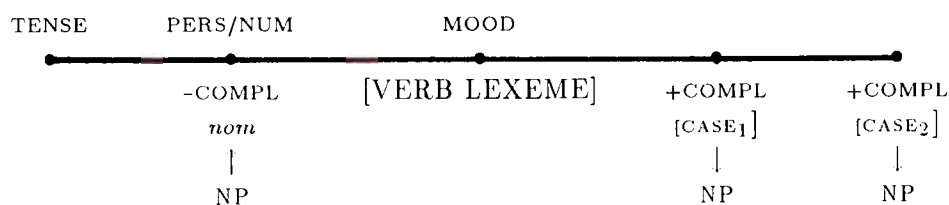


A. COMPLEMENT OF VERB A sentence in Old English regularly contains a ‘finite’ verb form, which is to say, a verb form inflected for tense, for mood, and for person and number. (This leaves aside response-sentences such as *Ġēa, Nese, Niċ, Ðæs cāseres.*) Most other elements may or may not occur in a sentence. Some are ‘adjuncts,’ which are optional in the syntax no matter how important they may be to the shading, the precision, or the tone of the utterance. The others are ‘complements’ of the verb form chosen, entailed by it.

To represent this aspect of the syntax of Old English, the diagrams that follow have as their centers the finite verb. The core verb—the lexeme for it, actually—is printed in large type. Above it is a heavy horizontal line linking all the elements of syntactic structure connected directly to the central (‘finite’) verb form. Above this line are the obligatory categories of inflectional variation of the verb: tense, mood, and person and number. Below it, together with the verb, are the verb’s complements. For example:



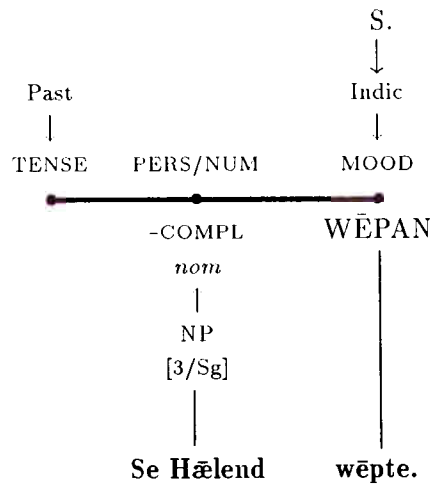
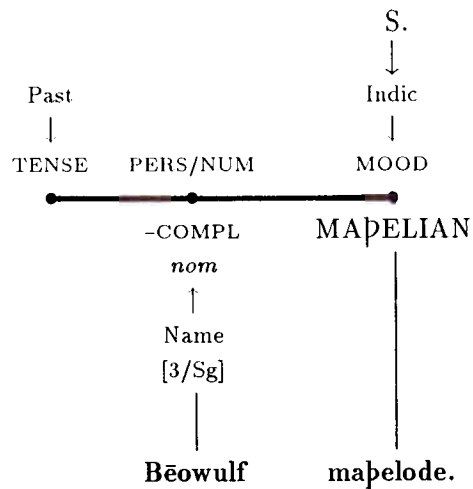
Nearly every verb occurs with -COMPL (the ‘subject’). If the -COMPL is a noun or pronoun it is regularly nominative case. In any event, it also determines the person and number inflection of the finite verb (shown by an up-arrow).

There may be other complements of the verb in the more usual sense, typically ‘objects’ of transitive verbs, or ‘complements’ of copula verbs, as they are usually called. The verb lexeme determines which of these complements will occur in association with it. They are distinguished then as +COMPL. The verb also determines the case inflection if the +COMPL is headed by a pronoun or noun or adjective (shown by a down-arrow). A +COMPL may be in any of the four cases. The case inflection transmitted by a verb to a +COMPL is fixed in the lexeme itself. That is why terms such as ‘direct object’ and ‘indirect object’ (among others) are not appropriate to describing morphosyntactic aspects of OE sentences. And that is why it is necessary for the diagrams regularly to include the case specification of any +COMPL with each verb lexeme.

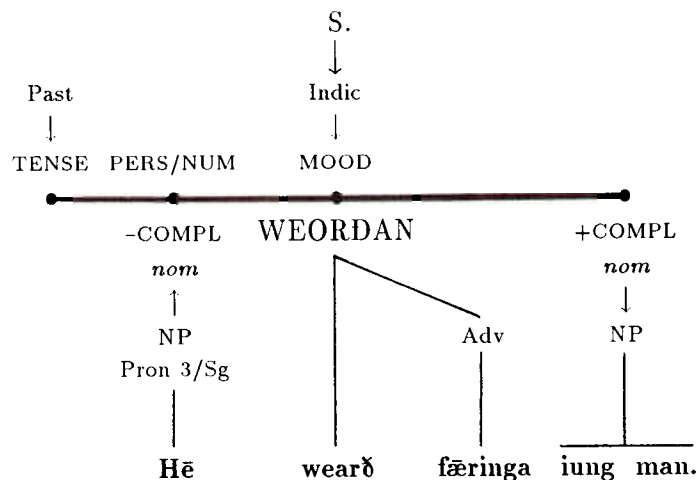
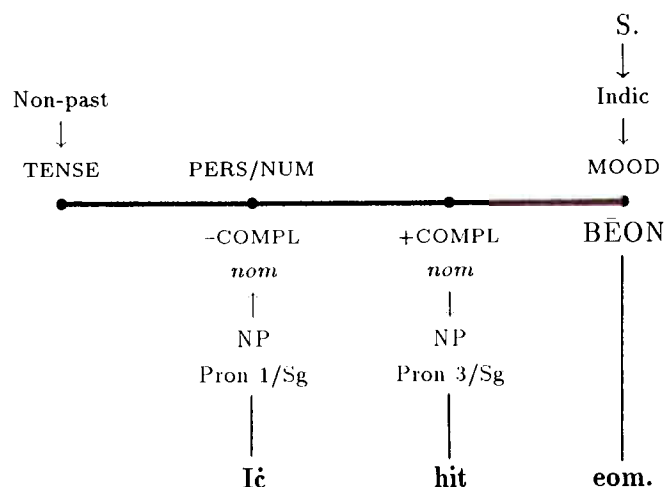
The illustrations of case government in this section will be limited to simple declarative sentences.

The unmarked form of a noun or name is selected for nouns and names ‘used in direct address’; these stand outside the syntactic structure of any predication sentence. On the model of Latin grammar, they are said to be in vocative case. **Lēofē dohtor** ‘Dear daughter,’ **Menn þā lēofestan** ‘Most beloved men.’

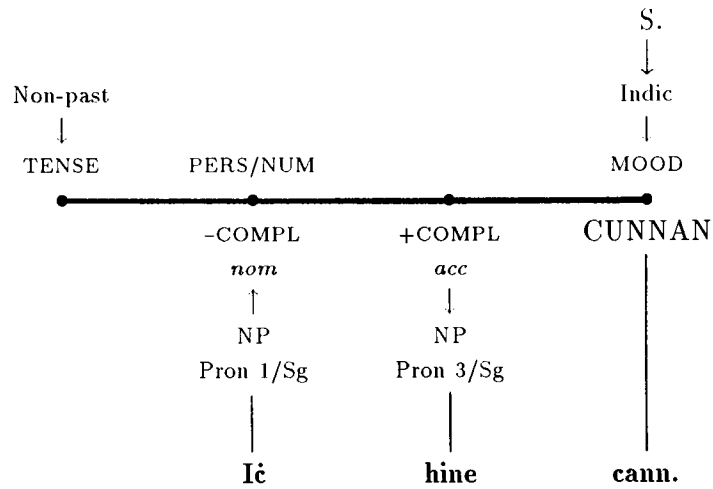
With ‘intransitive’ verbs (those without +COMPL), only the case of the subject (the -COMPL) is determined by the finite verb. It is nominative case: **Bēowulf mapelode** ‘Beowulf spoke-formally’; **Se Hælend wēpte** ‘The Savior wept.’



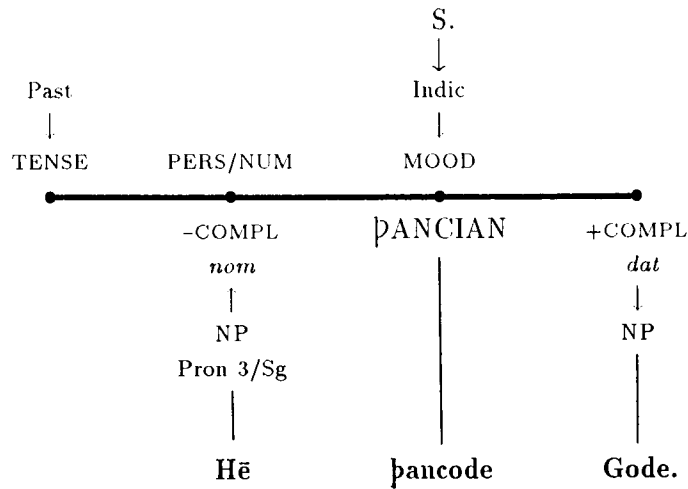
‘Copula’ (or ‘linking’) verbs select nominative case for both -COMPL and +COMPL: **Ic hit eom** ‘It is I’; **Hē wearð færinga iung man** ‘He suddenly turned into a young man.’



If the verb is ‘transitive,’ the case of the inflection for any +COMPL will be other than nominative. It may be accusative, as in **Ic hine cann** ‘I know him’; **Hī lēofne cēoseð ofer worldwelan** ‘They choose the beloved (one) over worldly wealth’; **Ālȳs ūs of yfele** ‘Deliver us from evil.’ (*HSEL* 418 ff.)

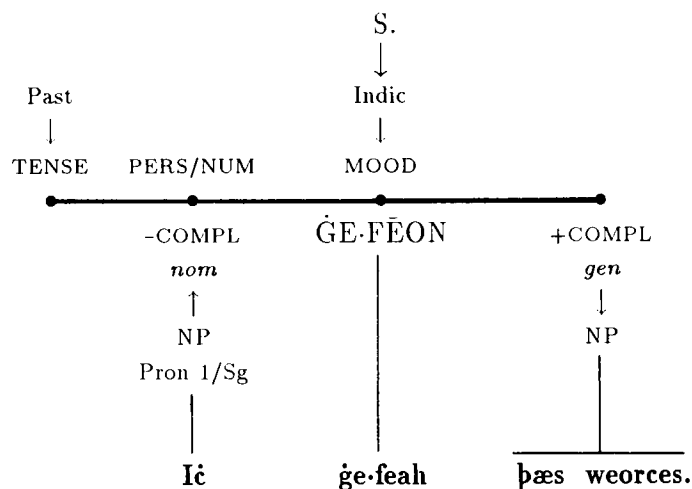


Or it may be dative, as in **Hē þancode Gode** 'He thanked God.'



Verbs governing dative case complements gather into several sense-groups: serving or obeying (**folgian**, **hīeran**, **þēowian**), liking or disliking (**līcian**, **lāðian**); saying, confessing, cursing, etc. (**andswarian**, **cīdan**, **bebēodan**); injuring or protecting (**derian**, **beorgan**); pleasing or its opposite (**līðian**), believing or trusting or their opposite (**trēowian**, **swīcan**), approaching (**nēalæcan**), touching (**hrīnan**), and others. (*HSEL* 316-369)

Or it may be genitive, as in **Ic ġe-feah þæs weorces** ‘I rejoice-in that work.’ **Fandiað ðises goldes** ‘Test this gold,’ **Helpe mīn** ‘Help me,’ **God ūre helpe** ‘(May) God help us’; or two of the Ten Commandments, **Ne ġewilna ðū oðres mannes wifes** ‘Desire (thou) not another man’s wife,’ **Ne ġewilna ðū oðres mannes æhta** ‘Desire (thou) not another man’s goods.’

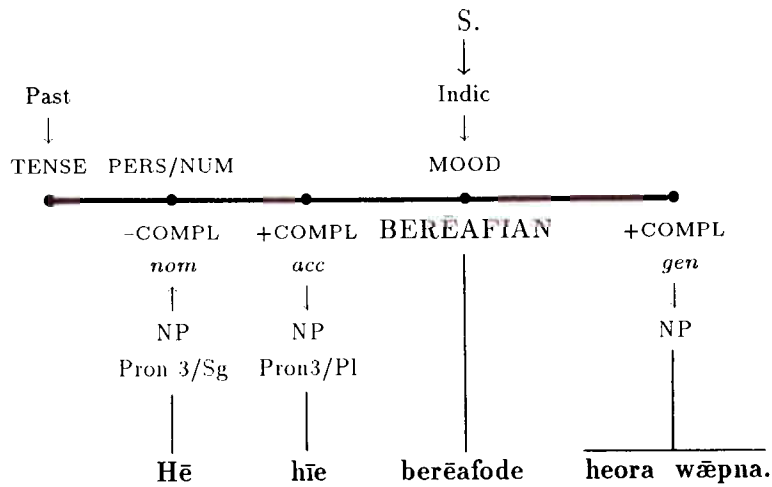
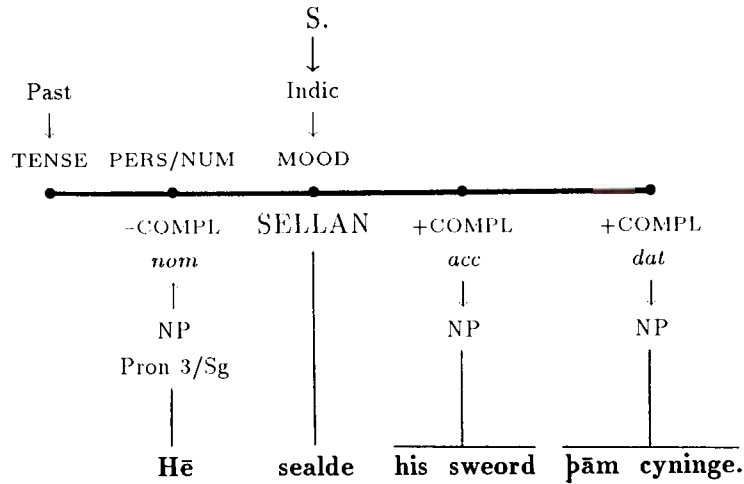


Many of the verbs governing genitive case complements share semantic features of desiring, hoping, needing (**wilnian**, **ġiernan**, **hopian**, **behofian**); enjoying or rejoicing or their opposite (**fæġnian**, **ġielpan**, **sargian**, **sceamian**); using (**brūcan**); granting (**unnan**); acquiring or losing (**earnian**, **losian**); helping (**helpan**); testing (**fandian**, **cunnian**), and others. (*HSEL* 378–91)

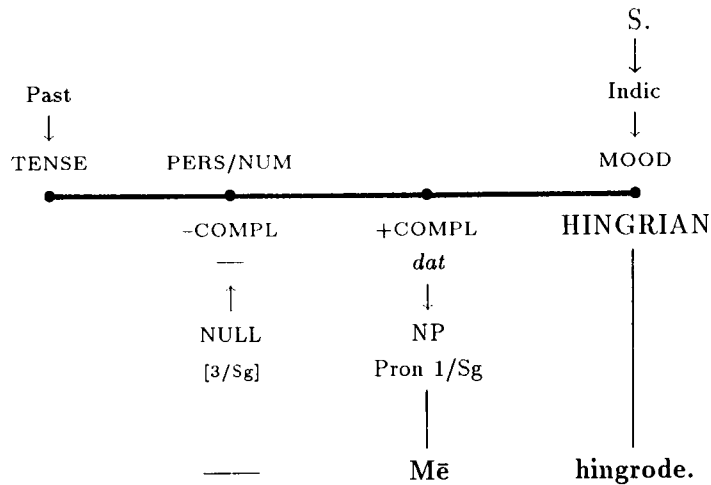
Genitive case complement of both verb **wilnian** and predicate adjective **ġeornful** (derived from **ġiernan**), employed for rhetorical parallelism, still is preserved in an early Middle English copy of an Ælfredian text: **ælc þāra þe hys wilnað and þe his ġeornful by[þ]** ‘each of those who desire it and who is yearnful [i.e., desirous] of it.’

The subject of an infinitive verb form is regularly in the accusative case: **Se Hælend geseah þysne licgean** ‘Jesus saw this one lie [i.e., lying (there)]’; **Apollonius sōna gemētte oðerne .. man ongēan hine gān** ‘Apollonius straightway encountered a second man walking toward him.’

If the verb is 'ditransitive,' the case inflections of the two +COMPL constituents are nearly always different from each other. (*HSEL* 676–698, *OES* 1092) For example, Accusative + Dative **Hē sealde his sweord þām cyninge** 'He gave his sword to the king'; Dative + Genitive **Hē þāre ġifena Gode þancode** 'He thanked God for the gifts'; Accusative + Genitive **Hē hīe bereafade heora wæpna** 'He deprived them of their weapons.'



‘Impersonal’ verbs are an anomaly from the point of view of most verb-centered patterns: **Mē hingrode** ‘I hungered.’



B. COMPLEMENT OF PREPOSITION Government of case by preposition is a structurally simple matter, because prepositions are single lexical items and any preposition governs directly the head of its complement: [**Hē sette his hand ofer þāra wera ēagan** ‘He set his hand on (the) eyes of the/those men’—**ofer** governing the case of **ēagan** but not the case of **þāra wera** (which is governed as shown in Section C, next).

Case governance with prepositions did not follow a one-for-one scheme over the historical span and geographical spread of Old English. Ælfric, for example, in reworking texts of his homilies after they had begun to circulate, changed case forms from dative to accusative frequently with **purh** and several times with **ofer**. What follows therefore is a simple listing of the main prepositions and their characteristic case governance.

æfter ‘after, along, according to’; with dative, usually.

æf ‘before [time]’; with dative.

æt ‘at, by, on, upon’; with dative, and accusative.

andlang ‘along,’ with genitive.

be/bī ‘by, along,’ with dative, and instrumental.