

# Visibilizing Normative Regional Historical Multilingualism (ViNoRHM): Ideology, Policy & Practice

ViNoRHM Newsletter

January 2025

Dear ViNoRHM Advisory Board Members, Local Cooperation Partners, ViNoRHM supporters, colleagues, and friends,

I thought at the end of year one that time had flown by, but now as I sit down to write our end-of-year-two update, I'm convinced 2024 passed by even more quickly! Where year one was really a lot of organization and getting our bearings, year two has been filled with lots of travel, talks, and a few minor publications related to the project and multilingualism here in the *Germany-Denmark border region* more broadly. Since some of you have been following along quite closely (whether you'd like to or not 😊), if this is a repeat to you – as always – feel free to just scroll through and just look at the pretty pictures.

My **project assistant, Andre Hermann**, is still assisting with all kinds of project work, and spent much of the last year beginning work on his own branches of the project. He's been focusing on semi-public texts, specifically parts of the Ranzelberg Guestbook and memory albums from students at the Tønder Teaching Seminary which he used for his BA thesis and expanded to an article in *Ord og Sag*. He's beginning work on his MA Thesis this semester and been visiting archives and gathering data to build from this foundation he's built and intends to expand into the language history surrounding the Duchy of Schleswig's teaching seminaries

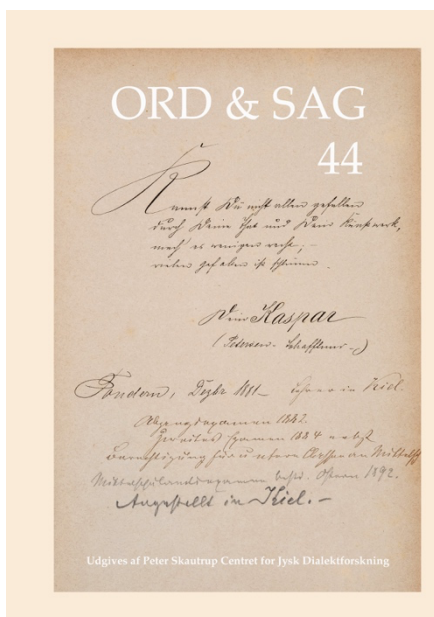


(specifically those in Tønder, Segeberg, and Eckernförde). His work adapts the communities of practice framework, and he shows that the writing practices of this group changes based on text type. He's also experimenting with AI for data analysis and is still working on things like collecting and digitizing documents and keeping me organized and on track.

I started off 2024's year of presentations and travel in March, where I presented on the specifically Frisian aspects of the Ranzelberg Guestbook at the [Ferring Stiftung](#) on Föhr. Shortly after several Flensburgers traveled to Cambridge for the [16<sup>th</sup> Forum for Germanic Language Studies Conference](#), where there were three presentations based on data from the ViNoRHM project.

1. Andre Hermann. Semi-public texts: communities of practice in 19th-century northern Germany ([Abstract](#))
2. Samantha M. Litty. Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang - Women and the Ranzelberg Guestbook ([Abstract](#))
3. Jan Momme Penning. "Den Ernst sein Brief bestätigt noch immer dasselbe". Variation in Dental Verbal Suffixes in Varying Text-types from the 19th Century Duchy of Schleswig ([Abstract](#))

Andre and Momme both presented excerpts from their BA Theses, and I focused on women in the Ranzelberg Guestbook – the lack of women writers, how women’s entries were treated when they did write in the guestbook, and how then men talked about women. This led to a mini outreach style article being published in the *Nordfriesland* 226 (pg. 24-25), “Das Frauenbild im Ranzelberger Gästebuch”.



Later in April we completed a multi-day archive trip to the archive of the Peter Skautrup Centre at Aarhus University. The Peter Skautrup Centre focuses on dialect studies and their archive is mainly recordings made in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but they also have a decent sized document archive that stretches back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including documents from our region. While we were there, we presented a general project overview for the Aarhus campus community, and Andre was invited to submit an article based on his BA-Thesis data, which we then co-authored and are happy to announce was published in *Ord og Sag*, the center’s peer-reviewed, open-access magazine. An extra bit of excitement comes from one of our images being chosen for the cover of this issue. The article is available here: <https://tidsskrift.dk/ordogsag/issue/view/11802>

Looking back, I realize that in 2023 we did a lot of work regarding the “practice” branch of the project, and 2024 can definitely be called our year of “ideology”, (and 2025 is gearing up to focus on “policy”). In May, I presented for the first time about visibilizing language ideologies at the research colloquium of the **Interdisciplinary Centre for European Studies (ICES)** here at the EUF. While I am a member of the Institute or Frisian Studies and Minority Research, ICES is the institute that supported the initial DFG-application, and so presenting for their research and lecture series is something that is important for sharing the work we’re doing here in Flensburg.

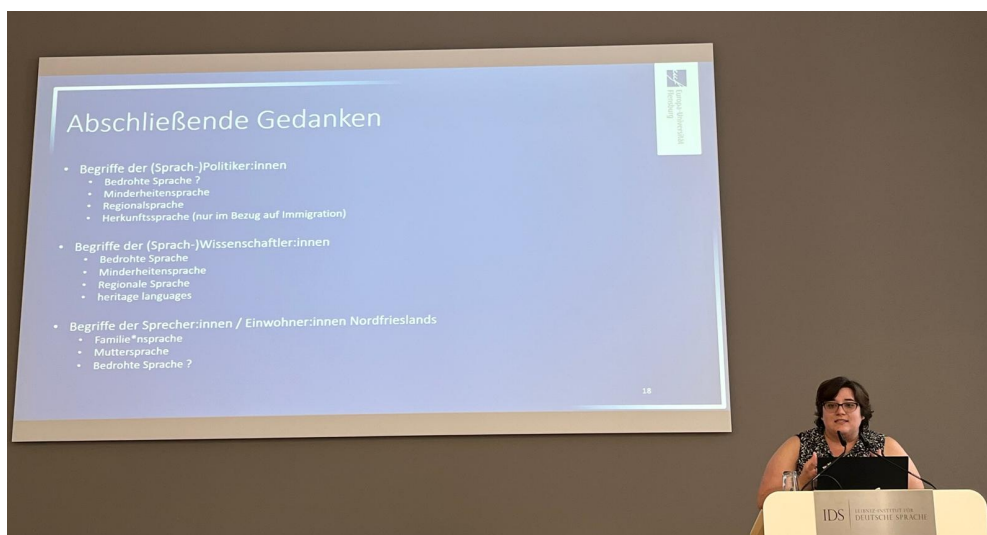


In June, Andre and I co-presented a few further steps of the ideology study we're working on at the 13th Historical Sociolinguistics Network Conference (Zurich; 5-7 June), and as part of the workshop Die Soziolinguistik des Nordfriesischen: Spracheinstellungen, -wahrnehmungen und -gebrauch, hosted by Dr. Ruth Kircher of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), I focused specifically on language ideologies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as related to Frisian and visible in Frisian texts or by Frisian authors.



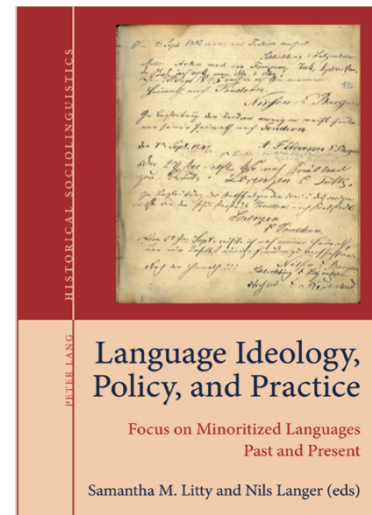
A major learning experience for me this past year, outside of – or perhaps *because of* – the work with ideology is the importance of how we label things or talk about things. As a linguist, I mostly refer to Frisian as *North Frisian*, due in large part to the prevalence of *West Frisian* in academic literature and online spaces (which is naturally also referred to by its speakers and researchers simply as *Frisian*). These naming practices kept coming up in my work regarding the Frisian dialects/varieties, mostly because I belong to an institute that deals with Frisian studies and Frisian issues on a daily basis and in a modern context. This means I spent a lot of time in 2024 thinking about how we – as linguistics, as academics, as people with connections to the Frisian community – talk about a language and its speakers and where this mismatches with practices and descriptions from the community itself. Coming from working with heritage languages and historical language communities in the American context, in the years I've spent in Flensburg, I've often wondered why there's little to no overlap between the heritage language research community and minority language research community when it comes to Frisian studies, and the tldr; version is imho *due to ideology*. So while I've been encountering this in today's contexts, I believe that the way Frisian is perceived and communicated about in the past has at least in part led to this naming issue today, making this discussion relevant for the ViNoRHM project as well.

I took this discussion to Uppsala in May, where I examined the case of North Frisian and the ways we refer to it to the workshop **Haugen Revisited: Theoretical and Empirical Realities of Heritage Communities** (22-24 May), then to a conference organized by the Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS Mannheim) (**Sprach(en)politik in Deutschland: Perspektiven auf Sprachminderheiten- und Mehrsprachigkeitskonstellationen**), and also to an additional panel at the aforementioned **Soziolinguistik des Nordfriesischen** workshop. The direct takeaway for the ViNoRHM Project is a change in the way I talk about the region. When I talk about the project region when speaking historically, or with those in-the-know I refer to the Duchy of Schleswig, but when I'm speaking more generally, I now refer to the region as the *Germany-Denmark border region* (or *Denmark-Germany border region*), as opposed to the German-Danish (or Danish-German) border region, because that terminology sometimes gives the impression that those are the only *languages* in the region. Given the project's goal of re-visibility of invisibilized languages and speaker groups, I feel that this term better prevents the unintentional invisibilization of the region's many other languages.



Two **other publications** related to the project came out this year. The first is from a project I presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> Workshop in Immigrant Languages in the Americas (Madison, Wisconsin; 2022). I was at breakfast the morning this conference was to start when I received the email informing me that the ViNoRHM Project was granted funding and would start in early 2023, so not only did this talk feel like a connection between my previous research strands and my future research strands, but it was also just generally a very exciting and emotional time. The resulting chapter, [Multilingual Memory Albums in Wisconsin and the Duchy of Schleswig](#), is now available through Bergen Language and Linguistics Studies 14.

The second publication I co-authored with Jan Momme Penning, who was an integral part of the team working to transcribe and research the Ranzelberg Guestbook. Our article, *Semi-public writings in the Duchy of Schleswig in the 19th century*, presents three case studies examining various semi-public texts and their usefulness for historical sociolinguistic research. We initially presented this research at the HiSoN 2022 conference in Murcia. We're quite happy with how this chapter turned out and I'm even more happy that it is part of the volume, *Language Ideology, Policy, and Practice: Focus on Minoritized Languages Past and Present*, which I co-edited with Nils Langer. More info on the volume [here](#).



**Upcoming in 2025:** Since we did so much traveling and talking and traveling and talking in 2024, the plan for 2025 is to stay put, sit down, and get to work to combine the many project parts into something much more comprehensive. However, we do of course have a few events we can't resist, and so I'll be traveling to Lausanne for the [International Workshop on Language History "from Below": Data Sources and \(Digital\) Approaches](#) (Université de Lausanne, 6-7 February 2025), then we're looking forward to a visit from Dr. Christa Schneider (Universität Bern) in March. Dr. Schneider is an expert for digital approaches and large corpus models and will be visiting the EUF specifically to do some advising on the ViNoRHM Project, so we're very excited to see what she can teach us. Andre has applied to present his upcoming MA-research at the **2025 NARNiHS Research Incubator** put on by the North American Research Network in Historical Sociolinguistics, so \*fingers crossed\* as he waits to hear about acceptance. In May, both Andre and I will be traveling to Bristol for the [20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition](#) of the **HiSoN** conference where we're looking forward to more great conversation and input on our presentations and the project more broadly.

Until you hear from me again, the **ViNoRHM website** is still the best place to check for updates and announcements (in German and English), and we will continue to update it as regularly as possible: <https://www.uni-flensburg.de/vinorhm>

Wishing you all the best for a healthy and happy 2025,  
Sam