

Yuè & the Sinitic Languages of the Pearl River Region — Unit 1.1

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Hilário de Sousa 蘇沙

EHESS–CRLAO

membre associé

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hilario@bambooradical.com

Preliminary matters

- Lecturer: Dr. Hilário de Sousa
(*any animate pronoun*; first-name basis is OK
“Hilário” can be pronounced in various languages /hi'la:ɾɐu/
/hi'le:ɾɐu/ /i'lariu/ /ilaxjo/ /fi'la:ɾijo/ /hi'la:ɾio/ etc.
or 蘇沙 *sou1 saa4* in Cantonese)
- Example sentences may include EXPLETIVES
- If Traditional and Simplified characters are displayed side by side, they are displayed as 繁 [简], e.g.
鬆 [松] *sung1* ‘loose’, 松 [松] *cung4* ‘pine’
裏/裡 [里] *lei5* ‘inside’, 里 [里] *lei5* ‘neighbourhood’
- Slides can be downloaded from my website
<https://hilario.bambooradical.com>
check for the latest version before each lecture

Pearl River Basin/Region



Figure 1: Pearl River Basin

Pearl River Basin/Region

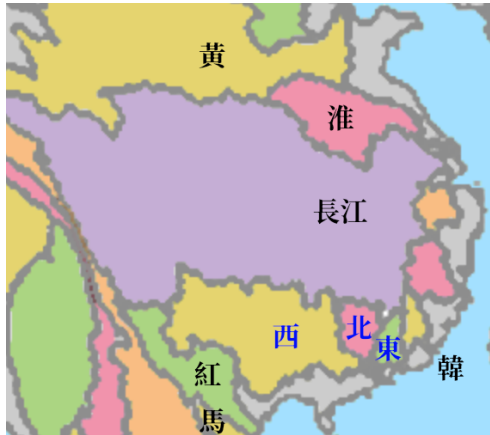


Figure 2: Some watersheds in East Asia

Based on

<https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/world-watersheds-blank.png>

Sinitic languages / dialects

漢語方言 *hànyǔ fāngyán* / *hon3 jyu5 fong1 jin4*:
 “Sinitic languages” / “Chinese dialects”

「方言」 partially overlaps with “dialect”

方言：regional speech variety (language or dialect)

Mair (1991): “topolect” as translation of 方言

mutual intelligibility not taken into account

方言 *usually used in opposition to a standard speech variety*

dialect: speech varieties of a location

language: collection of “mutually intelligible” dialects

Mair, Victor H. 1991. What Is a Chinese “Dialect/Topolect”? Reflections on Some Key Sino-English Linguistic Terms. *Sino-Platonic Papers* 29. 1–31.

Sinitic languages / dialects

- A: 你们会几种方言?
How many dialects can you guys speak?
- B: 华语还有广东话。
Mandarin and Cantonese.
- A: 华语不是方言啦!
Mandarin is not a dialect la hello.
- C: 华语是一种语言。
Mandarin is a language.
- D: 华语不是方言咩?
Mandarin is not a dialect?
- C: 华语是一种语言。
Mandarin is a language.

Figure 3: language/dialect as direct translation of 语言/方言

Introduction — Sinitic languages

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Sinitic languages / dialects



Figure 4: “German dialects” in 1900

Sinitic languages / dialects

Sinitic languages purely linguistic term:

Old Chinese and its descendants

Old Chinese, e.g.:

Oracle Bone Inscriptions 甲骨文 (13th–11th C BCE)

4 Books 5 Classics 四書五經 (before 2nd C BCE)

“Chinese”:

- Country of China
- Chinese dynasties / regimes
- 漢 Hàn (唐 Táng Tong4 / 華 Huá Waa4) ethnicity
- etc.

Sinitic languages / dialects

唐 / 華:



<https://maps.app.goo.gl/HgcvvvQHWow74yoS8> <https://maps.app.goo.gl/t6xCvmbhJf9ubpES9>
<https://youtu.be/sYIW2rOnfss?si=WeQ08HoCLW0rIX17&t=132>

Sinitic languages / dialects

1. “Chinese dialects”/“Chinese languages” can be interpreted as “dialects/languages of China” (*which can be Sinitic or non-Sinitic*)
2. Communities of native speakers of Sinitic languages can identify with all, some, or none of the non-linguistic senses of “Chinese”, e.g. *Sán Dìu 山瑶 of Vietnam identifies with none*



Sinitic languages



Figure 5: Some approaches to language/dialect classification

Sinitic languages

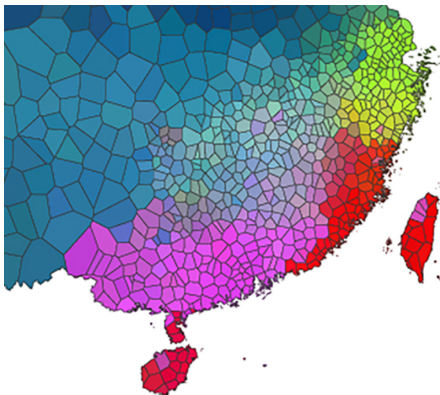


Figure 6: RGB–Multidimensional Scaling map of Southeastern Sinitic

Huang, He & Grieve, Jack & Jiao, Lei & Cai, Zhuo. 2024. Geographic structure of Chinese dialects: a computational dialectometric approach. *Linguistics* 62(4). 937–976. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling-2021-0138>

Based on data from the *Linguistic Atlas of Chinese Dialects* 汉语方言地图集

Sinitic languages

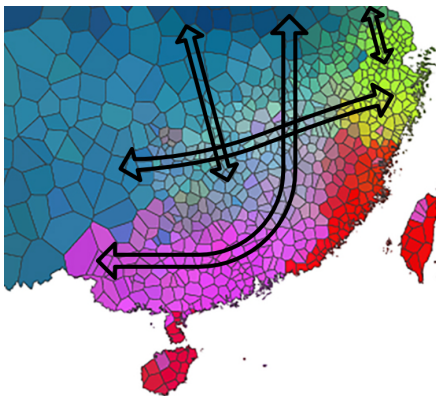


Figure 7: Some Sinitic dialect continua

Sinitic languages



Figure 8: Dialect groups in Yuan 袁家骅's classification *phonology based*

Huang, He & Grieve, Jack & Jiao, Lei & Cai, Zhuo. 2024. Geographic structure of Chinese dialects: a computational dialectometric approach. *Linguistics* 62(4). 937–976. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling-2021-0138>

Yuán, Jiāhuá 袁家骅. 1960. *Hànyǔ Fāngyán Gǎiyào* 汉语方言概要. Beijing: 文字改革出版社.

Sinitic languages



Figure 9: Dial. groups in Wurm & Li 李榮's classification *phonology based*

Huang, He & Grieve, Jack & Jiao, Lei & Cai, Zhuo. 2024. Geographic structure of Chinese dialects: a computational dialectometric approach. *Linguistics* 62(4). 937–976. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling-2021-0138>

Wurm, S.A. & Li, Rong (eds.). 1987. *Language Atlas of China*. 1st edn. Hong Kong: Longman Group (Far East) Ltd.

Sinitic languages

- 官話 Guānhuà / Gun1 Waa2
- 晉 Jìn / Zeon3
- 湘 Xiāng / Soeng1
- 贛 Gàn / Gam3
- 徽 Huī / Fai1
- 吳 Wú / Ng4
- 閩 Mǐn / Man5
- 客家 Kèjiā / Haak3 Gaa1
- 粵 Yuè / Jyut6
- 平話 Píng huà / Ping4 Waa2
- (+ smaller unclassified groups)



Figure 10: Southern Sinitic dialect groups

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinitic_languages#/media/File:Map_of_sinitic_languages_full-en.svg

Based on 1st ed. of the *Language Atlas of China* 中国语言地图集