



The Etymology and Semantics of the Ethnic Name *Csángó*

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Abstract. In this study, we approach the ethnonym *Csángó*, used to refer to the Hungarians living in Moldavia. We highlight the most important aspects of Hungarian linguists' approach to the semantics of the name *Csángó*, and we take a look at the Romanian specialized literature in the field. We aim to offer some innovative semantic and etymological pathways, though we are aware that the etymology and the meaning of the name itself will still stay a disputed and open question of the research. We do not intend to cover the history of the *Csángó* community, nevertheless we attempt to recover some aspects of the semantics of their name, taking into account its etymology and performing a semantic feature analysis to help bring to the foreground semantic aspects not captured so far.

Keywords: *Csángó*, Hungarian, Romanian, etymology, semantics

1. Introduction

Ethnonyms, or *ethnic names* can be defined as the names people use to refer to different ethnic groups. Ethnonyms are classified in two categories, i.e. there are the external ethnonyms, or exonyms, which are used by others for the given group of people, and the internal ethnonyms, or endonyms, that people use to refer to themselves. Today, *Csángó* is usually defined as both an exonym and an endonym. *Csángó* has also been used as an ethnic slur or a pejorative name (cf. Péntek 2014, Pávai 1999, Tánczos 2011); the pejoration process intensified in the last couple of decades, and if we consider the Romanian dictionary definitions of the term (see later in this study), the pejorative potential of *Csángó* is not once mentioned. As the number of Hungarians in Moldavia decreased,¹ the stigma

1 For information regarding the demographic changes the *Csángó* community has undergone, see Tánczos (2001b).

allotment process towards the Hungarian Csángó community intensified.² The terms ‘Csángó’, ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’, and ‘Catholic community from Moldavia’ are synonymous with each other though today there are Romanian Roman Catholics as well.

Nevertheless, Pávai (1999), Tánczos (2001a), Péntek (2005), and Iancu (2023) highlight the fact that ‘Hungarian’ and ‘Catholic’, ‘Csángó’ and ‘Catholic’ have become synonymous with each other. István Pávai (1999: 69–82) makes a complete inventory of ethnonyms, endonyms, and exonyms alike, with regard to the Csángó community. His research suggests that the Csángó call themselves ‘Hungarian’ and ‘Catholic’ mainly, while the exonyms they are referred to by Romanian are ‘Csángó’, ‘Hungarian’, ‘bozgor’, and ‘bandin’ (see also Nagy 2023). Lately, the name Csángó has been replaced by ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’ *moldvai magyar*, especially in the scientific discourse.

2. Research methods and aims of the study

The purpose of the study is to try to identify the etymology of the lexeme Csángó, by applying the method of indirect attestation of word meaning and/or form through an approach that takes into account phonetic and lexico-semantic aspects as well. The method of indirect attestation is briefly described by Béla Kelemen (1976), who uses it to track the emergence of certain Romanian words borrowed by the Hungarian language, to identify the date of their first (indirect) attestation. As Kelemen (1976) puts it, one of the most important factors for studying the history of a language is gaining knowledge regarding the first attestations of words. There is no doubt that the most authentic attestations are those directly taken from old texts and documents, but research on the history of words is enriched by finding the traces words leave in texts written in other languages.

As Philip Durkin highlights, “the more deeply interested we are in the history of words and the history of the lexicon, the more detail we want available to us, even when that pushes us into areas that are necessarily interdisciplinary” (Durkin 2022: 89). We approach the method of indirect attestation of words as a tool with the help of which we track semantic or formal aspects of word evolution by relying not only on direct but also on indirect evidence. We can reconstruct information about forms and/or meanings not only from the direct information available but also from indirect information, i.e. we make inferences about the form and/or the meaning of a word by analysing the traces it has left in other lexemes it has generated or in other languages which have borrowed the word subjected to analysis. Thus, we prove the existence of phonetic, morphological,

2 It is interesting to see the reflection of the Csángó issue in the novel *Született Moldovában* [Born in Moldavia] by the Hungarian novelist Rózsa Ignác.

or semantic aspects of words through evidence we find in other lexemes from the same lexico-semantic field, word family, or in other languages.

We assume that the word Csángó can be traced back earlier than its first attestation, and, what is more, its meaning can be identified by analysing evidence that we find in Hungarian and Romanian sources as well. We do know that Csángó is used as an adjective, usually in the combination *Csángó magyar* ‘Csángó Hungarian’, but hitherto the meaning of the adjective has not been established unequivocally. Therefore, we attempt to apply the method of indirect attestation of word meaning and form by taking the following steps:

- We establish the semantic field of the lexeme Csángó by relying on Hungarian and Romanian sources as well in order to be able to find its semantic features.

- We gather all the phonetically relevant forms (considered or neglected by previous research) and make a semantic feature analysis (in order to find whether there is a common denominator of meaning with Csángó).

- We take these relevant lexemes one by one and try to find them in old texts or glossaries that are not necessarily or exclusively related to the concept of Csángó. We mainly use such semantically independent sources in order to avoid being trapped by circular analysis.

- We establish the meaning these words carry in those sources, and we try to see whether any of them could be connected with elements of semantic features from the semantic field of Csángó.

3. Research on the Csángó issue in a nutshell

Hungarian research on the topic of the Csángó community’s history, dialect, music, lifestyle, traditions, and culture is tremendous. A lot of historians, linguists, priests, ethnographers, etc. have researched, analysed, described this community of Hungarians who speak the most archaic form of Hungarian and have preserved some of the Hungarian traditions. The limitations of this study do not make it possible for us to make a list of the most important contributors from Elek Gegő’s *A moldvai magyar telepekről* (1838) [On the Hungarian Settlements in Moldavia] to Laura Iancu’s *Miért csángó, ha Magyar* [Why Csángó if Hungarian] (2022).³

3 For further information see also the works and writings of Marco Bandini and his *Codex Bandinus* from 1646, Péter Zöld’s 1781 *Notitia de rebus Hungarorum, qui in Moldavia et ultra degant*, or the studies of János Jerney, Gábor Szarvas, Bernát Munkácsi, Mózes Rubinyi, Domokos Pál Péter, János Melich, Antal Horger, János Karácsonyi, Árpád Bitay, Bálint Csűry, Gábor Lükő, László Mikecs, Endre Veress, Gyula Márton, Attila Szabó T., János Péntek, Ferenc Pozsony, Vilmos Tancos, Vilmos Keszeg, Lehel Peti, Csanád Bodó, Laura Iancu, and many others. <https://kriterion.ro/glossary/csango-irodalom/>; <https://www.csangomuzeum.ro/264/>; <https://digiteka.ro/publikacio/csango-bibliografia-a-kivalogatas-szempontjai>; <http://www.kjnt.ro/csangobibliografia>.

Romanian historians have addressed mainly aspects of the Csángó community's history. While the position of Hungarian historiography on the issue of Csángó origins and that of Romanian historiography on the same issue are broadly in line until the interbellum period (see Rosetti 1905, Năstase 1935, Iorga 1915) – namely that this is a Hungarian community –, during and after the Second World War, the situation completely changed. Ideological slanting⁴ can be spotted in the writings of Dumitru Mărtinaş (1985), Iosif Petru M. Pal (1942),⁵ and Petru Râmneanţu (1946), who all stated that the Csángós were originally Romanians from Transylvania who were converted to Catholicism and were later forced to adopt the Hungarian language.

The latter two used the methods of eugenics and blood tests to prove that the Csángós were Romanian. They did so in the context of the 1940s when eugenics methods were applied by the Nazi and used as a justification for their abominable racial politics, which makes their contribution even more suspicious. Dumitru Mărtinaş's theory is based on these eugenic, therefore unscientific theories. His ideas regarding the origin of the Csángó are still very popular in Romania (Siarl 2016), but the number of non-biased approaches is growing (see Diaconescu 2002, 2008). Some earlier writings of Romanian scientists are still to be assessed such as Eliade's *De la Zamolxis la Genghis-Han, Studii comparative despre religiile şi folclorul Daciei şi Europei Orientale* [From Zamolxis to Genghis-Khan, Comparative Studies on the Religions and Folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe] (Eliade 1995), where he describes the shamanic practices of the Csángó community.

Apart from Hungarian and Romanian researchers, we must mention other contributors such as Yrjö Wichmann, the Finnish linguist who collected in 1906 a number of Hungarian north-Csángó proverbs and phrases, published in 1936 in Helsinki by Bálint Csűry and Artturi Kannisto, as the 4th volume of the series *Lexica Societatis Fenno-Ugricae*, Robin Baker's *On the Origin of the Moldavian Changos*, Meinolf Arens's *An Ethnic Group on the Pressure Field of Totalitarian Population Policies. The Moldavian Hungarians/Csángós in the Romanian–Hungarian–German Relations* (1944), Agnieszka Barszczewska's *The Moldavian Csángó Identity (1860–1916): Social and Political Factors*, but also the Turkish linguist, Hakan Aydemir (2002: 198–210) or R. Chris Davis's *Hungarian Religion, Romanian Blood: A Minority's Struggle for National Belonging, 1920–1945* (2019).

4 Ideological slanting or bias refers to the way they approached the issue of the Csángó origin and to the fact that their discourse was based less on historical or social evidence or scientifically verifiable, objective data but rather on “implicit values and assumptions embedded within texts, discourse, or social practices, e.g. loaded language”. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095956714>.

5 This Csángó-born, Romanian-speaking Catholic priest is mentioned in Rózsa Ignác's novel *Született Moldován* [Born in Moldavia], where the Csángó villagers call him a *janicsár pap*, i.e. a ‘janissary priest’, ‘traitor’, ‘deserter’, ‘renegade’.

4. Moldavian Hungarian dialects and groups

Without detailing the linguistic peculiarities of the Csángó dialect, we briefly present the two major positions regarding the geographical expansion and distribution of Csángó groups in Moldavia. The traditional view speaks about three major groups: 1. Northern Csángó dialects spoken around the town Románvásár (Roman): Szabófalva (Săbăoani), Kelgyest (Pildești), Balusest (Bălușești), Ploszkucény (Ploscuțeni); 2. Southern Csángó dialects spoken around the municipal town Bákó (Bacău): Bogdánfalva (Valea Seacă), Nagypatak (Valea Mare), Trunk (Galbeni), Szeketura (Pădureni), Gyoszény (Gioseni); 3. Székely Csángó dialects spoken along the Szeret (Siret), Tatros (Trotuș), and Tázló (Tazlău) rivers (Szabó T. 1959).

A more recent and innovative approach is the one proposed by researchers in the 2000s, who implemented the method of dialectometry, which leads to a new type of classification of Hungarian dialects in Moldavia based on isoglosses. Thus, four areas emerge: 1. Northern; 2. valley of the River Szeret (Siret); 3. valley of the brook Tázló (Tazlău); 4. valley of the River Tatros (Trotuș) (cf. Bodó 2006, Heltai 2014). A comprehensive outlook on this topic is also made by Benő (2012: 13–30).

Nonetheless, the time and geographical space from which the Csángó communities reached Moldavia is still debated by scientific circles, for all that the traces of the first Hungarian Catholics can be found as early as 1222 (Domokos 1987: 20). Gökhan Dilbaş (2014) states that the Csángó were living in Moldavia long before the founding of the Moldavian state by Dragoș, as by the time the first Mongol invasion of Hungary they had already settled in those areas. Though we do not intend to explore these aspects in the current study, we cannot but cite one of the most prominent experts of the Csángó studies, János Péntek, who declares:

The mainly phonetic but also geolinguistic data prove that the Moldavian Hungarian dialect is *mezősegi* and Szekler in its type. Its division – mainly because of its mixed nature and the continuous amalgamation – is geographically problematic: the stripe near the Szeret (Siret) River (east) is the more archaic one, showing distinct *mezősegi* features (the “Northern” near Románvásár – Roman, and partly the “southern”, near Bákó – Bacău), while the one which can be localized in the larger area neighbouring the Szekler dialect, near the Tatros (Trotuș), Tázló (Tazlău), and Aranyos-Beszterce (Bistrița Aurie) rivers, is “Szekler type”. Based on type and settlement, one can deduce information on origins as well. The Hungarians in Moldavia have all arrived from areas of historical Transylvania: the more archaic ones inhabiting the banks of the Szeret (Siret) River at a very early period, from the comitatus regions of Transylvania, from the *Mezőség*, most probably due to a distinct purpose and conscious relocation, while the

others in later periods, for different reasons; as a result of direct geographical contact by spontaneous migration as well, almost continuously from *Székelyföld* (Szeklerland). (Péntek 2012: 121–122)

5. The first records of the word *Csángó* (Chango, Czanko, Sanga, Canko) and positions regarding its etymology and meaning

5.1. Occurrences in old texts

The first written source of the word *Csángó* in Hungarian that we know of today is the letter of parish priest Péter Zöld in the 18th century, who fled to Moldavia in 1764 because of the bloodshed which took place in Madéfalva (Siculeni), an event which came to be known as Siculicidium.⁶ He went to Moldavia twice, first he spent there two months, and the second time he stayed for five years (Iancu 2023). In this intriguing study, Iancu (2023) makes a synthesis of the 18th-century emergences of the term, starting from the letter written by Péter Zöld to Vince Blahó in 1781, translated and published in Hungarian in 1783, in which he uses the lexeme *Csángó* as an endonym (*Hungaris in Lonka residentibus, Csángó dictis*).

Another occurrence is the one belonging to István Sándor's publication *Sokféle 'Varia'*, in which he identifies the name *tsángó*, defined as 'Moldavo Hungarus', with the name used by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus to refer to the Pechenegs, i.e. *tsangár* (*Bello autem inter Turcos et Pancinacitas, tunc temporis Cangar dictos*).⁷

However, we must also mention *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253–55*, published in London in 1900 (edited by Woodville Rockhill), in which the pilgrim offers the first accurate information on the identity of the Cumans with the Kipchaks, Turks, and *Cangle*, as he uses the variants *Cangle*, *Cangitae*, and *Kangali* to refer to a branch of the Cuman people. Due to the phonetic resemblance of the above-mentioned forms with *Csángó*, the names have been perceived as etymologically related despite the fact that there is a level of uncertainty related to the referent of the lexemes *Cangle*, *Canglae*, *Cangali*, and *Kangali*. The idea of the sameness of the *Csángó* with the Pechenegs is provided by a quite recent study by Enikő Hoppa (2020), who considers that the ethnonym we are analysing was borrowed from the old Slavs and followed the pathway *ka ngar>*kogar>*kogaъ>*kegaъ>*čegaъ, which changed in Hungarian as *čegaъ>*čę

6 <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-pallas-nagy-lexikona-2/s-16BBE/siculicidium-17799/>.

7 Sokféle 1–2. (Győr, 1791. 7). Első darab / 2. A' Kunokról, Jászokról, és Székelyekről. https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/Sokfele_01/?pg=4&layout=s.

gaŋ>*csengāŋ>*csāngāŋ>*csāngoŋ>*csāngó>csángó. She also states that the name Csángó may have evolved from the word *Kangar*, which, according to 6th–8th-century sources, denoted a group of Iranian people. The Iranian-speaking Kangar people in the 8th century mingled with the Middle-Turkic-speaking Pechenegs, and together they formed the Pecheneg tribal confederation described by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus; they later settled in Moldavia and were Hungarized by the Hungarians, who went there up to the 13th century (Hoppa 2020: 62–64).⁸

In the travel report of Domokos Teleki (1796) *Egynehány hazai utazások' leírása Tót és Horváth Országoknak rövid esmértetésével egygyütt* [The Description of Some Domestic Journeys Together with the Presentation of the Land of Croats and Slovaks], the *Tsángó* are the Hungarians inhabiting the Gyímes (Ghimes) region, and the word itself stands for 'wanderer', 'pilgrim'.⁹ Iancu (2023: 161) highlights that the word Csángó started to spread in the 18th century, with the help of the printed press, as well as its first semantic identification as 'wandering people' – though contemporary Moldavian Romanian sources do not use the term, and letters, reports written in Hungarian do not use it either. We add that the name *Cangar* is also mentioned as the synonym of Pecheneg in Lukácsy (1870), but, more importantly, Roger Bacon in his *Opus Majus* (1267), says that *Cangali/Canglae* is the name of the Cumans:

"Tota vero haec Tartarorum a Tanau usque ad Ethiliam fuit Cumanorum qui vocabantur Canglae, qui omnes sunt delete per Tartaros. Et tota ista vocabatur Albania antiquitas." 'But the whole of these Tartars, from Tanau to Ethilia, belonged to the Cumans, who were called Canglae, who were all destroyed by the Tartars.'¹⁰

"Deinde ultra Ethiliam est tertius prinoipatus Tartarorum et destructae sulit gentes indigenae al eis, et fuerunt Cumani Canglae, sicut prius." 'Then, beyond Ethilia, there is a third principality of the Tartars, and the tribes native to them were destroyed, and the Cumans were Canglas, as before.'¹¹

Thus, many sources link the etymology of Csángó to phonetically related forms (Veress 1934 considers the Csángós the descendants of the Cumans) that come from very old texts but that clearly refer to either the Cumans or to the Pechenegs.

8 She also quotes in this respect the ideas we can find in Endre Czeizel (1990), where the researcher states that the Csángó are genetically related to the Finns and the Iranians, which makes him consider that this group is the carrier of the genetic legacy of conquering Hungarian tribes.

9 „Ezeket az említett Gyímes-lunkai Lakosokat a Tsikiak Tsángóknak nevezik: lehet hogy ez a' Nevezet onnän jön , mivel ök vándorló Emberek és Lak helyeket gyakran el hagyták; az a' -Szó Tsángó pedig, olyan értelemben vétetik mint »' kóborló, vándorló.” 'These dwellers of the Gyimes-lunka are called Tsángó by those living in Tsik, i.e. Csik/Ciuc: this name may stem from the fact that they are wandering people who often leave their places, so the word Tsángó, in a similar sense, is "wandering", "roaming".'

10 The *Opus Majus* of Roger Bacon, ed. J. A. Bridges, Oxford, 1897, I, 366. <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ey4shp6s/items?canvas=565>.

11 Ibid.

Iancu (2023: 164) states that the word Csángó could have been in use in everyday communication in the 18th century, and, what is more, Péter Zöld might have known it prior to going to Moldavia. One of the most provocative things for Iancu is the lack of the word Csángó in non-Hungarian ecclesiastical or military, economic, etc. sources. Even in *Codex Bandinus* (with the original Latin title *Visitatio generalis omnium ecclesiarum catholicarum romani ritus in Provincia Moldaviae*), the report written in 1648 by Marco Bandini to be sent to Rome, to Pope Innocent X and to the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, the author talks about Hungarians and Catholics only. Therefore, the emergence and spread of the term is still under debate.

5.2. Some occurrences in Hungarian sources

The lexeme Csángó seems to be, in the sources and texts in which it was attested, an anthroponym and an ethnonym alike; morphologically, it functions as an adjective in most of the contexts. István András Duma makes a list of the earliest occurrences of the term.¹² According to Duma, to Zolnai Gyula's 1902–1906 *Magyar oklevél szótár. Pótlék a Magyar nyelvtörténeti szótárhoz* [Hungarian Dictionary of Diplomas. Supplement to the Hungarian Historical Dictionary]) and to Iancu (2022, 2023) and based on some research we have conducted on the volumes of *Székely Oklevéltár/ Szekler Archives*, the term emerges as an anthroponym:

- in 1400: Georgium Chango (Zichy Okm. V 233)
- in 1424: Petro Chanko (Muz. Forgach)
- in 1443: Ilias Sanga (*uric*/deed of donation issued by Stefan cel Mare)
- in 1584 Canko Thamas (see Zolnai 1902: 82)
- in 1602 Cziango Miklos/Csángó Miklós (Székely Okl. IV 67)
- in 1604 Chango Istuan (Székely Okl. IV 185) and Chiango Istuan (Székely Okl. IV 189)
- in 1614 Chiango Balint (Székely Okl. IV 459)
- in 1619 relicto Pauli Chiango (Székely Okl. IV 587)
- in 1635 Cziango Palne (Székely Okl. V 136).

As an ethnonym, before Péter Zöld's letters, the term is used in 1556 in Maksa (Moacşa), Covasna County, where 'andreas chango' and 'Michael csángó' are mentioned¹³ though the two items appear in a list of proper names, and therefore these could also be surnames wrongly spelled with lower-case letters.

The lexeme is used in many dictionaries and, naturally, in a lot of volumes dedicated to the Csángó community. For instance, in Baróti Szabó's 1792

12 <https://www.csangok.ro/Etelkoz%20%20es%20a%20csangok.pdf>.

13 *Item hereditatem in qua desident franciscus kws, fabianus teka, georgius seteth et andreas chango, valentinus sar, et Michael chango, proprijs laboribus et expensis quesui et nobilitaui.* Székely Okl. III. 1890: 313. https://adatbank.ro/html/alcim_pdf5296.pdf.

Dictionary, we have found *Tsángó* carrying two meanings: 1. ‘bell with a non-flat sound’, 2. ‘Hungarians born in Moldavia’. In the same source, we have identified *Tzanga*, meaning ‘a sheep or a flock of sheep who have lost their lambs’, and *Tzankó* meaning ‘the remains of beer, palinka or wine’. In Simai Kristóf’s 1809 Dictionary, the word is not listed, but we have found only *Tzanga* (‘ewe which lost its lamb’) and *Tzankó* (‘remains of beer making’). In Kriza (1863), *Csángó* is not listed – we have found only *csángat* meaning ‘ringing the bell loudly’ and *csángó* carrying the meaning ‘the remains of palinka making’ (aspects to which we will come back later).

According to Mikecs (1941),¹⁴ *Csángó* is the collective name of the ethnic groups that separated from the Szeklers. The word is probably a derivative of a now extinct verb meaning ‘to wander away’, ‘to break away’. *Csángó* is the name given primarily to the Moldavian Hungarians. It is also the name given to the Hungarians who moved from the Ciuc region to the nearby Trotuş River valley (*Gyimesi Csángók*), to the Hungarians living in Hétfalú (Şapte Sate) near Braşov, and to other inhabitants of Hungarian villages in Barcaság (Țara Bârsei) (*hétfalusi Csángók*). It is also often incorrectly used to refer to the Bukovina Szeklers and the Al-Duna Szeklers who split off from them. The name ‘*Csángó*’ is usually used as a term of derision. It is not used by the *Csángó* themselves but by the Szeklers living in their surroundings or further away. An exception are the Deva *Csángós*, also of Bukovina origin, who do not feel offended by the name, states Mikecs (1941).

In the most recent etymological dictionary of the Hungarian language, *Csángó* and its phonetic versions *Chango*, *Czanko*, *uanza* / *shanga*, *Csángó Hungari csángó-magyarok* *czángó sangó csangó* stand for a person belonging to the Hungarian ethnic group called *Csángó*.¹⁵ The word is derived from the verb *csáng* and is probably linked to *csángó* ‘unpleasantly, ear-piercingly ringing bell’, ‘irregularly, irregularly sounding bell’. *Csáng*, on the other hand, attested in 1795 as *Tsangó* and in 1796 as *Tsángó*, means ‘to roam, to stray, to wander’. The word root of *csáng* is also related to the following:

– *cammog* (attested in 1588 as *chammogni*, in 1589 as *czammag*, in 1774 as *tsammag*, and in 1785 as *tzommogtan*) meaning ‘to stroll’;

– *cankózik* (and its versions *czankozék* attested in 1660, *cankózni* attested in 1835, *Camkózik* attested in 1844, and *cangózik*) meaning ‘to start off’.¹⁶

In Gombocz and Melich (1914: 843), we can find a piece of information according to which the first written emergence of the lexeme in the form *Csangó* can be found in a Latin text from 1533, as published in Lajos Abafi’s *Figyelő* [Monitor] in 1878 (p. 148) and in the pages of *Magyar Nyelvőr* (1912: 245), where

14 <https://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/1-1203.html>.

15 <https://uesz.nyttud.hu/index.html>.

16 <https://uesz.nyttud.hu/index.html?displaymode=web&searchmode=exact&searchstr=cank%C3%B3zik&hom=>.

we can find a short note signed by Mihály Alföldi, stating that in a letter written by György Aranka to Márton György Kovachich on 6 November 1796 the writer mentions a Latin text written in 1533 he had found, in which the following lexical items can be spotted: *Turci*, *Hungari*, *Csángó Hungari*, and *Siculi* and *Terra Turcorum*, *Blacorum*, *Csangorum*, *Siculorum*, *Ultrasilvania*, and *Terra Alpium septem Silvarum*.

According to our findings, the Latin text and its Hungarian translation have been published several times, the last one being the version edited by Biró (2010). Nevertheless, we have found the text in Kilyéni Székely (1818) as well, the text being entitled *A' Székelyek eredetéről, és több Csik, Gyergyó, és Kászon Széki Fő Emberek vitéz tetteikről Jegyzések* [On the Origins of the Szeklers and on the Valiant Deeds of Several Important Men from the Ciuc, Gheorgheni, and Casin Areas]. We did find the lexeme *Csángó* in the following forms: *Csangour*, *Csangur*. However, the authenticity of this text has been questioned several times, even by Aranka himself, as Bíró (2010) states, and establishing the authenticity of this source is far beyond the scope of this study.

5.3. Some occurrences in Romanian sources

We have also searched for the term in the earliest but also more recent Romanian dictionaries, where the term emerges as follows:

- in Barițiu (1869), *Csángó* appears as *ceangau magiaru moldovenu sau barsanu* ‘Hungarian from Moldavia or Țara Bârsei’;
- in Alexics (1888), *Csángó* appears as *Cangău*, *csango igy nevesik a magyarokat Moldvaban* ‘this is how they call the Hungarians in Moldavia’;
- in Cihac (1879), *Csángó* appears as *Ceangău*, *Hongrois*; *Ungurii numiți și Ceangai* ‘Hungarians also called Ceangai’; and *csango sonnant mal* ‘sounding bad’;
- Hodoș (1929) defines the *Csángó* as *Ceangau colonist ungur* ‘Hungarian settler’;
- Scriban (1939) mentions the linguistic units: *ceanga* in *Lovi-te-ar ceanga*, *lua-te-ar boala*, *dracu* ‘go to hell’, *ceanga* being a synonym of ‘hell’, ‘devil’, ‘evil’, ‘sickness’; *ceangăi*, *șalgăi Ungur din Moldova* ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’, *sărar*, *Negustor de sare* ‘salt merchant’ (this idea that the *Csángó* in the form *Sángó* means ‘salt mine worker’ or ‘salt merchant’ had been launched by Iorga 1915);
- Stati (2011) lists *ceangău* as *maghiar din Moldova* ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’;
- Stef (2021: 84–85) mentions the meanings: *ceangău*, *ceangăi* (*ceangă* 1. *clopoțel care se pune la gâtul animalelor* ‘a bell to put around the neck of animals’; 2. *clopot care anunță plecarea trenului din gară* ‘bell announcing the departure of the train from the station’; 3. *nume dat populației de etnie maghiară stabilită*

în Moldova, în timpul domnitorului Alexandru cel Bun ‘name given to the ethnic Hungarian population settled in Moldavia during the reign of Alexander I’.¹⁷

Nevertheless, we have found the first known attestation of the word in Romanian in a list written during a census, carried out in Moldavia in 1591. In the list called *Lista țăranilor, curtenilor, vătașilor, nemeșilor și popilor din Moldova* [List of peasants, courtiers, bailiffs, noblemen, and priests from Moldavia], among the data referring to Tatros/Trotuș area, we find that 120 *șagăi* [*șangăi*], i.e. Csángós, were recorded there (Hurmuzachi 1900: 219–220). Another early attestation belongs to Miron Costin, as he uses the lexeme under the form *Șangăi* (meaning Hungarians from Aknavásár / Târgu Ocna in his *Chronicle* written in 1645 (Costin 1901: 102–103).¹⁸

6. Semantic and etymological analysis of Csángó

6.1. Semantic feature analysis of the word Csángó

Based on the previously mentioned dictionary definitions of the word Csángó, a semantic feature or componential analysis would provide the following semantic features or denominators of meaning:

Csángó = [+HUNGARIAN], [+CATHOLIC], [+MOLDAVIA], [+OUT (OF BORDERS)], [+SEPARATED].

Some semantic features, or rather nuances, components of semantic feature that should be considered, after studying some Romanian sources, are:

- that of *freeholder* (*răzeș/részes* = freeholder, cf. Preda 2021, Poni, 1921), as most of the Catholic (i.e. Csángó) villages in Moldavia were freeholder villages;
- the idea of *connectedness and consanguinity* or family relations (*neamuri de răzeși*);
- that of *swarming out* (*roirea satelor de răzeși*, cf. Tufescu 1934).

What is more, most of the above lexemes are of Hungarian origin in Romanian (*răzeș/részes* ‘freeholder’,¹⁹ *a se răzeși* meaning ‘to become neighbours’ and having as a synonym *a se megieși*, also of Hungarian origin, *mezsgye*).²⁰

17 Whose wife erected one of the earliest Catholic churches in Moldavia, in the town of Baia.

18 Nu să c’ade sa trecem poticala Nemtilor de Șangăii țerei noastre la munti pre Oituz. [We cannot pass over the fiasco the Germans suffered from the Șanga/Csángó from our country in the mountains before Oituz.]

19 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/r%C4%83ze%C8%99>.

20 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/megie%C8%99>. Although two etymologies are given, it is well-known that for a word to penetrate another language and become an etymon for a new word in the other language, direct or at least indirect contact is needed: in Moldavia, especially in its Northern part, where the word *răzeși* emerged and spread, Romanians did not truly have any linguistic vicinity with the Croats or the Serbs, but they were in direct, unmediated contact with the Hungarians. Therefore, the Hungarian etymology is much more realistic.

Tufescu (1934: 15) points out that the most frequent mechanism of spreading in the case of freeholders' villages was that of *roire* 'swarming out', 'clustering': through a natural process of multiplication of the population, some freeholder villages became unable to support a certain number of inhabitants, their subsistence possibilities being exceeded. Part of them left and founded a new village not far from the central, *beehive* village, through a phenomenon similar to bee swarming, in such a way that the new village did not stray too far from the archaic village. *Swarming out* means this way 'emigrating together from a place in company with a leader to start a new colony elsewhere, to form a crowd, and depart from a place to find another place of living'.

6.2. Csángó: Etymologies explored

We have gathered all the phonetically relevant forms (considered or neglected by previous research) and have made a semantic feature analysis (in order to find whether there is a common denominator of meaning with Csángó). We have taken these relevant lexemes one by one and have tried to find them in old texts or glossaries that are not necessarily or exclusively related to the concept of Csángó. We have used such semantically "independent", i.e. not solely Csángó-related sources in order to avoid being trapped by circular analysis. We have established the meaning these words carry in those sources, and we have tried to see whether any of them could be connected with elements of semantic features from the semantic field of Csángó.

6.2.1. *Canga, czanga, tzanga, tsanga, csanga*

In Baróti Szabó's 1792 dictionary *Kisdéd szótár* [Small Dictionary], we can find the version *tzanga*, which carries the meaning 'sheep and/or flock whose lambs have been lost' (Baróti Szabó 1792). The same meaning is associated with *tzanga* in Simai (1809): *Tzanga Ovis mater deperd.* In Szinnyei's *Magyar tájszótár* [Hungarian Dictionary of Regionalisms] (1893), we find the lexeme with two, slightly different forms: *canga* (*csanga* [?]), standing for 'a milk sheep whose lambs have died or were separated from it' (Szinnyei 1893: 218). The question mark which follows the second phonetic instantiation signals perhaps the fact that the author was rather uncertain about the proper form: *canga* or *csanga*.

In Hermán (1914: 507), we have found the form *czanga*, indicating 'a ewe which lost its lamb'. What is interesting is that Hermán (1914) also provides a lexeme purporting 'Hungarian from Moldavia' or 'Csángó from Moldavia', i.e. *Czárán – moldvai csángó*, meaning that the two concepts were named with two totally different words. In Csűry's 1935 dictionary, we can find *canga* with the meaning 'old ewe' (Csűry 1935: 122).

In a volume edited by Tinta Publishing House, *A Magyar tájszavak és népies lexikai elemek adatbázisa* [Database of Hungarian Dialectal and Folk Lexemes] (2012), *canga* conveys the meaning ‘a milk sheep whose lambs have died or been separated from it’. In a volume dedicated to Hungarian ethnography, we can find *canga* standing for ‘a flock of infecund and/or milk sheep, separated from the others and sent to outer pastures’.²¹

6.2.2. *Csáng, csángó, csángat, cángat, csangó, tsángó*

In Baróti Szabó’s 1792 dictionary, we have spotted the forms *Tsángó*, standing for ‘a bell with an unpleasant sounding’, but also for ‘Hungarians born in Moldavia’ (Baróti Szabó 1792: 239), this early dictionary treating this unit as a polysemic word rather than two homonyms. In Simai (1809), *Tsángó* carries only the first meaning listed by Baróti Szabó: *Campana malum fundens sonum*. In Ballagi (1867: 163), we can find *Csangó* signifying ‘bad sounding’, ‘muffled tone’; *Csángat* ‘ringing noisily’, ‘ringing the bell’; *Csángó* ‘Hungarian resident in Moldavia’; *Csángó* indicating ‘vinegary sour wine’, ‘mash left at the bottom of the cauldron when making palinka’, ‘acidified, stale food’. This latter meaning in the case of *csángó* is registered by Kriza (1926) as well, while Oláh (1906: 17) lists the meaning ‘clumsy little child’, obviously linked rather to *cíngár*, standing for ‘very slim child’.

We have also considered Czuczor and Fogarasi’s 1862 dictionary (1862: 1109), the first volume of which displays the following forms: *czanqó*, *csángó*, *czankó*, and *sankó*, conveying the meaning ‘walk slowly’, ‘lurk’, ‘cover’, or ‘hide’, but *csángó* also means ‘Hungarians expelled from Transylvania and living in Moldavia or Wallachia’ (*Így nevezik az Erdélyből kibujdosott moldva- és oláhországi magyarokat.*) (Czuczor & Fogarasi 1862: 1110).

Csang and *csanog* are two phonetic variants of a word with two values: it is a verb of Turkic origin standing for ‘speak in a bad voice’, ‘make a bad sound’, but it is also the root or regressive derivative element of the adjective *csángó* meaning ‘making a bad sound’ (Czuczor & Fogarasi 1862: 1110).

In the same source, we can find that *Csángó* is a lexeme that also signifies ‘a person who wanders, walks around’, and it is an antonym of *székely*, *székelő*, i.e. ‘a person who resides or stays in a permanent place’. The authors of this dictionary also add another phonetic version to *Csángó*, namely *Czangó magyarok*, designating ‘Hungarians living in or moving to Moldavia’. They explain this phonetic variant with the whistling speech of the *Csángó* Hungarians, who cannot articulate the voiced consonants *s* [ʃ] and *cs* [tʃ] (Czuczor & Fogarasi 1862: 1196).

21 <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/MagyarNeprajz-magyar-neprajz-2/ii-gazdalkodas-4/allattartas-pasztorokodas-A52/juhtartas-C41/legelok-es-legeltetes-C5A/>.

In Zaicz's etymological dictionary (2006: 117), *Csángó* is listed with the meaning 'Hungarian from Moldavia', derived from the archaic verb *csáng* meaning 'going back and forth'. However, we must note that this archaic verb *csáng*, though cited as the root of *csángó*, has not been listed in any of the sources we have seen, be they mentioned or not in this study.²²

In the first volume of the dictionary of the Moldavian Hungarian dialect (Péntek 2016: 132), we find *Csángó* and its phonetic versions *cángó*, *cangalëu*, and *sángó* designating an ethnic slur used for ethnic Hungarians in Moldavia, opposed to the ethnic name *madzsar* ('Hungarian'). A verb derived from the name or adjective *Csángó* is *csángódik*, meaning *csángóvá lesz* 'become *Csángó*'. This means indubitably that the verb has been derived from the adjective and is not its source. In Szabó T. (1975 II. 22), *Csángó* is defined as 'Hungarian from Moldavia'. The lexeme is described as an adjective which means 'wanderer'; the attestation Szabó T. uses belongs to Zöld (1781) though the source quoted is Teleki (1796). Sántha (2018: 111) lists the following forms: *cángat* as a verb meaning 'to make loud noise', *csáng*, *csángál*, or *csángat* standing for 'ringing the bell loudly', 'making unbearable noise with the bells', *csángá* as an adjective used to describe people who go sideways, *csángó* as an ethnonym for Moldavian Hungarians but also a noun referring to 'the remains of palinka making', and the adjective *csángós* signifying 'sounding bad or unpleasant'.

The situation of the verb *csángál* is still a pathway to be followed in order to be spotted in old texts, as it is seldom listed in dictionaries or glossaries, but it is still used in rural areas in Transylvania. Its connection to *csámborog* 'stroll' is probable, as the *New Etymological Dictionary of Hungarian*²³ mentions among its variants and/or related items *csángurdi* 'kóborló, csavargó; félbolond' meaning 'wanderer, vagabond, fool',²⁴ *csángódik* 'ide-oda üzött, hajtott, nyugalmat nem találó' meaning 'driven to and fro, restless, finding no rest',²⁵ *csángál* 'ide-oda lóbál; terel, hajt' meaning 'swaying to and fro; herding, driving',²⁶ and *csángál* 'félrebillent' meaning 'tilted to one side'.²⁷ Horger (1905) points out that *Csángó* comes from **csángani*, and it means 'to become Romanian', another, most probably earlier version of the lexeme being *Csangó*. In Gombocz and Melich (1914), *csángál* is a verb attested in Csík/Ciuc County and in Szekszárd, which is also used with the inflection *-áz*, i.e. *csángáz*, and it means 'swinging something', 'divert something into a direction', 'to hit' or 'to target something' (Gombocz & Melich 1914: 845). A parallel version is *csánkál*, attested in the areas around

22 Though we heard it used by villagers in the Eastern border of the Transylvanian Plain.

23 <https://uesz.nyttud.hu/index.html>.

24 Attested in *Magyar Nyelvőr*. Pest, 1872.

25 Attested in the archive files of *A magyar nyelv nagyszótára* [The Great Dictionary of the Hungarian Language].

26 Attested in *Magyar Nyelv*. Budapest, 1905.

27 Attested in *Magyar Nyelvőr*. Pest, 1872.

Pest and Szatmár/Satu-Mare, and it means ‘wander’, ‘jump’, ‘move’ (Gombocz & Melich 1914: 845).

6.2.3. *Csán*

In *A moldvai magyar tájnyelv szótára* [The Dictionary of the Hungarian Dialect from Moldavia] edited by János Péntek, we find the following definition of *csán*, which is, according to Péntek, the etymon of *csángó*: *csán* = *csinál* ‘to make’, ‘to do’ (Péntek 2014: 412, 2016: 133), obviously the root of *becsánul*, synonym of *becsukódik*, ‘to close’, ‘to shut’ (Péntek 2016: 68). Judging by the diverging meanings delivered by the two etymologically and phonetically related lexemes, we say that *csán* seems rather a maximal hyperonym, meaning a lot of things, not only ‘to do’ or ‘to make’.

What is more, the emergence of *csángó* from *csán*, however appealing, seems rather odd phonetically, as syncope would have led to **csil* whereas apocope to **csin*, rather than to *csán*, and the paragoge of *-(g)ó* would be even more difficult to explain.

6.2.4. *Cankó, czankó*

In Baróti Szabó’s dictionary (1792), *cankó* has the phonetic version *csángó*, but only with the meaning of ‘rest, remainder of wine making’, whereas the lexeme for Hungarian ethnic from Moldavia is *tsangó*. In Szinnyei (1893: 218), *cankó* is listed with the following phonetic and semantic variants: *cankó*, *cangó*, *canko*, *Csángó*, meaning ‘sour wine’, ‘acidified beer’, and ‘the part of palinka which remained at the bottom of the cauldron during distillation’.

The verb *cankózik*, *cankozik* stands for the following: 1. ‘wonder’, ‘roam’, ‘stroll’; 2. ‘follow in the footsteps of somebody’ (Szinnyei 1893: 218). The same two meanings of *cankózik* are listed in the *Database of Hungarian Dialectal and Folk Lexemes* (Tinta Könyvkiadó 2012): ‘to drink sour wine’, ‘to wander’, ‘to roam’, ‘to stroll’, and ‘to follow somebody’. Szabó T. (1975 I: 1131) defines *cankózik* as ‘to wander’, ‘to roam’, and the adjective *cankózó* as ‘wanderer’, as lexemes attested in the 1830s.

7. A new solution?

Taking into account all the above-mentioned forms and meanings, we have continued to search for a lexeme which is close in point of phonetics to the one we are analysing and which shares some of its semantic features: *Hungarian*, *Catholic*, *Moldavia*, *out*, and *separated* or connected with the ideas of *freeholder*,

swarming, consanguinity, as the above-mentioned versions with their meanings do not have these semantic features (perhaps with the exception of *canga*, which displays the features +out, +separated). We have found such a form with a weak or minor phonetic or sound shift and which has at least one common semantic feature listed above.

Wass György, in his volume, *Zselyk. Egy magyar falu Beszterce-Naszód megyében* [Jeica. A Hungarian Village in Bistrița-Năsăud County], a monograph of a village from the Transylvanian Plain region (where the Csángó are supposed to have come from, according to Péntek (2005)), includes in the glossary of terms that are specific for the sociolect of that area, the lexemes *csankó*, *csankázás* (Wass 1990: 140). *Csankó* means ‘a group or swarm (of bees) similar to a cluster’, while ‘the swarming of bees’, i.e. the ‘cluster-like moving of a group to a new territory’ is called *csankázás* (Wass 1990: 140), which is obviously a common semantic link that *csankó* shares with Csángó. That is why we believe that *csankó* used to mean ‘swarming of bees’, but, most probably, through semantic contamination and extension of meaning, ‘swarming of people out of one place to another, in a group, in a cluster to find and occupy new territories’, semantic aspects which are present in Csángó as well. This means that the two lexemes are connected – not only phonetically but, above all, semantically. Therefore, *Csángó (magyar)*, as an adjective, most probably means *kirajzott magyar* ‘swarmed out Hungarians’, *külső területre távozott magyar* ‘Hungarians who were relocated to or beyond the indago regions’, *külhoni magyar* ‘cluster of Hungarians displaced/sent beyond the borders’.

If we accept that Csángó delivers this meaning of *rajzani* ‘swarm out’, ‘cluster’, ‘move away’, ‘drive beyond/to the indago region or border’, it becomes obvious that the meanings of ‘wander’, ‘stroll’, ‘roam’, ‘get separated’ also attach to this semantic attribute. The connection between the verb delivering the meaning of movement for bees and the verb of movement used for groups of humans is obvious: in Hungarian, it is the verb *rajzani* and in Romanian the verb *a roi* ‘swarm’ with the derived noun *roire* ‘swarming’. However, we must notice that in Romanian *roire* also has a synonym, *bejenie*, used for bees and humans alike, which equally means ‘swarming’ but also ‘fleeing’, ‘wandering’, ‘becoming a fugitive’, ‘migrating’ (Hodoș 1929) and also ‘enemy’.²⁸

Conclusions

We have performed a semantic feature analysis of Csángó and all the lexemes that have been proposed as its etymons or are phonetically close to the word we are analysing. Our findings suggest that the only semantic feature the word *canga*

28 Cf. <https://dexonline.ro/text/bejenie>: *elensug sn* [At: ALR I, h. 1429/231 / V: *eleşug* / Pl: ~uri / E: mg *ellenség*] (Mgm; reg) 1 Jaf. 2 (If *eleşug*) Bejenie.

shares with Csángó are [+out, outer pastures], [+ separated]. *Csáng* seems to be rather a regressive derivation of Csángó and not its etymon, while the verbal form *csán* seems very unlikely to have fostered the emergence of Csángó. The only solution which shares several common denominators of meaning with Csángó is *csankó* (and possibly its versions *cankó*, *czankó*), which have the following list of features: [+out], [+ separated], [+swarming to find new territories] [+family]. Therefore, we believe that the etymology of the ethnic name Csángó can be solved by considering this lexeme which has today a limited, regional circulation, but it has been spotted in the geographical region which has been proposed as the source of Csángó migrations, i.e. the Transylvanian Plain: *csankó*. *Csángó* therefore most probably means *kirajzott* ‘swarmed out in a cluster’, *kitelepült* ‘expatriated’, ‘displaced’, *csopotosan, családdal külhonba távozott* ‘moved out, in groups, with families’.²⁹ Another argument in favour of our theory is the spread of the family name *Tankó* in the csángó communities, a phonetic version of *czankó*, *csankó*.³⁰ What is more, Hermán (1914: 656) lists *czankó csirke* and *tankó csirke* as phonetic variants of the same bird, formerly *Totanus totanus*, now *Tringa*, also called *cankómadár*, *lilimadár* in Hungarian, *fluierar* in Romanian and wader in English, a species of peregrine, migratory bird which makes a whistling sound.³¹

It is to be checked whether the forms *czankó*, *cankó*, and *csankó* are connected to the verb forms *cancikál*, *cancukál*, and *cancékol* (Sántha 2018: 93), standing for ‘walk’, ‘wander’, ‘roam’ and attested in Szeklerland but also in the areas belonging to the Transylvanian Plain. According to the new etymological dictionary of Hungarian, *cancékol*, *cancikál*, *cankászik*, and *csánkál* are variants of *cankózik*, attested in the 17th century and meaning ‘walk’, ‘wander’.³² The fact that the phenomenon of swarming, clustering has always been a basic component of Csángó rural areas is proven by the map in Iancu (2022: 17), showing the distribution of Csángó villages on the map of Moldavia, villages that typically show the outline of swarms or clusters. What is more, swarming was possible only in freeholder villages (Ghinoiu 1981: 8).³³

29 There are numerous Romanian old texts which prove that the oldest villages inhabited by freeholders, i.e. Hungarian Catholics, have names that derive from the name of the patriarch who founded the village, and all these villages had names of Hungarian origin, an aspect to which we will come back in a forthcoming study.

30 Horger (1924 151) considers that ‘Tankó’ is the diminutive of ‘Tamás’.

31 It is still to be studied why the semantic feature analysis of *cankó* ‘waders’ and *csángó* shows that they share at least two common denominators of meaning, that of [+migrate/peregrinate or swarm] and that of [+whistling sound].

32 <https://uesz.nyud.hu/index.html?displaymode=web&searchmode=exact&searchstr=cank%C3%B3&hom=>.

33 *Roirea satelor a fost însă posibilă numai în satele libere (moşneni, răzeşi, nemeşi)* ‘However, village swarming was only possible in the free villages (the “moşneni”, the “răzeşi”/freeholders, the “nemeşi”).’

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