

# Yuè & the Sinitic Languages of the Pearl River Region — Unit 5.2

13<sup>th</sup> EACL Summer School, Universität Stuttgart

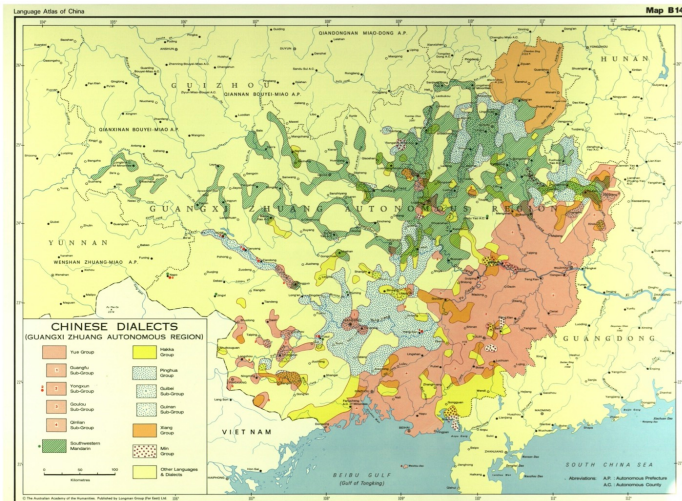
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Friday 31 July 2026  
丙午六月十八

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# SW Mandarin etc.



Language Atlas of China 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

Mandarin speakers mostly arrived in late 14<sup>th</sup> / early 15<sup>th</sup> C (元末 / 明初)



## SW Mandarin etc.

Liǔzhōu Mandarin 柳州官話

p p<sup>h</sup> m f, t t<sup>h</sup> n l, ts ts<sup>h</sup> s (tɕ tɕ<sup>h</sup> ɕ), k k<sup>h</sup> ŋ h  
 (ts ts<sup>h</sup> s > tɕ tɕ<sup>h</sup> ɕ / \_ i u j w)

|                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                  |                  |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ɿ <sup>1</sup>    | ɤ <sup>5</sup>    | o <sup>8</sup>    | e <sup>10</sup>   | ə <sup>13</sup>   | æ <sup>14</sup>   | ɑ <sup>16</sup>   | ɿ <sup>18</sup>  | ʊ <sup>20</sup>  |
| i <sup>2</sup>    | ia <sup>6</sup>   | io <sup>9</sup>   | ie <sup>11</sup>  |                   |                   | ia <sup>17</sup>  |                  | iu <sup>21</sup> |
| u <sup>3</sup>    | ua <sup>7</sup>   |                   |                   |                   | uae <sup>15</sup> |                   | ui <sup>19</sup> |                  |
| y <sup>4</sup>    |                   |                   | ye <sup>12</sup>  |                   |                   |                   |                  | yu <sup>22</sup> |
| ɛ̃ <sup>23</sup>  | ɛ̃ <sup>25</sup>  | ən <sup>28</sup>  | ən <sup>30</sup>  | ɑŋ <sup>33</sup>  | ɑŋ <sup>36</sup>  | ɛʔ <sup>38</sup>  | oʔ <sup>40</sup> | eʔ <sup>41</sup> |
|                   | iɛ̃ <sup>26</sup> |                   | ian <sup>31</sup> | iaŋ <sup>34</sup> | ioŋ <sup>37</sup> |                   |                  |                  |
| uɛ̃ <sup>24</sup> |                   | uən <sup>29</sup> |                   | uaŋ <sup>35</sup> |                   | uaʔ <sup>39</sup> |                  |                  |
|                   | yɛ̃ <sup>27</sup> |                   | yən <sup>32</sup> |                   |                   |                   |                  |                  |

## SW Mandarin etc.

| Standard Mand.                 | * 平 *A | * 上 *B | * 去 *C | * 入 *D        |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|
| 陰 *voiceless 清 initial         | 1 ˩    | 3 ˨˥   | 4 ˥    | <i>random</i> |
| 陽 *voiced sonorant 次濁 initial  | 2 ˨    |        |        | 4 ˥           |
| 陽 *voiced obstruent 全濁 initial |        |        |        | 2 ˨           |

| 柳州官話                           | * 平 *A | * 上 *B | * 去 *C | * 入 *D |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 陰 *voiceless 清 initial         | 1 ˩    | 3 ˩    | 4 ˨    | 2 ˥    |
| 陽 *voiced sonorant 次濁 initial  | 2 ˥    |        |        |        |
| 陽 *voiced obstruent 全濁 initial |        |        |        |        |

(Plus ˩˥ borrowed from Cantonese)

tone D &gt; tone A2 very common amongst SW Mandarin dialects

一 i˩ 六 lu˩ 七 tɕʰi˩ 八 pa˩ 十 sz˩

殺 toʔ˩ &lt; Canto. duk1 'poke'

嘜 maʔ˩ &lt; Canto. mak1 'brand' (&lt; Eng. "mark")

# SW Mandarin etc.

(Based on Tang 2012)

| 柳州官話                | 桂林官話                                 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 泥來不混 n ≠ l          | 泥來相混 n ~ l                           |
| 泥 ni↓ ≠ 梨 li↓       | 泥 = 梨 ni↓                            |
| 分尖團 MC tsj ≠ kj     | 不分尖團 MC tsj = kj                     |
| 精 tsən↓ ≠ 京 kjən↓   | 精 = 京 tɕin↓                          |
| 公雞 / 雞公             | 公雞                                   |
| koŋ↓ ki↓ / ki↓ koŋ↓ | koŋ↓ tɕi↓                            |
| 你們坐先                | 先和他講桂林話                              |
| ni↓ mən↓ tso↓ sɛ↓   | ɕjɛ↓ xo↓ tʰa↓ tɕjaŋ↓ kwej↓ nin↓ xwa↓ |

Táng, Qiuyuán 唐七元. 2012. 试谈桂林官话和柳州官话之间的方言差异. Journal of Guilin University of Aerospace Technology 桂林航天工业学院学报 2012(4). 453-456.

# SW Mandarin etc.

Example of other (Ming-dynasty) Mandarin enclaves, e.g.  
邕州官話 Yōngzhōu Guānhuà (Old Nánning Mandarin)

p p<sup>h</sup> m f, t t<sup>h</sup> n l, ts ts<sup>h</sup> s (tɕ tɕ<sup>h</sup> ɕ) ʈ, k k<sup>h</sup> ŋ h

|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| ɿ   | a   | o   | ə   |     | æ   | ai  | ei  | au  | əu  | iu |
| i   | ia  | io  |     | ie  |     |     |     | iau | iəu |    |
| u   | ua  |     |     |     |     | uai | uei |     |     |    |
| y   |     |     |     | ye  |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| əm  |     | an  | en  | ən  | aŋ  | əŋ  | uŋ  | yŋ  |     |    |
| iəm | iem |     | ien | in  | iaŋ | iəŋ |     |     |     |    |
|     |     | uan |     | uən | uaŋ |     |     |     |     |    |
|     |     |     | yen | yn  |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| ɐp  | əp  | ɐt  | ət  | et  | yt  | ɐk  | ək  | ək  | ek  |    |
|     | iəp |     |     | iet |     |     |     |     |     |    |

1 2 3 4 / 7 8

## SW Mandarin etc.

邕州官話 Yōngzhōu Guānhuà (Old Nánning Mandarin)

1↓1↓1↓/1↓

(SW) Mandarin traits: e.g.

\*-m > \*-n, \*-ŋ sometimes > -n

金 = 斤 = 京 kin<sup>1</sup> 針 = 珍 = 貞 tɕin<sup>1</sup>

慘 = 產 = 橙 ts<sup>h</sup>an<sup>1</sup>

\*-p > \*-t > \*-k > -0 (or glide)

濕 = 實 = 石 ɕi<sup>1</sup>

Quite many loans from e.g. Nan. Canto.

鉗 k<sup>h</sup>jem<sup>1</sup> (< NC k<sup>h</sup>im<sup>1</sup>), 粒 nɛp<sup>1</sup> (< NC nɛp<sup>1</sup>)

忽 fət<sup>1</sup> (< NC fət<sup>1</sup>), 突 tət<sup>1</sup> (< NC tət<sup>1</sup>)

鑿 tsɔk<sup>1</sup> (< NC tsɔk<sup>1</sup>)

# SW Mandarin etc.

「軍話」 “Jūnhuà”:

Many enclaves of descendants of Ming-dynasty soldiers,  
speaking some type of “older” Mandarin.

(The soldiers may or may not be native speakers of Mandarin;  
some kind of koine Mandarin developed within each garrison.)

## SW Mandarin etc.

e.g. 舊時正話 of 電白 (Chen 2006)

Ming-dynasty soldiers primarily from Zhejiang or Fujian (i.e. none or very few of them were native speakers of Mandarin)

電白華樓 A1 † A2 √ B √ C † / DL √ DS †

| 普通话 | 正 话                 | 哎 话                  | 黎 话                | 白 话                  |
|-----|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 我   | 我 wo <sup>31</sup>  | 哎 ɲai <sup>213</sup> | 我 va <sup>53</sup> | 我 ɲo <sup>35</sup>   |
| 你   | 你 ni <sup>31</sup>  | 你 ni <sup>31</sup>   | 你 lu <sup>31</sup> | 你 nei <sup>35</sup>  |
| 他   | 他 t'a <sup>33</sup> | 渠 ki <sup>213</sup>  | 伊 ji <sup>33</sup> | 渠 k'oi <sup>35</sup> |

The 電白舊時正話 community does not have the endonym/exonym of 軍話;

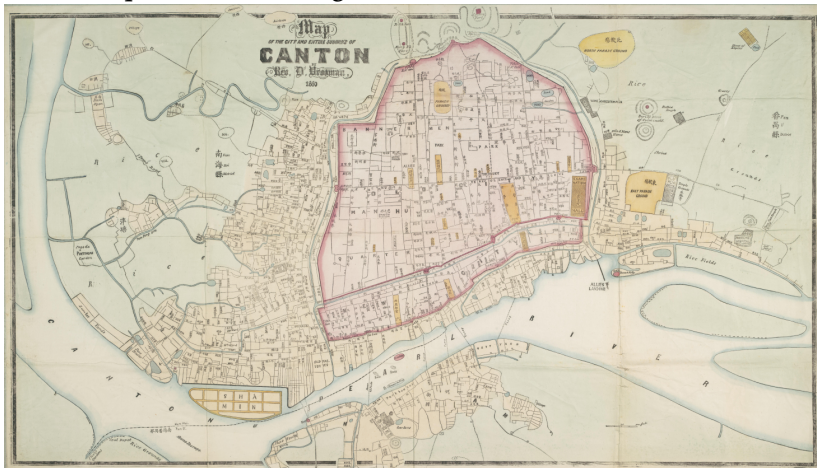
For Qiū (2005: 136), only Mandarin varieties which have the endonym or exonym of 軍話 should be considered 軍話.

## SW Mandarin etc.

Notice: not all communities of descendants of such soldiers  
speak a Mandarin variety  
e.g. 大鵬話 of Shenzhen/HK is mixed Hakka/Yue

## SW Mandarin etc.

Manchu quarters 滿城 (e.g. Canton 1860:)



## SW Mandarin etc.

廣州：旗下話 (NE Mandarin) & 滿洲話 (Beijing Mandarin)  
both with Cantonese influences; moribund

滿洲話 (Yang 2023) e.g.:

kuɿ tuɿ ‘tomb’ < Manchu *huru* ‘high place’ / *kuru* ‘elevation’  
擦黑儿 “dusk, nightfall” (e.g. NE Mandarin)

Tons of Cantonese calques, e.g.:

幾多 jǐduō ‘how/so many’ < Canto. gei2 do1

唔該晒 bùgāi saai3 “thanks” < Canto. m4 goi1 saai3

隔離 géli ‘neighbouring’ < Canto. gaak3 lei4

Yang, Gareth Junjie 楊鈞傑. 2023. The Moribund “Manchu Mandarin” in Guangzhou: A Product of Cantonese-Mandarin Contact. Paper presented at The 27th International Conference on Yue Dialects, The Ohio State University.

## SW Mandarin etc.

廣州滿洲話 (Yang 2023) e.g.:

包餛飩要买啲灰面和豆豉醬

bāo bōbo yào mǎi di1 huīmiàn hé dòuchǐ-jiàng

“To make dumplings, [you] need to buy some flour and *douchi* sauce”

啲 di1: Canto. mass classifier

你在哪啲找吃？

nǐ zài nǎdi1 zhǎo chī

“Where do you make your living?”

找吃 < Canto. 搵食 wan2 sik6 (seek eat) ‘make a living’

哪啲：

哪裏 nali > nadi(?); influence of Canto. mass CLF 啲 di1(?)

## SW Mandarin etc.

粵劇官話（戲棚官話／中州音）

Cantonese opera were all sung in Mandarin in earlier days  
Now primarily in Cantonese, but some Mandarin is still used

Cantonese Opera Mandarin is like earlier Guilin Mandarin +  
Cantonese influence, e.g. <https://www.canoperadict.com/>

Cantonese Opera Mandarin words in Cantonese: e.g.

可怒也！ko1 naau1 je1!

合晒合尺 hap6 saai3 ho4 ce1

|     |      |     |       |        |      |       |       |      |     |     |
|-----|------|-----|-------|--------|------|-------|-------|------|-----|-----|
| ... | 合    | 士   | 乙     | 上      | 尺    | 工     | 反     | 六    | 五   | ... |
| ... | ho4  | si6 | ji6   | saang3 | ce1  | gung1 | faan1 | liu1 | wu1 | ... |
| ... | G    | A   | B     | C      | D    | E     | F#    | G    | A   | ... |
|     | hap6 | si6 | jyut6 | soeng6 | cek3 | gung1 | faan2 | luk6 | ng5 |     |

# Mǐn

Yue, Hakka etc. have preserved little linguistic material from before Middle Chinese.

Mǐn (and S Wú & Wǎxiāng), other than having a layer borrowed from Middle Chinese, are good at preserving linguistic materials older than Middle Chinese.

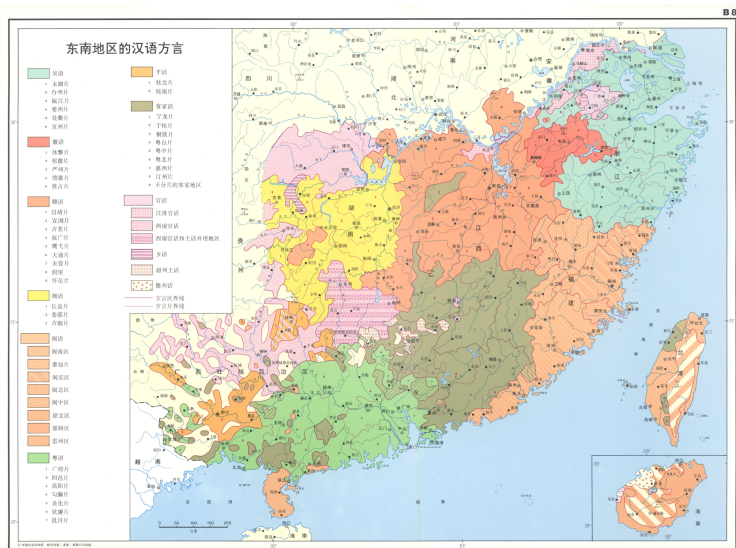
## \*Proto-Mǐn

|                    |                   |                                                                          |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inland Mǐn [InM]:  | NM+WM:            | Northern Mǐn [NM]<br>Western Mǐn [WM]<br>(a.k.a. Shào–Jiāng)             |
|                    | Central Mǐn [CnM] |                                                                          |
| Coastal Mǐn [CsM]: | Eastern Mǐn [EM]: | North [NEM]<br>(a.k.a. Fú–Níng)                                          |
|                    |                   | South [SEM]<br>(a.k.a. Hòuguān)                                          |
|                    | SM+PXM:           | Pú–Xiān Mǐn [PXM]<br>Southern Mǐn [SM]:                                  |
|                    |                   | Quánzhōu-type [QzSM]<br>Zhāngzhōu-type [ZzSM]<br>Guǎngdōng–Hǎinán [GHSM] |

Figure 1. One view of the internal structure of the Mǐn group

de Sousa, Hilário & Bit-Chee Kwok. in press 2025. The affiliation of the three Zhōngshān Mǐn varieties: A review & some additional notes 三種中山閩語的系屬問題: 回顧及觀察. *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics* 中國語言學集刊 18(2): 207-283. [https://doi.org/10.30184/BCL.202512\\_18\(2\).0002](https://doi.org/10.30184/BCL.202512_18(2).0002)

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# Mǐn

Within Pearl River Basin (Guǎngxī / Guǎngdōng):

Many enclaves of Southern Mǐn

Primarily of Zhāngzhōu 漳州-type

Some of Eastern Guǎngdōng-type (潮汕 / 海陸豐)

Zhōngshān Mǐn enclaves 中山閩方言島：

Often said to be all Southern Mǐn

de Sousa & Kwok (in press): one variety is S Mǐn, two varieties are E Mǐn (but typologically unlike the usual E Mǐn varieties)

de Sousa, Hilário & Bit-Chee Kwok. in press 2025. The affiliation of the three Zhōngshān Mǐn varieties: A review & some additional notes 三種中山閩語的系屬問題: 回顧及觀察. *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics* 中國語言學集刊 18(2): 207-283. [https://doi.org/10.30184/BCL.202512\\_18\(2\).0002](https://doi.org/10.30184/BCL.202512_18(2).0002)

## Xiāng

全州 Quánzhōu area (Xiāng / Yangtze Basin; NE Guǎngxī) is dominated by Xiāng and SW Mandarin.

Also many Xiāng enclaves elsewhere in Guǎngxī in the Pearl River Basin.

S/W Xiāng dialects (“Old Xiāng”): good at preserving voicing of MC voiced obstruents, e.g.

| MC  | 並<br>b             | 定<br>d                          | 澄<br>d                            | 從<br>dz                           | 羣<br>g                            |
|-----|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 全州湘 | biŋ <sup>1C</sup>  | diŋ <sup>1C</sup>               | dzẽŋ <sup>1A2</sup>               | dzoŋ <sup>1A2</sup>               | dʒɤŋ <sup>1A2</sup>               |
| 南寧平 | pən <sup>1C1</sup> | tən <sup>1C2</sup>              | tʃən <sup>1A2</sup>               | tʃuŋ <sup>1A2</sup>               | k <sup>w</sup> ən <sup>1A2</sup>  |
| 香港客 | pin <sup>1C</sup>  | t <sup>h</sup> in <sup>1C</sup> | ts <sup>h</sup> in <sup>1A2</sup> | ts <sup>h</sup> uŋ <sup>1A2</sup> | k <sup>h</sup> jun <sup>1A2</sup> |

## European languages

Macau Português 1557–1999

Canton 一口通商 1757–1842

British Hong Kong 1842ish–1997

Kouang-Tchéou-Wan français 1898—1945

Macanese creole (very few native speakers)

Chinese Pidgin English (extinct)

e.g. *long time no see, pidgin, look see, chop chop, chopstick, joss stick* (< Port. *deus*)

Cantonese:

Many English loanwords, e.g. 的士 *dik1 si2* < Eng. *taxi*

麻甩 *maa4 lat1* ‘pervert’ < French *malade* ‘sick’

冷 *laang1* ‘wool’ < French *laine* (? Port. *lã?*)

釐丁 *nung1 ding1* ‘be broke’ < Mac. creole *nôm têm* ‘not have’

## European languages

Code mixing between English and Cantonese (to a degree) is very common in Hong Kong (+ Macau)

Spoken Canto. in HK, e.g.

sen1 ji1 meu1 more common than 發電郵 faat3 din6 jau4  
同朕...

Some portuguese loanwords in Macau, e.g.

馬介休 ma1 ke1 jɛu1 < Port. Bacalhau ‘cod fish’

(also, /m/ was earlier [ᵐb] in Macau)

Older Macau Cantonese: ta1 ma1 ti1 ~ taj1 ma1 ti1 < Mac.  
creole *tomate* ‘tomato’

> 中山石岐 taj1 ma1 ti1

(Standard Cantonese 番茄 faan1 ke2 ‘tomato’)

# Sign languages

CSL family:

- HK SL + Macau SL
- Chinese SL (N & S)

JSL family:

- Taiwanese SL
- Korean SL
- Japanese SL

VietSL: Hanoi, Haiphong, Saigon

## Cantonese Writing

Classical Chinese (of various periods): e.g.

唧唧復唧唧 zik1 zik1 fuk6 zik1 zik1

木蘭當戶織 muk6 laan4 dong1 wu6 zik1

[...]

雄兔腳撲朔 hung4 tou3 goek3 pok3 sok3

雌兔眼迷離 ci1 tou3 ngaan5 mai4 lei4

Modern Standard Chinese (since about 1910s): e.g.

那榆蔭下的一潭

naa5 jyu4 jam3 haa6 dik1 jat1 taam4

不是清泉，是天上虹

bat1 si6 cing1 cyun4, si6 tin1 soeng6 hung4

## Cantonese Writing

Long history of elements of non-standard language amongst writings of Standard Chinese.

《紅樓夢》 is based on Beijing colloquial, with many Jiangsu/Zhejiang words

Classical(-like) texts with elements of spoken Cantonese:

《花箋記》 (late 明; 17<sup>th</sup> C)

大抵都係少年風雨性

daai6 dai2 dou1 hai6 siu3 nin4 fung1  
jyut6 sing3

見人閨女就思量

gin3 jan4 gwai1 neoi5 zau6 si1  
loeng6



## Cantonese Writing

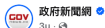
《垓下弔古》 梁啟超 (1873–1929)

又高又大又嵯峨 jau6 gou1 jau6 daai6 jau6 co1 ngo4  
臨死唔知重唱歌 lam4 sei2 m4 zi1 zung6 coeng3 go1  
三尺多長犀利劍 saam1 cek3 do1 coeng4 sai1 lei6 gim3  
八千靚溜後生哥 baat3 cin1 leng3 lau3 hau6 saang1 go1  
既然稟薏爭皇帝 gei3 jin4 ban2 dan2 zaang1 wong4 dai3  
何必頻脰殺老婆 ho4 bit1 pan4 lan4 saat3 lou5 po4  
若使烏江唔鋸頸 joek6 sai2 wu1 gong1 m4 goe3 geng2  
漢兵追到屎難痾 hon3 bing1 zeoi1 dou3 si2 naan4 oi

# Cantonese Writing

政府新聞網 news.gov.hk's  
Facebook page writes in  
Written Cantonese  
e.g. 佢 表示，呢啲 優勢  
“He indicates, these  
advantages”

(陳茂波 Paul Chan wrote in  
MSC  
e.g. 我們 深信，科技發展  
應是讓 人的 生活更美好)



政府新聞網

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【AI賦能】陳茂波司長聯誼誌撰文表示，今年內會推出優化版數碼轉型支援先導計劃，支持中小企採用現成嘅人工智能方案，指香港嘅AI布局已經由逐項推進，進入系統布局嘅階段，力求讓AI賦能千行百業。

司長又指，香港作為國際創新科技中心，憑藉「一國兩制」下內聯外通嘅優勢，既係AI研發轉化之地，亦係內地AI企業出海嘅策略適應地，協助前沿技術同商業模式對接國際標準與應用；國際金融中心嘅高效運作，則為呢啲探索與轉化提供資金支持。

佢表示，呢啲優勢正進一步吸引更多科技企業匯聚香港，佢期望與各界攜手，讓人工智能成為高質量發展嘅新動能；入連結了解多啲。

司長隨筆：<https://bit.ly/4yoTMOx>

#數碼轉型支援計劃 #人工智能 #AI #研發轉化 #應用出海 #財政司司長 #陳茂波 Minder weergeven



陳茂波 Paul M.P. Chan

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【以人為本 向上向善】

科技創新與人工智能已迅速成為我們生活中不可或缺的元素。在AI的時代，我們與其被動適應變化，不如主動出擊，更深度地理解箇中原理，為己所用。可以說，人工智能將會好像電腦和互聯網一樣，成為經濟發展和社會發展的底層支撐；AI帶來的這一輪深遠的變革，影響的不單是個別行業，而是學習、生活、工作、經營，以至創造方式本身。

對環球經濟而言，人工智能是新的增長引擎，卻也帶來新的風險與挑戰。日前在上海舉行的世界人工智能大會上，習近平主席發表主旨講話，深刻地指出應該讓人工智能成為各國促進共同繁榮、維護共同安全的重要動力源。我國倡議成立的「世界人工智能合作組織」，共29個國家簽署定並成為始創成員。「以人為本、向上向善」，正成為科技發展在國際間廣獲認同的共同目標。我們深信，科技發展應是讓人的生活更美好，須致力讓其紅利惠及更多人。

全文連結在留言區

#人工智能 #香港書展

#司長隨筆 #陳茂波 Minder weergeven

<https://www.facebook.com/govnews.hk/posts/pfbid022W5aFQVZ9Q4jNTN2NuBvRpwpLGszABM4abbVkPmFaidr59LyN835KsXmptytbaxMoI>

# Cantonese Writing

澳門特別行政區政府新聞局 [www.gcs.gov.mo](http://www.gcs.gov.mo)'s  
Facebook page writes in  
MSC

but one sees other  
elements, e.g.

Cantonese:  
一齊睇睇 今次暴雨的簡  
要回顧和未來天氣！

Classical Chinese:  
是 次暴雨



澳門特別行政區政府新聞局

Gisteren om 06:53 · 🌐

今年第四次紅雨 週中天氣漸好轉

【地球物理氣象局消息】今日（18日）凌晨，本局發出今年第四次「紅色暴雨警告」，一齊睇睇今次暴雨的簡要回顧和未來天氣！

■ 受活躍西南氣流影響，氹仔區雨勢最大

受活躍西南氣流影響，今日凌晨澳門西南方持續有雷雨區發展，並移近本澳。本局遂發出特別天氣信息提醒。

是次暴雨具有局地性強、短時突發性高的特點，雨勢短時間內急速增強，本局於15分鐘內先後發出黃色及紅色暴雨警告。其中，以氹仔區雨勢最為顯著，最大一小時滾動累積雨量達 56.4 毫米。而其他地區則錄得雨量介乎 10-35 毫米。（圖1）

■ 未來兩日仍有驟雨，下週中期起天氣好轉

預料未來兩日仍受西南氣流影響，間中有雷雨。隨着西南氣流於下週初期逐漸減弱，驟雨將有所減少。下週中起，轉受高空反氣旋影響，屆時日間陽光充沛、天氣酷熱。請市民密切留意局方的最新天氣資訊，關注天氣提示及警告！（圖2） **Minder weergeven**

<https://www.facebook.com/macagcs/posts/pfbid02EtTrLZ93xiCxxFRJ1EfYAPiJ7Eo8fprmbJCb6qb4DzsaU3JLG7cwDoa9gZP39bvkl>

## Cantonese Writing

Written Cantonese is highly stigmatised in the education system, and there is no standard.

Some morphemes have commonly recognised variants, e.g.  
𩚑 瘡 gui6 ‘tired’, 畀 俾 bei2 ‘give’, 撚 𩚑 lan2 ‘dick’

「有音無字」：<https://words.hk/zidin/v/55242/%F0%A6%A7%B2%E9%A3%AF%E6%87%89>

寫法、 • 𩚑飯應 *loe1 faan6 jing3* 

讀音： • lur飯應 *loe1 faan6 jing3* 

People are educated in Classical Chinese, and later also in Modern Standard Chinese (traditionally pronounced in Cantonese).

Same character if obvious cognate, e.g.

我 ngo5 ‘I’

恨 han6 ‘to want eagerly’ (< 恨 han6 ‘to hate’ in gen. Chin.)

## Cantonese Writing

Sometimes an etymologically unrelated (near-)homophonous character is used:



“Krim Kegatalan Kulit: 好力 祛痕痒软膏”

“Pinetarsol: 舒緩痕癢及發炎症狀”

This 痕 is not ‘scar’ in general Chinese

This 痕 is Cantonese han<sup>4</sup>A<sup>2</sup> ‘to itch’ < N Zhuang haenz  
(Thai คั้น k<sup>h</sup>ān, PT \*ɣal<sup>A</sup>)

*(And these people probably didn't know that ”痕癢” is not a term used in Standard Written Chinese)*

## Cantonese Writing

Sometimes an etymologically unrelated (near-)synonymous character is used:

Canto. 熨 tong3 ‘to iron/press’

Canto. tong3 written 熨 is etymologically not correct

熨 OC \*quns \*qud > Mand. yùn, TW/Hokkien ut

literary vs. colloquial pronunciations are sometimes written with the same character, e.g.

lit. 玩具 wun6 geoi6

col. 玩遊戲 waan2 jau4 hei3

Sometimes new character is made for colloquial pronunciation, e.g.

lit. 來往 loi4 wong5

col. 嚟 lai4 ‘come’

## Cantonese Writing

Largely the same character-making principles like other Sinitic languages

Phono-semantic compounds, e.g.

佢 keoi5 ‘3SG’ = 亻 PERSON + 巨 geoi6

(attested etymon is 渠 keoi4)

𨋖 lip1 “lift, elevator” = 車 VEHICLE + 立 lap6

Common use of 口 MOUTH for anything of the colloquial register, e.g.

喺 hai2 ‘to be at’, 係 hai6 ‘to be’

靚 leng1 ‘very young’, 靚 leng3 ‘beautiful’

唔 m4 NEG, 吾 ng4 ‘I’ (archaic)

𨋖 ngaam1 ‘correct’ (口 MOUTH + 𨋖 ngaam4)

(cf. Thai งาม ṇām ‘beautiful’)

咩 ‘what’ (口 MOUTH + 羊 SHEEP)

## Cantonese Writing

There are also simplex and complex ideograms:

有 jau5 ‘to have’ > 冇 mou5 ‘to not have’

(different from Hokkien 冇 p<sup>h</sup>ǎŋ<sup>C1</sup> ‘hollow’, 冇 ten<sup>+</sup>C2 ‘solid’)

𢳂 gui6 ‘tired’ (支 DEFRAI + 力 “energy”)

(At least one) phonetic compound:

𢳂 fit1 ‘whip, to whip’ ‘fit’

(飛 fei1 + 必 bit1)

Canto. characters: on the whole “not very adventurous”, cf.  
Zhuàng characters (saw ndip), Viet. characters (chữ nôl)

Talent and destiny resent each other.

## Cantonese Writing

Traditionally Cantonese people have had very low interests in (systemic) Cantonese Romanisation on average.

There are people who regularly type in some partially-conventionalised romanisation, e.g.:

“Nei ting yat faan ng faan hall ah bb?”

(Dear, are you coming back to hostel tonight?)

“Farn ah. Hui yuen colleague uk kei then farn lai.”

(Yes, I will come back after visiting my colleagues' home.)

“Nei gei dim farn lai ah?”

(What time would you come back?)

“8-9 dim la I think.”

(8 to 9 o'clock I think.)

## Cantonese Writing

Kongish: (e.g. Tsang, Lee & Li 2025)

Victor gor, a (ho chi ho) rich gei Kong man, spend jor dai la la HKD 400,000 to ask his BB marry him bcoz his BB like 'something exciting, amazing and not traditional like proposing in a restaurant with flower and a ring' say Victor gor.

Even ng eat ng play, a Kong guy yiu spend 30 month sin yau almost HKD 400,000. Just think think how impossible for most Kong guy, how many Kong girl will wait a Kong guy 30 months?

Victor gor, I am just a poor guy, so you win!