

**PUBLICATION OF HISTORICAL SOURCES – ASSESSMENT,  
APPROACH, INTERPRETATION.  
CASE STUDY: ANTIOCHUS CANTEMIR'S PASSPORT\***

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**Abstract:** *This research focuses on the release of a previously unexplored historical document, Antiochus Cantemir's diplomatic passport, recently discovered in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow. The inclusion of this authentic document in scholarly discourse is an important addition to Cantemir's family research. The investigation attempted not only to highlight one of the pages of Antiochus Cantemir's diplomatic activities but also to exploit, to a certain extent, the relevance of a representative documentary source for this era.*

**Keywords:** *Historical source, interpretation, Antiochus Cantemir, Peter I, Russia, passport, diplomacy.*

**Rezumat:** *Publicarea izvoarelor istorice – valorificarea, abordarea, interpretarea. Studiu de caz: pașaportul lui Antioh Cantemir. Prezentul studiu propune spre publicare un document inedit cu valoare istorică specială: pașaportul diplomatic al lui Antioh Cantemir, recent depistat în Arhiva Istorică de Stat a Actelor Vechi din Moscova. Introducerea în circuitul științific a acestui document autentic reprezintă o contribuție esențială la dezvoltarea cantemirologiei contemporane. Pe baza acestui document intenționăm să studiem nu numai una din paginile activității diplomatice a lui Antioh Cantemir, ci și să valorificăm, într-o anumită măsură, importanța unei surse documentare reprezentative pentru această epocă.*

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## INTRODUCTION

To mark the 350th anniversary of the famous Romanian historian, scholar, and intellectual's birth (on October 26, 1673) and the 300th anniversary of his passing, the year 2023 has been declared the Dimitrie Cantemir Year. In this context, this study is devoted to his well-known son Antiochus Cantemir, who, like his father, contributed to an increased visibility of the Cantemir family in world history. "Many studies from the most diverse fields continue to provide in-depth analysis of these fascinating historical figures"<sup>1</sup>, said Stefan Lemny, referring to both the renowned father and son.

The process of rewriting history by each generation is inevitable according to modern historiography. Finding, evaluating, and integrating new historical sources into scientific use contribute to reaffirming and further developing the study of history. Over the last three decades, modern historical research has reached a new stage of development with the emergence of new approaches, concepts, and methodological norms. Historians' inherent curiosity in many new research methodologies led to a fundamental shift in methodological standards, and transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, particularly through the perspective of historical anthropology.

## RESEARCH PURPOSE

The concept of historical sources is continuously revised by incorporating newly found documents into the scientific circuit. A historian's main task is to establish the accuracy and reliability of the source, the relevance and importance of the information for the research, the evaluation and organization of data from historical sources, the selective use of sources, etc. Researchers must be capable of appreciating, evaluating and comparing the sources found. Unfortunately, these simple rules are not always followed, and document publishing is frequently quantitative rather than qualitative, the number of pages becoming more important than the scientific (informational) content. The question is whether publishing previously unknown document collections and using new scientific

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<sup>1</sup> Șt. Lemny, *Dimitrie Cantemir. Un principe roman în zorile Luminilor europene* [A Romanian Prince at the Dawn of the European Enlightenment], București, Institutul Cultural Român, 2019, p. 67.

techniques contribute to a new interpretation of history or the manipulation of information acquired from the document.

This research focuses on a new historical document, an actual diplomatic passport of Antiochus Cantemir,<sup>2</sup> recently found in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA), Fond 1374 *The Cantemirs*, coll. 1, fol. 142, p. 279. Antiochus Cantemir received the passport “on December 27, 1731, by decree of Empress Anna Ioannovna for a trip to England.”<sup>3</sup>

### RESEARCH CONTEXT

This historical source is of exceptional research significance since the passport was and continues to be an important legal document reflecting the history of law and diplomacy in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The discovered original passport of Antiochus Cantemir is written in Russian, but there were cover letters in English, German and French since the journey to England was long and the diplomat had to cross numerous borders.

An appointed ambassador necessarily received the credentials<sup>4</sup> certifying his authority as a diplomatic representative (envoy). A letter of credence was signed exclusively by the head of state and addressed to the receiving head of state in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A special seal certified the letters. “On December 24, 1731, a letter of credence was drawn up for Antiochus Cantemir, and three days later, on December 27, an «Instruction», outlining the main directions of his activities in the host country.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Antiochus Cantemir (10/21.09.1708/1709, Istanbul – 31.03/11.04.1744, Paris), the youngest son of Dimitrie Cantemir (1673 – 1723), born in marriage to Cassandra Cantacuzino (1681 (?) – 1713). A poet-satirist, writer, diplomat and educator, figure of the early Russian Enlightenment. He took part in the events that led to the accession of Empress Anna Ioannovna, then in the struggle against members of the Supreme Privy Council, who were trying to limit the autocracy. A diplomatic representative of Russia in London (1732 – 1738), later in Paris (1738 – 1744). For his comprehensive education and wide erudition, he became famous in Russia and Europe. Had two illegitimate children.

<sup>3</sup> Rossijskij gosudarsvennyi istoricheskij archiv drevnich aktov [Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts] (hereinafter **RGADA**), coll. 1374, aids 1, fol.142, p. 279 (See Annex no. 1).

<sup>4</sup> The credentials are one single document, although the word is plural. The plural has traditionally been preserved, since, in the letters of the Russian sovereigns, only the indication of the full title of the tsar required a listing of 55 territories that he owned. As a result, the document was a rather impressive scroll (V. P. Egorov, *Diplomaticheskij protokol i jetiket* [Diplomatic protocol and etiquette], Moscow, MGU Publ., 2013, p. 71).

<sup>5</sup> Letter of Credence from the Russian Resident at the English Royal Court Antiochus

Unfortunately, there is no distinct literature of a historical and legal sort that would allow the study of the origin and formation of the diplomatic passport system methodologically. There are no complete analytical studies on the history of a diplomatic passport. This topic is merely addressed in the broad framework of passport history. The term “passaporto” is of Italian origin, derived from the Latin “passus” (“pace”). It consists of two words: “pass” (“to pass”) and “porto” (“harbour”, “port”). In this sense, the word “passport” spread to other European countries, including Germany, and France, and came to refer to any written documents authorizing passage across the border. The passport, like the passport system in general, did not become a legal document in Russia until the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Peter I.<sup>6</sup>

In 1724, Peter I and the Senate<sup>7</sup> issued a series of decrees introducing various kinds of documents for a significant part of the population inside the country, identical to modern passports. In the same year, Peter I revised his order on the free travel of nobles abroad. Starting from 1725, “those who are going overseas should not be allowed to leave without a passport from the Collegium of Foreign Affairs”,<sup>8</sup> that is, nobility who travelled abroad for business or study was required to own a diplomatic passport, which strengthened the legal status of a Russian citizen abroad. These legislative acts established Russia's “passport system”, a

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Cantemir dated December 24 (Old Style), 1731, in Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire. Coll. 35 (Relations between Russia and England), aids. 1, fol. 542, p. 1–2; S. L. Turilova, A. A. Orlov, *Knjaz' Antioh Dmitrievich Kantemir – russkij diplomat, pojet i filosof (K 310-letiju so dnja rozhdenija)* [Prince Antiochus Dmitrievich Kantemir – Russian diplomat, poet and philosopher (To the 310<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth)], in “Lokus, ljudi, obshhestvo, kul'tury, smysly” [Locus, people, society, cultures, meanings], 2017, No. 4, p. 7. Available at: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/knyaz-antioh-dmitrievich-kantemir-russkij-diplomat-poet-i-filosof-k-310-letiyu-so-dnya-rozhdeniya/pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Peter I (9 June/30 May 1672 – 8 February/28 January 1725), representative of the Romanov dynasty, most known as Peter the Great. A Russian monarch who ruled Russia from 7 May/27 April 1682 to 1721, and subsequently the Russian Empire until his death in 1725. Until 1696, he ruled jointly with his older half-brother Ivan V. He is primarily credited with the modernization of the country, transforming it into a European power.

<sup>7</sup> The Governing Senate was established in 1711 by decree of Peter I as the highest governing body in the Russian Empire, combining important state functions including legislative, executive, supervisory, and judicial.

<sup>8</sup> *Polnyj svod zakonov Rossijskoj imperii* [Complete set of laws of the Russian Empire], Coll. 1 (1649-1825), vol. 5, no. 3445/49.

feature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>

According to the sequence of events, the passport provided to Antiochus Cantemir in 1731 has not yet attained the perfection of a European passport and might serve as an illustration of one of the first diplomatic passports. In this context, it is worth noting that the electronic release of a copy of Antiochus Cantemir's passport has been reported on the website "Oriental Literature. Medieval historical sources of the East and West",<sup>10</sup> where the text is nearly identical to the original, apart from some phrases (expressions) that will be discussed in this study.

The passport's structure and semantic presentation must first be examined. The empress was first mentioned with all of her titles because it was an imperial order and only she had complete competence and authority to issue and sign a passport for a diplomatic servant, a particular state document: "By the Grace of God, we, Anna, Empress and Autocrat of All Russia,<sup>11</sup> and others, and others, and others. Through this announcement to all who should know that the bearer of this document, Prince Antiochus Cantemir, has been sent to England for our affairs. For the sake of this, we friendly ask all high officials, and especially His Royal Majesty of Great Britain, from each according to the rank and dignity."<sup>12</sup>

There is only one difference between the original and the copy. If Antiochus Cantemir simply appears as a prince in the original document, there is a more

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<sup>9</sup> V. G. Chernukha, *Passport v Rossii. 1719-1917* [Passport in Russia. 1719-1917], Saint Petersburg, 2007, pp. 21-49.

<sup>10</sup> "Passport to Prince Antiochus Cantemir. By the Grace of God, we, Anna, Empress and Autocrat of All Russia, and others, and others, and others. Through this announcement to all who should know that the bearer of this paper, our lifeguard lieutenant (poruchik) Prince Antiochus Cantemir, has been sent to England for our affairs; for the sake of this, we friendly ask all high officials, and especially His Royal Majesty of Great Britain, from each according to the rank and dignity; to those concerned, we express our kind wish, and we all-mercifully command to our military and civil administrators that the aforementioned Prince Antiochus Cantemir with the people and things that are with him not only freely and without delay pass wherever his path lies, both going there to England and returning back. But also, every favour and help to show him is ordered. For which we promise to repay mutually high-ranking persons in such cases; Our subjects should fulfil this command of ours. As evidence of this, this pass with our seal was given to him in Moscow, December 27, 1731. Chancellor Count Golovkin." Available at: <https://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Engl/XVIII/1720-1740/Kantemir/181-200/199.phtml?id=5113>

<sup>11</sup> Anna Ioannovna (January 28/February 7, 1693 – October 17/28, 1740), Empress of Russia from the Romanov dynasty. Daughter of Tsar Ivan V and niece of Emperor Peter I.

<sup>12</sup> RGADA, coll. 1374, aids 1, fol.142, p. 279.

thorough specification of his ranks in the copy: "our lifeguard lieutenant Prince."<sup>13</sup> Antiochus Cantemir enlisted in the Lifeguards Preobrazhensky Regiment before completing his studies at the Academy of Sciences. He served in the lower ranks for three years before receiving the first officer rank of lieutenant (poruchik) in 1728.<sup>14</sup>

This is an important difference between the copy and the original because the text does not mention the conventional passport data that were already included in European passports, where the passport system has a longer historical experience.

Passport documentation of people who were in the state, military, or civil service at the time required an official list or a service record. It was an important component of the passport, the main document of the era. The form and content of the data changed, but information such as the first name, patronymic, last name, year of birth, class affiliation, family and property status, titles, ranks, state awards, etc. were mandatory.

Antiochus Cantemir (See Annex no. 2) was only 22/23 years old<sup>15</sup> when he was appointed to the post of Russian Empire representative in Great Britain in 1731. He had the fame of a highly educated intellectual. Besides being excellently educated at home,<sup>16</sup> he proved himself one of the best students at the Greco-Slavic Academy, and "in 1724-1725, Antiochus Cantemir spent a short period of study with St. Petersburg academicians. He studied mathematics with Professor Bernoulli, physics with Bilfinger, history with Bayer, and moral philosophy with Christophorus Gross."<sup>17</sup> In society, Antiochus was known as a gifted and versatile person, he was fluent in several languages – Latin, English, Italian, and French, showed interest in ancient history, physics, and jurisprudence, and he was fond of literature and

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<sup>13</sup> See: <https://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Engl/XVIII/1720-1740/Kantemir/181-200/199.phtml?id=5113>

<sup>14</sup> A. D. Cantemir, *Collected Poems*, Leningrad, Sovetskij Pisatel' Publ., 1956. Available at: <http://www.epwr.ru/quotauthor/221/>

<sup>15</sup> In the historical literature, opinions differ about the year of birth of Antioch Cantemir. Some researchers believe that he was born in 1708, others believe that in 1709. In particular, in the collection of works by Antiochus Cantemir dated 1849, the publisher P. Perevlessky indicates September 10, 1709, as the date of his birth. See: *Sobranie sochinenij izvestnejshih russkih pisatelej* [Collected Works of the Most Famous Russian Writers], Issue 2, *Izbrannye sochinenija knjazja Antioha Kantemira* [Selected works of Prince Antiochus Cantemir], Moscow, University Printing House, 1849, p. IV.

<sup>16</sup> A large role in the education of A. Cantemir belonged to his mentors when he was a child, Anastasy (Afanasy) Kondoidi and Ivan Ilyinsky. Anastasius Kondoidi taught him ancient Greek, Latin, Italian languages, and history. He mastered Latin, Russian language and writing to perfection thanks to Ivan Ilyinsky.

<sup>17</sup> A. D. Cantemir, *Collected Poems*, Leningrad, Sovetskij Pisatel' Publ., 1956.

painting. Antiochus Cantemir took an active part in the events that led to the coming to power of Empress Anna Ioannovna. The Empress always treated Antiochus and his sister, Maria Dimitrievna, with warmth and tenderness, hosting her on numerous occasions and appointing her as her lady-in-waiting in 1730.

It should also be emphasized that the young Antiochus Cantemir was entrusted with a rather difficult diplomatic mission. The Russian Empire did not have a diplomatic representative in Great Britain as of November 14, 1720, following the memorandum of the English Secretary of State Stanhope, according to which Mikhail Bestuzhev, resident in London, was required to leave England within 8 days. "Official diplomatic relations were finally interrupted."<sup>18</sup>

Antiochus Cantemir, not only a young but also an inexperienced diplomat, faced a difficult task: restoring diplomatic relations interrupted for many years between the two leading empires of the world, the Russian Empire and Great Britain. They wrote upon his appointment stating, "he was appointed minister to the British court to renew goodwill."<sup>19</sup>

The conventional requirement for diplomatic officials crossing borders to comply with all security guarantees stated that: "To those concerned, we express our kind wish, and we all-mercifully command to our military and civil administrators that the aforementioned Prince Antiochus Cantemir with the people and things that are with him not only freely and without delay pass wherever his path lies, both going there to England and returning. But also, every favour and help to show him is ordered. For which we promise to repay mutually high-ranking persons in such cases; our subjects should fulfil this command of ours. As evidence of this, this pass<sup>20</sup> with our seal<sup>21</sup> was given to him. In Moscow, December 27, 1731."<sup>22</sup> Count Gavriil Golovkin, Chancellor and President of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs certified the passport.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Reljicii knjazja Antioha Dmitrievicha Kantemira iz Londona (1732-1733)* [Reports of Prince Antiochus Dmitrievich Cantemir from London (1732-1733)], vol. I, 1892, p. III.

<sup>19</sup> *Sochinenija knjazja Antioha Dmitrievicha Kantemira* [The works of Prince Antioch Dmitrievich Cantemir], St. Petersburg, 1836, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> "Pass" is the term for passport, often used at that time.

<sup>21</sup> The copy includes the note: "Sealed with a medium seal on red wax under a paper custodia." Available at: <https://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Engl/XVIII/1720-1740/Kantemir/181-200/199.phtml?id=5113>

<sup>22</sup> RGADA, coll. 1374, aids 1, fol. 142, p. 279.

<sup>23</sup> Gavriil (Gavrila) Ivanovich Golovkin (1660 – 25.07.1734, Moscow), count from 1707, associate of Peter I, from 1709 was the first chancellor of the Russian Empire, the first cabinet minister in 1731-1734. Ancestor of the Golovkin count family. Upon the establishment of

The passport bears traces of a small seal on red wax. The red colour of the seal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century testified that it was a document of special national and international importance. As mentioned above, no special studies on the history of the emergence and development of the diplomatic passport system were conducted, but a comparison with a document available for research was possible, specifically, the auxiliary collection of the National Museum of History of Moldova<sup>24</sup>, which contains a copy of “the jokey passport of Peter I, issued to him after the completion of the Prut Campaign, in the «wagon train on the Dniester River» in August 1711”<sup>25</sup>: “By the Grace, we, Peter the First, the Tsar and Autocrat of all Russia, and others, and others, and others, declare through this to everyone who should know about it. Since our nobleman, born Peter Mikhailov,<sup>26</sup> was temporarily released to the European kingdoms and lands for his needs; therefore, we friendly ask all high-ranking authorities, and each by his rank and dignity: The one to whom this Pass is presented, we kindly ask that the said nobleman be allowed to go freely and without delay where his path lies on his business, both going there and returning back with the people and things left with him, and that he be freely allowed to live safely where he can, and every benevolent assistance be given. For his free passage and stay, this Pass was given to him with our seal in the wagon train at the Dniester, in August 1711. Count Golovkin” (See Annex no. 3).

A comparison of Peter I’s 1711 passport and Antiochus’ 1731 passport demonstrates that the form and content have remained virtually unchanged after 20 years, and the same government official, Count Gavriil Golovkin, signed both passports. In other words, the two models of a foreign passport from the first third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century discussed in this study accurately reflect the era and the passport system.

## CONCLUSIONS

It remains unclear how Antiochus Cantemir’s original passport has survived to this day, but it most likely survived, firstly, because it was the main legal document in addition to the death certificate of the deceased returning home. “The body of

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collegiums in 1720, he was appointed president of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>24</sup> Further in the text: **NMHM**.

<sup>25</sup> NMHM, FA-5433. In 1987, a copy of the document, made by the artist M. Shoskalskaya, was acquired by the State Museum of History (now NMHM) from the collection of archives and libraries of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) (Purchase Act no. 423,1987; 80 rubles).

<sup>26</sup> The secret name of Tsar Peter I during the Prut Campaign. The tsar used this name for his foreign travels.



Antiochus Cantemir was sent from Rouen to Russia on a Dutch ship five months later, on August 4, 1745; it arrived at home in the fall, and he was buried in October 1745. Together with the body, 11 boxes with precious things, portraits, books, manuscripts and personal service papers, dishes, and church utensils were loaded."<sup>27</sup>

One of the testamentary executor Heinrich Gross' letters<sup>28</sup> sent to the "high heirs (Maria, Matvey and Sergey Cantemir – A/N) and the State Collegium of Foreign Affairs", includes the "inventory and register" of Antiochus Cantemir's personal belongings.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, Maria Cantemir made every effort to ensure that all the belongings of her beloved brother were delivered safely, as Antiochus Cantemir left the largest share of his property to his sister. Subsequently, after the death of Maria in 1757, all her property, including the belongings of Antiochus, passed to her brothers, Matvey and Sergey Cantemir, who, in turn, were very responsible for the preservation of family values. The well-known historian and archivist I. I. Shimko, in his research on Maria and Antiochus Cantemir, describing the family archive of the Cantemir princes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, makes references to the archive<sup>30</sup> of Sergey Cantemir, who was the last keeper of all Cantemir family possessions.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> L. Zabolotnaia, *Izvestnaja i neizvestnaja istorija zhizni docherej Dmitrija Kantemira. Marija Kantemir i Ekaterina-Smaragda Golitsyna (Sbornik statej, dokumentov i illjustracij)* [The known and unknown life story of the daughters of Dimitrie Cantemir: Maria Cantemir and Ekaterina-Smaragda Golitsyna (Collection of articles, documents and illustrations)], Chişinău, Cartdidact Publ., 2020, p. 350-351.

<sup>28</sup> Heinrich Ivanovich Gross (also known as Alexey Leontievich Gross; German: Heinrich Gottfried Gross; 1713/1714, Kirchheim unter Teck / Stuttgart, Duchy of Württemberg – 1765, London), master of theology, Russian diplomat, privy councillor, personal secretary and executor of A. Cantemir. An employee of the Russian Embassy in Great Britain (1736–1738). Since 1738, he has been in Paris with A. Cantemir.

<sup>29</sup> RGADA, coll.1374, aids.1, fol. 868, part 8, p. 54-54 back.

<sup>30</sup> Sergey Cantemir (08/11/1706, Istanbul – 04/24/1780, Moscow, Donskoy Monastery) was the third son of the Moldavian ruler Dimitrie Cantemir and Cassandra Cantacuzino. His real name was Şerban, which he received in honour of his maternal grandfather, Şerban Cantacuzino, the Wallachian ruler (1678-1688). However, since he was brought up and lived in Russia from early childhood, more often his name there sounded like Sergey, less often as Serban. In adulthood, he signed all documents and letters exclusively with the name Sergey. Only the name Sergey is found in the correspondence between his older sister Maria and his brothers Antiochus, Matvey, and Konstantin.

<sup>31</sup> I. Shimko, *Lichnost' knjazhny Marii Dmitrievny Kantemir* [Personality of Princess Maria Dmitrievna Cantemir], *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshhenija* [Journal of the Ministry of Public Education], Saint Petersburg, 1891, pp. 274-276; Ibidem, *Novye dannye k biografii knjazja Antioha Kantemira i ego blizhajshih rodstvennikov* [New data

As has been shown above, the diplomatic passport of Antiochus Cantemir is of particular importance as a historical source for research in the field of Cantemir family studies. To know history, it is not enough to have facts, one must have data, especially sources containing information and semantic load. This article aimed to explore not only one of the pages of Antiochus Cantemir's diplomatic activities but also, to a certain extent, develop the value of one unique source, to depict an era, based on a single document. Modern historical science differs from all prior historical research in that it evolves in a new information environment, appropriating certain approaches and impacting its formation. Now the objective is to provide a confirmed and accurate history based on fresh perspectives and research techniques, rather than simply produce historical works on a specific topic.

### Annexes



Annex no. 1. *The diplomatic passport of Antiochus Cantemir.*

The Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA), Fond 1374 *The Cantemirs*,  
 coll. 1, fol. 142, p. 279.



Annex no. 2. *Portrait of Prince Antiochus Cantemir*. Unknown artist.  
Oil on canvas. 76x61,5 cm. Copy from the original painting by J. Amigoni (1735).  
Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum. Accession No. NGHM-115.





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13. Zabolotnaia Lilia, *Izvestnaja i neizvestnaja istorija zhizni docherej Dmitrija Kantemira. Marija Kantemir i Ekaterina-Smaragda Golicyna. (Sbornik statej, dokumentov i ilustracij)* [The known and unknown life story of the daughters of Dimitrie Cantemir: Maria Cantemir and Ekaterina-Smaragda Golitsyna: (Collection of articles, documents, and illustrations)], Chişinău, Cartdidact Publ., 2020.