PALIA DE LA ORĂŞTIE – *THE REFLECTION OF THE SOURCES IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION*

Roxana VIERU
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi

***Abstract*:** *In the Preface of Palia de la Orăştie, it is claimed that the sixteenth century Romanian text represents the first translation of the Old Testament into Romanian (in fact, the first two books). The authors announced that the originals used for the translation was made were a Hebrew text, a Greek text and a Slavonian (Serbian) text. As it is generally known and agreed nowadays, this Calvinist Biblical text has, in fact, both Hungarian and Latin bases. In the following, we intend to prove, using only a few elements now (because we did this before*[1] *by means of other elements) that the above-mentioned sources are, indeed, Heltai's Pentateuh and a version of Vulgata. These elements can be organized into two parts (the former presenting the Hungarian influence and the latter, the Latin influence) and each of these parts can be subdivided into three categories: lexemes, calques and translations.*

Key words*: Lexemes, calques, translations.*

The Influence of the Hungarian Source over the Romanian Text

Lexemes

- *Jemble* is a word which was not attested before the sixteenth century and appears only extremely rarely in the written texts of that period. In *Palia de la Orăştie*, the word occurs just twice, but in the same paragraphs in *Pentateuh*, we find the etymon of the Romanian word, *semlye*.
- *Siriu* is another word important for the topic. Like the previous example, this word was not attested in the Romanian or Hungarian texts written on Romanian territories before 1582 (when *Palia* was printed). Moreover, it was in use only for a very short period. The word appears very frequently in our text, in the second book (*Ishod*) predominantly. Comparing *Palia* to *Pentateuh*, we can easily see that *szerszam* (the etymon of the Romanian *siriu*) occurs in the same paragraphs as its Romanian equivalent. There is, though, one exception, where the Hungarian author used the word *eszközit* instead of *szerszam*. Since the Hungarian lexemes have the same semantic basis and since the context in the Romanian text which is the exception is found among some other "non-exceptional" contexts, we draw the conclusion that the Romanian authors used one and the same word every time as a (translation) linguistic reflex.

---

[1]Vieru, Roxana – *Elemente maghiare în Palia de la Orăştie*, published in *Comunicarea – ipoteze şi ipostaze*, coordinator Luminița Hoarță Cărăuşu, Iaşi, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2008
Vieru, Roxana – *Cîteva elemente latine în Palia de la Orăştie*, in *Spațiul lingvistic şi literar românesc în orizont European*, coordinator Luminița Hoarță Cărăuşu, Iaşi, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2008

BDD-A5809 © 2010 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-24 09:12:23 UTC)

Calques

- The Hungarian (compound) word *kutfeig* (or *kütfey*) has as its Romanian equivalent an almost pleonastic phrase: *capul izvorului* (*Bitia 14.7*). The Hungarian *fej* means "starting point, head, beginning", but the meaning of *kut* is "well". In another chapter of the same book, the authors chose the phrase *izvor de fîntînă* (*Bitia 21.19*) as the equivalent of the same Hungarian word. They must have thought that *fej*, having the above-mentioned meaning, could be associated with the spring (of water). The second element of the Hungarian word has an exact parallel in Romanian. In these cases, in the Latin text we can read two simple words: first *fontem*, then *puteum*.
- In the Romanian text we find an exact translation of the Hungarian phrase *égö* ("burning") *Aldozatot* ("sacrifice, offering") as it appears in numerous contexts: „jirtvă încă şi *jirtvă de ardere* vei da noo" (*Ishod, 10.25*) – „Adnod kel minekünc mind *Aldozatot*, s'mind *égö Aldozatot*", „socrul lu Moisi luo *jirtvă de ardere*" (*Ishod, 18.12*) – „Mosesnec Ipa vön *égö Aldozatot*". The Romanian authors opted for the same translation of the word *Aldozat* „sacrifice" in *jirtvă de beutură*, as one can see in the following excerpt: „şi *jirtvă de beutură* vărsă pre ea" (*Bitia, 35.14*) – „Es *Itali Aldozatott* ötte reaia". A weird type of calque is met in *jungherea de ardere*. To get to this result, the translators remained in the same semantic sphere as before, but reduced it to only one dimension: stabbing, as the only way to perform a sacrifice. In one paragraph (*Bitia, 22.6*), *Vulgata* contains the phrase *ligna holocausti*, while in all the other fragments the simple word *holocaustum* ("combustion, complete burning") is used. Heltai's text always presents this word combination. When seen in parallel, the two texts, Romanian and Hungarian, present semantic similarities: „şi junghe acolo pre *jungherea de ardere*" (*Bitia, 22.2*) – „es áldozzad ott ötet *égö Aldozatul*", „şi despică lemne pre *giungherea de ardere*" (*Bitia, 22.3*) – „es fát hasogata az *égö Aldozathos*", „Şi Avram luo leamne de *giungheare de ardere*" (*Bitia, 22.6*) – „Es Abraham vöue az *égö Aldozathozvalo* fát", „ce unde e oaia la *giungheare de ardere*" (*Bitia, 22.7*) – „de hol vagyon a iḿh az *égö Aldozathoz*", „tocmi-va Dumnezeu luişi oaia pre *giungheare de ardere*" (*Bitia, 22.8*) – „iuhot szerez az Istë ömaganac az *égö Aldozattra*".
- The term *marhă* means "cattle" and also "one's wealth measured in heads of cattle". There are still some cases in *Palia de la Orăştie* where this word stands for a more general concept, namely that of "wealth" (whether in terms of money, food, or anything else). In the following fragment, the word obviously covers the notion of "cattle": „dă-mi mie oamenii şi *marha* ţine ţie" (*Bitia, 14.21*). But in „şi luo *marhă* de argint şi de aur" (*Bitia, 24.53*), the same word suggests the idea of money; in the next two paragraphs, *marhă* has a much larger semantic sphere: „Să neştine da-ş-va banii la priiatnicul său a ţinea, sau atare vase, şi din casa acestuia le vor fura, şi de vor afla furul, de doao ori atata să plătească. Iară de nu vor afla furul, domnul caseei ei-l ducă în[n]ain(tea) giudeaţelor, şi să-l gioare cum nu se-au tins la *marha* priiatnicului său." (*Ishod, 22.7*) (the refference is anaphoric: money, dishes etc) „Tătîni-său iară tremease cu *marhă* den Eghipet încă dzeace asini încărcaţi, şi dzeace asini carele grîu, pîine, şi vipt ducea tătîni-său pre cale." (*Bitia, 45.23*). In all the corresponding paragraphs from *Pentateuh*, the reader will find the Hungarian word *marha*, which means that the Romanian translators "copied" the Hungarian text closely.

Translations

- The paragraph *9.7* from *Bitia* is the exact image of the same paragraph in the Hungarian text. In *Pentateuh*: „Tü kedig gyümöchezzettec es sokassodgyatoc es éllyetec a földen, hogy sokan legyetec rayta". By comparing the same paragraph in *Vulgata* with

BDD-A5809 © 2010 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-24 09:12:23 UTC)

the one in *Palia de la Orăştie*, we notice some semantic differences. In Romanian: „rodiți-vă şi vă înmulțiți şi viiați spre pământ, cum să fiți mulți pre el"; in Latin: „Vos autem crescite et multiplicamini et ingredimini super terram", which means "grow and multiply and be free to walk whatever you want on Earth". In the Romanian text, the idea of maturation that we find only in *Vulgata* is missing. What the Latin text lacks in comparison to the Romanian text is the divine commandment to intensely populate the Earth: „cum să fiți mulți pre el". What is more, in the first part of the Romanian paragraph, there are two almost synonymic verbs: „rodiți-vă şi vă înmulțiți" ("be fruitful and multiply"). This phrase with redundant sonority is the exact translation of the Hungarian expression: „Tü kedig gyümöchezzettec es sokassodgyatoc".

- In paragraph *18.7* from *Bitia*, the noun *calf* has two determiners: *frumos* ("nice") and *gras* ("fat"). In *Pentateuh*, the word *boryut* also has two determiners corresponding to the Romanian adjectives: *szep* and *köuer*. In *Vulgata*, there are two other adjectives: „et tulit inde vitulum tenerrimum et optimum" (*tenerrimum* "young" şi *optimum* "good").
- The Romanian phrase „derept însă Avraam pogorî gios la Eghipet, cum acolo pe sine ca un venit să se hrănească" (*Bitia, 12.10*) corresponds to the Hungarian „Ezert Abram Egyptusba mene alá, hogy ott magat mint iöueueny eltetneye". In the same part of the same chapter, in *Vulgata*, the verb displaying the idea of "eating" is missing: „descenditque Abram in Aegyptum, ut peregrinaretur ibi".
- The fragment „Avram răspunse şi aşa zise" (*Bitia, 18.27*) is the exact translation of the Hungarian: „Abraham felele es eszt monda". Instead, in *Vulgata* a simple sentence occurs in the same place: „*Respondensque Abraham*".
- The next chapter reveals another inadvertence: the Latin text differs from the Romanian and Hungarian texts in terms of content. The Romanian authors wrote, in *19.16* in *Bitia*: „Şi cînd el se dzăboviia, prinseră îngerii mîna lui [...]". The author of *Pentateuh* transposes the same reality: „Es mikor ö kesneyec meg fogac az Angyaloc az ö kezet", where kesneyec means "to linger". Unlike these two texts, *Vulgata* contains a verb with a different notional content: „Dissimulante illo, apprehenderunt manum eius [...]", where *dissimulante* translates the idea of "forgiveness" in the Biblical sense, "forgiving the sins".
- In paragraph *8.19* in *Bitia*, the authors used an ennumeration of all the main classes (in the authors' view) of the animal kingdom (the acquatic beings were, though, left aside). The Romanian authors preserved the same ennumeration in the Hungarian source, which differs a lot from the one in the Latin text. In Romanian: „După aceaia, tot fealul de jiganii, tot fealul de viermi, tot fealul de păsări, şi tot ce se trage pre pământ, ieşi din corabie tot la fealul lui." In Heltai's *Pentateuh* there are the same representatives of the main classes of animals: „Annakutanna mindenfele élö *állatoc* („animals, cattle"), mindenfele *fèrgec* („worms"), mindenfele *madarac* („birds") es minden, valami a földen mász, ki iöue a Barkabol, kiki mind az ö fele höz". Although the global sense of the text is maintained, *Vulgata* contains other classes of animals: „Sed et omnia *animantia* ("animals"), *iumenta* ("draught cattle") et *reptilia* ("reptiles"), quae reptant super terram, secundum genus suum, egressa sunt de arca."
- The figurative meaning implied by the term *curată* implies (in the phrase „fată curată" (*Bitia, 24.16*)) can be found in the Hungarian text (*szüz* "virgin", *vala* "girl"), as well as in the Latin text („virgoque pulcherrima"). But the suplimentary determiner (pulcherrima "the most beautiful") of the noun in *Vulgata* has no equivalent in the other two texts.

BDD-A5809 © 2010 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-24 09:12:23 UTC)

- The following phrase is part of the paragraph *27.34* in *Bitie*: „tare cu amar fu". It is the precise translation of the Hungarian „igen meg keserödéc". In the same place, *Vulgata* contains the phrase „et consternatus ait", where *consternatus* is normally translated as "scared", a meaning which is really "far" from the notion reflected in the Romanian and Hungarian terms.
- In many paragraphs from the 34th chapter of *Bitia*, the Romanian authors used the phrase *lemn de cer*. It represents a calque after the Hungarian *cherfa*. Instead, in *Vulgata*, different terms occur in the corresponding paragraphs, designating all sorts of trees.

The Influence of the Latin Text over the Romanian Text

Lexemes

- The word *mandragora* is a term of Latin origin (< Lat. *mandragoris*). Its proper sense is "belladonna", the well-known plant. The contexts where the word occurs claim more the figurative, rather than the proper sense, which is bound to the qualities this plant has and to the incantation practices in which it is involved. We can illustrate this with the following excerpt: „Ruven ieşi la secerătură la vremea secerăturiei şi află în cîmp *mandragora* şi duse mîni-sa Lieei. Şi dzise Rahiila Lieei: rogu-te, dă-mi cea *mandragora* a ficiorului tău. Răspunse Liia: au nu-i destul cum ai luat domnu-mieu, ce încă veri să iai şi *mandragora* a feciorului mieu? Zise Rahiila: ni batăr, să se culce cu tine derept *mandragora* a ficiorului tău. Cînd amu Iacov seara din cîmp vine, mearse Lie înaintea lui şi zise: la mine vino, că te-am cumpărat cu *mandragora* al ficiorului mieu; şi cu ea durmi în acea noapte". (*Bitia, 30.14-16*). Each occurence of the word *mandragora* in *Palia de la Orăştie* finds its correspondent in *Vulgata* and in *Pentateuh*. The difference consists in the fact that the Hungarian *Dudaim* has a very general meaning ("weed") and lacks the magical connotations of the Romanian and Latin words that name the above-mentioned plant.
- *Areate* (< Lat. *aries, -etem*) means "breeding ram". There is a clear-cut distinction between *berbece* and *areate*. In other texts, as well as in *Palia*, the authors included both terms in contexts with different meanings, and brings us to the conclusion that the common speaker was well aware of this difference. In his dictionary, DER, Al. Ciorănescu wrote that "*arieţii* are the rams, since they are taken apart from the ewes until they are brought back among them". Lots of contexts in *Palia de la Orăştie* include the word *areate*, though some of them (very few) include the other term too. In the corresponding paragraphs from *Vulgata*, the etymon of the Romanian word occurs most of the times, while the remaining paragraphs are formulated in such a way as to avoid any of the terms. If we follow both texts in parallel, we discover these similarities: „vădzu după spate un *areate* acăţat cu coarnele întru o tufă de spini" (*Bitia, 22.13*) – „viditque post tergum *arietem* inter vepres haerentem cornibus", „piale roşită de *areate*" (*Ishod, 25.5*) – „pelles *arietem* rubricatas", „Fă desupra acestui coperemînt în cort şi alt coperimînt, den piei roşite de *areate*". (*Ishod, 26.14*) – „Facies et operimentum aliud tecto de pellibus *arietum* rubricatis", „Dup-aceasta ia seul *areatelui*" – „tolles adipem de *ariete*" (*Ishod, 29.22*), „piiale ruşită de *areate*" (*Ishod, 35.7, 35.23*) – „pellesque *arietum* rubricatas". The word has survived until present days in Romanian and it can still be heard in some parts of Oltenia and Transilvania.

BDD-A5809 © 2010 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-24 09:12:23 UTC)

Calques

- The Latin verb *compleo* means both "to fill" and "to accomplish". The meaning this verb has in „*complevitque* Deus die septimo opus suum" (*Genesis, 2.2*) is, obviously, the latter. During the period when *Palia* was translated, the Romanian language had the verb *a umple*, but it lacked a lexeme for the notion required by the above-mentioned context. Therefore, the Romanian translators used the word *a umple* to designate this reality as well: „şi *împlu* Dumnezeu a şaptea zi lucrul său". The same rule was observed with the Latin verb *impleo* which has, among other meanings, the two senses we mentioned for *compleo*. So, the Romanian authors used the word *împle* once again when they had to translate: „căce *n-ați împlut* numărul cărămizilor". In paragraph *7.25* in *Ishod*, the same verb *a împle* was used to express the idea "to fulfill", a meaning which the Latin verb *impleo* has, while the Romanian verb *a împle* does not: „*Impletique* sunt septem dies" – „Şi se *împlură* şapte zile" (*Ishod*, 7.25). Translating paragraph *5.14* from *Exodus*: „Quare non *impletis* mensuram laterum sicut prius", the Romanian authors once again made use of the verb *a împle*: „căce *n-ați împlut* numărul cărămizilor". The verbs used in the Hungarian text are distinct and have well defined semantic structures.
- The Romanian verb *a afla* is "endowed" with only one meaning: "to discover something new". In Latin, the verb *invenerio* has more than only this sense, as it also means "to discover something hidden". Translating a sentence like „Noë vero *invenit* gratiam coram Domino", the Romanians used the word *a afla* the same way as they did when they translated „omnis igitur qui *invenerit* me, occidet me." or „cumque proficiscerentur de oriente, *invenerunt* campum in terra Sennaar". The Romanian versions of these fragments are: „Ce Noe *află* milă naintea Domnului" (*Bitia, 6.8*), „tot cine mă va afla, ucide-mă-va" (*Bitia, 4.14*), „şi fu când ei mergea către răsărită, *aflară* un pământ şes" (*Bitia, 11.2*).
- The Latin verb *a cunoaşte* coming from the Latin *cognosco* inherited the meaning "to know". In *Palia de la Orăştie*, along with this meaning (that can be understood in a context like „unde aceasta ai dzis: anume te *cunosc* tine" (*Ishod, 33.12*)), the verb acquires two additional one, as a consequence of the influence the Latin text has over the Romanian one. In *Palia* „*cunoscură* că sînt goli" (*Bitia*, *3.7*), where *a cunoaşte* means "to find out", as *cognosco* means in „*cognovissent* se esse nudos". Also, in *Palia*: „*cunoscu* muiarea sa" (*Bitia, 4.17*), where *a cunoaşte* means "to have a sexual intercourse", the same meaning *cognosco* has in the following sentence from *Vulgata*: „vero *cognovit* uxorem suam".

Translations

- Paragraph *4.6* from *Genesis*: „Et cur concidit facies tua?" ("and your face has moved") has this version as its equivalent in *Palia*, this version: „şi faţa ta s-au mutat". The Romanian phrase is the exact translation of the Latin fragment and both of them differ significantly from the sentence in the corresponding paragraph from *Pentateuh*: „Es miert valtozic a te szined?" ("why, for what reason did your colour change?"). In the previous paragraph, only one of the essential elements is related to the Latin text, while the other one relates to the Hungarian text: „şi faţa lui se schimbă" - „et concidit vultus eius" ("and their face moved") - „es syine meg valtozec" („and the colour changed"). So, in the second mentioned Romanian fragment, the authors "got" the noun from Latin and the verb from Hungarian.
- A short fragment from the Latin text – „Dominus, ait, in cuius conspectu ambulo" – was translated in Romanian as follows: „Domnul înaintea căruia umblu"

BDD-A5809 © 2010 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-24 09:12:23 UTC)

(*Bitia, 24.40*). Instead, the Hungarian text contains a very concise sentence: „Es monda ennekem" ("and said to this one").

- There is an ambiguous fragment in the Hungarian text: „Es monda a Sara az ö felesége felül" which means "and said to Sara, his wife", while *felül* means "from above". In Latin, the text is so much simpler: „Dixitque de Sara, uxora sua". It is exactly the same as in the Romanian text: „Şi dzise de Sara, muiarea lui" (*Bitia, 20.2*).
- A fragment from *Palia* reads like this: „Şi ducîndu-se împrotivă, şezu departe, loc de o săgetare" (*Bitia, 21.16*). In the same place, in *Vulgata*: „Et abiit, seditque e regione procul, quantum potest arcus iacere", means "and he went, sat down in a place so far away where the bow could expand". The Hungarian version differs a lot from these two: „es elmenuen ellembe leüle tanoly mint egy lönesny földen", meaning "and he ran away, sat down far away, where he could stay on the ground".
- In paragraph *8.22* from *Ishod*, God is presented as „Domn în mijloc de pământ". This is the exact translation of the corresponding fragment from *Vulgata*: „quoniam ego Dominus in medio terrae", where *in medio* really means "in the middle". In *Pentateuh*, the fragment „WR mind è szeles földẽ." can be translated as "God (was) everywhere on Earth". The term *szeles* is synonymic to „in its length", without having any other meanings.
- Latin allows a very clear and precise expression, so that authors of different kinds of texts can afford to be as brief as they want. That is why the paragraphs in *Vulgata* are most of the times so much shorter than the ones in *Pentateuh*. As the Romanian translators were so eager to be as explicit as possible, in order to explain the Biblical facts rather than simply say them, they introduced all the information they could from both sources. In this way, the risk is that the phrases might become very unusual or unnatural and the text might be full of unwanted and even useless details. Some fragments can follow the Latin text and leave aside the Hungarian one and vice versa. This is the case with paragraph *25.32* from *Ishod*: „Şi şase creangure să iasă den coastele sfeaşnicului, de o laturi încă trei, de altă iară trei". The sentence got all the elements from *Vulgata*: „Sex calami egredientur de lateribus, tres ex uno latere, et tres ex altero". In *Pentateuh* there is no further explanation, just the one corresponding to the first part of the Romanian text: „Es hat ág szarmazzec a györtyatartonac oldalibol".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arvinte, Vasile; Caproşu, Ioan; Gafton, Alexandru; Guia, Sorin, *Palia de la Orăştie (1582). Textul*, Iaşi, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2005

Biblia hebraica ex recensione Aug. Hahnii cum Vulgata interpretatione latina, Summtibus Ernesti Bredtii, 1868

Dicţionar maghiar-român, Bucureşti, Editura Carocom, 2005 [= DMR]

Guțu, Gheorghe, *Dicționar latin – român,* ediția a II-a revăzută şi adăugită, Bucureşti, Editura Humanitas, 2003 [= DLR]

Kelemen, Bela, *Cu privire la începuturile influenței maghiare*, 1971, extracted from „Cercetări de lingvistică", nr. 2

Király, Francisc*, Contacte lingvistice*, Timişoara, Editura Facla, 1990

Király, Francisc, *Fonetica istorică şi împrumuturile lexicale*, 1970, in „Studii şi ceretări lingvistice", nr. 3

Murvai, Olga*, Gramatică comparată maghiaro-română*, Bucureşti, Editura Cavallioti, 1997

Szili, Péter; Csillag, Imre, *Dicționar român – maghiar, maghiar – român,* Constanța, Editura Steaua Nordului, 2002

Turcu, Éva, *Mic dicționar maghiar – român*, Bucureşti, Editura Sport – Turism, 1978

BDD-A5809 © 2010 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-24 09:12:23 UTC)