

RUSSIA, THE SLAVS AND THE SLAVIC QUESTION THROUGH THE BIOGRAPHY, CAREER AND WRITING OF DIMITRIE CANTEMIR

ABSTRACT

Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), the hospodar of Moldavia (1693, 1710–1711), collaborated with the Russian tsar Peter the Great during his 1711 campaign in Moldavia against the Ottoman Empire. After the defeat of the Russian and Moldavian coalition, Cantemir lived in Russia and was active on the political and cultural scene there. The author of this paper considers him as one part of a so-called “early history” of the Romanian Slavic studies and modern Romanian-Slavic relations. This is because of his full involvement in tsar Peter’s foreign policy as an adviser on Oriental and Turkish matters (he wrote some very early works of Oriental studies: the *Incrementa atque decrementa aulae othomanicae* and *Kniga sistima ili sostojanie muhammedanskoj religii*), and because of his scientific interest in Slavic issues in Romanian history (including the *Hronicul vechimii româno-moldo-vlahilor* and *Descriptio Moldaviae*). Cantemir’s work continued the traditional interest of Moldavian chroniclers (Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin, Ion Neculce) in the northern Slavs (Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Cossacks), but also represents a great advance due to the cultural and political perspectives opened by life at tsar Peter’s court. At the same time, his attitude towards Slavic issues in Romanian medieval history (the birth of the Romanian people and language, the Slavic influence upon them, and the Slavonic influence on medieval Romanian culture) played a major role in formatting future historical discourse (among historians of the Enlightenment, the so-called *Transylvanian School* and Romanticism, among Latinist scholars).