



# Nominal suprafixed and diminutive suffixes in Yuè and Pínghuà Chinese

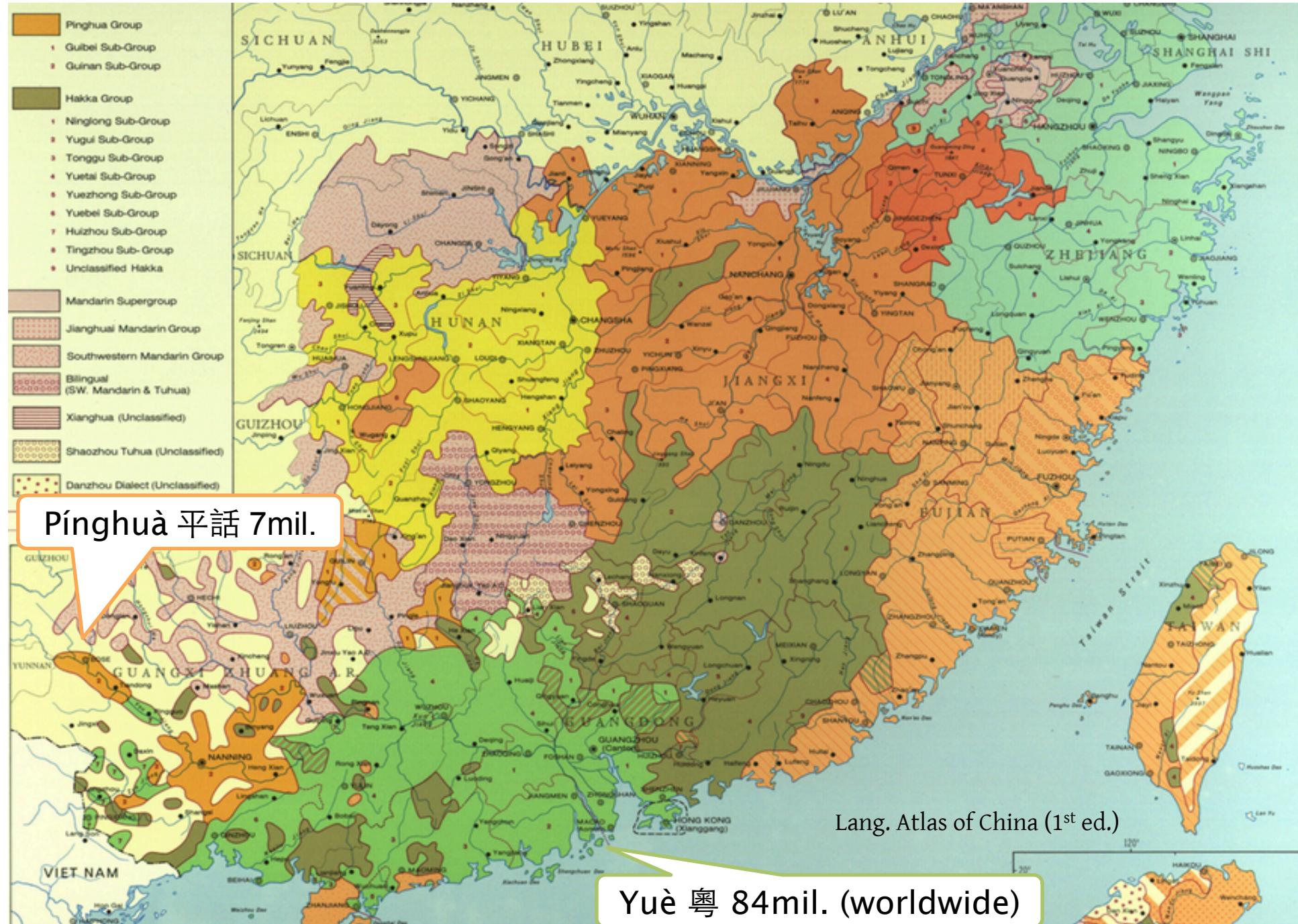
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# Nominal suprafix

- Suprasegmental affix (tones in this case)
- The word becomes or remains a Noun

e.g. Standard Cantonese

刷  $ts^h at^3$  ‘brush (v.)’ (regular reflex of Mid. Chi. 刷  $srwæt^D$ )

刷牙  $ts^h at^3 \eta a^{21}$  ‘brush teeth’

(Asian phonetic pitch numbering: 5 highest, 1 lowest)

刷  $ts^h at^3 > 35$  ‘brush (n.)’

牙刷  $\eta a^{21} ts^h at^3 > 35$  ‘toothbrush’

(different from 牙擦  $\eta a^{21} ts^h at^3$  ‘cocky’)

刷頭  $ts^h at^3 > 35 t^h e u^{21}$  ‘[tooth]brush head’

# Nominal suprafix

- In this case: Derivational morphological process  
(e.g. not-predictable, word class may change)
- a.k.a. “Changed tones”  
變音 binyam / binjam / bin3jam1 biànyīn
- Not tone sandhi  
(largely predictable / automatic,  
mainly determined by the phonological environment)

# Nominal suprafix

Diminutive suffix → nominal suprafix

(e.g. Mài Yún 麦耘 (1995), Chen Zhongmin (1999), Zhōu Liètíng 周烈婷 (2002), Kao Wan-yu 高婉瑜 (2007), Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 (2016))

e.g.:

noun<sup>Tone X</sup> -DIM<sup>Tone Y</sup>

→ noun<sup>Tone X</sup> -DIM<sup>Tone Y</sup> → noun<sup>Tone XY</sup>

(→ noun<sup>Tone Y (or Tone Z)</sup>)

*diminutive meaning may be extended, and lost, along the way*

## modern **Standard Cantonese:**

Six tonemes: /55/ /35/ /33/ /21/ /13/ /22/

(Asian phonetic pitch numbering: 5 highest, 1 lowest)

	*A	*B	*C	*D, L	*D, S
*voiceless	55~53 <sup>x</sup>	35	33	3	5
*voiced	21	13	22	2	

<sup>x</sup>: Traditionally, Upper A is 53, while 55 is a suprafix

e.g. 釘  $t\epsilon\eta^{53}$  ‘to nail’ versus 釘  $t\epsilon\eta^{55}$  ‘nail (n.)’

By now 53 is a free variation of 55 for most speakers

## modern **Standard Cantonese**:

Suprafixes: /35/ (very common), /55/ (rarer), /21/ (restricted)

Independent word: 妹 *mui*<sup>22 > 35</sup> ‘younger sister’

我個妹

*ŋɔ*<sup>13</sup> *kɔ*<sup>33</sup> *mui*<sup>22 > 35</sup>

(1SG CLF y.sis) ‘my younger sister’

姊妹 *tsi*<sup>35</sup> *mui*<sup>22 > 35</sup>

(o.sis y.sis) ‘sisters’

## Standard Cantonese:

(Bound) root

妹 *mui<sup>22</sup>* ‘younger sister’ (< Mid. Chi. 妹 *mwoj<sup>C</sup>*)

妹夫

*mui<sup>22</sup> fu<sup>55</sup>*

(y.sis husband) ‘younger sister’s husband’

兄弟姊妹

*hin<sup>55</sup> tei<sup>22</sup> tsi<sup>35</sup> mui<sup>22</sup>*

(o.bro y.bro o.sis y.sis) ‘siblings’

## Standard Cantonese:

-妹 -*mui*<sup>22 > 55</sup> ‘girl’

坡妹

*pɔ*<sup>55</sup>-*mui*<sup>22 > 55</sup>

(pore-girl)

‘Singaporean girl’

聾妹

*lʊŋ*<sup>21</sup>-*mui*<sup>22 > 55</sup>

(deaf-girl)

‘deaf girl’

妹仔 *mui*<sup>22 > 55</sup>-*tseɪ*<sup>35</sup>

(girl-DIM)

‘(female) servant’

# Standard Cantonese:

21, very limited

## Some kin-like terms:

小妹妹  
*siu<sup>35</sup> mui<sup>22</sup> > 21 mui<sup>22</sup> > 35*  
(small y.sis y.sis)  
'little girl'

妹妹仔  
*mui<sup>22</sup> > 21 mui<sup>22</sup> > 55 -tsai<sup>35</sup>*  
(y.sis y.sis-DIM)  
'(naïve) young lady'

## (Kin-like nicknames of 80s/90s HK celebrities:)

梅姐  
*mui<sup>21</sup> > 55 -tsε<sup>35</sup> > 21*  
(Mui -o.sis)  
'Anita Mui'

達哥  
*tat<sup>3</sup> -kɔ<sup>55</sup> > 21*  
(Tat -o.bro)  
'Ng Man Tat'

哥哥  
*kɔ<sup>55</sup> > 21 kɔ<sup>55</sup>*  
(o.bro o.bro)  
'Leslie Cheung'

## Some place names:

南灣  
*nam<sup>21</sup> wan<sup>55</sup> > 21*  
(south bay)  
'Praia Grande' (Macau)

銅鑼灣  
*tʰvŋ<sup>21</sup> lɔ<sup>21</sup> wan<sup>55</sup> (> 21)*  
(bronze gong bay)  
'Causeway Bay' (Hong Kong)

# Standard Cantonese:

## Unpredictability

門 *mun<sup>21</sup>* ‘door’

大門 *tai<sup>22</sup> mun<sup>21</sup>* ‘big door’

前門 *ts<sup>h</sup>in<sup>21</sup> mun<sup>21 > 35</sup>* ‘front door’

後門 *heu<sup>22</sup> mun<sup>21 > 35</sup>* ‘back door’

屯門 *t<sup>h</sup>yn<sup>21</sup> mun<sup>21</sup>* ‘Tuen Mun’ (town in western HK)

澳門 *ou<sup>33</sup> mun<sup>21 > 35</sup>* ‘Macau’

(pronounced *ou<sup>33</sup> mun<sup>21</sup>* or *ou<sup>33</sup> mun<sup>21 > 35</sup>* in Macau itself)

## Standard Cantonese:

Usually at the end of a word/morpheme, but e.g.

楊箕 *jœŋ<sup>21</sup> > <sup>35</sup>kei<sup>55</sup>* (suburb of Canton)

Sometimes the original tone is not generally known

碌柚 *luk<sup>5</sup>jeu<sup>?>35</sup>* ‘pomelo’

柚子 *jeu<sup>?>35</sup>tsi<sup>35</sup>* ‘yuja / yuzu (/ pomelo)’

(Mid. Chi. 柚 *yuw<sup>C</sup>*)

## Diminutives / diminutive-like suffixes in Yuè dialects

Kao Wan-yu 高婉瑜 (2007), Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 (2016)

-子  $-tsi^B$  ('child')

-仔  $-tsVj^B$  ('child')

-兒  $-nye^A$  ('male child', later 'child')

-子  $-tsi^B$  no obvious geographical pattern

-仔  $-tsVj^B$  newer Cantonese / eastern form

(due to Cantonese, found to some degree throughout Yuè / Pínghuà)

-兒  $-nye^A$  older form, still common in the west

# -子 -*tsi<sup>B</sup>* ('child')

Mandarin: the use of 子 -*zi* is very common, e.g.

筷子 *kuài-zi* 'chopsticks'

鴨子 *yā-zi* 'duck'

被子 *bèi-zi* 'quilt'

腦子 *nǎo-zi* 'brain' (colloquial)

(子 -*zi*: usually a "noun marker", i.e. it adds no meaning to a noun stem)

Cantonese: the use of 子 *tsi<sup>35</sup>* is limited

筷子 *fai<sup>33</sup>-tsi<sup>35</sup>* 'chopsticks'

鴨 *ap<sup>3 > 35</sup>* 'duck'

被 *p<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>13</sup>* 'quilt'

腦 *nou<sup>13</sup>* 'brain'

# -子 -*tsi<sup>iB</sup>* ('child')

More common in some Yuè dialects,

e.g. Liánjiāng 廉江 (Zhān 詹 et al. 2002: 404–405)

蕉子 *tsiu<sup>55</sup>-tsi<sup>35</sup>* 'banana'

馬蹄子 *ma<sup>13</sup>t<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>11</sup>-tsi<sup>35</sup>* 'water chestnut'

Cf. Cantonese

蕉 *tsiu<sup>55</sup>* 'banana'

馬蹄 *ma<sup>13</sup>t<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>21 > 35</sup>* 'water chestnut' (馬蹄 *ma<sup>13</sup>t<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>21</sup>* 'horse hoof')

# -仔 -*tsVj<sup>B</sup>* ('child')

Probably an old dialectal form of 子 *tsi<sup>B</sup>*

Commonly written 仔 (MC *tsi<sup>A</sup>* or *tsjij<sup>B</sup>*)

Often claimed to be etymologically 憲 (MC *sre(j)<sup>A</sup>*)

Can be reconstructed as *tsej<sup>B</sup>* or *tsej<sup>B</sup>* from Yuè & Pínghuà forms

Cantonese *tsei<sup>35</sup>*

In isolation: 'son'

As a suffix: all-purpose diminutive suffix

雀 *tsæk<sup>3</sup> > 35* 'bird' > 雀仔 *tsæk<sup>3</sup>-tsei<sup>35</sup>* 'little bird'

被 *p<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>13</sup>* 'quilt' > 被仔 *p<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>13</sup>-tsei<sup>35</sup>* 'little quilt'

# -兒 -*nye*<sup>A</sup> ('male child' > 'child')

Cantonese

Noun root 兒 *ji*<sup>21</sup> (Lower tone A),

e.g. 兒童 *ji*<sup>21</sup> *tʰvŋ*<sup>21</sup> 'child' (literary expression)

As a suffix (in high level suprafix *ji*<sup>55</sup>) only in fossilised forms

乞兒 *het*<sup>5</sup> *ji*<sup>21</sup> > <sup>55</sup> (beg-DIM) 'beggar'

捉兒人 *tsuk*<sup>5</sup>-*ji*<sup>21</sup> > <sup>55</sup> *jən*<sup>21</sup> > <sup>55</sup> (catch-DIM person) 'hide and seek'

貓兒 *mau*<sup>55</sup> *ji*<sup>21</sup> > <sup>55</sup> (cat-DIM) 'cat(?) / kitten(?)'

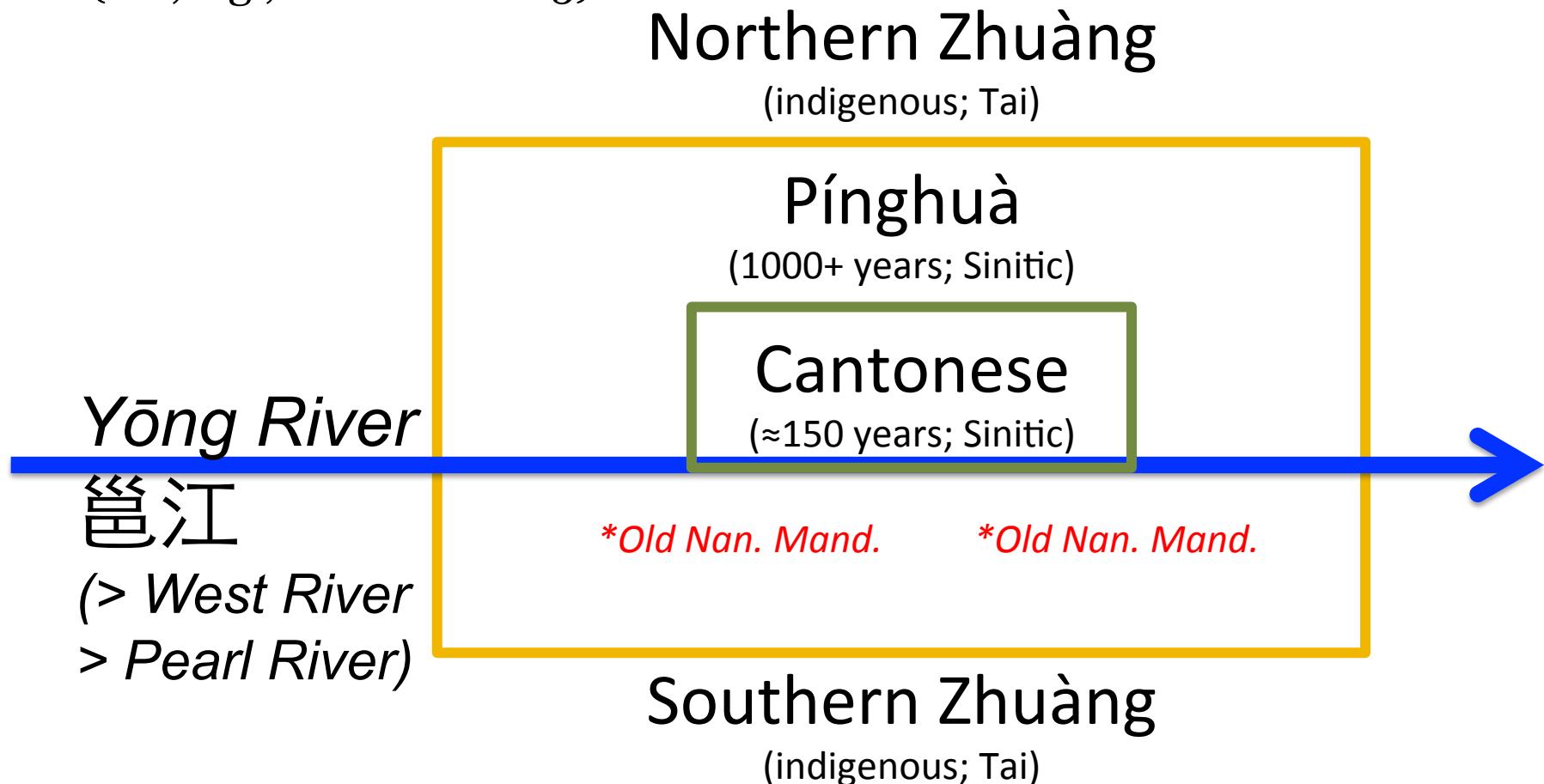
(c.f. nursery rhyme: 排排坐，食粉粄，貓兒擔凳畀姑婆坐，坐爛個屁股唔好賴我

c.f. idiom: 老狗嫩貓兒，食死有人知)

-*nye* Very common in western Yuè dialects

# In 南寧 Nánníng, schematically

(see, e.g., de Sousa 2015):



(\*Old Nánníng Mandarin 邕州官話 (less than 500 years), used to dominate the city centre but now moribund there)

**Nánníng Cantoneses** (Lín Yì 林亦 & Qín Fèngyú 覃凤余 2008: 14)  
 6 tonemes: /55/ /35/ /33/ /21/ /24/ /22/

	*A	*B	*C	*D, L	*D, S
*voiceless	55	35	33	3	5
*voiced	21	24	22	2	

**Nánníng Wèizìlù Pínghuà**  
 7 tonemes: /53/ /33/ /35/ /55/ /21/ /13/ /22/

	*A	*B	*C	*D
*voiceless	+ asp	53	33	35
	- asp			55
*voiced	*son	21	13	22
	*obs			23

(Irregular D: 5)

**Old Nánníng Mandarin**  
 4 tonemes: /35/ /31/ /54/ /13/

	*A	*B	*C	*D
*voiceless	35	54	13	31
*voiced	31			

(Irregular D: 5, 2)

# Nánníng Cantonese

子 -*tʃi*<sup>35</sup>: similar to Standard Cantonese 子 -*tsi*<sup>35</sup>

Not used much; usually a “noun marker”

仔 -*tʃei*<sup>35</sup>: similar to Standard Cantonese 仔 -*tsəi*<sup>35</sup>

All-purpose diminutive suffix

兒 -*ji*<sup>21 > 55</sup>: similar to Standard Cantonese 兒 -*ji*<sup>21 > 55</sup>

Fossilised in some words

e.g. 乞兒 *het<sup>5</sup>ji<sup>21 > 55</sup>* (beg-DIM) ‘beggar’

# Nánníng Cantonese

Suprafixes: 35, 55 (,21); used much less often than Standard Cantonese  
some examples (including **counterexamples**):

Nánníng Cantonese	Standard Cantonese
枱 <i>tʰɔi<sup>21</sup></i> ‘table’	枱 <i>tʰɔi<sup>21</sup> &gt; 35</i> ‘table’
枱布 <i>tʰɔi<sup>21</sup> pu<sup>33</sup></i> ‘table cloth’	枱布 <i>tʰɔi<sup>21</sup> &gt; 35 pou<sup>33</sup></i> ‘table cloth’
阿妹 <i>a<sup>33</sup>-mui<sup>22</sup> &gt; 35</i> (NAME-y.sis) ‘younger sister’	阿妹 <i>a<sup>33</sup>-mui<sup>22</sup> &gt; 35</i> (NAME-y.sis) ‘younger sister’
細妹 <i>ʈei<sup>33</sup> mui<sup>22</sup></i> (small y.sis) ‘youngest sister’	細妹 <i>sɛi<sup>33</sup> mui<sup>22</sup> &gt; 35</i> (small y.sis) ‘youngest sister’
妹仔 <i>mui<sup>22</sup> &gt; 55-tʃei<sup>35</sup></i> (y.sis-DIM) ‘female servant’	妹仔 <i>mui<sup>22</sup> &gt; 55-tsei<sup>35</sup></i> (y.sis-DIM) ‘female servant’
畀面 <i>pi<sup>35</sup> min<sup>22</sup> &gt; 35</i> ‘give face’	畀面 <i>pei<sup>35</sup> min<sup>22</sup> &gt; 35</i> ‘give face’
面子 <i>min<sup>22</sup> &gt; 35-tʃi<sup>35</sup></i> (face-NOUN)	面子 <i>min<sup>22</sup>-tsi<sup>35</sup></i> (face-NOUN)
堡壘 <i>pou<sup>35</sup> lui<sup>24</sup> &gt; 55</i> ‘fortress’	堡壘 <i>pou<sup>35</sup> ley<sup>13</sup></i> ‘fortress’

# Nánníng Pínghuà

Nán. Cantonese 子 -*tʃi*<sup>35</sup>: limited use, similar to Standard Cantonese

Nán. Pínghuà 子 -*tʃi*<sup>33</sup>: very common,  
perhaps more common than Mandarin -zi

Nánníng Pínghuà	Nánníng Cantonese	Standard Cantonese
毫子 <i>hau</i> <sup>21</sup> - <i>tʃi</i> <sup>33</sup> ‘0.1 Yuán’	毫子 <i>hu</i> <sup>21</sup> - <i>tʃi</i> <sup>35</sup> ‘0.1 Yuán’	毫子 <i>hou</i> <sup>21</sup> - <i>tsi</i> <sup>35</sup> ‘0.1 Yuán’
鉗子 <i>kem</i> <sup>21</sup> - <i>tʃi</i> <sup>33</sup> ‘pliers’	鉗 <i>kʰem</i> <sup>21</sup> ‘pliers’	鉗 <i>kʰim</i> <sup>21</sup> > <sup>35</sup> ‘pliers’
星子 <i>ʈən</i> <sup>53</sup> - <i>tʃi</i> <sup>33</sup> ‘star’	星 <i>ʈeŋ</i> <sup>55</sup> ‘star’	星 <i>siŋ</i> <sup>55</sup> ‘star’
蕉子 <i>tʃiu</i> <sup>53</sup> - <i>tʃi</i> <sup>33</sup> ‘banana’	蕉 <i>tʃiu</i> <sup>55</sup> ‘banana’	蕉 <i>tsiu</i> <sup>55</sup> ‘banana’
○子 <i>puk</i> <sup>2</sup> - <i>tʃi</i> <sup>33</sup> ‘pomelo’ (< N. Zhuàng <i>lwg</i> -bug)	○○ <i>puk</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>luk</i> <sup>5</sup> ‘pomelo’	○柚 <i>lok</i> <sup>5</sup> - <i>jəu</i> <sup>22</sup> > <sup>35</sup> ‘pomelo’

# Nánníng Pínghuà

## Dimunitives:

兒 *-ŋi<sup>21</sup>*

兒 *-ŋi<sup>21</sup> > <sup>53</sup>*

仔 *-tʃai<sup>33</sup>* (< newer Cantonese loan)

Not widely used

the suffix used is lexically determined

(one could always use an adjective 細 *tvi<sup>55</sup>* ‘small’ instead)

# Nánníng Pínghuà

e.g.:

	兒 -ŋi <sup>21</sup>	兒 -ŋi <sup>21 &gt; 53</sup>	仔 -tʃai <sup>33</sup>
雞 <i>kəi<sup>53</sup></i> ‘fowl’	✓		✓
狗 <i>kəu<sup>33</sup></i> ‘dog’	✓	(✓)	(✓)
羊 <i>jəŋ<sup>21</sup></i> ‘goat’	✓		
豬 <i>tʃəi<sup>53</sup></i> ‘pig’			✓
車 <i>tʃʰəɛ<sup>53</sup></i> ‘car’	✓	✓	✓
刀 <i>tau<sup>53</sup></i> ‘knife’	✓		✓
燈 <i>teŋ<sup>53</sup></i> ‘lamp’		✓	✓
屋 <i>ʊk<sup>3</sup></i> ‘house’		✓	
鑊 <i>tʃʰəŋ<sup>53</sup></i> ‘wok’		✓	
碗 <i>uŋ<sup>33</sup></i> ‘bowl’			✓

# Nánníng Pínghuà

Suprafixes: infrequent

53, mostly in the suffix 兒  $-ni^{21} > 53$

Cantonese-like examples (Cantonese has 55 suprafix for these):

文  $mən^{21} > 53$  ‘Yuán’, 米  $məi^{13} > 53$  ‘metre’, 荷蘭  $hə^{21}lan^{21} > 53$  ‘Holland’

Other examples:

歌詞  $ka^{53} tʃi^{21} > 53$  ‘love song lyrics’ (vs. 歌詞  $kə^{53} tʃi^{21}$  ‘song lyrics’)

( $ka^{53}$  is a genre of songs)

大娘  $tai^{22}-nəŋ^{21} > 53$  (big-lady) ‘paternal grandfather’s senior wife’

細娘  $təi^{55}-nəŋ^{21} > 53$  (small-lady) ‘paternal grandfather’s junior wife’

(vs. 阿娘  $a^{55}-nəŋ^{21}$  (NAME-lady) ‘paternal grandmother’)

老娘  $lau^{13}-nəŋ^{21} > 53$  (old-lady) ‘mother’

# Nánníng Pínghuà

Non-53 suprafixes:

姨娘 *həi<sup>21</sup>-nəŋ<sup>21</sup>* (<sup>> 55</sup>) ‘mother’s younger sister’

雀 *tʃɛk<sup>3 > 5</sup>* ‘bird’

雀兒 *tʃɛk<sup>3 > 5</sup>-ni<sup>21</sup>* ‘little bird’

(vs. 孔雀 *kʰʊŋ<sup>33</sup> tʃʰɛk<sup>3</sup>* ‘peacock’

(Old Nánníng Mandarin 雀 *tsʰo<sup>31</sup>* ‘bird’, Standard Mandarin 雀 *què*  
Nánníng Cantonese 雀 *tʃʰœk<sup>3</sup>*, Standard Cantonese 雀 *tsœk<sup>3 > 35</sup>*; MC *tsjak<sup>D</sup>*))

爺爺 *jɛ<sup>21</sup> jɛ<sup>21 > 35</sup>* ‘paternal grandfather’ (< Cantonese)

奶奶 *nai<sup>13 > 55</sup> nai<sup>13 > 55</sup>* ‘paternal grandmother’ (< Mandarin)

(Modern) Sinitic languages:  
Morphologically “isolating”  
Very few affixes, mostly etymologically transparent  
(Sagart 2004)

Affixes are mostly entire syllables  
(Ansaldi, Bisang & Szeto 2018)

However, sub-syllabic affixes, e.g.:  
verbal sub-syllabic affixes in Northern Sinitic  
(Lamarre 2015, Acordia 2015)  
verbal and pronominal sub-syllabic affixes in Sinitic  
(Chappell forthcoming)

Cantonese:  
verbal suprafixedes

(Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 2009)

nominal suprafixedes

(Maurice Wong 1982; Alan Yu 2007)

(amongst many others)

Diminutives and suprafixedes in Yuè in general:

Zhōu Liètíng 周烈婷 (2002:154–171)

Kao Wan-yu 高婉瑜 (2007)

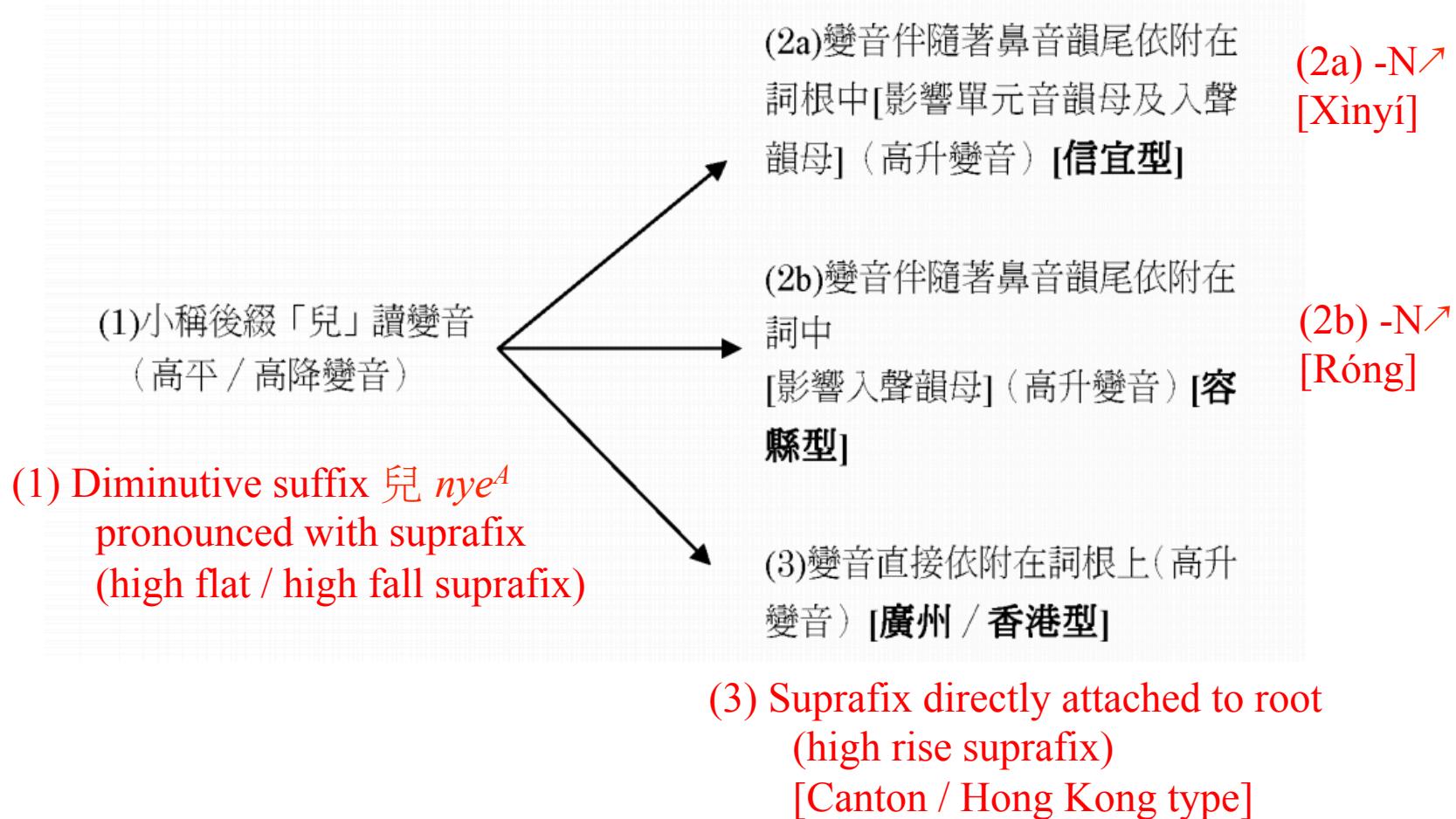
Chén Xiǎoyàn 陈小燕 (2007: 267–275)

Shào Huìjūn 邵慧君 & Gān Yū'ēn 甘于恩 (2007a,b)

Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 (2016)

# Nominal suprafix and diminutives

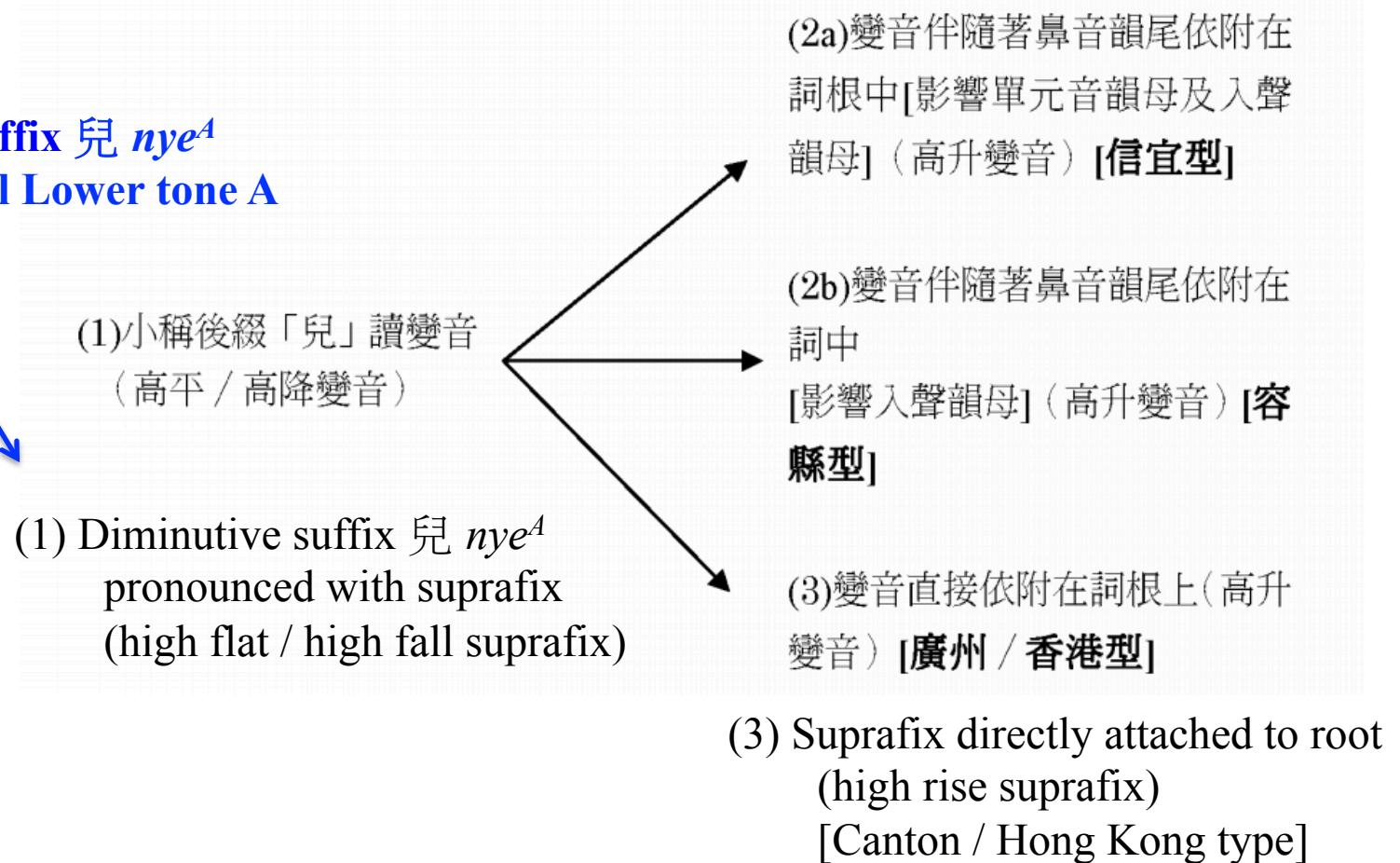
Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 on Yuè dialects (2016: 306)



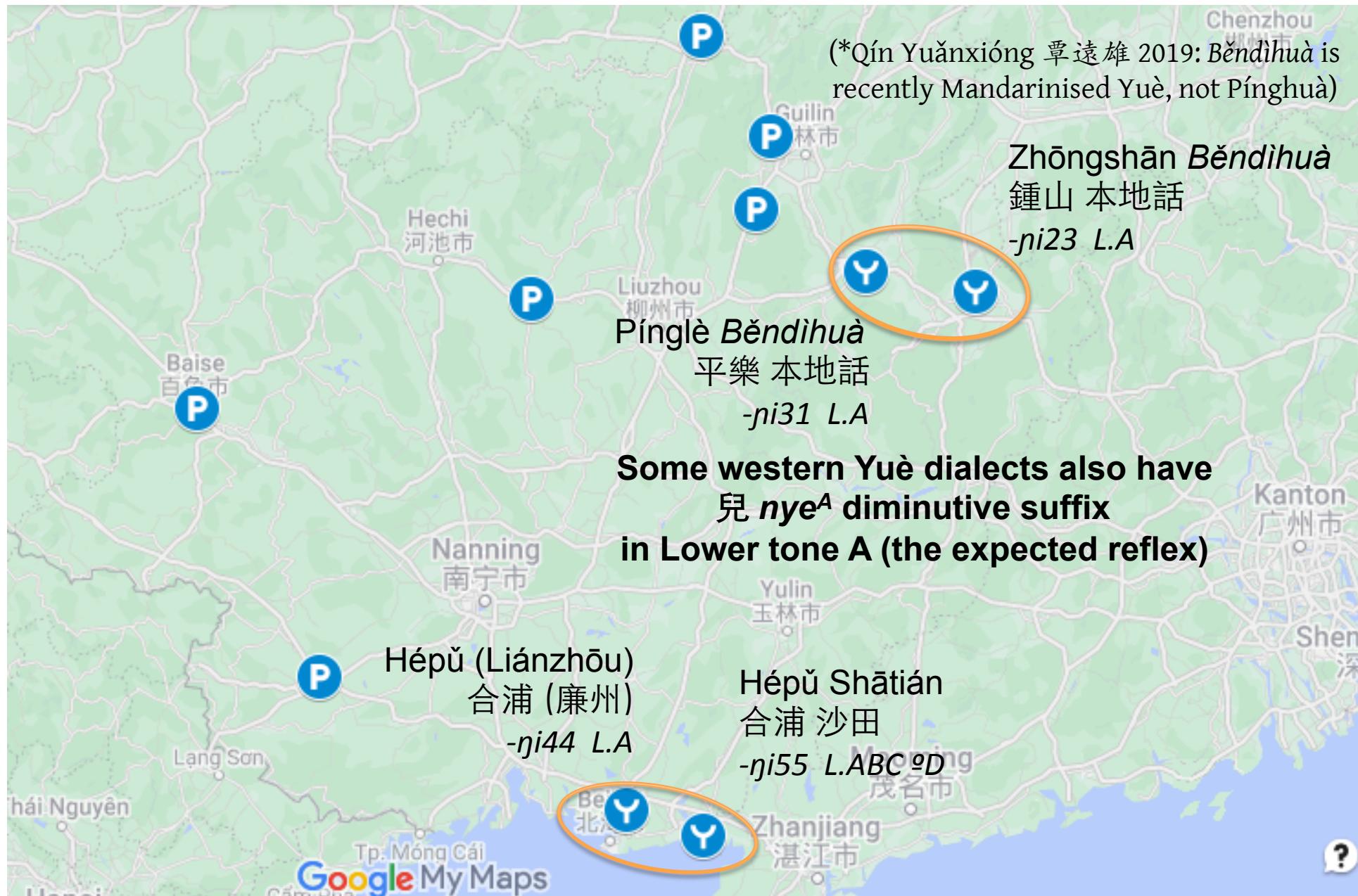
# Nominal suprafix and diminutives

Looking at Pínghuà (and some western Yuè dialects):

(0) Diminutive suffix 兒 *nye<sup>4</sup>*  
in its original Lower tone A

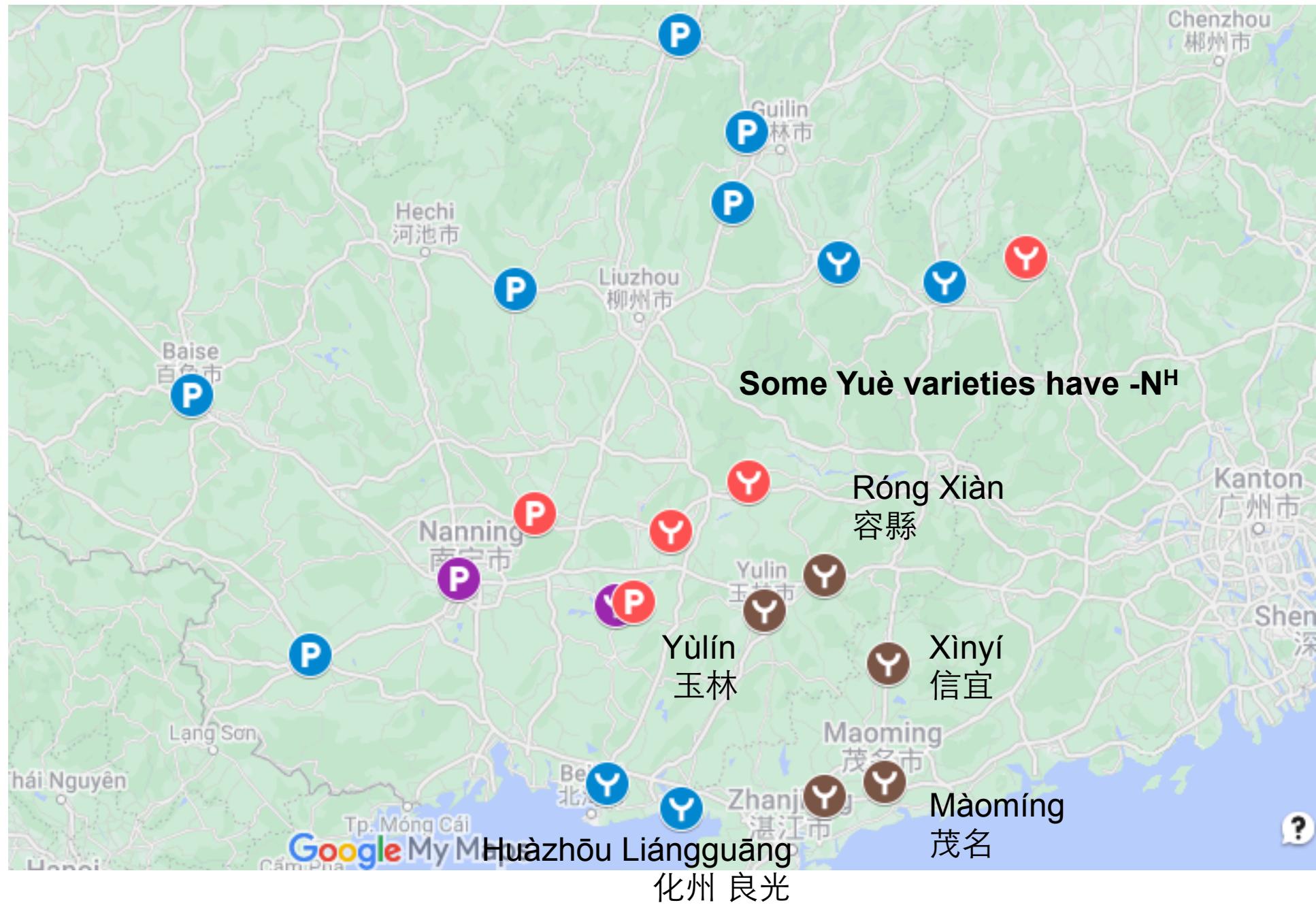












# -N<sup>H</sup> (nasal suffix in high tone) > -H

Huàzhōu Liángguāng 化州良光 Yuè (Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 2016)

Usually a separate syllable -N<sup>H</sup>

手兒 (*seu<sup>35</sup>-ŋ<sup>23</sup>>*) *seu<sup>35</sup>-ŋ<sup>53</sup>* (hand-DIM) ‘finger’

銀兒 (*ŋen<sup>23</sup>-ŋ<sup>23</sup>>*) *ŋen<sup>21</sup>-ŋ<sup>53</sup>* (silver-DIM) ‘coin’

乞兒 (*hak<sup>5</sup>-ŋ<sup>23</sup>>*) *hak<sup>5</sup>-ŋ<sup>53</sup>* (beg-DIM) ‘beggar’

腳兒 (*kiɛk<sup>3</sup>-ŋ<sup>23</sup>>*) *kiɛŋ<sup>35</sup>-ŋ<sup>53</sup>* (leg-DIM) ‘leg’

正下兒 *tseŋ<sup>33</sup> ha<sup>21</sup>-ŋ<sup>23</sup>>* *tseŋ<sup>33</sup> han<sup>35</sup>* ‘a while’

鵝 *ŋɔ<sup>23</sup>>* *ŋɔ<sup>53</sup>* ‘goose’

販子 *fan<sup>33</sup>-dei<sup>35</sup>* (sell-DIM) ‘hawker, peddler’ (子 -*dei<sup>35</sup>*: inspired by Hakka)

煙仔 *jin<sup>53</sup>-dei<sup>35</sup>* (tobacco-DIM) ‘cigarette’ (仔 -*dei<sup>35</sup>*: inspired by Cantonese)

-N<sup>H</sup> (nasal suffix in high tone) > -H

Màomíng 茂名 Yuè (Shào Huìjūn 邵慧君 & Gān Yū'ēn 甘于恩 2007b)

-ni<sup>55</sup> or (N)↗ [↗: rise to very high, often falsetto]

豬兒 tʃi<sup>55</sup>-ni<sup>55</sup> / tʃin↗ (pig-DIM) ‘piglet’

勺兒 ſiak<sup>22</sup>-ni<sup>55</sup> / ſiaŋ↗ (spoon-DIM) ‘spoon’

印兒 jən<sup>33</sup>-ni<sup>55</sup> / jən↗ (mark-DIM) ‘ink stamp’

雞兒 kəi<sup>55</sup>-ni<sup>55</sup> / kəi↗ (fowl-DIM) ‘chick’

## -N<sup>H</sup> (nasal suffix in high tone) > -H

Xìnyí 信宜 Yuè (Zhān Bóhuì 詹伯慧 et al. 2002: 204)

primarily (N) $\nearrow$  [ $\nearrow$ : rise to very high, often falsetto]

魚  $jy^{13}$  ‘fish’ >  $jyn \nearrow$  ‘little fish’

亞叔  $a^{33} sok^{55}$  (dad.y.bro) ‘uncle’ >  $a^{33} soj \nearrow$  ‘little uncle’

狗  $kəu^{24}$  ‘dog’ >  $kəu \nearrow$  ‘little dog’

豬  $tʃy^{53}$  ‘pig’ (Shào Huìjūn 邵慧君 & Gān Yū’ēn 甘于恩 2007b)

豬  $tʃyn \nearrow$  (pig\DIM) ‘little pig’

豬兒  $tʃy^{53}-ni^{53}$  (pig-DIM) ‘newborn piglet’

豬兒  $tʃy^{53}-nin \nearrow$  (pig-DIM\DIM)

Róng County 容縣 Yuè (Zhōu Zǔyáo 周祖瑤 1987)

鋼筆  $koy^{22} pet^5$  >  $koy^{22} pen^{35}$  (steel pen) ‘fountain pen’

豬  $tsy^{55}$  ‘pig’ >  $tsy^{35}$  ‘little pig’

Yùlín 玉林 Yuè (Zhōu Liètíng 周列婷 2002)

six tonemes: 55 33 52 32 24 11 || 4 3 2 1

with suprafex: 44 35 35 34 34 34 || 44 35 34 34

(In the examples below: tone changes in the first syllable is tone sandhi,  
tone changes in the second syllable is diminutive suprafex)

侄兒  $tsat^{22} > {}^{11}ni^{32}$  ‘brother’s son’ (兒  $ni^{32}$  in citation tone (Lower tone A))

阿侄  $a^{33} tsat^{22} > a^{33} tsan^{34}$  ‘brother’s son’

雀兒  $ta^{33}-ni^{55}$  (bird-DIM) (兒  $ni^{55}$  in a high tone (Upper tone A))

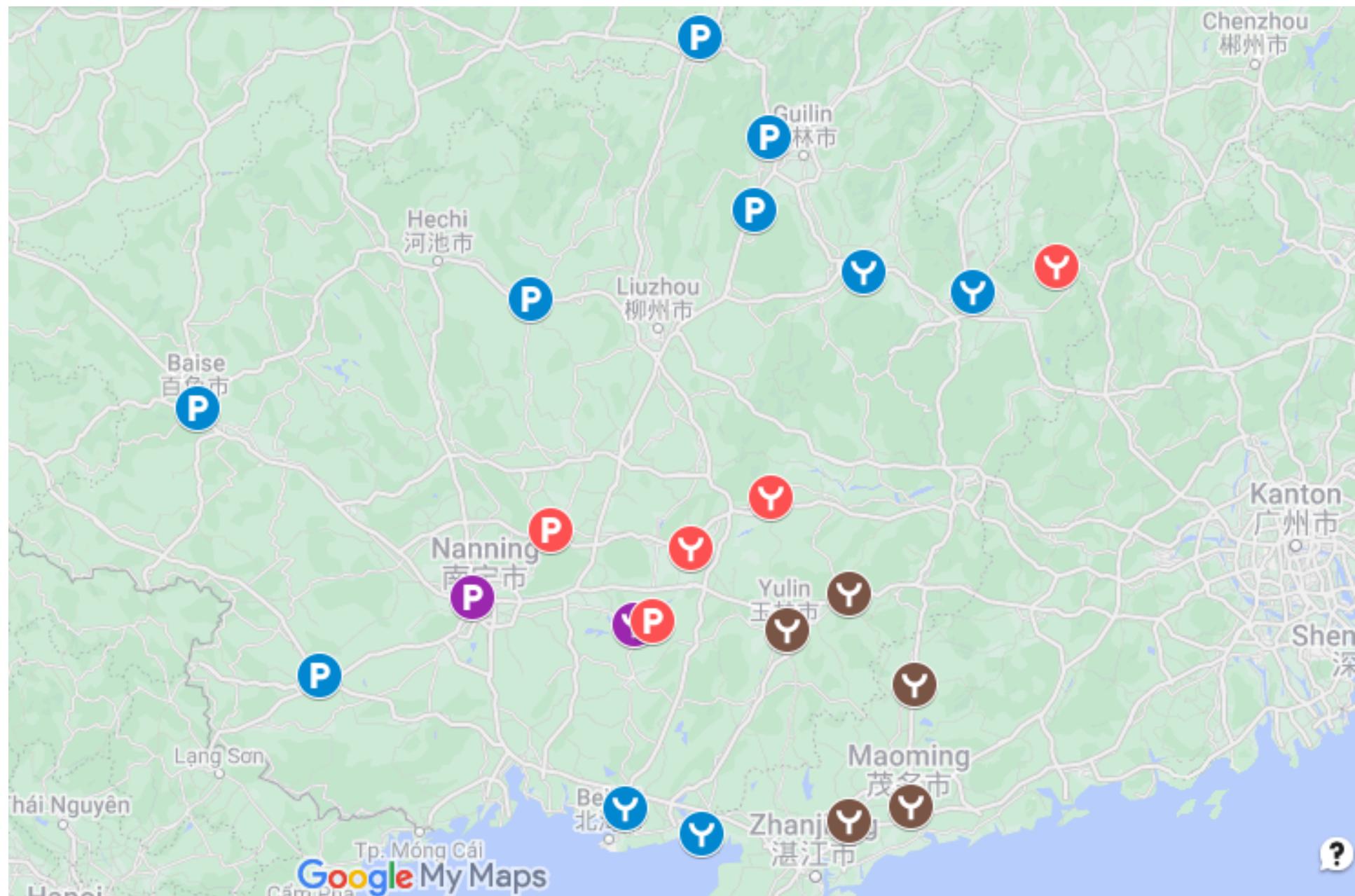
雞兒  $kai^{55}-ni^{55} > kai^{33} ni^{44}$  (fowl-DIM) (兒  $ni^{44}$  in suprafixed Upper tone A)

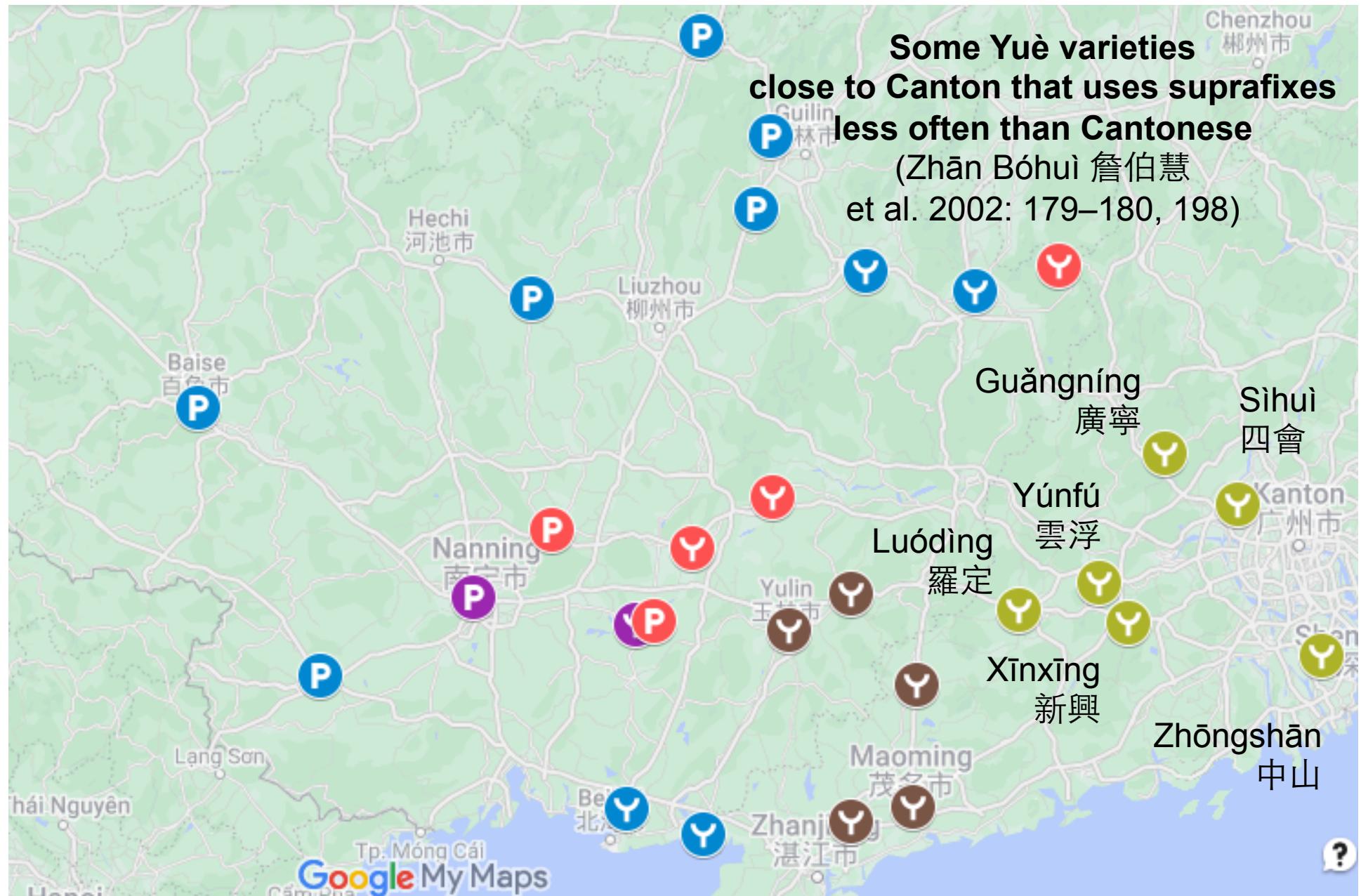
羊兒  $ja^{32}-ni^{55} > ja^{11}-ni^{44}$  (goat-DIM)

年頭  $nin^{55} > {}^{52}tau^{32}$  (year head) ‘beginning of year’

年尾  $nin^{55} > {}^{33}mi^{33}$  (year tail) ‘end of year’

明年  $məŋ^{32} nin^{55} > məŋ^{11} nin^{44}$  ‘next year’





# Ch'an Chan Sene (1900)

quoted by Kwok Bit-chee (2009)

Cantonese tones in 1900

	*A	*B	*C	*D, L	*D, S
*voiceless	53	45	4	4	5
*voiced	31	34	3	3	

and (verbal / nominal) suprafixes

	*A	*B	*C	*D, L	*D, S
*voiceless	5	45-5	4-5	4-5	5-5
*voiced	31-5	3-5	3-5	3-5	

*i.e. basically a floating 5 attached after the citation tone*

# Ch'an Chan Sene (1900)

quoted by Kwok Bit-chee (2009)

On tone 31-5:

*[...] has a distinct fall and a long rise, in fact being the most prolonged of any of the rising tones, and much emphasis is thrown into the voice on its recovery from the fall, increasing in its volume as it rises into a good crescendo and dying away at the end again. (Ch'an 1900: 211-212)*

# Ball (1888)

Six citation tonemes,  
plus two suprafixed *that were different from the citation tones*

“Third Rising Tone”:

this Rising Tone is a longer tone than the other two Rising Tones,  
banning lower and ascending higher than either of them (1888: xxxi)

	U.B	L.B	*
	<i>tsz35</i>	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>z13</i>	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>z315</i>

26.	子似柿	<sup>c</sup> <i>tsz</i>	<sup>‘</sup> <i>ts‘z</i>	<sup>‘</sup> <i>ts‘z*</i>	A son, similar, persimmon.
27.	搵尹韻	<sup>c</sup> <i>wan</i>	<sup>‘</sup> <i>wan</i>	<sup>‘</sup> <i>wan*</i>	To look for, correct, rhyme.

	<i>wen35</i>	<i>wen13</i>	<i>wen315</i>
	U.B	L.B	*

Ball (1888): xxxiii

The underlying tone of a 15 syllable can be any tone other than 53 (Upper tone A) (?)  
The old 15 is now pronounced as 35

# So where did the floating ⑤ suprafix (on nouns) come from?



There is no written record (?) of what the nominal suprafixes were contractions of

## If Cantonese nominal suprafices came from diminutives:

兒 *nye<sup>A</sup>*?

(e.g. Mài Yún 麦耘 (1990), Zhōu Liètíng 周烈婷 (2002: 154–171), Chén Xiǎoyàn 陈小燕 (2007: 267–275) Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 (2016))

1. 兒 *nye<sup>A</sup>* as diminutive and source of suprafix in western Yuè dialects
2. The (very few) fossilised cases of 兒 *-ji<sup>55</sup>* in modern Cantonese

However,

1. There is no *a priori* reason why eastern Yuè dialects must have followed the same path as the western Yuè dialects
2. The range of nouns with a suprafix in Standard Cantonese does not overlap much with that with a *-nye* suffix in western Yuè dialects

(Shào Huìjūn 邵慧君 & Gān Yū'ēn 甘于恩 2007b)

## If nominal suprafices came from diminutives:

### 仔 $tsVj^B$ diminutive?

Kwok Bit-chee 郭必之 (2016): unlikely

Although the rising tone of Cantonese 仔  $tse^i^{35}$  does coincide with the high rising suprafice in Cantonese, most Yuè dialects have 仔  $tsVj^B$  in a rising tone, but their suprafices are mostly high level or high falling.

However,

1. There is no *a priori* reason why western Yuè dialects must have the same path as the eastern Yuè dialects
2. Kwok (2016: 307) gives three examples alternations of the high rising suprafice and the suffix  $tse^i^{35}$ : ('k.o. snack', 'bird', 'measles')

35 香港粵語有這樣的同源異型詞：「角」[kok33-35] 和「角仔」[kok33 tʃei35]（一種粵式油炸食物）、「雀」[tʃæk33-35] 和「雀仔」[tʃæk33 tʃei35]（小鳥）、「麻」[ma21-35] 和「麻仔」[ma21 tʃei35]（麻疹）。「角」、「雀」和「麻」的高升變音很可能源自小稱後綴「仔」的省略。

## If nominal suprafixes came from diminutives:

子 *tsi<sup>B</sup>* diminutive?

e.g. Maurice Wong (1982), quoted by Alan Yu (2007: 202)

- (12) min<sup>22</sup> tsi<sup>35</sup> ~ min<sup>35</sup> ‘face, honour’  
k<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>21</sup> tsi<sup>35</sup> ~ k<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>35</sup> ‘a chess piece’  
jet<sup>2</sup> tsi<sup>35</sup> ~ jet<sup>35</sup> ‘(special) day’

However:

*min<sup>22</sup>-tsi<sup>35</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>21</sup>-tsi<sup>35</sup>, jet<sup>2</sup>-tsi<sup>35</sup>*

are most probably Mandarin loans  
(and there are very few such pairs)

# Conclusion

Along the Pínghuà–Yuè dialect continuum:

- the dominant diminutives (from west to east) are:  
兒  $nye^L$  – 兒  $nye^H$  (–  $N^H$ ) – 仔  $tsVj^H$
- nominal suprafixed are the most developed towards the eastern end (e.g. Standard Cantonese)
- the Standard Cantonese nominal suprafixed came from  
兒  $-nye^H$  and/or 仔  $-tsVj^H$  suffix?



# Things to be done

e.g.

Better look at the diminutive suffixes in Cantonese in and before the 19<sup>th</sup> century;

Closer look at the low suprafixed in Szeyap (e.g. Taishanese)

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