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On Pinghua and Yue: Some Historical and Linguistic Perspectives

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Abstract

Pinghua 平話 is a Sinitic dialect group spoken in Guangxi in southern China. Within Chinese linguistics, there have been many debates on its affiliation. Pinghua is associated with the earliest Han Chinese migrants in Guangxi, but in terms of number of speakers in Guangxi Pinghua has been overtaken by Yue, Southwestern Mandarin, and Hakka. Pinghua is primarily associated with the Han Chinese migrants who entered Guangxi through Hunan, whereas Yue is primarily associated with those who entered Guangdong through Jiangxi. Yue speakers have subsequently spread westward in large numbers from Guangdong to Guangxi. Linguistically, the Pinghua dialects sit on a dialect continuum with the non-Cantonese Yue dialects in Guangxi. On the other hand, the Cantonese enclaves in Guangxi are the results of Cantonese people moving directly from the Pearl River Delta to Guangxi within the last 150 years or so.

Keywords

Pinghua – Yue – Cantonese – Sinitic – Kra-Dai – Guangxi – Guangdong – riverine migration – historical linguistics – language contact

Introduction

In Chinese linguistics, Pinghua 平話 refers to a Sinitic dialect group found in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region 廣西壯族自治區 in far southern China. Going clockwise, Guangxi is surrounded by the Gulf of Tonkin (south), Vietnam (southwest), Yunnan (west), Guizhou (northwest), Hunan (northeast), and Guangdong (east). Guangxi is rich in ethnolinguistic diversity. Its

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population is 38.4% non-Han Chinese and 61.6% Han Chinese.[1] The west is majority non-Han, while the east is majority Han. The largest non-Sinitic languages are Northern and Southern Zhuang, with 13.8 million speakers in total. The Zhuang languages are indigenous, members of the Tai branch of the Kra-Dai language family.[2] As for the Sinitic languages, six of the ten main dialect groups in the *Language Atlas of China* [LAC] are represented in Guangxi. In descending order of number of speakers, they are Yue 粵 (Cantonese and other Yue dialects; 16.86 million),[3] Mandarin (Southwestern Mandarin 西南官話; 5.43 million), Hakka 客家 (4.9 million), Pinghua (4.13 million), Xiang 湘 (1.31 million), and Min (Southern Min 閩南; 0.14 million).

Pinghua is perhaps the least known of these six groups. Among the Sinitic dialect groups in Guangxi, Pinghua has the longest history in Guangxi. Yet it is difficult to describe Pinghua as the representative speech variety of Guangxi; people usually associate Guangxi with the larger languages of Zhuang, Yue, and Southwestern Mandarin. At the same time, Pinghua is also not small enough that one can simply ignore it when Guangxi is discussed. Moreover, Pinghua has not been left unclassified, as the Sinitic *tuhua* 土話 ("patois") in neighbouring southern Hunan and northern Guangdong have been in the LAC.

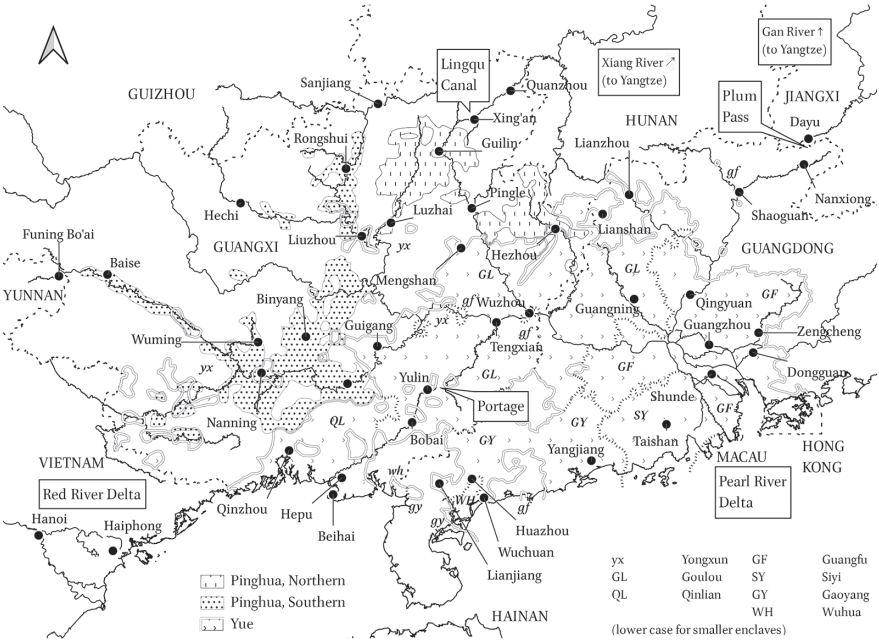
This article begins with a summary of the migration history of the Sinitic groups in Guangxi. In the first section, Pinghua and Southwestern Mandarin's arrival in Guangxi via Hunan is discussed. In the second section, Yue's arrival in Guangdong via Jiangxi, and the subsequent spread of Yue from Guangdong to Guangxi are discussed.

Following that are discussions on the linguistic classification of the Sinitic speech varieties in general, and the situation with Pinghua more specifically. Since the publication of the first edition of the LAC in 1987, there have been many debates on the affiliation of Pinghua. Some argue that Pinghua – whether in its entirety or a portion thereof – should be subsumed under Yue, while others argue that Pinghua and Yue are two separate entities.

1 Population figures in this paragraph are from Deng (2008).

2 Kra-Dai is also known as Tai-Kadai, *Zhuang-Dong* 壯侗, or *Dong-Tai* 侗台.

3 "Yue" in this article is the Sinitic dialect group Yue 粵 and its speakers, not the historical indigenous population collectively known as Yue 越 or Baiyue 百越. Nonetheless, historically the names Yue 粵 and Yue 越 have often been used interchangeably, and are homophonous (e.g. Cantonese *jyut*^{6}, Sino-Vietnamese *Việt*, Middle Chinese *ɣywot*, Old Chinese **[ɢ]*wat*). The vast majority of Sinitic Yue 粵 people have some indigenous Yue 越 ancestry (as suggested by genetic studies; see footnote 24). For the historical indigenous Yue 越, see Wang Wenguang and Li Xiaobin (2007), Brindley (2015) and Churchman (2016), amongst others.



MAP 1 Pinghua and Yue in Guangxi and Guangdong according to Wurm et al. (1987)

Thereafter, a few linguistic features of various Pinghua and Yue varieties are presented. Southern Pinghua and the non-Cantonese Yue dialects in Guangxi form a dialect continuum. Given that we are dealing with a dialect continuum, the questions of whether Pinghua and Yue constitute one or two dialect groups, and if so where the boundary between them lies, have a number of valid answers, depending on one's perspectives.

Map 1 is a map of the Pinghua- and Yue-speaking areas in Guangxi and Guangdong according to the first edition of the LAC.

Pinghua, Southwestern Mandarin, and the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor

The Nanling Mountains 南嶺 run roughly along the northern border of Guangxi and Guangdong, separating the Yangtze River Basin to the north and the Pearl River Basin to the south. Areas south of the Nanling, namely the Pearl River Basin, the Red River Region in the historical Chinese context when Vietnam was part of China, and the small river basins in between (the small

rivers between Macau and the Vietnamese border), are commonly referred as *Lingnan* 嶺南, i.e. *nan* [south] of the *ling* [mountain range].[4] (In this article, "the North" means China north of the Nanling, i.e. the Yangtze River Basin and further north; cf. the *Bak¹ Fong¹* 北方 [the North] in a stereotypical Cantonese world view.)

Chinese administration was first set up in Lingnan during the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BCE), after the opening of the Lingqu Canal 靈渠 in 214 BCE, in present-day Xing'an 興安 County in northeastern Guangxi.[5] The Lingqu Canal links the Xiang River to the north, a tributary of the Yangtze primarily in Hunan, with the Li River 灕江 to the south, a tributary of the West River (of the Pearl) in Guangxi. For the next millennium or so, this Xiang–Li riverine route, which I call the *Hunan–Guangxi Corridor*, was the main route that Chinese settlers from the north took to reach Lingnan.[6] During this period, most migrants settled in what is now northeastern Guangxi. From northeastern and eastern Guangxi, some Chinese settlers moved further downriver east towards the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong, others southwest towards the Guangxi coast. To reach the Guangxi coast, most went up the Beiliu River 北流江 (a tributary of the Pearl), crossing the portage at present-day Beiliu City through the Ghost Gate Pass [Guimen guan 鬼門關] to Yulin 玉林, then following the Nanliu River 南流江 south to Hepu 合浦 on the Guangxi coast. From there, many went along the coast to the Red River Region.[7] Looking at historical Chinese census records, before the eighth century CE, Guangxi-plus-Vietnam had more Chinese population than Guangdong: the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor took northern Chinese migrants first to Guangxi, and there were important maritime trading hubs on the Guangxi coast and the Red River Delta, both commercially more important than the Pearl River Delta during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–9 CE; 25–220 CE).[8] Based on the population figures of the commanderies listed in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (2nd century CE), the populations of the different parts of Lingnan were as follows:[9]

– Jiaozhi 交趾, Jiuzhen 九真, Rinan 日南 (≈ Vietnam): 143,643 hearths, 981,735 heads

4 Unfortunately, Leizhou Peninsula and Hainan Island are beyond the scope of this study.

5 Brindley (2015), 95.

6 Lin (2004), 153. A variation of the Hunan–Guangxi route is via the Mengzhu Range near Zhongshan 鍾山 and Hezhou further east.

7 For this and other routes that Chinese migrants took to reach the Pearl and Red River Regions, see Churchman (2016), 59–64. From northern China, up the Red River was also the easiest route to Yunnan, and from there overland to Sichuan. Li Tana (2011), 40.

8 E.g. Li Tana (2011); Xiong (2014); Demandt (2019).

9 *Hanshu*, 28b.33–40.

– Yulin 鬱林, Cangwu 蒼梧, Hepu (≈ Guangxi + far western Guangdong): 52,192 hearths, 296,302 heads
– Nanhai 南海 (≈ rest of Guangdong): 19,613 hearths, 94,253 heads

Based on the 606 CE population figures for the commandaries listed in the *Suishu* 隋書 (636 CE), the population of the different parts of Lingnan were as follows:[10]

– Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen, Rinan, Bijing 比景, Haiyin 海陰, Linyi 林邑 (≈ Vietnam): 60,241 hearths
– Cangwu, Shi'an 始安, Yongping 永平, Yulin 郁林, Hepu, Ningyue 甯越 (≈ Guangxi): 193,704 hearths
– Nanhai, Longchuan 龍川, Yi'an 義安, Gaoliang 高涼, Xin'an 信安, Yongxi 永熙 (≈ Guangdong): 87,991 hearths
– Zhuya 珠崖 (Hainan): 19,500 hearths

In this period, the Han Chinese population was in the minority in Lingnan, and there were still many mentions of non-Sinitic peoples in the region. The Han Chinese population was concentrated in the cities and towns, surrounded by land mostly inhabited by indigenous people.[11] This is currently still the case in central and western Guangxi. (On the other hand, Guangdong and eastern Guangxi are now overwhelmingly Han Chinese, with nearly all indigenous people having been Sinicised.[12] In Vietnam, the medieval Sinitic population in the Red River Region gradually merged into the surrounding Việt-Mường population after Vietnam's independence in the tenth century CE.[13])

The migration of Han Chinese people from the north to Guangxi often had military causes. Chinese people from the north often viewed Lingnan as an uncivilized place filled with tropical diseases and unsuitable for habitation for "normal people". For example, the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) poet Li Shen 李紳 (772–846), in his poem *Yu Lingqiao zhi huangzou di Gaoyao* 逾嶺嶠止荒陬抵高要, described Lingnan as a place where "the heat and steam breed venomous insects and snakes" (*yan zheng jiezuo chonghui du* 炎蒸結作蟲虺毒). Chinese settlers in Guangxi were often people who were exiled, or soldiers who were settled in the area after they were sent to invade, to suppress revolts by indigenous people, and/or to secure this border region in general. Examples include the Western Han's (202 BCE–9 CE) invasion of Nanyue/Nam Việt (204–111 BCE, an independent kingdom in Lingnan based in present-day

10 *Suishu*, 31.51–88.
11 Xu (1999), 104.
12 See also footnote 37.
13 Phan (2013) 296–302.

Guangzhou),[14] and the Eastern Han's (25–220 CE) crushing of the rebellion of the Trưng sisters (?–43 CE).[15] After the latter's defeat, a group of northern Chinese soldiers were stationed in Lingnan, their descendants being called the *Maliuren* 馬留人, i.e. *ren* [people] *liu* [left behind] by General Ma Yuan 馬援 (Mã Viện; 14 BCE–49 CE).[16] During the Tang Dynasty, revolts by indigenous people in Guangxi occurred at least during the years 687, 756, 777 and 794.[17] Some Pinghua speakers claim that their ancestors arrived in Guangxi during the Tang Dynasty, often from Shandong.[18]

In the history of Pinghua, the most significant military event happened during the Song Dynasty (960–1279). Between 1029 and 1055, near the present-day Guangxi–Vietnam border, indigenous Tai[19] leaders Nong Quanfu 儂全福 (*Nungz Cienzfuk*/*Nùng Tồn Phúc*, recorded as 儂存福 in Vietnamese texts; ?–1035) and his son Nong Zhigao 儂智高 (*Nungz Ciqgau*/*Nùng Trí Cao*; 1025–1055) at various times claimed independence, sought vassal status with the Lý Dynasty (1009–1225) of Vietnam, or with the Song Dynasty of China.[20] In 1052, Nong Zhigao captured Nanning (then Yongzhou 邕州) and many cities to the east, and ended up besieging Guangzhou for nearly two months. In the end, Song China sent in northern Chinese soldiers, led by the vice-head of the military (*shumi fu-shi* 樞密副使) Di Qing 狄青 (1008–1057), defeating Nong Zhigao in 1053 at the Kunlun Pass 崑崙關 northeast of Nanning. Many Pinghua speakers claim that their ancestors were these Song Dynasty soldiers from northern China, mostly Shandong.[21]

Traces of this military history are not difficult to find. For instance, Zhuang[22] calls Han Chinese *Gun* 軍 [military],[23] e.g. the "Chinese language" is *vah Gun* 話軍. Looking at the Sinitic language map of Guangxi in the first edition of the LAC (map B-14), one can see that the distribution of Pinghua is somewhat linear; Pinghua appears as many small and medium-sized blobs along certain axes. The axis that links all the other axes is the land route between Guilin,

14 Brindley (2015), 215–218.
15 Ibid., 233–238.
16 Xu (1999), 103.
17 Lin (2004), 170.
18 E.g. Bi (1985).
19 In terms of ethnic classification, they are considered Zhuang in China and Nùng in Vietnam.
20 E.g. Anderson (2007).
21 Xu (1999). More specifically, many claim that their ancestors came from Baima 白馬 County in Shandong, which is nowadays part of Hua County 滑縣 in Henan.
22 Word forms from Standard Zhuang are given. Standard Zhuang is largely based on Northern Zhuang as spoken in Wuming District of Nanning.
23 Different from *guen* 官 [official].

Liuzhou and Nanning, nowadays the three largest cities in Guangxi. There was a military-grade road linking these three cities, and this was the route that Di Qing's army took: the army arrived through Hunan, passing Guilin and Liuzhou, and finally met Nong Zhigao's army near Nanning. After Nong was defeated, the northern Chinese soldiers were settled in Guilin, Liuzhou, Nanning and other places in Guangxi, gradually merging with the (small) pre-existing Han Chinese population into a single linguistic community. Their descendants spread along the Guilin–Liuzhou–Nanning route and along the rivers that dissected this route. The rivers were important to the Pinghua people, as they were their primary trade routes, and also their primary escape routes when attacked (due to, e.g., disputes with indigenous people, who outnumbered them in most places).

It has been around a millennium since the arrival of the Song Dynasty soldiers. There have been linguistic, cultural and genetic[24] exchanges between the Pinghua and Zhuang. However, until recently (sometime after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949), there was a degree of psychological distance between the Pinghua and the Zhuang. Intermarriage used to be rare in regions where the population of Han Chinese was higher, and they kept each other from their respective industrial domains. For instance, members of many Pinghua communities in and upriver from Nanning are called *Zheyuan ren*/*tʃi*^{55} *win*^{21} *ɲɐn*^{21} 蔗園人 [sugar-cane plantation people], as their primary industry was sugar-cane farming. They excluded the Zhuang and also other Sinitic peoples from their sugar-cane industry.[25] In another example, Sitang 四塘 (northeast of Nanning city centre) was about 90% Zhuang and 10% Pinghua Han in population. The Zhuang there were mostly bilingual in Zhuang and Pinghua, and some also spoke Cantonese; the Pinghua generally understood Zhuang, though most older people did not speak Zhuang. Older Pinghua women who married into Zhuang families "till no teeth no speak Zhuang language" (至没齒不說壯話),[26] i.e. they could not speak or refused to speak Zhuang after all these years living in Zhuang families, from around the point of marriage till they were so old that all their teeth had fallen out. (Young people no longer have this prejudice and speak both Zhuang and Chinese.)

Probably due to this psychological distance between Pinghua and Zhuang, there have not been any large-scale language shifts (the abandoning of one language in favour of another) between Pinghua and Zhuang. (There have

24 See Gan et al. (2008) for the population genetics of Pinghua speakers in Northern Guangxi, and Lu et al. (2013) for Southern Guangxi.

25 Xu (1999), Matsumoto (1993).

26 Lin and Yu (2009), 257.

certainly been some, but Pinghua and Zhuang have maintained an equilibrium.) Added to the relatively small number of northern Chinese ancestors who came through the Hunan-Guangxi corridor, Pinghua is a minority surrounded by the indigenous Zhuang majority. Not only is Pinghua a minority in relation to Zhuang, it has also been overtaken in terms of number of speakers by three other Sinitic groups that arrived in Guangxi later: Mandarin from the north, and Yue and Hakka from the east. Pinghua has also been overtaken in terms of power. In Guangxi, Pinghua is the majority only in Hengzhou and Binyang (east of Nanning, within Nanning Prefecture), and Binyang is the only place throughout Guangxi where Pinghua is the *lingua franca* of the county. All other counties and cities in Guangxi have city centres that are dominant in Zhuang, Southwestern Mandarin, Yue and/or Hakka. For instance, in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi, Nanning Cantonese is spoken in the city centre, Pinghua is spoken in the suburbs and nearby rural areas, and Zhuang is spoken mainly in the rural areas. The Pinghua dialects spoken in the various suburbs of Nanning are divergent enough that sometimes Pinghua speakers from different suburbs have to rely on Nanning Cantonese to communicate with each other. (This is the situation at least two decades ago; nowadays the entire Nanning is dominated by New Nanning Mandarin, or *Nanning Putonghua*, Nanning's strongly localized version of Modern Standard Mandarin.) With basically all the cities dominated by other languages, there is no standard variety of Pinghua that Pinghua speakers gravitate towards when they communicate with other Pinghua speakers.

Another language that entered Guangxi via Hunan is Southwestern Mandarin. Southwestern Mandarin entered Guangxi centuries later than Pinghua. Large numbers of Southwestern Mandarin speakers arrived during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).[27] Again, many were soldiers and officials sent by the central government to solidify China's hold on this border region. Through its political and economic dominance, Southwestern Mandarin quickly replaced Pinghua as the *lingua franca* in northern Guangxi. The Southwestern Mandarin spoken in northern Guangxi is commonly called *Gui-Liu hua* [Guilin-Liuzhou speech].

Conforming to the general trend of more Han in eastern Guangxi and more Zhuang in western Guangxi, Southwestern Mandarin is numerically stronger

27 Xie Jianyou (2007), 290. See also Herman (2007) on the Chinese colonisation of Guizhou in the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries, under similar militaristic circumstances as Guangxi.

in northeastern Guangxi than in northwestern Guangxi.[28] The stronger dominance of Southwestern Mandarin in the Guilin and Hezhou Prefectures in northeastern Guangxi is also reflected in how much stronger the Pinghua dialects there are influenced by Mandarin. The LAC classifies Pinghua into Northern Pinghua and Southern Pinghua. Northern Pinghua includes the Pinghua dialects in Guilin and Hezhou Prefectures, while Southern Pinghua includes all the other Pinghua dialects, including those in Liuzhou and Hechi Prefectures, which are geographically in northern Guangxi. The Northern Pinghua dialects are strongly Mandarinized, the Southern Pinghua dialects much less so. Some linguistic examples are demonstrated later in this article; the important point here is the distinction between Northern Pinghua (northeastern Guangxi) and Southern Pinghua (the rest of Guangxi).

The number of Southwestern Mandarin speakers in Guangxi is 5.43 million, a number not substantially larger than Pinghua's figure of 4.13 million. Non-Sinitic languages are usually spoken in reasonable numbers in the vicinity of Pinghua and Southwestern Mandarin speakers. The number of Han Chinese settlers who arrived via Hunan was not large enough to have substantial impact on the number of indigenous speakers. The situation is very different in the Yue-dominated eastern and southern parts of Guangxi.

Yue, and the Jiangxi–Guangdong Corridor

Yue is the largest Sinitic dialect group in Guangxi. Unlike Pinghua and Southwestern Mandarin, whose Han Chinese ancestors entered Guangxi via Hunan to the north, Yue speakers entered Guangxi from Guangdong to the east.

During the Tang Dynasty, a military-grade road was completed in 716 across the Plum Pass (*Meiguan* 梅關), on the border between the present-day Nanxiong City in northern Guangdong and Dayu County in southwestern Jiangxi. North of the Plum Pass is the Zhang River in Jiangxi, a tributary of the Gan River, which flows north into the Yangtze. South of the Plum Pass is the Zhen River in Guangdong, which becomes the North (*Bei*) River downstream at Shaoguan and continues south to the Pearl River Delta. This Gan–Bei

28 Across northern Guangxi, from east to west, the percentage of Han Chinese is 83% in Hezhou, 85% in Guilin, 49% in Liuzhou, 16% in Hechi, and 15% in Baise Prefectures (China national census 2010). Zhuang is still spoken by large numbers in Liuzhou, Hechi, and Baise Prefectures. There are also many other non-Sinitic languages spoken in northern Guangxi. Deng Yurong (2008).

riverine route, which I call the Jiangxi–Guangdong Corridor, rapidly overtook the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor as the most important route for northern Chinese settlers into Lingnan.[29] Contrasting Guangxi and Guangdong, the number of northern Chinese migrants who went through the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor (Chinese ancestors of Pinghua and Southwestern Mandarin speakers) was relatively small; their numbers were not large enough to overwhelm the non-Sinitic populations in most parts of Guangxi. On the other hand, in Guangdong, the number of northern Chinese migrants who went through the Jiangxi–Guangdong Corridor was so huge that, by the second half of the Tang Dynasty (approximately eighth and ninth century CE), there were already not many reports of indigenous people in the Pearl River Delta, in contrast to, e.g., the frequent reports of uprisings by indigenous people in western Guangdong and in Guangxi.[30] Already by the 754 census, the population of Guangdong had surpassed that of Guangxi plus Vietnam: "Vietnam": 221,999 heads, "Guangxi": 400,777 heads, "Guangdong": 753,534 heads, Hainan: 39,639 heads.[31] Comparing the Guangxi–Guangdong population ratio in this 754 census (≈ 3.5 : 6.5) with the ratio in the 606 census (≈ 7 : 3) gives one a sense of the explosion of Han Chinese population that the Plum Pass Road brought to Guangdong.

Northern Chinese migrants continued to enter Lingnan through the Jiangxi–Guangdong Corridor in huge numbers. The Yue, especially Cantonese, often claim that their ancestors came from or through Zhujixiang 珠璣巷, a town located between Nanxiong city centre and the Plum Pass.[32] Yue Chinese formed in the Pearl River Delta, primarily from two layers of northern Chinese linguistic elements: Middle Chinese in the tenth century during the latter years of the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties period (907–979),[33] and Early Mandarin in the thirteenth century during the latter years of the Song Dynasty.[34] There are also remnants from the pre-existing Sinitic speech varieties in the area,[35]

29 Zhan et al. (2002), 3; Li Tana (2011), 40.

30 Wu Songdi (1997).

31 Prefectural population data from Yang (1979), compiled primarily from data in *Xin Tangshu* (1060). During the Tang Dynasty, these places were all part of the Lingnan Circuit. The prefectures are here grouped into "Vietnam", "Guangxi", "Guangdong", and Hainan, based on modern boundaries.

32 For instance, http://www.gdsqyg.com/agdfyzg/mingluinfo?mlproid=20180403593781 61 (accessed 3 February 2022). See also Churchman (2019), 249. Nowadays Zhujixiang speaks Hakka.

33 Wang Hongjun (2009).

34 Lau (2001).

35 For instance, there are very early dialectal words in Cantonese, like *tʰɐj*^{35} 睇 [look/read], which were recorded in Yang Xiong's 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) *Fangyan* 方言 (*juan* 2) as being dialectal words in *Nan Chu zhi wai* 南楚之外 [further than Southern Chu] (Chu

as well as a strong substrate from the indigenous languages, primarily Kra-Dai languages.[36] Later on, Yue speakers gradually expanded out from the Pearl River Delta, overwhelmingly in a westward direction, as the west was relatively lightly populated. (Northern Guangdong was already heavily populated by Han Chinese. Later on, the Pearl River Basin to the north and east of the delta became primarily Hakka-speaking.) During their gradual westward expansion, the pockets of pre-existing Han Chinese (many probably speaking Pinghua-like languages) and nearly all indigenous people (mostly speakers of Kra-Dai languages) were absorbed into the Yue-speaking community.[37] During the Song and Yuan (1271–1368) Dynasties, the Yue gradually filled western Guangdong. Between the Ming Dynasty and the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), they also filled eastern and southeastern Guangxi.[38] In Guangxi, the western boundary of the Yue-speaking area is roughly the eastern boundary of the Zhuang-speaking area.[39] As Yue spread westward, Zhuang and other indigenous people shifted to Yue.

Among the Yue dialects in Guangxi, two types need to be distinguished: "native" Guangxi Yue, and Guangxi Cantonese. The LAC classifies the Yue dialects in Guangxi into four types: Goulou 勾漏, Qinlian 欽廉,[40] Guangfu 廣府, and Yongxun 邕潯. Goulou Yue in the Pearl River Basin and Qinlian Yue on the Guangxi coast and hinterlands are "native" Guangxi Yue varieties; these are Yue dialects that are spoken in large areas, and are associated with the Yue dialects that gradually spread from east to west during the Ming Dynasty and

≈ Hunan). There are also isolated linguistic traits in Yue that are from Southern Middle Chinese which have travelled down the coast via Fujian, or later again via the Jiangxi–Guangdong corridor. Kwok (2004).

36 E.g. Ouyang (1989); Li Jingzhong (1994); Huang Yuanwei (1997); Li Jinfang (2002), 100–141. See also Alves (2018) on linguistic convergence in southern China, and de Sousa (2015b) on the Far Southern Sinitic languages from a Mainland Southeast Asian linguistic point of view.

37 Within the core Yue-speaking area in Guangdong and Guangxi, the only indigenous Kra-Dai languages left are the Biao 標 Language (e.g. Liang Min and Zhang Junru 2002) in Huaiji and Fengkai in Guangdong, and Hezhou in Guangxi, and the Jizhao 吉兆 language (e.g. Ostapirat 1998; Catherine Churchman p.c.) in Wuchuan, on the southwestern coast of Guangdong. (In both cases, younger speakers are shifting to Yue.)

38 On the westward expansion of Yue Chinese, see Li Jinfang (2002), 126–134. See also Churchman (2019) on the Sinicization of southeastern Guangxi.

39 See, e.g., map B-14 on Sinitic Guangxi and map C-12 on non-Sinitic Guangxi in the first edition of the LAC.

40 One has to be careful with the term Qinlian Yue. From Chen Xiaojin and Chen Tao (2005), it is clear that the "Qinlian Yue" in the LAC includes two very different forms of Yue dialect: Yue in Beihai city is clearly Cantonese, while Yue in Hepu (*Lianzhou hua* 廉州話) is a very different language. In this article, only the latter, "native" form of Yue is considered Qinlian Yue.

early Qing Dynasty.[41] On the other hand, the Guangfu Yue and Yongxun Yue dialects are Cantonese. There are many enclaves of these Cantonese speakers in Guangxi, and they appear as many small blobs on a map. The Guangfu Yue dialects in Guangxi are minimally different from Standard Cantonese. The largest Guangfu Yue communities in Guangxi are Wuzhou 梧州 and Hezhou 賀州 near the Guangdong border. These are Cantonese communities that developed earlier in Guangxi, and they have maintained very close ties with the Pearl River Delta.[42] On the other hand, Yongxun Yue enclaves are found further away from the Guangdong border. The ancestors of these Yongxun Yue speakers are primarily Cantonese people who migrated upriver directly from the Pearl River Delta after the maritime prohibitions were lifted at the end of the First Opium War (1839–1842). Many arrived during later calamities, e.g. the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). The Yongxun Yue varieties, while still recognisably Cantonese in its phonology, have received a noticeable amount of Zhuang influences.[43] The largest Yongxun Yue community is in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi. From Nanning, speakers of Nanning Cantonese travelled in many directions, most notably upriver west from Nanning, forming many Yongxun-type Cantonese enclaves in western Guangxi. Guangxi Cantonese has gone much further west than Guangxi Pinghua: Pinghua has spread just across the border to Funing County in Yunnan,[44] while Cantonese has gone much further west to Hekou in Yunnan on the Red River, across from Lào Cai of Vietnam.[45]

In summary, the Jiangxi–Guangdong Corridor contributed substantially more growth to the Sinitic-speaking population in Lingnan than the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor did. (This includes both the Han Chinese migrant population and the indigenous population that shifted to Sinitic languages.) The Sinitic dialect groups that are primarily associated with the Jiangxi–Guangdong Corridor have the following population figures: Yue 68 million worldwide,[46] Hakka 44 million worldwide,[47] and Gan 48 million.[48] Contrast this with the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor to the west: Pinghua 4.1 million,[49]

41 Deng (2008).

42 See Miles (2017) on the migration of Cantonese people up the West River between the mid-sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.

43 See, e.g., de Sousa (2015a), Kwok (2019), on the influence of Zhuang on Nanning Cantonese and Nanning Pinghua. See also Huang Yang and Wu Fuxiang (2018) on convergences of grammar among the languages in the Central Southern Guangxi region.

44 Li Lianjin (2000), 3.

45 Li Jinfang (2002), 132–133.

46 Wu Wei (2007).

47 Xie Liuwen and Huang Xuezhen (2007).

48 Xie Liuwen (2006).

49 Deng (2008).

Xiang 36.5 million,[50] and Southwestern Mandarin in Guangxi and southern Hunan 11.2 million.[51] Pinghua has never been very big. It has always been surrounded by a large indigenous population, and Pinghua has "lost territory" to the expansion of Mandarin from the north and Yue from the east. Also associated with the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor is Annamese Middle Chinese, a Sinitic speech variety that Phan argued (2013) was spoken in the Red River Region alongside Proto-Việt-Mường in the Middle Ages. Following the general theme of relatively weak Sinitic input along the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor, Annamese Middle Chinese stopped being spoken as a living language sometime after the independence of Vietnam in the tenth century CE; the Chinese community there shifted to (a Sinicised) Vietnamese language.[52] (But it has left behind a huge superstrate on the Vietnamese language, and Chinese continued to be learnt as a literary language in Vietnam long after independence.[53])

How Pinghua Came to Be Known to Linguists, and Their Opinions

Language classification is a tricky matter; often there are no sharp boundaries that clearly demarcate different languages or dialects. This situation occurs frequently with the Sinitic languages, especially given that, for most of their history, there have not been many long-lasting political borders within the Sinitic-speaking realm which would foster sharper linguistic boundaries between the Sinitic languages. Neighbouring speech varieties often influence each other a great deal, and sometimes hybrid varieties arise, blurring the boundary between them. In addition, throughout the ages, there have been the various national and regional standards, which exert influences over their respective spheres of influence.

The classification of the Sintic languages has evolved over time. One commonly encountered scheme is Zhan Bohui's division into seven dialect groups: Yue, Hakka, Min, Wu, Gan, Xiang and Northern (i.e. Mandarin).[54] The publication of the first edition of the LAC in 1987 is a major milestone in Chinese linguistics. While not everyone agrees with its linguistic classifications, its classification scheme of ten first-order Sinitic dialect groups (plus other unclassified varieties) has functioned as the basis of discussion ever since.

50 Chen Hui and Bao Houxing (2007) for Hunan, Deng (2008) for Guangxi, Li Lan (2009) for Sichuan.

51 Deng (2008) for Guangxi, Chen Hui and Bao Houxing (2007) for southern Hunan.

52 Phan (2013), 296–302. This has similarities to how the Norman French ruling class in England shifted from Norman French to (a Frenchified) English language.

53 See also Phan (2013); Phan and de Sousa (forthcoming).

54 Zhan (1981).

Beyond the traditional seven, one new addition is Pinghua of Guangxi. In addition, to the east is a plethora of unclassified small Sinitic varieties in the mountainous regions of southern Hunan and northern Guangdong, known collectively as *tuhua* 土話 ("patois"). The publication of the LAC has greatly raised the profile of Pinghua and *tuhua* within the Chinese linguistics community. Accompanying this improved awareness of Pinghua are many debates on the decision to elevate Pinghua to a first-order dialect group.

Traditionally, the saying in Nanning is that the range of local languages consists of *Guan Ping Tu Bai* 官平土白: *guan* [official] is Mandarin, *ping* [flat] is Pinghua, *tu* [earth] is Zhuang and *bai* [white] is Cantonese. Zhang Junru compared the phonology of Chinese loanwords in Zhuang with Pinghua and Nanning Cantonese, concluding that they had been borrowed from Pinghua and not from Cantonese.[55] As Cantonese is Yue, Pinghua is therefore not Yue. (However, note the fallacy here: the facts that Cantonese is Yue and that Pinghua is not Cantonese do not infer whether Pinghua is Yue or not.) Wei Shuguan and Liang Min hold similar views that Pinghua and Yue are separate entities.[56]

Li Lianjin is of the view that the Goulou branch of Yue should be detached from Yue and subsumed under Pinghua.[57] (Geographically Goulou Yue makes up more than 40% of the Yue-speaking area.) Li Xiaofan takes a similar view.[58] We have already mentioned above that Southern Pinghua in Guangxi and Cantonese in the Pearl River Delta are parts of the same dialect continuum (discussed more below); ignoring the Cantonese enclaves in Guangxi, Goulou Yue is linguistically a transition between Southern Pinghua to the west and Guangfu Yue (which includes Cantonese) to the east. So, if one is to argue that Pinghua is separate from Yue, then whether Goulou Yue is Pinghua or Yue is really just a matter of where to dissect this dialect continuum. In other words, it depends on which of the commonalities and differences Goulou Yue has with its neighbours one chooses to give more weight to.[59]

While linguists like those mentioned above focus more on the differences between Pinghua and Yue, others concentrate more on their commonalities and subsume Pinghua, or at least Southern Pinghua, back within Yue. This is the more common position in Chinese linguistics these days.[60]

55 Zhang Junru (1982).

56 Wei (1996); Liang Min and Zhang Junru (1999).

57 Li Lianjin (e.g. 2000, 2003, 2005).

58 Li Xiaofan (2012).

59 See also, e.g., Zhang Min and Zhou Lieting's (2003) rebuttal of Li Lianjin (2003), arguing that Goulou Yue is Yue and not Pinghua.

60 Examples of this view include Qin Yuanxiong (2000), Wu Wei (2001), Xie Jianyou (2007), and Zhan (2007).

While many linguists find Northern Pinghua too dissimilar from Yue, Liang Jinrong takes a relatively "lumpist" view and subsumes both Northern and Southern Pinghua under Yue.[61] Chen Xiaoyan suggests a "tentative" model in which "Old Yue" (*Lao Yueyu*) includes Northern Pinghua, Southern Pinghua and Goulou Yue, while "New Yue" (*Xin Yueyu*) includes other branches of Yue.[62]

Given that Southern Pinghua and Yue basically lie on a dialect continuum, whether they should be considered one or two entities, and where the boundary lies if they are two separate entities, is just a matter of perspectives, with both camps having many arguments that are simultaneously valid.

As for Northern Pinghua, the LAC uses "Northern Pinghua" as a cover term for all Sinitic speech varieties in Guilin and Hezhou Prefectures that are not considered Southern Pinghua, Mandarin, Yue, Hakka, Xiang or Min. The Pinghua dialects around Guilin are still recognizably like Southern Pinghua, with just its phonology and lexicon somewhat Mandarinized (some examples below). On the other hand, the (non-Xiang/non-Mandarin) dialects in northern Guilin Prefecture and Hezhou Prefecture to the east are better understood as a continuation of the *tuhua* zone from neighbouring southern Hunan and northern Guangdong. The formation of the *tuhua*s is to various degrees related to the expansion of Gan and Hakka speakers from the east.[63] The *tuhua* zone is a huge and diverse transition zone between Xiang, Gan, Hakka, Yue and Pinghua, plus influences from the Southwestern Mandarin spoken within the region, and the indigenous languages (primarily Mienic). Like Pinghua, they have been overwhelmed by later arrivals, namely Southwestern Mandarin in southern Hunan and northeastern Guangxi, and Hakka (plus some Yue) in northern Guangdong and the neighbouring northeastern corner of Guangxi.[64]

Some Linguistic Commonalities between (Southern) Pinghua and Yue

In the rest of this article, some linguistic features of Pinghua and the surrounding speech varieties will be demonstrated, correlated with some of the themes discussed above. In this section, some commonalities between Pinghua and Yue, and some differences between Southern Pinghua and Northern Pinghua are demonstrated. In the next two sections, some linguistic differences along

61 Liang Jinrong (1997).

62 Chen Xiaoyan (2007), 362. A similar New versus Old Yue distinction is made by Zhang Min (2005), and Chen Weiqiang and Hou Xingquan (2016).

63 E.g. Cao Shuji (1990); Zhuang (2004), 311–327.

64 See, e.g., Chen Xiaoyan (2007) for Hezhou in Guangxi; Chang (2004) for Lianzhou in Guangdong.

the Southern Pinghua–Yue dialect continuum will be demonstrated. It would go beyond the scope of this article to present a detailed dialectology study, so only a few linguistic features will be discussed here.

Some preliminaries:

a) for comparability, the modern languages are rendered in the International Phonetic Alphabet [IPA], instead of the various romanization schemes like Mandarin Pinyin or Cantonese Jyutping;

b) Middle Chinese [MC] is rendered using a transcription that is close to Baxter's transcription of MC.[65] If needed, a distinction between Early Middle Chinese [EMC] and Late Middle Chinese [LMC] will be made.[66] The Middle Chinese tones of Level (*Ping* 平), Rising (*Shang* 上), Departing (*Qu* 去) and Entering (*Ru* 入) are notated here as A, B, C and D, respectively;

c) "Sino-Vietnamese" [SV] is the pronunciations associated with Sinitic words borrowed into Vietnamese at any stage of history. "Early SV" and "Late SV" are two different layers of Chinese pronunciation used in the *modern* Vietnamese language; Early SV entered Vietnamese before Middle Chinese, Late SV at around the time of LMC;[67]

d) with Sino-Zhuang (in Wuming Zhuang), the newer loans from Southwestern Mandarin are ignored, leaving only the older loans from Pinghua;

e) data from the Min languages are labelled for the layer borrowed from MC versus linguistic material inherited from a pre-MC era.

MC has the following consonantal codas: *-p*, *-t*, *-k*, *-m*, *-n*, *-ŋ*. Southern Pinghua is like Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-Zhuang, most Yue dialects (e.g., Cantonese) and the MC layer in Southern Min in having a medium-high to high level of conservatism with these consonantal codas. Table 1 exemplifies the conservatism of Southern Pinghua and some other languages with these codas. Most Sinitic languages to the north have lost *-p*, *-t*, *-k* and *-m* in different ways. Northern Pinghua, under the influence of Southwestern Mandarin, has also lost these codas. Table 2 exemplifies Northern Pinghua and some other languages as not being conservative with the codas.

65 Baxter (1992), 27–85.

66 EMC refers to the phonological system deduced from the rime book *Qieyun* 切韻 (601 CE). LMC refers to the phonological system of the rime tables *Yunjing* 韻鏡 (earliest surviving edition: 1161 CE) and *Qiyinlüe* 七音略 (before 1161).

67 Following Phan (2013). In more-common usage, "Sino-Vietnamese" refers to the system of pronunciation of Chinese characters in Vietnamese society, which largely corresponds with what Phan refers to as Late SV.

TABLE 1 Examples of the conservatism of MC consonantal codas in Southern Pinghua and other languages

			EMC	S Pinghua	Sino-Zhuang	Sino-Viet	Cantonese	S Min (MC layer)
1.	十	[ten]	*dzyip* ^{D}	*ɬɐp*^{2}	*ɕip*^{3}	*tʰəp*^{31ʔ}	*sɐp*^{2}	*sip*^{5}
2.	八	[eight]	*pɐt* ^{D}	*pat*^{3}	*peːt*^{24}	*ɓat*^{35}	*pat*^{3}	*pat*^{32}
3.	六	[six]	*ljuʷk* ^{D}	*lʊk*^{23}	*lok*^{3}	*lʊ͡kp*^{31ʔ}	*lʊk*^{2}	*liok*^{5}
4.	三	[three]	*sam* ^{A}	*ɬam*^{53}	*θaːm*^{24}	*tam*^{44}	*sam*^{55}	*sam*^{55}
5.	千	[1,000]	*tshen* ^{A}	*tʃʰin*^{53}	*ɕiɛn*^{24}	*tʰiɔn*^{44}	*tsʰin*^{55}	*tsʰiɛn*^{55}
6.	零	[zero]	*leŋ* ^{A}	*lən*^{21}	*liŋ*^{21}	*lɪ̰ŋ*^{44}	*lɪŋ*^{21}	*lɪŋ*^{24}

TABLE 2 Examples of the non-conservatism of MC consonantal codas in Northern Pinghua and other languages

			EMC	N Pinghua	Mandarin	Shanghainese	E Min (MC layer)
7.	十	[ten]	*dzyip* ^{D}	*siɛ*^{22}	*ʂʐ̩*^{35}	*zɐʔ*^{12}	*seiʔ*^{4}
8.	八	[eight]	*pɐt* ^{D}	*puo*^{55}	*pa*^{55}	*pɐʔ*^{5}	*paiʔ*^{23}
9.	六	[six]	*ljuʷk* ^{D}	*liu*^{55}	*liu*^{51}	*loʔ*^{12}	*lyʔ*^{4}
10.	三	[three]	*sam* ^{A}	*suaŋ*^{43}	*san*^{55}	*sɛ*^{52}	*saŋ*^{44}
11.	千	[1,000]	*tshen* ^{A}	*tsʰiɛ*^{43}	*tɕʰiɛn*^{55}	*tɕʰi*^{52}	*tsʰieŋ*^{44}
12.	零	[zero]	*leŋ* ^{A}	*lai*^{22}	*liŋ*^{35}	*lɲ*^{23}	*liŋ*^{52}

EMC has the bilabial initials of *p- ph- b- m-*. By LMC, they became labiodental *f- f- ɦ- v-* when followed immediately by *-jo*, *-ju*, or *-jw* (e.g. 風 [wind] EMC *pjuʷŋ*^{A} > LMC *ɸuʷŋ*^{A}; cf. Cantonese *fʊŋ*^{55}, Mandarin *fəŋ*^{55}, vs. Sino-Korean *pʰuŋ*). However, these changes did not occur at the same time: *p- ph- b-* > *f- f- ɦ-* took place earlier than *m-* > *v-*. Pinghua is like Yue in having most instances of EMC *p- ph- b-* in those environments already turned into *f- f- ɦ-* (and later *ɦ-* > *f-*), but *m-* has not yet turned into *v-*. This feature in between EMC and LMC can be traced to Northern Chinese in about the ninth to tenth centuries CE.[68] Some Southern Pinghua dialects, under Mandarin influence, have slightly more cases of *m-* having turned into something like *ʋ-*, *v-*, or *w-*. Northern Pinghua

68 Wang Hongjun (2009).

has many more such cases, due to the much stronger Mandarin influence in the region, but they have typically retained some cases of *m-*. Table 3 exemplifies languages that have retained a bilabial *p- b-* type of pronunciation, versus languages that have turned these into a labiodental *f-* or similar. Table 4 exemplifies languages that have retained a bilabial *m-* type of pronunciation versus languages that have turned these into *f- v-* or the like.

TABLE 3 Examples of the conservation of EMC *p- b-* versus innovations

			EMC	Early Sino-Viet	S Min (pre-MC layer)	Hakka	Sino-Zhuang
13.	斧	[axe]	*pju* ^{B}	*ɓuə*^{35}	*pɔ*^{51}	*pu*^{31}	*fou*^{55}
14.	佛	[Buddha]	*bjut* ^{D}	*ɓut*^{31ʔ}	*put*^{5}	*fut*^{5}	*pat*^{3}

			EMC	S Pinghua	N Pinghua	Canto.	Late SV	S Min (MC layer)	Mand.
13.	斧	[axe]	*pju* ^{B}	*fu*^{33}	*fu*^{23}	*fu*^{35}	*fu*^{324}	*hu*^{51}	*fu*^{214}
14.	佛	[Buddha]	*bjut* ^{D}	*fɐt*^{2}	*fu*^{23}	*fɐt*^{2}	*fət*^{31ʔ}	*hut*^{5}	*fuo*^{35}

TABLE 4 Examples of the conservation of EMC *m-* versus innovations

			EMC	Early Sino-Viet	S Min (MC Layer)	Cantonese	S Pinghua
15.	味	[smell/taste]	*mjwɨj* ^{C}	*mui*^{21}	*bi*^{51}	*mei*^{22}	*məi*^{22}
16.	萬	[10,000]	*mjwon* ^{C}	*muən*^{44}	*buan*^{51}	*man*^{22}	*man*^{22}
17.	文	[writing]	*mjun* ^{A}		*bun*^{24}	*mɐn*^{21}	*mɐn*^{21}

			EMC	N Pinghua	Hakka	Sino-Zhuang	Late Sino-Viet	Mandarin
15.	味	[smell/taste]	*mjwɨj* ^{C}	*mɛi*^{21}	*mi*^{52}	*fai*^{33}	*vi*^{31ʔ}	*vei*^{51}
16.	萬	[10,000]	*mjwon* ^{C}	*uaŋ*^{21}	*van*^{52}	*faːn*^{33}	*van*^{31ʔ}	*van*^{51}
17.	文	[writing]	*mjun* ^{A}	*fən*^{21}	*vun*^{11}	*man*^{21}	*văn*^{44}	*vən*^{35}

Some West-East Linguistic Differences along the Southern Pinghua–Yue Dialect Continuum

In the preceding section, we have seen two phonological traits that are common between Southern Pinghua and Yue (there are many more commonalities) and that Northern Pinghua is Pinghua that has been Mandarinized. Below we will see a small number of linguistic isoglosses that dissect the Southern Pinghua–Yue dialect continuum in a west–east manner.[69] These west–east differences correlate somewhat with whether these linguistic influences came through the Hunan–Guangxi corridor in the west or the Jiangxi–Guangdong corridor in the east.

In the discussions below, an "eastern" feature is demonstrated first with examples from Standard Cantonese, and the corresponding "western" feature is usually demonstrated first with examples from Nanning Pinghua. Examples from some other Pinghua and Yue varieties are also shown. "East" and "west" have been placed in quotation marks here because they are simply features that are more prevalent in areas towards the east and the west respectively. Some "western" features are only found in the western extreme, while some extend quite far east, but most are somewhere between these two extremes. Sometimes there are exclaves of a "western" feature in the east. The reverse of all these is also true for the "eastern" features. Whether a dialect is considered Pinghua or Yue by linguists does not predict whether they have a "western" or an "eastern" feature. It is simply that, on average, a dialect located geographically in the west has more "western" features, one located geographically in the east more "eastern" features.

In this section, the many Cantonese enclaves in Guangxi are excluded by default; they are Yue dialects that have primarily "eastern" features, but are located geographically in the west (their history in the west is short). Within Southern Pinghua, when a "west" versus "east" distinction is made, the Southern Pinghua dialects geographically in northern Guangxi side with the "east". Data from Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Zhuang are also included; Sino-Zhuang sides with the "western" features, while Sino-Vietnamese can have "western" or "central" features (see the next section for the "central" features).

A. Historical phonology:

"East": MC a/o vs. æ/ɛ distinction often maintained in the vowel

"West": MC a/o vs. æ/ɛ division distinction rarely maintained in the vowel

69 More can be seen at de Sousa (forthcoming).

The MC vowels of *a*, *o*, *æ*, and *ɛ* evolved differently in the various modern Sinitic languages. (Not included in the discussions below are cases where these vowels are preceded by the glides of *j-* and/or *w-*.) While perhaps no Sinitic language has consistently kept the *a/o* vs. *æ/ɛ* distinction, some have more instances of keeping this distinction than others.

Looking at the Jiangxi–Guangdong Corridor, Yue has maintained the distinction about half of the time.[70] Yue has maintained the distinction better than Hakka, and Hakka better than Gan.[71] With the Hunan–Guangxi Corridor, Xiang is also poor in maintaining this distinction.[72] Sino-Vietnamese has not maintained this distinction in its vowels (but see below on how the distinction is maintained by the preceding initial in some cases). Sino-Zhuang has also largely not maintained this distinction. In Southern Pinghua, the distinction often occurs, as in most Yue dialects to the east, except that from about Nanning westward the distinction is not well kept.

With the MC rimes *-a* vs. *-æ* (with no coda): Cantonese in the east usually has them as *-ɔ* versus *-a* respectively. In the west, however, a distinction is usually not made, with both *a/o* and *æ/ɛ* usually having *-a* as the reflex. Examples of this (shown below) are Late Sino-Vietnamese, Funing Pinghua in Yunnan (the western-most Pinghua variety) and Hepu Shatian 沙田 Yue. Also shown below are speech varieties that are somewhere in between, i.e. sometimes making a distinction, sometimes not. In Nanning, Weizilu 位子滷 Pinghua does not always make a distinction, whereas Tingzi 亭子 Pinghua makes a clear one. (Tingzi Pinghua is also relatively Cantonesized, being closer to the city centre.) See Table 5.

With the MC rimes {*-aj -oj*} vs. {*-æj -ɛj -ɛ*}, and *-aw* vs. *-æw*, Cantonese in the east usually has them as *-ɔi* versus *-ai*, and *-ou* versus *-au* respectively. In the west, again, a distinction is usually not made, both being *-ai* and *-au* respectively. However, in comparison with the preceding *-a* vs. *-æ* set, the isogloss for these sets lies further to the east. In Nanning Pinghua, no distinction is made with these vowels (this contrasts with Nanning Cantonese, where the distinction is often made, similar to Standard Cantonese). The mixed patterns occur in localities slightly to the east in, e.g., Binyang Pinghua, Guigang Yue and Hepu Yue. Another phenomenon worth noting is the fronting of the *k-* initial in front of MC *-æ/-ɛ*: MC *k-* becomes *z-* in Sino-Vietnamese, *ki-* (*kj-*) in Sino-Zhuang and *ts-* / *tʃ-* in Binyang Pinghua. Thus, in Late Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Zhuang,

70 The following MC distinctions are generally kept in Yue: *-a* vs. *-æ*; {*-aj -oj*} vs. {*-æj -ɛj -ɛ*}; *-aw* vs. *-æw*; {*-am -om*} vs. {*-æm -ɛm*} with velar initials; {*-an*} vs. {*-æn -ɛn*} with velar initials.

71 For Hakka, see Xie Liuwen (2003), 39–46; for Gan, see Sun (2007), 156–157.

72 Chen Hui (2006), 112–126.

TABLE 5 Examples of maintenance vs. non-maintenance of the MC {-*a*} vs. {-*æ*} distinction in vowels

			EMC	Late SV	Funing Pinghua	Hepu Shatian Yue	Sino-Zhuang	Nanning Ping (Weizilu)
18.	鑼	[gong]	*la* A	*la*^{44}	*la*^{31}	*la*^{55}	*la*^{21}	*la*^{21}
19.	羅	[net]	*la* A	*la*^{44}	*la*^{31}	*la*^{55}	*la*^{21} *lo*^{21}	*lɔ*^{21}
20.	我	[I]	*ŋa* B	*ŋa*^{325}	*ŋa*^{21}	*ŋa*^{11}		*ŋa*^{13}
21.	鵝	[goose]	*ŋa* A	*ŋa*^{44}	*ŋa*^{31}	*ŋa*^{55}	*ŋo*^{21}	*ŋɔ*^{21}
22.	茶	[tea]	*dræ* A	*ɕa*^{21}	*tsa*^{31}	*tsʰa*^{55}	*ɕa*^{21}	*tʃa*^{21}
23.	家	[home]	*kæ* A	*za*^{44}	*ka*^{44}	*ka*^{213}	*kia*^{24}	*ka*^{53}

			EMC	Nanning Ping (Tingzi)	Binyang Pinghua	Hepu Yue	Rongshui Pinghua	Cantonese
18.	鑼	[gong]	*la* A	*lɔ*^{21}	*læ*^{213}	*lo*^{44}	*lɔ*^{21}	*lɔ*^{21}
19.	羅	[net]	*la* A	*lɔ*^{21}	*læ*^{213}	*lo*^{44}	*lɔ*^{21}	*lɔ*^{21}
20.	我	[I]	*ŋa* B	*ŋɔ*^{13}	*ŋæ*^{22}	*ŋo*^{35}	*ŋu*^{45}	*ŋɔ*^{13}
21.	鵝	[goose]	*ŋa* A	*ŋɔ*^{21}	*ŋæ*^{213}	*ŋo*^{44}	*ŋɔ*^{21}	*ŋɔ*^{21}
22.	茶	[tea]	*dræ* A	*tɕa*^{21}	*tʃa*^{213}	*tsʰa*^{44}	*tʃia*^{21}	*tsʰa*^{21}
23.	家	[home]	*kæ* A	*ka*^{41}	*tʃa*^{35}	*ka*^{45}	*ka*^{52}	*ka*^{55}

although the *-a/-o* vs. *-æ/-ɛ* distinction is not kept by the vowels, the distinction is kept by a difference in some of the initials. See Table 6.

B. Historical phonology:
In the Pearl River Basin:
"East": MC voiced plosive and affricate initials become voiceless aspirated in tones A&B, and voiceless unaspirated in tones C&D
"West": MC voiced plosive and affricate initials become voiceless unaspirated

In EMC, there were three series of plosive and affricate initials: voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated and voiced. For instance, with bilabials, they were *p-*, *ph-* and *b-* respectively. In most Sinitic languages, the voiced plosives and affricates became voiceless. (In Mandarin and Cantonese, what are commonly transliterated as *b-* and *p-* are in fact both voiceless, i.e. *p-* and *ph-*.) When they become voiceless, whether they become aspirated or unaspirated

TABLE 6 Examples of maintenance vs. non-maintenance of the MC {*-aj -oj*} vs. {*-æj -ɛj -ɛ*}, and *-aw* vs. *-æw* distinction on the vowel

			EMC	Late SV	Sino-Zhuang	Hepu Shatian Yue	Nanning Pinghua
24.	該	[should]	*koj* ^{A}	*kai*^{44}	*kaːi*^{24}	*kai*^{213}	*kai*^{53}
25.	高	[high]	*kaw* ^{A}	*kau*^{44}	*kaːu*^{24}	*kau*^{213}	*kau*^{53}
26.	再	[again]	*tsoj* ^{C}	*tai*^{35}	*ɕaːi*^{35}	*tsai*^{11}	*tʃai*^{55}
27.	寶	[precious]	*paw* ^{B}	*pau*^{324}	*paːu*^{55}	*pau*^{11}	*pau*^{33}
28.	階	[stair]	*kɛj* ^{A}	*zai*^{44}		*kai*^{213}	*kai*^{53}
29.	交	[cross]	*kæw* ^{A}	*zau*^{44}	*kiaːu*^{24}	*kau*^{213}	*kau*^{53}
30.	債	[debt]	*tsrɛ* ^{C}	*cai*^{35}	*ɕaːi*^{35}	*tsai*^{11}	*tʃai*^{55}
31.	飽	[full]	*pæw* ^{B}	*pau*^{3ʔ5}		*pau*^{11}	*pau*^{33}

			EMC	Binyang Pinghua	Guigang Nanjiang Yue	Hepu Yue	Rongshui Pinghua	Canto.
24.	該	[should]	*koj* ^{A}	*kœ*^{35}	*kui*^{44}	*kui*^{45}	*kɐi*^{52}	*kɔi*^{55}
25.	高	[high]	*kaw* ^{A}	*kœu*^{35}	*kɐu*^{44}	*kɐu*^{45}	*ku*^{52}	*kou*^{55}
26.	再	[again]	*tsoj* ^{C}	*tʃai*^{35}	*tʃɔi*^{52}	*tsui*^{44}	*tʃɐi*^{45}	*tsɔi*^{33}
27.	寶	[precious]	*paw* ^{B}	*pœ*^{33}	*pɐu*^{34}	*pau*^{35}	*pou*^{55}	*pou*^{35}
28.	階	[stair]	*kɛj* ^{A}	*tʃai*^{35}	*kɔi*^{44}	*kai*^{45}	*kai*^{52}	*kai*^{55}
29.	交	[cross]	*kæw* ^{A}	*tʃau*^{35}	*kiɛu*^{44}	*kau*^{45}	*kau*^{52}	*kau*^{55}
30.	債	[debt]	*tsrɛ* ^{C}	*tʃai*^{55}	*tʃɔi*^{52}	*tsai*^{44}	*tʃai*^{45}	*tsai*^{33}
31.	飽	[full]	*pæw* ^{B}	*pœu*^{33}	*piɛu*^{34}	*pau*^{35}	*pau*^{55}	*pau*^{35}

varies. In the Hunan–Guangxi corridor, the Xiang dialects range from having retained most of the voiced initials (e.g. Quanzhou 全州 in Guangxi) to the majority having become voiceless unaspirated (e.g. Changsha, the capital of Hunan).[73] Sino-Vietnamese is also voiceless unaspirated. (However, in Vietnamese there is a later sound change that changed *p- t-* to implosives *ɓ- ɗ-*.)[74] On the other hand, in the Jiangxi – Guangdong corridor to the east, Gan and Hakka are mostly voiceless aspirated. (The superscript ^{h} in Tables 7 and 8 indicates aspiration.)

73 See also Chen Hui (2006), 25–48.

74 Phan (2013), 318.

TABLE 7 Development of MC voiced plosive initials in Xiang, Sino-Vietnamese, Hakka, and Gan

		EMC	Changsha Xiang	Quanzhou Xiang	Late Sino-Viet	Hakka	Nanchang Gan
36.	平 [flat]	*bjæŋ* ^{A}	*pin*^{13}	*biŋ*^{23}	*ɓɪŋ*^{21}	*pʰin*^{11}	*pʰiaŋ*^{24}
37.	田 [field]	*den* ^{A}	*tiẽ*^{13}	*diẽ*^{23}	*dɨən*^{21}	*tʰiɛn*^{11}	*tʰiɛn*^{24}
38.	狂 [mad]	*gjwaŋ* ^{A}	*kuan*^{13}	*guãŋ*^{23}	*kuəŋ*^{21}	*kʰɔŋ*^{11}	*kʰuɔŋ*^{24}
39.	被 [cover]	*bje* ^{B}	*pei*^{21}	*bi*^{35}	*ɓi*^{31ʔ}	*pʰi*^{44}	*pʰi*^{21}
40.	淡 [bland]	*dam* ^{B}	*tan*^{21}	*daŋ*^{35}	*ɗam*^{31ʔ}	*tʰam*^{44}	*tʰan*^{21}
41.	艇 [dugout]	*deng* ^{B}	*tʰin*^{41}	*tʰiŋ*^{55}	*ɗiŋ̍*^{3ʔ5}	*tʰin*^{31}	*tʰin*^{213}
42.	近 [near]	*gjɨn* ^{B}	*tɕin*^{21}	*dʑiŋ*^{35}	*kən*^{31ʔ}	*kʰiun*^{44}	*tɕʰin*^{21}
43.	病 [sick]	*bjæŋ* ^{C}	*pin*^{21}	*biŋ*^{35}	*ɓəjŋ̍*^{31ʔ}	*pʰiaŋ*^{52}	*pʰiaŋ*^{21}
44.	電 [electric]	*den* ^{C}	*tiẽ*^{45}	*diẽ*^{35}	*ɗɨən*^{31ʔ}	*tʰiɛn*^{52}	*tʰiɛn*^{21}
45.	白 [white]	*bæk* ^{D}	*pɤ*^{24}	*bə*^{23}	*ɓăjk̚*^{31ʔ}	*pʰak*^{5}	*pʰak*^{21}
46.	達 [reach]	*dat* ^{D}	*ta*^{24}	*da*^{23}	*ɗat*^{31ʔ}	*tʰat*^{5}	*tʰat*^{21}
47.	及 [reach]	*gip* ^{D}	*tɕi*^{24}	*tɕʑ*^{33}	*ɣăp*^{31ʔ}	*kʰip*^{5}	*tɕʰit*^{21}

With Southern Pinghua and Yue, two axes need to be distinguished: the Pearl River Basin, and the coast and hinterlands to the south. We will only look at the situation in the former here. In the Pearl River Basin, in the west, we find something similar to the general trend along the Hunan–Guangxi corridor: voiced plosives and affricates became voiceless unaspirated. This covers Southern Pinghua and most of Goulou Yue (i.e. this isogloss reaches quite far east: e.g. Guangning in Table 8 is only about 130 km away from Guangzhou). In the east, the situation resembles a mixture of the patterns found in the two corridors: they are aspirated in tones AB, and unaspirated in tones CD. This covers Guangfu Yue (as defined by the LAC), a large part of which is Cantonese. This mixed pattern in Guangfu Yue is attributed to the wave of northern Chinese migrants who arrived in Guangdong via Jiangxi during the latter years of the Song Dynasty.[75] This twelfth/thirteenth-century wave of northern Chinese is Early Mandarin; most Mandarin dialects also have a similar mixed pattern of aspirated in tone A vs. unaspirated in tones CD.

75 Lau (2001).

TABLE 8 Development of MC voiced plosive initials in Pinghua and Yue dialects in the Pearl River Basin

		EMC	Nanning Pinghua	Rongshui Pinghua	Mengshan Yue	Guangning Yue	Cantonese
48.	平 [flat]	*bjæŋ* ^{A}	*pən*^{21}	*pɛŋ*^{21}	*piŋ*^{21}	*piɐŋ*^{21}	*pʰeŋ*^{21}
49.	田 [field]	*den* ^{A}	*tin*^{21}	*tin*^{21}	*tin*^{21}	*ten*^{21}	*tʰin*^{21}
50.	狂 [mad]	*gjwaŋ* ^{A}	*kʷaŋ*^{21}	*kuŋ*^{21}	*kuəŋ*^{21}	*kuɔŋ*^{21}	*kʷʰɔŋ*^{21}
51.	被 [cover]	*bje* ^{B}	*pəi*^{13}		*pi*^{35}	*pɐi*^{214}	*pʰei*^{13}
52.	淡 [bland]	*dam* ^{B}	*tam*^{13}	*tam*^{24}	*tam*^{35}	*tam*^{214}	*tʰam*^{13}
53.	艇 [dugout]	*deng* ^{B}	*tʰɛŋ*^{13}	*tʰɛŋ*^{55}	*tiŋ*^{35}	*tiɐŋ*^{214}	*tʰɛŋ*^{13}
54.	近 [near]	*gjɨn* ^{B}	*kɐn*^{13}	*kɛn*^{24}	*kɐn*^{35}	*kɐn*^{214}	*kʰɐn*^{13}
55.	病 [sick]	*bjæŋ* ^{C}	*pən*^{22}	*pɛŋ*^{24}	*piŋ*^{214}	*piɐŋ*^{214}	*pɛŋ*^{22}
56.	電 [electric]	*den* ^{C}	*tin*^{22}	*tin*^{24}	*tin*^{214}	*ten*^{214}	*tin*^{22}
57.	白 [white]	*bæk* ^{D}	*pɛk*^{2}	*pɛk*^{35}	*piak*^{22}	*pak*^{214}	*pak*^{2}
58.	達 [reach]	*dat* ^{D}	*tat*^{2}	*tat*^{35}	*tat*^{22}	*tat*^{214}	*tat*^{2}
59.	及 [reach]	*gip* ^{D}	*kɐp*^{2}	*kiɐp*^{35}	*tʃɐp*^{55}	*kɐp*^{22}	*kʰɐp*^{2}

The "western" unaspirated pattern is older for Yue, and remnants of it are found even within the Pearl River Delta (and there is no evidence that these Yue dialects were influenced by Goulou Yue). For instance, in Shunde, about 50 km south of Guangzhou, they have the Cantonese pattern, except that some commonly used words have kept the older unaspirated pattern: e.g. in tone A 婆 *pɔ*^{42} [old woman], 茶 *tsa*^{42} [tea], 甜 *tim*^{42} [sweet], and in tone B 淡 *tam*^{13} [bland],[76] cf. Standard Cantonese 婆 *pʰɔ*^{21} [old woman], 茶 *tsʰa*^{21} [tea], 甜 *tʰim*^{21} [sweet], and tone B 淡 *tʰam*^{13} [bland] (MC 婆 *bwa* ^{A}, 茶 *drœ* ^{A}, 甜 *dem* ^{A}, 淡 *dam* ^{B}).

C. Vocabulary Differences

There are vocabulary differences amongst the Pinghua and Yue dialects. Most of the time there are no simple east-vs.-west isoglosses for these vocabulary items. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that most vocabulary items that are often thought of as "typical of Yue" are actually Cantonese words that have spread

76 Chen Weiqiang and Hou Xingquan (2016).

various distances from the Pearl River Delta westwards and replaced earlier words used in the west. In other words, most of these "typically Yue" words are not universal among Yue dialects. Roughly speaking, the further west one goes, the less often one encounters these eastern/Cantonese words. A few examples will be given here.

The Cantonese word for "read" (e.g. book)/"watch" (e.g. film) is 睇 *tʰɐi³⁵* (MC *tʰejᴬ*). This word is near-universal amongst Yue dialects,[77] e.g. in eastern Guangxi: Yulin *tʰai³³*, Guigang *tʰɔi³⁵*. However, in Yue dialects further west and in Pinghua, the cognate of Mandarin 看 *kʰan⁵¹* (MC *khanᶜ*) is used: Hepu Yue 看 *hun⁴⁴*, Nanning Pinghua 看 *han³⁵*.

The copula 係 (MC *kejᶜ*) [to be] is often considered emblematic of Yue and Hakka,[78] e.g. Cantonese *hɐi²²*, Hakka *hɛ⁵²*. All the other Sinitic languages use 是 (MC *dzyeᴮ*), e.g. Mandarin *ʂʐ̩⁵¹* and Shanghainese *zʐ̩²³*. Nonetheless, upon closer inspection, not all Yue dialects use 係; with an isogloss running slightly to the west of the Guangxi–Guangdong border,[79] Yue dialects to the west of this isogloss use 是, e.g. Yulin *si²⁴*, Guigang *sei²¹*, Hepu *si²¹*. All Pinghua dialects use 是, e.g. Nanning *ɬi²²* and Lingui Wutong *ɕi¹²*.

At about the same location is another isogloss for two different pronunciations of the word 鼻 [nose].[80] The *Qieyun* only records a tone C version, *bjijᶜ*. To the east of this isogloss the tone C version is used, e.g. Cantonese *pei²²* and Bobai Yue (in far eastern Guangxi) *pʰɐi²¹*. To the west is a tone D version, with a *-t* coda, e.g., Guigang Yue *pat²¹ si²¹* and Hepu Yue *pʰɐt²¹ lɐŋ⁴⁴*. The Yulin Yue word for "nose" combines both versions: *pat¹¹ pi¹¹*. The tone D version is universal amongst the Pinghua dialects, e.g. Nanning *pɐt² tʃi³³* and Lingui Wutong *peʔ²²*.

D. Grammatical differences:
"East": two main negators; "West": one main negator

There are also many east–west grammatical differences. Here we will look at just one example: the negators.

Similar to Mandarin, which has two basic negators, 不 *pu⁵¹* and 沒~沒有 *mei³⁵ ~ mei³⁵ jou²¹³*, Standard Cantonese also has two functionally similar

77 Cao Zhiyun et al. (2008), map Lexicon 121.
78 For instance, in the text for map B8 in first edition of LAC, all Hakka dialects are said to use 係, and "it seems" that all Yue dialects also use 係. (Gan, in contrast, uses 是.)
79 Cao Zhiyun et al. (2008), map Grammar 038.
80 Cao Zhiyun et al. (2008), map Phonetics 037.

basic negators 唔 *m²¹* and 冇 *mou¹³*. Here, in an oversimplified manner, they are called imperfective [IPFV] and perfective [PFV] negators respectively.[81]

Standard Cantonese

60. 我唔去 *ŋɔ¹³ m²¹ hɵy³³* (I NEG:IPFV go) [I am not going / I will not go.]
61. 我冇去 *ŋɔ¹³ mou¹³ hɵy³³* (I NEG:PFV go) [I did not go.]

"Not have" or "not exist" is expressed by a single 冇 *mou¹³*, not 唔有 *m²¹ jɐu¹³* or 冇有 *mou¹³ jɐu¹³*.

62. 我冇錢 *ŋɔ¹³ mou¹³ tsʰin³⁵* (I NEG: have money) [I did/do/will not have money.]

Towards the west, starting from approximately the western third of Guangdong, a single negator is used for both imperfective and perfective negation.[82] For instance, in Yangjiang on the mid-west coast of Guangdong, 無 *mou⁴³* corresponds to both 唔 *m²¹* and 冇 *mou¹³* in Standard Cantonese.[83] In western Guangdong the general negator often has the negative possession/existence meaning as well, similar to Standard Cantonese 冇 *mou¹³*.

Looking further west in Guangxi, the norm is to convey "not have" or "not exist" with two separate words.[84] The best example with which to illustrate this is Nanning Cantonese. Compare the Nanning Cantonese examples below (demonstrating the western pattern with two separate words 冇有*mu²⁴ jɐu²⁴*) with the Standard Cantonese examples above (demonstrating the eastern pattern with a single word 冇 *mou¹³*).

Nanning Cantonese

63. 我冇去 *ŋɔ²⁴ mu²⁴ hy³³* (I NEG go) [I did not go. / I am not going. / I will not go.]
64. 我冇有錢 *ŋɔ²⁴ mu²⁴ jɐu²⁴ tsʰin²¹* (I NEG have money) [I did/do/will not have money.]

The same constructions are found in Zhuang.[85]

81 There have been many different accounts of the functional differences between these two negators. For instance, Xiao and McEnery (2008) claim that the difference in Mandarin is that *bù* negates the existence of a state, while *méi* ~ *méiyǒu* negates the realization of an event.

82 Cao Zhiyun et al. (2008), map Grammar 033.

83 Zhan et al. (2002), 211.

84 Cao Zhiyun et al. (2008), map Grammar 030. See also Law (2014).

85 However, note that Pittayaporn et al. (2014) reconstruct negators in Proto-Tai with the same distinction as that found in Standard Cantonese and Standard Mandarin: {**ɓaw*^{B} ~ **mi*} and **paj*^{B} for what I call "imperfective" and "perfective" negation respectively. This distinction is kept by very few modern Tai languages.

Northern Zhuang
65. *kow²⁴ ɓow⁵⁵ paj²⁴* (I NEG go)
66. *kow²⁴ ɓow⁵⁵ mi²¹ ŋan²¹* (I NEG have money)

Many Pinghua and Yue dialects in Guangxi are like this. The following are some examples.

Nanning Pinghua
67. 我冇去 *ŋa¹³ mi¹³ həi³⁵* (I NEG go)
68. 我冇有錢 *ŋa¹³ mi¹³ jəu¹³ tʃin²¹* (I NEG have money)

Guigang Yue[86]
69. 冇去 *ma¹³ hœy⁴¹* (NEG go) [X did not go. / X is not going. / X will not go.]
70. 冇有錢 *ma¹³ jau¹³ tsʰin³³* (NEG have money) [X does/did/will not have money.]

Hepu Yue[87]
71. 冇去 *mɐu²¹ hu⁴⁴* (NEG go)
72. 冇有 *mɐu²¹ jɐu³⁵* (NEG have) [X does/did/will not have.]

Lingui Wutong Pinghua[88]
73. 冇入 *mou⁵³ ŋɐʔ²²* (NEG enter) [X did not enter. / X is not entering. / X will not enter.]
74. 冇得辦法 *mou⁵³ tɐʔ⁵ pã¹²faʔ⁵* (NEG exist solution) [There is no solution.]

Some Linguistic Features in the Middle of the Southern Pinghua–Yue Dialect Continuum

We have seen above some "west-vs.-east" linguistic differences along the Southern Pinghua–Yue dialect continuum. There are a few cases where Nanning Pinghua in the west and Standard Cantonese in the east share a linguistic feature, while places in between have a different, usually less common feature. That Nanning and Guangzhou share features which are different from places in between can be attributed to the fact that Nanning and Guangzhou received more population traffic from the north than the places in between,

86 Chen Xiaojin and Weng Zewen (2010), 411.
87 Chen Xiaojin and Chen Tao (2005), 372.
88 Zhou Benliang (2005), 223–224, 250–251, 293. 冇得 *mou⁵³ tɐʔ⁵* [not exist] is the negative form of 有 *iau⁵³* [exist].

which caused Nanning and Guangzhou to have more linguistic features that are "normal" from a Sinitic point of view. In the central region (eastern Guangxi and western Guangdong), there is the Hunan–Guilin–Hepu route, which was the primary route between northern China and the Red River Delta before the Tang Dynasty. However, the Guilin–Hepu route was gradually used less by the Chinese from the north due to: a) Guangzhou gradually overtaking Hepu as a long-distance trading port after the Eastern Han Dynasty;[89] b) the opening of the Plum Pass Road (716 CE) during the Tang Dynasty, causing an explosion of population in Guangdong, further increasing its importance (see above); and c) the rise of the Guilin–Liuzhou–Nanning route in Guangxi to the west during the Song Dynasty, especially after the defeat of the Nong polity in 1053.[90] The increase in traffic from the north to Guangzhou and Nanning supplied Guangzhou and Nanning with linguistic features that are relatively normal from a Sinitic linguistic point of view. On the other hand, the land in between, with fewer of these northern Chinese influences, managed to keep more of the regional linguistic features,[91] some of which are retentions, while others are local innovations.

One common development in the central region is the MC initials *ts- tsh- dz-* "fortifying" to *t- tʰ- d-*. This sound change is primarily found in areas close to the Guangxi–Guangdong border, and also around the Siyi area (e.g. Taishan) in Guangdong.[92] Sino-Vietnamese has essentially the same development of MC *ts- tsh- dz-* becoming *t- tʰ- t-*. See Table 9.

TABLE 9 Development of MC *ts- tsh- dz-* in Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-Zhuang, and some Pinghua and Yue dialects

				west		*central*				*east*
			EMC	Sino-Zhng	Nanning Pinghua	Late SV	Yulin Yue	Lianshan Yue	Taishan Yue	Canto.
75.	精	[essence]	*tsjeŋ* ᴬ	*ɕiŋ*^{24}	*tʃən*^{53}	*tiɲ*^{44}	*tɛŋ*^{55}	*tɛŋ*^{53}	*ten*^{33}	*tseŋ*^{55}
76.	清	[clear]	*tshjeŋ* ᴬ	*ɕiŋ*^{24}	*tʃʰən*^{53}	*tʰiɲ*^{44}	*tʰɛŋ*^{55}	*tʰɛŋ*^{53}	*tʰen*^{33}	*tsʰeŋ*^{55}
77.	從	[follow]	*dzjoʷŋ* ᴬ	*ɕoŋ*^{21}	*tʃʊŋ*^{21}	*tɔn̂m*^{21}	*tɔŋ*^{32}	*ɬoŋ*^{21}	*tʰøŋ*^{22}	*tsʰʊŋ*^{21}

89 E.g. Chen Hongbo (2010).

90 E.g. Anderson (2007).

91 See also Churchman (2019) on the Sinicization of southeastern Guangxi, which occurred much later than the Pearl River Delta, the Red River Delta, and the Nanning area.

92 E.g. Cao Zhiyun et al. (2008), maps Phonetics 061–065.

TABLE 10 Development of MC *p- t- tr- k-* in Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-Zhuang, and some Pinghua and Yue dialects

				west		*central*		*east*
			EMC	Sino-Zhuang	Nanning Pinghua	Late SV	Lianshan Yue	Cantonese
78.	幫	[help]	*paŋ* ^{A}	*paːŋ*^{24}	*paŋ*^{53}	*ɓaŋ*^{44}	*bøŋ*^{53}	*pɔŋ*^{55}
79.	端	[tip]	*twan* ^{A}	*tuon*^{24}	*tun*^{53}	*ɗwan*^{44}	*dun*^{53}	*tyn*^{55}
80.	知	[know]	*trje* ^{A}		*tʃi*^{53}	*ci*^{44}	*tʃi*^{53}	*tsi*^{55}
81.	見	[see]	*ken* ^{C}		*kin*^{55}	*kiən*^{35}	*kin*^{35}	*kin*^{33}

Also around the Guangxi–Guangdong border region, a common sound change is the MC initials *p- t-* becoming implosives *ɓ- ɗ-* or voiced *b- d-*, without the other voiceless obstruents like *tr-*, *ts-*, or *k-* having a similar sound change.[93] The sound change of *p- t-* > *ɓ- ɗ-* again also occurs in Vietnamese, but not in most other Vietic languages.[94] See Table 10.

As for Zhuang, occurrences of these *ɓ- ɗ-* initials in Sinitic languages are often attributed to the substrate Kra-Dai languages (e.g. Zhuang), where *ɓ- ɗ-* (or *b- d-*) are very common. Zhuang does indeed have *ɓ-* and *ɗ-*. However, Sino-Zhuang has simple *p- t-* for the MC *p- t-* initials. The Tai family is not known to have a *p- t-* > *ɓ- ɗ-* sound change.[95] In other words, the *p- t-* > *ɓ- ɗ-* sound change in the Sinitic languages is not an influence from the Kra-Dai languages.[96]

Conclusion

The history of a language is not the same as the history of its speakers. Nonetheless, there is a degree of correlation between the two: historical records of population movements and linguistic traits (modern linguistic traits and linguistic traits deduced from historical documents) help each other

93 E.g. Cao Zhiyun et al. (2008), maps Phonetics 044, 049, 054.

94 See the model of Phan (2013), 318.

95 E.g. Pittayaporn (2009).

96 Research on implosives in Sinitic languages includes Zhu Xiaonong (2006) and Zhu Xiaonong and Cun Xi (2006). In particular, Zhu Xiaonong and Cun Xi (2006) argue that the implosives found in some Wu and Min dialects are not from the Kra-Dai substrate but arose through internal mechanisms.

in painting a fuller picture of the migration history of a region. Chinese has been written for millennia, causing many linguistic features of various historical stages of northern Chinese to be known. When looking at the southern Chinese varieties, based on features of what stage(s) of northern Chinese they have preserved, one can deduce approximately when the northern Chinese ancestors of these speakers left northern China for southern China. Written records of some of the more-prominent southern Chinese varieties (e.g. Southern Min, Cantonese) appeared within the last few centuries. With these records, one can gain some understanding of their more recent migration history, for instance, approximately when specific groups of Cantonese migrants left the Guangzhou area.

Pinghua is the oldest Sinitic dialect group in Guangxi. Pinghua people's Sinitic ancestors arrived in Guangxi primarily from northern China through Hunan. The Pinghua and the indigenous Zhuang have influenced each other linguistically, culturally and genetically for about one millennium, though the Pinghua population is smaller than the Zhuang population in most regions of Guangxi. Not only is the number of Pinghua speakers small in relation to Zhuang, Pinghua has been overtaken by three other Sinitic groups that arrived in Guangxi later: Southwestern Mandarin, which also arrived from the north via Hunan but centuries later, and Yue and Hakka, which arrived from Guangdong to the east.

Yue is the largest Sinitic dialect group in Guangdong and Guangxi. Yue people's Sinitic ancestors arrived in Guangdong primarily from the north via Jiangxi. The Yue language was formed in the Pearl River Delta before spreading primarily in a westward direction and gradually filling western Guangdong and eastern Guangxi. During this gradual westward expansion, Yue absorbed linguistic elements from the pre-existing Sinitic languages (most of which probably resembled Pinghua) and the indigenous languages (most of which probably resembled Zhuang). Other than this gradual westward expansion, within the last 150 years or so many speakers of Cantonese (i.e. standard Yue) migrated directly from the Pearl River Delta to Guangxi, forming many Cantonese enclaves in Guangxi.

Linguistically, Pinghua is often divided into Southern Pinghua and Northern Pinghua; Northern Pinghua is Pinghua that has been substantially Mandarinized (due to the influx of Southwestern Mandarin speakers in northeastern Guangxi), while Southern Pinghua is relatively conservative. Southern Pinghua and the non-Cantonese Yue dialects in Guangxi form a dialect continuum, which continues further east as the Yue dialects in Guangdong. (The Cantonese enclaves in Guangxi are thus formed by people who migrated directly from nearly the eastern end of the dialect continuum to the west.)

Along the Southern Pinghua–Yue dialect continuum, there are many linguistic isoglosses that are roughly "west-vs.-east", and the isoglosses are spread out along the continuum: some are found to the west, some to the east, and most are somewhere in between.

The "eastern" features are newer Cantonese features that have spread some distance towards the west, adding to or supplanting the older "western" features in the west. Some linguists use the term "New Yue" for these newer Cantonese features, versus "Old Yue" for the older Yue features that are more typically found towards the west.

There are also some features that are shared by Nanning in the west and Guangzhou in the east, but places in between have something different, thus creating a "west + east vs. central" division. This is probably due to Nanning and Guangzhou having greater population flows from the Yangtze and further north, causing these two cities and their hinterlands to conform more to the more common Sinitic linguistic features, whereas the places around the Guangdong–Guangxi border in between have been better at preserving the "atypical" regional features.

When measuring against the Southern Pinghua–Yue dialect continuum, Sino-Zhuang usually sides with the "western" features, while Sino-Vietnamese sides with either the "central" or the "western" features.

Ever since the LAC's decision to elevate Pinghua as a first-order Sinitic dialect group on par with Yue, there have been many debates within Chinese linguistics on its affiliation. Some linguists argue that Pinghua is a branch of Yue, while others argue that Pinghua and Yue are separate entities. In the latter camp, opinions vary as to where the boundary lies. The most popular view among Chinese linguists currently is that Southern Pinghua is a branch of Yue, while Northern Pinghua is "something else". Given that Southern Pinghua and Yue lie on a dialect continuum (ignoring the Cantonese enclaves in Guangxi), whether they should be treated as one or two entities, and where the boundary lies if they are two entities, depends simply on one's perspectives, with both camps having many arguments that can be simultaneously valid. (The debates over Pinghua versus Yue bear similarities with the similarly "never-ending" debates over Hakka versus Gan.)

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Sino-Zhuang: Northern Zhuang of Wuming 武鳴 (Chen Hailun and Lin Yi 2009, supplemented by Qin Xiaohang 2004, and GSYGVY 1983)
Northern Zhuang: general knowledge
Gan: Nanchang 南昌 (BZYJ 2003)
Hakka: Meixian 梅縣 (BZYJ 2003)
Mandarin: Standard Mandarin, general knowledge
Min, Eastern: Fuzhou 福州 (BZYJ 2003)
Min, Southern: Xiamen 廈門 (BZYJ 2003)
Pinghua, Northern: by default Guilin Chaoyang 朝陽 (Xie Jianyou 2007); Lingui Wutong 臨桂五通 (Zhou Benliang 2005, Li Lianjin 2000)
Pinghua, Southern: by default Nanning Weizilu 位子淥 (author's fieldwork); Funing Bo'ai 富寧剝隘 (Li Lianjin 2000); Nanning Tingzi 南寧亭子 (Li Lianjin 2000); Rongshui 融水 (*Tuguai-hua* 土拐話; Xie Jianyou 2007); Binyang Xinqiao 賓陽新橋 (Xie Jianyou 2007)
Xiang: Changsha 長沙 (BZYJ 2003); Quanzhou 全州 (Xie Jianyou 2007)
Wu: Shanghainese (Qian 2008)
Yue, Gaoyang: Yangjiang 陽江 (BZYJ 2003)
Yue, Goulou: Guigang 貴港 (Chen Xiaojin and Weng Zewen 2010); Guigang Nanjiang 貴港南江 (Xie Jianyou 2007); Yulin 玉林 (Zhou Lieting 2002); Mengshan Xihe 蒙山西河 (Xie Jianyou 2007); Bobai 博白 (Xie Jianyou 2007); Lianshan Butian 連山布田 (Zhan et al. 1994); Guangning 廣寧 (Zhan et al. 1998)
Yue, Guangfu: Standard Cantonese, general knowledge; Shunde 順德 Cantonese (Zhan et al. 2002)
Yue, Qinlian: Hepu 合浦 (*Lianzhou-hua* 廉州話; Chen Xiaojin and Chen Tao 2005), Hepu Shatian 合浦沙田 (*Haibian-hua* 海邊話; Chen Xiaojin and Chen Tao 2005)
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