

Remote Relationships
of the Languages of the Americas
(*Amerind I*)

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Indo-European family

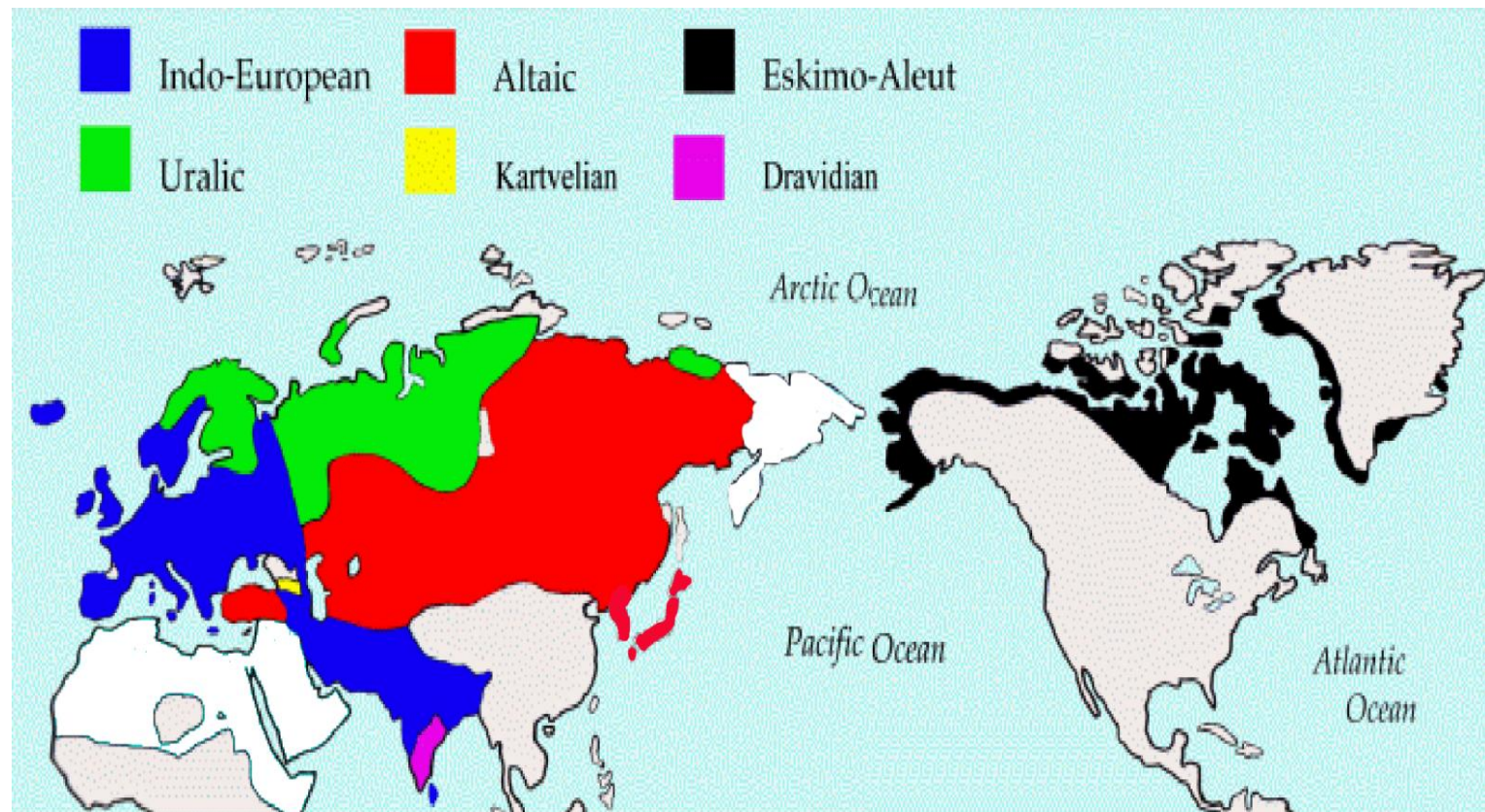
- A. Anatolian
- B.
 1. Tokharian
 2. Hellenic
 4. Armenian
 5. Albanian
 6. Italic
 7. Celtic
 8. Germanic
 9. Balto-Slavic
 10. Indo-Iranian

What is language reconstruction

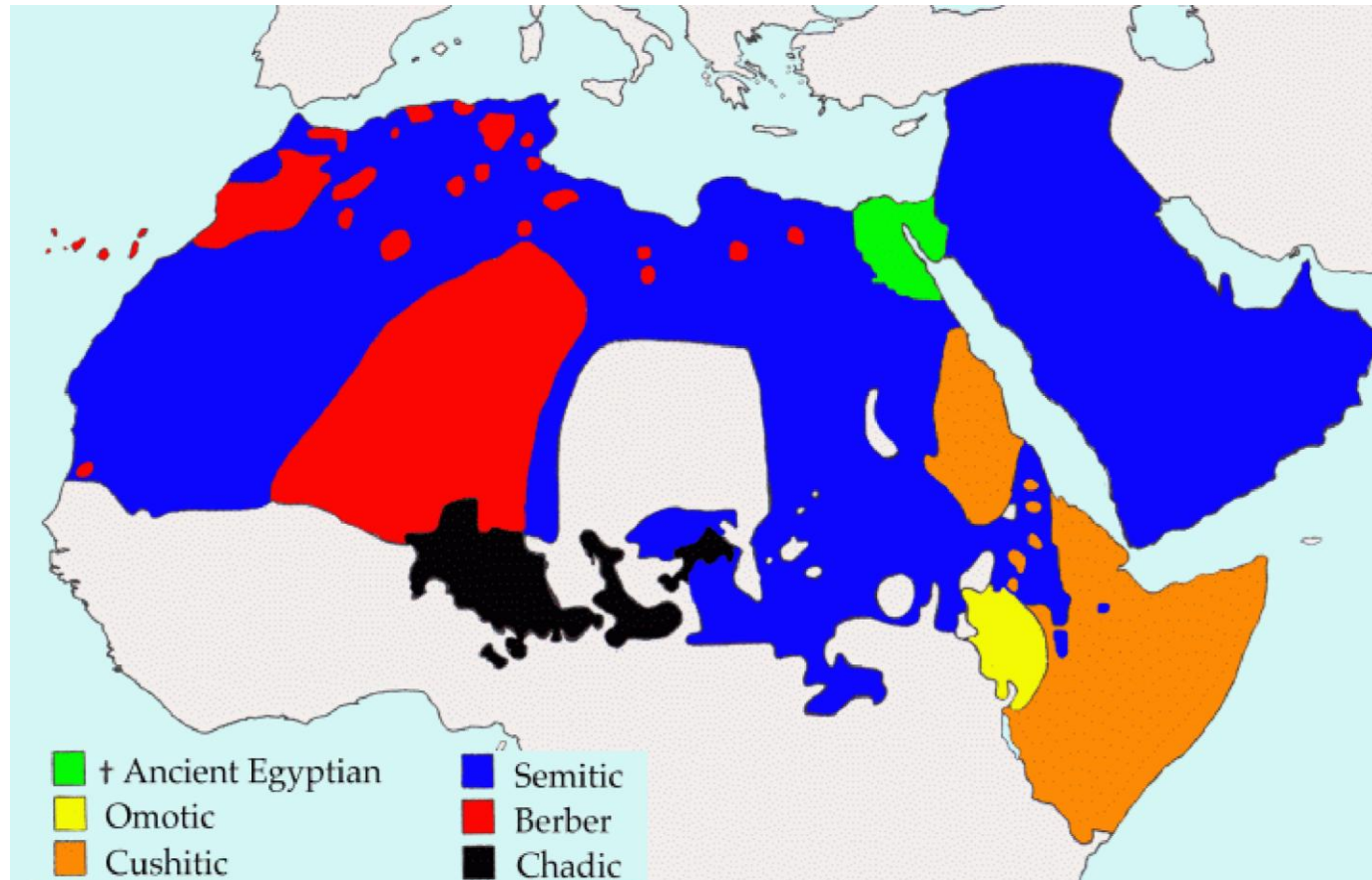
Ideally, for each reconstructed proto-language we should know:

- (i) its *phonological system* and how it developed into the systems of the daughter-languages;
- (ii) its *lexicon*: morphemes (minimal meaningful items) and words. It is also important to be able to identify borrowings into the proto-language and its descendants. Traditionally such reconstructed lexicon is called “an etymological dictionary” and may consist of thousands of proto-forms;
- (iii) its *grammar*: what grammatical meanings existed and how they were represented

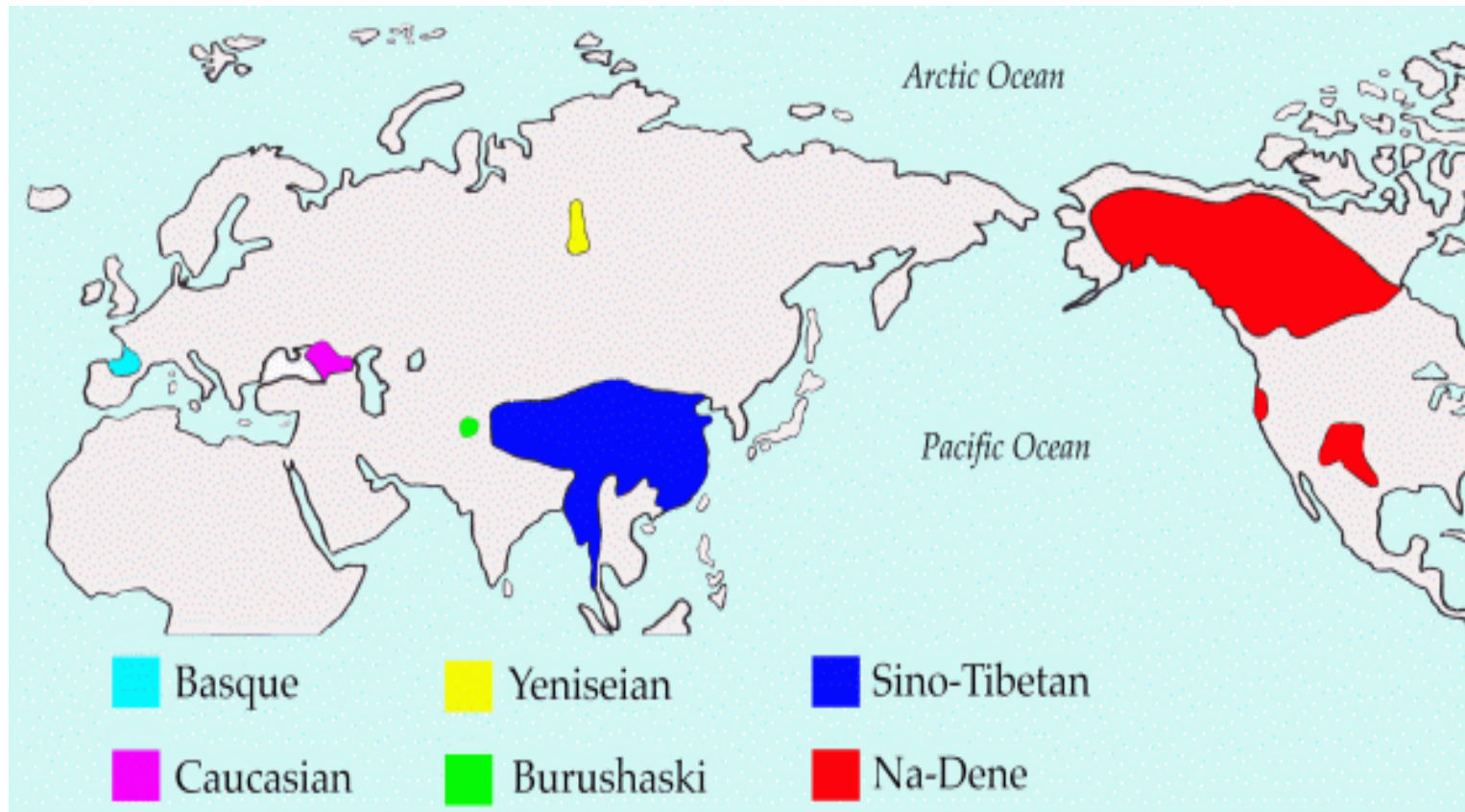
Eurasiatic super-family



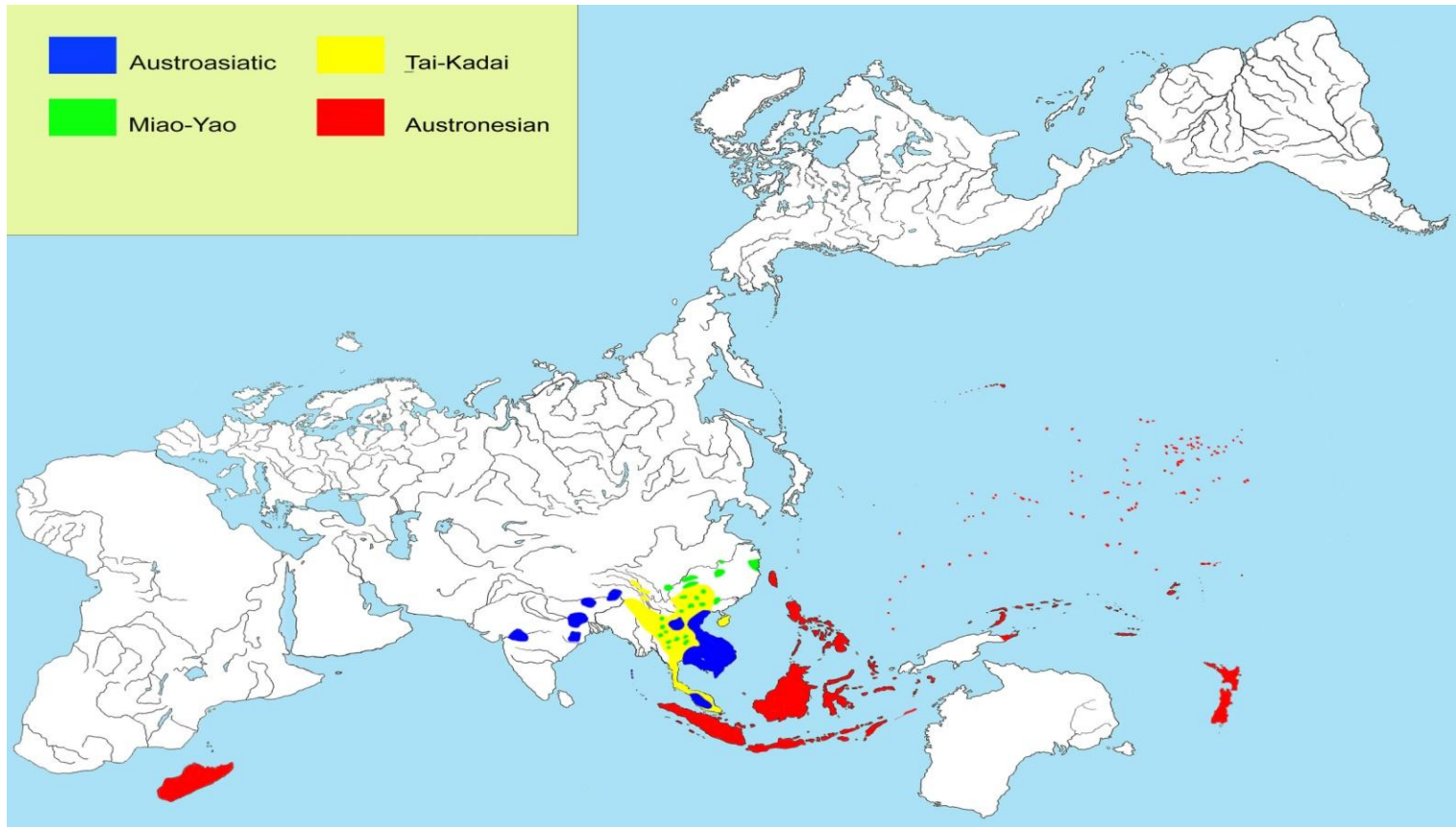
Afroasiatic super-family



Dene-Caucasian super-family



Austriac super-family



Prerequisites for reconstruction

We always need lexical resemblances between presumably related languages

If we have them we can turn on the machinery of reconstruction. Without resemblances nothing can be done

Their absences, however, doesn't imply that the languages are not related: it is possible that we simply missed the resemblances

Borean hypothesis

- Borean super-super family (15 -17 KYA)
 - Eurasiatic (12 KYA)
 - Afroasiatic (12 KYA)
 - Sino-Caucasian (10 KYA)
 - Austric (10 KYA)
- The Borean hypothesis is currently supported by:
 - (i) an impressive list of lexical resemblances (~1K)
 - (ii) major phonological correspondences

N&C American etymologies

We were able to get dictionaries for the following N&C proto-languages:

| <i>Family</i> | <i>Apprx age (KYA)</i> | <i># of Forms</i> | <i>Member of</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| • Salishan | 5.2 | 1350 | |
| • Uto-Aztecan | 4.5 | 580 | Aztec-Tanoan |
| • Miwokan | 4.1 | 880 | Penutian |
| • Wakashan | 3.5(?) | 2600 | |
| • Yuman | 2.7 | 620 | Hokan |
| • Central Algonquian | 2.5 | 1250 | Algic |
| • Mixe-Zoque | 2.5 | 1485 | |
| • Mayan | 2.3 | 1450 | |
| • Pomoan | 2.3 | 300 | Hokan |
| • Eskimo | 2.2 | 1770 | Eskimo-Aleut |
| • Zapotecan | 1.8 | 500 | Oto-Manguean |
| • Chinantecan | 1.4 | 500 | Oto-Manguean |

South American etymologies

- So far we don't have an etymological dictionary of any of 20 odd language families south of Mexico
- Only for seven of them we have word-lists of about 500 words long

| <i>Family</i> | <i>Member of</i> | <i># of reconstructed forms</i> |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Arauran | | About 550 |
| • Chibchan | | About 500 |
| • Quechuan | | About 500 |
| • Maku | | About 500 |
| • Tupi | Tupi-Munduruku | Less than 500 |
| • Carib | | Less than 400 |
| • Maipuran | | Less than 400 |

Next level groupings

Four deeper entities have been suggested for Northern America:

Penutian;

Hokan;

Mosan;

Oto-Manguean

The Oto-Manguean family is generally accepted, despite even its supporting evidence being extremely weak

The reality of Penutian and Hokan, proposed by Sapir, is often rejected

The acceptance of Mosan is somewhere in between

Cultural Contact zones

Over several years EHL team members were collecting databases for Penutian, Hokan, Totonacan and other American language families

EHL databases contain lexical resemblances between the following reconstructed proto-languages:

- 1. Proto-Penutian, Proto-Hokan, and Proto-Uto-Aztecan;
- 2. Proto-MZ, Proto-Mayan, and perhaps Proto-Totonacan;
- 3. Proto-Salishan, Proto-Wakashan, and Proto-Algonquian

Obviously, we are talking about three cultural zones where borrowings can be expected

Amerind I

However, lexical resemblances are also found across the zones, thus indicating possible genetic relationships

Currently we are proposing that such a hypothetic language family – Amerind I (Am¹) – consists of:

Penutian

Quechuan-Aymaran

Hokan

Aztec-Tanoan

Mixe-Zoquean

Totonacan (?)

Iroquoian-Caddoan-Keresan (?)

Salishan (?)

Chibchan (?)

(and presumably some other less studied groups)

The limits of Amerind I

Some other families, such as Algonquian, Oto-Manguean, or Maipuran, didn't appear to show enough lexical resemblances to link them to Am¹

This observation does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that such families are not related to Am¹ – it may also mean that we simply didn't find the needed evidence

We may estimate the age of Proto-Am¹ as perhaps about 8 – 9 KYA or slightly older

Amerind II ??

- It looks like a number of South American languages – such as e.g. Maku, Tupi, Carib – show relatively little similarity to Amerind I but much greater similarity between themselves
- We may provisionally call the group (with yet unclear extent) *Amerind II (Am²)*

Am¹, Am², and Borean

- Am¹ demonstrates noticeable (and seemingly equally strong) level of similarities to all branches of Borean
- Am² does seem to show noticeable similarities to at least Austric branch of Borean; the issue of relations to other branches remains to be investigated
- It remains to be seen if similarities between Am¹, Am², and different branches of Borean project to the level of Borean super-super-family or form some other kind of coordination with it

Conclusions I

Examination of existing EHL databases allows us to suggest that:

1. A number of linguistic families of the Americas belong to a single super-family - Am¹
2. The age of Proto-Am¹ is perhaps about 8 – 9 KYA or slightly older
3. Am¹ is **not** identical to Greenberg's Amerind. Further investigation is needed to clarify both its extent and possibility of other macro-groupings within Greenberg's Amerind (such as perhaps Am²)
4. Am¹ (as well as possibly Am²) may form a separate branch of the Borean super-super-family or be in other way coordinated with it

Conclusions II

1. The original homeland of Am¹ speakers must be somewhere in Asia. However, it is possible that the disintegration of Am¹ took place already in Americas (presumably somewhere around the western coast of Northern America)
2. If the patterns of associations of Am¹ and Am² with the Borean are different, then they must represent separate waves of migration into Americas (Am² presumably being the earlier)

Acknowledgments

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