Many, no doubt equally acceptable, explanations of this type could be put forward. But we can only proceed through detailed justification in individual languages for syntactic explanations of this (or other) sorts; and by then attempting syntactic reconstruction through painstaking comparison of the syntaxes of present-day languages. To attempt to 'jump' to some general explanation of the connection between verbal and nominal -Diri—whether of the type sketched above, or of some other type—is quite illicit.

Topic B:
Ergative, locative and instrumental case inflections
2. Locative

The static locative suffix is -raj, which becomes -rug after nasals and stops by a
hardening process and undergoes other regular changes. The static locative
(in, on, at) is distinct from the allative in -way and the suffix -raj 'through,
along, by'. An example:

(4)  ya - buri a: - gugu - rug
1sg sat III water Loc
'I sat in the water (class III).'

3. Instrumental

The instrumental prefix is -miri. This is never used in an ergative sense, and
normally refers only to objects or materials used in some physical activity:

(5)  gawu - rani
la:ma-miri
1sg/III.2 speared spear instr
'I speared it (class III.2) with a spear.'

As hinted at in B-1, the instrumental suffix may be optionally omitted in
such a sentence since context makes it clear that la:ma can only be
instrumental.

The instrumental can be used in intransitive clauses:

(6)  ni - yari: wanda - miri
Ma:sg goes walking stick instr
'He is walking with a walking stick.'

I have at present no data regarding the surface form of body part terms in
instrumental function (the type 'I hit him with my hand').

4. As we can see, there are no syncretisms involving ergative, locative, and
instrumental cases in Nunggubuyu, except as a result of low-level case-suffix
deletion in the sentence type (3). There are no transformations such as
passivation, antipassivation, or relative-clause formation which rearrange
case marking on nouns. The absence of morphological syncretisms and of
case-changing transformations is interesting in view of the abundance of such
phenomena elsewhere in the continent.

5. It should be mentioned that there are one or two examples in my corpus
where ablative -wala/-gala is used in something like an ergative sense. In a
text dealing with emu and brogla, both in nonhuman class II (which is
related to the feminine singular class), the following passage occurs:

(7)  ngga η - a: - gamajj para-wa: yin, yaguri yi:-guduru-way,
i/(II) II/II Indir stole II emu to that II brogla A1
η - a: - gamajj aha η - a: - yag, para-ggga, η - a: - yag,
i/(II) II Indir stole then II/II Indir ate III stone II/II Indir ate
ngga para-wa: yin-gala
i/(II) II emu A1
'It, emu, stole it from it, from brogla.' It stole it from it, then it ate it
away from it, the stone. It ate it away from it, emu (agent).
50. Nunggubuyu

J. Heath

1. Ergative

There is no ergative case suffix in Nunggubuyu (spoken eastern Arnhem Land) nor nominative, accusative, or dative for that matter. Word order is no help in indicating case functions either.

Instead, the case relations of the major NPs in a clause are indicated mainly by pronominal prefixes on the verb, cross-referencing overt or deleted NPs:

(1) na - walyinyu yu - rani yara-mahinyu

MaSC man MaSC/FeSC spared FeSC woman

'The man spared the woman.'

Because the prefix -yu indicates masculine singular subject and feminine singular object, it is clear that na-walyinyu must be the subject and yara-mahinyu the object. If the prefix on the verb were yu- FeSC/MaSC the translation would be 'The woman spared the man'.

The zero (nominative) case is used for intransitive and transitive subjects, for direct and indirect (including benefactive) objects, and for comitative NPs. In the case of the comitative, there is a cross-referencing (but pronominally unspecified) prefix -anyi- added to the verb:

(2) ni- anyyi yara-mahinyu

MaSC Comit went FeSC woman

'He went with the woman.'

The zero case is also sometimes used instead of more concrete case suffixes, especially allative -way and instrumental -miri, as long as there is no ambiguity in context:

(3) ni- yarri yi-gala:li:gi

MaSC went turtle

'He went to/turtles.'

Even though yara-mahinyu belongs to nonhuman class I, which is cross-referenced by the same ergative prefix ni- as masculine singular human nouns, the ni- here cannot refer to yara-mahinyu. This is because if yara-mahinyu were functioning as subject it would have a class prefix na-. The only acceptable interpretation of (3) is that yara-mahinyu is a shortened form of yi-gala:li:gi-way 'to the turtles' (literally 'class I-turtle-allative').

2. Locative

The static locative suffix is -ruj, which becomes -duj after nasals and stops by a hardening process and undergoes other regular changes. The static locative ('in, on, at') is distinct from the allative in -way and the suffix -waj 'through, along, by' An example:

(4) yu - buri a-: gugu - ruj

1SG sat III water Loc

'I sat in the water (class III).'

3. Instrumental

The instrumental prefix is -miri. This is never used in an ergative sense, and normally refers only to objects or materials used in some physical activity:

(5) yaru - rani la:ma-miri

MaSC goes walking stick instr

'I speared it (class III.2) with a spear.'

As hinted at in B-1, the instrumental suffix may be optionally omitted in such a sentence since context makes it clear that la:ma can only be instrumental.

The instrumental can be used in intransitive clauses:

(6) ni - yari:warela - miri

MaSC goes walking stick instr

'He is walking with a walking stick.'

I have at present no data regarding the surface form of body part terms in instrumental function (the type 'I hit him with my hand')

4. As we can see, there are no syncretisms involving ergative, locative, and instrumental cases in Nunggubuyu, except as a result of low-level case-suffix deletion in the sentence type (3). There are no transformations such as passivation, antipassivation, or relative-clause formation which rearrange case marking on nouns. The absence of morphological syncretisms and of case-changing transformations is interesting in view of the abundance of such phenomena elsewhere in the continent.

5. It should be mentioned that there are one or two examples in my corpus where ablative -wala/-gala is used in something like an ergative sense. In a text dealing with emu and brolga, both in nonhuman class II (which is related to the feminine singular class), the following passage occurs:


'I', emu, stole it from it, from broli. It stole it from it, then it ate it away from it, the stone. It ate it away from it, the stone. It ate it away from it, the stone. It ate it away from it, the stone. It ate it away from it, the stone.
The two were fighting for possession of a stone, and emu seized it and swallowed it, thus keeping it out of brogla's possession. The direct object is 'stone', while 'brogla' is an indirect object ('benefactive' is not an appropriate term here unless weakened to include counter-benefactive senses). In such constructions the verbal prefix combination marks category of subject and indirect object only, and adds an indirective prefix to show that the object is indirect. Since both subject and indirect object are in class II, the pronominal prefix *u*- 'II/II' was inadequate to clarify which noun was subject and which indirect object. To disambiguate the sentence, the narrator had recourse to the addition of the ablative suffix to the agent and the ablative suffix to the indirect object. This case marking is extremely rare, and some other Nunggubuyu speakers were unable to understand the passage and felt it was a mistake.

Although there is nowhere near enough data to determine the conditions under which the ablative can be used in this sense, my feeling is that it does not mark ergativity as such, but rather is available to mark either intransitive or transitive subject in a position where contrast with an indirect object is necessary. That is, the addition of -wala/-gala goes hand-in-hand with the addition of ablative -uy/-guy.

51. Summary

reflected in the use of case affixes is more abstract, since we follow the event emanating from (i.e., voluntarily caused by) emu, and directed against brogla.

51. Rapporteur's summary

R.M.W. Dixon

For all the languages described in papers for this topic, instrumental NPs can, of course, occur with simple transitive sentences; some languages also allow them with simple intransitive sentences but others do not. It appears, however, that an instrumental NP can always occur with a derived intransitive sentence (which relates to a transitive deep structure) such as reflexive, reciprocal or anti-passive; instrumental NPs occur with derived intransitives even where they cannot occur with simple intransitives.

This, and other evidence, suggests that instrumental NPs are not affected by the most straightforward syntactic transformations, which do affect subject (ergative) and object (nominative) NPs; and that in many languages this difference will constitute a main criterion for distinguishing between an instrumental and an ergative NP, especially where instrumental and ergative inflections coincide (see Dixon 1972:93-95).

The main problem, which it was hoped papers for this topic would help clarify and perhaps solve, was: why does instrumental coincide with ergative in some languages but with locative in others? Although some interesting and useful data has been presented by the contributors, none of it really sheds much light on this problem.

It may in fact be best to approach the problem syntactically—to ask what deep structure can appropriately be associated with instrumentals in each individual language, and whether this entails any natural explanation of instrumental inflection in that language. For instance, in Dyirbal (a language in which instrumental coincides formally with ergative) a strong case can be made out for representing an instrumental NP in terms of a deep relative clause, with dummy verb 1/nom 'uses'. Then

(1) tree-nom man-erg axe-inst cut

'The man cuts the tree with an axe.'

would have deep structure:
The two were fighting for possession of a stone, and emu seized it and swallowed it, thus keeping it out of brogla's possession. The direct object is 'stone', while 'brolga' is an indirect object ('benefactive' is not an appropriate term here unless weakened to include counter-benefactive senses). In such constructions the verbal prefix combination marks category of subject and indirect object only, and adds an indirective prefix to show that the object is indirect. Since both subject and indirect object are in class II, the pronominal prefix $g(u)-$ 'II/II' was inadequate to clarify which noun was subject and which indirect object. To disambiguate the sentence, the narrator had recourse to the addition of the ablative suffix to the agent and the ablative suffix to the indirect object. This case marking is extremely rare, and some other Nunggubuyu speakers were unable to understand the passage and felt it was a mistake.

Although there is nowhere near enough data to determine the conditions under which the ablative can be used in this sense, my feeling is that it does not mark ergativity as such, but rather is available to mark either intransitive or transitive subject in a position where contrast with an indirect object is necessary. That is, the addition of -waly-gala goes hand-in-hand with the addition of ablative -wayi-guy.

I will close with a tentative etymology for instrumental -miri. In the large Yuurlngu group of languages in north-eastern Arnhem Land, including the Ritharrungu language which is geographically contiguous to the Nunggubuyu-speaking area, there is an *having* suffix -miri. Although this is not regularly used in an instrumental sense, there are occasions where it can have the same effect, as in the "pseudo-instrumental" construction exemplified by example (2) in my paper 27 in this volume.

If we suppose that Nunggubuyu once had a nonzero case suffix functioning both as ergative and instrumental, and that this suffix has been dropped, Nunggubuyu at one stage would have been unable to distinguish instrumental from other zero case categories (ergative, nominative, dative, comitative, etc.), and it is reasonable to suppose that a new instrumental inflection would arise. Under such conditions it does not unduly strain the imagination that the language could have borrowed -miri from the languages to the north, with slight semantic specialisation as an instrumental suffix.

Incidentally, -miri also shows up in Warndarang, the language immediately to the south. This language belongs to a family including Mara and Alawa, further to the south. Alawa does not have -miri as a case suffix, and to my knowledge neither does Mara. I therefore suspect a subsequent transfer of Nunggubuyu -miri into Warndarang. In general, the Warndarang case system is very much like the Nunggubuyu one and quite unlike the Alawa; there appears to have been considerable diffusion both of case system structure and in two or three cases of actual morphemes, probably from the large Nunggubuyu group to the smaller Warndarang group.

Note
1. Note that in English the directions are reversed, since we follow the course of the stone *from* brogla to emu. In Nunggubuyu the directionality reflected in the use of case affixes is more abstract, since we follow the event emanating from (i.e. voluntarily caused by) emu, and directed against brogla.

R.M.W. Dixon
For all the languages described in papers for this topic, instrumental NPs can, of course, occur with simple transitive sentences; some languages also allow them with simple intransitive sentences but others do not. It appears, however, that an instrumental NP can always occur with a derived intransitive sentence (which relates to a transitive deep structure) such as reflexive, reciprocal or anti-passive; instrumental NPs occur with derived intransitives even where they cannot occur with simple intransitives.

This, and other evidence, suggests that instrumental NPs are not affected by the most straightforward syntactic transformations, which do affect subject (ergative) and object (nominative) NPs; and that in many languages this difference will constitute a main criterion for distinguishing between an instrumental and an ergative NP, especially where instrumental and ergative inflections coincide (see Dixon 1987.93-95).

The main problem, which it was hoped papers for this topic would help clarify and perhaps solve, was: why does instrumental coincide with ergative in some languages but with locative in others? Although some interesting and useful data has been presented by the contributors, none of it really sheds much light on this problem.

It may in fact be best to approach the problem syntactically—to ask what deep structure can appropriately be associated with instrumentals in each individual language, and whether this entails any natural explanation of instrumental inflection in that language. For instance, in Dyirbal (a language in which instrumental coincides formally with ergative) a strong case can be made out for representing an instrumental NP in terms of a deep relative clause, with dummy verb *inst* ("uses"). Then
(1) tree-nom man-erg axe-inst cut
'The man cuts the tree with an axe.'
would have deep structure: