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Super-extended ergativity in Mam

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1. Introduction

Mayan languages show ergative-absolutive alignment through verbal agreement morphology. Following Mayanist tradition (England 2001, Coon 2016, Aissen et al. 2017), we refer to the morphology used to co-index ergative subjects as “**Set A**” (also used to co-index possessors), and to the one used to co-index absolutive objects/subjects as “**Set B**”. We provide an example from Q’anjob’al below.

- (1) Q’anjob’al matrix clauses → ergative/absolutive
- a. Max-**ach** w-il-a’.
PFV-B2S A1S-see-TV
‘I saw you.’ (Mateo Pedro 2009: 47)
 - b. Max-**ach** way-i.
PFV-B2S sleep-ITV
‘You slept.’ (Mateo Pedro 2009: 48)

In addition, many Mayan languages show clause-type based split ergativity (Zavala Maldonado 2017). In clauses lacking aspect, these languages exhibit nominative-accusative alignment, where Set A is extended to co-index *intransitive subjects* in addition to transitive subjects. This is shown with Q’anjob’al in (2). Following Dixon (1979) and England (1983b), we refer to this pattern as “extended ergativity”.

- (2) Q’anjob’al aspectless clauses → nominative/accusative
- a. Chi uj [**hin** y-il-on ix Malin].
IPFV able.to B1S A3-see-AF CLF Malin
‘Malin is able to see me.’ (Coon et al. 2014: 221)
 - b. Chi uj [**ko**-b’ey-i].
IPFV able.to A1P-walk-IV
‘We are able to walk.’ (Coon et al. 2014: 197)

The most widely adopted analysis of extended ergativity is that these clauses in fact instantiate *possessed nominalizations* (Comrie 1978, Larsen & Norman 1979, and many others). The main idea is that in cases like (2b), Set A co-indexes not an intransitive subject, but a possessor. A more loyal translation of (2b) might thus be: ‘Our walking is possible’.

Mayan languages of the Mamean sub-branch also show split ergativity, but it differs from that in languages like Q’anjob’al. In these languages, Set A is extended to co-index *all* of the non-oblique arguments of aspectless clauses, revealing what is essentially a neutral alignment pattern. We follow England (2017) in calling this pattern “super-extended ergativity”. A set of examples is provided below for Ixtahuacán Mam; (3) shows the basic ergative/absolutive pattern, whereas (4) shows the neutral super-extended pattern.

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- (3) Ixtahuacán Mam matrix clauses → ergative/absolutive
- a. Ma **chin** ok **t-tzeeq'**a-n=a.
 PROX B 1S DIR A2/3S-hit-DS=1S
 'You hit me' (England 1983a:2)
- b. Ma **chin** b'eet=a.
 PROX B 1S walk=1S
 'I walked' (England 1983a:2)
- (4) Ixtahuacán Mam aspectless clauses → neutral ergative
- a. O chin ooq' aj [**n-kub'** **t-tzeeq'**a-n=a].
 COM B 1S cry when A 1S-DIR A2/3S-hit-DS=1S
 'I cried when you hit me' (England 1983a:14)
- b. N-chi ooq' aj [**n-poon=a**].
 INC-B2/3P cry when A 1S-arrive.there=1S
 'They were crying when I arrived there' (England 1983a: 21)

Against these facts, the goal of this paper is two-fold.

First, we argue that the super-extended ergative pattern is in fact to be *expected*, once we adopt three independently-motivated assumptions about the syntax of Mayan languages: (i) that aspectless clauses, as mentioned above, are in fact possessed nominalizations (Comrie 1978, Larsen & Norman 1979, a.o.); (ii) that objects in some Mayan languages undergo consistent raising above ergative subjects (Campana 1992, Coon et al. 2014, a.o.); and (iii) that possessive structure in Mayan parallels high-ABS syntax in also involving raising of a nominal (usually the possessum) over the possessor (Coon 2013a, Deal & Royer 2023). In short, we show that object raising feeds configurations in which the object is both the object of the clause and also the notional possessor of the relevant nominalization, explaining the super-extended pattern in (4).

Our second goal is to explain why Mayan languages vary in showing extended ergativity, as in (2), versus *super*-extended ergativity, as in (4). We propose to locate this variation in the *size* of nominalizations, arguing that languages with *super*-extended ergativity can nominalize bigger structures than those with extended ergativity. Smaller nominalizations essentially bleed the possibility for object raising, which in turn bleeds *super*-extended ergativity.

The paper is structured as follows: §2 provides background on Mam, §3 provides the analysis of super-extended ergativity, §4 explains variation across Mayan, and §5 concludes.

2. Background on Mam

Mam (iso 639: mam) is a Mamean-branch Mayan language spoken predominantly in Western Guatemala by over 500,000 speakers (Richards & Macario, 2003). Like other Mayan languages (see e.g., England 2001; Coon 2016, Aissen et al. 2017), it is a head-marking, ergative-absolutive language. While the baseline word order is VSO, arguments often appear at the clausal left-periphery as topics or foci. The Mam data discussed in this paper come from published materials on San Ildefonso Ixtahuacán Mam (e.g. England 1983b), but the facts pattern similarly across other dialects.

Mam is a “high-(ABS)olutive” Mayan language (Tada 1993, Coon et al. 2014). One morphosyntactic consequence of this fact is the position of Set B morphology within the verb stem, which generally follows aspect morphology in a position that linearly precedes Set A (this contrasts with low-ABS Mayan languages, where Set B follows the verb stem). An example of a transitive clause is provided in (5). We also show in (6) that, as in other Mayan languages, Set A is used to co-index possessors in Mam, revealing a syncretism between ergative and genitive agreement. This will be important for our analysis of extended ergativity in §3. Finally, Set A and Set B paradigms are provided below in (7)-(8) for reference.

- (5) Ma **chin** ok **t-tzeeq'**a-n=a. (6) **t-xaar** Luuch
 PROX B1S DIR A2/3S-hit-DS=1S A2/3S-jug Pedro
 'You hit me' 'Pedro's jug' (England, 1983b:330)

- (7) **Set A** (ergative/possessive) marking in Mam (England, 1983b)

	SINGULAR	ENCL	PLURAL	ENC
1 excl	n- ~ w-	=a	q-	=a
1 incl			q-	
2	t-	=a	ky-	=a
3	t-		ky-	

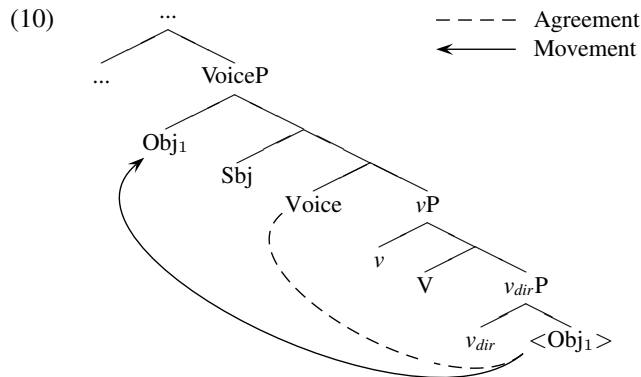
- (8) **Set B** (absolutive) marking in Mam (England, 1983b)

	SINGULAR	ENCL	PLURAL	ENCL
1 excl	chin	=a	qo	=a
1 incl			qo	
2	tz- ~ tz'- ~ ∅ ~ k-	=a	chi	=a
3	tz- ~ tz'- ~ ∅ ~ k-		chi	

In keeping with its high-ABS syntax, Mam displays syntactic ergativity (i.e., it is subject to the *Ergative Extraction Constraint* familiar in Mayan; Aissen 2017). As shown below, transitive subjects (agents) cannot be \bar{A} -extracted (9c), however the \bar{A} -extraction of transitive objects and intransitive subjects is not restricted (9a–b). Mam makes use of an antipassive voice construction to facilitate agent extraction (9d).

- (9) Mam syntactic ergativity (England 1983a:4)
- a. **Xiinaq** x-tz-uul
 man PROX.DEP-B2/3S-arrive.here
 'The *man* arrived here' (intransitive subject extraction)
 - b. **Qa=cheej** x-chi kub' t-tzyu-'n xiinaq.
 PL=horse PROX.DEP-B2/3S DIR A2/3S-grab-DS man
 'The man grabbed *the horses*.' (object extraction)
 - c. ***Xiinaq** x-chi kub' t-tzyu-'n qa=cheej
 man PROX.DEP-B2/3P DIR A2/3S-grab-DS PL=horse
 Intended: 'The *man* grabbed the horses.' (failed agent extraction)
 - d. **Xiinaq** x-∅-kub' tzyuu-n t-e qa=cheej.
 man PROX.DEP-B2/3S-DIR grab-AP A2/3S-RN:PAT PL=horse
 'The *man* grabbed the horses.' (antipassive → agent extraction)

Finally, we assume a structure for Mam transitive clauses as given in (10), motivated by much previous work. In particular, we first build on a large body of work that propose that high-ABS syntax in Mam is a reflex of transitive objects moving to Spec,VoiceP, after agreement with Voice⁰ (Campana 1992; Ordóñez 1995; Coon et al. 2014, 2021; Little 2020; Ranero 2021; Royer 2022, 2023; Scott 2023). Second, we assume that verb-initiality in Mam is achieved by means of serial head movement of the directional and verb to a position above VoiceP (Clemens & Coon 2018; Elkins 2023; Elkins et al. 2024); for reasons of simplicity, we do not illustrate this movement in the tree in (10). Last, we assume that only transitives, and not intransitives, contain the projection VoiceP; intransitive clauses in Mayan are taken to be simply ν P, as has been defended in recent work on Mayan syntax (see e.g., Ranero 2021; Burukina & Polinsky 2023).



3. Explaining (super)-extended ergativity

With this previous background on Mam in hand, we restate the first goal of this paper. Recall from above that while languages like Q’anjob’al only extend Set A morphology to *intransitive subjects* in non-finite embedded clauses, Mam extends it to *all* core arguments in these contexts (including *transitive objects*). England (2017) calls this “*super-extended ergativity*”; (11) restates a prototypical example from above.

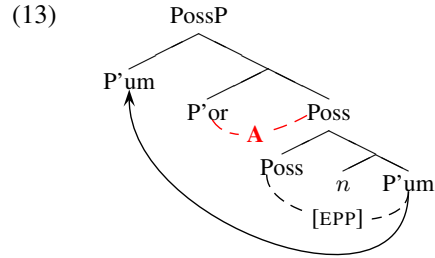
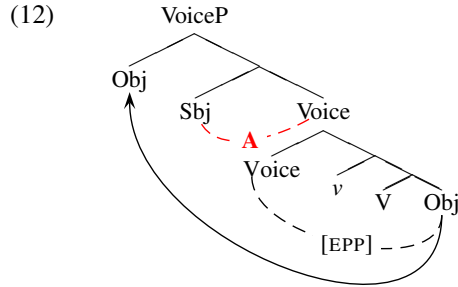
(11) Super-extended ergativity in Mam (England, 1983a)

- a. O chin ooq’ aj [n-kub’ t-tzeeq’a-n=a].
COM B1S cry when A1S-DIR A2/3S-hit-DS=1S
‘I cried when you hit me’
- b. N-chi ooq’ aj [n-poon=a].
INC-B2/3P cry when A1S-arrive.there=1S
‘They were crying when I arrived there’

The first goal of this paper, which we elaborate in this section, is to present an analysis of the Mam facts in (11). Specifically, we aim to show that once we adopt three independently-motivated assumptions about Mayan morphosyntax, super-extended ergativity is in fact *predicted* to arise. The first of these assumptions was already presented in the previous section: there is a large body of work convincingly arguing that Mayan languages like Mam exhibit high-ABS syntax, which involves consistent raising of the object over the ergative subject, as illustrated in (10) (Campana 1992, Ordóñez 1995, Coon, Mateo Pedro & Preminger 2014, Coon, Baier & Levin 2021, Scott 2023). The second assumption, which we discuss in §3.1, is that possessive structure in Mayan parallels high-ABS syntax insofar as it involves consistent raising of a nominal (usually the possessum) over the possessor (Coon 2013a, Deal & Royer 2023). Finally, the third assumption, discussed in §3.2, is that aspectless clauses in Mayan are in fact possessed nominalizations, where the ‘unexpected’ (extended) cases of Set A reflect what is formally possession, and not ergativity *per se*. As previously mentioned, this assumption builds on a long tradition that has treated embedded clauses in split ergative contexts as such (Comrie 1978, Larsen & Norman 1979, Bricker 1981; Kaufman 1990; Coon 2010b; Coon et al. 2014, Coon & Carolan 2017, Coon & Royer 2020). In §3.3, we then show how when taken together, these three assumptions predict super-extended ergativity, therefore explaining the pattern in (11).

3.1. Possessive structure and the source of Set A

Recall that across the Mayan language family, Set A agreement is polysemous between ergative and genitive; it is thereby used to track both transitive subjects within the verbal domain and possessors within the nominal domain. Recent work, such as Coon (2013a) and Deal & Royer (2023), has proposed that the appearance of Set A within both the nominal and verbal domains arises due to a parallel syntactic structure in both domains. We therefore follow this body of work in assuming a parallel syntax for VoiceP and PossP, shown in (12)-(13) below, respectively.



Beginning with the structure of VoiceP in (12), we assume that object raising is caused by Agree with an [EPP] feature on Voice⁰. As discussed in §2, object raising above the subject is already needed to explain the existence of syntactic ergativity both within Mam and other high-ABS Mayan languages (Campana 1992, Ordóñez 1995, Coon, Baier & Levin 2021, Coon, Baier & Levin 2021); see also Myers et al. (to appear) on other correlates of object raising in Mayan), and so we follow Scott (2023) in assuming this syntax in Mam (see also (10) above). Here, we represent Set A agreement in Mayan as resulting from a Spec-Head Agree relation between Voice⁰ and the transitive subject (building on e.g., Coon 2013a, 2017 and Deal & Royer 2023). Though not represented in the above trees, note that it is widely assumed, on the other hand, that Set B assignment varies within the family (Coon et al. 2014): while v⁰ assigns it in low-ABS Mayan languages (where object raising does not occur), T⁰ assigns it in high-ABS languages.

As shown in (13), we assume that a parallel structure is also found for PossP in the nominal domain. That is, an [EPP] feature on Poss⁰ triggers movement of the possessum above the possessor. Possessive Set A is then assigned to the possessor, as it is the specifier of Poss⁰. Deal & Royer (2023) show that the parallelism between (12) and (13) is in fact necessary to derive parallel hierarchy effects found in both verbal and nominal domains in Mayan.

3.2. Possessed nominalizations as the source of extended ergativity

Next, we assume that split ergative clauses are in fact possessed nominalizations, following a longstanding intuition in Mayan linguistics (Comrie 1978, Larsen & Norman 1979, Bricker 1981, Kaufman 1990, Coon 2010b, Coon et al. 2014, Coon & Carolan 2017, Coon & Royer 2020). Consider, for instance, the pattern of extended ergativity in Ch'ol in (14), similar to the one for Q'anjob'al in (2). Ch'ol shows aspect-based split ergativity: in progressive and imperfective aspects, intransitive subjects are co-indexed with Set A agreement:

(14) Ch'ol extended ergativity

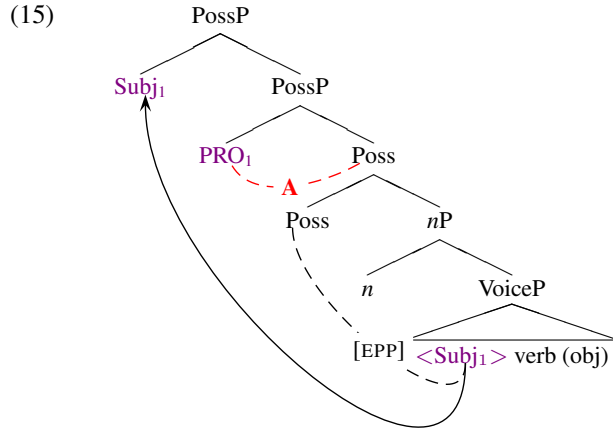
a. Chonkol [**k-mel-e'** jiñi waj].
 PROG [A I-make-DEP DET tortilla]
 'I'm making the tortillas.' (Coon 2013b: 135)

b. Mi [**k-majl-el**].
 IMPF [A I-go-NML]
 'I go.' (Coon 2013b: 135)

For Coon (2013a,b), the clauses which show extended ergativity involve aspectual predicates that take nominalizations as their subjects (a more literal translation of (14) is thus: 'My making of tortillas is happening'). In particular, the verbal projections in (14) are nominalized at the VoiceP level (represented as vP in Coon 2013a), just like English 'poss-ing' nominalizations.

Now, adapting Coon's proposal to the syntax of PossP in (13), we derive the structure in (15). Poss⁰ attracts the closest nominal in its c-command domain, here the subject. The subject then serves as the controller for a PRO in Spec,PossP. PRO is then assigned Set A.¹

¹ While we follow Coon (2010b, 2013a) in representing the relation between the possessor and the subject with PRO in (15), an alternative to this analysis could be to move the subject directly into the specifier of PossP, in the spirit of movement approaches to control (Hornstein 2001, Polinsky & Potsdam 2002). Such an analysis could help



The crucial contribution of Coon’s analysis of extended ergative clauses being formally possessed nominalizations is that the source of Set A in (15) is actually *possessive*, not *ergative*. That is, Set A marking is not a morphological exponence of ergativity *per se*, but it rather reveals agreement with the possessor of the nominalization. The possessor, which is always also the subject in Ch’ol, being marked with Set A derives the NOM/ACC ‘extended ergative’ pattern in (14), i.e., split ergativity within a nonfinite embedding.

To locally summarize this section, we presented a key assumption that will help us advance the last component of the analysis of *super*-extended ergativity in Mam. First, Set A in the nominal domain is the result of structural case assignment to possessors (§3.1). Second, extension of Set A marking in non-finite embeddings falls out from a formal property of such clauses: that they are in fact possessed nominalizations (§3.2). With all this in hand, we explain super-extended ergativity in Mam below.

3.3. Super-extended ergativity as a predicted pattern

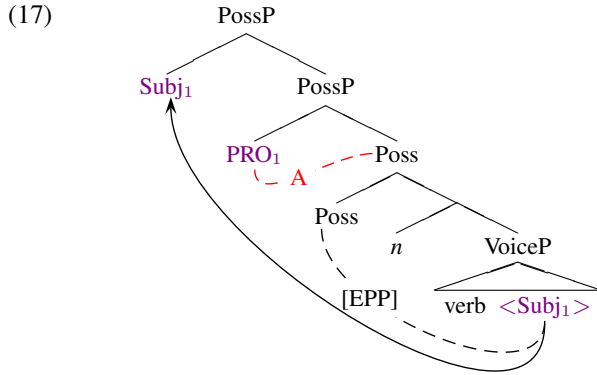
Recall that the pattern of super-extended ergativity is the extension of Set A morphology to mark *all* arguments in non-finite embeddings, as illustrated again in (16).

- (16) Super-extended ergativity in Mam (England, 1983a)
- a. O chin ooq’ aj [n-kub’ t-tzeeq’a-n=a].
COM B1S cry when A1S-DIR A2/3S-hit-DS=1S
‘I cried when you hit me’
 - b. N-chi ooq’ aj [n-poon=a].
INC-B2/3P cry when A1S-arrive.there=1S
‘They were crying when I arrived there.’

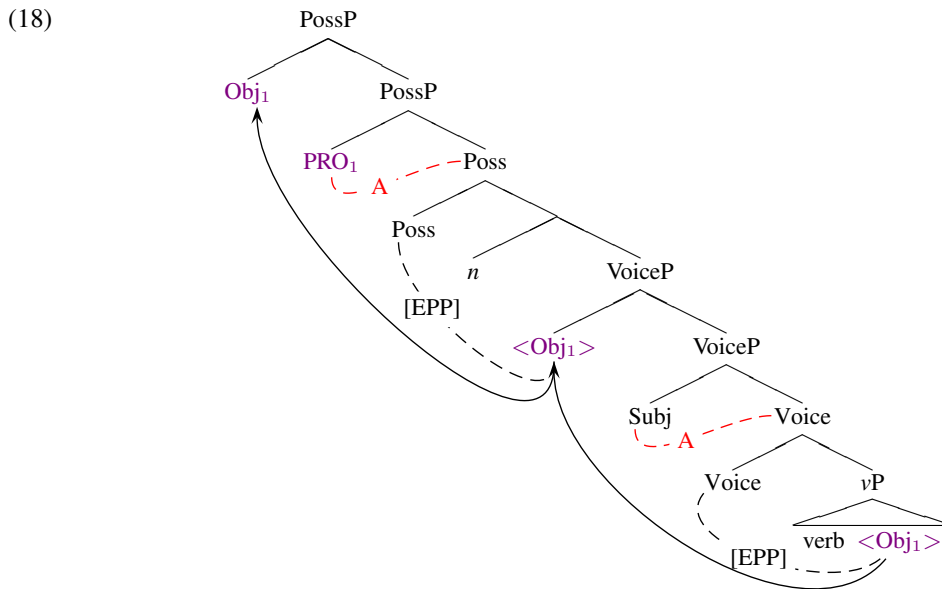
Extending Coon’s (2013a) analysis of extended ergative clauses to *super*-extended ergative clauses, we now show that, once we factor in the fact that Mam is a high-ABS language (which Ch’ol is not; Coon et al. 2014), super-extended ergativity is—all else being equal—predicted to arise.

We start with Mam intransitive clauses, which pattern identically to Ch’ol, and then turn to the super-extended-ergative pattern found in Mam transitive clauses. An example of an intransitive nominalized clause in Mam is given in (17). Following the analysis of possessive phrases laid out in §3.1, we assume that Poss⁰ searches for a DP in its c-command domain, finds the highest DP in the nominalized clause, and attracts it to its specifier. In its raised position, the subject now c-commands the possessor, and serves as the antecedent to PRO, with which it is co-indexed. Poss⁰ then Agrees with PRO and assigns it Set A. This is the exact same result as the derivation for Ch’ol nonfinite intransitives.

explain why Set A can cross-reference the ϕ -features of the subject, a fact that is not straightforwardly explained if the probe on Poss⁰ Agrees with a (by assumption) *featureless* PRO.



Turning to transitive clauses, the schema for a nominalized transitive clause is given in (18). The derivation proceeds similarly to that in (17) above, but involves an additional—and crucial—step of object movement. First, within the nominalization, Voice⁰ Agrees with the object and moves it to its specifier. This step does not arise in low-ABS languages like Ch’ol. Voice⁰ then reprojects (Béjar & Rezac 2003), and assigns Set A (ergative) to the subject (Coon 2013a, Deal & Royer 2023). Having moved to Spec, VoiceP, the object now becomes the highest accessible goal for Poss⁰.² Poss⁰ then probes for a nominal due to its own [EPP] feature and finds the object, causing a second step of raising to Spec, PossP. The object is now in a position from which it can control a PRO in the possessor of the nominalization. Finally, Poss⁰ Agrees with the PRO co-indexed with the object and assigns it Set A, leading to the illusion that the object is coindexed with Set A agreement.³



What is important about the structure we are proposing in (18) is that there are two instances of Set A agreement: first, Voice⁰ assigns Set A to the transitive subject, and second, Poss⁰ indirectly assigns Set A to the transitive object (via Agree with PRO). In other words, given (i) consistent object raising in Mam (§2), (ii) parallel raising in possessive constructions (§3.1), and (iii) the nominalization analysis

² Note that this is in following Coon et al. (2021), who assume that the object is more local to probes than the subject in configurations like (18).

³ Notice that super-extended clauses like (16a) also lack Set B morphology. This is also expected given the high-ABS account of Mam syntax: since Set B is assigned by T⁰ in high-ABS clauses (Coon et al. 2014, Coon et al. 2021, Myers et al. to appear), the nominalization is too small for it to even be generated. On the other hand, in low-ABS Ch’ol, where Set B is assigned by v⁰, Set B is expected to arise. This is indeed the case, see e.g., Coon (2010a): (16). Also note that Set B is not represented in (14a) because third person Set B is null in Ch’ol. In §4, we discuss why Set B can be assigned in nonfinite transitive clauses in Q’anjob’al (1a), a high-ABS language.

of extended ergative clauses (§3.2), then super-extended ergativity is in fact *predicted* to arise in Mam. This concludes our analysis of super-extended ergativity in Mam, the first goal of this paper.

4. Source of variation in (super-)extended ergativity in Mayan

Having provided an answer to the first goal of our paper, we now turn to our second goal: to explain variation observed across Mayan languages with regards to the distribution of Set A agreement in aspectless clauses. Recall that Mayan languages vary with regards to whether they exhibit *super*-extended ergativity or merely extended ergativity. This variation is summarized in the table in (19):

(19) Extended / super-extended ergative patterns in Mayan

	extended pattern (e.g., Ch’ol, Q’anjob’al)	super-extended pattern (e.g., Mam)
Intrans. subject	Set A	Set A
Trans. subject	Set A	Set A
Trans. object	Set B	Set A

So far, our proposal gives rise to an important prediction: if a Mayan language’s objects raise (i.e., if it is a high-ABS language), then super-extended ergativity is expected. However, this prediction is not borne out: as shown in (1a), Q’anjob’al, a high-ABS language, only exhibits extended ergativity, *not* super-extended ergativity. In other words, while our analysis straightforwardly derives the fact that low-ABS languages like Ch’ol lack super-extended ergativity, more needs to be said about why some high-ABS languages, like Q’anjob’al, also lack the super-extended ergative pattern.

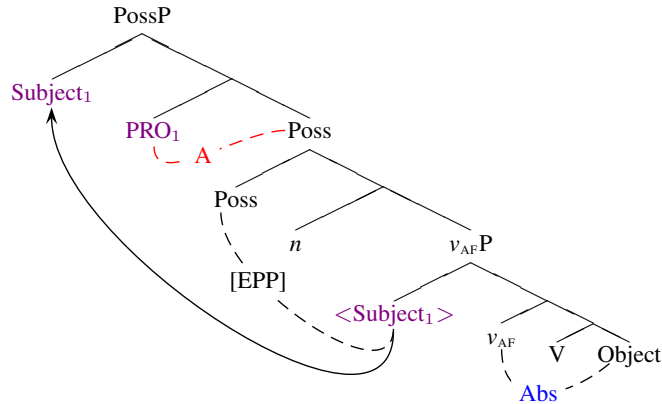
Consider the sentences in (20) in Chuj, another high-ABS language showing extended, but not *super*-extended, ergativity (Coon & Carolan 2017, Coon & Royer 2020). There is an important difference between languages like Chuj or Q’anjob’al and languages like Mam: as shown in (1a) and (20), languages of the Chuj/Q’anjob’al type construct nominalized clauses by means of a special morphological form called Agent Focus (AF), *-an* in (20), which has been characterized in Mayan as a flavor of v^0 (along with active and passive). This previous work explicitly argues that the Agent Focus construction involves an alternative v^0 head that (i) exceptionally assigns Set B to the object low and (ii) does not trigger object raising (Coon et al. 2014, Coon et al. 2021, Royer 2022, 2023).

(20) Chuj non-finite clauses display extended ergativity

- a. Tz-yal [**hin-y-il-an** ix Malin].
IPFV-able.to B1S-A3-see-AF CLF Malin
‘Malin is able to see me.’
- b. Tz-yal [**ko-b’ey-i**].
IPFV-able.to A1P-walk-IV
‘We are able to walk.’

Considering this landscape of split ergative patterning, we are thus led to an open question: what underlies the source of variation with respect to (super-)extended ergativity across the Mayan language family? Here, we propose that the locus of variation should lie in the size of possible nominalizations. This proposal builds on a body of literature that shows nominalization sizes can vary across and within languages (Grimshaw 1990; Alexiadou 2001; Coon & Royer 2020). We will show that the particular structural size of the nominalization determines whether object raising occurs, which, if it does, feeds super-extended ergativity. Specifically, we argue that languages like Chuj and Q’anjob’al, which only show extended ergativity, are only able to nominalize a small structure, which we take to be vP . In such cases, object raising does not occur; we follow Coon et al. (2014) in assuming that the object is case-licensed low by means of AF voice, as in (21).

(21) Transitive embedded clause in Q'anjob'al/Chuj



In contrast to Chuj and Q'anjob'al, languages like Mam are able to nominalize larger structures, which we take to be (at least) VoiceP, as in (18) above. In cases where the nominalization is larger, object raising can occur, which feeds nominalizations controlled by the object and thus super-extended ergativity. As an important corollary to this proposal, objects in Mam do not need to be case-licensed low by Agent Focus. Indeed, Mam lacks a dedicated AF form.

In the remainder of this section, we present two pieces of evidence in support of the idea that Mam nominalizations are larger than those in Q'anjob'al and Chuj.

4.1. Evidence 1: high directionals

In Mam, recall that directional auxiliary verbs are required for almost all transitive verbs. Mamean languages are the only Mayan languages with “high” (pre-verbal) directionals (22) (see also Mateo Toledo 2023). We assume this indicates additional functional structure above vP. This proposal builds on Elkins et al. (2024), where we show that directionals start low and obligatorily move above VoiceP.

- (22) O chin ooq' aj [n-*(kub') t-tzeeq'a-n=a].
 COM B 1S cry when A 1S-DIR A2/3S-hit-DS=1S
 'I cried when you hit me'

Chuj and Q'anjob'al, on the other hand, lack “high”/pre-verbal directionals (22), which we take to indicate less functional structure:

- (23) Tz-yal [hin-y-il-an ix Malin].
 IPFV-able.to B 1S-A3-see-AF CLF Malin
 'Malin is able to see me.' (Chuj)

Interestingly, the Mamean language Awakateko shows both extended and super-extended ergativity, the pattern necessarily hinging on whether a directional is present. We take this as positive evidence that in (24b), a larger structure is being nominalized, thereby giving rise to super-extended ergativity. In (24c), on the other hand, we assume that a smaller structure is nominalized and the object is licensed low, analogous to the AF pattern in Chuj and Q'anjob'al.

- (24) Awakateko split ergativity (Larsen, 1981)
- Ye aw-uul-e'n.
 when A2S-arrive.here-NMLZ
 'when you arrived.'
 - ye a-b'een-e'n w-uky'-aal.
 when A2S-DIR-NMLZ A 1S-carry-INF
 'when I carried you off...'
 - ye t-il-ool axh.
 when A3S-see-ACT.INF B2S
 'when he saw you...'

4.2. Evidence 2: negation

Second, we invoke evidence from negation to argue that Mam nominalizations are larger than in Chuj/Q'anjob'al. In Mam, super-extended ergative clauses can be negated, which we take to indicate a bigger embedding.

(25) T-u'n [me'n ax t-kub' kyim] ...
A2/3S-RN:PURP [NEG same A2/3S-DIR dead]
'So that (our crops) do not die...' (Scott 2023: 280)

(26) ...t-u'n [mii'n t-xi' t-b'in-cha-'n jel carro].
A2/3S-RN:PURP [NEG A2/3S-DIR A2/3S-do-CAUS-DS CLF car]
'...so that she doesn't fix the car' (Todos Santos Mam fieldnotes)

In Chuj, extended ergative clauses cannot be negated, as shown in (27) below. It is possible to resolve the ungrammaticality of (27)—that is, it is possible to negate such clauses—however, a finite (non-nominalized) clause is required instead (28).

(27) *Tz-yal man-w-uk'-an-laj kape'.
IPFV-can NEG-A1S-drink-AF-NEG coffee
'I'm able to *not* drink coffee.'

(28) Tz-yal max-w-uk'-laj kape'.
IPFV-can NEG.IPFV-A1S-drink-NEG coffee
'I'm able to *not* drink coffee.'

In sum, we have argued that Mam is able to nominalize bigger structures, as data from high directionals and negation show. We take this larger structure to be at least VoiceP, but perhaps much larger. Chuj-like nominalizations, on the other hand, may not include high directionals, nor can they be nominalized. We take this to indicate that these languages may only nominalize smaller structures, such as vP. Interestingly, the case of Awakateko gives us evidence that nominalization sizes can vary *within* a language as well as across languages. Nominalization size therefore correlates with the presence or absence of super-extended ergativity for a given high-ABS language.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we presented an analysis of super-extended ergativity in Mam, a type of split ergativity in which Set A marking is extended to mark all arguments in non-finite embedded clauses. We argued that the extension of Set A to objects in a given Mayan language should be possible, but only if two conditions are met: (i) the language has high-ABS syntax (object raising); and (ii) nominalizations in this language are big enough to facilitate object movement.

Our proposal makes a prediction regarding high- vs. low-ABS syntax. A low-ABS language (that is, one with no object raising) should never show super-extended ergativity. So far, this prediction seems to be on track. Recall that super-extended ergativity is only observed in Mamean-branch Mayan languages. Among Mamean languages, high-ABS Mam and Tektiteko (a.k.a. Teko; Stevenson 1987) show super-extended ergativity, and so does Awakateko (modulo nominalization size; see (24)). In contrast, Mamean-branch Ixil, which is low-ABS, only displays extended ergativity (Coon et al. 2014). We therefore take super-extended ergativity to be a novel diagnostic for high-ABS syntax.

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