Conference on the Languages and Linguistics of Middle and Central America

Totonacan

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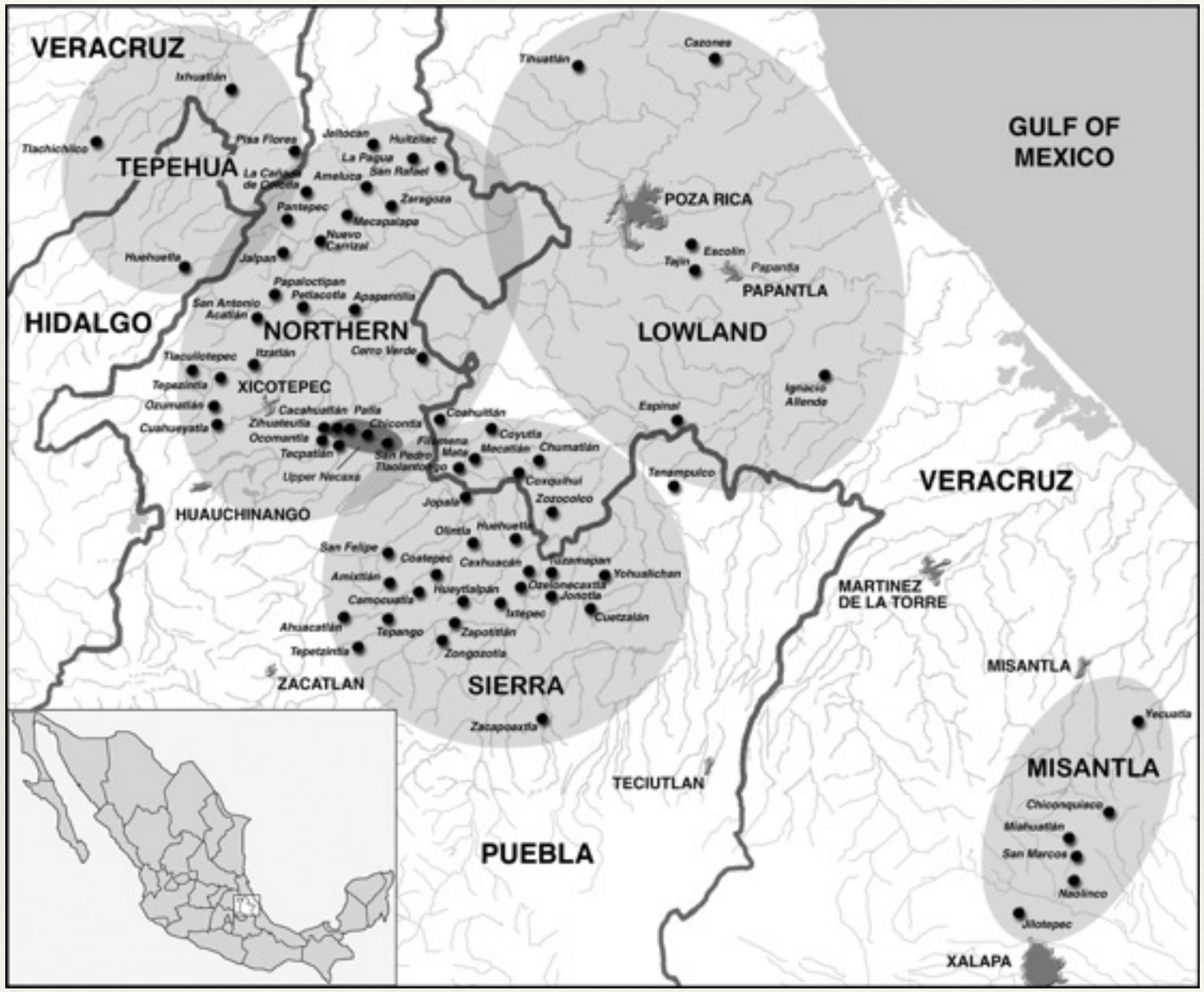
Totonacan family

- approx. 253,000 speakers
- divided into two branches: Totonac and Tepehua
- 3 Tepehua languages:
  - Pisaflores
  - Tlachichilco
  - Huehuetla
- Totonac has traditionally has 4 divisions
  - Misantla
  - Northern
  - Sierra
  - Lowland
- number of languages in divisions is unknown



Typological profile

- highly agglutinative or polysynthetic languages

  i̯škinkaːtateːliːšo̯ʔoni̯ku̯tuma̯ːʔo̯ːnampaláːn

  i̯š– kin– kaː– ta– teː– liː– **šo̯ʔó** –ni̯ –ku̯tún –ma̯ː –ʔo̯ː –nan –palá –yaː –n

  PAST–1OBJ– PL.OBJ– 3PL.SUB–PATH– INST–**pay** –BEN –DSD –PROG –TOT –ST.PL –RPT –IMPF –2OBJ

  'They didn't want to be coming by and paying us all (they owed us) again because of that.'

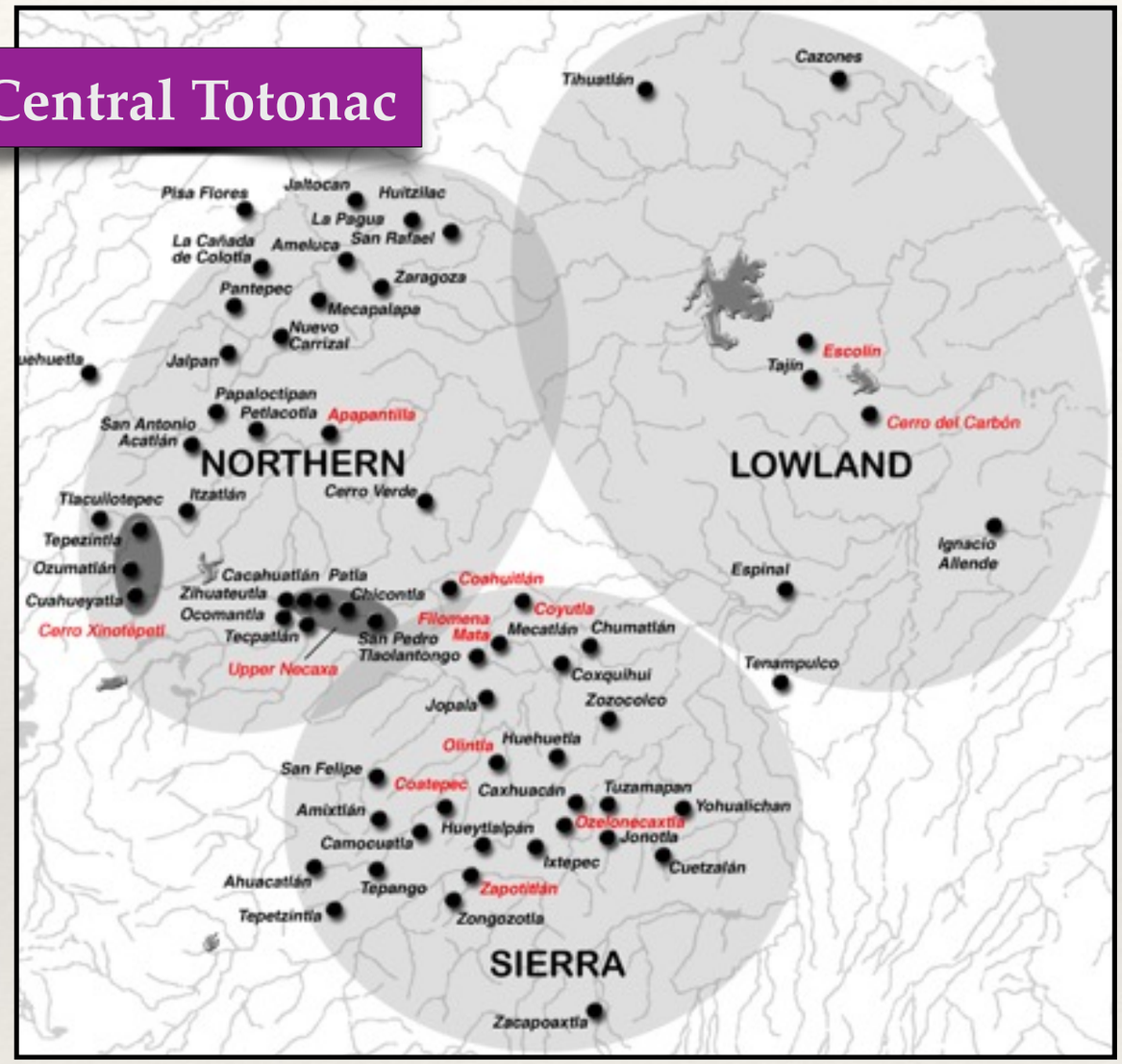
- constituent order very flexible, governed by information structure
- unmarked VS & VO (as per Dryer 1997)
- nominative/accusative alignment, no nominal cases
- prefixal numeral classifiers, transnumeral nouns
- one to no adpositions, body part terms used as locatives
- body part prefixes used on verbs to express locative and configurational meanings
- valency regulated by multiple causatives and applicatives
- agreement with subject and one or two objects

Current issues

- field has reached the critical mass for the beginning of bitter internecine warfare
  - there are almost 10 of us
- currently, there is a lot of discussion around
  - internal reconstruction
    - Totonac internal relations
    - glottalic features in proto-Totonacan
  - primary and symmetrical objects

Totonac internal relations

- Tot is often split into 4 symmetrical groups
- but division Misantla vs. others is stark
  - phonological, morphological, lexical evidence
- Brown et al. (2011) propose Central group
- within Central, different sources suggest different sub-groupings
  - Northern-Sierra vs. Lowland (García Rojas 1978)
  - Northern vs. Lowland-Sierra (Ichon 1969; Davletshin 2008; Brown et al. 2011)
  - Sierra vs. Northern-Lowland (MacKay & Trechsel, to appear)
- of these three scenarios, only the latter two seem to be much in play



Northern: Upper Necaxa, Apapantilla, Coahuitlán
Sierra: Zapotitlán, Coatepec, Coyutla, Olintla, Ozelonacaxtla
Lowland: Cerro del Carbón, Escolín
Uncertain: Filomeno Mata, Cerro Xinolatépetl

Phonological evidence

- not many regular sound changes to divide up the Central group
- the back fricative is **/h/** in Lowland and Sierra, **/x/** or **/χ/** in Northern
  - Papantla may have weak phonological evidence for underlying /x/ (Levy, p.c.)
  - Coatepec McQuown (1990) and Ozelonacaxtla (Román Lobato 2008) are reported to have both /x/ and /h/
  - Brown et al. (2011) and Davletshin (2008, 2014) reconstruct *x and *h for proto-Totonacan (disputed by MacKay and Trechsel 2013)
- Northern has **5-vowel** systems, Sierra and Lowland typically have **3-vowel** systems
- **laryngealized vowels** in Northern occur in all syllable-types
  - Lowland lacks laryngeals following sonorants and seems to have lost them in many syllables following fricatives
  - a cluster of languages in the Sierra (Coatepec, Olintla, Huehuetla) appear to have lost laryngealization

Morphological evidence

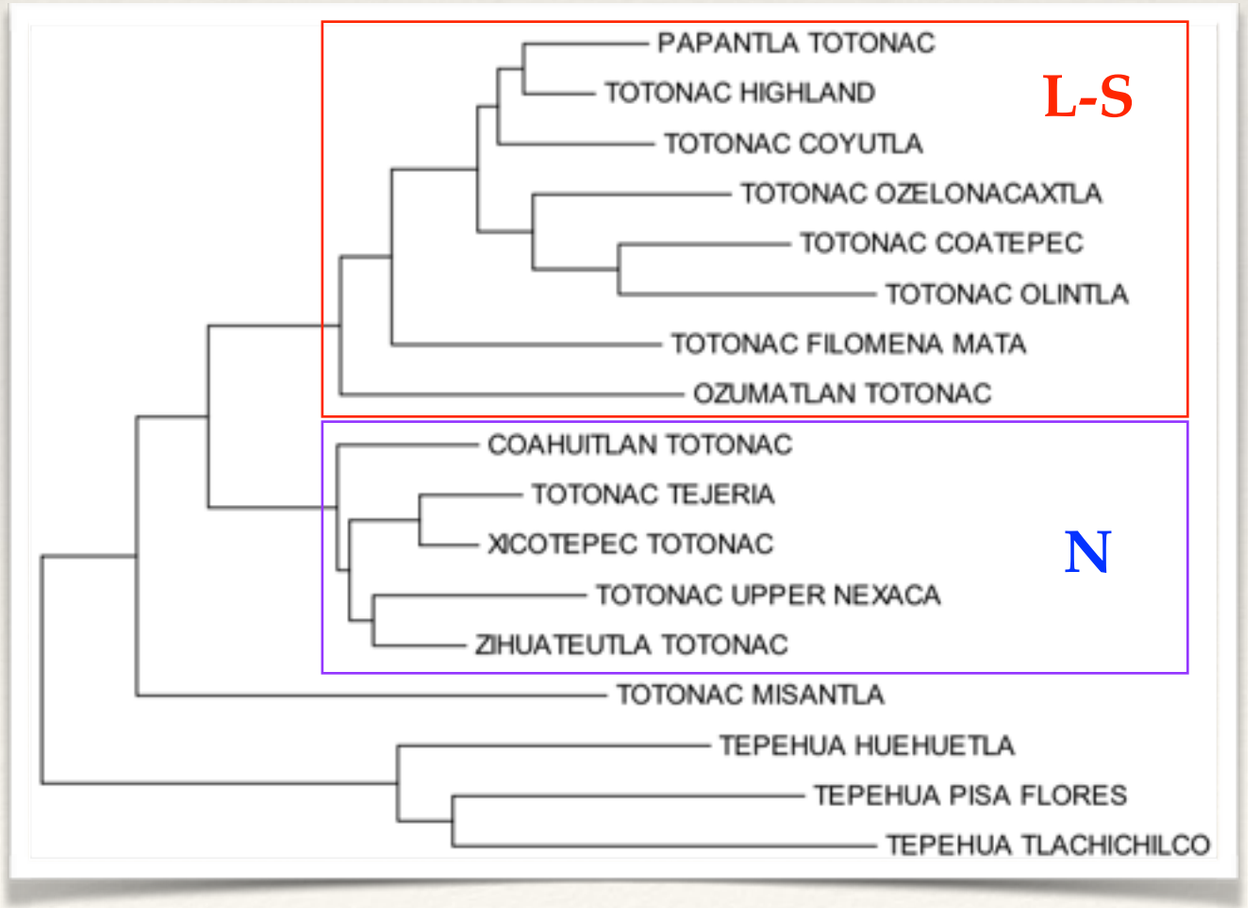
- Sierra is distinguished by 3 features (MacKay & Trechsel, to appear):
  - suffix *-qo꞉* becomes a generalized plural-participant marker
    - *-qo꞉* is totalitive/terminative in N, L, **Filomeno Mata**, and **Cerro Xinolatépetl**
    - *ta-* '3pl.sub', *ka꞉-* 'pl.obj' in these languages
  - use of compositional 2 > 1 forms (when 1 and/or 2 is plural)
    - other Totonacan languages use non-compositional syncretic forms
    - identical syncretic pattern shared by N, L, and **Filomeno Mata**
  - preserves the /y/ of the imperfective suffix *-ya꞉* in ultimate final position
    - Zapotitlán *taštúy* 's/he goes out' vs. Upper Necaxa *taštú* 's/he goes out'
    - suffix completely elided in N, L, **Filomeno Mata**, and **Cerro Xinolatépetl**
- MacKay & Trechsel use these traits to suggest (not very strongly) a Northern-Papantla grouping
  - however, equally possible Sierra innovated after the Lowland-Sierra vs Northern split
  - lexical evidence indicates that these are recent innovations

Lexical evidence

- clearly groups Lowland-Sierra against Northern
- some of the isoglosses:

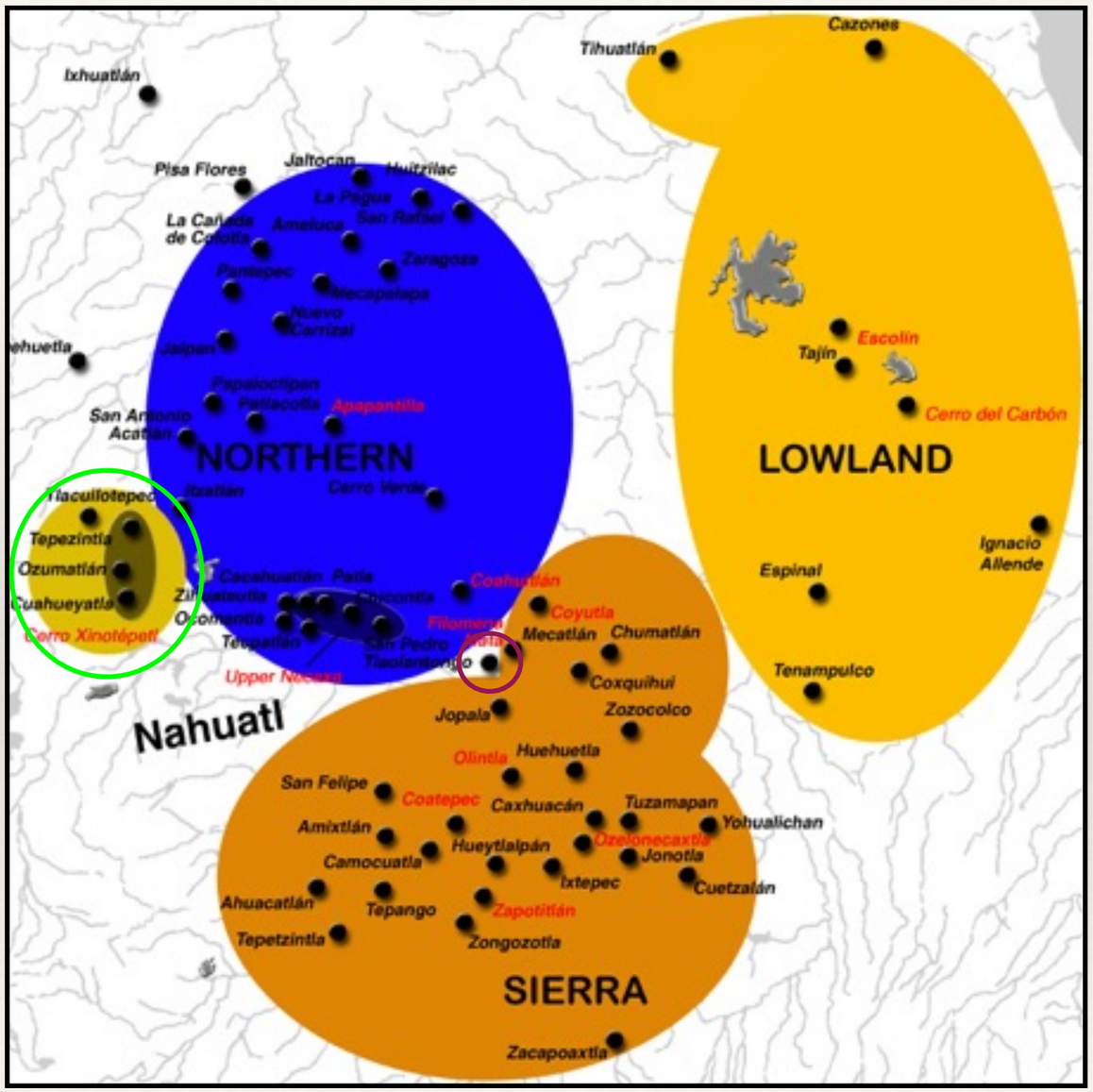
‘water’:	Tep, M, N *škaːn*, L-S *čučut*	‘see’:	Tep *laqcʼín*, N *laqtsín*, L-S *ɣkšił*
‘leaf’:	N (various), L-S *tɣwaːn*	‘ear’:	M *qɣqašqoł*, N *aqašqoł*, L-S *taqaːn*
‘negative’:	N (various), L-S *niː*		

- supported by cognate sets in Kondrak et al. (2007), Brown et al. (2011)
- ASJP (Müller et al. 2009) ☞
  - essentially, fails to recognize Lowland vs. Sierra split at all
  - puts Filomeno Mata and Cerro Xinolatépetl (Ozumatlán) with S-L



Conclusions

- likely the basic division is N vs. S-L
  - distinctive morphological features of S are late innovations
  - happened after Cerro Xinolatépetl was split off from S-L group by Nahuatl (mid- to late-15th Century?)
  - lexical similarity between S and CX can't be explained by contact
- some N features in CX may be due to contact
  - dorsal back fricative
- Filomeno Mata also appears to be morphologically "conservative" but is lexically closer to L-S than to N
  - may be due to contact (?)



Glottalic features in pTn

- the Totonac and Tepehua branches are distinguished by a regular correspondence, Tot CV̰ ~ Tep C'V
- two possible diachronic pathways
  - pTn *CV̰ → Tep C'V
  - pTn *C'V → Tot CV̰
- either seems largely consistent with the facts
- first has been favoured (e.g., Arana Osnaya 1953; Levy 1987; Davletshin 2008; Brown et al. 2011, 2014; Watters 2013)
- MacKay & Trechsel (2013) have argued for the second

Glottalic features in Totonac

- CV̰ is found throughout the Tot branch, though not in all languages
  - non-modal phonation
  - post-vocalic glottal closure
    - following stops and affricates in Zapotitlán (Aschmann 1946)
  - pre-vocalic glottal closure
    - following stops and affricates in Papantla and Upper Necaxa
      - results in ejective-like stops and affricates in Papantla (Alarcón Montero 2008)
- across the family, CV̰ is found in all syllable types
- less frequent to varying degrees following voiced segments and fricatives
  - Northern and Cerro Xinolatépetl have CV̰ in all syllable types
  - in Lowland less frequent after fricatives and never after voiced consonants
  - Sierra shows variable distribution
    - Zapotitlán and Coyutla in all syllable types
    - Olintla, Coatepec, Huehuetla Totonac have lost laryngeals altogether

Glottalic features in Tepehua

- C’ in Tepehua found in all three varieties
  - Tlachichilco: p’, t’, k’, (q’), ts’, č’
  - Huehuetla: ɓ, ɗ, k’, ts’, č’
  - Pisaflores: ɓ, ɗ, ɠ ~ k’, ts’, č’
    - ts’V ~ tsV̰, č’V ~ čV̰ (MacKay & Trechsel 2008)
- C’ restricted in distribution
  - restricted to stops and affricates (T)
  - C’ only found in syllabic onsets
- laryngealized vowels also found in some contexts in Tepehua
  - viz., Pisaflores alternations above; also ɠV̰ ~ k’V ~ kV̰ (MacKay & Trechsel 2008)
  - regressive laryngealization of vowels in second-person subject forms (Watters 1994)
    - laryngealization also triggers C → C’ (MacKay & Trechsel 2008)

      paš- ‘bathe’ + -ta ‘PFV’ + -t’iti ‘2PL.SUB’ → ɓąšɗąą̰ɗḭiti (MacKay & Trechsel 2013)

Competing hypotheses

pTn *CṼ → Tep C'V, Tot CṼ	pTn *C'V → Tot CṼ, Tep C'V
1. Diachronic shift	
• glottalization moves V → C_	• glottalization moves C → _V
• synchronically attested in family	• typologically common process
• Ṽ unusual, but common in MA	• C' typologically common, Ṽ rarer
2. Lack of Tep glottalized resonants (R) and fricatives (F)	
• R/FṼ → R'/F' blocked	• R' and F' absent in pTn
• blocking FṼ →/F' seen in Papantla	• F' and R' typologically uncommon
3. Ṽ in Tot syllables with resonant (R) and fricative (F) onsets	
• pTn *Ṽ not restricted	😱 spontaneous generation of R' and F'
• varies due to family-internal shifts	• sporadic process accounts for variation

Competing hypotheses

pTn *CṼ → Tep C'V, Tot CṼ	pTn *C'V → Tot CṼ, Tep C'V

4. Tep C' found in onsets only

• pTn *ṼC not context for shift	• C'# → C via phonotactic constraint • C' in coda typologically marked

5. Final T' in Tep CVT verbs

❖ all roots ending in a stop/affricate (T) surface as CVT'a in the imperfective

ktasp'it'a 'I'm returning' *tasp'itli* 'he returned' (Kung Smythe 2007)

• due to allomorphy of IMPF suffix: *-ʔaː* / T__ , *-yaː* / elsewhere (Watters 1988; Smythe-Kung 2007)	• underlyingly these are CVT' roots • other coda T' removed by phonotactics 😱 *all* T-final verbs underlyingly CVT' 😱 *no* CVplain-T verbs in the lexicon

Conclusions?

- on the balance of things, it seems like the facts support reconstructing pTn *CV̰
  - relies on a phonological process synchronically attested in both branches of the family
  - does not require unexplained spontaneous generation of Tot V̰ in syllables with fricative and resonant onsets
  - does not require all Tep CVT verb roots to have glottalized codas
- there are some remaining questions about the nature of the pTn glottalic feature
  - it seems to behave like a “mobile” suprasegmental feature
  - it may be linked to “glottalic” vowels as suggested in Brown et al. (2011), or
  - it may be a genuinely free phonemic element (Davletshin 2014)

Primary and symmetrical objects

- Totonacan languages have a number of typological features that make sorting out grammatical relations challenging
  - lack of nominal case
  - lack of prepositions
  - valency-increasing morphology that allows up to five objects
- languages in the family appear to vary as to how this is handled

Symmetrical objects in Misantla

- MacKay & Trechsel (2008) argue Misantla is a "symmetrical object language"
  - all objects of a multi-valent clause can control agreement

ʃwáan kíláalíimáakutuníin (hɔŋkučára)
ʃwaan **kin**–laa–lii–maa–kutu–ni–**na** (hun–kučara)
Juan **1OBJ**–3PL.OBJ–INST–CAUS–feed–DAT–**2OBJ** DET–spoon
'Juan made me feed you with them (the spoons)'
'Juan made you feed me with them (the spoons)'
'Juan made him/her feed us with them (the spoons)'
'Juan made us feed her/him with them (the spoons)'
'Juan made them feed us with it/them (the spoons)'
'Juan made us feed them with it/them (the spoons)' (MacKay & Trechsel 2008: 244)

  - multiple interpretations correspond to agreement with up to three objects in any of three available semantic roles
  - combination of *kin-* '1obj' and *-na* '2obj' can mean:
    - '1pl.obj'
    - '1sg.obj' '2sg.obj'

Symmetrical objects in Misantla

- any object can be target of reflexive or reciprocal

kít ʔíklakaswáátnikán hɔ́mPedro
kit **ik–**lakaswaat–ni**–kan** hun–Pedro
I **1SUB–**shave–DAT**–REFL** DET–Pedro
'I shave myself for Pedro'
'I shave Pedro for myself'

ʔutún taláalakaswáátnikán hɔ́mPedro
utun **ta–laa–**lakaswaat–ni**–kan** hun–Pedro
they **PL.SUB–RCP–**shave–DAT**–REFL** DET–Pedro
'they shave each other for Pedro'
'they shave Pedro for each other'

(MacKay & Trechsel 2008: 248)

- MacKay & Trechsel argue that no object properties distinguish among the multiple objects of Misantla verbs

Objects in Upper Necaxa

- Upper Necaxa distinguishes between primary and secondary objects
  - objects are generally symmetrical with respect to control of agreement

kinkaːliːɬtu̱kuyáːn čą̱ːtín ʔǫ́tni̱

kin–kaː–liː–ɬtu̱kú–yaː–n	čą̱ː–tin	ʔǫ́tni̱
1OBJ–PL.OBJ–INST–stab–IMPF**–2OBJ**	CLF:HMN–one	drunk

‘A drunk stabs us with it/them.’

‘A drunk stabs it/them with us.’ (knives speak)

  - agreement with two SAP objects in either semantic role is possible
  - affixes *kin-* ‘1obj’, *kaː-* ‘pl.obj’, and *-n* ‘2obj’ <u>must</u> be interpreted as a unit ‘1pl.obj’
    - rules out other possible interpretations:

      *‘A drunk stabs me with you$_{PL}$.’ or *‘A drunk stabs you$_{PL}$ with me.’
      *‘A drunk stabs us with you$_{SG}$.’ or *‘A drunk stabs you$_{SG}$ with us.’
      *‘A drunk stabs us with you$_{PL}$.’ or *‘A drunk stabs you$_{PL}$ with us.’

  - unlike Misantla, agreement with a third argument is ruled out
  - verbs must agree with SAP arguments, irrespective of semantic role

Objects in Upper Necaxa

- any object can be target of reciprocal*

  nalaːšapani̯yáːuʍ

  na–laː–šapa–ni̯–yaː–ʍ

  FUT–RCP–massage–BEN–IMPF–1PL.SUB

  'Let's massage him/her/them for each other.'
  'Let's massage each other for him/her/them.'

  - unlike Misantla, no further object agreement is possible
  - the reciprocal suffix seems to block additional objects

*UNT reflexives are formed differently than in Misantla.

Objects in Upper Necaxa

- only *primary* objects are suppressed in the object-suppressive voice

nąkmaški꞉nín kistánkų̃ (*ą̃ʔtín regálu)
na–i̱k–maškí꞉–nin kin–stánkų̃ (*ą̃ʔ–tin regálu)
FUT–1SG.SUB–give–OBJ.SUPP 1PO–sibling CLF:GEN–one present)
'I'm going to give my younger sister away (in marriage).'

*'I'm going to make gifts/a gift to my younger sister.'

- the suffix *-nin* suppresses the expression of an object
- in underived ditransitives, it targets the RECIPIENT or non-THEME
- UNT is thus a "primary object language" in the sense of Dryer (1986)
- there is a property pertaining to primary objects that does not pertain to other objects
- UNT is not a "symmetrical object language"

Objects in Upper Necaxa

- testing shows that Upper Necaxa opposes a unique primary object to a repeatable secondary object
  - primary objects are
    - objects of monotransitives
    - non-THEMES of underived ditransitives
    - CAUSEES in causatives
    - basic objects in applicative constructions
  - secondary objects are
    - THEMES of underived ditransitives
    - applied objects (UNT applicatives are *non-direct applicatives*—Beck 2009)
- this shows a split in the family between symmetrical languages (Misantla) and primary-object languages (UNT)
- the latter group probably includes other Northern languages and Papantla (Levy, n.d.), as well as Tepehua (Jim Watters, p.c.)

Looking ahead

- Totonacan studies have gone through a boom in the last decade or so
- number of theoretical publications and basic documentary sources has grown substantially
- a number of dissertations/theses have been written, several more are in the works
- native-speaker linguists in training
- recent work may be significant for the field of Mesoamerican linguistics
  - Brown et al. (2011) suggest genetic links between Totonacan and Mixe-Zoque (Totozoquean)
  - Brown et al. (2014) suggest links between Totozoquean and Chitimacha, a language spoken in the southern U.S.
- stay tuned for more …

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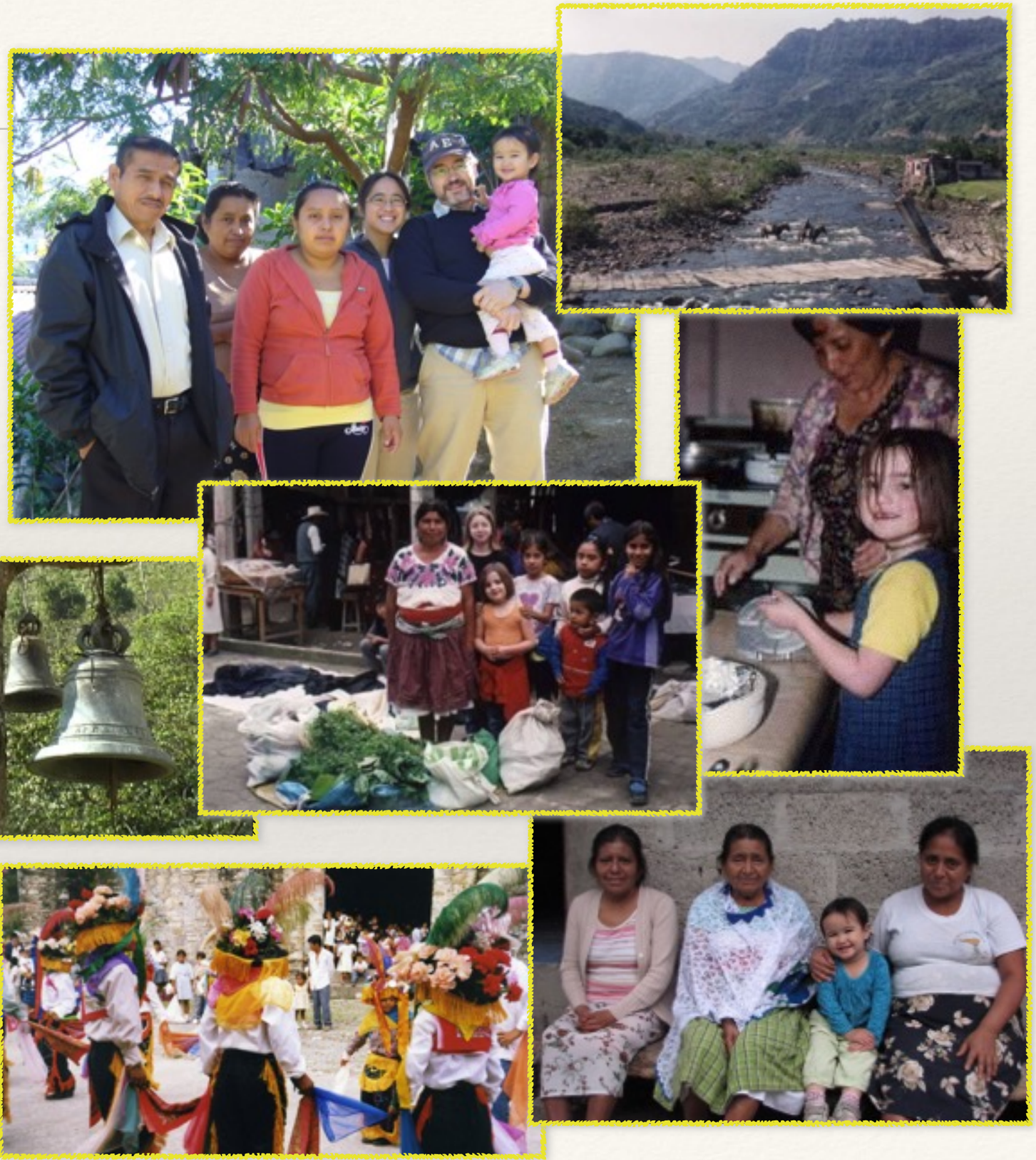
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