

Rechtsgeschichte Legal History

www.rg.mpg.de

<http://www.rg-rechtsgeschichte.de/rg20>
Zitiervorschlag: Rechtsgeschichte – Legal History Rg 20 (2012)
<http://dx.doi.org/10.12946/rg20/361-362>

Rg **20** 2012 361 – 362

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As a consequence of the Reformation and the Council of Trent, the Papacy developed a better organized and more professional diplomacy, which was based on the institution of nunciatures. Gregory XIII (1572–1585) and Clement VIII (1592–1605) raised the foundations of an organizational model that remained substantially unchanged until the 19th century.¹ Nunciatures were not exactly embassies, because they worked not only as representations to other princes, but also as jurisdictional offices in charge of collecting taxes and juridical affairs.² Consequently, they were potent centers of influential networks that attached local elites with Rome all around Europe in the Modern Age.

Nunciatures have been largely researched since the mid-19th century and their sources are well known to European historiography. Nevertheless, the scope of almost every study has been a single nunciature along national historical lines or the development of nunciatures in a given pontificate.³ In this sense, a global perspective is required in order to widen our comprehension and draw a comparison with the progress of the diplomatic services of secular powers.

Our aim is not to contribute to the vivid discussion about the definition and differences between »world history« and »global history«,⁴ but to propose useful tools and a framework for researching the birth of modern Vatican diplomacy from a global perspective. Analysing power organization in the 16th and 17th centuries requires the use of terms and concepts related to the Court world. The princely courts of Europe had their ideal in Rome, the biggest political centre of that

time and the most complex and dynamic court of the Old Continent.⁵

From the mid-15th century onwards, the Church developed a consistent attempt for building a modern political power as her lay neighbours were struggling to.⁶ Beyond the diplomatic order there was a peculiar logic that Papal representatives maintained and cultivated: the courtly *ethos*. Nuncios and legates were not aristocrats but clergymen. Nevertheless, they perfectly knew the monarchical protocol and took profit of court factions, just as happened in Rome. Their image was far from that of a humble friar, because most of them were cardinals or high bureaucrats of Roman administration. They acted as princes of the Church, with their own little (or not so little) court.

The importance of this courtly dynamic lies in the fact that it provides a framework for comparative analysis with the secular monarchies of the time. This let us to pose the question of the existence of models of negotiations, or the ability of nuncios to manipulate the factional disputes of the court where they resided. Moreover, another aspect of the problem is whether they had different means and tools than ambassadors at their disposal.⁷ In other words, did the nuncios (with their spiritual powers and networking in the Curia) have a comparative advantage for negotiating over their lay colleagues?

A second question implies how these court circumstances molded and adapted the general strategy and objectives of the Popes. It is vital to emphasize the interconnectedness of the global features with the most concrete ones for avoiding the risk of too general statements. An example is

1 RICCARDI (2000).

2 »No solo per giovamento della Sede Apostolica, ma della Republica Christiana, è più necessario esser buon giudice che buon ambascere perche perduto la Giurisdittione, e l'autorità, cessa il bisogno, che li Principi hanno di star bene con questa Santa Sede, manca la riveren-

za, il riguardo, e l'affettion loro verso di esso«. Cardinal Ludovisi to nuncio Del Sangro, Rome, October 6, 1621, ASV, Fondo Pio, lib. 69, p. 85.

3 As an example, the German Historical Institute in Rome has published impressive collections of edited sources from the nunciatures.

4 CROSSLEY (2007) 106–120. For a very critical review of this book, FERNÁNDEZ ARMESTO, F., *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010) 349–351.

5 SIGNOROTTO/VISCEGLIA (2002) 53–98.

6 PRODI (1987) 157–181.

7 ANDRETTA (2010) 151–191.

offered by the publication and enforcement of the Tridentine decrees in the Catholic monarchies. The confessional context of Madrid, Paris and Vienna was very diverse and so was the pressure exerted by the nuncios. As masters of court balances of power, these diplomats resorted to non-institutional and discreet means of implementing their confessional agendas. They sought the support of the most »papist« courtesans and strived to create a climate of opinion favorable to their goals.⁸ An ambitious comparative research would shed light on the actual mechanics, progress and setbacks of the political side of Counterreformation.

On a larger scale, the projects of the Papacy in the Early Modern Age went far beyond Old Europe. A comparison with the Spanish Monarchy seems to be opportune, as both were the only world powers at the beginning of the »first global era«, both with a project of dominion of a political or confessional nature. The history of the Catholic missions has been widely developed and offers the most »global« conclusions for an Early Modern Pontificate. Furthermore, the establishment of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1622 clarified the missionary strategy.

An interesting point for discussion and study relates to the establishment of contacts with the peoples to evangelize. Those cultural encounters

can be compared with similar experiences of the Portuguese and Spaniards in Asia, Africa and America. The first steps had a diplomatic ceremony: salutations, meeting with the local ruler and the exchange of gifts. Missionaries were not alone, for also formal embassies were sent to such diverse places as Moscow, the Congo, China or Persia.⁹ The function of Papal envoys as court agents in those remote lands can be paralleled with European examples and with the colonial contacts developed by secular Western powers. That allows us to assert a model of worldwide political relations and to individuate the differences caused by the confessional factor.

As can be seen, the »Court Studies« approach favours the development of several research agendas related with Early Modern Papacy. In this sense, we think that global history offers an ambitious and profitable methodology that needs, at the same time, a tight guideline for rendering innovative results and connection with the latest trends in political research. Thus, the Holy See can be understood as a global power only in the frame of a European Court Society. ■

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⁸ WINKELBAUER (1999) 58–96.

⁹ GRAY (1999); GIORDANO (2003) I, 92–93, 135.