

The languages and related notions

- The effort in this section is to see how languages are related to various other notions in the real world.
- How languages affect some of the views in the real world.
- And how some views and facts from the real world seem to have deep impact on the languages.
- The course on language typology should not ignore these inter-related facts.
- They might not have direct impact on the methods of analyzing languages,
- but they seem to have great significance and relevance for the structural nuances with regard to forming the world-view of the Natives.

Why should we study the structure of language ?

- These notions provide the single and most common variable by which cultural groups are identified.
- They facilitate us with the means by which we come to know about customs and skills that pass from one generation to the another.
- They also motivate the cultural diffusion of innovations.
- Because languages differ spatially, they reinforce the sense of region, place, and differences in perception of things.
- Study of language with these ingredients is called *geolinguistics* or linguistic geography by researchers outside linguistics.
- Such studies have facilitated the linguists to understand the ways in which the human mind responds to processes of cognition through language.

Terms used in the study of language

- *Language* — tongues or forms of speech that cannot be mutually understood
- *Dialects* — variant forms of a language that have not lost mutual comprehension
 - A speaker of English can understand various dialects of the language in England and elsewhere.
 - A dialect is distinct enough in vocabulary and pronunciation to mark and differentiate its speakers and their geographical belongings
 - Some 6,000 languages and at least six times more to the number of dialects are spoken around the world today

Terms used in the study of language

- *Pidgin* form of a language — results when different linguistic groups come into contact
 - It serves the purposes of commerce, trade or empire building
 - It becomes the hub of structural differences due to the flux of languages, yet the efforts are incessantly made to make the communication possible following some technique
 - It has a small vocabulary derived from the various contact groups
 - It prepares a unique platform for re-structuration of the language that will sever as a means to link various groups in the area.

Terms used in the study of language

- *Lingua franca* — a language that spreads over a wide area where it is not the mother tongue of many speakers
- Or
- Any language that is used regularly for communication between people who do not share a native language is a lingua franca.
 - A language of communication and commerce
 - Hindi has this status in many parts of India
 - Swahili has this status in many parts of East Africa

Kenya

- Kenya has two official languages: Swahili and English.
- Both these languages function as the lingua franca in the area.
- These lingua franca facilitate communication among Bantu, Nilotic, and Cushitic language speakers.
- Swahili developed along the coast of East Africa where Bantu came in contact with Arabic spoken by Arab sea traders.



Kenya

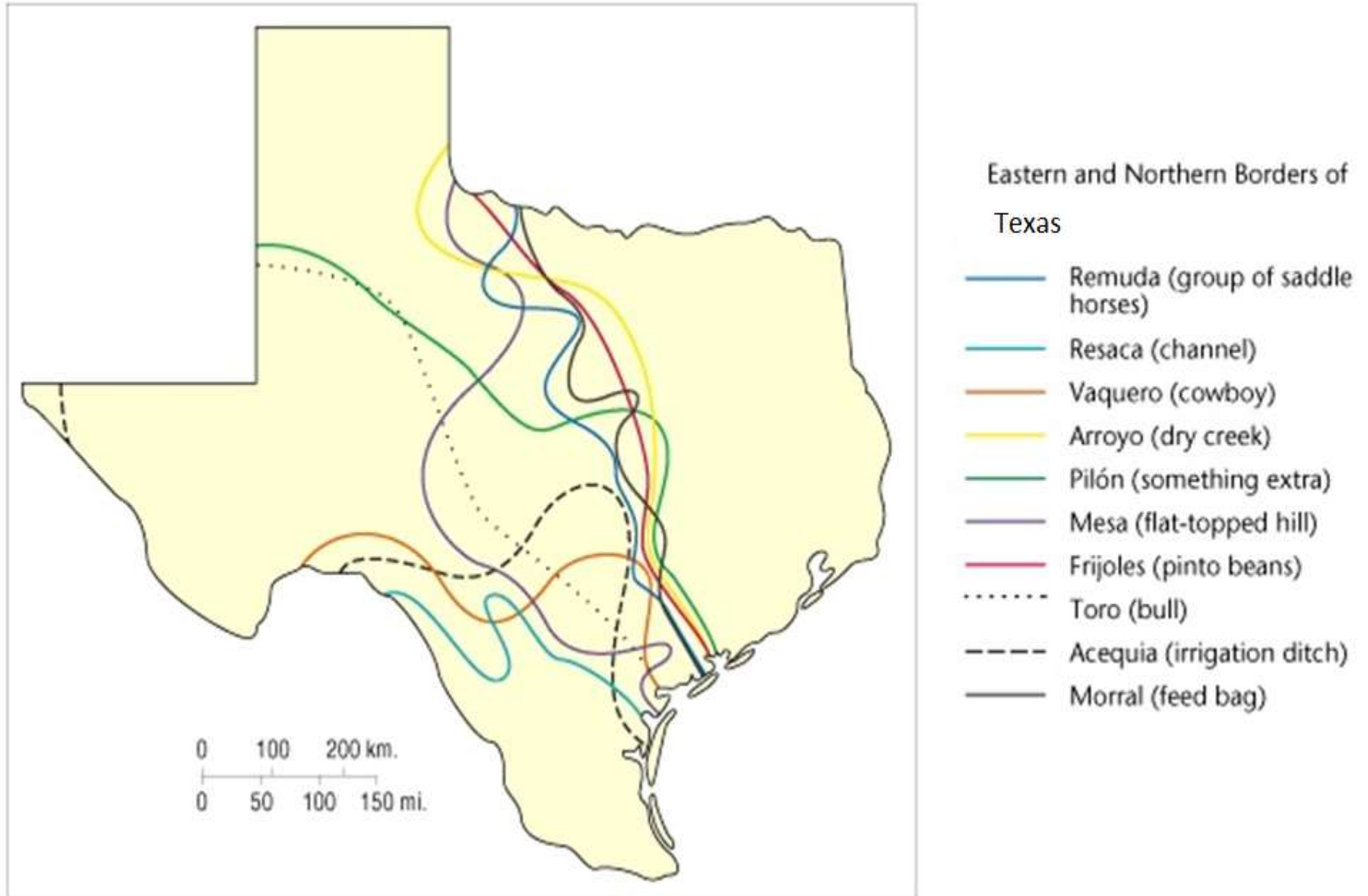
- English became important during the British colonial period and is still associated with high status.
- This shopping center caters to Maasai herders who speak a Nilotic language and Kikuyu farmers who speak a Bantu language.
- Jambo means “hello” in Swahili.
- So, the name of the mall is a good example of how English and Swahili function as lingua franca in the area.



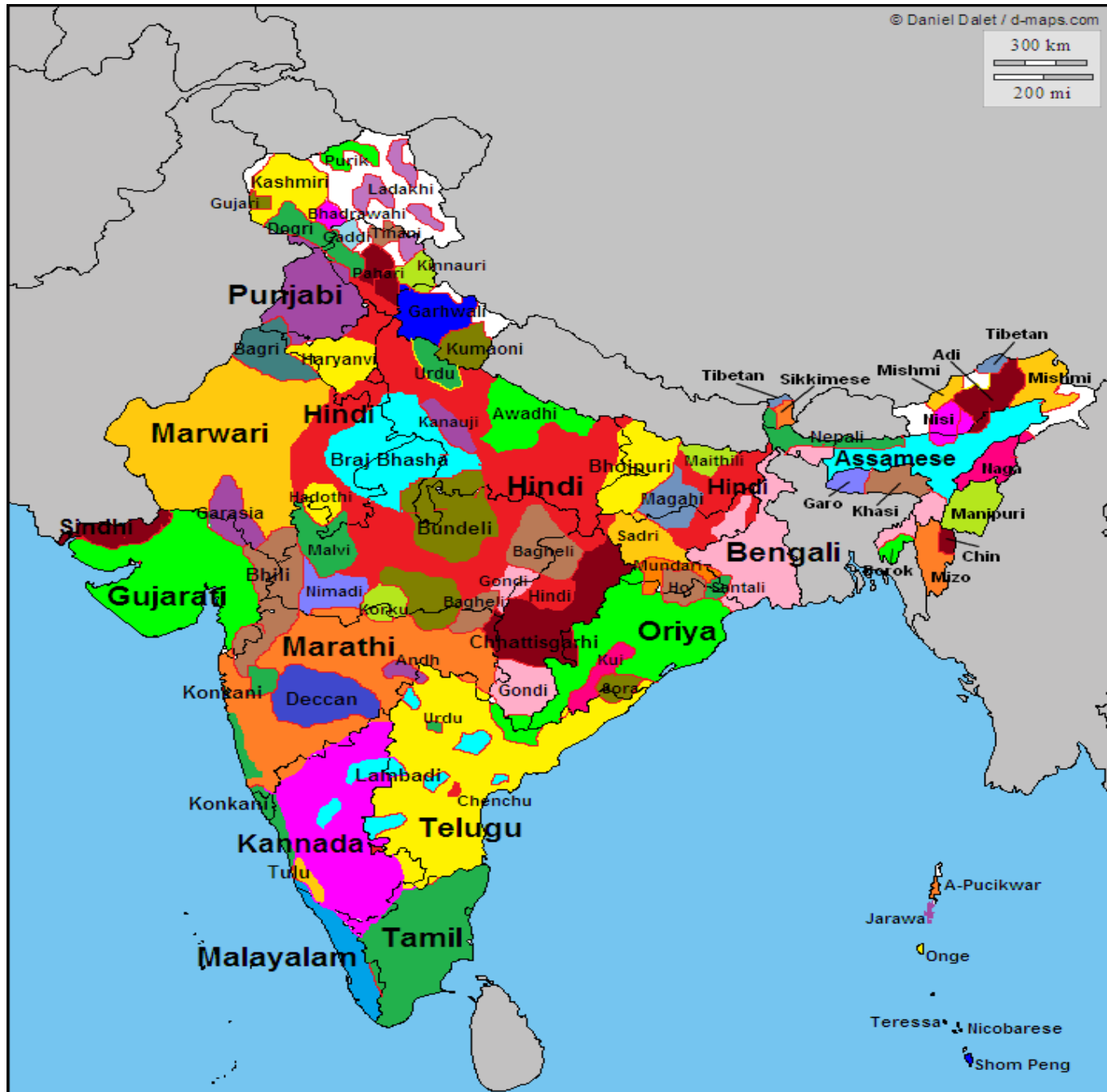
Characteristics of language can define linguistic regions

- *isoglosses* —are lines drawn on a map of an area and these lines represent the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the languages spoken in the area by the means of contact of the speakers of different languages in the area.
- They, thus, also represent the borders of individual word or grammatical construct and its usage and distribution in the area
 - No two words, phrases, or pronunciations have exactly the same spatial distribution
 - Spatially isoglosses crisscross one another
 - Isoglosses typically cluster together in “bundles”
 - Bundles serve as the most satisfactory dividing lines among dialects and languages
 - The more the ‘bundles of isoglosses’, the less is the similarities amongst the languages

Isoglosses marking different areas for different words



Home Work



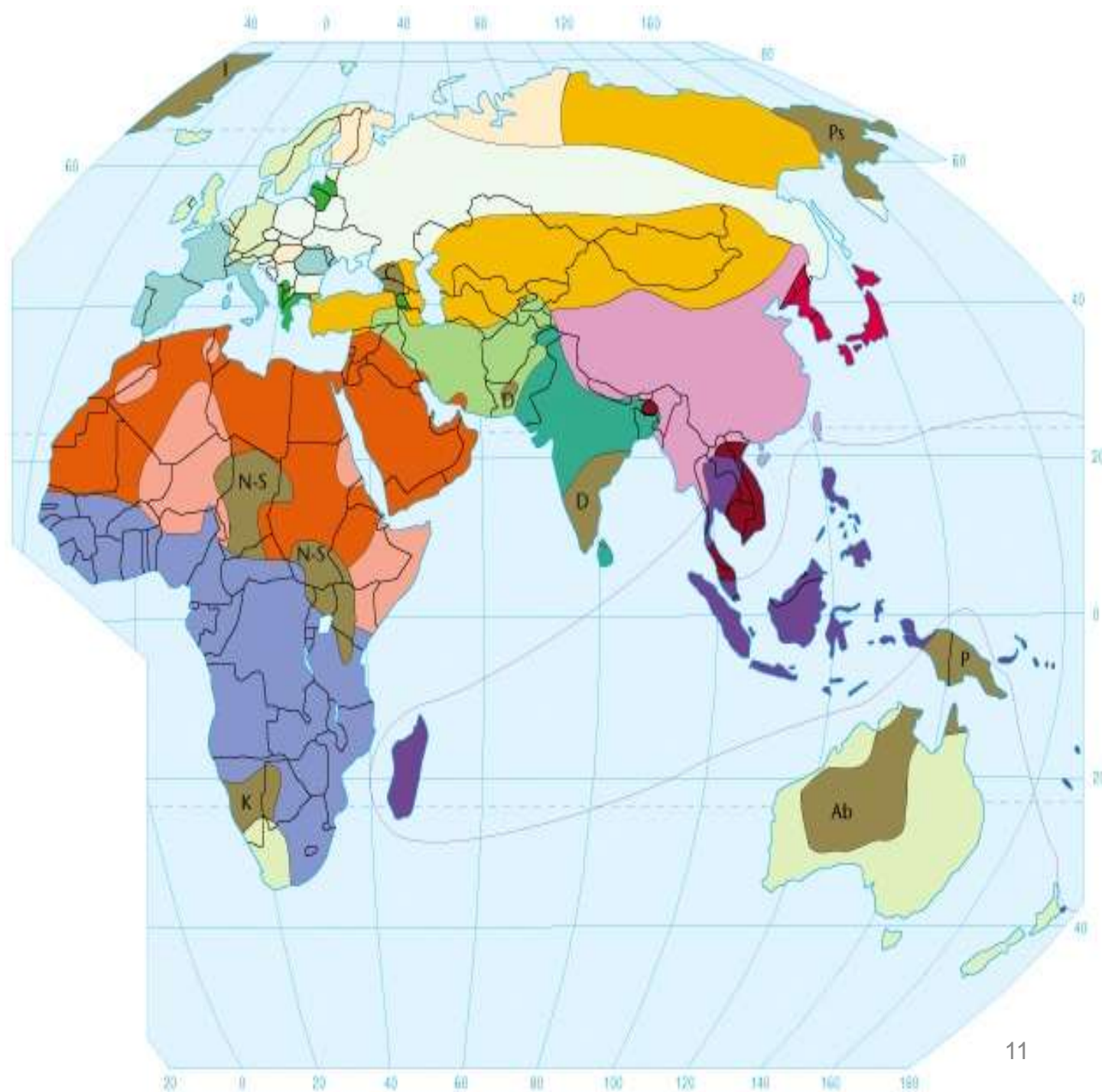
Indo-European Family

- Slavic
- Germanic
- Romance
- Iranic
- Indic
- Other Indo-European

Afro-Asiatic Family

- Semitic
- Hamitic
- Altaic family
- Niger-Congo family
- Austronesian family
- Uralic family
- Sino-Tibetan family
- Austro-Asiatic family
- Japanese and Korean
- Other families

I = Inuktitut
A = Amerindian
C = Caucasian
N-S = Nilo-Saharan
K = Khoisan
Ps = Paleosiberian
D = Dravidian
P = Papuan
Ab = Aborigine



Language families

- **The Indo-European language family**
 - Largest and most widely spread language family
 - Spoken on all continents
 - Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe and Australia
 - Very dominant in Europe, Russia, North and South America, Australia, and parts of southwestern Asia and India
 - Sub-families- Romance, Slavic, Germanic, Indic, Celtic, and Iranian
 - Subfamilies are divided into individual languages
 - Seven Indo-European tongues are among the top 10 languages spoken in the world
 - By comparing vocabularies in various languages one can see the kinship

Language families

- **The Afro-Asiatic family**
 - Has two major divisions—Semitic and Hamitic
 - Semitic covers the area from Tigris-Euphrates (ṭaɪgrəs-ufretɪs) valley westward through most of the north half of Africa and to the Atlantic coast
 - The area or the domain of the language family is huge but it doesn't consist very dense-populated area due to the desert
 - Arabic is the most widespread Semitic language—about 186 million
 - Hebrew was a “dead” language and was used only in religious ceremonies
 - However, it was revived in 19th Century and now known as modern-Hebrew
 - Hebrew is the official language of Israel in modern times
 - Amharic is a third major Semitic language and has 20 million speakers in the mountains of East Africa

Language families

- **The Afro-Asiatic family**

- Has two major divisions—Semitic and Hamitic
- Very small number of people speak Hamitic languages
 - Share North and East Africa with Semitic speakers
 - Spoken mainly by the Arabs of Morocco and Algeria
 - Spoken in some parts of the Sahara and some parts of East Africa
 - Originated in Asia but today only spoken in Africa
 - Expansion of Arabic decreased the area and number of other Semitic speakers, especially the Hamitic speakers

Language families

- In Africa, the south part of Sahara Desert is dominated by the *Niger-Congo language* family
 - Spoken by about 200 million people
 - The noun-classification system is the robust feature of Niger-Congo languages (Nc-1 to Nc10)
 - Greater part of the Niger-Congo culture region belongs to the Bantu subgroup
 - It also includes Swahili—the lingua franca of East Africa

Language families

- *Altaic* language family
 - Includes Turkic, Mongolic, and several other subgroups
 - Homeland lies largely in deserts, tundra, and coniferous forests of northern and central Asia
- *Uralic* family
 - Finnish and Hungarian are the two most important languages in this family
 - Both have official status in their countries

Language families

- ***Austronesian* language family**
 - Most remarkable language family in terms of distribution
 - Speakers live mainly on tropical islands
 - Ranges from Madagascar, through Indonesia and the Pacific Islands, to Hawaii and Easter Island
 - Longitudinal span of the language family is more than half way around the world
 - Largest single language in this family is Indonesian—50 million speakers
 - Most widespread language is Polynesian
 - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Austronesian-languages>

Austronesian language family



Language families

- *Sino-Tibetan* language family
 - One of the major language families of the world
 - Extends throughout most of China and Southeast Asia
 - Han Chinese is spoken in a variety of dialects as a mother tongue by millions of people
 - Han serves as the official form of speech in China
- *Japanese/Korean* language family
 - Another major Asian family with nearly 200 million speakers
 - Seems to have some kinship to both the Altaic and Austronesian
 - However, the researchers don't agree that Korean and Japanese are related to Altaic language family

Language families

- *Austro-Asiatic* language family
 - Found in Southeast Asia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and spoken by many tribes of Malaya and parts of India
 - Including India, the Austro-Asiatic family of languages has/have always been marginalized
 - And thus, it has occupied a remnant peripheral domain
 - Has always suffered encroachment by Sino-Tibetan, Indo-European, and Austronesian family of languages

Language families

- Khoisan — found in the Kalahari Desert of southwestern Africa
- languages in this family are characterized by the so-called ‘click’ sounds
- Dravidian — spoken by numerous people of southern India and northern Sri Lanka
- Others include — Papuan, Caucasian, Nilo-Saharan, Paleo-siberian, and a variety of Amerindians
- *Basque*: this is spoken on the borderland between Spain and France and is unrelated to any other language in the world (an example of language isolate)

Searching for the aboriginal tongue

- Using some conventional techniques, linguists seek to find out the most prehistoric language of the world.
- *Nostratic—ancestral* speech of the Middle East dating between 12,000 to 20,000 years ago
 - Ancestral to nine modern language families
 - A 500-word dictionary has been compiled
- Contemporary with Nostratic were other ancient tongues including Dene-Caucasian(=kaukasian).

Nostratic

- Nostratic is a proposed language family that includes many of the indigenous language families.
- This includes languages of Eurasia, including the Indo-European, Uralic and Altaic as well as Kartvelian languages.
- It also includes the Afroasiatic languages native to Northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, and the Dravidian languages of the Indian Subcontinent .
- The exact composition and structure of the family varies among proponents.

Searching for the aboriginal tongue

- Dene-Caucasian reputedly gave rise to Sino-Tibetan, Basque, and one form of early Native-American called Na-Dene
- Scholars are attempting to find the original linguistic source area from where all modern languages have been derived
- It is believed that the original language arose in Africa perhaps 250,000 years ago and diffused from there into different parts of the world.

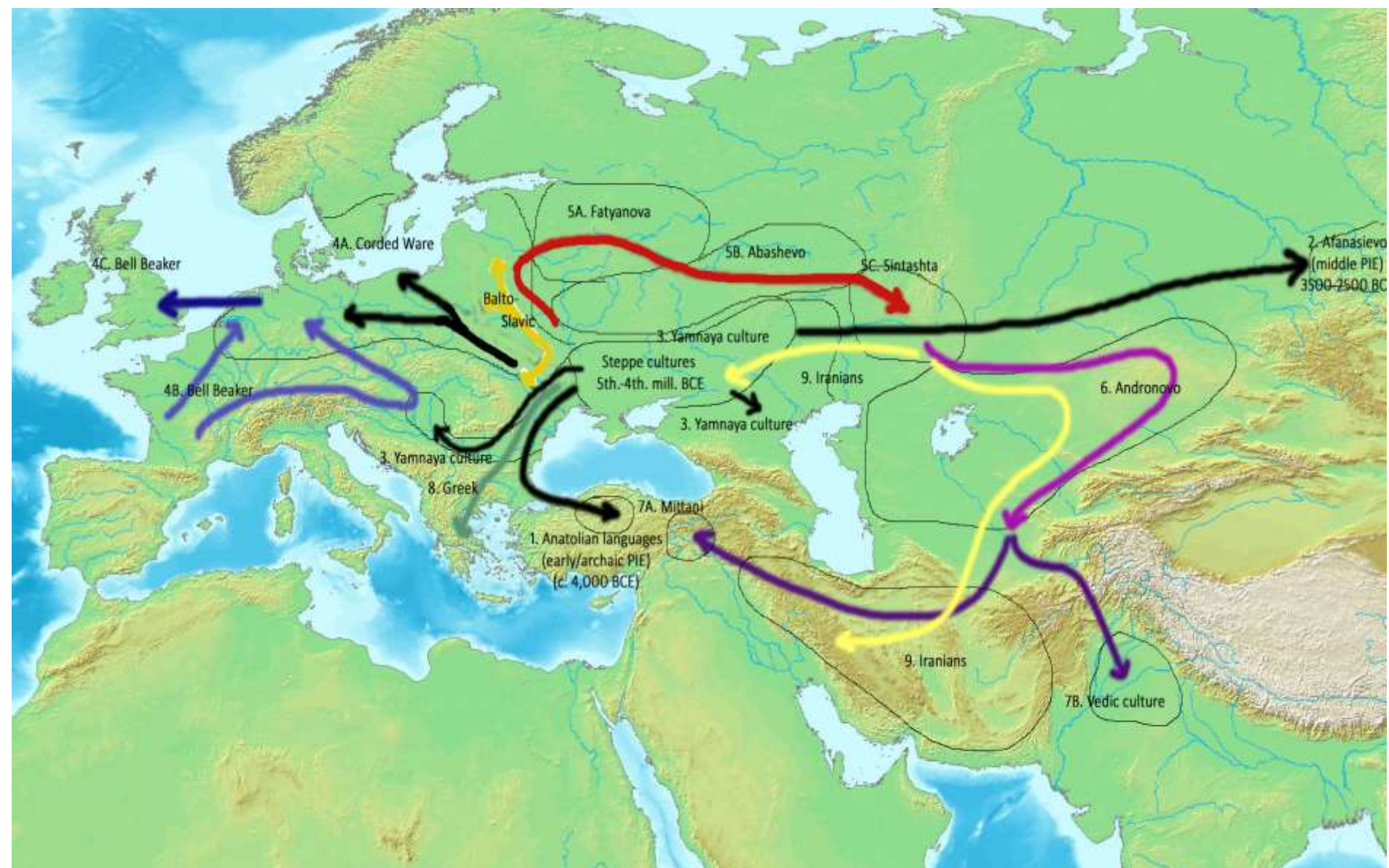
Indo-European diffusion

- Earliest speakers apparently lived in southern and southeastern Turkey (Anatolia) about eight or nine thousand years ago, and later;
 - They diffused west and north into Europe
 - They represented expansion of farming people at the expense of hunters and gatherers
 - As people dispersed and lost contact, different variant forms of the languages came into existence.
 - Later it caused fragmentation of the family of languages and spread into different parts of the world.

Indo-European diffusion

- Language diffusion also occurred with the spread of great political empires, especially Latin, English, and Russian
- 'Relocation' and 'expansion' of the community and thus diffusions have been very common trends in the history of human civilization.
 - Relocation-diffusion took place by conquering areas and implanting the Conqueror's language
 - Implanted language often gained wider acceptance by expansion of area, and thus diffusion of language was natural
 - The spreading of the Conqueror's language had a hierarchy
 - Spread of Latin with Roman conquests
 - Spanish in Latin America
 - English in India

Indo-European diffusion



Austronesian diffusion

- The mass started settling down and the use of hearth=(central area) in the interior of Southeast Asia began some 5,000 years ago
- This was an indication of first settlement of its kind as a community.
- Initially they spread southward into the Malay Peninsula
- In a process, lasting several thousand years, people sailed in tiny boats across the uncharted vast seas to New Zealand, Easter Island, Hawaii, and Madagascar
- Sailing and navigation were the key factors to Austronesian spread into different areas
- They started settling down in groups wherever they found congenial and suitable environment.
- As and when a sizable population was in place, some 1000 people in a group would leave the area in search of a new land.

Austronesian diffusion

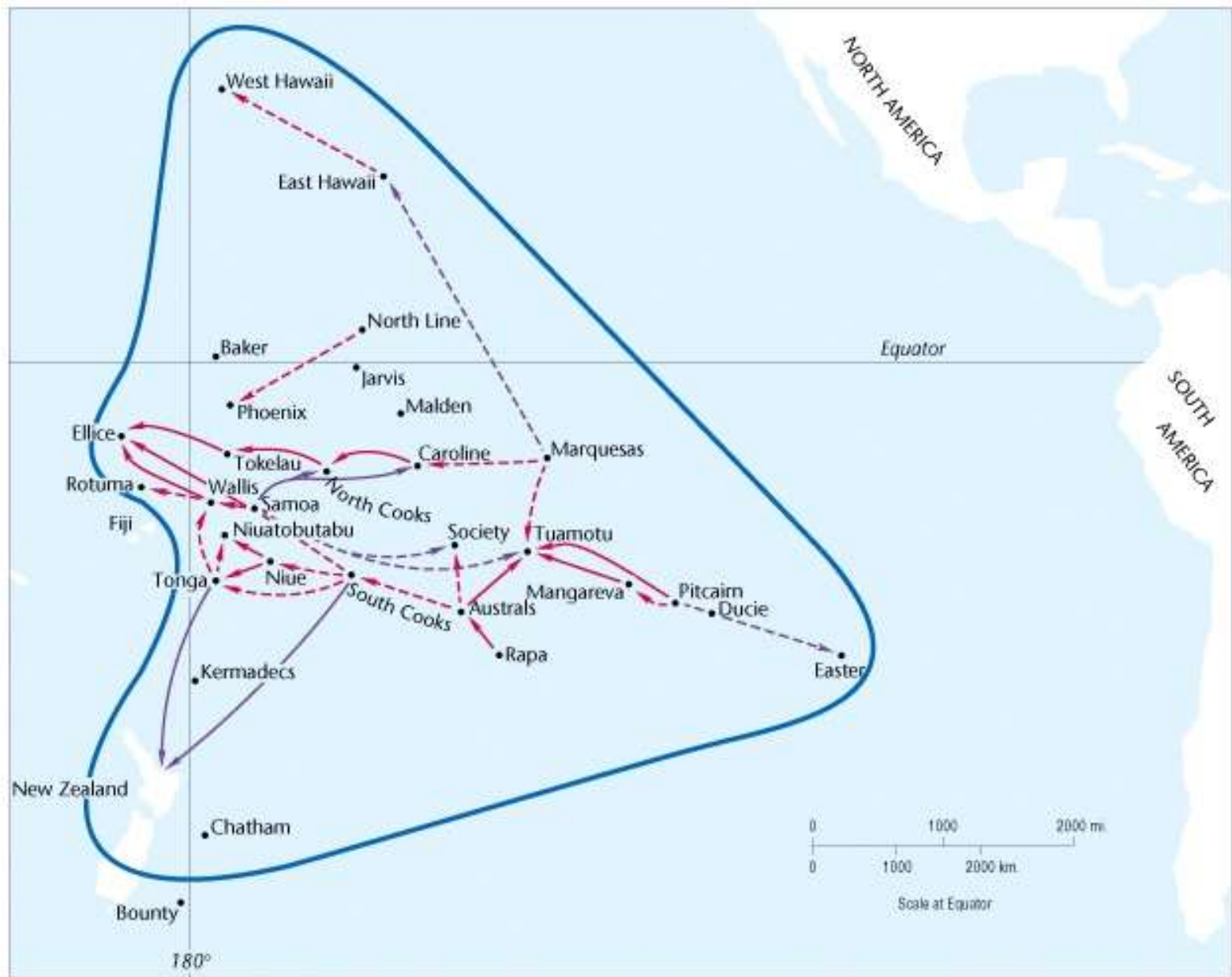
- The remarkable diffusion of the Polynesian people
 - This diffusion formed the eastern part of the Austronesian culture region
 - They occupy hundreds of Pacific islands in a triangular-shaped realm
 - New Zealand, Easter Island, and Hawaii form the three apexes of the realm
 - Made a watery leap of 2,500 miles (i.e. 4023KM) from the South Pacific to Hawaii
 - Used small boats to pave their ways
 - Went against prevailing winds into a new hemisphere with different navigational devices and tools they had
 - No humans had previously found the isolated Hawaiian Islands
 - Sailors had no way to know that a new land existed in that area
 - But they managed their journey with their courage and technique

Austronesian diffusion

- Researchers like John Webb and Ward have studied the prehistoric Polynesian diffusion
- They wanted to know the way in which this diffusion must have taken place in the past:
 - Their method involved the development of a computer model building-in data on:
 - Winds
 - Ocean currents
 - Vessel traits and capabilities
 - Island visibility
 - Duration of voyage, etc.
 - Both *drift* and *navigated* voyages were considered

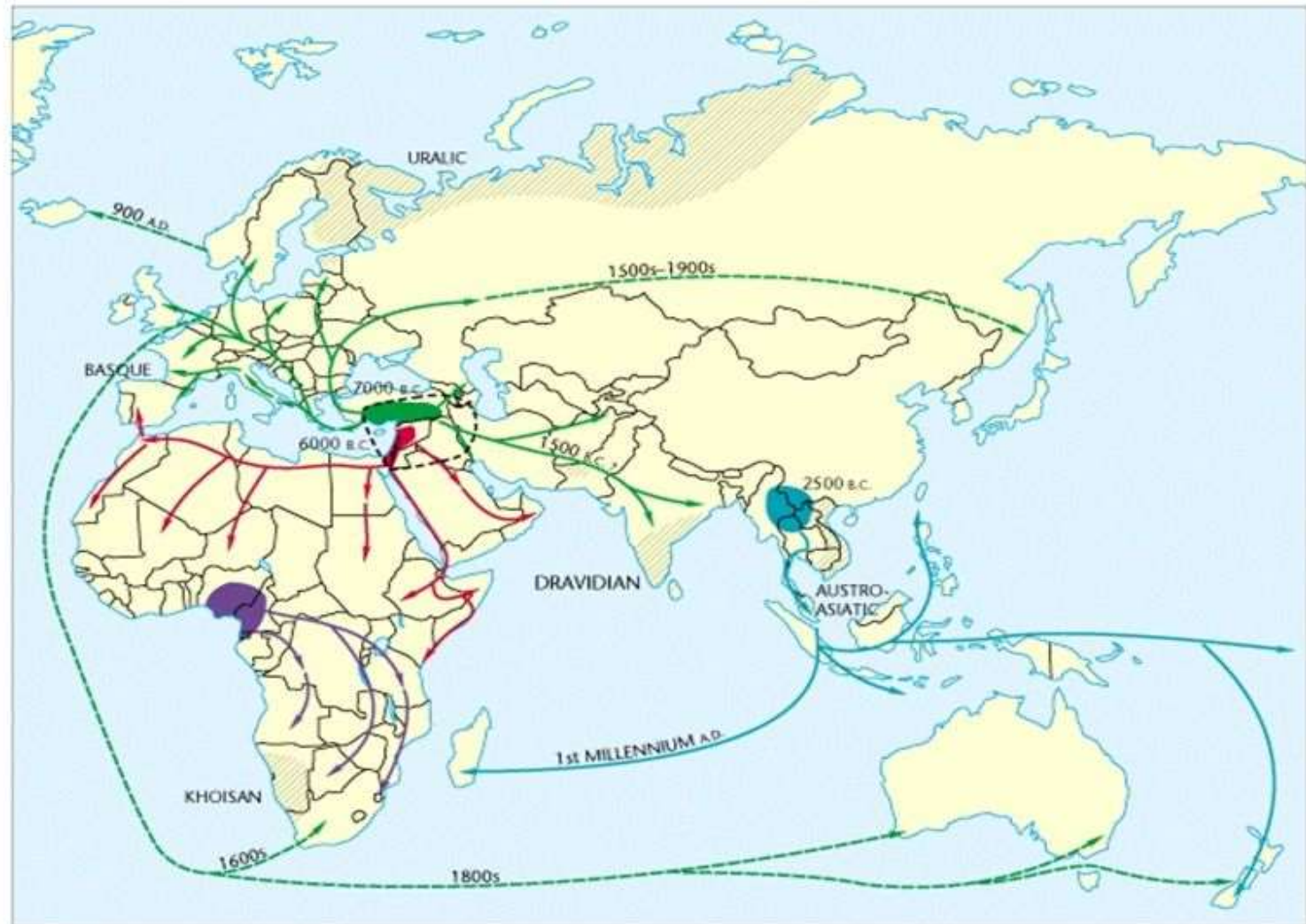
Austronesian diffusion

- So, Webb and Ward developed the computer stimulated voyage model with all required ingredients
- Over one hundred thousand voyage simulations were run through the computer for their studies
- Their conclusions
 - Triangle was probably entered from the west direction of the ancient Austronesian hearth area
 - Technique of “Island hopping” was used—this helped them to migrate from one visible island to another
 - Core of eastern Polynesia likely reached by navigated voyages
 - Outer arc from Hawaii through Easter Island to New Zealand was reached by the navigating voyagers



- Very high drift contact probabilities — High navigated voyage probabilities — Border of Polynesian culture region
 - - - High drift contact probabilities - - - Moderate navigated voyage probabilities • Selected island or island group

Austronesian diffusion



Indo-European source,
Prehistoric diffusion, and
Later diffusion
Austronesian source and
Diffusion

Afro-Asiatic source and
Diffusion
Niger-Congo source and
Diffusion

Selected language families
in retreat refuges
Presumed area of Nostratic
speech, 12,000 B.C.

Communication should be possible even with differences

