

Title : *Sixteenth century French phonological variation as reflected by Present-day Martiniquan Creole*

Author's full name : Adrienn GULYAS

Institutions :

Eotvos Lőránd University of Budapest (ELTE)  
French Department/Francia tanszék  
Műzeum krt. 4./C.  
Budapest 1088  
Hungary

Université de René Descartes - Paris 5  
12, rue Cujas  
75005 Paris  
France

E-mail adress : gadi77@freemail.hu

Abstract :

This presentation is a fragment of our PhD research which mainly uses oral corpuses of Present-day Martiniquan Creole<sup>1</sup> (MC), historical and present-day Vulgar French sources, 17th century purist grammars, as well as philological works on the Middle French and the early Modern French period.

Our aim is to show some examples of how certain phonological forms of MC can be traced back to 16th-17th century Vulgar French<sup>2</sup> varieties and, more generally, to phonological variation in French in this period (see table below).

Knowing that approximately 90% of the vocabulary of French-based Creoles originates from French, the phonological forms of some of these lexical items may seem peculiar as compared to their Modern French equivalents.

As it turns out, most of these forms are attested by our French historical sources as variants coexisting with the present-day forms during the 16th century. In the 17th century, they became gradually marked as "vulgar" and were eliminated by the purists, though some of them survived as archaisms in Vulgar French until the 18th century and in French-based Creoles.

---

<sup>1</sup> Martinique is a French department situated in the West Indies. Also, there is an important Martiniquan community living in metropolitan France.

<sup>2</sup> We mean by "vulgar" non-standard varieties spoken by lower layers of society (cf. Vulgar Latin), independently of their geographical position.

Some references :

- Chaudenson R. (1992) *Des îles, des hommes, des langues. Essai sur la créolisation linguistique et culturelle*. L'Harmattan. 309p.
- Frei H. (1971) *La grammaire des fautes*. Genève: Slatkine. 317 p.
- de La Chaussée F. (1989) *Initiation à la phonétique historique de l'ancien français*. Paris: Klincksieck. 251 p.
- Thurot Ch. (1881-1883) *De la prononciation française depuis le commencement du XVIe siècle*. Imprimerie nationale. 3 vol.

Table :

<b>Phenomenon</b>	<b>16th c. variation</b>	<b>MC</b>	<b>Modern French</b>	<b>English translation</b>
<i>Confusion of o/u</i>	comment/ coumant	kouman	comment	'how'
	aujourd'hui/ aujourd'hui	jòdi-a	aujourd'hui	'today'
	oblier/oublier	obliyé	oublier	'forget'
<i>Word-final t + / - pronounced</i>	debout : +/-	doubout : +	debout : -	'standing'
	/dwa/,/dwe/, /dwet/ : +/-	/dwet/ : +	/dwa/ doigt : -	'finger'
<i>wa/we</i>	/nwe/-/nwa/	/nwe/	/nwar/ noir	'black'
	but: /rwe/- /rwa/	/rwa/!	/rwa/ roi	'king'
<i>Aspirated h (always a /w/ in MC)</i>	/haj/-/aj/	/waji/	/aj/ haï	'hated'
	/hale/-/ale/	/wale/	/ale/ haler	'to drag'
<i>coda R</i>	vinaigue/ vinaigre	vinèg	vinaigre	'vinegar'
	aut'/autre	(an)lòt	autre	'other'