



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
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Bavarian in Brazil

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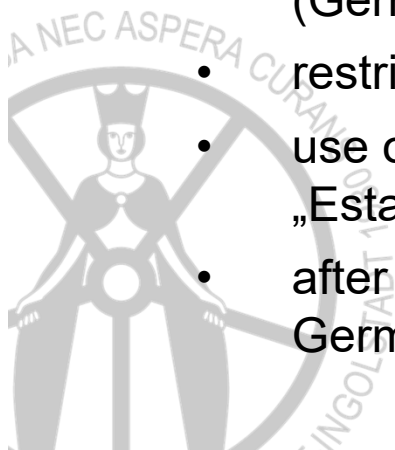


Variation and idiosyncrasy in Germanic and Romance,
LMU Munich, July 21-23, 2026



Background: German Immigration to Brazil

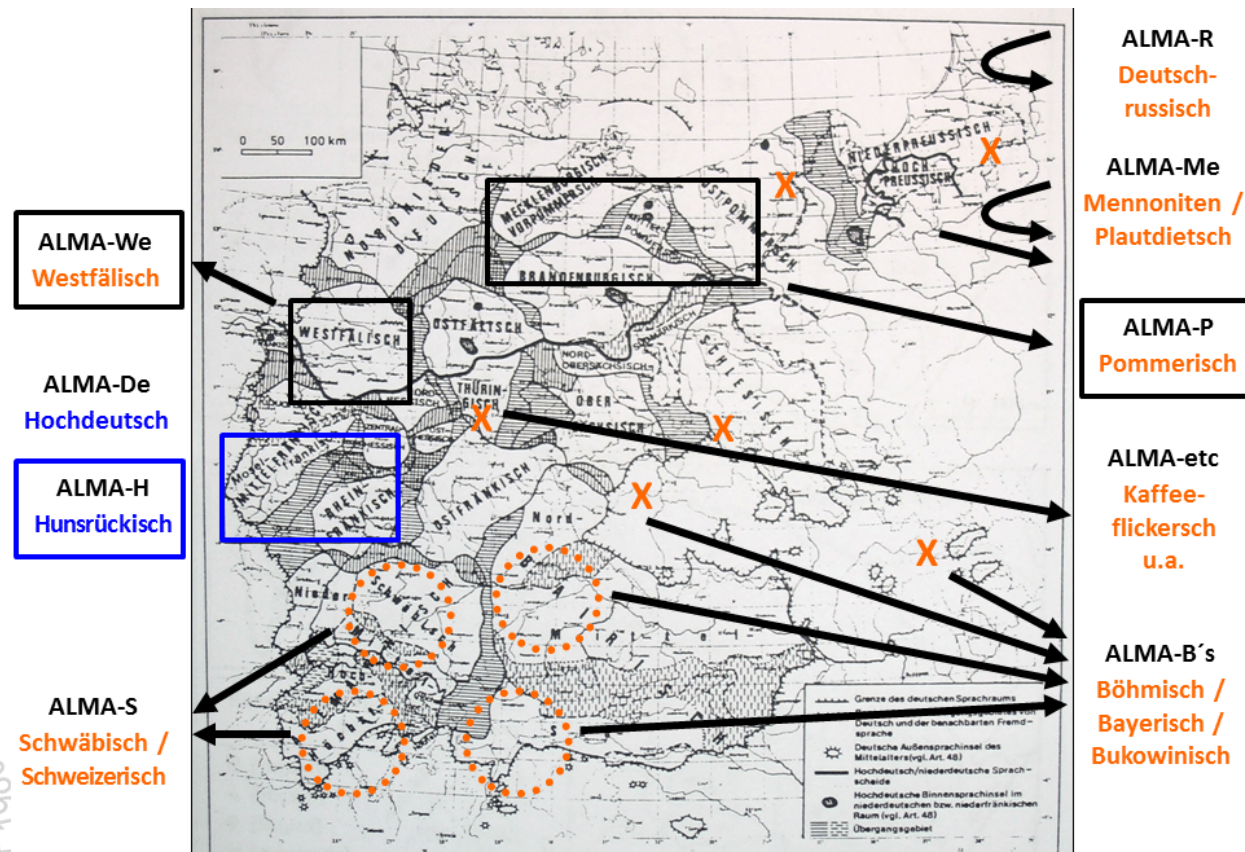
- large groups of immigration from German-speaking Europe in waves starting in 1820s and lasting to 1930s, mostly in Southern Brazil
- numbers are vague:
 - around 2 to 5 million descendants of German origin today
 - 600.000 to 1.5 million German L1 speakers today
- German-speaking groups shaped by political developments
 - thriving German-speaking communities in 19th and early 20th centuries (German schools, churches, publications...)
 - restrictions started with WW1 and intensified in WW2
 - use of German language (and other immigrant languages) prohibited with „Estado novo“ (Vargas' politics of a single national language, 1937-1945)
 - after restrictions, German continued in spoken varieties, while written German mainly disappeared







Original dialects transferred to Brazil



ORIGEM DAS VARIEDADES DO ALEMÃO NO BRASIL. Mapa de fundo: áreas dialetais do alemão na matriz de origem na Europa, conforme Wiesinger (1983, p. 831).

<https://www.ufrgs.br/projalma/variedades-do-alemao/>



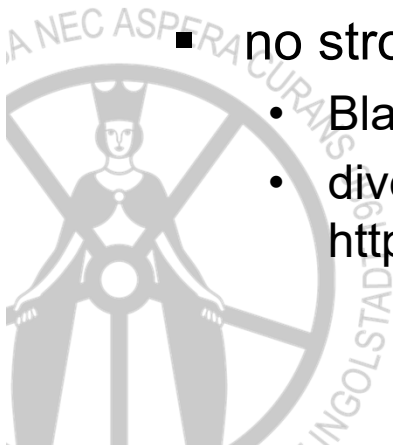
Bavarian immigration to Brazil

- arrival relatively late, starting from 1860s/70s and lasting to 1930s
- spots with Bavarian speakers:
 - Novo Friburgo (RJ, Bohemia)
 - Nova Petrópolis (RS, Bohemia)
 - São Bento do Sul (SC, Bohemia, Bavaria, Tyrol)
 - Treze Tílias (*Dreizehnlinden*, SC, Tyrol, 1933)
 - Colônia Tirol (ES, Tyrol)

- no strong documentation for São Bento do Sul

- Blau (1958)
- diverse documentation on the internet, cf.
<https://saobentonopassado.wordpress.com/>

Blau, Josef (1958): *Baiern in Brasilien. Chronik der Besiedelung von Sao Bento durch arme Leute aus dem Böhmerwald*. München.





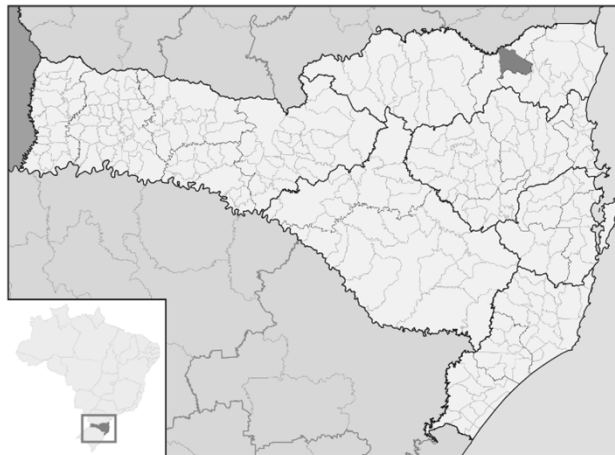
São Bento do Sul: Location





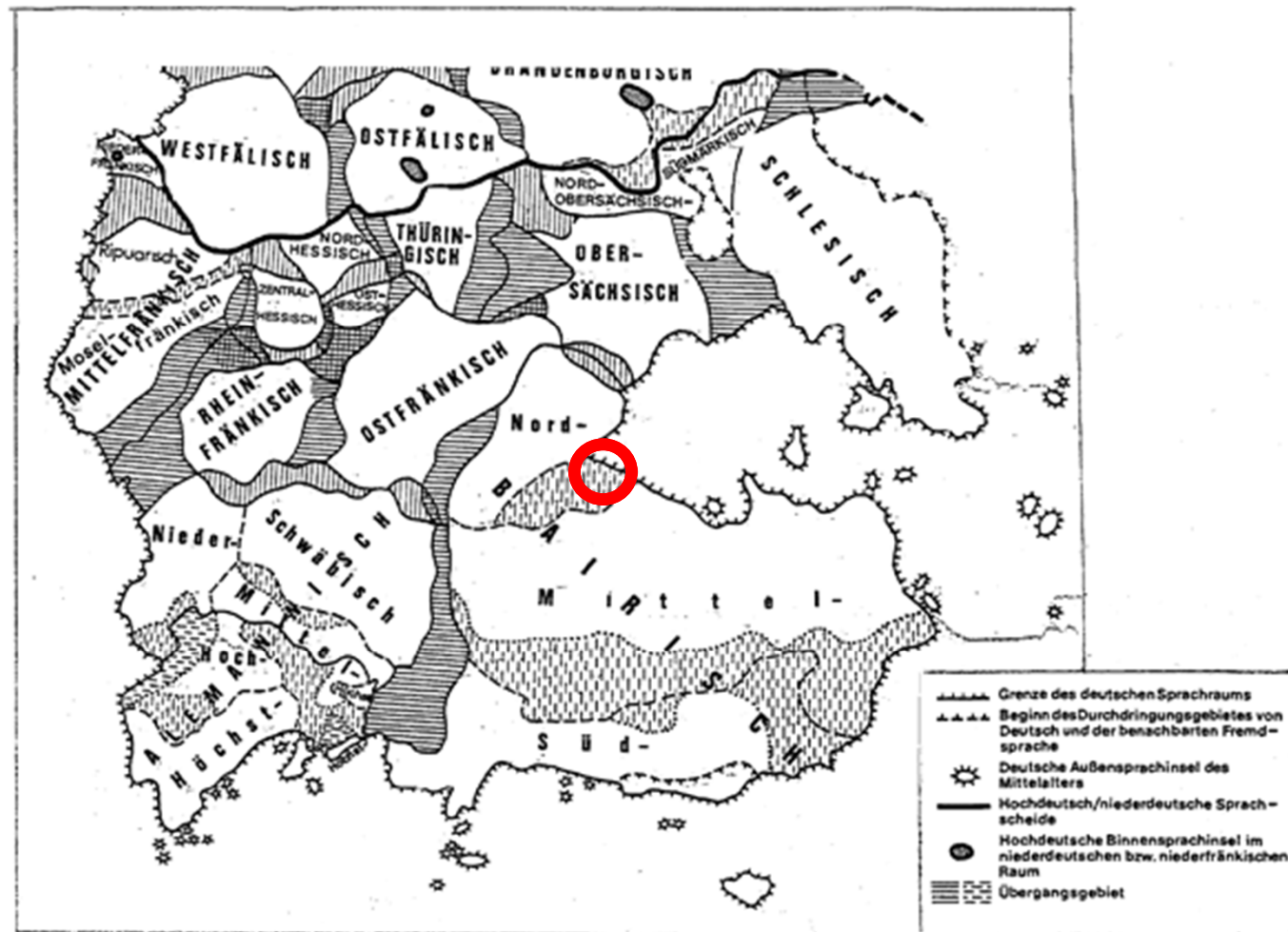
São Bento do Sul: Background

- São Bento do Sul, Santa Catarina
- immigration started in 1873
- recruited by *Hamburger Ansiedlungsgesellschaft*
- immigrants stemmed from the Bohemian Forest (*Böhmerwald*)
- Bohemia belonged to Austria at that time
- today Czech-German border region





Area of emigration



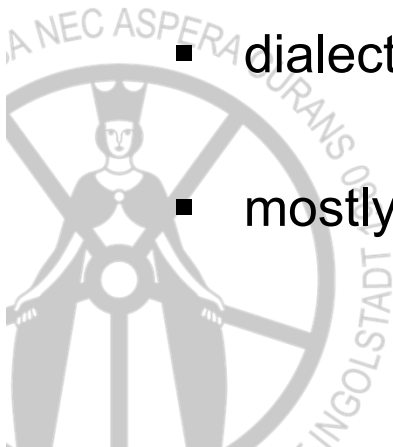
Karte : Einteilung der deutschen Dialekte: Die Gliederung der deutschen Dialekte (im ersten Jahrzehnt des 13. Jhs.)





Characterization of São Bento Bavarian

- most immigrants from the transitional zone between Central and North Bavarian and from North Bohemia
- speakers are often monolectal Bavarian, but some of them can also shift to a close-to-standard variety of German
- Portuguese functions as high-prestige variety
- German varieties with rather low prestige
- dialect features generally well-preserved
- mostly restricted to oldest generation





Lexical features

- Bavarian vocabulary strongly retained
- *schnodern* ,speak‘ → *Bairisch schnodern*
- *neel* ,grandfather‘ – *naal* ,grandmother‘
- *goschn* ,mouth‘ (*Maul*)
- *gleße* vs. *gnedel* ,dumplings‘ (meta commentary: *gnedel* Bavarian)
- word-formation: *derinnern* ,remember‘, *verzählen* ,tell‘





Common lexical items in Brazilian German

from German

- *Luftschiff* ,plane‘

loans from Portuguese

- *milje* ,corn‘
- *rossn* ,fields‘
- *guri* ,boy‘
- *assude* ,pool‘
- integration of verbs with *-ieren*:
 - *barbiere*, *balwiere* ,shave‘
 - *aposentiert* ,retired‘
 - *graviere* ,record‘, ...





Discourse-related items

- turn-initial *é* 'yes', *não* 'no'
- discourse marker *ne*





Phonology

Phonological features retained from original region

- short rounded mid vowels
ölf ,eleven / elf', *Göld* ,money / Geld', *Mül* ,milk / Milch'
- postvocalic / unvocalized in Brazilian Bavarian (cf. *feil* ,much / viel', but Central Bavarian *fäi*, *fui* ,much / viel')

Features with small geographic spread in dialect of origin

- mhd. *î* > *ää*: *rääten* ,ride', *Wää* ,wine', *Zäät* ,time'
- mhd. *iu* > *ää*: *Däätschland* ,Germany', *häät* ,today'
- mhd. *û* > *åå*: *Hoos* ,house', *Oosland* ,foreign countries'

Diphthongs later today!





Some morpho-syntactic features

- *-n* generalization in nouns in *–e*: *a kettn* ,a chain‘ (*Kette*)
- verb conjugation and personal pronouns:
i leg, du leg-st, er leg-t, mia leg-ma, es leg-ts, sie leg-ent
- double negation:
*I will **koa** kuche **niema**.* ,I don‘t want any more cake.‘





Syntax

- verb position generally follows V-Last/V2 pattern, but varies strongly
 - V2 in subordinate clause (a)
 - SV in main clause (b)
 - V1 in main clause (c)

(5) a *warum hon i kenna mit ean ned schnodern*

why have I can with them not speak

‘why I could not speak to them’

b *In die Schul i hon nix verstanna*

in the school I have nothing understood

‘In school I did not understand anything.’

c *Han i a Roos, reit aff des Roos hinter de Veicher nache, ne.*

Have I a horse ride on the horse after the animals after, DM

‘I have a horse, I ride after the animals on the horse.’





Syntax

- relative particle *wo* ,where‘ for persons and localities, *wos* ,what‘ for other references
- final infinite constructions introduced by *fia* ,for‘ (*für*)

D’Prefeitura hod nur an, an gloan Caminiong ghod, fia d’makadam foan.

The mayor’s office had only a, a little truck had, for the macadam drive

‘The mayor’s office only had a little truck for driving the macadam.’





Syntax

- indefinite articles with mass nouns

und a Wosser gem ‘and gave water’

hod ma an Kaas gmacht ‘they made cheese’

hom a Holz gfohn ‘they drove wood’





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Thank you for your attention!

