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## **On the external relations of Purepecha : an investigation into classification, contact and patterns of word formation**

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## On the external relations of Purepecha

An investigation into classification, contact and patterns of word formation

Taking a systematic, multi-method approach, this thesis considers Purepecha in the Latin American context from the perspectives of genealogy and contact, as well as offering insight into the history of the language through two studies focussing on word formation processes. The genealogy study re-visits the two most prominent classification proposals for Purepecha - Greenberg (1987) and Swadesh (1967) - concluding on the basis of a quantitative lexical comparison using the Oswalt Monte Carlo Shift Test and a more traditional typological comparison of affix ordering that no signal of relatedness between Purepecha and any other sampled language can be identified. The two language contact studies address possible interaction between Purepecha and other languages at long-distance, regional and local levels. The lexicon of metallurgy, the most convincing archaeological evidence for interaction between South America and West Mexico, does not support this contact scenario although the lack of observable loanwords in this domain may reflect the largely non-verbal nature of technology transmission. A lexical comparison of over 1600 terms shows that at the regional and local levels, Purepecha also displays very few borrowings from the prehispanic period. This paucity of borrowings is reversed in the modern period, with Spanish exerting a heavy influence on all aspects of the language. The shift in borrowing pattern is explained by the gargantuan socio-political change experienced by Purepecha speakers since the imposition of Spanish, with language acting as a mirror for social change. The two studies on word formation focus on the varying semantic transparency of the roots and suffixes that comprise the language, with a specific emphasis on olfactory language, and introduce the notion that roots may be precategorical in nature. This language-internal work provides greater context for future investigation into processes of historical development and possible comparative efforts.



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