postma (2019:105): while subjunctives, both present and past, were lost in Brazilian Pomeranian, the newly created mood-neutral past tense has systematically opted for the old past subjunctive forms. So, in BP the new mood-neutral past tense of *kooma* 'to come' is *kaim/kaima* 'came.SG/PL' < *kaim/kaima* 'came.**SUBJ.**SG/PL', instead of the expected *kaam/kaama* 'came.IND.SG/PL'. Similarly, the past tense of 'to be' is *weer(e)* 'was/were' < older *weer(e)* 'were.SUBJ' instead of the expected *was/waare*. In the present tense, no bias to subjunctive forms can be observed and the present tense is a simple continuation of the older present tense indicative. No explanation was given for this curious and surprising fact.

In this study we report on investigations of the past tense in European Hinter-Pomeranian around the time of the emigration to the new world (around 1870). By analyzing three Pomeranian short stories statistically, it turns out that the "intrusion" of past subjunctive forms was already present in Europe, but in the past indicative PLURAL only, not in the SINGULAR: i.e. EP *kam – kaime* 'came.SG-PL', *was – weere* 'was/were'. Secondly, this intrusion only targeted the verbs in ablaut classes 4, e.g. *neeme* 'to take' and ablaut class 5 verbs, e.g. *jeewe* 'to give', giving rise to EP *nam – naime* and *jaf – jaiwe*. By studying the Wenker Atlas, which is based on questionnaires of around 1875, we can sketch a dialectological spreading of this phenomenon: Pomeranian contrasts with the neighboring Low German dialects Vor-Pommersch in the west and Low Prussian in the east, where root vowel change over the past tense paradigm is absent. Eastphalian and South Westphalian, however, do parallel Pomeranian, which is confirmed by the statistics over a 15th century text from Brunswick. This phenomenon was described in Lasch' MLG Grammar as an "Eindringen" of optative forms in the past indicative plural of ablaut class 4/5 verbs. No explanation for the selective target was given. In search for a solution, we analyse an Old-English text (Anglian dialect) that also exhibits this phenomenon, being the precursor of Modern English *was – were*, where the *were* has the shape of a subjunctive form, which is also the pattern in Gothic 4th and 5th class, as well in Saterland Frisian. Old English (West Saxon), Old Saxon, Middle Dutch, and OHG, however, lack this vowel change pattern, and have a length opposition only.

'to come'	Brazilian Pomeranian preterite	European Pomeranian preterite		Old Saxon preterite		Gothic preterite	
		ind.	subj.	ind	subj	ind	subj
ik	kaim	kam	kaime	quam	quāmī	qam	qēmjau
duu	kaimst	?	kaimst	quāmī	quāmī	qamt	qēmeis
hai	kaim	kam	kaime	quam	quāmī	qam	qēmi
wii		←		quāmum	quāmīm	qēmum	qēmeima
ji	kaime	kaime ←	kaime	quāmud	quāmīd	qēmud	qēmeiþ
sai		←		quāmun	quāmīn	qēmun	qēmeina

We discuss possible scenarios how the alternating pattern can have reached Hinter-Pommern: 1. there is a regular vowel change from OS long **ā** to Pomeranian **e/ai**, 2. Pomeranian is not a direct daughter of Old Saxon which is a rather western variety, but of an as yet unknown Easter Old Saxon, which was similar to Gothic on this point, or 3. by a language contact scenario during the Ostsiedlung, where Eastphalian and Pomeranian have reinterpreted substrate Flemish/Dutch length oppositions as a qualitative alternation. Potential evidence will be extracted from corpus searches in the Reference Corpus Niederdeutsch (REN) over a period from 13th-16th century.