Xuping Li

A Grammar of Gan Chinese

Sinitic Languages of China

Typological Descriptions

Edited by
Hilary Chappell

Volume 1

Xuping Li

A Grammar of Gan Chinese

The Yichun Language

L'ECOLE DES HAUTES ETUDES EN SCIENCES SOCIALES

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Before joining the Sinotype project in 2009, my linguistic background had been mainly in formal semantics and syntax. It was an exciting and unforgettable experience for me to write a reference grammar within a functional-typological perspective. During the entire project, I found myself looking for the right balance between formal and functional linguistics, which influenced my ways of uncovering and sorting out the data in the book. I am deeply indebted to Hilary Chappell, who helped me at every stage of the project. The outcome of this book has been greatly influenced by her knowledge of Chinese dialectal grammar and typological insights. The Sinotype team members, Chen Weirong, Chen Yujie, Ngai SingSing, Hilario de Sousa and Wang Jian, also deserve a big 'thank you', for their contribution to creating a very vibrant Chinese linguistic circle in Paris.

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1 Centre de recherches linguistiques sur l'Asie orientale (CRLAO) at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS).

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Preface

Sinitic Languages of China: Typological Descriptions is a new series specializing in the description of the grammar of Sinitic languages, 'Sinitic' being the technical term for the very large number of languages that come under the general name of 'Chinese' in the West. As such, it includes well-known examples such as Cantonese 广东话, Hokkien 闽南话, Shanghainese 上海话 and Hakka 客家话, lesser-known ones such as Hunanese Xiang 湘语 or the Jin languages of Shanxi 晋语, without overlooking the national language known as *Pǔtōnghuà* 普通话 in China – or Standard Mandarin in the West. Even Mandarin comes in many non-standard forms including Sichuanese in the southwest and the unusual varieties spoken in Gansu in northwestern China or in the Central Plains area, to name but a small handful.

The primary goal of this series is to promote scientific knowledge of Chinese languages and their typological characteristics through the publication of high calibre linguistic research, based on empirical fieldwork, close analysis of the data and solid theoretical interpretations. The grammatical descriptions, written in a functionalist framework, will be illustrated by linguistic examples presented in a 'value-added' four-line format that includes romanization, glossing, the idiomatic English translation, and also the Chinese characters to cater to historical and comparative interests as well as our sinophone readers.

The specific objective is to reveal the great structural diversity found in Sinitic languages and to dispel many recurrent linguistic myths about Chinese. The authors involved in this series are all highly trained fieldwork linguists with a background in both typology and Chinese linguistics.

The series thus aims to reach an international readership for the first time, given that most literature available on Chinese languages, up until now, has been predominantly written in (Standard Written) Chinese.

Impetus behind the series

The large-scale research project, *The hybrid syntactic typology of Sinitic languages (Sinotype)*, provides the impetus behind this series. It benefitted from funding in the form of an Advanced Grant awarded by the European Research Council (ERC) for the period 2009 – 2013.

The SINOTYPE team comprised seven researchers: the principal investigator (and editor of this new series), Hilary Chappell, five postdoctoral fellows and one doctoral student, in addition to two technical staff. Each team member chose an unknown Sinitic language on which to carry out intensive fieldwork and linguistic analysis during the 4 ½ years of the project, according to the following choices:

The hybrid syntactic typology of Sinitic languages: Team members
Principal investigator (PI):

1. Hilary CHAPPELL 曹茜蕾 (PhD, Australian National University; EHESS, Paris)
   Xianghua, an unclassified Sinitic language of Hunan province

Postdoctoral fellows:

2. Weirong CHEN 陈伟蓉 (PhD, University of Hong Kong; University of International Business & Economics, Beijing)
   Hui'an language of Southern Min, Fujian

3. Yujie CHEN 陈玉洁 (PhD, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing; Zhejiang University, Hangzhou)
   Shangshui language of Central Plains Mandarin, Henan

4. Hilario DE SOUSA 苏沙 (PhD, University of Sydney; Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics)
   Nanning Southern Pinghua, Guangxi

5. XuPing LI 李旭平 (PhD, Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv; Zhejiang University, Hangzhou)
   Yichun language of Gan, Jiangxi

6. WANG Jian 王健 (PhD, Peking University; Changshu Institute of Technology & Shanghai Jiao Tong University)
   Shangzhuang language of Jixi Hui, Anhui

Doctoral student

7. Sing Sing NGAI 倪星星 (MPhil, Cambridge University; EHESS, Paris)
   Shaowu language of Northwestern Min, Fujian

During the entire period of the project, more than thirty field trips were made to China to carry out intensive investigations *in situ* of the languages targeted for description. Consequently, each researcher has spent up to a total of one year in the field in order to undertake a comprehensive analysis of a little-known Sinitic language with the goal of writing a comprehensive reference grammar, written in a functional, typological perspective.

Thanks to generous logistic support from the host institute, the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), spacious premises for the exclu-

sive use of the SINOTYPE research centre were found in inner-city Paris for the entire period of the project.

Significance of the SINOTYPE project

Standard Mandarin, or *Pǔtōnghuà* 普通话, has generally been the main, if not, only point of reference for Sinitic languages in typological studies in the West, while until recently it persisted as the primary object of analysis in Chinese linguistics in general. Therefore, the overall aim of the SINOTYPE project was to carry out the first large scale investigation into the linguistic typology of Sinitic or Chinese languages, broadening its horizons beyond Standard Mandarin to consider a set of major parameters in the grammatical make-up of this major branch of Sino-Tibetan.

As outlined above, each team member has been responsible for the description of the grammar of one language, based on extensive fieldwork in China. The scope of the project thus involved pan-Sinitic research not previously carried out in any depth in either China or the West. Over 50 publications have so far resulted from this research project, including the edited volume, *Diversity in Sinitic languages* (OUP, 2015).

Opening up this *terra incognita* in the form of this special series of grammars with De Gruyter Mouton, which concentrates on the lesser-known Sinitic languages of China, is hoped to reveal crucial new insights into the typological profile of Sinitic languages and should substantially aid in providing a more fine-grained classification of this branch of Sino-Tibetan.

This new series is expected to increase linguistic interest in the Sinitic languages of China and dispel a large number of myths surrounding the use of the label 'Chinese', a term which continues to convey the rather erroneous view of a monolithic language, comprised of dozens of related dialects showing a high degree of similarity and uniformity in their grammar. This notion is reinforced in its turn by the persistent and superficial classification of 'Chinese' as an example *par excellence* of an isolating language that possesses little morphology.

One type of counterexample from our early findings shows that, quite to the contrary, the process of fusion and its outcome in portmanteau morphemes abounds in Chinese languages, while the use of tone sandhi and rhyme allophony to indicate grammatical features such as aspect, nominalization, morphological definiteness and plurality exists to a far greater degree than has ever been supposed.

Since, as already observed, most of the linguistic literature on Chinese concerns the standard language, Mandarin, the knowledge that is steadily being made available on Sinitic languages to the wider linguistics community is cer-

tain to change immeasurably, if not irrevocably, the profile of what is known about this vast language group in the years to come.

H.M. Chappell
Paris, 2017

List of abbreviations

The abbreviations for grammatical glosses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules in the main, apart from categories which are common in Sinitic languages and for which the SINOTYPE team created new labels such as VCL for verbal classifier, RED for reduplication, or TENT for tentative aspect.

□	symbol for unidentifiable characters
1/2/3 SG/PL	first/second/third person singular/plural
ACC	accusative
AFFM	affirmative
ASP	aspect marker
BA/OM	object marker
CL	classifier
COMPL	completive aspect marker
COP	copula
DAT	dative marker
DEM	demonstrative
DELIM	delimitative aspect
DIM	diminutive
DIR	directional complement
DO	direct object
DUR	durative
EXP	experiential aspect marker
FOC	focus marker
GEN	genitive marker
INCHO	inchoative aspect
INF	infix
INTJ	interjection
IO	indirect object
LOC	locative
MOD	particle for linking modifier with head noun
NEG	negative
NEUT	neutral
NM	noun marker
NMLZ	nominalizer
NOM	nominative
NUM	number
OM	object maker

PASS	passive marker
PFV	perfective aspect marker
PL	plural
POSS	possessive marker
PREF	prefix
PREP	preposition
PRF	perfect aspect
PROG	progressive
PRON	pronoun
PRT	particle
Q	question particle
RED	reduplication
RC	relative clause
REP	repetitive aspect
RVC	resultative verb compound
SFP	sentence-final particle
SG	singular
SUF	suffix
SVC	serial verb construction
TENT	tentative aspect
TOP	topic

Contents

1 Gan and the Gan People

1.1 Gan Chinese in China

The grammar we describe in this volume concerns Gan Chinese (贛语: *Gànyǔ*). The term *Gàn* is a geographical abbreviation for Jiangxi province (江西), being also the name of the major river in this region. Gan Chinese is often called *Jiāngxīhuà* after the province of Jiangxi, while in fact it is mainly spoken in the northern and central parts of Jiangxi Province. Due to migration from Jiangxi to neighbouring provinces, different varieties of Gan Chinese are also spoken in the southern part of Anhui province (安徽), the eastern part of Hunan province (湖南), the southeast of Hubei province (湖北), and the northwest of Fujian province (福建). According to the Administration Manual of the People's Republic of China published in 2004 (*Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó Xíngzhèng Qūhuá Jiǎncè*《中华人民共和国行政区划简册》), there are more than 48 million Gan speakers throughout the country, including 29 million in Jiangxi, 9 million in Hunan, 5.3 million in Hubei, 4.5 million in Anhui, and 0.27 million in Fujian.[1]

According to the *Atlas of Chinese Languages* published in 2012 (*Zhōngguó Yǔyán Dìtújí*《中国语言地图集》), the Gan dialects are divided into nine subgroups:

The Changjing subgroup 昌靖片
The Yiliu subgroup 宜浏片
The Jicha subgroup 吉茶片
The Fuguang subgroup 抚广片
The Yingyi subgroup 鹰弋片
The Datong subgroup 大通片
The Leizi subgroup 耒资片
The Dongsui subgroup 洞绥片
The Huaiyue subgroup 怀岳片

The boundary of each subgroup is defined in the following map:[2]

1 This is the most recent data available in the preparation of the book.

2 I would like to thank Mr. Zheng Yi and Mr. Yang Wanglong for drawing the illustrative map, which was adapted and adjusted on the basis of Map B-11, entitled 'Chinese dialects in Jiangxi province and Hunan province' in the *Atlas of Chinese Languages*, which was authored by Chi-

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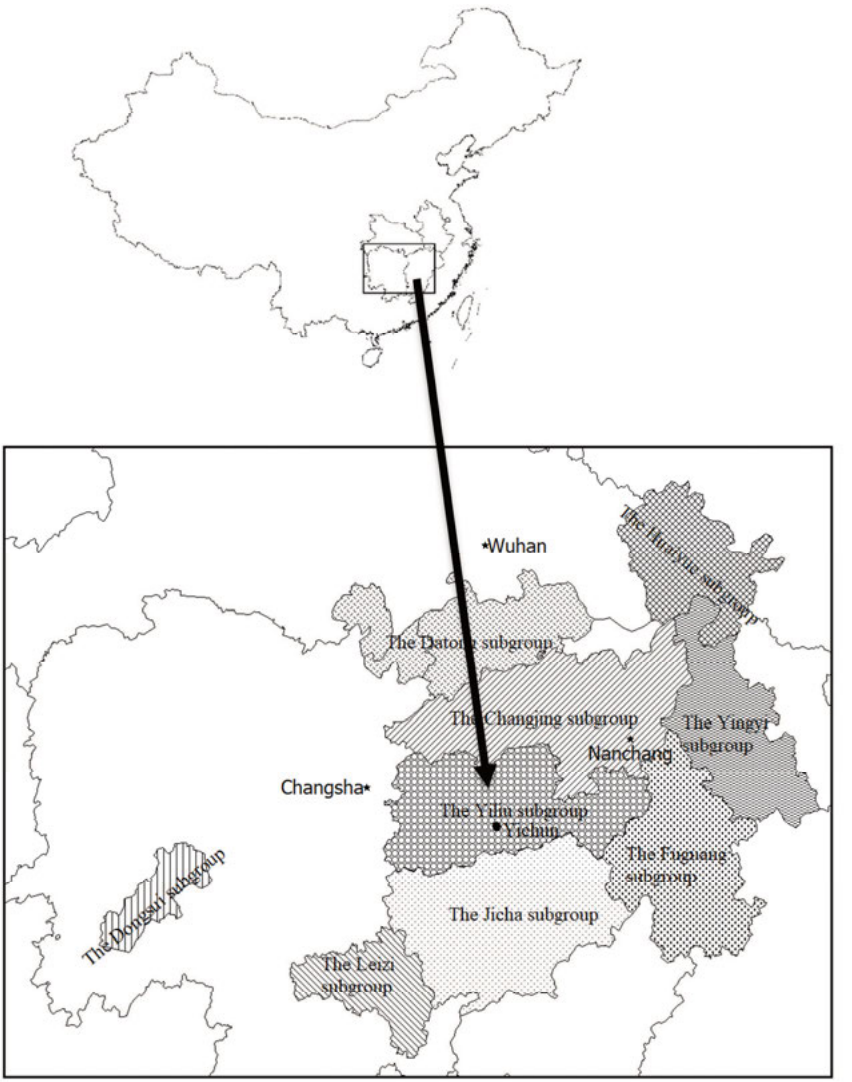

Fig.1-1: Map of the Gan-speaking areas

nese Academy of Social Sciences and Australian Academy of Humanities and published in 1987 by Longman, Hong Kong.

In this study, we will mainly concentrate on the Gan dialects spoken in Jiangxi province, since that is where this group of languages originates. In what follows, we will briefly introduce the geographical background of Jiangxi.

The northern border of Jiangxi Province is located along the lower reaches of the Yangtze River. In the east it is bordered by Zhejiang and Fujian, where Wu dialects and Min dialects are spoken respectively, to the south Guangdong, in the areas where Hakka is spoken. To the west, it is bordered by the Xiang-speaking Hunan province, and to its north lie Hubei province and Anhui province, where Jianghuai Mandarin and Hui dialects are spoken respectively.

Jiangxi is surrounded by mountains to the east, south, and west, and to the north flows the Yangtze River in an easterly direction. It has the largest fresh water lake in China, Poyang Lake, which connects the Yangtze River with two other important rivers, the *Gànjiāng* (贛江) and the *Fǔshuǐ* (抚水) Rivers, which run all the way to the southern tip of the province. Historically, these two rivers have been the main migration routes from the north to the south. The provincial capital of Jiangxi is Nanchang (南昌), which is located in the northern central region of the province. Other important cities include Jiujiang (九江) in the north, Ganzhou (贛州) in the south, Yingtan (鷹潭) in the east, Yichun (宜春) and Pingxiang (萍乡) in the west.

According to the 2015 census, Jiangxi has a population of 45.65 million people. Half of the population, 51.63%, lives in the city and the rest in villages or rural areas.[3] The majority of the population is Han Chinese.

The two main languages spoken in Jiangxi are Gan and Hakka. Gan has the largest population of speakers, at 29 million. The Hakka-speaking population is 8 million in Jiangxi and it is ranked as the second largest language spoken in the province. Other languages spoken include Jianghuai Mandarin (mainly spoken in Jiujiang), Southwestern Mandarin, and Wu Chinese.

1.2 Gan Chinese as a Sinitic language

The linguistic terms of *Gànyǔ* (贛语) 'Gan Chinese' or *Gàn Fāngyán* (贛方言) 'Gan dialects', were not used until the year 1955. Ding and Li (1955) were the first to suggest that Gan Chinese be one of the seven Chinese dialect families.[4] Dia-

3 These statistics are retrieved on the website of People's Government of Jiangxi Province, http://www.jiangxi.gov.cn/lsq/jxgk/201507/t20150701_1174692.html (retrieved on 1st Nov, 2016).

4 According to Ding and Li's classification, the other six dialect families, or what are now called branches of Sinitic, include Mandarin, Wu, Xiang, Hakka, Cantonese, and Min.

lect classifications of Chinese languages are mainly based on phonological features, which involve the reconstructed sounds or tonal categories of Middle Chinese (MC) as a reference point. One of the most striking phonological characteristics of Gan Chinese is that 'all of these dialects (i.e. Gan dialects) have voiceless aspirated stops in all tones for the MC voiced stops and affricate initials' (cf. Norman 1988: 204), whereas typically the MC voiced initials have reflexes as either aspirated or unaspirated voiceless initials in most branches of Sinitic. Hakka has undergone the same phonological changes. This distinguishes Gan and Hakka from other Chinese languages.

When talking about Gan, we cannot ignore Hakka. These two languages are intricately entwined with one another. There are two opposing views concerning the relationship between Gan and Hakka. One school of researchers, including Li Fang-Kuei (1938), Luo Changpei (1940) and Wang (1998), groups Gan and Hakka together, both of which "go back to a common ancestral Chinese dialect which is unique to them" (cf. Sagart 2002: 130). The term Hakka-Gan language (客赣语: *KèGànyǔ*) is always used to refer to this. One of the main factors for treating them as the same language is that they have undergone the same main set of sound changes for some series of consonants from MC, which distinguishes them from other Sinitic languages (Li Fang-Kuei 1938).[5] In particular, the voiced stops and affricates of MC have become voiceless, aspirated consonants in present Gan and Hakka languages, as mentioned above. It is called "aspirated devoicing" by Sagart (1988). The following example is taken from Wang (1998: 14).

(1)	同	动	洞	独
Meixian (梅县)	$t^huŋ$	$t^huŋ$	$t^huŋ$	t^huk
Nanchang (南昌)	$t^huŋ$	$t^huŋ$	$t^huŋ$	t^huk

The Meixian dialect is a representative Hakka language and the Nanchang dialect is a representative Gan language. As we can see from (1), in both Meixian and Nanchang dialects, the initial pronunciations of the four characters are all represented as an aspirated voiceless consonant t^h, which is reconstructed as a voiced consonant **d* in Middle Chinese.

However, another group of researchers rejects this viewpoint for various reasons. For example, Norman (1988: 222) claims that the shared characteristics of Gan and Hakka are very superficial, because aspirated devoicing is not a

5 For example, one of the characterizing features of the Wu dialects is that they all retain the voiced consonants, i.e. stops, fricatives and affricatives, of Middle Chinese.

strange and unusual change. Yuan (1960) rejects grouping Gan and Hakka together because he finds that in its lexicon, Gan resembles Wu and Xiang more than it does Hakka. According to the *Atlas of Chinese Languages* (2012), Gan and Hakka should be treated as two languages, since a subset of the voiced consonants in Hakka are read corresponding to the MC tone register of Yin Ping 阴平 (High Level), a featured not shared by most Gan dialects.

In this study, we lean towards the standpoint that Gan Chinese is a separate language from Hakka. One of the aims of our research is to identify some grammatical properties that belong exclusively to Gan. We attempt to distinguish the Gan language from others, such as Hakka, from the perspective of syntax and grammar.

No matter whether researchers tend to think of Gan as a separate language from Hakka or as sharing the same ancestry as Hakka, most of them agree that Gan Chinese developed on the basis of a hybrid of the Mandarin dialects spoken in the central plains of China and of the local patois spoken originally in the Jiangxi area (Luo 1940; Hashimoto 1973; Yuan 1960; Sagart 1988, 2002). Due to constant wars in the northern part of China in the Yellow River area, people migrated from the north to the south. Owing to the the Ganjiang and the Fushui Rivers, both of which connect the Yangtze River with the southern part of China, Jiangxi Province became an important migration transiting point. In the history of China, there were three big migration waves that had rolled over Jiangxi by the end of the Tang dynasty. The first occurred at the end of the Eastern Han dynasty (third century), the second took place at the end of Eastern Jin (fifth century), and the third at the end of the Tang dynasty (eighth–ninth century). During these migration waves, some individuals stopped moving southward and settled down in Jiangxi. The mixture of the northern language spoken by the migrants with the local dialects spoken in Jiangxi most likely gave birth to the Gan group of dialects.

Some researchers (e.g. Zhou and You 2006) argue that Gan Chinese as a language had formed by the end of the Tang dynasty. According to Norman (1988: 198), Gan Chinese is a transitional Chinese language (belonging to the central group of Sinitic languages) between Northern dialect groups and Southern dialect groups.[6] Chappell (2015) has elaborated on this foundation, proposing five linguistic areas in China with Xiang, Gan, Hui, Jianghuai and Wu be-

6 Norman (1988) tentatively makes a three-way classification of Chinese dialects: the Northern groups, the Southern groups, and the Central groups. The Northern groups refer to the Mandarin dialects. The Southern groups include Yue (e.g. Cantonese), Kejia (Hakka), and Min. And the Central groups include Wu, Xiang, and Gan.

longing to a central China Transitional group, an area of linguistic turbulence in terms of grammatical features. As Norman aptly puts it, the central zone is 'the result of centuries of northern linguistic intrusions into a region that originally was home to dialects of a more purely southern type: in the course of many centuries, the original Southern features of these dialects have been progressively eroded, leaving dialects of mixed types'.

1.3 The Yichun language as a representative of Gan Chinese

Most previous studies on Modern Gan Chinese (Yuan 1960; Norman 1988; Sagart 1999) have taken the Nanchang dialect as standard Gan Chinese. This is partly because Nanchang is the provincial capital of Jiangxi, it is economically and culturally more important than other cities and regions and its language consequently enjoys a more prestigious status. The second reason has something to do with the fact that the dialects spoken in peripheral areas of the province may well have been influenced by neighboring dialects due to language contact. Nanchang is geographically located in the center of the province and its neighboring cities are all Gan-speaking, so it is possible that Nanchang Gan has been less influenced by these other dialects.

Nonetheless, as a metropolitan area in Jiangxi, Nanchang is economically more developed. People living in Nanchang have a greater chance to receive a better education, which is given in the standard language, Mandarin, than those from rural areas. Additionally, people from different areas of Jiangxi gather in Nanchang, where Mandarin is sometimes used as a lingua franca. So while it may well be the case that the Nanchang dialect is less influenced by neighboring dialects such as Hakka, Jianghuai Mandarin, or Min, it is nonetheless heavily influenced by Standard Mandarin, the national language of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C).

In the current study, we focus on a Gan language spoken in the western part of Jiangxi Province. This is namely the Yuanzhou variety of Yichun language (宜春袁州话: *Yíchūn Yuánzhōuhuà*), which is spoken in the Yuanzhou district of the Yichun city.[7] We use the term 'the Yichun language' for short throughout the text. As we can see from Map 1.1, the Yichun language belongs to the Yiliu subgroup (宜浏片), which is surrounded to the north, east, and south by three Gan

7 The Yichun Yuanzhou dialect is distinguished from dialects spoken in other districts or counties under the governance of the Yichun Prefecture, such as the Shanggao dialect (上高话), the Tonggu dialect (铜鼓话), the Yifeng dialect (宜丰话) etc.

speaking areas. On the west side, however, it is bordered by the Xiang dialects. The city of Yichun is 150 kilometres from the Xiang-speaking city of Zhuzhou (株洲). So geographically speaking, the Yichun language still belongs to the pure Gan-speaking area. Therefore, the Yichun language can be taken as a representative variety of Gan Chinese. The study of the Yichun language is significant in that its grammatical properties are representative of the large areas in western Jiangxi and eastern Hunan where Gan dialects are spoken.

1.4 Linguistic type

The Yichun language has the syllabic structure of CV(C), which is similar to that in Mandarin. It has five syllabic tones: high-rising 34, high-level 44, high-falling 42, falling-rising 213, and entering tone 5, and importantly, tone sandhi is clearly applicable at the word level.

The basic word order of the Yichun language is SVO, but there is also the order OSV, which results from object topicalization. The order SOV is very restricted in this language.

There are clearly defined classes of pronouns, demonstratives, nouns, adjectives, classifiers, prepositions, and verbs.

There is a three-way distinction of the demonstrative system: distal, proximal, and ultra-proximal, which is not an oft-seen phenomenon in other Sinitic languages, yet this is a grammatical feature shared by most Gan dialects.

The Yichun language is a classifier language. There is no mass/count distinction for nouns and there are no plural suffixes on nouns. In contrast, it has a rich classifier system for nouns in the contexts of counting and measuring.

Disregarding its status as a SVO language, modifiers in the nominal domain occur to the left side of the noun head.

It is a tense-less language but it similarly has a quite elaborate aspect system to express temporality.

It possesses both prepositions and postpositions.

The Yichun language has a large inventory of sentence final particles, which express various modal and speaker-oriented meanings.

It is a WH-in-situ language, which is not involved with any movement of auxiliaries or WH-words in forming interrogative sentences.

1.5 Literature

Compared with Mandarin, Cantonese, and Wu, there has not been extensive research conducted on Gan. Most of the previous studies on Gan have focused mainly on phonology and lexicon. From the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, we found a total of 276 papers on Gan between the years of 1935–2004. Our statistics show that there are 106 papers on phonology (38.4%), 50 papers on grammar and morphology (18.1%), and the rest, 120, include papers on etymology, classification of the Gan languages, and other general topics (43.5%). This suggests that, in contrast to the study of phonology, the study of the grammar of the Gan language remains relatively undeveloped and quite limited in its range.

Even less has been studied about the grammar of the Yichun language. By August 2016, we had found fifteen pieces of work on the Yichun language:

Phonetics and Lexicon:

Liu, Ping. 2001. *Yíchūn Fāngyán Yīnxì*. 宜春方言音系. [On the phonology of the Yichun language] MA thesis, Fujian Normal University.

Peng, Qiansheng. 2012. *Yǔyán Jiēchù Shìjiǎoxià de Yíchūn （Shuǐjiāng）Fāngyán Cíhuì Biànhuà Yánjiū*. 语言接触视角下的宜春（水江）方言词汇变化研究 [On the change of vocabulary in the Yichun (Shuijiang) dialect in the perspective of language contact]. MA thesis, Jiangxi Normal University.

Rao, Xin. 2004. *Yuánzhōu Fāngyán Cíhuì (Shàng)(Xià)*. 袁州方言词汇(上)(下). [Vocabularys in Yuanzhou dialect (I)(II)]. *Journal of Yichun College*.

Yi, Wei. 2010. *Yíchūn Fāngyán Chēngwèi Yánjiū*. 宜春方言称谓研究 [On the appellation system in the Yichun language]. *Journal of Yichun College*. 2010 (5): 96-99.

Morphosyntax:

Chen, Haibo. 2006. *Yíchūnhuà de Jiānglái Shítài Zhùcí 'gé' jíqí Láiyuán*. 宜春话的将来时态助词"格"及其来源. [On the future marker 'ge' and its origin in the Yichun language]. *Journal of Wuhan University*. Pp. 202–207.

Han, Jiakun. 2013. *Yíchūn Fāngyán de hòuzhuì 'de'*. 宜春方言的后缀 "的" [On the suffix *de* in the Yichun language]. *Journal of Yichun College*. 2013 (4): 113-115.

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1.6 Spoken and written Gan

People from different towns in the Yuanzhou district of Yichun may speak slightly differently. They have their own special features of pronunciation and prosody, but they are mutually intelligible. According to Rao (2004), the Yichun language can be roughly divided into four sub-groups based on phonetic differences. These include the northeastern subgroup, the eastern subgroup, the northwestern subgroup, and the central-southern subgroup. Among them, the central–southern variety is the most prestigious, since that is where the governments of the city of Yichun and of the Yichun Prefecture are located.

There is a municipal TV station in Yichun, most of whose programs are broadcast and transmitted in Mandarin but there is also a special program recorded in the Yichun language. It is called, *Yíchūn Gùshì*（宜春故事) [Stories in Yichun]. It tells stories about the daily life of the Yichun people in their city. This program has been a great success and it is quite popular with local audiences.

In this study, we only investigate the central–southern branch of the Yuanzhou variety of the Yichun language. Some of the data used in this study have been taken from videos of this program.

Gan Chinese has no standard form of writing. Most of the characters can be written in the same way as in Mandarin Chinese, but some words, especially native colloquial words, are unique to Gan and cannot be represented by conventional characters. In daily life, the local people sometimes create special characters to represent certain local words. For example, the word 老表 *lɔpiɔ* is a nickname, or endonym, which the Gan people use to refer to themselves and is used by those from other provinces. In Mandarin, it is written as 老表, meaning cousins. However, a local bakery in Yichun coined the characters 佬俵 to represent it. Regard the picture below for illustration.

In this study, we will use both Chinese characters and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to represent the Yichun language. If some morphemes cannot

be represented by characters, we will use a homophonic character that has the same pronunciation to replace them, as illustrated in (2).

(2) 我格时蒙慌。
ŋo^{34} ko^{34}ɕi^{44} maŋ^{34} foŋ^{34}.
1SG this moment NEG frighten
'At that moment, I was not frightened.'

In (2), the character 蒙 is used to represent the negation marker *maŋ*^{34}. They share the same pronunciation, but it is not the original character etymologically for *maŋ*^{34} 'NEG', since *maŋ*^{34} 蒙 means 'to cover'.

Another strategy is to use the symbol □ to represent characters that cannot be identified. As shown in (3), □ stands for the morpheme *tia?*. This strategy is employed when we cannot find a homophonic character.

(3) 你还蛮有本事格，安徽格都给你□得回来哩。
ȵi^{34} xai^{44} man^{44} iu^{42} pun^{42}sɿ^{213} kiɛ,
2SG FOC very have skill INTJ
ŋon^{34}fi^{34} ko tu^{34} kiɛ^{42} ȵi^{34} tiaʔtɛʔ fi^{44}lœ^{44} li.
Anhui MOD even PASS 2SG cheat back PRF
'You're really experienced in fooling around with girls! You've hooked up even with an Anhui girl.'

2 The Yichun sound system

In this chapter, we describe the sound system of the Yichun language, starting with the consonants then moving on to discuss the vowels. We will conclude with a discussion on the tones and tone sandhi patterns. The description of the Yichun sound system given below will not only give us an overview of the phonetic system of Yichun Gan, it will also reflect something common to other Gan dialects.

2.1 Consonants

In the Yichun language of Gan Chinese, there are 19 consonants in total (including the zero consonant), as illustrated as below:

Tab.2-1: Consonants in Yichun Gan

		bilabial	Labial-dental	Alveolar	Velar	Alveo-palatal
Stops	**unaspirated**	[p]		[t]	[k]	
	aspirated	[p^h]		[t^h]	[k^h]	
Fricatives			[f]	[s]	[x]	[ɕ]
Affricates	**unaspirated**			[ts]		[tɕ]
	aspirated			[ts^h]		[$tɕ^h$]
Nasal		[m]		[n]	[ŋ]	[ȵ]
Lateral				[l]		

At first glance, the consonants of the Yichun language are very much like the Mandarin consonant system, except that there is no retroflex series such as /ʂ/, /$tʂ^h$/, or /tʂ/ to be found in the Yichun language. This feature is shared by most Gan dialects.

In addition, the following points should be noted concerning the consonants in the Yichun language.

First, like many other Sinitic languages, such as Mandarin and Cantonese, the stops in the Yichun language are not distinguished by any contrast in voicing but by the contrast in aspiration. This may pose some difficulty for foreigners learning this language.

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Second, the voiced stops and affricatives of Middle Chinese have become aspirated voiceless consonants in the Yichun language. For example, the character 同, which had a voiced stop /*d/ as an onset in Middle Chinese is pronounced as /t^{h}əŋ^{44}/ in the Yichun language.

Third, what we mean by 'zero consonant' [ø] is the case where a vowel itself constitutes the syllable onset, or alternatively, wherever there is a null consonant before the vowel in syllable-initial position. The analytical convenience of including the label of a null element is that sometimes this gap can be indirectly deduced in certain phonological contexts. In the Yichun language, when the syllable starts with vowels such as [a], [o], and [e], a glottal stop /ʔ/ can be observed, though it is very weak. Similarly, when the syllable starts with a high vowel such as /u/ or /y/, a weak [w] or [j] is observed respectively (Liu 2001). This can be used as proof that there is no initial consonant and is a secondary effect thereof.

Fourth, strictly speaking, the alveopalatals /tɕ/, /tɕ^{h}/, and /ɕ/ are not exactly the same as their Mandarin counterparts. The articulation of /tɕ/, /tɕ^{h}/, and /ɕ/ in the Yichun language is less palatalized than their Mandarin counterparts. The actual pronunciation of /tɕ/, /tɕ^{h}/, and /ɕ/ in the Yichun language sounds closer to the palatals /tʃ/, /tʃ^{h}/, and /ʃ/ respectively. In fact, Liu (2001) considers [tɕ], [tɕ^{h}], and [ɕ], as well as [tʃ], [tʃ^{h}], and [ʃ] as free variants of the phonemes of /tʃ/, /tʃ^{h}/, and /ʃ/. According to Liu, the latter are thus also possible when they are followed by vowels such as [i] and [u]. A related phenomenon is that not all Gan dialects have the same number of consonants as the Yichun language. Consonants range in number from 19 to 24. The main reason for this difference stems from whether we treat certain consonants as allophones or phonemes.

Fifth, /n/ and /l/ are free variants, as is very common across Southern Sinitic languages. For example, native speakers of the Yichun language can pronounce the character 脑 'brain' either as [lao^{42}] or [nao^{42}].

Sixth, the labial–dental /f/ is labialized in the Yichun language. Its narrow transcription is [f^{w}].

Last but not least, the fricative [x] is close to the glottal [h] when its following vowel starts with /o/.

2.2 Vowels

The following figure illustrates the inventory of primary vowels in the Yichun language. According to the figure below, there are ten vowels, among which there are more front vowels than back vowels.

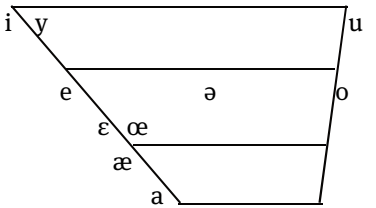


Fig.2-1: Vowel chart in Yichun Gan

These 10 vowels can combine differently to form diphthongs. The diphthongs can remain as open syllables or be closed by coda elements, such as nasals or stops. Coda elements are greatly simplified in the Yichun language. The syllabic-final stops /p/, /t/, and /k/ in Middle Chinese are reduced to a glottal /ʔ/ in Yichun. The codas for the nasals are restricted to /n/ and /ŋ/, and the nasal of /m/ in Middle Chinese is assimilated into /n/.

Tab.2-2: Rimes in Yichun Gan (63, including m̩ and ŋ̩)

ɿ	i	u	y
a	ia	ua	
o	io	uo	
ə			
œ			yœ
ɛ	iɛ	uɛ	
æ	iu	ui	
ai		uai	
an		uan	
on	ion	uon	
en	ien	uen	
aŋ	iaŋ	uaŋ	
oŋ	ioŋ	uoŋ	
ɛu	iɛu		
	in	un	yn
ao			
əŋ	iəŋ	uəŋ	
	iʔ	uʔ	yʔ
aʔ	iaʔ		
oʔ	ioʔ	uoʔ	
ɛʔ	iɛʔ	uɛʔ	
œʔ		uœʔ	yœʔ
æʔ		uæʔ	
	iuʔ	uiʔ	
m	ŋ		

The following points concerning vowels and rimes in the Yichun language are worthy of special attention:

First, the presence of /ɿ/ is only possible after the alveolar series, /ts/, /ts'/, and /s/.

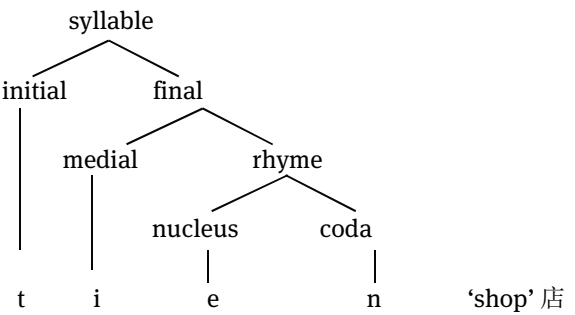
Second, the pronunciation of [œ] should be represented as [ɐ] in a strict sense. For example, the character 开 has the pronunciation [$k^hɐ^{34}$]. For the sake of reader-friendliness, we use the vowel [œ] instead.

Third, in the vowels /on/, /ion/, and /uon/, there is a weak schwa between the vowel and the coda. Therefore, strictly speaking they should be represented as /o^{ə}n/ /io^{ə}n/, and /uo^{ə}n/ respectively, where the symbol /ə/ stands for schwa.

2.3 Syllabic structure

Gan Chinese, including the Yichun language, has the same syllabic structure as other Chinese dialects, such as Mandarin and Wu. The maximal syllable is composed of CGVX, that is to say a consonantal onset, a pre-nuclear glide, the nucleus, and a coda. In traditional analyses, the syllable CGVX is divided into an 'initial' (声母: *shēngmǔ*) and a 'final' (韵母: *yùnmǔ*), where the initial refers to the first consonant and the final refers to everything except the initial consonant. The hierarchical structure of the syllable can be represented as in the following diagram:

(1)



The Chinese term 'initial' corresponds to the 'onset'. The onset in Gan Chinese can only be filled by a single consonant. Onsets with consonant clusters are rarely found in Chinese languages.

The 'final' consists of medial and rhyme: the former is realized by a glide, such as /i/, and the latter is composed of a nucleus and a coda. The nucleus is the only obligatory element in the syllable. For example, bare vowels such as /i/ 'clothes', /u/ 'house', and /y/ 'rain' all constitute legitimate syllables in the