

HISTORICAL [PRE-]MODERNISM AND THE ENTANGLED NETWORKS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT. DIMITRIE CANTEMIR'S *DESCRIPTIO MOLDAVIAE* DURING THE LONG 18TH CENTURY AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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Abstract Dimitrie Cantemir's *Descriptio Moldaviae* is considered the first [pre-] modern historiographical text of national history/geography and is celebrated as the first academic work written by a native Romanian that can still be used as a scientific reference today. We postulate in the present article that the modernity of the Catemirean writing is not derived from its academic virtuousness and informational value, but rather from its long history and circulation throughout the Enlightened Western and Eastern Europe. For the reconstruction of the text circulation, we will not follow the traditional linear pattern of cultural transfer, of publication and re-publication, of text production and translation, but we propose to reconstruct (even if only partially, given the information gaps) the complicated and entangled network that this text, as non-human actant, creates around it, and the effects and mutations it produces along its various stops in space and time. Following a chronological path, we aim to highlight the entanglements of various actors and actants and less so the unidirectional relationship between humans and artefacts. Thus, *Descriptio Moldaviae* becomes an important actor in a complicated and globally active network that highlights the intrinsic interconnectedness of the pre-modern world, still so familiar today.

Keywords ATN [actor-network theory], knowledge and ideology transfer, *Descriptio Moldaviae*, translation, text circulation.

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Descriptio Moldaviae is arguably one of the most important historical and geographical writings with academic purpose written by a Romanian-speaking intellectual at the beginning of the 18th century. Deeply rooted in the pre-modern historiography of the Western Enlightenment, Dimitrie Cantemir's description of Moldavia in its Latin manuscript original rapidly circulated from St. Peterburg throughout Europe. Thus, soon enough, this geographical and historical writing became a common reference for all historians dealing with Central and Eastern Europe, a geographical space that had been fairly unknown to the Western academia before then. The writing still fascinates more than 300 years later, not necessarily because of its academic or aesthetical value or its historiographical modernity, but rather due to its ability to form connections in different places and different moments in time. In the present article, we argue that *Descriptio Moldaviae*, on the entangled and complicated route on which it circulated throughout the 18th century, became, in itself, an important "actor" and "actant" in a self-formed network of citations, editions and reissues, a network that would impact the public Western understanding of Moldavia and would shape the modern concept of national history. Throughout its 100-year journey, Dimitrie Cantemir's writing was shaped and, in its turn, shaped the external contexts of its production and re-production, fulfilling different functions for different target readership. The reconstruction of this entangled network helps us better understand the way in which a textual artefact, as non-human actor, can produce and influence change in the public sphere and shape the modern sense of identity.¹

"Action is always interaction with variable actors, of variable ontologies, times, spaces, durability" declares Latour in his essay from 1996 on Inter-Objectivity,² adding in later works that this "relational interaction" is the unifying property of all beings.³ Thus, following Latour's demonstration, we regard actors, human and non-human alike, as defined by their relations and interrelations, impacting and being impacted by other actors.⁴ Thus, history and historiographical thought become the reconstruction of networks that transcends "the *laminar* time, the geological strata of one period building on another, while remaining absolute distinct. Actants call for a theory of *turbulent time*, of the present tumbled into the past."⁵ Taking Dimitrie Cantemir's description of Moldavia as our case-study, we follow less the chronological movement of the writing itself and the human actors involved in the circulation

¹ For the role of the translation in forming the national awareness and in the cultural transfer in the time of the Enlightenment, see Alexandra Chiriac, "The translation of history: German history texts in their Romanian translation. Knowledge and ideology transfer as stepping stone into the modernity of the nineteenth century," *German Studies Review* 46, no. 1 (February 2023): 1-16, DOI:10.1353/gsr.2023.0000.

² Bruno Latour, "On Interobjectivity," *Mind, Culture and Activity* 3, no. 4 (1996): 228-45, 239.

³ On the concept of "entanglement", see the 2013 Holberg Prize lecture: Bruno Latour, "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene," *New Literary History* 45, no. 1 (2014): 1-18.

⁴ Graham Harman, "Entanglement and Relation. A response to Bruno Latour and Ian Hodder," *New Literary History* 45, no 1 (2014): 37-49.

⁵ Christina Lupton, Seab Silver, Adam Sneed, "Introduction: Latour and Eighteenth-Century Literary Studies," *The Eighteenth century* 57, No. 2, Special Issue: Bruno Latour and Eighteenth century Literary Studies (2016): 165-79, 167.

of the text, but rather the REPs, reproduction of the text across actants, and the network that this work creates through different modes.⁶ In other words, we analyze the circulation and impact that the writing of the Moldavian ruler had throughout the 18th century, focusing on the implications that this text had and still has on the scientific, political and aesthetic discourse on Moldavia as a geographical place, a historical region, a war zone and a political strategic point and as a Western representation of the nearby exotics.⁷

Valentina and Andrei Eșanu⁸ and Florian Dudaș⁹ offer us the best factual and chronological reconstruction of the circulation of Dimitrie Cantemir's text, from the production, in 1716, of the Latin manuscript in Sankt Petersburg, until its translation into Romanian and publication in 1825.¹⁰ We will not reproduce here all the details offered by the above-mentioned researchers, but we will select the most relevant data to the reconstruction of the networks created by this writing.¹¹

After his alliance with Peter I in his ultimately failed campaign against the Turks, Dimitrie Cantemir was forced to give up his rule in Moldavia and retreated to Sankt Petersburg in 1711. Until his death in 1723, he put his vast knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and of his own country of Moldavia to good use and wrote numerous historical writings, most of them in

⁶ In "Reassembling the Social" (2005), Latour defines "a mode as a way of being in the world that causes things to appear, to be continuous or seamless with one another, in spite of the many discontinuities and differences that must exist". Lupton, Silver, and Sneed, "Introduction," 171.

⁷ Larry Wolff argues that Eastern and Central Europe are a concept "invented" by the French Enlightenment movement, a concept that derives its roots from Voltaire's historical and political work on Charles XII of Sweden and on Peter I of Russia. He described the military confrontations in Eastern Europe describing also the peoples and traditions of the regions and drawing thus the attention of the Western world towards this unknown and exotic land in the East. See: Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilisation of the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994) and Larry Wolff, "Voltaire's public and the idea of Eastern Europe: Toward a Literary Sociology of Continental Division," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 932-42.

⁸ Andrei Eșanu, Valentina Eșanu, "Studiu introductiv," in *Integrala manuscriselor Cantemir*. Vol. LXXIV: *Dimitrie Cantemir Descriptio Moldaviae. Manuscris facsimil inedit*, ed. by Constantin Barbu (Craiova: Editura Revers, 2010), 7-111.

⁹ Florian Dudaș, *Ediția princeps a cărții lui Dimitrie Cantemir „Descrierea Moldovii”: „Beschreibung der Moldau”, Hamburg, 1769-1770. Studiu bibliologic și ediția anastatică* (Oradea: Editura Lumina, 2013), 5-45.

¹⁰ The history of the book circulation stretches to the 21st century – Eugen Munteanu is currently preparing a commemorative edition of the first German edition and its Romanian translation. We will limit our research to the history of the circulation of this writing from its production to the first two translations into Romanian (the translation of the Russian excerpt into Romania and the complete translation of the German edition, both at the beginning of the 19th century) and its publication in 1825.

¹¹ We will use the main data and information from the chapter signed by Alexandra Chiriac: "Scrisoarea Moldovei: prima traducere în limba română a lucrării lui Dimitrie Cantemir *Descriptio Moldaviae*," in *Integrarea istoriei lumii în cultura românească. Traduceri de texte istorice din limba germană la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea și începutul secolului al XIX-lea*, coord. by Alexandra Chiriac (Iași: "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Publishing House, 2022), 417-503.

Latin, so as to make them accessible to the Western academia.¹² As he himself confessed, Cantemir wrote *Descriptio Moldaviae* (1716) at the explicit request of the German Academy of Sciences from Berlin, where he had been a member of the Orientalist Department since 1714. For his membership, he was recommended by Heynrich von Huysen, a German war counsellor at the court of Peter I, an expert in the juridical and political relationships between Russia and Prussia. Aside from his diplomatic role in Sankt Petersburg, von Huysen was directly responsible for the relationship between the German and Russian Academies of Sciences, facilitating the direct relationships between scientists and the exchange of books and manuscripts.¹³ Dimitrie Cantemir finished his Latin manuscript in 1716 but, for unknown reasons, he failed to send his work to Berlin, in spite of the numerous requests.

After Dimitrie Cantemir's death, all of his manuscripts came into the possession of his son, Antioch, who, in spite of Heinrich von Huysen's promises to the Berlin Academy, also failed to send his father's description of Moldavia to be published in Germany. Instead, he left Sankt Petersburg in 1732 as Russian ambassador in London, taking with him his father's texts, among which: *Historia Incrementorum atque Decrementorum Aulæ Othomanicae* [= The History of the Ottoman Empire] and *Descriptio Moldaviae*. In London, Antioch made a deal with Nicolas Tindal to translate and publish the Latin text of the *History of the Ottoman Empire* into English, which happened in 1734. Although announced by the scientific press, the English translation of the Moldavian geography did not appear.¹⁴

Antioch's second attempt to publish his father's Moldavian description, this time in Holland, failed once again. There are some indications that the book dealer Gaillée Chenguillon from Haga retained a manuscript of the Latin work but did not publish it, probably because of Antioch's financial difficulties. What remains from this attempt is only the Russian sigil of Dimitrie Cantemir done by Francois Morellon-Lacave in Amsterdam in 1735 and included in Dimitrie Cantemir's engraving.¹⁵

After Antioch's death in 1744, the manuscripts of Dimitrie Cantemir were auctioned and bought by Count Friedrich von Thomson. In 1746, after the count's death, his book and

¹² Among the most famous historical texts are *Hronicul vechimei a romano-moldo-valahilor*, *Historia moldo-valahica*, *Vita Constantini Cantemyrii, cognomento senis*, *Moldaviae Principis*, *Historia Incrementorum atque Decrementorum Aulæ Othomanicae*, *Descriptio Moldaviae*, *Collectanea Orientalia*, *Systema de religione et statu Imperii turcici*.

¹³ Emil Pop, "Dimitrie Cantemir și Academia din Berlin," *Studii. Revista de istorie*, no. 5 (1969): 827 and Werner Bahner, "Ein bedeutender Gelehrter an der Schwelle zur Frühaufklärung: Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1726)," in *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR: Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973), 7.

¹⁴ The German periodical *Neue Zeitung von gelehrten Sachen* (1733) contains a note announcing the publication of the History of the Ottoman Empire and the plan for an English translation of the Moldavian description. See: *Neue Zeitung von gelehrten Sachen*, no. LXV (August 13th 1733): 572, available online: https://zs.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/jportal_jpjournal_00001014 (accessed on 15th of October 2023).

¹⁵ Eșanu, Eșanu: "Studiu introductiv," 46 and 89-90. They cite Helmut Grasshoff, *Antioch Dimitrievič Kantemir und Westeuropa* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1966), 92-94.

manuscript collections were offered by his widow to his cousin Abraham Kaau-Boerhaave, professor at the Academy of Science from Sankt Petersburg. Thus, *Descriptio Moldaviae* returned on Russian soil. This professor offered Cantemir's manuscripts to the medical doctor and imperial counsellor Kruse, who gave them to the German historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller, state counsellor at that time in Sankt Petersburg. This circulation of the manuscript, recounted in the preface of the German edition by G.F. Müller himself,¹⁶ is contested by the two Romanian historians Valentina and Andrei Eşanu. They found a small note made by two Parisian librarians who had been commissioned to draft a comprehensive list of all of Prince Antioch's books and manuscripts after his death. This list contains 847 titles, out of which 207 titles in Russian, Greek and Latin were sent directly to Sankt Petersburg. The rest was indeed auctioned. However, in the list compiled by the two librarians and published in 1896, there is no trace of the *Descriptio Moldaviae* manuscript. A possible explanation is that, due to the great costs of editing the *History of the Ottoman Empire*, Antioch was forced to compensate Nicolas Tindal for his translation by giving him the original manuscript of *Descriptio Moldaviae*. The English translator then presumably sold this manuscript to a collector, namely Count Friedrich von Thoms, as stated in a note from the German periodical *Göttingsche Zeitung von gelehrten Sachen*, from 1744.¹⁷ This theory is also sustained by the fact that, in 1746, upon the count's death, both manuscripts (*History of the Ottoman Empire* and *Descriptio Moldaviae*) were included in the catalogue of the count's collection: *Bibliotheca Exquisitissima Thomsiana*. This collection was then auctioned by the count's wife and all traces of the two manuscripts were lost until 1901, when Otto Hassarowitz from Leipzig sold the manuscript of the *History of the Ottoman Empire* to the Harvard Library. Unfortunately, there was no mention of the Latin manuscript of *Descriptio Moldaviae*.¹⁸

Today, there are only three manuscripts of the original Latin writing on Moldavia: the so called mss A,¹⁹ an incomplete copy made by Dimitrie Cantemir's personal secretary, Johann Gotthilf Vockerodt, a copy that contains marginal notes, observations and corrections made by the author; mss. B,²⁰ a copy made by or at the order of G.F. Müller or Gottfried Siegfried Bayer

¹⁶ G.F. Müller, "Vorrede. Demetrio Kantemirs, ehemaligen Fürsten in der Moldau. Beschreibung der Moldau," *Magazin für die neue Historie und Geographie* 3 (1769): 539-41.

¹⁷ "Das Original jenes schönen Werks [trifft] [...] in der kostbaren Bibliothek des Herrn Grafen von Thoms, an. Dieser Hr. Graf hat auch das Original Msc. Der Moldauischen Historie, welche von dem Fürsten Demetrio Cantemir, Hospodar der Moldau, aufgesetzt ist, käuflich an sich gebracht," *Göttingsche Zeitung von gelehrten Sachen* (June 1744): 396-7. Available online: <https://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN319732576> (accessed on 15th of October 2023).

¹⁸ Eşanu, Eşanu, "Studiu introductiv," 36 and Dudaş, *Ediția princeps*, 9-11.

¹⁹ This manuscript with the title "Demetrii Cantemirii, principis Moldaviae. Descriptio Moldaviae" with the inscription "Autographum auctoris passum in margine" is to be found at the Institute for Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Federation, Sankt Petersburg section, Sector of Oriental manuscripts. See Eşanu, Eşanu, "Studiu introductiv," 37, 49.

²⁰ This Latin manuscript is entitled *Demetrii Cantemirii, Principis Moldaviae. Descriptio antiqui et hodierni status Moldaviae, descripta ex apographo quod eius filius mecum communicavit. Petropol[i] 1727* and is

in 1727, and mss. C, a later copy, from 1750-1760, belonging to Alexandru Scarlat Sturza and found recently in Odessa.²¹

This complicated route taken by Cantemir's text on Moldavian geography and history is difficult to place within a larger context, due to the fact that many pieces of the puzzle are still missing and the information gaps do not allow the modern researcher more than speculations. We would thus venture to postulate only that writing *Descriptio Moldaviae* was a political and strategic necessity at the beginning of the 18th century, when the Russian campaigns against the Turks and Swedes drew the attention of Europe towards Moldavia and Central and Eastern Europe, as the new battleground of political power. However, afterwards, this necessity faded: the numerous attempts of translating and publishing this piece of history illustrate the fact that Western Europe manifested an interest in the exotic lands beyond the Habsburg Empire, but with limited distribution and impact for the general public. Dimitrie Cantemir's historical writings incited the curiosity of the Western scholars from a pure but limited academic perspective. Things changed rapidly after the break of the Russo-Turkish war in 1768, when Central and Eastern Europe became once again the actual theatre of a war with vast implications for the entire Western world, and Dimitrie Cantemir's *Descriptio* a valuable source of information and data that had to be made available to the general reading public.

Even if *Descriptio Moldaviae* circulated throughout Europe and the Russian Empire in the manuscript form, the true recognition of the informational value of this historical and geographical work came in 1769, when the German intellectual from the Petersburger court, Gerhard Friedrich Müller, convinced scholar and editor Anton Friedrich Büsching to translate and publish the Cantemirean text in his periodical *Magazin für die neue Historie und Geographie*.²² Anton Friedrich Büsching was a renown geographer, who travelled several times to Sankt Petersburg, where he met G.F. Müller, Jakob von Stählin and other German historians and scholars who worked at the Academy of Sciences from the Russian capital, so the collaboration between Müller and Büsching was based on a life-time friendship and on common scientific interests.²³ Büsching commissioned professor J.L. Redstob from Berlin with the translation into German of *Descriptio Moldaviae* and published this translation in two parts: the geographical part in volume III of his periodical in 1769 (pages 537-574), and the rest of the text in volume IV from 1770 (pages 1-120). Interestingly enough, the German translation

to be found at the Institute for Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Federation, Sankt Petersburg section, Sector of Oriental manuscripts, 25 D.8 See Eşanu, Eşanu, "Studiu introductiv," 37, 49.

²¹ This manuscript was identified by Galina N. Moiseeva and described by Andrei and Valentina Eşanu. See Eşanu, Eşanu, "Studiu introductiv," 37-8.

²² Andrei and Valentina Eşanu indicate that the source text of the German translation is the newly discovered mss. C manuscript found in Odessa. See Eşanu, Eşanu, "Studiu introductiv," 92.

²³ Peter Hoffmann, *Anton Friedrich Büsching (1724-1793). Ein Leben im Zeiten der Aufklärung* (Berlin: Arno Spitz Verlag, 2000) and Peter Hoffmann, Valerik Ivanovic Osipov, *Geographie, Geschichte und Bildungswesen in Rußland und Deutschland. Briefwechsel Anton Friedrich Büsching – Gerhard Friedrich Müller 1751 bis 1783* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995).

is placed in the periodical in the chapter dedicated to the Russian history and geography, so as to suggest the affiliation of the Romanian-speaking territory to the Russian Empire.

At the same time with the publication of the first part of *Descriptio Moldaviae* (the geographical description) in Büsching's magazine and encouraged by the recent outbreak of war between the Russian and Ottoman Empire, another geographical text on the Moldavian geography was published in Sankt Petersburg in 1770 by Büsching's and Müller's friend and collaborator Jakob von Stählin, as an abstract of Cantemir's writing, with the title:

Kurze geographische Beschreibung des Fürstenthums Moldau, und der zwischen dem Schwarzen und Kaspischen Meere gelegenen Länder und Völker Nebst einem hierzu verfertigten Landkärtgen. Aus dem geographischen Calender auf das Jahr Christi 1770, gedruckt zu St. Petersburg bei der Kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften [= Short geographical description of the Moldavia Principality and of the peoples who live between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Together with maps. From the Geographical Calendar published in the year 1770 at St. Peterburg at the Imperial Academy for Sciences].

In the preface of the Sankt Petersburg edition (reproduced also in the second edition), the author mentions that this "pocket calendar" was written for all men on the battle-field who carry the "arms of Her Majesty, Her Highness the Empress" and who can see with their own eyes the places described in this text and on this map. In other words, the information on Moldavia was vital for the Russian generals who fought in the war against the Turks on the Moldavian soil, and, for this information purpose, Stählin wrote a short adaptation of the geographical chapter of Dimitrie Cantemir's historical work on Moldavia.²⁴

We were unable to find this calendar, but Stählin's text was republished in a second German edition:

²⁴ "[...] Dieser geographische Taschen-Kalender soll seinen Liebhabern diesen, den Schauplatz des jetztererähnten Krieges und der siegreichen Waffen Ihrer Majestät unserer glorwürdigsten Kaiserinn, bequem bey sich zu tragen, und bei einlaufenden Nachrichten von dasigen Kriegs-Operationen sogleich die gegend ansehen zu können, wo unsere Kriegsheere ziehen, und frische Lorbern einsammeln. [...] und wollen nur das dem Rußisch-Kayserchen Zepter nun zum zweitenmal so glorreich unterworfenene Fürstenthum Moldau, in einem Auszug aus einem schriftlichen Aufsatz des ehemaligen Hospodars der Moldau, Fürsten Dmitri Kantimir, kürzlich beschreiben", "Vorbericht des Petersburgischen Abdrucks" in „Kurze Beschreibung des Fürstenthums Moldau, und der zwischen dem Schwarzen und Kaspischen Meere gelegenen Länder und Völker. Nebst einem hierzu verfertigten Landkärtgen," in *Beylagen zum Neuveränderten Rußland*, M. Johann Joseph Haigold (ed.), 2nd vol. (Riga, Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1770), 439.

Kurze geographische Beschreibung des Fürstenthums Moldau, und der zwischen dem Schwarzen und Kaspischen Meere gelegenen Länder und Völker Nebst einem hierzu verfertigten Landkärtgen. Aus dem geographischen Calender auf das Jahr Christi 1770, gedruckt zu St. Petersburg bei der Kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften. [= Short geographical description of the Moldavia Principality and of the places and peoples who live between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Together with maps. From the Geographical Calendar published in the year 1770 at St. Petersburg at the Imperial Academy for Sciences]

and in a Russian edition:

“Краткое географическое описание Княжества Молдавского и лежащих между Чернымъ и Каспийскимъ морями земель и народов, с ландкартою сихъ земель”
* [Footnote:] Изъ географическаго месяцослова на 1770 годъ. In: *Собрание сочинений, выбранныхъ изъ месяцослововъ на разные годы*. Часть III, Санкт-Петербург, 1789, p. 91–106. [= Short geographical description of the Moldavia Principality and of the territories between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, with a map of these lands * [Footnote: From the Geographical Calendar for the year 1770]. In: *Collected Works Selected from Calendars of Different Years*. Part III, St. Petersburg, pages 91–106].

Due to his profession and interest in the Russian art, politics and culture,²⁵ we may presume that Jakob von Stählin may have written the Moldavian geography as a bilingual text (German and Russian) and published it in the calendar from 1770, republished in the second editions mentioned above. Since we do not have access to the first edition, we cannot prove or disprove this hypothesis, but the comparative analysis of the second German and Russian editions of Stählin’s text and the subsequent Romanian translation seem to sustain the hypothesis of an initial bilingual first edition.²⁶

Written as an informative text for the Russian military personnel fighting in the Moldavian campaigns against the Turks, with the explicit aim to help orientate the troops on the field, Stählin’s text travelled a couple of years later to Moldavia, through a delegation of

²⁵ Some bibliographical information on the life and work of Jakob von Stählin are found in the German National Library:

[https://personenlexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/Lexika/St%C3%A4hlin,_Jakob_von_\(GND_100975127\)](https://personenlexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/Lexika/St%C3%A4hlin,_Jakob_von_(GND_100975127)) (accessed on 15 October 2023). See also Giuseppina Larocca, “New Perspectives on Jacob von Stählin: Towards an Intellectual Biography,” *Slavonica* (Routledge 2018), DOI: 10.1080/13617427.2018.1471807.

²⁶ See the full demonstration based on the comparison between the three texts in Alexandra Chiriac, Victor Celac, “The first version of Dimitrie Cantemir’s Moldavian Geography in Romanian language: *Tălmăcire dintr-o scriere geografică tipărită în Rosia la anul 1770*,” *Études bibliologiques / Library Research Studies* (Biblioteca Academiei Române, Filiala Cluj-Napoca), forthcoming.

the orthodox church representatives that were at that time in Sankt Petersburg in audience to Catherine II, to pledge their allegiance to the Russian cause. The Moldavian church delegation brought back a number of documents and correspondence between Russian generals and church representatives, documents that were translated and included in a miscellaneous manuscript (today ms. 1667 RAL and ms. 348 RAL).²⁷ Among these texts and documents with historical value, there is also the short geographical text on Moldavia with the title: *Tălmăcire dintr-o scriere gheograficească ce s-au tipărit în Rosiia la anul 1770. Pentru Moldova* [= Translation of a geographical writing, published in Russia in 1770. For Moldavia] (ms. 1667, f. 31r-32v).

Comparing the Romanian text of this excerpt with Stählin's German and Russian texts,²⁸ we conclude that the Romanian translation was not made from German but from Russian. This assessment is based on several striking differences between the two texts. Firstly, the Romanian manuscript does not contain the entire German/Russian text, but only the first 5 of the total 9 paragraphs or sections of the Description. The Romanian version contains the translation of a short pre-history of Moldavia (the Roman conquest, founding of Moldavia), information regarding the Moldavian borders, rivers and lakes, the territorial-administrative division of the land and a last paragraph on "șanțul minunat al împăratului Traian" [= the wonderful wall of Emperor Trajan] (ms. 1667, f. 32v). The description of the Moldavian riches: grains, fruits and vegetables, winegrowing culture, forests and details on the wood industry, the description of wildlife, fish and bees and data on the production of wax and honey (p. 446-450 from the second edition of Stählin's description) are missing from the Romanian translation. An argument in favour of a Russian source of the Romanian translation is the presence of words of Russian origin. For example, the distances were not indicated in

²⁷ Ștrempel dates these manuscripts to the beginning of the 19th century. See Gabriel Ștrempel, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1983), 30-31 and Gabriel Ștrempel, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1978), 94. See also N.A. Ursu, *Contribuții la istoria culturii românești. Studii și note filologice* (Iași: Cronica, 2002), 22-136, 126. Mihail Kogălniceanu printed these texts in "Arhiva Românească" from 1841. In this text collection, we can find the correspondence of Russian generals with the Metropolitan Gavril of Moldavia, as well as some administrative and political texts from the period 21 July 1769 – 21 June, 1771, regarding the Russo-Turkish War (1768-1774) and the Russian occupation and government in Moldavia and Wallachia. Today, these texts are gathered in two miscellanea manuscripts from the Romanian Academy Library, ms. 1667 BAR and ms. 348 BAR, dated by Ștrempel to the beginning of the 19th century (Ms. 348: "Condică de documente dintre anii 1769-1802, cele mai multe privitoare la relațiile Moldovei și Țării Românești cu Rusia în timpul războiului ruso-turs din anii 1769-1774" (128 f.). See Ștrempel *Catalogul I*, 95 and ms. 1667: "Miscelaneu", 66 f. in: Ștrempel, *Catalogul II*, 30-31.

²⁸ The German edition is available online:

<https://books.google.ro/books?id=YqRKAACAAJ&pg=PA437&dq=kurze+geografische+beschreibung+Moldau+in+Russland&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjUyLvr25b5AhUN7rsIHSCoAZEQ6AF6BAGFEAI#v=onepage&q=geografische%20Beschreibung&f=false> (accessed on 28 June 2023). The Russian edition is also available online: <https://viewer.rsl.ru/ru/rsl01005441908?page=5&rotate=0&theme=black> (accessed on 28 June 2023).

“deutsche Meilen” but in “verste rosienesti”. Other words that sustain this statement are words of Slavonic origin, such as “iproci” (31v) meaning “and so on” as a translation of the German abbreviation “u.s.w.” (p. 441).²⁹

The translation into Romanian of this short geographical description is surprising, since it cannot fulfil the same goal as Stählin’s German/Russian text. The Romanian readership would have been familiar with the administrative division of the country and with its rivers and natural richness, so the text loses its informational function. Without any other clues from the translator or copyist of the text, we may speculate that the Romanian translation played a rather symbolic function for its target readership: as a scientific geographical text on the homeland that could act as a legitimatizing text for the country’s independence, or at least for the country’s claim against the Turks. The scientific data and rigorous presentation of the information is furthermore legitimized by the connection between this excerpt and the scientific prestige of Dimitrie Cantemir, a native “hospodar” with academic training and international recognition, who fought alongside the Russian armies against the Ottoman enemies.

Going back to the German translation of Dimitrie Cantemir’s work on the Moldavian geography and history, Büsching’s German edition was a success from an academic point of view, but a financial burden. Thus, in 1771, a second edition was published in Frankfurt and Leipzig with the title: “*Demetrii Kantemir, ehemaligen Fürsten Historisch-, geographisch- und politische Beschreibung der Moldau, nebst dem Leben des Verfassers und einer Landcharte* [= Dimitrie Cantemir. Former ruler. Historical, geographical and political description of Moldavia, along with the life of the author and a map]. This second edition also had a preface (“Vorbericht”), where Büsching thanked G.F. Müller for his contribution to the publishing of this valuable text and for the service he thus brought to science. He also mentioned that this second edition was a more affordable one, so as to reach a wider reading public. Surprisingly, in this second edition, Büsching also included the German translation of the life of Dimitrie Cantemir that had initially been part of the English translation of the *History of the Ottoman Empire*, a fact that illustrates the intertwined fate of the two Cantemirean writings.

Büsching’s German editions of *Descriptio Moldaviae* quickly became very popular among the Western scholars, and was cited in most world histories of the time.³⁰ The book also

²⁹ For the full comparative analysis between the three texts see: Chiriac, Celac, “The first version of Dimitrie Cantemir’s Moldavian Geography,” forthcoming.

³⁰ Büsching is one of the first scholars to use Cantemir’s writing in his research in *Neue Erdbeschreibung* from 1770. One year later, *Beschreibung der Moldau* is cited by August Ludwig Schlözer in *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* (Halle, 1771). Other scholars who cited Dimitrie Cantemir’s work are Jean-Louis Carra in *Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valahie avec une dissertation sur l’état actuel de ces deux provinces* (Iasi, 1771 and Neu-Chatel, 1781), L.A. Gebhardi in *Geschichte des Reichs Ungarn und der damit verbundenen Staaten* (1782), G. Acherwall in *Geschichte der heutigen vornehmsten Europäischen Staaten im Grundrisse* (1779), F.J. Sulzer in *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens* (Viena, 1781), L.A. Baumann in *Kurzer Entwurf der Staatsverfassung aller europäischen Reiche zum Gebrauch der Jugend auf Schulen* (1781), Carl Renatus Hausen in *Statistische Nachrichten von der Moldau zur Erläuterung der Geschichte*

travelled to the Romanian principalities: there are German editions in the ecclesiastical libraries from Oradea and Blaj and in many private libraries, having been used by various Transylvanian scholars in their historical and political writings. The German text on Moldavia was also used as an intermediate text for subsequent translations: in Russian (in 1789), in Greek (1819), and in Romanian (1806).

A copy of the German edition from 1771 of Dimitrie Cantemir's texts must have also travelled to Moldavia, where it must have served as a source text for the first Romanian translation, which was finished in 1806, the same year as the outbreak of yet another Russo-Turkish War (1806-1812). This translation is today lost and there are only two known copy-manuscripts left: one, at the Romanian Academy Library (mss. 1227 RAL), which is a fragment of a later copy, and one in a private collection,³¹ unattainable to us for now.³² The person responsible for the translation of this text is presumably Ioan Nemișescu, a clerk from Iași, who also translated other texts on national history.³³

Because of the war and/or of the plague outbursts from 1812, 1814 and 1816,³⁴ the text remained in its manuscript form and was sent by the metropolitan church official Veniamin Costache to Bucharest to his Wallachian homologue and close friend Grigore for safe-keeping. The manuscript resurfaced 20 years later, when it came back to Moldavia to be published in the printing house of the Neamț Monastery in 1825, with the title:

unserer Zeit (1784), C. Gerhard, *Beschreibung des Banats, der Wallachey, Moldau und der Königreiche Servien und Bosnien, aus besten Schriftstellern gezogen* (1789), Andreas Wolf in *Beiträge zu einer statistisch-historischen Beschreibung des Fürstenthums Moldau* (Sibiu, 1805), S. Raicevici, in *Observazioni storiche, naturali e politiche intorno la Valachia e Moldavia* (Neapoli, 1788). In Central and Eastern Europe, Cantemir's Beschreibung was used as reference by G. Pray, M. Bel, A. Horányi, P. Wallaszki and others. See Grigore Ploșteanu, "Receptarea Descrierii Moldovei de Dimitrie Cantemir în lumea germană," in *De la umanism la luminism*, ed. by Ioan Chiorean (Târgu Mureș: Mica Doric, 1994), 67-78.

³¹ In a short note published in 1970, researcher Ioan Nicola from the Music Academy from Cluj-Napoca states that he owns a manuscript of Dimitrie Cantemir's writing. We were unable to find further details on the fate of this manuscript. See: Ion Nicola, "Un manuscris românesc al Descrierii Moldovei de Dimitrie Cantemir," *Limba și Literatura*, no. 25 (1970): 159-161.

³² The full description of the manuscript from RAL, as well as an extensive analysis of the manuscript text, the published text and the German translation of *Descriptio Moldaviae* is to be seen in Chiriac, "Scrisoarea Moldovei", 458-496.

³³ He also translated *Istoria politiceasca a Dachiei* in 1808, after Ludwig August Gebhardi's text, and a textbook of world history of Johann Matthias Schröckh. The philological demonstration of Nemișescu's authorship of the translation was done by N.A. Ursu, "Ioan Nemișescu, autorul primei traduceri românești a operei lui Dimitrie Cantemir *Descriptio Moldaviae*," *Arhivele Moldovei* III-IV (1999): 7-21 and N.A. Ursu, "Cine a făcut prima traducere românească a operei lui Dimitrie Cantemir *Descriptio Moldaviae*," *Limba română* XV, no. 3 (Bucharest, 1979): 245-54.

³⁴ In the preface, the monk Gherontie noted that it was because of the "known events" that the manuscript was not published sooner (*Scrisoarea Moldovei*, 1825, p. 2-3).

Scrisoarea Moldovei de Dimitrie Cantemir, domnul ei, Carea acum întâi s-au tipărit în zilele bine-credinciosului și de Hristos iubitorului domnului nostru Ioani Sandul Sturza Vovda cu blagoslovenia prea Osfințitului arhiepiscop și mitropolit Chirio Chir Veniamin. Pe vremea pré cuviosului stareț a sfintei mănăstiri Neamțului la anul 1825 [= The Description of Moldavia by Dimitrie Cantemir, her ruler, which is now published for the first time in the days of the faithful and God-loving ruler of ours Ioan Sandu Sturza Voda, with the blessing of His Holiness Archbishop and metropolitan Veniamin. In the days of our faithful Prior of the Holy Neamț Monastery in the year 1825].

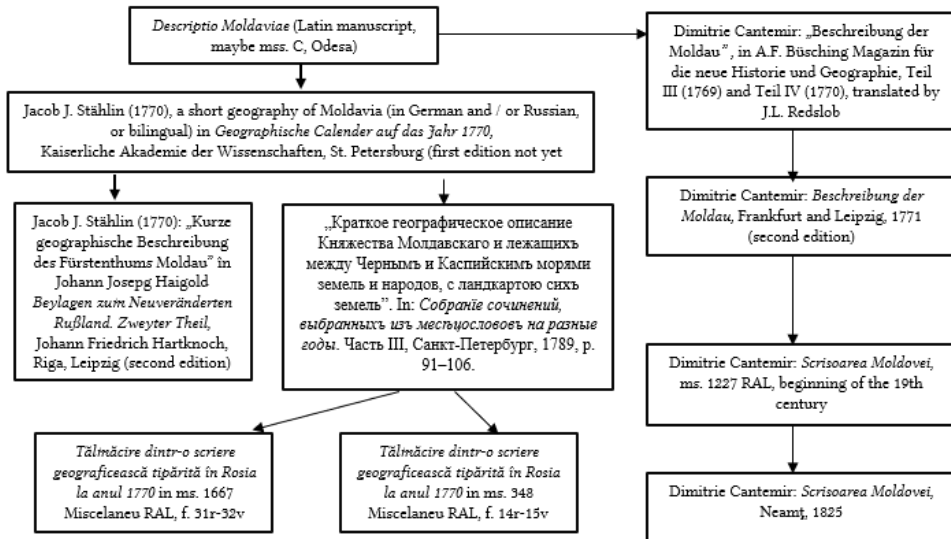
The preface signed by the hieromonk Gherontie is entitled “Către iubitorii de știință cetitori” [= To the science loving readers] and contains the interesting remark that it was the duty of the church to publish not only canonical books, but also political ones that did not harm the true faith.³⁵ The role of the Moldavian church in the fight for independence is historically well attested,³⁶ so it is not surprising that the monks and church representatives had a direct involvement in translating and publishing Dimitrie Cantemir’s description. As it was the case with the small geographical excerpt of Stählin’s text, *Scrisoarea Moldovei* also plays a rather symbolic and unifying function for its Romanian readership. Among the scientific geographical and historical data, Cantemir builds, for the first time, a coherent national mythology: from the founding legend of Dragoș to rich and colourful local mythology. If these folkloric elements were designed to create an exotic aura around these lands (with a unique blend of Byzantine orthodoxy and pagan rituals) for the foreign Western academia, for the Romanian readership it functioned as a coagulating and unifying symbol of continuity and perpetuity, a symbol that still reverberates today. Dimitrie Cantemir’s *Descriptio Moldaviae*, in its Romanian translation,

³⁵ “De această carte carea acum era neștiută de patrioți, nu știu în ce chip s-au înștiințat înfocatul rîvnitori spre tot folosul de obște, iară mai ales spre înmulțirea cărților, nu numai ale celor canonisite bisericești, ci și ale celor politicești care nu aduc vreo prihană pravoslaviei. Preaosfințitul, zic, arhipăstoriul nostru, pre carea judecînd-o preaosfinția sa a fi nu numai vrednică, ci și cu necuviință și cu prihană a nu o avea patrioții, pentru aceia la anul 1806, au iconomisit preaosfinția sa de s-au tălmăcit din cea nemțască, căci izvodul cel moldovenesc nu s-au aflat. Și atuncea o ar fi și tălmăcit dacă nu știutele întîmplări ale vremilor l-ar fi zăticnit. Deci, după atîte schimbări ... o și uitasă preaosfinția sa. Iară ea era păzindu-să de un înalt și prea cinstit ipochimen, carele cînd au socotit vremea cuviincioasă, au împublicarisit-o. Și așa prea cinstitul ipochimen (carele este preaosfințitul și sporitul întru bogoslovie Mitropolitul Ungro-Vlahiei Chirio Chir Grigorie), au îndemnat spre tipărire ei // preaosfințitul nostru arhipăstori cu dragoste au blagoslovit. Și preacuviosul nostru stareț au bine-voit și noi cu bucurie am primit. Și doriți sîntem pururea a ne nevoi la niște ascultări și porunci ca aceastea spre tipărirea, zic, folositoarelor cărți.” (*Scrisoarea Moldovei*, 1825, 2-3).

³⁶ See, for example, Vlad Georgescu, *Ideile politice și Iluminismul în Principatele Române 1750-1831* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1972); Ovidiu Papadima, *Ipostaze ale Iluminismului românesc* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1975); Ștefan Ștefănescu, *Istoria românilor în secolul al XVIII-lea* (Bucharest, 1999); Ioan-Augustin Guriță, *Gavriil Callimachi, mitropolit al Moldovei (1760-1768)* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2017).

thus represents an important actant in the shaping of the national identity, by mixing the founding narratives of the land with accurate scientific data.

The short chronological presentation of the text's circulation during the long 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century³⁷ can be summarized through the following diagram that highlights the traditional understanding of textual circulation through editions and re-issues, source texts and target texts in a linear cultural transfer process:



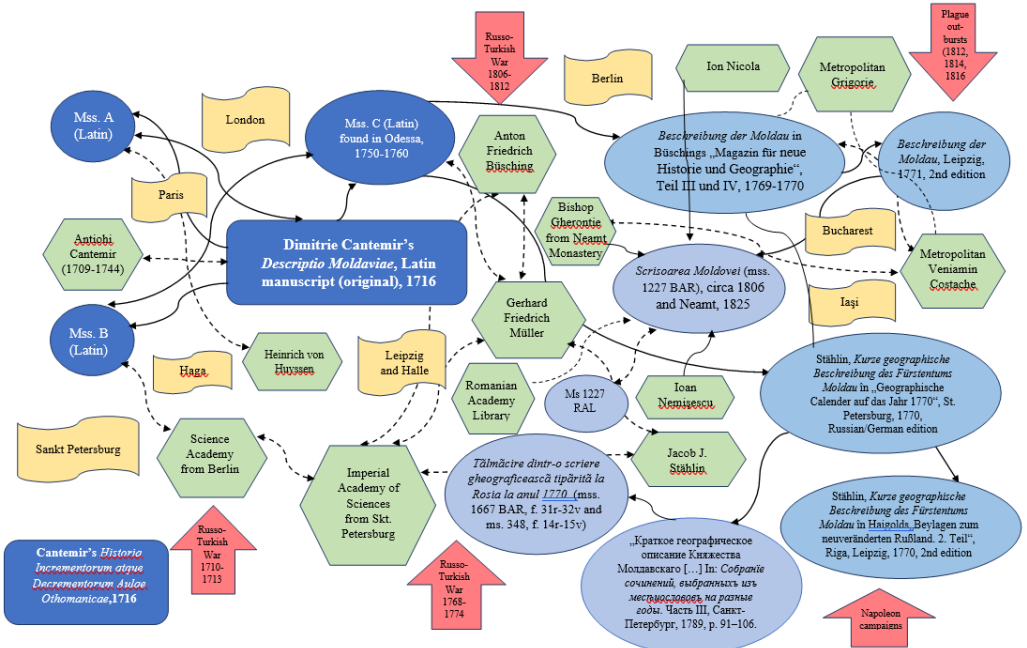
38

This traditional approach is very restrictive, in the sense that it only reveals the textual results of a very complicated network and fails provide a more in-depth investigation of the interactions between the actors and actants. To use Latour's own words: "ANT claims that modern societies cannot be described without recognizing them as having a fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary character that is never captured by the notions of levels, layers, territories, spheres, categories, structures, systems. It aims at explaining the effects accounted for by those traditional words without having to buy the ontology, topology and

³⁷ After the publication of the Romanian translation of the German text in 1825, *Scrisoarea Moldovei* was republished in 1851 by Costache Negruzzi and in 1868 by T. Boldur-Lățăscu. In 1872, the Romanian Academic Society published the first Romanian translation of the Latin original text, a translation edited by Al. Papiu Ilarian. In the 20th century, numerous Romanian editions of *Descriptio Moldaviae* followed. See Dudaș, "Ediția princeps," 42-44.

³⁸ This diagram is also published in Chiriac, Celac, "The first version," forthcoming.

politics that go with them.³⁹ We thus propose a diagram model that illustrates the circulation of *Descriptio Moldaviae* as a network that allows us to reshuffle the actors, spaces and times of discourse production and reproduction and that provides more insight into the interconnections between apparently non-connected elements.



This entangled network formed by and through Dimitrie Cantemir's *Descriptio Moldaviae* brings together textual artefacts (dark blue), translations (light blue), places (yellow), institutions and persons (green) that interacted under certain external circumstances (red arrows). Cantemir's text thus becomes both actor and actant that shaped the historical, political and aesthetical discourse of the pre-modern historiography of Moldavia. This short reconstruction of the 100-year text circulation is meant to highlight the complex nature of the transfer of ideas and knowledge and to illustrate the multiple functions and mutations that this text produced around it, visible through the free interaction of the multiple actors involved in the network. Latour's theory provides us a model of analysing the global interaction of human and non-human actors that shaped the 18th century pre-modern discourse in a very similar way as it does today.

³⁹ Bruno Latour, "On actor-network theory. A few clarifications," *Soziale Welt*, no 4 (1996): 369-381, 370.