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A Peculiar Feature in the Word-Order of Layamon's *Brut*

Haruo Iwasaki

He funde *wunsum ane stude ⁘* vppen ane watere.

þær he gon aræren ⁘ *riche ane burhe.* (Caligula 1012-13)

La3amon's *Brut* has not a few instances presenting this peculiar word-order instead of the more usual order 'article (demonstrative or possessive) +adjective+noun'. This phenomenon has not escaped the notice of some English philologists[1], and we learn from the descriptions of some of them that this feature is not wholly restricted to La3amon's *Brut*[2]. What draws our attention, however, is that the greater part of their citations are from La3amon. This makes us wonder if this could chiefly be one of La3amon's stylistic peculiarities or one of his dialect features, possibly the South-Western dialect, and what relation it has, if it ever could have, with the English of the ages preceding and following that of La3amon, and with the French version which formed the basis of the *Brut*[3]. But it might be desirable first to investigate, before we go into an inquiry of wider scope, how often and in what circumstances this peculiar word-order appears in La3amon's *Brut*. The following analysis therefore will only be the first step towards a more detailed study.

1. The two texts of La3amon's *Brut*.

There are two manuscripts of the *Brut* preserved in the Cotton

collection in the British Meseum: Caligula A IX and Otho C XIII. The former was probably written in 1200 or thereabout and the latter about half a century later. They will hereafter be referred to as C(-text) and O(-text) respectively.

2. The word-order in question.

We often find in the *Brut* instances in which numerals (including the indefinite article), demonstratives (including the definite article) or possessives intervene between adjectives and nouns. We shall call this word-order 'A-X-N': A stands for adjectives, X for numerals (including the indefinite article), demonstratives (including the definite article) and possessives, and N for nouns. Here are some examples.

C: He ȝef Assaracum his sune : *sele þreo castles* (197)

C: ⁊ heo rumliche hit ȝef : *gode þon kempan* (1227)

O: To Londene he verde *mid mochele his folke* (1437)

3. The method of our investigation.

F. Madden says in his edition of the *Brut*, Vol. 1, p. xxxv, that in the writing of the C-text two hands are clearly apparent and that the first hand continues from the beginning for several pages, but at fol. 16b, in the story of King Lear, a larger hand commences, which is more irregular and negligent and at fol. 86 the original hand is resumed, but only for two pages and a half, and the larger hand then continues to the end.

As the manuscript is not available, it is impossible to find precisely where at fol. 16b the hands change. Therefore it would be better to exclude fol. 16b and take fol. 1—fol. 16a and the same number of lines after fol. 17a as the material for our investigation. In other words the same numbers of lines will be chosen from the first scribe's part and from the second scribe's part; these will be referred to in this article as C1 and C2 respectively. By making this distinction we shall be

able to find whether the scribes' habits have anything to do with the occurrence of this word-order 'A-X-N'. From the O-text, which is written in one and the same hand, will be chosen the lines corresponding to those of the C-text. In our text, *Laȝamon: Brut*, ed. by G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, EETS 250, 1963, the lines under investigation will consequently be lines 1—1441a and 1487—2927a[3].

Our investigation thus contains a double phase: the comparison between C1 and C2, and between C and O. We shall proceed our analysis according to the classification presented in 2 above, and try to find out in what condition this word-order occurs, and whether it is a lexical or syntactical or metrical factor that underlies this peculiar word-order.

4. 1. X = Numeral (including the indefinite article).

When X is a numeral, the A-X-N order appears 1) when the word-group is the object of a verb, 2) when the word-group is the object of a preposition, and 3) when the whole phrase constitutes an adverbial phrase.

In each section below the following items will be shown: the examples of the A-X-N order, its frequency, its frequency ratio in comparison with that of the X-A-N order, the adjectives (and the prepositions as the case may be) used there; and for comparison, those of the X-A-N order will be given as well.

4. 2. With verbs.

A-X-N: ex. C1: He funde *wunsum ane stude ·* vppen ane watere.

þær he gon aræren *· riche ane burhe* (1012-13)

O: He ȝaf Assarachus his sone *· seli þre castles* (197)

a) Frequency. First-half-line :   C1 [2], C2 [0]; O [2]

Second-half-line: C1 [3], C2 [0]; O [2]

Total: C1 [5], C2 [0]; O [4]

b) Ratio. C: A-X-N 28%—X-A-N 72%

$$\begin{cases} \text{C1: A-X-N } 33\%\text{—X-A-N } 67\% \\ \text{C2: A-X-N } 0\%\text{—X-A-N } 100\% \end{cases}$$

O: A-X-N 29%—X-A-N 71%

c) Adjectives used. C1: *feir, moni, rich, seli, wunsum.*

O: *moni, seli, wonder, wunsum.*

cf. X-A-N: ex. C1: He makede *ane riche burh :* 2 hehte heo

Winchestre (1408)

a) Frequency. First-half-line : C1 [3], C2 [3]; O [6]

Second-half-line: C1 [7], C2 [0]; O [4]

Total: C[10], C2 [3]; O[10]

b) Adjectives used. C1: *feir, heah, hende, muchel, newe, rich, wunsum.* C2: *good, long, strong.* O: *deorne, feir, god, heah, long, mochel, newe, rich, strong, wunsum.*

The first thing to note is the fact that this construction is lacking in C2 and that all the instances of this word-order in C1 and O appear in corresponding lines, except for one instance in C1 (line 606) whose corresponding portion in O is illegible.

Judging from the above material, it is rather difficult to conclude that adjectives have anything to do with the A-X-N order. The same adjectives appear in both constructions. This can be confirmed in each of the following sections; many of the adjectives that apper in the A-X-N order can also appear in the X-A-N order. What then is the factor that conditions the occurrence of this order? What seems to be of far greater importance is the fact that the A-X-N word-group almost always constitutes a half-line by itself and verbs to another half-line. This will easily be recognized by comparing the line C1: 1013 with C1: 1408 above. The line C1: 1012 at once contradicts this state-

ment, but this is an only exception. The limitation of space does not permit us to give abundant examples, but those given in 2 may also help to give the idea. (The third example with a preposition preceding the word-group will be explained later.) It is noteworthy that in all the instances, except for the line C1: 1012, the A-X-N word-groups constitute half-lines by themselves; in other words they are metrically separated from verbs.

We might conclude that adjectives and verbs do not play a fundamental part in the occurrence of this word-order; that is to say, neither lexical nor syntactical approach may solve the problem. If we then proceed from another, i.e. a metrical, point of view, the A-X-N word-groups will immediately reveal a common feature; type A, one of the rhythmic patterns in Old English alliterative versification, is clearly recognizable in all of them.

The A-X-N word-group contains two words that can bear alliteration: the adjective and the noun. If a verb is added, the line becomes what is called 'Schwellvers'. Verbs can be separated from the word-group, but prepositions, as in the third example in 2, cannot because they are much more dependent upon the words they govern than verbs are. In this case, however, the preposition+A-X-N word-group does not become hypermetrical, but only a variation of type A because prepositions do not bear stress.

Now it has become fairly clear that this word-order is metrically conditioned, and as the analysis in the following sections will only help to confirm this view, only what is noteworthy will be pointed out.

4. 3. With prepositions.

A-X-N: ex. C1: He wonede at Ernle3e ⁚ *at æðelen are chirechen* (3)

C2: ac ic heo wulle habben ⁚ *to hæ[h]3e[r]e are quene*

(1603)

a) Frequency. First-half-line : C1 [0], C2 [1]; O [1]

Second-half-line: C1 [3], C2 [2]; O [1]

Total: C1 [3], C2 [3]; O [2]

b) Ratio. C: A-X-N 25%—X-A-N 75%

$\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{C1: A-X-N 30\%—X-A-N 70\%} \\ \text{C2: A-X-N 21\%—X-A-N 79\%} \end{array}\right.$

O: A-X-N 11%—X-A-N 89%

c) Adjectives used. C1: *æðel, moni, rich.* C2: *heah, oþer.*

O: *moni, oþer.*

d) Prepositions used. C1: *at, on, to.* C2: *to, mid.* O: *in, mid.*

cf. X-A-N: ex. C2: For Gudlac him sende word : *bi ane wise*

monne (2383)

a) Frequency. First-half-line : C1 [5], C2 [7]; 0 [11]

Second-half-line: C1 [2], C2 [4]; 0 [6]

Total: C1 [7], C2 [11]; 0 [17]

b) Adjectives used. C1: *deop, heah, hwit, lutel, muchel, þick, wunsum.* C2: *aȝen, alpi, brod, feir, long, lut, mochel, rich, strong, wis.* O: *alpi, aluis, brod, fea, great, heah, hwit, long, lutel, mochel, rich, soch, strong, þick, wis, wunsum.*

c) Prepositions used. C1: *in, into, of, on, to.* C2: *bi, in, into, mid, to, wiðinnen.* O: *bi, for, in, into, mid, of, to, widine.*

It must be noted that the A-X-N word-group always has monosyllabic prepositions, while the X-A-N word-group has disyllabic or trisyllabic prepositions as well. The A-X-N order more faithfully represents the Old English *anacrusis*, while the X-A-N order has too many unstressed syllables at the beginning of a half-line to conform to the type.

4. 4.   Adverbial phrase.

A-X-N: ex. C1: Nes Brutus i pon londe ꝛ bute *lutel ane wile.* (174)

O: Nas Brutus in pat lond ꝛ bote *lutel one wile.* (174)

a) Frequency. First-half-line   : C1 [0], C2 [0]; O [0]

Second-half-line: C1 [1], C2 [0]; O [1]

Total: C1 [1], C2 [0]; O [1]

b) Ratio. C: A-X-N 33%—X-A-N   67%

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{C1: A-X-N } 100\%\text{—X-A-N } 0\% \\ \text{C2: A-X-N } \quad 0\%\text{—X-A-N } 100\% \end{array} \right.$

O: A-X-N 25%—X-A-N 75%

c) Adjectives used.   C1: *lutel.* O: *lutel.*

cf. X-A-N: ex. C2: þer ich wulle wunie ꝛ þolie þeos wænen/*ane*

lutele stunde (1717-18)

a) Frequency. First-half-line   : C1 [0], C2 [2]; O [2]

Second-half-line: C1 [0], C2 [0]; O [1]

Total: C1 [0], C2 [2]; O [3]

b) Adjectives used. C2: *lutel.* O: *lutel.*

Just as in 4. 2. there can be found no examples of the A-X-N order in C2, and the examples in C1 and O occur in corresponding lines.

5. 1.   X = Demonstrative (including the definite article).

The A-X-N order appears only in C, and that quite infrequently. This shows that the construction may have been already archaic in C and that to the audience of the O-scribe's age it may have been too archaic or awkward to be tolerated.   All the instances in C are replaced in O by more usual constructions. (See notes (5), (6), and (7).) It is interesting to note that *gode þon kempen* (C1: 1227) is replaced in O by *gode hire cniþtes* (O: 1227); this may suggest that the latter construction was probably not unidiomatic, at least in verse, to the O-scribe and the readers or audience of his age. (See further 6. 1. —6. 5.

below.)

The A-X-N order appears 1) when the word-group is the object of a verb, 2) when the word-group is the object of a preposition, and 3) when the whole phrase is a subject.

What has been stated above also holds true here. The A-X-N word-group, or with a preposition preceding it, always constitutes a half-line and has a rhythmic pattern of the Old English type A.

5. 2.　With verbs.

A-X-N: ex. C1: ⁊ heo rumliche hit ȝef ⫽ *gode þon kempan* (1227)[5]

　　　a) Frequency. Second-half-line: C1 [1]

　　　b) Ratio. C1: A-X-N 6%—X-A-N 94%

　　　c) Adjective used. C1: *god.*

　　cf. X-A-N: ex. C1: þar com Eneas ⫽ ⁊ grette *þen alde king* (68)

　　　a) Frequency. First-half-line　: C1 [10], C2 [2]

　　　　　　　　　　　Second-half-line: C1　[5], C2 [4]

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Total: C1 [15], C2 [6]

　　　b) Adjectives used. C1: æþel, *ald, Englisc, drihtlich, heah, leoflich, newe, soþ, soþfest, strong, uvel, uvere, wild.* C2: *best, heah, more, muchel.*

5. 3.　With prepositions.

A-X-N: ex. C2: swiðe heo was sori ⫽ *fore sorehfulle þan slehte* (1993)[6]

　　　a) Frequency. Second-half-line: C2 [1]

　　　b) Ratio. C2: A-X-N 6%—X-A-N 94%

　　　c) Adjective used. C2: *sorehful.*

　　　d) Preposition used. C2: *fore.*

　　cf. X-A-N: ex. C2: þis writ com to Fraunce ⫽ *to þan freo kinge* (1595)

　　　a) Frequency. First-half-line　: C1 [7], C2 [6]

Second-half-line: C1 [5], C2 [10]
Total: C1 [12], C2 [16]

b) Adjectives used. C1: *almihti, best, heðen, muchel, Troysc, vuel, wid, wintred.* C2: *Alemainisc, Bruttisc, eldre, Frensc, freo, redful, Romanisc, seorhful, strong, swerd, teonful.*

c) Prepositions used. C1: *after, for, ჳeond, in mid, of, a, on, to, uppe, þuru.* C2: *atforen, bi, bote, in, mid, of, an, to, toჳene, wih.*

5. 4. As a subject.

A-X-N: C1: þa fusden þa ferde/wenden riht to þare sæ·' *sela þa þeines.* (548-9) [7]

a) Frequency. Second-half-line: C1 [1]

b) Ratio. C1: A-X-N 5%—X-A-N 95%

c) Adjective used. C1: *sel.*

cf. X-A-N: ex. C1: þat *þeos ჳunge wiman*·' iwerd hire mid childe (133)

a) Frequency. First-half-line   : C1 [15], C2 [25]
Second-half-line: C1 [5], C2 [2]
Total: C1 [20], C2 [27]

b) Adjectives used. C1: *ald, Dardanisc, feir, ჳung, heah, rich, rimi, norþern, Troynisc, unimet, wild, windercrefti.* C2: *ald, æðel, Almainnisc, forme, Frensc, ჳung, forwunded, muchel, Romanisc, þeodisc, unseli, sel.*

6. 1.   X = Possessive.

The A-X-N order is most frequent when X is a possessive, especially when the word-group is preceded by a preposition.   Many instances can be found in C1, C2 and O although frequency diminishes in this order.   It is chiefly due to this frequent occurrence of the preposition

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+A-X-N order that we have the impression that Laȝamon's *Brut* has many instances of the peculiar word-order.

The A-X-N order occurs 1) when the word-group is the object of a verb, 2) when the word-group is the object of a preposition, and 3) when the word-group forms a vocative. The same principle as has been stated above also holds true here.

6. 2. With verbs.

A-X-N: ex. C1: ȝ he heom wolde ȝeuen ⁘ *richen his monnen* (1366)

O: and ȝeo rumliche ȝef *gode hire cniþtes* (1227)

a) Frequency. First-half-line : C1 [0], C2 [0]; O [0]

Second-half-line: C1 [3], C2 [4]; O [3]

Total: C1 [3], C2 [4]; O [3]

b) Ratio. C: A-X-N 23%—X-A-N 77%

$\begin{cases} \text{C1: A-X-N 19\%—X-A-N 81\%} \\ \text{C2: A-X-N 29\%—X-A-N 71\%} \end{cases}$

O: A-X-N 10%—X-A-N 90%

c) Adjectives used. C1: *god, kene, rich.* C2 ; *æðel, half, leof, muchel.* O: *god, half.*

cf. X-A-N: ex. O: and ȝiue me mine borewes ; and *mine gode castles* (2352)

a) Frequency. First-half-line : C1 [8], C2 [7]; O [13]

Second-half-line: C1 [5], C2 [3]; O [14]

Total: C1 [13], C2 [10]; O [27]

b) Adjectives used. C1: *aȝen, drihtlich, eldest, feir, kene, leof, muchel, naked, rich, steap, stelen, wis.* C2: *ald, drihlich, god, lefful, leof, rich, soð.* O: *ald, aȝen, eldest, feir, drihlich, god, heah, kene, lefful, leof, mochel, naked, rich, soþ, stelen, weri, wis.*

6. 3. With prepositions.

A-X-N: ex. C1: þer þe king walde forð ᛬ *mid muchelere his ferde*
(765)

C2: to læden þis garisume *to leuene mine fadere* (1772)

O: Brutus him remde to ᛬ *mid bitere his reses* (343)

a) Frequency. First-half-line : C1 [3], C2 [3]; O [4]

Second-half-line: C1 [13], C2 [8]; O [13]

Total: C1 [16], C2 [11]; O [17]

b) Ratio. C: A-X-N 47%—X-A-N 53%

{ C1: A-X-N 50%—X-A-N 50%
{ C2: A-X-N 42%—X-A-N 58%

O: A-X-N 21%—X-A-N 79%

c) Adjectives used. C1: *god, grim, laþ, luþer, mære, mild, muchel, rich, scearp, self, wiȝeful, wroþ.* C2: *feir, grim, laþ, leof, muchel, scone, self.* O: *biter, feir, laþ, leof, luþer, mild, muchel, rich, self.*

d) Prepositions used. C1: *bi, mid, of, to.* C2: *at, mid, of, to.* O: *mid, of, to.*

cf. X-A-N: ex. C1: Brutus heom smat on ᛬ *mid his grime smite* (269)

a) Frequency. First-half-line : C1 [3], C2 [5]; O [14]

Second-half-line: C1 [13], C2 [10]; O [50]

Total: C1 [16], C2 [15]; O [64]

b) Adjectives used. C1: *aȝen, grim, mære, muchel, quick, sotlich, tirful, wihtful.* C2: *aȝen, ald, bare, feir, god, kene, leof, muchel, quick, stille.* O: *aȝen, ald, bare, biter, boþe, cwik, dern, eldest, feir, fel, ful, god, grim, hendi, kene, laþ, leof, mochel, oþer, rich, stille, stronge, swiþe, wis.*

c) Prepositions used. C1 *bi, for, mid, of, on, to, þurch.* C2: *bi, for, mid, of, on, to.* O: *bi, bote, for, in, mid, of,*

on, to, þorh, wið.

Mid is the most frequent among the prepositions used here. Out of the twenty-seven instances in C, no less than eighteen are with *mid*; this amounts to about sixty-six percent of the whole. When we compare the frequency ratio of the *mid*+A-X-N order with that of the *mid*+X-A-N order, it is approximatery 3 : 1. Such is not the case with the other prepositions.

In O, on the other hand, the *mid*+A-X-N order, although it is still to be found fairly often, is not so frequent as *mid*+X-A-N; and yet it is with *mid* that the A-X-N order most frequently occurs.

6. 4.　As a vocative.

A-X-N: ex.　C1: anan swa ȝe hi[t] i-hereð *·′ hende mine kempen/* ohtliche heom slæð on (400-401)

C2: Fare we swiðe to þare sæ *·′ sele mine dranches* (2258)

O:　Fare swiþe to þare see *sele mine kempes* (2258)

a) Frequency. First-half-line　: C1 [0], C2 [0]; O [0]

Second-half-line: C1 [2], C2 [1]; O [1]

Total: C1 [2], C2 [1]; O [1]

b) Ratio.　C.　A-X-N 60%—X-A-N 40%

$\begin{cases} \text{C1: A-X-N } 67\%\text{—X-A-N } 33\% \\ \text{C2: A-X-N } 50\%\text{—X-A-N } 50\% \end{cases}$

O:　A-X-N 33%—X-A-N 67%

c) Adjectives used. C1: *hende, hold.* C2: *sel.* O: *sel.*

cf. X-A-N: ex. O: Lusteþ mine cniþtes *·′* lusteþ *mine leoue men* (434)

a) Frequency. First-half-line　: C1 [0], C2 [1]; O [1]

Second-half-line: C1 [1], C2 [0]; O [1]

Total: C1 [1], C2 [1]; O [2]

b) Adjectives used. C1: *leof*. C2: *leof*. O: *leof*.

7. Summary.

The A-X-N order in La3amon's *Brut* is not lexically or syntactically conditioned; it is metrically conditioned. It has a rhythmic pattern of type A (or its variation) of Old English alliterative versification. This does not imply that the X-A-N order never takes this pattern, but generally it tends to be hypermetrical and does not conform to this pattern. Whether or not the A-X-N word-order could be the survival of Old English it is impossible to say at least from our brief investigation. However, the example in *The Battle of Maldon* (cited in note (2) below) which was written towards the end of the tenth century suggests its origin in late Old English.

The frequency ratio of the A-X-N order in O is, as may be expected, much smaller than in C. But a closer examination reveals the fact that the ratio also diminishes from C1 to C2 and that a parallel diminution is recognizable in the two portions of O corresponding to C1 and C2. It might be suggested that the O-scribe may have transcribed the C-text, which will be the most probable explanation of the phenomenon.

NOTES

(1) Bøgholm, N., *The La3amon Texts: A Linguistic Investigation.* Einar Munksgaard, 1944. (p. 83)

Einenkel, E., *Geschichte der englischen Sprache II, Historische Syntax.* (Grundriss der Germanischen Philologie, hrsg. von H. Paul) Strassburg, 1916. (S. 175)

Koch, C. F., *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache.* Cassel, 1865. (II Band, S. 172)

Maetzner, E., *An English Grammar.* Tr. by Clair James Grece. London, 1874. Reprint: Tokyo, 1962. (Vol. 3, p. 563)

Mossé, F., *Manuel de l'anglais du moyen âge. Moyen-anglais I.* Paris, 1949. (p. 152); *Moyen-anglais II.* 1949. (p. 21);

Vieil-anglais I. 1950. (p. 168)

(2) Koch and Maetzner, and naturally Bφgholm, draw their citations exclusively from Laȝamon. Einenkel gives OE examples, which are dubious ones, as well as ME and ModE examples. The most definite statement about this is that of F. Mossé, who, citing a typical example from *The Battle of Maldon* (*on wlancan þam wicge*, line 240), says that this word-order probably has its origin in Old English. According to my own cursory investigation, this word-order is not to be found in *Beowulf* (ed. by Fr. Klaeber, D. C. Heath), *Juliana* (ed. by R. Woolf, Methuen), *Elene* (ed. by P.O.E. Gradon, Methuen), *Andreas* (ed. by K. R. Brooks, Oxford), Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (ed. by D. White-lock, Methuen), *Judith* (ed. by B. J. Timmer, Methuen), *Aelfric's Lives of Staints* (EETS, OS 76), *Havelock the Dane* (ed. by W. W. Skeat and K. Sisam, Oxford), *Sir Orfeo* (Auchinleck MS, ed by A. J. Bliss, Oxford), and in the extracts in *Early Middle English Texts* (ed. by Dickins and Wilson, Bowes). There are two examples in 'What Love Is Like' (No. 53 in *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown, Oxford): 'Loue is loueliche a þing to wommone nede' (line 10) and 'Loue is sellich an þing, wose shal soþ singe' (line 21). It is noteworthy that the language of the poem belongs to the South-Western dialect.

(3) Still further, investigation ought to be made into the other Germanic languages of the time, because Behaghel describes exactly the same phenomenon in his *Deutsche Syntax* (IV Band, S. 206-207).

(4) Those lines in the C-text which lack their corresponding lines in the O-text have been excluded from our consideration.

(5) cf. O: and ȝeo rumliche ȝef gode hire cniþtes (1227)

(6) cf. O: ȝeo .as swiþe sori ⁚ for þan (il)ke sleþte (1993)

(7) cf. O: þo fusde þe ferde/wenden riþt to þare see ⁚ selie cniþtes (548-9)