AYAPANEC

Daniel Suslak

Ayapanec Gulf Zoquean (often referred to as “Ayapaneco”) is a moribund Mixe-Zoquean language spoken by a handful of elderly residents of the town of Ayapa, Tabasco. Its speakers call it Numte Oote ‘the true language.’ They call themselves Nyi’nta’ ‘people from here’ or Ndxaxjonta’ ‘people from this land.’ Ayapa is located in the municipality of Jalpa de Méndez, in a region of Tabasco known as the Chontalpa. The Chontalpa is a contact zone in which Ayapanec has been spoken side by side with Gulf Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan) and Chontal (Mayan) for centuries both before and after the Spanish Conquest.

Manuel Segovia Jiménez told me the story *Uudzu Tzu’ Mbüünyi* ‘Monkey and Thunder’ on several occasions during the time we worked together. This particular version was recorded in his home in the summer of 2007 and transcribed and translated with his help later that fall. Don Manuel was born in 1936 and continued to speak Ayapanec every day, long after all of his friends and neighbors had given it up. In 2015 Manuel, Isidro and their group of speakers worked with INALI to produce an animated version of Monkey and Thunder featuring Ayapanec voice acting and Spanish subtitles.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The tale *Yomi Ndxe’ Gwon’nh* ‘Fish Woman’ was narrated by Isidro Velásquez Méndez in San Cristóbal de las Casas during a summer 2002 PDLMA fieldwork session. Don Isidro was born in 1942 and raised in an Ayapanec-speaking household. According to Isidro, this is a true story that was told to him by his grandfather when he was a child. This narrative, like many of the stories Isidro recounts, helps to explain why there is so much poverty in Ayapa today. You can hear the resignation in his voice, but his sly sense of humor also shines through.

SIERRA POPOLUCA (SOTEAPANEC)

Lynda Boudreault

Sierra Popoluca is spoken in about 80 communities in the municipalities of Hueyapan de Ocampo, Soteapan, and Tatahuicapan in the southern part of the state of Veracruz. With some 28,000 speakers, children in remote communities are hearing and speaking the language in the home, although in more populous areas Sierra Popoluca has given way to Spanish as the home language. While referred to commonly as “Sierra Popoluca,” or simply “Popoluca,” in the region where it is spoken speakers self-identify as speakers of *nɨntahɨy* meaning ‘true (*nɨnta*) word *(hɨy*)’.

The story JeɁm TzuɁukiny ‘The Caterpillar’ was narrated and translated by Eugenia Ramírez Gutiérrez in Santa Rosa Cintepec, Veracruz, in November 2005. It is the second version of the story “The Caterpillar” recorded in the field. The story warns girls not to talk to strange men on the road.

TEXISTEPEC POPOLUCA

Søren Wichmann, Lynda Boudreault, Jan Strunk[[2]](#footnote-2)

Texistepec Popoluca, a Gulf Zoquean language, is spoken in the town of Texistepec, located in the southernmost part of the state of Veracruz, Mexico. It is one of the four languages spoken in Veracruz that is referred to as Popoluca. Some scholars prefer to call it Texistepequeño, and the autodenomination is *wɨː-ʔoːt* ‘good word(s)’.

The story presented here was narrated in 1993 by Tomás Lopéz Florentino. This story was originally published in *Cuentos y colorados en popoluca de Texistepec* (Wichmann 1996), a collection of Texistepec stories with Spanish translations, an analytical index and folkloristic comments. In addition to Mr. Lopez, at the time this story was recorded there were at most a few hundred speakers of the language. The stories were recorded on cassette and later transcribed and translated with the help of Mr. López, and to a lesser extent with the late Carmen Román Telésforo.

The story *Kañcheñyoomä'* ‘The Lazy Woman’ (*kañčeñ* ‘lazy’, *yoːmɨʔ* ‘woman’) is told in a series of episodes. It tells of a young man who wants to take a wife, but the object of his affection is known to be lazy (lines 1-60). After they are married, his bride’s lack of interest in helping with household chores frustrates her new family, especially her mother-in-law (61-93). After the couple is moved into their own home, the young man learns the extent of her laziness (104-154) and solves the problem (155-200). His father-in-law sees first-hand how his daughter has changed (201-244) and learns what motivated her transformation (245-283). The father-in-law returns home with notions of implementing the same strategy to change his wife’s lifelong attitude toward domestic responsibility (285-305). His actions have consequences (306-363), and his wife sets him straight (364-395).

JITOTOLTEC

Roberto Maldonado Zavala

Jitotoltec is spoken in northeastern Chiapas. Originally thought to be one of the Chiapas Zoque dialects, Jitotoltec has recently been identified as a language in its own right (Zavala 2011). Differences in its phonology, morphology, lexicon, and grammar are observed that distinguish Jitotoltec from Chiapas Zoque. Speakers refer to the language as *ʔɨta norowera* ‘our language (inclusive)’ or *ʔɨʔti norowera* ‘our language (exclusive)’. Jitotoltec has some 3000 speakers, and is in contact with Tsotsil speakers in the region. The story The Merchant presented here was narrated by Pedro González Rojas from Ejido Calido, Jitotol, Chiapas, Mexico on the 9th of January, 2016.

OCOTEPEC

Ernesto Ramírez Muñoz and Román de la Cruz Morales

Ocotepec Zoque is part of the dialect chain of Chiapas Zoque dialect chain (Wonderly 1949), spoken in the municipality of the same name located in the Northeastern part of the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Ocotepec Zoque speakers identify themselves as *ʹodepät*, literally ‘man (pon) of words (ʔone)’. To refer to the language, speakers use the term *ʹodetsame*, which comes from *ʔon‑e tsam‑e* ‘speech (ʔon‑e) say (tsam‑e)’, literally meaning language of the word. The *ʹodepät* has a great repository of oral tradition that is still transmitted today to younger generations from grandparents to grandchildren and parents to children during family situations.

The legend of the *Näwayomoʹ* ‘The River Woman’ is a narrative of prehispanic origin that has endured to the present day. The version analyzed and transcribed here was told in 2014 by Mrs. Brígida Muñoz Morales, a 44-year-old native speaker of Ocotepec Zoque. She tells of the *näwayomoʹ*, a snake that transforms into a women with four digits on each hand. When appearing to men, this creature takes the form of their wives, seducing them and causing them to become ill and die.

The story *Teʹ Kak Yajkti Teʹ Tsiʹ* ‘The Jaguar and The Opossum’ is narrated by Francisco Morales Ramírez. At the time the text was recorded in July 2014, Mr. Morales was 84 years old. In this story he portrays the opossum as a small and wily character, and the jaguar as strong but naïve.

SAN MIGUEL CHIMALAPA ZOQUE

Silviano Jiménez Jiménez

San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque is spoken in Oaxaca. The speakers of San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque refer to their language as ’aŋpɨn tsame, from mouth (’aŋ), man (pɨn) and speech (tsame). San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque has an extensive oral tradition that is only shared between adults and elderly speakers. Each of the Zoque stories, legends, and myths reflects San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque and general Zoquean cultural elements and combines these with beliefs of other cultures with which San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque has maintained contact over distinct periods in its history. Today, San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque is in danger of extinction.

The story Bi Maʔixi ‘The Dream’ was narrated by Silviano Jiménez Gutiérrez, born in 1952. The story was recorded on August 19, 2014 in the community of Emilano Zapata in San Miguel Chimalapa, Oaxaca. The narration relates a dream previously shared by the speaker’s late father. In the dream, the protagonist speaks with an unknown man (the devil), who in addition to taking him to visit various places throughout the region, shows him the penances suffered by those that work with the devil.

SANTA MARÍA CHIMALAPA ZOQUE

Silviano Jiménez Jiménez and Roberto Zavala Maldonado

Santa María Chimalapa Zoque (ZMAR) is spoken in the eastern part of Oaxaca, in the district of Juchitán. The speakers of ZMAR refer to their language as *’aŋpɨn tsame*, which comes from mouth (*’aŋ*), *man (pɨn*), and *speech (tsam-e)*, meaning ‘word of man’. The communities within the municipality of Santa María Chimalapa were still largely monolingual in the early 1960s when the area did not have access to education, highways or public services. Today, the language is considered severely endangered as most children and young people are not speaking the language. One exception is Chivixhuyo, where families are passing the language on to younger generations.

Santa María Chimalapa Zoque is the most conservative of the languages of the Zoquean branch of the family. Its closest genetic relative is San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque (ZMIG) with which it shares a great part of its lexicon, although there are differences in morphosyntax, phonology, and phonetics.

The story *Kaʔ Sampaloʔke* ‘The Imp’ was narrated by Lucio González González, a native speaker born in 1941. The story was recorded on December, 2015, in Santa María Chimalapa, Oaxaca, by the authors who transcribed and translated the text with the assistance of Mr. González. The protagonist of this narrative, a woman from Santa María, is tricked by a being she counters at a spring where she is washing clothes. This type of story is found through the various communities of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the states of Oaxaca and Veracruz. In all of them, these creatures who trick people are referred to as “duendes”, which later, owing to Christian mestizo influence, are conflated with the Devil. In this story, the trickster creature is at once *duende* ‘imp’, devil, woman and child, which illustrates the cultural mixing that the story has undergone in the face of extensive cultural exchanges that have taken place in Santa María Chimalapa.

1. The animated version is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly5ParAe9Ts&feature=youtu.be. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. SW recorded and analyzed it; LB prepared the English translation and did the formatting; JS is responsible for text-to-speech alignment. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)