

# An Analysis of Language Variation and Its Causes Among the Samei People in Ala Township

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**Abstract:** Through the investigation of language variation and Culture teaching and learning of the Samei people in Ala Township,it is found that the language of Samei people in Ala Township has changed in the process of use.And language contact and language mixing eventually lead to the disappearance of language;There are many reasons that lead to language variation:the first is the history and social environment of the Samei people in Ala township;Secondly,there is a mutual influence and restriction between language and culture.In the process of dynamic language communication,attention should be paid to the protection and inheritance of national culture.

**Keywords:** The Samei people of Ala Township;Language variation;Cause

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## 1. Introduction

Ala Yi nationality Township is a minority people township in Guandu District,Kunming,Yunnan Province,which is located eight kilometers east of Kunming City and governs six village committees and 29 village(residential)groups.At the end of 2019,the permanent population was 77,366,of which 11,365 were Yi people.The Samei people[samei] is a branch of Yi people,is a minority group in Yunnan Province,southwestern China.The Samei people in Ala township mainly concentrated in Puzhao,Shiba,Ala,Gaopo,Haizi five community committees.

This paper will study the language variation and its causes of the Samei people in Ala Township,in order to provide theoretical support for the protection and inheritance of this unique culture.The Samei people have their own language,that is,Samei language,which belongs to the southern dialect of the Yi branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family in the Sino-Tibetan language family.The common language is Chinese(Datong).Most Samei people can also speak Chinese,Chinese and other ethnic languages are their second language.In the Samei village,the compatriots often use Samei language for daily communication.And the local Han people refer to the communication language between the Samaritans as“Da Hua”.Through the investigation and study of the language use and speech behavior of the Samei people in Ala Township,it is found that the Samei people in Ala Township have some changes in the process of language variation and culture teaching and learning.

## 2. Language Variation

The Samei people are a group of ethnic minorities with a unique language and culture living in Ala Township.Due to the geographical location,historical background and national culture and other reasons,the language of the Samei people in Ala Township has changed to a large extent.

The contact between the Samei Yi language and Chinese,coupled with the status of Chinese in the whole mainstream society,makes the Yi language used by fewer and fewer places and people.And the Yi language cannot be used in society except at home or in some limited places.This contact led to the weakening of the Samei Yi language,which gradually declined in number of speakers.The Samei branch has long been concentrated in non-minority settlements with multi-ethnic integration and convenient transportation,so

the older generation of Samei people born in the 1930s can fully master the Chinese dialect of Yunnan-Kunming dialect. Now most of the Samei people born in the 1980s and 1990s have become parents, and their language education for their children has no Samei dialect, but has changed to Kunming dialect, and even Mandarin Chinese. At present, the youth of Ala Township almost entirely use Chinese.

Language contact has led to a certain degree of mixing of the Samei language with other languages. This mixture is mainly reflected in two aspects: vocabulary and grammar. For example, the Samei language assimilates many Chinese parts of words, such as the quantifiers “bucket[tʰŏ31]” and “string[tsʰue55]”, and many foreign words are included in the common language of the Samei people, such as “grape[pʰu31tʰo55]” and pepper[xu31təo55]. In addition, there are also several grammatical structures influenced by Chinese, such as borrowed Chinese function words such as “Zhuo dzo33”, “Guo ko55”. The word order is also influenced by Chinese, forming the word order of “adjective+noun”.

With the development of society and the advancement of national integration, Samei language is facing the danger of disappearing. In the course of our investigation, we found that the traditional Samei language of Ala Township is gradually disappearing. Currently, less than 30 percent of villagers can speak Samei language. This kind of disappearance is mainly reflected in the language elements and language use. On the one hand, many traditional Samei words have fallen out of use and have been replaced by foreign words. Young people hardly speak Yi language, and they mainly speak Chinese when communicating with each other. Only some middle-aged and elderly villagers still speak sporadic Samei language, and only Chinese is spoken within Yi families, especially in villages. Only when they were asked about the pronunciation of specific basic words did they speak the Yi pronunciation of those words. It can be seen that the Samei language of Yi nationality in Ala Township disappeared very fast. Even the traditional Samei word “Torch[tʰa33pʰɿ21]” has now been replaced by the Chinese “torch[xuo35pa55]”. On the other hand, the traditional Samei grammar structure is also gradually disappearing. The traditional Samei grammar used a lot of verb deformations to indicate tenses and voices, but now more and more Samei people are starting to use simpler Chinese grammar to express themselves.

### 3. Cause Analysis

The language variation of the Samei people in Ala Township is closely related to historical reasons. In the past few hundred years, Ala Township has undergone multiple ethnic integrations and migrations. The policy of bureaucratization of native officers during the Qing Dynasty led to a large number of Han people entering Ala Township, which has influenced the language of the Samei people. The local Samei people said that they have been hunted down in history and have also fled in various places during the pursuit process, so the Han people call them “scattered people”. It can be seen that war and migration caused the disappearance of their language. At the same time, the geographical location of Ala Township has also influenced the language of the Samei people by a large number of outsiders, and intermarriage between townships has further highlighted the diversity of languages.

The change and development of the society is also an important reason for the variation of the language of the Samei people in Ala Township. With the progress of society and the development of science and technology, the rapid development of we-media has changed the language of Samei people. With the development of urbanization, the Yi people’s living area has become smaller and smaller, and there are more and more Han people around, so the Yi people can only use Chinese as a communication tool. Kunming’s urbanization development proves that the unlimited expansion of the city is not lucky for the Yi language in the outskirts of the city. Many Yi ethnic villages are becoming neither villages nor cities. From the appearance of many villages in Ala Township, it is difficult to see that this is a Yi village, and even when entering the village. With the construction of the economic development zone, the Samei people have transformed from traditional agricultural operations to modern industrial and commercial operations. Many commercial words were absorbed into the daily speech of the Samei people, which enriches and develops the vocabulary system of the Samei language to a certain extent. At the same time, with the popularization of education and the promotion of Mandarin Chinese, many Samei people began to use Chinese to express themselves, and these vocabulary and grammatical structures entered the core field, which also made the Samei people’s language changed in terms of language cognitive characteristics.

The variation in the language of the Samei people in Ala township is also related to their population size. Ala Township is a multi-ethnic coexistence area. The cultural exchanges between the Samei people and other ethnic groups are very frequent. Ala Township is like a magnet that constantly absorbs a variety of people. The composition of the population began to undergo drastic changes. According to statistics, in 2000, the proportion of local people, unit people and migrant population appeared a serious imbalance. Locals make up only 10% of the population. In this cultural integration, the language structure of the Samei people was affected.

In general, there are many reasons for the variation of the language of the Samei people in Ala township, including

historical, social, cultural and personal factors. These factors interacted with each other, and together led to the variation of the language of the Samei people in Ala Township. The Samei people of Ala Township have been living in the suburbs of Kunming for a long time, and the urbanization of business and trade has become one of the most important engines of economic growth in Ala Township. Under the influence of factors such as the rapid development of social economy and the increase of people's demand for the spiritual world, it is inevitable that the variation of the Samei language will disappear.

#### **4. Conclusion**

It is a complicated and important subject to analyze the language variation and its causes among the Samei people in Ala township. Through the above research, we can see that the language variation of the Samei people is a dynamic process, with language complementation and language competition. The linguistic variation of the Samei people in Ala Township is not only reflected in the language elements, but also in the relationship between their mother tongue and Chinese, as well as people's values and world outlook. In the future, we need to further strengthen research and practice in this area, take effective protective measures, and pass on the Samei language as an important part of family education to the next generation, so that their children and grandchildren will master modern languages such as Kunming dialect, Mandarin Chinese, English, and will not forget the local Samei language at the same time. As long as the Samei language is preserved, the rich Samei culture it carries can be preserved.

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