

PORTUGUESE PLUPERFECT: ELEMENTS FOR A DIACHRONIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: Although in Contemporary Portuguese the use of the simple pluperfect is confined to written registers, the large number of attestations found in diachronic data seems to indicate that in earlier periods this verb form was commonly used. My main objective is to present a contribution for a more complete and coherent approach of the development of the Portuguese pluperfect, concentrating mainly on the change that led to the partial obsolescence of the simple form. Reviewing previous studies / comments on the functioning and evolution of the Portuguese pluperfect, and analyzing diachronic data retrieved in different types of textual sources (mainly from Old and Middle Portuguese), I aim at identifying the possible factors that determined the gradual disuse of the simple verb form, hypothesising that these were different but mutually conditioning factors.

KEYWORDS: pluperfect; Old Portuguese; Middle Portuguese; linguistic change; grammatical conditioning factors.

0. Portuguese simple pluperfect – a conservative feature

From a diachronic perspective, the preservation, in Portuguese, of the simple pluperfect verb form (e. g. *mostrara* < MONSTRARAM) is usually referred to as particularly conservative in the Romance domain – cf., a. o., Posner (1996: 327): «Portuguese is another so-called conservative language (...) It resisted innovative tendencies like (...) and preserved, however marginally, verb forms like the Latin pluperfect...». To simply characterize a given language as ‘conservative’ is not, of course, accurate, as it appears to be implicit in the work of this author. The notion of ‘conservation’, recurrently used in historical linguistics, has an essentially operative character, presupposing diachronic contrasts between different linguistic systems and thus it cannot be used as an absolute characterization. In this sense, to state, in the Romance context, that the preservation of the simple pluperfect is conservative merely implies that it diverges from the most general Romance trend.

But the point I wish to make here is that the preservation of this verb form cannot be considered ‘marginal’. If it is true that in Contemporary Por-

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tuguese it is confined to literary (or otherwise very restricted) uses, the large number of attestations found in diachronic data seems to indicate that in earlier periods the simple pluperfect was commonly used. This reasoning should, of course, be tested in a careful analysis of the extant written records – since diachronic data are retrievable only in written texts, it is not possible to infer a direct relation between the number of attestations and the frequency of use in the language. Nevertheless the typological diversity of the written testimonies where the simple pluperfect occurs seems to indicate a non restricted use of the form, i. e., a use not restricted (roughly) by style or, more broadly, not directly connected to sociolinguistic factors.

My analysis presupposes that the limited use of the simple pluperfect observed in Contemporary Portuguese is the consequence of a linguistic change (or of linguistic changes) that occurred later in the history of the language and that this was due to conditioning factors to be identified. It is not, as suggested by Posner (*ibid.*), an indication of some sort of ‘marginal’ preservation of the Latin form and so it could not lead to the conclusion that Portuguese is not that conservative, even if we were to accept such type of general characterization in the Romance domain. As I will try to evidence in the following points, the tendency towards the (partial) disuse of the simple pluperfect was a consequence of several innovative changes, and it became apparent only after these changes took place and expanded.

1. The simple pluperfect in diachrony – tense versus modal values

The Portuguese (either simple or compound) pluperfect is usually described as indicating «an action that occurred before another past action» (Cunha & Cintra, 1984: 455, tr.), and it is therefore characterized as an «essentially anaphoric tense» (Lopes, 1997: 661; Oliveira, 2003: 161, tr.). In Medieval Portuguese (more accurately, in Old and Middle Portuguese, from the most ancient written records of the language to the middle 16th century) we find numerous attestations of the simple pluperfect compatible with this tense characterization. Cf. (1) to (6)¹:

- (1) *disse A mj~ dito tabaliõ que eu lhj mostrasse e leesse hu~u sseu testame~to que ele ffezera* [make-3sgPLUP] e *outorgara* [authorize-3sgPLUP] (DPs 1336)
“He told me to show him and to read his will that he had made and authorized”
- (2) *de guisa foy que aquel que el fezera* [do-3sgPLUP] *mays de ben ca a todos os angios foy derribado dos ceos* (FR late 13th cent.?)
“It was in a way that the one to whom he had done more good than to all the angels was expelled from heaven”

¹ The references of the sources of the examples are listed at the end of the text.

- (3) *E porque tragia o poo que colhera [collect-3sgPLUP] no altar na mão destra tolheu com a mão seestra o pano* (DSG m. 14th cent.?)
 “And because he had the dust that he had collected from the altar in his right hand he grabbed the tissue with his left hand”
- (4) *chegou ao Rio de marce que he no Reyno de suiurumeça que el ganhara [conquer-3sgPLUP]* (LLC late 14th cent.?)
 “He arrived to the M. river which is located in the kingdom of S. that he had conquered”
- (5) *Nembrouse el Rey alboface~ de sas molheres e de seus filhos e (...) que trouuera [bring-3sgPLUP]* (LLC late 14th cent.?)
 “King A. remembered his wives and sons and (...) that he had brought”
- (6) *E quando esta embayxada veo era no tempo que el-rey mandara [command-3sgPLUP] contar as mulas* (VFJII 1545)
 “And when this embassy came it was at the time when the king had commanded that the mules be counted”

But the contrast that appears to be diachronically more significant is that the same verb form is largely attested with a value generically characterizable as modal, in cases where we would have, in Contemporary Portuguese, a (modal) conditional (simple or compound) or a subjunctive (imperfect). Cf. (7) to (11):

- (7) *E porque cuidaron todos mil vegadas que devera [dever-3sgPLUP] a seer todo espedaçado* (DSG m. 14th cent.?)
 “And because they all considered one thousand times that it should have been completely broken”
- (8) *e nã casou como deuera [dever-3sgPLUP]* (LLC late 14th cent.?)
 “And he did not marry like he should have”
- (9) *ca sy asi cõtecera. [happen-3sgPLUP] forades perdido. [be-2pIPLUP lose-PP]* (LLC late 14th cent.?)
 “Because if it had been so you would have been lost”
- (10) *Dise el Rei. como sabes tu que eu recebera [receive-1sgPLUP] morte* (LLC late 14th cent.?)
 “The king said: how do you know that I would have been killed (‘received death’)?”
- (11) *e que se com rigor e justiça o quisera [want-3sgPLUP] castigar, cousas tinha sabidas delle por onde com direito o podera [can-3sgPLUP] fazer* (VFJII 1545)
 “And if he had wanted to punish him with rigour and justice he knew things about him by which he could have done so according to the law”

Although not directly relevant for the current study, it should also be noted that the simple pluperfect also occurs in medieval texts in cases where in Contemporary Portuguese the ‘conditional’ form is used, but as a ‘future in the past’, like in (12):

- (12) *como quer que aquella ouvera [have-3sgPLUP] de ser ho seu postrimeiro dia, caa o cavallo errou ho porto* (ZCPM late 15th cent.?)
 “Even though that day would be his last day (i. e. he died later that day) because the horse did not get to the harbour”

Various studies on Portuguese mention the modal use of the simple pluperfect in ancient language states. Among these, Ali (1964⁶: §1539) signals the use of forms ending in *-ara*, *-era*, *-ira* from Old to Classical Portuguese in cases where they ‘replace’ the imperfect subjunctive and the conditional (which he always calls ‘futuro do pretérito’), but he does not indicate when this use was abandoned (the latest example he cites is from the 17th cent.). Silva (1988: 428-432) studied a sample of 20% of the 550 examples of simple pluperfect in a corpus from the middle 14th cent., and she indicates that apart from the ‘basic temporal value’ (corresponding to 86,4% of the total number of the studied occurrences) these verb forms evidence ‘other values’ – they occur in conditionals, and in sentences expressing ‘irreality’.

I will not discuss here how this modal value emerged in the first place, since my main concern is to approach the change that occurred later in Portuguese (the disuse of the simple pluperfect). As known, the modal use of the simple pluperfect cannot be considered in absolute terms a Romance innovation. A modal reading of this verb form was already possible in Latin, even though apparently in more restricted contexts – in conditionals in the apodosis and with inherently modal verbs². As shown in the examples above, in Old and Middle Portuguese we find attestations in conditionals, both in the apodosis and in the protasis, and also cases where the conditional is only implicit (cf. 10), apart from uses with modal verbs (cf. 7, 8).

While in other Romance languages, like Spanish, with specific differences concerning different varieties, this type of use was preserved³, it was lost in Portuguese (except for a few fixed expressions and otherwise very marked uses), where it was entirely replaced by subjunctive or conditional forms⁴. So the possibility of expressing either tense or modality, depending on the concurrence of other elements, appears as the most distinctive feature of the use of the simple pluperfect in Portuguese past stages. In the diachronic perspective of Portuguese pursued here, it is the loss of this modal value that is to be considered, since even in cases where the verb form is preserved (especially literary or very formal uses) it has a temporal reading (apart from the very exceptional cases mentioned above). So it could perhaps be stated that the partial obsolescence of this verb form also had as conse-

² For an example of the pluperfect (indicative) in conditionals, in Latin, s. Pinkster (1995: 301-302).

³ In some Italian dialects this modal value of the pluperfect is also attested (Lilienthal, 1998: 12-13).

⁴ Becker (2008) approached the diachronic divergence observed between Spanish and Portuguese, but he concentrated mainly on the Spanish change where, according to his analysis, a ‘marginal’ value became central after a period of polysemy.

quence the loss of one of its possible values. In other words, the simple pluperfect ceased to be ‘polysemous’ in Portuguese (if one accepts the notion of polysemy to characterize this type of semantic phenomena).

2. Simple versus compound pluperfect

Apart from the concurrence of tense and modal values, the role of other factors must be considered in order to assess different explicative hypotheses for the disuse of the simple pluperfect, in particular the concurrence of simple and compound forms.

In her synchronic study of the pluperfect in Contemporary Portuguese, Lopes (1997: 658) claims to have signalled a certain ambiguity of the value expressed by the (compound) pluperfect, concerning the temporal relation between the ‘temporal perspective point’ and the situation described – anteriority or superposition. Her hypothesis is that these two values would have been expressed in past language stages by the simple and compound forms respectively. The observed ‘ambiguity’ would then be the consequence of the fact that the surviving compound form had accumulated the two values once pertaining to different forms.

Campos (2000, 2005), who also approached, from a different perspective, this topic, suggests that the difference of values of the simple and compound forms persists even in Contemporary Portuguese and that the contrast between these values, although subtle, is still observable in those literary contexts where both forms co-occur, assuming that different forms are, by definition, assigned different values (Campos, 2000: 59, a presupposition also assumed by Lopes, *ibid.*⁵). In her analysis of a 15th century sequence (here transcribed as 13) where both the simple and compound forms of the pluperfect occur, she claims that they express different aspectual values: «À mon avis, dans l'exemple [...] nous avons affaire à une question d'aspect. En effet, la première occurrence – *veera* – exprime l'accomplissement d'un évènement ponctuel, tandis que la deuxième occurrence – *o que tinha feito* – exprime et l'évènement accompli et la conséquence de nature stativique qui en découle.» (Campos, 2000: 59)

(13) *ca el nom veera* [come-3sgPLUP] *ali por aquilo, mas por fazer o que tinha feito* [have-3sgIMP do-PP] (F. Lopes, *Crónica de D. João I*, apud Campos, 2000: 58)

“Because he hadn’t come there for that but to do what he had done”

⁵ The main difference between the positions of these two linguists in this particular aspect seems to be that while Lopes (1997) assumes an identity of values, in Contemporary Portuguese, for the simple and compound forms, hypothesizing on a differentiation of values only in past language stages, Campos (2000, 2005) suggests that this differentiation persists on the (literary) registers where both forms co-occur.

According to this analysis, the simple and compound form of the pluperfect share the same tense / aspect basic value, but the choice between one of the two forms has linguistic significance (not merely stylistic), implying that: «[l'énonciateur] privilégie une des phases associées à l'accomplissement de l'évènement construit linguistiquement [...] soit la culmination, soit l'état qui en résulte.» (Campos, 2000: 60)

In her approach, Campos (2000, 2005) seems to suggest a possible relation between formal (simple / compound) and semantic (aspectual) contrasts, and she even ponders the hypothesis of some sort of parallel evolutions of the perfect and pluperfect forms. From a specifically diachronic perspective⁶, the analysis should, of course, include the process that would lead to the grammaticalization of constructions with *haver* / *ter* (imperfect) + past participle (ideally approaching this process in the more comprehensive context of the emergence of compound tense forms)⁷.

The analysis of diachronic data shows that, at least until the 14th century, attestations of this type of constructions are sometimes ambiguous, allowing either for a compound tense reading or for a reading still compatible with the preservation of the etymological meanings of *haver* / *ter*⁸, especially when there is overt agreement. Cf. (14), (15):

- (14) *a mea nobre caualaria que eu quia prouada [have-3sgIMP prove-femPP] e~ mytas faze~das* (LLC late 14th cent.)
 “My noble cavalry that I had (I ‘possessed’) and had come through / that I had tested in many occasions”
- (15) *estauã del mãzelados porque os tiinha soiogados [have-3sgIMP submit-plPP]* (LLC late 14th cent.)
 “They were angry with him because he had them submitted / had submitted them”

⁶ Campos (2000: 57) explicitly assumes not having made extensive use of diachronic data.

⁷ Campos (2000, 2005) suggests that the evolution of both the perfect and pluperfect could have been somehow parallel, in consonance with her claim that some semantic difference still persists between the simple and compound forms of the pluperfect. In their analysis of the compound perfect, Squartini & Bertinetto (2000: 410) do, however, note that the set of restrictions of the compound perfect – «it selects only durative and non-telic situations encompassing the Reference Time, while non-durative and telic situations are only accepted if interpreted as spanning an interval that reaches up to the Reference Time» – «does not hold for the other compound forms, such as the pluperfect (...). This state of affairs is clearly due to the competition between CP and SP, rather than being an intrinsic character of Portuguese compound forms in general.»

⁸ I will not specifically discuss in this paper the variation between these two verbs in the history of Portuguese, a subject that I have explored in previous work (Brocardo, 2006). I shall simply note that as ‘lexical’ verbs, *haver* and *ter* expressed different semantic values in Old Portuguese. In short, *haver* implies a relation viewed as inherent or permanent, while *ter* applies when the relation is viewed as transitory. In numerous cases they can occur with the same type of object, but the variation can not be considered free variation. Later in the history of the language, the value of *ter* becomes more general and, as known, it entirely replaces *haver*, both as a lexical verb and as an auxiliary.

It is mainly from the 15th century onward that the data seem to evidence a more advanced grammaticalization stage of these constructions (cf. 16 and 17) even if we still can find many rather late examples showing overt agreement (cf. 18 and 19)⁹:

- (16) *E tinham acordado* [have-3plIMP agree-PP] *de se hirem a Bulhões* (ZCPM late 15th cent.?)
 “And they had agreed to go to B.”
- (17) *e o comde tinha mandado* [have-3sgIMP order-PP] *a Gomçallo Nunez que lhes abrisse* (ZCPM late 15th cent.?)
 “And the count had ordered G. N. to open (the gate) for them”
- (18) *tam virtuoso rey de que tantas merces e honrras tinham recebidas* [have-3plIMP receive-pl,femPP] (VFJII 1545)
 “Such a virtuous king from whom they had received so many honors”
- (19) *porém que elles tinham compreendida* [have-3plIMP understand-femPP] *hu~a cousa em que el-rey (...) lhe daria muy craro testemunho* (VFJII 1545)
 “But they had understood one thing in which the king would give them a very clear testimony”

Since the use of the simple pluperfect would persist, as evidenced by the high frequency of the attestations, it seems legitimate to assume that only later would the competition of simple and compound forms decisively contribute to the progressive disuse of the former (as one could also predict from its persistence in some contemporary written uses).

It should be pointed out that this type of competition between simple and compound forms was present from the most ancient language periods. With the so called unaccusative verbs we have numerous attestations of formally parallel constructions with verb forms from Latin ESSE¹⁰ (imperfect) + past participle, alternating, apparently freely, with the simple pluperfect. Cf. (20) – (26):

- (20) *A alma non era* partida [be-3sgIMP depart-PP] *ainda do corpo* (DSG m. 14th cent.?)
 “The soul had not yet departed from the body”
- (21) *E o mandadeiro quando chegou aa cidade achou novas que o bispo da cidade era morto* [be-3sgIMP die-PP] *e achou que morrerá* [die-3sgPLUP] *en aquela ora* (DSG m. 14th cent.?)
 “And the man, when he arrived to the city, found that the city bishop had died and he found that he had died at that hour (recently)”

⁹ These examples show that full grammaticalization does not necessarily imply loss of agreement (cf., a. o., Squartini & Bertinetto, 2000: n. 6, p. 428).

¹⁰ These are sometimes referred to as forms of *ser*, but diachronically this is not accurate, since in fact they are not forms derived from Latin SEDERE, and in Old Portuguese there is clear evidence that the descendents of ESSE and SEDERE still corresponded to (morphologically and semantically) distinct paradigms.

- (22) *logo foram avisados de como elle hera partydo* [be-3sgIMP depart-PP] (ZCPM late 15th cent.?)
 “They were immediately informed that he had departed”
- (23) *soube ho comde como Mulley Abualle (...) partyra* [depart-3sgPLUP] *de sua terra* (ZCPM late 15th cent.?)
 “The count knew that M. A. had departed from his country”
- (24) *Tanto que foi sabido que el-rey Dom Afonso era partido* [be-3sgIMP depart-PP] (VFJII 1545)
 “As soon as people found that king A. had departed”
- (25) *e por nam vir a Nafrol donde partira* [depart-3sgPLUP] (VFJII 1545)
 “And in order not to come to N. from where he had departed”
- (26) *quiseram outra vez ser certificados de toda a verdade dellas (...) pera que jaa tinham enviados seus navios que ainda nam eram tornados* [be-3plIMP return-PP] (VFJII 1545)
 “They wanted once again to be certain of their truth (...) and for that reason they had already sent their ships that had not yet returned”

These correspond, no doubt, to compound tense forms. As known, these are not, contrarily to other periphrastic forms, a Romance innovation, they continue the Latin pattern for deponent verbs, and are preserved in some contemporary Romance languages, i. e., they are unquestionably fully grammaticalized¹¹.

One could, of course, hypothesize that this was not an entirely free variation – the type of contrast between the simple and compound form could correspond to an aspectual contrast (as proposed by Campos, 2000 for simple / compound with *ter* pluperfect), and so the compound form would be characterized, by contrast, as ‘resultative’. But only an extensive and fine analysis of the data could, perhaps, sustain this proposal.

Since these compound forms with < ESSE are lost in Portuguese, it will be relevant to the diachronic study to signal at what approximate time the constructions with *haver* / *ter* start to occur also with this subclass of verbs. I did not find any attestations in the 14th and 15th century’s texts that I explored exhaustively. From the 16th century onward there are already some attestations, also sporadically found in texts (originally) written in more ancient periods but preserved in late testimonies. In these cases we have variation between constructions with *haver* and < ESSE. For example, in the *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344* there is one single example of *avya chegado* in contrast with numerous attestations of *era chegado*, *partido*, etc. (27). Examples (28) and (29) also correspond to texts preserved in late testimonies, whose dates are conjectural.

¹¹ Silva (1988: 446-447) considers that constructions with «*seer*» + PP of ‘intransitive’ verbs correspond possibly to the only case of compound tense attested in her corpus (since constructions with other verbs have not yet grammaticalized).

- (27) *E elle, como era ja partido [be-3sgIMP depart-PP] de Saragoça quanto hu~a jornada e avya chegado [have-3sgIMP arrive-PP] a hu~a villa que a nome Pedra Alta, ficou ally suas tendas.* (CGE 1344 (CIPM) 15th cent.?)
 “And as he had already departed from S. one day before and he had arrived to a place called P. A., he set his tents there”
- (28) *E em seu lugar donde sse avia partido [have-3sgIMP depart-PP] foy posto frey Booa Ventura, o quall avia bebido parte do calez.* (Crónica da Ordem dos Frades Menores 1209-1285 (Davies & Ferreira) 15th cent.?)
 “And in his place from where he had departed they placed f. B. V., who had drunk part of the calyx”
- (29) *e agora me apareço e me disse como avia saido [have-3sgIMP leave-PP] deste mundo e como caira do leito e como sobia [?] ao çeeo.* (Crónica da Ordem dos Frades Menores 1209-1285 (Davies & Ferreira) 15th cent.?)
 “And now he appeared to me and told me how he had left this world and how he had fallen from his bed and how he was going up [?] to heaven”

In some (non exhaustive) searches of 16th century’s texts, apart from attestations of the inherited construction (< ESSE + past participle), I signaled several examples of *ter* + past participle of unaccusative verbs, namely *chegar*, *partir*, *sair* and *entrar* (30-32). In these searches I did not signal any occurrences of this type of construction with *haver*.

- (30) *E tres ou quatro dias antes tinha chegado [have-3sgIMP arrive-PP] de Bungo o Irmão Ayres Sanches* (Frois, Historia do Japam 1 (Davies & Ferreira) 1560-1580)
 “And three or four days before brother A. S. had arrived from B.”
- (31) *chegou à barra de Goa Fernão Peres de Andrade, que tinha partido [have-3sgIMP depart-PP] do Reino por Capitão mór de cinco náos* (Couto, Quinta década (livros 8-10), vol. 1, Décadas (Davies & Ferreira) 1584)
 “F. P. A., who had departed from the kingdom as captain of five ships, arrived to the port of G.”
- (32) (...) *um Rei, que tinha saido [have-3sgIMP leave-PP] das trevas de sua cegueira, e entrado na luz da verdade do Evangelho* (Couto, Quinta década (livros 8-10), vol. 1, Décadas (Davies & Ferreira) 1584)
 “(...) a king that had left from the darkness of his blindness and had entered into the light of the truth of the Gospel”

The emergence of (first) *haver* and (afterwards) *ter* in constructions with this subclass of verbs (that occurred always with < ESSE in earlier language stages) seems to be a clear sign of the full grammaticalization of the construction as a compound verb form. Whether the formal and semantic contrasts were somehow parallel is a more complex issue. Assuming that this supposed semantic contrast existed in the first place between the original compound / simple forms, it will also be necessary to establish if it persisted when the new compound forms emerged. These hypotheses should be tested in careful data collections and analyses, starting by the definition of criteria for the retrieving of texts and corpora. Not only this sort of analyses have to be sustained by

meticulous semantic studies, implying a close look of occurrences in different syntactic / semantic contexts, but they should also be supported by an adequate methodology for the collection of linguistic data in different types of testimonies. In a more comprehensive diachronic approach, supposedly early attestations of the innovative construction with unaccusative verbs, like the ones mentioned above, should be confronted with data from different types of textual sources (ideally dated originals or, at least, copies not too distant, chronologically, from the original). In this paper I have focused mainly on pointing out the specificity and significance of the data related to this particular subclass of verbs, for which some sort of competition between the simple and compound forms was possible from the most ancient language stages, while for other verbs the compound form only emerged later.

3. Perfect / pluperfect syncretism of the 3rd person plural

But yet another rather different issue has been signalled by historic grammarians (Ali, 1964⁶: §1534) that should be considered in a more comprehensive approach of this topic – the phonological convergence of the 3rd person plural verb forms of both the perfect and simple pluperfect.

In Old Portuguese these verb forms had distinct phonological endings, in accordance with their etymological origin (/õ/ < -UNT / /ã/ < -ANT), as shown in (33) and (34), which constitute examples from a rather late testimony of systematic etymological spelling:

- (33) *O priol foi desto muy coitado polo que el disera a el Rey dõ afomso (...) E dise a grã uoz ai deus podermiades dizer hu ficou. e os caualeiros lhi diserõ [say-3plPERF] (LLC late 14th cent?)*

“The chief priest was very sad about this because of what he had said to king A. (...) And he said loudly: could you tell me where it remained? And the knights said to him”

- (34) *E ao depouys a grã te~po algu~us que lhi bem nõ queriã (...) repitiã as palauras hu el nõ estaua que lhi diserã [say-3plPLUP] os dõzees no paaço del Rey. (LLC late 14th cent.?)*

“And long time after that some people that did not like him, where he was not present, repeated the words that the young men had said to him at the king’s palace”

By the 15th century, these 3rd person plural verb forms had become indistinct, due to phonological change, as evidenced by many non etymological spellings (represented in the written records by different types of graphic phenomena). Cf. (35):

- (35) *E ponhamos – disserrã [say-3plPERF] elles – que vos temdes esta çidade por allgu~s tempos [also spelled *disserom* or *disserão*] (ZCPM late 15th cent.?)*

“And let us suppose – they said – that you have this city for some time”

Forms like the ones exemplified above, whose endings were before pronounced with two different nasal vowels, were no longer distinguishable as they had merged to a nasal diphthong. Although limited to a single person / number form, the role of this syncretism also has to be considered in a diachronic approach of the simple pluperfect. Since 3rd person plural forms present a relatively high frequency (at least in the type of texts that provide more occurrences of pluperfect) the fact that perfect and simple pluperfect forms had become phonologically identical certainly favoured the use of the pluperfect compound form in many contexts, if it did not made it obligatory (cf. below), probably contributing to its expansion.

Although this is apparently a case where we have some sort of ‘grammatical’ consequence of a regular phonological change (it had effect on virtually every /õ/ and /ã/ endings, regardless of the syntactic category of the word form), some authors have claimed that unstressed verb endings were affected earlier by the merger (Cardeira, 2005: 169; 171) and some have even sustained that the ‘confusion’ between perfect and (simple) pluperfect forms could have functioned as a possible conditioning factor of the phonological merger (s. references in Cardeira, 2005: 169; 171).

How, more precisely, the ‘grammatical’ and phonological processes interacted remains to be established, but the fact that the changes involved – the emergence of the fully grammaticalized compound verb form (with *haver / ter*) and the phonological merger – are likely to have taken place / expanded approximately by the same period (roughly from the 14th to the 15th century, contrasting Old and Middle Portuguese¹²) reinforces the hypothesis of their interaction. In any case, the 3rd person plural form of the simple pluperfect is no longer an available alternative, even in those restricted (literary) registers where the simple pluperfect is preserved, as exemplified in (36):

(36) *Quarenta dias eram já decorridos* [be-3plIMP pass-plPP] *desde que, integrado na leva dos escolhidos, dera entrada* [give-PLUP entrance] *na arca*
(ex. from Torga, apud Campos 2005: 135)

“Forty days had already gone by since the time when, as part of the chosen ones, he had entered (‘given entrance in’) the ark”

Even though this is one of the examples, among others, presented by Campos (2005) to support her claim that the simple and compound forms express different values, in this precise context the simple form could not have been used (note that curiously Torga uses here a rather ‘archaic’ compound form) since it would either be interpreted as perfect, and consequently ungrammatical, or at least ambiguous.

¹² The chronology of the phonological change has been approached in many studies and is usually taken as one of the linguistic parameters that contrast the mentioned periods. This is not true for the emergence of the compound form, so here I’m just stating a very broad chronology of the change.

4. Conclusion

In this paper I started with the claim that the preservation, in Portuguese, of the Latin (simple) pluperfect is a feature adequately characterizable as ‘conservative’, with the proviso that this sort of characterization should always be taken in relative terms, and so if it is adequate to use it as an operative notion, applicable to linguistic features, it is not, in strict terms, applicable to a given language. I sustained that the gradual disuse of the simple pluperfect that led to its partial obsolescence should be viewed as a change that occurred later in the Portuguese language history. Typically, this type of change cannot be characterized as ‘concluded’ change. It was plausibly due to a combination of different types of conditioning factors that ultimately had as consequence the decrease of the number of occurrences of the simple pluperfect (the rate and the chronology of this decrease remain to be established on the basis of empirical studies performed with adequate methodologies).

The mentioned conditioning factors include:

- the marking of both tense and modal values characteristic of the pluperfect simple form in the most ancient language stages;
- the competition between the simple and compound forms for the expression of tense values (perhaps overlapping only partially, if we consider hypothetical aspectual differences). It was noted, in particular, that this type of competition existed since the language most ancient periods for a subclass of verbs (with ‘be’ forms, < ESSE), but only the grammaticalization of the new constructions (with ‘have’ forms, *haver > ter*) and its expansion to all verb classes seem to have been decisive for the observed change.
- the syncretism of 3rd person plural perfect and pluperfect, virtually excluding the use of an important subset of verb forms as alternative options for the marking of pluperfect.

My proposal for a more comprehensive approach of the ‘history’ of Portuguese pluperfect can thus be synthesized as follows: assuming an admittedly simplified distinction between change actuation and transmission, the partial obsolescence of Portuguese pluperfect would correspond to ‘grammar initiated change’ (Dressler 2003: 462) in the sense that it was crucially determined by a combination of grammatical and not (roughly) sociolinguistic conditioning factors.

In order to obtain a clearer picture of this ‘history’, several related topics still have to be developed and explored in future diachronic research, like the supposed parallelism of formal (simple versus compound) and semantic (aspect values) distinctions that was hypothesised. But other aspects should also be included in this type of approach, and these have to do with the relationship between pluperfect and other verb forms. For instance, it would perhaps be useful to investigate the arguments of those authors that have referred to ‘confusion’ between pluperfect and perfect (referring, I as-

sume, to uses of the perfect in contexts once restricted to the pluperfect), and especially to (re)analyse the data that supposedly attest this phenomenon. Another possibly relevant topic relates to establishing the contrasts between these two verb forms and the so called past anterior¹³, a verb form that became totally obsolete in Portuguese, but that might have competed with the other 'preterits' in past language stages.

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