

Contributions to the biography of a forgotten translator of Herodotus' *The Histories*: Dimitrie I. Ghica

Adrian-Bogdan CEOBANU¹

Introduction

On September 30th, 1914, in Bucharest, around noon, a funeral procession took a silent itinerary from the street called Spătarului, number 13, towards the Șerban-Vodă cemetery. His mother, his wife and children, his close relatives, and his friends paid one last homage to Dimitrie I. Ghica. The central press included mentions of the one who had been an “ephoros of civilian hospitals; a former plenipotentiary minister; a former deputy and senator”². He passed away on September 28th, 1914, following a brief illness. Many obituaries failed to mention anything about his literary passions, about his activity as a translator and a writer. Indeed, much could have been said on the topic. Nicolae Iorga was the only one outlining a portrait that comprised his worthy qualities: “the translator and annotator of Herodotus was the most studious of Ion Ghica’s sons. He had benefitted from high quality studies in England. His knowledge was far reaching and deep, proven also by the lectures given last year at the Institute for the Study of Southeastern Europe. He also tried getting into the political life, but he lacked the required energy and spontaneity to make a name for himself”³. The great historian had a great insight into the work penned by Dimitrie I. Ghica, given that in 1909 he had published the manuscript of the first Romanian translation of Herodotus’ *The Histories*; the said translation was performed in the 17th century and it was found at the Coșula Monastery⁴.

Dimitrie I. Ghica began translating – in late 19th century – from Greek into Romanian Herodotus’ *The Histories*, in four volumes. It was a tremendous effort carried out by the person who in 1880 was awarded by the Romanian Academy for having translated the 4th book⁵ of the work in question. Decades later, his name seems to have been forgotten; a couple

¹ “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, bogdan.ceobanu@yahoo.com

² “Universul”, year XXIII, Wednesday, October 1st, 1914, p. 5.

³ “Neamul Românesc”, year IX, issue 40, București, October 12th, 1914, p. 8; IORGA 1938, 32.

⁴ HERODOT 1909; MARINESCU-HIMU 1964, 309-323.

⁵ Dimitrie I. Ghica was not the only one to have translated the 4th book of Herodotus’ *The Histories*. In 1879, in Iași, Alexandru Gr. Suțu had his translation published; he had used the Teubner edition of 1874. In the introduction, the

of press articles⁶ managed to point out, though, aspects of his biography⁷. Posterity does seem to have forgotten about him too soon. In the following lines, my endeavour is to reconstruct – even partially – the biography of a person with an important diplomatic and literary activity.

Family and education

Born on March 25th, 1848, in Bucharest, Dimitrie was the son of Ion Ghica and of Alexandrina. He was born to a numerous family: he had five sisters and four brothers. His father – the descendant of a ruling family from Walachia – was an important Romanian politician: a participant in the 1848 Revolution, subsequently sent to exile – he sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire and he was even bey of Samos – he was involved in the unionist movement of 1859; subsequently, he held several ministerial positions both during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, and in the first years of Carol I's reign. In 1881, he was appointed Romania's plenipotentiary minister in London; he remained in this position for ten years and he returned to the country at the end of his tenure. He died six years later, in 1897⁸.

In 1847, Ion Ghica married Alexandrina, daughter of the Greek-born general Nicolae Mavros and of Sevastița Suțu (granddaughter of Mihai Suțu, third time the prince of Walachia and one time the prince of Moldavia in late 18th and early 19th century)⁹. From among the ten children born to the family of Ion and Alexandrina Ghica, only seven survived to adulthood. Sabina Cantacuzino – a person close to the family – recollected in her memoirs that besides Dimitrie, “a truly, remarkable, educated, and well-mannered man, but who out of a strange anomaly was not the favourite of the house, at least of his mother”, no other child managed to meet the expectations of the family¹⁰.

Dimitrie I. Ghica spent the first part of his childhood abroad. From late 1849 to the spring of 1859, he lived first in Constantinople, then in Samos (from 1854), where his father had been appointed governor. I believe that the period spent on the island near the Turkish coast had an influence on his literary taste. Furthermore, on the first page of the volume within Herodotus' The Histories, published in 1894, he inserted the following dedication: “This work is dedicated to my father Ion Ghica; while he was a governor in Samos, I visited as a child the birthplace of Herodotus and the ruins of the Greek colonies in Asia Minor. This is a token of my respect, affection, and gratitude”. Years later, upon visiting the island of Samos, Dimitrie

translator confessed to having rushed with the publication of the edition, to having possibly made mistakes, given that he had not undertaken Greek literature for 23 years (HERODOT 1879 VIII-IX.)

⁶ GRECEANU 1995a, MAMINA 2008.

⁷ See also the page dedicated to Dimitrie I. Ghica in SIMION 2017, 961.

⁸ For further details concerning the political and diplomatic activity carried out by Ion Ghica, see BENGESCU, 1899; PĂCURARIU 1959; IORDACHE 1995.

⁹ Alexandrina Ghica died on April 2nd, 1926 (see GRECEANU 1995b).

¹⁰ CANTACUZINO 2013. 197.

I. Ghica noted in his journal that in those places he had lived the most beautiful years of his childhood¹¹. During those times, Ion Ghica would accompany Dimitrie Bolintineanu in his journeys across Asia Minor and the surroundings; there is no explicit evidence that young Dimitrie would have accompanied them, too. Bolintineanu's notes¹² are worth reading in order to understand the atmosphere dominating Dimitrie's uprising. Those thoughts on the world proposed mental revisitations of the past, suggested geographical itineraries, treasured folk traditions and beliefs.

Following three years spent in the country (1859-1862), Dimitrie I. Ghica was sent by his father to Great Britain for studies; he was enrolled in Wellington College. In a period when the Romanian elite was trained mainly in a French-speaking environment, with most young people choosing Paris¹³, the option of the Ghica family was by no means random. During his exile, Ion Ghica had a very good relationship with the ambassador of Great Britain to Constantinople, Stratford Canning; the latter also mediated the enrolment of Dimitrie¹⁴. Decades later, Ghica noted in his journal – for the day of September 11th/24th, 1901: “Today we celebrate 39 years since my father dropped me at Wellington College; I was a foreign kid, in a foreign and far away school. I bless that day, for it has enabled me to get a good and Christian education, which has bettered me with a blessing from above (...) I cried bitterly 39 years ago, though one cannot state to have had a happy childhood at home. I wonder what would have been the outcome, had I had parents with more patience and less severity towards me”¹⁵. The carefully written paragraph merely suggested the regret of a childhood and adolescence haunted by sadness and lacking the desired affection.

After graduating from high school, the young Ghica continued his studies in Great Britain. He attended Cambridge University and he obtained a doctoral degree in social and political sciences in 1872. In the same year, his first translation was published. He had translated into Romanian the work by Thomas B. Macaulay, *Despre drepturile civile ale Israelitilor*.

Upon returning to the country, Dimitrie participated in 1873 in a contest for a position at the Philosophy Department of the University in Iași, but to no avail. In the same year, he married Melania Kretzulescu, daughter of Constantin Kretzulescu. The two were cousins. Maria, Ion Ghica's mother, had been born to the Câmpineanu family; she was Anica's sister,

¹¹ Biblioteca Academiei Române [Romanian Academy Library] (hereinafter BAR), Secția Manuscrise [Manuscripts Section], A 3822, Dim. I. Ghica (Jurnal), caietul [notebook] II, f. 153.

¹² See BOLINTINEANU 1968.

¹³ Foreign universities had for a long time the “monopoly” for the training of local elite. Explanations reside in the shortcomings of Romanian education and in the mirage of Western Europe. Constantin Argetoianu's words synthesise the situation in the best way possible. According to him, “in the years 70 and 80, a doctoral degree – especially obtained in Paris – opened all the doors in our countries” (ARGETOIANU 2008, 88).

¹⁴ GRECEANU 1995a, 300.

¹⁵ BAR, Secția Manuscrise [Manuscripts Section], A 3822, Dim. I. Ghica (Jurnal), caietul [notebook] II, f. 13.

who was married to Alexandru Kretzulescu. The latter had many descendants, among whom Constantin. Dimitrie and Melania had two children together: Ion, born in 1874, and Alexandrina, born two years later¹⁶.

The family relations and the atmosphere of his uprising modelled Dimitrie's career. He was a cousin of Dimitrie A. Sturdza's wife, Zoe Sturdza. The former was one of the leaders of the National Liberal Party and its president from 1892. His sister Maria was married to Sturdza's brother, George. The liberal path marked his public image. His brothers took on a different path: Alexandru became a politician after marrying the daughter of the conservative politician Lascăr Catargi¹⁷; Nicolae married the daughter of the conservative leader Gheorghe Grigore Cantacuzino¹⁸.

After working in Great Britain for four years, at the British Museum, Dimitrie Ghica returned to the country at the end of the 70s. He also dipped his toes into politics, in the Old Kingdom, by becoming a member of the National Liberal Party, but this endeavour did not benefit from any resounding success. He dedicated his time to translations; thus, he translated *Romeo and Juliet*, subsequently featured on the scene of the National Theatre in Bucharest. He rejoiced more than standing ovations.

During the sessions of the Romanian Academy in 1878, the decision was made to include in the Zappa award (for classical translations, from Greek and Latin authors) for the subsequent year the best translations of Plinius Coecilius Secundus (junior). *Epistol. Liber VIII 1-21*, Plutarchus. *Vita Pelopidae cap. I-XXII* inclusive, and Herodotus. *Historiarum lib. IV, cap. 51-100*. Persons participating in the contest had to meet certain requirements. For instance, manuscripts had to be sent by September 1st, 1879, in order to be assessed by the Literary Section of the esteemed academic forum. The winners were to be charged by the Romanian Academy with the integral translation of the work written by the author in question, which also covered the printing costs. Obviously, there were also mentions concerning the financial compensation of the people to be declared winners¹⁹. The Commission that analysed the translations from Plutarch and Herodotus comprised Ioan Caragiani, Ion Ghica, Alexandru Odobescu, Alexandru Papadopol-Calimah, and George Sion²⁰. One may find surprising Ion Ghica's presence in the Commission – it was the only one where he was included – but he was at that point the president of the Romanian Academy. Whereas four translations from Herodotus were received, only three were accepted for appraisal, among which the one by Dimitrie I. Ghica. Upon assessing the translations received, the members of the Commission

¹⁶ GRECEANU 1995a, 299-300.

¹⁷ GRECEANU 1995b, 121-122.

¹⁸ Nicolae I. Ghica was also a diplomat he was even appointed secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His biographic chart may be found in CEOBANU 2019, 121-122.

¹⁹ *Analele Academiei Române [Romanian Academy Annals]*, seria [series] II, tom [volume] I, sesiunea extraordinară a anului [extraordinary session of the year] 1879, Tipografia Academiei Române, 1880, p. 236-237.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

determined that the one done by candidate C was the best, by highlighting several aspects: it had the most complete footnotes, containing grammatical, syntactical, philological, critical explanations on the text. However, there were also recommendations made by the reporter of the commission, Ioan Caragiani: the translator had to revise the work under the special control of a certain recommended member²¹. On April 13th, 1880, in a solemn session that included the opening of envelopes, the Romanian Academy awarded the translation presented by Dimitrie I. Ghica, who thus obtained the financial support of the institution and the right to translate Herodotus' work. It was not an easy task for him. Caught in the daily turmoil, he managed to finalise the project only after three decades and a half, a period during which he alternated the literary, diplomatic, and political career.

Literature and diplomacy in the Old Kingdom

Dimitrie I. Ghica joined the Romanian diplomacy in 1883; he activated as legation secretary, first in Berlin and then in Constantinople. Upon his accession to Romanian diplomacy, his father – Ion Ghica – was the Romanian minister in London, while D.A. Sturdza was in charge with the foreign policy of the Old Kingdom. We may assume that kinships played an important role in his accession to the Romanian diplomatic corps. Those were the times when one could join the Romanian diplomatic corps by appointment; contests were included as an access way as late as the spring of 1885. George Bengescu – a diplomat, too, and a relative of Dimitrie I. Ghica – disavowed the manner of initiation in his diplomatic career. As he had noted, “Dimitrie Ghica was taken from the benches of the governmental majority and suddenly appointed first-class secretary of the Berlin Legation by Mr. Dimitrie Sturdza, to whom Dimitrie Ghica was closely related”²².

During their stay abroad, besides the imperatives of their official missions, the Romanian diplomats were involved in various other activities. Several examples maybe relevant in this respect. Alexandru Emanoil Lahovari – Romania's minister in Rome – sent in 1898 to Petru Poni, the president of the Romanian Academy, 202 documents comprising 942 pages concerning the Romanian Principalities. Due to the efforts made by Nicolae Kretzulescu in Petersburg, in February 1884, the university of that city constituted a special course of Romanian language and literature. In Constantinople, Trandafir Djuvara dealt with the collection Ottoman chronicles and sources for the history of Romanians. This led to the portrait in public perception of the scholar diplomat. In a speech uttered on the occasion of

²¹ Analele Academiei Române [Romanian Academy Annals], seria [series] II, tom [volume] II, ședințele ordinare din 1879-80 și sesiunea generală a anului 1880 [the ordinary sessions of 1879-80 and the general session of the year 1880]. Secțiunea I. Partea administrativă și Debaterile [Section I. Administrative Part and Debates], Tipografia Academiei Române, 1881, p. 283-292.

²² BENGESCU 1899, 300.

the reception to the Romanian Academy of the diplomat Dumitru C. Ollănescu, Iacob Negruzzi pointed out as follows: “this is the right place to highlight that – for our honour and praise – in opposition maybe to what is happening in other nations, many of those who have represented our countries attached to the foreign governments took advantage of their spiritual peace abroad given that they were far from the domestic political struggles – always passionate through their nature – and they worked arduously and successfully in the field of national literature”²³. Several examples are notable in this direction.

Vasile Alecsandri was appointed in late January 1885 as plenipotentiary minister in the French capital. This was ultimately a long tenure; it lasted five years, until August 1890. His experience in diplomacy dated to the reign of Alexandru Ion Cuza. He had earned a good name. King Carol considered him “an experienced diplomat who had to undertake several missions of uttermost importance concerning Napoleon III, Victor Emanuel, and England. His reports of the period, namely 1857-1863, are excellently written and they were even partially published (...) from the early youth, he had very good relations to the French metropolis and to the literary circles of the area. Hence, his heart drove him to Paris, reason for which all we could do was to give him the position that had become vacant”²⁴. Alecsandri accepted the challenge of acting as plenipotentiary minister in Paris in a period when the Romanian-French relations were tense. Tact and wisdom were very much required for mitigating divergences; he managed to be quite successful in this respect. He had a hard time adjusting, though. He was dissatisfied with the conditions found at the headquarters of the Legation, placed in a particular hotel on Penthievre street. He decided to move in a building near the Monceau park, where “from the salon balcony, one would catch a glimpse of the blue sky, no wider than a handkerchief, and the sight of two or three trees making the poet’s view more animated”²⁵.

The agitation of Paris was not to his taste, but he did not skip the official soirées thrown each Wednesday by the French minister of Foreign Affairs. He did not like French cuisine. He served his meals at home, while during receptions, he would focus on the atmosphere. He spent his free time in theatres, the circus, and the hippodrome. However, he would also receive backlash from Bucharest. He was scolded for “not contacting more often and on a more intimate level with the Romanian young people in Paris”, who spent their days in the cafés and alehouses of the Latin Quarter²⁶. During his stay in the French capital, he worked on the French translation of the drama Ovidius, in five acts and in verse, as well as on the project of a tragedy, Virgiliu.

²³ DINU 2014, 186.

²⁴ CRISTESCU 2005, 195.

²⁵ BENGESCU 1899, 182.

²⁶ BENGESCU 1899, 195-209.

Other such examples include George Bengescu and Dumitru Ollănescu Ascanio. The first – born in 1848 in Craiova – was a descendant of a great noble family from Walachia; he joined diplomacy in 1872 as secretary of the diplomatic agency in Vienna. In a first phase, he alternated the diplomatic and the administrative career. From the 80s, he had held various positions in the Romanian diplomacy: Legation secretary in London, in Paris, plenipotentiary minister in the Hague and Brussels, then in Athens. George Bengescu was attracted by the “book treasures” of Paris; he occupied the “Reserve” table at the National Library²⁷. In London, he had accepted the appointment as Legation secretary because he was attracted by the perspective of studying in the British Museum library. He took an interest in Voltaire and he found unpublished letters pertaining to him. He translated from his work; he also translated some of Alecsandri’s poems into French. He drafted up an impressive bibliography concerning the Romanian-French relations in the 19th century; he was also interested in the issue of the East. He was among the first biographers of Queen Elisabeth. His literary passion never hindered his professional commitments.

This profile partially fits Dumitru Ollănescu Ascani, too. He was born in 1849 at Focșani; a descendant of a noble family, he joined diplomacy in September 1876, first in the headquarters of the Ministry, then in the foreign service. The last dignity honoured was the one as plenipotentiary minister in Athens, from 1889 to 1892. Literary critique admits that Ollănescu completed his literary work upon leaving the diplomatic corps; this is partially true. He had dedicated his time to writing, given that he completed in 1879 the work titled *Pe malul gârlei*. Comedie într-un act. He was also one of the translators focusing on Horace’s works. Whereas his initial desire was to translate his entire work, he eventually managed to translate the letters, odes, two satires, and the entire *Arta poetică* (1891), the last translated into Romanian for the second time. Moreover, between 1878-1879, Ollănescu wrote, under the pseudonym Ascanio, the dramatic critique for the “*România liberă*” newspaper; between 1884-1885, he also collaborated with “*Voința națională*”, by signing various literary reviews.

Dimitrie I. Ghica: a diplomat and a literate

Appointed in the German capital from July 1st, 1883, Dimitrie I. Ghica did not forget about his literary endeavours. Beyond the routines and activities related to the tasks specific to his position, he continued his editorial project regarding the translation of Herodotus’ *The Histories*. He was in touch with Ion Bianu, the director of the Romanian Academy Library. In a letter sent in early May 1886, he agreed with the last, by admitting that it was problematic to have the work printed in Romania. He was thinking of discussing with various German editors, renowned and appreciated for their openness to publishing books in diverse

²⁷ BENGESCU 1899, 69-80.

languages. He also asked for an estimate of the printing costs and for more details on the working methods. However, he was aware that the 2,000 Lei per year for printing expenses promised by the Academy would not be enough. According to his calculations, the entire edition would have been published across two decades. He proposed a solution that would have solved partially the financial needs: cashing in money during the publication, through subscriptions²⁸. He was quite confident in his plan.

Two weeks later, he sent to Bianu a printed page sample by L. Schade. That printing house collaborated fruitfully with the German Academy. He was very much pleased with the offer received, as well as with the quality of execution. He estimated that for 800 copies he would have needed 12-13,000 Marks. According to his own words, Ghica had already finished the first two volumes²⁹. He was overly optimistic, though. He did not get the best of news from Bucharest. The financial constraints and the political tensions delayed the approval of expenses. In late 1886, other shortcomings emerged: because he dedicated most of his time to his professional obligations, Ghica had to make several amendments; he had to take a trip to London for a visit to his father; there was also the strike of the German printers. He chose not to become pessimistic and he wrote to Bianu that "I know the pace of it is piano, but I do hope it is at least sano"³⁰.

In the last part of the year 1889, Dimitrie I. Ghica was transferred to the diplomatic mission of Romania in Constantinople; in the meanwhile, on November 19th, 1888, he had been promoted as Legation advisor. He was not pleased of his situation on the Bosphorus banks. He acknowledged it in a letter penned in early 1890: "Not even the charming view before my eyes today – bringing the first sunny day on the balcony of the serial, a unique view in its own way, with Bosphorus to the left and the Marmara Sea to the right (...) – none of such beauty has brought me any consolation. I admire them; I am in awe of them and very much impressed, but upon coming home, I feel sad and I am homesick; I miss my family, my country, my friends"³¹. Given that the activity of the Legation was intense, he may not have advanced terribly with his editorial project. Due to governmental instability, he resigned from diplomacy on February 23rd /March 11th, 1891, and he returned to the country³².

He sought refuge at his Topliceni estate and he had all the time necessary for his translations. In 1894, in Berlin, the printing house of L. Schade – with whom he had begun a collaboration eight years prior – issued the first volume of Herodotus' The Histories. In the introduction, Ghica stated to have been aware of the difficulty entailed by such "huge and complicated" work; he admitted to a preference for the Latin and Greek literature even since

²⁸ CROICU, CROICU 1974, 505.

²⁹ CROICU, CROICU 1974, 505-506.

³⁰ CROICU, CROICU 1974, 506-508.

³¹ CROICU, CROICU 1974, 513.

³² CEOBANU 2019, 113.

he had been a student. He appreciated the studies conducted by other exegetes of the work penned by Herodotus, such as Dean Blakesley or Canon Rawlinson. He expressed his gratitude to Professor Reginald Stuart Poole within the British Museum for all the assistance provided. Towards the end of the introduction, he provides several clarifications concerning the Greek text: “in order to study this text, I consulted all the versions within famous manuscripts and, where there was a doubt, I appraised carefully the arguments produced by the most competent commentators in favour of the various versions they supported”³³. The author also made a biography of Herodotus, where he included several aspects within the life of “the father of history”³⁴.

After quitting the diplomacy in 1891, he was reintegrated by Dimitrie A. Sturdza, in January 1896, as secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He honoured this position for two years and a half; he collaborated with the Liberal leader between November 1896-March 1897 and with Constantin Stoicescu, minister of Foreign Affairs. According to The Organisation Law of the Ministry, drafted up in March 1873, the secretary general, who was also the director of the chancery, had two types of attributions: he sent the correspondence for the minister and he could replace the former in various situations. As a director, he received the correspondence and distributed it to various departments; he monitored the activity of the clerks within central administration, and he ensured the “unity and harmony” within it. The Law for the reorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, drafted up in February 1894, brought along several modifications concerning the status of the secretary general in the organisation chart of the institution. He “assisted” the minister, by distributing the works for the various services of the department. The office of registration and “expedition” and the service of “translations” were under his strict monitoring³⁵.

Dimitrie I. Ghica held the most important dignity within the central administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until late June 1898, when he was appointed envoy extraordinary and Romania’s plenipotentiary minister in Athens. It was perhaps the best destination for Ghica. He served two tenures in the Greek capital: July 1st/13th, 1898- April 1st, 1900 and May 14th, 1901-March 29th, 1905. The journal kept in this period reveals his interests, beyond his diplomatic activity. He went to the conferences of various personalities, such as the lecture held on December 18th /30th, 1899, on the Acropolis, by the director of the German Institute of Archaeology, Wilhelm Dörpfeld³⁶.

Because travels were among his passions, he often chose journeys that took a couple of days in order to admire the astounding Greek heritage. He took advantage of the beautiful

³³ GHICA 1894, VI-VII.

³⁴ GHICA 1894, IX-XXIII.

³⁵ MAMINA, NEACȘU, POTRA 2004, 672.

³⁶ BAR, Secția Manuscrise [Manuscripts Section], A 3822, Dim. I. Ghica (Jurnal), f. 6.

weather and he went to Cape Sounion to admire Poseidon's Temple³⁷. He was accompanied by his wife Melania for "an archaeological stroll" in Athens, in early February 1900, with the purpose of taking photographs. He wrote: "we went to the Prisc hilltop and he walked on the steps where Demosthenes is said to have uttered his famous speeches against Philip of Macedonia. The natural rock has a perpendicular cut to form a wall of the precinct, and the stairs leading to the tribune are also cut in the rock. This provides a splendid view of the Acropolis entrance from Propylaea and on the Parthenon and the Temple of Athene Nike. Underneath the hilltop, between us and the Areopagus, one may see the excavations made by the German school in the Melete quarter, where Mr. Dörpfeld found the Enneacronus fountain and where he discovered the entire irrigation system of Pericles' descendant"³⁸.

The lines written by Ghica reveal a person paying attention to details, with a great insight into ancient Greece; he was also in touch in the latest discoveries in the field. This may be why he entered in early 1901 – after having been replaced in April 1900 in the position of Romanian minister in Greece – the contest for a position in the Greek Language and Literature Department at the University of Bucharest. Following the death of Francudi Epaminonda on March 8th, 1897, the position had been vacant. The candidates included Constantin Litzica, Dimitrie Burileanu, and Dimitrie I. Ghica, who submitted a request on January 21st, 1901 for his intention to apply for the position. Among the scientific arguments invoked, besides the works already published, he reminded that "in the field of Greek archaeology", he had followed – during his position as official representative of Romania in Athens – the courses of various Archaeology schools in the Greek capital, especially of the German and the French school³⁹.

His fellow candidate, D. Burileanu, born on October 26th, 1869, with a Letter degree from the University of Sorbonne in Paris, had been from 1898 a substitute teacher within the Department⁴⁰, while Constantin Litzica had obtained in 1894 a Letter degree the University of Bucharest. In his journal, Ghica noted that on January 23rd / February 5th, 1901, he first went to the Romanian Academy in order to get copies of the translation from Herodotus, and then he submitted them to the Ministry of Public Instruction, along with a request for applying to the contest⁴¹. He was not successful; the position was given to D. Burileanu, who through the royal decree of October 19th, 1901 was appointed permanent aggregate at the University of Bucharest.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 9.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 11.

³⁹ Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale [County Service of the National Archives] Iași, Fond Rectorat [Rectorate collection], dosar [dossier] 656/1900-1901, f. 238-239.

⁴⁰ Anuarul Universității din București pe anul școlar 1901-1902. Al X-lea Anuar publicat de secretariatul Universității, Institutul de Arte grafice Carol Gobl, București, p. 19.

⁴¹ BAR, Secția Manuscrise [Manuscripts Section], A 3822, Dim. I. Ghica (Jurnal), f. 248.

Meanwhile, Ghica became involved in the political life. As a candidate of the National Liberal Party, for a position of deputy in the 1st college Muscel, he was not successful. The result of the elections was communicated to him on his birthday, namely March 13th /26th, 1901. He was turning 53. According to his notes, this was one of the greatest disillusionings of his life⁴². Good news also came, however. The same Dimitrie A. Sturdza, once again the leader of the Romanian diplomacy, would influence his career. At the proposal of the latter, through the royal decree No. 1986, of May 14th, 1901, signed by King Carol I, Ghica was recalled to “active duty” from May 16th, 1901 and appointed again envoy extraordinary and second-class plenipotentiary minister in Athens⁴³. Thus began Ghica’s second mission in the Greek capital, when he continued many of the activities carried out during his first tenure: in September, he welcomed a visit from a group of Romanian university students, led by Professor Tocilescu⁴⁴; he paid visits to the temple of Jupiter Olympian⁴⁵; he travelled to the Island of Poros, along with the Legation secretary, Constantin Diamandi⁴⁶; he was in the audience at the conference held by Professor Dörpfeld about Nike’s temple in order to “refreshen his memory”⁴⁷ and at the one held by the French archaeology professor H. Lechat, a former student of the French School in Athens⁴⁸.

In early May 1902, Dimitrie I. Ghica, accompanied by his wife, went on a trip to the Island of Samos, thus setting foot there “after a 43-year absence”. He remembered that “so many memories filled my thoughts and I found it most curious to be in Samos again, so much so that I could not sleep”⁴⁹. The visit to the island also brought back unpleasant memories: in the yard of the St Spiridon church, he found the graves of his siblings, Alexandrina and Nicu, who had died in 1857 and 1858⁵⁰. He found his childhood places unchanged; he saw familiar faces again. Memories flooded his mind; in the centre, there was the image of his father, whose tenure as governor of the Samos Island dwelled in the collective memory of the inhabitants.

In 1902, a Romanian publishing house issued the fourth volume of Herodotus’ *The Histories*⁵¹. The discussions with Ioan Socec – the owner of the publishing house – had begun in the period when Ghica was still in the country, namely around 1900-1901; they were

⁴² *Ibidem*, f. 289.

⁴³ CEOBANU 2019, 113.

⁴⁴ BAR, Secția Manuscrise [Manuscripts Section], A 3822, Dim. I. Ghica (Jurnal), caietul [notebook] II, f. 1-11.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 18-19.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 35

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 96.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 151-152.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 152.

⁵¹ *Istoriile lui Herodot*. Traducere română din limba originală însoțită de textul elinesc și de note critice geografice, etnografice și gramaticale, cuprinzând rezultatul celor mai recente cercetări și descoperiri privitoare la text și la subiectele tratate de acest autor, și ilustrată cu harte și deseneuri by Dimitrie Ion Ghica M.A., a work awarded by the Romanian Academy, vol. IV, București, 1902, Stabilementul de Arte Grafice I.V. Socecu.

resumed when he came to Romania in May 1902. Ghica's choice was not random. In the Old Kingdom, one of the most important families of booksellers-editors, who influenced book trade, was the one whose famous representative was Ion V. Socec (1830-1896). The business had begun in 1856, and his successor Emil carried on the family tradition⁵². In his introduction to the fourth volume, Dimitrie I. Ghica mentioned that "from among the entire work penned by Herodotus, the first 140 chapters of this book have a special importance for us, the Romanians, because they comprise the oldest description of the Lower Danube basin, of the left bank occupied today by the Romanian Kingdom, of the peoples inhabiting it, as well as of the region on the northern Black Sea coast, with its ancient Scythian population"⁵³. In the spring of 1905, he left Greece; this would be his last contact with the Romanian diplomacy. He subsequently joined politics and he held various administrative positions.

The two other volumes were published in 1912 (volume II) and 1915 (volume III), posthumously. The latter was published under the supervision of Iuliu Valaori, an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, the University of Bucharest. His family gave the manuscript to the Romanian Academy, given that "Ghica's hand stopped forever". In the introduction to the volume, in October 1915, several lines were inserted about Dimitrie I. Ghica "who never stopped making a priority of the study and translation of the Muses penned by the Father of History (...) Ghica wished to provide the Romanian reader with an entire encyclopaedia of knowledge about the ancient Greek and barbarian world, representing the target of the accounts and descriptions made by the first historian, geographer, and ethnographer of the Greek world"⁵⁴.

By way of conclusion

Decades later, the exegetes of Herodotus' work appreciated the efforts made by Dimitrie I. Ghica in late 19th and early 20th century. Perhaps the best description of his activity is the one provided by A. Piatkowski in his introductory study for the 1961 edition of Herodotus' work, where he highlights that the translation was done "in the spirit of the most reliable scientific translations; it is accompanied by a rich critical apparatus (...) the translated work was not widely disseminated among the Romanian public or reedited. Ghica's translation is more than valuable; inconsistencies are scarce and the text critique accompanying the work involves a tremendous effort. The notes took into account the outcomes of the latest scientific research

⁵² POPA 2015, 38-45, 71-76.

⁵³ Dimitrie I. Ghica, *Introducere la Cartea IV, in Istoriile lui Herodot...*, vol. III, p. III.

⁵⁴ Note in *Istoriile lui Herodot. Traducere română din limba originală însoțită de textul elinesc și de note critice geografice, etnografice și gramaticale, cuprinzând rezultatul celor mai recente cercetări și descoperiri privitoare la text și la subiectele tratate de acest autor, și ilustrată cu harte și deseneuri* by Dimitrie Ion Ghica M.A., a work awarded by the Romanian Academy, vol. III, București, Librăriile Soccec&Co, 1915, p. V.

endeavours of the last part of the 19th century”⁵⁵. Today, more than 100 years after the death of Dimitrie I. Ghica, his name is worth a historiographical rehabilitation, among both historians and philologists.

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⁵⁵ PIATKOWSKI 1961, CXIV.

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