

The present project “Inventories of the Jesuit Colleges in Nieśwież and Nowogródek – elaboration and source edition” is planned to take place over three years. The main underlying idea is to make so far unexploited sources available to a larger public of researchers from Poland or eastern neighboring countries. These sources are the inventories of Jesuit colleges written after the suppression of the Jesuit Order, and now preserved in Moscow and Minsk. For the degree of details and variety of information, they represent a valuable material not only for Church historians, but also for specialists in other – sometimes very distant – disciplines. The importance of this issue depends on the significant role played by the Jesuits in the cultural and social life of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The work to be conducted within the project aims at both elaboration of manuscript inventories into an electronic text (MS Word) and preparation of the critical apparatus. In order to accomplish these tasks, queries in many different archives and libraries in Poland or abroad are required. Such queries are necessary to answer the questions posed by the inventories, which have not been analyzed so far by the scientific community. Chronologically the research includes not only the period during which the inventories were written, but also previous as well as later years: from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This aspect is related both to the long lasting development of colleges and the complicated fate of the former Jesuit property after the suppression of the Order.

The project has pioneering features. Through the elaboration of inventories and their enrichment with a comprehensive introduction and detailed critical apparatus, the project will put into scientific circulation much previously unknown information about Old-Polish culture and society. Moreover, it will facilitate the solution of new issues, related to different – sometimes poorly investigated – disciplines. The project will also contribute to the extension of the research questionnaire of Jesuit historiography. It will increase our knowledge about the suppression of religious congregations, a process deeply related to the social and cultural transformations occurring in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In such a context the project will contribute to a revival of research about the Commission of National Education, which represented the first Education Ministry in Europe.

The project has also an international relevance. On the one hand it fits into a research trend already established in other countries, but currently neglected in Poland as well as in former Soviet countries. On the other hand, thanks to the English version of the introduction and to summaries in many congress languages, the source edition will contribute to the dissemination of results of Polish science abroad.

Many reasons induce to undertake this project, as detailed below.

1) The relevance of the inventories for further development of historiography about Jesuits. This depends on the possibility of showing through them many cultural, social and economical aspects so far neglected in the scientific literature.

2) The value of inventories for research on the development of the multicultural heritage of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with particular attention to the role in this process of the Catholic Church.

3) The value of information found in inventories for specialists from different areas such as: history of art and architecture, history of education and intellectual formation of the elites, history of music, history of medicine, history of books, history of printing, history of economy and agriculture, urban studies and history of ethnic minorities. In case of neglected issues the publication of inventories can induce new investigation on certain disciplines.

4) The exploitation and appreciation of inventories by Polish historians. This concerns in particular archival units preserved in Polish cultural institutions. At the same time, the variety of issues addressed in the inventories demonstrates the need of making them available to a wider public. In pursuing this goal, one should start from inventories preserved outside the country, because their consultation is linked to higher costs and logistical problems.

5) The need of developing partnership with Belorussian historians through consultations and participation to common conferences.