This abstract addresses the properties of the ergative agreement system in Davani; this is a south western Iranian minority endangered language with a decreasing population (almost 120 speakers) spoken in the village of Davan, Fars, Iran. More specifically, the aim of the discussion is twofold: i) to describe and provide a structural analysis of Davani split ergativity within the Probe-Goal theory of AGREE (Chomsky 2000, 2001); ii) to explain the unexpected sources of agreement patterns in this language, and how the analysis proposed can be extended to more canonical instances of split ergativity.

The ergativity of Davani is in its agreement system, showing a split along the dimension of tense. That is, the ergative alignment is reflected in the agreement system in finite clauses in the past tense, in verbal paradigms only. This is best shown by a contrast of (unaccusative) intransitive and transitive sentences in the past tense (1) vs. the present tense (2). In the past, O is cross-referenced by the same morpheme series as S in the same position (attached to the verb, 1a 1b, 1c), while A is cross-referenced by a different series in a different position (attached to the first constituent in the sentence, 1c). In the present tense, A and S are cross-referenced by the same agreement morphology, as opposed to O (2a vs 2b)

(1) Past tense
   a) una šeδ-en 3pl went-3pl
      ‘They went.’
   b) Hasan-o Hoseyn δoves-en Hasan-and Hoseyn run-3pl
      ‘Hasan and Hoseyn ran.’
   c) Hasan-o Hoseyn-e-š a ro gel ro: kešek kerdeδ-en Hasan-and Hoseyn-e-3sg on on ground pull did-3pl
      ‘He pulled Hasan and Hoseyn on the ground.’
   d) sev-a-ku-šu xa. apple-a-def-3pl.cl. ate.
      ‘They ate the apple.’

(2) Present tense
   a) una me xand-en they prog. laugh-3pl.
      ‘They are laughing.’
   b) una Ali me ven-en 3pl Ali prog see-3pl
      ‘They see/are seeing Ali
   c) Hasan-o Hoseyn-e-š a ro gel ro: kešek kerdeδ-en Hasan-and Hoseyn-e-3sg on on ground pull did-3pl
      ‘He pulled Hasan and Hoseyn on the ground.’

Although Davani displays a typologically less common agreement pattern, some connections can nevertheless be established with other split ergative languages. In Davani Os carrying features related to ‘specificity’ and unaccusative subjects are collapsed into a class as they are the only arguments that agree with the verb. In order for an object in the past tense to trigger agreement, it must be [+specific], [+human] and [+ highly affected]. This is illustrated by the contrast in 1c vs. 1d (‘the apple’ lacks the feature [+human]). This talk argues that the verbal agreement in the past tense is the structural counterpart of a structural nominative case assigned by finite T to the object. As the A is unavailable to check the [uφ] in T (it carries an inherent ergative case), an agreement relationship is established between finite T and the nominative object. However, the agreement relation is only established when the object moves outside the VP. This explains the ‘specificity’ interpretation on the object (Diesing 1992, de Hoop 1996, etc.), which is seen in other split ergative languages (Hindi, Mahajan 1989, 1992). Following Mahajan (1989), the object is assumed to move outside the VP in order to get Case. As in many other split ergative languages, structural accusative cannot be licensed inside the VP due to the absence/structural underspecification of the v head. The data from Davani also shows that there is a non-trivial correspondence between the position of a DP and the interpretation it can take.