

## **The Subaltern Retinue: 'Family' of the Early Modern Apostolic Nuncios (1559–1700)**

The organisation and functioning of the diplomatic service of the early modern Holy See have been a significant area of interest for historians. Contemporary research has been conducted in the growing field of *new diplomatic history*. Furthermore, the historical editing of source material produced by the network of apostolic nunciatures has been a consistent and fruitful endeavour. This is why it is so surprising that researchers have not devoted more attention to a fascinating aspect of the nunciatures' activity: the functioning and organisation of their lower personnel and entourage. This research gap negatively impacts our understanding of early modern diplomacy, making it less comprehensive and fragmented.

The role of the ambassador's 'family', or diplomatic retinue, was essential to the mission's effectiveness, prestige and recognition at the host court. This was especially true for the representation of a polity whose aspirations were based on a universalist ideology and an authority of a moral and religious nature – the papacy. Despite the limited attention paid by contemporary scholarship to this issue, early modern theorists of diplomacy – such as Alberico Gentili (1552–1608), Carlo Pasquale (1547–1625), Krzysztof Warszewicki (1543–1603), Juan Antonio de Vera y Figueroa (1585–1658) or Abraham de Wicquefort (1606–1682) – provided extensive reflection on the question of the diplomatic entourage. The project aims to reconstruct the role and form of diplomatic retinue in line with the critical tenets of early modern political thought on the theory of diplomacy and consequently examine the diplomatic practice of the period through observations of the activities of the Holy See's foreign representatives in three critical outposts of the papacy's activities in Central and Eastern Europe: the Republic of Venice, the Imperial Court, and Poland-Lithuania.

The project presents three main research tasks: 1. It will explain the principles of how diplomats' retinues were organised and how they worked according to the accounts of political writers and theorists of diplomacy of the early modern period. 2. It will develop historical models for the analysis of the organisation and functioning of the diplomatic retinues of early modern apostolic nuncios. It will consider the peculiarities of the papal *two-souls*' profile, universalist aspirations, the interaction of the Roman diplomatic service with the peripheral structures of the Catholic Church, and its confessional nature. 3. It will compare those models against the hypothesised key factors: the socio-economic status of the nuncios, as well as the chronology and geography of their missions. The above objectives are interconnected because the ambition of the project is to look at how the lower personnel of the apostolic nunciatures worked and to put this in the context of the broader diplomatic practice that was developing rapidly in Europe during the period of study. In this way, the project aims to identify the general and systematic features that defined the 'families' of nuncios within the norms of diplomatic practice at the time, as well as their distinctive elements regarding religious, political, symbolic and representational aspects.

The implementation of the project foresees the analysis of early modern utilitarian literature concerning the theory of diplomacy, diplomatic correspondence, and other documentary materials (instructions, final reports, diaries, itineraries, bills, personal notes). It will draw upon apostolic nunciatures' source editions and the extant bibliography while entailing a comprehensive archival inquiry (especially in the Vatican City). The research methods adopted will combine traditional historical criticism with newer, interdisciplinary approaches, including comparative and connected history, confessionalisation theory, and elements of historical anthropology.

The expected research results will provide a foundation for further study of diplomatic theory and political practice in early modern Europe. The development of this topic will encourage a creative historical debate, which may, in turn, stimulate interest in exploring new fields of research as well as using new methodological approaches to the history of diplomacy, especially the papal one, which is particularly receptive to comparative, universal and transnational approaches. Extending the analysis to lesser-known aspects of the diplomatic practice will fulfil an important research target.