

# HANS COBENZL'S DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO MOSCOW (1575) AND HIS PREDECESSORS

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## 1. Introduction

The diplomatic mission of Johann (Hans) Cobenzl (around 1530-1598) at the court of Ivan IV the Terrible (1547-1584) in 1575/1576 was an important event in the long history of diplomatic contacts between the Holy Roman Empire and East Slavic principalities. An account of this mission (*Relatione*) provides valuable information about the history of Muscovy in the second half of the sixteenth century. This event had an intercultural and interconfessional dimension: the mission itself and its account made a significant contribution to the mutual acquaintance of Central and Eastern Europe, where a positive attitude of the member of the Latin Church towards the Eastern Orthodoxy was obviously stated. In this context, it should be emphasized that Johann Cobenzl came from the region between the Eastern Alps and Northern Adriatic with constant German, Slavic and Italian cultural and language interaction.

This article aims to put Johann Cobenzl into the history of the contacts between the region under consideration, the so-called Inner Austria (Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia), and the lands of Eastern Europe (the principalities of Rus'). This aim causes the following structure of the article, divided into two parts: *Predecessors of Johann Cobenzl in contacts with Eastern Europe* (by Aleksey Martyniuk) and *Johann Cobenzl: mission and personality* (by Simon Malmenvall). Sigismund Herberstein (1486-1566) was a direct predecessor of Johann Cobenzl, his compatriot. Herberstein headed two missions to Moscow (in 1517 and 1526), wrote a monumental book *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii* (edited in 1549 in Vienna). A vast literature has developed on Herberstein and his mission; nowadays it is a separate research area<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the authors of

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1 See the last scientific edition of the Herberstein's book, representing the original Latin (1549) and ancient German (1557) text, its translation into Russian and the articles of the

this article tried to obsolete the issue of a much better-known Herberstein and show it from a broader historical perspective. The contacts between Inner Austria and Eastern Europe during the middle ages are represented by three minor case studies from the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The second part of the article is devoted to Johann Cobenzl, historical background of his mission to Muscovy and his account. Both parts emphasize the regional dimension according to the overall theme of the research project on Gorizia and the Cobenzl family.

## **2. Predecessors of Johann Cobenzl: representatives of Inner Austria in contacts with Eastern Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries**

### ***2.1 Political contacts of the thirteenth century and their cultural consequences***

Direct political contacts between the lands of Eastern Europe (the principalities of Rus') and the region under consideration were established in the mid-thirteenth century. It was rooted in the political crisis, known as the War of the Babenberg Succession<sup>2</sup>. On 15 June 1246 Frederick II the Quarrelsome (1230-1246), the duke of Austria and Styria, was killed during the battle on the Leitha River. The direct Babenberg line (976-1246) ended with his death; representatives of this family developed a steady domain throughout the territories of contemporary Austria and Slovenia. The rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, kings of Bohemia and Hungary and dukes and princes of other countries got involved into the War of the Babenberg Succession. At a certain period, Austria and Styria (since 1252), Carinthia and Carniola (since 1269), Friuli including Gorizia (since 1272) found themselves at the mercy of Ottokar II Přemysl (1253-1278), king of Bohemia. However, in 1276 he was defeated by the German king Rudolf I Habsburg (1273-1291), and in 1278 he was killed in the Battle on the Marchfeld. In 1282 king Rudolf left the duchies of Austria and Styria to his sons Albrecht and Rudolf as an inheritance. In 1286 the king Rudolf granted his associate Meinhard II from the family of the counts of Gorizia the lands of Carinthia and Carniola. This award was made on

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historians from different countries (Austria, Russia, Slovenia, etc.), reflecting the contemporary view on the problem: Sigizmund GERBERŠTEJN, *Zapiski o Moskovii*, ed. Anna L. HOROŠKEVIČ, vol. I–II, Moscow, Pamjatniki istoričeskoj mysli, 2008.

2 Norbert MIKA, *Walka o spadek po Babenbergach 1246-1278*, Racibórz, Wydawnictwo i Agencja Informacyjna WAW Grzegorz Wawoczny, 2008; Aleksey MARTYNIUK, *Do Gerberštejna: Avstrija i Vostočnaja Evropa v sisteme personalnyh svyazej i kulturnyh kontaktov (13. – načalo 16. veka)*, Moscow, Kvadriga, 2019, pp. 11-223.

condition that these lands will revert to the Habsburgs (as happened in 1335). Therefore, as a result of the war the Habsburgs gained the “Babenberg Succession”. It has prepared an eminence of the Habsburgs and an establishment of the so-called Danubian Monarchy, which existed until the fall of the Habsburgs in 1918.

The precariousness of the situation in this region of Europe during the War of the Babenberg Succession attracted the attention of the Rurikids, the widespread dynasty ruling over various East Slavic principalities. In 1252 the mighty prince Daniel Romanovich (1205-1264), prince of Halych (contemporary western Ukraine), joined the conflict. His son Roman got married to Gertrude, the duchess of Babenberg, but failed to capture Vienna and the whole of Austria with her help. In the following year (1253) he left Austria. After these events Roman ruled in Navahrudak (on the territory of contemporary western Belarus). Here he contributed to the creation of the new territorially vast and politically influential state in Eastern Europe – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Short life of the prince Roman (he died around 1258) provides an interesting example of the vibrant connections between different European regions during the middle ages.

The so-called *Halych-Volhyn Chronicle* (palace chronicle of the prince Daniel) recounted events of the War for the Babenberg Succession related to the region on the crossroad of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup>. It describes the negotiations between the prince Daniel and the Hungarian king Béla IV (1235-1270) with “German ambassadors” in June 1252 in the Pressburg castle (contemporary Bratislava in Slovakia). Some of the “ambassadors” are identified by names<sup>4</sup>. Frederick von Pettau and the archbishop Philip of Salzburg are of specific interest to us<sup>5</sup>. Frederick was a representative of the Pettau family, known in Styria since the twelfth century. Pettau (present-day Ptuj in Slovenia) was the centre of the domain of the archbishop of Salzburg; therefore, many representatives of the family served theses archbishops. Frederick played a prominent political role in Styria during the reign of Ottokar II Přemysl and the first Habsburgs.

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3 The *Halych-Volhyn Chronicle*, in comparison to other medieval East Slavic chronicles, is unique due to its “western” content. This fact draws the attention of the historians from different countries. Passages, dedicated to Austria, have been translated into German by Izydor Szaraniewicz in 1872. In recent years the chronicle has been translated into Czech (by Jitka Komendová), Polish (by Dariusz Dąbrowski and Adrian Jusupović) and Slovak (Martin Homza). Thus, the *Halych-Volhyn Chronicle* is a significant source for the research of intercultural contacts in this European region.

4 *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 2, *Ipat'evskaja letopis'*, Saint Petersburg, Tipografija M. A. Aleksandrova, 1908, p. 814.

5 Regarding their identification: Martyniuk, *Do Gerberštejna* cit., pp. 83-89.

An even more important political player was Philip von Spanheim, archbishop of Salzburg between 1247 and 1257. He came from the noble family and was a son of the duke of Carinthia Bernhard II (1202-1256). Philip was then characterized in historiography as the “elected” (*electus*), since he refused to be ordained in order to reserve his right to the throne of the Duchy of Carinthia after his father’s death. Philip was a warlike ruler of the Archbishopric of Salzburg, an independent ecclesiastical principality of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1250-1252 he struggled to expand the possessions of the Archbishopric in Styria, Carinthia and Tyrol. During the War of Babenberg Succession Philip was a supporter of Ottokar II Přemysl (they were cousins). It is clear, therefore, why he as a confidant of the new duke went on an embassy in Pressburg (June 1252) to king Béla IV and prince Daniel Romanovich of Halych. Soon after this meeting, the archbishop Philip has been notified that his enemies, counts Albert III of Tyrol and Meinhard of Gorizia, attacked his possessions. In the battle near Greifenburg in Carinthia on 8 September 1252 Philip defeated the united troops. Many nobles, including the count Albert of Tyrol, were captured and had to pay an enormous ransom for their release. Medieval sources note an interesting detail: Philip personally participated in fighting and blooded his hands – consequently, he could not have been ordained<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, he retained his succession rights to the throne of the Duchy of Carinthia. This complex political manipulation has gone wrong for him: he was overthrown and banned by the Salzburg chapter in 1257 and has finally lost his inheritance of the Duchy of Carinthia.

The conclusion of the first case under consideration is the following. The contacts between the East Slavic territory (Principality of Halych-Volhyn) and the region of Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia were established in the mid-thirteenth century because of the political events that took place in the Austrian Duchy. In this context, a good example is the situation during the summer of 1252: early in June, the archbishop Philip makes an embassy to Pressburg and uses the opportunity to contact the prince Daniel Romanovich of Halych, after that he defeats the count Meinhard of Gorizia near Greifenburg in Carinthia. Consequently, the land of Gorizia, at least implicitly, for the first time in history finds itself related to the Eastern Europe. These events were also reflected in the medieval East Slavic literary tradition. The *Halych-Volhyn Chronicle* first mentioned Styria (*земля Штирська*)<sup>7</sup> and the names of regional political actors – the archbishop Philip of Salzburg and Frederick von Pettau. On the other hand, the Rus’ principalities have for the first time

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6 *Iohannis abbatis Victoriensis Liber certarum historiarum*, ed. Fedorus Schneider, vol. I/1-3, Hannover - Leipzig, Impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1909, p. 95.

7 *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2, p. 814.

learnt about Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia. The War of Babenberg Succession made Rus' more topical in the Central European context, the name Rus' was chronicled in the regional narratives. For example, the *Styrian Rhymed Chronicle* by Ottokar aus der Gaal mentions the "son of the Russian king" (prince Roman), husband of Gertrude, who left his wife and went back to his country<sup>8</sup>. We know that Roman returned to the lands of contemporary Belarus. Thus, the political events of the mid-thirteenth century and their literary reflection contributed to political and cultural contacts between the territories that were geographically very far apart – from the Adriatic coast to the plains of Eastern Europe.

## ***2.2 The knights from the southern lands of the Austrian Duchy in the crusades in Eastern Europe***

The fourteenth century went down in history of chivalric culture as the "Great Age of the Prussian Reysa" (from German *reysa*: campaign, fighting, battle). Reysa meant a military expedition of the Catholic noblemen in the Europe's eastern periphery against Lithuanian pagans and Rus' "schismatics". These expeditions represented a direct continuation of the crusades to the Holy Land. The knights from all regions of Latin Europe (Germany, France, England, Burgundy, Bohemia and other lands, even Spain) participated in these expeditions<sup>9</sup>. The members of the most influential European families proved themselves on the Prussian battlefields: king John of Luxembourg (1296-1346) – participant of the Hundred Years' War, "le chevalier idéal" for his contemporaries (killed at the battle of Crécy in 1346); Louis of Hungary (1326-1382) – he ruled over Hungary almost forty years, then became king of Poland; and Henry, earl of Derby – later Henry IV, king of England (1367-1413), character from the Shakespeare's plays *Richard II* and *Henry IV*. Participation of the high nobility set up the Prussian crusades as an essential element of the chivalric culture of the middle ages. One of the worthiest prizes of the crusade for the young nobleman was a knighting ceremony with the banner of St. George (a red cross on a white field) in the pagan land. As will be seen below, it was the main reason why the Austrian duke Albert III (1349-1395) came to Prussia in 1377. The knights of the Habsburg lands, particularly from Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia, actively participated in the campaigns against

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8 Joseph SEEMÜLLER (ed.), *Ottokars österreichische Reimchronik*, vol. 1. Hannover, Weidmann, 1890, pp. 33, 35.

9 For more information on this issue, see: Werner PARAVICINI, *Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adels*. Teil 1. Sigmaringen, Thorbecke, 1989; ID., *Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adels*, Teil 2, Sigmaringen, Thorbecke, 1995.

Lithuanians and Rus'. We know that from the poems of the Austrian poet and herald Peter Suchenwirt (around 1320-1395) who joined the campaign of the duke Albert III to Prussia<sup>10</sup>. Crusades in Eastern Europe were an important focus of the Suchenwirt's writings. In this respect, German historian Hartmut Boockmann pointed out that Suchenwirt "was a professional promoter of the chivalry feasts"<sup>11</sup>. Suchenwirt mentioned many Austrian knights by name. Therefore, it is possible to reconstruct the events of the concrete military campaigns<sup>12</sup>.

The best account of the campaign in the pagan land by Suchenwirt is about the Albert III's crusade against Lithuania in 1377<sup>13</sup>. Suchenwirt was a participant of this crusade. His poem *Duke Albert's Crusade* is thus an eyewitness account. It is both a literary masterpiece and a primary source: the poem describes the typical daily life of the Christian army in the pagan land; additionally, this work is an excellent representation of the chivalric medieval customs. *Duke Albert's Crusade* is not only about the military campaign, but also about ceremonies, feasts and games during the expedition. The leisure-time activities in the chivalric culture were as essential as the military campaign itself. Attention may be drawn to some evidences from *Duke Albert's Crusade*: it is about the knights from the region under consideration.

The story begins by listing the principal leaders of the crusade. They were five counts: count Hans von Meidburg, count Hugo von Montfort, count Herman von Cilli, his son Herman II and nephew Wilhelm. Three of them came from the noble family of Sannegg, well known in Carinthia and Carniola since the twelfth century. In 1341 the German king Louis of Bavaria (1328-1347) granted Frederick von Sannegg a countship. He and his successors were henceforth designated counts of Cilli (according to the castle Cilli/Celje in present-day Slovenia)<sup>14</sup>. Their possessions on the borderland contributed to the development of political and dynastic ties between the counts of Cilli and Hungary, Balkan countries and the towns of northeast Italy. Many of the two thousand men Austrian army (the number attributed in the chronicle of the

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10 Alois PRIMISSER (ed.), *Peter Suchenwirt's Werke aus dem vierzehnten Jahrhundert. Ein Beytrag zur Zeit- und Sittengeschichte*, Vienna, Druck und Verlag von J. B. Wallishausser, 1827. Five laudable songs not included in the edition of A. Primisser were identified and published later by Georg E. FRIESS, *Fünf unedirte Ehrenreden Peter Suchenwirts*, Wien, In Commission bei Karl Gerold's Sohn, 1878.

11 Hartmut BOKMAN, *Nemeckij orden: Dvenadcat' glav is ego istorii*, Moscow, Ladomir, 2004, p. 135.

12 For details refer to: Martyniouk, *Do Gerberštejna* cit., pp. 284-297, 312-343, 357-377.

13 *Peter Suchenwirt's Werke* cit., pp. 8-15.

14 Alois NIEDERSTÄTTER, *Österreichische Geschichte. 1278-1411. Die Herrschaft Österreich. Fürst und Land im Spätmittelalter*, Wien, Ueberreuter, 2001, pp. 255-258.

Teutonic Order)<sup>15</sup> in the campaign were the knights of the counts of Cilli from Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia. Significance of the Austrian crusaders was well recognized in Königsberg: the overall command was given to the Austrian knight Konrad von Kreyg. Konrad von Kreyg is well known from the sources of the duke Albert's III times. He was among the closest associates of the duke; between 1380 and 1397 he held an important position of captain (governor) of Carinthia<sup>16</sup>. The united forces crossed the Neman River and came into enemy territory on 4 September 1377. Suchenwirt solemnly tells us:

Des margens frue man froleich gacht  
mit vrewden in der haiden lant:  
da wart gesprengt und gerant!  
Rangnet tzu fodrist nach ir sit,  
da volgt sand Jorgen fedel mit  
und Steyr lant mit der panir,  
dar nach der van mit reicher tzier  
des maisters, da pey Osterreich.  
Vil panir sach man wirdichleich  
hoch in den luften fledern [...]<sup>17</sup>

*Early the next morning the army  
joyfully rushed into the pagans' land  
at full gallop!  
The warriors of Ragnit were at the head,  
followed by those of St. George  
and of Steierland with their banner.  
Then came the ornate banner  
of the grandmaster along with that of Austria.  
Many noble flags  
fluttered in the breeze [...]*

Listing of the banners by Suchenwirt allows the reconstruction of the march formation of the crusaders in the pagan land. At the head of the army were the knights from the border castle Ragnit who knew the terrain well. They were followed by the knights under the banner of St. George: they seemed to come from different lands. Then came the knights of the count Herman von Cilli under the banner of Styria. The troops from the south Habsburg lands were thus considered as the self-sufficient military unit. The main forces under the grand master of the Teutonic Order Winrich von Kniprode and the duke Albert III followed from behind.

Suchenwirt describes war as “fun adventure” (*abentewr*) and “pagan-hunting” (*iaght*). The slaughter of pagans and the devastation of their lands was considered as the heroic deed. Duke Albert and many other warriors were solemnly knighted on the first day of the campaign:

Der graf von Tzil Herman genant  
daz swert auz seiner schaide tzoeh  
und swencht ez in di luften hoch  
und sprach zu hertzog Albrecht:

*Count Herman of Cilli  
drew his sword from its sheath  
and swung it high in the air  
and said to duke Albert:*

15 Theodor HIRSCH, Max TÖPPEN, Ernst STREHLKE (eds.), *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, vol. 2, Leipzig, Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1863, p. 585.

16 See: *Peter Suchenwirt's Werke* cit., pp. 200-201.

17 Ibidem, p. 11.

„Pezzer ritter wenne chnecht!“  
und slug den erenreichen slag.  
Do wurden auf den selben tag  
vir und sibentzig ritter.<sup>18</sup>

*“Better knight than squire!”  
and struck the blow of honor.  
Seventy four others were also knighted  
on that very day.*

The following day the count Herman von Cilli prepared the feast in honor of the recently knighted warriors. Nine dishes and a great deal of wine were served in front of the knights. Suchenwirt even reports the types of wine: *Rainfal*, *Wippacher* and *Lutenberger*<sup>19</sup>. This report is of particular interest in terms of military logistics and cultural history. *Rainfal* or Prosecco was a popular type of wine from Karst on the border between Carniola and Italian lands<sup>20</sup>. Consequently, the wine from Gorizia – from the heart of Europe and the future location of the Cobenzl family – has been drunk in lands of the wild pagans, on the frontier of civilization as well. The towns Wippach and Luttenberg in Carniola and Styria were owned by the counts von Cilli, nowadays in Slovenia – Vipava and Ljutomer<sup>21</sup>. Thus the count Herman von Cilli brought the wine from his lands to Prussia. The count was not a young man (he was born around 1332) and the knighting ceremony was certainly not his goal. Herman von Cilli was a famous warrior and nobleman: he was married to Catherine, daughter of the Bosnian ban. Catherine’s younger sister was married to the king Louis of Hungary. Participation in the crusade under the own banner and the great feast in the pagan land showed the eminence and power of Herman. It was his symbolic capital, the real reason for his participation in the campaign of 1377. Therefore, the account of Suchenwirt represents the Prussian crusade both as a military campaign and as significant element of chivalric culture of that time.

The poems of Peter Suchenwirt provide us with an eyewitness account of the Baltic crusades and makes us feel the spirit of that time. According to the circumstances presented above, the crusaders from Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia greatly enhanced the political and cross-cultural communication between Central and Eastern Europe.

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18 Ibidem, p. 11.

19 Ibidem, p. 13.

20 See: *Peter Suchenwirt's Werke* cit., p. 199; *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* cit., vol. 2, p. 163; Claudia BRINKER, *Von manigen helden gute tat: Geschichte als Exempel bei Peter Suchenwirt*, Bern, Peter Lang, 1987, p. 116. Claudia Brinker provides an evidence of these types of wine, popular in Austria in fourteenth century; she refers to well-preserved accounts concerning the ducal court.

21 *Peter Suchenwirt's Werke* cit., p. 199; *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* cit., vol. 2, p. 167; Brinker, *Von manigen helden* cit., p. 118.



### ***2.3 Tracts of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: comparative politics of Novgorod and Carinthia***

Each age is driven by its own ideas and accomplishments. In the fifteenth century the tracts replaced the chivalric deeds. The most famous representative of the new generation was an Italian humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464). Since young years he was at the heart of international political and cultural activities of Europe: he was involved in the work of the Council of Basel, was a private secretary to cardinals and Roman popes, many years served under the Holy Roman emperor Frederick III (1452-1493) and finally in 1458 became pope as Pius II. Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini wrote numerous literary works, including three historical and geographical masterpieces: *History of Austria* (three editions, 1453-1458), *History of Bohemia* (1458), *Europa* (1458). Aeneas Silvius launched the concept of the European unity against the Ottoman Turks who captured Constantinople in 1453.

Piccolomini spent much of his life in the region under consideration. Since 1442 he worked in the chancellery of the Holy Roman emperor Frederick III. During his service Aeneas explored Austria, Styria and Carinthia and the neighbouring lands. At the court of the emperor, he experienced the features of the Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, which had a great impact on his own political activities and literary work. His historical and geographical opinions were formed while working at the centre of political life of the Holy Roman Empire. Even after he became pope, he continued to work on the issues from the Vienna period (for example, *History of Austria*). This period continued more than twelve years until 1455 when he left Austria and went back to his native Italy<sup>22</sup>.

The vast literary and epistolary heritage of Aeneas Silvius has yet to be fully examined. We consider mainly one episode from his tract *Europa*. This work integrates for the first time Lithuania and Rus' into Europe, "our common house". Just recently, these lands were targets of war against the "pagans and schismatics". In this context, Piccolomini narrates a short story about East Slavic lands<sup>23</sup>. He identifies the people of Rus' (*Ruthenis*) as the Strabo's Roxolanes (by Piccolomini: *Rosanos*) and describes them as "barbaric and simple-minded people". Piccolomini calls these lands the ancient way, anticipating the ethnogenetic studies of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Rus' or Ruthenians – "Roxolanes", Poles – "Sarmatians", Lithuanians –

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22 The Austrian medievalist Alphons Lhotsky wrote a spectacular book on Piccolomini and Austria in the genre of intellectual history: Alphons LHOTSKY, *Aeneas Silvius und Österreich*, Basel, Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1965.

23 Enea Silvio PICCOLOMINI, *Europa*, eds. Günter FRANK, Paul METZGER, Albrecht HARTMANN, Heidelberg, Verlag Regionalkultur, 2005, pp. 176-177.

“Romans”, etc. Such a mental model was very fruitful, as Sigismund Herberstein and Johann Cobenzl used it later.

Piccolomini focuses on Novgorod, the big city least accessible to German merchants. He mentions the wealth of the city, consisting of a large amount of silver and precious furs. Then he draws attention to the customs of the Novgorodians. The plot is based on a prototype from the work *Commentarius in quatuor libros De dictis et factis Alfonsi Regis Aragonum Antonii Panormitae*<sup>24</sup>. According to *Europa*, in the middle of the Novgorod market square there was a stone. The one who could climb it up without being thrown of the stone took the power over the city. This resulted in an increase in the number of the popular uprisings and armed clashes. More details are available in the *Commentarius*: the king (*rex*) judges while sitting on the stone; however, he does not remain for a long time: if anybody overthrows the king from the stone, the citizens welcome a new ruler.

Russian historian Oleg Kudrjavcev devoted a special article to Piccolomini's Novgorod account. He has rightly described it as “narrow-minded and ridiculous”, based on the common medieval concept of the northern barbarism<sup>25</sup>. Piccolomini, obviously, refers to democratic institutions in Novgorod – public meetings (*veče*) and its internal conflicts. It is hard to figure out a source of this account: the evidence about German merchants in Novgorod is too general, therefore it is hard to confirm whether they gave any oral information to the Italian humanist. The story about the Novgorod stone remained unique. Hartmann Schedel included it in his *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493) thereby making this plot well-known in literary circles of Latin Europe<sup>26</sup>.

The literary and mental concepts presented above open a convenient parallel with the other plot from the tract *Europa*, enabling us to solve the mystery of the Novgorod power stone. It is the so-called “Prince's stone” (German: *Fürstenstein*, Slovene: *knežji kamen*) which played an important role during the enthronement ceremony of the Carinthian dukes. The stone looked like an inverted basis of the ancient column. The local chroniclers, such as Ottokar aus der Gaal, Johann von Viktring and others, describe the spectacular enthronement ceremony<sup>27</sup>. Piccolomini gave another detailed description of

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24 Oleg F. KUDRJACEV, *Kalif na čas: političeskij byt Novgoroda v izobraženii Pija II (Eneja Sil'vija Pikkolomini)*, in «Drevnjaja Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki», 62 no. 4 (2015), pp. 55–58.

25 Kudrjavcev, *Kalif na čas* cit., p. 55.

26 Hartmann SCHEDEL, *Welchronik 1493. Kolorierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Stephan FÜSSEL, Cologne, Taschen, 2001, fol. CCLXXVIII (verso).

27 Actual review by: Heinz DOPSCH, Karl BRUNNER, Maximilian WELTIN, *Österreichische Geschichte. 1122–1278. Die Länder und das Reich. Der Ostalpenraum im Hochmittelalter*, Wien, Ueberreuter, 1999, pp. 317–320.

the ritual in *Europa*<sup>28</sup>. The selected peasant sat on the stone in a presence of a big crowd. He asked some questions in the Slovene language to a future duke who was also dressed like a peasant. After receiving the answers, the peasant gave the duke a gentle blow on the cheek and invited him to sit down. The duke was allowed to draw his sword, mount the “Prince’s stone” and turn full circle, to face ritually in four directions. He promised the people a fair trial. After the solemn mass the new duke sat on the stone “Duke’s Chair” (German: *Herzogstuhl*, Slovene: *vojvodski prestol*), located at the Zollfeld plain north of Klagenfurt (Slovene: *Celovec*). Historians have no doubt about the antiquity of this tradition dating back to the time of the Slavic principality of Carantania<sup>29</sup>.

The last duke of Carinthia who passed through the enthronement ceremony was Ernest the Iron in 1414. Thus, the memory about this ritual was still living in the mid-fifteenth century, particularly at the court of the emperor Frederick III, son of the duke Ernst. In this case Piccolomini could use both the written sources and the oral tradition. What concerns us is the combination of the two motives in the Piccolomini’s evidence about the political traditions of Carinthia and Novgorod: the archaic idea about direct democracy and the Slavic political customs. The third motive may be added – about the conflict, more expressed in the Novgorod account and reflected as taking oath with the sword in the description of the enthronement ceremony in Carinthia. Piccolomini was aware of kinship between Slavic people; he discusses this topic explicitly in *Europa*<sup>30</sup>. This suggests that Aeneas Silvius took into account some political customs of the Carinthian Slavs familiar to him when referring to the traditions of the Novgorodian *Rutheni*. Therefore, Piccolomini conducted a comparative study, building a typological model and contrasting the ancient Slavic (dis)order of Novgorod and Carinthia with the “modern” political system of the Latin Europe. This defines Piccolomini as a novator who “creates” the image of the European East. Aeneas borrows the ancient patterns from the ancient tracts and political traditions of Carinthia, transports them on the East thereby including Eastern Europe in the “mental map” of the Latin West. This approach tended to be more analytical rather than purely

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28 Piccolomini, *Europa* cit., pp. 145-147.

29 Dopsch, Brunner, Weltin, *Österreichische Geschichte* cit., pp. 319-321. At the end of the twentieth and at the beginning of the twenty-first century the “stone story” again become particularly important. The picture of the “Prince’s stone” was printed on banknotes of the independent Republic of Slovenia, showing the origin of the Slovenian state. The decision provoked protests by Austrians, who considered the Stone as their place of memory. In 2006 the “Prince’s stone” was solemnly transferred to the building of the Provincial Parliament of Carinthia.

30 Piccolomini, *Europa* cit., pp. 172-173.

descriptive as it was by medieval chroniclers. Aeneas set out the framework for rationalistic studies of the early modern period.

The conclusion is the following. History of the middle ages was not a chronicle of the self-contained world. International networks and bonds connected the people from extremely distant regions of Europe. A perspective-taking task of the project *Gorizia at the heart of Europe: the Cobenzl family* reveals the historical ties between the region under consideration and the Eastern Europe. We have found out the dynamics of these ties: political and dynastic contacts of the thirteenth century; participation of the chivalry from the Habsburg lands in the European-wide movement of the fourteenth century; and incorporation of the territories of the Eastern Europe in the Western “mental map” of the fifteenth century contributed to the “discovery of Russia” by Sigismund Herberstein in the early sixteenth century. All these contacts provided the overall context of the mission of Johann Cobenzl; in 1575 he did not choose the road to nowhere – he was following his predecessors.

### 3. Johann Cobenzl: Personality and mission

#### 3.1 A short biography

Johann or Hans Cobenzl was one of the most important personalities of the Habsburg imperial administrative and foreign political apparatus in the second half of the sixteenth century. Moreover, his engagements did not concern only those sectors typical for a high-ranking official and diplomat coming from the area of Inner Austria, i.e. maintaining relations with the nearby Republic of Venice, Patriarchy of Aquileia, and the Papal See; namely, Cobenzl represented his sovereign, the Holy Roman emperor, in such distant lands such as Poland and Muscovy<sup>31</sup>. The fact itself that Cobenzl was designated to lead the imperial delegation to Muscovy testifies about his high esteem in the eyes of the emperor and within the Central European diplomatic apparatus of the time<sup>32</sup>.

Hans Cobenzl (Giovanni; Ivan/Janez) was born around the year 1530 in a local, probably Slavic-speaking, family belonging to a lower military nobility from the Karst region around San Daniele del Carso (Slovene: Štanjel), the

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31 Silvano CAVAZZA, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564: la formazione di un ministro austriaco*, in Liliana FERRARI, Paolo IANCIS (eds.), *Oltre i confini: Scritti in onore di don Luigi Tavano per i suoi 90 anni*, Gorizia, Istituto di Storia Sociale e Religiosa, 2013, p. 71.

32 ID., *La Relatione delle cose di Moscovia di Giovanni Cobenzl*, in «Quaderni Giuliani di Storia», 34 no. 1 (2013), pp. 61-62.

territory in present-day western Slovenia, at the time divided between the lands of Gorizia and Carniola<sup>33</sup>. Between 1548 and 1552 Cobenzl studied at the university of Vienna<sup>34</sup> and became a *baccalaureus*, presumably in law<sup>35</sup>. During his university years, Cobenzl was under moral and material protection of Urban Textor (around 1490-1558)<sup>36</sup>, a native from the same Karst region, chaplain of the imperial court in Vienna, preacher and confessor of the future emperor Ferdinand I (1556-1564), a staunch opponent of Lutheranism and promotor of the Society of Jesus, from 1543 to 1558 bishop of Laibach (Slovene: Ljubljana) in Carniola<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, on Textor's initiative, in 1553 Cobenzl, together with Bartholomäus Laufer from Oberburg (Slovene: Gornji Grad) in the Diocese of Laibach, signed up as the first student of the recently established Jesuit *Collegium Germanicum* in Rome. The following year, however, both Cobenzl and Laufer were forced to leave Rome due to their insufficiently "orthodox" views and unwillingness to pursue theological studies for the sake of future ecclesiastical career<sup>38</sup>. In 1556 Cobenzl was among the students of the juridical faculty at the university of Bologna, yet without obtaining a formal academic degree. It should be noted, though, that students from Inner Austria were very uncommon in Bologna of the time<sup>39</sup>. In 1558 Cobenzl entered in the imperial chancellery as a secretary for Latin letters. During his early Viennese period he adopted those fundamental skills and principles characteristic for his entire career, particularly his loyalty to the political authorities and emperor

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33 Cavazza, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564* cit., pp. 72-73.

34 According to the university registers, Cobenzl is listed as «Ioannes Khobentzel Kharts, Slavus» (Johann Cobenzl from Karst, Slav). Although the University of Vienna had always had many Slavic-speaking students, this particular denotation («Slavus») is rarely found in its documents from the early modern period. This could indicate that Cobenzl was not of noble origin (or at least belonging to a lower military aristocracy). It appears improbable that a member of Carniolan or Gorizian nobility would identify himself with his first language (Cavazza, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564* cit., p. 73). See also: Archiv der Universität Wien, *Wiener Artistenregister*, Band 4 (1416-1555), eds. Thomas MAISEL, Ingrid MATSCHINEGG, n. 29081/b-1.

35 Cavazza, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564* cit., p. 73.

36 More on Textor: France Martin DOLINAR, *Textor, Urban*, in Clemens BRODKORP, Erwin GATZ (eds.), *Die Bischöfe des Heiligen Römischen Reiches: 1448 bis 1648. Ein biographisches Lexikon*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1996, pp. 692-693; Primož SIMONITI, *Humanismus bei den Slovenen*, ed. Marija WAKOUNIG, Wien, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008, pp. 270-271.

37 Cavazza, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564* cit., pp. 73-74.

38 Cavazza, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564* cit., pp. 74-75; Andreas STEINHUBER, *Geschichte des Kollegium Germanikum-hungarikum in Rom*, vol. 1, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 1906, pp. 18, 43-44.

39 Cavazza, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564* cit., p. 76; Gustav KNOD, *Deutsche Studenten in Bologna: 1289-1562. Biographischer Index zu den Acta Nationis Germanicae Universitatis Bononiensis*, Berlin, Decker, 1899, pp. 143-144, 258.

himself, even when dealing with ecclesiastical matters. In the subsequent years he managed to build a brilliant administrative and political career, becoming one of the most noticeable secretaries under Ferdinand I who granted him the attestation of nobility, bearing the title *von Prosegg* (Prosecco; Prosek; village and fortress east of Trieste). From 1576 and 1591 he was serving the archduke of Styria, Charles II (1564-1590), as the head of the land's financial chancellery. In 1585 the same archduke granted him the title of baron<sup>40</sup>. Cobenzl was also, starting from the mid-sixties of the sixteenth century, one of the most prominent members of the Austrian branch of the Teutonic Order, serving as the commander of Laibach, Graz, and Vienna<sup>41</sup>. Cobenzl died in 1594 during his active presence at the Imperial Diet in Regensburg and was buried in the church of the Teutonic Order of the same city<sup>42</sup>.

### ***3.2 Cobenzl's mission to Muscovy: political background***

The years between 1573 and 1576 were marked by a vivacious diplomatic activity between the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian II (1564-1576) and tsar Ivan IV (1547-1584) over the question of succession to the throne of the Polish-Lithuanian confederacy following the death of king Sigismund II August (1548-1572). Maximilian was intent on placing his own son, the archduke Ernest, on the Polish-Lithuanian throne, and he tried to enlist the support of Ivan for his candidate. These efforts of Maximilian culminated with the arrival on Russian territory in November 1575 of the Austrian diplomatic delegation led by Hans Cobenzl<sup>43</sup>. This diplomatic mission, taking place in the winter of 1575/1576, was thoroughly described by Cobenzl himself in his report—written in a coherent renaissance Italian language, at the time becoming the renowned language of South and Central European diplomacy—known as the *Report on Muscovy* (*La relatione delle cose di Moscovia*)<sup>44</sup>. The *Report* can

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40 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., pp. 54-56.

41 Cavazza, *Giovanni Cobenzl fino al 1564* cit., pp. 77-79; Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 56; Lothar GROSS, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Reichshofkanzlei 1559 bis 1806*, Wien, Haus-Hof und Staatsarchiv, 1933, p. 359.

42 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 57.

43 Bonner MITCHELL, Russel ZGUTA, *The Sixteenth-Century 'Account of Muscovy' Attributed to Don Felippo Prenestain*, in «Russian History», 8 no. 3 (1981), p. 391.

44 Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., pp. 391-392, 399-400; Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 57. When showing Cobenzl's ability to write in Italian, it is necessary to note that he had studied in Rome and Bologna during his youth and then lived in Italy between 1571 and 1573. More importantly, his letters to the (future) cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini (1593-1610) between 1592 and 1594 prove that he was capable of writing acceptable Italian – the style of these letters is compatible with his account on the mission to Muscovy.

be regarded as a representative foreign political document of utmost success in the context of the late-sixteenth century European diplomacy. In 1589 this text was included in the Italian edition of the miscellany known as *Thesoro politico* (*Political Treasure*), presumably published in Paris and often defined as one of the most read and copied book of the Counter-Reformation period, containing various reports, particularly from Venetian authors, political disputations, and (secret) treaties. From 1589 to 1618, there are almost twenty preserved printed editions and redactions of the *Thesoro*, not counting innumerable manuscript copies, originally written in Italian and occasionally translated into French and Latin<sup>45</sup>.

The immediate background of the Cobenzl's mission discussed can be traced back to 1572, the year Sigismund II August, the last royal member of the Jagellonians, died without leaving a male heir and opened the possibility for the Polish and Lithuanian noblemen to elect a new ruler from another dynasty<sup>46</sup>. Hoping to see a Habsburg succeeding to the Polish-Lithuanian crown, Maximilian connected his initiative with the aspirations of the Polish bishops and a part of the Lithuanian high nobility, who wanted the election of Ernest as the king of Lithuania, Prussia and Livonia. This was with the implicit understanding that the Habsburg cause would also be secured among other (particularly Polish) aristocrats—on the other hand, a second larger part of the Lithuanian electorate, higher and lower nobility of the Eastern Orthodox confession, preferred Ivan IV as their new sovereign. In this context, Maximilian wanted to use his diplomats to achieve the support of the Russian monarch and restrain his expansionistic ambitions in Livonia, where the Muscovites had resumed their hostilities in the summer of 1575<sup>47</sup>. Chosen to head this mission was Hans Cobenzl, at the time vice chancellor to archduke Charles, who was brother of the emperor and ruler of Inner Austria. Accompanying Cobenzl as the second ambassador would be Daniel Prinz von Buchau (Czech: Bochoř), a counsellor of the imperial appellate court in Bohemia, and a retinue of some two dozen persons<sup>48</sup>. A prominent member of Cobenzl's retinue was also Christoph von Herberstein, a descendant of the famous Sigismund Herberstein (1486-1566), originating from Wippach (Vipacco; Vipava) in southern Carniola, who completed two diplomatic

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45 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., pp. 53, 73-74.

46 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., pp. 58-59.

47 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., pp. 57, 59-60; Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., pp. 392-393; Fëdor VERŽBOVSKIJ, *Posol'stvo Ioanna Kobencelja v Moskvu v 1575–1576 gg.*, in «Varšavskie universitetskie izvestija», 7 (1896), pp. 6-7, 10.

48 Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., p. 393; Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 63; Jaroslava HAUSENBLASOVÁ, *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolf II.*, Prag, Artefactum, 2002, pp. 261, 269.

missions to Muscovy between 1516-1518 and 1526-1527 representing the emperors Maximilian I (1503-1550) and Ferdinand II and who had written a fundamental and extensive sixteenth-century account<sup>49</sup> on the politics, history and ethnography of Eastern Europe<sup>50</sup>. Unfortunately for Maximilian, the chamber of the Polish nobility, with the strong support of the lower and middle nobility, subsequently chose another candidate, Transylvanian prince Stefan Báthory (1576-1586), nominally an Ottoman vassal ruler, who was crowned in May 1576. Had Maximilian been recognized as king of Poland the conflict between Poland and Russia over Livonia might have been settled by negotiations rather than war. The union between the Poles and the Habsburgs might also have resulted in a concerted effort against the Ottomans by the Empire, Poland, and Russia. This plan for a large-scale alliance was one of the major objectives of Cobenzl's mission, as emphasized in the initial part of the mentioned report<sup>51</sup>.

Cobenzl left another account of his mission in a lengthy letter, apparently written originally in "Illyrian" (Croatian), but translated also into Latin and Italian, to his friend Georg Draschkowitsch de Tracoscan (Juraj Drašković)<sup>52</sup>.

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49 According to the biography of both diplomats, Herberstein and Cobenzl, their knowledge of Slovene language (one of the South Slavic languages) is indisputable. In analogy with the case of Herberstein's missions at the beginning of the sixteenth century, also driven by the aspiration to establish a great anti-Ottoman coalition, it can be presumed that Cobenzl, at least in (semi)private conversations with his Russian hosts, used a kind of adapted Slavic idiom which enabled him to better understand the surrounding cultural environment and being easily accepted by the Russian side. It should be noted, though, that during solemn speeches and official negotiations the Muscovite court used two of its own translators from Livonia for German and Russian languages.

50 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., pp. 63-64, 66. For a representative overview of Sigismund Herberstein's life and work, see: Gerhard PFERSCHY (ed.), *Sigismund von Herberstein: kaiserlicher Gesandter und Begründer der Rußlandkunde und die europäische Diplomatie*, Graz, Akademische Druck, 1989; Anna L. HOROŠKEVIČ, *Baron Sigismund Gerberštejn. Antobiografija v zerkale 'Zapisok o Moskovi'*, in «Slovenica: Istorija i perspektivy rossijsko-slovenskih otnošenij», Saint Petersburg, Aleteja, 2011, pp. 88-100.

51 Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., pp. 393-394; Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., pp. 60-61, 67-69.

52 Georg Draschkowitsch de Tracoscan (Juraj Drašković) was born in Bilina near Knin in central Dalmatia, at the time (1563-1578) archbishop of Agram (Zagreb) in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, imperial viceroy of Croatia and Dalmatia (1567-1578), in his late years cardinal (1585-1587) of the Catholic Church: Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., p. 394; Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 76; Friedrich ADELUNG (ed.), *Kritisch-Literarische Uebersicht der Reisenden in Russland bis 1700, deren Berichte bekannt sind*, vol. 1, Leipzig, T. O. Weigel, 1846, pp. 293-294. For a complete translation of Cobenzl's letter from Latin to Russian, see: Vasilij F. DOMBROVSKIJ, *Pis'mo Ioanna Kobencelja o Rossii XVI veka*, in «Žurnal ministerstva narodnago prosvjaščenija», 35 (1842), pp. 127-153.



There can be little doubt that Cobenzl's more known work, the *Relatione*, is just a slightly amended version of his letter to Draschkowitsch. Moreover, literary and circumstantial evidence points to Draschkowitsch as the most logical recipient of the account. He was, *inter alia*, the personal representative of emperor Ferdinand I at the Ecumenical Council of Trent (1545-1563) in 1561 and later represented the entire Hungarian Church. At Trent he distinguished himself as the leader of a liberal reform group that fought for permitting communion under both species and the abolition of the requirement of clerical celibacy. These two changes would have eliminated some major liturgical and juridical obstacles in the relations between the Eastern and Western Churches. Bishop Draschkowitsch was clearly an appropriate man for Cobenzl to address on Russia and similarities between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. More than a third of the account is given to that matter, with a view to convincing the addressee that it would be easy to bring Ivan IV and his people to ecclesiastical union under the "universal" authority of the pope. This text, despite all its naive statements, is an important document for the history of the Catholic relations with the Eastern Orthodox Russia and deserves serious consideration<sup>53</sup>. On this basis, it should be noted that in the second half of the sixteenth century papacy was attempting to minimize its losses to Protestantism and at the same time trying to unite its forces in the face of the Ottoman rule and spread of Islam in South-Eastern and Central Europe. In the context of these political and religious realities, Cobenzl's sympathetic views on Ivan IV and his people must surely have raised high hopes of winning a potentially vast host of Eastern Orthodox Christians for the Catholic Church and of the emergence of a powerful new member of the anti-Ottoman coalition. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the letter to Draschkowitsch was widely circulated and copied<sup>54</sup>. In this context, one cannot forget to mention the unrealized idealistic project of the pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) to unite the entire Eastern Orthodox world with the Catholic Church on the basis of partial theological accord reached between Rome and Constantinople already at the Ecumenical Council of Florence-Ferrara in 1439. To reach this goal, between 1581 and 1582, the pope sent Antonio Possevino (1533-1611), an Italian Jesuit and one of the most renown Catholic apologists of the time, to the tsar's court in Moscow – this mission was subsequently described by Possevino himself in an extensive report rich with politically and theologically detailed observations<sup>55</sup>.

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53 Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., pp. 395-396, 399.

54 Ibidem, p. 396; Hans ÜBERSBERGER, *Österreich und Russland seit dem Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Wien - Leipzig, Wilhelm Braumüller, 1906, pp. 461-462.

55 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 70; Stanislas POLČIN, *Une tentative d'union au XVI. siècle : la mission religieuse du père Antoine Possevin S. J. en Moscovie; 1581-1582*, Roma, Pontificium

### 3.3 Cobenzl's Relation

Cobenzl opens his report with the intention to communicate it to “His Holiness and to the other Christian princes in order to lead them ... into the alliance which the Muscovites wish to see formed against the Turks”<sup>56</sup>. The author than prefaces his observations about the Church in Muscovy by daringly claiming that union with Rome might be achieved easily, “especially since they never left it”<sup>57</sup>. He continues:

For this reason there are grounds to hope that if they saw and heard about the errors in which they find themselves they would immediately come into agreement with us and would increase our number so greatly that the gain would be three times the loss incurred during recent years [due to Protestantism] in Germany and in France<sup>58</sup>.

As evidence for this assertion, he proceeds to describe a host of Muscovite religious practices and institutions, seeking always to draw reassuring comparisons with his own “Latin” practices and institutions. He particularly speaks of a deep-rooted religiosity and spiritual fervor of the Russian people, particularly concerning the Divine Liturgy, the veneration of saints, the use of sacramentals and holy images, and the consistent observance of fasts. He also describes Russian monasticism, focusing on the famed Holy Trinity Lavra of Saint Sergius east of Moscow. Furthermore, according to Cobenzl, the Muscovites are acquainted with the Catholic holy places and even

desire most fervently to see Rome and to visit the places heard, so many saints whom they honor more than we. [...] For those who were from the beginning assigned to accompany me often talked to me, always saying that they wanted nothing much as to do honor to [the holy] places, and especially Our Most Holy Lady of Loreto, better known to them than many Germans and Frenchmen<sup>59</sup>.

However, according to Cobenzl, even though the Muscovites hold the great Eastern theologian and Church Father Saint John Chrysostom (circa 347-

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Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1957; Antonius POSSEVINUS, *Moscovia*, Vilnius, Ioannes Velicensis, 1586.

56 Bonner MITCHELL, Russel ZGUTA (eds.), *Account of the Most Excellent Signor Don Felippo Prenestain, Imperial Ambassador of His Caesarean Majesty to the Grand Prince of Muscovy, 1579*, in «*Russian History*», 8 no. 3 (1981), p. 401.

57 Mitchell, Zguta (eds.), *Account* cit., p. 401.

58 *Ibidem*.

59 *Ibidem*, p. 402.

407) in high esteem, they are theologically unsophisticated. Cobenzl added that the author of the report discussed could find no one among them who was able to debate on the points of the Homoousian controversy from the fourth century concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ in relation to God the Father. Moreover, their greatest error lies in rejection of all but the first seven Ecumenical Councils (between 325 and 787), and this is at the core of their “separation” from the Roman pontifical see<sup>60</sup>.

In historiography, Cobenzl’s *Relation* has been used most often to illustrate the civility, splendor, and sumptuousness of Ivan’s court, more precisely, his residences in Mozhaïsk about one hundred kilometers west of Moscow<sup>61</sup>. Cobenzl’s attitude towards Ivan IV shows striking differences with the common (Central) European image of the Russian tsar of the time, expressed particularly in German political tracts and ethnographic accounts, writing about political refugees from Muscovy and depicting the monarch as an atrocious tyrant both towards his own family members and the entire people under his rule<sup>62</sup>. Against this background, one of the Cobenzl’s most illustrative observations, accentuating Ivan’s richness and hospitality, is the following: “Ivan IV had ordered so much food that there was enough for three hundred people rather than for the mere thirty [who were with me]”<sup>63</sup>. The author narrates that the riches and splendor he experienced in Muscovy are even greater than those of the courts of Spain, France, Tuscany, Germany, and Hungary – all of which he has seen personally on his previous diplomatic missions. He states that:

[Ivan IV] had worn an imperial mantle with a crown on his head almost like that of the pope, which I saw recently when I was at Rome in the Castel Sant’Angelo. Almost like it in form [I mean], for in value neither that of the pope, nor that of the king of Spain, nor that of the king of France, nor that of the grand duke of Tuscany, which I have seen, nor that of the emperor, not those of the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia, can be compared to this. The mantle was studded with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other similar jewels as big as walnuts, so that I marveled greatly at how he could support such a great weight on his head<sup>64</sup>.

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60 Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., p. 397-398.

61 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 66. One of the most notable examples is the popular-scientific monograph on the reign and private life of Ivan IV: Robert PAYNE, Nikita ROMANOFF, *Ivan the Terrible*. New York, Crowell, 1975, pp. 354-358.

62 Cavazza, *La Relatione* cit., p. 71; Andreas KAPPELER, *Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des westlichen Rußlandbildes*, Bern, H. Lang, 1972.

63 Mitchell, Zguta (eds.), *Account* cit., pp. 407-408.

64 *Ibidem*, pp. 408-409.

As one might expect, much of the account is given to a detailed relation of the three meetings between the envoys and the tsar. There is also some information about the geography, history, economy, and political and military structure of the Muscovite state – all designed to show the tsar’s power, wealth, and hospitality. In this context, Cobenzl notes: “He had borne most liberally all the travelling and maintenance expenses while I was in his kingdom; I never had to spend one denarius except for some tips to those who served me”<sup>65</sup>. Most importantly, as already noted, the first part of the report, comprising more than a third of the entire text, is devoted to a discussion on the beliefs and practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church<sup>66</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusion

Diplomatic mission of Johann (Hans) Cobenzl at the court of Ivan IV was an important event in the long history of diplomatic contacts between the Holy Roman Empire, particularly the so-called Inner Austria (Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia), and East Slavic (Rus’) principalities. An account of this mission (*Relatione*) provides valuable information about the history of Muscovy in the second half of the sixteenth century. This event had an intercultural and interconfessional dimension: the mission itself and its account made a significant contribution to the mutual acquaintance of Central and Eastern Europe, where a positive attitude of a member of the Latin Church towards the Eastern Orthodoxy was obviously stated. The first part of the report, comprising more than a third of the entire text, is devoted to a discussion on the beliefs and practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church. However, Johann Cobenzl did not choose the road to nowhere, as he was following his predecessors – not limited to the renowned diplomat and Cobenzl’s compatriot Sigismund Herberstein who enabled the “discovery of Russia” in the mid-sixteenth century through his monumental *Commentaries*. On this basis, three minor case studies on the predecessors of Cobenzl – Philip of Salzburg, Herman von Cilli, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini – from the Alpine-Adriatic region living between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, less known in the historiography, are also taken into consideration.

The contacts between the East Slavic territory (in this case, Principality of Halych-Volhyn) and the region of Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia were first established in the mid-thirteenth century because of the political events that took place in the Austrian Duchy, known as the War of the Babenberg

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65 *Ibidem*, p. 410.

66 Mitchell, Zguta, *The Sixteenth-Century* cit., p. 397.

Succession. In 1252 the archbishop Philip of Salzburg contacted the prince Daniel Romanovich of Halych and after that defeated the count Meinhard of Gorizia near Greifenburg in Carinthia. Consequently, the land of Gorizia, at least implicitly, for the first time in history founded itself related to the Eastern Europe. These events were also reflected in the medieval East Slavic literary tradition. The *Halych-Volhyn Chronicle* first mentioned Styria (земля Штирська) and the names of regional political actors – the archbishop Philip of Salzburg and Frederick von Pettau. The second episode in the history of contacts between Inner Austria and Rus' was set within the participation of Herman von Cilli in the Baltic crusade under his own banner and its related account of the chivalric poet Peter Suchenwirt from the mid-fourteenth century. According to the circumstances discussed in previous chapters, the crusaders from Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Gorizia greatly enhanced the political and cross-cultural communication between Central and Eastern Europe. The third case study considers one episode from the tract *Europa* by the humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, future pope Pius II. This work integrates for the first time Lithuania and Rus' into Europe – “our common house”. He identifies the people of Rus' (*Ruthenis*) as the Strabo's Roxolanes (by Piccolomini: *Rosanos*) and describes them as “barbaric and simple-minded people”. Furthermore, an interesting element in Piccolomini's account is the story on the Novgorod market square stone, probably connected to the princely stone and duke's throne of the Carinthian Slavs familiar to him, drawing from the archaic idea about direct democracy and the Slavic political customs. Therefore, Piccolomini conducted a comparative study, building a typological model and contrasting the ancient Slavic (dis)order of Novgorod and Carinthia with the “modern” political system of the Latin Europe.

According to the diplomatic missions and similar events of Johann Cobenzl, Sigismund Herberstein and their medieval predecessors, it is clear that the territory between the Alps and Adriatic Sea was integrated into the secular and ecclesiastical international relations seeking collaboration with various polities of the distant Eastern Europe. Additionally, all described diplomatic missions or aims to establish contacts with rulers of Rus' principalities were primarily the result of political needs stemming from the unsolved issues within the Holy Roman Empire or from external threats, such as the aspiration to establish a great anti-Ottoman coalition in case of Herberstein and Cobenzl. However, concerning the acquaintance of and personal attitude towards Eastern Europe, there is a difference between Cobenzl and Herberstein, on the one hand, and their medieval predecessors, on the other. This difference lies in the fragmentary and occasional character of the earliest contacts and testimonies, whereas the two mentioned early modern diplomats provide us with extensive, in-depth and personalized accounts on the politics and (religious) traditions of Muscovy.

## **Abstract**

This article is dedicated to the wider historical and cultural circumstances of the diplomatic mission of Johann (Hans) Cobenzl at the court of Ivan IV the Terrible (1547-1584) in 1575-1576, which represents an important event in the history of contacts between the Holy Roman Empire, particularly the so-called Inner Austria, and East Slavic (Rus') principalities during the middle ages and early modern period. The first part of this article covers three minor case studies on the predecessors of Cobenzl from the Alpine-Adriatic region living in the thirteenth (Philip of Salzburg), fourteenth (Herman von Cilli) and fifteenth (Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini) centuries; the second part covers the historical background of Cobenzl's mission to Muscovy and his literary account. Authors of this article advocate two mutually intertwined theses: all described diplomatic missions to Eastern Europe or aims to establish contacts with rulers of various Rus' principalities were primarily the result of political needs stemming from the unsolved issues within the Holy Roman Empire; all these missions or contacts enabled the incorporation of the territories of the Eastern Europe in the Western "mental map" and contributed to the "discovery of Russia" in the mid-sixteenth century (most notably by Sigismund Herberstein, also originating from Inner Austria). This provided the overall context of the mission of Johann Cobenzl; he did not choose the road to nowhere – he was following his predecessors.

## **Keywords**

Hans (Giovanni) Cobenzl; Sigismund Herberstein; Inner Austria; Muscovy; diplomacy