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The Diffusion of a Morphological Change: The Reduction of the Old Spanish Verbal Suffixes *-ades*, *-edes* and *-ides*

Specialists in diachronic linguistics have shown increasing concern over the last two decades with the way in which a change spreads through the lexicon. Research carried out on the history of diverse languages, as well as the observation of changes in progress, have shown that often change works its way gradually through the lexicon, perhaps word by word or by subsets of morphemes; not all items which fulfil the structural conditions for a given change need shift at the same time. Moreover, a change may run its course or be blocked by a competing process before it has had time to diffuse through the entire lexicon. Consequently those lexical items which remain untouched appear to constitute what traditional historical linguistics has called 'exceptions'. This view of the spread of linguistic change has become known as the 'lexical diffusion hypothesis'¹.

This concept presupposes a starting point, either a so-called 'leader word' or a clearly identifiable subset of morphemes such as a derivational or an inflectional suffix. I have tried elsewhere to illustrate the latter possibility by suggesting that an ongoing change in many social and regional varieties of modern Spanish, namely the loss of intervocalic [δ], whether the reflex of Lat. -D- or -T-, may have originated in the verbal paradigm of late Old Spanish. At some point prior to the middle of the fourteenth century the stressed second person plural suffixes *-ades*, *-edes*, *-ides* began to lose their medial consonant; i.e. ind. *amades* > *amaes* > *amáis* (dial. *amás*), *comedes* > *comees* > *coméis* (dial. *comés*), *vivides* > *vivís*, subj. *amedes* > *améis* (dial. *amés*), *comades* > *comáis* (dial. *comás*), *vivades* > *viváis*, fut. *amaredes* > *amarees* > *amaréis*, etc. At that time, the change represented the only instance of a process deleting -d-; no nouns adjectives, verb stems, or other

¹ The reader unfamiliar with this hypothesis can turn to Wang (1969, 1977), and, for an historical overview to Labov (1981: 269-74). Romance data have not figured prominently in the literature on lexical diffusion; for one recent example, see Fagan 1985.

suffixes with *-d-* shed this consonant in the late medieval language (Dworkin forthcoming)².

The reduction of these verbal suffixes raises several questions: Should the analyst expect all instances of *-ades*, *-edes*, *-ides* to have undergone loss of *-d-* at the same time? Could the change have originated in one of the sets of endings, or in one of the verb tenses at issue (pres. ind., pres. subj., future ind.)? Would a speaker have employed *amáis* alongside *hablades*, or *amáis* and *habláis* alongside *comedes* and *vivides*, or *amaréis*, *comeréis* beside *amades*, *amedes*, *comedes*, *comades*? While the change is in progress it is reasonable to suppose that the speaker may have considered both the new and the old sets of endings as allomorphs in free variation.

The linguist who wishes to investigate the genesis and spread of a change which was completed some five centuries ago must rely on written records. Most medieval Spanish texts have survived only in copies prepared distinctly later than the date of original composition. Consequently, the more evolved forms may reflect the practices of the later copyist rather than those of the original author. In those instances where no considerable time gap separates the original production from the extant ms(s), seemingly archaic forms may represent older spelling habits rather than the realities of contemporary pronunciation. Care must be exercised in evaluating data extracted from poetry; during the transition period a poet who may have regularly said *amáis* still might have recourse to *amades* if meter required a trisyllabic form³.

In this study I propose to examine the use of the 'long' and 'short' stressed second person plural endings in Spanish texts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in an attempt to trace the way the shortening of these endings may have spread within the subset of verbs. The *terminus ante quem* is 1492, the year in which Antonio de Nebrija published his pioneering *Gramática de la lengua castellana*. The paradigms presented in that work show only the 'short' stressed second plural verb suffixes, although Nebrija notes elsewhere in his text that «... en la segunda per-

² A partial parallel is offered by the fate of Hispano-Latin intervocalic [β] which seems to have been deleted only in verb endings (except in the environment /a-a/) and in the suffix -IVUS, -IVA. However, this morphologically-conditioned shift did not trigger a general loss of -[β]-; see Lyons 1978: 238-9.

³ E.g., one finds the following consecutive verses in a poem by Carvajal (ed. Scoles, no. XXXI): «e serés menos penado/e seredes más amado» (vv. 28-9).

sona del plural las más veces hacemos *síncopa* & por lo que avíamos de dezir *amades, leedes, oídes, dezimos amaís, leéis, oís*» (ed. Quilis 1980: 250) ⁴.

I am unaware of any text composed before 1300 which contains examples of the shortening of stressed *-Vdes* ⁵. Although they are rare, the few fourteenth-century examples of the short endings may shed light on the origin and diffusion of the change under study. The earliest instances that I have encountered appear in the *Libro de buen amor*, a text in which the long endings overwhelmingly outnumber the short forms on which I shall comment here ⁶. The *Libro de buen amor* is preserved in three late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century codices. Verse 1332*d* as set down in MSS S and G contains the fut. *andarés*: «*andarés* en amor de grand dura sobejo», whereas T offers *andaredes*. With *andarés* the verse is one syllable short. Editors of the poem are divided in their treatment of this line; Corominas and Willis opt for *andaredes* while Joset and Blecua favor *andarés*. In MS S, verse 1451*d* appears as «*temedes* vos que todas *yrés* por esa vía»; G offers «*tenedes* vos que todas *ydes* por esa vía», while T replaces the verb with *yer[ra]n*. All three versions contain fourteen syllables. Here all the aforementioned editors have respected the reading of S, namely *yrés*.

Two details are highly significant here. In both instances, the verb is in the future tense, i.e., a reduction of *-edes* has occurred. Yet elsewhere in the work the second plural future ending is

⁴ As noted in Dworkin (forthcoming), the older endings have survived in some conservative Asturo-Leonese dialects. In 1558 Cristóbal de Villalón listed in his *Gramática castellana*, among archaisms used «en algunas montañas por ... gentes no agudas ni miradas en el hablar castellano», the phrase *donde sodes* (ed. García 1971: 52).

⁵ Throughout this paper I use *-Vdes* as a cover designation for *-ades, -edes, and -ides*.

⁶ Verse 777*a* of the *Libro de buen amor* reads in MS S (the sole codex which preserves this quatrain) «después que vos ayas fecho este sacrificio». All editors have emended the verb to *aya[de]s fecho*. The form *ayas* here is not *ayás* as Gavel (1920: 225) and Girón Alconchel (1986: 121) claim. A similar problem crops up at 932*ab* (preserved only in MS S) where Trotaconventos declares: «Nunca digas nonbre malo nin de fealdat/llamatme buen amor e fare yo lealtat». Corominas chooses to print here *digás*. At 672*d* (found only in MS G) Corominas emends on metrical grounds the MS *querriedes* to *querriés*. If he is correct, this would be the only medieval reduction of an imperfect indicative form in *-Vdes*. In like fashion, at 740*d* Corominas prints *podrés*, although the MSS readings are *podredes* (S) and *podedes* (G). No other editor of the *Libro de buen amor* has made these changes.

regularly *-edes*, as is the second person plural pres. ind. of all *-er* verbs and the pres. subj. of all *-ar* verbs. Both examples under discussion occur in direct speech, placed in the mouth of the bawd Trotaconventos and are the only instances of second plural fut. forms that she employs. Is this a clue that the reduction of stressed *-Vdes* originated in the future ending and in the lower strata of society? Did Juan Ruiz deliberately use here the shortened forms to characterize Trotaconventos linguistically with greater reality and vividness? ⁷

Fourteen of the manuscripts which preserve the compilations and translations prepared at the behest of Juan Fernández de Heredia (ca. 1308-96) date from the final decade of the fourteenth century. These codices present a linguistic mixture of Heredia's native Aragonese, together with Castilian and Catalan, of which the various elements remain to be identified, described, and analyzed. With regard to the second plural verb ending at issue, the Heredian corpus totally eschews the Aragonese/Catalan ending *-V(t)z*. Although the long forms predominate, the Heredian texts show the first noteworthy concentration of the short stressed second plural endings, with examples from all three conjugation classes. The concordances in Nitti and Kasten (1982) show pres. subj. *queraes* to be the most frequent example, with sixteen occurrences. Many forms appear only once in the entire corpus, especially in one text, the so-called *Tucidides romanceado*, a translation of the speeches in Thucydides' Peloponnesian War (ed. López Molina 1960). Hodcroft (1963-64: 97) notes that in the *Crónica de Morea*, the shorter endings turn up sporadically only in *-er* verbs: *avés*, *fogáes*, *podéys*, *queráes*, *querés*, *seáes*, *soes*. Unfortunately, next to nothing is known about the linguistic background of the scribes working in Heredia's scriptorium.

Additional examples of the reduction of stressed *-Vdes* prior to 1400 are rare. Either this change was working its way so slowly through the verbal component of the lexicon that scribes felt no need to alter their orthographic practices, or it was considered a stigmatized speech habit, unworthy of written representation in the literary language. The older form dominates overwhelmingly in the MSS which have preserved the prose and poetry of Pero López de Ayala (1332-1407). His best known work, the *Libro ri-*

⁷ A resoundingly affirmative answer to this question is given by Girón Alconchel (1986: 120-1).

mado de palacio is preserved in two MSS (designated N and E), both copied in the early years of the fifteenth century. In two instances N employs the shortened *avés* as an auxiliary verb in compound tenses: «Solamente por mi onra pues en esto me *avés* puesto» (327a); «lo que nos *avés* mandado o aquí non *estaredes*» (449d). At 468a MS N reads «faremos, diz, cuenta, que *soes* buen escudero», and at 473b, «Viene a mí un judío e dize: '¿*Querés* aver . . .». In all four instances MS E employs the corresponding form in *-edes*. The three recent editors of the poem disagree on the handling of these verses. Joret (1978) opts for the short form in all four cases; Orduna (1981) differs by preferring *sodes* at 467a, while Garcia (1978) favors *avedes* (327a) and *sodes* (467a).

Twice the editors of the poem propose emendations favoring the short ending. At 459d both MSS employ *tenedes*; Joret prints «que yo quite vuestra mula que aquí *tenés* empeñada», while Garcia and Orduna present *ten[ed]es*. In like fashion at 464b the readings are N *podedes*, E *podemos*. Joret sets down «. . . non *podés* aver recabdo», while Garcia and Orduna show greater hesitation by offering *pod[ed]es*. Both these editors also suggest that metrical considerations determine here the choice of the short verb ending. I have encountered no instances of the short endings in López de Ayala's prose. Note that except for *soes* all the relevant forms involve reduction of *-edes*. Is it significant that in 473b the form *querés* is placed in the mouth of a Jew?

Although the unique MS copy of the *Dança general de la muerte* dates from the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the poem itself may have been composed in the final years of the fourteenth or the first decade of the fifteenth century. Forms in stressed *-Vdes* dominate by a wide margin; the scribe clearly felt no need to change the forms of the original, though they may have been archaic by his time. The MS offers one example of fut. *abrés* (alongside eight cases of *abredes*), two of *abés* (vs. one of *avedes*), one of *darés* (alongside two of *daredes*), one of subj. *estéys* (matched by one instance of *estedes* and two each of *estades* and *estaredes*), one of *vayaes*, and three of *soes*. Three of the relevant items occur in stanza LXVII (ed. Sola-Solé), which also contains *fadades*. Throughout the poem all speeches that use the short form are spoken by Death. Although the printed poem (Seville 1520), lengthier than the MS version, contains, as would be expected, more instances of the shorter endings, it still retains

a considerable number of verbs ending in stressed *-Vdes*; st. LXVII: 2 of the MS («pagad los cohechos que *abés* levado») appears with *avedes* in the 1520 edition (st. 76).

The textual complexities involved in studying the evolution of stressed *-Vdes* in the first six decades of the fifteenth century can be demonstrated graphically by studying its use in the writing of four contemporary authors: Enrique de Villena (1384-1434), Íñigo López de Mendoza, the Marqués de Santillana (1398-1458), Juan de Mena (1411-56), and Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, the Arcipreste de Talavera (1398-? [after 1482]). The works of these four men have been preserved in codices set down within fifty years of the date of original production, i.e., in a period when the short endings were beginning to dominate.

The MSS which preserve the poetry and prose of the Marqués de Santillana display an overwhelming preference for *-Vdes*. A significant exception is the poet's consistent use of *sois* and *seré(i)s* for *sodes* and *seredes*. Occasional examples of the short endings turn up in some of his *canciones* and *decires*. One finds in the *Decir de un enamorado* (ed. Durán) *devéis* (v. 16), *llamarés* (v. 36), *pensés* (v. 64), and *merescés* (v. 67). The last two examples are followed in the same stanza by *mirades* (v. 69) and *dedes* (v. 72). Vv. 19-20 of *Serranilla 1* (ed. Durán) read «non *penséis* que me *tenedes/ca* primero *provaredes*». *Avéys* used as an auxiliary verb turns up in a speech that the poet places in the mouth of one of his own daughters (see Durán 1975: 59, v. 27). The poems by Santillana preserved in the *Cancionero general* (Valencia 1511) contain instances of *deseáys*, *estaréys*, *fatigáys*, *hagáys*, *leés*, *merescéys*, *posséys*, *queréis*, *seáys*, *serés*, *soys*, *valéys* (Sousa 1964: 77).

The Arcipreste de Talavera's *Atalaya de las Corónicas* (1443) as preserved in B. L. Egerton 287 (ed. Larkin) and his *Vidas* of San Ildefonso and San Isidoro (ed. Madoz y Molerés) regularly use *-Vdes*. His most famous work *El corbacho* (1438) has survived in one MS (Esc. h.iii.10) copied in 1466. Alongside a considerable number of forms in stressed *-Vdes* the reader finds such items as *alabáys*, *apretáys*, *ayáys*, *creáys*, *estáys*, *fagáys*, *quebráys*, *quebráys*, *sepáys*, *veáys*; *dexéys*, *enogéys*, *fallaréys*, *gozéys*, *penséys*, *podéys*, *queréys* *sabéys*, *tené(y)s*; *dezís*, *venís*; *soys*. It may be significant that many (though certainly not all) of these short forms turn up in speeches placed in the mouths of women whom the Arcipreste is seeking to portray in an unfavorable light.

The seven MSS and the two incunabula which have preserved

the writings of Enrique de Villena present an anarchic mixture of the long and the short endings. The prose texts from which I shall cite relevant forms have all been edited on the basis of BN MS 6599 prepared ca. 1450, less than two decades after the death of Villena. The *Doze trabajos de Hércules* (ed. Morreale) offers *acebtedes, avredes, comunicuedes, divulguedes, ignoredes, publiquedes, seades*, alongside *avrés, queráis, queréis, sois, sabrés*. In one sentence (p. 141:9) *queráis* occurs with *divulguedes* and *publiquedes*⁸. Villena's *Tratado del aojamiento* (ed. Soler) contains *avredes, dezides, guardaredes, ofrecedes* alongside *contempláys, podéys*. In contrast, in the *Tratado de la lepra* (ed. Soler) such shortened forms as *avéys, cogés, entendéys, esperáys, querés, tenés* outnumber such items as *cognoscedes, fallaredes* and *mundifiquedes*. The new endings predominate in the *Tratado de la consolación* (ed. Carr); witness *acatáys, avéys, avréys, cumpláes, devéys, presumís, serés, sentís, veréys* vs. *afirmades, loades, miredes, quexedes, sabedes, sentides, sodes*. Villena's *Epístola a Suero de Quiñones* (ed. Carr) contains one instance each of *hallaredes, parades, seades* and *amáis*. I have found only short forms in the translation of the *Divina Commedia* attributed to Villena (ed. Pascual).

The long and the short endings also co-exist in the MSS which have preserved the poetry of Juan de Mena. In his *Laberinto de Fortuna* (also known as the *Trescientas*), the forms in stressed *-Vdes* predominate by a small margin; one finds four instances of *sois* and one each of *podéis, sabéis, and veré(i)s*. In his lyric poetry Mena overwhelmingly favors the short endings, which are the rule rather than the exception in fifteenth-century lyric verse⁹. Lida de Malkiel (1950: 240) notes that the short forms seem to be reserved for the Cancionero poetry, but were deemed unsuitable for the more solemn language of allegory and epic. Vårvaro (1964: 100) claims that the choice of ending depended on the exigencies of meter. The prose *Tratado sobre el título de duque* (ed. Fainberg) prefers the forms in *-Vdes*, though it contains examples of *avés, and venís*.

The short endings are clearly in the majority in most works composed in the second half of the fifteenth century. In senti-

⁸ In the Introduction to her edition of *Los doze trabajos* Morreale speaks of «la dental muda de la segunda persona del plural» (lxx).

⁹ For examples from the fifteenth-century poets whose writings are preserved in the *Cancionero general* (1511), see Sousa (1964).

mental novels such as Juan Rodríguez de Padrón's *Siervo libre de amor* (ed. Prieto), the *Triunfo de amor* of Juan de Flores (ed. Gargano), Diego de San Pedro, *Cárcel de amor* (ed. Corfis 1982), the *Triste delectación* (ed. Gerli), *Historia de la linda Melosina* (ed. Corfis 1985), as well as in such texts as Gonzalo García de Santa María's commentary on the Gospel and Epistles (eds. Collijn and Staaff) and the letters of Hernando del Pulgar (ed. Domínguez Bordona), the reader will find in the second plural pres. ind., pres. subj. and fut. ind. only the endings without *-d*. Only the short endings are listed in Pero Guillén de Segovia's rhyme dictionary, *La gaya ciencia* (ed. Casas Homs). Yet in Alfonso de Cartagena's *Oracional* (ed. González-Quevedo), in those sections of Lope García de Salazar's *Libro de las bienandanzas y fortuna* (ed. Sharrer) dealing with the legendary history of Britain, and in the letters of Rodríguez de Almela (ed. Mackenzie), as well as in many royal chancellery and notarial documents from the second half of the century, the endings in stressed *-Vdes* are preferred by a wide margin¹⁰.

Some observations on the fate of *-Vdes* in the textual tradition of the *Amadís de Gaula* are appropriate here. In the four Books of Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Amadís* (Zaragoza, 1508), only the short endings are found, as would be expected. Montalvo's Preface informs the reader that he corrected the first three Books of a primitive *Amadís* and added on his own the Fourth Book and the *Sergas de Esplandián*. A poem by Pero Ferrus preserved in the *Cancionero de Baena* (no. 305) alludes to a three book version of the *Amadís* circulating in the fourteenth century. Do the short forms in the first three Books reflect the usage of the earlier version(s) or are they modernizations attributable to Montalvo?. Antonio Rodríguez Moñino (1957) published the extant fragments of a (early fifteenth-century?) manuscript of Book Three¹¹. Here the reader finds one instance of *queréis* alongside *membrede*s, *sode*s, *vede*s, and *verede*s. In like fashion, the 1503 edition of the late thirteenth-Century *Gran conquista de Ultramar* (the only version which contains the entire text of this work) often sub-

¹⁰ The examples of stressed *-Vdes* found in sixteenth-century *romanceros* reflect an archaizing style appropriate to the genre rather than the realities of contemporary speech; for brief discussion see Alvar (1974: 315-6).

¹¹ A. Millares Carlo was unable to date these fragments on the basis of paleographic evidence; Lapesa placed the language ca. 1420 (see Rodríguez Moñino 1957).

stitutes the short endings where the corresponding passages in the extant MSS display *-Vdes*.

It is time to draw some conclusions from the foregoing data. The short endings began to become widespread and acceptable in the first decades of the fifteenth century. Clearly, the processes underlying the reduction of *-Vdes* began even earlier. It would be simplistic and misleading to state that in a given text, the forms in *-Vdes* represent the choice of the author and that the short forms result from scribal modernization. Linguistic change does not take place overnight. The old and the new variants of the stressed second plural verb ending could co-exist for a considerable length of time. For many speakers, *-ades* and *-á(i)s*, *-edes* and *-é(i)s*, *-ides* and *-ís* may have constituted sets of allomorphs in free variation, a situation which often indicates a change in progress. The analyst must also consider the possibility that in some instances *-ades*, *-edes*, and *-ides* may be but archaic spellings masking the new phonetic reality.

Prior to the second half of the fifteenth century, speech style, tone, and genre may have played a role in the choice of verb endings. The two examples of verbs with the short endings in the *Libro de buen amor* turn up in speeches pronounced by the bawd Trotaconventos. The various editors of the *Libro rimado de palacio* agree that López de Ayala used the short endings when they were required for metrical purposes. Since *-Vdes* clearly dominates in the poem, it seems reasonable to conjecture that for the Chancellor the short forms were not fully acceptable and should be employed only when necessary. As noted above, all instances of the short endings in the MS version of the *Dança general de la muerte* are placed in the mouth of Death. Many (though I hasten to add, not all) of the new endings in the *Corbacho* are used by women whom the Arcipreste de Talavera is ridiculing; in contrast his historical and hagiographic writings offer only *-Vdes*. Juan de Mena appears to have opted for *-Vdes* in his stately *Laberinto de Fortuna*, but for the endings without *-d-* in his lyric poetry. Until their general acceptance *-á(i)s*, *-é(i)s*, and *-ís* may have carried for some speakers and writers a certain stigma or association with lower class speech or less serious and noble registers, genres and styles. This division was not absolute in the first half of the fifteenth century, for one notes the high number of short endings in Villena's treatises.

The data seem to indicate that the reduction of stressed *-Vdes*

did not act at the same moment on *-ades*, *-edes*, and *-ides*. The 1911 revision (published posthumously in 1954) of Cuervo 1893 suggests that this shift first occurred in the sequence *-edes*; Cuervo may have been influenced by Baist's similar observation (1906: 897). Zauner (1921: § 109) conjectured that the loss of *-d-* in *-Vdes* first took place in the verb *ser*; i.e., *soes* (later *sois*) for *sodes*. The textual evidence supports Cuervo. The ending *-edes* functioned as the second plural pres. ind. suffix for *-er* verbs, as the pres. subj. desinence for *-ar* verbs, and as the fut. ind. ending for all verbs. The two earliest examples from the *Libro de buen amor* (*andarés*, *irés*) involve the future; the relevant forms in MS N of the *Libro rimado de palacio* are *avés* (used as an auxiliary in compound tenses), *podés*, *querés*, *tenés* and *soes*. Except for *vayaes* and three instances of *soes*, all short forms in the *Dança general de la muerte* come from *-edes*. Almost all the short forms in the writings of the Marqués de Santillana result from the reduction of *-edes*. Spanish is a language with a strong predilection for morphological regularity, especially in verb endings. Variants such as OSp. pret. *-este* (for *-aste*), *-ioron* (for *-ieron*), imperfect *-iés*, *-ié*, *-iémos*, *-iédés*, *-ién* (for *-ias*, *-ia*, *íamos*, *iades*, *-ian*) were relatively short-lived. Speakers might not have long tolerated such variation as *amades*, *amedes*, *amaré(i)s*. Once *-edes* had lost its medial consonant, it would not have taken long for *-ades* and *-ides* to follow suit.

The history of Spanish also supports the hypothesis that the suffix *-edes* may have been the first to undergo reduction. In the early Middle Ages a regular sound change eliminating intervocalic [δ] began to work its way gradually through the lexicon. At this stage in the development of Hispano-Romance, [δ] represented only the spirantized reflex of Latin [d] (orth. *-d-*); the voiced reflexes of Latin [t] had not yet evolved beyond the stage [d]¹². The sequence *-ede* seems to have been highly vulnerable to early loss of its medial consonant. Instances of such conservative forms as *crede* 'he believes', *fede* 'faith', *piedes* 'feet', *siede* 'he is seated', *vede* 'he sees' are exceedingly rare in the earliest Castilian and Leonese texts¹³.

¹² Alonso (1967: 63-77) claimed than OSp. [d] (from Latin [t]) first spirantized in word-final position; for a dissenting view, cf. Otero 1985.

¹³ In contrast, Old Riojan and Old Aragonese display a greater retention of the reflex of Latin *-d-*; note especially *piedes*. On the history of Latin *-d-* in Hispano-Romance, see Dworkin 1974, 1978.

In some respects, the on-going reduction in Spanish of the participial suffixes *-ado*, *-ido* offers a typological parallel to the evolution of *-ades*, *-edes*, and *-ides*. Until recently, in most varieties of Spanish, the loss of the consonant in these suffixes has been associated with stigmatized lower-class «popular» or uneducated speech habits. Consequently it has been difficult to trace its spread over time through written sources¹⁴. The little evidence at our disposal indicates that *-ado* must have lost its [δ] much earlier than *-ido*. At the outset this shift was limited to the participial suffixes; non-morphemic sequences of *-ado* and *-ido* were not affected. On the other hand, *-udo*, which since the fourteenth century had ceased to function as a participial suffix, has remained untouched by this tendential loss of *-[δ]*.

The findings of this paper will interest specialists in Spanish historical grammar and in general diachronic linguistics. This study pinpoints *-edes* as the possible starting point for the reduction of *-Vdes*. It also suggests that the change originated during the fourteenth century in the lower strata of society, and that it worked upwards and gained general acceptance in the literary language by the middle of the fifteenth century. It is likely that the late medieval loss of *-d-* in the verbal suffixes at issue may mark the beginning of the ongoing sound change which in many regional and social varieties of Spanish is gradually deleting intervocalic [δ] regardless of its etymological origin. This study also affords the linguist the opportunity to observe how a change in its initial stages may originate in and work its way through a limited subset of the lexicon.

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¹⁴ The earliest example of which I am aware is *quedao* found in the *Cancionero de Pedro del Pozo* (Salamanca 1547); see Guitare 1971: 181.

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