Pínghuà (of Guǎngxī) 平話 refers to a group of Sinitic dialects that are primarily spoken in Guǎngxī Zhuàng Autonomous Region 廣西壯族自治區 in Southern China. People in Nánníng 南寧, the capital of Guǎngxī, traditionally recognize four speech varieties spoken in the area: Guān Píng Tǔ Bái 官平土白, referring to Mandarin, Pínghuà, Zhuàng and Cantonese respectively. Zhāng Jūnrú 張均如 (1982) first argued that Pínghuà is not Yuè 粵 Chinese while comparing the phonologies of Sino-Zhuàng (Chinese loanwords in Zhuang), Pínghuà and Nánníng Cantonese (a variety of Yuè). The awareness of Pínghuà within Sinitic linguistics was raised considerably when the LANGUAGE ATLAS OF CHINA (Wūrǎn & Lǐ Róng 李榮 et al. 1987) listed Pínghuà separately from Yuè.

The most salient historical phonological feature that distinguishes Pínghuà from Cantonese and Mandarin is that in most Pínghuà 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 Pínghuà is clearly different from varieties of Cantonese in the area like Nánníng Cantonese, the status of Pínghuà as a subgroup independent from Yuè is controversial.

The Pínghuà dialects are commonly divided into Southern Pínghuà (Guǐnán Pínghuà 桂南平話) and Northern Pínghuà (Guǐběi Pínghuà 桂北平話). The phonology of Southern Pínghuà 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 Pínghuà has been Mandarinized: -m -p -t -k no
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 Nánníng and Guílín (桂林) (the current and previous capitals of Guǎngxī, respectively) are the most famous varieties of Southern and Northern Pínghuà, respectively. Qín Yuānxióng 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)*
Pínghuà speakers have mostly settled along transportation routes; this relatively linear distribution is a witness to the major migration pathways of Pínghuà 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 Daihnamz 大南 (Mandarin Dànán), headed by the Zhuàng leader Nungz Ciqgau 儂智高 (Mandarin Nóng Zhìgāo), near Nánníng. Many Pínghuà people claim that they are the descendents of these Sòng soldiers, most of whom were from the Shāndōng 山東 area in Northern China. After the war, some of these Sòng soldiers were settled in various towns in Guǎngxī, the majority along the Guilín – Liǔzhōu 柳州 – Nánníng 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 Guǎngxī from as early as the Qín 秦 dynasty), and these people – the Pínghuà people – gradually migrated outward along the waterways in the area, e.g., along the Lǐjiāng 灏江 from Guilín, upriver along the Róngjiāng 融江 north of Liǔzhōu, upriver from Nánníng to Chóngzuǒ 崇左 to the southwest and Fùníng 富寧 (in Yúnnán 雲南) to the northwest, and downriver to Héngxiàn 横縣 to the east. Many later Hàn Chinese immigrants from places like Jiāngxī 江西 and Fújiàn 福建 were also absorbed into the Pínghuà population. Some non-Sinitic people in the area have also shifted into speaking Pínghuà-like Sinitic languages, e.g. Southern Pínghuà spoken by Zhuàng people, Northern Pínghuà spoken by Red Yáo トーヨー people in Lóngshèng 龍勝 (Xiè Jiànyóu 謝建猷 2007:91-113).
One salient sociolinguistic feature of Pínghuà is that there is no influential urban variety that speakers uniformly gravitate towards. Pínghuà 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 Pínghuà-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 Pínghuà spoken mainly in suburban and rural areas.

Pínghuà is the endonym of Pínghuà people around the Nánníng and Guilín areas. There is a wide array of endonyms for other closely related Sinitic dialects spoken in other parts of Guǎngxī, for instance bàixinghuà 百姓話 ‘commoner speech’, běndìhuà 本地話 ‘local speech’, zhèyuánhuà 葭園話 ‘sugarcane-field speech’, just to name a few. It is mostly in linguistics and other related disciplines that the term Pínghuà 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 Pínghuà dialects of Nánníng or Guilín areas.

PHONOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN PÍNGHUÀ

The phonologically innovative Northern Pínghuà dialects are found to the northeast of Liǔzhōu. The remaining Pínghuà dialects, including the ones spoken along the Róngjiāng north of Liǔzhōu, are Southern Pínghuà dialects, which are phonologically more conservative. The
Southern Pínghuà dialects are relatively uniform, whereas the Northern Pínghuà dialects are very diverse. The Mandarinization of Northern Pínghuà is a later phenomenon, as can be seen from the fact that the earlier Chinese loans in the non-Sinitic languages of Northern Guǎngxī are Southern Pínghuà-like.

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

- Phonemic contrast between /ʃ/~/s/ versus /ɬ~/θ/, e.g., Nánníng Tíngzǐ 亭子 /siu³³/ 'few' vs. /liu³³/ 小 'small';
- Few medial glides; usually there is only a w which occurs only after k, kʰ or zero (similar to Cantonese);
- An unrounded high back vowel /u/;
- No front rounded vowels;
- No syllabic nasals (c.f. Cantonese /ŋ¹³/ 五 'five' vs. Nánníng Shàngháo 上堯 /ŋo³³/ 五 'five');
- Split in one or both entering tones; most Pínghuà dialects have a split of the entering tone based on vowel length/quality like Yuè dialects. However, in the Pínghuà dialects of Nánníng and places upriver, it is the lower-register entering tone (yángrù 陽入) that is split, based on whether the initial is sonorant or obstruent in Middle Chinese, e.g., Nánníng Shàngháo /hip²³/ 葉 'leaf' (< *jep), /wat²³/ 域 'region' (< *(i)wik) versus /hak²/ 學 'learn' (< *ɣæ(wk), /wat²/ 活 'live' (< *ɣwat);
- No systematic tone-sandhi.
In Northern Pínghuà dialects, the stop codas -p -t -k -m no longer exist, e.g., Línguì Liàngjiāng

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 (shàng 上) tone;
- Systematic tone-sandhi.

As one moves further away from Guilín 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 (Guǐdōng Tūhuà 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 Tūhuà 湘南土話), which together with the Northern Guǎngdōng Patois (Yuèběi Tūhuà 粵北土話) form a huge linguistic transition zone.
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 (jiūdūshēng 九都聲) of
Hèzhōu /no²¹³/ 男 'male', /ŋai²²/ 眼 'eye', /tʃʰo⁴³⁵/ 鐺 'wok' (c.f. Nánníng Shàngyáo /nam²¹/ 男
'male', /nan¹³/ 眼 'eye', /tʃʰeŋ⁵³/ 鐺 'wok').

**PHONOCLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PÍNHUÀ 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 Gōuluò 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. /tʰɛŋ⁵⁵/ 糖 'sugar' (< *daŋ⁴₅\_LEVEL),
/tsʰo²¹/ 坐 'sit' (< *dzwa₁\_RISING), /kʰi²¹/ 忌 'taboo' (< *gi⁴₃₁\_DEPARTING), /pʰɛk²¹/ 白 'white' (< *bæk⁴₅\_ENTERING)
(Chén Xiǎojǐn 陳曉錦 and Chén Tāo 陳滔 2005). (This is similar to Gàn, Hakka, and the Dānzhōu
儋州 Yuè dialect in Hānīnán 海南.) In contrast, Gōulò Yuè and the vast majority of Pínghuà
dialects have the Middle Chinese voiced obstruents devoiced and unaspirated (see below for
examples). Pínghuà and Gōulò Yuè in Guǎngxī are distinguished by the trait that most
Pínghuà dialects have the Middle Chinese series of affricates merged into one place of
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 /tʰɒm⁴⁴/ 参 'participate' (< *tʰAm^level⁴⁴), /tʰɒm⁴⁴/ 贪 'greedy' (< *tʰAm^level⁴), versus Nánníng Shàngyáo Pínghuà /tʰam⁵³/ 参 'participate', /tʰam⁵³/ 贪 '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 Pínghuà 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 Nánníng, Guìpíng 桂平, Qīnzhōu 桂州 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 Nánníng area, Cantonese underwent strong grammatical and lexical influence from Zhuàng, and this Zhuàng-influenced Cantonese spoken in Nánníng, 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 邕浔 Yuè in the literature. Many Southern Pínghuà speakers are fluent in Yōngxún Yuè/ Nánníng Cantonese as there are many Cantonese enclaves within Pínghuà-speaking areas. Some salient phonological differences between Nánníng Pínghuà and Nánníng Cantonese include:

- Pínghuà has the Middle Chinese obstruents devoiced and unaspirated, regardless of tone. Nánníng Cantonese, like Cantonese in general, has the Middle Chinese obstruents
Some Lexical and Grammatical Traits of Pínghuà

The lexicon of Pínghuà shares many similarities with Cantonese, but there are also a number of prominent lexical differences between Pínghuà and Cantonese. Pínghuà often has Mandarin-sounding words in its basic vocabulary. For instance, instead of Cantonese /hɐi22/ 倘 'be',
devoiced and aspirated (including syllables which have shifted from rising to departing tone). For instance, in Nánning Xīnxū 心墟 Pínghuà /taŋ21/ 糖 'sugar' (< *daŋ\^LEVEL), /tʃu13/ 坐 'sit' (< *dzwa\^RISING), /kəu22/ 忌 'taboo' (< *gi\^DEPARTING), /pɛk2/ 白 'white' (< *bæk\^ENTERING); in Nánning Cantonese /tʰɔŋ21/ 糖 'sugar', /tʃʰɔ13/ 坐 'sit', /ki22/ 忌 'taboo', /pɛk2/ 白 'white';
– Middle Chinese *ua (rounded first division rhyme of the 果 guǒ group) is usually /u/ in Nánning Pínghua and /ɔ/ in Cantonese, while Middle Chinese *u (rounded first division rhyme of the 遇 yù group) is usually /ɔ/ in Nánning Pínghuà and /u/ in Nánning Cantonese, e.g. Nánning Pínghuà /nu22/ 糯 'glutinous' (< *nu\^DEPARTING), /lɔ22/ 路 'road' (< *lu\^DEPARTING) versus Nánning Cantonese /nɔ22/ 糯 'glutinous', /lu22/ 路 'road' (Standard Cantonese /lou22/);
– In Nánning Pínghuà, 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 Pínghuà /mau21/ 毛 'hair' (< *mau\^LEVEL), /mau21/ 茅 'reed grass' (< *mæw\^LEVEL); Nánning Cantonese /mu21/ 毛 'hair', /mau21/ 茅 'reed grass'.

SOME LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL TRAITS OF PÍNGHUÀ

The lexicon of Pínghuà shares many similarities with Cantonese, but there are also a number of prominent lexical differences between Pínghuà and Cantonese. Pínghuà often has Mandarin-sounding words in its basic vocabulary. For instance, instead of Cantonese /hɐi22/ 倘 'be',
Pinghua (of Guangxi) has /ti/ 'look, watch', and /sik/ 'eat', Nánning Shàngyáo (Southern Pínghuà) has /ki/ 'is', /han/ 'look, watch', and /het/ 'eat', and similarly Línguì Liǎngjiāng (Northern Pínghuà) has /ji/ 'is', /hō/ 'look/watch', and /hi/ 'eat' (cf. Mandarin shì 'is', kàn 'look/watch', and chī 'eat'). There are some Sinitic lexical items that are commonly found in Pínghuà dialects (and also in neighboring Western Yuè dialects) but are rare in other Sinitic dialects. For instance, Nánning Shàngyáo (Southern Pínghuà) has /kʷə/ 'return' and /tʃʰəŋ/ 'small wok', Línguì Liǎngjiāng (Northern Pínghuà) has /kʷæ/ 'return' and /tʃʰə̃/ 'small wok'. Contrast this with Cantonese /fan/ 'return' and /wɔk/ 'wok', and Mandarin huí 'return' and guō 'wok'. Pínghuà – Southern Pínghuà in particular – also has many Zhuàng loanwords. One example is the first person inclusive pronoun /wən/ 'in Nánning Shàngyáo, cf. Northern Zhuàng vunz 'person'. (Southern Pínghuà and Northern Zhuàng usually have a clusivity distinction, whereas Southern Zhuàng, Northern Pínghuà and Yuè tend not to.) Another example is 'give': /həɯ/ in Nánning Xīnxū and /hei/ in Nánning Tíngzǐ, which is related to Proto-Tai *hauį 'give' (e.g. Northern Zhuang hawj [hauį] 'give'). Línguì Liǎngjiāng also has a possibly related form /han/ 'give'.

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

- For Pínghuà dialects spoken around Guilín, [classifier + noun] noun phrases are ubiquitous, as in most Yuè dialects. For Pínghuà dialects spoken in suburban Nánning,
[classifier + noun] noun phrases do not exist in pre-verbal position, as in most Mandarin dialects;

- In Nánhíng Pínghuà, 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. Línguì Liǎngjiāng Pínghuà has the Cantonese-like "give + theme + recipient" ditransitive order;

- Pínghuà has few negators. In particular there is no distinction between perfective versus non-perfective negation (e.g., méi 没 versus bù 不 in Mandarin). Instead, in Southern Pínghuà the main semantic division with the negators is between a general negator, e.g. /mi³³/ in Nánhíng Shàngyáo, versus a perfect negator /meŋ²¹/ ("not yet"). In Línguì Liǎngjiāng Northern Pinghua, there is also a general negator /mi³³/, and a perfect negator with an non-fused form /mi³³ tsʰaŋ³¹/ (<>tsʰaŋ³¹/ 曾 "ever"). Nánhíng Cantonese has the same distinction: general negator /mu³³/ versus perfect negator /meŋ²¹/. (In contrast, Standard Cantonese has the following negators: perfective mou⁵, non-perfective m⁴唔, and perfect mei⁴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 *baw⁸ (emphatic) and *mi (non-emphatic), and perfect negator *paj⁸ (Pittayaporn, Jampathip, and Iamdanush 2010).

Affiliation of Pínghuà

The affiliation of Pínghuà is still a contentious issue in Chinese linguistics, especially given that the phonology of Southern Pínghuà greatly resembles Yuè. Amongst the many opinions on the affiliation of Pínghuà are: a) Northern Pínghuà and Southern Pínghuà are both branches of Yuè
(e.g., Liáng Jīnróng 梁金榮 1997); b) Southern Pínghuà is a branch of Yuè, while Northern Pínghuà is something else (e.g., Xiè Jiànyóu 謝建猷 2007), possibly related to the neighboring Sinitic patois of Southern Húnán (Xiāngnán Tūhuà 湘南土話); and c) Pínghuà and Yuè are separate branches of Sinitic, and Gōulòu Yuè is in fact a type of Pínghuà (e.g., Lì Liánjìn 李連進 2003). The fact is that Southern Pínghuà and the neighboring Gōulòu and Liánzhōu types of Yuè share many phonological, lexical, and grammatical features, and Pínghuà and Yuè lie on a continuum. There are linguistic features that are typical of Pínghuà and features that are typical of Yuè. However, the isoglosses are not bundled along the border between Pínghuà and Yuè as indicated by the LANGUAGE ATLAS OF CHINA (see above for isoglosses that do separate Pínghuà and Yuè). For instance, the isogloss between the prototypical-Yuè copula 係 (e.g. Cantonese /hei²²/) and the prototypical-Pínghuà copula 是 (e.g. Nánning Shíbù 石埠 Pínghuà /ʃi²²/) lies within Yuè territory; many western Yuè dialects also use 是, e.g. Yùlín /si²⁴/, Liánzhōu /si²¹/. In another example, the isogloss between the prototypical-Yuè trait of the retention of the 豪 *aw – 貢 *æw distinction (first and second division rhymes of the 效 xiào group) and the prototypical-Pínghuà trait of the merger between these two rhymes lies within Pínghuà territory. It is only in the Pínghuà dialects spoken in and west of Nánníng, Yōngníng 崂寧, Wūmíng 武鳴 and Mǎshān 馬山 that this merger has happened, e.g. Nánning Pínghuà has 高 /kau³³/ (<*kawlvl) 'tall', 交 /kau³³/ ( <*kæwlvl) 'exchange'; Héngxiàn Báihé 橫縣百合 Pínghuà to the east has 高 /kou¹⁴/ 'tall', 交 /kou¹⁴/ 'exchange' (Huáng Hǎiyáo 黃海瑤 2008) (c.f. Nánning Cantonese 高 /ku⁵⁵/ 'tall', 交 /ku⁵⁵/ 'exchange'). Whether Pínghuà 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 Pínghuà and western Yuè dialects are...
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).

Hilário de Sousa


