

## 1. Introduction

This book is a grammatical description of the Coatlán-Loxicha Zapotec language (CLZ), known to its speakers as *Di<sup>7</sup>zh Ke<sup>7</sup>* or ‘word of San Pablo Coatlán,’ though as I describe in §1.2, the name also can also be translated as the ‘language of the lords’ if we consider one likely etymology. My approach to the language is one of a descriptive linguist interested in historical issues and I integrate a historical perspective into the synchronic description I give in each chapter. I hope that different elements contained in this description will be useful for all types of linguists, CLZ speakers and their descendants, and others with an interest in the languages, cultures, and history of Mesoamerica.

While I aim at providing a complete description of the language, there are nevertheless many deficiencies. There are topics which I have not analyzed fully enough to include here, and there are surely many others which have escaped my attention completely until some future time. My work on this and other Southern Zapotec languages is an on-going endeavor that I expect to occupy me for the rest of my life. Separately from this grammar I intend to publish a dictionary of CLZ and one or more volumes of texts in this language, in addition to smaller projects related to the grammar and history of CLZ and Southern Zapotec.

In this first chapter I introduce basic facts and background information on CLZ and its speakers. First (§1.1) I preview the fuller description provided in this grammar with some basic linguistic information on CLZ. Next I discuss the names for this language (§1.2)

and its genetic affiliation (§1.3). In the rest of the chapter I provide geographic (§1.4), historical (§1.5), and ethnographic (§1.6) information on the Southern Zapotecs with an emphasis on the CLZ-speaking region. The final section (§1.7) gives an account of the work I have done so far and on which this grammar is based, including information about the CLZ speakers I have worked with and the methods we have used.

### **1.1 Linguistic profile of CLZ**

CLZ is a Southern Zapotec (Zapotecan, Otomanguean) language belonging to the Coatec subgroup according to Smith-Stark (2003). It is a monosyllabic, tonal, head-marking, left-headed language with basic VAO & VS constituent order. Here I preview some of the highlights that are examined in greater detail in the chapters to follow.

From a phonetic and phonological point of view this language has much to offer towards bettering our knowledge of tone languages and their typology. In this grammar I describe interaction between tone and segments (§2.5), different registers that tones can be realized in (§2.5.5), different kinds of glottalization that are used in tone marking (§2.5.2), and ways that tone and register are exploited for morphological purposes (Chapters 4-6). CLZ is one of several modern Zapotec languages which have undergone deletion of all previously unstressed vowels. The way in which the language has reduced from a previously polysyllabic language into an overwhelmingly monosyllabic one, has no doubt added to the complexity and functional load of the system of suprasegmental contrasts, especially tone but also features such as nasalization and palatalization.

CLZ is a head-marking language and the bound segmental morphemes that occur are inflectional (Chapter 5) and derivational prefixes (Chapter 6) and pronominal enclitics

(§3.1.4 & §8.2). Zapotec verbs have interesting stem alternations in their inflectional paradigms (Chapters 4 & 5) including surface vowel alternations for verbs with vowel-initial stems. In one special class there are multiple stems with different initial consonants that are used with different TAM categories. Among the derivational issues I describe for CLZ are the existence of related transitive/intransitive or active/passive verb pairs (§5.1), and two layers of animacy marking on nouns (§5.3), one going back to Proto-Zapotec (PZ) and the other being a Southern Zapotec innovation that developed from shortened classifiers. In my description of enclitic pronouns I discuss the phonological and syntactic distributions of two types of clitic (§8.2).

The syntax of this and other Otomanguean languages in general is of interest because of the theoretical (both descriptive and formal) issues associated with the syntax of languages in which verb and object are discontinuous (Chapter 7). In this left-headed language verbs precede their arguments and nouns precede their modifiers. I describe the different syntactic constructions that mark alienable and inalienable possession (§8.1) and the innovative use of a prefix historically used to productively mark alienably possessed Zapotec nouns, which in CLZ instead marks a closed class of inalienably possessed nouns. Most phrases that translate as prepositional phrases in Spanish and English are in fact possessed noun phrases in CLZ but a few historical nouns have lost their original meanings and might be considered emergent prepositions in modern CLZ, alongside an additional class of loan prepositions (Chapter 3). Noun incorporation and the formation of different types of compound verbs (Chapter 7) are also topics of syntactic and morphological interest. One of the most intriguing syntactic topics in Southern Zapotec languages is the existence of an exotic inclusory construction which resembles

constructions found in languages of the Pacific such as Australian languages (see Lichtenberk, 2000 and Singer, 2001). In the CLZ version of the construction the formula *quantifier noun possessor* means that the number indicated by the quantifier equals the number of the possessor plus the number of the possessed noun, so that *three son John* means ‘John and his two sons.’ Though CLZ lacks (at least productively) the construction sometimes called the *reflexive of possession* (Butler, 1976) in which a subject is omitted when coreferent with the possessor of a direct object, there are certain instances where a subject goes unexpressed when it is coreferent with a following possessor or other argument. These different coreference phenomena are covered in Chapter 7.

While there have been some dramatic changes between Proto-Zapotec and CLZ, CLZ also has some conservative phonological features within Southern Zapotec. For one, the earlier palatalized voiceless stops (as in Benton, 1998 and Kaufman, 2003) are maintained in some instances and in others are at least conserved as /t̥/ whereas these have become /t/ and /t̃/ in most other Zapotec languages. In one dialect the voiceless /t̥/ reflex of \*ty is still marked as lenis through a weak pre-pausal glottal stop following the segment (§2.1.1). CLZ is also interesting for some of its less conservative features. While most Zapotec languages have a contrast between two, three, or more phonation types, separate from the tonal contrast, glottalization in CLZ has become a tonal contrast itself (§2.5). This language has much to offer our understanding of how tone languages may change over time, especially in languages with extensive vowel deletion.

## 1.2 Language names

The names given to Zapotec languages by linguists are often cumbersome and tend to be substituted with acronyms. I am compelled to here justify the mouthful I have chosen to denote this language: *Coatlán-Loxicha Zapotec* (CLZ), or in Spanish *el zapoteco de los Coatlanes y Loxichas* (ZCL). I start by reviewing the names which others have used to refer to this language.

In CLZ the name of the language is *di<sup>7</sup>zh ke<sup>7</sup>* [ðiʔʂkeʔ]. *Di<sup>7</sup>zh* means ‘palabra, idioma; word, language<sup>1</sup>.’ *Ke<sup>7</sup>* is not a morpheme that has been recorded in isolation in CLZ but it is found in the town name of San Pablo Coatlán, *Yêzh Yè Ke<sup>7</sup>* or sometimes just *Yíke<sup>7</sup>*. In the fuller version of the toponym both of the other morphemes are analyzable. *Yêzh* means ‘pueblo; town’ and *yè* means ‘cerro; hill’. In the shorter name *Yi* may be a reduced form of the word *yî* ‘piedra; rock’ or perhaps a reduction and mutation of *yè* hill<sup>2</sup>. So *ke<sup>7</sup>* would seem to be a morpheme that refers specifically to San Pablo Coatlán.

San Pablo Coatlán is the *cabecera* or county seat of the Coatlanes and was also the ancient capital of the principality of *Quiegoqui* (Espíndola, 1580), later misidentified as *Huihuogui* in several sources (Gutierrez, 1609; Gay, 1950; Rojas, 1958; and Brandomin, 1992) and referred to as *Guiotequi* by Alcázar L. (2004). *Quie* is cited by Córdova (1578) as meaning ‘piedra generalmente’ (‘rock in general’) and is found in several place names of Zapotec origin: *Quiegolani*, *Quiechapa*, *Quieguitani*, *Quielovego* and *Quieri* (Brandomin, 1992). In fact, although the form *quie* cited by Córdova is in a Valley Zapotec language, all of the *Quie*-initial place names cited by Brandomin for the state of

---

<sup>1</sup> Here and throughout the grammar I give Spanish and English glosses, in that order and separated by a semi-colon. In most circumstances the Spanish glosses are offered by a native Zapotec speaker and the English glosses are my interpretation of the meaning(s) of the Zapotec word.

Oaxaca are in the Southern Zapotec area, though he gives similarly glossed place names beginning in a *g* in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec: *Guevea*, *Guiedo*, *Guienagati*, and *Guiengola*.

The translation given for *Huihuogui* (a later miscopying or misinterpretation of *Quiegoqui*) is ‘río de los señores; river of the lords’ (Gutiérrez, 1609; and cited by Gay, 1950; Rojas, 1958; Alcázar López, 2004). ‘Señor; lord’ is given as *coqui* by Córdova (1578). The voicing difference between *coqui* and *goqui* is not unexpected since we know that lenis consonants underwent voicing during this period in most Zapotec languages.<sup>3</sup>

Both the sixteenth and seventeenth century *relación*<sup>4</sup> writers are clearly deficient in their understanding of Zapotec, yet they each give us valuable pieces of the etymological puzzle which can then be put together. Espíndola (1580) gives us the correct Zapotec name but not the correct translation. While sometimes Nahuatl place names were translations of Zapotec ones, Espíndola assumes too often that this is the case. In (1580) he says that Coatlán in Zapotec “is called *Quiegoqui*, which in the Mexican language (Nahuatl) means Coatlan and in ours ‘Sierra de Culebras’” i.e. ‘hill or mountain range of snakes’ (quotation is my translation). While his Spanish term correctly translates the better-known Nahuatl, it has nothing to do with the meaning of the Zapotec name. On the other hand, Gutiérrez (1609) gives an altered Zapotec term which can’t be quite right, but a better translation. *Quie* should mean ‘rock’ and not ‘river’ but *goqui* does mean

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Yè Tzî*, literally ‘cerro de águila; eagle hill’, which alternates with *Yítzî*, both being variants of the town name of ‘Sata Catarina Cuixtla’.

<sup>3</sup> Evidence that Zapotec lenis obstruents changed from voiceless to voiced in the post-contact period comes from Spanish loanwords. Spanish voiceless consonants were borrowed as lenis consonants and later underwent voicing the same as lenis consonants in native words. For example, Operstein (2004) cites the Spanish loan in ZZ *vaca* → *bag*. ZZ (Operstein, 2004) and CLZ both have *bay* for Spanish ‘pañuelo.’

<sup>4</sup> The *relaciones* are colonial era documents made by religious and political officials to report to their superiors about the state of things in the part of New Spain that was under their jurisdiction.

‘lord(s).’ ‘River of the lords’ was probably a valid toponym in use to refer to the Coatlán River but the town itself was ‘rock of the lords.’

/ko/, or in modern times *go*, is one of two animacy prefixes which are added to many words referring to humans, animals and supernaturals (see §6.6). Prefixes are pre-tonic in Zapotec and their vowels are lost in SZ languages. The *co* of Córdova’s *coqui* was unstressed and is therefore a prefix we would expect to reduce or delete in SZ languages. In SZ languages animacy prefixes have undergone prenasalization, with \**ko-* often reflecting as *ngw-*. However, animacy prefixes are often further reduced or deleted in toponyms (e.g. compare *mbéwnè* ‘scorpion’ to *Béwnè* ‘Santa María Colotepec.’). If the *co* of *coqui* did not survive into modern CLZ, or if it suffered vowel deletion rendering an initial cluster that would reflect as a fortis consonant, the form we would expect would be *ki*, a syllable which is awfully similar to the *ke*<sup>7</sup> morpheme in the CLZ name of San Pablo Coatlán and of CLZ itself. There are plentiful examples of an *i~e* alternation in several words between different dialects of CLZ and the glottalization would not have been written in these colonial sources anyway. Thus, *di*<sup>7</sup>*zh ke*<sup>7</sup> could be translated as ‘palabra o lengua de los señores; word or language of the lords.’

Other Zapotec languages also use their cognates of the *di*<sup>7</sup>*zh* morpheme in the names for their languages. Some also add an ethnonym specific to their region, e.g. Zoogocho Zapotec is known to its speakers as *diža’xon*. The *xon* morpheme is glossed by Long C. and Cruz M. (1999) as ‘casera’ (homestyle) as in *rmed xon* ‘medicina casera; home remedy.’ The dictionary made by Zanhe Xbab Sa (1995) defines *xhon* as referring to the Zapotec people that inhabit the Cajonos region (presumably cognate with the Spanish stressed syllable in *Cajonos*). Other Zapotec names for Zapotec languages combine the

*díʔzh* morpheme with a general Zapotec ethnonym. Kaufman (2003) reconstructs this morpheme as \**sä* in Proto-Zapotec (PZ). Reflexes include those seen in the following words different Zapotec languages have to name themselves: Isthmus Zapotec *didxazá* (Picket et al., 1959), San Agustín Mixtepec Zapotec *díʔis tæ̀*, Cuixtla (aka Miahuatlán) Zapotec *díʔstèʔ*, Santo Domingo de Morelos (same language as San Agustín Loxicha) Zapotec [ðiʔis tey], Mitla Zapotec *didxsaj* (Stubblefield & Stubblefield, 1991), San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec (SLQZ) *Diiʔzh Sah* (Munro and López et al., 1999).

In some Zapotec languages the morpheme for ‘language’ is part of the ethnonym, so that one doesn’t refer to ‘Zapotec people’ but rather ‘people of the Zapotec word / language.’ For example, in SLQZ a Zapotec person is *bùunny Diiʔzh Sah* (Munro and López et al., 1999) and in Santo Domingo de Morelos ‘gente zapoteca; Zapotec people’ are [ʃaʔ ðiʔiz tēy].

The first name used to refer specifically to this language in a European tongue was *coateco*, which is mentioned in the *Relaciones Geográficas* (Feria y Carmona, 1777) and has also been used more recently by Smith Stark (2003) in naming the subgroup of SZ languages to which CLZ belongs. Other names used in English and Spanish to refer to this language are those used by the SIL and listed in the Ethnologue. The main publication on this language before my association with it was Dow Robinson’s (1963) *Field Notes on Coatlan Zapotec* (1963). The name used in Robinson’s title is how this language is often referred to in the literature (e.g. Fernández de Miranda, 1965; Benton, 1988; Rendón, 1995), mostly historical work in which Robinson’s data was used to further reconstructions of Proto-Zapotec. The Ethnologue lists the following alternate



names: Western Miahuatlán Zapoteco, Santa María Coatlán Zapoteco, Coatlán Zapotec(o), and San Miguel Zapoteco.

The Nahuatl name *Coatlán* means ‘sierra de culebra, lugar de culebra; snake hill, place of snake(s)’ because of the steepness of the surrounding mountain range (Espíndola, 1580) or because of the great quantity of snakes that existed in San Pablo Coatlán (Gutiérrez, 1609).

The name *Zapotec* comes from Nahuatl *tzapotécatl* ‘Zapote people’ (Paddock, 1970). The zapote is a class of fruit that comes in many colors and which is common in Oaxaca.

The name I use for this language ‘Coatlán-Loxicha Zapotec’ has an additional word compared to the earlier names in the literature, which I will now justify.

The Ethnologue currently counts this language as two languages. The language of the Coatlanes (except San Vicente Coatlán) is there given the official code of [ZPS] and the names already given above. The Loxicha dialect(s) of CLZ are in the Ethnologue given the language code of [ZPX] and the official name of *Northwestern Pochutla Zapoteco* or the alternate names of *San Baltázar* (sic) *Loxicha Zapoteco* and *Loxicha Zapotec*. Despite the Ethnologue’s categorization of CLZ as two distinct languages with intelligibility test scores of only 71% (Loxicha’s “intelligibility with Santa María Coatlán”) and 54% (Coatlán’s “intelligibility of Loxicha”), these are in fact dialects of the same language with the highest degree of mutual intelligibility. I have participated in and witnessed conversations between people from the various towns and they had no more (and in some cases less) difficulty communicating with each other than I would with someone who speaks a different dialect of English than my own.

Since the towns which speak CLZ today have the *apellido*<sup>5</sup> of either Loxicha or Coatlán, the name *Coatlán Zapotec*, or likewise the name *Loxicha Zapotec*, would only give fair representation to part of the speech community. Either of these names would also cause confusion because there are two or three other languages<sup>6</sup> in this region which are spoken in towns with the *apellidos* Coatlán and Loxicha. CLZ is the only language which is spoken in some towns with each *apellido* so the use of both *Coatlán* and *Loxicha* in the compound name should indicate the appropriate language and exclude the other nearby languages with similar names.

Loxicha is a bimorphemic word of entirely Zapotec origin. *Lo-* is found on place names in the SZ and NZ areas. According to Brandomin (1992) it comes from the Zapotec *loho* ‘lugar’ (‘place’). This is probably the word for ‘face,’ which is *ndô* in CLZ but *lo* in related languages such as SAMZ. This word is also used like a preposition meaning ‘to, towards, facing, at’ and is commonly used to express location. Brandomin gives the *xicha* morpheme the meaning of ‘piña’ (‘pineapple’). However, in CLZ the tone does not quite match. In CLZ the name of San Baltazar Loxicha is *Yêzh Xîzh* and its people are *mě Lxîzh*. The word for pineapple is *bxi<sup>7</sup>zh*. An equally good candidate as ‘pineapple’ is ‘tejón; coatimundi’ *mxi<sup>7</sup>zh*. Both of these last two words have glottal tone

---

<sup>5</sup> In many parts of Mexico, and especially in Oaxaca, towns have compound names. A typical formula is the Spanish name of the patron saint of the town followed by an indigenous toponym. The indigenous toponym sometimes comes from the local indigenous language and other times from some other indigenous language of Mexico which was used administratively in colonial times, usually Nahuatl. The indigenous name, because it occurs last and because it follows a saint’s name which is also a Spanish given name for people, is referred to as the *apellido*, which is the Spanish term for a surname.

<sup>6</sup> The language spoken in San Vicente Coatlán was probably once part of a dialect continuum with CLZ but Zapotec is no longer spoken in the intermediate towns so the continuum has severed these into two separate languages. A Miahuatec language is spoken in San Agustín Loxicha and several other towns near and on the Pacific coast, including some with the Loxicha *apellido*, e.g. Candelaria Loxicha, Quelové Loxicha. The variety of Zapotec spoken in the town of San Bartolomé Loxicha may be a third language or it may be a dialect of the language spoken in San Agustín Loxicha. Speakers from various towns which speak the

in CLZ while the toponym has low tone. This does not rule them out though because there are some related words which differ by these two tones. Another possibility is that the town is named after a flower. Ortega (1777) in his *relación* of Santiago Lapaguía, mentions a flowering tree with fragrant white flowers which he calls *plurifundio* in Spanish. He writes, “in the Zapotec language they name them *luxicha*” (my translation). This tree is also found in SBL where in Spanish it is called *florifunda* or the more standard *florifundio* and in Zapotec *mě yi*<sup>7</sup> which translates as ‘señor flor; Mr. flower.’ This flower is very fragrant and is also an entheogen (Ott, 2004). Thus, if this is the correct etymology, the town’s name could either refer to the existence of this plant in SBL (which would hardly be a feature unique to this town, though perhaps there could have been a tree on a particularly important spot there) or, hypothetically, the name could refer to the use of this plant by shamans in SBL. I have not heard reports of *mě yi*<sup>7</sup> being used in this way in SBL but the use of a higher animate classifier *mě* in the name suggests knowledge of its entheogenic properties.

### 1.3 Linguistic affiliation

Zapotec languages are Otomanguean languages. The Otomanguean family is thought to be roughly 6000 years old (Kaufman, 2004). It stretches from San Luis Potosí in the North to Costa Rica in the South. Otomanguean languages are overwhelmingly tonal and are known for their VAO syntax. Zapotecan languages are Eastern Otomanguean languages and are most closely related to Mazatecan. The Chatino languages are the

---

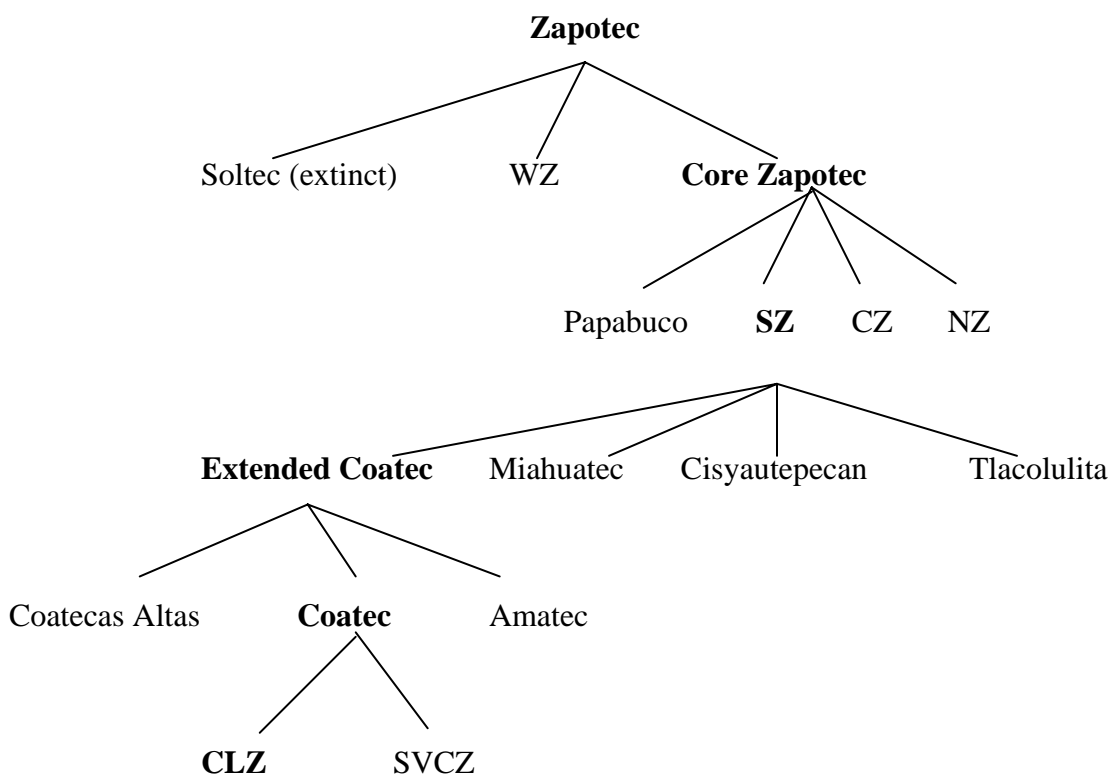
latter language claim to not be able to understand speakers from San Bartolomé Loxicha, but speakers from San Bartolomé Loxicha say that in fact they can understand speakers from those same other towns just fine.



(Ethnologue). Judging from the information given by Smith Stark (2003) and my own personal field experience with many Zapotec languages, SZ languages alone must number between ten and the mid-upper teens.

According to Smith Stark (2003), SZ languages are characterized by having an initial /m/ or /mb/ where other Zapotec languages have /b/ in animal words and other words marked with an animacy prefix. “Extended Coatec” languages (CLZ, SVC, Coatecas Altas and Amatec) share the innovation of \**ss* > /ts/. In Figure 2 I show CLZ within Smith’s classification. All English labels are my translation.

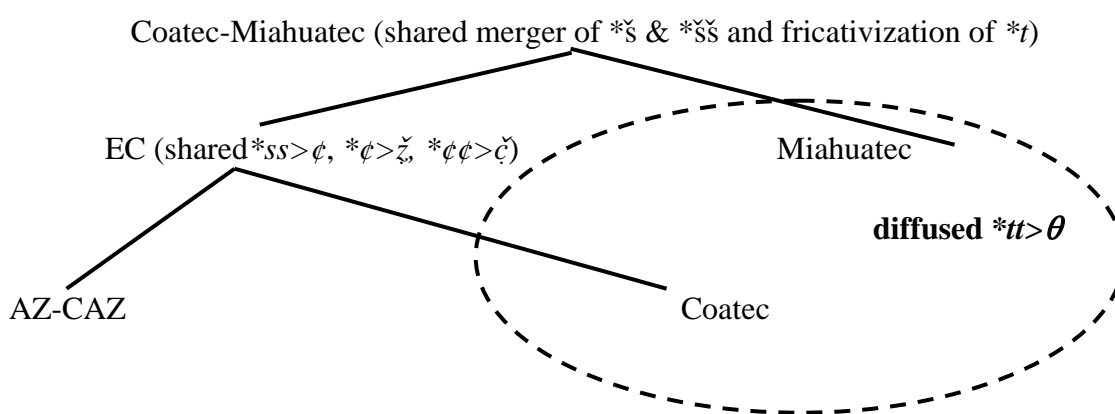
**Figure 2: CLZ in Smith Stark (2003)’s classification**



In Beam de Azcona (forthcoming a) I found two additional sound changes shared by the Extended Coatec (EC) languages, \**ç* (IPA *ts*) > *z* and \**çç* > *ç*. I also found that Smith

Stark's EC and Miahuatec subgroups of SZ were more closely related to each other than to other subgroups, sharing the merger of  $*s$  and  $*s\text{̥}$  and the change  $*t > \theta$ . At least one other sound change was shared through diffusion between Miahuatec and Coatec proper,  $*tt > \theta$ , as shown below.

**Figure 3: Shared innovations in Coatec-Miahuatec**



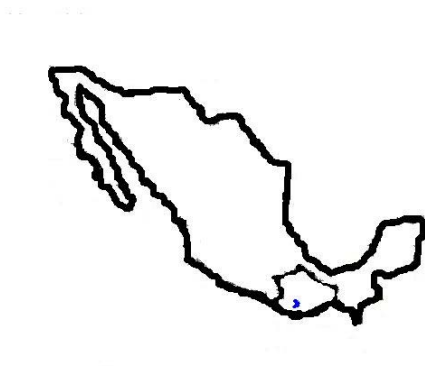
CLZ lies within the Mesoamerican linguistic area, as defined by Campbell, Kaufman, and Smith Stark (1986). It has all of the five main features used to define Mesoamerica as a linguistic area: nominal possession of the type where a prefixed possessed noun is followed by the possessor, relational nouns (in CLZ these are possessed but don't take pronominal affixes, like in Campbell et al.'s examples, because there are none), a vigesimal numeral system, non-verb-final word order, and several of the Mesoamerican calques<sup>7</sup>. Of the 27 additional traits that support Campbell et al.'s classification of Mesoamerica as a linguistic area, CLZ has 14: absence of switch-reference, inalienable possession of body-part and kin terms, locatives derived from body parts, absence of

plural markers, noun incorporation (though this appears to be somewhat fixed now), body-part incorporation, aspect more than tense, inclusive vs. exclusive pronominal forms, a zero copula construction<sup>8</sup>, voicing of obstruents after nasals, stress on the vowel preceding the last consonant of a word, aspirated stops and affricates, contrastive tones, and retroflexed fricatives and an affricate.

#### 1.4 Geographic location

CLZ is spoken by a few hundred people, nearly all of them adults, in the region known as the *Sierra Madre del Sur* or simply *la Sierra Sur* in the southern part of the state of Oaxaca, in southern Mexico.

**Figure 4: CLZ in Oaxaca and Mexico**



CLZ territory is in the westernmost part of the SZ area which dominates the Southern Sierra Madre region of the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. To the southwest of CLZ lies the Chatino region, to the northwest the Papabuco and Western Zapotec areas. Beyond these

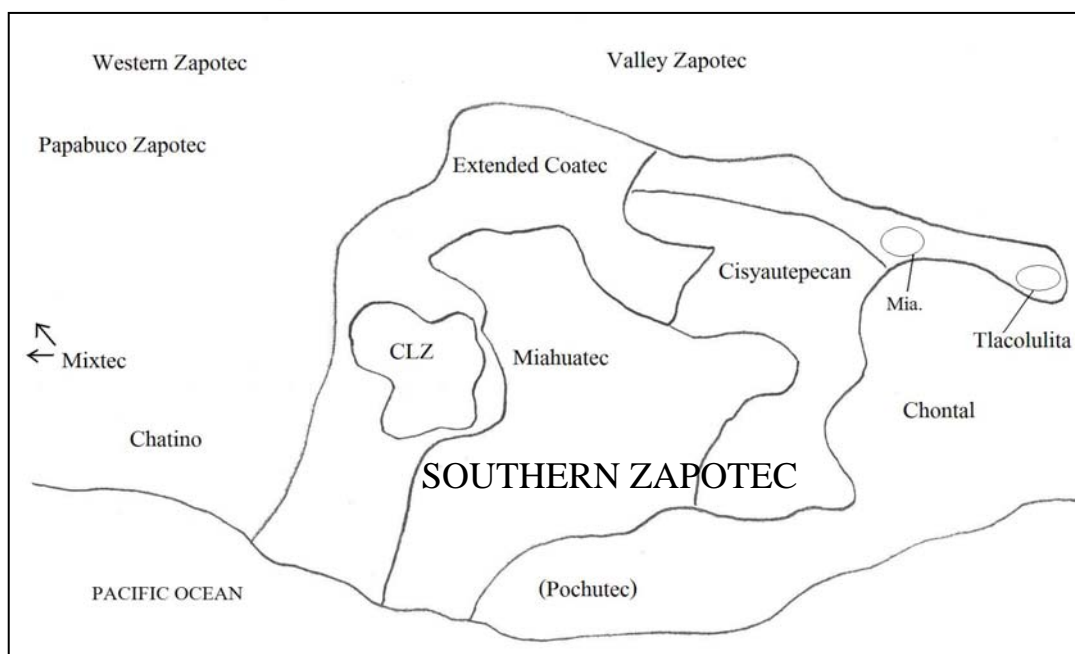
---

<sup>7</sup> The ones I have found in CLZ are the following--- door: mouth of house, eye: fruit of face, wife: intimately possessed 'woman', branch: arm of tree, to marry: to join, molar: grindstone (metate), edge: mouth, otter: water-dog, to write: to paint, and alive: awake.

<sup>8</sup> An additional feature given by them, pronominal copular constructions with affixes, would be true if CLZ had any affixes. Such constructions do occur in CLZ with full pronouns.

languages to the west are Mixtec languages, which historically had contact with CLZ prior to the Spanish and Aztec conquests, when Mixtecs occupied Miahuatlán (Brockington, 1973). To the southeast was the unique Pochutec Nahua language which became extinct in the early twentieth century. Beyond Pochutla along the coast and then upward lies the Chontal-speaking region. Due east from CLZ-speaking towns are found the various Miahuatec and other SZ languages. North from CLZ is CLZ's closest relative, SVCZ. Beyond SVC is Coatecas Altas, the northernmost of the SZ languages. These three languages together with Amatec form Smith-Stark's (2003) "Extended Coatec" subgroup of SZ. To the north past Coatecas Altas, beginning in northern Ejutla and Ocotlán, are the Valley Zapotec languages which border SZ all along its northern border. CLZ is thus situated among a diverse variety of its Otomanguean relatives and was also historically in proximity to the unrelated Pochutec Nahua and Chontal languages.

**Figure 5: CLZ and its linguistic neighbors**





Once spoken in perhaps as many as 33 settlements, CLZ is today spoken in seven towns and their subsidiary ranches. Since 1996 I have worked with speakers from four of these: San Miguel (SMigC) and Santa María Coatlán (SMaC) and San Baltazar (SBL) and Santa Catarina Loxicha (SCL), though most intensively with SBL. There are still a few speakers in San Sebastián (SSC), Santo Domingo (SDC) and San Jerónimo Coatlán (SJC), according to monolingual Spanish speakers and one CLZ semi-speaker from these towns whom I have met in Miahuatlán. According to the 2000 Mexican Census (INEGI, 2002), 1588 people in all these towns were Zapotec speakers. The Coatlanes lie in the western part of the ex-district of Miahuatlán while the Loxichas are to the south in the ex-district of Pochutla. CLZ's closest relative is San Vicente Coatlán Zapotec (SVCZ) in the ex-district of Ejutla to the north.

The CLZ-speaking area was once much more widespread than it is today. The variety of Zapotec spoken in San Vicente Coatlán (SVC) was probably once part of a dialect continuum with the various varieties of CLZ. Language death in the towns which are geographically intermediate between SVC and the other Coatlanes has severed this dialect chain into two separate languages. According to speakers I have interviewed, today SVCZ is not intelligible to speakers of the surviving dialects of CLZ, nor are these dialects intelligible to SVCZ speakers. Nevertheless, older speakers of both languages name the same now-Spanish-speaking towns as towns which used to speak a variety of Zapotec intelligible to both SVCZ and CLZ speakers.

The town of Santa María Colotepec (SMCo), near the Pacific coast, was probably originally a CLZ-speaking town (based on toponymic evidence discussed below). Today it is a Southern Zapotec town where several SZ languages are spoken but where none

dominates. Spanish is the public language as well as the home language of families who have lived in SMCo for several generations. Nevertheless the town is known as an ethnically Southern Zapotec town, e.g. I have heard people in Puerto Escondido describe it as ‘a town of Indians.’ SMCo is a place where many SZ people relocate, bringing with them their languages, which they continue to use in their homes and with other immigrant neighbors in the community with similar backgrounds. Speakers of SVCZ, CLZ, Miahuatec and other SZ languages live here. According to the 2000 census there are more than 1200 residents over the age of 5 who speak “Zapotec” or “Southern Zapotec” there. Only a fraction of this number are CLZ speakers. However, given the moribundity of CLZ in the towns where it survives, particularly in the Coatlanes, there are probably as many or more CLZ speakers in SMCo as in the 7 CLZ-speaking towns listed above. Thus, it might be said that there is an immigrant speech community here, but that CLZ is no longer *the* language of SMCo.

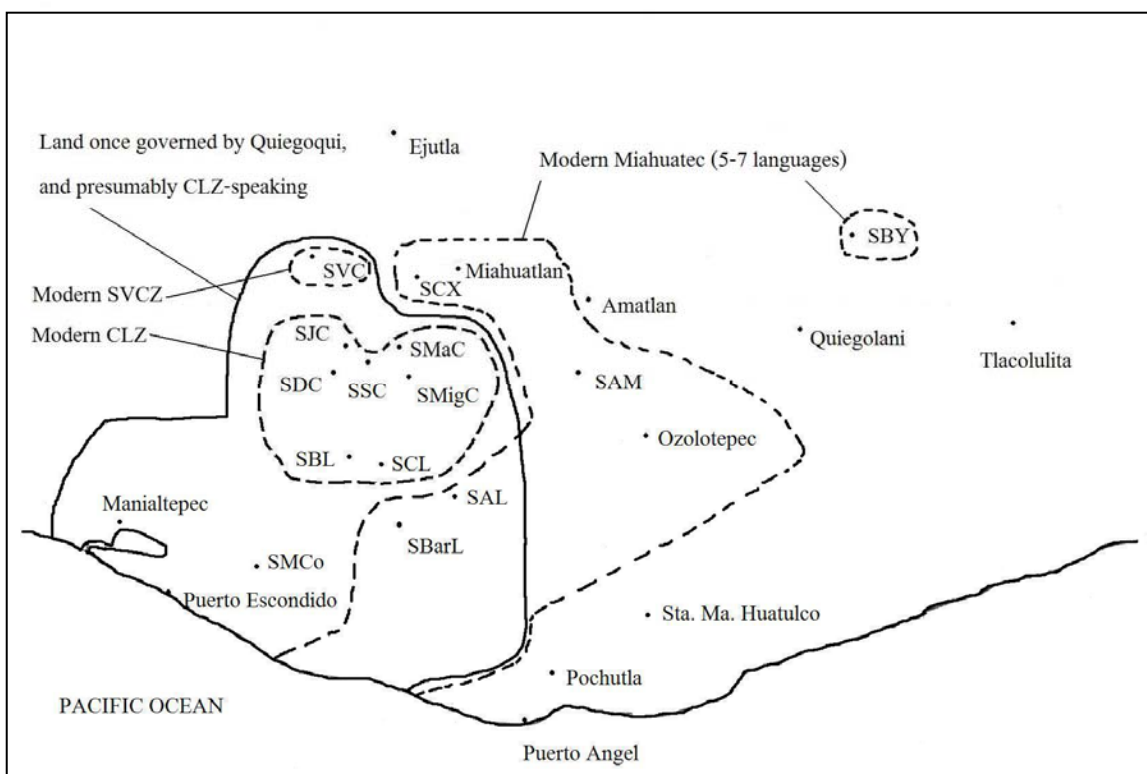
Language death due to the shift to Spanish is the primary reason for the reduction of CLZ’s presence on the map. In the case of SMCo it is both language shift and the immigration of other linguistic groups which have caused CLZ to no longer play the leading role in the town’s linguistic identity. Additionally, what appears to be a colonial-era (eighteenth century, see Gerhard, 1993: 73 & 125) migration of Miahuatec speakers into the southeastern corner of the area once governed by Quiegoqui, the ancient capital of this region and now known as San Pablo Coatlán, may also be responsible for the loss of Coatec territory. Oral histories and legends in both San Agustín Mixtepec and San Agustín Loxicha indicate that a disagreement caused a group of people to leave the former town to migrate south, eventually founding the latter town. Today the language of

San Agustín Loxicha (SAL), a Miahuatec language which is indeed the southernmost relative of languages spoken in and around Miahuatlán, including the nearly-dead language of San Agustín Mixtepec, is alive and well. SALZ is spoken by the overwhelming majority of the population in several towns along and near the Pacific coast including San Agustín Loxicha, Candelaria Loxicha, Cozoaltepec, Santo Domingo de Morelos, and other towns. At least some of this territory was probably originally under the CLZ sphere of influence.

The Zapotec toponym for SMCo corroborates the other evidence of a late Miahuatec push towards the coast. This toponym indicates that the language spoken immediately to the east of CLZ in places like San Agustín Loxicha and Cozoaltepec was not original to this area, and that historically the town of SMCo was closer to (or within) the CLZ area. The CLZ place name *Béwnè* is virtually the same as the CLZ word *mbéwnè* ‘scorpion.’ The *colotl* morpheme also meaning ‘scorpion’ is found in the official name which comes from Nahuatl, *Colotepec* or ‘scorpion hill.’ SALZ and other Miahuatec languages have another word for the animal ‘scorpion’ based on the root *xûb* but have borrowed the CLZ name for SMCo. The SALZ name for SMCo is *Bónè*. While the phonological form of the SALZ name for SMCo is slightly different from the CLZ form just cited (*mbéwnè*), which used in San Baltazar Loxicha (the nearest CLZ-speaking town to SMCo), it is identical to the form used in San Miguel Coatlán, a more northern CLZ-speaking town where scorpions are called *mónè*. This suggests that before founding SAL, the people, who possibly then spoke the same language as the people of San Agustín Mixtepec (SAM), had already borrowed a name for SMCo from the nearest CLZ speakers to SAM.

While Quiegoqui may have governed some towns that spoke other languages, it is likely that CLZ was once the most widely spoken language in the area ruled by Quiegoqui, and thus the most widely spoken in the SZ region. It was the language of the most important SZ rulers, the Language of the Lords, *Di'zh Ke'*.

**Figure 6: Coatec territory lost to Spanish and Miahuatec**



The northern part of the CLZ area is a cold climate pine forest, while the southernmost CLZ-speaking towns, though still in the mountains, are closer to the coast, where the foggy pine forest gives way to banana trees and palms. There are streams and, famously in Santa María Coatlán, caves.

SBL is five hours from Miahuatlán by bus on a mostly dirt road. It is closer to Puerto Escondido but until 2004 travelers and vehicles had to cross a river without a bridge and

during the rainy season the town's bus could not always pass. Historically people from SBL and SCL more often made the long trip to Miahuatlán because that is where they went historically, had a passable road to, and where they once had political ties. Even after becoming part of Pochutla the ties to Miahuatlán, culturally and economically, were stronger than those to the south. With the new bridge, and perhaps in a few years with a planned toll highway, it will be quicker and easier to go to Puerto Escondido. This will bring more contact with the outside and with foreigners.

CLZ will probably be dead in the Coatlanes before significant cultural changes take place, but had it survived, increased access to the coast from the Loxichas would likely have meant further divergence of the Coatlán and Loxicha dialects of CLZ. The weekly trip to market in Miahuatlán brought a high level of contact between speakers of the various CLZ dialects, and with the northern Miahuatec languages. Indeed many CLZ speakers from SBL have acquired a passive knowledge of Miahuatec languages spoken in places like Santa Cruz Xitla (SCX) and are able to have bilingual conversations where each person speaks his native Zapotec language and is understood by the other. The languages of SBL and SCX are not mutually intelligible for speakers who are not familiar with the other language. Trips to Puerto Escondido bring less contact with people from the Coatlanes and northern Miahuatec languages like that of SCX (though some people from all of these towns do immigrate south to SMCo and Puerto Escondido). Instead, in Puerto Escondido and SMCo, CLZ speakers from the Loxichas come into increased contact with speakers of San Agustín Loxicha Zapotec (SALZ) and the related dialect or language spoken in San Bartolomé Loxicha (SBarL), as well as with Chatino and Mixtec,

but mostly this trip brings contact with Spanish speakers, and potentially also with the many Italian and English speakers who live in “Puerto.”

### **1.5 Historical background of the Southern Zapotec region**

A look at the map in Figure 5 above suggests that during its history CLZ was likely in contact with Chatino and Pochutec, as well as with other SZ languages which themselves were in contact with Chontal and with Central Zapotec languages. Through invasion and other political arrangements CLZ speakers also came into contact with one or more Mixtec languages, with Classical Nahuatl, and finally with Spanish. In this section I give some general details about the history of the SZ region and the context in which language contact occurred.

Most of the Southern Zapotec region remains unexplored by archaeologists but Donald Brockington’s (1973) work at sites in and around Miahuatlán (the city) suggests a Zapotec presence during the Mesoamerican Preclassic era. Archaeologists who work in Oaxaca refer to stages called Monte Albán I-V (here MA1-5). Brockington (1973) found an abundance of MA2 (100BCE-200CE) and later Zapotec pottery and a small amount of MA1 (400-100BCE) pottery. Joyce Marcus (2003) also argues for an MA2 Zapotec presence in this region based on comparative epigraphic evidence. She uses Aztec pictograms from the Codex Mendoza with known readings to decipher toponyms represented by similar Zapotec pictograms on an MA2-era building at Monte Albán. She argues that this building lists border sites conquered by the Zapotecs and incorporated into their empire, which had its capital at Monte Albán near the modern city of Oaxaca.

That the Southern Zapotecs had an origin in the Valley of Oaxaca and expanded towards the Pacific Ocean may also be indicated by the CLZ toponym for Ocotlán, which lies to the north of the SZ area in the Valley of Oaxaca. In CLZ Ocotlán is known as *Làt Tzo*<sup>7</sup>, literally ‘the back’s plain.’ *Làt* means ‘llano, valle; plain, valley’ and *tzo*<sup>7</sup> means ‘espalda, atrás; back, behind’. This toponym reflects the south-facing orientation of the SZ people, focussing them away from their origins and towards the frontier, which moved further and further southward after their arrival in the region. However, though tradition and details like those discussed here suggest a Valley origin for the Southern Zapotecs, a possible closer linguistic affinity with the Papabuco Zapotec languages currently spoken to the west should not be ruled out.

In the expansion to the Pacific the Southern Zapotecs invaded and seized many previously populated communities, driving out and killing many Chontal speakers but also incorporating many of these into new Zapotec-governed communities (Martínez Gracida, 1883). According to Espíndola (1580), the Southern Zapotecs of Ozolotepec had wars not just with the Chontales but also with the Mixes. The southern expansion also pushed the SZ border closer to that of the Mixtec kingdom of Tututepec.

The Mixtec *relación* of Huitzo<sup>9</sup> states that it had wars with both Coatlán and Miahuatlán. While there were conflicts with this Mixtec community far to the north of Coatlán, there was a more enduring conflict with the Mixtec lordship of Tututepec, which was closer by, on the Pacific coast to the southwest (Whitecotton, 1977).

---

<sup>9</sup> Huitzo lies approximately 110 kilometers to the Northwest of the city of Oaxaca. Both Zapotecs and Mixtecs ruled this town at different times and during certain archaeological periods there were separate Mixtec and Zapotec neighborhoods. At the time of the interaction with Coatlán, Huitzo was controlled by Mixtecs.

The Tututepec Mixtecs conquered several SZ towns from which they subsequently collected tribute. According to Woensdregt (1996), Tututepec dominance over Zapotec lands was more of an economic relationship than anything else. However, these same Tututepec Mixtecs established a military base at Miahuatlán from which they launched operations against Valley Zapotec towns including Mitla (Brockington, 1973). The Mixtecs took over the MA2 Zapotec site studied by Brockington and known to locals as *el Gueche* or simply *el cerrito* (both the Zapotec and the Spanish term mean 'hill').

It is unclear when the Mixtec occupation ended but the scant archaeological evidence we have available indicates that either the Mixtec presence in SZ territory lasted much longer than in more northern Zapotec sites, or at the very least the Mixtecs had some more long-lasting cultural influence on the Southern Zapotecs. According to Brockington (1973) the Mixtec invasion at Miahuatlán as well as at Valley Zapotec sites is marked by a change in pottery style, from earlier Zapotec grey ware, found only in the Zapotec linguistic area, to red-on-cream ware, found mostly in the Mixtec linguistic area. While Valley Zapotec sites like Mitla later show a renaissance of Zapotec style and a rejection of Mixtec style pottery, in Miahuatlán Mixtec style pottery does not disappear after its introduction during the MA4 period. While both styles of pottery are found at Miahuatlán in the stratum that is supposed to be MA4 (900-1350CE), by MA5 (1350-1521) the Mixtec style pottery is more popular than the native Zapotec style.

We currently do not know the full extent of language contact between Mixtec and Zapotec, but we are beginning to compile evidence of diffusion. Some of the influence took place at an earlier stage of Zapotec. The word for 'hummingbird' in Northern Zapotec and in the westernmost varieties of Southern Zapotec appears to be a borrowing



from (or to) Mixtec<sup>10</sup>. The fact that this loanword exists in NZ and SZ, though these two branches of Zapotec are now widely separated, suggests that it was borrowed much earlier than the Mixtec occupation at Miahuatlán, before NZ and SZ separated.

Some other traits found in SZ languages may be evidence of diffusion from Mixtec, though much more evidence would be needed both to confirm this and to determine the timing of the diffusion relative to the different periods of contact between Mixtec and Zapotec (i.e. early contact before the separation of SZ from the other branches of Zapotec vs. later contact during Mixtec invasion and occupation of SZ territory).

Prenasalized segments or homorganic nasal-obstruent clusters are found in most Mixtec languages (Yasugi, 1995), but are not as widespread in Zapotec. Dictionaries of some Northern (Castellanos, 2003; Long and Cruz 1999) and Central (Stubblefield & Stubblefield, 1991; Pickett et al. 1978; Munro & Lopez et al., 1999) Zapotec languages

---

<sup>10</sup> The CLZ word for ‘hummingbird’ is *nzho<sup>7</sup>zh*, which is identical to the Coatecas Altas Zapotec (CAZ) *nzho<sup>7</sup>zh* (Benton, p.c.), and cognate with Cuixtla *nzo<sup>7</sup>s* (Ruegsegger & Ruegsegger, 1955), San Bartolomé Loxicha *nzho<sup>7</sup>z*, Cozaltepec & Santo Domingo de Morelos *nzo<sup>7</sup>(o)z* (all SZ languages), SJZ *ixtùtsi<sup>7</sup>* (Nellis & Nellis, 1983), Zoogocho *troše<sup>7</sup>* (Long & Cruz, 1999), and most or all of the other Northern Zapotec variants given by Castellanos (2003): *troche*, *gullyeje*, *peterhushe*, and *rhatutzi*. The possible Mixtec etymon for this word may be reflected in the modern forms found in San Miguel el Grande Mixtec *ndíyoho* (Dyk & Stoudt, 1973), San Juan Colorado Mixtec *nyoho* (Stark Campbell et al., 1986), and the Yucunany dialect of Mixtepec Mixtec *ncho<sup>7</sup>o* (Mary Paster, p.c.). Michael Swanton (p.c.) reports that the word in Nativitas Chochon is *zízùskí*, a form which is phonologically unusual in that language. These words are not cognate with the word for ‘hummingbird’ found in Valley and Isthmus Zapotec languages, e.g. SLQZ *bidyu<sup>7</sup>ahnn* (Munro & Lopez et al., 1999), Mitla Zapotec *bidujnd* (Stubblefield & Stubblefield, 1991), Chichicapan baduLa (Benton, p.c.), and Isthmus Zapotec *biulú* (Pickett, 1971). Two Western Zapotec (WZ) languages have a word cognate with the Central Zapotec form: *dúndù<sup>7</sup>* in Santa Catalina Mixtepec and *dudò<sup>7</sup>* in Asunción Mixtepec, both languages which border Mixtec. A third WZ language, Lachixío, has a different form, *zhi-tzà* (all Western Zapotec information kindly provided by Mark Sicoli, p.c., though I have used CLZ-style orthography to represent the forms here). Papabuco Zapotec has a different word for ‘hummingbird,’ based on the root *bi<sup>7</sup>* (Natalie Operstein, p.c.). Not all SZ languages have a form cognate with the form found in CLZ, CAZ, NZ and Mixtec languages. At least four SZ languages to the east of CLZ and CAZ share a cognate with an unusual final consonant cluster: Amatlán Zapotec *nzhing* (Riggs, 2004), San Juan Mixtepec *dzing* (Nelson, 2004), Quioquitani Zapotec *tsínk* (Marlett and Ward, nd), and San Agustín Mixtepec Zapotec *sínk*. These appear to be borrowed from Chontal, cf. Lowland Chontal /kan<sup>7</sup>çini/ (Loretta O’Connor, p.c.), and Highland Chontal *jlantsini* (Turner & Turner, 1971). I compiled this correspondence set after Joe Benton informed me of the difference between the Coatecas Altas and Chichicapan Zapotec words, and Barbara Hollenbach’s observation that the Coatecas Altas form looked like the Mixtec word.

list small numbers of lexical items with such clusters, but these sounds appear to be more widespread in SZ, Papabuco (Rendón, 1971; Operstein, p.c.) and Western Zapotec (Yasugi, 1995; Persons, 1979). This is also a general feature of the Mesoamerican linguistic area as in (Campbell, Kaufman, and Smith Stark 1986).

CLZ, Miahuatec languages, San Juan Mixtepec Zapotec (the westernmost Cisyautepican language, Benton, p.c.), and Lachixío Zapotec (a Western Zapotec language, Persons, 1979) all have some or all of the completive allomorphs nasalized. Though it may be coincidental, the Mixtec completive marker is *ni-* (Macaulay, 1996).

Mixtec languages mark verbs for an aspectual distinction between potential and realis aspect. Macaulay (1996: 46) describes the Mixtec realis category as “used to describe actions which are underway at the time of the speech event, are habitual, or have already been finished at the time of speaking.” In CLZ and in Miahuatec languages the only two inflectional categories which meet these criteria, habitual and completive, are also the only two which are marked with prenasalized consonants. The more eastern, Cisyautepican, language spoken in Quiégolani does not have nasalized allomorphs for either of these aspects (Black, 1994). The Western Zapotec language of Lachixío (Persons, 1979) has both prenasalized and non-nasal allomorphs of the habitual and completive.

The Aztecs from the Tenochca empire of the Valley of Mexico were invaders in many parts of Oaxaca and Alcázar López (2004) also describes them as invaders of Miahuatlán and other Southern Zapotec areas. However, according to Espíndola (1580), the people of Coatlán rebelled against their ruler and actually sought protection from the Aztec emperor Moctezuma (Motecuzoma). They paid him a tribute of powdered gold and

blankets and in return a Mexican garrison stayed to aid them in the frequent battles that took place. It may be that the invitation by the Coatecs to the Aztecs facilitated Aztec invasion into other Southern Zapotec city-states.

Nahuatl was known by some Southern Zapotec people during the early colonial period. Gutiérrez (1609) states in his *relación* of Miahuatlán that some of the locals knew how to write (alphabetically) in Zapotec and Nahuatl. Regarding their speaking abilities he writes:

Su lengua es la çapoteca corrupta, a diferencia de la que se habla en los Valles de Guaxaca, que es muy pulida: algunos hablan la mejicana, avnque mal, y otros la castellana.

Their language is Corrupt Zapotec, as differentiated from that spoken in the Valleys of Oaxaca, which is very polished. Some speak Mexican (i.e. Nahuatl), although poorly, and others speak Spanish. (my translation)

The Coatecs were formally made subject to the Spanish Crown on January 25, 1522 (Alcázar López, 2004). According to Gutiérrez (1609), the Coatecs had several battles with Cortés, with many Coatecs dying in the final battle, bringing about the peace treaty. Many more would die of disease in the years to follow. Even after “pacification” there were several SZ rebellions against Spanish rule. In the aftermath of these rebellions the leaders were sent to Mexico City for execution and the other rebels were sent to work in the mines of Chichicapan where many died of disease (Gutiérrez, 1609). The Spanish also punished those who were caught continuing traditional religious practices. In 1544 and 1547 two Coatec nobles, don Alonso and don Andrés, were tried for idolatry and convicted. A Coatlán rebellion is mentioned in passing by Díaz del Castillo (1960), who lived from 1495-1584 and accompanied Cortés in the conquest of Mexico. As described

by Alcázar López (2004), the Coatlán rebellion quieted down when it was learned that Cortés was coming back from his travels outside New Spain. Díaz del Castillo writes:

Aun los caciques del peñol de Coatlán, que se habían alzado, le vinieron a dar el bienvenido y le trajaron presentes.

Even the chiefs of Coatlán, who had risen up in revolt, welcomed him and brought him gifts. (my translation)

Although uprisings took place in the early colonial years there were also periods of cooperation between some Zapotecs and Spaniards. In the beginning SZ armies were put at Alvarado's disposition to battle Mixtecs in Tututepec. In 1530 Nuño de Guzmán occupied Tamazulapam, a subsidiary of Miahuatlán, and left behind Spaniards who married indigenous women, creating the first Miahuatec *mestizos* (Alcázar López, 2004).

The Catholic church provided an opportunity to learn alphabetic writing. According to Gutiérrez (1609), in Coatlán there were twenty-five men who knew how to read and write using the alphabet. Likewise in Miahuatlán there were some Zapotecs who learned to write in Zapotec and Nahuatl. Spanish is notably absent from Gutiérrez's description of the languages being written in colonial Miahuatlán.

From these historical accounts, along with the limited archaeological and epigraphic findings reported, the picture that emerges of Southern Zapotec history is one of a people who expanded into this southern region approximately 2000 years ago, maintaining some contact with the Zapotec political empire centered in the Valley of Oaxaca, while increasingly gaining unique local identities through expansion, diversification, and contact with other linguistic groups, including Chatinos, Chontales, and speakers of

different varieties of both Mixtec and Nahuatl. Contact with Chatinos and Mixtecs to the west is a factor which likely contributes to the distinctiveness of CLZ, the westernmost SZ language, compared to Miahuatec and Cisyatepecan languages which have had more contact with Chontal speakers. One example is the alienably possessed word for house, *nì*, which was borrowed from Chatino into the ancestor of CLZ and SVCZ and differs from the form used in all other SZ languages, *yo'ó*. While CLZ was perhaps the most prominent SZ language at the Spanish conquest it has been losing ground both to Miahuatec languages and Spanish ever since. Recent internal diversification has also split what was recently one language into two distinct modern languages, SVCZ and CLZ.

### **1.6 Ethnographic information**

The information in this section comes mostly from San Baltazar Loxicha (SBL), though many or most of the details apply to other CLZ-speaking towns as well. The description I give here pertains mostly to conservative, Catholic families. Protestant *Chareños* (people from SBL) reject many aspects of traditional life, especially concerning spiritual beliefs. The largest protestant group is Pentacostals but there are also Baptists and Jehovah's Witnesses. In SBL relations between the two groups are fairly good and much better than elsewhere in Mexico. These two groups of *Chareños* clearly disagree with each other's beliefs but they are friends and compatriots. Some of the patterns described below are beginning to fall out of use and/or vary between families.

### 1.6.1 Work: subsistence & *cargos*

The people of SBL grow corn, beans, squash, bananas and other fruit for their own consumption and grow coffee as a cash crop. Some also grow sugar cane from which they make *panela* (blocks of cane sugar). Men travel and sometimes stay for up to a week at remote locations where they tend their crops and other times hunt. Women stay home to cook, care for the children and otherwise maintain the household. Tortillas and other food are sometimes brought to the men at remote locations where they are working the field. Besides farming the people of SBL make a living at different professions including carpentry, home construction, transportation of people and cargo, lumber processing, and by working in the town government.

Once they reach adolescence (at 15 or 16), men start to serve their civic and religious responsibilities, which in rural Mexico are called *cargos* or 'responsibilities.' This system of required public service in SBL mixes political and religious jobs. Protestants are excused from the religious positions but do serve in the civic positions. Women usually do not serve unless they are widowed heads of household or have husbands who cannot serve, as increasing numbers are going to North Carolina and Atlanta for work. Single mothers don't serve, except by helping with the schools, because they continue to be part of their parents' household. With their service boys become men and are considered *comuneros auténticos*, 'true citizens' and acquire voting privileges. If they are still residing in the same home as their father both men continue to serve but as a favor to the household they will not be obliged to serve at the same time, until the time when the young man builds his own dwelling. Service terms are one year.

### 1.6.2 Family: marriage & *compadrazgo*

Marriage can take place at any age but people, especially women, are considered marriagable at the age of 15. Marriage is arranged between the two families. The young man's family suggests a bride and if the young man agrees they go to consult with the young woman's parents and grandparents. If both sets of parents agree then the young woman is consulted. While young men and women can and do respond truthfully when they do not wish to marry a certain person, some find less direct ways of ensuring that they end up with the spouse they desire. One way to influence bride selection in the direction desired is the subtle courting of the prospective mother-in-law by the young woman hoping to be selected as bride. She does this by means of friendly visits in which she offers to help with chores, thereby showing what a good daughter-in-law she could be. Once all agree, the marriage plans are sealed when the young man's family brings formal offerings, including cases of beverages and food, to the young woman's family.

Families are typically patrilocal. Matrilocal families are formed by exception during marriage negotiations and may be requested by either side. This exception is made to provide sonless households with grandchildren as well as to reduce the burden on households with several sons. A matrilocal son-in-law is called *gùzh zǒb* 'yerno de planta; seated son-in-law' though in Spanish his friends may taunt him by calling him *yerno esclavo* 'slave son-in-law.' Sometimes the young woman's family will request, as a condition of their permitting the marriage, that the couple reside in the woman's house for the first year of the marriage or for a year preceding the marriage, during which time the young man will help his father-in-law. Such a young man is called *gùzh dūb lí<sup>7</sup>n* 'yerno de un año; one-year son-in-law.'

By virtue of being patrilocal, the Zapotecs of SBL are patrilineal when it comes to property inheritance, but the system of religious sponsorship known in Spanish as *padrinazgo* ‘godparenthood’ or *compadrazgo* ‘co-parent-hood,’ is matrilineal. A woman’s baptismal godparents are expected to be the godparents of her wedding and the godparents of a wedding are expected to be the baptismal godparents of all the children born of that wedding. Godparents are automatically the *compadres* of all the living ancestors of their godchildren. In SBL *padrinazgo* is a multi-generational relationship between families. Since the same person cannot live long enough to be a girl’s baptismal godparents and then the godparents of her wedding and then of her children and then of her daughters’ weddings and so on forever, when a person dies or is too old to take on the responsibility, it passes to one of the godparents’ children, male or female, and that person’s spouse. Thus traditional *compadrazgo* in SBL is a relationship between families which on the side of the godparents is passed down generationally without regard to sex while on the side of the godchildren the relationship is strictly matrilineal.

As elsewhere in Mexico, while the relationship between godparent and godchild is not insignificant, the relationship between each whole family, sponsoring and sponsored, is highlighted and baptisms seem to be just as much a marriage of two families as the christening of a child. The two families are now considered to be relatives and a marriage taboo prevents a person from marrying the child of his or her godparent because one’s godparents’ children are like one’s own siblings. Godsiblings are referred to by compounds consisting of the sex-appropriate sibling term followed by the loan morpheme *mbál*, e.g. a cross-sex god-sibling is *bzàn mbál*. The parents of one’s godparents also count as grand-godparents and are referred to with compounds



containing the morpheme *gõx* ‘old,’ as in *xna<sup>7</sup> mbál gõx nâ*, ‘my old godmother,’ i.e. the mother of my godfather or godmother.

That the *compadrazgo* relationship is perhaps more important than the relationship of *padrinazgo*, both in Hispanic culture as a whole as well as in this Zapotec community, is reflected by the etymological and morphological structure of the kinship terms used to refer to the people involved in this relationship. ‘Compadre’ and ‘comadre’ respectively are the loanwords *mbál* and *mál*, though they usually occur with the possessive prefix *x-* as in *xmbál nâ* ‘mi compadre; my co-father.’ The godparent terms are formed through compounding by adding the parent morphemes *xùz* ‘padre; father’ and *(x)na<sup>7</sup>* ‘madre; mother,’ rendering *xùz mbál* ‘padrino; godfather’ and *xna<sup>7</sup> mbál* ‘madrina; godmother.’ Note that while ‘compadre’ *mbál* and ‘comadre’ *mál* are phonologically different, both male and female godparent terms use the male loanword *mbál*. The borrowing of the Spanish term *compadre* but not the term *padrino* indicates that *compadrazgo* is the central concept from which other relationships, such as that of godparent, are derivative.

The multigenerational nature of *compadrazgo* is also indicated linguistically. The compounds for godparents are, almost, syntactically ambiguous. Inalienable possession in CLZ is indicated by a phrase consisting of the possessed noun phrase followed by the possessor noun phrase. The kin term for ‘ahijado; godchild’ is *xìn mbál*. Syntactically this looks very much like how one could also refer to the child of one’s compadre. While a godparent’s godchild is in fact the child of his or her compadre, the reverse is not true. The child of the godparent<sub>i</sub> is not necessarily the godchild of the compadre<sub>j</sub> of the godparent<sub>i</sub>. However, an innovative feature of CLZ morphology disambiguates. The prefix *x-* (see §6.7) is marked on a closed class of nouns, mostly kin terms and including

*mbál*, when inalienably possessed. Thus, to say ‘my godchild’ one says *xìn mbál nâ* and to say ‘my compadre’s child’ one says *xìn xmbál nâ*. The same near-ambiguities arise in referring to older generations. The phrase *xùz mbál nâ* means ‘my godfather’ but is syntactically very close, and perhaps was historically identical, to ‘my compadre’s father.’ Since these relationships are multigenerational the same person could be one’s godparent, for example the godparent of one’s marriage, and at the same time the parent of one’s *compadre* or *comadre*, i.e. the parent of the godparent of one’s child.

### 1.6.3 Traditional beliefs

SBL is located in a beautiful, natural setting. In and around the town there are both tropical plants like banana and plumeria trees, and cool pine forests with tree ferns. The plants are nourished by streams, ponds, and abundant rainfall. A variety of small birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles, and rodents as well as larger domestic animals are found in the center of town and residential areas while more exotic animals such as sloths and ocelots are sometimes seen in the nearby forest, along with game animals like deer. The air is clear and provides an excellent location for stargazing. At night the rain pours down in the summer and in the winter the winds blow, making such a loud noise on the *lamina* (corrugated tin) roof that it’s as if some animate being were trying to communicate with the person lying below on the *dà* ‘petate; mat.’ The people who have lived in this environment for so long have determined the use of the local plants and the meaning behind the behavior of the animals and forces of nature that they encounter every day.

There are various causes for illness. There are remedies, including ones using local plants, for curing certain physical illnesses such as parasites. The cause of other illnesses

such as *mbzhêb* ‘susto; fright’ and *nwĩx* ‘antojo; craving’ are the various ways in which unhealthy airs can enter a person’s body, e.g by involuntarily gasping when suddenly afraid or by smelling someone else’s food and not eating it. These illnesses also have their treatments which make use of elements involved in the ill person’s original infection, e.g. the type of food craved, or a natural element, like water, involved in the person’s acquisition of fright. Other times a person’s spirit, which is itself composed of air, may leave the person’s body, making the body sick. Bringing the spirit back requires a ritualistic cure which only certain people know how to perform. Some of these people are professional *sahorines* who charge for their services, while others who know some of these same cures do not like to be labelled this way and choose to only use their knowledge when necessary to help family and close friends.

Traditional Zapotecs believe that each person is born with an animal totem, variously called a *tono*, *tonante*, or *tonal* in Spanish and *wzhë<sup>7</sup>* in CLZ. While Judeo-Christian ideas of *soul* often have the spirit playing the role of internal conscience, super-ego, best self, the external spirit that is the *wzhë<sup>7</sup>* is a mischievous trickster at best and malevolent Mr. Hyde at worst. A *wzhë<sup>7</sup>* is *aire* ‘air’ that takes the corporeal form of an animal in order to bother people. A person’s *wzhë<sup>7</sup>* will usually take the form of the particular animal that the person was born with, i.e. the animal identity of the *tono*, but there is the vague idea that perhaps under certain circumstances the person’s spirit might be able to take the form of another animal, to best suit its purposes. While most *wzhë<sup>7</sup>* are animals, a few are forces of nature. The most powerful *wzhë<sup>7</sup>*, and the only one that can kill humans, is Lightning. One day in SBL two women were having a loud argument that many people heard. That same afternoon Lightning struck the house of one woman, killing her in an

instant. Most examples of *wzhë<sup>7</sup>* behavior have to do with a person admiring and coveting someone else's property. For example, a man is jealous of how well the corn is growing on the plot adjacent to his. The wind comes and blows many cornstalks down, but only on the envied plot that was doing so well.

Many animals, including a few which seem like borderline *wzhë<sup>7</sup>*, are *(m)bitz* 'anuncios; omens' (*mbitz* also means 'pena, alma; spirit'). These are animals whose presence signifies something. The arrival of particular animals (e.g. at one's home) announces that a visit is coming, or that a death will occur, or that someone is gossiping about the home's owner, or that a dead person is trying to communicate with someone in the home. These animals include the fox, the lightning bug, and several kinds of birds. Many ominous animals are also called *má gǎn* 'animal de muerto; animal of the dead' or *mbèk tǎ gǎn* 'perro de muerto; dog of the dead' indicating that animals with such powers of foretelling have access to the same magical or supernatural knowledge the dead have access to, and these animals are like the dead people's helpers or pets. They are also called this because many are announcing pending deaths or the presence of a dead person's spirit. The owl is a special omen which, unlike other animals, may actually *be* the dead person in the form of an owl, attempting to communicate with people in the house, usually to complain about their behavior. Not all omens are animals (though most are). Certain occurrences have similar meanings. When someone gets a *ba<sup>7</sup>*, a swelling under a molar, it means that someone will die<sup>11</sup>.

Though most omens are bad, not all are. If a person is thinking about some idea they have like making a certain purchase and they see an eagle, if they see the chest of the

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *bá<sup>7</sup>* 'tomb' in Coatecas Altas Zapotec (Benton, 2002).

eagle it means that the idea will work out but if they only see it from behind things will not work out and it's better to forget the idea. A bird called the *chéwíz*, or in Spanish the *cherihuizo*, announces that a visitor is coming. It is also called *má mēn* or 'human's animal' because it announces humans' arrival.

Not the same as an animal omen, there is one personal trait which in non-fiction texts acts as foreshadowing to the suspicious nature of a person. People who don't eat salt, or who don't eat at all, are not normal people. One incident occurred in 2002 when a man who had come to SBL land from the Coatlanes had an interesting encounter with a very old man who appeared out of nowhere, wearing old-fashioned indigenous dress, and refusing all food except unsalted tortillas, which he didn't eat in any case. During their conversation certain details revealed that this was no ordinary man but in fact a *xa<sup>7</sup> Yízh Lû* 'gente del mundo; person of the World,' a supernatural being. In this case the *xa<sup>7</sup> Yízh Lû* claimed to be 400 years old and to have *always* lived on this land. In his conversation with the man from the Coatlanes he complained about the behavior of a former traditionalist, now protestant, man who had abandoned his beliefs. So it is that many today are abandoning their traditional beliefs and practices in SBL, but there are also many who still interpret occurrences in traditional ways.

### **1.7 Basis for this study: consultants, methods and aims**

Prior to my work on CLZ very little material was available on the language. However, what little did exist was more than what was available for most other Southern Zapotec languages, and consequently CLZ had been used in several reconstructions of Proto-Zapotec (Fernández de Miranda, [1965] 1995; Benton, 1988; and earlier drafts of

Kaufman, 2003). CLZ's role in these reconstructions was a strong factor in its selection for inclusion in the Project for the Documentation of the Languages of Meso-America (PDLMA), where I began my investigation of the language.

Other than my own work, I know of four sources of data for this language. From 1886 to 1893 Antonio Peñafiel distributed a 250 word list to many indigenous communities, including Santa María Coatlán (SMaC). In 1922 Jaime de Angulo gathered linguistic material from many Oaxacan languages. In Angulo & Freeland (1935) 12 words from either SMaC or San Pablo Coatlán are given in an appendix and five more forms from the Coatlanes are given in the grammatical description. Between 1956 and 1958 Dow Robinson of the SIL made several field trips to the Coatlanes, mostly to SMaC. Plans for a bible translation and further documentation were apparently scrapped when it became clear that the language was moribund or soon to be so. Robinson (1963) gives a grammatical sketch of the language along with a lexicon of ca. 600 words. Unpublished work on this language by Robinson is housed at the SIL-Mexico archives in Catalina, Arizona. Robinson's analysis is understandably preliminary, but his rather odd orthographical choices (<p> represents /β/, <pp> represents /p/, <b> represents /mb/) have caused several linguists confusion over the years. Nevertheless, Robinson's work was a great contribution to our knowledge of Southern Zapotec languages and his data have been used in all subsequent reconstructions of Proto-Zapotec as well as in comparative work by Rendón (1971). Subsequently, Robinson's colleague, Roger Reeck, provided 31 kinship terms from Santa María Coatlán (SMaC) for William Merrifield's 1981 book on Otomanguan kinship.

I have worked with people from four of the seven towns where CLZ speakers remain. In order of the most time spent, my main CLZ consultants have been Lázaro Díaz Pacheco of SBL, José Santos Velásquez of SMaC, Pedro Pacheco Pacheco of SMigC's Campo Nuevo ranch, and Ermelinda Canseco Santos of SMaC. I have also spent shorter amounts of time with other speakers. The details of our work are described below.

I began my investigation of CLZ in 1996 on the PDLMA. That year I spent 9 weeks in Catemaco, Veracruz at the Hotel Playa Cristal along with 13 other linguists and as many speakers of Mixe-Zoquean and Zapotecan languages. My consultant was a 65-year-old man from SMaC. I started by eliciting word lists and verb paradigms and developed a preliminary phonological analysis. I also recorded and transcribed two folktales.

My consultant that year had grown up in a time when his town was undergoing a dramatic shift from Zapotec to Spanish. Dow F. Robinson, whom my consultant still remembered as *Federico*, wrote of his 1956-8 visits:

...it was evident that the language, as far as the people were concerned, branded them as "indios," as ignorant peasants. Progress up and out of this social level was to come through the acquisition of Spanish...To recognize the Zapotec language as a language and worthy of being studied was interpreted as an effort to regress to a previous generation - the time, in the memory of not a few adults, when the presence of a "mestizo" in the village would find every door shut, with the women and children inside, and only a few of the bravest men outside to exercise their meager vocabulary of Spanish.

These social factors are reflected in the speech community. We met no monolingual speakers of Zapotec. The people claimed there were none. After studying the families of Santa María Coatlán, in reference to use of language, it became clear that only about 10 per cent of the children had any control of Zapotec; one third of the women of child-bearing age could not speak Zapotec, though they could understand it; and though the men knew Zapotec, they carried on their marketing and political and religious responsibilities in Spanish. The children alleged that their parents would not allow them to speak Spanish at home. (Robinson, 1963: iii-iv)

My first CLZ consultant would have been in his late twenties when Robinson visited his town. This put him on something of a cusp, older than many of the child-bearing women who had a passive knowledge of the language, and just barely in the group of adults who could remember the time when the town was mostly Zapotec speaking. His use of both Spanish and Zapotec seemed to me to be marked by SMaC's rapid language shift beginning in his childhood. Despite the fact that by his 20's Spanish was the dominant language of SMaC, at 65 his use of Spanish gender categories, for example, was not consistent, yet his Zapotec, while more grammatical, showed considerable borrowing and code-switching when compared to subsequent consultants from other towns.

In 1997 I returned to the PDLMA to work with Lázaro Díaz Pacheco (LDP) of SBL, who was to become my main CLZ consultant and my *compadre*. LDP was born in 1955 and had a good command of both Zapotec and Spanish. I was surprised to learn that CLZ was not LDP's first language, but after working with him and other speakers over the years and witnessing their conversations, I am satisfied that he has native fluency in CLZ. Though not encouraged to use Zapotec in childhood, LDP heard Zapotec all around him from birth, and this allowed him to attain more native fluency in his second language than would be the case for a person who moved into a speech community after childhood.

LDP's linguistic autobiography illustrates several sociolinguistic factors at play in twentieth century SBL. His parents and extended family were bilingual but very much Zapotec dominant. In LDP's family and in his neighborhood all the adults spoke Zapotec to each other, but LDP's parents would switch to Spanish when addressing him. However, even when talking to LDP, his parents would code-switch into Zapotec frequently when they didn't know how to say something in Spanish. Most adults in SBL



at that time still spoke Zapotec. LDP's parents didn't scold or punish him if he tried to speak Zapotec, but Spanish was the language he spoke first.

At this time, the early 1960's, the schoolteachers frequently beat children with belts for speaking Zapotec and constantly chastized the class, telling them to give up Zapotec: "*no precise, no sirve el dialecto*" ("it's not precise, the dialect is worthless"). When hanging out with Zapotec-speaking children, LDP would listen to their conversations and got beaten along with them when the teacher came along. These beatings were not a long-term deterrent however, since LDP dropped out of school in second grade.

Up until the time he was fifteen LDP knew some Zapotec but didn't speak it that well. He started speaking it more when he served as *topil* alongside CLZ speakers. At the age of sixteen LDP went to Mexico City where there were about 10 other boys from the town working. Ironically, it was in Mexico City that LDP became fluent in CLZ. There CLZ was a code shared by these young men, separate from the millions of other people in this biggest city on Earth. Once he moved back home he spoke Zapotec to his parents and grandparents, who used to speak to him in Spanish, for the rest of their lives.

Other than the two years in Mexico City and shorter periods when he has gone to work in Oaxaca or Puerto Escondido, LDP has lived in SBL his whole life. Like other *Chareños* (people from SBL) he grows coffee to sell but he is also a driver, transporting people and cargo from Miahuatlán and Puerto Escondido to SBL and other nearby towns. As a driver he comes into contact with other speakers of other CLZ dialects and SZ languages. He is aware of many dialect differences and can also communicate in Zapotec to some extent with people from Santa Cruz Xitla, who speak a Miahuatec language, having become familiar with their language through his frequent trips to Miahuatlán.

LDP has many strengths as a consultant. He doesn't hesitate to point out a linguist's errors or misanalyses and he likes to give literal glosses. For example, once after giving a phrase-length Zapotec term to describe a phone book he offered the Spanish translation '*el libro adonde está notado todos los números de teléfonos de nuestros pueblos*' ('the book where all the numbers of telephones of our towns are recorded'), rather than the shorter and more common Spanish term *directorio*. This desire to reflect as exactly as possible the meaning of CLZ words and phrases even at the expense of natural-sounding Spanish, is an asset when trying to parse Zapotec words and phrases. LDP is also a master storyteller who enthusiastically narrates long texts in several genres.

Since 1997 I have sought out speakers of other dialects of CLZ as well as other Southern Zapotec languages, whenever I am in the SZ region. When in Miahuatlán I have worked with any CLZ speaker I've met for however long they've been able, usually about 2 hours. I've spent such brief interviews eliciting words and phrases of interest, and recording short texts when possible (which I would transcribe later with LDP's help). I have worked this way with middle aged and elderly, male and female speakers from Santa Catarina Loxicha, San Miguel Coatlán, and San Baltazar Loxicha. At my behest LDP has made recordings of several more speakers from SBL and one semi-speaker from San Sebastián Coatlán. In SBL itself I have also recorded texts with older people, and spent time chatting in and about Zapotec with a variety of others.

In addition to my three summers' of work on the PDLMA and my subsequent annual trips to work with LDP, I also spent a few weeks working alongside LDP in Miahuatlán with Pedro Pacheco Pacheco (PPP) from the Campo Nuevo (CN) Ranch, which politically belongs to San Miguel Coatlán, and Ermelinda Canseco Santos (ECS), an

elderly midwife from SMaC. ECS, as a representative of SMaC was the hardest to find and recruit. My 1996 SMaC consultant estimated there were then 20 speakers, but I suspected there were more since he only named men. Four years later, ECS estimated that there were only 15 elderly speakers left in that town, and she counted both sexes.

My fieldwork style with CLZ has been one of intensive data collection, in retrospect perhaps too intensive at times, considering the need to balance data collection with time for analysis. I have combined the methods of elicitation, text analysis, and conversational immersion. I have also frequently delegated tasks to LDP including the recruitment of other consultants, and text recording and transcription. An example of this methodology is the trip when I worked with LDP, PPP, and ECS. We worked every day for two weeks, in three shifts. In the morning I would work with ECS for three hours, eliciting words and working on phonological problems, while LDP recorded texts with PPP. We would all take a break together, walking to a local store for cold soft drinks, *nítz kwàl*. Upon our return to the Hotel Juan Manuel I would work with PPP eliciting words and transcribing texts he had recorded with LDP, while LDP recorded texts with ECS. After this we would go to lunch together, where we had mixed Zapotec and Spanish conversations, and then come back for a short nap. In the afternoon I would work with LDP for three hours of syntax questions while ECS and PPP worked for two hours on tasks like gathering plants they knew the names of or drawing maps to label with toponyms the next day.

Much of what I have learned about CLZ has been through elicitation, but no matter how much elicitation a person does ahead of time there will always be new and surprising facts about a language's grammar that come only from text transcription and analysis and from participant observation. Though I am not a fluent Zapotec speaker, I have tried to

use the language when spending time socially with LDP and other CLZ speakers. It was only by seeing LDP interact with ECS, who was much older than him, that I realized *mě gōx* ‘old person’ could be used as a respectful address term. Another example took place during lunch in Catemaco one day when we had a plate of pineapple in front of us. Our conversation went like this:

- (1.1) RGBA: *Ndàl látyo<sup>7</sup>-n<sup>^</sup> bxi<sup>7</sup>zh*  
‘I like pineapple.’
- LDP: *Ndàl látyo<sup>7</sup>-n<sup>^</sup> bxi<sup>7</sup>zh nà zèd.*  
‘I like pineapple with salt.’
- RGBA: *Zěd?*  
Salt? (with rising intonation)
- LDP: *No. “Zèd”.* (with a hand gesture LDP uses to indicate the low tone)  
No (in Spanish). “Salt”. (in CLZ with the correct pronunciation)
- RGBA: *¿Entonces cómo podría hacer la pregunta?* (switching to Spanish)  
Then how could I ask the question? (i.e. if not with intonation)
- LDP: *“Xâl ndàl látyo<sup>7</sup>-á bxi<sup>7</sup>zh nà zèd?”* ‘¿Que le gusta la piña con sal?’  
“Is it that you like pineapple with salt?”(in CLZ) ‘Is it that you like pineapple with salt?’ (translated into Spanish<sup>12</sup>)

This is how I learned how to form yes-no questions in Zapotec--- and how I was reminded of the importance of pitch distinctions in a tone language! When trying to speak a language, one has a need for constructions like polar yes-no questions years earlier than if one only asks about them through a lingua franca in order to fill a slot in a grammatical description where one thinks such information ought to occur. I find that it is also easier

<sup>12</sup> LDP’s Spanish translation in fact contains a construction that is not standard and is actually influenced by the Zapotec use of a complementizer for question formation)

for me to remember such information when my discovery of a particular linguistic element is tied to the memory of a real conversation, rather than the memory of one of many elicitation sessions, although some of those are quite memorable too.

When I began work on this language as an undergraduate my first goal was to create a dictionary. By the time I continued on to graduate school at UC Berkeley I had been sufficiently inspired by that department's tradition, especially in earlier years under Mary Haas, of having Ph.D. students document undescribed California languages in three parts: dictionary, grammar, and collection of texts. It is still my goal to follow this model, and companion volumes to this grammatical description are well underway. All three projects contribute to each other.

In this introductory chapter I have given a condensed history, ethnography, and sociolinguistic sketch of the society that is home to CLZ. This story of political expansion, division, growth, decline, and selective cultural preservation, as seen through the archaeology and history of the region as well as through the life stories of my consultants, is the story of the Coatlán-Loxicha Zapotec language which I will now describe in linguistic terms in the chapters to follow.