GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN

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Gothic

Morphosyntactic Structures – Part 2: Arguments and Valency

Roadmap

- Alignment and subjects

- Causatives and transitivity

- Voice

- Adposition incorporation

Alignment and subjects

Alignment

- Gothic is nominative-accusative

- The nominative case is used for most subjects, intransitive or transitive

  iþ   ik   qam
  but I.NOM came

  swaswē kann   mik   atta,   jah ik   kann attan
  as   knows me.ACC father.NOM, so I.NOM know father.ACC
  'as the father knows me, so I know the father'

Non-nominative subjects

- A few verbs take a sole accusative argument

  jabai ƕana   þaursjai,   gaggai   du mis jah driggkai
  if   one.INDEF.ACC thirst.OPT.3SG   go.OPT.3SG to me and drink.OPT.3SG
  'if someone should thirst, let him go to me and drink'

- This may qualify as a non-nominative subject

- Such cases are determined lexically and associated with semantic roles

  - Especially experiencer roles
  - Dative case the most frequent

    þugkeiþ   im
    seem.3SG they.DAT
    'they think'

Null subjects

- Null subjects are common in Gothic

swaswē skuljau   rōdjan
as   owe.OPT.1SG speak.INF
'as I ought to speak'

ganah   sipōni   ei   wairþai   swē laisāreis   is
suffice.3SG disciple.ACC COMP become.OPT.3SG like   teacher.NOM his
'It is enough for a disciple to turn out like his teacher'

Predication

- Verbal predication is common (including with the copula)

   sa ist Helias 'that is Elias'
   wairsiza gataira wairþiþ 'the tear will become worse'

- Null predication is not rare, and normal in secondary predicates

   braid   daur jah rūms   wigs
   broad door and spacious road
   'broad is the door and spacious is the road'

   jah dauþans us-standand un-riurjai
   and dead   stand   un-destroyed
   'and the dead will rise imperishable'

Causatives and transitivity

Transitivity

- Primary/basic verbs may be transitive or intransitive

  slahan 'smite, strike (someone)'
  drigkan 'drink (something)'
  ganisan 'be saved, healed'
  wakan* 'be watchful, be awake'

- Class I weak verbs can transitivize intransitive or ingestive verbs

  dragkjan* 'give to drink'
  ganasjan 'save, heal'
  wakjan* 'waken (someone)'
  ˣslōhjan-type is not possible (*slahan* cannot be transitivized in Gothic)

Transitivity

- Adjectives (as nominal statives) may be transitivized as factitives

  fulls 'full' → *fulljan** 'fill, make full'
  manags* 'many' → *managjan** 'multiply'
  weihs 'holy' → *weihan** 'sanctify' (class III weak verb)

- Nouns may also be transitivized according to their semantics

  namō 'name' → *namnjan* 'give a name/call by name'
  taikns 'token' → *taiknjan** 'indicate, show'
  þius 'servant' → *gaþiwan** 'put in bondage, place in servitude' (class III w.v.)

Voice

Voice

- Gothic has several strategies for passive-like constructions
  - An inherited synthetic passive inflection
  - Anti-causative reflexives
  - Synthetic inceptives
  - Periphrastic participial constructions
- Infinitives are unmarked for voice

Synthetic passive

- Inherited from the Indo-European middle
- Found only in the present tense
- An agent may be expressed prepositionally (fram + DAT)
- Formed also to secondary transitives (gafulljada 'is, will be filled')

nū   sa   reiks þis   fairƕaus   us-wairpada   ūt
now the king   this.GEN world.GEN out-throw.PASS out
'now the king of this world will be cast out'

Anti-causative reflexive

- Reflexive forms of transitive verbs may have a middle, even passive sense
- A similar construction was grammaticalized as a true mediopassive in Norse

jah gasaiƕandei   *Paitru*   *warmjandan*   *sik*
and see.PTC.NOM.FEM Peter.ACC.SG warm.TR.PTC.ACC.SG himself
'and seeing Peter warming himself/getting warm'

du ni *sprauto* wagjan izwis
to not quickly shake.TR themselves
'to not become shaken quickly'

Inceptives

- Class IV weak verbs form inceptives/inchoatives to stative bases

- These are not strict passives, being non-agentive

- They do often serve as a 'passive' counterpart to transitivized statives

  *wakjan** 'wake up (trans.)' ~ *ga-waknan** 'wake up, become awake'
  *fulljan** 'fill' ~ fullnan* 'become full', *us-fullnan* 'be fulfilled'
  *managjan** 'multiply' ~ *managnan** 'grow more, be abounding'
  *weihan** 'sanctify' ~ *weihnan** 'be hallowed'

Periphrastic participle constructions

- Past/passive participle with an auxiliary verb

- Often both past and passive (cf. present-only synthetic passive)

fram guda unsaramma *warþ*   *usfulliþ*   *þata waurstw*
by   god   our   become.PST fulfil.PPP DET   work
'that work was fulfilled by our god'

þan   *usfulljada* *izwara ufhauseins*
then fulfil.PAS your   obedience
'when your obedience is fulfilled'

ei   *þata gamēlido* *usfulliþ*   *waurþi*
COMP DET scripture fulfil.PPP become.PRS.OPT
'that the scripture should be fulfilled'

Infinitives and voice

- Infinitives are unspecified for voice

- Certain modal contexts (e.g. intent, desire) may prompt a passive reading

ga-runnun hiuhmans managai hausjōn jah leikinōn fram imma
stream.PST crowds   great   hear.INF and heal.INF by   him

'great crowds streamed together to hear and to be healed by him'
ni   mahta   was fram ainomēhun ga-leikinōn
not possible.FEM.N.SG was by   anyone   heal.INF
'she could not be healed by anyone'

Adpositions and valency

Adposition incorporation

- Adpositions may occur preverbal position
- The object remains in the same case as if it were in the prepositional phrase
- If the adposition is regarded as truly incorporated, the object is now adverbal

þaþrō qam ana fēra Saurais jah Kileikiais
thence came.1SG in regions.ACC Syria.GEN and Cilicia.GEN
'afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia'

aggilus fraujins ana-qam ins
angel.NOM lord.GEN in-came.3SG them.ACC
'the angel of the lord came upon them'

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Thank you for your attention!