Linguistic Evidence for Austronesian Homeland and Dispersal

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1. Previous literature

(1) Kern. 1889. Taalkundige gegevens ter bepaling van het stamland der maleisch-Polynesian volken [Linguistic evidence for the determination of the original homeland of the Malayo-Polynesian]


2. Three linguistic approaches to the homeland

(1) linguistic palaeontology
   - such as Kern (1889)

(2) migration theory ("Wörter and Sachen technique")
   - such as Sapir (1916) and Dyen (1956)

(3) toponymy (study of place names)
3. Sapir’s (1916) hypothesis

- The area of greatest linguistic diversity is the most likely center of dispersal of a language family or linguistic subgroup.
4. Subgrouping hypotheses of the Austronesian language family

(1) Dyen (1965)
   - Based on lexicostatistics

(2) Starosta (1995)
   - Based on morphological evidence

(3) Blust (1999)
   - Based on phonological evidence

(4) Sagart (2004)
   - Based on lexical evidence of numerals 5-9

(5) Ross (2009)
   - Based on phonological and morphosyntactic evidence

- Except Dyen, all these subgrouping hypotheses point to Taiwan as the center of greatest linguistic diversity.
4.1 Dyen (1965)

- Formosan languages belong to a lower subgroup.
Cf. Haudricourt (1965)
4.2 Starosta (1995)

Fo: Proto-Formosan = PAN

F1

F2

Rukai

Tsou

F3

Saaroa

Chamorro

F4

Kanakanavu

F5
4.3 Blust (1999)
4.4 Sagart (2004)

PAN

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<tr>
<th>Luilang</th>
<th>Pituish</th>
<th>Walu-Siwaish</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pazeh</td>
<td>Atayalic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saisiat</td>
<td>Thao</td>
<td>all other AN lgs.</td>
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<td>Favorlang</td>
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<td>Taokas</td>
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*pitu

*Walu

*Siwa
4.5 Ross (2009)

Proto Austronesian
  - Tsou
  - Rukai
  - Puyuma

Proto Nuclear Austronesian
  - Proto K-S
    - Saaroa
    - Kanakanavu
  - Paiwan
  - Bunun
  - Proto W Plains
    - Thao
  - Proto NW Formosan
    - Saisiyat
    - Pazih
  - Proto Atayalic
    - Atayal
    - Seediq
  - Proto E Formosan
    - Siraya
    - Amis
    - Kavalan
  - Proto Malayo-Polynesian
    - (all extra-Formosan Languages)
5. The most diverse linguistic area in Taiwan

- The most diverse linguistic area is in Southern Taiwan.
- Rukai (1st split) and Tsou (2nd split) are spoken in the south, if based on Starosta’s subgrouping hypothesis.
- 5 out of 9 major subgroups (Paiwan, Puyuma, Rukai, Tsouic and Bunun) are spoken in the south, if based on Blust’s subgrouping hypothesis.
- 3 out of 4 major subgroups (Puyuma, Rukai, and Tsou) are spoken in the south, if based on Ross’s subgrouping hypothesis.
6. Did pre-Austronesian speakers arrive in Taiwan at the same time or in successive waves?

- Most Formosan languages except Puyuma and Saaroa have retained PAN *S as s or ♦, whereas all extra-Formosan languages have lost it or retained it as h.

- This piece of linguistic evidence indicates that Formosan peoples must have arrived in Taiwan at the same time, or else their reflexes of PAN *S could not have been so uniform.

- Although Saaroa has also lost *S, it is retained in its most closely related language, Kanakanavu.
7. Austric dispersal

- Reid (1994, 1999) gives convincing linguistic evidence for the Austric hypothesis.
- Based on Reid, Blust (1996) postulates that the Austric homeland is in the northern tip of Burma, near the border with Sichuan, China and northeast India.
- The pre-Austronesian speakers dispersed to the east coast of China by the Yangtze River and then went southward along the east coast before they reached Taiwan.
- However, the archaeological evidence given by Tsang indicates that pre-Austronesian speakers may have come from the southeast coast of Kuangtung, China.
- How shall we reconcile the difference?