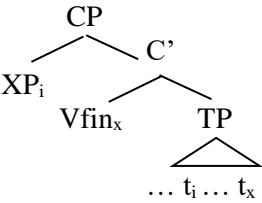


## Verb-Third, multiply-filled prefields, and the diachronic continuity of the German left periphery

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Present-Day German (PDG) has traditionally been regarded as a strict Verb-Second (V2) language in light of the assumption that its prefield, namely the left-peripheral area of the clause preceding the finite verb situated in C°, can only be occupied by one XP in matrix clauses. According to this principle, only one constituent can (and must) move to Spec,CP to satisfy an EPP-like feature carried by C that requires that the pre-C° position not be empty in main clauses (cf. Den Besten 1977/1983).

- (1) a. 
- b. [CP [*Maria*]<sub>i</sub> [C° *aß*]<sub>x</sub> [TP *ti* *einen Apfel* *tx*]].  
       Maria           ate           an       apple  
 ‘Maria ate an apple.’

However, recently a number of so-called “Verb-Third” (V3) phenomena have been discussed in the literature that seem to involve the activation of a larger portion of structure than the assumption of a one-projection prefield would suggest, as in the following examples. These phenomena have been mostly discussed in non-formal approaches in which they have been classified as occasional “exceptions to the rule”:

### (2) Present-Day German (PDG)

- a. [*Wenn Sie wirklich den Job hätten haben wollen*], [*Sie*] *hätten dann schon*  
     if you really the job had have want you would-have then PRT  
     *ein bisschen auf den Punkt kommen müssen*.  
     a bit to the point come must  
 ‘If you really had wanted that job, you should have come to the point.’ (Auer 2000: 177)
- b. [*Ihr Anwalt,*] [*mit umständlicher Begründung, dringlich und in*  
     their lawyer with sophisticated motivation urgently and in  
     *aller Form,*] *beantragte Wahrheitsbeweis*.  
     all form requested proof-of-the-truth  
 ‘With a sophisticated argumentation, pressingly and in due form, their lawyer requested a proof of the truth.’ (Lühr 1985: 18)
- c. [*Im Winter*] [*allerdings*] *komme ich gerne nach Rom*  
     in-the winter however come I gladly to Rome  
 ‘In winter, however, I will be happy to come to Rome.’ (Breindl 2011: 25)

At the same time, the diachronic development of the prefield in the German root clause has been a much debated topic in the generative literature of the last two decades (cf. e.g. Axel(-Tober) 2007, 2018; Speyer 2008; Walkden 2014, 2017; Petrova 2012; Speyer & Weiß 2018). One of the main claims of recent studies in this field is that the system has evolved from a so-called ‘relaxed’ to a ‘strict’ V2 grammar. The idea is that in the older stages of the language, which allow for multiply-filled-prefield configurations in which more than one maximal projection may occupy the left periphery (cf. (3a)-(3c)), this area exhibits a structure comparable – *mutatis mutandis* – to the one proposed for Present-Day Italian and other languages by Rizzi (1997), and that its internal makeup is then gradually (i.e., diachronically) reduced into a single-specifier prefield, thereby resuming the operationalization generally found in the theoretically-informed literature on PDG as illustrated in (1) above:

(3) a. **Old High German (OHG, 750-1050)**

[*Dher selbo forasago*] [*auh in andreru stedi*] *chundida, dhazs...*  
the same prophet also in other passage revealed that  
'This prophet also revealed in another passage that ...' (*Is.* 20,22 -21,1)

b. **Middle High German (MHG, 1050-1350)**

[*Des uirden tages.*] [*alle di tir*] ... *suln sich samnen* ...  
the fourth day all the animals shall REFL gather  
'On the fourth day, all animals will gather on the surface of the sea.' (*MP.* b3va,18)

c. **Early New High German (ENHG, 1350-1650)**

[*Dadurch*] [*dan*] [*sunderlich vertrawn vnd hoffnung*] *haben dy krancken* ...  
therefore then great faith and hope have the sick  
'Therefore, the sick will then have great faith and hope ...' (*ENHG – Pill.* 180, 20-22)

In this paper, I will combine these two perspectives within one and the same theoretical framework (the cartographic model) by presenting the results of a large-scale corpus study of main clauses with complex prefields in OHG, MHG, and ENHG and comparing the data with the patterns attested in PDG. In consideration of these results, I will make the following claims:

- Despite apparent dramatic differences between Historical German and PDG (and in contrast to most studies devoted to this topic), the left periphery of German can be assumed to exhibit basic historical continuity, especially from MHG onwards.
- Although individual phenomena of the left periphery have in part disappeared or become less pervasive (e.g. left dislocation in general, CP-internal adverbial resumption) due to the standardization of German, it seems indeed that most V3 patterns are still available in some niche of the grammar of this language (e.g. only in spoken usage or only in very high registers) and that the makeup of V2 has *per se* remained diachronically stable.
- This insight can only be gained if (at least) comparable methods and (at least) comparable theoretical assumptions about the syntax of German are used to interpret the data (e.g. if one accepts the idea that some XPs surfacing to the left of the finite verb in a main clause may be merged outside of the 'inner' CP area and their position therefore does not result from movement).

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