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EUROPEAN AND RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS' ACTIVITY IN AZERBAIJAN IN 13TH-17TH CENTURIES

Plano Carpine

Azerbaijan, a country with rich resources of raw materials, highly developed craftsmanship and a favorable geographical location, has always drawn the attention of other states. While establishing diplomatic and trade relations with Azerbaijani states, foreign countries focused on the description of cities, the ethnic composition and religious affiliation of the local population and the types of available crafts and goods. Therefore, the notes of ancient and medieval diplomats currently serve as an important source of information for studying the history of Azerbaijan.

Mongol invasions and the establishment of the Mongol Empire, the ensuing emergence of the state of Amir Timur, Ottoman military campaigns and the founding of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of the Safavid state, as well as the transition of major trade routes, were the driving factors for the surge in the number of European and Russian embassades being sent to the East. Most of those embassades left behind documents and travel notes relating to Azerbaijan.

Plano (Palazio) Carpine (13th century), an Italian monk of the Franciscan Order, was delegated to the East in accordance with a decision of the Catholic Lyon Cathedral in 1245 "to convince the Mongols to accept the Christian faith and to turn their weapons against the Turks and Arabs." Six monks serving as ambassadors, including Plano Carpine, started a trip to meet with the Mongol khans. Carpine travelled through Russia, passing by the Caspian Sea and heading to Central Asia. Upon return to his home country, he published his travel notes, which also included information about Azerbaijan.

William of Rubruck (around 1215 to around 1270) was a French monk from Flanders, who hailed from the Rubruck village near Saint-Omer. In 1253-1255, he was delegated by the King of France Louis IX to meet with the Mongol Khan Mangu. Rubruck headed to Sudak in Crimea from Constantinople through the Black Sea and onward to Matriga near Azov, via the Don and Volga rivers, the steppe, southward from Lake Balkhash to Karakorum, the residence of the Mongolian "great khan", arriving there on December 27, 1253. On his way back,

Gilliom de Rubruck


Rubruck turned southward from Sarai on the Volga, crossing Derbent, Shamakhi, the Mughan steppe and Nakhchivan. Rubruck further reached Erzurum, Cilicia, Cyprus, Antioch, and Tripoli, arriving at this destination by August 15, 1255 whence he sent a message notifying King Louis IX that he had fulfilled his mission. Rubruck cited a number of facts regarding the parts of the Caucasus he traversed during his trip, providing descriptions of Derbent, Ganja, Shamakhi and Nakhchivan and information about the activities of the local population.

Marco Polo (born circa 1254 in Venice) is a world-famous explorer. His father and his uncle, Niccolo and Maffeo, who were engaged in mercantile trade in Constantinople, visited countries subject to the Mongol khans and were hosted by Kublai Khan in China circa 1255. On their way back, Niccolo and Maffeo were instructed by Kublai Khan to arrange sending missionaries to the Pope. Having completed this assignment, they went to see the khan again in 1271, taking the young Marco with them. Marco Polo became fluent in Mongolian and other Oriental languages, learned the local customs and went on to receive various administrative and financial assignments from Kublai Khan, which allowed him to visit many Asian countries. Marco Polo's journey, which was generated by the interests of the Venetian merchant capital and those pertaining to the feudal-Catholic policy, surpassed by far all the previous trips of Europeans to Asia. Marco Polo travelled from Asia Minor to Tabriz, Isfahan, Hormuz and Khorasan, through Pamir and the Gobi Desert. His return journey stretched from the shores of China, circumventing Asia by sea into Hormuz, and then back to Tabriz, Erzurum, Trabison and onward. Polo headed back as late as in 1292 and returned to Venice by the end of 1295. In 1298, Polo took part in a naval battle with the Genoese as an officer of the Venetian fleet and was captured. While in captivity in Genoa, he talked about his travel experiences with Rusticiano, a fellow captive. The latter's notes, supplemented by Polo himself, were at the core of the description of his journey.

Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo (died in 1412) was a nobleman from Madrid, who served as Ambassador of Castile to the court of Timur. The growing might of the state of Amir Timur and its rivalry with Turkey were of great interest in Western Europe and drew particular attention in the states that were involved in trading with the East. Castile, which embarked on a path of colonial policy from the end of the 14th century, was one of the first European countries to forge ties with Amir Timur.

An embassy mission that included Clavijo, Alfonso Paez de Santa Maria and Gomez de Salazar was active in the East in 1403-1406. Clavijo kept a travel diary for the embassy. The embassy mission traveled via Cadix, Constantinople, Sinop, Trabison, Erzincan, Erzurum, Alashkert, Igdir, Bayazet, Khoy, Tabriz, Miane, Sultaniye, Tehran, Damgan, Nishapur, Mashhad, Ankhoy, Balkh and Samarkand, arriving there on September 8, 1404. The mission was hosted by Timur in Samarkand. During their return trip the diplomats traveled via Bukhara, Abiward, Jajerm and Damgan whence they took the previous path, subsequently reaching Khoy. Since it was unsafe to go through the Bayazet region, they had to head toward Ani and Kars and onward to Georgia, Tortum, Trabison and then to Castile by sea.

Clavijo's diary does not contain medieval "fiction". The accurate information he provided in it has been confirmed by recent research. He managed to document a lot of important facts from the realities pertaining to Azerbaijan.

Afanasy Nikitin, a well-known Russian merchant from Tver, made a major trip to the Caucasus, Persia and India in 1466-1472, which was in line with international aspirations of the Russian traders. During his journey Nikitin was engaged in commercial transactions; he went bankrupt a few times and his business picked up several times again during that time period. His description of localities is rather inconsistent, but he mainly focused in his writings on all matters related to trade and domestic life.

Initially, Shamakhi was the final destination of Nikitin's trip. A convoy comprised of two ships, loaded by Nikitin and other Tver merchants with goods, joined Shirvan Ambassador Asanbeg (Hasan Bay), who was returning from Moscow at that time, and headed to Astrakhan through the Volga river. The convoy was plundered



Marco Polo

there, but Nikitin and his fellow travelers continued their journey toward Derbent on board the two ships along with Asanbeg. The ship carrying Nikitin's fellow travelers crashed due to a storm near Tarkov, while Nikitin, himself, was captured by a Kaitag ruler. However, Nikitin managed to reach Derbent. Moscow Ambassador Vasily Papin, delegated to Shirvanshah Farrukh Yasar, was there at the time. The Russian merchants were released from captivity owing to the efforts of Farrukh Yasar and V. Papin. Nikitin further headed to Baku from Derbent and onward to Persia circa 1466. In the spring of 1469, he headed to Muscat from Hormuz whence he went to India, staying there until early 1472. On his way back Nikitin traveled via Muscat again to Bandar Abbas and onward to Shiraz. He further went to Yazd, Isfahan, Kashan, Tabriz, Erzurum, Trabison and Kafa, Kyiv and farther up the Dnieper.

Throughout his journey, Nikitin took notes titled "Traveling beyond three seas". Following his death, the notes were acquired by Mamyrëv, a civil servant of the Grand Prince of Moscow Vasily, and further included in the Russian chronicle. 19th century Azerbaijani Orientalist Mirza Kazim Bay was one of those who initially took heed of those notes and published them.

Josaphat Barbaro (died in 1493) was a Venetian nobleman and diplomat. Barbaro came from an old noble family that included many people engaged in diplomacy, military science, art and sciences, as well as owned major commercial enterprises. During his commercial activity in 1436-1452 Barbaro lived in Tana (Azov), which at that time was the main center for Venetian trade on the Black Sea. Barbaro visited Crimea, the North Caucasus and the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus. In 1469, Barbaro served as the governor of the Republic of Venice in Shkodra, Albania. In 1471-1473, he acted as the Venetian ambassador to the court of the Aq Qoyunlu ruler, Uzun Hasan.

The conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453

had an adverse impact on the Venetian trade. Therefore, Venice established diplomatic relations with Uzun Hasan of Aq Qoyunlu, Turkey's rival in Asia. Venice, which maintained ties with Aq Qoyunlu by running embassies in the Shah's court, was represented there by Caterino Zeno and Barbaro in 1471 and Contarini in 1473. The purpose of the embassies was to coordinate the military action of Venice and Aq Qoyunlu against Turkey.

Barbaro traveled from Venice to Cyprus, Cilicia on the Euphrates, Tabriz, Sultaniye and Isfahan, and also reached Samarkand and India. During his return trip he headed to Tabriz, Shamakhi, Derbent, Moscow, as well as Poland and Germany. Upon his arrival in Venice Barbaro compiled a description of his journey, which included extensive information about Azerbaijan. He provided a comprehensive description of the state of Aq Qoyunlu, including versatile and valuable data pertaining to geographical conditions, natural resources, the ethnic composition and domestic life of local residents, economic and social relations, the political system, military affairs, and even cultural monuments.

Ambrogio Contarini (15th century) was a Venetian diplomat who hailed from an ancient aristocratic family. The latter included a number of statesmen, scholars and artists and had a prominent position in the Venetian trade. In 1473-1477, Contarini served as the Venetian ambassador to the court of Uzun Hasan, a diplomatic post aimed at coordinating Venice and Aq Qoyunlu's hostilities against Turkey.

Contarini traveled from Venice through Germany, Poland, Kyiv and onward to Kafa whence he headed toward Batum by sea along the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus, via Guria toward Poti and then to Kutais, Gori, Lori and Tabriz. On August 4, 1474, he arrived in Tabriz and then went to Sultaniye, Qom, Kashan and Isfahan where he met Barbaro and along with him was received by Uzun Hasan on November 4.

Contarini headed to Tabriz with Uzun Hasan. On June 28, 1475, Contarini left Tabriz, while Barbaro stayed there. He traveled through Tbilisi, Imereti, Mingrelia and Guria. Having reached the mouth of the Rioni River, he learned about the capture of Kafa by the Turks (July 1475), which prompted him to return to Tbilisi and stay there until October 21. Contarini further opted to travel via Shamakhi, Derbent and onward to Astrakhan by sea, arriving there by April 30. Until January 1477, he stayed in Russia and arrived in Venice as late as on

Ruy de Clavijo

April 10, 1477. Contarini compiled a description of his journey, which included interesting information about Azerbaijan. Contarini's "Journey" is a travel diary reflecting his personal impressions regarding the visited locations. Both Contarini and Barbaro, who truly represented the Venetian school of diplomacy, provided scarce information about their "journeys" intended for the general public or their diplomatic mission. Instead, Contarini cited a number of interesting facts about all the locations he traversed along the way (Shamakhi, Derbent, Tabriz, etc.) This information pertained to the local population, its ethnic background, natural wealth, trade, customs, cities and fortifications. The "Journey" of Contarini was published for the first time in Venice in 1487.

Paul Iovv Novokomsky (died in 1552) was a bishop who hailed from the Lombardy city of Kole in Italy. He wrote a number of political and geographical compositions, including "The Book about the Ambassade sent by Vasili Ivanovich, Grand Prince of Moscow, to Pope Clement VII". The "Book about the Ambassade" is extremely biased, but it contains information about Azerbaijan and neighboring countries.

Anthony Jenkinson made a voyage in 1546 along the Atlantic coast of Europe and the Mediterranean Sea (Germany, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Mediterranean islands, the European part of Turkey, Syria, Palestine and the Mediterranean coast of Africa), drawing the attention of the Moscow (Muscovy) Trading Company, which was established in England in 1555. The founding of the company paved the way for English expeditions in the second half of the 16th century to Muscovy and onward to Azerbaijan, Central Asia and Persia along the Volga-Caspian route. Jenkinson initiated and participated closely in those journeys and expeditions, making four such trips in 1557-1571. He also provided descriptions of all the trips. One of these was an overview of his journey to the Safavid state, which is of great importance for the history of Azerbaijan. Jenkinson arrived in Astrakhan on June 10, 1561 and further visited Derbent, Shamakhi, Javad, Ardabil, Tabriz and Qazvin, which was home to Shah Tahmasib's residence at that time.

Jenkinson provided a precise economic and geographical overview of his entire journey through the Caucasus, describing the cities he visited in detail. He portrayed the Turkish-Safavid rivalry that occurred in that time period as a struggle for trade routes, and above all, the route of transporting Shirvan and Gilan silk to Europe. Jenkinson also compiled a map of his travel along the shores of the Caspian Sea.



In this period, the Muscovy Trading Company sent the following employees to Azerbaijan on trade and diplomatic missions: **Richard Johnson** (1565; he was the organizer of a British expedition to the south through Azerbaijan, who provided a description of that trip); **Arthur Edwards** (he participated in three expeditions and drew up a description of his trip that took place in 1565-1567, which included information about trade in Azerbaijan, mainly in Shamakhi); **Lawrence Chapman** (he participated in one of the expeditions in 1568 with a stopover in Azerbaijan and left behind a detailed description of it); **Christopher Barrow** (in 1579-1581 he participated in the company's expedition, visited Azerbaijan and left a detailed description of the journey).

Stefan Kakash and Tekdander. **Stefan Kakash**, a native of Semigradia (Transylvania), was delegated in 1602 by the German Emperor Rudolf II Habsburg in the capacity of Ambassador to Safavid Shah Abbas I. The delegation was sent in response to the embassy mission of Huseyn Bay and Anthony Shirley, an Englishman, which was delegated by Shah Abbas in 1600. The mission was expected to seek the Shah's support in the struggle against Turkey. Kakash was accompanied by Tekdander, his secretary (died in 1614), and Aqelast, his aide. Kakash died on October 25, 1603 in the vicinity of Lankaran, prescribing that others would take over and fulfill the diplomatic mission vested in him.



Aqelast died in Qazvin in early November, and **Tekdander** had to carry out the assignment on his own. Upon return following his meeting with Shah Abbas I, Tekdander presented a detailed description of his journey to Emperor Rudolf II in Prague on January 8, 1605. Shortly thereafter, it was circulated by print media.

Kakash and his assistants traveled from Prague to Krakow, Minsk and Moscow, then to Kazan and onward to Astrakhan along the Volga river and via the Caspian to Lankaran on board a merchant ship. Tekdander further went to Qazvin and returned to Tabriz. Shah Abbas I, who had arrived in the Iranian city by then, received Tekdander there. He then traveled with the Shah, who was launching a campaign, to Marand, Julfa, Nakhchivan, and Irevan, and witnessed the siege of this city. Tekdander further traveled "through the Gordian and Moskhi Mountains to the Koisu river and then to

Stefan Kakash

Terek, onward to Astrakhan by sea and then through Moscow to Prague via the same route. Tekdander precisely described his entire trip, in particular, his travel to Lankaran, Qazvin, Tabriz, Irevan, Julfa and Terek on the Koisu river bank. The meetings with Shah Abbas were described in detail.

Mikhail Nikitich Tikhonov was a Muscovy nobleman. In 1613-1614, he was delegated to Shah Abbas I as Ambassador together with Alexei Bukharov, in a bid to restore Moscow's diplomatic relations with the Safavids, which soured during the so-called "troubled times".

In November 1613, Tikhonov's embassy, together with Safavid Ambassador Amir Alibay, who was visiting Moscow, was en route to Nizhny Novgorod, Samara and Urgench, since Mikhail Romanov's reign had not yet been established in Astrakhan and the Caspian route was closed. Furthermore, the diplomats arrived in Kizilagac on December 18, having traveled through Mashhad, Qazvin and Ardabil. They were received by Shah Abbas on the following day. On December 25, Bukharov left for Shamakhi, while Tikhonov, himself, stayed there for a few days to conclude the negotiations with Shah Abbas and visited Lankaran together with him. On his way back, Tikhonov traveled via Shamakhi, Derbent, Tarki, Terek and Astrakhan.

Ivan Brekhov was a Kazan-born Muscovy nobleman. Brekhov, who was a career serviceman, participated in battles in the North Caucasus and military campaigns against the Poles. In 1614-1615, he was delegated to the Safavid state together with Stepan Afanasyev, an interpreter. Having left Moscow on July 23, 1614, Brekhov traveled through Terek, Tarki, Derbent and Shamakhi. On October 23, the embassy mission visited the camp of Shah Abbas I near Tiflis. The delegates were hosted by the Shah on October 26 and together with him traveled onward to Kizilagac where they joined the embassy mission of Tikhonov, subsequently starting their return trip from Lankaran. In June 1615, the embassy returned to Moscow simultaneously with Tikhonov's delegation.

The documents of Tikhonov and Brekhov's embassy missions contain data depicting the situation in the Caucasus in the early 17th century after Shah Abbas I asserted his power in the Safavid state.

Grigory Shakhmatov was a Moscow boyar who was delegated in 1615-1616 to Shah Abbas I with a letter from the Tsar together with Yermola Grigoryev, a translator. He traveled via Moscow, Astrakhan, Terek,

Adam Olearius

Tarki, Derbent, Shamakhi, Ardabil, Qazvin, Sava, Qom, Kashan and Isfahan. The Tsar's letter was handed over to the Shah on August 30, 1615. Shakhmatov stayed in Isfahan until early November. He returned to Moscow by June 15, 1616. Shakhmatov's message whereby he reported on the fulfillment of his mission upon his return included considerable information about Azerbaijan.

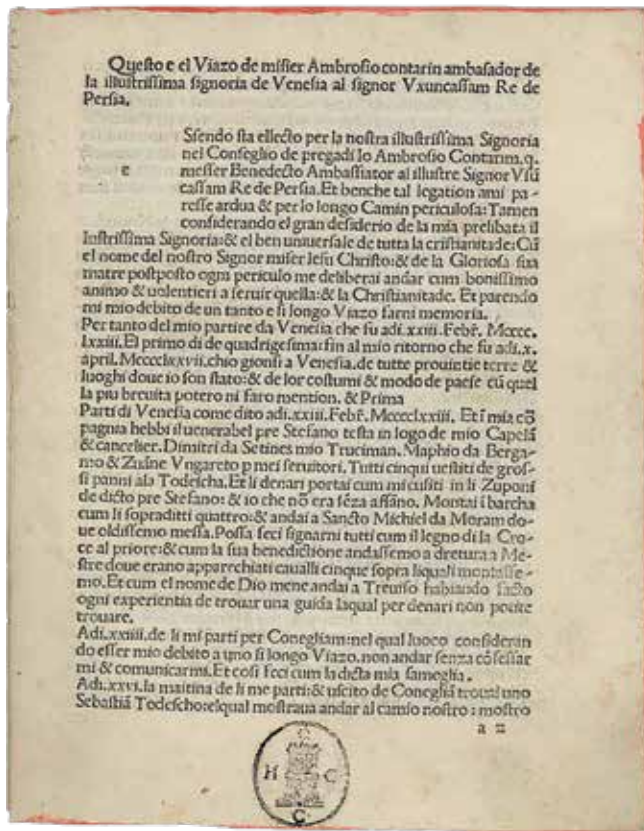
Mikhail Petrovich Baryatinsky, a prince, served as a war chief in a number of cities and took part in battles against the Poles. In 1618, he teamed up with I. I. Chicherin, a nobleman, and M. Tyukhin, a clerk, heading an embassy mission seeking to secure a cash subsidy from Shah Abbas I for the Moscow authorities. The delegates left Moscow on May 23, 1618, traveling via the waterways (the Moskva, Oka and Volga rivers) to Astrakhan, via the Caspian to Nizovaya whence they headed to Shamakhi, Ardabil and Qazvin, arriving there on November 3. The Shah hosted the visitors on the following day. Though Baryatinsky's mission enjoyed a warm welcome, it was a complete failure. The delegates spent the winter in Qazvin where Baryatinsky died later. Chicherin and Tyukhin left Qazvin on September 16, 1619 and returned to Moscow via Ardabil, Shamakhi, Shabran, Derbent, Tarki, and Terek.

Fedor Afanasyevich Kotov, a Moscow merchant representing "the sovereign's treasury", visited the Caucasus and Persia along with eight fellow travelers in 1623, in accordance with the Tsar's decree, and compiled a travel diary upon return "about traveling to the Persian kingdom and from Persia to Turkey and to India and Ormuz where the ships arrive". Kotov left Moscow on May 5, 1623, traveling by waterways (Moskva, Oka and Volga rivers) to Astrakhan and to Niyazabad by sea, arriving there on August 14, and then continued his journey by caravans. The travel diary was compiled according to the following routes: 1. Astrakhan, Terek, Niyazabad (by water), "Shevran"; 2. Astrakhan, Terek, Tarki, Kaitag, Derbent, "Shevran" (overland route); 3. "Shevran", Shamakhi, Ardabil, Zanjan, Sultaniye, Abqar, Qazvin, Saveh, Qom, Kashan, Natenz, and Isfahan. The distances covered by the travelers were cited as the number of days spent on the road. An emphasis was placed on the description of individual urban centers, mainly from the viewpoint of trading (bazaars, caravanserais, etc.). Moreover, the travel diary contained a lot of interesting general data such as topography of the terrain, buildings and the everyday life of local residents. It also provides in-



formation about Derbent, the "Derbent area", a village located one Verst (an old Russian measure of length) away from Niyazabad, as well as Shamakhi and Ardabil. There is also a description of such Muslim holidays as "Bayram-Nosurus", "Bayram-Romazan" (Ramadan), and Ashura, the day of mourning. This is followed by descriptions of the trips from Persia to Turkey and India (apparently not made by Kotov himself): 1. Shamakhi, Ganja, Irevan, Alashkert (Malazgirt), Erzurum, Erzincan, Karahisar, Tokat, Amasya and Constantinople; a note was added that trips were also made from Ardabil to Tabriz and from Qazvin to Baghdad and Basra; 2. Isfahan, Kashan, Qom, Varamin, Tehran, Farabad, Mashhad, Kandahar and onward (very briefly) to Hormuz.

Artemy Sukhanov was a Russian nobleman and the personal secretary of the Moscow Patriarch. In 1637-1640, Sukhanov participated in F. Volkonsky's embassy



Passage from a book by Ambrogio Contarini. 15th century

of Dr. Paludan for this purpose. He also oversaw the creation of the well-known Gottorp globe, which was subsequently presented to Peter the Great in 1713. Olearius compiled the Arabic-Persian-Turkish dictionary, translated the "Gulustan" by Saadi into German and wrote the Holstein chronicle. He learned Oriental languages during his trip and upon his return home spent time processing the collected data. He is known for describing his trip to Moscow, the Caucasus and Persia. The first edition (1647) provides this description as a travel diary; in 1656, the text was scientifically processed and supplemented with detailed descriptions of Moscow, the Caucasus and Persia.

Following their departure from Moscow on June 30, 1636, the delegates traveling by waterways visited Astrakhan, went to Terek by sea, as well as Niyazabad; they used a caravan to reach Shamakhi and Jevat, at the confluence of the Kura and Araz rivers, and also traveled to Ardabil, Sultaniye, Qazvin, Qom, Kashan, and Isfahan, arriving on August 3 and eventually staying there until December 21. On their way back, they traveled via Qazvin, Rasht, Gilan, Kizilagac, Mughan, Shamakhi, Derbent, Tarki, Terek, and Astrakhan.

Olearius provided very detailed descriptions of the areas of the Caucasus he visited, along with a comprehensive and precise overview of various ethnic groups and geographical regions of the Caspian Sea. He paid great attention to the natural conditions, flora and fauna of the country, crafts of the local population and the social structure. His impressions of the trip are combined with scientific observations and comments based on the accounts of earlier well-known travelers and writers. The book of Olearius is amply illustrated. The edition is supplemented by maps of the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Gilan. Olearius, himself, attached great importance to the corrections and elaborations he had made in the maps of the Caspian that existed at that time. Cornelius Klaus Kluting, a Dutch captain and engineer, who was in charge of the ship carrying the embassy mission and later, upon the instruction of the Moscow authorities, fortified the city on the Terek, was the closest associate of Olearius in compiling the maps. 🌟

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to Kakhetia. In 1649-1653, Sukhanov was delegated to the eastern provinces and traveled through Azerbaijan in 1651-1652 on his way back. Afterwards, he made a lot of relevant comments in his travel notes called "Proskynetarion". During his trip through Azerbaijan he traveled via Erzurum, Ganja, Shamakhi, Tbilisi, Mtskheta, and then again via Shamakhi, as well as Derbent and Tarki.

Adam Olearius was a German scholar born circa 1600 in Aschersleben near Magdeburg. He graduated from Leipzig University in 1627 with a master's degree in philosophy. He moved to Holstein due to wars. Serving as the ambassadorial secretary and later as an adviser, he was part of the Holstein embassades of Philip Kruse and Otto Brugemann to Moscow and the Safavid state, which were aimed at concluding treaties with both countries on carrying out silk trade through Moscow to Holstein, which had a conducive location between the Baltic Sea and North Sea. Olearius visited Muscovy and Azerbaijan twice in 1636-1639 as part of the embassy mission. Olearius also held the position of chief librarian and headed the cabinet of curiosities in the court of the Dukes of Holstein-Gottorp. He enriched the library with a great number of Persian and Arabic manuscripts brought from the East. As for the items stored in the cabinet of curiosities, he acquired the famous collection

Map compiled by Anthony Jenkinson indicating the countries he visited



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A caravan on the Great Silk Road. Medieval miniature painting

