

# INALIENABLE POSSESSION IN SWEDISH AND DANISH – A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** In this paper we discuss the alienability splits in two Mainland Scandinavian languages, Swedish and Danish, in a diachronic context. Although it is not universally acknowledged that such splits exist in modern Scandinavian languages, many nouns typically included in inalienable structures such as kinship terms, body part nouns and nouns describing culturally important items show different behaviour from those considered alienable. The differences involve the use of (reflexive) possessive pronouns vs. the definite article, which differentiates the Scandinavian languages from e.g. English. As the definite article is a relatively new arrival in the Scandinavian languages, we look at when the modern pattern could have evolved by a close examination of possessive structures with potential inalienables in Old Swedish and Old Danish. Our results reveal that to begin with, inalienables are usually bare nouns and come to be marked with the definite article in the course of its grammaticalization.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the striking differences between the North Germanic languages Swedish and Danish on the one hand and English on the other is the possibility to use definite forms of nouns without a realized possessive in inalienable possession constructions. Consider the following examples:

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- (1) SV Jan kammade **håret**.  
 Jan brushed hair-DEF  
 EN John brushed **his hair**.

The definite in the Swedish example renders an inalienable interpretation. The English ‘the hair’, though also most naturally interpreted as inalienable, may also refer to the hair belonging to a different referent (e.g. John’s five year old son).

If the definite in the Swedish example is substituted for a possessive pronoun, the inalienable interpretation is still available (though it is stylistically awkward to use a possessive), however, the possessive also allows for alienable interpretation, e.g. if we assume that Jan is wearing a toupee.

- (2) SV Jan kammade **sitt** **hår**.  
 Jan brushed his-REFLhair-DEF

Note that because Swedish has retained the Indo-European distinction between reflexive and non-reflexive possessives, the referent of *sitt hår* will always be interpreted as belonging to the subject of the sentence, the question is only if the possession is alienable or not. If the pronoun chosen was the non-reflexive *hans* ‘his’, the interpretation would be: belonging to somebody else.

Existence of parallel and not interchangeable structures to express possession is called a possessive split. A commonly held view is that alienability splits are lacking from the Indo-European languages (Haspelmath 2008, Dixon 2010:277-78, Nichols and Bickel 2011:6). Lately, this view has come to be challenged in a number of studies concerning Indo-European languages (Lødrup 1999, 2009, 2010, 2014, Stolz et al. 2008). Lødrup has demonstrated in a number of papers that Norwegian shows different patterns for alienables and inalienables, and that the use of the definite article can also be an expression of inalienability.

Alienability splits seem to belong to individual histories of the North and West Germanic languages. The patterns involve the definite article, which rises independently in all Germanic languages and is not part of their common heritage. Therefore, it is of interest to study the splits diachronically.

The aim of the present paper is to present the changes in expressions of inalienable possession in the history of the East Scandinavian languages, Danish and Swedish, and put them in the context of grammaticalization of the definite article. The study is based on a corpus of nineteen Old Danish and Old Swedish texts, written between 1250 and 1550. The period chosen for the study is one of tumultuous changes in the grammar of both languages, including among other loss of case marking and rise of the definite and indefinite articles.

The paper is organized as follows: first we discuss the concept of inalienable possession. In 3 we present alienability splits in modern Scandinavian languages. In 4 the corpus and the results of the study are given and discussed.

## 2. INALIENABLE POSSESSION

Possession involves a number of relations between two referents, among others ownership (such as legal possession), meronymic relation or kinship. A number of other relations may be expressed by possessive structures, as in ‘my workplace’ or ‘my paper’, which do not fall under any of the above categories but rather describe a vaguely specified connection between the possessor and the possessum.

Possession may be expressed in a number of ways, such as the genitive case (in case languages such as Polish, e.g. *samochód Jana* ‘John’s car’), prepositional phrases (the mother **of John**), possessive adjectives (pol. *Janowa matka*) and possessive pronouns (**his** mother) etc. Many languages exhibit possessive splits, i.e. different classes of nouns require or favour different possessive constructions. The split may be determined by the possessor, e.g. its animacy as in the English examples *the roof of the car* (?the car’s roof) vs. *John’s car* (?the car of John) or by the possessum, e.g. so-called alienability splits. Typically, such splits involve separate patterns for alienable and inalienable relations.

Inalienable possession is a type of possession which cannot be terminated. It usually involves an animate (human) possessor and either a kinship term or a body part as possessum. In some languages inalienables may also include culturally important items, such as clothes or weapons etc.

In languages with alienability splits two properties are recurrent:

- 1) the nouns that take inalienable possession virtually always form a small, finite set (usually including body parts, kinship terms and other ‘objects in the personal domain’ (Bally 1996)), while nouns taking alienable possession constitute all the rest (Nichols 1988:562);
- 2) the inalienable marking is shorter than the alienable one or expressed by zero vs. overt marking.

A number of explanations have been put forward regarding the latter regularity, one of the most influential being Haiman 1983, in which an iconic motivation is proposed. Haiman argues that the reason for the lack of marking or shorter expressions being used with inalienables is that it iconically shows lack (or shortness) of distance between the possessor and the possessum. This theory has recently been refuted by Haspelmath (2008), who shows numerous examples which are problematic for Haiman’s approach and who proposes an economic motivation instead. According to Haspelmath, the inalienables occur

more frequently as possessums and are therefore expected to be possessed. The possessive marking may thus become redundant.

The nouns taking inalienable possession almost always include kinship terms and body part nouns and some extensions of these sets, such as garments, weapons or friends. This set is by no means homogenous. Both body part nouns and kinship terms are relational nouns in their basic use (in the sense of Löbner 1985, see also Lødrup 2014), however kinship terms are animate nouns, which strongly resemble proper names and often appear as subjects while body part nouns (and other culturally important items) are inanimate nouns often appearing as objects or adverbials (Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001).

Alienability splits are also a function of the dominant possession patterns in a language. With respect to possessive structures, all languages can be classified as either HAVE/BE languages, where both verbs can be used in possessive constructions, and BE languages, which have only the verb ‘be’ at their disposal. Most of the Indo-European languages belong to the former group, while Finno-Ugric languages, Turkish or Hebrew among others belong to the latter group. A characteristic feature of HAVE/BE languages is a relative opposition of *possessive structures* where HAVE is used and *locative structures* where BE is used, especially in partitive relations with inanimate objects (Maciejewski 1996:103). The examples below show that animate possessors are treated differently in HAVE/BE languages when inalienable possession or part-whole relationship is involved. While BE can be used with reference to an inanimate referent, it cannot be used when the referent is animate.

- (3) EN The house **has** a roof. – There **is** a roof on the house.  
He **has** strong hands. – \*There **are** strong hands on him.

What is interesting is that this distinction is somewhat less pronounced in the Scandinavian languages, making them similar to BE languages. While constructions with HAVE are more frequent in Swedish, locative constructions with body part terms, as in the examples below, are also possible (it is a regular construction in Norwegian, see section 3 for more examples).

- (4) SV De slog vinflaskor **i huvudet** **på honom**.  
they threw wine bottles on head-DEF on him  
‘They threw wine bottles on his head.’
- (5) SV Det värkte **i bröstet** **på honom**.  
it hurt in chest-DEF on him  
‘His chest hurt.’

Maciejewski (1996:104) maintains that this analytical, i.e. locative, way of expressing body parts in Scandinavian languages is an exception and a very marginal feature in HAVE/BE languages. One can argue that these examples show that the locative meaning, usually expressed by means of BE and prepositions, is deeply intertwined with POSSESSION.

### 3. ALIENABILITY SPLITS IN MODERN SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES

It is a commonly held view that alienability splits are lacking from the Indo-European languages (e.g. Dixon 2010:277-78, Nichols and Bickel 2011:6). However, recent research suggests that if a wider spectrum of constructions is taken into account, the splits may indeed be found (Stolz et. al. 2008 and Lødrup 1999, 2009, 2010, 2014 on Norwegian). Although there are no regular separate patterns for alienable and inalienable possession in Danish and Swedish, it may be noted that Norwegian has grammaticalized possessive prepositional phrases establishing split possession with respect to body part nouns by grammaticalizing the choice of the preposition *til* ‘to’ or *på* ‘on’ (Lødrup 2014).

While the preposition *til* ‘to’ has grammaticalized as a general possessive preposition, the traditionally locative preposition *på* ‘on’ has grammaticalized as a possessive preposition that is used exclusively with body part nouns, as in example (6). The possessor PP usually forms one constituent, especially when it is an object of a preposition, as in (7). The preposition *på* when used with nouns other than body parts often gets a locative or a partitive interpretation (Lødrup 2009:222). The construction with the preposition *på* is ungrammatical with common nouns, as in (7).

(6) NO Det fløy en fugl over **hodet** på ham.  
 (Lødrup 2014:38)  
 There flew a bird over head-DEF on him  
 ‘A bird flew over his head.’

(7) NO \*Det fløy en fugl over **bilen** på ham.  
 There flew a bird over car-DEF on him  
 ‘A bird flew over his car.’ [intended]

Furthermore, all Mainland Scandinavian languages (Danish, Swedish and Norwegian) allow definite nouns without a realized possessive when the possessor is understood to be the subject, as in the following examples:

- (8) NO Peter vasker **ansiktet.** (Lødrup 2014:38)  
 SV Peter tvättar **ansiktet.**  
 DA Peter vasker **ansigtet.**  
 Peter washes face-DEF  
 ‘Peter washes his face’.

- (9) SV Peter tvättar **hans ansikte.**  
 ‘Peter washes his (≠ Peter’s) face’.

Definite without a realized possessive is also allowed with nouns denoting ‘objects in the personal domain’ (Bally 1996), culturally important artifacts, a phenomenon known from other languages (Seiler 1983).

- (10) NO Peter vasker **bilen.**  
 SV Peter tvättar **bilen.**  
 Peter wash car-DEF  
 ‘Peter is washing his car’.

- (11) NO Peter spiser **kaken.**  
 SV Peter äter **kakan.**  
 Peter eat cake-DEF  
 ‘Peter is eating his/the cake’.

The latter example fails if ‘the cake’ is not known from earlier discourse or situational context, while the example with ‘the car’ is successful even when previous mention is lacking. In lack of marking other than the definite article, the nouns *ansiktet* ‘the face’ and *bilen* ‘the car’ are interpreted as an inalienable part of the subject of the sentence. Theoretically, it would also be possible to use the reflexive possessive pronoun in this context (*sin*), but it is stylistically awkward. If, however, the car or the face is not an inalienable part of the subject but of some other referent, more marking must be used to achieve such interpretation: either a periphrastic possessive with a PP or a possessive (not reflexive) pronoun.

- (12) SV Peter tvättar **hans bil.**  
 Peter wash his car  
 ‘Peter is washing his (≠ his own) car’.

Moreover, more possessive splits may be found in Norwegian when it comes to kinship terms (Lødrup 2014). Kinship nouns are grammatically singled out from other nouns in two common possessive constructions. The first one is the construction with prenominal possessive pronouns. Kinship nouns are the only ones in Norwegian that “allow an unstressed possessive

pronoun to be prenominal and non-focal” (Lødrup 2014:40). In other constructions the pronoun has to be postnominal, as in the following examples:

- (13) NO Jeg besøkte **min far / sønn / bror.** (Lødrup 2014:40)  
 I visited my father / son / brother  
 ‘I visited my father / son / brother.’
- (14) NO John var rasende. Noen hadde stjålet **bilen hans / ??hans bil.**  
 John was furious somebody had stolen car.DEF his / his car  
 ‘John was furious. Somebody had stolen his car.’

The second construction where kinship nouns are treated differently is the one with a postnominal possessive. Usually postnominal possessives in Norwegian require a definite form of the possessum, the only exception is a selected group of kinship terms (i.e. the closest relatives, like *far* ‘father’ or *mor* ‘mother’) which are always indefinite in such constructions.

- (15) NO **far min / \*bil min** (Lødrup 2014:41)  
 father my / car my  
 ‘my father’ / ‘my car’
- (16) NO **far til John / \*bil til John**  
 father of John / car of John  
 ‘John’s father’ / ‘John’s car’

Kinship terms, just like proper names, are often treated as inherently definite, thus the use of definite articles or other determiners is usually redundant (Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001:205). Both in Norwegian and Swedish kinship terms usually occur as bare singular nouns, the natural interpretation is then that the possessor is the subject of the sentence. If the kinship noun is definite the interpretation with the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person possessor is not available. *Pappa* ‘dad’ in a sentence like (17) without an extended context will always mean ‘my dad’, while *pappan* ‘dad-DEF’ in a sentence like (17) must mean ‘someone else’s dad’. However, if the possessor is a 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun there is a choice between a definite or indefinite form of a noun, as in (18). Again, those characteristics apply only to the closest relatives from higher generations. There are no such restrictions on body part nouns or alienable nouns, which supports the theory about inalienable splits for kinship nouns in Norwegian and possibly other Scandinavian languages.

- (17) SV Jag pratade med **pappa.** / Jag pratade med **pappan.**  
 I talked to dad / I talked to dad-DEF  
 ‘I talked to my dad.’ [intended]

- (18) SV Han pratade med **pappa** / **pappan**.  
 He talked to dad / dad-DEF  
 'He talked to his dad.'

#### 4. THE RESULTS

Alienability splits in Modern Danish and Swedish are only possible with a grammaticalized definite article in store. It also seems that the difference between English and Scandinavian languages in this respect has arisen at the time of the grammaticalization of the definite article. We have therefore studied the expressions of inalienability in a corpus of Old Danish and Old Swedish texts.

##### 4.1 THE CORPUS

The texts chosen for the corpus of this study were written between 1250 and 1550. The texts were divided into two periods: I. 1250 – 1400 and II. 1400 – 1550. It has been established in previous research that by 1400 both Swedish and Danish have evolved from the original fusional types towards the modern, more analytical structure (e.g. Delsing 2014). Therefore, we assume, some differences may be found between texts belonging to periods I and II.

The texts chosen represent three genres: legal texts, religious prose and profane prose. Legal texts were included in the study as being the oldest extant texts available. We have strived towards choosing uniform fragments of high narrativity, as in the fragments with descriptions and story-telling more diverse constructions may be found.

There are six Swedish texts in the corpus, four in the first period and two in the second period. All the already digitalized texts were obtained from *Fornsvenska textbanken*. The two genres represented in the texts are legal texts (*Äldrevästgöotalagen* and *Östgöotalagen*) and religious prose (the remaining four texts). The genre is of importance here as the type of the relations understood as inalienable possession and the frequency of those different types often depends on the genre of the text. While the expressions with kinship terms are more frequent in law texts, expressions with body part nouns are more frequent in religious texts. The corpus of the Swedish texts comprises 45 183 words in total, with 33 796 words in the first period (1300 – 1400) and 11 387 words in the second period (1400 – 1500). The length of the Swedish texts chosen for the corpus is fairly even, with ca 9 000 words per text, with the exception of *Didrik av Bern* which is the shortest one here. The exact age of the Swedish texts and the size of fragments chosen for analysis are given below:



|                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| I.                            |              |
| 1. Äldrevästgöotalagen (1225) | 6 900 words  |
| 2. Östgöotalagen (1280)       | 7 900 words  |
| 3. Codex Bureanus (1276-1307) | 10 521 words |
| 4. Järteckensboken (1385)     | 8 475 words  |
| II.                           |              |
| 5. Sju vise mästare (1400)    | 9 900 words  |
| 6. Didrik av Bern (1450)      | 1 487 words  |

The corpus of the Danish texts differs from the Swedish one. First of all, this corpus is composed of more texts, but of significantly shorter length. There are thirteen Danish texts, six in the first period (1300 – 1400) and seven texts in the second period (1400 – 1500). Most of the Danish texts come from *Gammeldansklæsebog* and the webpage *Tekster fra Danmarks middelalder 1100-1515* (<http://middelaldertekster.dk>). The same two genres are represented here, there are three law texts in the first period (*Erik sjaellendskelov*, *Skanske kirkelov* and *Valdemarslov*), the remaining ten texts are examples of religious prose. In the Danish corpus there are altogether 20 384 words, with 4 817 words in the first period and 15 567 words in the second one. The length of the chosen fragments varies from 477 words to 5 394 words. The exact numbers for each text, that is the year and word count, are given below:

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| I.                                       |             |
| 1. Cambridgefragmentet (1300)            | 952 words   |
| 2. Marialegende (1300)                   | 477 words   |
| 3. Mariaklagen (1325)                    | 669 words   |
| 4. Erik sjaellendskelov (1300)           | 1 067 words |
| 5. Skanske kirkelov (1300)               | 738 words   |
| 6. Valdemarslov (1300)                   | 914 words   |
| II.                                      |             |
| 7. Af sjaelens trost (1425)              | 1 797 words |
| 8. Aff Sancta Marina (1450)              | 1 272 words |
| 9. Af Sancte Kerstine hennis pyne (1450) | 5 394 words |
| 10. Huoel Sancte Pouelvort pint (1450)   | 1 685 words |
| 11. Af Jeronimi levned (1488)            | 768 words   |
| 12. Af Katherine legende (1488)          | 1 316 words |
| 13. Karl Magnus Krønike (1480)           | 3 335 words |

## 4.2 THE METHOD

The data was collected manually. We have excerpted all instances of potential inalienables within four categories: kinship terms, body part nouns, other (animate possessor) and other (inanimate possessor).

Early on it became obvious that deciding which use is the inalienable one and which one is alienable is not always possible. However, since the nouns chosen are prototypically inalienables, we have decided to exclude only the most obvious alienable uses, as in (19), where the reference is generic.

- (19) Bonþe skal eig ranssak syniæ æn han ær sialuær hemaæ. han skal vpp latae sin inuistær hus þæt ær **kornskyæmmæ ok matskammæ ok symnskæmmæ** þy þru æru inuistar hus. (AVL TB:5)  
 ‘Yeoman shall not search forbid if he is himself at home. He shall open his abode, that is grain store and dining-room and bedroom, these three are the abode.’

The categories show different frequencies and are unevenly distributed between genres. Kinship terms and body part nouns are the most abundant whereas categories with animate or inanimate possessor (the so-called part-whole relationship) are much less frequent or even marginal. Kinship terms are frequent in legal texts, while body part nouns are more often found in religious and profane prose.

The examples of the categories called *other*, which are considered examples of part-whole relationship, may not be universally perceived as examples of inalienable possession. They show characteristics of inalienable treatment as they are close and in a way inseparable from the possessor, such phrases in our corpus are mostly represented by terms for armour parts and weaponry.

The material was further sorted according to the kind of possessive expression evidenced in the texts. We distinguish six different expressions: zero marker, genitive, possessive pronoun, reflexive possessive pronoun, definite article, and marginally, the construction with possessive dative.

The results presented here are the general results per 1000 words and they are divided in the following way. First we present the results for the Swedish texts, the results for the first and the second period are described separately and then compared. Then the Danish texts are described in the same way. We also draw parallels and compare the data from the Swedish texts with the results from the Danish corpus.

## 4.3 THE SWEDISH DATA

In the Swedish texts from the first period (1300 – 1400) we find the whole of 303 examples of inalienable possession which constitutes 8,97 per 1000 words. The possessum category of body part terms is the most often represented among the examples with 5,74 per 1000 words, which is almost 64% of all the examples. It is followed by the category of kinship terms, which constitutes 2,78 per 1000 words. Other categories with animate and inanimate possessor give the results of respectively 0,33 and 0,12 per 1000 words.

When it comes to the possessive expressions used, the most common one in the older texts is the zero marker (2,64 per 1000 words). Bare noun phrases are thus used most often in almost all the inalienable categories, with the exception of body part terms, where the use of possessive pronoun is just about more frequent (compare 1,45 per 1000 words for zero marker and 1,51 per 1000 words for possessive pronoun). Possessive pronoun is the second most frequent expression in the texts from this period, with the frequency of 1,89 per 1000 words. As already mentioned it is most often represented in the category of body parts (out of 1,89 words, 1,51 per 1000 words are found in this category). The third most frequent possessive expression here is the definite article, 1,6 per 1000 words. The examples of definite noun phrases are evenly distributed between kin terms and body part terms, respectively 0,71 and 0,83 per 1000 words. The other two significant constructions, genitive and reflexive possessive pronoun, are also relatively common in this period. The examples of reflexive possessive pronoun occur almost exclusively with kin and body part terms and they comprise 1,33 per 1000 words. The use of the genitive construction amounts to the frequency of 1,13 per 1000 words and it is the most common with body part terms. The last possessive expression observed is the possessive dative. Interestingly enough, this archaic construction is attested almost exclusively in the Swedish texts in the first period in our corpus, with the addition of two Danish texts (*Cambridgefragemntet* 1300 and *Af Sancte Kerstine hennis pyne* 1450). All the examples of possessive dative are expressions with body parts and they constitute 0,38 per 1000 words in the older texts.

| 1300-1400<br>(33796 words)     |                | Bare noun   | Possessive pronoun | Genitive    | Reflexive possessive pronoun | Possessive dative | Definite article | Total       |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Kinship terms                  | total          | 30          | 13                 | 7           | 20                           | 0                 | 24               | <b>94</b>   |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0,89        | 0,38               | 0,21        | 0,59                         | 0                 | 0,71             | <b>2,78</b> |
| Body part nouns                | total          | 49          | 51                 | 29          | 24                           | 13                | 28               | <b>194</b>  |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 1,45        | 1,51               | 0,86        | 0,71                         | 0,38              | 0,83             | <b>5,74</b> |
| Other<br>(animate possessor)   | total          | 7           | 0                  | 2           | 1                            | 0                 | 1                | <b>11</b>   |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0,21        | 0                  | 0,06        | 0,03                         | 0                 | 0,03             | <b>0,33</b> |
| Other<br>(inanimate possessor) | total          | 3           | 0                  | 0           | 0                            | 0                 | 1                | <b>4</b>    |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0,09        | 0                  | 0           | 0                            | 0                 | 0,03             | <b>0,12</b> |
| Total                          |                | <b>89</b>   | <b>64</b>          | <b>38</b>   | <b>45</b>                    | <b>13</b>         | <b>54</b>        | <b>303</b>  |
| Per 1000 words                 |                | <b>2,64</b> | <b>1,89</b>        | <b>1,13</b> | <b>1,33</b>                  | <b>0,38</b>       | <b>1,6</b>       | <b>8,97</b> |

(Fig. 1) *The occurrences per 1000 words in the Swedish texts in period I.*

In the second period (1400 – 1500) there are 114 examples of inalienable noun phrases in the Swedish texts, which constitutes 10,03 per 1000 words. The category of body part terms is again the most often represented, with 48% of all the examples in this period, more precisely 4,83 per 1000 words. Surprisingly, the next most often category are other expressions with animate possessor (2,9 per 1000 words). It is finally followed by equally well represented kinship terms (1,16 per 1000 words) and other expressions with inanimate possessor (1,14 per 1000 words). The drop in the number of examples of kinship terms compared to period I is definitely due to differences between the genres. As mentioned earlier, the older law texts are abundant in examples referring to family members because of the sheer nature and subjects of the text, like the inheritance law, etc. As for the possessive expressions used for inalienable possession in period II, the possessive pronoun is the most frequent one (3,51 per 1000 words). It is most commonly used in body part terms and other terms with animate possessor, respectively 1,58 and 1,23 per 1000 words. The second most common expression is the definite article, with the frequency of 3,25 per 1000 words. It is most often attested with body part terms (1,93 per 1000 words). The other possessive expressions are much less frequent. The zero marker and the reflexive possessive pronoun constitute respectively 1,49 and 1,15 per 1000 words, followed by the genitive with a marginal number of 0,54 per 1000 words.

| 1400-1500<br>(11378 words)  |                | Bare noun   | Possessive pronoun | Genitive    | Reflexive possessive pronoun | Possessive dative | Definite article | Total        |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Kinship terms               | total          | 2           | 5                  | 2           | 2                            | 0                 | 2                | <b>13</b>    |
|                             | Per 1000 words | 0,18        | 0,44               | 0,18        | 0,18                         | 0                 | 0,18             | <b>1,16</b>  |
| Body part nouns             | total          | 7           | 18                 | 1           | 6                            | 1                 | 22               | <b>55</b>    |
|                             | Per 1000 words | 0,61        | 1,58               | 0,09        | 0,53                         | 0,09              | 1,93             | <b>4,83</b>  |
| Other (animate possessor)   | total          | 8           | 14                 | 2           | 5                            | 0                 | 4                | <b>33</b>    |
|                             | Per 1000 words | 0,7         | 1,23               | 0,18        | 0,44                         | 0                 | 0,35             | <b>2,9</b>   |
| Other (inanimate possessor) | total          | 0           | 3                  | 1           | 0                            | 0                 | 9                | <b>13</b>    |
|                             | Per 1000 words | 0           | 0,26               | 0,09        | 0                            | 0                 | 0,79             | <b>1,14</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                |                | <b>17</b>   | <b>40</b>          | <b>6</b>    | <b>13</b>                    | <b>1</b>          | <b>37</b>        | <b>114</b>   |
|                             | Per 1000 words | <b>1,49</b> | <b>3,51</b>        | <b>0,54</b> | <b>1,15</b>                  | <b>0,09</b>       | <b>3,25</b>      | <b>10,03</b> |

(Fig. 2) *The occurrences per 1000 words in the Swedish texts in period II.*

In all the Swedish texts we find thus 417 examples of expressions with inalienable possession, which makes up the average of 9,23 per 1000 words. Body part terms constitute 60% of all the examples (5,51 per 1000 words) while kinship terms constitute 26% of all the examples (2,37 per 1000 words). Two of the possessive expressions show the same frequency, that is the zero marker (25,5% of all the examples) and the possessive pronoun (25% of all the examples). They are followed closely by noun phrases with definite articles (22% of all the examples). The drop of the number of examples with kin terms has been explained above and the same explanation applies to the sudden increase of the part-whole relationship in the second period (i.e. other expressions with animate possessor). It is the genre and consequent subjects of the dominating religious prose in period II that are the reason for the increased examples of armor and weaponry terms that are treated here as inalienable. As for the possessive expression, in the Swedish texts we can see a clear development from the dominating bare noun phrases, that were the most frequent group in the older texts (period I), to dominating possessor pronouns and definite noun phrases in the younger texts (period II) (see Table 3 below).

When it comes to body part terms, which are often marked with a definite article in inalienable contexts in modern Swedish, we can see a significant rise in the use of the definite article in the second period. While only 14% of all body parts examples are used with the definite article in period I, this structure

constitutes as much as 40% of body parts examples in period II. The use of the definite noun phrases for body parts is not yet regular in any of the studied Swedish texts, although *Sju vise mästare* (1400) seems to be the most advanced in this respect (44% of body part terms are definite in this text). However, one has to take into consideration the fact that some of the definite noun phrases may be the result of a direct or indirect anaphora and not of a conscious choice of the definite form for inalienable nouns. The use of possessive pronouns and reflexive possessive pronouns for the category of body part terms does not change in any significant way across the two periods. The use of bare noun phrases and genitive decreases substantially in period II, not only when it comes to body part terms, but also across all the categories. The inalienable nouns, being those that most often occur as possessums and that have anchors that are thus most predictable, already in period II seem to favour constructions with the definite article and possessive pronouns instead of the more explicit genitive. Another interesting observation is that the Swedish texts exhibit a fairly even average number of all the inalienable noun phrases per 1000 words. The average numbers in individual texts vary from 6,74 to 11,91 per 1000 words, with the exception of the youngest text (*Didrik av Bern* 1450) where we find an astonishing number of 31,58 per 1000 words. This high number depends solely on the chosen fragment, as in the story told the terms for armor and weaponry play a significant role and thus are very frequent. As we will see this average number of all the inalienable nouns per 1000 words will be much different for the Danish texts.

|           | Bare noun | Possessive pronoun | Genitive | Reflexive possessive pronoun | Possessive dative | Definite article | Total |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------|
| Period I  | 29%       | 21%                | 13%      | 15%                          | 4%                | 18%              | 100%  |
| Period II | 15%       | 35%                | 5%       | 12%                          | 1%                | 32%              | 100%  |

(Fig. 3) *The percentage of the possessive expressions' uses in the Swedish texts.*

#### 4.4 THE DANISH DATA

In the first period (1300 – 1400) we find 138 examples of inalienable possession in the Danish corpus, which amounts to the frequency of 28,65 per 1000 words. Compared to the Swedish texts it is a fairly high number of inalienable noun phrases found. The only examples in this period when it comes to the category of possessum are kinship terms, that make up 58% of all the examples (16,82 per 1000 words), and body part terms, that make up the remaining 42% of the examples (11,83 per 1000 words). As far as the possessive expression is concerned, the most common construction used is the

possessive pronoun with the frequency of 9,55 per 1000 words, which makes up exactly one third of all the examples. The next most often used expression is the zero marker (6,65 per 1000 words) followed by the definite article (5,81 per 1000 words). What is interesting is that almost all the possessive expressions are more often used for the category of kin terms with the exception of the definite article. The use of the definite noun phrases dominates in the category of body parts, albeit only by a small margin. The reflexive possessive pronoun is also used quite frequently in period I, there are 23 examples of this construction which constitutes 4,77 per 1000 words. The use of genitive and possessive dative is quite marginal, with the frequencies of respectively 1,25 and 0,62 per 1000 words. Both of those expressions are found almost exclusively with the examples of body part terms in this period.

| 1300-1400<br>(4817 words)      |                | Bare noun   | Possessive pronoun | Genitive    | Reflexive possessive pronoun | Possessive dative | Definite article | Total        |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Kinship terms                  | total          | 18          | 33                 | 1           | 16                           | 0                 | 13               | <b>81</b>    |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 3,74        | 6,85               | 0,21        | 3,32                         | 0                 | 2,7              | <b>16,82</b> |
| Body part nouns                | total          | 14          | 13                 | 5           | 7                            | 3                 | 15               | <b>57</b>    |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 2,91        | 2,7                | 1,04        | 1,45                         | 0,62              | 3,11             | <b>11,83</b> |
| Other<br>(animate possessor)   | total          | 0           | 0                  | 0           | 0                            | 0                 | 0                | <b>0</b>     |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0           | 0                  | 0           | 0                            | 0                 | 0                | <b>0</b>     |
| Other<br>(inanimate possessor) | total          | 0           | 0                  | 0           | 0                            | 0                 | 0                | <b>0</b>     |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0           | 0                  | 0           | 0                            | 0                 | 0                | <b>0</b>     |
| Total                          |                | <b>32</b>   | <b>46</b>          | <b>6</b>    | <b>23</b>                    | <b>3</b>          | <b>28</b>        | <b>138</b>   |
| Per 1000 words                 |                | <b>6,65</b> | <b>9,55</b>        | <b>1,25</b> | <b>4,77</b>                  | <b>0,62</b>       | <b>5,81</b>      | <b>28,65</b> |

(Fig. 4) *The occurrences per 1000 words in the Danish texts in period I.*

In the second period (1400 – 1500) there are 219 examples of inalienable noun phrases in the Danish texts, which gives the average of 14,05 per 1000 words. In this period we find examples of all the categories of possessum. The most frequent this time are body part terms that comprise the overwhelming 73% of all the examples (10,34 per 1000 words). The category of kinship terms is quite scarcely represented with the frequency of only 2,05 per 1000

words. There are also examples of the category other terms with animate possessor (1,54 per 1000 words) and just two examples of the other terms with inanimate possessor (0,12 per 1000 words). Among possessive expressions the most frequent one is again the possessive pronoun, its use constitutes 40% of all the uses (5,65 per 1000 words). The second most common expression is the definite article with the frequency of 3,2 per 1000 words, which amounts to 23% of all the examples. The zero marker is also fairly frequent in this period (2,57 per 1000 words), especially in the category of body parts. The use of the reflexive possessive pronoun is considerably less frequent, 1,67 per 1000 words. The use of remaining expressions, genitive and possessive dative, is again very marginal with the frequencies of respectively 0,7 and 0,26 per 1000 words. All of the possessive expressions in period II are the most frequent with the examples of body part terms which comes as no surprise judging by how overwhelmingly frequent the body part terms are in the Danish texts of this period.

| 1400-1500<br>(15567 words)     |                | Bare noun   | Possessive pronoun | Genitive   | Reflexive possessive pronoun | Possessive dative | Definite article | Total        |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Kinship terms                  | total          | 0           | 17                 | 0          | 9                            | 0                 | 6                | <b>32</b>    |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0           | 1,09               | 0          | 0,58                         | 0                 | 0,38             | <b>2,05</b>  |
| Body part nouns                | total          | 33          | 67                 | 10         | 17                           | 4                 | 30               | <b>161</b>   |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 2,12        | 4,3                | 0,64       | 1,09                         | 0,26              | 1,93             | <b>10,34</b> |
| Other<br>(animate possessor)   | total          | 7           | 4                  | 1          | 0                            | 0                 | 12               | <b>24</b>    |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0,45        | 0,26               | 0,06       | 0                            | 0                 | 0,77             | <b>1,54</b>  |
| Other<br>(inanimate possessor) | total          | 0           | 0                  | 0          | 0                            | 0                 | 2                | <b>2</b>     |
|                                | Per 1000 words | 0           | 0                  | 0          | 0                            | 0                 | 0,12             | <b>0,12</b>  |
| Total                          |                | <b>40</b>   | <b>88</b>          | <b>11</b>  | <b>26</b>                    | <b>4</b>          | <b>50</b>        | <b>219</b>   |
| Per 1000 words                 |                | <b>2,57</b> | <b>5,65</b>        | <b>0,7</b> | <b>1,67</b>                  | <b>0,26</b>       | <b>3,2</b>       | <b>14,05</b> |

(Fig. 5) *The occurrences per 1000 words in the Danish texts in period II.*

The Danish texts as a whole give us thus 357 examples of inalienable possession which makes up the average of 17,51 per 1000 words. It is almost twice as high as the average of the Swedish texts. Body part terms are the most frequent category, they constitute 61% of all the examples. Kinship terms



constitute 31% of all the examples and the remaining 7% are the examples of other categories. Those numbers are very similar to the frequencies in the Swedish texts (compare 60% of examples of body parts and 26% of kin terms in the Swedish corpus). The same three categories of possessive expression are the most common in the Danish texts as in the Swedish ones, but in a different order. The use of the possessive pronouns is the most frequent (38% of all the examples), the next two expressions are the definite article (22% of all the examples) and the zero marker (20% of all the examples). When it comes to changes in the number of examples of individual types of inalienable possession, we can see a severe decrease in the occurrences of kin terms between period I and period II. Again, the only reasonable explanation for that is the specific genre of the texts. In period I we have three relatively short fragments of law texts that alone make up for 74% of the use of kinship terms in period I and 53% of all the kinship terms in all the Danish texts. The body part terms are on the same, quite high, level of frequency in both periods, there are no significant changes here. What is interesting is that, while in the Swedish corpus we could see a rise in the usage of definite article with body parts across the two periods, the Danish texts show a reverse tendency. While in period I 26% of body part examples have a definite article, only 19% of body part examples are definite in period II. Surprisingly more examples in this category have a zero marker than a definite article in period II. Unfortunately, there is no clear tendency to be observed as far as the change in the use of different possessive expressions is concerned. When we compare the percentage of the constructions used in period I and II (see Table 6 below), we can see that there are no significant shifts in the frequency of use.

|           | Bare noun | Possessive pronoun | Genitive | Reflexive possessive pronoun | Possessive dative | Definite article | Total |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------|
| Period I  | 23%       | 33%                | 4%       | 17%                          | 2%                | 21%              | 100%  |
| Period II | 18%       | 40%                | 5%       | 12%                          | 2%                | 23%              | 100%  |

(Fig. 6) *The percentage of the possessive expressions' uses in the Danish texts.*

## 5. DISCUSSION

The overall results comparing the Danish and the Swedish data are presented in table 7 below.

| Period | bare noun |     | poss pron |     | genitive |     | refl poss |     | poss dat |    | def article |     |
|--------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----------|-----|----------|----|-------------|-----|
|        | DA        | SV  | DA        | SV  | DA       | SV  | DA        | SV  | DA       | SV | DA          | SV  |
| I      | 23%       | 29% | 33%       | 21% | 4%       | 13% | 17%       | 15% | 2%       | 4% | 21%         | 18% |
| II     | 18%       | 15% | 40%       | 35% | 5%       | 5%  | 12%       | 12% | 2%       | 1% | 23%         | 32% |

(Fig. 7) *Danish and Swedish results – a comparison.*

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the comparison. In a number of publications, it has been remarked that among the Scandinavian languages, Danish is in the vanguard of morphological changes encompassing the nominal inflection, such as loss of case and rise of definiteness (e.g. Ringgaard 1986). The percentage of zero markings are lower than in corresponding Swedish texts in Period I, as are the genitives. The overall results for Danish texts show little difference between Period I and Period II, confirming the earlier findings that many changes have already taken place in Danish, or were well underway, in the 13th century. The Swedish results, on the other hand, show the change between Period I and II to be significant. The overall numbers of bare nouns fall dramatically and the number of definites is almost doubled, which is concurrent with the rise of the definite article and the limitation of the use of bare nouns (e.g. Skrzypek 2012). Also the falling frequencies of the genitive are a clear indication of the reduction in case marking (e.g. Norde 1997, Skrzypek 2005).

There is a great deal of text-internal variation in the choice of the form. This is particularly clear in two Swedish texts, Jart (1385) and SVM (1400), written down at the end of the first period and the beginning of the second period respectively. E.g. body part nouns can be expressed by virtually all means.

*bare noun*

- (20) Keserinnan war mykith dröffdh aff thz at han fik swa langan dagh oc tha the gingo at soffwa. tha tedhe hon kesarenom **dröfft änlite** (SVM 117)  
 The empress was much distressed by this that he got such a long day and when they went to sleep then she showed the emperor a distressed face.

*reflexive possessive*

- (21) ok hiolt en cirkil j **sinne hand** ok ä for hwaria aue maria ther brodhorin las  
tha satte hon wänasta blomstir j thän cirkillin (Jart 60)  
and held a wreath in his hand and for each ave maria that the brother prayed  
she put the most beautiful flower i this wreath

*definite article*

- (22) Thän klärkin fiol j hardhan siukdom vm sidhir oc änxla. at han at aff sik  
**tungona**. (Jart 63)  
this clerk fell into hard sickness later and anxiety such that he ate his tongue

Similarly, terms for weapons or parts of larger (inanimate) entities vary in their expressions.

- (23) Thän tidh the waro badhe ensamne vtdrogh han **swärdh** ok drap han. (Jart 21)  
The time they were both alone he drew his sword and killed him.
- (24) Än gudh hindradhe them swa at thera arma dufnadho ok **swärdhin** fiöllo vt v  
thera handum (Jart 40)  
But God hindered them so that their arms stiffened and the swords fell out of  
their hands.
- (25) Mit i trägardhin stodh en mykith högh gran. oc borgharen lät all tidh graffwa  
om **henne röter** oc gödha them (SVM 117)  
In the middle of the garden stood a very high spruce and the owner let all the  
time dig around its roots and fertilize them.
- (26) þa væxte vænast lilia up af hans graf (...) Mæn grouo tel **rotenna** ok funno at  
hon gik vt af hans tungo (Bur 7)  
The the most beautiful lily grew out of his grave. Men digged to the root and  
found that it went out of his tongue.

The overall picture of inalienability expressions in Old Danish and Swedish shows great variation of form, which gradually settles for the system similar to the one in modern languages. Other major changes in the grammar – the decline of the nominal flexion and the rise of definiteness – are part of the evolution of inalienability expressions.

Textually, inalienables are types of indirect anaphors - they are dependent on other nominals for their interpretation. Diachronically, this is the bridging context (see Heine 2002) in the grammaticalization of the definite article (de Mulder and Carlier 2011, Skrzypek 2012) and therefore of great interest in the study of the development of definiteness. Further studies could shed light on the place of alienability splits in the grammaticalization of the definite article.

The Scandinavian languages have in this respect taken a different path from other Germanic languages, in that they make use of the definite article as a sole exponent of possession. This, so far not fully understood, development, brings them closer to the BE-languages, in which possession is mainly expressed by location. This locative pattern is at the heart of the definite, originally a demonstrative pronoun.

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