Adjectival definiteness marking and noun-phrase internal functions

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Noun phrase structure in Old Norse

- (in)definiteness marking is not required for (in)definite interpretation
- there are a number of definiteness markers
  - free (hinn and -inn) and bound -ið
  - distal demonstrative sé (most forms in -s such as bat)
  - proximal demonstrative þá (most forms in -s such as þetta).
- þinn is not yet an indefinite article
- the word order within the NP seems almost totally unconstrained by syntactic rules (Faarlund 2004: 55)
- free word order represented as flat structure
- initial information-structurally privileged position

In Gudrunaugs saga Ormstungu possesses generally postnominal:

fáðir hans ‘his father’
dóttir þínum ‘your daughter’
broðir sin ‘his brother’
kona hans ‘his wife’
frændi mínum ‘my kinsman’

But when contrastive prenominal:

(1) at minn fáðir varí eftirhátin þinn fóður
that my father was after you GEN father GEN ‘that my father trailed in the wake of your father’ (Gunnlaug 9:33)

Adjectives in Old Norse
Adjectives occur in two forms:

- **strong** adjectives are associated with indefiniteness, but can occur in definite noun phrases (see Deling 1994, Stroh-Wollin & Simke 2014)
- **weak** adjectives occur only in definite noun phrases and always accompanied by (hinn)
- (hinn) only occurs immediately preceding a weak adjective

Regardless of whether the adjective precedes or follows the noun and repeated for each adjective:

(4) maður hín sami
man HINN sami (Grettir, 1094)

(5) hínt skírlífustu ok hínt postuligustu
HINN most apostolic HINN most apostolic man PL
(Marta, 805)

Even when the adjective would otherwise be immediately preceded by another definite element:

(6) það íð mikla hárk ok ép
hím HINS great WK tumult and shooting (Alexander, 1323)

(7) Stýrmanasona íð hín ungga
’skipper’s wife’ DEM HINN young WK ‘that young wife of the skipper’ (Grettir, 409)

- adjectives appear not to occur recursively: co-ordination with more than one adjective
- fáðir kan íð úrlendan
fóður ADJ ‘father’. DEM ADJ ‘father’
(Grettir, 26)

The role of (hinn)

- ‘North-Germanic and Rumanian developed an “adjectival” article, which in principle only has scope over an adjective’ (Perridon & Sleeman 2011: 8)
- (hinn) ‘seems to be just a formal element preceding adjectives with the so-called weak inflection’ (Stroh-Wollin 2009: 7–9)
- association between adjective and definiteness in other varieties of early Germanic (Carme 1910, Heinrich 1954)
- but theoretical analyses do not capture this

Previous analyses of (hinn)

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(hinn) licenses the weak adjective as a modifier

The licensing is functional rather than categorical, (hinn) allows the weak A to function as an ADJ

Functional uncertainty and inside-out designators

- compare functional uncertainty in clauses for instance Wambaey as in (19) (Norðing 1998)
- case markers contribute inside-out designators which resolve uncertainty: SUBJ in (10)

(10) [NP (hinn) [NP (hinn)]]

Functional uncertainty and ON adjectives

- A STR adjective is associated with an inside-out designator that creates an ADJ (cf strong in (15))
- weak A to function as an ADJ

(15) [NP (hinn) [NP (hinn)]]

Hypothetical historical development

- (hinn) started out as a functional licensor of a weak adjective
- it is likely that the weak adjective was definite in origin (see for instance Stroh-Wollin (2009: 9) and Ratkus (2010: 249) for Gothic)
- ever time, (hinn) came to be structurally associated with the noun phrase rather than the adjective phrase, and later it was replaced in this use by what is now den in the modern Scandinavian languages

In Icelandic an adjective does not need a syntactic determiner, but in Modern Scandinavian and Faroese it does, we argue this is structural persistence

Data and References

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