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Writing the history of a language and historical linguistics. A discussion of *Norsk språkhistorie*: *Mønster* and *Dansk sproghistorie: Dansk tager form*

Sandøy, Helge (ed.): Norsk språkhistorie I. Mønster. *Oslo 2016 (Novus).*
Hjorth, Ebba (ed.): Dansk sproghistorie. Vol. 1. Dansk tager form. *Århus 2016 (Aarhus Universitetsforlag).*

1 Introduction

In this article, we address two newly published books on Scandinavian language history: one on Norwegian, *Norsk språkhistorie*: *Mønster*, and one on Danish, *Dansk sproghistorie*: *Dansk tager form*. Both books constitute the first volume in a series – *Norsk språkhistorie* I–IV (NSH) and *Dansk sproghistorie* 1–6 (DSH) respectively – and we will therefore refer to them simply as NSH1 and DSH1.

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Abstract: In this article, we address the initial volumes of the two series *Dansk sproghistorie* (DSH) and *Norsk språkhistorie* (NSH), DSH1 and NSH1, respectively. We briefly present the contents of each volume as well as the overall outline of the entire series. DSH1 and NSH1 are quite different, which makes detailed comparison difficult. However, precisely by being different, they together raise important questions about the tradition of historical linguistics in general and Scandinavian historical linguistics in particular. The bulk of the article is devoted to some of these questions, including how to define the object of study, how to describe and explain grammatical change and what theoretical status to assign to reconstructed forms. We believe that recurrent discussion of fundamental issues of this sort is vital to our field, not least in relation to the new bearers of tradition that DSH and NSH will undoubtedly be.

Keywords: Scandinavian language history, historical linguistics, Danish, Norwegian, language change, analogy, comparative linguistics.

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NSH and DSH are independent from each other. It is, more or less, a coincidence that NSH1 and DSH1 entered the stage during the same autumn, namely that of 2016. At the same time, it is clear that both books are greatly awaited. Together with the rest of the series, they make a considerable contribution to the field, where they will be a natural companion for students and researchers, as well as an important source of information for the general public. Through these series, the knowledge of the history of Danish and Norwegian is made accessible, and, as we will see below, is sometimes also expanded. Future work will necessarily refer to these works, and they will therefore also have a function of (further) establishing a tradition.

In the following, we discuss some aspects of DSH1 and NSH1. As we will see, the two books are quite different, which often makes direct comparison difficult. However, together they raise some principal questions about the tradition of historical linguistics in general, and Scandinavian historical linguistics in particular – not least since they approach the topic in so different ways. These questions about language, language change, and the traditions of linguistic inquiries, are important. We address some of them here, not because we have final answers (we don't), but because we believe that discussion is vital for our field, and because we are certain that DSH and NSH will be central to the transmission and development of the tradition in the future. Our critical comments notwithstanding, DSH and NSH are both important and impressive works.

The books that we consider here (i.e. NSH1 and DSH1) have a rich and varied content, and it is impossible to make it all justice. We concentrate on the description of formal properties of Norwegian/Danish and their historical development; this favours NSH1 over DSH1. For us as historical linguists working on grammar it is simply more important to discuss the role of morphology in syntax (as in chapter 4.3 (Mørck) of NSH1) than it is to dwell on the development of printing fonts (as in chapter 4.6 (Nielsen) of DSH1). Moreover, we are particularly interested in the tradition of (Scandinavian) historical linguistics, which typically focuses on phonology, morphology and, in more recent years, syntax.

We have chosen to include both DSH1 and NSH1 in our discussion, although not all parts of them will be covered to an equal measure. As mentioned, the comparison of them is not always possible, though. Certainly, Danish and Norwegian are closely related languages, who even share a significant part of the history of the written language. Still, the two books differ in many ways. Some discrepancies follow from the fact

that the respective series have chosen different ways to distribute the contents across the volumes (see section 2 below). Other differences can be explained by the fact that the intended audience is only partly overlapping. NSH1 is primarily directed at professional linguists and advanced students. Although DSH1 have these readers in mind as well, it explicitly aims at being accessible to a wider audience. The more inclusive intention of the Danes might be connected to what we perceive as a form of de-linguistification of language history; for instance, DSH1 puts a lot of emphasis on various (more or less non-linguistic) aspects of the history of writing.

All this said, we believe that addressing NSH1 and DSH1 in the same article is definitely called for, not only because they both happened to appear the same year. In fact, the asymmetry between the volumes has in itself inspired us to raise and discuss the more general issue of how to write the history of a (national) language. Also, casting off the yoke of a demand for constant comparison, we have allowed ourselves to address specific topics that only one of the volumes deals with extensively, not least to illustrate the choices that the authors have faced. If we had chosen to wait in order to be able to include all volumes in both series in our discussion, this would, on the one hand, have presented us with more opportunities for comparison of certain linguistic phenomena than just the first two volumes can now provide, since no comparison would be excluded on the grounds that certain phenomena are part of the wrong volume, as it were. On the other hand, the differences following from the books targeting different readers would be as complicating as before (if not more). As we will see below, already the two first volumes give us ample to discuss.

Both NSH1 and DSH1 are written by several authors, but despite that, there is, we believe, good reason to treat them as two monographs rather than two anthologies. After all, they are meant to function as coherent texts, referring both within the volume and within the series of coming volumes. Still, there is indeed a specified author behind every chapter/section in both DSH1 and NSH1. For clarity, we enclose an appendix where we list all the authors and indicate what specific part or parts they have composed. In addition, we provide the surname(s) of the author(s) of any section of the books that we are currently addressing in our text.

Section 2 gives a short overview of the two volumes. In section 3, we discuss the object of study in the two cases at hand (i.e. Norwegian and Danish). Section 4 raises the issue of tradition in historical linguistics in

general and Scandinavian historical linguistics in particular. In 4.1, we direct our attention to the use of reconstructed forms, and, more importantly, the theoretical status that they are believed to have. Although both NSH1 and DSH1 make use of such forms, only DSH1 devotes an entire chapter to reconstructed languages. Section 4.2 and 4.3 deal with different aspects of grammar and grammatical change, issues that are more prominent in NSH1 than in DSH1. In 4.2, we briefly discuss the reference made to sound laws, analogy, and grammaticalization, and take the discussion of the loss of case morphology in Norwegian as an example. In section 4.3, we focus on the syntax chapter of NSH1 (there is no comparable chapter/section in DSH1), more specifically its relation (or lack thereof) to the generative tradition, addressing both theoretical issues (the syntax-morphology interface) and empirical ones (fronting in subordinate clauses). Section 5 gives a brief conclusion.

2 The contents of the two volumes

As noted, the two books are aimed at partly different target groups. NSH1 is much more formal and (linguistically) technical, which corresponds well with its purpose to be "a modern reference work" (p. 9).[1] In contrast, DSH1 is, at times, almost like a coffee table book, containing an abundance of colourful pictures and separate text boxes, where the facts have been boiled down to an appetizing minimum, neatly and spaciously arranged on the two-columned square shaped pages. Indeed, DSH1 is directed at "a wider audience interested in language" (p. 8).[2] This approach not only leads to a less technical tone in the linguistic narrative, it justifies the reader-friendly layout.

We note that women are not well represented among the authors of NSH1 and DSH1. Although their share increases somewhat in later volumes, the over-all male preponderance is clear: 72 % of the authors in NSH, and 62 % in DSH are men. It is unfortunate that historical linguistics is still represented as a field dominated by men – not least when it is vividly apparent from the references to older works that are provided throughout both NSH1 and DSH1, as well as from the photos included, that women were absent (more or less) in the past.

[1] Norwegian: eit moderne fagleg referanseverk.
[2] Danish: et bredere sproginteresseret publikum.

2.1 NSH1

The Norwegian series consists of four volumes, and it was completed in early 2019. The first volume describes the structure of Norwegian (including the textual level) at different times. Volume 2 (*Praksis* 'practice') is concerned with language usage at different times. Volume 3 (*Ideologi* 'ideology') focuses on language policy and ideology and discusses Norwegian as a cultural artefact (NSH1, p. 9). The last volume (*Tidslinjer* 'time lines') gives a description of Norwegian during eight historical periods from the oldest (–700) to the modern day. It is clear that the series gives a rich overview of the many different aspects of the field.

In the volume under discussion here, NSH1, there is a strict focus on structural properties, which demands the full attention of the reader. After an introductory chapter on language change, we are served the diachronic development of Norwegian. This is traditionally sectioned into phonology (chapter 2), morphology (chapter 3), syntax (chapter 4) and lexicon (chapter 5). The text is descriptively thorough and analytically complex, and clearly written by experts in the field. With the exception of the chapter on the lexicon, most of which covers loanwords, the structural expositions of NSH1 are, as mentioned, directed at students of linguistics. Chapter six of NSH1 is, however, also different, and gives a broadly accessible account of the historical development of texts and genres. In what follows, we present chapters 1–4 in some more detail.

Chapter 1 (Sandøy/Nesse) presents a sociolinguistic approach to variation and change, efficiently illustrated by examples from recent developments in Norwegian dialects. It discusses language change in terms of individuals, networks and the larger society, introduces the familiar S-curve, and discusses internal and external explanations to change. The chapter gives an important backdrop to the following chapters. The illustrations of e.g. the effects of language contact are both interesting and clarifying, and the chapter is enjoyable reading in and of itself. It does not, however, give a theoretical basis for subsequent chapters – it does not say much about theories of grammar. The chapters on phonology, morphology and syntax, on the other hand, are rather structuralist, with only sporadic comments on e.g. external motivations.

Chapter 2 (Torp/Kristoffersen) is concerned with phonology, and discusses many of the familiar topics in Scandinavian historical linguistics. At the same time, it is much more than a summary of traditional analyses. The discussions of umlaut, breaking, vowel harmony etc. often provide good overviews of the general patterns, but also point to problematic

cases, and are often updated with references to recent studies. Much unlike the neo-grammarians, the authors make reference to phonologisation and morphologisation of sound change. However, as in the traditional literature, we are often left wondering about the connection between phonological and morphological change – the strict division into a chapter on phonology and morphology is sometimes in the way. Symptomatically, in the discussion of tone accent in NSH1 (Kristoffersen), the important work by Tomas Riad (1998, 2003) is only referred to in a footnote (p. 152; cf. also e.g. Riad 2015), and Riad's (2013, 2015) discussion of the connection between tone and morphology is not discussed at all.[3]

In the introduction to the third chapter, on morphology (Enger/Conzett), the authors specify their theoretical perspective, and it is said that morphology is an independent part of the grammatical system (p. 215), and also independent from sociolinguistic concerns (p. 217). Paradigms and analogy are taken to be important concepts. Regarding analogy, the authors "assume that speakers compare inflectional forms all the time" (Enger, p. 217).[4] The chapter also contains several examples of morphological change understood in terms of paradigmatic analogical change. As in the chapter on phonology, the description often manages to balance the line between empirical detail and generalization. For instance, the section on verbal inflection (also by Enger) gives both a good and updated overview of changes in verbal morphology and some examples of dialect forms and irregular forms. With respect to the loss of plural agreement morphology, it is mentioned that this change has often been given a phonological explanation. NSH1 instead argues (p. 264) that the spread of forms within a paradigm should be understood in terms of morphology (and analogy, we assume) and perhaps syntax. As so often, the question remains how systematic analogical change is, and how it is restricted (cf. below).

Chapter 4 (by Mørck) treats the history of Norwegian syntax as the history of various combinations of words found in texts from Norway. The reader is served an array of patterns, conveniently sorted into straightforward groups. Being something of a syntactic catalogue, this chapter has the potential to function as a natural starting point for any sort of inquiry into historical Norwegian syntax. We ourselves have already been inspired by some peculiar Old Norwegian examples pre-

[3] Riad argues that inflectional and derivational suffixes can carry tonal information, and that the distribution of accent 2 in Swedish is largely predictable on morphological grounds.

[4] Norwegian: antar at talerne jamfører bøyingsformer hele tida.

sented in NSH1, the likes of which we have never seen before; as we will show below, these new data can help us tie together some loose ends from the previous literature (see section 4.3). To us, this sort of QED moment, as it were, instantly and explicitly proves the value of the chapter. However, the strong descriptive focus also has a downside, since it deprives the reader of insights and generalisations that a more theoretical approach could have provided. Certainly, the chapter contains a couple of syntactic trees, but no reference is made to them in the remainder of the chapter. The focus is on describing the linear word order patterns that are found during different historical stages of Norwegian, not on changes in the underlying structures. The variation that we can note is also between different possible word orders, not between different speakers or dialects. In that sense, the description is rather standard (see further section 5). Quite traditional is also the section on genre variation, which is based on works by Nygaard from the turn of the last century (1896, 1905).

2.2 DSH1

The relative lightness of DSH1 compared to NSH1 is not only due to the former targeting a wider group of readers. To some extent, it also follows from a different division of labour between the volumes in the respective series. The Danish series will eventually consist of six volumes; as of January 2020, three volumes have been published. The first volume is in many ways an introduction, and many of the topics are relevant also in the following books, where they will perhaps also be given a more thorough treatment. Volume 2 (*Ord for ord* 'word for word') contains a chapter on orthography, a separate chapter on punctuation, one chapter on pronunciation during different periods, a chapter on the lexicon and one about loanwords. Volume 3 provides some of the content that we find in NSH1: it has a section on inflection, one on syntax and chapters on dialects and sociolects. Volume 4 will discuss Danish in different text types, as well as the history of reading and writing education in Denmark. The fifth volume will be concerned with Danish outside of Denmark and other languages in Denmark. Finally, the last volume will deal with style and will also contain a characterization of the language of 20 influential authors from different times. Unlike the first volume, volumes 2–6 will largely be chronologically organized (DSH1, p. 10).

DSH1 is divided into four main chapters, with subchapters by different authors. The focus is on the outer prerequisites for the development

of Danish, both the ideo-historical frame and the purely physical conditions. It is really quite striking how much weight DSH1 puts on extralinguistic factors. Apparently, it is not considered sufficient to include the question of what physical form Danish has had over the years in the first chapter, where the sources of earlier language are treated (*Kilder*, 'Sources'); in our view, that would have been the unmarked choice. Instead, the history of Danish typography takes up almost a third of the entire DSH1, as chapter 4 (*Skrift*, 'Writing'). Here, we can read about techniques for mural inscriptions, numerous styles of handwriting, the production of print, tactile writing systems (Braille) and short hand, to name some of the more prominent topics. (It is after having read chapter 4 that we understand that the title of the first volume, *Dansk tager form*, 'Danish takes form', should be taken literally.)

The two chapters in the middle of DSH1 are predominantly ideo-historical in nature. Chapter 2 is quite uneven (which is reflected in the rather vague title *Historie og sprog*, 'history and language'). It contains five subchapters that include general discussions of the history of linguistics and of national identity and language, as well as traditional sections on historical periods and language genetics (we discuss the latter at some length in section 4.1 below). The first subchapter on language history and linguistic theory (Gregersen) covers several important questions for historical linguistics – e.g. what we mean by *language* – and describes the history of (historical) linguistics, focusing on Danish. This subchapter is well worth reading, and has more substance than other parts of the chapter. The concluding subchapter, for instance, is something of a causerie on "language history and other (hi)stories" (*Sproghistorie og andre historier*, Jørgensen). The very brief subchapter on historical periods (Jørgensen) informs the reader how previous scholars have sectioned the history of Danish, in particular how the different period labels overlap; why DSH has chosen to use the division it has is never explained. The subchapter on language and identity (Albrectsen) is concerned with the importance of different historical sources for Danish national identity, and how Danish identity has been construed at different times. However, it does not give us the more general (and theoretical) discussion of language and identity that the heading might suggest.

Chapter 3 is more straightforward and internally coherent, covering the history of the description of Danish (in a wide sense, including language cultivation). The chapter starts out with the history of the discipline of language history in 3.1 (Holmberg). This is followed by the history of lexicography in 3.2 (Hjorth), the history of grammatical de-

scription in 3.3 (Heltoft), and the history of orthographic standardisation and language cultivation in 3.4 (Galberg, Jakobsen). The topic of the last subchapter (3.5) is the history of phonetics and phonology (Basbøll). All subchapters in chapter 3 are ideo-historical in nature, and as such, they have many virtues. In addition, they function as a bibliographic thesaurus. Often, the reader is directed to an online resource (signalled by a designated symbol in the margin), complementing the physical book. On the website – dansksproghistorie.dk – we find, for example, extended versions of text boxes, links to digitized versions of cited sources as well as appetizing audio clips and filmed lectures.

3 The object of study

Both NSH1 and DSH1 aim at describing the history of a present-day national language of a medium-sized Nordic country (as regards population).[5] As Scandinavian languages, Danish and Norwegian are genetically closely related; in addition, the political history interconnects the two countries Norway and Denmark, and, in effect, the two languages.

The earliest Scandinavian sources are common to all North Germanic languages, namely the runic inscriptions carved with the elder fuþark around the middle of the first millennium AD. Thus, the horn of Gallehus, the most famous record of this ancient Nordic language, is invoked both in NSH1 and in DSH1, as part of the history of Norwegian and Danish respectively. Yet, it comes as no surprise that this particular inscription, which was originally found in Jutland, comes up a bit more often in DSH1 than in NSH1. The latter instead prefers similar (albeit less famous) carvings from what is present-day Norway (e.g. the Tune stone from Østfold).

Much later, the paths of the two languages were once again intertwined. More specifically, the history of written Danish, from around 1550 to 1850, came to include Norwegian too, as it were. During this period, Norway and Denmark were part of the same country, although not as equals: the centre of political power was Copenhagen, and the common written code was Danish. This period of Danish domination apparently poses a bigger problem for NSH1 than it does for DSH1. In practise,

[5] Both Norway and Denmark have between 5 and 6 million inhabitants, as does Finland (also medium-sized), which can be compared to the 10 million in Sweden (big) and the 300 000 in Iceland (small).

NSH1 faces an acute shortage of early modern texts in Norwegian. Some early modern dialect texts were compiled and published by Venås in 1990; this collection is – more or less – the sole provider of early modern examples in NSH1.[6]

To treat the union with Denmark as a lapse in the history of Norwegian is not the only way to go. For other Norwegian historical linguists in the past, the union instead called for a common language history. For instance, in their prominent two-volume language history from around the turn of the last century, Hjalmar Falk and Alf Torp embrace the shared history of the two languages; accordingly, their two works are entitled: *Dansk-norskens lydhistorie* (Torp & Falk 1898) and *Dansk-norskens syntax* (Falk & Torp 1900), 'The sound history and syntax', respectively, 'of Danish-Norwegian'. Notably, Falk and Torp were leading members of Riksmålsforbundet. The aim of this association was to promote the legacy of the Dano-Norwegian union. In the more recent discussion, the focus has typically rather been on what is uniquely Norwegian (*særnorsk*), i.e. not Danish. The shift from Danish to Norwegian has been subject to a lot of discussion in sociolinguistics and with regard to standardisation and language planning. Less is known about the grammar of Norwegian between 1550 and 1800, or for that matter, the grammar of Danish as written by Norwegians. We note that the works by Falk and Torp are not mentioned among important prior language histories in the foreword of NSH1.

In its last chapter, NSH1 has to include early-modern Danish, for obvious reasons: to categorically exclude it would lead to a gap in history precisely when new and important genres (such as journals and newspapers) emerge. As a form of compromise, Danish texts by Norwegian authors are given the function of a basis for reflection on national identity: as stressed by NSH1, 18th century Norwegian-born writers such as Holberg clearly saw no contradiction in viewing Norwegians and Danes as two peoples, at the same time promoting the Copenhagen-based Danish as the common code for writing (p. 552, Sejersted). Naturally, this costs him his place in the history of the Norwegian language, as presented in the first five chapters of NSH1.

Turning now to the history of Danish, the period of union with Norway is simply less important. From a Danish perspective, Norway was little more than a temporary province, at the time on a par with other

[6] As pointed out to us by a reviewer, Venås does not include all early modern texts, only those not included in the previously published collection by Dalen & Hagland (1985). For some reason, the latter is not mentioned in NSH1.

provinces such as Jutland or Fyn. In retrospect, it falls in the category of lost areas, such as Skåne, Halland and Blekinge (which have belonged to Sweden since the mid 1600s). Subsequently, in DSH1, the language of 18th century writer Ludvig Holberg, who was born and raised in Bergen, is as naturally a part of the history of Danish as, for instance, the provincial law of Skåne (from the 13th century).

There is another discrepancy between NSH1 and DSH1 that is rooted in the same historic differences. It regards the question of what constitutes the present-day end point of history. For the Danes, the written language of today can be conveniently followed backwards in time. It is quite clear that it is not the history of spoken Danish that is the primary concern of DSH: we have to wait for volume 3 before we get to read anything about Danish dialectal variation. By contrast, for the Norwegians, the history of the language is the history of the dialects. This means that there is no given single variety to which all historic forms can be related. As noted, this perspective is forced by the outer circumstances. But it also has the virtue of highlighting the complexity of language change.

DSH1 is about the national language of Denmark. The Danish dialects, or Danish spoken in Norway, on the Faroe Islands, or elsewhere, are not of particular concern. (However, volume 5 of DSH will, as noted, focus on Danish outside of Denmark, and other languages in Denmark.) In chapter 2.2, on language and identity, Danish identity is tied to the language, but also seen in opposition to Swedish and German (Norwegian is not mentioned in this context). Moreover, the focus in DSH1 is on the written language, although it is often stressed that the spoken language is in some sense primary (e.g. p. 9) or even "the language proper" (p. 17)[7] – what is meant by this is unclear. Indeed, the separation of written and spoken language is sometimes necessary, particularly in sections devoted to spelling norms or printing. However, when dealing with the overarching, general properties of a language, abstracting away from stylistic, inter- or intra-individual variation, a crucial point to be made is that many of the general properties of language are largely independent of the medium. At any rate, to acknowledge this is both more realistic and honest than resorting to somewhat truistic claims about the primality of speech.

NSH1, too, is concerned with the language of the Norwegian speech community at different times, although this is often (depending on the

[7] Danish: det egentlige sprog

historical stage and phenomenon under discussion) understood in terms of the various dialects. The reference to the dialects is particularly common in the chapters on language change, phonology and morphology. In the chapter on syntax (by Mørck), the discussion of dialectal variation is much less integrated into the description, and there is very little about the diachronic developments of dialect syntax. Instead, NSH1 largely follows the traditional approach and presents Old Norwegian as one coherent language that develops into one Middle Norwegian variety, and finally into Present-Day Norwegian. The reason for this is most likely that there has been little work done on the diachrony of the Norwegian dialect syntax, and that the sources do not provide enough material for reconstructing syntactic developments. However, over the last decades, considerable work has been carried out on the synchronic syntax of the dialects, most notably within the ScanDiaSyn project umbrella (e.g. Vangsnes 2007a, 2007b). The chapter on syntax in NSH1 does include a section on dialect syntax, but although several of the phenomena mentioned there (e.g. long distance reflexives, doubling of the indefinite determiner, particle placement, pre-proprial articles etc.) were investigated within ScanDiaSyn, little of this work is mentioned. This is unfortunate, as it gives quite an inaccurate picture of the state of the art in Scandinavian dialect studies.

To understand language change, we cannot only refer to national languages or even dialects. Instead, we clearly need to make some reference to the grammatical systems of individuals. In a description that only considers linguistic features that are shared among all speakers in a community and do not show (inter- and intra-individual) variability, language change will simply remain a mystery. This is of course a challenge for anybody who wants to write the history of a national language like Danish or Norwegian: on the one hand, *language* must then be understood as a social, shared system in the community; on the other hand, the coherent theoretical object of study in linguistics is the grammatical competence of the individual speaker.

Johnsen (2019) hints at the problem of the object of study when he criticizes NSH1 for not properly defining what is meant by Norwegian. He himself uses *Norwegian* to mean "inherited from Old Norwegian or created on the basis of inherited material" (2019: 80)[8]. This seems to us like a theoretically naïve position to take. If we assume that the object of study is the grammars of speakers, present-day speakers of Norwegian

[8] Norwegian: nedervt frå gamalnorsk eller nylaga frå nedervt tilfang

dialects clearly have features that are inherited from Old Norwegian, in addition to new features of different origin – but unless something suggests that we are dealing with bilingualism (or bidialectalism), these features are part of the same system, which we usually refer to as "Norwegian". From a synchronic point of view, it makes no sense to treat features with different origin separately, and for the diachronic study, the question is how this system has developed. Part of the answer might be Danish influence. In the series of books on the history of Swedish soon to appear, Ralph acknowledges the problem of the object of study and the definition of Swedish and deals with it by taking present-day Swedish as the starting point and moving backwards in time (see Ralph in press). In this respect, Ralph deviates dramatically from the tradition of historical linguistics, unlike NSH1 and DSH1, but he is able to make the process of reconstruction visible. It should also be added that there is no reason to assume that Old Norwegian grammars were "purer" and not influenced e.g. by language contact, or that different speakers in medieval Norway did not have partly different grammatical systems.

A theoretical discussion of language change must make reference to the properties of grammars, and our understanding of language change depends, in turn, on whether we view the grammatical system as a system of rules, constraints, a network of constructions and paradigms, or something else. It also matters how we understand the universal properties of language and the biological basis for the linguistic competence. Notably, a statement that language structure is a consequence of language use or that language use "is a phenomenological reality" (p. 71, Gregersen)[9] is not sufficiently specific, and it can be combined with many different models of grammar and grammar change. As noted above, the first chapter of NSH1 (by Sandøy) provides an important discussion of some of the questions of language change at macro- and micro-levels, but although the problems are sometimes hinted at, neither of the books attempts to provide a coherent account of language change in terms of individual grammars, or speech communities for that matter. One could perhaps argue that a more theoretical understanding of the history of Danish and Norwegian lies outside the scope of this type of handbook. However, it is likely that the explanation rather has to do with the received knowledge in the field and the established tradition. In any case, a coherent theoretical account is probably too much to ask at this point, but it should be an aim for future generations of Scandinavian historical linguists.

[9] Danish: er en fænomenologisk realitet

4 Writing Scandinavian language history

There are many ways to write the history of a language. What the result will look like depends on factors like the intended audience or the properties of the particular language and its context, but also on how the language is defined (in terms of its speakers and their competence) in relationship to other languages, and on the theory of language and language change. An important issue is tradition: how have linguists in the past dealt with language history, what modes of practise have become standard, what sort of research questions have been promoted, and – most importantly – what is taken for granted? The answers to these questions vary across sub-disciplines, and so does the power of tradition. Furthermore, it is a delicate matter to relate one's considerations to a national context, as well as to the linguistic tradition in a broader sense. In fact, several perspectives are often intertwined in a rather intricate way. For instance, the study of inter-Scandinavian variation has an important place both within the comparative paradigm, providing pieces in the genetic puzzle, and within the generative framework, where the meticulous mapping of micro-variation may help reveal properties of the neuro-biological limits of language (i.e. UG).

If the habits of tradition are taken for granted and converted to scientific norm, there is a risk that theories and hypotheses are tacitly transformed to truths and axioms. On the other hand, there is also a risk in ignoring past research in the name of sober descriptivism. Although tradition needs to be reflected upon with a critical eye, the critic cannot merely glance at influential previous works, and disregard them without a more profound understanding of their essence.

In the following, we discuss three important issues in more detail: the comparative paradigm, language change, and the balance between descriptive sobriety and theoretical insight.

4.1 The role of reconstruction

We believe that any serious attempt to present the history of a language needs to include a thorough and critical discussion of the comparative historical method. Both NSH1 and DSH1 lack such a discussion, although the results of the method (i.e. reconstructed *-forms) are part of the diachronic story they tell.

DSH1 contains only one subchapter that is dedicated to the history of actual forms of Danish: 2.4 *Sprogfamilien*, 'the language family' (by

Hyllested). Here, words of modern Danish are linked both to words in related languages and to earlier recorded or reconstructed word forms. Although this section focuses on the development of Germanic, and North Germanic in particular, quite a lot is said about much earlier stages, several millennia prior to the earliest written records. In dealing with this language pre-history, DSH1 claims that today, most linguists, archaeologists and geneticists agree that the reconstructed proto-Indo-European language (PIE) was spoken by a nomadic people living on the steppe north of the Black Sea some 5000 to 6000 years ago (p. 138).[10]

We are a bit concerned by this claim, for several reasons. To begin with, there is an alternative suggestion, originally made by Renfrew (1987), according to which the Indo-European languages derive their common origin from what is present-day Turkey, from where they were dispersed over Europe and Asia along with the spread of agriculture. This so-called Anatolian hypothesis has experienced a revival in recent years, following new advances in glottochronology. For instance, Bouckaert et al. (2012), refining the analysis in Grey and Atkinson (2003), use methods from computational pholygenetics to argue that PIE is between 7500 and 9800 years old. This estimated time-span includes the starting point for the spread of agriculture from Anatolia, which began around 8500 years ago (judging from archaeological evidence). These new proponents of the Anatolian hypothesis have certainly received critique (most notably from Perelsvaig & Lewis 2015; see also Chang et al. 2015 and Anthony & Ringe 2015). Still, we had expected DSH1 to at least mention the recent debate rather than presenting a somewhat forced image of consensus in the field.

A far more severe concern of ours, however, is that the chapter fails to include any critical discussion of the comparative paradigm. In our view, the real problem is not to determine the age of PIE and to pinpoint the homeland of its speakers. The problem is that this task presupposes a solid link between the product of the comparative method (i.e. the *-forms) and a real language.

Contrary to what DSH1 leads us to believe, many comparative linguists, in the past and in the present, would question such a link, thus being characterized as formalists (in the sense of Öhman 1993). For a formalist, the comparative method is useful to effectively summarize systematic similarities between languages, but to what extent this generalisa-

[10] The title of the section where we are presented with this information is *Det indoeuropæiske grundsprog og dets talere*, 'The original Indo-European language and its speakers'.

tion (the *-form) reflects a past reality is, at best, uncertain. This issue was raised as early as 1880 (by Delbrück); other early formalists (identified by Öhman 1993) include Trubetzkoj (1915) and Meillet (1925).

Also, as stressed by Dixon (1997), who is, in turn, inspired by Meillet, (1967[1908]:169) and Bloomfield (1933:318), even if there is a reality behind PIE, the very nature of the reconstruction, which typically contains several forms for one grammatical function, suggests something quite different than the existence of a single PIE language. A more accurate characterization of PIE would be that it is a summary of common properties of "a small areal group of distinct languages, with similar structures and forms" (Dixon 1997:98).

On the other hand, the believers in the solid link (apparently including DSH1 in chapter 2.4) seldom recognize any alternative; they have simply converted the hypothesis of PIE (originally formulated by William Jones in 1786) to an axiom, in effect becoming realists (to continue using Öhman's 1993 labels; cf. also Ralph 2000). Symptomatically, when realists, on occasion, present arguments in favour of the reality of PIE, these are strikingly weak. For instance, Anthony & Ringe (2015) give the following two arguments: 1) the reconstructed PIE "falls within the observed range of modern native languages", and 2) the comparative method yields "categorical results that can be replicated by other researchers and checked both for internal consistency and against information from other sources" (2015:200).

We find both arguments unconvincing. The fact that PIE looks like a "normal" language is a product of the reconstruction, which is based on how human languages are known to function. In other words, the sensible nature of PIE is built into the comparative method. Second, the consistency of the method does not say anything about the status of the resulting product. As long as we do not have actual records of language development over seven or eight millennia, we cannot really "check the results against information from other sources". Furthermore, a prerequisite for felicitous reconstruction of pre-historic objects is that we fully understand the nature of such objects today. The truth is that the nature of human language is quite poorly understood, compared to, for instance, the human genome. Linguistics is simply not genetics.

Even within the field of comparative historical linguistics, the extreme focus on the Indo-European homeland by some is seen as counter-productive by others. In fact, there are those that appear to feel that their discipline has been hijacked by the speculative pre-historians, obsessively linking reconstructions to different sets of archaeological data. Thus,

almost in despair, Harrison writes: "Too many comparative historical linguists want to dig up Troy, linguistically speaking. They consider it more important that comparative historical linguistics shed light on prehistoric migrations than that it shed light on language change. I can only say that I do not share those views on the focus of comparative linguistics. I do not consider comparative historical linguistics a branch of prehistory. And I sincerely believe that if we cared less about dates, maps and trees, and more about language change, there'd be more real progress in the field." (2003: 231). In a similar vein, Dixon maintains that "[t]he results of historical linguistics may not be spectacular, but this is no reason for ignoring them in favour of spectacular – but vacuous – speculations." (1997:44). Clearly, DSH1 is part of the problem identified by Harrison and Dixon. It introduces PIE as a real language spoken thousands of years ago by the Kurgan horsemen of the Pontian steppe; to the reader, all this is presented as undisputable facts.[11]

Compared to DSH1, NSH1 is less explicit in its view on the comparative method and its resulting forms: there is no chapter about the reconstructed Indo-European pre-history (as in DSH1), and no general discussion of the comparative method. Nevertheless, this method is, no doubt, the basis on which the history of Norwegian rests. At various points, we are confronted with a sort of fact-dropping about PIE. In NSH1, PIE corresponds to the label *indoeuropeisk*, 'Indo-European'. This way of referring to it implies quite strongly, we believe, a single variety-interpretation: *indoeuropeisk* appears in the text just like any other language, living (e.g. *norsk*, 'Norwegian') or recorded (e.g. *mellomnorsk*, 'Middle Norwegian'). Here are two examples: "In Indo-European, the stress could be placed on different syllables depending on the inflectional form" (p. 107, Kristoffersen);[12] "Compounding in Indo-European is probably based on word forms" (p. 277, Conzett).[13] Apparently, the comparative tradition is so taken for granted that there is no mention of what Indo-European is, let alone what status it might have. The spontaneous interpretation is that Indo-European and Norwegian are objects of the same sort.

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[11] A reviewer raises the question whether such a description can perhaps be justified as a simplified account in a handbook directed at a group of readers that includes non-specialists. Our answer to this is a firm no. On the contrary, controversial issues are particularly important to acknowledge when addressing readers who are not scientists themselves.

[12] Norwegian: I indoeuropeisk kunne trykket legges på ulike stavelser avhengig av bøyningsform.

[13] Norwegian: Samansetjing i indoeuropeisk er truleg basert på ordformer.

However, on occasion, we get hints that NSH1 is not as realist as DSH1. For instance, all of a sudden, in the middle of the phonology chapter, there is a strong disclaimer regarding a vowel system for mediaeval western Norwegian: "It needs to be stressed that this is a reconstructed system that has probably never existed in this form in any specific dialect" (p. 161, Torp).[14] Similarly, in the morphology chapter, the discussion of two different genitive suffixes in (the only scarcely recorded) ancient Nordic is abruptly toned down since it is "'only' reconstruction" anyway (p. 219, Enger),[15] implying that a reconstructed language is something completely different than a living (or recorded) language. Further on, in the chapter on the lexicon, there is a brief note on the danger in relating reconstructed words for natural phenomena to geographical places, based on the meaning of the word today, for the trivial reason that "a term may change its meaning" (p. 457, Jenstad).[16] Implicitly, NSH1 directs critique against the same group of pre-historic enthusiasts that was singled out by Harrison and Dixon above.

In none of the cases where the reality behind reconstructions is called into question is the reader offered any theoretical or ideological context. We wonder why these points are not made more explicitly in the first chapter, which is indeed about the theory of language change. As it is now, the reader very much gets mixed signals. On the one hand, we applaud NSH1 for proceeding with caution, even when it comes to *-forms that merely fill out blanks in an otherwise recorded history. On the other hand, the caution loses much of its credibility when "Indo-European" is unreflectively presented as a piece in the same puzzle.

4.2 Language change

Although neither of the volumes aims at a fully coherent theoretical description of either linguistic competence or change, we believe that the theoretical underpinnings of handbooks of this type are important – not least since they will influence new generations of scholars. In this section we focus on how language change is understood, first in general, then, as an illustration, by looking closer at how the loss of case is treated in NSH1.

In chapter 2.1 of DSH1, entitled "Language history and linguistic the-

[14] Norwegian: Det må understrekast at dette er eit rekonstruert system, som truleg aldri har eksistert i denne forma i nokon bestemd dialekt.

[15] Norwegian: "bare" rekonstruksjon.

[16] Norwegian: nemningar kan skifte innhald.

ory"[17] (Gregersen), some general issues are raised: here, DSH1 considers the different Saussurian uses of the term *language* and mentions the problem of defining a language when individual speakers might have different systems, and when the same speaker might have access to more than one system. For instance, it is stated that the definition of the language Danish is challenged by V2-violations due to language contact (p. 74). Chapter 1 of NSH1, "Language change",[18] (Sandøy/Nesse) goes considerably further and provides a thorough discussion of language change, but, as noted, the conclusions from this chapter are not used in the rest of the volume, with few exceptions. One such exception from the chapter on morphology comes from the section on vowel balance (Norw. *jemvikt*) in infinitives (by Enger). Here it is mentioned that forms like /væ:r/ for expected /vær/ as the infinitive of 'be' might have both structural and sociolinguistic explanations; the form /væ:r/ lies closer to the spoken language based on the standard bokmål (p. 269; cf. Mæhlum 1985, 2009).

In order to say something about the process of change and in order to fully understand the structural conditions of change, we need to make reference to the systems of speakers. For instance, we now know that sound change is not blind to phonological structure (see e.g. Kiparsky 2003 and references there). Again, both NSH1 and DSH1 reproduce some of the inconsistency that is part of the tradition. In chapter 2.4 in DSH1 on language families (Hyllested), references is made to (neo-grammarian) sound laws, and, without references or qualifications, it is stated that sound changes apply without exception under the right conditions (p. 127). In the chapter on phonology in NSH1 (Torp), it is said that umlaut "strikes" and that sound changes operate or "exert power" during certain periods (pp. 116–117)[19] – phonological change thus appears to be a natural force. When sound change is viewed as following natural laws independent of grammatical systems, a realist view on the reconstructed proto-language also clearly lies close at hand (cf. section 4.1 above). At the same time, much of the discussion in NSH1 is, as far as we can see, consistent with the type of model of language change espoused by e.g. Iversen & Salmons (2012) who clarify something of what adds complexity to the study of e.g. umlaut: "... regular sound change grows from phonetic seeds typically nurtured by co-articulatory and/or perceptual biases. Phonetic effects are then reinterpreted by later genera-

[17] Danish: Sproghistorie of sprogteori.
[18] Norwegian: Språkendring.
[19] Norwegian: slå til, verke.

tions as phonological generalizations, and these are integrated into the broader grammatical fabric of the language and over time often lead to new morphological generalizations, such as association with particular inflectional categories. Later changes eventually obscure earlier generalizations but may leave clear traces in exceptional or marginal patterns" (Iversen & Salmons 2012:105).

As noted in section 2 above, the morphology chapter in NSH1 views analogy as the morphological change par excellence. However, there must also be other types of change, leading to new categories (rather than the spread of forms in pre-existing categories). Neither of the volumes contains any coherent discussion of grammaticalization. It is in fact rather striking how little there is of semantic change and e.g. grammaticalization of auxiliaries, complementizers, and so on. The discussions of lexical change instead focus on changes in the open word classes (particularly loan words) in connection to socio-cultural changes. DSH1 mentions grammaticalization from word to clitic and cyclic change (with reference to Jespersen's cycle) in the chapter on historical linguistics and language theory (p. 76, Gregersen). The chapter on morphology in NSH1 (Enger/ Conzett) gives a couple of examples of grammaticalization that leads to new morphological categories, e.g. the development of the morphological passive (p. 219, 260, Enger) and the definiteness suffix (p. 219, 227, Enger, Conzett). There is also one interesting example from modern Norwegian, namely the emergence of a so-called *abundance plural* (p. 247, Conzett)[20] formed with the suffix *-vis* (cf. *bøtter med ting* 'buckets of things' and *bøttevis med ting* 'bucketloads of things'). This is an example of newer research (Kinn 2005) that has been successfully integrated into the description.

Grammaticalization is mentioned in the chapter on syntax in NSH1 (Mørck), but it is not used in the standard way to refer to the process whereby lexical items develop into grammatical morphemes. Instead, it is used in the less standard way to refer to the establishment of grammatical word order and fixed grammatical functions such as subject and object. The idea is that functions such as subject and object were less clearly defined in Old Norwegian than in the present-day Scandinavian languages, and that word order had a pragmatic rather than a grammatical function. It is stated that in Old and Middle Norwegian, subjects, direct objects and indirect objects typically have nominative, accusative and dative case, respectively. Lexical case is illustrated with verbs like

[20] Norwegian: overflodsfleirtal.

fylgia and *unna* (p. 330–334). It is also suggested that nominal constituents "not always have as clearly distinct and marked syntactic functions as subject, direct object, and indirect object have in Modern Norwegian" (p. 329).[21] Rather than taking a stand in the debate about oblique subjects in Old Scandinavian (see e.g. Falk 1997, Faarlund 2001, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2001), NSH1 states that there are oblique noun phrases in Old Norwegian, which we "with our modern linguistic intuitions would perceive as subjects" (p. 330)[22] – they are referred to as "subject-like" (p. 330).[23] In some of the examples, the syntactic function of oblique noun phrases is given with a question mark (e.g. S? in example 4 on p. 330). It is however not discussed what the diagnostics of subjecthood (or objecthood) are and in what way they have changed – apart from morphological marking (cf. section 4.2. above).

The description of the loss of case in the morphology chapter (Conzett) is quite traditional. It is stated that there are two main types of change that have affected inflection: sound change and analogical change (p. 229). This is clearly an oversimplification, and it fails to make the necessary distinction between e.g. phonetically, phonologically and morphologically conditioned change (cf. the quote from Iversen & Salmons 2012 above). For one thing, the emergence of definiteness discussed on the previous pages would then apparently not be a change in nominal inflection. Furthermore, the change of the *s*-genitive to possessive clitic is in fact mentioned as a possible case of degrammaticalization (p. 245). We would rather agree with Börjars (2003) – who is not referenced here – that the distinction between clitic and affix is simply not precise enough to capture the development of the *s*-morpheme, some aspects of which "are best viewed as changes to the case system, rather than changes to individual case endings" (ibid.:156). In any case, the distinction between sound change and analogy simply does not suffice.

Two types of analogy are mentioned in the context of case loss: change within the paradigm of a word (e.g. nom./dat. *rún* spreads to accusative) or change between paradigms (e.g. the spread of genitive *-s* to new declension classes). Neither of these leads to changes in the paradigm structure of the language, or the inflectional categories themselves, unless a whole class changes like the individual form *rún*: categories "disappear

[21] Norwegian: ikke alltid har like klart atskilte og markerte syntaktiske funksjoner som subjekt, direkte objekt og indirekte objekt i moderne norsk.

[22] Norwegian: ut fra vår moderne språkfølelse er naturlig å oppfatte som subjekt.

[23] Norwegian: subjektaktige.

when all their members shift to a different class" (p. 239).[24] We are not certain that changes that lead to a general loss (or emergence) of categories should be treated as analogical in the same sense as changes of individual lexical forms. The reason for the general shift also remains somewhat mysterious – it is said that it can have phonological, syntactic and morphological explanations, but that some of the simplification without a doubt is due to "pure sound change" (p. 245).[25] Reference is made to the studies by Barðdal (2009) and Enger (2013), but they are not discussed further. Enger (2013) in fact provides a critical discussion of the traditional (neo-grammarian) view of the loss of case.

There is of course a syntactic side to the loss of case. The syntax chapter (Mørck) mentions that lexical genitive and dative on direct objects tend to be replaced by accusative in Middle Norwegian, and that oblique "subjects" become nominative rather early on. Whether the loss of lexical case follows systematic patterns is not discussed. However, in the second section of the morphology chapter (Conzett), it is mentioned that dative is preserved in some Norwegian dialects (see e.g. Eythórsson et al. 2012, Sandøy 2012), and that the dative in these dialects was extended to new verbs during the Late Middle Ages (p. 246). Here, an outlook to the other Scandinavian languages would have been relevant. As shown by Delsing (2014), both the dative and the genitive become more restricted in Swedish in the 14th century, but they also become semantically more predictable (restricted to possessors and experiencers, respectively). Petersen (2017) shows that the semantics of verbs play an important role for the preservation or loss of the dative case in present-day Faroese (cf. also e.g. Barðdal 2008, Jónsson 2009, Thráinsson 2013 and many others on Icelandic). In the Norwegian dialects that have preserved dative after prepositions, the case alternations are also highly predictable both morphologically and semantically (see e.g. Anderson & Åfarli 2015).

We conclude that the treatment of case would have benefitted from more theoretical clarity in the discussion of sound change and analogy, as well as an inclusion of reanalysis among the types of change. Moreover, we miss a discussion of semantic factors (both e.g. animacy and event semantics) and references to studies on Insular Scandinavian and Swedish. However, it is hardly surprising that the description of the loss of case relies heavily on tradition – this is an important and complex devel-

[24] Norwegian: forsvinn ved at alle medlemene i klassen går over til ein annan.
[25] Norwegian: reine ljodendringar.

opment, involving several linguistic domains, which has been discussed throughout the history of Scandinavian linguistics, but which is still not fully understood.

4.3 Generative syntax and the Nordic perspective

As already mentioned, the syntax chapter of NSH1 takes no theoretical notions for granted but the descriptive tools from the (school) tradition. It makes some brief remarks on the so-called Rich Agreement Hypothesis (RAH), which has inspired many of the (now classic) generative approaches to comparative Scandinavian and Germanic syntax (e.g. Falk 1993, Holmberg & Platzack 1995, Rohrbacher 1999). The reader is informed that generative syntacticians once suggested that there might be a link between rich verbal agreement and an array of syntactic phenomena, but that this link has turned out to be far from absolute. Given the strong descriptive focus in the chapter, the lack of further theoretical discussion is understandable. Nevertheless, the generative tradition (including the RAH) does provide many useful generalizations about North Germanic, as well as explicit proposals for linking syntax to morphology. In our view, the syntax chapter of NSH1 could have benefitted from incorporating insights from the generative literature, without having to resort to theory-internal technicalities corrupting the descriptive soul of the chapter.

First, the Mainland Scandinavian languages have all undergone changes regarding subordinate clause word order and verbal deflection that the RAH predicts (see Falk 1993 on Swedish, Christoffersen 1997, Vittersø 2004 on Norwegian, and Sundquist 2003 on Danish). Second, although the hypothesis has been questioned and criticized on both empirical and theoretical grounds over the years (see especially Bentzen et al. 2007), it has, in fact, experienced a recent revival (Koeneman & Zeijlstra 2014, Tvica 2017), which in itself should merit a comment. Third, it puts emphasis on the interface between morphology and syntax raising a complex of important questions: are morphological distinctions directly relevant for syntactic structure, and if so, how can we describe (and understand) the morpho-syntactic interplay?

Certainly, there is a subsection devoted to morphological influence on syntax (as noted above). But what is missing there is precisely a theoretical anchor for what is now a series of speculations based on the quite vague notion that inflectional distinctions and non-pragmatic word order may serve the same purpose. The details in this presumed relation

between morphology and syntax are never investigated; as a consequence, previous attempts to understand the connection are at best mentioned in passing, but often completely ignored. Consider, for instance, OV word order. Within the generative framework, the relation between the historical development (and subsequent loss) of this order in Scandinavian and changes in nominal morphology was widely debated around the turn of the millennium (see Delsing 1999 on Swedish, Hróarsdóttir 2000 on Icelandic, and Sundquist 2002 on Norwegian and Danish). However, this story is not told in NSH1; here, OV is simply reduced to yet another section in the Norwegian catalogue of surface patterns.

From a Scandinavian horizon, the empirical scope of the syntax chapter of NSH1 is quite narrow including only western Scandinavian. Consequently, when NSH1 (on p. 373) addresses stylistic fronting (SF), we get – as usual – a generous compilation of relevant Norwegian examples, medieval as well as early modern; these are – in turn – related to Icelandic, where SF still occurs. Given that NSH1 is a handbook about Norwegian, such an empirical delimitation can hardly come as a surprise.

Still, Scandinavia is more than just the west. And we must never forget that the national boundaries of today have very little significance for the language of the Middle Ages. In fact, broadening the perspective and including more of the Scandinavian palette is often both empirically clarifying and theoretically rewarding. For instance, and now returning to the treatment of SF in NSH1, we are presented with some interesting examples which look like a mix between embedded topicalization (since they have an overt subject) and SF (since there is fronting of one-worded elements). Two of these are given in (1) below (from NSH1, p. 374, with our glossings and translations). There is nothing like this in Icelandic.

(1) a. æf þer ero log kunnig
if you.DAT be.PRS.3PL laws known
'if the laws are known to you'

b. Dæsse sæla kyn er nu hafum
these seal.PL.GEN kinds that now have.PRS.1PL
ver um rœtt
we about spoken
'these kinds of seal that we have now spoken about'

However, the patterns in (1) are not a Norwegian anomaly. As shown by Falk (2007), precisely this sort of word order was possible in Old Swedish; see (2) (from ibid., p. 94, with our glossing and translation).

(2) Nu ringir þæn sum egh biþær
Now toll.PRS.SG that-one that not ask.PRS.SG
klokkarin til
sexton.DEF to
'Now, the bell is tolled by one who is not asked to do so by the sexton'

Falk argues that (2) is indeed a clause involving SF (and not topicalization), and the same can be claimed about (1a–b) (as will soon be evident). The clue is, following Falk (2007), to recognize that in the SF-hierarchy (identified already by Maling 1980), the subject is actually included as the top candidate. This explains a) that SV is the unmarked order and b) that SF (in the traditional sense) occurs precisely when there is no subject. However, the hierarchy is not absolute. Sometimes an element of a higher rank is skipped in favour of the next element on the ladder. In subjectless clauses, this sort of hierarchy violation might look like in (3) below (from Falk 2007:93, with our glossing and translation), were the direct object (*minnæ*) is stylistically fronted in spite of the presence of an indirect object (*præsti*), which is higher in the hierarchy. On Falk's account, the example in (2) is structurally parallel to (3): in both cases, an element of a higher rank (i.e. the subject in (2) and the indirect object in (3) respectively) is overlooked in favour of the next element in the hierarchy (which is negation in (2) and the direct object in (3)).

(3) þe minnæ giwæ præsti æn öre
those less give.PRS.3PL priest.DAT than penny
'those who give less than a penny to the priest'

Without giving specific numbers, Falk notes that it is strikingly often a negation that is fronted in cases such as (2). This is somewhat problematic for her analysis. What the analysis predicts is that any element that is eligible for SF should be able to precede the VS-string (i.e. surpass the subject on the ladder), as long as it does not skip over yet another pinhole. In other words, in clauses without negation but with both a subject and other potential SF elements, we expect the second highest SF element to be fronted when, on occasion, the subject is ignored. But for some reason, Falk fails to retrieve such examples in her Old Swedish sample.

Intriguingly, however, adding the Norwegian examples in (1a–b), precisely this empirical lapse is filled. In (1a), we have three candidates for fronting: the subject (*log*), the pronominal indirect object (*þer*), and the predicative (*kunnig*). Skipping the subject, the next element in line is expected to be the indirect object, if this is SF and if the hierarchy identified

by Falk applies.[26] And it is indeed *þer* that is fronted. The order in (1b) is felicitously predicted by Falk's analysis as well: again disregarding the subject, the fronted one-worded adverbial (*nu*) outranks both the particle (*um*) and the non-finite verb (*rœtt*).

In sum, considering Norwegian and Swedish together (rather than Norwegian and Icelandic) turns out to increase our general knowledge of the more precise structure of SF in mediaeval Mainland Scandinavian. NSH1 does not link the data, and we cannot really expect it to, but it makes the linking possible.

5 Concluding remarks

Both NSH1 and DSH1 are the first parts of a series, and we greatly look forward to having access to two complete series in a not too distant future. Already these two first volumes are highly useful for anybody interested in the history of the Scandinavian languages. As a whole, DSH1 makes easy and relaxing reading, being accessible also to non-professionals. The history of linguistics in Denmark is particularly enjoyable, not least since the online complement – with its mix of digitized copies of historical documents and links to suggested further reading – really comes into its own here. The strength of NSH1 is instead its updated and thorough description of the phonology, morphology and syntax of older Norwegian, which can serve as a good reference point for anybody working on the history of the Mainland Scandinavian languages. The introductory chapter on language change also makes an important contribution, and we can recommend it to all students in linguistics.

For new students in Scandinavian historical linguistics, it is clearly good to learn about the tradition – and to learn not to take it for granted. Both NSH1 and DSH1 show (albeit in different ways) that there is, at least to some extent, an established way of writing the history of Scandinavian, and that this often relies on the neo-grammarian heritage (in a diluted form). It is also striking to what extent the description of the history of the languages is tied to national identity and nation-building. However, it also shines through here and there in both NSH1 and DSH1

[26] This is Falk's SF hierarchy for Old Swedish (2007:92), including the subject as the top candidate (ibid.:96): *subject – negation – indirect object (pronominal) – direct object (pronominal) – one-worded adverbial – indirect object – direct object – particle – predicative – non-finite verb – multi-worded adverbial – preposition*.

that there is a growing body of work that challenges the received knowledge of e.g. Indo-European, sound change and analogy; it may include semantic factors in the discussion or address the interface between e.g. prosody, morphology and syntax, and also integrate recent insights from cross-linguistic studies. Moreover, it is made clear both that the historical linguist often must take several different domains into consideration, and that historical linguistics has much to contribute to our understanding of the Scandinavian languages and language in general. In both these respects, NSH1 and DSH1 have, without doubt, a lot to offer.

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APPENDIX

List of authors of chapters/sections in DSH1 and NSH1

NSH1

Foreword to the entire series (Tove Bull, Brit Mæhlum, Agnete Nesse, Helge Sandøy, Michael Schulte, Inge Særheim, and Lars Vikør)
Foreword to NSH1 (Helge Sandøy)
Chapter 1. Språkendring, 'language change' (Helge Sandøy and Agnete Nesse)
Chapter 2. Fonologi, 'phonology' (Gjert Kristoffersen and Arne Torp)
Chapter 3. Morfologi, 'morphology' (Hans-Olav Enger and Philipp Conzett)
Chapter 4. Syntaks, 'syntax' (Endre Mørck)
Chapter 5. Ordförrådet, 'the lexicon' (Tor Erik Jenstad)
Chapter 6. Tekst og sjanger, 'text and genre' (Eva Maagerø, Jan Ragnar Hagland, Anders Johansen, Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, and Aslaug Veum)

DSH1

Foreword to the entire series (Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab)
Introduction to Danish language history (Ebba Hjorth)
Chapter 1 Kilderne, 'the sources'
- 1.1. Sprogets kilder, 'the sources of the language' (Bent Jørgensen)

Chapter 2. Historie og sprog, 'history and language'
- 2.1. Sproghistorie og sprogteori, 'language history and linguistic theory' (Frans Gregersen)
- 2.2. Sproghistoriske perioder, 'periods of language history' (Bent Jørgensen)
- 2.3. Sprog og identitet, 'language and identity' (Esben Albrectsen)
- 2.4. Sprogfamilien, 'the language family' (Adam Hyllested)
- 2.5. Sproghistorie og andre historier, 'language history and other histories/stories' (Bent Jørgensen)

Chapter 3. Sprogbeskrivelser, 'language descriptions'
- 3.1. Sproghistorier, 'handbooks in language history' (Bent Jørgensen)
- 3.2. Ordbøger, 'dictionaries' (Ebba Hjorth)
- 3.3. Grammatikker, 'grammars' (Lars Heltoft)
- 3.4. Retskrivningshåndbøger, 'orthographies' (Henrik Galberg Jacobsen)
- 3.5. Fonetikker, 'handbooks in phonetics/phonology' (Hans Basbøll)

Chapter 4. Skrift, 'writing'
- 4.1 Runer, 'runes' (Michael Lerche Nielsen)
- 4.2 Den ældste bogstavskrift, 'the oldest alphabetic writing' (Aage Andersen)
- 4.3 På sten og mur, 'on stone and wall' (Niels Haastrup)
- 4.4 Ældre nydansk håndskrift, 'older modern Danish handwriting' (Aage Andersen)

4.5 I det offentlige rum, 'in the public room' (Bent Jørgensen)
4.6 På tryk, 'in print' (Ervin Nielsen)
4.7 Nyere håndskrift, 'newer handwriting' (Bent Rohde)
4.8 Lysende skrift, 'shining writing' (Henrik Birkvig)
4.9 Stenografi, 'shorthand' (Finn Holle)
4.10 Punktskrift, 'Braille' (John Heilbrunn & Kurt Nielsen)