

PRINCE LOUIS-LUCIEN BONAPARTE AND ENGLISH DIALECTOLOGY

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LABURPENA

Ez da ezaguna Luis-Luzien Bonaparte printzea ingeles dialektoen ikerketan aitzindari izan zenik. Harold Orton-ekin batera II. Mundu-gerraren ondoren egin zen *Survey of English Dialects* lanaren kofundatzailea izan zen Eugen Dieth-ek berak ez zuen printzearen lana aipatu ere egin 1947an idatzi zuen artikulu luzean. Printzeak XIX. mendearen erdialdera Bibliaren zati batzuk ingeles dialekto askotara (baita beste hizkuntza batzuetara ere) itzultzeaz gain, gramatikaren ezaugarrietan, bereziki *izan* aditzaren formetan oinarrituz ingeles dialektoak sailkatu zituen lehenengo izan zen. 1876 eta 1877 urteetan argitaratu zituen lehenengo mapak. Bere lana eta ideiak printzearen garaikideen lanekin alderatuz eztabaidatuko dira eta ikuspegi modernoekin daukaten zerikusia eta ingeles dialektologian izan zituen emaitzak aztertuko.

RESUMEN

El hecho de que el Príncipe Louis-Lucien Bonaparte fuera un precursor en lo que se refiere al estudio de los dialectos del inglés no ha recibido la atención que se merece. Incluso Eugen Dieth, co-fundador con Harold Orton tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial, del “Survey of English dialects” (Estudios sobre los dialectos ingleses), omite señalar el trabajo del Príncipe en su extenso artículo publicado en 1947. El Príncipe no sólo tradujo fragmentos de la Biblia a varios dialectos del Inglés (así como a otros idiomas) a mediados del siglo XIX, sino que fue también el primero en clasificarlos, basándose en peculiaridades gramaticales, especialmente en las formas del verbo *be*. Su trabajo dio lugar a la publicación de dos mapas pioneros en 1876 y 1877. Se estudia su obra y sus ideas en relación con sus contemporáneos y se muestra la conexión con los planteamientos modernos así como los resultados de investigación sobre la dialectología del inglés británico.

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“Il est fort regrettable qu’on passe souvent sous silence cette activité très méritoire du Prince Bonaparte dans le domaine de la dialectologie italienne” (Pop 1950, 485). What Sever Pop here remarks with regard to Italian dialectology can with equal justification also be said of the Prince’s activities in English dialectology: they were passed over in silence in all the four general surveys of English dialects, starting with Skeat in 1911 and including Brook 1963, Wakelin 1972 and Trudgill 1990. Did the Prince fare better in the eyes of those who initiated the nationwide *Survey of English Dialects* at a linguistically crucial period of time shortly after the Second World War and of those who were later closely associated with it? Unfortunately not. In a long review article, published in 1947, the co-founder of the *Survey of English Dialects*, Eugen Dieth, while tracing the history of dialect studies in Great Britain, completely overlooked the work of the Prince. And Harold Orton, together with Dieth founder of the said *Survey*, wryly remarked that “the Prince sometimes found dialect features just where they ought not to be” (Sanderson 1977, 161). Stewart Sanderson, Harold Orton’s successor at the University of Leeds, in his article “Language on the Map” (1977), has a paragraph on the Prince’s maps, but Sanderson’s view that the Prince’s “underlying assumption that dialects were to be distinguished on a county basis” (1977, 161) is completely disproved by Bonaparte’s maps showing his classification of English dialects. Finally Petyt, in his 1980 book entitled *The Study of Dialect*, like Sanderson, mentions Bonaparte, not, however, in his own right, but in a sub-chapter on Alexander J. Ellis, another important 19th century dialectologist. Petyt has this to say: “So he [Ellis] relied largely on second-hand material, supplied by over eight hundred voluntary helpers. Notable among these are His Imperial Highness Louis L. Bonaparte, who provided a number of specimen texts and also gave Ellis his ‘first conceptions of a classification of English dialects’” (1980, 71).

Thus we must conclude that 20th century dialectologists, mostly British, either ignored the Prince’s work in English dialectology completely, misrepresented or minimised it. Two exceptions must be noted here. The first is Sever Pop whose matter-of-fact entry in volume two of his work *La Dialectologie* is worded thus:

Le 20 juin 1873, le prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte présenta à la Société philologique de Londres une communication intitulée *Classification des dialectes anglais modernes*, accompagnée d’une carte indiquant les principaux dialectes anglais (Londres, 1873, une feuille in-4° et une carte en couleur; tirage en 250 exemplaires). Cette carte a été rédigée après une enquête faite sur place par le prince Bonaparte (cf. *English Dialect Society, Series D, Miscellanies II*, p. 13) (voir la planche n° LXIII, p. 911 de mon étude).

Cette carte a influencé la rédaction de l'Atlas phonétique des parlers danois...

Le prince Bonaparte a en outre le mérite d'avoir traduit dans de nombreux dialectes anglais plusieurs parties de la Bible¹ (1950, 910).

The second exception is my paper (Viereck 1979) in which I analyzed Guy S. Lowman's data collected in Central and Southern England in 1937-38² and compared these results also with Bonaparte's.

What did the Prince do in and for English dialectology? In the late 1850s, he initiated a series of translations of religious texts into many languages and dialects, among them also English dialects. *The Song of Solomon* was the one translated most often for the Prince, sometimes by well-known people such as the poet William Barnes who provided the Dorset version. Only 250 copies were printed of these versions and at the Prince's own expense (Skeat 1873). But extracts of them are still readily available in *The Book of a Thousand Tongues* (1939, 1972²). While Joseph Wright made use of all these translations in his six-volume *English Dialect Dictionary* (1898-1905) as they are of considerable lexical interest, Alexander J. Ellis in his *The Existing Phonology of English Dialects* (1889), understandably, could not. Ellis notes:

The versions of the song of Solomon published by the Prince, and written by the best authorities he could procure, were admirable when made, as opening out the whole question of English Dialects in a comparative form; but when I endeavoured to utilise them for the present investigation, I found it impossible to determine the pronunciation from the orthography with any approach to the necessary accuracy, and hence I have been reluctantly compelled to pass them by altogether (1889, 2*).

However, Ellis is most generous in acknowledging the Prince's help in various ways and writes:

Finally I wish to record my obligations to H.I.H. Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte..., who, though he was able only on one occasion to take down a portion of a cs. [comparative specimen, i.e. 15 short numbered paragraphs constructed for the purpose of obtaining dialect renderings of familiar words in various connections and some characteristic constructions, entitled 'Why John has no doubts' - W.V.] in pal. [palaeotype, i.e. a special type of transcription devised by Ellis - W.V.] himself, yet procured me many versions of the cs. from others, and a large amount on incidental information. To him I owe especially my first conceptions of a classification of the English Dialects, and he has been throughout a warm sympathiser and a ready helper. Possessing a large collection of English dialect books... and all the best glossaries, with many of his own notes in travelling, he allowed me to examine them all, and abstract what was needed, so that I was made thoroughly acquainted

1. These passages were not translated by the Prince himself, but rather at his request by native speakers of the various dialects. See Wright's Bibliography in his *English Dialect Dictionary* and further below.

2. It should be said in passing that Lowman's linguistic fieldwork is not mentioned in Sever Pop's 1950 generally full documentation.

with all that had been done before, and saw how necessary it was to treat the pron[unciation] separately (1889, 5).

A closer look at Ellis's book reveals that he repeatedly also included grammatical information gleaned from Bonaparte's research without specifically mentioning this in his index. Thus we read: "... from Rickmansworth [in the southeast of England] Prince L.-L. Bonaparte obtained a few notes. *I be* is not much in use, *I are* is more common, and *we am, am you?, I, we knows* are heard occ[asionally], *I says* frequently, *w* for *v* rarely if ever heard" (1889, 235).

To Prince Bonaparte goes the honour of having provided us with the *first* classification of English dialects (see Bonaparte 1875-76, repr. 1877). As the text reveals, he read this paper before the Philological Society on April 7, 1876. Bonaparte calls his classification a *new* classification of the English dialects. This seeming contradiction is explained in the first paragraph of Bonaparte's paper: "During the summer of the past year, I made several excursions in some of the English counties, with the object of ascertaining the general nature of the dialect therein spoken amongst the uncultivated peasants. The result I have obtained has been rather contrary to what I expected to find, and has obliged me to modify *my previous classification*" (p. 570, italics mine). This classification "as far as concerns the primary dialects, is principally founded on their grammatical characters, particularly on the substantive verb; but the vocabulary, and the consonantal and vocal changes are also taken into due consideration in determining the sub-dialects and varieties" (p. 574).

The two maps that accompany Bonaparte's paper differ only in two minor cartographical conventions (see Maps 1 and 2). The map dated 1877 has fine lines which show "Projections of Varieties into adjacent Counties" as compared to thick lines with a specifically marked ending on the map dated 7 April, 1876. The following four points are especially worth mentioning, as a kind of first summary:

(1) The maps show the "approximate delimitation" of the dialects. The Prince was well aware that "no real exact delimitation of English dialects is ... possible... This is owing to the fragmentary state of the present English dialects, which are rather remnants of dialects, imperceptibly shading one into the other, and more or less influenced by standard English, than anything else" (p. 577).

(2) The Prince was also well aware of the fact that primary dialects can be subdivided. Thus, according to him, the Western English Dialect can be further divided into five sub-dialects.

(3) Also quite modern is his terminology, as his use of 'transitional' and 'varieties' to describe dialectal differences shows and his view that "the num-

ber of the varieties is almost infinite, and is equivalent to that of the different localities” (p. 577).

(4) Bonaparte was well aware that dialects –contrary to what Sanderson (1977, 161) said– are not to be distinguished on a county basis. His maps and his texts show this quite clearly and so does his (already quoted) remark on the map legend: “Projections of Varieties into adjacent Counties are shown by straight lines”. The county in Bonaparte’s time was nothing but a handy reference unit as it was later for the *Survey of English Dialects* and as it is today, e.g., for Edward’s 1990 bibliography without implying that “cultural variations coincide meaningfully with county boundaries” (Sanderson 1977, 161).

From what the Prince said on the almost infinite number of varieties it follows that “only dialects and subdialects are the essential parts of a classification such as this...” (p. 577).

Altogether the Prince distinguishes between fourteen primary dialects on his maps but names only thirteen in the legends. The fourteenth, called Scotch by him –he also refers to this in the text– is to be found on English soil in northern Northumberland. Bonaparte notes:

The South-western (No. III.), the Devonshire (No. IV.), and even the Cornish (No. V.), are decidedly Southern; the Midland (No. IX.) is decidedly Midland; and the Northern (No. XIII.) decidedly Northern. The other eight are more or less transitional. In fact, the North-eastern (No. XI.), the North-western (No. VIII.), and even the North Midland (No. XII.), partake of the Midland and of the Northern; the Western (No. VI.), and even the Shropshire (No. VII.), shade from the Southern into the Midland; the East Midland (No. X.), in its Southern varieties at least, partakes of the South-eastern (No. II.), and this of the former, as well as of the South-western (No. III.); the Eastern (No. I.), finally, shows a tendency towards the Northern varieties of the East Midland (No. X.). This transitional character of the majority of the English dialects obliges me to abandon their distinction into Southern, Midland, and Northern families, without ceasing, however, to recognize the Southern, Midland and Northern characters on which the present classification is based (p. 575).

What are the features that led Bonaparte to classify the English dialects in this way? He notes:

Southern characters I call: the use of *I be, thou bist, he be, we be, you be, they be*, for *I am*, etc; the periphrastic tenses replacing the simple, as *I do love*, for *I love*; the prefix *a* before the past participle, as *I have aheard*, for *I have heard*, the permutation of the initial *f, s, sh*, and *thr*, into *v, z, zh*, and *dr*, the broad pronunciation of the Italian *ai*, replacing the sound of the English *ay*, as in *May*, pronounced as the Italian adverb *mai*. Other characters may be quoted as Southern, but the preceding five I have found sufficient for my object.

Their absence constitutes the negative characters of the Northern English Dialect, and the use, more or less frequent, of *I is, thou is, we is, you is, they is*, pronounced according to the nature of the dialect, presents a good positive criterion for it, although not for the Scotch. The change of *o* into *a* before *ng*, as in *sang, lang, strang*, for *song, long, strong*, may be considered also an additional character of the Northern English. The use of the second person of the singular, and of *I is, thou is, we is*, etc., as well as the absence both of

the guttural I [= the Scotch and German *ch*], and of the intermediate sound between the French *eu* in *peu* and *u* in *pu*, are, in my opinion, good distinctive criteria between Northern English and Scotch... For what relates to the forms *I is*, *they is*, I have sometimes met with them in decidedly non-Northern varieties; but in this case *we is* and *you is* are not to be found, as in the Northern English; and in the same manner it is possible to find, although rarely, in some of the non-Northern varieties, *he, we, or they be*, but not *I be* and *you be*, as in the Southern Dialect. The Midland characters are negative, and consist in the absence of the Southern as well as the Northern ones. Still the verbal plural in *n*, as *we aren*, for *we are*, distinguishes pretty well the North-western English (No VIII.); and the form *we bin*, also for *we are*, which may be found in Shropshire (No. VII.), is an interesting instance of the shading of the Southern dialects into the North-western (No. VIII.) (p. 575f.).

As patterns are difficult to recognise immediately on the maps drawn by the Prince, I have redrawn them restricting myself to his primary dialect areas, ignoring both the subdialects and the principal varieties (see Map 3). Then I correlated these with my generalisations of the data of the *Survey of English Dialects* (cf. Viereck 1986a, 1986b; see Maps 4-6). As the three maps show, I worked out these generalisations on the phonetic, the lexical and the morphological level.

The [morphological] map [Bonaparte's main concern] reveals largely the same structure as we described for lexis... and for phonetics... We can distinguish a northernmost area in England..., a further transitional zone along the Humber - Lune - Ribble..., the same 'Staffel-' or 'Stufenlandschaft' between the Humber and the Wash as we noted... for the other linguistic levels, a rather homogenous Lincolnshire and East Anglia, an unstable subarea in the West Midlands..., and a similarly unstable area in the southeast. For the southwest, we note a difference in that, for morphology, the belt from the British Channel to Ha[mpshire] is much less marked than for phonetics and lexis... However, two subareas can be distinguished in the far southwest for morphology, too: one in western and parts of central Co[rnwall], the other in east Co[rnwall], D[evon] and parts of west So[merset]. These, again, are not so clearly marked as for the other two levels. All in all, it must be concluded that there is substantial agreement between lexical, phonological, and morphological heteroglosses in dialectal English English (1986a, 243).

A correlation between the Prince's findings and my own about eighty years later show remarkable agreements. The Prince clearly recognised a separate speech area in northernmost England as he recognised the oldest and most stable linguistic divide running from the Humber in the east to the rivers Lune and Ribble in the west. Also the southwestern and the East Anglia relic areas are clearly marked on Prince Bonaparte's map. He even noted the two subareas in the southwest covering the same territory in 1876 as they did in the mid-twentieth century. The most important deviation between Bonaparte's and my findings is his line separating dialects X (East Midland) and XI (North Eastern). I might add that Bonaparte's delimitation was not substantiated by Alexander John Ellis whose Transverse Line I starts further south from the Wash in a southwesterly direction (cf. his map *English Dialect Districts*,

1887) as does my delimitation. It is important to repeat here that of the thirteen primary dialects Bonaparte names in the legend “eight are more or less transitional” in his opinion (p. 575). Furthermore it is also important to repeat that Bonaparte differentiated between many varieties and subdialects. Although it is true that there are better ways of displaying these on a map, it cannot be denied that the Prince had a very realistic picture of the complex dialectal reality of his time. He already was well aware of what modern dialectology was to show much later, namely - in Kontic’s words - “that there is no such thing as an ‘ideal dialect area’”, i.e. “an area clearly cut off from its neighbours...” (1990, 256). Kontic goes on to say: “This impression can also be gained if one considers Viereck’s computer maps [of 1985]... Certain dialect areas do become clearly visible, in particular the South-West and East Anglia, but the rest of his area of investigation... is covered with circles in different shades of grey, indicating that the differences between the individual localities are not great” (1990, 256, fn. 92).

“Finally, we should not forget about the following geolinguistic rule, mentioned in Chambers/Trudgill [1980], 107: ‘The pattern of criss-crossing isoglosses separating even contiguous villages from one another and apparently describing a bewildering variety of dialect feature combinations is now recognised as a typical pattern for any region that has a long settlement history’” (Kontic 1990, 256), which is certainly true for the whole of England.

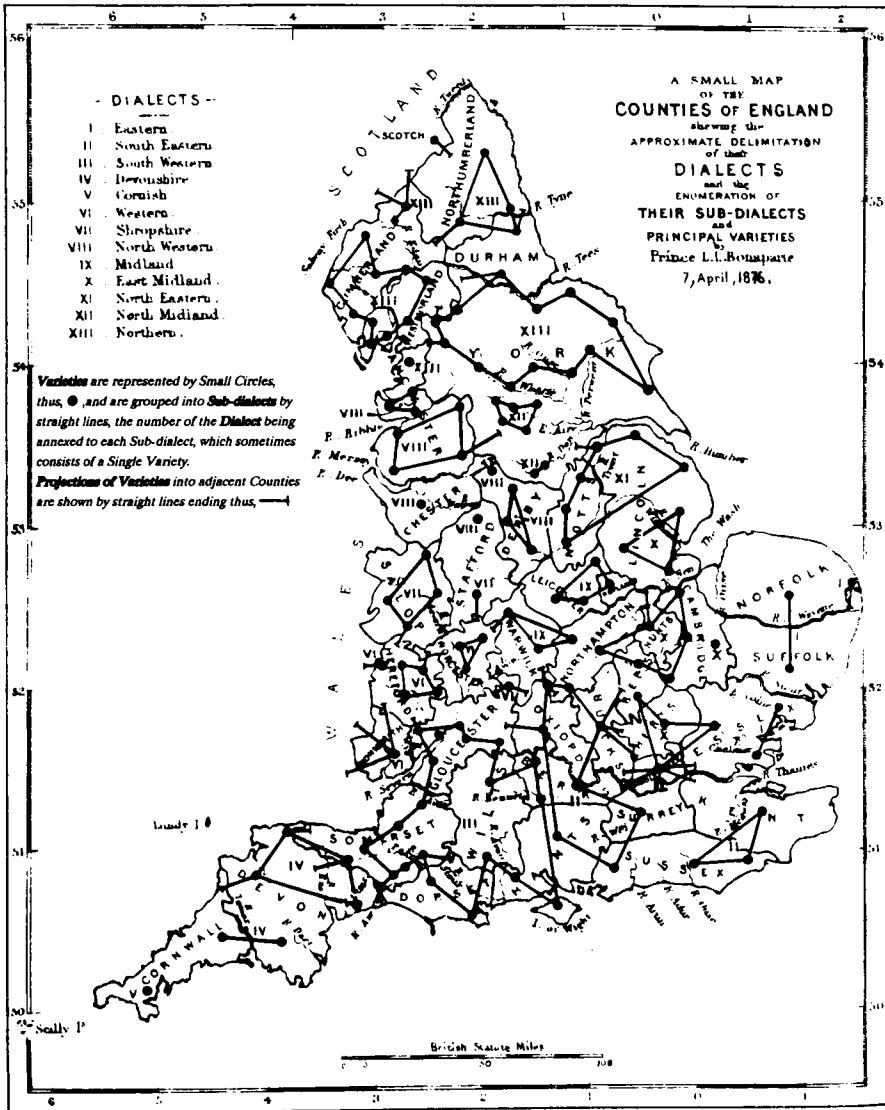
This state of affairs is already present in Bonaparte’s work, if not so much on his map then certainly in his accompanying text. And that is why I quoted from it at some length.

In short, the Prince was a most important pioneer in the field of English dialectology with astonishingly modern views on the nature of linguistic variation and with results that were substantiated to a great extent much later. Thus Bonaparte deserves a much better treatment than he has received in Britain in the present century, and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to set the record straight.

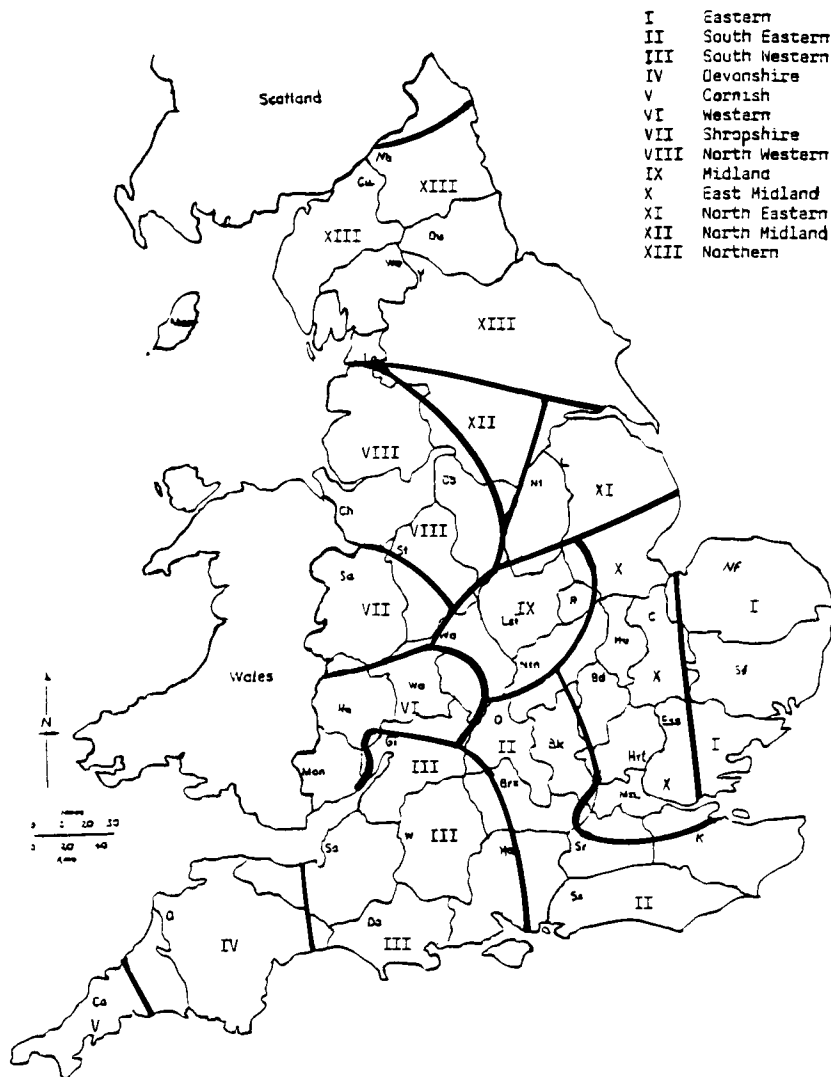
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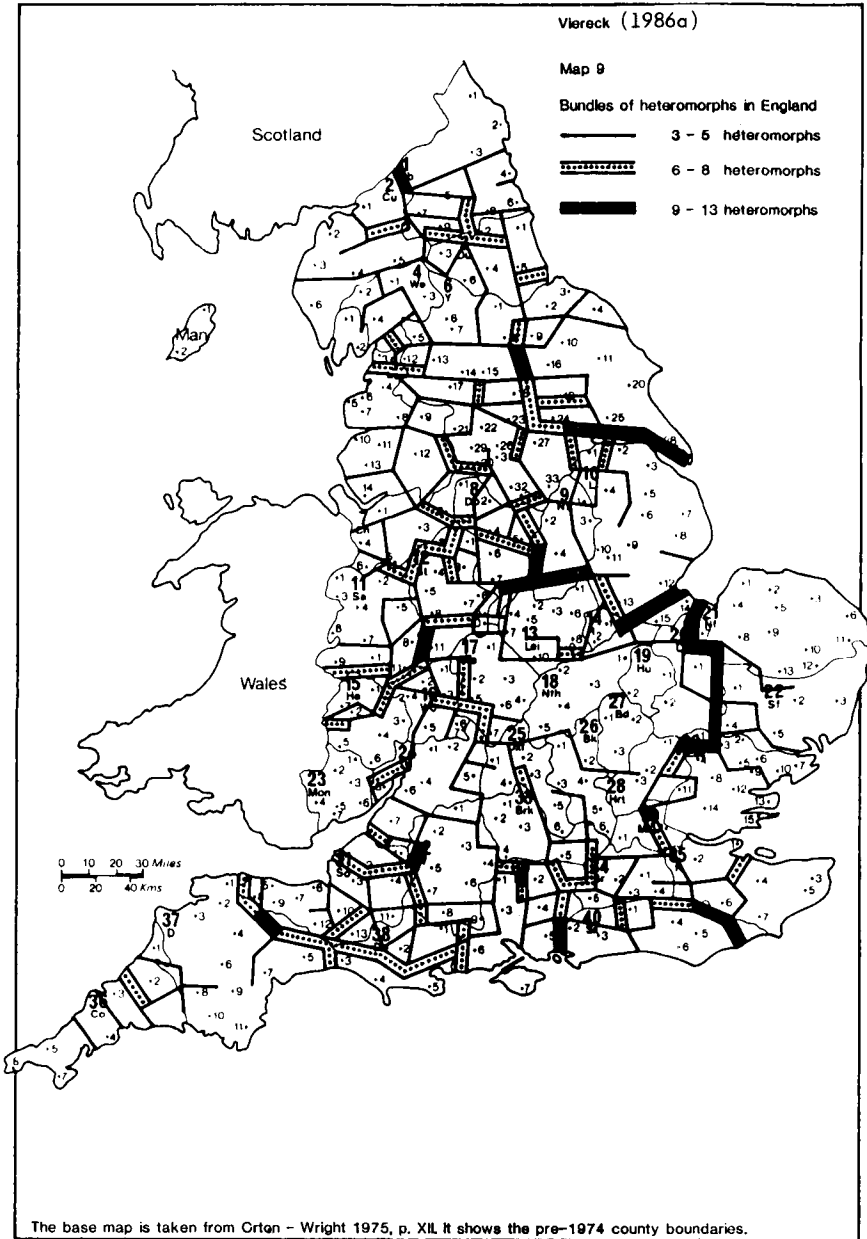
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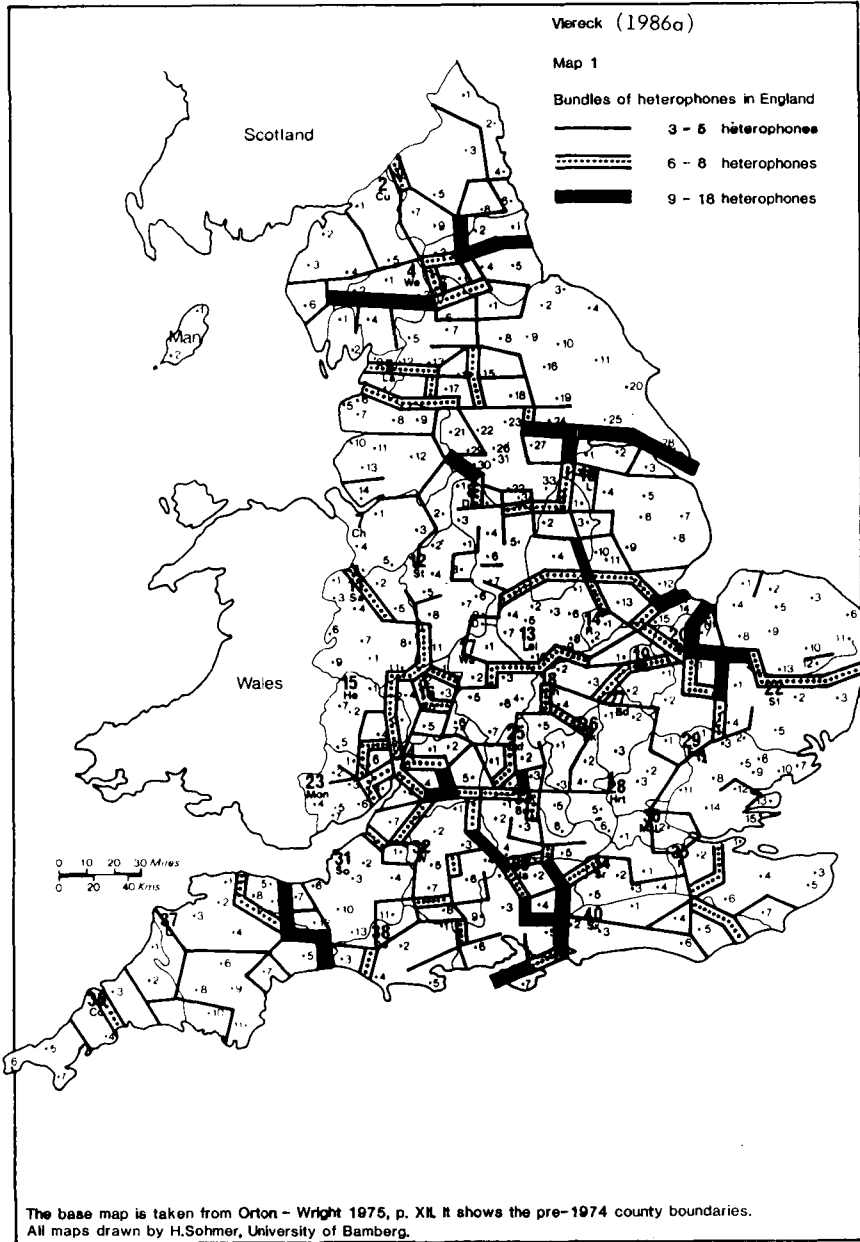
Map I



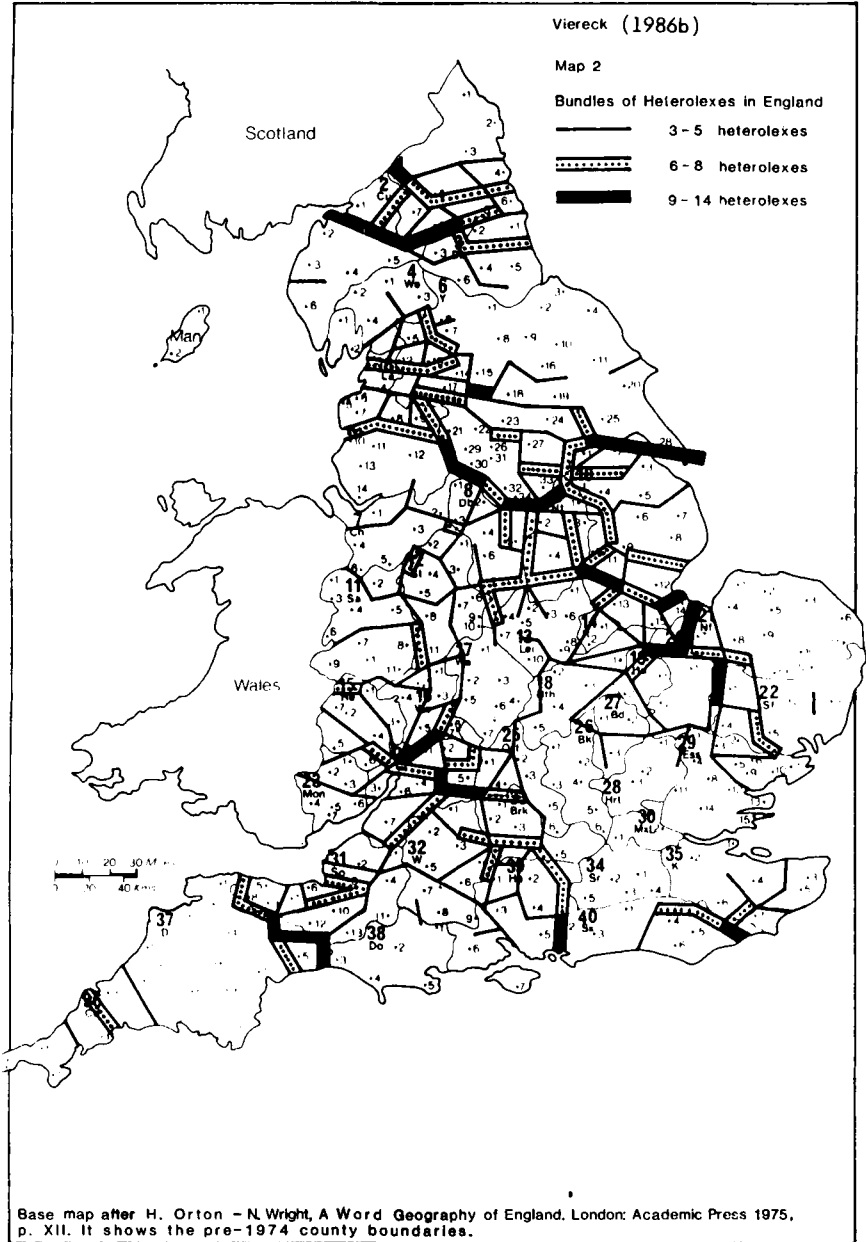
Map 3



Map 4



Map 5



Map 6