

Stress In Nahuatl of Durango: Whose Stress?

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1. Background and Problem¹

Classical Nahuatl² is generally and without discussion recognized to have predictable word stress on the penultimate syllable;³ the same seems to hold for most contemporary Nahuatl dialects. The one oft-quoted exception in Classical Nahuatl is that vocative forms had word final stress. Since the vocative form is no longer in use, this exception has disappeared with it.

In a few Nahuatl dialect areas, however, the predictable word stress seems less stable (cf. Lastra 1981). One such innovative dialect area is that of Durango which I have had occasion to study during three visits in the community of San Agustín de Buenaventura in 1993, 1995, and 1996.

One of the first phrases I learnt in San Buenaventura was *kinán titóh?* 'what is your name?' For a language which is known to—or expected to—have predictable word stress on the penultimate syllable, that is a surprising phrase. And it turned out that many words gave me the same unexpected impression of stress on the final syllable.

In fact, also the antepenult occasionally receives stress. The list of examples in (1) points to no restrictions at all on stress assignment.

- (1) -VCCV́# *kitasaskiá* 'he would throw it'
-VCV́# *kitasalá* 'he threw it' (imperfect)
-VCV́C# *kinán* 'how?', *taxkál* 'tortilla'
-V́CVC# *siwat* 'woman', *aláwah* 'slippery'
-V́CCV# *malinki* 'twisted'
-V́CCVC# *séltih* 'fresh'
-V́CVCV# *itokáloha* 'they may be named', *káskara* (= *káxkar*) 'shell'
-VCCV́ *weḗká* 'he laughs'
-VCCV́C *weḗkák* 'they laughed', *mayrón* 'madrone tree', *beldúk* 'knife'

To inhabitants of San Buenaventura—whom I call "Sanbueneros"—the assignment of stress is evidently not the simple and mechanical process it was to speakers of Nahuatl in the 16th century, and which it probably is to speakers of most present-day Nahuatl varieties. In this paper I shall present two alternative and highly sketchy descriptions of the stress pattern in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura, one relating stress to the morphological system, and another a purely phonological description. Both descriptions will focus on the words and word forms that enter into regular patterns.

The Sanbueneros constitute a small group of persistent speakers who handle their language quite differently from the way Nahuatl speakers of other dialect areas handle theirs; this includes phonology. However, the Sanbuenaventura innovations in the area of prosody are not what I shall here consider a problem, they constitute the **substance** of this paper; the **problem** to be touched upon is how to describe the stress pattern, and more basically how the abstractness of a linguistic description is related to our general concept of language (or should I say our linguistic theory) and to the task of the linguist. A concomitant problem is the role of the linguist's previous knowledge and experience with—in this case—Nahuatl, and as a consequence her expectations in analyzing a "new" dialect.

Sanbueneros have contact with speakers of Nahuatl in other communities in the state of Durango, and some of them are aware that Nahuatl is also spoken in other parts of the Mexican Republic, but they have not had contact with speakers of Nahuatl outside the Durango-Nayarit area for many generations. They consider themselves "indígenas" and convey a sense of sharing this identity with the other indigenous groups in Las Sierras—with whom they converse in Spanish. Since they have thus been isolated from other varieties of Nahuatl, it seems to make sense at the outset to analyze their speech without making reference to other Nahuatl dialects; I shall feign to have no knowledge of other Nahuatl dialects or of historical reconstructions, but afterwards I shall introduce a comparative and historical perspective.

A great many words of Spanish origin form an integrated part of the Nahuatl vocabulary of San Buenaventura. This has been the case in Nahuatl of western Mexico for well over a hundred years (cf. Canger 1995), and it seems appropriate to consider the lexical corpus as homogeneous as that of any other language.

Apart from material collected in San Buenaventura and a brief interview with a speaker from San Pedro Jicora, Durango, I have access to an extensive body of texts from neighboring communities recorded in 1905-1907 by the German scholar Konrad T. Preuss. The language found in Preuss' texts is very close to what is spoken today and suggests almost no changes in the last hundred years.

2. Description A: Stress as Part of the Morphological System

The observation that the occurrence of stress is not random, but appears to be assigned from the end of the word rather than from the beginning, will form a natural basis for the two descriptions. In this first description, which I call Description A, stress on the **penultimate syllable** is found to be the unmarked pattern; other configurations, stress on the final syllable, on the penult, or antepenult, are shown to be exploited in the morphological system. However, these marked configurations also occur in words that are not inflected.

2.1. Nouns

In connection with nouns the Nahuatl speakers of San Buenaventura recognize two grammatical categories: (a) number, 'plural' vs. 'singular'; and (b) possession, 'possessed' vs. 'non-possessed'. 'Possessed' vs. 'non-possessed' is distinguished only in the singular. On the basis of morphology, most nouns can be neatly distributed on three phonologically definable classes; the unruly nouns are relegated to a fourth class, as shown in (2).

(2)		Singular		Plural
		Non-Poss	Poss-1sg	
Class 1.	'tortilla'	<i>taxkál</i>	<i>no-táxkal</i>	<i>(no-)taxkál-me</i>
	'bow'	<i>tawitól</i>	<i>no-tawitol</i>	<i>(no-)tawitól-me</i>
Class 2.	'woman'	<i>siwa-t</i>	<i>no-siwa-t</i>	<i>(no-)siwá-m</i>
	'fresh corn'	<i>élo-t</i>	<i>no-élo-t</i>	<i>(no-)eló-m</i>
Class 3.	'potsherd'	<i>tapálka-t</i>	<i>no-tapálka-t</i>	<i>(no-)tapalká-m</i>
	'arrow'	<i>miti</i>	<i>no-miti</i>	<i>(no-)miti-m</i>
Class 4.	'bee'	<i>néyti</i>	<i>no-néyti</i>	<i>(no-)neyti-m</i>
	'fish'	<i>miçí</i>	<i>no-miçí</i>	<i>(no-)miçí-m</i>
	'dog'	<i>pélo</i>	<i>no-pélo</i>	<i>(no-)pelóh-me</i>
	'hand'	<i>máhwa</i>	<i>no-máhwa</i>	<i>(no-)máhwa</i>
	'wasp'	<i>hikót</i>		<i>hikót / hikot-im</i>
	'airplane'	<i>abyón</i>	<i>no-abyón</i>	<i>(no-)abyón-eh</i>
	'eagle'	<i>ágila</i>		<i>ágila-h</i>

Not all nouns in classes 1-3 behave quite as neatly as these examples suggest, but the basic pattern looks like that given in Table 1.

	Singular		Plural
	Non-Poss	Poss	
Class 1.	<i>-V(C)CVl</i>	<i>-V(C)CVl</i>	<i>-V(C)CVl-me</i>
Class 2.	<i>-V̇CV-t</i>	<i>-V̇CV-t</i>	<i>-VCV̇-m</i>
Class 3.	<i>-V̇Cti / CV̇ti</i>	<i>-V̇Cti / CV̇ti</i>	<i>-VCti-m / CVti-m</i>

Table 1. Noun Classes

A description of the nominal morphology will include something about the shape of the stems in the three or four noun classes; it will account for the predictable distribution of the two variants (*-me/-m*) of the suffix for 'plural'; and—what concerns us here—it will contain a few rules for the assignment of stress which, in the case of nouns, falls exclusively on the stem. What these rules must express is that a shift in stress is correlated with the distinction between 'possessed' and 'non-possessed' (class 1) and between 'singular' and 'plural' (classes 2 and 3), as shown in Table 2.

- | | |
|----|---|
| A. | Nouns that end in <i>-l</i> (class 1) are assigned final stress when unpossessed <i>taxkál</i> 'tortilla', but have the unmarked stress pattern (stress on the penult) when possessed, <i>no-táxkal</i> 'my tortilla'. |
| B. | Nouns of classes 2 and 3 are assigned stress on the final syllable when in the plural, <i>siwá-m</i> 'women', <i>neyti-m</i> 'bees', as opposed to the singular forms <i>siwa-t</i> 'woman', <i>néyti</i> 'bee' where they display the unmarked stress pattern. |
| C. | No pattern emerges for the nouns of class 4. |

Table 2. Patterns of Noun Morphology

2.2. Verbs

Person and number of the subject is indicated by affixes on the verbs, 'person' by prefixes, and 'plural' by a suffix; and on transitive verbs the person and number of the object is also indicated, as shown in Table 3.

Subject		
<u>Singular</u>		
1	<i>ni-koçí</i>	'I sleep'
2	<i>ti-koçí</i>	'you sleep'
3	<i>ø-koçí</i>	'he sleeps'
<u>Plural</u>		
1	<i>ti-koçí-l</i>	'we sleep'
2	<i>an-koçí-l</i>	'you sleep'
3	<i>ø-koçí-l</i>	'they sleep'
<u>Object</u>		
<u>Singular</u>		
1	<i>ø-niçí-ita</i>	'he sees me'
2	<i>ni-miçí-ita</i>	'I see you'
3	<i>ni-k-ita</i>	'I see him'
<u>Plural</u>		
1	<i>ø-tiçí-ita</i>	'he sees us'
2	<i>an-ni-miçí-ita</i>	'I see you'
3	<i>ni-kim-ita</i>	'I see them'

Table 3. Person and Number of Subject and Object

Sanbueneferos distinguish imperative from indicative and recognize four tenses: present, perfect, future, and imperfect; in addition they make use of two forms in order to indicate that an action or event is hypothetical. On the basis of morphology, verbs are distributed among six phonologically definable classes, as shown in Tables 4 and 5. The verbs used in these paradigms are: *tasa* 'throw'; *weçka* 'laugh'; *koçí* 'sleep'; *pepeçø* 'fasten'; and *ahkoki* 'lift up'.

The distribution of the verbs on these six classes is determined not only by the listed forms, but also by the shape of the verb stem as Verb 1 in the formation of a productive verbal compound construction. Since stress assignment in this compounded construction involves only Verb 2, the construction as such is of no importance for the present discussion.

A careful look at the paradigms will reveal that placement of stress can be expressed as in Table 6, where the grammatical morphemes are underscored. That is, Table 6 synthesizes how stress forms an integrated part of the verb morphology.

	Class I	Class II	Class III
Present	<i>Ø-ki-tás(a)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pák(a)</i>	<i>Ø-wéçka</i>
Perfect	<i>u-Ø-ki-tás(a)</i>	<i>u-Ø-ki-pák(a)</i>	<i>u-Ø-wéçka</i>
Future	<i>Ø-ki-tása-s</i>	<i>Ø-ki-páka-s</i>	<i>Ø-wéçka-s</i>
Imperf.	<i>Ø-ki-tasá</i>	<i>Ø-ki-paká</i>	<i>Ø-weçká</i>
Imper.	<i>xi-h-tás</i>	<i>xi-h-pák</i>	<i>xi-wéçka</i>
hypo.1	<i>Ø-ki-tása-ha</i>	<i>Ø-ki-páka-ha</i>	<i>Ø-wéçka-ha</i>
hypo.2	<i>Ø-ki-tasa-skiá</i>	<i>Ø-ki-paka-skiá</i>	<i>Ø-weçka-skiá</i>
	Class IV	Class V	Class VI
Present	<i>Ø-ko-ç(-a)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç(-a)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki(-a)</i>
Perfect	<i>u-Ø-kó-ç(i)</i>	<i>u-Ø-ki-pepe-ç</i>	<i>u-Ø-ki-ahkók</i>
Future	<i>Ø-kó-ç-s</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç-s</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkóki-s</i>
Imperf.	<i>Ø-ko-ç(-yá)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç-wá</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-yá</i>
Imper.	<i>xi-kó-ç</i>	<i>xi-h-pepe-ç</i>	<i>xi-k-ahkók</i>
hypo.1	<i>Ø-kó-ç(-ha)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç(-ha)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkóki-ha</i>
hypo.2	<i>Ø-ko-ç(-skiá)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç(-skiá)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-skiá</i>

Table 4. Verb Classes, Singular Subject

	Class I	Class II	Class III
Present	<i>Ø-ki-tasá-l</i>	<i>Ø-ki-paká-l</i>	<i>Ø-weçká-l</i>
Perfect	<i>u-Ø-ki-tasá-k</i>	<i>u-Ø-ki-paká-k</i>	<i>u-Ø-weçká-k</i>
Future	<i>Ø-ki-tasá-s-ke</i>	<i>Ø-ki-paká-s-ke</i>	<i>Ø-weçká-s-ke</i>
Imperf.	<i>Ø-ki-tasa-l-á</i>	<i>Ø-ki-paka-l-á</i>	<i>Ø-weçka-l-á</i>
Imper.	<i>xi-h-tasá-k</i>	<i>xi-ki-paká-k</i>	<i>xi-weçká-k</i>
hypo.1	<i>Ø-ki-tasá-lo-ha</i>	<i>Ø-ki-páka-ha</i>	<i>Ø-weçká-lo-ha</i>
hypo.2	<i>Ø-ki-tasa-lo-skiá</i>	<i>Ø-ki-paka-lo-skiá</i>	<i>Ø-weçká-lo-ha</i>
	Class IV	Class V	Class VI
Present	<i>Ø-ko-ç-l</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç-l</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-l</i>
Perfect	<i>u-Ø-ko-ç-k</i>	<i>u-Ø-ki-pepe-ç-k</i>	<i>u-Ø-ki-ahkoki-k</i>
Future	<i>Ø-ko-ç-s-ke</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç-s-ke</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-s-ke</i>
Imperf.	<i>Ø-ko-ç-l-á</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç-l-á</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-l-á</i>
Imper.	<i>xi-ko-ç-k</i>	<i>xi-h-pepe-ç-k</i>	<i>xi-k-ahkoki-k</i>
hypo.1	<i>Ø-ko-ç-lo-ha</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç-lo-ha</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-lo-ha</i>
hypo.2	<i>Ø-ko-ç-lo-skiá</i>	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ç-lo-skiá</i>	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-lo-skiá</i>

Table 5. Verb Classes, Plural Subject

	Singular	Plural
Present	-V(C)Ca-Ø	-V(C)Cá-Ø-l
	-CVCi(-a) / CVCó(-a)	-CVCi-Ø -l / CVCó-Ø -l
Perfect	u..VCCV / -V(C)V	u..V(C)CV-k
Future	-V(C)CV-s	-V(C)CV-s-ke
Imperf.	-á / -yá / -wá	-l-á
Imper.	(xi)-VCCV-Ø / -V(C)V-Ø	(xi)-V(C)CV-Ø-k
hypo.1	-V(C)CV-ha	-V(C)CV-lo-ha
hypo.2	-skiá	-lo-skiá

Table 6. Pattern of Verb Morphology

An admission is in order at this point. It is unclear exactly what the verb forms given so far represent; there is a great deal of variation. For instance, in Table 3 'he sleeps' is quoted as *Ø-ko-ç*, but in Table 4 it is *Ø-ko-ç(a)*, and 'he throws it' *Ø-ki-tás(a)* contains two variants in Tables 4 and 5. On the other hand, the future forms in Table 4 (*Ø-ki-tása-s*, *Ø-ki-páka-s*, *Ø-wéçka-s*, etc.) and the perfect forms in Table 5 (*u-*

Ø-ki-tasá-k, *u-Ø-ki-paká-k*, *u-Ø-weçká-k*, etc.) might also be given with variants for the respective suffixes: *-s/-h* and *-k/-h*. This lack of clarity reflects a determined unwillingness on the part of the author to regularize and relegate the variation inherent in spoken language to linguistic rules and prose descriptions. The variation I have included here is not chosen at random; the actual manifestation of the markers for future and perfect, *s* vs. *h* and *k* vs. *h* is of no consequence for a discussion of stress assignment, but the syncope of a final vowel may be crucial. After this disconcerting aside—to which I shall give no solution later in the paper—, let me continue Description A.

In the verbal system stress assignment appears to comply with two distinct strategies. According to one strategy, stress is limited to the verb stem and is determined by the category of 'number'. In present, perfect, future, and imperative, 'plural' is marked by one of two suffixes, *-l* or *-k/-ke*, but in addition, all plural forms have stress on the final vowel of the verb stem, contrary to the singular forms that have stress on the penultimate syllable of the stem.

Classes IV–VI present a peculiar exception to this, namely that the stem final vowel is stressed in the present singular, probably caused by an optional tense marker, *-a* which does not occur in the plural forms.

According to the other strategy stress is determined by certain suffixes. The suffixes indicating 'imperfect' and 'hypo 2' attract stress, and in 'hypo 1' stress is placed on the antepenult.

2.3. Adjectives and Other Words

Stress is not exploited in the adjectives; with a few exceptions it regularly falls on the penultimate, as shown in (3).

(3)	<i>çkákawak</i>	'strong'
	<i>kaçákawak</i>	'dirty'
	<i>kašánki</i>	'loosened'
	<i>malinki</i>	'twisted'
	<i>péstik</i>	'smooth'
	<i>páltik</i>	'wet'
	<i>sabroso</i>	'tasty'
	<i>mánso</i>	'tame'
	<i>awádo</i>	'watery'
	<i>hwersúdo</i>	'strong'
	<i>çapárrro</i>	'short'

Plural is indicated by a reduplication, *CIVh-*; but this does not interfere with the penultimate stress, as shown in (4).

(4)	<u>Singular</u>		<u>Plural</u>
	<i>piçákawak</i>	'narrow'	<i>pih-piçákawak</i>
	<i>étik</i>	'heavy'	<i>eh-étik</i>

2.4. Adverbs

Adverbs are not inflected. They are stressed according to a general rule assigning ultimate stress to those ending in a consonant and penultimate stress to those ending in a vowel, as shown in (5).

(5)	<u>-CVC#</u>	
	<i>ašikén</i>	'just now'
	<i>axkih</i>	'in a minute'
	<i>demás</i>	'too'
	<i>hanóh</i>	'in a minute'
	<i>ketál</i>	'hello'
	<i>kinán</i>	'how?'
	<i>kwakín</i>	'then'
	<i>mostatih</i>	'the following day'
	<i>nepán tayowál</i>	'midnight'
	<i>nikáh</i>	'this way'

<i>okán</i>	'there'
<i>yohán</i>	'that's all'
<u>V (C)CV</u>	
<i>áso</i>	'maybe'
<i>ásta</i>	'until'
<i>haníma</i>	'immediately'
<i>kási</i>	'almost'
<i>mósta</i>	'tomorrow'
<i>k(i)yáwáh</i>	'outside'

Summing up, Description A of stress assignment in Nahuatl spoken in San Buenaventura focuses on the prominent role stress plays in the nominal and verbal inflection. It will comprise the following rules:

- A basic rule placing stress on the penultimate syllable if nothing else is indicated.
- Some specific rules with a considerable functional load, closely connected with the morphological systems.
- A rule applying only to adverbs, claiming that stress is on the final syllable if an adverb ends in a consonant and on the penultimate if it ends in a vowel.
- An ad hoc observation that some words, particularly nouns, do not conform to the basic rule—and are not comprehended by the morphological stress rules; these words have to be marked individually for stress.

3. Description B: Stress Assignment in Purely Phonological Terms

Just like in Description A, stress on the penult is here considered the unmarked stress pattern. But in Description B this observation will play a far more important role than it did in Description A. In fact I shall here attempt to argue that this unmarked pattern is the only stress pattern needed in a description of the Nahuatl spoken in San Buenaventura.

I have used *kinán titóh?* 'what is your name?' as an example of stress on the final syllable. But in Table 4 there is a final *a* in present tense in parentheses, *Ø-ki-tás(a)* 'he throws it'; and I mentioned, in Description A, an optional marker of 'present' in verb classes IV–VI, *Ø-ko-ǫ(-a)* 'he sleeps'. An alternative form to *titóh* 'you are named' is thus *ti-tóka*. In other words, the final syllable that receives stress in the forms *Ø-ki-tás* 'he throws it', *ti-tóh* 'you are named', and *Ø-ko-ǫ* 'he sleeps' may not be quite as final as most speakers let you believe. I shall call the variant forms **with** the optional vowel 'full forms'.

If we choose to recognize this optional final vowel and base our description on the full forms, we can argue that stress is on the penult in present tense verb forms with a singular subject, and that these forms will then also conform to the unmarked stress pattern.

The perceptive reader will here expect another aside in which I admit that now I **am** willing to get rid of the inconvenient variants in order to base Description B on a set of less common, but orderly forms.

Even if there are speakers who never use the full forms, they will nevertheless have access to the optional vowel—in other forms of the same verb. For example, if the sentence quoted above is addressed to more than one person, it goes: *kinán nan-itoká-l* 'what are your (pl.) names?', and we can posit *itoka* as the stem of the verb and the syncopated vowel as *a*.

But what about the plural forms, which end in *-Vl*? The sentence *kinán nan-itoká-l* 'what are your (pl.) names?' seems to present the same problem for our description, i.e. stress on the final syllable. Can a similar analysis be found for them?

The two "hypo-" verb forms with a plural subject, *Ø-itoka-lo-skiá* (3Subj-be.named-Pl.Subj-Hypo.2) 'they might be named' and *Ø-itoká-lo-ha* (3Subj-be.named-Pl.Subj-Hypo.1) 'they might be named', reveal that the suffix *-l* 'plural subject' has a variant form, *-lo*. Another argument for *-lo* is that the imperfect with plural subject which I have given as *Ø-ki-tasa-l-á* 'they threw it' will occasionally be pronounced [*kitasalo(w)á*].

If we thus posit *Ø-itoká-lo* 'they are named' as the full form, then also the present tense with plural subject will conform to the unmarked pattern. (Another slight shift in my willingness to include more abstract forms can here be observed.)

A picture is beginning to form, namely that cases of stress on a word final closed syllable are due to a syncopated final vowel. So far we have concentrated on words for which we posit two variant forms: (a) a form ending in stressed vowel plus consonant, *-VC#*; and (b) the full form that has an additional final vowel, *-VCV#*. Other cases of this type are perfect and imperative with a plural subject, *u-Ø-ki-tasá-k* (Perf-3Subj-3Sg.Obj-throw-Pl.Subj) 'they threw it', *xi-h-tasá-k* 'throw (pl.) it!' The paradigm shows that 'plural' of subject is marked either by *-lo/-l* or by *-ke/-k*, *-ke* in the 'future' and *-k* in 'perfect' and 'imperative'; this suggests that the syncopated vowel in the suffix for 'plural subject' in 'perfect' and 'imperative' is *e*.

A productive verbal compound consists of verb 1, an infix, *-ti-*, traditionally called a ligature, and a verb 2, a verb of motion or the verb 'be': *ni-polih-ti-ném* (1Sg.Subj-lose-"ligature"-go) 'I am lost'; *ti-takes-ti-katka-l-á* (1Pl.Subj-talk-"ligature"-be-Pl.Subj-Impf) 'we were talking'. In such constructions, forms with the verb 'be' in the present, with singular subjects have stress on the final syllable: *Ø-ki-tas-tí-k* (3Subj-3Sg.Obj-throw-"ligature"-be) 'he is throwing it' and *Ø-ki-tas-ti-ká-h* (3Subj-3Sg.Obj-throw-"ligature"-be-Pl.Subj) 'they are throwing it', but the syncopated vowels are recoverable from the independent forms of the verb 'be': *ka* 'he is' and *kah/kate* 'they are'.

In Description A, nouns of class 1 were characterized as having stress on the final syllable, in the singular, e.g. *taxkál* 'tortilla', and those of class 2 in the plural, e.g. *siwá-m* 'women'. The suffix for 'plural', *-m*, has a variant *-me*, in, for example, *taxkál-me* 'tortillas', which suggests that the syncopated vowel is *e*. For the singular form of class 1 nouns, e.g. *taxkál* 'tortilla', however, no other forms of these words make the syncopated vowel recoverable. But on the basis of a possible pair of variants *-t/-ti*, as in *siwa-t* 'woman' and *míti* 'arrow', we may tentatively posit *-i* as the syncopated vowel in words of the type *taxkál* 'tortilla'; thus *taxkáli*.

So far I have dealt with penult stress in word forms ending in a consonant, but there are also cases where the stressed vowel is in final position. Some of these are simply due to the fact that a preceding *w* or *y* is dropped together with the optional final vowel in present tense, e.g. singular *ni-k-elká* 'I forget it' and *Ø-ki-pí* 'he has it'. The full forms, *ni-k-elkáwa* and *Ø-ki-píya*, can be deduced from the corresponding plural forms *Ø-k-elkáwá-l* 'they forget it' and *Ø-ki-piyá-l* 'they have it'.

We find a stressed final vowel in verbs from classes IV–VI in the present tense with a singular subject: *Ø-ki-pepe-ǫ* 'he fastens it', *Ø-ko-ǫ* 'he sleeps', but they present no problem so long as the description is based on the full forms which include *-a* as a marker of 'present': *Ø-ki-pepe-ǫ-a* 'he loses it', *Ø-ko-ǫ-a* 'he sleeps'.

The final stressed vowel in the 'imperfect' and in 'hypo 2' are a little more complicated. For the 'imperfect' the simplest analysis would be to suggest an *-a* suffixed to the present tense form, as in Table 7.

Class	Singular	Plural
I	<i>Ø-ki-tasá-a</i> [kitasá]	<i>Ø-ki-tasa-ló-a</i> [kitasalá]
II	<i>Ø-ki-paká-a</i> [kipaká]	<i>Ø-ki-paka-ló-a</i> [kipakalá]
III	<i>Ø-weǫká-a</i> [weǫká]	<i>Ø-weǫka-ló-a</i> [weǫkalá]
IV	<i>Ø-ko-ǫ-á-a</i> [koǫyá]	<i>Ø-ko-ǫ-ló-a</i> [koǫlá]
V	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ǫ-á-a</i> [kipepeǫwá]	<i>Ø-ki-pepe-ǫ-ló-a</i> [kipepeǫlá]
VI	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-á-a</i> [kiahkokiá]	<i>Ø-ki-ahkoki-ló-a</i> [kiahkokilá]

Table 7. Analysis 1 of the Suffix for 'Imperfect'

However, it is somewhat disconcerting that the same suffix should indicate sporadically 'present' and systematically 'imperfect', particularly since they cooccur in verbs from classes IV–VI, e.g. *Ø-ko-ǫ-á-a*. A solution to this problem can be found in the fact that the optional final *-a* in present tense forms with a singular subject of classes IV–VI is better identified with the optional vowel found in classes I–III, *Ø-ki-tás(a)*, than considered a suffix for 'present'. The full forms in present for verbs from classes IV–VI will thus be *Ø-ko-ǫ(a)* 'he sleeps', *Ø-ki-pepe-ǫ(a)* 'he loses it', *Ø-ki-ahkoki(a)* 'he lifts it up'.

Let me recapitulate the obvious argument in Description A for analyzing final *a* of *Ø-ko-ǫ(a)* 'he sleeps' and *Ø-ki-pepe-ǫ(a)* 'he loses it', as a marker of 'present, singular': it occurs only in forms in present tense forms with a singular subject.

Making this optional final vowel part of the stem—in Description B—also solves another problem related to the ‘imperfect’ suffix. Rule 4 of the phonological rules in (7), that account for the pronunciation of the forms posited for ‘imperfect’, includes a morpheme boundary (+) precisely to prevent it from applying to the present tense singular forms of verbs of classes IV–VI. Without the morpheme boundary marker the rule would apply to *Ø-ki-pepeφó+a* ‘he fastens it’ and give *[kipepeφá]. With the morpheme boundary marker it applies to *Ø-ki-tasa-ló+a* ‘they threw it’, but not to *Ø-ki-pepeφó(a)* ‘he fastens it’ which with the new analysis of the optional, final vowel in classes IV–VI now has no morpheme boundary. Since there is no argument for including a morpheme boundary marker in rules 1-3, it is not there.

- (7) Rule 1. *-Cáa* → *-Cá*
 Rule 2. *-iáa* → *-iyá*
 Rule 3. *-oáa* → *-owá*
 Rule 4. *-Có+a* → *-Cá*

The suffix indicating ‘hypo 2’ must be analyzed as complex and made up of two suffixes: *-skíá-a*, the second suffix looking exactly like that for ‘imperfect’.

Finally the exceptional antepenult stress in ‘hypo 1’ may be explained by considering the suffix *-ha* an enclitic. Its occurrence at the end of the word combined precisely with the rare stress pattern are the best arguments I can come up with for this analysis. To describe *-ha* as an enclitic primarily in order to maintain the predictability of the penultimate stress seems problematic and probably circular, and yet that may be how clitics are generally recognized. The observation that *-ha* occurs in final position, after the suffix indicating ‘plural subject’, contrary to the order found in the ‘future’ where the suffix indicating ‘plural subject’, *-ke*, occurs in final position, as in *Ø-ki-tasá-s-ke* ‘they will throw it’, might be used as an argument for analyzing it as an enclitic. But that would create another problem: the stressed suffixes indicating ‘imperfect’ and ‘hypo 2’, which likewise occur in final position, as in *Ø-ki-tasa-l-á* ‘they threw it’ and *Ø-ki-tasa-lo-skiá* ‘if they throw it’, are unlikely candidates as enclitics, since atonicity is a general and defining feature for clitics (cf. Matthews 173).

According to Description B the basic pattern of the noun morphology and of verb morphology will look as the do in Tables 2’ and 6’. Note that all the forms have penultimate stress, and thus agree neatly with the unmarked stress pattern. Vowels in square brackets are either optional or posited as underlying; the plus sign indicates that what follows is an enclitic; and grammatical morphemes are underscored.

	Singular		Plural
	Non-Poss	Poss	
Class 1.	<i>-V(C)CV́l[-i]</i> <i>taxkál[i]</i>	<i>-V́(C)CVl</i> <i>no-táxkal</i>	<i>-V(C)CV́l-me</i> <i>(no-)taxkál-me</i>
Class 2.	<i>-V́CV-t</i> <i>siwa-t</i>	<i>-V́CV-t</i> <i>no-siwa-t</i>	<i>-VCV́-m[e]</i> <i>(no-)siwá-m[e]</i>
Class 3.	<i>-V́Cti / CV́ti</i> <i>néyti</i>	<i>-V́Cti / CV́ti</i> <i>no-néyti</i>	<i>-VCtí-m / CVtí-m[e]</i> <i>(no-)neytí-m[e]</i>

Table 2’. Pattern of Noun Morphology According to Description B

	Singular	Plural
	Present	<i>-V́(C)Ca-Ø / -ia-Ø / -óa-Ø</i>
Perfect	<i>-u...V́CCV / -VC(V)</i>	<i>-u...V́-k[e]</i>
Future	<i>-V́(C)CV-s</i>	<i>-V́-s-ke</i>
Imperf.	<i>-a</i>	<i>-l[ó]-a</i>
Imper.	<i>(xi)-V́CCV-Ø / -V́C(V)-Ø</i>	<i>(xi)-V́-Ø-k[e]</i>
Hypo.1	<i>-V́(C)CV+ha</i>	<i>-V́-lo+ha</i>
Hypo.2	<i>-skíá-a</i>	<i>-lo-skiá-a</i>

Table 6’. Pattern of Verb Morphology According to Description B

It was noted under Description A that adjectives generally have stress on the penult, and thus present no problem for Description B.

The general rule that adverbs are assigned ultimate stress on those ending in a consonant and penultimate stress on those ending in a vowel is in consonance with the basic tendency observed in Description B, to syncope word final vowels. It does not tell us, however, what specific vowel to posit as underlying in the individual adverbs.

Summing up, Description B of stress assignment in Nahuatl spoken in San Buenaventura will thus comprise the following rules:

- A. a basic rule placing stress on the penultimate syllable, not counting enclitics;
 B. a number of remarks about vowel syncope and about underlying vowels that are never pronounced.
 C. an ad hoc observation that some words, particularly nouns, do not conform to the basic rule; these words have to be marked individually for stress.

Adverbs ending in a consonant are either marked for stress or they are equipped with an unspecified final vowel to be syncopeated.

4. Historical Perspective

The main feature of Description B is a process of vowel syncope. The description is based on the longer of two variants; these longer forms can generally be assumed to be the more conservative, traditionally called underlying forms.

Under the assumption that forms affected by vowel syncope are younger than the unscopated ones, Description B suggests process and a certain time depth. If the posited older forms correspond to forms reconstructed for General Aztec,⁴ we can argue that Description B—although based on synchronic material—offers insights into the history of the dialect. No time depth is suggested in Description A.

I shall now briefly demonstrate that Description B, at least in part, agrees with General Aztec and with other—more conservative—contemporary dialects.

4.1. Nouns

According to commonly accepted hypotheses, General Aztec distinguished ‘possession’ from ‘non-possession’ in both singular and plural. ‘Non-possession, singular’ was, at an early stage, expressed by one of two suffixes, **-ta* or *-in*, called absolutive suffixes, **-ta* being by far the most common. The development of this suffix has led to three variants, as shown in (8).

- (8) General Aztec
- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---|
| <i>*-ta</i> → <i>*-la</i> → | <i>-li / l__</i> | e.g. <i>*komal-ta</i> → <i>komal-li</i> ‘comal’ |
| | <i>-l / V__</i> | e.g. <i>*siwa:-ta</i> → <i>siwa:-l</i> ‘woman’ |
| | <i>-li / C__</i> | e.g. <i>*nex-ta</i> → <i>nex-li</i> ‘ashes’ |

‘Possession’ was—and is in most contemporary dialects—expressed by dropping the absolutive suffix and by adding a personal prefix indicating the person and number of the possessor, as shown in (9). Some words will also add a ‘possessive’ suffix *-w(i)*.

- (9) Non-Poss Poss-1sg
- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
| <i>komal-li</i> | <i>no-komal</i> | ‘my comal’ |
| <i>siwa:-l</i> | <i>no-siwa:-w</i> | ‘my woman’ |
| <i>nex-li</i> | <i>no-nex</i> | ‘my ashes’ |

With a few modifications, the three regular noun classes in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura (those that are posited in both descriptions) correspond neatly to the development of the General Aztec suffix **-ta*. However, the dual content of the suffix, ‘singular’ and ‘non-possessed’ is not recognized by Sanbueneros, to whom the only incontestable suffixal remnant, *-t*, in class 2 simply means ‘singular’. It is present in both ‘non-possessed’ and ‘possessed’ forms, e.g. *siwa-t* ‘woman’ and *no-siwa-t* ‘my wife’. Likewise, the Sanbuenero suffix for ‘plural’, *-m/-me*, whose correlates in General Aztec and in other contemporary dialects include ‘non-possessed’, means only ‘plural’, e.g. *(no-)siwám[e]* ‘(my) wives/women’, and remnants of the General Aztec suffix *-w(i)* for ‘possessed’ is in San Buenaventura Nahuatl found only in a

few completely lexicalized forms, e.g. (*no-*)*máhwa* 'my hand(s)' from **no-ma'-wa:-n* (1Sg.Poss-hand-Poss-Pl) 'my hands'. These modified patterns are summarized in Table 2''.

	Singular		Plural
	Non-Poss	Poss	Non-Poss/Poss
Class 1.	-V(C)CVl[i]	-V(C)CVI	-V(C)CVl-me
	<i>taxkál[-i]</i>	<i>no-taxkál</i>	<i>(no-)taxkál-me</i>
	<i>komál[-i]</i>	<i>no-kómal</i>	<i>(no-)komál-me</i>
Class 2.	-V̇CV-t	-V̇CV-t	-VCV̇-m[e]
	<i>siwa-t</i>	<i>no-siwa-t</i>	<i>(no-)siwá-m[e]</i>
Class 3.	-V̇Cti	-V̇Cti	-VCti-m
	<i>néyti</i>	<i>no-néyti</i>	<i>(no-)neyti-m[e]</i>
	-CV̇ti	-CV̇ti	-CVti-m[e]
	<i>míti</i>	<i>no-míti</i>	<i>(no-)miti-m[e]</i>

Table 2''. Pattern of Noun Morphology According to Description B

The changes that have led to the Sanbuenero noun morphology are: (a) *λ* has become *t*, a general phonological rule; (b) *-ti* in class 3 (< *-li*) no longer functions as a suffix; and (c) in class 1 the former suffix *-li* can be recognized only in the stress pattern (Description A). It was precisely the stress pattern that made me hypothesize an underlying *-i* in the unpossessed form (Description B), a hypothesis thus confirmed by the historical perspective—what was not captured was the reduction of *ll* to *l*. On the basis of the nominal forms occurring in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura it would probably be possible to reconstruct approximately the General Aztec situation, but that has not been my aim here.

4.2. Verbs

General Aztec distinguished person and number of subject and object by affixes similar to those used by Sanbueneros today. The only conspicuous difference is that Sanbueneros employ *-lo/-l* where General Aztec has a glottal stop, as shown in (10).

(10)	San Buenaventura	General Aztec	
'present'	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-l[ɔ]</i>	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-'</i>	'they sleep'
'imperfect'	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-l[ɔ]-a</i>	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-ya-'</i>	'they slept'
'hypo 2'	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-lo-skia-a</i>	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-ski(y)a-'</i>	'if they sleep'

The examples in (10) show that not only have the ancestors of today's Sanbueneros picked another suffix for 'plural' of subject, they have also reversed the order of the two suffixes in 'imperfect' and 'hypo 2'. I should add that there are no vestiges of word final glottal stop in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura; word internally, *h* corresponds to General Aztec glottal stop; cf. San Buenaventura *Ø-tehkó(a)* 'he descends' < General Aztec *Ø-λe'ko*.

In General Aztec—like in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura—imperative is distinguished from indicative, and four tenses: present, perfect, future, and imperfect, are recognized. Only one of the two Sanbuenero forms indicating that an action or event is hypothetical ('hypo 2') is found also in General Aztec, as in (10). The form I have called 'hypo 1' characterized by the enclitic *-ha* is not recognized in General Aztec, and I am not aware of any other dialect area that makes use of such a form.

The bases for positing verb classes in San Buenaventura and for General Aztec are fundamentally different, but not crucial for the problems under discussion here. They are: the 'plural' suffix *-ke/-k*; the optional, final *a* of 'present tense' in verb classes IV–VI; the enclitic *-ha*; and the 'imperfect' suffix. Let us discuss each in turn.

First, the 'plural' suffix *-ke/-k* corresponds to *-ke'* in General Aztec which thus supports the full forms on which Description B is based, as shown in (11).

(11)	San Buenaventura	General Aztec	
'perfect'	<i>u-Ø-ko ɸi-k'e/</i>	<i>Ø-ko ɸ-ke'</i>	'they slept'
'future'	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-s-ke</i>	<i>Ø-ko ɸi-s-ke'</i>	'they will sleep'

The fact that Sanbueneros have generalized this suffix and use it also in the imperative forms where General Aztec has *-ka:n* is a case where the historical insight of Description B is not confirmed by a comparison with General Aztec.

Second, the optional final *-a* of 'present tense' in verb classes IV–VI was in Description A treated as a marker of 'present', whereas it was analyzed as forming part of the stem in Description B. In General Aztec this final *-a* is not considered a suffix, and Description B again reflects the situation of an earlier stage of the dialect. However, a comparison with General Aztec, as in (12), and with most contemporary dialects reveals that in many cases the optional, final *-a* in verbs of classes IV–VI represents an innovation in San Buenaventura, an innovation Nahuatl of Durango shares with other dialects in the Western Periphery (cf. Canger 1988:482).

(12)	San Buenaventura	General Aztec	
	<i>Ø-ki-polo(a)</i>	<i>Ø-ki-poloa</i>	'he loses it'
	<i>Ø-ko ɸi(a)</i>	<i>Ø-ko ɸi</i>	'he sleeps'
	<i>Ø-pano(a)</i>	<i>Ø-pano</i>	'he passes'

But this innovation does not appear to involve the content of the form or the status of the vowel in question, and it is not possible on the basis of synchronic data to determine in which cases this optional, final *-a* has been supplied and in which it goes back to General Aztec.

Third, the fact that the enclitic *-ha* is not recognized in other Nahuatl dialects, and thus must be considered an innovation in San Buenaventura, supports the hypothesis that it is an enclitic whose origin could well be some adverb. I wish to suggest that *-ha* is an abbreviated and encliticized form of the adverb *san* 'only', since *h* is a variant of a number of phonemes, but syllable initially it represents only *s*. In San Buenaventura *san* occurs after another adverb or after a numeral where in other dialects it precedes, e.g. *yo-hán* (< *iw-san*) 'only thus' and *se han* 'only one', which in Classical Nahuatl are *çan yuhqui* [*san iwki*] and *çan ce* [*san se.*] (Carochi 1645:519, 514). Another example is in La Huasteca Nahuatl *zanihqui* [*sanihki*] (Kimball 1980:71).

Fourth, the 'imperfect' suffix cannot be unambiguously reconstructed for General Aztec. It appears to be formed recently, after the General Aztec period, with the adverb *ya* meaning 'already', and the process is in progress. In a few dialect areas *-ya* is still treated as an enclitic (it is outside the scope of stress assignment), whereas it has become reanalyzed and functions fully as a suffix in most, and in still others it is absent (cf. Canger 1980:56–59 for more details).

The suggestion that the suffix for 'imperfect' and *-ha* are enclitics, based on the observation that the suffix for 'plural subject' precedes them, is supported by the historical comparison. The morpheme boundary needed in the description also points to recent arrival. The order in which they have appeared on the scene is also captured by Description B: *-a* 'imperfect' has the status of a suffix, whereas *-ha* is still an enclitic (cf. Bybee's fusion continuum; Bybee 1985).

The purpose of this section was to demonstrate that the forms posited in Description B correspond to forms reconstructed for General Aztec, and thus offer insights into the history of the dialect. The establishment of penultimate stress is in perfect agreement with previous stages. And I have shown that a comparison confirms almost all the posited suffixes—or some variant forms.

Within the historical perspective it is finally worth observing that vowel syncope is not a new phenomenon in Nahuatl. It has hit word final vowels time and again, typically in the environment of a preceding stressed vowel plus one consonant, i.e. *-V(C)CV̇CV → -V̇(C)CVC*, as shown in (13).

(13)	* <i>siwá:-li</i> → <i>siwa:-λ</i>	(woman-NonPoss.Sg)	'woman'
	* <i>i:-siwá:-wi</i> → <i>i:-siwa:-w</i>	(3Poss-woman-Poss)	'his wife'
	* <i>Ø-a'si-ki</i> → <i>Ø-á'si-k</i>	(3Subj-arrive-Perf)	'he arrived'

However, it has not previously affected the stress pattern. Even a presumably quite recent case of vowel reduction has respected the traditional penult stress. In a few dialects in Central Guerrero, *t* and *l* have absorbed a following *i* that immediately precedes *a*, e.g. *tia* → *ɸa* and *lia* → *lya*, but the change is accompanied by a shift of stress, to the vowel of the preceding syllable, e.g. *Ø-ki-pa:ktia* → *Ø-ki-pá:kɸa* 'he makes him happy' and *Ø-ki-λa:lia* → *Ø-ki-lá:lya* 'he places it'.

In spite of the convincing insights this comparison with General Aztec reveals, it has, however, not given us any clues to why the ancestors of present-day Sanbueneros have chosen to give up the comfortable and straightforward stress pattern of the earlier stage.

5. The Linguist's Stress and the Speakers' Stress

The two descriptions differ at several levels:

- A. In Description A it is assumed that stress potentially contributes contrast to two otherwise identical sign expressions, whereas in Description B no such distinctive value is ascribed to stress. According to Description B, stress serves only to demarcate the word phonologically.
- B. The two descriptions assign stress to elements of a systemically different kind. Description A describes the placement of stress above all to stems, noun stems and verb stems, and to grammatical morphemes, whereas the rules of Description B apply to the phonological word. This is obviously what is implied by the label I have given the two descriptions: "Stress as part of the morphological system" versus "Stress assignment in purely phonological terms." A striking consequence of this difference is that only according to Description A does it make sense to recognize 'poss' vs. 'non-poss' as a grammatical category, exemplified by *taxkál* 'tortilla (NonPoss)' vs. *-táxkal* 'tortilla (Poss)'. By including the suffix *-i* in Description B the shift in stress becomes a phonological feature unconnected with any grammatical category.
- C. The two descriptions fit into a full analysis of the expression system in different places, and each presupposes a different analysis. Thus Description B is based on a previous treatment of variation and syncope, but the analysis of these features is less crucial for Description A.

In spite of all these differences I still consider both descriptions adequate, and **because of the** differences they are both necessary. On the one hand, I would not find it reasonable to give a description of the speech of Sanbueneros without the historical perspective, in particular in view of the information we have about Nahuatl dialects and their history and the recent analyses of Nahuatl in general.

On the other, in connected speech, stress on the word final syllable is so remarkable that it must be included in a description. In a short text in which a man (born 1966) tells about how he has been stung by scorpions, I have counted 180 words of two or more syllables; and out of these 180 words 72 have stress on the final syllable, i.e. more than one third.

Furthermore, stress is, due to optional vowel syncope, the only feature that marks the contrast between some specific verb forms, e.g. *wéçka* 'he laughs' vs. *wéçká* 'he laughed'. And since *p*, *t*, *k*, and *s* are optionally manifested by a faint *h* word finally (and partially in syllable final position), the segmental contrast is reduced drastically between other verb forms, e.g. *wéçka-h* 'he will laugh' vs. *u-wéçká-h* 'they have laughed' and *Ø-ki-tása-h* 'he will throw it' vs. *Ø-ki-tásá-h* 'they threw it', whereby stress carries as heavy a functional load as the grammatical suffixes.

In a more comprehensive study of the phonology both descriptions will somehow have to be included, and so will the status of the widespread vowel syncope in San Buenaventura, which—if it represents a change in progress—is certainly not a rapid change. Precisely the same variation which I have encountered in San Buenaventura is evident in the texts which Preuss collected 90 years ago in the neighboring community, San Pedro Jicora—and is still in operation there (UC Field Notes 1993).

I have not referred to the concepts "level of abstraction" and "psychological reality." They have lurked in the wings all along. But I am uneasy with both. Due to my general linguistic education, attitude and previous work, I immediately—as soon as I began working in San Buenaventura—looked for the recognizable forms from other dialects, automatically tried to reconstruct "what had happened"; but the level of abstraction I reached is far from the competence of any of the speakers.

Furthermore, my experience in working with many speakers in many communities has led me to not expect the same speech, the same understanding, the same way of handling their language from speakers who produce what we as linguists want to give a more or less uniform description. I seriously doubt that the speakers of Nahuatl of San Buenaventura all operate their language from the same level of abstraction, and I would not know whose psychological reality to look for.

6. The Role of Spanish

In dealing with the historical perspective I have discussed Nahuatl of San Buenaventura exclusively in relation to other Nahuatl dialects and to General Aztec. However, it is necessary to consider it also in the historical perspective of the last couple of hundred years. I have mentioned that Nahuatl of the Western Periphery adopted a remarkable number of Spanish words already in the 18th century (cf. Canger 1995; Cortés y Zedeño 1765; Guerra 1692). This implies that there must have been at the time much contact and strong influence from Spanish. And I see great resemblances in the stress patterns of the two languages.

In part II, "Stress Assignment in Spanish," of his book "Syllable Structure and Stress in Spanish: A Nonlinear Analysis," Harris (1983) makes a basic distinction between "Morphological Government of Verb Stress" and "Lexical Government of Nonverb Stress." The "established generalizations" for the former, he says, are (Harris 1983:84):

Each inflectional paradigm and nonparadigmatic form (infinitive, gerund, participle) has a characteristic fixed stress pattern that admits no variation, however minimal, among individual lexical items. There is no such thing as a unpredictably or irregularly stressed verb form in Spanish.

And he leaves "morphological government of verb stress" at that (Harris 1983:84):

This does not mean, of course, that the principles governing verb stress are fully understood; however, in what follows verbs are excluded from discussion unless explicitly mentioned.

In presenting "established generalizations" for "lexical government of nonverb stress" he employs the concept markedness and says:

A wide range of evidence has been brought forward that supports the following statements about markedness:
(a) Penultimate stress is unmarked in vowel-final words.
(b) Final stress is unmarked in consonant-final words.

The distinction between stress exploited in the inflectional systems and stress assignment in non-inflected forms is basic to both Spanish and Nahuatl of San Buenaventura. The Sanbueneros distinguish *wéçka* 'he laughs' from *wéçká* 'he laughed' exactly like Spanish speakers distinguish *tómo* 'I take' from *tomó* 'he took'.

In parts of the Sanbuenero vocabulary, specifically in the adverbs, the phonologically determined unmarked stress pattern resembles that of Spanish, penultimate stress in vowel-final words and final stress in consonant-final words, but elsewhere and where no inflection is involved penultimate stress is unmarked in consonant-final words in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura.

The basic similarity in the two languages in the exploitation—as well as in the predictability—of stress makes it natural to assume Spanish influence as the main factor behind the innovative stress patterns in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura. And it may well be that the lack of stability in the traditional predictable word stress in other Nahuatl dialects is also attributable to Spanish. If a shift in stress patterns is in fact earlier in Nahuatl of Durango than in other areas, it may well be due to the unexplained massive Spanish influence in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds in the Western Periphery.

Notes

1. I gratefully acknowledge a generous grant from the Danish Crown Prince Frederik that financed the field work on which the present study is based. Comments by Lyle Campbell to an early version of the paper have been a great help.
2. By the term Classical Nahuatl I refer to the Nahuatl spoken in Central Mexico in the 16th and 17th centuries.
3. The terms **penultimate** and **penult** traditionally refer to syllable. I have not investigated problems of syllable structure in Nahuatl of San Buenaventura. So when I use the terms **penultimate**, **penult**, **antepenult**, etc. even though I may say penultimate syllable, etc., I really mean penultimate **vowel**, etc.
4. General Aztec is a generally accepted term referring to the most shallow common stage, reconstructed for all present-day Nahuatl dialects; it does not include the Pochutec dialect (Campbell & Langacker 1978).

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Approaching the Semimillennium: Language Contact in Latin America

Frances Karttunen

1. Introduction¹

Five hundred years ago Spanish and Portuguese were not spoken on mainland Latin America. An enormous number and variety of indigenous languages were. Once Europeans arrived and established colonial rule, they remained vastly outnumbered by speakers of the indigenous languages, and today there still remain areas where Spanish and Portuguese are minority languages, absent from the fabric of everyday life.

Most such indigenous speech communities are small, and all are immersed in the sea of Spanish and Portuguese stretching from south Texas, New Mexico, and California to Cape Horn. A few islands in this area are large and constitute sizable percentages of national and state populations; among them are the Quechua and Aymara populations of Peru and Bolivia, the speakers of several Mayan languages of Guatemala, and the population of Mexico's southeasternmost state of Chiapas.

Wherever such a situation obtains, that which is perceived as positive by linguists is perceived as problematical by local, state, and national governments, and has been so perceived throughout the Americas.² The struggle between the proponents of language maintenance and cultural survival on the one hand, and the proponents of suppression of indigenous languages and assimilation on the other, dates from the first decades of contact in the sixteenth century and has been debated unceasingly throughout the era of national independence. What to do about the "indios"? (Or more politely, what to do about the *indígenas*?) How to bring about national unity when there is a persistent residue of people who speak something other than the Spanish or Portuguese of education, bureaucracy, commerce, and political empowerment?

One way is to deny that indigenous languages have survived to this day. A section on rural versus urban vernacular speech in an essay on Brazilian sociolinguistics (Bortoni and Guimarães 1988:19) opens with the statement, "*O Brasil é um país monolíngüe, de língua portuguesa...*"³

The undeniable existence of indigenous languages and their perceived threat to national unity have a way of forcing themselves to the fore, however, and they have most recently asserted themselves in Chiapas, Mexico, where speakers maintain the Mayan languages Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Chol, and Lancandón, and where refugees from other Mexican states and from across the border in Guatemala have brought their own languages with them to communities that did not exist twenty years ago.

When the Zapatista national Liberation Army occupied San Cristóbal de las Casas and other provincial towns of Chiapas on New Year's Day of 1994, journalists around the world immediately labeled them "Indian rebels." It was reported with apparently no sense of inconsistency that the Zapatistas were virtually monolingual speakers of indigenous languages who spoke Spanish so poorly as to be barely able to make themselves understood, and yet were sophisticated in the manipulation of global media and had virtuoso multilingual spokesmen. Foreigners and religious workers were reflexively blamed for effective action of which "Indians" were supposed incapable.

The following questions were ignored in forums large and small: What language(s) do the Zapatistas speak? Do the residents of the communities they occupied in the first days of 1994 view the Zapatistas as some of themselves or as strangers? Have ethnically and linguistically distinct people, who in the past have not gotten along with each other, finally found common cause? These questions got short shrift, and it was some weeks after the initial events when they finally began to be addressed at all. In the meantime, and mostly still, to the world at large the neo-Zapatistas of 1994 remain undifferentiated "Indian rebels."

The initial manifesto issued in January 1994 belied the blanket characterization of the Zapatistas as uncouth monolingual peasants. Its passionate description of unendurable social injustice was fluently couched in the rhetoric of academic socialism. Among the Zapatistas was at least one spokesperson with complete mastery of that style, a person since come to be known as the garrulous—and definitely non-Maya—Subcomandante Marcos. Significantly, the manifesto mentioned no specific ethnicity by name.

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by the Friends of Uto-Aztecan**

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