

Principal reasons for the formation of language differences in Minyag Ganzi (Sichuan, China)

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Minyag designates a specific geographical region including Kangding Municipality, Xinlong County, Daofu County, and a part of townships of Yajiang County, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, China. In the historical Tibetan geography, it corresponds to one of six plateau in mdo khams called “Minyag Rabgang”. The main area includes the center of Kangding, more than 200 kilometers place east of Daofu, the southeast of Yajiang, the north of Jiulong, west of Danba, where almost all Tibetans are called ‘Minyagwa’. The area functions as the culture exchange center of Han China and Tibet until now. A main traffic road between Tibet and Han China goes through this area, which has developed a multicultural society there. At present, there are more than six languages spoken in this area: Khams Tibetan, Amdo Tibetan, Daofu (Stau), Zhaba (nDrapa), Daohua, Minyag, rGyalrong, etc., all of which belong to the Sino-Tibeto-Burman macrofamily; meanwhile, we can also find divergent varieties and local dialects in this region.

Minyag people mainly live along Luqu River and at the east side of mid-Yalong River in Ganzi Prefecture. In spite of multi-cultural foundation and geographical environment, this region still maintains strong vitality of each language community. Hence, the Minyag language itself is a key to reveal ethnic and cultural origin of Minyag. Here we can find significance of clarifying dialect differences and distribution by drawing linguistic maps in this region. Additionally, it is also crucial to study the cultural, historical development of Minyag and linguistic changes.

This paper will briefly examine language use and regional divergence of Minyag in Ganzi Prefecture, by combining historical literature research with descriptive linguistics under a framework of geolinguistics.