Tonic hvas and non-tonic hvas(-uh) in Gothic

This is the author's manuscript

Original Citation:

Availability:
This version is available http://hdl.handle.net/2318/1561248 since 2016-08-05T17:47:39Z

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The traditional view on the possibility of describing Gothic syntax has long been pessimistic, since Gothic, as documented by its most relevant monument, i.e. bishop Wulfila’s fourth-century translation of the Bible, was assumed to be generally not idiomatic and to imitate the word order and phraseology of its Greek original heavily (Mai-Castiglione 1819: XX; Gabelentz-Loebe 1836: XXVIII). Over time, this has been repeatedly challenged by scholars who noted that, in a sizeable minority of cases, Greek word order is not strictly reproduced in the Gothic text and that these cases may provide precious clues to the understanding of Gothic syntax (see especially Streitberg 1891: 81-82; Fourquet 1938: 234-281). It has therefore become customary, for scholars trying to describe the native features of Gothic syntax, to attach particular importance to those relatively rare places in the text where Greek word order is not respected by the translator. One such case is found in Lk 14:28:

(1) izwara hwas raihtis wiljands kelikn timbrjan, niu frumist gasitands rahneþ manwipo habaiu
<þo> du ustiuhan

tίς γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν θέλων πύργον οἰκοδομήσαι οὐχὶ πρῶτον καθίσας θηρίζει τὴν δαπάνην, εἰ ἔχει εἰς ἀπαρτισμόν;

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?”
Here the Greek interrogative pronoun τίς appears duly translated as *huas* in Gothic, but *izwara* “of you (pl.)”, the rendering of Greek ἐξ ὑμῶν, occupies the first position in the sentence, right before the pronoun it determines, contrary to what we observe in the Greek text.

If taken as a literal translation, this particular verse could be of great significance for our understanding of Gothic word order and of early Germanic syntax in general. Ferraresi suggests that *izwara* is here topicalized and the sentence is an example of a wh-question in which a constituent precedes the wh-element (Ferraresi 2005: 135). If so, this verse might represent one of the very rare cases of movement across CP with a lexical wh-element in Germanic. Ferraresi lists other similar cases from Wulfila’s Bible, but these are of limited value, as they routinely reproduce Greek word order. Eyþórrsson (1995: 100) takes a cautious approach and remarks that it is not necessary to posit topicalization in (1), as it may as well be a case of left dislocation, or *izwara huas* may be in construction; however, he notes that a case of topicalization similar to (1) is found once in the Eddic corpus:

*af heilom hvat varð / húnom mínom?*

“What became of my healthy sons?”

This is a line from the *Völundarkviða* (32:3-4), which is thought to be one of the oldest parts of the poetic Edda. Eyþórrsson further notes that movement across a wh-word is found in other archaic Indo-European languages as well. It could be argued, therefore, that such a feature existed in early Germanic but was quickly ruled out. This is what Kiparsky (1995: 143-145) suggests, listing other examples from Old High German and Old English literature. Walkden (2014: 117-118), however, questions the validity of these examples and defines the data “too sparse” to draw any solid conclusion.

It is my contention that previous analyses of (1) are flawed by a misunderstanding of the function performed by *huas* in this particular passage. This pronoun bears no interrogative function in this
context and therefore (1) can tell us nothing about the syntax of Gothic and Germanic interrogative clauses; rather, it can tell us much about Gothic prosody.

In fact, if izwara and hias were here in construction, or if we had left dislocation, this passage would not be less isolated and “exceptional” than as a case of topicalization. Wh-words and their determiners never independently show left dislocation or, generally speaking, violate Greek word order in the rest of Wulfila’s Bible. Compare (1) with the following:

(2) hias izwara gasakip mik bi frawurht?
    tı̄ς ē̄ ὑμὸν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἀμαρτίας;
    “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (Jh 8:46)

(3) ip hias izwara maurnands mag anaaukan ana wahstu seinana aleina aina?
    tı̄ς δὲ ἐ̂ξ ὑμὸν μεριμνῶν δύναται προσθείναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ πῆχυν ἕνα;
    “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

(4)unte huo dailo garaihtein mip ungarihtein aipfa huo gamaindufe liuhada mip riqiza?
    tı̄ς γὰρ μετοχὴ δικαίωσὺνη καὶ ἄνομίς; ἢ τīς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος;
    “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

Another curious feature of (1), if hias is here taken as an interrogative pronoun, is the compresence in it of a wh-word and the interrogative particle -u cliticizing to ni. Gothic ni-u, as in this case, usually translates Greek οὐ̃χι and is found in rhetorical yes/no questions predicting an affirmative answer (Streitberg 1920: 219). The evidence from the rest of Wulfila’s Bible, however, strongly suggests that -u is never used in wh-questions and that this enclitic and interrogative pronouns or adverbs are mutually exclusive. Schulze noted as early as 1907 that -u never appears in the first member of a disjunctive question standing in appositive relation with a wh-word, e.g. Lk 6:9:
(5) *hva skuld ist sabbato dagam, þiuþ tauer þau unþiuþ tauer?* (lit. “what is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil?”)

EI ἔξεστιν τῷ σαββάτῳ ἀγαθοποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι

“This is lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil?”

Compare Mk 3:4:

(6) *skuldu ist in sabbatim þiuþ tauer aþþau unþiuþ tauer, saiwa nasjan aþþau usqistjan?*

ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀποκτεῖναι;

“This is lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?”

See Schulze 1907: 563. Ferraresi (2005: 149) mentions one case in which -u seems to cliticize to a wh-word:

(7) *hvaþþ-han habais þatei ni namt?* (1Kor 4:7)

τί δὲ ἔχεις ὦ νῦν ἐλαβές;

“and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?”

Here, however, as in other similar cases, what we have is most probably the copulative enclitic -uh, rather than interrogative -u (Pagliarulo 2011: 396 ff.). Sentence (1) would then be the only attested case of ni-u (and of -u in general) in a wh-question.
All these exceptionalities arise from the interpretation of *huas* in (1) as an interrogative pronoun, and such an interpretation basically results from a mechanical comparison with the Greek text, which has the interrogative pronoun τίς. This is not the only possible reading of this passage, however: *huas* may as well perform the function of an *indefinite* pronoun/adjective with the meaning “any(one)” or (with the addition of enclitic -*uh*) “every(one)”, as in the following cases:

(8) *ni ἰπτει ἀτταν ἱερόν* *huas* (Jh 6:46)

οὐχ ὡς τὸν πιστεύον ἔφρακέν τις

“Not that any man hath seen the Father”

(9) *huazuh modags brohr seinamma sware, skula wairpib stauai* (Mt 5:22)

πᾶς ὁ ὄργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἕνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει

“whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”

Now, when *huas* functions as an indefinite, it may indeed be found in a relative positioning with its determiners or with words it qualifies which goes contrary to the Greek word order. Consider the following:

(10) *winda huammeh laiseinais* (Eph 4:14)

παντὶ ἰνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας

“with every wind of doctrine”

(11) *duuhe pau weis bireikjai sijum heilo huoh?* (1Kor 15:30)

τί καὶ ἡμεῖς κινδυνεύομεν πᾶσαν ὃραν;

“And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?”
It should be noted that, when this happens, the indefinite tends to move to the right. The same when a single Greek word is translated with a syntagm containing an indefinite:

(12) \textit{ni ainishun his paurbeip} (1Th 4:12)  

\[ \text{μηδενός χρείαν ἔχετε} \]  

“ye may have lack of nothing”

This “rightward shift” of the element is unexceptionable in the rendering of idiomatic Greek expressions like καθ’ἡμέραν “every day” or κατ’ἑτος “every year”. These are translated, respectively, \textit{daga hvamme} (Lk 16:19, 19:47; 1Kor 15:31; Mk 14:49) or \textit{dag hvanoh} (Lk 9:23), and \textit{jera hvamme} (Lk 2:41). Such expressions are in all likelihood Gothic idioms and therefore examples of “genuine” Gothic usage; it is interesting to note, though, that they show the indefinite adjective \textit{following} the noun, contrary to the general tendency of the Gothic language as exemplified by the \textit{Skeireins}, and of Germanic in general, which is to place adjectives \textit{before} the nouns they determine. In the \textit{Skeireins}, which is thought to be syntactically fairly independent (see Ebel 1978), the order adjective-noun is largely predominant, occurring in roughly 80% of cases (Smith 1971: 287).

The Gothic Bible yields only one case in which the indefinite moves to the left of another element violating the order of the Greek original:

(13) \textit{unte wenja mik hoo hvelo saljan at izwis} (1Kor 16:7)  

\[ \text{ἐλπίζω γὰρ χρόνον τινὰ ἐπιμεῖναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς} \]  

“but I trust to tarry a while with you”
Here the indefinite is immediately preceded, in the Gothic text, by the personal pronoun mik (the reflexive construction wenja mik translates Greek ἐλπίζω “I hope”). The passage thus shows an interesting affinity with Jh 16:30:

(14)  \[ ni \, þarft \, ei \, þuk \, hvas \, fraihnai \]

\[ ðu \, ðreivan \, êxeiðs \, ïna \, tіs \, se \, ërøt‌a \]

“thou […] needest not that any man should ask thee”

The Greek text has indefinite τίς followed by the personal pronoun se; in the Gothic version the two pronouns switch places. Now, as Fourquet (1938: 484) observed, pronouns are, in Gothic, “mots autonomes”, i.e. salient phrase elements, opposed to more lightly stressed elements like the adverb þan and enclitics, which is to be expected, as Germanic pronouns are reflexes of tonic Indo-European pronouns (Fourquet 1938: 273). What we have here noted suggests that hvas is a stress-bearing element only when it performs an interrogative function; when it is indefinite it tends to behave like an enclitic, placing itself immediately to the right of other, more salient elements: nouns or, as in sentences (12) and (13), object pronouns. This may also explain why enclitic -uh does not show elision when it cliticizes to interrogative hvas, as in sentence (7), but it does so when cliticizing to indefinite hvas.

To sum up, sentence (1) is not a wh-question but rather a rhetorical yes/no question structurally similar to

(15)  \[ stiks \, õibiqissais \, õanei \, gaweiham, \, niu \, gamainduhs \, blopis \, fraufins \, ist? \]  (1Kor 10:16)

\[ tό \, ðot̩́ŕ̩m̩n \, t̩́h̩́s \, eúlogíaς \, ð \, eúlogoûm̩n̩, \, õûk̩ \, koïnons̩â \, êst̩́n \, tοu \, aûm̩atos \, tοu \, ðristoð; \]

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?”
and is probably to be translated thus: “Will anyone of you… not sit down…?”. The inverted rendering izwara hva as is most parsimoniously explained as cliticization of indefinite hva s to the personal pronoun izwara, as it appears to be the general tendency for indefinites in Gothic.

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