Chapter 3

Nominal Inflection

3.1 Introductory Remarks

Proto-Slavic inherited three nominal inflectional categories from the Indo-European proto-language, viz. case, number and gender. Proto-Slavic nouns are inflected for case and number. Adjectives, non-personal pronouns and some numerals are inflected for case, number and gender. Personal pronouns are inflected for case and, depending on interpretation (see § 3.2.7), number. This section gives an overview of the different Proto-Slavic stem-types with paradigms showing the actual inflectional endings of each type.

Proto-Indo-European nominal paradigms basically had the same set of endings attached to the stem; only the o-stems had partly differing endings. Based on the position of the accent and the ablaut grades of root, suffix and ending, inflected lexemes belonged to one of five ablaut types: an acrostatic (immobile root-accent), a proterokinetic (root-accent alternating with suffixal accent), an amphikinetic (root-accent alternating with desinential accent), a hysterokinetic (suffixal accent alternating with desinential accent) and a mesostatic (immobile suffixal accent) paradigm (see e.g. Szemerényi 1996/1999: 161–162; Clackson 2007: 79–86; Olander 2009: 91–92). The accent–ablaut paradigm of a lexeme determined the suffix-ending structure of the word-forms of that lexeme. For instance, the genitive singular of a proterokinetic i-stem was *-éi̯s, whereas that of a hysterokinetic i-stem was *-i̯-ó/és.

It is likely that the clear-cut distinction between the various ablaut types was already disappearing in the stages leading up to Proto-Indo-European; in Proto-Slavic there is no such distinction. In each paradigm one suffix-ending structure has been generalised in a given case–number form; for instance, in the i-stem genitive singular the Proto-Indo-European proterokinetic ending *-eis > PS *-ei̯ [17] (CS *-i [22/29]) was generalised. In the Proto-Indo-European reconstructions in this study only limited attention is paid to the original affiliation of a given ending to one accent-ablaut paradigm or the other.

Proto-Indo-European nominal word-forms ended in an optional stem-forming suffix followed by a case–number marker. In the i-, u-, ā- and o-stems the stem-suffix (*-i/*-ei̯, *-u/*-eu̯, *-ah₂, *-o-) and the case–number marker fused in pre-Proto-Slavic and are best analysed as one indivisible ending in Proto-Slavic. In the consonant stems, on the other hand, the morphological boundary between the consonantal stem-suffix and the case–number marker
Nominal Inflection

is still perceivable in Proto-Slavic. This means that all Proto-Slavic declensional stems end in a consonant (Lunt 1955/2001: 222). In order to avoid repeating myself more than necessary, the case–number markers are analysed under the consonant stems in this chapter.

A remark on the status of the vocative is appropriate here (see also § 1.5.1). In Vedic, vocative forms are accented on the first syllable if they are in the beginning of a sentence or a verse; otherwise they are unaccented (see e.g. Debrunner & Wackernagel 1930/1975: 27). Accentuation of the initial syllable is also found in Greek forms such as o-stem ἀδελφε and r-stem πάτερ vs. nom. sg. πατήρ. In Slavic, lexemes with fixed accent on the first syllable of the ending, e.g. o-stem PS *sakaˈlo (CS *sokɔlъ), ā-stem *geˈnā (*ženà), *sesˈtrā (*sestrā), form an unaccented vocative, e.g. PS *sakalə (CS *sȍkole) > Štk. sȍkole, *ˌgena (*žȅno) > Štk. žȅno, *ˌsestra (*sȅstro) > Štk. sȅstro, Ukr. séstro. Combined with the unaccentedness of the vocative in Vedic, this indicates that the vocative form was unaccented in Proto-Indo-European (Andersen 2012: 149–150).

The accentuation of vocative forms may seem to constitute an exception to otherwise exceptionless statements that we can make about paradigmatic accentuation in Proto-Indo-European, Vedic or Slavic—for instance, that any Vedic o-stem is accented on the same syllable counting from the beginning of the word: nom. sg. devāḥ, acc. devām, gen. devāsyā etc., but voc. deva or déva. This peculiarity has a natural explanation when we realise that the vocative is not a case, but a derivational form (Andersen 2012: 137–147); differences in accentuation between a base word and a derived form are only to be expected. As mentioned in § 1.5.1, vocative forms are included here since they are traditionally regarded as inflectional forms and formally fit well into the study.

3.2 Paradigm Types

3.2.1 Consonant Stems

The Proto-Slavic consonant stems have two main subtypes: (1) non-neuter (masculine-feminine) stems and (2) neuter stems. Both non-neuter and neuter stems display several different nominative formations. The endings of the non-neuter stems are distinct from those of the neuters in the nominative and accusative of all numbers; in the remaining forms the endings of all genders are identical. From a synchronic point of view the nominative(–accusative) singular of consonant stems consists of a short variant of the stem used in the remaining forms; for instance, to the stem PS *dukter- (CS *dətˈer-) a nominative singular *dukˈtī (*dətˈī) is formed. Outside the nominative(–accusative)