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THIRD-PERSON AGREEMENT AND PASSIVE MARKING IN TACANAN LANGUAGES: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE¹

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The five Tacanan languages (Amazonian Bolivia and Peru)—Araona, Cavineña, Ese Ejja, Reyesano, and Tacana—have a conspicuously similar verbal suffix *-ta* (or *-ka* in one dialect of Ese Ejja). Depending on the language and the transitivity of the verb stem it attaches to, this suffix is used either to refer to a third-person plural S argument or a third-person singular or plural A argument, or to mark a passive derivation. In this paper, I argue that the suffixes are all historically related and that they come from a single source: a third-person plural suffix **-ta*. I also suggest that this marker could have originated in a third-person plural independent pronoun that I reconstruct as **tuna*.

[KEYWORDS: Amazonian languages, Tacanan languages, passive, third-person agreement, transitivity]

1. Introduction. The Tacanan family consists of five languages: Araona, Cavineña, Ese Ejja, Reyesano (Maropa), and Tacana. These languages are still spoken today, although the number of speakers is very low (approximately 111 for Araona, 601 for Cavineña, 518 for Ese Ejja, 12 for Reyesano, and 50 for Tacana, according to Crevels and Muysken 2009).

As is the case for the majority of Bolivian lowland languages (and, more generally, Amazonian languages), the Tacanan languages had not been studied extensively until recently. They were first documented through word lists collected by travelers and missionaries, starting in the nineteenth century, and made known to the academic world by the work of historical linguists—notably Brinton (1891; 1892), who was the first to propose a Tacanan group, and Schuller (1933), who was the first to hypothesize a genetic link to the larger family of Panoan languages spoken in Amazonian Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia.

The second wave of documentation of the Tacanan languages took place between the 1950s and 1980s when the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) settled in Bolivia. SIL missionaries elaborated writing systems and produced

¹ The ideas developed in this paper benefited from comments made by the participants in the workshop on “Argument-Coding in Lowland Bolivian Languages” (CELIA, Villejuif, April 5–7, 2007), the annual conference of the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA, Chicago, January 3–6, 2008), and the third conference of the Syntax of the World’s Languages (SWL3, Berlin, September 25–28, 2008). This article was also improved by comments from Denis Creissels, Spike Gildea, Marc Peake, Françoise Rose, and an anonymous *IJAL* associate editor. Finally, I am indebted to the speakers of Cavineña, Reyesano, and Tacana who have shared their languages with me during my fieldwork in their communities.

the first grammatical sketches, dictionaries, and collections of texts. Based on the lexical information available at the time, two morphophonological studies on historical reconstruction were published (Key 1968 and Girard 1971). In addition to proposing a Proto-Tacanan phonological system and Proto-Tacanan morphemes (504 cognate sets in Girard 1971), these studies also investigated the link with Panoan languages (116 cognate sets in Girard 1971). However, as acknowledged by Girard (1971), establishing the genetic affiliation between the two families requires more work and a better knowledge of the various Tacanan languages. Besides Key's and Girard's work on Tacanan and Panoan, there have also been suggestions of higher-level groupings. Suárez (1969; 1973) proposed a link between Tacanan, Panoan, and the Bolivian isolate languages Chimane-Mosetén and Yuracaré (see the papers on those languages published in this volume). A link between Tacanan, Panoan, Chimane-Mosetén, and Yuracaré is also found in the work of Swadesh (1959; 1960). Greenberg (1987) put forward the hypothesis of a link between Tacanan, Panoan, Chimane-Mosetén, Jê, and Carib languages. However, until more is known about the Tacanan languages and Proto-Tacanan, these relationships are highly speculative and remain an open question for further research.

More recently, starting in the mid 1990s, a new generation of academic linguists (including myself) has carried out more extensive studies of the grammatical structure of individual languages of the family, based on primary data collected during periods of extensive fieldwork. My own studies were dedicated to Cavineña from 1996 to 2004, Reyesano from 2004 to 2008, and Tacana since 2009. These studies have produced (or are in the process of producing) full-length grammatical descriptions of the languages, which have provided, for the first time, substantial morphosyntactic information and have allowed ambitious projects of morphosyntactic reconstruction to be undertaken.

This paper is a first attempt at reconstructing Tacanan verbal morphology—in particular, that having to do with third-person agreement and passive marking. It begins with some background on the argument-encoding systems of the distinct Tacanan languages (2) and continues with a description of the problem to be addressed in this paper: a verbal suffix *-ta* (or *-ka*) that is found in all Tacanan languages and that marks, depending on the language and the verb transitivity, third person, plural number, or passive (3). Section 4 hypothesizes that the five *-ta* suffixes are cognates and argues for their historical development from a unique **-ta* verbal suffix marking third-person plural S or A. In 5, I suggest that one could go even further back in time and propose the origin of **-ta* as a third-person plural independent pronoun.

2. Argument-encoding systems of Tacanan languages. Four of the five Tacanan languages (Araona, Cavineña, Ese Ejja, and Tacana) have an ergative case-marking system manifested by a special (ergative) marker on the A NP (or a special set of ergative independent pronouns), and no

marking on the S and the O NP (or a distinct set of absolutive independent pronouns). In all these languages, the ergative marker is an enclitic on the last word of the NP. The ergative case-marking pattern of Tacanan languages is illustrated below with examples from Cavineña.²

(1a) Cavineña transitive clause³

Iba=ra=tu *iyé-chine* **takure.**
 jaguar=ERG=3SG(ABS) kill-REC.PAST chicken(ABS)
 ‘The jaguar killed the chicken’.⁴

(1b) Cavineña intransitive clause

[**Tuke tupuju**]=tu **iba** *tsajaja-chine.*
 3SG behind=3SG(ABS) jaguar(ABS) run-REC.PAST
 ‘The jaguar ran behind him’. (Camp and Liccardi 1989:33)

The form of the ergative marker differs slightly from one language to the next: =*ra* in Cavineña (Guillaume 2006; 2008; 2010); =(j)a in Araona (Pitman 1980 and Emkow 2006); =(y/w)a in Ese Ejja (Chavarría 1984; 2003 and Vuillermet 2007; forthcoming a; forthcoming b); and =*ja* in Tacana (Ottaviano and Ottaviano 1965; 1989, Ottaviano 1980, and Guillaume field notes).

None of these four languages have any developed system of person marking on the verb, apart from the third-person suffix *-ta* (or *-ka*) discussed in this paper. Cavineña, however, has a system of pronominal enclitics in second position in the clause. This system is functionally very close to a system of person marking in the verb because a second-position bound pronoun can cross-reference an argument already expressed by an NP or an independent pronoun in the same clause, as with =*tu* ‘3SG’ which cross-references the

² The phonetic value of each grapheme used in this study is given below, using IPA symbols. The following abbreviations are used for the languages discussed: A for Araona, C for Cavineña, E for Ese Ejja, R for Reyesano, and T for Tacana. Sources are: Pitman and Pitman (1970) and Emkow (2006) for Araona; M. Chavarría (personal communication) for Baawaja Ese Ejja; Guillaume (2008) for Cavineña; Guillaume (field notes) for Reyesano; and van Wynen and van Wynen (1962) and Guillaume (field notes) for Tacana. Graphemes: *a* [a]; *b* [b] in A, C, and T, [β] in E, [ʙ] in R; *ch* [tʃ]; *d* [d] in A and C, [ɖ] in T, [ð] in R, [ɟ] in E; *dy* [j] in A and C; *dz* [ndz] in R; *d'* [tʃ] in T; *e* [e]; *i* [i]; *j* [h]; *k* [k]; *kw* [kʷ]; *l* [l] in R; *m* [m]; *n* [n]; *o* [o] in A and E; *p* [p], *r* [r] in C, [r] in R and T, [l] in A; *ry* [ʎ] in C; *s* [s] in A, C, E, and R, [ʃ] in T; *sh* [e]; *t* [t]; *ts* [ts] in A and C [tʃ] in R, [tʃ] in T; *ty* [c] in C; *u* [u] in C, R, and T; *w* [w]; *y* [j]; *jj* [χ] in E; *z* [z] in A.

³ Abbreviations used in this paper are: A = most agentive argument of a transitive predicate; ABS = absolutive; ANT = anterior; BM = boundary marker; COMP = completive; CONTR = contrastive; DAT = dative; DL = dual; EMPH = emphasis; ERG = ergative; EV = evidential; FOC = focus; GEN = genitive; IMPFV = imperfective; INC = incomplete; INT = interrogative; ITR = intransitive; LIG = ligature; LOC = locative; O = most patientive argument of a transitive predicate; PASS = passive; PERF = perfect; PL = plural; PREV = preventive; PROG = progressive; PTCL = particle; PURP = purpose; QUEST = question; REC.PAST = recent past; REM.PAST = remote past; REP = reportative; RES = resultative; S = single argument of an intransitive predicate; SAP = speech-act participant; SG = singular; UNCERT = uncertain; → acting on; [] multiple-word constituent; = clitic boundary; > higher than; 1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person.

⁴ When no source for an example is given, the example is from my own corpus.

O NP (*takure* ‘chicken’) in (1a) and the S NP (*iba* ‘jaguar’) in (1b). The encoding of grammatical functions by second-position clitic pronouns follows the same ergative pattern that characterizes NPs and independent pronouns (although the ergative alignment is slightly less transparent; see the full details in Guillaume 2006; 2008:chap. 15; 2010).

The fifth language of the family, Reyesano, has a radically different argument-encoding system because it does not have any case marking: overt NPs receive no marking regardless of their grammatical function, whether S, A, or O. Similarly, there is a single set of independent pronouns for the three grammatical functions.

(2a) Reyesano transitive clause

A-kachi-ta(-a) te iba te awadza.
 PAST-bite-3A-PAST BM jaguar BM tapir

‘The tapir bit the jaguar’ (or, in a different context, ‘the jaguar bit the tapir’).

(2b) Reyesano intransitive clause

A-wudzudzu-a te awadza.
 PAST-run-PAST BM tapir

‘The tapir ran away (when I shot at it)’.

Unlike other Tacanan languages, Reyesano has a full-fledged system of person marking on the verb, realized by first- and second-person prefixes (*m-* ‘1SG’, *mi-* ‘2SG’, *ka-* ‘1PL’, and *mika-* ‘2PL’). In intransitive clauses, the prefixes cross-reference the (unique) S argument when it is a first or second person.

(3) Reyesano intransitive verbs

<i>m-a-puti-a</i>	[1SG-PAST-GO-PAST]	‘ I went’
<i>k-a-puti-a</i>	[1PL-PAST-GO-PAST]	‘ we went’
<i>mi-a-puti-a</i>	[2SG-PAST-GO-PAST]	‘ you (sg) went’
<i>mik-a-puti-a</i>	[2PL-PAST-GO-PAST]	‘ you (pl) went’

In transitive clauses, the system is hierarchical, in that the person prefixes index only the argument higher on a 2 > 1 > 3 scale regardless of its grammatical function (A or O).⁵

(4) Reyesano transitive clauses

<i>mi-a-ba(-a)</i>	[2SG-PAST-SEE-PAST]	‘ you (sg) saw him/her/it/them’ or ‘I/we saw you (sg) ’
<i>mik-a-ba(-a)</i>	[2PL-PAST-SEE-PAST]	‘ you (pl) saw him/her/it/them’ or ‘I/we saw you (pl) ’
<i>mi-a-ba-ta(-a)</i>	[2SG-PAST-SEE-3A-PAST]	‘he/she/it/they saw you (sg) ’
<i>mik-a-ba-ta(-a)</i>	[2PL-PAST-SEE-3A-PAST]	‘he/she/it/they saw you (pl) ’

⁵ In transitive clauses with a third-person argument, it is the presence vs. absence of the marker *-ta* that disambiguates the grammatical function of the argument cross-referenced in the prefix position (see Guillaume 2009 for a more detailed discussion).

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT-ENCODING SYSTEMS OF TACANAN LANGUAGES

Language	Marking System	Alignment	Ergative Marker
Araona	Case marking	Ergative	= <i>(j)a</i>
Cavineña	Case marking + second-position bound pronouns	Ergative	= <i>ra</i>
Ese Ejja	Case marking	Ergative	= <i>(y/w)a</i>
Reyesano	Person marking in the verb	Hierarchical	None
Tacana	Case marking	Ergative	= <i>ja</i>

<i>m-a-ba(-a)</i>	[1SG-PAST-see-PAST]	'I saw him/her/it/them'
<i>m-a-ba-ta(-a)</i>	[1SG-PAST-see-3A-PAST]	'he/she/it/they saw me '
<i>k-a-ba-ta(-a)</i>	[2PL-PAST-see-3A-PAST]	'he/she/it/they saw us '

None of the Tacanan languages makes use of constituent order to encode/disambiguate the grammatical function of the participants. In addition, the NPs and independent pronouns are never obligatory.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the argument-encoding systems of each Tacanan language.

3. Third-person agreement and passive marking. The issue I focus on in this paper concerns the cross-referencing of third-person arguments using the verbal suffix *-ta* (or *-ka*) in Araona, Ese Ejja, Reyesano, and Tacana (3.1) and the marking of passive by a similar suffix *-ta* in Cavineña (3.2).

3.1. Third-person agreement in Araona, Ese Ejja, Reyesano, and Tacana. In Araona, Ese Ejja, Reyesano, and Tacana, a suffix *-ta* (or *-ka*) marks a third-person plural S argument within an intransitive clause and a third-person (singular or plural) A argument within a transitive clause. Examples of the transitive *-ta* in Reyesano were given in (2a) and (4) above. The use of intransitive *-ta* is illustrated in (5).

(5) Reyesano intransitive clauses

(5a) *a-puti-a* [PAST-go-PAST] 'he/she/it went'
a-puti-ta(-a) [PAST-go-3S.PL-PAST] 'they went'

(5b) *A-wudzudzu-ta(-a)* *te* [*ki* *paku* *kwana*].
 3-PAST-run-3S.PL-PAST BM 1SG.GEN dog PL
 'My dogs were already running'.

Since third-person singular S is unmarked, similarly to third-person (singular or plural) O, this unusual pattern could arguably be analyzed as an instance of split-intransitivity ($S_{PL} = A/S_{SG} = O$).⁶

⁶ Note that we are rather far from prototypical split-intransitivity, since the split is not based on aspect or agentivity but on number. Also, it is restricted to third-person marking. For a typological discussion of this pattern, see Guillaume (2009).

In all the languages, *-ta* is placed between the verb stem and a (usually) obligatory TAM suffix. Depending on the language, intransitive and transitive *-ta* have varying degrees of productivity. In Reyesano, both intransitive and transitive *-ta* are obligatory. In other words, they are required whenever there is a third-person plural S argument or a third-person (singular or plural) A argument, respectively.⁷

In Tacana (6 and 7 below), the same situation occurs. In texts published by Ottaviano and Ottaviano (1965) and those I collected during two short fieldtrips in 2009 and 2010,⁸ *-ta* is always present whenever there is a third-person plural S or a third-person (singular or plural) A.

(6) Tacana intransitive clauses

(6a) *e-neti-ani*

IMPFV-stand-IMPFV

‘he is standing’ (Ottaviano and Ottaviano 1965:388)

(6b) *e-neti-ta-ani*

IMPFV-stand-3S.PL-IMPFV

‘they are standing’ (Ottaviano and Ottaviano 1965:363)

(7) Tacana transitive clauses

(7a) *e-manuame-ta-ani*

IMPFV-kill-3A-IMPFV

‘he is killing him’ (Ottaviano and Ottaviano 1965:362)

(7b) [*Jame kwana=ja*] *da* *ema* *jid’iu-ta-itia*
 frog PL=ERG PTCL 1SG(ABS) peal-3A-PAST

‘the frogs skinned me’ (Ottaviano 1980:14–15)

In Ese Ejja, intransitive *-ta* (Baawaja dialect) or *-ka* (Sonene dialect) is rare and used mostly with posture or motion verbs, in addition to ‘die’ and ‘cook’. Transitive *-ta* (or *-ka*), however, is obligatory, as in Reyesano and Tacana.⁹ (8) and (9) are from the Baawaja dialect.

(8) Baawaja Ese Ejja intransitive clauses

(8a) *Jikiójo ta* [*Sha éjja*] *ani*.

here CONTR Sha spirit(ABS) sit

‘Here is Sha’s spirit’. (Chavarría 1984:62)

⁷ In the case of intransitive *-ta*, this statement may need to be revised slightly: in a few examples with inanimate plural S in the text corpus, *-ta* does not appear (see Guillaume 2009).

⁸ Note that there is no thorough grammatical description of Tacana; the only study available is a tagmemic grammar sketch by Ottaviano and Ottaviano (1965).

⁹ Note that we have very little grammatical information on the Baawaja dialect of Ese Ejja, so my statements here are the result of my studying texts. For the Sonene dialect, I rely on Shoemaker and Shoemaker (1965) and Vuillermet (2007; forthcoming *a*; forthcoming *b*).

- (8b) [*Ebákwa dejja*] *aní-ta* *kiawéshachii*.
 child male(ABS) sit-3S.PL there_far_away
 ‘The children are there far away’. (Chavarría 1984:58)

(9) Baawaja Ese Ejja transitive clauses

- (9a) *Shawe=a dokwei tekwa-ta-pa*.
 tapir=ERG deer(ABS) kill-3A-PAST
 ‘The tapir killed the deer’. (Chavarría 2003:2)

- (9b) *Eseéjja=a mo tekwá-ta-ni*.
 person=ERG 1SG(ABS) sting-3A-PROG
 ‘Someone is stinging me’. (Chavarría 1984:26)

In Araona, intransitive *-ta* occurs even less frequently than in Ese Ejja. It is not mentioned in the grammar by Emkow (2006) but is (briefly) discussed by Pitman (1980:44). As it turns out, the examples that have *-ta* on intransitive verbs only involve posture verbs or the location/existential verb *po* ‘be’, as in (10b). According to both Pitman (1980:43) and Emkow (2006:560–66), transitive *-ta* is not obligatory either, although, as far as I can tell from the examples the authors provide, it often occurs (see 11).¹⁰

(10) Araona intransitive clauses

- (10a) *Ketsio reunion po-ani?*
 when meeting(ABS) be-PROG
 ‘When will the meeting be?’ (Emkow 2006:289)

- (10b) *Teje=o pó-ta-ja*.
 garden=LOC be-3S.PL-PROG
 ‘They are in the garden’. (Pitman 1980:44)

(11) Araona transitive clauses

- (11a) *Wada teje kwé-ta-ja*.
 3SG.ERG garden(ABS) cut-3A-PROG
 ‘He is clearing the garden’. (Pitman 1980:33)

- (11b) *Wada ema dobea-ta-iki jidyó*.
 3SG.ERG 1SG(ABS) bring-3A-PAST here
 ‘He brought me here.’ (Pitman 1980:83)

¹⁰ The rationale for using or not using transitive *-ta* in Araona is not altogether clear. Pitman (1980:83) states (but does not demonstrate) that *-ta* is used when the A is not the main participant, while Emkow (2006: 560–66) argues (but, in my view, does not fully demonstrate) that *-ta* is used when O is a definite participant. Both statements seem to point to a notion of respective topicality, with *-ta* being used when the O is more topical than A. More work is needed, however, to confirm this hypothesis.

To summarize, in Araona, Ese Ejja, Reyesano, and Tacana, there is a verbal suffix *-ta* in both intransitive and transitive clauses. In all four of these languages, this suffix marks intransitive third-person plural S and transitive third-person (singular or plural) A. The productivity of the suffix varies among the languages.

3.2. Passive in Cavineña. In my Cavineña corpus, I found only two examples with a suffix *-ta* occurring on an intransitive verb, both involving the verb *maju-* ‘die’ (12). In these examples, the meaning of *-ta* is unclear. It does not appear to involve plurality but rather seems to express an impersonal third-person S argument.

(12) Cavineña intransitive verbs

(12a) *Ejeke=kwana=tu* *maju-ta-ya*.
 INT=UNCERT=3SG(ABS) die-TA-IMPFV
 ‘Someone (unidentified) is going to die’.

(12b) *Ijawakada=tuke=ekwana-ja* *etare*
 noisy=3SG(ABS)=1PL-DAT house(ABS)
e-maju-ta=tibu.
 RES-die-TA=REASON

‘Our house is very noisy because someone has died’. (Camp and Liccardi 1989:59)

With transitive verbs, a verbal suffix *-ta* does occur, although it is not very productive either. Interestingly, unlike in the previous languages, it is a passive marker, not a third-person marker (13).

(13) Cavineña transitive verbs: passive

(13a) *A-ta-wa=taa=yatse*.
 affect-PASS-PERF=EMPH=1DL(ABS)
 ‘We (my brother and I) got killed (lit., got affected)’.

(13b) *Jadya* *tirya-ta-wa=ju*. . .
 thus finish-PASS-PERF=DS
 ‘Having been exterminated (lit., finished) that way (they decided to go live somewhere else)’.

The rationale for treating this suffix as a passive is as follows. First, native speakers always translate sentences with verbs marked by *-ta* into passive (or at least impersonal passive) sentences in Spanish, never into active ones. Second, there is clear evidence for formal detransitivization, such as the fact that agents cannot be expressed: in (13a) and (13b), for example, it is not possible to use an NP or an independent pronoun to specify the identity of the ‘killer’ and the ‘finisher’, respectively. Also, detransitivization is found in the verb morphology. Cavineña has certain aspectual and postural suffixes which have

two allomorphs, the choice of which depends on the transitivity of the verb stem they attach to. This is the case, for example, with the completive suffix, which shows up as *-tere* on intransitive verb stems and *-tirya* on transitive verb stems (Guillaume 2008:191ff.). As it turns out, a transitive verb with *-ta* can only select the intransitive completive allomorph *-tere*, as shown in (14).

- (14) Cavineña
*Dutya ekana iye-ta-tere-wa. *iye-ta-tirya-wa*
 all 3PL(ABS) kill-PASS-COMP.ITR-PERF
 ‘They were all killed’.

As noted above, *-ta* is not productive. In texts, it is found very infrequently and only with a very limited number of roots with highly transitive semantics, such as those in the preceding examples. In elicitation, it is not accepted on any verbs.¹¹

Because of the lack of productivity of *-ta* and, as a result, the scarcity of examples in the corpus, it is unclear whether or not the patient of a verb passivized by *-ta* has subject properties, in particular behavioral and control properties. In the only example available of a verb marked by *-ta* in a sentence with obligatory subject-to-subject coreference between its clauses (15), the coreferential argument is the notional A of the passive, not the notional O.

- (15) Cavineña
 [[*Ekwanaja ebakani=kwana*] *waraji=kwana=keja duju-tsu*]
 1PL.GEN name=PL authority=PL=LOC.GNL take-SS

ekwana tsume-ta-ya.
 1PL(ABS) use-PASS-IMPFV
 ‘They (the land owners) give (lit., take) our names to the authorities and use us’.

This example suggests that the notional O does not have subject behavioral and control properties. More examples of this type are needed, especially examples from texts, in order to conclude that this is indeed the case.

To summarize, Cavineña has an intransitive suffix *-ta* with a very restricted distribution—it is only attested with the verb *maju-* ‘die’ in the corpus—and with meanings having to do with the impersonal. Cavineña also has a non-productive transitive suffix *-ta* used for marking a passive derivation.

3.3. Summary. The different meanings and degrees of productivity of the intransitive and transitive *-ta* verbal suffixes in the five Tacanan languages are summarized in table 2.

¹¹ Cavineña has a second passive marker, *-tana*, which is fully productive. See Guillaume (forthcoming) for a detailed discussion of the differences between *-ta* and *-tana* and of the possible historical origin of *-tana*.

TABLE 2
MEANING AND PRODUCTIVITY OF THE *-ta* VERBAL SUFFIXES IN THE TACANAN LANGUAGES

	Intransitive <i>-ta</i>	Transitive <i>-ta</i>
Reyesano	3S plural, obligatory	3A (singular or plural), obligatory
Tacana	3S plural, obligatory	3A (singular or plural), obligatory
Ese Ejja ¹	3S plural, rare	3A (singular or plural), obligatory
Araona	3S plural, rare	3A (singular or plural), not obligatory (?)
Cavineña	3S impersonal (?), one verb	Passive, nonproductive

¹ *-ka* in the Sonene dialect of Ese Ejja.

Below, I argue for a cognate relationship between the different *-ta* suffixes and investigate what historical development could have led to their present-day forms and meanings.

4. Diachronic development of *-ta* suffixes: Proto-Tacanan. In view of the reasonably close similarities in form, function, and distribution of the *-ta* suffixes in the five Tacanan languages, I hypothesize that they are all cognates; that is, I suggest that they come from a single source. If this hypothesis is correct, then there are a number of different possibilities for the meaning of the historical source of this morpheme. It could either have had any of the meanings expressed by present-day *-ta* suffixes, or another meaning no longer apparent in any of the languages. In other words, there are logically these possibilities: (1) third-person plural, (2) third-person (number neutral), (3) third-person impersonal, (4) passive, (5) something else.

According to the general literature on grammaticalization, it seems more probable that the source is a person marker rather than a passive marker; it is more common for passive markers to evolve from person markers rather than vice versa (see Haspelmath 1990 and Heine and Kuteva 2002:235–57). If the source of *-ta* suffixes was a person marker, it remains to be determined whether it was plural, number neutral, or impersonal. Considering the tenet of grammaticalization that morphemes become less specific over time, one would expect third-person plural to be primary since this is a more specific meaning than third-person number neutral or third-person impersonal. It seems reasonable, therefore, to posit the third-person plural as the original meaning of the source morpheme, in which case Proto-Tacanan had a suffix **-ta* marking third-person plural S and A arguments. The posited **-ta* ‘3PL S/A’ would then have evolved in distinct directions, depending on the language and the transitivity of the verb stem.

With intransitive verbs, **-ta* has remained a third-person plural marker in Reyesano, Tacana, Ese Ejja, and Araona. In Cavineña, it seems to have become an impersonal marker. In Reyesano and Tacana, **-ta* remained (or became)

obligatory; as discussed above, whenever there is a third-person plural S, *-ta* is required. In Ese Ejja and Araona, it remained (or became) optional: it is rarely used, and only with a restricted number of verbal roots. Finally, in Cavineña, it has basically disappeared, being retained on only one root, ‘die’. Regarding the obligatory status of third-person plural marking in Reyesano and Tacana, it is quite possible that this was influenced by Spanish, where plural marking in the verb is an inflectional category. It is worth mentioning that both Tacana and Reyesano (unlike Araona and Ese Ejja) have been in very close contact with Spanish for a long time; speakers of these two languages have been living in missions for centuries.¹²

With transitive verbs, **-ta* lost its plural meaning in all of the languages. In Reyesano, Tacana, Ese Ejja, and Araona, it became a third-person A marker unspecified for number. In other words, in these languages it now marks any third-person argument in A function, whether singular or plural. In Cavineña, it became a passive marker, probably with an intermediate stage during which it referred to an impersonal A argument (similar to the impersonal use of the pronoun *they* in English).¹³ This latter development is, as already mentioned, a well-attested one (see Haspelmath 1990 and Heine and Kuteva 2002: 235–57). The former, however, has not to my knowledge been reported in the general linguistic literature and remains unexplained. Why should a third-person plural marker lose its plural specification and yet remain definite (i.e., not develop into some sort of impersonal marker)? And why should it do so only in transitive clauses? The answer may reside in the functional need for clearer disambiguation of A vs. O roles in “pro-drop/zero-anaphora” languages, that is, languages in which the core NPs or independent pronouns are never obligatory. Since the function of the arguments is not indicated on the verb,¹⁴ when the NPs or independent pronouns are not expressed in transitive clauses, the semantic function of the participants, especially in situations involving a SAP and a third person, can only be retrieved by looking at the presence or absence of the suffix *-ta*. In other words, a possible rationale for the generalization of a third-person plural A marker to any third-person A in four of the Tacanan languages is that it allowed those languages to develop

¹² Cavineña, like Reyesano and Tacana, is a language of people who were “reduced” in a mission. Apparently, **-ta* took a different path in this language, from third-person plural to third-person impersonal.

¹³ An argument in favor of an intermediate stage with an impersonal marker comes from the fact that, as shown above, the *-ta* on intransitive verbs in Cavineña appears to have impersonal meanings. Note also that the passive construction resembles an impersonal passive in that the patient does not appear to have behavior and control subject properties (see 3.2).

¹⁴ As shown in 2 above, Tacana, Ese Ejja, and Araona have no system of indexation of first and second person in the verb. Reyesano does index first and second person, but the system is hierarchical and does not indicate their grammatical function.

TABLE 3
THIRD-PERSON INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS IN THE TACANAN LANGUAGES¹

	S/O			A			GEN/DAT		
	SG	DL	PL	SG	DL	PL	SG	DL	PL
Araona	<i>joda</i>	<i>watseda</i>	<i>(da)kama</i>	<i>wada</i>	<i>waiseada</i>	<i>(da)kamaja</i>	<i>(wa)da</i>	<i>watseada</i>	<i>(da)kanaja</i>
Cavineña	<i>tuke</i>	<i>taise</i>	<i>tuna</i>	<i>tura</i>	<i>tatsera</i>	<i>tunara</i>	<i>tuja</i>	<i>tatseja</i>	<i>tunaja</i>
Ese Ejja	<i>oya</i>	—	<i>oya</i>	<i>owaya</i>	—	<i>owaya</i>	<i>ojaya</i>	—	<i>ojaya</i>
Reyesano	<i>tu(w)e</i>	—	<i>tuna(we)</i>	<i>tu(w)e</i>	—	<i>tuna(we)</i>	<i>ta</i>	—	<i>tuna(da)</i>
Tacana	<i>tuada</i>	<i>tuatseda</i>	<i>tuna/tuneda</i>	<i>tuaweda</i>	<i>tuatseda</i>	<i>tuna/tuneda</i>	<i>tusa</i>	<i>tuatsesa</i>	<i>tunasa</i>

¹ The sources are as follows: Emkow (2006:246) for Araona; Guillaume (2008:569) for Cavineña; Vuillermet (forthcoming a) for the Sonene dialect of Ese Ejja; Guillaume (2009) for Reyesano; and Ottaviano and Ottaviano (1965:402; 1989), Ottaviano (1980), and Guillaume (field notes) for Tacana.

a more explicit reference-tracking system, clarifying the identity of the arguments in at least some configurations.

5. Diachronic development of *-ta* suffixes: Pre-Proto-Tacanan. One of the most common origins of person marking in verbs is probably the cliticization of independent pronouns (Siewierska 2004:251). Table 3 shows the third-person independent pronouns in the Tacanan languages. Given these forms, I believe it is not unreasonable to suggest an independent third-person plural pronoun ***tuna* as the ancestor of the suffix **-ta*.

As can be seen in table 3, the third-person pronouns in three of the languages (Cavineña, Reyesano, and Tacana) are similar in shape to the *-ta* suffix, as they contain either an element *ta* (in boldface and underlined) or an element *tu* (in boldface). Note also that the plural forms in these same languages contain the syllable *na*. Finally, from the distribution of *ta* and *tu* forms, it is probable that all the *ta* forms are phonological reductions of *tua* or *tuCa* sequences, that is, *tu* followed by either the vowel *a* or by a consonant and the vowel *a*. If we look at the dual pronouns, it is very likely that the *ta* in the Cavineña forms comes from *tua*, as found in the corresponding dual forms in Tacana. And the Reyesano third-person singular genitive pronoun *ta* almost certainly comes from *tuda*, *da* being the regular genitive marker in the language, as occurs in one variant of the third-person plural genitive pronoun, *tunada*.

These observations suggest that **-ta* could be the reduced version of an independent third-person ***tuna*, a form that is still found synchronically with the same segmental makeup and the same meaning in three Tacanan languages (Cavineña, Reyesano, and Tacana). This pronoun became an enclitic to the verb and grammaticalized into a verbal suffix agreement marker. One might wonder how this could have occurred in languages with flexible constituent order. It may be that the phenomenon of second-position encliticization, where independent pronouns become unstressed and attach to the last phonological word of the first immediate constituent of the clause, was involved. This phenomenon is found in present-day Cavineña, as was briefly discussed in 2 above. In (16), additional examples of this are shown, involving second-position encliticization of the third-person plural =*tuna* referring to an S argument in (16a) and an A argument in (16b).

(16) Cavineña (Guillaume 2006; 2008; and field notes)

(16a) [*Tumeke mejiji=ju*]=*pa=tuna* *tawi-nati-kware*.
 that beach=LOC=REP=3PL(ABS) sleep-GO-REM.PAST
 ‘It is said that they slept on that beach’.

(16b) *Tume=tunara=ekwana* *tya-tsa-kware* *emajaka*.
 then=3PL.ERG=1PL(ABS) give-COME-REM.PAST space(ABS)
 ‘They gave us a place (to sleep)’.

As the verb (or predicate) is the only constituent required in a clause, clauses in discourse often consist only of a verb followed by second-position enclitics, as in (17), which could well be the start of grammaticalization of second-position enclitics into verbal enclitics and later into verbal suffixes.

- (17) Cavineña (Guillaume 2006; 2008; and field notes)
Tedidisha-kware=tunara=ike.
 rub_all_over-REM.PAST=3PL.ERG=1SG(ABS)
 ‘They rubbed me all over’.

Postulating a similar process of bound pronoun encliticization in Pre-Proto-Tacanan, we can hypothesize that Pre-Proto-Tacanan independent ***tuna* became a second-position enclitic ***=tuna*, then a verbal enclitic ***=tuna*, and finally a verbal suffix ***tuna*. Subsequently (or simultaneously), ***tuna* was reduced to **-ta*, along the lines discussed above.

All of this is quite speculative, however. Until now, there have been no historical reconstructions of a Pre-Proto- or even a Proto-Tacanan system of independent pronouns, so there is no proof that ***tuna* ever existed. Also, other potential problems with (at least) the cliticization process must be acknowledged; for example, simple cliticization should put the pronoun after the TAM suffixes rather than before them, and normal cliticization should involve other members of the paradigm of independent pronouns, not just third-person plural.

Until we have a better idea of the nature of the pre-Proto- and proto-language and the development of the daughter languages (in particular in the domain of independent pronouns and TAM morphology), the above proposal is only tentative.

6. Conclusions. In this paper, I have argued that the *-ta* (or *-ka*) suffixes found in the five Tacanan languages are historically related and that they come from a single source, a suffix **-ta* that marked plurality of third-person S or A arguments. This hypothesis accords with grammaticalization theory, with the development of a third-person plural A marker into a passive marker. However, it also involves an unexpected typology: the grammaticalization from a (definite) third-person plural marker to a (definite) third-person number neutral marker. I have proposed a functional explanation in terms of the need for these languages to disambiguate more clearly the grammatical function of A and O arguments in transitive clauses. Finally, I have attempted to show that **-ta* could have originated in a third-person plural independent pronoun ***tuna* in Pre-Proto-Tacanan, although the evidence for this latter development is much weaker than for the former.

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