

# Francoprovençal

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# Francoprovençal: a regional language spoken in our region

A language descended from the Latin that spread from Lugdunum (Lyon), the city founded in 43 B.C. which became the capital of the Gauls

- Gallia transalpina (Narbonnaise) in the south
- Gallia comata (Long-Haired Gaul) : Lyon, Belgium, Aquitaine

# Languages spoken in metropolitan France

## The regional languages of metropolitan France

Languages of Latin origins:

Gallo-Romance languages:

Langue d'oïl,

**Francoprovençal**,

Occitan

Corsican

Catalan

Non-Romance languages:

Breton

Germanic dialects:

Alsatian and Platt,

Flemish

Basque



# Conference program

Geographic situation of Francoprovençal

History

Principal characteristics

Current weak vitality

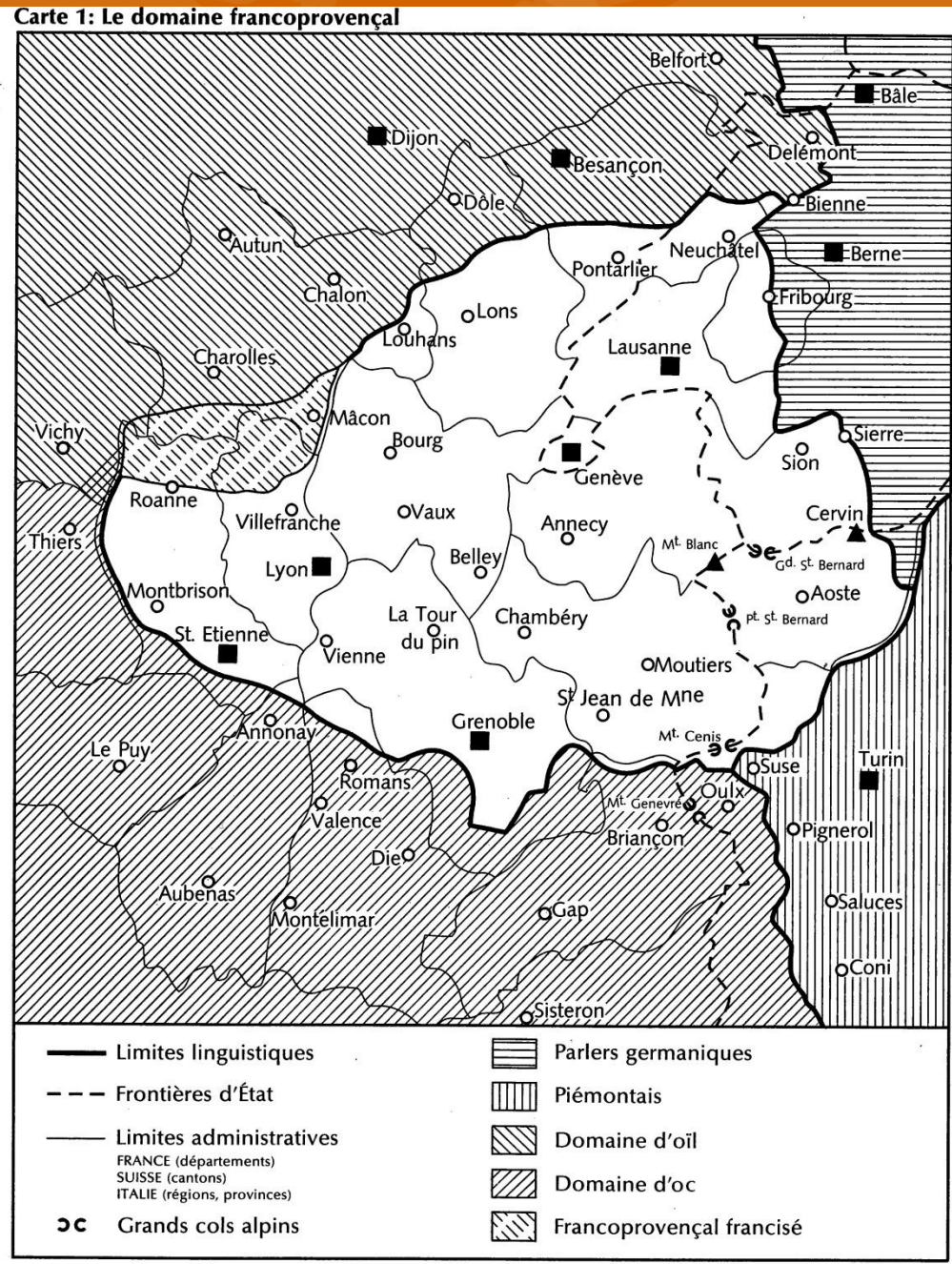
Revitalization efforts seeking to bring about a revival

# Geographic situation

Francoprovençal is spoken in three contiguous countries:

- France
- Switzerland
- Italy

- Linguistically, it borders on:
- Langue d'oïl to the north
  - Occitan to the west and to the south
  - Piedmontese to the southwest
  - Alemannic to the northwest



Carte établie d'après Tuailon (1972, 337)

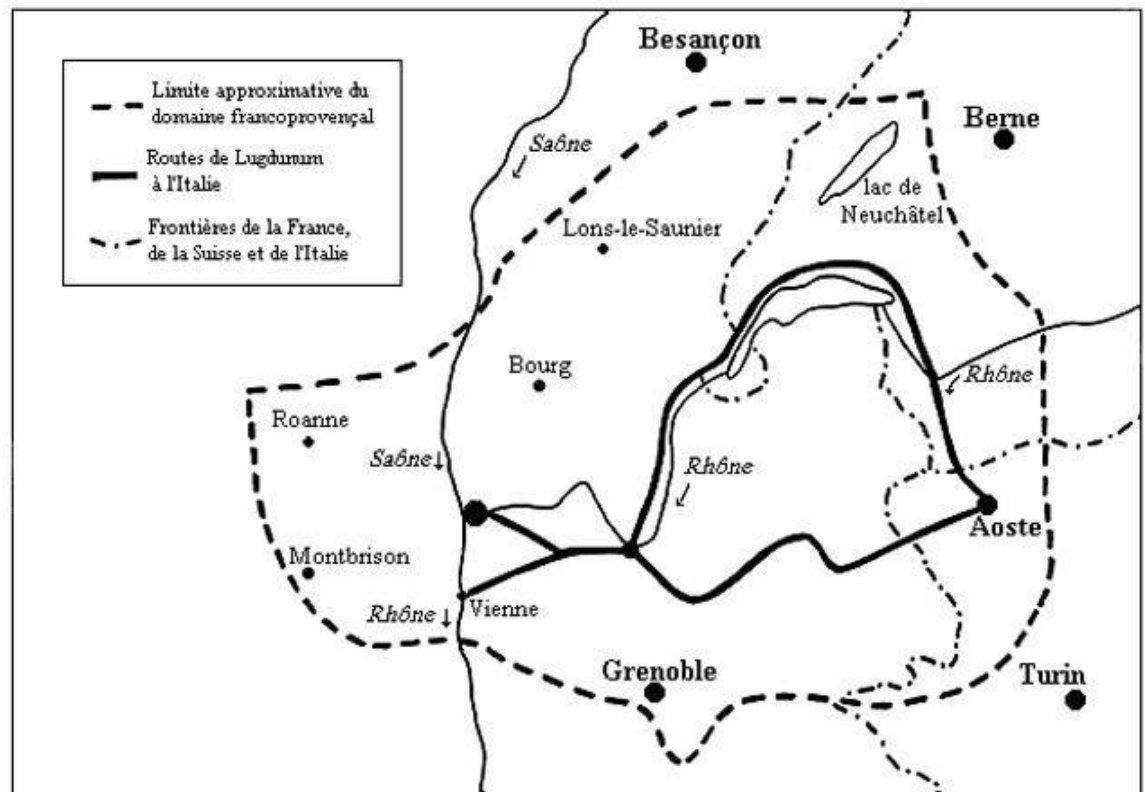
# History

Lugdunum (Lyon) founded in 43 B.C., capital of the Gauls in 14

Latin spread along the two roads that linked Lugdunum to Augusta Praetoria (Aosta), crossing the Alps in the direction of Rome

Latinisation took place in two steps—first with a fairly pure Latin, later with a very popular Latin

## Anciennes voies romaines en domaine francoprovençal



# History (continued)

The settling of the Franks in the north and Romance-Germanic bilingualism profoundly transformed the Gallo-Romance of the north

The Burgundians who settled in our region had little influence on the Romance language that was spoken here and that thus remained relatively stable.

Francoprovençal is “proto-French sheltered from certain Northern innovations” (Gaston Tuaillon).

The distinctiveness of Francoprovençal was only recognized in 1873, by Graziadio Isaia Ascoli.

Other proposed names: : *rhôdanien*, *lyonnais*, *français du sud-est*, *arpitan*.

# Phonetic characteristics of Francoprovençal

- Conservation of certain unstressed final vowels and thus of paroxytonism (ex ALA > *ala*), which distinguishes it from French
- Double evolution of A : *ala* (< ALA) but *filli* (< FILIA), *shanta* (< CANTARE) but *manzhi* (MANDUCARE), which distinguishes it from Occitan

- Diphthongization of accented Latin vowels E and O (short or long)

	Francoprovençal	French
A+ N final (PANE)	[ã], [pã]	[ɛ̃], pain [pɛ̃]
Ĕ +N+cons. (VENTU)	[ɛ̃], [vɛ̃]	[ã], vent [vã]
Ē +N+cons. (VENDERE)	[ɛ̃], ['vɛ̃dɐʁə]	[ã], vendre [vãdɛ]
U +N final (UNU)	[õ], [ũ]	[œ ~ ɛ̃], un [œ ~ ɛ̃]

- Transformation of Latin C and G into θ and δ in certain positions

- Weakening of intervocalic consonants, as in French

	Latin	French	Francoprovençal	Occitan
P	SAPONE	savon [sa'vɔ̃]	savon [sa'võ]	sabon [sa'bu]
C	PACARE	payer [pe'je]	payi [pa'ji]	pagar [pa'ga]
T	VITA	vie [vi]	via [vja]	vida ['vida]
D	SUDARE	suer [sy'e]	sua [sy'a]	susar [sy'za]



# Morphosyntactic characteristics of Francoprovençal

- Four forms of the definite article
- Use of personal subject pronouns (but omission in the dialects of certain speakers)
- Regular distinction between the masculine singular and the neuter in the personal subject pronouns and the direct objects
- Creation of masculine singular possessive adjectives *notron*, *votron* based on extension of *mon*, *ton*, *son* paradigm
- Two types of conjugation for the verbs of the first group due to the double evolution of the Latin A
- Extension of the flexional ending –o of the present indicative to several other tenses
- Extension of the -v suffix of the first group to the imperfect indicative verbs of the other groups

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=> **Significant fragmentation :**

Explained by the fact that Francoprovençal no longer had a linguistic stronghold after Lyon abandoned it in the Middle Ages and adopted the language of the king of France: French

# Francoprovençal : an endangered language

Spoken by fewer than 150,000 people

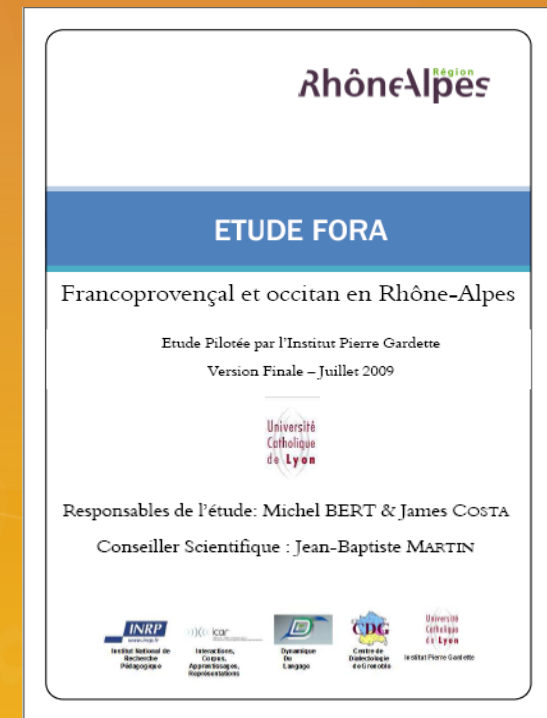
The FORA Study (Francoprovençal and Occitan in Rhône-Alpes) conducted in 2009 by Michel Bert and James Costa showed that in France, Francoprovençal is a very endangered language (there has been no family transmission for two generations).

The precise number of speakers is hard to determine, as there are invisible and latent speakers. Certain still feel embarrassed or even ashamed because of the humiliation they suffered as children at school when they spoke their 'dialect'.

In France, the State and the school waged war against regional languages until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Switzerland, the situation of Francoprovençal is similar to that of France.

In Italy, the situation is better: the Aosta Valley is "the bastion of Francoprovençal" (Saverio Favre). The Authorities of this autonomous region have long supported the language.



## Towards a revival?

As a result of the FORA Study, the Rhône-Alpes region decided in 2009 to enact a policy of support for its regional languages.

Amongst the measures introduced, it is worth pointing out the following:

- the nomination of an elected specialist of the domain and the creation of a monitoring committee directed by another elected specialist
- the hiring of a scientific advisor
- assistance to associations or organisations working with regional languages
- support for manifestations in favour of regional languages
- support for research on regional languages, especially concerning oral heritage and microtoponymy
- participation in the Academy of Occitan, the standing conference of the Occitan language
- assistance to publishing, notably by the creation of the “Regionals” collection which aims to increase awareness of literature written in regional languages
- negotiation of an agreement with the Grenoble board of education to facilitate the teaching of regional languages
- commissioning of a feasibility study in anticipation of the opening of a calandreta (a bilingual Occitan-French school) in the south of the region
  - A similar type of school could be established in the Francoprovençal domain
- consciousness raising of all involved actors through the organisation of discussions taking place in June

The revival of Francoprovençal must start with a rehabilitation of the language in the eyes of a general public still heavily influenced by all that was said in the past to discredit it, especially by the education system. This rehabilitation should be a cultural one.

The theme of the next conference of the international festival of Francoprovençal dialects is “Writing, Playing, Singing in Francoprovençal in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”.

Michel Bert and Bénédicte Pivot are conducting a study which will allow for measures to be proposed in order to coordinate the actions of those interested in Francoprovençal.

# Conclusion

Francoprovençal will never again be the popularly spoken language that it was a century ago.

However, thanks to the efforts of militants and to the support of the Rhône-Alpes region, the essential elements of the language can still be preserved.

As is the case for Occitan, cultural creation could support the survival of Francoprovençal.

**Merci beaucoup!**

**Thank you very much!**