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Late Affrication of <ç> and <z>: Evidence from Spanish Loans in Zapotec and Trique

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Few studies take into account the indigenous languages of Spanish-America as repositories of older Spanish pronunciation. The first scholar to approach the subject systematically was Delos Lincoln Canfield in his Spanish literature in Mexican languages as a source for the study of Spanish pronunciation (1934), in which he examined the use of sixteenth-century Spanish orthographic conventions to render the sounds of the indigenous languages of Mexico. Another approach was taken, years later, by Parodi (“Los hispanismos”, Orígenes) and Campbell, who sought for evidence of sixteenth-century Spanish phonology in the earliest Spanish loans in Mayan and other Mesoamerican indigenous languages.

The study of Spanish loans in Mesoamerican languages has provided information on such points of sixteenth-century Spanish phonology as the maintenance of the initial aspirate /h/ (e.g., Tzotzil horno from Spanish horno), the existence of a phonemic distinction between /b/ and /β/ (e.g. Tzotzil napuʃ < nabos versus wakaʃ < vacas) as well as between the alveolar and post-alveolar fricatives (e.g. Acatec asaron < azadón versus aʃuʃ < ajos). Such changes as /k/ > /j/ and /ʃ/ > /x/ are also amply documented in a relative chronology of borrowing, with the earlier loans showing the earlier forms of both phonemes (Parodi, “Los hispanismos”; Campbell; Sicoli; Operstein). Nevertheless, despite abundant evidence of the maintenance of the affricated pronunciation represented by the graphemes <ç> and <z> in Peninsular Spanish well into the sixteenth century,¹ the studies referred to above do not document this pronunciation in Mesoamerica. Moreover, Campbell (174 and 178) and Sicoli (69) state emphatically that evidence of such pronunciation in the Mesoamerican linguistic area is entirely absent. In this note, we provide documentation to show that the treatment of <ç> and <z> in two Spanish loans in two different Zapotec languages and at least one Mixtecan language can be understood only by presuming an affricated pronunciation in the Spanish source-words.

Zapotec is a family of languages that forms the greater part of the Zapotecan branch of the Otomanguean stock. It is spoken mainly in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico, and is divided into five dialectal zones: Northern, Southern, Papabuco, Solteco, and Central (comprising the Zapotec languages of the Oaxaca Valley and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec). The Zapotec languages with which this paper is concerned are spoken in the towns of Santa María Zaniza (subsequently referred to as Zaniza) and San Juan Atepec (subsequently referred to as Atepec). The former belongs to Papabuco, and the latter to the Northern, branch.² Both languages have been in contact with Spanish since the sixteenth century, as shown by their treatment of /k/, and of post-alveolar and palato-alveolar fricatives in early Spanish loans (cf. silla ‘saddle, chair’, ajo ‘garlic’ > Zaniza xily, àzh, Atepec xila, gaŷu; for more details, see Operstein).³

In this note we concentrate on the Zaniza and Atepec treatment of the Spanish words zapato (<çapato> in sixteenth-century orthography; cf. Córdova) ‘shoe’, which becomes txubat in modern Zaniza, and cruz ‘cross’, which is cúruutsi in present-day Atepec.⁴ Some historical background is required to elucidate the problems surrounding the

rendering of <ç> as Zaniza tx (a post-alveolar retroflex fricative) and <z> as Atepec ts (an apico-alveolar affricate), if the sounds in question had been pronounced as fricatives in the source-words.

The regular treatment of <ç>/<z> even in the earliest layer of Spanish loans in Atepec and Zaniza, unambiguously shows their sibilant pronunciation in the source-words, e.g.:

mozo (spelt <moço> in Córdoba) ‘servant’ > Zaniza mùz;
arroz ‘rice’ > Zaniza arùz;
durazno ‘peach’ > Atepec trasu.

The treatment of the sounds written with the same graphemes in crúz and zapato (i.e., çapato) not only differs from the regular pattern as shown above, but also coincides with the treatment of Spanish <ch>, e.g.:

chocolate ‘chocolate’ > Zaniza txulad;
chivo ‘goat’ > Zaniza txib;
(cf. çapato ‘shoe’ > Zaniza txubat);

coche ‘pig’ > Atepec cuttsi;
cuchillo ‘knife’ > Atepec gutsílú;
(cf. crúz ‘cross’ > Atepec cúruútsi).⁵

Such a rendering of the Spanish affricate <ch> makes it evident that, in the sixteenth century, both Zaniza tx (which is at present a fricative) and Atepec ts/tts sounded sufficiently close to this affricate. This conclusion is confirmed by the historical reconstruction of Proto-Zapotec.

The phonological system of Proto-Zapotec, as reconstructed in the unpublished works of Joseph Benton and Terrence Kaufman, includes a geminate/single pair of affricates (*cch/*ch in Benton’s notation, *ttz/*tz in Kaufman’s), reflected as follows in present-day Zaniza and Atepec:

- *cch- (*ttz-) > Zaniza tx-, Atepec ts-, e.g.:
 *ccho-n(n)a ‘three’ (Benton) > Zaniza txun, Atepec tsunná;
- *-cch- (*-ttz-) > Zaniza -tx-, Atepec -tts-, e.g.:
 *kiccha (Benton), *kittza(?) (Kaufman) ‘hair’ > Zaniza gitx, Atepec íttsa’;
- *ch (*tz) > Zaniza dx, Atepec ts, e.g.:
 *tza ‘day’ (Kaufman) > Zaniza dxi, Atepec tsá;
 *lu:ʔtzeʔ ‘tongue’ (Kaufman) > Zaniza lyudx, Atepec luetsé’.

Given that both Zaniza tx and Atepec ts/tts go back to an original affricate, and that Zaniza tx is routinely used in early loans to render Spanish <ch>, it seems probable that, at the time of the first contact with Spanish Zaniza tx still had an affricated pronunciation. This means that the <ç> of çapato and the <z> of crúz were rendered by affricates in both Zaniza and Atepec, clear evidence of their affricated pronunciation in the Spanish source-

words. The rendering of both Spanish <ch> and <ç>/<z> by means of the same affricate in the two Zapotec languages is accounted for by the fact that Atepec and Zaniza had, at the time of borrowing, only one type of affricate, which had to do double duty in the assimilation of two different affricates in Spanish loan-words.

The evidence adduced above shows beyond doubt that the affricate pronunciation of <ç> and <z> had been carried over to Central America. The admittedly small number of words in which this pronunciation is documented so far may testify to their particularly early introduction, dialectal origin, or stylistic markedness. Both the existence and rarity of the affricate pronunciation of the phoneme(s) in question is also apparent from the loanword cruz in Copala Trique, a language belonging to the Mixtecan branch of Otomanguan. In Copala Trique, cruz is reflected as rutze and rugutze (with a metathesis, probably through earlier *gurutze). This loan-word appears to represent the only recorded instance of Spanish <z> as tz (i.e., an apico-alveolar affricate) in this language (Hollenbach 69, 88). It is highly likely that a more thorough and systematic investigation of Spanish loanwords in other languages in the same area may yield more instances of the survival of this phonetic archaism.

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Notes

¹The extensive bibliography on the subject is too well known to require detailed mention here. The evidence for the affricate pronunciation of <ç> and <z> is based on: a) abundant documentation in Spanish transcriptions of Arabic and Hebrew sibilants; b) descriptions of Spanish pronunciation by Spanish grammarians beginning with Nebrija; c) observations on the foreign equivalents of Spanish sounds by the writers of language textbooks; d) the treatment of Spanish loans in contemporary European languages; e) the evidence of conservative dialects such as Judeo-Spanish. The procedures and results of this type of investigation are fully detailed, e.g., in Galmes de Fuentes, Amado Alonso, and Zamora Vicente.

²The data for Atepec Zapotec is taken from Nellis and Goodner de Nellis, and the data for Zaniza Zapotec is based on my own fieldwork during the summers of 1999 and 2000 for the Project for the Documentation of the Languages of Mesoamerica.

³Zaniza and Atepec x represent a voiceless post-alveolar fricative, Zaniza zh and Atepec ɣ̃) its voiced counterpart, a' is a checked vowel.

⁴The initial cluster of the borrowed word is broken by the insertion of an epenthetic vowel. The final -i is paragogic and seems to be generally added to borrowed oxytones except those ending in -n (cf. Dios > Diúyí 'god', nuez > nueci 'nut', but sacristán > ýuéda[yòtò']).

⁵It is interesting to note that the treatment of Spanish ch in more recent loans differs from its treatment in the early borrowings in each language, cf. lechuga 'lettuce' > Zaniza letyug (*ty* = [tʃ]), chocolate > Atepec choculátí / chocoláté.