

Yuè & the Sinitic Languages of the Pearl River Region — Unit 4.2

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North-South and Vietnam



靈渠 (秦 214
BCE near 桂林)

鬼門關 (鬱林/
玉林 & 北流)
合浦

梅關道 (唐 716
CE) & 珠璣巷

Pinghua: 4m;
Zhuang 14m;
Yue 68m

North–South and Vietnam

LAC 2nd ed. (2012) classification and figures:

Xiāng River Corridor:

- Xiāng 湘 30.85m
- SW Mandarin Guìliǔ 西南
官話桂柳片 30.07m
- Píng huà 平話 4.06m

Gàn River Corridor:

- Gàn 贛 48m
- Hakka 客家 42.2m
(worldwide)
- Yuè 粵 68m (worldwide)
- Tǔ huà 土話 (Patois) 3.83m

North–South and Vietnam

Chinese loanwords in Korean & Japanese:

Approximation of the prestigious variety of Chinese at the time
Transmitted through scholars who went to China

Chinese loanwords in Vietnamese:

Not approximation of a prestigious variety of Chinese

Most-likely scenario:

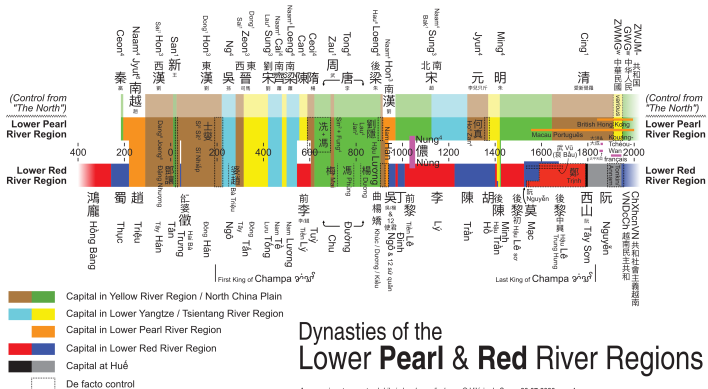
Local Sinitic variety/ies spoken by the Chinese community in
the Red River Delta region, i.e. “Annamese Middle Chinese”
(Phan 2025; Phan & de Sousa 2022), Fujianese (Whitmore
2020)

Phan, John D. 2025. *Lost tongues of the Red River: Annamese Middle Chinese & the origins of the Vietnamese language*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Phan, John D. & de Sousa, Hilário. 2022. Southwestern Middle Chinese: Preliminary evidence from Hunan, Guangxi, and Sino-Vietnamese. In Phan, Trang & Phan, John D. & Alves, Mark J (eds.), *Vietnamese linguistics: State of the field* (Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society Special Publication 9), 59–79. Honolulu: University of Hawai ‘i Press.

Whitmore, John K. 2020. The Sông Cái (Red River) Delta, the Chinese diaspora, and the Trần/Chen clan of Đại Việt. *Crossroads: An interdisciplinary journal of Asian interactions* 19. 210–232.

North-South and Vietnam



Dynasties of the Lower Pearl & Red River Regions

North-South and Vietnam

Terminologies surrounding “Sino-Vietnamese”

	common	Phan (2025)
0 CE (Han dyn.; LOC)	Old-SV/“Non-SV”	Early SV
601 (Sui dyn.; EMC)		
1000 (Viet. indep.; LMC)	Sino-Vietnamese	Late SV
literary pronunciation	漢越音	
<i>Red River Chinese shifting to Việt-Mường</i>	âm Hán-Việt	
later, e.g. recent loans from Canto./Teochew Sinitic neologisms		Recent SV

Examples of Sinitic 文白異讀

Mandarin 血 Lit. xuè e.g. 血統, Col. xiě e.g. 流血

Cantonese 正 Lit. zing3 e.g. 正統, Col. zeng3 e.g. 正 !

Tones

Alves (2018)

Old Chin.	son. end.	-ʔ	-s	-p -t -k
Middle Chin.	平 A	上 B	去 C	入 D

Proto-Vietic	son. end.	-ʔ	-s -h	-p -t -c -k
(native) Viet.	ngang ^{A1}	sắc ^{B1}	hỏi ^{C1}	sắc ^{D1}
	huyền ^{A2}	nặng ^{B2}	ngã ^{C2}	nặng ^{D2}

P-Viet.	son. end.		-ʔ		-s -h		-p -t -c -k	
P-Viet.	*ci:m	*ve:r	*ʔa-cə:ʔ	*r-ko:ʔ	*ceh	*mu:s	*-suk	*məc
Viet.	chim	về	chó	gạo	chẻ	mũi	tóc	mật
gloss	bird	turn back	dog	husked rice	to split	nose	hair	gall

Alves, Mark J. 2018. Early Sino-Vietnamese Lexical Data and the Relative Chronology of Tonogenesis in Chinese and Vietnamese. *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics* 11(1-2). 3-33. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2405478X-01101007>

Tones

MC tone	平 A	上 B	去 C	入 D
ESV	ngang huyền ^A	sắc nặng ^B	hỏi ngã ^C ngang huyền ^A	sắc nặng ^D
LSV		hỏi ngã ^C	sắc nặng ^B	

	ESV	LSV
紙	giấy ^{B1} ‘paper’	chỉ ^{C1} (e.g. chứng chỉ 證紙)
網	mạng ^{B2} ‘network’	võng ^{C2} ‘hammock’
歲	tuổi ^{C1} ‘age’	tuế ^{B1} (e.g. vạn tuế 萬歲)
字	chữ ^{C2} ‘character’	tự ^{B2} (e.g. văn tự 文字 ‘contract’)

Tones

MC tone	平 A	上 B	去 C	入 D
ESV	ngang huyền ^A	sắc nặng ^B	hỏi ngã ^C ngang huyền ^A	sắc nặng ^D
LSV		hỏi ngã ^C	sắc nặng ^B	

	ESV (LOC)	ESV (EMC)	LSV (LMC)
帶	dải ^{C1}	đai ^{A1}	đái (~đới) ^{B1}
e.g.	dải đất 'strip of land'	đai đen 'black belt'	ôn đới 溫帶
共	cũng ^{C2}	cùng ^{A2}	cộng ^{B2}
e.g.	'also'	'with'	tổng cộng 總共

Tones

MC tone	平 A	上 B	去 C	入 D
ESV	ngang huyền ^A	sắc nặng ^B	hỏi ngã ^C ngang huyền ^A	sắc nặng ^D
LSV		hỏi ngã ^C	sắc nặng ^B	

LOC: 帶 *C.t ^s a[t]-s	> ESV -s (no tone)	> later: dài ^{hỏi C1}
EMC: 帶 taj ^C	> ESV -0 (no tone)	> later: dài ^{ngang A1}
LMC: 帶 taj ^C		> LSV: dài ^{sắc B1}

Tones

全濁上歸去 voiced obstruent tone B2 becomes tone C

	MC (B)	LSV (exp. C2)	Nan. Ping. (exp. B2)	Canto. (exp. B2)
市	dzji ^B	thị ^{B2}	<u>ʈi</u> ˩ ^{B2}	<u>si</u> 5 ^{B2}
是	dzje ^B	thị ^{B2}	ʈi˩ ^{C2}	si6 ^{C2}
動	du ^w η ^B	động ^{B2}	tɯŋ˩ ^{C2}	dung6 ^{C2}
奉	bjo ^w η ^B	phụng ^{B2}	fɯŋ˩ ^{C2}	fung6 ^{C2}
坐	dzwa ^B	toạ ^{B2}	tʃu˩ ^{B2}	<u>co</u> 5 ^{B2} ~ zo6 ^{C2}
漸	dzjem ^B	tiệm ^{B2}	<u>tʃim</u> ˩ ^{B2}	zim6 ^{C2}
杜	du ^B	<u>đồ</u> ^{C2}	tɔ˩ ^{C2}	dou6 ^{C2}

Tones

次濁平歸陰去 voiced sonorant tone A2 becomes tone A1

	ESV	LSV
貓	mèo ^{A2}	miêu ^{A1}
蛾	ngài ^{A2}	nga ^{A1}
龍	rông ^{A2}	long ^{A1}
姨	dì ^{A2}	dì ^{A1}

The same happens in (Wǎ)Xiāng (瓦) 鄉.

Looking at some Xiāng 湘 dialects (Shuāngfēng), probably split of sonorant tone A2 and obstruent tone A2, and then sonorant tone A2 merged with tone A1.

Finals

Centralisation of MC -im -in
(= Pan-Yuè trait: -iC > -jɛC (> -ɛC))

	MC	ESV	LSV
孀 ‘dad l.bro’s wife’	叔母 sju ^w kmuw ^B	thím ^{B1}	thâm ^{C1}
辰 ‘5 th 地支’	dzjin ^A	thìn ^{A2}	thần ^{A2}

In both LSV and Pan-Yuè, this centralisation occurs to a very high degree but usually not 100%.

Finals

LSV: Centralisation of MC -i group of finals
(止攝開口: 支 -j(i)e, 脂 -(j)ij, 之 -i, 微 -jij)

	MC	LSV	Nan. Ping.
奇	gje ^A	cø/kÿ ^{A2}	ki↓ ^{A2}
飢	kij ^A	cø ^{A1}	kəj↓ ^{A1}
其	gi ^A	cø/ky ^{A1}	ki↓ ^{A2}
基	ki ^A	cø ^{A1}	kəj↓ ^{A1}
幾	kjij ^{A/B}	cø/ky ^{A1}	kəj↓ ^{B1}

Liao (2023: 110–121): very common in Zhuang/Pinghua–Yue in Guangxi.

Liao, Hanbo 廖漢波. 2023. The formation of Lingnan linguistic traits: Typological structures and diachronic issues. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong. (PhD thesis.)

Finals

LSV: MC -aŋ/-an group of finals 宕/山攝

	LSV		南寧平	貴港粵	玉林粵	Canto.
兩	lư ^{B2}	lạng ^{B2}	lɛŋ ^{B2}	ljɔŋ ^{B2}	la ^{B2}	lœŋ ^{B2}
剛	cư ^{A1}	cang ^{A1}	kaŋ ^{A1}	kɔŋ ^{A1}	ko:ŋ ^{A1}	kœŋ ^{A1}
檔	đư ^{A1}	đáng ^{B1}	taŋ ^{A1} /ɿ ^{B/C1}	tɔŋ ^{C1}	do:ŋ ^{A1} /ɿ ^{B/C1}	tœŋ ^{A1} /ɿ ^{B/C1}
癢	du ^{C2}	dạng ^{B2}	jɛŋ ^{B2}	jiɔŋ ^{B2}	ja ^{B2}	jœŋ ^{B2}
山	sơn ^{A1}	san ^{A1}	saŋ ^{A1}	sɔŋ ^{A1}	ɕɔŋ ^{A1}	saŋ ^{A1}
單	đơn ^{A1}	đan ^{A1}	taŋ ^{A1}	tɔŋ ^{A1}	do:ŋ ^{A1}	taŋ ^{A1}

Perhaps -ư^{B2}/-ơn are older regional developments, and -aŋ/-an are newer borrowings from Pinghua and/or E Guangxi Yue.

Finals

MC 魚 -jo 虞 -ju finals

	MC	ESV	LSV
驢	ljo ^A	lữa ^{A2} ‘donkey’	lư ^{A1} ‘donkey’
初	tɕ ^h jo ^A	xũa ^{A1} ‘ancient’	sơ ^{A1} ‘beginning’
主	tsju ^B	chúa ^{B1} ‘lord’	chủ ^{C1} ‘master’
符	bju ^A	bùa ^{A2} ‘amulet’	phù ^{A2} ‘talisman’

Finals

MC 二等 “2nd division” (ɛ æ)

	MC	ESV	LSV
茶	ɬæ ^A	chè ^{A2}	trà ^{A2}
畫	hwɛ ^C	vẽ ^{C2}	hoạ ^{B2}
膠	kæw ^A	keo ^{A1} ‘glue’	giao ^{A1} ‘glue’
斬	tʂɛm ^B	chém ^{B1} ‘chop’	trảm ^{C1} ‘cut off’
察	tʂ ^h ɛt ^D	xét ^{D1} ‘observe’	sát ^{D1} ‘examine’
瓦	ŋwæ ^B	(ngói ^{B1}) (OC *C.ŋ ^{wɿ} ra[j]?)	ngoã ^{C2}

Finals and Initials

(LSV:)

MC 二等 “2nd division” (ɛ æ) with 一等 “1st division” (a ə)
with velar initials:

	MC	LSV	南寧平	賓陽平	玉林粵	台山	Can.
牙	ɲæ ^A	nha ^{A1}	ɲa ^{↓A2}	ɲa ^{↓A2}	ɲ/ɲɔ ^{↓A2}	ɲga ^{↓A2}	ɲa ^{↓A2}
咬	ɲæw ^B	giǎo ^{C1}	ɲaw ^{↓B2}	ɲaw ^{↓B2}	ɲɔw ^{↓B2}	ɲgaw ^{↓B1}	ɲaw ^{↓B2}
雁	ɲæn ^C	nhạ ^{B2}	ɲan ^{↓C2}	ɲan ^{↓C2}	ɲɔn ^{↓C2}	ɲgan ^{↓C2}	ɲan ^{↓C2}
我	ɲa ^B	ngã ^{C2}	ɲa ^{↓B2}	ɲø ^{↓B2}	ɲœ ^{↓B2}	ɲg ^u ɔj ^{↓B2}	ɲɔ ^{↓B2}
熬	ɲaw ^A	ngao ^{A1}	ɲaw ^{↓A2}	ɲøw ^{↓A2}	œw ^{↓A2}	ɲgaw ^{↓A2}	ɲo/aw ^{↓A2}
岸	ɲan ^C	ngạn ^{B2}	ɲan ^{↓C2}	ɲøn ^{↓C2}	ɲɔn ^{↓C2}	ɲg ^u ɔɲ ^{↓C2}	ɲɔn ^{↓C2}

Finals and Initials

(LSV:)

MC 二等 “2nd division” (ɛ æ) with 一等 “1st division” (a ə)
with velar initials:

	MC	LSV	南寧平	賓陽平	玉林粵	台山	Can.
嫁	kæ ^C	giá ^{B1}	kaɿ ^{C1}	tsaɿ ^{C1}	kɔɿ ^{C1}	kaɿ ^{AC1}	kaɿ ^{C1}
交	kæw ^A	giao ^{A1}	kawɿ ^{A1}	tsawɿ ^{A1}	kɔwɿ ^{A1}	kawɿ ^{AC1}	kawɿ ^{A1}
奸	kæn ^A	gian ^{A1}	kanɿ ^{A1}	tsanɿ ^{A1}	kɔnɿ ^{A1}	kanɿ ^{AC1}	kanɿ ^{A1}
歌	ka ^A	ca ^{A1}	ka/ɔɿ ^{A1}	kø ^{A1}	kœɿ ^{A1}	k ^u ɔ l	kɔɿ ^{A1}
高	kaw ^A	cao ^{A1}	kawɿ ^{A1}	køwɿ ^{A1}	kœwɿ ^{A1}	kawɿ ^{AC1}	kowɿ ^{A1}
乾	kan ^A	can ^{A1}	kanɿ ^{A1}	kønɿ ^{A1}	kɔnɿ ^{A1}	k ^u ɔnɿ ^{AC1}	kɔnɿ ^{A1}

Initials

	EMC	ESV	LSV
牙	ɲæ ^A	ngà (voi) ‘(象) tusk’	nha ‘tooth’
嫁	kæ ^C	gả ‘marry off’	giá ‘marry’
芥	kej ^C	cải ‘cruciferous vege’	giới ‘mustard’
房	bwjang ^A	buồng “room”	phòng “room”
斧	pju ^B	búa ‘axe’	phủ ‘axe’
味	mwjij ^C	mùi ‘smell’	vị ‘taste’
萬	mwjən ^C	muôn/man ‘10000’	vạn ‘10000’

1. ɲ 疑 > ɲ; k 見 > c etc.: Pinghua / W Yue partially like this
2. bw/pw > f 非敷奉: Pinghua–Yue & Hakka mostly like this; kept some characters as b/p. (Min has most usually not developed f.)
3. mw > v 微: Pinghua–Yue & Hakka mostly retained m. Pinghua has a few, Hakka has a bit more, cases of v. (S Min usually m > b)

Lanneau, Grainger. 2025. Acquisition in a trilingual environment and philological education: A re-examination of regular, unique and unusual SinoVietnamese initial features. Seattle: University of Washington. (PhD dissertation.)

Initials

(e.g. Phan 2025: 106)

Old Viet. *b- *p- *d- *t- > *p- *t- > b- d-

Sinitic (MC) 精 ts- 清 ts^h- > Viet. t- t^h-

Sinitic (MC) 莊 tʂ- 初 tʂ^h- > Viet. tʂ- ʂ- (> N Viet. c- s-)

Sinitic (MC) 章 tʃ- 昌 tʃ^h- > Viet. c- s-

化州_{下江} 粵 (Li 1996: 13-15)

MC 幫 p- 端 t > 化州粵 b- d- (voiced)

MC 精 ts- 清 ts^h- > 化州粵 t- t^h-

MC 莊 tʂ- 初 tʂ^h- > 化州粵 tʃ- tʃ^h-

MC 章 tʃ- 昌 tʃ^h- > 化州粵 tʃ- tʃ^h-