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Mochica: Grammatical topics and external relations

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Part I. Introduction

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. General background information

1.1.1. State of the art

South America linguistic panorama represents an enigmatic field of research when it comes to its genealogical diversity and the presence of a large number of isolates. Following Seifart & Hammarström (2017: 260), South America is the continent with the highest proportion of language isolates. According to these authors, 10 % of South American languages are isolates, that is, 65 out of 574 languages. Taking into consideration that South America was the last continent to be populated, the presence of 65 isolates and this linguistic diversity can be considered a paradox which intrigues linguists, who, aiming at disambiguating it, explore possible genealogical and areal relationships between these languages.

Out of these 65 South American isolates, 12 (8 extinct) have been found in the Andean region (Seifart & Hammarström 2017: 265, 266). The present study concentrates on Mochica, an extinct isolate of the Andes. The research conducted for this dissertation was circumscribed within the *Mesandlingk* project, led by Willem Adelaar. The aim of this project was to reconstruct the linguistic past of Mesoamerica (Mexico and western Central America) and the Middle Andes (Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia) through a study of the genealogical and contact relations between the indigenous languages of Mesoamerica and the Andes. The ultimate goal of Adelaar's project was to contribute to the understanding of the historical process behind the settlement of the Americas as a whole. The research presented in this thesis was carried out as a sub-project within *Mesandlingk*. The objectives of my project were to understand the nature of the Mochica language and to attempt to identify the possible external and genealogical relationships of this language.

1.1.2. Brief information on the Mochica language

Mochica was spoken until the mid- to late-nineteenth century in the northern coastal area of Peru (see Map 1¹). Mochica is typologically distinct from other Andean languages. It is predominantly a synthetic, suffixing language. Most of the languages that existed in the Andes prior to the Spanish conquest vanished, leaving little evidence for posterity. Fortunately, in the case of Mochica, there are colonial and post-colonial descriptions, which help us interpret some of its forms. The Mochica language has been preserved whilst it was still spoken in two colonial documents: *Rituale, Sev Manvale Pervanvm* by Jerónimo de Oré (1607) and *Arte de la lengua yunga* by Fernando de la Carrera (1644). Our knowledge of the grammar and phonology of Mochica is limited since Carrera's (1644) is the only existing grammar that has survived from colonial times.

¹ Map 1 was created by Arjan Mossel (University of Leiden).

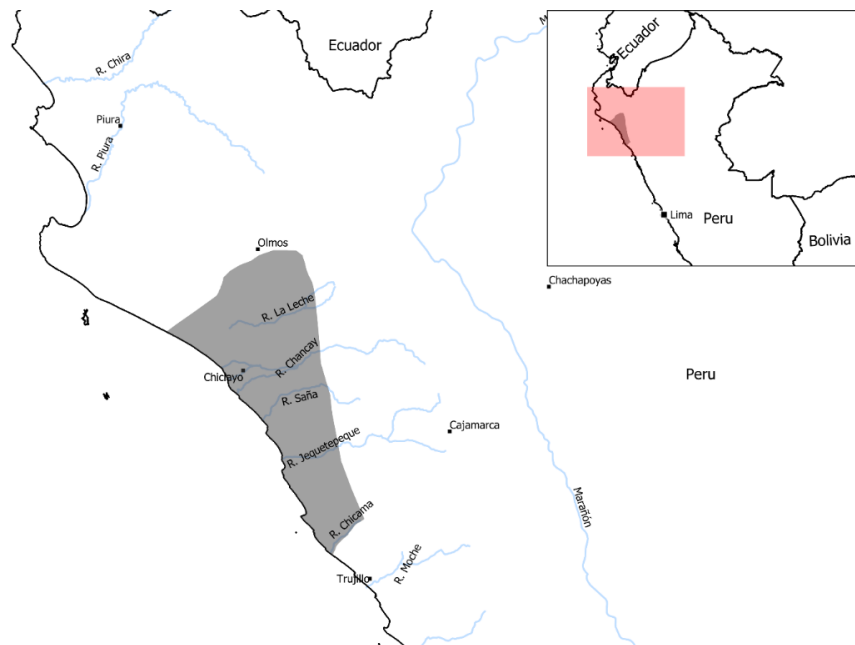


Figure 1. Map 1. Distribution of the Mochica language, according to Carrera's (1644) information

1.1.2. This dissertation

1.1.2.1. Research questions

This dissertation intends to answer the following main questions:

1. What is the nature of the Mochica language?
 - a. What kind of relevant information can be extracted from the only existing grammatical description (Carrera 1644) of this language whilst it was still spoken? Is this information enough to create a Mochica grammatical sketch?
2. What are the main peculiar typological features of Mochica?

3. Can one find genealogical relationships between Mochica and other languages?
 - a. Is it feasible to establish external areal relations between Mochica and surrounding languages?
 - b. Is it feasible to establish external distant relations between Mochica and other languages of South America and Mesoamerica?
 - c. Is the Mochica isolate status refutable?

The objective of this dissertation is twofold: first, to understand the Mochica language and second, to establish Mochica's genealogical and contact relationships. In this respect, I try to answer Research Questions 1, 1a and 2 in Parts II and III of this thesis, that is, in chapters 2-8. In Part IV (chapters 9 and 10), I deal with Research Questions 3, 3a, 3b and 3c.

1.1.2.2. Aims of this study

This dissertation aims to contribute to the better understanding of the Mochica language as presented primarily in the missionary colonial description *Arte de la lengua yunga* (Carrera 1644). One of the very few available physical exemplars in octavo format can be found in the British Library in London (British Library, General Reference Collection, C.58. b.4). For the present study, I worked with a digitized copy ordered from the British Library. Besides this grammar, I have worked with other linguistic and non-linguistic data.

Throughout this dissertation, I systematize and describe Mochica grammar as a whole and analyze in more depth some specific Mochica grammatical topics, concentrating on the most salient peculiar typological features that

differentiate this language from the other Andean languages. Nevertheless, the ultimate motivation of the selection of the topics dealt with in depth depends on the available data, considering that there are no remaining Mochica speakers. The methodology consists in interpreting texts (due to the lack of speakers) and taking into account a general linguistics and typological approach. Besides my contribution to the study of the Mochica language itself, I offer the results of my attempts to find genealogical and external relations of Mochica with other languages. I examine early proposals and suggest new ones.

1.1.2.3. Challenges of this study

There are several challenges one encounters when approaching the Mochica language. First, the fact that there are no speakers left is a clear limitation. In relation to its phonological system, the reconstruction of Mochica sounds will probably always remain hypothetical, unless someone discovers the location of the wax cylinders that were recorded by Hans H. Brüning in Eten, by means of the Edison phonograph during the first half of the twentieth century. Brüning was an enthusiastic collaborator of the Austrian ethnomusicologist Erich Moritz von Hornbostel (1877-1935), who was at one point the director of the *Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv* (which is nowadays part of the *Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin-Dahlem*).

The *Phonogramm-Archiv* distributed phonographs and wax cylinders to travelers, explorers, scientists and diplomats around the world (until 1943), producing a collection of 30,000 phonographic recordings kept in the above-mentioned archive. Unfortunately, some of the cylinders remain undiscovered due to misplacement during the Second World War (Yep 2017: 198-199). Brüning collaborated on this project and kept epistolary communication with

von Hornbostel over several years (1908-1925). His musical recordings in Lambayeque represent the first ones in Peru (Hampe Martínez 2009), but, unfortunately, his linguistic recordings of the Mochica language have not yet been located (Zevallos Quiñones 1941: 377, Aristizábal & Schmelz 2009: 10, Schmelz 2016: 19, Cánepa Koch 2016: 72).

Another problem one faces when dealing with northern Peruvian languages in general, including Mochica, is the scarcity of sources on these languages. In colonial documentation, one finds references to several lost coastal languages that coexisted in northern Peru: Olmos, Sechura, Quingnam, Mochica, Culli, Colán and Catacaos (Oviedo y Valdés [1492-1549] 1855; Mogrovejo [1593-1605] 2006; Calancha 1639; Martínez Compañón 1783b: EIV). Unfortunately, Mochica is the only language for which there is some sort of grammatical and lexical documentation in republican and colonial times.

However, in spite of the available evidence, the sources do not include enough information on basic vocabulary or grammar that would contribute to a more complete understanding of the language, or that would suffice to allow for a translation of all the religious texts left by Carrera (1644); in the best case scenario, one would have enough information on Mochica lexical items to allow for a lexical comparison with other languages.

Carrera (1644: no numbered page²) expressly says in his introductory words to the reader that he is not sure whether he has accommodated everything according to the Latin grammar. In addition, when dealing with the Mochica numeral classifiers, Carrera (1644: 187) explains that it is better to learn how to use these elements following “the criterion of use”. The concept of use is

² No numbered page henceforth n.p.

present in colonial grammatical descriptions as an invitation to learn in a pragmatic way. This way Carrera excuses himself for not including the numeral classifier for counting weaving threads. The information about this specific numeral classifier will probably remain unknown. In relation to difficulties with pronunciation, Carrera (1644: n.p.) explains that it is difficult to teach pronunciation in his grammar, claiming that only after six to eight months of use and practice with native speakers, can the learner achieve proper pronunciation and improve the gained language skills. Following these observations, it is not difficult to suspect that there is information about Mochica grammar that we will never have access to, unless we were to recover at least one of the reportedly lost colonial grammars (see 2.4.1.1.).

In addition to the scarcity of documentation, the difficulty of accessing possible repositories of lost grammars, catechisms and vocabularies, i.e. religious orders' archives, is another source of frustration. In the search for any kind of further evidence on Mochica, it is necessary to try to access different archives, both in South America and Europe. For Colonial Mochica, the places to visit in search for linguistic evidence are the archives of various religious orders because Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit, Augustinian, Mercedarian and secular priests preached and missionized amongst Mochica speaking Indians.

To obtain information about Republican Mochica, a large part of which resulted from German scholarship, starting with Bastian at the end of the 19th century and continuing throughout the first half of the 20th century, one needs to visit archives in Germany. While among German archives, the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin (Seler's and Lehmann's legacies) and the library of the Ethnological Museum in Hamburg (Brüning's legacy) were accessible, the convents and church archives in Peru did not quite collaborate willingly.

The exception was my experience in the parish archives of Eten, Jayanca, Mórrope and Lambayeque, thanks to the intercession and unceasingly kind help of Father Freddy Beltrán García, lecturer of Theology in both the *Universidad Católica Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo* and in the Santo Toribio Seminar. In Lima, only the Franciscans allowed me to visit the library of the *Convento de los Descalzos* and the *Archivo histórico documental de la Provincia Franciscana de los XII Apóstoles del Perú*, in which I consulted manuscripts related to the activities of Marcos López (López 1649, 1650) and Fernando de la Carrera (Carrera 1649), as ecclesiastical judge in Magdalena de Eten (Lambayeque).

The Archiepiscopal Archive in Trujillo, where one could presumably find evidence on missionary activities conducted while the extinct northern languages were still spoken, is practically impossible to consult. Many monasteries do not even have an inventory or catalog of what they keep since the first years of colonial time. I consider this one of the biggest problems a Mochica scholar has to deal with. One never knows what can be found in an archive. One does not only need to look for linguistic data in grammatical descriptions or vocabularies; epistolary communication and other documents written by priests may contain valuable information as well, not only about the speakers and the languages geographic boundaries, but also about lexical items and the structure of the language itself.³

³ When researching the priests that worked in the Moxo missions, I was able to discover lexical evidence and even a brief grammatical sketch of the *Moxa* language in a letter written by the Jesuit Aller (1667).

1.1.4. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five parts. Part I contains Chapter 1, which offers a general introduction to the dissertation and presents the corpus of study and methodology. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 are included in Part II. Chapter 2 is devoted to thoroughly describing all the available Colonial and Republican Mochica study sources. In this chapter, I additionally introduce what I have called New Mochica, i.e. a new language based on Mochica, but with different structures belonging to Spanish. This chapter also includes my proposal of etymologies for an anthroponym (Naimlap/Ñaimlap) and a toponym (Lambayeque). Chapter 3 is dedicated to the evaluation of earlier proposals of interpretation of the Mochica phonological system. Mochica is a language with no speakers left; therefore, all interpretations may remain hypothetical and impressionistic. Nevertheless, in this chapter, I provide the result of my own analysis and concentrate on the interpretation of the controversial so-called Mochica sixth vowel <æ>, which I hypothesize to be the phonologically high, central vowel /i/. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 deal with Mochica nouns, adjectives and pronouns, and Mochica verbs, respectively.

Specific grammatical topics are discussed in detail in Part III, which consists of Chapter 6, 7 and 8. In Chapter 6, I offer an analysis of the syntax and semantics of the possessive constructions described in Carrera (1644). In this chapter, I propose an analysis of the Mochica inalienability split, which cannot be identified as a strict bipartite system (inalienable-alienable). I claim that the Mochica system of nominal possession is a *continuum*, which would have at one end the inalienable construction and, at the other, the allomorphs expressing alienable possession. In between, one finds a transition area represented by inalienable possessive constructions with double marking, characterized by the suffix <-æng>.

Chapter 7 is a study of Mochica lexical and grammatical nominalization. I describe and analyze the four nominalizing suffixes in the language: <-(V)çVc> / <(V)ssVc> ‘event nominalizer’, <-(V)pVc> ‘agentive nominalizer’, <-tVc> ‘locative nominalizer’, and <-Vc> ‘locative / instrumental nominalizer’. Additionally, this chapter provides evidence of the existence of deadjectival and stative nominalization. Furthermore, this chapter also concentrates on grammatical nominalization, presenting examples of nominalizations serving a relativization function, a complementation function, and an adverbial function.

Chapter 8 concentrates on expanding the description and analysis of numeral classifiers in Mochica. In this chapter, I suggest that the Mochica system does not correspond to a typologically prototypical numeral classifier system. I show that the Mochica numeral classifier system has peculiar characteristics and argue that it includes some morphemes that cannot be seen as typical numeral classifiers. They share some features comparable to those in the languages studied by Bender & Beller (2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b) but retain their very own peculiar characteristics. This is the main reason why, according to the present analysis, I consider the Mochica system as neither a numeral classifier system in a strict sense nor a specific counting system.

Chapters 9 and 10 constitute Part IV of this work and cover topics dealing with the second aim of this study. In Chapter 9, I re-evaluate earlier proposals of language contact across the Andes. I present a detailed analysis of the possible case of language contact between Mochica and Cholón-Hibito. I also examine the evidence of the contact relationship between Mochica and Quingnam, as well as the case of contact between Mochica and Quechua. Likewise, I inspect coastal loan terms in Quechua that I propose to be of Mochica origin. Chapter 10 explores Mochica’s distant relations. In this

chapter, I review previous proposals on distant relationships between Mochica and other languages and reconsider Stark's (1968, 1972) proposal on the Mochica relationship with Mayan and provide the results of my own comparison with Proto-Mayan, which was not available when Stark conducted her own comparative study. After a careful re-evaluation, I conclude that Mochica and Mayan cannot be said to be genealogically related. Therefore, I suggest that Mochica remains for the time being a linguistic isolate.

Finally, Part V contains Chapter 11. Chapter 11 presents a summary of the findings of this dissertation. Chapter 11 also offers some topics for future consideration concerning the study of the Mochica language and its place in the linguistic history of pre-Columbian South America.

1.1.5. Corpus and methodology

One of the aims of this investigation was to reconstruct and better understand the Mochica language in order to achieve the second goal of this research: the comparison of Mochica with other languages, which could allow for the establishment of potential contact or genealogical relations.

Mochica is a language without speakers. Thus, the main source of study of the language while it was still spoken and functional is the Mochica grammatical description written by Fernando de la Carrera (1644). This colonial grammar has been my main source of data. To be able to use the information contained in such a source properly, I had to conduct linguistic historiography. According to Swiggers (2012: 38-39) linguistic historiography can be defined as “[...]the discipline (within the field of [general] linguistics) that aims at providing a scientifically grounded descriptive and explanatory account of how *linguistic knowledge* (i.e. what was accepted at a given time as

knowledge, information and documentation on language related issues) was gained, and what has been the course of development of this linguistic knowledge, since its beginnings to the present time.”

Many grammatical treatments presented in colonial grammatical descriptions constitute the first attempts to describe the corresponding linguistic phenomena in the history of linguistics, and this fact has often been dismissed. For instance, numeral classification, inalienability split, and evidentiality were first described in such works. This is certainly a debt of the modern linguist to the colonial grammarians. In relation to the grammatical description of Mochica, for example, one encounters original terminology to refer to numeral classifiers or Carrera’s own way to explain the Mochica inalienability split. One has to consider the concepts described and explained in the *Arte* within their proper social and cultural context. Swiggers (2012: 42) claims that the methodology involved, “follows from the fact that the linguistic historiographer is an “observer”, a (critical) “reader” and an “interpreter” of the evolutionary course of linguistic knowledge”. Following Swiggers (2012: 42), this requires a basic attitude of empathy for the past; a linguistic historiographer respects what he/she finds in his/her sources.

Besides the first concern regarding the interpretation of the colonial grammar of Mochica, in the cases where it was possible, I confronted and complemented the information with that found in the work of Middendorf (1892). Middendorf confirms with examples the information provided by Carrera. With respect to vocabulary, Carrera (1644) and Middendorf (1892) are good sources of information. However, the post-colonial wordlists provided by German scholars provide additional, and sometimes more insightful, new lexical items. In general, I have turned to all possible attested

lexical evidence I have come across, including information extracted from archives and ethnographical sources.

This thesis is also the result of applying a combination of several disciplines within the field of general linguistics. First of all, as stated above, I needed to become a good reader of colonial manuscripts, but also had to develop certain skills on the fly, such as reading Sütterlin⁴ handwriting. A great deal of time was spent improving my paleography skills in order to read colonial manuscripts from different times (16th-18th century). My sample of manuscripts is extensive: the manuscripts come mainly from *the Archivo General de Indias*, AGI in Seville, where I spent some time in 2014, the Archiepiscopal Archive of Quito (October 2015), different archives in Lambayeque (2014), and the Franciscan Archive in Lima (2014-2015). Of post-colonial manuscripts, I mainly dealt with Seler's, Lehmann's and Brüning's legacies. Visiting archives and collecting materials were part of my activities during my period of investigation of the Mochica language. Oftentimes, archival work is not visibly fruitful, as one can spend hours or days and find nothing. In the present investigation, I have also conducted etymological research, trying to uncover the history of the Naymlap anthroponym and the Lambayeque toponym. Finally, a crosslinguistic typological and comparative approach was needed, as well. After reconstructing some grammatical aspects of the Mochica language, I was able to compare it with other surrounding languages as well as with other typologically similar languages.

⁴ To understand Seler, I needed to learn to read Sütterlin, for which I received extra help from Rogier Nieuweboer and Hans W. Giessen, from the University of Helsinki.

