



THE ROLE OF DIMITRIE CANTEMIR IN THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE’S CULTURE

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Abstract *Dimitrie Cantemir, was twice Prince of Moldavia (in March-April 1693 and in 1710-1711). He was also a prolific man of letters, philosopher, historian, composer, musicologist, linguist, ethnographer and geographer between 1711 and 1719, he wrote his most important creations. Cantemir was known as one of the greatest linguists of his time, speaking and writing eleven languages and being well versed in Oriental Scholarship. This oeuvre is voluminous, diverse and original; although some of his scientific writings contain unconfirmed theories, his expertise, sagacity and groundbreaking.*

Key words:
Geographer,
philosopher, historian,
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JEL Codes:

1. Introduction

As a Romanian chronicler (author of chronicles), Dimitrie Cantemir represents the most important personality of the Romanian literature in the feudal era. He won the respect of his contemporary intellectuals and of his descendants, he impressed by his own strong personality as a symbol for the whole mankind, grace of his studies concerning some fields as: history, geography, politics, music, mathematics and physics.

2. Methods of research

I have used the research in order to finalize the article: fundamental (theoretical): to get familiar with the special language and to work out abstract ideas and explanatory models

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Born in Silisteni on October 26, 1673, he was the second son of Constantin Cantemir, Prince whose name origins sprung down to a Tatar Sultan, ruler of Moldavia between 1685 and 1693, who was evaluated as a docile tool in the hands of Moldavian boyars' oligarchy. Dimitrie Cantemir's education was provided by the Cretanian monk Ieremia Cacavela, who taught him the Slavonic language, then Greek, Latin, theology and philosophy. Since he was 15 years old, that means since 1688, he lived in Istanbul as a hostage at the

Sultan's Court, but, even if he was involved in such conditions, he followed his path to learn at the Patriarchy's Academy, in order to complete his studies in such fields as: logics, philosophy, geography, history, medicine, chemistry and occidental languages. The interest of the young Moldavian in literature and occidental sciences was encouraged by the diplomats of the occidental states and travelling through the Central Europe convinced him about the linguistic unity of the Romanian people.

Once coming back from Constantinople, he was co-participant at the reign duty near his father and, after his father's death in 1693 Dimitrie was chosen as voivode but only for three weeks, being dethroned by Constantin Duca. Cantemir found himself in a precarious financial situation, being dispossessed of his heritage by his brother Antioh, he married Casandra, the Valachian voivode Serban Cantacuzino in 1699. He was again enthroned as voivode of Moldavia in 1710. Judged as devoted towards the Ottoman Empire, he played the role as a spy and his main goal was to watch over the Valachian voivode Constantin Brancoveanu suspected to have planned to join the Russian's side. The Ottoman defeat in the battle of Zenta, in 1697 determined Dimitrie Cantemir to lose his trust in the military value of the Ottoman army and making alliance with the Russian Tzar Peter the Great, he fought by the Russian side during the Russo-Turkish War.

Cantemir was forced to choose the exile way near Peter the Great of Russia, after the defeat of his army by the Turks in the battle of Stănilești on Prut river. On August the 1st, 1711 he received the title of Prince of Russia, enjoying of the very special Tzar's

consideration and he lived twelve years in Harcov, Moscow and Sankt Petersburg. After his wife's death, he married, in 1719, Nastasia Trubetkoi. Cantemir felt sick during the campaign against Prussia, he reached his way back and died at 50 years old age on September the 1st 1723, being buried in the Down Church of the Greek Monastery from Moscow.

Well known as propagator of the Enlightenment, he wrote the first book in romanian language „the Divan or The Wise Man's Parley (Quarrel) with the World” more in a spirit of an ethics treaty. His second work, „The Image of the Sacred, Undepictable Science” was published in Latin at Constantinopol under the title „Metaphysics”, the author becoming a forerunner in the Romanian philosophy. His next work was „the Logics”, which was the first didactic material known as being written, under this form by a romanian.

He was chosen member of the Academy in Berlin, since 1714, prompted by the members of this cultivated Assembly, he wrote his renowned book entitled: „Descriptio Moldaviæ”. This monumental work was structured in three parts: geography, politics and the third about the church and other wise works from Moldova. Any geographical works of his time wasn't conceived in a such complex manner, those ones referring only at a country and the kind of state organisation, without describing the customs of the voivode, of the ruling class, the nobles and the people. The genuine kind of this work was given by descriptions concerning the people, with his wedding and funeral customs, depicting characters from the folklore tradition, games and ceremonies, also the local myths. The special care that Cantemir offered to the folk life in his description of the country was the evidence not only of a world wide opened sight from the scientific point of view, but also of author's progressist attitude concerning the social and politic issues. A step forward for understanding the meaning og the state, generally, was represented by the inclusion of the folk's life in a book concerning the feudal state. Written in latin, this book doesn't belong to the romanian literature, but it is linked to our romanian history of literature by its described subjects and the place of Dimitrie Cantemir's creation and his social ideas. This book was written in 1716 at the request of the Academy in Berlin, organized in three chapters and contains in the geographical one the description of relief forms, of flora, fauna and mineral reches, depicting the small towns and the country's main towns during the history and elaborates a map of Moldavia, Cantemir becoming, in that way, our first romanian cartographer. The political chapter reffers to the political and administrative organisation of the country, speking about the type of the state, the manner of chosing or rejecting the voivodes, particularities linked to the enthronment or dethronment

of voivodes. The third part concerns the church ones and other customs and proofs rich information about the moldavian laanguage, the alphabet in use but also about local mythology, the author being the first one who made researches and observation over the moldavian ethnography and folklore.

Cantemir's main political ideas were the fight against the Ottoman Empire domination and the setting up of an autoritaritative voivodal state in Moldavia able to replace the ancient nobiliary one, both stipulated by the Lutek Treaty concluded between Moldavia and Russia in 1711. This treaty foresaw the independence of the moldavian state and the establishment of a centralized voivodal regime under the Russian's border, and the „Descriptio Moldaviæ” meant a completion and a scientific commentary of the treaty concluded by Cantemir with the Tzar Peter the 1st. It was underlined that Moldova was an independent country but its liberty was infringed in the same moment with the violation of the treaties and the existence of a centralized voivodal regime which existed since the settlement of the country and being abolished by the nobility. In those conditions were established the historical principles, through the conclusions elaborated by the well knowledge of the past useful to Cantemir's politic ideas applied when he was in the voivodal chair.

Judged by Nicolae Iorga to be a social-philosofical novel with a patriotic character very close o the politic pamphlet, the literary wotk of the renowned writer was considered the „Historia Hieroglyphica” which allegorically depicted a whole era. The writing has for purpose unmasking the strong dissensions between the boyards' s families being in charge to rule both the romanian countries and the role played by the Sublime Porte both in the politics and life of Moldavia and Wallachia using characters from the fable's world. The action reffers to the Raven (Brancoveanu) who vanted extend his influence in Moldova and initiate the Unicorn's (Dimitrie Cantemir) pursuit, Unicorn who, being betrayed, was captured, put in jail and only finally set free (released). This action gave to Cantemir the possibility of intrusion inside the politic realities of hi stime not only in Moldavia, but also in Wallachia and even Ottoman Empire. The final part of „Historia Hieroglyphica” is represented by a glossary, the first one in the romanian literature. The lecture of this work is enough difficult specially some explications needed, much more further in the medieval literature was enthroned the tradition of presenting the human life under the cover of an animal world story. For the author, the fantastic world offered some originally field by writing it as a pamphlet where the narrative, the fable, the fairy-tale, the fiction with characters are weaved (knitted) with a lot of deep mistery extracted

from proverbs, lines and thoughts from the oriental and classic romanian folklore.

Cantemir's world wide fame was, however due to his work „The History of the Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire”, for the chosen subject, the novelty of the approach, the original manner of using some data through the book and the original translation both in French and English. Concerning the work „Constantin Cantemir's life”, it can't be said exactly if it is a singular biography of his father or an anticipated chapter from Dimitrie's „Chronicle of the durability of Romans-Moldavians-Wallachians”, seen during a long time as his capital work, the first history of anywhere Romanians could live. Elaborated upon the basis of a ample plan and using a wide spectrum of information extracted from the works belonging to historians across the time, by his progressist ideas and his encyclopaedic spirit, Dimitrie Cantemir became one of the most remarkable personalities of the whole european culture.

3. Conclusions

He realized the completion and the final conclusion of Roman origin elaborated by his predecessors, Cantemir started to build a bridge to the Southern and western Europe from the very middle of the South-Eastern part full involved both in orthodox and bizantine tradition. In this way he suggested the imminent fall of empires, events in which believed all small and oppressed peoples. He added to our history the pieces which were missed from documents but which he inserted in the appropriate place with the profound intuition of the integrated facts.

Cantemir succeeded, due of his gifts, erudition and his many-sided culture to demonstrate to the south-eastern world, but specially to his own country that he belongs to the Europe born from the european spirit and, in the same time, one of the sources of this spirit.

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