

THE PROGRAM OF THE TRANSLATIONS MADE IN MOLDAVIA IN THE XVIIITH CENTURY

LE PROGRAMME DES TRADUCTIONS RÉALISÉES EN MOLDAVIE DANS LE XVIII^E SIÈCLE

PROGRAMUL TRADUCERILOR REALIZATE ÎN MOLDOVA SECOLULUI AL XVIII-LEA

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Abstract

The present study presents, in general, the program of the translations made around some cultural personalities from Moldavia in the XVIIIth century. One important center was established at the monastery Neamț around Abbot Paisie Velicikovski who had a rich translation activity in Romanian and Slavonic languages, especially from Greek literature. The name of Leon Gheuca, in the period of time when he was a bishop at the bishopric of Roman, is related to the second important translations program of Enlightenment inspiration. Besides translations from French or Greek, the first translations from Italian are remarked here. In addition to the two reference centers, it is added the one made at Putna around Archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu who created a true “literary stream” in the monastery, confirmed by the many translations made by himself and by other inhabitants of that holy place.

Résumé

L'étude actuelle présente, de manière générale, le programme des traductions réalisées autour de quelques personnalités culturelles de la Moldavie du XVIII^e siècle. Un centre important était situé au monastère de Neamț autour de l'abbé Paisie Velicovski, qui a soutenu une riche activité de traduction en roumain et en slavon, en particulier de la littérature grecque. Le deuxième important programme de traductions, d'inspiration des Lumières, est lié au nom de Leon Gheuca, dans le temps qu'il était évêque à l'évêché de Roman. Avec les traductions du français ou du grec, les premières traductions italiennes sont également notées ici. En plus des deux centres de référence, nous pouvons même ajouter un autre, formé à Putna autour de l'archimandrite Vartolomei Mazareanu qui a créé un véritable «mouvement littéraire» dans le monastère, confirmé par les nombreuses traductions faites par lui-même, ainsi que par d'autres moines de ce lieu saint.

Rezumat

Actualul studiu prezintă, în linii generale, programul traducerilor realizate în jurul unor personalități culturale ale Moldovei secolului al XVIII-lea. Un important centru s-a constituit la mănăstirea Neamț în jurul starețului Paisie Velicikovski care a susținut o bogată activitate de traducere în limba română și slavonă, în special din literatura greacă. De numele lui Leon Gheuca, în perioada în care a fost episcop la episcopia Romanului, este legat al doilea program important de traduceri, de inspirație iluministă. Alături de tălmăcirii din franceză sau greacă, se remarcă aici și primele traduceri din italiană. În completarea celor două centre de referință, îl adăugăm pe cel format la Putna în jurul arhimandritului Vartolomei Măzăreanu care a creat un adevărat „curent

literar” în mănăstire, confirmat de multele traduceri făcute de el însuși, precum și de alți viețuitori ai aceluia sfânt lăcaș.

Key words: *the program of the translations; scholar; Enlightenment movement; manuscript; printing.*

Mots-clés: *le programme des traductions, érudit, le mouvement des Lumières, manuscrit, impression.*

Cuvinte cheie: *programul traducerilor, cărturar, mișcare iluministă, manuscris, tipăritură.*

Introduction

To capture, in general, the historical and cultural context of Moldavia in the XVIIIth century, it is worth remembering that this period, although considered for a long time a black spot in our history, a century of degradation (if we think that between 1711 – 1821 there were the Phanariot reigns in Moldavia and Wallachia), can also be seen from the perspective of that stage in the evolution of Romanian culture that makes the natural transition to modernity and does not cause a “rupture” of the traditional culture. This century of “lights”, first appeared in the West as a current that radiates to Eastern Europe, is called by Nicolae Iorga “the century of the reformers” if we take into account rulers such as Grigore II Ghica and Grigore III Ghica who made culture a priority issue, then by Nicolae Mavrocordat and Constantin Mavrocordat, along with other scholarly rulers. It is known that in this period of time there were attempts to replace in school the Greek language with the local language. And so, around year 1770, the Bishop of Roman, Leon Gheuca, supported by the Metropolitan of Moldavia, Gavriil Calimachi, asked for the replacement of Greek with the language of the people but, for that time, the initiative remained in a trial stage only.

Although known as the “Phanariot period” of Moldavia, the fight for education in the XVIIIth century intensified, more people having access to education, and also the preoccupation for translating and publishing books in Romanian grew bigger. The translations made in this century by scholars from clergy or boyars are from Slavonic, Greek, French, Italian, Russian or Turkish and the selected writings are especially educational and pedagogical, but the domains from which texts begin to be translated are increasingly different: philosophical, literary, popularizing science, juridical and administrative, opening the corridor to the cultural affirmation of Romanian society in the XIXth century. The translating activity intensifies in the second half of the XVIIIth century; the majority of translators come from monastic environments or are hierarchs who are patronizing many of the interpreting activities. Their effort complements the process of merging humanistic elements with patristic or hagiography, a phenomenon accentuated in the Romanian Countries and also in the whole area of the East since the time of Petru Movilă, Udriște Năsturel or Varlaam, but finds its continuation during the second half of the XVIIIth century in a newly created framework, with visible influences from a Viennese or French Enlightenment, or influences from the cultural Polish-Ukrainian and Russian spaces.

The first Moldavian center to concentrate on a rich translation activity – the Paisian community

As far as the translation program of Moldova in the XVIIIth century is concerned, it manifested itself more strongly around two cultural personalities. An important center which concentrated a rich translation activity, was formed around the personality of the abbot Paisie Velicikovski, who, once in the community of Dragomirna (1763), Secu (1775) and especially Neamț, promoted: “an ample translation activity into Romanian and Slavonic (for his fellow countrymen) of Greek literature and other writings of instruction and religious education” (URSU, 2004, p. 22). The Paisian community succeeded in gathering and forming within it:

“A true school of translators, in which three generations of «instructors» (Macarie, Ilarion, Ștefan, Isaac, Gherontie, Climent and Iosif) translated into Romanian an impressive number of texts [...]. From the teacher Ilarion remained in three manuscripts the translation of the *Exaimeron* of Saint Vasile cel Mare, which he made between 1774-1775 and commented in several hundreds of notes of philosophic and scientific content” (URSU, 2004, p. 22-23).

These monks created, through their translations, numerous manuscript books which then were taken to other monasteries and eparchial centers in the Romanian Countries. Some of the translations, due to their importance, were printed since the XVIIIth century and, especially, the beginning of the next century in the important printing centers of the time in Bucharest, Râmnic and Iași, culminating, of course, with that in Neamț, whose existence begins in 1807. Representative for the Paisian community remains hierodeacon Ștefan who translated from Slavonic *The Lives of Saints*, the anthology of Dimitrie of Rostov, printed in twelve volumes (between 1807-1815).

The second important translation program, of Enlightenment inspiration

The second important translation program is linked to the name of Leon Gheuca. He became a protosinghel of the Metropolitan, and then a bishop, and, in 1786, a Metropolitan, and he, apart from spiritual matters, was more preoccupied by cultural problems (it is known that he was a good friend of the greatest Serbian prelate, Dositei Obradovici). Leon Gheuca remained a reference personality of the Moldavian Enlightenment movement because, at the time, he had an important role, was active in spreading culture, even without the imprint of originality. During the period when he was a bishop at the diocese of Roman, he initiated, together with hierodeacon Gherasim Putneanul, a rich activity of translations that primarily had as its source the Enlightenment moral- philosophical literature:

“The objective of this program, of Enlightenment inspiration, was the translation of some writings of moral and civic education and, in order to accomplish the proposed translations, Bishop Leon and his collaborator organized a French language learning circle there, in which a grammar of this language was translated. The first translator in the program initiated at Roman was hierodeacon Gherasim Putneanul, identified as the author of *Cuvînt de îngropare vechiului Ștefan voievod*, of the political pamphlets *Cuvînt a unui țaran către boieri* and *Corespondenție între doi streini asupra obiceiurilor Moldovii și a Țării Muntenestei*, and others”¹.

Among the translators of French or Greek languages who fulfilled the purpose of the program initiated at Roman is, firstly, the scholar monk Gherasim Putneanul, above mentioned. He partially translated from French (a number of nine books from the 24 in existence) *Les Aventures de Télémaques*, the novel by Fénelon that Leon Gheuca was concerned to print in 1783. Then: “The texts translated based on *Pensées sur différents sujets* (1751) by Massillon, all bringing social resonance ideas, were the only fragments printed in the manuscript *Despre știința stihilor*. But they appeared in a volume, without an author, printed with the title *Hrisun Engolpion* (1816)” (DlitR., 1979, p. 394-395). From Greek, the same author deals with *Gheografía noao*, after the variant, translated by Gheorghios Fatzéas, of a universal geography manual written by the English Patrick Gordon.

Another name associated with the accomplishment of this important translation program in Moldova in the second half of the XVIIIth century is that of Toma Dimitriu, chancellor at the

¹ N. A. Ursu, Despina Ursu, *op. cit.*, p. 23-24; apud Doina Cobet, *Prima gramatică franceză tradusă în limba română*, în „Limba română”, XXXIX, 1990, nr. 2, p. 125-129.

Metropolitan Chancellery of Iași. He made a first translation after a popular Greek novel *Theaghen și Haricleea* by Heliodor, which, in the Romanian version circulated under the title *A lui Eliodor istorie etiopicească*, and then, also from Greek, he translated *Teatron politicon, adecă priveriște politicească*, after the work of Ambrosius Marlianus, *Theatrum politicum*. At the request of the treasurer Ioan Cantacuzino, he translated *Alcătuire înaurită a lui Samuil Ravi Jidovul*, printed in Iași in 1771, and at the urge of the Metropolitan Gavriil Calimah, it remains important to remember the translation of a basic text for the Romanian Enlightenment (having in view the source of ideas inspired by Montesquieu, Cesare Beccaria, Samuel von Pufendorf) *Învățătură a însuși stăpînitorei mării Ecaterinii II*, printed in 1773, as well as some anti-Ottoman political manifests, both *Toaca împăraților* and *Tălmăcire a facerii lui Ioan Plokof*, written by Voltaire, and *Rugăciune a neamului grecilor către toată creștineasca Evropă*, written by Giovanni del Turco.

With a rich administrative career, reaching the rank of governor, Alecu Beldiman can also be remembered as a good connoisseur of French and Greek languages, along with other translators from Moldova at that time. Starting with 1784, he translated in Romanian the plays *Sîrois* and *Milosîrdia lui Tit* by Metastasio, and also texts from different authors: Florian, Homer, S. Gessner, Voltaire (*Tragedia lui Orest*, printed in the second decade of the next century, it is considered the first translation into Romanian of a play by Voltaire), Abbot Prévost etc. There are some writings translated by Beldiman with unidentified authors such as *Istoria lui Tarlo și a prietenilor săi*, *Iscoditoriul lucrurilor omenești* or *Istoria lui Zelmis și a Elvirei*. Most of his translations are plays and novels „helping to familiarize the readers with these species. From the literature of the XVIIIth century, he was particularly attracted by neoclassical writings with an obvious moral, that he, as a translator, always pointed out in his forewords as well” (DlitR., 1979, p. 97).

Bishop Amfilohie Hotinul was considered a precursor of translations from Italian with *Elementi aritmetice arătate firești*, a manual of Mathematics in Romanian (among the first ones of this kind we had), which has been in the manuscript since 1784, is a successful processing after *Elementi aritmetici* by Alessandro Conti. Inspired by *Geografia universală* by Claude Buffier, Amfilohie Hotinul translated *De obște gheografie*, a manuscript which served as a manual for the students of the spiritual school from Putna monastery. As a manuscript appeared *Gramatica fizicii*, a treaty of natural sciences, which raised translation problems (as he pointed out himself in the preface) in that the scientific terminology was poorly represented in Romanian at that time. We find an interpretation in Romanian of the famous scholar bishop, a manual of theology named *Gramatică teologhicească*. Through his effort to translate all these texts, Amfilohie Hotinul participated, without a doubt, in the process of enriching the language with neologisms and in the formation of a Romanian scientific style.

A rich Putnean tradition

In addition to the two reference centers for the translation activity in Moldavia in the XVIIIth century, we add the one created at Putna, marked by the personality of the Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul who, among other preoccupations “for the perfect renovation of Putna” (GIURESCU, 1966, p. 6) – working both on the restoration of the foundation of the church and on the monastery’s reinforcements – also supported a broad cultural activity. Here evolved, according to a rich Putnean tradition established since the XVth century, a great number of calligraphists, miniaturizers, analysts, translators and teachers among who we remind in these succinct lines the “Romanian teacher Eulohie” (who translated *Viața Sfinților*, in five volumes, between 1757 – 1760, at the urge of the Metropolitan Iacov Putneanul) and especially the scholar archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu with his rich activity as a translator and copyist.

Among the many scholars from the end of the XVIIIth century who were brilliant through their European culture and their wide understanding of the sense of history (Leon Gheuca and Iacov Stamati in Moldavia, Chesarie Râmniceanu, Nicodim Greceanu in Țara Românească, not mentioning the activity of the Ardelean scholars), Vartolomei Măzăreanu is, at first glance, a modest figure. Not having their brightness and originality, his work is still important through its

continuity and amplitude. He compiled and translated a great number of monastic documents (the so-called *Condici ale mănăstirilor Solca și Voroneț*), with some historical additions, a corpus of the Moldavian chronicles from which only one fragment is preserved and he wrote a short *Istorie a mănăstirii Putna*; he translated a lot, only from Slavonic and Russian, religious works (*Leastvița* by Ioan Scararul, *Viețile sfinților Gheorghe și Macarie Egipteanul, a Panahidnic* etc.), didactic works (an anthology of maxims and moral teachings, a fragment about Moldavia from a Russian geography book printed in 1770), historical (a fragment from a Russian cronograph, probably that one of Dimitrie of Rostov) and even a *Esopie*, which is lost today. Vartolomei Măzăreanu was also attributed a *Cuvânt de îngroparea vechiului Ștefan Voievod, domnul Moldaviei*, published by Kogălniceanu in *Arhiva românească*, II, 1841.

A personality of various and deep knowledge for his age, Vartolomei Măzăreanu, of course was not alien to the Enlightenment guidelines which anyways were influencing the spiritual life in Moldavia, but his true passion was the history of Moldavia. He translated from Slavonic into Romanian *Pomelnicul mănăstirii Moldovița*. He personally wrote some works which, today, anyone would catalogue as historical monographies: *Istoria mănăstirii Putna*, *Arătare pentru Ștefan Tomșa voievod, domnul țării Moldovii*. At the *Condica mănăstirii Voronețul V*. Măzăreanu attached an unusual supplement: *Domnia lui Ștefan Voievod cel Viteaz, ctitorul Sf. mănăstiri Voronețului și a altor multor mănăstiri și biserici*. Vartolomei Măzăreanu's head of work is *Молдавскоу Лемонуцеу - Letopisețul Moldovei*. Written at the order of general-field marshal Piotr Alexandrovici Rumeanțev, V. Măzăreanu's *Letopisețul Moldovei* represents a successful compilation in Russian from the chronicles of Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin, Ion Neculce.

Among his many translations, some are secular, such as *Apoftegmata* and *Ithica ieropolitica*, collections of moral texts, biblical or mythological parables, the second one being translated from different church books, from Russian. We find that his numerous translations from Slavonic and Russian are based on religious service books, Holy Fathers' speeches, saints' lives, historical works (he wrote historical works himself), he copied documents, kept only in manuscript, about some of his translations, but nothing is known today.

Towards the end of the XVIIIth century, more precisely since 1775, through the Habsburg annexation of Bucovina, the entire learning activity, culminating with the history of translations registered in the monastery Putna, recorded a decline. Most of the monasteries were abolished, only three remained: Putna, Sucevița and Dragomirna, but, in a short time, the Putnean spiritual school closed being replaced with the clergy school from Suceava in 1786.

Conclusions

In the evolution of the Romanian culture towards modernity, and especially of the literary Romanian language, the translations played a decisive role: „the studies of Liviu Onu, Ștefan Munteanu, G. Ivănescu, I. Gheție, Gheorghe Chivu and others proved the fact that in the XVIIIth century Romanian language has been enriched which prepared it, in a lexical and even stylistical outlook, for the subsequent challenges, those manifested in the ambition, multiplied after 1800, to produce texts of aesthetic relevance². The role of religious, historical, scientific translations (with a variety of themes: philosophy, geography, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, the first bilingual glossaries Romanian – Slavic and Slavic – Romanian were issued) or literary made in this era was an educative-formative, opening access to instruction and reading to a growing number of people, as it had never happened before.

² Andrei Corbea-Hoișie, *Cuvânt înainte*, în volumul colectiv *Impulsul Iluminismului în traduceri românești din secolul al XVIII-lea*, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2014, p. 9.

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