

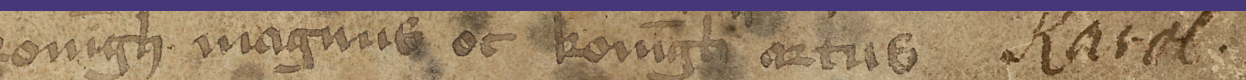


Three Crowns and Eleven Tears

East Norse Philology from Cologne

Edited by Anja Ute Blode & Elena Brandenburg

SELSKAB FOR ØSTNORDISK FILOLOGI 2022



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Anja Ute Blode & Elena Brandenburg (red.): *Three Crowns and Eleven Tears:
East Norse Philology from Cologne*

Selskab for østnordisk filologi, nr. 4
Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund, nr. 605

Tilsyn: Simon Skovgaard Boeck
Bogens bidrag har desuden været underkastet anonym fagfællebedømmelse

Udgivet med støtte fra
Institut für Skandinavistik/Fennistik, Universität zu Köln
Fachverband Skandinavistik e.V.
Letterstedtska Föreningen
Svend Grundtvigs og Axel Orløks Legat

Printed in Denmark by Tarm Bogtryk A/S
ISBN 978-87-408-3417-8

Kommissionær: Syddansk Universitetsforlag

Omslag: Cod. Holm. K 47, bl. 1; prologen til Ivan Løveridder
Se <http://tekstnet.dk/ivan-loeveridder/1>.
Originalen tilhører Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm.

Selskab for østnordisk filologi
ostnordiskfilologi.wordpress.com
www.facebook.com/ostnordisk

Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund
Christians Brygge 1
1219 København K
ujds.dk

Syddansk Universitetsforlag
Campusvej 55
5230 Odense M
Tlf. +45 6615 7999
universitypress.dk

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6. THE MEANINGS OF MIDDLE DANISH *MUGHE* ‘CAN, MAY, MUST’

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Keywords: dynamic modality, possibility, necessity, semantic change, Middle Danish

Resumé: Middeldansk *mughe* »kunne, måtte« og dets betydninger

Artiklen undersøger modalverbet *mughes* betydning i fire middeldanske tekster fra begyndelsen af det 16. århundrede. Der argumenteres for at nødvendighedsbetydningen, som stadig findes i moderne dansk *måtte*, er opstået i tvetydige kontekster hvor både mulighed og nødvendighed er mulige læsninger. Desuden foreslås det at *mughe* i yngre middeldansk også er belagt med betydningen »forventning«, og at denne kan have spillet en rolle i nødvendighedsbetydningens udvikling.

1. Background

This paper investigates the meanings of the modal verb *mughe* in late Middle Danish. In early Middle Danish the verb *mughe* expressed possibility and permission (‘can, may’), but towards the end of the Middle Danish period it began to be used to express necessity as well (‘must, have to’), a meaning which survives in its Present-Day Danish descendant *måtte*. While similar changes have been documented in the modal systems of other languages – including earlier English and German – the precise steps by which such a change may happen are contested. In this paper, I attempt to identify the contexts where the change to necessity meaning happened in late Middle Danish, using a small corpus of texts from the early sixteenth century.¹

1 This contribution was written in connection with my PhD work (Gregersen 2020b); an earlier paper based on the same corpus analysis appeared as Gregersen (2019). I am most grateful to my supervisor Olga Fischer for her advice and support and to audiences in Cologne (SØF) and Amsterdam (Oudgermanistendag) for their questions and remarks. I also thank the anonymous reviewer for pertinent suggestions. The usual disclaimers apply.

The development from possibility to necessity meaning has been much discussed in the literature on the history of the English and German modal verbs. While it is well known that the Old English (c. 800–1050) modal *mot* can usually be translated ‘can’ or ‘may’, as in (1), it is debated whether the meaning ‘must’ is also attested in the extant Old English texts and how exactly the semantics of *mot* should be characterised (see Yanovich 2016 for a recent proposal and further references).²

- (1) *Of ælcum treowe ðises orcerdes ðu **most** etan.*
of each.DAT tree.DAT this.GEN garden.GEN you MOT.2SG eat.INF
‘Of every tree in this garden you may eat.’ (c.1050, Gen 2.16; DOE Corpus)

From early Middle English onwards, however, necessity instances are securely attested, i.e. with *mot* meaning ‘must’ or ‘have to’. An early example cited by the *OED*, from a thirteenth-century chronicle, is given in (2). Here, a necessity reading seems like the only option, as *mot* co-occurs with the adverb *nede* ‘necessarily’.

- (2) *Ah heo **mot** nede beien/ þe mon þe ibunden bið*
but he MOT.3SG necessarily yield.INF DEF man REL bound COP.3SG
‘But the man who is bound necessarily has to yield.’ (c.1275, *Lazamon Brut* (Calig.) 1051; *OED*, s.v. *mote* v.¹)

A similar meaning change has been observed in the Old High German cognate *muoz*. In both cases, the reasons for the change are contested. Some, such as Goossens (1987) for English and Bech (1951) for German, have suggested a semantic reinterpretation in negated contexts, while Traugott and Dasher (2002: 123–7) suggest a pragmatic motivation for the English development.³ In the literature on German, yet another theory has been put forward, namely that the necessity meaning developed in affirmative contexts where an open possibility is in fact the only possible course of action (e.g. Paul 1992 [1897]; Fritz 1997: 89–94).

2 The following abbreviations are used in the glosses: ACC = accusative; AUX = auxiliary; COP = copula; DAT = dative; DEF = definite; DEM = demonstrative; GEN = genitive; INDF = indefinite; INF = infinitive; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PRS = present; PST = past; REFL = reflexive; REL = relativizer; SG = singular. Expanded abbreviations in the italicised examples are put in roman type. Textual emendations are indicated with square brackets.

3 Specifically, that the necessity meaning arose in contexts with ‘invited inferences of obligation’ (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 126) where the possibility modal was used ‘euphemistically’ where the speaker actually meant ‘must’. A similar explanation of the German development was also proposed in a short Festschrift contribution by Bréal (1903).

A contributing factor to the disagreement about the development from possibility to necessity is the scarcity of data. Few vernacular documents survive from the early Middle English and early Middle High German periods when the changes appear to have happened, and hence the proposed explanations remain speculative. In contrast, the parallel development in Middle Danish *mughe* investigated in this paper happened several centuries later, in a period with a better *Quellenlage*, around the beginning of the early modern period. Although one has to grant that the Danish and the English and German modals may have followed different semantic pathways, findings from one language may help shed light on the possible developments in another.⁴ In addition to this comparative objective, the paper aims to contribute to the description of Middle Danish. In the following section, I provide a brief sketch of the modal verb *mughe* in early Middle Danish and its later development as reported in the literature. Section 3 introduces my late Middle Danish material along with the search method and semantic classification used. Section 4 presents the findings, and section 5 concludes.

2. The meaning of *mughe* in early Middle Danish

The early Middle Danish modal verb *mughe* (3SG.PRS *ma*) differed from its modern descendant *måtte* in a number of ways, most importantly its meaning. While Present-Day Danish *måtte* is used to express permission and necessity, the necessity meaning is not found in the early Middle Danish sources.⁵ In his grammar of the Scanian Law in MS Holm B 74, Bjerrum (1966: 53) finds that *mughe* is used to express possibility (*mulighed*) and permission (*tilladelse*), while necessity and obligation are both expressed by the ancestor of modern *skulle* (see also Hansen and Heltoft 2019: 785–6; Heltoft and Nielsen 2019). This state of affairs seems to hold in the other early Middle Danish text witnesses as well. In (3), from King Eric’s Zealandic Law (AM 455 12°), *mughe* is used to express both possibility and permission. (4), from a (fragmentary) verse retelling of the Gospel of Nicodemus, contains an example of the possibility meaning in the past tense.

4 Note that while Old English *mot* (the ancestor of *must*) and Old High German *muoz* (the ancestor of Present-Day German *müssen*) are cognates, Middle Danish *mughe* is a different etymon. Its cognates are English *may* and German *mögen*. See Kroonen (2013, s.vv. **mōtan-*, **mugan-*) for details.

5 It is a contested issue exactly how many separate meanings should be distinguished for Present-Day Danish *måtte* and how these relate to each other conceptually. The precise analysis of the Present-Day Danish situation need not concern us here; I refer instead to the treatments by Jensen (1987), Brandt (1999, 2002), Boye (2001), and Hansen and Heltoft (2019: 765–819).

- (3) *oc trøstær han sich til thær ofnæ at han **ma** utæn kunæ wæræ. tha*
 and trusts he REFL to there upon that he MA without wife be then

***ma** han hennæ ut af garthæ sc[iu]tæ i særki enæ oc mættæl*
 MA he her out of property expel in smock only and mantle
 ‘And if he is confident after this that he can [= ‘is able to’] live without a wife,
 then he may [= ‘is allowed to’] expel her from the house in nothing but her
 smock and mantle’ (c.1300, ErL 2,2; also quoted by Bjerrum 1967: 35)

- (4) *Thre dagha letto the æfter thæn hælge man. Oc **mato** the ængha*
 three days looked they for DEF holy man and MA.PST they no

lund hitta han.

way find him.ACC

‘For three days they searched for the holy man and were not able to find him in
 any way’ (c.1325, ChrOpst. 19–20)

A contemporary Danish paraphrase of (3) would use *måtte* only for the second instance of *mughe*, i.e. for the permission sense. For the possibility meaning, i.e. the first instance in (3) as well as the one in (4), a form of *kunne* ‘can’ would be used. In contrast, for many speakers of English *can* is possible in all these cases, although the prescriptive tradition favours *may* for the permission sense (see Quirk et al. 1985: 221–3). Present-Day English *can* and early Middle Danish *mughe* thus exhibit a similar polysemy. Table 1, based on the figures in Hansen and Heltoft (2019: 783–4) and Obe (2011, 2013), presents the early Middle Danish situation in schematic form.

Table 1: Modals in early Middle Danish

possibility <i>mughe</i>	permission <i>mughe</i>
necessity <i>scule</i>	obligation <i>scule</i>

The Middle Danish modal verbs have most recently been investigated by Obe (2011, 2013), who analyses the use of *kunne*, *mughe*, and *scule* in three fifteenth-century texts.⁶ In the one assumed to be the most linguistically conservative, *Lu-*

⁶ Heltoft and Nielsen’s (2019) overview of the history of the modal verbs appeared shortly after I finished the first draft of this paper. I have included references to it in the following where relevant.

cidarius (AM 76 8°), *mughe* does not occur with necessity meaning. In the other two, *Sjælens Trøst* (Holm A 109) and *Karl Magnus' Krønike* (Holm Vu 82), this meaning does occur, though only very infrequently in the former. In the latter, on the other hand, 17 out of 77 occurrences of *mughe* are analysed as expressing necessity, as in the example in (5). I take this to represent the same meaning category as in present-day examples like (6).

(5) *wdger worde seg mannelege ok slogh xx i hæll aff them tha war*
 Ogier defended REFL valiantly and struck 20 dead of them then was

han so trøtther at han motthæ giffue segh fangen
 he so tired that he MA.PST give REFL caught
 ‘Ogier defended himself valiantly and killed twenty of them; then he was so tired that he had to surrender’ (1480, KMagnus 50; quoted by Obe 2013: 151)

(6) *Mit fly var aflyst, så jeg måtte vente til kl. 18.35.*
 my flight was cancelled so I MÅ.PST wait until clock 6.35.
 ‘My flight was cancelled, so I had to wait until 6.35 p.m.’ (1998, KorpusDK)

Obe finds a few examples of *mughe* which appear to be ambiguous between a possibility and a necessity reading, and suggests that the necessity meaning may have developed in such contexts (Obe 2013: 111–12, 195–6). This explanation is similar to the one proposed for German by Paul (1992 [1897]) and Fritz (1997), cf. Section 1 above. More recently, Heltoft and Nielsen (2019) have argued the same point.

Table 2: Modals in KMagnus (based on Obe 2013: 178)

possibility <i>kunne / mughe</i>	permission <i>mughe</i>
necessity <i>mughe / scule</i>	obligation <i>scule</i>

Table 2 gives a simplified overview of the modal system in *Karl Magnus' Krønike* as analysed by Obe (2013). As the table shows, *mughe* in this text can express both possibility (along with *kunne*), permission, and necessity (along with *scule*). Concerning the choice between *mughe* and *scule*, Obe (2013: 190–2) notes that these two modal verbs are distributed differently across clause types, but that the material is too limited to warrant any definite conclusions.

In this paper, I supplement Obe's findings on fifteenth-century *mughe* with an analysis of the verb as it appears in texts from the early sixteenth century, i.e. from the very end of the Middle Danish period.⁷ This material was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, as the necessity meaning of *mughe* is relatively rare in Obe's corpus but eventually became established in Modern Danish, one might expect it to be more frequent in texts from a slightly later date than Obe's corpus, and hence that it will be easier to identify the contexts where the change happened. Secondly, after the introduction of printing to Denmark in the late fifteenth century the amount of available material increases, not just in terms of the number of surviving texts, but also in the variety of text types. Although I have limited myself to only four texts in this study, these texts represent different genres and implied audiences and presumably contain a wider range of different uses of *mughe* than a more homogenous corpus. In addition, they may easily be complemented by other sixteenth-century texts in future investigations.

3. Material and method

The four editions used were all published by Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab (DSL). Three (JPræst, JesuB., and KvUrteg.) are recent editions from the platform tekstnet.dk; the fourth (HelieKr.) is from an older edition made available online on Arkiv for Dansk Litteratur (ADL). The most important information on the four texts, including the abbreviations used in the following, is given in Table 3. For further bibliographical details, I refer to the list of references.

Table 3: Abbreviations and text information

	Title	Date	Edition	Witness	Words
JPræst	<i>Jon Præst</i>	c. 1500	Nielsen 2015	Thott 585,8°	c. 1,600
JesuB.	<i>Jesu Barndoms Bog</i>	1508	Boeck 2015	LN 21 (eks. 1)	c. 15,000
KvUrteg.	<i>Kvindens Urtegård</i>	c. 1515	Boeck 2017	Thott 245,8°	c. 17,000
HelieKr.	<i>Om kranke og fattige Mennesker</i>	1528	Kristensen 1933	A.12–2	c. 10,000

Of the four texts, two (KvUrteg. and JPræst) are from manuscripts, the other two (JesuB. and HelieKr.) from early prints. JPræst, JesuB., and KvUrteg. are based on text witnesses from the collections of the Royal Library in Copenhagen. HelieKr. is

⁷ Or, depending on the definition, the very beginning of the Modern Danish period. The boundary between Middle and Modern Danish has been set variously at 1500, 1515, 1525, and 1530 AD (see Jørgensen 2016).

based on the only surviving print, in The Karen Brahe Library in Roskilde, supplemented with a later transcription of four pages missing from the print (see Kristensen 1933: 289–90 for details). Further details on JesuB. may be found in the older edition by Jacobsen and Paulli (1915). An earlier synoptic edition of JPræst by Karker (1978) presents the text along with three other versions (Danish, Swedish, and Latin).

The texts belong to different genres. KvUrteg. is a handbook on childbirth and midwifery, JPræst is a fantastical description of the wonders of the far east, JesuB. is a chapbook containing apocryphal legends, and HelieKr. is a treatise on the treatment of the poor and destitute in sixteenth-century Copenhagen. One text (KvUrteg.) is a fairly close translation of a German original, two (JPræst and JesuB.) are re-workings of earlier translations (going back to Latin and German originals, respectively), and one (HelieKr.) is a Danish original. The last text, however, while being composed in Danish, is also the most rhetorically ornate and probably further from the spoken language at the time than the other three.

The texts were downloaded from adl.dk and the GitHub repository of DSL (github.com/dslldk; DSL 2018). The files were then searched for possible spellings of *mughe* with AntConc (Anthony 2014) and the concordances exported to a spreadsheet.⁸ Irrelevant hits – primarily of the adverb *maa ske* ‘perhaps’ (present-day spelling *måske*) – were removed manually. Before presenting the results in Section 4, I will briefly discuss the classification of modal meanings used for the semantic analysis.

The most important meaning categories have already been introduced implicitly in Section 2, but will be spelt out in more detail here. The semantic classification broadly follows the one used by Byloo and Nuyts (2011: 13–24) in their investigation of Dutch and the one used in the Danish functional tradition (e.g. Bech 1951; Bjerrum 1966; Hansen and Heltoft 2019). Despite some terminological and conceptual differences, these two frameworks are comparable in many respects. A central distinction is the one between – with Bech’s terms – *causal* and *autonomous* modal factor. In the causal modal meanings possibility and necessity, the factor making the situation possible or necessary is some circumstance in the world, such as the laws of nature or the abilities and constitution of the subject referent. In the autonomous meanings permission and obligation, the factor is grounded in someone’s (‘*einem sehr oft persönlichen »agens«*’, Bech 1951: 7) decisions about what should be allowed or required. Hansen and Heltoft (2019) suggest the term ‘intentional’ for this

8 The concordances with my annotations can be downloaded from the project repository (Gregersen 2020a) at <https://doi.org/10.21942/uva.12568559.v1>. The four editions used are also all available online (see the list of references for hyperlinks).

type instead, which I have used in Table 4. Another important distinction is between the ‘weak’ meanings possibility and permission, where a situation *may* (but need not) obtain, and the ‘strong’ meanings necessity and obligation, where something *must* or needs to happen – either because it is a necessity caused by the circumstances or because someone requires it. The four semantic categories defined by these two oppositions are shown in Table 4 along with an English paraphrase.⁹

Table 4: Modal meaning categories

	causal	intentional
‘weak’	possibility ‘be able to’	permission ‘be allowed/permitted to’
‘strong’	necessity ‘need, have to’	obligation ‘be obliged/required to’

In addition to these four ‘core’ modal categories, a number of other meanings can be distinguished for *mughe/måtte*. One is the optative meaning, also found in present-day examples like (7), where the modal expresses that a given situation is wished or hoped for. This type is often found after subjective particles like *gid* or in complements of predicates expressing wishes or desires (see Jensen 1987: 96–99).

- (7) *Gid du må falde overbord og blive spist af fiskene.*
 I.hope you MA fall overboard and AUX eaten by fish.PL.DEF
 ‘I hope you’ll fall overboard and get eaten by the fish.’ (KorpusDK)

This optative use is marginal in the four Middle Danish texts and will not be discussed further in the paper. More important is a meaning category which I have labelled ‘prediction’. This will be exemplified and discussed in the following section.

4. Findings

The four texts contain 103 examples of *mughe* between them. Of these, 95 examples were analysed as shown in Table 5. The remaining eight examples occur in

⁹ Note that the classification used here differs from the one which is more commonly found in the English literature, where *dynamic*, *deontic*, and *epistemic* modal meanings are distinguished (see e.g. Palmer 2001; Traugott and Dasher 2002). In this tradition, dynamic and deontic meanings are usually grouped together as subtypes of ‘root’ (Palmer 2001: ‘event’) modality. In the framework adopted here, dynamic and epistemic would be considered subtypes of causal meaning; the ‘intentional’ categories permission and obligation correspond to deontic modality. For further details on these different traditions, see Gregersen (2020b: Ch. 3) and references there.

idiomatic expressions or other less frequent meaning categories, such as the optative one mentioned above. These are not included in Table 5.¹⁰

Table 5: Meanings of late Middle Danish *mughe*

	possibility 40	poss./perm. 5	permission 7
prediction/poss./nec. 19	poss./nec. 19		
	necessity 5		obligation 0

As Table 5 shows, *mughe* is not used to express obligation, but the three categories possibility, permission, and necessity are all represented in the four texts. In light of Obe's findings in *Karl Magnus' Krønike* (see Table 2 above), this is what we would expect.

Note that the apparently high frequency of the possibility category in Table 5 is to some extent an artefact of the choice of texts. JPræst contains almost exclusively possibility instances, and the medical advice given in KvUrteg. often takes the form 'she can also do this' as in (8), expressing what is possible for the pregnant woman to do without adverse health effects. Hence, the type is also very frequent in this text.

- (8) *Ok tis_ligest mo hwn ok vel æde vnge hønssse kød vel sodne.*
and likewise MA she also well eat young hen's meat well cooked
'And likewise, she can also eat well-cooked chicken.' (KvUrteg. 7)

More important than the frequencies of the individual types, however, is the occurrence of examples which do not fit neatly into only one category. There are five examples which allow both a possibility and a permission reading, and 19 examples where both possibility and necessity readings seem appropriate. In some cases, such as (9), there appears to be genuine ambiguity between two meanings. In (9), the choice between the categories 'possibility' and 'necessity' depends on how the following clause *oss scal intheth skade* is understood. If it is meant to provide support for the previous statement *wi mo wade*, a possibility interpretation seems more likely: 'we can wade, because nothing is going to hurt us'. If it is

¹⁰ Note that the results in Table 5 are also somewhat simplified in that not all cases of ambiguity are distinguished. For instance, I have collapsed the types 'prediction/possibility', 'prediction/necessity', and 'prediction/possibility/necessity' into a single cell. For further details, also on the differences between the individual texts, I refer to Gregersen (2019).

meant as reassurance, a necessity reading is more appropriate: ‘we will have to wade, but surely nothing is going to hurt us’. It is, of course, impossible to know for certain whether a late Middle Danish reader or listener experienced the example as ambiguous, but since both readings are possible, I have decided to classify it as such.

- (9) *Tha sagdhe iomfrw maria thijll iosep huor komme wij offuer thenne*
 then said Virgin Mary to Joseph how come.PL we across this

beck. iosep swarede wi mo wade oss scal intheth skade
 creek J. replied we MA wade us shall nothing hurt
 ‘Then said the Virgin Mary to Joseph, “How are we going to get across this creek?” Joseph replied, “We can [or ‘have to’] wade; nothing is going to hurt us.’ (JesuB. 13)

In a number of other cases, the opposition between possibility and necessity appears to be neutralised. Here, it is not just the case that both readings are possible, but rather that the choice between them does not seem to make a difference. In (10), for instance, it does not significantly alter the meaning whether one paraphrases with ‘may’ or ‘needs to, should’; the point is that a feeble, dry, and thin woman has due cause to worry about giving birth prematurely.

- (10) *en qwynne, som megit vansmectigh er ok toor ok mager, hwn mo*
 INDF woman REL very feeble is and dry and thin she MA

ok rædis for vtidigt barn
 also worry about premature child
 ‘a woman who is very feeble, dry, and thin may [or ‘has reason to’, or ‘needs to’] worry about premature birth as well’ (KvUrtg. 10)

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, a sizable number of examples allow a reading which I have termed ‘prediction’, alongside possibility or necessity (or both of these). In such cases, the situation is presented as an expectation or prediction about the future rather than an open possibility or an absolute certainty. For instance, (11) was analysed as ambiguous between possibility and prediction, as indicated by the English translation:

- (11) *Hoo som drycker aff then keldæ en dryck fastennæ/ tha fangher han*
 who REL drinks from DEM spring INDF drink fasting then catches he

enghen sot/ Och maa han leffuæ soo wnggh som han wore men
 no disease and MA he live as young as he were.SBJV only

xxx aar gamel

30 years old

‘Whoever drinks of this spring while fasting will be afflicted with no disease and may [or ‘will’] live on without ageing as if he were only 30 years old’ (JPræst 3)

In (12), I think all three readings are possible. The speakers addressing the young Jesus in this passage clearly think that he is going to get himself killed by socialising with grown lions, but this prediction could also be understood as a more or less certain possibility (‘you may get in great trouble’ or ‘you are certainly going to get in great trouble’, etc.).

- (12) *Jhesus sig oss theth hwor theth kommer til at thu kant gange i _blant*
 J. say us it how it comes to that you can.2SG walk among

the willæ løwer thu æst so liden oc so yng thu mot
 DEM wild lions you COP.2SG so small and so young you MA.2SG

komme ther medt i stor møde oc tage ther aff thin dõt
 come there with in great trouble og take there of your death
 ‘Jesus, tell us how it is possible that you can walk among the wild lions – you are so small and so young, you may [or ‘are going to’] get in great trouble in this way and get yourself killed’ (JesuB. 17)

A few of these ‘prediction’ examples are even more difficult to fit under the ‘possibility’ or ‘necessity’ label. The most straightforward case of a prediction meaning is given in (13), from a section in KvUrteg. on how the umbilical cord may be used to predict the number of children a woman will get. Note that the corresponding passage in the German original (14) has a periphrastic future with *werden* rather than a modal verb.

- (13) *Er thet so, at ther er ingen knwder poo, tha fonger hwn aldri*
 COP it so that there COP no knots on then gets she never

flere børn, men er ther fult knuder po, tha mo hwn fonge it
 more children but COP there full knots on then MA she get INDF

barn for hwor knwde

child for every knot

‘Is it so that there are no knots on it [the umbilical cord], then she will get no more children, but are there knots on it, then she will get a child for every knot.’ (KvUrtg. 17)

- (14) *Siend aber rüntzlin oder knöpff dar an/ so würt sie nach*
 COP.3PL however folds or knots there on then will she after

demselden kind so vil kinder machen so vil der nabel runtzen
 the.same child as many children make as many DEF navel folds

oder knöpff hat.

or knots has

‘But are there folds or knots on it, then she will bear as many children after this one as the navel has folds or knots.’ (Rößlin 1910 [1513]: 74)

Note that none of the examples in (9)–(13) is negated. Of the 95 examples analysed in this study, only 14 contain a negation, none of which allows a necessity reading. Examples with a negation all express either (lack of) possibility or permission, as in (15).

- (15) *Thet wrag som haffuer sijn rette eijermandt till stede [...]*
 DEM wreckage REL has REFL.POSS proper owner at place

maa inghen mandt i werdhen optaghe

ma no man in world.DEF take.away

‘Any wreckage whose rightful owner is present ... no person is allowed to take for himself’ (HelieKr. 18–19)

The use of *mughe* in the four texts thus appears to support the suggestion by Obe (2013) and Heltoft and Nielsen (2019) that the necessity meaning of *mughe* developed in af-

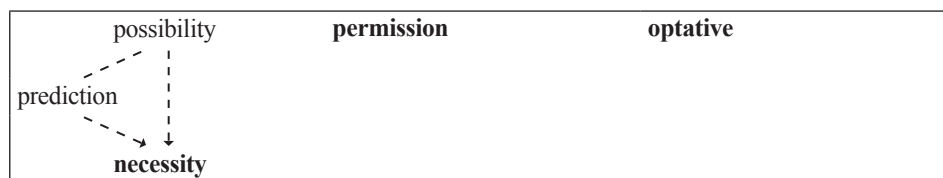
firmative contexts where both a possibility and a necessity reading are possible. Neither the notion of obligation or negation appears to have played a role in this development.

5. Conclusion

This contribution has investigated the meanings of *mughe* in four texts from the very end of the Middle Danish period (early sixteenth century). In addition to the meanings ‘possibility’ and ‘permission’, which were also found in early Middle Danish, *mughe* occurs with necessity meaning in the sixteenth-century texts. I have argued that a significant number of instances in affirmative clauses allow both a possibility and a necessity reading, and that this is likely to be the context where the necessity meaning developed.

In addition, I have suggested that late Middle Danish *mughe* also had a use which I have labelled ‘prediction’. As discussed in Section 4, there are a number of examples in the corpus where a prediction reading is possible alongside, or even preferable to, a possibility or necessity reading. I leave it open for future investigations what role, if any, this prediction use played in the semantic change. In Table 6, I have indicated the change from possibility to necessity with dashed lines to show that it may either have happened directly in ambiguous contexts or via the prediction meaning. The three meanings current in Present-Day Danish *måtte* are indicated in boldface.

Table 6: Development of necessity *mughe*



Of the three theories about the development of necessity meaning mentioned in Section 1 – negation (Bech 1951; Goossens 1987), pragmatic inference (Traugott and Dasher 2002), and ‘open possibility’ (Paul 1992 [1897]; Fritz 1997) – the third would thus appear to be preferable to the other two, at least in the case of Middle Danish *mughe*. It is of course not certain that Old English *mot* and Old High German *muoz* followed exactly the same semantic pathway as *mughe*, but perhaps the late Middle Danish material may help us reconsider earlier assumptions, for instance about the example repeated here as (2’):

- (2') *Ah heo mot nede beien/ þe mon þe ibunden bið*
 but he MOT.3SG necessarily yield.INF DEF man REL bound COP.3SG
 'But the man who is bound necessarily has to yield'
 or: 'But the man who is bound is necessarily going to yield' (?)

This was quoted in Section 1 as an apparently straightforward instance of early Middle English *mot* expressing necessity, rendered as 'has to' in the translation. In (2') I have suggested that another interpretation may be possible as well, with *mot* expressing prediction rather than necessity. Whether a prediction interpretation is appropriate for this and other early Middle English examples will have to remain a topic for future investigations.

Finally, I note that while this contribution has focused exclusively on earlier Danish material, it would certainly be worthwhile to consider the development of *mughe* in light of the other Scandinavian languages. In particular, the history and functions of the 'acquisitive' (van der Auwera et al. 2009) modal verb *få* in Norwegian and Swedish would be interesting to compare with *mughe*, for this verb is also found with both prediction, permission, and necessity uses (see Teleman et al. 1999, IV: 294–7; Askedal 2012: 1307–9). I intend to look into this in future work.

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