On agent focus agreement in Proto-Mayan[*]

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ABSTRACT: In many Mayan languages, a special construction is used to focus subjects of transitive verbs, the so-called agent focus construction. Though this construction has two participants, it is morphologically intransitive and agrees with only one argument. Modern Mayan languages differ in which argument is cross-referenced in the agent focus construction, with some of them showing agreement with the agent, others with the patient and others with either the agent or the patient depending on their respective position on a person hierarchy. All of these patterns have been proposed by different authors to be the original pattern found in Proto-Mayan. Based on evidence from colonial Q'eqchi', this paper suggests that in Proto-Mayan the verb did not agree at all in the agent focus construction. The variety of different agreement patterns in modern Mayan languages reflects the fact that agreement in the agent focus construction developed only after Proto-Mayan had split up.
KEYWORDS: Proto-Mayan; Classic Mayan; Q'eqchi'; Agent focus construction; Agreement

RESUMEN: En muchas lenguas mayas se usa una construcción especial si el sujeto de un verbo transitivo está en foco, la llamada construcción enfoque de agente. Aunque esta construcción tiene dos participantes, morfológicamente es intransitiva y concuerda con solo un argumento. Las lenguas mayas modernas difieren en con cuál argumento el verbo concuerda en la construcción enfoque de agente. En algunas, el verbo concuerda con el sujeto, en otras con el objeto y en otras o con el sujeto o con el objeto dependiendo de qué argumento está más alto en una jerarquía de persona. Todos estos sistemas de concordancia han sido propuestos por diferentes autores como el sistema original usado en el proto-maya. Basándose en evidencia del q'eqchi' colonial, este artículo propone que en proto-maya el verbo no concordaba con ningún argumento en la voz antipasiva de enfoque. La variedad de diferentes sistemas de concordancia de esta construcción en las lenguas mayas modernas resulta de que concordancia en la construcción agente de enfoque se desarrolló después de que el proto-maya se escindiera.
PALABRAS CLAVE: Proto-Maya; Maya clásico; Q'eqchi'; Construcción enfoque de agente; Concordancia

1. Introduction

In several Mayan languages, agents of transitive verbs cannot be focused, questioned or relativized by using a regular transitive construction. Rather, a special construction, the agent focus construction (also called the focus antipassive construction; both terms will be used interchangeably in this paper), has to be used. In the agent focus construction the transitive verb takes a special derivational morpheme which is in many Mayan languages the same morpheme that is also used to form the absolutive antipassive voice (hence the often-used name focus *antipassive*). Similar to the antipassive voice, the verb is morphologically intransitive in the agent focus construction, and thus has only one person agreement marker (an absolutive marker) instead of the two agreement markers (ergative and absolutive markers) of transitive verbs. Nevertheless, semantically the agent focus construction is transitive, having both a subject and an object (Stiebels 2006: 505).

Given that the agent focus construction involves two semantic arguments, but has only one agreement marker for person, one may wonder which argument is cross-referenced on the verb. Indeed, the patterns of agreement in the agent focus construction vary greatly across the Mayan languages, with three different patterns of agreement discernable in the modern Mayan languages.

The differences in agreement between the modern Mayan languages raise the question which pattern was the original agreement pattern in Proto-Mayan, and how the agreement patterns found today in Mayan developed out of this pattern. Contrary to earlier proposals, this paper argues that neither of the three agreement patterns found in modern Mayan languages reflects the original pattern. Rather, based on evidence from colonial Q'eqchi' it is proposed that in Proto-Mayan there was no person agreement at all with any argument, and that person agreement in the agent focus construction is a later development of the individual Mayan languages, which explains the differences in their agreement patterns.

This paper is structured as follows. In 2, the three agreement patterns of agent focus constructions found in modern Mayan languages are presented. 3 gives an overview on previous suggestions on the agreement pattern of focus antipassives in Proto-Mayan. 4 provides evidence for a fourth "agreement" pattern found in colonial Q'eqchi'. In 5 it is argued that the pattern found in colonial Q'eqchi' is the original pattern and a scenario is provided how the different agreement patterns in the modern Mayan languages may have come about. 6 discusses implications of this reconstruction for the development of focus antipassive agreement from Classic Mayan to Ch'olti'. The paper concludes with a short summary.

2. Agent focus agreement patterns in modern Mayan languages

There are three different basic patterns of agreement in agent focus constructions in modern Mayan languages: invariable agreement with the agent, invariable agreement with the patient, and variable agreement with either the agent or the patient depending on the respective position of the agent and patient on a person hierarchy (Stiebels 2006: 524). Each of these agreement patterns will be exemplified below.

The invariable agent agreement pattern is found, among others, in Q'eqchi' (Dayley 1983: 28-19) and Poqomchi' (Brown 1978) from the Greater K'iche'an branch. In these languages, the focus antipassive always agrees with the agent, never with the patient. The patient is expressed by a relational noun phrase. In (1a) from Poqomchi', the agent is in the first person singular, and thus the verb *b'uhyun* "to quiet" has a first person singular absolutive marker *in-* as agreement marker, while the patient is expressed by the relational noun *r-eh*, but is not cross-referenced on the verb. Similarly, in (1b) from Q'eqchi', the verb *sak'o* "to hit" agrees with the agent in the second person singular, while the patient is introduced by a relational noun:[1]

(1a) *Re' hin x-**in**-b'uhy-un-ik*   *r-eh.*   (Brown 1978: 124)
      DEF I   COM-B1-QUIET-AF-DC.IV   A3-IO
      "I'm the one who got him quieted down."

(1b) *laa'at x-**at**-sak'-o-k*   *w-e*   (Dayley 1983: 29)
      YOU   REC-B2-HIT-AF-DC.IV   A1-IO
      "It was you who hit me."

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[1] The following abbreviations are used in this paper: A = ergative marker; AF = agent focus; AG = agentive prefix; ART = article; B = absolutive marker; CAUS = causative; COM = completive; DC = declarative; DEF = definite; DEIC = temporal deictic enclitic; DEM = demonstrative; DIR = directional; FOC = focus; INC = incompletive; IO = oblique object of (focus) antipassive; IV = intransitive verb; NA = nominalized antipassive; PL = plural; POS = positional; PR = preposition; PRES = present; PRG = progressive; PROX = proximate past; REC = recent past; SBJ = subjunctive; TV = transitive verb; 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person. Glosses taken from secondary sources are standardized and sometimes slightly modified.

The invariable object agreement pattern is used, among others, in the Mamean language Ixil (Ayres 1983), the Greater Q'anjob'alan languages Akatek (Zavala 1997: 452), Jakaltek (Grinevald Craig 1979), Q'anjob'al (Acker 2016: 91) and Chuj (Hou 2013: 11) as well as the Tzeltalan language Tzotzil (Aissen 2017: 150).[2] In (2a) from Ixil the agent of the agent focus construction is only marked with the preposed independent pronoun *in* "I", but is not cross-referenced on the verb. The patient on the other hand, is expressed by the second person singular absolutive pronoun *axh*, which is postposed to the verb. The same agreement pattern can be seen in (2b) from Akatek, (2c) from Jakaltek, (2d) from Q'anjob'al, (2e) from Chuj and (2f) from Tzotzil:

(2a)   *In*   *kat*   *q'os-on*   ***axh***   (Ayres 1983: 27)
        I   REC   HIT-AF   2B
        "I hit you."

(2b)   *Ja'-in*   ***ø-ij-on-toj***   *naj*   *unin*   (Zavala 1997: 452)
        FOC-I   B3-BACK.CARRY-AF-DIR   CL   BOY
        "It is I who carried the boy."

(2c)   *Mak*   *k-**ach***   *il-n-i*   (Dayley 1983: 57)
        WHO   PAST-B2   SEE-AF-DC.IV
        "Who saw you?"

(2d)   *A*   *naq*   *Xhun*   *ch-**ach***   *kaq-on-i*   (Acker 2016: 91)
        FOC   CL   JOHN   INC-B2   HATE-AF-DC.IV
        "It is John that hates you."

(2e)   *Mach*   *ix-**ach**-mak'-an-i?*   (Hou 2013: 11)
        WHO   COM-B2-HIT-AF-DC.IC
        "Who hit you?"

(2f)   *Buch'u*   *ch-ik'-on-**ik***   *ech'el*   *ta*   *poxtael*   (Aissen 2017: 150)
        WHO   INC-TAKE-AF-PL   DIR   PR   BE.CURED
        "Who (sg/pl) is going to take them to the clinic?"

In Yucatec Maya the verb also agrees with the patient in the agent focus construction, but the verb shows transitive status suffixes and no preposed aspect marker can be used (Verhoeven and Skopeteas 2015: 4-5), as shown in the following example:

(3)   *Peedróoh*   *haant-ø-**ø***   *oon*   (Verhoeven and Skopeteas 2015: 5)
       PEDRO   EAT-SBJ.TV-B3   AVOCADO
       "PEDRO ate (an) avocado."

The third focus antipassive agreement pattern is found in several languages of the K'iche'an group, including Kaqchikel (Heaton 2018: 341), Tz'utujil (Dayley 1981: 482), K'iche' (Mondloch 1981: 221-222), Sakapulteko (DuBois 1981: 246-250) and Sipakapense (Barrett 1999: 244-250). Which argument the verb agrees with depends in these languages

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[2] Aissen (2017: 150) corrects an earlier statement by the same author (Aissen 1999) that both agent and patient agreement are possible in Tzotzil.

usually on the respective position of the arguments on the following person hierarchy (Dayley 1983: 482):[3]

Nonthird person > third person plural > third person singular

The focus antipassive agrees with the argument that is higher on the hierarchy. Even though the verb may agree with either the agent or the patient, no ambiguity arises as to which argument is the agent and which the patient because the agent is placed in the focus position before the verb. This agreement pattern is illustrated in (4) for Tz'utujil, in (5) for Kaqchikel, in (6) for K'iche', in (7) for Sakapulteko and in (8) for Sipakapense. While the examples in (a) show agent agreement in the respective languages, the examples in (b) exemplify patient agreement:

(4a) *Inin*   *x-**in**-ch'ey-ow-i*   *jar*   *aachi*   (Dayley 1981: 482)
I   COM-B1-HIT-AF-DC.IV   ART   MAN
"I was the one who hit the man."

(4b) *Jar*   *aachi*   *x-**in**-ch'ey-ow-i*   (Dayley 1981: 483)
ART   MAN   COM-B1-HIT-AF-DC.IV
"The man was the one who hit me."

(5a) *Ja*   *yïn*   *x-**i**-tz'et-ö*   *ri a Juan*   (Erlewine 2016: 462)
FOC   I   COM-B1-SEE-AF   JUAN
"It was ME that saw Juan."

(5b) *Ja*   *ri a Juan*   *x-**a**-tz'et-ö*   *rat*   (Erlewine 2016: 462)
FOC   JUAN   COM-B2-SEE-AF   YOU
"It was JUAN that saw you."

(6a) *In*   *x-**in**-b'an-ow*   *lee*   *chaak*   (Mondloch 1981: 214)
I   COM-B1-DO-AF   ART   WORK
"I'm the one who did the work."

(6b) *aree*   *lee*   *nu-naan*   *x-**in**-k'asu-n-ik*   (Mondloch 1981: 215)
FOC   ART   A1-MOTHER   COM-B1-AWAKEN-AF-DC.IV
"My mother is the one who awakened me."

(7a) *ee*   *ra*   *at*   *x-**at**-ch'iy-iw*   *l*   *ak'alaab'*   (DuBois 1981: 247)
FOC   ART   YOU   COM-B2-HIT-AF   ART   CHILDREN
"You're the one who hit the children."

(7b) *nee*   *wa'*   *x-**in**-ch'iy-iw-ek*   (DuBois 1981: 248)
WHO   DEM   COM-B1-HIT-AF-DC.IV
"Who was it that hit me?"

(8a) *Chin*   *x-**i'**-to'-w-ik*   *ch-r-e*   (Barrett 1999: 248)
WHO   COM-B3.PL-HELP-AF-DC.IV   PR-A3-IO
"Who (plural) helped him?"

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[3] As an alternative, Tz'utujil and Sakapulteko also allow agent agreement even if the patient is higher on the person hierarchy. In this case, however, the patient must be expressed obliquely (Dayley 1981: 484; DuBois 1981: 248).

(8b)   *Pey   x-**in**-to'-w-ik*   (Barrett 1999: 246)
       PEY   COM-B1-HELP-AF-DC.IV
       "Pey helped me."

Note that in Sipakapense the patient is usually higher in the person hierarchy than the agent, so the verb normally agrees with the patient. If the agent is higher on the person hierarchy than the patient and therefore controls agreement, the patient must be expressed with a relational noun phrase (Barrett 1999: 248), as shown in (8a) above.

Some Mayan languages completely lack an agent focus construction. This includes all Ch'olan-Tzeltalan languages (Quizar and Knowles-Berry 1988: 91) except Tzotzil and probably also Classic Mayan and Ch'olti', the Greater Q'anjob'alan languages Tojolab'al and Mocho', Huastec and probably also the Yucatecan languages except Yucatec Maya (Stiebels 2006: 507-508).

3. Previous research

Given the varying patterns of agreement in the modern Mayan languages, one wonders with which item focus antipassives agreed in Proto-Mayan. Indeed, any of the three patterns found today has been proposed to be the original agreement pattern. Smith-Stark (1978: 182) argues that the focus antipassive cross-referenced the agent rather than the patient in Proto-Mayan, pointing to the fact that markers of agent focus constructions are often morphologically homonymous with markers of absolutive antipassives, which agree with the agent. In Kaqchikel, recently a development from an absolutive antipassive marker to a focus antipassive marker has taken place (Heaton 2017: 379-383). Robertson (1980: 151) suggests that agent focus constructions derive from antipassive constructions, supporting Smith-Stark's proposal that focus antipassives originally agreed with the agent. Schweitzer (2006: 105-110) argues that Proto-Mayan did not make a morphological distinction between absolutive antipassives and focus antipassives, which would further support Smith-Stark's proposal.

Contrary to Smith-Stark (1978), Dayley (1983: 85-86) considers agent agreement to be an innovation, pointing to the respective distribution of these patterns in the modern Mayan languages. He notes that obligatory agent agreement seems to be restricted to Q'eqchi' and Poqom, which belong to the same branch, have been in rather close contact and also share some phonological innovations (Campbell 1977). Obligatory patient agreement, on the other hand, is found in several different branches that are at least in part geographically noncontiguous. Kaufman (2015: 342-345) argues that focus antipassives in Mayan do not derive from absolutive antipassives but rather from transitive constructions. He points to the agent focus construction in Yucatec Maya where the agent is extracted and only the patient is marked on the verb, but the verb still takes transitive morphology. According to Kaufman, such a construction was reanalyzed as intransitive because only one argument was marked on the predicate, and thus gave rise to focus antipassives. Similarly, Grinevald Craig (1979: 157) suggests that the agent focus construction originally was a different construction than the antipassive construction and had patient agreement, but in several Mayan languages gradually developed into a more antipassive-like construction as a result of the reanalysis of agent focus constructions as intransitive and of the introduction of agent rather than patient agreement.

Stiebels (2006: 560) argues that the agent focus construction was originally limited to contexts where both the agent and the patient were in the third person, with the verb cross-referencing the patient. According to her, agreement according to the person hierarchy and agent agreement developed only with the extension of the agent focus construction to contexts with nonthird-person arguments.

Norman and Campbell (1978: 150) argue that the person agreement of focus antipassives followed a person hierarchy as in several languages of the K'iche'an group. Compared with the other two suggestions, this reconstruction offers the advantage that both agent and patient agreement would have been possible in Proto-Mayan provided they were higher on the person hierarchy. Thus, the development of obligatory agent or obligatory patient agreement would only necessitate that an agreement option that was already used in certain circumstances was generalized to other contexts where this option was not available before, namely contexts where the other semantic argument was higher on the person hierarchy.

In the following section, I present evidence from colonial Q'eqchi' for a fourth "agreement" strategy, namely no agreement at all with any semantic argument, which I will argue to be the original pattern.

4. A fourth "agreement" pattern in colonial Q'eqchi'

Evidence for a fourth agreement pattern of focus antipassives in Mayan comes from the *Arte de Lengua Cacchí para Bien comun*, an early grammatical description of colonial Q'eqchi' whose author and provenance are unfortunately unknown. This grammar was copied in 1875 by Carl Hermann Berendt, who also added translations of several sentences found in the colonial manuscript into the Q'eqchi' of his time at the page margins, which gives the opportunity to directly compare the variety of Q'eqchi' documented in the colonial manuscript with the nineteenth-century Q'eqchi' recorded by Berendt. This manuscript has been studied in detail by Vinogradov (2017a, 2017b), who discusses several important changes that have taken place from colonial Q'eqchi' as documented in this manuscript to modern Q'eqchi'.

The *Arte de Lengua Cacchí para Bien comun* shows an important change in the agent focus agreement pattern from colonial to modern Q'eqchi'. In modern Q'eqchi', the verb agrees with the agent in the agent focus construction (Dayley 1983). For colonial Q'eqchi' the *Arte de Lengua Cacchí para Bien comun* gives some examples of focus antipassives with the verb *loq'on* "to love". Two examples of focus antipassives of *loq'on* are given below, along with their translations into nineteenth-century Q'eqchi' provided by Berendt:

(9a)   <hain naloɛonɛ auech>   (Berendt 1875: 39)
    Ha'in na-loq'o-n-k   aw-ech
    I   PRG-LOVE-AF-DC.IV   A2-IO
    <Yo te amo.> ("I love you.")

(9b)   <lain   nin loḳonḳ aᵘetx>   (Berendt 1875: 39)
    *La'in n-**in**-loqʻo-n-k   aw-ech*
    I   PRG-B1-LOVE-AF-DC.IV   A2-IO
    "I love you."

(10a)   <haô naloɛonɛ erech>   (Berendt 1875: 39)
    ha'o   na-loq'o-n-k   er-ech
    WE   PRG-LOVE-AF-DC.IV   A2.PL-IO
    <Nosotros os amamos.> ("We love y'all.")

(10b)   <lao nokô loḳonḳ er-etx>   (Berendt 1875: 39)
    *La'o   nok-**o**-loq'o-n-k   er-ech*
    WE   PRG-B1.PL-LOVE-AF-DC.IV   A2.PL-IO
    "We love y'all."

In both cases, the colonial example ((9a) and (10a)) clearly differs from the nineteenth-century example ((9b) and (10b)) in the agreement pattern. While the nineteenth-century examples show the pattern known from modern Q'eqchi', where the focus antipassive agrees with the agent, the colonial examples have no absolutive person marker at all. Rather, in the colonial examples the subject is only referenced by the independent pronouns *ha'in* in (9a) and *ha'o* in (10a), which are placed in the focus position. Note that no argument is in the third person in any of the examples, so we can clearly rule out that this just results from the use of another agreement pattern than the agent agreement pattern used in modern Q'eqchi'. This suggests that the verb agreed neither with the patient nor with the agent. This conclusion is also supported by the following comment of the *Arte de Lengua Cachí para Bien comun* about focus antipassives:

(11)   "Siempre el verbo en 3ª persona de singular."   (Berendt 1875: 39)
       "The verb (is) always in the third person singular."

While in some Mayan languages there are certain restrictions that the focus antipassive can only be used if either the agent or the patient (or sometimes both) is in the third person, as shown in the examples presented above, in colonial Q'eqchi' both the agent and the patient can clearly be used in the first or second rather than just the third person. For this reason, the comment of the *Arte* is best understood as referring not to restrictions on the arguments that are possible with focus antipassives, but to restrictions on the verb form, which according to this interpretation may only be unmarked for person, because third person absolutive markers are not overtly realized.

The same pattern of absence of agreement in the agent focus construction can also be seen in a petition from 1619, edited by Freeze (1980):

(12)   <haín tatzibac y ratin ahualebc>   (Freeze 1980: 122)
       Ha'in ta-tz'ib'a-ø-q   i   r-atin   ajwal-eb'
       I   PRES-WRITE-AF-SBJ.IV   ART   A3-WORD   LORD-PL
       "I am writing the words of the gentlemen." (translation by Freeze (1980: 123))

As in (9a) and (10a) above, in (12) the agent is only expressed by the independent pronoun *ha'in* in focus position, but is not cross-referenced with an absolutive marker on the verb.[4]

Although in other respects Q'eqchi' is rather innovative, that in colonial Q'eqchi' the use of absolutive markers was not yet obligatory in predications involving an absolutive argument (as are agent focus constructions) is clearly in line with the fact that absolutive markers were not yet obligatorily attached to the verb, but instead could also be cliticized to adverbs and conjunctions, as demonstrated by Vinogradov (2017a). Both phenomena are more

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[4] Contrary to what one expects, in this example the patient is not introduced by a relational noun. While this is common in other Mayan languages, in Q'eqchi' the patient of a focus antipassive is usually preceded by a relational noun (Dayley 1983: 28). The same document also contains another instance of the agent focus constructions (with the agent in the third person singular) where the patient is indeed introduced by a relational noun. However, in this case the patient is in the second person, so it is much more prominent than the inanimate third person patient in (12). Other examples of agent focus constructions where an inanimate third person patient is not introduced by a relational noun can be found in the *Coplas de Luís de Cáncer*, another early colonial Q'eqchi' manuscript (see XI in Romero (2019: 233)). It is imaginable, though without further research speculative, that similar to differential object marking in Spanish the marking of patients with relational nouns was originally restricted to more prominent patients and then was gradually extended to less prominent patients. This would also explain why, for example, in Tz'utujil the patient has to be introduced by a relational noun if it is high on the person hierarchy but does not control agreement (Dayley 1981: 484).

suggestive of a use as pronominal clitics than as affixes marking agreement, and thus indicate a lower degree of grammaticalization of absolutive markers than in modern Mayan languages.

5. Agent focus agreement in Proto-Mayan

What are the implications of the "agreement" pattern of focus antipassives documented in the *Arte de Lengua Cacchí para Bien comun* for the reconstruction of the focus antipassive agreement pattern in Proto-Mayan? Even though colonial Q'eqchi' seems to be the only documented Mayan language that has no person agreement with focus antipassives (but also see 6 on Classic Mayan) and the other three agreement patterns are thus much more common in the documented Mayan languages, the directionality of language change strongly points to the pattern found in colonial Q'eqchi' as the original "agreement" pattern. The development of obligatory person agreement is a grammaticalization phenomenon, which is like other grammaticalization phenomena unidirectional, i.e. cross-linguistically the change (nearly) always proceeds from a system where morphemes are used as pronouns to a system where they are used as obligatory agreement markers (Corbett 2006: 264-269; van Gelderen 2011; Lehmann 2015: 42-45). As the loss of agreement which would have had to take place from Proto-Mayan to colonial Q'eqchi' if focus antipassives would have agreed with any semantic argument in Proto-Mayan cannot have resulted from sound change, a reconstruction of focus antipassive agreement to Proto-Mayan would therefore require a change that is against the cross-linguistic directionality of language change. Furthermore, in this case one would have to assume that Q'eqchi' first lost person agreement with focus antipassives only to reintroduce it shortly afterwards. Therefore, the most plausible reconstruction of the "agreement" pattern of focus antipassives in Proto-Mayan is that they did not agree at all.

Not only is this the most plausible reconstruction from the point of view of the directionality of language change, but it also readily explains the variety of different agreement patterns found in the agent focus construction in modern Mayan languages. Since according to this reconstruction, the agreement patterns do not go back to a common ancestor, it is not necessary to assume that one of the three agreement patterns found in modern Mayan languages changed to another agreement pattern in any Mayan language. Rather, the agreement patterns developed separately in the individual languages. To explain the emergence of the different agreement systems, we may assume roughly the following three stages in the development of focus antipassive agreement from Proto-Mayan to the modern Mayan languages:

1. No agreement

First, there was no person agreement at all in the agent focus construction. Originally, the agent focus construction may have been a functional extension of the regular antipassive construction, which would explain the morphological similarities between focus antipassives and absolutive antipassives (Smith-Stark 1978; Robertson 1980; Schweitzer 2006). Because due to their status as clitics absolutive pronouns were too weak to be put in focus, contrary to other antipassives pronominal agents had to be marked with independent pronouns rather than absolutive pronouns.

This is the stage that must be reconstructed to Proto-Mayan and which is still found in colonial Q'eqchi'. It may be illustrated with the following example from colonial Q'eqchi':

(13) <haat naloɛonɛ vech>   (Berendt 1875: 39)
      Ha'at na-loq'o-n-k   w-ech
      YOU   PRG-LOVE-AF-DC.IV   A1-IO
      <tú me amas> ("You love me.")

2. *(Optional) pragmatic agreement*

In a second stage, person agreement became possible in the agent focus construction, though it was still not obligatory and not yet grammatically determined. As both the agent and the patient were semantic arguments of the focus antipassive, both of them were possible controllers of person agreement. Whether the verb agreed with the agent or the patient was governed by pragmatic considerations, most notably the respective prominence of the arguments. Because arguments that are high on the person hierarchy are more prominent than arguments which are low on the hierarchy, there was a preference for the verb to agree with the person higher on the person hierarchy, following the cross-linguistic tendency that agreement develops first in the first and second person and with other prominent arguments (van Gelderen 2011). Contrary to the person hierarchy agreement pattern found in modern Mayan languages, however, this was not obligatory, so the verb could also agree with the argument lower on the person hierarchy.

This stage seems not to be attested in any modern or colonial Mayan language. Nevertheless, the importance of the prominence of the arguments for agreement is still reflected in the use of a person hierarchy to determine agreement in the K'iche'an languages. A similar pattern is also found in the Mamean language Awakatek. As can be seen in (14a), in Awakatek the focus antipassive usually agrees with the patient. However, if the patient is in the third person singular (i.e., low on the person hierarchy), the verb may optionally agree with the agent rather than the patient (Larsen 1981: 138), as shown in (14b):

(14a) *in*   *n-**kxh**-b'iy-oon*   (Larsen 1981: 138)
       I   PROX-B2-HIT-AF
      "I was the one that hit you."

(14b) *in*   *n-**chin**-b'iy-oon*   (Larsen 1981: 138)
       I   PROX-B1-HIT-AF
      "I was the one who hit him."

Thus, Awakatek retains the possibility of agent agreement in cases where the patient is low on the person hierarchy and therefore not very prominent.

3. *(Obligatory) grammatical agreement*

This is the stage found in modern Mayan languages. In the development from stage 2 to stage 3, agreement became obligatory, and thus is now no longer determined by pragmatic considerations but is grammatically conditioned. Depending on which argument agreed more frequently with the verb, the individual Mayan languages generalized either the agent or the patient agreement pattern or made agreement according to the person hierarchy obligatory. In some Mayan languages the generalized agreement patterns clearly reflect constraints on the use of the agent focus construction in the respective language, which lead to one of the two semantic arguments being more frequently the more prominent one. Thus, in Q'anjob'al the agent may only be in the third person, while the patient can also be in the first and second person (Mateo Toledo 2017: 552), so the patient is usually higher on the person hierarchy than the agent. This is reflected in the generalization of patient agreement:

(15) *Maktxel*   *ch-**on***   *etz'e-n-i?*   (Mateo Toledo 2017: 553)
      WHO   INC-B1.PL   IMITATE-AF-DC.IV
      "Who is imitating us?"

In Tzotzil, the agent focus construction is used as an inverse voice in cases where the patient is more prominent than the agent (Aissen 1999). As can be expected from the fact that the patient is usually more prominent than the agent, Tzotzil has also generalized the patient agreement pattern (Aissen 2017: 150). In the following example, the verb agrees with the patient in number:

(16)   *Buch'u*   *ch-ik'-on-**ik***   *ech'el ta*   *poxtael*   (Aissen 2017: 150)
       WHO   INC-TAKE-AF-PL   DIR   PR   BE.CURED
       "Who (sg/pl) is going to take them to the clinic?"

Note that Tzotzil allows only third-person arguments in the agent focus construction, so which argument is more prominent is determined by other factors than the position on the person hierarchy, including the definiteness and humanness of the arguments (Aissen 1999). This shows that the position on the person hierarchy is not the only prominence feature that influenced pragmatic agreement in stage 2.

If the scenario presented here is correct, absolutive markers were not an obligatory part of a predication in Proto-Mayan but could be supplanted by independent pronouns, and thus should better be considered as pronouns themselves rather than as agreement markers. This is also supported by the fact that in many colonial Mayan languages nonverbal predicates can be formed just with independent pronouns while the use of absolutive markers is not obligatory, as was noted already in the nineteenth century (Stoll 1884: 133; Seler 1887: 7-8). Consider the following example from Ch'olti':

(17)   <natzet. ahcalia ti caba>   (Morán 1695: 65)
       Natz'et ah-kal-ya   *ti=ka-ba*
       YOU   AG-MAKE-NA   PR=A1.PL-SELF
       "You are our creator."

No absolutive marker is used in the nonverbal predication in (17). Rather, the subject of the predication is only expressed by the second person singular independent pronoun *natz'et*.

6. The case of Classic Mayan and Ch'olti'

In light of the data from colonial Q'eqchi' and the scenario of the development of focus antipassive agreement in Mayan presented in the preceding section, it is interesting to take a look at the agreement pattern of focus antipassives in the earliest attested Mayan language, Classic Mayan, and its descendent language Ch'olti'. As is well known, most Mayan glyphs are written in a Ch'olan language (Campbell 1984). Houston et al. (2000) suggest that Classic Mayan represents an Eastern Ch'olan language, which would make colonial Ch'olti' and its modern sister language Ch'orti' the languages most closely related to Classic Mayan. This suggestion is criticized by Mora-Marín (2009), who considers Classic Mayan to be Pre-Proto-Ch'olan. Regardless whether Classic Mayan represents Pre-Proto-Ch'olan or an Eastern Ch'olan language, however, Ch'olti' is a direct descendent of Classic Mayan.

Unfortunately, both in Classic Mayan and in Ch'olti' there are only very few documented cases of focus antipassives, most of which involve only arguments in the third person (see Lacadena (2000: 167-170) and Law and Stuart (2017: 151-152) for Classic Mayan), so the picture is not entirely clear. For Classic Mayan, Hull et al. (2009: 38-39) identify focus antipassives with a first-person singular as agent and a third person as patient.

As they note, the verb does not agree with the agent, even though the agent is higher on the person hierarchy than the patient (1. Person > 3. Person):

(18) **hi-na PAT-ta-bu-ni-ya** "jaguar throne"**-na**   (Hull et al. 2009: 38)
      hiin   *pat-bu-n=iiy*   *"jaguar throne"*
      I   FACE.DOWN-CAUS.POS-AF=DEIC   THRONE
      "I have overturned the jaguar throne."

      That the verb does not agree with the agent although it is higher on the person hierarchy than the patient rules out obligatory agent agreement and agreement according to the person hierarchy as the agreement pattern of focus antipassives in Classic Mayan. For this reason, Hull et al. (2009) suggest that in Classic Mayan focus antipassives agreed with the patient.

      Nearly the reverse situation seems to be found in Ch'olti'. Unfortunately, the manuscript which documents Ch'olti' contains only one case of a focus antipassive (Sattler 2004: 379).[5] Contrary to what is attested from Classic Mayan, in this case the agent is in the third and the patient in the second person. However, while in Classic Mayan the verb did not agree with the agent, in Ch'olti' it clearly does not agree with the patient, which is higher on the person hierarchy than the agent. In the following example *Dios* is the agent in focus position, while the patient is expressed by the relational noun *t=A-ba*, which expresses indirect objects, but is not cross-referenced on the verb:

(19)   <dios coquian taba>   (Morán 1695: 43)
        Dios   *kohk-yan*   *t=a-ba*
        GOD   PROTECT-AF   PR=A2-SELF
        "It is God who protects you."

      That the patient is not cross-referenced on the verb although it is higher on the person hierarchy rules out patient agreement and agreement according to the person hierarchy. This may be interpreted as evidence that Ch'olti' had agent agreement.

      If one considers Classic Mayan to have had patient agreement and Ch'olti' to have agent agreement, both languages differ strongly in the agreement pattern they use, even though one of them descends from the other. One may argue that the agreement pattern changed from Classic Mayan to Ch'olti', though it remains unclear how exactly such a change would have taken place. However, it is important to note that the attribution of patient agreement to Classic Mayan and of agent agreement to Ch'olti' only follows from the assumption that the verb must agree either with the agent or the patient. There is neither positive evidence for patient agreement in Classic Mayan nor for agent agreement in Ch'olti'. Given that a pattern without any agreement is attested in colonial Q'eqchi', the much simpler explanation is that focus antipassives agreed neither with the agent nor with the patient in Classic Mayan. If this is correct, Ch'olti' either simply maintained this pattern or innovated agent agreement, which would be a plausible development given that the same change is attested in Q'eqchi'.[6]

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[5] Sattler does not describe this as a focus antipassive, but the colonial *Arte* explicitly compares this sentence with similar sentences in the K'iche'an languages which clearly involve agent focus constructions, so this is without a doubt a focus antipassive.

[6] One reviewer points out that the Ch'olan languages and Q'eqchi' have been in close contact, so the absence of agreement in the agent focus construction could be an innovation shared by the two languages through contact rather than a retention from Proto-Mayan. However, although one might imagine the loss of agreement in the agent focus construction as an intermediate step from patient agreement to agent agreement, in this case it would still be unclear what would have motivated the loss of agreement in just this particular construction, while other constructions than the agent focus construction would have simply maintained agreement. Therefore, it is

7. Conclusions

In modern Mayan languages, there are three different agreement patterns of focus antipassives, namely obligatory agreement with the agent, obligatory agreement with the patient and agreement with either the agent or the patient according to which semantic argument is higher on the person hierarchy. The variety of agreement patterns found with focus antipassives raises the question which was the original pattern that must be reconstructed to Proto-Mayan. All three agreement patterns found in modern Mayan languages have been suggested to be the original pattern. In this paper, a fourth pattern has been identified in colonial Q'eqchi', namely no agreement at all with neither the agent nor the patient. Considering the unidirectional character of grammaticalization phenomena like the development of agreement, it has been argued that this pattern is the pattern to be reconstructed for Proto-Mayan, and that the three patterns found in modern Mayan languages are later developments. Furthermore, although the data on these languages are limited, the suggestion that focus antipassives originally did not have person agreement also gives a simple explanation for an apparent difference in agreement between the earliest attested Mayan language, Classic Mayan, and its descendent Ch'olti'.

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preferable to assume that the by far earliest Mayan language (Classic Mayan) and another rather early Mayan language (colonial Q'eqchi') just independently retained the original pattern.

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