

LITHUANIA IN THE ANCIENT ITALIAN STATES'  
HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS FROM THE LATE  
1400s TO THE EARLY 1700s:  
TOWARD A MODERN *FORMA MENTIS*



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**SUMMARY.** This research aims at understanding modifications in the perception of the world in a period usually defined as that of the transition from the Medieval (symbolic) *forma mentis* to the Renaissance (rational) one. The means to conduct this research is the investigation of late 15<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian literature about Lithuania.

The analysis of the nature and extent of the information about Lithuania accessible in the ancient Italian states portrays a line of development in human perceptions of Europe.

During late 15<sup>th</sup> century both cartographical and literary accounts were mainly intended as symbolic Christian interpretations of Europe. It was even imagined as physically protected from the infidels by mythical physical elements such as the Riphean Mountains. This symbolism characterized the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century literature as well despite a better knowledge of Northern and Eastern Europe. The supposed unity of Christian Europe had to be represented as a real unity able to overcome all doctrinal and political divergences, thus including Muscovy and criticizing those who opposed its supposed integration – i.e., Poland-Lithuania.

**KEYWORDS:** Lithuania, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, travel reports, Italian historiography, Giovan Battista Ramusio, Giovanni Tarcagnola.

Writing about the history of the Middle Ages, Adriano Prosperi noted that the most interesting and challenging task for historians is to understand how people were thinking, imagining, and perceiving the world in a certain period.<sup>1</sup> Some, more radical, scholars even claim that the Thought and its manifestations are the only possible objects of investigation.<sup>2</sup> We ourselves will try to investigate human thinking in late 15<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian historiography and literature about Lithuania. As a matter of fact, this period has often been understood as a phase of transition not only in political and economical matters, but also with reference

<sup>1</sup> See the introduction of A. Prosperi, *Dalla peste nera alla Guerra dei Trent'Anni*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> We are obviously referring to B. Croce and particularly to his speculations in *La storia come pensiero e come azione*.

to the European manner of thinking.<sup>3</sup> The comprehension of these changes in the human perception of the world is precisely the focus of our research. The means to achieve this awareness will be an analysis of published information about Lithuania largely accessible in the ancient Italian states.

Clearly we do not aim at portraying an image of Lithuania as it appeared to the Italian readers just in order to understand how much was known about Lithuania in the Italian peninsula – as Gintautas Sliesoriūnas, as an example, has done with 17<sup>th</sup> century English publications about the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.<sup>4</sup> Nor do we intend to complement Rūstis Kamuntavičius's "catalogue" of Italian Renaissance travelers to Lithuania.<sup>5</sup> Rather, we will try to delineate changes and permanencies in the perceptions that historiographers and travelers had of the world in a period which bridges the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The relatively small amount of sources, their very specific subject, and the evident changes occurring in the representation of Lithuania during the period examined could offer a privileged perspective for the investigation of the transition from the Medieval to the Renaissance *forma mentis*: the human intellect, not the image of Lithuania is the focus of this research.

At the same time, and despite the main aim of our study, the necessity for a new investigation on the Italian historiography about Lithuania in the early modern period is evident in the academic gap that characterizes historical studies devoted to the Baltic Region. The territories between the Gulf of Bothnia and the higher reaches of the Niemen have often been perceived as just a bridge joining the lands of Poland to those of Muscovy. The academic interest in the historiography of the region reflects this geographical perception. Nonetheless we have to recognize that several attempts to fill this gap have been made since the early 90s and continued in recent years. Particularly valuable is C. Carpini's pioneering research on Western historiography

<sup>3</sup> See, as an example, J. H. Bentley, 'Early Modern Europe and the Early Modern World', in C. H. Parker and J. H. Bentley (eds.), *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity: Individual and Community in the Early Modern World* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007) 13–31. It seems, however that there are certain difficulties in trying to determine clear-cut boundaries in the European chronology; rather elements of persistence of the medieval *forma mentis* have been perceived as a bridge conferring continuity to the intellectual changes. See S. N. Eisenstadt and W. Schluchter, 'Paths to Early Modernities: A Comparative View', *Dedalus* 127 (1998) 1–18. See also B. Wittrock, 'Early Modernities: Varieties and Transitions', *Dedalus* 127 (1998) 19–40.

<sup>4</sup> G. Sliesoriūnas, 'The Image of Lithuania in English Publications in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century', *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 16 (2012), 95–118. This is the approach emerging, in recent years, in a number of researches on Poland and Slavic World. See, as an example, the studies collected in *Europa Orientalis* 5 (1986). Cf. C. Carpini, 'La conoscenza della Lituania in alcuni dizionari storico-geografici fra '700 e '800', *Res Balticae* 12 (2013), 39–49.

<sup>5</sup> R. Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos stereotipai italų ir prancūzų literatūroje XVI–XVII a.* PhD dissertation, Vytautas Magnus University, 2002. See also Id., 'Itališki XVI–XVII a. su Lietuva susiję tekstai', *Istorija* 49 (2001), 88–97; Id., 'À l'extrémité du monde occidental: l'image de la culture lituanienne dans les littératures italienne et française du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* 220 (2003), 415–430; and A. Baniulytė, 'Itališki Lietuvių istoriografijos žymenys', *Darbai ir dienos* 49 (2008), 25–44.

about the Grand Duchy of Lithuania,<sup>6</sup> which, in a way, set the foundations, and defined a model, for further studies. Similarly, a positive tradition of studies about the Italian perception of Lithuania in historical sources is evident in P. Klimas's article about the Venice ambassador to Muscovy Ambrogio Contarini;<sup>7</sup> in A. Janulaitis' studies on the description of Lithuania in Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's historical works;<sup>8</sup> or in R. Kamuntavičius's investigation of Francesco da Collo's mission to Muscovy.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Lithuanian scholars inquired into certain travel or diplomatic relations just because they referred (typically only in passing) to Lithuania but not in order to throw light on a broader historical question.

By contrast, the tradition of studying relations between ancient Italian states and Poland or Muscovy is much richer. The well-established Italian and French traditions of Slavic studies produced, particularly during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, valuable pieces of research and organic historiographical outlines. Some of these studies dealt specifically with the links between Italy and Slavic peoples in early modern times. In this particular field, the primacy of Polish and Russian studies in Italy (and France) is undeniable. Representative, in this respect, are É. Pommier's research on Italian historical accounts about Muscovy,<sup>10</sup> and P. Marchesani's rundown on Poland in Italian historiography during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>11</sup> The reasons for this predilection are certainly connected with the political and economical interest of these two countries, the historical bond with them, and their geographical position. In some cases it was more of an interest generated by contingent events such as Bona Sforza's crowning as queen of Poland or the necessity to find a way to reach Persia through the north of Europe.

Despite the geographical position and political-military relevance of the country in early modern Europe, the literature dealing with the ancient Lithuanian

<sup>6</sup> C. Carpini, 'Il Granducato di Lituania nel panorama storiografico occidentale. Note in margine a The History Of Lithuania Before 1795', *Res Balticae*, 8 (2002), 239–248.

<sup>7</sup> P. Klimas, 'Ambrosio Contarini: Venecijos ambasadorius Lietuvoje (1474–1477)', *Praeitis* 2 (1931), 158–182.

<sup>8</sup> A. Janulaitis, 'Enėjas Silvius Piccolomini bei Jeronimas Pragiškis ir jų žinios apie Lietuvą XIV / XV a. (Kau-nas: Spindulio, 1928).

<sup>9</sup> R. Kamuntavičius, 'XVI a. pirmosios pusės imperatoriaus pasiuntinys F. Da Kolas Lietuvoje ir tarpininkavi-mo misija Maskvoje', in R. Šmigelskytė-Stukienė (ed.), *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės istorijos kraštovaiz-dis* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2012), 239–254.

<sup>10</sup> É. Pommier, 'Les Italiens et la découverte de la Moscovie', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 65 (1953), 247–283. See also A. Jobert, 'Les étrangers en Moscovie au temps d'Ivan le Terrible et de Godunov', *Revue Historique* 196 (1946), 150–164.

<sup>11</sup> P. Marchesani, 'La Polonia nella storiografia italiana del XVI e XVII secolo: i clichés ideologici e la loro evoluzione', *Europa Orientalis* 5 (1986), 203–231. Illustrative of the Italians interest for the Slavic world are also Giovanna Brogi Bercoff studies in this field and, particularly, her reflection on the Italian and Slavic historiography: G. Brogi Bercoff, 'Storiografia Italiana e slava dal Medioevo al Rinascimento', *Europa Ori-entalis* 1 (1982), 3–9. See also, Id., 'Dell'utilità e dei fini di un nuovo studio sulla storiografia della Polonia, dell'Ucraina e della Russia', *Europa Orientalis* 5 (1986), 203–231.

state is certainly less rich in the historiography of the Italian Renaissance. Carpini's research has not developed yet into a coherent and extensive study of this potentially rich branch of Italian historiography. Nor can G. K. Lukomskii's brief notes on Italians travelling to Muscovy's neighboring country be considered a representative study of foreign accounts of the Baltic region.<sup>12</sup> Despite being a pioneer research project about Western literature on Muscovy focusing on Italian diplomatic and travel reports, it is more like a catalogue of contrasting impressions and picturesque descriptions. Similarly, several curious travelers' reports are listed in F. Dukmeyer's transcription and analysis of Korb's diary (but the focus is almost exclusively on the traveler's stay in Muscovy).<sup>13</sup> The Grand Duchy of Lithuania is touched on in passing in P. Pierlig's investigation of the diplomatic relations between Russia and the Holy See,<sup>14</sup> and in S. Ciampi's enormous collection of documents about diplomatic relations and missives between Italy, Russia, Poland and "other northern parts."<sup>15</sup> However, in both catalogues, often Lithuania either disappears in the historiography of the Republic of the Two Nations, or is reduced to the function of a bridge toward Muscovy. The same situation is evident in A. Cronia's modern synthesis about the contacts between Italy and Poland,<sup>16</sup> and even more "Polonized" is the image of Lithuania in the Polish literature on this subject and particularly in the works of T. Ulewicz.<sup>17</sup>

A large number of studies dealing with Italian travel accounts touch on the knowledge about Lithuania in the ancient Italian states. However, most of these investigations concentrate on single and distinct travel accounts. This is the case with D. Caccamo's and G. Michelini's essays about Alberto Vimina,<sup>18</sup> or G. Platania's study about Pietro and Tommaso Talenti.<sup>19</sup> All these academic papers neither offer a global picture of the historiography about Lithuania nor permit us to contextualize it in the ideological transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

<sup>12</sup> G. K. Lukomskii, *Moskoviia v predstavlenii inostrantsev 16 i 17 vekov* (Berlin: Academia, 1923).

<sup>13</sup> F. Dukmeyer, *Korbs diarium itineris in Moscoviam un Quellen die es ergänzen* (Berlin: Ullstein & Co., 1909).

<sup>14</sup> P. Pierlig, *La Russie et la Saint-Siège* (Paris: Albert L. Hérold successeur, 1896).

<sup>15</sup> C. S. Ciampi, *Bibliografia critica delle antiche reciproche corrispondenze [...] dell'Italia colla Russia, colla Polonia ed alter parti settentrionali [...]* (Firenze: Leopoldo Allegri e Giov. Mazzoni, 1834-1839).

<sup>16</sup> A. Cronia, *La conoscenza del mondo slavo in Italia* (Padova: Officine grafiche Stediv, 1958).

<sup>17</sup> T. Ulewicz, 'Związki kulturalno-literackie Polski z Włochami do XVII wieku', in T. Michałowskiej et al. (eds.), *Literatura staropolska w kontekście europejskim (Związki i analogie)* (Wrocław: Zakł. Nar. im. Ossolińskich, 1977), 21–65. The same "critics" apply to the anyway useful works of A. F. Grabski, *Polska w opiniach Europy Zachodniej XIV-XV wieku* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn., 1968).

<sup>18</sup> D. Caccamo, 'Alberto Vimina in Ucraina e nelle parti settentrionali. Diplomazia e cultura nel Seicento Veneto', *Europa Orientalis* 5 (1986), 233–283. G. Michelini (ed.), *Michele Bianchi (Alberto Vimina): breve racconto della guerra di Lituania e Polonia contro Mosca alla metà del 17. secolo* (Vilnius: Museo d'Arte della Lituania, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> G. Platania, *Viaggi, mercatura e politica. Due lucchesi nel regno dei Sarmati europei nel XVII secolo: Pietro e Tommaso Talenti* (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2003).

Instead, comprehensive works tend to concentrate on the knowledge of the Slavic world in Italy as in the already mentioned article by A. Cronia, or in the research of L. Cini and V. Šičiński.<sup>20</sup> In all of these studies the relations between Poland, Ukraine, Muscovite Rome and Venice are very well contextualized in the Eastern European culture, but this is understood *tout court* as the culture of the Slavic Europe. The adoption of such a linguistic approach generated a geographical and literary gap dismissing the investigation of the Baltic enclave in the Slavic world.

It is our intention to contribute to bridge this historiographical and geographical gap. However, before dealing specifically with the subject matter, we believe we should give a reason for this disparity between Slavic and Baltic studies in Italy in order to better contextualize our research. It is undeniable that while authentic collections and libraries on Polish history have been known in Italy since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>21</sup> academic interest in Baltic studies is a late 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. Nonetheless this is not sufficient to explain the different fortunes of Slavic and Baltic studies in Italy. There are other terminological and historical reasons. First of all, for centuries, Lithuania Proper and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were mentioned in the ancient accounts as provinces of the Polish Kingdom, thus being tacitly included in the historiographical works about Poland. For example, the subordination of the Lithuanians is clearly stated in the relation about Muscovy attributed to Francesco Tiepolo (and dating from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century) in which, writing about 'Livoni, Lituani, et Russiani rossi,' it is noted that 'i primi alla corona di Polonia [sono] tributarij, gli altri dui in tutto obediienti'.<sup>22</sup> Lithuania rather than a country is considered as an ethnical region, which is in administrative, military, and political matters subject to the Polish Crown. Such statements are very common and almost identical in the various so-called Venetian manuscripts on Muscovy, which, being among the oldest sources referring to the administrative partitions of the southern Baltic region, have clearly influenced later accounts.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, it is possible to outline several different phases in the development of Italian historiography about Lithuania. Each of these periods is characterized by a different degree of knowledge of the country, and by a different foreign influence on its representation. Consequently, it is possible to individuate a connection

<sup>20</sup> L. Cini (ed.), *Venezia e la Polonia nei secoli dal XVII al XIX* (Venezia: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1965). V. Šičiński, *Ukraine in Foreign Comments and Descriptions from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Ukr. Congr. Comm. of America, 1953).

<sup>21</sup> Marchesani, *La Polonia*, 204.

<sup>22</sup> // Livonians, Lithuanians and Red Ruthenians [...] the formers [are] tributary of the Polish Crown, the other two obedient in every respect//. Quoted from S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia* (Venice: P. Naratovich, 1858) 3:506. See the 1576 manuscript, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana (hereinafter BMV), *Relazioni*, Cod. LXIV cl. VI.ital.

<sup>23</sup> We are referring, as an example, to the manuscript 1576, Venice, BMV, Cod. XXVIII. cl. VII it.

between the attitude toward Lithuania and the nature of the contacts between ancient Italian states, Poland, Lithuania, and Muscovy. In other words, there is a close connection between the evolution of the historiographical cliché and the nature of the contacts between these regions. The chronological limits of our research are imposed by the succession of these periods.

The economical relations Venetians had with Muscovites and the travels of Venetians to Tartary and Persia are what define the first period: the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The second period is the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Muscovy was seen both as a defender of a besieged Christianity and a target for a possible union of the Churches, thus becoming the destination of a number of papal nuncios and ambassadors. Both these periods are characterized, in the Italian accounts, by a positive attitude toward Muscovy and a critical posture toward Poland-Lithuania. Later, a third and different kind of relation with Eastern Europe influenced Italian historiography about that region. It again shoved the interest specifically in Lithuania into the background: since the crowning of Bona Sforza as queen of Poland (1518), a number of Italian historians and antiquarians got interested in the fate and faith of her family and their descendants in Poland-Lithuania. The interest in, and knowledge of, Poland-Lithuania grew even more when, during the Livonian war (1558-1583), Polish statesmen, clergymen, and literary people actuated a sort of systematic propaganda in favor of Catholic Poland (and against “schismatic” Russia) and initiated the printing in Rome of a great deal of pamphlets, panegyrics, and other reports both in Latin and Polish.

These relations were the cause and main source of geographical and “ethnographic” reports, which necessarily touched on Lithuania. In these accounts, objects of interest were, initially, the rivers connecting the northern parts of Muscovy to the Caspian and the Black Seas, which seemed to be possible alternative commercial routes after the Mediterranean became “an Arab lake.” Ambrogio Contarini’s *Viaggio della Tana* (1477) is just one of many examples of these exploratory-diplomatic travel accounts, which often included more or less detailed descriptions of Lithuanian cities and Lithuania.<sup>24</sup> Certainly the search for a northern access to Muscovy had already become a priority during the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and the knowledge of Lithuania was connected, at least until late 15<sup>th</sup> century, with these explorations. Already during the 13<sup>th</sup> century the popes used to send ‘ambasciatori nelle parti orientali, Frati Minori e Predicatori. Li quali preso camino per terra per la Polonia, e Russia vennero in Tartaria scrivendo diligentemente il loro viaggio’.<sup>25</sup> The

<sup>24</sup> G. B. Ramusio *delle Navigazioni et viaggi*, (Venice: Giunti, 1583) 2:91. We are referring to the second extended edition. The first edition dates Venice, 1551–1554. See also note 51.

<sup>25</sup> // Ambassadors to the eastern parts, minorites and preachers. Who, travelling by land to Poland and Red Russia, arrived in Tartary taking diligently notes about their travel. // G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigazioni*, 2:234.

Rome-Venice route to Tartary and back (through the southern part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) is clearly described, for example, in the travel account of some 13<sup>th</sup> century friars who tell us that

Furono dati a noi doi Comani<sup>26</sup> [...] acciò ne conducessero per siti a Kionia di Rossia.<sup>27</sup>[...] costoro in sei giorni ci condussero a Kionia [...] ma gli kionesi [...] tutti ci vennero incontra allegramente, e si congratularono con noi. Lo medesimo fo fatto a noi per tutta la Rossia, Polonia, Boemia. Daniel<sup>28</sup> et Vuasilico<sup>29</sup> suo fratello ne fecero gran festa.<sup>30</sup>

Taking into account other Venetian travel accounts and especially Contarini's, we can presume the road back to Europe passed through contemporary southwestern Lithuania and certainly included Trakai.<sup>31</sup>

During the 13<sup>th</sup> and most of the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, examples of such precise verbal descriptions of "European Sarmatia" as those of these friars were quite rare. By contrast, graphical representations of these far-away regions were more common. As an example of such late-Medieval portrayals, we could consider the so-called Map of Jesi because it is both one of the most accurate nautical maps and a representation of Eastern Europe dating from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It marks, therefore, one of the chronological limits of our research.<sup>32</sup> Striking in this map is the extreme precision of the coastal details, which contrasts with a number of "mistakes" in the representation of Eastern Europe's inland. It has been noted that some regions are represented upside-down: 'Silesia is not *beneath* Lithuania, and both Moravia and Prussia should have been on Bohemia's right, while here they are on the *left* of this region and *upside-down*' [authors' original italics]<sup>33</sup>. In the same map there is, it's worth noting, an incorrect representation of a chain of mountains – the mythical Ripheans – much closer to Central Europe than the Urals (of which they are, supposedly, a representation). Considering the fact that the well-known Altars of Alexander are also quite close to Europe, it becomes clear that 'this table intends to narrate to the attentive observer the events of his time

<sup>26</sup> The Turkish-Altaic Cuman people.

<sup>27</sup> Quite probably a location not far from nowadays Astrakhan and the North-Ossetian city of Kion-Khokh.

<sup>28</sup> King Danil of Halych (d. 1264).

<sup>29</sup> Vasilko Romanovich, brother of the King.

<sup>30</sup> // We were given two Cumans [...] so that they could guide us through places to Kion of Russia. [...] In six days they lead us to Kion [...] but all the inhabitants of Kion [...] came toward us cheerfully, and congratulated with us. The same happened to us in Red Russia, Poland, Bohemia. Daniel and Vasilko, his brother, offered great celebrations. // G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigationi*, 2:243.

<sup>31</sup> See P. Klimas, Ambrosio Contarini, 10.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed study on the Map of Jesi see P. Licini, 'L'Europa Orientale in una strana carta nautica di Jesi', *Europa Orientalis* 10 (1991), 27–58.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

by means of a language that is not just geographical, but also a symbolic interpretation of the Eastern European borders',<sup>34</sup> where cities such as Regensburg (where Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini persuaded the Christian princes to fight the Turks) and geographical elements such as the Ripheans create an 'unrealistic, but reassuring barrier against the Tatars' and thereby significantly reunite the whole Christian world (the Orthodox included).<sup>35</sup>

This sort of symbolic description was apparently less common when the contacts between Venetians and Muscovites became more frequent, profound, and multifaceted in the next century and especially later, during the rule of Ivan the IV, which, according to the 1573 report of the Venetian ambassador in Poland Girolamo Lippomano, was personally 'molto affettionato alla nation' italiana, e particolarmente alli Venetiani, onde molti delli forestieri che vanno la, per farsi più grati, dicono esser' Vinentiani'.<sup>36</sup>

In the Venetian accounts of the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries is evident a positive attitude toward Muscovy and the critical tones with regards to Poland (and, with it, Lithuania). In the Venetian relations of this period, it is Muscovy, 'serrato da levante [...] da quattro orde de Tartari',<sup>37</sup> not the Polish-Lithuanian state, which is to be considered the bulwark of Christianity against the Tatars. And still in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Francesco Tiepolo was stressing that Ruthenians and Cumans were not able to withstand the pressure of the Golden Horde and the Polish even allied themselves with the infidels, while only the firmness of Ivan III brought to a halt the Tatar advance into Europe:

Boido<sup>38</sup> [...] l'anno 1140<sup>39</sup> dopo rotto l'esercito de Cumani et Russiani, presa la Cumania et altre provincie vicine, al quale, et a successor suoi, non solo fu tributaria, ma di maniera sottoposta che da loro i duchi sui erano obbligati torre la confirmation dello stato suo [...]. Et questo continuò fino a che Giovanni<sup>40</sup> avo di questo<sup>41</sup> [...] li negò il tributo, che nell'avvenire più non li fù pagato, perché detto regno, pervenuto [...]

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. See also L. Kochan, *Storia della Russia moderna* (Torino: Einaudi, 1982).

<sup>36</sup> // really attached to the Italian nation, and particularly to the Venetians, hence many foreigners who go there, to show them off, claim to be Venetians. // We are quoting from É. Pommier, *Les Italiens*, 258. This report is preserved at Venice State Archive in 'Relazioni Polonia', envelope 26.

<sup>37</sup> // besieged from east by four hordes of Tatars//. S. Romanin, *Storia documentata*, 506.

<sup>38</sup> Quite probably, the Mongol ruler Batu Kahn (1207-1255). See next note.

<sup>39</sup> It is realistic there is a mistake here: the author is probably referring to the year 1240 since it is in the year 1238 that the Tatars invaded the Kipchak controlled steppe (properly *Cumania*); in December 1240 they pillaged Kiev and defeated Danylo of Halych (and the *Russiani* of the account); 1241 is also the year of the Battle of Lagnica and that of Mohi which marked the beginning of Mongol-Tatar rule on Eastern Europe.

<sup>40</sup> Ivan III (1440-1505).

<sup>41</sup> The author is writing at the time of Ivan IV (1530-1584).

Hamet<sup>42</sup> [...] appresso il Neper,<sup>43</sup> [...] fu da detti Precopensi<sup>44</sup> anichilato. [...] Onde a Tartari sempre dopo più in quei confini andarono mancando le forze, et per lo contrario crescendo a Moscoviti [...].<sup>45</sup>

At that time, Polish and Lithuanian armies were sometimes allies of the Golden Horde, a fact that was condemned by many Christian states and led writers and travelers to see in Muscovy the defender of Christian Europe and thus the most important actor in that region. Hence, until the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (but sometimes even later) the most “noble” and interesting subject for literary works was Muscovy’s struggle to protect Christianity. Consequently, in various accounts, Lithuania was (with Poland) just a necessary stepping-stone toward Muscovy and hence depicted, because of the Muscovite influence on Italian travelers, as an ally of the infidels.

The third stage, as mentioned above, is characterized by the interest Italians writers had in Polish noblemen and regents. Book collections on the subject of Polish history and literature were being formed in private houses.<sup>46</sup> The interest in Poland grew, and with it a “Polonized” knowledge of Lithuania. In a number of accounts published in Italy around the third decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is even possible to perceive the influence of Polish interests in the representation of conflicts in the region.<sup>47</sup> For example, the battle of Orsha (1514) is often depicted, in these Polish-Italian commentaries, as a Catholic triumph over the schismatic Muscovites. Battles like those of Orsha and Olszanica (1527) were celebrated in Rome by oeuvres such as the collection of writings *Carmina de memorabilia cede Scismaticarum Moscovitarum* or Francesco Speroli’s *Oratio*.<sup>48</sup> Scholars tend to see

<sup>42</sup> Ahmed Khan, Khan of the Great Horde between 1465 and 1481.

<sup>43</sup> The River Dnieper. The author is probably referring to the Ugra River. Both rivers flow through Smolensk, but it was on the Ugra that the so-called Great Standoff took place in 1480 marking the end of Tatar rule over Russia.

<sup>44</sup> A group of Tatars allied to Ivan III.

<sup>45</sup> // Boido [...] in the year 1140 after defeating the army of Cumans and Ruthenians, took the Cumania and other neighbouring provinces, which not only became tributary to him and to his successors, but their dukes were forced to ask for the approval of his state [...]. And this situation lasted until Ivan ancestor of the current regent [...] refused to pay them the tribute, which was not paid anymore in the future, because that realm once [...] Hamet [...] reached the Neper [...] was annihilated by the mentioned Precopenses. [...] Hence the Tatars became more and more powerless on those borders and, on the contrary, more powerful became the Muscovites [...]. // S. Romanin, *Storia documentata*, 508–509.

<sup>46</sup> See P. Marchesani, *La Polonia*, 206.

<sup>47</sup> We are referring to G. Falletti’s *Ad Sigismundum Sarmatorum Regem* published in Venice in 1557, to G. B. Ramusio’s printing of the *Oratio in funere Sigismundi Jagellonis* in Venice in 1559 and to a number of Polish oeuvres printed in Naples and Rome in the same period. For an extensive list see P. Marchesani, *La Polonia*, 206.

<sup>48</sup> F. Speroli, *Oratio r. in Christo p. d. Francisci Speruli episcopi s. Leonis habita in pontificiis sacris Clementis VII ob memorabilem cladem, quam impii Tartari, auspiciis serenissimi Sigismundi regis, a Poloniis nuper acceperunt*,

in these works the beginning of Polish “advertising” among Western Catholics and specifically in Rome.<sup>49</sup>

During the Livonian war the already mentioned Polish propaganda in favor of Catholic Poland caused the printing in Rome of a number of Latin and Polish oeuvres. In the Italian historiography of this period, the influence of the apologetic attitude of this late 16<sup>th</sup> century Polish occasional literature about their kings and their deeds is evident. Illustrative in this sense are a number of Polish-Italian works about Sigismund I and Sigismund Augustus, such as those of G. B. Ramusio, G. Falletti, M. Avanzo, and S. Morlupino. This “Polonocentric” influence, on the one hand, and the lack of consistent direct contact between Italian and Lithuanian courts, on the other, did not permit Italian historiography to mirror the interests of this third political actor.

It is only during the last phases of the Livonian war, with the political-religious missions of the Jesuits in Moscow, Vilnius, Smolensk, and Dorpat, that a more defined and independent image of Lithuania formed in the ancient Italian states’ historiography. And it is only around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that envoys, either of the Italian courts or of the Holy See, began producing independent ethnographic and historical works about Lithuania, such as that of Alberto Vimina (1671).

The academic, geographical, and chronological limits of our research evidently impose themselves on their own. Our study should deal with Lithuania as a transit area between Central Europe and the borders of besieged Christianity during a period that goes from the Venetians’ exploration and commercial journeys in the lands of Rus’ to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. As noted by Pommier, after the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the reciprocal ‘knowledge’ of Central and North-Eastern Europe turned into the Muscovite investigation of European history: by the time of Peter the Great (1672-1725) it is up to North-Eastern Europe to discover Western Europe – ‘the problem of the knowledge of the regional object of this study in this period would have to be defined in new terms’.<sup>50</sup>

A final consideration about the sources: it is precisely because of the goal we set ourselves that we decided to investigate almost exclusively “well-known accounts.” Only oeuvres meant for a large audience can be representative of both the author and the readers and thus represent a common or conventional mind-set.<sup>51</sup>

*ubi obiter de Polonorum cum Tartaris natiuo odio, & utriusque gentis moribus, institutis, ac gestis agitur, cum breui descriptione Sarmatiae Poloniaeque* (Rome: Francesco Minizio Calvo, 1527).

<sup>49</sup> See T. Ulewicz, ‘Związki kulturalno-literackie Polski z Włochami do XVII wieku’, in T. Michałowskiej et al. (eds.), *Literatura staropolska w kontekście europejskim (Związki i analogie)* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1977), 21–65. See also P. Marchesani, *La Polonia*, 203.

<sup>50</sup> É. Pommier, *Les Italiens*, 249.

<sup>51</sup> In order to decide which accounts were well known during the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, we had recourse to later catalogues and bibliographic collections that, in a way, provide a reliable imagine of the

Accordingly, we will consider private documents only if they were published and became relatively widely available. This is the case, for example, with Alberto Campese's letter to Pope Clement VII in 1524. In general, greater attention will be paid to exceptionally popular accounts.<sup>52</sup>

Alberto Campese's letter to Pope Clement VII is a classical example of an indirect description of Lithuania. More than a letter, this text is a very detailed commentary on Muscovy, which assumes, in the last three chapters, the form of a treatise on the union of the Churches. In this respect, the author clearly sees in the Polish-Lithuanian state the main obstacle to the union that seemed very possible if 'per astuzia e opera del re di Polonia la cosa non fusse stata disturbata'.<sup>53</sup> The same opinion, apparently, had been expressed by Tommaso Negro – Bishop of Scardona and Papal Nuncio to the Polish King. In contrast, according to some ancient chroniclers, the Muscovite prince demonstrated 'animo veramente cristiano e fraterno'.<sup>54</sup> In the ninth section of the letter, 'Per qual cagion non si debba mandar ambasciador di Polonia al duca di Moscovia per ridurlo all'union ecclesiastica',<sup>55</sup> Campese even states that it seems 'al re di Polonia dispiaccia che 'l duca di Moscovia diventi o sia da noi tenuto veramente cristiano',<sup>56</sup> and concludes his letter suggesting that 'per niuna via non ne communi-casse cosa alcuna né col re di Polonia né con alcuno che gli fusse favorevole'.<sup>57</sup>

Sometimes even in secular accounts it is possible to perceive criticism toward the deeds of the Polish King. In the Italian translation of Sigismund von Herberstein's account it is possible to read:

"editorial success" of a work (mentioning these works or republishing them after many years since their first edition). Precisely, we had recourse to C. S. Ciampi, *Bibliografia critica delle antiche reciproche corrispondenze [...] dell'Italia colla Russia, colla Polonia ed alter parti settentrionali [...]* (Florence: Leopoldo Allegri e Giov. Mazzoni, 1834-1839); N. F. Haym, *Biblioteca italiana ossia notizia de' libri rari nella lingua italiana divisa in quattro partiprincipali [...]* (Venice: Angiolo Geremia, 1723); we confronted this work with his 19<sup>th</sup> century integrated edition *Biblioteca italiana [...] de' libri rari italiani [...] edizione corretta, ampliata [...]* (Milan: Giovanni Silvestri, 1803-1807); G. Cinelli Calvoli, A. D. Sancassani (eds.), *Biblioteca volante [...] edizione seconda [...]* (Venice: Giambattista Albrizzi, 1734-1748); F. Argelati, A. T. Villa (eds.), *Biblioteca degli volgarizzatori [...]* (Milan: Federico Agnelli, 1767). Finally, precious information about Italian writers dealing with the history of the events of Muscovy and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth have been found in S. Ciampi, *Esame critico con documenti inediti della storia di Demetrio di Iwan Wasiliewitch* (Florence: Giuseppe Galetti, 1827). With specific reference to the 16<sup>th</sup> century's accounts, we referred also to P. U. Dini, *Aliletoescur: linguistica baltica delle origini: teorie e contesti linguistici nel Cinquecento* (Livorno: B&C, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> We are referring here mainly to the works of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (then Pope Pius II) and Paolo Giovio's histories.

<sup>53</sup> // By trickery and actions of the King of Poland that result would not have been nullified. // G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigationi*, vol 2, 129v.

<sup>54</sup> // A very Christian and fraternal mood. // Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> // For what reason it should not be sent a Polish ambassador to the Muscovy Duke in order to induce him to unite the Church // Ibid., 131v.

<sup>56</sup> // The Polish King is unhappy about the possibility that the Duke of Muscovy would become or be actually retained Christian // Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> // in no way should communicate anything to the King of Poland or to those supporting him. // Ibid.

Io vi dissi nel principio che fui mandato da Massimiliano Imperatore nella Moscovia a componere e pacificare i principi di Polonia e della Moscovia; ma senza risoluzione alcuna indi mi parti', perciocché, mentre nella Moscovia, presenti gli oratori del re di Polonia, io trattavo della pace e concordia fra loro, il re di Polonia, raunato l'esercito, Opotzka castello (indarno però) espugnava, e per ciò il principe negava di voler fare tregua con il re di Polonia: e così, senz'altra conclusione del negozio, onorevolmente mi diede licenzia.<sup>58</sup>

Incidentally, we should note that Herberstein's *Commentaries* during the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were, together with Piccolomini's cosmography, one of the few reliable sources of knowledge about Eastern Europe. They were published in Italian translations and included in the numerous editions of Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi*.<sup>59</sup> Noteworthy is the success of the several Italian translation of this work of Herberstein's: another clue supporting the idea of a broader audience for non-Latin texts already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

However, even more revealing is Campese's description of Muscovy's borders. Here the author offers a very short, but illustrative, geographical, and historical account of Lithuania.

[...] verso ponente al mar Prutenico, primamente i Rossi, dappoi i Lituani e i Samogeti serrano il dominio de' Moscoviti [...]. Da Chiovia, che già fu città principale de' Rossi, insino a Vilna, città principale de' Lituani, si fanno cinquecento miglia italiane;<sup>60</sup> da Vilna insino a' liti vicini del mar Prutenico circa trecentocinquanta; [...]. Così li Rossi come i Lituani e i Samogeti rendono ubbidienza al re di Polonia, insino dal tempo di Iagellone, che fu primo granduca di Lituani, il quale, essendosi battezzato e fatto re di Polonia, e mutatosi il nome, nominandosi Vladislao, convertì alla fede di Cristo i suoi Lituani e i Samogeti. [...] Tanto sotto questo re di Polonia detto Gismondo quanto sotto gli altri suoi predecessori Alessandro e Casimiro, la miglior parte del dominio lituano (cioè quella ch'è fra il fiume Boristene,<sup>61</sup> la palude Meotide<sup>62</sup> e il Tanai,<sup>63</sup> che

<sup>58</sup> // I told you in the beginning that I was sent by the Emperor Maximilian to Muscovy in order to settle and gentle the princes of Poland and Muscovy; but without any success I had to leave, because, while in Muscovy, at the presence of the Polish King's orators, I was dealing for the peace and harmony between them, the King of Poland, gathered the army, took the castle of Opotzka (but in vain), and for this reason the Prince refused to agree on a truce with the King of Poland: and so, with no other conclusions of the treaty, with honour, he let me leave. // G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigationi*, 2:183r. S. von Herbrstein's *Rerum Moscovitarum commentari* was first published in Basel in 1551. This work was then included in the second volume of Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi* (1583 edition). The account proved so popular that a third Italian translation was published in Venice as *Commentari della Moscovia et parimente della Russia et delle altre cose belle et notabili, composti già latinamente per il Signor Sigismondo Libero Barone in Herberstein, Neiperg et Gutenbag tradotti nuovamente di latino in lingua nostra volgare* (1600).

<sup>59</sup> See previous note.

<sup>60</sup> Since the Italian mile is about 1.851 meters, according to the author, between Kiev and Vilnius there are about 900 kilometres, but in reality the distance is about 750 kilometres.

<sup>61</sup> The River Dnieper.

<sup>62</sup> The region of, and around, the Sea of Azov.

<sup>63</sup> The River Don.

già propriamente s'apparteneva allo stato de' Rossi) nella quale è Chiovia, principal città già ricchissima e magnificentissima, posta appresso 'l fiume Boristene, e dapoi anche la rabbia e crudeltà de' Tartari l'abbiano guasta e distrutta del tutto e avenga che i re di Polonia ancora la posseggano, nondimeno per la vicinà de' sopradetti e per le continoue correrie è desolata e quasi del tutto abbandonata.<sup>64</sup>

Once again it is clear why the ancient Italian States' historiography dealt only marginally with Lithuania: it was considered in every respect just a subject of the Polish crown. Interestingly, the earlier conversion of Mindaugas is not considered a real transition to the Christian faith (or the author was not aware of it): it is only with Jogaila and the annexation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to Poland that the land is considered a Christian one by the Italian writer. A second point of interest is the consciousness of the political and ethnical distinction between Samogitians and Lithuanians, a fact that in turn confirms a fairly good knowledge of the subject matter. Finally, we have to note the quite precise calculation of the distances between relevant cities of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Ruthenia and the pretty accurate geographical description of settlements. This relative precision, in connection with the equally exact geographical description of Muscovy, makes clear that already in the third decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century knowledge of the easternmost parts of Europe was quite detailed.

Nonetheless, even in this description the Riphean Mountains fulfill a function of symbolic protection against Asian Sarmatians.<sup>65</sup> Obviously, Campese did not know Sigismund von Herberstein's account about his travel to Muscovy even if they share a number of similarities, especially with reference to certain myths about Muscovy's rivers and mountains,<sup>66</sup> thus confirming once again the strength of Ptolemy's description of Eastern Europe.<sup>67</sup> The descriptions and the interest in

<sup>64</sup> // [...] To the west by the Prutenic Sea, firstly the Red Ruthenians, then the Lithuanians and the Samogitians border the domains of the Muscovites [...]. From Kiev, that once was the main city of the Red Ruthenians, to Vilnius, main city of the Lithuanians there are five hundred Italian miles; from Vilnius to the shores of the Prutenic Sea about three hundred and fifty; [...]. The Red Ruthenians as well as Lithuanians and Samogitians are subject to the King of Poland, since the times of Jagiello, who was the first Duke of the Lithuanians, who, once baptized and become King of Poland, and changed his name, to call himself Wladislaw converted to the faith of Christ his Lithuanians and Samogitians. [...] Under this King of Poland Called Sigismund as well as under his predecessors Alexander and Casimir, most of the Lithuanian domains (that is those between the River Dnieper, the Sea of Azov and the River Don, which actually belonged to the Red Ruthenians' state) where is Kiev, main city and once extremely rich and magnificent, situated by the River Dnieper, and since the rage and cruelty of the Tatars caused its decadence and destruction and even if it still belongs to the Kings of Poland, nonetheless because of the closeness of the above mentioned and the continuous incursions it is desolate and almost desert. // G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigazioni*, 2:127r–127v.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. P. Licini, *L'Europa Orientale*, 45.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> According to Ptolemy, the Rivers Don and Dnieper rise from high mountains – the Ripheans – which, at the same time separates Europe from Asia, but are much closer to Europe than the Urals.

distant and different peoples are indeed supported by more accurate geographical accounts; however some Medieval remnants are still perceivable.

In passing, it is possible to note in Campese's letter a continuous reference to 'our histories' and 'our historians'. Evidently, other sources were available in the ancient Italian states before 1524. Since Paolo Giovio's *Commentario delle cose de Turchi* was published only in 1532, his very popular *Historiarum suis temporis* even later, and his *De legatione Basilii Magni principis Moschovie* in 1525, it seems clear that Campese is referring to Enea Silvio Piccolomini's *de Europa*, which appeared in 1458 and immediately attained great popularity. It is also certain Campese knew of Contarini's report, republished in Venice in 1524.<sup>68</sup>

Contarini's report has already been extensively investigated by both Italian and Lithuanian historians and especially by P. Klimas. Contarini's commentaries have been criticized for focusing too much on the author himself. Nevertheless, the descriptions of the most exotic people and places, such as the Tatars, the Persian Shah, or the winter in Muscovy, are vivacious and rich in detail. Generally, Contarini is much more interested in describing exotic things, stressing the diversity of the personalities and regions he visited (noting, for example, that Polish dwellings are completely different from the geographically not too distant German ones), and. Little information about Lithuania is provided (he spent some time in Trakai), probably because Contarini seems not to distinguish it from Poland. On the contrary, a lot is said about the King Casimir IV Jagiellon. The general portrait depicted by Contarini is that of an Eastern Europe freed from the Tatar yoke thanks to Muscovy's efforts.

In our diachronic study, greater importance is assumed by the Pope-to-be Pius II's historical-geographical works. While Piccolomini's very popular *De Europa* was written almost half a century before Campese's letter, it was published for the first time only in 1571.<sup>69</sup> The greatest 15<sup>th</sup> century supporter of the war against the Turks was also the supposed author of a historical-geographic treatise about Europe

<sup>68</sup> The relation was written in 1477, but published for the first time in 1487 with the title *Questo e el viazo de misier Ambrosio Contarin ambador de la illustrissima signoria de Venesia al signor Uxuncassam Re di Persia* (Venice: per Hanibalem Fosium). This relation was than published, as *Itinerario dei Magnifico et Clarissimo messer Ambrosio Contarini [...]* (Venice: per Francesco Bindoni et Mapheo Pasini, 1524). It became much more popular when included in Antonio Manuzio's *Viaggi fatti alla Tana, in Persia, in India et in Costantinopoli* (Venice: Manuzio, 1543) and later in the second volume of G. B. Ramusio's *dell Navigationi et viaggi* (Venice, 1554). See G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigationi*, 2: 112r–156r.

<sup>69</sup> Once again, for more detailed information about Piccolomini's description of Lithuania we invite to refer to P. U. Dini, *linguistica baltica delle origini*, 50–83; R. Kamuntavičius dissertation; A. Janulaitis, *Enėjas Silvius Piccolomini*. The main Piccolomini's works we are referring to are *Cosmographia pape Pij* (Venice: Bernardinus Venetus de Vitalibus, 1501–1503); *Historia Bohemica* (Rome: Johannes Schurener, 1475). Piccolomi's *de Europa* was criticized and expurgated before a tardive publishing (specific details about the edition of *de Lituania* have been provided in the above-mentioned study of P. U. Dini). Despite figuring as written by Giovanni Gobellini, it has been demonstrated that the author of this book was Pope Pius II himself.

in which there appears a quite exhaustive book *de Lituania*.<sup>70</sup> The general frame in which the work develops is defined by a unitary conception of Christianity able to mitigate doctrinal and rite differences: it is a conception well defined by Piccolomini's principle '*Christianus sum, et nil christiani a me alieno puto*'.<sup>71</sup> It is precisely because of this conception that the deeds of Vytautas – the ally of the Tatars – are condemned in Piccolomini's work. The description of the habits of Lithuanians is equally quite negative: they are at the border of Christianity both territorially and culturally. The famous account about the liberal habits of the Lithuanian noblewomen is just one of the examples. However, the fortune of this work more than a century after its draft was possibly determined by the author's lack of interest in the political events and the much more detailed descriptions of exotic habits. All in all, this oeuvre is a typical example of late-medieval cosmography influenced by recent geographical discoveries and by the humanistic taste of its author, and was used for decades both as a valuable reference and an engaging reading.

A similar fortune smiled on Paolo Giovio's histories and also on his *De legatione Basilii Magni Principis Moscoviae ad Clementem vii Pontificem Maximum*.<sup>72</sup> The latter account, as usual, introduces the reader to the geographical position of Muscovy; explains its borders and those of the neighboring countries; and deals with the religion, habits, and language of the Muscovites and, obviously, with the question of the union of the Churches. At a general level, Giovio's account is innovative because of the author's ability to connect political and military events at a European level.

Nevertheless, speaking about the knowledge of Lithuania, not much is added by this report. As an exception, the interesting etymological investigation and a reflection on the "language of the Lithuanians" can be mentioned:

Li Roxolani,<sup>73</sup> li Geti<sup>74</sup> e i Bastarni<sup>75</sup> anticamente abitarono quel paese, dal quale crederi che fusse venuto il nome di Rossia, perciocché una parte di Lituania la chiamano Rossia inferiore,<sup>76</sup> e la Moscovia è chiamata Rossia bianca.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> A multifaceted research on Piccolomini life, literary works and apostolic activities is C. H. Verdière, *Essai sur Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini* (Paris: Joubert, 1843).

<sup>71</sup> Ep. 162. See Charles H. Verdière, *Essai*, 95.

<sup>72</sup> P. Iovio, *De legatione Basilii Magni Principis Moscoviae ad Clementem vii Pontificem Maximum Liber: in quo situs regionis antiquis incognitus, religio, gentis, mores et causae legationis fidelissime referuntur*, 1525. This account was firstly presented in a letter to Giovanni Rufo, archbishop of Cosenza, and then included in Ramusio's collection of travel accounts. We will refer to this later edition in which Giovio's relation is referred as *Paolo Iovio Historico delle cose della Moscovia*. See G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigazioni*, 2:131r–137r.

<sup>73</sup> Descendants of the Alans.

<sup>74</sup> Thracian tribes of the Lower Danube.

<sup>75</sup> The Germanic tribes who inhabited, until the 4<sup>th</sup> century, nowadays South Ukraine.

<sup>76</sup> Red Ruthenia.

<sup>77</sup> // The Roxolani, the Getae and the Bastarnae used to inhabit that country in ancient times, and from them I tend to believe the name Red Russia derived, since part of Lithuania is called Lower Russia, and Muscovy

The ancient inhabitants of the region seem to offer the opportunity to individuate a common past and an explanatory reason for the supposed cultural unity of the easternmost part of the European Sarmatia. In Giovio's account, however, this supposed homogeneity is extended to the language: even that of the Lithuanians is identified with the Slavonic one:

Li Moscoviti usano e la lingua e le lettere schiave, come fanno li Schiavi, li Dalmatini, li Boemi, li Poloni e i Lituani: la qual lingua si dice esser piú usata di tutte l'altre.<sup>78</sup>

Because of the influence of his sources – the envoys of the Duke of Muscovy – and the implicit reference to the language of the ruling classes and Grand Dukes, Giovio depicts the Lithuanian language as a Slavonic one, clearly referring to the Chancellery Slavonic used at the court. Such statements might have caused a bit of confusion among readers, but there has always been bewilderment amid classical writers when dealing with the languages of the Balts.

We should remember, in passing, that even Tacitus misunderstood the language of these tribes and, consequently, their ethnic origins. According to the Latin historian, the Balts were speaking a language similar to that of the Brits. The assimilation of *Prutenus* to *Brittus* is not exclusive to Tacitus: in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Prussian chronicle *Borussorum Origo ex Domine Christiano* is not only one of the first written accounts suggesting that Lithuanian originated from the Romans, but also mentions the ancient idea of the Baltic languages being connected with the language of Britain.

While there are no references to the alleged Roman origins of the Lithuanians in Giovio, his representation of Lithuanians as the quite indefinite mingling of people of the European Sarmatia gets even more intricate – at least according to the collective memory of the Muscovites as supposedly narrated by Demetrius:

Ma dimandando noi a Demetrio se appresso di loro fusse di mano in mano lasciata da' loro antichi fama alcuna, o dalle istorie loro memoria, dei popoli gotti [...] ci rispondeva che 'l nome della gente gottica e del re Totila era famoso e illustre, e che a quell'impresa si ragunarono diversi popoli, e specialmente li Moscoviti, e che quell'esercito si accrebbe dal concorso delle genti di Lituania e di quei Tartari ch'abitavano appresso la Volga: nondimeno tutti furono chiamati Gotti, percióché i Gotti che abitavano l'isola d'Islandia e di Scandavia furono capi di quell'impresa.<sup>79</sup>

is called White Russia. // G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigationi*, 2:133r.

<sup>78</sup> // The Muscovites use the Slavic language and letters, as the Slavs, the Dalmatians, the Bohemians, the Polish and the Lithuanians: this language is said to be used more than all the others. // *Ibid.*, 134v.

<sup>79</sup> // But asking Demetrius whether they preserved any memory of their ancestors' deeds, or through history, of the Gothic peoples [...] he answered us that the name of the Gothic people and that of the King Totila was famous and illustrious, and that in that feat different people took part and especially the Muscovites, and that that army was reinforced by the people of Lithuania and those Tatars living close to the Volga: nonetheless

Despite the celebration of the Slavonic language and the mention of all the people who took part in the expedition of the Goths, the central point of Giovio's description is the intention to depict a sort of united European Sarmatia opposed to the Asiatic Sarmatia lying beyond the mountains of Muscovy.

The idea of two Sarmatias and the fear of the "other" is clearly expressed in the already mentioned letter of Alberto Campese, who portrays the Asian Sarmatians invasions as a calamity and a threat to Christianity, especially when the Tatar invader

al tempo d'Innocenzio quarto, entrando nella nostra Europa sopra la palude Meotide con un esercito innumerabile, primamente prese la Rossia, e in quella distrusse una città ricchissima nominata Chiovia, dappoi li Poloni, gli Slezii e i Moravi, e appresso ruppe li Ungheri, gli vinse e con una grandissima strage gli rovinò, e messe una grandissima paura a tutta la cristianità.<sup>80</sup>

The partitioning of Eastern Europe and the western part of Central Asia into European and Asiatic Sarmatias was very common and conventional in the ancient Italian states as in the rest of 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In the historiographical tradition, this conceptual partition found its most popular supporter in Maciej Miechowita, whose books about the two Sarmatias were soon published in Italian as part of Giovan Battista Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi* (1550). This work is known as *I libri di Matteo di Micheovo sulle due Sarmazie* and proved successful because it was based on the traditional distinction between Europe and the part of the world beyond the *Are Alexandri*.

Despite Miechowita's book not being a travel account, it is not difficult to understand why Ramusio included this work in his collection for the Italian readers. The second book of Miechowita's treatise deals with European Sarmatia and specifically with the foundation, expansion, and development of Samogitia, Lithuania, and Muscovy; and it often mentions the Roman and Italian origins of the former two. Referring to Lithuania, the historical account is very poor in terms of narrative construction and rather resembles a chronology of the regents with interposed sections concerning the stages of the Christianization of Samogitia and Lithuania. The account, influenced by the author's main source, Jan Długosz, starts with the legend of the Italian origin of the Lithuanians (without

less all where called Goths, because the Goths who were living in the Island of Scandinavia where the leader of the feat. // Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> // At the time of Innocent fourth, entering in our Europe north of the Azov Sea with an innumerable army, firstly they took Red Russia, and there destroyed an extremely rich city called Kiev, then the Polish, the Silesians and the Moravians, and subsequently defeated the Hungarians, they defeated them in a huge carnage and crippled them, and terribly frighten the whole Christianity. // G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigationi*, 2:127r.

any mention of the flight from Nero or Attila) – something that could easily have engaged the Italian reader. This work, like that of Giovio, is mainly an apology for the unity of the European Sarmatians, who should have been guided by the Roman Church. The fifth part of the account is a perfect summa of this idea: it is the chronology of the action Pope Innocent IV took in order to challenge the Tatars' siege of Europe.

Moreover, we should note that Miechowita's treatise became so popular in the Italian peninsula that even the diplomatic mission of Francesco Da Collo to Muscovy (1518-1519) was seen as an opportunity to investigate the discrepancies between the geographic descriptions of the Polish writer and those of Claudius Ptolemy. Surprisingly, in his treatise,<sup>81</sup> and despite the journey he actually made, Da Collo reiterated Ptolemy's description and particularly the existence of the Riphean and Hyperborean mountains. Lithuania is described only in passing as one of the stops on his journey, and he did not add anything new for his Italian readers.<sup>82</sup>

In the extended reprint of Ramusio's *Delle navigazioni et viaggi* (1583), another very popular and influential account of the history of Poland and Lithuania is reproduced: we are referring to the Italian translation of Alexander Guagnini's description of European Sarmatia.<sup>83</sup> In this account the information about Lithuania is abundant and often much more precise than in other previous Italian sources. The history of Lithuania is addressed extensively; the geographical description is precise; its borders are correctly defined. Short anecdotes are often interposed in the main narration in order to provide details about improbable subterfuges, actions carried out 'secretamente' and 'occultamente';<sup>84</sup> these and similar frivolities make the reading much more lively and intense. All in all, Guagnini seems to like the anecdotes about strange manners and the persistence of paganism even among

<sup>81</sup> He prepared a report of his travel in the Latin language, but it was not published. In 1558 an Italian transposition was drafted by Fabio Sbarra and known as *Trattato moscovitico*. The original work was partially published by Da Collo's son, Marco, as *Trattamento di pace tra il Serenissimo Sigismondo Re di Polonia, et Gran Basilio Principe di Moscovia havuto dalli Illustri Signori, Francesco da Collo, Cavallier, Gentil'huomo di Conegliano, et Antonio de Conti, Gentil'huomo Padovano, Oratori della Maestà di Massimilian, Primo Imperatore l'anno 1518. Scritta per lo medesimo Sig. Cavalier Francesco. Con la relatione di quel viaggio, et di quei paesi settentrionali, de' monti Riphei, et Hiperborei, della vera origine del fiume Tanai, et della Palude Meotide* (Padua, 1603).

<sup>82</sup> R. Kamuntavičius, XVI a. pirmosios pusės, 244.

<sup>83</sup> Originally written in Latin in 1578 and published as *Alexandri Guagnini Veronensis Sarmatiae Europaeae Descriptio, Quae Regnum Poloniae, Lituaniam, Samogitiam, Russiam, Massoviam, Prussiam, Pomeraniam, Livoniam, Et Moschoviae, Tartariaeque partem complectitur. [...] Cui supplementi loco, [...] Item Genealogia Regum Polonorum* (Speyer, 1581). Much more popular was among Italian readers the translation appeared in G. B. Ramusio's collection of travel reports (1583) and known as *Ladescrittione della Sarmatia Europea del Manifico Cavalliere Alessandro Guanino Veronese*.

<sup>84</sup> G. B. Ramusio, *Delle navigazioni*, 2:36r.

noblemen living not far from 'Vilna' where there is 'una villa del Re, Lavaris si chiama, nella quale sin'hora s'adorano i serpenti'.<sup>85</sup>

The last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century offers a greater variety of historical works describing Lithuania as part of the so-called histories of the world. The nature of these oeuvres varies, for now together with the travel and embassy reports a number of "sundry" histories are included. Giovanni Tarcagnota's *Delle Istorie del Mondo* (first edition Venice 1585) was a sort of universal history of the world clearly influenced by a Christian Catholic perception of history. His collection of Latin and Greek historical accounts covered the history of humanity from the "beginning of the world" to the year 1513. An integration of Mambrino Roseo and Bartolomeo Dionigi da Fano extended Tarcagnota's works up to the year 1582. It is in the third part of this work that the Italian readers had the opportunity to get acquainted with Lithuanian history. Dealing with the events of the years-long conflict between Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy for control over Livonia, the author explains how Lithuania was involved and the political and military consequences of these wars.

A comparable collection of somehow similar nature is Cesare Campana's *Historie del mondo*.<sup>86</sup> Writing about Muscovy and the wars against Poland, Sweden, and the Turks occurring during the seventh decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Campana mentions both Poland and Lithuania and stresses, indirectly, that they were allied to the Turks themselves.<sup>87</sup> The same tone already used by Campese is replicated here: the Polish king is shrewd and astute in choosing alliances and refusing peace agreements while 'il moscovita [...] desiderava [...] viver quietamente co' Principi Stranieri'.<sup>88</sup> In the third book of the first volume some pieces of information about the Lithuanian origins of the Jagiellonian family are provided when writing about the death of Sigismund II. Naturally, the author stresses the relations with the Aragon family and the pompous ceremony held in Naples in honor of the King.

In the historical works of Campana there is, traditionally, an abundance of geographical descriptions enriched by (sometimes quite imaginary) accounts of exploration journeys. Nevertheless, much greater attention is reserved for military deeds. This is the reason why Campana has been criticized as a litterateur: he was interested 'a ragionar delle guerre principalmente' in order to please and amuse the

<sup>85</sup> // a mansion of the King, called Lavaris, where up to nowadays snakes are worshipped. // Ibid., 46.

<sup>86</sup> It was published in 1596 in Venice; in 1598 in Turin, and a third time in Venice (1597-1599) before the end of the century. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century this work was republished as a two volumes history in Como (1601) and Pavia (1602). A part of these histories – about the notable events occurred in 1595-1600 – was separately published in Brescia in 1601. An extended version of the *Historie* appeared in 1607 again in Venice.

<sup>87</sup> C. Campana, *Delle historie del mondo*, (Venice: Giunti, 1607) 1:33. First edition 1597.

<sup>88</sup> // the muscovite [...] desired [...] to live in peace with the Foreign Regents. // Ibid.

readers.<sup>89</sup> Being a committed Counter-Reformist, Campana was openly intolerant and critical especially of Calvinism and Lutheranism. For this reason his *Historie* were included in Antonio Possevino's *Bibliotheca Selecta* and his historiographical skills celebrated in Possevino's *Apparato all'istoria*.<sup>90</sup>

The Jesuit Antonio Possevino himself contributed to the knowledge of Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy in Italy. Pope Gregory XIII sent him to Sweden, the Baltic region, and Muscovy officially to mediate a peace treaty in the Livonian War and secretly to investigate the possibility of reuniting the Churches. He left two Latin accounts of these travels, but already in 1593 and 1594 two Italian translations were available.<sup>91</sup> Travelling to Livonia, cooperating with Piotr Skarga, and having the opportunity to meet both Ivan and Bathory, Possevino acquired a very precise knowledge of that region and had the opportunity to write an equally accurate and truthful report (despite the exaggerated criticism of Reformers such as Volanus, for example). The Italian translation of the *Commentarii* (and especially Possevino's long letter to Stephan I and one to Eleanor of Austria) assumes the form of a sort of history of the Church in Poland-Lithuania (and Transylvania).

A similar interest is evident in the 17<sup>th</sup> century editions of Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici* in which, with rare exceptions, the history of Poland-Lithuania is reduced to that of the Catholic Church in those regions. Nevertheless, some interesting comments about the political situation of the Commonwealth offer an unusual perspective. In a 1574 letter by the cardinal of Como (published in the *Annales* as a complementary document) about the funeral of Sigismund II we read that knights were carrying

ogni uno sopra una lancia una cornetta di diverse insigne, che significavano le province che sono soggette al Regno di Polonia, non essendo venute però quelle di Lituania et della Russia, per esser Province unite già gran tempo, et non soggette al Regno di Polonia.<sup>92</sup>

As already mentioned, the interest in Poland-Lithuania since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (and mainly in the next century) was connected, in the ancient Italian states,

<sup>89</sup> // to debate about wars mainly // L. Ducci, *Ars historica*, 63.

<sup>90</sup> See A. Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1607) 273, 323; and A. Possevino, *Apparato all'istoria di tutte le nationi* (Venezia, 1598), 22r, 173v, 180r.

<sup>91</sup> For the reason that the first Italian edition, Antonio Possevino, *Commentarii di Moscovia, et della pace seguita fra lei e il Regno di Polonia [...] tradotti nell'Italiana da Gio. Battista Possevino [...]* (Mantova: Mammarello, 1592) has not been recognized as his own by the author himself, we will refer to the second edition – Mantova: Francesco Osanna, 1596.

<sup>92</sup> // each of them was carrying on a spear a standard of various banners, which represented the provinces subject to the Kingdom of Poland, not being present those of Lithuania and Russia, being them long time united, and not subject to the Kingdom of Poland // As published in *Annales Ecclesiastici: Quos Post Caesarem S. R. E. Card. Baronivm, Odoricvm Raynaldvm Ac Iacobvm Laderchivm [...] Ab An. MDLXXII. Ad Nostra Vsque Tempora Continvat Augustinus Theiner* (Rome, 1856), 538.

with a curiosity about the lives of the heirs of Bona Sforza, the deeds of Sigismund I and his descendants, and the worldly events at their court. This sort of relations added very little information about those countries, but informed readers regarding the high-society lifestyle as in the pamphlet *Le Allegrezze et solennita fatte in Cracovia, citta principale del regno de Polonia. Nella coronatione del [...] Re Enrico di Valois, fratello di Carli IX. Christianissimo Re di Francia* (1574).

In this respect, the 17<sup>th</sup> century seems to be characterized by twofold literary productions concerning Lithuania: on the one hand, as we have seen, it was a common practice to reprint the most exotic travel accounts that appeared during the previous century; on the other hand, the ever-growing number of religious and political missions to the Polish kings stimulated the production of a great quantity of reports which were as precise in political, religious, and military matters as they were unsuccessful in terms of circulation and editions. Cilli da Pistoia's 1627 report, Raffaele Barberini's relation on Muscovy (1658), Alberto Vimina's relation (1671), and even Ercole Zani's precious and rich report about Eastern Europe (1690) had no success among Italian publishers and readers.

In conclusion, we can affirm that our research has unintentionally, and accidentally, dug up and suggested once again a possible line of investigation of the often debated subject of the Gothic origins of Lithuanians: the Muscovites' memories and the etymological meaning of Visigoths suggest that the Lithuanians were just one of the ethnic groups included in the peoples collectively known as Goths. However, it is not our intention (and it is beyond our capabilities) to investigate this hypothesis.

Moreover, it is evident that already during the 16<sup>th</sup> century a growing number of readers from different social classes and educational backgrounds were influencing the "editorial market." While still in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, books and readings were something destined almost exclusively for clerics and noblemen, the 16<sup>th</sup> century saw a great number of translations from Latin to Italian immediately after the drafting of Latin accounts (see Possevino's relations, for example, or the great success of the Italian translations of Herberstein's report and Guagnini's history). The difficulties of publishing something in Latin rather than in Italian (Da Collo's and other similar reports) demonstrate that there was a much larger audience for this kind of literature. Reading was becoming a common practice among "lower-classes," too: these typically had a lesser knowledge of the Latin language.

Analyzing the features of the Italian literature about Lithuania, we determined that at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, both graphical and literary accounts were mainly intended as symbolic interpretations of Europe. And usually it was a Christian symbolism aimed at depicting a united Christian Europe physically separated

from the heirs of Gog and Magog and physically protected from them (by the Riphean mountains, for example).

Moreover, it has been noted how this symbolism partially characterized the 16<sup>th</sup> century literature too: despite a better knowledge of Northern and Eastern Europe, in a number of accounts the Riphean mountains “did not move” (as in Campese’s relation). Apparently, the reason for this incongruence was the necessity to represent the supposed unity of Christian Europe as a real unity able to overcome all doctrinal divergences, thus including Muscovy and criticizing those who opposed its supposed integration – i.e. Poland-Lithuania.

Finally, the great interest in manners, habits, exotic customs, and the life and celebrations of nobles, in connection with the criticism of those authors who focus too much on political and military aspects, clearly demonstrates that the “new readers” mentioned above were certainly reading in order to learn more about the expanding world, but the reading was becoming, in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, a leisure activity more than an educative one.

Moreno Bonda

#### LIETUVA SENOVĖS ITALIJOS VALSTYBIŲ ISTORINIUOSE ŠALTINIUOSE XV–XVI A.: MODERNIOSIOS *FORMA MENTIS* LINK

**SANTRAUKA.** Šiuo tyrimu siekiama parodyti, kaip keitėsi pasaulio suvokimas laikotarpiu, simboliškai apibrėžiamu pereinamuoju tarp viduramžių (simbolinio) *forma mentis* ir Renesanso (racionalaus). Straipsnyje analizuojama XV a. pabaigos – XVII a. italų literatūra apie Lietuvą. Senosiose Italijos valstybėse prieinamos informacijos apie Lietuvą pobūdžio ir kiekio analizė suteikia galimybę pamatyti, kaip žmonės tuo metu įsivaizdavo Europą ir kaip tas suvokimas kito.

XV a. pabaigoje ir žemėlapiai, ir kelionių aprašymai daugiausia atliko simbolinę krikščioniškos Europos interpretacijos funkciją. Netgi buvo įsivaizduojama, kad Europą nuo netikinčiųjų saugo tam tikri fiziniai elementai, pavyzdžiui, mitiniai Rifėjų kalnai. Toks simbolinis įsivaizdavimas būdingas ir XVI–XVII a. pradžios literatūrai, nors tuo metu žinios apie Šiaurės ir Rytų Europą jau buvo išsamesnės. Tariama krikščioniškos Europos vienybė privalėjo būti vaizduojama kaip tikra ir gebanti peržengti visus politinius ir doktrininus skirtumus, tokiu būdu į ją įtraukiant Maskvos Didžiąją Kunigaikštystę ir kritikuojant tuos, kurie priešinosi jos tariamai integracijai, t. y. Lenkijos ir Lietuvos valstybei.

**RAKTAŽODŽIAI:** Lietuva, Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė, kelionių aprašymai, Italijos valstybių istoriografija, Giovan Battista Ramusio, Giovanni Tarcagnola.

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