

Corpus pontificis.
Pope's Body as Element of Symbolic Communication
(14 – 16. Centuries)

My project has its roots in the typically «history of the body» problem presentation. This trend has gain significant importance among researchers in the last decades. The concept of the «body»¹, initially associated with natural sciences, was introduced as a notion into social and political sciences at the end of the 19th century. In the early 20th century, historians as well – inspired mostly by anthropology and history of medicine – started to enquire into the role of concepts of the body. It is the question which has become relevant again in the light of the most recent research trends in history which deal with different aspects of communication. It is possible to justify this research topic by suggesting that the human body is as historically active and subjected to historical changes as the economic and social structures and mental patterns are. This assumption can be proven at the very least by the fact that the body is interlocked with all the factors mentioned above.

Different types of bodies were under consideration previously – sometimes they were «active» and «ruling» like the bodies of the kings in the famous Mark Bloch's book², however, sometimes they were «oppressed» and «passive» as was the case with Michel Foucault³. The sacred and authoritative functions of the metaphor of the human body were most extensively treated by Ernst Kantorowicz in his book «The King's Two Bodies»⁴. There he discussed the medieval ideas according to which the king (and only the king) possessed two bodies – a physical one and a political one – at the same time, and these two bodies were determined by completely different properties. However, this issue has been brought up during international academic discussion since only the 1980s⁵.

Along with the «double» bodies of secular rulers⁶ the «simple» body of the Pope has now drawn the attention of scholars. One of the pioneers of this area was Reinhard Elze, who indicated the characteristic features of the body in his legal and historical study of the

¹ Böckenförde E.-W., Dohrn van Rossum G.: Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper, in: Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. Bd. 4. Stuttgart, 1978. S. 519 – 521.

² Bloch M.: Les Rois thaumaturges. Paris, 1924.

³ Foucault M.: Surveiller et punir. Paris, 1975. *Idem*: Histoire de la sexualité. Vol. 1 – 3. Paris, 1976 – 1984.

⁴ Kantorowicz E.: The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology. Princeton, 1957.

⁵ The reasons for the interest in such questions were discussed for instance by: List E.: Der Körper (in) der Geschichte, in: Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften 8 (1997). S. 167 – 185.

⁶ Bertelli S.: Il corpo del re. Sacralità del potere nell'Europa medievale e moderna. Firenze, 1990.

«spoliation rights»⁷. The idea of the oneness of the Pope's body was later supported also by Agostino Paravicini Bagliani. He examined various treatises, letters and images from the 11th up to the 13th century in order to explain how the Popes managed to harmonize their mortality with the postulate of the eternity of the papacy as an institution⁸.

In my paper I have been trying to generate the vision of the Pope's body which was evangelized by the keepers of the *cathedra Petri* themselves. However I am not so much interested in the already quite explored predominately juridical and legal issues⁹, but – with the exception of musicology¹⁰ – in the far less respected religious practices of the Curia. Previously researchers of the symbolic representation of the papacy in the 15th century often regarded the Pope predominantly as a ruler of the city of Rome, as an Italian local politician, or simply as a monarch, and therefore they mainly focused on such ceremonies as, for example, the *possesso*, the papal procession to the Lateran Palace, and the rites of *adventus*¹¹. For my part I would like to concentrate on the areas of papal activities, which were used by the pontiffs during the Mass and on other liturgical occasions in order to present them as the successors of Peter and the Vicars of Christ. Consequently sources examined from the liturgical point of view play the major role in my research. However, as opposed to the theological outlook I have been analyzing these texts while taking into account political connotations of the pope's gestures and actions described there.

The very idea of the liturgical rituals embodying the political position of the papacy in the 15th century is usually contested for two reasons. On the one hand, it is assumed that the forms of the divine service, and especially of the papal divine service, changed very seldom and the process was extremely slow. Therefore it is considered to be difficult to find the features of the papal Mass which were exclusively typical for the 15 century. On the other hand, in the context of so-called «secularization» of the papacy and the Curia at the threshold

⁷ Elze R.: Sic transit gloria mundi. Zum Tode des Papstes im Mittelalter, in: Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters 34 (1978). S. 1 – 18.

⁸ Paravicini Bagliani A.: Il corpo del Papa. Torino, 1994. In the most recent scientific literature appeared also another theory, which asserts the existence of two papal bodies. See Krüger Th. M.: Die zwei Körper des Papstes. Zur politischen Theologie des Renaissancepapsttums, in: In frumento et vino optima. Festschrift für Thomas Zotz zu seinem 60. Geburtstag. Ostfildern, 2004. S. 297 – 316.

⁹ See Prodi P.: Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna. Bologna, 1982.

¹⁰ Roth A.: Studien zum frühen Repertoire der Päpstlichen Kapelle unter dem Pontifikat Sixtus' IV. (1471 – 1484). Die Chorbücher 14 und 51 des Fondo Cappella Sistina der Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Frankfurt a. M., 1982; Bölling J.: Das Papstzeremoniell der Renaissance. Texte – Musik – Performanz. Frankfurt a. M., 2006 (Tradition – Reform – Innovation. Studien zur Modernität des Mittelalters, Bd. 12).

¹¹ Märkl C.: Papst Pius II. (1458 – 1464) in der Kapelle des Palazzo Medici Riccardi zu Florenz. Ein Beitrag zu Ikonographie und Zeremoniell der Päpste in der Renaissance, in: Concilium medii aevi 3 (2000). S. 161 – 169; Staubach N.: «Honor Dei» oder «Bapsts Gepreng»? Die Reorganisation des Papstzeremoniells in der Renaissance, in: Rom und das Reich vor der Reformation, hrsg. von N. Staubach. Frankfurt a. M., 2004 (Tradition – Reform – Innovation... Bd. 7). S. 91 – 136.

of the Reformation the drop in the number of papal liturgies is interpreted as a hallmark of their waning importance¹².

My research project aims at finding better explanations, as these observations can be interpreted in a different way. Taking into consideration the re-establishment of the papacy as a political authority in the 15th-century Rome it is necessary to investigate the strategies used by the Popes as well as the impact of the former on the contemporaries. At the same time the central aspects of the Pope's spiritual and religious role should not be ruled out prematurely. On the contrary they must be considered very carefully. Thus, the archaic form of the Papal Mass was significantly different from other religious services due to its continuity and immutability. And it is quite probable that thanks to their rarity the oldest parts of the Mass gained a whole new meaning, which they had not had when they had been common. The limited number of services, which were celebrated by the Pope himself, could be also said to significantly increase the importance of these events.

These assumptions are supported by the fact that epistolary and verbal argumentation used to play a less significant role in the process of political communication in the pre-modern period. Consequently it greatly boosted the communicative significance of images, gestures and body movements which were charged with some specific symbolic meaning¹³. It may even be suggested that there was a full-fledged «paralinguistic» system, which helped both individuals and groups of people to communicate. The origins of the system can be found mostly in the Roman liturgy, which was so far often neglected by historians¹⁴. Its importance for the issues of symbolic communication is genuinely revealed if one takes into account the degree of interpenetration between spiritual and secular spheres in the Middle Ages.

In view of all the points mentioned above the analysis of both descriptive and regulatory accounts of the Papal Mass proves to be an undeniable necessity. Moreover, due to the special symbolic language that was inherent in the liturgy it is possible to determine the characteristics of the papal body and to clarify the relations between the Corpus Christi (considering manifold possible interpretations of this highly complicated object) and the body

¹² See *Fernández P.D.*: The Patrimony of St. Peter. The Papal Court at Rome c. 1450 – 1700, in: *The Princely Courts of Europe, Ritual Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500 – 1700*, ed. J. Adamson. London, 2000. P. 153.

¹³ *Stollberg-Rilinger B.*: Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne. Begriffe – Thesen – Forschungsperspektiven, in: *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 31 (2004). S. 513 – 514.

¹⁴ *Althoff G.*: Die Kultur der Zeichen und Symbole, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 36 (2002). S. 6; *Bärsch J.*: Stiftsliturgie und städtische Religiosität im Mittelalter. Beziehungen und Abgrenzungen im Zeugnis des Liber ordinarius, in: *Herrschaft, Liturgie und Raum. Studien zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte des Frauenstifts Essen*, hrsg. von K. Bodarwé und Th. Schilp. Essen, 2002. S. 132; *Stollberg-Rilinger B.*: Herrschaftszeremoniell, in: *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*. Bd. 5. Stuttgart, 2007. Sp. 416.

of his vicar. In my paper I show how gestures and movements of the body illustrated at times political intentions and concepts, which are only indirectly described in written sources.

This approach has happened to be productive in my degree work (i.e. master's thesis. Lomonosov Moscow State University. Moscow, 2009). In the paper I examined so-called *Caeremoniale* of Agostino Patrizi Piccolomini¹⁵, which is the first relatively complete and systematic description of the curial ceremonies of the liturgical year.

Within the framework of this extensive preparatory work I tried to «translate» religious ceremonies, which are described in the text mentioned above, from the symbolic language of the liturgy. To this end I used both the mediaeval treatises on interpretation of the religious activities¹⁶ and the descriptions of the activities by eyewitnesses and contemporaries¹⁷. So I was able to demonstrate that the Renaissance Popes, which were often regarded as «secularized», intensively promulgated their claim to the vicariate of Christ through the means of liturgical symbolism. It also became evident that the changes in Patrizi Piccolomini's *Caeremoniale* were aimed at emphasizing the role of the Pope as *vicarius Christi* even more explicitly than before.

In my present PhD project the chronological framework of my research has been expanded, since it seemed sensible to take into consideration the period from the return of the Popes from Avignon up to the Reformation (1387 – ca. 1520). I also extended the geographical framework by selecting my sources in the way that allows to understand how the trends which emerged in the «centre» impacted the periphery. The practices which were drawn up in the Curia were evidently significant not only for the papacy. They should have influenced also the high clergy of all Catholic countries, and in no small measure the princes of the church of the Holy Roman Empire. Therefore besides the Italian books of ceremonies I have engaged the non-Italian ones, among them the so-called *libri ordinarii* of the cathedral and collegiate churches are of special significance¹⁸. Moreover, I have been using other types of sources, especially contemporary theological and liturgical treatises. I have been doing it in

¹⁵ L'Oeuvre de Patrizi Piccolomini ou le Cérémonial papal de la première Renaissance, ed. M. Dykmans. T. 1, 2. Città del Vaticano, 1980 (Studi e testi, T. 293, 294).

¹⁶ For example: *Durandus G.: Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, ed. A. Davril, T.M. Thibodeau. T. 1 – 4. Turnhout, 1995 (CCCM, T. 140).

¹⁷ For example: *Burckard J.: Liber notarum ab anno MCCCCLXXXIII usque ad annum MDVI*, ed. E. Celani. Vol. 1 – 2. Città di Castello, 1906 – 1911 (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, T. 32).

¹⁸ For example: *Liber Ordinarius der Essener Stiftskirche. Mit Einleitung, Erläuterungen, und einem Plan der Stiftskirche und ihrer Umgebung im 14. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. von F. Arens. Paderborn, 1908; *Odenthal A. Edition des Liber Ordinarius aus St. Gereon von 1424*, in: *Märtyrergrab – Kirchenraum – Gottesdienst. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur ehemaligen Stiftskirche St. Gereon in Köln*, hrsg. von A. Odenthal, A. Gerhards. Siegburg 2005. S. 265 – 282.

order to compare the theories and interpretations presented there with the usual practices¹⁹. Finally, the image sources and material culture of the papal court are also considered in my research²⁰.

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²⁰ See: *Ladner G.:* Die Papstbildnisse des Altertums und des Mittelalters. Von Innocenz II. zu Benedikt XI. Città del Vaticano; Roma, 1970. (Monumenti di antichità cristiana, Ser. 2, Vol. 4); *Idem:* Images and Ideas in the middle ages. Selected Studies in the History and Art. T. 1. Roma, 1983 (Storia e letteratura, Raccolta di studi e testi, Vol. 155). P. 209 – 237. For 15. Century see for example: *Märtl C.:* Körper-Kult. Die Sorge um das leibliche Wohl am päpstlichen Hof, in: *Pompa sacra. Lusso e cultura materiale alla corte papale nel basso medioevo (1420 – 1527)*, hrsg. von Th. Ertl. Rom, 2010 (Nuovi Studi Storici, Vol. 86). S. 15 – 36. The spatial aspects are mostly explored at the example of Avignon. See for instance: *Schimmelpfennig B.:* «Ad maiorem Pape gloriam». La fonction des pièces dans le palais des Papes d'Avignon, in: *Architecture et vie sociale*, ed. J. P. Guillaume. Paris, 1994. P. 25 – 46; *Idem:* Die Organization der päpstlichen Kapelle in Avignon, in: *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*. Bd. 50. 1970. S. 80 – 111.

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