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PLAGUE, CATTLE PESTILENCE, AND HUNGER IN THE PAPAL STATE (1713–1716): A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF EVERYDAY LIFE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BRITISH SOURCES

ABSTRACT. The British government did not appoint its representative in Rome, so the British in Venice were obliged to regularly inform on the developments in the Papal States. For this reason, their reports contain data that reveal certain aspects of the daily life in the Papal States, primarily those related to epidemics, hunger, and natural disasters. Our research is based on the

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archival material and relevant histories of this era, as well as the contemporary results of historical science for comparative analysis and the creation of an objective scientific picture of the epidemics and other natural disasters that affected the inhabitants of the Papal States in this short period at the beginning of the 18th century.

KEYWORDS: Papal State; Clement XI (1700-1721); plague; hunger; cattle pestilence.

INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

The Papal State occupied a central position on the Apennine Peninsula and it was administered from Rome.⁴ The war for Spanish heritage (1701-1714) did not leave Italy aside, where its most important battles were fought. The years of warfare for the Papal state brought not only financial difficulties but also epidemics, which were accompanied by natural disasters. At the same time, a climatic phenomenon known as the "Little Ice Age" left its consequences on the human and natural resources of those economies that were affected by this natural disaster. Soon after the signing of peace in Rastatt, a new war broke out. At the end of 1714, Porta decided to declare war to Venice. Thanks to diplomacy, Austria was involved in this conflict since 1716, (Elezović, 2016, pp. 56-57). A new war, even though military operations were conducted far from the Italian mainland this time, was capable of eradicating the populations of certain parts of Europe. In these contours, it is necessary to justify exploring the segments of human everyday life and the impacts of the war, epidemics, and hunger.

The aim of the paper is to highlight the issue of plague, cattle pestilence, and hunger in the Papal States between 1713 and 1716, as the contribution to the history of everyday life in the mentioned period. The research is primarily based on British sources; they are compared with other historical sources, and ultimately, with the findings of contemporary history. In science, it is known that comparative methods were applied by researchers of various phenomena and various contents by taking into account the course of historical development of the society or studying certain social,

⁴ What was considered as a Papal State was a group of several areas (Campania, Primorje and Lazio, Umbria, Sabina, Spoleto duchy, Marca, Bologna with Romagna, Ferrara, Komacjo, Urbino, Montefeltro, Benevento and Avignon), treated as separate provinces, while some of them enjoyed the right to make their money and had their own laws.

political, economic, legal phenomena and activities, etc. (Tancic, Elezovic, Gordic, 2018, pp. 56–57). In this spirit, the research has been carried to correctly identify the intensities of these epidemics and their impact on the population and their life and work in the Papal States.

The analysed period forms an integral part of "Classical Europe", the term by which Pierre Chaunu defined a special civilization unit in the development of Europe that encompassed the period from 1620 to 1760.⁵ Considering the rhythm of the occurrence of plague, the French historian believed that a milestone in the development of epidemiology occurred between 1685 and 1720 (Chaunu, 1977, p. 198), which is justified in numerous medical tracts written with the intention of their authors to improve the health care. This research is supported by the fact that the epidemics that hit the Apennine Peninsula between 1711 and 1714 remain a poorly explored phenomenon, neglected even in the Histories that aimed to glorify or criticize the political activities of Pope Clement XI (Clement XI, 1700-1721) (Polidori, 1727; Lafitau, 1752, Reboulet, 1752; Guarnacci, 1751). Epidemics that hit Italy at the beginning of the 18th century are largely neglected at the expense of previous major waves of plague, or a plague that took place in 1720 in the French merchant centre of Marseille. This leaves room for research based on British sources, which have not been taken into account in the analysis of the consequences of the epidemic, famine, and social unrest in the Apennine Peninsula.⁶

EVERYDAY LIFE IN FEAR OF THE PLAGUE

The Papal States during 1712 remained in the shadow of negotiations in Utrecht and the efforts of Clement XI⁷ to resist the surprises of Savoie and Vienna in establishing a new distribution of forces on the peninsula until it was disturbed by a new wave of plague. This epidemic is thought to have originated from Hungary, from where it spread through Venice to Milan and Ferrara, eventually reaching the Papal States. The fast-hitting plague also endangered

⁵ On his definition of this notion see: Chanunu 1977, pp. 19–21.

⁶ In recent years, the plague in the Papal States in the early 18th century is being handled by Italian historian Maria Pia Donato (Donato, 2016b; Donato, 2006, pp. 159–174), but her research is based on the material of Italian provenance.

Rome (Lafita 1752, II, p. 49). It soon caused the discontinuation of trade, and according to the descriptions, among the inhabitants, it brought great fear, to which the authorities responded by organizing church processions (Lafita 1752, II, pp. 49–50). The fear of plague made Clement XI bestow the most important position in the field of health care in the Papal States to the famous physician and author of a number of medical treatments, Giovanni Maria Lancia (*Giovanni Maria Lancisi*, 1654 – 1720).⁸

At the beginning of 1713, half of Rome was ill, while many died, the epidemic had lasted for four months. The Pope's subjects, because of the miserable circumstances in which they lived, did not hesitate, in moments of despair, to steal or plunder. When Cardinal Tomazi died, the Pope decided that his quarters were protected by the guard just so they would not be robbed.⁹ In order for the plague to be suppressed, every communication (goods and passengers) with the infected areas was suspended, while the post which came to Rome from the Habsburg monarchy had to be opened and perfumed, so that the infection would not be transferred through it.¹⁰ On the borders of the Papal States, the guard was strengthened to make this measure effective. It was ordered that the bodies of those who died in the hospices in Rome be dissected, but in the end, it turned out that none of them died from the plague.¹¹

When it was found that the plague occurred in Vienna, in April 1713, a Congregation was held where it was decided to suspend the

- ⁷ Born in 1649 as Giovanni Francesco Albani in a respectable noble family in Urbino. For the sake of education, he moved to Rome in 1660. Ten years later he decided to pursue a church career. He studied philosophy, theology, and law. From 1677 he entered Prelature. See about his origin and early years: Lafitau 1752, I, pp. 1–59; Reboulet, 1752, I, pp. 2–32. About the rise in the church hierarchy in addition to the aforementioned history and: Andretta 1982; The most important history of the pontificate of Clement XI: Polidori, 1727; Lafitau, 1752, I-II; Reboulet, 1752, vol. I–II, Guarnacci, 1751, II, pp. 1–380. On the situation about the War of the Spanish Heritage and the relationship with the Vatican: Pometti, 1898, pp. 279–457; Pometti 1899, pp. 109–79; Pometti 1900, pp. 239–76, pp. 449–515. About the situation in the Vatican during the negotiations held in Utrecht and Rastatt see: Kouµh, 2017, pp. 43 and further.
- ⁸ "Clément XI nomma Lancisi con premier médecin et camerier secret"; Dezeimeris, 1837, t. III, vol. II, p. 386. For the explanation of this type of titles, see: Pia Donato, 2016b, p. 59. About his career and a list of all the more important works from his opus see: Dezeimeris, 1837, t. III, vol. II, pp. 385–388.
- ⁹ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 12v; Venice, 13 January 1713; third letter under that date.
- ¹⁰ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 14r; Venice, 20 January 1713.
- ¹¹ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 16v; Venice, 20 January 1713; second letter under that date.

trade with Milan, Mantova, Piacenza, Modena, Mirandol, Komac, and the Canton of Grizon under the threat of death.¹² As it could be concluded from the list of those areas, Clement XI primarily took note of the protection of Rome, as the Pantheon, Mirandol, and Komacho constituted the integral parts of the Papal States. This is confirmed by the Edict banning the abandonment of the city without possession of a medical certificate issued in Kampidol.¹³ Also, entering Rome was not possible without having a similar confirmation.¹⁴ At the beginning of June, Rome looked like a desert, as its inhabitants abandoned it and retreated to their rural estates.¹⁵ The new Consistory in mid-June 1713 was dedicated to the fight against the plague, but it also discussed the situation in the state of Karl VI (1711-1740).¹⁶ Over the next few months, British reports do not mention the plague as a danger to the inhabitants of Rome, which is why its wave in 1712-1713 can be considered endemic without major consequences.

Another more dangerous type of epidemic at the time hit the Papal States. A large epidemic of fodder plague struck a number of European countries during the first two decades of the 18th century. Its source was the Neuchatel area in today's Switzerland, where the first cases of cattle illness were recorded in 1702. It is believed that it was transferred to Italy from Dalmatia in 1711 (Spinage, 2003, p. 106; Kocić – Dajč, 2014, p. 151),¹⁷ in time to appear in the Papal States. The first news about it was recorded in British sources related to a letter by Christian Cole on August 25, 1713, stating that "several oxen died one day in the past week in Rome", which is why they are forbidden to be transferred to Rome until further.¹⁸ It was speculated that the cause of their death could also be the drinking water, which is why the market where they were sold was relocated from the Colosseum to St. George's Square.¹⁹ The big-horned cattle

- ¹³ *Campidoglio* Square in Rome on the Capitol, one of the seven hills on which the city is based.
- ¹⁴ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 92v; Venice, 28 April 1713.
- ¹⁵ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 122v; Venice, June 9, 1713. This measure is recommended by Muratori in his tract *Del governo della peste* (Muratori, 1714, p. 28 and further).
- ¹⁶ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 150r; Venice, July 28, 1713
- ¹⁷ More precise information on this epidemic is brought up by a contemporary of events that stated that on August 27, 1711, in the village of Sermeola, 2 miles away from Padua, many oxes that arrived from Hungary died here (Borromeo, 1712, p. 13).
- ¹⁸ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 167v; Venice, August 25, 1713

¹² TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 86r; Venice, 21 April 1713.

breed continued in the coming months throughout Italy.²⁰ The Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples suffered the most from the dead cattle, although Lombardy was not spared.²¹ In September 1713, the cattle plague hit Ferrara and Brescia.²² Regarding the Papal States, the most numerous victims were reported in Campania, where in early October 1713, there were first casualties.²³ At the end of September, 1,080 oxen died in Rome and Campania from the plague, and a week later about 700 of them.²⁴ According to the recent surveys, in the Papal States between August 1713 and May 1714, a total of 26,252 cattle died (Spinage, 2003, p. 107).

Early in October, horses also started to suffer from the plague, announcing the possibility that hunger would start to harm the population of the Papal States. The only solution was for the authorities to allocate a certain amount of money for the purchase of wheat in other countries.²⁵ This time too, in response to the epidemic, a church procession was organized in Rome. The miraculous image of Christ from the Lateran Palace was brought before the inhabitants of Rome so that they would be calmed.²⁶ Additional turmoil was caused by the flooding of the Tiber, which on this occasion flooded the lower parts of the city and the surrounding fields.²⁷ A happy circumstance for the papal subjects was the cold weather that arose as the winter approached, which also affected the reduction of cattle deaths.²⁸

As a result of the fodder plague, the ploughed fields were left untreated,²⁹ thus, such an unfavourable outcome foreshadowed

- ²² TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 189r; Venice, September 15, 1713. The cattle plague in Ferrara also ruled in 1714 that people began to fear that it would be transferred to them; Spinage, 2003, p. 107.
- ²³ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 202v; Venice, October 6, 1713
- ²⁴ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 206r; Venice, October 13, 1713. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Campaign represented an area with a large population density of 160 inhabitants per km²; Chaunu, 1977, p. 227. This was at the same time the greatest danger to the papal authorities since poor harvesting in areas with a higher density of population potentially worsened devastating consequences for the authorities.
- ²⁵ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 232v; Venice, November 17, 1713.
- ²⁶ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 232v. See also: Spinage, 2003, p. 107.
- ²⁷ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 234v; Venice, November 17, 1713.
- ²⁸ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 240v; Venice, December 1, 1713.

¹⁹ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 167v.

²⁰ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 183r; Venice, September 1, 1713

²¹ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 185r–185v; Venice, September 8, 1713

certain hunger. In order to repair the difficult situation at the beginning of March 1714, the pope issued a \$ 100,000 lottery, the income of which was intended "for the benefit of the hospital *La Carità*".³⁰ Realizing that cattle mortality poses a threat to agriculture, at the beginning of April, the Proclamation was issued according to which the Apostolic Treasury approved a loan of 100,000 crowns at a rate of 2% interest. This money was intended for traders to buy livestock abroad.³¹

The poverty of the people of the Papal States became apparent to many contemporaries, while the British sources state that they did not withhold either from attacking and robbing people on the streets of Rome in the afternoon was a usual occurrence.³² The poor suffered more misery that the government could not prevent. At the end of June 1714, several people were killed by lightning in Campania, while ice, which was sometimes heavy up to 9 ounces³³, was falling. As a victim of a thunderbolt, the British report mentions a certain Capuchin, which in Frascati,³⁴ while he was talking to the Ambassador of Malta, was suddenly hit by lightning and killed on the spot. In the same way, one of the ambassadors' servants was killed.³⁵

EVERYDAY LIFE IN HUNGER

Measures previously undertaken by the government on the supply of grain did not immediately yield results. The hunger tormented the populations of the Papal States at a time when the grain was still not harvested,³⁶ while the new wave followed in July of 1714.³⁷

- ³¹ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 310r; Venice, April 6, 1714. During those critical years, papal authority proved to be effective in combating the plague. Namely, by 1711, this epidemic was relatively unknown even among the educated circles. However, during this crisis, the pope brought together the most distinguished scientists, first of all, Lancision, who succeeded to repress it (Spinage, 2003, p. 107–108).
- ³² TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 319v; Venice, April 27, 1714; see also: TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 321p; Venice, April 27, 1714; the second letter under that date.
- ³³ Measure for weight. It has been widely used throughout Europe since antiquity, where it weighed about 70 g.
- ³⁴ *Frascati* a town in the Lazio area, about 20 km from Rome.
- ³⁵ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 366r; Venice, July 20, 1714.

²⁹ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 282r; Venice, February 16, 1714

³⁰ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 294v; Venice, March 4, 1714

Until 1716, the effect of natural disasters, as well as an imposed set of political circumstances, led Clement XI to take concrete measures to improve the status of its subjects. First came the costly masks intended for visitors to the carnival, which was held in Rome at the beginning of each calendar year, which could be interpreted as a reflection of the fight against luxury, which threatened to provoke a rebellion. An order was issued to close all shops in Rome in which this type of goods was sold.³⁸ Until then, many people died from the effects of starvation, which led the government to allocate money to buy 40,000 sacks of wheat in Apulia.³⁹ Subjects in the Papal State were particularly unpleasantly surprised by the meteor, which caused great fear and superstition (*TMM*, 1716, p. 157).

Clement XI, in a pompous manner, celebrated Easter in the Church of St. Peter in April 1716, in the presence of the most important church prelates and diplomats. Procession and celebration took place despite the famine that affected the Papal state. A great number of people died of hunger, while many robberies were committed in Rome itself.⁴⁰ In those days, a large number of people were coming to Rome searching for food while the people of this city already lived in great misery.⁴¹ The hunger caused the immigrants to Rome to find some temporary work to be able to afford food and survive. A bunch of poor and hungry people was the best recommendation for a possible national rebellion, which, if it arose, would seriously shake the power of Clement XI. On the occasion of the sale of ecclesiastic services of a position in the Apostolic Chamber for 10,000 crowns,42 which was not sufficient to settle expenditures in the intention of the authorities to settle the poorest, at the same time, the most vulnerable subjects.

In his efforts to take care of the poor, Clement XI tried to convey to the cardinals and prelates the pressing need to take care of them by providing them with food and work. One of the measures was their employment on the maintenance of city streets. However, it quickly proved ineffective. As a consequence of nepotism, wide-

- ³⁶ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 355v; Venice, June 29, 1714.
- ³⁷ TNA, SP, 99/60, f. 366r; Venice, July 20, 1714.
- ³⁸ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 124v; Venice, February 21, 1716; second letter under that date (Rome, February 21, 1716).
- ³⁹ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 131v; Venice (non-dating document).
- ⁴⁰ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 161r–161v; Rome, 28 April 1716
- ⁴¹ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 170v; Rome 2 May 1716.
- ⁴² TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 170v.

spread in the administrative system, there were no jobs for the poor, because the cleaning operations of the streets were monopolized by the friars and priests who employed their loyal people.⁴³ Hunger led to several rebellions. The rebellion in Terni was particularly dangerous,⁴⁴ as a result, the Governor had to withdraw, while Governor of Narnia had to make a great effort to suppress the rebellion by distributing grain and money to his people.⁴⁵

The Vatican—while trying to settle the church dispute with France in order to defend its shores from the attack of the Ottoman semi-regular naval forces and to coordinate the actions of the allies in the fight against the Ottoman Empire-primarily sought to maintain peace among its subjects. When, at the beginning of June 1716, several ships loaded with grain sailed into the port of Civitavecchia, they were greeted with great joy by the local inhabitants.⁴⁶ In order to take advantage of favourable circumstances, the monsignor Imperiali announced the Manifesto, which was supposed to show his good governance in the "great shortage of grain" in the best possible light. However, it was already speculated that the new governor of Rome would be Monsignor Falconieri.⁴⁷ In order to prevent possible rebellion at the time the harvest started, Edict was published containing precise prices of grains in the territory of the Papal States. A few loads of bread were sent to workers engaged in the harvest for fear of them escaping with the crop. To the news that several residents of Perugia were suffering from a certain type of fever, Rome began to fear that the plague had reappeared. Because of this, several physicians were sent to Perugia.⁴⁸

With these measures, the rebellions were extinguished. At the same time, they can be interpreted as a reflection of collective helplessness and dissatisfaction not only with the authorities but also against all the things imposed daily on them. This can be justified by the fact that, despite conservatism, the papal authority was able to successfully manage finances, but only for a moment. Rome, as the centre of Catholic ecumenism, was endowed with numerous incomes, which, on various bases, were collected from their possessions, from devotees, and rulers. The press announced that there

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⁴³ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 171r; Rome, 15 May 1716

⁴⁴ City in Umbria, in the valley of the Nera River.

⁴⁵ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 172r; Rome, May 9, 1716. The city of Umbria.

⁴⁶ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 186r; Rome, June 6, 1716.

⁴⁷ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 195r; Rome, June 20, 1716.

⁴⁸ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 197r; Rome, June 6, 1716.

were 4 million ducats in the Apostolic Treasury, with the remark that this capital would soon be reduced due to the costs of the war against the Ottomans (LH, 1716, p. 230). This wave of hunger, according to recent research, was a local crisis and a "minor event". The same research suggests that hunger in 1716 affected papal subjects to a lesser extent than was the case in 1708–1709. (Alfani – Mocarelli – Strangio, 2017, p. 32).

Clement XI endeavoured to maintain power over a society that was ruined by all forms of crime, intensified by a general dissatisfaction of the subjects. In such a stirring society, the news of the robbery by a certain officer in the Pope's office, who was thrown into the prison because of the embezzlement of 12,000 crowns, deeply echoed.⁴⁹ Soon the Vatican was shaken by a new scandal when several people were thrown into jail for forgery of "Agnus Dei by Pius V and Innocenti XI".⁵⁰ This latest incident revealed that individuals did not even try to profit from selling the relics.

As a result of the plague, earthquakes, floods, epidemics, hunger, and the Spanish Heritage War, the Clement XI's pontificate was marked by a decline in the number of inhabitants. According to a study, 130,826 inhabitants lived in Rome in 1695, in 1700 that number rose to 149,447. After that date, there was a decline in the number of inhabitants, which reached the lowest point in 1705 (132,104 inhabitants), followed by a slow demographic recovery, especially after 1713 (Gross, 1990, p. 57). An analysis of these statistics suggests that the fluctuations in the number of people in Rome were not drastic, at the same time indicating that the plague (except for cattle plague) and the hunger that hit the Papal States in the period under consideration cannot be considered pandemics with serious consequences for subjects and society as a whole. They had a much greater influence on the everyday life of ordinary people who were forced to live in constant fear of the epidemic and possible rebellion.

CONCLUSION The British sources reveal that the Papal States during the analysed period were affected by the re-encirclement of political events in

⁴⁹ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 200r; Rome, July 1, 1716.

⁵⁰ TNA, SP, 99/61, f. 223v; Venice, August 28, 1716; second letter under that date; Rome, August 22, 1716. Agnus Dei represented wax moldings that, after being blessed by the Pope, were sent to the churches for worship, while their sale to the papal cashier made significant profits. The very same explanation provided by the official British report is also given in LH, 1716, p. 237.

the Apennine Peninsula, but also by a series of nature-related disasters. The key place in these reports belongs to important political events, such as the talks in Utrecht and Rastatt, the handover of power in Naples and Sicily, events in other Italian states, and the activities of the Jakobbite opposition. However, British observers were also interested in the situation in the Papal States, in the first place, for a short-term plague, then a pest attack, as well as a shortage of cereals, identified by some as a consequence of the small ice age. The waves of the plague that hit the Papal States in 1712 lasted for about 4 months, but thanks to the efforts of Pope Clement XI and one of the most prominent physicians of the Lancision era, Rome managed to recover quickly and without many consequences. The animal plague that broke out immediately after the cessation of human plague left devastating consequences and was directly responsible for the poor harvest and hungry years that followed after 1714. The cattle plague affected not only the big horned cattle but also began to attack horses in time, which, according to a recent survey, mostly hit livestock in Campania. The Wave of Hunger (from 1714 to 1716) led the authorities to turn to extraordinary measures to prevent a rebellion in certain parts of the Papal States, as well as in Rome itself. For this reason, they decided to buy wheat in Apulia, which helped overcome the crisis. All these disasters left the consequences on the everyday life of ordinary subjects, who tried to find the best way to survive, while some of them resorted to crime.

SOURCESThe National Archives at Kew Gardens, London (TNA), State Papers (SP),
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retaries of State. Including a Description, and Drawings of the Imperial Ports
in the Gulph of Venice. From Jan[uar]y 6. 1713. to Dec[embe]r 21. 1714.]
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From 8. Jan[uar]y 1715. to the 31. Dec[embe]r 1717]
LH 1716 = Lettres historiques (et politiques) contenant ce qui se passe de plus impor-
tant en Europe. Mois le Juliet 1716, tome L. Amsterdam: Chez Jaques Desbordes.
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Резиме

Куга, помор стоке и глад у Папској држави (1713–1716): прилог историји свакодневице из перспективе британских извора

Аутори у раду анализирају прилике у Папској држави изазване епидемијом куге која је погађала њене становнике, али и сточни фонд. Временски оквир који је предмет анализе био је обележен завршетком великог сукоба у Европи познатог као Рат за шпанско наслеће (1701-1714), али и почетком новог Млетачко-османског рата (1714-1718). Стална ратна опасност, посебно војне операције вођене на територији Апенинског полуострва, утицала је на интензитет и активност епидемије у Папској држави. Аутори податке из британских извора компарирају са другим историјским изворима, али и са савременим истраживањима. Истраживање је показало да су епидемије које су у кратком периоду (од 1713. до 1716) погодиле Папску државу биле мањег интензитета, што се посебно односи на епидемије људске куге. Сточна куга, с друге стране, показала се штетном по привреду Папске државе, претећи да у њој, као крајњу последицу пролонгира и глад, стално присутну међу најсиромашнијим слојевима становништва. Мере заштите које је Рим преузимао показале су се ефикасним, због чега од 1716. године нема вести о куги и глади у британским изворима који описују прилике у Папској држави.

Кључне речи: Папска држава; Климент XI (1700-1721); куга; глад; помор стоке.



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