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Píng huà (of Guǎng xī)

Píng huà 平話 refers to a group of Sinitic dialects that are primarily spoken in Guǎng xī Zhuàng Autonomous Region 廣西壯族自治區 in Southern China. People in Nán níng 南寧, the capital of Guǎng xī, traditionally recognize four speech varieties spoken in the area: *Guān Píng Tǔ Bái* 官平土白, referring to Mandarin, Píng huà, Zhuàng and Cantonese respectively. Zhāng Jūn rú 張均如 (1982) first argued that Píng huà is not Yuè 粵 Chinese while comparing the phonologies of Sino-Zhuàng (Chinese loanwords in Zhuang), Píng huà and Nán níng Cantonese (a variety of Yuè). The awareness of Píng huà within Sinitic linguistics was raised considerably when the *LANGUAGE ATLAS OF CHINA* (Würm & Lǐ Róng 李榮 *et al.* 1987) listed Píng huà separately from Yuè. The most salient historical phonological feature that distinguishes Píng huà from Cantonese and Mandarin is that in most Píng huà dialects, the Middle Chinese voiced obstruents are devoiced and unaspirated, whereas in Cantonese and Mandarin they are also devoiced, but aspirated or unaspirated depending on which tone the syllable has. While Píng huà is clearly different from varieties of Cantonese in the area like Nán níng Cantonese, the status of Píng huà as a subgroup independent from Yuè is controversial.

The Píng huà dialects are commonly divided into Southern Píng huà (*Guì nán Píng huà* 桂南平話) and Northern Píng huà (*Guì běi Píng huà* 桂北平話). The phonology of Southern Píng huà bears similarities with Cantonese and many other Yuè dialects: it is relatively conservative in retaining all six ancient codas -m -n -ŋ -p -t -k, and there are at least three entering (*rù* 入) tones. In contrast, the phonology of Northern Píng huà has been Mandarinized: -m -p -t -k no

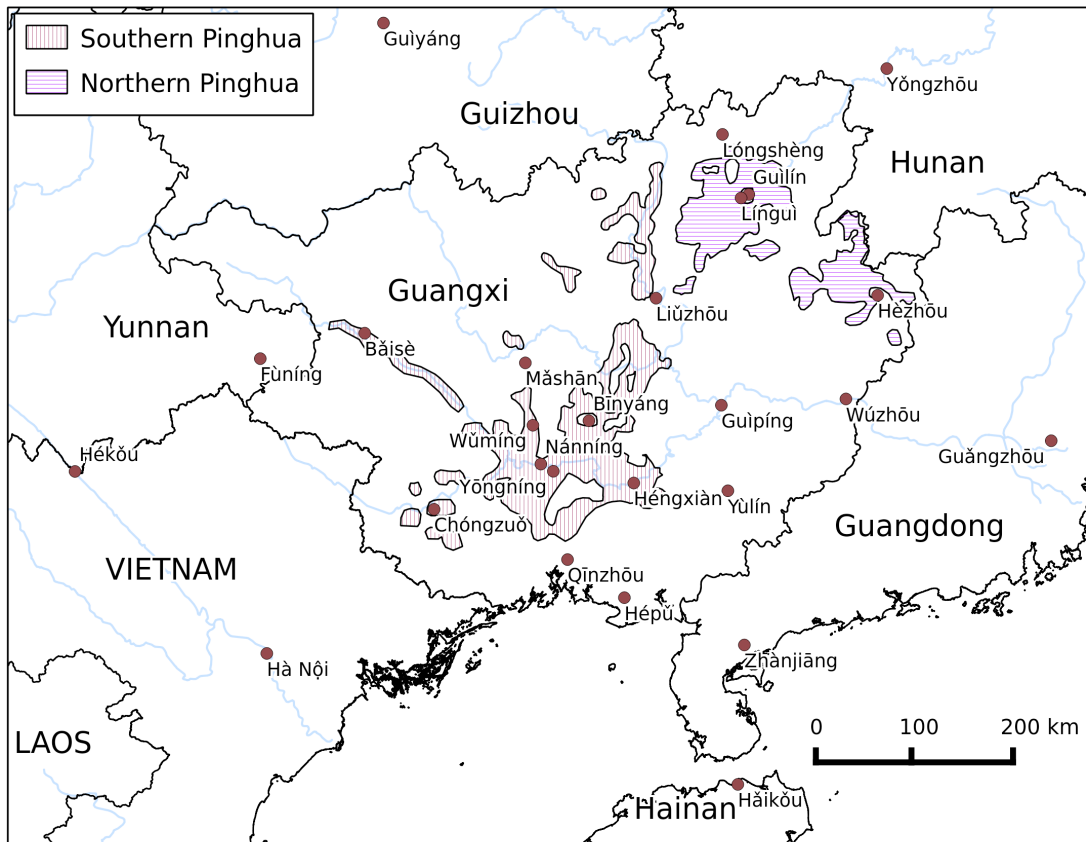
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longer exist, and there are fewer tones (but still more tones than the four or five tones in the Southwestern Mandarin spoken in Guǎngxī). The Pínghuà dialects spoken in the suburbs and villages around Nánning and Guǐlín 桂林 (the current and previous capitals of Guǎngxī, respectively) are the most famous varieties of Southern and Northern Pínghuà, respectively. Qín Yuǎnxióng 覃遠雄 (2007) estimates the number of speakers of Southern Pínghuà as 2.19 million, and Northern Pínghuà as 1.76 million. Historically, Pínghuà had strong influence over nearby non-Sinitic languages. For instance, the older layers in the phonologies of Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Zhuàng resemble Southern Pínghuà more than other Sinitic varieties.

#### DISTRIBUTION AND HISTORY OF PÍNGHUÀ



Map 1 Distribution of the Pínghuà dialects in Guǎngxī (Based on Würm & Lǐ 1987)

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Píng huà speakers have mostly settled along transportation routes; this relatively linear distribution is a witness to the major migration pathways of Píng huà people. An important migration event occurred during the Northern Sòng 宋 dynasty: in 1053 CE, a war was waged between Sòng and the polity of *Daihnanz* 大南 (Mandarin *Dà nán*), headed by the Zhuàng leader *Nungz Ciqgau* 儂智高 (Mandarin *Nóng Zhì gāo*), near Nán níng. Many Píng huà people claim that they are the descendants of these Sòng soldiers, most of whom were from the Shān dōng 山東 area in Northern China. After the war, some of these Sòng soldiers were settled in various towns in Guǎng xī, the majority along the Guǐ lín – Liǔ zhōu 柳州 – Nán níng route that they traveled along from the north. They absorbed the pre-existing Hàn 漢 Chinese population of the area (there have been small enclaves of Hàn Chinese people in Guǎng xī from as early as the Qín 秦 dynasty), and these people – the Píng huà people – gradually migrated outward along the waterways in the area, e.g., along the Lí jiāng 濛江 from Guǐ lín, upriver along the Róng jiāng 融江 north of Liǔ zhōu, upriver from Nán níng to Chóng zuǒ 崇左 to the southwest and Fù níng 富寧 (in Yún nán 雲南) to the northwest, and downriver to Héng xiàn 橫縣 to the east. Many later Hàn Chinese immigrants from places like Jiāng xī 江西 and Fú jiàn 福建 were also absorbed into the Píng huà population. Some non-Sinitic people in the area have also shifted into speaking Píng huà-like Sinitic languages, e.g. Southern Píng huà spoken by Zhuàng people, Northern Píng huà spoken by Red Yáo 紅瑤 people in Lóng shèng 龍勝 (Xiè Jiàn yóu 謝建猷 2007:91-113).

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One salient sociolinguistic feature of Píng huà is that there is no influential urban variety that speakers uniformly gravitate towards. Píng huà is spoken mostly in rural areas and suburbs of larger cities. With rare exceptions like Bīnyáng 賓陽, all county towns and city centers in Píng huà-speaking areas are dominated by Cantonese or Southwestern Mandarin speakers, who are later immigrants: Southwestern Mandarin reached Guǎngxī during the Míng 明 dynasty, and Guǎngxī Cantonese formed towards the end of the Qīng 清 dynasty (Lín Yì 林亦 and Qín Fèngyú 覃鳳餘 2008:5-7). Through their commercial or political superiority, Cantonese and Mandarin people dominated most of the cities and towns in Guǎngxī (Cantonese mostly in the south, and Mandarin mostly in the north), leaving Píng huà spoken mainly in suburban and rural areas.

Píng huà is the endonym of Píng huà people around the Nán níng and Guì lín areas. There is a wide array of endonyms for other closely related Sinitic dialects spoken in other parts of Guǎngxī, for instance *bǎixìng huà* 百姓話 ‘commoner speech’, *běndì huà* 本地話 ‘local speech’, *zhèyuán huà* 蔗園話 ‘sugarcane-field speech’, just to name a few. It is mostly in linguistics and other related disciplines that the term Píng huà is broadened to refer to all these Sinitic dialects in Guǎngxī that are not considered to be Yuè or other Sinitic varieties, and bear similarities with the Píng huà dialects of Nán níng or Guì lín areas.

#### PHONOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN PÍNGHUÀ

The phonologically innovative Northern Píng huà dialects are found to the northeast of Liǔzhōu. The remaining Píng huà dialects, including the ones spoken along the Róngjiāng north of Liǔzhōu, are Southern Píng huà dialects, which are phonologically more conservative. The

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Southern Píng huà dialects are relatively uniform, whereas the Northern Píng huà dialects are very diverse. The Mandarinization of Northern Píng huà is a later phenomenon, as can be seen from the fact that the earlier Chinese loans in the non-Sinitic languages of Northern Guǎng xī are Southern Píng huà-like.

The following are some phonological traits that are common (but by no means universal) in Southern Píng huà dialects:

- Phonemic contrast between /ʃ/~s/ versus /ʃ/~θ/, e.g., Nán níng Tíng zǐ 亭子 /siu<sup>33</sup>/ 少 'few' vs. /ʃiu<sup>33</sup>/ 小 'small';
- Few medial glides; usually there is only a w which occurs only after k, k<sup>h</sup> or zero (similar to Cantonese);
- An unrounded high back vowel /u/;
- No front rounded vowels;
- No syllabic nasals (c.f. Cantonese /ŋ<sup>13</sup>/ 五 'five' vs. Nán níng Shàng yáo 上堯 /ŋɔ<sup>13</sup>/ 五 'five');
- Split in one or both entering tones; most Píng huà dialects have a split of the entering tone based on vowel length/quality like Yuè dialects. However, in the Píng huà dialects of Nán níng and places upriver, it is the lower-register entering tone (*yáng rù* 陽入) that is split, based on whether the initial is sonorant or obstruent in Middle Chinese, e.g., Nán níng Shàng yáo /hip<sup>23</sup>/ 葉 'leaf' (< \*jɛp), /wət<sup>23</sup>/ 域 'region' (< \*(h)wik) versus /hak<sup>2</sup>/ 學 'learn' (< \*ɣæ<sup>w</sup>k), /wət<sup>2</sup>/ 活 'live' (< \*ɣwat);
- No systematic tone-sandhi.

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In Northern Pínghuà dialects, the stop codas -p -t -k -m no longer exist, e.g., Línguì Liǎngjiāng

臨桂兩江 (Liáng Jīnróng 梁金榮 2005) /je<sup>13</sup>/ 十 'ten', /ie<sup>5</sup>/ 一 'one', /li<sup>13</sup>/ 六 'six', /sã<sup>35</sup>/ 三

'three' (c.f. Nán níng Shàngyáo /ɬep<sup>2</sup>/ 十 'ten', /et<sup>3</sup>/ 一 'one', /luk<sup>23</sup>/ 六 'six', /ɬam<sup>53</sup>/ 三 'three').

The following are some phonological traits commonly found in Northern Pínghuà dialects.

- Medial glides j and w;
- Front rounded vowels;
- Syllabic nasal ŋ;
- The plosive codas of Middle Chinese are turned into a glottal stop, or dropped all together; usually at least one entering tone is retained as a separate toneme;
- The Middle Chinese coda \*-m is universally lost. Most Northern Pínghuà dialects have the coda -ŋ, and many also have -n. Some dialects have nasalized vowels, and all dialects have at least some cases of the coda nasality being lost all together;
- One rising (*shǎng* 上) tone;
- Systematic tone-sandhi.

As one moves further away from Guílín and closer to the Hèzhōu 賀州 area to the east, the local Sinitic dialects, which are sometimes considered Northern Pínghuà, become less and less recognizably Pínghuà-like. The Sinitic patois in the Hèzhōu area are now commonly called the Eastern Guǎngxī Patois (*Guìdōng Tǔhuà* 桂東土話, e.g., Chén Hǎilún 陳海倫 and Liú Cūnhàn 劉村漢 2009). The Eastern Guǎngxī Patois can be viewed as a geographical continuation of the neighboring Southern Húnán Patois (*Xiāngnán Tǔhuà* 湘南土話), which together with the Northern Guǎngdōng Patois (*Yuèběi Tǔhuà* 粵北土話) form a huge linguistic transition zone

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between Pínghuà, Xiāng, and Gàn-Hakka. It is difficult to find commonalities amongst these Sinitic patois (other than that they are Sinitic and not Mandarin), but one common feature is the rampant but irregular dropping of Middle Chinese nasal codas (a feature also found in Northern Pínghuà proper to a small degree), e.g., in the Ninth-Dū patois (*jiǔdūshēng* 九都聲) of Hèzhōu /no<sup>213</sup>/ 男 'male', /ŋai<sup>22</sup>/ 眼 'eye', /tʃ<sup>ho</sup>435/ 鑊 'wok' (c.f. Nánning Shàngyáo /nam<sup>21</sup>/ 男 'male', /jan<sup>13</sup>/ 眼 'eye', /tʃ<sup>h</sup>ɛŋ<sup>53</sup>/ 鑊 'wok').

#### PHONOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PÍNGHUÀ AND YUÈ

Pínghuà is closely related to Yuè. Nonetheless, there are some prominent differences between Pínghuà and Yuè that led some linguists to argue that Pínghuà is distinct from Yuè. There are several types of Yuè dialects spoken in Guǎngxī. To the east of the Pínghuà-speaking area are the Yuè dialects of the Gōulòu 勾漏 type, and to the south are the Yuè dialects of the Liánzhōu 廉州 type (Liánzhōu 廉州 is the old name of Hépǔ 合浦). The first prominent feature of Liánzhōu Yuè is its comparatively smaller number of tones: three entering tones and three or four non-entering tones. Another prominent feature of Liánzhōu Yuè is that the Middle Chinese voiced obstruents are devoiced and aspirated, e.g. /t<sup>h</sup>ɛŋ<sup>55</sup>/ 糖 'sugar' (< \*daŋ<sup>LEVEL</sup>), /ts<sup>ho</sup>21/ 坐 'sit' (< \*dzwa<sup>RISING</sup>), /k<sup>hi</sup>21/ 忌 'taboo' (< \*gi<sup>DEPARTING</sup>), /p<sup>h</sup>ɛk<sup>21</sup>/ 白 'white' (< \*bæk<sup>ENTERING</sup>) (Chén Xiǎojīn 陳曉錦 and Chén Tāo 陳滔 2005). (This is similar to Gàn, Hakka, and the Dānzhōu 儋州 Yuè dialect in Hǎinán 海南.) In contrast, Gōulòu Yuè and the vast majority of Pínghuà dialects have the Middle Chinese voiced obstruents devoiced and unaspirated (see below for examples). Pínghuà and Gōulòu Yuè in Guǎngxī are distinguished by the trait that most Pínghuà dialects have the Middle Chinese series of affricates merged into one place of

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articulation while remaining affricates, e.g. /tʃ/, /tʃʰ/, whereas Gōulòu Yuè dialects have the alveolar affricates turned into alveolar plosives, merging with the Middle Chinese alveolar plosives (similar to Sino-Vietnamese), e.g. Yùlín 玉林 Yuè /tʰɔm<sup>54</sup>/ 參 'participate' (< \*tʰɔm<sup>LEVEL</sup>), /tʰɔm<sup>54</sup>/ 貪 'greedy' (< \*tʰɔm<sup>LEVEL</sup>), versus Nánning Shàngyáo Píng huà /tʃʰam<sup>53</sup>/ 參 'participate', /tʃʰam<sup>53</sup>/ 貪 'greedy'. Gōulòu Yuè dialects often have implosives /ɓ/ /ɗ/ or voiced /b/ /d/ (similar to, e.g., Zhuàng, Hainanese, Vietnamese) and front rounded vowels /y/ /œ/ (similar to Cantonese), while Píng huà dialects do not have implosives, and usually no front rounded vowels.

Another type of Yuè dialect in the area is Guǎngxī Cantonese. There are many enclaves of Cantonese speakers in Guǎngxī, for instance in Nánning, Guìpíng 桂平, Qīnzhōu 欽州 and Wúzhōu 梧州. The phonology of these Cantonese dialects in Guǎngxī remain very similar to the Cantonese dialects in Pearl River Delta, as most Cantonese speakers migrated from the Pearl River Delta to Guǎngxī within the last 150 years. In Nánning area, Cantonese underwent strong grammatical and lexical influence from Zhuàng, and this Zhuàng-influenced Cantonese spoken in Nánning, Guìpíng, and their emigrant communities to the west in places like Chóngzuǒ 崇左, Bǎisè 百色 and Hékǒu 河口 (in Yúnnán) is called Yōngxún 邕潯 Yuè in the literature. Many Southern Píng huà speakers are fluent in Yōngxún Yuè/ Nánning Cantonese as there are many Cantonese enclaves within Píng huà-speaking areas. Some salient phonological differences between Nánning Píng huà and Nánning Cantonese include:

- Píng huà has the Middle Chinese obstruents devoiced and unaspirated, regardless of tone. Nánning Cantonese, like Cantonese in general, has the Middle Chinese obstruents



devoiced and aspirated if the tone is level or rising, or unaspirated if the tone is

entering or departing (including syllables which have shifted from rising to departing

tone). For instance, in Nánning Xīnxū 心墟 Píng huà /taŋ<sup>21</sup>/ 糖 'sugar' (< \*daŋ<sup>LEVEL</sup>), /tʃu<sup>13</sup>/

坐 'sit' (< \*dzwa<sup>RISING</sup>), /kəu<sup>22</sup>/ 忌 'taboo' (< \*gi<sup>DEPARTING</sup>), /pək<sup>2</sup>/ 白 'white' (< \*bæk<sup>ENTERING</sup>); in

Nánning Cantonese /t<sup>h</sup>əŋ<sup>21</sup>/ 糖 'sugar', /tʃ<sup>h</sup>ə<sup>13</sup>/ 坐 'sit', /ki<sup>22</sup>/ 忌 'taboo', /pək<sup>2</sup>/ 白

'white';

- Middle Chinese \*ua (rounded first division rhyme of the 果 *guǒ* group) is usually /u/ in Nánning Píng huà and /ɔ/ in Cantonese, while Middle Chinese \*u (rounded first division rhyme of the 遇 *yù* group) is usually /ɔ/ in Nánning Píng huà and /u/ in Nánning Cantonese, e.g. Nánning Píng huà /nu<sup>22</sup>/ 糯 'glutinous' (< \*nua<sup>DEPARTING</sup>), /lɔ<sup>22</sup>/ 路 'road' (< \*lu<sup>DEPARTING</sup>) versus Nánning Cantonese /nɔ<sup>22</sup>/ 糯 'glutinous', /lu<sup>22</sup>/ 路 'road' (Standard Cantonese /lou<sup>22</sup>/);
- In Nánning Píng huà, the Middle Chinese unrounded first and second division vowels (in Baxter's system \*a/\*o versus \*æ/\*ɛ without a preceding \*w) are often identical (like Mandarin), whereas Cantonese dialects often have them distinct, e.g. Nánning Xīnxū Píng huà /mau<sup>21</sup>/ 毛 'hair' (< \*mau<sup>LEVEL</sup>), /mau<sup>21</sup>/ 茅 'reed grass' (< \*mæw<sup>LEVEL</sup>); Nánning Cantonese /mu<sup>21</sup>/ 毛 'hair', /mau<sup>21</sup>/ 茅 'reed grass'.

#### SOME LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL TRAITS OF PÍNGHUÀ

The lexicon of Píng huà shares many similarities with Cantonese, but there are also a number of prominent lexical differences between Píng huà and Cantonese. Píng huà often has Mandarin-sounding words in its basic vocabulary. For instance, instead of Cantonese /hei<sup>22</sup>/ 係 'be',

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/t<sup>h</sup>ei<sup>25</sup>/ 睇 'look, watch', and /sik<sup>22</sup>/ 食 'eat', Nánning Shàngyáo (Southern Píng huà) has /ʔi<sup>22</sup>/ 是 'be', /han<sup>25</sup>/ 看 'look, watch', and /hət<sup>3</sup>/ 吃 'eat', and similarly Líng uì Liǎngjiāng (Northern Píng huà) has /ʃi<sup>33</sup>/ 是 'be', /hō<sup>53</sup>/ 看 'look/ watch', and /hi<sup>5</sup>/ 吃 'eat' (cf. Mandarin shì 是 'be', kàn 看 'look, watch', and chī 吃 'eat'). There are some Sinitic lexical items that are commonly found in Píng huà dialects (and also in neighboring Western Yuè dialects) but are rare in other Sinitic dialects. For instance, Nánning Shàngyáo (Southern Píng huà) has /k<sup>w</sup>əi<sup>53</sup>/ 歸 'return' and /t<sup>h</sup>ɛŋ<sup>53</sup>/ 鑊 'wok', Líng uì Liǎngjiāng (Northern Píng huà) has /k<sup>w</sup>æ<sup>35</sup>/ 歸 'return' and /t<sup>h</sup>ɛ̃<sup>35</sup>/ 鑊 'small wok'. Contrast this with Cantonese /fan<sup>55</sup>/ 翻 'return' and /wək<sup>2</sup>/ 鑊 'wok', and Mandarin huí 回 'return' and guō 鍋 'wok'. Píng huà – Southern Píng huà in particular – also has many Zhuàng loanwords. One example is the first person inclusive pronoun /wən<sup>21</sup>/ 佢 in Nánning Shàngyáo, cf. Northern Zhuàng vunz 佢 'person'. (Southern Píng huà and Northern Zhuàng usually have a clusivity distinction, whereas Southern Zhuàng, Northern Píng huà and Yuè tend not to.) Another example is 'give': /həu<sup>25</sup>/ in Nánning Xīnxū and /həi<sup>55</sup>/ in Nánning Tíngzǐ, which is related to Proto-Tai \*hau<sup>c</sup> 'give' (e.g. Northern Zhuang hawj [həu<sup>55</sup>] 'give'). Líng uì Liǎngjiāng also has a possibly related form /haj<sup>35</sup>/ 'give'.

We have seen that with phonological features, Southern Píng huà is more Yuè-like than Northern Píng huà. With grammar, the opposite is sometimes true. The following are some salient grammatical features in Southern and Northern Píng huà dialects:

- For Píng huà dialects spoken around Guílín, [classifier + noun] noun phrases are ubiquitous, as in most Yuè dialects. For Píng huà dialects spoken in suburban Nánning,

- [classifier + noun] noun phrases do not exist in pre-verbal position, as in most Mandarin dialects;
- In Nánning Píng huà, giving is usually expressed by the serial verb construction "give + theme + give + recipient", while the Mandarin-like ditransitive construction "give + recipient + theme" is also acceptable. Líng uì Liǎng jiāng Píng huà has the Cantonese-like "give + theme + recipient" ditransitive order;
  - Píng huà has few negators. In particular there is no distinction between perfective versus non-perfective negation (e.g., *méi* 沒 versus *bù* 不 in Mandarin). Instead, in Southern Píng huà the main semantic division with the negators is between a general negator, e.g. /mi<sup>13</sup>/ in Nánning Shàng yáo, versus a perfect negator /mɛŋ<sup>21</sup>/ ("not yet"). In Líng uì Liǎng jiāng Northern Pinghua, there is also a general negator /mi<sup>33</sup>/, and a perfect negator with an non-fused form /mi<sup>33</sup> ts<sup>h</sup>əŋ<sup>33</sup>/ (</ts<sup>h</sup>əŋ<sup>33</sup>/ 曾 "ever"). Nánning Cantonese has the same distinction: general negator /mu<sup>13</sup>/ versus perfect negator /mɛŋ<sup>21</sup>/. (In contrast, Standard Cantonese has the following negators: perfective *mou*<sup>5</sup> 冇, non-perfective *m*<sup>4</sup> 唔, and perfect *mei*<sup>4</sup> 未.) This division of non-perfect versus perfect negators parallels the pattern in Tai languages. For instance, Proto-Tai is reconstructed as having non-perfect negators \**ɓaw*<sup>B</sup> (emphatic) and \**mi* (non-emphatic), and perfect negator \**paŋ*<sup>B</sup> (Pittayaporn, Jampathip, and Iamdanush 2010).

#### AFFILIATION OF PÍNGHUÀ

The affiliation of Píng huà is still a contentious issue in Chinese linguistics, especially given that the phonology of Southern Píng huà greatly resembles Yuè. Amongst the many opinions on the affiliation of Píng huà are: a) Northern Píng huà and Southern Píng huà are both branches of Yuè

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(e.g., Liáng Jīnróng 梁金榮 1997); b) Southern Píng huà is a branch of Yuè, while Northern Píng huà is something else (e.g., Xiè Jiànyóu 謝建猷 2007), possibly related to the neighboring Sinitic patois of Southern Húnán (*Xiāngnán Tǔ huà* 湘南土話); and c) Píng huà and Yuè are separate branches of Sinitic, and Gōulòu Yuè is in fact a type of Píng huà (e.g., Lǐ Liánjìn 李連進 2003). The fact is that Southern Píng huà and the neighboring Gōulòu and Liánzhōu types of Yuè share many phonological, lexical, and grammatical features, and Píng huà and Yuè lie on a continuum. There are linguistic features that are typical of Píng huà and features that are typical of Yuè. However, the isoglosses are not bundled along the border between Píng huà and Yuè as indicated by the *LANGUAGE ATLAS OF CHINA* (see above for isoglosses that do separate Píng huà and Yuè). For instance, the isogloss between the prototypical-Yuè copula 係 (e.g. Cantonese /hɛi<sup>22</sup>/) and the prototypical-Píng huà copula 是 (e.g. Nán níng Shí bù 石埠 Píng huà /ʃi<sup>22</sup>/) lies within Yuè territory; many western Yuè dialects also use 是, e.g. Yù lín /si<sup>24</sup>/, Liánzhōu /si<sup>21</sup>/. In another example, the isogloss between the prototypical-Yuè trait of the retention of the 豪 \*aw – 肴 \*æw distinction (first and second division rhymes of the 效 xiào group) and the prototypical-Píng huà trait of the merger between these two rhymes lies within Píng huà territory. It is only in the Píng huà dialects spoken in and west of Nán níng, Yōng níng 邕寧, Wǔ míng 武鳴 and Mǎ shān 馬山 that this merger has happened, e.g. Nán níng Píng huà has 高 /kau<sup>53</sup>/ (<\*kaw<sup>LEVEL</sup>) 'tall', 交 /kau<sup>53</sup>/ (<\*kæw<sup>LEVEL</sup>) 'exchange'; Héng xiàn Bǎi hé 橫縣百合 Píng huà to the east has 高 /kou<sup>34</sup>/ 'tall', 交 /kau<sup>34</sup>/ 'exchange' (Huáng Hǎi yáo 黃海瑤 2008) (c.f. Nán níng Cantonese 高 /ku<sup>55</sup>/ 'tall', 交 /kau<sup>55</sup>/ 'exchange'). Whether Píng huà and Yuè should be considered one or two branches of Sinitic, and where the boundary lies if they are separate, depend on one's viewpoint. More studies on the various Píng huà and western Yuè dialects are

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urgently needed to clarify this picture. The situation is somewhat similar to the debate of whether Gàn and Hakka should be considered one or two branches of Sinitic (see, e.g., Sagart 2002).

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