

REVIEWS

ȘTEFAN LEMNY, *CANTEMIREȘTIL. AVENTURA EUROPEANĂ A UNEI FAMILII PRINCIARE DIN SECOLUL AL XVIII-LEA* [THE CANTEMIRS. THE EUROPEAN ADVENTURE OF AN 18TH-CENTURY PRINCELY FAMILY], PREFACE BY EMMANUEL LE ROY LADURIE, TRANSLATED BY MAGDA JEANRENAUD. BUCHAREST: POLIROM, 2010, pp. 328.

Reviewed by Annemarie Sorescu Marinković*

Originally published in France in 2009, and translated into Romanian a year later, the book of Ștefan Lemny, a Romanian-born French historian specialized in eighteenth-century cultural history, follows the unusual destiny of a family who gave European culture two remarkable figures: Dimitrie Cantemir and his son, Antioh, intermediaries between East and West, between the Christian, Catholic, West and the Islamic Ottoman Empire.

Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723) was a prolific man of letters — philosopher, historian, composer, musicologist, linguist, ethnographer, and geographer. He learned Greek and Latin at home, and, living in forced exile in Istanbul between 1687 and 1710, he mastered Turkish and studied the history of the Ottoman Empire at the Patriarchal Academy. Twice Prince of Moldavia (in 1693 and in 1710–11), he was eventually defeated by the Turks and sought refuge in Russia, where he finally settled with his family. Peter the Great granted him the title of *knyaz* (Prince) of the Russian Empire and made him his secret advisor. Dimitrie Cantemir was a member of the Royal Academy in Berlin. He was known as one of the greatest linguists of his time. He spoke and wrote eleven different languages, and was well-versed in Oriental schol-

arship. His work is voluminous, diverse, and original; despite unverified theories and inaccuracies contained in some of his scholarly writings, his expertise, sagacity, and groundbreaking research are widely acknowledged. In 1714, at the request of the Royal Academy in Berlin, Cantemir wrote *Descriptio Moldaviae*, the first geographical, ethnographical and economic account of Moldavia. He became famous in Europe for his *History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire*, which remained a seminal work on the Ottoman Empire until the middle of the nineteenth century. The book, which circulated throughout Europe in manuscript for a number of years, was finally printed in 1734 in London, by his son, Antioh. Antioh Cantemir (1709–1744) was educated at the Saint Petersburg Academy. In 1731 he was appointed Russian ambassador in London. From 1736 until his death, he served as Russian minister plenipotentiary in Paris. He was a noted figure in Parisian intellectual circles and a close friend of Montesquieu's and Voltaire's. Antioh is known for his translations of De Fontenelle into Russian. In 1742, he published his own philosophical work, *On Nature and Man*. His work, reflecting the

* Institute for Balkan Studies, Belgrade

scope and purpose of Peter the Great's European-style reforms, stands out as a contribution to the integration of Russian culture into contemporary European trends. Writing about Dimitrie Cantemir, Voltaire suggested that he "combined the talent of Ancient Greeks with the science of letters and of arms", while Montesquieu said, after Antioh's death, that "Russia will not easily find an ambassador of such excellence".

Ștefan Lemny is not interested in these two exceptional men of culture only from the perspective of their valuable work; he also takes a look at their private and sentimental life. He takes the reader to a tour of Moldavia, the "cradle" of the Cantemirs, the country where they were born and ruled, and proceeds all the way to Constantinople, Saint Petersburg, London and Paris, places they visited or lived in. This long European journey, which took place in two separate phases, deserves special attention. The first phase, epitomized by Dimitrie, belongs to the east of the continent, which was not even considered Europe by some, especially when it comes to its part incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. The road travelled by the Moldavian prince was impressive: he crossed two different worlds — the Ottoman Empire (Moldavia was part of it) and Russia — which fought for supremacy in the region. Antioh's diplomatic role in London and Paris epitomizes a different stage, one of laborious diplomatic efforts aimed at aligning Russia with the influential European capitals. The strength and singularity of the Cantemirs resides in the fact that father

and son shared the same intellectual approach, the underlying idea of which was to establish the relationship of mutual acquaintance between societies and cultures of their time. Even if their objectives and initiatives, occurring within two different national cultures, Romanian and Russian, diverged, they shared the same passionate desire to bridge the gaps between the worlds they crossed and came to know.

This marvellously written and well documented book has several merits. So far, it is the only extensive study which, depicting the life and work of the two Cantemirs in one place, seeks, without resorting to a mere biographical analysis, to re-establish continuity between them, since, ironically, Dimitrie is well known and studied in Romania, while Antioh is an object of academic interest in Russia. Lemny's study uses biography as a means to highlight those aspects of the two men's life and activity which are important from the perspective of cultural proximity between the countries in which they lived (Moldavia, the Ottoman and Russian empires), as well as for the intellectual Europe of the eighteenth century. Their contribution is just a link in a vast communication network, but it is a significant component in searching for the so-called European idea, where the Oriental Europe and the Enlightened Europe are shaking hands with one another. From this perspective, the Cantemirs' adventure is more than a mere shift in space: it is a splendid intellectual adventure, which played a vital role in the construction of a modern, cosmopolitan identity for eighteenth-century Europe.

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE BUISSON, *MIHAILOVIĆ (1893–1946) HÉROS TRABI PAR LES ALLIÉS.*

PERRIN, COLLECTION TEMPUS, 2011, pp. 350.

*Présenté par Veljko Stanić**

Dans la prestigieuse « Collection Tempus » de Perrin est apparue une nouvelle édition de l'ouvrage de Jean-Christophe Buisson *Mihailović (1893–1946) Héros*

trabi par les Alliés. Jean-Christophe Buisson est journaliste et écrivain français,

* Institut des Etudes balkaniques, Belgrade