Vegans, Teetotalers, and the Decoupling of Case and Agreement in Old Hungarian[1]

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Main observations & claims

- Empirical focus: personal names (epithets, nicknames or nickname-derived family names) which preserve an otherwise unattested archaic syntactic pattern
- Non-casemarked object followed by a verb carrying the object agreement suffix:

(1) *bor-(nem)-isz-sza*
wine-not-drink-OBJ.3SG
'wine-lover/teetotaler', lit. 'drinks (not) wine'

(2) *hús-(nem)-esz-i*
meat-not-eat-OBJ.3SG
'meat-eater / meat-avoider, lit. eats (not) meat'

Main observations & claims (cont.)

- I argue that these fossils preserve a stage of Old Hungarian where
  - only topicalized objects received accusative case (just like in Eastern Mansi and reconstructed Proto-Ugric), with non-topicalized objects having nominative case
  - verbal agreement was the function of definiteness (as opposed to topicality) (just like in Modern Hungarian): definite DPs trigger object agreement on the verb
- These fossils represent the missing piece in the puzzle of how agreement and case assignment was separated from topicality in the history of Hungarian

Main observations & claims (cont.)

- Topicality, agreement and accusative case assignment in the Ugric languages:

	***Proto-Ugric, E Mansi, *Early Old Hungarian[1]**	**E & N Khanty, N Mansi[1]**	**?**	**Late Old to Modern Hungarian**
Object agr. is a function of:	Topicality	Topicality	**?**	Definiteness
Acc. case assignment is function of:	Topicality Objecthood	Objecthood	**?**	Objecthood

[1]: É. Kiss (2020)

Main observations & claims (cont.)

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	***Proto-Ugric, E Mansi, *Early Old Hungarian[1]**	**E & N Khanty, N Mansi[1]**	***Mid Old Hungarian**	**Late Old to Modern Hungarian**
Object agr. is a function of:	Topicality	Topicality	Definiteness	Definiteness
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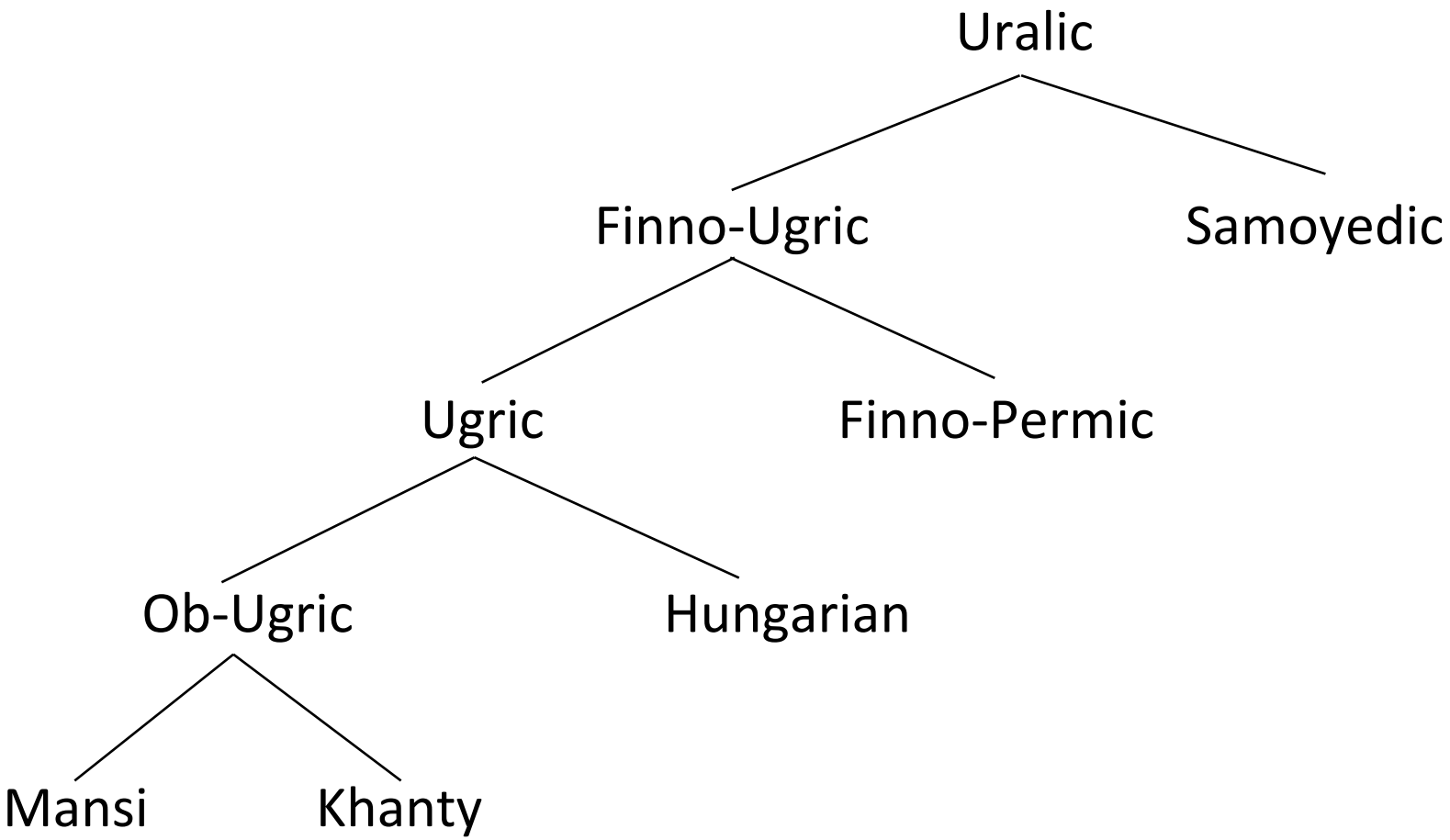
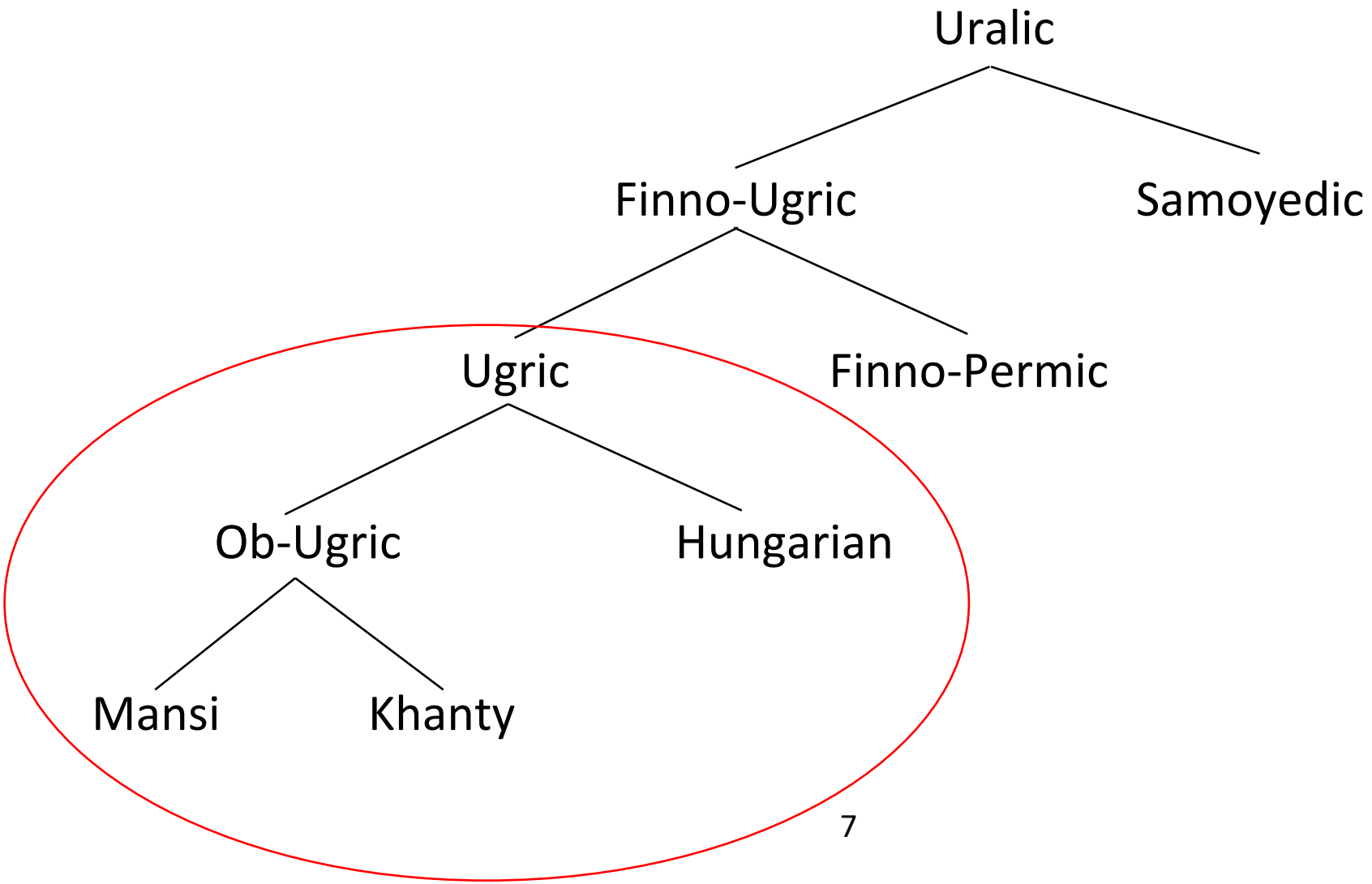
[1]: É. Kiss (2020)

Uralic languages: Traditional classification



Uralic languages: Traditional classification



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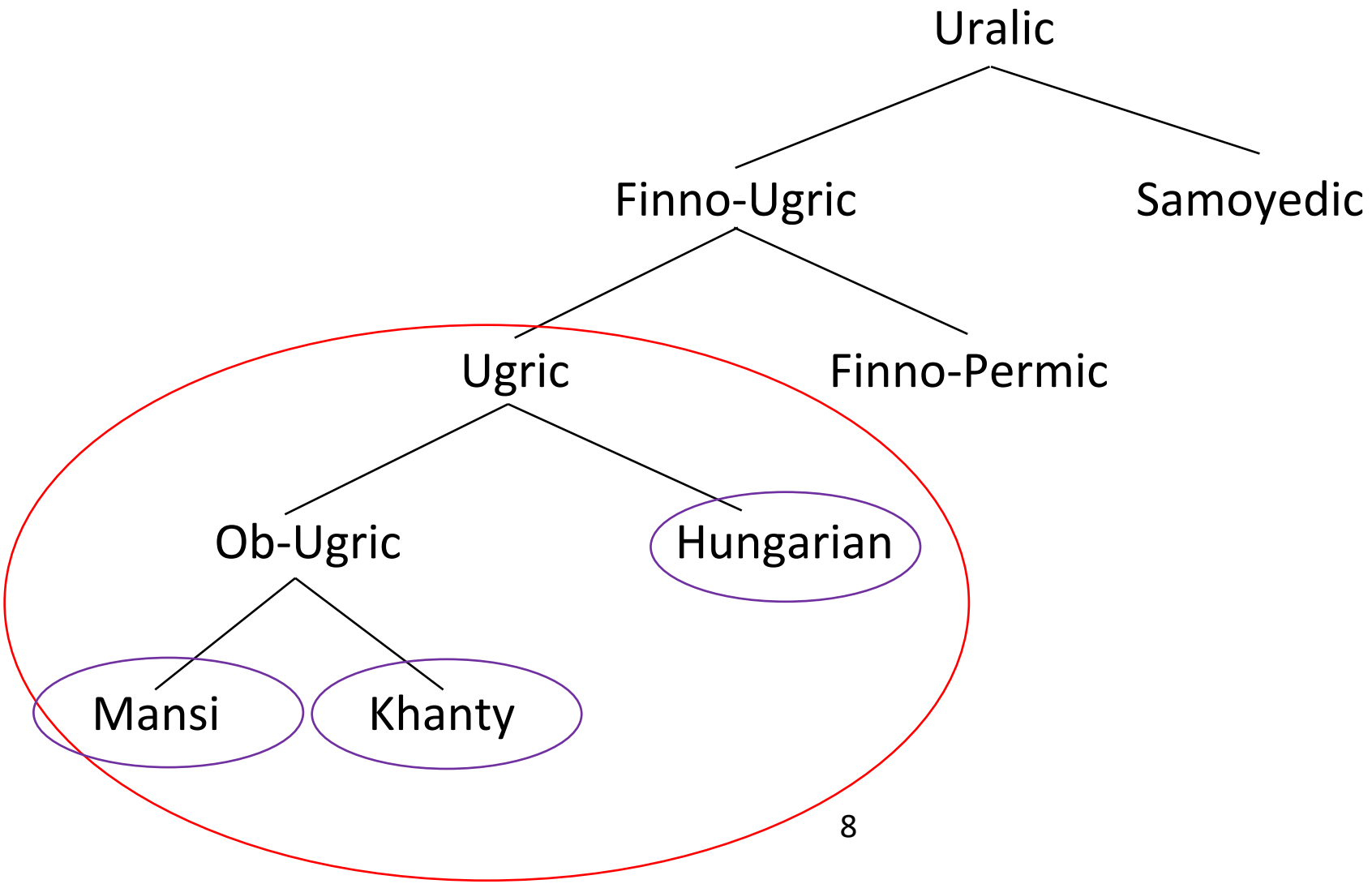
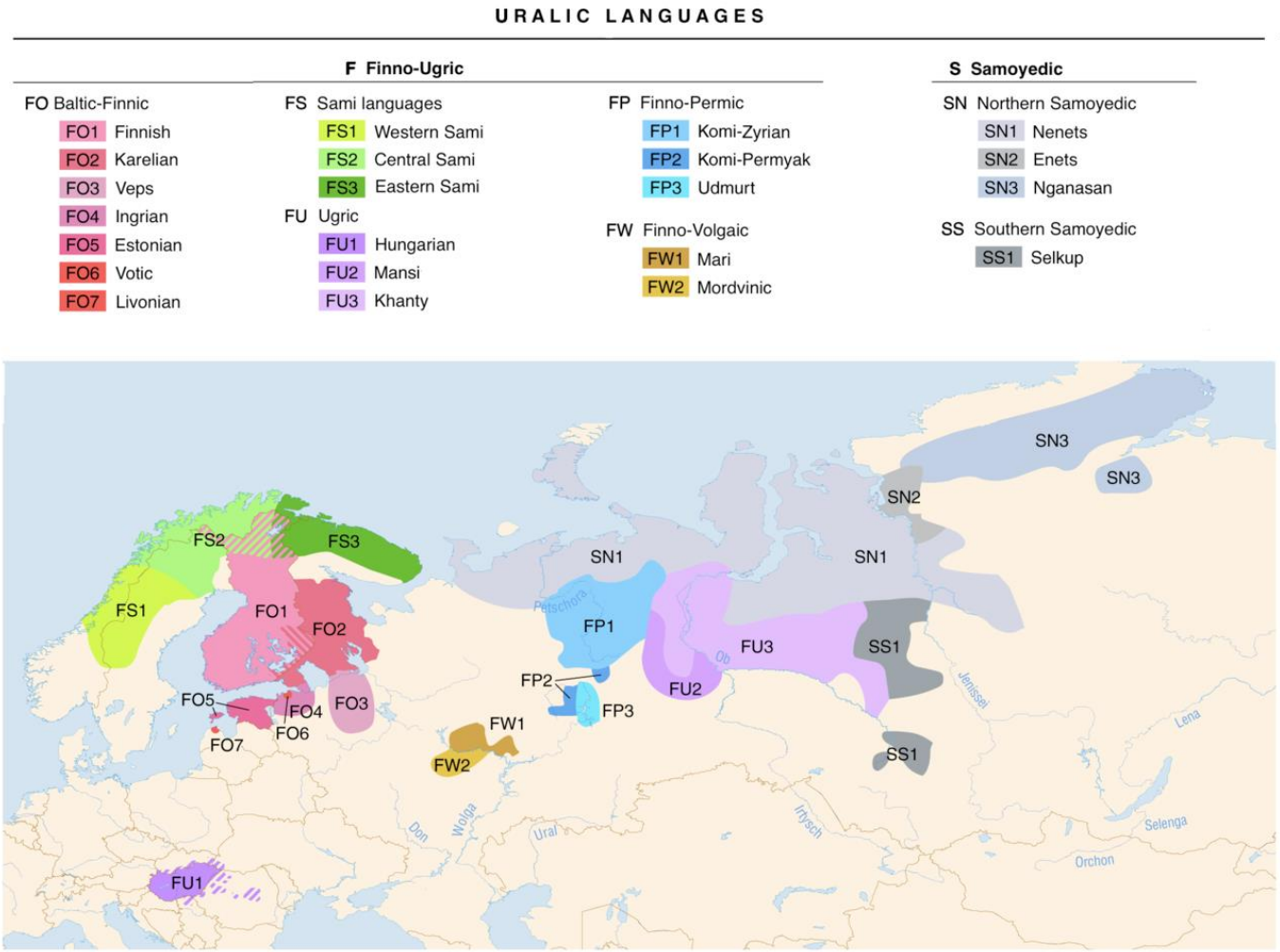
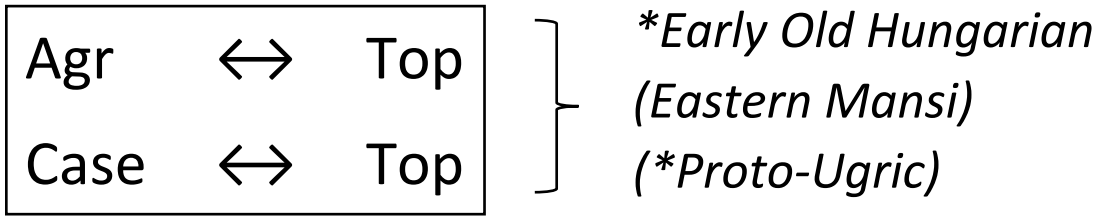


Uralic languages: Geography



source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Linguistic_map_of_the_Uralic_languages.png

What exactly happened btw *Early OH and Late OH?



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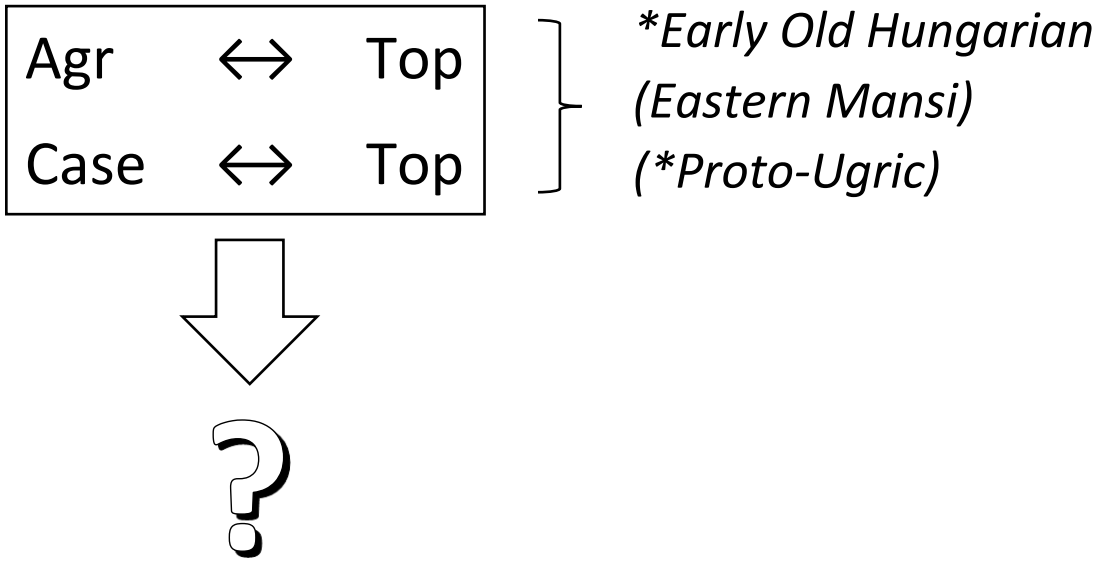

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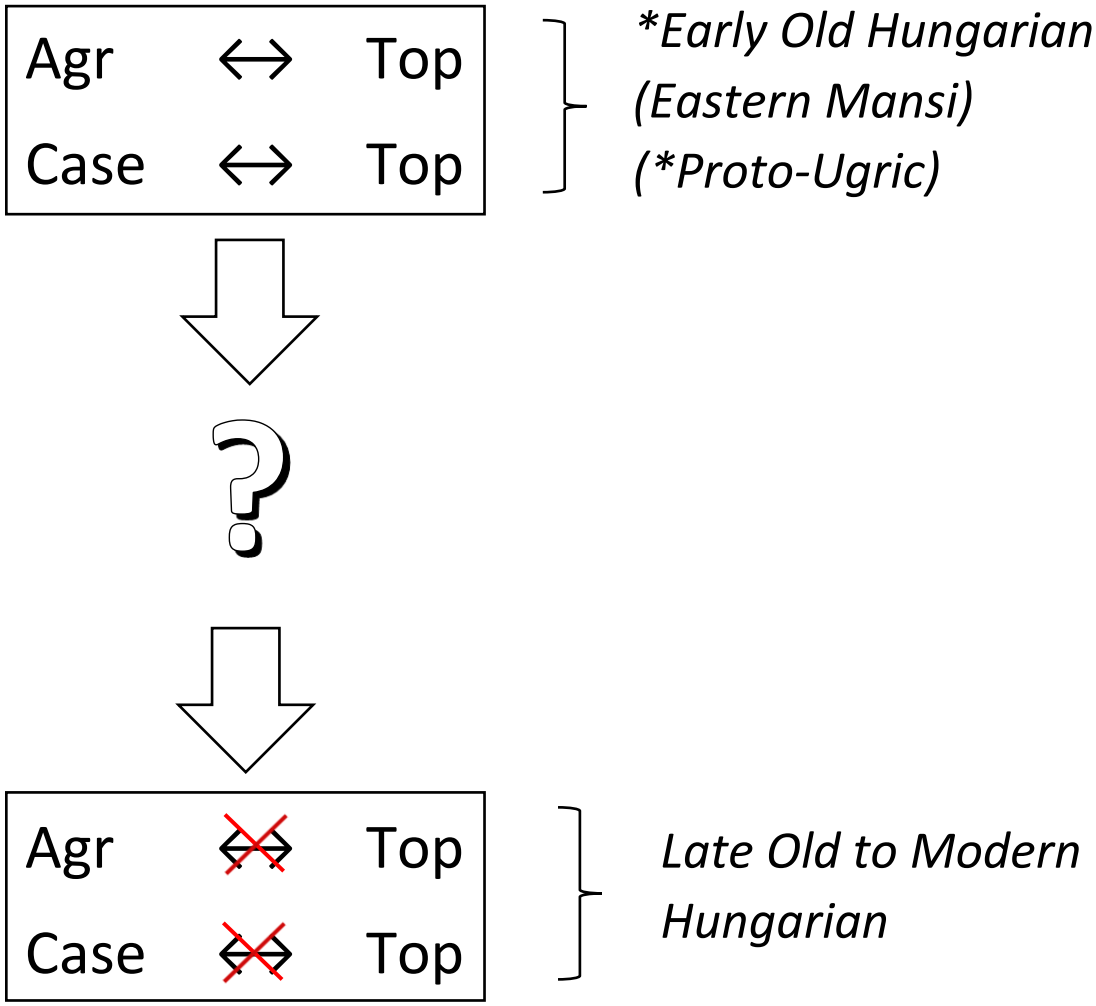
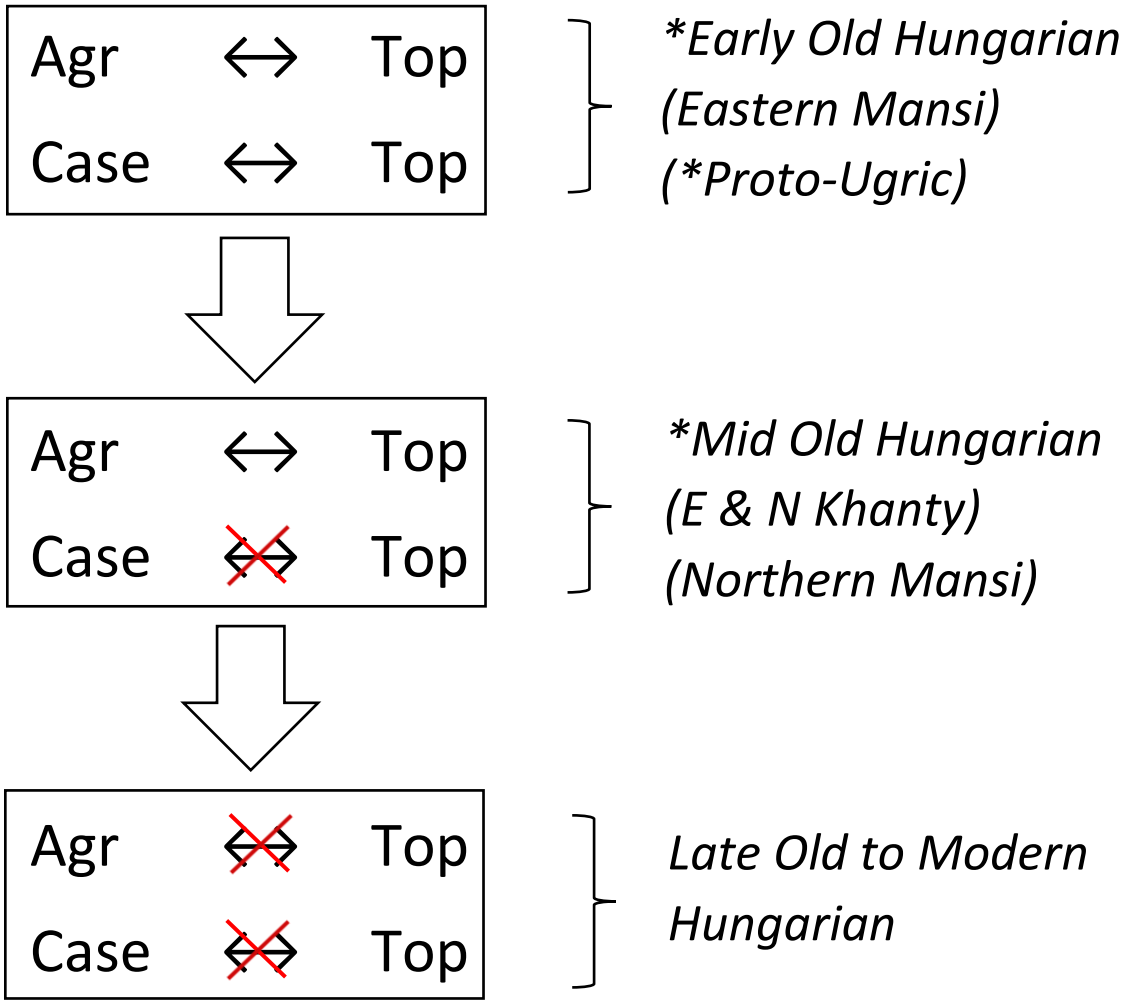
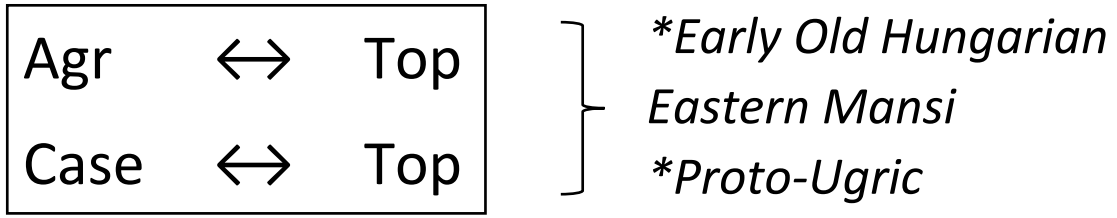


Default assumption (for want of any evidence)



My proposal (based on new evidence)



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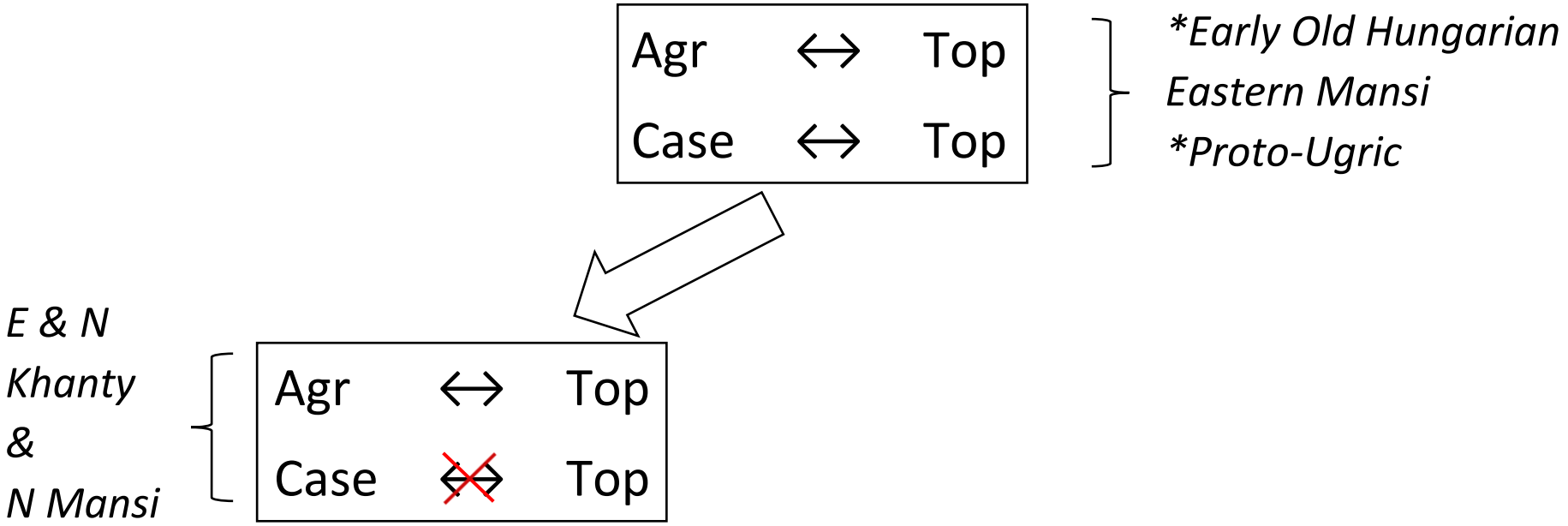

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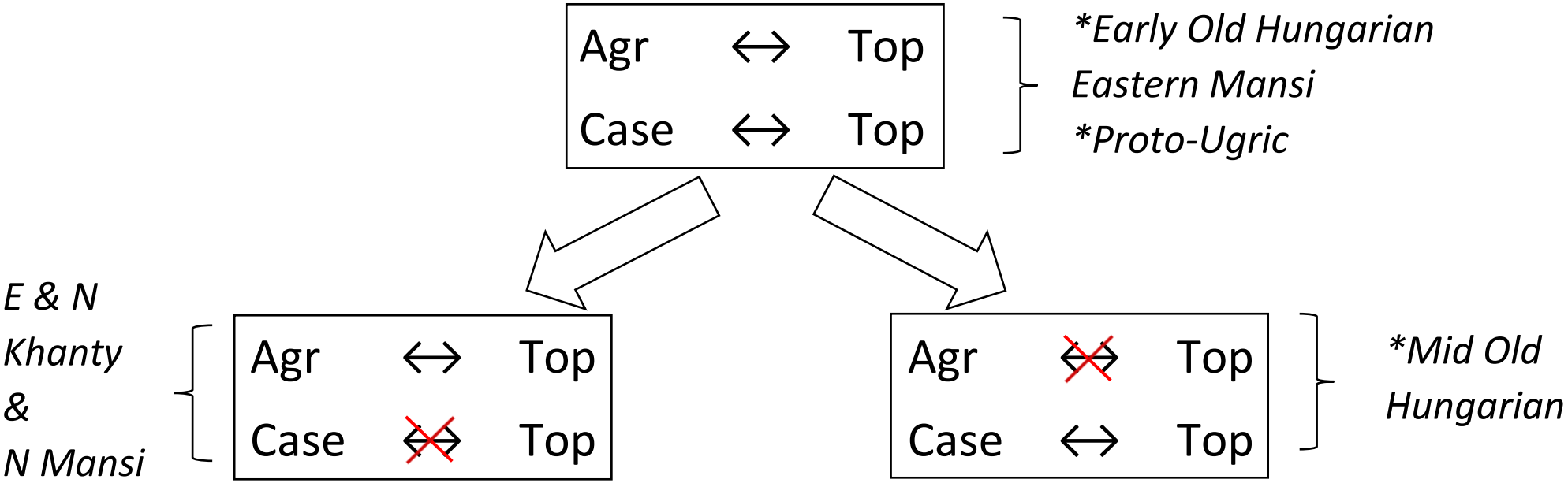

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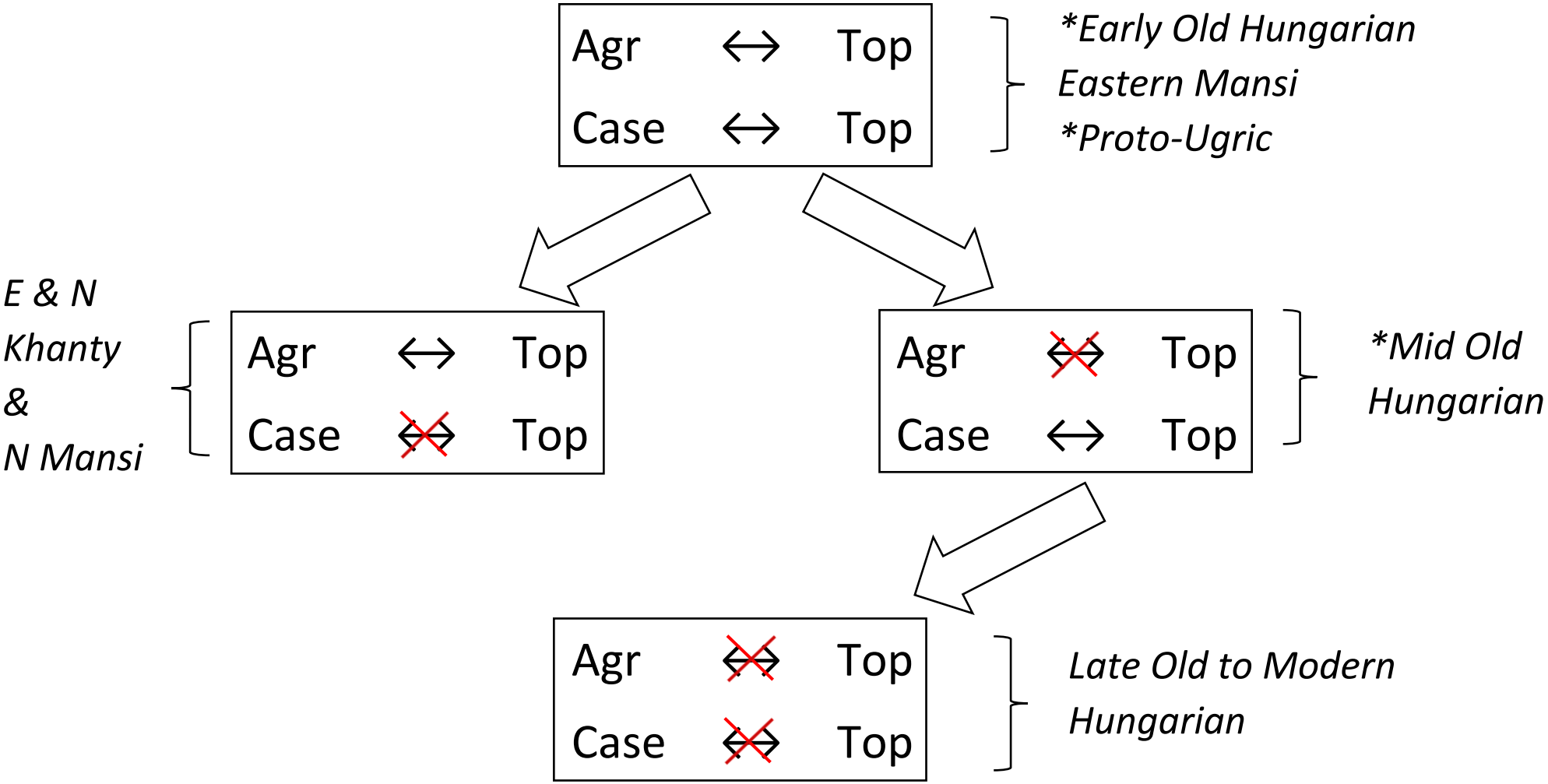


My proposal (based on new evidence)

- Hungarian traversed a different path than its Ob-Ugric sisters in terms of the decoupling of case, agreement and discourse function (topicality)
- The agreement-topicality link was severed first and the case assignment-topicality link was severed later

Background: Case & Agreement

- 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)
  - Late Old to Modern Hungarian is an example of (C).

Background: Case & Agreement in Ugric (É. Kiss 2020)

- Eastern Mansi (Kulonen 1989, Virtanen 2014, 2015):
  - only topical objects elicit verbal agreement
  - only topical objects get accusative case.
- Other, non-extinct variants of Ob-Ugric (Nikolaeva 1999, Csepregi 1997, 2019, Asztalos, Gugán & Mus 2017, Riese 2001, Skribnik 2001, Sosa 2017, Filchenko 2007, Bíró & Sipőcz 2017):
  - verbal agreement is still a function of topicality
  - all objects are assigned structural accusative case independently of discourse role
  - pronominal objects are overtly acc.-marked, lexical objects have a phonologically null allomorph of the acc. morpheme
  - morphological accusative case is still partially correlated to discourse function, as pronominal objects are likelier to be topics than lexical objects.

Background: Case & Agreement in Ugric (É. Kiss 2020)

- Modern Hungarian:
  - all objects are assigned structural and morphological accusative case, and object agreement on the verb is triggered by definite objects (independently 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 is due to the loosening of the strict SOV structure of Proto-Ugric:
  - the increasing frequency of post-verbal objects in Ob-Ugric (SVO)
  - the development of a discourse functional left periphery (Top Foc V X*) in Hungarian.

The Challenge of pre - Late Old Hungarian

- Ob-Ugric languages (dialects of Mansi and Khanty): the diachronic pathway has been mapped in great detail (É. Kiss 2020).
- Hungarian: more difficult as Late Old Hungarian (the earliest period from which we have surviving texts, 12th C) had the same system in terms of accusative case assignment and object agreement as ModH.
- Fossilized constructions in:
  - Late Old Hungarian: SOV non-finite embedded clauses with non-case-marked objects
  - Middle Hungarian: variable object agreement with topical indefinite objects
- É. Kiss (2020) argued that Early Old Hungarian must have been similar to 19th-century Eastern Mansi having SOV word order, with topicalized objects eliciting verbal agreement and receiving morphologically realized structural accusative case.

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 Bowern 1998).
- A cross-linguistically well-attested strategy: turn a clause-sized element into an adjective or noun without any morphological marking.
- 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'	(E)
(2)	*vau-rien*	'is worth nothing'	->	'useless person'	(F)
(3)	*tluč-hub-a*	'beat-mouth-FEM.NOM'	->	'person who speaks a lot'	(Cz)

New evidence – Archaic syntax preserved in personal names

- Such epithets often develop into family names:

(4) *Shakespeare, Makepeace, Drinkwater* (E)
(5) *Boileau* (= *boit l'eau* drinks the water -> teetotaler) (F)
(6) *Skočdopole* (= *skoč do pol-e* jump into field-GEN 'jumps into the field') (Cz)

- Epithets/names attested in Modern Hungarian preserve a peculiar syntactic pattern: a non-casemarked object followed by a verb carrying the object agreement suffix:

(7) *bor-(nem)-isz-sza*
wine-not-drink-OBJ.3SG
'wine-lover/teetotaler',
lit. 'drinks (not) wine'

(8) *hús-(nem)-esz-i*
meat-not-eat-OBJ.3SG
'meat-eater / -avoider'

(9) *ló-dönt-i*
horse-topple-OBJ.3SG
'strong enough to topple a horse',
lit.: 'topples horse'

(10) *maga-hány-ja-vet-i*
self-scatter-OBJ.3SG-throw-OBJ.3SG
'boastful'
lit.: 'scatters and throws self'

New evidence – Archaic syntax preserved in personal names

- The presence of the subject agreement suffix and the availability of reflexive subjects indicates that these are underlyingly full sentences with a syntactically active 3SG subject:

(11) *pro*$_{3SG}$ *hús* *nem* *esz-i* (*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 2013).
- The absence of verbal particles is also indicative of an archaic, pre-Late Old Hungarian provenance.

Characterizing the object: non-topical but definite

- Given the meaning of these sentences, the object is unlikely to be a discourse-old topic.
- Object agreement here must be sensitive to definiteness.
- Is it reasonable to assume that the object in sentences such as (11) is indeed definite?
- Reflexive pronouns such as *maga* 'self' (10) are known to be definite.
- The lack of a definite article with lexical objects is not relevant: Early Old Hungarian, similarly to most Uralic languages, lacked articles (definite or indefinite) altogether: definite articles are a Late Old Hungarian development (cf. Egedi 2013, 2014).
- An important common characteristic of these sentences is that they provide a general characterization of the subject's attitude/ disposition/relationship wrt the object: whether she eats meat / drinks wine / topples horses in general.

Characterizing the object: non-topical but definite

- The object is generically interpreted. Crucially, in Hungarian, singular definite DPs can freely receive a generic interpretation:

(12) *János szőrén ül-i meg a lovat.* (Modern Hungarian)
John hair.3SG.on sit-OBJ.3SG PRT the horse.ACC
'John rides horses without a saddle.'

(13) *Mari szereti a bort.* (Modern Hungarian)
Mary like-OBJ.3SG the wine-ACC.
'Mary likes wine.'

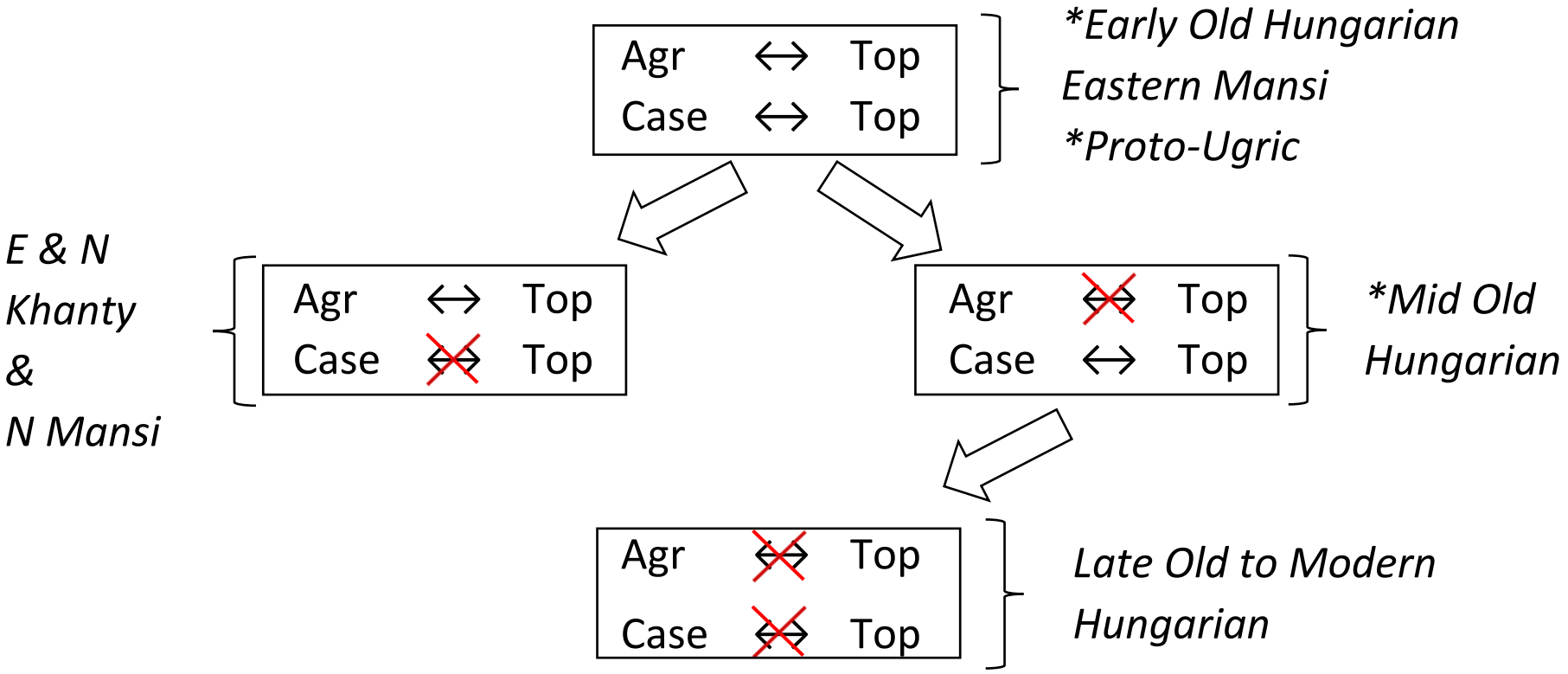
- It is reasonable to assume that the generically interpreted object in (11) was indeed definite in Early Old Hungarian too (cf. Egedi 2013:378 for a detailed argument), so object agreement on the verb was indeed triggered by definiteness.

Characterizing the object: non-casemarked

- These fossils 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-casemarked.
- 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 (10), the reflexive pronoun has no visible case marking supports the former position.

A different trajectory

- 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:



Why?

- In É. Kiss's (2020) dependent-case style analysis, the interdependence or otherwise of accusative case assignment and topicality is a function of whether SubjP and vP are separate domains for case assignment:

(14) $[_{SubjP}$ Subject $[_{ObjP}$ Topical object $[_{VoiceP}$ $[_{vP}$ $[_{VP}$ Non-topical object]]]]]

- I argue that in the stage of Early Old Hungarian that is preserved in the construction under discussion, the sentence still had the structure shown in (14) 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.

Why?

- 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.

Conclusion

- In Hungarian, unlike in other Ugric languages, the agreement-topicality link was severed first and the case-topicality link only later.
- Epithets, nicknames and nickname-derived family names can preserve very archaic syntax (even full clauses).
- (Some additional discussion on the non-feasibility of an alternative incorporation analysis and on the allomorphs of the OBJ.3SG suffix is provided after the References.)

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Against an incorporation analysis

- Could the non-case-marked object be incorporated? Three counterarguments:
- Incorporated objects in Hungarian elicit indefinite object agreement:

(15) a. *A fiúk meccset néznek.*
the boys match.ACC watch-INDEF.3SG
'The boys are watching a match.' (='They are engaged in match-watching.')

b. **A fiúk meccset néz-ik.*
the boys match.ACC watch-OBJ.3SG

- They are obligatorily accusative-marked (certainly in finite clauses, with non-finite clauses, there is dialectal variation):

(16) a. *A fiúk meccset néznek.*
the boys match.ACC watch-INDEF.3SG

b. **A fiúk meccs néznek.*
the boys match watch-INDEF.3SG

- Modified objects are OK in the construction under discussion:

(17) a. *[egyéb szesz]-isz-sza*
other spirit-drink-OBJ.3SG
'drinker of other spirits'

b. *[csak víz]-isz-sza*
only water-drink-OBJ.3SG
'drinker of water only'

Underrepresentation of the *-ja* allomorph

- OBJ.3SG has two allomorphs *–ja* (attaches to stems with back vowels) and *–i* (attaches to stems with front vowels)
- In the surviving examples, verbs which elicit the *–ja* allomorph of the OBJ.3SG (third singular definite object agreement) suffix are somewhat underrepresented (see figures below)
- Very often, we find the *–i* allomorph even in cases where, certainly in the standard dialect, we would expect *–ja* (in line with the vowel harmony patterns of suffixation):

(18) *szar-a-rág-i* vs. the expected: *szar-a-rág-ja*

shit-3SG-chew-OBJ.3SG shit-3SG-chew-OBJ.3SG

'stingy', lit. 'chews his/her own shit'

- Reason 1: historically, in many dialects of Hungarian, OBJ.3SG only had a single allomorph *–i* (Szabó 1902, Melich 1913, Horger 1931, Imre 1971)

Underrepresentation of the *-ja* allomorph

- Reason 2: analogy might have helped the survival 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:

(19) a. *csoszog-i* shuffle.feet$_{V}$-ADJ ‘foot-dragger’

b. *ki-vagy-i* who-be.2SG-ADJ ‘pretentious’

c. *vigyor-i* smile$_{N}$-ADJ ‘prone to an easy smile’

- This *–i* suffix is (I am grateful to Péter Rebrus for discussions):
  - omnivorous: it can attach to verb stems, conjugated verb forms, nouns
  - non-harmonic: it only has a single allomorph (*-i*)
  - non-templatic (unlike the standard diminutive *–i,* which always has a two-syllable output: *aranyos* ‘cute’ -> *ari* ‘cute-DIM’)
  - changes the word class (unlike the diminutive *i*)

Underrepresentation of the *-ja* allomorph

- Some statistics about our construction:
  - Altogether 56 epithets/names, which include 30 verbs, out of which:
    - 19: front stem with front OBJ.3SG suffix (*-i*)
    - 5: back stem with back OBJ.3SG suffix (*-ja*)
    - 6: back stem with front OBJ.3SG suffix (*-i*)