

WORD ORDER, PARTICIPANT-ENCODING AND THE ALLEGED ERGATIVITY IN TERIBE¹

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it will provide a much needed description of the basic relations in Teribe, a Chibchan language spoken in Costa Rica and Panama. Second, based on the analysis provided, it will address the recent claim (Constenla 1997) that Teribe exhibits an ergative-absolutive case-system; this alleged ergative system is said, in addition, to be "pronominally split"; that is, as far as the pronoun system goes, the language is said to function on a nominative-accusative basis, grouping A and S against O. While the pronominal system indeed works in those terms, I will show that the analysis on which the case for ergativity is based is inaccurate; consequently, the claim that the organization of the pronominal system constitutes a split in the alleged ergative system becomes void.

This paper is organized as follows. The remainder of this section briefly refers to the two phenomena at issue, ergativity and split ergativity. Section 2 is devoted to describing the strategies for participant-encoding in Teribe. The analysis leading to the erroneous view about the Teribe grammatical type is likewise addressed there; it will be shown that that analysis does not really reflect what is going on in the grammar of Teribe. In Section 3, the issue of the grammaticalization of agreement, in my view one of the factors contributing to the misinterpretation of the Teribe data, is addressed; using data from two neighboring relatives of Teribe, Rama and Boruca, it will be shown that Teribe simply represents an instance of a process of grammaticalization of an agreement pattern. Finally, Section 4 is the conclusion of the study.

The data used for this study stem for the most part from my own fieldwork on both Teribe and other Chibchan languages (e.g. Bribri and Boruca) during the last three years; secondary sources will be acknowledged in due course.

1.1 Ergativity

As is well-known ergativity is the pattern consisting of the systematic equal treatment of the only participant of an intransitive clause (represented here as S) and the object of a transitive clause (O), as opposed to the subject/agent of a transitive clause (A). This alignment of S and O against A has both morphological and syntactic manifestations. As for the former, it can be effected via direct marking (on the NP, that is, as case), as in Bribri (1a-c), or it can be expressed by means of verbal morphology, as agreement/cross-referencing, as in Guatuso (2a-c), taken from Sánchez (1979):

(1a) *ie'-rdiwö-φsq-wē*
3SG-ERGSun-ABSsee-PERF
'She saw the sun'

(1b) *dīwö-φmichō*
sun-ABSGO

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'The sun goes'

(1c) *ie'- φ túrke \underline{k} adiwö ska*
 3SG-ABS jumpsun to.
 'She jumps to the sun'

(2a) *ma-rra-kua _e*
 2ABS-1ERG-see-NON-FUT
 'I see you'

(2b) *i-r φ a-kua _e*
 3ABS-2ERG-see-NON-FUT
 'You see him'

(2c) *mi-tó-ye*
 2ABS-go-NON-FUT
 'You go'

In the examples in (1), *diwö* ('the sun') is the unmarked absolutive, just as the pronoun *ie'* ('s/he') appears unmarked as intransitive subject and as object, but not when it is the subject of the transitive construction -in (1a)-, in which case it is marked ergative (-*r*). There is a clear opposition between S and O (φ -marked) against the marked A. As for the Guatuso data, the markers for second person vary depending on the role of the NP they refer to: if S and O, they take the form *mV* (where the realization of the vowel is subject to rules of vowel harmony); if A, then the corresponding form is *r φ a* (< φ > represents / Φ /, a voiceless bilabial fricative). Again, S and O align against A.

As for syntactic ergativity, it occurs when a language "has syntactic rules that treat S and O in the same way, but differently from A. These rules concern the distribution among NPs of syntactic priorities such as the ability to be the controller/target of conjunction reduction, relativization, Equi NP-deletion in infinitival clauses, etc." (Kazenin 1994: 78). The well-known difference between ergative and accusative syntax is usually illustrated by contrasting English with Dyirbal; in the former, only S and A can be deleted when coordinated, as illustrated in (3), where the controllers of the operation are S and A; for O ('the child') to be the controller, it must be promoted to subject (S) position via the passive construction:

- (3a) *The man saw the child and left* [the man left/*the child left]
 (3b) *The child was seen (by the man) and left* [the child left/*the man left]

In Dyirbal (cf. Dixon 1994: 155, 161, 164), a different picture emerges when coordinations like the ones in (3) occur:

(4a) [*yabu* _O *uma-* _{gu} *Abura-n*] [φ _S *banaga-n'y*u]
 mother-ABS father-ERGSaw-NON-FUT returned-NON-FUT
 'Father saw mother and she returned' [mother returned/*father returned]

In (4a), O and S align in opposition to A. For 'father' to be the referent that returns, the syntactic process known as antipassive must apply; the ergative NP must be in S or O function so it can be coordinated; just like the agent of the passive construction, the absolutive in the antipassive is downgraded:

(4b) [*uma sbural- a-n^yuyabu-gu*][φ _S *banaga-n^yu*]
 father-ABSsee-ANTIP-NON-FUTmother-DATreturned-NON-FUT
 'Father saw mother and returned' [father returns/*mother returns]

1.2 *Splits*

It is also well-known that languages are rarely 100% ergative in both their morphology and syntax. Many languages with morphological ergativity exhibit a hybrid pattern, known as split ergativity, where for certain aspects of the grammar S and A are grouped against O (in a clearly accusative pattern), while in others the alignment of S and O against A remains. Splits can be conditioned basically by four factors: a. verb semantics (intransitive verbs expressing situations requiring an agent -'walk', 'sit'- are marked ergative);² b. the semantic nature of NPs (pronouns expressing 1., 2. and 3. person singular are usually cross-referenced on the verb following an accusative pattern, while non-pronominal inanimate NPs are marked following the ergative pattern); c. tense, aspect, mood -and negation, see Dixon (1994: 101)- (past, perfective tense-aspect take ergative marking, while non-past, imperfective tense-aspect take accusative marking); d. subordinate clauses (purposive clauses take accusative marking, while relative clauses take ergative marking). There is a further type of split, the 'bound vs. free' split, which "consists in different kinds of marking on free-form nominals (i.e. case or similar marking on NPs) and in cross-referencing bound affixes" (Dixon 1994: 94); usually the cross-referencing system is accusative (developing from free pronouns), while NP marking is ergative. Dixon refers to this type of split as a 'meta-split', because it depends "entirely on the different grammatical [as opposed to semantic] ways of realising S/A/O identification" (Dixon 1994: 95). These splits are usually morphological. There are, in addition, instances of syntactic split ergativity; this phenomenon consists in "the coexistence of ergative and non-ergative syntactic strategies in the syntax of a given language" (Kazenin 1994: 79).

Of the four types of split (morphological) ergativity, the one conditioned by the nature of the NP is critical for this study. I will thus briefly refer to it here. In this type of split, "if pronouns and nouns have different systems of case inflection, then the pronoun system will be accusative, and the noun system ergative, never the other way around" (Dixon 1994: 84). This split is not random; it is determined by the notion of control. A hierarchy of control (called the Nominal Hierarchy), illustrated in (5), has been attested, which represents the degrees of control of the various types of NP referents according to their likelihood of being in control of situations, and thus to function as agents; such NPs appear to the left of the hierarchy and usually receive accusative marking; the

²There are two types here, which Dixon (1994) calls "split-S" (there are prototypical situations for S to be marked as A or as O and most verbs fall automatically into either of these) and "fluid-S" (S is associated with A or O depending on every individual circumstance); languages of these two types are usually regarded as constituting a separate type in addition to the nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive types, the "active/non-active type".

farther to the right the more likely it is that the NP involved receives ergative marking:

(5) *The Nominal Hierarchy* (Dixon 1994: 85)

Demonstratives Common Nouns

1st person pronouns 2nd person pronouns 3rd person pronouns Proper Nouns
Human Animate Inanimate

<-----
more likely to be in A than in O function

The underlying principle of this hierarchy is that it is more necessary to overtly code one key feature of ergativity, agentivity and control, in those cases in which referents inherently low in control and agentivity do appear as agents in certain situations. In Dixon's (1994: 85) terms,

It is plainly most natural and economical to 'mark' a participant when it is in an unaccustomed role. That is, we could expect that a case-marking language might provide morphological marking of an NP from the right-hand side of the hierarchy when it is in A function, and of an NP from the leftmost end when in O function (as an alternative to providing ergative marking for *all* A NP's, of whatever semantic type, or accusative marking for *all* O NP's) [emphasis in original].

A split determined by the nature of the NP is thus semantic in essence, being based on control and agentivity, with pronouns having an accusative system and nouns an ergative one. This is important to keep in mind because the alleged split ergativity of Teribe, discussed in 2.4, is said to be of this type.

2. Word order and the encoding of participants in Teribe

Since many aspects of Teribe grammar can be better explained and understood from the perspective of discourse grammar, the use of a text is critical for the description and analysis below. The following narration (T1) constitutes the main, though not the only, source of examples used in the description of grammatical relations in Teribe. It was presented by Mrs. Adelfia González in Térraba, Province of Puntarenas, Costa Rica, in June 1997. It is one of several stories about the reunification of the Teribe group after 300 years of forced separation:³

(T1) **Naso Broran e Teribe-so ëng tö-no ëng tok e lanyo**
Teribe Térraba DEM Teribe-ORGN RECIIP meet-PERF RECIIP with DEM story

³ The Teribes were separated in 1698 by Franciscan missionaries to help bring about their surrender and Christianization. A clan was brought from northeastern Panama (then Costa Rican territory) to the Pacific region of Costa Rica. After 300 years of almost no contact between the two groups, a reencounter took place. Within this context of reunification, the two groups are beginning to strengthen links. The Costa Rican group is called Térraba and the Panamanian one Teribe. Together they refer to themselves as *Nasos*. Mrs. González is a Teribe who married a Térraba.

Rey tek ör-ong bamgo shko ga oba dyo yo-no trak llëme; chicha
King come arrive-PERF first of CONJ people chicha drink-PERF little NEG; chicha

shäria-r-a lok tanke kësks kwenyo, pök, mya. Jeg-ong tawa së-na-ba dli,
make-PERF-3 PL tank big of those, two, three. Go-PERF 1PL.EXCL feed-PERF-DS food,

oba bërko-ono dbar mya. Rey dyo yo-no nelö; ba sombrero k_
people dance-PERF day three. King chicha drink-PERF drunk; 3SG sombrero CAUS

joywa-ra-ba; kosina dorko pë buk. Kosina dorko wle-n-a lok, wollë-no
laugh-PERF-DS; stove under sleep POSIT. Stove under find-PERF-3 PL, wake up-PERF

buk e shko ga; pë cocina dorko, sombrero dök-tong buk dboy; to jek iröng
POSIT DEM of CONJ; sleep stove under, sombrero fall-PERF POSIT away; go go again

ga sombrero be-no buk na toksa... E... oba bërko-no ara; oba
CONJ sombrero remain-PERF POSIT here alone... DEM... people dance-PERF much; people

guitarra sö-no, oba akordeon sö-no, llun sö-r-a lok; oba bërko-no dbong
guitar bring-PERF, people accordion bring-PERF, drum bring-PERF-3 PL; people dance-PERF tiger

bëyo. Reunion shärio-no; trak llëme ëng wle-no. Oba shro-no ara;
dance. Meeting make-PERF; little NEG RECIP meet-PERF. People arrive-PERF much;

oba ör pang trak llëme na. Oba ëng boy bankro-no llëme. Oba
people arrive POSIT little NEG here. People RECIP wife fear-PERF NEG. People

ëng boy kro-no, ba boy naso-ga terraba tok; tek kalë tok junikong
RECIP wife seize-PERF, 3POSS wife Teribe-PL Terraba with; go there with this side

tok. Oba kone ba boy-ga ënkwo-no, wle-na oba dë buk ba tok... tle
with. People where 3SG wife-PL fight-PERF, find-PERF.INV people OBV POSIT 3SG with... say

lok ga... to shro-no lok plobek llëme, sino ënkwo-no. Oba ëng rayo-no
PL CONJ... go arrive-PERF PL behave NEG, but fight-PERF. People RECIP leave-PERF

sek oma nada más terraba k_ shko. Rey tek ör-ong na, är këm ga
almost DEM just Terraba CAUS of. King come arrive-PERF here, arrive there CONJ

lë-k oba oblë dë ga rey ör pë buk boy tok, le, är këm
say-IMP.INV people different OBV CONJ King arrive sleep POSIT wife with, say, arrive there

ga woyd-e ba boy dë ame, le; shwon skwa-r-a, le, we

CONJ want-IMP.INV 3SG wife OBV no longer, say; clothes take off-PERF-3, say, shower.IMP.INV

di klik go, le-a eni. Tle ga rey öt-ong ocho dia pë ba boy tok llëme.
 water hot INSTR, say-3 so. Say CONJ King arrive-PERF eight day sleep 3POSS wife with NEG.

Terrabas and Teribes Met

First came the King, and the people drank lots of chicha, which they had prepared in two or three big containers. Others gave us food and danced for three days. The King got drunk, and some people were making fun of his sombrero. He fell asleep under the stove; there they found him the next morning, his sombrero lying at a distance. People danced a lot; they brought guitars, accordions and drums; they danced the Tiger Dance. Many meetings were held; many people came. The [Teribe and Terraba] men dishonored each other's wives; they took each other's wives, the Teribe and Terraba wives, those from there with those from here. Fights broke out whenever they found their wives with other men. They did not behave; instead they started fights, and some couples were about to separate because of the Terrabas. The King came, and some people gossip that, once back in Teribe, his wife was reluctant to sleep with him; they say that she took off his clothes and wanted to sprinkle him with hot water. They also say that she would not sleep with him for up to eight days.

The participant-encoding ('core arguments') strategies existing in Teribe include word order, agreement (understood as the indexing of the subject on the verb; see 2.1 and 2.3, below), and direct marking; the last mentioned strategy is rather marginal insofar as it is restricted to the obviative case in the inverse construction, as shown in (6), and the dative, which is marked by the postposition *kong* (7):

(6)*ga woyd-e ba boy dë ame*
 CONJ want-IMP.INV 3SG wife OBV no longer
 'And his wife did not want [him]'

(7)*Twa-ra rey dë ba kong llëme ga, irkë trak llëme plu kong*
 give-PERF.INV King OBV 3SG to NEG CONJ, angry little NEG King to
 'Since the King did not give them [wives], they got very angry at him'

2.1. Teribe sentence-types and word order

There are three basic sentence-types in Teribe, stative and positional, intransitive, and transitive sentences. Stative and positional clauses involve static situations, have only one participant, and lack aspectual marking; their order is SV:

(8)*Mok pang kw-ara e dbala kw-öbö sök*
 moon POSIT CL.ROUND-ONE DEM star CL.ROUND-SOME POSIT
 'There is a moon (hanging) up there and some stars are (living) too'

This sentence-type includes asyndetic equational, inclusive, possessive, and (some) locative clauses, in addition to those having a positional verb, such as (8).

Intransitive verbs/clauses are one-participant constructions expressing events; their order is SV (9). Intransitive verbs/clauses can be further subdivided into movement verbs (10) and 'plain intransitives' (9), due to the different (perfective) aspect marker, *-(t)ong* in the former and *-no* in the latter:⁴

(9) *Weshko tawa parko-no*
 Next day 1PL.EXCL work-PERF
 'The next day we worked'

(10) *sombrero dök-tong buk dboy*
 sombrero fall-PERF POSIT away
 '[His] hat fell down and lay there'

The subject of both stative/positional and intransitive sentences can be suppressed in running discourse, a common topic continuity strategy, yielding a ϕ V structure:

(11) *ta sök junikong, woydë plu anmoio llëme*
 1SG POSIT this side, want good even NEG
 'I am here [and I] don't like [it] at all'

Postverbal subjects are not allowed in these sentence-types. Since these are one-argument structures, the suppressed participant is easily retrievable.

Transitive clauses have two participants, express actions, and have three possible word orders: a. AOV with the same perfective aspect marker as intransitive verbs (*-no*), as in (12); b. OV-s, where *-s* stands for a person suffix, and a different perfective aspect marker (*-ro*), as in (13); c. and the inverse construction OVA \ddot{e} , where the agent appears postverbally and marked for obviation, as in (6), above:⁵

(12) *oba acordeon sō-no*
 people accordion bring-PERF
 'People brought accordions'

(13) *llun sō-r-a lok*
 drum bring-PERF-3 PL
 '[They] brought drums'

⁴ A couple of movement verbs take the *-no* marker, as can be seen in (T1):

(i) *Oba shro-no ara*
 People arrive-PERF much
 'Many people came'

⁵ It is common for the patient to be suppressed in the OVA order. In the case of third person singular, which is expressed by ϕ in Teribe (see 2.2), it is difficult to tell between suppression, that is ϕ anaphora, and simply third person singular; the former is more conspicuous with first and second persons, as in (11), above.

The system just described may seem ergative at a first glance; after all, a transitive subject (A) is treated differently from the object (O) and from intransitive subjects (S), since in the OV-s order it is A that is marked on the verb. Similarly, the OVAdē order could well be analyzed as an ergative construction, where A is coded by direct marking, and O would be the unmarked absolutive. That analysis cannot account for two important facts. First, it cannot account for the fact that in the AOV order the agent is not marked ergative, but is treated just like S. Thus *oba* ('people') receives equal morphosyntactic treatment in both (12) and (14) (cf. also (i), footnote 4); in both cases it is a preverbal unmarked NP, in A function in (12), and in S function in (14):

(14) *Oba bërko-no ara*
 people dance-PERF much
 'People danced a lot'

Even in (15), an instance of the AOV order, where A can be analyzed as either suppressed (that is, the activated participant *oba*, 'people' is coded as \varnothing anaphora) or as third person subject (in Teribe \varnothing , see (18) below), the verb does not index the agent. Once again, A's in the AOV order are not treated differently from S's; that (15) is an instance of the AOV order is shown by presence of the perfective aspect morpheme *-no*, instead of *-r-a* of the OV-s order:

(15) *Reunion shario-no*
 meeting make-PERF
 '[They] held meetings'

Second, although it is basically the agent of transitive verbs that is indexed in the verb, there are instances of intransitive verbs marked for person (16), so that in addition to the admittedly prevailing OV-s, a few V-s cases have to be taken into account.⁶

(16) *Rey dyo yo-no nelõ; ba sombrero k_ joywa-ra-ba;*
 King chicha drink-PERF drunk; 3POSS sombrero CAUS laugh-PERF-DS

kosina dorko pë buk
 stove under sleep POSIT
 'The King got drunk and they laughed at his sombrero [lit. 'because of his sombrero they laughed'];
 [he] was sleeping under the stove'
 Again, the existence of these cases suggests equal morphosyntactic treatment of A and S in the "agreement system".

The question remains, however, why are there two word orders in "complementary

⁶ While this could indeed be taken as a manifestation of the Nominal Hierarchy in that third person of an intransitive verb is marked, the fact that this verb can mark other persons (e.g. *joyw-r-wa* laugh-PERF-1PLEXCL, 'we laughed') shows that it is not the third person that is causing the marking. The other possibility, split conditioned by verb semantics, is not applicable because there is no regular marking of active intransitive verbs (elsewhere) in the language.

distribution" in this language, in the first place? A look at their roles in discourse can shed some light on this issue. T1 consists of four readily recognizable segments. The first one introduces the story and the two main 'protagonists' around which the narration revolves, *Rey* 'the King', and *oba* '(the) people'. Once the protagonists are introduced, two segments are assigned to each of them. The King is the protagonist in the second segment, which begins from *Rey dyo yono nelö* 'The King got drunk', and continues until *sombrero beno buk na toksa* ('his hat lay here alone'). A new segment begins when *oba* moves to the foreground, introduced by *E... oba bërkonno ara* ('And... people danced a lot') until *Oba ëng rayo-no sek oma nada más terraba k_ shko* ('People were about to separate because of the Terrabas'). After this segment, the King reappears as the main protagonist and remains so till the end of the story. How do the word order patterns connect with the 'core roles' involved?. As can be seen in T1, the AOV order helps to introduce a referent in A function and to keep it 'activated', as well as to reactivate it after some stretches of discourse,⁷ while the OV-s order is used when A is firmly established as the topic of the stretch in question; this is most clearly in the third clause of example (17), which follows (14) at the onset of the second segment of T1. It goes without saying that the assessment of whether a referent is firmly established or not is in principle solely dependent on each individual speaker:⁸

(17) *oba guitarra sö-no, oba akordeon sö-no, llun sö-r-a lok*
 people guitar bring-PERF, people accordion bring-PERF, drum bring-PERF-3 PL
 'People brought guitars, accordions and drums'

As for intransitive sentences, these conform to the pattern established in Du Bois (1987), namely to introduce one participant at a time. Thus in segments I and IV, the King is introduced in S function; the same is true for *Oba* in segment III. As for segment II, the King is introduced in A function, probably because it is not its first mention in T1. More significant, perhaps, is the fact that the use of the AOV order to introduce a participant (*oba* in segment I) seems to run counter to Du Bois' principles. Actually, it does not; it represents an instantiation of another principle, namely "if a mention is new information, this typically entails that it will be realized with a full NP" (Du Bois

⁷Though rare, there are instances of AVO order in Teribe, one of which appears in (T1):

(i) *oba bërko-no dbong bëyo*
 people dance-PERF tiger dance

'The people danced the Tiger Dance.'

The AVO order is similar to the AOV in its discourse function. In these cases the verb may agree for person. This is not the case in (i), but see (26), below.

⁸The reciprocal sentences in the third segment are not counterexamples to this analysis insofar as despite the fact that the subject may be suppressed (i), these constructions have no alternative OV-s order; they are always AOV, where O is the reciprocal pronoun (ii):

(i) *ëngwoydo-no*

RECIPwant-PERF

'[They] loved each other'

(ii) **ëngwayda-r-a (lok)*

RECIPwant-PERF-3 (PL)

'They loved each other'

1987: 830). This same principle applies in the case of the OV-s order, which is used overwhelmingly to introduce new (O) participants in T1,⁹ thus conforming to Du Bois prediction that

To the extent that human protagonists are likely to be agents in two-place predicates, it is likely that the A role will be filled by a given mention of a thematic human protagonist *-for which a pronoun or a cross-referencing affix rather than a full NP will suffice*. In the O position, in contrast, we tend to find inanimate patient arguments in much greater variety. Each is likely to be relatively ephemeral in the discourse, rarely persisting through more than a few successive clauses. The steady sequence of shifting patient referents results in the O role being being filled very frequently with new, lexical mentions [emphasis added].

Based on the above considerations, it is more feasible to analyze the situation in Teribe as a discourse-run set of orders, roughly distributed as follows: SV is used to introduce participants, likely to be topics for a good stretch of discourse; AOV is used to introduce participants and to keep them 'activated', especially A; while OV-s is used to introduce only a new participant, O, while keeping A as given information (as -s). AOV comes very close to what Lambrecht calls SENTENCE-FOCUS, an information structure relation "in which the focus extends over both the subject and the predicate (minus any topical non-subject elements)", while the OV-s fits the profile of what Lambrecht calls ARGUMENT-FOCUS, a relation "in which the focus identifies the missing argument in a presupposed open proposition" (Lambrecht 1994: 222). As for the inverse OVAdē order, it is a construction involving overwhelmingly lexical NPs as A's. As the three instances in T1 show, O tends to be filled with given mentions (\varnothing , that is third person singular and/or \varnothing anaphora, two times and one time with a verb of saying plus a sentential object), while S is filled with given mentions too (*oba* 'people' two times and *ba boy* 'his wife' who had been mentioned indirectly in the previous passages, where reference is made to the men's dishonoring their wives), thus conforming to Givón's characterization of the inverse construction, "the patient is more topical than the object but the agent retains considerable topicality" (Givón 1994b: 9). In sum, in terms of both the coding of individual, lexical NP's and the indexing of participants in the verb there are no grounds to claim that Teribe works on an ergative-absolutive basis.

2.2. The pronominal system

The Teribe personal pronouns fall into two paradigms, one that I call "nominal" and the other which I will term "oblique". The former is used to code referents in subject and object

⁹Of a total of 21 instances of O, excluding those cases in which O is encoded as a reciprocal pronoun, 13 are lexical NPs, 3 are subordinate clauses, *tle (lok) ga...* 'they say that...' two times, and *lëk oba oblë dë ga...* 'some other people say that...', and the rest consists of 4 third person pronouns, which, as we will see in the next section, is \varnothing in Teribe; plus one in which the first person plural exclusive is used in a double object construction (*Jegong tawa sënaba dli*, 'They came and gave us food'). As for the forms *le* 'say' and *lea eni* ('so say), which appear four times and one time, respectively, near the end of T1, these are parenthetical forms signaling indirect speech. As such, they are not instances of *verba dicendi* plus sentential object, such as those mentioned above. Of the 13 lexical NPs, one, *dyo* 'chicha' appears three times, one of which it is expressed by a synonym, and *boy* ('wives').

relations, while the latter codes objects and objects of postpositions. Members of the oblique paradigm are also used as possessive determiners, in prenominal position. Teribe has the inclusive/exclusive opposition in the first person plural and a switch reference system, limited to third person plural; both the exclusive/inclusive and the same/different oppositions are expressed by verbal morphology. The Teribe pronoun system is illustrated in (18):

(18) *The pronoun system in Teribe*

NOMINALOBLIQUE

1. *tabor*

SINGULAR2. *pabop*

3. *φba*

1excl. *tawaborwa*

1incl. *shibi*

PLURAL2. *pāybomi*

3same *φba*

3different *bgaba*

The expression of grammatical relations by means of pronouns works as follows. Members of the nominal paradigm may code (O)bjects of a transitive verb in the OV-s order, as in (19), as well as S(ubjects) of an intransitive verb, as in (20):

(19) *pa shpo-ro-r*

2SG hit-PERF-1SG

'I hit you'

(20) *pa shro-no kupke shko*

2SG arrive-PERF yesterday

'You arrived yesterday'

This situation would lead one to posit ergative alignment; however, the nominal paradigm is also used to code A(gents) of transitive verbs in the AOV order, in which case O is coded by a form from the oblique paradigm (21a); the language does not admit two contiguous members of the same paradigm (21b). In addition, the oblique paradigm can be used to code O(bjects) in the OV-s order, as shown in (21c):¹⁰

(21a) *pa bor kimtē*

¹⁰In Quesada (*in press*) an example such as (21b) is presented as grammatical. That is erroneous; two members of the nominal paradigm can appear in an AOV order only if there is linguistic material (a marker of left dislocation, a connective, etc.) between the two, as in (i):

(i) *Ta ra pa kimtē*

1SG however 2SG help

'I did help you'

2SG 1SG help
'You help me'

(21b) **pa ta kimtë*
2SG 1SG help
'You help me'

(21c) *ba kosho-ro-rwa ga to borwa shiryo*
3SG wait-PERF-1PL.EXCL CONJ go 1PL.EXCL.POSS place
'We waited for it and went to our place'

This system parallels a nominative-accusative basis because although A, S, and O are treated similarly in the nominal paradigm -that is, A is not opposed to S and O, the members of the oblique paradigm **cannot** be used to code A (22a) nor S (22b), only O in both the SOV and the OV-s orders, thereby disclosing an opposition of A and S against O:

(22a) **bor pa kimtë*
1SG 2SG help
'I help you'

(22b) **bop shro-no kupke shko*
2SG arrive-PERF yesterday
'You arrived yesterday'

As for datives (used here as a cover term including recipients, experiencers, benefactives) and other oblique relations (instrumentals, locative), these are expressed mainly by postpositional phrases, and therefore by forms from the oblique paradigm. A most notable exception is to be made of cases in which the dative postpositional phrase is fronted, in which case its object can be expressed by forms of either paradigm:

(23a) *Dbur twa-r-a bor kong*
money give-PERF-3 1SG to
'He gave the money to me'

(23b) *Ta~bor kong dbur twa-r-a*
1SG to money give-PERF-3
'He gave me the money'

The distribution of the pronominal system in terms of the grammatical relations these forms code is summarized in (24):

(24) SUBJECT > OBJECT > DATIVE > INSTRUM. > COMITATIVE > LOCATIVE
nominal > nominal > oblique > oblique > oblique > oblique
oblique nominal

2.3. *The agreement system*

The subject agreement markers alluded to in 2.1. are shown in (25):

- (25) 1.-*r*
 SINGULAR2.-*p*
 3.-*a* ~ -*φ* (depending on verb class)
 1excl.-*rwa*
 1incl.-*y*
 PLURAL2.-*mi*
 3same-*a* ~ -*φ* (depending on verb class)
 3different-*ba*

The forms in (25) are obvious grammaticalized instances of the oblique pronouns. The morphological status of the bound forms, as suffixes, indicates that the current OV-s order was indeed an OVA configuration in the past; cliticization and later fusion led to the current state.

2.4. *Ergativity in Teribe, according to Constenla (1997)*¹¹

After having laid out the organization of grammatical relations in Teribe, this section deals with the claim that those relations follow an ergative-absolutive pattern. Constenla's analysis seems to depend on two basic errors. The first consists of characterizing the pronominal system, illustrated in (18), in terms of an opposition between "focused" and "non-focused" pronouns. While tacitly acknowledging that the system functions along the lines described in 2.2 (: 3-4), which in turn implies that the opposition is one of core vs. oblique relations, Constenla bafflingly equates the core/oblique opposition with a focus/non-focus opposition. There are no grounds for this characterization; suffice it to mention that the forms of the oblique paradigm are **never** used to code A or S, only O, so that the opposition focused/non-focused has to be sought somewhere else in the grammar. That is, in Teribe there is no such thing as:

allegedly "focused" vs. allegedly "non-focused"

*ta jek*bor jek*
 1SG go 1SG go
 'I go'*I go'

or

allegedly "focused" vs. allegedly "non-focused"

*pa kimtë-r*bop kimtë-r*
 2SG help-1SG 2SG help-1SG
 'TII help you'*I 'll help you'

I will come back to the implications of this first error.

¹¹All quotations have been translated from the original Spanish version. In this section, only the page number will be indicated.

The second, more serious error in Constenla's analysis lies in the characterization of the alternative word orders for transitive constructions, AOV ~ OV-s, likewise as one involving focus and markedness.¹² Thus, in Constenla's view, the opposition between *ta bop kimtë* (AOV) and *pa kimtë-r* (OV-s) lies in the fact that in the former case the subject (*ta*) is focused, while in the latter case it is not. As can be seen in (T1) and as explained in 2.1., this opposition is one of topic continuity; the former is used discourse-initially, to introduce and to reactivate participants, while the latter is used in running discourse. As for focus, the AOV order fits the profile of a sentence-focus structure, not one of argument structure; hence the forms per se are not indicators of focus or lack thereof; rather, it is the structure as a whole that renders the AOV construction as a focus construction. Constenla even argues that the OV-s order is unmarked, while the AOV is the marked one, and maintains that speakers produce the AOV order only when it is elicited. This obviously suggests low text-frequency, which Constenla (: 4) uses as a criterion to analyze the OV-s order as basic, but that does not necessarily imply basicness.¹³

The two considerations just discussed led to the claim that

if the construction I have called non-focused transitive is basic and unmarked... Teribe would be basically an ergative language (in terms of pronouns, the form used for the only argument of the intransitive verb or patient of the transitive one is the same) and the basic order of the transitive clause would be OVS. *The absolutive case is the one requiring, in the non-focused transitive construction or in the intransitive one, the presence of the focused forms of the personal pronouns.* The ergative case [would be] the one that can be expressed in the third person by a postpositional phrase [emphasis added].

Several aspects need scrutiny here. In the first place, even if the OV-s order were indeed unmarked, it would not follow that there is ergativity. The fact that the pronoun that precedes the verb in the two transitive constructions (AOV and OV-s) is identical in form to the only participant of the intransitive construction (SV) is simply the result of the fact that the Teribe personal pronouns, like those of Boruca and other reportedly accusative Chibchan languages, happen to be indistinguishable as to subject or object (in Teribe only partially so, as we saw in 2.2); it is not the result of a different treatment of S and O against A by the grammar.

Second, as for the absolutive case as being the one "requiring, in the non-focussed transitive construction or in the intransitive one, the presence of the focussed forms of the personal pronouns", it is sufficient to mention that these are the only possible forms to be expected there, given the fact that the so-called "non-focussed forms" cannot be used, by virtue of their being possessive and oblique forms. Moreover, it strikes me as incoherent that focussed forms should be

¹²It is worth mentioning that Constenla does not provide any (at least working) definition of "focus". From his analysis one can infer that he seems to equate it with overt NP realization (as opposed to \varnothing anaphora or "agreement"), which, as will become evident in 3 below, is by no means accurate.

¹³A comparison with a language like Spanish is appropriate here. This language has two basic orders AVO: *Tú viste a Juan* vs. *Viste a Juan*; the latter, as well as other non-AVO orders, is far more frequent in Spanish (cf. Ocampo 1995); still, no one would dispute that Spanish is an AVO language.

required in non-focussed situations. Not to mention another incoherence, namely that the focus system Constenla presumes applies only to transitive sentences; that is, assuming for a minute that the two pronominal paradigms are opposed in terms of focus/non-focus, one is left with the following situation: in the OV-s order, O (the alleged absolutive) is focussed, but in intransitive constructions (which are SV when there is no \varnothing anaphora, in which case there could be grounds to claim lack of focus), the overtly realized intransitive subject (the alleged absolutive) is not focussed. It becomes difficult to conciliate the claim that the same absolutive form should be focussed in one case but not in the other, especially when the criterion for the focus/non-focus opposition is precisely formal (syntactically both "absolutives" are preverbal).

Third, the suggestion that the ergative case is expressed by an oblique seems a bit "sui generis", considering the fact that the ergative case corresponds to a transitive subject, an unquestionably core nominal. That is, suggesting that the ergative case is expressed by an oblique is tantamount to implying that this case is not morphosyntactically integrated into the case frame of the verb but is instead downgraded to an oblique.

The confusion created by characterizing the opposition between the core and oblique/possessive pronoun paradigms and the two discourse-determined word orders as being of focus and markedness, respectively, has led Constenla to claim that:

focusing produces a split of ergativity, since, in this case, in terms of pronouns, the agent of the transitive verb coincides with the only participant of the intransitive verb, while the patient of the transitive verb is expressed by means of different forms.

An effective disclaimer consists in underscoring once more that though the pronoun forms of the nominal paradigm are indistinguishable as to A, S, or O, they do oppose A and S to O in the oblique paradigm; in Teribe A and S is not coded by a form that is limited to coding O's.

3. The grammaticalization of agreement in three Chibchan languages

In this section, the system of participant identification of Teribe is compared to that of two of its relatives, Rama (Nicaragua) and Boruca (Costa Rica). These two languages exhibit two related ways of participant identification (agreement), which are worth analyzing from the perspective of grammaticalization. When talking about the grammaticalization of agreement, two things have to be kept in mind. First, grammaticalization proceeds from discourse and semantics to syntax and morphology (cf. Traugott and Heine 1991 and contributions therein). Second, agreement, as categorial covariation which expresses syntactic reference-relations morphologically, originates in anaphoric relations (cf. Lehmann 1982); the categories of a noun phrase are reproduced by another element. The grammaticalization of (person) agreement thus suggests a discourse-driven process, motivated by the need to identify the participants of situations. If the agreement patterns of a language are highly grammaticalized, their use is mechanical (e.g. English third person singular), if not, these will be heavily dependent on discourse (e.g. the Spanish clitic pronouns ceasing to be pronominal and becoming object agreement markers, cf. Quesada (1995)). In addition, as in every gradual process such as grammaticalization, the existence of degrees is to be expected; in the case of agreement, these will be characterized, language internally, by variability (between semantic and syntactic agreement) and, cross-linguistically, by the arrangement of the languages compared into at least three stages/groups: syntactic agreement, variable agreement, and zero or incipient agreement. The remainder of this section is devoted to analyzing the Teribe system of participant identification in cross-linguistic perspective in order both to make better sense of its

organization of grammatical relations and to cast the case for ergativity in this language under that light.

Let us begin with Teribe. As explained in 2, Teribe makes use of agreement and word order to identify participants. To the extent that the subject is indexed in the verb in the OV-s order, it can be said that agreement is highly syntacticized; on the other hand, the discourse-determined alternative word order AOV, together with the intermittent marking of third person plural (*lok*), show that identification of participants is still highly dependent on discourse, cf. (15); that is, it is not totally grammaticalized. In fact, there are instances in which both agreement and word order are used (notice the AVO order in (26)):

(26) *Kone kone kro-ro-rwa borwa lanma*
 some find-PERF-1PL.EXCL 1PL.EXCL.POSS husband
 'Some [of us] found a husband'

This process is a clear instance of semantic agreement, which usually appears at the onset of the grammaticalization of agreement. That this is the case in (26) is evidenced by the fact that the exceptionally infrequent AVO order is not an instance of the OV-s order, which is the order that exhibits regular agreement in the language; equally rare are instances of agreement on the SOV order:

(27) *Oba junikong om woyoje-r-a lok pit*
 people this side FOC forget-PERF-3 PL finish
 'The people from here have have forgotten totally ABOUT IT'

(28) *Tawa borwa llëbo e bankrë-rwa*
 1PL.EXCL 1PL.EXCL.POSS thing DEM fear-1PL.EXCL
 'We respect those things of ours']

The admittedly rare cases of agreement in the AVO and SOV orders thus hint at an extension of the agreement pattern. It becomes clear then that Teribe is somewhere between syntactic and semantic agreement.

Let us now turn to Rama. This language is AOV (29), with an alternative Os-V word order, where s- stands for a subject-agreement prefix (30):

(29) *naas glaas aark-u*
 1SG glass break-PAST
 'I broke the glass'

(30) *chiicha i-ngw-i*
 chicha 3SG-drink-PRES
 'He drinks chicha'

(CIDCA 1990: 51-2).

As in Teribe, the two orders are discourse-determined; the former is used discourse-initially, to introduce and to reactivate participants, while the latter is used in running discourse (CIDCA

1990: 72). As shown in (30), Rama makes use of prefixes to express subject-agreement; free subject pronouns are used for emphasis and/or discourse-opening. While the distribution of the two word orders in Rama mirrors that of Teribe, in that person markers are used in the absence of the free personal pronouns (or full NP subjects), the Rama system of participant identification differs in two important respects from that of Teribe, thus revealing a higher degree of grammaticalization of person-agreement. First, there are two paradigms of personal pronouns, one for subject and one for object. The former are of two kinds, free and bound. The free forms are:

(31a) SINGULARPLURAL

- 1. *naas* ~ *nahnsut*
- 2. *maamulut*
- 3. *yainganut*

These forms are used in sentence-initial position in the AOV order. The bound pronouns are short (grammaticalized) forms of the free ones, and are used in the (O)s-V order:

(31b) SINGULARPLURAL¹⁴

- 1. *n-*, *ni-ns-*, *s- nsu-*, *su-*
- 2. *m-*, *mim-*, *mul-*, *ml-*
- 3. *y-*, *i-an-*

(CIDCA 1990: 72).

As for the object pronouns, these all end in *a* and are all free (3SG is usually \varnothing):

- (31c) 1. *n-ansul-a*
 2. *m-amulul-a*
 3. *y-a* ~ \varnothing *anul-a*

(CIDCA 1990: 74).

Second, the subject-prefixes are used regularly with intransitive verbs:

(32) *y-almalng-u*

3SG-die-PAST

'He died'

(CIDCA 1990: 52).

(32) shows that, as opposed to Teribe, where the person suffixes are to a great extent still determined by discursive needs, the use of the Rama person agreement markers is more syntacticized. In fact, the absence of the subject prefix in an intransitive construction with no free subject NP is ungrammatical (e.g. in (32), **almalng-u*).

The third language in this survey, Boruca, exhibits a pattern of participant identification which is completely the opposite of the Rama one. Boruca is AOV. Participants are not cross-referenced on the verb (but see below), their role being made explicit by word order and by a set of contrast and focus markers. In addition, the Boruca pronominal system does not distinguish the core relations. The Boruca pronominal system is represented in (33); these forms code both subjects and

¹⁴There is no indication in the source about the conditioning factor in the use of all the allomorphs listed in (31b).

objects; in addition, they function as obliques and possessive pronouns:

(33) SINGULAR PLURAL

1. *atdi*² (*róhk*)

2. *bábi*² (*róhk*)

3. *ii*² (*róhk*)

The plural marker *róhk* is used only when the plural pronouns appear in subject-function. When functioning as subjects, these forms rarely if ever stand alone; in most cases they are accompanied by the information-structure markers *a_* or *ki*, or else by *abí*, as in (34a), (34b), and (34c).¹⁵ Actually, their function as either subject or object is marked by the presence or absence, respectively, of the markers -that is, none of these markers (with certain exceptions in the case of *abí*) is used with non-subject pronominal NPs (this is why *ki* is glossed as SUBJECT in (34b)):

(34a) *ba_ daba-krá*

2SG.FOC arrive-PERF

'You, you came'

(34b) *ba kidaba-krá*

2SG.SUBJ arrive-PERF

'You came'

(34c) *a²r¹⁶ abi_ daba-krá*

1.SG. EMPH-FOC arrive-PERF

'It was me who arrived'

Of the three markers, however, *a_* is restricted to subject noun phrases (full or pronominal); on the other hand, *ki* and *abí* can accompany non-pronominal object noun phrases and postpositional phrases.¹⁷ It is the role of *a_* which is of interest here. A characteristic of this marker is that it fuses with the pronouns, producing portmanteau (bound) morphemes:

(35) 1. $\underline{át+a_} \rightarrow \underline{a_di^2+a_} \rightarrow \underline{di_}$

¹⁵A detailed description of the distribution and function of these three markers goes beyond the scope of this paper. See Quesada (*in progress*).

¹⁶*a²r* is a phonetically conditioned variant of *at*.

¹⁷A *ki*-marked pronoun in object function is ungrammatical:

(i) **At kibahd-r-i_*

1SG(OBJ) hit-PRES-3SG

'He hits me'

(ii) **At kikwik-krái ki ma_*

1SG(SUBJ) dance-PERF 3SG(OBL) DEF with

'I danced with her'

2. $ba_1 + a_1 \rightarrow ba_1 bi_2 + a_1 \rightarrow bi_2$
 3. $i_3 + a_1 \rightarrow i_3 i_3 r\acute{o}hk + a_1 \rightarrow i_3 r\acute{o}hk$

These new forms, in turn, are fused and affixed to the conjugated verb forms in cases in which the basic AOV order is disrupted by reordering of constituents, as in (36), where A is postposed, or by reordering, as in (37). Fusion takes place with the forms beginning in a vowel (a_1 , 1 singular; and i_3 3 singular and plural). The three forms with an initial voiced stop (ba_1 , 2 singular; di_1 , first plural; and bi_2 , second plural) also cliticize to the last verbal suffix, which in Boruca always ends in a vowel; stops in intervocalic position become fricative. Although total fusion does not occur with these forms, the lenis articulation of the fricative segment may eventually cause the total attrition of this element:

(36) $e^? tse auhai^? -kr-a_1$
 one dogkill-PERF-1SG
 '(I) killed a dog'

(37) $w\acute{e}^? ku_1 i_3 uge^? attsan-kr-i_3 r\acute{o}hkku^? ta$
 DEM pig because of 1SGput in-PERF-3SG PLjail to
 'Because of this pig (they) put me in jail'

A_1 thus has two forms, a free or 'heavy' one used to focus subjects, and a bound or 'light' (more grammaticalized) one, reminiscent of the relation between free subject pronouns and prefixes and suffixes of Rama and Teribe, respectively. The light form of a_1 can be affixed to free personal pronouns, still as a focus marker, as in (34a) -a free portmanteau morpheme; in addition, the portmanteau morpheme can lose its free-form status, being affixed to the verbal complex, in which case it functions as a topic continuity marker and ultimately as an agreement- marker; the result is an incipient alternative OV-s word order, much like that in Teribe. In fact, the most common use of a_1 is that of highly topical ('active') subject; thus a_1 marks same subjects, while ki in its function as subject marker¹⁸ tends to appear when subjects are new in discourse. Thus Boruca has two basic word orders for transitive clauses: A(ki)OV and OVs(- a_1), whose distribution parallels that of the word orders of Rama and Teribe. Compare (38), where ki marks the subject of the presentative sentence (which although is not transitive does illustrate the discourse-function of ki as marker of new subjects), but a_1 performs the anaphoric function:

(38) $Br\acute{u}nkahk ki^{19} ta kw\acute{i}ng kaw\acute{i}^? -krae^? tse s\acute{i}^? kwa ki. W\acute{a} ki ya^?$
 Boruca SPEC in many live-PERFone foreigner SPEC DEM DEF REFL

¹⁸ ki has other functions in the language that include co-presence with demonstratives, relative clauses, proper names, and pronouns. Going into details of these functions exceeds the scope of this presentation; see Quesada and Quesada-Pacheco (1995).

¹⁹The accent mark in ki represents high tone (Boruca has two tones, high and low, unmarked). There are rules of tone assimilation and placement; one of them is at work in (38). See Quesada-Pacheco (1995) for details on this phenomenon of Boruca phonology.

ka'yé_ira Johnson. Tunxuákrí'-ír-i_kwíng kákba'róhk ki ta,
 call-IMP Johnson. Policemanbig-IMP-3SGmany dayPL SPEC in,
ma_i-_wá'róhkba-kr-i-_é'tse brúnkahk é'de, bú'k kóngat é'tse ramát.
 then 3-SG child PLhave-PERF-3-SG one Boruca with, two males one female.

'There lived right in Boruca for a long time a [certain, specific] foreigner [that was] called Johnson. He was a police officer for many years and had three children with a Boruca [woman], two boys and a girl.'

(Adapted from Constenla and Maroto 1986: 88).

While the distribution of the two word orders and the two markers functions as explained above, their use is not yet obligatory. \varnothing anaphora is still a very productive mechanism in Boruca, whereby the identification of participants is still heavily dependent on discourse (cf. the texts included in Constenla & Maroto 1986, as well as those in Quesada-Pacheco 1996).

The three languages just discussed share one typological feature: all three have two basic word order patterns whose use is determined by the discourse: AOV for discourse onset and participant activation, and OVA (Teribe and Boruca) and OSV (Rama) for running discourse; both the OSV and the OVA orders have in common that the subject is removed from sentence-initial position because of its information structure status (given information, active participants). However, they differ in terms of the degree of grammaticalization of the identification strategies. These languages can be arranged in a continuum of grammaticalization of agreement, where each of them represents a particular stage in the process. The three stages can be characterized in terms of three parameters discussed above for each language:

1. degree of syntactic cohesion (bondedness) of person markers;
2. degree of formal distinguishability of core relations (paradigmaticity);
3. degree of obligatoriness of person markers (syntacticization).

The behavior of the three languages in terms of these parameters is summarized in (39):

(39) *Agreement and participant identification in three Chibchan languages*

Rama Teribe Boruca

1. highly head-marking / partially head-marking / incipient head-marking
2. full distinguishability / partial distinguishability / \varnothing distinguishability
3. identification in verb / identification in verb/text / identification in text/verb

more grammaticalized

less grammaticalized

According to (39), Rama constitutes a case of higher and Boruca one of lower grammaticalization of agreement, while Teribe falls half-way between the two. In terms of the main point of this paper, the lesson to be drawn is that the Teribe system of participant identification is not a case of ergativity but represents an instance of an agreement pattern characterized by partial syntacticization of participant identification (intermittent agreement, cf. 2.1 and 2.3 above) and still somewhat dependent on discursive needs. The system described in 2. is therefore one of topic continuity, where the alternating orders and the agreement system **all** pertain to the identification of participants, not to the degree of control or agentivity, as is the case in the split conditioned by the type of the core NP, explained in 1.2.

Despite the preceding, the question about the tendency to index mainly transitive subjects in the verb still remains. There are two plausible explanations for that tendency. First, it can be the case that the agreement pattern has proceeded from transitive verbs and is now spreading to intransitive verbs. Changes proceeding from transitive to intransitive verbs -which have nothing to do with ergativity- are not uncommon, the creation of middle voice systems on the basis of reflexive constructions being a case in point (cf. Quesada 1997a). The other possibility, which could in fact be the cause of the former, is that, given the strong dependence of participant identification on discourse, it became necessary to overtly express the "extra" argument for purposes of reference. The full realization of the transitive subject was in conflict with the tendency to one-argument structures, a discourse principle already noted by Du Bois (1987: 826); that tension might have induced the process of cliticization and fusion of the postverbal, topical, transitive subject. In other words, given that the alternative word orders are controlled by topic continuity, it is only natural that the process began with transitive verbs; intransitive sentences whose subject information-structure status is active are either SV or simply ϕ V; however, in the case of transitive sentences, it was necessary to "accommodate" the "given subject" (recall that we are talking about a

previous stage where there was no person-agreement, similar to the current stage of Boruca, discussed above); while the Rama solution was to remove it from sentence initial position but to still keep it preverbal, Teribe (and Boruca) placed it postverbally. The extension to intransitive verbs (which can be regarded as an indicator of the accusative disposition of the system) constitutes a case of what Harris and Campbell (1995: 255) call "consistency in alignment"; that is, if a syntactic change occurs, which pushes the syntactic system in one direction, other subsequent changes might take place which tend to harmonize with the development/direction of the previous change. In the Teribe case, it means that once agreement with transitive subjects occurred, the tendency toward consistency caused certain intransitive verbs to also index the subject. It is no accident that the first intransitive verbs with which this occurs express situations that require an active, volitional subject (e.g. *joywa* 'laugh at X'). Presumably, more intransitive verbs will progressively exhibit subject-agreement, until a system like that in Rama develops (at the cost of φ anaphora).

4. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the organization of the basic grammatical relations in Teribe. Among the strategies this language makes use of for the function of participant-identification are word order and a partly grammaticalized agreement system. There are two basic orders for transitive clauses, controlled by topic continuity: AOV and OV-s; insofar as the latter order entails agreement; it can be said that agreement in Teribe is likewise determined by discourse. At the same time, the fact that it only appears in the OV-s order hints at a low degree of grammaticalization. In accordance with its origin, the scope of agreement basically includes transitive constructions; the latter fact has given rise to the claim that the system of basic relations in Teribe is ergative. After a review of how Teribe encodes participants, and after a look at the distribution of the two basic orders for transitive clauses in discourse, it appears that a more suitable account of this aspect of the grammar of Teribe is to recognize that there are two discourse-run alternative orders for transitive clauses and that one of them is giving rise to an agreement pattern, which at present is low grammaticalized, but might spread to intransitive constructions, thus replicating a pattern found in other languages of the Chibchan family.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3grammatical person
 INSTinstrumental
 RECIPreciprocal
 ABSabsolute
 INVinverse
 REFLreflexive
 ANTIPantipa
 ASSive
 NON-FUT non-future
 SGSingular
 CAUScausation
 NEGnegation
 SPECspecific
 CLnumeral classifier
 OBJobject
 SUBJsubject
 CONJconjunction
 OBLoblique
 DEFdefinite article
 OBVobviative
 DEMdemonstrative
 ORGNorigin
 DSDifferent subject
 PASTpast tense
 ERGergative
 PERFperfective aspect
 EMPHemphasis
 PLplural
 EXCLexclusive
 POSITpositional verb

FOCfocus markerPOSSpossessive
 IMPimperfective aspectPRESpresent tense

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The existence of productive rules of φ anaphora can shed light on this issue. As it has been insinuated so far, both two and one-argument verbs can have one of their core NPs suppressed: in the AOV order A but not O can be suppressed, in the the SV order S can be suppressed and in the OV-s order O can be suppressed. This is not random. This "suppressability" pattern mirrors the well known hierarchy of topicality, of pragmatic case roles (Givón 1984): the role that is higher in the hierarchy is suppressed; thus in the AOV order, A but not O can be suppressed; AV is ungrammatical in Teribe. O can be suppressed if A is indexed in the verb. At the same time, these roles

These "rules" of φ anaphora determine

XXXXXXXXXXXXallow suppression of both transitive and intransitive subjects; for instance, the intransitive subject of the third clause in (14) and the transitive subject of the second clause in (15), below are treated in the same way (both are suppressed):

(15) *oba bërko-no dbong bëyo. φ Reunión shärio-no; trak llëme φ ën wle-no*
 people dance-PERF tiger dance. φ Meeting make-PERF; littleNEG φ REFL meetPERF
 'People danced the tiger dance. [They] held meetings; [They] met a lot'

In (15) one would expect the forms *sharia-ba ~ -ra* (makePERF.3PL) and *wle-na* (find-PERF.3) given the absence of a free subject NP in the second and third clauses; still, the form of the allegedly ergative paradigm is not used (φ anaphora is used instead); that is, the transitive subject is once more treated like the intransitive subject in both orders; moreover, transitive and intransitive subjects are treated equally regardless of whether they are nominal or pronominal. Clearly, this is not an instance of ergativity; rather, this situation is caused by the fact that personal pronouns in Teribe (see next section) are indistinguishable for subject (transitive or intransitive) and object function. The existence of person suffixes for transitive subjects in the non-AOV order is determined by rules of discourse; concretely, topic continuity and information status of the referents involved (more on this in 3.).

The AOV serves to create a backbone, and as the narration proceeds one-argument structures tend to become more frequent thus confirming Du Bois' "Non lexical A constraint' and Given A constraint'.

Despite the formal indistinguishability of the personal pronouns, the identification system is very economical and effective in that it makes use of person agreement, described above, in the absence of a subject NP, full or pronominal, but does not utilize it if an overt subject NP is present, as shown in (11, 19), or, also, when \varnothing anaphora is used, as in (17).

Special mention deserves the identification of third person participants. As can be seen in (18), the third person morpheme is identical both for number (singular and plural), and for grammatical relations (object and oblique). The potential ambiguity is solved as follows. First, if a given NP is in subject role the admittedly rare alternative form *ebga* can be used. There is, however, a more common procedure which is employed; it consists in the use of the positional *lok*, which originally meant 'be/stand plural'. This procedure distinguishes the number of the subject in event sentences; it has no other function in the language than marking subject plurality. Thus, in (21a) there is no confusion as to who asked whom to drink too:

(21a) *Padre roka-rg-a lok sök dyo ye ba-tok bebë*

Priest ask-EXH-3 PL POSIT chicha drink 3PL-with too

'They asked the priest to get to drink chicha with them!/*'The priest asked them...

The use of *lok* is to a large extent still dependent on discourse; as can be seen in (T1), it is used only when the speakers consider it necessary, that is, when there is a risk of ambiguity; compare (21b) and (21c), both from (T1), where this intermittent use is attested:

(21b) *Oba kone ba boy-ga ënkwo-no, wle-na oba dë buk*

People where 3SG wife-PL fight-PERF find-PERF.3 people FOC POSIT

ba-tok... tle lok ga...

3-with... say PL and...

'Fights broke out whenever they found their wives with other men, they say.'

(21c) *Tle ga rey öton ocho dia pë ba boy tok llëme.*

Say CONJ King arrive eight day sleep 3SG wife with NEG.

'They also say that she would not sleep with him for up to eight days.'

The function of *lok* as marker of verbal plurality (and restricted to subjects) precludes any possible ambiguity and, in addition, helps identify in (21a) the object of the postposition *tok* as plural; otherwise, there would be no way to ascertain whether *ba* is singular or plural in this case. This is how *lok* allows to distinguish between singular and plural, as well as between subject and non-subject. As for the ambiguity in non-subject function, the solution is simpler: *ba* always appears preverbally when object but followed by a postposition in the remaining functions; in addition, it is always followed by a noun if expressing possession.

Finally, as noted in 2.1., in intransitive sentences subject NP's, both pronominal and non-pronominal, are used to introduce the discourse or to identify participants in certain segments, but, as in the case of *lok*, \varnothing is preferred when the identification of the only participant is not threatened, as in (22):

(22) *Plublun-ga är ga e permiso shik ba-kong...jek opsrək jon eni llëme*
 whites-PL arrive CONJ DEM permit obtain 3SG-to... go enter POSIT like that NEG
 'Whites come [to Teribe] and ask him for permission, [they] don't just invade'

Although reference is made to a participant already active in the discourse (the King, the topic of the discourse), the newly activated participant (the whites) is kept active until the end of the episode (not included in (22) to save space) and that makes it possible, despite the \varnothing anaphora, and even the lack of (verbal) number agreement to identify the participants; in (22) the suffix *-ga*, which is used only with human and culturally relevant animate referents, marks the subject for number. The intermittent use of *lok*, \varnothing anaphora, and the person agreement suffixes reveals that agreement in Teribe is not as highly syntacticized as in languages like Spanish or German, and thus behaves as a complementary reference strategy; it "co-exists" with word order and direct marking. More on agreement in 3.

¹This paper is part of a series of descriptions of aspects of Teribe grammar supported by Grant 410-98-0138 from the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada. A note on orthographic representation: in the Bribri examples below, the underlined vowels represent nasal vowels; in the Teribe examples, <ë> and <ö> represent high lax vowels, front and back, respectively. As for <ll> it represents the voiced postalveolar fricative sound /_/_/.

²There are two types here, which Dixon (1994) calls "split-S" (there are prototypical situations for S to be marked as A or as O and most verbs fall automatically into either of these) and "fluid-S" (S is associated with A or O depending on every individual circumstance); languages of these two types are usually regarded as constituting a separate type in addition to the nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive types, the "active/non-active type".

³The Teribes were separated in 1698 by Franciscan missionaries to help bring about their surrender and Christianization. A clan was brought from northeastern Panama (then Costa Rican territory) to the Pacific region of Costa Rica. After 300 years of almost no contact between the two groups, a reencounter took place. Within this context of reunification, the two groups are beginning to strengthen links. The Costa Rican group is called Tèrraba and the Panamanian one Teribe. Together they refer to themselves as *Nasos*. Mrs. González is a Teribe who married a Tèrraba.

⁴A couple of movement verbs take the *-no* marker, as can be seen in (T1):

(i) *Oba shro-no ara*
People arrive-PERF much
'Many people came'

⁵It is common for the patient to be suppressed in the OVA order. In the case of third person singular, which is expressed by \varnothing in Teribe (see 2.2), it is difficult to tell between suppression, that is \varnothing anaphora, and simply third person singular; the former is more conspicuous with first and second persons, as in (11), above.

⁶While this could indeed be taken as a manifestation of the Nominal Hierarchy in that third person of an intransitive verb is marked, the fact that this verb can mark other persons (e.g. *joywo-ro-rwa* laugh-PERF-1PL.EXCL, 'we laughed') shows that it is not the third person that is causing the marking. The other possibility, split conditioned by verb semantics, is not applicable because there is no regular marking of active intransitive verbs (elsewhere) in the language.

⁷Though rare, there are instances of AVO order in Teribe, one of which appears in (T1):

(i) *oba bërko-no dbong bëyo*
people dance-PERF tiger dance
'The people danced the Tiger Dance.'

The AVO order is similar to the AOV in its discourse function. In these cases the verb may agree for person. This is not the case in (i), but see (26), below.

⁸The reciprocal sentences in the third segment are not counterexamples to this analysis insofar as despite the fact that the subject may be suppressed (i), these constructions have no alternative OV-s order; they are always AOV, where O is the reciprocal pronoun (ii):

(i) *ëngwoydo-no*
RECIPwant-PERF
'[They] loved each other'
(ii) **ëngwayda-r-a (lok)*
RECIPwant-PERF-3 (PL)
'They loved each other'

⁹Of a total of 21 instances of O, excluding those cases in which O is encoded as a reciprocal pronoun, 13 are lexical NPs, 3 are subordinate clauses, *tle (lok) ga...* 'they say that...' two times, and *lëk oba oblë dë ga...* 'some other people say that...', and the rest consists of 4 third person pronouns, which, as we will see in the next section, is \varnothing in Teribe; plus one in which the first person plural exclusive is used in a double object construction (*Jegong tawa sënaba dli*, 'They came and gave us food'). As for the forms *le* 'say' and *lea eni* ('so say), which appear four times and one time, respectively, near the end of T1, these are parenthetical forms signaling indirect speech. As such, they are not instances of *verba dicendi* plus sentential object, such as those mentioned above. Of the 13 lexical NPs, one, *dyo* 'chicha' appears three times, one of which it is expressed by a synonym, and *boy* ('wives').

¹⁰In Quesada (*in press*) an example such as (21b) is presented as grammatical. That is erroneous; two members of the nominal paradigm can appear in an AOV order only if there is linguistic material (a marker of left dislocation, a connective, etc.) between the two, as in (i):

(i) *Ta ra pa kimtë*

1SG however 2SG help

'I did help you'

¹¹All quotations have been translated from the original Spanish version. In this section, only the page number will be indicated.

¹²It is worth mentioning that Constenla does not provide any (at least working) definition of "focus". From his analysis one can infer that he seems to equate it with overt NP realization (as opposed to \varnothing anaphora or "agreement"), which, as will become evident in 3 below, is by no means accurate.

¹³A comparison with a language like Spanish is appropriate here. This language has two basic orders AVO: *Tú viste a Juan* vs. V-(s) O *Viste a Juan*; the latter, as well as other non-AVO orders, is far more frequent in Spanish (cf. Ocampo 1995); still, no one would dispute that Spanish is an AVO language.

¹⁴There is no indication in the source about the conditioning factor in the use of all the allomorphs listed in (31b).

¹⁵A detailed description of the distribution and function of these three markers goes beyond the scope of this paper. See Quesada (*in progress*).

¹⁶*a[?]r* is a phonetically conditioned variant of *at*.

¹⁷A *ki*-marked pronoun in object function is ungrammatical:

(i)**At kibahd-r-i*_

1SG(OBJ)hit-PRES-3SG

'He hits me'

(ii)**At kikwik-krái ki ma*_

1SG(SUBJ)dance-PERF3SG(OBL) DEF with

'I danced with her'

¹⁸*ki* has other functions in the language that include co-presence with demonstratives, relative clauses, proper names, and pronouns. Going into details of these functions exceeds the scope of this presentation; see Quesada and Quesada-Pacheco (1995).

¹⁹The accent mark in *ki* represents high tone (Boruca has two tones, high and low, unmarked). There are rules of tone assimilation and placement; one of them is at work in (38). See Quesada-Pacheco (1995) for details on this phenomenon of Boruca phonology.