Reconstructive description of eighteenth-century Xinka grammar
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Propositions

1. The description of eighteenth-century Xinka grammar requires a reconstructive approach based on current understandings about universal pathways of language change and the evolution of grammar.
2. Xinka exhibits a few typological properties that are not typical for the Meso-american linguistic area (e.g. auxiliary verbs in postposition, a tense/aspect marker that seems to be sensitive to switch-reference). Some of the Xinka traits that are also found in other Mesoamerican languages may have been acquired by diffusion.
3. Xinka has accusative alignment, but exhibits a split in the treatment of S and A arguments based on tense/aspect and syntactic hierarchy as well as in the third person.
4. Xinka expresses future originally with the adverbial TAM element *pe ʔ*. The adverbial has a directional meaning ('to come') and is also used to express imperative/deontic mode. Periphrastic future in Xinka has grammaticalised from intransitive progressive constructions involving the motion verb *ʔaku* 'to go' and is most likely a recent development.
5. Maldonado-Xinka is phonologically and grammatically closest to the Xinka of Guazacapán (cf. Terrence Kaufman, personal communication 2001).
6. The accuracy of the data from the *Arte de la lengua szinca* and additional information from legal documents in the Central American Archive in Guatemala City (AGCA) suggest that Maldonado de Matos was a Xinka speaker.
7. The language knowledge of the last Xinka speakers exhibits the patterns of language deterioration and decay that have been described as typical for semi-speakers. Primary descriptions of moribund languages should therefore always take processes of diachronic development into account.
8. The application of some descriptive terms used and established in Mesoamerican (in particular Mayan) linguistics does not reflect the given grammatical categories accurately (e.g. the term 'relational noun').
9. The indigenous rights movement in Guatemala can contribute to a higher prestige of indigenous languages, but it cannot impede the process of language shift or reverse language loss.
10. Xinka cultural activists redefine Xinka ethnic identity by cultivating their peripheral status within Guatemalan society.
11. Ethnohistorians often take autochthonous indigenous text documents from Highland Guatemala too literally. For instance, the concept of migration and origin in colonial K'iche'an text sources does not have a historical basis, but relates to creation as the central paradigm of Maya mythology. The concept is used in the sources as a principal means of legitimising power by deriving authority from remote supreme centres.