

deeper into the South. What remains to be explored, however, are the contributions made by local populations to the formation of the Hakka people, and how these differed from those that made up the Yue or the Min. For no matter what the ethnic origin of the Hakka, the group is *linguistically* Southern Chinese. The Hakka dialects are historically allied to the other Southern dialects around them. They have some unmistakably Northern features, but they are actually not much more like Mandarin than Cantonese is. The Hakka dialects were formed in the South—almost surely in northeastern Guangdong—and the present widespread distribution of their speakers is the result of large-scale migrations that took place out of Meixian during the Qing dynasty.

Middle Chinese voiced consonants became aspirated consonants in Hakka. This historical development is often considered to be the most important characteristic of the dialect group. Since the Gan dialects of Jiangxi—just to the north of the Hakka-speaking area—underwent the same change, many linguists used to group Gan and Hakka together as Gan-Hakka. But since there are no other good reasons for this grouping, it has now generally been abandoned. Gan and Hakka are nowadays usually classified separately.

	<i>Middle Chinese</i> (7th century)	<i>Hakka</i>	<i>Peking</i>
'level'	b-	p'in ²	p'ing ² (p'ing)
'white'	b-	p'ak ⁸	pai ² (bái)
'lift'	d-	t'i ²	t'i ² (tí)
'younger brother'	d-	t'i ³	t'i ³ (dì)
'flag'	g-	k'i ²	ch'yi ² (qí)
'together'	g-	k'iung ⁵	kung ⁵ (gòng)

The dialect spoken around Meixian is considered to be standard Hakka.

It has seventeen initial consonants (see chart). The nasal *ny-*, which is articulated with the blade of the tongue against the palate, occurs only before the vowel *i*; e.g., *nyit* 'sun,' *nyiet* 'moon.' It does not contrast with the velar nasal *ng-*, which never occurs before *i*, and so the two can be regarded as the same phoneme even though they are pronounced very differently. The initial *v-* developed historically from **w-*, and some linguists still treat it as a semivowel.

There are six vowels in Hakka: *i*, *ə*, *e*, *a*, *o*, *u*. After the initial consonants *ts-*, *tʂ-*, and *s-*, the vowel *ə* is pronounced like the buzzing minimal vowel heard in Mandarin *sì* 'four,' for example. But, unlike this similar-sounding Mandarin vowel, the Hakka vowel contrasts with *i*; e.g., *səi* 'to think,' *sí* 'west.' As in other Southern dialects, *m* and *ng* sometimes function as vowels.

A syllable can have a medial vowel *-i-* or *-u-*. It may have an offglide *-i* or *-u* or a final consonant *-p*, *-t*, or *-k*.

There are six tones in Meixian Hakka. (But they are numbered to 8 since earlier tone categories 4 and 6 have merged with categories 3 and 5.) This tone system has a number of peculiarities that are not found among the tones of other dialect groups. For example, in Mandarin and most other dialects, very few syllables beginning with a nasal consonant or *l-* have tone 1; but in the colloquial Hakka vocabulary such syllables are common.

	<i>Hakka</i>	<i>Peking</i>
'take'	na ¹	ná
'hair'	mau ¹	máo
'fish scale'	lin ¹	lín
'mother'	me ¹	mǔ
'horse'	ma ¹	mǎ
'carp'	li ¹	lǐ

Peculiarities like this suggest that the historical development of the Hakka tone system was unusual and possibly unique.

Hakka has more Northern words than Yue and Min dialects do, but overall its vocabulary is characteristically Southern. Its syntactic structure, too, is generally of the Southern type.

The following folk tale illustrates many of the structural features of the Meixian Hakka dialect. The story is built around a Hakka explanation for the origin of a peculiar birdcall.

Ko'tsə³ ts'ok⁸ ts'ok⁸, O'tsə³ p'ak⁸sok⁸
gē zǐ záo záo — zǐ bái —
 brother chisel bore mother waste-thoughts

A'sun¹ t'ung² A'nyi¹ he⁶ liong¹ hiung¹t'i¹.
 Āshùn tóng Āyì xì liǎng xiōngdì
 Asun with Anyi be two brothers

A'sun¹ he⁶ ts'ien²oi¹ kiung¹-ke⁶, A'nyi¹ he⁶ heu²oi¹ kiung¹-ke⁶.
 Āshùn xì qián — — — Āyì xì hòu — — —
 Asun be before-mother bear SP Anyi be stepmother bear SP

Heu²oi¹ tso'nyin² m² kung¹t'au¹, ts'i¹ka¹-ke⁶ ts'in¹sen¹ tsə⁸
 hòu — zuòrén — gōngdào zì jiā — qīnshēng zǐ
 stepmother behavior not just oneself SP one's own son

ts'iu⁸ k'on²tso⁷ pau¹pi², A'nyi¹ oi¹ mak¹-ke⁶ ts'iu⁸
 jiù kànzuo bǎobèi Āyì ài — — jiù
 then regard-as treasure Anyi want something then

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The Languages of China

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

PRESS

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