

**“CONCIONES LATINAE MULDAVO” BY SILVESTRO AMELIO.
OBSERVATIONS ON THE LATIN VERSION**

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Abstract

In this study we propose an overview of a Latin text that was little investigated in Romanian philology: the *homiliarium* translated by the Italian missionary Silvestro Amelio of Foggia, who preached the Catholic religion in the Romanian countries at the beginning of the 18th century. His collection of sermons is preserved today in Ms. rom. 2882 of the Library of the Romanian Academy and was written in both Latin and Romanian. The Latin text contains a compilation of homilies from different bibliographical sources, on which their translator intervenes in some places, without altering the meaning of the primary source.

Key-words: *Italian missionary, Latin language, Romanian language, homilies, bibliographical sources*

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous proposons un aperçu d'un texte latin peu étudié en philologie roumaine. Il s'agit de l'*homiliarium* du missionnaire italien Silvestro Amelio de Foggia, qui a prêché la religion catholique dans les pays roumains au début du XVIIIe siècle. Sa collection de sermons est conservée dans Ms. rom. 2882 de la Bibliothèque de l'Académie Roumaine, en latin et en roumain. Le texte latin contient une compilation d'homélie provenant de différentes sources bibliographiques, sur lesquelles leur traducteur intervient à certains endroits, sans altérer le sens de la source primaire.

Mots-clés: *missionnaire italien, le latin, le roumain, homélie, sources bibliographiques.*

The activity of Italian Catholic missionaries in the Romanian countries is quite well known and described by philologists such as Teresa Ferro, Giuseppe Piccillo, Gheorghe Chivu, Traian Diaconescu. However, the Italian libraries, the libraries of the Vatican, the archives of the *De Propaganda Fide* Congregation still have much information to offer related to this subject. Bartolomeo Basetti, Vito Piluzio, Antonio Zauli, Francesco Maria Madrelli, Anton Maria Mauro etc. crossed

the Romanian cultural space in the 17th-18th centuries¹ and showed interest in Romanian realities and in learning the Romanian language from their older fellows², as a useful tool in achieving missionary goals. Bilingual texts – in Latin and Romanian – of their homilies are also an introductory way to use the Romanian language for future missionaries.³ Among these people, there is the Italian Jesuit Silvestro Amelio da Foggia, who lived in Romania for ten years (1712-1722), as a missionary. The quality of the Romanian language he used in writing reminds us of a famous contemporary of his, the Georgian Antim Ivireanul, who became metropolitan of Wallachia. In fact, he is not the only Italian missionary who wrote in Latin and Romanian. Vito Piluzio published a catechetical work, *Dottrina Christiana tradotta in lingua valaca* (1677), Anton Maria Mauro wrote several texts that Carlo Tagliavini gathered under the title *Diverse materie in lingua moldava* (circa 1760), still in manuscript. Two manuscripts remained from Silvestro Amelio da Foggia. One of 166 sheets that includes a catechism translated into Romanian, *The Passions of Christ*, collected the texts of the four evangelists, various prayers and the much better known Italian-Romanian glossary, edited and analyzed linguistically by Giuseppe Piccillo.⁴ The second manuscript, which is the subject of this material, is much more voluminous and represents a bilingual homiliary of 458 sheets (916 pages), entitled *Conciones Latinae Muldavo, quibus, quia Dominicis aliisque festis infra annum occurrentibus ad litteram possunt uti missionari*.

The history of scientific preoccupations for Silvestro Amelio and in particular for this work was presented by Teresa Ferro, in a study published in the 1990s, which emphasizes the special value of the manuscript: “This work, comprising eighty-five sermons written in Latin and translated into Moldavian in a total of 916 dense handwritten pages, is, without any doubt, a valuable document for knowing the linguistic peculiarities of the Romanian language of that time.”⁵ The manuscript, preserved in the collections of the Library of the Romanian Academy, under the mark Ms. rom. 2882, is an invaluable sample of the dialectal variant of the Romanian language in Moldavia at the beginning of the 18th century. It gathers 86 homilies (although Amelio mentions one less on the front page), preceded by an

¹ Gheorghe Chivu, *Misionarii italieni și normele vechii române literare*, in “Language and Literature – European Landmarks of Identity”, 2 (1), Universitatea din Pitești, Pitești, 2006: 45.

² Teresa Ferro, *La palatalizzazione delle labiali in alcuni testi romeni manoscritti degli inizi del sec. XIX*, in Maria Micle, Vasile Lațiu (eds.), “Studia in honorem magistri Vasile Frățilă”, Editura Universității de Vest, Timișoara, 2005: 247, n. 7.

³ Gheorghe Chivu, *Conciones Latinae Muldavo, un manuscris singulier du XVIII^e siècle*, in “DACOROMANIA”, serie nouă, XXVI, 2, Cluj-Napoca, 2021, p. 146. The study also includes a detailed analysis of some Romanian language facts from the manuscript, regarding orthographic, phonetic, morphological and lexical aspects.

⁴ See the bibliography, the two materials published in “Studii și cercetări lingvistice”, 1 and 2, 1980.

⁵ Teresa Ferro, *Din morfologia verbului în „Conciones” de Silvestro Amelio*, in “Dacoromania”, Serie Nouă, I, Cluj-Napoca, 1994-1995: 251.

address *Ad lectores* and by a dedication to the Minister General of the Conventual Friars Minor of the Order of St. Francis, Vincentius Maria de Comitibus. These texts have never been translated into Romanian and regarding them we can say that they represent the sure elements of originality, as far as Latin texts are concerned. The formal option of Italian was oriented towards the alternation of the fragments in Latin, with their variant in Romanian, resulting in that massive manuscript, presented by Teresa Ferro. Regarding the period of writing the manuscript, Silvestro Amelio records the year 1725 on the first page. In a study published in 1987, the same Teresa Ferro showed that Silvestro Amelio was still working on the homiliary in 1737, as he noted in a letter dated “Foggia 20 April 1737”.⁶

All the homilies, each preceded by a relevant *New Testament* fragment, were collected by Silvestro Amelio from works of a religious character and with western circulation. Analyzing the Latin text as a whole, we identified three Catholic authors that the Italian took over or paraphrased closely, without mentioning them. The most commonly used source is the homily of Radulphus Ardens, *In epistolas et evangelia Dominicalia homiliae*. His homilies were published in Paris, in 1564, and were quickly reprinted in 1565, 1567, 1571, 1573, 1576, 1586 etc., in different European cities. We used for comparison the edition printed in Cologne in 1604, in an attempt to determine the Latin text from *Conciones*, the editing of which we are working on. In 1754, Jean François Dreux du Radier, in his *Bibliothèque historique et critique du Poitou*, vol. I, published in Paris, mentioned this edition as the last.⁷ In the analysis of the relationship of filiation of Amelio’s text with the homily of Radulphus Ardens, we used the 1604 edition, having as criterion the temporal approach to the moment of writing the Italian homily. But we also confronted the previous editions, as well as the text from 1564, republished in volume 155 of the *Patrologia Latina* series.

In the manuscript, Silvestro Amelio marginally records the source of the biblical quote. At page 108 v, for the quotation “non rapinam arbitratus est esse Se aequalem Deo”, Amelio makes marginal reference to *Philip. 2*. The abbreviation appears in the following editions of Radulphus Ardens: 1564 (p. 131), 1565 (p. 90), 1604 (p. 265); because in the 1571 edition, the abbreviation used was *Phil. 2* (p. 88), we think that this one cannot be taken into consideration among the ones Amelio could have used.

In the first homily, *Dominica prima Adventus Domini*, a quote from the *Gospel of John* is recorded on the edge of the page 2^v: “Corpora nostra moriendo non perdunt, sed mutantur in melius, quoniam quantum facile est alicui excitare dormientem, tam facile, imo facilius est Deo excitare defunctum. Vnde ipse

⁶ *Ibidem*, 1994-1995: 252, n. 6.

⁷ Dreux du Radier, *Bibliothèque historique et critique du Poitou*, Tom 1, Paris, Librairie Ganeau, 1754: 207.

Dominus, ait, ‘Lazarus amicus noster dormit, sed vado ut a somno excitem illum’.” Under the text, there is a reference to *John. 11*. Below, for another quote, this time inserted in the text, is the marginal reference to *Ephes. 5*. The 1564, 1565 and 1571 editions contain only the above quotation, without reference to *John 11* and *Ephes. 5*, which appear in the 1586 and 1604 editions.

A similar situation is found at the beginning of the homily *Dominica in Quinquagesima*. In the 1564, 1565, 1571 editions there is a large quotation from the *Epistle I to Corinthians 12, 31*. In the 1586 and 1604 editions, the quote is much shorter and stops at “angelorum”, followed by the abbreviation “etc.”, as it appears in Amelio’s text. Probably because the marginal reference to *2 Cor. 13* of the copy he had at his disposal was slightly erased, the Italian misinterpreted it as *2 Cor. 19*.

Silvestro Amelio (p. 89^r): *Excellentiorem viam vobis ostendo. Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum etc. (2 Cor. 13)*.

Radulphus Ardens (ed. 1564, p. 100^r / ed. 1565, p. 68^v / ed. 1571, p. 67^r / ed. 1576, p. 67^r): *Excellentiorem viam vobis ostendo. Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum, charitatem autem non habeam, factus sum velut aes sonans aut cimbalum tinniens etc. (2 Cor. 13)*

Radulphus (ed. 1586, p. 86^v; 1604, p. 201): *Excellentiorem viam vobis ostendo. Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum, etc. (2 Cor. 13)*.

In *Domenika tertia Quadragesimae*, Amelio Silvestro begins the comments on the passage from the *Epistle to the Ephesians* thus: *Bipertita est lectio ista, fratres charissimi: Primo enim nobis praecipit Apostolus ut Dominum imitemur*. The term *bipertita* appears in Amelio’s manuscript and we found it in the editions 1564 (p. 131), 1565 (p. 90), 1571 (p. 88), 1586 (p. 128); but in the 1604 edition, the form used was *bipartita* (p. 264).

Considering only these relevant examples, we can draw a first conclusion, namely that Amelio used an edition published after 1571, probably the edition printed in 1586 of the homiliary of Radulphus Ardens.

Amelio accurately takes the marginal references to the *Bible*. Either he is not interested or he does not have at hand the necessary tools to record references to other types of literary sources. In the first homily, *Dominica Prima Adventus Domini*, we have identified two references that are not part of the biblical text. The first one refers to a *Poeta*, the second to *Augustinus*. If Radulphus quoted a *Poeta*, Amelio took over the reference as such, without being interested in his identity. Thus, a quote from Ovid’s *Heroides*, IV, v. 89 was used: *De primo dicit Poeta: “Quod caret alterna requie durabile non est.”* Also a quote taken from *Sermo 393: De paenitentibus* by Aurelius Augustinus is used without indicating the work: *Vnde Augustinus⁸: Age paenitentiam dum sanus, et securus es: quia paenitentiam egisti,*

⁸ Aurelius Augustinus, *Sermo 393: De paenitentibus*, PL 39, Tom V, Second part, Paris, 1865: 1712.

dum peccare potuisti: si vero vis agere paenitentiam, cum iam peccare non potes, peccata te dimiserunt, non tu illa.

For the sentence *Dabo tibi magnum imperium, impera tibi*, from the homily *Quarta Dominica Adventus Domini* there is no reference, either to Amelio or to the source text, although the quotation is part of the famous *Sententiae* of Publilius Syrus. In *Dominika infra octa<vam> Nat<ivitat>is> Domini*, Amelio copies Radulphus’ text in which he refers to a *phylosophus*, without being interested in his identity: *Et phylosophus: “Non te moveat dicentis auctoritas, nec quis, sed quid dicat, intendito.”* The philosopher to whom he refers is Seneca, to whom was attributed, under the title *De quatuor virtutibus cardinalibus*, a work that belonged to Martin de Braga, entitled *Formula honestae vitae*⁹.

Amelio’s obedience to the source is so great that the wrong references made by Radulphus Ardens are taken as such. For the quote *secura mens ... iuge convivium* (p. 19^r), the marginal reference to *Psalm 15*, instead of *The Book of Proverbs 15*, from Radulphus’ text, was copied by Amelio. Quoting from *Psalm 39*, Amelio writes *beatus est* (p. 59^r) instead of *beatus vir*, taking the error from Radulphus’ source text.

Amelio quotes from *Psalm 119 Heu me*, instead of *Heu mihi* (p. 94^r), because it was written as such in the source text (ed. 1604, p. 413). Likewise, the noun *impudicitia* is omitted in the quote from the *Epistle to the Galatians: Manifesta autem, inquit Apostolus, sunt opera carnis; quae sunt fornicatio, immunditia, luxuria, idolorum servitus* (p. 114^r). The omission had appeared in Radulphus’ text (ed. 1604, p. 677), which shows that Amelio did not verify the accuracy of the quotation. In the sequence of the *Holy Gospel of Matthew*, used as an argument for the homily *Dominica in Ramis Palmarum*, Radulphus had introduced the subject *Iesus*, for the sake of the clarity: *Cum appropinquassent Iesus Hierosolymis et venissent Bet<h>phage ad Montem Oliveti* (ed. 1604, p. 318), but Amelio takes this insert as is (p. 121^v).

Silvestro Amelio’s interventions in the text he copied from Radulphus Ardens are very rare. For example, at page 270^v, the Italian marginally inserts the reference *I Thess. 4*, which is missing in the original. Very rarely does he correct the erroneous marginal references of Radulphus. Thus, the statement *quoniam Virginem Matrem ei virgini commendavit* (p. 33^r) is supported by an *argumentum ad auctoritatem, Ioan 14*, by Radulphus. Amelio thus copies, then cuts the number 14 and replaces it with 19, which is correct. The quote *Exortum est, inquit, in tenebris lumen rectis corde, misericors et miserator Dominus* (p. 26^r) has the marginal reference *Psalm 3*, instead of 111. We consider that this is a simple confusion of

⁹ Martin de Braga, *Formula honestae vitae*, Caput I, *De prudentia*⁹, *Patrologia Latina*, Tom LXII, p. 24D. Vide Jean Pierre Massaut, *Critique et tradition à la veille de la Réforme en France*, Paris, Librairie philosophique ‘J. Vrin’, 1974: 86, n. 16.

Amelio's, between the number 111 marked with Arabic numerals and the number 3, marked with Roman numerals. He wrote *sine omni formarum adiectione*, instead of *sine omni formarum concretione* (p. 35^v) because in Radulphus' original there was a short sentence in which the noun *adiectione* appeared, a phrase that Amelio gave up in his compilation.

Deviations from the original are sometimes mere slips of Amelio's. Thus, in the sentence *Sed statim in nosmet ipsos indignantes vanas, quam totius meditationes a nobis repellamus et ad ipsum redeamus* (p. 20^v), the genitive form *totius* is wrong, instead of the adverb *potius*, in Radulphus' text. The Italian sometimes omits one or more words inadvertently. The fragment *Et iustitia eius. Petamus et qualiter debemus?* from the text of Radulphus became *Et qualiter debemus?* (p. 21^r). The fragment *Hodie caelis rorantibus desuper et nubibus pluentibus iustitiam, aperta est terra et germinavit salvatorem* from the text of Radulphus was copied in a short version: *Hodie caelis rorantibus desuper et germinavit Salvatorem* (p. 24^v). For the quote *Et esse sub sensibus divitias computabunt* (p. 86^r), Amelio refers to *Ioan 30*, instead of *Iob 30*, as Radulphus correctly wrote (ed. 1604, p. 199).

The second source of inspiration for Silvestro Amelio was the work of Petrus de Palude (Latinized) Petrus Paludanus, *Sermones sive Enarrationes, in Evangelia. De Tempore ac Sanctorum festis, qui Thesaurus Novus, vulgo vocantur*. In order to analyze the relationship between the source text and that of the Italian missionary, we used the edition printed in Cologne, in 1602. Amelio processed two of de Palude's homilies in three of his own works. The first one was *Feria secunda Pentecostes. Enarratio II*, of which the Italian selected fragments between pages 141-153 in the quoted edition. Amelio also took the title, *Feria secunda Pentecostes* and the bibliographical references. For conclusions, however, he returns to the homiliary of Radulphus Ardens, from which he copies an excerpt from *In Die Sancto Pentecostes* (ed. 1604, p. 546-547). For the homily *Feria Tertia Post Pentecostes*, Amelio resumes the mentioned text of Petrus Paludanus, continuing its copying from the point where it was interrupted by the text of Radulphus. The second homily of Paludanus is *De Corpore Christi. Enarratio I* (ed. 1602, p. 627-638), from which Amelio is inspired for his own homily, entitled *In Festo Corporis Christi*, with reference to a Roman Catholic holiday dedicated to the Body of the Lord (*Corpus Christi*). Silvestro Amelio ignored the bibliographical references in the text of Petrus de Palude, including a large part of the biblical references, as opposed to the faithful quotations of the text of Radulphus Ardens. The copying of this homily is also fragmentary, as Amelio preferred to use the initial and final parts of Paludanus' texts.

The third bibliographical source used by Amelio was the homiliary of the Spanish Louis de Granada (Latinized Ludovicus Granatensis), *Conciones quae de praecipuis Sanctorum festis in Ecclesia habentur, a Festo Sancti Andreae, usque ad*

Festum Beatae Mariae Magdalенаe. For this research, we used the edition printed in Antwerp in 1614. Amelio used Granatensis’ texts for his last 22 homilies. Unlike the previous ones, which had commented on various religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, the Ascension, Pentecost, etc.), the homilies taken from Ludovicus Granatensis have in the centre the figures of some saints (in the order they appear in *Conciones*): The Virgin Mary (six homilies), St. John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, St. James the Apostle, St. Lawrence the Martyr, St. Bartholomew the Apostle, St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist, St. Michael the Archangel, St. Francis of Assisi, the Holy Apostles Simon and Judas, All Saints, St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Thomas the Apostle, St. John the Evangelist, St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist, St. Philip and James the Apostles; the last homily refers to the feast dedicated to the Finding of the Holy Cross.

As in the case of previously used sources, Silvestro Amelio’s interventions are reduced. The homily *In Festo Beatissimi Patriarchae Francisci*, partly taken from the third homily to the same saint in the work of Granatensis, focuses on Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Order of Minorities, to which Amelio belonged. This explains the addition of the possessive adjective *nostro*, in the text taken from the Spanish author, who had been part of the Dominican Order: *Quod de beatissimo Patre nostro Francisco intelliget* (p. 408^v) and, below, of the name *Franciscus*, omitted by Granatensis: *Unde cum beatus Pater Franciscus ab aliis laudaretur* (p. 410^v).

The attitude towards the text of Granatensis is similar to that of the text of Paludanus. Amelio quotes in fragments, compiles various fragments, takes from the beginning and end parts of the homilies, adds *Amen* at the end, and ignores the marginal references made by Granatensis to various patristic and medieval sources (Blessed Augustine, Bernard de Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas etc.). In the critical edition of the Latin text we are preparing, all the additions, omissions, manner of compilation, critical references identified in Amelio’s text were marked. However, the great gain for Romanian philology will be offered by critically editing the Romanian text, which represents the translation of these homilies by Silvestro Amelio. The efforts of interpretive transcription and commentary of the Romanian text are made by Professor Gheorghe Chivu¹⁰.

The Latin text in *Conciones* is therefore a compilation of three major sources, on which Amelio intervened minimally and from which he extracted fragments considered relevant. These were alternated with the translation into Romanian, resulting in an impressive manuscript, both in size and in historical value, of the Romanian language in its Moldavian version, at the beginning of the 18th century.

¹⁰ We thank again professor Gheorghe Chivu for making available the facsimile of the manuscript and for his suggestions and help offered during the research of the Latin text.

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