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# Word order in the OHG right periphery and its Indo-European origins

Old High German (OHG) shows a great deal of variation in verb placement. Even abstracting away from the position of the finite verb, there are apparent SVO (1) and SOV (2) patterns, posing a problem for establishing the basic word order of the language.

(1)  *uuanta Ir   ni-mugut gihóren **mîn uuort***                    (*Tatian*)
     because you neg-can   hear     my  word
     'because you cannot hear my word'

(2)  *dhazs druhtin dhir ist **huus**  zimbrendi.*                    (*Isidor*)
     that   lord    you  is  house building
     'that the Lord is building you a house'

This paper closely examines two criteria for SVO vs. SOV in the early OHG prose texts *Isidor* and *Tatian*. Although both texts are translations from Latin, they show independence from the Latin source in the placement of verbs.

The first criterion is the position of non-finite verbs relative to their complements, as in (1)-(2). Two main factors influence the position of the complement. First, length is important: pronouns almost always precede V while longer complements tend to follow V. Secondly, of the complements that follow, a disproportionate number are proper names, thus new-information focus may favor placement after the verb. Thus the unmarked pattern appears to be SOV, with an extraposition rule for heavy or focused complements, not unlike Modern German.

The second diagnostic for SVO vs. SOV is the relative order of two verbs in the same clause (Greenberg 1966). Abstracting away from verb-second clauses, in OHG we find both non-finite before finite (3) and finite before non-finite (4):

(3)  *so   dhine daga **arfullide uuerdhant***                    (*Isidor*)
     when your days  fulfilled  are
     'when your days are fulfilled'

(4)  *thaz her blint **uuvrdi giboran***                    (*Tatian*)
     that he  blind was    born
     'so that he was born blind'

Both of these orders are compatible with the assumption that OHG is SOV, if the language has Verb Projection Raising, like Swiss German and some other West Germanic varieties. Indeed, this study shows that OHG order in (4), like its Swiss German counterpart, is sensitive to both prosody and focus.

Thus the basic syntax of OHG largely reflects the SOV order that is frequently posited for Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European. In fact, even the deviations from SOV find parallels in OHG's predecessors: this paper demonstrates that extraposition and Verb Projection Raising are at work in Gothic and even in much older Indo-European languages like Sanskrit. Therefore, while there was innovation in the left edge of the clause from Proto-Indo-European to OHG (i.e. the rise of verb second), the right periphery of the OHG clause continues the basic order and movement operations that existed in Proto-Germanic and even Proto-Indo-European.