

Cause, consequence and indexicality in Middle Danish case-system changes

The earliest Middle Danish texts of the Scanian dialect, e.g. *Skånske Lov*, are characterised by a relatively stable use of case marking for expressing grammatical relations as well as a relatively unreduced system of unstressed vowels. In the NPs of prepositional phrases, for instance, we often see the historically expected case (1-2) even though we also find examples of partial and full neutralisations to a new, non-genitive unity case or stem formally identical to the historical accusative (3-4) (Bjerrum 1966: 39); thus, in surroundings where we would historically expect agreement between attribute and head in the dat.sg.:

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|-----|---|-------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|---|
| (1) | at andr-u
at second-N.DAT.SG.
'at the second moot' | thing-i
moot-DAT.SG. | (2) | ofna vgild-um
on illegal-M.DAT.SG. | akr-i
field-DAT.SG.
'in unconsecrated ground' |
| (3) | ofna brofiall-Ø
on plank-NON-GEN.SG.
'in his house' | sin-nj
his-F.DAT.SG. | (4) | mæth halfu-j
with half-F.DAT.SG. | tylt-Ø
dozen-NON-GEN.SG.
'with a group of six people' |

In later texts such as *Sjælens Trøst*, we see a general increase in the percentage of partial and full case neutralisations. Thus, e.g., the traditional dative case (and agreement between attribute and head in the NP) gives way to the new unity case – either by means of partial (5) or full (6) neutralisations or hybrids applying both old and new strategies in co-ordinate NPs (7); thus, again in historical dat.sg.-surroundings:

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|-----|---|--|-----------|--------------------------------|--|
| (5) | vpa en-um
on a-M.DAT.SG. | aghir-Ø
field-NON-GEN.SG.
'[we were] in a field' | (6) | pa mi-t
on my-N.NON-GEN.SG. | hovith-Ø
head-NON-GEN.SG.
'[I carried three baskets] on my head' |
| (7) | mæth stor-t
with great-N.NON-GEN.SG. | hærskap-Ø
mastery-NON-GEN.SG. | oc
and | stor-e
great-F.DAT.SG. | ær-o
honour-OBL.SG.
'with great mastery and great honour' |

Contrary to the traditional suggestion of, e.g., Brøndum-Nielsen (1966), these neutralisations cannot be caused solely by sound changes (mainly reduction of unstressed vowels, cf. above) and analogical reshaping on the expression level of the grammatical signs. Firstly, in a text such as *Sjælens Trøst*, we do not see any major reductions of unstressed vowels. Secondly, this (or any other) soundlaw hardly brings any explanatory potential to the loss of, say, the original *-Vr* of the nom.sg., cf. Jensen (2011). Thirdly, even later texts such as *Søndagsevangelier*, to the language of which many of these soundlaws have applied, display a case system similar to that of the non-unstressed-vowel-reduced *Sjælens Trøst* with both historically expected case marking and partial and full neutralisations. In my paper, I will therefore:

- A) argue that traditional soundlaws and analogical reshaping in the standard Neogrammarian sense cannot constitute the sole cause for the grammatical changes in the Old Scanian case system,
- B) discuss what factors are relevant instead of or in addition to soundlaws and analogy, and
- C) based on the description of markedness oppositions and the *Principle of Markedness Agreement* (as per Andersen 2001: 35-37 and somewhat similarly Mareš 1969 [1952]), reflect on the reasons why these grammatical changes took place in some environments sooner than in others.

As for (B), we must first decide if and, in that case, where early case syncretisms – induced by soundlaw or analogy – may have formed the bases of later systemic regrammations (demorphologisations). Afterwards, we must account for the mechanisms behind these regrammations. In the present case, Andersen's (2010: 119-121) model fits the data well by elucidating how case marking is sometimes a mere expression of indexical relations, i.e., redundancy, while syntax becomes the only means of expressing grammatical functions in the primary, symbolic sign relations, cf. also Diderichsen (1941: 93-107) on the relatively predictable word order within Middle Danish NPs. Thus, my paper presents a structuralist and functional approach to morphological change, for which cf. also, e.g., Andersen (1980, 2010) and Vachek (1980).

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