Conference on the Languages and Linguistics of Middle and Central America

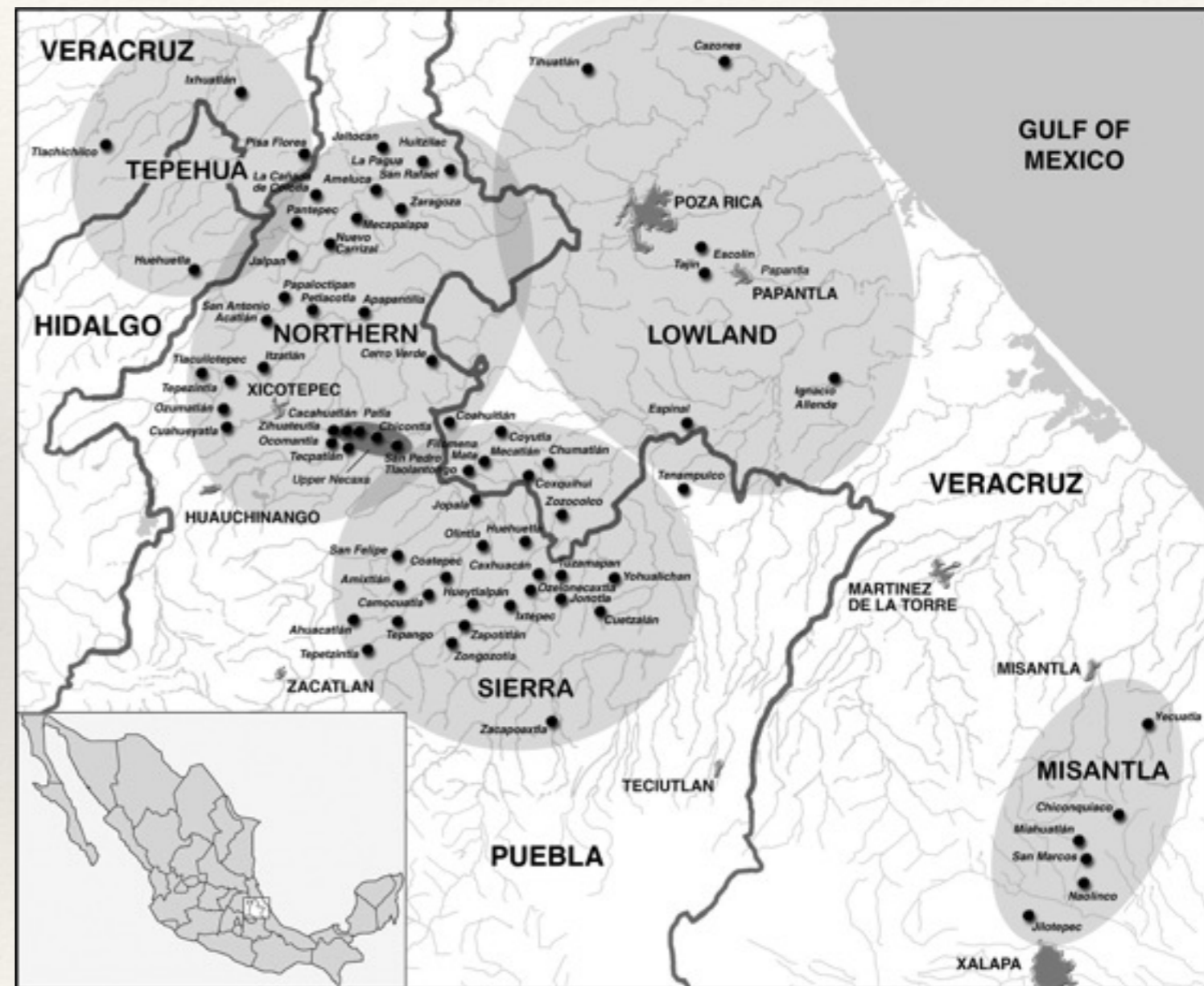# Totonacan

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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

i̠škinkaːtateːliːšo̠ʔoni̠ku̠tumạːʔo̠ːnampaláːn

i̠š– kin– kaː– ta– teː– liː– **šo̠ʔó** –ni̠ –ku̠tún–mạː –ʔo̠ː –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

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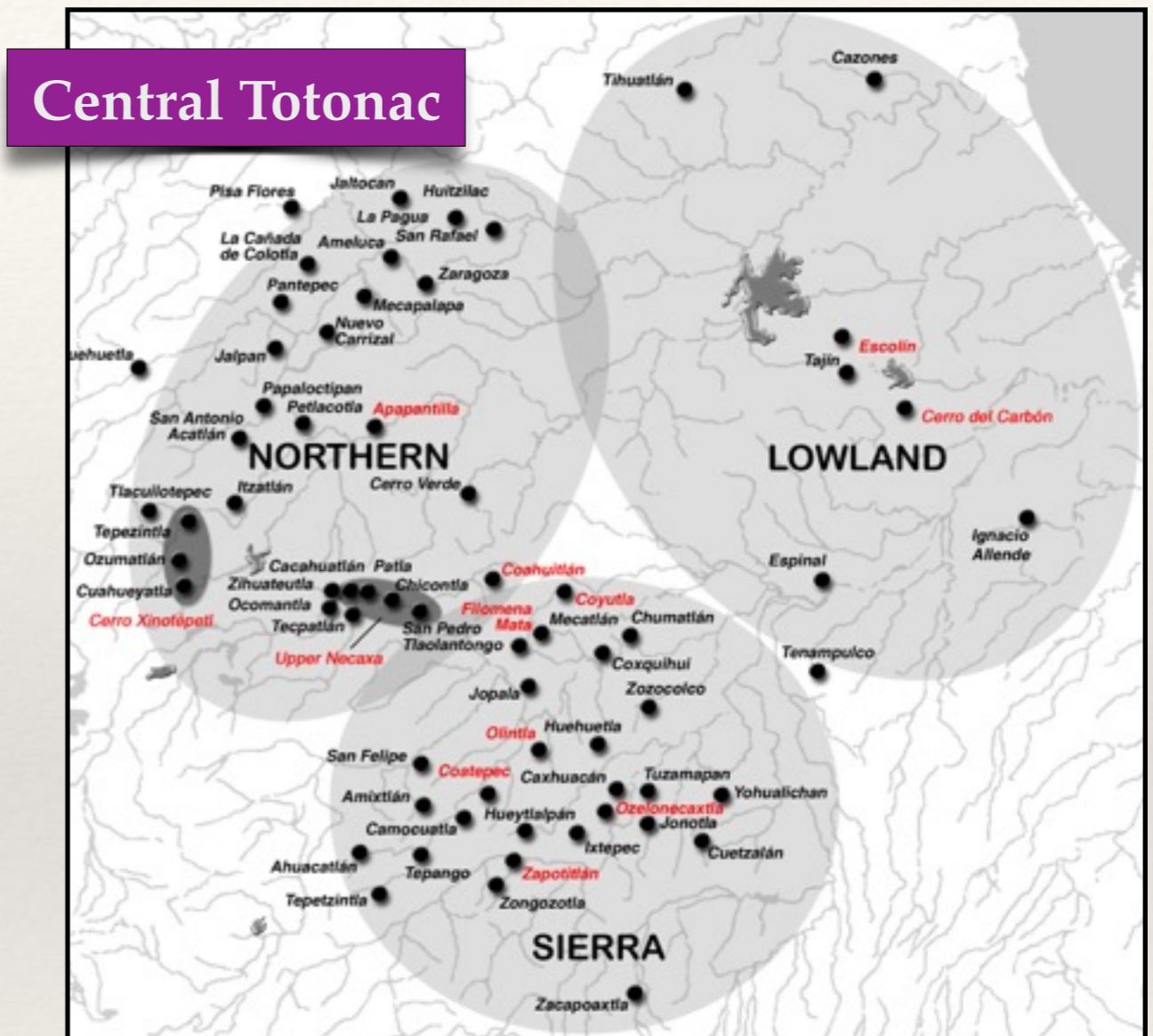
Northern: Upper Necaxa, Apapantilla, Coahuitlán
Sierra: Zapotitlán, Coatepec, Coyutla, Olintla, Ozelonacaxtla
Lowland: Cerro del Carbón, Escolín
Uncertain: Filomeno Mata, Cerro Xinolatépetl

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 *laqc'ín*, N *laqtsín*, L-S *u̥kšił*

  'leaf': N (various), L-S *tu̥waːn* 'ear': M *qa̰qašqoł*, 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
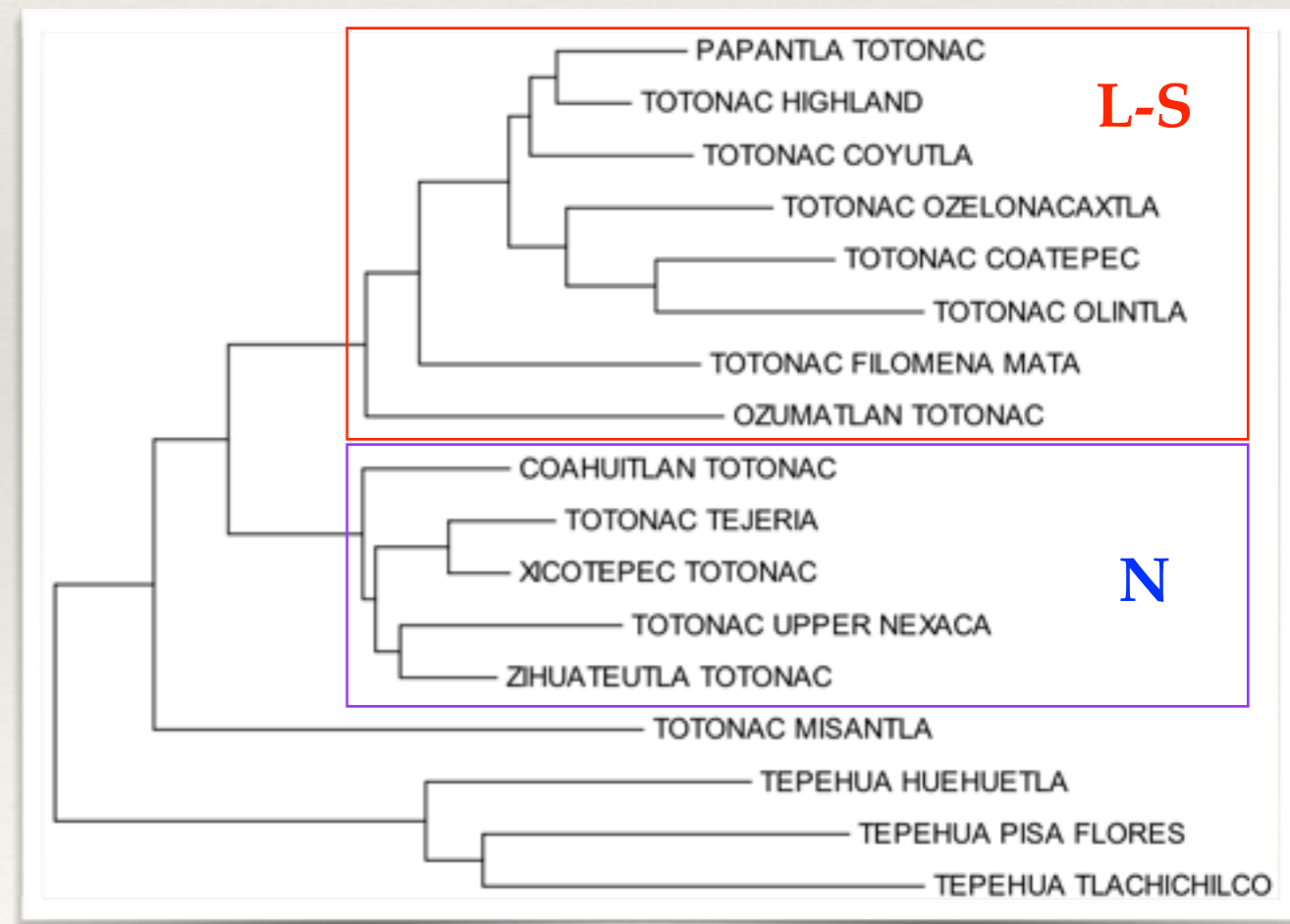
Conclusions

- 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 (?)
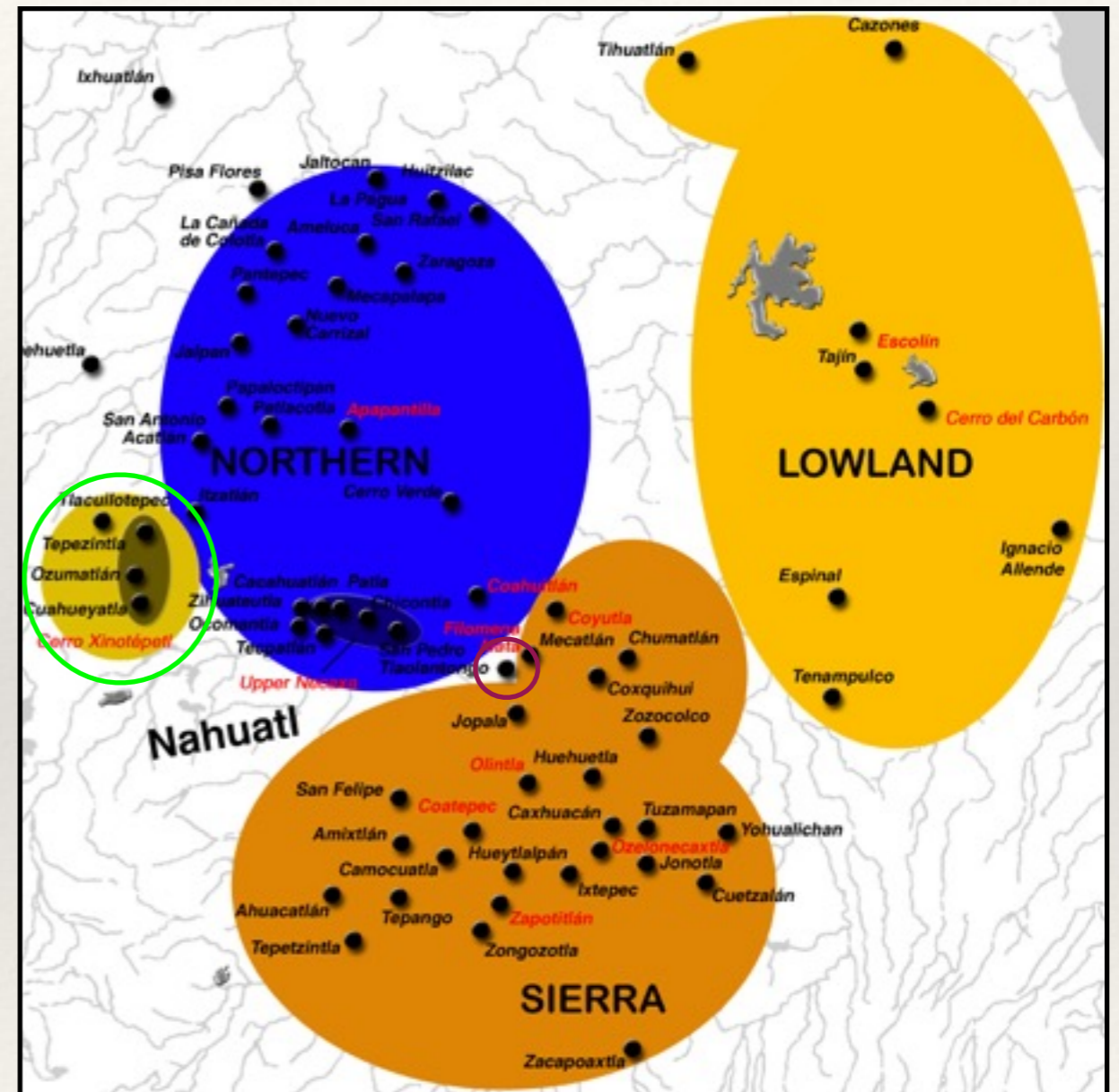
Glottalic features in pTn

❖ the Totonac and Tepehua branches are distinguished by a regular correspondence, Tot CṾ ~ Tep C'V

❖ two possible diachronic pathways

  ❖ pTn *CṾ → Tep C'V
  ❖ pTn *C'V → Tot CṾ

❖ 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' → ɓa̰šɗa̰a̰ɗ̰iti (MacKay & Trechsel 2013)

Competing hypotheses

pTn *CV̰ → Tep C'V, Tot CV̰ | pTn *C'V → Tot CV̰, Tep C'V

1. Diachronic shift

- glottalization moves V → C_
- synchronically attested in family
- V̰ unusual, but common in MA

- glottalization moves C → _V
- typologically common process
- C' typologically common, V̰ rarer

2. Lack of Tep glottalized resonants (R) and fricatives (F)

- R/FV̰ → R'/F' blocked
- blocking FV̰ →/F' seen in Papantla

- R' and F' absent in pTn
- F' and R' typologically uncommon

3. V̰ in Tot syllables with resonant (R) and fricative (F) onsets

- pTn *V̰ not restricted
- varies due to family-internal shifts

- 😱 spontaneous generation of R' and F'
- sporadic process accounts for variation

Competing hypotheses

PTN *CV̰ → TEP C'V, TOT CV̰ | PTN *C'V → TOT CV̰, TEP C'V

4. Tep C' found in onsets only

- pTn *V̰C 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 *CṼ

  ❖ relies on a phonological process synchronically attested in both branches of the family

  ❖ does not require unexplained spontaneous generation of Tot Ṽ 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

  ∫wáan kílláalíimáakutuníin (hɔŋkučára)

∫waan	**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	ʔíklakaswą́ą̯tnikán	hómPedro
kit	**ik**–lakaswą̯ą̯t–ni–**kan**	hun–Pedro
I	**1SUB**–shave–DAT–**REFL**	DET–Pedro

'I shave myself for Pedro'
'I shave Pedro for myself'

ʔu̯tún	taláalakaswą́ą̯tnikán	hómPedro
utun	**ta–laa**–lakaswą̯ą̯t–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

  kinkaːliːɬtu̲kuyáːn ča̲ːtín ʔó̲tni̲

kin–kaː–liː–ɬtu̲kú–yaː–n	ča̲ː–tin	ʔó̲tni̲
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

nạ̃kmaški꞉nín kistánkụ (*ạ̃ʔtín regálu)
na–ị̃k–maškí꞉–nin   kin–stánkụ   (*ạ̃ʔ–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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