

Research article

## A Geolinguistic Analysis of “Oie” and “Jars” - Evidence from the *Atlas Linguistique de la France* -

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**Abstract:** In standard French, goose as a generic term and a female goose is “une oie,” and a gander is “un jars.” “Oie” is derived from Latin AUCA, and “jars,” according to Dauzat (1921: 9-16), from pre-Latin GARR-. In this research, by employing Map 936 “oie” (goose) from the *Atlas Linguistique de la France* (ALF), we investigated the following four research questions: I. What is the distribution of the forms of “oie” as a generic term for ‘goose’? II. Where did the phonetic change [ɔ] > [ɔi] occur, according to *Frantext*? III. Is the word “jars” the oldest word for ‘gander’ in France? IV. What is the distribution of the forms of “jars”?

Our finding, concerning “oie,” indicated that older forms, such as [auka], [ɔə] and [ɔj], remained in the periphery and the standard form [wa] might have moved from central to southeastern France by following the Rhône and its tributaries’ basins. We, however, could not clarify the origin of the phonetic change [ɔ] > [ɔi] in “oie.” First, we found that forms of “jars” were observed at only 253 of the 638 ALF survey points. Furthermore, we indicated that “jars” might be derived from the old Frankish \*gard rather than pre-Latin GARR-. Additionally, from the distribution of the forms and regional dictionaries, we suggested “jars” could be from a newer language layer than “auc” whose etymology is Latin AUCA. We concluded that the presence of forms of “jars” in ALF was likely related to the breeding of geese. \*

**Keywords:** dialectology; geolinguistics; *Atlas Linguistique de la France*; oie (goose); jars (gander)

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## 1. Introduction

To represent animals in standard French, some terms for females are generated by modifying the end of the words used for males. Some examples include: “chat” (male cat and generic term) and “chatte” (female cat), “lion” (male lion and generic term) and “lionne” (lioness), “tigre” (male tiger and generic term) and “tigresse” (tigress). On the other hand, according to Dubois (1989: 88) and Asakura (2013: 232-236), there are approximately 20 animals with completely different terms for males and females. Here are some examples: “bélier” (ram) and “brebis” (ewe and generic term), “bouc” (billy goat/he-goat) and “chèvre” (nanny goat/she-goat and generic term), “cheval” (horse and generic term) and “jument” (mare), “porc” (pig and generic term) and “truie” (sow). Goose in French is one of these animals where there is a completely different term for the genders. A female goose and a generic term of goose are both represented by “une oie.” A male goose, or a gander, is “un jars.” However, their terms or forms vary from dialect to dialect.

## 2. Previous research on “oie” and “jars”

There have been some linguistic studies on “oie.” According to Väänänen (1981: 44, 91), the spelling has been changed as follows: lat. *auca* > *oca* > *oue* > *oie*. Fouché (1966: 209, 271-284, 296-297, 462) introduces its phonetic change as follows: [auka] > [ɔə] > [ɔiə] > [ɔi] > [oi] > [wɛ] > [wɛ] > [wa]. Observing 32 maps of *Atlas Linguistique de la France (ALF)* (Gilliéron & Edmont 1902-1910), including Map 936 “oie,” Le Dû et al. (2005: 121, 142-153) developed a theory, “Synthèse sur les aires ligériennes.” This theory indicates that several terms and pronunciations have spread from the west to the east and south along the Loire (see Figure 1). They explained that the spread of pronunciations [wɛ], [wɛ] and [wa] based on this theory. In addition, Fouché (1969: 614) mentioned that the phonetic change [ɔə] > [ɔiə] (that is [ɔ] > [ɔi]) occurred in eastern and western France.

On the other hand, linguistic research on “jars” is limited to Dauzat (1921: 9-16). Based on *ALF* and his own survey data, he geolinguistically analyzed the distribution of forms representing “jars” in southwestern France and in the Massif Central<sup>1</sup> in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He concluded that the word type “jars” is derived from pre-Latin *GARR-*, and that it is the oldest term representing a gander in his study area by

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<sup>1</sup> The Massif Central is a highland region in the middle of Southern France (see Fig. 4).

comparing it with other forms. Nonetheless, if “jars” is not a descendant of *GARR-* but of some other etymological origin, then “jars” may not be the earliest term for ‘gander’.

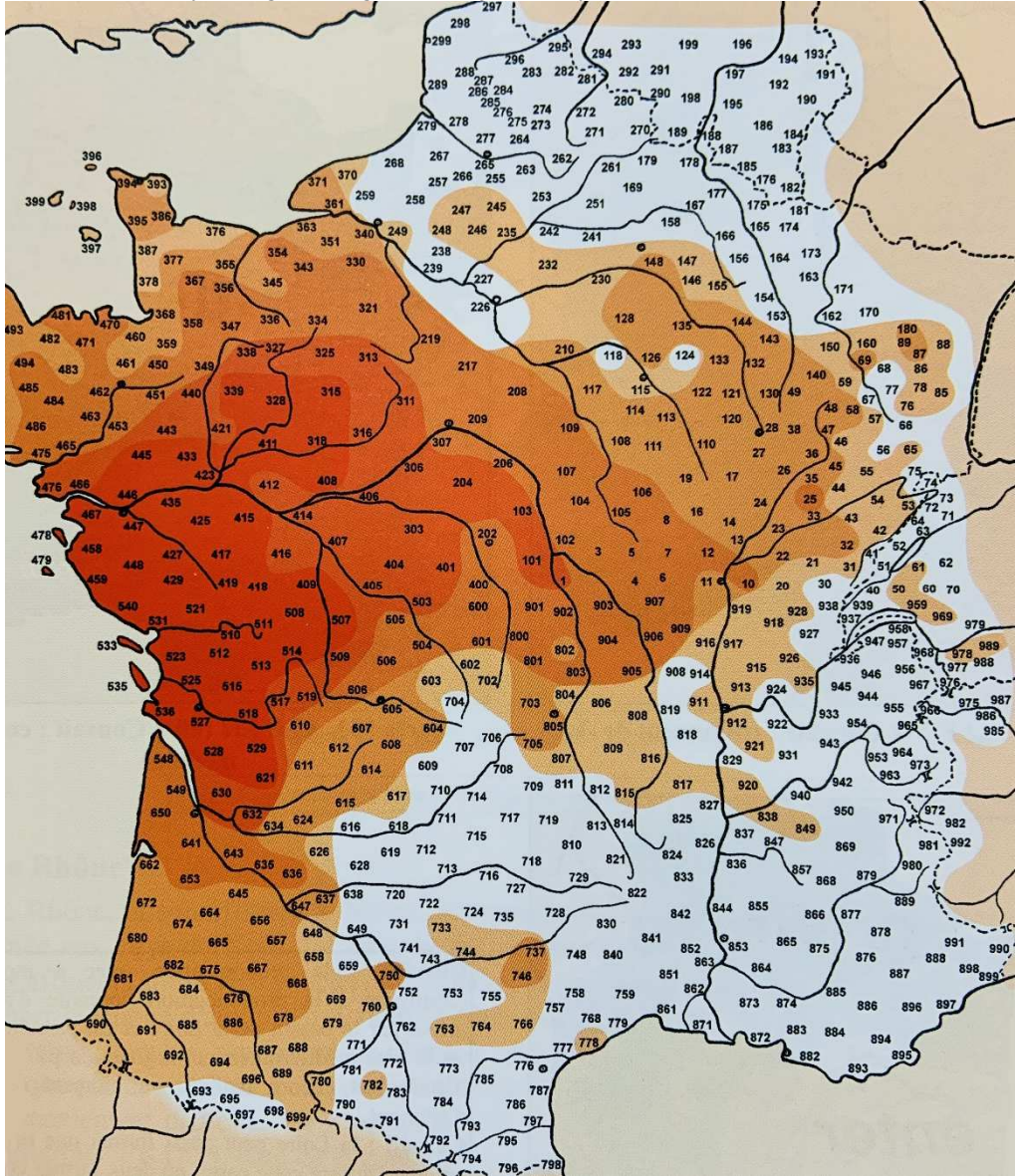


Fig. 1 “Synthèse sur les aires ligériennes” (Le Dû et al. 2005: 153)

### 3. Research questions

Based on the above-mentioned studies, we have established four research questions regarding the forms of “oie” and “jars” in France at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- I. What is the distribution of the forms of “oie” as a generic term for ‘goose’?
- II. Where did the phonetic change [ɔ] > [ɔi] occur, according to a large French text corpus, *Frantext*?
- III. Is the word “jars” the oldest word for ‘gander’ in France?
- IV. What is the distribution of the forms of “jars” ?

### 4. Methods

In this study, Map 936 “oie” from *ALF* was used. In this map, several forms are listed at one survey point in the order of generic term, male goose, female goose, and gosling.

As indicated in Figure 2, the number of forms recorded differs from point to point. At point 440, for example, five forms (wã, jã, jãk, pirõt, and pïj) are registered, separated by semicolons and a comma<sup>2</sup>. Thus, at this point one form of “oie” as a generic term for ‘goose,’ two forms of “jars,” one form of “oie” as ‘a female goose’ and a form of “oison” are described. Only the first form of “oie” as a generic term and “jars” were included in the analysis; therefore, at the point 440, of the five, only wã and jã were analyzed<sup>3</sup>.

Historically, “oie” had two types of spelling variations: “oie/oye” – with “i/y” –, and “oe/oue” – without “i/y” –. To identify when and where the phonetic change [ɔ] > [ɔi] occurred, we counted the number of appearances of the terms “oie/oye” and “oe/oue” in a large French text-corpus, *Frantext*, and compared the relative frequencies of these two spelling groups.

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<sup>2</sup> In *ALF*, semicolons are used to distinguish the categories of phonetic forms and commas the variations within the category.

<sup>3</sup> The phonetic forms in *ALF* are written in l’alphabet Rousselot-Gilliéron, a system of phonetic transcription, mainly utilized for the transcription in *Revue des patois gallo-romanes* and in the *ALF*. As a matter of convenience, we have transferred all phonetic forms into IPA with reference to SYMILA (2014).

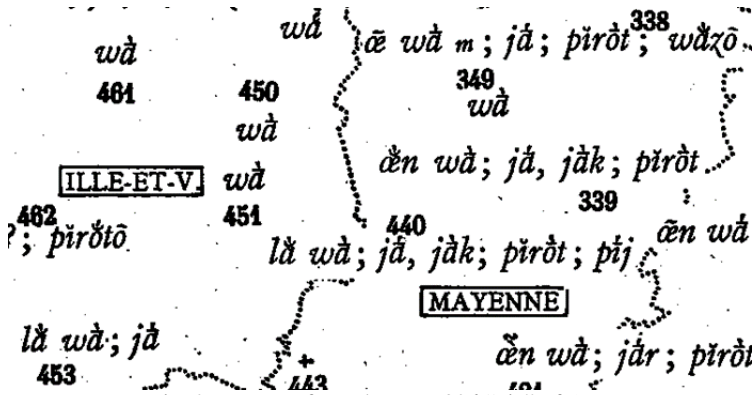


Fig. 2 Extract from the Map 936 “oie” of ALF

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. Analysis of “oie”

#### 5.1.1. Distribution of “oie”

The distributions of representative phonetic forms meaning “oie” (generic term of goose) based on the Map 936 of ALF are demonstrated in Figure 3.

We find that older phonetic forms such as ■ [auka], ■ [ɔə] and ■ [oj] remained in the periphery. Meanwhile ■ [auka] is spread across southern France, while ■ [ɔə] is seen in Belgium. Moreover, ■ [oj] is widely distributed in eastern France. In the northernmost region, ■ [ojõ] is present adjacent to ■ [oj]. However, ■ [we]/[wε] is widely distributed along the northwestern coast and scattered in the eastern part of France. The newest form, ■ [wa], is surrounded by older forms: ■ [we]/[wε], ■ [oj], ■ [ojõ], ■ [ɔə] and ■ [auka]. The ■ [auka] area almost overlaps with the Occitan languages in southwestern France, and the areas where other forms are found are roughly equivalent to those of the Oil languages and Francoprovençal.

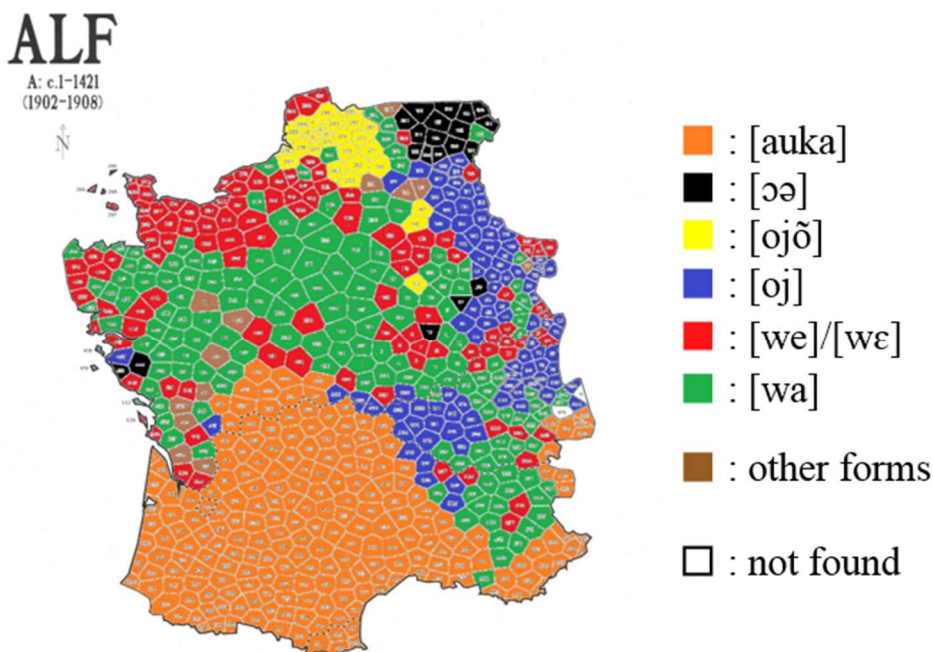


Fig. 3 Phonetic forms of “oie” (generic term of goose)<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, Figure 4 shows that ■[we]/[we] and ■[wa] crossed the ■[oj] area in the east, invaded the ■[auka] area and traveled down to southeastern France. It appears that they have followed the Rhône and its tributaries’ basins, nearly reaching the Mediterranean. In the southeastern part of France, we do not find any older forms. It means that the phonetic change has been realized relatively recently in this area. However, we could not confirm that these forms had first occurred in the west. The validity of the theory “Synthèse sur les aires ligériennes” (Le Dû et al. 2005: 121, 142-153) regarding the expansion of [we], [we] and [wa] has not been confirmed in this study.

<sup>4</sup> The representative phonetic forms have various variants. We list some variants: ■ [auka]: pt. 758, 759, 768, 779, 851, etc. [auka], pt. 628, 637, 638, 647, 657, etc. [auko], pt. 635, 643, 653, 656, 664, etc. [aukə], pt. 658 [aukat], pt. 705 [autsə], pt. 405, 503, 504, 505, 509, 519 [ɔ:f], ■ [ɔə]: pt. 186, 189, 199, 291 [o:ə], pt. 193, 194, 198 [ɔ:ə], pt. 187, 195 [o:w], ■ [ojõ]: pt. 273, 275, 276, 283, 296 [ojõ], pt. 284, 285, 288, 289, 296 [ujõ], pt. 271, 281 [ozõ], pt. 253, 267, 277 [ezõ], ■ [oi]: pt. 48, 59, 67, 78, 86, 140, etc. [o:j], pt. 58, 66, 69, 85, 143, etc. [ɔ:j], pt. 49, 154, 155, 156, 163, etc. [u:y], pt. 57, 68 [wɔj], pt. 906 [øjas], ■ [we]/[we]: pt. 8, 106, 330, 334, 343, etc. [we]/[we:], pt. 128, 144, 238, 239, 376, etc. [we]/[we:], pt. 5 [vwe], ■ [wa]: pt. 226 [wa], pt. 306, 311, 316, 327, 349, etc. [wa:]. As “other forms”, we have observed the following: pt.158, 167, 251 [bi:lo], pt. 293 [ga:], pt77 [gogot], pt. 408, 416, 511, 512, 515, 528, 621 [pirõ] and pt. 411 [tora:s].

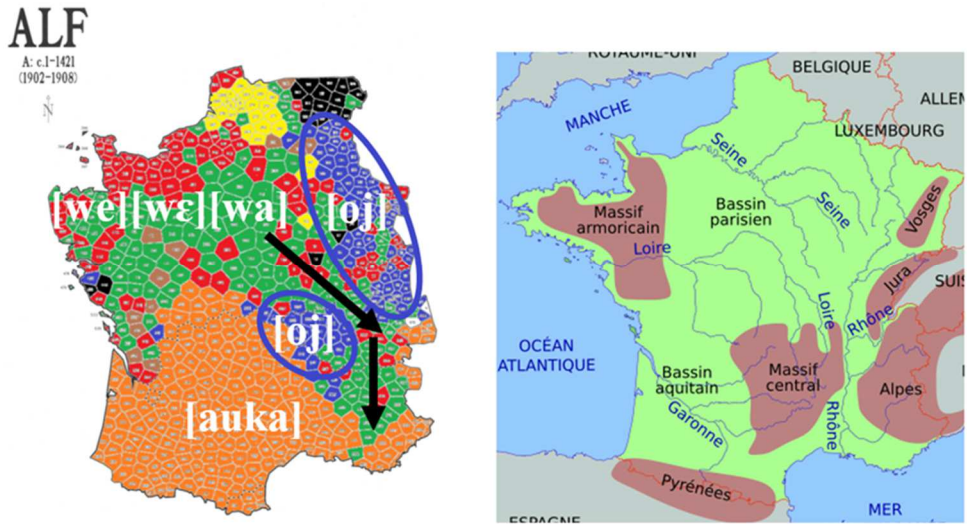


Fig. 4 Expansion of [we], [wɛ] and [wa] (left) and Geographical map of France (right)

### 5.1.2. Origin of [ɔ]

To identify when and where the phonetic change [ɔ] > [ɔi] had occurred, we used Frantext and investigated when and where the two spelling groups, “oie/oye” and “oe/oue,” had been written. It was easy to find the years of publication of the documents. On the other hand, it was difficult to identify the dialects in which the documents had been written. Therefore, we assumed that they had been written in the dialects of the authors’ birthplaces. Except for the area of [auka] in southwestern France, we formulated three divisions: west, central (where Paris is located), and east (see Figure 5) and classified the authors’ birthplaces into the above three areas. Some of the authors’ birthplaces were unknown; we only counted documents when the relevant author’s birthplace was clear.

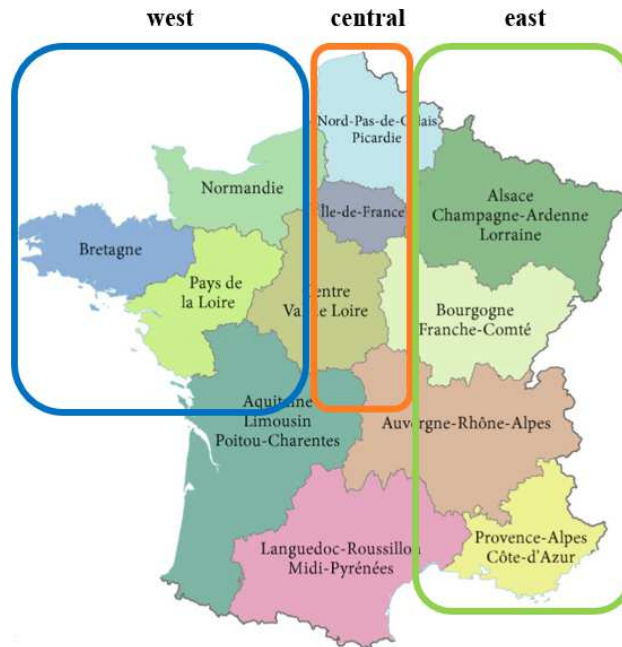


Fig. 5 Three divisions for corpus analysis<sup>5</sup>

Figure 6 shows the relative frequencies<sup>6</sup> of documents with the spelling groups “oie/oye” and “oe/oue” in the three areas from the 12th to the 15th centuries. We referred to the total numbers shown by Frantext. In the 12th century, there were more documents with “oe/oue” than with “oie/oye” in each area. In the eastern parts of France, there were no documents with “oie/oye.” In the 13th century, documents with “oie/oye” were dominant in the east. Hence, we consider that “oie/oye” expanded to the east during that century. In the 15th century, “oie/oye” were used more than “oe/oue” in each area. As a result of the above observations, it was not possible to identify when and where the spellings “oie/oue” had occurred. Rather, we can say that the spellings “oie/oye” had been used everywhere in northern and eastern France. Considering that the pronunciations [oj]/[ɔj] are distributed in the east in *ALF*, it could be deduced that the spellings “oie/oye” had been probably pronounced [oj] or [ɔj]. Since it was not possible to identify when and where the spellings “oie/oye” occurred, it was also

<sup>5</sup> Carte de France (1999-) Carte des régions de France from <http://www.cartesfrance.fr/carte-france-region/carte-france-regions.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The number of documents with “oie/oye” or “oe/oue” in each area in each century divided by the total number of documents written in each century (see Table 1) is the relative frequency.



impossible to infer when and where the change in voice [ɔ] > [ɔi] occurred. Therefore, the opinion of Fouché (1969: 614) was not confirmed in this study.

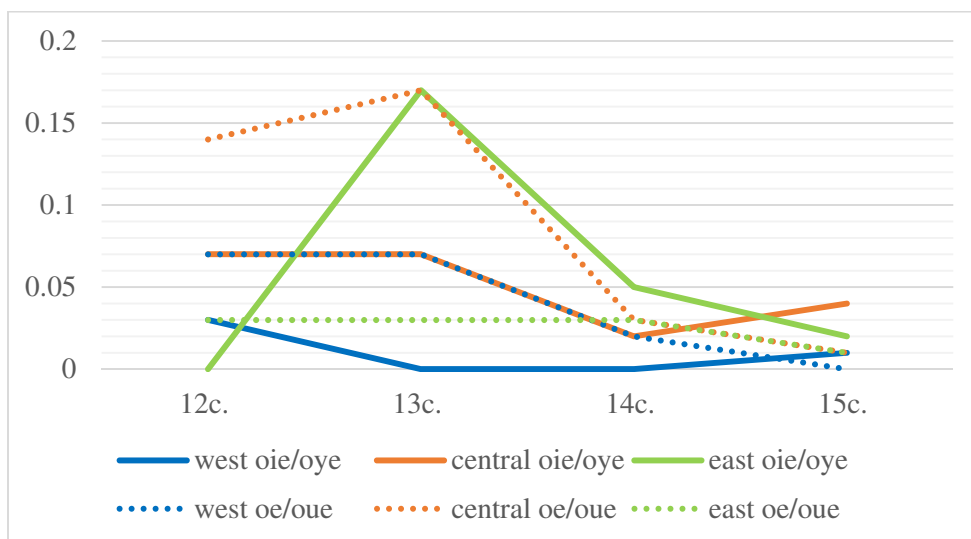


Fig. 6 Relative frequencies of documents with “oie/oye” and “oe/oue” from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries

Table 1 Total number of documents per century

Period (in century)	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
Total numbers of documents	29	30	115	160

## 5.2. Analysis of “jars”

### 5.2.1. Distribution of “jars”

The distribution of “jars” in Map 936 of *ALF* is presented in Figure 7. The forms were confirmed only at 253 of the 638 *ALF* survey points, and in the remaining 60% of the area, forms representing a gander were not shown.

While ■ “jars” is spread across northwestern France, ■ “auc” is widely observed in the southwest of France. The word “auc” is a form derived from the generic term of these areas “auca” (Dauzat 1921: 12). Meanwhile, ■ “guirot” is distributed in Gascony. In addition, ■ “oie” is seen at the four points in northern France. In standard French, “oie,” the generic term for goose, is a feminine noun, but in Calvados it is a masculine form. Hence, “oie” is also utilized in this area to represent a male goose. A variant of “oie,” “oyard,” is found in central France. Interestingly, ■ “ganser,” a loanword from

the German word “Ganser”<sup>7</sup> (Dondaine 2002: 239), is observed at some points in Jura, Switzerland and Haute-Saône.

Dauzat (1921: 10) asserted that “jars” and “guirot” were both derived from a pre-lat. *GARR-* and were the earliest words representing a male goose. However, according to *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch (FEW)*, “jars” was derived from old Frankish *\*gard*, meaning ‘a sting’ (*FEW XVI*: 16b). According to Foix et al. (2003: 354), “guirot” is an onomatopoeic word. This means that the etymologies of these two words may be different. Furthermore, Frankish words were added to the Latin language after the invasion of the Franks (von Wartburg 1934: 48). Therefore, if the etymology of “jars” is *\*gard* as written in *FEW*, “jars” can be, at least, a newer form than “auc” which has a Latin etymology.

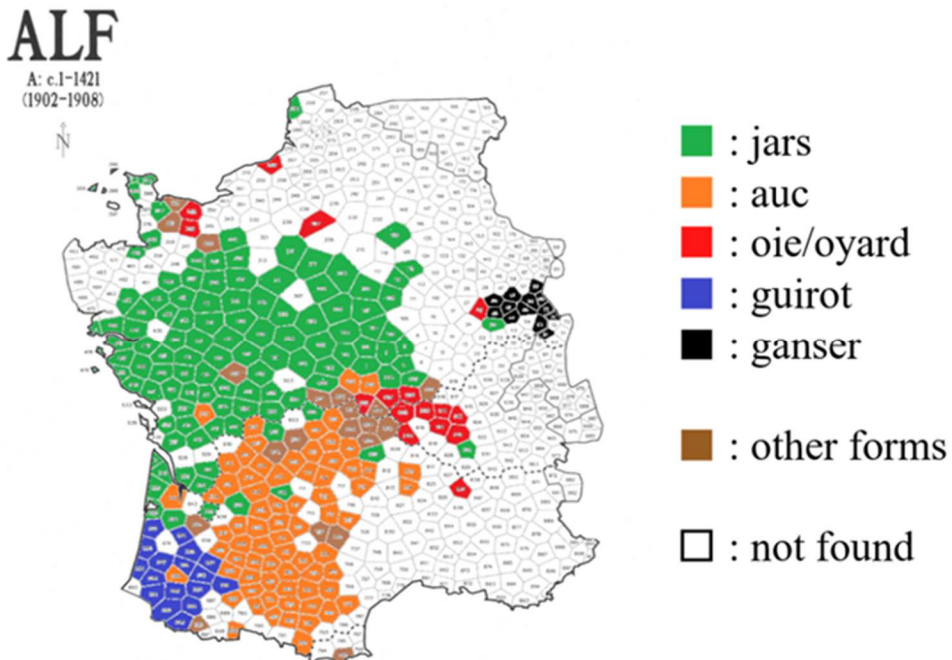


Fig. 7 Word forms of “jars”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> “Ein Ganser” means ‘a male goose,’ and ‘a female goose’ is represented by “eine Gans” in German.

<sup>8</sup> As “other forms,” we have observed the following: pt.796 [be:læ], pt. 645 [bjøk], pt. 703, 804, 805, 806 [da:gə], pt.735 [ga:brə], pt. 909 [goda], pt. 336 [go:gje], pt. 695 [gwa:j], pt. 601, 800, 801, 803 [kə:ka], pt. 604, 608 [pilu] and pt. 367, 376, 409 [piro].

### 5.2.2. Characteristics of the distribution of “jars”

As mentioned in 5.2.1., forms representing ‘a male goose’ do not exist in about 60% of the areas analyzed. On the other hand, in maps representing other animals such as horses, goats, pigs, and sheep, the forms of both males and females were found at all *ALF* points<sup>9</sup>. As stated in Robins (1997: 50), horses were represented by *equus* and mare was *equa* in Latin, as the difference in gender was important to speakers. In contrast, *corvus* ‘raven’ did not have specific terms for males and females, because the gender difference was not important.

In France, *foie gras*, an expensive type of pâté made from the liver of a goose or duck, has been produced and consumed. As *foie gras* producers need to continue breeding geese and ducks, we hypothesized that forms referring to a male goose would only be found in areas where geese are bred. To test this hypothesis, we investigated the breeding areas of geese in the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when the *ALF* survey was being implemented from documents on geese written in the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the names of endemic geese contain a place name (e.g., Normandy in *oie normande*).

According to Guy & Buckland (2002: 134-138), there are six types of French endemic geese: *oie blanche du Bourbonnais*, *oie blanche du Poitou*, *oie des Landes*, *oie normande*, *oie d’Alsace* and *oie de Toulouse*. Their names were accompanied by place names, indicating where these species originated. The *La Grande Encyclopédie* (1899: 303) described that, geese were raised in Allier, Basses-Pyrénées, Cher, Deux-Sèvres, Dordogne, Gers, Haute-Garonne, Indre, Landes, Maine-et-Loire, Mayenne, Nièvre, Sarthe, Saône-et-Loire, Tarn-et-Garonne, Vienne, and Yonne in the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, they were reared in Aude, Haute-Saône, Tarn (Marc 1811: 108-109), Ariège (Pelletan 1868: 804-805), the Sologne, Touraine (Bréchemin 1903: 317), Hautes-Pyrénées (Dumazet 1907: 370), Beauce (Vassilière 1908: 281), Limagne, Poitou (Dauzat 1921: 10), and Quercy (Quintin 1926: 366)<sup>10</sup>. In addition, as Dumazet (1907: 369) declared “les oies dont le foie sert de base à cette industrie [= industrie agricole] sont la gaieté des campagnes des bords de la Garonne et de ses affluents (the geese, whose liver is the basis for this [= agricultural] industry, are the merriment of the countryside on the riverbanks of the Garonne and its tributaries),” it is considered that geese were also bred in Gironde and Lot-et-Garonne where the Garonne river flows.

<sup>9</sup> Please refer to Map 269 cheval; cheveaux (horse, horses), Map 736 jument (mare), Map 150 bouc (billy goat/he-goat), Map 272 chèvre (nanny goat/she-goat), Map 1061 porc (boar or pig), Map 1342 truie (sow), Map 886 de moutons (of rams/ sheep) and Map 173 brebis (ewe) etc.

<sup>10</sup> The Limagne is a large plain which lies within the department of Puy-de-Dôme. The Sologne is a region extending over portions of the departments of Loiret, Loir-et-Cher, and Cher. Quercy comprised the present-day department of Lot, the northern half of the department of Tarn-et-Garonne, and a few communities in the department of Dordogne, Corrèze and Aveyron. Beauce comprises Eure-et-Loir and Loir-et-Cher, and parts of Loiret, Essonne, and Yvelines.

Furthermore, Figure 8 illustrates the breeding area of geese in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century inferred from the documents on geese and endemic species names (left) and the area where the forms representing a male goose were observed in Map 936 “oie” of *ALF* (right). Although there are some exceptions, the areas shaded in red on the map on the left are almost identical to those on the map on the right. Moreover, especially in northeastern and southeastern France, there are neither forms representing a male goose in *ALF*, nor a description about geese breeding in the documents. Therefore, our hypothesis that forms meaning a male goose could be found only in areas where geese are bred, is not necessarily wrong.

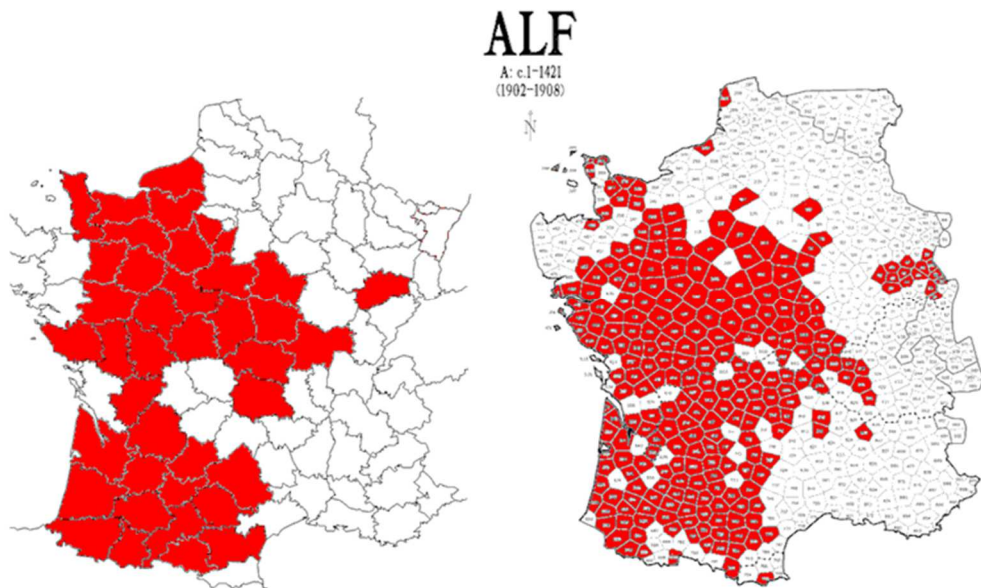


Fig. 8 Maps of inferred geese breeding areas in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (left) and of areas where forms of “jars” were observed in *ALF* (right)<sup>11</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

We analyzed the forms of “oie” as a generic term for goose and “jars” as the specific male form in France around 1900 by using Map 936 “oie” of *ALF*. A limitation of the research is that the study area was limited to the southwest of France; therefore, it is necessary to analyze the distribution of forms of “jars” throughout France.

<sup>11</sup> We excluded Alsace from the map of the inferred breeding areas of geese as the *ALF* survey was not conducted in this area.

Our first research question was to clarify the distribution of the phonetic forms of the generic word for goose, “oie.” Consequently, we found that older forms such as [auka] and [ɔə] remained on the periphery and that the newest form [wa] was surrounded by older forms. The newer forms [we], [wɛ] and [wa] seem to have traveled along the Rhône and its tributaries’ basins to the Mediterranean, relatively recently. We could not prove where [we], [wɛ] and [wa] had occurred or confirm the validity of the theory suggested by Le Dû et al. (2005: 121, 142-153).

The second research question was to identify when and where the phonetic change [ɔ] > [ɔi] had occurred. The spellings “oie/oue,” which can be presumed to have been pronounced [oj] or [ɔi], were found everywhere in northern and eastern France during the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Therefore, it was not possible to determine when and where the phonetic change [ɔ] > [ɔi] had occurred. Thus, the opinion of Fouché (1969: 614) has not been confirmed.

The third research question was to elucidate whether “jars” indicates the oldest language layer. From the etymological dictionary, we pointed out that “jars” might be derived from the old Frankish \**gard* rather than the pre-Latin *GARR*-. Therefore, we have suggested that “jars” could be a word in a newer language layer than “auc” of Latin etymology.

The fourth research question aimed to clarify the distribution of the forms of “jars.” Forms were confirmed in approximately 40% of the *ALF* survey points. We conclude that the presence of a specific term for male goose is likely related to the breeding of geese.

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