3. South Sleswick and the Lower Rhine, where is that?

3.1. The Lower Rhine – An attempt to describe a region

The Lower Rhine – this term is in contrast to, let’s say Bavaria or England, not associated to an area which also describes its people but a mere geographically term although the inhabitants are, of course, part of an ethnic group as they are predominantly of Frankish origin. However, nowadays the Frankish groups living in the Lower Rhine would describe themselves as “Rheinländer” (Rhine-landers, people from the Rhineland). But where are the confines of the area, what is part of “The Lower Rhine” and what is not, can distinctions be made?

Contemporary the Lower Rhine in its entirety is part of the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia and includes the districts (Landkreise) of Kleve (Cleves), Wesel, Viersen, Neuss and Heinsberg and also includes the cities of Krefeld and Mönchengladbach, some also include Duisburg, Oberhausen, Mülheim and Düsseldorf. The state of North Rhine-Westphalia was established in 1946 after the allied dissolution of the previous German state of Prussia and it became a part of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. The Lower Rhine area is characteristically flat with the river Rhine at its centre and its windings has shaped the landscape to a large degree. “Streusiedlung” (scattered settlement) is the historically predominant form of rural settlement as it is also for most of the Netherlands and Northern Germany (Wulf Habrich: Der Kreis Viersen als Teil der rheinischen Stadtlandschaft zwischen Rhein und Maas, Die naturraeumlichen Einheiten, Der Kreis Viersen, Stuttgart und Aalen, 1978, pages 20/21, ISBN 3-8062-0184-6). Most of the area is also part of the administrative district (Regierungsbezirk) of Düsseldorf although the district of Heinsberg is part of the administrative district of Cologne.

The exact borders of the area are nevertheless difficult to define and are disputed, some also include the area around Cologne and Bonn into the Lower Rhine, some draw the line at the districts borders, others draw the borders to linguistic and cultural divide lines, such as what the linguist Theodor Frings called the “Benrath line” for the southern frontier of the area in his dissertation “„Studien zur Dialektgeographie des Niederrheins zwischen Düsseldorf und Aachen” (Dialect-geographical studies of the Lower Rhine between Düsseldorf and Aachen) (Frings, Theodor: Studien zur Dialektgeographie des Niederrheins zwischen Düsseldorf und Aachen, Marburg 1913, ISBN: 978-3-253-02905-9, see also chapter 10.). This line, although not always consistent, divides the Lower Franconian dialects from the Riparian-Franconian dialects around Cologne-Bonn-Aachen. Simultaneously, the Benrath line forms the southern extent of the northern German scattered settlement structure; in addition, the old farmhouses north of this line often have lower roofs and are entered from the gable end resembling the Low Saxon hall houses while further to the south they are entered from the eaves side. Traditional inheritance rules change on this line as well but a transitional character is reflected by the co-existence of Ripuarian style Frankish farmhouses deep into the Lower Rhine area. (Dieter Pesch: Volksleben am Niederrhein, Haus und Hof, Der Kreis Viersen, Stuttgart und Aalen, 1978, pages 172/173, ISBN 3-8062-0184-6). The Cologne born author and Nobel Prize in Literature winner Heinrich Böll described the landscape and environment surrounding the river Rhine as turning “Dutch” in
character northwards between the cities of Bonn and Cologne (Heinrich Böll: Briefe aus dem Rheinland, Nordrhein-Westfalen, page 17, DTV, 1985, ISBN 3-423-10602-6) and attested Cologne, in particular the Cologne before WWII, as an effectively “Dutch (Netherlandic)” city comparable to Antwerp or Utrecht during a recorded conversation with the Cologne songwriter Wolfgang Niedecken (Westdeutscher Rundfunk: Kölner Erinnerungen aus vierzig Jahren - Heinrich Böll und Wolfgang Niedecken im Gespräch am 18. November 1984 im Haus in Langenbroich, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y85OEXf5FSk ). All in all, since the transition from north to south is smooth and not abrupt it is difficult to draw a clear line and the inhabitants usually do not consider themselves as Low Franconians or Ripuarions but rather commonly as “Rheinländer” or “Rheinfranken” (Friedrich Engels: Fränkische Zeit, Anmerkung: Der fränkische Dialekt, http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me19/me19_474.htm ).

Historically, the term “Rhineland” includes also parts of the German federal state Rhineland-Palatinate as far south as the city of Speyer and parts of Hessen although the borders of the “Rhineland” are, just as is the case with the Lower Rhine, difficult to define. To the East, however, the borders of the Lower Rhine are more clearly defined with the linguistic and administrative border to Westphalia. To the west and north the state border to the Netherlands forms the contemporary border of the area, however, linguistically and cultural the area is linked to the Dutch and Belgium provinces of Limburg and forms a continuum with these provinces to such an extent that it originally was a de facto unit (see chapter 10.3). Moreover, the transition further to the west into Brabant and Flanders was also smooth. Strictly speaking, the East-Belgian and officially German speaking municipalities of Eupen, Lontzen and Kelmis (the former neutral territory of Moresnet) also belong to the Lower Rhine since they formed a part of the Rhine province until 1918 (but not Neutral Moresnet) and the local dialect is Lower Franconian (but not Raeren where it is Riparian). During medieval times the Lower Rhine, Limburg and the Riparian speaking areas also had their own common written standard which is still visible in the contemporary spelling of various place names in the Lower Rhine area, the Cologne-Aachen area and Limburg: “oi” stands for long “o” sound (Korschenbroich, Boisheim, Troisdorf, Oirsbeek), “ui” and “uy” for the German “ü”-Umlaut (Duisburg, Vluyn, Heythuysen, Buir) and “eu” originally for the German “ö”-Umlaut (Rheurdt, Leuth, Reuver, Euskirchen). Place names such as Brachelen and Sevelen have the final “n” omitted when pronounced in local Lower Franconian speech, however, there are also obvious attempts to “Germanize” the local pronunciation by officially omitting the original “e” in the modern German spelling as is the case in place names such as “Amern” “Geldern” and also in “Köl” and as such, to force the reader to pronounce the final “n” sound. In local Lower Franconian these places are pronounced “Amere””, “Yeldere”” and “Kolle””. Traditions such as the annual carnival or the archery festival (Schützenfest, Schuttersfeest) are shared by Brabant, Limburg and the Lower Rhine as well. The Dutch Sinterklaas-feast was originally celebrated at the Lower Rhine and the Northern Rhineland as a whole in a similar fashion as is still the case in the Netherlands and Belgium but has lost in importance and almost disappeared since the beginning of the 19th century, thus with the incorporation of the Rhineland as a whole into Prussia (Bonner Münster: Lasst uns froh und munter sein - Nikolaus als Vorbote der Liebe Gottes, article from 23-11-2013, http://www.bonner-muenster.de/jahreskreis/heilige/12-06-nikolaus.htm ). The area is predominantly catholic, although some protestant pockets exist and, thus, many religious traditions and festivals are similar across the national borders.
3.2. The languages of the Lower Rhine

Travelling through the Lower Rhine area on the left bank of the river Rhine the first impression is that this is a region which is entirely German, all official signboards, announcements, texts, description, newspapers and other media only appear in standard German. The first hint that historically there may have been another language appears when noting the place names of the Lower Rhine: Raderbroich, Rheurdt, Beeck, Nieuwer, Kevelaer, Overhetfeld, Broekhuizen etc. They do not appear like typical “German” place names, in fact, they resemble place names further to the west in the Netherland and Belgian provinces of Limburg.

Walking through a Lower Rhine town such as Kempen standard German appears to be the general language of communication on the streets although, particularly among the elder generation, a slight accent is audible, somewhat similar to the accent heard in neighbouring Limburg. Moreover, the characteristically flat landscape, the “Streusiedlung” (scattered settlement) as the historically predominant form of rural settlement and the old farmhouses with their lower roofs and entrances from the gable end resemble the Low Saxon hall houses which are also predominant in the Eastern Netherlands might make the observer wonder “may it be that the Lower Rhine and the provinces of Limburg share a common history and a common language which has disappeared due to national borders having been created in the past?” How common is the culture and the local dialects and in how far is it still maintained?

In fact, studies comparing the local dialects of the Lower Rhine to those across the national borders to the West have already been conducted in the past. Wider ranging studies are available from the linguists Wencker and Frings who were able to prove that north of a line called the “Benrath Line” the dialects are Lower Franconian in character and thus more closely related to the modern Dutch language than to standard German.

What is “Dutch”?

From Wikipedia:

“Dutch is closely related to German and English[^5] and is said to be roughly in between them.[^4] Dutch shares with German a similar word order, grammatical gender, and a largely Germanic vocabulary, it has however—like English—not undergone the High German consonant shift, does not use Germanic umlaut as a grammatical marker, and has levelled much of its morphology, including the case system.[^7] Dutch has three grammatical genders,[^1] but this distinction has fewer grammatical consequences than in German.[^8] Dutch also shares with German the use of modal particles,[^8] [^9] final-obstruent devoicing, and the use of subject–verb–object word order in main clauses and subject–object–verb in subordinate clauses[^9]. The view about mutual intelligibility between Dutch and German varies.[^10][^11][^12] Dutch vocabulary is mostly Germanic and contains the same Germanic core as German and English, incorporating more Romance loans than German and fewer than English.[^10]
Dutch belongs to its own West Germanic sub-group, West Low Franconian, paired with its sister language Limburgish, or East Low Franconian, both of which stand out by mixing characteristics of Low German and High German. Dutch is at one end of a dialect continuum known as the Rhenish fan where German gradually turns into Dutch. Dutch is also at one end of a dialect continuum with Low German, but these dialects however are gradually becoming extinct.

All three languages have shifted earlier /θ/ > /d/, show final-obstruent devoicing (Du brood "bread" [broːt]), and experienced lengthening of short vowels in stressed open syllables which has led to contrastive vowel length that is used as a morphological marker. Dutch stands out from Low German and High German in its retention of the clusters /sp/ and /st/, while shifting of /sk/ to /sx/. It also did not develop i-mutation as a morphological marker, although some eastern dialects did. In earlier periods, Low Franconian of either sort differed from Low German by maintaining a three-way plural verb conjugation (Old Dutch -un, -it, -unt → Middle Dutch -en, -t, -en).

In modern Dutch, the former 2nd-person plural (-t) took the place of the 2nd-person singular, and the plural endings were reduced into a single form -en (cf. Du jij maakt "you(sg) make" vs. wij/jullie/zij maken "we/you(pl)/they make"). However, it is still possible to distinguish it from German (which has retained the three-way split) and Low German (which has -t in the present tense: wij/ji/se niemmet "we/you(pl)/they take"). Dutch and Low German show the collapsing of older ol/ul/al + dental into al + dental, but in Dutch wherever /l/ was pre-consonantal and after a short vowel, it vocalized, e.g., Du goud "gold", zout "salt", woud "woods" : LG Gold, Solt, Woold : Germ Gold, Salz, Wald.

With Low German, Dutch shares:

- The development of /xs/ > /ss/ (Du vossen "foxes", ossen "oxen", LG Vösse, Ossen vs. Germ Füchse, Ochsen)
- /ft/ → /xt/ though it is far more common in Dutch (Du zacht "soft", LG sacht vs. Germ sanft, but Du lucht "air" vs. LG/Germ Luft)
- Generalizing the dative over the accusative case for certain pronouns (Du mij "me" (MDu di "you(sg.)"), LG mi/di vs. Germ mich/dich)
- Lack of the second consonant shift
- Monophthongization of Germanic *ai > ē and *au > ō, e.g., Du steen "stone", oog "eye", LG Steen, Oog vs. G Stein, Auge, although this is not true of Limburgish (cf. sjtein, oug). Exceptions include klein "small" and geit "goat" (but West Flemish kleene, geet).
- Loss of Germanic -z (which later became -r) in monosyllabic words. For example, the German pronoun wir "we" corresponds to Du wij (but Limburgish veer), LG wi.

Dutch shares with German:

- The reflexive pronoun zich (Germ sich). This was originally borrowed from Limburgian, which is why in most dialects (Flemish, Brabantine) the usual reflexive is hem/haar or z'n eigen, just like in the rest of West Germanic.
- **Diphthongization** of Germanic ē² > ie > i and ô > uo > u (Du hier "here", voet "foot", Germ hier, Fuß (from earlier fuoz) vs. LG hier [iː], Foot [oː])
- **Voicing of pre-vocalic initial voiceless alveolar fricatives**, e.g., Du zeven "seven", Germ sieben [z] vs. LG söven, seven [s].
- **Final-obstruent devoicing**

Although the Lower Rhine is thus regarded as being part of the original “Dutch” speaking area there is, however, a transitional area just to the north of this line which includes the cities of Neuss, Mönchengladbach and Krefeld, parts of the district of Neuss and almost entirely the districts of Heinsberg and Viersen. This area is described as speaking South Lower Franconian and here some Middle-Franconian features are found next to Lower Franconian ones:

“Ech” instead of “Ik” (“I”)

“ooch” instead of “ook” (“also”)

The personal pronouns of the standard German cases accusative and dative are reduced to dative ones in the form of “mech” and “dech”, in Dutch they are “mij” and “jij” and are effectively in accusative.

The southernmost dialects in Kaarst and Neuss have also shifted old Germanic “t” to “ts” as is the case in Middle Franconian and standard German such as “vertelle” instead of “vertelle” (“to tell”) or “Tsiet” instead of “Tiet” (“Time”) and they use “han” instead of “heb” for “have” as e.g. “Ech han” instead of “Ik heb” (“I have”). Moving from south to north, these transitions change slowly and may differ from village to village until they reach a line called the “Uerdingen line”, North of it the dialects are effectively wholly Dutch in character. To the south of the Benrath line the Middle (Ripuarian-)Franconian dialects are much more uniform until they reach the border which divides them from Mosel-Franconian.

Although local dialects are retreating and are often only maintained by diminishing elder generations, local dialect poetry is available which reflects these divisions and a good overview was collected in a publication from 1979 called “Rheinische Mundart”. This collection includes local dialect poetry from the Lower Rhine, the Middle Rhine (Ripuarian) area and the Mosel-Franconian area and the various examples make the divisions obvious.

The northern most poems from Cleves display a clear Dutch-Gelderlands character, “gej” is used instead of “dech” (“you”) as a personal pronoun, the vocabulary includes many words which are part of modern Dutch but unknown in standard German such as “Botteram” “oprape” “mooi”. The following story written by Karl Groenewald (1894-1966) from Cleves gives a good impression:

**Papier**

Ses Joor was min Jöngst. Twee Botterame hat min Vrauw öör süver ingewekkelt vöör no de Scholl. „Dat Papier mot gej weer met no Hüs brenge, gej dörvt neks op de Stroot schmitte!“
Smeddags brogt sej et mooi gevalde weer met. - Den andren Dag koom sej met eenen hoogroje Kop, halv agter Ojem in de Köök: „Seg Mud, et Botteramepapier, dat breng ek noots meer met, ek heb et op de Stroot geschmeete...en üt de Körf an de Scholl he'k nog wat drüt gëddonn, dat he'k ook op de Stroot geschmeete! Vöör den Man, den met die grote Knep en met die groote Tang, den ömer dat Papier oprape mot!“

„Kind“, seet min Vrauw, „ek heb doch geseit, gej dörvt gen Paier op de Stroot schmitte, dat es verbooje!“

Met groote froogende Ooge het sej min Vrauw angekeke. „Ek schmiet et evel op de Stroot...wen den Man gen Papier vind...en wen hej dann no den Börgermester mot kome...dan wörd den Man 'gewerbslos'...!“

Ek heb stellgeschweege. Et geeft Ogenblickke in’t leeve, wor man Kinder de Antwoord schöldeg bliev.


Although Dutch in character there are some features which resemble Low Saxon such as the use of „ömer“ instead of Dutch „altijd“ and „schmitte“ instead of Dutch „gooien“. Standart German is, of course, „gewerbslos“ showing that new expressions such as the word for „unemployed“ have been imported into the Cleves dialect directly from standard German and thus demonstrate the disappearing link to the Netherlands. However, the author must also had some knowledge of standard Dutch because he uses a specific Dutch-like spelling for words such as „gen“ or „gej“ or „Vrauw“.

At the southern end of the Gelderlands-Dutch speaking part of Lower Rhine the author Paul Oehlen (1896-1959) from Hüls, a part of the city of Krefeld and just north of the Uerdingen line, is a good example:

Schöpp on Joffel (Shovel and Fork)

*Die Schöpp stöt höesch die Joffel aan,* (The shovel is triggering slightly the fork)

*Doe bönne en de Schür* (there inside the barn)

*Off se dann janiet dr’eiter köem* (if she is not become aware of)

*Dat bute Frühjo’ehr wüer* (that spring is arriving outside)

„Dä Merling schmitt sech en de Broß, (The merlin is preparing his chest)
Eck hùr et an sin Lied (I can hear it by his song)

Mech krabbelt et bös en et Blott, (It is itching me terribly in my blood)

Eck jlöef, et ös sue wiet.“ (I believe it is about time)

Die Joffel drˈop: „Mech jöck et ook, (The fork answers: It is also itching me)

Vletts häs am Eng dou reit, (perhaps you are right in the end)

Ma wenn eck sieh, wie weij vool Roas (But when I see that we are full with rust)

Wöes et perdus mech schleit.“ (I almost become sick)

Die Sonn stöt alle Poeten op, (The sun is knocking all the paws open)

Dö Bur speit en de Honk. (The farmer is spitting into his hands)

Et dürt net long, en Stöndshe knopp, (It does not take long, an hour only)

Send Schöpp un Joffel blonk. (and shovel and fork are shiny again)


The author uses „eck“ for „I“ and „ook“ for „also“ which is characteristic for Gelderlands-Dutch but some influence from Middle-Franconian is already visible. „Mech“ and „dou“ are used as pronouns instead of „mij“ and „jij“ and the conjunction „on“ is replacing Dutch „en“ („and“). The Middle-Franconian -k sound replacing –d at the end of a word is apprarent in „Honk“ instead of „hand“ in Dutch and „eng“ instead of Dutch „einde“. Typical South-Lower Franconian is also „reit“ instead of „recht“ (“right”) and „eiter“ instead of „achter“ (“behind”). In general, the poem is based on German spelling, only „weij“ betrays some Dutch spelling influence. The author is using standard-German influenced „Frühjoˈehr“ instead of Dutch „lente“.

Two kilometers to the south of Hüls is Inrath, also part of Krefeld but already south of the Uerdingen line which is reflected by the dialect. The following poem of Johanna Overdick (1988-1967) is a good example:

Wat denken de Lü? (What are the people thinking?)
Wat denken de Lü, wat mi‘enen de Lü,(What are the people thinking, what do they mean)

wat fisple se eiter mech her? (What are they gossiping behind me)

Ech dri‘ehn mech ne‘it öm, et kömmt mech su‘e vür (I do not turn around, it appears to me)

Et ruscht mar de Wenk dur de Blär. (as if the wind is only rustling through the leaves)

Vlets lo‘ewe se mech, vlets büre se mech, (Perhaps they praise me, perhaps they condemn me)

vlets trecke se mech dur de Täng (perhaps they pull me through the teeth)

et mäk mech ne‘it kli en, et mäk mech ne‘it jru‘et, (it does not make me small, it does not make me big)

et hät all nicks op sech am Eng. (it does not matter in the end)

Wä kennt mech?  Kenn ech mech? (Who knows me? Do i know myself?
The man up above)

dä wet, wie ech bön. On ech frog (he knows who I am. And I am asking)

mech döcks möt en ärg beklomme Jemöit: (myself often with anxious mood)

Wat breng ech be‘i däm op de Wog? (What will I weigh on his scale)


„Ech“ has replaced „Ek“ for „I“ but almost all other consonants resemble Dutch and are not affected by the standard German consonant shift. In fact, the language looks almost identical to the one from Huls which is not surprising considering the 2 kilometers distance, but nevertheless, the fact that „Ek“ is used in Huls while „Ech“ is used in Inrath makes the one Gelderlandsch-Dutch and the other South Lower Franconian-Limburgs and here a part of the dialect of the city of Krefeld. But this example shows how smooth and gradual the changes in the region are, often almost insignificant and only over longer distances they become more obvious.

22 km south of Inrath is Büttgen, part of the city of Kaarst which is located precisely at the Benrath Line. The next village to the south, Greifrath is already located south of the line. The dialect of Büttgen shows already a lot more influence from Middle Franconian then the one from Inrath as the following text indicates:

Et woet samsdääs meddach, hä hot sech jet op de bank jelait, de oore zo, knaatschich von dä küel. Sii, der schottelplek en de häng, de kompe en tellere am schpööle.

Hä drient et radio aan, wat näeve de bank schteet, on hüet jraad noch – weiterhin kühl -. Do vlüch hä op, als wemmem e päed jetroene höt, krit sech et reekeliser on haut dat radio knatsch kapot.

Öm joddes welle, säät sii, wat mäks du dan vonne kwatsch? Säät hä, höste dan net jehuet, wat de käel em radio jesait hät? Weiterhin küel. Ech bön et een vör allemool sat möt küel.

Sing vrau kann sech vör laache koom halde on säät: Du döppe, hük meddach jöv et kenne küel, dat woer der schlus vom wetterberich „weiterhin kühl“

(Jakob Nilges, Norbert Drueke: Büttgen und seine Mundart I, St. Sebastianus-Schützenbruderschaft Büttgen, Niederrhein Verlag, Kaarst, 1985, Page 62)

Most of the consonants are still Lower Franconian-Dutch in character (as in „naslöeker eruut“) but „ts“ has replaced „t“ in „zo“ („to“) and displays an even stronger Middle Franconian influence on the Buettgen dialect than in Inrath. Middle Franconian „hük“ has replaced „vandaag“ and it is rather „von“ instead of „van“ („from“). From the same source the above text was adopted it appears that the personal pronoun „we“ which is „wij“ in Dutch has become „mer“ in Buettgen as is the case in Middel Franconian, a sentence like „We are calling you“ is „mer roope öch“.

8 km’s to the south east of Büttgen is Norf, part of the city of Neuss and just across the river Erft and south of the Bernath Line. The following poem of the Norf-born poet Ludwig Soumagne (1923-2003) is a good example of the Middle-Franconian dialect just south of the Benrath Line:

Häer mer danke Dech
bös ungs wigder su jnädig Häer
Jott em Himmel halt Ding Hank üvver se
beschötz die Dolle op Äede
die net dofür künne dat mer su sind
die für ungs de Kohle us em Füür holle
die für ungs de Hank en et Füür läje
die für ungs dorch et Füür jonnt
die für ungs die schwere Ärbeet donnt
die für ungs der Kopp hinhalde
die für ungs Drieß un Dreck fäje
die für ungs danze un sprenge
die für ungs vür ungs Strank hant
die für ungs der Hot trække
die für ungs schöldig wäede
die für ungs dree Fenger huchhäve
die für ungs hängere un freere
die für ungs läve un sterve
die für ungs der Himmel op Äede bedüje
die für ungs draan jlöve müsse
leev Hääer Du weeß wie mer op die Dolle
aanjewiese sind - erbarm Dech un lott se
öm Joddes Welle net ussterve
Amen


“weet” becomes “weeß” (“to know”) and “ut” becomes “uss” (“out”) although the Dutch –Lower Franconian “dat” and “op” are also present here as is the case generally in Middle Franconian. The Norf-dialect has also retained “lott” while further to the south in Cologne it is “loss” (“let”) and still has only personal pronouns in dative (“dech”) while further to the south the dialect of Cologne has already a distinction between accusative and dative as is the case in standard German. However, the texts from Büttgen and Norf would be fully comprehensible to both dialect speakers as is the case between Huels and Inrath above while that may not be the case further to the North or South demonstrating ones again the slow transition of the language.

Finally, the following poem by Hans Jonen (1892-1958) from Cologne is a good example of Middle Franconian in form of the Ripuarian-Cologne dialect:

Am Schlagbaum

Ich ston beim Schlagbaum an d’r Grenz

Do drüvven eß’n Huus begränz

Do wood e Kind gebore.

Un nevve mir spillt op d’r Stroß

Ne Köttel, kaum drei Spanne groß

Un wat kann sin – noh Johre?

Dat dä un drüvven dö do ston
Obwohl se ganix sich gedon –

Un traachte sich nohm Levve

Wä denk do nit: Och, leever Gott,

dun endlich doch dä Schlagbaum fott,

dat die de Häng sich gevve!


The accusative-dative distinction for the personal pronoun „me“ (mir-mich) is part of the Cologne dialect and the High-German consonant shift even further advanced than is the case in Norf. Lower Franconian „keng“ for „child“ has become „kind“ again as is the case around Cleves. The author is using a „g“ in e.g. „gevve“ but it has to be pronounced like English „y“ in „yesterday“ pre-vocalic and as a standard-German „ch“ post-vocalic. Communication appears still be possible between a speaker from Norf and Cologne but it is doubtful that this would work with a Lower Franconian speaker from Krefeld-Inrath. But since the city of Cologne and its dialect has a somewhat prestigious position in the Rhineland as a whole, it is likely that Lower Franconian speakers still understand it or at least a great deal of it while that does not work vice-versa and this prestigious position may also be the reason for the increased middle-Franconian influence, present at the southern end of the Lower Franconian area around Neuss and Düsseldorf.

In turn, the further spread of Middle-Franconian at the southern end of the Lower Franconian speech area may show how the high-German consonant shift and usage spread through the Rhineland from south to north. As Friedrich Engels was able to prove (Friedrich Engels: Fränkische Zeit, Anmerkung: Der fränkische Dialekt, http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me19/me19_474.htm), at one point the Rhineland as a whole must have had a Dutch-Low Saxon like pronunciation of all consonants but they began to shift about 1500 years ago (Bibliographisches Institut GmbH: Lernhelfer>Zweite Lautverschiebung, 2016, https://www.lernhelfer.de/schuelerlexikon/deutsch/artikel/zweite-lautverschiebung) and the ongoing shift at the southern end of the Lower Franconian speech may give us an idea how this shift began to occur. At the southern most extensions of the Rhineland area almost all consonants are shifted today apart from d to t, even in southern Palatinate words such as the one for „table“ are still pronounced „disch“ instead of „tisch“ indicating an old Dutch-Low Saxon heritage.

3.3. Sleswick – another attempt to describe a region
In contrast to the Lower Rhine, the borders of the Sleswick area are much clearer defined. With some minor changes Sleswick is still defined by the borders of the old Duchy of Sleswick as it was established in 1058 by Olaf I of Denmark. To the north the Kongeå forms the old border to Denmark proper, to the West the North Sea is the border (although the coast line shifted sometimes dramatically throughout history), to the East the Baltic Sea and to the South the river Eider. The Baltic Sea islands of Als, Ærø, Årø, Barsø and Fehmarn, The North Sea islands of Rømø (partly), Sylt (partly), Föhr (partly), Pellworm, Nordstrand, Langeness and The “Halligen” were traditionally also a part of Sleswick and most of them still are with the exception of Fehmarn. Today, Sleswick is administratively divided into a North and a South; the North is a part of the Danish Kingdom and forms a part of the region of Southern Denmark (Syddanmark). The South is part of the state of Sleswick-Holsten which is a federal state of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German spelling is “Schleswig-Holstein”. This division occurred after the 1921 plebiscite were the population north of a line stretching from the little river Vidå on the North Sea coast to Kruså on the Flensborg Fjord voted to become a part of Denmark. Thus, this line became then the national border between the German Empire (and nowadays Federal Republic of Germany) and the Kingdom of Denmark and this border became a definite cultural dividing line ever since with national minorities remaining on both sides of the border. Through various cross-border organizations and increasing European Integration after WWII and, more recently, the Schengen agreement which effectively lifted all border controls inside the European Union, this border has diminished in significance somewhat but a linguistic and cultural divide is still prevailing.

The area was originally settled by North Sea Germanic groups such as the Angles, Ambronians, Jutes and Saxons as far it is known but many of these groups migrated numerously from the area eventually conquering Britain (> Angles>England) and most of Sleswick was colonized by Dano-Scandinavian settlers moving in from the North-East. To which degree North Sea Germanic settlers remained is up to dispute, however place names suggest that north of a line Hollingstedt-Dannevirke-Haddeby-Eckernförde those who remained became assimilated by the Dano-Scandinavians. To the south of this line exists a mixed place-name area where the southernmost Dano-Scandinavian place names are to be found just south of the Eider. However, large parts of these southern districts where sparsely populated and thus formed a de-facto border area towards Holsten in that sense.

In the southern and south-western part of Sleswick, North-Sea Germanic speech remained predominant in the form of North-Frisian and Low Saxon. Most of the Frisians may have immigrated from areas to the southwest in nowadays the Netherlands and East Friesland but it is nevertheless likely that there was already a North-Sea Germanic element present (in particular on the Island of Amrum>Ambronians) where the local population adopted later the name “Frisian” for themselves. In the area between the Dannevirke and the Eider a strong Holsten-Saxon element is found and the existence of the Frisian and Holsten-Saxon elements in the Southwest and South of Sleswick became one of the causes of the nationalistic disputes arising in the 19th century (Jessen-Klingenberg/March: Kleiner Atlas zur Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins, Braunschweig. 1986, ISBN 3-14-10099-6).
Dano-Scandinavian house forms are predominant north of the Eider-Dannevirke-Sli line while south of it Saxon house forms are predominant and the Frisian “Gulf”-Houses are predominant in the south-west. Again, the transition is fluid, Saxon style farmhouses can also be found north of the Eider-Dannevirke-Slie line. Folklore and cultural traditions are also transitional and are often difficult to be distinguished between Saxon, Southern Jutish or Frisian. There are, however, some specific Frisian traditions such as “Biikebrennen”. The common Lutheran-Protestant religious orientation may also have contributed to a similarity in traditions and festivals. However, the common Nordic midsummer festival (in the form of St. Hans) is only celebrated by the Danish population of Sleswick.

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