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The emergence of definiteness marking in Scandinavian – new answers to old questions

1 Introduction

All standard varieties of Scandinavian share the characteristic of nouns being inflected for definiteness by means of a suffix; cf. for example Sw. *hus* “house” and *huset* “the house”. The first recorded instances of what look like definite noun forms in Scandinavian appear in a couple of Swedish runic inscriptions from the 11th century.

Apparently, the emergence of the definite inflection of nouns is the first step in a series of morphosyntactic changes that eventually resulted in an obligatory formal distinction between definite and indefinite noun phrases all over Scandinavia. The entire process is drawn out and the rules and means, finally settled, to make the distinction vary between the

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Abstract: This article takes up the much debated questions of how and when the definite forms of nouns emerged in Scandinavian. The topic has been paid great interest over the years, but answers to the questions still vary considerably, no doubt because this very early process is difficult to follow in detail in written sources. The conclusions in this article are founded on a variety of approaches, combining solid empiricism and theoretical considerations. Furthermore, empirical evidence from all over Scandinavia is considered. It is found that the definite suffix probably emerged from two related demonstratives (with weakened deixis), *hinn* on the mainland and *enn* on Iceland, in parallel, mutually independent processes. This means, in turn, that the emergence must be dated to a point of time after the colonization of Iceland. In order to reach a more precise dating, insights from functionalist and Minimalist approaches to grammaticalization are taken into account. It is suggested that the definite form emerged around 1000, not long before the first attested instances are found, but it is maybe not until the 12th century that it had a more noticeable impact on people’s linguistic usage.

Keywords: development of definiteness marking, Early Scandinavian, definite suffixes, grammaticalization.

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Scandinavian languages. However, all standard varieties are still alike in one respect: using the definite form of the noun is the only way to express definiteness as long as there is no pre-nominal attribute.

In this paper, I focus on the very start of the process mentioned, i.e. on the emergence of the definite suffix, addressing two basic questions: How did the suffix emerge? And when did it emerge more precisely? These questions seem to be the subjects of never-ending discussion. In spite of the great attention paid to the issue, there are still no unanimous answers, obviously because the details of this first steps in the process are indeed hard to discern in written sources. However, I believe there is more evidence, direct and indirect, than generally recognized to shed light on the process.

In the following, I pay much attention to empirical evidence, scrutinizing all kinds of records that can contribute to a well-founded view on how and when the definite forms of nouns emerged. But I also discuss various data from the basic theoretical standpoint that we should seek answers that are probable from a typological point of view. As a general principle, this view has already had some impact on my comprehension of the origin of the suffix. As regards the dating of its emergence, I will also make use of the more elaborated approaches to grammaticalization as articulated by functionally oriented scholars, as well as by adherents of Minimalism.

To some extent, I draw attention to empirical evidence found in the literature, for reason that is not always adequately noticed or addressed in discussions of the development of definiteness marking in Scandinavian. On a number of matters, though, I provide fresh empirical investigations of importance to shed new light on the process.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 gives a brief account of the nominal inflection in Early Scandinavian,¹ and section 3 presents an overview of and some comments on earlier research as well as some theoretical background to the following surveys. Section 4 and 5 are mainly devoted to the question of how the definite suffix emerged, chiefly its origin; section 4 focuses on the scanty evidence on the mainland, whereas section 5 focuses on the earliest instances of definiteness marking in Iceland. Section 6–8 concentrate on the question of when the suffix

¹ My umbrella term *Early Scandinavian* encompasses all Scandinavian varieties during the Viking Age (c.800–c.1100) and a large part of the Middle Ages (c.1100–c.1500). When differentiating between the two branches of Scandinavian, I use the terms *West Norse* for the varieties in Norway and Iceland and *East Norse* for the varieties in Sweden and Denmark.

emerged. The short section 6 is devoted to the implications of some attested transitional forms on the way to a full-fledged suffix. In section 7 and 8, two different approaches to grammaticalization are tested as methods to further pinpoint the birth of the definite suffix. Section 9, finally, sums up the findings.

2 Nominal inflexion in Early Scandinavian

The presentation in this section aims to provide the reader that is not familiar with the (nominal) morphology of Early Scandinavian some basic information to facilitate further reading.

In Early Scandinavian, a noun belonged to one of three genders, masculine, feminine or neuter, and was inflected for number (singular or plural) and case (nominative, genitive, dative or accusative), though not always unambiguously so. The system is illustrated in Figure 1.² The figure does not show the entire picture, as a noun belonged not only to a certain gender, but also to a certain declension of that gender, defined by its inflectional morphemes.

The paradigm in Figure 1 shows forms of the noun that were originally unmarked for definiteness; they were compatible with a definite as well as an indefinite interpretation.

Adjectives agreed with the nouns they modified in gender, number and case, but there were two guises for every combination of gender,

		Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Singular	Nom.	<i>fisk-r</i>	<i>bón</i>	<i>skip</i>
	Gen.	<i>fisk-s</i>	<i>bón-ar</i>	<i>skip-s</i>
	Dat.	<i>fisk-i</i>	<i>bón</i>	<i>skip-i</i>
	Acc.	<i>fisk</i>	<i>bón</i>	<i>skip</i>
Plural	Nom.	<i>fisk-ar</i>	<i>bón-ir</i>	<i>skip</i>
	Gen.	<i>fisk-a</i>	<i>bón-a</i>	<i>skip-a</i>
	Dat.	<i>fisk-um</i>	<i>bón-um</i>	<i>skip-um</i>
	Acc.	<i>fisk-a</i>	<i>bón-ir</i>	<i>skip</i>

Figure 1. The inflection of *fiskr* “fish”, *bón* “prayer” and *skip* “ship” in Early Scandinavian.

² The spelling of Early Scandinavian forms basically follows the normalized West Norse standard, e.g. by marking long vowels with an accent.

		Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
		Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Singular	Nom.	<i>rik-r</i>	<i>rik-i</i>	<i>rik</i>	<i>rik-a</i>	<i>rik-t</i>	<i>rik-a</i>
	Gen.	<i>rik-s</i>	<i>rik-a</i>	<i>rik-rar</i>	<i>rik-u</i>	<i>rik-s</i>	<i>rik-a</i>
	Dat.	<i>rik-um</i>	<i>rik-a</i>	<i>rik-ri</i>	<i>rik-u</i>	<i>rik-u</i>	<i>rik-a</i>
	Acc.	<i>rik-an</i>	<i>rik-a</i>	<i>rik-a</i>	<i>rik-u</i>	<i>rik-t</i>	<i>rik-a</i>

Figure 2. Strong and weak inflection of the adjective *rik* “rich” in Early Scandinavian (singular forms).

number and case, the so-called strong and weak forms, as demonstrated by the singular forms in Figure 2.

The weak adjectival declension is a Proto-Germanic innovation, but weakly inflected adjectives are nevertheless still infrequent in the Viking Age runic inscriptions (and even in the earliest Old Swedish manuscripts; see further Simke 2012, Stroh-Wollin & Simke 2014). The original function of the weak declension is somewhat unclear, even though the weak forms seem to have had a definite flavour very early (Ringe 2006:169 f.). The earliest attested weak forms, the ones found in runic inscriptions from the Viking Age, are generally preceded by a word of demonstrative origin, *hinn* (presented further below) or *sá/þenn*,³ and the phrases as a whole normally appear post-nominally – sometimes even post-posed, indicating that they were not part of the inner core of the noun phrase. Possibly, this kind of phrases had originally nominal status without an overt noun, as they only exceptionally appear with a noun head, but are freely used without (as *þen siuke* for “the sick (person)”) in the earliest Old Swedish medieval manuscripts (see further Stroh-Wollin 2015a).

There are two very common demonstratives in Early Scandinavian, *sá/þenn* (later *then* > *den* in the mainland varieties) and *þessi/þenni* (later *denne*, *denna* in the mainland varieties), of which the second paradigm has developed as a reinforcement of the first by the addition of the element *-si* to the different forms. The original singular nominative forms *sá* for the masculine gender and *sú* for the feminine gender are irregular.⁴

³ Sometimes a weak form appears after a proper name without *hinn* or *sá* in the runic inscriptions, in which case it may be interpreted as a byname. I have only found two indisputable Viking Age instances of ordinary adjectives in the weak form not preceded by *sá* or *hinn*: *Krist helgi* “holy Christ” and *syndalausi Krístr* “sinfree Christ” (DR 389 and G 200 respectively in the Scandinavian Runic Text Database). Both instances constitute somewhat special cases as they may represent conventionalized phrases, where it is quite conceivable that the pre-adjectival word has been dropped.

⁴ The *sá/þenn* paradigm, the two suppletive forms (i.e. *sá* and *sú*) included, is an Indo-European heritage.

		Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Singular	Nom.	<i>hinn</i>	<i>hin</i>	<i>hit</i>
	Gen.	<i>hins</i>	<i>hinnar</i>	<i>hins</i>
	Dat.	<i>hinum</i>	<i>hinni</i>	<i>hinu</i>
	Acc.	<i>hinn</i>	<i>hina</i>	<i>hit</i>
Plural	Nom.	<i>hinir</i>	<i>hinar</i>	<i>hin</i>
	Gen.	<i>hinna</i>	<i>hinna</i>	<i>hinna</i>
	Dat.	<i>hinum</i>	<i>hinum</i>	<i>hinum</i>
	Acc.	<i>hina</i>	<i>hinar</i>	<i>hin</i>

Figure 3. The inflection of *hinn*.

These two forms were exchanged for more regular ones early on, *penn* and *þe* respectively, in Mainland Scandinavian. Icelandic, on the other hand, retains the old irregular forms.

The demonstratives just mentioned have direct counterparts in other Germanic languages, e.g. Engl. *that* from the original paradigm and Engl. *this*, which is a reinforced variant. The demonstrative *hinn*, on the other hand, which is the assumed origin of the definite suffix, at least in Mainland Scandinavian (cf. below), does not seem to have had any counterpart in Germanic outside Scandinavia. The paradigm is presented in Figure 3. As will be shown below, the origin of the Icelandic definite suffix is most likely *enn*, not *hinn*, but the two demonstratives are probably closely related⁵ and inflect in the same way.

Basically, the definite suffix originally appears as the corresponding forms of *hinn* minus the initial *h*. It attached to the noun already inflected for number and case according to the paradigm demonstrated in Figure 1; *fiskr* + *inn* gives *fiskrinn* (nom.) ‘the fish’, *fisks* + *ins* gives *fisksins* (gen.) ‘the fish’s’ etc. However, the definite suffix drops its initial *i* if the first inflectional morpheme ends in a vowel, e.g. *fiska* + *ina* gives *fiskana* (pl. acc.) and sometimes after endings on *-r*, e.g. *fiskar* + *inir* gives *fiskarnir* (pl. nom.). Further, the plural dative form is a complicated matter: *fiskum* + *inum* ended up as *fiskunum* in West Norse and as *fiskumin* in East Norse.

The morphological system of Early Scandinavian accounted for above is principally retained in Icelandic and Faroese, whereas modern Swedish, Danish and Norwegian have a much reduced number of forms, mainly because case marking (anaphoric pronouns disregarded) is lost altogether.

⁵ *Hinn* is probably a reinforced variant of *enn*.

3 A brief overview of matters of debate and some theoretical prerequisites

In the two first subsections below, I account for and comment upon matters of debate concerning how and when the Scandinavian definite suffix emerged. As it is far from possible to do justice to all contributions in this long and extensive discussion, I give priority to more recent research. I hope that my selection covers the main standpoints. The interested reader can certainly find more exhaustive overviews in some of the works referred to in the text. In the third and last subsection, I discuss in more detail the challenges and possibilities in pinpointing the emergence of the definite suffix.

3.1 How did the definite suffix emerge?

It is generally assumed that the definite suffix stems from a post-posed demonstrative, generally identified as *hinn*. The grammaticalization process is illustrated in (1), where the case-marked demonstrative, here in the genitive, *hins*, is attached to *dags*, the word for “day” inflected for the same case.

- (1) *dag-s hin-s* > *dag-s'(h)in-s* > *dag-s-ins* (> *dagens*)

The double case marking on definite forms of nouns, as in *dagsins* “the day’s”, is retained in Icelandic and Faroese. The Mainland Scandinavian languages have lost case marking, but Swedish, Danish and some varieties of Norwegian use *-s* as a possessive marker, which can be attached to any indefinite or definite form of the noun; cf. *dagens* (day.DEF.POSS.) within brackets in (1).

There is no reason to call the process as such into question. However, the instances of *hinn* in early manuscripts chiefly have a kind of contrastive meaning: “the former one” or “the other one”. Instances of a pure demonstrative *hinn*, the assumed origin of the suffix, are conspicuous by their absence (cf. however section 4), which soon gave rise to the hypothesis that the origin of the definite suffix is rather to be found in post-posed adjectival phrases headed by *hinn* (see e.g. Delbrück 1916). As already mentioned, the first instances of weakly inflected adjectives (i.e. in Viking Age runic inscriptions) constantly appear post-nominally, preceded by some word of demonstrative origin, most often *hinn* (but in East Norse also *sá*).

We do in fact find noun phrases where a pre-adjectival *hinn* has cliticised to the preceding noun in accordance with the first step assumed by this hypothesis. The name of a famous longship, *Ormen Lange* (*ormrinn langi* in West Norse) ‘The Long Serpent’, is one example; see (2).⁶

- (2) *ormr hinn langi* > *ormrinn langi* (Old Norw.)
 serpent HINN long
 ‘The Long Serpent’

It was argued that once cliticisation as in (2) appeared regularly, noun + clitic could also have come into use without the adjective. This hypothesis, however, met early rejection on various grounds (among others by Nygaard 1905, Pollack 1912). Even later researchers have been sceptical of the hypothesis. It was, for instance, objected that phrases with *hinn* + adjective added to a noun were probably not frequent enough to have the assumed impact on grammar. Östen Dahl (2015:36) adds to this argument that there ‘also seems to be little concrete evidence of such a development anywhere’. Thus, I believe Lander & Haegeman (2013:3) are jumping to conclusions when they characterize this hypothesis as ‘the received view’, even though it is seriously considered in some recent works, e.g. Skrzypek (2009, 2010, 2012) and Börjars & Harries (2008).

Another circumstance that is sometimes brought to the fore, but still not clearly elucidated, is the fact that the pre-adjectival word is actually often *enn* or *inn*, not *hinn*, in the earliest Icelandic manuscripts. It is reasonable to assume a relation between *hinn* and the *h*-less variants. But which variant is the primary one? Martin Syrett (2002:273) proposes *hinn*, Dominika Skrzypek (2009:70) *inn* (see further below). Interestingly, the alternation between *enn* and *inn* is seldom taken notice of at all. These forms are generally regarded as just phonetic or orthographic variants of the same word, often represented as ‘*enn, inn*’ in early works (e.g. Noreen 1923, § 472), but nowadays normally just as ‘*inn*’. However, as will be shown below, this is not the whole truth.

To summarize, the question of how the definite suffix emerged concerns more than one aspect. One issue is whether the definite suffix stems from an ordinary demonstrative with weakened deixis or from a former demonstrative that for some reason seems to have been an indispensable companion to weakly inflected adjectives. Another issue is how the forms *hinn*, *inn* and *enn* are related and which one of them is the most

⁶ When glossing examples, I do not specify grammatical morphemes apart from definiteness markers (to be), which are glossed in small caps. In cases of citation, these morphemes are reproduced in the same form as they appear in the quote – but in small caps.

plausible candidate as origin of the definite suffix. In addition to these questions, I will raise one more, less discussed, viz. whether the definite inflection developed more or less simultaneously all over Scandinavia, or whether there was one particular centre of innovation from where it spread.

3.2 When did the definite suffix emerge?

Two instances of the word *andinni* (fem. sg. dat.) “the spirit” in two runic inscriptions are generally regarded as the first recorded definite forms in Scandinavian. Both instances are found on rune stones from the province of Uppland in Sweden, and they appear in two identical phrases: *Guð hialpi andinni* “May God help the spirit”.⁷ One of these inscriptions (U 644) is dated to c.1040; the other (U 669⁸) is a little later, from the latter half of the 11th century.⁹ Less attention has been paid to G 110 on the Isle of Gotland in the Baltic Sea from c.1000, where the sequence **stainin** is found. Thorgunn Snædal (2002:52) proposes the reading *staininn* (masc. sing. acc.) “the stone”, but I believe there is reason to hesitate about this interpretation, to which we will return.

The difficulties in following the details of the development demonstrated in (1) above, have led to widely varying proposals as regards the dating of the definite form.¹⁰ Scholars also sometimes draw quite different conclusions, even when their suggestions are based on recorded frequencies in various texts.

Harry Perridon (2002:1019) bases his view, on the one hand, on the two instances of definite forms on Upplandic rune stones from the 11th century (cf. above) and, on the other hand, on the Icelandic *First Grammatical Treatise* from the first half of the 12th century, where “the suffix is already used consistently”. He assumes that “by 1100 the practice of formally marking definiteness in nouns had spread to all parts of Scandi-

⁷ Here and in the following, cited rune sequences in italics are transcriptions, i.e. interpretations of the words written in the Latin alphabet and in accordance with modern orthographic norms, whereas cited rune sequences in bold face are transliterations. The sigla presented in connection to runic inscriptions refer to their designations in the national editions of runic inscriptions (*Sveriges runinskrifter*, *Norges innskrifter med de eldre runer*, *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*, *Danmarks runeindskrifter*) and the electronic Scandinavian Runic Text Database (for address, see References).

⁸ U 669 is now lost, but known from older drawings.

⁹ The dating of U 644 is rather exact as the commemorated person was one of the men who died in a well-known expedition with Ingvar the Far-Traveller to the Caspian Sea. The dating of U 669 is based on the style of the ornamentation.

¹⁰ See e.g. Perridon 1989:135 ff. for a more extensive overview.

navian language area”. However, in an overview on East Norse, Lars-Olof Delsing (2002: 938 f.) expresses some doubts about the evidence of the runic instances and calls attention to the fact that definite forms are still rare in the earliest mediaeval (East Norse) manuscripts. He also questions the “often repeated” argument that the scanty use of definite forms is a matter of style; the definite forms are rare, he notices, not only in the provincial laws, but also in the *Gutasaga* and in *The chronicles in Vidhem* from the 13th century. On the basis of these observations, Delsing is “inclined to believe that the article developed as an innovation in the 13th century”.

As for the two runic instances of *andinni*, one cannot fully exclude the possibility of a reading *and (h)inni*; no spaces have been used to segment the words in the prayer in these inscriptions. However, in that case, *(h)inni* would be understood as a non-bound definiteness marker rather than a demonstrative. Different variants of the prayer *Guð hialpi* + OBJECT “May God help ...” are rather common in memorial runic inscriptions, but no instance with an object *and þessi* “this spirit” containing the ordinary proximal demonstrative is found, whereas a variant with only a simple *and* or *salu* (fem. dat.) “soul”, is well attested (for instance in U 668, where the same men that erected U 669 in memory of their brother give a prayer for their dead father).¹¹ So, judging from the normal runic practice, the instances of *andinni* most plausibly represent either a noun + an early conventionalized definiteness marker, possibly cliticised, or a full-fledged suffixed definite form.

Concerning the evidence of the *First Grammatical Treatise*, one may note that this text is only preserved in a manuscript from the 14th century (Codex Wormianus). However, one cannot deny the presence of definite forms also in West Norse manuscripts from the late 12th and early 13th century (Larsson 1889, Holtsmark 1955).¹² Thus, Delsing’s dating of the innovation as such as late as the 13th century seems less probable – even on East Norse ground. On the other hand, Perridon’s description may give the impression of a frequent use of definite forms all over Scandinavia around 1100, which is not necessarily true. In his dissertation, Perridon (1989:142) speaks of “a hidden life” of the article in oral language before it turns up in written sources.¹³

¹¹ By far the most frequent variant of the prayer is *Guð hialpi and/salu* + a genitive denoting the deceased person.

¹² Cf. however section 5 about definiteness marking in early Icelandic.

¹³ Perridon & Sleeman (2011:4) date the emergence of the suffix (without further discussion) to the 9th or 10th century.

Östen Dahl (2015:38) also suggests an earlier dating than Delsing, among other things from the perspective of grammaticalization: “even the earliest attestations are suffixed rather than separate words, and they display non-anaphoric uses”. The first point is correct only as long as we do not consider the oldest West Norse manuscripts, where non-bound articles in fact appear regularly (Larsson 1889, Holtsmark 1955). The oldest West Norse manuscripts are significantly older than the oldest East Norse ones, and they will be taken into account in the following. The second point, that non-anaphoric uses of definite forms are early attested, is interesting. I will return to this topic in section 7.

Some scholars have proposed a very early dating. Lately, Börjars & Harries (2008:294 f.) repeat an older argument that the suffix more likely developed in Proto-Nordic, “rather than as independent developments in the daughter languages”. However, this has not been proven (and Börjars & Harries do not actually explore the subject, as it has no immediate relevance to their point). Furthermore, one may argue that already before 800, the Scandinavian language was spread over a rather large area, even though the colonization of Iceland came later.

Skrzypeck (2009:73 f) points to the regional distribution of pre-adjectival *hinn* and *inn* (*enn*) in East Norse and Icelandic respectively, and suggests that the *h*-less variant is primary and first gave rise to the definite suffix and later to the pre-adjectival *hinn*. The author concludes that the definite form emerged before the Viking Age, i.e. before 800, since *hinn* was already the normal pre-adjectival in East Norse at that time. Theoretically, there is nothing wrong with formulating this hypothesis, but I strongly doubt it can be borne out when considering various empirical facts, to which we will return.¹⁴

The survey above shows that scholars may land on very different suggestions when it comes to dating the emergence of the definite suffix in Scandinavian. I have also tried to show that there is often room for doubts regarding the reasoning in some way or another. In some cases, the hypotheses are not supported empirically. In other cases, the empirical basis is too limited, partly because of geographical near-sightedness.

¹⁴ The hypothesis is for example partly founded on the presumption that only the *h*-less variant is ever cliticised, but there is, in fact, at least one example of a cliticised *hinn* (see further below).

3.3 Pinpointing the emergence of the definite suffix – challenges and possibilities

The emergence of the definite suffix in Scandinavian is the result of the grammaticalization process illustrated in (1), repeated in (3) below, where the demonstrative *hinn* (here in the genitive form) first cliticises to the noun and is subsequently reinterpreted as an inflectional morpheme.

(3) *dag-s hin-s* > *dag-s'(h)in-s* > *dag-s-ins*

It is inherent in the nature of grammaticalization that the transition from one stage to the next is not abrupt; the development is sliding down the grammaticalization cline, which makes it a challenge to pinpoint more exactly when a certain transition has taken place.

Nor is it the case that the stages recognized in (3) as such represent well-defined steps. The word *hins* in a phrase such as *dags hins*, for example, may in theory be an ordinary demonstrative as well as a primitive definiteness marker, practically void of deictic meaning. Furthermore, a semantic bleaching of this kind is often accompanied by phonetic reduction, initially by reduced stress.

An advanced reduction of deixis and stress facilitates the cliticisation, which in this context simply means that the (former) demonstrative phonetically hooks on the preceding noun.¹⁵ I do not take the status of the word to change fundamentally when first cliticised, but the clitic is more likely combined with loss of the initial *h* than the free word, and the cliticisation is a necessary step towards the reinterpretation of the former demonstrative as a suffix.

The suffix is morphologically different from its precursor, and the reinterpretation is here assumed to have derivational consequences for the noun phrase. The aim of pinpointing the emergence of the definite suffix primarily concerns finding out approximately when this step was taken for the first time.

Jan Terje Faarlund (2009) has argued that the postposed definite article (as he puts it) was still a clitic in Old Norse, in contrast to Modern Norwegian, where it is a suffix. The author tests this idea on four different criteria, specifying the difference between clitics and affixes:

¹⁵ There is a vast literature on clitics, but I will not contribute to this debate here. I confine myself in this context to the unsophisticated description of cliticisation given above and will, for the sake of simplicity, also use the label *clitic* for the element attached to the noun as long as it has not attained affixal status.

- Clitics may have free counterparts, affixes do not.
- Clitics do not normally cause morphophonological changes in the host.
- No arbitrary gaps, which means that a clitic is not sensible to properties of the host, whereas an affix may fail to attach to certain items.
- Clitics may have their own inflection, while affixes *are* inflections.

However, none of these criteria can inevitably determine the status of the Old Norse article as a clitic, one problem being the uncertainty expressed by words such as *may* and *normally*. One can only conclude that the modern Norwegian article shows more suffixal properties than does its Old Norse counterpart, but this is to be expected, given the time passed.

Concerning the first criterion, it is not proven that the pre-adjectival *(h)inn* is a free counterpart to the post-nominal definite article, as the author seems to take for granted (Faarlund 2009:624).¹⁶ It is unclear why weakly inflected adjectives normally appeared with *hinn* in the earliest attested Scandinavian – as appositions or independent phrases without a head noun (cf. section 2), but it is likely that the pre-adjectival *hinn* had some other function than that of an ordinary definite article. In Stroh-Wollin 2015a, I argue that this was still the case as long as pre-adjectival *hinn* was in use on the whole (on the Mainland¹⁷), and thus, even when *hinn* + adjective later appeared pre-nominally.

When it comes to the second criterion, Faarlund (2009:624 f.) mentions the dative plural, such as Old Norse *hestunum* instead of **hestuminum* (< *hest-um* + *inum*), as a potential problem for his claim, but dismisses it as it is “a single instance among 17 distinct cells of definite forms”. I am inclined to take the opposite standpoint, i.e. to attach great importance to the dative plural forms, not only the West Norse variants on *-unum*, but also the East Norse ones on *-umin*. In East Norse the *-um* of the host is maintained, but it is followed by a phonetically reduced definiteness marker, i.e. *-in*, where the distinct dative ending (*-um*) of the former demonstrative/clitic is simply dropped (cf. section 2). At an early stage of suffixation, it is not surprising that words inflected for definiteness normally are not different on the surface from their corresponding variants

¹⁶ The analysis in Faarlund 2009 depends heavily on this assumption. For further discussion, see Stroh-Wollin 2015b and the references there.

¹⁷ Pre-adjectival *hinn* in modern Icelandic is secondary to the development of the definite suffix; see further section 5.

with clitics. Accordingly, these cases have little diagnostic value. Counterexamples, on the other hand, should be taken seriously.

The third and fourth criteria can only prove that the article in Modern Norwegian is an affix, but not that the article in Old Norse was not.

However, I nevertheless find the last of the statements above important from the theoretical point of view, as it summarizes my view of the difference between the definite clitic and the definite suffix. The clitic is in this case a complex item consisting of a stem (*h*)*in*- and an ending, whereas the allomorphs of the definite suffix assumingly are stored in the mental lexicon as units. This point is important for the formal analysis in section 8.

In the following, I will not use the kind of criteria discussed above to decide what kind of definiteness marking we have at different points of time.¹⁸ Instead, I will rely to a great extent on surveys in written documents. As these were created several hundred years ago and people at that time did not stick to firm orthographic norms, it is often impossible in specific cases to say for sure whether a certain writing represents an instance of this or that. However, this circumstance is not an insuperable methodological impediment.

It is interesting, for instance, that one finds post-nominal definiteness markers as, at least seemingly, free words in early West Norse documents, up to the beginning of the 13th century, whereupon this kind of writing ends. (The earliest East Norse manuscripts are later and do not show this feature.) Even though a space between the noun and the definiteness marker is not in every single case a certain sign that we are dealing with two words – or vice versa, it is most plausible that this change of writing habits in its entirety in fact indicates a movement along the grammaticalization cline.

Furthermore, early Icelandic offers an even more interesting case, its primitive definiteness marker being *enn*, not *hinn*. This means that we can follow, not only how *enn* hooks on the noun, but also how the vowel changes from *e* to *i*, presumably because of a reinterpretation from clitic to suffix. The Icelandic case is the topic of section 5 below, and the temporal implications of the findings from Icelandic and some occurrences of transitional forms from the mainland are briefly discussed in section 6.

¹⁸ I likewise find it hard in practise to make use of lists of features characterizing demonstratives in contrast to definite articles (or other grammaticalized items with their origin in demonstratives); see e.g. Diessel 1999:118 f. Such lists have great theoretical interest and may be more useful in modern synchronic surveys than in historical diachronic ones.

(4) extra-linguistic deixis > anaphoric reference > independent
definite reference
demonstrative
definite article

¹⁹ This stage is not final in the sense that a further development is impossible. Ever since Greenberg 1978, it is a well-known fact that definite articles may evolve into markers of specificity and even further into plain noun markers. However, if this happens it is no longer a question of a true definite article. The standard varieties of the Scandinavian languages do not show such expanded use of definite markers, but some vernaculars do (see further Dahl 2015).

²⁰ The stages correspond to the ones in Skrzypek 2012, but I do not use exactly the same labels as Skrzypek. Most important, I use *independent definite reference* where Skrzypek

1. extra-linguistic deictic reference
2. anaphoric reference
3. associative reference
4. independent definite reference
5. generic reference

It is not self-evident how this view of grammaticalization can be related to the model in (3), but taking independent definite reference to indicate full suffixation may be a qualified guess. The referential expansion of the definite form of nouns is the topic of section 7 below.

In section 8, I try a Minimalist analysis to date the emergence of the definite suffix. Minimalism offers a model that makes it possible to relate different phenomena that may seem unrelated on the surface. In this case, I direct the attention to the change of the noun phrase word order in Early Scandinavian and its possible relation to the emergence of the definite suffix, for reason that dating of the word order change may indirectly reveal the birth date of the suffix.

4 In search of the origin of the definite suffix (on the mainland)

As pointed out above, the absence in the sources of a free demonstrative *hinn* as precursor to the definite suffix led to the early hypothesis that the suffix actually derived from *hinn* in post-posed adjectival phrases. For theoretical reasons, I believe, as do many others, that this is unlikely. One aspect is indeed the low frequency of adjectival modifiers (cf. section 3.1). Another aspect is the typological one pointed out by Dahl (2015:36) that we do not have any evidence of a similar development elsewhere. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that the grammaticalization of a definiteness marker does not happen just accidentally. Rather, we would expect that the process is caused by an extended use of demonstratives for – in a first step – anaphoric reference (cf. section 3.3).

Now, one may ask if it is completely impossible to find some empirical evidence of a normal demonstrative *hinn* in Early Scandinavian. One possible instance that is in fact frequently adduced is the rune sequence **hali hino** “this stone” (acc.) on a whetstone from the 6th century found

has *unique reference*; *unique* may give the impression that the label encompasses truly unique referents, such as *the sun*, rather than referents that are not unique but uniquely identifiable in a certain context.

in Strøm, Norway (N KJ50).²¹ The whetstone from Strøm is generally referred to as the only possible example of an ordinary demonstrative *hinn*. However, I believe there is more evidence that deserves attention, even though it is somewhat uncertain and somewhat indirect.

First, there is a medieval Danish runic inscription (DR 47) found on a plate on a door that, unfortunately, has sustained a great deal of damage, although some of the runes have been interpreted as *hin dyr* “this door”. Furthermore, there are two other medieval inscriptions of interest from the Isle of Gotland in the Baltic. One of these (G 206) is found on the inside of a locker, where a possible neuter form *hit* “this” can be read, but the head noun has not been interpreted, so we cannot know for sure. The other one (G 39) was found on a grave cover that is now lost, but a fairly good drawing survives, clearly indicating the rune sequence **hin : st ...**, which has not unreasonably been interpreted *hinn st[ain]* “this stone”.

In addition to these medieval inscriptions, we have the rune sequence **stainin** on G 110 mentioned above. The inscription is dated to c.1000 by Snædal (2002:52), who suggests that this is an early (if so, the earliest attested) instance of a noun in the definite form: *staininn* “the stone”. However, no spaces have been used to segment words in this inscription, so an interpretation *stain [h]inn* “this stone” is also possible and fits well into the normal pattern of Viking Age runic inscriptions with a post-posed demonstrative after a noun denoting the very object that bears the writing. Furthermore, the fact that the inscription is found on Gotland is also worth considering.

We can actually also find some indirect evidence, mainly from Gotland, of a lost deictic *hinn*. There are 11 runic inscriptions from the island (G 5, G 55, G 66, G 78, G 83, G 101, G 102, G 103, G 104E, G 231, G 240; see also Snædal 2002:221) dating from the 13th through 16th centuries that show some form of a demonstrative, which may be taken as a reinforced variant of *hinn*. We find the forms *hinna* and *hissan* (sg. masc. acc.), *hissun* (sg. fem. acc.) and *hitta* (sg. neutr. nom.). In addition, the form *hitta* is found in the provincial law of Gotland (GL, p. 89) from the early Middle Ages and, furthermore, in a runic inscription from the province of Uppland (U NOR2000:27A) on a tuning key from the early 12th century.

All in all, though uncertain and indirect, this evidence points in the direction of a lost *hinn* demonstrative. Because of a weakened deixis, it

²¹ It could be noted, though, that there are in fact two formally acceptable interpretations of **hino**: *hi-no* and *hin-no*, i.e. with a Proto-Scandinavian accusative inflection *-no* on the stem *hi-* or on the stem *hin-*. We have evidence of the former demonstrative stem, for example in Gothic *hina*, *himma*, *hita* “this” and in the German word *heute* “today” (< *hiu tagu* “this day”).

appears only occasionally in its original form in deictic contexts, but it seems as if a strengthened variant survived for some time on Gotland, and maybe also on the neighbouring mainland. Thus, we have a very good candidate for a definiteness marker to be, i.e. an ordinary demonstrative, but with a much weakened deictic force.²² This also means that we do not have to seek the origin of the definite suffix in the pre-adjectival *hinn*, accidentally cliticising on the noun. The pre-adjectival use may be understood as just another function developed from the same demonstrative as the suffix.

5 Early Icelandic – not *hinn*, but *enn*

In Mainland Scandinavian, nothing points to any other origin of the definite suffix and the (primary) companion to weakly inflected adjectives than *hinn*. The pre-adjectival *hinn* can be traced to the 9th century (because of an instance in the runic inscription on the Swedish Rök stone, Ög 136), and there is no ambivalence concerning the spelling of the vowel of the definite endings to arouse suspicion of its origin (Stroh-Wollin 2014). In Iceland, on the other hand, the origin was, as will be shown below, not *hinn*, but *enn*. Furthermore, we can get an inkling of how a post-posed freestanding *enn* cliticises to the preceding noun and adjusts the quality of the vowel in accordance with normal endings.

The instances of *enn* and *-enn* in the earliest Icelandic are hidden in modern editions with normalized spelling. The pre-adjectival *enn* is normalized as *inn* or *hinn* (the latter in accordance with the modern pre-adjectival article in Icelandic) and the post-nominal *(-)enn* is just transformed to a regular suffix *-inn*; cf. the normalized and the diplomatic version, henceforth IH (de Leeuw van Weenen 1993), of a phrase from the Icelandic Homily Book in (5a–b).

- (5) a. *inn efsti fulltrúi lífsins álangur* (Einarsson et al. 1993:177)
 INN highest guarantee life.GEN.INS in-the-future
 “the highest guarantee for the future life”
 b. *enn efste fulltrúe lífs ens alengr* (IH 53r)

²² Admittedly, this demonstrative had proximal deixis, whereas it is generally claimed that definite articles in most cases develop from distal demonstratives (De Mulder & Carlier 2011). This is also repeated for the case of Scandinavian in the works of Skrzypek (2009, 2010, 2012). But the rule is not conclusive and we can take a weak deixis to be of more crucial importance than the distal or proximal nature of the demonstrative.

The normalizing of pre-adjectival *enn* may be due to the view that *inn* and *enn* are taken as merely two phonetic or orthographic variants of the same word, possibly as *h*-less variants of *hinn*. (The inflectional morphemes are identical.)

However, we actually find *hinn* in two other functions in Old Icelandic texts. It can be a demonstrative with a specific kind of deixis, indicating contrast: “the other (one)” or “the former (one)” (cf. German *jener* and English *yon, yonder*). It also appears, alongside *sá/þenn*, as antecedent to relative clauses (or *that* clauses), in which case it may, but does not have to, express contrastive meaning as well. These uses of *hinn* are found in all varieties of medieval Scandinavian. But whereas the mainland varieties also have *hinn* in pre-adjectival position, there is a clear division of labour between *hinn* and *enn* in the earliest recorded Old Icelandic.²³

Occasionally *hinn* also turns up in the pre-adjectival function in, for instance, the Icelandic Homily Book from c.1200. These texts contain 40 pre-adjectival *hinn* (12 of which are in one and the same homily), compared to 431 *enn* – and 8 *inn*.²⁴ But a not too far-fetched suspicion is that most instances of pre-adjectival *hinn* have been taken over from Norwegian originals. There are a number of closely related versions of sermons in the contemporary Icelandic and Norwegian books of homilies, indicating a mutual exchange of this kind of text across the sea.

One possibility to consider is of course whether *enn* and *inn* are not just weakened forms of *hinn*, manifested in *h*-drop. If so, the large dominance of *enn* over *inn* could perhaps be due to the fact that the unstressed vowel *i*, found above all in endings, was often spelled <e> during an early period of Icelandic (Benediktsson 1962²⁵). However, I claim this is not the case, because *enn*- forms are just as frequent in texts with <i> as those with <e> for /i/ in endings. Instead, the distribution of *enn*- forms and *inn*- forms in different functions reveals a great deal about the development of the definite suffix in Icelandic.

Table 1 below shows the number of pre-adjectival *enn*, *inn* and *hinn*, of post-nominal free (non-bound) *enn* and *inn* and of post-nominal bound *-enn* and *-inn* in three homilies (indexed *e*, *n1* and *n2* in de Leeuw

²³ This implies in turn that we most likely should regard the common Scandinavian contrastive *hinn* and pre-adjectival *hinn* found on the mainland as two different words.

²⁴ The numbers are based on counting occurrences in Larsson 1891 and de Leeuw van Weenen 1993.

²⁵ The later spelling with <i> is not, according to Benediktsson, due to phonetic change in unstressed syllables, but to adjustments of the vowel quality in short stressed syllables. Thus, <e> and <i> in endings, for instance, represent the same allophone of /i/.

Table 1. The number of *enn*, *inn* and *hinn* in pre-adjectival position and of free and bound (-)*enn* and (-)*inn* as definiteness markers in post-nominal position in three homilies from *The Icelandic Homily Book* (IH) and the Christian Laws Section of *Grágás*, texts which normally have <i> for /i/ in endings.

Text	Pre-adjectival			Post-nominal			
	<i>enn</i>	<i>inn</i>	<i>hinn</i>	Free		Bound	
				<i>enn</i>	<i>inn</i>	- <i>enn</i>	- <i>inn</i>
IH: e	6	1	0	4	0	6	19
IH: n1	18	1	2	5	0	11	52
IH: n2	12	2	0	14	1	8	73
Grágás: KB	32	47	0	0	0	0	76

van Weenen 1993) from the Icelandic Homily Book and in the Christian Laws Section of *Grágás*, the medieval Icelandic collection of laws (following Codex Regius, c.1260, ed. Finsen 1852). The texts chosen regularly use <i>, not <e>, for /i/ in endings. Instances of the bound morpheme are of course not counted when its vowel is dropped, most often when the first inflectional morpheme is vocalic. This is uncomplicated concerning forms such as *fiskana* (pl. acc.) < *fisk-a* + *enali/ina*, but it is important to notice that the rule also applies to forms such as *fiskinum* (sg. dat.) < *fisk-i* + *enum/inum*.

Table 1 shows that the pre-adjectival word and the free post-nominal definiteness marker are normally written as *enn* in the homilies investigated, whereas the bound morpheme is more often *-inn* than *-enn*. In the law text, written about 60 years later, we have a bound post-nominal *-inn* throughout, whereas the pre-adjectival word has both forms, although *inn* is the most common.

In other words, we can discern a pattern in which an original *enn* takes on the normal vowel of endings when bound to a noun (*-enn* > *-inn*), which indicates that a clitic is then reanalysed as a regular inflectional suffix. Somewhat later, the spelling of the pre-adjectival word shifts in the same direction, maybe influenced by the post-nominal suffix. This change of vowel quality may in turn have led to confusion about *inn* being a different word from *hinn*, especially as the latter word was regularly used pre-adjectively in contemporary Norwegian. We know, anyhow, that *inn* was later abandoned and that *hinn* became the normalized pre-adjectival article.

Finally, the question of what demonstrative is the origin of the Scandinavian definite suffix seems to have two answers. It was *hinn* in Mainland Scandinavia and *enn* in Iceland. This also indicates that the completion of definiteness marking by suffixation followed its own path in Iceland. Thus, we cannot assume only one single centre of innovation to explain the uniform spread of the definite inflexion of nouns all over Scandinavia. Instead, the process might just have been “in the air”. Actually, other Germanic languages, as well as the Romance and Celtic, also develop definiteness marking at approximately the same time (Perridon & Sleenman 2011:3).

6 Transitional forms

The Icelandic data presented above seem to be the closest we can get to a direct observation of the different steps in the grammaticalization of the Scandinavian definite suffix. As the Icelandic origin of the suffix is *enn*, not *hinn* as on the mainland, the Icelandic process is better captured by (6) than by (3) above, but apart from the slightly different origins of the suffix, we may expect parallel processes in Iceland and on the mainland.

(6) *dag-s en-s* > *dag-s'en-s* > *dag-s-ins*

However, we can only get a glimpse of some reminiscences of the first steps of this process in some of the preserved homilies, where all three variants shown in (6) are seemingly represented. But even here, the suffixed variant is the most common one already, and the Icelandic law book from c.1260 does not show but the suffixed variant.

So, what we actually can observe directly of the Icelandic grammaticalization process is some transitional forms on the way from demonstrative to suffix, to which we may count also the non-bound instances of *enn*, as they generally seem to be void of deictic meaning.

The earliest Norwegian manuscripts also show a certain occurrence of the non-bound post-nominal *enn* (Holtmark 1955). Moreover, they also exhibit some other transitional forms. One example is an instance of the plural dative form where the inflectional complexity of the demonstrative/clitic is retained, viz. *steinomenom* “the stones” in the Norwegian Homily Book (Indrebø 1931:49, 45). As pointed out above (cf. section 2 and 3.3), the *-uminum* (appearing here as *-omenom*) for the dative plural cases was later simplified to *-unum* (in West Norse).

Another interesting early Norwegian text is a fragment of the Saga of Olav Tryggvason (Codex de la Gardie 4), which shows three nice examples of *hinn* (with retained *h-*) as a post-posed definiteness marker. One instance is *hunzhins* “the dog’s”, clearly written as one word. There are also two instances where the *hin-* form follows on a new line, *atsoken hinne* “the battle” and *hugar hins* “the soul’s”. As the writer never uses hyphens, it is impossible to judge whether we have free or bound definite markers in these cases.

Just like the Icelandic one, the manuscript of the Norwegian book of homilies is dated to c.1200 and the fragment of the Olav Tryggvason Saga to the middle of the 13th century. It is possible, maybe even probable, that the transitional forms are reminiscences from earlier manuscripts, but I hesitate to predate them much more than a hundred years or so. If this is correct, the 12th century seems a period of consolidation as regards the definite suffix, at least in West Norse. The earliest East Norse manuscripts are significantly later than 1200. As mentioned above, they show a rather scanty use of definite forms, but no transitional forms. At this stage, I can see nothing in particular to indicate whether the development in East Norse is ahead of or lagging behind the development in West Norse.

7 Medieval Scandinavia – more and more definite forms. What can the rate of increase tell us?

As noted above, Östen Dahl (2015:38) takes the fact that “even the earliest attestations [...] display non-anaphoric uses” as an argument in favour of a fairly early dating of the definite form. Dahl refers here to the observation that definiteness markers expand their referential capacity as the grammaticalization process proceeds. The “non-anaphoric uses” mentioned indicate that the process has advanced beyond the initial stage; cf section 3.3.

In order to get some empirically based idea on how this referential expansion proceeds in Early Scandinavian, I have investigated how the formal structures of semantically definite noun phrases are related to the referential categories in two complexes of narrative prose texts, one reflecting Norwegian around 1200 and one reflecting Swedish around

1300.²⁶ The earlier texts come from the miracles of Saint Olav in the *Norwegian Homily Book* (ed. Indrebø 1938); the first ten miracles of Saint Olav have been investigated. Like its Icelandic counterpart, the Norwegian Homily Book is one of the earliest preserved Scandinavian manuscripts, and apparently, there was a mutual exchange of sermons between Norway and Iceland, as many similar versions appear in both books of homilies. However, as regards the miracles of Saint Olav, the Norwegian provenience is certain.²⁷ The later text complex consists of legends devoted to Saint Jacob the Great in the *Old Swedish Legendary* (Codex Bureanus, ed. SFSS 7:1, pp. 166–176).²⁸

In the investigation, semantically definite noun phrases with no modifiers or with only a demonstrative were excerpted and sorted into three referential categories, labelled OLD, ASS and KNOW, in principle corresponding to the anaphoric, associative and independent definite references presented in section 3.3. The analysis and the labels used here are partly inspired by The PROIEL Project's "Guidelines for annotation of givenness" (accessible online, see References). Noun phrases with modifiers other than demonstratives were not considered, since the development of definiteness marking in noun phrases with adjectival and other pre-posed attributes is a quite a different story and proceeds along different paths in Norwegian and Swedish.²⁹

The label OLD means that the referent is mentioned beforehand and is present in the discourse, see (7), where the word in bold face, *stenen* (stone.DEF.) "the stone", exemplifies NPs of this category.

- (7) *þe baro a land hælaghan licama. ok lagþo a en sten [...] **stenen** veks for benom som vaks for insighle* (Codex Bureanus, p. 166)
 "They carried the holy corps on shore and put it on a stone [...].
The stone gave way to the bones like wax to a seal."

²⁶ Skrzypek 2012 studies the process in Old Swedish from the oldest law text (c.1225) up to the early 1500s. However, she does not provide the same kind of figures as I do here.

²⁷ According to Haugen & Ommundsen (2010:15), the Miracles of Saint Olav were created close in time to the preserved manuscript, i.e. c.1200.

²⁸ The Legendary is estimated to have been created somewhere between 1276 and 1306. The original manuscript is lost and only two later manuscripts remain, the (incomplete) Codex Bureanus being the oldest. This codex is dated to the mid-14th century. However, the concordance of the language in the two preserved manuscripts makes it plausible that they both largely reflect the language of the time the text was created. There is one exception, though: the last legend about Saint Jacob the Great was obviously added later, as it refers to an event that took place in 1340. This legend is not part of the investigation here.

²⁹ It would carry too far to sort out the details here. See Stroh-Wollin 2015a for an account of definite NPs with adjectival attributes in Old Swedish and, to some extent, Old Norwegian.

The label ASS means that the referent itself is not mentioned beforehand, but may be identified by association with some previously mentioned referent or that it can in some other way be understood from the discourse, see (8a–b).³⁰ The words *hendi* “hand” and *søvni* “sleep” below (both in the dative case) exemplify this referential category. The nouns would have been in the definite form in modern Scandinavian, but appear here in the unmarked form. When a possessive reading is possible, English generally uses possessives rather than the definite article, cf. the translations below.

- (8) a. [...] *at hann sat ok tælgði vond ein með knifi er hann hafðe í hendi* [...] (Norw. Homily Book, p. 118)
 “[...] that he was whittling a stick with a knife that he had in **his hand** [...]”
- b. [...] *þa sofnaðe hann í kirkju inni, ok syndisk hanom í søvni maðr ein* [...] (Norw. Homily Book, p. 116)
 “[...] then he fell asleep inside the church, and a man revealed himself to him in **his sleep** [...]”

The label KNOW means that the referent is not mentioned beforehand, but is possible to identify in the given context by the reader’s general knowledge of the world. One example is the word *ofn* “oven” in (9), which is readily understood as the oven normally found in a household.

- (9) *Heldr bauð hann ambot sinni [...] at hon skyldi fara ok elda ofn till brauðs ok baka* [...] (Norw. Homily Book, p. 115)
 “Instead, he asked his maid (...) to go and light **the oven** to bake bread.”

NPs referring to unique referents stored in people’s “encyclopedic” memory are somewhat special and often name-like, such as *doma dagh* (acc.) “doomsday”, and have not been included in the KNOW category.

The results of the excerption are shown in Tables 2 and 3. In NPs with no modifier, the noun (N) can appear either in the definite or in the unmarked form.³¹ The demonstrative appears in the Norwegian text as *sá* (three times post-nominally). The Swedish text has both *þænn* (< *sá*) and the reinforced variant *þænne*.

³⁰ The orthography in examples from the Norwegian Homily Book is somewhat normalized.

³¹ I use the notation *unmarked* instead of *indefinite*, since the absence of the definite suffix is not incompatible with a semantically definite reading and the excerpted NPs are in fact semantically definite.

Table 2. The structure of semantically definite noun phrases (with no or only demonstrative modifiers) in *The Miracles of Saint Olav* (1-10) in the Norwegian Homily Book (c.1200).

Referential category Structure	OLD		ASS		KNOW		Tot.	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
N unmarked	8	18	13	57	10	83	31	39
N definite	27	60	3	13	2	17	32	40
sá + N unmarked	8	18	6	26	0	0	14	17
N unmarked + sá	2	4	1	4	0	0	3	4
Total	45		23		12		80	

As can be seen from the tables, the overall use of the definite form is considerably higher in the later text complex compared to the younger one, 72% and 40% respectively. It is also noteworthy that the number of NPs with demonstratives is relatively high in the older narratives. This kind of phrase is (sometimes) still possible (and occasionally even necessary) in the modern languages for anaphoric (OLD) and associative (ASS) references, but the figures here indicate that it was a more natural variant of the definite form around 1200. For this reason, I prefer to base the comparison between reference categories on the figures for NPs solely consisting of a noun in the unmarked form, which presumably reflect the extent to which it was possible to dispense with all kinds of definiteness marking.

As expected, this comparison shows that the OLD category has the smallest portion and the KNOW category the highest portion of NPs with no visible definite morpheme, whereas the ASS category falls somewhere in between. This applies to both text collections, and for all three

Table 3. The structure of semantically definite noun phrases (with no or only demonstrative modifiers) in the legends of the Saga of Saint Jacob the Great in the *Old Swedish Legendary*, (c.1300).

Referential category Structure	OLD		ASS		KNOW		Tot.	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
N unmarked	6	9	5	31	16	55	27	24
N definite	59	89	8	50	13	45	80	72
þænn + N unmarked	0	0	1	6	0	0	1	1
þænne + N unmarked	1	2	2	13	0	0	3	3
Tot.	66		16		29		111	

reference categories, the portion is considerably smaller in the younger collection than in the older one.

The overall impression is that the 13th century is a period of rapid increase when it comes to formal definiteness marking, one could say in the steep rise of the S-curve. However, further conclusions on the topic in this paper must of course be drawn with caution, as I have only investigated two complexes of texts that are not very extensive from two different Old Scandinavian varieties. Nevertheless, a sort of extrapolation backwards in time could provide a rough picture.

If only considering the use of the suffixed forms for KNOW references as the sign of a true definiteness marker in the most rigorous sense, we can see that nearly half of the instances (45%) take the definite form in the younger collection of texts, but only two out of twelve instances (17%) in the older. This takes us back to the 12th century, but not necessarily further. However, with a less strict criterion, we might predate the emergence of the definite form somewhat. When taking the total portions of definite forms into account, we would rather suggest the 11th century, maybe even the late 10th century, if considering the first slow climb of the S-curve that represents the earliest phase of a linguistic change.

8 The implications of early word order changes in definite noun phrases

The previous section dealt with the emergence of the definite suffix as grammaticalization from a functionalist point of view. In this section, I will try a Minimalist approach to grammaticalization in one more effort to pinpoint the emergence of the definite suffix.

The reason for trying this theoretical approach as well is the potential it brings to argue for a causal relation between the emergence of formal definiteness marking and changes of the noun phrase word order in Early Scandinavian. As will be shown in more detail below, such word order changes are discernible from the late Viking Age and onwards, which means that they apparently run in parallel to the development of definiteness marking. And if it is not only a question of a temporal coincidence, but also of a causal connection, there may be a way to indirectly date the emergence of the definite suffix by dating the change of word order.

The section is organized in the following way. 8.1 gives a Minimalist presentation of the noun phrase structure of Modern Scandinavian and suggests a model for Viking Age Scandinavian, supported by some empirical evidence. Section 8.2 contains, first, a brief account of grammaticalization from the Minimalist point of view, whereupon I present a hypothesis concerning the reinterpretation of *(b)inn* as a formal definiteness marker and discuss, with some more empirical support, its impact on the noun phrase structure, particularly on the relative order of noun and demonstrative. Finally, section 8.3 presents the conclusion.

The theoretical account below is deliberately simplified. I try to keep the details to a minimum, as the Minimalistic description is not a goal in this context, but a means to argue for a causal relation between changes to the noun phrase word order and the emergence of formal definiteness marking – in order to date the latter by dating the former.³²

8.1 Noun phrase structure in Modern and Viking Age Scandinavian

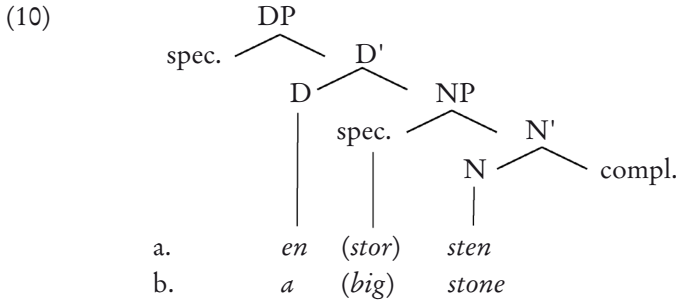
In section 8.1.1 below, I account for a simplified, non-detailed, Minimalist model of an abstract noun phrase structure applying to modern Scandinavian and argue for a slightly different variant in (early) Viking Age Scandinavian, a language void of formal definiteness markers. My hope is also that readers with little to no familiarity with Minimalist syntax are able to follow the reasoning. In section 8.1.2, I follow up by providing empirical evidence to support my model for the Viking Age noun phrase.

8.1.1 *The abstract structure of noun phrases*

It is nowadays (since Abney 1987) generally assumed among Minimalists that a full (argumental) noun phrase, e.g. in modern Germanic languages, is not an NP, but a DP, i.e. (minimally) an NP with a DP superstructure on top; see the structure in (10).³³ The D of the DP can be associated with “determiner”, which captures the fact that articles and other determiners appear in the initial position of noun phrases; see (10a–b).

³² Stroh-Wollin 2015b gives a more detailed account of Minimalist terms for the entire process, from no marking to mandatory marking of (in)definiteness.

³³ As mentioned above, the model presented here is technically simplified. The NP in (10) actually represents the top of a more complex structure (cf. the nP in Julien 2005).



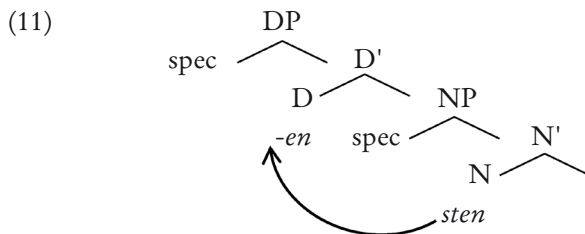
The N-node of the noun phrase structure is lexicalized by a head noun, as *sten/stone* in (8a–b). The noun may, but does not have to, take attributive phrases in its specifier and/or complement position(s); see spec. and compl. in (10). Whether or not the head takes a specifier and/or a complement, the result is an NP.³⁴

The constituents defining the character of the structural units, such as N in NP or D in DP, are called head constituents, whereas complements and specifiers are phrase constituents. All structural units are organized according to the same principle and combine elements consistently in a binary fashion: heads combine, or “merge” as the term goes, first with their complement, whereas specifiers merge, in a second step, with the mergers of head and complement (see the N' and D'-nodes above). As syntagms are generally composed of structurally similar units on top of each other, we typically get the kind of hierarchical backbone structure illustrated in (10).

D, constituting the head of DP, is a functional category, which means that it is defined by an abstract functional feature. This feature attracts a lexical item carrying a lexical counterpart to the feature in question during the course of derivation.

The attracted item may be a grammatical word, such as the indefinite articles in (10a–b). But it may also be an inflectional affix, such as the definite suffix in Scandinavian, in which case the noun down the tree has to “move” to join it, as an affix must attach to a host; see the derivation of Sw. *stenen* “the stone” in (11). In a corresponding noun phrase in English, D is lexicalized by the free definite article *the* and the noun remains in N.

³⁴ The locus of adjectival attributes is a debated matter. Julien (2005) proposes an αP on top of her nP, but this is not necessary for my purposes.



If the feature in D attracts an affix or an article, it is inserted in the D-node. However, the functional feature may also come with some other constituent, for instance a possessive or a demonstrative, which are not necessarily head constituents; even single words sometimes constitute phrase constituents. There is, for instance, reason, according to Minimalist syntactic principles, to see a demonstrative consisting of a stem + an affix as a phrase constituent. In that case, it has to take the specifier position.

Now, what about noun phrase structure in languages without articles (or the like)? Many have taken the DP analysis more or less for granted in article-less languages as well, but this presumption has recently been challenged, not least in different works by Željko Bošković (see e.g. Bošković 2012). Moreover, Lander & Haegeman (2013) have tested Old Norse on some of the criteria put forward by Bošković to distinguish between languages with definite determiners and a DP on top of NP, so-called DP languages on the one hand, and, on the other hand, languages without formal definite determiners and assumingly also without the DP layer, so-called NP languages. The authors do not adopt a definite position on the question of whether Old Norse lacks the DP layer or not, but state that the language behaves like an NP language according to the criteria tested.

In the following, I adopt the view that languages without articles are not DP languages, also stemming from the theoretical standpoint that functional categories should not be innate, but created afresh by every individual when acquiring a mother tongue. However, when dealing with the earliest attested forms of Scandinavian, I nevertheless assume a functional projection on top of NP, which I name EP for the sake of simplicity, with E for *edge*. This is partly inspired by Börjars, Harries & Vincent (2016:e16), who identify a high “discourse-prominent position on the left edge”.³⁵

³⁵ In other respects, I do not follow Börjars, Harries & Vincent. They do not put forward a Minimalist analysis, but argue, with reference to the relatively free word order in Old Scandinavian, for a rather “flat structure in which elements are not associated with particular positions” (p. e16). However, I believe the word order is not as free as these authors claim. Furthermore, and also not observed in their article, it becomes less free as we proceed in time.

A consequence of the assumption that there is no DP in the Viking Age noun phrase is that no elements can be associated with a formal D-feature. Thus, possessives and demonstratives were definite only by force of their semantic meaning, but not formally definite. This means that they were more adjective-like than today and that we can readily have them, just as adjectival attributes, as specifiers in the NP, below the EP.

So, why do we need an EP? The empirically based answer to this question (more thoroughly demonstrated below) is that it explains the variation as regards noun phrase word order in Viking Age Scandinavian. I suggest that some constituent that was first attached in NP had to move to EP, and that this element could be the noun itself, as well as any specifier attribute. In addition, this freedom enabled a kind of pragmatic use of the initial position of the noun phrase. Noun first was unmarked, whereas fronting of an attribute underscored its contribution to the phrase.³⁶

8.1.2 Empirical evidence of the EP-NP structure

Below, I present an investigation of noun phrases in Viking Age runic inscriptions to empirically support the EP-NP structure assumed above.

Five pairs of strings, combinations of a noun and a modifier, were searched in the Runic Text Database. The five pairs chosen were expected to show different patterns regarding the surface structure, on the assumption that fronting to the initial position was a means of assigning more weight to a modifier. Of course, it was also important to find combinations that occur rather frequently in runic inscriptions. The stereotyped formulation of memorial inscriptions is actually a help in that respect. (12) shows a typical example, transformed to English.

(12) NN had this stone raised in memory of NN, his father.

The commemorated person could of course be someone other than the erector's father, and sometimes there is a characteristic of the deceased person added at the end of the formula (cf. the cited runic inscriptions below).

Given the formula in (12), two pairs of noun + modifier were obvious

³⁶ I do not believe that the formal nature of EP should be interpreted in pragmatic terms, but rather that it just came into use for pragmatic purposes. I will not speculate further on this issue, as it is not at stake here.

choices for the investigation: *stein þenna* vs. *þenna stein* (acc.) “this stone” and *faður sinn* vs. *sinn faður* (acc.) “his father”. In these cases, we expect the unmarked noun-first word order to be predominant. Phrases such as *faður sinn/sinn faður* can be compared with phrases of a relationship where the modifier is a name in the genitive, not a possessive as *sinn*; see (13).

- (13) *Biorn, Finnviðar sunn, let hoggva hælli þessa æftiR Olæif, broður sinn.* (U 130)
 Bjorn Finnvið’s son let cut rock-slab this after Olæif brother his
 “Bjorn, Finnvið’s son, had this rock-slab cut in memory of Olæif, his brother.”

There is normally no reason to stress a possessive *sinn* that announces that the commemorated person in a runic inscription is the erector’s father or brother etc., because this is the unmarked case. But the situation is different when a less obvious relationship is announced and the use of a name in the genitive case is needed, as illustrated in (13). For the investigation, a search for the noun *sonr* (nom.) “son” was conducted, after which the instances with attributes consisting of names in the genitive in pre and post-positions were counted.

The investigation also comprises two pairs of noun phrases with adjectival attributes. In the first pair, the attribute consists of a single adjective, whereas in the second pair, the adjective is preceded by an intensifying adverbial; cf. (14a–b).

- (14) a. *Hærfpruðr ræisti stein þennsa æftiR sun sinn Smið, dræng goðan.* (Öl 28)
 H. raised stone this after son her S. man good
 “H. raised this stone in memory of her son S., a good man.
 b. *ÞoriR ræisti stein þannsi æftiR Karl, sinn felaga, harða goðan dræng.* (Vg 112)
 Þ. raised stone this after K. his partner very good man
 “Þ. raised this stone in memory of K., his partner, a very good man.”

Table 4 gives the numbers and the distributions of phrases with post-posed and pre-posed modifiers, respectively.

As expected, the table shows a very small percentage of pre-posed demonstratives and pre-posed *sinn*. The figures also indicate, again as expected, a much stronger inclination to front modifying names in the genitive rather than to front the possessive *sinn*. The one word adjectival

Table 4. The distribution of post-posed and pre-posed modifiers in five pairs of noun phrases in Viking Age runic inscriptions.

Strings of investigation		Tot. n	Post-posed mod.		Pre-posed mod.	
			n	%	n	%
<i>stein þenna</i>	vs. <i>þenna stein</i>	815	796	98	19	2
<i>faður sinn</i>	vs. <i>sinn faður</i>	703	678	96	25	4
<i>sonr name.GEN</i>	vs. <i>name.GEN sonr</i>	51	24	47	27	53
N + A	vs. A + N	123	88	72	35	28
N + [advl + A]	vs. [advl + A] + N	52	13	25	39	75

attributes are not fronted very often in runic inscriptions. This is perhaps a little surprising, but may be due in part to the fact that a majority of the instances are used to characterize somebody as “good”. An adjective denoting a more unexpected virtue would perhaps be fronted to a higher degree. But interestingly, an intensifying adverbial seems to have a substantial effect on the position of the adjectival attributes. On the whole, the investigation supports the view that “noun first” is unmarked and the fronting of a modifier is pragmatically motivated.

8.2 The first step towards formal definiteness

I have argued above that the abstract noun phrase structure was not the same in Viking Age Scandinavian as it is in the modern Scandinavian languages. Below, I will present a hypothesis of how the transition from the former structure to the latter starts and discuss the possible consequences of this change on the noun phrase word order.

8.2.1 Grammaticalization from the Minimalistic point of view

Grammaticalization was long a matter discussed exclusively from a functionalist approach. However, the phenomenon has also inspired linguists working in the Minimalist Program for some time: see e.g. Roberts & Roussou 2003, van Gelderen 2010.

Grammaticalization from this point of view primarily means that semantic features of content words are reanalysed as functional features. Here, “reanalysed” first and foremost means that an item with no prior impact on the syntactic derivation as such becomes associated with a feature with impact on the derivation. The meaning of the non-functional semantic feature is not lost, even though the semantic impact of the functional feature has possibly to be understood in a more formal way.

A leading principle is also the Head Preference Principle (“Be a head rather than a phrase”), which means that grammatical morphemes tend to be head constituents. It is also assumed that grammaticalization is change “up the tree”. This is logical from the general principle of design by which the descriptive core of a syntagm is low, whereas functional elements are high. Thus, a reinterpretation of a descriptive semantic feature in functional terms will push the element bearing the feature in question upwards. It is also taken to be less “costly” to insert an element directly into a high position rather than moving it from below (van Gelderen 2010:13 ff.).

8.2.2 *From hinn to -inn*

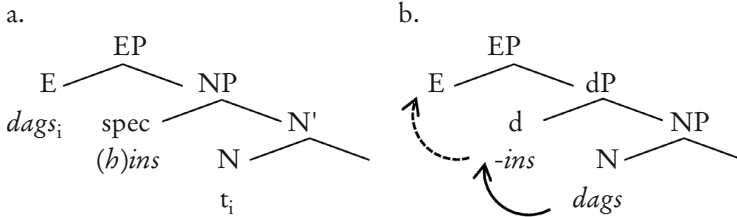
At first glance, one might suppose that the EP projection of the Viking Age noun phrase was just reinterpreted as a DP at some point, perhaps as a consequence of the emergence of formal definiteness marking. However, the development towards obligatory definiteness marking is a process of several hundred years, and it is not likely that two competing structures of this kind would live side by side for such a long time.

On the other hand, if at some point a weakened demonstrative is associated with a functional definite feature, there must be a locus for it somewhere in the structure. We must assume a head with a corresponding abstract definite feature to attract it. My hypothesis is that a new projection, dP, is sandwiched in between EP and NP. The little *d* signals that its nature is definite in some sense, but it is not a full DP, and I would say there will not be any DP until the definite–indefinite distinction becomes mandatory several hundred years later. Instead, the EP remained in the left edge, actually permitting both NP and dP complements, which explains why the expansion of the definite form proceeded very gradually. The old EP-NP structure would do as long as the speaker did not choose to express definiteness explicitly. (See Stroh-Wollin 2015b for more details.)

The derivation of the noun phrases representing the starting point and the completed transition to definite inflection in (15) is demonstrated in (16a–b). In (16a), the former demonstrative/clitic is still a complex item consisting of stem + ending, which makes it a phrase constituent, whereas the suffix in (16 b) is reanalysed as an indivisible unit and as a head constituent. The suffix is, by force of its functional feature, inserted in *d*, from where it attracts the noun in *N* (see the continuous line). The inflected noun will then move from *d* to *E* (see the dotted line).

(15) *dag-s hin-s* > *dag-s'(h)in-s* > *dag-s-ins*

(16)



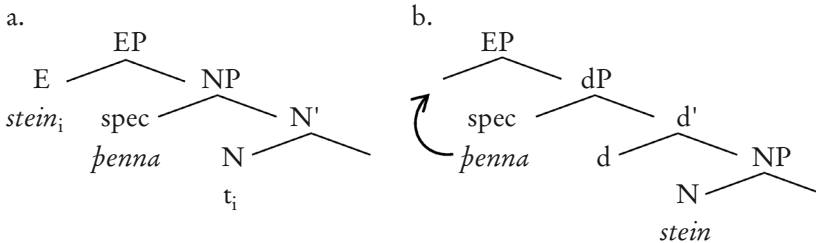
Now, we can say that the transition from the stage in (16a) to the stage in (16b) exhibits all three of the criteria characterizing grammaticalization mentioned above. A semantic feature is reinterpreted as a functional feature, the former phrase constituent is reinterpreted as a head constituent, and it is (in a way) a change “up the tree”.

8.2.3 From *stein þenna* to *þenna stein*

Once speakers have “decided” that definiteness is a formal feature that defines a functional structural category, one can expect that elements other than the “pure” definiteness marker (i.e. the suffix), for instance demonstratives, were also associated with a functional definite feature. Presumably, this has an impact on the derivation as well, since a formally definite demonstrative cannot be a specifier in NP, as could the former demonstrative. It will now be attracted to the dP by force of its formal definiteness.

The structure in (17a) demonstrates how a phrase such as *stein þenna* “this stone” is derived according to the older grammar, whereas the structure in (17b) shows how the demonstrative is inserted in the dP above NP. From here, it may be a more preferred candidate for moving to EP than before, for instance because moving the demonstrative from the dP could be less costly than moving the noun from the more distant NP.

(17)



If this is on the right track, we would expect that the emergence of formal definiteness would soon result in an increased number of demonstrative first phrases, such as *þenna stein* instead of *stein þenna*. This hypothesis is followed up below with one more investigation in the runic material.

As was demonstrated in the previous section, there are very few instances of *þenna stein* in relation to *stein þenna* in the Viking Age inscriptions. Because the medieval inscriptions also offer some comparable strings, it is possible to follow how the word order develops in a rather fixed context. In order to maximize the material, I have included all kinds of phrases with the demonstratives *sá/þenn* and *þessi/þenni* when used in the sense of “this” and referring (extra-linguistically) to the very object on which the inscription is found (e.g. “this stone”) or to a very close object (e.g. “this church”) or to the writing itself (e.g. “these runes”).

Two kinds of searches in the Scandinavian Runic Text Database have been conducted. First, a search was made for the numerous strings *stein þenna* and *þenna stein* (singular accusative) in Viking Age and medieval inscriptions separately. The number of Viking Age instances of these strings given by the program was accepted directly, whereas the medieval instances were sorted into periods. Secondly, the different forms of the demonstratives were searched for and all noun phrases fulfilling the criteria mentioned above were collected, except the instances of *stein þenna* and *þenna stein* already covered by the first search. The complementary collection of noun phrases was further checked and highly uncertain instances (e.g. in damaged inscriptions) were discarded manually. Finally, the remaining instances were also sorted into time periods and counted.

The Viking Age inscriptions cover about three hundred years, c.800 to c.1100, and no further chronological division has been made as they show very little variation concerning the position of the demonstrative. The medieval inscriptions, on the other hand, have been divided into three periods: the beginning of the 12th century to c.1200, the beginning of the 13th century to c.1300, and the beginning of the 14th century and on. This division is based primarily on information from the Scandinavian Runic Text Database. When the only information about dating given in the database was “medieval”, I was able in some cases to find more accurate dating in the respective printed editions. However, 33 instances with imprecise ages still remained after this check and these are not included in the figures below.

The result of the investigation is presented in Table 5. The numbers include the instances of *stein þenna/þenna stein* as well as the other noun phrases with demonstratives. The former type comprises 847 instances,

Table 5. The distribution of noun phrases with post-posed and pre-posed demonstratives in Scandinavian runic inscriptions from the Viking Age and the Middle Ages (b = beginning of).

Period	Tot. n	Post-posed dem.		Pre-posed dem.	
		n	%	n	%
c.800 – c.1100	1,102	1,067	97	35	3
b 12 th cent. – c.1200	52	41	79	11	21
b 13 th cent. – c.1300	24	12	50	12	50
b 14 th cent. –	28	8	29	20	71

i.e. about 70% of the total number of 1206 instances (of all four periods) accounted for in Table 5.

The figures in Table 5 clearly demonstrate a shift in word order. The increasing portion of phrase-initial demonstratives cannot be due to pragmatic factors, as only very comparable phrases are part of the investigation. We need another explanation; to me the emergence of formal definiteness lies nearest at hand.

Now, there is actually one more circumstance to support the assumption. As many as 16 of the 35 instances of the pre-posed demonstratives in Viking Age inscriptions are signed by or attributed to the same rune master: Visäte. The opposite word order is found in five of the inscriptions signed by or attributed to Visäte. The distribution makes it probable that Visäte himself was responsible for the concrete wording in many cases and that he had a rather strong inclination towards initial demonstrative.³⁷ Moreover, Visäte is also responsible for one of the assumed two first instances of a noun in the definite form, *andinni* (dat.) ‘the spirit’ on U 669 (signed by Visäte).

Visäte’s runic inscriptions are generally dated, on ornamental grounds, to a period from the middle of the 11th century and about one generation ahead.

8.3 Conclusions

In the previous section, I have shown that non-emphatic demonstratives tend to appear more and more phrase-initially after the Viking Age. Even if this conclusion is not drawn on the basis of a large number of medieval

³⁷ To the best of my knowledge, the attribution of the non-signed inscriptions is not based on noun phrase word order, but chiefly on layout, ornamentation, rune forms and orthography.

phrases, it is clear enough. It is also evident that definite forms of nouns must have been used more than sporadically in the 12th century. If this is not only a temporal coincidence, but there is a causal relation as well, as assumed here, we may have yet another means to date the emergence of the definite form, i.e. to date it indirectly by dating the very start of the word order change.

I have argued above that the change of word order is caused by definiteness becoming a functional feature, which is in turn considered an inevitable consequence of the reinterpretation of (*b*)*inn* as a formal definite suffix. However, the dating is not actually dependent on a belief in the precise model proposed above. A belief in some kind of causal relation would actually work.

How far back in time is it possible to trace formal definiteness? On the one hand, the number of instances of pre-posed non-emphatic demonstratives are few before 1100. On the other hand, we can actually identify a specific individual who apparently prefers pre-posed (non-emphatic) demonstratives in the 11th century. I find this important, and even more so as the same individual is also the man behind what is generally considered one of earliest instances of a noun in the definite form.

Thus, I find it probable that (primitive) definiteness was a feature of Visäte's grammar and that *andinni* on U 669 is a true definite form. I also find it reasonably probable that *andinni* on the somewhat earlier U 644 is a true definite form. This means that the definite suffix is attested in the 11th century. It might be somewhat older. However, this very early evidence of formal definiteness is not necessarily representative of contemporary people in general. It may have been restricted to some individuals. As I see it, it is not impossible that people with different internal grammar regarding noun phrases lived side by side for some generations.

9 Summing up

In this article, I have discussed how and when the definite inflection on nouns emerged in Scandinavian. I believe the investigations presented above have resulted in more reliable answers than before on these much debated questions. The following points offer a brief summary of the main topics discussed above. To start with, the investigations concerned three different aspects of the question of how.

- The definite suffix has its origin in a normal deictic demonstrative, not in a pre-adjectival particle accidentally cliticising on nouns. Normally, definiteness markers develop from ordinary demonstratives with weakened deixis, and there is no reason to suggest anything else when it comes to Scandinavian. Further, it looks as if we in fact have some evidence, though mostly indirect, of the missing link.
- The concrete demonstrative behind the definite suffix is *hinn* on the mainland and *enn* on Iceland.
- The fact that the suffix stems from different origins in different varieties means that we cannot assume one single centre of innovation, which in turn indicates that the development may just have been in the air. Not only Scandinavian, but all Germanic, Romance and Celtic languages develop definiteness marking at approximately the same time.

The different origins also give us a terminus post quem for the emergence at c.900, i.e. the time when the Norwegian colonizers arrived in Iceland. But more direct and indirect evidence has been scrutinized to reach a more precise dating.

- The concrete empirical evidence consists of two instances of *andinni* “the spirit” from the 11th century, a considerable and increasing use of definite forms from the 13th century and on, and also a good deal of transitional forms (e.g. noun + *enn* as separate words) in manuscripts from c.1200, possibly reflecting slightly earlier originals.
- From a functionalist view of the grammaticalization of definiteness markers, we can note that in c.1200 definite nouns were most often used for anaphoric and associative reference and less often for independent definite reference, the hallmark of a “true” definiteness marker.
- From a Minimalist perspective on grammaticalization, we can assume that the increased number of pre-nominal demonstratives from the late Viking Age and on bear witness to a new abstract structure caused by definiteness (in a primitive sense) becoming a formal category.
- If we also assume that definiteness marking developed according to the S-curve model with a very slow start, we may suggest that some individuals recognized definiteness in a formal sense around 1000. However, it is maybe not until the 12th century that it had a more noticeable impact on the linguistic usage.

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