

Case in Early Middle Danish - a double content system

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Preliminary remarks

1.

Nominative	a.	<i>thiuf-ær</i>	b.	<i>kun-a</i>
Accusative		<i>thiuf-Ø</i>		<i>kun-u</i>
Dative		<i>thiuf-i</i>		<i>kun-u</i>
Genitive		<i>thiuf-s</i>		<i>kun-u</i>
		thief		woman, wife

2.

Nom.	<i>han</i>	<i>hun</i>	<i>de</i>
	he	she	they
Non-nom.	<i>ham</i>	<i>hende</i>	<i>dem</i>
	him	her	them

3. The stress pattern explanation: changes in the stress pattern ('infortissvækkelsen') results in massive loss of case markings prompting the need for a more fixed word order.

4.

<i>gade</i>	[gaðə]	(Sw. <i>gata</i>)	"street"
<i>kvinder</i>	[kvenɔr]	(Sw. <i>kvinnor</i>)	"women"

5. Representations of schwa sounds in Old Danish: *æ*, *e*, (*i*)

6.

[..] fra denne oversigt over böjningsformer i opløsning eller forvirring uddrager vi da [...] det sikre resultat, at lovsproget som det findes i de gamle håndskrifter har været i usædvanlig grad et litterært sprog, bl. a. med en mængde døde böjningsformer som skriverne slet ikke har magtet.

"[...] from this overview of inflective forms in decay or confusion we conclude [...], that the language of lawtexts as it is seen in the old manuscripts has been primarily a literary language with many obsolete inflective forms beyond the grasp of the scribes."

(Brøndum-Nielsen 1918: 131)

An investigation

7. Main source of investigation: Scanic Law in the manuscript Stockholm B 69 (~1350)
8. Distribution of the nominative and oblique cases in the singular of all masc. *an-* and fem. *ōn-* stems in the B 69 of the Scanic Law. Count includes such occurrences as *hin sæcti* “the accused” as the adjective in this kind of constructions follows the paradigm for *an-* and *ōn-* stems.

	nom -i/-a	obl -a/-u	<i>æ</i>	nom	obl	<i>æ</i>
subject	52	19	1	63	23	2
subject complement	11	4	1	(71,59%)	(26,13%)	(2,27%)
direct object	2	63	1	13	239	7
indirect object	0	8	0	(5%)	(92,3%)	(2,7%)
object complement	1	1	0			
governed by preposition	5	84	4			
'pure' adverbial	0	2	0			
first word in compounds	0	61	2			
possessive genitive	5	19	0			

9. The double content system

The traditional case system: used to show grammatical relations and semantic roles between a governing word (verb, preposition, adjective) and a noun/NP. Important function: identification of subjects and objects. Important feature: agreement.

The cohesive case system: used by the organising of the information of a text/message. Concerns features such as given and new, focus, foreground and background information.

Examples of cohesive case in the B 69

10. § 179 (DgL 249,16-23)

Thagar granna hafwa sath sæth sina tha sculu the læggia lagstæfnu fore alla the i by bo sammen | ath the giærthe alli ath the lagstæfnu ær fore lægs. thæn ær æi giærthær bøte øre.

"When the neighbours have sown their seeds then they shall set a deadline for everyone within the village in order for them all to put up fences by this fixed deadline. He who doesn't put up fences must pay a fine of one øre."

<i>Sithæn lægs</i>	<i>annur</i>	<i>lagh stæfnu</i>
Then is-set	second-fem.nom.	deadline-fem.obl.

oc thæn ær æi giærthær bøte twa øra. ||

"and he who doesn't put up fences must pay a fine of two øre."

<i>Sithæn lægs</i>	<i>thrithia</i>	<i>lagstæfnu</i>
Then is-set	third-fem.nom.	deadline-fem.obl.

oc thæn ær æi wil tha giærtha bøte half marc.

"and he who will not then put up fences must pay a fine of half a marc"

11. § 182 (DgL 250,7-14)

<i>Kuna</i>	<i>manzs</i>
Woman-fem.nom.	man-masc.gen.

"A mans wife"

ma æi mæth logum mera sælia af bondans bo æn fæm pænninga mun utan bondans with æn wil hun hoflega swa sælia bort tha ma hun mykin scatha gøra. um hun ær usnial kuna tha scal bonden fara [til] things oc sigia til

"may not legally sell of more of the husbands belongings than five pænningas worth without the husbands knowledge, and if she often sells off in this manner, she may cause great damage. If she is an unwise woman, then the husband must go to the thing and tell -"

<i>ath</i>	<i>kunu</i>	<i>hans gør swa</i>
that	woman-fem.obl	his does so

12. § 37 (DgL 211,2-5)

<i>Wil bonde</i>	<i>quikær</i>	<i>oc</i>	<i>quitha fuldær</i>	<i>i clostær fara</i>
Will man	alive-masc.nom. and		anguish full-masc.nom.	into convent go

tha ma han mæth allum sinum howoth lot in fara.
 "then he may go there with all his main possessions"

warthær han siukur
 becomes he ill-masc.nom.

tha ma han halfwan gifwa clostre (...) oc eig mera
 "then he may donate half to the convent (...) and not more"

13. § 178 (DgL 249,6-8)
Brytær man up uth giærthe fore hæsti sinum ællær fore wagni sinum.
 "If a man breaks a fence because of his horse or because of his wagon"

oc worthær *scatha*
 and becomes damage-masc.obl.

ofna akrum ællær ofna ængiæ manna bôte scatha oc ofna twa øra)
 "on someones fields or meadows, he must pay compensation for the damage and two øre in addition"

14. § 216 (DgL 257,16-20)
Ær *kunu* *san-Ø* *fore hordoms sac*
 Is woman-fem.obl. true-fem.nom. for adultery sake
 ("If the woman is found guilty of adultery")

swa ath hun ma æi gen mæla tha ma hænnæ bonde um han wil hana borth hwraka
 "so that she cannot deny it, then her husband - if he wishes - may cast her away"

15. **Principle of cohesive case i the B 69**
 subj. and subj. compl. (or parts thereof) in the nominative are foreground information
 subj. and subj. compl. (or parts thereof) in the accusative are background information

16. The word *bonde* in E don. var. 136,4° (Arvebog & orbodemål):

not in the definite form	in the definite form	
<i>bonde</i> nom.	<i>bonden/bondan</i> nom./obl.	working as subj. and subj. complements
<i>bonda/bonde</i> obl./nom.	<i>bondan</i> obl.	working as object etc.

17. *huor han worther. a talæther. oc a kerther*
 where he becomes. - charged-masc.nom. and - indicted-masc.nom
ther scal man ouer hanom rætæ
 there shall man over him do-court
 "The case must be served at the location where the charges have been brought" (U 9,4-5)
18. *Then deel ther bygdher ær han skiptas i trenæ deela*
 that part that built-masc.nom. is he is-divided in three parts
 "The inhabited part (of the world) is divided into three parts" (Luc 241,17)

Developments

19. The development of cohesive case

Nominative by subject complements	Nominative by subject complements	Nominative (and accusative by default) by subject complements and subjects
Agreement -number -gender -case	Agreement -number -gender -case Marker of foreground information	Agreement -number -gender Marker of foreground information
>	>	

Later developments of the orig. masc.nom.sing.-marker: *-(æ)r*

15TH CENTURY:

In PPs:

20. *vpa en forgylt-ir stool* (DSjT 128,2)
 on a gilded chair
21. *meth sød-er sangh* (Mand 128,9)
 with sweet singing

As object complement:

22. *War herre giordhe sik osynlek-er fore them* (BP 122,29-30)
 Our Lord made himself invisible to them
23. *iak thedhe them diæwllen wara fördömdh-er* (BP 150,31-32)
 I showed them the-devil be damned

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