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## From Editions to Translation: The Reception of some Critical Objections in the *Blaj Bible* (1795)

**Abstract:** This paper proposes an insight into some philological issues that have concerned editors and translators of the Bible over time. After a survey of Samuil Micu's approaches to textual criticism, which are well-known in Romanian philology, we briefly present some phenomena that influenced the development of biblical philology in the 17th century, with the aim of highlighting their impact on later editions of the Septuagint. One of the main sources of Samuil Micu's translation, Lambert Bos's *Septuagint* (1709), was critically evaluated by some European scholars. We will show, through a comparative analysis, how some of these objections were dealt with in Samuil Micu's translation of the *Blaj Bible* (1795), addressing the dialogue between two traditions: the Romanian translation tradition and that of the major editions of the Septuagint.

**Keywords:** *Septuagint*, Samuil Micu, textual criticism, *Codex Alexandrinus*, Johann Ernst Grabe

### 1. Introduction

The second complete translation of the biblical text into Romanian, comprising the *Old* and *New Testaments*, was published at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in Transylvania. This translation, which the Greek-Catholic monk Samuil Micu Klein had begun working at since 1783, during his studies at the "St. Barbara" College in Vienna and which was published in 1795 had a significant influence on the formation of the literary language and equally on the Romanian biblical tradition. The purpose stated in the preface to Micu's translation was to produce a linguistically and stylistically renewed translation of the old version of the Bible, published in Bucharest in 1688<sup>1</sup>, yet not in a manner that would reproduce it, but rather by re-translating it

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based on contemporary sources. This approach enabled Samuil Micu to encounter both the Romanian traditional translations of the *Septuagint* and the rich Western tradition, Protestant and Catholic alike, of critical editions. His translation of the *Blaj Bible* (1795) placed Samuil Micu as a forerunner of modern textual criticism in the Romanian culture. However, this role that has been attributed to him is not necessarily contested, but rather questioned due to a historical reality: at the time, in the Romanian culture there were no bilingual or polyglot editions of the Bible elaborated by Romanian intellectuals following comparisons of Greek and Latin texts.

The fact that Romanian culture acutely lacked biblical editions, produced according to the humanist model provided by Erasmus, made Romanian researchers question the critical relations of the translators with the sources they used. The difficulty of this approach is greatly increased by a well-known “reluctance” of the old editors when it came to declaring their sources accurately, for reasons primarily related to the spectre of religious confessionalization. Philologist Eugen Pavel, one of the editors of the *Blaj Bible*, wrote two important articles in which he aimed at explaining the efforts of textual criticism behind Romanian Bible translations since the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. In his first article he argued, among other things, that under the influence of Lutheran and Calvinist biblical criticism in Alba Iulia, the Romanian scholars who worked on the complete translation of the *Bălgrad New Testament* (1648) and the translation of the *Psalter* (1651) made the transition from a Slavonic model of translation to a Latin one, based on bilingual Greek Latin sources (Pavel 2014, 82–98; especially 88–89 and 91–92).

In the second article, Eugen Pavel revisited and developed the same topic, providing consistent evidence to argue that European textual criticism methods were adopted for the first time in the translation and editing of biblical texts in Alba Iulia and that these principles can be subsequently identified throughout the Romanian biblical studies (Pavel 2016, 17–30). According to the Romanian philologist, after almost 150 years, the European model of textual criticism was fully established and perfected with Samuil Micu’s translation: “Starting with the Transylvanian School, textual criticism experienced a new dimension, the moment of maturity being reached with the edition of the *Blaj Bible*, published by Samuil Micu Klein in 1795” (Pavel 2016, 24). To substantiate his claim, Eugen Pavel compiled a convincing summary of the sources used by Micu in his translation and the impact they had on the manner in which, much like in critical editions, he established and commented on the text. In general, the *Blaj* translation implied the confrontation of two traditions, which often interfere and complement each other: one related to Romanian translatology developed especially in the *Bucharest Bible* of 1688, as evidenced

by the common translation choices<sup>2</sup>, and another related to Catholic and Protestant critical editions produced in different parts of Europe between the early 17<sup>th</sup> and mid-18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>3</sup>.

Samuil Micu's interest in biblical philology in 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Europe can be discussed from various perspectives. At this point of our discussion, it is enough to mention a single clue that we discovered in the preface to his translation, entitled *Foreword to the Holy Scripture (Cuvânt înainte la S<fânta> Scriptură)*<sup>4</sup>. In the context of the debate on the divine inspiration of the prophetic texts, Micu claims that the Jews are the Christians' adversaries ("sânt vrăjmași numelui creștinesc"; ["they are enemies of the Christian name"]) and that altered the texts of the prophecies on purpose ("lor mult le ajuta ca să acopere și să șteargă cărțile prorocilor"; ["it is much to their advantage to cover and erase the books of the prophets"]). However, this preconception, which was advanced in the context of the Judeo-Christian polemics dating since Antiquity and occasionally revisited by some humanists during the Renaissance, only came to be used excessively between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the writings of authors such as Jean Morin (1591–1659), Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) or William Whiston (1667–1752). For instance, in *Exercitationes biblicae* (1633) Morin insisted that the rabbis deliberately corrupted the biblical texts because of their "hatred" of Christians, convinced that they intentionally did so to prevent the Christians from using the *Old Testament* as evidence of Jesus Christ's deity<sup>5</sup>. The same suspicion, discussed in the debate over the inspiration of the Bible, can be identified in the writings of Isaac Vossius<sup>6</sup> and was subsequently developed in relation to the fulfilment of prophecies in the *New Testament* by William Whiston (Steiger 2008, 751–752). It would be hard to prove a direct relationship between these ideas and Micu's preconceptions since they became commonplace in many other subsequent theological writings. Nevertheless, the presence of the idea in the preface of the translation from Blaj reflects at least the Romanian translator's concern for an "uncorrupted" text and the prevalence of the *Septuagint* tradition over the *Masoretic* one.

A mixed translation, such as the one produced by Samuil Micu, is directly dependent on the critical editions its author consulted. In the case of divergences between texts in the same tradition, the way the text is regarded as accurate becomes equally relevant for translation decisions. Micu was forced to choose *what* to translate when the editions he consulted showed significant differences or as indicated in our analysis, when one of the main sources contained debatable variants. Therefore, a comparative analysis of the objectionable texts in the Franeker Dutch edition can only be

fully understood if it is treated in the broader context of the challenges that biblical philology has raised ever since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2. The evolution of biblical philology in the 17<sup>th</sup> century**

The early 18th-century biblical philology is marked by a general trend, which had been manifest for more than a century: the separation of the “inspired” Bible – the political, theological, moral, and liturgical guide of the past – from an “academic” Bible, regarded as a collection of texts composed diachronically, transmitted in different traditions, and interpreted by means of linguistic and historical tools<sup>7</sup>. These different approaches, which have never been rendered absolute in practice (*cf.* Touber 2017, 325–347), have been determined by or have represented the catalyst for four complex phenomena with a significant impact on the philology practiced throughout Europe: *critica sacra*, polyglot editions, Spinozism, and the *Codex Alexandrinus*.

As a literary genre, inheriting the type of philology practiced by humanist scholars, the *critica sacra* appeared in Europe around 1650, its main purpose being to reconstruct the original biblical texts by means of comparative methods. Inevitably subject to corruption caused by the lengthy process of transmission, the biblical texts needed to be reconstructed to eliminate the inconsistencies, repetitions and errors occurring in manuscripts. The works entitled *critica sacra* brought together various critical opinions expressed by previous authors, discussed certain terms from a semantic perspective, solved chronology-related issues and proposed amendments and translation solutions. The best-known *Critica sacra*, published in 1650 by Louis Cappel (1585–1658), had a huge impact. The evidence it provided for the late age of the Masoretic vocalisation of the Hebrew text paved the way for later debates on the hitherto indisputable divine inspiration of the Hebrew Bible. Another *Critica sacra* (1660) was edited in London by John Pearson (1613–1686). Comprising no less than 9 volumes, this work brought together the biblical commentaries of the best exegetes of the previous two centuries and represented an excellent guide for the monumental London Polyglot Bible (1657). Brian Walton’s polyglot edition (1600–1661), which included biblical texts in several languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Arabic and Persian), was the last and most complete in a series of similar works published in Alcalá de Henares (1520), Antwerp (1568–1573) and Paris (1628–1645)<sup>8</sup>. This phenomenon of polyglot editions was triggered by the philologists’ desire to study biblical texts in their original ancient versions from a comparative perspective. Arranging the texts in parallel columns allowed for quick and efficient analysis of the differences between versions, giving a fairly comprehensive picture of how different traditions of

biblical textual transmission have intertwined and diverged over time. One of the most notable consequences of the polyglot editions was the awareness with regard of the instability of the texts, which led to the desire to reconstruct the earliest and most coherent of them. They have also generated a whole host of auxiliary tools necessary for the study of the original versions, such as grammars, lexicons and studies dedicated to Oriental culture and civilisations.

Baruch Spinoza's philosophical scepticism was another element that contributed to the uncertainties about the inspiration of the biblical texts and their imperfections. In the four chapters (7-10) of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), dedicated to the interpretation of biblical texts, Spinoza succeeded in challenging the normative value attributed to the Scriptures and in pointing to a fundamental distinction between the original meanings of the texts, as intended by their authors, and the meanings subsequently attributed to them in the course of history (see Touber 2018, 30–75; Bravo 2006, 193–194). Spinoza's ideas have had a huge impact on biblical philology and no exegete of the Scriptures has been able to ignore them ever since. Over time, Spinoza's ideas have reinforced the rigorous historicization of the message conveyed by biblical texts and have contributed to the increasing separation of biblical philology from theology.

Without producing the same political and social impact as Spinoza's views, the last potentially disruptive factor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century philology was the emergence of and uncertainties over the interpretation of the manuscript called *Codex Alexandrinus* by Brian Walton. Contemporary researchers have already described the historical circumstances of its acquisition by the English in 1628 (Mandelbrote 2006, 78–80; Spinka 1936, 10–29), explaining the discrepancy between the ideas of some English philologists, who believed that the manuscript was redacted by Saint Thecla and that it contains the earliest tradition of the translation of the *Septuagint* from Alexandria, and the historical reality, meant to establish the exact dating and precise nature of the manuscript (Bossina 2021, 154). Although it has been approached rather reluctantly by philologists, accustomed to the view that no manuscript should contain the original text of the Greek translation, the *Codex Alexandrinus* had nevertheless a major impact on the study of the *Septuagint* because of its potential to represent a serious competitor to the Masoretic Text and to combat, based on its attributed antiquity, both the Latin and Greek versions of the biblical texts (Hardy 2015, 123–124). The role of the Bodleian Library manuscript became significant in the theological disputes between Catholics and Protestants: while for some Protestants it represented a means of challenging the countless editions based on the *Codex Vaticanus* or the translation of the *Vulgate* (produced at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century), others regarded it as a real

threat, because, some paragraphs that differed from Hebrew tradition discredited the very principle of *sola Scriptura*, one of the pillars of the Protestant faith. The manuscript received as a gift by King Charles I from Patriarch Cyrill Lucaris (1570–1638) succeeded in dividing European philologists and theologians into mixed groups. Protestants like James Ussher (1581–1656) and Catholics like Jean Morin were united in their scepticism with regard to the value of the manuscript and questioned its authority; others, like Isaac Vossius, exalted its value and wanted an edition that would supersede the others, whereas scholars like Patrick Young (1584–1652) and Thomas Gale (1636–1702) published partial editions based on the *Codex Alexandrinus*, of Pseudo-Clemens' *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Oxford, 1633), *Book of Job* (London, 1637) and *Psalms* (Oxford, 1678).

The English philologists' generations-long desire to have a complete edition of the text preserved in the *Codex Alexandrinus* was eventually fulfilled by Johann Ernst Grabe (1666–1711) and the continuators of his Oxford project. Arriving in England in 1697 and converted to Anglicanism, Grabe came under the protection of the great critic John Mill (c. 1645–1707), who helped him procure numerous biblical lections preserved throughout manuscripts in various European libraries<sup>9</sup>. Grabe was convinced that the *Codex Alexandrinus* preserved the oldest and best text of the *Old Testament*, opposing it vehemently to the *Vaticanus* manuscript; he also promised that based on the comparison with other manuscripts and the signs used by Origen he would restore the text to its original ancient form. This promise of reconstruction not only affected the text of the edition, which contains some 2000 emendations, but also delayed the publication of the volumes unduly. By the time of Grabe's death (1711), only volumes I (*The Octateuch*, 1707) and IV (*Poetic books*, 1709) had been published. His project was later taken up by the scholar Francis Lee (1661–1719), who managed to edit and publish only volume II (*Historical Books*) in the year of his death. A year later, William Wigan published volume III (*Prophetic Books*) and the last of the edition called *Grabiana*, named after the philologist from Königsberg.

Although Johann Ernst Grabe failed to prove the superiority of the Greek text of the *Codex Alexandrinus*, mainly because of the scepticism manifested by critics regarding such claim and because his edition was contaminated with other versions of the text, the manuscript continued to fascinate for many years, remaining part of the critical apparatus of major editions. In the period 1730–1732, the Swiss philologist Johann Jakob Breitinger (1701–1776) reprinted the edition begun by Grabe, comparing it with the text of the *Vaticanus* manuscript, yet his edition also failed to produce a clean text, free from the interference of other textual variants.

### 3. The Dutch Edition in the *Grabiana's* Preface

Of all the phenomena that marked biblical philology in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the preparation of the English edition of the *Alexandrinus* manuscript had a substantial impact on the production of Lambert Bos's *Septuagint*. From the preface to the Dutch edition, we learn that there is not only a constant reference to the major editions produced in England, but also a long-distance dialogue with Grabe's *Septuagint*, the most fascinating of them all. In his desire to argue for the superiority of the Greek text preserved in the *Codex Vaticanus*, the Franeker professor of Greek praises Johann Ernst Grabe's initiative, proposes emendations to the *Codex Alexandrinus*, refers to the first volume of Grabe's edition (*Octateuch*, 1707) and even includes in the preface of Dutch edition a subchapter containing Grabe's proposed emendations to the text of the Alexandrian manuscript<sup>10</sup>. The death of the Prussian scholar (1711) delayed not only the continuation of the Oxford project, but also the reaction to open dialogue in the preface to Bos's edition. The reply would come a few years later from two of Grabe's editors: Francis Lee and Johann Jakob Breitinger. Only the former is partially the subject of this study. If the Swiss theologian's reception of the Dutch edition is more consistent and deserves to be treated separately in a future study, Francis Lee's has been treated in part in another article (Catană-Spenchiu and Răchită 2023, 317–332). Consequently, here it is only necessary to outline the general attitude that Francis Lee had towards the editorial project at Franeker.

In the preface to the second volume of the *Grabiana* (Oxford, 1719), Francis Lee situates Lambert Bos's edition in the context of philological debates concerning the contorted transmission of Greek translation over the centuries. Even though Bos recognized the importance of *Codex Alexandrinus* for textual criticism and admitted that in some passages the text was superior to that of the *Codex Vaticanus*<sup>11</sup>, the completion of a concurrent editing project that made frequent references to the English edition and its value led Francis Lee to view the new Dutch edition with great suspicion. Broadly speaking, Francis Lee believed that Lambert Bos's goal was to diminish the impact and authority of the biblical text corrected and edited by Grabe. The suspicion of the English editor arose from the conviction that the Hellenist from Franeker knew, just as well, that an "authentic" Greek text, superior to the existing ones, was about to appear in England<sup>12</sup>. The mere decision to produce an amended edition of the Roman Catholic *Sixtina*, according to the text preserved in the Vatican manuscript, was interpreted as an attempt to undermine public confidence in the value of the English edition<sup>13</sup>.

Francis Lee's main criticism concerned the alleged selective emendation of the Roman *Septuagint*. While appreciating Lambert Bos's courage in correcting the errors of a canonized edition, he also reproaches his passive attitude toward other biblical passages that would have needed emendations<sup>14</sup>. The English scholar suggests that Bos used Grabe's critical observations in his interventions on the text, without being consistent in this direction<sup>15</sup>. Several textual arguments, which constitute proposals for emendation based on *Codex Alexandrinus*'s variants, aim to prove the intentional omissions of the Dutch philologist.

#### **4. Comparative analysis of texts**

Francis Lee has discussed two distinct categories of texts. In the first category (*Hosea* 3:3; *Joel* 2:16; 2:30 and 3:17) Lambert Bos's emendation of the Sistine text is praised and in the second one comprises 5 philological issues, identified by Johan Ernst Grabe in the second book of *Kings* (14:17) and *Hosea* (4:6; 12:12; 13:2 and 14:2), which Lambert Bos preserved as they occurred in the canonized edition of *Sixtina*. We will focus for this analysis on the last category because we already have conducted a comparative investigation on the examples from the first one. The textual observations that Francis Lee makes posed philological challenges not only for editors of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also for subsequent translators tasked with determining which text to translate.

For a reliable comprehension of the critical assessments made of the Franeker edition, it is worth considering a comparative analysis of the various editions of the time, and also of the way in which these texts were understood in Protestant exegesis, collected in John Pearson's *Critici sacri* (1660) and republished in an enlarged edition (Amsterdam, 1698).

Furthermore, in order to have a better understanding of how Samuil Micu referred to the objections raised against the Franeker edition, we have to consider that the Romanian translator had to choose between two Septuagint editorial traditions: one that was specific to Romanian translation, based overwhelmingly on the Aldina text, followed in the Frankfurt edition (1597), respectively the Sistine editing tradition, followed in the new Protestant editions he consulted.

##### **4.1. 2 Kings 14:17**

The text in *2Kings* 14:17 opens the series of philological issues, identified by Johann Ernst Grabe in the *Sixtina*, which Lambert Bos retained without any change and did not mention in the critical apparatus of the Dutch edition. In the particular case of *2Kings* 14:17 ("And the woman said, 'May



the word of my lord the king indeed be as an offering”<sup>16</sup>) Grabe notes an error caused by a wrong delineation of *scriptio continua* in the manuscripts. The phrase Εἴη δὴ ὁ λόγος (lat. *sit quaeso sermo*) was read differently by the *Sistine* editors and printed in its corrupted form εἰ ἥδη ὁ λόγος, which would alter the authentic meaning of the passage<sup>17</sup>. Francis Lee noted that the Spanish edition of Alcalá de Henares (1520) and the Venetian edition of Aldo Manutius (1518) opted for a different text variant (γενηθήτω δὴ ὁ λόγος), which used the aorist passive imperative of the verb γίνομαι, while still managing to render the meaning intended by the biblical authors. The English editor suspects that Lambert Bos deliberately chose not to include in his edition the emendation proposed by Grabe, despite having had four years to discover it in his public epistle addressed to John Mill. Furthermore, he insinuates that Bos deliberately ignored the other versions of the text, his main interest being to produce a text that would comply with the Hebrew text and the Rome edition.

*LXX-Sixt*, 234: καὶ εἶπεν ἡ γυνή. εἰ ἥδη ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου μου τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς θυσίας.

*LXX-Bos*, 433: Καὶ εἶπεν ἡ γυνή, Εἰ ἥδη ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου μου τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς θυσίας.

*LXX-Grabe*, vol. II, n.p.: Καὶ εἶπεν ἡ γυνή· Εἴη δὴ ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου μου τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς θυσίαν.

Grabe is undoubtedly right about the text established by the *Sistine* editors, since the error could easily be detected by comparison with Jerome’s use of the conjunctive in translation (*ut fiat verbum domini mei*) or with the other Greek versions, which used the verb γενηθήτω. However, Grabe’s proposed emendation might not be as original as his editor thought. The grammatical issue had been noted long before by Hugo Grotius, who in his philological notes observed that the verb in the paragraph should be a verb in the optative mood (*potius optantis est, ut LXX sumserē*) and suggested that the form εἰ ἥδη would be a popular lection (*non εἰ ἥδη, ut vulgò legitur*<sup>18</sup>). The scarce presence of the Greek optative in biblical texts and most probably an interpretation according to which the phrase was an elliptical structure, determined Bos’s reluctance with regard to Grabe’s proposed emendation. The fact is that in the earlier editions of the *Sistine* the text is not emended. Jean Morin preserved the *Sistine* text<sup>19</sup>, and Grabe would later note in *Epistula ad Millium* that the Greek text of the London Polyglot (*ipsisque Bibliis Polyglottis Waltoni*) was not corrected, either<sup>20</sup>.

It is obvious that the Romanian translations followed the Frankfurt edition, providing a slightly different text, which we can also identify in the version proposed by Samuil Micu.

*LXX-Frankf*, 286a: Καὶ ἐρεῖ ἡ δούλη σου· γενηθήτω δὴ ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου μου τοῦ βασιλέως.

Ms.45: “Și va grăi roaba ta: ‘Facă-să, dară, cuvîntul domnului meu, împăratului’”. [“And thy handmaid will speak: ‘May the word of my lord the king will now be’”].

Ms.4389: “Și să zică roaba ta: ‘Să fie cuvîntul stăpînului meu, al împăratului’”.

[“And let your handmaid say: ‘Let the word of my lord, of the king be’”].

B 1688: “Și va grăi roaba ta: ‘Facă-să dară cuvîntul domnului meu, împăratului’”. [“And thy handmaid will speak: ‘May the word of my lord the king will now be’”].

B-Blaj: “Și va grăi roaba ta: ‘Să fie cuvântul domnului meu, împăratului’”.

[“And thy handmaid will speak: ‘Let the word of my lord the king be’”].

In the note to the text, the Frankfurt edition mentioned that εἰ ἤδη is a corrupted text, which replaced the correct version εἶη δὴ<sup>21</sup>, without any comment on the substitution of ἡ γυνή for ἡ δούλη or of εἶη δὴ for γενηθήτω δὴ, derived from the text of *Aldina*. The clearest evidence that Micu did not follow Lambert Bos’s edition is the lack of the conditional conjunction in the translation. Even though he was aware of the grammatical problem, given that the text of the Leipzig edition presented a corrected text (Εἶη δὴ ὁ λόγος) and mentioned that other editions preferred the form εἰ ἤδη<sup>22</sup>, he opted in this case to combine solutions provided by the tradition of earlier translations.

#### **4.2. Hosea 4:6**

The poetic text from *Hosea* 4:6 (“My people have become like one who lacks knowledge;/ because you have rejected knowledge, / I will also reject you from being a priest to me”<sup>23</sup>) posed such a minor problem at the time that today one may find it quite difficult to understand the nature of critical observation in itself. Lambert Bos was criticized of having preserved the flawed text of the *Sixtina*, which contained the negative particle μὴ before the verb ἱερατεῦειν, although this element is found neither in the *Codex Vaticanus*, nor in the Hebrew text. The observation is first made by Grabe in

his *Epistula ad Millium*<sup>24</sup>, but the irony is that the negation appears even in the printed version of his edition.

*LXX-Sixt*, 558: ὅτι σὺ ἐπίγνωσιν ἀπόσω, καὶ γὰρ ἀπόσομαι σέ, τοῦ μὴ ἱερατεῦειν μοι·

*LXX-Bos*, 1080: ὅτι σὺ ἐπίγνωσιν ἀπόσω, καὶ γὰρ ἀπόσομαι σέ, τοῦ μὴ ἱερατεῦειν μοι·

*LXX-Grabe*, vol. III, n.p.: ὅτι σὺ ἐπίγνωσιν ἀπόσω, καὶ ἐγὼ ἀπόσομαι σέ, τοῦ μὴ ἱερατεῦειν μοι·

Although today it is difficult to understand the objection made by Grabe and reiterated by Lee, in those days it had a special significance in the dispute between Protestants and the leadership of the Catholic Church. This aspect is suggested by the way the verse was interpreted at the time. For instance, the humanist François Vatable stated in his notes that the verse referred to the High Priest (*Summum Sacerdotem alloquitur*<sup>25</sup>), without establishing any hermeneutical connection to contemporary society whatsoever. Yet in the typological reading of the prophetic books of the following century, the prophecy could be read as a reference to the Roman Pontiff. Regardless of the nature of the interpretation, in the still tense atmosphere of the disputes between Catholics and Protestants, the presence of the negative particle in the text of the editions was most probably frowned upon. It fed the unjustified fear that the text might be interpreted in the sense of a double negative and that it might be attributed the opposite meaning. From the translation of Jerome's *Vulgate* (*repellam te ne sacerdotio fungaris mihi*) it is quite clear that the presence of the negation was rather a translation solution of the text from Hebrew, which had also been adopted by some of the Greek versions. The text preserved in the *Codex Vaticanus* literally translated the Hebrew infinitive construct, rendering its equivalent by an infinitive without negation. Jerome solved the problem elegantly, opting for a negative final subordinate, which forced him to add the verb *fungor* to the text, because in Latin there was no verb that could express the exercise of the function of priest, without deviation from the meaning. Actually, none of the editions based on the *Sistine* text removed this negation<sup>26</sup>.

This state of facts is also reflected in the tradition of Romanian translations, where most of the editions consulted retained the negation. With the exception of Ms.4389, which attempted a translation without negation and produced a rather obscure text (“Că tu ai lepădat știința, ce te voiu lepăda și eu pre tine de-a mai fi mie preut”), all other Romanian versions translate the adverb of negation. Micu followed in the footsteps of

his predecessors, deciding to transform the infinitive into a predicative verb (“pentru că ai lăpădat știința și Eu te voiu lăpăda pre tine, ca să *nu* preoțești Mie”<sup>27</sup>).

### 4.3. *Hosea 12:12*

The critical objection formulated by Lee with regard to the text of *Hosea 12:12* (“And Jakob withdrew to the plain of Syria, and Israel was subject because of a wife, and because of a wife he kept watch”<sup>28</sup>) is limited to the repetitive text ἐν γυναικὶ καὶ ἐν γυναικὶ, reproaching the Dutch editor for deliberately omitting the preposition ἐν from the second construction, following the model of the *Sistine* editors, although the double preposition is preserved in both the uncial manuscripts, *Vaticanus* and *Alexandrinus*, respectively in all the major editions of the time (cf. Grabe 1705, 49). Lee’s reproach is merely aimed to tease the claims expressed by Lambert Bos, in the preface to his edition, to correct the *Septuaginta Romana* in accordance with the text of the *Vaticanus* manuscript. The omission of the second preposition is found, to the same extent, in the other editions of the *Sistine* consulted by Lambert Bos, who records the text καὶ ἐδούλευσεν Ἰσραὴλ ἐν γυναικὶ, καὶ γυναικὶ ἐφυλάξατο<sup>29</sup>.

Protestant exegesis generally regarded the text of *Hosea 12:12* as an allusion to chapter 29 of the *Genesis* and interpreted the repetition ἐν γυναικὶ καὶ ἐν γυναικὶ as a precise reference to the seven-year intervals in which Jacob served Laban for Rachel (*Genesis 29:20*) and Leah (*Genesis 29:28*)<sup>30</sup>. Johannes Drusius rendered a similar meaning to this paragraph, pointing to the philological issues raised by the Latin translation of the text. Some preferred to translate it by the dative *pro uxore*, others opted for the causal meaning of *propter uxorem* or *propter mulierem*, while more literal translations insisted on equating the Hebrew terms and translated it *in uxore* (Pearson 1698, vol. 4, 149 and 151–152). The consultation of the Protestant exegetical tradition reveals that most exegetes read the double preposition and that the absence of one of them could lead to entirely different meanings, probably referring to a messianic dimension that did not exist in the text. In their desire to render the Hebrew text as faithfully as possible, the ancient translators rendered the preposition -ב (b-) by ἐν in many instances, even where the classical paradigm rejected them as linguistic barbarisms. A critic accustomed to classical Greek had to interpret the second construction ἐν γυναικὶ differently because of the change in verbal diathesis. Whereas the active diathesis of the verb ἐδούλευσεν in the first construction easily allows the preposition ἐν, things are different for the verb ἐφυλάξατο, because in classical Greek the verb in the middle diathesis

is automatically followed by the dative, without a preposition. This grammatical correction, omitting the preposition ἐν from the second construction, provided deeper meaning to the paragraph, as it could be read in a messianic sense and translated by expressions such as “kept out of woman” or “stayed away from woman”.

In the Romanian translations, this philological issue is practically non-existent, because the Frankfurt edition displays the repetition of the preposition, in accordance with the *Aldina* edition and the *Alexandrinus* manuscript, which contained the text ἐν γυναικὶ καὶ ἐν γυναικὶ ἐφυλάξατο (*LXX-Frankf*, 727). Consequently, Samuil Micu adopts the solution offered by most Romanian versions, which opt for the *variatio* translation of both prepositions<sup>31</sup>.

#### 4.4. *Hosea 13:2*

The philological issue raised by the paragraph from *Hosea 13:2* (“And they added to sin/ and made a cast image for themselves”<sup>32</sup>) was the addition by the *Sistine* editors of the adverb of time νῦν before the first verb of the verse (προσέθεντο), although this was omitted in the known uncial manuscripts<sup>33</sup>. Grabe’s observation was echoed by Lee, who imputes to the Dutch edition the retention of this adverb, according to the model of the Roman edition.

*LXX-Sixt*, 562: καὶ νῦν προσέθεντο τοῦ ἁμαρτάνειν, καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς χώνευμα ἐκ τοῦ ἀργυρίου αὐτῶν.

*LXX-Bos*, 1087: Καὶ νῦν προσέθεντο τοῦ ἁμαρτάνειν, καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς χώνευμα ἐκ τοῦ ἀργυρίου αὐτῶν.

*LXX-Grabe*, vol. III, n.p.: Καὶ νῦν προσέθεντο τοῦ ἁμαρτάνειν ἔτι, καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς χώνευμα ἐκ τοῦ ἀργυρίου ἑαυτῶν.

The adverb νῦν incriminated in this case most probably aimed at a harmonization of the text, having been added under the influence of the Latin tradition of the *Vulgate*, which placed the adverb at the beginning of the paragraph (*et nunc addiderunt ad peccandum*), as well as the Hebrew tradition, where the adverb of time *atta* (אָתָּא), preceded by the conjunction, was placed in the same position. Grabe was able to detect the problem due to the fact that in the *Codex Alexandrinus* text the state of continuity of sin is marked by another adverb of time (ἔτι), which renders the addition of the first adverb superfluous and even pleonastic. Ironically, because the third volume of the *Grabiana* had a different editor, this text is the only one to retain both adverbs in the set text without any additional notice. As we learn

from the critical apparatus of the Dutch edition, Lambert Bos was well aware that the adverb  $\nu\tilde{\nu}$  was missing from the *Codex Alexandrinus*<sup>34</sup>, yet its presence in the editions of *Aldina*, *Complutensia*, the Patristic writings, and especially the other editions based on the *Sistine* text<sup>35</sup> determined him to preserve it in the text.

Samuil Micu translated the adverb of time  $\nu\tilde{\nu}$  in his version, as it was confirmed not only by the Franeker edition but also by the other sources he consulted.

*LXX-Frankf*, 727a: Καὶ  $\nu\tilde{\nu}$  προσέθεντο τοῦ ἁμαρτάνειν [ἔτι].

Ms.45: „Și acum adaose [încă] a greși”. [And now they [still] add to err].

Ms.4389: „Și acum iarăși au adaos a greși”. [And now do they add again to err].

B 1688: „Și acum adaose a greși”. [And now they add to err].

*B-Blaj*, 706: „Și acum, au adaos a păcătui”. [And now, do they add to sin].

The Frankfurt edition notes already pointed out that the adverb  $\epsilon\tilde{\tau}$  is pleonastic in relation to  $\nu\tilde{\nu}$  (*LXX-Frankf*, 727a, n. 2) and framed the second adverb between square brackets. The other possible sources of the Romanian translator also preserved the adverb  $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ , while Christian Reineccius' edition pointed to its absence from the two known uncial manuscripts<sup>36</sup>. The translation provided for the first part of the verse in the *Blaj Bible* indicates a source from which the adverb  $\epsilon\tilde{\tau}$  is missing, whereas the way in which the verb ἁμαρτάνειν was translated, with the meaning it held in Hellenistic Greek, points to a translation uninfluenced by pre-existing ones in the Romanian tradition.

#### **4.5. Hosea 14:2**

The last example discussed by Francis Lee concerns a philological issue encountered in *Hosea* 14:2 (“Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, / for you have been weakened by your injustices”<sup>37</sup>). Grabe briefly noted that the verb ἡσθένησας, rendered in the second person singular in the *Codex Vaticanus* and most editions, has been rendered by ἡσθένησαν, in the third person plural, in the *Aldine* and *Sistine* editions (Grabe 1705, 49). The texts of the editions actually mark a different understanding of the subject of the paragraph (Ἰσραὴλ), which can also be read as a collective noun, but here causes a disagreement between the singular verb of the main clause (ἐπιστράφηθι) and the plural verb (ἡσθένησαν) in the subordinate sentence.

*LXX-Sixt*, 562: Ἐπιστράφηθι ἰσραὴλ πρὸς κύριον τὸν θεὸν σου, διότι ἡσθένησαν ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις σου.

*LXX-Bos*, 1088: Ἐπιστράφηθι Ἰσραὴλ πρὸς κύριον τὸν θεὸν σου, διότι ἡσθένησαν ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις σου.

*LXX-Grabe*, vol. III, n.p.: Ἐπιστράφηθι Ἰσραὴλ πρὸς Κύριον τὸν θεὸν σου, διότι ἡσθένησας ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις σου.

From the critical apparatus of the Franeker edition, where the singular form ἡσθένησας is attributed to the *Alexandrinus* and *Vaticanus* manuscripts and the Alcalá de Henares edition<sup>38</sup>, we learn that Lambert Bos has intentionally retained the plural form of the verb in the *Sistine* editors. His decision seems to have been influenced by the editions of Jean Morin and Brian Walton, which also retain the plural form of the verb<sup>39</sup>. As indicated by the critical apparatus of the Paris and London editions, the differences in the person of the verb ἡσθενέω are not specific only to the Greek versions; the same situation occurs in the Latin manuscripts, which either oscillate between *infirmatus es* and *infirmati sunt*, or propose different translations, such as *corruisti* or *impegisti*, in the singular. Grabe's observation is consequently not an original discovery. Johannes Drusius's notes had already signalled that the plural form was a copying error that required emendation<sup>40</sup>.

This confusing situation of the person of the verb was not transmitted in the Romanian translations, because the Frankfurt edition, although based on *Aldina*'s text, presented a different subject and, consequently, corrected the verb, establishing a singular form for it: Ἐπιστράφηθι ἱεροσαλῆμ ἐπὶ κύριον τὸν θεὸν σου, διότι ἡσθένησας ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις σου<sup>41</sup>. Given that the subject of the subordinating clause, the same as that of the causative subordinate, turned into a clear singular form (Ἱεροσαλῆμ), the person of the verb can no longer raise issues of agreement between subject and predicate either. Following the Frankfurt edition, all 17<sup>th</sup> century Romanian translations rendered the verb “ai slăbit” (“you have been weakened”) in the singular (Ms.45; Ms.4389; B1688). Comparing editions and translations, Samuil Micu preferred to translate the singular form of the verb but did not accept the different lection fixed for the subject: “Întoarce-te, Israile, cătră Domnul Dumnezeuul tău, că ai slăbit întru nedreptățile tale!” (“Return, O Israel, unto the Lord your God, for you have weakened in your iniquities!”<sup>42</sup>).

## 5. Conclusions

The contextualization of translations and following editions allows us to see philological problems, raised from the reading of manuscripts, that do

not disappear without a trace after the establishing of texts. The challenges posed in the 17th century by variants found in the *Codex Alexandrinus* and other manuscripts of the *Septuagint* continued to incite critical reflection long after the editions were produced. The translation of the *Blaj Bible* was not made in a context detached from the new discoveries of European biblical philology, nor did the translator intend to follow indiscriminately a single source.

The criticism that Lambert Bos's Dutch edition has received constitutes for the most part conquests of biblical philology from previous centuries. The well-known objections of Protestant biblical exegesis to the canonization of Catholic editions take a different form in the case of the Franeker edition. In the case of passages invoked to criticize Lambert Bos's passive attitude toward *Sistine* errors, at least two cases (*2Kings* 14:17 and *Hosea* 14:2) comprise grammatical anomalies noted long before by Johannes Drusius, and two others (*Hosea* 4:6 and *Hosea* 12:12) reflect hermeneutics derived from investing each element of the text with prophetic meanings.

A comparative analysis of the texts objected to the Franeker edition, and the choices made by Samuil Micu, who was forced to decide which text to follow in the translation, can give us considerable clues to the text criticism applied in the Romanian translation. A "conservative" attitude prevails in this process, in which innovative elements are rejected, while translation solutions provided by the Romanian tradition are preferred. Samuil Micu's choices oscillate between the tradition of old Romanian biblical translations, and the editions he consulted and convinced him. The limited examples we have investigated suggest that the Greek-Catholic monk did not follow a single Greek text without a complete philological exploration. This becomes evident in cases that raise grammatical issues (*2Kings* 14:17 and *Hosea* 14:2), corrected or not in the editions consulted. Samuil Micu avoids here the errors attributed to the Dutch edition, either by translating the different text of another edition (*2Kings* 14:17) or by choosing to translate a mixed text, resulting from the comparison between the editions and the tradition of Romanian translations (*Hosea* 14:2). Objections derived from the prophetic hermeneutics of the text (*Hosea* 4:6; *Hosea* 12:12) have no impact on Micu's translation, as long as they are preserved in most sources. Even if the philological problems he faced are not explicitly mentioned anywhere, it is precisely this "oscillating" attitude towards his sources that constitutes irrefutable proof of a critical judgment made beforehand.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For B 1688, Ms.45, Ms.4389 there were used the texts from the *Monumenta linguae Dacoromanorum* series (MLD.VII, MLD.XVII).



<sup>2</sup> The preparation for printing of the *Bucharest Bible* (1688) has quite a complicated history, as proved by two manuscripts (Ms. 45 and Ms. 4389), which preserve the translation efforts for the *Old Testament*. A detailed study of the two manuscripts has been conducted by Căndeia 1979, 79–224. According to Eugen Pavel, some of the reliable sources for the *Bible from Bucharest*, which was translated by Nicolae Milescu (1636–1708), between 1661 and 1664, were: 1. The Frankfurt *Septuagint* edition (1597); 2. The *Ostrug Bible* of 1581; 3. One of the editions of the *Vulgate*, published in Antwerp between 1599 and 1645; 4. Several editions of the Hebrew text, translated into Latin, by Hebraists such as Santes Pagnino (1470–1541), Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), Sebastian Castellio (1515–1563), Emmanuele Tremellio (1510–1580) and François de Jon (1545–1602); 5. Roger Daniel’s *Septuagint*, the first Greek Bible to be printed in England (London, 1653). Some of these sources were also consulted by Samuil Micu, who sometimes adopted translation solutions from the old Romanian version, and sometimes detached significantly from it (Pavel 2016, 18–19).

<sup>3</sup> Among the European critical editions used by Samuil Micu, the following have been mentioned: 1. The Franeker *Septuagint* (1709); 2. One of the biblical editions elaborated by François Vatable (most probably the Heidelberg bilingual edition of 1616, cf. Pavel 2014, 91); 3. The London Polyglot Bible (1653–1657); 4. The canonized edition of the *Vulgate*, published in Venice in 1690; 5. The *Septuagint* edition of Christian Reineccius (1668–1752), published in Leipzig between 1747 and 1751. Other secondary editions are added to these sources, whose impact on translation is still being studied.

<sup>4</sup> Samuil Micu wrote a much more extensive introduction, preserved today in manuscript (Ms. 497) at the Romanian Academy Library in Cluj-Napoca, which he revised and briefed in the printed version (See Pavel 2016, 24).

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the writings in which Morin revisits this idea, see Gibert 2008, 769–771.

<sup>6</sup> The reasons behind Vossius’ opinions, set in the broader context of the controversy over the divine inspiration of the Bible, are discussed by Danneberg 2003, 75.

<sup>7</sup> See the introduction and studies on the topic in van Miert et al. 2017.

<sup>8</sup> For more discussions on the phenomenon of polyglot editions, see Schenker 2008, 774–784; Hamilton 2016, 138–156; Mandelbrote 2016, 82–109.

<sup>9</sup> The full history of the preparation and elaboration of the first edition of the *Septuagint* based on the texts of the *Alexandrinus* manuscript is recounted in Scott Mandelbrote’s studies (Mandelbrote 2006, 89–92; Mandelbrote 2021, 44ff).

<sup>10</sup> See *LXX-Bos*, *Subtexere heic potius quam ad calcem Operis* [...] and *LXX-Grabe*, vol. I, *Prolegomena* II, §2).

<sup>11</sup> “*Non tamen diffiteor, quaedam esse in Cod. Alex. quae praeferenda sunt Romano.*” (“I do not deny, however, that there are some <fragments> in Codex Alexandrinus which are preferable to those in the Roman <manuscript>.”) *LXX-Bos*, *Prolegomena* II.

<sup>12</sup> For Francis Lee, as for most philologists of the era, critical observations and emendations of the *Septuagint* in the established texts or in the footsteps of editions were considered mandatory, given the consensus of scholars of the era about the altered nature of all preserved manuscripts.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *LXX-Grabe*, vol. II, *Prolegomena* I, §1.

<sup>14</sup> See *LXX-Grabe*, vol. II, *Prolegomena* II, §5.

<sup>15</sup> *LXX-Grabe*, vol. II, *Prolegomena* II, §6.

<sup>16</sup> *NETS*, 286.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Grabe 1705, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Pearson 1698, vol. 2, 1016.

<sup>19</sup> *LXX-Morin*, vol. I, 565.

<sup>20</sup> *PB-Walton*, vol. 2, 356.

<sup>21</sup> *LXX-Frankf.*, 286a, n. 39.

<sup>22</sup> LXX-*Leipzig*, 501.

<sup>23</sup> NETS, 783.

<sup>24</sup> “*Mox cap. 4. v. 6 negativa particula μή ante ἱερατεῦειν est addita, quae tamen in MS. Vatic. ut & Cyrillo Alex. non extat, neque in Hebraeo est expressa, licet praefixum ꝛ eam subinserat.*” Grabe 1705, 48.

<sup>25</sup> Pearson 1698, vol. 4, 40.

<sup>26</sup> LXX-*Morin*, vol. 2, 375; PB-*Walton*, vol. 3, 8.

<sup>27</sup> B-*Blaj*, 702.

<sup>28</sup> NETS, 788.

<sup>29</sup> See LXX-*Sixt*, 562; LXX-*Bos*, 1087; LXX-*Morin*, vol. II, 385; PB-*Walton*, vol. 3, 22.

<sup>30</sup> See in this respect the interpretations of the Hebraist Sebastian Münster and those of the Benedictine bishop Isidoro Chiari (1495–1555), edited by Pearson 1698, vol. 4, 143 and 145.

<sup>31</sup> Ms.45: “pentru muiere și întru muiere să păzi”; Ms.4389: “au slujit Istrail pentru muiere, pentru muiere se-au păzit”; B 1688: “pentru muiere și întru muiere să păzi” (MLD.XVII); B-*Blaj* 1795: “pentru muiere, și întru muiere s-au păzit”.

<sup>32</sup> NETS, 788.

<sup>33</sup> “*Contra chap. 13. v. 2 vox νῦν ante προσέθεντο est inserta, cum tamen in MS. Vatic. ut & Alex. non sit exarta.*” Grabe 1705, 49.

<sup>34</sup> LXX-*Bos*, 1087, n. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. LXX-*Morin*, vol. 2, 385; PB-*Walton*, vol. 3, 22.

<sup>36</sup> See the note of LXX-*Leipzig*, 1254.

<sup>37</sup> NETS, 789.

<sup>38</sup> LXX-*Bos*, 1088, n. 6.

<sup>39</sup> LXX-*Morin*, vol. 2, 386; PB-*Walton*, vol. 3, 24.

<sup>40</sup> Pearson 1698, vol. 4, 172.

<sup>41</sup> LXX-*Frankf*, 728a. Although it contains significant differences from other versions, the Frankfurt edition renders the correct version of the verb in question (ἡσθένησας), pointing out in the critical apparatus that the ἡσθένησαν variant is corrupt (728a, n.3).

<sup>42</sup> B-*Blaj*, 707.

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