

Birth, Life and Death of Body-Part Terms: Tepehua-Totonacan languages in Focus

Albert Davletshin

Universidad Veracruzana (Xalapa), Russian State University for the Humanities
(Moscow)

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A few languages of the World possess somatic affixes which are grammatical morphemes encoding (external) body-parts and related notions. To the best of my knowledge, all such languages are spoken either in the Americas or on the Andaman islands. For simplicity's sake, I will call such languages somatic.

Research questions:

- 1) Do body-part terms develop somewhat differently in somatic languages?
- 2) Which morphemes are more stable, somatic prefixes or corresponding body-part terms?
- 3) What are possible sources of somatic prefixes and how do we reconstruct them?

Notes: the 100-word list may include from 11 up to 14 words denoting external body-part terms.

The Tepehua-Totonacan languages of Mexico number up to eighty somatic prefixes each and thus provide a nice case to seek answers to the questions above (ca. 3,300 years of divergence).

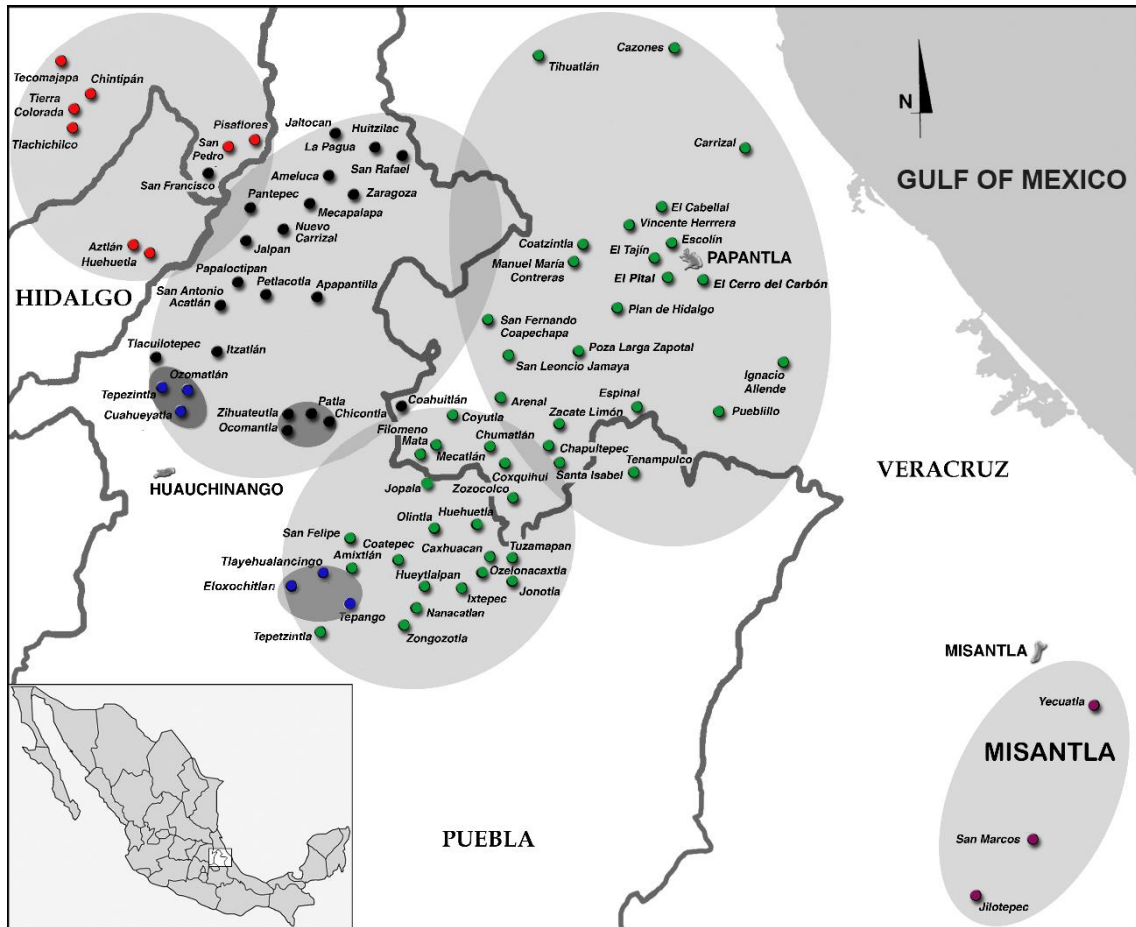


Figure 1. Tepehua and Totonacan languages. Red dots indicate Tepehua idioms, black – Northern, magenta – Misantla, blue and green – Nuclear Totonacan languages and dialects. Based on David Beck’s map by his courtesy.

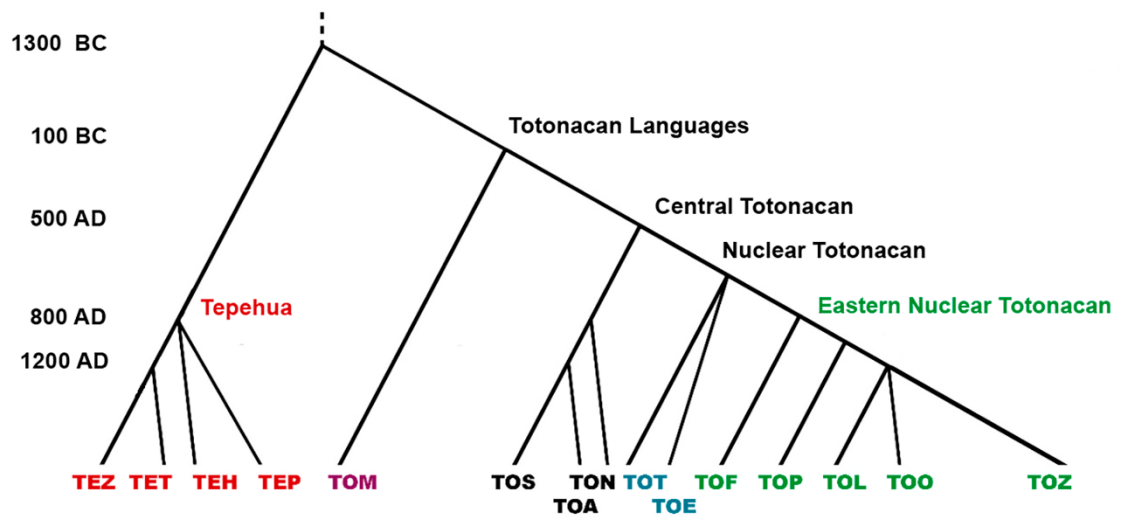


Figure 2. Lexicostatistical classification of Tepehua-Totonacan languages and dialects (Davletshin in press). Red colour indicates Tepehua idioms, black – Northern Totonacan, magenta – Misantla Totonac, blue – Western Nuclear Totonacan and green – Eastern Nuclear Totonacan languages and dialects.

Basic facts about somatic morphemes in Tepehua-Totonacan languages:

- 1) somatic prefixes encode places and topological properties related to external parts of human body,
- 2) no external body-parts are encoded by isolated lexical morphemes, but derived from somatic prefixes by body-part suffixes or formatives,
- 3) some somatic prefixes are composite,
- 4) most somatic prefixes have more than one allomorph,
- 5) somatic prefixes are used as classifiers,
- 6) some somatic prefixes are unproductive fossilised morphemes,
- 7) somatic prefixes productively appear on relational nouns, numerals, verbs, adjectives, and nouns (but not on adverbs),
- 8) some of them are grammaticalized as applicatives, and
- 9) somatic prefixes in body-part terms, relational nouns, numerals, verbs, adjectives, and nouns are etymologically related but heterosemous.

Notes: all numeral classifiers and all relational nouns are based on somatic prefixes.

*-laq=čut '(n.) eye', *-laka-puu=ɔu 'face'

*lak(a)= '(som.) face and sight-related', *lak(a)= '(som.) body related', *-puu-lak-niɔ '(rel.n.) inside of', *-laka-puu=ɔ 'in front of', *laka- '(num.cl.) places and place-names', *laka- '(gram.) marker of locative nouns', *laka 'all-purpose preposition'

Pisaflores Tepehua:

laka=t'ikt'i 'small (of people, generic), < FACE', puu=t'ikt'i 'tight (of clothes), narrow of (road), < INSIDE', maka=t'ikt'i 'thin (of thread, branch), < BODY', ch'a-š-paa=t'ikt'i 'narrow at the waist (of clothes) < LEG + CONNECTIVE + BELLY', kik=t'ikt'i 'of small opening (a sack), < MOUTH', etc. (author's fieldwork data).

Notes: -t'ikt'i cannot be used without somatic prefixes.

Let us consider some body-part terms in Tepehua-Totonacan languages and their reconstructions.

1. Body-part suffixes: Nuclear Totonacan languages possess only one body-part suffix *-n, Tepehua languages and Misantla three of them: *-n, *-la't and *-ᵛ₁.

	'foot'	'hand'	'tooth'	'neck'
Chintipan	č'aha=ᵛ	maka=ᵛ	taca=lat	piš-tu=ᵛ
Huehuetla	č'aha=ᵛ	maka=ᵛ	taca=lat	piš-tu=ᵛ
Misantla	tuhu= la't	maka= la't	taca= la't	piš-tū=n
Xicotepec	toxo=n	maka=n	taca=n	piš=ni'
Chicontla	tuxa=n	maka=n	taca=n	piš=ni'
Papantla	tuhu=n	maka=n	taca=n	piš=ni
Nanacatlan	tuwa=n	maka=n	taca=n	piš=ni'
b-p parts	*tuwa=l'at	*maka=l'at	*taca=l'at	*piš-tuw=ᵛu
som. pref.	*tuw=	*mak(a)=	*tasa=	*piš=
num.cl.		*maqa- 'flat (tortillas)'		*piš- 'bundles (of herbs)'

Notes. 1. Grammatical levelling is evident. 2. The suffix *-l'at can be reconstructed as 'suffix of plural body-parts'. 3. The semantics of *-ᵛ₁ is unclear, see Misantla pā=n 'belly', tan-paha-ᵛ 'waist' and paha-ᵛ 'half'. 4. Proto-Tepehua *č'aha=ᵛ 'foot, leg' is

derived from *č'aha=ᵛa 'leg', see also *č'ā= 'leg-related'. 5. The *ihi, *aha and *uhu sequences are simplified as *ī, *ā and *ū when unstressed in Tepehua languages and Misantla Totonac, and everywhere in Central Totonacan languages. 6. The k-grade suffixes have q-grade allomorphs before q-grade stems, some somatic prefixes and their derivatives are lexically specified with q-grade. 7. The š-grade suffixes have s-grade allomorphs before s-grade stems, some somatic prefixes and their derivatives are lexically specified with s-grade.

2. The body-part formatives are based of lexical morphemes.

	'ear'	'eye'	'head'	'nose'
Chintipan	ᵛaqa=šqo†	laq=č <u>u</u> †	ᵛaq= cu †	†ī-šin
Huehuetla	ᵛaqa=šqo†	laq=č <u>u</u> †	ᵛaq=cu†	†ī-šin
Misantla	qa'qa'=šqu†	laq= čaqā '-n	kā'k= lukut	ki'=ᵛ
Xicotepec	a'q a'=šqo†	laqa= stapu -n	a'q=šāq	kin=ni'
Chicontla	a'ᵛa=š'o†	laᵛa=stapu-n	a'ᵛ=šā'ᵛ	kin=ni'
Papantla	taqī=n	laqa=stapu	a'q=šāqa	kin-ka =n
Nanacatlan	taqā=n	laqa=stapu	a'q=šāqa	kin-ka=n
b-p part	*ᵛaqa=šqu†	*laq=č <u>u</u> †	*ᵛaq=cu†	*kin=ᵛi
prefix	*ᵛaqa=	*lak(a)=	*ᵛaq=	*kinka=, *kin=
num.cl.	*ᵛaqa- 'trees'	*laka- 'places'		

1. 'Head' and 'eye' are based on "something round" *-cu†, see also Proto-Tepehua *puh=ču† 'navel < INSIDE' + "something round".
2. 'Eye' is also based on 'bean' *stapu in Central Totonacan languages and 'inner part' *-chaqā'= in Misantla.
3. 'Head' is also based on 'bone' *-lukut in Misantla.
4. Nuclear Totonacan replaced *kin=niᵛ 'nose' with *kinka=n based on the composite somatic prefix *kin-ka=.
5. The same scenario is evident in the case of Proto-Tepehua *tan-ki†-lak=niᵛ 'chest' derived from "TRUNK? + MOUTH + FACE" and Proto-Nuclear Totonacan *ku'š-mū=n 'chest' from "CHEST + FOREHEAD".

Some intriguing scenarios:

1. Reflexes *ʔaqa= mean 'ear-related', see also *ʔaqa=ʃquʔ 'ear', but in a few words the related morpheme means 'head-related' *ʔaqa=luqut 'horn' < "head-bone+q_grade", *ʔaqa- 'numeral classifier of trees and mature plants', *ʔaqa-tuhun 'Seven Summits (a mythological place-name)' and Tepehua *ʔaka= 'penis-related'.

We can proposed that the original prefix *ʔak(a) 'head-related' was used to derived *ʔaqa=ʃquʔ 'ear' and later reanalysed as 'ear-related'. The old 'ear' prefix is, however, preserved in the word *qax=mat- 'to hear'.

2. The word *tihiʔ 'road' was used to derive *qī-s-tī=n 'spinal column' as "road of the back", later reanalysed as a somatic prefix 'spinal column-related' and in Tepehua as 'bottom-related'. It is obligatorily added to the word 'tail' in Chintipan and Tecomajapa Tepehua *tī-ʔistah.

3. The 'knee' prefix *cuqus= seems to be derived from the accretion of *č'aha= 'leg-related' to the original 'knee' somatic prefix *qus=.

Some findings:

1. The value of lexical reconstructions is evident.
2. Somatic prefixes and formatives of body-parts develop independently from each other.
3. Somatic prefixes are subject to grammatical levelling and simplification.
4. New body-part terms can originate from the prefixes encoding adjacent areas and their combinations meanwhile somatic prefixes can evolve from body-part terms and formatives.
5. Lost body-part terms tend to survive as somatic prefixes.

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