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**ГРЪЦКИЯТ ЕЗИК И ВИЗАНТИЙСКИТЕ ИЗТОЧНИЦИ В  
ИСТОРИЧЕСКИТЕ СЪЧИНЕНИЯ НА ДИМИТЪР КАНТЕМИР**

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**THE GREEK LANGUAGE AND THE BYZANTINE  
SOURCES IN DIMITRIE CANTEMIR’S HISTORICAL WORKS**

Prince Dimitrie Cantemir was the first personality of encyclopaedical intellect in Romanian culture and also the most important Romanian writer who used Latin in his works. Though, his intellectual background had been under the influence of Greek culture, following the fashion of those times. This influence was expressed, in Cantemir’s works, mainly at lexical level; the author oscillated between the adaptation of Greek words to the standards of Latin and their use in the original form. Regarding the Byzantine bibliographical sources written in Greek, Dimitrie Cantemir used them in a critical manner and circumscribed them to his own vision on history as a science.

*Key words:* Cultural background, Romanian voievods, Phanar, latinization, citation and paraphrase, bilingual editions.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Walachia and Moldavia were situated not only at the core of some successive military conflicts between Turks and Russians or Turks and Austrians, but also at the crossroads of the Oriental and Western cultural ideas. In this context, the Romanian countries were receptive, on the one hand to the ideas propagated by European culture, and on the other hand, to the renaissance of Greek culture, which was used by the Romanian people in placing its fight against the Ottomans under the sign of orthodoxy.

In Walachia, voievods Șerban Cantacuzino, Constantin Brâncoveanu, Gheorghe Duca, in Moldavia, Dimitrie Cantemir and his brother Antioh encouraged and protected Greek culture. Șerban Cantacuzino wished to unite his country with Moldavia and to restore the Byzantine power (Pippidi 2001: 328). Constantin Brâncoveanu founded, in 1694, the Royal Academy, at the monastery Saint Sava, in Bucharest. Here, the base of education consisted in Greek and Latin classical studies. In 1707, in Moldavia, Antioh Cantemir founded a Greek school, following the pattern of the school in Bucharest and he also benefited from a generous donation of books from Chrisant Notaras (Camariano-Cioran 1974: 16). Constantin Duca, voievod Gheorghe Duca’s son, had Ioan Comnenos, Azarios Tzizalas and Spandonis as professors. The last one also taught at the Great

School in Phanar. Azarios Tzigalas was solicited by Antioh Cantemir, as teacher for his own sons. Constantin Brâncoveanu knew Greek and so did his three sons.

Dimitrie Cantemir also had a professor of Greek, the Cretan monk Ieremia Cacavela. He had been traveling a lot in Europe, studying in Venice and Vienna. He was protected, for a while, by the Transylvanian prince Mihai Apafi I (Cernovodeanu 1980: 294-296). Then, he arrived in Walachia, where he became the favourite of Șerban Cantacuzino and of his follower, Constantin Brâncoveanu. In his honour, Cacavela translated from Italian into Greek “Raggualio”, a study about the siege of Vienna (Țarălungă 1989: 54). Asked by Constantin Cantemir to be the professor of his sons, Antioh and Dimitrie, Cacavela arrived in Moldavia, probably after 1691. He taught them Slavic, Greek and Latin. Dimitrie Cantemir was strongly influenced by his professor, although they were together for only two years, until 1693. Ieremia Cacavela influenced the philosophical thinking of the young prince, whose first work, *The Divan or The Wise Man’s Quarrel with the World or the Soul’s Trial with the Body*, published in Jassy, in 1698, had a Greek version. Later on, during his stay in Constantinople, Cantemir wrote two other shorter works, this time in Latin, *Sacrosanctae scientiae indepingibilis imago* and *Compendiolum universae logices institutionis*, both inspired by Cacavela’s writings and ideas.

Dimitrie Cantemir spent twenty years in Constantinople. It is in its Greek district called Phanar that was the residence of the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Patriarchal Academy or the Great School who preserved the spirit of the Byzantine University. Although there are no proofs that Cantemir studied at the Great School (who imitated the academic atmosphere of the University of Padua), in *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire* the author gave a list of the professors teaching there. Later, some of them became his private teachers: *Iacomium, Grammaticum accuratissimum, qui et nobis, adhuc Constantinopoli degentibus, philosophiae praecepta tradebat* – “Iacomius, a very accurate grammar teacher, who taught us too the precepts of philosophy, while we were still living in Constantinople” (Cantemir, 2002: 335), *Meletius, primo Artae, post Athenarum Archiepiscopus, vir in omni scientiarum genere exercitatissimus, alioquin Helmontiarum, sive Thaletis principiorum studiosus quae etiam nobis per octo menses explicavit* – “Meletius, Archbishop, first of Arta, then of Athens, a man with great skills in all the sciences, and besides this, interested in the principles of Helmont or Thales, that he explained to us too, for eight months” (Cantemir, 2002: 336).

Cantemir’s contact with academic knowledge and also with the Western diplomats reduced the influence of Cacavela’s mystical thinking. During his stay in Constantinople, Cantemir started to be more and more interested in Romanian history. He read enormously, in different languages, organizing an impressive bibliography and worked in parallel at several historical works, all written in Latin: *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus (On Ancient and Contemporary Names of Moldavia)*, *Historia Moldo-Vlachica (Moldo-Walachian History)*, *Descriptio antiqui et hodierni status Moldaviae (Description of the Past and Present of Moldavia)*, better known as *Descriptio Moldaviae – Description of Moldavia*. After he settled in Russia, he continued his preoccupations on history and wrote, between 1714 and 1716 (Tahsin 1973: 438), his most notorious work, *Incrementorum et decrementorum Aulae Othman[n]icae sive*

*Aliothman[n]icae Historiae a prima gentis origine ad nostra usque tempora deductae libri tres - The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire).*

The occurrence of Greek words in these historical works written in Latin is due to two influences: Cantemir's Romanian cultural background, strongly influenced by Greek culture at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the bibliographical sources used by him. The first direction influenced the author's Neo-Latin, while the second one influenced the organizing and the synthesizing of his historical ideas.

The fact that *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus* and *Historia Moldo-Vlachica* were still in the rough copy condition is proved by certain oral expressions in Greek, suggesting the involvement of his own feelings and opinions in these scientific texts. They are usually used in contexts regarding address to the reader or the author's personal ideas about history as a science: *Quandoquidem σὺν Θεῷ perventum est ad illam Chronologiae partem, ...; et quamvis non putem quemquam nostra admonitione, ἄπαγε, indigere, attamen huius a nobis veluti memorialis, ut solet dici, cuiusdam praemissionis memorem...* (Cantemir 1983: 242). These expressions appeared neither in *Description of Moldavia*, nor in *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire*, because they were not abandoned projects like those two works mentioned above, but almost finished works.

Even though, the occurrence of some graphic duplicates of a Greek word already Latinized indicates that Greek came, sometimes, more easily to Cantemir's mind: *in tetragono* ("in square") (Cantemir 1973: 78) appeared, few pages bellow, in τετραγόνῳ (Cantemir 1973: 108); *in scriniis templi B(eatae) Mariae Virginis Μαργουλιτισσας* (Cantemir 2002: 372) and a few lines bellow, on the same page, *ad templum Marguliotisam*.

In *Description of Moldavia*, regarding the Moldavian lakes, Cantemir mentioned Ovid's Lake and the legend according to whom the famous Latin poet lived near it: *Ultimus et celebratissimus est lacus Ovidii, Lacul Ovidului incolis, prope Akiermann, olim Albam Iuliam* (Cantemir 1973: 68). In *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire*, in a reference to this city, Cantemir used the Greek graphs for Ovid's Lake, without any explanation: *Vrbs est antiquissima et Ovidii exilio celebris, a quo et lacus, qui prope hanc urbem est, ΛΑΚΥΑ ΛΥΗ' ΟΒΗΔ, Lacus Ovidii, a posteris Moldavis appellationem accepisse videtur* (Cantemir 2002: 349).

On the same coordinate of the author's subjective implication in the text, there are certain expressions which indicate, not by accident, a critical perspective on the cited source. Criticizing the Hungarian Istvan Szamosközy (whom he mistook for the Polish chancellor Jan Zamoysky), Cantemir pointed out the absence of the historical sources in his argumentation, using a Pythagorean sentence, αὐ'το'ς ἔφα ("he said it"): *Sed praeter αὐ'το'ς ἔφα nihil habet, unde neque refutatione opus esse duximus* (Cantemir 1983: 42). In *Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, the author resumed this idea, adding to the Hungarian historian, Louys Moréry and Stanislav Sarnicki: *Causam vero huius tam profundae obli(vi)scionis non aliam, ut ex iisdem intelligere possumus, existimant, quam duas scriptam: coloniarum Traiani ab Aureliano in Mysiam, sive ut illi ex αὐ'το'ς ἔφα putant, in Italiam reductionem, secundam vero Gotthorum Hunnorumque gravissimas in Romanum Imperium incursiones...* (Cantemir 1983: 275).

The most interesting aspect of the adaptation of the Greek words in these Latin texts is their morphological integration in the context. The first of these texts that was written, *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus*, was abandoned by the author at an early stage. Later, reconsidered and improved, it became the basis for *Descriptio Moldaviae* (Cantemir 1983: 19). In this work, preserved in a state of project, the Greek words started to be used from the very first page. Writing about the reader's attitude towards his ideas, Cantemir concluded: *Qui si arguerit nobis, παιδείαν, si correxerit, conatibus nostris, θεραπείαν lubenter agnoscemus* – *If he criticizes us, we shall gladly admit his teaching (παιδείαν), if he corrects us, we shall appreciate his concern (θεραπείαν) for our efforts* (Cantemir 1983: 28). Both the Greek words are used in the accusative, because they are direct objects of the verb *agnoscemus*. In another context, there is the same situation: *Cum iam firmiter ex ante probatis et dictis pateat (...) habitatores (...) eius cum principe in Maramorisz ad suos cognatos et ὁμοφύλος se recepisse ...* (Cantemir 1983: 116). Here, the direct object ὁμοφύλος was correctly accorded in case with *cognatos*, as it was requested by the verb *recepisse*.

In the other Latin texts as well, the Greek determinatives are used by Cantemir in the cases asked by their clause terms: *in ἱστοριοφίλων gratiam explicare annitemur* (Cantemir 2002: 15); *proto-diaconus τὰς ἑκτενάς recitat* (Cantemir 1973: 160); *finito sacro, metropolita principi, eius coniugi, filiis ac filiabus ἀντίδωρον offert* (Cantemir 1973: 230).

The Greek adjectives agree with their Latin clauses: *ψυχοκτόνος Tyrannus* (Cantemir 1983: 304), *διακριτικῶς Lectori iudicium reliquimus* (Cantemir 2002: 13).

Greek does not have the ablative case like Latin. In Cantemir's texts, the Greek nouns are used in the dative, probably starting from the analogy between the Greek ending for dative, plural *-ις*, and the Latin ending for dative, plural *-is*, for both languages, in the first and second declension. In Latin, *-is* is also the marker for ablative, plural, so Cantemir made, in fact, an analogy between Greek dative and Latin ablative: *Othmanicae. Nomen hoc Turcicae genti a primo eius Imperatore Othomano inditum perverse vulgo a Christianis scribitur ἱστοριογράφοις* (Cantemir 2002: 293). This analogy was extended for singular, between Latin ablative ending *-ā* and Greek dative ending *-α* (first declension) *ς*, and between Latin ablative ending *-ō* and Greek dative ending *ω* (second declension).

Cantemir ignored the Greek sign *ι*, for dative, and the Latin quantity of the vowel: *in τετραγόνω in square* (Cantemir 1973: 108); *immota et illaesa eorum ωὐθεντία* – *without changing or destroying authenticity* (*ωὐθεντία*) (Cantemir 1983: 218); *frustra de ἀναρχία timere populum* – *the people is afraid for no reason of the anarchy* (Cantemir 2002: 35).

The bibliographical sources written in Greek represent Byzantine chronics, found by Cantemir in Constantinople, during his twenty years stay there. They were published very often in bilingual editions, Greek – Latin, in using of which Cantemir followed his declared intentions to treat history as a science.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the distinction between citation and paraphrase was not very clear and the author was rarely quoted (Benner 1977: 37–39), but Cantemir preferred to

quote exactly or to paraphrase, indicating the author's name, the title of the work and even the number of the page. This manner of quotation contributed to the identification of some of the editions used by Cantemir himself.

In the unfinished projects *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus* and *Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, Cantemir leaves (although very rarely) the Greek citations in original. In *Descriptio Moldaviae* there are not quotations from a Greek historical source, but only Latin quotations. The only fragments in Greek concern ecclesiastic singings and expressions. With them, Cantemir wanted to make a connection to the former Byzantine magnificence, because in the Romanian Church, the language used was the Slavonic, since the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Cantemir 1973: 374, note 4) and then the Romanian, from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but not Greek. In order to write *History of the Ottoman Empire*, not many Greek sources have been used. Cantemir, just like he did for *Description of Moldavia*, counted on his personal memories and experiences of life. The analysis of the critical assimilation of the Greek sources is provided by *De antiquis...* and *Historia Moldo-Vlachica*. Using bilingual editions, Cantemir quotes, generally, the Latin part, but when the translation did not satisfy him, the author quotes in original: *Hunni, qui et Σθλαβῖνοι dicuntur; Thraciam infestaverunt multosque captivos abduxerunt multosque occiderunt, capto etiam eius provinciae praefecto* (Dimitrie Cantemir 1983: 298) *vs Eodem anno Hunni, qui et Slavini dicuntur; Thraciam infestaverunt, multosque captivos abduxerunt, multos occiderunt, capto etiam praefecto eius provinciae.* (Cedrenos 1647: 368 C-D). In the same manner, Cläuser's translation of Chalcocondylas is improved by Cantemir with quotations in original of important terms: "*Nihil different ab Italis, caetera etiam victus ratione, armorum et supellectilis apparatus etiamnum eodem utentes, quamvis ea gens in duos discreta sit principatus* 'ές τε τὴν Βογδανίαν, in Moldaviam (antiquiori Moldaviae utitur nomine, de quo dicturi sumus in nomine Moldaviae) et 'Ιστρίαν, sive γαρ' 'Ιστρον χόραν, Valachiam Transalpinam, sive Montanam." (quotation from Chalcocondylas 1650: 41A, Cantemir 1983: 190). 'Ιστρία is a name invented by Cantemir, following Cläuser's translation *Istriam regionem* of the Greek 'Ιστρον χόραν (Cantemir 1983: 191, n.183).

The fact that Cantemir had a different attitude towards bilingual editions he used, but a constant attitude towards each of them indicates the author's critical filtering of these sources. From Ioannes Zonaras' *History* (edition 1568), Cantemir takes fragments from Hieronymus Vuolfius' Latin translation, but, from Maltretus' edition of Procopius' works, Cantemir uses only the Greek original and translates himself the needed passages.

The large assumptions from Greek chronics are rare; more frequently, Cantemir paraphrases or makes an abstract of the fragment, using the Latin version too. From works of Gregoras, Choniates, Ioannes Cantacuzino, Chalcocondylas and others, Cantemir translates the Greek original or summarizes the parallel Latin translation, giving up the details. In descriptive passages, generally the author keeps the original Greek forms of peoples and names and very often he interferes in the citation with explanations: *Apud Cantacuzenum primum legimus Ο'υγγροβλαχίας nomen, quod hodierni Graeci in usu habent, Vlachos nimirum Ungaricos, eo nimirum sensu, quod Ungaris sint viciniore,*

*aut quod olim Valachia Regibus Ungaris fuerit subiecta. Franzas Protovestiarius Μαυροβλαχίαν notat, sed ex interpretatione Turcicae appellationis, Valachiam nempe Nigram* (Cantemir 1983: 416, 418).

The manner of using the Greek language in Latin historical texts puts in evidence several characteristic elements for the Romanian society in the main, and for Dimitrie Cantemir particularly. The Greek penetrated more and more the daily language of upper classes, marking the beginning of a linguistic phenomenon that will flourish during the Phanariot period. For Dimitrie Cantemir, as an exponent of the leading class at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Greek language and culture are an echo of the Byzantine glory that other Romanian leaders – Șerban Cantacuzino, Constantin Brâncoveanu – dreamt to resurrect too.

Quoting and paraphrasing from Greek chronics, Cantemir frequently combines the original quote with the paraphrase from the parallel Latin version, keeping the key words in original. The exact quotations, with the mention of the edition used and even of the page number, the critical manner of citation from bibliographical sources, all recommend Dimitrie Cantemir as *the first Romanian historian* (Câdea 1971: 64) in the scientific sense of the notion.

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