

THE PRINZIPAL FEATURES OF THE LENITION IN THE INLAND HIGH GERMAN OF THE SUDETEN LANDS

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The lenition in inland High German that was operative from the 13th century on and was discovered by the Prague Old German scholar Primus Lesiak (1878—1937), brought about a lasting change in the state of consonants in large parts of High German. As these changes, in contrast to those caused by the High German *lautverschiebung* scarcely appeared in writing, scientific research has paid only scant attention to them thus far. The German vernacular of the Sudeten lands — namely the dialect as well as the elevated colloquial speech — was more or less affected by the lenition in inland High German.

Map no. 1, appended to the article, shows the fate of the anlaut explosive fortes MHG *p, t, k*, which in the areas designated I, to which the town dialects of Brünn and Iglau also belong, merged with the explosive lenes MHG *b, d, g* to form one sound each. This is in most cases a medial sound (semi-fortis *B, D, G*), but can also be the lenis and occasionally also the fortis. Unchanged remains only the aspirate *kb* preceding vowels. The anlaut MHG *s* became voiceless in this area. In area II, these changes appeared only in part, namely in sentence anlaut or following voiceless consonants. After vowels and sonorities the old fortes and lenes remained as such, e. g. MHG *s* as a voiced sound. But lenition was advancing. In area III, the old relationships were as yet unshaken. The anlaut MHG *s* is always voiced here. (*p* in *Schönhengst*, etc., is a Bavarian inheritance.)

The situation of the weakening of the anlaut explosive fortes is shown in map no. 2. In the area designated Ia, to which the town dialects of Brünn and Iglau once again belong, the anlaut MHG *p, t, k* became *b, d, g* and merged with the old *b, d, g* (in so far as the latter did not become spirants or were dropped). In the area Ib, *p, t, k* likewise merged with *b, d, g* (in so far as the latter remained explosive consonants). The MHG geminates *pp, tt, ck* are in area I (a and b) always fortes. In area II, geminates, fortes and lenes are without exception spoken as semi-fortes to lenes, while in area III, the old relationships have been preserved. Relationships similar to those in anlaut prevail also in auslaut, but are clearly recognizable only in the dialects.

The anlaut MHG *k* before vowels is spoken in the whole Sudeten German area as an aspirated sound. The distribution of the aspiration of the anlaut *k* before consonants is shown by map no. 3. In the colloquial language of northern Moravia and Silesia, and in part also in the dialect in this region, the anlaut *p* and *t* are frequently also aspirates.

In some connection with lenition is also the prevalent transformation of the explosive lenes into fricatives, above all from *b > w* and *g > x* (ch). In colloquial speech, the change from *g > ch* is found only in the areas shown in map no. 4.

This study is restricted to the explosive sounds: as far as the fricatives are concerned, it attempts solely to clarify the question of the pronunciation of the anlaut *s* in the Sudeten area.