

# *Three Tibeto-Burman Languages of Vietnam*

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## **1. Introducing the Tibeto-Burman peoples of Vietnam**

In this modest study I will be focusing on three Tibeto-Burman (TB) languages of Vietnam referred to in Vietnamese language sources as: Phù Lá, Xá Phó, and Lô Lô.<sup>1</sup> The most important contribution this essay makes, I feel, is to present reliable data for these languages. To the best of my knowledge there is very little published about any of these much beyond general information such as their names, approximate locations, and some reports of their customs and practices, cf. Lajonquière 1906, Abadie, 1924, DEMG 1975, Lục and Nòng 1975, 1995, Nguyễn 1975, EMPV 1978, Hemmet 1995 and Mai 1995, 1998. To aid in making linguistic data widely available, I have compiled as a companion piece to this paper a comparative word list of about 500 lexical items including the data elicited during my fieldwork sessions on these three as well as the four other Tibeto-Burman languages of Vietnam that can be accessed on my Web Site //ling.uta.edu/~jerry/. One other contribution I hope to make is to present current information about the locations, distribution, populations, and linguistic situation of these groups. All of them have small speaker numbers and inhabit areas of the country very near the China border. As their old people tell it, they immigrated to these places at some time in the near or remote past to escape harsh physical conditions or political turmoil and now live in small numbers in Vietnam. For some of these cases we have concrete evidence in support of their immigrant origins from very closely related groups in China who live nearby. Much about their history, culture, and languages remains unclear though and deserves further study, Nguyễn 1976 and Mai 1995, 1998. A third point I wish to make concerns the position of these groups within the larger spectrum of Lolo-Burmese languages, which is the subgroup of Tibeto-Burman to which all of them belong.<sup>2</sup> In pursuing these points I will provide some general information about each of these languages and then note some of their distinctive features.

It is useful to mention that the policy characterizing relations between the majority society and small people groups within Vietnam has followed the practices of the Soviets and the Chinese. That is to say, selected groups are granted official recognition with certain rights and privileges; such decisions are often based on historical, cultural, linguistic, and political considerations. As a result, people groups, cultures, and languages do not completely overlap with such officially recognized minorities. So, for example, the TB peoples of Vietnam discussed here are classified into the official nationalities: Phù Lá and Lô Lô. From our own

<sup>1</sup>The research reported on here has been sponsored by a 1995 grant NEH RT-21754-95 from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by the grants SBR 9511285 and SBR9729043 from the National Science Foundation to the author and Dr. Kenneth J. Gregerson all entitled "Languages of the Vietnam-China Borderlands". I wish also to acknowledge the assistance of Profs. Nguyễn Văn Lợi, Hoàng Văn Ma, Tô Văn Thang, who arranged and accompanied me on the field trips that led to the data and analysis here. Many thanks as well are due Pete Unseth, who spent many hours digitizing the data from my original tape recordings, and Trần Thuận for help with some of the Vietnamese data. Most of all I wish to thank Graham Thurgood who was able to unlock the system of tonal development in all of these language. Some of the information about Phù Lá is taken from the MA thesis of my student Robb Fried.

<sup>2</sup>See Matisoff 1988 for a discussion of this choice of name.

data as well as information gathered from Vietnamese sources, however, it is evident that there exists a greater number of language groups than official ethnicities: Lô Lô has two language groups (one discussed here) and Phù Lá also has at least two groups (both discussed here).

Map: Tibeto-Burman groups of northern Vietnam

## 2. The Phù Lá nationality

The population of the Phù Lá was determined to be 6424 in the last official census (April 1, 1989). People of the Phù Lá nationality live mostly in Lào Cai Province and are divided into several different subgroups but treated as one nationality (cf. Map). So, for example, EMPV 1978 distinguished six separate subgroups: (1) the *Phù Lá Hán*, *Phu Kha*, or *China Phù Lá* living at Bắc Hà District at Lũng Phình Commune and Tả Chu Phùng of Mường Khương District, Lào Cai Province (2) the *Phù Lá Lão* or *Xá Phó* living on the southwest bank of the Red River in Sa Pa District and in Lai Châu Province to the west (3) the *Phù Lá Đen* or *Black Phù Lá* living Bát Xát District in A Lù Commune and in Nàn Xí of Xín Mần District, Hà Giang Province, (4) the *Phù Lá Hoa* or *Flowery Phù Lá* also living in Bát Xát District in A Lù Commune and also some living with the *Xá Phó* of Bảo Thắng District, Lào Cai, (5) *Chù Lá Phù Lá* in Lũng Phình of Bắc Hà District, Lào Cai, and (6) the *Phù Lá Trắng* or *White Phù Lá* living in Mường Khương District, Lào Cai Province. Twenty years later the description of these peoples and their linguistic and cultural situation had changed considerably. Mai (1995:63) states that in the early 1980's the *Phù Lá Đen* and the *Phù Lá Hoa* of Bát Xát District of A Lù Commune returned to China where they once lived and, moreover, the *Phù Lá Trắng* and *Chù Lá Phù Lá* were now regarded as belonging to the Phù Lá Hán subgroup. Thus, Vietnamese sources say there are today only two linguistic groups living in Vietnam, the Phù Lá Hán to the north and east of the Red River and the *Phù Lá Lão* to the south and west of the Red River. Moreover, our informant, an official who was familiar with the linguistic situation in many Phù Lá villages, reported that language shift is highly advanced in many places; younger speakers of Phù Lá are opting to speak other regional languages and Vietnamese, so there is some urgency in getting more information on these groups quickly while there are still some completely fluent speakers available. In this paper we will report on the *Phu Kha* or *Phu Khla* language of Bảo Yên District, Lào Cai and also on the *Xá Phó* or *Laghuu* language of Sa Pa District, Lào Cai, which are quite different in phonology and lexicon and are certainly not comprehensible in running conversation.

Finally, it is worth noting that on the Web Site [//travel.yn.cninfo.net/nyminfq/minzu26/yizu/yizu-e.htm/](http://travel.yn.cninfo.net/nyminfq/minzu26/yizu/yizu-e.htm/) there are pictures of the Yi of Yunnan Province in traditional dress. The picture 28 entitled *Yi of Wenshan Prefecture* show women wearing clothing identical to the *Phu Kha* of Vietnam. That further confirms the presence of the *Phu Kha* north of the border.

## 3. Phù Lá Hán or Phu Kha Language

This subgroup of the Phù Lá call themselves /phu<sup>31</sup> kha<sup>33</sup>/ or /phu<sup>31</sup> khɬa<sup>33</sup>/ and are often called *Phù Lá Hán* by neighboring groups. They are said to have arrived in Vietnam in two waves, the first in the 15th century and a later one in the 18th century. The fact that some of the Phù Lá nationality has returned to China recently suggests that there still exist closely related groups north of the border. We were not told, however, that members of this group regularly visit China in search of spouses or to pay visits to relatives or to honor ancestors even though some of these people live very close to the Sino-Vietnamese border. Many *Phu Kha* speakers know a form of *Guanhua* (Southwestern Mandarin) Chinese and it is not surprising that we detected a number of modern Chinese loanwords in their lexicon.

As far as what the autonym /phu<sup>31</sup> kha<sup>33</sup>/ can tell us, we note that the designation [phu<sup>31</sup>] 'people' is a very common one for TB groups, especially those belonging to the Eastern Yi nationality in Yunnan. Some autonyms of groups in China are: /phu<sup>21</sup>/, /pho<sup>21</sup>/, /thlu<sup>21</sup> la<sup>21</sup> ba<sup>21</sup>/, /phu<sup>21</sup> ua<sup>33</sup>/, /a<sup>21</sup> tlu<sup>21</sup> phu<sup>55</sup>/ and /phu<sup>33</sup> va<sup>33</sup>/.

There have not been many reports about the Phù Lá before, but one early mention is found in Abadie 1924:182f. Abadie notes that the Phù Lá are related to the Lô Lô but their vocabulary is clearly different. Another work on the Phù Lá is the report of Lục Bình Thủy and Nòng Trung (1975).

### 3.1. Distinctive features of Phu Kha

Four tones, stops in four manners of articulation, plain, aspirated, voiced, pre-nasalized (for the labial series) and syllabic nasals suggest a northern Yi heritage for Phu Kha. Further support for this claim come from the fact that Phu Kha possesses two series of clustered initial consonants, a dental series /t̥ th̥ dl/ and a velar series /k̥ kh̥ gl ŋl/ as well as /p̥ç/ as in *p̥ça<sup>31</sup>* 'leaf' and *psu<sup>31</sup>* 'vomit'.

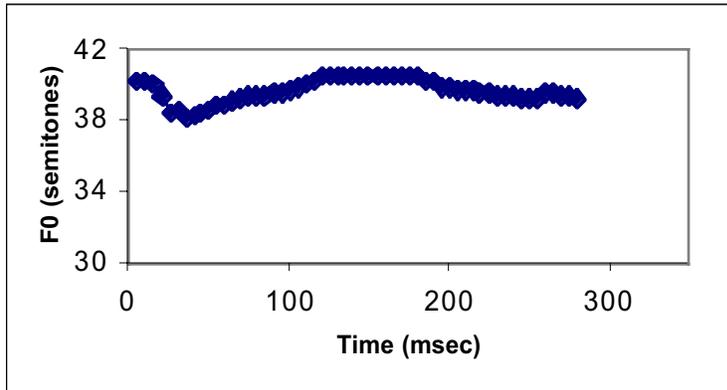
Initials.

p	ph	b	mb	f	v	m	w		
pj	phj	bj		fj	vj	mj			
t	th	d		s	z	n	t̥	l	
t̥	th̥	dl							
ts	ths	dz							
t̥ç	th̥ç	dz		ç					
tj	thj	dj				nj	t̥j	lj	j
kw	khw	gw		xw					
k̥	kh̥	gl							

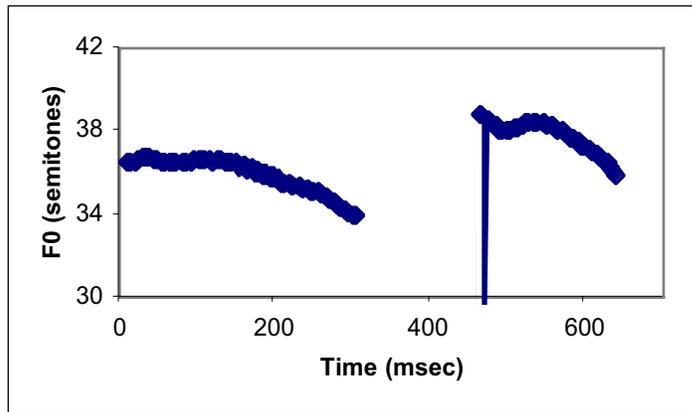
Phu Kha has three tones with values 31, 35, 33, as well as a few words with the tone value 53. Several of these tone values can be accompanied with sharp glottal constriction at the end of the syllable. This feature is still easily perceived and has not as yet resulted in a tense/lax voice quality contrast as has happened in many Yi languages. Examples of some of these tonal contrasts are:

ha <sup>31</sup> dry plot	ŋa <sup>31</sup> five	vur <sup>31</sup> far	çi <sup>31</sup> gold	la <sup>31</sup> tiger
kho <sup>31</sup> inside	ja <sup>31</sup> chicken	mu <sup>31</sup> horse	th̥tu <sup>31</sup> face	
ŋu <sup>31</sup> ox	su <sup>31</sup> firewood, to die			
sa <sup>35</sup> three	tu <sup>35</sup> four	nia <sup>35</sup> cat	ŋa <sup>35</sup> fish	su <sup>35</sup> teeth
tha <sup>33</sup> one	ja <sup>33?</sup> soul	ŋ <sup>33</sup> two		
ŋu <sup>53</sup> needle				

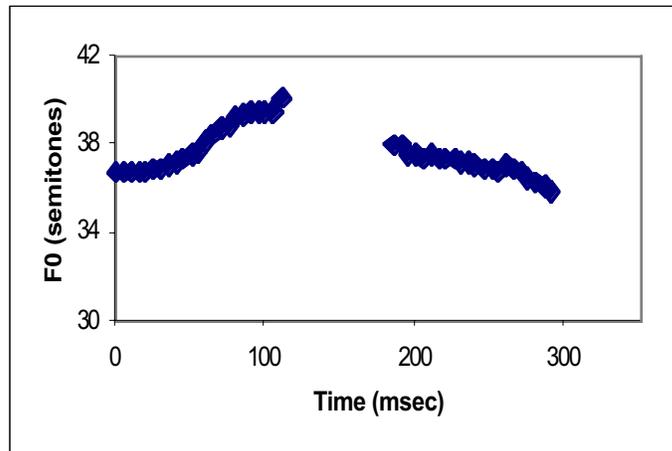
Pitch plots for these tone shapes are provided below.



4: Tone plot for Phu Kha ʔu<sup>33</sup> ʔu<sup>33</sup> 'egg'



4: Tone plot for Phu Kha m̥<sup>31</sup> tɕa<sup>53</sup> 'wind'



4: Tone plot for Phu Kha mi<sup>35</sup> khu<sup>31</sup> 'ashes'

In regard to syllable rhymes and codas, Phu Kha possesses syllabic nasals: m̥<sup>31</sup> 'blow', n̥<sup>33</sup> 'two', and ŋ<sup>35</sup> 'steam' and it preserves the coda /-p/, as well as /-n -ŋ/, which is quite unusual for Northern Yi. Most northern Yi languages demonstrate strong atrophy of the right side of the syllable. Examples of these phenomena are:

ap <sup>35</sup> khu <sup>53</sup> ma <sup>31</sup>	'pumpkin'
tɕap <sup>31</sup> ɕi <sup>31</sup>	'pangolin'
ljap <sup>35</sup> kha <sup>33</sup>	'guest'
hai <sup>31</sup> ɕəp <sup>33</sup> kha <sup>33</sup>	'husband'

### 3.2. Comparative notes

Phu Kha reflects the proto tone category \*1 as 31 as is seen in: barking deer, bear, cat, sparrow, bat, foot, intestine, hammer, alcohol, star, cloud, rain, house, wide, spicy, drink, bark, roar, etc. and also some in 33. Proto tone \*2 is reflected as 35 (or sometimes 31) as is seen in: horse, buffalo, tiger, dog, belly, liver, salt, price. Proto tone \*3 is reflected as 33 as in: moon, dry, full, forget, and wait. The two dead tones are usually realized with tone values 31 and 33.

Dental clusters are an important feature of Phu Kha, because they are not widely attested in Yi languages except in Nisu, one of three main branches of Yi, cf Bradley 1999. According to Chen et al 1985 and Wu 1991, this kind of Yi, the Yiliang E Yi, is classified as Eastern Yi. In fact, Phu Kha appears to be situated close to a special subgroup of Nisu or Nyisu that includes the lectal continuum from Lunan County about 75 km SE of Kunming to the Vietnamese border.<sup>3</sup> The dental-lateral clusters represent a hallmark innovation that defines this subgroup showing a gradient pattern of variation (data from Wu 1991).

This diagram below shows that pre-nasalized and voiced dental clusters are lost and clusters simplified variably with the change having started in the south in the Wenshan/Xichou areas as well as in Sani areas, whereas Yanshan and Lushan Nyisu retain the full set of four manners of articulation. Phu Kha shows family resemblance in being very similar to *Phuwa* and *Phulaba* (which are found at locations near to the Phu Kha of Lào Cai Province, Vietnam) in its place in the process of ongoing change within the lectal continuum. This pattern of implicational variation accords well but not perfectly with geographic distribution; Lunan Sani is, for example, out of place, but this unexpected result may be the result of this location being a regional center of contact possibly promoting sound change.

1. Lunan Muzhu [ɲi<sup>55</sup> su<sup>33</sup> phu<sup>55</sup>]<sup>4</sup>
2. Yanshan [pho<sup>21</sup>] & 3. Mengtsi [phu<sup>21</sup>]
4. Wenshan Phu Ua
5. Wenshan Phulaba
6. Phu Kha of Lào Cai Vietnam
7. Xichou [phu<sup>33</sup> va<sup>33</sup>] & 8. Lunan Sani
9. Wenshan[a<sup>21</sup> tʰa<sup>21</sup> phu<sup>55</sup>]

ɬ	thɬ	dɬ	ndɬh
ɬ	thɬ	dɬ	ndɬ
ɬ	thɬ	dɬ	dɬ
ɬ	thɬ	dɬ	dɬ
ɬ	thɬ	dl	dl
ɬ	ɬ	dɬ	dɬ
ɬ	ɬ	ɬ	ɬ

This entire system represents an innovative development of these lects from proto-Loloish prefixes or initials where the parent language usually had labial clusters or the prefix \*m- or \*ʔ-, cf. Thurgood 1982 and Wu 1991. As the chart below shows the cross lectal variation of wavelike change in the forms of Nyisu of Lunan County *ɲi<sup>55</sup> su<sup>33</sup> phu<sup>55</sup>* (pt 1), Yanshan *pho<sup>21</sup>* (pt. 2), and Mengzi *phu<sup>21</sup>* (pt. 3), which have a complete system of plain unaspirated, aspirated, voiced, and pre-nasalized voiced stops with lateral clusters; the speech of Wenshan Phuwa (pt. 4) and Wenshan Phulaba (pt. 5), which have only three of the four initials with stop + lateral sequence, a situation identical to the Phu Kha of Vietnam (pt. 6); finally, Xichou *phu<sup>22</sup> va<sup>22</sup>* (pt. 7), Lunan Sani (pt. 8) as well as Wenshan *a<sup>21</sup> tʰa<sup>21</sup> phu<sup>55</sup>* (pt. 9), which has simplified these clusters even more.

Gloss	Loloish	1, 2, 3	4, 5	6	7, 8	9
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<sup>3</sup>The Lunan Nyisu [ɲi<sup>55</sup> su<sup>33</sup> phu<sup>55</sup>] are called locally Dahei Yi (Great Black Yi). They number only 2,000 and live in a mountainous area from the county seat. Their language is quite distinct from the much larger Sani of the same county. Local gazetteers from the Tang Dynasty onward report that they are descended from the Wuman

<sup>4</sup>This 2000 strong Yi group of Lunan County—point 1—lives in a remote area, preserves their traditional lifestyle much more than the much larger and better known Sani—point 9—of the same county.

kick	---	ndʒa <sup>33</sup>	dʒu <sup>21</sup>	---	dʒo <sup>33</sup>	tʃu <sup>33</sup>
full	*m-bliŋ <sup>3</sup>	dʒɛ <sup>21</sup>	dʒu <sup>33</sup>	dɛ <sup>33</sup>	dʒe <sup>33</sup>	tʃɛ <sup>33</sup>
bee/wasp	*bya <sup>2</sup>	dʒu <sup>33</sup>	dʒa <sup>33</sup>	dla <sup>33</sup>	dʒa <sup>21</sup>	tʃɛ <sup>33</sup>
fly	°byam <sup>1</sup>	dʒɪ <sup>21</sup>		dɭu <sup>31</sup>		
silver	*plu <sup>1</sup>	thʃu <sup>33</sup>	thʃo <sup>33</sup>	tshu <sup>31</sup>	ʃu <sup>33</sup>	ʃo <sup>21</sup>
white	*plu <sup>1</sup>	thʃu <sup>21</sup>	thʃo <sup>33</sup>	tshu <sup>31</sup>	ʃu <sup>33</sup>	ʃo <sup>21</sup>
face	*pyu <sup>2</sup>	thʃo <sup>55</sup>	thʃɤ <sup>33</sup>	thʃu <sup>31</sup>	ʃo <sup>21</sup>	ʃu <sup>21</sup>
lame	---	tʃa <sup>33</sup>	tʃa <sup>33</sup>	---	tʃo <sup>33</sup>	tʃu <sup>55</sup>

This regularity was discussed by Thurgood 1982 as an innovation as well (he included all classes of voiced stops, not just the labials). The table above records a larger data set with the gradient devoicing and cluster simplification on display.

That Phu Kha reflects dental clusters in parallel to other Nyisu languages, proto-tones in a complex way, the presence syllabic nasals, and the four manners of stop articulation (plain, aspirated, voiced, and pre-nasalized voiced) suggests that Phu Kha belongs to northern Loloish, Nisu of the Eastern subbranch and supports Bradley's claim.

#### 4. Xá Phó, Laghuu, or Phù Lá Lão

The Xá Phó are officially classified in Vietnam as a part of the Phù Lá nationality, but the Xá Phó language is not mutually intelligible with the other Phù Lá member Phu Kha. Xá Phó speakers are found in Lào Cai Province at Văn Bàn, Bảo Thắng, and Sa Pa Districts as well as in Cam Đường very near to Lào Cai City. A few are also located in Yên Bái Province to the south at Văn Yên and in Sơn La Province near Thuận Giáo City, cf. Map. In this paper we rely largely on data collected from Mr. Mã A Suân of Nậm Sang Commune, Sa Pa District, Lào Cai Province, but we also have some data from a location in Yên Bái Province just across the border from Lào Cai where the phonological system is somewhat different.

##### 4.1. Distinctive features of Xá Phó

Xá Phó has the following set of initial consonants, including plain, aspirates, voiced stops, and pre-nasalized voiced stops.

p	t	ts	tɕ	k	ʔ
ph	th	tsh	tɕh	kh	
b	d	dz	dʒ		g
mb	nd	ndz	ndʒ		ŋg
m	n l		ɲ		ŋ
f	s		ɕ	x	h
v	z		ʒ		ʎ

It also has a series of velar plus lateral cluster.

kl	khɭ	gl	ŋkhɭ
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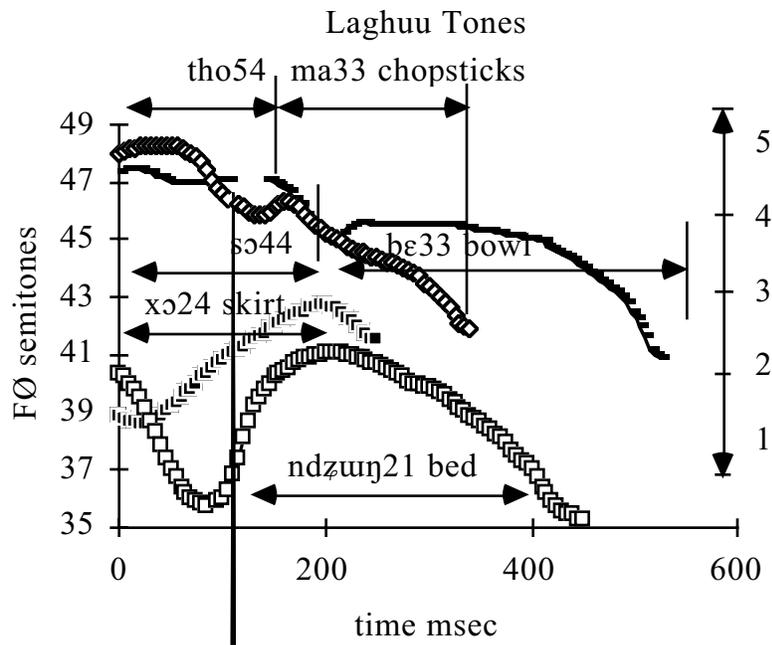
In comparison to the initials the rhymes of Xá Phó are comparatively simple.

i	ɿ	ʉ		u
	ə	o		
ɛ				ɔ
				a
ɿ			khɿ <sup>33</sup>	four
i			mi <sup>21</sup> ne <sup>24</sup>	cat
ʉ			mu <sup>33</sup> ɲe <sup>33</sup> khu <sup>33</sup> ba <sup>33</sup>	wind
u			mu <sup>24</sup> pa <sup>21</sup>	horse
ə			ɲə <sup>44</sup> pa <sup>21</sup>	buffalo
o			mo <sup>33</sup> tho <sup>24</sup>	sky
ɛ			mɛ <sup>21</sup> tɕho <sup>54</sup> ma <sup>33</sup>	window
ɔ			mɔ <sup>33</sup> li <sup>21</sup> va <sup>44</sup>	rain
a	ma <sup>33</sup> po <sup>33</sup>			raft
			ma <sup>44</sup> ma <sup>33</sup>	bamboo

Nasal codas are /-m -n -ŋ/. The labial and dental nasal codas occur with much less frequency than the velar.

m	mom <sup>33</sup> fishnet	n	tin <sup>33</sup> ɲaŋ <sup>33</sup> field, wep
ŋ	moŋ <sup>31</sup> tɕhu <sup>54</sup> tɕhu <sup>21</sup> pa <sup>44</sup> fog		

Xá Phó has only one rising tone with the value 24. The other tones have the shapes 54, 44, 33, and 21, as the following pitch plot demonstrates.



: Tone plot of Laghuu (Xá Phó)

## 4.2. Comparative notes

We were able to obtain a small amount of data from a second location in Sơn La, which confirms the Lào Cai speech forms, whose autonym is [la21 ɔ44]. The tonal system appears to be identical to Lào Cai, as are many of the initials and finals.

Gloss	Lào Cai /la21 ɣu44/	Sơn La /la21 ɔ44/
8tarne33	gu33 khɿ33 ba33 ma33	mu22 kli22
rain	mɔ33 li21 va44	mɔ44 e55 a22
river	i33 dzu44	i21 tɕhu44
stone	lu53 khu33	lu54 khu44
tree54	ma33	se54 khɿ54
leaf54	kha44	se22 khɿ44

Xá Phó speech forms differ from Phu Kha significantly by not undergoing the developments that have led to the dental cluster series /tʰ thʰ dl/. Xá Phó appears instead to have undergone an innovative change of its own, as the labials, which are the source of /tʰ thʰ dl/, have developed into velars, including clusters. Therefore, we can conclude that it is not likely that Xá Phó is a member of the Yiliang E Yi subgroup.

While helping us to exclude Xá Phó from the Yiliang branch of E Yi, these developments in Xá Phó can also help us locate where it belongs in the wider picture of Yi languages. Many lexical items of the parent language with original labials including many with additional /l j/ have become velars often with clustered lateral, e.g. \*b-le2 ‘four’ is khɿ33 or khɿ44, \*plu1 ‘white, silver’ is khɿu33 or khu21, \*pyu2 ‘face’ is ki44, and \*bun1 ‘shirt’ is khɿu21. Wu 1991 reports that Wenshan Zuoke shows this same kind of development:

Gloss	Xá Phó	Wenshan Zuoke
excrement	khɿ54	khɿ
silver	khɿu33	khu33
white	khu21	khu21
fly	ŋgo33	ŋu21
face	ki44	khu44 du44
bee	ŋga33	ge21

Wenshan Zuoke belongs to Southeastern Yi, Wenxi subtype, and is found in a location close to the place where Xá Phó speakers are found today. That means that Phu Kha and Xá Phó though belonging to one nationality in Vietnam, come from two differing subgroupings of Yi that have undergone different innovations with regard to the prefixed/clustered labials.

## 5. Lolo

The Lolo nationality of Vietnam is divisible into two mutually unintelligible linguistic groups—the Flowery and Red Lolo, on the one hand, who live in Hà Giang Province at Đồng Văn and Mèo Vạc Districts, and the Black Lolo, who live in Cao Bằng Province at Bảo Lạc District. The Flowery Lolo of Hà Giang reside in Xín Cái (Mèo Va5c) and at Lũng Cú (Đồng Văn) within 5 km of the Sino-Vietnam border. The Black Lolo live in the villages Hoàng Tri and Đức Hạnh (Bảo Lạc) not far from the Bảo Lạc District capital on the China border. They had a combined population of 3,100 in the 1989 census. We report here on the speech of Ms. Lò Thi5 Mi of Mèo Va5c, who was 28 years of age at the time we elicited the data. The Red Lolo call themselves [ma)53 tsi53]. There is another group in Funing Country

<sup>5</sup>The labial initials are not the only source of velar + lateral clusters in Xá Phó.

of Wenshan Prefecture MUYANG JIESHE DAPING DADUI MUSANGDUI who speak a very similar language and who call themselves [mo31 ndzi31]. The [mo31 ndzi31] live about 25 km to the north of the Vietnam border and are thought to belong to the SE Yi. The linguistic situation in Wenshan Prefecture is very complex, however, as very many Yi groups reside there possessing many different groups of Loloish speakers, cf. //yi.peoples.org/. On the basis of the geography it has been supposed that the Lolo of Vietnam belong to the Lolo of Wenshan prefecture, cf. //yipeople.org/southeastern/s\_lolo.htm/.

### 5.1. Special features of Vietnam Lolo

Lolo has the most complex initial system of the three languages reported on, possessing three sibilant series: plain [s ts tsh], retroflex [β tβ tβh], and palatal [ç tç tçh] as well as having four kinds of stops plain /p t k q/, aspirated /ph th kh qh/, voiced /b d g/, and pre-nasalized before a voiceless stop /mp nt Nk ≤q/. The complete set of initials is:

p	ph	b	mp	m	f	v	
ts	sh		nts				
t	th	d	nt	n	s	z	l
tɕ	tɕh	dz	ntɕ		ʃ	z	
tç	tçh	dç	ntç	ɲ	ç	ç	
k	kh	g	ŋk	ŋ	x	ɣ	
q	qh		Nq				

Red Lolo [mã53 tsi53] has five tones with values 53, 31, 312, 44, and 35, which we have not plotted here.

Rhymes are:

i	ε	e	ɔ	o	u	a
		ẽ	õ	õ		ã
ia	ua	iã	uã			

ɪ	tɕi31	teeth
ε	qhε44	excrement
e	qhe312	eye
ɔ	ŋɔ44	duck
o		
u	ɲu53	cow
a	tɕa35	boil
ẽ	qẽ53	ear
õ	çõ53	nose
õ	bõ53	belly
ã	bã44	to fly
ia	phia35?	leaf
ua	vua44	pig
iã	piã35	left
uã	qhuã44	room

### 5.2. Comparative comments

<sup>6</sup>Nguyễn 1985 reports that there are a few living in Mường Khương in Lào Cai as well as at Phóng Thổ in Lai Châu Province.

<sup>7</sup>This complex initial corresponds elsewhere in Yi to pre-nasalized voiced stops. Phonetically however, in Viet Lolo the stop or affricate component is voiceless.

From our data sets it is evident that Lolo is phonologically and lexically quite unlike either Phu Kha or Xá Phó. We believe that Vietnam Lolo (LL) is, in fact, a form of Mo'ang or [muaŋ51] and is also close to Kasu Yi, which are both found in the extreme east of the Yi (Loloish) settlement area in Funing County at Longyang, Longmai, Mula, and Ligong and even in border areas of Yunnan and Guangxi Province and in Guangnan County, respectively. Both are locally called White Lolo (WL). Wu 1993, 1994 reports on these languages at length concluding that they differ quite significantly from other forms of Yi of the area. Viet Lolo possesses features more like Mo'ang, which we will thus focus on here.

The resemblance of [muaŋ51] and Viet Lolo is clear and unquestionable. Some important common features are: uvular consonants /q qh ɲq/, diphthongs (Wu treats them as secondary articulations /pj phj mbj tj thj/, where I have transcribed them as diphthongs. There remain considerable differences; notably the former has a pre-glottalized series of initials //m ʔmj ʔn ʔnj ʔl ʔlj ʔz/ (Lolo has none), retains final /-p -t -k -m -n -ŋ/ (Lolo has none), and has a full set of tense/lax contrasts, which LL may also have. There are also many uniquely similar forms (WL\LL): phjaŋ33\phiã44 face, pja33\pia53 bee, ʔa33\ʔɔ44 son, kau33\kua31 nine, ma31ʔ\mɔ44 dream, /nei33\nie44 today.

Thus, the local exonym, the autonym, the geographic location all make it very probable that the Lolo of Vietnam are related to the White Lolo of Funing and neighboring areas. Beyond this evidence is the similarity of phonological inventory (esp. uvular consonant initials), which establish the link between these two. Most importantly there are examples of unique vocabulary not found at other Yi locations. Despite similarities it is also evident that White Lolo possesses even more archaic features than the Red Lolo language of Vietnam in the strong retention of final consonants.

The numbers of Yi speakers in Vietnam is not great, yet it is clear that they and their brethren in China are all peripheral to the main body of Yi speaker further to the north and west. It is not to be forgotten as well that the Black Lolo of Cao Bằng Province remain to be studied. But even without material on this subgroup, it is clear that through isolation Viet Lolo appears to have preserved some important characteristics that will, one hopes, give us a better understanding of this language group. The dictum that small groups are often more informative about history than larger ones seem to apply here.

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<sup>8</sup>Muyang Yi in Funing County [mo31 <sup>n</sup>dzi31] has only four tones with values 31, 13, 44, and 53. There is a somewhat complex system of correspondence between the two places.

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