

# Chapter 7

## Beyond given versus new: The proprial article in Old Icelandic

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The proprial article (*hann Jón* ‘he John’) is attested across North Germanic and has attracted recent interest for Icelandic in particular (Sigurðsson 2006; Wood 2009; Sigurðsson & Wood 2020). Previous considerations of its pragmatics have focused on the given/new dimension, with the claim that it marks familiarity/givenness (Sigurðsson 2006; Johnsen 2016). Yet a large and growing body of work shows the need to go beyond given versus new for a full understanding of the morphosyntax–information structure interface (e.g. Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; Cook & Bildhauer 2013). I examine the proprial article in Old Icelandic in a wider information-structural context which recognises different types of topic transition. I show that the proprial article at this early stage is a topic management device which signals various types of topic-shift. Additionally, I confirm an early claim (Heusler 1921) that a special variant of the proprial article (*þeir Jón* ‘they John’) serves two functions in Old Icelandic as (i) an associative plural and (ii) a strategy for coordinating referents which are asymmetrically topical, discussing this in the context of recent theoretical research on associativity, coordination and information structure.

### 1 Introduction

A number of present-day Germanic languages have a functional element which can combine with proper nouns, in particular personal names, commonly referred to as a “proprial article” (PA) (see e.g. Delsing 1993; Van Langendonck & Van de Velde 2009; Dahl 2015; Kokkelmans 2018; Muñoz 2019).<sup>1</sup> In West Germanic,

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<sup>1</sup>An alternative label for the proprial article is “onymic article”, as commonly used in the literature on German (e.g. Nübling 2017; Schmuck 2020b,c; Ackermann 2021).



the PA is formally identical to the definite article, e.g. (1); in North Germanic, it is formally identical to the personal pronoun, e.g. (2).<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a. (non-standard) High German  
 [der Peter] hat dem Kind einen Ball geschenkt  
 PA.M.NOM.SG Peter has DEF.DAT child INDEF.ACC ball gifted  
 ‘Peter gave the child a ball as a present.’ (Altmann 1993: 33)
- b. Dutch, Brabantisch  
 Wette gelle nog da we [de Jan] op de met emme  
 know you.PL still COMP we PA.COMM Jan on the market have  
 gezien?  
 seen  
 ‘Do you know that we saw Jan at the market?’ (Schmuck 2020b: 164)
- (2) a. (modern) Icelandic  
 [Hún Þuríður] gat ekki tekið þessum tíðindum  
 PA.F.NOM.3SG Þuríður.NOM could NEG take DEM.DAT news.DAT  
 ‘Þuríður could not take this news.’ (IcePaHC: 2008, Ofsi.1163)
- b. Norwegian, Inner Østfold  
 På tjuårsdagen heldt [han Torbjørn] og [ho  
 on twenty-year-day.DEF held PA.M.3SG Torbjørn and PA.F.3SG  
 Eline] ein fest for [ho Sissel]  
 Eline a party for PA.F.3SG Sissel  
 ‘On her 20th anniversary, Torbjørn and Eline held a party for Sissel.’  
 (Johnsen 2016: 194)

The function of the PA has been examined for a range of Germanic varieties, with various functions attributed to it. In West Germanic, where the PA takes the form of the definite article, cf. (1), it is assumed that the PA does not mark definiteness, since personal names refer to an entity conceptualised as unique and are thus inherently definite (Longobardi 1994; Nübling 2017, 2020; Schmuck 2020c). In Southern German varieties, the PA is obligatory and does not appear to have any pragmatic effect (Nübling 2020; Schmuck 2020b), whereas in Northern German varieties it is optional and has been claimed to fulfil various pragmatic functions. Hartmann (1982), for instance, has argued that the PA as exhibited in Rhineland dialects can indicate that the individual referred to is known to speaker and hearer, and can also convey a speaker’s annoyance with an individual. Similarly, the PA in (Flemish) Dutch dialects has been claimed to express familiarity (Van Langendonck 2007: 158). Werth (2014), meanwhile, has argued

<sup>2</sup>I gloss instances of the proprial article as PA throughout.

that in Northern German dialects, the PA can act as a focus marker, or as a marker of social distance.

In North Germanic, a similarly wide-ranging list of pragmatic functions has been attributed to the PA, with a specific focus on the given/new dimension. For modern Icelandic, it has been argued that the PA marks “familiarity or givenness”, as evidenced by the fact that the PA is only felicitous if the referent is known to both speaker and listener (Sigurðsson 2006: 220). Similar claims with respect to familiarity have been made for the North Germanic PA elsewhere, notably by Håberg (2010) for certain Norwegian dialects and by Dahl (2015: 97), who claims the same for “most colloquial varieties” of Swedish. At the same time, others have claimed that the PA in present-day Mainland Scandinavian plays a role in discourse activation (Teleman et al. 1999; Strahan 2008; Lie 2008, 2010). Johannessen (2008, 2020), meanwhile, claims that a superficially similar element which occurs in Present-day Norwegian signals “psychological distance”, occurring in contexts where the speaker/addressee does not know the person referred to, or in contexts where the speaker expresses a negative attitude towards the individual.

Furthermore, the pragmatic status of the PA in Early North Germanic is disputed. While Johnsen (2016) claims that the PA marks familiarity/givenness in Old Norwegian/Icelandic, as claimed for modern Icelandic (Sigurðsson 2006), Kinn (2016) claims the contrary for Old Norwegian, namely that 3rd person pronouns which occur before proper names (i.e. potential PAs) do not have any semantic or pragmatic effects. As such, the precise pragmatic status of the PA in Old Icelandic remains unclear. Moreover, discussion of its (potential) pragmatic effects have, as for modern Icelandic, been limited to a consideration of the given/new dimension. There is, however, a large and growing body of work on the interaction between morphosyntax and information structure from various perspectives which shows that one needs to go beyond a simple given versus new distinction in order to fully understand phenomena at this interface (e.g. Ariel 1990, 2001; Vallduví 1992; Grosz et al. 1995; Vallduví & Engdahl 1996; Walker et al. 1998; Erteschik-Shir 2007; Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; Krifka 2007; Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010; Cook & Bildhauer 2013).

In this chapter, I examine the proprial article in Old Icelandic in this wider information-structural context which recognises different types of “topic transition” (e.g. Daneš 1974; Grosz et al. 1995; Walker et al. 1998; Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010). On the basis of Old Icelandic corpus data from IcePaHC (Wallenberg et al. 2011) and further supplementary data from a related corpus, MicePaHC (Ingason 2020), I show that the PA in Old Icelandic is more than a straightforward givenness marker, as previously claimed (Sigurðsson 2006; Johnsen 2016). While the PA is indeed restricted to discourse-given

referents, it has a more nuanced motivation, marking a referent which is known from the discourse but which represents a new aboutness topic (Reinhart 1981), i.e. “shift-topic”. In this respect, the Old Icelandic PA functions as a specialised topic management device which signals the (re-)establishment of a familiar referent as topic. In addition, I confirm an early claim by Heusler (1921) that a special variant of the proprial article serves two functions in Old Icelandic as (i) an associative plural and (ii) a strategy for coordinating referents which are asymmetrically topical, discussing this in the context of recent theoretical research on associativity, coordination and information structure.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I discuss the current understanding of the proprial article in Icelandic and other North Germanic varieties in Section 2, and discuss the diachrony of proprial articles in Section 3. Section 4 outlines the methodology for the corpus study which is the focus of this chapter, including the collection and tagging of the data, and the relevant information-structural concepts. Section 5 examines the so-called “plain” proprial article (Sigurðsson 2006) in the broader context of topic management devices, and Section 6 discusses the pragmatic properties of a special variant of the proprial article. Section 7 concludes the chapter.

## 2 The proprial article in modern North Germanic

### 2.1 The proprial article in modern Icelandic

Sigurðsson (2006) provides a detailed overview of the properties of the proprial article in modern Icelandic. The PA can occur, generally optionally, with simple personal names and short forms of kinship terms, but is highly questionable or ruled out with common nouns beyond these kinship terms, cf. (3).<sup>3</sup> Note that such

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<sup>3</sup>The proprial article is generally ruled out with full names, presumably due to the fact that the referent must be familiar/given. Sigurðsson (2006: 225) notes it is possible if the referent is commonly known by their full name, as with, for instance, a famous politician. The PA is also possible with simple personal names modified by adjectives, though optional, as elsewhere (Delsing 1993: 134):

(i) modern Icelandic

- a. Svo fæddist [hann        Siggi        litli]  
so was-born PA.M.NOM.3SG Siggi.NOM little.NOM  
‘So little Siggi was born.’ (IcePaHC: 2008, Mamma.1122)
- b. Og [Lancelot    litli]        rak    óðara upp glaðlegt    gelt  
and Lancelot.NOM little.NOM drove madly up cheerful.ACC bark.ACC  
‘And little Lancelot madly drove up a cheerful bark.’  
(IcePaHC: 2008, Mamma.1809)

examples do not involve an intonational break between the PA and the referent it combines with, which distinguishes the PA from straightforward apposition (Sigurðsson 2006; Wood 2009).

(3) modern Icelandic

- a. **hann** Jón / **hún** María  
PA.M.NOM.3SG Jón.NOM PA.F.NOM.3SG María.NOM
  - b. **hann** pabbi / **hún** amma  
PA.M.NOM.3SG dad.NOM PA.F.NOM.3SG grandma.NOM
  - c. ?? **hann** kennari / \* **hún** bók  
PA.M.NOM.3SG teacher.NOM PA.F.NOM.3SG book.NOM
- (Sigurðsson 2006: 224–225)

The PA can (optionally) occur on a range of grammatical functions, e.g. subject, object, prepositional complement and predicative complement, cf. (4).

(4) modern Icelandic

- a. Subject:  
[**Hún** **María**] kom í gær  
PA.F.NOM.3SG María.NOM came yesterday  
‘Maria came yesterday.’
- b. Object:  
Við sáum [**hana** **Mariú**] í gær  
we.NOM saw PA.F.ACC.3SG María.ACC yesterday  
‘We saw Maria yesterday.’
- c. Prepositional complement:  
Bréfið er frá [**henni** **Mariú**]  
letter.NOM.DEF is from PA.F.DAT.3SG María.DAT  
‘The letter is from Maria.’
- d. Predicative complement:  
Er þetta ekki [**hún** **María**]?  
is DEM.NOM NEG PA.F.NOM.3SG María.NOM  
‘Is that not Maria?’  
(Sigurðsson 2006: 225)

The PA shows case, person and number agreement with the personal name it combines with, and is always prenominal (**hún** *María*); postnominal distribution (\**María* **hún**) is ruled out according to Sigurðsson (2006). Additionally, the PA

can occur on possessors in what Sigurðsson (2006: 216) refers to as the “Name-Genitive Construction”, e.g. (5).

(5) modern Icelandic

Allir bílarnir [hans Jóns] eru gulir  
all.NOM cars.NOM.DEF PA.M.GEN.3SG Jón.GEN are yellow  
‘All Jón’s cars are yellow.’ (Sigurðsson 2006: 213)

In this particular context, a genitive-marked PA is obligatory if the head noun bears the suffixed definite article (Sigurðsson 2006), cf. the contrast in (6).

(6) modern Icelandic

- a. bókin [hennar Maríu]  
book.NOM.DEF PA.F.GEN.3SG Maria.GEN  
b. \* bókin [Maríu]  
book.NOM.DEF Maria.GEN  
(Sigurðsson 2006: 224)

In terms of its pragmatic properties, Sigurðsson (2006: 220) claims that the PA is a “marker of familiarity or givenness”, on the basis that it is only felicitous if both speaker and addressee know and can identify the referent in question. Sigurðsson (2006: 226) further claims that the familiarity signalled by the PA is a “deictic feature” which speakers use to signal that both they and the addressee are familiar with the referent.

Crucially, the examples of the Icelandic PA discussed so far must be considered as just one variant of the PA, specifically what Sigurðsson (2006) calls the “Plain Proprial Article Construction”. Another example of this “plain” type, this time occurring with a coordinated referent (‘Jón and María’), is provided in (7a) below. This “plain” PA is distinct from what Sigurðsson (2006) calls the “Gapped Proprial Article Construction”, illustrated in (7b).

(7) modern Icelandic

- a. [(Þau) Jón og María] eru vinir  
PA.N.NOM.3PL Jón and María are.PL friends  
‘Jón and María are friends.’  
b. María fór út. [Þau Jón] ætla að hittast  
María went out. PA.N.NOM.3PL Jón.NOM intend.PL to meet  
‘María went out. She and Jón are going to meet.’  
(Sigurðsson 2006: 227–228)

In the “plain” type in (7a), the PA can be omitted and the sentence is still grammatical – indeed, as already mentioned, this variant of the PA is optional. By contrast, in the “gapped” type in (7b) the PA cannot be omitted, since this would result in a mismatch in number agreement between the verb and subject; *þau Jón* in this context functions as a plural for subject-verb agreement, denoting a set consisting of María and Jón.<sup>4</sup>

The “gapped” PA in modern Icelandic has been discussed under a number of different labels in line with different analyses. As mentioned, Sigurðsson (2006) discusses it as a special “gapped” variety of the proprial article, in line with the fact that he analyses it as involving a coordination structure and deletion; see Wood (2009) for a similar analysis in the context of “imposters” (Collins & Postal 2012), i.e. elements which exhibit a mismatch between grammatical person and notional person. Sigurðsson & Wood (2020), meanwhile, develop a different analysis for the construction, which they instead refer to as the “Pro[NP]” construction, as distinct from the (plain) proprial article.<sup>5</sup>

The construction in question in fact appears to qualify as what is often labelled as an “inclusory” construction in a diverse range of languages, in particular Austronesian and Australian languages (cf. Lichtenberk 2000; Singer 2001; Bhat 2004; Gaby 2005; Haspelmath 2007; Bril 2011; Schultze-Berndt et al. 2013); it consists of a non-singular pronoun (“superset”) plus a personal name (“subset”) whose referent is included in the reference of the non-singular pronoun, cf. (8) and the example repeated in (9).

- (8)  $\underbrace{\text{PA.DU/PL}}_{\text{SUPERSET}} - \underbrace{\text{name}}_{\text{SUBSET}}$

- (9) *María fór út. [Þau Jón] ætla að hittast*  
*María went out. PA.N.NOM.3PL Jón.NOM intend.PL to meet*  
 ‘María went out. She and Jón (=they including Jón) are going to meet.’

<sup>4</sup>As Sigurðsson (2006) observes, in some contexts the “gapped” PA can combine with more than one name in a coordination structure:

- (i) modern Icelandic  
*Anna kemur líka. [Þau Jón og María] eru vinir*  
*Anna comes too PA.N.NOM.3PL Jón.NOM and María.NOM are.PL friends*  
 ‘Anna is coming too. She, John and Mary are friends.’ (Sigurðsson 2006: 229)

In such cases, the “gapped” type is identical in form to a “plain” PA construction, cf. (7a).

<sup>5</sup>In the context of Old Icelandic, the “gapped” PA has also been discussed as an “associative plural” construction in modern theoretical and typological work (den Besten 1996; Moravcsik 2003; Daniel & Moravcsik 2013; Sigurðsson & Wood 2020), as I discuss in detail in Section 3.

Compare similar inclusory constructions from a range of languages in (10), where the non-singular pronoun (superset) is shown in bold and the personal name (subset) in italics.

- (10) a. Yapese  
       Ka **ra**       bow       *Tamag*  
       PST 3DU/PL come+DU tamag  
       ‘He and Tamag came.’ (Jensen 1977: 270, as cited in Aissen 1989: 519)
- b. Toqabaqita  
       **Keeroqa tha**       *Bita* kero       sifo       naqa  
       3DU       PERS.MKR Bitā 3.DU.NONFUT descend PERF  
       ‘He/she and Bitā have gone down.’ (Lichtenberk 2000: 10)
- c. Kriol  
       **Mindubala** *Namij* kol-im dardaga  
       1.DU.EXCL Namij call-TR bloodwood.apple  
       ‘Me and Namij call it dardaga.’ (Schultze-Berndt et al. 2013: 243)
- d. Māori  
       Kei te aha **kōrua** ko *Tame*?  
       TAM what 2DU SPEC Tame  
       ‘What are you and Tame doing?’  
       (Bauer 1997: 548, as cited in Bril 2011: 246)

On this basis, I will refer to examples like (9) as the “inclusory PA”, as distinct from the “plain PA” already discussed. With this term, I commit to no more than the observation that the pronoun and the name are in a superset-subset relation as in (8).<sup>6</sup>

Just like the plain PA, the inclusory PA can occur in various grammatical functions and agrees in case with the personal name, e.g. (11).

<sup>6</sup>Sigurðsson & Wood (2020: 2) also briefly acknowledge that the construction is similar to inclusory constructions as discussed for other languages, but say that the term is not “entirely satisfactory” and that they “use the term ‘inclusive’ in a different sense”, namely in relation to whether the pronoun refers to a subset that is included in the set denoted by the noun it combines with. On this particular definition, they note that constructions such as *við Ólafur* (I and Ólafur) are “non-inclusive”, since the pronoun is not included in the reference set of *Ólafur*. However, this seems to be the reverse of the standard understanding of “inclusory” constructions (e.g. Lichtenberk 2000; Bhat 2004; Gaby 2005; Haspelmath 2007; Gil 2009; Bril 2011; Schultze-Berndt et al. 2013), whereby the pronoun is the superset, whose reference includes the referent expressed by the noun (subset), cf. (8) above. In line with this wider typological body of work, I opt for the term “inclusory PA” for the Icelandic construction.



(11) modern Icelandic

- a. Quirky subject:  
[**Okkur** Ólafi] leiddist  
PA.1PL.DAT Olaf.DAT bored  
'Olaf and I were bored.'
  - b. Direct object:  
Hún sá [**okkur** Ólaf]  
she.NOM saw PA.1PL.ACC Olaf.ACC  
'She saw Olaf and me.'
  - c. Possessor:  
Hún er vinur [**okkar** Ólafs]  
she.NOM is friend PA.1PL.GEN Olaf.GEN  
'She is a friend of Olaf and me.'
- (Sigurðsson & Wood 2020: 5)

Also similar to the plain PA, Sigurðsson (2006) claims for modern Icelandic that the inclusory PA marks familiarity/givenness, i.e. indicates that the addressee knows and can identify the PA-marked referent, in other words the same function as that attributed to the plain PA (Sigurðsson 2006).

At the same time, there are some differences between the plain and inclusory PA, as extensively discussed by Sigurðsson & Wood (2020). Firstly, unlike the plain PA, which cannot occur with common nouns (Sigurðsson 2006), Sigurðsson & Wood (2020) observe that the inclusory PA can occur with animate common nouns often denoting occupations (e.g. *við kennarinn* 'the teacher and I'). Secondly, they show that the pronoun in the inclusory PA shows head properties, controlling person and number agreement on the finite verb, e.g. (12), and number, gender and case agreement on adjectival and participial predicates, e.g. (13).

(12) modern Icelandic

- a. [**Við** María] fórum  
PA.NOM.1SG Mary.NOM went.1PL  
'Mary and I went/left.'
  - b. [**Þið** María] fóruð.  
PA.NOM.2PL Mary.NOM went.2PL  
'Mary and you went/left.'
  - c. [**Þær** María] fóru  
PA.F.NOM.3PL Mary.NOM went.3PL  
'Mary and she went/left.'
- (Sigurðsson & Wood 2020: 4)

(13) modern Icelandic

- a. A male + Olaf:

[**Þeir** Ólafur] eru sterkir  
PA.M.NOM.3PL Olaf.NOM are.3PL strong.M.NOM.PL  
'Olaf and he are strong.'

- b. A female + Mary:

[**Þær** María] eru sterkar  
PA.F.NOM.3PL Mary.NOM are.3PL strong.F.NOM.PL  
'Mary and she are strong.'

- c. A non-male + Olaf:

[**Þau** Ólafur] eru sterk  
PA.N.NOM.3PL Olaf.NOM are.3PL strong.N.NOM.PL  
'Olaf and she/it are strong.'

- d. A non-female + Mary:

[**Þau** María] eru sterk.  
PA.N.NOM.3PL Mary.NOM are.3PL strong.N.NOM.PL  
'Mary and he/it are strong.'  
(Sigurðsson & Wood 2020: 6)

## 2.2 The proprial article in modern Mainland Scandinavian

As Sigurðsson & Wood (2020) note, the inclusory PA construction is only present in modern Insular Scandinavian, and in Faroese it is less robust than in Icelandic. In modern Mainland Scandinavian, the inclusory PA construction has been lost altogether. The plain PA, however, is present in some Norwegian and Swedish varieties, e.g. (14).

- (14) a. Norwegian, Voss

Men [**ho** Inger] se kkje e så mykkje te  
but PA.F.3SG Inger see NEG I so much to  
'But Inger, I don't see much.' (Håberg 2010: 90)

- b. Northern Swedish

[**En** Bjürström] ha affärn  
PA.M.3SG Bjürström has shop.DEF  
'Bjürström has the shop.'  
(Delsing 2003: 21, as cited in Johannessen & Garbacz 2014: 10)

According to Jorgensen (2000), there is no PA in Danish, contrary to suggestions in earlier work (Hulthén 1944).

In terms of the function of the PA in modern Mainland Scandinavian, there seems to be a wide range of claims, varying across individual varieties. Dahl (2015: 97), for instance, notes that in “most colloquial varieties of Swedish” the PA has a clear pragmatic effect which he illustrates with *han Erik* meaning ‘that person Erik that you know’, i.e. signalling familiarity (see also Delsing 2003). In varieties where the PA is obligatory with given names and name-like uses of kinship terms, no such effect is found according to Dahl. Others, meanwhile, have claimed that the PA signals a new person in the discourse, thus playing a role in discourse activation (Teleman et al. 1999; Strahan 2008; Lie 2008, 2010). Lie (2010), for instance, argues that the PA in Present-day Norwegian does not refer to a previously mentioned referent or a referent available in the situational context, but rather serves to activate specific, shared knowledge. Similarly, Teleman et al. (1999) state for Swedish that the PA functions to actualise referents that are not present in the current discourse but which are present in the shared knowledge of speaker and hearer.

Johannessen (2008, 2020), meanwhile, claims in the context of Present-day Norwegian that the PA must be distinguished from what she refers to as the “psychologically distal demonstrative” (PDD). The PDD can occur with any kind of human noun as well as proper names, and typically occurs in contexts where the speaker/addressee does not know the person referred to, or in contexts where the speaker expresses a negative attitude to the person referred to, e.g. (15).

(15) Norwegian

jeg og Magne vi sykla jo og [han Mikkel] da  
 I and Magne we cycled then and he Mikkel then  
 ‘I and Magne and that guy Mikkel we cycled then.’  
 (Johannessen 2008: 164)

This leads Johannessen (2008, 2020) to claim that the PDD signals “psychological distance”. Due to the fact that the earliest written examples noted by Johannessen (2008) are from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that the use of the PDD is found to have increased between 1970 and 2005 (Johannessen 2008), Kinn (2017) suggests that the PDD is a relatively recent development.

### 3 Historical context

#### 3.1 Proprial articles, case and the grammaticalisation of definiteness

The diachronic development of the PA in Germanic has generally been neglected in modern theoretical research, although its emergence in the history of (High) German has attracted some recent interest (Schmuck & Szczepaniak 2014; Schmuck 2020a,b,c). Here, the rise of the PA has been characterised as representing a relatively late stage in the overall grammaticalisation of the definite article (e.g. Schmuck & Szczepaniak 2014; Schmuck 2020b), in line with the fact that the German PA is formally identical to the definite article, cf. (1a) above. The grammaticalisation of the definite article with common nouns is virtually complete by the end of the Old High German period (c. 750–1050), where it occurs even with unique common nouns, e.g. *thiu sunna*, ‘the sun’ (9<sup>th</sup> century, Otfrid, as discussed in Schmuck & Szczepaniak 2014: 103). The establishment of the article with unique common nouns – which, like personal names, are inherently definite – is seen as a crucial step which in turn facilitated the article’s further grammaticalisation to proper nouns, including personal names, as of the Early New High German period (c. 1350–1650) (Schmuck & Szczepaniak 2014; Schmuck 2020b). In this context, Schmuck & Szczepaniak (2014) propose (16) as the grammaticalisation pathway of the definite article, which is an adapted version of that in Lyons (1999: 337), also taking into account uniques.

(16) simple definite > generic > unique > proper noun

In addition, many have attributed the rise of the PA in German to the loss of case-marking on proper nouns (e.g. Behaghel 1923: 52–55; Schmuck & Szczepaniak 2014; Ackermann 2018; Schmuck 2020c). In Old High German, proper nouns inflected like common nouns, but case-marking was lost as of the Middle High German period (1050–1350). The assumption is that, as case-marking was lost on proper nouns, including on personal names, this was compensated for by the newly emerging PA which became the exclusive exponent of case. This is supported, for instance, by data in Ackermann (2018: 153–154, 188–189), who observes that use of the PA increases as case inflection is lost.

In contrast to West Germanic, the PA is attested comparatively early in North Germanic, and is exhibited already in the earliest attested stage, Old Norse/Icelandic (c. 1150–1450), e.g. (17). As in the modern language, the Old Icelandic (plain) PA takes the form of the 3SG personal pronoun (masc. *hann*, fem. *hún*).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>In the corpus data which this chapter makes use of (outlined in Section 4), all texts are normalised to modern Icelandic orthography, regardless of their date. For sake of consistency, I retain this normalised orthography here.

(17) Old Icelandic

Og er Túta kemur fyrir Halla þá réttir  
and when Túta.NOM comes before Halli.ACC then outstretches

[hann Halli] hendur í móti grísinum  
PA.M.NOM.3SG Halli.NOM hands.ACC towards pig.DAT.DEF

‘And when Túta comes before Halli, then Halli stretches out his hands  
towards the pig.’ (IcePaHC: 1275, Morkin.1156)

In light of the development of the PA in German, where it is generally assumed that the loss of case and the grammaticalisation of the definite article to unique common nouns were crucial factors, the early attestation of the PA in Old Icelandic is interesting; Old Icelandic has rich morphological inflection on nominals, including personal names – as indeed the modern language still does – and it is well known that the definite article was not yet fully grammaticalised with common nouns at this stage (Leiss 2000, 2007; Börjars et al. 2016). As Börjars et al. (2016) discuss, noun phrases in Old Norse/Icelandic do not require an explicit marker of (in)definiteness in order to receive a definite/indefinite interpretation. In this context, the thorough investigations by Leiss (2000, 2007) show that Old Icelandic can be considered a “hypodeterminating language”, whereby definiteness is overtly marked on definite expressions where definiteness cannot be presupposed, i.e. rhemes, but is not marked on expressions which are inherently definite, i.e. themes and proper nouns. Moreover, evidence from Old Swedish suggests that the definite article was not grammaticalised to unique and generic contexts at this early stage of North Germanic (Skrzypek 2012).

As such, the early attestation of the PA in North Germanic cannot be related to the establishment of a highly grammaticalised definite article in the way that the rise of the German PA is often accounted for. Rather, as its formal identity with personal pronouns suggests, the North Germanic PA should be considered on its own terms, separate to the ongoing grammaticalisation of definiteness.<sup>8</sup> As further support of this, Dahl (2015: 98), citing synchronic data from Delsing (1993), points out that, although there is significant overlap in the distribution of the proprial article and “extended” use of definite forms (e.g. with generics) in present-day North Germanic varieties, there are also dialects which have the PA and no extended use of definite forms, as well as those which have extended use of definite forms and no PA. This synchronic distribution leads Dahl to suggest that the PA and extended uses of definite forms have separate histories of origin, in other words cannot be considered as part of the same grammaticalisation process as they are for historical German.

<sup>8</sup>In this sense, the label “proprial *article*” is perhaps misleading. Nevertheless, as it is by far the most common term in the literature on North Germanic, I retain the term here.

### 3.2 The disputed status of the plain proprial article

As already mentioned, the status of the plain PA in early North Germanic is disputed in the literature (Faarlund 2004; Kinn 2016; Johnsen 2016). Faarlund (2004: 89), for instance, notes that the plain PA in Old Norse/Icelandic in the singular (i.e. *hann*, *hún*) is “rather unusual” and “mostly confined to a colloquial style”. Kinn (2016: 165) observes that a 3sg personal pronoun *hann* “sporadically co-occurs with proper names” in Old Norwegian, providing, for instance, the example in (18).

- (18) Old Norwegian  
 Oc i þuí kœmr [hann asbiorn] i stovuna  
 and in that comes he Ásbjörn in dining.room.DEF  
 ‘And in that moment, Ásbjörn entered the dining room.’ (Kinn 2016: 165)

Kinn (2016: 165) claims that personal pronouns in contexts like (18) in Old Norwegian do not seem to have any semantic or pragmatic effect. She instead assumes that such instances, while superficially similar to the modern PA construction, are in fact cases of straightforward apposition. This is in line with the theory of null subjects which is the main component of her thesis.

Kinn (2017) revisits the status of the (plain) PA in Old Norwegian. She notes that in her dataset taken from two texts (*The Legendary Saga of St. Óláfr* and *The Old Norwegian Homily Book*), the appearance of a plain PA-like element (*hann*, *hon*) before a personal name does not appear to be systematic; there are only four such instances, and the great majority of personal names appear without any accompanying pronoun. She contrasts this finding with the study by Dahl (2015: 98), which found a more systematic use of *hann/hon* before personal names in a short Norwegian charter in the *Norwegian Diplomatarium* from 1430. On the basis of this, Kinn (2017) suggests that the PA emerged in some dialects around that particular time, i.e. later than the Old Norwegian data she herself examined.

Johnsen (2016), however, takes issue with Kinn’s claim for Old Norwegian and provides early examples from Old Icelandic which he claims exhibit proprial articles, e.g. (19), which is taken from an episode in which King Harald Fairhair meets Skalla-Grímr, from an Icelandic manuscript from c. 1320–1350.

- (19) Old Icelandic  
 Qlvir tók til máls: “Nú er Grímr hér kominn, sonr Kveld-Ulfs.” [...]  
 Qlvir took to speech now is Grímr here come son Kveld-Ulfr’s [...]  
 Konungr litaðist um. Hann sá, at maðr stóð at baki Qlvi [...]. “Er  
 king looked around he saw that man stood at back Qlvir [...]. is

þetta [hann Skalla-Grímr]”, sagði konungr, “in mikli maðr?” Grímr  
 this he Skalla-Grímr said king the great man Grímr  
 sagði, at hann kenndi rétt. “Ek vil þá”, sagði konungr, “ef þú  
 said that he knew right I will then said king if you  
 beiðast bóta fyrir Þórolf, [...] veita þér [...] sómd, eigi minni  
 request compensation for Þórolfr [...] give you [...] honor not smaller  
 en ek veitta [honum Þórolfi], bróður þínum”  
 than I gave him Þórolfr brother yours  
 ‘Olvir began speaking: “Now Grímr has arrived, the son of Kveld-Ulf”.  
 [...] The king looked around. He saw a man standing behind Olvir [...].  
 “Is this Skalla-Grímr”, said the king, “the great man?” Grímr said that he  
 was right. “Then I wish”, said the king, “if you request compensation for  
 Þórolfr, [...] to honor you no less than I honored Þórolfr, your brother.” ’  
 (Johnsen 2016: 197)

Johnsen (2016) provides a number of convincing arguments that these examples can be considered instances of the (plain) PA and that they do not merit analysis as apposition, including the fact that the pronoun cannot stand on its own with its referent retrievable from context, as in the example in (20). Since Ketill Auðunarson has not been mentioned earlier in this chapter, nor the fact that anyone is going to receive rafters, without the proper name the referent is impossible to identify.

- (20) Old Icelandic  
 Halli á Hakavíkinni borgaði fyrir Loðini á Holtum uppá eitt hundrað  
 Halli on Hakavika bailed for Loðinn on Holtar upon one hundred  
 sperna [honum Katli Auðunarsyni]  
 rafters him Ketill Auðunarson  
 ‘Halli from Hakavika guaranteed one hundred rafters to Ketill  
 Auðunarson on behalf of Loðinn from Holtar.’ (Johnsen 2016: 200)

In terms of the pragmatic properties of the PA in early Norwegian/Icelandic, Johnsen (2016) observes that the PA-marked referent is known and given information in the context, while personal names which refer to individuals who are not familiar from the context are not accompanied by a PA. Johnsen’s claims, however, are made on the basis of a relatively small dataset, and so merit testing on a larger scale.

Finally, Faarlund (2004: 89) specifically comments on the plain PA in the plural with a coordinated referent in Old Norse/Icelandic (‘they X and Y’), saying that

this is much more common than the singular plain PA with a single name ('he X'). He provides the example in (21).

- (21) Old Norse/Icelandic  
 með hverjum skildaga [þeir Einar ok Brúsi  
 with what agreement.DAT PA.M.NOM.3PL Einar.NOM and Brúsi.NOM  
 brœðr] hófðu félag sitt gört  
 brothers.NOM had partnership.ACC their.REFL.ACC made  
 'with what agreement the brothers Einar and Brusi had formed a  
 partnership' (Hkr II.206.15, Faarlund 2004: 89)

### 3.3 The inclusory proprial article, number and associativity

Besides the plain PA, Old Icelandic also exhibits the inclusory PA, as discussed in early philological work on Early Germanic, notably Bergmann (1838: 220), Grimm (1898: 350–351) and Heusler (1921: §395–396, §404–405), as well as more recently by Faarlund (2004: 90). Both Grimm and Heusler point out that the inclusory PA can be a dual pronoun in the 1st and 2nd person, which in Old Icelandic retain a distinction between dual (DU) and plural (PL) in the personal pronoun paradigm, cf. Table 1. Thus, in the first and second persons, one finds both dual PAs and plural (inclusory) PAs, as in (22) for the first person and (23) for the second person.

Table 1: Distinction between dual and plural in the 1st and 2nd person personal pronouns in Old Icelandic (Barnes 2008: 61)

	1st person		2nd person	
	DU	PL	DU	PL
NOM	<i>vit</i>	<i>vér</i>	<i>(þ)it</i>	<i>(þ)ér</i>
ACC	<i>ok(k)r</i>	<i>oss</i>	<i>yk(k)r</i>	<i>yðr</i>
DAT	<i>ok(k)r</i>	<i>oss</i>	<i>yk(k)r</i>	<i>yðr</i>
GEN	<i>okkar</i>	<i>vár</i>	<i>ykkar</i>	<i>yð(v)ar</i>

- (22) Old Norse/Icelandic  
 a. erom [vit Gunnarr] nú sáttar  
 are PA.NOM.1DU Gunnarr.NOM now reconciled  
 'Gunnar and I are now reconciled'



- b. sætt, þeire er konungr gørþe mille [vár Brúsa]  
 agreement DEM REL king.NOM made between PA.GEN.1PL Brúsi  
 ‘the agreement which the king made between us and Brúsi’  
 (Heusler 1921: p. 124, §395)
- (23) a. Old Norse/Icelandic  
 þó at [it Egell] talezk við  
 though COMP PA.NOM.2DU Egill.NOM speak.RECP with  
 ‘although you(sg) and Egill speak with each other’  
 (Heusler 1921: p. 124, §395)
- b. og hefir þetta mikið um spillt, er [þér Eyvindur]  
 and has DEM much PTCL worsened REL PA.NOM.2PL Eyvindur.NOM  
 fundust við Jótland.”  
 met.RECP by Jutland  
 ‘and this has greatly worsened since you(pl) and Eyvindur met each  
 other by Jutland’ (IcePaHC: 1250, Thetubrot.73)

Grimm (1898: 350) provides similar examples of inclusory PAs in the dual from both Old English and Old High German poetry, e.g. (24), which indicates that this particular construction is a broader Early Germanic phenomenon, although examples in West Germanic seem to be much rarer than in North Germanic.

- (24) a. Old English  
 vit Scilling  
 PA.NOM.1DU Scilling.NOM  
 ‘Scilling and I’ (Traveller’s Song, line 103, Grimm 1898: 350)
- b. Old English  
 uncer Grendles  
 PA.GEN.1DU Grendel.GEN  
 ‘mine and Grendel’s’ (Beowulf, line 2002, Grimm 1898: 350)
- c. Old High German  
 wiz Hiltiprant  
 ‘Hildebrandt and I’ (Grimm 1898: 350)<sup>9</sup>

In the third person, which lacks a dual in Old Norse/Icelandic, inclusory PAs in the plural are also attested and have been discussed in modern theoretical

<sup>9</sup>The specific text is not provided by Grimm. I have not been able to find the precise example, and it has been claimed that Grimm himself constructed this example (Krause 1924: 236, fn. 2); thanks to Nelson Goering and Svetlana Petrova for pointing this out.

work as an “associative plural” construction (den Besten 1996; Moravcsik 2003; Daniel & Moravcsik 2013; Sigurðsson & Wood 2020), i.e. a construction which refers to a focal, typically human referent, plus their (unnamed) associates. Such discussions refer to examples like (25).

(25) Old Norse/Icelandic

**þeir**                      Gizorr  
PA.M.NOM.3PL Gizorr.NOM

‘Gizorr and his associates’ (Daniel & Moravcsik 2013: ex. (4))

However, Heusler (1921: §404), who discusses the example in (25) in detail, notes that it can have two different meanings: (i) ‘Gizorr and his people’ and (ii) ‘Gizorr plus another named individual’.<sup>10</sup> According to Heusler, in the first case Gizorr is the main person, around which one or several unnamed (or not to be named again) people are grouped, i.e. an associative plural.<sup>11</sup> In the second case, the already named individual is in the “consciousness” of the speaker, to which Gizorr is added as a second person.<sup>12</sup> These two meanings are also reflected in the translations of the examples provided by Faarlund (2004: 90), e.g. (26), though he does not discuss the construction in detail.<sup>13</sup>

(26) Old Norse/Icelandic

- a. [**þeir**                      Ásbjörn] lendu útan        at eyjunni  
PA.M.NOM.3PL Ásbjörn landed from.out at island.DAT.DEF  
‘Ásbjörn and his men landed on the outside of the island’  
(Hkr II.250.18, Faarlund 2004: 90)
- b. hvat [**þau**                      dróttning] tala jafnan  
what PA.N.NOM.3PL queen.NOM talk constantly  
‘what he and the queen are always talking about’  
(Hkr I.293.5, Faarlund 2004: 90)

Strikingly, the inclusory PA is also attested in the Poetic Edda, as pointed out by Bergmann (1838: 220), who provides the examples in (27).

<sup>10</sup>Original: “G. und die Seinen” and “ein genannter nebst G.” respectively (Heusler 1921: §404).

<sup>11</sup>Original: “Im ersten Falle ist G. die Hauptperson, an die sich ein oder mehrere ungenannte (oder nicht wieder zu nennende) anreihen, “G. und die um ihn” ” (Heusler 1921: §404).

<sup>12</sup>Original: “Im zweiten Falle liegt der andere, schon genannte (...) im Bewußtsein des Sprechenden, so daß nur Gizorr als Ergänzung, als 2. Person hinzugefügt werden muß”

<sup>13</sup>Sigurðsson & Wood (2020: 9) also acknowledge this second function of the inclusory PA in modern Icelandic, and in fact state that the associative plural usage of the construction, as seen in Old Icelandic, is “obsolete” in the modern language.

(27) Old Norse/Icelandic

- a. þau Högni  
PA.N.NOM.3PL Högni.NOM  
‘she and Högni’ (Atlamál, verse 10, Bergmann 1838: 220)
- b. við Freyr  
PA.NOM.1DU Freyr.NOM  
‘Freyr and I’ (Skírnismál, verse 20, Bergmann 1838: 220)
- c. ið Gymir  
PA.NOM.2DU Gymir.NOM  
‘you(sg) and Gymir’ (Skírnismál, verse 24, Bergmann 1838: 220)

Such examples in the Poetic Edda, which preserves poems likely composed in c. 800-1100 CE, show that the inclusory PA has a long history in North Germanic.

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Data collection

The claims in this chapter are based on data from two parsed corpora of historical Icelandic, IcePaHC (Wallenberg et al. 2011) and MICEPaHC (Ingason 2020), henceforth referred to collectively as “(M)IcePaHC”. IcePaHC spans the whole Icelandic diachrony from 1150-2008 CE, with 61 text excerpts from varying genres, which altogether contain around 1 million words. MICEPaHC is an extended corpus of Old Icelandic saga texts currently under development, and I use this resource to complement the IcePaHC data, since the PA is a relatively low-frequency phenomenon, at least in the extant written texts which are available to us from the Old Icelandic period.

I restrict the study to texts dated up to 1450 ( $\approx$  Old Icelandic), according to the dating provided by the corpora themselves.<sup>14</sup> Both corpora are syntactically annotated according to the Penn Treebank format established for historical English (Santorini 2010), which allows for the extraction and quantitative investigation of specific hierarchical structures and linear orders via the CorpusSearch query language (Randall 2005). Each sentence from (M)IcePaHC is equipped with a unique sentence ID which provides information about the year and name of the text, the text genre and the number of the token in the text. When citing an example from

<sup>14</sup>1450 is relatively late to be considered “Old Icelandic”, but since the PA is a relatively low-frequency phenomenon, I stretch the period to gather as much data as possible.

(M)IcePaHC, I specify the particular corpus and provide the year, text name and token number, allowing for identification of the example in the relevant corpus.

In the (M)IcePaHC annotation, the plain and the inclusory PA are treated identically as a pronoun which combines with an appositive noun phrase (NP-PRN), headed by a proper noun (NPR-\*). An example of an annotated plain PA is provided in (28a) and of an inclusory PA in (28b).<sup>15</sup>

- (28) a. (NP-SBJ (PRO-N hann-hann)  
(NP-PRN (NPR-N Ófeigur-ófeigur)))  
b. (NP-SBJ (PRO-N þeir-hann)  
(NP-PRN (NPR-N Þorleifur-þorleifur)))

I extract all third person PAs as the basis of the study via CorpusSearch queries (Randall 2005); as mentioned in Section 3, the inclusory PA also occurs in the first and second person but I leave such examples for further research.

As outlined in Section 2, in contexts where the inclusory PA combines with more than one personal name in a coordination structure, it will be identical in form to a plain PA construction. There are many such examples in the (M)IcePaHC data where, without contextual information, the construction could in principle be an instance of either the plain or inclusory PA, e.g. (29).

- (29) Old Icelandic
- a. Síðan fara [þeir Arinbjörn og Egill] á  
then go PA.M.NOM.3PL Arinbjörn.NOM and Egill.NOM to  
fund Bjarnar  
meeting.ACC Björn.GEN  
‘Then Arinbjörn and Egill (at least) go to a meeting with Björn.’  
(IcePaHC: 1250, Thetubrot.60)
- b. [Þau Rannveig og Gamli] tóku allvel  
PA.N.NOM.3PL Rannveig.NOM and Gamli.NOM received very.well  
við Gretti  
with Grettir.DAT  
‘Rannveig and Gamli (at least) gave Grettir a very good welcome.’  
(IcePaHC: 1310, Grettir.1635)

Examples like (29) can only be categorised as plain or inclusory via close manual examination of the example in context; it is not possible to categorise them

<sup>15</sup>See the official annotation policy at [https://linguist.is/icelandic\\_treebank/NP-PRN](https://linguist.is/icelandic_treebank/NP-PRN).

automatically via the (M)IcePaHC annotation. Thus, I set them aside as a third “mixed” group, alongside a set of examples where the PA is identical in form to the 3SG pronoun *hann/hún* and which are straightforwardly all of the plain type, cf. (28a), and a set which are straightforwardly all of the inclusory type, i.e. examples where the PA is identical in form to the 3PL pronoun *þeir/þær/þau* and where the PA combines with only one personal name, cf. (28b).

The inclusory and mixed types are attested more frequently in the corpora than the plain type, which is less frequent. Thus, while I rely only on IcePaHC data for the inclusory and mixed types, for the plain type I also include relevant examples from MIcePaHC to supplement the small number in IcePaHC; for the inclusory and the mixed type, including all examples from MIcePaHC would yield too many examples to allow manual qualitative checks. After manual checking of the search outputs to exclude misannotations and erroneous examples, this yields the three datasets outlined in Table 2.<sup>16</sup>

Table 2: PAs in (M)IcePaHC (1150–1450)

Corpus	Plain	Inclusory	Mixed
IcePaHC	38	169	107
MIcePaHC	46	–	–
Total	84	169	107

The plain and inclusory subsets in Table 2 are manually tagged for properties relevant to the investigation, specifically (i) the grammatical function of the PA-marked expression, (ii) whether the referent marked by the PA is discourse-given or discourse-new, and (iii) whether the referent marked by the PA represents a topic, and if so, what type of topic transition is relevant as per the definitions in (32) below.

In terms of the distribution of the PA across different text types, one can look at the IcePaHC data in isolation to gain at least an impression, since that corpus spans a range of genres (narrative, religious, biographical, scientific and legal texts), while MIcePaHC consists of solely saga texts. The generalisation for all three subsets of data in Table 2 is that the PA is virtually restricted to narrative texts in Old Icelandic, i.e. sagas. For the plain subset, all 38 examples from

<sup>16</sup>In order to make the study of manageable scope, I restrict the study to third person instances of the PA, and exclude any examples which include nouns tagged as “proper nouns” which are not personal names, e.g. *goði* ‘chieftain’, *jarl* ‘earl’.

IcePaHC occur in sagas. For the inclusory subset, all but one of the 169 examples occur in sagas and all but one of the 142 examples from the mixed subset occur in sagas. The two examples of the PA found in non-sagas occur in the religious texts *Homiliubok* and *Judit* and are provided in (30).

(30) Old Icelandic

- a. að af trænu kom það epli, er [þau  
 COMP of tree.DAT.DEF came DEM.NOM apple.NOM REL PA.N.NOM.3PL  
 Eva og Adamur] átu fyrirboðið  
 Eve.NOM and Adam.NOM ate forbidden  
 ‘that from the tree came that apple, which Eve and Adam ate  
 (and it was) forbidden’ (IcePaHC: 1150, *Homiliubok*.2082)
- b. og hugði að þau Júdit mundu sofa bæði  
 and thought COMP PA.N.NOM.3PL Judith.NOM would sleep both  
 saman  
 together  
 ‘and thought that he and Judith would both sleep together’  
 (IcePaHC: 1450, *Judit*.434)

*Homiliubok* is a collection of sermons featuring extensive quoted passages from the bible, and *Judit* is a bible translation of the Book of Judith, and it is clear from the examples in (30) that they occur in narrative passages. Thus, one can claim on the basis of the IcePaHC data that, at least within the written language, the PA in Old Icelandic appears to be a narrative-specific device.

## 4.2 Topicality and topic transitions

Any study of the morphosyntax–information structure interface must first outline one’s terminology and understanding of key information-structural concepts. In particular, terms such as “topic” and “focus” subsume a range of notions depending on author and approach, and the definition of topichood in particular is a slippery customer (e.g. Chafe 1976; Reinhart 1981; Givón 1983; Jacobs 2001; Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; Krifka 2007; Neeleman et al. 2009; Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010). In this chapter, “topic” will be understood as roughly equivalent to “aboutness topic”, i.e. the entity about which information is expressed (cf. “sentence topic”, Reinhart 1981). In this context, the diagnostic tests provided by Götze et al. (2007: 165) can be used to identify the aboutness topic of an utterance, cf. (31).

- (31) An NP X is the aboutness topic of a sentence S containing X if:
- a. S would be a natural continuation to the announcement  
*Let me tell you something about X*
  - b. S would be a good answer to the question  
*What about X?*
  - c. S could be naturally transformed into the sentence  
*Concerning X, S'*  
where S' differs from S only insofar as X has been replaced by a suitable pronoun

As already mentioned, there is good reason to assume that studies of information-structural phenomena should go beyond a distinction between given and new and this is no less the case with topic and focus; whereas topics are prototypically given and foci prototypically new, there are many non-trivial exceptions to these general correspondences (see e.g. Cook & Bildhauer 2013). With respect to topicality, one way of distinguishing between different subtypes of topic is to go beyond whether a referent is given or new and instead consider specifically the relation between a current topic and the topic of the immediately preceding utterance, i.e. the topic transition (see e.g. Daneš 1974 and “Centering Theory” in Grosz et al. 1995). In this chapter, I recognise four types of topic transition, as defined in (32) (cf. Canes Nápoles & Riester 2021 for a similar typology).

- (32)
1. TOPIC CONTINUITY: current topic is co-referential with topic of immediately preceding utterance
  2. TOPIC PROMOTION: current topic is co-referential with focus of previous utterance
  3. TOPIC RESUMPTION: current topic is co-referential with an earlier topic which was not the topic of the immediately preceding utterance
  4. SUBSECTIONAL TOPIC SELECTION: current topic is an element of a previously introduced set of entities

Type 1 in (32), topic continuity, equates to notions defined elsewhere as “familiar topics” (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007) or “continuous topics” (Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010; cf. also Givón 1983), whereas types 2–4 represent various types of what are standardly labelled “shift-topics” (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010). Note however that types 2–4 each involve a shift of topic to a referent which, although not the topic of the preceding sentence, is already present in the discourse in some way, i.e. given/familiar. This

will become particularly relevant in the discussion of the plain proprial article alongside other topic management devices in Old Icelandic in Section 5.

## 5 Topic management and the plain proprial article

Recent years have seen a surge of interest in the morphosyntax–information structure interface in Early Germanic, especially within Early West Germanic, (e.g. Trips & Fuß 2009; Hinterhölzl & Petrova 2009, 2010; Petrova & Hinterhölzl 2010; Epstein 2011; Breban 2012; Meurman-Solin et al. 2012; van Gelderen 2013; Bech & Eide 2014; Los & van Kemenade 2018; Catasso et al. 2021). Particular attention has been centred on the various devices which are employed for the management of discourse participants, and different types of topic transition (e.g. Epstein 2011; Breban 2012; van Gelderen 2013; Los & van Kemenade 2018; Catasso et al. 2021). By comparison, relatively little has been said about Early North Germanic in this context.<sup>17</sup> In this section, I examine various morphosyntactic devices in Old Icelandic, including the proprial article, in terms of how they contribute to topic management. The discussion in this section is limited to the plain PA; I examine the inclusory PA in Section 6.

### 5.1 Narratives and information structure

As outlined in Section 4, the evidence from IcePaHC indicates that the PA is a narrative-specific phenomenon, at least in the exclusively written language which is available to us from the period. As many authors have noted (e.g. Carroll & Lambert 2003; Dimroth et al. 2010; Riester 2015), narratives as a genre bring their own specific characteristics which interact with the expression of information structure. Riester (2015) notes, for instance, that narratives are primarily structured on the temporal dimension, and that the “question-under-discussion” (von Stutterheim & Klein 1989; Van Kuppevelt 1995) is typically a global one (e.g. *What happened? What happened next?*). Dimroth et al. (2010) note that this global question-under-discussion which underlies so much of narrative texts results in a prototypical narrative structure where the time talked about (“topic time”, Klein 1994) shifts from one utterance to the text, while the protagonist is maintained, and the predicate that holds for the protagonist constantly changes.

Furthermore, medieval Icelandic sagas must be considered on their own terms as a particular type of narrative with their own saga-specific linguistic traits,

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<sup>17</sup>Relevant exceptions include Kossuth (1980), Leiss (2007), and Booth & Beck (2021).



which may be to some extent linked to their (at least partly) oral origins (e.g. Byock 1984; Quinn 2000; Sigurðsson 2004). Various literary studies of the sagas have pointed out the rather unique style of saga narrative. Clover (1974), for instance, refers to sagas as exhibiting a “narrative of parataxis”, where a series of relatively independent units or “scenes” occur in paratactic sequence, without connecting narrative of any kind. As she also notes, the narrative in the sagas is often “stranded”, with the scene shifting back and forth between accounts, involving rhetorical devices of scene-setting. Similarly, Byock (1994) observes that the basic building blocks of saga structure are small, discrete particles of action and that they have a characteristic sense of homogeneity, with repeated presentation of incident after incident, in an economic style which the sagas have become famous for.

Given their rather unique style, it is unsurprising that certain authors have highlighted various morphosyntactic phenomena with special pragmatic properties which are particularly characteristic of saga texts, such as the “narrative inversion” V1 pattern (Kossuth 1980; Platzack 1985; Hopper 1987; Booth & Beck 2021), discussed below in Section 5.2, tense switching (Richardson 1995) and certain formulae which signal a shift in scene and/or temporal backtracking (Clover 1974). In this section, I claim that the PA is another such device employed for a specific type of topic management.

## 5.2 Givenness, topic continuity and narrative inversion

As outlined in Section 2, previous claims regarding the pragmatics of the Icelandic PA have focused on the given/new dimension, with the standard view that it is a familiarity/givenness marker, both in the plain variety and the inclusive type (Sigurðsson 2006). Moreover, this claim has been extended to early Norwegian/Icelandic by Johnsen (2016), as also discussed in Section 2. However, on closer inspection it is clear that the plain PA is not motivated in prototypical givenness contexts, for instance, where a single referent is maintained as the topic (cf. “topic continuity” in (32) above) and where no other referents are active in the discourse. Rather, in such contexts, the referent is expressed via straightforward personal pronouns, in line with the expression of topic continuity in Early Germanic more generally (e.g. van Gelderen 2013; Los & van Kemenade 2018). An example is provided in (33), which represents a continuous discourse segment from the opening of a new chapter, where the character of Haflíði Höskuldsson is introduced and maintained as the topic throughout.

(33) Old Icelandic

- a. Maður hét Haflíði Höskuldsson bróðir  
 man.NOM was.called Haflíði Höskuldsson brother.NOM  
 Sighvats auðga  
 Sighvatur.GEN wealthy.GEN  
 ‘There was a man called Haflíði Höskuldsson, brother of Sighvatur the wealthy.’
- b. Hann dreymdi um veturinn eftir jól þá er Melaför var  
 he.ACC dreamt in winter.DEF after Christmas when Melaför was  
 að hann var úti staddur á Kolbeinsstöðum  
 COMP he.NOM was outside stood at Kolbeinsstaðir  
 ‘He dreamt in the winter after Yule, when Melaför was, that he was standing outside at Kolbeinsstaðir.’
- c. Þar átti hann heima í Haugatungu  
 there had he.NOM home in Haugatunga  
 ‘He had his home there in Haugatunga.’
- d. Hann sá að leikur var sleginn þar skammt frá  
 he.NOM saw COMP game.NOM was struck there not.far from  
 garði  
 farmstead  
 ‘He saw that a game was struck there not far from the farmstead.’  
 (IcePaHC: 1250, Sturlunga.389.28–32)

A similar example, from the opening of *Finnboga saga ramma*, is shown in (34).

(34) Old Icelandic

- a. Ásbjörn hét maður  
 Ásbjörn.NOM was.called man.NOM  
 ‘There was a man called Ásbjörn.’
- b. Hann var kallaður dettiás  
 he.NOM was called Dettiás  
 ‘He was called Dettiás.’
- c. Hann var Gunnbjarnarson Ingjaldssonar  
 he.NOM was Gunnbjörnson.NOM Ingjaldurson.GEN  
 ‘He was the son of Gunnbjörn, son of Ingjaldur.’

- d. Mikill maður var hann og sterkur og  
great.NOM man.NOM was he.NOM and strong.NOM and  
vænn að álit  
handsome.NOM to appearance.DAT  
'He was a great man, strong, and handsome in appearance.'
- e. Hann bjó í Flateyjarðal á bæ þeim er  
he.NOM lived in Flateyjarðalur on farmstead.DAT DEM.DAT REL  
heitir á Eyri  
is.called á Eyri  
'He lived in Flateyjarðalur on the farmstead which is called á Eyri.'  
(IcePaHC: 1350, Finnbogi.625.1–5)

All of the sentences in (33) and (34) exhibit verb-second (V2) word order but a particular type of verb-first (V1) order has also been claimed to signal topic continuity, namely the “narrative inversion” construction (Platzack 1985), where a clause-initial finite verb is followed by a topical subject, typically realised as a personal pronoun, e.g. (35) (Kossuth 1980; Booth & Beck 2021).

- (35) Old Icelandic  
Sat hún hjá fótum hans  
sat she.NOM by feet.DAT he.GEN  
'She sat by his feet.' (IcePaHC: 1150, Homiliubok.1875)

The construction is particularly common in narrative texts, especially the sagas (Platzack 1985) and cannot initiate a new discourse (Sigurðsson 2018), instead typically appearing in the reporting of sequenced temporal events with no change in participants Platzack 1985; Hopper 1987; Kossuth 1980). Booth & Beck (2021) discuss the construction at length as an exception to V2, on the basis of corpus data from IcePaHC, and claim that the construction signals a clause with a subject which is an “anaphoric topic”, i.e. a topic with a direct antecedent in the immediately preceding context in the same narrative section. They provide the example in (36), which represents a series of temporally sequenced clauses, and where V2 coincides with topic-shift and narrative inversion V1 with topic continuity.

(36) Old Icelandic

- a. **Gissur** kom í Reykjaholt um nóttina eftir  
 Gissur.NOM came to Reykjaholt in night.ACC.DEF after  
 Máritíusmessu  
 Máritíusmass.ACC  
 ‘Gissur came to Reykjaholt in the night after Máritíusmass.’
- b. Brutu **þeir** upp skemmuna er Snorri svaf í  
 broke they.NOM up storehouse.ACC.DEF REL Snorri.NOM slept in  
 ‘They (=Gissur and his men) broke open the storehouse where  
 Snorri was sleeping.’
- c. En **hann** hljóp upp og úr skemmunni og í hin  
 but he.NOM leapt up and out storehouse.DAT.DEF and in DEM.ACC  
 litlu húsin er voru við skemmuna  
 little.ACC houses.ACC.DEF REL were by storehouse.ACC.DEF  
 ‘But he (=Snorri) leapt up and out of the storehouse and into those  
 little houses which were next to the storehouse.’
- d. Fann **hann** þar Arnbjörn prest og talaði við hann  
 found he.NOM there Arnbjörn.ACC priest.ACC and spoke with he.ACC  
 ‘He (=Snorri) found there Arnbjörn the priest and spoke with him.’
- e. Réðu **þeir** það að Snorri gekk í kjallarann  
 planned they.NOM DEM.ACC COMP Snorri.NOM went in cellar.ACC.DEF  
 er var undir loftinu þar í húsunum  
 REL was under loft.DAT.DEF there in houses.DAT.DEF  
 ‘They (=Arnbjörn and Snorri) planned that Snorri would go into the  
 cellar which was under the loft there in the houses.’
- f. **Þeir** **Gissur** fóru að leita Snorra um  
 they.NOM Gissur.NOM began to seek Snorri.GEN around  
 húsin  
 house.ACC.DEF  
 ‘Gissur and his men began to search for Snorri around the house.’  
 (IcePaHC: 1250, Sturlunga.439.1765–1772, Booth & Beck 2021: 21)

Of the 83 examples of the (singular) plain PA in the (M)IcePaHC data (see Section 4), there is only one instance where the PA occurs on the subject of a narrative inversion V1 clause. On the standard assumption that the PA is a familiarity/givenness marker, this is unexpected, since narrative inversion V1 by

definition involves a topical subject which is discourse-given. Rather, it suggests that the function of the (plain) PA in Old Icelandic should be more closely examined. The one example where the (plain) PA coincides with the subject of a narrative inversion clause is shown in (37), together with the relevant preceding context.

(37) Old Icelandic

- a. Þuríður gengur þá innar og leggur sitt stykki  
 Þuríður.NOM goes then in and places her.REFL.ACC piece.ACC  
 fyrir hvern þeirra bræðra  
 before each.ACC DEM.GEN brothers.DEM  
 ‘Þuríður goes in then and places her piece before each of the brothers.’
- b. Tekur [hann Steingrímur] til orða og mælti:  
 takes PA.M.NOM.3SG Steingrímur.NOM to word and said  
 ‘Steingrímur takes up the word and said:’  
 (MIcePaHC: 1300, Heidarviga.1450–1454)

Sentence B in (37) involves a topic shift from Þuríður (=topic of sentence A) to Steingrímur and is thus an atypical use of narrative inversion, which typically marks topic continuity. Note, however, that Steingrímur is referenced in sentence A as one of the brothers, i.e. that sentence A involves topic shift via subsectional topic selection (cf. (32) above). In the next section, I show that marking this type of topic-shift is overall a common function of the plain PA in Old Icelandic.

### 5.3 The plain proprial article, subjecthood and topic-shift

As in modern Icelandic (Section 2), the plain PA in Old Icelandic can occur on a range of grammatical functions, as evidenced by the (M)IcePaHC data which provide examples on subjects, possessors, objects and prepositional complements, cf. Table 3. For each grammatical function, I compare the number of PA-marked personal names against the number of simple personal names which occur without the PA. This reveals that the presence of the PA is in fact incredibly rare across all functions, cf. Table 3. In this section, I focus on the plain PA as it occurs on subjects, which is the most common in the dataset (65/84 examples).

As already shown in Section 5.2, the (plain) PA does not occur in prototypical givenness contexts, i.e. those which involve topic continuity. On first sight, this observation appears to cast doubt on the standard assumption that it functions

Table 3: Frequency of the plain PA across grammatical functions in (M)IcePaHC (1150–1450)

Grammatical function	PA	no PA	%PA
Subject	65	28 391	0.23
Possessor	13	3 961	0.33
Object	3	3 048	0.10
Prepositional complement <sup>a</sup>	3	–	–
Total	84		

<sup>a</sup>I do not make this comparison for the PA on prepositional complements as unlike proper nouns (NPR-\*) which occur as subjects, possessors and objects, which are virtually all personal names, proper nouns which occur as prepositional complements are very often place names, which cannot be disambiguated from personal names in the corpus annotation.

as a familiarity/givenness marker. At the same time, the familiarity/givenness association with the PA is not in fact inaccurate; the (M)IcePaHC data for the plain PA, once tagged as described in Section 4, confirm that the PA-marked referent in Old Icelandic is always discourse-given. Specifically, in all 84 instances of the plain PA in (M)IcePaHC, the PA marks a referent which is referred to in the previous discourse. However, as I will show in this section, the (M)IcePaHC data indicate that the (plain) PA is more than just a straightforward familiarity/givenness marker. In particular, it occurs on the subject in contexts involving a particular type of topic-shift, where a discourse-given referent is promoted to, resumed, or subsectionally selected as the topic (cf. the topic transitions in (32) above). Crucially, such an account relies on a more complex understanding of the interaction between morphosyntax and information structure, beyond a simple given/new distinction.

Of the topic-shift contexts in which the plain PA appears, one can distinguish three sub-contexts that involve particular types of topic transition as outlined above in (32): (i) TOPIC PROMOTION, (ii) TOPIC RESUMPTION and (iii) SUBSECTIONAL TOPIC SELECTION. Firstly, the plain PA can mark instances of topic-shift involving topic promotion, i.e. where a referent construed as non-topical in the previous context (e.g. as a focused element) is “promoted” to topic, e.g. (38).

(38) Old Icelandic

- a. Og er Túta kemur fyrir Halla þá réttir  
and when Túta.NOM came before Halli.ACC then outstretched

[**hann** Halli] hendur í móti grísinum...  
PA.M.NOM.3SG Halli.NOM hands.ACC towards pig.DAT.DEF

‘And when Túta came before Halli, then Halli stretched out his hands towards the pig.’ (IcePaHC: 1275, Morkin.1156)

- b. Svo er sagt að þeir kæmu að máli við Þórodd  
so is said COMP they.NOM came to talk.DAT with Þóroddur.ACC  
goða Eyvindarson frænda sinn synir  
chief.ACC Eyvindarson.ACC kinsman.ACC their.ACC sons.NOM  
Þóris flatnefs. Hét annar þeirra Þórður illugi  
Þórir.GEN flat-nose.GEN was.called other.NOM they.GEN Þórður illugi  
en annar Björn. Þeir báðu hann ráðagerðar til að drepa  
and other Björn they.ACC asked he.ACC plan.GEN to to kill  
Skútu Áskelsson því að hann hafði drepið föður þeirra  
Skúta Áskelsson because he.NOM had killed father.ACC they.GEN  
og bróður. [**Hann** Þóroddur] vill nú þreifa  
and brother.ACC PA.M.NOM.3G Þóroddur.NOM will now consider  
um þá  
about they.ACC

‘So it is said that they, the sons of Þórir Flat-nose, came to speak with Chief Þóroddur Eyvindarson, their kinsman. One of them was called Þórður illugi and the other Björn. They asked him for a plan to kill Skúta Áskelsson because he had killed their father and brother. Þóroddur now wishes to consider them.’

(MicePaHC: 1400, Reykdæla.2035–2038)

Secondly, the plain PA signals topic-shift in contexts where a referent who was a previous topic, but was not the topic in the immediately preceding context, can be re-established or resumed as the topic (“topic resumption”, cf. Gast 2010). A very common context here is extended dialogues which alternate back and forth between at least two speakers. An example is shown in (39), which is a continuous piece of discourse where the conversation alternates between Ófeigur and Gellir, and where the PA is used to signal turn-taking.

(39) Old Icelandic

- a. “Hví sætir það?” segir Ófeigur  
why amounted DEM.NOM says Ófeigur.NOM  
“‘How did that come about?’, says Ófeigur.”

- b. “Því,” kvað [hann Gellir], “að eigi hafa þeir  
because said PA.M.NOM.3SG Gellir.NOM COMP NEG have DEM.NOM  
menn til orðið er bæði séu vel ættaðir og  
men.NOM PTCL become REL both would.be well born and  
fémiklir og hefðu staðfestur góðar”  
moneyed and would.have residences good  
‘ “Because”, said Gellir “these men have not come forth, who were  
both well-born and (well-)moneyed and who have good residences.” ’
- c. “Já,” kvað [hann Ófeigur], “þar er gott  
yes said PA.M.NOM.3SG Ófeigur.NOM there is good.NOM  
mannval”  
choice.people.NOM  
‘ “Yes”, said Ófeigur, “there is a good choice of people there.” ’  
(IcePaHC: 1450, Bandamenn.39.717-721)

Thirdly, the plain PA occurs in another type of environment involving topic-shift, specifically where a discourse-old referent, which was previously explicitly mentioned/understood as the member of a set of referents, is picked out from the set as a new topic (“subsectional topic”, cf. van Deemter 1992; Dekker & Hendriks 1996; Krahmer & Deemter 1998), e.g. (40).

(40) Old Icelandic

- a. og þar koma til móts við þá Egill og  
and there come to meeting.GEN with they.ACC Egill.NOM and  
Gellir [...] Einn dag um þingið er á  
Gellir.NOM one.ACC day.ACC at assembly.ACC.DEF when on  
leið gengur Ófeigur frá búð og kemur til  
way.ACC goes Ófeigur.NOM from booth and comes to  
Mýramannabúðar og var [hann Egill] úti í  
Mýramenn’s.booth.GEN and was PA.M.NOM.3SG Egill.NOM out in  
virkinu og talar við mann einn  
work.DEF and speaks with man.ACC one.ACC  
‘and Egill and Gellir come there to meet with them [...] One day at the  
assembly, when it is underway, Ófeigur leaves the booth and comes  
to the booth of the Mýramenn and Egill was out working and he  
speaks with a certain man.’ (IcePaHC: 1450, Bandamenn.36.599)



- b. En þau voru í akri Vigdís og Sigmundur. Og  
and they.NOM were in field.DAT Vigdís.NOM and Sigmundur.NOM and  
er [hún Vigdís] sá hann gekk hún í mót  
when PA.F.NOM.3SG Vigdís.NOM saw he.ACC went she.NOM towards  
honum  
he.DAT

‘And they were in the field, Vigdís and Sigmundur. And when Vigdís saw him, she went towards him.’ (MIcePaHC: 1350, Viga.505)

- c. Þá mælti Glúmur við Ingólf: [...] Og nú gengu  
then spoke Glúmur.NOM with Ingólfur.ACC and now go  
þeir báðir saman og nú viku [hann  
they.NOM both.NOM together and now turns PA.M.NOM.3SG  
Glúmur] í hlöðu  
Glúmur.NOM into barn.ACC

‘Then Glúmur spoke with Ingólfur: [...] and now they both go together and now Glúmur turns into the barn.’

(MIcePaHC: 1350, Viga.887)

In sum, the plain PA – at least on subjects – signals a specific type of topic shift involving the (re-)establishment of a discourse-given referent as topic. As such, the standard assumption that the (plain) PA signals givenness is not incorrect, but it is only part of the story. A final observation which is relevant in this context is that the order of the PA and the PA-marked referent in the (M)IcePaHC data is fixed; the PA is always prenominal. This fixed ordering is striking, given that word order in the nominal domain is known to be relatively free in early North Germanic (e.g. Börjars et al. 2016), where e.g. demonstratives, adjectives and possessors can occur before or after the head noun. However, as Börjars et al. (2016) point out, word order in the Old Norse/Icelandic noun phrase is not completely free; there is a structurally defined, discourse-prominent position at the left edge which hosts information-structurally privileged elements. On the assumption that the (plain) PA serves a special information-structural function in marking topic-shift, its restriction to this information-structurally privileged position is thus expected.

## 6 The inclusory proprial article

### 6.1 Associativity, givenness and topicality

As discussed in Section 2, previous accounts of the pragmatics of the inclusory PA in modern Icelandic have been restricted to the given/new dimension, with

the claim that, like the plain PA, the gapped PA marks familiarity/givenness (Sigurðsson 2006). At the same time, the gapped PA in Old Icelandic has been discussed, often in passing, as an “associative plural” construction (den Besten 1996; Moravcsik 2003; Daniel & Moravcsik 2013; Sigurðsson & Wood 2020), although, as mentioned in Section 3, Heusler (1921) points out that this is only one function. As Heusler states, the PA can also express two individuals, one of whom is already in the “consciousness” of the speaker, i.e. in the common ground (Stalnaker 2002), and thus not explicitly named, and one who is explicitly named and “added” as a second person (cf. footnote 12 above). To my knowledge, the precise properties of the inclusory PA in Old Icelandic have not been examined since the early descriptive work by Heusler (1921). In this section, I examine to what extent the two different functions of the inclusory PA are exhibited in the (M)IcePaHC data. I focus specifically on examples in the third person, which in principle allow for both functions.

With respect to associative plurals, they are typically defined both in terms of form and meaning. Corbett & Mithun (1996: 1), for instance, define them as consisting of a nominal plus some sort of marker, which denote a set comprised of the referent of the nominal and one or more associated members (for similar definitions cf. Moravcsik 2003; Lewis 2021). In terms of pragmatics, the set denoted by an associative plural is ranked, with the referent around which the associate(s) is/are centred being “focal” (Moravcsik 2003) or “pragmatically dominant” (Daniel & Moravcsik 2013). Although such constructions generally have a restricted distribution within individual languages, typologically they are relatively common; Daniel & Moravcsik (2013), for instance, found associative plural constructions to be present in 201/238 sample languages. They are particularly common throughout Australia, Asia and Africa, although rare in Western Europe, found only in Icelandic, Norwegian, Frisian, German, Northern Saami and Basque.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Note that the associative plurals for Norwegian, Frisian and German are rather different to the Icelandic construction discussed here:

- (i) a. Norwegian  
moren og di  
mother and they  
‘mother and the rest of the family’ (Daniel & Moravcsik 2013: Sentence igt-1209)
- b. Frisian  
heit en hjar  
father and them  
‘father and them’ (Daniel & Moravcsik 2013: Sentence igt-3403)

In order to investigate to what extent the inclusory PA in Old Icelandic functions as an associative plural on the terms just outlined, I conducted a manual investigation of two texts which provide particularly abundant examples of the construction and for which reliable published English translations are available: (i) *Grettir* (Faulkes 2001) and (ii) *Þomsvíkingar* (Finlay & Jóhannesdóttir 2018). As with the investigation of the plain PA in Section 5, I focus here on the inclusory PA as it occurs on the subject, which constitutes the vast majority of the examples in the two texts ( $n=19$ ). 11 of the 19 examples are translated with an associative plural meaning ('X and his associates'), where the PA-marked expression refers to a group of unidentifiable human individuals centred around the PA-marked referent ('X'), e.g. (41). In each instance the PA-marked referent is discourse-given, but is not present in the immediately preceding context. Since many of the examples involve long passages of text, I do not provide glossing but simply the accompanying published translations from Faulkes (2001) and Finlay & Jóhannesdóttir (2018).

(41) Old Icelandic

- a. Þorgils frétti að [**þeir** Þorsteinn] fjölmenntu mjög til alþingis og sátu í Ljárskógum. Því frestaði hann heiman að riða að hann vildi að [**þeir** Þorsteinn] væru undan suður riðnir þá er hann kæmi vestan og svo varð.

'Thorgils heard that **Thorstein's party** was assembling a great following for the Althing and was waiting in Liarskogar. He delayed his own departure because he wanted **Thorstein and his party** to have ridden away south by the time he came from the west, and so it turned out.' (IcePaHC: 1310, *Grettir*.1381–1383)

- b. Þau Rannveig og Gamli tóku allvel við Gretti og buðu honum með sér að vera en hann vildi heim riða. Þá frétti Grettir að [**þeir** Kormákur] voru sunnan komnir og höfðu gist í Tungu um nóttina.

'Rannveig and Gamli welcomed Grettir warmly and invited him to stay on with them, but he wanted to ride home. Then Grettir found out that **Kormak's party** had come back from the south and had lodged at Tunga for the night.' (IcePaHC: 1310, *Grettir*.1635–1638)

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c. German

Anna und die

Anna and PL.DEF.ART

'Anna and her group' (Daniel & Moravcsik 2013: Sentence igt-3235)

- c. Og nú er það sagt, að Haraldur konungur gráfeldur fellur þar í bardaganum og mestur hluti liðs hans, og lauk svo um hans æfi. [5] Og þegar er Hákon jarl veit þessi tíðendi, þá gerir hann atróður harðan, þá er [þeir Gull-Haraldur] voru sízt viður búnir.

‘And now it is said that King Haraldr gráfeldr fell there in battle with the greater part of his company, and thus his life ended. And as soon as Jarl Hákon learned this news, he makes a hard rowing attack when **Gull-Haraldur and his men** were least prepared for it.’

(IcePaHC: 1260, Jomsvikingar.490–492)

- d. En um daginn eftir, þá berjast þeir allan dag til nætur, og þá eru hroðin tíu skip Haralds konungs, en tólf af Sveini, og lifir enn hvortveggi þeirra, og leggur Sveinn nú skip sín inn í vogsbótinn um kveldið. En [þeir Haraldur konungur] tengja saman skip sín um þveran voginn fyrir utan og leggja stafn við stafn, og búa svo umb, að Sveinn væri inni tepptur í voginum, og ætla að hann skyldi eigi út koma skipunum, þótt hann vildi við það leita.

‘But the following day they fight all day until night, and then ten of King Haraldr’s ships are stripped, and twelve of Sveinn’s, and both of them are still alive, and now Sveinn berths his ships in at the head of the bay in the evening. But **King Haraldur and his men** link their ships together across the outside of the bay, setting stem to stem and arranging things so that Sveinn would be trapped in the bay, and intended that he would not be able to get his ships out if he wanted to try it.’

(IcePaHC: 1260, Jomsvikingar.1283–1290)

The remaining eight examples of the inclusory PA in these two texts are translated instead as ‘he and X’ and as such do not appear to qualify as associative plurals on the understanding of the term here. Some examples from this group are provided in (42).

(42) Old Icelandic

- a. Um vorið fór Grettir norður í Voga með byrðingsmönnum. Skildu [þeir Þorkell] með vináttu en Björn fór vestur til Englands.

‘In the spring Grettir went north to Vágan with merchants; **he and Thorkel** parted on friendly terms.’ (IcePaHC: 1310, Grettir.1040–1042)

- b. Þá var til jarls kominn Bersi Skáld-Torfuson, félagi Grettis og vin. Gengu [þeir Þorfinnur] fyrir jarl

‘By this time Grettir’s comrade and friend Bersi Poet-Torfa’s son had arrived at the earl’s. **He and Thorfinn** approached the earl.’

(IcePaHC: 1310, Grettir.1147–1148)

- c. Fór Grettir með Þorfinni. Skildust [**þeir** Þorsteinn bróðir hans] með vináttu.  
‘Grettir went with Thorfinn. **He and his brother Thorstein** parted in friendship.’ (IcePaHC: 1310, Grettir.1263–1264)
- d. Og nú tekur jarl upp þetta fé allt að herfangi og geldur Haraldi konungi af því fé þriggja vetra skatt fyrir fram, og kveðst eigi mundu í öðru sinni betur til fær en nú. Haraldur konungur tekur því vel, og skiljast [**þeir** Hákon] nú, og fer hann í braut úr Danmörku  
‘And now the jarl takes all that money as booty and pays King Haraldr from that money three years’ tribute in advance, and said he would not another time have a better opportunity than now. King Haraldr accepts that gladly, and **he and Hákon** part now, and he goes away from Denmark until he comes to Norway.’ (IcePaHC: Jomsvikingar.507–511)
- e. Þess er nú við getið að Pálnatóki á son við konu sinni Ólofu, og er hann fæddur litlu síðar en konungur fór í braut af veizlunni; sá sveinn var kallaður Áki. Hann var þar upp fæddur heima með feður sínum, og várust [**þeir** Sveinn Haraldsson] fóstbræður.  
‘It is now told further that Pálnatóki has a son with his wife Ólof, and he is born shortly after the king went away from the feast; this boy was called Áki. He was brought up there at home with his father, and **he and Sveinn Haraldsson** were foster-brothers.’  
(IcePaHC: 1260, Jomsvikingar.1128–1133)

This second group, as exemplified in (42), appears to qualify as the second function of Heusler (1921). The PA-marked expression denotes a set comprising two individuals, one of whom is already in the common ground (Heusler’s “consciousness”) and represents a continuing topic in the present utterance and is not explicitly named. Close inspection reveals that the second referent is consistently discourse-given, but never has the status of continuing topic; rather it is typically a newly promoted or resumed topic (cf. (32) above). I discuss this issue of asymmetry in topicality further in Section 6.2.

## 6.2 Inclusive constructions and noun–pronoun coordination

Various authors have discussed inclusive constructions in the wider context of linguistic devices which indicate the involvement of two or more persons in a particular semantic role, including standard coordination (e.g. Bhat 2004; Gaby 2005; Haspelmath 2007; Bril 2011). Bril (2011), for instance, in her discussion of

conjoining strategies in Austronesian languages, observes that inclusory constructions often (though not always) occur in languages which ban (standard) noun–pronoun conjunction. She further notes that, if inclusory constructions are available in a language which permits (standard) noun–pronoun conjunction, the choice between standard coordination and the inclusory construction typically correlates with discourse effects, whereby standard coordination expresses equal topicality, salience, or emphasis between conjuncts, and inclusory constructions involve pragmatic asymmetry between conjuncts.

Searches in (M)IcePaHC show that standard coordination of a 3sg pronoun and a personal name ('he and X') is attested in Old Icelandic, though very rare, and certainly much rarer than the inclusory PA. I have found only one continuous example, i.e. where the coordinated pronoun and personal name are directly adjacent, shown here in (43). The example occurs on a possessor and is from a late text (*Ectorssaga*, 1450).

(43) Old Icelandic

En gamli maður segir: ["..."] Gekk hann þá út og kom aftur  
but old.NOM man.NOM says went he.NOM then out and came back  
skjóttliga leiðandi eftir sér einn þræl stórran að ekki  
quickly leading after REFL.DAT one.ACC slave.ACC big.ACC COMP nothing  
var í milli um vöxt hans og Aprívals  
was between about size he.GEN and Apríval.GEN  
'But the old man says ["..."] Then he went out and came back quickly,  
leading after him a big slave such that there was nothing between his and  
Apríval's size.' (IcePaHC: 1450, *Ectorssaga*.1515)

Besides the continuous example in (43), I have also found one example where the 3sg pronoun and coordinated personal name are discontinuous ('he...and X'), shown here in (44).

(44) Old Icelandic

Var Þorleifur á húsum þeim er eru í útnorður  
was Þorleifur.NOM at buildings.DAT DAT.DEM REL are in northwest.ACC  
frá kirkju. Hafði hann þar hanboga og Jósteinn  
from church.DAT had he.NOM there handbow.ACC and Jósteinn.NOM  
glenna austmaður hans  
glenna.NOM east.man.NOM he.GEN  
'Þorleifur was at those buildings which were north-west of the church.  
He and Jósteinn Glenna, his man from the east, had there a handbow.'  
(IcePaHC: 1250, *Sturlunga*.391.102)

The difference between (43) and (44) is that the named referent *Apríval* in (43) is known from the previous discourse, whereas in (44) *Jósteinn* is a first mention, and occurs with other identifying material ('his man from the East'). Like inclusory constructions, discontinuous nominals crosslinguistically have been observed to often coincide with information-structurally asymmetric conjuncts, especially in languages where word order is sensitive to information structure (e.g. McGregor 1997; De Kuthy 2002; Fanselow & Féry 2006; Skopeteas et al. 2022). On the basis of the very limited data available for Icelandic, one can suggest that discontinuous coordination of a pronoun and a name is used when the pronoun is a continuing topic, and the name is discourse-new. When the name is familiar, but not a continuing topic, i.e. when the referents differ not in givenness but in topicality, the M(IcePaHC) data indicate that Old Icelandic by far favours the inclusory PA construction compared to standard coordination, which in such contexts appears to be very rare.<sup>19</sup> Besides functioning as an associative plural, the inclusory PA (at least on subjects) thus serves an additional function in expressing a topic which comprises a continuing topic and an additional discourse-given referent which is re-established as topical (shift-topic), in line with the general trend for inclusory constructions to involve conjuncts which differ in topicality (Bril 2011).

## 7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that investigations of linguistic features at the morphosyntax–information structure interface must go beyond the given/new dimension in order to achieve a full understanding of such phenomena. By considering different types of aboutness topic in terms of types of topic transition, I have shown that the proprial article in Old Icelandic is more than a straightforward givenness marker, as previously claimed by Sigurðsson (2006) and Johnsen (2016). Rather, the (M)IcePaHC corpus data indicate that the proprial article is often employed in Old Icelandic saga narratives as a topic management device. The plain PA was shown to occur optionally as a topic-shift marker, employed specifically when a discourse-given referent is (re)established as a topic via topic promotion or resumption, or via subsectional topic selection. The (M)IcePaHC data also confirmed an early claim by Heusler (1921) that the inclusory PA serves two different functions in Old Icelandic: as (i) an associative

<sup>19</sup>Relatedly, Sigurðsson (2006: 230) states for modern Icelandic that the inclusory PA *við Jón* ('we John') is "often or usually preferred" to the standard pronoun-noun coordination structure *ég og John* ('John and I').

plural and (ii) a strategy for coordinating (at least) two human referents which are both discourse-given but differ in topicality (continuing topic versus shift-topic). More broadly, the Old Icelandic facts emphasise the different nature of the diachrony of the proprial article in North Germanic compared to Continental West Germanic (e.g. Schmuck & Szczepaniak 2014; Schmuck 2020a,b,c), and in particular that, in the former, topic management rather than the grammaticalisation of definiteness and loss of case is a key factor.

## Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	NEG	negation
COMM	common	NOM	nominative
COMP	complementiser	NONFUT	non-future
DAT	dative	PA	proprial article
DEF	definite	PERF	perfect
DEM	demonstrative	PERS	person
DU	dual	PL	plural
EXCL	exclusive	PST	past
F	feminine	PTCL	particle
GEN	genitive	REFL	reflexive
INDEF	indefinite	REL	relativiser
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
M	masculine	SPEC	specifying preposition
MKR	marker	TAM	tense-aspect-mood
N	neuter	TR	transitive

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