

# **Will the Real Proto-Austronesian Please Stand up?**

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Was Proto-Austronesian an Ergative language or an Accusative one?

That's the way the question has always been asked. It's a categorial question, with only two categories and hence only two possible answers. But is the Erg-Acc quality continuous or discrete?

My position is that as a language changes in this quality, it does so in a series of small steps that are perhaps discrete for the individual and fairly close to discrete in the population. Eventually there is a discrete change that lets us say that the language has moved from Ergative syntax to Accusative syntax or from Accusative to Ergative.

The answer also depends on the stage of PAN in which we have an interest. The earliest reconstructable stage of PAN (or pre-PAN if you wish?) had Accusative syntax, while the final state of PAN achieved a fairly high degree of ergativity.

Perhaps the most revolutionary statement I am making is that ergativity is not a dichotomous black-or-white classification. It is a movement around the Accusativity-Ergativity cycle in a series of very small steps. While on a forced choice I will call Atayal an ergative language, I sympathize with the ambivalence shown by Rau and by Huang. Like the philosopher Whitehead I contend that it is more fruitful to view the world as consisting of processes and not of discrete categories of things.

This is a study in diachronic syntax of the Austronesian (AN) languages. We shall be concerned with the casemarking (syntactic case) and the quasi-semantic Case relations (argument structure) of the core terms of the verb, in all its voices. (Nor need the syntactic case always agree with the casemarking.) We aim at clarifying the laws of Diachronic Universal Grammar.

We shall examine the ergativity of PAN and of some AN languages whose ergativity or accusativity has been questioned.

In this work, the terms 'agent' and 'patient' designate basic roles that can be called doer and undergoer. Experiencers are included in the 'agent' term because they are usually human and are taken to be in some way in charge of the situation, as in the 'veni, vidi, vici' situation.

AN is a good family in which to analyze the diachronic changes of ergativity, because for at least one living group, East Polynesian, reconstructions show two complete ancestral

cycles (four one-way changes), from PAN down: Accusative to Ergative to Accusative to Ergative to Accusative. This paper deals mostly with the earliest of the four.

I intend to show (1) that the earliest reconstructable PAN had Accusative syntax; (2) that before moving toward ergativity PAN had to develop passive voice(s) and developed at least three of them, much like the passive voices that English has; (3) that through a series of small, identifiable steps, the passive voices became ergative voices (the Accusative syntax became Ergative syntax); and (4) that the end stage of PAN, ancestral to most (if not all) primary branches of AN, had become essentially Ergative.

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Usually I shall gloss the ergative phrases as agents in English passive; that's the way to see the ancestral passive clauses from which they derive. Occasionally I may gloss the ergative phrases as nominative subjects in English. That's the way to foresee what the sentences promise to become in the future when the ergative agent case comes to be reanalyzed as the new nominative. Despite what can be done with certain verbs, making 'ergative' constructions in English ("I dropped the ball. The ball dropped to the ground."), there is no generally applicable way to gloss AN ergative sentences into English.

### **Abbreviations : Language Groups**

The following abbreviations will be used for language groups: AN Austronesian, MP Malayo-Polynesian, CEMP Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, PN Polynesian, EPN East Polynesian. All may be preceded by P for Proto-. Standard abbreviations such as NP, DP, and VP are used. PCM means preposition or casemarkers.

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the syntactic pivot and adds, 'If subject is defined syntactically as the primary grammatical relation, the absolutive NP in Sama Bangingi may rightly be called the subject, regardless of its semantic role.'

Gault gives an excellent example of antipassive in this language; and the construction in this languages is more convincing than antipassives that have been described in some other AN languages (to which Blust, pers. com., has objected). In an accusative language such as English, a passive is formed when the patient (or other non-nominative element) is promoted to nominative subject, and the agent is demoted to a prepositional phrase which is not a core term, and so is easily deletable. In Sama Bangingi an anti-passive is formed when the ergative agent is promoted to an absolutive subject and the patient is demoted to a prepositional phrase which is not a term, and so is easily deletable. Here are examples of Gault's:

Angallang	iya
INTRANS.shout	3sg.ABS
'He is shouting.'	

Angallang	iya	<b>ma</b> -	aku.
INTRANS.shout	3sg.ABS	OBL	1sg
'He is shouting at me.'			

Anaggaw	aku	<b>ma</b> -	iya
ANTIPASSIVE.capture	1sg.ABS	OBL	3sg
'I will (attempt to) capture him.' (AF)			

Despite the difference in labeling the verb, and her showing "shout" as a simple intransitive, she says that the morphology and syntax of the last two sentences are precisely the same. The one labeled antipassive is a transformation (AF) of an ergative transitive (NAF) sentence. In both sentences the morpheme (word?) 'ma' (marked OBL as if it were a casemarker) needs to be considered a preposition if we consider an antipassive to be analogous to a passive. This is one of the situations that makes me regard preposition and casemarker as something less than distinct categories and leads me to use the designation PCM.

Some others have applied the term Antipassive to the Agent-Focus constructions which were ancestrally Nom-Acc active transitives before PAN moved into ergativity. Those examples have been less convincing because no preposition was inserted and free deletion has not been shown. Blust was right to doubt them. But the antipassive concept is clearly valid in Gault's example.

The language has five voices (ergative and four NAF: patient, recipient, instrument, and locative). Gault regards the patient focus as the basic transitive construction in ergative languages, from which the other four focuses are derived.



She wisely adds, 'We cannot expect to find a single noun phrase in Bangingi which will have the triple prominence of a prototypical English subject or evidence all of its subject properties.' The triple is primary semantic role, primary syntactic relation, and the pragmatic topic.

There are some points on which my viewpoint differs from hers. I have shown here that when we take Tagalog (or, I think her Bangingi') ergative voices, and translate them into English as the passives from which they descend, there is almost exact equivalence, one for one, between the various voices of that language and the voices of English. She gets different numbers of English voices not only by considering both ditransitive objects as accusative objects, but also by being unaware of English's locative and circumstantial passive voices. She fails to note sentences such as "This house has been lived in." and "This knife has been cut with."

Labeling both the following as patient-focus, which should mean Ergative, she includes them in the table of focuses:

	agt	pat	recpt	
Binowa	e'na	lauk-in	pe'ma	sigaam
will.bring	she	food-that	there	to them.

		pat	recpt		(agt)
Binowa		lauk-in	pe'ma	sigaam	(e'na)
will.be.taken		food-that	there	to them	(by her)

She makes two patient-focus voices by merely changing the order of the words. One, in which the ergative agent is not marked deletable, comes out "She will bring that food there to them." In the other, the ergative agent is shown as deletable, and she glosses it (when I put the English words into normal sequence) "That food will be taken there to them (by her)." Of course, the basic difference between an ergative and a passive is that in a passive the agent has been demoted to an oblique adjunct and it is freely deletable; that makes the sentence intransitive; while in an ergative voice the ergative agent phrase is a core term and argument, and the free deletability is revoked; the sentence is transitive. So how can the ergative agent be freely deletable in this language? What has gone on diachronically? Has this language retained the ancestral passive alongside the ergative that diachronically came from the passive? If so, how many other languages and in which primary divisions of AN is the option retained? Or has this language alone somehow restored the ancestral passive option? If it is restorable, one must suggest the possibility that in all the conservative AN ergative languages, the *synchronic development, the generative grammar, in an early step, creates a passive and then derives the ergative from it.* If that were so, it would make the ergative languages more fundamentally passive than has been thought.

Clearly, Gault has found an interesting language and some interesting questions come to mind.

### **Some Suggested Criteria of Stages in the Ergativity Cycle**

So far as I know, not all these criteria have been proposed by others.

In the process of ergativity, the ergative element progressively gains more trappings of the subject, while the absolutive element progressively loses trappings of the subject.

A language with both syntactic and morphological ergativity is farther around the cycle than one with only morphological ergativity.

A language with mixed ergativity (either semantic or categorical split) is farther around the cycle than one with full ergativity. It is close to becoming Accusative.

An accusative language with a passive voice in which the agent is not freely deletable is farther around the cycle than one in which the agent is freely deletable.

An accusative language in which the passive voice is used oftener than the active voice is farther around the cycle.

This is not the paper in which evidence will be given for adopting those criteria.

### **Summary of Some Conclusions**

1. Study of some of the more archaic AN languages shows that they have moved at least part way from Accusative syntax (with a passive voice) to Ergative syntax (with an ergative voice).

2. In some AN languages clauses are readily nominalized. (Example: 'Ako ang bumasag ng baso. [Schachter & Otanes, 299]' Literally, I the break of glass. Freely: I'm the one who broke a glass.) And it is a respectable position that ergative constructions can arise from nominalization. Nevertheless, the origin of the attested ergative constructions in archaic AN tongues is clearly from passives which are easily reconstructed (and are still called 'passive' in Mayrinax).

3. In such languages the nominative or absolutive case markers are either old topic markers or old markers of specificity (referentiality). So in the reconstructed PAN with Accusative syntax the nominative case seems to have been (like English) without any overt case marking.

4. All other casemarkers found in archaic AN languages originated as prepositions of space relations.

5. In a given language, a marker may function both as a space preposition and as an accusative-like casemarkers; or both as an adjective (John's) and as a prepositional phrase (of John). That's an awkward fact, as syntactic analyses treat prepositional phrases, noun phrases, and adjective phrases as

altogether different entities.

6. Boundaries between semantics and syntax are fuzzy.

7. What this paper deals with is a half-cycle from PAN Accusative syntax to the Ergative Syntax found in a number of fairly archaic languages spoken today. But going down thence to East Polynesian there is evidence of a second, third, fourth, and even incipient fifth half-cycle as follows: (2) back to Accusative in Greater Proto-Central-Eastern MP; (3) back to (predominately) Ergative syntax by the end of Proto-Polynesian; (4) back to (predominately) Accusative syntax in East Polynesian languages; and (5) possibly an incipient movement back toward Ergative syntax in Maori.

## Some Basic Principles

### Unidirectionality Reversibility, Cyclicity

Diachronic linguistics has improved in recent years by an increase in the number of processes that are recognized as unidirectional. The physical world, governed by entropy, seems unidirectional. In linguistics entropy shows itself in lenition. Locally and temporarily the process can be reversed (fortition), but never for the system as a whole.

Sound systems are lost. Words are inserted. Words are lost by grammaticalization, and by being reduced to clitics and then affixes.

Some phonological changes can move in either direction, as  $a > e$ ,  $e > a$ ,  $d > t$ ,  $t > d$ . Others are unidirectional:  $kirk > church$ , but never  $church > kirk$ .

Cyclically, languages can move from (predominately) isolating to agglutinative to inflectional to isolating, but only in that direction, not the reverse.

Thirty years ago a controversial issue was whether Proto-Polynesian had drifted from passive voice (Accusative syntax) to ergative voice (Ergative syntax) or the reverse. Today it is accepted that ergative voice never drifts to passive voice. Drift between Ergative syntax and Accusative syntax makes a cycle, moving around the circle in only one direction.

As for the specific issue of thirty years ago, neither side was fully right nor fully wrong. The process was more complex. The beginning of PPN must be defined as the first point at which it began to differ at all from Proto Central Pacific, the common ancestor of Polynesian and the Fijian-Rotuman group. At that point the language had a -Cia suffix on active transitive verbs (with former PCM -Ci and fossilized 3s accusative pronoun -a). The end of the PPN period is defined as the final point from which its primary divisions began to differ. At that point PPN had both a passive voice (with -Cia) for one class of verbs, and for another class of verbs an ergative voice (with no such suffix). Its active -Cia voice had been destroyed, but it had a look-at construction that was threatening to become active transitive and in fact

went on to do so in East Polynesian.

## Space as Concrete Source of Abstract Concepts

A basic principle of Diachronic Universal Grammar is: All concepts of relations, however abstract they may be, arise historically from morphemes of space relations. Indeed, within this statement we see:

re (back)	lat (borne, carried)
abs (from)	tract (dragged)
con (together)	cept (taken)

## Ablative Preposition “from”: Ancestor of Marking of Non-subject Agent, and Ancestor of Genitive “of”

The Latin preposition ‘ab’ means ‘from’ and also marks the agent ‘by’ in passive constructions. Likewise in ancient Greek the preposition ‘apo’ is spacial ‘from’ and also marks instruments and agents that are not subjects.

We can reconstruct the same for PAN particle ‘nV’ (with the normal variation of vowel). In various languages it is a space ablative ‘from’ as well as more abstract ‘from’ (cause); instrumental PCM, non-subject agent PCM, and a genitive PCM. It can scarcely be doubted that the space-ablative is the oldest use, and the other uses are all common and natural descendants of this ablative use.

The ‘from’ gloss of ‘nV’ comes all the way down to Maori in East Polynesian, though it is not used with verbs of motion there. In some of the archaic languages the two main uses of ‘nV’ are agent and genitive. So it’s not surprising that many scholars have called it “genitive case” and consider the ergative agent to be a kind of genitive. A rather unfelicitous use of the term, but understandable. The old ablative ‘from’ word may have been replaced by a new word for ‘from’, thereby obscuring the ablative origin. English has done something in that direction, as the ancestral word ‘off’ is largely replaced by ‘from’ in the ablative role and by ‘by’ in the agent role, while remaining ‘of’ in the genitive role. About 200 years ago we began to spell ‘of’ and ‘off’ differently.

## Passive voices leading to Ergative voices

Passive voices can be typed by the element that is promoted to nominative subject. Likewise, ergative voices are typed by the element that appears in the absolutive (focus) case that was ancestrally a nominative subject. Here are three types of passive in English: note that some of them permit (and some require) a retained accusative object. By separating to- and for-datives we can count four or more English voices. I have estimated the degrees of acceptance.

**Patient (theme) passive:**

An award was given by the committee.

An award was given me by the committee. (with recipient)

A party has been given in this house. (with locative)

**Recipient (to-dative) passive:**

I was given an award by the committee. (with accusative)

\*I was given by the committee.

\*The project was given a grant to by the government.

?The fund was given to by the company.

**Beneficiary (for-dative) passive:**

(My father built me a house.)

I was built a house by my father.

??I was built a house for by my father.

**Locative and circumstantial passives:**

This house has been lived in.

This wall has been bored through.

That idea has been thought of before.

That matter has been looked into already.

This knife has been cut with.

\*This house has been given a party in. [At this conference 25 members by show of hands rejected the sentence. Two of them spoke to me afterward and gave the sentence marginal standing. The construction is used in Tagalog, a language in which the old passive voices seem to have become ergative voices (in what seems to be the majority view). As noted, my translations are English passive, to show the ancestral form that the language must have gone through in the drift through passive voice.]

**Construction rejected for English passive but fully acceptable as Tagalog ergative**

With only lexical substitution, the Tagalog ergative examples are the same construction as the rejected English passive sentence 'This house has been given a party in'.

The following examples of locative focus (LF) are given by Schachter & Otnes (1972:317). My translation keeps the focus as subject. Schachter's makes the Tagalog ergative phrase the English subject.

Pinagbayuhan nila      nang palay ang lusong.  
pounded (LF) by-them of rice the mortar'  
'The mortar was pounded rice in by them.'  
(They pounded rice in the mortar.)'

Pinaglalaruan namin nang tses ang mesang maliit.  
 played (LF) by-us of chess the small table  
 'The small table is played chess on by us.'  
 (We play chess on the small table.)

Pinaglutuan ni Helen nang karne ang kawali.  
 cooked (LF) by Helen of meat the frying pan  
 'The frying pan was cooked meat in by Helen.'  
 (Helen cooked some meat in the frying pan.)

Typical conservative Formosan and Philippine AN languages have ergative / passive voices much like those three basic types. The patient passive has the verb suffixed with -un or -in, presumably from the PAN obscure vowel. The locative passive has the verb suffixed -an. The element 'an' also occurs as an independent locative word; and as a noun-forming suffix that ancestrally formed locational nouns (where such activity takes place) but in some languages has come to form general verbal nouns. In most languages the dative and locative (or allative) are a single focus form. In others, the locative focus noun represents a patient (theme), with little or no implication of location, but with (perhaps) a lesser degree of transitivity than is conveyed by the patient focus suffix. A controversial hypothesis is that the -un, -in, and the -an elements were ancestrally phrases meaning something like 'at that' (coindexed with the focus-nominative-absolutive NP).

### **Diachronics of Promotion and Demotion**

Within each primary branch of AN some languages are more generally archaic than others.

Languages that are generally archaic are the most useful ones to use in reconstructing the hypothetical ancestral languages.

Even the more archaic languages are not archaic in all ways. A less generally archaic language may preserve one or more ancestral features better than is done in some languages that are more generally archaic.

Passives use a synchronic mechanism in which the agent (sometimes called the underlying subject) is demoted from its status as an argument (a core or essential term) and becomes an adjunct (oblique adjunct) that is easily deletable. English 'by' agents are typical in that regard.

A key step in the diachronic evolution from passive to ergative voice is that a synchronic process is acquired that blocks the demotion of the non-nominative agent phrase. The

agent is still synchronically moved from nominative subject but it no longer ceases to be a core term or argument. One theory that has been offered is that the agent moves to the core position that would normally become the accusative object. Semantically that's a paradox, of course. No matter whether that is the best synchronic description or not, the ergative phrase that is created resembles the direct object in being the second most basic DP in its transitive sentence.

### **Anomalous Casemarking in Passives and Negatives**

In some AN languages inconsistent casemarking occurs in passives. In East Polynesian, where for declarative and interrogative sentences the verbal suffix **-Cia** marks passive, imperative clauses use the same suffix but are active. In Fijian and in the common ancestor of Polynesian and Fijian, that suffix marks active transitive clauses.

In Mayrinax Atayal, that situation is even more complex (Huang, 1994b, 60-70).

### **Background**

While all agree that in most primary branches of AN, if not all, ergative languages are found, many uncertainties or disagreements are reported about some languages that have been repeatedly studied. For Wulai and Mayrinax Atayal, one author described it as Ergative syntax (Huang, 1994a) and then as Accusative syntax with passive voices (Huang, 1993, 1994b). Her 1984a paper, influenced by Starosta, was written before the ones published in Taiwan (1993, 1994b), as the peer-reviewed journal takes longer in process than the Taiwan book publisher.

One extensive review of thinking on ergativity is part of a rewritten Ph.D. dissertation (Manning, 1996) that studied a West Greenland Eskimo language. Manning discusses ergativity in almost every known theory of syntax, and gives his own approach in which argument structure (something closer to semantics than to pure syntax) is the most crucial determinant of syntax in languages throughout the world. He regards Tagalog as Ergative syntax.

Manning notes that diachronic proposals for ergativity in languages of the world have proposed two paths for languages to slide into ergativity. One is from passive voices; the other from nominalization.

Nominalization was proposed by Starosta, Pawley and Reid (1982) as the source of Ergative syntax in Austronesian. That approach is not implausible. In some AN languages, "The banana eat got sick" is the way to say, "The one who ate bananas got sick". Nevertheless, the fact that some AN languages have voices that some experts call Ergative and other experts call Passive is reason to accept that languages

can drift imperceptibly from one to the other. And in fact, some happenings in the drift are easily recognized.

### Established Principles

Though we tend to think categorically, in major changes of status, many syntactic changes take place in small steps, which are inconspicuous. (Were it not so, grandparents could not communicate with their grandchildren.) Thus, we'd expect that a change from Accusative to Ergative syntax, or from Ergative to Accusative syntax, must take place as a series of smaller steps.

### Hypotheses: General Course

The general course of development flowed from Accusative syntax in earliest PAN to Ergative syntax in late PAN and in PMP. It essentially crossed the border at the end of PAN.

In its earliest reconstructable stage, PAN was an Accusative language. I give reasons to suspect that both Nominative and Accusative elements may have lacked overt casemarking (like nouns in English). With unspecified vowels, some prepositions were: **nV**, ablative 'from'; **kV**, allative 'to, toward' and comitative 'with'; simple **V**, locative 'in, at'. Other prepositions less well defined were **mV** (alongside?), **dV**, **sV**, **tV**, and **cV**. (I use "c" as Mayrinax does for the consonant usually written "C" so as to leave capital C and capital V for generalized consonant and vowel.)

Ross (1995) has given a good general description of PAN verbal affixes.

In some period, PAN developed passive voices: apparently three or more of them, much as English has. Three in English are: patient subject (the box was broken by a hammer); dative subject (I was given an award by the committee); and locative subject (This house has been lived in by somebody). In PAN the patient-subject passive's verb had suffix **-en**. The location-subject passive's verb had suffix **-an**. The circumstance-subject passive had prefix **si-**.

The ablative directional preposition **nV** "from" (a concrete location) came to be used abstractly with objects that were sources in any sense, causes in general.

When an ablative 'from' preposition acquires both genitive (possessive and 'of') uses and agent uses (in passive or ergative) it often loses ablative 'from' uses. But the 'from' use has persisted all the way down to East Polynesian. In Maori, for instance, it translates 'from' though not used with verbs of motion (Williams and Williams, 1956).

My rearrangement of the tables of "casemarking" in Huang's Mayrinax (1994b, 109) shows the following which I



believe also represent a late stage of PAN:

glottal+V    kV    nV    cV    kV    (zero)+V

Topic	Topic	Gen	Loc	Allat	Loc
Nom	Nom	Instr	Dat	Com	
		Ben	Acc		
ku	-----	n-cu	c-ku		

Where the vowel is 'a' and not 'i' the tables actually show zero and not glottal as the initial consonant of the Topic or Nominative. I assume that the glottal was present ancestrally.

A curiosity is that Huang's work lists a cV 'casemarker' 'cu', but fails to list 'ca', which is used by Li (1995) translated as 'at':

kac-un cu' na' xuil ca' tunux  
bite-PF I Gen dog head

'I was bitten by a dog at the head.' [or 'in' or 'on'?]

Neither Li nor Huang acknowledges that word, as can be seen from the blank spot in the line.

This preposition **ca** is a vowel variant of the better-recognized **cu** 'casemarker' in Mayrinax and illustrates the vague boundary between things called casemarkers and things called prepositions. Its reflex in Wulai Atayal is the dative or locative casemarker **sa**, which is only coincidental and not cognate with Tagalog's **sa**. Unfortunately, none of these diachronic facts have been noticed in the synchronic reports.

Likewise a locative preposition 'ci' is recorded by Huang (1993) but not recognized by her. It occurs thrice in two pages (123-124) in a tale. One example (123) is:

p- kaki ci lahuy  
p- live CI mountain  
[those who] stayed on the mountain'

Prepositions **dV**, **tV**, and **sV** don't occur in Mayrinax, but were present in PAN. Wulai Atayal has **te**, allative 'toward'. The **dV** and **tV** had some space meaning (Gault, op.cit.), as did non-nominative **sV**. A **si** particle for proper names of persons occurs in some languages, but is glottal + **i** in Mayrinax. In some languages, when that person marker occurs it replaces whatever would be the normal preposition or casemarker in a function.

An interesting fact is that **kV** serves both as a space preposition and also as a topic marker that can become a Nominative (or later Absolutive) marker. It's not clear that the two basic uses had ancestry in common.

I used the word Topic in the table for usage either as a topic marker or as a marker of specificity. Topics are intrinsically specific, and so many instances can be labeled either way. **kV**, a determiner, is used after prepositions to

mark specificity. Let's compare Mayrinax and Old Javanese.

Again consulting the tables on Huang (op cit) we note that specificity is shown both in a row and in a column. The column, of course, is the left column, the ancient Topic, marked by Vowel preceded anciently by a glottal stop which zeroes out in most languages. The three rows are for (1) nonspecific common nouns, (2) specific common nouns, and (3) proper names of persons. Essentially, for that row, in each column the markers for the specific common nouns consist of the nonspecific case markers plus **-ku**. Here are the interesting facts by type of subject:

common nouns

nonspecific	a'	cu	na	i
specific	<b>-ku</b>	<b>c-ku</b>	<b>n-ku</b>	

proper nouns	'i	'i	ni	ki
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As we see, the suffix **-ku**, a determiner that can be called an article, has the effect of making compound determiners specific (referential). It is common in AN languages to write as a single word a PCM and a determiner (as if *atthe*).

Now let's look at Old Javanese. For most AN languages, written records occurred scarcely, if at all, before 200 years ago. Old Javanese was one written a thousand years ago, and scattered records made for several hundred years have survived.

Becker and Hunter (1988) give this table of 'deictic prepositions' in Old Javanese:

[square brackets are my comments and hyphens are mine]

	[Case 1] [Nominative] direct	[Case 2] [Genitive] oblique	[Case 3] [Dative-Loc] directional
indefinite, nonspecific	i	ni	ri [ <b>&lt;*di</b> ]
definite	i-ng	ni-ng	ri-ng
definite and specific	i- <b>ka</b> -ng	ni- <b>ka</b> -ng	ri- <b>ka</b> -ng

Two things key points to notice are these: (1) Old Javanese resembles Tagalog in that it attaches the "linker" **-ng** to the casemarking particle under certain very common circumstances. In Tagalog that's the **a-ng** and the **n-ang** which is oddly written '**ng**'. (2) More to the point, Old Javanese agrees with Mayrinax in adding **-kV** to the casemarker to

show specificity. (True, it has vowel **u** in Mayrinax and vowel **a** in Old Javanese, but that's within the normal variation of the vowel in the PCMs.) The two languages have no history of geographic proximity that could allow borrowing. So I suggest that the only reasonable explanation of the occurrence of this marking for specificity is that it was present in Proto Austronesian.

This table is the only one based on attestation alone that is completely logically consistent. Possibly the ancient AN languages were more analytic and agglutinative than those observed in the past two centuries. Those authors' concept of 'definite' differs from the usual; theirs equates to the suffixation of the '**ng**' linker found also in Central Philippine. Tagalog's **a-ng** Case 1 marker is cognate with Old Javanese's **i-ng**.

So, the agreement of Mayrinax and Old Javanese gives the answer: that the specific marker was **kV** attached to the right of the casemarker, and the glottal+vowel was the topic marker. That settles the question: it was **kV** that marked specificity and '**V** that marked topic. Or does it settle it?

As topics by nature are nearly always specific, it may not be fully clear that one of the two PAN forms was a topic marker and the other a marker of specificity. Some evidence suggests that the '**V** particle occurred at the left of the word or NP that was topicalized, and the **kV** particle occurred at the right. And it was only much later that a whole clause could occupy the topic slot at the left of the sentence.

Neither Wulai Atayal nor Mantauran Rukai is considered a specially conservative or archaic language; nor are they nigh kindred. Both of them have a particle from PAN **\*kV** (Wulai differentiating **ga'** from **qu**), which serves to mark the right edge of a topic.

Wulai (Rau, 1992, 145) shows:

gaga' kmut tunux **ga'** itan ka tayaN nanak mga'  
 custom Act-cut head TOP 1PD that Atayal only they said  
 'As far as the custom of headhunting is concerned, just talk  
 about the one that belongs to us the Atayal.'

That left phrase ending '**ga'** is simply a topic, and corresponds with what is found in other language. Other examples in Wulai show a later development from it, in which various sentence-adverbial subordinate clauses use the

sentence-initial slot, with ‘ga’ at its right.

For several dialects of Rukai, Zeitoun (manuscript, 1995) shows versions of the same right topic marker from PAN \***ka**. One example shows also the left marker ‘V, specifically ‘i, which we have also noted in Mayrinax Atayal. Here are two of her examples.

Maga Rukai  
i-knee **ka** vlak-li  
i- this Top 1s.BG  
‘This is my child.’

Mantauran Rukai  
‘ina’i ‘a lalakie-li  
this Top child-1s.BG  
‘This is my child.’

The varying forms of the right topic marker (with ‘g’ or ‘k’ or glottal stop) easily arise from PAN ‘k’. It is a disputed question whether PAN had a ‘g’ phoneme or not.

In Nataoran Amis, as reported by Chen (1987), both particles occur left of the NP, but on different NPs: the descendant of the glottal+V being a topic and the descendant of the kV a nominative. In MP languages, the marker of topic-nominative-absolutive is normally descended from the glottal form and usually with lenition of the glottal to zero.

The use of prepositions and casemarkers in other branches of AN are consistent with their being modifications or simplifications of the stage of PAN as shown in the table of present-day Mayrinax Atayal. So in this sense Mayrinax is a conservative language. When Nominative subjects of passives came to be Absolutive elements in Ergative constructions these, too, perpetuated the marker (usually as ‘i > i in MP languages).

The most important conclusion to be drawn is that among all so-called “casemarkers” in PAN (and in the more conservative existing AN languages) every such marker comes ancestrally from a space preposition or from a topic marker.

### Boundary of Semantics and Syntax

Harris, 1993 (104,105,107) makes these comments:

‘As transformational analyses of syntax grew more probing and more comprehensive, they increasingly involved semantics.... In Cartesian Linguistics, [Chomsky] says the relation of deep structure to thought and meaning in fact is not so clear...The kernel of generative semantics was an obliteration of the syntax-semantics boundary....As Chomsky describes his own approach, much of his work is what everyone else calls semantic; “still, I want to include all that as syntax.”. The only aspects of meaning he has ever wanted to tackle are those that can be subsumed under (or, in some cases, redefined as) syntax.’

### A Peek Ahead

For the sake of completeness, I'll list here the processes of the other three one-way changes leading to East Polynesian syntax. Proto-Central Eastern MP moved from Ergative to Accusative syntax by (a) letting the Agent-Focus voice (descended from PAN active voice) disappear from use; (b) letting the other uses of the absolutive become the new accusative case; and (c) letting the ergative case become the new nominative. Much later, in the third one-way change, late PPN (which had not inherited a general passive voice) allowed a specialized lexical passive construction (basically an old intransitive with an involuntary inanimate cause argument) to develop into a new ergative agent marker, and this new Ergative voice became and remains the normal transitive construction in languages such as Tongan. The fourth one-way change, from Ergative back to Accusative, began after the Ergative DP was borrowed into the old Cia active transitive construction and forced it to be reanalyzed as passive. For East Polynesian only, an old intransitive look-at construction was reanalyzed as active transitive, and by a massive merger of verb classes, an active-passive contrast was established, creating a new Accusative syntax for what became the major class of transitive verbs.

There is also some evidence that one East Polynesian language may have begun a fifth half-cycle. That's Maori, where the fact that the passive is used more often than the active voice may be a sign of a drift from passive voice toward ergative voice. If and when the process completes itself, it will have created for the first time in Polynesian an ergative voice with the -Cia suffix on the verb.

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