Book Review

Pană Dindelegan, Gabriela, ed. 2016. *The syntax of Old Romanian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. xxxi + 691. ISBN: 978-0-19-871235-0. £ 90.00; US $ 175.00.

Reviewed by **Kim Schulte,** Universitat Jaume I, Castellón de la Plana, Spain,
E-mail: kschulte@uji.es

https://doi.org/10.1515/flih-2018-0021

The Syntax of Old Romanian is a timely and important contribution to the field of Romanian historical linguistics, and it is also a valuable resource for comparative Romance linguists. Intended as a complementary continuation of *The Grammar of Romanian* (Pană Dindelegan 2013), which offers a synchronic account of the present-day language, the volume under review focuses on the period between 1500 and 1780, from the date of the oldest preserved Romanian texts to the final stages of what is generally considered 'Old Romanian'.

The book is written in a way that makes it accessible to a wide range of linguists, largely eschewing the application of specific syntactic frameworks, though in some sections the terminology is notably influenced by generative grammar. In general, however, the reader is presented with a largely traditional grammatical description that, nevertheless, also takes into account aspects such as usage frequency and discourse factors where relevant. While it is explicitly aimed at a 'non-Romanian readership', a basic knowledge of modern Romanian is certainly helpful, as the introductory explanation of the linguistic structures analysed can, on occasion, be very brief.

From the very beginning, Pană Dindelegan makes it clear that this volume is not a synchronic account of the language at a particular point in its history; much attention is paid to changes and developments taking place during the Old Romanian period. This is a laudably realistic approach in comparison to more traditional accounts that sometimes give the impression of changelessness within established 'stages' of a language. Similarly, throughout the book there is an emphasis on diatopic variation, highlighting regional features and differences, thereby reminding the reader that Old Romanian, like any natural language, was a multidimensional continuum.

The linguistic description presented in this book is based on the analysis of a large corpus of modern editions of historical documents, divided into two subperiods: an exhaustive corpus for 1500–1640 (the first half of the period under examination), and a representative selection of texts for the following 140 years until 1780. This separation into two parts is convenient because it makes it easier to identify changes during the Old Romanian period. The examples from the

corpus provided in each section are well selected and helpful; the source texts are reliably identified, and in the corresponding appendix the bibliographical information is supplemented by very useful information on the geographical provenance of the respective text. Moreover, the interested reader can access a more extensive selection of examples for each grammatical structure in the online annexes, available on the website of the Romanian Academy's Linguistic Institute (www.lingv.ro).

In addition to various sections written by the editor herself, the volume contains contributions by a considerable number of established scholars in Romanian linguistics, in their majority researchers from the Romanian Academy's Linguistic Institute "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti". The main body of the book consists of ten substantial chapters, most of which consist of several separate sections by different authors. The overall chapter division is very transparent, as it is based on the traditional classification of syntactic structures and elements. However, the order of the chapters is slightly odd in that related structural categories are not necessarily analysed in adjoining chapters; for instance, chapters essentially dealing with complex sentences (Chapter 3, which covers non-finite subordination; Chapter 6, examining adverbial phrases; Chapter 8, which looks at coordination; and Chapter 9, exploring complex clauses) alternate with others dealing primarily with nominal and adjectival structures.

The Introduction (pp. 1–13) begins with a very clear presentation of the corpus (by Emanuela Timotin), providing a brief but very useful historical overview of the period and the influence of socio-political factors on text production, before discussing the different types of texts included in the corpus; an important detail is the fact that it contains both original texts and translations (the latter making up the majority of the earliest documents), which may explain the presence of calques as well as genuine contact-induced features in the corpus. The sections on phonology (by Camelia Stan) and morphology (by Martin Maiden, who is also consultant editor of this volume) both essentially conclude that Old and present-day Romanian do not differ fundamentally with regards to their phonology and morphology.

Chapter 2 ("The verb and its arguments: the root clause"; pp. 14–231), which makes up almost a third of the entire book, explores the structure of the root clause, i. e. 'the verb and its arguments' in Old Romanian. It begins with Rodica Zafiu's analysis of the syntax of moods and tenses, observing that the basic mood system (indicative, subjunctive, imperative) is essentially a continuation of the Latin paradigms, but that important innovations such as the emergence of the conditional mood can be observed as early as the sixteenth century, whereas other modal constructions, such as the 'presumptive mood', are only just beginning to gain a foothold in the period under examination. This is followed by a

section on clitic pronouns by Alexandru Nicolae and Dana Niculescu, in which the position and order and of pronominal clitics is comprehensively examined in a wide range of different syntactic contexts. One of the noteworthy observations is a markèd difference between texts originally written in Romanian, which show a clear preference for proclitics, and translations, in which proclisis is generally far less dominant in the earliest texts.

The next section, by Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, looks at the syntactic frames in which different verbs appear; while there are no fundamental or typological differences between Old and Modern Romanian in this area, more variation and flexibility can be observed in the older language. This is followed by an extensive section on argument structure, co-authored by G. Pană Dindelegan and Irina Nicula Paraschiv, with substantial subsections on the subject, the direct object, the secondary direct object (a structure with two direct objects inherited from Latin that has disappeared in other Romance languages), the indirect object and the prepositional object. The section on 'property-denoting complements', by Adina Dragomirescu and Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, examines the different types of predicative complements, and the final section by Andra Vasilescu and Gabriela Pană Dindelegan provides an inventory of 'constructions involving overall clause structure', distinguishing different types of passive constructions, middle and anaphoric reflexives, reciprocal constructions, and the possessive use of dative clitics, pointing out that both Old and Modern Romanian have a mixed system of expressing possession, using possessive adjectives as well as dative clitics.

Chapter 3 ("Non-finite verb forms and non-finite constructions"; pp. 232–287) deals with non-finite verb forms and constructions: the infinitive, the supine, the past participle and the gerund. The section looking at the infinitive and infinitival clauses, by Isabela Nedelcu, is of particular interest because in Modern Romanian there are fewer syntactic contexts in which the infinitive occurs than in other Romance languages; in this chapter, a decrease of the use of the infinitive in favour of the subjunctive and other verbal forms is observed in Old Romanian, as a result of both external and language-internal factors. Other important aspects examined are the status of the particle *a* (which can be clearly prepositional, a strongly grammaticalized infinitive marker, or anything between these two extremes in Old Romanian), and the greater degree of fluidity between the long infinitive in *-re* and the short form ending in the stem vowel.

Adina Dragomirescu's section on the supine, a non-finite verb form that, like the infinitive, can be more nominal or more verbal in different constructions, shows that this verb form was predominantly used nominally in the sixteenth century, with more typically verbal usages increasing towards the end of the Old Romanian period. The following section, on constructions with the past

participle, reveals that Old Romanian had a wider range of compound verb forms containing a past participle than the modern language. The final section of this chapter, by Dana Niculescu, argues that the Old Romanian gerund had a more verbal character than its present-day counterpart.

Chapter 4 ("The nominal phrase"; pp. 288–393) covers all aspects of the nominal phrase. It begins with two sections by Camelia Stan on articles and other determiners, observing significant differences to Modern Romanian, perhaps most notably the multiple use of enclitic definite articles in a single NP, which also implies the possibility of multiple case marking, as well as 'polydefinite structures' combining up to four definite determiners (articles and demonstratives) within one NP. This is followed by a section on possessive constructions that focuses primarily on the range of structures available for this purpose, which include genitive inflection of the noun, enclitic definite articles in their genitival form, as well as proclitic *lui*, the genitive marker *al*, and several prepositions; Old Romanian displays a series of patterns and combinations of these structures that are no longer present in the modern language.

The following section, by Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, examines the use and evolution of partitive phrases during the Old Romanian period, noting a progressive decrease of partitive *de*, including structures with an empty head of the type *mănâncă de pâine* (lit. 'eat-3SG of bread') 'he eats bread' (p. 332), which are no longer possible in present-day Romanian. The section on pronominal posession, by Alexandru Nicolae, analyses the shifting usage patterns of possessive adjectives, affixes and adnominal clitics, identifying not only distributional but also syntactic changes during and since the Old Romanian period. This is followed by sections on quantifiers and modifiers by Camelia Stan, on apposition and nominal classifiers by Raluca Brăescu, on the complementation patterns and argument structure of deadjectival and deverbal nouns (including the partly nominal 'long infinitive') by Camelia Stan, on nominal ellipsis by Alexandru Nicolae, and on nominal intensifiers by Andra Vasilescu.

Chapters 5 ("Adjectives and adjectival phrases"; pp. 394–413) and 6 ("Adverbs and adverbial phrases"; pp. 414–423) deal with the syntax of adjectives and adverbs, respectively. Raluca Brăescu highlights a far greater flexibility regarding the structure of adjectival phrases with respect to their position in the NP, the presence or absence of a definite article, and their internal argumental configuration, whereas Carmen Mîrzea Vasile observes fewer differences between Old and Modern Romanian in the syntax of adverbial phrases; noteworthy structures of the old language are adverbials with pronominal clitics and the possibility of lexical adverbs being inserted between a clitic/auxiliary and the main verb.

Chapter 7 ("Prepositions and prepositional phrases"; pp. 424–443), by Isabela Nedelcu, explores the use of prepositions and the structure of prepositional phrases, observing that in Old Romanian, especially in the first half of the period examined, there was a greater degree of variability and freedom in this area than in the modern language. Chapter 8 ("Coordination and coordinating conjunctions"; pp. 444–462), by Blanca Croitor, looks at coordination, comparing the inventory of coordinating conjunctions with that of Modern Romanian and highlighting some typical usage patterns in the old language. Chapter 9 (pp. 462–561) is concerned with "the complex clause", with sections by Mihaela Gheorghe on complement and relative clauses, by Andreea Dinică, Rodica Zafiu, Oana Uță Bărbulescu on different types of clausal adjuncts, and by Rodica Zafiu on comparative constructions.

Chapter 10 (pp. 562–575), by Alexandru Nicolae, examines "word order and configurationality". In contrast with most other parts of this book, this chapter is clearly inspired by the generative approach to syntax. Its main conclusion is that word order in Old Romanian was freer than it is today, with phenomena such as non-local definiteness checking and *scrambling*. Nicolae argues that Old Romanian is at an intermediate stage between discourse driven syntax and configurational syntax, though very little is actually said about the role of discourse features in determining word order.

Chapter 11 ("Clausal organization snd discourse phenomena"; pp. 576–628), finally, is a bit of a mixed bag, with sections on interrogative and exclamatory constructions (by Mihaela Gheorghe), negators and negative constructions (by Dana Manea), presentative markers of the type *iată* 'behold' and the corresponding constructions (by Rodica Zafiu), cognate objects and other pleonastic constructions (by Irina Nicula Paraschiv and Dana Niculescu), the use of feminine singular pronouns with neutral value (by Gabriela Pană Dindelegan), and vocative phrases and terms of address (by Margareta Manu Magda). Several of these topics are of particular interest because they discuss structures that are rare or unique among the Romance languages, for instance the use of feminine forms to refer to unspecified or 'neuter' referents.

The concluding chapter ("Conclusions"; pp. 629–637) summarises the most important findings in the different areas covered by this volume and makes some valid generalizations, for instance the observation that there are greater differences between Old and Modern Romanian in the nominal domain than in other areas of grammar. Regarding the origin of Old Romanian features, on the one hand there are structures shared with other Romance languages that have since disappeared from Romanian, revealing the 'Romance nature' of its syntax. On the other hand, the influence of contact languages on the grammatical structure of Old Romanian should not be underestimated, as there is evidence

of a wide range of features spreading from translations to texts originally written in Romanian, leading, in particular, to a substantial increase in the frequency of certain native structures that were previously less commonly used.

Throughout the book, one of the most frequently recurring observations is that Old Romanian had a greater degree of freedom and variability in almost all areas of its grammar than the modern language, which, it is claimed, has undergone a reduction of syntactic variation and redundant structures. While the corpus data clearly demonstrates the use of a wider range of apparently equivalent constructions, on occasion a little more discussion of the contextual factors influencing or determining the choice between these available alternatives would have been welcome. It should also be borne in mind that standardization tends to reduce linguistic variation, so it is perhaps not entirely unexpected that Modern Romanian has, in many cases, fewer interchangeable constructions.

All in all, this volume provides an extremely comprehensive overview of the syntax of Old Romanian, covering all important areas in impressive detail. Furthermore, what sets it apart from other grammars is the use of corpus data; not only is such an analysis far more reliable and exact than traditional impressionistic grammatical descriptions, but the presentation of actual percentages when discussing usage frequency also makes it possible to retrace and analyse the evolution of the respective structures over the period examined. In conclusion, *The Syntax of Old Romanian* is definitely a worthy addition to the bookshelf of any linguist interested in the history of Romanian or the Romance languages.

References

Pană Dindelegan, Gabriela. 2013. *The grammar of Romanian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.