

GUIDOBALDO COBENZL,  
AN ARISTOCRAT BETWEEN PATERNALISM AND PATRIOTISM

*Filippo Soramel*

**Introduction**

Guidobaldo Cobenzl (1716-1797) was born in Laibach (Ljubljana) as the second survived son of Gorizian-Carniolan landed nobleman Giovanni Gasparo Cobenzl (1664-1742)<sup>1</sup>. Thanks to his father's proximity to the Emperor, he spent his teenage years as page at the court of Charles VI, and his early twenties fighting the Ottomans in the Balkans. He was twenty-five, when he married Lothringian-Tyrolian heiress Marie Benigna Montrichier (1720-1793). Living off the revenue of the seigneurie of Reifnitz (Ribnica), in Lower Carniola, the two settled in Laibach in 1741. Here, Guidobaldo entered the provincial administration and became well-versed in Latin, history, maths, and physics, so to keep up to date with contemporary theoretical and practical innovations. The appetite for improvement and reform that he consequently developed won him numerous opponents in Carniola. Hence, in 1748, he relocated his growing family to Gorizia, where, on the contrary, his personal connections and library would prove useful to local intellectuals. This was the case for two of the most important works of the Gorizian Enlightenment, such as the second edition of the *Tentamen genealogico-chronologicum promovendae seriei comitum et rerum Goritiae* (Genealogical-chronological essay on the progressive series of counts and events of Gorizia, 1759) by Rodolfo Coronini Cronberg (1731-1791), and the *Istoria della Contea di Gorizia* (History of the County of Gorizia, 1855) by Carlo Morelli (1730-1792)<sup>2</sup>.

---

1 Arianna GROSSI, *Cobenzl, famiglia*, in Cesare SCALON, Claudio GRIGGIO, Ugo ROZZO, Giuseppe BERGAMINI (eds.), *NL. 2. L'Età veneta*, Udine, Forum, 2009, p. 739.

2 Alfred von ARNETH, *Graf Philipp Cobenzl und seine Memoiren*, in «Archiv für österreichische Geschichte», 67 (1886), pp. 1-181: 62-63; Alessio STASI, *Canto gli onor delle Sonziache sponde*, in Rodolfo CORONINI CRONBERG, Lorenzo DA PONTE, *Fasti Goriziani*, Mariano del Friuli, Edizioni della Laguna, 2001, p. 13; Carlo MORELLI, *Istoria della Contea di Gorizia*, Gorizia, Paternolli, 1855-1856 (Mariano del Friuli, Edizioni della Laguna, 2003), vol. III, p. 259.

However, Guidobaldo's life was tarnished by the bright political and diplomatic careers at the service of the House of Austria enjoyed by his father, his elder brother Charles (1712-1770), his son Johann Philipp (1741-1810) and his nephew Louis (1753-1809). In fact, he was not mentioned in the main contemporary lists of notable political and cultural figures of the County of Gorizia<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, Guidobaldo was involved in the most significant, reformist Gorizian associations of the second half of the century. He participated in a *Compagnia della Carità* (Company of Charity) organised by the first Archbishop of Gorizia in 1754, Carlo Michele d'Attems, in the *Cesarea Regia Società d'Agricoltura nelle Principate Contee di Gorizia e Gradisca* (Imperial Royal Society of Agriculture in the Princely Counties of Gorizia and Gradisca), which was sponsored by Maria Theresa in 1764, and in the *Accademia degli Arcadi Romano-Sonziaci* (Academy of the Romano-Gorizian Arcadians) which he himself founded in 1780. In fact, his reformist zeal stemmed from the socio-economic inefficiencies marring the Habsburg Hereditary *Länder* (*Erblande*).

By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, like its neighbouring regions, the County of Gorizia was characterised by intertwined higher and lower 'lordships' (*Herrschaften*)<sup>4</sup>. Landholding aristocrats enjoying varying degrees of feudal authority over their lands (*Grundherrschaft*) – ranging from allodial sovereignty to mere jurisdictional prerogatives – coexisted with the authority of the prince (*Landesherrschaft*)<sup>5</sup>. Prerogatives of taxation, administration of justice, exaction of labour services, and military assistance characterised such lordships as highly personalised, at once public and private authorities<sup>6</sup>. Accordingly, the relationship between peasants and landed nobility, and between the latter and their territorial princes was strongly paternalistic in character, as representation of such legal and economic relationships<sup>7</sup>. However, by the 1740s, such system was in crisis throughout Central Europe, as commercial decline and privatisations of communal pastures exacerbated feudal structures<sup>8</sup>. Labour

---

3 Pietro Antonio CODELLI, *Gli scrittori friulano-austriaci degli ultimi due secoli*, Gorizia, Tommasini, 1783; Morelli, *Istoria* cit. III, pp. 245-374.

4 Pierpaolo DORSI, *Il sistema dei giudizi locali nel Goriziano tra XVIII e XIX secolo*, in «Quaderni Giuliani di Storia», 1 (1983), pp. 9-12.

5 Hans H. KAMINSKY, James VAN HORN MELTON, *Translators' Introduction*, in Otto BRUNNER, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, pp. XXIX-XXX.

6 Charles W. INGRAO, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1618-1815*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 7-8.

7 James VAN HORN MELTON, *Absolutism and the eighteenth-century origins of compulsory schooling in Prussia and Austria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 145.

8 Tommaso FANFANI, *Economia e società nei domini ereditari della Monarchia Asburgica nel Settecento (Le contee di Gorizia e Gradisca)*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1979, p. 26; Tommaso FANFANI, *La Società Agraria di Gorizia e Gradisca nel dibattito del Settecento*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1977, p. 15.

obligations (*rabotte*) and taxation increased, worsening the living conditions of the peasantry, and causing regular uprisings, which peaked in 1713 in the Gorizian Alps and Karst. Moreover, increasing land rental involving non-noble tenants (*stontisti*) weakened personalised feudal ties between lords and peasants, and this was even intensified by the rise of a landless sub-peasant class (*sottani, herrenlose*) devoted to vagrancy and theft that had no ties to landed feudal authorities<sup>9</sup>. The situation precipitated when the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) saw the House of Austria almost lose their Imperial lands and crown for good. The offensive mounted by Prussia, Bavaria and other Imperial principalities highlighted the extant social crisis and prompted thorough legal, economic, and social reforms in the Habsburg domains<sup>10</sup>. On the one hand, the dynasty tried to turn its disparate holdings into a modern, centralised, ‘fiscal-military state’ capable of heavy taxation to sustain a large standing army<sup>11</sup>. On the other, such restructuring imposed a refinement of patterns of social control that had as their object the people at large as an economic force capable of sustaining substantial fiscal necessities<sup>12</sup>. Such process, which characterised the reigns of Maria Theresa (1740-1780) and Joseph II (1780-1790) has traditionally been referred to as ‘Josephinism’.

As a landed noble and a Josephinist reformer, Guidobaldo epitomised such crisis and transformation of lordship and paternalism as systems of social control. The present essay shall investigate their integration within state-building structures and theories proper of Habsburg reformism, as observable in the dynastic and aristocratic shared need for new strategies of social control characterising the associations Cobenzl participated in. As it will be demonstrated, this took moral, Counter-Reformist tones in the Company of Charity, whereas the Society of Agriculture, inspired by British, French, and Swiss ‘patriotic’ associations, displayed a socio-economic focus. However, while feudal lordship was theoretically co-opted into state public authority, its practical shortcomings brought to the decline of the nobility’s ‘publicness’, which was confirmed by the Gorizian Arcadia. This way, this essay will analyse Guidobaldo Cobenzl’s and his peers’ transition from feudal nobles to modern aristocrats, from lordly paternalism to Habsburg patriotism.

---

9 Fanfani, *Economia* cit. pp. 92, 119-21; Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism* cit. pp. 147-9; Furio BIANCO, *Struttura sociale e paesaggio agrario. La “Bassa” friulana nei secoli XVIII e XIX*, in «Classe», 18 (1980), pp. 336, 347.

10 Robert J. W. EVANS, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs. Central Europe c. 1683-1867*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 57.

11 William D. GODSEY, *The Sinews of Habsburg Power: Lower Austria in a Fiscal-Military State 1650-1820*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 15-16.

12 Grete WALTER KLINGENSTEIN, *Controllo sociale e problemi economici nella politica teresiana*, in Luigi TAVANO, France M. DOLINAR, *Carlo Michele d’Attems: primo arcivescovo di Gorizia 1752-1774. Fra curia romana e stato asburgico*, Gorizia, ISSR, 1990, vol. II. Atti del Convegno, p. 93.

## 1. Aristocratic Paternalism and the *Compagnia di Carità*

Between the second half of the 1740s and the early 1750s, the County of Gorizia was among the early territories to be impacted by Maria Theresa's and her ministers' first round of reforms. Among the latter, after Habsburg diplomats and Venetian ambassadors signed a treaty in Vienna in March, on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1751, a Papal bull abolished the Patriarchate of Aquileia, which spanned across the Austro-Venetian border. Two archbishoprics took its place, in Udine and Gorizia respectively, thus eliminating what had been cause of instability for centuries<sup>13</sup>. This became the first successful attempt to limit foreign episcopal authority over Habsburg territories, and to align ecclesiastical and political borders, which would gain impetus in the following decades<sup>14</sup>. While the social implications of such reform are well known, they find further confirmation in one of Guidobaldo Cobenzl's surviving documents. The nobleman received, by the then recently appointed first Archbishop of Gorizia, a detailed letter titled *Erezione canonica della Compagnia della carità istituita in Gorizia dalla potestà del Prelato da principiarsi l'anno nuovo 1755* (Canonical Erection of the Company of Charity instituted in Gorizia under the authority of the Prelate to be commenced next year 1755). This document testified the convergence of lordly paternalist authority with that of the rising Habsburg state, and the role that a noble settled in Gorizia, like Guidobaldo Cobenzl, could have in the common attempt at implementing more efficient forms of social disciplining.

Indeed, the very suppression of the Patriarchate had been the outcome of a coordination of Habsburg, Papal, and local aristocratic interests, especially as sponsored by brothers Sigismondo and Carlo Michele d'Attems, with the latter being nominated first Archbishop of Gorizia<sup>15</sup>. In fact, the *Erezione* suggests that the Gorizian nobility maintained a considerable role in episcopal affairs in later years. On the one hand, the General Head of the Company of Charity was to be the Archbishop himself. On the other, he would be aided by four councillors, two ecclesiastics and two laymen. In turn, this council would choose three directors for each of the eight quarters in which Gorizia would be divided. Although the Company was to be open to whomever wanted to participate, including women and unprivileged people, it was explicitly stated

---

13 Friedrich EDELMAYER, *La casa d'Austria e la fine del patriarcato d'Aquileia*, in Sergio TAVANO, Giuseppe BERGAMINI, Silvano CAVAZZA (eds.), *Aquileia e il suo Patriarcato: atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studio, Udine, 21-23 ottobre 1999*, Udine, Deputazione di storia patria per il Friuli, 2000, pp. 571-579.

14 Erwin GATZ, *Riformismo settecentesco nelle diocesi del Sacro Romano Impero*, in Joško VETRIH (ed.), *L'Arcidiocesi di Gorizia dall'istituzione alla fine dell'Impero Asburgico (1751-1918)*, Gorizia, ISSR, 2001, pp. 39-41.

15 Klingenstein, *Controllo sociale* cit., p. 98.

that «it will be the task of the prelate [the Archbishop] to look for some worthy knights and some nobles, or the civic magistrate, and an exemplary priest who might take on the duties of their assigned district»<sup>16</sup>.

This way, the aristocratic element was granted a preeminent role in the territorial organisation of the Company. Cobenzl himself was to become the director of the fourth quarter, his deputy being another nobleman, Pietro Antonio Coronini di Rubbia. They would be aided by two members of the ecclesiastical state, one of whom was Antonio Morelli, who could indeed boast a nobility patent too. Moreover, the description of their district suggests that, on a structural level, the Company relied on the personal holdings and networks of single nobles in the town of Gorizia:

*The fourth [district] begins from [the palace] of the Count of Rubbia, and on the left-hand side it descends to the gates of the town, and then to the Chapel of S.S. tre Piè, from where it ascends again following all of the houses on the left-hand side, and, arriving to the corner in front of S. Croce Palace, it bends on the side of the Count of Cobenzl, and exits the gates of the town, including all of the houses to the Studeniz [hill]*<sup>17</sup>.

Furthermore, the cooperation of noble and ecclesiastic elements in the Company of Charity followed a declaredly reformist agenda of moral disciplining. Already by endorsing Carlo Michele d'Attems as archbishop, the Court selected a figure with proven cultural stature, especially in theological and canonical matters. He boasted reformist ideals learned from Catholic reformer Ludovico Antonio Muratori in Modena, and the intention of honouring his duty to defend the *salus animarum* (salvation of the souls)<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, as asserted in the Erezione, the very Company would be nothing but the practical implementation of Muratori's *Sulla carità cristiana* (On Christian Charity, 1723)<sup>19</sup>. Accordingly, the association posed itself as an institution of social coordination and organisation, intending «to put into motion the charitable piety of the most tenacious and reluctant [and to give] norms, and distributive and organised rule to the charity of those that, with no examination, allocate their donations to those that are less worthy and less needy»<sup>20</sup>.

---

16 *Erezione canonica della Compagnia della carità istituita in Gorizia dalla potestà del Prelato da principiarsi l'anno nuovo 1755*, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, cc. 74-75.

17 *Idem*, cc. 82-83.

18 Michele CASSESE, *Cultura e pastoraltà nei vescovi goriziani tra riformismo ed età napoleonica (1751-1816)*, in Joško VETRIH (ed.), *L'Arcidiocesi di Gorizia* cit., pp. 65-69.

19 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 74; Klingenstein, *Controllo sociale* cit., p. 99.

20 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 73.

Thus, on the one hand, the duties of the directors included gathering donations in their districts once a week and choosing «two ladies, of which at least one of the patrician or privileged order». The latter would be tasked with assisting lonely mothers with young infants, for which Cobenzl was invited to choose his own wife<sup>21</sup>. On the other, directors were also tasked with duties of clearer socio-economic value dear to the Archbishop<sup>22</sup>. They should intercede in favour of poor boys and girls to turn them into apprentices in the workshops of Gorizian artisans. They should also help the homeless, especially if unable to work, who, as mentioned, were a growing population in Gorizia and its province<sup>23</sup>. Finally, all «brothers [members] of the Company» were asked to perform various charitable acts aimed at bettering and moulding the Catholic morality of their districts' inhabitants:

*[...] encouraging [their neighbour] to live Christianly by attending the Most Holy Sacraments, convincing him to listen to the mass, and other devotions, and mental and vocal Orations; taking care of him when ill, comforting him when afflicted, correcting him if led astray, instructing him if ignorant, or at least praying God, settling fights for him, eliminating enmities, making peace among enemies, engraving and distributing holy images and devout books, making sure that obscene, naked, and badly covered images be eliminated from houses, are so many charitable acts that dedicating every day to some of these should not be hard*<sup>24</sup>.

This way, the Company co-opted the paternalist, moral superiority of its members into implementing social disciplining in Catholic reformist fashion. Throughout the *Erezione*, the foundation of such charitable behaviour was largely stated to be the pure moral obligation of the good Christian. However, the centrality of the noble members' father-like moral superiority *vis-à-vis* the poor recipients of their benevolence was made explicit through the allegory of a human body with various limbs differing in moral status: «One must love their neighbour like limbs of a same body love each other with a mutual union [...] friendship, that runs through all parts of the human body [...] They honour and respect each other, and the most noble limbs do not despise the most despicable»<sup>25</sup>.

Furthermore, to perform such duties, directors were meant to conduct repeated censuses of the indigent population in their districts:

---

21 *Idem*, cc. 75, 81-82.

22 Klingenstein, *Controllo sociale* cit., p. 99.

23 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, cc. 75-77.

24 *Idem*, c. 79.

25 *Idem*, c. 81.

[...] *examining their needs, behaviour, and habits, keeping a register of the poor people that live in every house of their district with the added note of their needs, job, sex, and age of each one. Being this register kept in the form of a book and of tables with method and precision, that is used in the military, [every director] should show it every fourteen days with their report to the head [the Archbishop] and two councillors, in order for them to help the indigent in need in the way they deemed most appropriate*<sup>26</sup>.

In fact, the Company was intended as an intermediary between the sovereign and the poorer population. In two occasions, intercessions were suggested. On the one hand, in the provision to the ruler of the knowledge necessary to establish who would be worthy, by virtue of needs and habits, of the licence of mendicant. On the other, in advising the government and promoting the erection of public hospitals, and the enlargement of the one already existing in Gorizia<sup>27</sup>. As a consequence, the integration of noble paternalism and authority in the town of Gorizia within the Company of Charity resulted in the latter's effective function as a tool of Habsburg state-building. Social disciplining was to be achieved through top-down moralisation and bottom-up information centralisation.

Thus, Gorizian noblemen and noblewomen, such as Guidobaldo, his adjutants, and his wife, represented a considerable force within the Company. Their personal networks informed the latter's territorial structure, and their traditional, paternal superiority and guidance lent themselves to new patterns of social disciplining and control, which characterised state-building in the region. However, as no other document seems to confirm the erection of a Company of Charity in Gorizia, the uniqueness of the *Erezione* casts doubts on its effective implementation. Yet, the scope and intensity of reforms in the County of Gorizia in the 1740s and 1750s gave Guidobaldo Cobenzl the chance to persevere in his reformism, which peaked a decade later.

## 2. The *Società di Agricoltura* as Aristocratic Patriotism

While the abolition of the Patriarchate of Aquileia represented a significant early step in the process of Habsburg state-building, it was not the earliest of Maria Theresa's reforms to be implemented in the County of Gorizia. As the Austro-Ottoman war of 1736-1739 and the Prussian invasion of Silesia (1740) left the Empress in dire financial crisis, in 1745, she inaugurated a thorough operation of alienation of jurisdictional districts to

---

26 *Idem*, cc. 75-76.

27 *Idem*, cc. 80-81.

landed nobles in Gorizia and in the neighbouring County of Gradisca<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, following the final rectification of the porous Austro-Venetian border in 1754, the two provinces were unified for fiscal reasons into one *Land* under the name of United Princely Counties of Gorizia and Gradisca<sup>29</sup>. This way, local nobles found their lordly authority enhanced within a newly shaped province. It was after such reforms that, in 1764, Guidobaldo Cobenzl inherited and moved to his uncle Ludwig's seigneuries of San Daniele and Losa in the Gorizian Karst<sup>30</sup>. One year later, in his new capacity as a Gorizian landed noble, he became a co-member of the newly founded Imperial Royal Society of Agriculture in the Princely Counties of Gorizia and Gradisca. Representing a joint response to the famine that plunged the *Erblande* into agricultural crisis in the aftermath of the Seven Years War (1756-1763), this 'patriotic' association coronated two decades of aristocratic and dynastic cooperation in the region towards new strategies of socio-economic disciplining<sup>31</sup>.

First to suggest the erection of agricultural societies was Flemish hydraulic engineer Maximilien Fremaut (1722-1768), who, between 1764 and 1768, acted as head of Trieste's Commercial Bureau, thanks to Guidobaldo's brother Charles Cobenzl, then minister plenipotentiary in the Austrian Low Countries<sup>32</sup>. In early 1764, Fremaut sent a memorandum to the United Court Chancellery, in which he suggested the creation of agricultural societies in the provinces of Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Tyrol, as an answer to their disappointing agricultural conditions. These associations should develop from a core of six «enlightened people» well-versed in the agricultural sector, and should be centrally coordinated by a «Superior Society» in Vienna<sup>33</sup>. As Chancellor of State Anton Wenzel von Kaunitz (1711-1794) received Fremaut's proposal extremely positively, societies of agriculture were

---

28 Dorsi, *Giudizi* cit. pp. 16-7; Fanfani, *Economia* cit. p. 89.

29 Eno PASCOLI, *La Contea di Gorizia e Gradisca nel Settecento*, Udine, Doretti, 1967, pp. 97, 110, 112-114; Donatella PORCEDDA, *La regolazione dei confini austro-veneti (1750-1756)*, in Annalia DELNERI, Donatella PORCEDDA (eds.), *Confini, contea di Gorizia e repubblica di Venezia*, Cormons, Poligrafiche San Marco, 2001, pp. 16, 19; Karl SPREITZHOFFER, *Le autorità centrali e l'amministrazione locale delle province dell'Austria Interiore fino alla metà del XVIII secolo*, in Jože ŽONTAR (ed.), *Handbücher und Karten zur Verwaltungsstruktur in den Ländern Kärnten, Krain, Küstenland und Steiermark bis zum Jahre 1918. Ein historisch-bibliographischer Führer*, Graz, Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, 1988.

30 Arneth, *Philipp Cobenzl Memoiren* cit., p. 91.

31 Franz A. J. SZABO, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 1753-1780*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 159.

32 István NASADI, *L'ingénieur flamand Maximilien Fremaut au service du développement agricole et de l'aménagement rural du Banat de Temesvar (1757-1768)*, in «Bulletin de la Société Géographique de Liège», 1 (1996), pp. 99-100.

33 ASTs, C. R. *Consiglio Capitaniale*, b. 4, Massimiliano Fremont, *Umilissimo Pro Memoria...*, cc. 4-7.



inaugurated in Klagenfurt, Gorizia, Graz, Laibach, and Innsbruck between 1765 and 1767<sup>34</sup>. In Gorizia, the Commercial Forum received the Court's dispensation to create an agricultural society in a Gracious Rescript (*Grazioso Rescritto*) dated 4<sup>th</sup> June 1765<sup>35</sup>. As demonstrated by the proceedings conserved by Guidobaldo, the inaugural session took place under the presidency of Giovanni Gasparo Lantieri on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1765. Like Fremaut had suggested, another five landed nobles constituted the Society's core. However, membership was extended to another six co-members, including Guidobaldo Cobenzl, and to nine further associates<sup>36</sup>. Regardless, of the original twenty-one members, only the commoner Leonardo Buglioni, Superintendent of the Woods of the County, could not boast a Gorizian nobility patent<sup>37</sup>. Consequently, such aristocratic preponderance conferred the Society a strong territorial aspect, which was confirmed by its operational organisation.

At the first session, the two Counties were divided into areas each to be surveyed and monitored by one or two members, who would implement the policies of the Society locally. Subdivisions and appointments mirrored the members' seigneurial power bases, so that the Coronini's were entrusted the upper course of the Isonzo, the Lantieris the middle Vipava (Vipacco) valley, the Strassoldos the Parish of Aquileia, and so on. Guidobaldo Cobenzl received the northern Gorizian Karst around Lower Reiffenberg, and his seigneuries of San Daniele and Losa, while only Giovanni Gasparo Lantieri, as president, was given the Parish of Gorizia<sup>38</sup>. Such organisation both resulted from and strengthened the pivotal role that Gorizian nobles had earned in the countryside. Indeed, through their lordly powerbases, the nobles' rural hegemony was virtually unmatched and their compliance and cooperation in any agricultural policy fundamental<sup>39</sup>.

Accordingly, the aristocratic members' part as moral and social guides of the population in their respective districts, which had already characterised the Company of Charity with regards to the town of Gorizia, was extended to the entire territory of the Counties in the Society of Agriculture. During the first session, the new social role of the nobility *vis-à-vis* the peasantry was expressed

---

34 Fanfani, *Società Agraria* cit. pp. 8-9; Helmut REINALTER, *Geheimbünde in Tirol. Von der Aufklärung bis zur Revolution 1848/49*, Innsbruck, Studienverlag, 2011, p. 41; Szabo, *Kaunitz* cit. p. 159.

35 ASTs, C. R. *Consiglio Capitaniale*, b. 4, Istituzione di una società di Agricoltura (A 25), c. 133.

36 Verballi delle Sessioni della Società di Agricoltura, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 138.

37 Fanfani, *Società Agraria* cit. p. 28.

38 ASPG, *I. R. Archivio della Società Agraria*, b. 141, Sessione della Società 27 agosto 1765.

39 Fanfani, *Economia* cit. pp. 34-5.

as relying on the traditional paternalist ideology of moral superiority and guidance, «being there no better way to pull the farmers out of the lethargy and indolence in which they [lay], than making them instruct by people, for whom they may feel respect, and whom they may trust»<sup>40</sup>. Yet, lordly paternalism extended beyond the strictly moral and Christian sphere of their subordinates' lives. Landed nobles were to become socio-economic examples for the peasantry and instruct it to its own benefit:

*[...] it has been considered as duty of every Associated Lord to do whatever he can to encourage workers in his district to be diligent and industrious, to persuade them not to spend the dispensed holidays idly, but to unite after having attended the mass in some useful work for the community itself, which could be the reparation of their streets, the cleaning of ditches, the fixing of the embankments of streams and rivers, the amelioration of their meadows through the extirpation of noxious weeds and the elimination of rocks, the planting of trees in their districts, on the shores of rivers; may also their instruction per se or in the best practice in the work of the optimal farmer be of merit, and when an experiment, or a practice be found good, or useful, [the Associated Lord] may strive to expand it everywhere in his district showing he himself the proof to the peasants, making sure that the same be done by his friends, and employees, so that the workers may see in experience the advantages and the gains that result from them*<sup>41</sup>.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1765, before the first session, Guidobaldo Cobenzl himself was personally informed by President of the Commercial Forum Giulio Strassoldo about the project of instituting a «School of Agriculture» relying on the appropriate inspection of the population to be carried out in the single districts of the province by the Society's members. His «famous zeal for the public good» was praised as useful in finding potential candidates to be instructed in such institution, and in bringing happiness to the Gorizian population<sup>42</sup>. Indeed, such project reflected the tendency, albeit shy, among some Gorizian nobles, to move away from coercion as a practical means of lordship. The concomitant appearance of schools for peasant children in aristocratic estates demonstrated that traditional practices of social control were becoming obsolete<sup>43</sup>. Even Society's members organised autonomous initiatives to 'enlighten' and discipline their peasants instead of obliging them, such as Rodolfo Coronini did in his estate of Quisca, north of Gorizia<sup>44</sup>.

---

40 Giovanni Gasparo Lantieri, direttore dell'I.R. Società d'Agricoltura delle unite Contee di Gorizia e Gradisca, agli associati, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 119.

41 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 141.

42 Dal Cesareo Reg. Consesso Commerciale dell'Unite Contee di Gorizia, e Gradisca; Si notifica al Sig. Co. Guido Cobenzl, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, cc. 123-124.

43 Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism* cit. p. 164.

44 Stasi, *Canto* cit. p. 41.

In fact, during the Society's second session on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1765, a notice was addressed to the Empress about the intentions of the Society to avail itself of parish priests «that in the villages take care of education and well-being of the souls [*salute delle anime / salus animarum*]». The intention of the members of the Society was to have them explain to the people in homilies and private conversations that the Society was created to «promote their better sustenance, and provide to everyone a less penurious life, higher income, and all in all a happier existence». They should explain that such ameliorations were the sole purpose of the associates, and that the latter «would not make use of any authority, or force. They would only try to incite the diligence of the workers through persuasion, and practical experiments [...] for this benefits every State, Ecclesiastical and Private [citizen]»<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, periodic admissions of parish priests occurred in 1765, 1785, 1787, and 1794<sup>46</sup>. This way, peasants and farmers were to be seen by the Society as receivers of education and enlightenment for their own moral, and consequently material, advantage, from their feudal lords.

The implementation of this restructured strategy of social disciplining and the role to be played in it by the landed aristocracy found further explanation, during the first session of the Society, in a list of points «in which every associated lord [was ...] asked to prove industrious in augmenting, through the aforesaid [points], the public good of the best Agriculture»<sup>47</sup>. Here and elsewhere, recurrent references to the state, the public good, and the fatherland as beneficiaries of the Society's activities highlighted the sublimation of personal, lordly paternalism, into more impersonal forms of patriotic ideologies. Already in his memorandum to the United Chancelleries, Fremaut, influenced by French Physiocracy just as much as Viennese ministers in the 1760s, highlighted the economic advantages enjoyed by those States and Republics that had already implemented similar patriotic institutions and suggested that «agriculture [was] the only means through which to restore and make their fatherland flourish»<sup>48</sup>. The same inspiration can be found in a newsletter dated 12<sup>th</sup> January 1766 found among Guidobaldo's papers, which made explicit references to the agricultural societies of Brittany and Ireland<sup>49</sup>. This way, like the latter institutions, the Society presented itself not merely as a union of lords benefitting their subjects, but a tool of state-building to the advantage of the newly shaped Gorizian-Gradiscan province<sup>50</sup>.

---

45 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 139.

46 ASPG, I. R. *Archivio della Società agraria*, b. 147, Matricola dei membri, anni 1765-1914.

47 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 119.

48 Szabo, *Kaunitz* cit., p. 158.

49 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 119.

50 Koen STAPELBROEK, Jani MARJANEN, *Political Economy, Patriotism and the Rise of Societies*, in

After all, this depersonalisation and abstraction of manorial authority and paternalism had been developing for decades, and its integration with rising state structures was embedded in the very organisation of the Society. In her Gracious Rescript, the Empress conferred the association a yearly budget of 300 florins to be granted by the local Commercial Magistrate<sup>51</sup>. In turn, the Society hired a salaried actuarial filing clerk and rented the Rafût hill, just south-east of Gorizia, with the intention of running public experiments<sup>52</sup>. This way, the modern state effectively entered the Habsburg Littoral. The economy – or legitimate social control – which previously equated to the administration of the household and was prerogative of the *pater familias* and, by extension, of the feudal landowner, was now object of concerted action within an impersonal structure<sup>53</sup>.

Thus, while under Maria Theresa's early reforms the territorialisation and the rural power of the Gorizian nobility peaked, the latter's authority was co-opted into Habsburg reformism, on the example of previous such processes elsewhere in Europe<sup>54</sup>. Indeed, through the foundation of the Society, the Gorizian landed nobility completed its transformation into a useful intermediary of state authority in the countryside<sup>55</sup>. As such, the instructive and disciplining intentions of figures such as Guidobaldo Cobenzl simultaneously served the interests of the Habsburg state and of the Gorizian landed nobility within it. However, while dynastic-aristocratic cooperation throughout the *Erblande* peaked in the 1760s, decline soon followed.

### 3. The Divergence of Dynastic and Aristocratic Interests

As already seen with regards to the Company of Charity, the top-down, disciplining role of intermediary authorities within the fiscal-military state entailed a specular, bottom-up, centripetal flow of information. Such pattern was indeed a systemic feature of Maria Theresa's early reforms. In Gorizia, these were epitomised by the first cadastral book compiled between 1744 and 1748, and by the expansion of the jurisdictional and fiscal tasks of state

---

Koen STAPELBROEK, Jani MARJANEN (eds.), *The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century. Patriotic Reform in Europe and North America*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 2.

51 ASTs, C. R. *Consiglio Capitaniale*, b. 4, c. 133.

52 Fanfani, *Società Agraria* cit., p. 25.

53 Jürgen HABERMAS, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press, 1991, p. 20.

54 Tim NEU, "Little tools of state formation". *The Admission of Nobles to Imperial and Territorial Diets in Early Modern Germany*, in «Parliaments, Estates, and Representation», 15/2 (2015), pp. 201-203.

55 Szabo, *Kaunitz* cit. p. 160.

bureaucracy and noble institutions alike<sup>56</sup>. As the ideal coronation of dynastic and aristocratic convergence of interests, the Society of Agriculture was intended as the high point of information centralisation. However, Guidobaldo and his peers proved unable to uphold such centripetal flow of knowledge and perform their own part as intermediaries of social disciplining.

In her Gracious Rescript allowing the creation of the Society of Agriculture, Maria Theresa also demanded a quarterly report on the activities of the association<sup>57</sup>. Accordingly, during the latter's first session, the directives that members were asked to follow to discipline and educate the population were coupled with points regarding the gathering of information<sup>58</sup>:

*It has also been established, that the goal of the first operations of the Associated Lords be the examination of the state of agriculture in their districts, the investigation of the reason of good progress, and of its decay, of the present obstacles, and of those that [the Lords Associates] can fear for its resurgence, and finally the most appropriate remedies to make agriculture as flourishing as possible, which they could derive from their first information.*

Furthermore, the Society «publicly [invited] every good patriot, and inhabitant of said Counties to be willing to communicate to the Society or to one of its co-members verbally, or in writing, his news, experiments, findings and thoughts directed at bettering the cultivation of the lands»<sup>59</sup>.

To facilitate such process, it was agreed to organise competitions and prizes in every district to the individual members' discretion. Moreover, the creation of a school of agriculture was announced as an institution gathering information, «where every honest citizen may intervene, and benefit [the school] in the discussion of the subjects tending to the accretion of agriculture»<sup>60</sup>. Indeed, despite the sporadic nature of such additions – they occurred again only in 1775 and 1778 – farmers were even accepted a first time within the Society in January and March 1766<sup>61</sup>. Thus, like it had been for the Company of Charity, the landed nobles' and the Society's ability to gather and

---

56 Fanfani, *Economia* cit. p. 98; Dorsi, *Giudizi* cit. pp. 16-17; Godsey, *Sinews* cit. p. 25; Roger J. KAIN, Elisabeth BAIGENT, *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State: A History of Property Mapping*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 184, 191; Jože ŽONTAR, *L'amministrazione in Stiria, Carinzia, Carniola e nel Litorale dal 1747/1748 al 1848*, in Jože ŽONTAR (ed.), *Handbücher und Karten zur Verwaltungsstruktur in den Ländern Kärnten, Krain, Küstenland und Steiermark bis zum Jahre 1918. Ein historisch-bibliographischer Führer*, Graz, Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, 1988, pp. 131-132.

57 ASTs, C. R. *Consiglio Capitanale*, b. 4, c. 133

58 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 119.

59 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, cc. 140-141.

60 *Idem*, cc. 141-2.

61 ASPG, I. R. *Archivio della Società agraria*, b. 147.

convey information was presented as the *sine qua non* of state social disciplining. Such mutuality was expressed in the members' «right to inform via the Ministries of the Imperial Royal Court both the diligence, and good will of industrious workers, and their reluctance, and incompetence, for the worthy and willing to be rewarded, and the negligent to be reminded of their duties»<sup>62</sup>.

Nevertheless, such purposes encountered immediate difficulties, as suggested by Guidobaldo Cobenzl's seeming lack of participation in any of the early sessions of the Society, either in person or through reports of the situation in his district. In fact, on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1768, he and others were issued a notice by the director and the chancellor of the Society of Agriculture. On the one hand, receiving members were reminded of their role as encouragers of social discipline in favour of agricultural production, and as gatherers of information on rural and agrarian conditions. On the other, they were rebuked for their evidently systematic inability to fulfil such role:

*However, the attention and commitment of many members not corresponding to the aforementioned intentions, this Society proposed to invite them all to a general meeting already occurred on 17<sup>th</sup> March, so that they be pleased to report verbally or in writing everything that they recorded, observed, and discovered about agriculture during the three years expired since the first newsletters issued on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1766. Yet, the Society was in this too disappointed in the hope it had of seeing its members all united to refer their observations, and to inform it of everything that they were asked with the first letters; while, apart from those that live in the town [of Gorizia], no one else attended [said meeting] nor provided for that day a report on their conduct.*

Thus, representing the culmination of a regular issue, the notice terminated with another exhortation to gather the information «that necessarily we need, to continue our work, and to gain that profit, which we search for the benefit of the fatherland»<sup>63</sup>.

Yet such issues concerning the functioning of the Society were the outcome of the structural reforms that had transformed the Counties in the previous decades. As the apical point reached by neo-feudal structures within state-building, the Society maintained as core objective the privatisation of communal pastures in favour of extant aristocratic landowners. Members were explicitly reminded of such purposes, as the first concern of their industriousness should be the promotion «of most useful live hedges, be they of mulberry trees, of black thorn, or of other [sort]; and in places where rocks

---

62 ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, c. 139.

63 Carlo Antonio di Strassoldo, direttore sostituto, e Alfonso di Porcia cancelliere della I. R. Società di Agricoltura delle Unite Contee di Gorizia e Gradisca agli associati, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 711, f. 2100, cc. 128-129.

are abundant, of fences of rocks around the fields»<sup>64</sup>. Even the dissertations gathered in essay prizes considered privatisations and enclosures as the only means to properly regulate and improve agriculture, on the example of Britain, Flanders, and the Canton of Bern<sup>65</sup>, so much so that one such contribution referred to this issue as to «the enigma, the secret of Agriculture»<sup>66</sup>. In fact, actual enclosures only worsened peasant living standards and increased the *sottani* population<sup>67</sup>. Moreover, abuses towards the Gorizian peasants increased alongside noble jurisdictional prerogatives and, in 1765, the Society even disavowed its own intendedly anti-coercive methods, suggesting instead a higher number of clobber blows to enforce labour services<sup>68</sup>. In fact, the distinction between seigneurial rights and public duties remained blurred, and laws were bent in favour of the seignior, so that, in the 1770s, the lordly administration of the *Land* appeared corrupt and arbitrary<sup>69</sup>.

Finally, the dysfunctions of the socio-economic structure arisen in the Counties came to the fore as the Society of Agriculture failed to deliver the economic boom that had been prefigured. As landowners increasingly rented their lands, focusing on immediate gains, rather than favouring the infrastructural and technological growth of the region, the need for a redirection of reformist efforts became clear<sup>70</sup>. For this reason, the Society's 400-florin yearly budget, and the salary of their clerk were suspended on 29th August 1772<sup>71</sup>. Gorizian pleas in the following months highlighted the new crops and the positive technical improvements that the Society had introduced in the Counties, and blamed persistent economic stagnation on the 'roughness' of the peasants as «inveterate in their ancient customs»<sup>72</sup>. Despite the consequent restauration of Court funding in late 1772, increasing state interference meant that the Society lost most of its original reliance on

---

64 ASGo, b. 711, fasc. 2100, c. 120.

65 Fanfani, *Società Agraria* cit., p. 48; see Giovanni A. SCOPOLI, II / *Risposta al quesito del 1769*, in Cesarea Regia Società d'Agricoltura delle Unite Contee di Gorizia e Gradisca (ed.), *Memorie per servire al progresso dell'agricoltura*, Gorizia, De' Valerj, 1782, pp. 27, 30.

66 Giovanni Battista TUNJ, X / *Dissertazione sopra al quesito qui all'incontro proposto dalla medesima Società*, in Cesarea Regia Società d'Agricoltura delle Unite Contee di Gorizia e Gradisca, *Memorie per servire al progresso dell'agricoltura*, Gorizia, De' Valerj, 1782, pp. 5-6.

67 Renato IACUMIN, *L'età moderna*, in Flavio COSSAR (ed.), *Comunitas Civitatis Aquileiae. Aquilee inte storie*, Mariano del Friuli, Edizioni della Laguna, 2008, p. 146.

68 Fanfani, *Società* cit., p. 128.

69 Dorsi, *Giudizi* cit., pp. 20-21; ASTs, C. R. *Consiglio Capitaniale*, b. 131, Sommario dei disordini del paese.

70 Iacumin, *L'età moderna* cit., p. 146.

71 Fanfani, *Società* cit., p. 37.

72 Relazione sull'attività della Società consegnata all'Eccelsa aulica cancelleria di Boemia ed Austria, 9 giugno 1773, in ASTs, C. R. *Consiglio Capitaniale*, b. 25.

aristocratic autonomy in the following decade<sup>73</sup>. By the end of the 1760s and early 1770s, the numerous agricultural ‘experts’ that had been made members of the Society, and that had initially displayed proximity to the interests of the landed nobility, now began critiquing aristocratic lordship. They contested first and foremost labour services, which contrasted sharply with the free-producing peasant landowners envisaged by popular Physiocratic thinkers. Indeed, because of looming unproductiveness and peasant dissatisfaction, the reduction of *rabotte* became a generalised economic need<sup>74</sup>. Accordingly, in Gorizia-Gradisca, labour services were regulated a first time on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1772, and a second on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1779<sup>75</sup>. Meanwhile, in 1774, the introduction of a single criminal code for the *Erblande* further curtailed lordly privileges<sup>76</sup>.

Thus, as elsewhere in the *Erblande*, the 1760s represented the high point of dynastic and aristocratic cooperation in the Counties of Gorizia and Gradisca too<sup>77</sup>. Epitomising such system, the Society of Agriculture was the first institution to bear the consequences of its downfall. The inability or reticence of landholding members such as Guidobaldo Cobenzl to enable information centralisation and effective state control of the Gorizian countryside marred the functioning of the association and of the socio-egal structures from which it derived. Consequently, dynastic and aristocratic interests progressively diverged during the 1770s, and would characterise the sole reign of Joseph II after 1780.

#### **4. The *Arcadi romano-sonziaci* and the ‘Privatisation’ of the Landed Nobility**

While he estranged himself from the Society during the 1770s, Guidobaldo championed a last aristocratic association months before Maria Theresa’s death in 1780. Inspired by his brother Charles Cobenzl, who had founded a literary society in Brussels in 1769, he joined forces with member of the Roman Arcadia Giuseppe Coletti (1744-1815)<sup>78</sup>. Their cooperation turned them into vice-custodian – Guidobaldo was subordinate to the Custodian of the Roman Arcadia – and secretary of a Gorizian Arcadian colony, which was

---

73 Fanfani, *Società* cit., pp. 50-51.

74 Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism* cit., p. 151.

75 Fanfani, *Economia* cit., pp. 128-129.

76 Dorsi, *Giudizi* cit., p. 18

77 Godsey, *Sinews* cit., p. 1.

78 Camillo DE FRANCESCHI, *L’Arcadia Romano-Sonziaca e la Biblioteca Civica di Trieste*, in «Archeografo Triestino», s. III, 2 (1929-30), pp. 99-104.



primarily concerned with the reinstatement of aristocratic state patriotism. However, as Joseph II succeeded his mother, state consolidation accelerated with decreased research of noble consensus, starting in the Counties with the abolition of labour services in 1781<sup>79</sup>. Consequently, regardless of its purposes, Guidobaldo's academy could not reverse that divergence of aristocratic and dynastic interests that had developed since the 1770s.

Indeed, like the previous associations, the Gorizian Arcadia was characterised by primarily aristocratic membership. Beyond Cobenzl and Coletti, fourteen exponents of leading Gorizian noble families participated as founding members at the first academic session on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1780<sup>80</sup>. The aristocratic consciousness of the group was stressed in the academic register, where members exhibited their seignorial titles and jurisdictional prerogatives<sup>81</sup>. Such group immediately represented a gravitational point for local noblemen, as the Society of Agriculture suffered a rapid haemorrhage of its leading figures, culminating on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1781, when the Society's Director and Vice-Director were accepted as members of the Arcadia. Hence, Guidobaldo's academy swiftly replaced the Society as point of expression of aristocratic interests. On the one hand, this transition was made evident with the early establishment of a botanic garden in Cobenzl's palace in Gorizia, which could ideally rival the Society's Rafût<sup>82</sup>; on the other, it would find symbolic recognition when, on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1783, the Society decided to cede its books, documents, and proceedings up to 1769 to the Arcadians<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, in its early years, the Arcadia posed itself as heir of the early Society as coronation of aristocratic and dynastic cooperation.

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1781, the Arcadians agreed to accept General Anton Prince Esterházy's proposal to organise a public gathering at his expense in the Great Military Hall of Gorizia. The event took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> of February and saw nineteen members recite thirty-three prosaic and poetic contributions to a «most blooming audience of any rank of nobility and intellectuals»<sup>84</sup>. In the proceedings of the academy, that evening was triumphantly described asserting that «the praises that on such occasion our famous, magnanimous, and erudite Vice-Custodian received corresponded to his innate grandeur and generosity

---

79 William D. GODSEY, *Habsburg Government and Intermediary Authority under Joseph II (1780-90). The Estates of Lower Austria in Comparative Perspective*, in «Central European History», 46/4 (2013), pp. 712, 738-739; Derek BEALES, *Philosophical Kings and Enlightened Despotism*, in Mark GOLDIE, Robert WOLKER (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 516; Fanfani, *Economia* cit., p. 129.

80 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/2, Registro delle Ragunanze pubbliche e private, p. 1.

81 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/1, Catalogo degli incliti ed eruditi fondatori (1783).

82 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/2, pp. 11, 13, 20.

83 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/8 (116), De libri della Ces. Il.a Società d'Agricoltura.

84 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/1, pp. 13-14, 18-19; Franceschi, *Arcadia* cit., pp. 107-108.

of spirit, of which the grandiosity of this public Arcadian gathering was but a little example»<sup>85</sup>. Moreover, as most compositions that were presented in the Great Military Hall were in memory of the recently deceased Maria Theresa, or in honour of Joseph II, the ‘publicness’ of the gathering consisted in the Colony’s display of its proximity to the dynastic state.

The same aristocratic state patriotism reverberated in the Arcadian lyrical appreciation of pastoral life, as expressed in early poetic compositions. It found its best expression in a sonnet Coletti sent Cobenzl, while the latter was in Vienna, visiting his son at Court in 1781:

*[...] but on your path do not forget, that for how many / your footprints beyond your native soil are, among your loyal shepherds are equal / the controversies echoing through meadow and river [...] I know, that arriving you will see the German / lift his forehead and recall the deeds of Giovanni and Carlo [Cobenzl’s father and brother] / but the echo of your forest / in lamentable sound you shall listen to / oh Eurimante, the call of Juno*<sup>86</sup>.

Here, Coletti’s invitation to follow the call of the Roman goddess of the state and to return among the Gorizian ‘shepherds’ highlighted the Arcadians’ consciousness as landed nobles enjoying public authority. Later public gatherings conveyed similar ideas. On the one hand, on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1781 the Arcadians accepted the invitation to organise a second public session in the palace of member Guido Della Torre Valsassina, which was located on the Travnik meadow, in Gorizia<sup>87</sup>. On the other, on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1782 a third public gathering took place in Rodolfo Coronini’s castle in Quisca<sup>88</sup>. As a celebration of the latter session, member Jaroslao Schmidt wrote an ode in Ancient Greek, which was soon translated into Italian as *La Ragunanza degli Arcadi romano-sonziaci tenuta in Quisca il dì 30 giugno 1782* (The Gathering of the Romano-Gorizian Arcadians held in Quisca on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1782). Here, beyond the usual praises addressed to Cobenzl, interestingly, Coronini was described as «prophet, savant, noble of virtue and knowledge / well-known expert and defender, / whom everyone in pleasant Quisca, / as a father, loves and honours», thus stressing his father-like superiority in his estate<sup>89</sup>. However, this would be as far as the academy would go in highlighting traditional lordly paternalism, suffering instead of the progressive removal of the Gorizian nobility from its traditional public role.

85 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/2, pp. 18-19.

86 Coribante’s Sonnet to Eurimante in Vienna, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 236, f. 601.

87 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/2, p. 55.

88 Circolare (19<sup>th</sup> May 1782), in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 236, f. 601.

89 Jaroslao SCHMIDT, *La Ragunanza degli Arcadi romano-sonziaci tenuta in Quisca il dì 30 giugno 1782*, Gorizia, Tommasini, 1782, pp. 15-16.

The Gorizian Arcadia never displayed again the same proximity to the state as it did in its first public gathering. The Travnik and Quisca sessions did not see any official participation of state figures as such. In fact, unlike the Company of Charity or the Society of Agriculture, the Arcadia had no institutional ties to the Habsburg state. Instead, according to the *Leges Arcadum* (Laws of the Arcadians) maximum authority resided in the community of the Arcadians themselves, and administered, in the case of Gorizia, by a *Saggio Consiglio* (Wise Council) of the founders, and two censors<sup>90</sup>. To sanction such separateness, Arcadians were required to take ‘pastoral’ names inspired by classical bucolic poetry, such as Eurimante Epidaurico (Cobenzl) and Coribante Tebanico (Coletti)<sup>91</sup>. Furthermore, the academic gatherings taking place in Cobenzl’s palace in Gorizia were labelled as ‘private’ and confined to members alone. Yet, the divergence between Gorizian aristocracy and Habsburg state became clearer as Joseph II’s reforms impacted the Littoral.

In 1783, as the Counties and Trieste were merged into one *Gubernium* (Government) with the latter as capital, Gorizian-Gradiscan Captain Pompeo de Brigido became *Gouverneur* and moved to the booming port city alongside most functionaries<sup>92</sup>. The consequent relocation to Trieste of Arcadian members with administrative commitments prompted the foundation of a Trieste branch of the Gorizian Arcadia on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1784<sup>93</sup>. Brigido himself and Bishop of Trieste Francesco Filippo d’Inzaghi (1731-1816) were immediately accepted as privileged members of the new consortium, and later confirmed as pro-vice-custodian and censor respectively, thus informally tying the Triestinian Arcadia to the dynastic state<sup>94</sup>. Indeed, the social differences between the two groups surfaced immediately. While Gorizia remained predominantly local and aristocratic, Trieste saw the increasing inclusion of bourgeois elements from around the Monarchy<sup>95</sup>. Accordingly, in Gorizia,

90 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/2, pp. 1-2, 7; *Leges Arcadum*, in ASGo, b. 236, f. 601.

91 BCTs, ADTs, R.P. ms. 3-26/1.

92 Peter G. M. DICKSON, *Monarchy and Bureaucracy in Late Eighteenth-Century Austria*, in «The English Historical Review», 110/436 (1995), p. 329; Pascoli, *Gorizia* cit., p. 116; Grete WALTER KLINGENSTEIN, *Europäische Aufklärung zwischen Wien und Triest. Die Tagebücher des Gouverneurs Karl Graf Zinzendorf 1776-1782*, Vienna, Böhlau, 2009, vol. 1, pp. 65-82.

93 Donatella PORCEDDA, *Una vita per lo Stato e per l’Istoria della Contea di Gorizia*, in Carlo MORELLI, *Istoria della Contea di Gorizia*, Gorizia, Paternolli, 1855-1856 (rist. an. con indici), vol. V. Silvano CAVAZZA, Paolo IANCIS Donatella PORCEDDA (eds.), *Studi e documenti su Carlo Morelli e l’Istoria della Contea di Gorizia*, Mariano del Friuli, Edizioni della Laguna, 2003, pp. 32-33, 43.

94 Atti Gorizia, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1784, and Trieste, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1784, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 236, f. 601.

95 Antonio TRAMPUS, *Tradizione storica e rinnovamento politico: la cultura nel Litorale Austriaco e nell’Istria tra Settecento e Ottocento*, Gorizia, Istituto giuliano di storia, cultura e documentazione, 1990, pp. 101-102; de Franceschi, *Arcadia* cit., p. 125.

Coronini guided aristocratic protestations against the incorporation of the Gorizian-Gradiscan *Land* into the new *Gubernium*, while the Triestinian Arcadians consistently showed their support for Joseph's union of the Counties and Trieste<sup>96</sup>.

Moreover, on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1784, Brigido submitted his fellow Arcadians the essay question «What branch of Commerce suits the Stock Exchange of Trieste, that would simultaneously be the most favourable to industry in the Provinces of Gorizia and Gradisca; then what are the most proper means to confer it the highest possible increase». Although the lack of vitality of the Trieste branch prompted Brigido to repropose this prize several times, the association's general interest in socio-economic questions distinguished it from its Gorizian counterpart<sup>97</sup>. Indeed, in Gorizia, only the Society of Agriculture, which, by that time, was *de facto* devoid of any landed-aristocratic component, retained a properly patriotic focus, as demonstrated by the agricultural information published in its journal *Notizze* (News) between 1781 and 1788<sup>98</sup>. Thus, social control and public authority, which had been accepted as prerogatives of the impersonal state during the 1760s, were now precluded to the landed nobility as it lost its traditional lordly and paternalist public functions.

This shift was simultaneously confirmed by Joseph II's legal reforms. Among them, since 1784 Gorizian landed nobles wanting to maintain their jurisdictional prerogatives were forced to employ qualified functionaries approved by the Court of Appeal of Klagenfurt. Moreover, between 1787 and late 1788, all private simple jurisdictions were replaced by fourteen «central courts»<sup>99</sup>. Consequently, Gorizian aristocrats flooded the Court of Appeal with individual petitions asking for clarifications<sup>100</sup>. Among them, an elderly Guidobaldo Cobenzl sent Klagenfurt a petition dated 6<sup>th</sup> January 1788, and a similar plea to the Emperor himself dated 16<sup>th</sup> February. Here, differentiating between simple jurisdictions, which he accepted would be concentrated, and allodial seigneuries, such as Losa and San Daniele, Guidobaldo asked for the legal proceedings of the latter to be sent back from the seigneurie of Upper Reiffenberg, where he had erroneously sent them. This way, he proved equally obedient to the new 'public' directives, and protective of his 'private' seignorial rights. However, he justified the latter not by harking back to

---

96 Stasi, *Canto* cit., p. 34.

97 Atti – Gorizia, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1785 and 9<sup>th</sup> December 1787; Circolare 21<sup>st</sup> February 1790, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 236, f. 601.

98 Imperial Regia Società Agraria delle due Unite Contee di Gorizia e Gradisca, *Notizze*, Gorizia, De' Valerj, 1781-1788.

99 Dorsi, *Giudizi* cit., pp. 19-27.

100 Petizioni alla Corte d'Appello di Klagenfurt, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 422, f. 1305.

traditional lordly patriotism, but by highlighting his obligation to provide his own subjects with «the advantage they desire as they themselves recognised in conformity with their natural judgement»<sup>101</sup>. Such words eventually represented a completed ‘privatisation’ of the landed nobility, who could not pretend to either coerce or discipline its subjects anymore.

In conclusion, Guidobaldo Cobenzl expressed what had been evident at the foundation of the Arcadia already. His academy could not reverse the failure of aristocratic-dynastic cooperation on feudal terms. The inexorable decline of noble public authority pervaded the academy’s structures and characterised its version of state patriotism, eventually surfacing as a result of Joseph’s sweeping reforms. Consequently, as a reformer and a landed noble, Guidobaldo could only defend what he perceived as his private property, while recognising his subjects, not anymore as disciplinable subordinates, but as self-disciplining citizens within the Habsburg modern state.

## Conclusion

Although an arguably minor figure within the Cobenzl family, Guidobaldo’s experience as a Gorizian landed nobleman directly involved in Josephinist reformism represents a valuable addition to the history of Central European aristocracies in such a transformative period. His participation in three Gorizian associations provides insight into the complicated relationship between the Habsburgs and the Gorizian nobility. Based on a shared need for more refined strategies of social control, their cooperation, consensus, integration, or lack thereof, contributes to the conceptualisation of Habsburg state building as a diffused process, involving and sustained by a variety of social forces<sup>102</sup>.

Thus, in late 1754, Guidobaldo’s role in the project of the Company of Charity indicated the confluence of noble personal networks and paternalist ascendancy into state-building practices, which now encompassed ecclesiastical matters. The Company posed itself as an intermediary of Catholic moral disciplining of the destitute population in the town of Gorizia, while reinforcing and benefitting from traditional lordly authority. Likewise, a decade later, the patriotic Society of Agriculture extended such system to the entirety of the newly shaped Gorizian-Gradiscan *Land*. Since the local aristocracy had seen its rural power accrued during the first two decades of Maria Theresa’s

---

101 Istanza alla Corte d’Appello; Supplica a Sua Maestà, in ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 36, f. 102.

102 Godsey, *Sinews* cit., pp. 6-9; Franz SZABO, *Cameralism, Josephinism, and Enlightenment: The Dynamic of Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy*, in «Austrian History Yearbook», 49 (2018), p. 14; Evans, *Austria, Hungary* cit., pp. 57, 72.

reforms, landed noblemen such as Guidobaldo represented the backbone of the Society as indispensable implementers of socio-economic disciplining in their assigned districts, which were indeed centred around their personal holdings. However, while this entailed the co-optation of traditional lordship into the public authority of the Habsburg state, Guidobaldo and his peers proved largely reluctant or unable to upkeep the centripetal flow of information necessary to implement agrarian and social policies in the Gorizian-Gradiscan countryside. Hence, during the 1770s, their public role declined along with the lordly autonomy of the Society itself. Accordingly, in the 1780s, Guidobaldo's own Gorizian Arcadia proved a vain attempt at reinstating aristocratic state patriotism. Lacking state active support and overwhelmed by Joseph II's radical reforms, the academy could not reinstate lordly paternalism, nor reverse the 'privatisation' of the Gorizian landed nobility, whose role in social control and disciplining was largely lost by the late 1780s. Thus, like elsewhere in Europe, the associations that Guidobaldo took part in represented cardinal, transformational experiences for the Gorizian aristocratic elites<sup>103</sup>. Even when political turmoil erupted at the death of Joseph II in 1790, Gorizian petitions were unable to revert the transition occurred during the previous decades<sup>104</sup>. Willing or not, as they had already done in their history, the noble elites of Habsburg Central Europe had once again reinvented themselves<sup>105</sup>.

Meanwhile, Guidobaldo, now old, progressively reduced his involvement in the socio-cultural life of the region, till, in March 1797, he had to find refuge in Reifnitz from Napoleon's revolutionary armies. Having moved back to Gorizia after three months in Lower Carniola, he died, aged eighty-two, in October of the same year<sup>106</sup>. After his death, the Counties would be invaded again, and eventually absorbed into the French Empire between 1809 and 1813, before returning to the Habsburgs as part of changing administrative territories after the Congress of Vienna. They entered, this way, into a new stage of their socio-political history<sup>107</sup>.

---

103 Helmut ZEDELMAIER, *Il movimento accademico dell'età moderna e la fondazione dell'accademia bavarese delle scienze*, in Stefano FERRARI (ed.), *Cultura letteraria e sapere scientifico nelle accademie tedesche e italiane del Settecento*, Rovereto, Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati, 2003, pp. 26-29; Richard VAN DÜLMEN, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, Cambridge - Oxford, Polity Press, 1992, pp. 1, 251.

104 Dorsi, *Giudizi* cit., pp. 30-34.

105 Godsey, *Government* cit., pp. 714-715.

106 Arneth, *Philipp Cobenzl Memoiren* cit., p. 161.

107 Žontar, *Amministrazione* cit., p. 122.

## **Abstract**

Under the reigns of Maria Theresa (1740-1780) and Joseph II (1780-1790), Guidobaldo Cobenzl (1716-1797) participated, in Gorizia, in three significant socio-cultural experiences of state-building. His involvement in the Company of Charity (1754-1755), in the Society of Agriculture (1764-1797), and in the Academy of the Romano-Gorizian Arcadians (1780-1797) were emblematic of a variable, yet systemic relationship towards socio-economic modernisation between the Gorizian nobility and the Habsburg dynasty. On the one hand, Guidobaldo's endeavours demonstrate how aristocratic-dynastic cooperation peaked in the 1760s, with the blending of traditional lordly paternalism and patriotic ideologies and practices intended to establish new patterns of social control necessary to the rising Habsburg "fiscal-military state". On the other, they testify the opposite trend during the following two decades, thus shedding new light on the transition of the Gorizian nobility from feudalism to the modern state.

## **Keywords**

Guidobaldo Cobenzl; paternalism; patriotism; associationism; Josephinism

