

NELSON GOERING

Gothic

Morphosyntactic Structures – Part 3: Verbal Syntax



Roadmap

- Past/Non-past
- Statives
- Aspect and prefixes
- Modality
- Negation

Tense



Past

- Basic division is past versus non-past
- The past can be used for continuity from past to present

swa filu jērē skalkinōda þus
so many year.GEN.PL I.serve.PST you.DAT
'I (have) served you so many years'
(Greek verb translated is *douleúō*, a present)

- And for the Greek pluperfect (rare in the NT)

þaiei in auhjōdau maurþr gatawidēdun
they.REL in uproar.DAT murder.ACC do.PST.3PL
'those who did murder in the uproar'
(Greek verb is *pepoiékeisan* 'had done')

Non-past

- The general non-past tense is traditionally called the ‘present’
- Can of course be used for strict present reference

amēn amēn qipa izwis
‘truly, truly, I say to you’

- Can also have full future reference

ains izwara galēweip mik
one.NOM you.GEN.PL betray.NPST me.ACC
‘one of you will betray me’

Participles, tense, and aspect

- Participles traditionally labelled as ‘present’ and ‘past’
- Better understood as incomplete and passive, respectively

ip Seimōn Paitrus was standands jah warmjands sik
but Simon Peter was stand.PTCP and warm.TR.PTCP himself
‘but Simon Peter was standing and warming himself’

ei usfullip waurpi þata gamēlidō
COMP fulfil.PPP become.PRS.OPT DET scripture
‘that the scripture may be fulfilled’

Aspect



States

- Major ways of encoding states or changing states include:
- Adnominal statives (as adjectives)
- Class III weak verbs are often stative (*liban* ‘be alive’)
- So are preterite-presents (*dugan* ‘be useful’)
- Class IV weak verbs are inceptive, bordering on stative

fraqistnan ‘perish, become destroyed’

af-lifnan ‘remain, be left, *become left’

þapro þan weis þai libandans, þai aflifnandans

from.then then we the living the remaining

‘then we the living, the remaining’

States

- Passive participle + auxiliary can take either *wairþan* or *wisan*
- *wisan* is less marked, and more stative
- *wairþan* is more marked, indicating a change of state

ni ainshun izē gahrainids was

not any of.them cleanse.PPP was

‘not any of them was cleansed (i.e. in a state of having been cleansed)’

gahrainidai waurþun

cleanse.PPP became

‘they became cleansed’

Aspect and prefixes

- Prefixal system of Gothic complex, and not all prefixes are aspectual
- The basic ‘perfectivizing’ prefix is *ga-*
taujan ‘do, make’, *ga-taujan* ‘complete, accomplish’
- This coexists with a distinct *ga-* with a comitative meaning

bidjam... ga-ga-wairþnan guda
pray.3PL PFV-COM-become.INCEP.INF god.DAT

‘we pray [you] to be reconciled with god’

(*ga-wairþi* ‘becoming in common’ is lexicalized as ‘peace, reconciliation’)

Aspect and prefixes

- Aspectual *ga-* verbs tend to translate Greek aorists
- Unprefixed atelic verbs more likely to translate Greek progressives
- Even with no clear Greek contrast, *ga-* seems to be a marked perfectivizer

ga-sat = *ekáthisen*, aorist ‘sat down’

sat = *ekáthēto*, imperfect (middle) ‘was sitting’

us-fullnōda mēl du bairan jah ga-bar sunu

fulfilled time to bear.INF and PFV-bear.PST son.ACC

‘(her) time to give birth arrived and she bore a son’

bairan = *tekeĩn* (aorist infinitive)

ga-bar = *egénnēsen* (aorist)

Aspect and prefixes

- Corpus doesn't allow a full or strict analysis of prefixal aspect
nim þus bōkos... jah ga-mēlei fim tiguns (Lk 16:6)
'get your book and write 'fifty''
nim þus bōkos jah mēlei ahtautēhund (Lk 16:7)
'get your book and write 'eighty''
- Greek has *grápson* (aorist imperative) in both instances
- Other prefixes may perfectivize, but also have lexical weight
- *ana-mēljan* does translate an aorist infinitive, *apográpsasthai*
- It also has the special lexical sense 'to tax' ('to be taxed')

Modality



Optative

- A general way of marking modality on finite verbs
- Functions are relatively typical
- In some subordinate clauses
 - After verbs of desire, command, permission; thinking, hoping, etc.
 - i.e. in cases of marked deontic or epistemic modality
- In main clauses, also in modally marked contexts

E.g. in disbelieving questions

hawaiwa sijai pata, pandei aban ni kann

‘how might that be, since I do not know a man?’

Modal elements

- Detailed modal nuance often supplied by verbs and adjectives
- Verbs: *skulan** ‘must’, *wiljan* ‘want’, *munan* ‘think, believe’, etc.
- Adjectives: *skulds* ‘necessary’, *mahts*, ‘possible’
- *skulds* and *mahts* take infinitive complements

skulds ist us-hauhjan sa sunus mans

‘the son of man must be raised up’

ni mahta was fram ainōmēhun ga-leikinōn

‘(she) was not able to be healed by anyone’

Negation

Negation

- Negation is generally ‘logical’, with the general negative particle *ni*

ni patei ni habaidēdeima waldufni

NEG COMP NEG have.PST.OPT.1PL power

‘it is not that we did not have the power’

- The expression *ni waihts* reinforces a negative

ni bēdup ni waihtais

NEG ask.PST.2PL NEG anything

‘you have not asked anything’

Negation

- Nominal negation, including on participles, with prefix *un-*
un-witands munins is
NEG-know.PTCP intent.ACC.PL his
'not knowing his intentions'
un-kunnands auk nauh wisands jah ni kunnands biūhti
NEG-know.PTCP for still being and NEG know.PTCP custom
'for being still unknowing and not knowing the custom'

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