Case, topic and clefts in Mono-Alu.

Bill Palmer, University of Newcastle (Australia)

This paper examines the particle ga in Mono-Alu (MA) (Northwest Solomonic (NWS)). Previously analysed as an absolutive case preposition (Fagan 1986), I demonstrate that ga cannot assign absolutive case and propose an alternative analysis in which ga is head of a Topic Phrase, with a DP or IP as its complement, the IP occurring in a cleft construction.

MA has been analyzed as displaying unmarked SV/AOV order (Evans & Palmer 2011:496, Fagan 1986:84, Ross 1988:228). All orders of DPs referring to A and O are possible. However, AOV (2a) and AVO (2b) account for most clauses with two overt DPs and occur with similar frequency, as do SV (1a) and VS (1b) (Fagan 1986:84). Fagan argues that postverbal DPs referring to S or O are marked with ga (1b),(2b), while A cannot be, leading him to conclude ga is an absolutive case preposition (1986:94), a typologically unusual marked absolutive with unmarked ergative, at odds with the claimed universal of absolutive as the unmarked case (Tsunoda 1981). However, several factors undermine Fagan's analysis.

First, <u>preverbal S or O (1a), (2a) cannot be ga-marked, ga being confined to postverbal DPs</u>, a fact not accounted for in Fagan's analysis. Further, ga-marked DPs appear to be adjuncts. Objects are obligatorily indexed by postverbal pronominal clitics (2), (3), (7), leading Fagan to conclude that MA displays both ergative and accusative case (1986:80,108). However, there is evidence that the clitics are not agreement but object pronouns in internal argument position, with a coreferential ga-marked DP as adjunct, a hypothesis resembling that proposed for object DPs elsewhere in Oceanic from Fijian (Aranovich n.d.) to Hoava (Palmer 2011). Evidence for this in MA includes the obligatory nature and fixed position of the clitics versus the optionality and freedom of location of object-referring DPs elsewhere in the clause, including the possible separation of a ga-marked DP from the verb by an oblique or even the A (3). Further evidence against Fagan's analysis lies in the fact that while postverbal S and O are typically marked with ga, they may occur without it (4), (8). Finally, and crucially, it transpires that while infrequent, ga may in fact occur with the A (5).

Fagan notes in passing another construction, in which S precedes the verb with ga located between S and V (6). For Fagan, ga is still associated with the S, but notes it cannot be a preposition here as it follows the NP with which it is associated (1986:95), acknowledging his theory is unable to account for this construction. In fact, this construction also occurs when the phrase preceding ga refers to the O (7), the A (8), or even an oblique (9).

This paper proposes a unified account in which ga does not mark absolutive case but topic. A post-predicate Topic Phrase occurs with ga 'TOP' as head. As in several other NWS languages (see e.g. Palmer 2009), marked (e.g. contrastive) topics are overtly expressed in a postverbal TOPP. In MA verbal constructions (1)-(5), DPs may occur in TOPP. Clause order of DPs is relatively free, and DPs may occur postverbally without occurring in TOPP, as shown by postverbal non-topic A co-occurring with a ga-marked O (3), and postverbal non-topic S (4) and O (8) not marked with ga.

In this analysis, the construction in (6)-(9) does not involve ga postposed to a preverbal NP as Fagan assumes. Instead, ga remains a preposition, with the IP as its complement forming TOPP in a cleft construction. The clause-initial phrase is a nominal predicate and is in focus, with the ga-marked IP expressing the situation or event in the context of which the focal information holds. The cleft constructions resembles equative clauses (10), save that the ga-marked equative subject is an IP, rather than a DP.

- (1) a. **E'a Sakusaku** i-lefe. b. *I-lefe* ga Sakusaku. 3SG.SBJ[REAL]-leave 3SG.SBJ[REAL]-leave ga S. this S. 'Sakusaku went away.' 'Sakusaku went away.' a. Maito kai-gu o-*i*-golu= \emptyset . (2)same.sex.sib-1SG.PSSR 2SG.SBJ-REAL-swallow=3SG.OBJ 2sg 'You swallowed my brother.' b. E'a magota *bau e-na-lapu=ri* ga sa-gu talaiva. this old.woman NEG 3SG.SBJ-IRR-kill=3PL.OBJ ga POSS-1SG.PSSR women 'The old woman shall not kill my wives.' (3) *I-nkot=i* Matairua ga tauii. 3PL.SBJ[REAL]-grasp=3SG.OBJ M. ga child 'Matairua took hold of the child.' (4) Ir-i-soku fanua famata=ang. 3PL.SBJ-REAL-arrive people village=LOC 'The men arrived at the village.' (5) *E-na-fa-fonu*= \emptyset ga Kirikoputu sa-na mauto. 3SG.SBJ-IRR-CAUS-be.full=3SG.OBJ ga K. GEN.POSS-3SG.PSSR basket 'Kirikoputu would fill her basket.' (6) Pirite ga i-gagana. k.o.bird ga 3SG.SBJ[REAL]-go 'The pirite bird went off.' [i.e. 'It was the pirite bird that went off.'] [I-polee.] (7)[Manualai ga i-fa-por=i]. 3SG.SBJ[REAL]-be.pregnant fish.hawk ga 3SG.SBJ[REAL]-CAUS-be.born=3SG.OBJ She became pregnant. She gave birth to a fish hawk.' ['It was a fish hawk she gave birth to.'] (8) Ale ga i-fa-mako=Ø darami? who? ga 3SG.SBJ[REAL]-CAUS-be.cooked=3SG.OBJ food 'Who has cooked our food?' ['Who is it that has cooked [our] food?'] (9) O'a=ua ga i-aofo ga ifa-na. that=COMIT ga 3SG.SBJ[REAL]-be.sick ga same.sex.sib.in.law-3SG.PSSR 'That's why her sister-in-law fell ill.' ['It was with that her sister-in-law fell ill.'] (10)Sa-mia famata ga emi. GENPOSS-2PL.PSSR village ga this 'This is your village.' Aranovich, R. n.d. Transitivity and polysynthesis in Fijian. ms. UC Davis.
- Evans, B. & B. Palmer. 2011. Contact-induced change in southern Bougainville. *OL* 50/2:489-529
- Fagan, J.L. 1986. A grammatical analysis of Mono-Alu. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Palmer, B. 2009. Clause order and information structure in Cheke Holo. OL 48/1:213-249
- Palmer, B. 2011. Internal objects in Hoava: a VAO language that isn't. AFLA paper.
- Ross, M.D. 1988. Proto Oceanic and the Austronesian languages of western Melanesia. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Tsunoda, T. 1981. Split case-marking in verb types and tense/aspect/mood. *Linguistics* 19:389-438.