
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-Polynesische volken [Linguistic evidence for the determination of the original homeland of the Malayo-Polynesian]**
- (2) Haudricourt. 1954. Les origines asiatiques des language malayo-polynésiennes.**
- (3) Blust. 1985. The Austronesian homeland: a linguistic perspective.**
- (4) Bellwood. 1991. The Austronesian dispersal and the origin of languages.**

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

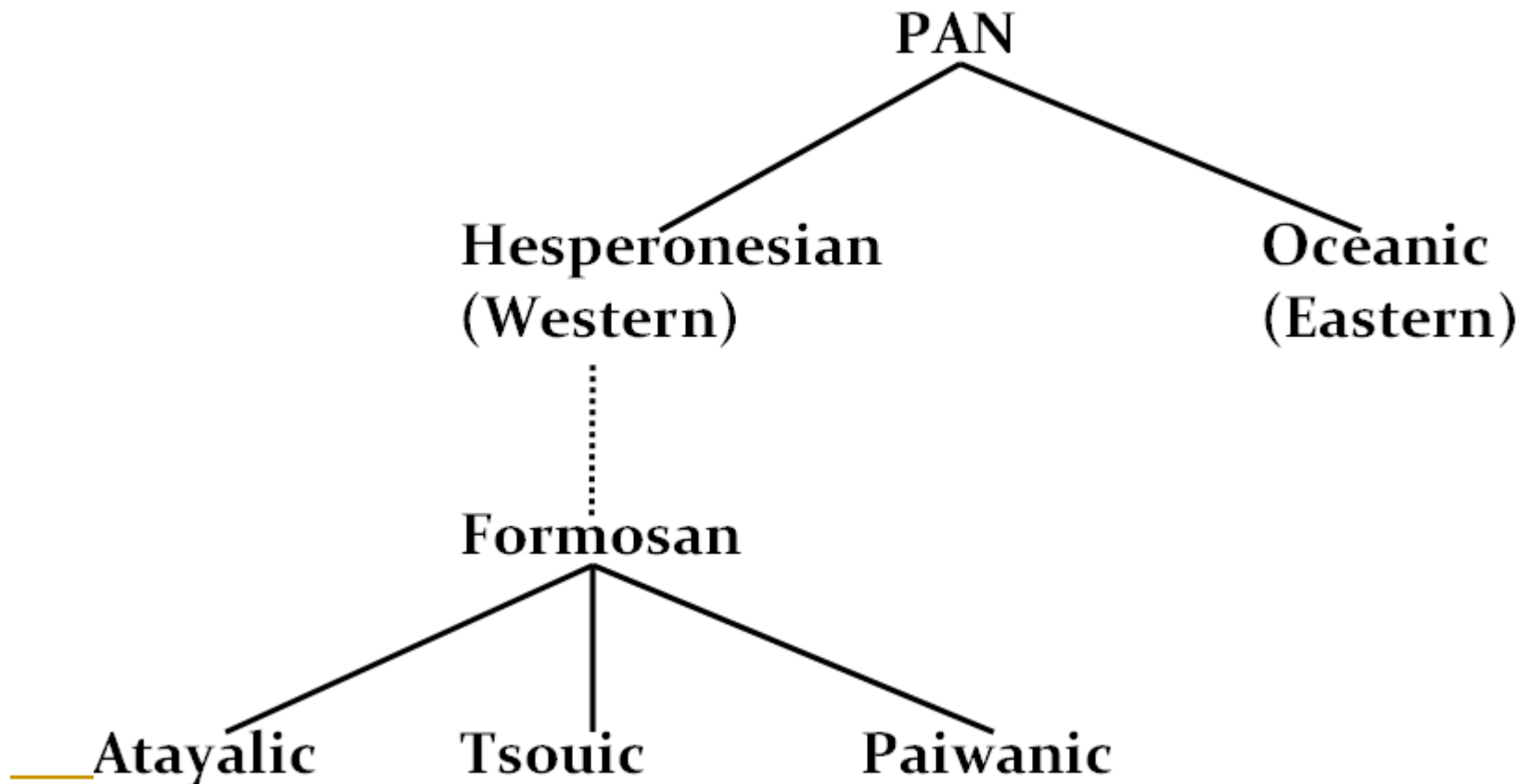
(5) Ross (2009)

- Based on phonological and morphosyntactic evidence

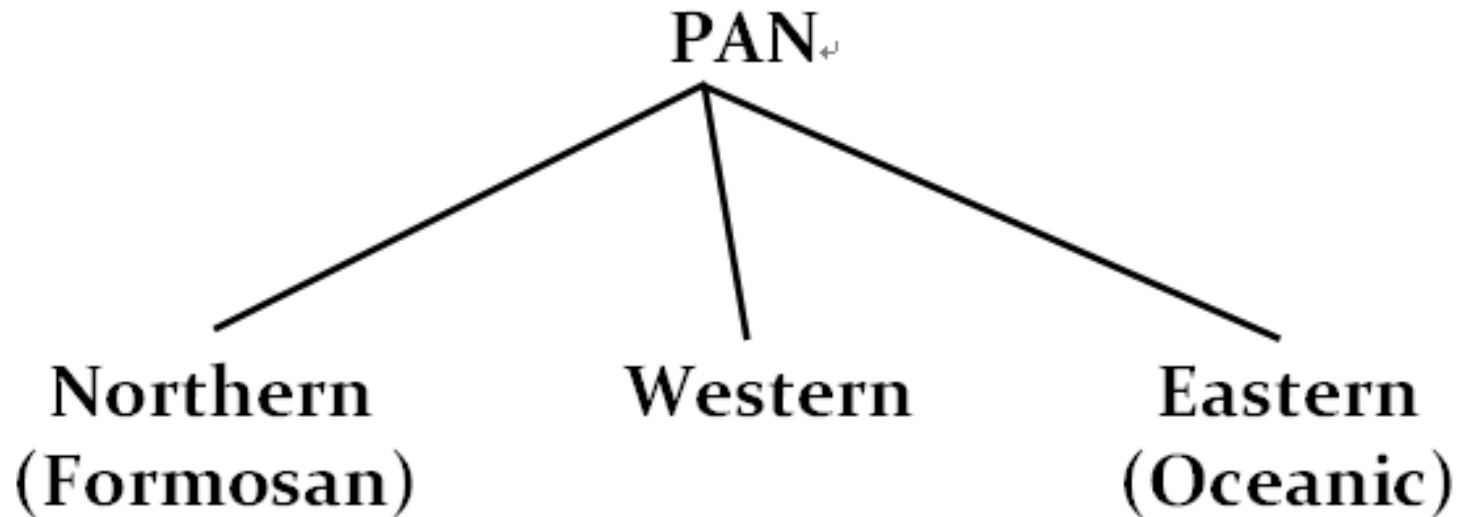
- Except Dyen, all these subgrouping hypotheses point to Taiwan as the center of greatest linguistic diversity.

4.1 Dyen (1965)

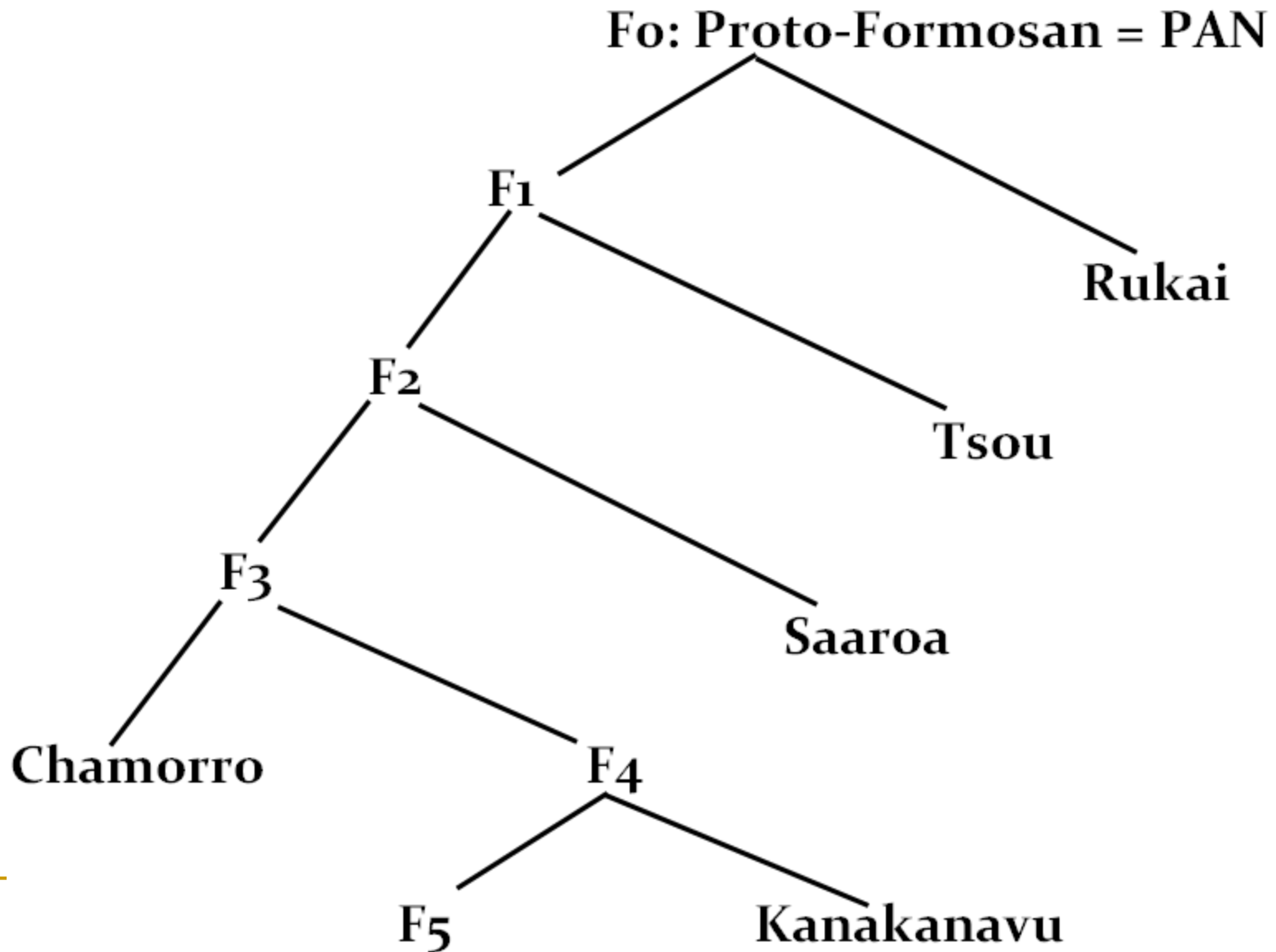
- **Formosan languages belong to a lower subgroup.**



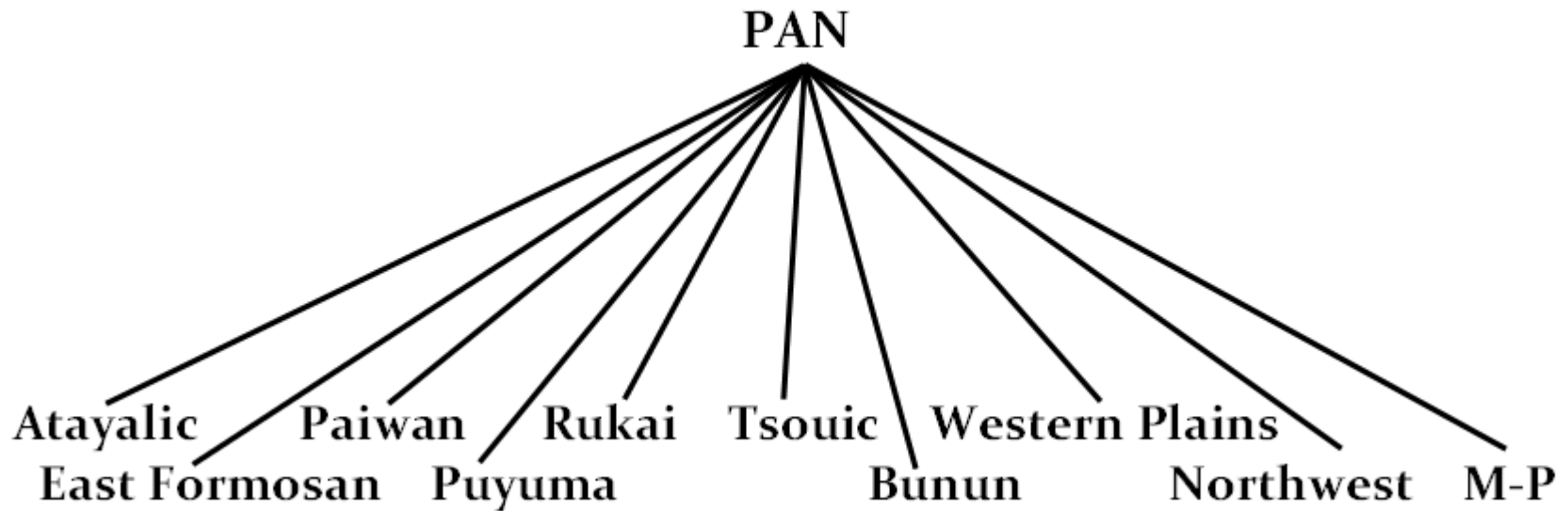
Cf. Haudricourt (1965)



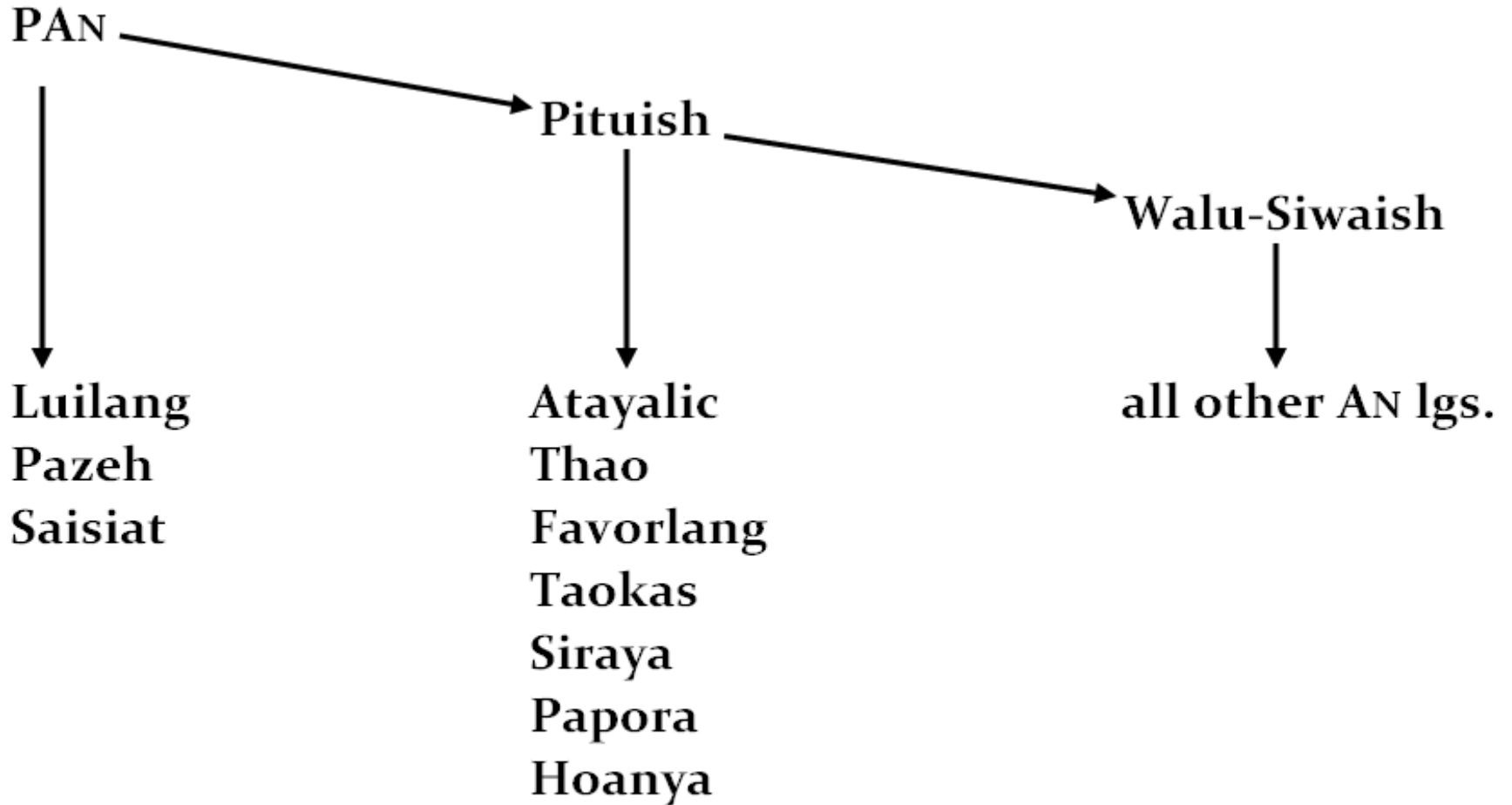
4.2 Starosta (1995)



4.3 Blust (1999)



4.4 Sagart (2004)

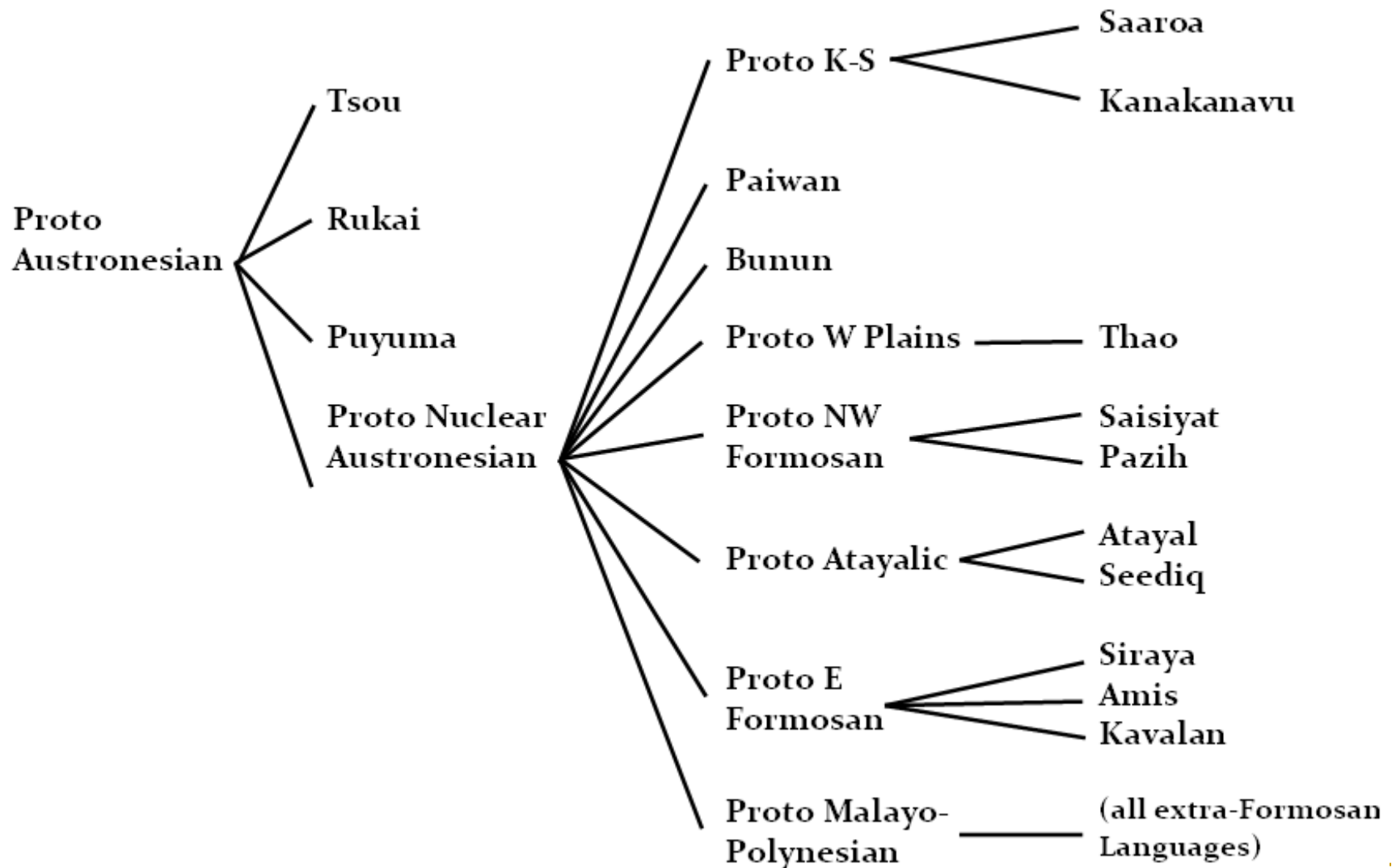


*pitu

*Walu

*Siwa

4.5 Ross (2009)



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 *ʃ*, 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.**
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- **How shall we reconcile the difference?**

