Part 1

The influence of orthographic repertoire on Written Cantonese across different jurisdictions

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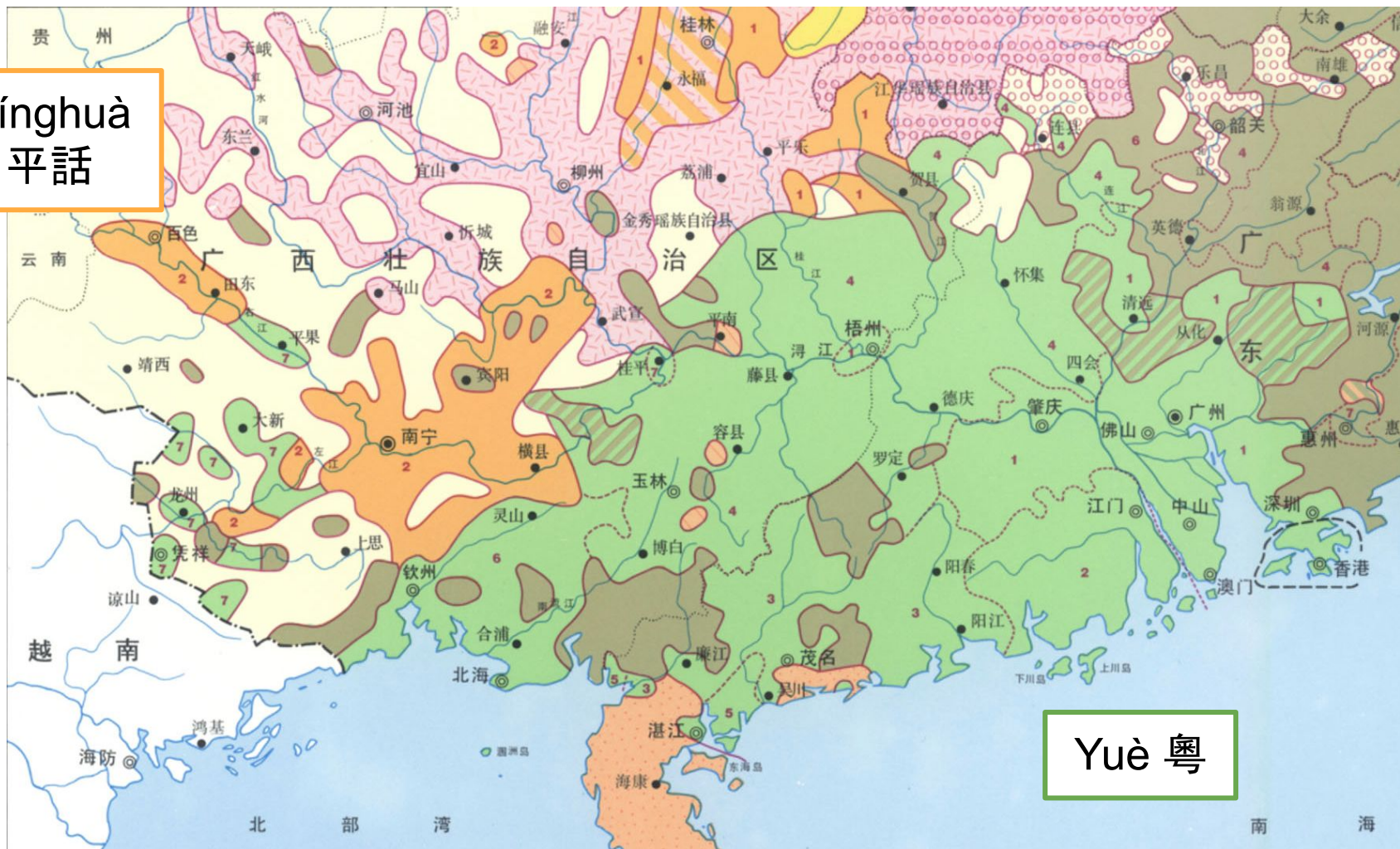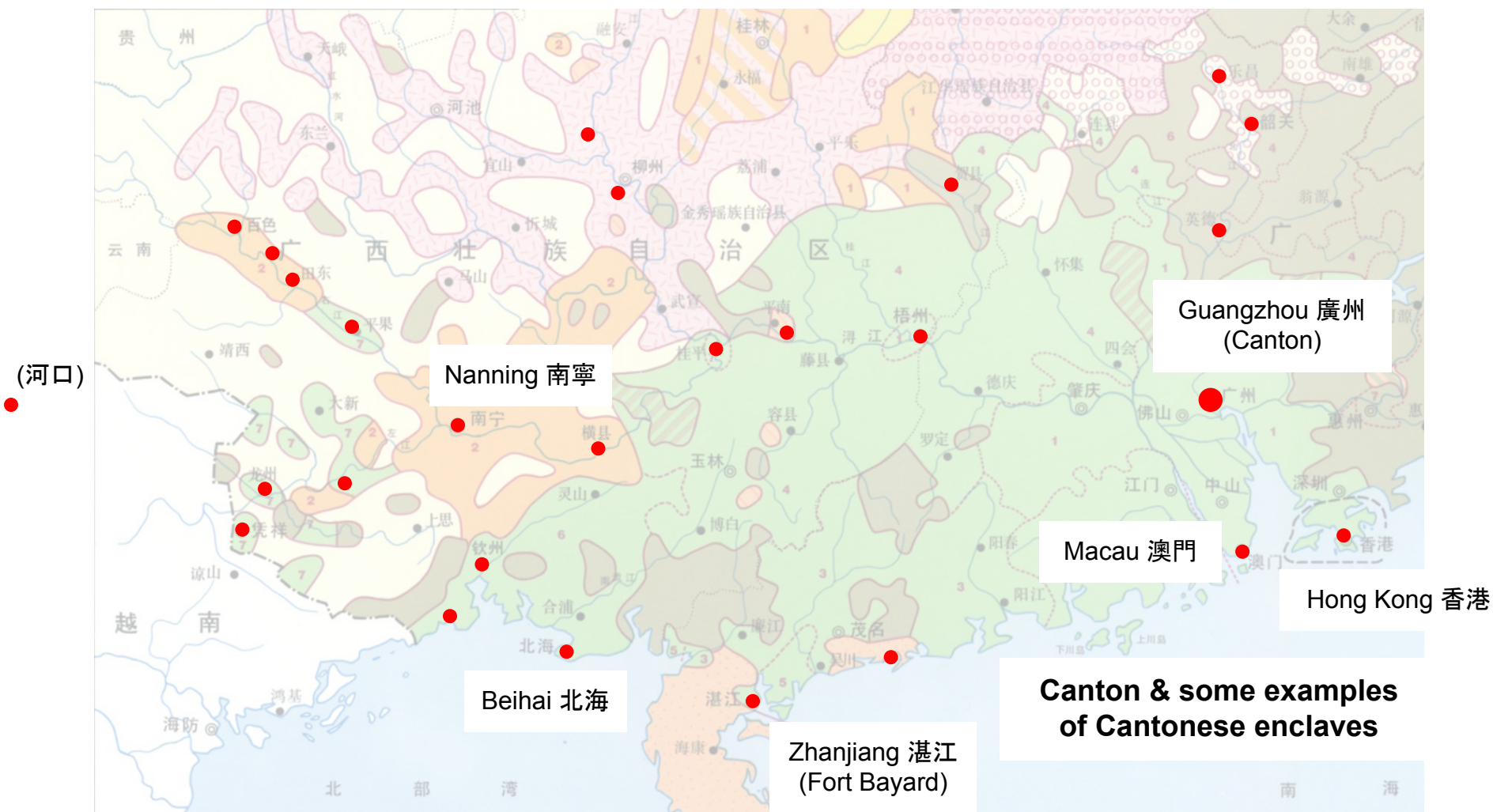
Hilário DE SOUSA
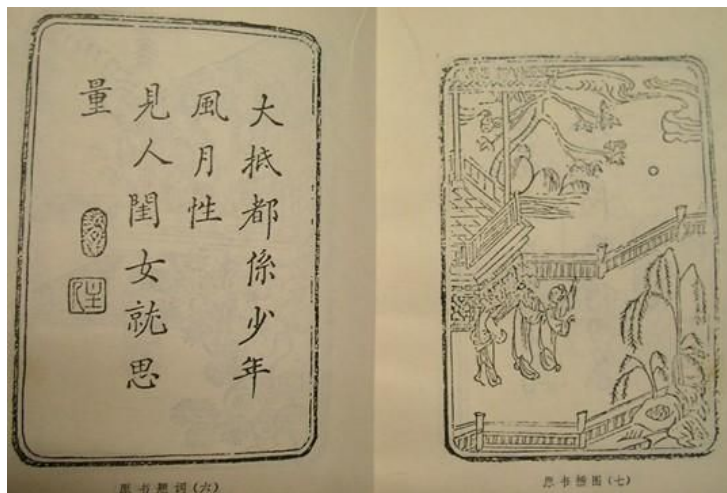CRLAO EHESS   *hilario@bambooradical.com*

Nanning 南寧

Guangzhou 廣州
(Canton)

(河口)

Macau 澳門

Hong Kong 香港

Beihai 北海

Zhanjiang 湛江
(Fort Bayard)

**Canton & some examples
of Cantonese enclaves**

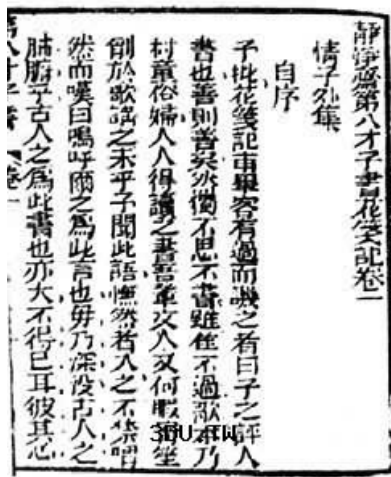# *Muk6 jyu4 syu1* 木魚書 (since the 17th century)

e.g. Faa1 Zin1 Gei3 花箋記 The Flowery Paper (see also, e.g., Majorie Chan 2005)

做乜	來由	噉	挂牽？
zou6mat1	loi4jau4	**gam3**	gwaa3hin1?
do:what	reason	so	worried

'Why are you so worried?' (花箋記 16)

Rare examples of Written Cantonese in education context:

1917 Classical Chinese textbook
with Cantonese annotation

(四書白話旁訓新讀本；
teaching text of 孟子 離婁)

(merci: twitter @taichungpui)

Modern Written Chinese in the education system

Chinese textbook in Hong Kong in late 60s – early 70s (?)

他每天早上到工廠去上班，

Modern Written Chinese in the education system

Modern Written Chinese (i.e. Written Mandarin)

他	每天	早上	到	工廠	去	上班,
(tā	*měitiān*	*zǎoshàng*	*dào*	*gōngchǎng*	*qù*	*shàngbān,)*
ta1	mui5tin1	zou2soeng6	dou3	gung1cong2	heoi3	soeng5baan1,
3SG	everyday	morning	reach	factory	go	work

'He goes to work at a factory every morning,'

Cantonese

佢	每日	朝早	去	工廠	返工,
keoi5	mui5jat6	ziu1zou2	heoi3	gung1cong2	faan1gung1,
3SG	everyday	morning	go	factory	work

'He goes to work at a factory every morning,'

Modern Written Chinese in the education system

練習二：把方言改正過來
Exercise 2:
correct [the sentence] from dialect

(Cantonese:)
我爸爸好早就去左返工，
好夜先至返屋企。

(Written Chinese:)
✎我的爸爸很早便去上班，
很晚才回家。

'my father goes to work very early in the morning, [he] comes back home very late.'

Graphemes for writing Cantonese

Chinese characters *(Cantonese people are in general poor with romanisation)*

Usually the same characters are used for Cantonese cognates of morphemes that people are familiar with from their education of Modern Written Chinese or Classical Chinese.

e.g. 你 nei5 / nǐ 'you (sg)', 會議 wui6 ji5 / huìyì 'conference',

頸 geng2 'neck' (e.g. Mandarin 頸椎 *jǐngzhuī* 'cervical vertebra(e)')

Graphemes for writing Cantonese

In other cases:

- creation of novel characters; most commonly created are phono-semantic compounds, and there are also some ideograms
- using homophonous or near-homophonous characters
- using synonymous characters (in Written Cantonese this is rare, unlike, e.g., Min languages)
- reviving rarer characters found in earlier stages of Chinese

There is no standardisation, and the same morpheme can have various commonly used graphemes.

Graphemes for writing Cantonese

Non-Sinitic words, e.g. words from Kra-Dai substratum, European loanwords

e.g. *lip1* 'elevator' (< English 'lift')

one solution: use European script

Graphemes for writing Cantonese

Non-Sinitic words, e.g. words from Kra-Dai substratum, European loanwords

Phono-semantic compounds 形聲

☐ *lip1* 'elevator' (< Eng. 'lift'):

車 vehicle radical +
立 lap6 phonetic component

我會做好呢份工

I'll get the job done!

共創好環境

Creating quality life together

口 mouth radical:

"character represents a colloquial morpheme"

e.g. 呢 ("sounds like" 尼 nei4)
ni1~nei1 'this'
cf. Zhuang *neix* 'this', Thai นี้ *níi* 'this'

di1 (of Hmong-Mien origin; Yue-Hashimoto 1991)
- mass classifier (non-singularity)
- comparative (on adjectives)

mouth-radical　啲　di1
　(phonetic component 的　dik1;
　　or Mandarin 的 di ?)

homophonous grapheme　D di1

有啲嘢唔講得

啲 係會繼續嘅
It's a Material World

朋友問你D錢洗晒去邊
壽司刺身
燒肉
拉麵
快餐

艺术呢D嘢
你识条铁咩!

Using (near-)homophonous characters

e.g. *han4* 'itch'
(cf. Zhuang *haenz*, Thai คัน *khān*)

written with 痕 *han4* 'scar'
(cf. Mandarin *hén*)

Hong Kong Written Chinese 痕癢 'itch':
痕 *han4* 'itch' (which most people does not know is not Sinitic) +
癢 *joeng5* 'itch' (Sinitic)

Rare in Cantonese writing:
Using synonymous but etymologically unrelated characters 訓讀

e.g.

nap1 'concave' (cf. Zhuang *mboep* (?))

written as 凹 (regular reflex *aau3*, cf. Mandarin *āo*)

gip3 'astringent' (etymology unknown)

written as 澀 (regular reflex *sap1*, cf. Mandarin *sè*)

Some morphemes of Sinitic origin also require "solutions"

(i.e. not morphemes that people are familiar with from their education of Modern Written Chinese and Classical Chinese; the etymology of these morphemes is not generally know)

e.g.

phono-semantic compound 形聲

佢 *keoi5* 3SG (Human radical 亻 + phonetic component 巨 *geoi6*)

(etymology 渠 *keoi4*, a southern dialectal word in Classical Chinese)

ideograms 指事/會意

冇 *mou5* 'not have / not exist' (from 有 *jau5* 'have / exist')

(etymologically perhaps 無 *mou4* 'not have / not exist', plus the tone of 有 *jau5*)

haau2 bun2 zi6 / kǎo běnzì 考本字 'searching for original characters':

gui6 'be tired':

劤

(ideogram: 支 'defray' + 力 'power')
(but expected reflex of 劤 is *gwai3*)

癀

(phono-semantic compound:
疒 sickness radical + 會 *wui6*)
(but expected reflex of 癀 is *gui3*)

Part 2

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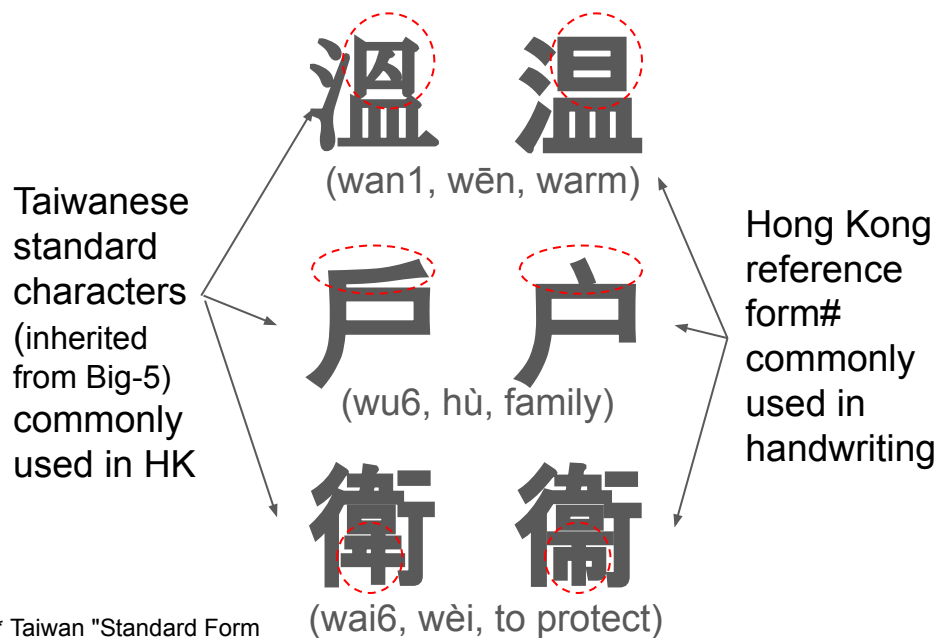   The Education University of Hong Kong   *lchaakming@eduhk.hk*
Hilário DE SOUSA
    CRLAO EHESS   *hilario@bambooradical.com*

i. Glyph-level script choice

Taiwan vs Hong Kong flavour of Traditional Han

溫　溫
(wan1, wēn, warm)

Taiwanese standard characters (inherited from Big-5) commonly used in HK

戶　户
(wu6, hù, family)

Hong Kong reference form# commonly used in handwriting

衛　衞
(wai6, wèi, to protect)

* Taiwan "Standard Form of National Characters" compilant

published by Education Bureau

香港特別行政區政府
新聞公報

GovHK 香港政府一站通　简体版　English

天氣酷熱市民應預防中暑　去

天氣酷熱市民應預防中暑
＊＊＊＊＊＊＊＊＊＊

　　衞生署衞生防護中心今日（七月八日）提醒市民特別是進行戶外活動的人士，天氣酷熱，應採取適當措施，預防中暑及曬傷。

　　衞生防護中心發言人說：「進行戶外活動時，應帶備並補充大量水分，以防脫水。」

　　發言人解釋：「進行消耗體力的戶外活動時，應避免飲用含咖啡因的飲品，例如咖啡和茶，以及酒精類飲品，以免增加水分經泌尿系統流失的速度。」

　　發言人補充：「小童、長者、過胖人士，以及長期病如心臟病或高血壓患者均較易中暑，他們應特別注意。」

　　市民應採取以下預防措施：

• 穿着淺色、寬鬆及通爽的衣物，減少吸熱，方便排汗及散熱；
• 避免做劇烈運動或作長程的登山或遠足等活動，高溫、出汗及疲乏均會

i. Glyph-level script choice

Taiwan vs Hong Kong flavour of Traditional Han (con't)

These two glyphs are merged to 著 in Taiwan,
but the distinction is maintained in Hong Kong

着

zoek3, zhuó, to wear
zoek6, zháo/zhe, to
suffer; PROG.

著

zyu3, zhù,
to author

i. Glyph-level script choice

Japanese influence

駅 =驛 in Traditional Han, read as jik6

戸 Japanese **glyphs** are rare

	Proportion of Population Aged 5 and Over Able to Speak Selected Languages/ Dialects as the Usual Spoken Languages/ Dialects			Proportion of Population Aged 5 and Over Able to Speak Selected Languages/ Dialects as Another Spoken Languages/ Dialects		
	Percentage			Percentage		
Japanese	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.4	1.7	2.0

ii. Preferred strategy

What to do when no acceptable characters are available?

- Homophones
- English orthography
- Avoiding the phrase
- New phono-semantic compounds
    - Recycling existing phono-semantic compounds in Unicode
    - Adding a new character to Unicode
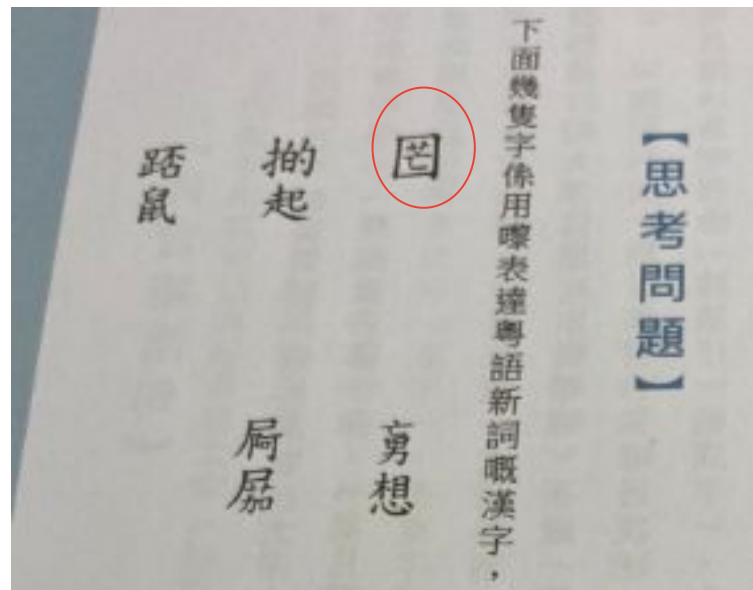
我根本唔識點應佢，只係流曬冷汗。

「其實我有一事相求。」

「唔好求我，我咩都幫唔到你㗎！」我突然諗起有隻game，入面話影相可以捉鬼，即刻拎住掛喺心口嘅相機，連揿幾下快門，連閃幾下閃光燈。

我望住個囸，入面真係名乎其實「連鬼影都冇隻」，但係望夫石仍然企喺我面前。

「公子，你喺度做咩？」

「啊！我只係見難得撞鬼，所以想影低落嚟貼IG啫。」

「你係影唔到我㗎。」

回口芒 **mon1**

Recently encoded.

口 wai4 + 芒 mong1

Process:

Writers
→ Use in published materials
→ Ideographic Research Group
→ Unicode Consortium
→ Industry

iii. Reference point for the phonetic component

Cantonese vs Putonghua

ge3 (possesive marker)	嘅	既 gei3	噶	葛 got3 gé
saai3 (universal-quantitative marker)	晒嘥	西 sai1 徙 saai2	嘥	塞 sak1 sài
gaa3 (final particle)	㗎□	架 gaa3 駕 gaa3	嘎	夏 gaat3 gā
hai1 (expletive)	閪	西 sai1	黑嘿	黑 hak1 hēi

iv. The role of external systems

English orthography

hea	he3	lazy
chok	cok3	shake' or 'pretentious
AA制	ei1 ei1 zai3	to go dutch
BB	bi4 bi1	baby
jer	zoe1	male genital
call	ko1	to call
chur	coe2	demanding

Hanyu Pinyin

The expletive 屌 *diu2* as **diao**

The use of Putonghua acronym, e.g. YYDS (< 永遠的神, god-level player or person)

Kong Girl Phonetics

Cantonese transliteration

English orthography

   UP 噏 *ap1* to say
   MUD 乜 *mat1* what

Hanyu Pinyin

   D**a** Ga 大家 *daai6 gaa1* everyone

   T**ong** 同 *tung4* with

   B**ao**: 爆 *baau3* break

第 1 頁 ∨   下一頁

#1 衛生根 P · 2 年前 👁 ↩   ⤴ ⋯

LEI YUT GOR HAI 8.18 DA GA KAU TONG GE FONG SIK
IF U WAI YI YAU GHOST, WRITE ON A PIECE OF PAPER
"NEI GI NG GI NGO UP MUD 7 AH?"
YU GWOR KUI TAI NG MING
JAU GI KUI HAI YUN DING HAI GWAI LA
🐸🐸🐸🐸🐸

TONG NGO TUI BAO KUI AH DIU!!!!!!!

👍 8041   👎 102

v. Character choice that reflects regional features

Macau

戈 go1 'this'
from 戈 go1 'dagger'

Hong Kong

起 hei2 'at'
from 起 hei2 'rise', reflecting a new reduced pronunciation

Nanning

嘞 slak1 'one or so'
from Nanning Cantonese 塞 slak1 'block (v.)'

據悉，香港大部分食物供應來自內地，市場上的價格上漲，或許是一些商販「趁你病，攞你命」，利用未經證實的小道消息抬價牟取暴利。紅街市菜販黃先生表示，澳門年初一至今蔬菜零售價比起年前略貴，他笑言「都屬於正常升幅啦，但唔會好似香港咁誇張」；另一檔主金小姐表示，今日年初八蔬菜零售價最高，她稱「初初戈時生菜都係3蚊左右，今日就變咗4個半一斤，最貴係菀菜心同芥蘭，要15蚊成本價」。市民羅小姐表示，春節期間菜價上漲，但在可接受範圍內；又指不擔心疫情影響澳門供應鏈。

柯清煌受訪時指出，香港菜價大幅提高，與香港疫情嚴峻有關，而澳門沒有疫情，所以菜價不會上漲，相信未來亦不會受香港影響。而最近正值農曆新年，價格略有調升屬正常現象，同時強調市政署雖未有作出明確監管，但相信商販們都會自覺，與市民「共度時艱」。
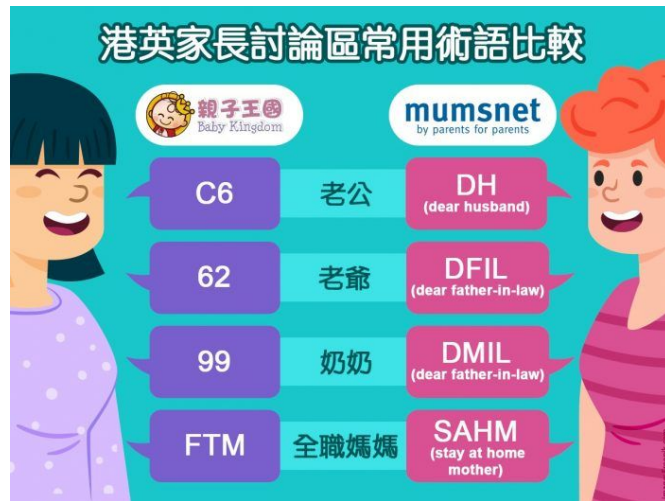
https://www.exmoo.com/article/192461.html

Texting variation (Hong Kong)

發表於 13-7-8 23:04 | 只看該作者

C6=死佬, C9=師奶, 鞋音嘛, 網上打既語言,

https://www.baby-kingdom.com/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=7991245

為食寶B

港英家長討論區常用術語比較

親子王國 Baby Kingdom		mumsnet by parents for parents
C6	老公	DH (dear husband)
62	老爺	DFIL (dear father-in-law)
99	奶奶	DMIL (dear father-in-law)
FTM	全職媽媽	SAHM (stay at home mother)

c9	師奶	*si1 naai1*	**9** nine	middle-aged women
c6	死佬	*sei2 lou2*	**6** luk6	husband
99	奶奶	*naai4 naai2*	**9** nine	mother-in-law
62	老爺	*lou5 je4*	**6** luk6, **2** ji6	father-in-law
on9	戇鳩	*ngong6 gau1*	**9** gau2	f--ing stupid
siu4	笑死	*siu3 sei2*	**4** sei3	laugh-die
sor9	sor鳩	*so1 gau1*	**sor** < sorry	f--ing sorry
jm9	做乜鳩	*zou6 mat1 gau1*	**jm** < **jo mud**, **9** gau2	what the f--k

Disambiguation: Sentence-final particles

Luke (2007) discusses a case of ambiguity caused by orthographic variation in sentence final particles found in the news

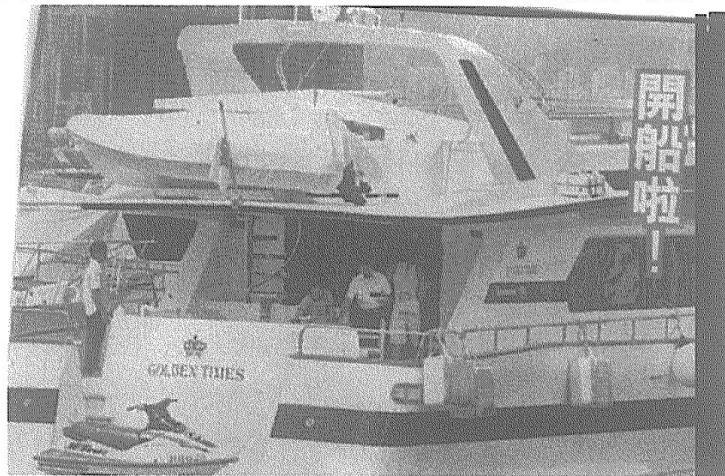開船　　　　**啦**

hoi1 syun4　laa**1**/**3**

set sail　　　SFP

laa**1** Please leave the port
→ now written as 啦

laa**3** The boat is leaving
→ now written as 喇

有時即使有語境的幫助，一些語氣詞的身分還不是完全明確的，例如：

Discussion

The factors that affect how Cantonese is written

- English orthography
- Hanyu Pinyin
- Character pronunciation
- Local romanisation practice
- Regional varieties

Does every jurisdiction **follow** Hong Kong Written Cantonese usage? No.

Bibliography

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Luke, Kang Kwong 陸鏡光. 2007. Yuèyǔ jūmò zhùcí de shūxiě fāngshi 粵語句末助詞的書寫方式 [Writing method of Cantonese sentence final particles]. In Joanna Ut-Seong Sio & Sze-Wing Tang (eds.). *Studies in Cantonese Linguistics* 2. 95–107. Hong Kong: Linguistics Society of Hong Kong.

(See also the bibliography in the extended abstract.)