

## ICHL25: Paper submission for poster session

Title: *Instrumentality and the Instrumental Case in Old High German and Old Saxon*

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### Background

It is accepted that there are five morphological cases in Old High German (OHG) and Old Saxon (OS): nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, and instrumental. By the usually understood 'end' of the OHG/OS periods (~mid-eleventh century), the instrumental case was restricted to lexicalised expressions such as prepositional conjunctions and 'fossilised' adverbial expressions. However, in many OHG/OS texts, there is evidence that the case (hereafter INS) was still used productively but existed in competition with the dative (hereafter DAT) in several contexts. The factors which might have determined the use of either case form in different contexts remain unexplained.

The use contexts of INS shift over time. The synthetic, standalone case form is more prevalent in earlier monuments but comes to be more restricted to contexts following prepositions such as *mit*, *za*, and *in*, and fossilised in adverbial expressions formed with the demonstrative pronoun. In many OHG/OS texts, DAT and INS are used in such a way that suggests partial, but not total, syncretism, which leads to case alternations within the same noun class, such as a-stems Isidor De Fide 4 (INS) *druhtines uuordu sindun himila chifestinode* ("the heavens are strengthened by the word of God") and De Fide 5 (DAT) *chichundemes mit herduome dhes heilegin chiscribes* ("we proclaim with the authority of the holy scripture"), and even alternations of the same lexical item, such as in Heliand 9 (DAT) *mid them godes barne* and Heliand 10 (INS) *mid thiu godes barnu* (both: "with the child of god").

### Previous work

This is an area of OHG/OS morphosyntax to which little attention has been paid. Ehret (1907) provides an overview of the functions of INS in OHG alone but does not account for the syncretism in either OHG or OS. There is no in-depth explanation or discussion in any other recent or older literature on INS in either OHG or OS – simply passing references in the grammars and primers (Braune 2018, Gallée 1993, Wright 1906). There have been investigations into the syncretism of DAT and INS in OE, but no attempts to account for the interaction of these two cases in OHG or OS, nor any comparative analyses assessing the difference in function in these two closely related language varieties.

### Research and approach

Using the [DDD Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch](#), I am analysing every relevant instance of DAT and every instance of INS in every OHG and OS text. By making initial synchronic analyses on a text-by-text basis, I aim to draw insightful diachronic conclusions by grouping the data to see if any trends can be identified according to the dating or format of text.

I am investigating what different syntactic and semantic factors are which might have caused either INS or DAT to be used in different contexts to express instrumentality. It is possible that INS was lexically restricted to a certain subset of nouns (e.g. non-abstract) and that this restriction varied between both OHG/OS. More broadly, I aim to assess how the decline of the instrumental compares with the syncretism in case morphology in other (West) Germanic languages and in other branches of PIE. Most ambitiously, I would like to make a reasonable judgment as to whether INS was productive at the time of our earliest and latest OHG/OS monuments and determine when it might have become fossilized.

## Keywords

Old High German, Old Saxon, morphosyntax, historical linguistics, philology.

## References

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