

The perfective auxiliary *o* in the Moldavian variety. Diachrony and synchrony

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is the analysis of the perfective auxiliary *o* in the Moldavian variety. The paper starts by discussing the origin, the dating, the localization, and the evolution of the form *o* in Romanian, until the 19th century. Against the literature and the linguistic atlases according to which the form *o* is general in Moldavia, our corpus study has revealed that the forms *a* and *au* are also used alongside the form *o*, under the influence of the standard language; moreover, the form *o* shows a tendency towards specialization for contexts with multiple cliticization.

Our analysis—which contributes to the understanding of the phonology-morphology interface—can be extended to the study of other regional varieties of Romanian.

1. Introduction

In this paper, we analyse the perfective auxiliary *o* (3rd person, singular and plural) in the Moldavian variety of Romanian. The starting point of our research is the remark that the information in the dialectological treatises and the linguistic atlases differs to a certain extent from what we have found in the examination of the dialectal texts. The treatises mention that the form *o* is used in Moldavia for the 3rd person singular and plural, a fact confirmed by the linguistic maps, whereas the situation found in texts is different: alongside the form *o*, in this region the standard forms *a* and *au* are also used syncretically, both for the singular and the plural. In what follows, we will try to identify the factors that influence the usage of the forms *o*, on the one hand, and *a/au*, on the other hand. This research can be extended to other regional varieties of Romanian, in which more than one form of the perfective auxiliary is used.

First of all, we briefly review the data discussed in the literature related to the form *o* in the Daco-Romanian varieties and the hypotheses formulated with respect to the origin of the form *o* (§2). We then tackle the history of the form *o*, starting with its first attestations and ending with data from the 19th century (§3). Finally, we analyse the distribution of the form *o* and the parallel forms *a/au* in certain maps from the linguistic atlases and in dialectal texts from Moldavia (§4). In §5, we draw the conclusions and formulate an account for the parallel usage of the two forms of the auxiliary.

2. The auxiliary *o* in dialectal Daco-Romanian

In this section, we present the distribution of the form *o* in the present-day varieties, as described in the dialectological studies, and the hypotheses on the origin of this form.

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2.1. The distribution of the form *o* in the present-day varieties

According to the dialectological studies, one of the features that distinguish the Southern varieties from the Northern ones is the form of the perfect auxiliary for the 3rd person: *a* in Wallachia and *o* in the Northern varieties, both for singular and plural.

In the table below, we have synthesised the information from Caragiu Marioţeanu *et al.* (1977, p. 142, 149, 158, 162, 167) and TDR (1984, p. 179, 225, 263, 309, 337), in order to draw a general image of the geographical distribution of the 3rd person form of the perfective auxiliary in Romanian.

Variety	3 rd person singular	3 rd person plural
Wallachia	<i>a</i>	<i>a, au</i>
Moldavia	<i>o</i>	<i>o, au</i>
Banat	<i>o</i>	<i>or</i>
Crişana	<i>o</i>	<i>o, or, au</i>
Maramureş	<i>o</i>	<i>o, or</i>
Transylvania	<i>o</i>	<i>o, or</i>

Table 1: The distribution of the auxiliary *o* in Daco-Romanian varieties

The table above shows that, according to the dialectological treatises, the form *o* is used both for the singular and the plural in all the Northern varieties, except for the Banat, where it is used only for the singular. Of the Northern varieties, the Moldavian one is characterised by the absence of the plural form *or*, therefore the form *o* is the syncretic expression of the singular and the plural.

2.2. Hypotheses on the origin of the form *o*

As we will extensively show in §3, the form *o* is not attested in the first period of old Romanian. Thus, the form *o* emerged at a later stage and its origin is controversial. Frâncu (1969, p. 303) offers a summary of the emergence of the form *o*:

- (i) the form *o* replaced the form *a* in specific conditions (Coteanu, 1961, p. 89): first, the 3rd person plural *or* occurred (it extended from the future auxiliary *a vrea* ‘want’, through the future-in-the-past with a presumptive value, which is also a past tense), and then the singular form *o* was recreated; for the variety considered in this paper, this hypothesis is hard to support, because *or* is not used at all in Moldavia for the plural;
- (ii) *o* < *au* (< Lat. HABUNT) by assimilation, a hypothesis put forth by Frâncu (1969, p. 303), using old Romanian data (see §3);
- (iii) *o* has a mixed origin: *a avea* ‘have’ and *a vrea* ‘want’.

As noticed by Coteanu (1961, p. 89) and Frâncu (1969, p. 303), the form *o* cannot derive from *a*, because such a phonetic change is impossible in Romanian. Frâncu (1969, p. 305–306) argues against hypotheses (i) and (iii), showing that: the areas of perfective *o* and future *o* do not overlap, the *o*-future is more recent than the compound past with *o*, and the form *or* (attested only in Banat, according to Frâncu) dates from the beginning of the 19th century; therefore, the form *o* of the compound past probably occurred before the contamination between *a vrea* ‘want’ and *a avea* ‘have’, recently attested in Banat.

After analysing, in the next section, the data from old Romanian, we will adopt the hypothesis that *o* originates in *au*.

3. The auxiliary *o* in diachrony

The 3rd person perfective auxiliary *o* was not of much interest for researchers. The authors which have taken up this issue, Frâncu (1969), Gheţie (1975), and Zamfir (2007) arrived at (slightly) different results, because the corpus on which their analyses are based is different.

3.1. Frâncu (1969, p. 304) shows that the form *o* is old enough, being attested in documents from the Northern area, ever since the beginning of the 17th century. According to his research, the form *o* is absent not only from religious texts (a fact which shows that it did not belong to the standard/literary language), but also from the Wallachian documents. It has only one attestation in the oldest version of *Alexandria*, the 1620 variant (1). Frâncu (1969, p. 304) also notices that the form *o* is not attested in the Moldavian chronicles, because the copies preserved were made by Wallachian scribes.

- (1) *ți-o dat (A.1620, 112/13)*
 CL.DAT.2SG=O give.PPPE
 'He gave to you'

Arguing for his hypothesis on the origin of the form *o* (see *supra*, §2.2), Frâncu (1969, p. 300–304) also analyses the distribution of the forms *a* and *au* in old Romanian. The author notices that, in the 16th century, the form *a* is not attested in texts with rhotacism and in Coresi's printings (in which the form *au* is exclusively used, both for the singular and the plural), the first religious text containing the form *o* being PO.1582. Frâncu (1969, p. 301) shows that the usage of *a* is not just a writing error; rather, it illustrates the involuntary and unconscious penetration of oral elements in the written language. Thus, the form *a* does not belong to the literary language of the 16th century, but it was probably used in the spoken language. In the 17th century, *a* was frequently used in Wallachia (Frâncu, 1969, p. 302). Therefore, in the 17th century, there were two areas for the 3rd person singular of the perfective auxiliary: a Southern area, where *a* and *au* were used, and a Northern area, where *o* and *au* were used.

Frâncu (1969, p. 304) shows that the initial stage of the assimilation of *a* from *au* by the rounded vowel *u* is attested in inscriptions from Maramureș, dating back to the first half of the 17th century:

- (2) *Popa Pinte nu oo dat ce oou plătit*
 priest Pinte not O give.PPPE what O pay.PPPE
și oou spus (IM, p. 33, apud Frâncu, 1969, p. 302)
 and O say.PPPE
 'Priest Pinte did not give what he paid for and what he said'

Frâncu (1969, p. 304) notices that the change *au* > *o* by assimilation occurs especially when the auxiliary is preceded by a rounded vowel, namely the direct object *o* (3rd person singular feminine accusative clitic), which was preverbal in old Romanian, and he illustrates this case with examples like the following:

- (3) a. *Această carte o-u [= o au] cumperat popa Lupu (1720, MM, IM, p. 33)*
 this book O=AUX.PERF.3SG buy.PPPE priest Lupu
 'Priest Lupu bought this book'
- b. *Cum o-u [= o au] crescute (1619, DR, 45)*
 how O=AUX.PERF.3SG=PL raise.PPPE
 'how he/they raised it'
- c. *Cum au luat pre Despina de mică de*
 how AUX.PERF.2SG take.PPPE DOM Despina of little that
o [= o au] ținut el și o crescute el ca o fată
 O (O=AUX.PERF.3SG) keep.PPPE he and O raise.PPPE he like a daughter
a lui și o hrănit 30 de ani (1615, Mold, DB, 111)
 GEN his and O feed.PPPE 30 of years
 'How he took Despina when she was a little girl and he kept her, he raised her and fed her for 30 years'

Frâncu (1969, p. 305) concludes that the form *o* originates in *au*, and the written forms *o-u* and *oo* represent the initial stage of the assimilation of *a* from *au*, favoured by the presence of a rounded vowel. Another argument for this conclusion comes the fact that, in the old language, *o* only occurs in the areas where *au* is exclusively used for singular and plural and that in the present-day language *au* is attested only in the areas where *o* is also used.

3.2. Gheție (1975, p. 171) shows that in Moldavia the new form *o* emerges soon after 1600 (4). In Transylvania, *o* is attested at the beginning of the 17th century and frequently shows up in original documents after 1700. In Banat, an area for which the first preserved original documents are from the 18th century, *o* is attested only once (5).

- (4) a. *o crescut* (1615)
 O grow.PPLE
 b. *o dat* (1619)
 O give.PPLE
 c. *s-o pus* (1660)
 CL.REFL=O put.PPLE
 d. *o ținut* (1699)
 O keep.PPLE
 (5) *o cumpărat-o* (1732)
 O buy.PPLE=CL.ACC.F.3SG
 ‘he bought it’

3.3. Zamfir (2007, p. 111) suggests the same timing: *o* is an innovation of the 17th century, which was not attested in the previous century. Working on a larger corpus, especially on more recently edited original documents, Zamfir (2007, p. 112) reaches more nuanced results than her predecessors: in old Romanian, *o* had an inverse distribution when compared to that of the present-day language: in the first period of old Romanian, she identifies 12 occurrences in original documents from Wallachia (not taken into account by Frâncu) and two occurrences in Moldavia.

Zamfir (2007, p. 111) shows that the initial stage identified by Frâncu (1969), illustrated with examples from the inscriptions from Maramureș, is also attested quite frequently in Southern original documents. The author quotes examples in which the auxiliary *au* preceded by the clitic *o* is elided, the result being the semivowel *u*:

- (6) a. *o-u vîndut* (DRH A XIX/361, 505, 1; DRH A XXI/132, 169: 12)
 O=AUX.PERF.3PL sell.PPLE
 ‘they sold it’
 b. *o-u cumpărat* (DIR A II/347, 266, 4)
 O=AUX.PERF.3PL buy.PPLE
 ‘they bought it’

Significantly, of the 15 occurrences of the auxiliary *o* identified by Zamfir (2007), in 12 this element occurs in contexts in which the presence of the clitic *o* is syntactically required—that is, with transitive verbs —(7)—but in which, in contrast to (6), there are no relics of the original form of the auxiliary.

- (7) *o [< o o] datu*
 O give.PPLE
 o [< o o] vîndut
 O sell.PPLE

<i>o</i> [<i>< o o</i>]	<i>ținut</i>	
o	keep.PPLE	
<i>o</i> [<i>< o o</i>]	<i>criscut</i>	
o	raise.PPLE	
<i>o</i> [<i>< o o</i>]	<i>hrănit</i>	
o	feed.PPLE	
<i>fostu-o</i> [<i>< o o</i>]	<i>luat</i>	
be.PPLE=O	take.PPLE	
<i>o</i> [<i>< o o</i>]	<i>fost</i>	<i>dat</i>
o	be.PPLE	give.PPLE
<i>o</i> [<i>< o o</i>]	<i>fost</i>	<i>vîndut</i>
o	be.PPLE	sell.PPLE
<i>o</i> [<i>< o o</i>]	<i>văndut</i>	
o	sell.PPLE	

Therefore, the form *o* in contexts such as *o au* CL.ACC.F.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG≡PL represents a step forward in comparison with the elided forms (Zamfir, 2007, p. 113). Moreover, elision also affects other forms of the auxiliary (8), therefore there is no necessary link between elision and the emergence of a systematic variant *o* for the 3rd person perfective auxiliary.

(8)	<i>o-mu</i>	<i>vîndutu</i>
	CL.ACC.F.3SG=AUX.PERF.1SG≡PL	sell.PPLE

The author concludes that *o* attested in the Wallachian original documents is a pseudo-auxiliary which incorporates two elements: the pronominal clitic *o* and the 3rd person form of the perfective auxiliary.

Zamfir (2007, p. 113) also has an important contribution for the dating and localization of the plural form *or(u)* characterizing today the area of Banat, which she attests for the first time in an original document from Wallachia (9); she nevertheless suggests that the copyist was from Banat.

(9)	<i>oru</i>	<i>făcut</i>	(DRH B XXIII/436, 636, 8, 1632)
	AUX.PERF.3PL	do.PPLE	
	'they did'		

Finally, another relevant observation is that the phonetic structure of the perfective auxiliary in old Romanian, for all the persons, is, in many cases, altered because the auxiliary often clusters together with other monosyllabic forms, especially with pronominal clitics. Therefore, the phonetic shape of the auxiliary is prone to a strong "vulnerability" (Zamfir, 2007, p. 114).

3.4. An investigation of the 19th century (Dragomirescu, 2012, p. 204) shows that in this period *o* did not belong to the standard language either. Until 1880, in Moldavia, the form *au* is almost general but certain grammars also mention the forms *a* and *o*. Although the grammars do not recommend this form, *o* is (rarely) used by Moldavian writers:

(10)	a.	<i>s-o</i>	<i>fudulit,</i>	
		CL.REFL=AUX.PERF.3SG≡PL	show.off.PPLE	
		<i>te-o</i>	<i>apucat</i>	(Alecsandri)
		CL.ACC.2SG=AUX.PERF.3SG≡PL	catch.PPLE	
		'he/they showed off', 'he caught you'		
	b.	<i>s-o-ntîlnit</i>		(Conachi)
		CL.REFL=AUX.PERF.3SG≡PL=meet.PPLE		
		'they met'		

3.5. Therefore, there is agreement in the literature on the fact that the perfective auxiliary *o* emerged at the beginning of the 17th century. The diachronic data suggest that there is no direct relation between the future auxiliary and the perfective forms *o* and *or*. Another common point seems to be the relation between the auxiliary *o* and the pronominal clitic *o* (possibly, other pronominal clitics too).

As far as the origin of this innovation is concerned, the information differs: **Frâncu (1969)** identifies the form *o* only in Moldavian original documents and the hybrid forms (such as *oo* or *o = auxiliary + clitic*) in inscriptions from Maramureș, whereas **Zamfir (2007)** discovers not only the form *o* (auxiliary or clitic + auxiliary), but also hybrid forms (*o-u*) especially in Wallachia. For the purpose of this analysis, we will endorse the hypothesis that *o* emerged from *au* by assimilation, under the right phonetic conditions: the vowel /a/, whose features are [central, open, non-rounded], is partially assimilated by the vowel /u/, characterized by the features [back, close, rounded], the result being the vowel /o/, which is [back, open-mid, rounded], therefore preserving all the features of /u/, except for the aperture, which changes under the influence of the open vowel /a/.

We should also keep in mind the idea that, in the old language, the perfective auxiliary was phonetically very vulnerable in the regional varieties.

In the next section we will analyse the distribution of the auxiliary *o* in the Moldavian variety, first of all in linguistic atlases and then in texts; we will try to decide whether there are restrictions related to the syntactic class of the lexical verb (whether the auxiliary *o* is preferred with transitive verbs, in which the pronominal clitic *o* can also occur) and to the presence of other clitic elements.

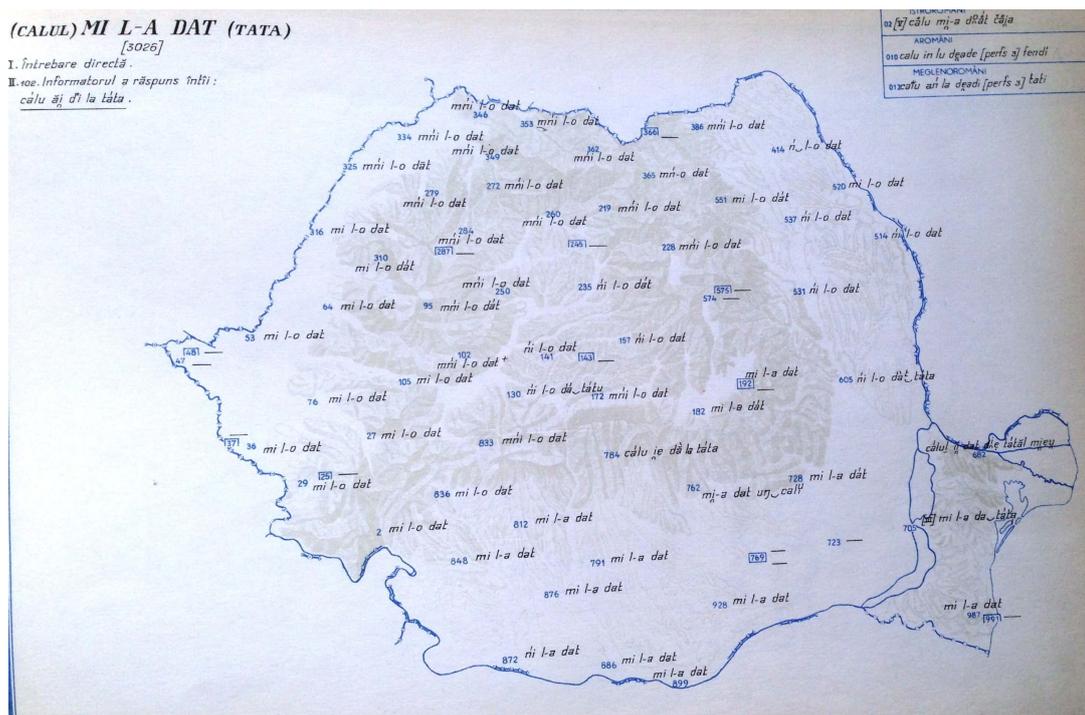
4. The auxiliary *o* in the Moldavian variety. The relation with cliticization

In contrast to other Northern varieties, in Moldavia, the auxiliary *o* is used both for the singular and for the plural; a special form for the plural, such as *or* in other areas, is not attested in this variety.

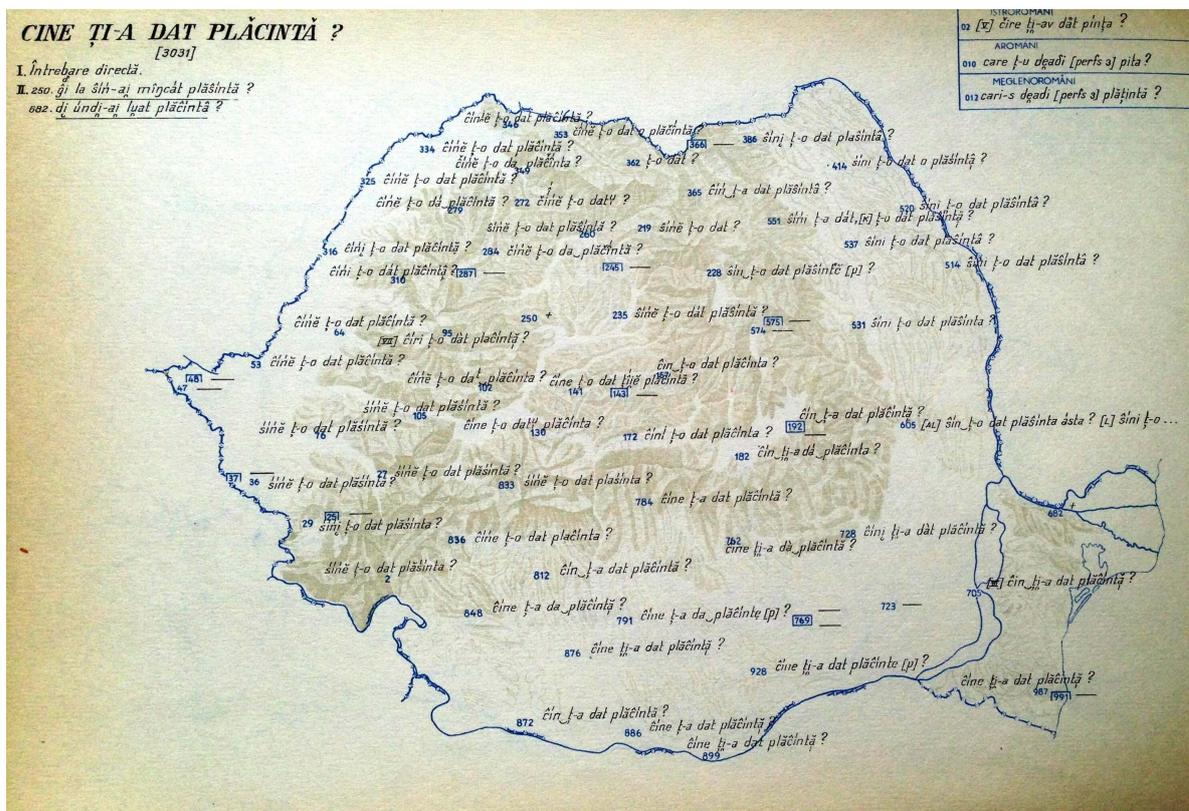
4.1. The data in the linguistic atlases

In this section, we analyse certain maps from **ALR s.n. V** and **VI** and from **ALR I**, which contain compound perfect forms for the 3rd person singular, co-occurring with pronominal clitics, in order to see which forms are preferred in Moldavia.

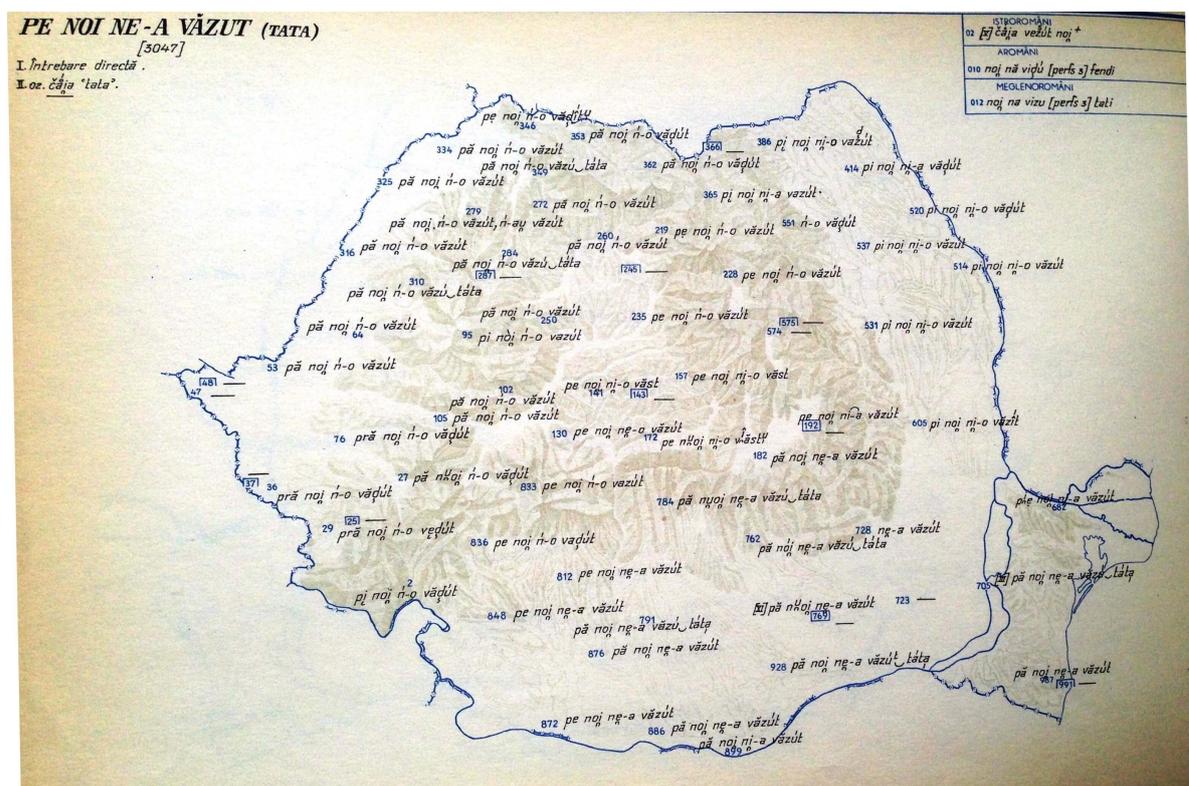
- (i) On map 1625, (*Calul*) *mi l-a dat tata* horse.DEF CL.DAT.1SG=AUX.PERF.3SG give.PP.LF father.DEF 'Father gave me the horse' (**ALR s.n. VI**), the form *o* occurs 11 times, whereas the form *a* only twice.



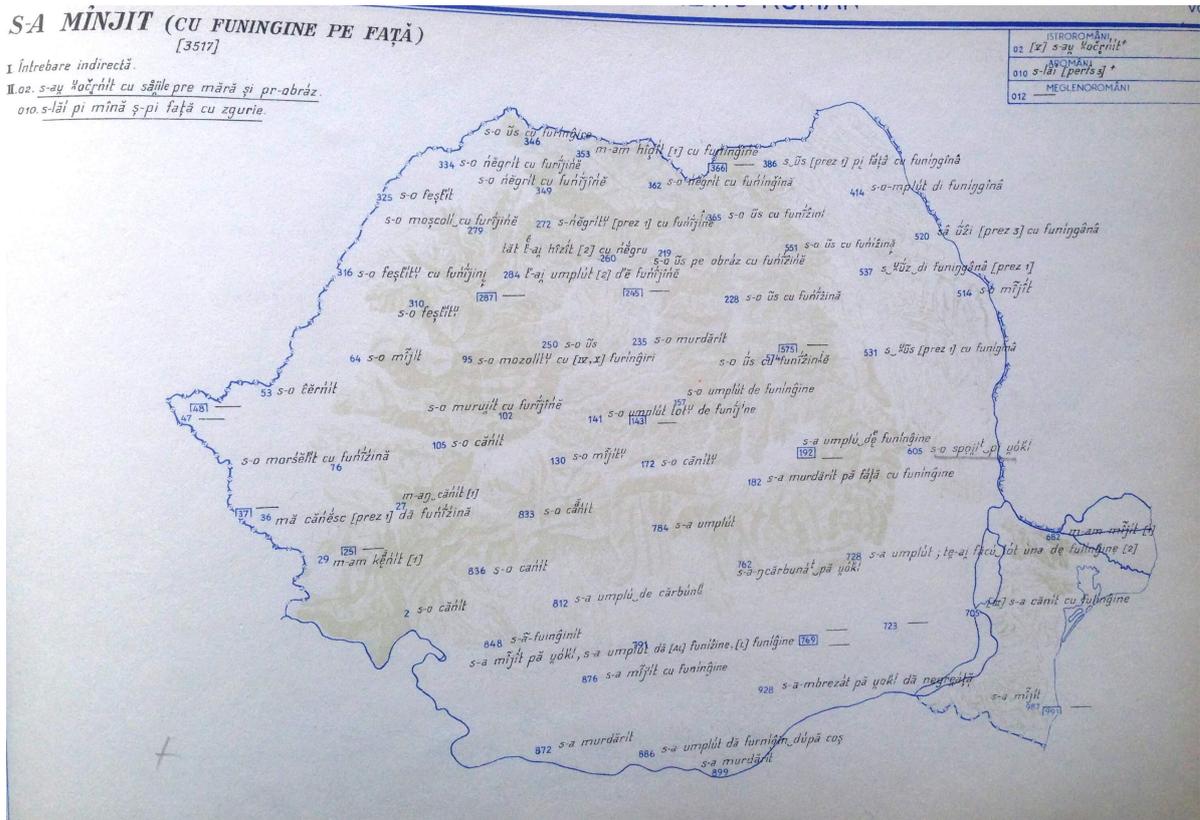
- (ii) On map 1630, *Cine ți-a dat plăcintă* who CL.DAT.2SG=AUX.PERF.3SG give.PPLE pie ‘Who gave you pie?’ (ALR s.n. VI), *o* is used 9 times and *a* twice:



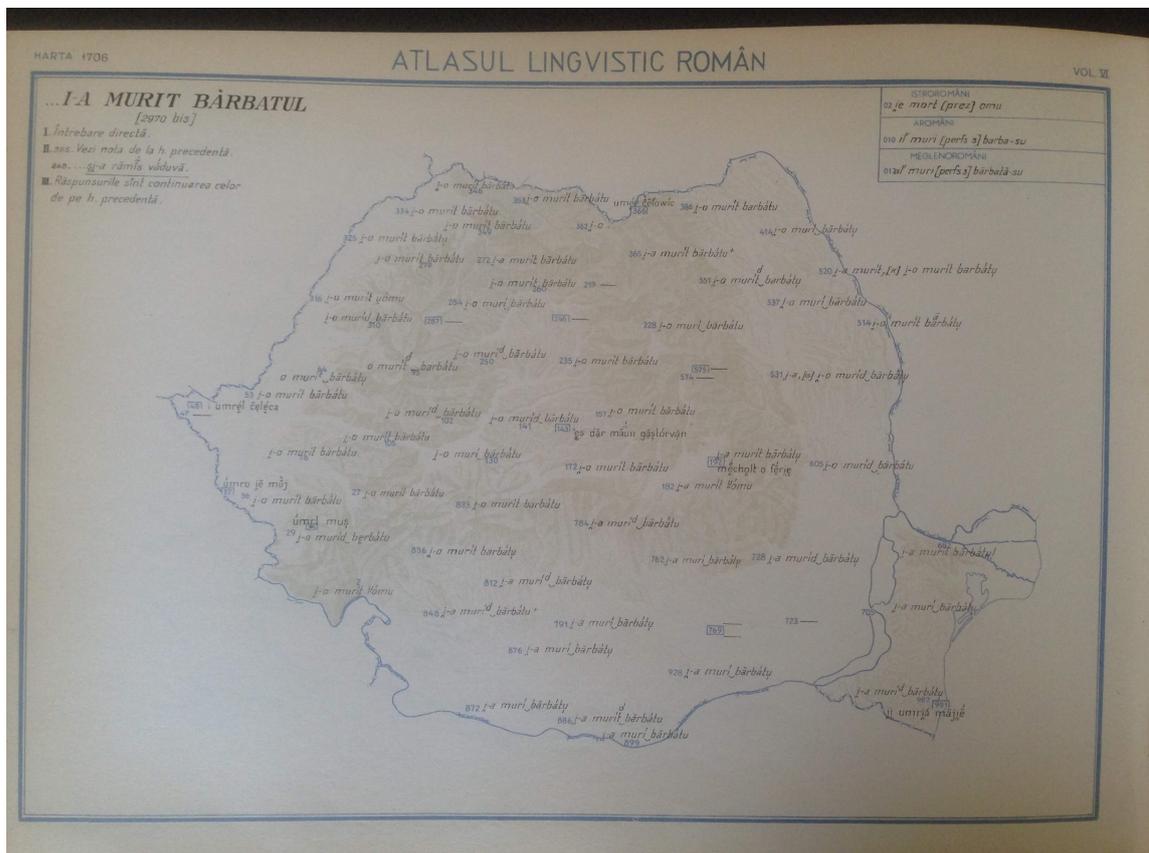
- (iii) On map 1642, *Pe noi ne-a văzut tata* DOM us CL.ACC.1PL=AUX.PERF.3SG see.PPLE father.DEF ‘Father saw us’ (ALR s.n. VI), *o* shows up 8 times and *a* twice:



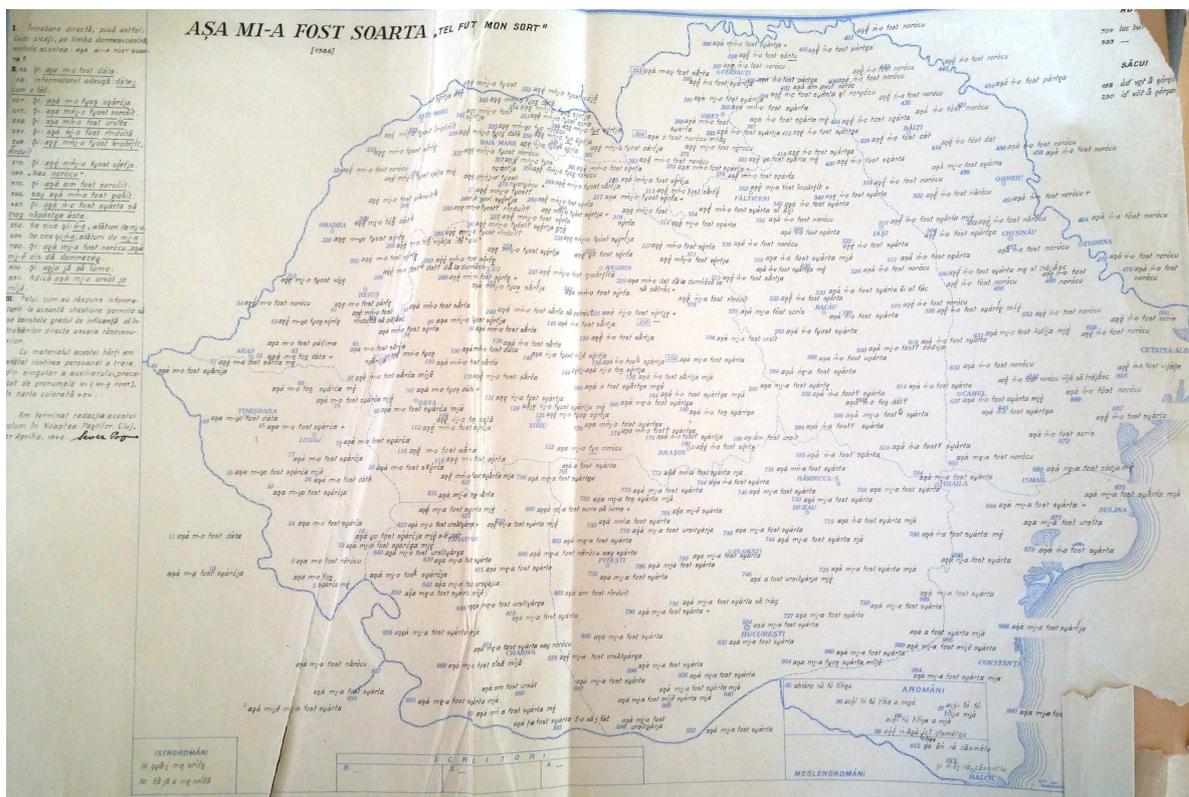
- (iv) On map 1455, *S-a mînjit (cu funingine pe fațã)* CL.REFL=AUX.PERF.3SG soil.PPLE with soot on face ‘He soiled his face with soot’ (ALR s.n. V), *o* is used nine times, while *a* is used twice:



- (v) On map 1706, ... *I-a murit bărbatul* CL.DAT.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG die.PPLE husband.DEF ‘Her husband died’ (ALR s.n. VI), there are eight occurrences of the form *o* and two of the form *a*:



- (vi) On map 302, *Așa mi-a fost soarta* like this CL.DAT.1SG=AUX.PERF.3SG be.PPLE fate.DEF ‘This has been my fate’ (ALR I, vol. II, part II) *o* is used in 49 points, while *a* is preferred in 12 points:



The analysis of these maps shows that *o* is preferred in the entire area of Moldavia, except for certain villages in the South, where *a* is employed. From these maps, it is apparent that *o* is compatible not only with transitive verbs [(i)–(iv)], but also with intransitives [(v)–(vi)]; the data in the maps are not relevant for the relation with cliticization, because the same situation is encountered as well when the auxiliary is not accompanied by pronominal clitics (for example, on the maps *Atîția au venit* ‘So many came’, *A făcut ce-a făcut* ‘He did what he did’, and *Au ars* ‘They burned’ from ALR s.n.). Thus, according to the atlases, the form *o* is general in Moldavia (except the few Southern points), irrespective of the presence of pronominal clitics. Roughly speaking, the atlases confirm the description in the dialectological handbooks.

4.2. The data from texts

The texts analysed in this research belong to three categories (see also Botez, 2016), which illustrate different moments (from the 20th and the 21st centuries) and have a different geographical distribution (in Moldavia):

- (i) older texts (from 1930–1960), collected from the entire territory where the Moldavian variety is spoken, included in the volume published by Emil Petrovici as a supplement to ALR II (referred to as TD below) and in Caragiu Marioțeanu et al. (1977) (referred to as DR below);
- (ii) dialectal texts (from 1968–1972) included in the supplement to NALR, volume I, part II (the counties Vrancea, Galați and Bacău), published by Stelian Dumistrăcel in 1995;
- (iii) new texts by Mădălina Botez, made in 2016 in two villages from the county of Neamț (Grințieșu Mare and Poiana, from the Grințieș commune) and in Tîrgu Neamț.

With respect to the relation between the auxiliary *o* and the transitivity of the lexical verb (see the discussion from Zamfir, 2007 above), it is worth mentioning that in the texts under analysis the auxiliary *o* equally combines with transitive (11) and intransitive (12) verbs.

- (11) a. *o dat* (TD, 166)
 O give.PPLE
 b. *o văzută* (TD, 197)
 O see.PPLE
 c. *o făcut* (TD, 202)
 O do.PPLE
- (12) a. *o vinit* (TD, 166, 180, 201, 208)
 O come.PPLE
 b. *o stat* (DR, 236)
 O sit.PPLE
 c. *o plecat* (DR, 236)
 O leave.PPLE

In the dialectal texts from (i), we have identified 31 structures with *o* without other clitics, 23 for the singular (13a) and 8 for the plural (13b). In 60 contexts, *o* is accompanied by pronominal clitics, by coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, 52 forms being used for the singular (14a–c) and 8 for the plural (14d). The standard form *a* does not occur in these texts, whereas *au* occurs only once as a singular (15a) and once with a plural value (15b).

- (13) a. *o ieșit* (TD, 197, 205)
 O go.out.PPLE
 b. *o trecut* (DR, 236)
 O pass.PPLE
- (14) a. *l-o-ntrebat* (TD, 179)
 CL.ACC.M.3SG=O=ask.PPLE
 b. *ș-o dus-o* (TD, 180)
 and=O bring.PPLE=CL.ACC.F.3SG
 c. *c-o văduț* (TD, 212)
 that=O see.PPLE
 d. *s-o făcut* (TD, 169)
 CL.REFL=O make.PPLE
- (15) a. *au gicit* (TD, 171)
 AUX.PERF.3SG guess.PPLE
 b. *au pălit* (TD, 172)
 AUX.PERF.3PL turn.pale.PPLE

In the texts under (ii), we have identified 19 contexts with *o* unaccompanied by pronominal clitics (16) and 71 contexts with *o* co-occurring with pronominal clitics and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (17). The standard forms *a* (for singular and plural) and *au* (for plural) occur without other clitic elements in 135 context (18) and with other clitics in 196 contexts (19).

- (16) a. *o intrat* (NALR, 15)
 O enter.PPLE
 b. *o vinit* (NALR, 15)
 O come.PPLE
- (17) a. *m-o lovit un mînz* (NALR, 15)
 CL.ACC.1SG=O kick.PPLE a colt
 'a colt kicked me'

- b. *c-o fost* (NALR, 21)
that=O be.PPLE
- (18) a. *a sărit cu toți* (NALR, 23)
AUX.PERF.3PL jump.PPLE with all
'They all jumped'
- b. *a liegat vaca* (NALR, 12)
AUX.PERF.3SG tie.PPLE cow.DEF
'he tied up the cow'
- (19) a. *m-a trimes părinți* (NALR, 238)
CL.ACC.1SG=AUX.PERF.3SG send.PPLE at parents
'he sent me to my parents'
- b. *s-au dus* (NALR, 12)
CL.REFL=AUX.PERF.3PL go.PPLE
'they left'

In the texts under (iii), we have identified 25 constructions with *o* unaccompanied by other clitics, 22 for the singular (20a) and 3 for the plural (20b) and 31 constructions with *o* co-occurring with pronominal clitics, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, and relative pronouns, 24 for the singular (21a–c) and 7 for the plural (21d–e). We have also identified 5 standard forms, all for the plural, among which 4 occur without other clitics (22) and one in which *au* attaches to the *wh*-element *ce* 'what' (in the Moldavian pronunciation [ʃe]) (23).

- (20) a. *o fost*
O be.PPLE
- b. *o vint*
O come.PPLE
- (21) a. *m-o ajutat*
CL.ACC.1SG=O help.PPLE
'he helped me'
- b. *ș-o zîs*
and=O say.PPLE
'and he said'
- c. *c-o fost*
that=O be.PPLE
'that he was'
- d. *nu prea s-o dus*
not really CL.REFL=O go.PPLE
'they did not really go'
- e. *cari-o fost*
which.PL=O be.PPLE
'which was'
- (22) a. *au făcut*
AUX.PERF.3PL do.PPLE
- b. *au fost*
AUX.PERF.3PL be.PPLE
- c. *au vrut*
AUX.PERF.3PL want.PPLE
- (23) *ș-au făcut*
what=AUX.PERF.3PL do.PPLE
'What did they do?'

In Table 2, we synthesize the results of the corpus study; the factors relevant for our research purposes have been boldfaced.

Source	<i>o</i> [+ clitics, conjunctions]	<i>o</i> [– clitics, conjunctions]	<i>a, au</i> [+ clitics, conjunctions]	<i>a, au</i> [– clitics, conjunctions]	Total
DR, TD (1930–1960)	60 (64,52%)	31 (33,33%)	–	2 (2,15%)	93 (100%)
NALR (total) (1968–1972)	71 (16,86%)	19 (4,51%)	196 (46,56%)	135 (32,07%)	421 (100%)
a. Vrancea	33 (13,63%)	8 (3,30%)	126 (52,07%)	75 (31%)	242 (100%)
b. Galați	17 (48,58%)	3 (8,57%)	11 (31,42%)	4 (11,43%)	35 (100%)
c. Bacău	21 (14,58%)	8 (5,56%)	59 (40,97%)	56 (38,89%)	144 (100%)
Recordings (Neamț, 2016)	31 (50,82%)	25 (40,98%)	1 (1,64%)	4 (6,56%)	61 (100%)

Table 2: The distribution of the forms *o* vs *a, au* in texts from Moldavia

The statistical data in the table, although not unitary, suggest that: (i) the texts from the first category, recorded in the first half of the 20th century, roughly confirm the information from the dialectological treatises and from the linguistic atlases, according to which the form *o* is general in Moldavia; (ii) in the texts from the second category, recorded in the second half of the 20th century in the Southern region of Moldavia, the percentages are unequal: the standard forms are preferred in Vrancea and Bacău, whereas the texts from Galați show a preference for the form *o*, especially when it co-occurs with other clitics; (iii) the texts from the last category, from the North, show a clear preference for the form *o*, independently of the existence of other clitic elements.

5. Conclusions

Our synchronic and diachronic analysis of the perfective auxiliary *o* in the Moldavian variety points to the following conclusions:

- (i) the auxiliary *o* developed from *au* by assimilation, and the context which favoured this change involves the existence of other clitics, especially the pronominal clitic *o*—see examples (1)–(3), (4c–d), (5)–(7);
- (ii) the auxiliary *o* is first attested at the beginning of the 17th century; similarly to the present-day situation, it has always been a non-standard form¹, belonging to the spoken language;
- (iii) the data from the dialectological treatises and from the linguistic atlases, as well as the texts from **DR** and **TD**, suggest that the form *o* is (quasi)general in Moldavia;
- (iv) the data from other texts, more recently collected, suggest, on the one hand, that the form *o* is used alongside the standard forms *a* and *au* (probably under the pressure of the standard language, especially in the Southern part of Moldavia) in similar contexts, and, on the other hand, that there is an incipient tendency towards the specialization of the form *o* for contexts with multiple phonological cliticization.

Besides the descriptive conclusions, we can also put forth the hypothesis that the current situation of the Moldavian variety is determined by the contact with the standard language, a special type of linguistic

¹In order to verify once more the usage of the auxiliary *o* in literary texts, we have surveyed two old texts published in Moldavia, **Prav.1581** and **șr.1644**. The form *o* is not attested in these texts.

contact, which implies competition (in this case, between the form *o* and the forms *a/au*) and change (Van Coetsem, 1992, p. 27). The transfer from the source-variety (the standard language) and the target-variety (the Moldavian one) involves a process of over-differentiation, opposed to the under-differentiation – Weinreich, 1953, p. 18), in which, due to reasons still hard to understand², the form *o* manifests the tendency towards the specialization for contexts in which other clitics are present, whereas the standard variants (*a, au*) are preferred in the absence of other clitics.

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²We could not identify a precise phonetic context which favours the usage of the form *o*. For similar conclusions related to the position of the pronominal clitic *o*, see Ledgeway (2017).

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