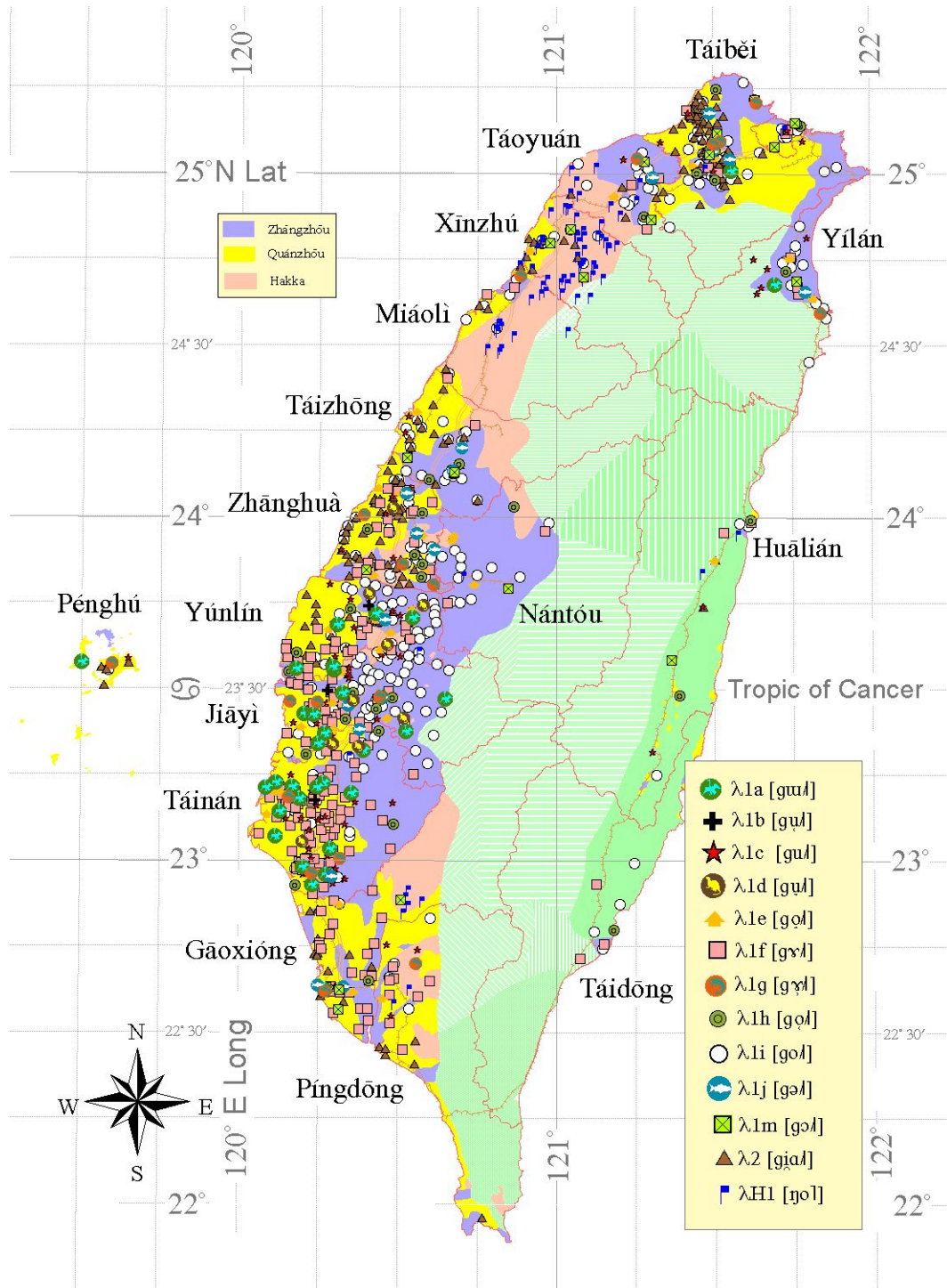# Mapping Taiwanese 'goose'

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Mapping Taiwanese 'goose'

[Abstract]

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The database for this study consists of responses from a thousand informants. The database can be queried for age, sex, education, language background, ethnicity, occupation, and residential history. The two common Taiwanese Southern Mĭn *goose* lexemes are *gô* and *giâ* (= Mandarin 鵝 *é*), accounting for 85% of all responses.

The vocalism of the *gô* lexeme can apparently wander around a very broad range of the back vowel space; I have noted eleven possible positions: [ɤ ~ ɤ̞ ~ o̞ ~ o ~ ɔ ~ o̞ ~ ʉ ~ u ~ ʉ ~ ɯ ~ ə], although just two variants—[goʎ] and [gɤʎ]—occur most frequently. [gɤʎ]- and [goʎ]-users contrast with respect to most background factors; and informants have the following characteristics depending on which form they use:

Factor	[gɤʎ]-users	[goʎ]-users	*Giâ*-users
Birthyear	1937	1931	1935
Sex	Slight female bias	Strong male bias	Neutral
Education	8 years	7 years (normal)	7 years (normal)
Stratum	Neutral	More Japanese lg. educ.	Slight Japanese ed.
Ethnic zone	Strongly Zhāngzhōu	Strongly Quánzhōu	Extremely Quánzhōu
Occupation	Slight business bias	Slight labor bias	Strong labor bias

A curious aspect of the vowel variation is the simplex vs. compound alternation in the same informant; e.g., the "paradigmatic" alternation [go˦.kaŋ˥] 'gander' ~ [gɤˤ.bɤˤ˥] 'she-goose' (vowel harmony?)

From the query tables, we can trace the rise and fall of the rival variants [gɤʎ] and [goʎ] respectively, along with sociopolitical fashion. For example, the less frequent [ɤ] vocalism slowly increased in popularity earlier in the twentieth century, until after World War II, when the [ɤ] became the commoner form among younger Taiwanese, while it appears that [goʎ] is becoming extinct. It may well be the case that the relatively dramatic expansion of the unrounded vocalism [ɤ] at the expense of the rounded [o] has been influenced by the Mandarin *goose* word *é* [ɤˊ], in the aftermath of the linguistic tsunami of 1949.

Another issue taken up is the phenomenon of initial-*g* deletion in *gô* and *giâ*.

Factor	*Gô > ô*	*Giâ > iâ*
Birthyear	1959	1938
Sex	Parity	Strong female bias
Education	12 years (above normal)	6 years (below normal)
Stratum	Mandarinized	Neutral
Ethnic zone	Strongly Zhāngzhōu	Completely Quánzhōu
Occupation	Businessmen & students	Farmers & housewives

In the case of the *gô*-based, *g*-less forms in [əʉ ~ ɔ ~ ɤ ~ ɤ̞~ o̞ ~ o ~ ʊ], the loss of initial /g/ is due to young, Mandarinized Taiwanese not pronouncing a voiced velar plosive because such a phoneme does not exist in standard Mandarin. But in the case of the *giâ*-based, *g*-less forms in [i̯ɑ], it seems less likely that Mandarin had much influence in this much earlier process.

In an etymological excursus, I propose that proto-Indo-european *ǵʰans 'goose' is borrowed into proto-Chinese as *gans. But since there already was a native Chinese word for 'goose', i.e. *ŋai, the borrowed word was semantically narrowed to 'wild goose' and its initial was assimilated to *ŋ- under the synonymous influence of *ŋai, producing *ŋans. The original form of the borrowing, however, was kept with extremely specialized meanings: *gans 'exotic bird; feather'.

Key words: Taiwanese Southern Min, sociophonetic variation, linguistic profiling, goose