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## **Educating the Catholic Nobleman. Projects and Models in Padua and Poland**

**Edukacja katolickiego szlachcica.  
Projekty i modele w Padwie i w Polsce**

### **Abstract**

In the 1560s and 1570s, Cardinal Giovanni Francesco Commendone (1524–1584) and his secretary Antonio Maria Graziani (1537–1611) were entrusted with important papal commissions in German and Polish lands, gaining a deep understanding of the political and religious situation of Central-Eastern Europe. The role of these two papal diplomats is highlighted by their political archives, an extraordinary collection of documents which has been the subject of the research project *The Nuncio's Secret Archives: Papal Diplomacy and European Multi-denominational Societies Before the Thirty Years' War (NSA)*, financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research. This rich documentation, in particular, underscores the importance of Padua in the network of relationships established by Commendone and Graziani. They frequently returned to the university city during breaks in their Alpine missions, taking part in circles and gatherings, and meeting with Venetian patricians, professors, and foreign students. In this context, the correspondence between Graziani and the Polish student Mikolaj Tomicki —the son of a prominent nobleman who had embraced the Reformation —is of particular significance. A parallel

reading of the letters written by Graziani and those written by Tomicki reveals the educational project offered to the young Pole by the two papal envoys. Moreover, it sheds light on the perspective of Commendone and Graziani, in which diplomacy and culture were closely intertwined.

**Keywords:** Papal diplomacy, Counter-Reformation, University of Padua, Giovanni Francesco Commendone, Antonio Maria Graziani

## Abstrakt

W latach sześćdziesiątych i siedemdziesiątych XV wieku kardynał Giovanni Francesco Commendone (1524–s1584) i jego sekretarz Antonio Maria Graziani (1537–1611) otrzymali ważne papieskie misje na ziemiach niemieckich i polskich, zdobywając głębokie zrozumienie sytuacji politycznej i religijnej w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Rolę tych dwóch papieskich dyplomatów podkreślają ich archiwa polityczne, niezwykle zbiór dokumentów, który jest obecnie przedmiotem projektu badawczego „The Nuncio’s Secret Archives: Papal Diplomacy and European Multi-denominational Societies Before the Thirty Years’ War” (NSA), finansowanego przez włoskie Ministerstwo Edukacji Wyższej i Badań Naukowych. Ta bogata dokumentacja w szczególności podkreśla znaczenie Padwy w sieci relacji nawiązanych przez Commendonego i Grazianiego. Często wracali oni do swojego miasta uniwersyteckiego podczas przerw pomiędzy misjami w rejonie Alp, biorąc udział w kręgach i spotkaniach oraz spotykając się z weneckimi patrycjuszami, profesorami i zagranicznymi studentami. W tym kontekście szczególne znaczenie ma korespondencja między Grazianim a polskim studentem Mikołajem Tomickim – synem zamożnego szlachcica, który przystąpił do ruchu reformatorskiego. Równoległa lektura listów pisanych przez Grazianiego i tych pisanych przez Tomickiego ujawnia projekt edukacyjny oferowany młodemu Polakowi przez dwóch papieskich wysłanników. Co więcej, rzuca ona światło na perspektywę Commendonego i Grazianiego, w której dyplomacja i kultura były ze sobą ściśle powiązane.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyplomacja papieska, kontrreformacja, Uniwersytet w Padwie, Giovanni Francesco Commendone, Antonio Maria Graziani

Anybody who has studied the Empire and Poland in the second half of the sixteenth century will certainly be familiar with the names of the papal ambassadors Giovanni Francesco Commendone and Antonio Maria Graziani. The former, a Venetian, had relatives in the patriciate while the latter came from a noble Tuscan family with close ties to the Roman curia and was first secretary to Commendone before also being appointed papal nuncio. From the early sixties on, the couple

were entrusted with important papal commissions in German and Polish lands<sup>1</sup>. What is less well-known is the political archive comprising the two diplomats' correspondence and study and work materials, which is not only testimony of the work they carried out, but also of their keen cultural interests and the extent of the network of their relations. This extraordinary collection of documents, which also includes a nucleus of books that belonged to Antonio Maria Graziani's library, became part of the private archive of the Graziani family – most of which has been preserved by the descendants in Vada (Livorno)<sup>2</sup>. It has been the object of a research project *The Nuncio's Secret Archives: Papal Diplomacy and European Multi-denominational Societies Before the Thirty Years' War (NSA)*, financed by the Italian ministry of University and Research<sup>3</sup>.

What is the point in a systematic study of Commendone and Graziani's papers? What is the point in creating – as we did in this project – an online portal making available in a digital format the diplomatic correspondence of the two papal envoys from central-eastern Europe, and their private correspondence, together with cultural references thanks to the census of surviving samples in Graziani's library? The answer lies in the fact that these papers and books take us with particular effectiveness to a phase in which the Church of Rome was redefining its perception of a Europe that had been profoundly changed by the religious crisis of the sixteenth century.

Pope Paul IV had died in 1559, the inquisitor pope who had hidden behind the theological condemnation of 'heresy,' refusing to recognise the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the actual election of Charles V's successor, Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor, who had been chosen by a diet that

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- 1 See Domenico Caccamo, "Commendone, Giovanni Francesco", and Marcella Marsili, "Graziani, Antonio Maria", both in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 27 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1982), 606–613, and *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 58 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2002), 801–804.
  - 2 A large amount of the archive ended up in the archive in Lawrence (Kansas), in the manuscript section of the Kenneth Spencer Research Library of Kansas University; other documents ended up in the New York Public Library and in other American libraries. For an archive profile, including bibliography, see: <https://siusua.archivi.beniculturali.it/cgi-bin/siusua/pagina.pl?TipoPag=comparc&Chiave=209524> (accessed on 08.06.2025).
  - 3 Participants of the project (PRIN 2017, prot. 2017 JMPYTA carried out between 2020 and 2024) include Elena Bonora (Parma University) as Principal Investigator and the research units of the Universities of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Padua, Venice-Ca' Foscari, directed respectively by Matteo Al Kalak, Antonella Barzazi, Dorit Raines. See Elena Bonora, "Gli archivi segreti del nunzio", *Riforma e movimenti religiosi* 12 (2022), 177–184. The project also foresees the compilation of a new archive inventory that will combine the two sections virtually.

also included princes who supported the Reform<sup>4</sup>. With the new pope, Pius IV, the Church opened its eyes to the areas in central-eastern Europe where the Catholic confession was no longer predominant. It also recognised that it was only possible to defend Catholicism effectively in those areas by means of the appropriate knowledge of the contexts and new legal framework in which this religious diversity was establishing itself. It was here that Commendone and his secretary Graziani played a key role for a pope who found himself faced with a new situation and was seeking analytical and effective instruments with which to intervene. In 1561, during a long journey across the Empire lands to announce the Council of Trent and to reopen the dialogue with the Emperor, Commendone described the situation of those areas in which the Peace of Augsburg had legalised the existence of 'heresy', studied the transformations of ecclesiastic institutions, and scrutinized the forms of religious coexistence that had actually developed in the cities and territorial principalities<sup>5</sup>. When he arrived in Poland as nuncio in 1563, he was not satisfied with the controversial image that his predecessors had used of the religious chaos, of the kingdom of sects<sup>6</sup>; instead, he studied the multiplicity of the confessions, relating them to the complex institutional system of the State, the composition of the Diets and Senate, the internal alignment of the nobility, the relationships between bishops who were in constant conflict but attracted by projects for a national church that was independent of Rome, studying in detail the geopolitical problems related to Poland's military role in eastern Europe that was boxed in between pressure from the Turks and pressure from the Russian Empire. In this he used his skill as a political mediator to establish effective relations with the sovereign, aristocratic factions, and

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4 Elena Bonora, "Come s'egli non fusse al mondo. Paolo IV e l'Europa", *Tiempos modernos* 37/2 (2018): 361–386.

5 Elena Bonora, "Comprendre et décrire un autre monde. Le voyage d'un nonce dans l'Europe des confessions et du pluralisme religieux (1560–62)", in *Le Langage et la foi dans l'Europe des Réformes*, ed. Tiphaine Guillaibert-Madinier, Julien Ferrant (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 215–224.

6 See, for example, the dispatches by Alvise Lippomano in autumn 1555 in *Acta Nuntiaturae Polonae*, III/1: *Aloisius Lippomano (1555–1557)*, ed. Henryk Damian Wojtyśka (Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum, 1993); in addition, Alexander Koller, "Lippomano, Luigi", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 65 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2005), 243–246. For more about the confessional situation in the Polish-Lithuanian area after the middle of the sixteenth century, see two recent books: Kazimierz Bem, *Calvinism in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth 1548–1648. The Churches and the Faithful* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2020); Dainora Pociūtė, *La Riforma in Lituania* (Turin: Claudiana, 2021).

Polish prelates<sup>7</sup>. It was this information about the country's conditions, and details about the structure of the ecclesiastic and civil powers that Commendone's dispatches offered the Roman curia that was to underlie the concession policy on rites that Pius IV promoted in Germany. The cardinal and his right-hand man Graziani continued to maintain their influence in Rome during Pius V's papacy and also at the beginning of Gregory XIII's, when they carried out other papal missions in those areas. In 1572 and 1573, when they were both sent back to Poland as legate and vice-legate respectively, they guided the papal line regarding Henry of Valois' succession to the throne. In the meantime, the Polish kingdom had joined the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, creating an unprecedented political-territorial entity as regards both size and military power.

In 1622 the creation of the *Congregatio de Propaganda fide* marked the beginning of a new season. This new Roman institution was to centralise the control of relations between the papacy and non-Catholic Europe, which was now mediated by missionary religious orders<sup>8</sup>. However, in the decades that followed the Peace of Augsburg, it was Commendone and Graziani who were the real experts of the central-eastern areas of the continent. They had become a reference point for other ecclesiastic figures who gained experience under their guidance and were then to play important roles in papal diplomacy<sup>9</sup>.

During their delicate missions in distant and often hostile lands, in their arduous confrontations with princes, aristocrats and prelates these men put to good use the sound literary, philosophical and legal knowledge they had acquired during their studies, mainly at Padua University. And it was to Padua that Commendone and Graziani would so eagerly return, during the breaks between one journey and another across the Alps. In the university city Commendone and his court were surrounded by a group of long-standing friends, made up of aristocratic Venetians

7 A fundamental source for this mission is Commendone's register of letter copies, preserved in New York Public Library, Manuscript and Archive Division, MssCol 603 (G.F. Commendone, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1563–1565).

8 In general, about the relevance of European problems in the work of Propaganda fide, see Giovanni Pizzorusso, *Governare le missioni, conoscere il mondo nel XVII secolo. La Congregazione de Propaganda Fide* (Viterbo: Settecittà, 2018), 19–45.

9 For example, two figures who were particularly close to Commendone: Giovanni Dolfin, a Venetian patrician, nuncio to the imperial court in 1571–1578, and Giovanni Andrea Caligari, nuncio in Poland in 1578–1581, and then in Graz in 1584–1586. For their profile see: Gaspare De Caro, "Caligari, Giovanni Andrea", and Gino Benzoni, "Dolfin, Giovanni", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 16 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1973), 711–717, and *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 40 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1991), 511–519.

who held important posts in both civilian life and the Church and by high-ranking members of the city, both ecclesiastic and laymen. This circle of friends was obviously also open to the university: the professors – in particular the philosophers from the schools of Arts and Medicine – the young Venetian noblemen attending courses that gave them a grounding in political activities, the foreign aristocratic students coming in Padua from different parts of Europe<sup>10</sup>.

During their brief breaks the two papal envoys therefore took part in the peculiar long-standing traditions of social life in Padua. As early as the fifteenth century, but mainly during the early sixteenth century, private circles and academies had multiplied and supported the activities carried out in the university classrooms. Whilst profound political-religious and cultural changes were taking place, these different kinds of associations had taken on an extremely important role, acting as informal meeting places that either criticised or integrated the official courses, spreading central debates. One such example was the renewal of the Aristotelian Paduan tradition, by the introduction of mathematics in natural philosophy and the enhancement of the function of logic as a guide to reasoning and the basis for effective study methods. The middle of the sixteenth century heralded a new climate, one that was marked by suspicion and tension, by the offense against Protestant religious dissent, which had penetrated extensively the university milieu, also in radical forms. Nevertheless, Padua remained a city with a rich, diversified cultural life that was able to offer multiple opportunities for encounters and gatherings. It was actually the 1560s that saw the beginning of the famous circle that was to meet until the turn of the century, at the home of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli, a nobleman of Genoese origins who had moved from Naples to Padua. At his home, surrounded by a great number of books and manuscripts, professors and students, cultured Paduan scholars, and Venetian aristocrats were able to gather and meet illustrious foreigners who were passing through<sup>11</sup>.

10 About the circle around Commendone and Graziani during their stays in Padua, see Elena Bonora, *Giudicare i vescovi. La definizione dei poteri nella Chiesa posttridentina* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2007), 265–267.

11 For an overview of sixteenth-century intellectual life in Padua and the turning point of the Counter-Reformation see Dennj Solera, Michaela Valente, “La *Patavina libertas* nell’età della Controriforma”, and Antonella Barzazi, “Fuori dalle aule: circoli e accademie”, both in *Libertas. Tra religione, politica e saperi*, ed. Andrea Caracausi, Paola Molino, Dennj Solera (Roma: Donzelli editore and Padova University Press, 2022), 167–184, 121–136; in addition, Angela Nuovo, “The Creation and Dispersal of the Library of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli,” in *Books on the Move. Tracking Copies through Collections and the*

It was also thanks to circles such as these that in the second half of the sixteenth century the Paduan University continued to attract outstanding teachers and to hold its attraction for foreign students. As a result, a good number of Germans still continued to arrive in the city; they had always been the largest student nation, divided up internally according to origin (Swiss, Belgians, Dutch, Silesians, Austrians and Bohemians). And there was also a conspicuous number of Poles, the second largest foreign community in Padua<sup>12</sup>. In this regard it is well known that the Polish contingent represented a special case for a long time: the prestige of having studied in Padua University was so great that the expression *Paduan* (*padewczyk*) did not just mean in Polish a former student from Padua but was a synonym for a man with a university education<sup>13</sup>.

In this context it is clear that Commendone and Graziani did not simply go to Padua because of their affection for the place where they had both studied, but that there was more behind it: they were attracted by a milieu that was so full of potential as regards their political-diplomatic projects. For example, the foreign students that the Inquisition regarded as a threat from afar, were seen with different eyes by the papal envoy and his secretary. Especially the young students from Eastern Europe, some of whom came from aristocratic families that were in favour of the Reformation, offered a means of strengthening the ties between the Church and the ruling groups of countries, like Poland, that were traditionally distant from Roman Catholicism and afflicted by religious turmoil. Commendone and Graziani followed them very closely, helped them in their studies and went on to exchange letters with them for years. Preserved in the Graziani archives, this correspondence opens up a window on a complex system of relationships in which Padua was at the centre.

From this point of view, the aristocratic Polish student, Mikołai Tomicki, who was in Padua in the sixties and part of Commendone's circle, is of particular significance. Mikołai came from a family that was

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*Book Trade*, ed. Robin Myers, Michael Harris, Giles Mandelbrote (Newcastle–London: Oak Knoll Press–British Library, 2007), 39–67.

12 See Lotte Kosthorst, “Studiare *trans Alpes*. La mobilità degli studenti di area germanica verso lo Studio di Padova (XV–XVII secolo)”, and Gabor Almasi, “Studenti padovani in Europa centrale e orientale nel Cinquecento”, in *Stranieri. Itinerari di vita studentesca tra XIII e XVIII secolo*, ed. Maria Cristina La Rocca, Giulia Zornetta (Rome: Donzelli editore and Padova University Press, 2022), 51–62, 165–181.

13 The same applied to the Hungarian word *padovás*. In 1574 the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II, for the second time candidate to the Polish throne, added to his electoral promises the pledge to support the costs for sending one hundred aristocratic young men to Padua University out of his personal income (Almasi, “Studenti padovani”, 168).



well-placed in the civil and ecclesiastic posts in the Kingdom. His father, Jan Tomicki, the castle governor of Gniezno, had adhered to the Reformation after having been educated by the Bishop of Krakow Piotr Tomicki, his uncle and a prominent intellectual and political figure with strong links in Italy. It would appear that Mikołai's arrival in Padua was actually the result of Commendone's initiative who, in 1562, after returning from his first trip to Germany, had had the opportunity to meet him, perhaps in Alsace if Tomicki, as some sources suggest, spent two years in France and Strasburg, accompanied by a preceptor-tutor<sup>14</sup>. His date of birth is unknown, but we know that the marriage between Jan, his father, and Zofia Oporowska, his mother, took place in 1551<sup>15</sup>. Then at the time Commendone met him, he could have been a mere child of ten or eleven. However, at the end of 1566 the young Pole, by then a Paduan student of Philosophy, and Graziani, who was thirty years old, were exchanging affectionate, confidential letters, and this was to continue for around another four years, until Tomicki's return to Poland in the autumn of 1570<sup>16</sup>.

14 See the notes of the Jesuit Girolamo Lagomarsini, the eighteenth-century publisher of Graziani's works, in Giulio Poggiani, *Epistolae et orationes alim collectae ad Antonio Maria Gratiano nunc ab Hieronymo Lagomarsinio e Societate Jesu adnotationibus illustratae ac primum editae* (Rome: Generoso Salomoni, 1758), 367, 374–378. In 1564 Tomicki moved from Strasbourg to Tübingen. See the recent contributions by Marcello Piacentini, "Qualche nota sul soggiorno padovano di Mikołai Tomicki e di alcuni suoi connazionali", *Romanica Cracoviensia* 2023: 349–359, and Agnieszka Biedrzycka, "Tomicki, Mikołai", in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, 54 (Warszawa–Kraków: IH-PAN, 2022), 326–328. About Jan Tomicki (1524–1575), see "Tomicki, Jan", in *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 19 (Lublin: TNCUL, 2013), 767; regarding the figure and role of Piotr Tomicki (1464–1535): Jerzy Miziolek, "The Bishop Piotr Tomicki Chapel in the Cracow Cathedral, and its Altarpiece Depicting «The Adoration of the Magi»", in *Die Jagiellonen. Kunst und Kultur einer europäischen Dynastie an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, ed. Dietmar Popp, Robert Suckale (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2002), 385–394, and Anna Odrzywolska-Kidawa, *Biskup Piotr Tomicki (1464–1535). Kariera polityczna i kościelna* (Warszawa: Sempër, 2004).

15 See Tomasz Pietras, *Oporowscy herbu Sulima. Kariera rodziny możnowładczej w późnośredniowiecznej Polsce* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2014), 210, 236. Zofia Oporowska died before 1585.

16 From a Vatican codex belonging to Girolamo Lagomarsini, Graziani's letters were published in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, ed. Angelo Mai et al. (Rome: Tipografia del Collegio Urbano, 1842), XI–XIII, 235–467. Tomicki's are preserved in the Graziani Archive of Vada, Fondo Antonio Maria Graziani (henceforth AGV, FAMG), 62B. A selection from this correspondence was published in *Lettere di Pieter de Witte-Pietro Candido nei carteggi di Antonio Maria Graziani* (1569–1574), edizione critica di Massimo Moretti (Roma: De Luca, 2012). About the Paduan stay of Tomicki and his relationships with Commendone, Graziani and cardinal Hozjusz see Henryk Barycz, *Polacy na studiach w Rzymie w epoce Odrodzenia (1440-1600)* (Kraków: Nakł. Polskiej



What emerges from this correspondence is an intense master disciple relationship, encouraged by Commendone. Graziani sent the young student lengthy letters in Latin that varied in tone: some were full of affection and emotive involvement, whilst others contained harsh reprimands when his pupil failed to heed his teacher's advice and was either too slow with his reply or sent a letter that was too short<sup>17</sup>. Behind these ups and downs we can perceive the despondency and difficulties of a young man who had come from afar, when trying to meet Graziani's pressing request that he wrote both in Latin and Italian. Consequently, reports from Padua, news from the group of the other aristocratic countrymen in the city, accounts of the recurring violent quarrel among the Polish and the Flemish students, or information about how his studies were progressing were occasions for Tomicki to develop further his language and style, also with back translations from one language to another, whilst always working in close contact with the classic models that Graziani provided him with<sup>18</sup>. Being so used to professional correspondence, Graziani never ceased to underline that the command of letter writing was a fundamental part of university education, but also an essential tool in view of the future roles the student was to take on in his homeland<sup>19</sup>.

It was Graziani who gradually introduced Tomicki into the cultural life of Padua and to the university professors. In the spring of 1567, he recommended him to a philosopher who had very close ties with the two papal diplomats: Federico Pendasio, an interpreter of the Aristotelian orientation based on the commentary by Alexander of Afrodisia. Tomicki not only attended his official courses, but also received private tuition from Pendasio on Aristotle's *Ethics*. With Graziani's fervent support, Pendasio himself not only introduced Tomicki to physicians and naturalists, but also to Greek studies, and entrusted him to a member of the group of philologists around Gian Vincenzo Pinelli and his library<sup>20</sup>.

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Akademii Umiejętności 1938), 158–159. I wish to thank Marcello Piacentini who led me to the sources in Polish language.

17 Letters from Graziani dated 7 and 27 December 1566 (from Rome), in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 243–244, 250.

18 See for example, Graziani's recommendations to Tomicki, 1 November 1567 (from Rome) in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 317–318, and Tomicki's letters dated April–May 1568 in AGV, FAMG, 62B.

19 Graziani corroborated his encouragement through his own example, declaring his commitment to writing of “litterarum turba”, in his letter dated 20 February 1567 (from Rome), in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 265.

20 See for example Graziani's letters dated 30 March and 24 May 1567 (from Rome) and 27 September of the same year in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 278, 296, 306; in addition, those from Tomicki dated October–November 1568 in AGV, FAMG, 62B. In 1563

This correspondence thus resulted in a study plan that was both rich and detailed and was to become even more intense when, in the spring of 1568 Tomicki was granted a two-year extension of his stay in Padua<sup>21</sup>. A couple of months later, when Archbishop Filippo Mocenigo returned from Cyprus, Tomicki had yet another point of reference. Deeply convinced of the high educational value of philosophy, Mocenigo involved him even further in the habitual meetings and conversations of his refined Veneto circle. In turn Tomicki established a small philosophical academy where he would hold disputations on logic and public discussions, together with other students and young Venetian aristocrats<sup>22</sup>.

A restless and permanently dissatisfied teacher, from the very start Graziani had tried to offer multiple proposals and stimuli. In 1567 he had therefore organised a visit in Bologna, in the hope that his pupil would be able to attend some of the lessons held by the antiquarian Carlo Sigonio<sup>23</sup>. In the same period, having been favourably impressed when he visited the German College in Rome, Graziani had decided to request a Jesuit teacher be sent to Padua, and had started to send some of Tomicki's writing to Diego de Ledesma, who was working in the Roman College on what would become the official *Ratio studiorum* of the Society of Jesus at the end of the century<sup>24</sup>. What was troubling Graziani was the conciliation between culture and the needs of moral and religious formation, the big question that emerged clearly in the writings on education by the Bishop of Verona, Agostino Valier, who was also close to the circle around Commendone<sup>25</sup>. At the beginning of their correspondence, Graziani made sure Tomicki received a copy of the Roman catechism and then went on to recommend he read Augustine's

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Pendasio (1525–1603) briefly followed Commendone and Graziani, when they were on their way to Poland but interrupted the journey after falling ill.

21 Letter dated 17 December 1567 (from Rome) in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 359–360.

22 The young Polish student's progressive studies of Aristoteles can be seen in his letters written in the autumn of 1568; his news to Graziani recommences in the spring-summer of 1569, all in AGV, FAMG, 62B. The cited book by Bonora, *Giudicare i vescovi* is mainly devoted to the person and life of Filippo Mocenigo.

23 See Graziani's letter dated 5 April 1567, in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 280. Owing to the bitter rivalry with Francesco Robortello, Sigonio had left the chair of humanities in Padua, which he had obtained also thanks to the support of the Polish students. For more see William Mc Cuaig, "Andreas Patricius, Carlo Sigonio, Onofrio Panvinio, and the Polish Nation of the University of Padua", *History of Universities* 3 (1983): 87–100.

24 Graziani's letter dated 23 June 1567, in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 297.

25 Valier dedicated to Tomicki a manuscript booklet regarding the heretics in Poland. See Giovanni Cipriani, *La mente di un inquisitore. Agostino Valier e l'Opusculum De cautione adhibenda in edendis libris (1589-1604)* (Firenze: NICOMP, 2008), 50–51, 73.

*De utilitate credendi*<sup>26</sup>. He later encouraged Tomicki to explore the problematical areas that bordered on philosophy and theology. In a longer letter in Latin, which was almost a small treatise, Graziani tried to explain how ethical disorder – the failure to control passions – had led to the abuse of a subjective interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and multiplied the errors of faith, resulting in excess and rift. First Luther, then Zwingli and finally Calvin had thrown Christianity into a storm that had not yet abated, Graziani wrote. And this was a storm, in which only the Roman Church – as the welcoming mother, like Noah's Ark – could offer shelter and protection<sup>27</sup>. As from 1568 Tomicki was then sent to the vicar-general of the bishop of Padua, the Dominican Girolamo Vielmi, and an Augustinian theologian, to study the opinions of the “heretics” in more detail, in particular as regards the subject of the Eucharist<sup>28</sup>.

In Graziani's letters as well, more and more space tends to be dedicated to the accounts of the outbreaks of religious conflicts in Europe. Continuous are the updates about the uprising in the Netherlands, the stiff resistance of the Huguenots in France, and the deepening of confessional divisions in Eastern Europe and Poland itself<sup>29</sup>. In this correspondence the condemnation of the consequences of the religious conflict go hand in hand with the verification of the political categories that were developed by the classical authors, a common theme in Graziani's analysis of the individual political contexts<sup>30</sup>. One such example are his observations about tyranny written in connection with the description of the situation in Wallachia: in 1570 Graziani was to devote an essay, once again for Tomicki, entitled *De despota Valachorum*, that chronicled the history of the usurper of the voivod of Moldavia, who was assassinated in 1563<sup>31</sup>. A further example is in the letters in which Graziani discusses the Polish

26 See respectively the letters dated 7 December 1566 (from Rome) in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 246, and the one, without date or return address, written in the spring of 1567, *ibidem*, p. 287.

27 Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Lawrence, Graziani-Commendone Collection, ms. 87, 23r-25v.

28 See in particular Tomicki's letter dated 14 July 1569 in AGV, FAMG, 62B. On Vielmi: Antonella Barzazi, “Vielmi, Girolamo”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 99 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2020), 209-211.

29 See for example Graziani's letters dated the spring of 1567 in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, in particular 262, 274, and the one dated 6 March 1568 (from Rome), *ibidem*, 373-374.

30 *Ibidem*, Graziani's letter (from Rome), 10 May 1567, 293-294.

31 The text is *ibidem*, 172-218; in the following pages (219-234) there is another essay regarding the despot's brother. See also Graziani's letter (from Narni), 27 September 1567, *ibid.*, 300-301.

institutions, portrayed as the fruit of a peculiar balance between royal power and authority of the laws, with a *Senatus* – Graziani wrote to his pupil – that oversaw *publicam libertatem*<sup>32</sup>.

Under Commendone's vigil eye, Graziani expresses his growing satisfaction with Tomicki's progress. In Poland, however, his father disapproves of the path his son has taken and accuses him of letting himself be seduced by the ceremony and exteriority of the Roman Church; he absolutely forbids him to travel to Rome, which Graziani is urging him to do, and threatens to make him leave Padua and send him elsewhere. Tomicki, however, feels sure that sooner or later he will be able to convince him<sup>33</sup>. In the meantime, his letters to Graziani have become a regular channel for the communication of different kinds of matters sent from the Polish bishops to Commendone. In the autumn of 1568 Tomicki is asked to present Graziani with the request on behalf of the Primate of Poland to be remembered to the Pope in view of the upcoming promotion of cardinals. Cardinal Hosius, Bishop of Warmia and former papal legate to the Council of Trent, the more influential Polish prelate, mentions Tomicki with the highest praise in his correspondence with Commendone<sup>34</sup>. Shortly before he is due to return home, the young man is forced to categorically deny that he is about to enter the Jesuits<sup>35</sup>.

After his return to his homeland in the autumn of 1570 Mikołaj Tomicki's correspondence with Graziani seems to have stopped suddenly. His father's return to Catholicism, sometime later, was probably due to his influence. However, Mikołaj put his experience in Padua to good use: both he and his father were part of the delegation sent in France to Henry of Valois in 1573; with Commendone's support he was rewarded with some ecclesiastic benefits that he was able to enjoy until his premature death in 1585<sup>36</sup>.

This correspondence finally deserves to be studied in much more detail. It offers us a direct contact with an educational project that was outlined against a dense network of contacts and mediation with the Polish ruling groups and the local ecclesiastical hierarchy, framed by a perspective – that of Commendone and Graziani – in which culture

32 *Ibidem*, 353–354, Graziani's letter (from Rome), 3 January 1568.

33 Tomicki's letter to Graziani dated 28 April 1570 AGV, FAMG, 62B; in the letter dated 6 January of the same year (*ibidem*) Tomicki had expressed the hope that his mother might also convert to Catholicism.

34 Graziani's letter dated 9 December 1568 in *Spicilegium Romanum*, VIII, 405.

35 Tomicki's letter (from Venice) dated 11 May 1570 in AGV, FAMG, 62B.

36 Thus the note by Lagomarsini in Poggiani, *Epistolae*, 377.

and diplomacy were closely intertwined. As such, the resources offered by a great university city such as Padua, presented unique tools for both knowledge and action.

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