

## A Relative Pronoun in Old Norse?

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Relative clauses in Old Norse may be introduced by the relative particles *sem* or *er*. Additionally, the particle *er* may be preceded by a pronoun (*sá*), which is homophonous with the demonstrative but considered by many grammars to be a relative pronoun. This pronoun displays “case attraction”: it agrees in case with its antecedent, rather than bearing the case of the trace in the relative clause. In (1), the pronoun *þann* is in the accusative, although it is the subject that is relativized:

- (1) Hann setti jarl í hverju fylki, þann er [e] dæma skyldi lög (Hkr 98)  
He set *jarl*.acc in each district, DEM.ACC PRT (subj) judge should law  
‘He placed a *jarl* in each district, who should judge the law.’

According to Lindblad (1943), case attraction arose because of re-analysis of the pronoun, which began as a demonstrative in the matrix clause but became associated with the relative clause. Case attraction, then, is a relic of the pronoun’s earlier position and function. Harbert (1989, 1992) finds that case attraction in Gothic occurs only with free relatives and that case conflicts are resolved by selecting the more oblique case. This raises several questions about this pronoun in ON, which this paper attempts to address using a corpus of 6 texts.

First, in which clause is the pronoun located? Most instances are ambiguous, but there are some clear-cut examples. In poetry, the particle and the pronoun can occupy one metrical position, suggesting that *er* is a clitic in C and the pronoun is in Spec-CP. Moreover, in clauses like (1), *jarl* is indefinite, making a demonstrative reading of *þann* (‘the one who should judge’) unlikely. Sometimes, though, the pronoun is clearly a demonstrative, because it is the only available object in the matrix clause (2). With instances of both demonstrative + *er* and relative + *er*, the reanalysis to a relative pronoun may still be in progress in classical ON.

- (2) hún gjörðist verð að bera þann, er oss leysti með sínu blóði (Hom 51)  
she made-REFL worth to bear DEM.ACC PRT US saved with his blood  
‘...she made herself worthy to bear him, who saved us with his blood...’

Secondly, which case will win in a case conflict? Unlike Gothic, there is no obliqueness hierarchy in ON; the pronoun in question always bears the matrix case. This is even true where the trace is modified by an adjective, resulting in a case mismatch *within* the relative clause:

- (3) hann felldi alla, þá er honum váru næstir (Hkr 45)  
he felled all.acc DEM.ACC PRT him were next.nom  
‘he killed all who were next to him’

Finally, how to account for the syntax of ON relative clauses and for the diachronic development? If the pronoun is a demonstrative, it is an apposition of the antecedent, and case

assignment is straightforward. But if it is a relative pronoun, one may account for this as Harbert does for Gothic, as a special instance of ECM. The apparent diachronic shift of this pronoun from the matrix clause down into the relative clause presents a possible counterexample to Roberts & Roussou's (2003) claim that grammaticalization is movement up the tree. As Faarlund (2009) claims for the Scandinavian clitic article, I argue that this downward grammaticalization came about via reanalysis during acquisition.

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