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CONSPECTVS SIGLORVM

<i>AA</i>	<i>Arts Asiatiques</i> , Paris.
<i>AAR</i>	American Academy of Religion.
<i>ABORI</i>	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</i> , Poona.
<i>AcAs</i>	<i>Acta Asiatica. Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture</i> , Tokyo.
<i>ACF</i>	<i>Annuaire du Collège de France</i> , Paris.
<i>(A)EPHE</i>	<i>Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études</i> , Section des Sciences Religieuses, Sorbonne, Paris.
<i>AfO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i> , Wien.
<i>AION</i>	<i>Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale</i> , Napoli.
<i>AKM</i>	<i>Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i> , Leipzig.
<i>AM</i>	<i>Asia Major</i> , Leiden.
<i>Anthropos</i>	<i>Anthropos</i> , Sankt Augustin.
<i>AO</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia</i> , København.
<i>AOr</i>	<i>Ars Orientalis</i> , Michigan.
<i>AOH</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae</i> , Budapesta.
<i>Archaeus</i>	<i>Archaeus. Études d'Histoire des Religions / Studies in the History of Religions</i> , Association Archaeus. RAHR & IHR, București.
<i>ARG</i>	<i>Archiv für Religionsgeschichte</i> , Berlin.
<i>ARIRIAB</i>	<i>Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology</i> , Soka University, Tokyo.
<i>ArOr</i>	<i>Archiv Orientální. Quarterly Journal of African and Asian Studies</i> , Praha.
<i>ArtAs</i>	<i>Artibus Asiae</i> , Ascona.
<i>ARW</i>	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart [1897-1941/1942].
<i>AS/ÉA</i>	<i>Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques</i> , Lausanne.
<i>ASSR</i>	<i>Archives de sciences sociales des religions</i> , Paris.
<i>BEFEO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'EFEO</i> , Paris.
<i>BEI</i>	<i>Bulletin d'Études Indiennes</i> , Association française pour les études indiennes, Paris.
<i>BEO</i>	<i>Bulletin d'Études Orientales</i> , Beyrouth.
<i>BIFAO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Études Orientales</i> , Cairo.
<i>BIS</i>	<i>Berliner Indologische Studien</i> , Berlin.
<i>BO</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i> , Louvain.
<i>BSO[A]S</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental [and African] Studies</i> , London.
<i>BSR</i>	<i>Buddhist Studies Review</i> , London.
<i>CAJ</i>	<i>Central Asiatic Journal</i> , Wiesbaden.

<i>CEA</i>	<i>Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie</i> , EFEO, Kyōto.
<i>CPD</i>	<i>Critical Pali Dictionary</i> , København.
<i>CSSH</i>	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> , Cambridge.
<i>EASR</i>	<i>European Association for the Study of Religions</i> , The Hague.
<i>EI</i>	<i>Enzyklopaedie der Islam</i> , Leiden.
<i>EĪ</i>	<i>The Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , new edition, Leiden.
<i>EMS(CAT)</i>	<i>Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines</i> , EPHE, Paris.
<i>EW</i>	<i>East & West</i> , ISIAO (ante ISMEO), Rome.
<i>HdO</i>	<i>Handbuch der Orientalistik</i> , Leiden-Boston.
<i>HJAS</i>	<i>Harvard Journal of Asian Studies</i> , Harvard.
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i> , Chicago.
<i>IAHR</i>	<i>International Association for the History of Religions</i> , The Hague.
<i>IASS</i>	<i>International Association for Sanskrit Studies</i> .
<i>IF</i>	<i>Indogermanische Forschungen</i> .
<i>IHQ</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i> , New Delhi, 1925-1963.
<i>IHR</i>	<i>Institutul de Istorie a Religiilor / Institute for the History of Religions / Institut d'Histoire des Religions</i> , Academia Română, București.
<i>IIAS</i>	<i>International Institute for Asian Studies</i> , Leiden.
<i>IJJ</i>	<i>Indo-Iranian Journal</i> , Dordrecht.
<i>'Ilu</i>	<i>'Ilu. Revista de ciencias de las religiones</i> , Madrid.
<i>Iran</i>	<i>Iran. Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies</i> , London.
<i>ISMEO / ISIAO</i>	<i>Istituto italiano per Medio ed Estremo Oriente / Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente</i> , Roma.
<i>IT</i>	<i>Indologica Taurinensia</i> , Official Organ of the IASS, Torino.
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i> , Société Asiatique, Paris.
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the AAR</i> , Oxford.
<i>JANER</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i> , Leiden.
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , New Haven / Michigan.
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i> , Association for Asian Studies.
<i>JASB</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay</i> , Bombay/Mumbai.
<i>JBE</i>	<i>Journal of Buddhist Ethics</i> , www.buddhistethics.org.
<i>JCR</i>	<i>Journal of Chinese Religions</i> , Harvard.
<i>JEAS</i>	<i>Journal of the European Āyurvedic Society</i> , Reinbek, 1990 sq. (2003: <i>TSAM</i>).
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i> , Leiden-Boston.
<i>JJRS</i>	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> , Nagoya.
<i>JIABS</i>	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i> , Lausanne.
<i>JICA[P]BS</i>	<i>Journal of the International College for Advanced [ensuite : Postgraduated] Buddhist Studies</i> , Tokyo.

<i>JIPh</i>	<i>Journal of Indian Philosophy</i> , Dordrecht.
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i> , Chicago.
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland</i> , London.
<i>JS</i>	<i>Journal des Savants</i> , Institut de France, Paris.
<i>MCB</i>	<i>Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques</i> , Bruxelles.
<i>MIO</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung</i> , Berlin.
<i>MO</i>	<i>Le Monde Oriental</i> .
<i>MSS</i>	<i>Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft</i> , München.
<i>MTSR</i>	<i>Method & Theory in the Study of Religion</i> . Journal of the North American Association for the Study of Religions, Toronto.
<i>Numen</i>	<i>NVMEN. International Review for the History of Religions</i> , IAHR, Leiden.
<i>OC</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i> , Wiesbaden.
<i>OE</i>	<i>Oriens Extremus</i> , Wiesbaden.
<i>OLZ</i>	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i> , Berlin.
<i>OS</i>	<i>Orientalia Suecana</i> , Uppsala.
<i>ÖAW</i>	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien.
<i>(P)EFEO</i>	<i>(Publications de l')EFEO</i> , Paris.
<i>PTS</i>	<i>Pali Text Society</i> , London.
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i> , Paris.
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i> , Paris.
<i>RE</i>	<i>Revue d'égyptologie</i> , Paris.
<i>REI</i>	<i>Revue des études islamiques</i> , Paris.
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i> , Paris.
<i>Religio</i>	<i>Religio. Revue pro Religionistiku</i> , Czech Society for the Study of Religions, Brno.
<i>Religion</i>	<i>Religion</i> , London.
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i> , Paris.
<i>RHPhR</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuse</i> , Strasbourg.
<i>RO</i>	<i>Rocznik Orientalistyczny</i> , Warszawa.
<i>RS</i>	<i>Religious Studies</i> , Cambridge.
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i> , Paris.
<i>SBB</i>	<i>Sacred Books of the Buddhist</i> .
<i>SBE</i>	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i> , 50 vols., 1871-1910.
<i>SMSR</i>	<i>Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni</i> , Roma.
<i>SA</i>	<i>Studia Asiatica. Revue internationale d'études asiatiques / International Journal for Asian Studies</i> , Association Archaeus. RAHR & IHR, București.
<i>SAO</i>	<i>Studia et Acta Orientalia</i> , București, 1957-1981.
<i>StII</i>	<i>Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik</i> , Reinbek bei Hamburg.
<i>StIr</i>	<i>Studia Iranica</i> , Paris.
<i>StOr</i>	<i>Studia Orientalia</i> , Helsinki.
<i>T</i>	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> , Tōkyō.

<i>Temenos</i>	<i>Temenos. Studies in Comparative Religion</i> , Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion, Turku/Åbo.
<i>TP</i>	<i>T'oung Pao</i> , Leiden-Paris.
<i>TSAM</i>	<i>Traditional South Asian Medicine</i> , Wiesbaden, 2003 sq. (<i>ante: JEAS</i>).
<i>UAj</i>	<i>Ural-Altäische Jahrbucher</i> , Wiesbaden.
<i>WZKS[O]</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd[- und Ost]asiens</i> , Wien.
<i>Zalmoxis</i>	<i>Zalmoxis. Revue des études religieuses</i> , Bucarest, 1938-1942 [Iași, 2000].
<i>ZfR</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft</i> , Marburg.
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i> .
<i>ZMRW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft</i> .
<i>ZRGG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte / Journal of religious and intellectual history</i> , Leiden.

TO OUR READERS

The present volume is one of the first issues of *Studia Asiatica* and *Archaeus* to be co-edited by the Romanian Association for the History of Religions (RAHR) and the Institute for the History of Religions of the Romanian Academy, founded in 2008. With it we have prepared a complementary volume (*Studia Asiatica* VII.2 [2006]-VIII [2007]), while volume IX (2008) is to be published as Proceedings of a colloquium co-organised in Paris in 2005, about the history of Asian studies in Europe.¹ Three volumes of Proceedings of the International Congress of the History of Religions, held in September 2006 in Bucharest, have been published or are in the course of publication in *Archaeus*. *Studies in the History of Religions* (XI-XII [2007-2008], XIII [2009] and XIV [2010]). Together with them shall be issued the proceedings of Asian religions panels of the Congress organised by the RAHR under the auspices of the EASR and the IAHR, containing a volume dedicated to Indian religions and Buddhist studies (edited by E. Ciurtin), and another dedicated to Iranian religions (edited by Mihaela Timuș), as the Institute itself includes a Department of Indian and Iranian Religions.

Studia Asiatica X (2009), the issuing of which has for the first time in its history been endorsed by Romanian public institutions, contains the ten contributions of eight researchers coming from Germany, Italy, Japan, the Philippines, United States, and Romania. Interested in a religiously articulated entomology, Ionuț Daniel Băncilă (Berlin) discusses, against a comparative backdrop, the range of issues raised by *generatio spontanea* and by the position of insects and other creatures considered pernicious by Manichaeism. Anna Caiozzo (Paris) analyses a rare illustrated manuscript of the Timurid age (in the possession of the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris), which describes a *mi 'rāj nāmeḥ* at the crossroads between Islamo-Iranian, Judaic, and Christian apocalypics. The Indian section of the volume puts forth one contribution on the history of Buddhist earthquakes (E. Ciurtin). Those who are familiar with the motif called, with reference to Sanskrit literature, “the whiteness of laughter” (Minoru Hara; see p. 93 in this volume) may possibly be taken by surprise, yet will undoubtedly be comforted by the ethnographical, historical and anthropological study of Thomas J. Zumbroich (Austin, TX) and Anayn Salvador-Amores (Baguio), about

¹ E. CIURTIN, Živa VESEL, Leili ANVAR, Pascale LAVAGNE, and Mihaela TIMUȘ, *Orientalismes et espaces culturels. Monde anglophone. Europe centrale et orientale*. Actes de la table ronde organisée par le GDRI “Les mondes lettrés” (CNRS), ACI TTT 014 “Les savoirs de la réflexivité” and UMR 7528 (CNRS-Paris III-EPHE-INaLCO) “Mondes iranien et indien”, Paris, 7-8 octobre 2005, Cahiers de la Société Asiatique, n.s. vol. VI & *Studia Asiatica* IX, Louvain-Paris, Éditions Peeters (forthcoming 2010).

the blackening of teeth in the Philippines, another incursion that our periodical makes towards Southeast Asian world. Ionuț Băncilă returns with an overview of the Christian literature translated and preserved in Sogdian, assessing sources, editions and commentaries too often ignored both in the history of Christianity and in that of Central Asian religions. Two contributions by Daniela Dumbravă (Rome) reopen for discussion, with new sources and innovating demonstrations, the superabundant world of Nicolae Milescu's presence in Asia (as he was recently commemorated on his tricentennial). This time, she insists especially on the year 1675, the starting year of Milescu's mission to Peking, as well as on his association, virtually unknown or vastly neglected by Romanian historians, with Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld. Andrei Oișteanu (Bucharest) continues the incursion into the manifold modernity of Europe's connections with Asia. Not without a return to Milescu, he opens an enthralling, complicated and necessary file,² that of the connections of certain travellers into Asia of Romanian origin or from Romanian territories with narcotic and hallucinogenic substances, studied from a perspective that includes ethnography, medicine, pharmacy, history of mentalities and history of religions. In a review article, Joseph O'Leary (Tokyo) rediscusses the relation between wisdom and compassion in Mahāyāna Buddhism, starting from Ludovic Viévard's contribution (on which see also *Studia Asiatica* 3 [2002]: 189-202).

It is only befitting to reiterate here our thanks addressed to all those that have stood behind our project, especially to Prof. Andrei Pleșu, to Ionuț Băncilă and Daniela Dumbravă, as well as to a certain friend who, in his generosity, has surrounded himself with an extreme discretion.

On April 4th, 2007 Arion Roșu departed from us: a few lines written in his memory are a more than appropriate presence in the periodical that would not have been born without his example, support, and friendship.

E. Ciurtin
Bucharest, November 17, 2009

² Otherwise, as Madeleine Biardeau once mentioned, "dans quelques décennies on ne verra dans l'étude de Wasson [*Soma, Divine Mushroom of Immortality. Ethnomycological Studies*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968] qu'un témoin de la grande époque du LSD" (*IJ* 20 [1978]: 262).

**NARCOTICS AND HALLUCINOGENS:
SCHOLARS FROM THE ROMANIAN TERRITORIES
TRAVELLING TO THE EAST
(SPATHARY MILESCU, DEMETER CANTEMIR,
J. M. HONIGBERGER, MIRCEA ELIADE)***

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Nicolae Milescu: "The weed that dispels any sorrow"

In 1674 Moldavian boyar Nicolae Milescu took residence in Moscow, having been offered a high official position at the *Posolski Prikaz*, the Tsar's chancellery charged with foreign affairs. In 1675, Milescu was sent by the Tsar of Russia, Alexei Mikhailovich, as high ambassador on a diplomatic mission to the Khan of China. One of his missions was "to learn at any cost and beyond the shadow of a doubt whether friendly relations and mutual affection are to be established in the future between His Majesty the Tsar of Russia and Kangxi, Great Khan of China." Milescu was also under orders to gather geographic, demographic and ethnographic facts from all the territories that he was bound to cross.¹

From the official Russian documents issued by the *Posolski Prikaz* on the occasion of the mission's departure on February 20th, 1675, there emerges the fact that Nicolae Milescu and his delegation (composed of 40 people) carried with them, among many things, "sable furs and 20 barrels of tobacco." With such gifts sent by "His Imperial Highness," the Tsar's ambassador was to win the good will of the powerful Mongolian tribal chieftains on China's border.²

* Fragment from forthcoming book by Andrei Oişteanu: *Narcotice la români: Istorie, religie și literatură* [*Narcotics and the Romanians: History, Religion, and Literature*, Iași, Polirom], to be published in 2010.

¹ Nicolae MILESCU, *Jurnalul de călătorie în China* [*Journal of a Travel to China*], edited by Corneliu Bărbulescu, Editura pentru literatură, Bucharest, 1962, p. xxiv.

² Cf. Daniela DUMBRAVĂ, *La Missione di Nicolae Milescu in Asia Settentrionale, 1675-1676*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Università di Firenze, 2007, p. 157 sq. I thank Daniela Dumbravă for signalling this information to me.

Interestingly, tobacco was considered a dangerous narcotic at that time, and was consequently banned from use and trade both in Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich's Russia and in Emperor Kangxi's China. In Russia even earlier, in the days of Tsar Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov (1613-1645), those who "drank tobacco" were threatened with deportation to Siberia.³ The Shunzhi Emperor of China, too, had banned the consumption of tobacco (*tan-pa-ku* in Chinese) through an edict issued in 1637. A long series of imperial edicts, issued by the Emperor in 1638, 1641, 1643, etc, successively renewed the prohibition.

The ban was again reinforced by Emperor Kangxi in 1676, even while Milescu's embassy was stationed in Beijing. Emperor Kangxi's anti-tobacco edict, however, was – according to a commentator – "much less dour than the previous ones and never enforced," which led to the "complete acceptance of tobacco smoking (as well as snuffing) at the end of the 17th century and its becoming an extremely widespread social practice." Besides, Kangxi was himself a smoker and he continued to receive offerings of "tobacco from the Portuguese Jesuits and from the Pope."⁴ Under these circumstances, Milescu may well have considered to set aside a few of the "20 barrels of tobacco" entrusted to him upon his departure, in order to present them to the Chinese Emperor.

On May 20th, 1676, Milescu reached the city of Beijing, where he stayed until September 1st of the same year. In his work *Descrierea Chinei* [*The Description of China*], Milescu referred often enough to the medicinal plants used by the natives. He even composed a special chapter entitled *How They Practice Medicine, the Ways in Which They Heal and What Remedies They Use*. Although "the Jesuits have translated numerous books for them into Chinese," among which were, claimed Milescu, medical books, "the healing craft of the Chinese is above that of our doctors." That was due to the fact that the physicians of China could "heal any disease faster and more thoroughly," using countless "herbs and roots that they give to the ill," and those were "described and drawn" in "many medical books." "In the apothecaries of China," wrote Milescu, "a great number of healing roots are sold, among which are some that cannot be found in Europe;" those were the object of an intense trade, carried out either by sea or by land, on the "silk road."⁵

³ Pierre FERRAN, *Le livre des herbes étrangleuses, vénéneuses, hallucinogènes, carnivores et maléfiques*, Marabout, Paris, 1969, p. 235.

⁴ Dinu LUCA, "Scurtă poveste despre mâncătorii de fum și mâncătorii de opiu" ["Short Story about Smoke Eaters and Opium Eaters"], in *Secolul 21*, no. 1-4/2004, Bucharest, pp. 149-53.

⁵ Nicolae MILESCU Spătarul, *Descrierea Chinei* [*The Description of China*], edited by Corneliu BĂRBULESCU, Minerva Press, Bucharest, 1975, pp. 48-50.

For all this admiration towards Chinese traditional medicine and the natural remedies used in China, Milescu had an extremely negative perception of the Chinese “alchemists” and “sorcerers,” who used various drugs allegedly to prolong life. “In China there are many alchemist doctors who claim not only that they can extract gold from tin and other such matters, but also that they possess medicine by means of which people can attain immortality; the same outrageous lie as that of alchemists in the European countries [...].”

Two centuries and a half passed until another Romanian scholar, Mircea Eliade, embarked again, evidently much more systematically and without ill feeling, upon the subject of Chinese alchemy and the drugs that prolong life. In an ancient Chinese treatise, *Ts'an T'ung Ch'i* (“The Harmony of Difference and Sameness”), written by Wei Po-Yang (120-50 B.C.), which Eliade quoted, it was stated, “If the mere herb *chii-sheng* [ginseng] can prolong life, / Why do you not try to put the *elixir* [alchemical gold] into your mouth?” Alchemy, concluded Eliade, was “one of the numerous techniques by which means the Chinese – and especially the Taoists – were looking for immortality.” The historian of religions extensively examined the mythology of the Chinese’ search for the “immortality drug.”⁶

Returning now to Nicolae Milescu, he maintained, in a somewhat more mellow tone this time, that the Chinese physicians and alchemists “know full many a root and herb of all kinds, yet the most precious and most highly praised root of all is the *ginseng*.” This plant, native from China, also called the “root of life,” possesses outstanding therapeutic properties. In two of the main documentary sources used by Milescu, authored by the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (*China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis ... illustrata*, Amsterdam, 1667) and by one of his disciples, the Jesuit missionary Martinius Martini (*Atlas Sinensis*, Amsterdam, 1655), the Chinese plant *ginseng* (*Panax ginseng*) was confused with the European *mandrake* (*Mandragora officinalis*): “*Ginsen*, [...] *mandragoram* nostratam credas.” It is interesting that Milescu did not endorse this error in his work. The confusion was caused, on the one hand, by the major importance attached to the root in the case of both medicinal plants and, on the other, by the quasi-anthropomorphic shape of both. In his study, *Mătrăguna și miturile “nașterii miraculoase”* (*The Mandrake and the Myths of the “Miraculous Birth”*, *Zalmoxis Review*, vol. III, 1940-1942), in a chapter bearing precisely the title “The

⁶ Mircea ELIADE, *Alchimia Asiatică [Asian Alchemy]*, vol. I: *Alchimia chineză și indiană [Chinese and Indian Alchemy]*, “Cultura poporului” Publishing House, Bucharest, 1935, pp. 12-3, 29-33.

Mandrake and Magical Plants in China”, Mircea Eliade inquired into the origins of the confusion between the two psychotropic plants.⁷

Coming back to the work *The Description of China*, in the chapter dedicated to the “faith of the Chinese,” Nicolae Milescu talked about Confucians, Buddhists, and Taoists. The latter were said to be a bunch of godless “sorcerers”, a band of hedonistic rascals, who ceaselessly looked for the “elixir of immortality.” The Moldavian scholar’s view on drugs emerges as extremely negative, a fact which can be ascribed to his ethic-religion outlook. “The third stage or order,” said Milescu about Taoism, “is the epicurean one, which recognizes neither God nor any idols, but teaches only that there is nothing better on earth than to revel indefinitely. With regard to this, [the Taoists] have concocted countless drugs and dishes for all bodily delights and feasts, and swear that by means of those drugs a man can be made to escape death, and [for that reason] they always search for them. The largest part of them are sorcerers, and their faith or order is the basest and the wickedest of all those that are in China.”⁸

However, when speaking of actual narcotics, Milescu’s view becomes, fortunately, lighter. In the Sian/Xi’an region (southwest of Beijing), for instance, “in the mountains, there grows a kind of weed,” Milescu claimed, “which, if eaten, suddenly makes that person cast aside any sorrow and kindles joy and laughter in him.”⁹ The description of the qualities of the Chinese “weed” that Milescu gave resembles the one made by Homer to an opiate concoction which he called *pharmakon nepenthes* (“remedy against grief”):

A medicine [...] that, drowning cares and angers, did decline
All thought of ill” (*Odyssey*, Chapman translation, IV: 294-7).

Unfortunately, Milescu omitted to mention the name of that particular psychotropic plant. It could possibly have been hemp or poppy. About the hemp growing in China, Nicolae Milescu only mentioned that it was used by the Chinese as a textile plant: “Hemp is also to be found, and it is used [by the Chinese] to make clothes.”¹⁰ His wording is very similar to that of Herodotus speaking about Thracians, about two

⁷ *Zalmoxis. Revistă de studii religioase, Volumele I-III (1938-1942), Publicată sub direcția lui Mircea Eliade* [*Zalmoxis: A Religious Studies Review, Volumes I-III (1938-1942), Published under the direction of Mircea Eliade*], edited, with introductory study, notes and addenda by E. CIURTIN; translated by E. CIURTIN, M. TIMUȘ and A. TIMOTIN, Polirom Press, Iași, 2000, pp. 383-6.

⁸ Nicolae MILESCU, *Descrierea Chinei*, 1975, p. 34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

millennia before, “Thracians use hemp to make clothes” (*Histories* IV: 74).

Dimitrie Cantemir: “Poppy juice and other narcotics”

Dimitrie Cantemir lived for 17 years of his life in Istanbul, in the period 1688-1705, first as a student and as a hostage, then as an ambassador (*capuchehaie*). He began his studies in 1691, at the age of 18, when he was left as a high-ranking soft hostage in Istanbul by his father Constantin, the ruler of Moldova (hence his name of Kantemiroglu, meaning “Cantemir’s son”). He managed to observe and study Turkish society in the smallest detail, including the mentalities and mores of the age. This fact is of particular importance. His works on the subject of the Turks and the Ottoman Empire were circulated throughout Europe (in Russian, Latin, and later in English, French, and German) and he was elected member of the Academy of Berlin (the Oriental Studies section) on July 11th, 1714.

Certain Turkish vices, among which the consumption of stimulants and narcotics (coffee, tobacco, opium/afyon/tiryak, and hashish), served as models for Romanian rulers, boyars, and town dwellers. “To drink Turkish coffee,” “to smoke like a Turk,” “to make a kyef” (i.e., to party), “to drink afyon,” “to walk about ‘*tiriachiu*’” (i.e., as if having inhaled opium), etc. are phrases that have entered into common usage in Romanian.

To go into more detail, the first attestation of coffee in Romanian culture occurs in a story linked with the High Porte and narrated by Ion Neculce in *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* [*The Chronicles of the Land of Moldavia*]. Around the year 1505, Logothete Tăutu, who was, the chronicler recounts, despatched by Bogdan-vodă with an embassy to the Turks, had no idea how to drink the *cahfê* offered by the vizier of Istanbul. He raised his *cahfê*, believing it to be a kind of spirit, and went, “Long live the Emperor and the Vizier!” Logothete Tăutu burnt himself with the coffee, “drinking up the handleless cup, the way you would another drink.”¹¹ Historian Aurel Decei questioned this piece of information from Neculce’s chronicle, claiming that coffee was introduced in Turkey about 50 years later, around the middle of the 16th

¹¹ Ion NECULCE, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* [*The Chronicles of the Land of Moldavia*], edited by Iorgu IORDAN, Minerva Press, Bucharest, 1980, p. 15.

century, during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.¹² However, be it true or untrue, Logothete Tăutu's story is meaningful.

The earliest documentary attestation of a *cahvene* (i.e., coffee house) in Bucharest dates from 1667, a few years before Dimitrie Cantemir's birth.¹³ The term *cahvene* comes, evidently, from Turkish, more specifically from the Turkish phrase *kahve-khané* ("the house of coffee").¹⁴ At the beginning of the 18th century, Cantemir mentioned the *kahveneas* of Istanbul, calling them "pubs where the *kofo* is brewed and sold." Wishing to bring out the excitatory qualities of coffee, the Moldavian Prince spoke of it possessing a "sober spirit". In the coffee houses of Istanbul "mostly soldiers gather" who, when sipping their coffees, "are imbued by a sober spirit."¹⁵

Immediately succeeding Dimitrie Cantemir's second reign (1710-1711), the Phanariote regime was established in Moldavia (1711) and Walachia (1716) and was to endure for over a century. In this "long century," an extremely important epoch that would leave its mark on Romania's subsequent evolution, the Phanariote rulers and boyars inculcated mentalities and mores that were long-lasting. Some, indeed, have survived to this day. The consumption of excitants and narcotics was one of the Turkish vices that in this precise age became more deep-rooted in the Romanian territories. Thus, one of the reasons why Cantemir's works concerning the history and the civilization of the Turks are of capital importance is the fact that they precede (and shed light on) the Phanariote age of the Romanian principalities.

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Since he was himself an alcoholic, according to what the Moldavian Prince Dimitrie Cantemir wrote in *Istoria Imperiului Otoman* [*The History of the Ottoman Empire*], Sultan Murad issued in 1633 "a public edict in which he gave license to sell and drink wine to all people, irrespective of their estate or condition." This occurred despite the fact

¹² Aurel DECEI, "Logofătul Tăutu nu a băut cafea" ["Logothete Tăutu Did Not Drink Coffee"], in *Magazin istoric* [*The Historical Review*] VI (1972), no. 6 (63), pp. 57-61.

¹³ G. I. IONESCU-GION, *Istoria Bucureștilor* [*The History of Bucharest*], first edition in 1899, second edition, Gh. M. Speteanu Cultural Foundation, Bucharest, 1998, p. 630.

¹⁴ George POTRA, *Din Bucureștii de ieri* [*From Yesterday's Bucharest*], The Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, vol. I, p. 386 sq.

¹⁵ Dimitrie CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhamedane* [*The System of the Muhammedan Religion*], edited by Virgil CÂNDEA, Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, p. 227.

that wine drinking “is counter to the Muhammedan law.” “Still, as much as he was a lover of wine, [the sultan] was a bitter enemy of opium and tobacco, and for that reason he put a stop to the use of both those substances under penalty of death. And what is more, he himself with his own hand killed several individuals, whom he spied either eating opium or smoking or selling tobacco.”¹⁶ It is claimed that during this prohibition the sultan “killed as many as 14,000 [users of opium and tobacco] throughout his empire [...], among which were many generals and men in the highest positions.”¹⁷

“There is a well-praised verse of Sultan Murad’s,” Cantemir continues, “who, being truly the head of all drunkards and mocking at those who eat poppy juice and smoke tobacco [...], says the following: *Ehlikeif olmak istersen bade nuş ol, bok ieme*, ‘If you want to be a worshipper of mirth, drink wine, but don’t eat filth [Rus. *kal*].’” Next, to make himself perfectly understood, Cantemir offered an explanation: “By filth [Rus. *kal*], he understood poppy juice and other stupefying confectionery.”¹⁸ Cantemir wrote this work in Russian, yet he also transcribed Sultan Murad’s advice in the original Turkish. In fact, both *kal* in Russian and *bok* in Turkish mean one thing, “excrement, faeces.” Virgil Cândeă translated the term into Romanian using a euphemism: “filth.” Cantemir reproduced the advice uttered by Sultan Murad one more time in another work of his, *The History of the Ottoman Empire*, written in the Latin language. In 1876, Iosif Hodoşiu rendered a more accurate translation: “When you wish to be of good cheer, drink wine, and do not eat shit.”¹⁹ It is interesting that, even today, the term “shit,” beside the known meaning, is used in slang (not only in English but also in French, *merde*) to refer to marijuana, hashish, etc., while being also “a generic name given to drugs.”²⁰

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¹⁶ Dimitrie CANTEMIR, *Istoria Imperiului Ottomanu. Crescerea și scăderea lui [The History of the Ottoman Empire. Its Rise and Fall]*, Romanian translation by Dr. Iosif HODOȘIU, Bucharest, 1876, pp. 371, 376-7.

¹⁷ D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhammedane*, 1987, p. 389; D. CANTEMIR, *Istoria Imperiului Ottomanu*, 1876, p. 378.

¹⁸ D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhammedane*, 1987, p. 389.

¹⁹ D. CANTEMIR, *Istoria Imperiului Ottomanu*, 1876, p. 378.

²⁰ George VOLCEANOV, Ana-Dolores DOCA, *Dicționar de argou al limbii engleze [Dictionary of English Slang]*, Nemira Press, Bucharest, 1995, p. 205, and Constantin FROSIN, *Dicționar de argou francez-român [French-Romanian Slang Dictionary]*, Nemira Press, Bucharest, 1996, p. 101.

Cantemir also wrote about the way in which dervishes administered opium (poppy juice) on themselves. Especially the dervishes of the *Mevlevi* order had that practice: “And those [dervishes of the *Mevlevi* order] who abstain from wine largely use poppy juice [Rus. *makovâi sok*] and another mixture, composed of several things (which they call *berci*), which first makes them become drowsy, and later they feel a kind of joy and an enlivening of the spirit.”²¹ About the word *berci*, we may surmise that Dimitrie Cantemir misspelled the Turkish-Arabic term that designates cannabis and hashish: *bangh*, *banj*, *bandj*, or *bendj*.²² It is probable that the term *bendj* became *benci* and was then corrupted into *berci*. Being extracted from cannabis, the hashish is also called *ibnat al-qunbus* in Arabic, meaning the “the daughter of the cannabis plant.”²³

Much of the information that Cantemir delivered was from the vantage point of an eyewitness, as was the case of the following narrative about an opium-eating dervish in the age of Sultan Mustafa II (1693-1703), a period when the Moldavian scholar lived in Istanbul: “I saw with my own eyes in the days of Mustafa the Sultan a dervish [...] who ate 60 *drams*²⁴ of the choicest poppy juice in one gulp.” The dervish would fall into a state of “very deep silence, like that of a corpse” and “would dismally sit that way for three hours, motionless and senseless, head drooping down to his chest.” “After that, like woken from a slumber, [the dervish] would commence a wondrous word of wisdom, or very pleasant verses (which where he lives are called *ghazal*) about love (meaning divine love, stands to reason), or else an unheard-of story, full of delight and helpful, a speech that lasted for longer than four hours.”

Like many writers speaking of the effects of various narcotics, Cantemir took pains to convince his readers that intoxication with “poppy juice” did not produce “any insanity” or other disorders of the mind that were characteristic of the inebriation by means of alcoholic drinks. Quite the opposite, every word uttered by the opium eater was “clear and fruitful.” “You could never have descried any insanity or babble nor find [...] a word that was not clear and fruitful, in as much as its import carried great weight and its lore was deep.”²⁵ The Romanian chronicler Ioan

²¹ D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhammedane*, 1987, p. 463.

²² See also Ernst JÜNGER, *Aproximări. Droguri și extaz [Drugs and Ecstasy]*, translated by Maria-Magdalena ANGHELESCU, postscript by Rodica BINDER, Univers Press, Bucharest, 2000, p. 246.

²³ Marcus BOON, *The Road of Excess. A History of Writers on Drugs*, Harvard University Press, London-Cambridge, MA, 2002, p. 126.

²⁴ Unit of mass measurement equal to 3.23 g in Moldavia; 60 *drams* are equivalent to 193.9 g or 6.84 oz (translator’s note).

²⁵ D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhammedane*, 1987, p. 389, 463.

Canta attempted to emphasize the same apparent paradox with reference to the opium-eater who was also a ruler around mid-18th century, Constantin Racoviță-Cehan. The Moldavian ruler “ate afyon in the morning and in the afternoon,” says the chronicler, and yet “he pursued his affairs befittingly.”²⁶

Cantemir’s testimonies about the dealings of dervishes from Turkey with opium at the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th are extremely precious. All the more so as they represent facts offered by an extremely scrupulous eye witness, and not simply peddled rumours read or heard. The issue is a controversial one. Even a specialist in the history of narcotics use, such as Ernst Jünger, had different opinions in this matter. Jünger set up a scale of the acceptability of drugs in various epochs and cultural areas: from “absolute interdiction” to “limitation”, and from “tolerance” to “favouring the joys of ecstasy.” Dervishes would fit into the first category. According to Jünger, dervishes “fall into ecstatic states,” yet “*only* through movement,” through dance, through the giddiness induced by the whirling dance. “From the earliest times, dance proved to be a means [...] of ‘escaping from human nature.’”²⁷

Jünger is right about this last point. Ritual dancing – consisting in the rotation of the body, with the right foot serving as a pivot – and rhythmical music play a major part in the state of ecstasy that dervishes induced on themselves. Some commentators equate and associate these ritual elements (and many others) with the dance and percussion practiced by the shamans of proto-Turkic tribes.²⁸

Cantemir, too, speaks of the “escaping from human nature” practiced by whirling dervishes belonging to various sects. From his narration can be gathered that he spent a great deal of time in their company, “Full often have I watched the exertion of these dervishes while I was in Constantinople and, although I have never espied them to have rotated for more than six hours, I have been thoroughly informed that a great many of them continue this exceedingly tiring and demanding dance for twenty-four hours at a stretch, without getting any rest whatsoever.” After numerous hours of head-spinning dance, dervishes, “as if seized by an unclean spirit, collapse to the ground as good as dead.”²⁹ Or, in a different formulation in another place, “falling to the ground, [the

²⁶ B. P. HASDEU, *Etymologicum Magnum Romaniae*, Minerva, Bucharest, 1972, vol. I, p. 325.

²⁷ E. JÜNGER, *Aproximări. Droguri și extaz*, 2000, pp. 67-8.

²⁸ Luminița MUNTEANU, *Derviși sub zodia semilunei: Istoria unei confrerii mistice și a patimilor sale [Dervishes under the Sign of the Crescent: The History of a Mystical Brotherhood and of Its Passions]*, Kriterion Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2005, pp. 250-4.

²⁹ D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhammedane*, 1987, p. 475.

whirling dervishes] begin to foam like those seized by devils and remain there for a long time as if they have taken leave of their senses.” In this state of ecstasy, continues Cantemir, dervishes “can see God as he is in Himself” and “have a foretaste and a foreperception of the happiness of the age, be it this age or the future age.”³⁰



III. 1. Ritual dance of Mevlevi whirling dervishes. Turkish miniature, middle of the 17th century. From D. CANTEMIR, *op. cit.*, 1987, ill. 31.

The ecstatic role of dancing is beyond question, but this does not necessarily mean that dervishes did not also resort to certain drugs (this is yet another resemblance between them and Asian shamans). In this respect, Cantemir is categorical, yet there are more arguments to be brought. An extremely important Anatolian mystical poet, Kaygusuz Sultân Abdâl (the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th), claimed by the tradition of the *Bektaşî* dervishes (he wrote, for instance, the *Bûdalânâme*, *The Book of the Wondering Dervish*), was a dedicated user of opium. It is probable that the very name of the poet has its origin in this vice. The compound *kaygusuz* (“carefree”) was used by the *Bektaşî* dervishes to refer to opium.³¹

Evidently, it was not only dervishes that used opium. In 1546, the French naturalist Pierre Belon claimed that most Turks, and especially those that went to war, “spend their last dime to buy themselves opium.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 505.

³¹ Luminița MUNTEANU, *Derviși sub zodia semilunei*, 2005, pp. 406-7.

As for military men, this situation endured until late. Even at the time of the Russo-Turkish War that ended with the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774), Turkish soldiers were distributed an opiate drink called *maslach*, which was supposed to boost their fighting spirit.³² Apart from dervishes, Cantemir also mentioned writers, “The Turks have no accomplished poet and, above all, no accomplished scholar who does not use that poppy juice, and more, who does not use it assiduously and to such a degree that a man who did not happen to see it himself might find improbable.”³³

Those were exactly the circles that Dimitrie Cantemir used to frequent around the year 1700 – poets, scholars, officers, dignitaries of all ranks, dervish monks, etc. Under these circumstances, it would be unrealistic to surmise that young Cantemir never tried “poppy juice” on himself, especially as in that age it was a customary thing to do, devoid of ethical connotations. As the English abbot Nicholas Tindal (1687–1774) assures us, in the morning Cantemir “would smoke his pipe and have a cup of coffee, according to the Turkish custom.”³⁴ It may well be that in the evenings Cantemir also behaved “according to the Turkish custom,” which is described by him thus, “After dinner and after they have drunk *café*, they smoke tobacco and pass their time in level-headed talks, as befits their rank and the time of day.”³⁵

According to accounts by his contemporaries (chroniclers Ion Neculce and especially Nicolae Costin), young Cantemir was often invited to feasts held by high Turkish dignitaries (*aghas*) seeing that he was an intelligent and cultured man, and also that he could play various instruments and sing Turkish songs. “Because he [Cantemir] was a clever man as well as well-versed in Turkish books, his name had by now spread by word of mouth all over Constantinople, so aghas invited him to their Turkish-style feasts on account of the friendship that he maintained with them. Others say that, since he knew [how to play] the *tanbur* [a kind of lute] well, the aghas would call him to feasts for the songs” (Nicolae Costin, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei – The Chronicles of the Land of Moldavia*). Or, evidently, from “their Turkish-style feasts” the *afyon* could not be lacking, just as later (after 1711) vodka could not be lacking

³² Eusèbe SALVERTE, *Des sciences occultes ou Essais sur la magie, les prodiges et les miracles*, Paris, 1843, p. 277.

³³ D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhammedane*, 1987, p. 463, see also p. 389.

³⁴ Paul CERNOVODEANU, “Démètre Cantemir vu par ses contemporains”, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* XI (1973), no. 4, pp. 637-56, here pp. 49-650; ap. E. CIURTIN, “Imaginea și memoria Asiei în cultura română (1675-1928)” [“The Image and Memory of Asia in Romanian Culture (1675-1928)”], *Archaeus. Studies in History of Religions* 2 (1998), fasc. 2–3 (1999), fasc. 1, p. 296.

³⁵ D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmirea religiei muhammedane*, 1987, p. 301.

from the Russian-style feasts held at the court of Peter the Great. Dimitrie Cantemir “could not hold his liquor well,” as Ion Neculce – who rather reluctantly followed the Prince into his Russian exile – does not fail to inform us in his own *Chronicles of the Land of Moldavia*.

Johann Martin Honigberger: opiotherapy and homeopathy

In the winter of 1940, Mircea Eliade published in *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* [*The Royal Foundation Review*] his well-known fantastic short story *Secretul doctorului Honigberger* [*Dr. Honigberger's Secret*]. The short story became famous throughout the world, owing to its translation into several languages. Yet few readers do know that at the origin of this fictional character lies a historical figure. Eliade himself mentioned Honigberger's name in a footnote of his 1936 book on yoga.³⁶ Eliade's description of Dr. Honigberger, the character in the short story, deserves to be reread, “But with difficulty could one elude the mysterious charm of this Saxon physician, a physician by virtue of his own sound decision, as officially he only held a pharmacist's diploma. Honigberger had spent more than half of his long life in the East. There was a time when he became the Court Physician, the pharmacist, the Head of Arsenal and the Admiral of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore. More than once did he amass considerable fortunes and lose them. A high-class adventurer, Honigberger, nonetheless, had never been a charlatan. He was a cultivated man in a great many sciences, both secular and occult, and his ethnographic, botanical, numismatic and art collections enriched many an illustrious museum.”³⁷

The inspiration for this text was, indeed, a Transylvanian Saxon, the physician and pharmacist Johann Martin Honigberger, born in Brașov (Kronstadt) in 1795. The city was then a part of the Habsburg Empire, yet when he said “home,” he meant “in Brașov, in Transylvania.” He died in

³⁶ Mircea ELIADE, *Yoga. Essai sur les origines de la mystique indienne*, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris & “King Carol II” Foundation for Literature and Art, Bucharest, 1936, p. 303 no. 3. A commentary on the significance of this reference in E. CIURTIN, “*Secretul doctorului Honigberger: verificarea in concreto*” [“*Dr. Honigberger's Secret: An in concreto Verification*”], in Johann Martin HONIGBERGER, *Treizeci și cinci de ani în Orient* [*Thirty-Five Years in the East*], foreword by Arion ROȘU, edited by (with an introductory study, notes, addenda and postscript) E. CIURTIN, translated by E. CIURTIN, Ciprian LUPU and Ana LUPAȘCU, Polirom Press, Iași, 2004, pp. 366-8, 405, 438.

³⁷ Mircea ELIADE, *La țigănci și alte povestiri* [*With the Gypsy Girls and Other Short Stories*], introductory study by Sorin ALEXANDRESCU, The Literary Publishing House, Bucharest, 1969, p. 248 sq.

1869, in Transylvania – “my native country,” in the town of Braşov – “my dear and well-beloved native town.” Unfortunately, no street or square in that town bears the name of the great orientalist. However, the house that he lived in, close to the Council Square (*Piaţa Sfatului*) in Braşov, today hosts a Coffee House called, not by a mere coincidence, *Orient Café*.

After graduating from Johannes Honterus High School in his native town, young Honigberger was apprenticed first to an apothecary in Braşov, then to another in Bistriţa. There are documents that confirm that psychotropic remedies were used by apothecaries in large Transylvanian towns (Cluj, Braşov, Sibiu, Bistriţa, etc.) since as early as the 16th century. This particularly refers to *cannabis* and *opium* (usually presented in the form of a *theriac*).

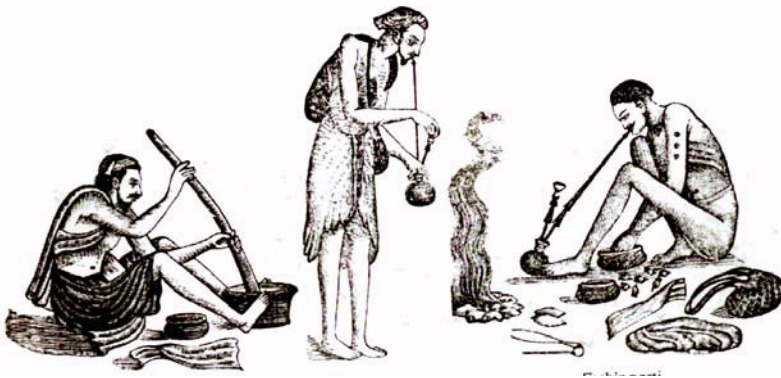
“A high-class adventurer,” but not a “charlatan” (as Eliade described him in the short story), Honigberger also became a great orientalist, a botanist (he also composed a *Materia Medica*), an archaeologist, and a collector of antiquities. For five decades, this “Transylvanian pilgrim” made five journeys to India, three in Europe and one to Africa. In 1815, when he was 20 years old, Honigberger crossed Bucovina, Moldavia and Walahia, where he remained “for a whole year” (among many other languages, he also spoke Romanian), on his way to the Near East (Istanbul, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Baghdad, etc.); later on, in 1829 (exactly one century before Mircea Eliade), he arrived in India, in the city of Lahore. For four years he was the principal physician at the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839). Honigberger published the memoirs of his journeys to Asia in German (Vienna, 1851) and in English (London, 1852, reprinted in 1905), under the title *Thirty-Five Years in the East*. The work was recently reprinted in a very good Romanian version under the editorship of E. Ciurtin.³⁸

Honigberger was a physician who applied homeopathic principles in an age when the discipline was in its infancy. “Only small doses can produce a real medical effect,” thus goes one of the principles phrased by pharmacist Honigberger, who in 1835 visited Samuel Hahnemann, the “father of homeopathy”, in Paris. Honigberger’s native Transylvania was not a *white area* on the map for the homeopathic physician Hahnemann. In the period 1777-1779, he had lived in Sibiu (Hermannstadt), as a librarian and a personal physician of Baron Samuel von Brukenthal.

In addition, apothecary Honigberger from Braşov was a resolute opiotherapist. He considered opium to be a quasi-universal remedy. “Opium is in Europe, as in India,” he wrote in 1839, “one of the most

³⁸ J. M. HONIGBERGER, *Treizeci și cinci de ani în Orient*, 2004.

important means of healing.” His model in this matter was the English physician Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689), nicknamed *Opiophilos* because he had tried to absolutise opiotherapy: *Nolem esse medicus sine opio*. Honigberger maintained that Dr. Sydenham’s memory “ought to be revered” and protected by those who had stigmatized him, calling him a “charlatan and a murderer.”³⁹



III. 2: From left to right: an Indian ascetic preparing an extract of *Cannabis indica* (*bhanga*); an Indian Muslim smoking *hashish* (*churrus*) from a special pipe (*hooka*); a fakir smoking opium from a *hooka* and preparing a poppyseed extract (Lahore, about 1850). Engravings from *Thirty-Five Years in the East* (London, 1852) by J. M. HONIGBERGER (Romanian ed. *Treizeci și cinci de ani în Orient*, ed. by E. Ciurtin, Iași, Polirom Press, 2004, p. 292).

In Istanbul, Damasc, Bagdad, Kabul or Lahore, Honigberger applied himself attentively to the study of psychotropic remedies and substances used by Easterners (cannabis, hashish, opium, *Datura stramonium*, as well as alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea). Some of those he adopted and used in his medical practices. Others he described in his works, where he also printed engravings representing fakirs preparing and administering on themselves hashish (*churrus*), hemp extract, poppy infusion, etc.

Moreover, in the period 1838-1841, he published in Gheorghe Asachi’s Iași publications – *Albina românească* [*The Romanian Bee*] and

³⁹ J. M. HONIGBERGER, *Treizeci și cinci de ani în Orient*, 2004, pp. 108-9, 180, 182, 292, 308.

Icoana lumii [*The Image of the World*] – articles popularising various aspects of Eastern ethnography. He contributed in this manner to the shaping of Asia's image in the collective consciousness of the Romanians, in an epoch when such information was quite scanty. Some of the articles were not signed, and others were signed only in initials: I.H. (probably standing for "Ioan Honigberger"). Their paternity was established (in a few cases merely assumed) by Arion Roșu and E. Ciurtin. Among the articles published in Iași there were texts about Asian botany as well as certain psychotropic plants, such as coffee ("Kafeoa," 1840) and tobacco ("Tiutiunul seu tabacul", 1841 or "Fumarea tiutiunului [n statele unite de Nord-America]" – "Tobacco Smoking in the United States of North America", 1841), on the opium trade in China ("Hina," 1840) etc.⁴⁰



III. 3. *Attar*, an Indian druggist. From J. M. HONIGBERGER, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 291.

⁴⁰ E. CIURTIN, "Imaginea și memoria Asiei," loc. cit., pp. 316-7, 425-6, and J. M. HONIGBERGER, *Treizeci și cinci de ani în Orient*, 2004, p. 361.

*Mircea Eliade: opium and cannabis*¹

In the spring of 1929, Eliade was 22 years old and he was living in Calcutta, lodged at Mrs Gwyn Perris's boarding house of 82 Ripon Street. In a page of his *Memoirs* referring to that period, Eliade wrote:

“It had been a weird week, in which I had encountered all kinds of strangers, male and female [...]. Once, being in just such a group, I entered a house in *Chinatown*, where one could smoke opium for a modest sum. I discovered that even Mr Perris indulged in this whim on occasion. [...] We were on our way home, and it was near dawn. In the car, one of the girls [...] warned me once more that I should by no means disclose where I had been, but say only that I partied with friends in a bar in *China Town*. My memories were blurry enough as it was. I could not always distinguish what had really happened to me from what I imagined it had [...]. I was exhausted, I could feel my head drooping, and my eyelids were as heavy as lead. [...] I was trying to persuade them [the hosts] that my exhaustion was due to a glass of whisky that I had drunk in one gulp. It might have been true, but this did not explain the semi-unconscious and fanciful state in which I was for the entire time almost. I felt that something had happened to me, but I could not remember exactly what it was.”²

From the text above it can be inferred that the historian of religions had experienced the intoxication with opium, even if the fact is not explicitly declared. In the monograph dedicated to Mircea Eliade, when he refers to this episode, Ioan Petru Culianu sums up the “weird week” in one sentence: “Eliade took part in the irresponsible nocturnal escapades initiated by a German fellow [?], a connoisseur of the indigenous districts [of Calcutta].”³ Similarly, Mac Linscott Ricketts avoids entering into any details concerning the experiences of the young

¹ Enriched version of a subchapter of Andrei OIȘTEANU's study “Mircea Eliade, from Opium and Cannabis to Amphetamines”, *Euresis. Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires et culturelles*, n.s., no. 3-4 (autumn-winter 2007), pp. 169-81, which discusses all known experiences with narcotics from Eliade's life and work.

² See also Mircea ELIADE, *Autobiography Vol. I: 1907-1937, Journey East, Journey West*, Translated by Mac Linscott RICKETTS, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1981, p. 166. First edition: *Mémoire I (1907-1937). Les promesses de l'équinoxe*, Gallimard, Paris, 1980.

³ Ioan Petru CULIANU, *Mircea Eliade*, third edition [revised and amended], translated by Florin Chirișescu and Dan Petrescu, with a letter from Mircea Eliade and a postface by Sorin Antohi, Polirom Press, Iași, 2004, p. 39.

Romanian scholar in the Chinese district of Calcutta: “For a week perhaps, he lived in a daze, subject to hallucinations and fantasies.”⁴

Evidently, opium was to be found in Calcutta not only in *Chinatown* establishments, but also in the Indian quarters. Such a quarter was located in the immediate vicinity of the Anglo-Indian district where Mircea Eliade lived.⁵ Both the house of his master, Surendranth Dasgupta (Maitreyi’s father) and the boarding house of the Anglo-Indian Perris family were located in this district. As Eliade wrote in his short story *Nopti la Serampore* (*Nights at Serampore*, 1940),

I lived then in Ripon Street, in the southern part of the town, quite close to the wholly Indian district. I enjoyed leaving home immediately after dinner, and I would wander through those narrow lanes, amidst walls overpowered by flowering shrubs, until I left behind the last Anglo-Indian villas and entered the labyrinth of indigenous huts, where life is never interrupted.

Eliade continues his description of the “wholly Indian district” resorting to his olfactory memory, “The smell of the *hookah* and the sweetish smoke of opium were joined with those unforgettable scents of Indian quarters.”⁶

In the matter of narcotics consumption, Mircea Eliade kept his reserve rather well in the memoirs and diaries he published in his mature years, yet we find him much franker in the diary and the quasi-autobiographical novel that he wrote and published in his youth. “Authenticism” was one of the typical traits of Eliade’s writing dating from the interwar period. Quite often, bravado was an ingredient too. Also, life experiences often took precedence over intellectual ones – a precept of the form of existentialism and *trăirist* philosophy (a variant of *Lebensphilosophie*) that young Eliade and his generation embraced.

In his Indian diary, *Şantier* (*Work in progress* – 1935), Eliade describes a few of his experiences with opium dating from the Indian period, especially from the year 1929. At the beginning of that year, freshly arrived in Calcutta, the young PhD student wrote, “I felt a mad urge to leave the books and smoke opium. Yet it was not because of the books. I would have come back to them, later. What I stood in danger of losing were not my spiritual functions – but their significance.” Opium is perceived by the young scholar not as an alternative to study, but as an adjuvant for it. In another note in his diary, at the end of 1929, Eliade

⁴ Mac Linscott RICKETTS, *Mircea Eliade: the Romanian Roots (1907-1945)*, vol. I (1907-1933), Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p. 384.

⁵ In October 2007 I had the opportunity to visit the Calcutta houses where Mircea Eliade lived in the period 1929-1931 (cf. illustration 4).

⁶ M. ELIADE, *La țiğănci și alte povestiri*, 1969, p. 310.

recounts an erotic scene that he experienced in an opium smoking room in Calcutta's *Chinatown*, after paying "in advance" for his dose of the narcotic. Around the autumn of 1931, before leaving India, Eliade recalls his erotic-narcotic exploits of 1929, "The extraordinary idea that I formed of myself for dining at *Nanking*, in the midst of *Chinatown*, and for being able to smoke, if I wanted, all the opium I could have asked for!"⁷ It is ironical that the treaty that ended the "First Opium War" (1839-1842) between the British and the Chinese was signed precisely in the Chinese town of Nanking.



III. 4: The house of the former boarding house owned by Mrs Gwyn Perris, 82 Ripon Street, Calcutta, where Mircea Eliade lived in 1929 and 1931

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After the erotic-narcotic exploits experienced in Calcutta's *Chinatown*, Eliade began to write at his novel *Isabel și apele diavolului* [*Isabel and the Devil's Waters*]. Published in 1930, the novel was written in the period April-August 1929, after the experiences mentioned above and, to some extent, because of them. "In order to stop myself from thinking, I kept writing away at *Isabel and the Devil's Waters*," Eliade

⁷ M. ELIADE, *Șantier. Roman indirect* [*Work in Progress. An Indirect Novel*], Cugetarea, Bucharest, 1935, pp. 30, 145, 238.

notes in his *Memoirs*. “I knew the subject very vaguely. It was about some of my experiences in India.”⁸ The novel is evidently one with many autobiographical elements. In this particular context, I am interested mostly in two characters: (1) The “Doctor,” the narrator – an *alter ego* of Eliade’s navigating the “devil’s waters,” and (2) “Miss Lucy Roth,” who impersonated Stella Kramrisch – a Viennese researcher some ten years older than Eliade, who taught History of Oriental Art. Mircea Eliade had met her in January 1929, at the University of Calcutta, through the agency of his teacher, Surendranath Dasgupta. In the novel, the Doctor and Lucy Roth meet again, coincidentally, at the famous restaurant of ill repute *Nanking*. “I spent [in *Nanking*] evenings of frivolous and sincere joy, in the sedate rooms, surrounded by Hindu servants and Chinese mores. I knew the patron and I knew that Mr Chen, the manager, was procuring either opium or Shanghai girls to those accepted.” While Lucy “loved drugs and wine,” the Doctor abhorred the “visions sprung out of vicious fumes.” “A dream produced by drugs,” the Doctor said, “is repulsive, disgusting. To me, opium, imagination through intoxication or thorough the exaltation of the senses are base mystifications, mediocre attempts at mirroring a pure world and at transmitting it to the mind by inflicting violence on the cells.” Eventually, the two arrive at Lucy’s house (a genuine museum of Oriental art), when they smoke opium again, this time from a collection pipe. Under the influence of the narcotic, Lucy sexually seduces the Doctor. “Opium intensifies the sensuality of women,” she explains to him later, “and suppresses that of men.”⁹

In 1985, 55 years after Eliade had published the novel *Isabel and the Devil’s Waters* (1930), Mac Linscott Ricketts wrote to Dr. Stella Kramrisch (the model of the quasi-fictive character Miss Lucy Roth). Among other things, she declared the following to Linscott Ricketts: “[n]ever in my life did I drink alcohol or consume any narcotic drug (nor did I smoke tobacco, opium or Hashish).”¹⁰ We probably shall never know whether Mircea Eliade left his novelistic imagination fly at will (as he probably did in Maitreyi’s case as well), or, after several decades, Stella Kramrisch merely wanted to defend her honour. However, one must note Stella Kramrisch’s interest in the study of *entheogenic drugs*, or else those drugs that cause *enthousiasmos*, the “god within,” the divine inspiration, in a human. Those are the narcotics that make a human be

⁸ M. ELIADE, *Memorii*, 1991, vol. I (1907-1960), p. 184.

⁹ M. ELIADE, *Isabel și apele diavolului [Isabel and the Devil’s Waters]*, critical edition by Mihai DASCĂL, in *Opere complete [Complete Works]* vol. I, Minerva Press, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 80-96.

¹⁰ I thank my friend Mac Linscott Ricketts for sending me the content of the letter signed by Stella Kramrisch on January 31, 1985.

“inhabited by a god.” A year after sending the letter discussed above, at the age of 90 years old, Stella Kramrisch published together with three other researchers a book on precisely these entheogenic plants, called *Persephone's Quest: Entheogens and the Origins of Religion* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1986).¹¹

Finally, it is worthy of mention that, in the spring of 1944, during a stay in Lisbon, Eliade reread his book *Isabel and the Devil's Waters*, “in order to revise it and prepare a new edition.” The author reread his book so enthusiastically that he forgot to revise it. After 15 years, he found it “intense, dramatic, and at the same time original.” The erotico-narcotic episodes described above did not seem to bother him in any way. “The only exasperating thing” in the whole volume he found to be “a homosexual episode.”¹²

*

“The experience of narcotics completes the picture of [erotic] sensations” – this is how George Călinescu summarised this epical episode. Mihail Sebastian, too, a friend of the author's, wrote a comment on the novel *Isabel and the Devil's Waters*, surprised by the “violent sincerity of Mircea Eliade's book.” The story of the book, including the “overpowering orgies in Miss Roth's house,” may be considered “befuddled and far-fetched,” yet in fact, Sebastian concludes, it is “entirely possible” (*Cuvântul*, May 31, 1930).

In the winter of 1930-1931, when Eliade withdrew into the *āśramas* in the vicinity of the town of Rishikesh, he served his apprenticeship, among others, with “a Nepalese Brahmacāri” – a monk

¹¹ The co-authors of the book (Gordon R. Wasson, Carl Ruck, and Jonathan Ott) are well-known figures in the field that studies the role played by narcotics in the history of religions. See especially Gordon R. WASSON, *Soma: The Divine Mushroom of Immortality*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, New York, 1968; Gordon R. WASSON, Carl RUCK, Albert HOFMANN, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysterries*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, New York, 1978; and Jonathan OTT, *Pharmactheon: Entheogenic Drugs, Their Plant Sources and History*, Natural Products, Kennewick, Washington, 1993. [Stella Kramrisch's contribution was firstly published as “Mahāvīra vessel and the plant pūtika,” *JAOS* 95 (1975), no. 2, pp. 222-235.]

¹² M. ELIADE, *Jurnalul portughez și alte scrieri [The Portuguese Diary and Other Writings]*, edited by Sorin ALEXANDRESCU, forewords, notes and translations by Sorin ALEXANDRESCU, Florin ȚURCANU, and Mihai ZAMFIR, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2006, vol. I, pp. 236-7. Cf. M. ELIADE, *Diario portugués (1941-1945)*, traducción del rumano de Joaquín GARRIGÓS, Barcelona, Editorial Kairós, 2001, pp. 126-127.

who “tended and picked medicinal plants.” Recalling this episode in his volume of *Memoirs*, Eliade spoke mostly of “Brahma’s Leaf,” a plant “known for thousands of years in Āyurveda pharmacopoeia,” renown “for its fortifying qualities” and used “for the treatment of fatigue.”¹³ On this occasion, the historian of religions wrote and sent for publication in Cluj, to Valeriu Bologa, an article concerning certain items of ancient Indian botanical lore, which came out immediately, in the autumn of 1931. Among other things, Eliade quotes from the book of the 10th-century physician Abū Manṣūr. Several psychotropic plants are mentioned in this treatise of Irano-Indian pharmacology: *Atropa belladonna* and *Cannabis indica* (*bhāng*, Sk. *baṅga*, Arabic *banj*). *Bhāng* is a “plant whose seeds,” Eliade comments, “are used as a substitute for opium.”¹⁴

What he dared not recount in his volume of *Memoirs* (published in his old age), namely his own experience with narcotics, he did in his Indian travelogue (published in his young age). On this occasion, Eliade described several plants with medicinal and hallucinogenic properties from the garden of the Nepalese brahmacārī, including “a species of *cannabis* that causes an intoxication similar to opium.” “Many of the plants I picked,” confesses Eliade, “I experimented either personally, or in the hospital of Lakṣmanjula.” Among other psychotropic plants, close to the Nepalese recluse’s hut grew several “*bhāng* bushes” (*Cannabis indica*), “whose leaves,” Eliade writes, “boiled or smoked in a wooden *hookah* [a kind of *narghile*] induce a state of torpor much praised by the *sādhus*, for it is said to facilitate mental concentration and to clarify meditation.”

These pages in the volume *India* are also highly interesting in virtue of the fact that Eliade tried to describe there (with uncertain language) the mental states that he had experienced during narcosis:

“Once I smoked *bhāng* and I recall that I had a vertiginous night, for the sense of space had shifted and I felt so light that whenever I wanted to turn on one side, I would fall from the bed. [...] [The plant] *bhāng* has a curious quality to focus and to deepen the thought, any thought that dominates consciousness at the moment of intoxication. Certainly, if it is a religious thought – as it is assumed to be – the meditation is a perfect one. I remember, nonetheless, that I had had that evening a literary discussion

¹³ M. ELIADE, *Memorii*, 1991, vol. I (1907-1960), pp. 209-10. This might have been the “Brahma-manduki” (or “Gotu kola”, or Indian pennywort).

¹⁴ M. ELIADE, “Cunoștințe botanice în vechea Indie. Cu o notă introductivă asupra migrației plantelor indiene în Iran și China” [“Botanical Lore from Ancient India. With an introductory note on the migration of Indian plants into Iran and China”], published in the *Bulletin of the Science Society of Cluj* 6 (1931), pp. 221-237.

with a visitor of the *āśram* and that that night was for me riddled with nightmares [...].”¹⁵

In the period 1930-1932, in Calcutta, Rishikesh and Bucharest, Eliade prepared his doctoral thesis. He presented this thesis, entitled *The Psychology of Indian Meditation. Studies on Yoga* [*Psihologia meditației indiene. Studii despre Yoga*], in 1933, at the University of Bucharest, and published it in French in 1936. A few paragraphs are dedicated there to the way in which Indian ascetics used psychotropic plants:

“the majority of the yogi and the *sannyāsis* have been using plant drugs for centuries, in the form of boiled leaves, roots, narcotics – either for precipitating a dubious trance, or for revigorating the nervous system. In Himalayan monasteries, plant drugs are still in use today, a sizable part of which make up the Indian folk pharmacopoeia.”¹⁶

When living in Calcutta, at the pension owned by the Anglo-Indian family Perris, Eliade had communicated his desire of purchasing himself a special pipe for smoking opium. His landlady from Calcutta did find one for him, but only after he left for Romania at the end of 1931. On January 7, 1932, Mrs Gwyn Perris wrote to Eliade in Bucharest, “She [a friend] wants to sell the curiosa, a prayer wheel and what you wanted, the opium pipe; so if you want them let’s know and I will let you know the price and will send them on to you [to Bucharest].”¹⁷ We shall never know whether Eliade ever received the opium pipe sent to him from Calcutta to Bucharest.

Finally, in a letter dating from the autumn of 1936, Mircea Eliade attempts to assuage Emil Cioran’s depression by telling him of his own melancholia. “Your sadness distresses me. Truth be told, I have been no better; of late, I have been consumed with melancholia and tempted by

¹⁵ M. ELIADE, *India*, edited and prefaced by M. Handoca, Editura pentru Turism, Bucharest, 1991, pp.121-2.

¹⁶ M. ELIADE, *Psihologia meditației indiene. Studii despre Yoga* [*The Psychology of Indian Meditation. Studies on Yoga*], edition by Constantin POPESCU-CADEM, “Jurnalul literar” Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, p. 179. The work was subsequently published in French, in a considerably larger form, in 1936 (cf. *supra* n. 36).

¹⁷ *Mircea Eliade și corespondenții săi* [*Mircea Eliade and His Correspondents*], vol. III (K-P), edition coordinated, notes and index by M. HANDOCA, the National Foundation for Science and Art, George Călinescu Institute of Literary History and Theory (Romanian Academy), Bucharest, 2003, p. 280. A previous publication of the entire correspondence with Perris’ circle in Calcutta owed to M. DASCĂL (editor) can be found in the volume M. ELIADE, *Isabel și apele diavolului*, 1994, pp. 139-58.

tragedy. If only you knew what foolish things I am capable of doing sometimes! [...] I cannot tell you what and how. May God spare me from losing my mind in the end.” “But what has got into you?” Eliade continues his letter. And, half jokingly, half not, he indicates a remedy: “Do you not have some opium at hand?”¹⁸

¹⁸ M. ELIADE, *Europa, Asia, America... Corespondență [Europe, Asia, America... Correspondence]*, Vol. I (A-H), edition by M. HANDOCA, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1999, p. 155.