

Chapter 9

Adjectival articles in early Germanic

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The grammaticalization of demonstratives into definite articles is a well-known phenomenon and has received a lot of attention in the literature. Less attention has been paid to the observation that there is another outcome where the demonstrative develops into an article element – not of the nominal projection, but narrowly of the adjectival phrase. In North Germanic, the nominal definite article came to be realized as a suffix, which is why specific uses of the former demonstrative as an adjectival article are clearly identifiable. In the other Germanic languages, however, adjectival articles are not as easily identified. Article uses of a demonstrative can simply be construed as a nominal definite article, which, in certain cases, merely happens to be accompanied by an adjective. In this chapter, we will first illustrate the properties of the Old Icelandic adjectival article, based on distributional evidence, but also in comparison to modern Icelandic. Next, we will argue that, upon a closer look, evidence can be adduced for an adjectival article in West Germanic and Gothic, as well.

1 Introduction

Definite articles have received their fair share of attention in the literature (DP hypothesis, definiteness, grammaticalization etc.). The definite article in question is a nominal article that occupies a position in the nominal extended projection (D^0) and marks the noun phrase/DP as “definite”, and diachronically usually derives from a demonstrative. There is, however, an article use that has not been the centre of attention the same way, even though it has not gone unnoticed either. Consider the bold-print elements in examples (1a)–(1d).



- (1) a. Greek
to megalo to kokkino to vivlio
the big the red the book
'the big red book' (Alexiadou & Wilder 1998)
- b. Slovenian
tá ta zelen svinčnik
this the green pencil
'this green pencil' (Marušič & Žaucer 2006)
- c. Hebrew
ha-yeladim ha-nexmadim
the-children the-nice
'the nice children' (Ritter 1991)
- d. Swedish, Norwegian, Danish
den store mann-en / den store mand
the big man-the / the big man
'the big/tall man' (cf. mann-en 'the man')

These article elements only occur if the noun is modified by an adjective; hence we will refer to them as *adjectival articles*. Adjectival articles are formally often identical to the respective regular (= nominal) definite article or to a demonstrative; they often occur in addition to the nominal article/a demonstrative – or, as is the case in Danish, instead of the nominal article if the noun is modified.

In this chapter, we will have a close look at adjectival articles in the early Germanic languages, which broadly consists of two tasks: firstly, we will give a characterization of the Old Icelandic adjectival article (*h*)*inn*.¹ Following Pfaff (2019, 2020, 2023), we will argue that (*h*)*inn* is, in fact, a component of the adjectival constituent (AP) rather than a determiner in the extended nominal projection (DP) – differently from modern Icelandic where *hinn* can be argued to occupy the D⁰ position. This idea can be supported by various observations, the gist of which can be summarized as follows: 1) there is an intimate relationship between (*h*)*inn* and precisely one weakly inflected adjective; 2) the sequence (*h*)*inn* + A.WK has the same distribution as strongly inflected adjectival phrases; 3) (*h*)*inn* (+ A.WK) co-occurs with various other determiners, including demonstratives and the (suffixed) nominal article.

Next, we will consider the other early Germanic languages, primarily addressing the question whether they even have a designated adjectival article, i.e. an

¹The notation (*h*)*inn* indicates that, in Old Icelandic manuscripts, we find instances both with and without an initial <h>.

element comparable to (*h*)*inn*. Upon careful examination, it turns out that the formally distal demonstrative in West Germanic, halfway through the grammaticalization path towards a (nominal) definite article, does indeed have uses/occurrences that are on a par with (*h*)*inn*, but not with what we would expect from a regular definite article (or a demonstrative for that matter). Similarly, for Gothic, it can be shown that the distal demonstrative in many cases behaves like an adjectival article, notably in cases where the Gothic translation deviates from the Greek source text.

Notice that the assumed adjectival articles in West Germanic and Gothic, and a fortiori the definite articles (i.e. the d-determiners), historically derive from the distal demonstrative *sā* (with a stem in *þ*).² On the other hand, the Old Icelandic adjectival article (*h*)*inn* derives from a Proto-Norse demonstrative *hinn* (PIE: **ke* + **eno*), which in turn is also the source of the suffixed definite (= nominal) article in the Scandinavian languages.³ Etymological difference aside, due to the fact that “articulization” has taken two formally/visibly distinct paths in North Germanic, but not in West Germanic, the adjectival article in the former is plainly visible since it only occurs with adjectives, whereas in the latter, it is “hiding in plain sight” insofar as it appears to be a regular article that merely happens to be accompanied by an adjective.

In addition, the evidence adduced is (partly due to the extant textual material) not always of the same sort, and we cannot always test all properties in all languages. Nonetheless, the conclusion will be that, for all early Germanic languages, we can identify an element that acts as an adjectival article, a formal element that is grammaticalized from a demonstrative and that forms a constituent with a weak adjective.

²For Gothic, of course, we cannot speak of a definite article proper because it disappeared from the record before the article could fully grammaticalize. As a matter of interest, the adjectival/definite articles in Greek and Slovenian, see (1a) and (1b), are also etymologically related to the same demonstrative, and so is the adjectival article in Mainland Scandinavian (1d), cf. fn. 3.

³The demonstrative use of *hinn* (meaning ‘the other one’) is found in Old Icelandic and has survived into modern Icelandic, whereas it has essentially disappeared from the other Scandinavian languages, see Pfaff (2019). In Old East Norse (Old Swedish, Old Danish), (*h*)*inn* is still found in use as an adjectival article, but enters into competition with *sá* (oblique form *þæn*) and is replaced as adjectival article early on (see Stroh-Wollin 2009, 2015, 2020; Pfaff 2019); eventually the same happens in Norwegian and Faroese. Icelandic is the only language where *hinn* has survived as adjectival article; see Section 1.1. Demonstrative uses of *hinn* will not be addressed here.

In addition, *hinn* has an appositive use, which Pfaff (2020, 2023) argues to represent an intermediate stage, diachronically, between genuine demonstrative and adjectival article.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: in Section 1.1, we will give a brief characterization of the element *hinn* in modern Icelandic. Even though it may be considered an adjectival article in the sense that the presence of an adjective is a necessary precondition for its occurrence, there are good reasons to assume that it really is a determiner in the extended nominal projection. The purpose is to have a contrast foil for the different behaviour of the same element in Old Icelandic. Following this, in Section 1.2 we give a brief overview of the sources we draw upon in the rest of the paper.

In Section 2 we discuss the adjectival article in Old Icelandic. The cumulative evidence from a wide range of observations – as such and in comparison to modern Icelandic – suggests that Old Icelandic *hinn* is a narrow component of the adjectival phrase. Section 3 turns to West Germanic and the languages Old English, Old High German, and Old Saxon. Here we argue that three types of evidence – from possessive + demonstrative constructions (Section 3.1.1), postnominal adjectives (Section 3.1.2), and vocatives (Section 3.1.3) – suggest that what is formally identical to the distal demonstrative also has an adjectival article function in these languages. In Section 4 we turn briefly to Gothic as a representative of the East Germanic branch of the family, showing that here, too, the case can be made for an adjectival article. Section 5 then summarizes and concludes.

1.1 Prelude: the adjectival article *hinn* in modern Icelandic

Apart from using an article suffix with simple definite noun phrases (*bil-en* ‘car-the’), the modern Scandinavian nominal system is famous for employing a free-standing article that is mandatory if a definite noun phrase is modified by an adjective; the respective adjective occurs in the so-called weak inflection, cf. (2).

- (2) a. Swedish
 den *(gul-a) bilen
 DET yellow-WK car.DEF
- b. Danish
 den *(gul-e) bil
 DET yellow-WK car
- c. Norwegian
 den *(gul-e) bilen
 DET yellow-WK car.DEF
- all: ‘the yellow car’

Modern Icelandic also has a freestanding article element, *hinn*, and even though it has a different etymology, it behaves alike in several respects, most notably, in that it also requires the presence of an adjectival modifier, as in (3).⁴

- (3) a. **hinn** *(meint-i) njósnari
 ART alleged-wk spy
 ‘the alleged thief’
 b. **hin** *(fræg-a) leikkona
 ART famous-wk actress
 ‘the famous actress’
 c. **hið** *(fullkorn-a) fyrirtæki
 ART perfect-wk enterprise
 ‘the perfect enterprise/company’

There are certain semantic and stylistic restrictions on the use of *hinn*, and it mostly occurs in written language. Nonetheless, it displays a number of interesting syntactic properties, as will be illustrated below. For one thing, in principle any number of adjectives can occur between *hinn* and the noun (4)–(5). The observation that adjectives can be modified by an adverbial/measure phrase illustrates that *hinn* combines with an adjectival projection/AP rather than simply with an adjective item (5)–(6).⁵ Likewise, cardinal quantifiers and numerals can occur between *hinn* and adjective (7a)–(7b); notably, we find cases with a numeral as the only modifier – without an adjective (7c). Moreover, we even find cases where a measure genitive phrase appears to be the sole modifier (8):⁶

- (4) a. **hinn** umdeild-i bresk-i aktívisti
 ART controversial-wk British-wk activist
 ‘the controversial British activist’

⁴But not vice versa; the standard pattern of definiteness marking with modified noun phrases employs the suffixed article: *gul-i bill-inn* ‘yellow-wk car-DEF’, not the freestanding article. All non-sourced Icelandic examples are from fieldwork by Alexander Pfaff.

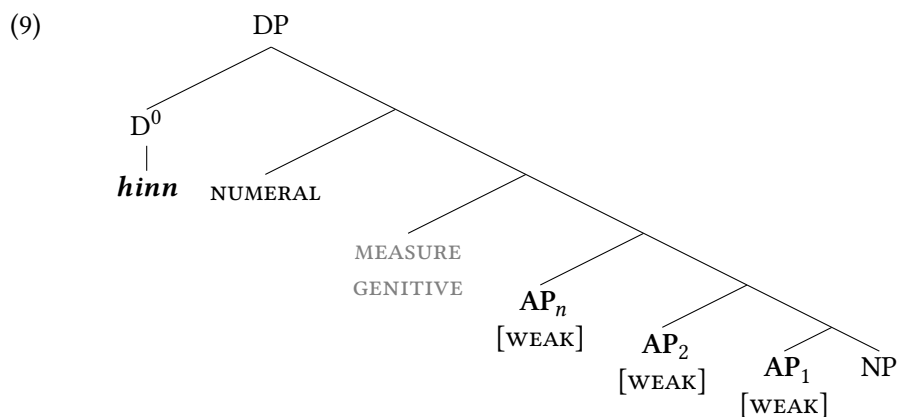
⁵Notice that (5) constitutes an intermediate case; on the one hand, the ordinal numeral occurs as a separate adjective; on the other hand, it strictly speaking modifies the following superlative adjective, not the noun. Crucially, both are weakly inflected. We will return to this kind of construction in Section 2.3.3.

⁶(8a) could potentially be construed in analogy to (6b), but involving a deleted adjective; after all, the alternative *hin tveggja tíma langa sýning* ‘the two-hours long.wk show’ is a possibility. However, it is hard to see which kind of adjective could have been deleted in (8b). At least for this latter example, it would seem as though the genitive phrase is a modifier of the noun, rather than of an (invisible) adjective.

- b. hinn svokallað-a klassísk-a fransk-a arkitektúr
 ART so-called-WK classical-WK French-WK architecture
 ‘the so-called classical French architecture’
- (5) a. hið þriðj-a mest-a bankagjaldþrot í sögunni
 ART third-WK greatest-WK bankruptcy in history.DEF
 ‘the third-greatest bankruptcy in history’
 b. hin fjórða-a stærst-a borg heimsins
 ART fourth-WK biggest-WK city world.DEF.GEN
 ‘the fourth-biggest city in the world’
- (6) a. hin nýlega frosna tjörn
 ART recently frozen-WK pond
 ‘the recently frozen pond’ (Sigurðsson 2013: 3)
 b. Hin 51 árs gaml-a einhleyp-a Lorrea Carr
 ART [51 year.GEN] old-WK single-WK Lorrea Carr
 ‘the 51-year-old single Lorrea Carr’
- (7) a. hinar mörg-u alþjóðleg-u skuldbindingar okkar
 ART many-WK international-WK obligations our
 ‘our many international obligations’
 b. hinar fjórar fræg-u kenningar
 ART four famous-WK theories
 ‘the four famous theories’
 c. hin þrjú lögmál Newtons um hreyfingu
 ART three laws Newton.GEN about motion
 ‘Newton’s three laws of motion’
- (8) a. hin tveggja tíma sýning
 ART [two.GEN hours.GEN] show
 ‘the two-hour show’
 b. hin tveggja barna móðir
 ART [two.GEN children.GEN] mother
 ‘the mother of two children’

Even though *hinn* requires the presence of some (prenominal) modificational material, it is not strictly dependent on precisely one weakly inflected adjective. Setting aside a number of peculiarities, it essentially behaves like a determiner element in a high position (above numerals) that triggers the weak inflection on

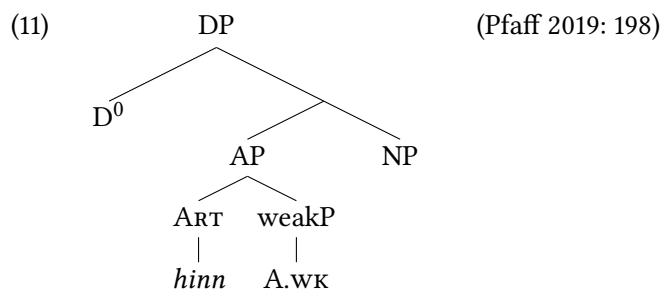
(adjectival) modifiers in its c-command domain. This is broadly the view that has emerged during the past 30 years or so (e.g. Magnússon 1984; Sigurðsson 1993, 2006; Pfaff 2009, 2014, 2015, 2017; Harðarson 2016, 2017; Ingason 2016). A rather simplified schematic can be rendered as in (9):



In Old Icelandic, we find examples involving (*h*)*inn* + weak adjective that superficially look like the ones found in modern Icelandic, e.g. (10).

- (10) a. *hinir íslensk-u menn* b. *hið röskvast-a fólk*
 ART Icelandic-WK men ART bravest-WK people
 ‘the Icelanders’ ‘the most brave people’
 (Saga: Eyrbyggja saga) (OIce.715.541)

However, it has been argued that the syntax of Old Icelandic (*h*)*inn* is considerably different in that it is not a determiner in the extended nominal projection, but forms a narrow constituent with the weak adjective to the exclusion of the noun, cf. (11).



In the following, we will make the case for this latter idea, providing evidence from various early Germanic languages for an article element that forms a unit with a weak adjective. We will first take a detailed look at Old Icelandic establishing the idea descriptively. After that we will examine the West Germanic languages, and finally, take a brief look at Gothic.

1.2 Sources

Unless otherwise stated, for all languages, example IDs are drawn from the *Noun Phrases in Early Germanic Languages* (NPEGL) database; for a comprehensive overview of NPEGL as a corpus resource, see Pfaff & Bouma (2024 [this volume]). NPEGL IDs are in the format Language.Number.Number, e.g. OIce.681.656 for an Old Icelandic example. The Old English (OE) portion of NPEGL consists of all nominals drawn from the *York–Toronto–Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (YCOE, Taylor et al. 2003), of which at the time of writing circa 3,500 had been more richly annotated according to NPEGL guidelines. Old Saxon (OS) is represented in NPEGL by an exhaustive sample of nominals from the C manuscript of the *Heliand*, a 9th-century gospel harmony (see Walkden 2016). The Old Icelandic portion in NPEGL contains the texts in the *Icelandic Parsed Historical Corpus* (IcePaHC, Wallenberg et al. 2011), 1150–1350.

Additional material for Old Icelandic is drawn from the *Saga Corpus*.⁷ For OE and Old High German (OHG) it was also necessary to supplement the material in NPEGL with other sources. NPEGL does not contain OE poetic sources, and these were investigated using the *York–Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Poetry* (YCOEP, Pintzuk & Plug 2001). For OHG, examples are drawn from the *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch 1.1* (ReA, Donhauser et al. 2018), part of the *Deutsch Diachron Digital* (DDD) megaproject; the ANNIS search interface⁸ was used to retrieve them.

2 The adjectival article (*h*)*inn* in Old Icelandic

Contrary to first appearances, there are good reasons to assume that (*h*)*inn* is not a regular article element in Old Icelandic, i.e. a determiner occupying an immediate position in the extended nominal projection (pace Roehrs & Sapp 2004; Faarlund 2004, 2007, 2009; Laake 2007; Lohndal 2007). Instead, it has long since

⁷<https://malheildir.arnastofnun.is/?mode=forn>.

⁸<https://korpling.german.hu-berlin.de/annis3/ddd>.

been suggested that it actually is an element of the adjectival constituent⁹ with *(h)inn* + A forming a unit to the exclusion of the noun (for instance Nygaard 1905; Lundebj 1965; Perridon 1996; Skrzypek 2009, 2010; Perridon & Sleeman 2011; Stroh-Wollin 2009, 2015; Börjars & Payne 2016; Börjars et al. 2016; *Gelenkartikel* ('linking article') in Heinrichs 1954; Himmelmann 1997; *attributive article* in Riebler 2016; *adjectival complementizer* in Pfaff 2019). In this subsection, we will summarize some arguments in support of the view that it is a narrow component of the adjectival phrase, and show that it is *(h)inn* together with a weakly inflected adjective that constitutes an AP.

2.1 “Bare” weak adjectives in Old Icelandic

The first relevant observation is that there is an intimate relationship between *(h)inn* and weak adjectives. Stroh-Wollin (2009: 7) notes that “*(h)inn* seems to be just a formal element preceding adjectives with so called weak inflection”, and Börjars & Payne (2016: 3) state that “*(h)inn* allows the weak A to function as an ADJ”. In other words, *(h)inn* only occurs when immediately followed by exactly one weakly inflected adjective, which could not act as a “proper” adjective on its own. This goes hand in hand with the observation that bare weak adjectives are virtually absent in Old Icelandic, or at least highly exceptional. Here the qualifier “bare” can, in principle, be understood to indicate that the adjective is not preceded by anything; but we will use it in the sense “weak adjective specifically not preceded by *(h)inn*” (thus weak adjectives only preceded by a demonstrative will also count as “bare”).

Notice that some bare weak adjectives are attested; those constitute a closed class and may be referred to as “functional” adjectives: determiner-like adjectives, ordinal numerals, and certain superlatives.¹⁰ This is also the case at earlier stages: Perridon (1996) identifies five attestations of bare weak adjectives in the runic corpus, and they all qualify as functional under the characterization just given.¹¹ On the other hand, bare weak “lexical” adjectives (with descriptive content) are basically non-existent in the oldest texts. Thus the big picture that emerges if we

⁹Of course, the older authors did not talk about “constituents” or “AP”, etc., but they clearly express the general idea, e.g. Nygaard (1905: 48): “Den foranstillede artikel er adjektivisk” (‘The proposed article is adjectival’).

¹⁰E.g. *sami* ‘same’, *fyrsti* ‘first’, *þriði* ‘third’, *næsti* ‘next’, etc. Note, however, that even these usually occur with preceding *(h)inn*. Thus the generalization is not that functional adjectives are (always) “bare”, but that they *can* more easily occur without preceding *(h)inn*.

¹¹Those five adjectives are: *æningi/æninga* ‘only-one’, *bæzti* ‘best’, *fyrsta* ‘first’, *þriðia* ‘third’. In addition, he mentions *ungu (uku)* ‘young’. However, Stroh-Wollin (2012) argues against interpreting *uku* as weak adjective, and suggests instead that it has to be read as a name.

abstract away from the “noise” is that bare weak adjectives without preceding *(h)inn* are essentially non-existent.

Traditionally, weak inflection is associated with definiteness, but, as will be shown in the next subsection, adjectives do not automatically occur weakly inflected when accompanied by definite elements (like demonstratives and possessives), and they are not found in vocatives, names and name-like expressions – differently from modern Icelandic. Likewise, the modern Icelandic standard pattern (A.WK N-DEF), see fn. 4, is virtually absent from the older Icelandic. Pfaff (2019: 179–184) shows that in the *Saga Corpus* this pattern occurs 11 times, and in IcePaHC (texts from 12th–16th centuries) we find 10 occurrences at most; two examples are shown in (12) (from Pfaff 2019: 180).

- | | | | | |
|------|----|---|----|---|
| (12) | a. | þriðja nótt-in
third night-DEF
‘the third night’
(IcePaHC: 1475 aevintyri) | b. | rauðfleckóttu uxa-
red-speckled ox-DEF
‘the red-speckled ox’
(Saga: Vopnfríðinga saga) |
|------|----|---|----|---|

Fifteen out of this small set of 21 attestations involve functional adjectives in the sense above. At the same time, there are 140 cases where the weak adjective is, in addition, preceded by *(h)inn* (ART A.WK N-DEF),¹² and several thousand cases where the weak adjective is only preceded by *(h)inn* without the suffixed article present (ART A.WK N). This staggering numerical discrepancy between Old Icelandic and modern Icelandic indicates a number of syntactic differences concerning the status of weak adjectives, the adjectival article and the nominal (suffixed) article. Relevantly, we see once more that bare weak adjectives are extremely rare in Old Icelandic even if a potential source of definiteness marking is present, unless the adjective is also preceded by *(h)inn*.

Taking Börjars & Payne (2016) one step further, Pfaff (2019) therefore suggests that weak adjectives are “defective”, or “incomplete” APs, as it were, and that *(h)inn* is an “adjectival complementizer” that, by merging with a weak adjective,

¹²Incidentally, the fact that various constellations of “double definiteness” (where the nominal and the adjectival article co-occur) are considerably more frequent than examples like (12) also suggests that weak adjectives are dependent on *(h)inn*, but do not necessarily interact with the nominal article (-DEF), as in (i).

- | | | | | |
|-----|----|--|----|---|
| (i) | a. | hin litlu hús-in
ART little houses-DEF
‘the little houses’
(OIce.681.656) | b. | tré-ð hið mikla
tree-DEF ART big
‘the big tree’
(Saga: Gunnlaugs saga) |
|-----|----|--|----|---|

produces a “complete” adjectival phrase: [_{xAP} (h)inn [_{weakP} A.WK]]. In the following, we will refer to the unit of these two elements (h)inn + A.WK as *weak sequence*.

2.2 Weak sequences and strong adjectives

2.2.1 Adnominal contexts

Upon a closer look at the occurrence of adjectival elements in Old Icelandic, we discern a recurrent distributional pattern: there are slots or (syntactic) contexts where we either find a weak sequence or a strongly inflected adjective – but negligibly rarely (or not at all) a bare weak adjective. Below, some prominent such contexts are given: adjectives following a pronominal possessive (13)–(14), adjectives following a demonstrative (15)–(16), and adjectives in noun phrases used as a direct address (~ vocative) (17)–(18).

(13) POSS + ART + A.WK:

- a. minn **hinn** best-i vin
my ART best-wk friend
'my best friend' (Saga: Íslendinga þættir)
- b. hans **ina** björt-u frægð
his ART illustrious-wk fame
'his illustrious fame' (OIce.100.538)
- c. gullhring sínum **hinum** góð-a
goldring POSS ART good-wk
'his good gold ring' (Saga: Harðar saga)
- d. karfi hans **hinn** stór-i
ship his ART big-wk
'his big ship' (OIce.488.876)

(14) POSS + A.STR:

- a. sinni fullkomin-**ni** vináttu
POSS complete-STR friendship
'his complete friendship' (Saga: Sturlunga saga)
- b. vors heilag-s föður
our holy-STR father
'(of) our holy father' (OIce.558.908)

- c. öxi sína forn-a
axe POSS old-STR
'his old axe' (Saga: Sturlunga saga)
- d. brauð vort yfirveranleg-t
bread our spiritual-STR
'out spirital bread' (OIce.923.674)

(15) DEM + ART + A.WK:

- a. þann hinn digr-a mann
DEM ART stout-WK man
'that stout man' (Saga: Heimskringla)
- b. þessi hin söm-u orð
DEM ART same-WK words
'these (very) same words' (Saga: Fljótsdæla saga)
- c. þau hin spakleg-u fræði
DEM ART sagacious-WK lore
'that sagacious lore' (OIce.239.056)

(16) DEM + A.STR:

- a. þann helg-an dóm
DEM holy-STR relic
'that holy relic' (OIce.729.539)
- b. þessi vond-ur svikari
DEM evil-STR traitor
'this evil traitor' (Saga: Íslendinga þættir)
- c. þeim norræn-um manni
DEM Nordic-STR man
'that Norse man' (Saga: Fóstbræðra saga)

(17) VOCATIVE: ART + A.WK:

- a. hann beiðist svo oft friðar af yður, inn mildast-i konungur
he demands so often peace of you ART mildest-WK king
'he asked you for peace so often, mildest king' (OIce.657.127)
- b. Heyr þú, hinn ung-i maður, rís upp
listen you ART young-WK man stand up
'Listen (to me), young man, stand up!' (OIce.707.561)

(18) VOCATIVE + A.STR:

- a. Ér, góð-ar konur, bölvið eigi
 ye good-STR women curse not
 ‘Don’t curse, (you) good women.’ (OIce.358.860)
- b. Minn virðugleg-ur herra Jón erkibiskup, eg kæri fyrir yður
 my gracious-STR lord Jón archbishop I charge before you
 upp á Sighvat Hálfðanarson
 against Sighvat Hálfðanarson
 ‘My gracious lord archbishop Jón, I bring (these) charges against
 Sighvat Hálfðanarson before you.’ (OIce.339.778)

Observations like these suggest two things: firstly, the fact that strong adjectives and weak sequences essentially occur in the same environments can be taken to mean that both instantiate the same syntactic object (category), viz. AP. In particular, it strongly corroborates the notion that (*h*)*inn* really is a component of the AP, rather than simply a definite (nominal) article. Secondly, even though both (*h*)*inn* and the weak inflection are somehow related to semantic definiteness, the distribution cannot (entirely) be governed by semantics, otherwise the occurrence of strongly inflected adjectives in these contexts would be completely unexpected. Based on the extant material, it is not obvious how to determine whether there is a (systematic) semantic difference in use between the two in examples such as the above, or to what extent a difference would be related to definiteness.

In contrast, in modern Icelandic (and modern Scandinavian more generally), the distribution of adjectival inflection is rather rigidly governed by definiteness: weak adjectives (not weak sequences) occur in definite contexts, strong adjectives elsewhere (see esp. Pfaff 2017). Thus contexts such as the above simply involve a bare weak adjective in modern Icelandic, cf. (19)–(21).¹³

¹³Two further contexts could be mentioned: (i) adjectives occurring in (fixed) name-like expressions, e.g. ‘the holy spirit’ (both constellations below are attested several times in IcePaHC: 1150.HOMILIUBOK):

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------------------------------------|
| (i) | a. hinn heilag-i andi
ART holy-wk spirit | b. heilag-ur andi
holy-STR spirit |
|-----|--|--------------------------------------|

Here modern Icelandic uses the standard pattern: *heilag-i andi-nn*.

(ii) a reviewer points out that our claim on distribution is backed up by a rare pattern in Old Swedish where a strong adjective precedes a definite noun (*luct hærxæznæmpð-in* ‘closed.STR jury-DEF’). This alternates with “double definiteness” cases, see fn. 12, and is in contrast to the modern Icelandic standard pattern. The pattern A.STR N-DEF is also found in Old Icelandic; see Pfaff (2019) for discussion and a quantitative comparison of those patterns.

- (19) a. minn góð-i / *-ur vinur
 my good-WK / -STR friend
 b. minn (*hinn) best-i vinur
 my ART best-WK friend
- (20) a. þessi vondi-i / *-ur svikari
 DEM evil-WK / -STR traitor
 b. þann (*hinn) digr-a mann
 DEM ART stout-WK man
- (21) a. kær-u / ágæt-u gestir
 dear-WK / good-WK guests
 b. Quo vadis, laus-i greinir?
 quo vadis free-WK article
 ‘Whither goest thou, free article?’

Pronominal possessives “trigger” the weak inflection on a following adjective; the strong inflection is ruled out in this context, and so is the occurrence of *hinn* in a post-possessive position, cf. (19). The same can be said about demonstratives, cf. (20). Bare weak adjectives also occur in direct addresses and can thus be said to have a vocative function in these contexts; this applies not merely to adjectives conventionally used in addressings, cf. (21a), but to any adjective occurring in an address noun phrase (cf. (21b), which is the title of a talk given in 2012).

2.2.2 Predicative contexts

As an initial observation, notice that, typically (but not exclusively) in predicative position, adnominal weak sequences involving a superlative adjective yield a so-called absolute/indefinite superlative (also known as “elative”) interpretation: no actual comparison is involved and the superlative does not indicate the unique extreme, but merely a high degree on a scale established by the property denoted by the adjective, cf. (22).

- (22) a. Þúríður var hin vitrasta kona
 Þúríður was ART wise.SUPL.WK woman
 ‘Þúríður was a very wise woman.’ (Saga: Fljótsdæla saga)
 (NOT: ‘the wisest woman among all women out of a given group’)

- b. Hann var hið mesta illmenni
 he was ART big.SUPL.WK villain
 ‘He was the greatest villain (i.e. a very bad person).’
 (Saga: Brennu Njáls saga)
- c. Skildu þeir með hinni mestu vináttu
 departed they with ART great.SUPL.WK friendship
 ‘They departed with great friendship.’ (OIce.260.119)

Weak sequences of that kind also occur in predicative position on their own (23), which includes coordination structures, cf. (23e).¹⁴

- (23) a. Gunnar var **hinn reiðasti**
 Gunnar was ART angry.SUPL.WK
 ‘Gunnar was very angry.’ (Saga: Brennu Njáls saga)
- b. Trausti var **hinn kátasti**
 Trausti was ART cheerful.SUPL.WK
 ‘Trausti was very cheerful.’ (Saga: Víglunda saga)
- c. konungur var **hinn glaðasti**
 king was ART glad.SUPL.WK
 ‘the king was very glad’ (Saga: Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss)
- d. hvorirtveggju voru **hinir óðustu**
 each.of.two were ART frantic.SUPL.WK
 ‘both were extremely furious’ (Saga: Eyrbyggja saga)
- e. Jarl var **hinn reiðasti** og **hinn erfiðasti** lengi
 jarl was ART angry.SUPL.WK and ART difficult.SUPL.WK long
 ‘The Jarl was very angry and (very) irritable for a long time.’
 (Saga: Brennu Njáls saga)
- f. compare with (23a): Bolli [...] var **mjög reiður**
 Bolli was very angry.STR
 ‘Bolli was very angry.’ (Saga: Laxdæla saga)

The crucial point to observe here, other than the relative interpretation itself, is that the weak sequence merely denotes a property, just like any adjective in predicative position – such as the strong AP in (23f). In other words, examples

¹⁴Notice also (23d), which would violate the uniqueness condition if the superlative did have its comparative meaning/use in this example.

like these suggest that weak sequences (can) have a simple adjectival interpretation. So in addition to the distributional evidence discussed in Section 2.2.1, we also have a semantic perspective corroborating the view that weak sequences are, in fact, APs.

Comparing (22) and (23), it would seem as though weak sequences involving individual level (IL) properties (*wise, popular, ...*) occur adnominally, and weak sequences involving stage level (SL) properties (*angry, glad, furious, ...*) can occur on their own. While we have not found any examples involving SL adjectives in adnominal contexts like (22) so far, weak sequences involving IL predicates are occasionally found in predicative position, especially, so it seems, when coordinated with a strong AP, cf. (24). Maybe a better clue is given by (22b) and (22c) where the adjective involved is non-intersective, i.e. it does not denote a separate property, but its interpretation is dependent on the property denoted by the noun. In other words, here *great* denotes a degree on a scale indicating *villain-ness* or *friendly-ness*, rather than an independent property *great-ness*. So the weaker generalization might be that, minimally, the adjective involved in cases like (23) must be predicative (i.e. of type $\langle e, t \rangle$).

Finally, it should be mentioned that weak sequences can be coordinated with “proper” APs headed by a strongly inflected adjective in predicative position, as in (24).

- (24) a. Var það lið [AP hið fríðasta] og [AP vopnað allvel]
 was that army ART fine.SUPL.WK and armed.STR all.well
 ‘That army was very fine (= consisting of fine men) and extremely well armed.’ (Saga: Egils saga Skallagrímssonar)
- b. hann var [AP hinn vasklegasti] og [AP fullur af ofurkappi]
 he was ART brave.SUPL.WK and full.STR of over-eagerness
 ‘he was very brave and full of over-eagerness’
 (Saga: Þórðar saga hreðu)

Under the premise that only like categories can be coordinated, this would be the definite argument in favour of the idea that weak sequences are APs rather than (possibly elliptical) NPs (or DPs). However, coordination is not an absolutely perfect criterion; notably, predicative categories are more flexible in that respect – after all, predicative NP & AP coordinations are well-known (“she is [a linguist] and [proud of it]”). Therefore, examples like these should rather be seen in conjunction with the other observations, as cumulative evidence. But there are further observations from coordination to be discussed in Section 2.3.

2.3 Multiple adjectives (and adjectival <-like> modifiers)

Various observations from the distribution of bare weak adjectives, weak sequences, and strong adjectives suggest that weak sequences in many crucial respects behave like strong adjectives, and hence should be treated alike, viz. as APs. The particular suggestion is that (*h*)*inn* should be construed as an adjectival article in a narrow sense, i.e. as a component of AP rather than a definite article in the (extended) nominal projection (DP). A natural expectation following from that conclusion is that, in cases of adjectival stacking, i.e. in noun phrases comprising more than one adjective, we should find an adjectival article with every individual adjective, similarly to the phenomenon known as *Determiner Spreading*, e.g. in Modern Greek (25).

- (25) a. **to** megalo **to** kokkino to vivlio
 ART big ART red the book
 ‘The big red book’ (Alexiadou & Wilder 1998: 303)
- b. to vivlio **to** kokkino **to** megalo
 c. **to** megalo to vivlio **to** kokkino
 d. **to** kokkino to vivlio **to** megalo

However, adjectival stacking in the narrow sense is extremely rare in Old Icelandic, also with strong adjectives. What at first glance may look like multiple adjectives can usually be broken down into a quantificational element (such as *many*) or some kind of functional adjective (e.g. *other*), or both, alongside the actual (lexical) adjective (see also Bech 2017), as in (26).¹⁵

- (26) margir aðrir göfugir menn
 many other noble men
 ‘many other noble men’ (Saga: Svarfdæla saga)

¹⁵One strategy occasionally used to accommodate multiple (strong) adjectives is for the noun to be “flanked” on both sides (which actually may involve functional adjectives and cardinal quantifiers), as in (i) (see also Bech et al. 2024 [this volume]).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(i) a. einn ungur maður fátækur
 one young man poor
 (OIce.008.041)</p> <p>b. svörtu merhrossi góðu
 black mare good
 (Saga: Eyrbyggja saga)</p> | <p>c. góðir menn margir
 good men many
 (Saga: Ljósvetninga saga)</p> <p>d. mörgum manni öðrum
 many.a man other
 (Saga: Sturlunga saga)</p> |
|---|--|

2.3.1 Adjectival coordination: Occurrence per adjective

Usually, when the noun phrase comprises more than one adjective, those are coordinated. Most commonly, this is a matter of two (or more) strong adjectives, but there are also cases of strong adjectives and weak sequences being coordinated, in both orders, which ties in with the observations made in the previous subsection. Most relevantly, there are also several cases of two weak sequences being coordinated. Some examples are given in (27) (see also Pfaff 2019: 192–193; fn. 36).

- (27) a. **hinn** hraustasti og **hinn** vaskasti drengur
ART energetic.SUPL og ART brave.SUPL lad
'the most energetic and bravest young man'
(Saga: Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu)
- b. **inn** sanni og **inn** eilífi drottinsdagur
ART true and ART eternal Lord's.day
'the true and eternal day of the Lord' (OIce.704.345)
- c. **hinir** bestu menn og **hinir** vitrustu
ART best.SUPL men and ART wise.SUPL
'the best and wisest men' (Saga: Heimskringla)
- d. Þú **hið** arga og **hið** illa kvikindi
you ART vile and ART evil creature
'you vile and evil creature' (Saga: Flóamanna saga)
- e. Hálfðan **hinn** mildi og **hinn** matarilli
Hálfðan ART mild and ART meat.stingy
'Hálfðan the Mild and Meat-stingy' (Saga: Heimskringla)

Many instances of this structure are found in predicative noun phrases, but also in argumental noun phrases, vocative noun phrases, and even appositive nominals constituting an epithet with a proper name. One crucial observation linking back to the issue raised in the introduction of this subsection is that the adjectival article (*h*)*inn* is repeated with every adjective/adjectival conjunct. In other words, examples like these are another strong indication that (*h*)*inn* really belongs with the AP, but the same point can be made more clearly, cf. (28).

- (28) a. fé það **hið** mikla og **hið** góða
money DEM ART big/much and ART good
'that handsome amount of money' (Saga: Brennu Njáls saga)

- b. skaða þann hinn mikla og hinn illa
 damage DEM ART extensive and ART bad
 ‘that extensive and bad damage’ (Saga: Brennu Njáls saga)
- c. þeim hinum smám og hinum fám skipum
 DEM ART small and ART few ships
 ‘those few small ships’ (Saga: Sturlunga saga)

As was already shown in (15), weak sequences often occur in noun phrases headed by a demonstrative. In cases involving adjectival coordination structures, we find that the demonstrative occurs once per noun phrase, but (*h*)*inn* occurs once per adjective.¹⁶ This iterates the point that ART belongs more closely with the adjective rather than with the noun phrase, and once more corroborates the idea that ART forms a constituent with a weak adjective (= AP) to the exclusion of the noun.

2.3.2 Numerals

Cardinal quantifiers (*many, few, ...*) are treated as adjectives in Old Icelandic insofar as they display a strong/weak alternation, they can be coordinated with regular adjectives as is illustrated in (28c), and consequently, they occur with (*h*)*inn*. In contrast, cardinal numerals, which otherwise behave rather similarly in terms of semantics and syntax, cannot be construed as adjectival elements in the same way as shown by Pfaff (2019: 192–193). Apart from the fact that numerals do not inflect weakly and are not attested in adjectival coordination structures, there are no attestations of ART + numeral, either; not in isolation, and especially not as an intervening element between (*h*)*inn* and A.wk. The latter would be a natural expectation on the assumption that (*h*)*inn* were a regular (noun phrase) determiner (cf. Cinque 2005), and, as already illustrated in the introduction, this is exactly what we find in modern Icelandic, cf. (7b) and (7c).

¹⁶For comparison: in modern Icelandic, both demonstratives and ART occur once per noun phrase, and what is coordinated are bare weak adjectives:

- (i) a. hinn einfaldi og augljósi sannleikur
 ART simple and obvious truth
 ‘the simple and obvious truth’
- b. þessi mikilhæfi og fjölgáfaði strákur
 DEM talented and highly.intelligent boy
 ‘this talented and highly intelligent boy’

2.3.3 The “third-greatest” piece of evidence

It is not only numerals that cannot intervene between (*h*)*inn* and A.WK; in fact, nothing can occur in that intermediate position, not even adverbial/degree elements – again, which is what we do find in modern Icelandic, cf. (6) and (8). This is yet another indication that there is an intimate relationship between (*h*)*inn* and a weakly inflected adjective. We will finally have a brief look at a handful of rather peculiar cases that make the same point from a slightly different angle. First, recall the examples in (5), one of which is repeated in (29).

- (29) *hið þriðj-a mest-a bankagjaldþrot í sögunni*
 ART third-WK greatest-WK bankruptcy in history.DEF

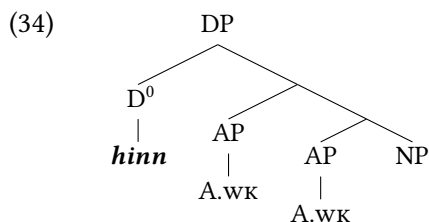
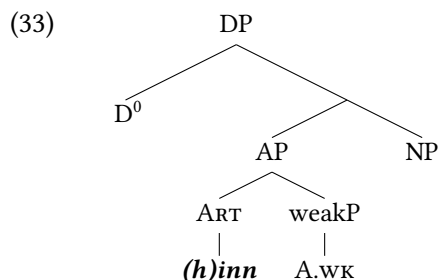
As already mentioned, this cannot be considered adjectival stacking in the proper sense because the first element (*þriðja*) modifies the following adjective, rather than the noun, cf. fn. 5. But what matters in the present context is that all adjectives following ART are weakly inflected. Now consider a corresponding example from Old Icelandic in (30).

- (30) *hann var hinn þriðj-i mest-ur lögmaður á Íslandi*
 he was ART third-WK greatest-STR lawyer on Iceland
 ‘he was the third-greatest lawyer in Iceland’ (Saga: Brennu-Njáls saga)

Here, the following superlative adjective occurs strongly inflected; notice that this is not a defect on behalf of that element, which regularly occurs weakly inflected when immediately preceded by (*h*)*inn* (e.g. *inn mest-i höfðingi* ‘ART greatest-WK chieftain’). Consider furthermore that we do not find strongly inflected adjectives immediately preceded by (*h*)*inn*, nor do we find more than one weakly inflected adjective following (*h*)*inn*. On the rare occasion that another adjective follows (*h*)*inn* + A.WK, it is strongly inflected:

- (31) *hinn þriðj-i sek-ur maður*
 ART third-WK guilty/condemned-STR man
 ‘the third guilty man; the third one of those guilty’ (Saga: Sturlunga saga)
- (32) *ins himnesk-a vors heilag-s föður*
 ART heavenly-WK our holy-STR father
 ‘our heavenly holy father’ (OIce.558.908)

On the reasonable assumption that ART (featurally) interacts with the weak inflection one way or another (see Pfaff 2017, 2019: 198), we can infer that ART has scope only over one adjective in Old Icelandic, cf. (33), but over all adjectives between it and the noun in modern Icelandic, cf. (34).



2.4 Summary

In this section, we have provided various pieces of evidence to the claim that ART is narrowly associated with the adjective (= is a part of AP) to the exclusion of the noun in Old Icelandic. We have pointed out distributional, semantic, and morphological properties all supporting that claim. Also by comparison, we have seen that ART has a rather different status in Old Icelandic and modern Icelandic.

3 An adjectival article in West Germanic

Cognates of *(h)inn* with the status of an article are not found outside the North Germanic languages. The early West Germanic languages do exhibit reflexes of Proto-Germanic **jainaz* (as does Gothic), but these have retained the semantics of a distal deictic demonstrative up until the present day. Perhaps because of this fact, it is not generally thought that an adjectival article can be found in West Germanic. Heinrichs (1954: 30–37) proposes that the demonstrative can function as a *Gelenkpartikel* ('linking particle'), and adduces examples from early West Germanic languages, but his treatment is not systematic, and has had little influence on subsequent work.¹⁷

In this section, we make the case that West Germanic indeed shows evidence of an adjectival article. We begin in Section 3.1 with a brief discussion of the literature on articles in the early West Germanic languages, as the dating of the emergence of definite and indefinite articles, and DP structure in general, is disputed. Subsequently we discuss the different strands of evidence that lead us to suggest that the early West Germanic languages might have had adjectival articles after all. Our empirical focus is on the three West Germanic languages attested in the first millennium CE: Old English (OE), Old High German (OHG), and Old Saxon (OS).

¹⁷A notable exception is Allen (2006), which we discuss in Section 3.1.1.

3.1 Evidence for an adjectival article in early West Germanic

Recent research on OE and OHG suggests that grammaticalization of demonstratives as definite articles was more advanced at this earlier stage than previously thought (Wood 2007b; Crisma 2011; Sommerer 2018; Allen 2019; Flick 2020). In the most extensive study of article emergence in the history of English to date, using prose evidence, Sommerer (2018: 312) concludes that “the form *se* takes up article function from early Old English onwards”, and increases dramatically in frequency during the period. Crisma (2011) shows that the use of historically demonstrative forms is higher in prose than in (putatively early) poetic texts, and proposes that the definite article in English was already established by the time of the “Alfredian” prose of the second half of the 9th century. Similarly, Flick (2020: 207) reaches the conclusion that the development of the definite article has already progressed substantially by early OHG.¹⁸ This raises a problem for any proposal suggesting that demonstratives also grammaticalized as adjectival articles: how are we to distinguish definite articles from adjectival articles?

We will henceforth refer to what was historically the distal demonstrative as DEM, without prejudice as to its categorical status, except where more specificity is required in particular contexts. The distributional diagnostics presented in the following subsections are intended to isolate contexts in which DEM can be neither a definite article nor a demonstrative.

In Section 3.1.1 we discuss patterns of co-occurrence of DEM and possessives. Section 3.1.2 discusses the use of DEM postnominally, and Section 3.1.3 presents its use in vocative contexts.

3.1.1 Possessives and DEM

In Present-day English (PDE), and in many other languages for which it is widely assumed that the article is the head of DP, pronominal possessives may not co-occur with articles: **the my book*, **my the book*, **Mary’s the book*, **the Mary’s book*. Evidence for the co-occurrence of DEM and possessives has therefore played a role in the debate around DP status in OE: Wood (2007b: §4) summarizes the findings. Evidence of DEM preceding the possessive is not particularly striking or problematic for the DP hypothesis, since similar structures are attested for PDE (e.g. *this(,) my book*), and are usually analysed as close apposition. Another potential approach sketched by Wood (2007b) is to view such structures as involving adjectival possessors in the sense of Lyons (1986, 1999), parallel to Italian

¹⁸“Die Funktionsanalyse von *dēr* hat gezeigt, dass die Entwicklung des Definitartikels schon im frühen Althochdeutschen weit fortgeschritten ist.”

il mio libro ‘the my book’.¹⁹ Either way, such examples are of no relevance to the adjectival article hypothesis.

The opposite order, in which the possessive precedes DEM, as in (35) – henceforth the POSS DEM construction (cf. Sommerer 2018) – is more interesting.

- (35) a. **his þam** ecan Fæder
 his DEM.DAT.SG eternal.DAT.SG.WK father.DAT.SG
 ‘his eternal Father’ (OEng.813.633; Ælfric’s Homilies Supplemental)
- b. **his þæs** clænan lifes
 his DEM.GEN.SG clean.GEN.SG.WK life.GEN.SG
 ‘his clean life’ (OEng.269.358; Gregory’s Dialogues, C)
- c. **min** se swetesta sunnan
 my.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG sweet.SUPL.NOM.SG.WK sun
 scima
 shine.NOM.SG
 ‘my sweetest sunshine’ (YCOEP; cocynew,117.164.1165)

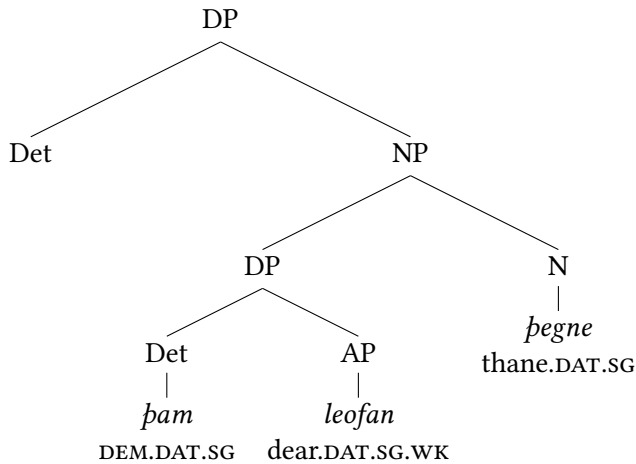
Such examples, which occur relatively frequently depending on the text (see the figures in Table 1 of Allen 2006: 153), share two features which are of particular importance for the adjectival article hypothesis. First, they are only found with the historically distal DEM and not with the proximal (Allen 2006: 158), suggesting that we are dealing with a grammaticalized form. Secondly, and crucially, they always occur with an adjective: that is, there are no examples of POSS DEM followed immediately by the noun.²⁰

Wood (2007b: 182) claims that, in examples such as (35), DEM occupies D and the possessive is in Spec,DP. While such a structure allows co-occurrence of POSS DEM, it fails to predict the exclusive co-occurrence of this construction with a weak adjective. An alternative analysis is presented by Allen (2006: 158–159), who suggests that “adjective phrases, like noun phrases, have a slot for a determiner”. The tree structure she proposes is given in (36) (with glosses added).

¹⁹See also Demske (2001) on OE and OHG examples.

²⁰For discussion and dismissal of potential counterexamples see Wood (2007a). Allen (2006: 156) identifies just two apparent counterexamples to this generalization, observing that both are from very late manuscripts, which casts doubt on their authenticity.

(36)



What is striking about this tree is that – modulo labels – the structure is exactly the same as the one proposed by Pfaff (2019) for Old Icelandic on similar but independent grounds (see (11) above).

The construction is found both in prose and in poetry (see (35c)). To be sure, there is variation across and within the early West Germanic languages as to the occurrence of the POSS DEM construction. Starting with English itself, it is essentially restricted to the OE period: by the early 12th century it was no longer a productively-used possibility (Allen 2006: 161–164). Within OE, too, there was variation, and in this context it is interesting to compare the C text of Gregory’s Dialogues – which plausibly dates to the 9th century²¹ – with the revised H text of the 10th–11th centuries (Yerkes 2002: §10; Allen 2006: 164; Wood 2007b: 180–181). There are sixteen examples of the POSS DEM construction in C where the relevant DP is also found in H (the manuscripts do not overlap in their entirety). In all sixteen cases, the reviser has made changes, and in eleven of them the DEM has been deleted. Regardless of whether this is evidence of a diachronic change in progress or simply of inter-individual variation, it is clear that the construction was not consistently found across OE texts, hence not consistently preferred by writers of OE.

Turning to OS, the POSS DEM construction is not found at all in prenominal position. In fact, the only place that the construction shows up in NPEGL is in the set phrase in (37).

²¹The manuscript itself is from the second half of the 11th century, but the translation it contains has been associated with Bishop Wærferth of Worcester, working during the reign of King Alfred in the second half of the 9th century.

- (37) fro **min** **thie** guodo
 lord.NOM.SG my.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG good.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘my good lord’ (OSax.115.210)

In all, this phrase occurs a further six times in manuscript C of the *Heliand*, each time with exactly the same wording. It also occurs twice in the OS *Genesis* (not included in NPEGL). It could moreover be analysed as a case of apposition. Thus the evidence from the POSS DEM construction for an adjectival article in OS is hardly overwhelming – though other sources of evidence point in the same direction.

OHG shows a similar lack of evidence for this construction. Searching the OHG texts in the *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch* (ReA) for a possessive immediately followed by DEM only yields two relevant examples, (38), both from Otfrid’s 9th-century *Evangelienbuch*.²²

- (38) a. Drúhtin **min** **ther** gúato
 lord.NOM.SG my.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG good.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘my good lord’ (ReA; O_Otfr.Ev.3.7)
- b. Múater **sin** **thiu** gúata
 mother.NOM.SG his.REFL.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG good.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘his good mother’ (ReA; O_Otfr.Ev.4.32)

The first example differs only by one word from the OS example in (37). Moreover, in both examples the final adjective is part of a rhyming couplet (rhyming with *gimúato* ‘benevolently’ in (38a) and with *scówota* ‘viewed’ in (38b)), so one might suspect that the choice of this construction may have been motivated primarily by metrical considerations. Still, insofar as this construction is not simply a case of apposition, the commonalities between OE, OS and OHG may be taken to indicate that the construction was an inherited one, even if it was formulaic and unproductive for the authors of the OHG and OS texts that we have at our disposal.

3.1.2 Postnominal adjectives

For OS, element order in nominals is also an indication that we are dealing with an adjectival article. There is some flexibility with regard to the position of elements within OS nominals, but when it comes to DEM elements – our focus here

²²The following ANNIS query was used: *posLemma* = "DPOS" & *posLemma* = "DD" & #1.#2. Examples were then filtered manually.

– the possibilities are extremely restricted. By far the most common pattern has DEM initial within the nominal phrase, as in modern West Germanic languages: NPEGL has well over two thousand examples of this type. There are, however, a minority of instances in which DEM follows a common noun: 33 in total in the NPEGL database.²³ In every one of them, DEM is formally distal, and immediately followed by a weak adjective. Examples are given in (39).

- (39) a. *suerdu* **thiu** *scarpon*
 sword.INS.SG DEM.INS.SG sharp.INS.SG.WK
 ‘(the) sharp sword’ (OSax.622.918)
- b. *himile* **them** *hohon*
 heaven.DAT.SG DEM.DAT.SG high.DAT.SG.WK
 ‘(the) high heaven’ (OSax.471.220)
- c. *nadra* **thiu** *feha*
 snake.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG colourful.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) colourful snake’ (OSax.429.338)

This construction is not restricted to set phrases, but occurs with a variety of nouns and adjectives, as the examples in (39) show.²⁴ The fact that postnominal DEM in OS is restricted to this construction strongly suggests that we are not dealing with a normal demonstrative or article here.

A related observation is that the converse also holds: just as postnominal DEM is only possible when immediately followed by a weak adjective, so too are postnominal weak adjectives in OS only possible when immediately preceded by DEM. To all intents and purposes, the two words function as a unit.²⁵ Adjectives that follow the noun (regardless of whether there is a prenominal DEM or not) otherwise must be strong. The sequence DEM plus weak adjective thus appears to have the same distributional properties as strong adjectives on their own, as argued in Section 2.2.1 for Old Icelandic.

²³This includes the seven instances of ‘lord my the good’ discussed in Section 3.1.1.

²⁴There are also twelve examples of a proper noun followed by an adjective; since this is possible in PDE titles such as *Alfred the Great*, it is less comparatively striking.

²⁵There are in fact a handful of exceptions to this, all involving the elements *selbo* ‘self’ (an intensifier, as in ‘God himself’) and *eno* ‘only/alone’. The *-o* ending on these functional elements is formally (masculine) weak. However, *selbo* and *eno* in this context seem to serve as focus particles rather than prototypical adjectives, and are found interchangeably with the strong forms *self* and *en*. For these reasons we do not consider them counterexamples to our general claim.

In OE prose, too, the generalization seems to hold that DEM is never postnominal unless followed by a weak adjective.²⁶ Examples of the construction are given in (40).

- (40) a. *geallancoðe þa readan*
 gall-disease.ACC.SG DEM.ACC.SG red.ACC.SG.WK
 ‘(the) red gall disease’ (OEng.284.604; Leechbook)
- b. *wermod se hara*
 wormwood.ACC.SG DEM.NOM.SG old.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) old wormwood’ (OEng.550.650; Lacnunga)
- c. *hælend se Nadzarenisca*
 saviour.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG Nazarene.WK
 ‘the Nazarene saviour’ (OEng.278.039; Vercelli Homilies)

Such examples are not hugely common, but then again postnominal adjectives are extremely uncommon in OE prose in general: over 96% of unmodified adjectives in the YCOE are prenominal (Bech et al. 2024 [this volume]), with the majority of the rare postnominal adjectives involving specific collocations or structures; one such is the phrase *God ælmihtig* ‘God almighty’ and variants on it, which Crisma (1999) argues involves movement of N to D.

The constraint operative in OS that postnominal adjectives must either be strong or be immediately preceded by DEM seems to hold in OE too. In the more richly annotated NPEGL subsample of OE prose, there is only a single postnominal weak adjective, found in example (41). All of the other 58 examples of postnominal adjectives in this sample are strong, including five more instances of *God ælmihtig*.

²⁶The following search was used: *(NP* iDoms N/N*) AND (NP* iDoms D*) AND (N/N* precedes D*)*. Two examples were retrieved, one of which (conicodA,Nic_[A]:15.2.4.313) is a misannotation. The other is *garsecg ðone* ‘ocean DEM’ (coalex,Alex:31.3.393), for which it is possible to analyse *ðone* as a variant form of the temporal adverb *ðonne*. By contrast, the reversed search with *(D* precedes N/N*)* returns over 80,000 hits. A problem with using the YCOE to search for the postnominal DEM plus weak adjective construction, however, is that all instances of it have been annotated as involving NP-internal apposition. This makes it difficult to distinguish between the construction we are interested in and other, more prototypical cases of apposition (e.g. those in which there is manuscript punctuation between the two phrases). The query *(NP* iDoms NP*PRN*) AND (NP*PRN* iDoms D*)* retrieves all instances, but very many irrelevant examples besides, even when it is further specified that only examples containing adjectives should be included.

- (41) God elmihtiga
 God.NOM.SG almighty.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘God almighty’ (OEng.448.299; Chronicle, E)

Evidently little can be concluded from this example, especially since it is attested very late, in the Chronicle entry for 1085, by which point the distinction between strong and weak adjectives may already have been starting to blur.²⁷

More examples of postnominal DEM are found in OE poetry, but here the picture is not as clear as in OS. Examples of postnominal DEM plus weak adjective sequences from the YCOEP (Pintzuk & Plug 2001) are given in (42).

- (42) a. sele þam hean
 hall.DAT.SG DEM.DAT.SG high.DAT.SG.WK
 ‘(the) high hall’ (YCOEP; cobeowul,23.710.598;
 there are three more identical examples)
- b. beorh þone hean
 mountain.ACC.SG DEM.ACC.SG high.ACC.SG.WK
 ‘(the) high mountain’ (YCOEP; cobeowul,95.3093.249)
- c. mægðhad se micla
 maidenhood.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG great.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘great maidenhood’ (YCOEP; cochrist,5.82.56)
- d. wyrd seo mære
 fate.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG great.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘great Fate’ (YCOEP; coexeter,136.99.92)
- e. salwonges bearm þone bradan
 field.GEN.SG bosom.ACC.SG DEM.ACC.SG broad.ACC.SG.WK
 ‘the field’s broad bosom’ (YCOEP; coriddle,181.1.29)

However, there are also a handful of other postnominal demonstratives without weak adjectives, including proximal demonstratives.²⁸ Moreover, postnominal weak adjectives in poetry do not need to be immediately preceded by DEM, as examples like (43) show.

²⁷We are grateful to a reviewer for pointing this out.

²⁸Concretely, there are fourteen such examples. A search for $(NP^* iDoms N/N^*)$ AND $(NP^* iDoms D^*)$ AND $(N/N^* precedes D^*)$ in the YCOEP yields 32 examples in total. 18 of these involve DEM plus weak adjective, the expected type. The other 14 include six examples of a distal determiner alone, all of them *þone* and all from Beowulf. Seven involve postnominal proximal demonstratives alone from various texts, and there is one misannotation. A further search for $(NP^* iDoms NP^* PRN^*)$ AND $(NP^* PRN^* iDoms D^*)$ in the YCOEP yields a handful of other potentially relevant examples of DEM plus weak adjective.

- (43) se maga geonga
 DEM.NOM.SG kinsman.NOM.SG young.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘the young kinsman’ (YCOEP; cobeowul,83.2673.2189)

The evidence from postnominal ordering in OE provides further evidence for adjectival article behaviour of DEM, then, though occasional problematic examples are also found.

In OHG, the evidence is variable. Among the larger OHG texts, the postnominal DEM plus weak adjective construction is only robustly attested in Otfrid’s *Evangelienbuch*.²⁹ Examples are given in (44).

- (44) a. Múater **thiu** **gúata**
 mother.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG good.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) good mother’ (ReA; O_Otfr.Ev.1.15)
- b. kúningin **thia** **ríchun**
 queen.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG rich.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) rich queen’ (ReA; O_Otfr.Ev.1.3)
- c. Gímma **thiu** **wíza**
 gem.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG white.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) white gem’ (ReA; O_Otfr.Ev.1.5)
- d. gótes drut **ther** **máro**
 God.GEN.SG friend.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG great.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘God’s great friend’ (ReA; O_Otfr.Ev.2.7)

Caution is needed here, since, as with the examples from Otfrid in Section 3.1.1, the adjective very often participates in a rhyming couplet. However, there are numerous such examples, and it is unlikely that Otfrid is drawing on an ungrammatical construction, even if it was marginal outside poetic usage. Examples are also found in other, smaller OHG texts, as in (45).

- (45) a. uuiroh **daz** **rota**
 incense.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG red.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) red incense’ (ReA; BR1_BaslerRezept1)
- b. uuiroh **daz** **uuizza**
 incense.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG white.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) white incense’ (ReA; BR1_BaslerRezept1)

²⁹The following query was used: *posLemma* = "DD" & *posLemma* = "NA" & *posLemma* = "ADJ" & #2.#1 & #1.#3; examples were then filtered manually.

- c. engila dê skônun
angels.NOM.PL DEM.NOM.PL beautiful.NOM.PL.WK
'(the) beautiful angels' (ReA; G_Georgslied_Tschirch)

Since these examples are found in early (8th- and 9th-century) texts written in different OHG scribal dialects, the most plausible hypothesis is that we are dealing with something that is a relic feature, if not synchronically fully productive.

3.1.3 Vocatives

In prototypical DP languages, such as PDE and Italian, vocatives are a context in which the DP layer may be absent, with vocatives surfacing as bare NPs (e.g. Longobardi 1994: 626–627, note 20). This stance receives support from the fact that, in English and Italian, both definite and indefinite articles are ungrammatical in vocatives, cf. (46).

- (46) a. ?*I ragazzi, venite qui!
the boys come here
'Come here, (the) boys!' (Italian; Longobardi 1994: 626)
- b. *Un/Qualche ragazzo, vieni qui!
a/some boy come here
'Come here, (a/some) boy!' (Italian; Longobardi 1994: 627)
- c. *The boys, come here!
- d. *A/some boy, come here!
- e. *This/that boy, come here!

In PDE, demonstratives are also excluded from vocatives: see (46e).³⁰ This suggests, in fact, the stronger hypothesis that DP *must* be absent in vocatives – though Longobardi (1994: 626–627, note 20) is cautious about this, noting that there are varieties in which at least definite articles seem to be acceptable in vocatives. He therefore suggests that the ungrammaticality of (certain) D elements in vocatives may be due to a semantic incompatibility. Under either theory, it is instructive to consider the predictions for adjectival articles. Under the adjectival

³⁰Longobardi (1994: note 20) observes that demonstratives are permitted in vocatives in “literary Italian”. Similarly, Cindy Allen (p.c.) points out that definite articles are possible – if dispreferred – in appositions to vocatives in Present-day English, such as “O Lord, the maker of all things”. Due to the nature of our evidence it is not always possible to rule out appositive status, especially for postnominal sequences of DEM plus adjective, and especially since it is difficult to define and delimit what apposition actually is. As a result, the diagnostic discussed in this section is perhaps not as strong as those laid out in the previous sections.

article theory, DEM is not part of the DP layer of the nominal, and its function is as a pure categorizer. Thus, under both the semantic theory and the no-DP theory, the prediction is that DEM *qua* adjectival article should be unproblematic in vocatives.

For OS and OE, this prediction is borne out. Starting with OS, the examples in (47) illustrate.

- (47) a. Herro **thie** **guodo**
 lord.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG good.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘good lord’ (OSax.811.792)
- b. fro min **thie** **guodo**
 lord.NOM.SG my.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG good.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘my good lord’ (OSax.115.210 = (37) above)

There are sixteen such examples in total in the OS portion of NPEGL.³¹ In all cases, DEM is formally distal and immediately followed by a weak adjective, as in the other examples of putative adjectival articles provided so far.³² In all cases, DEM is also postnominal, which as argued in Section 3.1.2 is a strong indication of adjectival article status in OS.

In OE, this construction is also very widespread: examples include (48a)–(48e).

- (48) a. Men **ða** **leofestan**
 men.NOM.PL DEM.NOM.PL dear.SUPL.NOM.PL.WK
 ‘Dearest men’ (OEng.586.608; Ælfric’s Lives of Saints, Christmas Sermon)
- b. min **se** **leofeste** sune
 my.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG dear.SUPL.NOM.SG.WK son.NOM.SG
 ‘my dearest son’ (OEng.708.922; Alcuin)
- c. min **se** **leofa** magister
 my.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG dear.NOM.SG.WK magister
 ‘my dear magister’ (OEng.640.906; Alexander’s Letter)

³¹Allen (2006: 160) discusses (47a) based on its inclusion in Heinrichs (1954), and suggests that its interpretation is appositional: ‘The Lord, the good one’. However, neither Heinrichs (1954) nor Allen (2006) mentions that the example is vocative, which makes this interpretation implausible.

³²The noun varies, but the adjective in all sixteen examples is ‘DEM good’, suggesting we may be dealing with a fossilized construction (though this inference is not on solid ground). Even if so, however, fossilized constructions by definition tell us something about a possibility that was once productive.

- d. þa leofestan broðor
 DEM.NOM.PL dear.SUPL.NOM.PL.WK brothers.NOM.PL
 ‘dearest brothers’ (OEng.934.199; Bede)
- e. min se halga Petrus
 my.NOM.SG.STR DEM.NOM.SG holy.NOM.SG.WK Peter.NOM.SG
 ‘my holy Peter’ (OEng.496.724; Blickling Homilies)

The example in (48a) is a formula that is incredibly widespread, especially in sermons; according to Porck (2020), it is attested more than 200 times in OE homilies across a variety of manuscripts, and is the most common way for priests to begin their sermons. However, the construction is attested with a variety of adjectives and nouns. Both prenominal and postnominal sequences of DEM plus weak adjective are found. In OE poetry, we find eight additional examples, four of which are prenominal and four of which are postnominal.³³

Once more, all examples in both poetry and prose are formally distal, and all examples occur with an immediately following weak adjective. This suggests that in OE, too, the DEM element that shows up in vocatives is always an adjectival article (rather than a definite article or demonstrative).

A full investigation of vocatives in OHG is a desideratum for future work: existing resources such as the *Deutsch Diachron Digital* corpus do not make it possible to extract expressions with vocative function straightforwardly. Nevertheless, OHG also exhibits DEM plus weak adjective sequences in vocatives, e.g. (44c) in the previous section, repeated here as (49).

- (49) Gîmma thiū wîza
 gem.NOM.SG DEM.NOM.SG white.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘(the) white gem’ (ReA; O_Otfr.Ev.1.5)

3.2 Summary of evidence

Table 1 summarizes the different pieces of evidence presented so far for adjectival articles in the early West Germanic languages.

In each case, crucially, it is the formally distal demonstrative that is found in these configurations, not the formally proximal demonstrative, and in each case there is a close connection between the DEM element and an immediately

³³The queries used for the YCOEP (Pintzuk & Plug 2001) were NP*-VOC* iDoms D* and (NP*-VOC* iDoms NP*PRN*) AND (NP*PRN* iDoms D*).

Table 1: Evidence for adjectival articles in early West Germanic

Language	OE		OS	OHG	
	prose	poetry		Otfrid	other
POSS DEM (Sect. 3.1.1)	+	+	+	+	–
Postnominal DEM (Sect. 3.1.2)	+	+	+	+	+
Vocative DEM (Sect. 3.1.3)	+	+	+	+	??

following weak adjective. We take this to indicate that the early West Germanic languages had an adjectival article derived from the distal demonstrative.³⁴

More tentatively, we posit that this is a shared inheritance from Proto-West Germanic (at least). Strikingly, the evidence for adjectival articles is found in all three of the West Germanic languages attested in the first millennium; however, it is not distributed equally across texts. The empirical picture we have so far seems to suggest that it is found in early texts, such as the plausibly 9th-century OE C text of Gregory’s *Dialogues* and the 9th-century OHG *Evangelienbuch* of Otfrid, more than it is found in later texts. This is consistent with an interpretation in which the adjectival article is an inherited West Germanic feature that becomes archaic and dies out in the individual histories of the West Germanic languages.

4 An adjectival article in Gothic

Gothic, the Germanic language with the earliest substantial textual attestation, presents well-known problems when trying to draw inferences about its syntax:

³⁴Once a regular definite article has grammaticalized, one might expect the adjectival article to co-occur with it, simply on the grounds that nothing rules this out: the two “articles” are not in complementary distribution with each other, syntactically or semantically. For that matter, we might expect to see an indefinite article co-occurring with an adjectival article. There are a few scattered examples of this kind: see for instance (i), from OS.

- (i) enon berage them hohon
a.DAT.SG mountain.DAT.SG DEM.DAT.SG high.DAT.SG.WK
‘a high mountain’ (OSax.406.580)

Heinrichs (1954) also remarks upon this example. However, we have not been able to find any comparable examples of co-occurrence in any of the early West Germanic texts we have looked at. We leave this mystery to future research.

the main text that we have at our disposal is a partial Bible translation, mostly of the New Testament, which remains very close to its Greek original (see Ratkus 2011: 21–39; Walkden 2014: 11–13; Miller 2019: 8–20 and references cited there).³⁵ For any syntactic feature observed in the Gothic Bible, the challenge to the analyst is therefore to establish whether it is truly a feature of Gothic or rather reflects a Greek original. Beyond this, moderately extensive Latin influence is also found in Gothic (see Falluomini 2015: chapter 5 and references cited there).

When the Gothic and the Greek original are in agreement, any conclusion about the syntactic properties of Gothic must be viewed with some scepticism. This is true, for instance, for any statement about null subjects: it can be shown that whether the subject in Greek is overt or null is by far the best predictor of whether the subject in Gothic is overt or null (Fertig 2000; Ferraresi 2005; Walkden 2014: chapter 5). In the case of article use, however, Gothic on the whole does not follow Greek usage. New Testament Greek, like Modern Greek, exhibits polydefiniteness (see Ramaglia 2008 and Leu 2007), as in (50).

- (50) hupo [tou pneumatos tou hagiou]
by the.N.GEN.SG spirit.N.GEN.SG the.N.GEN.SG holy.N.GEN.SG
'by the holy Spirit' (Luke 2:26; Ratkus 2011: 139)

When rendering polydefinite constructions, the translator(s) of the Gothic Bible did not translate every Greek article using a distal demonstrative. Instead, "the translator, faced with the choice of eliminating one of the two determiners, chooses to delete the one before the noun while keeping the one preceding the adjective" (Ratkus 2011: 140), as in (51).³⁶

- (51) fram [ahmin þamma weihin]
from spirit.M.DAT.SG that.M.DAT.SG holy.M.DAT.SG
'by the holy Spirit' (Luke 2:26; Ratkus 2011: 139)

In general, where the Gothic systematically deviates from the Greek, it is plausible that what is found in Gothic is a genuinely autochthonous construction. This is Ratkus's conclusion for the rendering of polydefiniteness. It is then striking that the single demonstrative form that is translated overtly is not the one

³⁵The other major Gothic text, the *Skeireins*, is probably also a translation from Greek (Bennett 1960; Schäferdiek 1981).

³⁶There are a handful of examples where both articles are rendered in Gothic, e.g. Mark 1:27. These, however, are comparatively so rare that, in light of the fact that such examples follow the structure of the Greek, Ratkus (2011: 140) goes so far as to call this structure ungrammatical in Gothic.

adjacent to the noun, but the one adjacent to the adjective. Of 151 examples containing a demonstrative, a weak adjective and a noun, 100 have the order DEM Adj.WK N, 47 have the order N DEM Adj.WK, and only four have the order DEM N Adj.WK (Ratkus 2011: 141). In 97% of examples, then, the demonstrative immediately precedes the weak adjective. Ratkus concludes that “[f]rom a philological point of view, the definite determiner and the adjective can perhaps be seen to form an indivisible unit” (2011: 141), noting that this has implications for the reconstruction of Germanic nominal syntax. Further examples are given in (52).

- (52) a. *hairdeis sa goda*
 shepherd.M.NOM.SG DEM.M.NOM.SG good.M.NOM.SG.WK
 ‘the good shepherd’
 (John 10:11; Greek: *ho poimēn ho kalos* ‘the shepherd the good’)
- b. *in fon þata unhvapnando*
 into fire.N.ACC.SG DEM.N.ACC.SG unquenchable.N.ACC.SG.WK
 ‘into the fire that shall never be quenched’
 (Mark 9:43; Greek: *eis to pur to asbeston* ‘into the fire the unquenchable’)

Ratkus (2011: chapter 5) goes on to develop an account in which an ‘artroid’ element, historically derived from the demonstrative, precedes weak adjectives in Gothic.³⁷ Ratkus’s artroid is a “fake’ determiner”, distinct in function from either a prototypical demonstrative or a prototypical article. This notion of artroid – in the context of its co-occurrence specifically with weak adjectives – is effectively the same as the notion of adjectival article that has been laid out in detail in Pfaff (2019) and in this chapter.

The Gothic data pose additional challenges in that weak adjectives need not be accompanied by an artroid/adjectival article, and occur without it in non-trivial numbers: Ratkus (2011: 141) counts 63 weak adjectives without a preceding DEM. This is unlike the situation in the other early Germanic languages, where it is normal for the two elements to occur together, as discussed in Section 3.1. Gothic weak adjectives also need not be definite: see in particular Ratkus (2018). However, that an adjectival article existed in Gothic – even if its use was not quite obligatory – seems to be a safe conclusion.

³⁷The term “artroid” is taken from the work of Albertas Rosinas on the Baltic languages; see Rosinas (2009: 85–93) and references cited there.

5 Summary and conclusion

We have shown in this paper that all five of the substantially attested early Germanic languages – Old Icelandic, Old English, Old High German, Old Saxon, and Gothic – display evidence for an adjectival article. In all five languages this element is grammaticalized from a demonstrative, forms a constituent with the weak adjective, and does not serve to mark definiteness.

From the perspective of comparative reconstruction, the obvious next step is to project these properties back to Proto-Germanic itself.³⁸ The major difference between North Germanic and the other branches, of course, is that the adjectival article (*h*)*inn* in North Germanic is a reflex of Proto-Germanic **jainaz*, whereas in East and West Germanic it is a reflex of Proto-Germanic **sa* (and its paradigm). This need not be fatal for a reconstruction of the adjectival article as a common Proto-Germanic feature, however. Rather, we are plausibly dealing with a single functional element whose morphophonological realization varies and changes within the Germanic family. In support of this, we know from the attested histories of the North Germanic languages that reflexes of **jainaz* and **sa* are in competition for other linking functions too (Stroh-Wollin 2009, 2015, 2020; Pfaff 2019), with the latter also appearing variably in a relative clause context (Wagner 2017; Sapp 2019). Thus we can reconstruct the underlying syntax of an adjectival article without committing ourselves to a particular morphophonological form. More needs to be said about the precise diachronic developments involved, of course, but this shared behaviour observed across all branches of Germanic makes continuity a more appealing scenario than independent innovation, on grounds of parsimony.

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	INS	instrumental
ART	adjectival article (Old Icelandic)	M	masculine
DAT	dative	N	neuter
DEF	suffixed definite article	NOM	nominative
DEM	demonstrative	OE	Old English
DET	determiner	OHG	Old High German
GEN	genitive	OS	Old Saxon
IL	individual level	PDE	Present-day English

³⁸This is also the stance taken by Ratkus (2011: 249–250) with respect to his “artroid” element; for Ratkus, the emergence of the artroid in fact precedes the emergence of the strong-weak adjective distinction in Germanic.

PL	plural	SL	stage level
POSS	possessive	STR	strong adjectival inflection
REFL	reflexive	SUPL	superlative
SG	singular	WK	weak adjectival inflection

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