

WEAK AND STRONG ADJECTIVES IN OLD NORSE: AN EXAMINATION OF *KONUNGS SKUGGSJÁ*

Terje WAGENER¹

Article history: Received 2 February 2023; Revised 28 April 2023; Accepted 30 May 2023; Available online 23 June 2023; Available print 30 June 2023.

©2023 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Weak and Strong Adjectives in Old Norse: An Examination of Konungs skuggsjá.* All early Germanic languages distinguish between a weak and a strong adjectival declension. This contrast is traditionally described in terms of definiteness, the strong declension expressing indefinite reference and the weak one definite reference. Such a description, however, might be more suitable with regard to Modern Scandinavian languages than to Old Norse (and other early Germanic languages), where the strong declension is found in a number of contexts where in Modern Norwegian only the weak one is acceptable, for instance with certain demonstratives and in noun phrases with possessives. This article takes a look at the Old Norse didactic work *Konungs skuggsjá* and examines various contexts that unambiguously require the weak declension in Modern Norwegian: demonstratives, possessives, proper nouns, vocatives and others. The role and referential properties of the determiners *sá* and *hinn* are given special focus.

Keywords: *weak adjectives, strong adjectives, Old Norse, Konungs skuggsjá, determiners*

REZUMAT. *Adjective slabe și tari în limba norvegiană veche: o analiză a textului Konungs skuggsjá.* Toate limbile germanice timpurii se diferențiază prin două tipuri de declinare adjectivală: a adjectivelor slabe și a celor tari. Acest contrast este descris în mod tradițional pornind de la tipul articolului folosit, declinarea tare făcând trimitere la referința nearticulată și cea slabă, la referința articulată. O astfel de descriere, totuși, ar putea fi mai potrivită pentru

¹ **Terje WAGENER** teaches Norwegian Language at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. His PhD-thesis from the University of Oslo was published (in a revised and extended version) as a book at Mouton DeGruyter Publishing House in 2017, titled "The history of Nordic Relative Clauses". He has also been teaching Norwegian at universities in Poland and Italy and has worked as a lexicographer on the NAOB dictionary. Email: terje.wagener@ubbcluj.ro

limbile scandinave moderne decât pentru limba norvegiană veche (și alte limbi germanice timpurii), în care declinarea tare se găsește într-o serie de contexte. În contrast, în limba norvegiană modernă, se acceptă doar cea slabă, de exemplu cu anumite demonstrative și în sintagmele nominale cu posesive. Acest articol prezintă textul didactic *Konungs skuggsjá* din limba norvegiană veche și analizează o serie de contexte care necesită în mod cert declinarea slabă în limba norvegiană modernă: demonstrative, posesive, substantive proprii, vocative și altele. Rolului și proprietăților referențiale ale determinanților *sá* și *hinn* li se acordă o atenție deosebită.

Cuvinte-cheie: *adjective, limba norvegiană veche, Konungs skuggsjá, determinanți sá, hinn*

1. Introduction

All the early Germanic languages distinguish between a strong and a weak adjectival declension, cf. this Old Norse contrast:

(1) gamall maðr
old. STRONG man
'an old man', 'the old man'

(2) hinn gamli maðr(inn)
HINN old.WEAK man(-the)

The standard way of describing the strong-weak contrast is in terms of definiteness (see f.ex. Faarlund et al 1997, 387f; Kristoffersen 2002, 916f; Lyons 1999, 85; Harðarson 2017, 921), the strong inflection being associated with indefinite reference and the weak one with definite reference. All the Nordic languages still maintain such a distinction today².

This distinction is found in all early Germanic languages and is thus assumed to be inherited from Proto-Germanic (Ringe 2006, 169f). This means that it predates the rise of the suffixed definite article, which is not found before the Old Norse period.

While describing weak and strong adjectives straightforwardly in terms of definite vs. indefinite might be accurate with regard to present-day Scandinavian - "the distribution of the two declensions [in Swedish] correlates

² Modern German also has strong and weak adjectives, but the distinction is not related to definiteness as such.

precisely with the definite–indefinite distinction" (Lyons 1999, 85) – the Early Germanic data present a more complicated picture (see f.ex. Ratkus 2011, 222ff). As we will see below, several referential and/or formal contexts that in today's Norwegian unambiguously require a weak adjective, are compatible with a strong adjective in Old Norse. As shown by Dyvik (1979, 59), there is no requirement to formally mark definite reference in Old Norse, even after it acquires a definite article: a noun phrase with a strong adjective is thus unmarked for definiteness. According to Nygaard (1905, 54) this is "just as common"³ as overt definiteness marking on the adjective. Since Leiss (2000) it has been common to refer to a language like Old Norse as *hypodetermining*, as opposed to a *hyperdetermining* language like Modern Norwegian, in which formal marking of definite reference is obligatory⁴.

In all the early Germanic languages, the weak adjective is closely associated with a "preadjectival determiner"⁵ (Nygaard 1905, 48). In Old Norse (Wagener 2017, 68ff), this preadjectival determiner is normally *hinn*; in the other early Germanic languages (including Old Swedish), it is a cognate of Old Norse *sá*, a descendant of Proto-Germanic *sa*. It thus seems reasonable to reconstruct *sa* as the preadjectival determiner in Proto-Germanic. While Old Norse prefers *hinn* preadjectivally, *sá* is also found in this use (Nygaard 1905, 52ff), and indeed the first Ancient Nordic attestation of the preadjectival determiner has *sá* and not *hinn* (Lindblad 1953, 34).

2. *Konungs skuggsjá*

The text excerpted for the purpose of this article is the didactic work *Konungs skuggsjá* "The King's mirror", henceforth referred to as *KS*. It has the advantage of being available as a grammatically annotated and searchable online file, as part of the *Medieval Norwegian Text Archive (MENOTA)* at www.menota.org. The search function enables you for example to look up all the instances of a certain lemma in a given work⁶. The text in *MENOTA* is based in its entirety on the manuscript *AM 243 b a fol*, assumed to be from around 1275.

The contrast between a popular and learned style in Old Norse literature was famously noted by Nygaard (1905, 2ff). Popular style is characterized by a

³ "Vel saa almindeligt" (Nygaard 1905, 54, my translation).

⁴ I use these terms without necessarily subscribing to all aspects of Leiss' analysis. Leiss' claim is that definiteness in Old Norse is only marked in syntactic positions where you expect an indefinite noun phrase, meaning that subjects remain unmarked for definiteness. That might be the case, but I would like to see this hypothesis tested on a larger data sample.

⁵ "den foranstillede artikel" (Nygaard 1905, 48, my translation).

⁶ It does not allow you to search for inflectional endings, so in order to identify all the weak adjectives, for example, one still has to read through the text.

more concise form and less subordination. Learned style, by contrast, has more subordination and more elaborate sentences. Popular style is supposed to be found in "original works with narrative content and in the original legal language"⁷, whereas typical learned-style texts are "translations or adaptations from foreign languages or works that presuppose a knowledge of foreign literature" (1905, 2)⁸. However, Nygaard adds that in Classical Old Norse [i.e. the 13th century], the popular style is common also among learned scribes.

The didactic work *Konungs skuggsjá* is regarded as a learned style-text, known for its "highly ornate style"⁹ (Wellendorf 2013, 345). It represents a Norwegian example of the continental speculum literature. This has direct relevance for some of the questions discussed in this article, for instance the nature of the preadjectival determiner *hinn*, which Nygaard (1905, 48) sees as more of a learned-style phenomenon.

The English translations are my own. In interpreting the Old Norse examples, I have sometimes consulted the Danish translation (Jónsson 1926; also available on *heimskringla.no*).¹⁰

Each example from KS is provided with its location in the online file of the manuscript AM 243 b a fol: The page number followed by the line number. Since each page consists of two 30-line columns, I have added *a* or *b* after the line number, where *a* means the first column and *b* the second. The URL is as follows: <https://clarino.uib.no/menota/document-element?session-id=254903717011510&cpos=323433>. The link can also be found in the bibliography under "Primary source".

3. Definite contexts explained

Before starting the analysis of the KS data, I would like to identify what will henceforth be referred to as *definite contexts*. For the purposes of this article, I take *definite contexts* to mean contexts that unambiguously require a weak adjective in Modern Scandinavian¹¹.

⁷ "originalværker af fortællende indhold og i det originale lovsprog" (Nygaard 1905, 2, my translation).

⁸ "oversættelser eller bearbejdelser fra fremmede sprog eller i verker, der forudsætter kjendskab til fremmed literatur" (Nygaard 1905, 2, my translation).

⁹ "høyt ornamentert stil" (Wellendorf 2013, 345, my translation).

¹⁰ While there are certain differences in the way Danish expresses definiteness compared with Norwegian (briefly, that Danish, unlike Norwegian and Swedish, does not allow so-called double definiteness), the two languages behave identically when it comes to the form of the adjective.

¹¹ This is a practical definition for the purposes of this article and not an attempt to define more generally the concept of definiteness, which is outside the scope of the present article. I do not claim that there is always a 1-to-1 relationship between a weak adjective and definite reference in Modern Norwegian, as I do not wish to claim that Modern Norwegian represents a sort of definiteness 'end point'.

As mentioned above, the Old Norse strong adjectival inflection (and noun phrases with indefinite nouns in general) is unmarked for definiteness, meaning that it is compatible with both indefinite and definite reference (Nygaard 1905, 54). This begins to change in late Old Norse and continues in the Middle Norwegian period, the strong inflection becomes gradually marginalized from definite noun phrases¹².

The focus of this analysis will be on these linguistic contexts, which all unambiguously require the weak adjective in Modern Norwegian:

- noun phrases where the head is a definite noun (4.1)
- noun phrases with the demonstratives/determiners *hinn* and *sá* (4.2)
- noun phrases where the head is a proper noun or a pronoun (4.3)
- noun phrases used in direct address (vocatives) (4.4)
- noun phrases with possessives (4.5)
- noun phrases with inherently definite adjectives (4.6)
- noun phrases with only one referent (4.7)
- noun phrases with superlatives (4.8)

4. KS attributive adjectives in definite contexts

4.1. Noun phrases with a definite noun

In Modern Scandinavian, a weak adjective is an automatic consequence of a definite noun, i.e. a noun with the suffixed definite article (Faarlund et al. 1997, 387ff). However, Skrzypek (2012, 58ff) presents examples from Old Swedish (and Modern Icelandic) where a strong adjective modifies a definite noun. In such cases, she argues, the adjective is descriptive and not individualising; it adds additional information much like a non-restrictive relative clause would and does not restrict the set of referents.

KS offers one example of a strong adjective modifying a definite noun.

(3)	ʎæit	[ec]	engan	ʎisan	mæistarann	þann
	Know	[I]	no	wise.WEAK	teacher-the	SÁ
	er (KS4r:1b)					
	REL					
	'I know of no wise teacher who...'					

¹² Having said that, even late Middle Norwegian sources offer examples of strong adjectives in contexts that require a weak one in Modern Norwegian, so the impression is that this process is not yet completed by the end of Middle Norwegian. I hope to take a closer look at the Middle Norwegian data in a future article.

Although the noun contains the suffixed article, it clearly does not carry definite reference, since it falls under the scope of the indefinite quantifier *enginn* (‘no’). In other words, it seems not to fall in line with the examples discussed by Skrzypek¹³.

Proto-Germanic, Ancient Nordic, and indeed the early Old Norse Runic inscriptions (Seip 1955, 55) do not have a definite article suffixed to the noun¹⁴. In the 13th century KS, it is still a relative novelty compared to the weak adjective, which is inherited from Proto-Germanic. This makes it important not to „project” from the situation in Modern Norwegian, where a weak adjective is an automatic consequence of a definite noun. As Dyvik (1979) shows, the suffixed article expresses different referential properties from the weak adjectival inflection. Given the difference in referential properties one should not expect a 1-to-1 relationship between them: One may occur without the other¹⁵.

It might be of some significance that the noun in (3) is modified by a relative clause, cf. 4.2.1.2 below.

A remark on double definiteness: This has not been a main focus of this study, but the impression is that the noun has the indefinite form in a clear majority of examples with *hinn*. Double definiteness only emerged in the 1200s (Lundeby 1965, 48) and still seems to be a marginal phenomenon in this text (from ca. 1275), although examples can be found, cf. (KS11v, 13b), (KS12v, 29b) and (KS13r, 3a) below.

4.2. Noun phrases with the determiners *sá* and *hinn*

Before I move on to analyse adjectives preceded by demonstratives, I would again like to stress that indefinite nouns are unmarked for definiteness in Old Norse. An indefinite noun – on its own or modified by a strong adjective – can for example have anaphoric reference. In KS, if an anaphorically referring noun is modified by an adjective, the adjective will normally be preceded by a determiner. But this is not obligatory, cf. (4), where the reference is clearly anaphoric:

(4) <i>iyir</i>	<i>hæilagt</i>	<i>alltari</i> (KS68r, 15b)
over	holy.STRONG	alter
'over the holy alter'		

¹³ KS also offers two examples of the phrase *æinn ængillinn* (KS58r:26a; KS58r, 7b), where the numeral *æinn* 'one' is followed by a definite singular noun. This is rendered as a partitive construction in the Danish translation: "en af englene" 'one of the angels' (Jónsson 1926, 153); see also Faarlund (2004, 74, ex. 62a) for a similar example. The nominative case and the singular form is unexpected; the normal way of rendering the partitive meaning would be with a plural noun in the genitive case.

¹⁴ According to Stroh-Wollin (2009, 6), the first instances of the Scandinavian suffixed definite article appear in Runic inscriptions from the 11th century.

¹⁵ What we never find in the Old Norse data, however, is a strong adjective preceded by *hinn*.

It is my impression that KS generally prefer to leave noun phrases (those that do not contain an adjective) unmarked for definiteness – although this has not been the focus of this investigation, so I will not make any strong claims. What I can say is that double definiteness seems to be rare (although it occurs). If double definiteness is an indicator of how far ahead the language was in the process of rendering definiteness marking obligatory, then KS seems to be at a relatively early stage¹⁶.

4.2.1. Noun phrases with *sá*

The Old Norse determiner *sá* (traditionally referred to as a demonstrative; see Wagener 2017, 64ff) is the ancestor of the Modern Norwegian preadjectival article *den*. In Modern Norwegian, this determiner always requires a weak adjective (and normally, but not always, a definite noun).

4.2.1.1. *Sá* in noun phrases that do not contain a relative clause

Non-relative *sá* is definite, in the sense that it carries unique reference; see Dyvik (1979, 49ff); Wagener (2017, 64ff). Wagener (2017, 66), relying on some theoretical insights from Abraham (2007), shows that (non-relative) *sá* behaves as an *anaphoric demonstrative*, in that it, for example, only seems to refer to rhematic information from the previous sentence and cannot continue a topic.

Given that *sá* has these characteristics, we would expect the adjective to have the weak inflection when preceded by (non-relative) *sá*. According to Nygaard (1905, 52f), however, this is in general rare in Old Norse prose, although he points out that it is common in certain learned-style works (like the *Book of Homilies*) and suggests that this use of *sá* points forward to the Modern Norwegian preadjectival article *den/det/de*, which etymologically derives from *sá*. According to Faarlund (2009, 13f), "the demonstrative took over the role of the independent definite article", a process already manifested in Norwegian manuscripts from the early 13th century.

I have found three examples of non-relative *sá* with an adjective (excluding inherently definite adjectives, see 4.6). One has a strong adjective and an indefinite noun: *þeim hægum manne* 'the/that holy man' (KS8r, 15b); the reference is clearly anaphoric, there is a mention of *hinn hæggi Patricius* 'the Holy Patrick' (KS8r, 9b) earlier in the sentence. The other one has a weak adjective and a definite noun: *þeim kallda fæginum* 'the/that cold zone'. Again, reference is anaphoric. The third one is (5), also anaphoric:

¹⁶ As Nygaard points out (1905, 47), there can be major differences between works (and even within them) with regard to the extent to which the definite article is used. He mentions that works translated from Latin tend to use the article less, since their source text does not have it. KS is not a translated work, but it represents a genre that has Latin works as models. I intend to look at a 'popular-style' text (one of the sagas) next, to get a more complete picture.

- (5) þæss hins hælga hus er sætt er
 SÁ HINN holy.WEAK house REL placed is
 i þat hælga sæti (KS68v, 26a)
 in SÁ holy.WEAK seat
 'the holy house, where the holy seat has been placed'

The adjective here is weak, but it follows a noun phrase with *sá* and *hinn* earlier in the sentence; one can speculate that the author has deleted the second *hinn* for stylistic reasons. Given that the noun phrase has anaphoric reference, *hinn* serves no referential purpose.

The other cases where *sá* co-occurs with the demonstrative *hinn* will be discussed in 4.2.3 below.

4.2.1.2. *Sá* in noun phrases that contain a relative clause

As demonstrated in Wagener (2017, 101ff) and (Dyvik 1979, 50ff), *sá* may lose its definiteness if the NP is modified by a relative clause, in the sense that it is compatible with non-unique reference. This is seen clearly in noun phrases where *sá* falls under the scope of a non-unique quantifier like *einn*, *einnhverr*, *nokkur* etc – although *sá* may fail to cause unique reference even in the absence of such a quantifier.

The text offers many examples of *sá* in relative contexts, like (6), where it falls under the scope of the indefinite quantifier *einn*. The adjective is always strong.

- (6) er þar ænn ýatn æitt miket þat
 is there also lake one big.STRONG SÁ
 er heiter Logri (KS6v, 27a)
 REL is-called Logri
 'There is also a lake there called Logri'

But even if the reference is clearly definite, the adjective is still strong:

- (7) þu atzt sætt æpli þat er
 you ate sweet.STRONG apple SÁ REL
 þu toct (KS44v, 2b)
 you took
 'You ate the sweet apple that you took'

As in the examples above, *sá* tends to follow the noun and the adjective when it is non-unique (cf. Wagener 2017, 59ff), but there are also examples where it precedes the adjective. This has no effect on the form of the adjective, which is strong either way. But the fact that relative *sá* can, and even tends, to

be separated from the adjective in this way, shows us that it is not a preadjectival determiner like *hinn*. *Hinn* always precedes the adjective and is never separated from it¹⁷.

Only three contexts may allow a weak adjective: a) The adjective is inherently definite, cf 4.6 below, or b) *sá* co-occurs with *hinn*, see 4.2.3, or c) the noun is definite, like in (8).

(8)	hafet	mykla.	þat	er	umhværfis
	ocean-the	big.WEAK	SÁ	REL	around
	rænnr	heiminn (KS13r:17a)			
	runs	world-the			
	'the big ocean that circles the world'				

4.2.2. Noun phrases with *hinn*

The demonstrative *hinn* is the source of the Norwegian suffixed definite article (Faarlund 2009, 6f; Stroh-Wollin 2009, 3ff), which originates in the Old Norse period. But in Old Norse there is also a preadjectival *hinn*, often referred to as an "an independent definite article" (Faarlund 2009, 6; a similar term is used by Nygaard 1905, 48). Both Faarlund and Nygaard see *hinn* as a preposed counterpart to the suffixed definite article; Stroh-Wollin (2009, 7f) however sees *hinn* as having "a quite different function from the definite suffix". I will return to this question in the conclusion.

Both in Old Norse and Modern Norwegian this article always requires the weak form of the adjective. A discussion of the referential properties and the evolution of *hinn* is given in Wagener (2017, 68ff). I will henceforth refer to this element in Old Norse as the *preadjectival determiner*¹⁸.

Also, Modern Norwegian has a preposed adjectival article (*den/det/de*), which however derives from *sá*, not from *hinn*. It requires a weak adjective and a definite noun (Stroh-Wollin 2009:4)¹⁹.

Nygaard lists (1905, 48ff) a number of contexts where *hinn* is used: With anaphoric reference (although mainly in poetry and to some extent in learned-style texts; in other genres it is normally accompanied by *sá*), with numerals and inherently definite adjectives like *sami*, with proper nouns like *Haraldr hinn hárfagri* 'Harald Fairhair', in direct address, with absolute superlatives

¹⁷ *Sá*, whether relative or non-relative, will always precede *hinn* when it co-occurs with it, which is another indication that *hinn* has a closer relationship with the adjective.

¹⁸ In ON, *hinn* is also found as a determiner/pronoun with other-deixis and possibly with a different etymology. It is only in this use that it has survived in Modern Norwegian dialects.

¹⁹ The noun can be indefinite in very formal usage and with non-specific reference (see Dyvik 1979, 67ff).

and with generic noun phrases (although according to Nygaard (1905, 51) generics normally prefer an indefinite noun and a strong adjective).

By late Old Norse, according to Lundeby (1965, 77), *hinn* had largely been replaced by *sá* and predominantly confined to proper names, especially noble titles.

In KS, *hinn* is found in all of these contexts. It never precedes a strong adjective. As expected, it is particularly frequent with proper nouns like *hina hælgu Mariu* '(the) Holy Mary' (KS3v, 14b), *hinn hælgi Patricius* 'the Holy Patrick' (KS8r, 9b) etc. Nygaard (1905, 54) writes that such examples also often lack *hinn*, but I have not come across any such cases in this text.

Hinn is also frequently found with some kind of generic reference, often as a substantivised adjective: *hinn fatæka* 'the poor one', 'poor people' (KS39v, 20b). In this use, it alternates with indefinite plurals (with strong adjectives), which is the more common way of expressing generic reference in this text: *hinn hviti biorninn* 'the white bear' (KS11v, 13b) vs *svarter birnir* 'black bears' (KS11v, 10b). Similarly, with superlatives, *hina bæztu siðu* 'the best customs' (17v, 4a) alternates with *bæzter siðarmænn* 'the best men of education' (KS17v, 7a). It is found with absolute superlatives, which by their nature are referentially indefinite: *hinar mæsto ugiptor* 'the greatest accidents', ie. 'very great accidents' (KS3r, 17a). It is common but not obligatory with inherently definite adjectives like ordinals, cf. 4.6 below.

As mentioned above, Nygaard found that *hinn* is rare with anaphoric reference, outside of learned-style texts and unless accompanied by *sá*. KS offers very few clearly anaphoric examples with *hinn*. One is *sƿærd hins unga mannz* (KS57v, 18a) 'the young man's sword', where the young man in question has been mentioned in the previous sentence. Another possible example is where the noun *vegr* 'zone' is introduced – *þa tva ƿægo er í himni liggia* 'the two zones that lie in heaven' (KS12v, 8b) – and then subsequently referred in the paragraphs that follow, with a contrast between warm and cold zones: *Hinn heiti ƿægrinn* 'the warm zone' (KS12v:29b). *Hinn* alternates with *sá*, *þeim kallda ƿæginum* 'the cold zone' (KS13r:7a), or *sá* and *hinn* co-occur in the same NP, *þeir hiner kalldu ƿægirnir* 'the cold zones' (KS13r:3a). But here the reading is primarily contrastive and not anaphoric.

Sometimes, the meaning borders on generic. The strong substantivised adjective *skilningar laus* 'a penniless person' (KS17v, 14b) is followed in the same paragraph by *hinn skilningar lausi* 'the penniless one' (KS17v, 19b). The reference is anaphoric in the sense that it seems to point back to an antecedent. On the other hand, since the meaning is generic, the use of *hinn* would be licensed also without the anaphoric reference. I am thus inclined to count this as an example of generic *hinn*.

One might in fact speculate that the author chooses *hinn* and not *sá* exactly to avoid an anaphoric reading. An illustration is the example *hit toma haf* 'the empty sea' (KS13r, 20a). The paragraph has already had several mentions of *haf* 'ocean'. Using *sá* would favour an anaphoric reading; the reader would be encouraged to look for an antecedent, which is to be avoided if the meaning is primarily generic. In Modern Norwegian, the equivalent phrase is acceptable with the simple definite, *det tomme hav*, which suggests an abstract, generic reading, cf. Dyvik (1979, 67).) One could also argue that *sá* has an emphatic element (cf. Lundebj 1965) that renders it unsuitable for a phrase such as *hit toma haf*, where it is the adjective that is emphasized.

4.2.3. *Sá* and *hinn* co-occurring in the same noun phrase

Sá and *hinn* might be found in the same noun phrase, and in popular-style texts this is, according to Nygaard (1905, 48), the most common way of expressing anaphoric reference.

KS offers 13 examples of *sá* and *hinn* together (as well as one with the proximal *þessi* and one with *slíkr* 'such'²⁰). The adjective is always weak.

- (9) Kona þærs hins ríka mannz ælskaðe
 Wife SÁ HINN wealthy.WEAK man loved
 Joseph (KS35v, 14a)
 Joseph
 'the wife of that wealthy and powerful man loved Joseph'

What (if anything) is achieved referentially by adding *þærs* to *hins ríka mannz*? Without *sá*, you may get a contrastive reading: the wealthy and powerful man as opposed to the poor and powerless man. With *sá*, the noun phrase becomes more clearly anaphoric: 'The wealthy man mentioned previously' (i.e. it points back to *þeim hofðingia [...] er hans hærra þar* 'the chieftain that was his master' in the previous sentence).

But in the majority of examples the addition of *sá* could be said to give the noun phrase more of an emphatic character.

- (10) Tre þat hit fagra er þit seet
 tree SÁ HINN fair.WEAK REL you see
 at stændr í miðri paradiso (KS40r,16b)
 that stands in middle paradise
 'the/that beautiful tree that you see standing in the middle of paradise'

²⁰ See Wagener (2017, 80ff) for a discussion on the referential properties of *slíkr*.

It is similarly used to add emphasis to particularly evil characters: *Sa hinn ofunnd fulli anndi* 'that hateful ghost' (KS43v, 21a), *sa hinn illgiarni anndi* 'that evil ghost' (KS43v, 25a). In two of the cases, the insertion of *sá* may be motivated by the presence of a postmodifying relative clause, cf. 4.2.1.2.

4.3. Noun phrases headed by a proper noun or a pronoun

4.3.1. Noun phrases with proper nouns

Nygaard mentions three different alternatives when the adjective modifies a proper noun: One featuring *hinn* and a weak adjective, *Haraldr hinn hárfagri* 'Harald Fairhair' (1905, 50); one with no determiner and a weak adjective, *Ólafr digri* 'Olaf the big one' (1905, 54); and finally, in the older literature, one with no determiner and a strong adjective, *Ketill flatnefr* 'Ketill the flatnosed' (1905, 50).

In Modern Norwegian, names always take a weak adjective. The presence of a preadjectival determiner depends on the referential properties. If the adjective is restrictive, the preadjectival determiner is normally used: *den nye Anita* 'the new Anita' (as opposed to the old one). If it only provides additional descriptive information, no preadjectival determiner is present: *gamle Anita* 'old Anita', i.e. 'Anita, who by the way is old'.

In KS, only the first of Nygaard's alternatives mentioned above is attested: If the proper noun is modified by an adjective, the adjective is always preceded by *hinn*: *hina hælgu Mariu* '(the) Holy Mary' (KS3v, 14b), *hinn hælgi Patricius* 'the Holy Patrick' (KS8r, 9b), etc (although, unlike in Nygaard's example above, *hinn* and adjective precede the proper noun). This then represents the only KS context where *hinn* seems to be obligatory with weak adjectives.

4.3.2. Noun phrases with pronouns

In Modern Norwegian, adjectives modifying pronouns are always weak (Faarlund et al 1997, 390). If they are descriptive/non-restrictive (*søte deg!*, lit. 'sweet you', i.e. 'you, who are so sweet'), they take no preadjectival article²¹. If they are restrictive (*den nye meg*, 'the new me', as opposed to 'the old me') they normally take the preadjectival article.

The texts offer one potential example of an adjective modifying a pronoun. It is descriptive/non-restrictive and has a strong adjective and no determiner.

²¹ I.e. they take no determiner when they are preposed to the pronoun. If postnominal, they require a determiner (*jeg den svake* 'I, who am weak'), but I would argue that we are then dealing with apposition and not modification. Modern Norwegian does not allow postnominal adjectives and many language users would insert a comma before the determiner.

- (11) ec ustyr fell i miclar sakir γiðr
 I weak.STRONG fell in great debt with
 þic (KS45r, 18a)
 you
 'I, weak as I am, fell in great debt with you'

This construction then differs in two ways from the Modern Norwegian equivalent: The adjective is strong and it is postmodifying. But the very fact that it is postmodifying may suggest it is in apposition to the pronoun and not modifying it. An apposition is also what is opted for in the Danish translation (Jónsson 1926, 129): *Jeg, svage menneske*, 'I, weak person', albeit with a weak adjective.

4.4. Noun phrases used in direct address (vocatives)

According to Lyons (1999, 152) "noun phrases used in direct address, in vocative function [are] of uncertain status in relation to definiteness". In some languages, they take definite nouns, in others indefinite ones. In Modern Scandinavian, vocatives require an indefinite noun and a definite adjective, but are incompatible with the preadjectival determiner (Lyons 1999, 85). Julien's (2014) more detailed investigation shows that definite nouns are not excluded from (certain types of) Norwegian vocatives; what is not allowed, is the preadjectival determiner *den*.²²

Ringe (2006, 170) points out that vocatives normally take weak adjectives in Early Germanic. According to Nygaard (1905), Old Norse vocatives can be both definite and indefinite. In the former case (1905, 50f), they feature *hinn* and a weak adjective; in the latter case (1905, 56), they feature a strong adjective and no demonstrative.

KS offers both of Nygaard's types, both the definite one, with *hinn* and a weak adjective as well as the indefinite one, with a strong adjective and no demonstrative. (12) has both types of vocative constructions in the same sentence.

- (12) Hœyr þu hinn milldazti huggare heilagr
 hear you HINN mildest.WEAK comforter holy.STRONG
 annde (KS53r, 28a)
 spirit
 'Hear, you the mildest comforter, the Holy Ghost'

There are two observations to be made here. One is that the examples with *hinn* all have an adjective in the superlative, the ones without *hinn* do not.

²²According to Julien (2014, 143), this is because vocatives contain a deictic 2nd person feature, which is incompatible with the 3rd person feature of *den*.

Secondly, and more importantly, all examples could be argued to be in apposition to the pronoun *þú* 'you'. This renders a comparison difficult, since even Modern Norwegian tolerates the preadjectival article in noun phrases that stand in apposition to vocatives: *Du, den deiligste jenta i hele Skien* 'You, the hottest girl in all of Skien'. Appositions can be seen as non-restrictive relative clauses (with deleted relativizer and copula), so all noun phrases that would be acceptable as a subject complement in a non-restrictive relative clause are in principle acceptable as appositions. I can add here that even most of the examples of vocatives with *hinn* offered by Nygaard (1905, 50f) are in apposition to *þú*. A more extensive data sample is thus necessary to shed light on the vocatives in Old Norse with regard to the presence of determiners like *hinn*.

4.5. Noun phrases with possessive pronouns and genitives

As Lyons (1999, 124) states, "there is little reason to draw a major distinction between possessives based on pronouns and possessives based on full noun phrases, since their syntactic behaviour is essentially the same".

4.5.1. Noun phrases with possessive pronouns

In Modern Norwegian, noun phrases with a possessive unambiguously require a weak adjective (Faarlund et al 1997, 388), even if, as mentioned above, the noun is indefinite.

In Old Norse, on the other hand, possessives are not inherently definite. As shown by Dyvik (1979, 65), they can co-occur with indefinite determiners like *einn* (one, a), *nokkur* (a, some) and *einnhverr* (any), unlike their Modern Norwegian counterparts. Cross-linguistically, this is not unusual, as many languages, for instance Italian, allow indefinite determiners in possessive noun phrases, cf. Lyons (1999, 22ff).

According to Nygaard (1905, 52), possessive noun phrases may take either a weak or a strong adjective. If they take a weak adjective they usually also feature the demonstrative *hinn*. Otherwise, the adjective is strong.

Delsing (1994) has investigated adjectives in possessive noun phrases in Old Swedish and finds a strong correlation between a weak adjective and the order possessive-adjective-noun. When weak adjectives appear in possessive noun phrases in his data, it is always with this order. (Though it is worth mentioning that Old Swedish does not have the preposed article *hinn*.)

In possessive noun phrases in KS, the adjective is always strong, like in (13) and (14) (with the exception of the one example with *hinn* discussed below, and noun phrases with inherently definite adjectives, cf. 4.6):

- (13) at skilia oc kunna heilagt logmal
 to understand and know holy.STRONG law
 þitt (KS54v, 6a)
 yours
 'to understand and to know your holy law'

- (14) mæðr þinni heilagri miskunn (KS54r, 15a)
 with your holy.STRONG mercy
 'in your holy mercy'

The relative order between possessive, adjective and noun makes no difference in this regard. The majority of examples have the order adjective-noun-possessive, like (13), but there are also several instances like (14), with the order possessive-adjective-noun – the order found by Delsing (1994) to favour a weak adjective – as well as three examples with other orders. In all cases, the adjective remains strong. I have found one possessive NP that features *hinn* in KS, *mina hina liotligo asion* 'my ugly face' (KS43v, 12a). As expected, the adjective is weak.

4.5.2. Noun phrases with possessive genitives

The adjective is always strong in KS noun phrases with possessive genitives. These examples are less numerous than the one with a pronominal possessive; they normally have the order with the adjective before the noun in the genitive, as in these examples.

- (15) heilagt guðs alltari (KS68r, 12b)
 holy.STRONG God's.GEN alter
 'God's holy alter'

- (16) í fullu konongs trausti (KS20r, 13a)
 in full.STRONG king's.GEN trust
 'in God's full trust'

- (17) æingetinn guðs sun (KS53r, 27a)
 only-begotten.STRONG God's.GEN son
 'God's only begotten son'

4.6. Noun phrases with inherently definite adjectives

There is a group of Old Norse adjectives that can be said to be 'inherently definite'. It includes ordinals, *sami* 'same', adjectives expressing order (*næstr* 'next', *fyrri* 'former' etc) and adjectives referring to unique locations (like *syðri* 'southern', *hægri* 'høyre' etc). Ratkus (2011, 141) speaks of "adjectives [that involve] an absolute or extreme notion". Nygaard (1905, 54)

notes that they frequently appear without the preadjectival article *hinn*. Their Modern Norwegian counterparts may also, and often tend to, appear without a preadjectival determiner. I take this as evidence of the determiner-like quality of these adjectives.

Most of these adjectives are diachronically comparative (*syðri, fyrri, ytri*) forms; the ordinals and *næstr* are originally superlative forms. Comparatives always follow the weak declension in Old Norse, the same goes for ordinals. The Old Norse word for 'same' has both a strong form *samr* and a weak form *sami*, the latter being more common (Heggstad et al 2012, 516). The Modern Norwegian determiner *samme* descends from the weak form.

In KS, inherently definite adjectives are always weak. I have not found a single strong form of *sami/samr*. These adjectives are usually (but not always) preceded by a determiner, which is normally *hinn* but may also be *sá* (*þann fyrsta fisk*²³ (KS39v, 12a); with *sami*, *sá* is the preferred option in temporal expressions meaning 'the same day' etc). The determiner tends to be absent in more or less set phrases like *mæð sama hætti* 'in the same way' (KS24v, 28a).

4.7. Noun phrases with only one referent

Some noun phrases have by their semantic nature only one referent, like *God, The Holy Spirit* etc. In Modern Norwegian, such nouns take a weak adjective. All the Old Norse examples offered by Nygaard (1905, 55) have a strong adjective.

In the several KS examples featuring a referent of this kind, the adjective is strong: *almatkan guð* 'the almighty God' (KS1v, 24a), *þionostomannum heilagrar kirkiu* (KS53v, 28b) 'the servants of the Holy Church', *sannr guð* 'the true God' (KS54v, 8a). One example deserves a special mention:

(18) þa er þætta æitt satt upphaf (KS1v, 8b)
 then is this one true.STRONG origin
 'so this is the only true beginning'

The Danish translation uses "det eneste" 'the only (one)' (Jónsson 1926, 16)²⁴, a superlative of the quantifying adjective *ene* 'the one', used in definite noun phrases and always with a weak adjective. Old Norse does not have a quantifier/adjective with this specialized meaning, instead it relies on the numeral *einn* to express it. However, the numeral *einn*, which only has a strong form in Old Norse, acquires the weak form *eina* in Middle Norwegian (cp.

²³ Although it should be said that the noun here is modified by a relative clause, a context that favours *sá*.

²⁴ "så er dette det eneste sande ophav" (Jónsson 1926, 16).

Modern Norwegian *ene*) when used in the sense of 'the one, the only' (see Wagener 2017, 257, fn. 1 for an example)²⁵.

4.8. Noun phrases with superlatives

According to Nygaard (1905, 62), Old Norse superlatives expressing the highest degree are normally strong. Absolute superlatives, on the other hand, are weak and take *hinn*.

Most attributive superlatives in KS are weak and modified by *hinn*, both definite superlatives, *hinn fægrsti staðr er mænn ytu* 'the most beautiful town that people know' (KS8r, 30a), and absolute superlatives *hinar mæsto ugiptor* 'the greatest misfortunes' (KS3r, 17a). There are a few examples where the superlative is weak but not preceded by *hinn* (*alettazta aldre* 'in the best age', i.e. 'in my best age' KS1v, 25b) or where it is strong (*þæira er bæzter siðarmænn ero* 'those who are the best men of education' KS17v, 7a).

5. Conclusion

This examination has shown that the only context that unfailingly triggers a weak adjective is the determiner *hinn*. In other definite contexts, strong adjectives are at least possible. In the case of possessives as well as noun phrases with only one referent, they seem to be the only option. They also vastly outnumber weak adjectives when co-occurring with the demonstrative/ determiner *sá*, which is unexpected from a present-day point of view, since it was *sá* that gave rise to the Modern Norwegian preadjectival article *den*. They seem to be obligatory in noun phrases with one referent, and at least available as an alternative with superlatives and vocatives (if the examples in this text actually qualify as vocatives, which is dubious).

In Ratkus' (2011, 142) detailed study of adjectives in Gothic, all weak adjectives that lack a preadjectival determiner are inherently definite (cf. 4.6 above) or occur in vocative noun phrases. He has "not found a single clear attestation of a weak adjective without a determiner that would not conform to either of these explanations." The present study shows, as was noted already by Nygaard (1905, 52ff), that it is possible to leave out *hinn* in almost all contexts. The one context where a weak adjective is always preceded by *hinn* in KS is with names (cf. 4.3.1). This could represent a late Old Norse development; Nygaard (1905, 54) writes that such examples "very frequently"²⁶ lack *hinn*. Lundebý (1965, 77) argues that by late Old Norse, *hinn* had largely been replaced by *sá*

²⁵ It is not the only quantifier to acquire a separate weak, or definite, form. *Sjalfr* 'self' found only with a strong declension in Old Norse, has a definite form *selve* in Modern Norwegian. The same goes for *annat* 'second, other': Exclusively strong in Old Norse, it has a separate definite form *andre* in Modern Norwegian.

²⁶ "Meget hyppig" (Nygaard 1905, 54, my translation).

and predominantly confined to proper names, especially noble titles, where it connotes reverence. So when *hinn* is always found with names in KS, this might then represent a use that is stylistically and pragmatically conditioned, and not required by syntax or semantics.

Ratkus reconstructs a (referentially empty) preadjectival determiner for Proto-Germanic, the only candidate being *sa*, the ancestor to Old Norse *sá*. The first attestation of a preadjectival article in the Ancient Nordic Runic material is *sá* and not *hinn* (Lindblad 1953, 34). This means that *hinn* at some point represented a Scandinavian innovation. As Stroh-Wollin writes, "it could be tempting to take the more discriminating inflection of *(h)inn* to compensate for the weak forms of the adjectives", an approach which would align with Ratkus' (2011, 222ff) analysis of the original Proto-Germanic preadjectival determiner as an "artroid", whose function is not referential, but to realize morphosyntactic features not expressed in the adjectival paradigm. This was a role originally performed by Proto-Germanic *sa*, but Old Norse *sá* could have evolved into too much of an anaphoric demonstrative to be suitable for this function. Old Norse *sá* has a more deictic nature than for instance its cousins in Old English and Old High German (Wagener 2017, 65), given that the latter languages' cognates of *sá* are used also used to express "indirect anaphoric reference" (like for example reference to body parts); in Old Norse this type of reference is reserved for the definite article (or an unmarked noun). Moreover, in Old Norse, the weak paradigm has far more syncretism than the strong one, which could motivate the (optional) insertion of *hinn* as a kind of artroid. The suffixed definite article, of course, derives from *hinn*, meaning that *hinn* must have lost much of its deictic character and was then more suitable than *sá* as a (referentially empty) preadjectival determiner. But it was not obligatory in this function and could be dispensed with, as the present study shows.

In cases where an adjective appears in a noun phrase with anaphoric reference, one could always call upon *sá*. In some cases, this would lead to the anaphoric *sá + hinn*-construction, common in some Old Norse works (see 4.2.3). This might seem like counter-evidence to the hypothesis suggested above that *hinn*'s role is to express morpho-syntactic properties, since the same properties are expressed by *sá*, which would render *hinn* redundant. However, I think there is good reason to assume that the *sá + hinn* construction cannot have been widespread in colloquial language. Such a construction is typologically marked; I know of no European language that avails itself of two determiners of that kind in the same noun phrase. At best, it must have been diachronically very unstable, which would explain why it seems to have been so short-lived. Another point is that as the suffixed definite article becomes generalized, the morpho-syntactic features of a noun phrase are expressed on the noun, so there is less need for *hinn*²⁷.

²⁷ The role of preadjectival determiner is of course eventually taken over by *sá*, or a descendant thereof, which however is no longer a mere 'artroid' and serves a different role than *hinn* used to.

I would like to end with a few words on the referential properties of the weak adjectival declension. It is clearly not anaphoric, cf 4.2.2 above; *sá* needs to be added in such instances. I see the referential function of the weak adjective as primarily contrastive. This may for instance explain why KS prefers strong to weak adjectives in the many examples of noun phrases with possessive pronouns and possessive genitives. Adjectives used in possessive noun phrases in KS are not contrastive²⁸:

(19) þarf ec mæirr miscunnsamligrar γægðar þinnar
 need I more merciful.STRONG mercy yours
 (KS45r, 15a)
 'I need your forgiving mercy more'

(20) guðdomligan matt guðs (KS51r, 29b)
 divine.STRONG power God's.GEN
 'your divine power'

'Your forgiving mercy' and 'your divine power' are not contrasted with 'your non-forgiving mercy' and 'your non-divine power'. The equivalent Modern Norwegian phrases would unambiguously require a weak adjective, despite the referential properties being unchanged. This shows that weak adjectives in Modern Norwegian serve a different referential function than they did in Old Norse and possibly had done ever since Proto-Germanic.

WORKS CITED

Primary source:

Konungs skuggsjá, AM 243 b a fol. URL: <https://clarino.uib.no/menota/document-element?session-id=254903757448439&cpos=323433>

Secondary sources:

Abraham, Werner. 2007. "Discourse binding: DP and pronouns in German, Dutch, and English." In *Nominal determination. Typology, context constraints, and historical emergence*, edited by Elisabeth Stark, Elisabeth Leiss and Werner Abraham, 21–48. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

²⁸ There are a few potential counterexamples, all with the adjective *rettr* 'right, correct' (f. ex. *rettr sun min* 'my right son' KS1v, 17a), where you might argue that the meaning is contrastive. However, *rettr* is always strong whenever used attributively in KS. And given that strong adjectives are referentially unmarked anyway, one must assume that they are also compatible with a contrastive meaning. Another question is why *rettr* is always strong in KS; the Gothic word meaning 'right' is always weak (Ratkus 2011, 242). Cf. also 4.6 above.

- Delsing, Lars-Olof. 1994. "'Hans sjukt ben' - Om starka och svaga adjektiv i fornsvenskan." In *Språkbruk, grammatik och språkförändring: En festskrift till Ulf Teleman 13.1.1994*, 99–108. Lund.
- Dyvik, Helge. 1979. "Omkring fremveksten av artiklene i norsk. Språklig markering av referensielle forutsetninger." *Maal og Minne 1-2 1979*: 40–78.
- Faarlund, Jan Terje, Svein Lie and Kjell Ivar Vannebo. 1997. *Norsk referansegrammatikk*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Faarlund, Jan Terje. 2004. *The syntax of Old Norse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Faarlund, Jan Terje. 2009. "On the history of definiteness marking in Scandinavian." *Journal of Linguistics* 45, no. 3: 617–639.
- Harðarson, Jón Axel. 2017. "55. The morphology of Germanic". In *Volume 2 Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics: An International Handbook*, edited by Jared Klein, Brian Joseph and Matthias Fritz, 913–954. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Heggstad, Leiv, Finn Hødnebo and Erik Simensen. 2012. *Norrøn ordbok*. Oslo: Det norske samlaget.
- Jónsson, Finnur. 1926. *Kongespejlet*. København: Gyldendal.
- Julien, Marit. 2014. "Vokativar i norsk." *Norsk Lingvistisk Tidsskrift* 32, no. 1: 130–165.
- Kristoffersen, Kristian Emil. 2002. "103. The morphology of Old Nordic I: Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian". In *The Nordic Languages. An international handbook of the history of the North Germanic languages. Vol. 1*, edited by Oskar Bandle et al., 911–925. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Leiss, Elisabeth. 2000. *Artikel und Aspekt: die grammatischen Muster von Definitheit*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Lindblad, Gustaf. 1953. "Den äldsta nordiska relativkonstruktionen." In *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*: 68–69.
- Lundeby, Einar. 1965. *Overbestemt substantiv i norsk*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Lyons, Christopher. 1999. *Definiteness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nygaard, Marius. 1905. *Norrøn Syntax*. Kristiania: Aschehoug.
- Ratkus, Arturas. 2011. *The Adjective Inflection in Gothic and Early Germanic: Structure and Development*. Unpublished PhD-dissertation, University of Cambridge.
- Ringe, Don. 2006. *A Linguistic History of English. Volume I. From Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seip, Didrik Arup. 1955. *Norsk språkhistorie til omkring 1370*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Skrzypek, Dominika. 2012. *Grammaticalization of (in)definiteness in Swedish*. Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Stroh-Wollin, Ulla. 2009. "On the development of definiteness markers in Scandinavian." In *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax*: 1–25. Lund: Lund University.
- Wagener, Terje. 2017. *The history of Nordic relative clauses*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Wellendorf, Jonas. 2013. "Lærdomslitteratur." In *Handbok i norrøn filologi*, edited by Odd Einar Haugen, 302–355. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.