

Non-Indo-European Language Families

The Indo-European family of languages is fairly broadly distributed today--embracing perhaps half of the world's inhabitable surface area. However, the Indo-European family is limited in origin to those tongues appearing first in Europe, the Middle East, and India. Elsewhere in the world, a number of language-families seem to be completely unrelated to proto-Indo-European. Here are some the general families for these Non-Indo-European languages:

ALTAIC: A language family including Turkish, Tungusic, and Mongolian.

AFROASIATIC: A possible language family with two main branches--Hamitic and Semitic. See Semitic, below.

KECHUMARAN: A language family spoken in the Andes of South America.

KHOISAN: A language family encompassing southwestern regions of Africa.

NIGER-KORDEFANIAN: A group of languages spoken in the southern part of Africa

NILO-SAHARAN: An African language family spoken in the central regions of the continent.

SAMOYEDIC: A group of Uralic languages spoken in northern Siberia. See Uralic, below.

SEMITIC: A language family including Akkadian, Amorite, Arabic, Ugaritic, Proto-Canaanite, Hebrew, Eblaite and Elamite.

SINO-TIBETAN: A group of languages spoken in China, Tibet, and Burma, including Mandarin

SUMERIAN: Sumerian is a difficult language to classify partly because it is the first known language to use a system of writing. Accordingly, it has no known roots. Adding to the difficulty, Akkadian languages supplanted it--so it leaves no known linguistic descendants. The language was agglutinative and limited to the areas around Kish and Uruk. It was largely monosyllabic and cannot be connected with any other known languages.

The earliest Sumerian script consisted of about 2,000 non-phonetic cuneiform symbols--but later these were simplified to about 500-600.

URALIC: A language family including Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic.

UTO-AZTECAN: A language family found in Central America and the western sections of North America.