Preface

Contents and readership

The Syntax of Old Romanian offers a comprehensive description of the syntax of old Romanian (the period between the beginning of the sixteenth century, the date of the earliest attested Romanian texts, and the end of the eighteenth century, more exactly 1780, conventionally considered to be the beginning of modern Romanian). Following the currently accepted periodization of the Romanian language (GR: 3–5), we have made a distinction between a first period of old Romanian (1500–1640), the period of the earliest known texts, and a second period (1640–1780), with an increased number of more stylistically diversified texts and more stable norms (for the difference between the two periods, see §1.1.1).

The Syntax of Old Romanian is a continuation of *The Grammar of Romanian* (OUP, 2013), which dealt with the grammatical description of standard modern Romanian. This new book presents a change of perspective and of the time frame examined: the diachronic investigation of the syntax of old Romanian.

The book is addressed to scholars specializing in Romance and general linguistics, and interested in diachronic syntax and especially in the syntactic history of Romance languages. The framework for discussion is modern, both theoretically and terminologically, and does not pose problems of accessibility. For Romance linguistics, the present work offers numerous facts that are new to Romance scholars, some of them also present in previous stages of other Romance languages; such phenomena throw new light on the evolution from Latin to Romance, as well as facilitating comparison with earlier stages of the Romance languages. For linguistic theory, the book offers the possibility of analysing the conditions under which the grammaticalization of different phenomena took place. In the special situation of translated texts, it also offers the possibility of investigating different phenomena of language contact and the way in which they can influence the syntax of a given language.

The present book does not presuppose knowledge of Romanian or its history. Its aim is an overall description of the syntax of old Romanian, with a special focus on the features considered specific to this period. Hence, the book itself is self-sufficient for readers not acquainted with the grammatical system of modern Romanian.

Corpus

The book is the result of recent research based on the excerption and analysis of a very large corpus of old texts. The texts from first period of old Romanian (1500–1640) have been exhaustively analysed; for the second period (1640–1780), we have selected representative and stylistically diverse texts.

Corpus analysis is the sole possibility for an older stage of a language which is not directly accessible to researchers. We have adopted this method with all its advantages and disadvantages. To begin with, all the examples used have been carefully selected. The comments on usage or pragmatic values (emphasis, stylistic intention,

BDD-B781-03 © 2016 Oxford University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:53 UTC)

etc.), as well as on instances of syntactic synonymy and ambiguity have been formulated with caution. The dating of certain phenomena is uncertain, because there is always the possibility that older texts may come to light; furthermore, many texts have been preserved without precise indications of their dating and localization (see §§1.1.3; 1.1.4). For many other difficulties and interpretative pitfalls, see §1.1.6.

In order to mitigate as much as possible the shortcomings of a study based on corpus research, we have tried:

(i) to employ a rich and diversified corpus, made up of different types of texts (original texts and translations; religious and non-religious texts; narrative and administrative texts; codes of law and bills of sale, etc.) from different areas of the Romanian-speaking territory (for the characteristics of the period in relation to the typology of the texts, see §1.1.2; for the geographical origin of each text, see the indications for each text in the corpus and also the indications given by the map which accompanies the corpus);

(ii) to bring frequently to the fore quantitative observations which may testify to the frequency and extension of a given phenomenon at a stage of the investigated interval, as well as to its dynamics; we hope to have weeded out accidental occurrences.

Despite all these precautions, certain observations are frequently accompanied by qualifiers such as 'probably' or 'possibly'.

Methods and objectives

The perspective of analysis is both synchronic and diachronic: *synchronic* in the sense that, in a given period with precise boundaries, we have aimed to give a quasi-exhaustive corpus analysis; *diachronic* in the sense that the two periods of old Romanian (1500–1640 and 1640–1780) are compared with each other, and the global results are subsequently set against the features of modern Romanian. With respect to the old language, we track down the behaviour of syntax in Romanian: the elimination or retreat of certain facts or generalization of others, total or partial grammaticalization of certain phenomena, competition between structures, and, implicitly, cases of syntactic variation, etc. We also examine the degree to which certain archaic phenomena, now jettisoned from standard Romanian, have been preserved in the non-standard varieties.

We also preserve the typological and comparative perspective of *The Grammar of Romanian*, focusing on those phenomena that are considered specific to Romanian (either in Romance or in the Balkan area).

Beyond mere description, we also strive to give answers to a few more general problems of diachronic research: the strength of foreign influences on the syntax of old Romanian, given the fact that countless texts are translations (especially from Slavonic, but also from Hungarian, Greek, and Latin). In this respect, we systematically compare translations and original documents, as well as texts with a freer syntax (narrative texts) with texts with a more rigid syntax (codes of law).

We are convinced that a foreign phenomenon may penetrate a given language and extend to a considerable degree only if the structural elements of that language allow this.

BDD-B781-03 © 2016 Oxford University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:53 UTC)

The structure of the book

In order to facilitate comparison with the present-day language, *The Syntax of Old Romanian* is organized along similar lines to *The Grammar of Romanian* (as regards structure, syntactic theory, terminology, and chapter titles).

The *Introduction* comprises three subsections: the first (§1.1) is devoted to the presentation of the corpus from the point of view of the typology, dating, and localization of texts, and the following ones (§§1.2; 1.3) present in a highly synthetic manner the general phonological and morphological characteristics of old Romanian.

Each of the following chapters (2–11) presents the description of a phenomenon, and carefully examines the differences between old and modern Romanian. We also examine the differences (when present) between the two periods of old Romanian (1500–1640 and 1640–1780), as well as the possible regional differences.

The quantitative tables and observations serve to make up for the impossibility of including examples from texts of all types, and from the entire period examined. In order to supplement and diversify the examples, the book is accompanied by an online appendix, hosted at www.lingv.ro → *The Syntax of Old Romanian*.

Each chapter ends with chapter conclusions, especially oriented towards the facts specific to old Romanian for the phenomenon considered. The book also presents general conclusions (Ch. 12), which synthesize the main phenomena characteristic of old Romanian.

Final remarks

The present book is a collective work, written by nineteen researchers, most of them working in the Department of Grammar of the 'Iorgu Iordan–Alexandru Rosetti' Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy – the same team that worked on the OUP *Grammar of Romanian* (2013). The introductory section on the morphological structure of old Romanian (§1.3) was graciously contributed by Professor Martin Maiden. The contribution of each author is specified in the detailed contents. An important role has been played by Adina Dragomirescu and Irina Nicula Paraschiv, who ensured that the book is uniform and consistently edited.

Our special gratitude goes to Julia Steer, whose professionalism, understanding, and sympathy have been with us throughout our collaboration, and to Professors Adam Ledgeway and Ian Roberts, the coordinators of the series *Oxford Studies in Diachronic and Historical Linguistics*, for their constant support and interest in the study of Romanian.

We have the deepest appreciation for and gratitude towards Professor Martin Maiden, who has generously and professionally offered us his unconditional support for the technical and linguistic oversight of the entire book; through his passion, enthusiasm, and interest in Romanian, he was the real initiator and mentor of this project.

Responsibility for any remaining inaccuracies, errors, or inconsistencies is, of course, solely ours.

April 2015 Gabriela Pană Dindelegan

BDD-B781-03 © 2016 Oxford University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 03:13:53 UTC)