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The modernist philological-linguistic network and Basque studies in the German speaking area

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Language Covered in Article

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Illustrative Map



Basque Country [\[1\]](#)

Content

More than any other non-Indo-European language, Basque has long exerted a particular attraction for philologists of German-speaking countries. This interest was aroused by the fact that the otherness of the Basque language in relation to the languages of Europe was understood as a phenomenon that required special attention: it was the other in the middle of the same, a paradox which demanded an explanation, and Basque – as an exotically distant language – was geographically close.

The professionalization, canonization and institutionalization of the scientific areas in the 19th century had many different backgrounds and formal outcomes which carried also important implications for Basque studies. In the philologies, as in other areas, this process consisted in the

creation of academic disciplines and chairs, university institutes, settled university studies, the foundation of numerous scholarly journals and book series, scientific societies, as well as in the emergence of an international network of scientific discourse – all within an array of 30–40 years. The scientific fields of research and the universities themselves have established rules of organisation, of standards and of good practice in order to carry out these advancements.

Generally, it should be noted that Basque studies were at first only indirectly involved in this process; presumably because there were no Basque universities and because institutions in neither Spain nor France, where Basque is a minority language, and certainly not in other countries, had sufficient interest in setting up their own Basque studies. Many of the 19th century bascologists were not professional philologists or linguists. Notable representatives of the field lived as idealists and amateurs (in a positive sense) of private means (for example Louis-Lucien Bonaparte, Willem van Eys, Hyacinthe de Charencey, temporarily also Wilhelm von Humboldt, Carl August Friedrich Mahn and many others) and eventually printed their publications on their own expense. Others earned a living in professions, which gave them the time and leisure to deal with Basque studies (Jules Vinson, Wentworth Webster, Arno Grimm, Theodor Linschmann and others) and only a few were engaged in related disciplines, especially in Romance studies or anthropology (Telesforo Aranzadi, Hugo Schuchardt and others). Nevertheless, there was a constant interest in the subject throughout the century, and a gradual penetration of Basque studies into more regulated and institutionalized domains such as that of Romance philology.

In the older paradigm, as with representatives of encyclopedic linguistics (e.g. Lorenzo de Hervás y Panduro, Johann Christian Adelung & Johann Severin Vater, the St. Petersburg project around Hartwich Ludwig Christian Bacmeister and Simon Pallas), but also for example in the dissertation of Georg August Friedrich Goldmann of 1807, the inventory and the position of Basque within the European linguistic landscape, specifically the possible genealogical affiliation, stood in the foreground. This perspective changed mainly with the works and in the wake of Wilhelm von Humboldt [1767–1835]. The three main topics of study, to which he intended to dedicate the three volumes of his huge unfinished Basque project, were: anthropology, linguistics and linguistic prehistory. In particular, the first two contributed significantly to the foundation of modernity in linguistics. The structure of the new edition is based on Humboldt's own work plan (cf. Humboldt 2010, 2012). The historical third part (Humboldt 1821) was very successful in that he deals in detail with the history of pre-Roman Iberia with impressive special knowledge of ancient history, ancient philology, epigraphy, numismatics and other subjects, and therefore also with the question of the relationship between Basque and Iberian and Keltiberian respectively. Humboldt's authority and reliability contributed greatly to the reception of this work, of which there are 5 translations in Spanish, and which is still regarded as a reference work in history of the field. The synchronic descriptions of Basque from Humboldt's pen had only partly been published, but in the German-speaking world this material was considered to be the main source of Basque studies for almost 100 years.

Humboldt's Basque works were further processed and reprinted during the decades of the remaining 19th century (Hurch 2018b). Carl August Friedrich Mahn [1802–1887] printed, with among other further additions, long text passages from Humboldt's work in his *Denkmäler der baskischen Sprache* [Monuments of the Basque language] of 1857. As with other linguistic studies, only a small portion of his writings on Basque were published during the 19th century. The overwhelming

majority of his manuscripts remained unprinted until few years ago. In the collections of the *Berliner Staatsbibliothek*, we find for example, the manuscript of a Basque–German dictionary presumably based on Humboldt’s work.

The emerging institutionalization of philologies is also reflected in new, large, handbook-like introductory works that were widely distributed. Gustav Gröber [1844–1911] published one of the early survey works in 1888, on the layout of the Romance languages. The Strasbourg geographer Georg Gerland wrote an introduction to Basque with the title “The Basques and the Iberians” (interesting from a linguistic point of view here is the very detailed review by Schuchardt 1888). Friedrich Müller [1834–1898] provided the *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft* [Outline of linguistics] in 5 volumes, whose third part, published in 1885, starts with a chapter entitled *Die Sprache der Basken* [The Language of the Basques] (p. 1–47).

August Friedrich Pott [1802–1887] was the first holder of a chair in general linguistics in Germany at the University of Halle. Pott knew how to move within the framework of classical Indo–European studies, but also how to distinguish himself as a scholar with interesting ideas concerning the history of thought and the history of linguistics (e.g., his plea for the reprinting of missionary grammars as a source of knowledge of the world’s languages was hardly taken note of; cf. also his extensively commented re-publication of Humboldt’s introduction to the *Kawiwerk*). But he was also a genuine representative of the new and modernist linguistic discipline and developed studies in typology in an Humboldtian tradition (his monograph on reduplication was particularly noteworthy). Among other subjects, Basque plays a remarkable role in his work: both in the book *Über Vaskische Familiennamen* [On Basque family names], which appeared in 1875, and in the work on number systems in European languages, which had appeared some years earlier (1867).

The activities and publications around the *Berliner Baskische Gesellschaft* [Berlin Basque Society] (founded by Karl Hannemann & Theodor Linschmann) were scientifically very heterogeneous and sometimes questionable. This prevented some researchers from becoming members of the society. In 1886–1896 the journal *Euskara* was published, the organ of the society (all issues are available as [scans](https://haab-digital.klassik-stiftung.de/viewer/toc/1184653658/1/LOG_0000/) (https://haab-digital.klassik-stiftung.de/viewer/toc/1184653658/1/LOG_0000/) at *Klassik Stiftung Weimar*). Among other matters, the positions in favour of Basque as universal language, as forwarded programmatically by Hannemann in the first issue of the magazine were controversial. Hannemann’s *Prolegomena* (1884) also suffer from a lack of scientific quality and reliability. In the broader context of the Basque society, however, some remarkable works have also appeared, such as the very solid literature study by Arno Grimm (1884) which was announced as the first part, although the second was never accomplished.

Amateurism and dilettantism are not to be interpreted as necessarily negative counter-sides of the process of institutionalization. Hycinthe de Charencey can be mentioned as an example of a notable figure of this category in France, whereas in German-speaking countries figures such as Arno Grimm or Rudolf Cruel can be mentioned. The latter was – until today – completely unknown (Hurch 2018c). He was a Protestant clergyman who worked in the *isolation splendide* of Lower Saxony. His pen is the source of spiritual writings and an interesting little booklet *Sprachen und Völker Europas* [Languages and Peoples of Europe, Detmold 1883] but above all of a hand-written Basque–German dictionary (1864) of 784 pages, an adaptation of printed Basque dictionaries (Larramendi, Salaberry and Lécluse).

As far as Basque studies took part in the canonization of philologies at all, this took place almost exclusively in the vicinity and context of the institutes and seminars of Romance philology. Hugo Schuchardt provides a good example here: He was a scholar and professor of Romance philology who published extensively on Basque language and grammar for around 40 years. Georges Lacombe in his obituary in the *Revista Internacional de Estudios Vascos* counts more than 100 publications authored by Schuchardt on Basque, which is a considerable part of his not always undisputed but always very stimulating oeuvre. Schuchardt's complete works are available as [scans](http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/werk/schriften/vollstaendige-liste) (<http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/werk/schriften/vollstaendige-liste>) (Hugo Schuchardt Archive). Leaving aside his accomplishments in Romance studies, Creole studies, Celtic studies, Caucasian studies, Balkan studies and general linguistics for the time being, there are also some important lines in the Basque works. His more than controversial work on Vasco-Iberism is left here without further commentary; furthermore, many of his etymologies appear as relatively unorthodox today. A very important aspect of the treatment of minority languages in the 19th century dealt with the historical and synchronic relation to the dominating superstrata. In this vein the common Basque-Romance language history not only filled a gap in the knowledge of European reality, but in addition it constituted a test ground for language contact with an extremely long time depth and the specificity that the substratum language had always continued to exist with typologically extremely diverse characteristics. Schuchardt was probably the first theoretician of contact studies, but he also carried out important descriptive work: In 1922 he published a study on the dialect of Sara (from the notes of his stay in 1886) describing in detail, among other things, the tonal accent of the Basque language (an assumption that was taken up seriously again only various decades later in literature). Schuchardt also deserves credit for his 1923 introduction to Basque (originally written for the German-speaking academic world, but later translated into Spanish), entitled *Primitiae Linguae Vasconum* (<http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/publication/231>).

The media innovations resulting *inter alia* from the emergence of a public postal system from 1840 onwards made it possible in the second half of the 19th century to establish discourse networks that had an unprecedented catalyzing effect on the development of the individual disciplines. In the paper legacy of Hugo Schuchardt, which for its simultaneous diversity and depth has experienced exemplary consideration, includes in the preserved correspondence portion some 14,000 letters. Alone the Basque network, which crystallizes in this estate, counts several dozen correspondents and a total of almost 2,000 pertinent letters and other pieces of correspondence (cf. details in Hurch 2018a; also see [letter database](http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/korrespondenz/korrespondenzpartner/bearbeitete-korrespondenz) (<http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/korrespondenz/korrespondenzpartner/bearbeitete-korrespondenz>) at *Schuchardt Archive*). The network reflects the complexity of the discussion, encompassing many aspects: grammar and lexicon, language contact, historical and genealogical considerations, affiliation, ethnological aspects, ongoing developments such as the rise of institutions, the proposal of a Basque orthography, but also personal news, experiences and gossip, as well as the whole breadth of Basque everyday life. Depending on people involved, such discussions occasionally fail to rise above the superficial, but sometimes extend into considerable detail. The breadth is also shown by the fact that Basque as an object of research within this network was not limited to Central Europe and the French-Spanish-Basque region, but that explorations of linguistic relationship and language origin – including Basque – were also taken on in other countries and other contexts including Russia and other Slavic countries (e.g. by F. Miklosich or J. Baudouin de Courtenay), even in the Caucasian area (e.g. by N. Marr), and in Italy (e.g. G. I. Ascoli, Cl. Giacomino and A. Trombetti).

There are many interesting aspects to be found in reconstructing this discourse context. First and foremost for history of scientific thought insofar as the analyses of the correspondence has contributed to a better understanding of the process of generation of knowledge. Moreover, many specific discussions which took place in this process of the constitution of single philologies can be grasped more adequately when taking into account the discussion, or metaphorically speaking behind the curtain, i.e. in the direct epistolary contact between the acting persons. But especially with respect to minority languages like Basque, which had more difficulties and a slower development in the creation of scientific structures and institutions, the insight into those historical discourse strategies and sequences allow the re-designing of those processes which are otherwise not documented: It must be assumed that the 'official' scientific discourse at the beginning of modernity has neglected minority languages in Europe. In the beginning, the construction of *national* philologies was the focus of attention in the context of neo-philology (*Neuphilologie*, as opposed to the research paradigm of classical philology). And the concept of *nation* in this sense was determined by the size of the industrial market and thus in terms of the modern *nation*-state concept. Only later did the study of internal differentiation and variation of languages become established, together with the perspectivation of smaller languages, which had not yet attracted systematic scientific attention.

It was precisely philologists and linguists like Hugo Schuchardt who brought to the fore various previously neglected fields of research, specifically the study of language contact, of dialectology and the small-scale study of areal diffusion in general. In a broader sense this also includes the establishment of Creole studies as a sub-discipline of Romance philology and linguistics. It was only in this way that the position of minority languages became firmly established in the discussion and linguistic landscape of the 19th century, and even moved an important step forwards from the periphery to the centre of interest. Rome was no longer regarded only idealistically as the origin of the classical national literatures and languages, but – including all the variationist considerations – also as the basis for the enormous differentiation which we find in the *Romania*, and these latter aspects were now being studied in their entire detail for the first time. With his studies on Rhaeto-Romance and on the Balkans Schuchardt had contributed, on the one hand, to the establishment of what was called the *Romania antiqua*, which was in a manner of speaking, the Romance *homeland*. On the other hand, however, he also extended classical Romance studies to include areas such as *lingua franca* and the colonial variants of pidgin and creole languages (provided that these latter had Romanesque lexifiers). In retrospect, it must be assumed that the interest in Basque studies, all things being equal, also falls within this context. The original character of Basque was of course beyond any doubt, and yet there are 2,000 years of common linguistic history and language contact with Romance neighbors (Spanish, Gascon, French and various local dialects), an issue which for Schuchardt was the subject of fruitful studies. The classical history of science only depicts these processes very poorly. Of course, analogous conditions apply to other language areas in Europe. In the above-mentioned discourse network there are many references to, for example, the Slavic contact space (as in the discussions with [Franz Miklosich](http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/person/2200) [1813–1891], [Jan Baudouin de Courtenay](http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/person/1097) [1845–1929] or [Ferdinand Blumentritt](http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/person/1160) [1853–1913]). This also illustrates that the Basque discourse of language contact, language mixing and minority languages was not isolated, but integrated in the broad picture of a pan-European framework.

Finally a scientific innovation in linguistics of lasting importance, which was made possible by the technical developments of the late 19th century, will be presented here: the first language sound recordings which may be considered an early instance of language documentation. These recordings were also substantially promoted by the aforementioned network. In 1899 the first sound repository in the history of science was founded, namely the “Phonogrammarchiv” at the *Austrian Academy of Sciences* (former: *Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Vienna). The creation of such a repository for voice recordings seemed an obvious step due to the new technical developments at that time, which for the first time allowed the permanent storage of oral speech data. At a very early stage and still without the benefit of the theoretical background we have today, the strategy emerged of documenting not only the voices of historic personalities (such as the Emperor of Austria Francis Josef), but also those languages which either were not familiar in Central Europe or which were spoken in regions with less stable societal situations. Speech recordings of this kind gained a very special historical importance in those contexts, where the languages today either are extinct or survive in a precarious situation (e.g., *Judeo-Español* of the Balkan area).

In 1913 the Viennese ethnographer Rudolf Trebitsch travelled to the Basque Country in order to make recordings for the Vienna Academy (cf. his description in Trebitsch 1914). Before the trip, he was given the necessary instructions and contacts from Hugo Schuchardt, and during the recording period, as the letters show, there was also contact between Schuchardt on the one hand and the Basque colleagues and collaborators, especially [Julio de Urquijo](http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/person/2906) (<http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/person/2906>) and [Georges Lacombe](http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/person/1977) (<http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/person/1977>), on the other (this correspondence is documented in the already mentioned electronic *Hugo Schuchardt Archive*). Finally, it was these two Basque specialists who should be given the real credit, because they established the contacts for Trebitsch, accompanied him to the recording sessions, prepared the recording protocols with the transcripts and also the translations from Basque for him, since he could scarcely speak either Basque or Spanish. This resulted in the first systematic vocal documentation of all Basque dialects, some music recordings and incidentally the recording of the voice by some well-known personalities such as Resurrección María de Azkue [1864–1951; a speaker of the Biscayan dialect from Lekeitio, priest and philologist, author of lexicographic and grammaticographic works, ethnographic collector, author of literary works and composer; co-founding member of the Basque Academy] and Pierre Broussain [1859–1920; a speaker of the Labourdin dialect from Hasparren, medical doctor and bascologist, co-founding member of the Basque Academy, member of the Real Sociedad Bascongada, mayor of his hometown for over 14 years]. Here a short passage from these two recordings is provided, including the historical companion recording sheet in copy, as well as the modernized transcript and the translation.

Aud. 1: Resurrección María de Azkue: Dialogue [from R. M. de Azkue's novel *Beinda Betiko*]

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(<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/00.0000/LME.lme.9586870/html>)

Des Phonographierten		Platte Nr. 2212	Der Aufnahme		Touren pro Minute 60	
Vor- und Zuname	Resurreccion de Azkue		Datum, Ort-Provinz-Land	14. Aug. 19, Leizuitio, Bizcaya, Spanien		
Geschlecht	Männlich	Rasse, Stamm	Baskisch		Art des Gegenstandes	Zweigespräch
Alter	49 Jahre	Beruf	Lehra der Basken in Bilbao, Geistlicher		Eigenes, Fremdes, schon Gedrucktes	—
Geburtsort-Provinz-Land	Leizuitio, Prov. Bizcaya, Spanien		Sprache, Dialekt, Mundart		Baskisch, Dial. v. Bizcaya, Leizuitio	
Wohnort-Provinz-Land	Bilbao, Prov. Bizcaya, Spanien		Musik, vokal oder instrumental		—	
war früher seßhaft in	—		ein- oder mehrstimmig		—	
reist viel, ist viel gereist, wann? wo?	Deutschland, Frankreich, Spanien, Orient		Stimmgattung oder Instrumente		—	
Wohnort-Provinz-Land der Eltern	Leizuitio, Bizcaya, Spanien		Geräusche, Schreien etc.		—	
Heimat des Vaters	Leizuitio		Art der Membran		Traubenrinne des Trichters Keim	
der Mutter	Mundaca, Prov. Bizcaya		Name des Phonographisten		B. Ruedorfbrüder	
Beruf			Beruf			Phonograph
Inhalt:			Transskription oder Uebersetzung			
<p>gauza andi ta bere moduko bat ikusi eban, Tsilik Tala Goikotik beraganutz etorrela; baltzen baltzaz ikuntan be gerisa eiten eban. Urretatu tsakonian, «gabon, adiski- dia, esan eutsan Tsilik: goisetik gabiltz, goisetik. — Nai gois nai berandu, iri zer? — Asarrez dator mutil au; gau be ba dro- garako ezkaituk tsarrenak. — Nor ais eu, tsimizta ori? — Enakusk? — Nik ez ondo, eure eskutzar onetako zigorra isan ezik. Tema eingo neuke Damutu eruen, bategaz diardudala. — Nundik nora abil eu? — Eztakut barriketari iarduteko astirik; baina itaune geidsago ez ei- tekoz erantzungo dauat. Gau guzti- dian, nundik nora eztaidala ta neure gerisia baino beste lagun barik, ibili nabil; egun-sentidša baino lenago oiz-barvenera tsuan nai neuke, nun- di paneki — Egun-sentidša baino le- nago? mau-mau, ezta inpernuko dia- brua baintz be. — Lagun on bat baneuko, bai — Ori ikustiarren... — ator. — Baina nik-i... — Orretara ezke- ro berba biko gisona ais i — Ez ni- bart euk ezuan eskini edozein Damutu- ri lagun eingo euskidšola? — Baina... — atsakidšak daukazak ik — Eta zein tsimiztak dei eingo dau, itsasoraterik badago? — Eguraldi tsarra, tsalupak dsaso ezindakua balego; tsarraitreko eusket?</p>			<p>(Des Transskriptors Name, Beruf, Muttersprache) Resurreccion de Azkue</p>			

Fig. 1: Resurreccion Maria de Azkue, Dialogue: recording sheet

[complete transcription + translation]

Aud. 2: Pierre Broussain: Talk about the Basque language

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(<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/00.0000/LME.lme.9586870/html>)

Des Phonographierten

Platte Nr. 2185

Vor- und Zuname *Pierre Broussain*
 Geschlecht *Männlich* Rasse, Stamm *Ruskisch*
 Alter *53 Jahre* Beruf *D. d. Medizin, Chirurgmeister*
 Geburtsort-Provinz-Land *Hasparren, Basse Pyr. Fks.*
 Wohnort-Provinz-Land *Hasparren, Basse Pyr. Frankreich*
 war früher sesshaft in *Paris* bis *1899*
 reist viel, ist viel gereist, wann? wo? *Frankreich, Spanien, England*
 Wohnort-Provinz-Land der Eltern *Hasparren*
 Heimat des Vaters *Hasparren* der Mutter *Bordeux b. Hasparren*

Inhalt:

Viena-ko jaun batek galdecinik, gootik erraiten tut zonbeit hitz Azparne-ko eskuara garbiz, eskuara aiphatzen duanaz geoz enitake con erray gaa galtzeko irriskian dela, Espainiako eskualherrietaz beeziki. Nafarroaz eta Bizkaiaz lehez, eskuaraz mintzo zira herri anhitz oai espanolez mintzo dia. Frantziako eskualherrietaz nahiz que mintzaia zaharra oai artio aski azkar den hales zonbeit lekutataz galtzen ai da, hala nola Endaiay, Doniane - Ziburuz, Donapaleu eta Naulay. Hiri horietaz badia haur frango, aitamak eskualdunak tiuztenak eta eskuara ez takitenak. Que arbasuez mintzaia eskoletan iakats balezate, elitake holakorik gerta. Eskoletan eskuara ikasiz que haurrek amodio gehioo balukete beez aitamez mintzaiaandako eta beez burüak ohora litazkete que arbasuak bezala mintzatuz. Eskolaz kanpo badia ene arabera bi gauza eskuara gal-aazter dutenak, lehenik jende handiez etsemplua, eta geo que mintzaiaaz probezia. Jende chehia beti jende handia jarrakitez zako, eta beezitako maneraz ala mintzatzeke maneraz. Eskual-herriko jende handiek, miikle, aphi, notari, abokat, aspaldiaz eskuara utzi ute frantsesaz edo espanolez artzeko, eta hez bezala ditako jende chehiak ce ai dia frantsesaz edo espanolez mintzatzen, ahal duteniaz. Behtiaz erray dut que mintzaia jobria dela. Ez da estonatzeko zeez eta oai diila mila urthe bezala cona bita batez ebaastu gabe. Alta baa biziki erreaz litake eskuara emaitia eskas ditiuz hitz guziak. Hitz berriak aise in ditazke erruak eskuaraz beriaz hartuz, frantsesai eta espanolai batez mailatu gabe.

Zum Teile durch Ausstreichen zu erledigen.

Der Aufnahme

Touren pro Minute 60

Datum, Ort-Provinz-Land *26. Juli, Hasparren, Basse Pyrénées, Fks.*
 Art des Gegenstandes *Gespräch über die basquische Sprache*
 Eigenes, Fremdes, schon Gedrucktes
 Sprache, Dialekt, Mundart *Witzsche, Mitdanasessisch*
 Musik, vokal oder instrumental
 ein- oder mehrstimmig
 Stimmgattung oder Instrumente
 Geräusche, Schreien etc.
 Art der Membran *Ebenholz* des Trichters *Klein*
 Name des Phonographisten *H. Prost* Beruf *Stenograph*

Transskription oder Uebersetzung

(Des Transkriptors Name, Beruf, Muttersprache) *George Lacombe*
Secrétaire de la Revue int. ds Etudes basques

Fig. 2: Pierre Broussain, Talk about the Basque Language: recording sheet

[\[complete transcription + translation\]](#)

These sound documents were published in fully only in 2003 (general editor Dietrich Schüller 2003; Basque text and translation editor Maria Jose Kerejeta). These were the first and most systematic voice recordings, but in the course of the First World War further voice recordings were made of prisoners of war in various places. In those years, Hermann Urtel worked with Basque prisoners of war in Hamburg. The relevant recordings can be found in the Berlin Phonogrammarchiv.

Fußnoten

1

Nordwestern (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Nordwestern>) (based on works by **maix** (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Maix>) and **Tintazul** (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Tintazul>)), **Blank map of Europe (without disputed regions)** ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blank_map_of_Europe_\(without_disputed_regions\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blank_map_of_Europe_(without_disputed_regions).svg)); additional details, captions, highlights added and map extended to the north by LME, **CC BY-SA 4.0** (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>)

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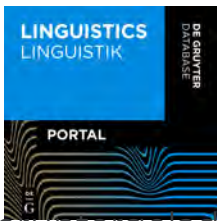
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