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Due to their geographical position, the Rumanian lands have acted as a bridge between the Near East and Central Europe since time immemorial. Located on the fringes of the Greek-Orthodox world, they were part of the “Byzantine Commonwealth,” embracing the same spiritual values and political designs. Entering the Turkish area of influence in the 15th century contributed to their role as a territory of interchange between civilizations. Although absorbed into the Ottoman Empire, the Rumanians developed a different relationship to the Sublime Porte than that of the Western Europeans, which was mostly based on fear and suspicion. Capable of adapting to hardships while harbouring hopes for freedom, Rumanians embraced those customs that did not require renouncing their Christian faith, their language, and their customs. Because of close contacts with the Ottoman political and cultural élite, Rumanian ruling families and court officials were in a position to observe and spread knowledge about Muslim history and contemporary life. With the Rumanians, Oriental studies were not born as a branch of science, but were generated by the necessity for survival and progress under Ottoman authority.

Since the mastery of Oriental languages was a key for accessing high court positions, in the 18th century the Rumanian princes’ educational policies included attempts to have Turkish and Arabic taught in schools. However, training in these languages was a problem even for the wealthy families,
because *muftis* were rarely knowledgeable in European languages or, if they did know them, they were expensive to hire. Moreover, for Rumanians, becoming a dragoman was not encouraged in Constantinople, for fear that this would smooth their path to the thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia (Matei 1967: 97). Rumanian noblemen forced to live in Constantinople took this opportunity to learn Turkish and Arabic, firstly at the Greek-Orthodox Academy of Phanar (Tk. Fener). In addition to the political benefits of acquiring these skills, some of the students searched for a deeper knowledge of the Muslim civilization, beyond the contradictions that separated it from the Christian world.

The first Rumanian promoter of Oriental studies whose scholarly fame crossed borders was Dimitrie Cantemir. Born in 1673, son of Constantin, Prince of Moldavia, he learned Greek, Latin and Slavonic while young, in Iași. From 1685 he lived in Constantinople, as a guarantor for his father’s obedience to the Ottoman court, then as ambassador (*kapûkehaye*) on behalf of his brother, Prince Antioch. There he studied the Oriental languages compulsory for persons with political ambitions: Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. He later acquired a mastery of Tatar⁴, French, Italian, and Russian. Cantemir socialised with Turkish officials, foreign ambassadors, and local scholars. He explored Ahmet III’s library and the archives of Top Kapı Sarai, to which he was allowed access because the Sultan held him in favour. After 22 years spent at his palace overlooking the Bosphorus, Cantemir briefly occupied the Moldavian throne. After his father died, he was appointed by the local high-ranking boyars, on 19 March 1693, to be his successor, but was replaced by the Ottoman authorities on 8 April. During his second brief reign, 23 November 1710 to 11 July 1711, a failed attempt to free Moldavia from Turkish rule, supported by Tsar Peter I, forced him to leave his country. Peter I, who admired Cantemir’s broad knowledge and humanist ideas, welcomed him at the Russian court as his private counsellor, appointed him a Senator and granted him a large estate near Moscow (Dmitrovka, in Orel County). Cantemir married Princess Anastasia Trubetskoi in 1720 and commissioned the Italian architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli to build them a palace in St Petersburg⁵. He accompanied Peter I in his campaign against Persia, in 1721-1722, in spite of suffering from diabetes, which killed him a year later.

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⁴ *Elsine i-sealse*, “the three languages”, see Matei 1967: 96 (note 11).
Among the many books that he wrote, two philosophical works written in Latin\(^6\), alongside his fame as an Oriental scholar, contributed to his election in 1714 as a member of the Academy of Berlin, *Societas Scientiarum Brandenburgensis*, established by G.W. Leibniz. He is chiefly celebrated by Rumanians for his scientific description of Moldavia, commissioned by this Academy, for his literary works\(^7\) and for his humanist principles stated in the ethical treatise *The Divan or the Wise Man’s Dispute with the World, or the Litigation between Soul and Body (Divanul sau gîlcera înțeleptului cu lumea sau giudețul sufletului cu trupul)*, his first published book and the only one that was translated into Arabic, in 1705 (see Cantemir 2006). In the *Divan* he adopted the plan of an *opus tripartitum*, introducing as the third chapter a translation of Andreas Wissovatius’s *Stimuli virtutum, fraenae peccatorum, ut et alia eiusdem generis opuscula posthuma* published in Amsterdam in 1682.\(^8\)

Living in Constantinople all his young life, Cantemir strove to understand Muslim civilisation through a good knowledge of the Turkish way of life and mentality. In 1716 he finished writing *Incrementorum et decrementorum aulae othmanicae sive alothmanicae historiae*, attaching a map of Constantinople drawn by himself. Brought to London in 1732 by his son Antioch, ambassador of the Russian Empire\(^9\), the Latin manuscript\(^10\) was translated by Nicholas Tyndal as *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire* (London, 1\(^{\text{st}}\) ed. 1734, 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) ed. 1756). French and German versions soon followed: Paris, 1743, and Hamburg, 1745, both translated from English\(^11\). Among others, Sir William Jones noted, in 1806, that Dimitrie

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\(^6\) *Sacrosanctae scientiae indepingibilis imago* (The Indescribable Image of Sacred Science), 1700, and *Compendium universae logices institutions* (A Hand-book of the System of General Logic), 1701, in Constantinople. The author intended the latter to be a handbook of clear definitions and a teaching guide to rational thinking.

\(^7\) Such as *Istoria hieroglifică* (The Hieroglyphic History), written in 1706, a symbolic depiction of Moldavian aristocracy and clergy, in a satirical note, based on models from Greek classical literature. It evokes the rivalry between the Cantemir and Brâncoveanu families. This is a social novel voicing criticism of the greedy boyars, sympathy for the harsh conditions of the peasants’ life, and a good understanding of the decadence of the Ottoman Empire.

\(^8\) See Feodorov 2005 for details on the Arabic version.

\(^9\) Antioch (1708-1744) was a prince, a writer, a diplomat, a scientist, the Russian ambassador in London in 1732-1738, and then in Paris.

\(^10\) The original Ms. Lat. 124 is preserved at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was first published in 1999 by Virgil Cândea in a photographic edition, accompanied by Introduction (in Rumanian and English), and then edited in 2001; see Cândea 1999, Cantemir 2001.

\(^11\) The two partial Russian translations, one by G.S. Bayer in 1721, the other by Ivan Groznin soon after 1723 (on a poor copy), were never published.
Cantemir was a very important historian, and his *History* surpassed in authority and method all the works devoted to the matter, superseding those of Richard Knolles and Sir Paul Rycaut (Bulgaru 1973: 988, note 172; Guboglu 1957: 187). Even the fact that Cantemir was criticised by Edward Gibbon confirms the fame of this book, which remained the main source for Ottoman studies for a whole century. Cantemir’s authority as an expert on Ottoman issues was only replaced after Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall published his *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches* (Pest, 1827-1835, t. I-X).

Unlike other scholars (R. Knolles, P. Rycaut, François Péris de la Croix, Antoine du Verdier, Barthélemy d’Herbelot), Cantemir provided eye-witness information on the Turks’ life at court and at home, and on documents from the Ottoman archives. He was also recommended by his connections: Rami Mehmed Pasha (d. 1707), defterdar Firari Hasan Pasha (d. 1701 or 1702), Ibrahim Pasha, treasurer of Qara Mustafa Pasha, and the master artist Levni Čelebi (d. 1732), whose portraits of the sultans illustrate his *History*. Cantemir favoured Oriental sources: *Tevarih-i al-i osman*, The Anonymous Chronicles”, the books of Husayn Hezarfen, Mustafa Na‘īma and Sa‘adeddīn (d. 1599). Although he considered that Christian sources were often biased and unsubstantial, he did not overlook reliable Byzantine historians such as Laonic Chalcocondil (1423-1490), or more recent authors like J. Leunclavius (d. 1593), A. Lonitzer (or Lonicerus, d. 1586), A. G. de Busbecq (d. 1592), and F. Péris de la Croix (d. 1713).

Knowledgeable in the Western European scientific ideas, Cantemir discussed in a treatise on the philosophy of history, *Monarchiarum physica examinatio* (“The Natural Interpretation of Monarchies”, 1714), the “growth and decay of empires”, a theory of natural history advanced by Aristotle. He applied it afterwards to support the idea that the Ottomans’ rise contradicted the cyclic order of ruling monarchies (Cândea 1999: LXXV). Part I of Cantemir’s *History* surveys the military and political rise of the Ottoman Empire from

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12 He was the author of the only general history of the Turks available at the time, ending with the year 1638 (difficult to obtain, it had a limited circulation).
13 In his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, VI, n. 4, as cited by Bulgaru 1973: 988; see Pippidi 2000: 125-126.
15 Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658-1730) adopted the same theory (Marsigli 1732). Montesquieu’s book *Considération sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* was printed in Amsterdam in 1734 (unsigned). He does not seem to have been influenced by Cantemir, whose French translation of the *History* was published the same year. See Iorga 2000: 203.
1300 to 1687, with biographies of 19 sultans. Part II covers only forty years, between 1672, when the Empire won its last territorial battle at Kamenitsa, and 1712. Cantemir provides eyewitness information on the battles of Zenta (1697) and Stânișoara on the river Prut (Moldavia, 1711), and a detailed picture of the frequent uprisings occurring all over the empire: those of the Janissaries, the Anatolian and Balkan pashas, the ulema, the military, and the peasants. The 500 pages of *Adnotationes* that follow contain transcriptions of documents from the Top Kapı Sarai archives: 115 biographies of shahs, khans, and court officials, notes on language matters, medicine, epigraphy, numismatics, music, and folklore from all over the empire. The *History* also refers to peoples other than the Turks, such as the Tatars and the Circassian.

It was the first time that a European and a Christian was able to study and comment on the Muslim civilisation and the Turkish people from within. To quote Arnold Toynbee: “His History of the Ottoman Empire (...) was perhaps the first to be presented by an Ottoman subject in the Western manner” (Toynbee 1955: 162). His goal was not merely academic: all his life he hoped that Rumanian lands would be freed from the Ottoman power, and that his research would come useful in the new era. He sympathized with the Turkish scholars who had rediscovered the old Persian-Arabic humanism, expressing doubts and questioning established religious creeds, by placing them under the scrutiny of reason. More than once, Cantemir found Ottoman society reasonable: “Turks believe that honours have to be bestowed not upon those born of aristocratic parents, but upon wise men of great experience, whose spirit has gained nobility by the practice of virtues”.

Another of Cantemir’s Oriental works is little known to European scientific circles: his survey of Islam, first written in Latin as *De Curanis*, translated into Russian by Ivan Il’inskij, his children’s tutor. Cantemir then enlarged and revised it for publication in 1722 as *Kniga Sistima ili sostojanie Muhammeddanskiia religii* (“The System or the Structure of the Muhammedan Religion”). Peter I requested this book after the publication in 1716 of the first Russian translation of the Qur’ān, from French, at a time when Russia was

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16 The Latin manuscript that served as a source for the Russian translation, dated 1719, is preserved at the Russian State Archive of Old Documents in Moscow (Rossiiskij Gosudarstvennyj Arhiv Drevnih Aktov, RGADA, Coll. 181, ms. 1325, fol. 2-128).
17 The first Russian translation of the Qur’ān, published in 1716, *Alkoran o Magomele ili Zakon turetskij, perevedennyj s frantsuzskago iazyka na rossiiiskij* (The Alkoran of Magomet or the Turkish Law, Translated from French into Russian), was carried out by an anonymous translator who worked on
involved in the Caucasus campaign. Without mentioning Cantemir, Sofronij, bishop of Vratsa, translated his book into Bulgarian in 1805, thus showing the circulation of the System in South-East European countries. As part of a project to print a German version in Berlin, excerpts of Cantemir’s System were soon translated after the Russian edition, but remained unpublished. No complete translation has yet been published in a major European language (see Appendix 1).

Cantemir surveyed Muhammad’s life and teachings, the Qur’an, the Muslim Apocalypse (revelations and prophecies), theology, celebrations, folk customs, traditional sciences, heresies, sects and Sufi brotherhoods (Abdali, Bektashi, Qadri, Kalenderi, Mevlevi, Nakshabandi). Cantemir also cites the Qur’an, the Muhammediyyeh (“The Jewels of Faith”, an anonymous text), Esrar-i cefri rümu, Vasiyetname, Qalila wa Dimna, the works of Ibn Sīnā, Sa‘adi, Luqmān, etc. His insight on relations between Muslims and Christians, on the historical landmarks of Islam, Ottoman architecture, the Hittite ruins in Anatolia, Roman and Byzantine traces in Constantinople, or local legends are still helpful to present-day research.

Cantemir always tried to record Arabic words as close as possible to their original form, opposing, e.g., the term Alcoran used by Ludovico Maracci (1612-1700). The fact that he defines the Muslim faith as “Mohammedanism” comes from a parallel with “Christianity” < Christ, a choice he may have made in order to address Islam on the same level of consideration as Christianity, or because this was the name commonly used in his time, in Russia. Although Cantemir repeatedly voiced his Christian convictions and rejected Islam as

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the French translation of André du Ryer. It was attributed to either Dimitrie Cantemir or Petf Posnikov (late 17th – first 3rd of the 18th c.). This is, possibly, the manuscript that Peter I demanded be sent to him urgently in Astrakhan, in a letter dated 18 July 1722, the first day of his Persian campaign; see Rezvan 2001: 395.

18 Believers in ‘abd al, ‘doubles’ or ‘substitutes’. Sari Saltık Baba, a Muslim saintly man living in the 15th c. in Babadag (Dobrudja, Eastern Rumania), was considered to be an ‘abd al.

19 A poem written in 1449 by Yazigi-Ogli Mehmed, born in Turkey, who presented Islam in verses based on the Qur’an and the adth, for ease of memorizing. Widespread for several centuries, it was originally written in Arabic, then translated into Turkish. Mehmed was the founder of a zawiya in Gallipoli.

20 An esoteric Shi’i writing that was well known in Constantinople. Sultan Ahmet III had a copy in his library.

21 “Book of the Testament”, a commentary of the Muslim faith, composed by the Turkish theologian Muhammed ibn Pir Ali al-Birgivi (1523-1573). It was popular in Istanbul: 110 copies are known in public and private libraries. Two French translations were made, in 1704 and again in 1822.
a false religion, deriving his reasons from the Qur’an, the Muhammediyyeh, and his own logic (Cândea 1999: XXI), he showed respect for the values of Muslim civilisation, as regards philosophy, ethics, science, literature and the arts. For instance, he commends the asceticism of dervish orders, the social rules observed by Muslims in their daily life, their hospitality, their treatment of prisoners of war, etc. In his own words: “Let us be fair and praise a good deed, even if done by our fiercest enemy”. The System also contains critical notes, required by the anticipated scrutiny of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church22, which would not allow a tolerant presentation of Islam, and by the popular attitude towards Islam in the Russian empire, where the Qur’an “was looked upon as buesole Magometovo, ‘the impudent words of Mahomet’” (Rezvan, loc. cit). Cantemir also adapted his discourse to his aim to convince Peter I, his princely reader, of the necessity to free the Rumanians from the Muslim rule of the Ottomans.

Other preoccupations and works reflect Cantemir’s interest for everything Oriental and the deep marks that his living in Constantinople left on his status mentis. Appointed by Peter I to write manifestos addressed to the local populations, in Persian and Turkish, during the Caucasus campaign, Cantemir contributed to the setting up of the first Arabic moveable type press in 1722.23 The dossier of his notes, drawings and inscriptions during the Persian campaign includes descriptions of mosques, palaces and graves in Derbend, Astrakhan, Kazan, and Sibirsk. He wrote the first description of the Caucasus wall, with its gates and towers, and drew up a panorama of the Caucasus Mountains as seen from the Caspian Sea, with data on the snow cap. He described the “staves (of the iuzhashis): one made of iron, the other of bronze. Muhammad’s and Ali’s names are written on both of them. The upper part holds three rays, while the bronze one is gilded.” In 1703-1704, he wrote in Turkish a treatise dedicated to Sultan Ahmed III (d. 1730), proposing an innovative system of musical notes, the Book of the Science of Music Based on Letters, or Short Explanation of the Theory of Music (Kitāb-i ʿilm-il müsīkī ʿalā vedjih-il hurūfāt).24

Cantemir may also have been the first European to confirm the reality

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22 The St Petersburg editing house founded by Peter I in 1711 was placed under the authority of the Synod in 1721.
23 See Frantsouzoff 2011: 123-137.
24 English translation and comments by Wright 1992; idem, II. Comments, 2000 [2001].
of Nasreddin Hoça who, according to one of his sources, Lami‘i Çelebi25, lived around 1400: Nasreddin was reportedly sent by the Anatolian city of Ak-Shekir (the ancient Philomenium) as a messenger to Timur Lenk’s camp (Guboglu 1960: 147)26. He described the astrolabe in his work of 1704 Istoria hieroglyfică (“The Hieroglyphic History”; see Pippidi 2000: 120), where he drew the first list of neologisms in the Rumanian language, with etymological explanations (described in Cîrствоiu 1974: 219-222). In De Cura nus he mentions that he tried to enter the Sultan’s treasury, to see the Prophet’s tooth and mantle preserved there. He is acknowledged as having introduced the word d Jin in Russian, one of the numerous Oriental words that he used in his works. In Descriptio Moldaviae (“The Description of Moldavia”), when reporting on Emperor Trajan’s efforts in rebuilding Dacia after its destructive conquest by the Roman armies, Cantemir cites the phrase Post ruinam Basra and recalls the Arabic original version: ba‘da harab al- Başra, referring to the reconstruction of something that was completely ruined27. His literary style, rich in proverbs, puns, popular sayings, also included Oriental rhythms close to those of Arabic sağ’.

We may conclude that, even without devoting most of his creative efforts to Islam and the Ottomans, Cantemir’s Oriental interests, and his admiration for the values of civilizations other than the Christian one, were essential elements of his personality, as an enlightened humanist and an open­minded thinker. Praised by Voltaire in 1731 in his History of Charles XII, King of Sweden, cited as a source by Victor Hugo28 and Lord Byron (Don Juan, V-VI), he was recently restored in the history of Russian scholarship as one of the pioneers of Oriental studies, who laid the foundations for the establishment of Musée Asiatique (“The Asiatic Museum”) in St Petersburg, in 181829.

25 Lami‘i Çelebi (d. 1531) wrote about Nasreddin Hoça based on the Saltük-nâme by Abu 1-Khayr Rûmî (d. 1480). Çelebi’s work was only printed in the 19th century.
26 See also Constantin 1973: 209-212.
27 The phrase probably refers to the destruction of Basra and Bagdad by the Mongols in 1258.
28 Charles Drouhet (in Văsile Alecsandri și scriitorii francezi, București, Cultura Națională, 1924, 1 86-87) cites Victor Hugo who asserted that he followed the “Turk historiographer” Dimitrie Cantemir when describing the “thrones of the Orient”.
29 According to Grigore Tocilescu (1850-1909), a historian sent by the Rumanian Academy to Russia in search of Cantemir’s manuscripts, Cantemir discussed with G.W. Leibniz about the Academy of St Petersburg. The website of the St Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts mentions Cantemir among the first promoters of Oriental studies in Russia.
Several decades later, Ianache (or Ienăchiță) Văcărescu, born around 1740, followed in Cantemir’s footsteps to write a *History of the Almighty Ottoman Emperors* (*Istoria preaputernicilor împărați otomani*), a brief, but broad survey of Ottoman history. The political situation had changed dramatically: after Cantemir’s flight from Moldavia to Russia, the Sublime Porte had the dangerous Brâncoveanu and Cantacuzino rulers of Wallachia beheaded and decided that only Greek aristocrats of Constantinople, “Phanariots”, would rule these troublesome countries from then on. Born to an old aristocratic family, in addition to his Greek education with a private tutor, Ianache also studied Turkish with a *hoca* and, later in Constantinople, Arabic and Persian *şarf* (grammar). Among his teachers in the capital of the Empire were Meletios of Arta (Cantemir’s former professor, still teaching at the Fener Academy), and Khalîl Hamîd, *kâtib* of the Divan and future vizier. Already proficient in Latin and Old Slavonic, Văcărescu’s newly acquired familiarity with French, Italian, German and Spanish allowed him the access to the latest European writings. He travelled widely, visited Vienna, Venice, the Balkans, Rhodes, spent many years in Constantinople and Brașov, chief city of Transylvania (1763-1767, 1769-1774). Văcărescu first met the Austrian Emperor Joseph II there, in 1773, when the Emperor asked him to act as an interpreter, in Italian, during a meeting with the Rumanian nobility.

Ianache Văcărescu inherited from his noble ancestors a taste for literature and ethnology, patriotic feelings, and respect for truth and honesty. His father’s long years at court, his own skills and his discipline recommended him for court office: after 1760 he occupied high positions, including that of Treasurer. This allowed him to promote several personal projects: he encouraged the use of Rumanian in official documents, introduced a ceremonial code at court, copying that of Constantinople (Cîrstoianu 1974: 109-112), created the first Rumanian fleet on the Danube, passed laws on navigation, land and naval armies. In 1790-1791 he ruled Wallachia, in the absence of a designated prince. His rich residence on Bâneasa estate, near Bucharest, was visited by foreigners who wrote impressive accounts, such as William Wilkinson and Scipion de La Garde de Chambonas (Theodorescu 1968: 398). By the time of his death in 1797, in dubious circumstances (possibly of poison, at the hands of an envoy of his Constantinopolitan enemy, Alexandru Moruzi), he had

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30 See his *Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia with Various Political Observations Relating to them*, London, Longman, 1820.
been appointed a *Dicheofilax* (canonical judge) of the Great Orthodox Church in Constantinople, he had largely increased his father’s inheritance and, as a testimony to his Christian devotion, built and endowed several churches: one in Bâneasa, on his own estates, and another in the city centre, in the old citadel. Celebrated for his poems in Greek and Rumanian and his attempts to mould his native tongue into classical metric patterns, he is taught in schools as the first modern poet of Rumania. His grammar of the Rumanian language is the first printed work in this field. In the theoretical chapter on literary styles, he included some remarks on the Turkish poetical meters, such as *vezni* (<Ar. *wazn*)\(^{31}\).

Exiled in 1788 to Nicopole in Bulgaria, and then Rhodes, by Nicolae Mavrogheni, Phanariot prince of Wallachia (April 1786 - September 1790), Văcărescu started writing *The History of the Almighty Ottoman Emperors* by request of the local people, who wanted to learn about their past. This work is preserved in one manuscript at the Library of the Rumanian Academy in Bucharest\(^{32}\), twice edited and published in Rumanian, but never translated. Văcărescu relied on copies of documents referring to the Rumanians that he had obtained at great expense from Ottoman archives. He also cited the chroniclers Na‘ima, Rashid and Subhî Efendi, courtmen and scholars, and vizier Selim Pasha, who composed comments on Qur’anic verses. He cites European sources such as Nikefor, Zonaras, Chalcocondil, Ladvocat, Voltaire, Büsching\(^33\), and, naturally, Cantemir, in the French translation of Joncquières. Văcărescu followed Cantemir in his *History*, but carefully avoided mentioning him, lest he upset the Sublime Porte.

He starts by presenting pre-Islamic Arabia, Muhammad’s life and teachings, the Qur’ân, and the first caliphs, followed by biographies of twenty-eight rulers, from 1300 until 1791, during the reign of Abdul Hamid. He was criticised at home for not having mentioned the Rumanian princes’ opposition to Ottoman power and their war victories, as if he was reporting only on the Turks’ history (Cîrstoianu 1974: 5-6).

The second part, a survey of events after the reign of Ahmet III, reflects a change of tone and an increased freedom of speech: Văcărescu wrote it after

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\(^{31}\) See Anghelescu 1975: 39.

\(^{32}\) Sized 22.5 x 16.5 cm, not an autograph, except for the poems and some marginal notes, it shows two hands of copyists. See Văcărescu 2001: XXXV, LXXIV-LXXV; Cîrstoianu 1974: 177.

\(^{33}\) See Văcărescu 2001: XXXVII, and Cîrstoianu 1982: 183-186, for details on all sources.
resuming his high position at court. We must keep in mind his political status: when starting his History he was an exiled court official under Ottoman authority (while Cantemir was writing in Russia, under the protection of his friendship with Peter I and his high position at the Russian court). Văcărescu’s life story was a testimony of the Ottomans’ mighty power: they had beheaded his grandfather, but also provided lanache shelter in 1763, when prince Racoviță murdered his father and uncle.

Văcărescu gives a detailed and picturesque account of his audience in Vienna, in January 1782, with Emperor Joseph II and Wenzel Anton of Kaunitz-Rietberg, Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, counsellor to Maria Theresa, and State Chancellor (see Appendix 2). His report reflects the contact of two worlds: that of a liberal and developed Europe and that of an Oriental society, still feudal in its manners, but represented by a cosmopolitan “Signor Văcărescu”, well educated and speaking perfect Italian. His account offers interesting insight into the situation of noblemen in East-European countries under Ottoman authority. Although he appreciated the Austrian discipline and moral stance, as well as being a great admirer of Peter the Great and Catherine II of Russia, his situation forced him to remain an obedient servant of the Sublime Porte.

The interest in an up-to-date history of the Ottoman Empire proves the author’s concern for a good understanding of the political situation of South-East European peoples. Văcărescu’s work is not a mere record of Muslim rulers: sometimes he agrees and sometimes he disagrees with previous chroniclers, adds details from personal findings, and he uses his critical judgment regarding events and characters. Personal comments, such as comparing Muslim and Christian customs and traditions, or his theological argument with Grand Vizier Selim Pasha on the issue of Heaven and Hell (see Appendix 2), bring novelty and eye-witness details to the stream of historical information. His work reflects the talent of a literary man influenced by his Oriental studies: although mixed with Italian neologisms and neo-Greek court terminology, its style and vocabulary resemble that of Turkish chroniclers. As Nicolae Iorga noted, Văcărescu used “idioms from the Levantine speech and

34 He had exchanged letters with Prince Kaunitz, in Italian, since 1777, ten years before their meeting in Vienna.
35 Văcărescu put his forehead to the ground and tried to kiss the Emperor’s hand; see Appendix 2.

Chronos n° 28 - 2013
the vernacular of Smyrna”. Following Turkish historiography, Văcărescu added descriptions in Classical verse to the Sultans’ portraits, a total of 29 stanzas, i.e., 151 lines.

Ianache Văcărescu also composed two vocabularies, Rumanian-Turkish and Turkish-Rumanian, containing words and phrases recorded by the author in daily conversation. Still unpublished, they were only briefly mentioned in the past two decades. The author presumably prepared these vocabularies as language tools, useful for the research of Ottoman documents, such as the khatt sherif that he translated into Rumanian in 1791 (15 fol., see Gubogu 1956: 321). Văcărescu’s concern to make his work accessible is noticeable in his comments of Turkish terms and his care for clear definitions when surveying the Qur’an. His knowledge of Turkish, Persian and Arabic, combined with his interest for language issues, generated the comparative notes on pronunciation and poetic meters included in his Grammar of the Rumanian Language.

Another activity connects Văcărescu to Cantemir: the beginning of cartography in Rumanian lands, a science that the European powers waging wars in Ottoman territory always encouraged. Văcărescu worked with an Italian painter to draw a map, printed in Venice in 1791, of “Thracia and Bulgaria, and the precise recording of all dwellings and roads from the Danube to Adrianopolis”. Certain names of towns, identical to those in Văcărescu’s History, helped Andrei Pippidi attribute this map to him. The Rumanians’ special status within the Ottoman realm made it easier for them to provide details about the geo-strategic situation of lands under Turkish rule. However, as with all experienced diplomats, Văcărescu was surely aware of the dangerous position he placed himself in when allowing foreigners the access to information that could be used against the interests of the Sublime Porte.

Studied at home firstly as a poet and a philologist, Ianache Văcărescu remains unknown to foreign scholars, as long as his works are available only in Rumanian, while his Turkish vocabularies still await publication. As far as we know, not even specialists in Turkey have benefited from his contribution to Ottoman historiography. As a brilliant representative of the

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36 Iorga 1933: 149.
39 See Pippidi 1994: 141-152.
South-European *intelligentsia*, holding high official positions during the 18th century, Văcărescu would be a choice subject when considering the delegation of Ottoman authority in the area.

To conclude, it appears that Dimitrie Cantemir and Ianache Văcărescu, deeply involved in local and regional politics, answered the urgency of the moment by devoting their creative efforts to a better and wider knowledge of Ottoman and Muslim issues. Their contribution to the beginnings of Oriental studies in Rumania is twofold: firstly, they had access to original sources, Ottoman documents and Oriental literature, and were able to shed light on their findings; secondly, they shared their own rich experience and eyewitness stories of life among the Turks. Therefore, I believe that their Oriental writings need to be properly reassessed by experts in the relevant fields, based upon reliable editions and translations into major European languages.

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APPENDIX 1


- Since hospitality is like a sister to generosity, it is truly worthy of praise with the Turkish people, for they are very hospitable and set the table for all travellers who pass by, without enquiring about their religion, and they offer them a resting place. There are two very large areas in the Turkish Empire, one in Europe, called Dobrudja [...], and the other in Anatolia, known as Ikonia. I think that the inhabitants of these areas show such generosity and hospitality that anyone who does not know them would hardly believe it. In every house the landlord has a special room in the courtyard prepared for foreign guests, where, even if someone came at midnight, he would find food ready and a bed laid with clean pillows, white sheets, and quilts; the same goes for horses: house servants give them oat, hay, and water, at the due time. They do this willingly up to three days, without complaining. And the third day, after they served [the guest] a plentiful meal, without ever mentioning money or cost, they ask him where he is heading; and if the guest answers that he has to go to this or that city, they respectfully show him the way and provide a guide for him (fol. 228).

- Shir. With the Arabs, Persians and Turks, poetic art is not only flourishing, but also very beautiful and ingenious. Poetry is called *shir*; if someone wanted to learn about it (as do almost all who want to move on to other sciences), he would have to study first the book called *Shehadi*, which shows the varieties and genres of verses called *bahr*, i.e., “sea”. [...] If one of the poets or science experts asked me what I think of the old and the contemporary Greek and Latin poets and their compositions, as compared to the Arab, Persian and Turkish ones, with everyone’s permission and consent, I would answer that the poets of these Oriental nations, both the old and the more recent, through their progress in this art, have gained supremacy. And I reckon that all those who master these languages and who happened to have read the Arab, Persian and Turk poets will say just like me, that by the perfection of their expression, the sweetness of eloquence (for they use another variety of rhyme and composition) their phrases, the beauty, richness and finesse of metaphors and other figures of speech, they surpass the Greeks and the Latin by far.

Music. Poetry is always and everywhere accompanied by music; but with Muslims, it is never taught in schools, so as to be learned, but only in private, at home, by experts in the art of music. Almost all the noblemen’s children (and even many of the ordinary people, if they have the wish or the inclination towards it) and all the *ulema, i.e.*, the scholars [learn it], for I have not met a single one that could not sing something or at least be able to understand music, since the Persian and the Turkish people (unlike the Arabs) have an innate tendency to enjoy music very much. (fol. 353)
Ilmii kelam: In rhetoric (which they call ilmii kelam, i.e., “the science of speech”), I can boldly assert that Oriental peoples are in no way inferior to the Westerners, for they have an innate tendency towards eloquence, especially the Arabs, Persians, and Turks, who follow them. If they heard a Muslim preacher giving a speech, especially when discussing moral virtues and vices, they would say, if I’m not mistaken, that Demosthenes of the Greeks and Cicero of the Romans are displaying their oratorical skills in the Turkish vernacular. If anyone read the historical books, poetry and tales, but especially the book called Humayun name, and if they thoroughly understood them, they would undoubtedly consider them to be much more eloquent than all European ones. The reason is that not only the sharpness of mind (which I think is attributed by nature equally to all men, according to their character), but also the infinite richness and unlimited treasures of the words and styles of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish create a facility and a richness of eloquence, so that the whole speech seems to stream from the speaker’s mouth like an ever flowing spring. (fol. 360)
APPENDIX 2


- Verse:
  
  *Muhammad dwelled in the world, a truly amazing man,*
  
  For he turned from a humble man to a Prophet, and a Prince.
  
  *He issued a law, and after it was settled*
  
  *It was embraced by many, in three parts of the world* [Asia, Africa and Europe].
  
  His successors were called halif, i.e., “epitrop” (Gr. for “governor”), and even today he holds this title, and it is the name of our mighty Emperor, *erhalifesi* or *halifei rui zemin*, meaning “epitrop on the face of the Earth” (fol. 6v).

- They hold that Heaven brings the good things that bodily senses can perceive, so that believers will not say that they do not understand it, like the scholar Miniáti⁴⁰ claims. As for Hell, they think it has an end, i.e., a Muslim who believed in the Qur’ân and Muhammad, God’s messenger, will not be punished forever, [...] but his sins will burn in Hell and the Muslim will be purified, and he would peacefully go to Heaven. For this reason I even had an argument with the Grand Vizier Varnâlî Zade Selim Pasha [...]. He asked: “Is it right that for one sin of little consequence and agreeable profit somebody gets punished for ever to burn in Hell? I answered that it’s the same reason that allows somebody who did a little good, or simply did not do any wrong, forever to rejoice in Heaven. Then I asked: “Is there the same punishment applied to a Muslim who disrespected me and your highness likewise?” “No”, he answered. “What if he disrespected the Emperor, what is he to expect?” “He has to lose his head”. “What if he disrespects God, doesn’t he have to lose his soul? Because assessing the gravity of disrespect is not based on words and deeds, but on the person to whom those words and deeds were addressed [...]. And since God is eternal, the punishment of the insolent has to be eternal, whether he is a Christian or a Muslim. For as great as God is, all breach of His commandments is as great, and since God is immortal, the punishment of the sinful must, in all fairness, be eternal.” He smiled as if he was going to laugh, and changed the subject. (fol. 8v-10r)

- He who kills an enemy, or gets killed by the enemy, is a martyr and a dweller⁴¹ in Heaven. [...] As for afterlife, they believe in egel or mucader, i.e., predestination⁴², denying free

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⁴⁰ Elias Miniás (1669-1714), Greek bishop, theologian and preacher of the 18th century. See Dimaras 1972: 166 and foll.

⁴¹ Gr. cílonom (cílonom).

⁴² Gr. proorism.
will\textsuperscript{43}, so that I do not know why they have to attend Judgement Day. They honour all the prophets before Muhammad, who are mentioned in their calendars, as in ours, although they do not celebrate them, for they do not take time off, not even when celebrating \textit{bairam}. They also honour many of our saints, but do not hold them to be intercessors with God. They cannot stand the sight of icons, either carved or painted. (fol. 10v-11)

\begin{itemize}
\item Stanza
\end{itemize}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Mahmut\textsuperscript{44} was praised in all his deeds}
\textit{For all considered him a worthy emperor.}
\textit{He brought victories, conquered territories,}
\textit{And pleased his subjects with many felicitous steps.}
\textit{And living thus in glory, he delighted his people,}
\textit{Ruling in peace until he passed away.} (fol. 73r)
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item Thus, on December 27 of the year '81 I set off from Bucharest [...] to convince the above-mentioned Princes to return\textsuperscript{45}; and were they unwilling to do so, [...] I was to go to Vienna to fulfil my mission. [...] The next day I went to see Prince Kaunitz, who was High Chancellor of the Court. After he greeted me with much ceremony and honour, he reassured me that orders had been sent to all the generals in Ardeal to urge the two Princes to return. After I thanked him as due, [...] Prince Kaunitz asked me when I desired to be received in audience by the Emperor. I wanted to do a proper job, so I asked him to bear with me until the answer came from Ardeal, [...] and if the prices are back, I would not ask for an audience, but only thank the Emperor [...] Kaunitz accepted my request and said that I knew how to do my job properly; then he took my arm and we went to the assembly hall, where all the court ambassadors were gathered, alongside the most beautiful ladies of Vienna. I was introduced to all of them, and they greeted me with affection and honour. Prince Kaunitz [...] found reason to admire the sable furs that I was wearing (For Europeans show such simplicity when meeting people for the first time. I myself had to take off my girdle at this party, for the ladies to see my shawl]. [The Prince] said: “Let me show you a sable fur that the heir of the Russian throne gave me; please give me an estimate for it”. He brought the fur and spread it on a billiard table. I understood why he was showing it to me and that the purpose was not the assessment. I answered that sable furs cannot be correctly assessed either in daylight or by night. However, this fur, considering its source and its destination, is priceless. And had I seen it by day, I would not have been able to assess it either. We spent that evening with such questions and answers until one hour after midnight [...]. The next evening I attended a ball given by the Spanish ambassador, where all the grandees of the Empire were present.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{43} “And autexusion”, Gr. for “self-determination”.

\textsuperscript{44} Sultan Mehmet I, 1730-1754.

\textsuperscript{45} The two sons of Prince Alexandru Ipsilanti, ruler of Wallachia, had fled to Austria. Without informing the Sublime Porte of this event, Ipsilanti sent a delegation headed by lanache Vâcărescu to bring them back. He also asked to be deposed after his sons' escape, and the Porte agreed, appointing Vâcărescu as a temporary replacement.
even Duke Maximilian, the Emperor's brother, who is now elector of Cologne. The next
day at ten o'clock I went to court [...]. Passing through the door I saw the Emperor in
the middle of the room, bareheaded, standing, and I advanced two steps, kneeling in the
Turkish style and putting my forehead to the ground. When I wanted to rise, I felt the
Emperor's hand on my head, and he told me that this protocol is not necessary and that
I should rise; and when I tried to kiss his hand, he retrieved it. He recognised me from
Brașov, where he had seen me in '73, and he told me at once: "Signor Văcărescu, how
come you are in Vienna?" He asked me: "What is the reason for their escape?" (i.e.,
the Ipsilanti Princes). I answered: "If any harm came to them, it was solely through
too much good and spoiling. [...] They are looking for more wealth than they had in
Wallachia". He answered that that was not easy to acquire there, and that it would require
much service and a long time. [...] "How did they imagine they would live here? There
are German Princes here who earn 20 florins per month, but they live out of the rent of
their estates. [...] I promise on my imperial word that neither in my countries, nor in my
service I would keep them, but I will return them to Turkey [...]." He congratulated me
for my appointment as caiçacam and asked me about the deposition. He asked me a lot
of questions, about Constantinople, about Wallachia, about customs, and others, keeping
me there for more than two hours. [...] And after a while he said: "I bid you farewell",
and after I knelt in gratitude he retired to his cabinet. And then I went out, for no one is
allowed to retire from the audience [room] until he has left. (fol. 12v-10r)
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