

Argument configurationality and discourse configurationality in Old Icelandic

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Two uses of the term 'configurationality'

- 'Configurationality' as a property of language has attracted much attention since early work (e.g. Hale, 1982, 1983)
- Now we can distinguish between two different types:
 - **Argument configurationality (AC):**
to what extent specific grammatical functions are associated with particular c-structure positions (Nordlinger, 1998)
 - **Discourse configurationality (DC):**
to what extent specific discourse functions are associated with particular c-structure positions (Kiss, 1995; Mycock, 2006; Gazdik et al., 2011)

Two uses of the term 'configurationality'

- Many contributions focus on either AC or DC
- No general consensus on the relationship between the two
- Some view AC and DC as alternatives spanning one typological dimension (e.g. Vilkuna, 1989; Snijders, 2015)
- But some empirical evidence to suggest they are independent:
 - Languages which are not AC but show DC, e.g. East Cree (Junker, 2004) and Warlpiri (Legate, 2002)
 - Languages which exhibit neither AC nor DC, e.g. Quechua (Muysken, 1995) and Fijian (Aranovich, 2013)
 - Languages which exhibit some level of both AC and DC, e.g. Japanese and Korean (Li & Thompson, 1976; Saito, 1985)

This paper

- I discuss AC and DC with respect to Old Icelandic (OldIce, 1150-1350), which provides an interesting case study
- Old Norse/Icelandic has been claimed to be non-argument-configurational (Faarlund, 1990)
 - though criticised (Platzack, 1991; Rögnvaldsson, 1995)
- Recent work on Early Germanic indicates that information structure (IS) drives word order, and DC has been claimed for some varieties:
 - Early English (Trips & Fuß, 2009)
 - Old High German (Petrova & Hinterhölzl, 2010)

This paper

- I examine AC and DC in Oldlce from the perspective of LFG
- Flexibility of c-structure allows for a more nuanced approach to the data, which indicates a mixture of endocentricity and lexocentricity
- Parallel architecture well suited for capturing AC and DC independently:
 - AC: correspondence between c-structure positions and GFs at f-structure
 - DC: correspondence between c-structure positions and IS-attributes at i-structure (e.g. Butt & King, 1996, 1997)

This paper

- Corpus data from IcePaHC (Wallenberg et al., 2011) and additionally from MIcePaHC¹
- I make three claims about OldIcelandic:
 1. at c-structure, endocentric functional projection and a lexocentric S; no VP-constituent
 2. non-argument-configurational: grammatical functions not associated with specific c-structure positions
 3. some DC: c-structure position in the midfield which is exclusively associated with topics
(midfield has been neglected; attention on prefield)

¹MIcePaHC is an extended Penn-style treebank of Old Icelandic saga texts currently under development: <https://github.com/antonkarl/micepahc>

Oldlce clause structure and argument configurationality

- Faarlund (1990) provides very broad evidence for his non-(argument-)configurationality claim:
 - lack of a VP-constituent
 - 'null' arguments
 - absence of expletives
 - discontinuous 'NP's and 'PP's
- ⇒ in line with early work (e.g. Hale, 1982, 1983)

OldIcelandic clause structure and argument configurationality

- The criticism of Faarlund's claim had two motivations (Platzack, 1991; Rögnvaldsson, 1995)
- Move towards all languages being 'underlyingly' (argument) configurational, regardless of surface order
⇒ Claim dismissed on theory-internal grounds
- If OldIcelandic is non-configurational, then we must have radical change to configurationality by Modern Icelandic
⇒ Claim dismissed on diachronic grounds
(all or nothing view of configurationality)

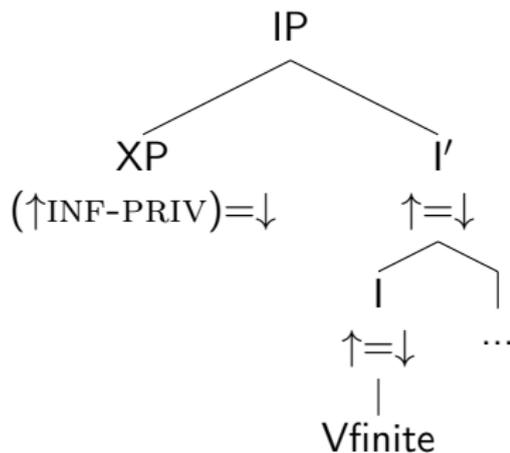
Oldlce clause structure and argument configurationality

- It seems reasonable to revisit the claim now from the perspective of LFG
- LFG still allows for (shades of) non-configurationality (Nordlinger, 1998; Bresnan et al., 2015)
⇒ Narrower set of criteria (Austin & Bresnan, 1996)
- Recent diachronic studies have shown that gradual growth of structure/shift towards increased configurationality is possible and indeed evidenced for North Germanic (e.g. Börjars et al., 2016; Booth et al., 2017; Booth & Schätzle, 2019)

Before examining how GFs map to c-structure positions, we have to be clear what those positions actually are...

How is the c-structure of OldIce organised?

- Evidence for endocentricity at clause-level, with an obligatory functional IP projection, headed by the finite verb in I (Booth & Schätzle, 2019):
 - Finite verb is positionally restricted: mostly V2 (some V1)
 - Prefield is IS-privileged (more on this later...)



How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- Evidence for lexocentricity: word order freedom in the midfield
⇒ No VP constituent (part of Faarlund's original claim)
- Original observations are supported by the corpus data:
 - Absence of VP-pronominalisation
 - Absence of VP-fronting
 - Absence of VP-clefting
- But this type of negative evidence is notoriously problematic in historical linguistics (e.g. Fischer, 2004)

Instead, sensible to look for **positive** evidence to support the absence of a VP-constituent...

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- Observation 1: relative order of verb and its object is flexible (Hróarsdóttir, 2000)²

- (1) a. en þeir vildu og hafa **orð þeirra**
but they wished also have word their
'But they wished also to have their word' (1150, Homiliubok.473)
- b. frá þessum degi skal eg aldrei **þín kona** vera
from this day shall I never your woman be
'from this day I shall never be your woman'
(1350, Viga.3654)
- (2) a. Nú munum vér lofa **þig**
now will we praise you
'Now we will praise you' (1150, Homiliubok.1260)
- b. Eigi mun eg **það** gera
NEG will I that do
'I will not do that' (1350, Finnboga.232)

²I look at sentences with a finite AUX and a nonfinite transitive verb in order to abstract away from V2

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- Corpus data confirms that both are robustly attested (preference for $V_{\text{nonfinite-Obj}}$)

$V_{\text{nonfinite-Obj}}$		$\text{Obj-}V_{\text{nonfinite}}$		Total	
<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
2590	72%	986	28%	3576	100%

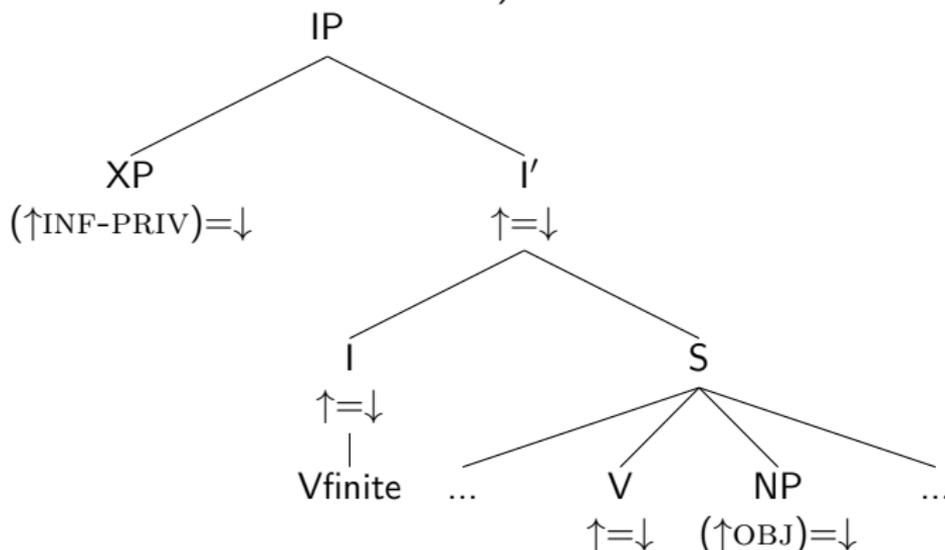
Table 1: Relative ordering of nonfinite lexical verb and object in Old Icelandic (1150-1350).

How is the c-structure of OldIce organised?

- Previously, this flexibility has been captured in terms of endocentricity:
 - VP-constituent whose head-parameter is unspecified (Rögnvaldsson, 1996)
 - an 'underlying' left-headed VP, with extensive movement to account for O-V orders (Hróarsdóttir, 2000)

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- We can capture this flexibility in terms of a lexocentric S, which is complement of I (cf. Sells, 1998 on modern Icelandic; Choi, 1999 on modern German):³



³The functional annotation on the OBJ NP is just for clarity here; as I come back to later there is good reason to assume that c-structure positions are not exclusively associated with GFs in Old Icelandic

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- Observation 2: no VP-fronting, but single elements from the verbal complex can occur in the prefield ('Stylistic Fronting', Maling, 1990):

- (3)
- a. **Svikið** hefir þú oss Egill.
betrayed have you we Egill
'You have betrayed us, Egill.' (1350, Bandamenn.103)
- b. **Vera** munu þar nokkurir óvíglegri
be may there some more-unwarrior-like
en þú.
than you
'There may be some more unwarrior-like than you.'
(1450, Vilhjalmur.99.2040)
- c. **Upp** mun nú gefin sökin við þig, Halli.
PTCL may now given case.DEF with you, Halli
'One must now declare the case against you, Halli.'
(1275, Morkin.1158)

How is the c-structure of OldIce organised?

- Observation 3: intervening constituents
- Modern Icelandic: a sentence adverb cannot intervene between a (nonfinite) verb and its object:
 - (4) *V_{nonfinite}-**ADV**-OBJ
 - (5) *Hann mun stinga **sjaldan** smjörinu í vasann.
he will put seldom butter.DEF in pocket.DEF
'He will seldom put butter in the pocket.'
- This has been taken as evidence for a VP-constituent in Modern Icelandic (Kaplan & Zaenen, 1989)

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- In OldIcelandic a sentence adverb can intervene:

(6) $V_{\text{nonfinite}}$ -**ADV**-OBJ

- Höfðu þeir Hallvarður haft **jafnan** andvirði.
had they Hallvarður had always value
'They and Hallvarður had always had value'
(1250, Egils.901)
- En eigi munuð þér bana **svo** öðrum birni
but NEG will you kill so other bear
'But you will not kill the other bear so.'
(1350, Finnboga.855)
- en ef hann deyrr muntu eiga **aldrei** landvært
but if he dies will-you own never land-rights
'But if he dies you will never own the land-rights'
(1350, Viga.1578)

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- And this is not just reserved for V-...-O order:

(7) OBJ-**ADV**-V_{nonfinite}

- En griðungurinn vildi hana **ávallt** ofan færa.
but bull.DEF wished she always down bring
'But the bull wished to bring her down always'
(1210, Jartein.436)
- og fyrir það vil eg þig **svo** af höndum leysa
and for that wish I you so of hands release
'And for that I wish to free you by the hands so'
(1275, Laxdæla.4260)
- þá skal eg þig **aldrei** drepa
then shall I you never kill
'The I shall never kill you' (1300, Njals.10029)

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- Tempo-spatial adverbs also show interesting behaviour
- In Modern Icelandic, these occur after the VP and cannot precede it in the midfield (Thráinsson, 2007):

(8) Jón hefur lokið þessu **hér/inni/nú/þar/þá**.
John has finished this here/inside/now/there/then
(Thráinsson, 2007, 39)

(9) *Jón hefur **hér/inni/nú/þar/þá** lokið þessu.
John has here/inside/now/there/then finished this
(Thráinsson, 2007, 39)

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

- In OldIcelandic, tempo-spatial adverbs commonly intervene between (nonfinite) verb and object in the midfield:

- (10)
- a. og hafði hann grætt þar fé.
and had he gained there wealth
'and he had gained wealth there'
(1275, Laxdæla.7759)
 - b. Skulum vér það mál þá upp taka
shall we that case then up take
'We shall then take up that case'
(1300, Njals.8839)
 - c. og má ég nú öngva dvöl hér eiga.
and may I now no stay here own
'And I may now have no stay here'
(1275, Morkin.1403)

How is the c-structure of OldIcelandic organised?

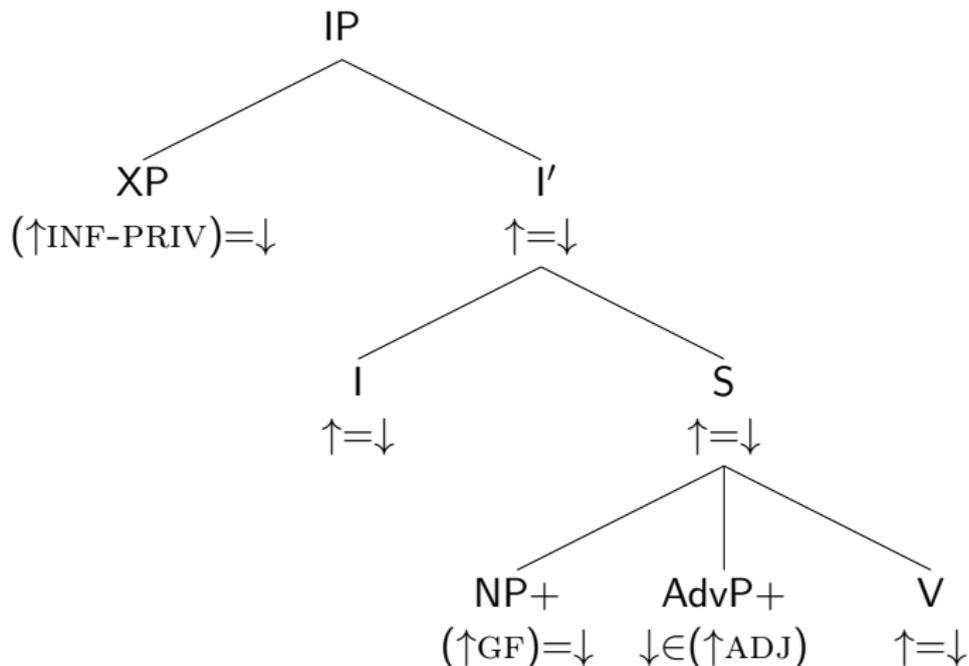
- Strikingly, there are also instances where a subject intervenes between verb and object in the midfield:

- (11)
- a. og vildi sitt mál **hvortveggi** hafa
and wished their-own case each have
'and each wished to have their own case'
(1310, Grettir.263)
- b. Mun það **engi maður** mistrúa
will that no man mistrust
'No man will mistrust that' (1350, Bandamanna.310)
- c. Mundu það **sumir menn** mæla í mínu landi
would that some men say in my land
að...
that
'Some men would say that in my land that...'
(1350, Finnboga.444)

- Examples involve a quantified subject > I'll return to this
- This order is not attested in IcePaHC data for 1900-2008

How is the c-structure of OldIce organised?

- Capturing lexocentricity in the midfield:
⇒ S, under which order is relatively free (more later)



To what extent is Oldlce argument-configurational?

- No VP; subjects and objects can be sisters under S
 - Under S, subject, object and verb exhibit flexible order
 - Both subjects and objects can occur in SpecIP (under the right IS conditions)
- ⇒ Neither SUBJ nor OBJ is exclusively associated with a particular structural position
- ⇒ Oldlce exhibits non-configurationality with respect to arguments

Old Icelandic and discourse configurationality

- What is the status of Old Icelandic with respect to DC?
⇒ Is there any c-structure position which can be shown to exclusively map to a particular discourse function?
- I assume a separate level of representation for IS, i-structure (Butt & King, 1996; King, 1997)
- Four-way division (cf. Vallduví 1992; Choi 1999):

	[+New]	[−New]
[+Prominent]	FOCUS	TOPIC
[−Prominent]	COMPLETIVE INFORMATION	BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- COMPLETIVE INFORMATION is new information which is not prominent in the discourse
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION is old information which clarifies the relation between what is already known and the new information introduced in the sentence

SpecIP and information structure

- Germanic V2 language: close relationship between prefield and topicality (Holmberg, 2015)
- Claim for OldIcelandic: prefield typically hosts topical constituents (Kossuth, 1978; Faarlund, 2004)
- In line with IS accounts for early Germanic: finite verb serves as boundary between topic and comment (Hinterhölzl & Petrova, 2010; Booth et al., 2017):

(12) *Topic* V_{finite} *Comment*

⇒ Is the prefield (SpecIP) an exclusive topic position?

SpecIP and information structure

- Non-topical constituents can also occur in SpecIP
⇒ Subjects of presentational sentences (cannot be topics)

- (13) a. **Björn** er þar ok á því landi
bear is there also on that land
'There is also a bear in that land...' (Kgs 30.10)
- b. Þá fór Ólafur konungur út til Stokksunda og
then went Ólafur king out til Stokksund and
komst þar eigi út. **Kastali** var fyrir austan
managed there NEG out castle is before west
sundið en her manns fyrir sunnan.
strait.DEF and host man.GEN before south
'Then King Ólafur went out to Stokksund and didn't
manage to get out there. There was a castle to the west of
the strait and a host of men to the south.' (Hkr II.9.3)

- (14) a. **Maður** hét Bjarni Grímólfsson, breiðfirskur
man was-called Bjarni Grímólfsson of-breiðfjörður
maður.
man
'There was a man called Bjarni Grímólfsson who was from
Breiðfjörður.' (1250, Eirik.7)
- b. **Sá maður** bjó á Herjólfnsnesi er Þorkell hét.
that man lived at Herjólfnsnes REL Þorkell was-called
'That man lived at Herjólfnsnes who was called Þorkell.'
(1250, Eirik.3)

- Also contrastive focus elements can occupy SpecIP:

(15) (Topic of previous discourse is some other woman...)

- a. **Halldóra** hét kona
Halldóra was-called woman
'There was a (different) woman called Halldóra'
(1250, Sturlunga.412.803)

(16) (Topic of previous discourse is King Harald and an Earl...)

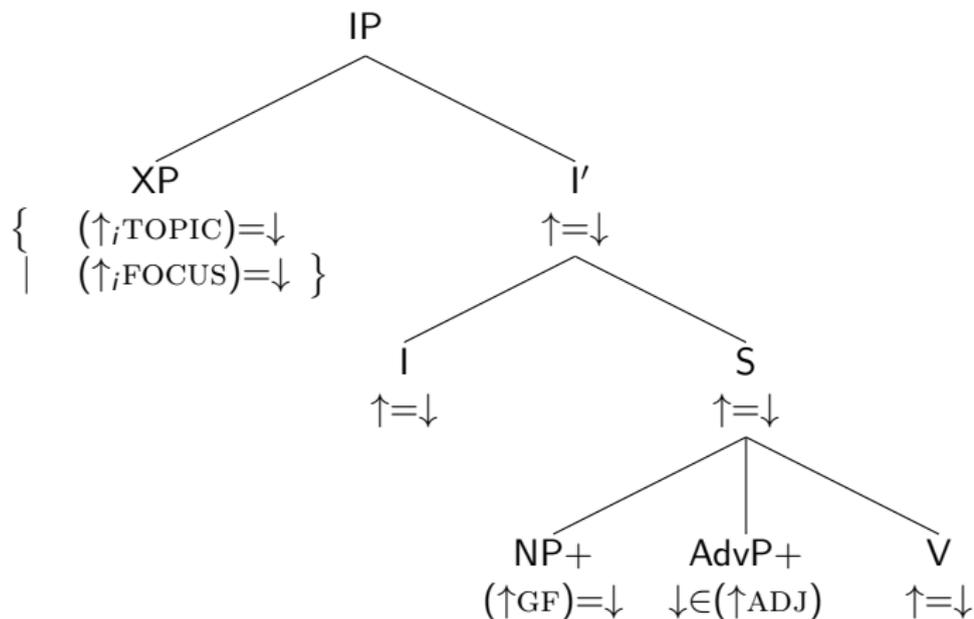
- a. **Friðrekur** hét sá maður er merkið
Friðrekur was-called that man REL banner.DEF
bar.
carried
'The (other) man who carried the banner was called
Friðrekur' (1275, Morkin.2040)

- A more explicit example of contrastive focus in SpecIP:

(17) Þá helgum vér Guði musteri í hjörtum órum
then hallow we god.DAT temple.ACC in hearts our
... **Níu englasveitum** helgum vér musteri ...
nine.DAT host-angels.DAT hallow we temple.ACC
'Then we hallow to God a temple in our hearts... To nine
host angels we (also) hallow a temple...'
(1150, Homiliubok.885)

SpecIP and information structure

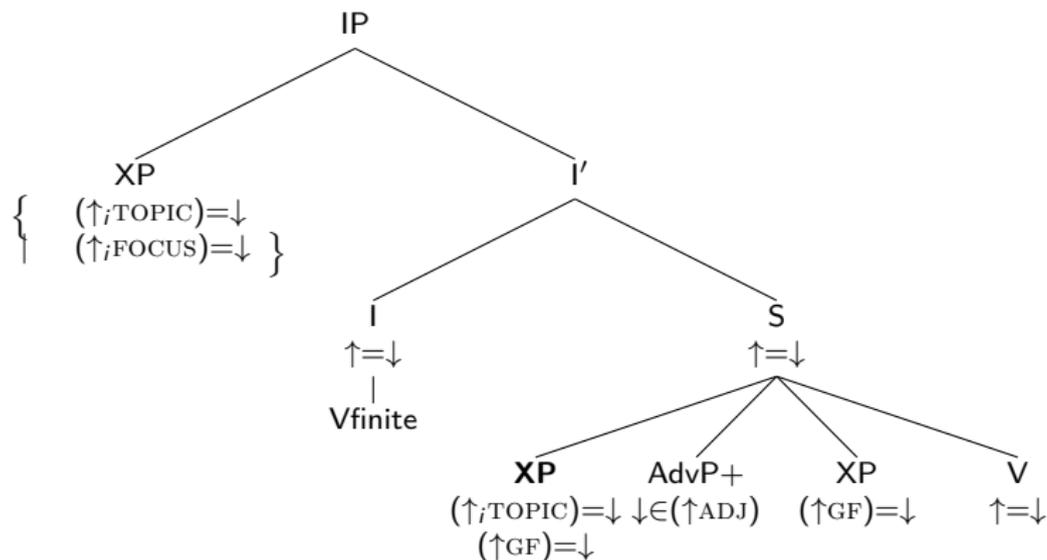
- SpecIP can host TOPIC or FOCUS:



- SpecIP is not exclusively associated with a discourse function
 \implies No evidence for DC here

The midfield and information structure

- But there is evidence for DC in the midfield
- A position which is exclusively associated with TOPIC, before canonical position for discourse adverbs



The midfield and information structure

- In presentational sentences with a midfield subject (non-topic) and a discourse adverb (e.g. *nú* 'now', *svo* 'so', *þar* 'there', *þá* 'then'), subject always follows the adverb:

(18) V_{finite}-ADV-SUBJ_{nontopic}

- a. Voru þar **tvö skip** í búnaði.
were there two ships in preparations
'There were two ships in the preparations.'
(1250, Sturlunga.408.710)
- b. Grettir fór nú norður í Voga og var þar
Grettir went now north in Vogi and were there
allmikið fjölmenni.
all-great crowd
'Grettir now travelled northwards into Vogi and there was there a very great crowd.' (1310, Grettir.896)
- c. Komu þá **lekar** að skipinu.
came then holes at ship.DEF
'Then came holes into the ship' (1310, Grettir.407)

The midfield and information structure

- By contrast, there are no attested examples of a configuration where the subject occurs before an adverb in the midfield:

(19) ?V_{finite} - SUBJ_{nontopic} - ADV

(Though this is negative evidence!)

The midfield and information structure

- In sentences with a quantified argument (non-topic) and a discourse adverb in the midfield, the quantified argument always follows the adverb:

(20) $V_{\text{finite}}\text{-ADV-SUBJ/OBJ}_{\text{nontopic}}$

- og flytja þá fram **hvorir** sannindi sín
and deliver then forth each truth their-own
'and each one then delivers their truth'
(1250, Thetubrot.89)
- Stukku þá **marginn** menn í burt.
ran then many men away
'Many men then ran away' (1310, Grettir.1897)
- Grettir segir þá **allan áskilnað** þeirra.
Grettir says then all disagreement their
'Grettir then tell all of their disagreement'
(1310, Grettir.287)

The midfield and information structure

- And this can now account for our earlier examples with a quantified subject intervening between object and verb
⇒ Object is in each case a TOPIC:

(21) V_{finite}-OBJ_{topic}-**SUBJ**

- a. og vildi sitt mál **hvortveggi** hafa
and wished their-own case each have
'and each wished to have their own case'
(1310, Grettir.263)
- b. Mun það **engi maður** mistrúa
will that no man mistrust
'No man will mistrust that' (1350, Bandamanna.310)
- c. Mundu það **sumir menn** mæla í mínu landi
would that some men say in my land
'Some men would say that in my land'
(1350, Finnboga.444)

The midfield and information structure

- Further evidence that pre-adverbial position in the midfield is exclusively associated with TOPIC:
 - Discourse adverbs appear to act as information-structural boundary between topic and non-topic

(22) Vfinite *Topic* **ADV** *non – topic*

- a. Þiggja þau þar ágærar gjafir.
receive they there excellent gifts
'They receive there excellent gifts.'
(1350, Finnbogi.661.2086)
- b. Fór hún síðan til nauta
went she then to boat-sheds
'She then went to some boat-sheds' (1210, Jarlein.60)
- c. Kenndu þá síðan rosknir menn
recognised him then full-grown men
'Then full-grown men recognised him'
(1210, Jarlein.30)

The midfield and information structure

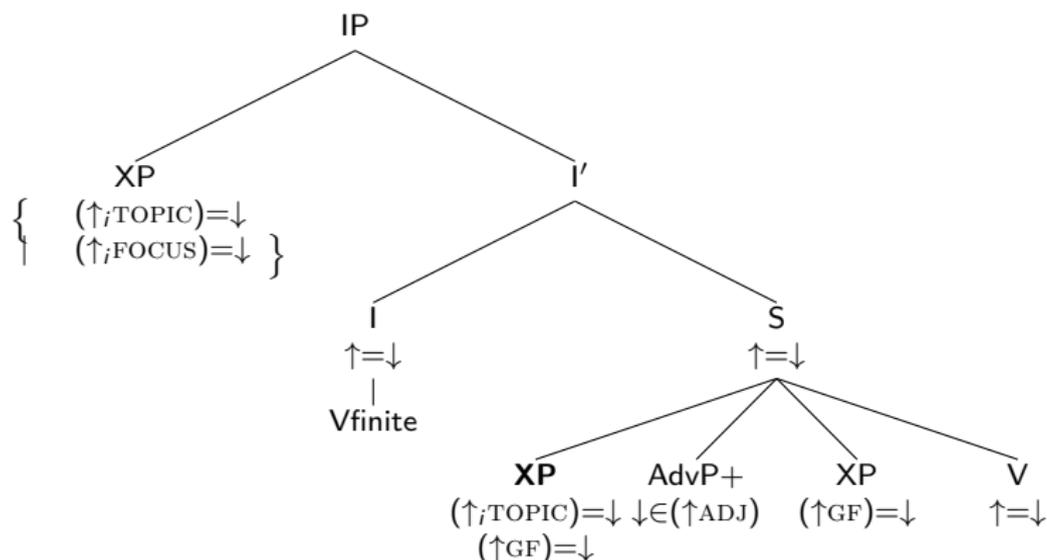
- This is not just an effect of pronominal/definite-marked arguments

⇒ These can occur later if they are non-topical:

- (23)
- a. Kom þá og **faðirinn sveinsins**
came then also father.DEF boy.DEF.GEN
'Then came the boy's father' (1210, Jarlein.128)
 - b. og verður þar **hin snarpasta atlaga**
and becomes there DEF hardest attack
'There became the hardest attack there'
(1260, Jomsvikingar.573)
 - c. Líður nú af **nóttin**
draws not off night.DEF
'The night now draws on' (1310, Grettir.111)
 - d. Kom honum síðan **það** í hug að...
came him then that in mind that
'It then came to his mind that...' (1210, Jarlein.30)

The midfield and information structure

- OldIcelandic exhibits some DC
 - ⇒ Designated topic position in the midfield
(cf. Frey, 2004 on Modern German)



Summary

- Oldlce c-structure exhibits a mixture of endocentricity and lexocentricity (IP, where I takes an S complement)
 - Quite a common combination: some second position phenomenon and post-second freedom, e.g. Warlpiri (Austin & Bresnan, 1996), Wambaya (Nordlinger, 1998)
- Little evidence for argument configurationality
 - So what does identify grammatical relations?
 - Likely a complex interaction between case and lexical semantics (Schätzle, 2018)
- Some evidence for discourse configurationality
 - Not prefield (which has attracted most interest to date)
 - Designated topic position within midfield
 - More research needed on relation between c-structure and i-structure → need IS-annotated data

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