Reconstructing the Case-marking and Personal Pronoun Systems of Proto Austronesian

Malcolm Ross
The Australian National University

Since Blust presented his reconstruction of Proto Austronesian and Proto Malayo-Polynesian personal pronouns in 1977, more data relevant to their reconstruction have become available. This paper takes account of relevant publications since 1977 and sets out a fresh reconstruction of Proto Austronesian personal pronouns, with supporting data from Formosan languages and interpretive arguments. Since personal pronoun systems in Formosan languages often incorporate the case-markers more generally used in noun phrases, and it is impossible to interpret the histories of the pronouns without taking account of the case-markers, a reconstruction of Proto Austronesian case-markers is also presented here. The goal of Blust’s 1977 paper was to show that all Austronesian languages outside Taiwan are characterized by certain innovations in their personal pronoun system, thus providing evidence for the Malayo-Polynesian subgroup of Austronesian. Blust’s findings are confirmed and augmented in the present paper.

Key words: Proto-Austronesian, reconstruction, pronouns, case-markers