ASPECTS REGARDING THE TRANSLATION OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS'NAMES IN OLD ROMANIAN BIBLICAL TEXTS

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Abstract: Any translator finds himself / herself confronted in his / her job with a lot of problems generated by causes among the most diverse: the unequal material (in terms of quantity and quality) offered by the source-language and the target-language, the different manners in which two languages refine the rendering of some concepts, the difference between two communities' mentalities, cultures and degree of civilization etc. This article refers to the translation, in Romanian, of the names of the musical instruments mentioned in the Bible. Some of the Jewish musical instruments existed only within the community which invented them, while others were similar to instruments used by other populations; so, the translation of the Holy Scriptures in Greek, Latin and from there on in other languages dealt with a number of difficulties, some of them concerning these concepts. We are going to present here the way in which some Romanian translators of the Biblical books chose equivalents for the names of the musical instruments, considering also that the Romanian religious texts followed up intermediate texts, not the originals themselves.

Keywords: Bible, old Romanian texts, translation, musical instruments, percussion

Rhythmic sounds produced in various ways (clapping hands, stamping feet, snapping fingers etc.) accompanied at first magical practices and all sorts of rituals performed during wars and hunting. Gradually, they have been associated with states of mind and feelings and so they came into being musical. Their artistic (in a more restricted sense) nature developed later.

Musical instruments have a history almost as old as humanity's; they evolved from the primitive forms (represented by natural objects such as the horns of some animals or the stalks of some plants) to really complex ones (nowadays we have electric and electronic instruments). Different populations conceived them differently according to the materials available to them and also according to their skills and imagination. Sometimes, even far away from one another, two populations could have created a similar type of item, at the same time, independently; other items were specific to the populations living in a quite restricted area.

Due to Jews' contacts with Egyptians, Babylonians, Romans and the Arab world, borrowings of instruments from one population to another was a normal situation. Still, having in mind that an instrument differs in details from one producer to another, then we can easily accept the fact that there may be changes in the features of the same instrument produced by different

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communities in different times. That is why the name given to an instrument created by a group of people at some point in time does not necessarily correspond to the exact same reality some time later or to the object made by a nearby group that might have borrowed the signifier together with the signified object or might have created its own word to designate it. So, at the same time, the names and the objects fluctuate in time and space. Since the Bible is a collection of books written along many centuries, the name given to a musical instrument in the first books may be associated to a (slightly) different instrument referred to in the last books. The translation in different languages during the ages might lead, thus, to a mere approximation (or even distortions). It is not to be forgotten that most of the translators used as sources not the original books, but intermediate texts, in their turn translations which probably had as sources other translations and so on. This generates a "chain reaction": one mistake at some point led to another, any approximation involved some other(s).

We analyzed some of the Romanian translations of the Biblical texts to see whether the Hebrew realities presented in the Biblical texts were well understood and correctly expressed in Romanian and, if not, what happened "on the road". We focused only on percussion instruments since the material offered by the Bible in terms of musical instruments is huge. We looked in 5 *Psalters* from the 16th century (*Psaltirea Șcheiană, Psaltirea Voronețeană, Psaltirea Hurmuzaki*[1]; Coresi's *Psalters*[2]), and also in *Palia* (Orăștie, 1581-1582, *PO*), the two *Psalters* Dosoftei wrote (*Psaltirea în versuri*, Uniev, 1673, *Ps. v.*; *Psaltirea de'nțăles*, Iași, 1680, *DPs.*), the *Bible* written in Bucharest (1688, *BB*), Petru Pavel Aron's version of the *Bible* (Blaj, 1760-1761, *BPPA*), Samuil Micu's version (Blaj, 1795, *BSM*) and Heliade Rădulescu's version (Paris, 1858, *BHR*). As we wanted to explain unusual lexical and / or semantic occurrences in the Romanian texts, we also searched the Frankfurt *Septuagint* translated in 1597 and Pezzana's *Vulgata* – not the translation printed in 1690 at Venice, the one Aron had as his source, but one of its later editions, published in 1720. *BB* started from the Greek translation that had been done in 1597; in the following centuries, translators of the *Bible* based their works mainly on *BB* or on other versions that were based on *BB* (*BSM* has *BB* as its main source). *BPPA* started from the Venetian *Vulgata* printed in 1690. It was interesting for us to see the revised edition of Ion Heliade Rădulescu since it was much criticized for its strange forms and structures (so far from Romanian, mixed with foreign forms); we wanted to see whether the names of musical instruments have been somehow distorted or adopted from another language. For Coresi's *Psalters*, we observed the forms in the Slavonian text that is presented in the bilingual edition; since there were no differences between the forms used in all the searched *Psalters*[3], we didn't look for other Slavonian text.

We began our research with the Hebrew version and, so, we are going to start the presentation of each notion from the Hebrew name of the instrument.

[1]There are lots of controversies in what concerns the year and the place these translations had been done, but we shall connect them to the 16th century. We reffered to them as *PȘ, PV, PH*.
[2] We considered the Romanian version, from 1570 (*Ps. rom.*), and the bilingual one, from 1577 (*Ps. sl.-rom.*).
[3]*Psaltirea în versuri* is a little bit different (leaving aside some parts or reformulating some others) since it had to fit the structure of a "poem".

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1. ***Tof*** is a membranophone used in the Semit space, a drum which didn't have sticks to hit, nor any object attached to it that could rattle. In their books, Curt Sachs (2012 : 108-109) and Valeriu Bărbuceanu (see his dictionary) have written that women were normally the ones who played the *tof*. The drum is among the first instruments that have been created by the man and it is spread all around the Globe; though the shape, the size and the materials differ, the concept of *drum* is, nevertheless, the same. However, the instrument called *tof* with its local characteristics was also known in the Greek-Roman world. The names given by different communities vary a lot, even when the object refered to is basically the same, if any of the communities didn't have a great influence on the others; but if two or more communities shared interests of any kind or one community had a great impact over another, then the name (as it always happens) given to a referent knew no ethnic borders. So it happens that the Greeks named almost the same kind of drum *τυμπανον* and the Romans *tympanum*; from Greek directly and from old Slavonian as an intermediate (since Slavonian got it from Greek) the word passed in old Romanian as *tâmpănă* (for etymology see *MDA*, Scriban; in *DER* it is explained as possibly coming only from Sl.) and, after some time, Romanian has developped another form which sounds more like its Greek, Latin, French and Italian etymons (*timpan*)(see *MDA*; for comparison see also Scriban's dictionary, where the Greek word is indicated as the only source).

Older Romanian translations of Biblical texts (*PŞ*, *PV*, *PH*, *Ps. sl.-rom.*, *Ps. rom.*, *PO*, *Ps. v.*, *DPs.*, *BB*) register *tâmpănă* as an equivalent for the Hebrew *tof* / Lat. *tympanum* / Gr. *τυμπανον* / Sl. ***týmpany]0***and newer translations (*BHR*) use *tympan / timpan*, a phonetism which stays closer to the etymons. *BBSM* and *BPPA* (chronologically written in between these texts) present an oscilation between the two above-mentioned phonetic forms[4].

Petru Pavel Aron sometimes chose to change these forms (in 2 Kings 6:5, 1 Chronicals 13:8, Iov 21:12) with a synonym, *dobă* (still a valid solution); yet, the change cannot be explained since the consulted *Vulgata* has a constant use of *tympanum* in all those paragraphs in which *tof* was used in the Hebrew text (Hieronymiana and Clementiana *Vulgata* present the same situation). The translation of the extracanonical books also present oscilations here – *tâmpănă / dobă*[5] – though there is no change in the use of *tympanum* in Pezzana's translation; contrasting with Aron's text, *BB* and *BSM* consistently present *tâmpănă* in those fragments.

2. ***Msiltayim*** is a percussion instrument, an idiophone made-up of two small plates; Sachs (2012 : 122) starts from the root *șalâl* "to clash" and the ending *–ayim* which expresses the idea of plurality and, by putting things together, he comes to the conclusion that the instrument must have been *thecymbals* played in one hand in two possible ways: either attached to the thumb and middle-finger and played like castanets or „fastened inside the prongs of a flexible split cane, as cymbals on clappers" (Sachs 2012 : 123). Translators' options for *κυμβαλου* (in *Septuagint*) and *cymbalum* (in *Vulgata*) are perfect. One can observe in the Romanian texts (*BB*, *BSM*, *BPPA*[6]) records of either *țimbal* or *chinval* (with a phonetical version, *chimval*), both

[4]See Gen. 31:27;Ex. 15:20; Jud. 11:34; 1 Sam 10:5, 18:6; 2 Sam. 6:5; 1 Chron. 13:8; Ps. 67:26, 80:2, 81:2, 149:3, 150:4; Isaiah 5:12, 24:8, 30:32.
[5]Iudith 3:7, 16:1, 3 Ezd. 5:2, 1 Mac. 9:39.
[6]1 Chron. 13:8, 15:16, 15:19, 15:28, 16:5, 16:42, 25:1, 25:6; 2 Chron. 5:12, 5:13, 29:25, 1 Ezd. 3:10, Neem: 12:27.

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words converging to the same root. Dictionaries indicate the form *ţimbal* as an older form of the present *ţambal* and the latter is indicated as being a *cimbal*, while a *cimbal* is either a *chinval* (the percussion instruments consisting of two platters) or a *ceteră* (which is a stringed instrument) (Scriban, Bărbuceanu, *MDA*, Tiktin). What one can infer from here is that some forms of practically the same word had designated the same thing up to a certain point and, with influences exerted by other languages, another meaning was added and, thus, the word stopped being so clear (in the absence of a larger context or the object itself).

Though most of the words in the European languages descend from forms like *κυμβαλου* or *cymbalum*, we still find the Hungarian *cimbalom* and the German *zimbal* designating a chordophone. The solutions found for the etymology of the Romanian words vary from one dictionary to another, but the last mentioned two words were sometimes indicated as actual etymons of some Romanian forms and, if it is so, than the explanation for a second meaning of Rom. *cimbal* has been found.

Grove dictionary shows that, during the Middle Ages, *cymbala* started to designate a group of bells put on a string and hit with a little hammer, a modification in the meaning of the word that was done on German grounds. *MDA*, on the other hand, indicates that, seldom, Romanian *chinval* states for a bell, an observation that may lead us to the conclusion that this meaning may have been borrowed from the Saxon population living in Romania.

Going back to the Romanian translations, we observed that *BB* has exclusive records of *ţimbal* wherever *msiltayim* was used in the Hebrew text, *BPPA* presents exclusively *chinval* and *BSM* has both (even in the limits of the same chapter; see 1 Chron. 15:16, 15:19, 15:28). This situation extends to extracanonical works[7], where *κυμβαλου* matches *ţimbal* in *BB* and *ţimbal / chinval* in *BSM*, while *cymbalum*was paralleled to *chinval* in *BPPA*. The use of *tâmpene* in *BB* (in 1 Chron. 25:1) instead of *ţimbale* draw our attention; by analyzing the *Septuagint* edition from 1597, we discovered that the choice for *tâmpănă* in *BB* was motivated by the use of *τυμπανον* in the Frankfurt text.

3. ***Šelšelîm***is described by Curt Sachs (2012 : 122) as an idiophone made-up of two big platters that are bumped into each other in order to produce powerful sounds. Since the previously mentioned instrument and this one are not mentioned in the same texts, Sachs (2012 : 123) considers that, after all, they might have referred to one and the same thing. Yelena Kolyada has the same point of view (see diagram 3 in chapter 1 of her book). The instrument has been presented in older translations (*PŞ*, *PV*, *PH*, *Ps. sl.-rom.*) as *clopot* (Ps. 150:5) where the Slavonian text has ***cimbal1***(see the bilingual version, for instance). This takes us to what was said above about the meaning "bell" of the word *cymbala* in the Germanic space. One other possible way to interpret things is that, for some, the almost bell-shaped platters could have been associated with actual bells.*BB* has *ţimbale* in the same verse, whereas *BSM* and *BPPA* have *chinvale*, so that the two words equal *κυμβαλου* and *cymbalum* in the source-texts. *Chinval* is also attested in *BPPA* in 2 Sam. 6:5 because the translator found in the original text *cymbalis*; but *BB* names the instrument *fluier* after the Gr. *αυλος* found in the source-text and *BSM*, which took

[7] 1 Mac. 4:54, 13:51; 3 Ezd. 5:81.

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as one of the main sources the 17th century translation of the *Bible*, has interpreted the instrument also as a flute (*fluier*). The change in the Biblical text could have been made even earlier than the Frankfurt translation (and to find out one should search that edition's sources). One thing is certain: Romanian translators complied with the texts they had before their eyes.

4. ***Šališîm*** is described by Yelena Kolyada (2014 : 138) as "probably an ancient Jewish idiophone of the sistrum type, a variety of m^{e}na'an'im". Curt Sachs presents it as "the most disputed musical term of the Hebrew language; as *šāališîm* is clearly connected with *šlošâ*, 'three', and *šalóš*, 'thrice', translators of the Bible suggested now triangles, now triangular harps, three-stringed lutes and even fiddles" (Sachs 2012 : 123); he considers it must have been the name of a dance (based on number three) since the text clearly separates it from *tof* and "poets and chroniclers never separate coherent notions" (*Ibidem*). The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. XV, p. 124-125) presents the many arguments surrounding this word; it was even seen as onomatopoetic. The only problematic fragment is 1 Sam. 18:6, because other contexts are a little bit clearer, offering the possibility to interpret it as connected with either military functions and ranks (though the precise meaning has not been deciphered) or with measures.

BB translated the *κυμβαλου* written in *Septuagint* (the Frankfurt edition) as *ţimbal* (a constant choice). Samuil Micu opted for *alăută* (a stringed instrument made of a pear-shaped wooden box and a broad short neck which has a gutter attached to it perpendicularly – see Bărbuceanu's dictionary for explanations and drawings) and so he took a distance from his main source (the influence must be from one of his other sources). The Venetian *Vulgata* refers to a *sistrum* and *BPPA* translates it (well) as *clopoţeale* "little bells"; a *sistrum* is a tennis-racket shaped instrument with parallel wires instead of the net and little plates, bells or other little objects (such as shells) are bound to these wires so as when the instrument is shaken, the little objects jingle.

5. ***Mnaanim*** is only mentioned once, in 2 Sam. 6:5. Sachs (2012 : 121) considers that "the name might have applied to a rattling vessel" or, better, to a *sistrum* of the kind Egyptians used to have. Yelena Kolyada starts from the verb *nûa* "to shake", "to swing", "to move from one place to another" and decides it is an idiophone, a *sistrum* or any kind of rattle (Kolyada 2014 : 112); she observes that different translations treated this word (*m^{e}na'an'im*) as a percussion instrument (either membranophone or idiophone), an aerophone or even a chordophone (see p. 114-115).

Since *mnaanim* is interpreted in *Vulgata* (1690, Venice) as a sistrum, Petru Pavel Aron chose to use in his text the word *clopoţei*, a solution he got for *sistrum* in 1 Sam. 18:6 (where it stood for *šališîm*). The Frankfurt *Septuagint* contains *κυμβαλου* in the above-mentioned Biblical fragment and the word passed in BB as *ţimbal* and from there in *BSM* as *ţimbal* as well.

6. ***Pa'āmon*** is defined in *Grove* dictionary as a percussion instrument, an idiophone, namely a bell or a jingle. Sachs (2012 : 109-110) defines it exactly the same and specifies that bells are normally used as a defence against evil forces; he also says that it was an indispensable accesory of the wealthy people's clothes in the 14th and 15th centuries.

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The musical instrument is registered in two chapters of the same book (Ex. 28:33-34; Ex. 39:25-26). In these places, the presence of *tintinnabulum* is atested in *Vulgata* (1690); *BPPA* has *clopoţel*, a good translation of the Latin word which means "an idiophone, a type of bell used in old Rome" (see Bărbuceanu's dictionary). *BB* and *BSM* followed closely the Greektext, where *κώδωνα* is presented ("Term for bell, also sometimes applied to the Salpinx (…) because of the bell-shaped flare at the end of the instrument" – *Grove* dictionary),and so, the two Romanian texts contain the word *clopoţel*. Interesting is the use of *tintin(n)abulum* in *BHR*; Heliade Rădulescu inserted a foreign word, though it was definitely not necessary.

Conclusions:

1. The interpretation of some of the names of musical instruments that one finds in the Hebrew text can be very tricky. Since the words are really archaic and old translations (more connected to the roots) interpreted them in various ways, confusion has been created along centuries. The truth must be that the real meaning is completely unknown and there are only speculations. See, for instance, *šališîm*.
2. Somewhere in the chain of translations, mistakes or confusions sometimes were made and the results could be seen on paper. Records of these deviations can then be observed in the texts that had as main sources the texts containing errors (see *šelšelîm – αυλος – fluier*).
3. In some cases, two or more instruments found in the Hebrew text were translated in Greek with the same word (approximating things, either because Greeks didn't have all those objects or they didn't have distinct words to differentiate similar instruments at the time when the translation was being done). Latin texts did the same. The situation extended then to other languages, Romanian included. See *chinval – ţimbal*.
4. Polysemantic words can lead to misunderstandings in decoding a text. A word like Rom. *ţimbal* found in a text can be interpreted as either an older form of *ţambal* (hence, a chordophone) or as the synonym of *chinval* (hence, a percussion instrument); unless one checks another text in a different language or even the Hebrew text, one cannot be sure what the fragment is about. And there comes another problem: even if the translator equaled *cymbalum* (for example) with *ţimbal*, no one can be sure that the translator was really aware of the content of those words and that he/she didn't mix up signifiers and signified concepts in his/her head.
5. The Romanian translators (except for Heliade Rădulescu – consider his option for *tintin(n)abulum*) have made good choices in translating the names of percussion instruments, following the sources precisely and proving a keen understanding of concepts.

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