

# WHAT'S THE INVERSE OF AN INVERSE? TRANSITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN ALGONQUIAN AND AUSTRONESIAN\*

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Morphosyntactic alignment in the Algonquian languages and some Austronesian languages, including those of the Philippine group, is complicated by the existence of two distinct transitive constructions: the DIRECT and INVERSE in Algonquian languages and the PATIENT VOICE and AGENT VOICE in Philippine languages. To my knowledge, the only existing comparison of these two systems is that of Haude and Zúñiga (2016), who employ Algonquian and Philippine as prototypes in a crosslinguistic survey of voice and inverse patterns. My goal here is somewhat different: I aim to compare the Algonquian and Philippine systems with each other in order to determine the degree to which they are similar or different. In particular, I compare the alignment patterns of Cree (Algonquian) and Kapampangan (Philippine). I will argue that the two languages are in fact *mirror images* with respect to morphosyntactic alignment, showing parallel but opposite behaviour across a range of detailed patterns.

I begin by establishing a broad parallel between the two systems: each includes a marked transitive construction that shows the opposite alignment pattern to that of the default transitive construction (§1). I then identify six specific similarities between the two systems (§2) as well as three differences (§3).

## 1. The parallel

This section shows that the transitive alignment patterns of Kapampangan (Mirikitani 1972) and Cree (Ellis 1971; Wolfart 1973) are mirror images of each other.

### 1.1 Alignment in Kapampangan

The basic alignment pattern of Kapampangan is shown in (1) (data from author's fieldwork).<sup>1</sup> The intransitive subject 'the dog' in (1a) and the transitive patient 'the car' in (1b)

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<sup>1</sup>The following abbreviations are used in glosses: 1s:3p = first singular agent, third plural patient; 1sE = first singular ergative; 1sA = first singular absolutive; ABS = absolutive; ACC = accusative; AV = agent voice; ERG = ergative; INV = inverse; NOM = nominative; OBJ = object; OBV = obviative; PL = plural; PST = past; PV = patient voice; PX = proximate; RED = reduplication; SUB = subordinator.

take the same case marker, *ing*, while the transitive agent ‘the man’ in (1b) takes a distinct case marker, *ning*. This is an ergative pattern (Gerds 1988; Aldridge 2012): intransitive subjects and transitive patients are treated the same (absolutive) while transitive agents are singled out for special treatment (ergative).

(1) Kapampangan intransitive and default “patient voice” transitive

- a. ta-taul ya [**ing asu**]  
 RED-bark 3s ABS dog  
 ‘**The dog** barks’
- b. pagnakwan ne [**ning lalaki**] [**ing kotsi**]  
 PV.steal 3s:3s ERG man ABS car  
 ‘The man steals **the car**.’

In addition to the distributionally unmarked PATIENT VOICE transitive construction shown in (1b), Kapampangan has a second transitive construction known as the AGENT VOICE, which is distributionally marked (Mithun 1994) and shows the opposite alignment. The agent voice is exemplified in (2b); the intransitive from (1a) is repeated as (2a) for convenience of reference. Here the transitive agent ‘the man’ takes the same case marker as the intransitive subject ‘the dog’, i.e. absolutive *ing*, while the transitive patient ‘a car’ takes a special case marker *ng* that appears only in this construction. The agent voice thus shows an accusative pattern: intransitive subjects and transitive agents are treated the same (absolutive/nominative) while transitive patients are singled out for special treatment (accusative).

(2) Kapampangan intransitive and marked “agent voice” transitive

- a. ta-taul ya [**ing asu**]  
 RED-bark 3s ABS dog  
 ‘**The dog** barks’
- b. magnako ya [ng kotsi] [**ing lalaki**]  
 AV.steal 3s ACC car ABS man  
 ‘**The man** steals a car.’

In summary, the default transitive construction in Kapampangan (patient voice) shows ergative alignment while the marked construction (agent voice) shows accusative alignment.

## 1.2 Alignment in Cree

The basic alignment pattern of Cree is shown in (3) (data adapted from Wolfart 1973).<sup>2</sup> As Cree is a head-marking language, the pattern is manifested by verbal agreement rather than nominal case marking. The intransitive subject ‘the men’ in (3a) and the transitive agent ‘the men’ in (3b) are indexed by the same agreement marker, the proximate plural ending

<sup>2</sup>To make the patterns as clear as possible, I use plural nominals in place of the singulars in Wolfart’s examples, as plural agreement morphology is more distinctive in shape than singular agreement morphology.

*-wak*, while the transitive patient ‘the dogs’ is indexed by a distinct agreement marker, the animate third-person “theme sign” *-ê*. This is an accusative pattern (Siewierska 1998; Déchaine 1999; Agnès 2014): intransitive subjects and transitive agents are treated the same (nominative) while transitive patients are singled out for special treatment (accusative).<sup>3</sup>

(3) Cree intransitive and default “direct” transitive

- a. nipâ **-wak** nâpêw -ak  
 sleep **-3.PX.PL** man -PX.PL  
 ‘**The men** sleep.’
- b. sêkih -ê **-wak** nâpêw -ak atimw -a  
 scare -3OBJ **-3.PX.PL** man -PX.PL dog -OBV  
 ‘**The men** scare the dogs.’

In addition to the distributionally unmarked DIRECT construction shown in (3b), Cree has a second transitive construction called the INVERSE, which is distributionally marked (Wolfart 1991, 1996; Dahlstrom 1991) and shows the opposite alignment. The inverse is exemplified in (4b); the intransitive from (3a) is repeated as (4a) for convenience. Here it is the transitive patient ‘the dogs’ that, like the intransitive subject ‘the men’, is indexed by the agreement ending *-wak*, while the transitive agent ‘the men’ is singled out for special treatment: it is unindexed by agreement, unlike all of the arguments in (3) above. The inverse thus shows an ergative pattern: intransitive subjects and transitive patients are treated the same (nominative/absolutive) while transitive agents are treated distinctly (ergative).

(4) Cree intransitive and marked “inverse” transitive

- a. nipâ **-wak** nâpêw -ak  
 sleep **-3.PX.PL** man -PX.PL  
 ‘**The men** sleep.’
- b. sêkih -ikw **-wak** atimw -ak nâpêw -a  
 scare -INV **-3.PX.PL** dog -PX.PL man -OBV  
 ‘The men scare **the dogs**.’

In summary, the default transitive construction in Cree (the direct) shows accusative alignment while the marked construction (the inverse) shows ergative alignment.

### 1.3 Comparison of alignment in Kapampangan and Cree

A schematic illustration of the alignment patterns in the two languages is given in Figure 1. Kapampangan shows ergative alignment in the default transitive construction and ac-

<sup>3</sup>In the literature on Algonquian languages, it is uncommon for morphosyntactic roles to be described in terms of cases such as nominative and accusative (though see Rhodes 1994). I note, however, that the “nominative” role that I identify in (3)–(4) (subject of intransitive, agent of direct transitive, patient of inverse transitive) is equivalent to the “central participant” role posited by Goddard (1969).

cusative alignment in the marked construction, while Cree is exactly the opposite, showing accusative alignment in the default construction and ergative alignment in the marked construction. The two languages can thus be described as showing split-ergative alignment patterns that are mirror images of each other. This mirror-image patterning extends to a number of quite specific details, as I will show in the next section.

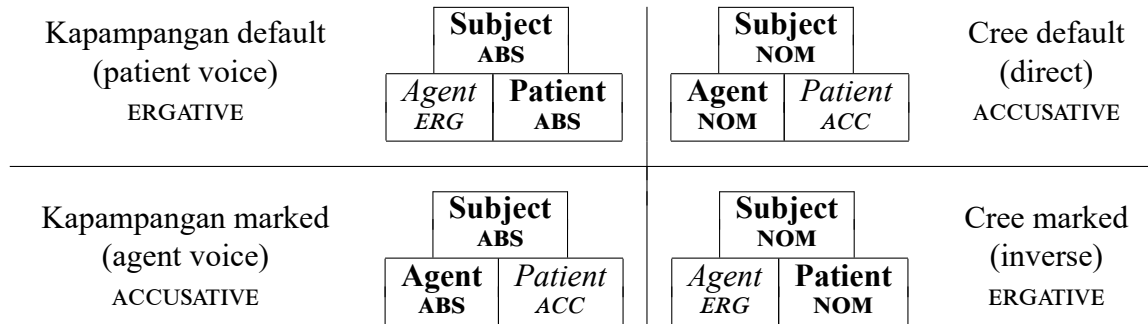


Figure 1: Alignment patterns in Kapampangan and Cree transitive constructions

Before continuing, I should acknowledge that the description of transitive alignment in Philippine and Algonquian languages in terms of split ergativity is not uncontroversially accepted in the literature on either language family. In the literature on Philippine languages, there is a longstanding debate over the correct characterization of transitive alignment; see e.g. the discussion and references in Aldridge 2012 and O’Brien 2016. In the literature on Algonquian languages, the description of transitive alignment is typically framed in Algonquian-specific terms, with little consideration of constructs from the broader typological literature such as ergativity (though Siewierska 1998, Déchaine 1999, and Agnès 2014 are notable exceptions). Although I adopt the terminology of split ergativity in this paper, I take no position on whether, at a deeper level of analysis, the Philippine and Algonquian systems are “truly” split-ergative (whatever that may mean). I have chosen to frame the discussion in terms of split ergativity because this approach to the data provides a simple and effective way to describe the properties of the two systems and to draw explicit and insightful generalizations about their similarities and differences.

## 2. Similarities

This section describes six ways in which the Kapampangan and Cree systems show mirror-image patterning: subjecthood diagnostics (§2.1), person restrictions (§2.2), agreement asymmetries (§2.3), interpretive correlates (§2.4), conflation of non-subject markers (§2.5), and resemblance to (anti-)passives (§2.6). One caveat is necessary: the descriptions given for Cree may, to a large extent, be taken to represent the Algonquian family as a whole, but the same is not necessarily true for Kapampangan, as my knowledge of the Philippine family is limited and I am unaware of the degree to which the properties that I describe for Kapampangan are found more generally across the family.

## 2.1 Subjecthood diagnostics

In both systems, the nominal in the unmarked case role (i.e. absolutive or nominative) has been analyzed by some researchers as the structural subject.<sup>4</sup> For Philippine languages, it is often argued that the absolutive argument is the subject of the sentence, regardless of whether it is the patient, as in the patient voice, or the agent, as in the agent voice (e.g. Kroeger 1993). This analysis is schematized in (5).

### (5) Absolutive as subject in Kapampangan

Patient voice		Agent voice	
<i>Agent</i> <i>ERG</i>	<b>Patient</b> <b>ABS</b>	<b>Agent</b> <b>ABS</b>	<i>Patient</i> <i>ACC</i>
<b>SUBJECT</b>		<b>SUBJECT</b>	

For Algonquian, the same proposal has been made for the argument that occupies what I identified above as the “nominative” role, which is the same as Goddard’s (1969) “central participant” role. This role is occupied by whichever argument ranks highest on the person hierarchy (1/2 > animate 3 > obviative 3 > inanimate). Bloomfield (1962:45) and Rhodes (1994), among others, regard the nominal that occupies this role as the subject of the sentence, regardless of whether it is the agent, as in the direct, or the patient, as in the inverse. This analysis is schematized in (6).

### (6) Nominative as subject in Algonquian

Direct		Inverse	
<b>Agent</b> <b>NOM</b>	<i>Patient</i> <i>ACC</i>	<i>Agent</i> <i>ERG</i>	<b>Patient</b> <b>NOM</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>		<b>SUBJECT</b>	

A similar proposal, though not framed in terms of subjecthood, is found in the generative literature on Algonquian languages. Using evidence from variable binding and weak crossover, Bruening (2001, 2005) has shown for Passamaquoddy that in the direct, the agent c-commands the patient, while in the inverse, the patient c-commands the agent. Since, by definition, the subject position is the argument position that c-commands any other argument positions in the clause, Bruening’s conclusion is equivalent to saying that in the direct, the agent is the subject, while in the inverse, the patient is the subject—exactly as in (6).

What the Philippine and Algonquian systems share is the possibility for either argument of a transitive verb to be the structural subject. This property is implemented in opposite ways in the two systems. In the Philippine system, the patient is the subject by default and a marked construction (the agent voice) is available in which the agent is the subject. In the Algonquian system, the agent is the subject by default and a marked construction (the inverse) is available in which the patient is the subject.

<sup>4</sup>I take “structural subject” to mean something like “the nominal that occupies the highest obligatorily-filled nominal position in a declarative clause”. This rough definition is intended to allow for variation in whether the subject position is an A or A-bar position.

## 2.2 Person restrictions

In both Kapampangan and Cree, the default transitive construction can be used with agents of all three persons and with patients of all three persons, as indicated in (7) and illustrated by the data in (8)–(11).<sup>5</sup>

### (7) Permitted person features in the default construction

Kapampangan		Cree (conjunct)	
<i>Agent</i> <i>ERG</i>	<b>Patient</b> <b>ABS</b>	<b>Agent</b> <b>NOM</b>	<i>Patient</i> <i>ACC</i>
1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3

- (8) Kapampangan default, 1/2/3 agent (ERG)
- a. pengan ku la [reng saging]  
PV.PST.eat 1sE 3pA [ABS.PL banana]  
'**I** ate the bananas.'
- b. pengan mu la [reng saging]  
PV.PST.eat 2sE 3pA [ABS.PL banana]  
'**You** ate the bananas.'
- c. pengan na la [reng saging]  
PV.PST.eat 3sE 3pA [ABS.PL banana]  
'**She** ate the bananas.'
- (9) Cree default, 1/2/3 agent (NOM)
- a. ê- wâpam -Ø -ak  
SUB- see -3OBJ -1s:3  
'(that) **I** see her'
- b. ê- wâpam -Ø -at  
SUB- see -3OBJ -2s:3  
'(that) **you** see her'
- c. ê- wâpam -â -t  
SUB- see -3OBJ -3s  
'(that) **she** sees the other'
- (10) Kapampangan default, 1/2/3 patient (ABS)
- a. akilala da ku  
PV.PST.meet 3pE 1sA  
'They met **me**.'
- b. akilala da ka  
PV.PST.meet 3pE 2sA  
'They met **you**.'
- c. akilala de  
PV.PST.meet 3pE:3sA  
'They met **her**.'
- (11) Cree default, 1/2/3 patient (ACC)
- a. ê- wâpam -i -t  
SUB- see -1OBJ -3s  
'(that) she sees **me**'
- b. ê- wâpam -is -k  
SUB- see -2OBJ -3s  
'(that) she sees **you**'
- c. ê- wâpam -Ø -ak  
SUB- see -3OBJ -1s:3  
'(that) I see **her**'

The marked transitive construction can also occur with arguments of all three persons in the *subject* case role (absolute/nominative). This is illustrated by the data in (12)–(13). In the Kapampangan marked transitive construction (agent voice), the absolute agent can be first, second, or third person, as shown in (12). In the Cree marked transitive construction

<sup>5</sup>For Cree, this claim applies only to the inflectional paradigm known as the “conjunct”, which occurs canonically in subordinate clauses. The “independent” inflection, which occurs canonically in main clauses, displays a person restriction that has no parallel in Kapampangan and will be discussed in section 3 below.

(inverse), the nominative patient can be first, second, or third person, as shown in (13).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(12) Kap'n marked, 1/2/3 agent (ABS)</p> <p>a.   mengan ku [ng saging]<br/>             AV.PST.eat 1sA [ACC banana]<br/>             'I ate a banana'</p> <p>b.   mengan ka [ng saging]<br/>             AV.PST.eat 2sA [ACC banana]<br/>             'You ate a banana'</p> <p>c.   mengan ya [ng saging]<br/>             AV.PST.eat 3sA [ACC banana]<br/>             'She ate a banana'</p> | <p>(13) Cree marked, 1/2/3 patient (NOM)</p> <p>a.   ni- wâpam -ikw -wak<br/>             1- see    -INV -3p<br/>             'they see <b>me</b>'</p> <p>b.   ki- wâpam -ikw -wak<br/>             2- see    -INV -3p<br/>             'they see <b>you</b>'</p> <p>c.   wâpam -ikw -wak<br/>             see     -INV -3p<br/>             'the others see <b>them</b>'</p> |
|--|---|

However, in the *non-subject* case role (i.e. non-ABS/NOM), the situation is different. In both Kapampangan and Cree, the non-subject role in the marked transitive construction can be occupied by third persons only; first and second persons are barred. In the Kapampangan agent voice, the non-subject case role is the accusative. In the examples in (12), the accusative patient is consistently a third person, and this is the only possibility: first and second person accusatives do not exist. In the Cree inverse, the non-subject case role is the ergative. In the examples in (13), the ergative agent is consistently a third person, and this, too, is the only possibility: first and second person ergatives (i.e. inverse agents) do not exist. The person restrictions in the marked construction are schematized in (14).

- (14) Permitted person features in the marked construction

Kpn agent voice		Cree inverse	
<b>Agent</b>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Agent</i>	<b>Patient</b>
<b>ABS</b>	<i>ACC</i>	<i>ERG</i>	<b>NOM</b>
1, 2, 3	3 only	3 only	1, 2, 3

The restrictions in (14) entail that in both Kapampangan and Cree, the alternation between the default and marked transitive constructions is neutralized for certain configurations of arguments, leaving the default construction as the only option. In Kapampangan, if the *patient* is first or second person, the default construction (the patient voice) is the only option, as the marked construction (the agent voice) allows third-person patients only. In Cree, if the *agent* is first or second person, the default construction (the direct) is the only option, as the marked construction (the inverse) allows third-person agents only.

In summary, Kapampangan and Cree show parallel patterning in the distribution of the marked transitive construction, which may only be used when the non-subject argument is a third person; this differs from the default transitive construction, which may be used with non-subject arguments of all three persons in both languages. The languages show opposite patterning, however, in the identity of the restricted argument, which is the patient (ACC) in Kapampangan and the agent (ERG) in Cree.

### 2.3 Agreement asymmetries

In both Kapampangan and Cree, agreement morphology systematically ignores the same case roles that were shown in the previous section to disallow first and second person nominals. In Kapampangan, where postverbal pronominal clitics function as an agreement system (Mithun 1994; Baker 2010; Haude and Zúñiga 2016:19), the default patient-voice transitive construction shows agreement for both arguments (*na* ‘3sE’ + *la* ‘3pA’ in (15a)) while the marked agent-voice transitive construction shows agreement only for the absolutive agent (*ya* ‘3sA’ in (15b)); the accusative patient is unindexed by agreement.

- (15) a. pagnakwan na **la** [ning lalaki] [**reng** **kotsi**]  
 PV.steal 3sE 3pA ERG man ABS.PL car  
 ‘The man steals the cars.’
- b. magnako **ya** [ng kotsi] [**ing** **lalaki**]  
 AV.steal 3sA ACC car ABS man  
 ‘The man steals a car.’

In Cree, a similar asymmetry is shown by the layer of verb inflection known as the CENTRAL AGREEMENT (Goddard 1969). In the default transitive construction (i.e. the direct), there is a degree of language-internal variation in the patterning of the central agreement, which typically indexes either the nominative agent, as in the “independent order” form in (16a), or both arguments, as in the “conjunct order” form in (16b) (central agreement in bold).<sup>6</sup> In the marked transitive construction (i.e. the inverse), there is no variation: the central agreement uniformly indexes only the nominative patient, as shown in (17). The ergative agent in the inverse construction is systematically ignored by central agreement across the entire Algonquian family (Oxford 2017).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (16) Cree default construction (direct)   | (17) Cree marked construction (inverse)   |
| a. <b>ni-</b> wâpam -â <b>-inân</b><br>1- see -3OBJ <b>-1PL</b><br>‘we.NOM see her.ACC’ (indep’t) | a. <b>ni-</b> wâpam -ikw <b>-inân</b><br>1- see -INV <b>-1PL</b><br>‘she.ERG sees us.NOM’ (indep’t) |
| b. ê- wâpam -Ø <b>-akiht</b><br>SUB- see -3OBJ <b>-1PL:3</b><br>‘we.NOM see her.ACC’ (conjunct)   | b. ê- wâpam -ikw <b>-yâhk</b><br>SUB- see -INV <b>-1PL</b><br>‘she.ERG sees us.NOM’ (conjunct)      |

Kapampangan and Cree are thus parallel in that a particular agreement marker systematically ignores the marked case role (i.e. the non-NOM/ABS role) in the marked transitive

<sup>6</sup>The independent and conjunct orders are two separate but parallel paradigms of verb inflection; the choice between the two paradigms is governed by clause type. In the independent, the central agreement is a prefix-suffix combination (e.g. *ni-...-nân* ‘1PL’ in (16a)); in the conjunct, the central agreement is a suffix (e.g. *-yâhk* ‘1PL’ in (17b)). The conjunct form in (16b) is from Moose Cree (Ellis 1971) while that in (17b) is from Plains Cree (Wolfart 1973).



construction, as schematized in (18). The languages differ in the identity of this role: it is the ACC patient in the Kapampangan agent voice and the ERG agent in the Cree inverse.

(18) Agreement in the marked construction

Kpn agent voice		Cree inverse	
<b>Agent</b> ABS	<i>Patient</i> ACC	<i>Agent</i> ERG	<b>Patient</b> NOM
indexed	unindexed	no central agr	central agr

## 2.4 Interpretive correlates

When both arguments are third person, the use of the marked construction is conditioned by similar discourse factors in both languages. In Kapampangan, the agent voice is normally used when the patient (ACC) is indefinite, as in (15b) above. In Cree, the inverse is normally used when the agent (ERG) is non-topical, as in (4b) above, where the low topicality of the agent is indicated by its encoding as obviative rather than proximate.

(19) Interpretation of the marked construction

Kpn agent voice		Cree inverse	
<b>Agent</b> ABS	<i>Patient</i> ACC	<i>Agent</i> ERG	<b>Patient</b> NOM
	indefinite	non-topical	

In both languages, the marked transitive construction is used when the argument that would ordinarily be the subject in the default transitive construction (the patient in Kapampangan; the agent in Cree) lacks a discourse property that is prototypically associated with subject-hood: definiteness in Kapampangan, topicality in Cree.

## 2.5 Conflation of non-subject markers

A further parallel between the two languages involves crosslinguistic variation in the morphological marking of non-subject (i.e. non-NOM/ABS) case roles. Kapampangan has distinct morphological marking for the two non-absolutive case roles: in (20), ERG is marked by the particle *ning* while ACC is marked by the particle *ng*.

- (20) a. pagnakwan ne [ning lalaki] [ing kotsi]  
 PV.steal 3s:3s ERG man ABS car  
 ‘The man steals the car.’ (patient voice)
- b. magnako ya [ng kotsi] [ing lalaki]  
 AV.steal 3s ACC car ABS man  
 ‘The man steals a car.’ (agent voice)

In Tagalog, however, the two non-absolutive case roles have been conflated morphologically: in the Tagalog examples in (21), the ERG role in (21a) (‘the man’) and the ACC role in

(21b) ('a car') are both marked by the same particle *ng* /*naŋ*/.

- (21) a.    *ninakaw* [*ng* *lalaki*] [*ang kotse*]  
           PV.steal    CASE man    **ABS car**  
           ‘The man has stolen **the car**.’ (patient voice)
- b.    *nagnakaw* [*ng* *kotse*] [*ang lalaki*]  
           AV.steal    CASE car    **ABS man**  
           ‘**The man** stole a car.’ (agent voice)

A head-marking equivalent of the variation between Kapampangan and Tagalog is found in Algonquian. The variation involves an agreement slot known as the PERIPHERAL SUFFIX (Goddard 1969). In the Cree forms in (22), the peripheral suffix *-ak* ‘3PL’ indexes the non-nominative argument regardless of whether it is ACC or ERG. In the direct form in (22a), the ACC patient ‘them’ is indexed by *-ak*, while in the inverse form in (22b), the ERG agent ‘they’ is indexed by *-ak*. Cree peripheral agreement thus shows the same pattern as case marking in Tagalog: the two non-subject roles (ACC and ERG) are treated the same.

- (22) a.    *ni-* *wâpam -â*    **-inân -ak**  
           1- see        -3OBJ **-1PL**    -3PL  
           ‘**we.NOM** see them.ACC’ (direct)
- b.    *ni-* *wâpam -ikw -inân -ak*  
           1- see        -INV **-1PL**    -3PL  
           ‘they.ERG see **us.NOM**’ (inverse)

In Meskwaki (Goddard 1994), however, peripheral agreement treats the two non-NOM case roles differently. The ACC patient ‘them’ in the direct form in (23a) is *not* indexed by peripheral agreement—no peripheral suffix can appear in this form—but the ERG agent ‘they’ in the inverse form in (23b) *is* indexed by peripheral agreement (*-aki* ‘3PL’). Meskwaki peripheral agreement thus shows the same pattern as case marking in Kapampangan: the two non-subject roles (ACC and ERG) are kept distinct.

- (23) a.    *ne-* *wa·pam -a·*    **-pena** (\*-aki)  
           1- see        -3OBJ **-1PL**    (\*-3PL)  
           ‘**we.NOM** see them.ACC’ (direct)
- b.    *ne-* *wa·pam -ekw -ena·n -aki*  
           1- see        -INV **-1PL**    -3PL  
           ‘they.ERG see **us.NOM**’ (inverse)

The variation is summarized in (24). The Philippine and Algonquian patterns are parallel in two ways: (1) the subject case role (ABS/NOM) is always kept morphologically distinct from the non-subject case roles (ACC, ERG), and (2) the non-subject case roles (ACC, ERG) vary in whether or not they are kept distinct from each other.

## (24) Variation in morphological distinction of case roles

## a. Philippine case markers for singular common nouns

Kapampangan		Tagalog	
ABS	<i>ing</i>	ABS	<i>ang</i>
ERG	<i>ning</i>	ERG	<i>ng</i>
ACC	<i>ng</i>	ACC	

## b. Algonquian agreement in forms involving 1st and 3rd persons

Meskwaki		Cree	
NOM	central agreement	NOM	central agreement
ACC	no peripheral agreement	ACC	peripheral agreement
ERG	peripheral agreement	ERG	

**2.6 Resemblance to (anti)passive**

A final similarity between the voice and inverse alternations in Kapampangan and Cree involves their resemblance to valency-reducing constructions. As has been observed for other Philippine languages (Gerds 1988; Aldridge 2012), the marked transitive construction in Kapampangan—the agent voice—resembles an antipassive in many ways. In an antipassive, the patient, which is ordinarily absolutive, is demoted to an oblique role, and the agent, which is ordinarily ergative, is promoted to the absolutive role. The demotion of the patient to an oblique role is consistent with several properties of the Kapampangan agent voice: the lack of agreement with the patient (§2.3), the impossibility of first and second person patients (§2.2), and the low topicality of the patient (§2.4) could all plausibly follow from the patient’s oblique status. Furthermore, if the “ACC” role that I have identified for the patient is in fact an oblique role, then the morphological conflation of ERG and ACC in Tagalog (§2.5) is in fact an instance of ergative-oblique syncretism, a known phenomenon (e.g. Polinsky 2016). Finally, the promotion of the agent to the absolutive role is consistent with the subject-like status of the agent in the agent-voice construction (§2.1).

In Cree, similarly, it has been observed that the marked transitive construction—the inverse—resembles a passive (Rhodes 1976; Wolfart 1991). In a passive, the agent, which is ordinarily nominative, is demoted to an oblique role, and the patient, which is ordinarily accusative, is promoted to the nominative role. The demotion of the agent to an oblique role is consistent with several properties of the Cree inverse: the lack of central agreement with the agent (§2.3), the impossibility of first and second person inverse agents (§2.2), and the low topicality of the agent (§2.4) could all plausibly follow from the agent’s oblique status. Furthermore, if the “ERG” role that I have identified for the agent is in fact an oblique role, then the morphological conflation of ACC and ERG in Cree (§2.5) is in fact an instance of accusative-oblique syncretism, a known phenomenon (e.g. English *him* as either accusative or dative). Finally, the promotion of the patient to the nominative role is consistent with the subject-like status of the patient in the inverse construction (§2.1).

Despite these compelling similarities, there are reasons to think that the Kapampangan agent voice is not, in fact, an antipassive, and that the Cree inverse is not, in fact, a passive, as indicated by the controversial status of the (anti)passive analysis in the literatures on both language families (see references in §1.3 above). Nevertheless, for descriptive purposes, at least, it seems useful to think of the Kapampangan agent voice as a “transitivized antipassive”—that is, a transitive construction that has many properties in common with an antipassive. Similarly, the Cree inverse can be informally thought of as a “transitivized passive” (cf. Rhodes 1976), a label that may in fact be an accurate description of the diachronic origin of the inverse construction (McLean 2001).

## 2.7 Summary of similarities

The alignment properties of Kapampangan and Cree are summarized in Table 1. The two languages repeatedly show properties that are the same at a deep level (e.g. failure to agree with a particular case role), but are implemented in opposite ways on the surface: whatever holds for the patient in Kapampangan holds for the agent in Cree, and vice versa.

	KAPAMPANGAN	CREE
Default construction	patient voice ERG agent, ABS patient	direct NOM agent, ACC patient
Marked construction	agent voice ABS agent, ACC patient	inverse ERG agent, NOM patient
Subjecthood diagnostics	ABS argument is subject (whether patient or agent)	NOM argument is subject (whether agent or patient)
Person restrictions	in agent voice, ACC patient can be 3rd person only	in inverse, ERG agent can be 3rd person only
Agreement asymmetries	in agent voice, ACC patient unindexed by agreeent	in inverse, ERG agent unindexed by central agr't
Interpretive correlates	use agent voice when patient is indefinite	use inverse when agent is non-topical
Conflation of non-subjects	same marking for ERG and ACC in some languages	same indexing of ACC and ERG in some languages
Resemblance to (anti)passive	agent voice resembles a transitivized antipassive	inverse resembles a transitivized passive

Table 1: Parallel but opposite properties of Kapampangan and Cree transitive constructions

### 3. Differences

Although the alignment systems of Kapampangan and Cree show many similarities, there are also some important differences, of which I will briefly discuss three. The first difference involves person restrictions. In addition to the parallel person restrictions noted for Kapampangan and Cree above (§2.2), Cree has a further restriction: in the “independent order” inflection, forms such as ‘she sees me’ and ‘she sees you’ (i.e. 3rd acting on 1st/2nd) must be expressed using the inverse construction, with the 1st/2nd-person patient obligatorily mapped to the NOM role; the direct construction is not possible. The Kapampangan parallel would be to require forms such as ‘I see her’ and ‘you see her’ (i.e. 1st/2nd acting on 3rd) to use the agent voice, with the 1st/2nd-person agent obligatorily mapped to the ABS role, but there is no such requirement; agent and patient voice are both possible.

The second difference involves the distribution of the verbal morphology that marks voice/inverse: in Kapampangan, voice markers appear on both transitive and intransitive verbs, while in Cree, direct/inverse markers appear on transitive verbs only. A possible reason for this difference is that Kapampangan voice morphology is actually a type of EXTRACTIION MARKING (Erlewine et al. 2017) and thus appears whenever an argument is extracted to subject position, regardless of the transitivity of the clause, while Cree direct/inverse morphology is actually a type of OBJECT AGREEMENT (Rhodes 1976, 1994; Brittain 1999) and thus appears only in transitive forms.

The third difference involves the property that is often called “syntactic ergativity” (Polinsky 2017). Kapampangan shows syntactic ergativity in that absolutive nominals can be relativized or wh-extracted while ergative and accusative nominals cannot. Cree shows no parallel constraint: in both the direct and the inverse, either argument can be extracted. A possible reason for this difference, from a generative perspective, is that absolutive case is assigned in an A-bar position in Kapampangan (cf. Bittner and Hale 1996 for Inuit), and thus only the absolutive nominal can move on to higher A-bar positions, while nominative case is assigned in an A-position in Cree (cf. Bruening 2009) and thus bears no special relationship to higher A-bar positions.

### 4. Conclusion

The Kapampangan voice system and the Cree inverse system both involve an alternation between a default transitive construction and a distributionally marked transitive construction. In both languages, the alternation shows strikingly similar properties with respect to subjecthood diagnostics, person restrictions, agreement restrictions, interpretation, and morphological variation. In each language, the marked construction has the appearance of a transitivized version of the valency-reducing construction that is prototypically associated with that language’s basic alignment pattern. The difference between the two languages lies in the nature of the basic alignment pattern. In Kapampangan, the basic pattern is ergative and the marked transitive construction is thus a transitivized antipassive (which resembles an accusative construction; Aldridge 2011), while in Cree, the basic pattern is accusative

and the marked transitive construction is thus a transitivized passive (which resembles an ergative construction; Comrie 1978). The Kapampangan voice system and the Cree inverse system thus involve a similar alternation that is implemented in opposite basic alignment patterns. This characterization captures the parallel but opposite nature of many properties of Kapampangan and Cree morphosyntax. Although this conclusion is admittedly informal, I hope that it may serve as a stepping-stone to further comparative work on the morphosyntax of Philippine and Algonquian languages.

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