13.Amerind

Homeland. Formation of the Amerind group took place in the warming period following the Glacial Maximum. Mariners from northeast Asia voyaged past North America's Laurentide ice sheet by relying on the "kelp highway" of rich maritime resources. They settled in a homeland clearly demarcated as the Salish Sea region – the coastal region from today's Vancouver to Seattle. The density of ethnic groups remaining in this region marks it as a center of dispersion. Settlers spread inland to expand the Almosan–Keresiouan languages; other groups sailed south along the coast, settling at additional points.

Concise Spreadsheet: top three levels

Amerind		
	Northern Amerind	
		Almosan-Keresiouan
		Penutian
		Hokan
	Central Amerind	
		Oto-Mangue
		Uto-Aztecan
		Kiowa-Tanoan
	Chibchan-Paezan	
		Chibchan
		Paezan
	Andean	
		Aymara
		Itucale-Sabela
		Kahuapana
		Northern
		Quechua
		Southern
	Amazonian	
		Equatorial-Tucanoan
		Carib-Panoan-Ge

Full Spreadsheet: see "13.Amerind," listing Amerind languages by groups and subgroups.

Pleistocene Changes.

65,000–45,000 years ago.

45,000–21,000 years ago.

21,000–12,000 years ago. Settlers moved rapidly from the homeland to establish the main Amerind language families. These included settlement of Hokan and Penutian groups along the coast of California; of Central Amerind group along the west coast of Mexico; the Chibchan–Paezan group on the west coast of Colombia; and the Andean group on the coast of Peru. From the Chibchan–Paezan group, one may hypothesize that settlers crossed the Andes at the low and narrow point in today's Ecuador and moved somewhat downriver to form communities and language groups in the upper Amazon Valley. Greenberg classified and subgrouped the resulting languages into Equatorial-Tucanoan and Ge-Pano-Carib, but the geographical distribution of groups and subgroups suggest strongly that settlers radiated out rapidly from a homeland. This hypothetical grouping, as shown on the accompanying map, is here labeled "Amazonian" and Greenberg's five eastern groups are listed as subgroups of Amazonian.

Holocene Changes.

12,000–6000 years ago. Movement of Penutian speakers from northern California to the Gulf of Mexico and along the Caribbean to Yucatan and Guatemala: Maya languages are of the Penutian group. In eastern South America, it appears that the forested Amazon Valley was settled first, after which settlement increased in the grasslands to the south and east. Andean languages spread south on both sides of the Andes.

6000 years ago–1000 CE. Among the migrations in this era was the movement of Algonkian speakers from Oregon to the east, where they became the dominant population in the Great Lakes area. In the same period, Tupi speakers moved eastward from the uplands of the Paraná, becoming prominent in much of eastern Brazil.

Commentary and Debates. Greenberg, after an initial 1971 classification of Amerind languages, published a coauthored 1986 *Current Anthropology* article with evidence that dental and genetic data were consistent with a single occupation of most of the Americas by migrants from Asia. Linguist Lyle Campbell led a vociferous attack, arguing that large language groups could be accepted only if they were fully reconstructed; Campbell went on to make similar arguments about against Altaic and other language families. Linguists remain split on these issues.

Greenberg and Ruhlen listed six main subgroups of Amerind, two of which (Equatorial-Tucanoan and Ge-Pano-Carib) are limited to the Amazon basin and the Atlantic coast of South America. I argue that the migratory logic of the rapid human occupation of South America suggests that the latter two families must be descendants of one or another of the Pacific coastal groups – Chibchan-Paezan or Andean. Specifically, I argue that Equatorial-Tucanoan is most likely a subgroup of Chibchan–Paezan. I also suggest considering Ge–Pano–Carib either as a subgroup of Equatorial–Tucanoan or as a subgroup of Andean. In the latter case, the Bolivian lowlands would be seen as the homeland of Ge–Pano–Carib.

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