

# Sangkong 桑孔 of Yunnan:

## Secondary "verb pronominalization" in Southern Loloish\*

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The Chinese linguist Li Yongsui has described (1991) a newly discovered language called Sangkong (saŋ<sup>55</sup>qhoŋ<sup>55</sup>), that evidently belongs to the "Bisoid" subgroup of Southern Loloish, close to Bisu, Phunoy, and Mpi.<sup>1</sup> Aside from the intrinsic value of the new lexical material Li provides, Sangkong has an extremely interesting syntactic property: a rudimentary system of "verb pronominalization", where the verb-phrase may contain either of two morphemes that refer to the person of the subject. In the case of the first person, this agreement morpheme is phonologically identical to the independent personal pronoun, ŋa<sup>55</sup> 'I'. The etymology of the non-first person marker, ze<sup>55</sup>, is not so transparent, though we offer a theory about its origin below.

### 1.0 SANGKONG PHONOLOGY

#### 1.1 Initials

p	pj	t	ts	tɕ	k	q	ʔ
ph	phj	th	tsh	tɕh	kh	qh	
mb	mbj	nd			ŋg		
m	mj	n		ɲ	ŋ		
			s	ɕ	x		h
w			l	z			

--Note the absence of a simple voiced series.

--Note the single voiced fricative ɕ, which represents the merger of several sonorant and fricative proto-phonemes. (See below 5.1.)

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<sup>1</sup> The Sangkong people number fewer than 2000. They live in Jinghong County of Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, and were formerly grouped with the Hani nationality.

## 1.2 Rhymes

Open:	-V
Nasal:	-VN
Constricted:	- $\bar{V}$
Stopped:	-VS

### 1.3 Tones

55 high level  
33 mid level  
31 low falling  
[35 high rising  
(sandhi tone)]

## 2.0 SANGKONG (SK) AND PROTO-LOLO-BURMESE

## 2.1 Initials

- (a) PLB \*voiceless obstruents > SK voiceless aspirates
- (b) PLB \*preglottalized obstruents > SK voiceless aspirates
- (c) PLB \*voiced obstruents > SK plain obstruents

\*b > SK p                      \*d > SK t                      \*g > SK k  
/same as Bisu, Lahu, Burmese/

- (d) PLB \*prenasalized obstruents > SK plain obstruents

\*ŋg > SK k (ka<sup>31</sup> 'desiderative')

\*mb > SK p (p<sub>0</sub><sup>33</sup> 'satiated')

- (e) PLB \*simple nasals > SK prenasalized voiced stops

\*m > SK mb      \*n > SK nd      \*ŋ > SK ŋg  
/cf. Bisu: PLB \*nasals > Bisu voiced stops/

- (f) PLB \*complex nasals > SK simple nasals

\*?m/hm > SK m      \*?n/hn > SK n      \*?ŋ/hŋ > SK ŋ  
/same as Bisu/

## 2.2 Some Loloish Manners of Articulation<sup>2</sup>

<i>PLB</i>	<i>WB</i>	<i>Luquan</i>	<i>Lisu</i>	<i>Lahu</i>	<i>Akha</i>	<i>Bisu</i>	<i>Sangkong</i>
*p	ph	ph	ph	ph	p/ph	ph	ph
*ʔb/ʔp	ph	p	p	p	p	ph(?)	ph
*b	p	b	b	p	b	p	p
*mb/*mp	p ~ b	mph	b	b	b	p	p
*m	m	m	m	m	m	b	mb
*ʔm/*hm	hm	m	m	m	m	m	m

From top to bottom, these reflexes range from more stop-like down to more nasal-like. This arrangement is satisfying because identical reflexes of different \*manners are contiguous in any vertical column (i.e. for any given language).<sup>3</sup>

As these manner-developments show, Sangkong definitely belongs in the "Bisoid" subgroup of Southern Loloish.

## 2.2 Rhymes

<i>PLB</i>		<i>Sangkong</i>
*-ak	>	- <u>a</u>
*-vak	>	- <u>o</u>
*-ok/-uk	>	- <u>o</u>
*-ik	>	- <u>i</u>
*-at	>	- <u>e</u>
*-vat	>	- <u>e</u> / - <u>ø</u> [FLOWER]
*-ap	>	-ap

<sup>2</sup> See Matisoff 1979:28.

<sup>3</sup> For a similar arrangement of the Tai consonantal series with respect to tonal developments, see Gedney, 1970/1989. It should also be noticed that the order in which the consonantal mutations (a) through (f) are listed reflects the presumed actual sequence of changes: first I (a/b), then II (c/d), then III (e), then (IV) f.

*-am	>	-am
*-an	>	-an or -e [see below]
*-aŋ	>	-aŋ
*-oŋ	>	-oŋ (?)
*-uŋ	>	-uŋ (?) <sup>4</sup>
*-um	>	-em
*-əy	>	-u
*-əw	>	-ø
*-a	>	-a
*-ya	>	-ja
*-wa	>	-o
*-u	>	-u
*-ul	>	-u
*-i	>	-e
*-ay	>	-e
*-ey	>	-i

### 2.3 Tones

PLB *1	>	SK 55
PLB *2	>	SK 31
PLB *3	>	SK 33 <sup>5</sup>
PLB *HS	>	SK 33c
PLB *LS	>	SK 31c

Sangkong has the Loloish tonal split in stopped syllables (see Matisoff 1972), despite the relative well-preservedness of syllable-final consonants: more proof, if any were needed, that this split was conditioned by the syllable-initial consonant group.

<sup>4</sup> SK contrasts -oŋ and -uŋ, though this has not been firmly established for PLB; maybe SK data will prove crucial here, e.g.: 'finger' la<sup>31</sup> nuŋ<sup>55</sup> vs. 'belly' u<sup>31</sup> poŋ<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Words in this tone are sometimes pronounced with constriction, e.g. 'egg' u<sup>33</sup>.