

Comparison of Old Norse and Proto-Norse Noun Declension

The purpose of this thesis is to follow the development of noun declensions from Proto-Norse to the Old Norse (Old Icelandic) language. The first of the three chapters seeks to give a comprehensive overview of Proto-Norse noun declensions. This overview is based on the evidence of the older runic inscriptions and on reconstruction using relevant linguistic literature. Each of the declensions is presented in the form of a paradigm accompanied by commentary and quotations of preserved grammatical forms. The second and largest chapter presents a survey of Old Norse (Old Icelandic) noun declensions. The survey has two aims. The first aim is to provide a synchronic description of the Old Norse noun declension system which would not be encumbered by an excess of diachronic approach as is often the case in the traditional grammars of Old Norse. At the same time, however, it should show how Old Norse inflectional exponents and classes continue the Proto-Norse declensions as presented in the first chapter. There is also a discussion of some of the systemic causes leading to morphological changes in inflection. The third chapter sums up the previous diachronic analysis and questions the validity of the traditional designations of declension classes based on Proto-Norse, such as *i*-stems or *ō*-stems, with regards to the morphological development of the language. This discussion should provide a base for a more reflected understanding of the traditional class labels and their implications. The third chapter also includes a very brief typological-structural comparison of the Proto-Norse and Old Norse declension systems.