Lǐ Yǒngsuì 李永燧. 2002. A study of Sangkong [Sāngkǒngyǔ yánjiū 桑孔语研究]. Beijing: Central Nationalities University Press. 403 pp.

The Sāngkǒng 桑孔 language, spoken in China's Yunnan Province, was discovered by Chinese linguists in the late 1980s. Since that time, Lǐ Yǒngsuì 李永燧 , who has published extensively on Hāní 哈尼 and other Southern Loloish languages of China, has been the principal Chinese investigator of the language.[1] In *A study of Sangkong*, one of the publications in the series *New found minority languages in China* [*Zhōngguó xīn fāxiàn yǔyán yánjiū cóng shū* 中国新发现语言研究丛书] Li presents a comprehensive and systematic introduction to the features of Sangkong.[2] This hardcover volume is the first publication on Sangkong of any substantial length.

The book contains five chapters (1 Introduction; 2 Phonology; 3 Lexicon; 4 Syntax; 5 Comparison and Affliation), followed by a Tibeto-Burman family tree, a word list, texts, bibliography, and acknowledgments. These sections will be discussed in order below.

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1. Chinese terms are given in pīnyīn romanization and, at the first occurrence, simplified Chinese characters. After the first occurrence, proper names will be given without tone marks.

2. For an overview of this series, see Thurgood and Li 2003. Review of *New found minority languages in China Series*. *Language* 79.4:843-845.

1. Introduction

The introduction contains a brief ethnographic description of the Sangkong people, a history of linguistic research, and a summary of the notable features of the language. The Sangkong (Chinese Sāngkǒng 桑孔 or Bùxià 布下 , autonym [saŋ^{55}qhoŋ^{55}]) live in the region of Xiǎojiē Township 小街乡 , Jǐnghōng City 景洪布 , Xīshuāngbǎnnà Tai Autonomous Prefecture 西双版纳傣族自治州 in Yúnnán Province 云南省 . The population numbers somewhere between 1000 and 2000. The nationality has no official status, as the Sangkong are classified by the government as members of the Hani minority. They have no historical records, and little is known about their origin. The language remains unwritten today and is of low prestige. Most speakers also know Mandarin, Hani (specifically the Yǎní 雅尼 variety of Hāyǎ 哈雅 dialect) and the Xishuangbanna dialect of Tai. Some speak Lāhù 拉祜. Despite the precarious position of the language, Li is encouraged by recent trends and believes the language is not in imminent danger of extinction.

Li classifies Sangkong as Southern Loloish, with similarities to Hani and Bìsū 毕苏 , and notes that its features are on the whole typical for Lolo-Burmese languages. A few distinctive features are highlighted by Li, notably: 1) the presence of a set of prenasalized initial consonants derived from earlier nasals; 2) the presence of both *-p -t -k* endings and open syllables with tense vowels; 3) the existence of verbal particles which agree in number with the subject of the sentence. These features are discussed in detail in the appropriate sections of the book, and I will touch on them further below.

Li explains that the fieldwork on which his description is based was carried out over three separate trips in 1997 (with the help of two graduate students), 1998, and 1999. There is reason to suspect that these dates may be in error, however, since Li's own publications on the language date back to 1992.

2. Phonology

The phonological description is typical of Chinese linguistic practice. The syllable is analyzed in three parts, the initial consonant (*shēngmǔ* 声母), the remaining segments (*yùnmǔ* 韵母), and the tone (*shēngdiào* 声调), each of which is described separately. Syllable structure is CV(C), and each syllable is pronounced with a distinctive lexical tone.

The chart of initials is presented on page 17. There are three distinct series of obstruents: voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated, and voiced prenasalized. The latter are described by Li as "nasals with oral release", and while it is possible phonemically to treat them as a voiced series /b bj d g/, Li prefers to transcribe them /mb, mbj, nd, ŋg/ etc., presumably to emphasize their historical origin as nasals. These prenasalized initials contrast with a series of ordinary nasals /m mj n ɳ ŋ/. In addition to labial, alveolar, palatal and velar initials, there is a series of uvular stops /q qh/ and a series of "palatalized labials" /pj phj mj mbj/.[3] The uvulars are derived from earlier velars in a manner reminiscent of developments in Lahu. Li notes that fricatives show a voicing

contrast, but the statement is too general in light of the fact that the contrast is only found in the palatal fricatives /ɕ ʑ/. The other fricatives (/x s h/) have no voiced counterparts. The glottal stop initial /ʔ/ does not contrast with smooth onset, so is considered an allophone of zero and not transcribed.

According to traditional Chinese linguistic practice, the stops /t th/ are described as "alveolars" (*shéjiān zhōng yīn* 舌尖中音) while the affricates /ts tsh/ are described as "dentals" (*shéjiān qián yīn* 舌尖前音). I have never seen a Chinese phonological inventory which does not classify the affricates as more forward than the stops in this way, and the reader should not draw any conclusions about place of articulation based on such a classification, which is likely just an artifact of Chinese linguistic convention.

There are eighteen monophthongal vowels in Sangkong, divided into two subsystems, one tense and one lax. The author points out that the so-called "lax" group is in fact articulated with ordinary modal voice, and is only considered lax in contrast with the tense series, which is articulated with "constriction (*jǐnsuǒ* 紧缩) of the throat". The author makes no mention of any qualitative differences between the lax vowels and their tense counterparts. Only the lax vowels may combine with consonantal endings *-m -n -ŋ -p -t -k*, though not all possible combinations occur. This phonotactic restriction is easily explained as the result of the development of tense vowels from the loss of stop endings. In the chart on page 36, a number of finals are asterisked. These finals

3. Note that *pj* is misprinted as *bj* at the top of page 17.