ERGATIVE CONTROL OF SYNTACTIC PROCESSES IN SAMA SOUTHERN

1. and 2. Introduction, and Explanation of Ergativity

- when is 3 a crowd? (siblings Sara & Alan, plus Owen / Mr & Mrs. Sara & Owen, plus Alan)
- many Philippine languages are morphologically ergative (S & O, plus A)
- for many of the world's languages which are morphologically ergative, control of syntactic processes is either (a) nominative, or (b) split between nominative and ergative (many Philippine languages)
- in (Southern) Sinama, at least 5 major syntactic processes show an exclusive ergative pattern of syntactic control

3. Ergativity in Sinama Morphology

- Sinama has three pronoun sets: absolutive, ergative, and oblique. As illustrated in examples (1) through (7), S and O are absolutive, and A is ergative.

(1) **Tuli akú   gana-gana.**
    tuli akú   gana-gana
    sleep 1SG.ABS later
       S
    I (S) will sleep later.

(2) **Tabangan-na   akú.**
    tabang -an -na   akú
    help   -PAT -3SG.ERG 1SG.ABS
           A   O
    She (A) will help me (O).

(3) **Tabangan-ku   iyá.**
    tabang -an -ku   iyá
    help   -PAT -1SG.ERG 3SG.ABS
           A   O
    I (A) will help him/her (O).

- When S or O is encoded by a full NP (whether common noun or a proper noun), it has no case marking:

(4) **Tuli si Ben   gana-gana.**
    tuli si Ben   gana-gana
    sleep PM name.person later
       S
    Ben (S) will sleep later.

(5) **Tuli anak-anak gana-gana.**
    tuli DUP- anak gana-gana
    sleep DIM- child later
          S
    The child (S) will sleep later.

(6) **Tabangan-ku   si Ben.**
    tabang -an -ku   si Ben
    help   -PAT -1SG.ERG PM name.person
              A   O
    I (A) will help Ben (O).

(7) **Tabangan-ku   anak-anak.**
    tabang -an -ku   DUP- anak
    help   -PAT -1SG.ERG DIM- child
              A   O
    I (A) will help the child (O).

- When A is encoded by a full NP (whether common or proper noun), it is preceded by *leh*, and the verb is obligatorily affixed with *ni-*:

(8) **Nitabangan   anak-anak leh mastal.**
    ni- tabang -an DUP- anak   leh mastal
    AGR- help   -PAT DIM- child ERG teacher
                  O   A
    The teacher (A) will help the child (O).

(9) **Nitabangan   akú   leh si Ben.**
    ni- tabang -an akú   leh si Ben
    AGR- help   -PAT 1SG.ABS ERG PM name.person
                  O   A
    Ben (A) will help me (O).

- The marker *leh* marks A only; it never marks S or O, as in *Tuli *leh si Ben* 'Ben (S) will sleep' or *Tabangan-ku *leh si Ben* 'I (A) will help Ben (O)'.

4. Syntactic Processes and Patterns of Control in Sinama

4.1. Relativization

- NP is modified by a subordinate clause; subordinate clause is relative clause, and modified NP is its head noun (e.g., *I saw the rope which Alan cut.*)
- In Sinama, relativization follows an ergative pattern of syntactic control in that only S and O may be the head of a relative clause.

(12) **Bey tandah-ku   lubid.**[1]
    bey ta-   ndah -ku   lubid   (independent clause)
    PPFV NCTRL- see -1SG.ERG rope
                        A   O
    I saw the rope.

---

[1] (The numbers assigned to examples in this handout are not continuous; they correspond to the example numbers in the full paper, some of which are not included here.)

(13) **Bey nikottob   lubid itu   leh anak-anak.**
```
     bey  ni- kottob lubid itu    leh DUP- anak                (independent clause)
     PPFV AGR- cut    rope  D1.ABS ERG DIM- child
                      O             A
```
A/The child cut this rope.

(14) **Bey tandah-ku   lubid ya bey nikottob**
```
     bey  ta-   ndah -ku       lubid ya  bey  ni- kottob
     PPFV NCTRL- see  -1SG.ERG rope  NMZ PPFV AGR- cut
```
   ø   leh anak-anak.
```
         leh DUP- anak                                 (relative clause, O is head)
         ERG DIM- child
     O=ø  A
```
I saw the rope which a/the child cut.

- Ex. (15) demonstrates that the A argument cannot be the head of a relative clause.

(15) ***Bey tandah-ku anak-anak ya bey nikottob(-na)[2] lubid ø.**
I saw the child who cut the rope.

- In (16), the relativized clause is an antipassive construction (that is, it has been detransitivized – note the *-ngan* intransitive prefix on the verb). Thus, the deleted referent is S (as is clearly the case in (18)).

(16) **Bey tandah-ku   anak-anak ya bey ngottob   ø lubid.**
```
     bey  ta-   ndah -ku       DUP- anak  ya  bey  ngaN- kottob    lubid
     PPFV NCTRL- see  -1SG.ERG DIM- child NMZ PPFV INTR- cut       rope
                                                              S=ø
```
I saw the child who cut a/the rope.

(17) **Bey nengge   anak-anak.**
```
     bey  ngaN- tengge DUP- anak
     PPFV INTR- stand  DIM- child
                       S
```
The child stood.

(18) **Bey tandah-ku   anak-anak ya bey nengge   ø.**
```
     bey  ta-   ndah -ku       DUP- anak  ya  bey  ngaN- tengge
     PPFV NCTRL- see  -1SG.ERG DIM- child NMZ PPFV INTR- stand
                                                              S=ø
```
I saw the child who stood.

4.2. Clefting

- NP extracted from main clause, appears as fronted head noun (e.g., *It's Alan who cut the rope.*); in Sinama, head noun is cross-referenced on nominalized verb.
- Clefting in Sinama follows ergative pattern of syntactic control – only S and O[3] may be the head noun. The head noun precedes the nominalized clause. The argument in the nominalized clause that is co-referential with the head noun is obligatorily absent. If the head noun is a pronoun, the pronoun is from the oblique class[4].

---

[2] The parentheses here indicate that this example is ungrammatical with or without the ergative pronoun.

[3] In addition to a patient, this may include a location, an instrument, or a beneficiary that has been promoted to O. See full paper for details.

[4] For example, item (20) would be: *Íya ya na bey nengge.* 'He/She is who stood.'

(19)
```
Bey   nengge        si Ben.
bey   ngaN- tengge  si Ben
PPFV  INTR- stand    PM name.person
                        S
```
Ben stood.

(20)
```
Si Ben            ya na bey  nengge        Ø.
si Ben            ya na bey  ngaN- tengge
PM name.person    NMZ LK PPFV INTR- stand
                                          S=Ø
```
Ben is who stood.

(21)
```
Bey   nikottob     lubid itu    leh anak-anak.
bey   ni- kottob   lubid itu    leh DUP- anak
PPFV  AGR- cut      rope  D1.ABS ERG DIM- child
                   O            A
```
A/the child cut this rope.

(22)
```
Lubid itu    ya  bey  nikottob      Ø  leh anak-anak.
lubid itu    ya  bey  ni- kottob       leh DUP- anak
rope  D1.ABS NMZ PPFV AGR- cut          ERG DIM- child
                                  O=Ø
```
This rope is what a/the child cut.

- Ex. (23) illustrates that A cannot be head of a cleft construction.

(23)
```
*Anak-anak ya bey nikottob(-na) lubid itu.
```
A/The child is who cut this rope.

- Transitive clause may be changed to antipassive (A becomes S); S can be the head of a cleft (24):

(24)
```
Anak-anak  ya  bey  ngottob       lubid Ø.
DUP- anak  ya  bey  ngaN- kottob lubid
DIM- child NMZ PPFV INTR- cut     rope
                                       S=Ø
```
A child is who cut (or cut at) a rope.

- In (25), patient is O and so is eligible to be head of cleft construction (26). When an oblique referent is promoted to O, it is also eligible to be the head of a cleft construction (see full paper for example of promoted recipient and beneficiary which are heads of cleft constructions).

(25)
```
Nipamuwan              búk  leh mastal   ni anak-anak.
ni- pangaN- buwan      búk  leh mastal   ni DUP- anak
AGR- PAT-    give       book ERG teacher  to DIM- child
                       O    A           OBL
```
A/The teacher will give the book to a/the child.

(26)
```
Búk  itu    ya na  nipamuwan           Ø   leh mastal  ni anak-anak.
búk  itu    ya na  ni- pangaN- buwan       leh mastal  ni DUP- anak
book D1.ABS NMZ LK AGR- PAT-    give        ERG teacher to DIM- child
                                       O=Ø A           OBL
```
This book is what a/the teacher will give to a/the child.

4.3. WH-question formation

- question with a pro-form (e.g., English "who", "what", "where", "why", "when"), often in clause-initial position, with "gap" where questioned argument occurs in the non-question form. (E.g., *He will give the book to you.* cf. *What will he give Ø to you?*)
- in Sinama, WH-question formation follows ergative pattern: S (34) and (41) and O (36) may be

questioned, not A (39):

(33) `Bey  nengge         anak-anak.`
    bey ngaN- tengge DUP- anak
    PPFV INTR- stand DIM- child
    The child stood.

(34) `Siyan bey  nengge         Ø?`
    siyan bey ngaN- tengge Ø
    who   PPFV INTR- stand   Ø
                            S=Ø

    Who stood?

(35) `Bey  pamuwan          búk  leh  danda  ni anak-anak.`
    bey pangaN- buwan búk leh danda ni DUP- anak
    PPFV PAT-   give book ERG female to DIM- child
                      O   A   OBL
    A/The woman gave the book to a/the child.

(36) `Iyan  bey  pamuwan          Ø    leh danda  ni anak-anak?`
    eyyan bey pangaN- buwan   leh danda ni DUP- anak
    what PPFV PAT-   give   ERG female to DIM- child
                           O=Ø A   OBL
    What did a/the woman give to a/the child?

(39) `*Siyan bey pamuwan buk  Ø    ni anak-anak?`
                              *A=Ø
    Who gave the book to a/the child?

(40) `Bey  akú     muwan         búk  ni anak-anak.`
    bey akú   ngan- buwan búk ni DUP- anak
    PPFV 1SG.ABS INTR- give book to DIM- child
         S
    I gave a book to a/the child.

(41) `Siyan bey  Ø    muwan         búk  ni anak-anak?`
    siyan bey   ngaN- buwan búk ni DUP- anak
    who   PPFV   INTR- give book to DIM- child
               S=Ø
    Who gave a book to a/the child?

4.4. Equi-NP deletion

- main clause and complement clause; argument in main clause co-referential with one in complement clause, and a co-referential argument is deleted (e.g., *I want to sleep. I want to give the book to her.*)
- in most languages, equi-NP deletion operates on nominative pattern of control; in Sinama, ergative – only S (49) or O (51) can be deleted, not A (52):

(47) `Kabilahian-ku          búk.`
    ka- bilahi -an -ku   búk
    INV- want   -PAT -1SG.ERG book
    I want the book.

(48) **Tuli akú.**
    tuli akú
    sleep 1SG.ABS
          S
    I will sleep.

(49) **Kabilahian-ku   tuli ø.**
    ka- bilahi -an -ku   tuli
    INV- want   -PAT -1SG.ERG sleep
                                    S=ø
    I want to sleep.

(50) **Nilinganan   akú   leh si Ben.**
    ni- lengan -an akú   leh si Ben
    AGR- call   -PAT 1SG.ABS ERG PM name.person
                    O   A
    Ben will call me.

(51) **Kabilahian-ku   nilinganan   ø   leh si Ben.**
    ka- bilahi -an -ku   ni- lengan –an   leh si Ben
    INV- want   -PAT -1SG.ERG AGR- call   -PAT   ERG PM name.person
                                            O=ø A
    I want Ben to call [me].

(52) ***Kabilahian si Ben nilinganan akú ø.**
    Ben wants to call me.
                        O   *A=ø

4.5. Second-position cliticization

- clitic: form which has some features of an independent word but which is bound to another word
- in many Philippine languages, S, A, and O pronouns all behave like second-position clitics
- in Sinama, only S and O function as second-position clitics, not A (thus, ergative pattern)
- specifically, when host element such as *ley* PPFT, *bey* PPFV, or *maha* NEG occurs clause-initially, and S (54) or O (56) is pronoun, it moves to left of verb (second position of clause); this is not the case with A (57), (58).

(53) **Nengge   iyá.**
    ngaN- tengge iyá
    INTR- stand 3SG.ABS
                  S
    S/he will stand.

(54) **Bey iyá   nengge.**
    bey iyá   ngaN- tengge
    PPFV 3SG.ABS INTR- stand
          S
    S/he stood.

(55) **Tabangan-na   akú.**
    tabang -an -na   akú
    help   -PAT -3S.ERG 1S.ABS
                A   O
    She will help me.

(56) `Maha akú    tabangan-na.`
    `maha akú    tabang -an  -na`
    `NEG  1S.ABS help   -PAT -3S.ERG`
    `     O                 A`
    She will not help me.

(57) `*Maha-na akú tabangan.`
    `     A   O`
    She will not help me.

(58) `*Maha-na tabangan akú.`
    `     A            O`
    She will not help me.

5. Conclusion

The data presented here demonstrate that in addition to morphological ergativity, Sinama exhibits a high degree of syntactic ergativity. Specifically S and O, and only S and O, control not only relativization, clefting, and WH-question formation, as in many Philippine languages, but also equi-NP deletion and second-position cliticization.[5] (That is, in each of these syntactic operations, S and O pattern alike, and A patterns differently.) To our knowledge, Sinama[6] is unique among Philippine languages in that syntactic control for equi-NP and second-position cliticization follows an exclusive ergative pattern. Although other Philippine languages demonstrate syntactic ergativity with respect to some of these processes, published results to date have not documented syntactic ergativity to this degree.

Abbreviations

A	more agent-like argument in transitive clause
AGR	agreement affix
ASC	Associative
BEN	beneficiary
CAUS	causative
D1.ABS	demonstrative, near, absolute
DIM	diminutive
DU	dual
DUP	reduplication affix
ERG	ergative
INS	instrument
INTR	intransitive
INV	involuntary

LK	linker
LOC	locative
MKR_I	impersonal marker
NCTRL	no-control
NMZ	nominalizer
O	more patient-like argument in transitive clause
OBL	oblique
PASS	passive
PAT	Patient
PM	personal marker
PPFT	past perfect
PPFV	past perfective
S	single argument of intransitive clause
VI	valence increaser

---

[5] Preliminary research indicates that imperatives, reflexivization, and reciprocalization operate on a nominative-accusative pattern of syntactic control, but these processes are beyond the scope of this paper.

[6] This claim may also be true of other Sama languages, and has in fact been demonstrated for Yakan (Brainard and Behrens 2002).