

The Evolution of Phonotactic Restrictions in Huave

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Suárez (1975) proposed a reconstruction of proto-Huave (pH) and sketched the development of the four attested daughter languages, San Mateo (Mo), Santa María (MA), San Dionisio (D) and San Francisco (F) Huave (Oaxaca, Mexico). According to Suárez' hypothesis, pH syllables are uniformly open (lacking codas); non-derived roots are typically disyllabic, of form CV₁CV₂, and conform to well-defined cooccurrence restrictions on V₁ and V₂. The development of the daughter languages involves four major processes shown in (1) and exemplified in (2)

- (1)
 - a. *Apocope*: immediately posttonic vowels, including all word-final vowels, are deleted, giving rise to closed syllables in word-final position.
 - b. *Diphthongization*: V₁ in many cases evolves into a complex diphthong through assimilation to properties of V₂ (which is then lost).
 - c. *Palatalization*: Plain and secondarily palatalized consonants, conditioned allophonically in proto-Huave by the following vowel, become contrastive, giving in all dialects two series of consonants: palatalized (C') and plain (C).
 - d. *A vocalic chain shift* rotating pH *a *i *e applies differentially in the four daughter languages, with F being the most conservative and Mo the most innovative. Moreover, pH *i is nowhere preserved intact, becoming FMA *u* /u/, D *yu* /ü/, Mo *e* /e/.
- (2)
 - i. *katɪ 'fish' > F *katy* /kat'/ [katʲ], MAD *küty* /kit'/ [kitʲ], Mo *küet* /kit'/ [kiɛtʲ]
 - ii. *mbese 'nail' > FMAD *mbex* /mb'es'/ [mbɛf], Mo *mbear* /mb'as'/ [mɓɛaf]
 - iii. *ndikɪ 'sea' > F *ndyuik* /nd'uk'/ [ndʲuikʲ], D *ndyuk* /nd'ük'/ [ndʲüikʲ], MA *ndyuk* /nd'uk'/ [ndʲuk], Mo *ndek* /nd'ek'/ [ndɛk]

The processes in (1) were already underway, but not yet complete, in the late 19th century when the first written attestations of Huave become available. In particular, word lists compiled under the direction of Antonio Peñafiel (c.1885-1895) provide important — but often very confusing — witnesses to one moment during this phonological evolution, and were used extensively by Suárez to support the proposed reconstruction.

This talk has two aims. First, I will re-evaluate the adequacy of Suárez' reconstruction in light of the much larger quantity of data now available, as recently collected in Noyer 2012 (DECH: *Diccionario etimológico y comparativo de las lenguas huaves*), and report on certain previously unobserved phonotactic restrictions holding of roots in the proto-language. Second, I will offer some corrections to Suárez' interpretation of the Peñafiel word-lists based on my own examination of the manuscripts, and discuss the importance of these data for a more adequate reconstruction of proto-Huave, tracing changes in the phonotactic restrictions of the four languages as they evolved to their present state.