

Rose Rittenhouse
University of Wisconsin–Madison

Verbal periphrasis and unique patterns of reanalysis in the Old High German *Evangelienbuch* and the Old Saxon *Hēliand*

Whether early Germanic [BECOME/BE/HAVE + past participle] already represented fully developed periphrastic verbal constructions is debated, as the past participle in such a structure could display either overt nominal inflectional morphology or a null ending. Overt inflection, which emphasizes the originally adjectival nature of the Indo-European participle, argues against the existence of a periphrastic passive or perfect. Frequent use of the null ending, on the other hand, which results in a seemingly bare past participle, implies possible reinterpretation of the entire construction as purely verbal. This quantitative corpus-based study examined patterns of past participial inflectional morphology in two original ninth-century works, the Old High German *Evangelienbuch* and the Old Saxon *Hēliand*, and contends that neither periphrastic construction appears fully grammaticalized in either text, although the Old Saxon data arguably reflect more advanced reanalysis, especially of the perfect.

Presence or absence of overt nominal inflectional morphology was compared across [BECOME + past participle], [BE + past participle], and [HAVE + past participle], as well as between [BECOME/BE + past participle] versus unambiguous adjectives in equivalent active copular clauses. Past participles as a group showed significant reduction in overt nominal inflection compared to unambiguous adjectives in both the Old High German and Old Saxon corpora. Regression trees for each text, however, revealed a more diverse set of variables (e.g. choice of finite verb, number of the clause's subject, transitivity level of the participle, etc.) predicting a lack of overt adjectival inflection on past participles in the *Hēliand*.

The aggregate results suggest that [HAVE + past participle] began undergoing grammaticalization first, followed by [BECOME/BE + transitive past participle] and finally [BE + intransitive past participle]. Within this relative timeline, the Old Saxon of the *Hēliand* exhibits at least the beginnings of reanalysis for all three stages, while the Old High German of the *Evangelienbuch* still lacks evidence of progression to the third stage. By identifying specific factors correlated with the appearance of modern-looking structures, this analysis offers a new approach to describing the evolution of the periphrastic passive and perfect and allows for a more nuanced interpretation of historical patterns than has been possible with traditional methodologies.