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University of North Carolina

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LANGUAGE DISSERTATION NO. 34

SWISS GERMAN DIALECT AND ROMANCE PATOIS

BY

WILLIAM G. MOULTON

YALE UNIVERSITY DISSERTATION

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PREFACE

One day in the spring of 1938 the late Professor Eduard Prokosch of Yale University suggested that I might find a topic for my doctoral dissertation in the general field of Old High German final vowels. In going through the work that has been done on this subject, the greatest stumbling block which I found was the assumption, made by many scholars, that certain final vowels must have been long in OHG because they still survive in a few modern dialects, especially in southwestern Switzerland. When I turned to these Swiss dialects, I became convinced that the full final vowels they show could not all have been long in OHG. Most of these vowels were surely short, and I began to suspect that they had been preserved because the dialects in which they occur have given up their inherited strong stress accent, and have taken on the weak stress accent of the neighboring Romance dialects. In order to test this belief, I began to look for other evidence of Romance influence. What I found seemed so important that it soon far outweighed the OHG aspects of the problem, and came to make up the bulk of my investigations.

As a result, the present study falls into two very unequal parts. The first chapter is polemic: it attempts to refute the belief that certain final vowels were long in OHG because they survive in a few modern dialects. The remaining chapters attempt to show how Romance influence has affected these dialects, especially as regards the preservation of final vowels.

Two scholars in particular have been very kind to me: Professor Hans Kurath of Brown University, and Professor Leonard Bloomfield of Yale University. To both of them my thanks for their help and encouragement.

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