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Worldwide patterns of language migration

In this paper techniques of dating proto-languages (Holman et al. 2011) and inferring their spatial location (Wichmann et al. 2010) are combined and applied to a dataset of over 4400 languages (Wichmann et al. 2013) in order to estimate patterns of language migration across the world and during different time periods. Different factors influencing migration rates are investigated, including the landscape, subsistence patterns, world regions, and time periods. Only some features of the landscape seem to have a decisive influence. Subsistence patterns are important, but apparently only in very recent times. Different world regions tend to exhibit similar patterns, although migration within Sahul proceeds at a slower pace than elsewhere. Finally, the overall trends in the increase and decrease of migration rates over time will be presented. The findings will be discussed in relation to recent studies of migration rates drawing upon archaeological and genetic data, which show some remarkable similarities.