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# Marked Nominative: Form and Function

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# Outline

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Traditionally Marked Nominative languages are defined by the following formal properties (Dixon 1979):

- (Transitive and intransitive) subjects receive overt morphological marking (nominative case)
- Objects receive no overt marking (zero coding)



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# Formally Marked Nominative

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**Wappo** (Yukian), Thompson et al. (2006: 33,14):

- (1) *hel-i*      *šut̥i:-šiʔ*  
fire-NOM go\_out-DUR  
'The fire is going out.'
- (2) *mi-meʔ*    *hel-khutem-i*    *maʔa haʔ*    *hel*    *neʔ-khiʔ*  
2SG-GEN fire-oven-NOM still    Q    fire have-STAT  
'Does your fireplace still have fire in it?'



# Functionally Marked Nominative

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A second type of marked nominative languages can be distinguished from the form based definition (König 2006).

- Nominative (S+A) and accusative case (P) are formally distinguished
- The accusative form is used in the widest range of functions (default case)



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**Gamo** (Omotic), Hompó (1990: 364):

- (3) *šankanca-z-ii*      *dangarsa-z-aa*  
hunter-DEF-NOM elephant-DEF-ACC  
*wod'-i-d-es*  
kill-PM-TN-COMPLX  
'The hunter killed the elephant.'



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## Project P3 – Marked Absolutive and Marked Nominative Case Systems in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspective:

- Typological study of marked nominative languages (MNL)
- Case marking within a number of subject-like constructions
  - Nominal, existential and locational predication
  - Topicalized and focused subjects
  - Extra-syntactic forms (citation and address form)
  - Subjects introduced by valency increasing operations
  - Possessors
  - Subjects of subordinate clauses
  - ...



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# Languages Studied So Far

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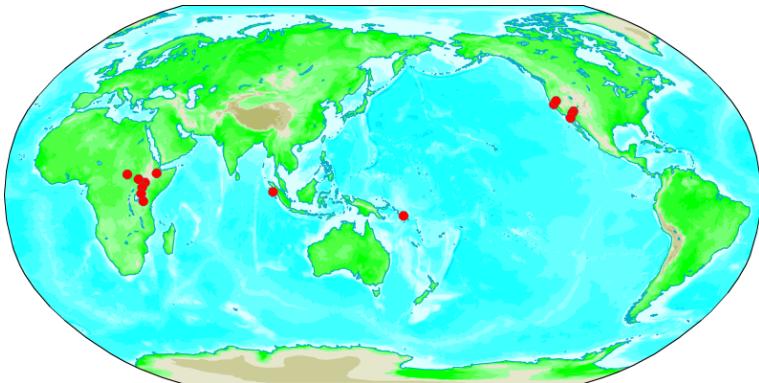
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# König's Definition of Functionally Unmarked

König (2006: 677) lists a number of functions which have to be or can be fulfilled by the accusative form in MNLs:

- Citation form
- Object function
- Nominal predicate in copula clauses
- S & A before the verb
- Possessor
- Indirect object
- Participants introduced by head-marking devices
- After prepositions
- Basis for case inflection ('Basis for case doubling')
- Patients of passives
- Further participants

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# König's Definition of Functionally Unmarked

In the following we will have a closer look at some of these. Namely:

- Citation form
- Object function
- Nominal predicate in copula clauses
- S & A before the verb
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- Participants introduced by head-marking devices
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Recapitulating König's 2006: 658 definition, it is clear that the citation form is an important indicator of a MNL for her.

*“In type 1 of marked nominative languages, **the accusative is** morphologically unmarked, functionally unmarked and **used in citation**. In type 2, **the accusative is** morphologically marked, functionally unmarked and **used in citation**.”*



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The accusative form is identical to the citation form in most languages, but:

- The (marked) nominative form is the standard citation form in Maidu, however, Shipley (1964: 30) notes that younger speakers use the accusative form in citation
- In Mojave many speakers tend to add a final *-a* or *-ə* to any noun in isolation (Munro 1976: 128, footnote 3)



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From her study on African MNLs König (2006: 678) concludes that the nominal predicate is a function which is most likely to be fulfilled by the accusative:

*“Nominal predicates are always covered by the accusative, except where the languages has developed a case just covering this function.”*



# Nominal Predicates

## The Yuman Situation

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In most Yuman languages the nominal predicate, rather than the subject of predication, is marked with the nominative affix:

**Dieguño**, Mesa Grande dialect (Yuman) Gorbet (1976: 15):

- (4) *ixpa-pu a:sa:-c yis*  
eagle-DEM bird-NOM is\_indeed  
'The eagle is a bird'



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Yet Another Pattern in Maidu

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Whereas in Maidu (5) both arguments receive the nominative:

**Maidu** (Penutian), Shipley (1964: 30):

- (5) *mym kylókbe-m ma-káde*  
DEM old\_woman-NOM be-INTERR  
*mín-kotò-m*  
2-grandmother-NOM  
'Is that old woman your grandmother?'





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Variation in Africa

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Also there seems to be more variation in African languages:

**Wolaytta** (Omotic), Lamberti & Sottile (1997: 225):

- (6) a. *ha-nna gelaawi-ya*  
DEM-one girl-NOM
- b. *ha-nna gelaawi-y<sup>u</sup>*  
DEM-one girl-ACC
- ‘This is a girl.’



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Another important factor in determining the functionally unmarked case is the paradigmatic build-up of the case system.

This includes the relation between the accusative and the nominative form (König 2006: 658):

As well as the building of oblique case forms, referred to as 'case doubling'.



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Another important factor in determining the functionally unmarked case is the paradigmatic build-up of the case system.

This includes the relation between the accusative and the nominative form (König 2006: 658):

*“If one of the two cases is derived from the other, it must be the nominative which is derived from the accusative . . . .”*

As well as the building of oblique case forms, referred to as ‘case doubling’.



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This includes the relation between the accusative and the nominative form (König 2006: 658):

As well as the building of oblique case forms, referred to as 'case doubling'. Explained in the following way by König (2006: 683):

*“The case marker is not suffixed to the morphological unmarked form, but to a form which itself is already a derived case form.”*



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As well as the building of oblique case forms, referred to as 'case doubling'.

She states that in Wolaytta the accusative is the basis of case doubling (ibid. p. 677).



# Base of Case Inflection

## The Wolaytta Case System Revisited

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NOM	-ay	ya/ -iy <sup>a</sup>	-i
ACC	-a	-yu/ -iyu	-a
GEN	-aa	-ee	-u
DAT	-aa-ss <sup>i</sup>	-ee-ss <sup>i</sup>	-uu-ss <sup>i</sup>
LOC	-aa-n <sup>i</sup>	—	-u-n <sup>i</sup>
ALL	-aa-kko	-ee-kko	-u-kko
ABL	-aa-ppe	-ee-ppe	-uu-ppe
COM	-aa-ra	-ee-ra	-u-ra
VOC	-ow/ -aw	-ey	-oow

Lamberti & Sottile (1997: 67ff.)



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## The Wolaytta Case System Revisited

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<b>GEN</b>	<b>-aa</b>	<b>-ee</b>	<b>-u</b>
DAT	<b>-aa-ss</b> <sup>i</sup>	<b>-ee-ss</b> <sup>i</sup>	<b>-uu-ss</b> <sup>i</sup>
LOC	<b>-aa-n</b> <sup>i</sup>	—	<b>-u-n</b> <sup>i</sup>
ALL	<b>-aa-kko</b>	<b>-ee-kko</b>	<b>-u-kko</b>
ABL	<b>-aa-ppe</b>	<b>-ee-ppe</b>	<b>-uu-ppe</b>
COM	<b>-aa-ra</b>	<b>-ee-ra</b>	<b>-u-ra</b>
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- Comparing our 14 MNLs with 6 non-MNLs
- Method: take every pair of these 20 languages
- Count in how many constructions their case assignment is the same
- Visualize which languages are similar in their case assignments



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Citation Form

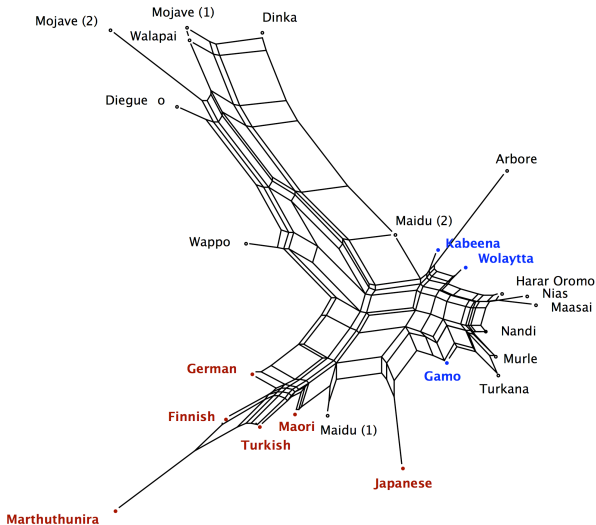
Nominal Predicates

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# Summary

What we have learned about marked nominative languages

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Handschuh,  
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- Some of the properties of African MNLs cannot be generalized to all MNLs
- It is not always the accusative, which has all the functions
- More data are needed in order to understand the rare phenomenon of marked nominative languages



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# References II

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