

PhD Candidate Fănel Şuteu, "Cantemir's Bestiary in the European Context: Historical Coordinates and Biblical Occurrences in the *Hieroglyphic History* (1705)"

Summary in English

An overview of the historiography of *Istoria ieroglifică* reveals a limited number of works specifically dedicated to the analysis of zoomorphs, and even fewer focus on the intersection of theology and Cantemir studies. Only a few Romanian scholars have explored the theological elements in Cantemir's novel, with most of them concentrating on general articles or comprehensive studies covering Cantemir's entire oeuvre.

The zoomorphic imagery in *Istoria ieroglifică* has been studied by authors such as Alexandru Filipaşcu, a scholar who reviewed Cantemir's fauna, identifying a total of 91 species or categories of wild animals, 13 domesticated animals, and 6 species whose identification remains uncertain. Mihai Moraru authored a study on the contribution of *Physiologus* to the fantastic animal imagery in the novel (1972). Doina Curticăpeanu wrote about the "Baroque Archipelago" as revealed in European culture, supported by Cantemir's work. Cristina Bîrsan (1993) and Andrei Milica (2005) produced two extensive studies on the unicorn. Cătălina Velculescu explored *Damascius the Studite's* bestiary (*Physiologus* of the ancient author) and made correlations between it and Cantemir's bestiary (2008). Articles by Professor Bogdan Creţu (2008-2012) and Professor Ovidiu Pecican (2010-present) conducted literary and historical analyses of the zoomorphic characters in Cantemir's novel.

Particularly important are the two scholarly editions: *Istoria ieroglifică* (vol. I-II, 1965, ed. Ion Verdeş, P.P. Panaitescu) and *Istoria ieroglifică* (1973, ed. Stela Toma and Nicolae Stoicescu), containing objective commentaries and historical analyses for nearly every character decrypted by Cantemir. Other authors have written significant volumes on this subject, such as Elvira Sorohan (1978), Doina Ruşti (2007), Gabriel Mihăilescu (2002), Manuela Tănăsescu (2012), Bogdan Creţu (2013), and Ovidiu Pecican as editor and author (2012; 2014; 2014; 2016). I have mentioned just a few names from the vast bibliography dedicated to Cantemir's zoomorphs.

Beyond this, the bibliography dedicated to the theology of *Istoria ieroglifică* is extremely limited. In the doctoral candidate's undergraduate thesis, defended in 2020, a series of articles related to Cantemir's theological themes were reviewed. Several researchers, including Eftimie Bârlădeanu, Teodor Bodogae, Vlad Alexandrescu, Ion Vicovan, Ştefan Pomian, Marcela Ciortea, and others, have explored such themes in Cantemir's work, but very few have specifically addressed the theological or biblical elements in *Istoria ieroglifică*. To date, there is no comprehensive work that investigates

Istoria ieroglifică in a biblical context. For a brief examination of such articles, see Appendix No. 1 (Reviews of articles/volumes on Cantemir's theology).

Through this doctoral thesis, titled *The Cantemirian Bestiary in the European Context: Historical Coordinates and Biblical Occurrences in Istoria ieroglifică (1705)*, I have historically approached the biblical themes and zoomorphic symbols in Dimitrie Cantemir's novel. I have also addressed the following key questions: (1) What is the chronology of the works and ideas related to zoomorphs that appeared in the European context? (2) What interpretative conceptions from the European zoomorphic tradition did Cantemir have at his disposal for encrypting/decrypting a bestiary? (3) What unexplored biblical/theological themes does Cantemir's novel offer us? (4) What theological and historical zoomorphic themes did the author of *Istoria ieroglifică* encode/decode in relation to these therianthropes?

This doctoral thesis, titled *The Cantemirian Bestiary in the European Context: Historical and Biblical Coordinates in Istoria ieroglifică (1705)*, is structured into three chapters, preceded by sections such as Abbreviations, List of Tables and Figures, and the present Introduction.

In the first chapter, titled (1) "Medieval Bestiaries and Their Interpretation: The Cantemirian Bestiary in the European Context," I conducted (1.1.) a chronological exploration of the European zoomorphic tradition, followed by a brief analysis of the sources of zoomorphic symbols in the European symbolic reservoir: (1.2.) the Septuagint (3rd century BCE), the Vulgate (4th century CE), (1.3.) *Physiologus* (2nd century CE), and (1.4.) medieval encyclopedias and bestiaries.

In the following subchapter, I tackled an important key question: (1.5.) What interpretative conceptions did Cantemir have at his disposal to encrypt/decrypt a bestiary? Here, I reviewed medieval conceptions about Divinity (*Deus est centrum mundi*), the Universe (a book of moral teachings, a summa of miracles, a map of symbols, and a special form of the world as *theatrum mundi*—the world viewed as a chessboard), the interpretation of texts (with the senses: literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical), and the classification of zoomorphs based on their type (genuine, pseudo-hybrid, and fantastic hybrids).

In the second chapter, I conducted an exploration of (2.1.) Dimitrie Cantemir's Europe (with the factors of influence from the continent's history, culture, and spirituality), then I established (2.2.) biographical coordinates of the author, (2.3.) briefly examined his historical and moral-religious work, proceeding to (2.4.) the manuscript, copies, and scientific editions of *Istoria ieroglifică*. I then highlighted important elements of (2.5.) history and autobiography in *Istoria ieroglifică*, before moving on to (2.6.) the impact of ancient and medieval thought on *Istoria ieroglifică* (the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and authors like Aristotle and Pliny). In the same context, I analyzed (2.7.-2.8.) biblical themes that influenced passages in *Istoria ieroglifică* (theonyms, ideas from Ecclesiastes/Pauline theology/Christian tradition—such as the cult of relics), concluding chapter two with (2.9.) themes

from the European zoomorphic tradition addressed by Dimitrie Cantemir (the theme of the labyrinth, zoomorphic symbols, biblical principles, and interpretation methods adopted in *Istoria ieroglifică*).

In the third chapter, I specifically analyzed (3.1.-3.2.) genuine (natural) zoomorphs *in bono sensu / in malo sensu*, conducting a terminological, symbolic, iconographic, and historical exploration in relation to characters such as the Wolf (Lupu Bogdan), the Lynx (Constantin Cantacuzino), the Raven (Constantin Brâncoveanu), the Fox (Ilie Enache Țifescu), and the Elephant (Antioh Cantemir). I then analyzed, under the same parameters, (3.3.-3.4.) pseudo-hybrid zoomorphs *in bono sensu / in malo sensu*, such as the Bat (Marco Pseudo-Beizadea), the Heron (Chiriță Dimachi), the Chameleon (Scarlat Ruset), the Giraffe (Alexandru Mavrocordat), and the Blind Worm (Dediu Codreanu). Finally, I examined (3.5.-3.6.) fantastic hybrid zoomorphs *in bono sensu / in malo sensu*, such as the Unicorn-Leopard (Constantin Cantemir), the Unicorn (Dimitrie Cantemir), the Raven-Leopard (Nicolae Ruset), and the Ostrich-Camel (Mihai Racoviță).

An important distinction I applied in this chapter (the third) was drawn directly from the pages of Cantemir's novel: Cantemir placed the "Scale of Heaven" beside each character, and following the Good/Evil distinction that governs the entire work, I assigned each analyzed mask a generic label: *in bono sensu / in malo sensu*.

In general, for each of the 14 entries, I provided the corresponding terminologies in Hebrew (TM), Greek (LXX), and Latin (VG); emblematic quotes from the biblical tradition and Cantemir's work; an image taken from European medieval manuscripts or drawn by artist Emanuel Benteu (for original hybrids that do not exist in the European iconographic heritage); the hermeneutics of the zoomorphic symbol from the European Zoomorphic Tradition (EZT) and Cantemir; and finally, a succinct historical characterization of the real characters portrayed by Cantemir, forming some prosopographical sketches.

After the Conclusions, I added the Bibliography used and the Appendices (No. 1. Bibliography on Cantemirian zoomorphs; No. 2. Reviews of articles/volumes on Cantemirian theology; No. 3. Mosaic lists of zoomorphs *in malo sensu* and *in bono sensu* (LXX/VG); No. 4. Manuscript and editions of *Istoria ieroglifică*; No. 5. The distribution of masks for the characters in *Istoria ieroglifică*; No. 6. Abbreviations of the books cited from Scripture).

Throughout the thesis, I employed the historical-diachronic method due to its close relevance to the following objectives: (1) to trace the chronology of works and ideas related to zoomorphs that emerged in the European context; (2) to construct the author's biography through evolving temporal expositions; (3) to follow an idea from its origins to its materialization in Cantemir's volume; (4) and to produce biographical sketches of the 14 zoomorphs studied (chapters 1-3).

Another method I employed was comparative analysis, which proved extremely useful for the tabular systematization I carried out for certain texts and words, aimed at facilitating a greater

understanding of meaning. Through comparative analysis, I also produced short exegetical notes on certain terms, especially within the terminological analysis of zoonymns, tracking terms both lexically and etymologically or symbolically (chapter 3).

The hermeneutic method was applied to interpret biblical and Cantemirian texts, extracting the meanings of zoomorphic symbols (positive/negative, see chapter 3).

For quantifying the occurrences of zoonymns (in Cantemir and the Bible), I employed the statistical method, extracting the frequency of the studied terminology in percentage form (chapter 3).

My primary sources included the volumes authored by Dimitrie Cantemir, especially the editions of *Istoria ieroglifică*. In principle, I used the Panaitescu-Verdeș edition (vols. 1-2, 1965), the Stoicescu-Toma edition (1973), sometimes the Romanian Academy edition (2003), and less frequently the Princeps Edition (1883). For chapter 1, *The History of Religious Ideas and Beliefs* (M. Eliade), *The History of Animals* (R. Lewinsohn), *Naturalis Historia* by Pliny (Polirom), and *Historia Animalium* by Aristotle, scanned online, were of real use. For chapter 2, I consulted Cantemirian biographies signed by P.P. Panaitescu, Victor Țvircun, and chronologies by Stela Toma (*Istoria ieroglifică*, 2016) and Ovidiu Pecican (*Cantemirian Hieroglyphs*). For chapter 3, volumes of biblical lexicology by Eugen Munteanu and C.M. Cărăbuș, N. Stoicescu's dictionary on the great dignitaries of Moldavia and Wallachia, Bogdan Athanasiu's volume on *The World of Ion Neculce*, and interpretations by professors Ovidiu Pecican (*Cantemirian Hieroglyphs*) and Bogdan Crețu (*The Unicorn at the Gates of the East*, vols. 1-2) were of real use.

In addition to these, I used online editions of the Bible, biblical and symbolic dictionaries, though I primarily relied on the LXX-NEC and VG.

For the writing of this work, I used 143 volumes as primary bibliography (Cantemirian works, dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries, etc.), 110 volumes as secondary bibliography, 20 articles, and 47 electronic resources, totaling 320 bibliographic sources.

And if what Ovidiu Pecican—an assiduous researcher of the substratum of medieval mentalities in the Romanian space inherited in Cantemir's era—claims is true, that an organizing axis of medieval thought is religiosity and that “among all aspects of the religious universe of the medieval man, the issue of salvation occupies a central place,” then a historical-theological study of medieval symbols will be useful in the future for penetrating the world of hieroglyphs depicted through animal forms.

Keywords: Dimitrie Cantemir, *Hieroglyphic History*, Cantemir's bestiary, zoomorphs, biblical symbols, zoomorphic symbols, european zoomorphic tradition, *Septuagint* (LXX), *Vulgate* (VG), *Physiologus*, medieval bestiaries

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3.6.1.5. The historical decoding of the Coracopardalis's identity – Nicolae Ruset (17th-18th Century)

3.6.2. The Strutocamila: Mihai Racoviță (1660-1744)

3.6.2.1. Emblematic quotes about the Strutocamila: from *The Hieroglyphic History* and from the Bible

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3.6.2.4. The Strutocamila: symbols from TZE vs Cantemirian symbols/characteristics

3.6.2.5. The historical decoding of the Strutocamila's identity – Mihai Racoviță (1660-1744)

Conclusions

Bibliography

Appendices