

The prosodic representation of *Verschmelzungsformen* in Middle High German

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This paper considers the prosodic representation of Middle High German (MHG) *Verschmelzungsformen* (VFs). These fused forms result from the encliticisation of one function word to another, e.g. *zem* ('to-DEF.MASC.SG' < *ze dem*), where a definite article encliticises to a preceding preposition. Most recent phonological literature, such as Hall (1999) and Kabak & Schiering (2006), has focused on the synchronic language, but there has been growing interest in the historical development of such forms. However, such studies are typically syntactic or semantic in focus, at best making vague, passing claims about the role of phonology, such as Nübling's (2005) reference to VFs forming a "trochee" in earlier stages of the language. Such arguments are furthermore largely corpus based, drawing solely on the orthography of prose MSs and overplaying the phonographic nature of MS spelling. This paper aims to address this gap, drawing on evidence from verse (from Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*) to demonstrate that VFs were more widespread in the MHG period than has previously been recognised (c.f. Waldenberger 2020) and analyse their phonological representation. With the earliest attestations in the Old High German period, such forms enjoyed great productivity in MHG, before becoming more restricted and grammaticalised in the modern language. For instance, forms absent from the modern standard language abound, e.g. *underem*. Nübling's work during the 90s stressed the development of VFs along a cline from their origins as allegroforms to the simple and special clitics found in the synchronic language. In contrast, I take a prosodic perspective and suggest that unstressed definite articles were reduced and encliticised to preceding function words, together comprising an entire foot and meeting the bimoraic minimal word requirement of MHG, capable of forming a prosodic word. These VFs, headed by a function word (FN), could themselves then be reduced and encliticised to a lexical host (LEX).

The prosodic hierarchy proposed by Nespor & Vogel (1986) comprises the following constituents: Foot (F) > Prosodic Word (ω) > Clitic Group > Phonological Phrase (ϕ) > Intonational Phrase > Utterance. However, as has been argued by Selkirk (1986), the clitic group is superfluous and clitic behaviour can be better accounted for with reference to the ω . Certainly, there is no need for such a constituent in German (c.f. Wiese 1996, Hall 1999) and its inclusion in the hierarchy was largely justified by the theory-internal principle of the Strict Layer Hypothesis, which prohibited recursivity. It is the position of this paper, however, that recursivity within the ω is perfectly possible, as argued by Gussenhoven (1986), Booij (1995) and Lahiri & Plank (to appear), meaning that a (host=clitic) sequence would form a recursive prosodic word ((host) $_{\omega}$ =clitic) $_{\omega}$, although the picture is more complex for VFs. In line with Lahiri & Plank (2010), I argue that prosodic and syntactic phrasing are non-isomorphic and that MHG (in continuity with other Germanic languages) by default associated function words leftwards, favouring trochaic groupings and thus encliticisation. Wiese (1996) argues that a host=clitic combination can form a ω (but focuses on LEX=FN combinations, leaving the precise representation of FN=FN VFs open). However, most other authors – largely due to adherence to the Strict Layer Hypothesis and the assumption of procliticisation (following syntactic alignment) – advocate alternative structures in order to avoid recursivity. For instance, Kabak & Schiering (2006) suggest that VFs form a foot adjoined directly to the ϕ ((FN=FN) $_F$ (LEX) $_{\omega}$) $_{\phi}$. Like Kabak & Schiering, but unlike Hall (1999), I do not assume that the preposition to which the definite article encliticises is a LEX, as in MHG the reduced article could encliticise to an unstressed, reduced form of the preposition (e.g. *ze*, rather than *zuo*), as in Middle Dutch (c.f. Lahiri & Systema 2018). I differ from both accounts, however, in arguing that VFs formed a ω in MHG, capable of bearing stress and focus. However, VFs were also capable of being reduced, losing their ω status and encliticising to a preceding LEX, forming a recursive ω of the structure ((LEX) $_{\omega}$ =(FN=FN) $_F$) $_{\omega}$, equivalent to ((LEX) $_{\omega}$ =FN) $_{\omega}$, as in ((*sprach*) $_{\omega}$ =*zem*) $_{\omega}$ (*gaste*) $_{\omega}$ ("spoke to the guest"). This analysis accounts for the facts of MHG cliticisation; the arguments against such a structure proposed by Hall (1999) disappear when one acknowledges that cliticisation was left-leaning and FNs would only procliticise in phrase-initial position, where encliticisation was prevented. For instance, word-final lax vowels in encliticised pronouns were reduced to schwas, e.g. *-se* ("she" < *si*). VFs are thus of great theoretical interest, involving the encliticisation of one function word to another.

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