

## Political influence as a factor in morphosyntactic variation: demonstratives *este* and *aqueste* in medieval Aragonese

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Medieval Ibero-Romance languages exhibited variation between short and long variants of the demonstratives (i.e. Spanish *este* and *aqueste*, respectively, both meaning ‘this’). Data collected from notarial documents (cf. Enrique-Arias 2018) shows that in most Ibero-Romance varieties (Galician-Portuguese, Leonese, Castilian, Navarrese) long forms such as *aqueste* were a small minority throughout the Middle Ages and disappeared completely by the 1600s. Catalan is a notable exception: in this language the long forms (i.e. *aquest* as opposed to short form *est*) were almost categorical from the earliest texts and have continued to exist to this day.

This research focuses on the peculiar situation of Aragonese, which experienced a spectacular increase in the frequency of *aqueste* type forms throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century to become almost categorical at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Shortly after, however, the long forms declined rapidly and disappeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In this paper I argue that the abrupt changes involving the distribution of *aqueste* type forms in Aragonese legal documents are changes from above that reflect how writers adopted alternating scriptural models –first Catalan, and later Castilian– dictated by the successive power centers that dominated Aragon.

Throughout the Middle Ages the Crown of Aragon, which also included the Principality of Catalonia, was ruled by a Catalan-speaking dynasty and, for the most part, the Royal Chancellery issued its documents in Catalan; thus, long demonstrative forms, which are characteristic of Catalan, became part of the prestigious model adopted by the scribes. This situation changed dramatically after 1412, when the Crown of Aragon was taken over by the Castilian-speaking Trastámara rulers; a few decades later there was a dynastic union with Castile under the Catholic Monarchs (Isabella and Ferdinand) which further increased the political and cultural Castilian influence among the peninsular kingdoms. This political change is reflected in a sudden decrease in the use of the Aragonese long forms and the adoption of Castilian style short forms.

In order to investigate these changes, I analyze a wide corpus of 2500 medieval Ibero-Romance documents (<https://corpuscodea.es/>) as well as other text types, looking at aspects such as the precise geographical distribution of the short and long variants, the realm where legal documents were issued (ecclesiastical, municipal or private), as well as additional texts from different typologies, such as documents of the Royal Chancellery and literary texts.

In sum, this investigation explores the powerful role of political influence in the introduction of contact-induced morphosyntactic structures. Other similar cases in the Iberian Peninsula will be considered, such as the increase of proclisis (Martins 2011, 2015) and prepositional object marking (Paixão de Sousa 2004) in Portuguese due to Castilian influence during the dynastic union with Spain (1580-1640), and the abrupt decrease of these structures once Portugal regained its independence.