

## **The geopolitical character of the post-Tridentine apostolic nunciatures (1562-1605) - a prosopographical and comparative study**

The rise of early modern state organisations required the establishment of an effective system of mutual contact and control, adapted to the increasingly dynamic geopolitical situation in sixteenth-century Europe. The art of diplomacy was created precisely at the service of early modern state, as an alternative to military solutions, to maintain political balance. First taking shape diplomacy of the Holy See was of a special character. It was not only a political representation of the early modern secular state, but it also related to the medieval model of a united Europe, the *Res Publica Christiana*. Due to it, after the Holy See's recovery from the Avignon and Reformation Crisis, it relatively easily regained its own political initiative, thanks to the gradual introduction of a system of diplomatic representation at particular Catholic courts.

One of the two main scientific objectives of the project is to compile a collective biography of the apostolic nuncios in the post-Tridentine period (1562-1605) and to assemble an updated list of them, following the geography of papal missions (the Imperial court, Madrid, Paris, Lisbon, Naples, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Venice, Florence, Piedmont, Graz, Cologne, Lucerne and Brussels). The second research aim is to establish the geopolitical character of particular apostolic nunciatures in a comparative perspective, as well as to try to combine their characteristics with the appointment policy of the Roman Curia towards its diplomatic staff.

The implementation of the project foresees the use of European nunciatures' documentary editions and existing bibliography of the subject, but also an extensive archival research (Vatican, Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Spain). The analysed material will consist mainly of correspondence, instructions, diaries as well as the political and literary legacy of the nuncios. It will be necessary to create a digital database that will enable the design of both the questionnaires for each of the surveyed diplomats, as well as the corresponding search engines for data analysis. The results of this prosopographical approach will then be used to construct a collective picture of the apostolic nuncios in the period in question. The next stage of the research will be the comparative study of the data collected, using the geographical key, necessary to determine the factors characterizing the papal appointment policy among its own diplomatic service, as well as its geopolitical orientation. The adopted research methods will employ both the achievements of traditional historical criticism and methodologies of the new history of diplomacy: prosopography, comparative history, connected history and confessionalisation theory.

The immediate incentive to undertake such research is provided by the following circumstances: firstly, despite the fact that we have reliable studies on the history of papal diplomacy in the second half of the sixteenth century, historiography has so far neglected the apostolic nuncios as a social community, and the geopolitical character of papal diplomatic establishments has not yet been analysed in a comparative perspective; secondly, I would like to break with the bilateral vision of early modern diplomatic contacts and to continue my studies in a broad European context; thirdly, it seems necessary to extend investigations regarding the history of papal diplomacy to include nunciatures that have been so far less studied (e.g. Italian nunciatures, Brussels or Lisbon).

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the role of the Holy See in the European 'international' system reached its apogee. For this reason, in my opinion, the focus of historiography should turn to those who at that time acted directly on behalf of the pope and the Holy See, participating in diplomatic and political interactions throughout Europe. Comprehending the key of the personnel policy for the implementation of the foreign policy of the papacy, along with its geopolitical orientation, is a problem the elaboration of which contains a great research value, not only for a Polish historian, but also among the whole Europe. Moreover, the digital database will prove to be an extremely useful tool for further research on the community of apostolic nuncios and will allow for future chronological expansion of the analysis.