

EDUCATIONAL VALUES IN *THE VITA CONSTANTINI CANTEMYRII*
BY DIMITRIE CANTEMIR

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The capitalization and editing of D. Cantemir's scientific heritage began almost three centuries ago, the process though is far from over. While some of the works of the Moldavian prince have been substantially edited and studied, some others remain in the shadows without due attention. Such is the case of *Vita Constantini Cantemyrii*... of which yet another copy was discovered in the Archive of Old Documents in Moscow, which reproduces quite truthfully the realities of the XVIIth century under the form of a freely narrated story. Presenting his father as a brave, courageous man, determined, skillful, wise, and caring parent, Dimitrie Cantemir observed one of the commandments of the decalogue – "Honor your father and mother". As he took refuge to Russia after 1711 he was able to introduce his work to the scientific community in that country and cause his works to be printed. Some did get printed during his lifetime while some others only had that chance after his death.

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The process of capitalization and research of Dimitrie Cantemir's scientific heritage has spanned over almost three centuries. One by one, Cantemir's writings were discovered, rediscovered, interpreted and edited in several European languages. Either through manuscript copies, or through translations and editions, they gradually returned in different ways in the Romanian environment, in the Romanian culture, where in fact they were expected the most. These aspects of the reception of Dimitrie Cantemir's scholarly legacy in universal and Romanian culture have been addressed in several works of our historians and writers. If we try to take a three-dimensional panoramic look at this phenomenon, we will notice that although several attempts have been made to set up editions of complete works, for one reason or another, despite the efforts made, the project has not been finished. That is why quite frequently in Romanian science and culture and not only recourse has been made to research and editions, often quite solid, critical of special works such as *Divanul (Divan)*, *Descriptio Moldaviae*, *Hronicul (Chronicle)* ... and lately, and *Istoria Imperiului Otoman (History of Ottoman Empire)*. Moreover, even masterful research has focused on the main contributions of Cantemir, so that some have either remained completely out of sight of the scholars, or have returned

only sporadically on certain occasions, including Cantemirian anniversaries. Among the latter is *Vita Constantini Cantemirii...* which in 1996, almost 20 years ago had a particularly rigorous edition, as far as possible at that time, accompanied by substantial introductory studies, notes and comments by the well-known specialists Andrei Pippidi and Dan Slușanschi¹. As it is well known, this edition relied on the only manuscript in Latin then known of *the Life of Constantine Cantemir* preserved at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg.²

We must also add here that although earlier translations were made by Nicolae Iorga³ and respectively Radu Albală⁴, Dan Slușanschi undertook with that occasion a new translation⁵ from Latin of the writing in question. However, even the edition to which I refer can and must be obsolete given that recently another copy of this Cantemir's work was discovered in the State Archive of the Old Acts in Moscow⁶, being linked with translation into Italian of Ottoman Empire history made by Antioh Cantemir, the son. We will just mention that the existence of this copy was admitted by Andrei Pippidi⁷.

Our predecessors, classics of Romanian historiography, Nicolae Iorga, Ilie Minea, Constantin C. Giurescu performed a detailed analysis of the content of Constantin Cantemir's life, detecting many inaccuracies, misrepresentations and errors that come off easily to conclude that the work under discussion is a minor

¹ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Vita Constantini Cantemirii, cognomento senis, Moldaviae principis/ Viața lui Constantin Cantemir, zis cel bătrân, Domnul Moldovei*, în *Opere complete*, vol. VI, tom I. Cuvânt înainte de acad. Virgil Căndea, studiu introductiv, note și comentarii de Andrei Pippidi, ediție critică, traducere și anexe de Dan Slușanschi și Ilieș Câmpeanu, indici de Ilieș Câmpeanu, București, Ed. Academiei Române, 1996, 330 p., including an annex in Latin which is edited by T.S. Bayer ([Кантемир Д.] *История о жизни и делах молдавского государя князя Константина Кантемира, сочиненная С[анкт]Петербуржской Академии Наук покойным профессором [Готлиба Сигфрида] Беером с российским переводом и с приложением Родословия князей Кантемиров / De vita et rebus gentis Constantini Cantemiri Principis Moldaviae*, Москва, Университетская типография у Н. Новикова, 1783, с. 261–308) and fragments *Incrementorum et decrementorum Aulae Othomanicae* regarding Moldavia and especially the reign of Constantine, p. 309–336.

² Serge Frantsouzoff, "Le fonds de Dimitrie Cantemir dans les Archives de l'Institut des manuscrits orientaux de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie", RESEE, XLIX, 2001, p. 125.

³ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Viața lui Constantin vodă Cantemir*. Text latin revăzut și traducere românească de N. Iorga, vol. I–II, București, 1924, 92 p. (I); XV+126 p. (II).

⁴ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Viața lui Constantin Cantemir, zis cel bătrân, Domnul Moldovei*. În românește de Radu Albală, cu un cuvânt înainte de P.P. Panaitescu, București, Editura de Stat pentru literatură și artă, 1960, XXVII +163 p.+5 f. il.

⁵ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Vita Constantini Cantemirii, cognomento senis, Moldaviae principis/ Viața lui Constantin Cantemir, zis cel bătrân, Domnul Moldovei*, în *Opere complete*, vol. VI, tom I. Cuvânt înainte de acad. Virgil Căndea, studiu introductiv, note și comentarii de Andrei Pippidi, ediție critică, traducere și anexe de Dan Slușanschi și Ilieș Câmpeanu, indici de Ilieș Câmpeanu, București, Ed. Academiei Române, 1996, 330 p.

⁶ М.Р. Рыженков, "Дмитрий Кантемир и его документальное наследие в Российском Государственном Архиве Древних Актов", *Revista de Istorie a Moldovei*, Chișinău, 2013, nr. 3, p. 41–42.

⁷ Andrei Pippidi. *Introduction*, in Dimitrie Cantemir, *Opere complete*, vol. VI, partea I, *Vita Constantini Cantemirii, Cognomento Senis, Moldaviae Principis*. Preface by de Virgil Căndea. Translation by Dan Slușanschi, Bucharest, Editions of the Romanian Academy, 1996, p. 39, fn. 89.

one, far from adequately reflecting the historical realities since the string of works dedicated by Dimitrie Cantemir to Romanian history. Basically, we have to agree with Cantemir's critics, but we dare say to just a certain limit, if we refer to documentation bases, in terms of modern historiography of this writings. If we examine the same work under another point of view, from an overall perspective we can discover that it is true and exposes what happened during the life of Constantin Cantemir, ultimately a historical truth, although quite subjective, with no strict documentartion but clad in historical atmosphere, a work penetrating the spirit of the time.

Besides the intrinsic scientific value, which would have desired to see our great predecessors in the scholarly heritage research of D. Cantemir, *Vita Constantini Cantemirii* ... as a biography, a panegyric or a novel, as various researchers has defined it has various other meanings, more important, as is its educational meaning.

As *Vita* ... even with its exaggerations and errors, unlike other works is a narration exposed in an accessible style understood by all, including youth and be for them as an example worth following, as a model of behavior, in various situations of life, including tensioned situations and dangers, of devotion for the author's homeland and its interests. Or, Constantin Cantemir with all his mishaps of soldier, prince and dignitary, and then the Prince of Moldavia, with his qualities and virtues of brave man, courageous, determined, skilled and even wise not only in decision making but also in the undertaking of some thrifty actions in the suspense situations it can serve as a good example, a model of behavior to be followed by the younger generations.

On the other hand the entire content of the *Life of Constantin Cantemir* is imbued with respect and admiration by Dimitrie the son, for his father -soldier, governor, ruler and caring parent. One can say with confidence that the author of the writing, as a person, as a personality in the spirit of the time, of the Christian perennial values followed one commandment of the Decalogue – "Honor your father and your mother". Or, compliance with these values will teach, by example worth following for growing generations.

In our opinion, when in high schools and universities we study Cantemir's works we should direct the attention of the students to these educational values.

However, as we are understanding and *Vita Constantini Cantemirii* ... in accessible Romanian translations can be a "book – a sweet delay" as Miron Costin defined it centuries ago.

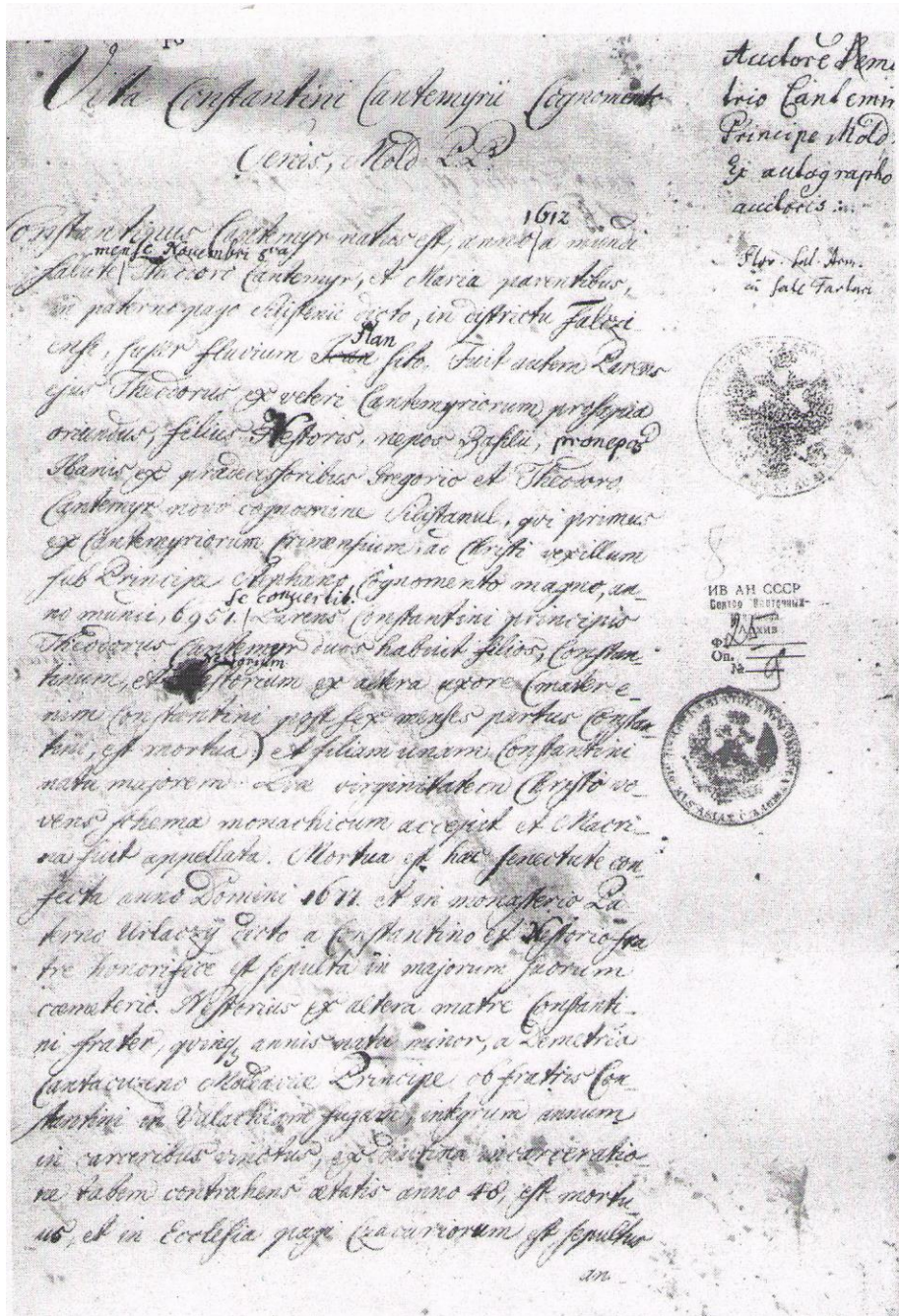
As Dimitrie Cantemir honest his parents, in the same manner did his children Maria and especially Antioh Cantemir who understood the value of his father's writings and respecting the Christian values has undertaken an extensive campaign of translating and publishing of writings of Moldavian Prince⁸.

⁸ Andrei Eșanu, Valentina Eșanu, "Antioh Cantemir – propagator al operelor tatălui său", in *Dinastia Cantemireștilor (sec. XVII–XVIII)*, Chișinău, Știința Editions, 2008, pp. 559–567; Andrei Eșanu, Valentina Eșanu, "Contribuția lui Antioh Cantemir la editarea și receptarea operei lui Dimitrie Cantemir în cultura europeană", in *Dimitrie Cantemir. Prinț între filosofi și filosof între prinți*. Papers read at the international conference *Opera lui Dimitrie Cantemir – simbol al convergenței civilizațiilor*, 21–22 octombrie 2010, Bucharest, 2011, p. 35–48.

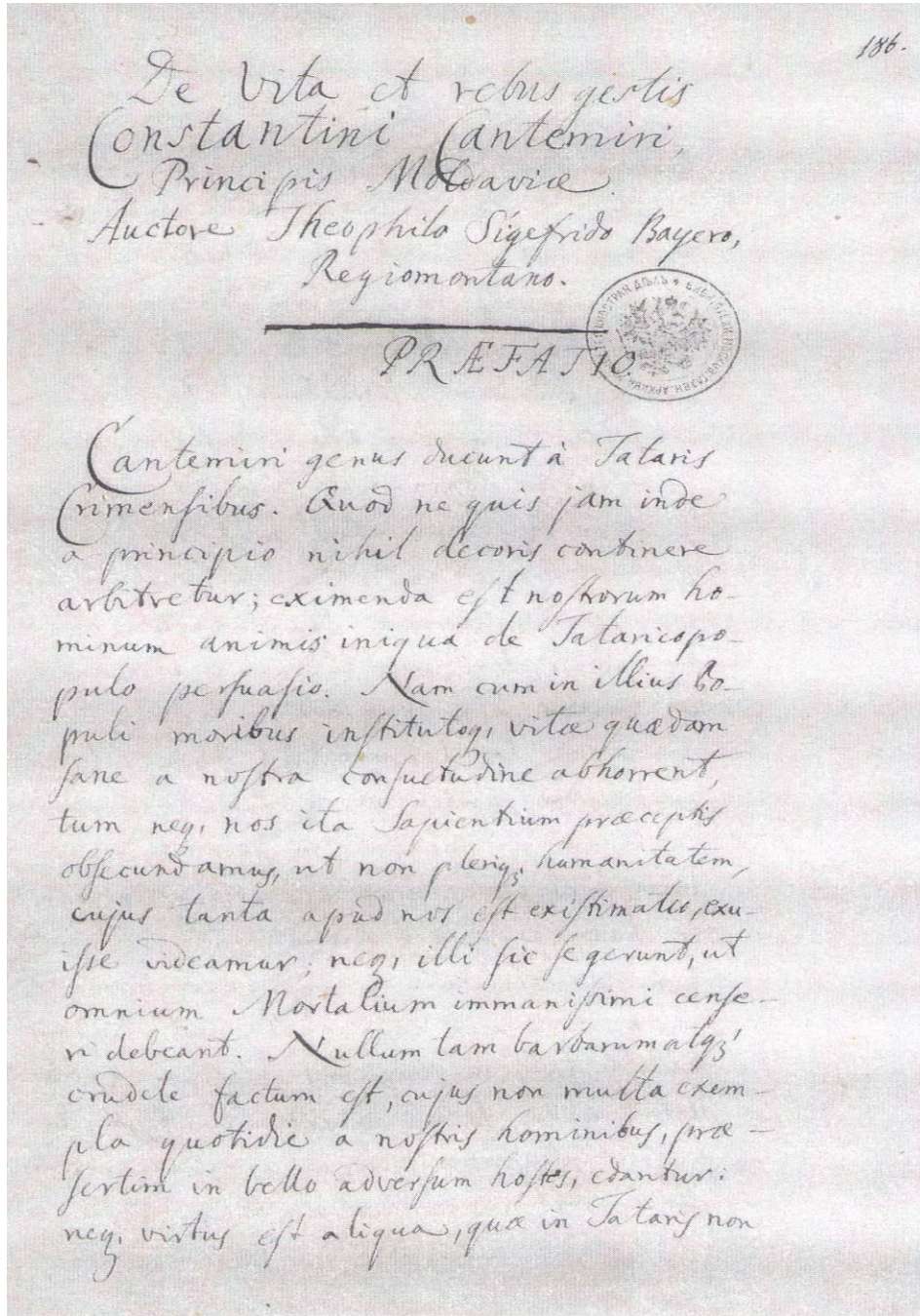
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