FUNDAMENTALS OF CULTURAL DIALOGUE

THE LATIN MODEL IN EARLY ROMANIAN LINGUISTIC WRITING

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Abstract:
Old Romanian writing was dominated by textual models and patterns assimilated by way of influences or the exclusive mediation of Slavonic. Two linguistic writings, *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum* (Caransebeş, about 1650), the first original dictionary based on the Romanian language, and *Institutiones linguae Valachicae* (Crişana, about 1770), the first grammar of the Romanian language written in Latin, attest to the explicit use of a Latin model in an age in which the whole of our culture was still strongly influenced by Slavonic models.

Keywords:
History of the Romanian language, old Romanian literature, Latin model, linguistic writings.

1. The period of old Romanian literary writing comes under consideration, in publications intended for the public at large, but also in some specialist studies presenting an overview of the literary production until the end of the 18th century, at the dawn of the Transylvanian Enlightenment, as a period dominated by the Slavonic cultural model.

This opinion persisted even after the discovery of some humanistic elements in the work of certain Romanian scholars writing during the troubled decades of the 17th and 18th centuries, scholars who studied and

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used Latin, such as Miron and Nicolae Costin or Dimitrie Cantemir. This is the case even after it was noted that, at the end of the 17th century and in the early 1700s, several texts coming from Western Europe were transposed or adapted into Romanian, being meant to satisfy the need for knowledge and instruction of the intellectuals in the Romanian space. For example, I'm thinking of the translation of some occidental prognoses written in Italian for the use of Constantin Brâncoveanu, under the common title of *Foletul Novel* (Newssheet); at the adaptation into Romanian of the most widely read Western novel of the time, under the title *Ceasornicul domnilor* (The Princes' Clock) by Nicolae Costin, the scholarly son of the renowned Moldavian chronicler; or the adaptation, in a manner which comes very close to what nowadays would be described as an original writing, by the learned Wallach Teodor Corbea, of the first Latin-Romanian encyclopaedic dictionary, entitled *Dictiones Latinae cum Valachica interpretatione.* Realised with the "subsidy of Father Mitrofan", bishop for Buzău – a remarkable fact not only for the end of the 17th century – who was a clergyman renowned for his great open-mindedness and his remarkable cultural activity, Teodor Corbea's work includes 37,254 entries, a figure hard to attain even in a modern lexicographic work[1].

The idea regarding the predominance of the Slavonic cultural model in old Romanian writing continued to persist in some studies, even after it was observed that, around the 1700s, Romanian had become the official language of culture and after our elevated literary writing had adopted and included in the everyday lexis over 1,100 neologisms of Latin-Romanic origin even before 1760 (beginning from the first half of the 15th century, when Romanian was only a language of everyday, interpersonal communication)[2]. This had been adopted as a way of overcoming the difficulties of expressing some new realities that Romanians had encountered through ever increasing contacts with the Western cultural space. It was a recourse attested by common speech, where some long-standing Latin-Romanic loans were so well integrated into everyday usage

[1] For the text edition and its main characteristics, see the edition by Alin-Mihai Gherman, Teodor Corbea, *Dictiones Latinae cum Valachica interpretatione,* Clusium, [Cluj-Napoca], 2001.

[2] Detailed considerations and illustrations regarding this lexical influences can be found in Gh. Chivu, Emanuela Buză, Alexandra Roman Moraru, *Dicţionarul împrumuturilor latino-romanice în limba română veche/*Dictionary of Latin and Romanic Loans in Old Romanian *(1421-1760),* Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti, 1992.

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that their modern clothing changed beyond recognition. (I'm thinking of *căprar*, a loan word from the beginning of the 18th century, from Italian or from mediaeval Latin, mediated by the Polish word *caprał* – "corporal"). There was also the savant method of creating terminologies in various domains of scientific activity, subsequently abandoned because of the competition exercised by direct savant borrowings, after the changing of the translators' cultural attitude. I have in mind the structural or semantic loan translation, by which "the grammatical case", for example, was called *cădere* (fall) in 17th and 18th century texts. (The Slavonic mediation could not change the "effect" of the first (Greco-Latin) model. Thus, *Marea cea din mijloc de pământ* (the Midland Sea) designated the Mediterranean Sea in our first geographical writings.

Regarding the abovementioned grammatical term, it brings to mind the passage from *Istoria ieroglifică*/The Hieroglyphic History, in which Strutocamila (the Ostrichocamel) gives an affected and pretentious answer to the banal question "Cum te chemi/What do you call yourself". This answer, characteristic of the self-sufficiency gained by the cultured man, and ornate with the attendant explanatory parenthesis, goes as follows: "Eu pe mine niciodată nu mă chem (au în-locul-numelui gramatica n-aţi citit, unde arată că *mă* în-locul-numelui *eu* de căderea-cea-chemătoare se lipseşte?), ce alţii pre mine *O, dumneata!* mă cheamă./I never call myself (or the in-place-of-name, haven't you read the grammar, which shows that *me* in-the-stead-of-the-name *I* goes without the calling-falling?)", but others call me *Oh, you!*

However, for the theme discussed here, the references made so far, which can be supplemented by many others (I am thinking, for example, of the influences of Latin writing recorded by specialists in texts written in the Cyrillic alphabet or of the influences of the same orthographic model acting upon some texts written in a Magyar, Polish or German orthographic manner), have, on the whole, a smaller importance than two original writings, both belonging to the linguistic domain, in which the Latin model was integrally adopted.

It is the case of two very important old Romanian texts, little known, unfortunately, not only in philological education: the first dictionary with a

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Romanian basis, entitled *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum*[3], and the first original grammar of the Romanian language, written in Latin, entitled *Institutiones linguae Valachicae*[4]. Both are entirely original texts, meant to present the structure and characteristics of the Romanian language to foreigners who know or speak Latin. (The presence in the two titles of the determiner *Valachicum* explicitly indicates the cultural belonging of the intended readership).

2. The first original dictionary of the Romanian language, entitled *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum*, is kept in the manuscript section of the University Library "Eötvös Loránd" in Budapest, where it could have ended up through an acquisition from the first half of the 19th century. The characteristics of the paper (the colour, consistency and origin) and of the handwriting (the sort of ink and the shape of the letters), as well as the aspect of some of the pages show that the volume we know today resulted from the joining of two independent manuscripts. The first of them, the most important for the history of Romanian writing, comprises an ample *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum* and a small Latin-Romanian glossary, organized thematically for names of grains and vegetables (*Frumenti et leguminum species*), terms for *gură* (mouth) in a large sense (thus including *cioc*/beak, *bot*/muzzle, *rât*) (*os*, *oris*) and names of colours (*Colores*). The other 91 pages were added at the beginning of the 18th century for the copying of several Latin quotations (*Connotationes ex adagiis*), alphabetically ordered, but due to the small number of fragments transcribed, most of the pages were left blank. The two parts of the manuscript were adjoined before 1742, when one of the owners of the lexicon, an envoy of the Western Church, wrote down the names of several places he visited in southern Transylvania and in Hunedoara, in an *Itinerarium* written on the last pages.

Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum is written by a sole person, in Latin alphabet and Magyar orthography. The author of the text, a Romanian intellectual who knew Latin very well, also made numerous modifications in

[3] The text was edited in the volume *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2008.

[4] For details regarding the text see the volume entitled *Institutiones linguae Valachicae. Prima gramatică a limbii române scrisă în limba latină/*The First Grammar of the Romanian Language Written in Latin, Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2001.

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the first form transcribed (the present manuscript is thus a copy of a previous form), by correcting some words, adding numerous articles in the right-hand margin of the pages, deleting a series of entries repeated by mistake, changing the place of others, completing or replacing some Latin glosses. The lexicon was also annotated in several places by three later readers, one of whom translated a few title entries into Hungarian.

The paper fibre analysis of the older part of the manuscript in the University Library in Budapest shows that *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum* was written around the year 1650. (According to the opinion formulated by B. P. Hasdeu, the discoverer and first exegete of the text, it had been written in the last decades of the 17th century, while Grigore Creţu, the author of the first complete edition, dated the writing of the lexicon "around 1670".)

A series of linguistic particularities (phonetic forms and regional dialect words), the use of Hungarian orthography for the writing of Romanian words, as well as the presence as separate entries of several place names in the south-western corner of Romania prove that the text was compiled in the Caransebeş area. (For this reason, Grigore Creţu called the lexicon *Anonymus Caransebesiensis*, thus replacing the old name, *Anonymus Lugoshiensis*, given by B. P. Hasdeu, who considered that this first Romanian-Latin dictionary was compiled in the "surroundings" of Lugoj.) The author of the writing, an anonymous intellectual, erroneously identified by some researchers as being Mihail Halici, must have belonged to the cultural movement in Banat, which is illustrated, in the 17th and 18th centuries, by several manuscripts using the Latin alphabet. (These were mainly copies of the Romanian translation of the Calvinist Songbook - *Cartea de cântece*.)

The first ample lexicographic writing accomplished in the Romanian space, based on the Romanian language and written with Latin letters is of particular importance for examining the evolution of our old literary writing. The author of the text was extremely versed in both the Latin language (he sometimes recorded forms, spellings and meanings rarely attested in texts) and the Romanian language (in the latter case, in both its literary variant and its specific dialectal idiom of Banat at the middle of the 17th century). Among the words registered one can distinguish, as it became evident the very moment the manuscript was discovered (in the summer of 1871), an extremely rich corpus of regional dialect words, most of them originating in Magyar and Serbian, though many are old forms inherited from Latin or

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lexemes with a still unknown etymology. The Latin glosses noted in some articles attest to the use in Banat, around the year 1650, of some general terms with meanings considered to have disappeared ever since the previous century (*număra* "a citi/read" and its derivatives *numărător* "cititor/reader" and *numărătură* "citire/reading"). Many entries represent the first attestations allowing the dating back to an earlier period of the known records for several lexical forms and variants. Others, such as *crâmpicea* "soi de grâu/variety of wheat", *hronţ* "os moale/soft bone", *lingui* "a se linguşi/flatter", *necât* "decât/solely", *păninc* "părânc, (varietate de) mei/hop (variety)", *scopos* "în mod demn, cum se cuvine/with decorum, properly", *tristeală* "tristeţe/sadness", *ursoanie* "ursoaică/female bear", *veşt* "(om) încercat, cu experienţă/worldly-wise, experienced (man)" or *zogonitor* "izgonitor/chaser", are absent from the historical dictionaries of the Romanian language. A few lexemes certainly belonged to familiar or even argotic language: *căcâcea, cenuşotcă* "persoană leneşă şi murdară/lazy and dirty person", *flecărău* "om flecar/chatterer", *pişotcă* "persoană care urinează în pat/bed-wetting person", *rumega* "a medita, a socoti/meditate, ruminate", *zăvri* "a vorbi mult şi fără rost/talk idly and incessantly". Several entries constitute the first attestations of some neologisms of Latin or Greek origin: *artic*/article*, lăternă*/lantern, *mirac/miracle*, *mod*/mode, *probă*/sample*, stemă*/emblem*, sumă*/sum, *tipar*/print*, titor, violă.* And the registering of over 250 names of plants (trees, bushes, medicinal herbs and plants, vegetables and cereals, flowers, and especially fruit trees), many of them without their Latin correspondent, indicate the anonymous author's interest in contemporary names in current use in Banat and the Caransebeş area.

The anonym of Caransebeş, attentive to the linguistic reality of the region he inhabited, though entirely exempt from the pressure of any high culture model which he might have wanted to transpose into Romanian, thus proved to be a genuine linguist, respectively, as the well-known botanist Al. Borza remarked, "a knower of plants and popular words better than Fabricius, Melius şi Beythe"[5], the three renowned Hungarian botanists of the time.

The last lexical series mentioned (that of fruit trees), comprises, for example, names of varieties which are absent from other old sources. For

[5] Al. Borza, *Nume româneşti de plante în vocabulare şi dicţionare din secolele al XVII-lea – al XVIII-lea*/Romanian Plant Names in 17th-18th century Vocabularies and Dictionaries, in „Cercetări de lingvistică/Linguistic research papers", Cluj, III, 1958, p. 202.

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măr/apple I quote a series containing 17 distinct names: *măr bunăbrut*, *măr câniesc, măr coadeş, măr curcubetariţ* "~ de forma curcubetei", *măr de Svânt Pietru, măr dulce, măr flocos, măr guşat, măr iernatec, măr muşcătariţ* "~ tămâios/flavoured", *măr nevestesc, măr oardzăn* "~ timpuriu/early", *măr pestriţ, măr rutilat* "~ rotund/round", *măr sălcin, măr văratec* and *măr vărgat*[6].

The manner of recording and ordering such a rich inventory of words demonstrates the persistent way in which the anonymous author of this *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum*, for the first time in the Romanian space, followed the Latin lexicographic model. The influence exercised by Latin, which is remarkable in a period (mid-17th century) in which Romanian writing was dominated by the Slavonic model, also has important consequences for the orthography of title-words. We are referring primarily to many significant deviations from the norms of Hungarian spelling (among these are the use of *c* and *ch* instead of *k*, or the creation of some graphemes for rendering some sounds of the Romanian language, *sh*, *dsh* or *dz*). We have in view especially the frequent recordings of some etymological spellings which prove a good knowledge of the existing link between some Romanian words and their Latin equivalents. Thus we note, in the spelling of Romanian words, the use of the double letters *ff, mm, pp* and *tt*, just like in the corresponding Latin forms, as well as the highlighting of the etymological structure for some of the words through the use and distribution of a few graphemes, among which we also find *tz*, used, for example, to indicate the derivation of the nouns logofetzie/ chancellery, *nevinovetzie*/innocence or *sufletzel*/little soul, from *logofet*/chancellor, *nevinovat*/ innocent and *suflet*/ soul, respectively.

The linguistic competence of the intellectual who wrote *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum* is also confirmed by the attempt to use title-forms so as to distinguish among some homonyms (see, for example, pairs of the type *scos*/taken out – *scosul*/taking out, *trecut*/past – trecutul/the past, where the form with the definite article individualizes the noun), and in particular by the presence in the manuscript of some first attempts of formulating explicit norms of usage by correlating some phonetic variants with forms considered recommendable (some variants

[6] Professor Grigore Brâncuş has identified, in *Dicţionarului limbii române*/Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 172 compounds with *măr*/apple. In this sense see the book entitled *Istoria cuvintelor*/The History of Words, Editura Fundaţiei *România de mâine*, Bucureşti, 2004, p. 104.

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with *sv* or *z* are referred by *vide* to the forms with *sf*, respectively *dz*: *svârşesc* vide *sfârşesc*/finish, *svârşit* vide *sfârşit*/end; *zac* vide *dzac/lie*, *zeamă* vide *dzeamă*/broth).

Most probably not intended to serve a didactic purpose (acquiring a language of culture, in this case Latin, by means of Romanian), as the majority of old Romanian lexicons, but meant as a thoroughly detailed presentation of the vocabulary of the Romanian language by means of Latin glosses, *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum* attests to a first utilization of the Latin model in a linguistic writing prior to the year 1700.

3. The oldest grammar of the Romanian language written in Latin, known to us so far, entitled *Institutiones linguae Valachicae*, is a manuscript kept in the archives of the Archbishopric Library in Kalocsa (Hungary). The rather short text (comprising only 44 pages in format -4^{o}), was written, as the dedication and the preface show, at the request and suggestion of the abbot Francisc Xaverius Rhier, a catholic canon of Oradea-Mare and archdeacon of Szolnokul de Mijloc. Under the same patronage was written another Romanian manuscript, *Lexicon compendiarium Latino-Valachicum*, kept in the same library in Hungary (the two writings being erroneously considered, most probably because of their registration code, parts of a single manuscript, written by a sole author). *Institutiones linguae Valachicae* was written around the year 1770, after the model of a "concise grammar" of the Latin language (likely to be identified in the handbook printed in Sibiu in 1744 by Michael Ajtai or in another, still unknown, quite similar to this one in terms of structure and manner of organization of the subject matter), in order to facilitate the quick learning the Romanian language by the western missionaries working in the Romanian communities in Bihor at the middle of the 18th century. This explains the structure and content of the grammar book, the frequent references, in the chapter devoted to the Cyrillic script, to the phonetic value of some graphemes in written Hungarian and, not least, the presence at the end of the lexicon, of the capital letters *O.A.M.D.G.*, the initial letters of the words in the formulation *Omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, frequently used by the Jesuits.

The author of the writing (erroneously identified by some researchers as being Grigore Maior, who had committed himself before Petru Pavel Aaron, at the middle of the 17th century, to writing, together with Silvestru Caliani, a first monolingual explanatory Romanian

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dictionary) was a Romanian intellectual from the southern region of Crişana of from the neighbouring area of Hunedoara, who had studied at the Jesuit college in Cluj.

According to the subtitle ("*Grammatica* compendio exhibita") and to some notations included in the preface, the writer of this old Romanian linguistic text was able to capture, by means of a surprisingly modern analysis, meant to discover the system of the language, the distinctive features of some grammatical classes and forms. These essential characteristics and the basic "rules" of Romanian were meant to facilitate the acquisition of a general knowledge of the language and then, by "reading books" and "by using it", sometimes even among its speakers, the quick learning of Romanian. The method was borrowed, as specified in the same introductory section of the manuscript, from the short books commonly devoted at that time to Latin, the language "to which this Romanian idiom owes its origin". This affirmation is reinforced by repeated observations regarding the similarity of the morphological particularities of the nouns and verbs in Latin and Romanian, and, respectively, the numerous existing concordances between Latin syntax and the patterns of Romanian syntactic constructions. (Thus, the pages of the writing contain, in different chapters, affirmations in support of the Latin model followed, a model which also became a way of quick learning for users of Latin of an idiom which, for the first time, was demonstrably proved to be of Latin origin: "Wallach nouns, just as the Latin ones, are characterised by gender, number and case"; "Verbs, even in this idiom, as in the case of Latin, entail numbers, persons and moods"; "just as in Latin, in the Wallach language, the manner of constructing the passive voice can be changed into that of the active voice"; "Latin syntax concords in almost all aspects with the Wallach construction types".)

Being part of a programme conceived by the leadership of the Catholic Church in Oradea-Mare, with correspondences in similar writings, realized with the same cultural purpose in other regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, *Institutiones linguae Valachicae* (as well as *Lexicon compendiarium Latino-Valachicum,* the other Romanian manuscript in Kalocsa), cannot be associated with the preoccupations of the intellectuals of the Transylvanian School (Şcoala Ardeleană) with the norming of literary Romanian. Having appeared separately from the renowned Transylvanian Latinist movement and having preceded by a decade the famous *Elementa*

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linguae Daco-Romanae sive Valachicae, printed in Viena by Samuil Micu and Gheorghe Şincai, the Romanian grammar in Kalocsa is thus the first original Romanian grammar which exclusively follows a Latin model and which explicitly affirms the Latinate character of the grammatical structures of the Romanian language. The most modern of our old grammars has thus a particular place among other old Romanian linguistic writings.

4. Old Romanian writing, dominated by textual models and patterns assimilated by way of influence or through the exclusive mediation of Slavonic, attests quite early, especially in the space beyond the Carpathians, to the existence of literary, textual or merely cultural Latin models.

The permanent aspiration of the old Romanian scholars for Latinity can thus be illustrated not only by the vocabulary (Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, the one who discovered that Luca Stroici, the learned Warden of Suceava, was "the father of Latin-Romanian philology", observed that the lexical stock of Latin origin of our language increases as we go further back in time), nor solely by the orthography (for instance, some authors wrote, in texts with Latin characters, according to the Hungarian or Polish orthographic manner: *afflat*; ***h**ommu, humeru; **ch**ristin; bonu* sau *comu*) or by the choice of sources from the Latin and Romance space.

Such linguistic writings as the two analysed above, *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum* and *Institutiones linguae Valachicae*, which clearly highlight culturally-oriented attitudes and actions, attest to the explicit use of a Latin model in an age when old Romanian culture as a whole was still strongly influenced by the Slavonic space.

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