On the Way to DP
From Runic to Old Icelandic

1. DP vs. NP languages. The theoretical focus of the paper is the relation between nominal syntax and clausal syntax. It has been repeatedly observed that languages vary with respect to the realisation of the nominal functional domain: English and Swedish can be labeled DP languages since they have obligatory articles for singular count nouns; languages such as Latin and Russian do not have obligatory articles and will be labeled NP languages (Gil 1987, Löbel 1993, Chierchia 1998, etc.; Alexiadou, Haegeman & Stavrou 2007 for a survey). We focus on the opposition between 'NP languages' and 'DP languages' and the diachronic development from NP languages to DP languages. One specific take on this contrast is developed by Bošković (2005, 2008, 2010), according to whom NP languages lack definite articles, not because D is null, but because D is missing altogether (see also Bošković 2009, which addresses some objections to the NP/DP parameter). Bošković argues that a cluster of syntactic properties correlate with NP- or DP-status, of which the following (which we label 'NP properties') will be focused on here: NP languages display (a) *scrambling*, (b) *focus-verb non-adjacency*, (c) (sometimes) *non-obligatory number morphology*, (d) *no clitic doubling*. While present-day Germanic languages are DP languages, and lack NP properties, it has been observed that the earliest Germanic lacked definite articles (e.g., Leiss 2006, among others). In our paper we study the NP/DP divide and the emergence of the determiner in Scandinavian as reflected in the runic inscriptions and the Poetic Edda.

2. Diachrony of Germanic. 'Runic' is an alphabetic system for the earliest Germanic languages. Considering the many centuries and broad geographical area they span, the runic inscriptions by no means represent one homogeneous language or dialect. The inscriptions older than c. 500 AD, for example, represent a linguistic state of affairs most properly designated as 'Northwest Germanic' according to Antonsen (1975, 2002) and Haugen (1976). We label this 'Old Runic' (OR). OR can be considered the mother language of both North Germanic (i.e., Scandinavian) *and* West Germanic. Therefore, if one believes Antonsen and Haugen, conclusions drawn about the earliest runic inscriptions (pre-500) are potentially significant for stages of Germanic preceding Common Scandinavian. The Viking-Age runic inscriptions of Denmark and Sweden (c. 800-1100) represent something like eastern Old Norse (ON). (The western dialects of ON developed into Norwegian, Icelandic, and Faroese, while eastern ON developed into Danish and Swedish.) The Poetic Edda, on the other hand, which was not written in runes, was written down in Iceland in the 1200s - though the original date of composition for many of its poems may have been much earlier. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, we will call the language of the Viking-Age inscriptions 'ON' and the language of the Eddas 'Old Icelandic' (OI).

3. The definite article. In the entire runic corpus up before 1000, no definite articles are attested (Skrzypek 2009). That is, there is no instantiation of the early Scandinavian definite article suffix -*inn*. In other words, nowhere in almost 1000 years of runic inscriptions can this hallmark property of DP languages be found. One option to interpret this would be that 'runic' was a DP language and that the absence of articles is register-related (Neckel 1924, cited in Skrzypek 2009), comparable to the absence of articles in current newspaper headlines (Stowell 1991). Alternatively, 'runic' was an NP language. According to Skrzypek (2009) there are a few attestations of the definite article in the runic inscriptions after 1000, and, around the same time, the article is sporadically attested in the Icelandic Eddas and Mainland Scandinavian legal texts. Starting in the 1200s, the article became common in the written texts available, though it may have been established earlier in the spoken language (Skrzypek 2009: 68). Mostly on the basis of etymological evidence Skrzypek (2009) postulates that the unbound (*h*)*inn* demonstrative must have grammaticalized into the definite article suffix *before* 800, even though it took time for it to penetrate into the written tradition. In any case, since a grammaticalization process is posited (and it is common for demonstratives to become articles; Himmelmann 2001), the underlying assumption must be that Scandinavian shifted from NP to DP language.

4. NP properties. Our paper provides diachronic support for the clustering of properties implied in Bošković's NP/DP parameter on the basis (i) of some Viking-Age (800-1100) Old Norse runic inscriptions ('runic Old Norse', Uppsala University's Rundatabasen), and (ii) of poems in the Poetic Edda (Old Icelandic) and it will shed light on the emergence of the determiner in Germanic.

(a) Scrambling. In addition to lacking an overtly realized definite article**,** runic Old Norse provides us with numerous examples of *scrambling*, here in the form of discontinuity in the noun phrase. This is expected in terms of Boskovic's parameter.

(1)   **kuml   kiarþu þatsi kitil ok sbakR**   (Sö 46)

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      monument made this Kitill and Spakr 'K. and S. made this monument'
The slightly younger OI of the Poetic Edda displays an interesting asymmetry. A comparison of the more typical, article-less poem *Völuspá* with the poem *Hárbarðsljóð* , which does have articles, yields a noticeable difference in the frequency of scrambling. *Hárbarðsljóð* is often singled out for being highly colloquial/informal. Interestingly, it is the only Eddic poem that can be said to have a modern-day distribution of definite articles. In *Hárbarðsljóð*, scrambling is quite rare. But in *Völuspá*, scrambling is manifested in different varieties, and examples like (2) (stanza 36) are common.

(2)   Á   fellur austan um   eitrdala   söxum   ok sverðum,   Slíðr heitir   sú
      from flows East through poison.vales daggers.DAT and swords.DAT S. is.called
      'From the East (it) flows through poison-vales, with daggers and swords; it is called Slithr'
This state of affairs is compatible with the diachronic shift from NP status to DP status. That is, old Scandinavian lacks definite articles while modern Scandinavian has them.

(b) Number morphology. It appears that some nouns in the older inscriptions may not be marked for number (e.g., **rūna/rūnō**) and are ambiguous with regard to singular vs. plural meaning, suggesting that the Old Runic language (i.e., NWGmc) does not need obligatory number morphology, which is another NP property (Bošković 2010).

(c) No focus-verb adjacency requirement. In runic Norse the V2 constraint has not yet been fully established (Axel 2004). Hence a fronted focused XP need not be adjacent to the inflected V. It is only in the post-runic/Old Icelandic period that the V2 rule really takes root (Rögnvaldsson 1996), and hence that the focused XP in initial position will be adjacent to the finite V. 'No adjacency requirement' is another NP property (Bošković 2010).

(d) Clitic doubling. OR lacks clitic doubling, while the later OI allows clitic doubling (e.g., *hef-k-at-ek* 'have-I-not-I' cited in Fortson 2004: 331), which Bošković identifies as a DP property.

5. Register variation and peripheral grammar. If Skrzypek is correct that the definite article had in fact established itself in speech before 800, register based variation may also be at play in determining the syntax of runic (Neckel 1924, Stowell 1991). A written attestation of the determiner *-inn* emerges much later than the period when it is postulated to have arisen in the spoken language. This might suggest that at some point the register of the runic inscription was characterized by a 'peripheral' grammar which retained NP properties longer than the core grammar of the contemporary spoken language. That register variation may be at the basis of syntactic variation is suggested by the discussion in Bošković (2010: 2, his (8), citing Franks 2007), which shows that poetic/literary (or 'storytelling' style; Johanna Vähätalo p.c.) Finnish lacks articles and allows left-branch extraction, while the contemporary modern Finnish has articles and does not allow LBE.

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Opmerking [e2]: We might give just 1 example, and say that Harbardsljod has only rare instantiations an ddrop the example