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Endangered languages of the Annamite Range and northern Vietnam

Abstract

The Annamite Range or Annamite Mountains located in the eastern part of the Indochina Peninsula in Vietnam and Laos, as well as the north of Vietnam, are the original places of settlement of ethnic minorities.

Based on the experience of documenting the conservative Vietic languages and the Kra-Dai languages, the paper will examine various aspects of the inaccessibility of the endangered languages of Vietnam, including the impact of inaccessibility on the evolution of languages. Speakers of the conservative Vietic languages, avoiding contact with outsiders whenever possible, roamed in small groups of 10-15 people in the area of the Vietnamese-Lao border until the beginning of the 21st century. The isolation of these local Vietic ethnic groups from the rest of the society for a very long period can be considered as one of the important factors that influenced the preservation in the conservative Vietic languages of many relict features that have already been lost in the genetically related Vietnamese language.

In recent decades, intensive contact with Vietnamese as a state language and lingua franca have led to some changes in the structure and vocabulary of the conservative Vietic languages. For comparison, the results of the language contacts of the Kra-Dai peoples of Northern Vietnam, who live surrounded by peoples of other language families – Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan, will be considered.