

The project “Inventories of the Jesuit College in Stuck and Tertianship House in Nieśwież – elaboration and source edition” is planned to take place over four years. The main underlying idea is to make so far unexploited manuscript sources available to a larger public both in Poland and abroad. These sources are the inventories of Jesuit houses, written after the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773 and now preserved by cultural institutions in Moscow, Minsk and Vilnius. The significance of these manuscripts depends not only on the crucial role played by the Jesuit Order in Polish-Lithuanian society, but also on their variety and degree of detail, which makes them a valuable material for Church historians, as well as for specialists in other disciplines.

The work to be conducted within the project aims at both elaboration of manuscript inventories into an electronic text and preparation of the critical apparatus. In order to accomplish these tasks, queries in several archives and libraries in Poland and 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 16th century to the beginning of the 19th century. This depends both on 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 Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian culture and society. Moreover, the project will expand the research questionnaire of Jesuit historiography and help the solution of previously neglected issues. It will enhance our knowledge about the suppression of religious congregations, a process deeply related to the social and cultural transformations occurring in the 18th and 19th centuries. In such a context, the project will contribute to further research about the Commission of National Education, which represented the first Education Ministry in Europe.

The project has also an international relevance for two reasons. Firstly, the project fits into a research trend already established in other countries, but currently scarcely developed in Poland and former Soviet countries. Secondly, thanks to a lengthy English summary, the source edition will contribute to the popularization of Polish-Lithuanian history 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 many cultural, social and economical aspects so far neglected in the scientific literature.

2) The value of inventories for research on the multicultural heritage of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with particular regard to the role 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 elites, history of music, history of medicine and pharmacy, library studies, economic and agricultural history, urban studies and history of ethnic minorities.

4) The exploitation and appreciation of inventories by some Polish art and architecture historians. 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 implies higher costs and logistical problems.

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

6) Continuing the editorial work on Jesuit inventories after the publication of the first edition of this kind, dedicated to the Nieśwież college and its estates.