The Sigmatic Plural in Old Piedmontese
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It is a well-known fact that the Latin accusative plural morpheme /-s/ is retained as a plural marker in all of Western Romance and in certain dialects of Sardinian. This so-called « sigmatic » plural is not found in the Italo-Romance territory. The Gallo-Italic dialects (Piedmontese, Lombard, Ligurian, Emilian-Romanian) show a partial preservation of final /-s/, notably in verbal forms. However, in the Gallo-Italic area this morpheme is not retained as a marker of plurality. Lausberg points out that « El norte de Italia constituye la zona de transición entre el dominio en que se mantiene la -s (Romania occidental) y el dominio en que la -s se resuelve en -i, o bien desaparece (Romania oriental). En voces aisladas (por ejemplo, martis martes), formas (segunda persona singular -as -as) y al amparo de condiciones favorables de fonética sintáctica (habes tu as-tu) la -s se mantiene en zonas más o menos extensas ; fuera de estos casos prevaleció el cambio centro-italiano -s > -i o la desaparición ».

An interesting situation in regard to this sigmatic plural arises in the earliest extant Piedmontese document, the Sermoni Subalpini. This text is a collection of 22 sermons written entirely in prose and has been ascribed to the latter part of the twelfth cen-


tury. It was first published in a diplomatic edition by Wendelin Foerster under the title « Galloitalische Predigten »¹. Today the manuscript is known by its Italian name and is in codex D. VI. 10 (128 r-188 v) of the Biblioteca Nazionale of Turin ².

Four distinct plural types for nouns and adjectives emerge in this interesting text: vocalic, consonantal, proleptic and sigmatic. The first three are considered to be indigenous to Piedmont, whereas the sigmatic plural is not found in this region ³.

In old Piedmontese texts and in the Modern Piedmontese dialects, the plural allomorph for feminine nouns and adjectives ending in -a/ (first declension forms) is [-e] < -ae. Thus, the singular-plural opposition for such forms is maintained by [-a ~ -e] ⁴. This type, which is known as the vocalic plural, is common in the

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¹ Wendelin Foerster, Galloitalische Predigten, in Romanische Studien, 4 (1879-80), 1-92. The definitive edition of the text is the one prepared by Wolfgang Babilas, Untersuchungen zu den Sermoni subalpini mit einem Exkurs über die Zehn-Engelchor-Lehre, München, 1968. Recently, a linguistic concordance of the text has been published by Gianrenzo P. Clivio and Marcel Danesi, Concordanza linguistica dei Sermoni Subalpini, Torino, Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1974. For further details on the manuscript, see Gianrenzo P. Clivio, The volgare in Piedmont from the Middle Ages to the End of the Sixteenth Century, in Romanische Forschungen, 82 (1970), 68-71.

² It consists of 188 parchment leaves measuring 17.5 x 12.5 cm. There are 20 lines of writing on each leaf. See also Babilas, Untersuchungen, p. 11-12.

³ In this paper the term « Piedmontese » is used to denote the complex of Gallo-Italic dialects spoken in the Piedmontese region. This excludes, therefore, the Gallo-Romance patois spoken in the western Piedmontese valleys. See Gianrenzo P. Clivio, Language Contact in Piedmont: Aspects of Italian Interference in the Sound System of Piedmontese, in Studies for Einar Haugen, ed. Evelyn S. Firchow et al., Paris, 1972, p. 119, n. 3.

⁴ For Modern Piedmontese, see Benvenuto A. Terracini, Pagine e appunti di linguistica storica, Firenze, 1957, p. 201. For examples in other Old Piedmontese texts, see Giulio Bertoni, Note e correzioni all'antico testo piemontese dei Parlamenti ed epistole, in Romania, 39 (1910), 312; and Gianrenzo P. Clivio, Brevi prose in volgare piemontese del Quattrocento: i Testi caramagnolesi, in Essays in Honor of Louis Francis Solano, Chapel Hill, 1970, p. 60.
Sermoni: desma (I, 126) vs. desme (I, 59), fea (X, 79) vs. fee (XX, 59), arma (XVI, 69) vs. arme (XI, 112), chosa (XVII, 65) vs. chose (XI, 52), bona (XIX, 50) vs. bone (VIII, 160), bela (VIII, 55) vs. bele (VIII, 126), etc.

Masculine nouns and adjectives, as well as feminine ones not ending in /-a/, have a plural form identical to the singular in most of Piedmont; that is, there are no overt markers signalling the opposition between singular and plural forms. This is due to the regular dropping of vowels in final position. The number of the noun is generally determined by preceding structures in a nominal syntagm. Examples of this type in the Sermoni are: lo mal angel (IV, 35) vs. los angel (I, 72), lo cel (XVI, 56) vs. li cel (XX, 21), un munt (VIII, 70) vs. li munt (XX, 21), lo volp (XIII, 56) vs. las petite volp (XIV, 25), la ver gen (XX, 9) vs. le ver gen (XX, 62), etc.

Occasionally, the singular-plural opposition is maintained by the so-called proleptic plural in the Sermoni: a metathetic type created by the unconscious anticipation of the final /-i/ which functioned as a plural marker in the mind of the speaker. However, this type has a very low frequency in the text. It may also be pointed out that it occurs only when the final consonant is either /l/ or /n/, and this suggests the possibility of palatalization: angel (I, 12) vs. angeil (XIX, 30), man (II, 67) vs. main (XII, 22), diavol (IX, 165) vs. diavoil (XIV, 65), carnal (XVI, 40) vs. carnail (III, 39), etc.

1. The edition of the text used in this paper is the one found in Babilas, Untersuchungen, p. 220-81. The Roman numeral refers to the sermon number, while the Arabic number identifies the line number.

2. A vocalic plural type in /-i/ appears in a few masculine nouns. However, these nouns (usually church words) are probably learmedisms: pecai (IX, 244), prelai (XIII, 51), etc. In some varieties of Modern Piedmontese, such as Canavese (spoken in the northwestern part of Piedmont), the singular-plural opposition for nouns ending in a consonant is maintained by metaphony: /fahr ~ kfr/ = ‘cart’ ~ ‘carts’, /gat ~ g.t/ = ‘cat’ ~ ‘cats’, etc. See Corrado Grassi, Elementi di dialettologia italiana, Torino, 1970, p. 69-70.

3. The proleptic plural is quite common in the works of Gian Giorgio Alione D’Asti, a sixteenth-century writer of farces. See Claudio Giacomino, La lingua dell’Alione, in Archivio glottologico italiano, 15 (1900), 430.
The sigmatic plural is the fourth plural type attested in the *Sermoni*, and it is found in free alternation with the other kinds: *angels* (I, 72), *desmes* (I, 126), *amis* (VII, 66), *mans* (XXI, 14), *fees* (I, 26), *chooses* (IV, 46), *diavols* (XI, 88), etc. This type is not found at all in any other Old Piedmontese text or in the modern dialects of the Gallo-Italic region. It may be observed that even the Provençal and Franco-Provençal patois of western Piedmont have the tendency to replace the sigmatic plural with Modern Piedmontese types.

By counting the number of lemmas in the concordance of the text which show plural forms, we have been able to determine that this fourth type makes up approximately 33% of all plural types in the text. This percentage seems to indicate that the use of /-s/ as a plural morpheme in Piedmont has disappeared only in recent times. Therefore, we can conclude that the sigmatic plural (possibly because of Gallo-Romance influence in Piedmont) extended into the Piedmontese territory at one time. Here, it remained until the twelfth century. However, as the frequency of its occurrence in the *Sermoni* indicates, it was gradually being replaced by the Modern Piedmontese types.

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**LES IMPARISYLLABIQUES FÉMININS EN ANCIEN PROVENÇAL**

A l'exception de *sòror* et de *mülier*, la déclinaison imparisyllabique féminine était devenue parisisyllabique en latin vulgaire. Ce changement s'est avant tout effectué par la création d'un nouveau nom. sing., adoptant l'accentuation de l'acc.: l.c. *potéstas*-potéstātem > lv. *potéstātis-potéstāte* > prov. po(d)estätz-po(d)estāt. La réformation peut également se faire en sens opposé, plus rarement cependant, quand le nominatif lui-même sert de base à un

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2. Clivio and Danesi, *Concordanza linguistica*, cit.