

AN UNKNOWN CANTEMIR: THE KABBALIST. AN ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT A SPIRITUAL MAPPING

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Abstract. Until now no researcher, Romanian or foreign, had the curiosity to explore an ‘alternative’ hypothesis to the Cantemirian historiography tradition, especially the ideas, the symbols of Kabala, diffuse, discrete in the work of the encyclopedic writer, of the novelist, of the philosopher and theologian who was Cantemir. Our study, *An Unknown Cantemir: The Kabbalist. An Attempt to Reconstruct a Spiritual Mapping*, relies on indirect sources, but its central argument is solid: the interpretations and the contemporary scholars of Cantemir are inscribed in a secret universe of the Kabala, of alchemy, of secrets’ initiation. It is possible that the Prince read in Latin or in Arab the texts of the great Kabala scholars, Jews or Arab, and especially the Italians. He knew van Helmont and through him Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, the friend of Leibniz, and he knew Ficin and Mirandolle. Within the Russian circles they studied Kabala; they practiced mason rituals, Cantemir himself was an initiate encyclopedic scholar, and thus, complete. Evaluating several cultural directions and hypotheses, this study proposes to sketchily map the Cantemirian spirit, this way challenging the inertia of the critical tradition.

Keywords: *Kabbala denudation, Adam Kadmon, Picatrix, Sefer Yezirah, Zohar.*

1. Cantemir was probably initiated into Kabbalah by studying the Neoplatonic philosophy; under the influence of van Helmont¹, who, in turn, was influenced by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth. Later, another reading could be Polish “cultural space”²: Lurianic ideas are also prominent in the 17th century messianic movement surrounding Sabbatei Zevi in Poland.³ But Leibniz seems to be the Secret Master of Cantemir. He was a radical gnostic, whose philosophy was profoundly influenced by the Lurianic Kabbalah. Isaac Luria (1534-72) was perhaps the greatest of Kabbalistic visionaries. Living and teaching in the community of Safed, which had produced such luminaries as Moses Cordovero

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¹ Dimitri (Demetrius) Cantemir, *Ioannis Baptistae Van Helmont physices universalis doctrine et christianae fidei congrua et necessaria philosophia*, Wallachia, 1709.

² G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1973, chapter I.

³ G. Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura românească*, ch. „Momentele introducerii culturii apusene, înainte de veacul al XIX-lea”. See also Petru Vaida, *Dimitrie Cantemir și umanismul*, Bucharest, 1972; Alexandru Duțu, *Umaniștii români și cultura europeană*, Bucharest, 1974.

and Joseph Karo, Luria developed an original theosophical system which will become the foundation for the Hasidic movement. Luria is known chiefly through the works of his disciples, most notably Chayyim Vital (1543-1620)⁴, his “Plato”. Returning to Leibniz, once this somewhat startling fact is understood, key areas of his philosophy, such as his concept of monads, defense of free will, and theodicy, can be seen in entirely new ways, which solve many of the problems that have perplexed scholars.⁵

2. Anne Becco is the first scholar in recent years to propose that Francis Mercury van Helmont had a decisive influence on Leibniz. She proves that Leibniz wrote van Helmont's last book, *Quaedam praemeditatae & consideratae Cogitationes super Quatuor priora Capita Libri Moysis, Genesis nominati...* (*Thoughts on Genesis*), which summarized van Helmont's kabbalistic ideas. On the other hand, Leibniz was interested in incorporating van Helmont's kabbalistic theories into his own philosophy.

3. Leibniz's interest in kabbalistic doctrine is revealed by the record he kept of his conversations with von Rosenroth. These notes on kabbalistic ideas will be modified and included in his later writings. Leibniz read over the *Kabbala denudata* with von Rosenroth and he has noted down some points he found most memorable: (i) that God is an indivisible point and creation occurs through the emanation of light; (ii) that there is a hierarchy of “creatures”, “souls” “intelligences” or “substantial forms” – these words are used interchangeably; (iii) that the inferior intelligences have “fallen” becoming “obscured” and experience “suffering”; (iv) that these fallen souls are enclosed in “husks” from which they will be slowly “extracted” through repeated “generation”; (v) that man is the “microcosm”; (vi) that after all “souls” are eventually “extracted” from their “husks” [i.e. perfected or saved], the millennium will begin; (vii) that all souls sinned in Adam and Eve, in other words that all souls were originally contained in Adam and Eve, and therefore shared original sin.⁶ One might imagine that science of kabbalah develops only according to some internal logic and that once its object is circumscribed, research is advanced by refining the methods and techniques used for studying it. Even in the natural sciences, the research object changes as research progresses. Moreover, certain types of research are slowed down or accelerated for strategic, ideological or cultural reasons. In the case of kabbalah, the relations between the observer and the object of his study are even more complex, since man is simultaneously the object and the subject of history. The observer and the observed are in a state of constant transformation as they react to each other. Consequently, the questions which the kabbalist poses to

⁴ G. Scholem, “Vital, Hayyim Ben Joseph” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 10, pp. 171-175 Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971.

⁵ A. P. Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1995.

⁶ Apud A. P. Coudert, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

kabbalah vary according to the times and the cultures concerned, because the subject and the object vary also. The questions which the kabbalist poses to kabbalah are in part the very questions which kabbalah itself has already posed to the kabbalist. That's why the Cantemirean kabbalistic ideas are more discrete and coded in *Sacrosanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago* and *Hieroglyphic History*. Why discreet? Since the late 18th century, Jewish circles in Western and Eastern Europe that adopted the cultural values of the Enlightenment, rejected the Kabbalah and engaged in a cultural struggle against its followers, mostly against the Eastern European Hasidic movement. Kabbalah was portrayed by members of the Jewish enlightenment movement, the *Haskala*, as an irrational, immoral and Oriental component of Judaism that should be purged in order to enable the restoration of an enlightened Judaism and its integration into modern Western Europe.⁷

4. The Leibnizian text reveals a deep interest and kabbalistic knowledge⁸: “M. Rosenroth has published different things without his name, such as the *Kabbala denudata*, part one and two. The first contains a procedure for dyeing fabric taken from some Jews and which should be excellent. The second part has several extracts from the *Zohar*, the *Zohar* published in Hebrew, with ancient glosses. Guillaume Prostel [Postel] began a translation of the *Zohar* from what someone sent him from Oxford, but he did not understand it sufficiently. He was deprived of the help we now have. At this moment the Jews are publishing a harmony of the Gospels. Luther's translation is printed in German characters. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are designated by the letters a, b, c, d. Whatever is found in one of them is marked by a single letter; whatever is found in several is marked by several letters. He has some fine oriental books, which are listed at the end of the *Kabbala denudata*. He has translated from English certain questions concerning the preexistence of souls, which contain opinions he does not accept. He is attending to the publication in German of the works of Helmont with certain commentaries. *The New Helicon* is a collection of sacred songs printed, I believe, at Frankfurt and which one can find at Nuremberg at Felsekern. I have read over the *Kabbala denudata* with him, from whom I have taken what follows: The infinite being consists in an indivisible point and the emanated light, or the sphere of activity, sends forth its light at its pleasure. The first born of the creatures, the Messiah, in as much as he is a creature, is called Adam Kadmon. He

⁷ Boaz Huss, “Admiration and Disgust: The Ambivalent Re-Canonization of the Zohar in the Modern Period” in *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. by Howard Kreisel (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006), pp. 205–207.

⁸ Milan Pavel Sesan, “Leibniz und Cantemir”, Wiesbaden 1970 in *Studia Leibnitiana*. 2. S. 135–139; cf. *Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz Universalgelehrter*, Ausgewählte Literaturnachweise aus dem Bestand der Akademiebibliothek, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften Akademiebibliothek, Berlin, 2002 in <http://bibliothek.bbaw.de/kataloge/literaturnachweise/leibniz/literatur.pdf>

receives the first rays of light and sends them to the other creatures. The second class is Adam, or the body of souls. The third class is that of the intelligences superior to souls. The fourth is the *microprosopon* or the passions. The fifth class is that of the inferior intelligences which have fallen and are called *Adam Belial*. The last class is that of the kingdom or the sephirot [the *sefiroth*], in which the spirits or *substantial forms* are contained. Seized with disgust for the supreme light and *obscured by their fall, the six classes contained in Adam Belial, experience a certain suffering as inferior creatures*. It is to this that St. Paul refers when he speaks of the suffering of the creatures. This corruption reaches all the ways to the superior classes. But the Messiah descended and put the superior classes in the place of the fallen ones. *From the fallen angels he made the husks, that is the obscured [darkened] lights*. These are those who afterwards lead the souls in captivity, and *it is thus that the souls are enclosed in the husks from which they will be extracted little by little by generation*, which supposes... they have no choice. The souls are divided into the soul of the head, the neck, etc. The body is eight times the length of the head, and this has a cabbalistic meaning: it signifies the eighth millennium. *Man, who is at the same time the summation and the consummation of the creation is a little world or microcosm. When the husks are consumed, that is to say, when all the souls are extracted, it will be the end. All souls sinned in Adam and Eve, from whom came original sin*. The Messiah took a body. One must therefore distinguish three things in him: his divinity, his rank, the first born of the creatures, and finally that which was born in time and of a virgin. There are different interpretations of the divine persons. The son corresponds to the class of the Messiah and the Holy Spirit to that of the souls. St. Paul appeared to make a distinction between God and the father of our Savior Jesus Christ. He appoints the coming of the Messiah and his reign on earth about 1832.”⁹

4.1. The Kabbalah, and especially the Lurianic Kabbalah, is the term for the mystical teachings of Judaism, especially after the twelfth century. The Kabbalah was considered to be the esoteric and unwritten aspect of the divine revelation granted to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The word itself means *that which is received or tradition*. The two major sources of kabbalistic thought available to Christians before the seventeenth century were the *Sefer Yezirah*, or *Book of Formation*, written some time between the third and sixth century C. E. and translated by Christian Kabbalists during the Renaissance, and the *Zohar*, (*The book of Splendor*), which was believed to have been written by Simeon ben Yohai in the second century C. E.

4.2. It could be possible that the Prince read in Latin *Sefer Yezirah*, the *Zohar* and *Sefer-ha-Raziel*, book known by the Rosicrucians. “The Latin copies of *Sefer-ha-Raziel* in particular show a continuation of interest in Hebrew angelology among Christian readers well after the great blooming of such concerns among

⁹ Apud A. P. Coudert, *op. cit.*, p. 46-47.

Rosicrucian authors in 1614-1620”¹⁰. Moreover, the angelic doctrine exposed in *liber Raziel* seems to be inspired by the famous *Claves Salomonis* and an important Arabic magical text, *Ghâyat al-Hakîm fi'l-sihr*, or *Picatrix* (*The Aim of the Sage*), written by de al-Majriti (d. ca. 1004-7)¹¹. On the other hand, the influence of al-Majriti, Maslamati ibn Ahmad on the Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim’s work was decisive¹²: “The angelic doctrine of *liber Raziel* is taken up by a group of texts called *Claves Salomonis*, magical texts that in conjunction with al-Magriti’s book of Arabic magic, *Picatrix*, influenced Cornelius Agrippa”¹³. It is said that Ficino’s astrological magic derives from the *Picatrix*¹⁴. The *Picatrix* is also mentioned by Johannes Trithemius in Book 2 of his *Steganographia* (1500) and in his *Antipalus Maleficiorum* (c. 1500).

5. The Cantemir spiritual map(ping) should include *Picatrix*, Ficino, and Pico’s works, too. Ficino and Pico were Agrippa’s and Cantemir’s source for his conception. The works of Plato, the Alexandrian Neoplatonists (Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblicus, and Proclus), and the Hermetic texts, had been translated into Latin by Ficino. Nettesheim works like *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* (*On Three Ways of Knowing God*), *De originali peccato* (*On Original Sin*), and *Dialogus de homine* (*A Dialogue on Man*) or Cantemir works like *Sacrosanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago*¹⁵ and *Hieroglyphic History* reflect the influence of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, as well as by the Hermetic treatises (translated from Greek by Ficino) and the tracts of Jewish Kabbalah, as interpreted in the Christianized Kabbalah of the humanist Johann Reuchlin.

Why wouldn’t Cantemir go through the same gnoseological ways, especially since Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa was the most influential writer of Renaissance

¹⁰ Åkerman, Susanna, “Queen Christina’s Latin Sefer-ha-Raziel Manuscript,” in *Judeo-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century: A Celebration of the Library of Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713)*, [INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES, 163] edited by Allison P. Coudert, Sarah Hutton, Richard H. Popkin, and Gordon M. Weiner, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 13.

¹¹ Al-Majriti, Maslamati ibn Ahmad, *Picatrix*, books I-II (2002), books III-IV (2008), translated from Arabic by Hashem Atallah, Ouroboros Press; *Idem*, *The Complete Picatrix*, translated by John Michael Greer & Christopher Warnock from Pingree’s Latin critical edition, Renaissance Astrology Press, 2010.

¹² Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (Three Books Concerning Occult Philosophy, Book 1 printed Paris 1531; Books 1-3 in Cologne 1533), *Three Books of Occult Philosophy Book One: A Modern Translation*, Trans. Eric Purdue, IA City, IA: Renaissance Astrology Press, 2012. See an examination of one of Agrippa’s university orations, on the subject of love, from a Neoplatonic and Cabalistic perspective: McDonald, Grantley. ‘Cornelius Agrippa’s School of Love: Teaching Plato’s Symposium in the Renaissance’, in *Practices of Gender in Late-Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Sherlock and Megan Cassidy-Welch (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 151-75.

¹³ Åkerman, Susanna, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁴ I. P. Couliano (1987), *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, University of Chicago Press, p. 118.

¹⁵ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Sacrosanctae scientiae indepingibilis imago*, (*Metaphysics*), translate Nicodim Locusteanu, Introduction, Em. C. Grigoraș, Bucharest, 1928.

esoterica?¹⁶ It is quite possible that Cantemir might have been reading and using the translations of Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi (ca. 800–870), the first philosopher in the Arabic tradition. He worked with a group of translators who rendered works of Aristotle, the Neoplatonists, Plotinus and Proclus, and Greek mathematicians and scientists into Arabic. The Istanbul manuscript also includes one of the few copies of al-Kindi's *On the Intellect* to survive in Arabic. This is the first treatise in the Arabic tradition to give a taxonomy of the types of intellect, such as will become familiar in al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes. Other works reveal al-Kindi's theory of soul. The *Discourse on the Soul* consists of quotations from Greek philosophers; *That There are Separate Substances* uses Aristotle's *Categories* to prove that the soul is immaterial, and *On Sleep and Dream* gives an account of prophetic dreams in terms of Aristotle's theory of the imagination.

5.1. Cantemir knew probably the secrets of Kabbalah. In *The Secret History of the Zohar*, Michael Berg discusses kabbalistic influence on Columbus via Abraham Zucato, Michelangelo, Newton, and Edison, along with the more usual Christian Cabalists (Paracelsus, Dee, Pico, Reuchlin, von Rosenroth) and finally on to Ezra Stiles and Albert Pike.¹⁷ Cantemir was their spiritual contemporary. He had read their works and, therefore, he had reflected on them. He had been initiated.

6. From the Muslim world, and Spain in particular, came works influenced by Hellenistic religious philosophy, in particular the *Chovot ha Levavot (Duties of the Heart)* of Bahya ibn Paquda. This was an important ethical work because it reframed Jewish religion from an exterior social context (“the duties of the body”) to an interior personal context (“the duties of the heart”), and marked an important transition in the path towards a personal mysticism. Many echoes of *Chovot ha Levavot* can be found between the lines of *Divanul sau Gâlceava înțeleptului cu lumea sau giudețul sufletului cu trupul (The Diwan or The Wise Man's Parley with the World or The Judgement of the Soul with the Body)*, discreetly coded. Spanish culture was influenced by the Bethren of Purity, a group from Basra who produced the encyclopedic *Rasa'il ikhwan as-safa' wa khillan al-wafa*. One should also mention the *Fons Vitae* of Solomon ibn Gabirol (c. 1021-1058), who sought to reconcile Neoplatonism with Jewish religion, and exerted much influence on medieval Christian scholastics. As general cultural background one should also mention the important works of Neoplatonic Christian theosophy such as the *De Divisione Naturae* of Johannes Scotus Eriugena. Because Cantemir knew very well Arabic, it is possible that Cantemirean work might be directly influenced by Bahya ibn Paquda or by *Rasa'il ikhwan as-safa' wa khillan al-wafa*. Or indirectly.

¹⁶ Gershom Gerhard Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York, Schocken Books, 1946; François Secret, *Le Zôhar chez les Kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance*, Paris, Librairie Durlacher, 1958.

¹⁷ Michael Berg, *The Secret History of the Zohar*, Los Angeles, The Kabbalah Centre, 2008; ch. “The Zohar’s Influence on the Renaissance, the Age of Discovery and Science”.

Arabic scholars, like earlier Neoplatonic thinkers, read the works of Plato, and developed similar questions.¹⁸ Even more, Plotinus' system has similar content to Islamic Sufism. Arabic philosophers like Avicenna (Ibn Sina), al-Ghazali, al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and al-Himsi utilized the works of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and other Neoplatonist philosophers to evaluate, assess, and adapt Neoplatonism to conform to the monotheistic constraints of Islam. The translation and interpretation of Islamic Neoplatonists had lasting effects on western philosophers, affecting Descartes' view on the conception of being.

6.1. Parviz Morewedge gives four suppositions about the nature of Islamic Mysticism¹⁹: (i) *The Unity of Being*: "An inherent potential unity among all dimensions of world-experience." (ii) *The Mediator Figure*: "The mediation between finite man and the ultimate being." (iii) *The Way of Salvation*: "Knowledge is embedded in the path of self-realization." Passing trials advances one through stages until transcendence. (iv) *The Language of Symbolic Allegory*: "Mystical texts are often written in the allegorical language of tales." We can find all these ideas in Cantemir's work: Christian model will be interpreted through the Islamic Sufism model as Jewish kabbalah by the 'gril' of Christian and Arabic kabbalah.

6.2. *A contextual argument*: Islamic Sufism and Jewish Kabbalah are so close to one another that the presumption of mutual influence is inescapable. Yet the transmission of these spiritual doctrines and practices between them is still historically mysterious. At certain points, there is evidence for direct influence of Sufism on Jewish spirituality. Elsewhere, the path between the two is challenging to discern. A leading Jewish author influenced by Sufism, Bahya ibn Pakuda, served as a Hebraic jurist in the Spanish city of Zaragoza during its Islamic period, before its reconquest by the Christians. Toward the end of the 11th century, he wrote a classic of Jewish ethics that is widely read today, *The Book of the Direction of the Duties of the Heart*. Originally composed in Arabic, the common Jewish language in the period that the great historian of Islam Bernard Lewis has called "the Judeo-Islamic" era, Bahya's work drew extensively on the writings of the early Arab Sufis, such as Dhunnun of Cairo, who died c.859. Bahya shared with the Sufis the belief that adherence to religious law would not, alone, secure the perfection of the soul, but that the believer must commit to God in the heart. He was not, however, an ecstatic, he believed in loving God from a respectful distance.²⁰ In this trend, transmitted from East to West, in this migration of Kabbalistic theory, we must read Cantemir's work.

¹⁸ Parviz Morewedge, *Neoplatonism and Islamic thought*. State University of New York Press, 1992; *Idem*, 1996. *The 'Metaphysica' of Avicenna (Ibn Sina): A Critical Translation-Commentary and Analysis of the Fundamental Arguments in Avicenna's 'Metaphysica' in the Danish Nana-I 'ala'i' (the Book of Scientific Knowledge)*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1992.

¹⁹ Parviz Morewedge, *Neoplatonism and Islamic thought*, *loc. cit.*, 1992, p.51.

²⁰ Moshe Idel analyzed the biography of a Kabbalist born in Zaragoza in 1240, after it had been retaken by the Christians. Abulafia travelled through the Muslim and Eastern Christian countries

7. *Kabbala in Russia*. When Cantemir emigrated in Russia, he became intimate adviser of Petru I and developed a prolific scientific activity. The social and historical context was dominated by Masonic, Rosicrucian and kabbalistic groups and associations. There are many moments in the influence of kabbalistic ideas in Russia that are directly connected with the development of secret societies. Cantemir was one of the founding members, a true pioneer. After the establishment of the first Masonic lodges in the middle of the eighteenth century, Russians became acquainted with various ideas and works related to kabbalah. The impact of these ideas especially intensified with the advent of Rosicrucian lodges in the 1780s. The first period was interrupted with the official prohibition of freemasonry in Russia in the 1820s, but some background Masonic activity continued until the 1850s-1860s. The second period, between the 1880s and the 1930s, is characterized by an increased interest in the occult sciences, which culminates in the 1910s-1920s. In the 1930s, most of the members of various secret societies and occult groups were arrested and executed by the communist regime.²¹ “Two Principle trends may be identified in Russian freemasonry of the late 18th-early 19th centuries: rationalistic (deistic) and mystical. (...) The Order [of the Gold- and Rosy Cross] was founded by Bernhard Joseph Schleiss von Loewenfeld (1731-1800)...[who] took an obvious interest in Kabbalah as if following the traditions of the Sulzbach Christian Kabbalah [i.e., von Rosenroth and van Helmont] of the late seventeenth century.”²²

before returning to Barcelona, where he began his Kabbalistic studies. His encounter with Kabbalah stimulated him to new and original ways of studying Jewish law that brought condemnation from the Jewish authorities of his time, although he was later acclaimed as a Jewish thinker. Abulafia's methods for attaining ecstatic union with the divine had parallels in Sufism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity and yoga. These included reciting the names of God in combination with “a complex technique involving such components as breathing, singing, and movements of the head, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the traditional commandments of Judaism”. Yet these procedures are widely known in Sufism. Idel notes one element in Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah and finds a parallel between this and Sufi discipline (*The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*. Translated from the Hebrew by Jonathan Chipman. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1988). In another of his works, Idel wrote on “the hypothesis that Jewish-Sufic tradition existed in the East, and likely also in Palestine.” Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah, according to Idel, fused with “an unbroken chain of [Jewish] authors ... who developed a mystical trend under Sufic inspiration.” This trend was transmitted from East to West in “a fascinating 'migration' of Kabbalistic theory.” The ecstatic Kabbalah that originated in Barcelona came back to Christian-ruled Spain enriched by its encounter with Sufism. Idel concludes, “Palestine made a great contribution” to Kabbalah. “This contribution, ironically, was nurtured by Muslim mysticism.” (*Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

²¹ Konstantin Burmistrov and Maria Endel, “Kabbalah in Russian Masonry: Some Preliminary Observations” in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, Volume Four, edited by Daniel Abrams and Avraham Elqayam, Los Angeles (Culver City): Cherub Press, 1999: 79.

²² Konstantin Burmistrov, “Kabbalah and Secret Societies in Russia (Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries)” in *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations*, edited by Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi, and Kocku von Stuckrad [ARIES BOOK SERIES: TEXTS AND

7.1. Russian masons of the late 18th century were familiar with one of the basic texts of Jewish mysticism, *Sefer Yezirah* (*The Book of Creation*, 3–6 centuries). At least two Russian translations of this text are kept now in MSs collections.²³ Also in several writings, well known kabbalistic text for Russian masons²⁴, one can meet long quotations from *Sefer ha-Zohar* (*The Book of Splendour*, 13th century).²⁵ Burmistrov & Endel found a translation of the treatise *Shaare Orah* (*The Gates of Light*) by Joseph Gikatilla (the 13th century), with quotations from the classic commentary to this text written by Mattityahu Delacrut, a kabbalist of the 16th century.²⁶ In the same MS codex, there is a version of *Ma'amar 'Adam de-'Azilut*, a text belonging to Lurianic Kabbalah.²⁷ Many translations of the works of European Christian kabbalists from German and Latin into Russian, as *True and Right Kabbalah* by Wilhelm Kriegsmann, *A Short Version of the Kabbalistic Teaching* by Jacob Brucker, and *The Jewish Kabbalah* by Caspar Schott should be mentioned here.²⁸ The authors of these writings based their knowledge on the works of Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin, Pietro di Galatino, Athanasius Kircher and other Christian kabbalists of the 15th-17th centuries, known maybe by Cantemir.

7.2. Once again, after Istanbul, Berlin, London, Paris, as initiatic tradition centers, real or virtual, Cantemir was to meet with secret societies, kabbalistic and philosophical, at Moscow.

8. Our question 'could Cantemir have been initiated into the secrets of kabbalah?' has not yet an answer. Maybe the real answer is even the lack of answer? However, to reconstruct a spiritual mapping means to open a new door to an unknown area of Cantemir's life and work.

STUDIES IN WESTERN MYSTICISM/10] (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 29-31. See also Konstantin Burmistrov and Maria Endel, "The Place of Kabbalah in the Doctrine of Russian Freemasons," in *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, Volume 4, Number 1, (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004).

²³ DMS RSL, F. 14, N 676. P. 46–52 in Burmistrov and Endel, 'Sefer Yezirah in Jewish and Christian Traditions', 63-71 in: *Judaica Rossica*, Vol. 2, Moscow: Russian State Univ. for Humanities Press 2002, 49–80); see also Gilly, 'Iter Gnostico Russicum', 56. About the Russian translations of *Sefer Yezirah* made from the Latin edition (S. Rittangelus, Amsterdam 1642), State Archive of Russian Federation, F. 1137, I, N. 118, Section X.

²⁴ DMS RSL, F. 14, N 676. P. 3-34 *Apud* Konstantin Burmistrov, Maria Endel, *The place of Kabbalah in the Doctrine of Russian Freemasons*, <http://elearning.zaou.ac.zm:8060/Beliefs/Judaism/Kabbalah/Kabbalah%20in%20Russian%20Freemasonry%20%20Konstantin%20Burmistrov%202004.pdf>

²⁵ I. Tisby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, Oxford: The Alden Press 1994, 3 vols.

²⁶ Sh. Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism: A Study of the Philosophical–Qabbalistic writings of Joseph Gikatilla (1248–c. 1322)*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI 1983.

²⁷ Burmistrov & Endel, *loc. cit.*

²⁸ DMS RSL, F. 14, N 1613, or F. 147, N 193 (Kriegsmann, *Die wahre und richtige Cabalah*, Frankfurt, Leipzig 1774); DMS RSL, F. 14, N 1644, Pt.5. P. 19-26 (from Brucker, J., *Historia critica philosophiae*, Vol. II, Leipzig, 1742, *Apud* Burmistrov & Endel, *op. cit.*

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