LANGUAGE CONTACT AND THE SYNTAX OF OLD ROMANIAN: ON THE HEAD PARAMETER

ADINA DRAGOMIRESCU[1]

Abstract. In previous literature many of the syntactic features of old Romanian are explained as having a Slavonic origin, i.e. they were acquired via language contact, precisely by translating many texts from Old Church Slavonic into Romanian. In this paper, I focus on one of these features, i.e. the existence of head-final structures in old Romanian, which are analysed as representing a typical case of convergence, since these structures are attested both in Latin (from which Romanian emerged and from which certain texts were translated) and in Old Church Slavonic.

Keywords: old Romanian, Old Church Slavonic, Latin, head parameter, convergence, language contact

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The project

This article is part of a larger project which aims to investigate the Slavonic influence on the syntax of old Romanian. Many texts written in old Romanian (preserved starting with the 16th century) were translated from Slavonic. Therefore, my aim is to revisit the syntactic features of old Romanian analysed by previous literature as being of foreign (especially Slav(on)ic) origin. Many of these features have been considered to be of Slav(on)ic origins mainly for ideological reasons, i.e. in the Communist period, the Slavic/Russian influence was overstated not only in linguistics, but also in Romanian historiography and culture. Another explanation for this misleading state of affairs is the fact that, at the time of the formulation of the hypothesis of the Old Church Slavonic influence on old Romanian, not many studies on Latin and (Old) Romance syntax were available, and consequently, the common features of (Old) Romanian and Latin/Old Romance were mostly ignored.

I aim to take into consideration a list of syntactic features which were analysed in the literature by the Slav(on)ic influence on old Romanian. This list brings together many

[1] "Iorgu Iordan – Alexandru Rosetti" Institute of Linguistics (Romanian Academy) / Department of Linguistics (University of Bucharest) / The Research Institute of the University of Bucharest. E-mail: adina.dragomirescu@lingv.ro.

This paper is part of the research project *Foreign features in the syntax of old Romanian. Cross-linguistic analogies,* awarded a Young Researcher Grant (2016–2017) by The Research Institute of the University of Bucharest.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

central features of the Romanian syntax, such as: subject positions and nominal phrase-internal word order; clausal word order/verb positions; (non-)doubling of the direct and indirect objects; differential object marking with prepositional *pe* (< lexical *p(r)e* 'on'); the ellipsis of the copula *a fi* 'be'; the predicative (i.e. main clause predicate) usage of the infinitive and of the gerund; the emergence of the "short" infinitive (without the ending *-re,* inherited from Latin); the usage of the infinitive in contexts specific to the subjunctive; auxiliary and pronominal clitic inversion; scrambling and interpolation in compound verbal forms; absence of negative concord, i.e. simple negation, sporadically attested in 16th century-texts; the reflexive usage of many verbs (*a se griji* 'to take care'); the dative indirect object/accusative direct object alternation (*a iubi cuiva/pe cineva* 'love + dative/accusative'). These features have been identified in: (i) books dedicated to the history of Romanian (Densusianu 1961, Rosetti 1968, Ivănescu [1979] 2000, Gheție (ed.) 1997); (ii) special studies devoted to the Slavic influence on the syntax of Romanian (Seidel 1958, Beneş 1955, Copceac [1963] 1998); (iii) linguistic studies accompanying the philologically edited texts (Mareş 1969, Rizescu 1971, Costinescu 1981, Teodorescu and Gheție 1977, Chivu 1993, Gheție and Teodorescu 2005); (iv) other studies dedicated to specific topics (e.g. Ciompec 1969).

In the present paper, I will focus on the head parameter, more exactly on old Romanian head-final structures often explained as obtained via linguistic contact.

1.2. Background

As already mentioned, the current view on the syntax of old Romanian, and particularly on word order, is that it has been strongly influenced by the syntax of Old Church Slavonic (Densusianu 1961 I: 161, Avram 2007: 313, [1975] 2007: 93; see also Stan 2013: 21, for a less radical perspective), from which many old texts were translated, especially in the 16th century. More recent research (Dragomirescu 2015, Nicolae 2015, 2016, in press, Brăescu, Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2015) has shown that the phenomena concerning word order reflect an old (on its way since Latin) and general (common for both Romance and Slavic) tendency of the languages spoken in the area: an on-going change in the head-directionality parameter, from head-final to head-initial (Ledgeway 2012, 2014, in press).

Therefore, the hypothesis I put forward is that the head-final structures of old Romanian are not the result of the Old Church Slavonic influence, but a state-of-art characterizing the passage from Latin to old Romance (including old Romanian), and more generally, the passage from Proto-Indo-European to the daughter languages. From this perspective, one can explain the existence of head-final structures not only in (late) Latin and in old Romance, but also in Old Church Slavonic and in the old Slavic languages.

To account for the similarities between old Romanian and Slavonic I use the concept of *convergence*, defined by Hickey (2010: 19) as follows: a feature in language X has an internal source, i.e. there is a systemic motivation for the feature within language X, and the feature is present in a further language Y with which X is in contact; both internal and external sources "converge" to produce the same result; therefore, *convergence* refers to the coming together of internal and external factors to produce the same output, but the term can also be used to mean that the two languages become more similar in structure, usually as the effect of one language acquiring structural features of the other.

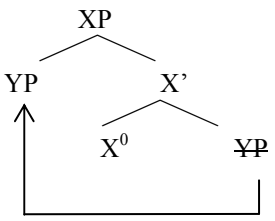
BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

The data examined in this presentation are collected from the previous literature on old Romanian and from old Romanian texts. For comparison with Old Church Slavonic, I have only investigated the Slavonic texts in Pleter, Lambru and Puiu (2005) and their corresponding fragments from old Romanian texts. It is worth mentioning that there are very few old Romanian texts (CC^1.1567, CC^2.1581) for which the direct Slavonic source is known (Olteanu 1969, Mareş 1994: 30) and that sometimes there is no direct relation (i.e., by translation) between the old Romanian text and the Slavonic one.

2. THE HEAD PARAMETER: WHEN LATIN MEETS OLD CHURCH SLAVONIC

The formulation of the head parameter as understood in the current literature originates in Kayne's (1994) *Universal Base Hypothesis*: when a complement surfaces to the left of its head, it must have moved leftwards, i.e. *rolled up*, across the head from its base-generated position to a derived (inner) specifier (as in (1)). This hypothesis has been used by Ledgeway (2012) in order to explain the word order changes taking place from archaic Latin to classical and late Latin, and then to the Romance languages.

(1)



According to this hypothesis, head-initial structures are basic, whereas head-final structures are derived. Despite the current controversy in the literature around the basic versus derived order (see Haider 1993, Zwart 1997, Primus 2001: 859), I adopt the view according to which head-initial structures are the basic ones because it also accounts for the diachronic development in a FOFC-observing (Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts 2014; Sheehan, Biberauer, Roberts, Holmberg 2017) path of change (Ledgeway 2012), i.e., in the passage from archaic languages to modern languages, the head parameter gradually switched from head-final to head-initial in a top to bottom (CP>IP>*v*P) direction, at least in the languages from the European area.

When considering old Romanian word order, both the Latin and the Slavonic facts need to be analysed. What we know so far is that modern Romanian is a head-initial language, whereas old Romanian possesses certain features specific to head-final languages. As far as Latin is concerned, Ledgeway (2012, in press) has convincingly shown that it illustrates an on-going change from archaic head-final patterns to innovative (Romance) head-initial patterns. Old Slavonic – less studied than Latin – has been claimed to be either a head-initial language (Willis 2000, Migdalski 2016) or a head-final language (Pancheva 2005). Form this controversy a more moderated conclusion emerged: Old Slavonic seems to be a language showing a competition (indicative of a change in progress) between the head-initial grammar and the head-final one, at least in the verbal domain

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

(Pancheva 2008). When comparing Pancheva's (2008) conclusion on Old Slavonic to Ledgeway's (2012) conclusion on Latin, one can notice that the Latin path of diachronic change appears to have taken place in Old Slavonic as well: most probably, the grammar of Old Slavonic reflects an on-going change from the head-final to the head-initial syntax. But whereas the Romance languages uniformly continued this diachronic path (i.e. they are all head-initial languages), modern Slavic languages seems to be still unspecified for the head parameter (Comrie 1989: 88), showing many features specific to verb-final languages (Haider 2015: 73, 88). Going back in time, the diachronic process by which the head-final syntax becomes head-initial originates in Proto-Indo-European, which was a head-final language, whereas all the daughter languages – including Latin and Old Slavonic – show variation in the position of the complement with respect to its head (Bauer 2009: 241–255, Watkins 1998: 68, Lehmann 1974).

There is a strong correlation between the head parameter and configurationality, which can be summarized as follows: a language with head-final structures also has discontinuous constituents. This correlation is based both on empirical data – head-initial phrases are compact, whereas head-final phrases are not compact (Haider 2015: 79) – and on the particular formal account adopted here – the derivation of discontinuous constituents and of head-final structures actually both rely on the availability of short, antilocal movement (Ledgeway 2012, in press).

The changes in the head parameter did not occur at the same time for the all types of phrases. This idea is clearly illustrated by the diachrony of Latin. In the noun phrase the change in the head directionality took place earlier than in the verbal phrase and in the clausal domain. Since the basic ordering of adjectives with respect to nouns is a debated topic[2], as many semantic and pragmatic factors intervene in the placement of adjectives with respect to their head (Bauer 2009: 263), a more accurate test for the head parameter in the noun phrase is the position of genitives. As shown by Ledgeway (2012: 213–218), while Early Latin exhibits a preference for prenominal genitives, in Classical Latin both positions are equally available; in late(r) Latin and early Romance, prenominal genitives become exceptional. In the verb phrase, the typological reorganization occurred at a relatively late stage and it was complete only in the Romance period (Bauer 2009: 268). The unmarked verb-final order was more persistent in embedded clauses than in main clauses (Bauer 2009: 269). Even if there is no agreement as to the head parameter in Old Church Slavonic and no analysis of this language in terms of configurationality, the assumption I am adopting here is that Slavonic underwent a similar diachronic path.

Therefore, old Romanian, a direct descendant of Latin[3] and a language strongly influenced by Old Church Slavonic via translations can be seen as mirror-image of the

[2] While traditional scholarship generally takes the NA/AN orders as indicative of a head-initial/head-final parametric setting, in current theoretical thinking agreement has not been reached as to whether the noun and the adjective stand in a relation of complementation (a diagnostic for the head-directionality parameter) or in a relation of specification (NA vs AN orders derive from different N-raising options – Crisma and Gianollo 2006). While the second theoretical choice had lately gained more ground (see Cinque 2010), typological studies have revealed that there is a strong correlation between the NA/AN ordering and other phenomena related to the head-directionality parameter. The NA/AN ordering remains a controversial diagnostic in relation to the head-directionality parameter.

[3] The medieval Latin influence on the syntax of old Romanian also manifested itself via translations from Medieval Latin.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

convergent changes occurring both in Latin and in Old Church Slavonic. Indeed, as shown by Nicolae (2016: 563), two of the most striking features of old Romanian were: the preservation of head-final residual features and discontinuous structures. The elimination of these structures in the passage to modern Romanian represents a natural continuation of the changes which took place in the transition from Latin to Romance.

3. PREVIOUS LITERATURE: CONTRADICTORY YET CONVERGENT CLAIMS

Depending on the perspective, the previous literature exhibits many cases in which the very same syntactic feature has been explained either as deriving from the influence of Slavonic or from that of Latin. In what follows, I will focus only on the information relevant for the head parameter.

3.1. The noun phrase

Although the position of adjectives is a questionable diagnostic for head-finality, it is worth mentioning that in Old Slavonic adjectives were freely ordered, with a preference for the prenominal position (Vaillant 1948: 116–134, apud Djamo-Diaconiță 1975: 337); similarly, Latin also had both prenominal and postnominal adjectives and genitives (Ledgeway 2012: 39). As Bauer (2009: 248) shows, this feature is most probably inherited from Proto-Indo-European. For old Romanian, Stan (2013: 59, 66) explains the variation in the position of adjectives as being influenced both by Slavonic and Romance factors.

In certain old Romanian texts, such as CV.1563–83, adjectival modifiers and possessives have a variable word order following the one of the Slavic sources (Costinescu 1981: 173); in (2), the adjective is postnominal in both languages, whereas in (3) and (4) the adjective, the genitive and the possessive adjective precede the noun.

(2) a. *fratele* *cela* ***smeritul*** (CV.1563–83: 56[r]) [ORom]
brother.DEF that humble.DEF
'that humble brother'

b. *bra(t)* ***smirenyi*** [OSl]
brother humble

(3) a. *în* ***mierurata*** ***a*** ***lu<i>*** *lumină* (CV.1563–83: 74[r]) [ORom]
in divine AL_{GEN} his light
'in his divine light'

b. *vŭ* ***divinii*** ***ego*** *světĭ* [OSl]
in divine his light

(4) a. ***a*** ***noastră*** *parrte* (CV.1563–83: 5[r]) [ORom]
AL_{GEN} our part
'our part'

b. ***naša*** *častŭ* [OSl]
our part

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

This strict correspondence is not general. Head-final noun phrases (or, more accurately, non-head-initial NPs) have been also identified in CL.1570 (Mareş 1969: 78–79, 97), in PH.1500–10 (Gheție and Teodorescu 2005: 58), in CC[2].1581 (Rădulescu 1963), i.e. texts translated from Slavonic (5)–(9), and in CIst.1700–50 (Dragomir 2006: 127–128), a text with Latin sources (10)–(13):

(5) a. *multă* ***slava*** *ta* (CL.1570: 2[v]) [ORom]
much.F.SG glory.DEF your
'your great glory'
b. *množes tvom* ***slavy*** *tvoeǫ*[4] [OSl]
much your glory your

(6) a. *sfânta* ***casa*** *aceasta* (CL.1570: 12[r]) [ORom]
holy.DEF house.DEF this
b. *ctěmy* ***hramě*** *cemь* [OSl]
holy house this
'this holy house'

(7) *răsădeaşte* *întru* *noi* *şi* [*fericata* *învăţăturiei*
instil.IMP.2SG in us and happy.DEF teaching.F.SG.DEF.GEN
tale ***frică***] (CL.1570: 19[v]) [ORom]
your fear
'Instil in us the fear of your helpful teaching as well'

(8) *Şi* [*această* *folositoare* *de sufletŭ* ***carte***] (CC[2].1581: II) [ORom]
and this useful for soul book
'and this book useful for the soul'

(9) *De* [*această* *purtătoare* *de lumină* ***săptămână***] (CC[2].1581: 135) [ORom]
of this carrying.F.SG of light week
'Of this light-carrying week'

(10) *de* [*ale* *altora* ***cuvinte***] (CIst.1700–50: 39[v]) [ORom]
of AL.F.PL other.GEN words
'of the words of the others'

(11) *la a* *noastră* *de rumâni* ***istorie*** *iară*
at AL.F.SG our of Romanians history again
mă *întorc* (CIst.1700–50: 44[v]) [ORom]
CL.REFL.1SG come.back.PRES.1SG
'I come back again to our Romanian history'

(12) *din* [*grecii* ***istorici***] (CIst.1700–50: 8[v]) [ORom]
from Greek.PL.DEF historians
'from the Greek historians'

(13) *sânt* *supuş* [*varvarei* *şi*
be.PRES.3SG obedient.M.PL barbarous.F.SG.DEF.GEN and
turceştii ***puteri***] (CIst.1700–50: 44[r]) [ORom]
Turkish.F.SG.DEF.GEN power
'They are obedient to the barbarous Turkish power'

[4] For the transliteration of the Cyrillic texts into the Latin alphabet, I have used the correspondence system presented in Linţa (1986: 7–9).

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

In Table 1, I present the results of a quantitative analysis of samples from three types of texts: translated from Latin (PO.1582), translated from Old Church Slavonic (CC[2].1581) and original documents from the 16[th] century (DÎ). What this table shows is that both the head-final (very restricted) and the head-initial NP order were possible in all types of texts.

The text	Prenominal possessives and genitives	Postnominal possessives and genitives
PO.1582	2,33%	97,67%
CC[2].1581	6,88%	93,12%
DÎ	3,68%[5]	96,32%

Table 1.
The position of the possessives and genitives in the old Romanian nominal phrase

Another important argument for head-finality comes from relative clauses. In general, even in head-final languages, relative clauses tend to follow their antecedent (Bauer 2009: 249); in Latin, the structures with relative clause modifiers were among the first structures which underwent the change from the head-final to the head-initial grammar in an early period (Bauer 2009: 258, Ledgeway 2012: 203–205); however, head-final structures are still attested in Latin (14) (see Ledgeway 2012: 209–210, ex. (33)).

(14) [*quae*$_i$ *arida erunt (. . .)*] *ea*$_i$ *omnia eximito* [Lat]
those.NOM dry.NO will.be those.ACC all.ACC remove.FUT.IMP.2SG
'those which are dry, you have to trim them all'
(Lat., Cato Agr. 44, in Ledgeway 2012: 209)

Relative clauses preceding their antecedent are extremely rare, but they are attested in old Romanian, both in CV.1563–83 (Costinescu 1981: 174), a text influenced by Slavonic (in which the relative clause translates a participle) (15) and in CIst.1700–50 (Dragomir 2006: 128), a text influenced by Latin (16). The attestation of these structures in old Romanian represents a very convincing argument for the existence of head-finality in the history of Romanian.

(15) a. *Destulu e noao* [***ceia ce***$_i$ ***au*** ***trecutu***]
enough is us.DAT that which AUX.PERF.3PL pass.PPLE
anii$_i$ *viiaţiei* (CV.1563–83: 79[r]) [ORom]
years.DEF life.DEF.GEN
'The years which passed are enough for us'
b. ***mimoše(d)šee*** *lěto žitia* [OSl]
pass.PPLE years life
(16) *Şi de toate* [***câte***$_i$ ***mai întâi au*** ***avut***]
and of all how.many first AUX.PERF.3PL have.PPLE

[5] All the prenominal genitives are realized pronominal genitives.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

<u>slave</u>$_i$ *s-au* *dezbrăcat* (CIst.1700–50: 42^r) [ORom]
glory.PL CL.REFL=AUX.PERF.3SG divest.PPLE
'And he lost all the glory he had before'

3.2. The verb phrase

The V-final order in old Romanian is explained in the literature both as being influenced by Latin or by Slavonic. For example, Stan (2013: 119) shows that authors such as Miron Costin, Constantin Cantacuzino, Dimitrie Cantemir use the V-final order due to the Latin influence; Stan (2013: 120) also mentions that rarely, in coordinated structures, the verb is expressed only once, in the final conjunct, and that this construction is influenced by the Slavonic source; however authors influenced by the Latin syntax also use this pattern (see also Frâncu 1997: 372–373, 2009: 403).

Therefore, we find V-final structures in CV.1563–83 (Costinescu 1981: 174) (17), in CL.1570 (Mareş 1969: 96) (18)–(19), in PH.1500–10 (Gheție and Teodorescu 2005: 58) (20)–(21), texts translated from Slavonic, and in CIst.1700–50 (Dragomir 2006: 126, 128) (22)–(23), and PO.1582 (24)–(25), texts translated from Latin:

(17) a. *Eu* *nu* *numai* *legatu* ***se*** ***fiu***,
I not only imprison.PPLE SĂ$_{SUBJ}$ be.SUBJ.1SG
ce ***şi*** *se* *moriu* *gata* ***sântu***
but also SĂ$_{SUBJ}$ die.SUBJ.1SG ready be.PRES.1SG
întru *Ierusalim* (CV.1563–83: 14^v) [ORom]
in Jerusalem
'I am ready not only to be imprisoned but also to die in Jerusalem'

b. *Az bo* *ne tŭčiꙗ* *svꙗzanĭ* ***byti***, *nꙑ* *i* *umrĕti*
I only not punish emprisoned be not and die
vŭ Ier(s)lmě *gotovĭ* ***esmŭ*** [OSl]
in Jurusalem ready be

(18) *şi* *toată* *viaţa* *noastră* *Hristos* *Domnului*
and all life.DEF our Christ God.GEN
pre ea ***să*** *o* ***dăm*** (CL.1570: 28^v) [ORom]
DOM it SĂ$_{SUBJ}$ CL.ACC.F.3SG give.SUBJ.1PL
'we shall give our life to Christ The Lord'

(19) *De dulce-cinstiţii* *şi* *de Dumnezeu* *păziţi*
for sweet-honour.PPLE.M.PL.DEF and by God protect.PPLE.M.PL
împăraţii *noştri,* *de toate* *curţile* *şi* *de voinicii* *lor,*
emperors.DEF our for all courts.DEF and for heros.DEF their
Domnului ***să*** ***ne*** ***rugăm*** (CL.1570: 12^r) [ORom]
Lord.DEF.DAT SĂ$_{SUBJ}$ CL.REFL.1PL pray.SUBJ.1PL
'We should pray to the Lord for all our honoured emperors protected by God'

(20) *numele* *Domnului* ***chemu*** (PH.1500–10: 100^v) [ORom]
name.DEF God.DEF.GEN call.PRES.1SG
'I call the name of God'

(21) *A* *face* *voia* *ta,* *Dzeul* *mieu,*
A$_{INF}$ do.INF will.DEF your God my

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

vrui (PH.1500–10: 34[r]) [ORom]
want.PS.1SG
'I wanted to do your will'

(22) *frumos* *lucru* ***iaste*** (CIst.1700–50: 3[v]) [ORom]
beautiful thing is
'this is a beautiful thing'

(23) *şi* *acolo* *mult foarte* *într-însa* *aur, argint şi alte scule*
and there much very in=in gold silver and other tools
ce *ştiia* *că* *de* *apă* *nu să*
which know.IMPERF.3PL that from water not CL.REFL.3PL
strică, ***punea*** (CIst.1700–50: 19[v]) [ORom]
damage.PRES.3PL put.IMPERF.3PL
'They put there a lot of gold, silver and other tools which they knew water cannot damage'

(24) *numai* *noi* *românii* *pre limbă* *nu* ***avem*** (PO.1582: 10) [ORom]
only us Romanians.DEF on language not have.PRES.1PL
'Only us Romanians we don't have it in our language'

(25) *Ce* *avea* *duh* *viu* *în sine* *spre pământ*
what have.IMPERF.3SG soul alive in himself on earth
muriră (PO.1582: 31) [ORom]
die.PS.3PL
'All who had a living soul on earth, they all died'

For CV.1563–83, it was also noticed that the direct object can precede the verb (i.e. the (S)OV order), as in the Slavonic version (26), but the anteposition of the direct object does not always reflect the word order in the Slavonic version (Costinescu 1981: 172); the (S)OV order is also frequent in CIst.1700–50 (Dragomir 2006: 127) (27)–(28), a text translated from Latin:

(26) a. *nu că* *limba mea* *avea* ***ceva***
not that language my have.IMPERF.3SG something
a *cleveti* (CV.1563–83: 51[r]) [ORom]
A$_{INF}$ gossip.INF
'not because I had something to gossip about'

b. *ne jako ꙗzykъ* *moi* *iměǫ* ***čto*** *oklevetati* [OSl]
not that language my have something gossip

(27) ***biruinţele*** *romanii* *împăraţii* (…) *le-au*
victories.DEF Roman.PL.DEF emperors.DEF CL.ACC.F.PL=AUX.PERF.3PL
stricat (CIst.1700–50: 11[v]) [ORom]
destroy.PPLE
'the Roman emperors destroyed their victories'

(28) *unii şi* ***această ţară*** *Muisia* *o* *chiamă* (CIst.1700–50: 9[r]) [ORom]
some also this country Moesia CL.ACC.F.3SG call.PRES.3PL
'Some people also call this country Moesia'

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

As in the Slavonic version, the direct object can be placed between the elements of a compound verb form (Costinescu 1981: 172) (29). But it is well known that discontinuous structures (specific to head-final languages) are also attested in Latin (Ledgeway 2012: 43–45). See also Dragomirescu (2013) and Nicolae (2015: 205–218) for old Romanian and Dragomirescu and Nicolae (2016) for Istro-Romanian, which most probably preserved interpolation and scrambling from old Romanian.

(29) a. *cum* ***se*** *rrugăcinri* ***facă*** (CV.1563–83: 67^{v}) [ORom]
how SĂ$_{SUBJ}$ prayers do.SUBJ.3SG
'he sould do prayers'

b. ***da*** *mltvo* ***sŭtvorѣti*** [OSl]
SUBJ prayers do

It is also worth mentioning that not only the V-final structures or the OV order were explained through the influence of Slavonic, but also the V1 structures, which Teodorescu and Gheție (1977: 115) claim to imitate the Slavonic order in MI.~1630. However, it is well-known that Latin also inherited from Proto-Indo-European verb-initial clauses, which were marked, in opposition to the verb-final ones, which were unmarked (Bauer 2009: 268, 275–282).

(30) a. ***Cădzu*** *o piatră* (MI.~1630: 170^{v}) [ORom]
fall.PS.3SG a stone
'A stone fell'

b. *pa(d)* *kame(n)* [OSl]
fall stone

(31) a. ***binevesti*** *arhanghel Gavriil* (MI.~1630: 173^{r}) [ORom]
good.announce.PS.3SG archangel Gabriel
'Archangel Gabriel brought the good news'

b. ***blagověsti*** *arhaagglo(m)* *Gavriilo(m)* [OSl]
good.announce archangel Gabriel

(32) a. ***dzise*** *Dumnedzeu* (MI.~1630: 177^{r}) [ORom]
say.PS.3SG God
'God said'

b. ***re(č)*** *gŭ* [OSl]
say God

In Table 2, I present the results of a quantitative analysis of samples from three types of texts: translated from Latin (PO.1582), translated from Old Church Slavonic (CC^{2}.1581) and original documents from the 16th century (DÎ). What this table shows is that in all types of texts all the superficial word order patterns (verb initial, verb medial and verb final) were attested, a fact which supports our claim that the word order in old Romanian is the result of the 'convergence' between the Latin word order and the Old Slavonic word order.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

The text	Main clause				Embedded clause			
	V1	V_{med}	Neg-V_{med}	V_{final}[6]	V1	V_{med}	Neg-V_{med}/Rel-V_{med}	V_{final}
PO.1582	36,26%	26,80%	0,92%	3,68%	8,28%	12,75%	8,54%	1,57%
CC^2.1581	8,85%	28,23%	0,72%	12,90%	9,33%	21,53%	10,04%	8,37%
DÎ	11,52%	34,18%	0,59%	1,95%	13,47%	22,07%	19,33%	0,78%

Table 2.
The position of the verb in the clause in old Romanian texts

To sum up, in this section I have underlined two main aspects: (a) certain convergent phenomena have been explained either as Slavonic influence or as Latin influence; (b) the same word order patterns are attested in all types of texts: translations from Slavonic, translations from Latin, and original texts.

4. CORPUS STUDY: AN ILLUSTRATION

When comparing Slavonic texts with their old Romanian counterparts (directly or indirectly related), what one notices is that in certain cases the old Romanian word order is the same as in Slavonic, whereas in other cases, the ordering of elements is different. As an illustration, I have used the examples extracted from the Slavonic texts included in Pleter, Lambru and Puiu (2015), which I have compared to their old Romanian counterparts with respect to word order.

4.1. The noun phrase

With respect to the structures relevant for the nominal phrase-internal word order, I have identified the following cases:

- adjective–noun (same order in both languages)

(33) a. *cěěvъšu* ***dobroe*** ***cěmę*** *na* *celě* *svoemъ*
seed.ACTIVE.PPLE good seed in land his
'who seeded good seed in this land'
(*Undolsky sheets*, 11th c., fol. 5/p. 15)

b. *ce* *seamânâ* ***bunâ*** ***sămânță*** *spre* *agrul lui* (CT.1560–1: 27v)
who seeds good seed in land his
'who seeds good seed in this land'

- noun–adjective (same order in both languages)

(34) a. *člověkъ* *eterъ* *сътvori* ***večerjǫ*** ***velijǫ***
man certain make.AOR.3SG dinner big
'a certain man gave a big dinner'
(*Codex Assemanianus*, 10–11th c., fol. 61d–62b/p. 24)

[6] I considered that a clause is verb-final when the verb was the last constituent of the clause, and is preceded by at least one constituent which was not a clitic or a *wh-* element.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

b. *Om neştine* *făcu* ***cină*** ***mare***
man certain make.PS.3SG dinner big
'a certain man gave a big dinner'
(CC[1].1567: 144[v], CC[2].1581: 463, CT.1560–1: 153[r])

● adjective–noun in Slavonic, noun–adjective in Old Romanian

(35) a. *vьcěkъ* *čьlověkъ* *prěžde* ***dobroe*** ***vino*** *polagaatъ*
any people first good wine put
'anyone would first put the good wine (on the table)'
(*Codex Marianus,* 11th c., Io., II, 1-10/p. 19)
b. *Tot omul* *mainte* ***vin*** ***bun*** *pun* (CT.1560–1: 184[v])
all people.DEF before wine good put
'anyone would bring the good wine first'

● adjective–noun in Slavonic, nominal ellipsis in old Romanian

(36) a. *i* *reče* ***mьnii*** ***siь*** *ego* *ocju*
and say.AOR.3SG younger son his father
'and the younger son said to his father'
(*Sava's book,* 11th c., f. 67–69/p. 27)
b. ***şi zise*** ***cel*** ***mai tânăr*** *părintelui*
and say.PS.3SG CEL more young father.DEF.DAT
'and the younger [son] said to his father'
(CC[1].1567: 168[v], CC[2].1581: 13, CT.1560–1: 154[v]–155[r])

● postnominal possessive adjectives in both languages

(37) a. *vy* ***žitьnicǫ*** ***moǫ*** (*Undolsky sheets,* 11th c., fol. 5/p. 15)
in barn my
'in my barn'
b. *în* ***jitnița*** ***mea*** (CT.1560–1: 28[r])
in barn.DEF my
'in my barn'

● prenominal possessive adjective in Slavonic, postnominal possessive adjective in old Romanian

(38) a. *izědy* ***tvoe*** ***iměnie*** *cъ* *ljuboděicami*
waste.PRES.PPLE your fortune with prostitutes
'who wasted your fortune with prostitutes'
(*Sava's book*, 11th c., f. 67–69/p. 28)
b. *răsipi* ***avuția*** ***ta*** *cu* *curvele* (CC[1].1567: 169[v])
waste.PS.3SG fortune.DEF your with prostitutes.DEF
'(who) wasted your fortune with the prostitutes'

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

4.2. The verb phrase

For the verb phrase, several situations have been identified:

● the same position of the verb in both languages: V1 (39), V-medial (40), V-final (41)

(39) a. ***reče*** *gospodъ pritъčǫ siǫ*
say.AOR.3SG god parable this
'God said this parable'
(*Undolsky sheets,* 11th c., fol. 5/p. 15)

b. ***zise*** *domnul* (CT.1560–1: 27v)
said God
'God said'

(40) a. *I vъ tretii deni brakъ* ***byctъ*** *vъ*
and in third day wedding be.AOR.3SG in
Kana Galeiscĕi i ***bĕ*** *mati Isusova tu*
Cana Galilee.GEN and be.IMPERF.3SG mother Jesus.GEN there
'And the third day, a wedding took place in Cana and Jesus' mother was there'
(*Codex Marianus*, 11th c., Io., II, 1–10/p. 19)

b. *În vreamea aceaea nuntă* ***fu*** *în Cana Galileiului.*
in time.DEF that wedding be.PS.3SG in Cana Galilee.GEN
Şi ***era*** *muma lu Isus aciia* (CT.1560–1: 184r)
and be.IMPERF.3SG mother.DEF GEN Jesus here
'And then a weeding took place in Cana and Jesus' mother was here'

(41) a. *vьcĕkъ čьlovĕkъ prĕžde dobroe vino* ***polagaatь***
any people first good wine put
'anyone would first put the good wine (on the table)'
(*Codex Marianus,* 11th c., Io., II, 1–10/p. 19)

b. *Tot omul mainte vin bun* ***pun*** (CT.1560–1: 184v)
all people.DEF before wine good put
'anyone puts the good wine first'

● V-final in Slavonic but V-medial in old Romanian (I have noticed a general tendency for the Slavonic V-final structures to have as V-medial correspondents in old Romanian)

(42) a. *egda že prozębe trĕba i plodъ* ***cьtvori***
when and sprout.AOR wheat and fruit make.AOR
'when the wheat sprouted and made fruit'
(*Undolsky sheets*, 11th c., fol. 5/p. 15)

b. *Când înfrunzi iarba* ***şi*** ***feace*** *plod* (CT.1560–1: 27v)
when spring.PS grass and make.PS fruit
'when the grass sprang and made fruit'

(43) a. *azъ že cьde gladomъ* ***izgybajǫ***
I and here of.hunger die.PRES.1SG
'and I am dying of hunger here'
(*Sava's book*, 11th c., f. 67–69/p. 27)

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

b. *eu **pieri** de foame*
I dye.PRES.1SG of hunger
'I am dying of hunger' (CC[1].1567: 169[r], CC[2].1581: 18–19, CT.1560–1: 155[r])

5. CONCLUSIONS

Old Romanian has residual head-final structures both in the nominal domain and at the clausal level. These structures have been eliminated in the passage to the modern language.

In the previous literature there are contradictory claims: in most of the cases, the head-final/initial variation is explained as resulting from the Old Church Slavonic influence (because most of the old text were translated from Slavonic) or, in a few situations, from the Latin influence (either because certain texts were translated from Latin or because certain authors were willing to mimic the Latin syntax).

I have shown that head-final structures are equally found in the texts translated from Slavonic and from Latin and the "convergence" between the two source languages can be seen in old Romanian. Following Bauer (2009), Ledgeway (2012, 2014 and in press), and Pancheva (2008), I suggested that:

(i) like Classical Latin, Old Church Slavonic illustrates the shift from the head-final syntax of Proto-Indo-European to the head-initial syntax of the modern European languages;

(ii) in the syntax old Romanian, the relics of the head-final syntax are to be explained both by Old Church Slavonic and by Latin.

The more general conclusion is that (all) the languages in the area underwent, at a certain moment, the change from a head-final to a head-initial syntax. But whereas in modern Romance the shift is complete, the modern Slavic languages are still underspecified for the head parameter (Heider 2015: 73), i.e. the shift is not complete, as it was in old Romanian.

CORPUS

CC[1].1567 – Coresi, *Tâlcul Evangheliilor*. Ed.: Coresi, *Tâlcul evangheliilor şi molitvenic românesc*, ed. V. Drimba, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 1998, 31–187.

CC[2].1581 – Coresi, *Evanghelie cu învăţătură.* Ed. S. Puşcariu, Al. Procopovici: Diaconul Coresi, *Carte cu învăţătură (1581)*, vol. I, *Textul*, Bucureşti, Socec, 1914.

CIst.1700–50 – Constantin Cantacuzino, *Istoria Ţării Româneşti*. Ed.: *Istoria Ţărâi Rumâneşti atribuită stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino*, ed. O. Dragomir, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 2006, 145–202.

CL.1570 – Coresi, *Liturghier.* Ed. Al. Mareş, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1969, 127–148.

CT.1560–1 – Coresi, *Tetraevanghel.* Ed.: *Tetraevanghelul tipărit de Coresi. Braşov 1560–1561*, comparat cu *Evangheliarul lui Radu de la Măniceşti. 1574*, ed. F. Dimitrescu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1963.

CV.1563–83 – *Codicele Voroneţean.* Ed. M. Costinescu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 1981, 229–400.

DÎ – *Documente şi însemnări româneşti din secolul al XVI-lea*, text stabilit şi indice de Gh. Chivu, M. Georgescu, M. Ioniţă, Al. Mareş, Al. Roman-Moraru, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 1979.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

MI.~1630 – *Manuscrisul de la Ieud.* Ed. M. Teodorescu, I. Gheție, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1977, 153–170.
PH.1500–10 – *Psaltirea Hurmuzaki*, ed. I. Gheție and M. Teodorescu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 2005.
PO.1582 – *Palia de la Orăştie.* Ed. V. Pamfil, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1968.
Pleter, T., R. Lambru, C. Puiu, 2005, *Limba slavă veche. Culegere de texte*, Bucureşti, Editura Universității din Bucureşti.

REFERENCES

Avram, M., [1975] 2007, "Particularități sintactice neromâneşti în diferite momente ale evoluției limbii române literare", in: *Studii de sintaxă a limbii române,* Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 93−103.
Avram, M., 2007, "Concluzii la sintaxă", in: M. Avram (coord.), *Sintaxa limbii române în secolele al XVI-lea – al XVIII-lea,* Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 313–317.
Bauer, B., 2009, "Word order", in: P. Baldi, P. Cuzzolin (eds), *New Perspectives on Historical Latin Syntax,* I. *Syntax of the sentence,* Berlin/New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 241–316.
Beneş, P., 1955, "Încrucişarea slavo-română în forma infinitivului românesc", *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice*, LVI, 3–4, 255–263.
Biberauer, T., A. Holmberg, I. Roberts, 2014, "A syntactic universal and its consequences", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 45, 2, 169–225.
Brăescu, R., A. Dragomirescu, A. Nicolae, 2015, "(Non-)configurationality and the internal syntax of adjectives in old Romanian", *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics*, XVII, 2, 55–74.
Chivu, G., 1993, "Studiu lingvistic", in *Codex Strurdzanus*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 142–230.
Cinque, G., 2010, *The Syntax of Adjectives,* Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press.
Ciompec, G., 1969, "Observații asupra exprimării negației în limba română din secolele al XVI-lea – al XVIII-lea", *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice*, XX, 2, 197–209.
Comrie, B, 1989, "Word order", in: *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology,* 2nd edn., Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 86–103.
Copceac, D., [1963] 1998, "Paralele slavo-române în sintaxa prepozițiilor", in *Tipologia limbilor romanice*, Cluj, Clusium, 198–229.
Costinescu, M., 1981, "Studiu lingvistic", in: *Codicele voronețean*, Ediție critică, studiu filologic şi studiu lingvistic de Mariana Costinescu, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 89−213.
Crisma, P., C. Gianollo, 2006, "Where did Romance N-raising come from? A parallel study of parameter resetting in Latin and English", in: J. Doetjes, P. González (eds), *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2004*, Amsterdam, Benjamins, 71–93.
Densusianu, O., 1961, *Istoria limbii române,* I. *Originile,* II. *Secolul al XVI-lea,* Bucureşti, Editura Științifică.
Djamo-Diaconiță, L., 1975, "Aspects de la place de l'adjectif dans la langue des chartes slavo-roumaines de la Valachie (XIVe – XVIe s)", *Revue roumaine de linguistique,* XX, 4, 337−340.
Dragomir, O., 2006, "Studiu lingvistic", in: *Istoriia Țărâi Româneşti atribuită stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino,* Ediție critică, studiu filologic, studiu lingvistic, glosar şi indice de nume proprii de Otilia Dragomir, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 39−135.
Dragomirescu, A., 2013, "O schimbare parametrică de la româna veche la româna modernă în sintaxa formelor verbale compuse cu auxiliar", *Limba română*, LXII, 2, 225−239.
Dragomirescu, A., 2015, "Există trăsături slavone în sintaxa limbii române? Două studii de caz / Are there Slavonic Features in the Syntax of Romanian? Two case studies", *Diacronia* 1, 1 http://dx.doi.org/10.17684/i1A3ro /
Dragomirescu, A., A. Nicolae, 2016, "Interpolation in Old Romanian and Istro-Romanian", talk given at LSRL 46, Stony Brook University, New York, March 31 martie – April 3.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

Gheție, I. (ed.), 1997, *Istoria limbii române literare. Epoca veche* (1532−1780), Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.
Gheție, I., M. Teodorescu, 2005, "Studiu lingvistic", in: *Psaltirea Hurmuzaki,* I, Studiu filologic, studiu lingvistic şi ediție de Ion Gheție şi Mirela Teodorescu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 23–83.
Haider, H., 1993, *Deutsche Syntax – Generativ*, Tübingen, Narr.
Haider, H., 2015, "Head directionality", in: A. Fabregas, J. Mateu, M. Putnam (eds), *Contemporary Linguistic Parameters,* Bloomsbury Academic, 73–97.
Hickey, R., 2010, "Language Contact: Reconsideration and Reassessment", in: R. Hickey (ed.), *The Handbook of language contact,* Wiley-Blackwell, 1–28.
Kayne, R.S., 1994, The Antisymmetry of Syntax, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.
Ivănescu, G., [2]2000 [1979], *Istoria limbii române*, Iaşi, Editura Junimea.
Ledgeway, A., 2012, *From Latin to Romance. Morphosyntactic Typology and Change*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Ledgeway, A., 2014, "Parametrul poziției centrului şi efectele sale pragmatice în trecerea de la latină la limbile romanice", in: R. Zafiu, A. Dragomirescu, A. Nicolae (eds), *Limba română: diacronie şi sincronie în studiul limbii române,* I, Bucureşti, Editura Universității din Bucureşti, 11–26.
Ledgeway, A., in press, "From Latin to Romance syntax: the great leap", in: P. Crisma, G. Longobardi (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Diachronic and Historical Linguistics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Lehmann, W., 1974, *Proto-Indo-European Syntax,* Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press.
Linţa, E., 1986, *Limba slavă veche,* Bucureşti, Tipografia Universității din Bucureşti.
Mareş, A., 1969, "Studiu de limbă", in: *Liturghierul lui Coresi,* Text stabilit, studiu introductiv şi indice de Al. Mareş, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 47−123.
Mareş, A., 1994, "Introducere", in: A. Mareş (coord.), *Crestomaţia limbii române vechi,* Volumul I (1521−1639), Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 17−39.
Migdalsky, K., 2016, "Head Directionality in Old Slavic", *12th European Conference on Formal Description of Slavic Languages,* Berlin, December 8-10.
Nicolae, A., 2015, *Ordinea constituenților în limba română: o perspectivă diacronică. Structura propoziției şi deplasarea verbului*, Bucureşti, Editura Universității din Bucureşti.
Nicolae, A., 2016, "Word order and configurationality", in: G. Pană Dindelegan (ed.), *The Syntax of Old Romanian*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 562–575.
Nicolae, A., in press, *Word Order and Parameter Change in Romanian. A Comparative Romance Perspective*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Olteanu, P., 1969, "Adjectivul în Cazania I a Diaconului Coresi şi în versiunea slavă de Neagovo", *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice,* XX, 2, 183–195.
Pancheva, R., 2005, "The Rise and Fall of Second-Position Clitics", *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory,* 23, 103–167.
Pancheva, R., 2008, "Head-Directionality of TP in Old Church Slavonic", in: A. Antonenko, J. Bailyn, C. Bethin (eds), *Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics: The Stony Brook Meeting, 2007*, Michigan Slavic Publications, Ann Arbor, 313–332.
Primus, B., 2001, "Word order typology", in: M. Haspelmath, E. König, W. Oesterreicher, W. Raible (eds), *Language typology and Language Universals,* Berlin/New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 855–873.
Rădulescu, M., 1963, "Topica atributului adjectival în *Evanghelia cu învățătură* a Diaconului Coresi", *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice,* XIV, 2, 233−258.
Rizescu, I., 1971, "Studiu de limbă", in *Pravila ritorului Lucaci*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 35–145.
Rosetti, Al., 1968, *Istoria limbii române de la origini până în secolul al XVII-lea*, Bucureşti, Editura pentru Literatură.
Seidel, E., 1958, *Elemente sintactice slave în limba română*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

Sheehan, Michelle, T. Biberauer, I. Roberts, A. Holmberg, 2017, *The Final-over-Final Condition. A Syntactic Universal*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
Stan, C., 2013, *O sintaxă diacronică a limbii române vechi,* Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.
Teodorescu, M., I. Gheţie, 1977, "Studiu de limbă", in: *Manuscrisul de la Ieud*, text stabilit, studiu filologic, studiu de limbă şi indice de M. Teodorescu şi I. Gheţie, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 59−141.
Vaillant, A., 1948, *Manuel du vieux slave,* tome I, *Grammaire,* Paris, Institut d'Études Slaves.
Watkins, C., 1998, "Proto-Indo-European: comparison and reconstruction", in: A. Giacalone Ramat, P. Ramat (eds), *The Indo-European languages,* London, New York, Routledge, 25–73.
Willis, D., 2000, "Verb movement in Slavonic Conditionals", in: S. Pintzuk, G. Tsoulas, A. Warner (eds), *Diachronic Syntax: Models and Mechanisms,* New York/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 322–348.
Zwart, J.-W., 1997, "The Germanic SOV languages and the universal base hypothesis", in: L. Haegeman (ed.), *New comparative syntax*, London, Longman, 246–267.

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)

BDD-A28576 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:58:01 UTC)