

Some Historical Realia in Russian and Romanian: Lexical and Phraseological Correspondences

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Abstract: In this paper, we advance a set of correspondences of Russian realia words (*i.e.* culture-specific items) in Romanian. These historical words will be part of a dictionary, together with about 200 realia units, arranged by categories: ethnographic realia, socio-political and administrative realia, geographical realia, and onomastic realia, addressed to young translators from Russian to Romanian, as well as to those interested in Russian culture.

Keywords: historical realia, Russian culture, Romanian correspondences, phraseology, lexicology

1. Introduction

The rendering of culture-specific items is presented in specialized studies as one of the translation difficulties that translators must overcome. Although, in specialized studies in the field of translation, culture, civilization, and intercultural, and communication studies, these culture-specific items have many names and definitions, they can identify themselves in a source text rather easily if the translator has cognitive cultural knowledge. The problem arises when the “ideal” translation solution must be identified. According to specific theories, the problem is a matter of the purpose of the target-text, of the target-receiver, and of other intra- or extra-textual features.

2. Russian Historical Realia and Their Romanian Correspondences

In this section, we selected a series of historical realia of Russian culture (until the 1917 Revolution), which may primarily interest the young Russian translator into

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Romanian. The idea was to finally create a lexicographic working tool, which we have not identified in Romanian lexicographic works yet.

The Romanian correspondences of the Russian realia were rendered on the basis of the translation solutions specified in specialized studies (Fedorov, 1983 [1953]; Vlakhov & Florin, 1980; Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992; Moldovan, 2000; Lungu-Badea, 2004; Dejica, 2013):

Бáрин [barin] – high rank in feudalism; feudal landlord; privileged name for Russian nobles, big landowners, high-ranking officials, and so on. This word derives from *боярин* which was used since the time of Kievan Rus' (see below *боярин* [boiarin]).

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration/ phonetic transcription: *barin* (E barin);
- b. hiperonim + explanatory addition: *nobil rus, aristocrat rus, feudal rus, moșier rus, latifundiar rus* (E Russian landlord/ landowner);
- c. hypernym + explanatory periphrasis: *proprietar de pământuri din Rusia Kieveană* (E landowner from Kievan Rus');
- d. functional analogue: *boier* (E Romanian nobleman).

It is found in expressions such as:

- ◆ *Ру. жить барином*¹ – *Ro. a trăi ca un boier (boierul), a trăi fără griji* (E to live like a lord);
- ◆ *Ру. жить как барин* – *Ro. a trăi ca un boier (boierul), a trăi fără griji* (E to live like a lord);
- ◆ *Ру. сидеть барином* – *Ro. a face pe boierul, a sta ca un boier (boierul)* (E to sit around like a lord);
- ◆ *Ру. сидеть как барин* – *Ro. a face pe boierul, a sta ca un boier (boierul)* (E to sit around like a lord).

Бáрышня [barîșnea] – a privileged name for daughters from Russian noble families and wealthy owners.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *baryšnja* (E baryshnya);
- b. phonetic transcription: *barîșnea*;
- c. hypernym + explanatory periphrasis: *fîica unui nobil rus, fîica unui aristocrat rus, fată de moșier, fată de boier, fată de boier rus* (E young lady, young bourgeois daughter);
- d. functional analogue: *domniță, domnișoară, duduie, duduică* (E young lady, miss).

Боáрин [boiarin] – Russian feudal nobleman; privileged name for the Russian nobles, for the great landowners, starting with Kievan Rus' (see also “Древняя

¹ Romanian correspondences of stable phrases and phrase units are from bilingual (Russian-Romanian) explanatory and phraseological dictionaries.

Русь”). This noble name began to disappear with the reform of aristocratic reorganization at the beginning of the 18th century, imposed by Peter I. From the word *боярин* derives the word *барин*.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *bojarin* (E boyarin);
- b. phonetic transcription: *boiarin*;
- c. hypernym + explanatory addition: *nobil rus, aristocrat rus, feudal rus, moșier rus, latifundiar rus* (E Russian landlord/ landowner) ;
- d. hypernym + explanatory periphrasis: *proprietar de pământuri din Rusia Kieveană* (E landowner from Kievan Rus');
- e. functional analogue: *boier, moșier, feudal, proprietar de pământuri* (E boyarin).

Грош [groș] – brass coin with a value of two kopeks. Starting with 1838, it was worth half a kopek.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *groș* (E grosh);
- b. phonetic transcription: *groș*;
- c. traditional variant: *groș*.

It is found in expressions such as:

- ◆ *Ru.* гроша не стоит – *Ro.* nu face nici cât o coreică; nici cât o ceapă degerată; fără valoare; nu valorează nimic (E isn't worth a curse/ a stiver/ a damn);
- ◆ *Ru.* без гроша в кармане (быть, сидеть, остаться) – *Ro.* fără un ban în buzunar (a fi, a sta, a rămâne) (E to be without a penny/ a cent/ a dime; to be penniless);
- ◆ *Ru.* за грош – *Ro.* pe nimic, pe degeaba (E sitting around for nothing).

Губёрния [gubernia] – the largest form of territorial-administrative unit. During the 19th century, Russia had 50 such units, which were made up of counties.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *gubernija* (E guberniya);
- b. phonetic transcription: *gubernia*;
- c. traditional variant: *gubernie*.

Дворянин [dvorianin] – derives from the word *dvor – curte* (E court). It is one of the names of the Russian aristocracy. In the beginning, in the 12th and 13th centuries, these Russian nobles were part of the suite of a *knyaz'* (see below) or of important boyars, providing military services. Later, they became landowners and, during Tsar Peter I, they represented the noble majority, especially since the title of *boyar* had been abolished. This noble rank *дворянин* could be acquired and was not lost with the

loss of wealth. Each *guberniya* and *uezd* (county) had a Noble Assembly (*дворянское собрание*). With the 1917 Revolution, this social class would disappear.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *dvorjanin* (E dvoryanin);
- b. phonetic transcription: *dvorianin*;
- c. semantic translation: *curtean* (E court servitor);
- d. local variant: *curtean, moșier, boier*;
- e. international variant + explanatory periphrasis: *nobil latifundiar, nobil rus, aristocrat rus; nobil din Rusia, latifundiar rus, latifundiar din Rusia* (E Russian nobleman/ aristocrat).

Дворянство [dvorianstvo] – Russian nobility; aristocracy. (see *дворянин* (dvorianin)). There were three categories of aristocracy: *hereditary nobility* (*потомственное дворянство*), the status that was transferred to the wife, children and descendants on the male line; *personal nobility* (*личное дворянство*), a status that could be transferred only to the wife; *estateless nobility* (*беспоместное дворянство*), the main category to which the *knyaz'*, *baron* and *count* belonged.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *dvorjanstvo* (E dvoryanstvo);
- b. phonetic transcription: *dvarianstvo*;
- c. semantic translation: *curte* (E court);
- d. semantic translation + explanatory addition: *curtea rusească* (E Russian court);
- e. local variant: *boierime* (E boyardom);
- f. international variant + explanatory periphrasis: *nobilimea rusă, nobilimea din Rusia* (E Russian nobility).

Декабри́ст [dekabrist] – Russian revolutionary of noble origin, organizer and participant in the December 1825 uprising against Tsarist autocracy.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration/ phonetic transcription: *dekabrist* (E dekabrist);
- b. traditional variant: *dekabrist, decembrist*.

Дрѣвняя Русь [Drevnaia Rus'] – represents the first state of the Eastern Slavs; it was formed under the direction of the Viking Rurik, with the union of the tribes of the Eastern Slavs and the Finno-Ugric tribes, in the 9th century. In 988, during Vladimir I, the conversion to orthodoxy took place. In the 11th century, there was a rich economic and, above all, cultural development. During the 9th and 12th centuries, the first code of laws of the Eastern Slavs was drawn up – *Russkaya Pravda* (*Pravila rusă*) (E Rus' Law). The first written form appears during Kiev's *knyaz'*, Yaroslav I the Wise, originally called Yaroslav's *Pravda* (*Правда Ярослава*), and the second form during Yuri Dolgoruki, the founder of Moscow. In literature, there are a number of synonymic names of the ancient Russian state: „Русь” (E Rus'), „Киевская Русь” (E

Kievan Rus'), „Древнерусское государство” (E Drevnerusskoe gosudarstvo), „Киевское государство” (E Kievskoe gosudarstvo) etc.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *Drevnaja Rus'* (E Drevnaya Rus');
- b. phonetic transcription: *Drevnaia Rusi*;
- c. semantic translation: *Rusia veche* (Old Russia);
- d. traditional variant: *Rusia Veche*, *Rusia Kieveană*, *Statul Kievean*, *Rutenia*, *Rutenia Kieveană* (E Kievan Rus'/ Old Russia/ Ruthenia).

Екатері́на ІІ Вели́кая [*Ekaterina II Velikaja*] – Empress of Russia from 1762 to 1796. She was of German origin, belonging to the family of Anhalt-Zerbst, who governed in Stettin, Prussia (currently Szczecin, Poland). She usurped the throne held by her husband, Peter III, becoming the tsarina of Russia. Cultivated in the European spirit, intelligent but also authoritarian, Catherine II pursued a policy of enlightenment and Westernization of Russia, through her increased interest in European culture, religious tolerance, education (the first school for girls was established during her reign) by offering rights, privileges and advantages not only to the great nobility, but also to the small owners, to which was added a policy of territorial expansion. By the end of her reign, Catherine the Great was able to reunite the old territories and to expand, the Russian empire thus becoming a great power in Europe. Although she was criticised for maintaining slavery, she is nevertheless considered to have had one of the strongest influences on the evolution of the whole Russian society.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *Ekaterina II Velikaja* (E Ekaterina II Velikaya);
- b. phonetic transcription: *Ekaterina II Velikaia*;
- c. traditional variant: *Ecaterina a II-a*; *Ecaterina cea Mare*; *Ecaterina a II-a a Rusiei*; *Ecaterina a II-a, Împărăteasa Rusiei* (E Catherine II, Catherine the Great (Empress of Russia)).

Земство [*zemstvo*] – a form of local government, established in 1864. It had a local council, most of which consisted of nobles. However, other social classes were allowed to participate in discussions on the problems of the province, which related to local education, healthcare, social problems of the community such as supply, roads of the region, etc. After the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, the system was dissolved.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration/ phonetic transcription: *zemstvo* (E zemstvo);
- b. report with phonetic adaptation: *zemstva*;
- c. functional analogue: *consiliu local*;
- d. functional analogue + explanatory periphrasis: *consiliu local din timpul Rusiei imperiale*;

- e. traditional variant: *zemstva*.

Ивѧн Сусѧнин [Ivan Susanin] – peasant from the Kostroma region, who became a national hero of the Russian people because, during Polish rule in the early 17th century, he saved the young Tsar Mikhail Romanov, only 16 years old, the founder of the Romanov dynasty. Ivan Susanin became the symbol of devotion to the Tsar and liberation from foreign occupation, creating a true cult of the tsar. M. I. Glinka, a famous Russian composer, worshiped him in the opera *Жизнь за царя* (E A Life for the Czar) (1836), originally known as *Иван Сусанин* (E Ivan Susanin), the first piece of opera in Russian music.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration/ phonetic transcription / traditional variant: *Ivan Susanin*.

Князь [cneaz] – knyaz'; political authority in feudalism, the ruler of a cnezate (E principedom).

Translating solutions:

- transliteration: *knjaz'* (E knyaz');
- phonetic transcription: *cneaz*;
- traditional variant: *cneaz, prinț*;
- international variant: *prinț, duce, principe* (E prince, duke, count);
- hypernym: *căpetenie, conducător, stăpân* (E ruler).

It is found in expressions such as:

- ◆ *Ру. великий князь* – *Ro. marele cneaz* (E grand prince/ duke);
- ◆ *Ру. жить князем* – *Ro. a trăi ca un domn/ ca un boier; a trăi/ a o duce împărătește* (E to live like a lord/ a royalty);
- ◆ *Ру. князь апостолов* – *Ro. prințul apostolilor (despre apostolul Petru)* (E the prince of the Apostles);
- ◆ *Ру. Князь мира* – *Ro. Domn al păcii, Prințul păcii; Mântuitorul (despre Isus)* (E the Prince of Peace);
- ◆ *Ру. князь мира сего* – *Ro. prințul lumii/ întunericului (despre Satan)* (E the Prince of the World);
- ◆ *Ру. князь тьмы* – *Ro. prințul întunericului* (E prince of darkness).

Князь Игорь [Cneaz Igor] – knyaz' of Novgorod, son of Sveatoslav, he was a real historical figure from the medieval times of Kievan Rus'. He became the central hero of the epic *Слово о полку Игореве* (E The Song of Igor's campaign / Lay of Igor's campaign), the oldest literary creation of the Eastern Slavs, in which the heroic struggle against the Polovitan invaders is depicted. Most specialists consider that the anonymous manuscript document of this literary monument dates back to the 12th century. The first Romanian translation of this epic appeared in 1885, due to the academic Alexandru Papadopol-Calimah who produced a translation in prose entitled *Cuvântul despre expediția lui Igor Sveatoslavici, principele Novgorodului Nordicu*

contra Polovților sau Cumanilor (E Word about the expedition of Igor Sveatoslavici, prince Novgorod Northern against Polovitans or Cumans). At the same time, the four-act opera of the Russian composer A. Borodin, *Prince Igor*, is well-known, in which the theme and the motifs of this anonymous Russian epic meet.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *knjaz' Igor'* (E knyaz' Igor');
- b. phonetic transcription: *cneaz Igor*;
- c. traditional variant: *cneazul Igor*;
- d. international variant: *prințul Igor, principele Igor* (E prince Igor).

Куликовская битва [Kulikovskaia bitva] – Battle of Kulikovo; under the leadership of Moscow's knyaz', Dmitri Donskoi an important victory over the Golden Horde, led by the military commander Mamai.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *Kulikovskaia Bitva* (E Kulikovskaya Bitva);
- b. phonetic transcription: *Kulikovskaia Bitva*;
- c. semantic translation + transposition: *Bătălia de la Kulikovo* (E Battle of Kulikovo).

Мешок [meșoc] – obsolete unit of measurement for weights equal to 3-5 puds (1 pud equals 16.38 kg, see below). Thus, a potato meshok (sack) weighed 50 kg, and one of flour weighed 80 kg.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *meșok* (E meshok);
- b. phonetic transcription: *meșoc*;
- c. semantic translation: *sac, traistă* (E sack);
- d. explanatory periphrasis: *unitate rusească învechită de măsurare a greutateii*.

It is found in expressions such as:

- ◆ *Ru. деженный/ золотой мешок* – *Ro.*(om) putred de bogat; gros la pungă; are un sac de bani; om avut; om bogat; avuție; bogăție (E he is a money-bag/ is rolling in money);
- ◆ *Ru. мешок костей* – *Ro.* (despre om) numai piele și os; om slab (E very thin);
- ◆ *Ru. мешок с костями* – *Ro.* (despre om) numai piele și os; om slab (E very thin);
- ◆ *Ru. пустой мешок не поставишь* – *Ro.* sacul gol nu stă în picioare (E an empty sack cannot stand upright);
- ◆ *Ru. попадать/ попасть в мешок* – *Ro.* a cădea în încercuire; a fi încercuit (E to get caught in a pocket).

Мещанин [meșceanin] – is a social category from the time of Imperial Russia that included the inhabitants of urban settlements such as small owners, merchants, craftsmen, etc.; the little bourgeois. It comes from the Polish word *miasto* which

means “city”. It is found in the phrase *мещанин во дворянстве* (“the gentleman bourgeois”).

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *meščanin* (E meshchanin);
- b. phonetic transcription: *meşceanin*;
- c. report with phonetic adaptation: *meşceanin*;
- d. semantic translation + explanatory addition: *mic proprietar rus, mic burghez rus* (E small owner/ small bourgeois).

Мещанство [meşceanstvo] – the small Russian bourgeoisie (see above *мещанин [meşceanin]*).

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *meščanstvo* (E meshchanstvo);
- b. phonetic transcription: *meşceanstva*;
- c. semantic translation + explanatory addition: *mica burghezie rusă* (E Russian small bourgeoisie).

Пётр I [Petr I] – his reign (1682-1725) was an important period of economic and social recovery for Russian Empire. It was due to the administrative-territorial, legislative and social reorganization, the transition to the new system of chronology, the reorganization of the army, the organization of education, the administration of the church institution, the creation of the maritime fleet, the establishment of the first museum, the appearance of the first newspaper (Ведомость/ Vedomost') and so on.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *Petr I/ Pjotr I* (E Petr I);
- b. phonetic transcription: *Piotr I*;
- c. traditional variant: *Petru I, Petru cel Mare* (E Peter I, Peter the Great).

Помещик [pomeşic] – landowner; estates, as a rule, of noble origin. It occurs in the phrases „крупные помещики” [krupnye pomeshchiki], „мелкие помещики” [melkie pomeshchiki].

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *pomeščik* (E pomeshchik);
- b. phonetic transcription: *pameşic*;
- c. local variant: *moşier*;
- d. traditional variant: *moşier (rus), proprietar de pământuri (rus), latifundiar (rus)* (E landlord class).

Пуд [pud] – an outdated unit of measurement for weights equal to 16.38 kg.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration/ phonetic transcription: *pud*;
- b. report with phonetic adaptation: *pud*;

- c. explanatory periphrasis: *unitate rusească învechită de măsurare a greutateii (egală cu 16,38 kg)* (E outdated Russian unit of measurement for weights (equal to 16.38 kg)).

It is found in expressions such as:

- ◆ *Ru.* пуд соли (много соли) съестъ с кем-л. – *Ro.* a mânca multă sare cu cineva; până nu mănânci cu omul o maje de sare nu-l poți cunoaște (E to eat a sack/ bushel/ peck of salt with smb.).

Серебряный век [Serebreanîi vec] – the Silver Age; is an important period of cultural development in Russia (1861-1917). The development of Russian culture at that time was made by connecting to European cultural life, especially through the intense activism of the Russian cultural movement *Mir iskusstva*. The writers and artists associated with the *Silver Age* are: V. Khlebnikov, Marc Chagall, V. Kamensky, V. Kandinsky, V. Mayakovsky, N. Berdyaev, P. Florensky, V. Bryusov, K. Balmont, F. Sologub, D. Merezhkovsky, O. Mandelshtam, A. Blok, M. Tsvetaeva, A. Akhmatova, etc.

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *Serebrjanyj vek* (E Serebryanyj vek);
- b. phonetic transcription: *Serebreanîi vec*;
- c. semantic translation: *veacul de argint* (E silver century);
- d. traditional variant: *Veacul de argint* (E Silver Age).

Старообрядец [staroobriadet] – (orthodox) believer of the old rite; adherent of the old Orthodox faith. Following the reforms introduced by the Patriarch Nikon of Moscow into the liturgical practices of the Russian Orthodox Church, a religious schism took place in the mid-17th century, which divided the Russian people and led to the persecution and torment of opponents. In view of the horrors to which they were subjected, the conservatives migrated to lands where they were allowed to practice their faith freely. It was not until 1783, through the Imperial Law issued by Catherine II, that the Conservative Russians were granted religious freedom. In Romania live the Lipovans who are the descendants of the conservatives. The ethnonym *lipovean* derives from the Russian *липа* (E linden).

Translating solutions:

- a. transliteration: *staroobryadec* (E staroobryadetz);
- b. phonetic transcription: *staroobriadet*;
- c. report + adaptare fonetică: *staroobriadți*;
- d. semantic translation: *vechi credincios* (E old believer);
- e. translational variants: *credincioși de rit vechi, creștini ortodocși de rit vechi, ortodocși de rit vechi, ruși staroveri, rascolnici (raskolniki, raskolnici)* („раскол” [raskol] – „schismă”), *schismatici* etc. (E Old Believers, Old Ritualists, Schismatics).
- a. local variant: *ruși lipoveni* (E Russian Lipovans).

3. Conclusion

Realia words are words-concepts that contain information about the socio-economic and cultural-historical evolution of a community. They are part of the mental vocabulary of a national community.

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