GRAMMATICAL VALUES OF THE VERB *A STA* 'STAY' IN ROMANIAN. A COMPARATIVE ROMANCE PERSPECTIVE[1]

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Abstract. In this paper, we aim to identify the grammatical values of the Romanian verb *a sta* 'stay', both in old and modern Romanian: aspectual and temporal values, copula, and passive values. Our approach is comparative: our goal is to compare and contrast different stages of Romanian (old and modern), Romanian against other Romance languages, as well as to have a more general cross-linguistic perspective.

Keywords: aspectual verb, copula, passive auxiliary.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Romanian postural verb *a sta* 'to stay' covers several meanings, which are expressed by different verbs in other (Romance) languages: 'to stay', 'to stand', 'to sit'. In this paper, we aim (i) to offer a short description of the grammaticalization paths in which the verb STARE is involved cross-linguistically, focusing on the Romance family, (ii) to describe and analyze the grammaticalized usages of STARE in old and modern Romanian, and (iii) to underline the specific paths of grammaticalization found in Romanian and the way in which these cases can offer a better understanding of the grammaticalization path for location and postural verbs in general.

2. CROSS-LINGUISTIC SURVEY

In their *World lexicon of grammaticalization,* Heine and Kuteva (2002) identify the following cases:

(i) **STAND > CONTINUOUS** in Yolngu (marker of durative aspect), Djinang (auxiliary for events in a durative state), Dutch (progressive aspect auxiliary), Bulgarian (continuous marker), Ngambay-Moundou (progressive auxiliary), Kxoe (present tense/continuous marker + copula), Tatar (progressive marker), Diegueño (progressive auxiliary), Imonda (durative marker > habitual marker + copula), Tariana (durative marker);

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(ii) **SIT > CONTINUOUS** in Yolngu (marker of durative aspect), Djinba (durative auxiliary), Djinang (auxiliary for events in a durative state), Jirwarli (progressive auxiliary), Diola Fogni (past progressive auxiliary), Mamvu (past progressive aspectual marker), Nobiin (durative marker/prefix), Kxoe (progressive particle), Ngambay-Moundou (progressive auxiliary), Danish (progressive aspect), Burmese (progressive auxiliary), Kedah Malay (progressive marker), Korean (progressive auxiliary), Imonda (copula), Sango (copula);

(iii) **SIT > HABITUAL** in Yankunytjatjara (auxiliary for customary or generic situation), Dutch (habitual aspectual auxiliary), Bulgarian (habitual marker), Kanakuru (habitual auxiliary), Shona (durative, habitual auxiliary), Sudan Arabic (progressive, habitual particle).

Therefore, according to Heine and Kuteva (2002: 277, 282), there are two general processes: postural verbs (LIE, SIT) grammaticalized to continuous and other aspectual markers, on the one hand, and postural verbs (LIE, SIT) grammaticalized to copular markers, on the other. In what follows, we will focus on these two values of the descendants of Lat. STARE in the Romance languages (and particularly in Romanian) and we will try to find out whether this verb covers other grammatical values.

3. THE ROMANCE LANGUAGES

As expected, the two cross-linguistically frequent values are also attested in the Romance languages. Before proceeding to the presentation of the values, we should mention that, in this paper, we deliberately left apart the pseudo-coordination patterns (such as (1)), discussed for Romanian by Gruianu (2016), Croitor (2017):

(1) El stă şi citeşte două ore.
he stands and reads two hours
'He is reading for two hours.'

3.1. Aspectual and temporal values

In the Romance languages, the STARE-periphrases (with a gerund or an infinitive) generally express progressive aspectual values (a subcategory of the imperfective aspect, with the values: continuous, habitual and generic), with the exception of Galician prospective aspect (see (4) below) (see Andriani 2017: Ch. 5). Alongside the progressive value, the gerundial/infinitival periphrasis preserves a durative/continuous value in Ibero-Romance and southern Italo-Romance (probably also in French) (3f), whereas in standard Italian (2a) the STARE construction expresses the progressive value (Bertinetto 2000: 576, Andriani 2017: 201). The most salient temporal value is the cross-Romance immediate future (5).

The Italian periphrasis with *stare* (< Lat. STARE) + the gerund or the infinitive of the lexical verb is used with a progressive value. In this construction, the verb *stare* is still a lexical verb, with no signs of grammaticalization.

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(2) a. ma non vedi che **sto** guidando?
but NEG see.2SG that stand.1SG drive.GER
'can't you see I'm driving right now' (standard It., in Andriani 2017: 199)
b. cosa **stai** a leggere?
what stand.2SG at read.INF
'What are you reading there?' (nonstandard It., in Heine & Kuteva 2002: 281)

Certain Romance auxiliaries (Sp., Ptg. *estar* and Fr. *être*) combine with a gerundive (Vincent 2016: 42) or an infinitive, also giving rise to progressive continuous aspect/durative structures. Whereas Sp., Ptg. *estar* originates in Lat. STARE 'to stand', the Fr. *être* represents a mixed paradigm, resulting from the combination of Lat. STARE 'to stand' with Lat. ESSERE 'to be'.

(3) a. **Estoy** leyendo *El poema del Cid*.
stand.1SG read.GER the poem of.the Cid
'I am reading *The poem of the Cid.*' (Sp., in Zagona 2002: 38)
b. **està** passando
be.3SG pass.GER
'He is passing.' (Sp., in Heine & Kuteva 2002: 281)
c. **Está** a cantar / **Está** cantando.
he.is to sing.INF he.is sing.GER
'He is singing.' (EuPtg./BrPtg., in Ledgeway 2012: 421)
d. **sto** tenenne na pascienza […]
stand.1SG hold.GER a pacience
'I'm being so patient' (Nap., in Ledgeway 2009: 434)
e. tu duorme e Ninno tu **stacə** a penarə
you sleep.2SG and Ninno your stand.3SG to suffer.INF
'you are sleeping and your Ninno is suffering' (Nap., in Rohlfs 1969: 133)
f. Vous **êtes** éternellement créant tout ce
you are eternally create.GER all this
qu'il vous plaît de créer
that=it you=pleases of create.INF
'You are continually creating all that.' (Fr., in Ledgeway 2012: 421)

Lat. STARE 'to stand' gave rise to the Gal. *estar a/para* + infinitive periphrasis, with an inceptive value (5a). When the verb is in the past tense, the interpretation of the periphrasis is that the action was about to happen, but it did not (4b).

(4) a. **está** para sair a terceira edición da
stand.3SG for appear.INF the third edition of
miña novella
my novel
'the third edition of my novel is about to appear'

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b. cando **estabamos** a poñer o pe no coche
when stand.1PL to put the foot in.the car
'when we were about to get in the car'
(Gal., in Pérez Bouza 1996: 72)

In several Romance languages, the Lat. STARE is used to express the immediate future 'to be on the point of' (Pountain 1982: 143). This is the most salient value of the STARE-periphrasis.

(5) a. Cast. estar para cantar
b. Ptg. estar para cantar
c. Cat. estar per cantar
d. It. stare per cantare
e. Rom. a sta să + subjunctive

3.2. Copula verb

The Lat. STARE 'to stand' is also at the origin of Sp., Ptg. *estar*, Fr. *être*, used as copulas (Pountain 1982: 140-141) (6). In Italian, the copula STARE mostly combines with adjectives expressing mental states (tranquillo 'quiet', comodo 'confortable', zitto 'quiet', etc. (Pountain 1982: 143).

(6) a. Yo **estoy** casado. (Sp.)
I am married
'I am married.'
b. **Estou** contente. (Ptg.)
I.am happy
'I'm happy.'
c. Vous **êtes** malades. (Fr.)
you are ill
'You are ill.'

3.3. Passive auxiliary

The passive value of STARE – which seems to be uncommon cross-linguistically (see section 2 above) – is attested in Italian, French, and Catalan (Cennamo 2016: 970). In Spanish and Portuguese, the stare-passive is specialized as a resultative passive, incompatible with a *by*-phrase (Pountain 1982: 140):

(7) a. Las proposiciones estaban clavadas a la puerta
the propositions were nailed to the door
(*por Lutero)
by Luther
'The propositions were nailed to the door (by Luther)'
(Sp., in Pountain 1982: 140)

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b. Estes dois alemães que estavam presos
these two Germans who were imprisoned
'These two Germans who were imprisoned.'
(Ptg., A.M. Martins, p.c.)

4. MODERN ROMANIAN

In modern Romanian, *a sta* is not an auxiliary but rather a lexical verb showing certain grammatical usages: as an aspectual verb, with different values, and as a copula verb.

● Of the aspectual and temporal values of the STARE-periphrases in Romance, Romanian only has the immediate future / inceptive one; the verb *a sta* is followed by a subjunctive (GALR I: 459; Pountain 1982: 143):

(8) a. **Stă** să plouă.
stands SĂ.SUBJ rain.SUBJ
'It is about to rain.'
b. **Stă** să cadă.
stands SĂ.SUBJ fall.SUBJ
'It is about to fall.'
c. Mi-**a** **stat** pe limbă să-ți
CL.DAT.1SG=AUX.PERF.3SG stand.PPLE on tongue SĂ.SUBJ=CL.DAT.2SG
spun asta.
tell.SUBJ this
'I was about to tell you this.'

● An aspectual value specific to Romanian is the terminative one, when *a sta* is followed by a supine form:

(9) a. Vinul **stă** din fiert.
wine.DEF stands from boil.SUP
'The wine has stopped fermenting.'
b. **Stă** din plâns.
stands from cry.SUP
'(S)he stops crying.'

● The Romanian verb *a sta* is also a copula for stage-level predicates, followed by a subject predicative complement realized through adjectives or adverbs. The predicative complement can add a locative (10a-c) or a modal (10d) value (Pountain 1982: 143).

(10) a. Fereastra **stă** deschisă.
window.DEF stands open.F.SG
'The window is open.'
b. **Stă** neclintit.
stands still
'He stands still.'

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c. Farfuria **stă** nespălată acolo.
plate.DEF stands unwashed there
'The plate was left unwashed there.'

d. Firea **stă** din ce în ce mai rău.
Firea stands from what in what more bad
'Firea is getting worse to worse.' (https://www.sfin.ro, 2019)

5. OLD ROMANIAN

In contrast to the Romance languages discussed above, Lat. STARE 'stand' is not attested in (old) Romanian with a progressive aspectual value. When combining with an infinitive, it has a terminative value (see (13) below), also preserved in modern Romanian in combination with a supine form. The only example we could identify in the corpus with *a sta* followed by a gerund is the one in (11), in which the verb *a sta* and the gerund seem to express two simultaneous events.

(11) iar țăranul tălpiz, cunoscând, **sta** foarte bine
and peasant.DEF sly know.GER stand.IMPF.3SG very well
socotindu și îndată au aflat un vicleșug nou
think.GER and immediately AUX.PERF.3SG find.PPLE a trick new
'and the sly peasant, knowing about it, was just standing there and thinking, and he immediately found a new trick' (Bert.1714: 16^{r})

The verb *a sta* has a durative aspectual value when it is followed by nouns (never by infinitives/gerunds):

(12) a. Până **stă** această viață, lucrat-au derept noi
until stands this life work=AUX.PERF.3SG for us
Domnul
God
'For as much as this life lasts, God has worked for us'
(CC^{2}.1581: 169, in DLR, s.v. *sta*)

b. Și potopul **stătu** spre pământ o sută
and flood stand.PS.3SG on Earth one hundred
și 50 de dzile.
and fifty of days
'And the flood lasted on Earth for one hundred and fifty days' (PO.1582: 31)

c. Și făcură în mijlocul cetății turn nalt,
and made.PS.3PL in middle.DEF fortress.GEN tower high
și-i suiră sus și-i zidiră
and=CL.ACC.M.3PL climb.PS.3PL up and=CL.ACC.M.3PL build.PS.3PL
acolo sus, și **stau** și până astăzi.
there up and stand.PRS.3PL also until today

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'And they built a high tower in the middle of the fortress and they put them up where they built them and they sit there until today.' (A.1620: 76[r])

d. Această slujbă şi această milostenie (…)
this religious.service and this charity
să se facă necontenit în tot
SĂ.SUBJ CL.REFL.PASS make.SUBJ continuously in all
anii, până **va** **sta** besearica
years.DEF until AUX.FUT.3SG stand.INF church.DEF
'This service and this charity shall be made every year, as long as this church shall exist.' (AAM.1714: 18[v])

e. să dea în toți anii până **va** **sta**
SĂ.SUBJ give.SUBJ in every years.DEF until AUX.FUT.3SG stand.INF
mănăstirea, la 40 de besearici 40 de orți
monastery.DEF to forty of churches forty of coins
'They shall give forty coins every year, as long as the monastery shall exist.' (AAM.1714: 35[v])

f. curțile acele domneşti (…), carile **stau** şi astăzi
courts.DEF those royal.PL which stand and today
'those royal courts which still exist today' (ULM.~1725: 3[v])

The terminative aspectual value has been attested since old Romanian. In contrast to modern Romanian, where *a sta* combines with a supine form, in old Romanian it is followed by an infinitive (13a-d, f) or by a verbal noun (13e).

(13) a. **stătu** de-a grăirea
stand.PS.3SG of=A.INF speak.INF
'he stopped speaking' (CC[1].1567: 110[v])

b. Şi **stătu** de-a naşterea.
and stand.PS.3SG of=A.INF give.birth.INF
'And she stopped having any other children.' (PO.1582: 99)

c. Şi aşa **stătu** nărodul de aducere darure.
and like.this stand.PS.3SG people.DEF of bring.INF gifts.ACC
'And this is how people stopped bringing gifts.' (PO.1582: 301)

d. **stătură** [îngerii] de-a căderea
stand.PS.3PL angels.DEF of=A.INF fall.INF
'the angels stopped falling' (CazV.1643: 379, in DLR, s.v. *sta*)

e. şi aşea **au** **stătut** războiul
and like.this AUX.PERF.3SG stand.PPLE war.DEF
într-acea dzi, toată dzua
in=that day all.F.SG day.DEF
'and this is how the war stopped that whole day' (CLM.1700-50: 160[r])

f. Atunce **au** **stătut** de îmbe părțile armele
then AUX.PERF.3PL stand.PPLE of both parts armies.DEF
de a se mai batere.
of A.INF CL.REFL more fight.INF
'And then both armies stopped fighting.' (NL.~1750–66: 247)

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The immediate future / inceptive aspectual pattern, with *a sta* followed by a subjunctive, frequent in modern Romanian (see 10), is attested only starting with the 19th century (14); before that time, one can identify the "switch context" (Heine 2002: 85), in which *a sta* is followed by *gata* 'ready' and by its complement, the verb in the subjunctive (15) (see Dragomirescu 2011).

(14) a. **Sta** s-apună soarele
stand.IMPF.3SG SĂ.SUBJ=set.SUBJ.3SG sun.DEF
'The sun was about to set' (Bălcescu, M.V. 120, în DLR, s.v. *sta*)

b. Amar îmi jălii patria
bitterly CL.DAT.1SG mourn.PS.1SG country.DEF
ce **stam** să părăsesc.
which stand.IMPF.1SG SĂ.SUBJ quit.SUBJ
'I was mourning bitterly for my country which I was about to quit.'
(Codru-Drăguşanu, C. 3, în DLR, s.v. *sta*)

(15) **sta** gata să să scoboare pe Dunăre
stand.IMPF.3SG ready SĂ.SUBJ CL.REFL go.down.SUBJ on Danube
'he was ready to (immediately) go down the Danube' (NL.~1750-66: 101)

In the copular usage, the verb *a sta* preserves, to a certain extent, its lexical meaning. These structures seem to have two different sources.

(i) For the cases in which the subjective predicative complement is expressed by a prepositional phrase (16), it seems they have their origin in constructions such as (17), where *a sta* has a postural value, in the same syntactic environment; the change here only concerns the type of nominal included in the prepositional phrase: a concrete noun in (16) vs an abstract noun in (17).

(16) Eu **stau** în toate dzilele întru mare frică,
I stand.PRES.1SG in all days.DEF in big fear
decât unde şedzi tu acmu.
than where sit.PRES.2SG you now
'Every day, I am more afraid than you are now.' (FD.1592-604: 572v)

(17) Şi derep să nu doarmă, **stau**
and in.order SĂ.SUBJ NEG sleep.SUBJ stand.PRS.3PL
numai într-un picioru.
only in=one leg
'And lest they should fall asleep, they stand only in one leg.' (FD.1592–604: 545v)

(ii) When the subjective predicative complement is expressed by an adjective (past participial, qualifying, quantificational, etc.) (18) or a noun denoting official positions or subjective appreciations (19), the source of the structure seems to be a small clause (*a sta* + *a fi* 'be' + adjective/noun), in which the verb 'be' is not expressed anymore.

(18) a. Mult **au** **stătut** hanul îndoit
după long.time AUX.PF.3SG stand.PPLE khan.DEF doubt.PPLE after

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aceaste cuvinte a lui Hmil
these words A.GEN LUI.GEN Hmil
'The khan was very suspicious after these words of Hmil's.'
(CLM.1700-50: 244^{v})

b. **sta** toate mâhnite pentru că le-au
stand.IMPF.3PL all.F.PL sad.F.PL because CL.DAT.POS.3PL=AUX.PERF.3SG
fugit păsăruica
run.PPLE birdie.DEF
'They were all very sad because their birdie had run away.' (Bert.1774: 27^{r})

c. după care lovitură până a triia dzi **au** **stătut**
after which shot until the third day AUX.PERF.3SG stand.PPLE
mort
dead
'And he died within three days after that shot' (CLM.1700-50: 280^{r})

d. **Au** **stătut** călugărul dentâi foarte tare,
AUX.PERF.3SG stand.PPLE monk.DEF firstly very strong
priimind şi moartea
receiving and death.DEF
'At the beginning, the monk was very strong, accepting even his death'
(CLM.1700-50: 254^{r})

e. Puiu pre Dumnedzeu martur că aşea
put.PRES.1SG DOM God witness that like.this
i-am dzis, şi tare
CL.DAT.3SG=AUX.PERF.1SG say.PPLE and strong
am **stătut**, că doar l-oi
AUX.PERF.1SG stand.PPLE that maybe CL.ACC.M.3SG=AUX.FUT.1SG
întoarce, şi n-am putut
change.his.mind.INF and NEG=AUX.PERF.1SG can.PPLE
'As God is my witness, I told him so and I was strong, trying to make him change his mind, but I did not succeed' (NL.~1750-66: 218)

f. Ce şi moscalii încă **stau** mulţi (…)
but also Russian.PL.DEF still stand.PRES.3PL many
în prejma lor.
in surrounding.DEF their
'but the Russians are still numerous around them' (NL.~1750-66: 331)

(19) a. **Au** **stătut** domn Gheorghie Ştefan vodă
AUX.PERF.3SG stand.PPLE prince Gheorghie Ştefan voivode
în anul 7161
in year.DEF 7161
'Gheorghie Ştefan voivode was a prince in the year of 7161'
(CLM.1700-50: 258^{r})

b. **Stătu** domnu Petriceico-vodă la vleato 7180.
stand.PS.3SG prince Petriceico-voivode at year 7180
'Petriceico voivode was a prince in 7180' (NL.~1750-66: 46)

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c. Şi **ai** **stătut** un om mare
and AUX.PERF.2SG stand.PPLE a man big
'and you were (like) a big man' (Bert.1774: 35^{v})

The verb *a sta* is also attested in passive resultative structures, incompatible with a *by*-phrase:

(20) a. Însă ţara (…) **au** **stătut** neclătită
but country.DEF AUX.PERF.3SG stand.PPLE NEG-damage.PPLE.F.SG
de nimea
by no.one
'But the country was not damaged by anyone' (CLM.1700-50: 246^{v})

b. aceşti 2 ghiauri nemți, ce **stau** legați acolea
these two giaours Germans who stand.PRES.3PL tie.PPLE.M.PL there
'these two German giaours who were tied there' (NL.~1750-66: 125)

6. CONCLUSIONS

After the survey of the main grammaticalized values of the STARE verbs in the Romance languages, in modern and old Romanian, we can draw the following conclusions:

(i) The Latin STARE was preserved in the Romance languages with the following values: aspectual (progressive, durative/continuous, and, marginally, prospective and inceptive), temporal (immediate future), related to the inceptive aspectual value, copulative and passive.

(ii) In modern Romanian, the descendant of the Latin verb STARE has also three grammaticalized values: aspectual (inceptive and terminative), temporal (immediate future), and copulative.

(iii) In old Romanian, the same grammatical usages (aspectual and copulative) are attested. The immediate future value is not attested in the oldest Romanian texts, but only starting with the 19th century. In contrast to modern Romanian, old Romanian is characterized by: the existence of the passive auxiliary value of *a sta*, absent from modern Romanian; the existence of a supplementary aspectual value in old Romanian (the durative one); the realization of the subject predicative complement (as adjective and noun in old Romanian and only as an adjective in modern Romanian).

(iv) Although it is able to express many grammatical values, both in old and modern Romanian, the copula *a sta* preserved the original location / postural meaning, a fact which contrasts to other Romance languages, where the STARE verbs are semantically bleached, having the meaning 'be' (for which Romanian inherited another Latin verb SUM, ESSE, FUI 'be').

Therefore, we can observe two main differences between Romanian and other Romance languages: the aspectual progressive value of *a sta* is missing from old and modern Romanian (while in other Romance languages this value is still present), and the terminative value of the verb *a sta* was identified only in old and modern Romanian.

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