KNOWLEDGE AND RECIPROCAL DIPLOMACY:

ALBERTO VIMINA'S EMBASSY TO MOSCOW (1655) AND IVAN CHEMODANOV'S EMBASSY TO VENICE (1656)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Muscovite-Venetian diplomatic encounters in the middle of the seventeenth century. It focuses on the Venetian mission of Alberto Vimina to Moscow (1655) and the Muscovite embassy of Ivan Chemodanov to Venice (1656-1657) that took place after decades of silence in diplomatic relations. The present research straddles the fine lines between intellectual history and the new diplomatic history. It examines and at the same time disentangles the state of knowledge about Muscovy in both seventeenth-century Italian notions of Russia and contemporary diplomatic practice. On the one hand, the thesis analyzes the images of Muscovy that circulated in proto-ethnographic writing in the Italian language, treating these texts as both reflections and tools of placing Muscovy in the hierarchies of the early modern political order. It further investigates the basis and strategies of 'otherization' and the implications of this process for diplomatic interaction. On the other hand, the study reveals the complex process of Venetian-Muscovite negotiations in the virtual absence of practical knowledge about one another. It tackles the role of imperial/republican ideologies, ceremonial means, and the functions of various intermediary agents in diplomatic self-representation. The thesis, thus, sheds light on the operative mechanisms of diplomatic communication and knowledge production in a broader early modern political context.

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INTRODUCTION

Thesis Statement

In the winter of 1657, Muscovite ambassadors finally reached Venice after a long and exhausting journey through the Atlantic Ocean and a short, hospitable reception in the lands of the Florentine duke. The image Muscovites' immediate presence impressed on their hosts was quite peculiar and astonishing. The guests from Russia mixed up the fine clarets that their hosts presented them and ate enormous amounts of caviar in their chambers. The Italian public witnessed how the Muscovite ambassadors punished their incorrigible servants who got drunk on all possible occasions. But the Italian city states and their populations also left an impression on the Russian dignitaries. These long-bearded men in richly decorated gowns were fascinated and amazed by the carnivalesque life of Venice. The process of learning about one another unfolded in the course of Venetian-Muscovite negotiations about a possible alliance against the Ottoman sultan. Venetians and Muscovites were unfamiliar with their counterpart's culture and diplomatic practice, but they made every attempt at coming to a mutual understanding. Both also needed to present themselves as veritable players in the 'society of princes' to which both essentially belonged, Venice as a republic and Muscovy as both a powerful Christian state and a perceived outlier.[1]

In my thesis, I focus on Alberto Vimina's Venetian embassy to Muscovy of 1655 and Chemodanov's mission of 1656-1657 to Venice. The embassies did not mark the beginning of Russian-Italian relations: Italian architects, for example, famously participated in the construction of the Moscow Kremlin under Ivan III in the second half of the fifteenth century. They, however, were the first diplomatic encounters between Russians and Italians after several decades of interruption in their political relations.[2] Russians needed to reacquaint themselves

[1] The term is coined by Lucein Bély in *La société des princes, XVIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1999).
[2] Alberto Vimina's mission was the first Venetian embassy to Muscovy in the seventeenth century.

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with their unexpected counterparts. Venetians, on the other hand, had access to previous accounts about Muscovy and Muscovites in several languages. However, the seeming abundance of written materials in fact obscured the actual lack of practical knowledge about diplomatic traditions of their counterparts. In other words, both parties had to communicate in the virtual absence of information about one another. Such unique circumstances provide meaningful insights into how early modern diplomatic relations functioned in the absence of previous tradition of direct interactions.

The communication between the two parties was complicated by their mutual need to establish their place in early modern diplomatic hierarchies in relation to one another and to other polities. Political organization and, thus, diplomatic self-representation of the two polities played an important role in this process. Both Muscovy and Venice struggled to establish their place in early modern diplomatic hierarchies. The former was a monarchy that had just started to increase its power and strove to be recognized as a universal empire. The latter was a republic whose representatives were proud of their republican freedoms but needed to position themselves in a princely world. This made the position of both Muscovy and Venice difficult but all the more interesting to study. This case study, then, considers the two states' political ideologies in how they perceived one another and built communication.

My thesis investigates Venetian knowledge about Muscovites growing from the humanist tradition of proto-ethnographic descriptions of other societies. I analyze culturally and historically determined stereotypes that impacted Venetian perceptions of Muscovites. At the same time, I examine the public discourse created during the two missions as a reflection of (sub-) conscious 'otherization' of Muscovy. I argue that a civilization-barbarity dichotomy was an important axis that Venetians employed to determine Muscovy's place within the known world. I also argue that this positioning went hand in hand with Venetian attempts to situate Muscovy in early modern diplomatic hierarchies.

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On the other hand, I reconstruct the complicated process of Venetian-Muscovite negotiations to understand how in light of the preexisting knowledge about Muscovy the two sides found ways of communicating with each other. I analyze the parties' attempts to commensurate their communication through references to their political order and comparisons with other princely courts or republican polities. I closely look at how Venice and Muscovy established their status in diplomatic hierarchies. I investigate arguments about titles, ceremonial and other means of self-fashioning, choice and conduct of diplomatic representatives. Eventually, I demonstrate that while striving to establish their status, the two parties tried to collect information about one another and built their communication based on practical knowledge of the other side's diplomatic tradition. I further elaborate on the role of what I termed 'invisible actors,' i. e., translators and interpreters, attendants (*pristav*s), inhabitants of cities, and various go-betweens who played crucial role during the two missions.

Conceptual Framework

This project is essentially a comparative venture. I will employ a dynamic perspective of *histoire croisée* to uncover the exchanges of information and ideas in the context of the Venetian-Russian relations.[3] Instead of looking at the two embassies or the sources produced in their course as separate units, I suggest that it is more fruitful to analyze them through the lens of multiple entanglements in which they took place or were generated. The two missions studied in this thesis largely depended on the intersection of political, economic, and diplomatic interests of the Muscovite court and Venetian Senate.

I do not perceive the documents related to the two embassies as the sources of objective observations and the ultimate truth about Muscovites (or Venetians, for that matter). Alternatively, I see them as the products and sometimes tools of defining borders and

[3] Michael Werner, Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 30-60.

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hierarchies in the early modern world of diplomatic encounters – a reciprocal process that requires me to explore a double perspective, that of the Republic of Venice and that of the Tsardom of Russia. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam suggests, rather than limiting myself to a twofold comparison, I will concentrate on multifarious exchanges and connections in a broader context.[4] Such an approach will let me trace the complex relationship between 'otherness' in the perception of foreign worlds and claims to imperial status and universal hegemony. This thesis also employs the framework developed by Cornel Zwierlein in his recent book, *Imperial Unknowns*.[5] I will look at Venetians and Muscovites as essentially "imperial unknowns," whose knowledge of one another was not necessarily objective, but whose communication was rather largely built on (un)intentional ignorance.

To place the early Venetian-Russian relations of the seventeenth century in a wider historiographical discussion, I will draw from the array of approaches and perspectives, employed in the so-called New Diplomatic History. In the past decades scholars of diplomatic history have developed interest in non-European regions marginalized in previous historiographic tradition. In particular, Daniel Goffman has attracted scholarly attention to the Ottoman impact on the development of European diplomacy.[6] His article published in 2008 was one of the first attempts to overcome an Italo-centric approach dominated in the field for more than half of the century since the publication of Garret Mattingly's *Renaissance diplomacy*.[7] Building on Goffman's assumption, modern scholars attempt to trace the impact of non-European actors on the transformation of diplomatic practice in the early modern period. By taking this perspective, I shift the focus from Europe as a 'classical' center of early modern

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[4] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Beyond the usual suspects: on intellectual networks in the early modern world," *Global Intellectual History* 2:1 (2017): 30-48.

[5] Cornel Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns. The French and British in the Mediterranean, 1650-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[6] Daniel Goffman, "Negotiating with the Renaissance State: The Ottoman Empire and the New Diplomacy," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 61–74.

[7] Garret Mattingly, *Renaissance diplomacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955).

diplomatic innovations to the processes that were developing beyond European borders (itself a fickle idea) and at the same time in close relationship with European powers. Though Muscovy was excluded from Renaissance developments, it was deeply involved in diplomatic exchanges in the course of early modern period. Thus, I argue that Venetian-Italian relations contributed to the creation of early modern diplomacy, and at the same time their communication was determined by the tradition established by the early modern 'society of princes.'

The term 'society of princes' was coined by Lucien Bély who underlines the importance of sociability practices and dynastic relationships at the level of diplomatic exchanges. In this thesis rather than seeing Muscovite-Venetian diplomacy as relations between two states, I employ this perspective which allows me to regard those relations as a part of early modern political culture. I share the assumption that sociocultural practices defined diplomatic relations and that they were the basis of diplomatic interactions in the early modern period.[8] Looking at Muscovite-Venetian relations through the lens of ceremonies and formal communication appears especially interesting since the two parties had not had official contacts before the middle of the seventeenth century. Therefore, they both had to adjust to unfamiliar sociocultural codes, learn a new system of symbolic representation of sovereignty, and potentially decide which place each of them takes in diplomatic hierarchical hierarchies of the princely world.

Another perspective of the new diplomatic history is an actor-centered approach. Drawing on the work of Daniela Frigo, Jeroen Duindam, and others I suggest that early modern diplomacy existed in forms of interconnectedness in which the ambassadors' individual agency played a crucial role in cross-cultural communication.[9] Such perspective also sheds light upon

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[8] See Tracey A. Sowerby, Jan Hennings, eds., "Introduction," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017). Jan Hennings, *Russia and courtly Europe: Ritual and the culture of diplomacy, 1648-1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[9] Daniela Frigo, "Prudence and Experience: Ambassadors and Political Culture in Early Modern Italy," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38:1 (2008): 15–34; see also Jeroen Duindam, "Introduction," in *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals*, 1550-1780 (Cambridge: Cambridge University

the impact of various intermediaries and 'non-state' actors on diplomatic practice. Tijana Krstić and Maartje van Gelder point out that the study of social interactions among various intermediaries opens a new perspective on diplomatic relations in the cross-confessional context.[10] In this thesis, I see building communication in diplomatic relations as a dynamic process that depended on multiple volatile factors. I assume that particular interests, intellectual background, religious convictions, and personal connections of the ambassadors, interpreters, and even members of diplomatic retinue played a crucial role in the negotiations. Considering such interconnections is particularly significant for the study of Muscovite-Venetian contacts because it allows to discern different layers of diplomatic discourses generated during the first encounters between the two polities. In this research, I demonstrate that multiple agents involved in the process of negotiations during the two missions played crucial role as sources of information and actors that facilitated communication between two sides.

Structure

The first chapter provides the diplomatic context in which the first seventeenth-century encounters between Muscovy and the Venetian Republic took place. It also recounts the course of both the Venetian and Muscovite missions. Alberto Vimina's embassy to the Russian tsar has not received much scholarly attention most likely because of the 'formal' character of the sources that it generated. On the other hand, there are several works that discuss the Venetian's time in Muscovy to some degree.[11] Although there is an array of studies dedicated to Ivan

Press, 2008), as well as Hillard von Thiessen, Christian Windler, eds., *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2010).

[10] Tijana Krstić, Maartje van Gelder, "Introduction: Cross-confessional diplomacy and diplomatic intermediaries in the Early modern Mediterranean," *Journal of Early modern history*, 19 (2015): 93-105. See also Tijana Krstić, "The elusive Intermediaries: Moriscos in Ottoman and Western European Diplomatic Sources from Constantinople 1560-1630s," *Journal of Early modern history*, 19 (2015): 129-151.

[11] Philip Longworth, "Russian-Venetian Relations in the Reign of Tsar Aleksey. Mikhailovich," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 64:3 (July 1986): 380-400; Domenico Caccamo, "Alberto Vimina in Ucraina e nelle 'Parti settentrionali' diplomazia e cultura nel seicento veneto," *Europa Orientalis* 5 (1986): 233-283; Natal′ia Kardanova, "O nekotorykh osobennostiakh kommunikatsii v khode diplomaticheskikh missii: peregovory 1655 v osveshchenii d′iaka Tomilo Perfil′eva i Venetsianskogo poslannika Al′berto Viminy," in *III Mezhdunarodnyi nauchno-prakticheskii forum 'Iazyki. Kul'tury. Perevody* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 2015): 135-148.

Chemodanov's visit to Italy in 1656-57, the story of his journey also deserves a more comprehensive overview, as Russian-Venetian diplomacy often takes a peripheral place in works focused either on the Italian perspective on Muscovites or on the influence of this embassy on Muscovy's relations with other European powers.[12] A closer look at both missions presented in this chapter provides the necessary background to understand the specifics of the two parties' communication in the context of early modern diplomacy. The chapter adopts a decidedly descriptive tone to reconstruct the itinerary, the purpose, and the composition of the embassy all of which provides important context for the analysis presented in the following chapters.

The second chapter is dedicated to the complex relationship between cultural perceptions and diplomatic objectives that shaped the two Venetian-Muscovite encounters. It focuses on how selected Italian sources interpreted Russian social practices, norms of comportment, and religious aspects. These issues had a strong connection to the diplomatic representation of the tsar and to the primary question of negotiations – the anti-Ottoman alliance. It is here where the Venetians' specific view on the Muscovites as a barbaric and sectarian 'other' came into conflict with their diplomatic need for Orthodox Muscovy as a strong ally in the fight against Ottomans. The present analysis allows, for heuristic purposes, to separate the Muscovite image preserved in humanist writing from the lively process of diplomatic communication, if only to better understand the strong and inseparable interconnection between cultural perception and political practice.

The third chapter deals with diplomatic practice in its complexity and various forms of diplomatic interactions. In course of the two missions, both Venetian and Russian diplomatic

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[12] Nicolai Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii (po 1800 god)* (Moscow: Tipografiia E. Lissnera i Iu. Romana, 1894–1902). See also Evgenii Shmurlo, "Posol′stvo Chemodanova i Rimskaia Kuriia," *Zapiski russkogo nauchnogo Instituta v Belgrade* 7 (1932): 1-25, as well as Irina Sharkova, "Posol′stvo Chemodanova i otkliki na nego v Italii," in *Problemy istorii mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii*, 207-223. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972).

agents needed to represent their rulers and states in a certain light given the lack of information about each other. Muscovite tactics of self-representation were based on the imperial tropes of being a Christian Orthodox power worthy of the respect given to other world empires. And yet, these tactics were not fixed and unilateral, but they rather largely depended on the dynamics of communication with the Venetians. Rather than seeing Muscovite seventeenth-century diplomacy as a set of self-contained and obsolete practices I will bring to light the features that allowed both sides to conduct negotiations and come to mutual understanding. The chapter includes sections on comparative imperial-republican self-representation, the functions of ceremony, and the role of ambassadors as well as other intermediaries.

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CHAPTER 1. DIPLOMATIC CONTEXT

1.1. Preparation for the First Encounter

From the second half of the seventeenth century Muscovy's diplomatic interests and expansionist policy slowly started to shift towards the West. Diplomatic endeavors of the Russian tsar, Aleksei Mikhailovich (1645-1676), attracted the attention of European powers who were looking for a strong ally against the Ottoman Empire. In 1684, the Holy Roman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Venetian Republic formed The Holy League against the Ottomans. Two years later Muscovy joined this alliance, becoming a part of a mighty and significant European coalition.[13]

The process of rapprochement between Muscovy and other Christian polities came with multiple difficulties in mutual understanding. Both Muscovy and its European counterparts had to negotiate their interests, motivating the parties involved to gain new or correct their lack of knowledge about one another. Russian-Venetian diplomacy of the 1650s was an important step towards future anti-Ottoman league, which explains its significance in international history. These exchanges are also a telling example of diplomatic practice and the ways in which communication worked and how Russians and Venetians dealt with "imperial unknowns" and with "republican unknowns," respectively.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, after decades of silence, Muscovy and Venice renewed diplomatic relations. At that point, both polities were involved in conflicts with their closest neighbors. In 1654, the tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich embarked on the campaign against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Russo-Polish War (1654-1667) was predetermined by the events of 1654 when the Cossack hetman Khmelnitsky took a pledge of allegiance to

[13] O.A. Zavaruhina, "Russko-Venecianskij svjazi i bor′ba s Osmanskoj imperiej v konce XVII veka," *Izvestija vuzov. Severo-Kavkazskij region. Obŝestvennye nauki* No. 3. (2018): 49.

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Aleksei Mikhailovich. Given that Cossack lands previously belonged to the Polish crown, this move was an indisputable occasion for war.

The war fostered an unprecedented surge in Muscovy's diplomatic endeavors. Russian representatives were sent to the French, Swedish, and Danish courts, and to the Dutch republic to collect information about the enemy and inform foreign rulers about the reasons for this war.[14] Later on, while already being in contact with the Venetians, Muscovy would come into conflict with another northern power, Sweden (Russo-Swedish war 1656-1658). This war attracted attention of other Western powers. The Habsburg and Polish-Lithuania diplomats persuaded Aleksei Mikhailovich to join the anti-Swedish coalition which united the forces of the Holy Roman Empire, Brandenburg-Prussia, Denmark, Dutch Republic, and Muscovy.[15] It was a short period of rest in Russo-Polish war which would start again shortly after Muscovy left the coalition.

Meanwhile, the Venetian Republic was involved in the War of Candia (1645-1669) with its old enemy, the Ottoman Empire. By the time of the first in the seventeenth century Venetian mission to Muscovy, the Republic was exhausted by this long-lasting conflict. The growing strength of Muscovy generated the Venetians' interest in this faraway northern land. Several years before the Vimina's embarking on the mission to Muscovy, the Venetian Senate started to discuss the possibility of an alliance with the tsar. The Venetians knew that in 1637 Don Cossacks captured Ottoman Asak [Azov]. They had also heard about the victory of mixed Russian-Cossack troops against Tatars in 1646.[16] The tsar's increasing military power made some patricians think that Muscovy would soon replace Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as

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[14] B.N. Floria, *Russkoe Gosudarstvo i Ego Zapadnye sosedi (1655-1661)* (Moskva: INDRIK, 2010), 10.

[15] Robert I. Frost, *After the Deluge: Poland-Lithuania and the Second Northern War* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 71-85, 162-163.

[16] Natalia Kazakova. "Stateynye spiski russkikh poslov v Italiyu kak pamyatniki literatury puteshestviy (seredina XVII v.)," 268-288, in *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoy literatury*, vol. XLI. (Leningrad, 1988), 269.

a new leading northern power.[17] However, a significant part of the Senate was skeptical about possible Muscovite assistance in the War of Candia. Some of the patricians believed that if Muscovites wanted to start a campaign against the Ottomans they would have already done so.[18]

Nevertheless, there was a person, who completely devoted himself to the idea of starting and cultivating diplomatic relations with Muscovy: Alberto Vimina. A humanist, diplomat, and prelate of the Catholic church, Vimina was born in a Venetian town, Belluno. Vimina's real name was Michele Bianchi, but he had to abandon it and leave Italy being followed by unknown yet apparently powerful enemies. Domenico Caccamo points out that the circumstances of his persecution are obscure. In his writings Vimina only confessed that he made "*a mistake which the interested sensitive persons named a crime*."[19] Seeking a safe place far away from his precarious homeland, Vimina escaped first to Rome, then to Naples, and finally settled down in Poland. There he found protection of the pontifical nuncio Giovanni Torres who played an important role in negotiations between the Polish king, Venetian Republic and Holy See about the trilateral alliance against the Ottomans.[20] Despite the Pope's reluctance to join the anti-Ottoman project, Torres seemed to support Polish and Venetian endeavors to bring it to life.[21]

Another person who had a significant impact on Vimina's diplomatic career was Niccolò Sagredo, the Venetian ambassador in Vienna. Sagredo was looking for a person able to negotiate with the Ukrainian Cossacks (at that point formally subjected to the Polish king) about their military assistance in the Venetian-Ottoman war. Torres immediately recommended

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[17] Philip Longworth, "Russian-Venetian Relations in the Reign of tsar Alexey Mikhailovich," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 64, no. 3 (July 1986): 383.

[18] Domenico Caccamo, "Alberto Vimina in Ucraina e nelle 'Parti settentrionali' diplomazia e cultura nel seicento veneto," *Europa Orientalis* 5 (1986): 246.

[19] Ibid., 234-235.

[20] "*Presentazione del libro "Lenkijos pilietiniu karu istorija - Historia delle guerre civili in Polonia"" di Michele Bianchi (Alberto Vimina)*," Biblioteca Civica, accessed May 13, 2021, http://biblioteca.comune.belluno.it/2013/03/13/presentazione-del-libro-lenkijos-pilietiniu-karu-istorija-historia-delle-guerre-civili-in-polonia-di-michele-bianchi-alberto-vimina/

[21] Domenico Caccamo, *Il carteggio di Giovanni Tiepolo ambasciatore veneto in Polonia (1645 – 1647)* (Roma, 1984), 154.

Vimina as a reliable and skillful official, even though the Venetian did not speak Polish or "Ruthenian."[22] Vimina's attempts to earn the esteem of influential diplomats came out of necessity because sonnections were an essential factor in Venetian diplomatic 'careers.' Having diplomatic appointment in one's curriculum vitae, on the other hand, could open endless opportunities for those who aspired to the highest offices of the Venetian government.[23]

Vimina eventually managed to promote himself as a diplomat and got the appointment to the Cossack lands. Just before departing on the mission to Khmelnitsky, Vimina for the first time met with Muscovites. In 1650, he witnessed a sumptuous delegation of Muscovite ambassadors with a two hundred and fifty-people entourage. According to Sagredo's reports to the Venetian Senate, Vimina was the one who explained him the "great novelty" of Muscovites proving to be a person of "extraordinary sagacity."[24] Possibly already back then Vimina started to think about organizing an embassy to the Russian tsar.

After two unsuccessful attempts to secure the cooperation with Ukrainian Cossacks, Vimina came back to the Republic where he became the archpriest of Alpago. He also continued his diplomatic work as a loyal agent of the Serenissima. In the winter of 1653-1654, Vimina payed an unofficial visit to Sweden. Though the data about this event in Vimina's life is scarce, he seemed to serve as a Venetian informant at the Swedish court. There is evidence that during this trip the Republic was in contact with him and supported his activities. While Vimina was travelling, the Senate received a complaint from Alpago that the archpriest abandoned his seat and avoided his duties. The Republican authorities were lenient with their loyal servant who proved to be more interested in diplomatic occupation than in his service as a clergyman.[25]

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[22] Caccamo, "Alberto Vimina," 238.

[23] Andrea Zannini, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Crisis of Venetian Diplomacy in the Seventeenth c and Eighteenth Centuries, in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Daniela Frigo, Adrian Belton (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 115.

[24] Dispaccio di N. Sagredo, 9 aprile 1650, f. 133., publsihed in Caccamo, 239.

[25] Caccamo, "Alberto Vimina," 244.

After returning from Poland Vimina did not forget about his anti-Ottoman projects. He wrote several letters to Senate suggesting other ambitious missions to Muscovy and Persia always under the pretext of finding help against Ottomans. In his appeal to the Senate on November 16 1654, Vimina tried to persuade the patricians by emphasizing the fact that the Muscovite enterprise would not cost the Republic much and that it would probably have a positive outcome:

> The mission to the Muscovite can be considered necessary at least because we can expect considerable profit and solace [sollievo], venturing only small expenses if the outcome turns out to be fruitless. The reasons which one can use to persuade this great prince to organize the Cossacks of the Tanais [Don] on a campaign to the Black sea, I consider, should be based on the consideration that, since the great Turk is an implacable enemy of the Muscovite, one cannot expect that Ottoman vexation will calm down, if the weapon does not resist the audacity with which he attempts to invade Muscovy by any means.[26]

Vimina managed to get his assignment to Muscovy. The events of the Russo-Polish war demonstrated that the Polish-Lithuanian power was decreasing while Muscovite began to grow. A rumor arrived from the front of the Russo-Polish war (1654-1667): it seemed that the corsairs stirred up their activity in the Black sea. The more Muscovites ventured into the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, the more hostile the Ottomans were towards them. The timing seemed perfect for Vimina to suggest the tsar an alliance against the common enemy, and the Senate finally decided to undertake this long-discussed mission.[27]

1.2. Alberto Vimina in Muscovy: The Struggles with Local Administration and First Attempts to Establish Communication

In December 1654, Vimina received 1200 ducats for the first six months of his service and credentials for the Grand Duke of Muscovy, and hetman Khmelnitsky. The new Venetian ambassador in Vienna, Battista Nani, was also informed about the envoy's assignment to the tsar. Nani was Vimina's supervisor, and the envoy's reports written during the mission to

[26] Scrittura di Vimina al Senato, 16 Novembre 1654, published in Caccamo, 271
[27] Caccamo, "Alberto Vimina," 246.

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Muscovy were addressed to him. In order to pass the forefront of the Russian-Polish war the envoy needed to go through Swedish lands. This complication caused a significant delay and Vimina arrived to Muscovy only on May 1655.[28]

On May 31st, the local officials, the voivode of Pskov Ivan Ondreevich Khilkov and his *dyak* Merkurii Krylov, received news: a Venetian ambassador was heading to Russia from the Baltic sea. This rumor reached Pskov, located on the border between Muscovy and Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, through a complex regional network of information. A translator of Swedish, Ivan Fenturov, learnt the news in an inn from a German merchant, Andryushka Schlüter. In his turn, the latter heard this rumor from a "trading foreigner" Oksenko Pen, who saw Venetian ships entering the port of Tallinn [Kolyvan'].[29]

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Pskov was a borderland town where one could expect foreign envoys or merchants' arrival at any time. It explains why local authorities were so sensitive to all the rumors spreading around. In these circumstances, the translators' duties were much broader than paperwork or interpreting; they also collected information in foreigners' gathering places and disseminated it among different people. Ingrid Maier and Daniel C. Waugh point out that cross-border espionage was typical for Russian border towns. The information was collected from interactions with foreigners, news sheets, printed and handwritten materials. The data deemed important for Russian foreign affairs then was sent to *Posol'skii Prikaz* to be analyzed by its officials.[30]

Vimina and his four companions could travel without restraints about 60 km after they passed the river Narva. Only somewhere near Gdov, they finally met Russian officials. It was the last time the envoy and his company could walk freely, unaccompanied by local guards and

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[28] Ibid., 247.

[29] *Pamyatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii s Papskim dvorom i s italianskimi gosudarstvami* (hereafter PDS), vol. 10 (St Petersburg, 1871), col 812.

[30] Ingrid Maier, Daniel C. Waugh. "How well was Muscovy connected with the world?" in *Imperienvergleich. Beispiele und Ansätze aus osteuropäischer Perspektive. Festschrift für Andreas Kappeler*, ed. G. Hausmann, A. Rustemeyer (Wiesbaden, 2009), 18-19.

pristavs.[31] According to the Muscovite customs, every foreign visitor was carefully observed and restricted in contacts with the locals. Russian authorities tried to protect themselves from foreign espionage because the unwanted information in the hands of foreign agents could significantly worsen Muscovy's diplomatic positions.[32]

In the first meeting, Muscovites immediately interrogated the members of the mission about their names, the details of their journey, and the state that sent them. They wanted to know the name of Venetian ruler, whether Venice was a "free or tributary state," whether the doge was the tsar's friend or enemy, and, eventually, with whom Venice had borders and how far it was from Poland and Sweden.[33] These questions, which this thesis will treat in detail in the following chapters, demonstrate how little the citizens of Gdov knew about the Venetian republic.

On June 12, the mission reached Pskov, where it stayed until Khilkov and Krylov received the first orders from Aleksei Mikhailovich. Meanwhile, the local officials found out that the name of the envoy was Alberto Vimina and that he arrived with letters for the Russian tsar on behalf of the "Venetian duke," Francesco Molin, Venetian "burgomasters," and Parliament.[34]

The delay in Pskov was not the only time when Vimina was compelled to wait. Having learned about the envoy's arrival, the tsar immediately sent letters to all the places Vimina was going to pass through. The orders of Aleksei Mikhailovich were contradictory since his domain was in the state of war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The tsar was in the military camp near Smolensk, while his son and heir to the throne, tsarevich Aleksei Alekseevich,

[31] Attendants who assisted foreign diplomats in their navigation in Muscovy and communication with Muscovite authorities.

[32] L. A. Iuzefovich, "*Kak v posol'skikh obychaiakh vedetsia': Russkii posol'skii obychai kontsa XV – nachala XVII v*" (Moscow, 1988), 76-77; O. B. Bokareva, "Doplomaticheskaiia sluzhba rossiiskogo gosudarstva i priemy poslov Kolomenskom i Izmailove v XVII-nachale XVIII vekov," *International Journal of Humanities and Natural Sciences*, vol. 9-2 (2019): 22.

[33] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Varsavia, 27 giugno 1655, n. 25, published in Caccamo, 274.

[34] PDS, col. 822.

remained in Moscow to represent the ruler at the dynastic court. Initially, on June 12, the tsar ordered to let Vimina and his four people go further in the direction of Velikii Novgorod and Moscow. However, on June 27, Aleksei Mikhailovich suddenly changed his mind and sent a letter to Pskov, which stated that instead of going to Moscow, Vimina and his company should have gone directly to the tsar. Given that it took around 12-13 days for the letters to arrive from Smolensk to Pskov and vice versa, the Venetian mission was directed to Velikii Novgorod on July 5, three days earlier than the tsar's new instructions reached Pskov. As a result of these delays, Vimina managed to arrive at his expected destination in Smolensk only at the end of July.[35]

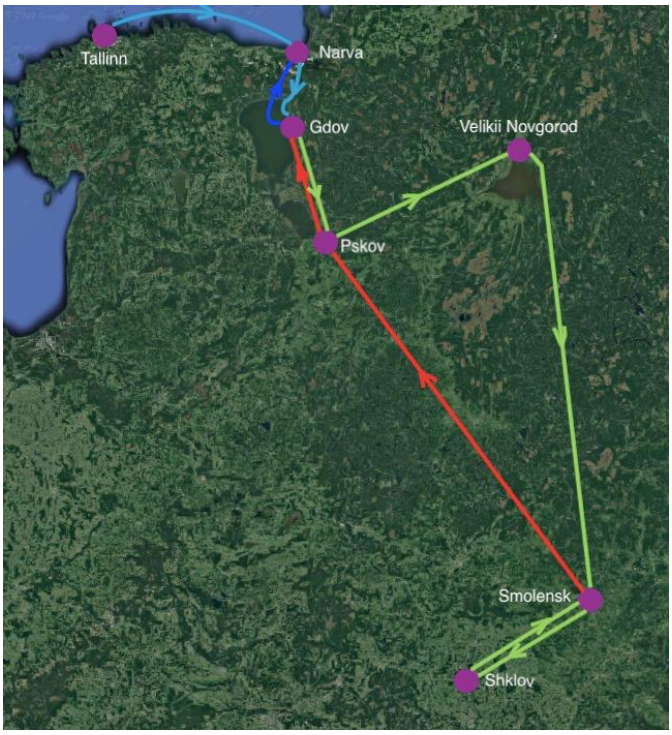

Figure I. 1. Vimina's travel in Russian lands

While Alberto Vimina was struggling with the local bureaucracy's inconveniences, the Russian authorities were collecting information about Vimina's mission. The arrival of Venetians evoked many questions among local officials. Where should the visitors be accommodated? How should they be treated? What supplies and amount of money should they

[35] Ibid., col. 865.

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receive? Aleksei Mikhailovich was concerned about the formal aspects of the reception of this embassy. June 15, the tsar sent a letter to *Posol'skii Prikaz* asking its high-ranking official, Grigorii Semenovich Kurakin, to find documentation about previous Venetian missions. The tsar wanted to know how to treat the envoy and how to establish written communication with the doge. However, Kurakin's assistants did not find any evidence about previous Venetian embassies. Instead, they sent the tsar some detailed descriptions of other diplomatic missions, primarily the Dutch ones.[36]

After archival research in *Posol'skii Prikaz* was finished, the tsar sent his instructions on the envoy's welcoming and reception. The visitors were solemnly greeted in every city they visited and accommodated either in apartments designed for incoming ambassadors or just in the towns' most populated and presentable parts. According to Muscovite diplomatic tradition, Venetians received food and money from local authorities. Muscovite officials reported to the tsar that Vimina got the best treatment in the visited places. However, from the perspective of the Venetian documents, the situation appears to be completely different. In the dispatches to the Venetian ambassador in Vienna, Vimina reported that when he entered Smolensk, soldiers and nobles indeed came to welcome the mission, but the accommodation allocated to the envoy barely looked like a luxurious ambassadorial apartment:

> Soldiers and nobles met me at the Dnieper's crossing point, and they accompanied me <…> in my room located on the ground floor. Surrounded by mud, closed in that small room, from where they do not let [me] go out even for a short walk. Oppressed by idleness hostile to my nature, in that unhealthy atmosphere, I remained on the banks of the Dnieper where it was always snowing in that period, where I was close to my death. [37]

The living conditions at Vimina's dwelling were so poor that they eventually caused him the sickness that prevented the envoy from a personal audience with Aleksei Mikhailovich. Instead, Vimina had to convey his letters of credence to Tomilo Perfiriev, the *dyak* of *Prikaz*

[36] PDS, col. 848.
[37] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 32, published in Caccamo, 277

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Tainykh Del.[38] The envoy was also asked to "present in writing the matter of negotiation entrusted [to him] by the ruler." Reluctant to do so in the beginning, he eventually agreed on handing over to Perfiriev the official letters and a piece of golden cloth, a present to the tsar from the Republic.[39]

After a long period of traveling back and forth while waiting for Aleksei Mikhailovich's decisions, Vimina finally met Perfiriev on November 12. The *dyak* visited the sick diplomat in his accommodation in Smolensk. In the conversation with the tsar's representative Vimina told him that the Venetian doge had heard about recent glorious victories of Muscovy's army. The envoy also informed Perfiriev that Venice was in state of war with the sultan and that Venetians were well aware of Muscovite troubles caused by Ottoman raids. He thus proclaimed that the doge was hoping that the tsar would send the Don's Cossacks against the Ottomans and would help to liberate Christians, suffering under the sultan's rule. As a final remark he suggested abolishing commercial mediation of the Dutch and establishing direct trade between Venice and Muscovy.[40]

Vimina wanted to know the tsar's opinion about the anti-Ottoman alliance as soon as possible. The diplomat even tried to get this information out of Pefiriev when the latter presented him Aleksei Mikhalovich's official reply to the doge. However, the *dyak* "did not want to open his mouth anymore, just if he was mute."[41] He only informed Vimina that the tsar ordered that the Venetian was quickly dispatched back, and immediately left ambassadorial apartments.[42] The Venetian representative had to return to Italy not knowing about the outcome of his long-planned mission. Nevertheless, the tsar announced his permission to conduct direct

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[38] The new ministry created in 1654 to control the Muscovite authorities and monitor whether the tsar's orders were observed. The ministry was also in charge of investigating crimes against the state. Boyars and other high-ranking officials did not have access to *Prikaz Tainykh Del*, only the tsar could know about the questions discussed behind its walls.

[39] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 33., published in Caccamo, 278.

[40] PDS, col. 904-906.

[41] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 34, published in Caccamo, 281.

[42] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 34., ibid, 280.

trade between the two states. With regard to a question that Vimina was mostly interested in, an alliance against the Ottomans, the tsar promised to send his own diplomats with a reciprocal visit to the doge.[43]

1.3. Ivan Chemodanov in Italy: Continuing to Learn and Negotiate

Shortly after Vimina left Muscovy, Aleksei Mikhailovich decided to send his own mission to the doge. The tsar believed that Venice was a wealthy state which could easily loan money needed for Russian military campaigns against Poland and Sweden. Besides, Aleksei Mikhailovich strived to develop Muscovite trade, and commercial relations with the Republic appeared a great opportunity.

At the beginning of May 1656, he assigned Ivan Chemodanov and Aleksei Posnikov as the first and second ambassadors. The translator Timofei Toposovskii and interpreter Lazar Zymarmanov also joined the delegation of thirty-three people.[44] Since the land route to Venice was closed because of the Russo-Polish war, the embassy was going to Italy by sea.[45] In June, the ambassadors and their entourage departed from Moscow, heading to the major northern port of Muscovy, Archangelsk. In Archangelsk, they embarked on commercial ships under the command of the English tradesman, John Hebdon.[46] The ships were loaded with precious furs, caviar, and 4500 pounds of rhubarb that Russians hoped to sell in Italy.[47]

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[43] PDS, col. 921.

[44] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva, kasaiushchiesia do Rossii*, transl. by M.D. Buturlin, vol. 1. (Moskva, 1871), 6-7.

[45] A. Brückner, "Russkie diplomaty-turisty v Italii v XVII v.," *Russkii vestnik* (1877): 24.

[46] John Hebdon was not just an English merchant, he actually held the status of the Royal Representative in Russia since 1650. Hebdon also functioned as a mediator in the relations between Aleksei Mikhailovich and Charles II in 1661. See more in Paul Dukes, Herd P. Graeme, Jarmo Kotilaine, *Stuarts and Romanovs: The Rise and Fall of a Special Relationship*, (Dundee University Press, 2009), 91, 99-103). Interestingly, in Livorno, the ambassadors were accommodated in the house of another English merchant Charles Longland ["gost' Karlus" in Russian documents], see in *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 7; More in Stefano Villani, "A Republican Englishmen in Leghorn: Charles Longland," in *European Contexts for English Republicanism*, ed. Gaby Mahlberg, Dirk Wiemann (Ashgate, 2013), 163-177.

[47] Longworth, "Russian-Venetian Relations," 388.

The long maritime journey started September 12 of 1656, and finished November 24 when the mission reached Livorno. This trip was full of dangers and hardships. First, the travelers went through severe storms. Then they were disturbed by a constant fear of "Turkish robbers" raiding near the shores of Spain.[48] The threat of pirate attack made the further maritime voyage impossible and the journey had to be continued inland.

When Hebdon's ships anchored at the shores of Tuscany, Muscovites would not expect that they were still far away from the final destination. They also did not know that their visit to Florentine Dutchy on their way to Venice would last for about a month and a half. The Pope prohibited unauthorized passing through his lands in central Italy because of the ongoing plague, and the Muscovites had to wait for his permission to continue their journey to Venice.[49]

Upon arrival to Livorno, the Russian representatives showed to the cities' governor Antonio Serristori the tsar's letter [*proezzhaia gramota*]. This document gave them permission to cross the territories between Muscovy and Venice and assured that they would receive every possible assistance from local authorities.[50]

After being examined by Italian doctors, the Russian diplomats were allowed to get off the ship and enter the city. In Livorno, they were accommodated in the house of an English merchant Charles Longland.[51] Muscovites were satisfied with the respect shown by their hosts in Livorno. The governor on behalf of the duke presented them the finest wines. The Russians gratefully accepted the clarets and then, to the surprise of Italians, mixed them up. Later on the ambassadors planned to turn that mixture into distilled spirits because they thought that the transportation of those precious bottles would be too expensive.[52]

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[48] PDS, col. 941-942.
[49] Ibid., col. 969.
[50] Ibid., col. 961.
[51] Ibid., col. 948.
[52] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva,* 7, 19-20.

While waiting for permission to continue their journey, the diplomats were busy trading at the local market and had a relatively active social life. They enjoyed the stay in Livorno and the company of local nobility. The ambassadors were especially close to the Venetian merchant Giuseppe Armano.[53] Armano and Serristori organized dinners to welcome their unexpected guests. Both Florentines and Venetians mentioned that Muscovites enjoyed listening to music and loved singing. The guests never missed a chance to participate in music evenings or balls though they did not dance themselves.[54]

Contradicting Vimina's claim about the lack of curiosity in Russian people, Chemodanov's and Posnikov's scribes thoroughly described Muscovites' impressions of the visited lands. The sources mentioned sceneries, palaces, churches, and monuments Muscovites admired while traveling through Italy. The diplomats asked questions about certain places, churches, and pieces of art. For instance, Chemodanov and Posnikov wanted to know more about the Council of Florence and the history of Venice.[55] The Venetian anonymous *relazione* specifically underlined that the ambassadors were eager to learn from their hosts about everything unusual or new they saw.[56]

In Livorno, Muscovite ambassadors visited the vineyard Origen Marchant and a Capuchin's convent. In Florence, they saw the Florentine treasury.[57] In Venice, they had a chance to witness the carnival, which they nevertheless disapproved, and were frequent guests in Venetian theater and opera that they noticeably admired. Towards the end of their mission in Venice, Muscovites were accompanied to see the Venetian treasury and the relics of saints. The *stateinyi spisok* listed the things that ambassadors saw and sometimes even elaborated on the

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[53] Stefano Villani, "Ambasciatori russi a Livorno e rapporti tra Moscovia e Toscana nel XVII secolo," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* (2008): 39.

[54] Relazione vera del modo di viver dell'ambasciatori moscoviti venuti in Venezia l'anno 1656 li 16 genaro," in Maria di Salvo, *Italia, Russia e mondo slavo: studi filologici e letterari (*Firenze University Press, 2011), 111; *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva,* 11-12, 19.

[55] PDS, col. 996, 1014.

[56] "Relazione vera," 111.

[57] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva,* 11; PDS, col. 996.

history of those artefacts. Muscovite documents mentioned the icon of the Virgin allegedly painted by Saint Luke, a fragment of the Holy Cross, relics of Saint Mark and many other saints and martyrs. It described Corno Ducale [doge's headgear], other lavishly decorated headgears and armor, precious caskets.[58] Those tours and entertainments were an important part of Muscovite ambassador's journey and occupied a significant part of their time.

Figure I. 2. Chemodanov's and Posnikov's journey through Italy

Returning to the course of the mission, on December 23, the ambassadors finally left Livorno. Several days after, they arrived in Florence, where they were greeted by the Duke's brother Leopoldo Medici. Muscovite representatives were honored by being offered the apartments in the Duke's residence. Ferdinando II Medici, surrounded by a large retinue of noblemen, guards, and foreigners, escorted the embassy to the palace. The cannon fire accompanied the ceremony.[59] In Florence, the diplomats finally met the Venetian representative

[58] PDS, col. 1078-1080.
[59] Ibid., col. 1158.

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Taddeo Vico, who provided them with information about the upcoming journey to Venice.[60] Vico made several attempts to ferret out the details of the tsar's mandate but did not quite succeed. Muscovites carefully kept information about the mission in secret.[61]

During the short stay in Florence, the ambassadors attended several private audiences with the Duke and his son, fourteen years old Cosimo. The *stateinyi spisok* registered the conversation with the young heir in detail. Cosimo was especially interested in the military organization of Muscovy. The ambassadors willingly shared their knowledge probably exaggerating the strength of the tsar's army. Upon the mission's departure, Chemodanov gifted to the Duke forty sables; his wife received ten sables, while Leopoldo and Cosimo Medici got a precious ermine skin each.[62] When the ambassadors were about to leave Florence, Ferdinando II gave them a letter to the tsar in which he expressed his wish to conduct trade with Muscovy via the port of Livorno.[63] According to Maria di Salvo, both sides seemed satisfied with this unexpected encounter and interested in establishing direct commercial contacts.[64]

January 1, 1567 Muscovites left Florence and continued their journey toward the northeast. The Venetian delegation of around fifty people led by already known Alberto Vimina was waiting for the embassy near Ferrara. The new doge, Bertuccio Valier (1595-1658), sent seven barques to transport the Muscovites via the rivers Po and Adige up to Venice.[65] Those vessels were richly decorated with Turkish carpets, velvet pillows, red velvet cloth with golden fringes and tassels on the outside, golden and light-blue paintings on the inside, as the Russian ambassadors noted.[66]

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[60] Ibid., col. 982.
[61] Maria Di Salvo, "La missione di I Cemodanov a Venezia (1656-1657): osservazioni e nuovi materiali," 97-116, in *Italia, Russia e mondo slavo: studi filologici e letterari* (Firenze University Press, 2011), 101.
[62] PDS, col. 989.
[63] Villani, "Ambasciatori russi," 44.
[64] Di Salvo, "La missione di I Cemodanov," 102.
[65] Bertuccio Valier was the third doge who succeeded Francesco Molin after his death.
[66] PDS, col. 1003, 1005, 1014.

In the series of audiences with Valier and patricians, Chemodanov found it necessary to explain why Muscovy had conflicts with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Sweden. Just like other Muscovite ambassadors at various European courts, he informed the doge about the wrongs that Polish and Swedish kings had done to the Russian tsar. The ambassador claimed that the tsar's "title in their [Swedish and Polish] royal charters was not written entirely." He also complained that the Poles "by order of the king and the Pans' Sejm printed some books with wicked dishonorable words, accusations, and curses towards our Muscovite state's Great Tsars and *boyars* and other officials."[67] Finally, Chemodanov announced that the tsar was always willing to support the idea of liberating Christians from Muslims, but he could not join the anti-Ottoman campaign because he was busy with his own wars. Eventually, the diplomat said that if the state of Venice and its honorable *vladeteli* wanted to demonstrate their love and goodwill towards the tsar, they could loan money to him in order to help fund his military forces.

Venetians hope to obtain a new powerful ally in the war against the sultan was dashed as much as Aleksei Mikhailovich's hope to get fuds from the Republic. After years of war with the Ottomans, Venice did not have any spare money to lend. The only intended goal met was the establishment of direct trade between Venice and Muscovy. The Muscovite delegation remained in Venice until the beginning of March of 1657 when the negotiations were concluded, and the ambassadors could come back to Moscow. Despite the 'unsuccessful' character of the first Russian-Venetian exchanges, Vimina's and Chemodanov's missions marked the beginning of the new era in the relations between the two states. This new era was characterized by the constant process of learning about one another and trying to reach mutual understanding, a process that is the focus of the following two chapters.

[67] Ibid., col. 1048-1049.

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CHAPTER 2. PERCEPTIONS OF MUSCOVITES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ITALIAN HUMANIST TRADITION AND VENETIAN DIPLOMACY

2.1. The Sources of Knowledge and Information about Muscovites

Italian images and perceptions of Muscovites cannot be removed from the nature and purposes of the documents that describe them. Although previous European accounts on Muscovy were available to European readers, the middle of the seventeenth century was the time when Venetians 'rediscovered' the Russian Tsardom. The burst of materials on Muscovites happened in 1656 when the tsar's diplomats landed in Italy for the first time in the century. There are many documents describing the Russian mission in Italy, and it might seem that Italians (Venetians in particular) had abundant knowledge about their counterparts given the quantity of textual witness, but was it actually the case?[68]

To answer this question, one should clearly understand the nature of writing about Muscovy, specifics of genres, motivation of the texts' authors, and their intended audiences. In his case-study of a sixteenth century English embassy, Jan Hennings points out visible differences in two descriptions of Muscovy written one from the perspective of a traveler and another from a viewpoint of a diplomat. Unlike the former, the latter focused on the author's experiences and responsibilities as a representative of his ruler und, thus, presented Muscovy's

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[68] A list of selected fifteenth-seventeenth century publications about Muscovy: Raffaelle Barberino, "Relazione di Moscovia." In *Viaggi di Moscovia de gli anni 1633, 1634, 1635 e 1636.* Viterbo: s.n., 1658; Ambrogio Contarini, *Questo e el Viazo de misier Ambrosio Contarini.* Venice: H. Foxius, 1487; Francesco da Collo, *Trattamento di Pace trà il serenissimo Sigismondo Rè di Polonia, et Gran Basilio principe de Moscovia.* Padua, 1603; Johann Fabri. *Ad serenissimum principem Ferdinandum archiducem Austriae, Moscovitarum iuxta mare glaciale religio, a D. Iaonne Fabri aedita.* Basel: Ioannem Bebelium, 1526; Paolo Giovio, *Pauli Iovii Novocomensis libellus de legatione Basilij magni principis Moscoviae ad Clementem VII.* Rome: Ex Aedibus Francisci Minitii Calui, 1525; Sigismund von Herberstein, *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii.* Vienna: Egydius Aquila, 1549; Antonio Possevino, *Moscovia, s. de rebus Moscviticis et acta in conuentu legatorum regis Poloniae et Magni Ducis Moscouiae anno 1581.* Vilna: Apud Ioannem Velicensem, 1586.

culture through the lens of diplomatic practice.[69] Various genres of sources produced by Italians in the course of the two Venetian-Muscovite missions provide an opportunity for a further analysis of Muscovite image constructed in diplomatic contexts.

The sources employed in this thesis can be roughly divided into two groups: reports (or dispatches) and *relazioni*. The first category includes reports of the Florentine official Antonio Serristori and some other participants and observants of Chemodanov's mission in Florence (1656).[70] It also unties the dispatches written by Alberto Vimina about Russians when he observed them in the Polish court (1650) and during his mission to Muscovy (1655).[71] Both Vimina's and Florentine texts contain authors' impressions of what they saw. Dispatches and reports, though they were not intended for general public, just like *relazioni* were based on multiple cultural assumptions characteristic for European intellectual tradition.

The second category, *relazioni*, was quite different in terms of its intended audience. The Venetian *relazioni* initially were official reports first orally performed and then written exclusively for the Senate or Collegio. However, already in the fifteenth century they gained fame as an invaluable source of information about distant lands. By the early seventeenth century they were so widely circulated in Europe that the diplomats themselves referred their readers to earlier publications for additional information.[72] Venetian archives sometimes contain two copies of one *relazione* by the same person: one addressed to the authorities and another to the general public.[73] Filippo De Vivo states that the first circle of readers consisted

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[69] Jan Hennings, "Textual Ambassadors and Ambassadorial Texts. Literary Representation and Diplomatic Practice in George Turberville's and Thomas Randolph's Accounts of Russia (1568-9)," in *Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby, Joanna Craigwood (Oxford University Press, 2019), 182-184, 188.

[70] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva, kasaiushchiesia do Rossii*, transl. by M.D. Buturlin, vol. 1. (Moscow, 1871).

[71] Published in Caccamo, "Alberto Vimina," 265-283.

[72] De Vivo, "How to Read Venetian Relazioni," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme,* vol. 34, no. ½ (2011): 36.

[73] Maria Pia Pedani, "L'Italia, Venezia e la Porta. Diplomazia e letteratura tra umanesimo e rinascimento," in *Italien und das Osmanische Reich*, ed. Hrsg. von Franziska Meier (Herne: Gabriele Schafer, 2010): 65.

of friends, relatives of the author, and like-minded patricians, but soon after the texts were read at squares and elsewhere in the city. Later on, the documents spread beyond Venetian borders in multiple copies and settled in libraries in many European literati.[74] Different mediators and publishers could omit several parts of reports keeping only the ones of importance for their particular purposes.[75]

Relazioni were highly pondered and filtered texts, adjusted to the specifics of the genre both stylistically and structurally. They were supposed to demonstrate humanist erudition and curiosity of particular diplomats as well as to convey the aura of success and wisdom of Venetian diplomacy in general.[76] They were also self-reflective texts which projected Venetian stereotypes onto others. Venetian diplomats were trained in theory and practice of rhetoric which impacted the style of *relazioni*. The usage of rhetorical skills was especially evident in the self-promotion of ambassadors who tried to amplify the difficulties they faced and thus emphasize their devotion to diplomatic vocation.[77]

Two documents that this thesis investigates were officially called *relazione*, but they showed a very different nature despite their name. The one written by Alberto Vimina clearly belongs to the genre of ambassadorial reports and has all the ingredients of diplomatic correspondence. The *Relazione vera del modo di viver dell'ambasciatori moscoviti venuti in Venezia l'anno 1656 li 21 genaro*, on the other hand, has little to do with the officially accepted form of diplomatic reports. It does not describe the state's geographical and political conditions, military organization and culture, but rather focuses on peculiar behavior of Muscovite visitors. The author of this document remained anonymous, but they were most probably a member of the Venetian receiving delegation. The purposes behind creating this '*relazione'* is not explicit,

[74] De Vivo, "How to Read Venetian Relazioni," 43.
[75] Ibid., 44-45.
[76] Gino Benzoni, "Ranke's favorite source: the relazioni of the Venetian ambassadors," *The Courier,* 22 (1987): 23.
[77] De Vivo, "How to Read Venetian Relazioni," 39-40.

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though its essay-like character, geographic description and entertaining function moves it close to the genre of foreign travel accounts. What matters here is that it is clearly distinguishable from the diplomatic report.

The history behind Alberto Vimina's notes about Muscovites in both the dispatches and *relazione* deserves particular attention. In this period, Venetian patricians and the general public could learn about Russians mostly through Vimina's mediation. Muscovy's images impressed on Venetians quite often are in fact the Venetian diplomat's perceptions reflected in his writing. The first period of Vimina's acquaintance with Russians took place while he served as the Serenissima's representative at the Polish-Lithuanian court. His short notes about the Muscovite ambassadors' behavior in Warsaw are preserved in several dispatches addressed to Niccolò Sagredo, Vimina's supervisor and Venetian resident ambassador in Vienna. It is hardly possible that Vimina had known much about Russians before he first encountered Muscovite ambassadors in Warsaw in 1650. The letters to Sagredo already ascribed to Muscovites the characteristics which persisted in Vimina's writing later on: servility, the lack of civil education and manners, schismaticism. It is important that most probably the diplomat's impression of Muscovites was formed under the impact of Polish anti-Russian propaganda. This propaganda, quite active during Russo-Polish conflict (1654-1667), included spreading various publications that presented the tsar and his subjects in an unflattering light.[78] Vimina explicitly 'admitted' that he was familiar with the Polish opinion about Muscovites in his dispatches saying that "the Poles think they can easily cheat, and they trust [the Russians] only out of necessity."[79]

In 1654, after a short break in diplomatic career, Vimina finally managed to persuade the Senate to organize an embassy to the tsar. As all Venetian diplomats, he turned to the state archive while preparing himself for the mission.[80] Most probably that was the time when he

[78] Lettera di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650, published in Caccamo, 268.
[79] Lettera di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650, ibid., 269.
[80] Filippo De Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice. Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 54-55.

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studied the works of *"*men who chose the path of traveling around the world with a compass.*"*[81] He inherited the tropes of Muscovy's despotism and got reassured about Russian barbarity while reading Herberstein and Possevino whom he mentioned in his texts.[82] Caccamo also suggests that in addition to these well-known works Vimina read *Relazioni universali* by Giovanni Botero and *Nuova aggiunta al compendio istorico unversale* by Giovanni Nicolò Doglioni. Both publications were popular in Italy and made notions of Russian barbarism and despotism a wide-known stereotype.[83] Thus, Vimina's descriptions of Muscovites were influenced by two main indirect sources of information Vimina had access to apart from his own eyes and ears: Polish courtiers (whom he surely talked to) and several earlier accounts on Muscovy.

As De Vivo underlines, the time laps between oral and written report could take several years.[84] In the case of Vimina, he himself mentioned that he started to write his *relazione* when he was still in Muscovy and finished it no later than 1657 when his report appeared in the Venetian Archives.[85]

By pointing out the specifics of Italian sources and drawing attention to their humanist nature and intended goals, I do not imply that they reflected reality less rigorously than Russian documents did. I rather argue that both Russian and Italian materials were highly biased or caught up in long-standing discursive tradition or institutional-bureaucratic development in their perceptions of themselves and of the other side and negotiations in general.

The 'Russian' sources for this thesis are printed in the nineteenth-century publication *Pamyatniki diplomaticheskikh snosheniy s Papskim dvorom I s ital'yanskimi gosudarstvami*

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[81] "Relazione della Moscovia," in Aberto Vimina, *Historia delle guerre ciuili di Polonia* (Venice: Pietro Pinelli, 1671): 285.

[82] Scrittura di Vimina al Senato, 16 Novembre 1654, ibid., 272.

[83] Caccamo, "Alberto Vinima," 262.

[84] De Vivo, "How to Read Venetian Relazioni," 32.

[85] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani. Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 35, published in Caccamo, 282. Due to the pandemic I did not have a chance to study the original Vimina's texts. Therefore, in this thesis I relied on the 1671 publication, in which the *relazione* became part of an extensive posthumous publication dedicated to the civil wars in Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth.

(PDS).[86] It contains information about both Vimina's and Chemodanov's missions. Vimina's arrival to Muscovy is registered in *stolbtsy*, a collection of all the documents produced during the Venetian embassy of 1655-1656. This collection holds the correspondence between the tsar, the *Posol'skii Prikaz*, and local officials responsible for receiving and accompanying Vimina during his journey through Russian lands. It also reflects the central administration's complicated policy in treating the guest while collecting all the possible information about the ambassador and the Venetian Republic.

The second type of Russian documents studied in this thesis is *stateinyi spisok* - a form of diplomatic diary that contains daily notes on the events which happened in the course of Russian embassies. Such documents included the descriptions of negotiations, informal meetings with officials and the voyage itself. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, this type of documents was the main form of Muscovite ambassadors' diplomatic report.[87] The *stateinyi spisok*, like the Venetian dispatches, contains traces of spoken language because, in Russian diplomatic practice, it was customary that diplomats memorized word-for-word speeches they were supposed to convey.[88] Another characteristic Russian and Venetian diplomatic reports shared was that they served to prove the ambassador's conduct and also demonstrate his devotion to serve their state or ruler. An important difference between two corpuses of documents is that Muscovite reports and correspondence were never intended for public circulation simply due to the absence of humanist tradition of reading, writing, and publishing. Russian learned world was rather based on state institution rather than on some sort

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[86] PDS (Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii). *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii s Papskim dvorom i s ital'ianskimi gosudarstvam*i. St. Petersburg, 1871. T. X.

[87] Nikolai Rogozhin, "Posol'skiie knigi XVI-XVII vv. (sostav i soderzhaniie, istoriografiia i publikatsii)," *Rossiiskaiia Istoriia*, no. 3 (2018): 88-89.

[88] On dispatches: Filippo de Vivo, Archives of Speech: Recording Diplomatic Negotiation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy, European History Quarterly Vol. 46(3) (2016), 522; on stateinyie spiski: D.S. Likhachev, "Povesti Russkikh Poslov kak Pamiatniki Literatury, in Puteshestviia Russkikh Poslov XVI-XVII vekov: Stateinyie Spiski, ed D.S. Likhachev, 319-346 (Saint-Petersbutg: Nauka, 2008), 322.

of Republic of Letters.[89] For this reason, those texts demonstrate a lack of curiosity and ethnographic interest when compared to their Venetian counterparts.

Attention to the nature and circulation of the sources shows that the image of the other side (that is, the Muscovite one) was not free from stereotypical, rhetorical or personal misperception. While Muscovites built their impression from Venetians and their understanding on how to communicate with them from scratch, their counterparts could rely on a number of previous accounts while negotiating. It seems that Venetians and Italians in general were more informed about their diplomatic partners because of their access to existing publications and manuscripts. In fact, most of practical data necessary for negotiations that Vimina collected was obsolete and did not reflect current Russian realities. As for previous treatises on Muscovites, they persistently repeated stereotypes that varied depending on the purposes of their authors. In other words, though Venetians seemed to have more knowledge about Muscovy, they had almost just as little practical information as their counterparts.

2.2. The Civilization-Barbarity Dichotomy and Discourses of Exclusion

Venetian notes about Muscovites, and many other contemporary documents of the type, quite often operated with the terminology of civilization-barbarity dichotomy. In this juxtaposition, Europe represented an idealized "us" while Muscovy was usually described as the barbarous "other."[90] According to Larry Wolff, Western European understandings of the division between "civilized" and "non-civilized" nations transformed in the course of the early modern period. While the Italian Renaissance divided the known world between the North and the South, ascribing to the latter the main qualities of civilization, the Enlightenment drew these

[89] Gregory Afinogenov, *Spies and Scholars. Chinese Secrets and Imperial Russia's Quest for World Power* (Harvard University Press, 2020), 14.

[90] Marshall Poe, *People Born to Slavery: Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography*, 1476-1748. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 116.

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lines between the West and the East.[91] One of the reasons for this shift was the emergence of new dynamically developing European centers such as London, Paris, and Amsterdam, as well as Western expansion further to the East and the necessity to appropriate and domesticate the "otherness" of trading empires' Asian domains.[92] The sixteenth-seventeenth century Western descriptions of Eastern Europe were not consistent in drawing lines between the 'civilized' and 'barbarous' parts of the world. According to Wolff, during this period Eastern Europe slowly started to be perceived as the area of transition between civilized and uncivilized through its "demi-orientalization."[93] This geographical delineation is not strictly applicable to the presented Italian sources on Muscovites. Nevertheless, I will further demonstrate that the elements of orientalization could indeed appear in Venetian documents as one of the arguments for Muscovite barbarity.

Alberto Vimina's seventeenth-century *relazione*, as the genre of the text required, started with the spatial positioning of Muscovy within the known world. On the first page, Vimina, described the tsar's realm as a part of Europe: "Among all the empires and provinces of Europe, it seems that the news about Muscovy were always obscured [and Muscovy] was seized in the corner of the world surrounded by barbarous people.*"* Furthermore, he continued to find similarities between Russians and other nations, placing Muscovy among other Northern European states. The envoy pointed out that Russians, just like other Northern peoples, believed that they were descendants of Noah's son Japheth. He then wrote that as all the Northerners Muscovites produced "aqua vita" [distilled spirits] from the humidity of the grain. He also noticed that like other Northern territories, such as Sweden or Cossack lands, Muscovy was

[91] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 4-10.

[92] Michael T. Bravo, "Precision and Curiosity in Scientific Travel: James Rennell and the Orientalist Geography of the New Imperial Sage (1760-1830)," in *Voyages and Visions. Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, ed. Jas Elsner and Joao-Paul Rubiés (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 162-183.

[93] Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4-11, 13.

inhabited by sturdy people who had never tried medicines because they were so perfectly healthy.[94]

Interestingly, several decades after Vimina, the English intellectual John Milton also found Muscovy's place in the north of Europe, calling it "the most northern Region of Europe reputed civil."[95] The term "civil," however, does not completely correspond to Vimina's overall impression of Russian lands. While situating Muscovy in the North of Europe, Vimina almost immediately distinguished Muscovites from other Northern peoples. Providing a short account of early Russian history, he concluded that after centuries of being controlled by brutal and barbarous rulers, Muscovites completely forgot what liberty was (probably presuming that liberty was a natural human state). According to the Venetian envoy, Russian people were genuinely inclined to servility, and that is why "these people among the most remote [peoples] of the North are the most satisfied in their happy ignorance of their fate."[96]

In the *relazione*, servility was a particular Muscovite feature that, along with the tsar's despotism, was primarily associated with Russian barbarity (those two characteristics often appeared together). Even before Vimina's thorough preparation for the trip to Muscovy, in the dispatches written in the Polish court, he called Muscovite conduct during ceremonies the "barbarous splendor." In Vimina's view, the Russian diplomats he saw in Warsaw were "servile," and "did not show much appreciation of dignity if [dignity] did not come along with utility." In the same dispatch he noticed with a distinct tone of disapproval Muscovite's "religious zeal" in uttering the tsar's titles.[97]

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[94] Vimina, "Relazione," 290, 294, 295.

[95] John Milton, *A Brief History of Moscovia and of Other Less-Known Countries Lying Eastward of Russia as Far as Cathay Gather'd from the Writings of Several Eye-Witnesses*, (London, 1682) https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A50886.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext

[96] Vimina, "Relazione," 291.

[97] Lettera di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650, published in Caccamo, 269.

Vimina found confirmation of his earlier observations in Possevino's and Herberstein's works.[98] Sigismund Herberstein presented Muscovy as a despotic state in which people were completely deprived of freedom. The Habsburg diplomat emphasized limitless power of the tsar "who could arbitrary dispose of everyone's life and possessions." [99] The papal legate Antonio Possevino, was less hostile to Muscovy since he hoped the Orthodox church would join other Christians under the Pope's hand. Just like Herberstein and later Vimina, Possevino planned to persuade the tsar into the alliance against the Ottomans. He ascribed Muscovite servility to the cruelty and enormous power of the tsar, pointing out that deep in their souls Russians were aware that their slavish behavior was wrong.[100]

Vimina mentioned that he completely agreed with both Herberstein's and Possevino's interpretation of political organization of Muscovy and the status of the tsar's subjects. The Venetian claimed that Muscovites saw their ruler as a divine being, who knew everything and had the authority to do with his subjects whatever he wanted.[101] Olearius' account, published almost simultaneously with Vimina's *relazione,* shared similar ideas placing Muscovites among other barbarians and claiming that the tsar treated them as slaves.[102] Yet, Olearius' work could hardly be familiar to Vimina, because it was first issued in Italian only in 1658, that is, two years after the Venetian mission to Muscovy.[103]

All these early modern accounts, including Vimina's one associated Russian barbarity with the tsar's despotism and his subjects' slavishness. That, according to Marshall Poe, was one of the main criteria for the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Western observers that distinguished Muscovy from the rest of Europe.[104] Europeans tended to juxtapose their own

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[98] Sigismund Herberstein visited Muscovy as a Habsburg diplomat two times, in 1517 and 1526-1527, but his *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentari*i was published only in 1549; Antonio Possevino was a papal legate sent to the tsar in 1581 to look for a possibility of including an anti-Ottoman alliance. See Hennings, 39-40.

[99] Sigismund Herberstein, *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentari*i (1557): 16.

[100] Possevino, *Moscovia*, 11.

[101] Vimina, "Relazione," 317.

[102] Poe, *People Born to Slavery*, 71, 73-74.

[103] Villani, "Ambasciatori Russi," 45.

[104] Poe, *People Born to Slavery*, 4, 60.

idealized governments and Muscovite tyranny. Those accounts often underlined that while European rulers respected law and custom, the tsar's power was not restricted by anything but his own will. European nobles were presented as proud people aware of ancient lineage, whereas Muscovite elites were just servants holding the lowest status of slaves in relation to the tsar.[105]

The reason for which Vimina, along with many other European observers, associated Russian lack of political freedom with barbarity was the notion of liberty that informed the humanist political worldview. Freedom was seen as a natural God-given gift shared by all people. In the case of republics such as the Venetian one, the people explicitly gave a portion of their freedom to the government, and thus, were specifically sensitive to the matter of tyranny. Poe argues, that a significant part of such ideology was the belief that freedom was given to people to ensure their self-perfection. Therefore, by taking away this divine gift, Russian tsars deprived their subjects from a chance of salvation.[106]

Positioning Muscovy on the scale of civilization-barbarity in Vimina's notes is quite contradictory. On the one hand, the Venetian describes Muscovy as a part of Northern Europe, thus including it in the European realm, at least geographically. On the other hand, he distinguishes the Tsardom primarily by emphasizing the tyrannical character of Muscovy's government and servile nature of Muscovite people. The shared European idea of freedom as an inherent human property made him draw parallels between the lack of freedom and barbarity. It is worth mentioning that, in Vimina's writing, tyranny or slavishness and, thus, barbarity was not associated with belonging to "the East." Political organization was not the only criteria that Vimina and other Italians used to determine the Muscovites' place in relation to themselves and within the 'society of princes.'

[105] Ibid, 81.
[106] Ibid, 216-217.

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2.3. Ethnographic Notes on Muscovites: Interpretation of Ambassadorial Behavior and Appearance

Muscovites were a proper curiosity for Italians who had never met a Russian in person. Italian sources are generous in describing the peculiarities of Russian public appearance and behavior. As mentioned above, Vimina's first encounter with the Russian tsar's ambassadors took place at the Polish court where he resided as a representative of Venice. In 1650, in a letter to his supervisor Niccolo Sagredo, Vimina left an extensive description of the tsar's diplomats:

> They are rough men but not clumsy. Suspicion makes them cautious, mistrust prudent. They hardly allow themselves to be circumvented in the shop because the fear of being deceived makes them mature in the discourses and considered in deliberations. They express their proposal without adornment of concepts and do not know how to make use of circumscriptions. Since their roughness was not trained to be cautious by limiting negative [words in their speeches], one of the ambassadors said to the starosta [a head of local self-government in Poland] Rozanski that he was lying. The starosta replied that if he had not respected his position and the ius of peoples, he would have mistreated him with his fists, but the ambassador did not make any reply.[107]

In this passage, Vimina emphasized Muscovite straightforwardness and roughness. He explained the lack of "manners" or inability to make their speeches less "negative" by the lack of proper training in more "cultivated" conversation. An interesting parallel can be made between Vimina's early dispatch and the note of Leonardo Villeré, a member of Angelo Correr's retinue, which accompanied Chemodanov in Venice. Villeré compared Muscovites with Ancient Romans, saying that they were "a bit barbarous" just like "Ancient Romans who used to blame the delights of Greeks because they had not practiced them yet."[108]

Both observers noticed the Muscovite ambassador's lack of knowledge about "manners" and "delights" of presumably more cultivated nations. Good manners were of importance for the Italian elites of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. Jeroen Duindam pointed out the significant role of comportment in diplomatic ceremonies and European courtly culture

[107] Lettera di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650, published in Caccamo, 269.
[108] Quoted in Di Salvo, *Italia, Russia e mondo slavo*, 105.

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in general.[109] The courts of Italy were celebrated for their luxury and refinement. Italian courtiers and artists to a great extent defined the atmosphere in other European courts of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries.[110] The famous Renaissance treaties *Il Cortegiano* was an influential compendium on good manners widely used in the early modern period.[111]

Paula Findlen underlines that certain norms of conduct, humanist education, and curiosity about the world constituted the general image of a "civil space's" member.[112] New norms of demeanor were used by the nobility to assert its power and confirm its position as a social elite.[113] In order to be considered a part of elitist circles, Italians had to demonstrate certain behavior and follow social norms established in the humanist circles.[114] Giovanni della Casa, who wrote a book of manners in 1558, widely known in Italian lands, noted: "Knowing how to be gracious and pleasant in one's habits and manner is a very useful thing to whomever decides to live in cities and among men, rather than in desert wastes or hermit's cells."[115] Those were the rules of conduct that united elites and distinguished them from other less 'educated' and 'civil' people of their own society.

An unusual interpretation of the Muscovite's lack of manners can be found in the Venetian merchant Armano's notes. He described Muscovites in the following words:

> I don't seem to discern in these characters great ostentation of their position, neither do I see many courteous traits, or perspicacity of ingenuity, but rather sincerity of the people who live beyond the Alps [sincerità oltramontana]. God would want that all the people of these times were dressed in [such sincerity].[116]

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[109] Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power. Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam University Press, 1995, 104.

[110] Ibid, 160-161.

[111] More about it: Stephen Kolsky, Making and breaking the rules: Castiglione's Cortegiano, Renaissance Studies Vol. 11 No. 4. 358-380.

[112] See *A History of Private Life III. Passions of the Renaissance*, eds. Philippe Aries, Georges Duby (Belknap Press, 1989), 195.

[113] Duindam, *Myths of Power*, 179.

[114] Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (University of California Press, 1994), 99-102, 104.

[115] Quoted in Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, 103.

[116] Quoted in Di Salvo, *Italia, Russia e mondo slavo*, 109.

Rather than criticizing Muscovites for their 'lack of manners' (or barbarity), Armano seemed to appreciate and praise some other characteristics apparently lost by his 'civilized' compatriots. The idea of civilized society's corruption as opposed to the natural state of less developed peoples was quite widespread already from the sixteenth century.[117] Interestingly, Armano almost followed Renaissance ideas of separating the world into South and North by choosing the Alps as a dividing line between civilization and barbarity. Though the merchant ascribed a positive meaning to certain specifics of Muscovite behavior, he still saw Russians as different from what he considered more civil.[118]

The prevailing attitude towards Muscovite inability to behave themselves in a civil manner, however, was critical and most of all: ironic. Florentine and then Venetian sources show similar condescension while describing Muscovites' table manners. The anonymous Venetian narrated:

> They eat soup with their hands making a spoon out of their palm and scooping it in the mouth. But when informed, take it [soup] with a hand and then put it on spoon and eat. They eat meat putting huge chunks in mouth, but, similarly, informed, they tear it in pieces, put on the fork and eat.[119]

The Florentine witness also found Muscovite table manners quite "amusing." He also registered that Muscovites made much dirtiness at the table. For instance, they could take pieces of food out of their mouth and put them back on the plate.[120] Along with other civil norms of comportment, table manners were an important instrument to render visible social relations among the diners.[121] The absence of those manners demonstrated the lack of civility in Muscovite representatives and contributed to their barbarous image.

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[117] Ter Ellingston, The Myth of the Noble Savage (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: of California Press, 2001), 17-18.

[118] His position seems close to Montaigne's views and the eighteenth-century idea of Noble Savage. See A.V. Fedin, "Ideia "Blagorodnogo Dikaria" v Iezuitskikh Reliatsiikh" XVII v.," Obrazy Drugogo (2012).

[119] Relazione Vera, 115.

[120] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 20-21.

[121] *A History of Private Life III*, 183-184.

Ethnographic notes about Muscovites registered the juiciest details of Muscovite characters and habits. Antonio Serristori, one of the first people who came in contact with Chemodanov's delegation, noticed that the ambassadors were quite stingy. They presented him sables of rather bad quality which the governor interpreted as a sign of greed.[122] According to the Livornese governor, Chemodanov tried to avoid giving tips and once, when some musicians managed to get a bit of money from him with a ruse, he remained gloomy for the rest of the evening.[123]

Serristori also noticed that the leaders of the mission were exceptionally frivolous with their servants and at the same time thought that they were superior people and behaved arrogantly.[124] It is worth mentioning that he was not the first person who ascribed such characteristic to Muscovites. Many other contemporary accounts described Russians as "very arrogant" people.[125] The same Vimina wrote that Russian nobility was full of quite haughty ostentation.[126] According to Poe, the idea of Russian arrogance was a common opinion shared by many sixteenth and seventeenth century authors.[127] This feature of character was surprisingly one of the characteristic ascribed to savages as their main flaw in ethnographic notes about exotic peoples.[128] Serristori, however, added that though in public ambassadors behaved arrogantly, at home they were so unceremonious with their servants that could even eat with them at one table or sleep on the same mattress altogether.[129] Such seemingly amiable characteristic also contributed to the less civil image of Muscovites, since during the early

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[122] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva,* 3-4
[123] *Ibid.,* 20.
[124] *Ibid.,* 5.
[125] Poe, *People Born to Slavery,* 49.
[126] Vimina, "Relazione," 296.
[127] Poe, *People Born to Slavery*, 49.
[128] A.V. Fedin, "Ideia "Blagorodnogo Dikaria" v Iezuitskikh Reliatsiikh" XVII v.," *Obrazy Drugogo* (2012), 78.
[129] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 8.

modern period elites attempted to separate themselves from the lower classes of society with their raffinate manners and demeanor.[130]

Speaking about the relationships with inferiors, Serristori also described how the ambassadors without any hesitation publicly scolded and beat members of their retinue, primarily because those constantly got drunk and dishonored the mission of the tsar's representatives. One of the servants was beaten up so harshly that that he ran away from such a "barbarous slavery" and nobody could find him ever since. Another member of the retinue, the priest the diplomats took with themselves from Muscovy [papasso] drank so much that he started to fight with other Russian servants. The ambassadors had to tie him to a bedpost with their own hands and did not set him free until the next day.[131] A couple of embassies' servants were ill because of the "most solemn beating" that the first ambassador gave them "with a log and with his own hands" for getting drunk.[132] Timpofei Toporovskii, who was called "the Polish interpreter" in Florentine sources, once also got into troubles with Chemodanov while trying to protect a servant the diplomat wanted to punish. Chemodanov spit in the interpreter's face which, according to Serristori, was a "courtesy" that the tsar's representative "used with everyone who told him something that he did not like." Then the first ambassador made Toporovskii kiss his feet and when the translator leaned down to obey the order, Chemodanov kicked him with such a "delicacy" that the man injured his head and remained in bed for several days afterwards.[133] In the tone of these observation one can notice the note of quite typical for many Italian descriptions irony based on fictitious ideas about real encounters. Such entertaining manner of narrating about Muscovites was employed to make those ethnographic notes attractive to the reader. On the other hand, those observations of humiliating punishments

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[130] *A History of Private Life III*, 190.
[131] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 11-12.
[132] Ibid., 17.
[133] Ibid., 27.

the first ambassador gave to his servants corresponded to the discourse of Muscovite inherited servility.

Another trait that Serristori and anonymous Venetian author both noticed was Muscovites' lasciviousness. Florentine documents assumed that Chemodanov talked only about women and gave most Florentine ladies he met quite prurient looks. Serristori believed that once the ambassador even pretended that he had pain in his hand just because he wanted to see the wife of a doctor who he had noticed earlier in one of the dinners with local nobility.[134] The governor of Livorno also wrote that Muscovites somehow brought from their country an idea that in Italy servants were women. The ambassadors even expressed their surprise with the fact that those women still had not come to serve them at the table and for other needs.[135] The author of Venetian relazione, who exaggerated 'barbarous' features of Muscovites to such extent that they became almost grotesque, also dedicated much time to describing their lecherous behavior.[136]

Both Venetian and Florentine authors pointed out Muscovite grubbiness. According to those observations, Russian guests changed their clothes only once in forty days, relived themselves whenever they liked and did not care much about hygiene in general.[137] Serristori mentioned that Muscovite love for caviar caused a lingering smell that they brought with themselves whenever they were going. He ironically noted that if after the ambassadors spent just three hours in his house he had to use perfumes to clean the rooms from this odor, then Longland's house where Muscovites stayed for over a month might have needed a proper quarantine.[138]

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[134] Ibid., 9.
[135] Ibid., 16.
[136] Relazione Vera, 113-114.
[137] Ibid., 113; *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 5.
[138] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 13.

Such interpretation of Muscovite character, manners, and habits in most ethnographic notes was associated with barbarity or at least the lack of civilized culture. The main features of Muscovy presented by Italian observers included arrogance, stinginess, lasciviousness, drunkenness, and dirtiness. Those negative characteristic surprisingly partially united images of Russians with contemporary descriptions of the New world's inhabitants in Jesuit relations.[139] Much of the accounts of Russia seemed to follow a very similar template. In most cases the image of barbarians not familiar with civil manners was interpreted as something entertaining for the reading audience. Among selected notes, only Armano's passage seemed to find something positive in the Muscovite character almost juxtaposing corrupted Europeans to the sincere guests from the North. Despite the prevailing idea of Muscovites as a relatively 'less civil' people, several Italian observers noticed something else behind this humanist interpretation of Russian public demeanor, but those notes will be discussed in the following chapter.

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[139] In particular arrogance, drunkenness, and in some way shamelessness and the lack of decency. In Annie Jacob, "Civilisation/Sauvagerie. Le Sauvage américain et l'idée de civilisation," *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, 15(1) (1991), 29.

Figure II. 3. The portrait of Ivan Chemodanov by Justus Sustermans (1657)

The last aspect that is important to consider is a physical appearance of Russian diplomats. Appearance and, in particular, costumes, played an important role in what image Muscovites impressed on their hosts. In the early modern world, dress could be a tool of cultural exchange and tell about its owner as much as their behavior or manners.[140] Italian sources describe Muscovite appearance with great interest. Serristori even hired a certain artist who could capture the Muscovite ambassador's image for the duke and elaborated on the description of the Russian gowns. Almost immediately he noticed the lavishness of Muscovites garments assuming that Muscovite ambassadors might have dressed up specifically to show that they can afford such rich clothing. Serristori reported that attending a ball the Muscovite diplomats "came richly dressed but with costumes that were completely different from the ones described

[140] Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up. Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

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earlier, maybe [the diplomats] flaunt the quantity of dresses they had."[141] The Venetian *relazione* also mentioned the richness of Muscovite costumes. Its anonymous authored thoroughly described Muscovite ambassadors' gowns:

> They have clothes with a long skirt to the half of shin padded with silk like quilts, with laces of huge pearls, and lined with sable. With a silver belt buckled under the navel, with a knife on one side, with a sheath all [covered with] gems which seem like tiny posies… Another long dress almost to the ground of golden brocade lined with sable fur with laces of pearls and other gems of great value with a huge collar at the back all [covered with] gems and other precious things which reaches up to the middle of the shoulders like Polish [collars did].[142]

Placing Muscovites in the coordinates of diplomatic hierarchies would also require comparison with the gowns used by other nations. Describing the garments of people, they never met before Serristori and the anonymous author of the Venetian relazione naturally associated them to something familiar. Serristori noted that Muscovite nobles' costumes reminded him of Armenian ones, while ordinary people's clothes were more similar to the Polish costumes.[143] As the example above shows, the Venetian *relazione*, also mentioned some similarities between Polish and Muscovite garments.

Another interesting detail, that distinguished the Venetian relazione is that the anonymous author repeatedly compared Muscovites to the Ottomans. The ambassadors' beards, shoes, and the manner of sitting was described as "alla turca." Intentionally or not, such refrain created a very particular image of the Muscovites, who out of all possible peoples of the world were associated with Venice's main rival. Interestingly, at the same time, the *relazione*'s author reminded the reader of the "actual" attitude that Muscovites have towards Ottomans: When they are at home, they wear white cloths on their heads, and they very much remind of barn

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[141] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 11.
[142] Relazione Vera, 112.
[143] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 7, 5.

owls. They look quite funny: red-faced, the beard "alla turca," but their biggest enemy is the Turk.[144]

The *relazione* emphasized that Ottomans were Muscovites' enemies because it needed to remind the readers about the side Muscovites would take in the war against the Turk. More important is what the refrain "alla turca" does to the Muscovite image. As it was mentioned, the sources of the period still placed Muscovy among Northern European countries. However, the repeated comparison to the Ottomans implicitly Orientalized Muscovy. Connotations between Muscovy and the Ottoman empire existed in earlier and later European accounts.[145] Of course, just a couple of parallels in a singular source can lead to a far-fetched conclusion. Therefore, presumed orientalization of Muscovy in Venetian writings deserves further investigation.

2.4. Religion in Diplomatic Discourse: The Issue of Eastern Christianity

Confessional aspects played a crucial role in Venetian diplomatic rhetoric in negotiations with Muscovites. Hoping to win a strong ally in the war against the Ottomans, Venetians naturally emphasized their religious unity. At the same time, Alberto Vimina, as many other Italians who came in contact with Muscovites, was aware of differences between the Catholic and the "Greek" faiths. This simultaneous similarity, on the one hand, and fundamental difference, on the other, explained the contradictory, if utilitarian-pragmatic, position that Venetians took in relation to Muscovite confessional belonging.

Attempting to persuade the tsar to join the anti-Ottoman campaign, Venetians deployed the rhetoric of united Christendom. No confessional controversies within the Christian world

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[144] Relazione Vera, 115.

[145] For instance, in contemporary Abraham de Wicquefort, *The embassador and his functions*, trans. J. Digby (London, 1716). Also see Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 82, 190; V. N. Kozulin, "Zarozhdenie russko-frantsuzskikh otnoshenii i pervyie predstavleniia russkikh o Frantsii (konets XVI – nachalo XVII v.)," *Izvestiia AltGU*, no. 2 (90) (2016), 81. Hennings, "Textual ambassadors," 181.

were mentioned in the speeches and charters of the Serenissima agents referred to the tsar and his representatives. Rather, they were suppressed. In the conversation with Perfirief, Vimina said that he wanted to suggest to Aleksei Mikhailovich "the most glorious enterprise endorsed by the [whole] world." He continued claiming that if His Majesty will "devote himself to setting free those Christians who are the subjects of the lord of the Turks" he will broaden "the borders of the Muscovite empire, planting in those barbarous countries the banner of the faith of Christ" and giving fellow-Christians the opportunity to worship true God and his saints.[146] Venetians repeated that the whole of Christendom would praise and glorify the tsar if he freed the Balkan Christians from the Muslim yoke when they raised the topic of the anti-Ottoman alliance.[147]

This was diplomatic rhetoric. On the other hand, the texts written with the European reader in mind demonstrate a rather different view on Muscovite religion, invoking insurmountable confessional divides. Alberto Vimina, being a prelate of the Catholic church, paid significant attention to the religious beliefs of the Muscovites. Although there were no doubts the Russians were Christians, Vimina characterized them as a sect that misinterpreted and distorted the true faith. Already in 1650, he noted that Russians belonged to "a schismatic sect."[148] Seven years later Vimina wrote that Russian Christianity was of the Greek origin accentuating that the subjects of the tsar were "imbued with the precepts of the Greek religion disjoint from the Roman one, and this way they lived deceptively assured that [their religion] is the pure faith which they call ancient and intact."[149] As in so many other accounts, the topic of religion exhibits the same contradiction between different representations of Muscovy depending on different readerships and diplomatic interlocutors.

Continuing his contemplation on the differences between Latin and Greek churches, Vimina made a list of Muscovite religious practices and beliefs that separated Muscovite

[146] Vimina, "Relazione," 279.
[147] PDS, col. 905, 1072.
[148] Letter di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650, published in Caccamo, 269.
[149] Vimina, "Relazione," 297.

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believers from Catholics.[150] He especially pointed out that the Russians easily believed in things which his co-religionists would find absolutely ridiculous. In his description, Muscovites were "extremely simple and persistent in their credulity of the faith, miracles and all their dogmas to such extent that it could make us laugh."[151] Venetian relazione also emphasized simplicity of Russian understandings of religion. An anonymous author wrote that Muscovites washed their faces in every running stream to wash away the "stains of sin." They wanted their hosts to do the same end when Venetians refused the ambassadors scolded them for not being devoted Christians.[152] On the other hand, the document reports that Muscovites would get angry with their saints and punish them if the saints did not fulfil their prayers.[153]

Vimina connected the Muscovite faith's schismatic nature to the lack of education, especially theological one. In 1650 he characterized Muscovites as *"*full of heresies, rough and not learned."[154] This image persisted in his view on Muscovites and appeared later on in his *relazione*.[155] According to Max Okenfuss, compared to Europe, Muscovy was "a bookless wasteland." Unlike European visitors Muscovites did not associate religious piety with theological education. On the opposite, they condemned and rejected Latin education and learning as a source of heresy.[156] Only members of educated circles, often foreigners from other Slavic nations, such as Iurii Krizhanich, associated education with being civil and pious.[157] In that period, Krizhanich's position though shared by the like-minded courtiers, was not the most popular one.[158] Orthodox commoners mostly thought that they were the only true Christians.

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[150] Ibid., 300.
[151] Ibid., 298.
[152] Relazione Vera, 111.
[153] Ibid., 112.
[154] Vimina, "Relazione," 269.
[155] Ibid., 298.
[156] Max J. Okenfuss, *The Rise and Fall of Latin Humanist in Early Modern Russia* (Brill, 1995), 26, 31.
[157] Krizhanich was a Croatian Jesuit who served in the Muscovite court. He self-consciously wrote about Slavs and especially Muscovites "*we are called barbarians, savages, beasts, thieves, and cheaters only because of our illiteracy, laziness, and stupidity*." Quoted in Okenfuss, *The Rise and Fall*, 58.
[158] It is worth mentioning that along with criticizing fellow-Slavs for the lack of education Krizhanich also accused foreigners for spreading lies and misinterpretations about Muscovy. Apparently, people of his circles were aware and self-conscious about the Muscovite image created in the West. See Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe*, 42.

Peasants would run away from the contact with foreigners and would not let them enter the places of worship believing that they were "unclean."[159]

Chemodanov and his retinue did not seem to be frightened by Catholic churches and monasteries which they voluntary visited and admired. At the same time, Serristori pointed out that Muscovites tried their best in showing that they were devoted Christians.[160] The governor also noticed that Muscovites demonstrated ostentatious piety. He believed that in reality, the ambassadors were quite absent-minded during their religious ceremonies and looked at their priest as if he had the lowest status among them.[161] In the same passage, Serristori mentioned that Muscovites usually bow their knees in front of icons only when they prayed for their tsar comparing them with Greek who, according to the Florentine, did that all the time.[162]

Connotation between Muscovite Christianity and Greeks was crucial in interpretation of their confessional belonging. European observers somehow associated Greek confession with servility and incentive to please and praise authorities, one of those Muscovite features that allowed Vimina to conclude about their barbarity. The seventeenth-century Anglican theologian Henry Dodwell among the main characteristics of contemporary Greeks, mentioned "servility and flattery and barbarousness."[163] It is quite revealing that such different sources as Vimina's *relazione* and Dodwell's treatise, whose authors had different literary and educational backgrounds described two Orthodox Christian societies in similar terms, ascribing to both the characteristic of barbarity.

Another even more serious accusation against the Greek faith was the Greeks' hostility towards [Latin] Christianity. A Venetian diplomat Angelo Alessandri roughly in the same

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[159] Poe, *People Born to Slavery*, 46.
[160] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 11.
[161] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 16.
[162] Interestingly, the Russian translator of the document pointed out that Serristori was wrong and Greeks did not bow their knees or even did not bow down to the ground [zemnoi poklon], see ibid., 173. Those types of bows were rather widespread in the old Orthodox tradition before the Patriarch Nikon (1652-1666) who used Greek rites and books as an example for reforming the church.
[163] Quoted in Cornel Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns. The French and British in the Mediterranean, 1650-1750* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) 131

period, wrote that Greeks were the nation most hostile to Christendom.[164] Surprisingly, Vimina who wholeheartedly believed in the holy anti-Ottoman alliance with the tsar, also spoke of the Muscovites as if they were potential enemies of Western Christianity. In his *relazione*, he shared his opinion on Russian atrocities against Catholics during the war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Vimina said that "the perfidious practice against Poles devoted [to Christianity], to whom he [the tsar] promised free… exercise of religion does not have many examples, even among Turks." He then described how suddenly breaking his promise, the tsar ordered to destroy all catholic churches, sacred images and statues, and send those who refused to baptize in Orthodoxy to Siberia.[165] Vimina called those actions "the biggest barbarity" of the Muscovites.[166] In this passage, contrary to the praise of the tsar as the savior of Christians in the Ottoman realm, Russians and Ottomans were equalized in their barbarity! In this sense, barbarism was associated with belonging to a different "religion" and committing crimes against Latin Christianity. In Vimina's picture, the tsar seemed to be acting in an even more barbarous way than the old Venetian neighbor, the Sultan. It is indicative that in Russian sources, the word "barbarians" was used in the translation of a Venetian charter that asked if the tsar could start a military campaign against the Ottomans. This charter stated that given the fact the Sultan was occupied with the Cretan war; the timing was perfect for sending "virile and brave" Don Cossacks to fight against "barbarians for eradication of infidel Muslims [agari'an]."[167] This association between animosity towards Latin Christianity and barbarity repeatedly appeared in different Venetian sources.

The Venetians' ambivalent and sometimes even hostile attitude towards Muscovites based on religious views opens up an entirely new perspective when compared with what

[164] Piotr Chimel, *Rethinking the Concept of Antemurale: Venetian Diplomacy in respect of the Ottoman World (1573-1645)* (Roma: Accademia Polacca Roma, 2019), 120.
[165] Vimina, "Relazione," 324, 280.
[166] Ibid., 281.
[167] PDS, col. 1072.

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Ventians had to say about Persians, for example in the writings by the Serenissima's diplomats. The main similarity between Persians and Russians was that Venetians looked at both as possible allies in the struggle against the Sultan.[168] Persians were Muslims while and Muscovites belonged to a different 'confession' of Christianity.

Piotr Chimel points out an interesting juxtaposition in the description of Ottoman and Persian "nations."[169] The Venetian baili's diplomatic reports of the seventeenth century stated that, unlike the Sultan, the Shah was the monarch respected by his neighbors and subjects. Strikingly, Persians were portrayed as courteous [civil] people who valued nobility. According to Venetian documents, they in all possible ways were closer to the European world than to the sphere of Muslim culture. In terms of the political order, Venetian diplomats drew similarities between Persia and the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth or Holy Roman Empire where the power of the monarch was under the control of princes and magnates.[170] Muscovy did not deserve such flattering characteristics in Vimina's *relazione*, even though it was also considered a potential ally. On the contrary, as mentioned above, Vimina emphasized the despotic nature of Tsardom, the tsar's unlimited power and slavishness of his subjects.

Venetians were not consistent in constructing the discourse of Persians similarly with Europeans. In some cases, Persians were depicted as far different from the 'civilized' West, especially in the description of the Shah's atrocities against his subject or the policy of forceful conversion of Christians.[171] Such accusations unite Persians with the Muscovites in Vimina's *relazione*. The crimes against Christianity seemed an important reason for which people belonging to a different confession were characterized as barbarous.

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[168] Chimel, *Concept of Antemurale*, 117.
[169] Ibid., 113-114.
[170] This comparison again demonstrated that Venetian documents always fashioned republican order as a sign of superiority.
[171] Chimel, *Concept of Antemurale*, 115.

In regards to Venetian interpretation of Muscovite faith, the difference between diplomatic rhetoric and the way Russians were described in sources for European audience was striking and crucial for a better understanding of Russian-Venetian diplomacy. While in diplomatic exchanges the tsar was presented as one of Christendom's noble defenders that had a firm place in the Christian world, in other writings Muscovy appeared almost as a barbarous enemy of Christendom. What is striking is the fact that such contradictions emerged in the same diplomatic context or were even produced by the same author. This exclusion was based on several fundamental factors which correspond to the ones discussed above. The first one is the lack of civil education and a peculiar rite that Venetians interpreted as something that deserved a laughter. The second is servility and despotism as characteristics that implicitly united Greeks and Muscovites through the means of belonging to the same confession. Eventually, the feel of danger from the expansion of the Orthodox church made the Muscovites appear (or be intentionally presented as) an enemy of Latin Christianity. Though the tsar was a possible ally against Ottoman 'infidels,' and therefore a good (or useful) Christian, he was compared to the sultan in his hostility towards Catholics. This hostility to the Western church, separately from other cultural or political characteristics, was sometimes interpreted as a sign of barbarism. As examples above show, both Muscovites and Ottomans were called 'barbarous' in the discourses of Christian believers' suppression.

As this chapter has shown, there existed much information about Russia despite the fact that Russians and Venetians encountered each other as though for the first time or at least after a long period of silence. However, while there was a seeming wealth of knowledge available to Venetian diplomats like Vimina, Muscovy largely remained an "imperial unknown" to him and other representatives of the Italian-speaking world as far as the practice and business of diplomatic realities were concerned (as much as the Serenissima remained a "republican unknown" to the Muscovites). (Non-)knowledge produced about Muscovites functioned in a

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similar way as accounts of the inhabitants of the New World, at least there are striking parallels. The difference was that those texts (or public discourse) attempted to place the Tsardom in early modern diplomatic hierarchies by reproducing stereotypes and emphasizing the oriental, "other" nature of Muscovite culture, rather than domesticating it (as in case with colonial domains). Venetians as the representatives if contemporary trade empires employed the same methods of managing their knowledge about Muscovy: specification of ignorance, ignoring, and filling the voids with simplified and altered topoi.[172] That mechanisms in combination with actual negotiations created the discrepancy between the image of Muscovy as a Christian power, on the one hand, and a perfidious barbarous land (enemy of Latin Christians), on the other. The next chapter will demonstrate how Venetians and Muscovites gained what I term here "operative knowledge", that is, means of direct diplomatic exchange, and built communication with one another. I argue that the process of coping with ignorance evolved through complex ceremonial exchanges that took place within an intrinsically interconnected early modern 'society of princes.'

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[172] Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns*, 14-15, 218-219.

CHAPTER 3. DIPLOMACY IN PRACTICE: DIPLOMATIC AGENTS AND THE LANGUAGES OF VENETIAN-MUSCOVITE COMMUNICATION

3.1. The Foundations of Commensurability: Empire and Republic

When Russian officials of Pskov first met Vimina, they knew virtually nothing about the Venetian Republic. As I have mentioned earlier, the search for precedents in the archives of the *Posol'skii Prikaz* was also fruitless. There was not a single document about previous contacts with Venetians. In these circumstances, the tsar ordered to collect information from the envoy himself. Aleksei Luzhin, the *pristav*, who accompanied the embassy in Smolensk, had to interrogate the envoy. He had to find out what titles the duke or parliament who sent Vimina used in charters to other states. Another matter of the interest was the ceremonial procedure the Venetian diplomat was going to follow while conveying his message. The order requested to find out how the envoy was going to deliver the letter from the doge and whether he was authorized to speak on behalf of the doge of Venice.[173]

The intended questions mostly referred to the ceremonial procedures and the titles. Being concerned with his own image in the 'society of princes,' the tsar was trying to understand how exactly Muscovites should treat the envoy from a state they had barely heard about. For the Russian officials it seemed important to collect this information before the actual audience took place. The tsar wanted to prepare for the reception of the Venetian representative, and the best way to do so was to clarify the status of the Venetian state in advance.

Towards the end of the mission, Vimina was thoroughly investigated again, that time by Tomilo Perfiriev. The questions highlighted the points that Muscovites deemed necessary to

[173] PDS, col. 265.

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place Venice in their system of diplomatic coordinates. Perfiriev attempted to find the place of Venice in European hierarchies asking if the doge Francesco Molin called any prince his "friend" or "brother," if the Serenissima was a friend of the Emperor [of the Holy Roman Empire], and with whom Venice shared borders. Muscovites also wanted to know whether Francesco Molin was a king and what title other princes used to address him.[174]

The learning process continued when Chemodanov's mission was sent to Italy with a reciprocal visit. On the way to Venice Muscovites met a delegation led by the very Alberto Vimina who had visited the Tsardom a year earlier. During the journey, the ambassadors conversed with their Venetian "*pristav*" trying to learn more about the Venetian republic before the meeting with the doge.

First question Chemodanov and Posnikov asked Vimina regarded political order of Venice. The diplomats wanted to find out who the ruler of the Serenissima was and who the government's highest-ranking people were. The ambassadors must have already learned that Venice was a republic. Muscovites knew that the Republican system of central administration was different from the monarchical one, and that republican ruler shared power with elites, or *vladeteli*. Muscovites had been familiar with the term *vladetel* at least since 1654-1655: Russian documents from the mission of the English diplomat Prideaux, addressed Oliver Cromwell as *vladetel.'*[175] A term that meant "ruler," "viceroy," or "governor."[176] The ambassadorial scribes used it in one of the given meanings while mentioning a tsar's *proezzhaiia gramota* to "kings, princes, and *vladeteli*" who were supposed to let the mission cross their territories.[177] On the

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[174] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 33198, ibid, 279-280.
[175] Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe*, 126.
[176] *Slovar' Russkogo Iazyka XI-XVII*, ed. S. G. Barkhudarov, G.A. Bogatova, vol. 2 (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 210.
[177] PDS, col. 961.

other hand, when *stateiinayi spisok* mentioned "*vlateteli*" in regards to Venetian authorities it generally referred to patricians.[178]

Asking about the government's first people, diplomats wanted to know whom they were supposed to communicate with apart from the doge himself. Muscovites also made sure to clarify whether other state's envoys or ambassadors were in Venice during that period.[179] Knowing about those other representatives was important for Russian diplomats because they needed to update their knowledge on who were friends (and enemies) of the Republic.

Chemodanov's and Posnikov's questions show that Muscovites deemed it necessary to discern the Venetian place among other states and understand the nature of the Venetian political order. Those were two main issues which impacted on how Muscovite diplomats negotiated with Venetians. On the other hand, the same arguments constituted Russian rhetoric of self-representation. Aleksei Mikhailovich's diplomatic agents emphasized that the tsar enjoyed a rank equivalent to those of emperors and that Muscovy was a state respected and recognized by the highest-ranking powers of the world.

One of the means to both prove Muscovy's high status among other polities and Aleksei Mikhalovich's high status as a prince was to be precise with the ruler's titles. Muscovites were concerned with the titles to such an extent that even a single misplacement or omission in the lengthy listing of the tsar's possessions could be considered a good pretext for a war.[180] Already in the sixteenth century Herberstein, in his notes about Muscovites, mentioned that Russian rulers appropriated the title of emperor from their European counterparts. He explained that the original Russian term "tsar" meant "king," but Muscovites intentionally translated it as "emperor," because that title was the most prestigious in the West.[181] Muscovite rulers indeed

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[178] "Who are the current ruling *vlateteli* in Venice, who are the highest-ranking and who follows after those." In PDS, col. 1006.

[179] PDS, col. 1007.

[180] Vimina, Relazione, 324.

[181] Herberstein, *Commentarii*, 17-18. In Russian transaltion "*tsar'*," "*korol'*," "*imperator*" respectively. See *Zapiski o Moscovii*, transl.I. Anonimov (Saint-Petersburg, 1886).

understood their sovereignty on terms of empire. Richard D. Wortman points out that in Russian case such status implied several connotations: it signified a dominion of supreme power, presumed imperial expansion, and referred to a Christian empire with the tsar, the defender of Christendom[182]

Alberto Vimina who surely was familiar with Herberstein's treaties associated Muscovite imperial status with the tsar's possession of "deserted Siberian lands of which the Grand Duke titled himself the Emperor."[183] The envoy, who witnessed a Russian delegation of 1650 at the Polish court, already knew that Muscovites were "meticulously zealous" in protecting their "honor."[184] During his archival preparation for the Russian mission he found the title used in Venetian negotiations with Ivan IV which happened almost a century ago. Venetians did not have a chance to update themselves on this matter because official diplomatic exchanges had not taken place since the second half of the sixteenth century, and Vimina apparently hoped that the old title would work just fine.

Nevertheless, the Muscovites immediately confronted the problem of titles once they received the doge's charter from Vimina. Tomilo Perfiriev several times warned the envoy that Venetians should have addressed the tsar properly henceforth. [185] Philipp Longworth emphasizes that Vimina must have been exhausted and irritated by the Russian manner to cherish such formalities. The envoy sometimes seemed not to care much about presumably insignificant details of negotiations. In one of his reports he even mentioned that he agreed with a wording of a request written to the tsar on his behalf. In this document he allegedly asked for the audience with Aleksei Mikhailovich's ministers instead of the audience with the tsar.

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https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Записки_о_Московии_(Герберштейн;_Анонимов)/1866_(ВТ:Ё)/Записки_о_Московии

[182] Richard D. Wortman, Senarious of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the abdication of Nicolas II (Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-2.

[183] Vimina, *Relazione*, 297; The Grand Duke [Granduca] was another title of the Muscovite tsar widely used in Italian documents. (Letter di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650, 268; Scrittura di A. Vimina al Senato, 16 novembre 1654, 272; Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Pskov, 27 giugno 1655, n. 25, ibid., 275.)

[184] Lettera di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650, ibid., 268.

[185] PDS, col. 906; Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani. Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 33, ibid., 278.

Though he never made such a statement he consented to sign the request. According to Vimina, he agreed with the tsar's officials just to avoid changing the opinion of Muscovite "barbarous souls" on more essential matters of negotiations.[186]

On the other hand, Vimina, as all other European diplomats, knew how important 'formalities' could be when princely honor was at stake. He himself associated the tsar's attempts to maintain his "haughty dignity" with particular importance Aleksei Mikhailovich ascribed to the titles.[187] Moreover, Venetians also employed special means to establish their high status in diplomatic hierarchies. Their image at the diplomatic arena was quite specific. On the one hand, Venetians underlined their republican pride. While observing Russian-Polish disputes about titles in 1650 Vimina sympathized with the Poles. Several times he underlined that Polish officials refused Muscovites' requests because they "respected the law" or "did not want to subvert the ancient institutions of the Republic."[188] Republican freedom was a part of Venetian identity, a source of republican rhetoric that distinguish Venice among other European powers.[189] Vimina answering to Perfiriev on whether Venice was a kingdom replied that "the name of king was hateful in the Republic."[190]

On the other hand, the republican pride coexisted in Venetian diplomatic discourse with the claim for being treated as a kingdom.[191] This dual position can be explained by the nature of early modern diplomacy that in the absence of modern nation-states operated within a 'society of princes.' Mattias Schnettger points out, dominating political culture of early modern period was essentially monarchical. In order to fit in republics had to follow the rules of diplomatic representation shared by powerful European princes.[192] Having completely refused

[186] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani. Riga, 24gennaio1656, n. 34, ibid., 282.
[187] Vimina, *Relazione*, 324.
[188] Lettera di A. Vimina a N. Sagredo, Varsavia, 26 marzo 1650., ibid., 268-269.
[189] Cozzi, "Venedig, eine Fürstenrepublik?" in *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut G. Koenigsberger (Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag,1988), 53.
[190] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani. Riga, 24gennaio1656, n. 34, ibid., 279.
[191] Cozzi, "Venedig," 54.
[192] Mattias Schnettger, "Die Republik als König. Republikanisches Selbstverständnis und Souveränitätsstreben in der genuesischen Publizistik des 17. Jahrhunderts," *Majestas 8/9* (2000/2001), 176-177.

established in such a society, sovereign republics risked to be considered socially inferior.[193] That is why the Venetian representatives as much as they empathized their unique republican culture, had to employ the language of self-representation shared and recognized in a world of princes. In other words, Venetian diplomats balanced republicanism with the rhetoric of dynastic courts, trying to get benefits from combining features of both. Among the means that a republic could employ to bolster their status in monarchical culture was referring to their glorious history, the size of the territory and prestige of their citizens, and eventually the ownership of a kingdom.[194]

In Muscovy, the Venetian representative seemed to use the same rhetoric as his colleagues used in relations with European courts. In his conversation with Perfiriev, Vimina informed the Russian representative that Venice possessed the kingdoms of Candia and Dalmatia. He also claimed that the Republic had a numerous fleet that the "Turks" were afraid of and beaten by many times. Eventually, the envoy mentioned that the Republic was not only large, but also one of the richest and most well-known territories.[195] All these facts, carefully listed by Vimina, were supposed to ensure that Muscovites would see in the Serenissima a diplomatic partner as worthy as other kingdoms or even empire, a typical ceremonial strategy.

When Alberto Vimina arrived to Muscovy, he was nevertheless treated as a republican representative, in lines with Dutch diplomats. After an archival investigation, the officials of *Posol'skii Prikaz* sent the following message to the tsar:

> [The information] about the arrival of Venetian posly, poslanniki, and gontsy [Russian diplomatic ranks] was not found, and we, your kholopy [slaves], ordered to write [to your] about the arrival and departure of Dutch poslanniki as an example [for how to treat Venetians].[196]

[193] André J. Krischer, *"Ritual Practice and Textual Representation: Free Imperial Cities in the Society of Princes,"* in Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby, Joanna Craigwood (Oxford, 2019), 224-225.

[194] Schnettger, "Die Republik als König," 182, 185-186, 189.

[195] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Riga, 24 gennaio, 1656, n. 33, ibid., 280.

[196] PDS, col. 848.

The given passage that Russians recognized the difference between royal courts and sovereign republics and were sensitive to the European language of diplomatic self-fashioning.

Another example of the Muscovite attitude towards republics took place a couple of years before Vimina's mission. In 1654, the representative from '*vladetel'* Oliver Cromwell' demanded the same honors that the tsar paid to the former king of England. Cromwell's diplomat claimed that though England became a republic, Spanish, French, and Portuguese kings and the Venetian Republic honored his ruler as if he was a king. The Muscovite reply was that "Venetian and Dutch *vladeteli* were not an example for his Majesty the tsar."[197] In this response, Venetians and Dutch were again equalized as two republics. At the same time, Muscovite representatives showed that the opinion of a republic was less important for Aleksei Mikhailovich than the one of a kingdom.

Notwithstanding Muscovite attitudes towards republics, in negotiations with the Serenissima, the tsar's diplomats persisted on being treated as the representatives of a universal power. Just like Venetians, Muscovites attempted to use all the possible means to bolster their status and occupy the most favorable position in the 'society of princes.' Along with many other necessary things, the tsar wanted to know how the doge addresses other princes. Luzhin wrote down the translation of the doge's greetings in charters to the Holy Roman Emperor: "To the Most Mighty and the Greatest Ferdinand III, the Christian Emperor and the Owner of many other lands."[198] Such a reference to Ferdinand III's titles was not there by chance. It is a reminder that Muscovites constantly checked what position in these negotiations they held in respect to other powers. While scolding Vimina for the omission of the tsar's titles, Perfiriev informed the Venetian that the "Christian Emperor, Turkish Sultan, and Persian Shah and other princes, tsars, and kings" wrote Aleksei Mikhailovich's title and name correctly and entirely.[199]

[197] S.M. Soloviev, Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen, T. 12. (1862) http://az.lib.ru/s/solowxew_sergej_mihajlowich/text_1120.shtml)

[198] Ibid., 889-890.

[199] PDS, col. 924-925.

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The self-comparison with other powers demonstrates how Muscovites imagined contemporary hierarchies of power and what place they reserved for themselves. When Chemodanov and Posnikov resided in Venice they also mentioned the sultan and the shah as important references while informing Venetians that the tsar's diplomats were always as greatly honored at the Ottoman and Safavid courts.[200] The tsar seemed to find himself at the same level as not only the Holy Roman Emperor but also Muslim rulers who claimed imperial recognition. The discrepancy in Muscovite diplomatic rhetoric, similar to the Venetian balancing between being honored as a republic and a kingdom, manifests itself when the negotiations turn to the anti-Ottoman alliance. There came to the fore the Muscovite pretensions for recognition as the only true Orthodox power led by the defender of all Eastern Christianity. Every time when Venetians asked about possible alliance against the Ottomans the ambassadors replied that their ruler was always ready to liberate the Christians who suffered under the Muslim yoke.[201]

This image of a Christian defender was two-fold. On the one hand, it ensured the Muscovite hegemony to be the only universal Orthodox empire. On the other, Christianity, though in its Greek form, was the liaison that united Muscovy with Europe. Religious rhetoric was a tool employed by both Muscovites and Venetians to pursue their interests and negotiate their status. Muscovite imperial notions consisted of at least two semantic layers. First, Muscovy represented itself a world empire together with other great powers, both Christian and Muslim. At that level religion served status and sovereign dignity as a means to an end. However, at another level, Muscovy was represented and represented itself as a part of the Christian community. In this context, the tsar's connection with other Christian rulers and his readiness to unite against the infidels was paramount, and confessional belonging was an end in itself.

[200] PDS, col. 1032-1033, 1038.
[201] Ibid., 1051, 1066.

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The previous chapters have shown that Venetian ethnographic accounts compared Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire for a reason quite opposite from the Russian representatives' logic. On the one hand, they separated the tsar from the rest of Europe while associating him with the sultan, while on the other Venetians adjusted such rigid belief system according to their diplomatic objectives. In negotiations about anti-Ottoman alliance, they referred to Muscovite tsar's image of a pious ruler and protector of Christendom. In other words, both Venetians and Muscovites were quite flexible in their diplomatic rhetoric and were ready to employ seemingly contradicting arguments if they seemed to be more suitable for a concrete moment.

3.2. The Language of the Ceremony

As I have mentioned earlier, Vimina fashioned Muscovites' behavior in such a way that they seemed to be unnecessarily obsessed with the tsar's titles and other diplomatic formalities. In fact, Europeans were as concerned about ceremonial procedures as their Russian counterparts. The fights over precedence among European ambassadors were not unusual. These disputes did not only concern the representatives of princely courts. Republican diplomats, including Venetians, argued for their precedence with the same eagerness. Abraham de Wicquefort mentioned a Venetian ambassador in London who, in 1641, strived to get his carriage before the Dutch one, which is particularly striking in the light of the Russian court's Venetian-Dutch comparisons.[202] Another contemporary Venetian diplomat, in his reports to the Senate, emphasized his success in receiving the same honors as the representatives of "other crowns'" had.[203]

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[202] Abraham de Wicquefort, *The embassador and his functions*, trans. J. Digby (London, 1716), 145.
[203] William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 52, no. 3 (1980), 457.

Jeroen Duindam emphasizes that European culture of courts appeared as a catalogue of states and princedoms ranked in a precise order.[204] On the other hand, diplomacy served to ensure and bolster the status of ruling dynasties and republics in the eyes of princes. In these circumstances, the participants of diplomatic exchanges constantly thought of how to defend the honor of their princes. Rank in diplomatic hierarchies went hand in hand with the ritual.[205] As Jan Hennings and others point out, ritual and bodily presence was an inherent part of the early modern political culture. Diplomatic ceremonies served as a symbolic language that governed communication between absent rulers.[206] During official ceremonies, every gesture and word could be important because the diplomat represented their state and, more importantly, their prince. A single mistake could be interpreted as a lack of respect towards the ruler and thus jeopardize their prestige. Therefore, early modern diplomats attempted to agree upon the ceremonies beforehand to avoid any possibility of sending a wrong message to the other party.[207] All these factors considered, for Venetians and Muscovites ceremonies were of a great importance, and they both needed to adjust to unfamiliar language of diplomatic representation.

An essential step in ambassadorial reception was the welcome by local towns and cities. Alejandra B. Osorio emphasizes that urban spaces served for endorsement of ruler's legitimacy in imperial peripheries.[208] In a quite similar way, urban ceremonies were employed by negotiating parties in diplomatic encounters. In both Muscovy and Italian lands foreign diplomats were solemnly welcomed in all places they passed. Aleksei Mikhailovich made sure to send his instructions on this matter to every city the Venetian envoy was going to visit. Each

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[204] Duindam, [shortened title instead of the year?] 1997, 103-104.
[205] Charlotte Backerra, Peter Edwards. "Introduction: Rank and Ritual in the Early Modern Court," *The Court Historian*, 26:1 (2021), 1-10.
[206] Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe*, *Russia and Courtly Europe*, 3, 98.
[207] Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial," 466.
[208] Alejandra B. Osorio, "Courtly Ceremonies and a Cultural Urban Geography of Power in the Habsburg Spanish Empire," in *Cities and the Circulation of Culture in the Atlantic World: From the Early Modern to Modernism*, ed. L. von Morze (Palgrave, 2017), 38-39.

voivode had to order civilians and military people to dress up in clean clothes and stay holding rifles so it was *"*crowded and orderly everywhere, as the ambassadorial custom requires.*"*[209] Similarly, while the Muscovite embassy was passing by the island of Pellestrina on the way to Venice, local men, women, and children were greeting the ships shouting "viva." The Serenissima also ordered to ring the bells in all monasteries and towns along the embassy's way to honor the ambassadors. When the Muscovites finally arrived in Venice on January 11, Angelo Correr, a distinguished diplomat and a member of the Council of Ten, with a retinue of forty people, had already been waiting for the delegation. Three hundred beautifully decorated gondolas were prepared to escort Muscovites through the Venetian canals to their accommodation. Cannons were shooting in the harbor of Venice, greeting the embassy.[210]

In the Russian and Venetian cases, the ceremony of ambassadorial reception was more than just a way to honor a foreign embassy. The lavish welcoming was supposed to impress the visiting party and to demonstrate the hosts' wealth and ability to maintain good order in their domains. It also served as a means of self-fashioning in the eyes of other polities' representatives who might have witnessed the splendor of ambassadorial reception.[211] Such carefully choreographed welcoming was not unique for these particular relations. In early modern diplomacy, urban spaces were a stage from which the participants of princely society communicated their political and social claims through the ceremonial means.

Another element of the foreign embassies' welcoming was demonstration of the receiving side's hospitability. Along with gifts and solemn greetings hospitability was an important means of showing respect to the counterpart's ruler and demonstrate the host's status and power.[212] As I mentioned earlier, while visiting Muscovy, foreign ambassadors were

[209] PDS, col. 836.
[210] PDS, col. 1015-1017.
[211] André J. Krischer, *"*Ritual Practice," 234.
[212] Maria Salomon Arel, "Hospitality at the Hands of the Muscovite Tsar: The Welcoming of Foreign Envoys in Early Modern Russia," *The Court Historian*, 21:1, (2016), 24.

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provided with food, money, and accommodation. For Chemodanov and Posnikov expected the same hospitability from their hosts and they were clearly discontent with Venetian reluctance to show it. The ambassadors several times asked Livorno's authorities when the doge would start to cover the mission's travel expenses. When Muscovites learned that Livorno was not a part of the Venetian domain, they expressed their surprise that the Florentine duke Ferdinando II Medici (1610-1670) did not want to provide them with everything at his expense.[213] Notwithstanding the Muscovite discontent, Venetians did not offer Chemodanov and Posnikov any financial assistance during their travels through Italy. The reason for misunderstanding was caused by the difference in understanding of hospitability in Muscovite and European diplomatic tradition. The tsar generously covered foreign representatives' travel expenses because hospitability was a source of royal pride. Despite poor accommodation, Vimina was provided with all sorts of supplies during the whole journey in Russia.[214] Western rulers, on the other hand, offered supplies only for a limited number of days before and after audience at the court.[215]

When Muscovites reached the borders of the Venetian domain, Vimina expressed his eagerness to show the Muscovite guests the same hospitality he enjoyed in Russia. Chemodanov was well informed about the conditions of Vimina's dwellings and the hardships he faced being aimlessly sent from one Russian city to another. The ambassadors started to apologize for the insufficient supplies and inconveniences the diplomat experienced in Muscovy, saying that the tsar was busy with the Polish campaign and the lands visited by the Venetian envoy were devastated by the war. Vimina responded that he was nonetheless delighted with his reception in Muscovite domain.[216] Only when Muscovites arrived in Venice their hosts finally showed

[213] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva,* 7, 9.
[214] PDS, col. 814.
[215] Arel, "Hospitality," 25-26.
[216] PDS, col. 1003-1004.

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them expected hospitability. Chemodanov and Posnikov were accommodated in a beautiful Palazzo Grimani, and received some money for their expenses.[217]

Figure III. 4. Palazzo Grimani di San Luca

The representation of rulers through their diplomats could convey the message of their majesty and power. This occurred mainly during ambassadorial receptions. During both missions, Venetian and Muscovite representatives faced problems trying to get an official audience. Those issues were partially caused by unfamiliarity with the counterpart's diplomatic culture and the lack of understanding of what to expect in the course of negotiations. Both parties had to cope with the challenges employing their own methods.

Vimina hoped to convey the doge's letter directly to the tsar, but first Aleksei Mikhailovich was on his military campaign in Poland then the Venetian envoy fell seriously ill. After months of aimlessly travelling from one border town to another and waiting to meet Aleksei Mikhailovich, Vimina was informed that he could not see the tsar. In lieu of the official audience he was offered to communicate the doge's message in writing to which Vimina responded that such procedure was not a "custom" in the Venetian state. Then Vimina was asked if he could convey the letters of credence and the message from the Republic to the vice chancellor Tomilo Perfiriev. The envoy agreed and the improvised ceremony took place at the

[217] Di Salvo, "La missione di I Cemodanov a Venezia," 110, 116.

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end of November in Vimina's dwelling in Smolensk.[218] During that meeting, Vimina conversed with Perfiriev and was interrogated by him. He also handed in the doge's letter and a piece of golden cloth, immediately after sent as a present to the Grand Duchess.

Upon arrival to Venice, Muscovite embassy also faced a problem in regards to the first audience with the new doge Bertuccio Valier (1656-1658). January 12, the ambassadors were informed that the doge was suffering from gout and could not be present at the reception ceremony. Instead, they were offered to present the letters from the tsar to a high-ranking patrician.[219] Chemodanov, however, driven by Muscovite diplomatic requirements, rejected this option. Having heard about the doge's disease and the idea of attending the audience with just a *vladetel'* who would sit in the doge's place, Chemodanov firmly stated that such ceremony was not possible.[220] Vimina attempted to explain to the Muscovite ambassadors that the doge, in fact, did not know anything or could not undertake any action concerning the affairs communicated in the tsar's letter. He assured the diplomats that those affairs were to be decided by the *vladeteli* of the state. To such a claim, Chemodanov responded:

> If your prince does not do anything, and you are the actual rulers of the state, you should have written your names in the letter to His Majesty the Tsar, but in that letter, there is only the name of your prince.[221]

The name of the doge in the Venetian charter was the Russian ambassadors' main argument to insist on their audience with the official ruler of the Venetian Republic. The source reflects another interesting detail suggesting that by changing the order of the reception ceremony, Venetians attempted to technically equalize Chemodanov's mission and Vimina's one. The possible proof of such hypothesis could be the fact that Vimina pointed out that when he was in Muscovy he did not see "the tsar's eyes."[222] He meant that he did not make any

[218] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani. Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 33, published in Caccamo, 278.
[219] PDS, col. 1028.
[220] Ibid., col. 1022.
[221] Ibid., col. 1022.
[222] Ibid., col. 1023.

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conflict out of that situation and expected the Muscovites to act in the same way, based on simple reciprocity. However, the ambassadors who apparently knew the details of Vimina's mission replied that the Venetian himself informed the tsar that he was sick and could not join the audience. Probably, they referred to the same document that Vimina signed to avoid the conflict and subsequent altering Muscovite "barbarous souls."[223]

While the ambassadors were waiting for Valier's recovery, Vimina attempted to determine how exactly the ambassadors would present themselves at the audience and what message they were going to convey. The Venetian diplomatic agent again showed his impatience in trying to reveal the tsar's response to Venetian requests. The argumentation the Muscovite ambassadors presumably employed in reply to Vimina was quite astonishing:

> We are surprised with what you are saying. Ambassadors and envoys from all neighboring states and German lands visit your duke's, and honorable vladedeli's the most glorious and the wisest city. (People) come (here) for science and to learn every wise doctrine. And you now give us such speeches and ask us tempting.[224]

In this passage, Muscovites lectured Vimina that he embarrassed such a great city with his lack of knowledge about diplomatic customs. The people who did not know almost anything about the Venetian state a year ago now tried to speak with its representative in the terms he could understand. This phrase demonstrates recognition of Venetian fame as a center of science and a significant node of diplomatic exchanges. Vimina's reply to such ardent speech was that he never wanted to tempt the ambassadors. His only intention was to make sure that the tsar's name received all the honors while the Republics' representatives did not embarrass themselves.

Though Muscovites were reluctant to share the details of the rites they were going to follow during the audience, Chemodanov and Posnikov also attempted to find out how

[223] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani. Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 34, ibid., 282.
[224] PDS, col. 1031.

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Venetians would "honor them." Their scribe explained that this information was necessary to avoid any possible embarrassment [bezchestiie].[225] These passages demonstrate that both Venetians and Muscovites attempted to prepare themselves for ceremonies by collecting information about their counterpart's diplomatic traditions. Another interesting detail is that the diplomats explicitly referred to other courts while requesting to be treated in a certain way. Rather than referring to any European ruler, they chose Ottoman sultan and Safavid shah as examples of how their tsar wished to be honored.

The long-awaited reception at the doge's palace took place on January 22 1657. That day the ambassadors "prepared themselves according to the ambassadorial custom" to meet the doge.[226] Vimina with an entourage of thirty people came to meet Muscovites in their residence, Correr and his retinue was waiting for the delegation with fifty gondolas. The interpreter Lazar Zymarmanov and *tselovalnik* Ftoryshka Leontiev walked in front of the procession. Nobles, the tsar's officials, and foreigners [nemtsy] with gifts followed after them. Pod'iachii Firs Baibakov solemnly held the tsar's letter, but it is not clear whether he was in the head of the procession or in front of the ambassadors who walked at the very end of the march. When the procession reached the doge's Palace they saw that the square in front of the palace was flooded with people. Many locals and foreigners stayed there with their hats off and bowed to welcome the ambassadors, showing their respect to the tsar.[227]

Muscovite diplomats were not entirely content with the course of the ceremony. They expected the doge and *vladeteli* to greet the delegation at the entrance of the palace. Correr, however, informed the ambassadors that personal welcoming by the doge was not a part of Venetian diplomatic tradition. He said that the doge and *vladeteli* honored the tsar's representatives enough by sending a delegation to accompany the ambassadors from their

[225] Ibid., col. 1032-1033.
[226] Ibid., 1035.
[227] Ibid., col. 1035, 1038.

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residence. Muscovites then replied that personal welcoming was a widespread custom, and at the courts of the tsar's "brothers…the Turkish Sultan and the Persian Shah" the diplomats were usually greeted several times.[228] They nevertheless did not ask any more questions and let the ceremony continue.

When the ambassadors crossed the threshold of the palace the doge and *vladeteli* got up out of their seats. According to Maria Pedani, depending on importance of the mission, the doge could either just stand up or immediately leave his throne and hug the ambassador.[229] Valier did not move from his place which showed that Venetians did not ascribe to the embassy the highest significance, though Muscovite sources tried to prove the opposite.

Standing in front of the doge surrounded by patricians, Chemodanov proclaimed the whole title of the tsar and announced that Aleksei Mikhailovich wished to establish trade with the Venetian Republic. Then the interpreter presented the gifts – precious fox, ermine, and sable furs – from Chemodanov and Posnikov separately.[230]

After the first audience there was a series of other receptions which did not cause any more ceremonial issues. Only upon the end of the mission, Venetian officials again attempted to avoid official audience in which the ambassadors were supposed to obtain the Republic's reply to the tsar. Instead of inviting Muscovites to the Doge's Palace, Venetians hasted to send a high-ranked patrician directly to the ambassadors' residence to convey the document. The letter was already stamped with a golden seal though Muscovites had asked to show them the copy beforehand to make sure that Aleksei Mikhailovich's titles were written correctly.

On February 20, the ambassadors were informed that they had to get ready according to the ambassadorial custom because the *vladetel'* Francesco was going to bring them the doge's letter. Muscovites, however, refused to accept the letter from anyone except the doge. The

[228] Ibid., col. 1038.
[229] Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, 69.
[230] PDS, col. 1043.

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vladetel' tried to explain to them that the ruler was sick and that such way of conveying the document was a habit in Venice. The diplomats replied that other state's *posly* and *poslanniki* were not an example for them and that they followed only the tsar's orders.[231] Another reason for repeating the ceremony was that while examining the copy of the doge's letter Russian translators found mistakes in the tsar's titles. Thus, the ambassadors could not this document to Muscovy.[232]

After that unsuccessful ceremony, Vimina told the Muscovites that they dishonored the *vladetel'* Francesco and humiliated the patricians of the Republic [Pospolitoi Rechi] by returning the letter back which "the whole city could witness."[233] Chemodanov and Posnikov replied that their diplomatic tradition presumed a personal audience with the ruler. Eventually, Venetians had to accept Muscovite requirements and organize the audience with Bertuccio Valier.[234]

A closer analysis of diplomatic ceremonies shows that both sides had to adapt to each other during negotiations and accept certain changes in familiar procedures. Both parties also evidently realized that diplomatic ceremonies communicated their status within the 'society of princes.' While staying in Muscovy, Vimina, unlike Chemodanov and Posnikov, did not risk the republican honor as much since his status did not imply such responsibility. On the other hand, there is a possibility that several ceremonial issues that appeared in the course of negotiations were caused exactly by Venetian attempts to equalize the status of Vimina's and Chemodanov's missions. Muscovite representatives were attentive to tiniest details that could potentially endanger the prestige of their ruler. They informed themselves about "diplomatic customs" at other courts and employed that knowledge to support their arguments. On the other

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[231] Ibid., col. 1082.
[232] Ibid., col. 1082.
[233] Ibid., col. 1085.
[234] Ibid., col. 1087.

hand, when needed they refused to accept references to the same "customs" and employed different rhetoric in their replies.

Though I claim that Venetians and Muscovites knew very little about each other, I do not presume that they communicated in complete ignorance of their counterparts' ceremonial languages. Muscovite courtly culture was syncretic. It included the elements of diplomatic rites and visual representation borrowed from Western Europe, the Byzantine and Ottoman empire, Greeks and Armenians.[235] When Chemodanov and Posnikov compared the Muscovite tsar with other rulers or refered to Ottoman and Safavid ceremonies as an example for Venetians, they did so for a reason. Muscovite diplomatic practice evolved in constant communication with other states. Though Muscovite ceremonial language was different from the Venetian one, it was not completely incomprehensible for the Republic and its representatives, and *vice versa*.

3.3. The Status and Image of the Ambassador

The status of diplomats played a crucial role in defining the ways of treating a mission. In most cases, diplomatic encounters were held in the absence of one or more princes of negotiating states. Therefore, the respect paid to a foreign ruler must be paid to their diplomat. Early modern European ambassadors had to make sure that nobody challenged or gave offence to the honor of the sovereign he represented.[236] By the end of the seventeenth century, the system of diplomatic ranks became commonly accepted in European 'society of princes.' There was a clear distinction between ambassadors, who embodied their prince's majesty and represented them directly, and second-order ministers, such as agents and residents, who did not bear such responsibility.[237]

[235] Daniel Rowland, "Architecture, Image, and Ritual," *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom Revisited: Essays in Russian History and Culture in Honor of Robert O. Crummey*, ed. Chester S.I., Dunning, Russell E. Martin, Daniel Rowland, 53-71 (Slavica Publishers, 2008), 70-71.

[236] William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial," 455, 457.

[237] Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe*, 90-91, 97.

In his treatise, Wicquefort expressed the seventeenth century understanding of these two diplomatic offices' functions. He underlined that an ambassador "represents the Person of the Prince his Master" and adds that "a good Embassador is also a great Theatrical Personage" because "to be successful in his Profession, he ought to play the Comedian a little."[238] Ambassadors played in important role in early modern culture since they symbolically represented the majesty of their absent ruler. The right to send ambassadors was usually reserved to royal dynasties, and thus demonstrated prestige. The rank of ambassador was reserved for the members of patriciate who occupied important positions in Venetian government.[239]

Ministers of second order, though had seemingly less significant position in the system of diplomatic ranks, in fact quite often had broader powers.[240] About ministers of second order Wicquefort noted that princes frequently preferred those second order representatives to ambassadors because they were "more proper to carry on an Intrigue with Safety, where the Secret is more necessary than Pomp." He also emphasized that second-order ministers negotiated "with less trouble and more success."[241] Venetians often preferred to dispatch non-patrician diplomats who did not hold ambassadorial status because those could have more flexibility in performing their diplomatic functions. At the same time employment of such representatives partially released the Republic from direct diplomatic involvement.[242] In 1655, one of the first things Aleksei Mikhailovich ordered to clarify when he heard of the mission from the doge was whether Venetian representatives were "*posly*, *poslanniki*, or *gontsy*."[243]

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[238] A. de Wicquefort, *The embassafor and his functions* (1681, Engl. 1716), 4.

[239] Wicquefort, *The embassafor,* 4*;* Andrea Zannini, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Crisis of Venetian Diplomacy in the Seventeenth c and Eighteenth Centuries, in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Daniela Frigo, Adrian Belton (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 133.

[240] André J. Krischer, Das Gesandtschaftswesen und das vormoderne Völkerrecht, in *Rechtsformen Internationaler Politik. Theorie, Norm und Praxis vom 12. bis 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Jucker, Martin Kintzinger, Rainer Christoph Schwinges, Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 197-240 (Berlin, 2011), 209.

[241] Wicquefort, *The embassafor,* 34.

[242] Zannini, "Economic and Social Aspects," 133-134.

[243] PDS, col. 811.

According to the European system of diplomatic ranks Vimina was an envoy and belonged to a category of second-rank ministers. Vimina, according to the European system of diplomatic ranks, did not have to represent the doge and the Republic directly. That was the main reason why he seemed more practical in his attitude towards ceremonies.

Muscovites had their own system of ambassadorial ranks. There were *gontsy* who just carried letters of the tsar, *poslantsy* or *poslanniki* who were minor envoys accompanied by a small entourage, and (*velikie) posly* – the highest-ranking diplomats attended by a large retinue of one hundred to two hundred people.[244] Russian diplomatic ranks referred to the social status of diplomats. The higher the status of the embassy (and that of the princes to whom it was sent) was the higher should have been the status of the appointed diplomat. In the view of European diplomatic practice, the tsar's sovereignty was recognized. Therefore, Muscovite representatives, *posly* and *poslanniki*, in particular, had a right to be received and treated as ambassadors. However, unlike European diplomats, the tsar's presentative regardless of their status directly represented Russian ruler (according to Russian custom). The latter meant that they were all equally responsible for the prestige of their ruler in the eyes of other dynastic courts. [245]

The Muscovite delegation of the *stol'nik* of Pereiaslavl' Ivan Chemodanov and *dyak* Aleksei Posnikov had official status of "*poslanniki*."[246] Chemodanov's report mentioned that though Venetians knew that the tsar's diplomats were considered "*poslanniki*" Vimina informed them that they were treated as "*posly.*"[247] That conversation did not necessarily take place, it might have easily been just Muscovite diplomats' attempt to assure Aleksei

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[244] Antonio Possevino, *Moscovia* (Vilna, 1586), 21-22; Kotoshikhin G.K. O *Rossii v tsarstvovanie Alekseia Mikhailovicha,* ed. G.A. Leont'eva. (Moscow ROSSPEN, 2000) http://www.bibliotekar.ru/rus/92-4.htm.

[245] Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe*, 98-99, 102, 104.

[246] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva, kasaiushchiesia do Rossii*, transl. by M.D. Buturlin, vol. 1. (Moskva, 1871), 6-7. Considering the status of Chemodanov, *stol'niki*, were generally sent as Russian representative to Danish king, German electors, and the Ottoman sultan. See Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe*, 102.

[247] PDS, col. 1032-1033.

Mikhailovich that his embassy received the highest honors. However, the fact is that Venetian and other Italian sources gave to Chemodanov and Posnikov the title of "*ambasciatori*."[248]

While trying to 'translate' Muscovite diplomatic ranks, Italian counterparts also made attempts to comprehend behavior of Russian ambassadors separating their actions as the tsar's representatives from their personal manners and habits. This task was not an easy one given differences in traditions and norms of conduct and the lack of knowledge about Russian culture. The nature of Venetian materials employed in this research is such that they mostly repeat stereotypes associated with Muscovite barbarity. However, other documents along with curious notes about the Russian delegation's manners and habits, provide a more comprehensive perception of the Muscovite diplomats as representatives of the tsar.

A Florentine observer pointed out that Chemodanov was a prudent man who did not do anything at the court without asking and making sure it was appropriate. He dedicated some time to describe the conduct of the first ambassador being quite impressed by his professional skills:

> The elder ambassador seems a very circumspect person since he wanted to know how the Serene Grand Duke [of Florence] treated the greatest princes of the world and which of them he recognized… In short, he always behaved himself and spoke with great observance, respect, and carefulness, even though [previously] [Muscovites] were told to be half-beasts deprived of good manners". [249]

In a similar way Chemodanov is described by the resident of Mantua, who visited the embassy while its stay in Venice:

> Contradicting everyone's assumption he presents himself as an individual of great value. He is very courteous, has very noble traits, the most reverent words towards the Republic… His appearance is venerable, and he shows the signs of great sagacity.[250]

[248] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 7, 11; *Relazione vera*, 111.
[249] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 30.
[250] Maria di Salvo, *Italia, Russia e mondo slavo, 105.*

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Those short notes demonstrate that despite stereotypes and prejudice about Muscovites that existed in Europe, and despite Muscovites' lack of "civil" manners their qualities as diplomats were still noticeable for the Italian side. While the anonymous Venetian *relazione* or Vimina's writing discussed in the previous chapter, draw a parallel between Muscovite ambassadors' weird behavior and "bad" manners and their presumed barbarity, the presented passages broke with this logic. Their authors seemed separate peculiar Muscovite customs or inappropriate behavior of Chemodanov's retinue's members. At the same time, neither Vimina nor other Venetian observants acknowledged these qualities in Muscovite ambassadors, concentrating mostly on either their seemingly amusing conduct or their barbarous and servile character. The evidence available in this research does not allow me to make further conclusions about the nature of this clash in the Venetian-Muscovite case. Without access to Italian archives is not possible to understand how Venetian representatives dealt with discrepancies and contradictions between ethnographic notes and actual practice of negotiations.

The Muscovite ambassadors indeed were concerned with their self-representation. Though Venetian and Florentine sources mentioned that the embassy's servants were always drunk and the diplomats themselves were involved in various unflattering activities, there is also evidence of Chemodanov showing prudence in keeping up the embassy's image. Once the Venetian merchant Giuseppe Armano invited Muscovites for a dinner in his house, but they refused. Florentines supposed that diplomats deemed inappropriate leaving their accommodation and participating in any entertainments unless those were official and of great importance. They were not entirely sure in what the ambassadors actually meant because eventually the diplomats accepted Armano's invitation. The hosts suspected that there must have been some interpreter's mistake, but their possible reluctance to participate in unofficial ceremonies might be interpreted as the ambassadors' care for their public image.[251]

[251] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 8.

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Another moment that reflects Chemodanov's concern with the image of the embassy was when Posnikov ordered a carriage planning to visit some sort of bathhouse without informing the first ambassador. According to Florentine documents, Chemodanov scolded his colleague saying that such move showed the lack of wisdom and dishonored the ambassadorial office.[252] Though Florentine documents are generous on details of the relationships between the ambassadors, *stateinyi spisok* is silent about those events. It seems hardly possible that Chemodanov and Posnikov would want to share with the tsar information about their conflicts and mistakes.

The mentioned moment of misunderstanding shows that the characters of Muscovite diplomats were an integral element in the mission's self-representation. Though Chemodanov was officially "the first ambassador," the relationship between the two diplomats were not strictly hierarchical. One of the Florentine reports registered an ardent argument between Chemodanov and Posnikov about an invitation for a private dinner. Apparently, Posnikov was convinced that only the first ambassador was invited to this event. On this occasion he made a scene requiring from Chemodanov to "be treated as an equal" because he believed that both ambassadors "held the same status."[253]

There were more conflicts of this kind. Once a Florentine poet wrote a sonnet for Chemodanov in which he did not even mention Posnikov. The latter, as soon as he learned about the poem, started to yell at the first ambassador and almost fought with him. The things between Muscovites got so heated, that the poet had to write another piece dedicated exclusively to Posnikov. Nonetheless, such conciliatory gesture caused another argument because the second sonnet unlike the previous one was written on golden paper and now the first ambassador felt offended.[254]

[252] Ibid., 31.
[253] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva,* 23.
[254] Ibid., 31.

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Such conflicts seem quite unexpected considering that Chemodanov was a high-ranking nobleman, *okol'nichii*, while Posnikov held the position of *dyak*, or chief clerk. Nevertheless, Posnikov's complaints were of some weight. The first ambassador apparently took care that the second person of the mission was treated in the most respectful way. In the official reception with the Venetian doge, Chemodanov was offered a sit on the right hand of Bertuccio Valier while Posnikov remained standing. The first ambassador immediately asked the doge to offer another seat to his colleague to which Venetians agreed but did not undertake any action. Having noticed that the second ambassador did not receive enough honors Chemodanov stood up and remained standing until the end of the ceremony.[255]

The relationship between the ambassadors was such that Chemodanov seemed to have more responsibility and thus showed more concern with the behavior of the mission's members. However, Posnikov behaved as if he could ask for equal treatment and protection of his honor. For him, as a lower-ranking noble, such arguments were an opportunity of social advancement. The diak could exploit diplomatic ceremonial to establish a precedent and elevate himself to the level of Chemodanov, just like European nobles did at the court of Louis XIV.[256]

Partially, Posnikov' also demanded proper treatment because respect shown towards the ambassador was demonstrated the hosting party's recognition of the tsar's majesty. Since both Chemodanov and Posnikov held the status of *poslanniki* they both were Russian representatives responsible for the image of the Muscovite ruler. In other words, the diplomats had to demand the honors they both equally deserved and make sure that neither of them settled for less.

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3.4. Invisible Links: The Role of Mediators

Mediators accompanied Venetian and Muscovite ambassadors all along their journeys. They were points of interaction, intrinsic links that connected people from two unfamiliar

[255] PDS, col. 1044.
[256] Duindam, *Myths of Power*, 101.

diplomatic cultures.[257] Translators and interpreters, *pristavs* or attendants, merchants, local officials, and devoted visitors 'surprisingly' interested in foreign affairs, were essential elements of early modern diplomacy.

Neither Vimina nor Chemodanov and Posnikov spoke the language of the destined country. When both Italian and Russian sides could not directly communicate with one another the role of interpreters and translators was decisive. Even minor mistakes that those people made could significantly impact the course of negotiations. The information they had an access to, given the character of their relationships with diplomats, was an important asset that both sides attempted to obtain.

In Vimina's company, there were several people from the German lands and an interpreter who joined the mission while the envoy was passing Stockholm.[258] However, the Venetian and his companions did not speak any Russian. Efim Fenturov who reported about the arrival of the Venetian mission to Muscovy was the first interpreter who worked with Vimina. Fenturov spoke only German and Swedish which meant that at that point communication between the parties required double mediation of two interpreters: one from the Venetian retinue and another from the Muscovite side.[259] Fenturov and the local *pristav* as every single person who directly contacted with Vimina were also supposed to serve as informers of the tsar. They were ordered to ask certain questions, collect that information and

[257] More on mediators: C. Isom-Verhaaren, "Shifting Identities: foreign state servants in France and the Ottoman Empire," Journal of Early Modern History, 8 (2004): 109-134; Kristic, Tijana, Van Gelder, Maartje. "Introduction: Cross-confessional diplomacy and diplomatic intermediaries in the Early modern Mediterranean," *Journal of Early modern history, 19* (2015): 93-105; Rothman, E. Natalie. Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011; "Afterword: Intermediaries, Mediation, and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean." In Journal of Early Modern History 19 (2015): 245- 259; Gürkan, Emrah Safa, "Mediating Boundaries: Mediterranean Go-Betweens and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560-1600." In Journal of Early Modern History 19 (2015):107-128. Diego Prillo, "Venetian Merchant as Diplomatic Agents: Family Networks and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe," in Early Modern Diplomacy, Theatre and Soft Power: The Making of Peace (Early Modern Literature in History), ed. N.R. de Carles (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 183-203; Iastrebov A.O. *Venetsianskie greki na russkoĭ sluzhbe v kontse XVII – nachale XVIII vekov,* PhD, MSU, 2019.

[258] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Varsavia, 27 giugno 1655, n. 25. ibid., 272.

[259] A.V. Beliakov, "Perevodchiki i perevody v Rossii kontsa XVI- nachala XVII stoletiia," *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii. Moskva, 12-13 sentiabria 2019 g.* (Moskva: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2019), 203, PDS, col. 821.

send it to higher authorities.[260] Pristav was usually asked to find out necessary information but just as if "speaking on his own behalf."[261]

Soon after the Venetian mission's arrival to Pskov, Aleksei Mikhailovich, requested that the *Posol'skii Prikaz* send another interpreter to his camp. The tsar, who still hoped to meet the envoy in person, needed someone who could talk to Vimina directly (in Latin) and translate the doge's letter [list].[262] The chosen person was the official of *Posol'skii Prikaz*, Ivan Adamov, the Dutch from Copenhagen who knew Latin, German, Danish and Swedish.[263] Nataliya Kardanova rightly assumes that the interpreter who worked with Vimina was the same person who translated the tsar's reply to the doge.[264] She also suggests that Adamov knew the envoy's mother tongue, drawing from the fact that the charter's final text was written in Italian, not in Latin. It is quite odd, though, that the documents of *Posol'skii Prikaz* never mentioned that Adamov spoke Italian, and that, on the contrary, they emphasized that none of translators could operate with this language.[265] Besides, if anyone knew Italian, Chemodanov would definitely have taken them on his mission to Italy in 1656.[266] Thus, communication between the two parties, most probably, was held in Latin. Adamov could potentially speak with German and Swedish-speaking members of Vimina's retinue, but the sources do not mention such occasions.

There is no evidence that Adamov was required to interrogate the Venetian envoy. Nonetheless, it would be logical to assume that the translator, just like his other colleagues, served as a secret agent of the tsar. For Vimina, deprived of freedom, always surrounded by guards and *pristavs*, communication with the interpreter was an escape. The envoy noted that

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[260] PDS, col. 833.
[261] Ibid., col. 865.
[262] Ibid., col. 829.
[263] Beliakov, "Perevodchiki i perevody," 202.
[264] N. Kardanova, "O nekotorykh osobennostiakh kommunikatsii v khode diplomaticheskoi missii: peregovory 1655 g. v osveshchenii d′iaka Tomilo Perfir′eva i Venetsianskogo poslannika Al′berto Viminy," *III Mezhdunarodnyi nauchno-prakticheskii forum "Iazyki. Kul'tury. Perevody"* (19-25 June 2015): 140.
[265] PDS, col. 965.
[266] According to Beliakov, the first Italian translator stated to work in *Posol'skii Prikaz* not earlier than in 1668 (Beliakov, "Perevodchiki i perevody," 188).

Adamov was a good person and that he earned a certain degree of recognition in public affairs. Being impatient about the tsar's reply, Vimina even tried to get some information from the interpreter, but Adamov politely refused to continue the conversation. However, when the Venetian asked him whether he could find out what message a certain Swedish envoy was brining to the tsar, the interpreter fulfilled the request.[267] It seemed that Adamov knew exactly which information he could share with Vimina and which should have been kept away from him.

Sending a reciprocal mission to the doge Muscovites made sure to find the most suitable specialists in the absence of Italian speakers. The delegation was accompanied by the translator Timofei Toporovskii who knew Latin and Polish, and interpreter Lazar' Zymarmanov who spoke German. Having arrived in Italy, Muscovites found out that most Italians did not actually use Latin, the language they hoped to communicate in with locals.[268] The ambassadors had to hire Johann Sachs [Giovanni Sachxy], the German retired lieutenant and merchant of "minor success" who knew some Russian.[269] His knowledge of the language seemed somewhat limited. Sachs most probably made mistakes that hampered communication between Muscovites and their hosts. As I have mentioned earlier, Florentine sources ascribed several moments of misunderstanding between ambassadors and Italians to the interpreter's mistakes. Besides, in his own report to the Florentine Duke, Sachs misinterpreted the Muscovites' intentions for Venetian loans. He believed that the tsar needed that money to organize a campaign against the Ottoman Empire.[270] At the same time, in the negotiations with Venetians, Chemodanov underlined that the funds were required for different purposes.[271]

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[267] Lettera di A. Vimina a B. Nani, Riga, 24 gennaio 1656, n. 34, published in Caccamo, 281-282.
[268] Beliakov, "Perevodchiki i perevody," 202.
[269] *Bumagi Florentiiskogo tsentral'nogo arkhiva*, 7.
[270] Ibid., 40.
[271] PDS., col. 1066-1068.

Italian interpreters, like his Russian colleagues, were some sort of secret agents of the polities they represented. As the example above shows Sachs was loyal to the Florentine duke. He reported to his master everything he found important in Russian-Venetian negotiations hoping to gain the ruler's favor. The translator had an exclusive access to the most secret and important information, even if he were not exceptionally proficient in the language of the embassy. Sachs also served as a mediator between the embassy and foreign diplomats staying in Vienna. For instance, once he informed Chemodanov and Posnikov that the Pope's representatives wanted to see them.[272] The latter means that those agents contacted Sachs to reach the Muscovite ambassadors through his mediation.

Venetians, unlike Florentines, did not manage to find anyone whose knowledge of Russian and Italian or Latin they could trust. After Muscovite ambassadors conveyed the tsar's charter to the doge, Vimina informed them that they had to wait until the document was translated in Italian and discussed in the Senate. However, the day after the ceremony, Vimina visited Muscovites to say that nobody in Venetian chancellery knew Russian. He asked if their expert in Latin, Timofei Toporovskii, could assist with the document's translation into Latin. As the *stateinyi spisok* reports, Muscovites at first declined this request saying that the translators were sent only for the tsar's business and they could not serve for other purposes. Vimina replied that in this case, the dialogue between the parties would be impossible. After a short consideration Muscovites eventually allowed Toporovskii to do the work. Toporovskii translated the document verbally in the presence of Vimina and a secretary who wrote the Latin version down. The same procedure was repeated at the beginning of February when Venice announced the reply to the tsar's charter. A secretary of the Republic read the document in Latin, and then Toporovskii translated it into Russian. There is also an evidence that Toporovskii and Sachs cooperated to write the final Venetian response to the Aleksei

[272] Ibid., col. 1058.

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Mikhailovich.[273] The task was to correct the tsar's titles and such a job required the skills of both translators. It is curious to imagine how they communicated and what they could discuss while working together on this document.

Though Venetians could not rely on their own translators in digging out necessary information about Muscovites, they employed other agents to realize this task.[274] As soon as the embassy stepped on the shores of Italy, Venetians reached Muscovites and from that moment kept an eye on them. In Livorno, the ambassadors got especially close to the Venetian merchant Giuseppe Armano. He served as the informant and broker of the Venetian resident in Florence Taddeo Vico. Most probably he was so determined to invite the Muscovites to his house because he hoped to get some information important for the Republic. Armano was also the person he told the Muscovites that the way to Venice was open and the embassy could continue the journey. [275] In Florence Taddeo Vico took over Armano's responsibilities and became the main link connecting the Venetian authorities with Russian diplomats. Unfortunately, the documents available at this stage of research cannot provide more information on Vico's activities and role as a Venetian agent.

When Chemodanov with the retinue reached the borders of the Venetian Republic, Vimina became the primary mediator between Muscovites and Venetian authorities while the embassy resided in Venice because he was already experienced in the Russian affairs. He reported the news from the doge and informed the diplomats when they needed to prepare for the ceremonies. Vimina's duty was to learn how the ambassadors were going to present themselves in the audiences, probably because Venetians wanted to avoid possible ceremonial

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[273] Ibid., col. 1083.

[274] Ioanna Iordanou, "The Spy Chiefs of Renaissance Venice: Intelligence Leadership in the Early Modern World," in *Spy Chiefs, Volume 2: Intelligence Leaders in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia*, eds. Paul Maddrell, Christopher Moran, Ioanna Iordanou, and Mark Stout (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 43-66.

[275] Villani, "Ambasciatori russi," 39.

misunderstandings.[276] In addition, he had to negotiate with Muscovites their demands for the personal meetings with the doge.[277]

It seems that Vimina had some sources of information other than direct communication with the diplomats through embassy's interpreters. One day he asked the diplomats whether the tsar wanted to borrow money from the Republic. According to the Russian sources, Vimina said that such request would be a huge dishonor for the embassy. Though diplomats were indeed ordered to ask for a loan, they refused replying to this question. They were wondering where Vimina heard this information, since they had not yet announced the tsar's wish to borrow from the Republic. The Venetian said that he just "figured it out," but him having some informant within the Russian delegation seems more plausible.[278]

There were some other less visible actors who played an important role in the course of the Russian mission to Venice. The first day when Muscovites settled in the city, representatives of the Greek church hasted to visit them. The Greeks informed Chemodanov and Posnikov that they were happy to see the ambassadors of such a "great Eastern tsar."[279] They also invited diplomats to visit their church, San Giorgio dei Greci, and promised to conduct a prayer in honor of Aleksei Mikhailovich. That one was the first in the series of Greek representatives' visits. In conversations with Muscovites, Greeks described the ordeals that their compatriots experienced under the Ottoman yoke expressing their hopes for the tsar's help. In one of the meeting, Greeks called Aleksei Mikhailovich the second Constantine I, who were destined to liberate faithful Christians from Ottoman slavery, and the second Alexander the Great, whose fame and honor was known in all neighboring states, and whose sword would always win over Christian enemies, Muslims. They also informed the diplomats that a recent Ottoman divination

[276] PDS., col. 1031.
[277] Ibid., col. 1022, 1085.
[278] Ibid., col. 1058.
[279] Ibid., col. 1021.

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said it was the time when the tsar was supposed to take Constantinople over, and all the Turks "lived with a great fear" of his looming mightiness.[280]

According to Phillip Longworth, those Greek visits could be inspired by Venetian authorities who used every possible measure to persuade the Tsar into the alliance against the Ottomans.[281] Aleksei Yastrebov points out Greeks' role as mediators between Muscovite and Venetians which they performed already in the sixteenth century.[282] The sources available at this point do not shed more light on actual motivation of Greeks in these negotiations. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that they acted to their own benefit as their position of transimperial subjects and cultural go-betweens presupposed.[283] It is not clear though who enjoyed Venetian Greeks' loyalty: their Venetian patrons, Muscovite co-religionists or Patriarch of Constantinople, the nominal head of the Venetian metropolitan.[284]

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[280] Ibid., col. 1055-1057.

[281] Longworth, "Russian-Venetian Relations," 398.

[282] A. O. Yastrebov, *Venetsianskie greki na russkoĭ sluzhbe v kontse XVII – nachale XVIII vekov*, PhD (MSU, 2019), 129-130.

[283] For instance, the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Kyrillos I Loukaris, a couple of decades before Chemodanov's mission attempted to promote an anti-Polish alliance between Russian and the Ottoman empire deeming the Catholic church a more serious enemy than the Muslim sultan. See Nikolaos A. Chrissidis, "The World of Eastern Orthodoxy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750: Volume I: Peoples and Place*, ed. Hamish Scott (Oxford University Press, 2015), 629-630. On transimperial subjects see Natalie E. Rothman. *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.

[284] Ibid., 630.

Figure III. 5. Chiesa di San Giorgio dei Greci

While staying in Venice, the ambassadors had other unusual guests. Information and rumors spread in Venice exceptionally fast. Soon after Chemodanov's and Posnikov's arrival whole city knew that Muscovite embassy was negotiating with the doge. Having heard such news, around fifty Russians who escaped Ottoman captivity went to the Palazzo Grimani seeking alms. When the ambassadors asked about the sentiment in Constantinople, they replied, "the Turkish tsar and pashas are scared of our Great sovereign, the Tsar and Duke and … are wary of the Tsar's warriors[coming] from all sides."[285] There might be a chance that those Russian captives were also encouraged to visit their compatriots by the Venetian authorities. At least the image of a powerful Muscovite ruler and the terrified sultan was similar in Greek and captives' narratives. That similarity could be explained by the intentions of the embassy's scribes to assure the tsar in the worldwide fame of his power. However, it seems that such a quite favorable rhetoric for the idea of the anti-Ottoman alliance did not come up by chance.

This subchapter just hints to how much importance non-state actors and what I termed "invisible mediators" could have had in the actual process of building communication between

[285] PDS, col. 1044.

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two polities. Along with fulfilling their direct duties, translators and interpreters were mediators and sources of information that helped the sides to understand each other. Moreover, the possible level of miscommunication between the Venetians and Muscovites adds to complexity of these negotiations. Eventually, the examples above demonstrate that foreign relations never evolved in a vacuum. They were always a part of a complex net of multiple participating parties' mixed public and private interests.

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CONCLUSION

Descriptions of Muscovite's peculiar culture and behavior provided in this thesis demonstrate how Muscovy was depicted decades and centuries after the first encounters between Venetians and Russians. The European Republic of Letters passed the discourse of Muscovite barbarity further on without much critical assessment. The alien image of Muscovy through its presumed barbarity was established on different levels. The rhetoric of othering stemmed from the differences in Venetian and Muscovite political culture, conceptions of civilized behavior, and confessional belonging. Those levels corresponded to contextually determined connotations. Though geographically Muscovy was presented as a part of Europe, culturally, it was depicted as an exotic land with people almost as peculiar as the inhabitants of the New World. Muscovite belonging to Eastern Christianity was another reason to call the tsar's domain a barbarous kingdom sometimes associated with the Ottomans.

The present study demonstrates that the discourse of Muscovite barbarity did not completely define the nature of diplomatic exchanges between the Tsardom and European early modern polities. I argue that it was this contradiction between cultural representation and diplomatic objectives that shaped the relations between Russia and Venice and their attempts at making sense of each other and at gathering knowledge about one another. For that reason, Alberto Vimina, so skeptical about Muscovite religious convictions in his relazione, talking to the tsar's representative, referred to Aleksei Mikhailovich as a glorious Christian ruler and defender of Christendom. Other Italian observers could notice the signs of sagacity and reverence in Muscovite ambassadors' behavior even behind their table manners or "barbarous splendor" of their demeanor. I argue that the depiction of Muscovy as an exotic outlier could be a part of Venetian unintentional (or intentional) attempts to define its place in early modern hierarchies of the 'society of princes,' the same way in which Poles spread unflattering rumors

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about the tsar and his domain. Based on this research, it is impossible to speculate about further implications of Vimina's or anonymous Venetian relazione impact on public opinion on Muscovy. It is, however, possible to conclude that those discourses of barbarity were addressed to a European audience and were largely separate from Muscovite-Venetian negotiations in 1655-1657.

The abundance of knowledge about Muscovites available to Venetians turns out to be an illusion when it comes to diplomatic practice. In the early modern political culture, one of important languages of diplomatic representation was the language of the ceremony. Through this system of symbolic representation, Venetians and Muscovites both had to establish their communication and convey their high status in diplomatic hierarchies. Though, as I emphasize, those two missions happened after a relatively long break in contacts, I do not imply that Venetians and Muscovites did not know what to expect from the other party in ceremonial terms. I demonstrate that during Venetian-Muscovite negotiations the involved parties flexibly adjusted to changing circumstances as the knowledge about their counterparts was growing. Muscovite diplomatic culture, as well as the Venetian one, developed in constant contact with other early modern polities. At the time when Vimina came to Muscovy, local officials knew that he should be treated just like the Dutch envoys because the latter also represented a republic. Realizing their precarious position in the 'society of princes,' Venetians, as they usually did, attempted to correct it by informing Muscovites about the kingdoms they possessed. However, this fact did not seem to make much difference in Muscovite attitude towards the Serenissima. Chemodanov and Posnikov repeatedly referred to diplomatic practice at other contemporary courts. Interestingly, requiring special treatment from Venetians, Muscovites compared themselves not only to the Holy Roman Emperor but also to the Ottomans and Safavids. While this comparison had negative connotations in Venetian

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discourse, in Muscovite diplomatic rhetoric it was supposed to elevate the tsar to the level of an imperial ruler.

Behind diplomatic rhetoric and striving for recognition in the princely world there was a process of communication between the sides' immediate interests. This communication was mediated by the involvement of multiple translators who were not necessarily proficient in the languages they worked with. Those translators, as well as dozens of various mediators, not only facilitated communication between the parties, but they also secretly or openly collected information that was later on used both to adjust to ceremonial requirements of the other side and to impact its potential decision. Although interests and loyalties of various intermediaries did not change the tsar's decision, they played a crucial role in building Muscovite-Venetian communication.

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