Ergativity: some additions from Indonesia*

MARK DONOHUE AND LEA BROWN

Recent work on ergative phenomena has been summarized in Dixon (1994), where in addition to listing and categorizing many aspects of ergativity across languages, he also makes several generalizations about ergative phenomena. Research on languages of Indonesia has turned up data in different languages that extends, refutes, or corroborates Dixon’s claims concerning case marking, ergativity splits, split-intransitivity, the primacy of morphological ergativity, and switch-reference systems. Data from four languages are presented supporting the claims made by the authors.

1. Introduction

In Ergativity (1994), Dixon presented a survey of ergative features, at both the morphological and syntactic levels, found in many of the languages of the world. In addition to exhaustively reviewing and explaining the data found in the literature, Dixon also made several predictions about systems that had at that time not yet come to light. Among these observations, Dixon makes several remarks about the ‘fact’ that syntactic ergativity always implies morphological ergativity, comments on switch-reference systems, and conclusions about the universality of ergative splits based on a person/animacy hierarchy. We shall compare these statements to data from four languages in Indonesia, Nias, Iha, Oirata and Bajau, which come from three different language families (Austronesian, West Bomberai, Timor-Alor-Pantar, and Austronesian, respectively). The relevant comments from Dixon are repeated here, and addressed in the sections following on the language that provides relevant data. Regarding markedness and case systems, he writes:

it is always absolutive that has zero realisation (or a zero allomorph), never ergative. (1994: 44)

Turning now to case systems, there is a clear, overall generalisation: that case which covers S (ie. absolutive or nominative) is generally the unmarked term—both formally and functionally—in its system. In terms of

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form: if any case has zero realisation, or a zero allomorph, it will be the absolutive or nominative. (1994: 56–57)\(^1\)

I said above that the case which includes S is ‘generally’ the unmarked one. It seems that *absolutive is always unmarked with respect to ergative* and nominative is almost always unmarked with respect to accusative. (1994: 58, emphasis ours)

One hypothesis concerning ‘ergativity’ in proto-Indo-European suggested that absolutive was marked by -N and ergative by zero. Rumsey (1987b: 25–26) uses the information that *no attested language has zero marking for ergative and non-zero for absolutive* to show that the hypothesis is implausible. (1994: 58, footnote 22, emphasis ours)

Nias has a case system that clearly marks absolutive case versus ergative case on core nominals, and has absolutive as the marked member of the ergative-absolutive case system, with ergative unmarked phonologically.

Regarding split ergative systems in which the split in marking between some form of ‘ergative’ system and a ‘non-ergative’ system is based on the semantic nature of the arguments (that is, based on the position of the argument in an animacy hierarchy, as proposed by Silverstein 1976), Dixon asserts (whilst noting exceptions, such as Arrernte) that

If pronouns and nouns have systems of case inflection, then the pronoun system will be accusative, and the noun system will be ergative, never the other way around .... We can represent the nominal hierarchy in diagrammatic form, as in 4.5 ...

![Diagram of the nominal hierarchy](image)

**Figure 4.5 The Nominal Hierarchy**

... an ‘ergative’ case is used with NPs from the right-hand end, up to some point in the middle of the hierarchy, and an ‘accusative’ case from that point on, over to the extreme left of the hierarchy. (1994: 84–85)

Case marking in Iha is only found on pronouns, and follows a nominative–accusative alignment. In past tenses, however, the case system shows what Dixon

\(^1\) The labels [A] and [O] are used as labels of convenience, following Dixon (1979), to describe the basic grammatical/syntactic functions of the (least and most patient–like, respectively) argument of transitive and intransitive clauses. [S] is the single argument of an intransitive clause (unergative and unaccusative verbs can be distinguished by subscripting them as S\(_1\) or S\(_0\), referring to the properties shared by these [S]s and the appropriate argument of a transitive verb ([A] or [O])). Andrews (1985: 68) describes the discovery and testing procedure for these roles in terms of reference to the ‘primary transitive verb’ and the morphosyntactic treatment of its two arguments.
(1994: 70, 108–109) calls split-ergative features,² with the first and second person singular pronouns optionally appearing in the accusative form when the intransitive verb indicates an uncontrolled or non-volitional state or event. Interestingly, third person singular pronouns and all plural pronouns, and common or proper nouns, are strictly nominative–accusative. Iha is thus a language in which the most (split–)ergative features (the split-intransitivity) are present in the highest-ranked members of the hierarchy, but only in the past tense forms. We thus see a tense-based split in one of Dixon’s split-ergative features.

Concerning the correlation between syntactic ergativity and ergative morphology, Dixon remarks that

No language is known that is ergative at the syntactic but not at the morphological level. (1994: 172)

In Oirata the case marking morphology monitors a nominative–accusative distinction, and yet the syntax shows several different pivots (in Dixon’s sense of an argument or arguments that is uniquely selected as being eligible for a particular set of constructions), some (exemplified here by the switch–reference system) referring to an accusative pivot, some referring to an ergative pivot.³ Interestingly, the existence of such a language was predicted, but not exemplified, by Marantz (1984: 198), who refers to this type as a type B ergative language in his classification (one that displays some ergative syntax, without ergative morphology).

Finally, discussing switch-reference systems, Dixon writes that

It is noteworthy that all switch-reference systems reported thus far work in terms of ‘same/different (derived) S/A’. Since there are well attested examples of S/O pivots, as well as S/A pivots (though the latter are much more common) we would expect, as more of the world’s languages are provided with adequate grammatical descriptions, to encounter some instances of switch-reference systems that work in terms of ‘same/different (derived) S/O’ (although of course there is no guarantee that we will). (1994: 153, footnote 16)

The Bajau language as spoken in Southeast Sulawesi makes use of a clause connecting mechanism that functions as a kind of switch-reference system, in that an [S₂,O] pivot is morphologically unmarked, but a switch-reference device coding person and number of the [A] is used when an [A] in one clause is taken to be coreferential with an argument in another clause.⁴

² Other writers variously label these systems ‘split-intransitive’ or ‘active (stative)’; the first term will be used in the rest of this article, as more transparent than the other options. See, among many others, Merlan (1985) and Mithun (1991).
³ The same situation is found in many Mayan languages, among others Mam, described in England (1983), but with ergative morphology on the verb.
⁴ A switch-reference system involving the categories same/different [S₅,A] is found in languages of the Dani family in Irian Jaya (such as Grand Valley Dani and Yali), and Eastern Pomo (McLendon 1975, 1978), which also has other switch-reference affixes monitoring same/different [S,A]. Dixon would probably classify this as a split-ergative switch-reference system. The switch-reference system
2. Nias

Nias is an Austronesian language spoken on the island group of that same name, off the west coast of Sumatra. Work on Nias has been published by Kähler (1936/37) and Sundermann (1905, 1913), and more recent work has been undertaken by Brown (1997), in ongoing research since 1993, as well as notes by Halawa et al. (1983).

In common with most Austronesian languages, in which nominal case is proclitic or prefixal, Nias has a system of case marking. The salient point of Nias morphosyntax for the purposes of this article is that nominals mutate when they are in an absolutive (S or O function), but not when ergative (A), in which case they appear unmutated (the citation form). The presence or absence of mutation thus serves as a case system, with the absolutive being marked by mutation of the initial consonant, and the ergative unmarked. In passing, it is worth mentioning that the mutated forms of nominals are also used to indicate a possessive relationship, as in (1):

(1) [NP bavi [POSSessor n-ama-gul]]

pig MUT-father-1SG.POSS

‘My father’s pigs’

The case marking by mutation that is described here applies only to regular, post-verbal arguments; when an argument receives a degree of pragmatic salience, and appears focused or topicalized, then it is beyond the scope of the case marking system, and always appears in an unmutated form. Nias, in common with many western Austronesian languages, has a complicated set of voice alternations; these

Footnote 4—continued

of Seri (Farrell et al. 1991) poses problems for an analysis that assumes it simply monitors same versus different [S,A], since the subject of passive verbs do not ‘count’ as [S]s for switch-reference purposes; clearly some element of thematic role information is also involved in the determination of identity, rather than purely syntactic role information. Martuthunira, the only other language known to the authors with both a passive and a switch-reference system (Dench 1995), treats the subject of a passive verb as an [S] for switch-reference purposes.

5 The mutation takes the form of a change in initial consonant, such that some b > (m)B, other b remain b; some d > (n)dr, other d remain d; g remains g; t > d; k, x > g; f > v; s, c > z; some Ø > n, other Ø > g. For more details, see the references on Nias. The mutation of b and d is shown orthographically with mb and nd.

6 All language examples are presented in practical orthographies; these differ from usual IPA symbols in that Iha and Bajau y represent a palatal glide [j], Nias z is an alveopalatal affricate [dz], mb is [B] (a bilabial trill), nd is [dr], kh is [x], and ø is [y]; Bajau ng is a velar nasal [n]. In Oirata de Josselein de Jong uses a macron to indicate a long vowel, which is here shown with two vowel symbols (i.e. aa); following de Josselein de Jong (1937), d is used for typographic convenience to transcribe a phoneme that is a (sometimes affricatively released) sub-lamino palatal retroflex stop. It is not, however, usually voiced, though it is used in loan words to represent sounds that in the source language were voiced dental and alveolar sounds, e.g. kaadere < Portugese cadeira ‘chair’, harmadak < Malay hari ‘day’ + Dutch maandag ‘Monday’.
have not been exemplified below; the case system described here represents that of the arguments in the most basic of these systems.\(^7\)

An intransitive sentence, showing mutation appearing with the S (the NP bearing this role has been bracketed and labelled), is given in (2) (ama means father as an independent lexical item, but is used as a polite title in men’s names):

(2) Manavuli sui [\(s\) n-ama-da] Tohönavaetau
    return again MUT-father-\(1\).IN.GEN Tohönavaetau
    ba Maenamölo
    LOC Maenamölo

‘Ama Tohönavaetau came back again to Maenamölo.’\(^8\)

The mutation in this vowel-initial case takes the form of a prefixal \(n-\). In (3) we can see that in a transitive sentence it is the object, not the subject, that appears in the mutated form (again, the A and O arguments have been bracketed and labelled):

(3) I-a \([o\) m-bavi]\( [\_a\) ama Gumi].
    3SG.R-eat MUT-pig father Gumi

‘Ama Gumi is eating/pigs pork.’

(4) a. I-bözi \([o\) n-ama-gu]\( [\_a\) ama Dali].
    3SG.R-hit MUT-father-1SG.POSS father Dali

‘Ama Dali hit my father.’

b. I-bözi \([o\) n-ama Dali]\( [\_a\) ama-gu].
    3SG.R-hit MUT-ama Dali father-1SG.POSS

‘My father hit Ama Dali.’

Clearly the mutation is found, in a basic transitive sentence, on only those NPs that are an S or an O; that is to say, which are the absolutive argument in the clause.\(^9\) Since this case is overtly marked, and the A (ergative) argument is not, we have a case of a marked absolutive case in a system in which the ergative is not so marked.

\(^7\) In addition to this system of case marking, we might note in passing that Nias displays two sets of verbal prefixes that cross-references the person/number categories of the A (only) in realis clauses, but the S or the A in irrealis clauses. Whether realis or irrealis, the case marking pattern on nominals is the same, with mutated S and O nominals, and A nominals in unmutated citation form.

\(^8\) All adults are referred to with the \(1\).IN possessive marker in Nias society, so a translation of the subject of (2) as ‘our Ama Tohönavaetau’ would not be appropriate.

\(^9\) The mutated argument is not simply the immediately post-verbal one; in the case of a sentence with a (preverbal) TOPIC O, the post-verbal A would not be mutated, demonstrating that the appearance of mutation follows syntactic role, and not linear position. Another example of a mutated O in a post-verbal position but separated from the verb is given in (i), in which the oblique \(khö-nia\) appears between the verb and the O.

(i) I-be \(khö-nia\) g-ana’a.
    3SG.R-give OBL-him MUT-gold

‘He gave him (the) gold.’

Not only is ‘gold’ mutated, despite being separated from the verb, but \(khönia\) is not mutated, showing clearly that linear position is not a major determiner of mutation.
### Table 1. Iha pronominal system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns Basic</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th>Sample partial verb paradigm kene-'see'</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recent past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 SG</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>ni</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ko</td>
<td>ki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>ndo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 PL.IN</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 PL.EX</td>
<td>mbi</td>
<td>mbi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ki</td>
<td>ki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>mi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Iha

Iha is the principle language of the West Bomberai family, spoken in and around Fakfak and most of the hinterlands of the Onin peninsula, on the western edge of Irian Jaya. Preliminary work was carried out on the language by Coenen (1953), and further reports can be found in Cowan (1953) and Anceaux (1958); all of these are summarized in Voorhoeve (1975). A publication by Flassy and Anjumung (1992) presents some more recent material. This work was extended by the first named author in 1993. This work uncovered an alternation in the case system found with pronouns in Iha, involving the use of a split-intransitive (or, in Dixon’s terms, split-ergative) paradigm for the more highly animate pronouns only. This alternation will be described in the following section.

In Iha verbs inflect with suffixes indicating a combination of person and number of subject, and one of eight tenses (future, present, and five past tenses), and in some cases show vowel changes as well in different tenses, or to reflect vowel harmony with the subject/tense suffixes; pitch accent is also not completely predictable, and this is also one indicator of broad tense category. Word order is strictly Subject–Object–Verb, and case differences are only found with singular pronouns, which have a basic form and a specifically accusative form. The basic and accusative pronouns are shown in Table 1, along with a (partial, for reasons of space and relevance to the topic of ergativity) sample verb paradigm.

Examples of the use of these pronoun sets can be seen in the examples (5)–(11), showing the ungrammaticality of accusative pronouns in subject position in transitive or unergative clauses, and the requirement that the verb agree with the subject. In (5) and (6) we can see the failure of the accusative pronoun set to mark the [A] of a transitive verb.

(5) *Mi kalipan mngbréhe-bíja.
    3 mat weave.mat-PRES.3
    ‘She is weaving a mat.’

(6) *Ndokalipan mngbréhe-bíja.
    3SG.ACC matweave.mat-PRES.3
The use of the accusative pronouns with the [O] of a transitive verb is illustrated in (7) and (8); (9) demonstrates the need for subject agreement on the verb. (9) is ungrammatical because the non-accusative pronoun in the clause, on, is first person, and the verb, kpacehé, shows second person agreement.

(7) Kpyémbot on ki kpace-bon.
    yesterday 1SG 2SG.ACC fight-PAST.1SG
    ‘I fought you yesterday.’
(8) Kpyémbot ko ni kpacehé.
    yesterday 2SG 1SG.ACC fight-PAST.2SG
    ‘You fought me yesterday.’
(9) *Kpyémbot on ki kpacehé.

The ungrammaticality of intransitive unergative sentences with their sole argument being an accusative pronoun is illustrated in (10) and (11). The verb ha(r)-‘climb’ is agentive, and so the accusative pronouns are not a grammatical choice of indicating the subject.

(10) Kebér on on-ma kpeh něngak ha-wahá-ŋge.
    just.then 1SG 1SG-POSS village towards climb-go-IRR
    ‘I wanted to go back up to my village just then.’
(11) *Kebér ni on-ma kpeh něngak ha-wahá-ŋge.
    just.then 1SG.ACC 1SG-POSS village towards climb-go-IRR

With unaccusative verbs in a past tense, there is a choice of the pronoun used for first and second person, as seen in (12)–(15), illustrating options with first and second person singular arguments in the yesterday’s past tense with an unaccusative verb:

(12) Kpyémbot on mgbahúrnbon.
    yesterday 1SG fall-PAST.1SG
    ‘Yesterday I fell over.’
(13) Kpyémbot ni mgbahúrnbon.
    yesterday 1SG.ACC fall-PAST.1SG
    ‘Yesterday I fell over.’
(14) Kpyémbot ko mgbahurnbé.
    yesterday 2SG fall-PAST.2SG
    ‘Yesterday you fell over.’
(15) Kpyémbot ki mgbahurnbé.
    yesterday 2SG.ACC fall-PAST.2SG
    ‘Yesterday you fell over.’

Although there are two distinct forms available to speakers to encode the same event here, there does not seem to be any difference in meaning involved; there is no difference in volitionality, control, or any of the other features associated with intransitivity splits (see Mithun 1991) between (12) and (13) or (14) and (15). It is possible that there is a difference in discourse context for these two uses, but at this
stage it is unclear what that context might be. A list of intransitive verbs that do and do not allow this split is given in (16):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Only basic pronouns allowed</th>
<th>Either basic or accusative pronouns allowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(16)\ ha(r)-</td>
<td>'climb'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horot-</td>
<td>'arrive'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokoh-</td>
<td>'run'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kpuru-</td>
<td>'fly'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kra gibri-</td>
<td>'wash'(^{10})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makpré-</td>
<td>'chat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mehén-</td>
<td>'sit down'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mréh-</td>
<td>'sing, cry out'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nandér-</td>
<td>'stand up'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>norok-</td>
<td>'swim'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waha-</td>
<td>'go'</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hereréde-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>himi-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>hir-</td>
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<td>kim-</td>
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<td>kotko-</td>
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<td>kpye-</td>
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<td>kpyok-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>mbohop-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>m̄tgbahúr-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tombot-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>würuk-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'sick'</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'dry in sun'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'wake up (intr.)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'die (non-human)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'itch'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'be boiling'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'cough'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'die (human)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'fall over'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'sleep'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'vomit'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this list we can see that the split is characterizable as following an unergative/unaccusative division, probably based on volitionality or control.

Based on a comparative look at other languages in the New Guinea area, we can plausibly suppose an earlier stage of Iha in which unaccusative sentences like (13) and (15), which use accusative pronouns, more closely resembled the morphosyntactically transitive verb form with a 'dummy' third person subject shown in (17):

(17) yesterday Isg.Acc (it) fall-Past.3Subj
     'Yesterday I fell over.' (literally, 'Yesterday (it) tripped me up'.)

Although the verb in this widely attested New Guinea construction type overtly takes third person agreement, this is not possible in contemporary Iha. A variation of the construction in (17) is available for third persons in Iha, but in this case the only interpretation is that there is literally a cause of the tripping, not that it is a 'dummy' subject, as seen in (18):

(18) Kpyémbot (mi) ndo m̄tgbahúr-mbih.
    yesterday 3 3sg.Acc fall-Past.3
    'Yesterday it/they tripped her/him up.'
    * 'Yesterday s/he fell over (with no outside intervention).'

In order to construct a sentence with the second reading, the basic pronoun must be used; use of the accusative pronoun in this position is not an option, with an intransitive reading:

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\(^{10}\) In common with many languages of the New Guinea region, the verb 'wash', gibri- in Iha, has an obligatorily present cognate object kra, 'water'.

Table 2. Case distinctions in Iha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past tenses:</th>
<th>[A]</th>
<th>[S(_A)]</th>
<th>[S(_O)]</th>
<th>[O]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on/m</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>ko</td>
<td>ko</td>
<td>ko/ki</td>
<td>ki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>ndo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common nouns</td>
<td>kabágat</td>
<td>kabágat</td>
<td>kabágat</td>
<td>kabágat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(19) **Kpyémbo** mi mųgbahür-mbih.
yesterday 3 fall-PAST.3
‘Yesterday s/he fell over (with no outside intervention).’

(20) *Kpyémbo* ndo mųgbahür-mbih.
yesterday 3SG.ACC fall-PAST.3
‘Yesterday s/he fell over (with no outside intervention).’

Note that in a future or irrealis form, there is no split-ergativity in the marking system, with the only choice for the pronouns being the basic set; the ‘accusative’ set may not be used for the subject of an intransitive verb in non-past circumstances. This is illustrated in (21) and (22):

(21) *On* mųgbahürnten.
1SG fall-FUT.1SG
‘I’m going to fall over.’

(22) *Ni* mųgbahürnten.
1SG.ACC fall-FUT.1SG

We thus have a split in marking properties as follows, shown by person and syntactic function, with split-intransitive marking found as an option in the first and second person singular, and accusative marking found with first, second and third person singular pronouns. Plural pronouns and common or proper nouns (exemplified here with kabágat ‘tree kangaroo’) are undifferentiated with respect to case marking (Table 2).

Another language with a split-intransitive system in one part of its nominal range is Georgian (see Merlan 1985 and the references contained therein). In Georgian, however, only nouns and third person pronouns allow for split-intransitive marking, the opposite of the Iha case, in which only first and second person pronouns allow the split-intransitive system to appear.

4. Oirata

Oirata is spoken in two villages, Oirata Barat and Oirata Timur, in the south-east of the island of Kisar, just off the eastern tip of Timor, in Maluku province. It has been tentatively grouped as an isolate within the Timor-Alor-Pantar family of non-Austronesian languages; extensive work has been carried out on Oirata by de Josselin de Jong (1937), and further work was conducted with speakers in Ambon by
Table 3. Oirata pronominal system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nominative</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Focus: NOM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 SG</td>
<td>ante</td>
<td>ani</td>
<td>an</td>
<td>amre</td>
<td>anitu</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>aate</td>
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<td>aare</td>
<td>aatu</td>
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<td>1 PLEX</td>
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<td>iite</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>iire</td>
<td>iitu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third person personal pronouns do not exist; an appropriate demonstrative, such as ue ‘that’ or uaiie ‘those’ is used instead, and not inflected for case, like other third person nominals. In the table the Focus: NOM forms are used for an [S] or [A] argument that is presented as exceptional or unexpected in its occurrence. The forms in the ‘Topic’ column are used when establishing a first reference of an argument, regardless of syntactic role. Note the near-identity of the possessive and accusative forms, differing only in the 1SG.

Donohue in 1994. Oirata displays a consistent nominative–accusative alignment on its verbal switch-reference system, and the case marking on the pronouns, but has a relativization strategy that applies only to the S or O argument, showing an ergative syntactic feature in a morphologically accusative system.

Verbs in Oirata do not index person or number of any arguments, and nouns display no case marking. The pronouns have several forms, showing a nominative–accusative split, with the nominative forms the marked members of the paradigm. The pronominal forms are given in Table 3.

The morphology on pronouns is consistently nominative/accusative, with a marked nominative case, and the switch-reference system monitors same or different subject ([S,A]), again consistent with a nominative–accusative alignment in the morphology. Examples (23) and (24) show the use of the nominative case morphology with transitive clauses, in both cases marking the subject of the clause.

(23) In-te ee asi.
     1PL.EX-NOM 2SG.POL see
     ‘We saw you.’

(24) Ee-te in asi-ho.
     2SG.POL-NOM 1PL.EX see-NEG
     ‘You didn’t see us.’

The use of the nominative case with intransitive clauses is illustrated in examples.

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11 It could be argued that the Oirata case system was actually one that assigned an ergative case, but with an extended use that covered all intransitive functions. This would not be consistent with (for instance) Bittner and Hale’s (1996) analysis of extended ergative case in (their example) Basque being the product of a universal derivation of unergative verbs from light verb constructions. The analysis would have to then assume that all unergative verbs were also derived from light verb constructions, and would then eliminate the contrast found in Basque between unergative and unaccusative. A partial listing of other languages with overt nominative case can be found listed in Dixon (1994: 64–65).
(25)–(27), showing nonagentive and agentive verbs, respectively, in both cases marking the subject with the nominative -te:

(25) An-te ete na’a ippa.
    1SG-NOM tree OBL fall
    ‘I fell out of the tree.’

(26) Woina’a in-te Ahum na’a ma’u.
    yesterday 1PL.EX-NOM Ambon OBL come
    ‘We arrived from Ambon yesterday.’

(27) Nahi ee-te mede-pe’e-é.
    tomorrow 2SG.POL-NOM eat-IRR-Q
    ‘Are you going to eat tomorrow?’
    (i.e. break a fast)

The switch-reference morphology also monitors this [S,A] versus [O] split, as can be seen in examples (28)–(31); in (28) the transitive subject of both verbs is monitored as being coreferent, and in (29) the intransitive subject of both verbs is shown as being the same, both with the -le ‘same referent’ verbal suffix.

Switch-reference system: monitoring [S,A] = [S,A] with -le sr

‘same referent’:

(28) In-te ihar asi-le turau.
    1PL.EX-NOM dog see-SR throw.at
    ‘We, saw a dog and then Ø; threw Ø; (at it).’

(29) Uaie lalare-le ma’u-ho.
    those walk-SR come-NEG
    ‘They didn’t come by foot.’
    (Glossing literally, ‘They, walked and Ø, didn’t come.’)

Non-identity of the subjects of two clauses is indicated by the use of the -to ‘different referent’ suffix. In (30) the subject of asi ‘see’ and the subject of tipare ‘run away’ cannot be construed as coreferential, and the contextually determined translation given is the most appropriate one. In (31) we can see that with two transitive verbs, ina ‘give’ and tutu ‘drink’, the use of the different referent suffix requires that the subjects not be coreferent. With same referent morphology, Ira eme modo inale tutu, the inappropriate, but syntactically forced, reading of ‘I gave water to the child and then I drank it.’ is produced.

monitoring [S,A] ≠ [S,A] with -to DR ‘different referent’:

(30) In-te ihar asi-to tipare.
    1PL.EX-NOM dog see-DR flee
    ‘We; saw a dog, and then Ø; ran off.’

(31) Ira eme modo ina-to tutu.
    water take child give-DR drink
    ‘Give the child some water to drink.’
    (Glossing literally, ‘Ø; give water to child, and Ø, drink.’)

The interesting thing about Oirata from the point of view of an investigation into
syntactically ergative constructions is the relative clause strategy, that morphologically involves suffixing a verb with -n, and marking the non-head core argument in the possessive case, if pronominal. de Josselin de Jong (1937: 205) wrote about this construction that

It is quite evident that *antajan* really means: my sleeping, *antajan jāni*: my sleeping is good. Likewise *anudan* may be taken to mean: my striking, but in this case my refers to the patient, and *anudan* consequently means: I who am struck, ... Likewise *aninan* (from *ina*- give) means I who am given.

Glosses for de Josselin de Jong's Oirata examples with our word divisions (based on speaker judgements of word boundaries) are given in (32), along with a 'normal' possessive example:

    my sleep-REL good          my hit-REL
    'My sleeping is good.'     'My being hit'

c. *An [ina-n]*  d. *An ahi*
    my give-REL                my fish
    'My being given'           'My fish'

In the examples in (32) the possessive pronoun refers to the [S] or [O], not the [A], as emphasized by de Josselin de Jong. It is a general constraint that in a relative clause construction involving a transitive verb suffixed with -n, the head of the relative clause must be interpreted as the object of the transitive verb, the [O]:

(33) *Ihar [in-te asi-n] tipare.*
    dog 1PL:EX-NOM see-REL flee
    'The dog that we saw fled.'

(34) *Ihar [an-te asi-n] mara.*
    dog 1SG-NOM see-REL go
    'The dog that I saw left.'

The subject of an intransitive verb, an [S], may serve as the head of an -n construction:

(35) *In-te ihar [mara-n] asi.*
    1PL:EX-NOM dog go-REL see
    'We saw the dog that had left.'

(36) *Maaro [mede-n] kopete-he.*
    person eat-REL black-NEG
    'The person who's eating isn't black.'

In a sentence with an accusative pronoun in the relative clause, which would require the head of the relative clause to be the subject of the transitive verb if such

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12 There are two verbs for 'eat' in Oirata, *mede* and *na*. The difference between the two is that *mede* can only be used intransitively, and *na* can only be used transitively. *Mede* also means 'corn', the staple food of the area.
a construction was possible, the head cannot be interpreted as an [A]; rather, the sentences is judged ungrammatical:  

    dog 1SG:ACC see-REL go
    'The dog that saw me left.'

In order to express sentences of the type 'The dog that saw me left' in which the relativized constituent would be the [A] of the relative clause, Oirata employs a strategy in which two clauses are joined with a switch-reference marker on the verb of the first clause indicating the identity of the subject in both clauses:  

(38) Ihar ani asi-le mara.
    dog 1SG:ACC see-SR go
    'The dog, saw me; and Ø, left.'
    (or, to give an equivalent in discourse, though not grammatical, terms: 'The dog that saw me left.'; similarly, given the demands of discourse, a translation of (28) as 'We, who saw the dog, threw something at it.' is also possible)

The construction with -n forms relative clauses which may only be headed by nominals in [S] or [O] function, and so can be described as a construction with ergative/absolutive syntax, selecting an absolutive pivot; only an absolutive argument may head a relative clause (as with most languages, the function of this argument in the main clause is irrelevant). Despite this, the case system on the pronouns is strictly nominative–accusative, and the switch-reference system monitors [S] and [A] categories as distinct to [O], thus also showing a nominative–accusative alignment.

5. Bajau

The Bajau language is spoken in myriad small coastal nomadic communities throughout most of Indonesia, and substantial parts of the Philippines and Malaysia as well. It is an Austronesian language, but has not been successfully subgrouped with any other Austronesian languages. The variety described here represents the Bajau spoken in the village of Mola, off the island of Wanci in Sulawesi Tenggara province, and some essential elements of its morphosyntax have been described in Donohue (1996), Verheijen (1986) and Walton (1986). The essential features for this exposition are that Bajau possesses a voice system which is a version of the Philippine-type voice system, involving diathesis without any loss of core status for the argument that is not selected as the grammatical subject of the clause; in both

13 Using an unambiguously possessive pronoun, rather than an accusative one, in this sentence is no more grammatical: *Ihar an asi mara. The only pronominal forms that may occur in a headed relative clause are nominative ones; possessive forms, such as seen in (32), can only be found in headless constructions, which are de facto nominalizations, as indicated by the translations of (32)a–c.
14 There is no passive or antipassive in Oirata, and thus no way to put an [A] argument into [S] position, which would make it eligible for this relativization strategy.
voice forms, the clause is transitive. In Bajau, however, the syntactic pivot is mixed, and the pivot monitored by the voice system is not the pivot that is referred to for the purposes of coordination across clauses, in which there is a switch-reference system that monitors same or different [S₂O].

There are only two voice forms for each verb, here called ‘actor voice’ (AV), marked on the verb by substitution of N (homo-organic nasal, or \( n \) for the initial consonant, and ‘object voice’, (OV, unglossed in the examples following) which is unmarked, depending on whether the A or the O is selected (earlier Philippinist literature refers to this diathesis as a ‘focus’ system; we avoid that term for the reasons espoused in Kroeger 1993). Examples of the use of this voice system with transitive and intransitive verbs, and some of its syntactic effects, are given in Donohue (1996). A more detailed picture of a Philippine-type voice system can be found in Kroeger’s (1993) description of the voice system and status of nominals in Tagalog.

When it comes to coordinated clauses the grammatical status of the arguments is not relevant to the determination of which element is construed as being coreferent with the null element; in all cases, the null element must be coreferential with the [S] or [O] argument in the preceding or following clause, regardless of the transitive (AV or OV), unergative or unaccusative nature of that verb, and whether that argument is selected as the ‘grammatical subject’ or not (in terms of the voice morphology). In the examples following the syntactic role played by the argument in question is indicated with one of Dixon’s [A], [S₂], [S₀] or [O], and if selected by the voice system as ‘grammatical subject’ (for purposes of word order variation, relative clauses, floating quantifiers etc.) (what Dixon (1994) would probably call pivot, though he avoids discussion of Philippine-type languages), it is subscripted with SUBJ; if the argument is not so selected, the syntactic role stands alone without subscripts.

In (39) and (40) examples of coreference are given, showing a non-subject [O] coreferent with an intransitive subject (either agentive or nonagentive), and a non-subject [O]; in both of these cases, the readings given are the only possible ones. In (41) we can also see a subject [O] coreferent with a following subject [O].

Transitive verb is an actor voice verb: [O] = [Sₐ, SUB]/[S₀, SUB]

(39) a. Ng-ing asu aku, lai.
   AV-see dog 1SG leave
   ‘I, saw the dog and \( \emptyset \) left.’

b. Ng-ing asu aku, cappa-na (* -ku).
   AV-see dog 1SG fall-3SG (-1SG)
   ‘I, saw the dog and \( \emptyset \) fell down.’

15 The distinction between [Sₐ] and [S₀] is actually irrelevant here, though it is retained to demonstrate that the restrictions are not based on a split-intransitive system, and to make the point concerning the coreference more clear.
[O] = [O]

(40) Ng-ita kaw aku, ngan-jagur si Udin.
AV-see 2SG 1SG AV-hit PN Udin
'I saw you, and Udin hit Ø·ij.'
* 'I saw you, and Ø; hit Udin.'

[O_{SUBJ}] = [O_{SUB}]

(41) Daka' asu bo-na gaggar-an-na asu-na uggo'.
catch dog SWITCH-3SG snarl-APPL-3SG dog-3SG pig
'The dog, caught it, and the dog, snarled at the pig.'

The case of an [A] not showing possible coreference with a following [A] is given in (42), demonstrating that grammatical subject properties (as monitored by the voice system) are not the determiner of reference in coordination. In this example not only is the voice-selected 'subject' status of the arguments insufficient to allow coreference, but also the [A] syntactic role borne by both arguments will not allow this. An ability to allow coreference is found with the clauses in (43) and (44), which show an [O] argument displaying coreference with a following [S] or [O] argument, regardless of whether the [O] argument was treated as the (voice-selected) grammatical subject or not; examples (40) and (99) are also relevant here.

[S,O] ≠ [S,O]; [A_{SUBJ}] ≠ [A_{SUB}]

(42) Ng-apus pario' ka n-agu garang.
AV-wipe pot and AV-put salt
'Ø; wiped the pot (clean) and Ø; put salt (in it).'

(questioning of Bajau speakers reveals that the [A]s in these two sentences cannot be construed as referring the same entity)

Transitive verb is an object voice verb: [O_{SUBJ}] = [SA_{SUB}]

(43) Tuba'-an-na pisaw panangkaw itu, duai ka dilao'.
stab-APPL-3SG knife thief that descend ALL sea
'He; stabbed the thief, with (his) knife and Ø; went to the sea.'

[O_{SUBJ}] = [O]

(44) Jagur-na aku, n-ubba si Udin.
hit-3SG 1SG AV-stab PN Udin
'Ø; hit me, and then Udin, stabbed Ø;.'

The final examples in (45) show that an intransitive subject cannot be coreferential with a transitive subject in an adjacent clause, but may be coreferent with an [O]; the fact that the [A] in the clause 'intana dayah ore ua'ku is not selected as the grammatical subject is irrelevant to the coreference restrictions, as evidenced by the non-coreference in (42). In the b sentence the runner in the first clause is unambiguously Hasan, and not Udin.
AV-spit first and eat-3SG fish that father-my
‘Ø₁ first spat and then my father; ate some fish.’
* ‘Ø₁ first spat and then my father; ate some fish.’

[Sₐ,SUBJ] = [O]
b. Lallai ka n-ubba si Udin si Hasan.
run and AV-stab PN Udin PN Hasan
‘Ø₁ ran and then Udini; stabbed Hasan.’

[Sₐ,SUBJ] = [O,SUBJ]
c. Ningkolo ia, lelle-kami.
sit 3SG tease-1PL.EX
‘She, sat down, and we; teased her.’

Sentences (39)–(45) have demonstrated the coreference restrictions found with clauses adjoined without any explicit coordinating morphology. In order to coordinate two clauses with an interpretation such that the [S,O] argument in each clause is not the same referent, and in which there is coreference involving an [S] or [A] argument, a speaker must use the switch-reference marker bo-, inflected with the suffixed forms of the pronouns showing the person and number of the [S] or [A] in the following clause.

In (46)–(50), to be compared with (42) and (45), examples of clauses with coreferential arguments, one of which is an [A], are presented. In all cases the sentence would not be grammatical if the bo-POSS switch-reference marker was not present; (46) is directly comparable with (39) and most of the other sentences show similar comparability with the sentences in (39)–(45). Just as in the previous set of examples, it is worth noting that the status of either of the arguments as ‘grammatical subject’ or not is irrelevant to the ability of the two to be construed as coreferential; the important thing is that the coreference of two non-[S,O] arguments requires the use of the switch-reference marker.

Transitive verb is an actor voice verb: [S,O] ≠ [S,O]; [A,SUBJ] bo = [Sₐ,SUBJ]

(46) Ng-ita asu aku, bo-ku lai.
AV-see dog 1SG SWITCH-1SG leave
‘I; saw the dog, and I; left.’

[S,O] ≠ [S,O]; [A,SUBJ] bo = [A,SUBJ]

(47) Ng-irra’ dayah kaw bo-nu m-unang kamanakang-ku.
AV-cut fish 2SG SWITCH-2SG AV-give SiC-my
‘You; cut the fishj and Ø₁ gave it to my nephew,r.’

Logically (45a) could be interpreted to mean that the fish spat, since it is the [O] in the following clause: ‘Ø₁ first spat and then my father; ate some fish.’ Since, in the real world, cooked fish do not spit, and all hearers know this, the preferred interpretation is that someone else spat; notice that the interpretation that father spat is not grammatical, even though spitting before eating is usual in Bajau culture.
(48) $M$-usay *kami ka dilao*, *bo-kami m-issi dayah* ...
AV-paddle 1PL.EX ALL sea, SWITCH-1PL.EX AV-hook fish
'We paddled out to the (deep) sea, and there we caught fish ...'

Transitive verb is an object voice verb: [S, O] $\neq$ [S, O]; [A] *bo* = [A, SUBJ]

(49) *Kita-ku asu, bo-ku lai.*
see-1SG dog SWITCH-1SG left
'I saw the dog, and I left.'

[S, O] $\neq$ [S, O]; [S, SUBJ] *bo* = [A]

(50) *Nga-riija daulu bo-na inta-na dayah ore ua'-ku.*
AV-spit first SWITCH-3SG eat-3SG fish that father-my
'First spat and then my father ate some fish.'

Additional examples demonstrating coreference involving a subject [A] and a subject [O] are given in (51) and (52); in these cases, showing both orders of the two arguments, bo- is required to allow coreferential interpretations.

[S, O] $\neq$ [S, O]; [A, SUBJ] *bo* = [O, SUBJ]

(51) *Nga-lelle asu ia, bo-na ia gaggar-an-na.*
AV-tease dog 3SG SWITCH-3SG 3SG snarl-APPL-3SG
'He teased the dog, then Ø.-vij snarled at (him).'

[S, O] $\neq$ [S, O]; [O, SUBJ] *bo* = [A, SUBJ]

(52) *Pangande-na Udin, tawa bo-na m-issi pai Udin.*
lie.to-3PL Udin but SWITCH-3SG AV-catch stingray Udin
'They, lied to Udin, (about the fishing grounds), but Ø.-vij caught some stingrays.'

Intransitive verbs, necessarily involving a single argument that is the grammatical subject, are normally interpreted as having coreferential subjects. If they are not to be so interpreted, then the switch-reference marker bo- must be used. The first two examples below illustrate coreference with either an agentic and non-agentic subject, or with two agentic subjects. The order of the two clauses is not important for coreference purposes, and a clause with two non-agentic subjects (not illustrated here) is also interpreted as involving coreference, unless explicitly designated as having different subjects.

Two intransitive verbs: [S, A, SUBJ] = [S, O, SUBJ]

(53) *Pore, cappa-na.*
go fall-3SG
'Ø.-vij went and s/he fell over.'

[S, A, SUBJ] = [S, A, SUBJ]

(54) *Nga-riija ana’ daulu, ningkolo.*
AV-spit child first sit
'The child spat, and then Ø., sat down.'
We can see that, despite a voice system selecting grammatical subject as input to a variety of constructions, such as relativization (see Donohue 1996 for exemplification of this), clausal coordination and its morphosyntactic realization operates on an ergative basis: argument that is [S] or [O] is coordinated with another [S] or [O] argument, and any deviation from this requires the use of the switch-reference marker bo- and the appropriate person and number suffixes.

6. Conclusions

The data from these languages of Indonesia have confirmed one prediction by Dixon, that a switch-reference system need not monitor an [S,A] pivot. This was shown with data from the Bajau switch-reference system, in which the non-identity of an [S] or [O] argument in two adjoined clauses must be monitored by the use of the special conjunction bo-POSS. This should not be thought of as unique; Donohue (1997) describes a system in Hatam which monitors two categories for coordination, [A] = [A] versus all other options, including, crucially, [A] = [S]. In a sense this is the exact opposite of the Bajau system described here, but it still operates in terms of [A] ≠ [S], and so is accurately described as being an ergatively aligned switch-reference system.

Another one of Dixon's generalizations, presented by him several times as an absolute constraint, that morphological ergativity necessarily precedes any degree of syntactic ergativity, has been shown to be unsustainable. The Oirata data show that a language with wholly accusative morphology (both case marking and switch-reference system) can exhibit degrees of syntactic ergativity, as seen by the operation of the relativization marked by -ni, in which only an argument in [S] or [O] may head a relative clause. The oft-repeated assertion that there are no languages with phonologically marked absolutive cases, has also been shown to not hold, with the Nias data clearly demonstrating that absolutive case can be marked with respect to ergative.

Finally, an interesting case of a split-intransitive system that is itself dependent on the person of the argument is demonstrated to exist in Iha for first and second persons with unaccusative verbs in past tenses.

While this survey of unusual ergative features in languages from Indonesia far from being exhaustive, it is suggestive of the range of phenomena that remain to be even partially documented in this region of great linguistic diversity. We are confident that further research will reveal yet other patterns of interesting morphosyntax in the region to challenge other authors' assertions about language universals.

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17 Other languages with (less incontrovertible) evidence for a marked absolutive category include Kabardian (Colarusso 1992) and earlier stages of Wardaman (Merlan 1994).
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