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Topic as evidence for nominative case in Ma Manda*
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1   Introduction[1]

"Optional ergativity" in Trans New Guinea (TNG) languages has received significant recent attention (Christensen 2010; Hynum 2010; McGregor 2010; Rumsey 2010; Suter 2010). In these accounts, an ergative enclitic is analyzed as marking the A argument of transitive clauses, in addition to occasionally marking the S argument of intransitive clauses. The treatments given to this phenomenon have, by and large, dealt with the motivations for its presence vs. absence in discourse, and have led to many conclusions regarding its function. McGregor (2010:1618–24) lists five primary types of explanation that have been proposed in the literature: (i) discriminative function in potentially ambiguous clauses; (ii) pragmatic function such as focus, counter-expectation, or definiteness; (iii) semantic function such as volitionality, control, willfulness, and self-motivation; (iv) a global distribution approach, whereby statistical trends are analyzed for correlations; and (v) a semiotic approach, whereby meaning is assigned to the morpheme itself on the one hand, and to its use on the other. These functional and/or statistical approaches have failed to provide a satisfactory account of the data for some languages. For example, they do not uniformly explain why the ergative is not actually required on the A argument, in contradistinction to its expected compulsoriness in a case-marking system. Additionally, its occasional use in marking the sole argument of intransitive clauses in many languages is puzzling. Even though it has been repeatedly suggested that the ergative case marker has a discourse pragmatic function, the particular function seems to vary significantly from language to language.

        Several authors have convincingly shown that this marker is indeed used to control information flow in discourse. Few, however, have provided structural accounts of the data to show how phrase structural configurations might play a role in the assignment of the ergative case marker. In this paper I provide just such an account for Ma Manda, a Finisterre-Huon language of the TNG family. I argue that, rather than having an optional ergative marker as has been argued for several related languages, Ma Manda has actually developed nominative case. I accomplish this by establishing that topic has an extra-clausal position as a sister of IP (i.e. TOP=[Spec, CP]), while subject is a daughter of IP (i.e. SUBJ=[Spec, IP]), as shown in (1). An NP that occurs in [Spec, CP] is extra-sentential: it does not bear a grammatical relation and does not

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[1] Abbreviations: **1** first person, **2** second person, **3** third person, **A** agent of transitive clause, **ADJN** adjunct nominal, **DU** dual, **EMPH** emphatic, **HAB** habitual aspect, **LOC** locative, **NEG** negation, **NFUT** near future tense, **NOM** nominative case, **NPST** near past tense, **NSG** non-singular, **O(BJ)** object, **P** patient of transitive clause, **PL** plural, **POSS** possession, **PRES** present tense, **RPST** remote past tense, **S** subject of intransitive clause, **SG** singular, **Sp** subject-prominent, **SR** same referent medial verb, **S(UBJ)** subject, **TNG** Trans New Guinea, **TOP** topic, **Tp** topic-prominent, **V** verb, **YNQ** polar question

take case morphology. An NP that occurs in [Spec, IP], however, is the grammatical subject. I argue that grammatical subjects in Ma Manda are required to bear nominative case, while topics cannot bear nominative case. Furthermore, I note a preference for filler-gap constructions in intransitive clauses, and resumptive pronouns in transitive clauses. I hypothesize that this is a natural consequence of the interaction between morphological ergativity and topic-prominence.

(1)
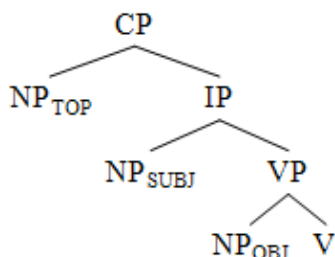
First, in §2 I summarize some of the common claims that have been made regarding optional ergativity in TNG languages. In §3 I introduce the Ma Manda data with a presentation of the basic clause types and word order variation. In §4 I show how the topic constituent is coded in Ma Manda and establish it as a topic-prominent language. In §5 I review the distributional characteristics of the case enclitic. Following Donohue's (2005) discourse-configurational approach, I argue that the facts are best explained by treating it as a nominative, rather than as an ergative, case marker. I also extend Donohue's analysis and argue that the analysis of topic can account for the comparatively infrequent usage of the nominative enclitic in intransitive clauses as well. Finally, in §6 I summarize my conclusions and suggest that some other "optional ergative" languages may be better analyzed as having nominative marking, or as being in transition from morphologically ergative to morphologically nominative systems.

2   "Optional ergativity" in Trans New Guinea

A great many TNG languages have been described as having an "optional ergative" case marker. I note McGregor's warning, however, that "the term optional is something of a misnomer, as there is no implication that presence and absence of the marker are in free variation, just that there is no difference in the referential meanings associated with presence and absence of the marker" (2010:1615). This marker, which is especially prevalent in the Highlands, often surfaces as an enclitic that attaches to the final constituent of a noun phrase. Though its properties vary somewhat, several characteristics recur in many languages. Here I survey some of these recurrent features as a backdrop for my treatment of Ma Manda clause structure.

In most of these languages the agent NP of transitive clauses is routinely accorded ergative case. Each language seems to have idiosyncrasies with regard to the marker's obligatoriness and optionality. This variation is often said to be related to Silverstein's (1976) animacy hierarchy. In Fore (Scott 1986:169–70), for example, inanimate NPs must be marked with ergative case for them to be interpreted as agents. Conversely, the higher the animacy of the NP, the less likely it is for it to be marked with ergative case. Non-human animates are likely to be accorded ergative case, while human referents (i.e. pronouns, proper nouns, "very close" kin terms) are disallowed from taking ergative case. In Numanggang, a Finisterre-Huon language

closely related to Ma Manda, pronouns are never assigned ergative case (Hynum 2010:134).[2] In contrast, though Kâte—another Finisterre-Huon language—does not allow the ergative marker on its personal pronouns, it has special ergative forms of its singular pronouns (Suter 2010:424). Figure 1 illustrates the ergative marker's optionality as it relates to Silverstein's (1976) animacy hierarchy. Every language has its own restrictions as to which levels on the hierarchy mandate the use of the ergative marker, and which levels mandate the non-use of the marker.
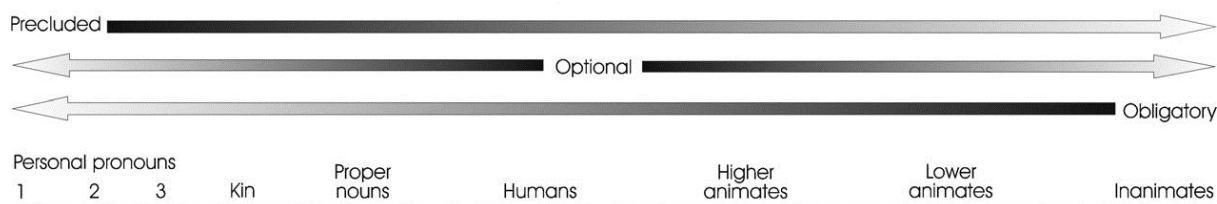

Figure 1: Optional ergative marker and Silverstein's animacy hierarchy (McGregor 2010:1617)

In languages where the ergative marking is optional, it is often claimed to be required in atypical word order configurations. That is, when patient NPs are fronted, the agent NPs are obligatorily accorded ergative case. This has been claimed for Yongkom (Christensen 2010:8), Kâte (Suter 2010:425), Fore (Scott 1986:169), Hua (Haiman 1980), and Lani ("Western Dani") (Donohue 2005:183), among others. This has also been claimed for Korafe (Farr 1999:102), with the added stipulation that the patient has to outrank the agent on the animacy hierarchy.[3] This pattern could also be explained by the correlation between animacy and topicality, as Donohue (2005:188–89) also suggests:

> [T]he high frequency of high-animate subjects (in APV clauses) appearing without ergative (or nominative) case is explained by their increased likelihood of appearing in the pragmatically more salient position: they are more topical, ... and so are more likely to be coded as pragmatically salient.

McGregor (2010), in his typological survey of optional ergative languages, refers to this use of the ergative marker (i.e. when ambiguity is possible due to atypical word order configurations or due to low-animacy agents) as the "discriminative function"—one of the five main types of explanations proposed in the literature for the distribution of the optional ergative marker (also see Comrie 1978:380). As pointed out by McGregor though, in optional-ergative languages "the ergative marker is used much more frequently than predicted by the discriminative theory, [often] used when there is no likelihood whatever of confusion of Agent and Undergoer roles" (2010:1619). The failure of the discriminatory hypothesis is seen, for instance, when the bound pronominal agreement affixes on the verb uniquely cross-reference the two arguments. Regarding morphological ergativity in general, Du Bois (1987:849) also remarks that "the discriminatory function of case-marking does not, by itself, provide a complete explanation for the ergative and accusative patterns." This is due in large part to the infrequent

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[2] Interestingly, the first and second plural pronouns, as well as the third person pronoun, all end in -di, the very marker for ergativity: *nindi* '1PL', *hidi* '2PL', *adi* '3'.

[3] It may just be a strong tendency in Korafe that patients are only fronted when they are topical, and therefore (most often) animate as well.

overt occurrence of both A and O arguments in a single transitive clause (cf. the One Lexical Argument Constraint (Du Bois 1987:819)).

Furthermore, Suter points out that it is unlikely that speakers of languages with an optional ergative marker "monitor their speech and insert an ergative marker whenever a syntactically ambiguous structure threatens to surface, and otherwise omit the marker" (2010:428). He continues: "For all we know, speakers are generally unaware of syntactic ambiguity and do not worry about it." Though this statement may be too strong, it does seem conspicuous that so many languages would use the marker for the same discriminatory purpose, with many of the same types of apparent pragmatic exceptions. That is, if the ergative marker in question was primarily a tool for disambiguation, it would be unlikely for the speakers of so many distantly related languages to choose to utilize it in precisely the same environments.

Some authors have pointed out that the patterns of case-marking are different depending on whether the clause in question is spoken in isolation or in a discourse context. Regarding Numanggang, Hynum (2010:138) mentions that, when an ergative enclitic marks the sole argument of an intransitive clause, in isolation the exact same sentence will be rejected as unacceptable unless the marker is removed. The identical situation is reported for Kâte (Suter 2010:436). Regarding Ku Waru, Rumsey (2010:1663) says that when typical transitive ("two-argument") clauses are elicited in isolation, "speakers almost always include the ergative marker on the subject NP. But in less self-conscious, connected speech, two-argument clauses are often found with subject NPs that are not ergatively marked." This appears to be related to the second of the five explanations for optional ergativity surveyed by McGregor—the "pragmatic function." Various pragmatic explanations have been suggested in the literature. Most often it is focus (i.e. non-topichood) which is associated with the use of the ergative marker on agent arguments (McGregor 2010:1619). This has been argued for Lower Grand Valley Dani (Bromley 1981), Korafe (Farr 1999:103), and Numanggang ("foregrounding") (Hynum 2010:143), among others. In Kâte the marker is termed a "rhematic ergative marker" (Suter 2010:436), where it is compared to the Korafe marker—which is analyzed to be a mixture of a pragmatic marker indicating focus and a semantic marker indicating agency or force. Whitehead (1981:50) discusses a few of the discriminatory and pragmatic explanations for the use of the ergative marker across Papua New Guinea:[4]

> The conditioning factors for the marker on Agents and Actors given in various of the papers referred to include displacement from initial position, introduction of new participants, emphasis of one group of participants over or to the exclusion of another, and the identification of the controlling identities at the various stages of the discourse. In the case of Timbe, clauses elicited in isolation give the impression that it is an ergative language with Agent case-marked by the suffix *-ne*, and Actor never. In text, however, there is no more than 60% consistency with this usage; instead it becomes clear that the function of *-ne* is to indicate the controlling entities.

Whitehead's mention of control introduces the third of McGregor's surveyed explanations for optional ergativity—the "semantic function." Often the use of the ergative

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[4] The term "Actor" here refers to the subject of an intransitive clause (i.e. S).

marker in non-standard word orders is related to discrimination and pragmatics. Its use in standard word orders, however, is often related to the semantics of the predication. Various semantic explanations have surfaced in the literature, including "control" in Folopa (Anderson & Wade 1988), Fore (Scott 1986:174), and Siane (Potts & James 1988:74); "intent" in Yongkom (Christensen 2010:9); "force" in Korafe (Farr 1999:103); and "object-individuation" in Ku Waru (Rumsey 2010). Dixon (1994:28–35) refers to these types of languages as having "semantically based [ergative] marking." He suggests that the semantic basis to the alternative marking schema is independence, self-motivation, and control of the actor.

McGregor's fourth surveyed type of explanation for the optional ergative marker is the global distribution approach, which "does not attempt to account for each individual instance of use or non-use of the case marker, but rather attends to statistical patterns in usage" (2010:1620). This approach seems to stem from the ergative marker's variable pragmatic functions in discourse. Suter (2010) performs just such a statistical analysis of the ergative patterns in Kâte. For instance, he compares monologue and dialogue, as well as clauses with one and two overt arguments, in order to determine the correlation of the ergative marker with rhematicity. Regarding Yongkom, Christensen uses statistical patterns as well, making statements such as the following: "In the corpus, 13 per cent of S noun phrases are marked with [the ergative marker]" (2010:13). This approach has provided interesting results, but has not resulted in many firm conclusions regarding the function of the ergative marker.

McGregor's fifth type of explanation is the semiotic approach, which assigns meaning to the ergative marker itself on one hand, and to its use vs. non-use (as a sign) on the other: "Once the meanings and/or functions of case-markers are separated from their uses, it becomes evident that what is at issue need not necessarily be the use of the ergative marker, as is usually presumed. Non-use is an equally good contender for meaningfulness" (2010:1622). This is McGregor's own approach in his typological-semiotic study of optional ergative markers in New Guinean, Australian, and Tibeto-Burman languages. His purpose is not to analyze grammatical distribution, but the use vs. non-use of the optional ergative marker "in those environments in which the choice is available" (2010:1617). The purpose of McGregor's approach is decidedly different than the structural focus of this paper. While in his approach—tied as it is to semantic/pragmatic factors—"predictability of use vs. non-use of the ergative marker will always be at best partial and probabilistic" (2010:1624), the approach posited here aims to provide a precise structural correlation between topichood and non-marking of case, and between non-topichood (i.e. focus) and the marking of case.

Another typical pattern is for the ergative marker to be polysemous with instrumental case. Foley (1986:106) suggests that the ergative case-marking schema "has resulted from the spread of a peripheral case-marker to the actor, a core relation, in order to meet certain grammatical needs." This polysemous relationship has been established for Yongkom (Christensen 2010:7,9), Enga (Li & Lang 1979:322), Kewa (Franklin 1971), Numanggang (Hynum 2010:131), and Kâte (Suter 2010:424), among many others.

With these few recurrent properties of optionally ergative languages having been described, I now turn to a description of the basic clause types in Ma Manda.

3   Basic clause types and word order variation

Like most TNG languages, Ma Manda has SOV standard word order, as seen in examples (2)–(5).[5]

(2) *nə-ŋkədek   ku-wəŋ*
    man-PL   go-PRES:3PL.S
    'The men are going.'

(3) *nə   mə-ntək*
    man   fall-PRES:3SG.S
    'The man (just) fell.'

(4) *nə   ip   təlam-gok*
    man   bird   3SG.O:shoot-RPST:3SG.S
    'The man shot a bird.'

(5) *nə   ip   məməm   yəlam-gok*
    man   bird   many   3NSG.O:shoot-RPST:3SG.S
    'The man shot many birds.'

A basic intransitive clause is provided in (2). The verb is shown to have a suffix which cross-references the person and number of the subject. The same agreement pattern occurs with the unaccusative subject in (3). The verbal suffix is a fused portmanteau morpheme that also indicates tense. A basic transitive clause is shown in (4), where a suffix on the verb once again cross-references the subject/agent. The sentence in (5) is similar to (4), except that the object/patient (*ip* 'bird') is plural. This plurality provokes a change on the verb's initial consonant, from *t* to *y*. Approximately 27 transitive verbs in Ma Manda have bound prefixes that cross-reference the object. In a large number of TNG languages all transitive verbs have bound pronominal object prefixes (Foley 1986:105). A characteristic feature of the Finisterre-Huon subfamily, however, is that only a small closed class of transitive verbs takes these prefixes (Suter 2012:23). Moreover, the individual prefixes are often fused with the verb roots, and the third person singular object form is often suppletive. Examples (6)–(8) illustrate these patterns.

(6) *nə   nambi-lək*
    man   1SG.O:see-PRES:3SG.S
    'The man sees me.'

(7) *nə   ip   den   yabi-lək*
    man   bird   some   3NSG.O:see-PRES:3SG.S
    'The man sees some birds.'

(8) *nə   ip   ka-k*
    man   bird   3SG.O:see-PRES:3SG.S
    'The man sees a bird.'

Examples (6)–(7) show the verb root *-b-* 'see' in the 1SG object form and 3NSG object form, respectively. The suppletive 3SG form of 'see' (*kə*) is shown in (8), having undergone a morphophonemic alternation as well. These examples have shown that Ma Manda has a

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[5] The phonology of Ma Manda, described in Pennington (2013), consists of fourteen consonants—/p t q b d g m n ŋ f s l w j/—and seven vowels—/i ɨ u e ə o a/. Examples in this paper are written phonologically according to the IPA, with the following two exceptions: /q/→*k* and /j/→*y*.

nominative-accusative pattern in its verbal morphology, with the subject (either S or A) being identically cross-referenced by a suffix on the predicate, and the object (P) being cross-referenced by a prefix. This pattern is extremely prevalent across Papua New Guinea (Foley 1986:105).

Although SOV is the default word order configuration, variation is quite common due to discourse pragmatic functions. The following examples illustrate the possible interpretations of a transitive clause that has either zero or one overt argument.

(9) *u-gok*
     3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
     'He/she hit him/her/it.' [6]

(10) *kaudə*   *u-gok*
     stone   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
     'She hit the stone.' (? 'The stone hit her.')

(11) *nə*   *u-gok*
     man   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
     'She hit the man.' (or 'The man hit her.')

(12) *kaudə=lɨ*   *u-gok*
     stone=NOM   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
     'The stone hit her.' (* 'She hit the stone.')

(13) *nə=lɨ*   *u-gok*
     man=NOM   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
     'The man hit her.' (* 'She hit the man.')

As seen in (9), clauses are minimally composed of a single verb. Pro-drop of both subject and object is extremely common for salient participants. As shown by Suter (2010:428) for Kâte, (a fellow Finisterre-Huon language) the most common pattern in discourse is for overt object NPs and zero subjects. This aligns with the expected topicality of subjects. Examples (10)–(11) show that, when only one argument is present and the bound pronominal affixation on the verb is ambiguous, the overt argument is taken as the patient. However, in a unique discourse context the alternate interpretation is available for (10) (namely, that 'the stone hit her'): e.g., if a story revolves around a magical stone, then its salience and animacy will allow it to be interpreted as the agent. Regarding (11), either interpretation is acceptable. Out of context, 'man' must be interpreted as the patient, but if the man is salient then it can be interpreted as the agent. Examples (12)–(13) illustrate that, when marked with the *lɨ* enclitic, the single argument can only be interpreted as the agent. The following examples illustrate the range of possible interpretations when both arguments are overt.

(14) *nə(=lɨ)*   *kaudə*   *u-gok*
     man=NOM   stone   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
     'The man hit the stone.' (* 'The stone hit the man.')

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[6] From this point forward ambiguous third person pronouns will be glossed as feminine for the sake of simplicity and clarity.

(15) *kaudə=lɨ*   *nə*   *u-gok*
      stone=NOM   man   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
      'The stone hit the man.' (* 'The man hit the stone.')

(16) *kaudə*   *nə*   *u-gok*
      stone   man   3SG.O:hit-RPST: 3SG.S
      ? 'The stone hit the man.' (* 'The man hit the stone.')

(17) *kaudə*   *nə=lɨ*   *u-gok*
      stone   man=NOM   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
      'The stone, the man hit it.' (* 'The stone hit the man.')

(18) *nə*   *kaudə=lɨ*   *u-gok*
      man   stone=NOM   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
      'The man, the stone hit him.' (* 'The man hit the stone.')

(19) * *nə=lɨ*   *kaudə=lɨ*   *u-gok*
      man=NOM   stone=NOM   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S

Shown in (14), if 'man' occurs before 'stone' then the man must be interpreted as agent, and therefore the presence of *lɨ* on 'man' is inconsequential for the truth-conditional value of the clause. If the marker is absent, then 'man' is interpreted as the topical subject, and 'stone' will bear intonational prominence as the focused object. Example (15) has 'stone' obligatorily interpreted as subject, since it bears nominative case. Example (16) is only appropriate in certain discourse contexts just like the alternate reading of (10) above. However, this sentence is completely ungrammatical if 'man' is the intended subject. When the standard SOV word order is disturbed, the subject argument must take the case enclitic. Here, 'stone' is fronted to topic position, but 'man' is not accorded nominative case; the grammatical version can be seen in (17). In (18) we see that, even when the inanimate argument 'stone' is placed in second position, if it has the case marker it is obligatorily interpreted as the subject. In this case 'man' is a topical object. Finally, (19) is ungrammatical because only one argument may bear nominative case in a clause.

In summary, Ma Manda is an SOV language that allows freedom in the ordering of its arguments. Such variation in the ordering of NPs is what prompted Foley (1986:168) to claim that "in only a minority of Papuan languages does the word-order of nominals in clauses play a major role in their interpretation." Donohue (2005) challenges Foley's claim, arguing instead that phrase structure configurations actually play a much greater role in Papuan syntax than has previously been allowed for. The examples above suggest that word order can vary due to the topicalization of NPs. Following Donohue (2005), I argue that topic has its own extra-clausal position external to IP, and that this fact can fully explain the case-marking requirements. Before addressing the phrase structure rules, however, I turn to a discussion of topic and a demonstration of the prominent role it plays in Ma Manda clause structure.

4   Topic

> [T]he topic is a discourse notion, whereas the subject is to a greater extent a sentence-internal notion. The former can be understood best in terms of the discourse and extra-sentential considerations; the latter in terms of its functions within the sentence structure. (Li & Thompson 1976:466)

In §4.1 I establish that topic is an active constituent of Ma Manda clause structure, and I show how it is encoded. In §4.2 I use Li & Thompson's (1976) criteria to show that Ma Manda is a topic-prominent language that also has a grammatical subject relation.

4.1   Topic constituent

As in many languages, topics in Ma Manda are fronted and optionally set off from the rest of the clause by a pause break.[7] The following examples are illustrative.

(20) *nə ,*   *bot*   *yot*   *floŋ*   *ku-tak*
      man   gathering   house   LOC   go-NFUT:3SG.S
      'The man will go to the meeting house.'

(21) *nə ,*   *kadɨp*   *səŋ*   *fe-lək*
      man   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The man is hewing timber.'

(22) *səp ,*   *kas=lɨ*   *səko-ŋək*
      dog   trap=NOM   3SG.O:hold-NPST:3SG.S
      'The dog, the trap caught it.'

In (20) the topic is the agent of an intransitive clause, in (21) it is the agent of a transitive clause, and in (22) it is a patient. Several criteria confirm this analysis. First, a pause break is infelicitous after an object, as seen in (23). After a nominative subject it is of questionable felicity, as shown in in (24). Only topics are ordinarily followed by pause. If a pause occurs after a topic, a second pause after the subject is definitely unacceptable.

(23) *nə*   *kadɨp*   *səŋ (*,)*   *fe-lək*
      man   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The man is hewing timber.'

(24) *nə=lɨ (?,)*   *kadɨp*   *səŋ*   *fe-lək*
      man=nom   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The man is hewing timber.'

Second, topics cannot be interpreted as indefinite; rather, they must be generic or definite. The word *bən* is polysemous: it can mean 'other' or 'a'. In (25), it has to mean 'other' because the indefinite interpretation is unavailable for a topic.[8] In (26) the initial NP is moved from topic to subject position, and both interpretations are possible. The preferred interpretation, however,

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[7] In examples throughout this paper pauses are indicated by commas, and should be interpreted as optional unless otherwise noted.

[8] Here the enclitic surfaces as *tɨ* due to the preceding nasal. As discussed in Pennington (2013:143–52), *lɨ* variously occurs as *lɨ*, *pɨ*, *tɨ*, and *kɨ*.

is for an indefinite reference, presumably due to pragmatic implicature. The very fact that the argument is not topicalized suggests that the indefinite reading is more appropriate.

(25) *nə   bən ,   kadip   səŋ   fe-lək*
      man   other   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The other man is hewing timber.' (* 'A man is hewing timber.')

(26) *nə   bən=tɨ   kadip   səŋ   fe-lək*
      man   other=NOM   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'A man is hewing timber.' (or 'Another man is hewing timber.)

    Third, when an object is topicalized, the subject must be assigned nominative case. In (22) 'dog' is in topic position, and therefore 'trap' has to bear nominative case. Conversely, in (21) 'man' is topic, and thus does not bear nominative case. If 'man' were not topic, it would be required to bear the case marking.

    Fourth, content question words, which inherently bear pragmatic focus, cannot occur in topic position. This is revealed by the fact that a wh-word agent must bear the nominative case enclitic, as seen in (27). Example (28) is ungrammatical because the case marking is absent. In fact, wh-word patients can never occur before subjects, as shown in (29)–(30). Thus, patients are only allowed to precede agents when topicalized. Since wh-words cannot be topicalized, it is unsurprising that patient wh-words cannot occur clause-initially.

(27) *net=tɨ   ba-k*
      who=NOM   come-PRES:3SG.S
      'Who is coming?'

(28) **net   ba-k*
       who   come-PRES:3SG.S

(29) *nə   masɨ   tə-wəŋ*
      man   what   do-PRES:3PL.S
      'What are the men doing?'

(30) **masɨ   nə(=lɨ)   tə-wəŋ*
       what   man=NOM   do-PRES:3PL.S

    The answer to a content question word, if it is an agent, must bear nominative case as well. I assume that "a single element cannot function as both topic and focus at the same time, since the same piece of information cannot be simultaneously old and new in a single context" (Kroeger 2004:161–62). The answer to a question is new information—bearing pragmatic focus—and therefore cannot be a topic. Example (31) is an appropriate answer to (27), while (32) is not.

(31) *gələmbon=tɨ   ba-k*
      Garambon=NOM   come-PRES:3SG.S
      'Garambon is coming.'

(32) *#gələmbon   ba-k*
       Garambon   come-PRES:3SG.S
       'Garambon is coming.'

Incidentally, if a speaker wishes to respond to (27) in the first person, then the pronoun must be in the emphatic form, as shown in (33)–(34). Additionally, first and second pronouns can never bear nominative case, as shown in (35)–(36). This pattern, which also occurs in Numanggang (Hynum 2010:134), is not unexpected due to the typical preclusion in optional ergative languages of ergative case-marking in the highest rankings of the animacy hierarchy.

(33) *nək-ŋa*   *ba-t*
      1SG-EMPH   come-PRES:1SG.S
      'I am coming.'

(34) *#nək*   *ba-t*
      1SG   come-PRES:1SG.S
      'I am coming.'

(35) **nək-kɨ*   *ba-t*
      1SG-NOM   come-PRES:1SG.S

(36) **sɨdɨ-kɨ*   *bə-wəŋ*
      2PL-NOM   come-PRES:23PL.S

Nominative case is also required on "corrective" subjects (i.e. subjects in contrastive focus). This is seen in (38)–(39), which are answers to the question posed in (37). These are the very types of arguments that cannot possibly occur in topic position, and therefore obligatorily take the case enclitic.

(37) *doyəŋ*   *mi*   *floŋ*   *ku-ŋək=kə*
      Doyang   water   LOC   go-NPST:3SG.S=YNQ
      'Did Doyang go to the water?'

(38) *dom*   *gələmbon=tɨ*   *mi*   *floŋ*   *ku-ŋək*
      NEG   Garambon=NOM   water   LOC   go-NPST:3SG.S
      'No, Garambon went to the water.'

(39) *#dom*   *gələmbon*   *mi*   *floŋ*   *ku-ŋək*
      NEG   Garambon   water   LOC   go-NPST:3SG.S
      'No, Garambon went to the water.'

It has been shown that a topic constituent is active in Ma Manda clause structure: it is fronted and optionally separated from the comment by pause, it cannot have indefinite reference, non-topicalized subjects always take nominative case, and topic is incompatible with focused elements. My argument, however, is not simply that arguments can be topicalized. Instead, I contend that the topic-comment structure is basic, and that the presence of a topic is the unmarked, preferred clause type. In the following section I provide evidence to support the claim that Ma Manda is a topic-prominent, rather than a subject-prominent, language.

4.2   Topic-prominence
Li & Thompson (1976:466–71) identify a number of characteristics of topic-prominence (henceforth Tp), as opposed to subject-prominence (Sp). In this section I use a few of these prototypical features as tests to substantiate the claim that Ma Manda is a Tp language.

First and foremost, Tp languages are famous for what has been called the "double subject" construction. This construction involves the co-occurrence of a topic and a subject, such that no

direct grammatical relationship holds between the two. Often the topic simply "sets the stage" for the clausal predication to follow. Li & Thompson (1976:468) claim that all Tp languages have double subject constructions, while no Sp languages have them. A clear example of the construction is provided in (40). A double-object construction is provided in (41), in which the subject, a salient participant, is dropped. In both examples a pause break is required after the topic.

(40) *ip ,*   *gisim*   *kaŋ*   *sowek=kɨ*   *yə=ŋə-gəmok-ŋəŋ*
      bird   bird.sp   and   cassowary.sp=NOM   here=be-PRES:23DU.S-HAB
      'Birds, the Papuan Flowerpecker and the Dwarf Cassowary dwell here.'

(41) *səiləs kaŋ   kevin   manu ,   nə-ŋkədek   wə   yenaŋgɨt-tə   i   ku-gok.*
      Sailas   with   Kevin   Manu   man-PL   that   3NSG.O:get-SR this go-RPST:3SG.S
      'Sailas with Kevin and Manu, [she] got those men and she left.'

In (40) 'bird' is the topic, which is then followed by a complete clause. Notice that the conjoined NP is marked with nominative case, since it is the subject of the clause. Notice also that the predicate 'be at' agrees with the subject and not the topic. The subject is dual, while the topic is generic or plural, but certainly not dual. This aligns with Li & Thompson's (1976:464) statement that "the verb in many languages shows obligatory agreement with the subject of a sentence" while "[t]opic-predicate agreement ... is very rare." In (41) three names occur in topic position, followed by a restatement—'those men'.

In Ma Manda the most commonly used double-subject construction actually involves the use of a resumptive pronoun, where the topic is followed by a demonstrative pronoun marked with the nominative enclitic, as seen in (43). The identical situation is described for Tauya, in which a topical NP may optionally be copied by a pronoun inside the clause. The "copy pronoun" is then case-marked if it occurs as a subject in a transitive clause (MacDonald 1990; Donohue 2005:190). Interestingly, as seen in (44), *wəlɨ* is actually ambiguous. While it is the subject NP in (43) (i.e. 'he'), it is a demonstrative in (44) (i.e. 'that'). Only the pause breaks provide clues as to their interpretation. When a pause break occurs after *nə*, then it is the topic and *wəlɨ* is the subject. In this case, a second pause break is unacceptable. When a pause break does not occur between the words, then *wə* is interpreted as a modifier of *nə*, with the nominative enclitic occurring at the end of the NP. Occasionally a pause break then occurs after the subject NP.

(42) *nə ,*   *kadɨp*   *səŋ*   *fe-lək*   *(=21)*
      man   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The man is hewing timber.'

(43) *nə ,*   *wə=lɨ (*,)* *kadɨp*   *səŋ*   *fe-lək*
      man   that=NOM   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The man, he is hewing timber.'

(44) *nə (*,)*   *wə=lɨ (?,)* *kadɨp*   *səŋ*   *fe-lək*
      man   that=NOM   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'That man is hewing timber.'

Confirmative support comes from the fact that adverbs can occur between the topic and pronoun, as shown in (45). Adverbs may occur clause-initially or pre-verbally, but never within a noun phrase. This provides strong evidence that *nə* and *wəlɨ* are separate constituents in this

example. Additionally, *wə* can occur without the nominative enclitic, as seen in (46). In this case, it must be interpreted as the distal demonstrative 'that'. The very nature of topichood forces the definite reading, and therefore *wə* would only be necessary for the emphasis of deixis. In (46) 'trap' is assigned nominative case, and therefore the topic is interpreted as the patient.

(45) *nə ,*   *səŋaŋgit*   *wə=li*   *kadip*   *səŋ*   *fe-lək*
      man   slowly   that=NOM   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The man, he is slowly hewing timber.'

(46) *səp*   *wə ,*   *kas=li*   *səko-ŋak*
      dog   that   trap=NOM   3SG.O:hold-NPST:3SG.S
      'That dog, the trap caught it.'

As already shown, deictic elements serve a number of functions in Ma Manda. The demonstratives *wə* 'that' and *yə* 'this' are used as modifiers, as well as third person personal pronouns. They also serve as adverbial demonstratives of location ('there' and 'here', respectively), and also of time. Additionally, *wə* serves as the default demonstrative, with its function often extended to serve as a definite article. Two other demonstratives have extended discourse functions as well. Before briefly exemplifying their use, their comparative deictic reference is illustrated below.

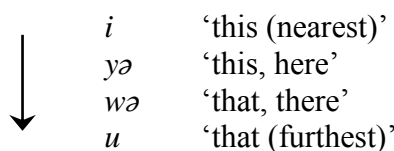|	
i	'this (nearest)'
yə	'this, here'
wə	'that, there'
u	'that (furthest)'

Figure 2: Comparative deictic reference

The deictics *i* and *u* have some of the same distributional patterns as *yə* and *wə*. This is exemplified below, where *u* is a demonstrative in (47), a subject pronoun in (48), and a topical pronoun in (49).

(47) *tamiŋ*   *u ,*   *səko*   *fetne*   *səko-ŋak*
      woman   that   chayote   bundle   3SG.O:hold-NPST:3SG.S
      'That woman grabbed a bundle of chayote.'

(48) *tamiŋ ,*   *u=du*   *səko*   *fetne*   *səko-ŋak*
      woman   that=NOM   chayote   bundle   3SG.O:hold-NPST:3SG.S
      'The woman, she grabbed a bundle of chayote.'

(49) *u ,*   *ku-gok.*
      that   go-RPST:3SG.S
      'She left.'

With this knowledge of the various uses of the deictic pro-forms, we can observe the copy pronoun construction in non-verbal clauses. Equative and attributive clauses are obligatorily composed of a topic NP followed by a comment clause. Only a resumptive pronoun can occur as a subject in the comment clause, and it must bear nominative case. Some examples of equative and attributive clauses are provided in (50)–(56). In (50) both distal deictics are shown to occur as demonstratives, modifying the topic 'aibika greens'. In (51) both distal deictics are shown to occur as subject pronouns, marked with nominative case. In (52) *wə* is a

demonstrative, while *udu* is the copy pronoun, occurring in subject position. As seen in (53)–(54), even when the topic NP can have only one possible referent—a proper name or first person pronoun—the pronoun is still required. This suggests that in this case the deictic is not a demonstrative modifying the topic (i.e. 'this me' is unlikely[9]). Examples (55)–(56) illustrate attributive clauses without an overt grammatical subject, and with a copy pronoun as grammatical subject, respectively.

(50) *guləm*   *u/ wə*   *kɨdə*
     aibika   that/ that   greens
     'Those aibika (greens sp.) are greens.'

(51) *guləm*   *u=du/ wə=lɨ*   *kɨdə*
     aibika   that=NOM/ that=NOM   greens
     'Aibika, they are greens.'

(52) *guləm*   *wə*   *u=du*   *kɨdə*
     aibika   that   that=NOM   greens
     'Those aibika, they are greens.'

(53) *doyəŋ*   *u=du*   *kəme*   *məlom*
     man   that=NOM   ground   owner
     'Doyang, he is the landowner.'

(54) *nək*   *i=di*   *yupməlan*
     1sg   this=NOM   long
     'I am tall.' (lit. 'Me, I am tall.')

(55) *plit*   *i*   *wagem*
     passion.fruit   this   bad
     'This passion fruit is bad.'

(56) *plit*   *i=di*   *wagem*
     passion.fruit   this=NOM   bad
     'Passion fruit, this is bad.'

When a third person pronoun occurs in topic position, a second deictic must occur in subject position, as shown in (57)–(58). Crucially, when *wə/yə* is the topic, then *u/i* must bear nominative case, as shown in (59).

(57) *wə*   *u=du*   *gələmbon*
     that   that=NOM   Garambon
     'He is Garambon.' (lit. 'Him, he is Garambon.')

(58) *yə*   *i=di*   *wo*   *masɨ*
     this   this=NOM   name   what
     'This, what is its name?'

(59) **wə*   *u*   *gələmbon*
      that   that   Garambon

While (57)–(58) show *wə/yə* occurring as the first element in the copy pronoun construction, (60) shows that *u/i* cannot occur as the first element. Examples (61)–(62) appear to

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[9] Though apparently this phrase is quite common in Malay (Paul Kroeger, p.c.).

show that the same deictic cannot occur twice in the copy pronoun construction (i.e. *wə wəli, *u udu).

(60) *u   wə=li   gələmbon
       that   that=NOM   Garambon

(61) *guləm   wə   wə=li   kidə
       aibika   that   that=NOM   greens

(62) *guləm   u   u=du   kidə
       aibika   that   that=NOM   greens

Recall (45), however, where an adverb is shown to occur between the topic and resumptive pronoun. This sentence is modified in (63), whereby the demonstrative *wə* is used to modify 'man' and then used again as the nominative copy pronoun after the adverb. Thus, the restriction is not against two instances of the same deictic, but against two *consecutive* instances of the same deictic.

(63) nə   wə   səŋaŋgit   wə=li   kadɨp   səŋ   fe-lək
       man   that   slowly   that=NOM   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
       'That man, he is slowly hewing timber.'

Regarding the use of deictics in non-verbal predicates, it is interesting to note that Yongkom, an Ok language of the TNG family, is extremely similar. As shown in (64), the morpheme *kuu* marks topic, while *kee* and *kui* are demonstratives.[10] What is relevant is that *kuu* is analyzed as the topic marker, and it appears to be historically related to *kui*, the remote distal demonstrative. Christensen claims that either a demonstrative or the topic marker can occur, but not both. Example (64) shows a minimal triplet of equative topic-comment sentences.

(64) Yongkom deixis in non-verbal predicates (Christensen 2010:27)

      a. kono   kuu   awon   kono
          bone   top   pig   bone
          'The bone is a pig bone.'

      b. kono   kee   awon   kono
          bone   this   pig   bone
          'This bone is a pig bone.'

      c. kono   kui   awon   kono
          bone   that   pig   bone
          'That bone, it is a pig bone.'[11]

Similarly, regarding Numanggang—the closest neighbor to Ma Manda—Hynum (2010:131 fn. 4) says that the ergative marker never co-occurs with either demonstrative, *i* or *u*. Note that the Ma Manda demonstratives are cognate with these forms. In contrast to the findings of Christensen and Hynum, I have found that nominative case does co-occur with demonstratives in Ma Manda, though they are different allomorphs. Whereas *li* marks nominative case

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[10] Interestingly, Christensen suggests that, in these topic-comment sentences, *kuu* 'TOP' stands in opposition to *kee* 'this' rather than *kui* 'that', as indicated in the translations.
[11] Though the translations make it appear that (64a–b) are not topic-comment sentences like (64c), I believe that all three have a topic-comment structure, just like Ma Manda non-verbal sentences.

elsewhere, *di/du* marks nominative case on the demonstratives. I presume the consonant variation is historically related to the *-di* case marker of Numanggang. The vowel variation is an example of vowel harmony, which is very common with the barred-i in Ma Manda (Pennington 2013:97,105).

In summary, the "double-subject" constructions and the use of resumptive pronouns ("copy pronouns") have been shown to be prevalent in Ma Manda. In every case the second NP—whether a nominal or pronoun—bears the nominative case enclitic. This is quite clear in non-verbal equative and attributive clauses: a topic NP is required, and an overt subject in the comment clause is obligatorily marked with nominative case.

The *i* and *u* demonstratives serve as resumptive pronouns in relative clause constructions as well, as shown in (65).

(65)	*tə*	*meŋ*ᵢ	ₛ₋ᵣₑₗ[*i*ᵢ	*kosan*	*leməŋ*	*kudu*	*lo-gok*]	*wə=li*ᵢ
	but	mother:3S.POSS	this	other.side	Lemang	there	go.up-RPST:3SG.S	that=NOM

	fale-kə	*i=di*ᵢ	*kasiŋəŋ*	*kum*	*bə*	*mo-ŋgok*
	turn.around-SR	this=NOM	Kesengen	down	come	go.down-RPST:3SG.S

'But his mother, who had gone up the other side to Lemang, she turned around and she came and went down to Kesengen.'

Importantly, once again *wəli* is shown to be separable from the nominal. Previously, in (45), an adverb came between the constituents. Here, an entire clause separates the two words. It is also important to note that the resumptive pronoun *i* in the relative clause is not assigned nominative case. Two analyses are possible, and further research is needed to determine which is appropriate: either the resumptive pronoun is the topic of the embedded clause, or it is only assigned nominative case when its antecedent is in subject position. If the resumptive pronoun here really is the topic of the subordinate clause, then this provides further support for the basicness of the topic-comment construction in Ma Manda. One would expect topic to occur less freely in subordinate clauses; but if topic can be shown to occur in subordinate clauses, then such distributional freedom would provide strong additional support for the topic-prominence of Ma Manda.

Li & Thompson (1976) identify several other typical characteristics of Tp languages. I mention some of these here without much undue discussion. Tp languages usually: do not have passive constructions, do not have dummy subjects, are verb-final, have surface encoding of topic, and have few constraints on the topic constituent. Ma Manda does not have a passive construction or dummy subjects. As previously discussed, it is a rigidly verb-final language. As for surface coding of topic, Ma Manda codes topic via fronting. Li & Thompson (1976:466) claim that, while Tp languages are expected to code topics, they are less likely to have surface coding for subjects. In Japanese and Korean, however, both topics and subjects are marked by distinct particles. Li & Thompson claim these to be both Tp and Sp languages. Ma Manda appears to be topic-prominent, but it also has a grammatical subject relation, as shown by the nominative case marker, word order, and bound pronominal agreement on the verb. The lack of topic morphology in Ma Manda may be a result of the interaction between two general tendencies: (i) higher animates tend to be precluded from taking ergative morphology, and (ii) higher animates tend to be topical. These may have led to a reanalysis whereby topic received

zero marking. Finally, Ma Manda has not been shown to have constraints on the type of argument that can occur in topic position. In fact, I wonder if the tail-head linkage strategy that is so common across TNG languages is actually a further example of the topic-comment structure: the recapitulation occurs as a clausal topic, followed by a predication in the comment clause.[12]

Following the analysis suggested by Donohue (2005), I argue in §5 that the optionality of the nominative case enclitic in transitive clauses is directly correlated with topicalization. I also expand Donohue's claim in order to account for the infrequent use of the nominative case enclitic in intransitive clauses.

5   Nominative case

Throughout §4, evidence was provided to substantiate the claim that Ma Manda is a topic-prominent language. In order to establish this fact, the distribution of the *lɨ* enclitic was explored. I review the distributional restrictions of *lɨ* in §5.1. Subsequently, in §5.2 I provide a phrase-structural account to show that Ma Manda has developed nominative case. Finally, in §5.3 I discuss the comparatively infrequent use of the nominative case in intransitive clauses, relating this to a preference for the filler-gap strategy, as opposed to the resumptive pronoun preference in transitive clauses.

5.1   Distributional patterns of the nominative enclitic

First of all, it was shown that *lɨ* must occur on an agent NP when the patient is topicalized. Examples (17) and (16) are provided again below.

(66)   *kaudə*   *nə=lɨ*   *u-gok*   *(=17)*
        stone   man=NOM   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
        'The stone, the man hit it.' (* 'The stone hit the man.')

(67)   *kaudə*   *nə*   *u-gok*   *(=16)*
        stone   man   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
        ? 'The stone hit the man.' (* 'The man hit the stone.')

In (66) 'man' must take the *lɨ* enclitic. Otherwise, 'stone' is interpreted as the agent, an inappropriate statement except in very unusual discourse contexts, as seen in (67). When only one overt argument is present, as in the intransitive clause in (68), then *lɨ* is completely optional. Examples (66)–(67) suggest that case-marking of agents is required in the comment clause, while it is disallowed in topic position.

(68)   *nə(=lɨ)*   *ku-yək*
        man=NOM   go-PRES:3SG.S
        'The man is going.'

Second, pause breaks were shown to be more appropriate before an argument marked with *lɨ*, rather than after it. Thus, pause breaks are used to encode topic, while *lɨ* is used to encode

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[12] After all, Du Bois (1987:811) reminds us that "new information must virtually always be integrated within a framework of shared (old) information, in order to be usefully interpretable" and "typically, the larger part of a message will consist of given or presupposed material, while only a small chunk consists of the actual message, new information."

subject. If a pause break does surface between the topic and an overt subject argument, then a second pause after the subject is ungrammatical. Pause breaks are not allowed after objects.

Third, it was shown that inherently-focused subjects require *lɨ*. For instance, when a wh-word occurs as the subject argument, it obligatorily takes the case enclitic, as seen in (69). The subject of the response clause must also bear nominative case, as in (70). Furthermore, corrective subjects must bear nominative case, as seen in (72), which is the answer to (71). These examples show that *lɨ* is incompatible with topic. That there are certain situations where *lɨ* is actually required in intransitive clauses suggests that an ergative analysis is unacceptable.

(69) *net=tɨ*   *ba-k*   (=27)
      who=NOM   come-PRES:3SG.S
      'Who is coming?'

(70) *gələmbon=tɨ*   *ba-k*   (=31)
      Garambon=NOM   come-PRES:3SG.S
      'Garambon is coming.'

(71) *doyəŋ*   *mi*   *floŋ*   *ku-ŋək=kə*   (=37)
      Doyang   water   LOC   go-NPST:3SG.S=YNQ
      'Did Doyang go to the water?'

(72) *dom*   *gələmbon=tɨ*   *mi*   *floŋ*   *ku-ŋək*   (=38)
      NEG   Garambon=NOM   water   LOC   go-NPST:3SG.S
      'No, Garambon went to the water.'

Another situation where an intransitive subject is required to bear nominative case is when a participant in discourse is introduced for the first time. In this case the participant could not possibly be topical. Rather, it is expected that such an argument would be rhematic, taking nominative case. This is seen, for example, in the following first sentence from a story about some children getting caught up in a flood.

(73) *nai*   *bən*   *floŋ*   *nənəksɨ=lɨ*   *leməŋ*   *ku-giŋ.*
      time   a   LOC   children=NOM   Lemang   go-RPST:3SG.S
      'One time (some) children went to Lemang.'

It was also shown that *lɨ* is required on the second argument in "double-subject" and "copy pronoun" constructions. In sentences of this type, a topic is followed by a grammatical subject which is always marked with *lɨ*. This is most clearly seen when an adverb occurs between the topic and copy pronoun, as seen in (74), and in non-verbal clauses, as seen in (75). Relative clauses were also shown to occur between the topic and subject.

(74) *nə*   *səŋaŋgɨt*   *wə=lɨ*   *kadɨp*   *səŋ*   *fe-lək*   (=45)
      man   slowly   that=NOM   wood   timber   hew-PRES:3SG.S
      'The man, he is slowly hewing timber.'

(75) *doyəŋ*   *u=du*   *kəme*   *məlom*   (=53)
      man   that=NOM   ground   owner
      'Doyang, he is the landowner.'

The requirement for nominative case in non-verbal clauses, as well as in some intransitive clauses, provides striking support for treating *lɨ* as a nominative, rather than as an ergative, case marker. A semantic or pragmatic explanation is unavailable for the obligatoriness

of case in the non-verbal clause in (75), while a structural analysis provides a clear explanation: when the topic slot is filled, the second NP cannot also be topical, and therefore must bear nominative case.

These distributional patterns of the *lɨ* enclitic provide convincing support for its treatment as a nominative case marker. In the following sections I build on Donohue's (2005) configurational account and argue that the notion of topic not only explains the optionality of nominative case in transitive clauses, but in intransitive clauses as well.

5.2   Phrase-structural considerations

In his treatment of Lani, Donohue argues for the set of phrase structure rules shown in (76). His purpose in presenting this minimal set of rules, he warns, is not to challenge X' theory, but to "avoid propagating structural levels where they do not add to the explanatory power of the argument" (2005:187). "The relative configuration of the nodes," he continues, "rather than the number of intermediary nodes, is what is at issue here."

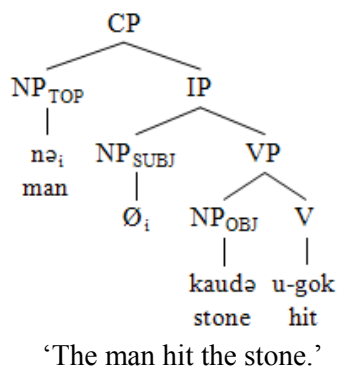(76)   Phrase structure rules for Lani (Donohue 2005:187,195)
    CP   →   (NP$_{TOP}$) IP
    IP   →   (NP$_{SUBJ}$) VP
    VP   →   (NP$_{OBJ}$) V'
    V'   →   ($_{ADJN}$) V

I do not argue for or against a VP constituent, or for the proper treatment of adjunct nominals. I intend only to argue that, at least in Ma Manda, the absence of nominative case on subjects is due to the location of the argument outside of the main clause, within the topic slot— "an extra-clausal pragmatically prominent position" (Donohue 2005:186). I utilize all but the V' constituent in the following structural description.

The distributional patterns of *lɨ* fall out of the phrase structure rules proposed by Donohue. An NP that occurs in [Spec, CP] is extra-sentential: it does not bear a grammatical relation. Furthermore, an argument in this position does not take case morphology (as seen in (77a)). An NP that occurs in [Spec, IP], however, is the grammatical subject (77b). Grammatical subjects in Ma Manda are required to bear nominative case, while topics cannot bear nominative case (77c). These requirements are seen most clearly when an object is placed into topic position, as in (77d). In this situation, the subject cannot be topicalized and thus must bear nominative case.
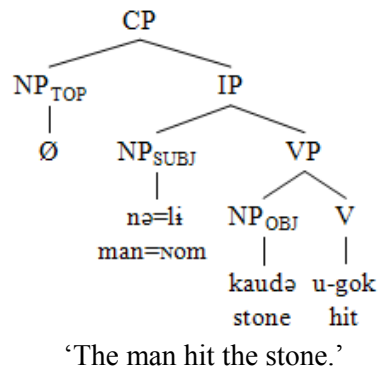
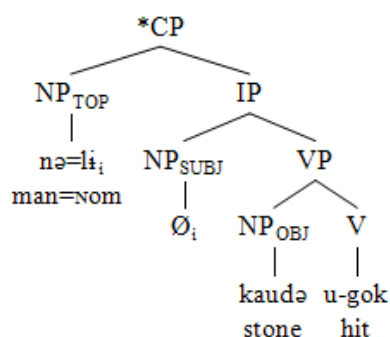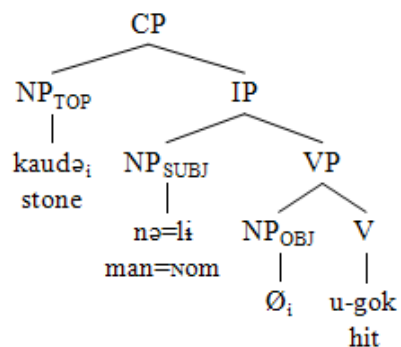(77)   a.   (=14)   b.   (=14)

'The man hit the stone.'   'The man hit the stone.'

c.   (=14)   d.   (=17)

```
            *CP                                          CP
          /     \                                      /    \
    NP_TOP        IP                              NP_TOP      IP
      |         /    \                              |        /   \
    nə=lɨ_i  NP_SUBJ   VP                        kaudə_i  NP_SUBJ  VP
   man=NOM     |      /  \                        stone      |    /  \
            Ø_i   NP_OBJ  V                             nə=lɨ NP_OBJ V
                    |     |                            man=NOM  |    |
                 kaudə  u-gok                               Ø_i  u-gok
                 stone   hit                                      hit
```

for: 'The man hit the stone.'   'The stone, the man hit it.'

When an argument is topic (i.e. located in [Spec, CP]), then it cannot also occur within the comment clause (i.e. IP). The ungrammaticality of this is shown in (78), which is a modified version of (77a) with an overt subject NP.
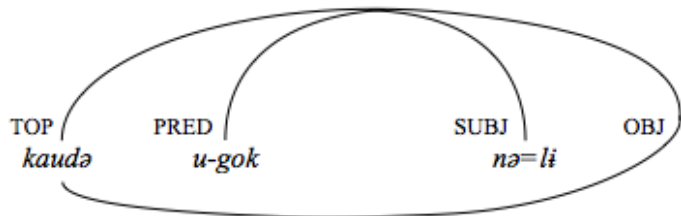
(78)   * nə   nə=lɨ   kaudə   u-gok.
         man   man=NOM   stone   3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
       for: 'The man, the man hit the stone.'

In Ma Manda two strategies are available for dealing with the fronted (topicalized) argument. First, the grammatical argument may be gapped. This is shown in (77a) and (77d), as well as in the functional diagrams below, where (79a) corresponds to (77a) and (79b) corresponds to (77d).

(79)   a.   (=14)

```
           TOP      PRED            SUBJ      OBJ
            nə      u-gok                     kaudə
```

       b.   (=17)

```
           TOP      PRED            SUBJ      OBJ
          kaudə     u-gok           nə=lɨ
```
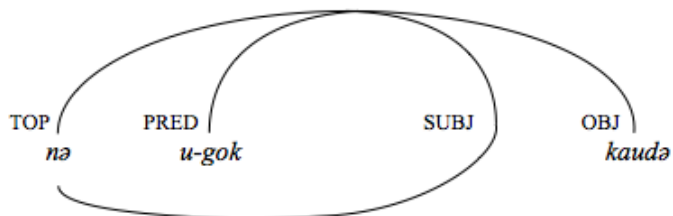
Notice that with this strategy, topic is functionally identified with a grammatical relation. When the gap strategy is employed, a filler-gap relation is established. The filler has dual status as topic and the grammatical relation associated with the gap. Nonetheless, as seen in (79a), since the argument is actually located outside of IP, it does not bear nominative case.
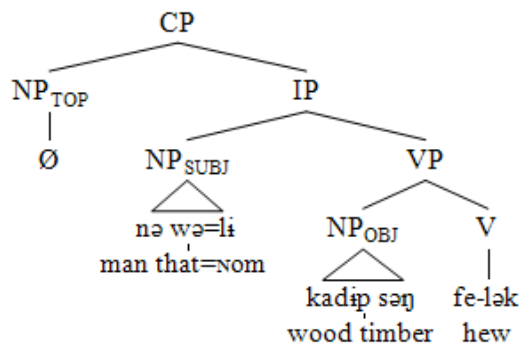
The second strategy used in Ma Manda is the insertion of a resumptive pronoun. This pronoun agrees with its topical antecedent in deictic reference, and it also bears grammatical case. When the resumptive pronoun occurs in subject position, this forms what I have called the "copy pronoun" construction. It was shown that (if there is no pause) this construction can be ambiguous. For instance, *wəlɨ* can be interpreted as either a resumptive pronoun (80a) or an NP-final demonstrative (80b).

(80) a.   (=43)   b.   (=44)
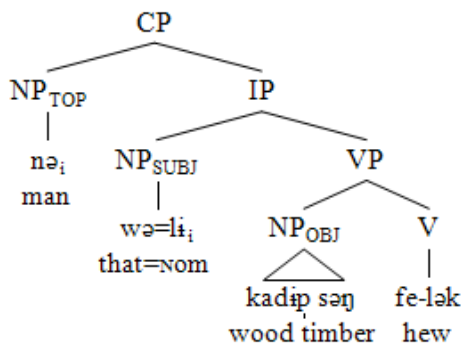
'The man, he is hewing the timber.'   'That man is hewing timber.'

The functional structure of (80a) is shown in (81). Notice that the resumptive pronoun only has an anaphoric relationship with its topical antecedent. While with the gap strategy the topic also has a grammatical function, with the resumptive pronoun strategy the topic does not have any other function; it is simply the antecedent for the pronoun in the IP.

(81)   (=43)

5.3   Resumptive pronoun strategy in transitive clauses

What the phrase structure rules in the previous section do not account for is the comparatively infrequent occurrence of the nominative case in intransitive clauses. The source of the nominative-accusative case system in Ma Manda may be the ergative systems that have been frequently described across the TNG family. It is no accident that so many languages have been so described: these languages never allow intransitive subjects to bear the case marker, thus establishing *bona fide* morphological ergativity. If the nominative morphology of Ma Manda does indeed have its roots in ergative morphology, it is not surprising that intransitive subjects are less frequently marked for nominative case. This would signal a state of change between ergativity and accusativity. Synchronically, however, it appears that subjects of intransitive clauses are prototypically topical. That is, subjects of intransitive predicates tend to be topicalized, and thus do not bear nominative case. This is the expected pattern from a topic-

prominent language. What is unexpected is that the A argument does not follow this pattern quite as robustly: in isolation, transitive subjects are more likely to be marked with nominative case.

The striking pattern, it turns out, is not that the nominative case enclitic occurs more frequently in transitive clauses, but that a topical (i.e. given, accessible, shared) A is often copied by a resumptive pronoun in the comment clause, while this is less likely to be the case for intransitive subjects. That is, the gap strategy is preferred with intransitive subjects, while the resumptive pronoun strategy is preferred with transitive subjects. By taking clauses with resumptive pronouns out of the equation, it appears that intransitive and transitive subjects are actually equally likely to bear nominative case.

This explanation—namely, that both S and A are equally likely to bear nominative case-marking—is borne out by the data presented in this paper. That is, there are a number of instances where nominative case is obligatorily marked on subjects, whether of intransitive or transitive clauses. When {S,A} is replaced with a wh-word, it must bear nominative case. In answer to a question, {S,A} must also bear nominative case. Additionally, contrastively focused and newly introduced subjects always bear nominative case. By topicalizing another argument, or by putting {S,A} in an inherently-rhematic position, the argument has been shown to obligatorily bear the nominative case marker as well. These facts are fully accounted for by a nominative analysis. Yongkom, an Ok language of the TNG family, provides further support for such an analysis. Christensen (2010:13) states that "the more common of the S noun phrase marking strategies are the use of *kuu* ... or leaving the S noun phrase unmarked." Recall from (64) that *kuu* is the topic marker, presumably derived from *kui*, the remote distal demonstrative. The upshot of this is that S has been shown to prototypically occur in the topic slot in Yongkom, just as I hypothesize is the case for Ma Manda. I only add that topical A is prototypically followed by a resumptive pronoun, while topical S is typically followed by a gap.

This observed pattern appears to be related to the Given A Constraint (Du Bois 1987:827). The Given A Constraint says that languages tend to avoid introducing new referents in the position of the A argument. This, Du Bois claims, is the "discourse basis of ergativity". That is, the introduction of new referents tends to follow an ergative-absolutive pattern. It is claimed that the S and O roles, in opposition to the A role, are the preferred slots for the introduction of new participants into discourse. Even nominative-accusative languages are said to follow this pattern. More relevant to the current discussion, Japanese—a topic-prominent language—strongly adheres to the constraint as well (Du Bois 1987:838). Du Bois' analysis posits that the A argument is prototypically topical ("given"), and that this treatment of A in opposition to {S,O} may be grammaticized as ergative case. On the other hand, S and A seem to universally pattern together with regard to topicality, since these arguments are typically human and agentive (Du Bois 1987:839). This groups {S,A} in opposition to O, and may be grammaticized as accusative case. I find that, indeed, participants are almost exclusively introduced in S and O roles in Ma Manda (thus satisfying the Given A Constraint). Saving a detailed discourse analysis for the future, a cursory glance at Ma Manda texts shows that participants are almost never introduced as transitive agents. Rather, they are introduced either as intransitive subjects or transitive patients.

One of the inherent difficulties that arises in the study of other "optional ergative" languages is that most linguists have based their analyses on a combination of isolated utterances

and clauses pulled from discourse. The introduction of referents in discourse is a complicated matter, and one that is infamously difficult to control for—partially due to varying ranges of shared background information among speech act participants. On the printed page, it is often impossible to know whether a clause was spoken in isolation or in a longer narrative. Furthermore, even if the author states that a particular clause is an isolated utterance, he cannot possibly provide all of the necessary information that will enable a reader to understand what shared background the hearers had with the speaker. These are just a few of the factors that inhibit my own understanding of how case-marking may be related to topichood in various TNG languages.

This being said, I do suggest that Ma Manda has developed nominative case, presumably having previously been a morphologically ergative language. This analysis, though difficult to prove, might help account for the preference for the resumptive pronoun strategy in transitive clauses. I hypothesize that the preference for resumptive pronouns in transitive clauses is a natural consequence of the interaction between morphological ergativity and topic-prominence. Taking the Given A Constraint as a universal tendency, it is expected that in topic-prominent languages A will be prototypically topical. That is, since referents are seldom introduced in the A-role argument position, a preponderance of A arguments will be topical—having been introduced in the S or O position in a previous clause. However, since case has been shown to be ungrammatical in the topic position, a resumptive pronoun is placed in the comment clause in order to bear ergative case.[13] Intransitive subjects, on the other hand, would have no need for such a strategy, since the absolutive argument is unmarked. Thus, the resumptive pronoun strategy became the preferred method in transitive clauses, while the gap strategy became the economical choice for intransitive clauses. It is valuable to note that, currently, the resumptive pronoun strategy is perfectly acceptable in intransitive clauses, just as the gap strategy is perfectly acceptable in transitive clauses. Nonetheless, the overall preference for isolated utterances is for resumptive pronouns in the A slot, and gaps in the S slot. Future research into neighboring languages may provide further clues suggesting that this pattern is indeed correlated with a past ergative system.

6   Conclusion

In spite of the varied behavior of ergative markers across the TNG language family, it is clear that many of them have typical ergative case morphology. Enga, for example, never allows the ergative case to mark intransitive subjects. This rules out a nominative-accusative analysis for Enga. Such languages, however, often allow a certain amount of freedom as to whether the A argument of a transitive clause will be accorded ergative case or not. Donohue (2005) argues that this is directly predicted if topic is taken to have a place in the clause structure. When an agent NP is removed from subject position (i.e. [Spec, IP]) and placed in topic position (i.e. [Spec, CP]), then ergative case is not marked. This analysis correctly predicts the variation in these "optionally ergative" languages. In this paper I have extended Donohue's argument by suggesting that, in languages that also allow the case enclitic to mark intransitive subjects, a nominative analysis may more appropriately fit the facts. In languages where the ergative enclitic occasionally occurs on intransitive subjects—such as Yongkom (Christensen 2010), Korafe (Farr

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[13] Why ergative case would need to be marked at all in these situations is a question that awaits future research.

1999), Kâte (Suter 2010), Numanggang (Hynum 2010), and Ma Manda—it can be argued that a nominative case system has developed, or is in the process of being developed. By taking the A NP as prototypically topical, this explains the frequent use of resumptive pronouns in transitive clauses. Just as other TNG "optional ergative" languages have been shown to have a much higher frequency of ergative-marking in transitive clauses, Ma Manda has a much higher frequency of nominative-marking in transitive clauses. Unlike other proposed analyses, however, I suggest that in Ma Manda the frequency is due to a preference for resumptive pronouns in transitive clauses, which naturally falls out of the interaction between morphological ergativity and topic-prominence. Whether other languages can be treated similarly remains to be seen, but it is certain that Ma Manda at least has developed a nominative case-marking scheme, presumably having roots in ergativity.

Jones (1986:38), in discussing the optional ergative marker in Yawa—a Papuan language of Indonesia—lamented the infrequent discussion of this optional marker in other New Guinea languages, suggesting that:

> It may be simply that many linguists correlate 'optional' with 'insignificant' or 'unimportant'. This is highly unfortunate, as the study of optionality may reveal intricacies to grammatical rules that have previously been missed. Alternatively, it may uncover processes that are dying out in the language, or on the contrary, are becoming more widespread, thus helping to fill out the diachronic picture.

Recently much more attention has been given to the optionality of this case marker. Many of these treatments have struggled with the statistical distribution of the marker, attempting to posit semantic and pragmatic arguments based on imprecise correlations and tendencies. Following Donohue (2005), I have argued that a phrase-structural account adequately solves the puzzle of variation seen in these languages. For languages where the marker has an extended use in intransitive clauses, I argue that a nominative-accusative analysis is potentially more accurate. Whatever the final conclusions for many of these languages, it simply cannot be said that such optionality has no "noticeable syntactic or semantic consequences" (Li and Lang 1979:319). Rather, we can be sure that the optionality sheds important light on variations in clause structure.

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