

Irina V. Samarina

Institute of Linguistics, RAS

Small-scale multilingualism in Vietic ethnic communities in North-Central Vietnam

Vietic ethnic minority groups (Sach, May, Ruc, Arem, and Ma Lieng) living in the mountainous regions of North-Central Vietnam near Laos border are recent hunter-gatherers. Until the second half of the 20th century very little was known about these groups. They roamed in small groups of 10–15 people and avoided contact with the outside world. In 1973, the groups Sach, May, Ruc, Ma Lieng, and Arem were recognized as one ethnic group with the common ethnonym Chut. Their final transition to sedentary life dates back to the beginning of the 21st century. They are settled in the provinces of Quang Binh and Ha Tinh. According to the 2009 census, the total number of these groups is 6,022 people. The ethnic languages of these groups are closely related but distinct languages.

Nowadays, Sach, May, Ruc, Ma Lieng, and Arem people usually live in villages with a mixed population presented by Kinh, Nguon as well as by non-Vietic groups. Villages with a monoethnic population (only Sach people or only May people etc.) are small in number. By virtue of the conditions of their settlement, Sach, May, Ruc, Ma Lieng, and Arem people are multilingual, speaking beside their native language at least two or three languages of other Vietic minority groups and/or neighboring Mon-Khmer groups and Vietnamese language as *lingua franca*. There are practically no monolinguals among them who speak only their ethnic language. Despite the fact that official documents identified Sach, May, Ruc, Ma Lieng, and Arem people in a single ethnic group, most people are still inclined to identify themselves as belonging separate groups.

In 2012–2015 we conducted a number of sociolinguistic surveys in order to find out the language situation in the areas where Sach, May, Ruc, Ma Lieng, and Arem live including language proficiency level, language acquisition, and distribution of languages in different situations. The results of these surveys will be presented.

Irina Samarina

Institute of Linguistics

Russian Academy of Sciences

ira_samarina@hotmail.com