

Reconstructing the decoupling of case and agreement in Old Hungarian

Evidence from epithets and names as syntactic fossils

Tamás Halm

Pázmány Péter Catholic University | Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics

The interdependence of accusative case and object agreement has changed dramatically during the history of Ugric languages. While Proto-Ugric exhibited full interdependence (mediated by topicality), this connection has loosened in the extant Ob-Ugric languages (Mansi and Khanty), and it is severed completely in Late to Modern Hungarian. In this paper, I introduce new, hitherto unreported empirical evidence from nicknames and family names that preserve archaic syntactic features for an intermediate stage of Early Old Hungarian (which predates our earliest written records) where case assignment was still a function of topicality but object agreement was already a function of definiteness. In addition to providing insight into an unrecorded stage of Hungarian, my findings also contribute to a more thorough understanding of the connection between case, agreement and information structure in Ugric and beyond.

Keywords: case, agreement, information structure, syntactic reconstruction, Ugric, Uralic, Old Hungarian

1. Introduction

According to Baker (2015), case and agreement can be (a) interdependent, (b) partially independent or (c) independent. É. Kiss (2020) argued that within the Ugric family, extinct Eastern Mansi and reconstructed Proto-Ugric exemplified (a), the Ob-Ugric languages of today (Mansi and Khanty) display (b), and Modern Hungarian is an example of (c). In Eastern Mansi, only topical objects elicited verbal agreement (so-called object agreement), and only topical objects received accusative case. In the other Ob-Ugric variants, while verbal agree-

ment is still a function of topicality, all objects are assigned structural accusative case independently of their discourse role. In Modern Hungarian, all objects are assigned structural and morphological accusative case, and object agreement on the verb is triggered by definite objects¹ (independent of discourse function): thus, both agreement and case assignment are fully independent from discourse function. É. Kiss (2020) also argued that this change ($a > b > c$) is due to the loosening of the strict SOV structure of Proto-Ugric: the increasing frequency of post-verbal objects in Ob-Ugric (SVO) and the development of a discourse functional left periphery (Top Foc VX^*) in Hungarian.

The diachronic pathways of the Ob-Ugric languages (Mansi and Khanty) have been mapped in great detail (É. Kiss 2020). However, with Hungarian, this has proved more difficult, as Late Old Hungarian (12th century, the earliest period from which we have surviving texts) had mostly the same system in terms of accusative case assignment and object agreement as Modern Hungarian. Fossilized constructions detectable in Late Old Hungarian (SOV non-finite embedded clauses with non-case-marked objects) and in Middle Hungarian (variable object agreement with topical indefinite objects) led É. Kiss (2020) to argue that Early Old Hungarian must have been similar to 19th-century Eastern Mansi (and, thus, reconstructed Proto-Ugric) in having SOV word order, topicalized objects triggering verbal agreement and morphologically realized structural accusative case.

In my paper, I introduce new, hitherto unreported empirical evidence for an intermediate stage between the hypothetical Eastern Mansi-like Early Old Hungarian and Late Old Hungarian (for which we have textual evidence). Personal names such as nicknames or nickname-derived family names often preserve archaic features of phonology, morphology and even syntax (for the latter, cf. Layton 1990 and

1. In Late Old to Modern Hungarian, definite objects trigger object agreement (this is also called the definite conjugation paradigm), whereas with an indefinite object or no object altogether, there is no object agreement (this is also called the indefinite conjugation paradigm):

- (i) *Mari ír-Ø.*
Mary write-3SG
'Mary is writing.'
- (ii) *Mari egy cikk-et ír-Ø.*
Mary a paper-ACC write-3SG
'Mary is writing a paper.'
- (iii) *Mari élet-e főműv-é-t írj-ja-Ø.*
Mary life-3SG magnum.opus-3SG-ACC write-OBJ-3SG
'Mary is writing her magnum opus.'

For more detailed accounts, see Coppock (2013, 2022), Bárány (2017), Bartos (2000, 2001), Den Dikken (2004), É. Kiss (2013b, 2017), among others.

Bowern 1998). Of particular interest for us is the cross-linguistically well-attested strategy of turning a clause-sized element into an adjective or noun without any morphological marking. This is mostly used to create slurs or nicknames based on a characteristic trait: a typical and defining attitude, disposition or activity:

- (1) *know-nothing* ‘does not know anything’ > ‘ignoramus’ (English)
 (2) *vau-rien* ‘is worth nothing’ > ‘useless person’ (French)

Such epithets often develop into family names and are preserved as such:

- (3) *Shakespeare, Makepeace, Drinkwater* (English)
 (4) *Boileau* (= *boit l'eau* drinks the water > ‘teetotaler’) (French)

Modern Hungarian has a set of such epithets/names which preserve a peculiar syntactic pattern: a non-case-marked object followed by a verb carrying the object agreement suffix:²

- (5) *hús-(nem)-esz-i-Ø*
 wine-(not)-drink-OBJ-3SG
 ‘wine-lover/teetotaler’, lit. ‘drinks (not) wine’
 (6) *ló-dönt-i-Ø*³
 horse-topple-OBJ-3SG
 ‘horse-toppler (i.e. strong enough to topple a horse)’, lit.: ‘topples horse’

This pattern is unexpected, as Modern Hungarian objects are obligatorily (and overtly) accusative-marked, independent of their informational structural status (topical or otherwise) or their definiteness. As I will argue below, these fossils represent an earlier stage of Hungarian where accusative case assignment was still a function of topicality (with only topicalized objects receiving accusative case, as is the case in Proto-Ugric and all the Ob-Ugric varieties), but object agreement was

2. This strategy is not limited to transitive verbs with an overt object. Sentences (i) without an object or (ii) with a silent pro object (Hungarian being a pro-drop language) have also been turned into epithets (cf. Appendix):

- (i) *jö-tt-Ø-men-t-Ø*
 come-PST-3SG-go-PST-3SG
 ‘(he/she) came and went’ > ‘rootless newcomer, carpetbagger’
 (ii) *pro-hány-ja-Ø -vet-i-Ø*
 it-scatter-OBJ-3SG-throw-OBJ-3SG
 ‘lobs it around and scatters it wide’ > ‘careless, negligent’

3. The 3SG subject agreement suffix is phonologically null (silent) in Hungarian. All the other subject agreement suffixes are overtly expressed.

already a function of definiteness and not of topicality (similar to the situation in Late Old to Modern Hungarian). This suggests that Hungarian traversed a different path than its Ob-Ugric sisters: the agreement-topicality link was severed first and the case assignment-topicality link was severed later, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Topicality, agreement, and accusative case assignment in the Ugric languages

	Proto-Ugric, E. Mansi	E. & N. Khanty, N. Mansi	Reconstr. Early Old Hungarian	Modern Hungarian
Object agr. is a function of:	Topicality	Topicality	Definiteness	Definiteness
Acc. case is assigned to:	Topical objects	All objects	Topical objects	All objects

In this reconstructed stage of Early Old Hungarian, *in situ* (non-topicalized) objects received nominative case, and topicalized objects received accusative case, similar to Proto-Ugric and the Ob-Ugric languages. However, as far as object agreement was concerned, Early Old Hungarian was more innovative: in a departure from Proto-Ugric and the known Ob-Ugric varieties, object agreement was already sensitive to the [+definite] feature, as opposed to [+topic].⁴

The paper is organized as follows. In §2, I discuss the landscape of case and agreement in Ugric and the challenge of Hungarian. In §3, I present the new evidence: archaic syntax preserved in names and epithets. In §4, I put forward my proposal, formulated in terms of dependent case theory and phases, and address two potential challenges to my analysis. The conclusions are given in §5. The Appendix contains the full list of all the relevant names and epithets I examine, and the sources from which I compiled them.

2. Case and agreement in Ugric, and the challenge of Hungarian

Ugric languages constitute a branch of the wider Finno-Ugric family, which is itself part of the Uralic family. Ugric languages include the Ob-Ugric languages: the critically endangered varieties of Mansi and Khanty spoken in Western Siberia

4. Such a change from [+topic]-sensitivity to [+definite]-sensitivity is a cross-linguistically well-attested phenomenon (facilitated by the shared component of specificity/givenness; cf. Givón 1975: 158).

(around 2000 and 14,000 speakers, respectively⁵); and Hungarian, spoken mostly in Hungary, neighboring countries and the wider diaspora (around 13 million speakers⁶).

The landscape of accusative case assignment and object agreement in Ugric has been mapped by É. Kiss (2020) in considerable detail. Following Baker's (2015) taxonomy, É. Kiss (2020) argued that within the Ugric family, extinct Eastern Mansi and reconstructed Proto-Ugric exhibit a total interdependence of case and agreement, the Ob-Ugric languages of today (Northern Mansi and Northern and Eastern Khanty) exhibit a partial interdependence, and Late Old to Modern Hungarian is an example of total independence.

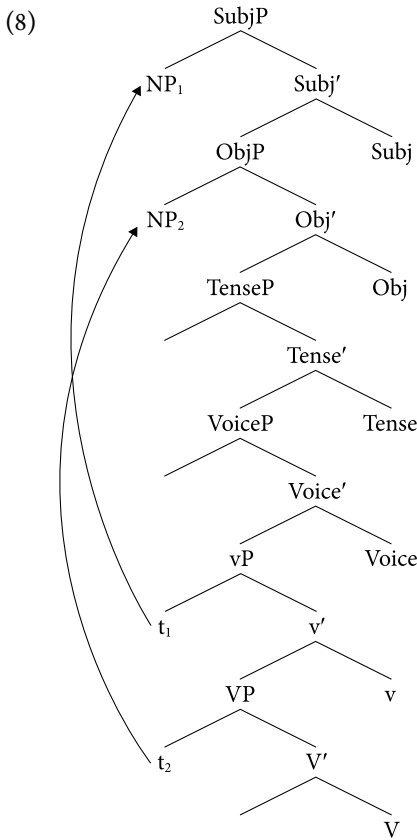
The link connecting case assignment and object agreement in Ugric is information structure. In Eastern Mansi (Kulonen 1989; Virtanen 2014, 2015), the most conservative (and by now, extinct) Ob-Ugric dialect, there is a complete fusion of topicality and argument hierarchy. The word order is strictly SOV. Subjects obligatorily function as the so-called primary topic of the clause (so much so that if a subject is not appropriately topical, being non-referential or non-specific, obligatorily passivization occurs involving the demotion of the subject to a by-phrase and the promotion of a referential or specific object to subject position). Discourse-old objects are accusative-marked and elicit object-verb agreement (7a), whereas discourse-new objects are non-case-marked and do not elicit object-verb agreement (7b):

- (7) a. *pro ðōw-mø öät kont-iil-øm.*
 1SG door-ACC NEG find-SG-1SG
 'I don't find the door.' (Eastern Mansi, Virtanen 2014: 405)
- b. *Kom jowt-nyööl wø-s.*
 man bow-arrow take-PST.3SG
 'The man took a bow and an arrow.' (Eastern Mansi, Virtanen 2014: 407)

É. Kiss (2020) argues that discourse-old objects are extracted from the verb phrase (VP) and moved to a so-called secondary topic position, where they enter into an agreement relation with the verb and are assigned accusative case, whereas discourse-new objects remain *in situ* within the VP, do not enter into an agreement relation and fail to receive accusative case. Considering these facts and other evidence such as adjunct placement patterns, É. Kiss (2020) proposes the following structure for Eastern Mansi (and reconstructed Proto-Ugric):

5. Results of the All-Russian population census of 2021. Table 6. Population according to native language.

6. Kenesei & Szécsényi (2022: 636).



Subjects are base generated in the specifier of vP (t_1) and moved to the specifier of SubjP (NP_1). Discourse-old (topical) objects are base-generated in the specifier of VP (t_2) and moved to the specifier position of ObjP (NP_2). Discourse-new objects are base-generated in t_2 and remain there. The heads of the subject phrase and the object phrase (Subj and Obj) are spelled out as subject and object agreement suffixes.

É. Kiss (2020) provides an account for the case-marking properties in terms of dependent case theory (Marantz 1991; Baker 2015), making the crucial assumption that vP and SubjP represent two phases,⁷ i.e., two separate spellout domains

7. According to standard generative assumptions, the derivation of a clause proceeds in a bottom-up fashion and by phases: roughly speaking, a phase is a chunk of syntactic structure that is considered closed (impenetrable) for further syntactic operations. Once a so-called phase head (such as v) has been inserted, the sister (complement) of that head becomes impenetrable: no element can leave it by movement and its contents become inaccessible for operations involving an element external to the phase (Chomsky 2001).

for case assignment. If the object is topicalized, it ends up in a single domain with the subject (SubjP, meaning the span from V to SubjP; since vP, being a phase, has already been sent to spellout and is thus, in essence, invisible for further syntactic operations). Since nominative case goes to the subject, the topicalized object receives accusative case.⁸ If the object remains *in situ*, it ends up being the only NP within its spellout domain (vP), and thus, it receives nominative case.

In other, more innovative and non-extinct variants of Ob-Ugric, such as Eastern Khanty, Northern Khanty and Northern Mansi (Nikolaeva 1999; Csepregi 1997, 2019; Asztalos et al. 2017; Riese 2001; Skribnik 2001; Sosa 2017; Filchenko 2007; Bíró & Sipőcz 2017), verbal agreement is still a function of topicality. However, the link between accusative case assignment and topicality is severed. All objects are assigned structural accusative case independently of discourse role: pronominal objects are overtly accusative-marked, whereas lexical objects have a phonologically null allomorph of the accusative morpheme. (This means that morphological accusative case is still partially correlated to discourse function, as pronominal objects are more likely to be topics than lexical objects.) Consider (9) (reproduced from É. Kiss 2020: 411):

- (9) a. *Vera lüw-at wū -A-təγ.*
 Vera she-ACC know-PRES-SG<3SG⁹
 ‘Vera knows him/her.’
 (Eastern Khanty, original source: Márta Csepregi, fieldwork)
- b. Context: We are good friends. He understands me. And, conversely:
Ma lüw-at toγəmtə-λ-əm.
 1SG he-ACC understand-PRES-1SG
 ‘I understand him.’ (Eastern Khanty, originally in Sosa 2017: 180)

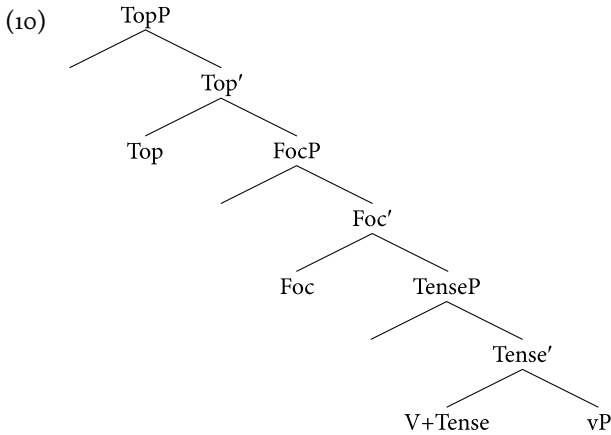
Personal pronouns are typically topical, and in such cases, they elicit verbal agreement (9a). Non-topical pronouns emerge in contrastive contexts, and they fail to elicit verbal agreement (9b). Independent from topicality, however, the pronominal objects are structurally and morphologically accusative-marked. To account for these patterns, É. Kiss (2020) argues that the innovative Ob-Ugric dialects have the same basic syntactic structure as Eastern Mansi (and Proto-Ugric), with the difference that vP and SubjP are not separate phases, i.e., they do not form independent spellout domains. This means that independent of topicality, the object is

8. Following Baker (2015: 48): “If there are two distinct NPs in the same spellout domain such that NP₁ c-commands NP₂, then value the case feature of NP₂ as accusative unless NP₁ has already been marked for case”.

9. “SG<3SG” indicates a portmanteau morpheme which encodes third person singular subject agreement and third person object agreement.

always in the same domain as the subject, and c-commanded by it, and as a result, it always receives accusative case.

In contrast to its Ob-Ugric sister languages, Modern Hungarian is no longer SOV, and it has a richly articulated discourse-functional left periphery, with dedicated and movement-derived topic and focus positions; see (10):



An object can thus be found in one of three positions. Discourse-functionally neutral objects remain *in situ* (within the vP), in a post-verbal position; focused objects are preverbal and induce particle-verb inversion; topical objects are also preverbal but do not induce particle-verb inversion. Consider:

- (11) a. *Mari el-olvas-t-a-Ø a könyv-et.*
 Mary PRT-read-PAST-OBJ-3SG the book-ACC
 ‘Mary read the book.’ (discourse functionally neutral, definite object)
- b. *Mari el-olvas-ott-Ø egy könyv-et.*
 Mary PRT-read-PAST-3SG a book-ACC
 ‘Mary read a book.’ (discourse functionally neutral, indefinite object)
- c. *Mari a könyv-et olvas-t-a-Ø el.*
 Mary the book-ACC read-PAST-OBJ-3SG PRT
 ‘It was the book that Mary read.’ (focus-moved, definite object)
- d. *Mari egy könyv-et olvas-ott-Ø el.*
 Mary a book-ACC read-PAST-3SG PRT
 ‘It was a book that Mary read.’ (focus-moved, indefinite object)
- e. *Mari a könyv-et el-olvas-t-a-Ø.*
 Mary the book-ACC PRT-read-PAST-OBJ-3SG
 ‘As for the book, Mary read it.’ (topicalized, definite object)
- f. *Mari egy könyv-et el-olvas-ott-Ø.*
 Mary a book-ACC PRT-read-PAST-3SG
 ‘As for a certain book, Mary read it.’ (topicalized, indefinite object)

As can be seen in (11), in Modern Hungarian, all objects are assigned structural and morphological accusative case, and object agreement on the verb is triggered by definite objects, independent of discourse function: thus, both agreement and case assignment are fully independent from discourse function.

É. Kiss (2020) argued that the gradual separation of agreement and case from topicality was due to the loosening of the strict SOV structure of Proto-Ugric: the increasing frequency of post-verbal objects in Ob-Ugric (SVO) and the development of a discourse functional left periphery (Top Foc V X*) in Hungarian. As far as dialects of the Ob-Ugric languages Mansi and Khanty are concerned, the diachronic changes have been mapped in great detail (É. Kiss 2020). Hungarian, however, has proved to be more of a challenge since Late Old Hungarian (12th century, the earliest period from which we have surviving texts) had the same system in terms of accusative case assignment and object agreement as Modern Hungarian. It is only through some fossilized constructions that were still detectable in Late Old to Middle Hungarian that we have been able to gain some insight into the case and agreement system of undocumented Early Old Hungarian.

The constructions include SOV¹⁰ non-finite participial embedded clauses with non-case-marked (or nominal-marked)¹¹ objects in Late Old Hungarian:

- (12) [*ő è gondol-uan*] *yme vr-nac angal-a ièlen-e-c nèk-i*
 he this think-PTCP lo Lord-DAT angel-3SG appear-PST-3SG DAT-3SG
 ‘Him having thought this, the Lord’s angel appeared to him.’
 Munich Codex (1416/1466): p.8 verso; cited by É. Kiss (2020: 417)

The other relevant fossilized construction is variable object agreement with topical indefinite objects. While in Modern Hungarian, indefinite objects fail to trigger verbal object agreement, up until Middle Hungarian, topical indefinite objects, such as relative pronouns with a topical antecedent, had the potential to do so:

10. Modern Hungarian exhibits mixed surface word order. Informational structurally neutral sentences are VSO or VOS, but due to the prevalence of topicalization, SVO, OVS, or indeed SOV or OSV are also amply attested. SVO is the most frequent surface word order (as subjects are likelier to be topicalized than objects). It has been argued recently that Hungarian is still an OV language below the surface (Halm 2021); this, however, does not affect the generalization concerning surface word order.

11. In Hungarian, nominal case is morphologically unmarked.

- (13) *Boldog asszony az olyan, [aki-t gyermek-estől együtt vesz-ik meg]*
 happy woman that one who-ACC child-SOC together buy-3<3PL¹² PRT
 ‘Happy is the woman who is bought together with her child.’ (Literally: ‘Happy
 is the woman whom they buy together with her child.’)

Mikes (1794: 136); cited by É. Kiss (2020: 422)

Based on these data, É. Kiss (2020) argued that Early Old Hungarian must have been similar to 19th-century Eastern Mansi (and reconstructed Proto-Ugric) in having SOV word order, with topicalized objects (and only topicalized objects) eliciting verbal agreement and receiving morphologically realized structural accusative case.

3. New evidence: Archaic syntax preserved in personal names

Personal names (such as nicknames or nickname-derived family names) often preserve archaic features of phonology, morphology, and even syntax (for the latter, cf. Layton 1990 and Bovern 1998). Of peculiar interest for our purposes is the cross-linguistically well-attested strategy of turning a clause-sized element into an adjective or noun without any morphological marking. This is mostly used to create epithets or nicknames based on a characteristic trait: a typical and defining attitude, disposition, or activity. Such constructions are attested in a variety of languages (see examples in the Introduction). Modern Hungarian has a set of such epithets/names¹³ which preserve a peculiar syntactic pattern: a non-case-marked object followed by a verb carrying the object agreement suffix:

- (14) *bor-(nem)-isz-sza-Ø*
 wine-(not)-drink-OBJ-3SG
 ‘drinks (not) wine’ > ‘wine-lover / teetotaler’
- (15) *hús-(nem)-esz-i-Ø*
 meat-(not)-eat-OBJ-3SG
 ‘eats (not) meat’ > ‘meat-eater / -avoider’
- (16) *ló-dönt-i-Ø*
 horse-topple-OBJ-3SG
 ‘topples horse’ > ‘horse-toppler (i.e. strong enough to topple a horse)’

12. “3<3PL” indicates a portmanteau morpheme which encodes third person plural subject agreement and third person object agreement.

13. Altogether 56, all of which are listed in the Appendix.

- (17) *maga-hány-ja-Ø-vet-i-Ø*
 self-scatter-OBJ-3SG-throw-OBJ-3SG
 ‘scatters and throws self’ > ‘boastful’

The availability of reflexive objects (17) indicates that these are underlyingly full sentences with a syntactically active 3SG subject:¹⁴

- (18) **pro*_{3SG} *hús nem esz-i-Ø* (Early Old Hungarian)
 she meat not eat-OBJ-3SG
 ‘She does not eat meat.’

The obligatory verb-final word order and the position of the negator (O Neg V) reflect the reconstructed word order of Early Old Hungarian (É. Kiss 2013a). The absence of verbal particles is also indicative of an archaic, pre-Late Old Hungarian provenance.

Given the meaning of these sentences, the object is unlikely to be a discourse-old topic: these epithets can be used to characterize someone without any preceding discourse context. Note also that in Modern Hungarian, a full-sentence equivalent would have a non-topicalized, *in-situ* object:

- (19) *Az unokám nem esz-i-Ø meg a húst.*
 the grandchild.1SG not eat-OBJ-3SG PRT the meat.ACC
 ‘My grandchild does not eat any meat.’

This leaves the option that object agreement here is already sensitive to definiteness (as it is in Late Old Hungarian). The question at this point is whether it is reasonable to assume that the object in sentences such as (18) is indeed definite. Note first that the reflexive pronoun *maga* ‘self’ is indisputably definite in Late Old to Modern Hungarian (20):

- (20) *ki magat alazanga felmagasztatic*
ki magá-t aláz-and-ja-Ø fel-magaszt-at-ik
 who self-ACC humble-FUT-OBJ-3SG PRT-exalt-PASS-3SG
 ‘Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.’
 Vienna Codex 246, mid-15th C (Late Old Hungarian)

Focusing on the examples with non-pronominal (i.e., lexical) objects, one has to note that the lack of a definite article does not signal indefiniteness: Early Old Hungarian, similarly to most Uralic languages, lacked articles (definite or indefinite) altogether; definite articles are a Late Old Hungarian development (cf. Gallasy 1992; Bakró-Nagy 1999; Egedi 2013, 2014).

14. Since the 3SG subject agreement suffix is phonologically null in Hungarian (Old and Modern alike), there is no way to gather direct morphological evidence for its presence or absence.

A more relevant common characteristic of these sentences is that they provide a general characterization of the subject's attitude/disposition/relationship with regard to the object: whether she eats meat/drinks wine/topples horses, in general. In other words, the object is interpreted generically. Crucially, in Hungarian, singular definite DPs can freely receive a generic interpretation (see also (19) above):

- (21) *János szőrén ül-i-Ø meg a lovat.* (Modern Hungarian)
 John hair.3SG.on sit-OBJ-3SG PRT the horse.ACC
 'John rides horses without a saddle.' (lit. 'John sits on the hair of the horse.')
- (22) *Mari szeret-i-Ø a bort.* (Modern Hungarian)
 Mary like-OBJ-3SG the wine.ACC.
 'Mary likes wine.'

Thus it is reasonable to assume that the generically interpreted object in (18) was indeed definite in Early Old Hungarian too (cf. Egedi 2013: 378 for a detailed argument), and object agreement on the verb was indeed triggered by definiteness.¹⁵

These fossils thus arguably represent a stage where object agreement was already a function of definiteness (and not of topicality) and non-topicalized lexical noun phrase objects were morphologically non-case-marked. This latter fact may either indicate that non-topicalized objects were not assigned accusative case (as in Eastern Mansi and reconstructed Proto-Ugric) or that objects in general were assigned accusative case, the exponent of which in the case of lexical nouns was a phonologically null accusative morpheme (as in Eastern Khanty, Northern Khanty and Northern Mansi). The fact that in (17), the reflexive pronoun has no visible case marking supports the former position. This suggests that Hungarian traversed a different path from its Ob-Ugric sisters. In Hungarian, the agreement-topicality link was severed first and the case assignment-topicality link was severed later, whereas in Ob-Ugric, the case assignment-topicality link was severed first, and the agreement-topicality link is still intact (cf. Table 1).

15. When the object is lexically specified as indefinite (such as with the universal quantifier *minden*), or there is no object at all, we witness a lack of object agreement (OBJ), as expected:

- (i) *minden-tud-Ø*
 everything-know-3SG
 'knows everything' ('know-all')
- (ii) *ingyér-ád-Ø*
 for.free-give-3SG
 'gives without asking for anything in return' ('munificent, generous')

I argue that in the stage of Early Old Hungarian that is preserved in the nickname construction under discussion, the sentence still had the structure shown in (24), and *v* was still a hard phase head (as it was in Proto-Ugric and Eastern Mansi): non-topical objects, being in a separate case assignment domain from the subject, received nominative case (and thus no visible case marking, as nominative is morphologically unmarked in Hungarian).

Object agreement, on the other hand, was already sensitive to the [+definite] feature, as opposed to [+topic] (in a departure from Proto-Ugric and the known Ob-Ugric varieties). Such a change from [+topic]-sensitivity to [+definite]-sensitivity is a cross-linguistically well-attested phenomenon (facilitated by the shared component of specificity/givenness, cf. Givón 1975:158), and it is a development that is orthogonal to whether *v* is a soft or a hard phase head. In other words, the case-agreement-topicality link can, in effect, be broken down into two independent links: the case-topicality link and the agreement-topicality link. Since these two are independent, any one of the two can be severed independently of the other: there is no ‘natural order’ in which the severing of the two links is supposed to happen. And indeed, both of the logically possible orders have been instantiated diachronically: by Ob-Ugric (Mansi and Khanty) on the one hand, and Hungarian on the other.

4.2 Against an incorporation analysis

Before concluding, there are two potential challenges to our analysis that need to be addressed. The first one concerns a potential alternative analysis. Since the objects in the construction under investigation are non-case-marked and they directly precede the verb (unless a negator intervenes), one might be inclined to propose an object incorporation analysis. However, such an analysis is manifestly unfeasible for a variety of reasons. Consider first that incorporated objects in Hungarian fail to elicit object agreement (unlike the objects in our construction):

- (26) a. *Mari meccs-et néz-Ø.*
 Mary match-ACC watch-3SG
 b. **Mari meccs-et néz-i-Ø.*
 Mary match-ACC watch-OBJ-3SG
 ‘Mary is watching a match.’ (‘Mary is engaged in match-watching.’)

Also, incorporated objects are obligatorily accusative-marked, certainly in finite clauses; with non-finite clauses there is dialectal variation:¹⁶

- (27) a. *János meccs-et néz-Ø.*
 John match-ACC watch-3SG
 b. **János meccs néz-Ø.*
 John match watch-3SG

And, crucially, modified objects are attested in the construction under discussion, which in itself excludes an incorporation analysis:

- (28) a. [*egyéb szesz*]-isz-sza-Ø¹⁷
 other spirit-drink-OBJ-3SG
 ‘drinker of other spirits’
 b. [*csak víz*]-isz-sza-Ø¹⁸
 only water-drink-OBJ-3SG
 ‘drinker of water only’

4.3 The underrepresentation of the *-ja* allomorph

In Late Old to Modern Hungarian, the object agreement suffix (OBJ) is subject to allomorphy conditioned by (i) the subject agreement suffix and (ii) by the vowel quality of the verbal stem. In case the subject agreement suffix is 3SG (phonologically null), OBJ has two allomorphs in standard Modern Hungarian: *-ja* (which

16. In non-finite clauses, non-case-marked incorporated objects are attested in some dialects (I would like to thank Katalin É. Kiss for drawing my attention to this):

- (i) *Megy-ek szőlő kapál-ni.*
 go-1SG vine hoe-INF
 ‘I am going out to hoe the vines.’

17. The full locus is the following (<http://forum.index.hu/Article/viewArticle?a=103469583&t=9048586>, created on September 16th, 2010, retrieved on January 18th, 2023):

- (i) *Szerintem bor-, sör- és egyéb szesz-isz-sza-Ø közönsége könnyen össze
 is dobhatná az erre valót.*
 according.to.me wine beer and other spirit-drink-OBJ-3SG audience.3SG easily PRT
 too throw.POSS.COND.3SG.OBJ the this.for due.ACC
 ‘I think his wine-, beer- and assorted spirit-drinking audience could easily put together
 what is needed for this.’

18. The full locus is the following (Döbrentei 1842: 269):

- (i) [*Berzsenyi*] *bor-nem-isz-sza-Ø, vagy csak víz-isz-sza-Ø volt.*
 Berzsenyi wine-not-drink-OBJ-3SG or only water-drink-OBJ-3SG was
 ‘Berzsenyi was a wine-avoider, or rather, someone who drank only water.’

attaches to stems with back vowels) and *-i* (which attaches to stems with front vowels):¹⁹

- (29) a. *Mari néz-i-Ø a naplementét.*
 Mary look-OBJ-3SG the sunset.ACC
 ‘Mary is watching the sunset.’
 b. *Mari bámul-ja-Ø a naplementét.*
 Mary gaze-OBJ-3SG the sunset.ACC
 ‘Mary is gazing at the sunset.’

In the surviving examples, verbs which elicit the *-ja* allomorph of the OBJ suffix are somewhat underrepresented: our corpus includes 56 epithets/names, which include 30 verbs, out of which 19 are front stems with a front OBJ suffix (*-i*) and five are back stems with a back OBJ suffix (*-ja*), six are back stems with a front OBJ suffix (*-i*). In tabulated format:

Table 2. Stem-OBJ patterns

		OBJ suffix		
		Front	Back	<i>total</i>
stem	front	19	0	19
	back	6	5	11
	<i>total</i>	25	5	30

There are two striking patterns here: (i) the relatively high frequency of the irregular back stem/front suffix combination and (ii) the resulting overall dominance of the front suffix (25 out of 30).

The examples in (30) show the irregular pattern: a case where we find the *-i* allomorph even though, certainly in the standard dialect, we would expect *-ja* (in line with vowel harmony patterns):

- (30) *szar-a-rág-i-Ø* attested but unexpected
 shit-3SG-chew-OBJ-3SG
 **szar-a-rág-ja-Ø* expected but unattested
 shit-3SG-chew-OBJ-3SG
 ‘stingy’, lit. ‘chews his/her own shit’

What explains the availability and high relative frequency of this irregular pattern? I propose that there are two reasons for the emergence of this pattern. The

19. For a detailed discussion of vowel harmony in Hungarian, see Rebrus & Törkenczy (2015) and references.

first is that historically, in many non-standard dialects of Hungarian, OBJ only had a single allomorph *-i* (Szabó 1902; Melich 1913; Horger 1931; Imre 1971): this means that this pattern, while irregular in the standard dialect, counts as regular in many non-standard dialects.

The second reason is that a strong analogical effect might have helped the survival, and indeed predominance of the *-i* forms in epithets, namely, the existence of an unrelated but homophonous adjectivizing *-i* suffix which also happens to be used in epithets:

- (31) a. *csozog-i* shuffle.feet_V-ADJ ‘foot-dragger’
 b. *ki-vagy-i* who-be.2SG-ADJ ‘pretentious’
 c. *vigyor-i* grin_N-ADJ ‘prone to an easy smile’

This *-i* suffix is clearly different from both the *-i* (OBJ) suffix and the standard diminutive suffix (which also happens to have the phonological form of *-i*). This epithet-*i* is omnivorous in the sense that it can attach to verb stems (31a), conjugated verb forms (31b) or even nouns (31c). It is non-harmonic, having a single allomorph (*-i*). Unlike the standard diminutive *-i*, it is non-templatic (the standard diminutive *-i* always has a two-syllable output: *aranyos* ‘cute’ > *ar-i* ‘cute-DIM’). And, unlike the standard diminutive, it typically induces a change of word class, turning whatever input it receives into an adjective.²⁰ But, crucially for our purposes, it is an *-i* suffix that features prominently in epithets, and as such, it may have played a reinforcing role by way of analogy, helping the spread of the dialectally available non-harmonic form (back stem/front vowel).

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined a peculiar syntactic pattern of Early Old Hungarian that was fossilized and preserved in certain epithets and names: a non-case-marked object followed by a verb displaying object agreement. I argued that these fossils represent crucial new evidence which helps us reconstruct how case assignment and object agreement worked in Early Old Hungarian, a stage of Hungarian of which we have no written records whatsoever. I have shown that Early Old Hungarian represented a transitional stage between Proto-Ugric (where both case assignment and object agreement depended on topicality) and Late Old to Modern Hungarian (where both case assignment and object agreement are independent of topicality). In Early Old Hungarian, case assignment was still a function

20. I am thankful to Péter Rebrus for discussion on the morpho-phonology of this diminutive suffix.

of topicality but object agreement was already a function of definiteness. This is a pattern that differs from what we have seen in other Ugric languages, where the agreement-topicality link was severed first and the case-topicality link only later. These findings thus fill a gap in the history of Hungarian (and Ugric) and demonstrate the independence of the agreement-topicality link and the case-topicality link.


Funding

The research reported here was supported by Grant 129921 of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Hungary, Grant TKP2020-NKA-11 of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology of Hungary, the Bolyai scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Bolyai Plus scholarship of the New National Excellence Programme of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology of Hungary. I am grateful to the Budapest Library of Central European University for graciously providing me a place to work during the winter of 2022–2023. Open Access publication of this article was funded through a Transformative Agreement with Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics.

Acknowledgements


I would like to thank Gergely Fórizs, Katalin É. Kiss, František Martínek, Ádám Nádasdy, György Rákosi, Péter Rebrus and Radek Šimík and the members of the research group “Implications of endangered Uralic languages for syntactic theory and the history of Hungarian” for comments and advice. I would like to express my gratitude to Ferenc Vörös for graciously sharing his database of Hungarian surnames. I am thankful to the audiences of various talk versions of this paper at presented at ICHL 25, DIGS 23 and within the Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics. I am indebted to the editors and reviewers of *Diachronica* for helpful comments and advice.

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Appendix

1. Non-silent object

<i>bor-(nem)-isz-Ø-</i>	wine-(not)-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘wine- drinker/avoider’	Benkő (1967) ²¹
<i>sza</i>			
<i>ser-(nem)-isz-Ø-</i>	beer-(not)-drink--3SG-OBJ	‘beer- drinker/avoider’	Nagy (1880), ²² forum ²³
<i>sza</i>			
<i>sör-(nem)-isz-Ø-</i>	beer-(not)-drink--3SG-OBJ	‘beer- drinker/avoider’	Farkas (2009), news ^{24,25}
<i>sza</i>			
<i>víz-(nem)-isz-Ø-</i>	water-(not)-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘water- drinker/avoider’	Döbrentei (1842), news, ²⁶ blog ²⁷
<i>sza</i>			
<i>tej-(nem)-isz-Ø-</i>	milk-(not)-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘milk- drinker/avoider’	blog, ²⁸ news ²⁹
<i>sza</i>			
<i>szesz-(nem)-isz- Ø-sza</i>	spirit-(not)-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘alcohol- drinker/avoider’	Toldy (1909), forum ³⁰
<i>vodka-(nem)-isz- Ø-sza</i>	vodka-(not)-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘vodka- drinker/avoider’	forum ³¹
<i>üdösi-isz-Ø-sza</i>	softdrink-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘softdrink- drinker’	forum ³²
<i>tea-isz-Ø-sza</i>	tea-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘tea-drinker’	Terebess (2000)
<i>kávé-isz-Ø-sza</i>	coffee-drink-3SG-OBJ	‘coffee-drinker’	
<i>hús-nem-esz-Ø-i</i>	meat-not-eat-3SG-OBJ	‘vegan’	Simonyi (1913)
<i>hal-nem-esz-Ø-i</i>	fish-not-eat-3SG-OBJ	‘fish-avoider’	Illyés (1964), forum ³³
<i>sajt-(nem)-esz- Ø-i</i>	cheese-(not)-eat-3SG-OBJ	‘cheese- eater/avoider’	Kurmai (2014), forum ³⁴
<i>kolbász-esz-Ø-i</i>	sausage-not-eat-3SG-OBJ	‘sausage-eater’	Sebők (1903)
<i>Ser-főz-Ø-i</i>	beer-brew-3SG-OBJ	‘beer-brewer’	Kujbus (2017), news ³⁵
<i>bor-szeret-Ø-i</i>	wine-love-3SG-OBJ	‘wine-lover’	Bacsó (1906)
<i>láb-a-tör-Ø-i</i>	leg-3SG-break-3SG-OBJ	‘leg-breaker’	news ³⁶
<i>Kar-tör-Ø-i</i>	arm-break-3SG-OBJ	‘arm-breaker’	news ³⁷
<i>bú-felejt-Ø-i</i>	sorrow-forget-3SG-OBJ	‘sorrow-free’	Endrei (1914)

<i>mark-a-pök-Ø-i</i>	palm-3SG-spit-3SG-OBJ	‘overconfident’	Simonyi (1876), Cz&F (1862)
<i>mark-a-köp-Ø-i</i>	palm-3SG-spit-3SG-OBJ	‘overconfident’	Korda (1884)
<i>maga-vet-Ø-i</i>	oneself-throw-3SG-OBJ	‘boastful’	Cz & F (1862–1874)
<i>maga-hány-Ø-</i>	oneself-scatter-3SG-	‘boastful’	Cz & F (1862–1874).
<i>ja-vet-Ø-i</i>	OBJ-throw--3SG-OBJ		
<i>ingyen-les-Ø-i</i>	free-seek-3SG-OBJ	‘freebie-seeker’	Simonyi (1876)
<i>vám-les-Ø-i</i>	toll- seek -3SG-OBJ	‘toll-collector’	Simonyi (1876)
<i>Bér-les-Ø-i</i>	wage-seek-3SG-OBJ	‘eager to receive one’s wage’	Vörös (2009)

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21. First attested in 1434.
 22. 16th C attestation.
 23. <https://forum.index.hu/Article/showArticle?t=1000031>, dated 2016.06.01., all websites were retrieved 2020.02.11. unless otherwise noted.
 24. <https://www.kisalfold.hu/sopron-es-kornyeye/a-sorissza-hrabal-sem-fogalmazhatta-volna-meg-szebben-az-alabbi-soproni-hirdetest-5342212/>, 2017.04.08.
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 26. <https://www.kisalfold.hu/kisalfold/rabakoz/harminc-eve-folyik-a-vizscapbol-5157934/>, 2016.06.30.
 27. https://okos-tojas.blog.hu/2011/03/12/bicebocakat_a_gatra, dated 2011.03.22.
 28. <https://naplo.org/index.php?p=hir&modul=irodalminaplo&hir=5644>, dated 2015.02.16.
 29. <https://www.delmagyar.hu/egyperces/negy-tejissza-fiver-361-eves-2971570/> dated 2012.08.02.
 30. <https://nlc.hu/forum/?id=1057&fid=441&topicid=8365&step=1&page=59>, dated 2003.07.21.
 31. https://forum.index.hu/Article/showArticle?na_order=&na_start=91&na_step=30&t=1001214, 1998.08.20.
 32. <https://hup.hu/szavazasok/20150618/sor-erzekenyseg>, discussion forum entry dated: 2015.06.18.
 33. <https://nlc.hu/forum/?id=1057&fid=441&topicid=104256&step=1&page=135> dated: 2007.06.12.
 34. https://forum.index.hu/Article/showArticle?na_start=27999&na_step=30&t=9048586&na_order=, 2010.11.01.
 35. Szarvas Társadalmi és Szépirodalmi Lap, 1894.08.30 (newspaper article)
 36. Zalai Közlöny, 1932.07.01 (newspaper article)
 37. Az Est, 1914.04.23

<i>pénz-les-Ø-I</i>	money-seek-3SG-OBJ	‘money-grabbing’	Kaffka (1916)
<i>hurka-les-Ø-i</i>	sausage-seek-3SG-OBJ	‘sausage-seeker’	Sebők (1903)
<i>haszon-les-Ø-i</i>	gain-seek-3SG-OBJ	‘self-interested’	Czipott (2016), news ³⁸
<i>világ-dögönyöz-Ø-i</i>	world-punch-3SG-OBJ	‘world-beater’	Simonyi (1876)
<i>ló-dönt-Ø-i</i>	horse-topple-3SG-OBJ	‘strong enough to topple a horse’	Simonyi (1876)
<i>Kár-tesz-Ø-i</i>	damage-do-3SG-OBJ	‘damage-causer’	Vörös (2009)
<i>kár-ment-Ø-i</i>	damage-save-3SG-OBJ	‘damage-mitigator’	news ³⁹
<i>bunda-visz-Ø-i</i>	fur.coat-carry-3SG-OBJ	‘furcoat-wearer’	Kertész (1902); Kiss (1878)
<i>per-veszt-Ø-i</i>	lawsuit-lose-3SG-OBJ	‘lawsuit-loser’	Horger (1931); R. Vozáry (1911); Simonyi (1895). Dessewffy (1847)
<i>minden-tud-Ø</i>	everything-know-3SG	‘all-knowing’	film ⁴⁰
<i>száj-tát-Ø-ja</i>	mouth-open-3SG-OBJ	‘idle’	Simonyi (1895); Horger (1931)
<i>száj-(a)-tát-Ø-i</i>	mouth-3SG-open-3SG-OBJ	‘idle’	Korda (1884); Arany (1851)
<i>fasz-a-rág-Ø-i</i>	prick-3SG-chew-3SG-OBJ	‘miserly’	Benkő (1967); Illésy (1887); Korda (1885); Korda (1884), forum ⁴¹
<i>szar-a-rág-Ø-i</i>	shit-3sg-chew-3SG-OBJ	‘miserly’	forum ⁴²
<i>szar-a-facsar-Ø-i</i>	shit-3sg-squeeze-3SG-OBJ	‘miserly’	Benkő (1967); Bellosics (1890); Szalai (1957), forum ⁴³
<i>sonku-facsar-Ø-i</i>	spent.honeyc.-squeeze-3SG-OBJ	‘miserly’	Bellosics (1890); Kulcsár (1877)
<i>ruha-nyúz-Ø-i</i>	cloth-wear.out-3SG-OBJ	‘cloth-chewer’	Szvorényi (1847)
<i>üreg-jár-Ø-i</i>	hole-walk-3SG-OBJ	‘cloth-outwearer’	Csokonai (1791)
<i>deszka-rág-Ø-i</i>	board-chew-3SG-OBJ	‘board-chewer’	Csokonai (1791)
<i>bőr-rágód-Ø-i</i>	leather-chew-3SG-OBJ	‘leather-chewer’	Csokonai (1791)

2. silent pro object

38. Bolond Istók 1880:75.

39. Bács-Kiskun Megyei Népújság. 1986.07.15.; Lévai Hírlap. 1910.05.28

40. Ralph lezúzza a netet (Ralph Breaks the Internet); Időcsapat (Time Squad).

<i>mindég-pro-kér- Ø-i</i>	always-it-ask-3SG-OBJ	‘demanding’	Endrei (1914)
<i>pro-alig-vár-Ø- ja</i>	it-hardly-wait-3SG-OBJ	‘eager, expectant’	Endrei (1914)
<i>pro- mingyá(r)-kér- Ø-i</i>	it-right.now-ask-3SG-OBJ	‘insists on upfront	En. (1914), Volák (1897), Éles (1898)
<i>pro-rögtön-kér- Ø-I</i>	it-right.now-ask-3SG-OBJ	‘payment’	Kertész (1902), Szűcs (1875)
<i>pro-tesz-Ø-i</i>	it-do-3SG-OBJ	‘doer’	Simonyi (1876)
<i>pro-hányja-vet- Ø-i</i>	it-scatter-3SG-OBJ -throw-3SG-OBJ	‘careless’	Benkő (1967)
<i>pro-most-kezd- Ø-i</i>	it-now-start-3SG-OBJ	‘procrastinator’	Kertész (1902)
<i>pro-les-Ø-i</i>	it-observe.closely-3SG- OBJ	‘peeper’	Kertész (1902)
<i>pro-hátul-kezd- Ø-i</i>	it-at.the.end-start-3SG- OBJ	‘Jewish (reads from	Kertész (1902) right to left)’
<i>pro-meg-mond- Ø-ja</i>	it-PRT-say-3SG-OBJ	‘outspoken’	Vörös (2009)
<i>pro-meg-ad-Ø-ja</i>	it-PRT-give-3SG-OBJ	‘pays her dues’	Vörös (2009) ⁴⁴
3. intransitive (no object)			
<i>ingyér-ád-Ø</i>	for.free-give-3SG	‘munificent’	Simonyi (1878); Kertész (1902)
<i>jól-jár-(t)-Ø</i>	well-go-(PST)-3SG	‘did well, had luck’	Nagy (1880), En. (1914), Vörös (2009)
<i>jö-tt-Ø-men- t-Ø</i>	come-PST-3SG-go-PST-3SG	‘rootless newcomer’	Benkő (1967) ⁴⁵
<i>mingyá-meg- lesz</i>	soon -PRT-be.FUT.3SG	‘will be ready soon’	Simonyi (1878)
<i>fesl-ik</i>	fray-3SG	‘inept shoemaker’	Kertész (1902); Ihász (1881) ⁴⁶

41. „Tyúktartós és tenyésztős közösség” Facebook-group, 2021.07.29. (collected by: György Rákosi); also shortened as *faszari*.

42. <https://kritikustomeg.org/user/13605/lil-martin/kommentek/>, dated: 2010.10.30.

43. http://enmegmondnam.blogspot.com/2010/01/blog-post_22.html, dated: 2010.01.22.

44. Other potential candidates: *Csórja* (steals it), *Hozza* (brings it), *Járja* (traverses it), *Tudja* (knows it), *Engedi* (lets it), *Keresi* (looks for it), *Lesi* (observes it closely/furtively), *Leveszi* (takes it down), *Méri* (measures it/portions it out), *Szedi* (collects it), *Veszi* (takes it).

<i>se-hall-Ø-se-</i>	neither-hear-3SG-neither-	‘reckless’	Weöres (1955)
<i>lát-Ø</i>	see-3SG		
<i>nem-hisz-Ø</i>	not-believe-3SG	‘non-believer’	Kubinyi (1885); Simonyi (1909) ⁴⁷

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45. Cf. also *rossz-kor-jö-tt* (wrong-at-come-PST-3SG) ‘came at wrong time’. Veress (1900); *későngyűtt* (nickname) – *későn-gyű-tt* (late-come-pst-3sg) ‘came late, latecomer’. Csomár (1881).

46. Cf. also *Reszket* (nickname) – *reszket-Ø* (shiver-3SG) ‘shivers’, *Fázik* (nickname) – *fáz-ik* (be.cold-3SG) ‘is cold’. Szentmiklósy (1901).

47. Attested in the 13th century. For several similar examples, cf. Kubinyi (1885) and Simonyi (1909).

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Résumé

L'interdépendance du cas accusatif et de l'accord d'objet a radicalement changé au cours de l'histoire des langues ougriennes. Alors qu'en proto-ougrien on trouvait une interdépendance totale (avec la topicalité comme trait d'union), cette connexion a perdu du terrain dans les langues ob-ougriennes existantes (mansi et khanty) et a tout à fait disparu du hongrois (médiéval tardif et moderne). Dans cet article, j'introduis de nouvelles preuves empiriques (des surnoms et des noms de famille qui conservent des caractéristiques syntaxiques archaïques) pour une étape intermédiaire du hongrois ancien (qui est antérieure à nos premiers documents écrits) où l'attribution du cas était encore régi par la topicalité, bien que l'accord d'objet fût déjà affecté par la spécificité. En plus de donner un aperçu d'une étape moins connue du hongrois, mes découvertes contribuent également à une compréhension plus approfondie du lien entre le cas grammatical, l'accord syntaxique et la structure de l'information dans le domaine ougrien et ailleurs.

Zusammenfassung

Die Interdependenz von Akkusativ und Objektkongruenz hat sich im Laufe der Geschichte der ugrischen Sprachen drastisch verändert. Während Protoungarisch eine volle Interdependenz, vermittelt durch Topikalität, aufwies, hat sich in den obugrischen Sprachen (Manisch und Chantisch) diese Abhängigkeit gelockert; im Spät- bis Neuungarischen ist sie vollständig

unterbrochen. In dieser Studie stelle ich neue, bisher nicht vorgestellte empirische Belege (Spitznamen und Familiennamen, die archaische syntaktische Merkmale bewahren) für eine Zwischenstufe des Frühungarischen vor, in der Kasuszuordnung noch eine Funktion der Topikalität blieb, während Objektkongruenz bereits eine Funktion der Definitheit war. Meine Ergebnisse geben nicht nur Einblicke in eine bisher unbekannte Phase des Ungarischen, sondern tragen auch zu einem tieferen Verständnis des Zusammenhangs zwischen Kasus, Kongruenz und Informationsstruktur im Ugrischen und darüber hinaus bei.

Address for correspondence

Tamás Halm
Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics
Benczúr utca 33
1068 BUDAPEST
Hungary

halm.tamas@gmail.com



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7936-037X>

Publication history

Date received: 21 March 2023

Date accepted: 22 August 2023

Published online: 25 April 2024