

# 2 Gothic and the Reconstruction of Proto-Germanic

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## 2.1 Introduction

Gothic is the language of two Germanic peoples, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, known from the early centuries of our era. Except for a few runic inscriptions, Gothic provides us with our earliest Germanic texts. The texts are chiefly translations of the New Testament and fragments of the Old Testament, ascribed to Wulfila (c. 300–82/3), and a few other materials from the sixth century. Because it precedes other extensive Germanic texts by three or four centuries, by even more those in North Germanic, Gothic is important for reconstruction of Proto-Germanic as well as for the information it gives us on its society and their language.

Like all early texts, those in Gothic present many problems. These have given rise to an enormous bibliography that has by no means provided solutions. Our information on Wulfila is slight. The origin of the Gothic alphabet is undocumented and spelling conventions are disputed. The text of the Greek Bible used for the translation is unknown. Only parts of the translation have come down to us, so that the stock of words and forms is not great. And the manuscripts that have preserved the translation were written in northern Italy, the Balkans or southern France, apparently in the early sixth century, possibly even by Ostrogothic scribes in contrast with the Visigoth Wulfila who produced the translation in the fourth century.

Moreover, the early history of the Goths is obscure. As a result, their relationships to the other Germanic peoples is unclear. Traditionally, as reported to us by a sixth-century historian, Procopius, they moved from Götland in eastern Sweden to the coastal area near the mouth of the Vistula in the first century before our era; Tacitus in the *Germania* of AD 98 reports Gotones in this area at his time (chapter 44). Around AD 200 they migrated to southern Russia, some going on to the Black Sea, in the region around the Sea of Azov. There two distinct groups can be recognized, the Visi ('good') and

the Ostrogoths ('Eastern Goths'). Subsequently the designation Visigoths was introduced and came to be interpreted as 'Western Goths', as indeed they were geographically in the Eastern Empire and later in their location in Spain from the fifth century. With other Germanic groups, whose languages we know only from names – the Burgundians, the Vandals, the Rugians – the Goths and their language are referred to as East Germanic, in contrast with the North Germanic peoples and languages of Scandinavia, and the West Germanic of central Europe. But differences in time of the texts brought about by shifts and realignments of the identifiable Germanic groups leave this classification open to many questions.

In the fourth century the Goths were in close touch with the Eastern Empire. Captives in battle were Christianized, and the new religion was introduced in other ways as well. Wulfila's grandparents were taken captive in a raid on the Cappadocian village, Sadagolthina, in AD 264. Brought up in the faith, Wulfila came with a delegation to the imperial court *c.* AD 336/7; there he was influenced by Bishop Eusebius to embrace the Homoean doctrine, a view of the relation of Christ to God the Father similar to that of Arianism. Probably in part because of his missionary efforts, the Goths as a group were Arians; as the Visigoths settled in the west towards the end of the fourth century, and the Ostrogoths a century later, they were at odds with the dominant Athanasian doctrines of the western Church. The doctrinal differences led to conflict. The Goths were destroyed as important political groups, the Ostrogoths by an army of the Eastern Empire under Belisarius in 555, the Visigoths by the Moslems in AD 711.

### **The Language in Relation to Proto-Germanic and the Other Germanic Dialects**

According to tradition the Goths maintained an aristocratic culture that reflected many characteristics of Indo-European society. They supported poets who preserved accounts of their valiant men, such as the king, Ermaneric, who came to be central figures in the medieval literature of the West and North Germanic peoples. The poets created a major role for Attila, ruler of the Huns, glorified as Etzel in the High German *Nibelungenlied*, and for Theodoric, the founder of the Ostrogothic empire in northern Italy, celebrated as Dietrich von Bern. The language maintains many military, legal and political terms, such as *draúhti*- 'army' in derivatives, *\*maþl* 'assembly', and the possibility of creating poetic terms known in other Indo-European literary traditions, as in the compound *mana-sēþs* 'world' < 'seed of men'. Such retentions of the earlier culture as well as archaic characteristics in the language support the view that Gothic can be taken as the chief source for reconstructing Proto-Germanic.

The other Germanic languages have undergone phonological and morphological changes not found in Gothic. The voiced sibilant /z/ has become a resonant, as in Old High German *mēro*, Old Icelandic *meiri*, as opposed to

Gothic *maiza* 'more'. Long /ē/ has been lowered, as in Old Icelandic *mākir*, Old English *māce* as opposed to Gothic *mēki* 'short sword'. The West Germanic languages have been especially innovative, as in lengthening consonants before resonants, e.g. Old English *settan*, Old High German *setzen* as opposed to Gothic *-satjan* and Old Icelandic *setja* 'set'. And as in this example, Gothic does not exhibit umlaut. Morphologically it maintains reduplication in many verbs and, like North Germanic, the reflex of the Indo-European second-person singular perfect form, as in *namt* 'thou didst take' as opposed to Old English *nōme*, Old High German *nāmi*. The Indo-European middle-passive is still preserved. Unfortunately for the determining of syntactic patterns, the Bible translation is very literal, so that it provides little information on syntax.

As might be expected, Gothic of the fourth to sixth century has also undergone changes from Proto-Germanic of the period before our era. Among innovations, Proto-Germanic /i, u/ have been lowered before /r/ and /h/, where the lowered vowels are written ⟨aí, aú⟩. Moreover, strong verbs exhibit no variation between voiceless and voiced fricatives, as in *slaha*, *slōh*, *slōhun*, \**slahans* 'strike'. Some specialists attribute the lack of contrast to absence of application of Verner's law in Gothic, by which voiceless fricatives became voiced if the Indo-European accent did not precede them, as in Old High German *slahan*, *sluoh*, *sluogum*, *gislagan*. But regularization is more likely, in view of the contrast in common words that are likely to maintain irregularities, like *aih* vs *aiġun* 'have', or in derivatives, such as \**frawardjan* 'destroy' versus *wairþan* 'become'.

## 2.2 Phonology

The Gothic alphabet, like the Greek and other early alphabets, also served to indicate numerals. There was no symbol for zero, and accordingly 27 symbols were adequate, those representing 1–9, 10–90, 100–900. In early Greek systems, each of these had a phonetic value. When there was no sound in Gothic corresponding to that in Greek, the symbol was none the less maintained for its use as numeral; for example, the symbol for koppa, representing 90, was kept even though Gothic had no back velar voiceless stop.

Wulfila or other designers of the Gothic alphabet made ingenious use of some superfluous symbols. For the [k<sup>w</sup>] sound they used the symbol representing 6, which in Greek stood for [w] or [v]; in our texts it is transliterated as ⟨q⟩. For [h<sup>w</sup>] they used the symbol representing 700, which is transliterated as the ligature ⟨h⟩. On the other hand, the symbol representing 5 was selected for long Gothic [e:], leaving no likely symbol for the short [e], for which the ⟨ai⟩ digraph was selected. Since short [e], [o] were represented by ⟨ai, au⟩ the symbols ⟨e, o⟩ represent long vowels /e:, o:/. Because these vowels are always long, some handbooks do not indicate the length with a

macron. The digraph <ei> is used to represent long /i:/.

The readings of <ai> and <au> are disputed. From borrowed names we know that they represented [ɛ] and [ɔ], the pronunciation of the digraphs in Greek of the time, e.g. *Aleisabaþ* Gk *Elisábet*, *apaústaúlus* Gk *apóstolos*. But many words with [ay, aw] diphthongs in the other Germanic dialects are also written with the digraphs, e.g. *áins*, Ger. *eins* 'one', *áugō*, Ger. *Auge* 'eye'. Still others have different cognate elements, e.g. *saian*, Ger. *säen* 'sow', *sauil*, Ger. *Sonne* 'sun'. The digraphs then may have had three different pronunciations: [ɛ, ay, ɛ:, ɔ, aw, ɔ:]. Yet specialists who insist on one pronunciation argue that framers of an alphabet would be unlikely to use symbols with more than one value. A solution is likely only if we discover new inscriptions or manuscripts. As here, specialists may use acute accent marks to distinguish the readings.

While the order of the alphabetic symbols and their values correspond to those in Greek, the shapes have several origins. Those for <h> and <𐌿> were based on Latin. The alphabet then, like other elements of Gothic society, reflects the combination of influences of the Greeks and the Latins on Germanic culture that led to the Gothic culture we know.

### The Consonant System

We assume nineteen consonantal phonemes for Gothic, four of which are differently interpreted by some specialists (Table 2.1). The series /b, d, g/ has stop articulation initially, finally and when doubled, fricative articulation between vowels. The other consonants have one principal allophone, except for /n/, which has a velar variant before velars.

The status of /j/ and /w/ is disputed, some interpreters taking them as variants of /i, u/. In most contexts they stand in complementary distribution, for example, only [w] before vowels, only [u] under accent between consonants. Direct contrasts for /i/ vs /j/ are found with proper names, e.g. *Maria* vs *kunja* 'kin'; for /u/ vs /w/ the contrasts are clear, as in *gáidw* 'lack', *faihu* 'property'. Yet the positions in which contrasts are found are so limited that we may assume single phonemes for the resonants in Proto-Germanic.

The status of <q> /k<sup>w</sup>/ and <𐌿> /h<sup>w</sup>/ is also disputed, some taking them as clusters of two phonemes. Clusters of consonant plus *w* occur only with

**Table 2.1** The consonant system

|   |   |   |   |                          |
|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|
| p | t |   | k | <i>k<sup>w</sup></i> <q> |
| b | d | z | g |                          |
| f | þ | s | h | <i>h<sup>w</sup></i> <𐌿> |
| m | n |   |   |                          |
| l | r | j | w |                          |

Note: The four italicized phonemes are those which are differently interpreted by some specialists. <𐌿> is the Gothic letter which represents the complex consonant [hw].

dentals, as in *twái* 'two'; the unique form *bidagwa* 'beggar' is taken as an error. Moreover, they pattern with single consonants, as in the past tense *sagg* [saŋk<sup>w</sup>] 'sank', where interpretation as a cluster would require a three-consonant sequence. Similarly, in the initial cluster of *qrammīpa* 'dampness', which would be unique if taken as /kwr/, though the cluster may be an error for /kr-/. We assume the same consonant system for late Proto-Germanic, except that /i, u/ included the consonantal variants [y, w], Gothic *j* and *w*. Moreover, before the fixing of the accent, [z] was a variant of /s/.

### The Vowel System

The vowel system of sixth century Gothic consisted of five short and five long vowels: /i, e, a, o, u, i:, e:, a:, o:, u:/, plus at least one diphthong /iw/ and probably /ay, aw/ as well. But there are problems.

As noted above, [i, e] [o, u] were virtually in complementary distribution, the open counterparts standing before /h, h<sup>w</sup>, r/, the close elsewhere, e.g. with PGmc /e/ *qiman*, cf. OHG *queman* 'come' but with PGmc /i/ in *gatašun*, cf. OHG *zigun* 'showed'. An early form of Gothic may have had a short vowel system consisting of three members: /a/, plus /i, u/ with allophonic variants. But the variants came to stand before other consonants as well, as did [e] in *aīþbau* 'or' < \*eh-þ-, and [i] before *r, h* as in *hiri* 'here', *nih* 'and not'. Accordingly, by the time our manuscripts were written, the language included five short vowels. Borrowings reflect this system, as in *aīpiskaúpus*, Gk *epískopos* 'bishop', with /e/ and /o/ before /p/.

Proto-Germanic on the other hand had a vowel system consisting of four short and four long vowels; the two low back vowels had fallen together. The system is generally represented with short /a/ and long /o:/ as a result of the later introduction of short /o/ and long /a:/. After the Proto-Germanic period, short /o/ resulted from lowering of some /u/; long /a:/ arose from compensatory lengthening upon loss of nasal before voiceless fricatives, as in \*þāho 'clay', OHG *dāhā*, cf. Lith. *tānkus* 'thick'.

A new long close /e:/ arose in Proto-Germanic through compensatory lengthening, upon loss of nasal as in \**mēs*, OHG *mias* 'table' < VLat. *mēsa*, Lat. *mensa*, and of laryngeal as in *fēra*, OHG *fiara* 'side' < PIE (s)*peHy-*. Proto-Germanic /ē/ was then lowered, generally written /æ/, so that the language had a long vowel system of six members. The two long *e* vowels fell together in Gothic; Old English *lāetan* 'let' corresponds to Gothic -*lētan*, while Old English *mēse* reflects the close long /ē/, often called *ē*<sup>2</sup>, as in Gothic *mēsa* 'table', yielding the system of five long vowels indicated above.

Early Gothic had the diphthongs /ay, aw, ey/, as in *áins* 'one', cf. OLat. *oinos*, *áukan* 'increase', cf. Lat. *augere*, and \**kiusa* 'test', cf. Gk *geúomai* 'taste'.

### Accentuation and Syllable Weight

Unfortunately we have no means for determining the intonational pattern of sentences. We can however determine the accentuation of individual words. Since voiceless fricatives are manifested even in forms that have voiced fricatives in the other Germanic dialects, we conclude that Gothic had fixed accent on stem syllables, usually initial, as in: *wisan*, *was*, *wēsum* 'be' in contrast with Old English *wesan*, *wæs*, *wæron*. The variation between singular and plural of the past is maintained to this day in *was*, *were*.

Other evidence supports the assumption of initial accent on words. The particle *anda* 'along' has maintained its second vowel in nouns, which had principal stress on the first syllable, but has lost it in verbs, which have principal stress on the stem; the difference is indicated in 1 Timothy 6:12 *andhaiháist þamma gōdin andaháita* 'you have confessed the good confession'. Similarly, because of the initial strong stress on nouns, vowels were lost or weakened in final syllables, as in the accusative singular *haúrn* 'horn' in contrast with *horna* of the Gallehus runic inscription dated about AD 325.

Moreover, enclitics, especially the connective particle *u(h)* 'and' can be placed between prefixes and verb stems, as in *at-uh-gaf* 'and he gave to', suggesting that those prefixes carried a secondary stress. On the basis of this evidence we assume three degrees of stress: strong, mid, and weak.

Syllables are light if they contain only a long vowel, or a short vowel, also when ending in a consonant; otherwise they are heavy. Heavy syllables were followed in Proto-Germanic by a vowel + consonant variant of resonants. The effect is attested in *-ja*-stems of nouns and verbs, as illustrated in Table 2.3.

## 2.3 Morphology

### Phonological Variation in Morphological Sets

Gothic, like Proto-Germanic, makes heavy use of the vocalic variation inherited from Proto-Indo-European that is known as ablaut. The varying vowels are the result of sound changes. In treatment of ablaut they are referred to as grades, with *e*-grade as basic (often called 'normal'), plus the variants: *o*-grade, lengthened grade, and zero grade. Ablaut is especially prominent in strong verbs, as in: *wairþan*, *warþ*, *waúrþun*, *waúrþans* 'become'. A paradigm has been constructed with four principal parts. Classes I–V have *e*-grade in the present and the infinitive, *o*-grade (PGmc, Go. *a*) in the past singular indicative, and zero grade in the past plural and subjunctive as well as the past participle. Classes IV and V have lengthened grade in the third principal part. Classes VI and VII observe different patterns.

While verbs of the first five classes have one basic pattern, they are classified into five groups in accordance with the structure of their stem (Table 2.2). Such alternation is also found in derivation, as in *\*(fra)wardjan* 'destroy', which illustrates Indo-European use of the *o*-grade in deriving

**Table 2.2 The basic pattern of strong verbs classes I–V**

|                     | Present          | Past singular | Past plural | Past participle |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Proto-Indo-European | e                | o             | ∅           | ∅               |
| Proto-Germanic      | e                | a             | ∅           | ∅               |
| Gothic              | I ei             | ái            | i           | i               |
|                     | II iu            | áu            | u           | u               |
|                     | III i/aí+l/m/n/r | a+            | u/aú+       | u/aú+           |
|                     | IV i/aíR         | aR            | ēR          | u/aúR           |
|                     | V iC             | aC            | ēC          | iC              |

Note: R = resonants, C = all other consonants.

causatives and factitives. Reflexes of ablaut variation in endings are also maintained, as in the nominative *brōþar* as opposed to the genitive *brōþrs* ‘brother’. Although such patterns of vowel variation are attested in some derived verbs, in nouns and endings, derivational morphology relies more heavily on affixation than on ablaut in both Proto-Germanic and Gothic.

### Morphological Classes

Like the other Indo-European languages, Gothic distinguishes nominals and verbals inflectionally as opposed to uninflected words. The nominals in turn may be subclassified into nouns, pronouns and adjectives, which include some forms of numerals. Nouns, adjectives and non-personal pronouns are inflected for gender, number and case. There are three genders: masculine, feminine, neuter. There are three numbers: singular, plural and dual, though the dual is preserved only in the personal pronouns, and in first- and second-person verbs of active voice. There are five cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and vocative, which has the same form as the nominative or accusative. Scholars who assume a Proto-Indo-European based on Indo-Iranian and Greek posit further cases for Proto-Germanic, of which only residues remain in Gothic; the residues may be derived from derivational as well as from inflectional forms.

### The Nominal Group

Proto-Indo-European distinguished athematic nouns (nouns made up of a base without a suffix before inflectional endings) and thematic nouns (nouns with base followed by *e/o* and inflectional endings). In Germanic the thematic nouns have become more prominent; consonant stems like *hatis* ‘hate’ have become thematic. The *-n-* stems have, however, maintained their prominence; a second adjective inflection has been built on them.

Nouns have six major classes of inflection, plus two subgroups of the *a*-stems. The *n*-stems have also developed separate inflections for *-ōn* and *-īn*

**Table 2.3** The principal noun classes

| Base            | <i>PGmc</i> | <i>a-stems</i> |         |           |       |         |        |        |           |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|---------|-----------|-------|---------|--------|--------|-----------|
|                 | <i>stem</i> | a              | ja      | -ja       | ō     | i       | u      | n      | consonant |
|                 |             | dag            | har     | háird     | gib   | gast    | sunu   | gum    | baúrg     |
| <b>Singular</b> |             |                |         |           |       |         |        |        |           |
| Nom.            | az          | dags           | harjis  | háirdeis  | giba  | gasts   | sunus  | guma   | baúrgs    |
| Acc.            | an          | dag            | hari    | háirdi    | giba  | gast    | sunu   | guman  | baúrg     |
| Gen.            | e/as        | dagis          | harjis  | háirdeis  | gibōs | gastis  | sunaus | gumins | baúrgs    |
| Dat.            | ái          | daga           | harja   | háirdja   | gibai | gasta   | sunau  | gumin  | baúrg     |
| Voc.            | e           |                | –       | háirdi    |       | –       | sunu   |        |           |
| <b>Plural</b>   |             |                |         |           |       |         |        |        |           |
| Nom.            | ōzez        | dagōs          | harjōs  | háirdjōs  | gibōs | gastei  | sunjus | gumans | baúrgs    |
| Acc.            | anz         | dagans         | harjans | háirdjans | gibōs | gastins | sununs | gumans | baúrgs    |
| Gen.            | ō/ēn        | dagē           | harjē   | háirdjē   | gibō  | gastē   | suniwē | gumanē | baúrgē    |
| Dat.            | amaz        | dagam          | harjam  | háirdjam  | gibōm | gastim  | sunum  | gumam  | baúrgim   |

subgroups; these and other details must be left to the handbooks. In Germanic grammars the classes are designated, as in Table 2.3, with labels representing their Proto-Germanic stem vowels or consonants. The Proto-Germanic endings are listed in the first column. The *a*-stems are masculine and neuter. The neuter nominative singular has the ending of the accusative; the nominative plural has an *-a* ending. The *ō*-stems are feminine. The other classes may have any one of the genders. A full set of forms is given for each declension.

### Pronouns

Like the other Indo-European languages, Gothic has various sets of pronouns. The personal pronouns are derived from comparable forms in Proto-Indo-European, though some have been enlarged with suffixes, such as the accusative singular *-k* < *-ge*. For example, the accusative *mik* 'me' corresponds to Greek (*e*)*mé* + *-ge*, with loss of final *-e*. Like the pronouns in the parent language, they maintain the shift in stem between nominative and oblique cases. Many of the forms have been analogically modified; *unsis* is found beside the accusative/dative *uns* (see Table 2.4).

Possessive adjectives are based on the genitive stems, e.g. *meins*, *þeins*, *unsar*, *izwar*; they are inflected like strong adjectives.

An anaphoric pronoun for the third person is based on a root *i* (possibly merged with *e*); it is inflected for case, number and gender, though not all forms are attested (Table 2.5). The interrogative pronoun, found only in the singular, is based on Proto-Indo-European *kʷo-*. In contrast with the other Germanic dialects, a distinct feminine has been developed (Table 2.6).

The neuter also includes a form *hʷē*, which is interpreted as an instrumental, as in *hʷē wasjaþ* 'with what you clothe yourself'. A comparable form



Table 2.4 The personal pronouns

|      | I     | we     | we two | thou  | you    | you two | self  |
|------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|---------|-------|
| Nom. | ik    | weis   | wit    | þu    | jus    |         |       |
| Acc. | mik   | uns    | ugkis  | þik   | izwis  | igkis   | sik   |
| Gen. | meina | unsara |        | þeina | izwara | igkara  | seina |
| Dat. | mis   | uns    | ugkis  | þis   | izwis  | igkis   | sis   |

Table 2.5 The anaphoric pronoun 'he, she, it'

|      | Singular |      |      | Plural |      |     |
|------|----------|------|------|--------|------|-----|
|      | m.       | f.   | n.   | m.     | f.   | n.  |
| Nom. | is       | si   | ita  | eis    |      | ija |
| Acc. | ina      | ija  | ita  | ins    | ijōs |     |
| Gen. | is       | izōs | is   | izē    | izō  |     |
| Dat. | imma     | izái | imma | im     | im   | im  |

Table 2.6 The interrogative pronoun

|      | m.                  | f.                  | n.                  |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Nom. | h <sup>w</sup> as   | h <sup>w</sup> ō    | h <sup>w</sup> a    |
| Acc. | h <sup>w</sup> ana  | h <sup>w</sup> ō    | h <sup>w</sup> a    |
| Gen. | h <sup>w</sup> is   |                     | h <sup>w</sup> is   |
| Dat. | h <sup>w</sup> amma | h <sup>w</sup> izái | h <sup>w</sup> amma |

is found in the neuter demonstrative, but, apart from compounds, only in the phrase *ni þē haldis* 'by no means' (< 'not rather than that'). It is a residual comparative construction of the OV pattern, paralleled in *neo dana halt* of the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, both giving testimony to the early verbal structure of Proto-Germanic.

The usual relative pronoun is made with *-ei* suffixed to the simple demonstrative, i.e. *saei*, *sōei*, *þatei*. The suffix may also be added to other pronouns, as in *ikei* 'I, who', and *ei* may be used alone as a clause connective meaning 'that, so that'. The creation of this relative pronoun in contrast with the adaptation of the interrogative in English and of the demonstrative in German provides evidence that postposed relative clauses were developed only in the individual Germanic dialects rather than inherited from Proto-Indo-European or Proto-Germanic.

**Table 2.7    The two adjective declensions in the masculine**

|      | <i>Strong</i><br>Singular | Plural     | <i>Weak</i><br>Singular | Plural    |
|------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Nom. | blinds                    | blindái    | blinda                  | blindans  |
| Acc. | blindana                  | blindans   | blindan                 | blindans  |
| Gen. | *blindis                  | *blindáizē | blindins                | *blindanē |
| Dat. | blindamma                 | blindáim   | blindin                 | *blindam  |

### *Adjectives*

Like the other Germanic languages, Gothic has two adjective inflections. One is based on the inflection of the noun, with possible *ja*-stems, *i*-stems and *u*-stems, though *o/ā*-stems are most prominent. This inflection is labelled strong. It includes some endings that are taken over from pronouns.

The other inflection is a Germanic innovation based on the inflection of *n*-stems. It indicates definiteness. Its meaning developed from the function of *n*-stems in some Indo-European languages to indicate specific individuals; such forms could then become personal names, e.g., Gk *Plátōn* 'Plato' (< 'the broad-shouldered individual'). Germanic shares the development of a definite adjective inflection with Slavic and Baltic, though in those branches the affixed element is a demonstrative. When definite articles were introduced into Germanic, possibly by influence from Latin which in turn had been influenced by Greek, and this earlier by Egyptian, weak (definite declension) endings accompanied the definite article; in time the adjective endings lost their distinctiveness. When maintained, as in Modern Standard German, the weak endings are reduced to *-e* and *-en*. To illustrate the two declensions, the masculine forms for each are given in Table 2.7.

Comparison is made with the suffixes *-iz-* and *-ōz-*, as in *managizō* 'more' and *garaíhtōza* 'juster', and in the superlative with *-ist-* and *-ōst-*, as in *managistans* 'most' and *armōstái* 'poorest'. Since comparatives refer to specific individuals, the comparative is inflected in the weak declension; the superlative is inflected either weak or strong.

### *Determiners*

Gothic had no articles. The Greek article is represented in some contexts by the simple demonstrative; in such passages the translator apparently intended to express emphasis. The early runic inscriptions also contain no article; accordingly we assume that there was none in Proto-Germanic.

### *Demonstratives*

The simple demonstrative is formed with reflexes of Proto-Indo-European \**so*, *sā*, *tad*. Similar paradigms are found in the other Germanic dialects;

**Table 2.8 The demonstrative pronoun**

|      | Singular |       |       | Plural |      |      |
|------|----------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
|      | m.       | f.    | n.    | m.     | f.   | n.   |
| Nom. | sa       | sō    | þata  | þái    | þōs  | þō   |
| Acc. | þana     | þō    | þata  | þans   | þōs  | þō   |
| Gen. | þis      | þizōs | þis   | þizē   | þizō | þizē |
| Dat. | þamma    | þizái | þamma | þáim   | þáim | þáim |

accordingly we can assume the forms also for Proto-Germanic (Table 2.8).

An extended form of the demonstrative is made with the affix *-(u)h* 'and, then', i.e., *sah, sōh, þatah*. The affix is assumed to be a cognate of Latin *-que* 'and'. This demonstrative is occasionally used as a relative pronoun.

### Quantifiers

Quantifiers are treated in Gothic grammar as indefinites; for example, *sums, suma, sum* 'someone' is inflected like a strong, rather than a weak, adjective. Its negative is represented by phrases consisting of *ni* 'not' and *áins*, 'one, *h<sup>w</sup>as* 'who', or *manna* 'man' followed by the enclitic particle *hun* 'any', e.g. *ni . . . áinshun, áinōhun, áinhun* 'no one'; they are treated as pronouns, though *áinshun* is also accompanied by nouns in the genitive. Two items represent 'each': *h<sup>w</sup>azuh, h<sup>w</sup>ōh, h<sup>w</sup>ah* and less commonly *h<sup>w</sup>arjizuh*, which is made up of *h<sup>w</sup>arjis* 'who' and *-uh*.

### Numerals

Cardinal numerals have the bases found in other Indo-European languages, e.g., *áins, twái, \*þreis, fidwōr, fimf, saíhs, sibun, ahtau, niun, taíhun*. The first three are inflected in all genders and cases, though as illustrated with '3' not all forms are attested.

The numerals for 11 and 12 are made as in Lithuanian with a suffix meaning 'additional' based on Proto-Indo-European *leyk<sup>w</sup>*- 'leave over': *\*áinlif, twalif*; the other teen numerals attested have the additive pattern of VO languages, *fidwortaíhun* '14', *\*fimftaíhun* '15'.

The numerals from 20–60 are made with simple cardinals plus *\*tigjus* '-ty', e.g. *twáim tigum* '(with) twenty'; those from 70–100 with *-tēhund*, e.g. *sibuntēhund* '70', *tahuntēhund* '100'. The hundreds are made with cardinals plus the neuter plural *hunda*, e.g. *fimf hunda* '500'.

The ordinals are based on the cardinals, except for *fruma* 'first' and *anþar* 'second', e.g. *þridja* 'third', *saíhsta* 'sixth'.

## The Verb

Gothic verbs are inflected for three persons, for three numbers – with the dual only in first and second persons, for present and preterite tenses; for indicative, subjunctive and imperative moods; and for active and passive voice, though passive forms are found only in the present tense. The subjunctive is based on the Indo-European optative; some handbooks maintain the designation, though to indicate parallelism with other Germanic dialects the term ‘subjunctive’ is generally used. Passives are also made with forms of *wisan* and *wairþan* plus the preterite participle.

### *Aspectual Expression*

While Gothic has a tense system, derivational patterns, such as the *-nan* verbs, also indicate manner of action (*Aktionsart*). Yet expression of such verbal meaning is one of the most debated features of the language, as is treatment of aspectual expression in linguistic handbooks.

Some linguists use the term ‘aspect’ generally, while others insist on restricting it to languages like Russian, in which parallel forms are found for the so-called perfective and imperfective aspects. It is useful to distinguish between aspect with such a meaning and *Aktionsart* ‘manner of action’, which is expressed through means such as derivation. Those who make the distinction posit only *Aktionsart* for Gothic.

### *Strong and Weak Verbs*

Gothic verbs fall into two groups: those called strong indicate tense through internal marking based on ablaut; those called weak are largely derived and indicate tense through a *d*-affix. The strong verbs consist of seven classes, for which we here use Roman numerals; the weak verbs consist of four, for which we use Arabic numerals. This twofold distinction sets Germanic off from other Indo-European languages; Latin, for example, has four conjugations, the third of which includes verbs such as those making up the strong group in Germanic. The two other western groups, Greek and Celtic, have even less distinct classes.

### *The Strong Verbs*

The strong verbs consist of two sets as determined by their ablaut patterning. Of the seven Germanic classes, the first five are parallel in their ablaut patterning, as illustrated in Table 2.2; the forms have adapted the ablaut vowels *e* vs *o*, and zero, though the fourth and fifth classes employ lengthened grade in the preterite forms other than the singular indicative.

The two remaining classes are difficult to analyse; their pattern may have been determined by laryngeal bases. By such an analysis the normal grade was applied in the past, while the present and the past participle have zero grade, e.g. Proto-Germanic *a* vs *ō* vs *ō* vs *a* of class VI, and *ay* vs *ēy* vs *ēy* vs *ay* among others of class VII, e.g., *swaran*, *swōr* ‘swear’, *háitan*, *hafháit*

'be named'. This hypothesis is difficult to verify because few verbs in the two classes have bases that are similarly modified in other Indo-European languages. Verbs of class VII show reduplication in the past tense. Its presence has been taken by some as persistence of the widespread pattern in Indo-Iranian and Greek. It may also be the result of internal spread, for parallel verbs in the other Germanic dialects provide only a few forms that have been interpreted as reflexes of reduplicated forms. For the most part the other dialects form the stem vowel in the past tense of class VII verbs with reflexes of Proto-Germanic  $\bar{e}^2$ .

### The Weak Verbs

Gothic has four classes of weak verbs, distinguished by their suffixes: class 1 *ilj*; class 2 *ō*; class 3 *ái*; class 4 *na/ō*. The last two may also be characterized semantically; class 3 verbs are stative; class 4 verbs are inchoative or medio-passive. Class 1 verbs result from various sources, notably causatives or factitives, e.g. *lagjan* 'lay', and denominatives based on nouns or adjectives, e.g. *háiļjan* 'heal'. Class 2 verbs are also chiefly denominatives.

### The Verbal Paradigm

Many forms of the class IV strong verb *niman* 'take' are attested; it is therefore useful for illustrating the paradigm (Table 2.9). The active voice has two tenses and three moods, but only present forms are found for the passive.

The forms of weak verbs are comparable, though the affix must be taken into consideration. And in the first class the second- and third-person singular and the second plural must be noted for variation of the resonant marking the root. The present singular forms are given in Table 2.10.

The forms of the weak past are characteristic only in the singular indicative. For *lagjan* the first and third singular are *lagida*, the second singular *lagidēs*.

**Table 2.9** The verbal paradigm as illustrated by the class IV strong verb *niman*

|            | Active             |                 |                | Past           |                 | Passive        |                  |
|------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
|            | Present Indicative | Subjunctive     | Imperative     | Indicative     | Subjunctive     | Indicative     | Subjunctive      |
| 1 Singular | <i>nima</i>        | <i>nimáú</i>    |                | <i>nam</i>     | <i>*nēmǰáú</i>  | <i>nimada</i>  | <i>nimáidau</i>  |
| 2          | <i>nimis</i>       | <i>*nimáís</i>  | <i>nim</i>     | <i>namt</i>    | <i>nēmeis</i>   | <i>nimaza</i>  | <i>nimáizau</i>  |
| 3          | <i>nimiþ</i>       | <i>nimái</i>    | <i>nimadau</i> | <i>nam</i>     | <i>nēmi</i>     | <i>nimada</i>  | <i>nimáidau</i>  |
| 1 Dual     | <i>nimōs</i>       | <i>*nimáiwa</i> |                | <i>nēmu</i>    |                 |                |                  |
| 2          | <i>nimats</i>      | <i>*nimáits</i> | <i>*nimats</i> | <i>*nēmuts</i> |                 |                |                  |
| 1 Plural   | <i>nimam</i>       | <i>*nimáima</i> | <i>*nimam</i>  | <i>nēmum</i>   | <i>*nēmeima</i> | <i>nimanda</i> | <i>nimáindau</i> |
| 2          | <i>nimiþ</i>       | <i>nimáiþ</i>   | <i>nimiþ</i>   | <i>nēmuþ</i>   | <i>*nēmeiþ</i>  |                |                  |
| 3          | <i>nimand</i>      | <i>nimáina</i>  |                | <i>nēmum</i>   | <i>nēmeina</i>  |                |                  |

**Table 2.10** The present singular of weak verbs

|       | Class 1 |        | Class 2 | Class 3 | Class 4 |         |
|-------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 sg. | lagja   | stōja  | sōkja   | salbō   | haba    | fullna  |
| 2 sg. | lagjis  | stōjis | sōkeis  | salbōs  | habáis  | fullnis |
| 3 sg. | lagjþ   | stōjþ  | sōkeiþ  | salbōþ  | habáiþ  | fullniþ |

There are three non-finite forms, the infinitive, e.g. *niman*, the present participle, *nimands*, the past participle, *\*numans*. The present participle is inflected like a weak adjective, though the feminine ends in *-ei*, e.g. *nimandei*.

### Preterite-presents

The Germanic languages have a small group of verbs that are inflected as past-tense forms but have present meaning. They arose when in the shift from an Indo-European aspect system to the Germanic tense system the lexical meaning rather than the aspectual meaning underwent change. For example, *wáit* 'I know' is based on the perfect (preterite) form of the Proto-Indo-European root *\*weyd-* 'see'; the aspectual meaning 'I have completed seeing' was not shifted to the preterite meaning 'I have seen' but rather to 'I know' – for, one who has seen knows. Among other members of the group are *kann* 'I know, I can' from 'I have recognized', *ōg* 'I fear' from 'I have suffered in spirit'.

Somewhat similarly, the verb forms *wiljau*, *wileis*, *wili* 'want' are historically optative, but are used as indicatives.

The present-tense forms of the verb *be* are made from the Proto-Indo-European root *\*ǵes-* 'be', e.g. *im* 'I am', *is* 'thou art', *ist* 'is'. The infinitive and past tense are made from the root Proto-Indo-European *\*wes-* 'exist', e.g. *was*, *wast*, *was*, inf. *wisan*, pres. part. *wisands*.

### Uninflected Words

There are four classes of uninflected words: adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections. Among these the class of adverbs has the most members, some of which are noted here.

Adverbs derived from adjectives are made with the suffix *-ō* that is a reflex of Proto-Indo-European *-ōd*, and identified by some scholars as an ablative, e.g. *galeikō* 'similarly'; as a more likely explanation it is a form from which the ablative in some nouns arose, notably in Sanskrit and Latin. The suffix *-ba* is used to derive adverbs of manner from adjectives, e.g. *ubilaba* 'evilly'. Adverbs of place form a set of related items using several suffixes, e.g. *inn* 'into', *inna* 'within', *innaprō* 'from within', *h<sup>w</sup>ap* 'where to', *h<sup>w</sup>aprō* 'from where'.

Prepositions are found that govern any of the oblique cases, or also several cases, such as *ana* 'on, at' governing the dative and the accusative, *in* governing all three cases, with the meaning 'because of' when followed by the genitive. They are also used as prefixes in compounding, e.g. *faura-gaggja* 'steward' < 'one going ahead'. When such prefixes are found with verbs, a particle may be placed between the two segments, e.g. *us-nu-gibiþ* 'now give (out)'. The position of the separating particle indicates that such verbal compounds are not fixed yet. This conclusion is supported by the position of the accent in such compounds in Modern German, where the prefix has been weakened in verbs, e.g. *erlauben* 'permit', but not in nouns, e.g. *Urlaub* 'furlough'.

Many conjunctions are in use to indicate the relationships between clauses. They do not govern modal forms, which in Gothic have the function of expressing modality rather than subordination.

Simple conjunction is indicated by *jah* 'and, also', *uh* 'and', and *nih* 'and not'. Disjunction is expressed by *þau(h)* and *aíþþau* < \**aif-þau*, cf. Eng. *if*, 'or', as well as by the correlatives *andizuh ... aíþþau* 'either ... or'. Adversative relationship is expressed by *iþ*, *þan*, *aþþan*, *akei* 'but' and *ak* 'but, on the contrary'.

For indicating conditional relationships *jabái* 'if' and *nibá(i)* 'if not' are used, and for indicating concessive relations, *þaúhjabái* 'even if', *swēþaúh* 'to be sure'.

To indicate purpose, many conjunctions in *-ei* are found, including *ei*, *þatei*, *þēei*, *þei* 'that', *swaei* and *swaswē* 'so that'. The conjunction *swē* is used for comparison with the meaning 'as' and temporally 'as, when'. Other temporal conjunctions are *þan*, *þandē* 'whenever, as long as', *biþē*, *mipþanei* 'while', *sunsei* (*suns-ei*) 'as soon as', *untē* 'until'.

Causal relationship is expressed by *allis*, *áuk*, *untē*, *rahtis* 'for, because'; result by *eíþan*, *nu*, *nuh*, *nunu*, *þanuh*, *þannu*, *þaruh* 'therefore, accordingly'.

This large array of conjunctions, most newly created for these uses in Gothic or Proto-Germanic, provides further evidence that means for expressing clausal interrelationships in Proto-Germanic had to be created, as we have noted with relative markers. When the basic order of sentences shifted from the Proto-Indo-European Object-Verb (OV) to Verb-Object (VO) in Proto-Germanic and its dialects, subordinate clauses came to be postposed; markers were then essential to indicate their relationship with the principal clause. The need was even greater because clausal interrelationships were not expressed through verbal forms, for example, subjunctives in contrast with indicatives.

Only a few interjections are included in the texts: *o* 'oh', *sai* 'behold', *wai* 'alas', as well as the three forms modified for number, *hiri*, *hirjats*, *hirjip* 'come here'.

## 2.4 Syntax

The many syntactic studies have been chiefly concerned with determining the function of morphological elements and categories, such as the uses of the various case forms, especially where they differ from the Greek. The space allotted does not permit summaries of the results; on the whole the functions of grammatical classes and categories in Gothic are in accordance with those of the other Indo-European languages, and equivalent to those in the other Germanic languages.

Because of the literal translation, the word order of our texts is for the most part that of the Greek original. Citing the order of sentence constituents or the structure of nominal and verbal groups merely provides a description of these structures in Biblical Greek. Only deviations from the Greek can be used to determine the native order, especially when they accord with the patterning of other early Germanic texts, such as the runic inscriptions. We therefore examine such deviations to determine the native syntax, also for its information on the syntax of Proto-Germanic.

These deviations indicate that Gothic retained many patterns of Object-Verb (OV) syntax. In OV languages, e.g. Japanese, Turkish, governing elements occupy the same position with regard to the element governed as does the principal governing element, the verb. Accordingly adpositions follow nouns as postpositions, rather than precede them as prepositions. And in the comparison of inequality construction, the adjective follows the standard rather than precedes it, as in English. Because they are equivalent to objects, complements (object clauses), and also adverbial clauses, precede the principal clause. Moreover, nominal modifiers, such as relative clauses, genitives and adjectives, precede nouns. Residues of OV patterns in a VO language inform us of the previous structure of the language.

### OV Order in Government Constructions

While the order of most clauses maintains that of Greek, in positive sentences with predicate adjectives the auxiliary follows the adjective, as in *siuks ist* 'is sick' (John 11:3). Since many predicate adjective constructions correspond to intransitive verbs in Greek, we may assume that the Gothic pattern is native. The order of such sentences is that of verb-final languages.

Comparative constructions support the assumption of earlier OV order, e.g., *managáim sparwam batizans sijub jus* (lit.) 'than many sparrows better are you' = 'you are better than many sparrows' (Matthew 10:31). Here the Greek does not have a comparative, but rather a verb: *pollôn strouthtôn diaphérete huméis* 'of (from) many sparrows differ you'. While the Gothic pattern differs from the Greek, examples like this illustrate the difficulty of determining the native order. The proposed standard in the comparative construction is indeed as in OV syntax; but the noun phrase also precedes the verb in Greek and may have provided the pattern for the Gothic order. Other



comparatives with standards in the dative, such as *máiza imma* 'more than he' (Matthew 11:11) also have the order of the Greek.

### OV Order in Participial Constructions

Attempts have been made to determine the native syntactic pattern through analysis of texts other than the Bible translation. But these, except for the Commentary on the Gospel of John, are short; the Commentary also is conceded to be heavily influenced by Greek, whether or not it is a translation. Yet it includes much subordination through the use of participial constructions, as in *jah þa leikinōn us wambái munans gabaúrþ in tweiþl gadráus* (lit.) 'and the corporeal from womb thinking birth into doubt fell' = 'because he thought of the corporeal birth from the womb, he doubted'. Such use of participial clauses proposed to the principal verb is characteristic of OV languages. This frequent pattern in the Commentary then provides further support for assumption of OV as the native word order. We must conclude, however, on the basis of the numerous conjunctions in the biblical texts and other constructions discussed below that the language had been shifting from OV to VO patterning.

### The Infinitive as Verbal Noun

A construction that has attracted considerable attention is the use of the infinitive to translate passive infinitives of Greek, as in *háit nu witan þamma hláiwa* 'command now guarding [(to) guard] for that tomb' for Greek *kéleuson oûn asphalishênai tòn táphon* 'command that the tomb be guarded'. Such use of infinitives as object, and also as subject, indicates that the so-called infinitive actually was a verbal noun; this analysis is supported by its origin in an accusative suffix, Proto-Germanic *\*-onom*. The present participle used as noun maintains similar evidence, for, when nominal, it is used with the genitive, as in *þans fijands galgins Xristaus* 'those hating of the cross of Christ' in contrast with its use of *fijands* when adjectival with a following dative. Such verbal noun constructions are characteristic of OV structure.

### Negation and Interrogation

Negation is marked by the particle *ni* or the suffixed form *nih*. These typically stand before the verb.

Interrogation is marked by the enclitic *-u* generally placed on verbs, as in *wileiz-u* 'do you wish' (Luke 6:54). In negative sentences, however, it may be enclitic to *ni*, as in *ni-u gamēlþ ist?* 'Is it not written?' (Mark 11:17). This marker assumes a positive reply. The markers for a negative reply are *ja-u* and *ibái*, as in *ibái mag blinds blindana tiuhan* 'can a blind person lead a blind person?' The position of the particles is often that of the Greek. Yet the placing of interrogative *-u* after verbs may be taken as a residue of OV order; such verbal modifiers are postposed to the verb in OV languages.

### Subordination

Subordination is indicated by conjunctions that do not govern the modal form of the verb, as noted above. Accordingly the construction of complex sentences is still highly paratactic as in OV languages.

Relative constructions, as we have indicated, are typically introduced by pronouns or particles suffixed by *-ei*. These often reproduce parallel relatives in Greek. The marker may however be used by itself, as in *from þamma daga ei háusidēdum* ‘from the day that we heard it’ (Colossians 1:9). It then functions as if indicating the focus of the sentence. This force is found when it is used with *ik* and *þu*, as in *þu h<sup>w</sup>as is þuei stōjis* ‘thou who art – thou-who judgest > who are you that you judge?’

Relative constructions then have something of the pattern found in Hittite, Vedic Sanskrit, early Greek and early Latin, where the relativizer is essentially a focusing particle. In Hittite and Latin the particle is based on PIE *k<sup>w</sup>-*, in Sanskrit and Greek on *yo-*. The focusing particle was placed in the clause that complemented the principal clause, as in the examples here, and eventually developed as the relative pronoun. The differing relative markers in the Germanic dialects, e.g. Ger. *der, die, das*, Eng. *who, which, that*, indicate that Proto-Germanic had no single marker, and that each of its dialects developed its own.

### Passivization

Greek passive constructions may be translated with the Gothic medio-passive in the present, with forms of *-nan* verbs, and with periphrastic constructions made with the preterite participle and forms of *wisan* and *wairþan*. The periphrastic forms still maintain some of their literal value, and accordingly are not actually elements of the verbal system. The perfect passive is translated with forms of *wisan* ‘be’ in most occurrences; the aorist on the other hand was more commonly translated with *wairþan* ‘become’. Presumably the difference in selection was made because *wisan* like the perfect indicates a state rather than a process. Development of such periphrastic forms gives further indication that the language was moving to VO patterning.

## 2.5 Lexis

In spite of its limited corpus, Gothic maintains words that are not attested in the other Germanic dialects, e.g. *amsas* ‘shoulders’, *aljis*\* ‘other’, *háihis*\* ‘one-eyed’, *milip* ‘honey’, and also the word for ‘ruler’ borrowed from Celtic *reiks*. Gaps in attestation, as of *\*mōþar* ‘mother’, for which *aip̃ei* is used, may be a result of our small corpus. The word *atta* is used for ‘father’; its cognate *fadar* is attested only once.

The vocabulary includes terms that were borrowed into Proto-Germanic from Celtic, some of which belong in the military sphere, e.g. *brunjō*

'breastplate', *eisarn*\* 'iron', *kēlikn* 'tower'; others have to do with legal and social arrangements, e.g. *áiþs*\* 'oath', *ambahts* 'servant', *arbi* 'inheritance', *dulgs*\* 'debtor', *freis* 'free'. (Placement of \* after a word indicates that the form, usually the base of a noun or verb, is not attested, but that another form of that word is attested, such as the dative plural, so that the base form can be provided with reasonable assurance.) These suggest that the Germanic peoples were in contact with Celts in the period before our era, and were culturally influenced by them.

Words borrowed into Proto-Germanic from Latin reflect trading, presumably in the centuries surrounding the beginning of our era: *akeit*\* 'vinegar', *asilus*\* 'ass', *assarjus*\* '(name of a) coin', *áurkeis*\* 'a pot', *katils*\* 'kettle', *káupōn* 'trade'. Latin words were also taken from the general vocabulary, such as *káisar*\* 'emperor'.

Subsequently Gothic borrowed many ecclesiastical terms. Some of these are found in two forms, the first, for example, *diabulus* 'devil' assumed to be borrowed before the time of Wulfila, who presumably used the form *diabaúlus*. Among such terms borrowed from Greek are: *aggilus* 'angel', *aíkklēsjō* 'congregation', *paska* 'Easter'. Yet the *-us* ending indicates the influence of Latin, from which terms were introduced by early missionaries. The basic vocabulary, however, remains Germanic.

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