CANTEMIR'S LATIN WORKS IN THE RUSSIAN ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

Eugenia ZGREABĂN[*]

Abstract: *In this scientific work, I wanted to present Cantemir's Latin will, kept in the Russian Federation, in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents and in the V. I. Lenin Library in Moscow, the "manuscript section". A fruitful period for the scientific and literary activity developed by Cantemir is during 1714-1722, when he writes his most important works – historical, geographic and folkloric scientific works. During Peter the Great, in Russia, he gets in contact with the Western European world. By his works, Cantemir succeeds in giving some invaluable cultural works to the Romanian and world literature, which managed to go over time, proving to be real spiritual experiences, thus bringing his contribution to the development of the Romanian humanism and succeeding in arising the admiration of some great scholars ((Leibniz, Voltaire, Montesquieu) and of the emperors of his time (Peter the Great, the tsar of Russia).*

Keywords: *archive, manuscript, book collection.*

The legacy of Cantemir's works, as well as his life history, is for the most part located in the libraries and archives from Moscow and Sankt-Petersburg. These works were of great interest for the Romanian researchers (starting with the academician Grigore Tocilescu), for the researchers from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldavia, and from many European countries, too. At the moment Cantemir had to immigrate to Russia – (1711, the year when he was defeated in the battle of Stănileşti) – he was a complex person, he knew very well Old and Modern Greek, Latin and Italian, Arabian, Turkish and Persian, Russian and French, practised music and architecture, having enough knowledge in mathematics, religion and philosophy. Hence, we can draw the conclusion that Dimitrie Cantemir was a complex statesman, politician and a very educated man: "Cantemir was one of these absolute cultural men. A historian, geographer, philosopher, Orientalist, theologian, innovator in music, art amateur, with specialist claims in philosophy and mathematics [...]. But in the middle of these diverse preoccupations, he first of all remains a historian" (Panaitescu, 1958: 256).

We can also say about Dimitrie Cantemir that he was not a "free ruler", that his life encountered others circumstances, too, sometimes dramatic ones. "A political man and a scholar who lived like a torch between a sunset and a sunrise of a century (1673 – 1723), and through his brilliant intuitions to the confluence of the feudal world to the modern one, Dimitrie Cantemir was a consistent fighter for the achievement of a political ideal of an elevated patriotism – the emancipation of his country from under the ottoman domination" (Măciucă, 1972: 17).

Due to his encyclopaedic personality, many considers that Dimitrie Cantemir belongs to the humanistic trend, but also that he can be considered a live example of the early Enlightenment man (sometimes, in the specialised literature, it is called "pre-Enlightenment", from the middle of the 17th century until the middle of the 18th century). "Dimitrie Cantemir was a Renaissance man, of course not a man of the Renaissance from the 15th and 16th centuries, but having the decadent aspects of the Jesuit Renaissance from the 17th century. From the Renaissance, it remains the passion for culture and classical languages, which also Cantemir has, writing in a declamatory

[*] University of Piteşti, jeny_pitesti@yahoo.com

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

Jesuit-Baroque-type Latin, and the appreciation for the people with multilateral creation gift – with absolute culture men according to the notion of that time" (Panaitescu, 1958 : 256).

As mentioned above, most of Dimitrie Cantemir's manuscripts have been kept in the Russian Federation, in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents – Российский государственный архив древних актов (known under the name of RGADA-РГАДА). This is in fact the oldest archive in Russia, made up of five very big archives: the Moscow Main Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MGAMID), Moscow Archive of the Ministry of Justice (MAMIU), the Moscow Palace Archive, the State Archive of the Russian Empire and the Land Survey Chancellery Archive. The Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (RGADA) is considered one of the greatest federal archives containing a number of over 3.2 million works. We can find here different antique, Greek and Slavic manuscripts from the 10th and 11th centuries, but also important works from the end of the 18th century. The documents associated with the name of the ruler Dimitrie Cantemir are located in four large book collections from the Archive.

The most important book collection, seen by us, too, is book collection 181, "Manuscript Section of the Library MGAMID", where I discovered a few of Cantemir's manuscripts, worthy of attention: *The History of Moldavia and Wallachia. The Shortening of the System of General Logic, The Hieroglyphic History, The Chronicle of Ancient Times of the Romanian-Moldavian-Wallachian, In compendio lum universae logices institutiones.*

In book collection 181, I identified other manuscripts gathered there since the 70's which belonged to the boyar fallen into disfavour, A. S. Matveev. Later on, this collection was completed with the confiscated manuscripts of the princes Dolgoruki, A. P. Volinski, P. I. Musin-Puşkin, A. I. Osterman. Talking to the manager of the Archive, M. M. R. Râjenkov, he confessed that subsequently they received in the archive the acquisitions and donations on behalf of the government agencies and archive management.

We shall not insist too much on talking about these works of the princes, because they were not in the centre of our attention, in exchange, we shall try to present some of the main features of the Cantemir's manuscripts that we noticed during our research.

As mentioned above, in book collection 181, the Romanian manuscript no. 1419 is found in the work *The Hieroglyphic History*, a book written by hand with Cyrillic letters in 1705 (having autograph of Dimitrie Cantemir, title page and 333 leaves (21.2 x 16.5cm).

The text is achieved by a habile penman and is colourful: initials in cinnabar and golden frontispiece. On the bottom title page, there is also an inscription regarding the donation of 1783 for MGAMID on behalf of Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski. In the title page of the original manuscript, the name of Dimitrie Cantemirs appears twice, once in Arabian (*Dimitri bekKhantimir*), and once in Cyrillic (Dimitriu Cantemir).

In the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest, we find the copy of Grigore Tocilescu in Manuscript 321, and the microfilm 18 (a copy made after the manuscript from Moscow) is found in the State Archive from Bucharest.

The full title of this parable novel is: *The Hieroglyphic History in twelve parts divided in 760 sentences, beautifully adorned, in the beginning with revealing numbers and at the end with foreign significant numbers, composed by Dimitrie Cantemir*.

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

The Hieroglyphic History – История иероглификэ 1705

In the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents, I also found the work *The History of Moldavia and Wallachia*, written in 1715 in Latin. I noticed that the work contained detailed notes made by the author, and also some comments on the margins made in Wallachian-Moldavian language (with Latin characters). The manuscript seems to have been donated, because on the leaf 129, there is an inscription in Russian, referring to the author and to the one who had offered it: "This book, written by hand by the Moldavian ruler Dimitrie Cantemir, I have donated to the Moscow Archive of the State College of Foreign Affairs in 1783, by Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski, court councillor".

The work *The Chronicle of the Ancient Times of the Romanian-Moldavian-Wallachian, Хроника стародавности романо-молдо-влахов* (1717-1723) was written by Dimitrie Cantemir with Cyrillic letters in 1717 in Sankt Petersburg. It was identified in the book collection 181, Manuscript no. 1420, containing 344 leaves (32 x 21cm).

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

The Chronicle of the Ancient Times of the Romanian-Moldavian-Wallachian, *Хроника стародавности романо-молдо-влахов*

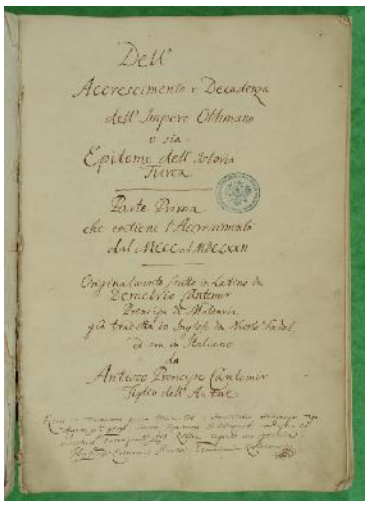
An exquisite manuscript, written by hand in Latin, is *In compendio lum universae logices institutionis – The Shortening of the System of General Logic.* Although it has only 44 leaves, it is covered in leather with golden floral ornaments and golden margins. It seems that the manuscript had been donated by the same court councillor, Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski. This is written right on the title page, where I deciphered an inscription in Russian: "This book was donated t the Moscow Archive of the State College of Foreign Affairs in 1783 by Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski, court councillor". The original of this manuscript is found in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents and belongs to the book collection 181, manuscript no. 1329, leaves 1-44 (88 pages).

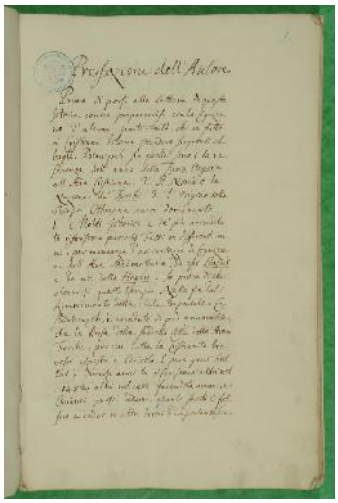
Incompendiolumuniversaelogicesinstitutionis is translated into Romanian by Dan Sluşanski and published in 1995, and the translation into Russian was made by M. Kaşuba, I. Zharaţi and I. Paslavski in 1988. In 1883, the Romanian Academic Society publishes this *Compendium* in Latin in volume VI of *Works*. V. Alexandrescu says that Dimitrie Cantemir's work would have been written until the year 1700 and represents a summary or a rendering of the treaty of the Greek monk, Ieremia Cacaveles, *Institutions logiques* (Alexandrescu, 2003: 249).

Also in the book collection 181, document 1363, inventory 16, I identified the manuscript of the work *The History of the Rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire – Historia increment rum at que decrementorum Aulae Othmmanicae.* This work was written between 17141716 and translated from latin into Italian. We fin d out from the title that this is in fact a translation of the first part (years 1300-1672), and the original version was written in Latin by Dimitrie Cantemir, and then translated into English by N. Tyndall and into Italian by the younger son of the Ruler, Antioh Cantemir. The text is in Italian. "A., Dell'Accrescimento e Decadenza Dell' Impero Othomano o sia Epitome dell' Istoria Turca. Parte prima che contiene l'accrescimento dal MCCC al

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

MDCLXXII. Originalmente scritta in Latino da Demetrio Cantemir Principe di Moldavia, gia tradutta in Inglese da Nicolo Tinda ed ora in Italiano da Antioco Principe Cantemir figlio dell'Autore" – leaf 251 (32 x 21cm).





The History of the Rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire – *Historia increment rum at que decrementorum Aulae Othmmanicae*.

As in the other manuscripts, we find an inscription in Russian clarifying the origin of the work: „This book is written by hand by the Russian counsellor and minister at the French court, bought by me in auction (tak.- M. R.), I donated it to the Moscow Archive of the State College of Foreign Affairs in 1783. Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski, court councillor". Studying the work thoughtfully, I noticed that the manuscript *The History of Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Empire* does not occupy all of it. At the end, to more specific, leaves 186-251, the writing is the same, but it is not in Italian, but in Latin, containing the copy of prince Dimitrie Cantemir*s work, *The Life of Constantin Cantemir, Prince of Moldavia – De Vita et rebus gestis Constantini Cantemiri, Principis Moldaviae*. Auctore Theophilo Sigefrido Bayero, innovative.

I found a copy, too, in which it is presented another name of author – Theophilus Siegfried Bayer (making reference probably to the academician Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer, who we know about that he lived during (1694-1738) and took care of the translation from Latin of Dimitrie Cantemir's works. From the composition point of view, Bayer's book includes 12 chapters, too, just like *Vita Constantini Cantemyrii, cognomento Senis, Moldaviae Principis,* following Dimitrie Cantemir's book about his father, Constantin Cantemir.

I noticed that the manuscript described is annexed to another one in Italian – "Annotations", *Annotazioni*, notes and large comments to "The History of the Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Empire" containing the pages 253-406. Antioh Cantemir will translate into Italian both works, (1735-1738), containing 193 leaves and 10 blank

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

leaves. The manuscript was donated to the archive by Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski, court councillor.

In the former half of the 18th century, this work had a great success in the Western world, being published shortly in the three languages: English, French and German. The work remained for a century the main source of information about the Turkish history for the entire Europe.

Ivan Iliinski's Diary (Notationesquotidianae) is found in the book collection 181, manuscript 388. This diary was achieved by Dimitrie Cantemir's private secretary and it contains 67 leaves (134 pages), with daily notes regarding the Cantemirs. The diary begins with ordinary notes dating from January 1721 and ends in October 1723 when Prince Dimitrie Cantemir was buried in Moscow. Besides the daily notes written down by Iliinski, I also found in the diary some mathematics exercises made by Antioh, Latin-Russian vocabulary exercises, *Ex libello Principis* (six geographical references made by Cantemir, regarding Cazan, Saratov, Astrachan), Turkish letters, and also bibliographical notes, such as: *Lexicon ellenoromaikon, Lexicon philologicum* and *Rosarium Politicum.*

The second important book collection that drew our attention is *book collection 9*, also known as "*The Cabinet of Peter I*". It includes the documents of the personal chancellery of the tsar in which there were office works for a wide range of problems related to the internal and external policy, which were solved by his direct participation. I also found here the correspondence between Prince Dimitrie Cantemir and the tsar Peter the Great of Russia.

Most of these letters were copied from the original Russian ones from the Moscow Archives by the Romanian academician, Gr. Tocilescu. They are found at the Romanian Academy (no. 325-326 – "Report", *The Annals of the Romanian Academic Society*, vol. IX, pages 45-53). The originals of the epistles of Dimitrie Cantemir were drafted in Latin, but their copies are written in Russian.

The letters are translated into Romanian by Ştefan Ciobanu, *Dimitrie Cantemir in Russia*, Editura Elion, 2000, pages.. 109-202. As Şt. Ciobanu confesses in his book, Dimitrie Cantemir's letters were published by P. Pekarski, *Наука и литературавъ РоссіиприПетръI-мъВеликомъ*, vol. I, St. Petersburg, 1962, pages 567-578.

*The book collection 68, „The Relationships of Russia with Moldavia and Wallachia"***.** Among the important documents that I found here, there are the following: Dimitrie Cantemir's Manifest about the passing under the protection of Russia; the documents [urice] of Tsar Peter for the estates of Moldavian boyars, who left together with the ruler in Russia; the correspondence of the chancellor of count G. I. Golovkin with Prince Dimitrie Cantemir (1712-1719). All these documents are found in copies and lists. The book collection 68 was started under the management of G. F. Miller and was achieved in the Moscow Archive of the College of Foreign Affairs, during the description of the documents of the Section of errands.

Another important book collection that I researched deeply is *book collection 1374*, "*The Representatives of the Cantemir Family"*. There are here important economic, business and personal documents of the different representatives of the family of Cantemir Princes. It includes letters, decisions and decrees regarding the granting to the Ruler Dimitrie Cantemir of the Russian citizenship and of some land estates, and also houses, that Peter the Great offered to Cantemir and his heirs, as well as a salary in amount of 6000 roubles.

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

In “A Letter of September 1722 of Dimitrie Cantemir to Peter the Great” published by P. Pekarski, *Наука и литературавъРоссіипривремяПетраI-мъВеликомъ*, vol. I, St. Petersburg, page 575-576, we find out that Cantemir had also received near Moscow “the villages that had belonged to Prince Vasilie Goliţân, village of Ciornâia Greazi (today Ţarişâno, district of Moscow), with the hamlets and the village of Bulatrikova, according to the register, there in them 37 dvors, with lakes and mills built by me”. All these ownership documents for factories and land estates, letters, petitions, and decrees, are generally kept in copies and they ate from the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century.

The friendship between Peter the Great, tsar of Russia and the Moldavian Ruler, Dimitrie Cantemir remained in history. We cannot help to notice that Peter I could always appreciate the devoted persons, who were close to him spiritually. As we can see from the letter mentioned above, after Dimitrie Cantemir moved to Russia, he received the title of Principe Serenisin and was rewarded with large land properties, including some close to Moscow. But the most important thing to be remembered is that, until the end of his life, Cantemir remained a helpful collaborator and one of the closest and trustworthy counsellors of the tsar. Dimitrie Cantemir distinguished by devotion and intelligence, and during the Persian Campaign (1722-1723) he was the chief of the campaign chancellery and composed the manifests and proclamations for the local population. Then, Cantemir has the merits of establishing the first printing shop in Russia with Arabian letters, to print the proclamations translated into Turkish. The Arabian researcher, D. A. Morozov, discovered a sample of such a proclamation in the book collections of the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (RGADA).

Regarding all these manuscripts that we presented above and studied deeply, we can say that what they have in common is that they were assigned to the Moscow State Archive of the College of Foreign Affairs. That is how these manuscripts were introduced in the archive. But there is still the question: how did these writings, very important for those who donated hem, arrived in their possession? It seems that all the works were in the possession of Dimitrie Cantemir’s son, Serghei (Şerban). About the latter, they know he died in 1780, without children. His archive was sold in auction and would have been bought by Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski. We have to take into account this version, too, although the benefactor mentions the auction as a main source of acquisition of the manuscript only for one of the “six inscriptions added” (more precisely, work 1363).

They do not know exactly how these manuscripts of Prince Dimitrie Cantemir came to the possession of Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski. As we mentioned in the first chapter of this work, Cantemir’s mother comes from the Bantâş family. Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski’s father, Nicolai Konstantinovici was brought from Iaşi to Russia by his mother at the age of 8, where he moved in 1717, at his cousin’s invitation, Prince Dimitrie Cantemir who, after the Prut campaign (1711) left the princedom and found protection to Peter the Great. As we know, Nicolai Konstantinovici was married to Anna Stepanova, the daughter of the Moldavian nobleman, Zetis Kamenski, the sister of the Moscow Archbishop, Ambrozie. Considering all these kinship relations, we can explain how Nicolae Bantâş-Kamenski could become the owner of these Cantemir manuscripts.

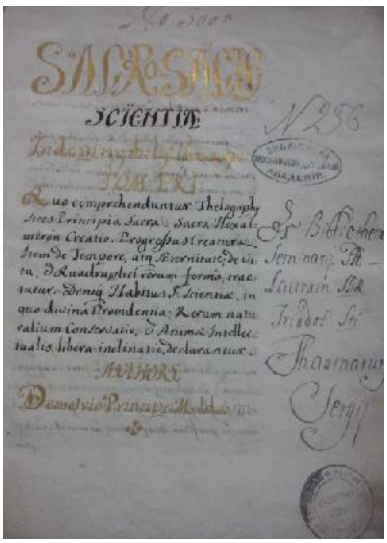
Another place where they keep Dimitrie Cantemir’s manuscripts is the State Library V. I. Lenin in Moscow “manuscript section” – known as ОтделерукописейГосударственнойбиблиотеки СССР имени В. И. Ленина. Here, there are the following works: *Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago*, *Loca*

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

Obscura in Cathechisi, Institutio Logicesid est de philosophiae instrumentali arte habitus.

At the Moscow State Library, I also identified the manuscript *Ioannis Baptistae Van Helmont. Phisices universalis doctrina et Christian la efidei congrua et necessaria philosophia*. Dimitrie Cantemir studied Ioannis Baptistae Van Helmont at the Constantinople Academy with Arts Meletii and it was the main source of inspiration for his philosophical books.

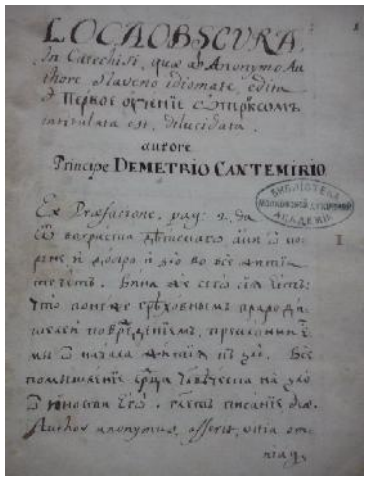
Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago – The indescribable image of the sacred science. This manuscript makes an impression even at the beginning, because of its cover which is covered in leather with golden impressions. As mentioned above, I discovered the original manuscript of the work at the State Library V. I. Lenin in Moscow)manuscript section), book collection 173, Latin manuscript 256 and contains 167 leaves (13 parts – 21.0 x 16.0cm). N. Locusteanu takes care of the first translation into Romanian of this work, in 1928. This will be also written down on the pages of the manuscript, reproduced below.



Manuscript cover and first page of *Sacro-sanctae scientiae indepingibilis imago* (1700) – *Неописуемый образ священной науки – Метафизика*

Loca Obscura in Cathechisia was written in Latin, having the cover covered in leather with golden impression. The manuscript belongs to the same book collection 173 of the State Library V. I. Lenin, manuscript 277 and it has 131 leaves (6 parts – 20.0 x 16.0cm). On margins, there are notes made in pencil. The work was brought t the Library Lavrei Saint Serghie. A copy made from the Russian text of this manuscript, made by Dimitrie Cantemir's private secretary, is found at the ARussian National Library from Sankt Petersbug, collection F. A. Tolstoi, manuscript 217. The translation into Romanian of the work was made pretty late in 1973 by T. Bodogae in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română [Romanian Orthodox Church]*, Bucureşti, XCI, no. 9-10, pages 1063-1111.

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)

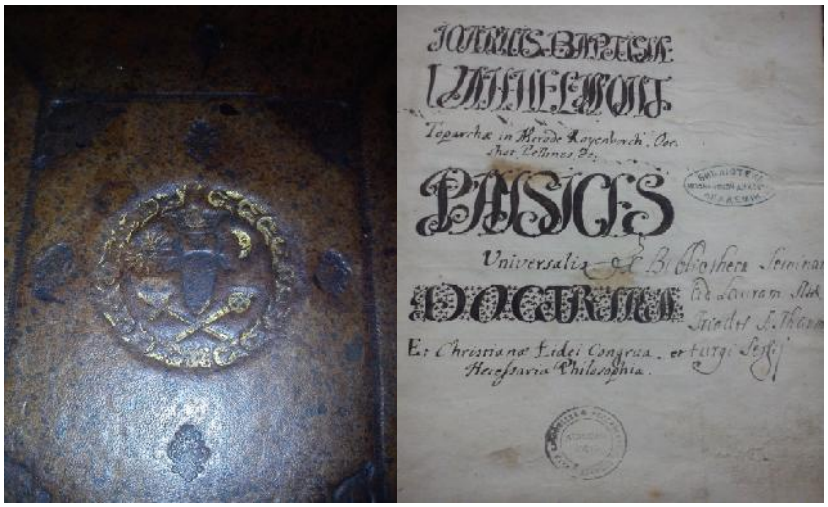

LOCA OBSCVRA
In Catechisi, quæ ab Anonymo Au
thore Slaveno idiomate edita
Первое ученїе отрокомъ
intitulata est, Dilucidata
autore
Principe DEMETRIO CANTEMIRIO

Loca obscura in catechisiquae ab anonymo authore slaveno idiomate edita et pervoeucenie otrokom intitulata est, dilucidata autore Dematrio Cantemirio (1700)

The manuscript *InstitutioLogicesid est de philosophiae instrumentali arte habitus* was brought from the Library Lavrei Saint Serghie, and now it is found at the Moscow State Library, quota 308.

The manuscript *Ioannis Baptistae Van Helmont. Phisices universalis doctrina et Christiana efidei congrua et necessaria philosophia* is at the State Library V. I. Lenin in Moscow, book collection 173, Latin manuscript 312. The work contains 417 leaves (7 parts – 21.6 x 16.5 cm). As all other 3 manuscripts mentioned above, this work was fount at the Seminar Library belonging to Lavrei Saint Trinity of Saint Serghie Wonder Maker. The cover is very beautiful, covered in leather with gold engraved emblem.

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)



Ioannis Baptistae Van Helmont physices universalis doctrina

The Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents and the State Library V. I. Lenin in Moscow are not the only places where they keep the scientific and literary works of Dimitrie Cantemir.

As we know, the works of the great scholar were translated in many languages by his son himself, Antioh Cantemir. Their full inventory at world level is not at all an easy task, being in the charge of the current researchers. The next generations should enjoy this spiritual legacy, too.

Bibliography

Măciucă, C., *Dimitrie Cantemir*, Colecţia „Oameni iluştri", Editura Albatros, Bucureşti, 1972

MISCELLANEA ARCHAEVS VII (2003), fasc. 3-4, p. 241-265. Centre d'Histoire des Religions, Université de Bucarest *Vlad ALEXANDRESCU*. UN MANUSCRIT INÉDIT ET INCONNU DE DÉMÈTRE CANTEMIR

P. Pekarski, *Наука и литература въ Россіи при Петръ I-мъ Великомъ*, vol. I, St. Petersburg, 1962

Panaitescu, P. P., *Dimitrie Cantemir. Viaţa şi opera*, Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, Bucureşti, 1958

Ştefan Ciobanu, *Dimitrie Cantemir in Rusia*, Editura Elion, Bucureşti, 2000

BDD-A14517 © 2014 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.25 (2026-09-15 06:18:28 UTC)