

o in nem rem noscunt geminos Alcmena e



PROLOGVS  
 Tuos in uostis uoluit inccimonijf era  
 Me letum lucris afficere atq; adiuuar  
 Et ut res rationesq; uostrotam omnia  
 Bene expedire uoluit peregrez. Beati domi



# BISHOP JOHN VITEZ AND EARLY RENAISSANCE CENTRAL EUROPE

## THE HUMANIST KINGMAKER

by  
**TOMISLAV MATIĆ**

**ARC** HUMANITIES PRESS



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To my father Josip and  
my mother Blaženka.

This would not be possible  
without you.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

**THE SUBJECT OF** this study is the life, career, and public activities of John Vitez of Sredna (early 1400s–1472)—a politician, prelate, diplomat and one of the most influential personages in the history of Renaissance humanism in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. Vitez was a nobleman from medieval Slavonia, who had spent a large portion of his lifetime as the bishop of Oradea (1445–1465), and finished his career and his life as the archbishop of Esztergom and primate of Hungary (1465–1472). He is also the author of the only extant complete collection of letters from the late medieval Kingdom of Hungary. His life is relevant to the history of Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, Poland, and the wider Central European area. This work studies the existing literature on John Vitez, presents new sources on his life and career, and attempts to create a complete image of him within the context of the tumultuous history of early Renaissance Central Europe.

By studying the lives, careers and actions of individuals or groups in a given historical period, we can draw conclusions on the causes, courses and consequences of historical events, which will in turn help us to attain a clearer image of a past society, its customs and its perception of reality. Such an approach makes history more “human,” as well as more understandable and interesting.<sup>1</sup> However, the fabric of reality is woven of human expectations, attempts, successes and failures, and their identification as such depends more on a historian’s perception than on the data preserved in sources. That often makes one’s conclusions uncertain.

Such uncertainty was often a problem during my study of John Vitez’s life. The sources are often vague or, especially in the case of narrative sources, unreliable. Vitez’s contemporaries, such as John of Thurocz (Thuróczy), Jan Długosz or Enea Silvio Piccolomini, often reported on events in a way that would serve the purpose they were trying to accomplish—to flatter a ruler, praise their religion, or self-aggrandize. As for the charters, they mostly present brief reports on the consequences of Vitez’s actions, offering nothing in the way of his motives and the actions themselves. Therefore, it was necessary to avoid making (too many) poorly founded assumptions, basing conclusions on conditional statements, and outright guessing (although if we want to reach any conclusions whatsoever, the latter is sometimes unavoidable). It soon became obvious that the task would be impossible if I treated Vitez’s life as an isolated phenomenon.

To alleviate this problem, I decided to focus on the context of Vitez’s historical period, meaning the political, ecclesiastical and cultural events and developments contemporary to him, instead of studying his actions and making assumptions about his motives.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes this approach yielded very little, as I have often reached the same

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**1** Bernard Guenée, *Between Church and State: The Lives of Four French Prelates in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 6.

**2** Such a method was used by Marianna D. Birnbaum in her biography of Janus Pannonius:

conclusions as other researchers had before. However, sometimes it led to findings different from the established narrative. Still, as the sources remain silent on many important issues, it proved to be impossible to altogether avoid assumptions based on the general tendencies of Vitez's historical period. In other words, we still do not know why Vitez acted as he did, what he was trying to accomplish, or whether those actions were his to begin with or he was simply executing someone else's will. Despite that, the assumptions based on the results of such a comprehensive approach are somewhat more reliable than they would otherwise be. In cases when the data on Vitez's actions were insufficient, such as regarding his study in Vienna or his bearing during the Transylvanian revolt of 1467, comparing them to the actions of other Hungarian prelates made it possible to determine things that would otherwise be unattainable. Also, this procedure provides the benefit of offering a panoramic view on the elite social strata of the fifteenth-century Kingdom of Hungary and wider Central Europe.

Before laying out the results of my own research, I briefly summarize the state of the previous historiographic research of the topic treated in this book, as well as how literature and the relevant sources are treated in it. It should be noted that, due to his importance for Hungarian national sentiment, John Vitez is a very common topic in Hungarian historiography. In Croatia he was also studied, but nowhere near as much as north of the Drava. That said, it is surprising that so few works dealing exclusively with his life and career have been published. Right at the outset of my research, it became apparent that the study of John Vitez was sharply divided into two separate compartments. The first, which produced very few publications, deals with Vitez's political, ecclesiastical and diplomatic activities. The second, much more copious, deals with his role as a Renaissance humanist and patron of the arts and sciences.

The representative work of the first compartment is the first and, until now, only complete biography of Vitez: *Vitéz János esztergomi érsek élete* by Vilmos Fraknói, published in 1879.<sup>3</sup> Although its historiographical value is enormous, it has many shortcomings, primarily due to its nineteenth-century understanding of history. Of other works by Fraknói, his article "Zrednai Vitéz János primás származása" deserves mentioning, as it revises his previous theory on the Sredna family.<sup>4</sup>

Of other authors, Vince Bunyitay studied Vitez's activities as a prelate in his monumental history of the diocese of Oradea, but he focused only on the time when Vitez was its bishop.<sup>5</sup> The next study dealing with Vitez as a politician did not come out until 1990—the article "Vitéz János, a politikus és államférfi (Pályavázlat—kérdőjelekkel)" by Ferenc Szakály.<sup>6</sup> It, however, follows Vitez's career only until the time of Matthias

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Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*. Works listed in the Select Bibliography below are simply cited in a shortened form in these notes.

3 Fraknói, *Vitéz János*.

4 Fraknói, "Zrednai Vitéz."

5 Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 3:269–93.

6 Ferenc Szakály, "Vitéz János, a politikus és államférfi (Pályavázlat—kérdőjelekkel)," in *Vitéz János Emlékkönyv*, ed. Bárdos et al., 9–38.

Corvinus's accession. András Kubinyi devoted several articles to Vitez,<sup>7</sup> but he mostly studied his career from the viewpoint of his work in the royal chancery, assessing other aspects of his life according to that.

Studying Vitez as a Renaissance humanist and patron of the arts has been much more appealing to historians. Fraknói himself published several works on that topic.<sup>8</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, Iván Boronkai devoted much effort to studying Vitez's writings from the viewpoint of history of literature.<sup>9</sup> He published the first modern edition of Vitez's letters, which also included his speeches and letters which were not part of the original *Epistolarium* compiled in 1452.<sup>10</sup> Klára Csapodiné Gárdonyi published an overview of Vitez's book collection in 1984.<sup>11</sup> Over the last few decades, Maria Prokopp published a number of works on Vitez's cultural activities,<sup>12</sup> while the largest number of works on that topic was published by Klára Pajorin, whose contribution to the study of John Vitez could be compared only to Fraknói's.<sup>13</sup>

In Croatian historiography too, Vitez was studied mostly as a Renaissance humanist and a patron of the arts. Olga Perić devoted several articles to his collection of letters,<sup>14</sup> and Miroslav Kurelac studied his contributions to science, culture and political theory.<sup>15</sup> A semi-biographical novel about Vitez was also published in Croatian.<sup>16</sup> More recently, a brief account of Vitez's life was published by Borislav Grgin in his book *Počeci rasapa*.<sup>17</sup>

I started my own research of Vitez's life and activities by studying his own writings—the collection of letters mentioned above, his speeches and other works. After this, I turned to contemporary narrative sources, such as the works of Antonio Bonfini (*Rerum Hungaricarum decades*) and Jan Długosz (*Historia Polonica*). The works of Enea Silvio Piccolomini proved to be most useful. Diplomatic sources, published and unpublished, filled in the gaps and cleared up some of the uncertainties. Of course, the narrative sources alone were not enough, especially when less publicly exposed details of

**7** Kubinyi, "Vitéz János"; Kubinyi, "Vitéz János és Janus Pannonius"; Kubinyi, "Adatok."

**8** Fraknói, "Váradon írt Vitéz-codex"; Fraknói, "Vitéz János Livius-codexei."

**9** Boronkai, "Vitéz János diplomáciai"; Boronkai, "Vitéz János és az ókori klasszikusok"; Boronkai, "Vitéz János retorikai."

**10** Iohannes Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai.

**11** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*.

**12** For example, Prokopp, "Az egyetemszervező"; Prokopp, "Johannes Vitéz, arcivescovo di Esztergom"; Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes."

**13** For a list of her works regarding Vitez, see the Select Bibliography below.

**14** Perić, "Zbirka pisama"; Olga Perić, "Tragom Ivana Česmičkog u pismima Ivana Viteza od Sredne," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 156–64; Perić, "Res privatae dans la correspondance de Iohannes Vitéz."

**15** Kurelac, "Kulturna i znanstvena"; Kurelac, "Ivan Vitez od Sredne i Jan Panonije (Ivan Česmički) između anarhije i tiranije," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 222–46; Kurelac, "Ivan Vitez od Sredne, kanonik kustos zagrebački."

**16** Josip Paro and Olga Perić, *Uspon mirnog čovjeka—Ivan Vitez* (Zagreb: Globus 1979).

**17** Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 45–52.

Vitez's life and career (such as, for example, his relations with his neighbours) needed to be dealt with. I therefore made extensive use of various legal documents and private letters, either preserved in manuscript form or published in collections.

When studying various aspects of Vitez's life, I would always start from the primary sources. They were given the most importance, but caution was paramount here as well. Generally, I always relied on legal documents and private letters, if they were available, more than on narrative sources. When treating narrative sources, I have always approached them as potentially biased or uninformed, and I point out wherever necessary in the text that a certain piece of information comes from a narrative source. Also, in cases when I found out that my study of the primary sources had nothing new to add to the existing state of research, I simply cited the most relevant literature on the subject. In cases when there was a conflict between my own findings and the previous researchers' theories, I pointed that out in the footnotes. In this manner I managed to offer a fresh perspective on the previously known sources, to add some previously unknown ones, or ones unused in this context, and to provide an overview of the relevant literature and the other authors' opinions.

Regarding the structure and contents of this book, it should be said that, as I strove toward presenting a complete image of Vitez's life, I observed every stage of it in the context of other persons of his status. To begin with, it was necessary to explain Vitez's origins. To achieve this, I had to study the history of his family, the nobles of Sredna. After this, I concentrated on the beginnings of Vitez's career, his first years as a prelate and his diplomatic and political activities. Regarding this, it should be noted that Hungarian prelates were magnates of the highest rank, who possessed considerable swathes of the kingdom. Therefore, Vitez's ecclesiastical career should not be understood purely as a religious issue, as his interactions with other prelates, with other lords, and the ways in which he managed his estates, were of equal importance. The next stage, Vitez's education, proved to be even less straightforward. While we do have some data regarding the Sredna family, on Vitez's student years we have almost nothing. However, as we know that Vitez enrolled in the University of Vienna, it proved to be worthwhile to study the activities of other contemporary prelates at that university, as well as its curricula. The results go a long way towards explaining Vitez's future interests.

To present a clear and coherent image of Vitez's life and career, the book's chronology is divided into two parts, the central point being King Matthias's accession in 1458. Vitez's political, ecclesiastical, and cultural activities before and after that point are studied in separate chapters. In this way, both the causality between events and different aspects of Vitez's life can be followed without losing track. It is important to note that although the book studies Vitez's life in the context of its time, it deals with events that were relevant from Vitez's point of view. Its scope expands and narrows with it, so at some stages it encompasses the entirety of Central Europe, and at others only the Kingdom of Hungary, or even less. His contemporaries are dealt with to the extent to which they or their actions interacted with Vitez, and they therefore disappear and reappear as they did in Vitez's life. The events that were relevant to his life and career are described in greater detail, while others are merely glossed over. Essentially, the intention here was to depict the world in which Vitez lived, but primarily *his* world.

## Vitez's Identity and Family Background

The name "John Vitez" has become so embedded in international historiography it is difficult to imagine that the person denoted by it never used it. It is one of many pieces of information about John Vitez of Sredna that are the result of several centuries' worth of historiographical theories, which have with time become indistinguishable from facts. For example, authors usually state that he was born in 1408.<sup>18</sup> This was an assumption made by Fraknói, and he himself admitted there is no evidence to support it.<sup>19</sup> The earliest mention of Vitez that we know of comes from a charter issued in 1417, which Fraknói did not take into consideration while writing Vitez's biography. In it, Vitez's uncle Philip renounced the rights to an estate in favour of the Pauline monastery on Garić in the name of himself, his sons John (*Iwan*) and Jacob, his brother Dennis and Dennis's son John, who was our Vitez.<sup>20</sup> The charter does not say how old the latter was at the time.

Regarding John's family background, Fraknói was at first led astray by the surname "Vitez," which means "knight."<sup>21</sup> In 1888 he revised his account, as by that time the charters of the Garić monastery were transferred from Zagreb to Budapest and in them Fraknói found numerous mentions of the Sredna family. It became obvious that the Sredna family indeed existed and that Vitez was a member of it.<sup>22</sup>

Why, then, do we not refer to him as John of Sredna? Fraknói thought that he must have adopted the surname "Vitez" from another Slavonian noble family, such as the

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**18** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, "Ime Ivana Viteza," 441; Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 17; Pajorin, "I primordi della letteratura antiturca," 822. Boronkái simply stated that Vitez was born "around 1400": see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 11. Miroslav Kurelac claimed that Vitez was born in 1405 and his opinion filtered into Croatian historiography: see Kurelac, "Kulturna i znanstvena," 21; Kurelac, "Ivan Vitez od Sredne i Jan Panonije (Ivan Česmički) između anarhije i tiranije," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 222–46 at 222; Žarko Dadić, "Znanstveni i kulturni krug Ivana Viteza u Mađarskoj u 15. stoljeću," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 183–207 at 183; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 45; Hrvoje Petrić, "Was Janus Pannonius (1434–1472) Actually Born in Komarnica, Podravina?," *Podravina* 1, no. 1 (2002): 75–82 at 76; Snežana Božanić and Milica Kisić, "О Ивану Витезу од Средне у делу *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*," *Istraživanja* 23 (2012): 217–31 at 218. However, Kurelac himself came to doubt that, so in his last article on John Vitez he put his year of birth as 1405, but with 1408? in parentheses: see Kurelac, "Ivan Vitez," 179. See also Perić, "Zbirka pisama," 99.

**19** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 9.

**20** DL 35 447; digest in Elemér Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: 8. Közlemény," *Levéltári közlemények* 10 (1932): 256–86 at 258–59, doc. 150. See also Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 100 and Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 27.

**21** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 2ff. This theory was accepted and repeated by Marijanović: see Stanislav Marijanović, "Jan Panonije u svom vremenu—Janovo pravo lice," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 126–46 at 139.

**22** Fraknói, "Zrednai Vitéz," 571. Cf. Csapodiné Gárdonyi, "Ime," 441. Today these charters are kept in the Croatian State Archives, but the National Archives of Hungary has photographs of them. See Silvija Pisk, "Prilog povijesti srednjovjekovnih pavlinskih samostana: prava i povlastice samostana Blažene Djevice Marije na Gariću (Moslavačka gora)," *Radovi: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* 43, no. 1 (2011): 149–85 at 156–57.

Vitez of Csév or the ones of Komarnica.<sup>23</sup> However, John himself never used the surname “Vitez,” and the surname “of Sredna” was applied to him by his contemporaries.<sup>24</sup> The inscription on his tombstone, discovered in scattered pieces in the ruins of the medieval Esztergom Cathedral during the eighteenth century, reads:

IMMORTALE DECVS S\_ \_ S, ET OMNIS GLORIA DOCTRINAE, RELIGIONIS HONOR,  
IOANNES JACET HIC PATRIAE PATER OPTIMVS ILLE, CUI CAPUT ORNABAT STRIGONI-  
ENSIS APEX. OBIIT SEXTO IDVS AVGVSTI ANNO.

This can be translated as: “Immortal ornament (of sciences?) and glory of all learning, honour of religion; here lies John, that excellent father of fatherland, whose brow was adorned with the mitre of Esztergom. He died on the sixth of the Ides of August.”

An inscription on another monument found in the ruins reads:

REVERENDISSIMVS DOMINVS JOANNES DE ZREDNA, DIOECESIS ZAGRABIENSIS ARCHI-  
EPISCOPVS STRIGONIENSIS, PRIMAS, ET ASPOSTOLICAE SEDIS LEGATVS NATVS, EXCEL-  
LENS DOCTRINA, INGENIO PRAECLARVS, RELIGIONE PIVS OBIIT SEXTO IDVS AVGVSTI  
ANNO 1472 CVIVS ANIMAE MISEREA TVR DEVS.<sup>25</sup>

This can be translated as: “Most reverend lord John of Zredna from the diocese of Zagreb, archbishop of Esztergom, primate, and permanent legate of the Apostolic See, who excelled in learning, was distinguished by his character, and was devoted to religion, died on the sixth of the Ides of August of the year 1472; may God have mercy on his soul.”

The coat of arms shown on these monuments is halved horizontally. In the upper field is a lion *passant* and in the lower a *fleur-de-lys* flanked by two six-pointed stars. On the tombstone the escutcheon is supported by two dragons. This is the coat of arms that Vitez also used as bishop of Oradea.<sup>26</sup> Some thought it possible that this was actually the coat of arms of Janus Pannonius’s family,<sup>27</sup> and there were also attempts to link Pannonius with the Vitez of Komarnica family.<sup>28</sup> However, the evidence that he was a member of the Česmica family is irrefutable.<sup>29</sup> As we will later see, Pannonius’s family was connected to the Sredna family by marriage.

**23** Fraknói, “Zrednai Vitéz,” 574.

**24** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, “Ime,” 442–45; see also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:283–84.

**25** On the discovery of these monuments, see Máthes, *Veteris Arcis Strigoniensis*, 64–65. Both are today kept in the crypt of the Esztergom Basilica.

**26** See a facsimile of Vitez’s episcopal coat of arms in Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:292.

**27** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, “Ime,” 446–47. Birnbaum argued that Vitez used the Garazda family coat of arms together with his own (Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 12), thinking that he was related to it. That opinion was, however, based on Fraknói’s older version of Vitez’s origins: see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 7. Two codices from Vitez’s library do bear coats of arms of both Vitez and the Garazdas, prompting some researchers to try to establish the link between them. See Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 7; Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 18–19. Cf. János M. Bak, “Janus Pannonius (1434–1472): The Historical Background,” in Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 29–45 at 30 and Marijanović, “Jan Panonije u svom vremenu—Janovo pravo lice,” in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 126–46 at 140.

**28** Petrić, “Was Janus Pannonius (1434–1472) Actually Born,” 80. For the Vitez of Komarnica family, see Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 164–73.

**29** Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 26.

None of the contemporary writers refer to Vitez by that name. For example, Vespasiano da Bisticci simply called him *meser Giovanni, Arcivescovo di Strigonia*.<sup>30</sup> The first to introduce the name “Vitez” was Antonio Bonfini, who refers to John of Sredna in five places in his *Rerum Hungaricarum decades* as “Ioannes Vitesius” or “Vetesius.”<sup>31</sup> Csapodiné Gárdonyi thought that this novelty might have stemmed from a text by Galeotto Marzi, in which Galeotto mentions three Johns—bishop of Syrmia John Vitez of Komarnica, commonly known as “the Younger,” our Vitez, and Janus Pannonius. It is possible that Antonio Bonfini read this text and thought all these people were members of the same family.<sup>32</sup> Marzio indeed claims that “Archbishop John” (of Sredna) and “Bishop John” (Pannonius) were blood relatives (*consanguinei*) of John Vitez (of Komarnica). However, he made it clear that Vitez was the surname only of the latter John’s family,<sup>33</sup> and he never referred to the former two Johns by it.<sup>34</sup>

John of Sredna was not a close relative of John Vitez of Komarnica.<sup>35</sup> The latter was, however, a distinguished member of the Jagiellonian court during Bonfini’s time (the 1490s), and it is possible he himself exaggerated his consanguinity with John of Sredna, as stressing a bond between himself and a distinguished rebel against Matthias Corvinus might have brought him the favour of the Jagiellonians.

It took several centuries for Bonfini’s mistake to take root. It seems that even those familiar with Bonfini’s work did not know that “John of Sredna” was one and the same as “Iohannes Vitesius.” The first who did was Elek Horányi in the late eighteenth century, who coined a new, composite name “Ioannes Vitézius de Zredna.” After that it became commonly used, and remains such even today.<sup>36</sup>

This is unfortunate, as the Sredna family had a long history, going back to the time of the Arpadians. Its earliest known member was a certain Večerin or Večelin (this was probably a local variant of the name Wezelin), mentioned in 1257 as a castle-warrior of Gračenica county.<sup>37</sup> He had three sons: Desiderius, Gymzina, and Dennis, all men-

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**30** Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:319. See also Alfredo Reumont, “Commentario dei tre prelati ungheresi menzionati da Vespasiano da Bisticci,” *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. 3, vol. 20 (1874): 295–314 at 297.

**31** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 535, 562, 564, 593. The “Vetesius” version is used only once, on p. 519.

**32** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, “Ime,” 447–48.

**33** Galeottus Martius, *De egregie* (2005), 178–81.

**34** Galeottus Martius, *De egregie* (2005), 196–97, 204–7, 208–9.

**35** Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 168–69. Cf. Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 12, Marijanović, “Jan Panonije u svom vremenu—Janovo pravo lice,” in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 126–46 at 136; and Petrić, “Was Janus Pannonius (1434–1472) Actually Born,” 78.

**36** Pajorin, “Vitéz János vezetéknévéről.”

**37** CD, 5:71ff, doc. 591. Castle-warriors (*jobagiones castris*) were, basically, the king’s soldiers who owned land in exchange for military service. See Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary*, 20, 48–49 and 79ff and Erik Fügedi, *The Elefánthy: The Hungarian Nobleman and His Kindred*, ed. Damir Karbić, trans. Csaba Farkas (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 37–38. Gračenica was an old Slavonian county that was absorbed by the Križevci county in the mid-fourteenth century: see Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 63–64.

tioned in 1273.<sup>38</sup> Dennis in turn had two sons, Desiderius and Germanus; they were the only ones to continue the family line, as Gymzina's son George was killed around 1331 in a blood feud. Sometime before that, the surviving members of the family were elevated to the status of county nobles of Gračnica.<sup>39</sup> Both brothers started their own family branches. They were last mentioned in 1340.<sup>40</sup>

Desiderius's son Gerard was John Vitez's grandfather. His generation was the first to possess Sredna, or at least the first to possess it under that name. They were mentioned as its owners in 1365 and it seems they were newcomers there, as another family unsuccessfully contested their ownership of it, claiming it rightfully belonged to them.<sup>41</sup> This was not the original estate owned by the family when they were still castle-warriors, as that one still existed, as royal property, in the fifteenth century and was called *Večerynfelde* or *Gemyzynafelde*—Večelin's land or Gymzina's land. It was still remembered that it used to be held by Večelin, a castle-warrior of Gračnica, and his sons Gymzina and Dennis.<sup>42</sup> The last time some members of the family were mentioned to have a stake in that estate, located between the rivulets Sredna and *Radslavcz*, was in 1390, when it was simply called *Gresench*,<sup>43</sup> probably because it belonged to Gračnica Castle.

Gerard was a rather adroit litigant. He represented parties in the Slavonian banal court,<sup>44</sup> acted as a royal agent in serving a summons,<sup>45</sup> and investigated crimes in the service of the count of Križevci in 1386.<sup>46</sup> After this last case he was no longer mentioned as alive. His sons Dennis, Philip and Peter were represented by their second cousin George, son of Stephen in a court case concerning some of their posses-

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**38** CD, 6:39, doc. 35. Gymzina was also mentioned in 1278 (CD, 6:245, doc. 210.) and Dennis in 1279 (CD, 6:287–88, doc. 242) and 1296 (CD, 6:253, doc. 221).

**39** CD, 9:546, doc. 443 and CD, 10:4, doc. 3. Germanus was in the service of the count of Gračnica in 1327: see CD, 9:347, doc. 288.

**40** CD, 10:561, doc. 394. They were previously mentioned in 1338 (CD, 10:386–87, doc. 285). See also Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 114.

**41** CD, 13:447–48, doc. 324. Gerard's brothers Dennis and John and his cousins (Germanus's sons) Gregory and Stephen are also mentioned here.

**42** AHAZU, 70: D I–CXL (Zbirka latinskih isprava), D–IX–33 and D–IX–35; digests in Jakov Stipišić and Miljen Šamšalović, eds., "Isprave u Arhivu Jugoslavenske akademije (Inventar)," part 1/3, *Zbornik Historijskog instituta Jugoslavenske akademije* 2 (1959): 289–379 at 362, nos. 1682 and 1684, and 363, no. 1688, and in *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, ed. Norbert C. Tóth and Bálint Lakatos, vol. 12 (Budapest: Magyar nemzeti levéltár, 2013), 101, no. 215; 109, no. 240 and 193, no. 502.

**43** AHAZU, 97: Codices, I d 12, vol. IV, pp. 12–13; digests in Stipišić and Šamšalović, "Isprave 1," 322, no. 1026 and 324, no. 1068.

**44** CD, 16:148–49, doc. 133 and 182–88, doc. 159; see also Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 104, and Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 27.

**45** CD, 16:234–35, doc. 194.

**46** DL 35 279; digest in Elemér Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: 6. Közlemény," *Levéltári közlemények* 9 (1931): 284–315 at 298–99, doc. 25.



sion rights in 1400.<sup>47</sup> This is when the family started using the surname “of Sredna.”<sup>48</sup> Although some of its members owned estates individually, it is apparent that Sredna had by then become the family seat, and that all of them had a stake in it.<sup>49</sup>

Of the three sons of Gerard, Dennis was the most successful. He joined King Sigismund’s army during his invasion of Bohemia in 1403,<sup>50</sup> and distinguished himself enough for the king to endow him and his brothers with the estate of Rogoža.<sup>51</sup> He was in the king’s presence on several other occasions during the next few years,<sup>52</sup> so it is possible he continued to participate in royal military campaigns.<sup>53</sup> He and his brother Philip were listed among people in the king’s confidence in 1413.<sup>54</sup> Until 1425 Dennis was rarely involved in matters of his estates or their environs, so it is possible that he

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**47** DL 35 302 and 35 303, digests in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 6. Közlemény,” 311, docs. 40–41. Fraknói thought George was their paternal uncle (see Fraknói, “Zrednai Vitéz,” 571).

**48** It was first appended to George’s name in 1395. The same charter contains the only appearance of his brother Michael: CD, 18:66–67, doc. 51.

**49** DL 34 856 (digest in Elemér Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: 3. Közlemény,” *Levéltári közleménye* 6 (1928): 87–203 at 118, doc. 80) identifies George as a *frater condivisionalis* of Gerard’s sons. The term denotes a participant in joint ownership of an ancestral estate: see Fügedi, *The Elefánthy*, 5 and 20–21; see also István Werbőczy, *Tripartitum opus iuris consuetudinarii inclyti regni Hungariae / The Customary Law of the Renowned Kingdom of Hungary: A Work in Three Parts, the “Tripartitum,”* ed. and trans. János M. Bak et al. (Idylwild: Schlacks, 2006), 112ff.

**50** See Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 47–49.

**51** DL 34 667; digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 3. Közlemény,” 101, doc. 39. See also Kamilo Dočkal, “Srednjovjekovna naselja oko Streze: prilog našoj srednjovjekovnoj topografiji,” *Starine* 46 (1956): 145–202 at 191–92 and Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 27. The king’s donation was issued near the castle of Skalica; regarding Sigismund’s sojourn there, see Pál Engel and Norbert C. Tóth, *Itineraria regum et reginarum / Királyok es kiralynek itinerariumai (1393–1438)* (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intezetében, 2005), 80. For this type of donation to several brothers through one of them, see Werbőczy, *Tripartitum opus*, ed. Bak et al., 108–9 and Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary*, 101.

**52** DL 35 321, digest in Elemér Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: 7. Közlemény,” *Levéltári közlemények* 10 (1932): 92–123 at 92, doc. 57; DL 34 669, digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 3. Közlemény,” 102, doc. 41. See also Dočkal, “Srednjovjekovna naselja,” 192.

**53** According to DL 34 669, Dennis addressed the king personally in Đurđevac in November 1405, when Sigismund was returning from his campaign in Bosnia (see Engel and Tóth, *Itineraria regum et reginarum*, 84; regarding the war in Bosnia, see Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, trans. Tamás Pálosfalvi (London/New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), 233–34). Dennis also conversed with the bans of Slavonia in Veliki Zdenci in June 1404, while they were on a military campaign (DL 34 668; digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 3. Közlemény,” 101–12, doc. 40; see also Dočkal, “Srednjovjekovna naselja,” 192), so it is possible that he was in their army.

**54** DL 38 115. See also Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 77.

followed Sigismund to some of his wars, maybe to Bohemia,<sup>55</sup> Bosnia,<sup>56</sup> or other places.<sup>57</sup> The only exceptions occurred in 1407, when he was involved in some transactions,<sup>58</sup> and in late 1414, when soldiers from a nearby fortress assaulted his sister Helen, pillaged his estates and abducted several of his serfs, so Dennis returned to personally accuse them in the county court.<sup>59</sup> This was the time when the kingdom was preparing for a great attack on Bosnia, which ended tragically in August 1415.<sup>60</sup> Many Slavonian nobles were captured or had trouble returning home after the defeat, and their estates were often pillaged by their more fortunate neighbours.<sup>61</sup> The fact that Dennis was present in Slavonia before the campaign might mean that he also took part in it.

Dorothy, Dennis's first wife, was most likely Vitez's mother. She was first mentioned in late 1416, during an inquiry of the pillaging of her estates, which took place in September 1415,<sup>62</sup> perhaps while Dennis was away in Bosnia. As Dennis's first (and only) son—John Vitez—was first mentioned on January 10, 1417,<sup>63</sup> we may presume Dennis was married some time before that.

Between 1400 and 1425, local affairs were mostly dealt with by Dennis's brothers, Philip and Peter.<sup>64</sup> It seems the latter also fought for King Sigismund, as by 1408 the king had awarded him several estates previously belonging to a local noble who had joined a rebellion against him.<sup>65</sup> Peter was also involved in a rather troublesome matter of being sentenced to death for committing calumny against his cousin, George of Sredna, in 1408. The ever-reliable Philip managed to extricate him, at the price

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**55** Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 58.

**56** For Sigismund's expeditions in Bosnia, see his itinerary in Engel and Tóth, *Itineraria regum et reginarum*, 84 and 86–88.

**57** For various wars involving Sigismund during the 1410s and 1420s, see Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 234–36.

**58** Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 97, doc. 72; MHEZ, 5:308, doc. 231. See also Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 27.

**59** DL 35 415; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 115–16, doc. 122.

**60** Dubravko Lovrenović, "Bitka u Lašvi 1415. godine," in *Raukarov zbornik. Zbornik u čast Tomislava Raukara*, ed. Neven Budak (Zagreb: Odsjek za povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu—FF-press, 2005), 275–95 at 275–76.

**61** Nikolić Jakus, "Obitelj Čupor Moslavački," 285–87; Lovrenović, "Bitka u Lašvi," 279 and 288.

**62** DL 34 843; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 109, doc. 62. See also Dočkal, "Srednjovjekovna naselja," 177–78. For an opinion regarding her parentage, see Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 27. Regarding Peter Castellan, the powerful neighbour responsible for the pillaging, see Pavao Maček and Ivan Jurković, *Rodoslov plemića i baruna Kaštelanovića od Svetog Duha (od 14. do 17. stoljeća)* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest / Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2009), 96–102.

**63** DL 35 447.

**64** Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 99, doc. 79; 106, doc. 96; 120, doc. 134; Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 8. Közlemény," 262, doc. 154; 262, doc. 159; 263, doc. 162; 266–67, doc. 172; 271, doc. 183; 275, doc. 196. See also Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 146–47.

**65** DL 35 346; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 99, doc. 78. The rebellion mentioned here is probably the one of 1403: see Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 209.

of Peter's own and some of his brothers' estates.<sup>66</sup> As Peter does not appear in later sources, he may have died not long after that.<sup>67</sup>

In Hungarian customary law, calumny was defined as committing fraud in litigation over possession rights.<sup>68</sup> We may assume that the estate of Sredna was at the centre of this affair, as Dennis and his brothers had no part in it, at least since their father's death. In 1425, Dennis became personally involved in the dispute over Sredna, asking King Sigismund to arrange for him and his brother Philip to take ownership of one half of the estate, saying it was rightfully theirs. The king agreed, but Dennis's cousins George, son of Stephen, and Lawrence, son of Gregory, opposed this, causing a lengthy lawsuit.<sup>69</sup> It seems that Germanus's branch of the family had usurped the rights of Desiderius's when Dennis and his brothers were minors (as we have seen, George acted as their guardian), and it took several decades for them to settle the matter.<sup>70</sup> After much litigation,<sup>71</sup> Sredna was finally divided in 1430, with one half going to Dennis and Philip, and the other to George and Lawrence.<sup>72</sup>

This was the time John Vitez emerged as a historical figure in his own right, so let it suffice to say that his mother died sometime before 1433, when his father married Ilko, widow of Ambrose of Újudvar, who already had several children.<sup>73</sup> Dennis also passed away not long after that. The last time he was mentioned was in 1435, when he, his son John and daughter Helen were said to have been jointly renting several peasant plots.<sup>74</sup> By 1437, the only surviving male members of Vitez's family were, beside himself: his first cousin, Philip's son Benedict,<sup>75</sup> and his third cousin, George's

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**66** DL 35 347; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 99–100, doc. 80 and DL 35 356; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 102, doc. 86.

**67** Peter was last mentioned in 1410. See DL 35 370; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 106, doc. 96.

**68** Werbőczy, *Tripartitum opus*, ed. Bak et al., 336–39.

**69** DL 35 505; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 8. Közlemény," 279, doc. 205. Lawrence had at least one brother, named John: see DF 288 094. I thank Bálint Lakatos for bringing this to my attention. John was also probably mentioned in DL 35 406 (digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 7. Közlemény," 113, doc. 115).

**70** Fraknói came to a similar conclusion: see Fraknói, "Zrednai Vitéz," 573–74.

**71** In chronological order: DL 34 856, 35 509, 35 510, 35 516, 35 522, 35 518, 35 519, 34 861, 35 521, and 35 308. Digests respectively in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 3. Közlemény," 118, doc. 80; Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 8. Közlemény," 280, docs. 208–9; 282–83, docs. 215–16 and 218–19; Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 3. Közlemény," 120, doc. 85; Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 8. Közlemény," 284, doc. 220; and Elemér Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: 9. Közlemény," *Levéltári közlemények* 11 (1933): 58–92 at 58, doc. 224.

**72** DL 35 046; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 9. Közlemény," 63, doc. 235.

**73** DL 103 562 and 103 563.

**74** AHAZU, D–X–33.

**75** Philip was last mentioned as being alive in 1433 (DL 35 543; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 9. Közlemény," 69, doc. 247), and Benedict was first mentioned in 1434 (DL 35 549; digest in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 9. Közlemény," 72, doc. 256).

son Stephen. They were the ones mentioned in the new donation of Sredna, granted to Vitez and his relatives by King Sigismund on his deathbed.<sup>76</sup> Benedict married Dennis's stepdaughter Helen, also called Ilko, around 1450.<sup>77</sup> It seems that they did not have any children together.<sup>78</sup> He was last mentioned in 1461.<sup>79</sup> Stephen was last mentioned in 1464.<sup>80</sup> He, as far as we know, did not have any sons, only a daughter named Dorothy.<sup>81</sup> By the 1470s, the Sredna family name had died out.

However, another branch needs to be added to the Sredna family tree. Vitez's father Dennis also had daughters. Contemporary sources agree on the fact that the poet John of Česmica—better known as Janus Pannonius—was a son of Vitez's sister.<sup>82</sup> This information is well known to historians and does not warrant further corroboration.<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, those two never referred to each other as uncle and nephew; in two of his letters, Vitez called Pannonius his “brother,” and their editor, Paul of Ivanić, added that Janus was indeed the bishop's *frater*.<sup>84</sup> Pannonius gave us the name of his mother—Barbara—in his poems,<sup>85</sup> and several papal charters confirm it.<sup>86</sup> Two of his elegies let us know she died on December 10, 1463, aged about sixty.<sup>87</sup> She was probably older than her brother John and was born a short while after their father had

**76** DL 35 058; digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 9. Közlemény,” 73, doc. 259.

**77** Helen was mentioned as his wife in 1454 (DL 100 741), and Benedict acted as the guardian of her daughter, also named Helen, in 1449 (DL 35 594; digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 9. Közlemény,” 89–90, doc. 301). The latter Helen later married Stephen Kerser of Presečno and had a son named John (DL 35 108, digest in Elemér Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: 10. Közlemény,” *Levéltári közlemények* 12 (1934): 111–54 at 118, doc. 361; DL 103 688; 100 740; 100 794; 35 667, digest in Elemér Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: 11. Közlemény,” *Levéltári közlemények* 13 (1935): 233–65 at 233, doc. 404). See also Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 98.

**78** Ilko was already deceased in 1457 (DL 100 741). In 1456 Benedict is mentioned to have been renting a portion of the Újudvar estate, but there is no mention of his children: see AHAZU, D–XII–76.

**79** DL 35 074; digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 10. Közlemény,” 118, doc. 328. Ritoókné Szalay, in *Nympha*, 28, thought that Vitez might have taken him into his service.

**80** DL 35 104; digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 10. Közlemény,” 135–36, doc. 357.

**81** DL 35 076; digest in Mályusz, “A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 10. Közlemény,” 117–18, doc. 327.

**82** See, for example, Theiner, 2:320, doc. 490; Piccolomini, *Opera*, 392; Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:327; Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 588 and 593.

**83** See, for example, Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 7–8; Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 9ff; Bak, “Janus Pannonius (1434–1472): The Historical Background,” in Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 29–30; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, “Ime,” 445; Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 26; Pajorin, “Primordi,” 824; Dražen Nemet, “Prikaz Janusa Pannoniusa u djelu Antonija Bonfinija *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*,” *Podravina* 9, no. 18 (2010): 45–58 at 54.

**84** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 158–59, docs. 76–77. See also Perić, “Zbirka pisama,” 108. Cf. Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 38.

**85** Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 216–17; see also Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 47.

**86** In 1458, Pope Callixtus III issued two charters in which Pannonius's mother, father, sister, and brother are named. See Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 29.

**87** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 100.

received the possession Rogoža from the king. Another of Dennis's daughters, named Helen, was mentioned as an unmarried girl (*puella*) in 1435, so it is possible that she was the youngest.<sup>88</sup> It is likely that she was actually his stepdaughter, who was also named Helen.

Although the Sredna family was old, it was not very distinguished. Its members never bore any titles or possessed any fortifications, and their estates were not large or numerous.<sup>89</sup> None of them—except Vitez, of course—ever performed any important functions; Stephen, son of George, was the only one to perform a state function, by being a noble magistrate of Križevci county in the 1460s.<sup>90</sup> Thuróczy was probably right when he called Vitez a member of lowly Slavonian nobility.<sup>91</sup> However, Vitez's father was often in contact with King Sigismund and, thanks to his martial abilities, gained considerable favour with him. It is likely that he used it to propel his son into royal service. Nevertheless, the prestige thus gained did not spill over onto the rest of the family.<sup>92</sup>

This does not mean that Vitez's relatives did not try to curry favour with him. While selling his share in the Sredna estate to the Pauline monastery on Garić in 1461, his cousin Benedict stipulated that the monks were to sing masses for his whole family, but especially for his deceased uncle Dennis: Vitez's father. It is also probably not a coincidence that his third cousin Stephen named his daughter Dorothy,<sup>93</sup> after Vitez's mother.

Opinions vary regarding the ethnicity of the Sredna family. Historians thought that its members were ethnically Hungarian, magyarized Slavs or Croats.<sup>94</sup> As for Vitez's contemporaries, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who personally knew him and Janus Pannonius,<sup>95</sup> listed them both among Hungarians in the chapter on Transylvania of his *Europa*, but emphasized that they were of Slavonian origin.<sup>96</sup> Vespasiano da Bisticci,

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**88** AHAZU, D-X-33.

**89** Pálosfalvi used these criteria to identify about ninety families that made up the noble elite of Križevci county in the fifteenth century. See Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 27–29.

**90** DL 35 094; summary in Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi: 10. Közlemény," 131–32, doc. 348. On noble magistrates, see Fügedi, *The Elefánthy*, 37.

**91** Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, 289.

**92** Pálosfalvi reached the same conclusion while studying other such cases. See Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 317–18.

**93** DL 35 076. Regarding the identity of Vitez's mother, see also Dočkal, "Srednjovjekovna naselja," 177, and Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 27ff.

**94** For example, see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 9 and "Zrednai Vitéz," 574–75; Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 25–26 and 28; Dadić, "Znanstveni i kulturni krug," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 183–207 at 184, Tibor Klaniczay, "Pojmovi Hungaria i Pannonia u doba renesanse," trans. Stanko Andrić, *Književna revija* 38, no. 1–2 (1998): 241–49 at 248.

**95** Regarding their acquaintance, see Pajorin, "Primordi," 822–23. Vitez probably introduced Pannonius to Piccolomini during the diet of Wiener Neustadt in 1455: see Mariotti, "La corrispondenza poetica," 52–53.

**96** Piccolomini, *Opera*, 392. See also Nemet, *Prikaz Janusa*, 46.

who probably got his information directly from Pannonius,<sup>97</sup> also claimed that Vitez was *di natione ischiavo* (of Slavic ethnicity),<sup>98</sup> but presents an interesting ambiguity in his biography of Pannonius—after stating that he was an *ischiavo* (Slav),<sup>99</sup> he calls him *Ungaro* (Hungarian).<sup>100</sup> John Thuróczy simply states that Vitez was born in Slavonia,<sup>101</sup> and Bonfini repeats that, probably taking it from him.<sup>102</sup> Pietro Ranzano, another contemporary chronicler, called them Dalmatians,<sup>103</sup> but that is certainly due to his *all'antica* vocabulary, meaning that he tended to use approximate terms from Classical antiquity for contemporary phenomena. It is also probably not accidental that in a letter to Vitez, Leonard Huntpehler praised the “Slavonian or Dalmatian” nation as being ancient and very dear to him.<sup>104</sup>

Vitez never called himself a Slav, but his family indeed became slavized, even if it was not of Slavic origins. By looking at the names of his ancestors and relatives, it appears that some of them used Hungarian versions of common Christian names, such as Gellért (Gerard) and Dezső (Desiderius). However, in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, Vitez’s uncle Philip named one of his sons *Iwan*, which is the Slavic version of John,<sup>105</sup> and during the following decades, members of Vitez’s family started using last names with Slavic suffixes. Vitez’s third cousin Stephen was called *filius Georgii Bangotha* in 1439,<sup>106</sup> but nine years later he started using the last name

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**97** Tanja Trška, “Ivan Vitez od Sredne i Jan Panonije iz perspektive talijanskog humanizma: Vespasiano da Bisticci i Ischiavi,” in *800 godina slobodnog kraljevskog grada Varaždina 1209.–2009: Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa održanog 3. i 4. prosinca 2009. godine u Varaždinu*, ed. Miroslav Šicel and Slobodan Kaštela (Zagreb / Varaždin: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zavod za znanstveni rad u Varaždinu / Grad Varaždin, Varaždinska županija, 2009), 609–18 at 609.

**98** Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:319. Trška points out that this could denote ethnic and/or geographical origins. See Trška, “Ivan Vitez,” 609–10.

**99** Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:327.

**100** Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:328–29. Older printed editions of Bisticci’s work (for example, Lajos Pongrácz, “Vespasiano da Bisticci e i suoi clienti ungheresi,” *Biblioteca dell’Accademia d’Ungheria di Roma* 17 (1939): 5–23 at 8–9) treated this as if Bisticci was stating that Pannonius had “become” Hungarian, which does not make any sense in context. Nevertheless, older works usually quoted this version (for example, Reumont, “Commentario,” 305; Pongrácz, “Vespasiano,” 17). For explanations of this misreading, see Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:xv–xvi, Trška, “Ivan Vitez,” 613, and Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 11.

**101** Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, 289.

**102** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 594.

**103** Ranzano, *Epitome rerum Ungaricarum*, LIXv.

**104** Isnard Wilhelm Frank, “Das Gutachten eines Wiener Dominikaners für die Universität Preßburg aus dem Jahre 1467,” *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 16 (1967): 418–39 at 424.

**105** DL 35 447. We can be certain that this was intentional, as in the same document Vitez himself is referred to as *Johannes*.

**106** DL 35 554.

*Bangodých*,<sup>107</sup> and continued doing so for the rest of his life.<sup>108</sup> In Slavic languages, the suffix *-ich*, when used in last names, denotes a descendant of the person to whose name it is attached, and “Bangotha” was Stephen’s father’s nickname. Similarly, Vitez’s nephew Benedict was known as *Gelethich* during the 1460s.<sup>109</sup> Vitez himself was called *Iohannes Dionisii alias Gele* in a letter to Pope Eugene IV in 1438.<sup>110</sup> That was the time when last names came into use in Hungary,<sup>111</sup> and it seems that Vitez’s branch of the Sredna family used his grandfather’s name (Geleth, i.e. Gerard) as its surname.<sup>112</sup> If he had not become a prelate, he would have probably also been known as Gelethich.

It is most likely that Vitez was exactly who his acquaintance Enea Silvio Piccolomini thought he was: a Hungarian of Slavonian origin. Slavonia was in the fifteenth century usually thought of as part of Hungary and its inhabitants called themselves Hungarian.<sup>113</sup> Vitez’s letters indicate that he thought of “Hungary” as his homeland;<sup>114</sup> however, that does not mean that he identified himself as an ethnic Hungarian. He was a member of the “Hungarian people” in the sense that he was a peer of the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>115</sup> A nice parallel would be the case of Kaspar Schlick, born in Chéb in Bohemia.<sup>116</sup> Despite his German descent, he called Hungary his homeland whenever it could benefit him to do so.<sup>117</sup> The only fact supporting his claim was his ownership of estates there, and his status as a member of the Hungarian nobility.<sup>118</sup> He did not hesitate to declare himself Italian as well, at least on his mother’s side.<sup>119</sup>

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**107** DL 35 588.

**108** DL 35 074, 35 076, 35 077, 35 094, 35 104.

**109** DL 35 623, 35 626, 35 074.

**110** MHEZ, 6:539, doc. 512.

**111** Marija Karbić, *Plemićki rod Borića bana* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest—Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2013), 81.

**112** See also Kurelac, “Kulturna i znanstvena,” 24.

**113** Klaniczay, “Pojmovi *Hungaria* i *Pannonia*,” 242–44. For example, in Piccolomini, *Opera*, 387–88, it is stated that the southern border of Hungary is the river Sava. Pálosfalvi touches on the problem of Slavonic nobility’s ethnicity very insightfully in *The Noble Elite*, 14–16n30.

**114** For example, in Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 37–38, doc. 2. See also Klaniczay, “Pojmovi *Hungaria* i *Pannonia*,” 248.

**115** For such a definition of the “Hungarian people,” see Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 121–22 and 350. See also Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 11 and Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 53.

**116** Franz Fuchs, “Schlick, Kaspar,” in *Neue deutsche Biographie*, vol. 23, *Schinzl—Schwarz*, ed. Hans Günter Hockerts (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007), 77–78.

**117** See, for example, *Briefwechsel* part 1, *Briefe aus der Laienzeit (1431–1445)*, vol. 2 (hereafter I/2):57, doc. 28 and 79, doc. 41.

**118** *Briefwechsel*, I/2:161, doc. 97. For this sense of belonging to the Hungarian nobility, see Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 338.

**119** *Briefwechsel*, I/2:153, doc. 90. See also Piccolomini, *Opera*, 124 and Alfred Pennrich, *Die Urkundenfälschungen des Reichskanzlers Kaspar Schlick nebst Beiträgen zu seinem Leben* (Gotha: Perthes, 1901), 2ff.

It would perhaps be most appropriate to call Vitez simply Slavonian, as his family's estates were in medieval Slavonia, in what had by Vitez's time become the county of Križevci. They were in the neighbourhood of the Garić monastery, in the territory of Gračnica.<sup>120</sup> Their exact location is more difficult to pinpoint. Večelin's estates lay in the Lonja river basin, south of Gračnica.<sup>121</sup> The Sredna creek, which gave its name to the adjacent estate,<sup>122</sup> no longer exist, but was probably one of the rivulets which drained into the Lonja. Due to massive land improvements conducted in that area during the last two centuries, most of the old watercourses are now gone, but a stream called *Szredai* can be seen south of Gračnica on an eighteenth-century military map.<sup>123</sup> The stream called *Radslavcz* or *Radykoucz*, mentioned as flowing parallel to Sredna,<sup>124</sup> might be today's Rakitnjak or some other rivulet in that area.<sup>125</sup>

I have laid out the book's subject, and its research and scope, as well as its structure, research methods, and the current state of research. With this short overview of Vitez's family history, I establish a starting point for embarking on a study of his life and career. We are, therefore, prepared for moving on to his role in the Central European political, ecclesiastical, and cultural history of the Late Middle Ages. We begin with the start of his political career; later chapters present his ecclesiastical and cultural activities. Let our journey begin.

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**120** Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 124.

**121** CD, 5:71–73, doc. 591. Some of the boundaries listed there still exist, such as the streams Trebež and Kutina.

**122** The name *Zrednamelleky*, usually applied to the estate, simply means “by Sredna”: see Fraknói, “Zrednai Vitéz,” 571.

**123** Mapire—Historical Maps Online, Arcanum Adatbázis Kft, <https://mapire.eu/en/map/europe-18century-firstsurvey/?layers=163%2C165&bbox=1850682.5755242247%2C5694353.146590834%2C1863571.7694188126%2C5698174.998005093>.

**124** AHAZU, Codices, I d 12, vol. IV, p. 12 and AHAZU, D–IX–33.

**125** For other attempts at determining the location of Sredna, see Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 63, Dočkal, “Srednjovjekovna naselja,” 177 and 199, and Ritoókné Szalay, *Nympha*, 26. However, it should be noted that earlier studies often confused Gračnica with Garešnica. See Pisk, *Pustinjaci*, 63–64 and Silvija Pisk, “Toponim Gračnica u srednjem vijeku,” *Zbornik Moslavine* 13 (2012): 29–40.



## Chapter 2

### INSTRUMENTS OF POWER

EVERY PERSON, NO matter how great their achievements, must begin somewhere. Vitez's beginning was not glamorous. He did not make a triumphant entry into the world of Central European late medieval politics, and he did not rise instantly through its ranks. On the contrary, he, as a member of a relatively low-ranking Slavonian noble family, did not have either the funds, fame, or influence to instantly become a factor in the higher echelons of the Kingdom of Hungary. His beginnings were humble, and he had to advance slowly and painstakingly through its ranks. In this chapter we examine his advancement through the ranks of the Hungarian ecclesiastical hierarchy and the royal chancery.

Vitez began his career as a notary in the Hungarian chancery of Emperor Sigismund. We first find him as such in November 1437.<sup>1</sup> That position did not require any education other than basic Latin literacy,<sup>2</sup> as his tasks consisted mainly of penning charters pertaining to the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>3</sup> The position did not by itself carry much prestige. While describing the workings of the Austrian ducal chancery, Piccolomini said that notaries were easily replaced, and their incomes meager.<sup>4</sup> Although Hungarian chanceries did have some peculiarities regarding the documents they produced,<sup>5</sup> Vitez's income was probably as modest and his workplace as insecure as those of his Austrian colleagues. However, chancery service did hold promise of social advancement, and was often rewarded with ecclesiastical offices.<sup>6</sup> It did not take long for Vitez to receive one.

After Sigismund's death and the election of Albert of Habsburg as king of Hungary, Vitez continued to serve the new ruler. Shortly after his coronation in early 1438,<sup>7</sup> Albert endowed Vitez with the office of *custos* (roughly equivalent to a Western sac-

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1 DL 35 058.

2 Although Vitez was styled a *magister*, this title was by then applied to any official: see Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 296. Cf. Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 351. For comparison's sake, out of thirty-three protonotaries of Emperor Frederick III, only eight held any academic degree: see Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 576.

3 Szakály, "Vitéz János," 11.

4 *Briefwechsel* part III, *Briefe als Bischof von Siena*, vol. 1, *Briefe von seiner Erhebung zum Bischof von Siena bis zum Ausgang des Regensburger Reichtages (23. September 1450–1. Juni 1454)* (hereafter III/1):403–4, doc. 215.

5 See Daniela Dvořáková, "Aspekte der *Narrationes* der Schenkungsurkunden Sigismunds für Ungarische Adelige," in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368–1437): Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), 235–44 at 235–38.

6 Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 297; Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 601; Szakály, "Vitéz János," 12.

7 For Albert's election and coronation, see Günther Hödl, *Albrecht II. Königtum, Reichsregierung und Reichsreform 1438–1439* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1978), 10 and 15.

ristan) in the cathedral chapter of Zagreb. This endowment marked the beginning of Vitez's rise in the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It, however, as most things in Vitez's life, did not come easily. A vacant office was guaranteed to attract clerics willing to vie for it. Indeed, in January 1438 a certain Marinus of Sevnica petitioned the pope for the office and received it.<sup>8</sup> He was a member of the Apostolic Chancery,<sup>9</sup> and it was customary for papal officials to request recently vacated offices for themselves.<sup>10</sup> However, a papal grant did not guarantee they would receive them.<sup>11</sup> At least one other contender petitioned the pope,<sup>12</sup> and the chapter of Zagreb, acting of its own accord, elected one of its own members to the office.<sup>13</sup> Thanks to King Albert's support, Vitez prevailed over the other contenders and the chapter was forced to accept him as one of its members. He requested and received a papal confirmation on August 14, 1438 in the form of a *nova provisio*,<sup>14</sup> which was usually issued when one's right to an office was disputed.<sup>15</sup> Only Marinus of Sevnica refused to relent. He pledged to pay the annate (ecclesiastical tax due to the Apostolic Camera) for the office,<sup>16</sup> started a lengthy lawsuit,<sup>17</sup> and continued to press his claim as late as 1446.<sup>18</sup> By then this issue had become irrelevant to Vitez.

Difficulties such as these were typical for Vitez's time, when the popes, chapters, and lay authorities were still contending the right to award ecclesiastical offices.<sup>19</sup> Although the lay lords had the most direct power and their candidates were therefore able to *de facto* take possession of their offices, as Vitez had, some contenders were able to bypass the lay patron and petition the pope directly, as Vitez's rivals did.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes they were successful. For example, Vincent Kot was elected and confirmed

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**8** MHEZ, 6:513–14, doc. 483. Marinus was an acolyte in 1439: see *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:175–76, doc. 614.

**9** He was an abbreviator in 1446, so it is probable that he held some post in the Chancery at this time as well: see *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:232, doc. 891 and MHEZ, 7:73, doc. 71.

**10** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 21.

**11** See Jadranka Neralić, "...tibi, qui ut asseris, de nobili genere ex utroque parente procreatus existis, auctoritate presentium indulgemus...: Plemstvo i crkvena karijera u papinskim dokumentima 15. Stoljeća," in *Izabrane teme iz hrvatske povijesti—Zbornik radova sa znanstvenih kolokvija Dies historiae 2004.–2006.*, ed. Suzana Miljan and Marko Jerković (Zagreb: Društvo studenata povijesti "Ivan Lučić-Lucius," 2007), 155–82 at 168–69.

**12** MHEZ, 6:515–16, doc. 486 and *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:161, doc. 542.

**13** MHEZ, 6:519–20, doc. 491 and *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:162, doc. 548.

**14** MHEZ, 6:539, doc. 512.

**15** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 160.

**16** MVC, 2:99, doc. 126.

**17** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:175–76, doc. 614.

**18** MHEZ, 7:73, doc. 71; *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:232, doc. 891; MVC, 2:121, doc. 163.

**19** Regarding this, see Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance*, 78–80, 84 and 98–99.

**20** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 145.

as archbishop of Gniezno in 1436 despite the protests of the Polish king Wladislas III.<sup>21</sup> However, the situation in Hungary favoured the king more than the pope, as in 1404 King Sigismund abrogated the right of clerical patrons to award ecclesiastical offices.<sup>22</sup> He later reached a compromise with the College of Cardinals during the Council of Constance, allowing the Holy See merely to confirm candidates presented by the king.<sup>23</sup> Unsurprisingly, the papacy never fully assented to this arrangement, claiming that Sigismund had imposed “servitude” upon the Church in Hungary.<sup>24</sup> It, however, benefited Vitez greatly, as it enabled him to prevail over the pope’s candidates.

His case was a common example of Sigismund’s practice of endowing his clerks with ecclesiastical offices,<sup>25</sup> continued by his successor Albert of Habsburg. Many of them prospered during the latter’s short reign. For example, Stephen Basso of Bük, a protonotary in Albert’s Hungarian chancery (who also held high offices during Sigismund’s reign), was royally awarded in 1439 by becoming provost of Székesfehérvár. That office had previously become vacant by the king’s promotion of Benedict son of Michael to the bishopric of Győr.<sup>26</sup>

Benedict’s career was quite similar to Vitez’s. A man of lowly origins (unlike Vitez, he was probably first-generation nobility), he rose by serving the ruler as an adviser and diplomat.<sup>27</sup> He accompanied King Sigismund to the Council of Constance, the imperial coronation in Rome and the Council of Basel, and would often represent the king at the Holy See, where he was given the office of protonotary apostolic.<sup>28</sup> He went on to serve King Albert, who appointed him his special adviser (*consiliarius specialis*). Benedict helped Albert to be elected as king of Hungary, and he accompanied him on

**21** CE, 2:351, doc. 241. Pope Eugene IV apologized to the king, but nonetheless refused to change his decision. The king’s candidate was Wladislas of Oporów, who was then bishop of Włocławek. See CE, 2:356–57, doc. 244.

**22** Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 263–64.

**23** Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 277.

**24** CE, 2:363–64, doc. 246.

**25** Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 278.

**26** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:182–83, doc. 647 and 183, doc. 650. For his career, see Tamás Fedeles, “Crkvene veze između Pečuha i Zagreba: Pečuški kanonici u zagrebačkom stolnom kaptolu (1354.–1526.),” *Etnografija hrvata u Mađarskoj* 11 (2004): 141–61 at 145–46 and Szakály, “Vitez János,” 11–12. Provosts of Székesfehérvár were subject directly to the pope: see *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:60, doc. 90 and 65, doc. 113.

**27** Mályusz thought that Benedict was related to the Vincze of Szentgyörgy family (Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 291). However, there was no blood relation between them: see Erik Fügedi, “A Szentgyörgyi Vincze család,” *A Veszprém Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei* 11 (1972): 261–70 at 261–62 (my thanks to Norbert Tóth for directing me to this article). The first estate his family can be linked to is Labdásvarsány (see DL 12 377; partially transcribed in *Budapest történetének okleveles emlékei*, vol. 3, 1382–1439, ed. Bernát Lajos Kumorovitz (Budapest: Budapest Történeti Múzeum, 1987), 168, doc. 996); it was given to Benedict and his relatives by King Sigismund in 1416 (János Károlyi, *Fejér vármegye története*, 3 vols. (Székesfehérvár: Csitári Kő- és Könyvnyomdája, 1899), 3:467–68, doc. 36). See also Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 2:71 and 2:83.

**28** DL 72 902. There were twelve protonotaries in the Apostolic Chancery, some of whom were honorary, as Benedict probably was: see Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 44.

his campaigns against the Poles and their allies in Bohemia.<sup>29</sup> Albert unsuccessfully tried to make him bishop of Zagreb in 1438,<sup>30</sup> finally succeeding to secure for him the see of Győr in 1439.<sup>31</sup> Benedict continued to serve the king, representing him when a truce with Poland was concluded in Namysłów in February 1439 and during the peace negotiations that followed.<sup>32</sup>

This example shows that there were successful, ambitious men in the royal chancery when Vitez began work there, who might have served as role-models for him. Another was Matthias of Gotalovac, a powerful chancery official and practically the central figure of the royal bureaucracy during the 1430s.<sup>33</sup> He was appointed as bishop of Vác in late 1437.<sup>34</sup> Yet another was Gregory Németi, a protonotary, who managed to become *custos*, and later provost of the Pécs cathedral.<sup>35</sup>

All these men were much more experienced than Vitez, and incomparably more powerful. Accordingly, the rewards they were given by the ruler for their service were greater. Although the office of a *custos* was an enormous boon for a young notary like Vitez, it was not disproportionately great. Unlike in other chapters in Hungary, in the cathedral chapter of Zagreb the *custos* was not the fourth most prestigious official—he was preceded by all of the archdeacons.<sup>36</sup> Still, the office did bring a considerable income.

Vitez's duties were to take care of the cathedral's valuables and to keep it tidy and furnished with liturgical equipment. He was also supposed to keep the chapter's records and safeguard its seal.<sup>37</sup> However, given his service at the chancery, we have reason to doubt he had ever performed these duties personally. It is more likely he did so through a substitute.<sup>38</sup> Although the chapter charter prescribed that absent

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**29** DL 72 903.

**30** MHEZ, 6:554, doc. 520. The summary wrongly identifies Benedict of Zvolen as the candidate, but the latter was never a provost of Székesfehérvár.

**31** The pope deigned to confirm him half a year later; *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:183, doc. 649.

**32** CE, 2:388, doc. 254 and 2:391, doc. 256. On both occasions Kaspar Schlick also served as the king's envoy.

**33** High chancellor from 1434 to 1437, and again in 1439 (Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:89). See also Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 293–94, Szakály, "Vitéz János," 11–12 and Fedeles, "Crkvene veze," 147–48.

**34** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:156–57, docs. 520 and 522.

**35** Fedeles, "Crkvene veze," 148.

**36** Ante Gulin, *Hrvatski srednjovjekovni kaptoli—Loca credibilia sjeverne i središnje Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2001), 52–53.

**37** Gulin, *Hrvatski srednjovjekovni kaptoli*, 15.

**38** In the fifteenth century it was not unusual for holders of ecclesiastical offices to be permanently absent (Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 348–49; see also Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance*, 166). For example, Matthias of Gotalovac received a permission from the pope to receive the income as provost of Zagreb without performing the required duties (Gulin, *Hrvatski srednjovjekovni kaptoli*, 45–46).

members were to be deprived of their income, that rule was often ignored.<sup>39</sup> By the mid-fifteenth century, absentee canons of Zagreb, by right of ancient custom, were not obligated to be present at their posts if they were in the king's service.<sup>40</sup> In their stead, liturgical and other duties were performed by substitutes—prebendaries or *clerici chori*.<sup>41</sup> In the custos's case, he had a subcustos to rely on.<sup>42</sup> Also, his office did not include pastoral care, thus being literally a sinecure,<sup>43</sup> which was the most sought after source of income among clerics.<sup>44</sup>

There are only two pieces of information that might indicate Vitez had resided in Zagreb: his own statement, made in 1450, that he knew Benedict of Zvolen while the latter was still in minor orders,<sup>45</sup> and Paul of Ivanić's claim that Vitez had long resided within the diocese of Zagreb.<sup>46</sup> However, Benedict was already a priest when he became a member of the chapter of Zagreb in 1437,<sup>47</sup> and it is much more likely Vitez had met him at the University of Vienna. As for Paul's claim, he was possibly exaggerating.

As there is no information on his actions in the chapter of Zagreb, we may assume that Vitez spent most of his time at the royal chancery. In August 1439 he was already King Albert's protonotary,<sup>48</sup> and it is probable that he was accompanying the king at the time.<sup>49</sup> Several royal charters, issued in Bodrog on October 12, 1439 and ordering that some estates, previously pawned to the Rozgonyi family (named after Rozhanovce in today's Slovakia) by the king or his predecessor, were to be permanently transferred to them, name Vitez as one of the king's agents charged with their execution.<sup>50</sup> However, the king's orders were not carried out by Vitez, but by his colleague, notary Dennis of Székesfehérvár. This is the last time such menial tasks were assigned to Vitez, while Dennis continued to perform them, even after he was promoted to protonotary around 1441.<sup>51</sup>

**39** Marko Jerković, "Kandidati za prebendu zagrebačkog kaptola u provizijama pape Bonifacija IX. (1389.–1404.)," *Croatica christiana periodica* 37, no. 72 (2013): 21–49 at 41.

**40** MHEZ, 7:415, doc. 391.

**41** Fedeles, "Crkvene veze," 142; Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 298.

**42** The chapter charter does mention the office of subcustos, although its income was not defined. See MHEZ, 296–98.

**43** MHEZ, 6:513–14, doc. 483; MHEZ, 7:73, doc. 71.

**44** Neralić, "...tibi, qui ut asseris," 162.

**45** MHEZ, 7:186, doc. 180; Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 150, doc. 72. See also Ljudevit Ivančan, *Podatci o zagrebačkim kanonicima, 1912–1924*, unpublished manuscript in Nadbiskupijski arhiv Zagreb, 174.

**46** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 152, doc. 72, note k.

**47** MHEZ, 6:493–94, doc. 467.

**48** DF 231 184 and 231 192. See also Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 107.

**49** For Albert's itinerary, see Hödl, *Albrecht II*, 28–36.

**50** DL 13 447, 13 448, 13 450, and 13 452. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 15–16.

**51** See DL 13 641, also concerning a livery of seisin involving the Rozgonyis.

Unlike mere notaries, protonotaries were important officials who would control the chancery while the chancellor was absent.<sup>52</sup> In fifteenth-century Hungary, they were highly valued for their skills.<sup>53</sup> Vitez had become proficient in internal Hungarian and international politics, possibly by learning from experienced diplomats such as Kaspar Schlick, John de Dominis, Matthias of Gotalovac, Benedict son of Michael, or others, which would have made him capable of performing complex and sensitive duties. Some authors believe Matthias of Gotalovac might have mentored Vitez during his early years.<sup>54</sup> However, even though they were both Slavonians, it seems that they were never in close contact.<sup>55</sup>

The two people who most likely did help advance Vitez's career were the Dalmatian John de Dominis and the Italian Taddeo degli Adelmari. Klára Pajorin was the first to assume that De Dominis had a hand in appointing Vitez to an office in Zagreb.<sup>56</sup> De Dominis, then bishop of Senj, would often travel between the Hungarian court and the Curia at the time when Vitez presented his supplication,<sup>57</sup> and it was common for bishops visiting the Curia to act as procurators for supplicants from their regions.<sup>58</sup> De Dominis was indeed known to do so either himself, as in the case of Matthias of Gotalovac in January 1438,<sup>59</sup> or through his agents, as in the case of Stephen Basso in February 1439.<sup>60</sup> Considering the future relations between De Dominis and Vitez, it is likely the old diplomat noticed him then. As for Taddeo degli Adelmari, he performed similar favours for Hungarian supplicants. For example, he acted on behalf of Abel of Korčula when the latter was given the diocese of Zagreb in 1438,<sup>61</sup> and was delegated by Dennis Szécsi to receive the pallium in his stead when he was elected as archbishop of Esztergom in 1440.<sup>62</sup> Taddeo, too, may have come to know Vitez around this time.

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**52** Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 601.

**53** Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 296–97.

**54** Fraknoi, *Vitéz János*, 11; Szakály, "Vitéz János," 12; Fedeles, "Crkvene veze," 148.

**55** See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitez*, 10.

**56** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 102. Note that "de Dominis" (similarly to "degli Adelmari") is in the ablative case and denotes familial origins, not geographical ones. Even though it is not grammatically correct, we will refer to him as "Dominis" for the sake of clarity and brevity.

**57** Dominis had started serving as a liaison between Hungary and the Holy See in King Sigismund's time: see Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 287 and 290. In early 1438 he was appointed nuncio in Hungary and Bohemia (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:158–60, doc. 527 and 535). In March 1438 he was elevated to a *legatus missus* (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:163, doc. 553; full transcription in Theiner, 2:217, doc. 372). He was very successful in his office, managing to negotiate the Truce of Namysłów that ended Albert's war with Poland (CE, 2:386, doc. 254). In May 1439 the pope prolonged his mandate and sent him to serve King Albert as an adviser (Theiner, 2:219–20, doc. 375).

**58** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 51.

**59** MCV, 2:730, doc. 1316.

**60** MCV, 2:99–100, doc. 127.

**61** MHEZ, 6:526–27, doc. 499.

**62** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:187–88, docs. 674 and 675. The pope's emissary

## The King's Reward

Although he was not at all a significant member of the Hungarian hierarchy, Vitez was becoming noticed by his superiors, and was well positioned to take the next chance for advancement, if it happened to present itself. It soon did. The first opportunity for Vitez to show his worth, and probably the kernel of his future career, was the embassy to Kraków in 1440. King Albert of Habsburg died in late 1439, leaving two kingdoms and a duchy—Hungary, Bohemia and Austria—without a ruler. The Polish king Wladislas III Jagiellon was a serious candidate for the Hungarian throne after King Sigismund's death,<sup>63</sup> and he renewed his bid after Albert's. The Hungarian Estates promised to deliver their response through an embassy, which was formed in January 1440. Its members were the ban of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia Matko Talovac, judge royal Stephen Báthori, master of the treasury John Perenyi, master of the doorkeepers Ladislaus Pálóci and master of the stewards and count of Somogy and Virovitica Emeric Marcali. It was headed by John de Dominis, bishop of Senj.<sup>64</sup>

These ambassadors were those who held the Estates' mandate, but the embassy itself was much larger, with an entourage of about one thousand cavalry.<sup>65</sup> The ambassadors were vested with full powers,<sup>66</sup> which were rarely conferred, especially when the matter to be negotiated was of high importance, as they gave them the liberty to negotiate virtually freely.<sup>67</sup> De Dominis's experience in negotiating with the Poles would have been valuable there, so it is not surprising that he headed the embassy, especially as he had previously gained King Wladislas's sympathies.<sup>68</sup>

Later events make it apparent that Vitez was also going to Kraków. Surprisingly, the high chancellor Matthias of Gotalovac, then bishop of Vác, was not. This was perhaps because his inclusion would have caused uncertainties regarding precedence, as the Estates wanted De Dominis to preside over the negotiations.<sup>69</sup> Considering his experience, he was likely given free choice of which chancery officials to bring along.<sup>70</sup> He probably chose Vitez because he already knew of him. Even if they were not in personal contact before, they most likely were by then, as it was customary for older

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for this matter was Valentine of Kapos, and the bishops charged with performing the ritual were Benedict son of Michael and Matthias of Gotalovac.

**63** Before the election, the pope's emissary received instructions not to support either Albert or Wladislas publicly, but to support both of them in private. CE, 2:362–63, doc. 246.

**64** CE, 2:410, doc. 268.

**65** CE, 2:411, doc. 269.

**66** CE, 2:415, doc. 273.

**67** Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 40.

**68** Theiner, 2:219–20, doc. 375.

**69** Cf. Szakály, "Vitéz János," 12. For issues of precedence in embassies, see Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 34–35.

**70** Vitez was certainly not the only available candidate. Stephen Basso was probably still a protonotary at that time (see *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:183, doc. 650; MHEZ, 2:170, doc. 123), and there was also the abovementioned Dennis of Székesfehérvár.

ambassadors to tutor their younger colleagues; contemporary manuals on diplomacy even recommended it.<sup>71</sup>

Upon reaching their destination, the ambassadors opened negotiations with their Polish counterparts, the driving force among whom was the bishop of Kraków Zbigniew Oleśnicki, who would later personally accompany the king to Hungary.<sup>72</sup> The negotiations were arduous, but on March 8, 1440, after a mass at the Kraków cathedral celebrated by De Dominis, it was announced that the ambassadors had elected Wladislas Jagiellon as king of Hungary.<sup>73</sup> The Hungarian embassy managed to obtain one important concession. Wladislas agreed to issue a decree immediately upon his coronation, in which he would obligate himself to defend Hungary not only with its own, but also with the Polish army (and vice versa). This was important because the Ottoman Empire had recently started pursuing an extremely aggressive policy towards Hungary.<sup>74</sup> The ambassadors' proclamation, in which they made public Wladislas's election—and made note of this stipulation—was composed on March 9, in Kraków, by John Vitez.<sup>75</sup> This was not unusual, as it was his job within the embassy to compose documents.<sup>76</sup> Even so, the new king would reward him for it in due time.

At first glance, it would seem that Vitez's superiors unjustly neglected to promote him during the first year of Wladislas' reign.<sup>77</sup> However, the reason was that the entire Hungarian bureaucratic structure—and the country in general—was in turmoil, even during the negotiations in Kraków.<sup>78</sup> The late King Albert's wife Elizabeth, daughter of Emperor Sigismund, gave birth to a son on February 22, 1440, having him crowned soon after as Ladislaus V.<sup>79</sup> She started a revolt immediately upon hearing of Wladislas's election.<sup>80</sup> Faced with a lack of funds and an abundance of enemies, the queen was soon forced to make peace and conclude an alliance with her late husband's second cousin, king of the Romans Frederick (usually known as Frederick III), who contested her rule in Austria. His price was extortionate: custody of Austria,<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth's own children, including Ladislaus, as hostages,<sup>82</sup> and custody of the Holy Crown of

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**71** Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 34.

**72** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 168 and 176.

**73** CE, 2:411, doc. 269.

**74** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 157ff; see also Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 83–85.

**75** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 169–70, doc. 1.

**76** Kubinyi, "Vitez János," 11; see also Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 97.

**77** See Szakály, "Vitez János," 13.

**78** Stephen Báthori never arrived in Kraków, but was addressed as the judge royal until King Wladislas's election (CE, 2:411, doc. 269). Immediately afterwards, Ladislaus Pálóci took his place, and signed the mentioned proclamation as judge royal (CE, 2:415, doc. 273).

**79** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 281.

**80** Tamás Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak: küzdelem Szlavóniáért (1440–1448)," *Századok* 134 (2000): 45–98 at 49–50.

**81** *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493)*, 12:59–61, no. 20.

**82** *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493)*, 12:65–66, no. 30.



Hungary.<sup>83</sup> Thanks to such heavy sacrifices, Elizabeth was able to continue the war against King Wladislas, and after her death in December 1442, Frederick took up her son's cause.<sup>84</sup>

As a result of the queen's revolt, the kingdom was sundered by a lengthy struggle. The bishop of Győr Benedict son of Michael was among the first to be vanquished. Although he initially supported Wladislas's election,<sup>85</sup> the old diplomat made a fatal mistake by crossing over to the queen's side,<sup>86</sup> and he was captured soon afterwards during the siege of Győr.<sup>87</sup> Matthias of Gotalovac also supported the queen and promptly lost his place as high chancellor, replaced by the bishop of Eger Simon Rozgonyi,<sup>88</sup> a fierce supporter of the Jagiellonian king.<sup>89</sup> On the opposite end, many Polish diplomats followed Wladislas to Hungary, such as Nicholas Lasocki and Gregory of Sanok.<sup>90</sup> It took a while for the complicated system of royal bureaucracy to reorganize itself.

Vitez's future career was decided by De Dominis's transfer to the bishopric of Oradea. Wladislas originally wanted De Dominis to take over the diocese of Zagreb, but Pope Eugene IV overruled that.<sup>91</sup> After some contention, he offered the king a compromise solution: De Dominis would be transferred to the vacant diocese of Oradea. Apparently not satisfied with the offer, Wladislas sent the pope an angry letter,<sup>92</sup> but he ultimately agreed to the transfer.<sup>93</sup> De Dominis therefore went to Oradea, a bishopric much wealthier than Senj, in late 1440.<sup>94</sup>

In mid-1441, it was decided it was finally time to reward Vitez. King Wladislas's chaplain, Thomas son of Peter, delivered to Pope Eugene IV a list of the king's officials (including himself) for whom he requested permissions to hold two incompatible offices, i.e. those that included pastoral care.<sup>95</sup> As personal presence was obligatory

**83** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 282; Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 251.

**84** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 283; Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 277–78.

**85** CE, 2:412, doc. 271.

**86** He and Matthias of Gotalovac were both present at Ladislaus V's coronation, at which Cardinal Dennis Szécsi officiated. CE, 2:417, doc. 275; Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, 236; Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 443.

**87** CE, 2:421, doc. 276.

**88** Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:89; Szakály, "Vitéz János," 13. Simon was transferred from Veszprém to Eger in early 1440 (CE, 2:412, doc. 271), and Matthias of Gotalovac took over Veszprém after that (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:190–91, doc. 688).

**89** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 128–29. It seems there was a personal hatred between him and the queen: see Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 448.

**90** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 442.

**91** "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Konzils von Basel," ed. Johannes Haller, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, ser. 2, 16 (1901): 207–45 at 230–31, doc. 24.

**92** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:198, doc. 726.

**93** *Concilium Basiliense*, vol. 7, *Die Protokolle des Concils 1440–1443: Aus dem Manuale des Notars Jakob Hüglin*, ed. Johannes Haller and Hermann Herre (Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1910), 265.

**94** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:193, doc. 708.

**95** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:198–99, doc. 729. Thomas became a canon of

for holding such an office, a special permission was required for holding more than one.<sup>96</sup> Vitez, then still a royal protonotary and custos of Zagreb, was among those officials, and the pope granted him this permission.<sup>97</sup> Although this did not mean that Vitez would automatically receive a better office, it demonstrated the king's intention to provide him with one.

The opportunity presented itself in 1442. Provost of Oradea Corrado dei Cardini (also a canon of Zagreb),<sup>98</sup> an experienced diplomat and an acquaintance of Poggio Bracciolini, died. At first, Pope Eugene IV awarded his office to Cardinal Branda Castiglione, then a nonagenarian, in March 1442.<sup>99</sup> However, King Wladislas had in October 1441 requested and received from the pope the right to nominate six persons for offices in cathedral or collegiate chapters.<sup>100</sup> It seems that he decided to exercise that right, because by December 1442, although Castiglione was still alive at the time, Vitez had become provost of Oradea.<sup>101</sup> The king's will seems to have prevailed this time and there were no judicial inconveniences. Vitez was probably selected for this office by De Dominis, the new bishop of Oradea. It is possible that he took part in the latter's symposia and had his first taste of Renaissance humanism.<sup>102</sup>

Thanks to the custom of Hungarian chapters to record the names of their most distinguished members in the legal documents they issued, there is an abundance of sources mentioning Vitez as provost of Oradea.<sup>103</sup> Some even bear his full name: *Johannes de Zredna*.<sup>104</sup> Although we know he held that office at least since late 1442, the sources are silent regarding what he actually did during his tenure.<sup>105</sup> Older historians, such as Kaprinai, concluded that he must have spent the time educating John Hunyadi's sons,<sup>106</sup> based on Bonfini's dubious claim that Vitez was their teacher.<sup>107</sup>

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Plock soon after that: see *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:199, doc. 732.

**96** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 105–6.

**97** A full transcription of Wladislas's request regarding Vitez is in MHEZ, 7:12, doc. 19.

**98** MHEZ, 6:41, doc. 40.

**99** *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 22, doc. 15. For information regarding Cardini, see Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 103 and Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 18. He was last mentioned as provost of Oradea in November 1440 (DF 281 299).

**100** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:200–201, doc. 736.

**101** DL 13 688.

**102** Klára Pajorin, "Alcuni rapporti personali di Pier Paolo Vergerio in Ungheria," in *Convegno internazionale di studi "L'Umanesimo Latino in Ungheria"*, ed. Papo and Papo, 45–52 at 46; Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 107–8.

**103** The only document Fraknói had discovered which mentions Vitez as holding that office is DL 13 714: see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 18. Other examples can be found in DF 291 388 and DL 99 649, 47 696, and 70 892.

**104** DF 263 366.

**105** For some opinions, see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 19–20 and Szakály, "Vitéz János," 13ff.

**106** Kaprinai, *Hungaria diplomatica*, 1:58–63.

**107** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 521.

The truth was probably not as romantic or grandiose. Vitez was simply not important enough to attract much attention, and the provostry of Oradea was more than satisfactory for a person of his status. It was the most distinguished office after the bishop's own, and it included pastoral care, which meant Vitez would have had to appoint (and support) a vicar if he was absent. Its official yearly income was an enviable sum of two hundred and fifty florins.<sup>108</sup> It also provided its holder with considerable military might and corresponding obligations to the king, whom the provost of Oradea had to follow to war at the head of a troop of fifty horsemen.<sup>109</sup>

Other than being entrusted with the mundane task of executing a last will by Pope Eugene IV in April 1445,<sup>110</sup> one of the few things we know Vitez did while he was provost is that he attempted to travel to Italy. This piece of information comes from a letter Vitez sent to Nicholas Lasocki, in which he vaguely wrote about various obstacles and enemies working against him, and of a great tragedy he suffered, due to which he can no longer tell true friends from false.<sup>111</sup> Paul of Ivanić interpreted this as Vitez doubting whether to go through with the promotion he was promised (presumably, to bishop of Oradea), which would mean the letter was written after De Dominis's demise. In the same letter, Vitez wrote about his inability to travel to the place of his heart's desire, which Paul interprets as him undertaking a journey to Italy to study, but having to abort it upon reaching Zagreb, because Ban Matko Talovac had forbidden him to leave the country for peculiar reasons—allegedly because the roads were infested with brigands.<sup>112</sup>

The ban probably knew very well who Vitez was (after all, they were in Kraków together) and how damaging it could be for the kingdom if he fell into enemy hands. However, we should not disregard that John de Dominis, Vitez's superior, maintained contacts with Kaspar Schlick, who was Frederick III's chancellor at the time. Schlick was trying to persuade him to cross over to the Habsburg side, and it seems De Dominis was considering it. In a letter to De Dominis, Schlick mentioned a visit by the latter's envoy, a modest and courteous man, who brought him much useful information.<sup>113</sup> It is conceivable that Vitez's supposed journey to Italy was a secret mission to Frederick's court.

Be that as it may, King Wladislas's reign in Hungary certainly was a time of opportunity for a new generation of aspiring bureaucrats. On the Polish side, there were Gregory of Sanok and Nicholas Lasocki, to whom Wladislas entrusted many important missions. According to a biography by Callimachus Experiens (Filippo Buonaccorsi), Gregory was one of the king's most trusted advisers not only on political, but also on

**108** *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 25–26, doc. 19.

**109** Vitez's predecessor Cardini requested the permission to hold two incompatible offices because the provostry alone was not enough for him to support his troop. *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:184, doc. 657. See also Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 196.

**110** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:223, doc. 842.

**111** *Vitéz, Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 60–61, doc. 20.

**112** *Vitéz, Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 61, doc. 20, notes b and g.

**113** *Briefwechsel*, I/2:24–26, doc. 15.

religious issues.<sup>114</sup> As for Lasocki, he represented Wladislas during peace negotiations with Frederick III in Vienna, convened in 1443 by the papal legate, Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini. Piccolomini, who was also present there, remembered him as being excessively haughty.<sup>115</sup> Kaspar Schlick had a better opinion of him, recommending him to Cesarini in mid-1443 as “my venerable lord dean” and saying that he had full confidence in him.<sup>116</sup> Lasocki was also one of Wladislas’s representatives also when a truce was concluded with Frederick in May 1444.<sup>117</sup> According to Piccolomini, he did not contribute much to the affair, having only succeeded in insulting Frederick’s representatives.<sup>118</sup>

On the Hungarian side, bishop of Vác and doctor of canon law Peter Agmánd of Aluniş (Hungarian: Kecsed) rose prominently.<sup>119</sup> Although he was Queen Elizabeth’s chancellor before the war, and received several estates from her in January 1440 as a reward for faithful service,<sup>120</sup> it seems that he switched sides soon after that.<sup>121</sup> He represented King Wladislas in negotiations with Frederick III together with Lasocki,<sup>122</sup> but unlike the latter was remembered by Piccolomini as a very humble man.<sup>123</sup> Paul of Ivanić described him as a distinguished individual, of exemplary lifestyle, beloved by all.<sup>124</sup> In King Wladislas’s Hungarian chancery, which was headed by Simon Rozgonyi, Andrew Kálnói rose to the place of vice-chancellor. He was provost of the collegiate chapter of St. John the Baptist in Pécs, and also acquired the provostry of Székesfehérvár in 1443, after the death of Stephen Basso, with the pope’s permission to hold them both.<sup>125</sup> That made him one of the most powerful prelates in Hungary.<sup>126</sup>

As we have seen, Vitez was not at all the only official at King Wladislas’s disposal, nor the most important one. His ascent was by no means guaranteed. It would take a completely unexpected combination of events for him to reach the top of the Hungarian church and state—such as an unsuccessful crusade against the Ottomans, ending in the Battle of Varna. In the following section we will examine perhaps the most

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**114** Callimachus, *Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei*, ed. Miodoński, XIIIr–XIIIv. See also Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 460 and 482.

**115** *Briefwechsel* part I, *Briefe aus der Laienzeit (1431–1445)*, vol. 1, *Privatbriefe* (hereafter I/1):565, doc. 192. See also *Briefwechsel*, I/2:52, doc. 27.

**116** *Briefwechsel*, I/2:40, doc. 21. Lasocki was dean of the chapter of Kraków at the time.

**117** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 392.

**118** *Briefwechsel*, I/1:320–22, doc. 141.

**119** He became bishop of Vác in May 1440, when Matthias of Gotalovac was transferred to Veszprém: *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:190, doc. 686.

**120** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczi Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:632–34, docs. 442–43.

**121** Szakály thought that he continued to secretly support the queen: see Szakály, “Vitéz János,” 19.

**122** *Briefwechsel*, I/2:52, doc. 27.

**123** *Briefwechsel*, I/1:565, doc. 192.

**124** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 117, note m.

**125** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:211, doc. 729 and 217, doc. 818.

**126** Cf. Szakály, “Vitéz János,” 13.

significant of Vitez's career advancements: his appointment as bishop of Oradea. We will see how it was intrinsically connected to his involvement with John Hunyadi, in whose government Vitez was an active and important participant. Therefore, we will first explain the context of his appointment, and then examine his actions as one of the factors in Hunyadi's system. We will focus primarily on the diplomatic services he rendered unto the governor, but also on Vitez's role in Hunyadi's military campaigns and in his relations with the Hungarian higher clergy.

### Hunyadi's Attendant

The year 1445 was a turning point for the Kingdom of Hungary. The Battle of Varna, fought on November 10, 1444, in which King Wladislas and a number of distinguished men lost their lives, left a great power vacuum in the Hungarian church and state.<sup>127</sup> John de Dominis was among the slain. His military contingent was the largest of all Christian forces present there and he was entrusted with the holy banner of St. Ladislaus. However, he did not distinguish himself in battle, as he was among the first to flee. He ultimately drowned in a nearby lake.<sup>128</sup> We do not know whether Vitez took part in the battle, but considering the size of De Dominis's contingent, it is likely that his troop was there. If he was with it, he probably escaped when the whole unit broke and fled during the Ottoman opening assault.<sup>129</sup>

The high chancellor Simon Rozgonyi was also killed,<sup>130</sup> as were many of the magnates. The situation was chaotic, with bands of survivors slinking back home for months, and for a long time it was unclear who was killed and who was not. For example, various rumours circulated regarding the fate of Cardinal Cesarini, the papal legate; it was not known until July 1445 that he was among the dead.<sup>131</sup> The pope even sent his nuncio Valentine of Kapos to the Wallachian voivode Vlad II Dracul in March 1445 to find Cesarini, because he heard he had sought refuge there.<sup>132</sup> Piccolomini wrote in December 1444 that Franko Talovac—Ban Matko's brother—was also killed, which soon proved to be false.<sup>133</sup> It was long rumoured that King Wladislas had managed to escape.<sup>134</sup> His adherents, led by the palatine of Hungary Lawrence Hédervári,

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**127** For a partial reconstruction of the list of participants, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 124–28.

**128** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 127–28.

**129** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 462–63.

**130** Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, 253 and Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 488.

**131** Pajorin, "Primordi," 816–18.

**132** CE, 2:453–54, doc. 305.

**133** *Briefwechsel*, I/1:490, doc. 167.

**134** For example, a pamphlet was circulating in Rome, claiming that the crusaders had won at Varna and that Wladislas was in Constantinople: CE, 2:454–58, doc. 306.

were among those spreading such rumours, trying to buy themselves the time to bring the situation under control.<sup>135</sup>

One of the areas needing this control was the diocese of Oradea. Wladislas's supporters, especially John Hunyadi, voivode of Transylvania (where much of the diocese was located), could not afford to allow it to fall into the hands of the Habsburg party. In early 1445 they appointed Franko Talovac, a survivor of Varna, who was then ban of Slavonia, as its governor.<sup>136</sup> The situation in the diocese was tense, with many of its soldiers' fates still unknown. For example, one of the diocesan officers lost two of his brothers at Varna, but was still hoping for their return.<sup>137</sup> The news of the bishop's death spread quickly, and many took the opportunity to usurp episcopal estates.<sup>138</sup>

In April 1445 the magnates took on the arduous task of finding a solution to the power vacuum. To keep the country from falling apart, seven captains of the kingdom—one of whom was Hunyadi—were appointed at the Diet of Pest, held in April and May.<sup>139</sup> Vitez took part in this diet. In a letter to a certain Archdeacon Paul, written on April 29 in Oradea, he wrote that he was invited and was making ready to attend, hoping a compromise would be reached between the Jagiellonian and Habsburg supporters, which would lead to a permanent peace within the kingdom.<sup>140</sup> If he managed to reach Pest soon after writing that letter, he might have witnessed the proclamation of the great compromise on May 7. To end the internecine war, Ladislaus V was elected as king of Hungary. To save the reputations of those who were until then claiming that Wladislas was still alive, it was decided that an envoy would be sent to Poland to check whether he was there. If he was not, the election would be confirmed and King Frederick III would be requested to turn over both Ladislaus and the Holy Crown. If he would refuse, all obligations to the newly elected king would be annulled.<sup>141</sup> The Estates of Bohemia, who had previously elected Ladislaus as king of Bohemia, agreed to this election.<sup>142</sup>

It was probably at this diet that it was decided Vitez would be nominated as bishop of Oradea. The letters requesting Vitez's confirmation, sent by Hunyadi and the nobility of Bihar county (in the diocese of Oradea) to Rome, were dated April 28, 1445, so they were either composed during the diet or immediately before it.<sup>143</sup> In them, Hunyadi appealed to probably every papal official he believed could help secure Vitez's

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**135** Held, *Hunyadi*, 114–15.

**136** Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak," 78; Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:77.

**137** DL 36 627 and 86 679.

**138** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 49, doc. 6.

**139** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 288. See also *Briefwechsel*, 1/1:568, doc. 192.

**140** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 49, doc. 6; see also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 27.

**141** For the text of the resolution, see, *Vestigia comitiorum apud Hungaros*, ed. Kovačić, *Supplementum* 2:9–36.

**142** *Briefwechsel*, 1/1:507, doc. 174.

**143** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 55–56, doc. 13. Only the letter to Giorgio Cesarini bears a date, but Paul of Ivanić clarified (in note f) that the other letters were sent at the same time as that one.

confirmation. Among them were the patriarch of Aquileia Lodovico Trevisan, the *éminence grise* of Eugene IV's Curia,<sup>144</sup> the previously mentioned Taddeo degli Adelmari, then a papal physician, who already knew both Hunyadi and Vitez,<sup>145</sup> and Giorgio Cesarini, brother of the deceased cardinal.<sup>146</sup>

We do not know whose idea it was that Vitez should be the new bishop. His position as provost of Oradea undoubtedly made him a "safe" choice, as it likely helped for the election to pass without much resistance from the chapter. It is possible that the diocese's governor Franko Talovac, whose power base was in Slavonia, endorsed his nomination, thus supporting a fellow Slavonian. However, the one who made sure that Vitez's confirmation in Rome would go through was John Hunyadi. Examining the relationship between Vitez and the legendary warrior, we can only conclude that it is possible that they knew each other. Although Paul of Ivanić noted that Vitez had composed letters describing Hunyadi's victories over Ottoman armies preceding the Battle of Varna,<sup>147</sup> that does not mean they were necessarily connected at all.<sup>148</sup>

As with most things regarding Vitez's early years, there are only inklings regarding this problem. Andrew Pannonius, a Carthusian scholar, provided one of them. In his youth he was a soldier in John Hunyadi's retinue, before leaving Hungary in 1445 and entering the charterhouse in Venice.<sup>149</sup> In a work he dedicated to Matthias Hunyadi, then king of Hungary, in the 1460s, he stated that he knew Vitez when the latter was still in minor orders.<sup>150</sup> That could mean any time before 1445, when Vitez was titled as a priest for the first time,<sup>151</sup> and it could indicate that Vitez and Andrew frequented the same milieu—perhaps the court of John Hunyadi. Szákaly was of a similar opinion, thinking that Vitez's letters regarding Hunyadi's victories before 1445 were in fact the latter's private correspondence commissioned from Vitez.<sup>152</sup> Also, in 1454 Piccolomini recounted that Hunyadi threatened to demote Vitez to chaplain if he inconvenienced him, because as he made him a bishop, he could unmake him too.<sup>153</sup> Could this have meant that Vitez used to be Hunyadi's chaplain? It is not unlikely, as in the

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**144** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 51, doc. 7. Hunyadi had never been in contact with him before, which he himself remarked on. Piccolomini wrote that Trevisan had become so powerful during Eugene's final years that the latter was the pope in name only (Enea Silvio Piccolomini, "Historia rerum Friderici III. imperatoris," in *Analecta monumentorum omnis aevi Vindobonensia*, ed. Kollár, 2:1–474 at 134.

**145** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 53, doc. 10.

**146** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 54–55, doc. 13.

**147** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 42, doc. 2, note B.

**148** Cf. Held, *Hunyadi*, 11 and 115.

**149** Sándor Bene, "Where Paradigms Meet: The Theology of Political Virtues in Andreas Pannonius' Mirrors for Princes," in *Italy and Hungary*, ed. Farbaky and Waldman, 173–217 at 177.

**150** Andreas Pannonius, "Libellus de virtutibus," ed. Fraknói and Ábel, 87. See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 47.

**151** *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 24, doc. 18.

**152** Szákaly, "Vitéz János," 15.

**153** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:491, doc. 290.

fifteenth century the powerful would award such titles to clerics they wanted to keep in their service, similarly to how they could make laymen their retainers.<sup>154</sup> Those were trusted individuals, often handpicked for higher honours by their masters; for example, Hunyadi made one of his chaplains provost of Cenad in 1450.<sup>155</sup> It is possible that Hunyadi made Vitez his chaplain sometime before 1445.

Besides these hints, we also have the already mentioned claim by Antonio Bonfini, according to which Vitez taught Hunyadi's sons, Ladislaus and Matthias, and Kaprinai's theory that evolved from it. The latter conjectured that the see of Oradea was a reward for Vitez's pedagogic services. However, he found it necessary to modify Bonfini's claim, as Matthias was only two when Vitez was made bishop, so he concluded that Vitez must have taught only the elder son, Ladislaus.<sup>156</sup> Although later events might point to a closer relationship between Ladislaus Hunyadi and Vitez, this theory remains unprovable.

The simplest solution would be that Vitez was made bishop of Oradea because he was a newcomer there, with a modest family background and without support from the local nobility, and as such completely dependent on Hunyadi. The latter could believe that Vitez would be an obedient prelate, ready to follow his orders.

Vitez's services were soon required. Ladislaus V was too valuable to simply be given away and Frederick III refused to hand him over. In 1446 Hunyadi was elected as governor to rule in his absence, thus becoming the most powerful man in the kingdom.<sup>157</sup> Researchers have long noticed that letters regarding peace negotiations with Frederick III make up a significant portion of Vitez's collection.<sup>158</sup> In fact, Hunyadi's military campaigns against the king of the Romans were accompanied by diplomatic offensives conducted by Vitez.

The first of these campaigns targeted the episcopal city of Győr, then occupied by Frederick's forces. Vacant since the death of Benedict son of Michael, its see was given to Augustine of Shalanky (Hungarian: Salánk) in 1445,<sup>159</sup> as a part of the great compromise between the Habsburg and Jagiellon supporters. Shalanky was firmly on the Habsburg side and formerly served as Queen Elizabeth's vice-chancellor, perhaps even chancellor.<sup>160</sup> As most of his diocese found itself under his former faction leader's occupation, the new bishop was unable to collect tithes due to him.<sup>161</sup> This was used by Hunyadi and Vitez to justify an offensive against Frederick in late 1446. As the lat-

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**154** Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 801–4.

**155** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:283, doc. 1132.

**156** Kaprinai, *Hungaria diplomatica*, 1:58–63.

**157** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 288.

**158** See, for example, Perić, "Zbirka pisama," 103ff.

**159** Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:71.

**160** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:112–13, doc. 51 and 121–22, doc. 55. See also Nemes, "Salánki Ágoston," 8–10.

**161** *Briefwechsel part II, Briefe als Priester und als Bischof von Triest (1447–1450)* (hereafter II):49–50, doc. 14 and p. 242.



ter had the (Roman) pope's support,<sup>162</sup> Vitez composed a letter in Hunyadi's name to Eugene IV on October 18, 1446, in which he accused Frederick of mistreating the diocese of Győr to such an extent that he had allowed stables, warehouses and shops to be constructed by the walls of its churches, including the cathedral.<sup>163</sup> He also took steps to justify the offensive before the Venetian Senate and Doge Francesco Foscari, as word had spread that its real targets were in fact Venetian holdings. Vitez assured them that Hunyadi had no intentions of attacking them, claiming in his letter that Frederick's usurpation of church revenues was the cause of the campaign.<sup>164</sup> These letters were delivered by Vincent Szilasi,<sup>165</sup> a notary of Hunyadi's, who was also a canon of Oradea (since 1445) and Vitez's associate.<sup>166</sup>

Both of these attempts failed, however, as Frederick's embassy (with Piccolomini as its member) shadowed Hunyadi's and managed to counter its actions. The doge condemned the Hungarian campaign.<sup>167</sup> The pope went even further by handing over Hunyadi's (or, rather, Vitez's) letter to Piccolomini, so that he could refute it more efficiently.<sup>168</sup> Piccolomini also convinced the cardinals of his master's righteousness, remarking that two of them—Tommaso Parentucelli (the future pope Nicholas V) and Juan Carvajal—had defended Frederick's honour as if they were Austrians themselves.<sup>169</sup> This is not surprising, as these two were the ones negotiating Frederick's cooperation with the Roman papacy against the Council of Basel.<sup>170</sup>

Despite the diplomatic setbacks, Hunyadi's 1446–1447 winter campaign in Austria was successful.<sup>171</sup> Frederick agreed to negotiate, and a truce was concluded on June 1. According to its terms, he was supposed to hand over the city of Győr, but keep some other Hungarian territories close to the border.<sup>172</sup> Shalanky was to receive his seat, at the cost of obligating himself in written form not to wage war on Frederick or Ladis-

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**162** Frederick III was a key supporter of the Roman papacy in its struggle against the Council of Basel: see Joachim W. Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire: The Conflict over Supreme Authority and Power in the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 282–83 and Johannes Helmuth, "The Empire and the Council," in *A Companion to the Council of Basel*, ed. Michiel Decaluwé, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 410–42 at 434ff.

**163** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 70, doc. 25.

**164** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 72–73, doc. 26.

**165** Piccolomini called him "Vincentius Hungarus": see *Briefwechsel*, II:238.

**166** Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 249–50.

**167** *Briefwechsel*, II:238.

**168** *Briefwechsel*, II:241–42.

**169** *Briefwechsel*, II:251.

**170** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:193–94, doc. 87.

**171** Piccolomini wrote disparagingly of this campaign, ridiculing Hunyadi for pillaging the countryside without taking any fortifications. See Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 130. If viewed as a *chevauchée*—a strategy favoured by the Ottomans Hunyadi had spent the past decade fighting—this was precisely the purpose of the campaign.

**172** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 289.

laus V.<sup>173</sup> However, the true success of the campaign was that it convinced Frederick that the newly appointed governor was a force to be reckoned with.

These events introduced Vitez to the European diplomatic forum. Hunyadi continued using his services when similar issues arose, such as in August 1447: the new pope, Nicholas V, dispatched Cardinal Juan Carvajal to Vienna as his legate, primarily to conclude a concordat with the king of the Romans, but also to preside over peace negotiations between him and Hungary.<sup>174</sup> King Frederick was crucial for the Roman papacy's effort to eliminate its rival in Basel, and his interests were therefore far more important to the pope than Hungary's. Judging by their actions, Hunyadi and Vitez probably knew this. Still, the Hungarian Estates elected seven ambassadors in September 1447 to go to Vienna and try to get Ladislaus V and the Holy Crown handed over to Hungary. These were the cardinal and archbishop of Esztergom Dennis Szécsi, the bishop of Vác Peter Agmánd, who was in the meantime appointed as high chancellor,<sup>175</sup> bishop of Győr Augustine of Shalanky, the palatine of Hungary Ladislaus Garai, the judge royal Ladislaus Pálóci, the royal treasurer Michael Ország, and Bishop John Vitez himself.<sup>176</sup> The latter's role was to protect Hunyadi's interests and speak on his behalf, as he himself admitted in a letter to Carvajal written on January 15, 1448.<sup>177</sup> His task was most likely to prevent any agreements not favourable to his master from being made.

Custody of Ladislaus V remained a burning issue, especially as now the Bohemians also demanded that he be handed over to them.<sup>178</sup> As previous researchers noted, Ladislaus's repatriation was not in Hunyadi's interest.<sup>179</sup> The king's absence guaranteed him the leading position in the kingdom, in the face of rising animosity among the magnates. On the other hand, Carvajal knew that the Roman pope's status in the Holy Roman Empire depended on Frederick III; he also thought the latter's custody of Ladislaus was the best means of keeping the peace in the region.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, the negotiations were essentially destined to fail. Vitez's greatest concern was to keep the

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**173** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:205–7, docs. 95 and 97. See also Nemes, “Salánki Ágoston,” 15–16.

**174** Canedo, *Un español*, 111.

**175** Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:89.

**176** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 76, doc. 27, note I. See also Held, *Hunyadi*, 127 and Canedo, *Un español*, 111–12. The same assembly elected Ladislaus Garai as palatine. See Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 289. His family was named after their castle and township—both of which no longer exist—in today's Croatia, close to the village of Gorjani. See Krešimir Regan, “Gorjani—srednjovjekovno sijelo plemićke obitelji Gorjanski,” *Scrinia Slavonica* 6 (2006): 127–59.

**177** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 74–75, doc. 27. Although this and the other letters pertaining to this issue are dated 1447, the year was 1448 according to our reckoning. Carvajal's mission was announced in May 1447 (Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:201–2, doc. 93), and he arrived in Vienna in the following November (Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 313). Paul of Ivanić explains that Vitez's letter dated January 18, 1448 pertains to the same embassy to Vienna as the one mentioned previously (Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 84, doc. 34, note a).

**178** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 30, 32 and 38.

**179** Held, *Hunyadi*, 127; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 292.

**180** Canedo, *Un español*, 111 and 130.

rest of the Hungarian embassy, particularly Cardinal Szécsi, a firm supporter of Ladislaus V,<sup>181</sup> from doing something that could upset the *status quo*.

It seems that Szécsi was aware of this, as he was in no hurry to depart for Vienna. Carvajal concluded the Concordat of Vienna with Frederick III on February 17, 1448,<sup>182</sup> but the Hungarian ambassadors did not even arrive by then. The cardinal issued an invitation to them on Christmas 1447, and Hunyadi agreed that the negotiations would start a week after New Year's, but the embassy tarried. That was embarrassing. Vitez wrote to Carvajal on January 15, conjuring up excuses such as that the cardinal did not send a reply to confirm the date, and that Hunyadi himself was not currently in Hungary, but in Wallachia, pacifying the country after his war against Voivode Vlad II Dracul and the succession war in Moldavia, because of which he left Vitez in charge of arranging the embassy's departure.<sup>183</sup> Hunyadi was indeed pressuring Vitez to get the embassy underway, and the latter sent a short letter to Szécsi on January 18, chastising the cardinal for not sending directions regarding departure to the other ambassadors, his responsibility as the head of the embassy. He even threatened to depart on his own if Szécsi remained obstinate.<sup>184</sup> Both of these letters were sent from Oradea, so it seems Vitez was wintering at his seat.

As nothing had happened by mid-February, new excuses had to be made. As Frederick III had sent the embassy an official letter of invitation granting it safe conduct, Vitez wrote to Frederick and Carvajal demanding a new letter, claiming the old one was not adequate, as it did not guarantee safety from a specific brigand named Oberberger. As a group of Hungarian pilgrims on their way to Rome was recently robbed in Austria, the ambassadors were allegedly worried that a scandal would break out if they were attacked.<sup>185</sup>

Delays such as these were not unusual for medieval embassies, and they would often cause political difficulties.<sup>186</sup> Worries about personal safety or possible scandals were justified, as every ambassador, while granted protection, still had to answer for his actions and could be tried for them.<sup>187</sup> For example, one of Hunyadi's envoys was impris-

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**181** Regarding his political allegiance, see András Kubinyi, "Szécsi Dénes bíboros prímás," in *Entz Géza Nyolcvanadik születésnapjára—Tanulmányok*, ed. Ilona Valter (Budapest: Országos Műemlékvédelmi Hivatal, 1993), 99–107.

**182** See Helmrath, "The Empire and the Council," 436ff.

**183** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 74–75, doc. 27. For Hunyadi's intervention in Wallachia and Moldavia, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 148. See also Held, *Hunyadi*, 125 and Engel's comment in Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. and ed. Mantello and Engel, 149n367. The Polish king Casimir IV, who considered Moldavia his vassal state, decided to ignore Hunyadi's activities (CE, 3:33–34, doc. 26). Incidentally, Augustine of Shalanky's consecration was scheduled for November 1447, and he was forced to invite the burghers of Bratislava to it, as Hunyadi and the rest of the magnates were busy fighting in Wallachia. Nemes, "Salánki Ágoston," 22.

**184** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 84, doc. 34.

**185** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 76–79, docs. 28–29.

**186** See Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 33.

**187** Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 42–44.

oned in Rome in 1450 because of personal debts, despite his master's protests that he should have been guaranteed immunity.<sup>188</sup> There are also many examples of ambassadors being attacked *en route*.<sup>189</sup> However, this particular embassy was a very reluctant one. When it finally arrived in Vienna, its visit was perfunctory. Piccolomini briefly noted the Hungarians' arrival, and that Carvajal failed to reconcile them with Frederick.<sup>190</sup>

This meant that Vitez had succeeded in his mission, as the formalities were observed, but the *status quo* remained undisturbed. Despite some embarrassment, Hunyadi could be satisfied with his services. In the following years Carvajal continued to press for negotiations, to be held first in Buda, and later in Bratislava,<sup>191</sup> but the situation remained unchanged. This suited both Frederick III and Hunyadi. It, however, did not please the Hungarian Estates. After a diet was held in June 1450, Vitez composed a long letter to Pope Nicholas V on Hunyadi's and the Estates' behalf, asking the pope to reconsider the issue of Ladislaus's custody. It was a listless effort. Vitez wrote that much effort was already wasted on that issue and encouraged the pope not to exert himself—sending an apostolic letter or a papal envoy to Frederick would suffice.<sup>192</sup> The Bohemian Estates made similar attempts, but Piccolomini cynically noted they did so more out of habit than conviction.<sup>193</sup>

Indeed, such attempts were not in the interest of the great and the powerful. Three of the most powerful Hungarian magnates—Hunyadi, Nicholas of Ilok (Hungarian: Újlak), and Ladislaus Garai—reached private agreements with Frederick III in Bratislava, on October 22, 1450.<sup>194</sup> Hunyadi agreed not to dispute Frederick's custody of Ladislaus V, nor his occupation of the border areas in western Hungary, and Frederick was to keep the Holy Crown and Ladislaus until he turned eighteen. In return, Frederick recognized Hunyadi as governor of the Kingdom of Hungary and promised to consult him before emancipating Ladislaus. The agreement even contained a clause stipulating that Hunyadi and Frederick would keep to it even when dealing with the Hungarian Estates.<sup>195</sup> Hunyadi was thus safe from unpleasant surprises. His agreement with Frederick served as a model for the latter's similar pact with George of Poděbrady, Hunyadi's Bohemian counterpart, who also worked against Ladislaus's emancipation.<sup>196</sup>

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**188** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 146–48, doc. 71.

**189** For examples, see *Epistolario*, 3:412, Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 129, and *Briefwechsel*, III/1:179, doc. 102.

**190** Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 139.

**191** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 79–80, doc. 30, especially note e, and 96, doc. 40, note a.

**192** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 144, doc. 69.

**193** Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 181.

**194** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 292. See also Canedo, *Un español*, 129–30.

**195** *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493)*, ed. Heinrich Koller et al., vol. 13, *Die Urkunden und Briefe des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs in Wien, Abt. Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv: Allgemeine Urkundenreihe, Familienurkunden und Abschriftensammlungen (1440–1446)*, ed. Paul Herold and Kornelia Holzner-Tobisch (Vienna: Böhlau, 2001), 145, no. 181.

**196** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 49–50.

## The Sword and the Crosier

In the previous section we see that Hunyadi used Vitez's services extensively when it came to matters of diplomacy. However, if we turn to Vitez's role in the governor's military campaigns, it seems that Vitez served Hunyadi primarily as a literary warrior, not an actual one. As we have seen, he did not participate in the Wallachian campaign of 1447. There is also no evidence suggesting that he followed Hunyadi to a raid against the Ottomans in late 1445, conducted in cooperation with the Crusader navy under Cardinal Francesco Condulmer. Vitez did compose a letter to Pope Eugene IV in Hunyadi's name on November 29, 1445, in which the Hungarian commander's meeting with Cardinal Condulmer in Nicopolis was mentioned,<sup>197</sup> but he was probably not personally present at the meeting.<sup>198</sup> As the raid ended in early October,<sup>199</sup> it is likely he wrote the letter after Hunyadi's return.

A more complicated issue is Vitez's participation in Hunyadi's Crusade of 1448, which ended in the governor's defeat on Kosovo Polje. Fraknói thought Vitez did participate in it, based on the fact that he composed several letters in Hunyadi's name in the crusader encampment, to be carried to the pope by Nicholas Lasocki.<sup>200</sup> Those were, for example, the letter written on September 6, 1448 near Kovin,<sup>201</sup> that of September 8, written *in progressu exercituali* (on the march) by a ford of the Danube near Kovin,<sup>202</sup> and the one of September 17, written by the ford, but on the other side of the Danube, in Serbia.<sup>203</sup> Lasocki was supposed to make a stop in Venice on his way to Rome, so Vitez composed a letter in Hunyadi's name for Doge Francesco Foscari, also written in Serbia, by the same ford, on September 12. That letter states that Lasocki witnessed the beginning of the campaign, because Hunyadi requested him to stay until then.<sup>204</sup> Also, as Carvajal was still toiling away to reconcile the Hungarians with Frederick III, his letter regarding the current state of the negotiations was brought to the crusader encampment.<sup>205</sup> Lasocki was supposed to deliver the response to the cardinal at the first convenience. Vitez composed it on September 14, also by the ford.<sup>206</sup> On the same spot, Hunyadi and Vitez witnessed the last will of Emeric Marcali,<sup>207</sup> who was killed on the Kosovo Polje soon afterwards.

**197** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 47, doc. 4.

**198** Cf. Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 29–30.

**199** This was most likely a perfunctory *chevauchée*, performed because the Crusader flotilla was in the area. See Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 143–44 and Held, *Hunyadi*, 119. Regarding the flotilla, see Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 223–24.

**200** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 47–49.

**201** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 94, doc. 38.

**202** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 87–89, doc. 36.

**203** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 90–93, doc. 37.

**204** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 95–96, doc. 39.

**205** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 174, doc. 3.

**206** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 96, doc. 40.

**207** DL 14 915.

It appears that all these letters were composed before the campaign began in earnest, while the army was still crossing the Danube. It did not start its march towards central Serbia before September 28. Lasocki witnessed its departure, but did not follow it.<sup>208</sup> As there is no mention of Vitez having participated in the crusade, it is likely that he returned to Hungary when the army departed. If he did, that was very fortunate for him. Hunyadi's army suffered a crushing defeat on Kosovo Polje on October 20. Hunyadi himself managed to escape, but he was captured while returning through Serbia by its despot, George Branković. The hostility between the two went back to 1444,<sup>209</sup> and besides, Branković's daughter Catherine was married to Hunyadi's bitter rival, Count Ulric II of Celje. The governor also made things worse by threatening to overthrow Branković for his refusal to take any part in Hunyadi's crusade.<sup>210</sup>

In a letter to Lasocki, written by Vitez in Hunyadi's name on December 30, after the governor's release, the latter's captivity was elegantly omitted, and it was simply stated that he had spent some time with the despot, arriving on Christmas Eve to Szeged, where the Hungarian diet was in session. In his comments, Paul of Ivanić explained that the purpose of the omission was to preserve the governor's dignity, but that it was well-known that he was captured, and released with great difficulty.<sup>211</sup> Vitez was among the magnates who gathered in Petrovaradin in late November 1448 to negotiate his release, together with Andrew Kálnói, who was then bishop of Pécs, and bishop of Bosnia Raphael Herceg.<sup>212</sup>

The Diet of Szeged also had to deliver a response to Cardinal Carvajal, regarding an agreement with Frederick III previously reached in Bratislava. It was composed, probably by Vitez, on December 14, informing the cardinal that the diet unanimously decided not to deliberate on the said agreement due to the present crisis. The truce was to be upheld and negotiations continued.<sup>213</sup> It is possible that this was Vitez's doing, to make sure the *status quo* remained undisturbed during Hunyadi's absence. There was indeed a crisis in the kingdom, similar to that after the Battle of Varna. It was long unknown who survived Kosovo Polje and who did not.<sup>214</sup> Many of Hunyadi's allies were killed in

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**208** This information comes from a letter to Lasocki, composed by Vitez on Hunyadi's behalf at the end of 1448. See Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 97, doc. 41.

**209** See Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 155–56 and 167.

**210** Held, *Hunyadi*, 129.

**211** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 98–99, doc. 41, Paul's comment in note o. Vitez's report on the Battle of Kosovo Polje was written in a manner that would make Hunyadi the hero. On the other hand, Piccolomini recounted a different version, delivered by Count Ulric of Celje, according to which the battle was lost due to Hunyadi's rashness and arrogance. See *Briefwechsel*, 2:75, doc. 23.

**212** Zichy, 9:205, doc. 158. See also Vjekoslav Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1901), 233. Kálnói was made bishop of Pécs in 1445: see Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:73.

**213** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 173–75, doc. 3.

**214** The last of the Talovac brothers, Perko, wrote to the pope on January 31, 1449 that he still did not know whether his brother Franko survived the battle or not. *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 34–35, doc. 27.

the battle, such as Franko Talovac.<sup>215</sup> Hunyadi's fate was also unknown for a while;<sup>216</sup> as before, there were even rumours that the Christians had won.<sup>217</sup>

The governor eventually took his revenge on Branković. It took some patience, as the magnates increasingly resisted his rule.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, the despot was ultimately forced to negotiate, and Vitez was one of the delegates—together with the Ladislaus Garai, Nicholas of Ilok and Ladislaus Pálóci—appointed by the Estates to mediate between the two. His role was to act in Hunyadi's best interest,<sup>219</sup> probably the reason he was included among the delegates. After great difficulties, they hammered out an agreement, signed in Smederevo on August 7, 1451. It stipulated that Branković was to give his granddaughter and ward Elizabeth—daughter of Ulric of Celje and Catherine—to Hunyadi's son Matthias in marriage. The wedding was to take place two years later, after the girl turned 13, and she was to be allowed to remain Orthodox Christian.<sup>220</sup> This was a great success for Hunyadi, as it would have made him, a man of obscure origin, a member of a true royal family.

To conclude, there is no evidence that Vitez personally fought in Hunyadi's armies, despite some bishops, such as Ladislaus Hédervári of Eger, having done so.<sup>221</sup> However, he most likely did have to put his troops at the governor's disposal. This is implied in a charter issued in 1453 to Stephen Keczer, one of the soldiers in Vitez's retinue, which states that Stephen had fought both abroad, against the Ottomans, and within Hungary, against the Bohemians.<sup>222</sup> The former statement probably refers to the Crusade of 1448. The latter concerns Hunyadi's campaigns against the troops of John Jiskra, nominally loyal to Ladislaus V, who held most of northern Hungary (today's Slovakia).<sup>223</sup> We cannot be sure whether Vitez participated in them. His troops did fight in the north, but without him, in 1456.<sup>224</sup> A written order from Hunyadi to Vitez and count of Bihar Francis Csáki, instructing them to intervene in some local proprietary matters, issued on July 18, 1452, could point both ways.<sup>225</sup> Although the document was issued

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**215** Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak," 96. The list of fallen magnates is impressive: see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 149–51.

**216** Similar to the situation after Wladislas's death, Hunyadi's supporters were spreading rumours that he had been Despot Branković's honoured guest and not a captive, and that he was already on his way back to Hungary. This was weeks before the governor's release. See DL 44 531.

**217** Guarino Veronese wrote of them to Lasocki: see *Epistolario*, 2:513, doc. 816.

**218** Held, *Hunyadi*, 135–36.

**219** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 54; Held, *Hunyadi*, 144.

**220** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:305–12, doc. 147. The girl died before the wedding took place: see Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 131.

**221** Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, 260–61; Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 501.

**222** DL 14 719.

**223** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 290–91.

**224** Zichy, 9:519, doc. 376.

**225** DL 55 517.

in Drienčany, recently conquered from Jiskra's forces,<sup>226</sup> it does not necessarily imply that the addressees were present during the conquest.

## The Governor and his Bishops

Let us now briefly examine Vitez's role in ecclesiastical affairs concerning Hunyadi. As we have seen, the governor would always make sure that Vitez was included in issues important to him. For example, Franko Talovac was once excommunicated by Cardinal Szécsi in a trivial court case, in which the latter acted as judge. Hunyadi managed to get the pope to suspend the censure and transfer the case to Vitez.<sup>227</sup> Also, if some of the clerics in Hunyadi's service were to be introduced to ecclesiastical offices, the pope regularly gave the task to Vitez. This was the case with Vincent Szilasi, whom Hunyadi presented to the parish of Baia Mare in 1446,<sup>228</sup> Peter of Crkvica, whom the same presented to the lectorate of Zagreb in 1447,<sup>229</sup> and Hunyadi's chaplain, Thomas, son of Paul, made provost of Cenad in 1450.<sup>230</sup>

For arranging such matters, Hunyadi had his man in Rome—Nicholas Lasocki, at the time acting as a representative of the Kingdom of Hungary at the Holy See.<sup>231</sup> To reward him and, in all likelihood, control him more efficiently, in 1449 Hunyadi wanted to award him the archbishopric of Kalocsa. That would have been Lasocki's first cathedra, as he was still merely the dean of Kraków.<sup>232</sup> However, he refused it, allegedly due to its poor state, asking instead for the diocese of Transylvania instead. Hunyadi agreed and, as its bishop, Matthias of Łabiszyn, was still alive and well, asked the pope to transfer the latter to Kalocsa.<sup>233</sup> Lasocki ultimately did not accept that diocese either, as he had succeeded in persuading the pope to give him the diocese of Włocławek in his native Poland. As the business of transferring Matthias of Łabiszyn to Kalocsa was already underway, Hunyadi suggested that Peter Agmánd be transferred to Transylvania, and his see in Vác filled by Vincent Szilasi.<sup>234</sup>

This was confusing for everyone involved. In the autumn of 1449, Hunyadi embarked on one of his campaigns and left the whole business of the transfers to Vitez,

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**226** See Engel's comment in Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. and ed. Mantello and Engel, 162n414.

**227** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:263, doc. 1041.

**228** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:231, doc. 881. Szilasi was already a canon of both Oradea and Alba Iulia.

**229** MHEZ, 7:111, doc. 108.

**230** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:283, doc. 1132; *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 36–37, doc. 29.

**231** He was addressed as such, for example, in *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 33–34, doc. 26 and Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 106, docs. 46 and 114, doc. 52.

**232** He was almost made bishop of Poznań in 1438: see CE, 1/1:115–18, docs. 106–109 and Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:219.

**233** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 107–8, doc. 47.

**234** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 109, doc. 48.



who was to report everything to him. Vitez obediently followed the governor's directions, forwarding his requests to the pope in a letter composed on October 20, 1449. An additional problem arose in the meantime. The bishop of Transylvania refused to be transferred to Kalocsa, so Vitez asked the pope to force him to comply.<sup>235</sup> However, Matthias of Łabiszyn, a Pole who had arrived in Hungary with King Wladislas, could afford to disobey the governor, as he had a powerful protector—Nicholas of Ilok.<sup>236</sup> In a letter to the pope, written by Vitez in Hunyadi's name on January 18, 1450, the governor admitted that Matthias could not be forced to yield. Peter Agmánd was not as fortunate, as although he initially resisted the transfer, Hunyadi managed to break his resistance and asked the pope to confirm him as archbishop of Kalocsa.<sup>237</sup>

This ecclesiastical conundrum demonstrates how tenuous Vitez's position was. Hunyadi could make or break Hungarian bishops, and only those protected by powerful magnates were safe from his grasp. Vitez had to stay in the governor's good graces if he wanted to remain in Oradea. It is understandable why such an arrangement did not appeal to Lasocki. Even so, Vitez was disappointed that his old friend refused to stay in Hungary. After Nicholas informed him of his newly acquired cathedra in Poland, Vitez responded on January 29, 1450, writing that although he otherwise had a very high opinion of Lasocki, in this matter he did not, as he had refused a gift and caused problems that a wise man never would.<sup>238</sup>

Despite refusing to become a Hungarian prelate, Lasocki continued to represent Hungary in Rome.<sup>239</sup> However, he died in September 1450, before entering into his diocese.<sup>240</sup> Peter Agmánd also died around that time, before the papal bull confirming him as archbishop of Kalocsa arrived.<sup>241</sup> This provided new opportunities for Hunyadi's dependents. Vincent Szilasi was made bishop of Vác on July 17, 1450,<sup>242</sup> and Raphael Herceg archbishop of Kalocsa on August 31.<sup>243</sup>

Other diplomatic tasks Vitez performed were of lesser importance. He had contact with the Pauline monk Valentine of Kapos, a papal chaplain and a minor penitentiary (since 1439).<sup>244</sup> Valentine was often sent by popes on diplomatic missions to his native Hungary, such as to deliver the messages of Nicholas V to the Hungarian Estates in

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**235** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 111–13, doc. 51.

**236** László Solymosi, "König Matthias Corvinus und der Ungarische hohe Klerus," in *Matthias and His Legacy*, ed. Bárány and Györkös, 283–300 at 290.

**237** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 115–16, doc. 53.

**238** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 121, doc. 58.

**239** He received praise for completing previous tasks and received new instructions from Hunyadi in June 1450: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 137–40, docs. 66–67.

**240** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 148, doc. 71, note b.

**241** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 117, doc. 53, note q.

**242** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:283, doc. 1129.

**243** Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:132.

**244** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:186, doc. 665.

mid-1449.<sup>245</sup> In October 1449, Vitez mentioned in a letter to the pope that he personally conversed with Valentine about Lasocki's promotion to one of the Hungarian dioceses.<sup>246</sup> He also composed several letters regarding the conflict between Valentine and the Hungarian Estates over the provostry of Dömös.<sup>247</sup> That was a mostly defunct institution, and Nicholas V tried to give it to the Paulines and make Valentine its first prior, which sparked an argument between the pope and the Hungarian Estates over the right of patronage.<sup>248</sup> Valentine withdrew and it seems that he later, in the 1460s, made friends with Thomas Himfi, one of Vitez's enemies.<sup>249</sup> He also joined Cardinal Szécsi's circle and received several offices from him in 1465.<sup>250</sup>

Vitez also had contact with diplomats serving Alfonso the Magnanimous, king of Aragon and Naples, namely with Bernard Lopez, the king's secretary, regarding the organization of the Crusade of 1448.<sup>251</sup> Lopez would go on to serve Alfonso's son, King Ferdinand I of Naples.<sup>252</sup> However, the chief person for contacts with Lopez and, consequently, Naples, was not Vitez, but Count Stephen Frankapan, whose wife—Isotta d'Este—was a distant relative of King Alfonso. Although the Frankapans had sided with the Habsburg party during the succession war, Stephen made peace with Hunyadi in 1446. Lopez was often a guest at his court.<sup>253</sup>

These were the conditions in which Vitez worked during Hunyadi's rule. As we have seen, he served his governor as a diplomat and as a liaison between him and the ecclesiastical circles, and he contributed troops to military campaigns. We could say that he was, overall, a stabilizing factor in the often-shifting environment of the Hungarian interregnum, and that his services were primarily meant to bolster Hunyadi's government, to justify his actions before foreign powers, and to maintain an uneasy peace between domestic potentates. However, although Vitez was an important figure, he nonetheless had little power of his own. When he got the opportunity to step out of the governor's shadow, he took it. In the following sections we will see how Vitez entered the service of King Ladislaus V and became a power in his own right. First, we shall examine the context of his appointment as the king's privy chancellor, then his actions in this capacity, with an emphasis on the peace negotiations with Emperor

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**245** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 104–5, doc. 45.

**246** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 113, doc. 51.

**247** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 122–30, docs. 59–61; 137–39, doc. 66; 141, doc. 68.

**248** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 62–67; see also Held, *Hunyadi*, 141–43.

**249** The “Brother Valentine” Himfi mentioned as one of his allies in his speech before the pope was most likely him: MHEZ, 7:512, doc. 455.

**250** MREV, 3:178–80, docs. 291–92.

**251** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 81–84, docs. 31–33. Regarding attempts at making an alliance with Alfonso, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 145. Regarding Bernard Lopez, see Alan Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples under Alfonso the Magnanimous - The Making of a Modern State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 88, 232, 236, 248 and 276.

**252** Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 277–78.

**253** Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani*, 230–32.

Frederick III and the organisation of an anti-Ottoman crusade, and finally his role in the turbulent events that followed Count Ulric of Celje's assassination.

### The Privy Chancellor

A storm was gathering in 1451. While Frederick III was preparing to go to Rome for his imperial coronation and wedding to Princess Eleanor of Portugal,<sup>254</sup> the Austrian nobles dissatisfied with Frederick's rule, gathered around Ulric Eizinger,<sup>255</sup> started plotting to pry Ladislaus V out of his custody. Frederick was aware of the danger, so he took Ladislaus with him to Italy.<sup>256</sup> After they left Austria, the conspiracy grew, and many of the Hungarians joined it.<sup>257</sup> In 1452, several Hungarian prelates, members of Cardinal Szécsi's clique, planned an escape attempt in which Kaspar Wendel, Ladislaus's teacher, was supposed to play the key role. Paul, the titular bishop of Argeş, who used to serve Queen Elizabeth during the succession war,<sup>258</sup> was the liaison between Wendel, Eizinger and the Hungarians. Their plan was to be put in motion in Florence, when Frederick and Ladislaus would be passing through on their return from Rome. Another one of Szécsi's adherents, the bishop of Győr Augustine of Shalanky, secretly approached Wendel there, in the church of Santa Croce, to deliver the instructions to him.<sup>259</sup> However, the plot was discovered, and Wendel was tortured and imprisoned.<sup>260</sup> After this attempt failed, the Austrians rebelled openly in July 1452, demanding Ladislaus's release from Frederick's guardianship and asking Hungary and Bohemia for help.<sup>261</sup>

This course of events suited neither Hunyadi, nor George of Poděbrady, who had only recently been elected as governor of Bohemia.<sup>262</sup> Both of them would have had to step down if Ladislaus were emancipated. Therefore, George did not send any help to the rebels, but his arch-rival Ulric II of Rožmberk was happy to do so. Hunyadi also did not assist the rebels,<sup>263</sup> but his nemesis, Ulric II of Celje, did. The outcome hung in the balance until the rebels managed to besiege Frederick in Wiener Neustadt. Forced to yield, the emperor handed over Ladislaus V to Ulric of Celje (the boy's maternal rela-

**254** For Piccolomini's report on the preparations, see Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 169ff.

**255** As a supporter of Frederick III, Piccolomini had only the worst to say about Eizinger. See Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 184.

**256** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 55.

**257** Held, *Hunyadi*, 146.

**258** See Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:109–10, doc. 49 and *Analecta monumentorum omnium aevi Vindobonensia*, ed. Kollár, 2:988–89, doc. 47.

**259** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:352–53, doc. 181; Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 324–25.

**260** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:97–98, doc. 46.

**261** Piccolomini reported in July 1452 that only some of the Bohemians supported the rebellion, that the Hungarians did not send any troops, and that Ulric of Celje did join the rebels, but reluctantly. *Briefwechsel*, III/1:102, doc. 48.

**262** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 57.

**263** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 59; cf. Held, *Hunyadi*, 146.

tive) on September 4, on the condition that Ulric would keep him out of public view until Martinmas, when a great diet was to be held in Vienna to decide what to do next.<sup>264</sup> However, Ulric ignored that provision and brought Ladislaus to Vienna immediately.<sup>265</sup>

Vitez presumably realized that everything was about to change, and what an abundance of opportunities that offered. With impressive speed, he gathered his retainers and was by September 15 already preparing to depart for Vienna, to bow to the newly emancipated king.<sup>266</sup> However, he did not leave immediately, perhaps because he waited for the Estates to act. Considering their usual speed, they were surprisingly quick. Of course, the old Habsburg party was jubilant, and the first emissary sent before Ladislaus was none other than Augustine of Shalanky.<sup>267</sup> Vitez was eventually made a member of an enormous embassy, headed by Cardinal Szécsi and Palatine Garai, which arrived in Vienna in October.<sup>268</sup> According to an eyewitness, Provost Jacob of Vasvár (one of Shalanky's canons) Vitez travelled with a splendid entourage of two hundred horsemen, along with Hunyadi's son Ladislaus, Cardinal Szécsi and other magnates. Unfortunately, the ambassadors' arrival was marred by a minor scandal—the king was supposed to ride out of Vienna to greet them on October 7, but was busy feasting and left them to wait on the road for hours.<sup>269</sup>

This might have been an early sign of Ladislaus's character, and it is possible that some were able to read it. A day after this inconvenience, on October 8, in the ducal palace overflowing with spectators, Vitez made his first speech before the king on behalf of the Hungarian embassy. A large part of it consisted of apologizing on behalf of Hunyadi and other Hungarian lords for not taking part in the rebellion that led to Ladislaus's emancipation. Vitez claimed that Hunyadi did not help the rebels because he had been afraid that Frederick III might harm Ladislaus, and besides he did not have the time—although he wanted to—to join the rebellion, because it had succeeded so quickly. In fact, he compared Ulric of Celje to Caesar himself, saying that his success is similar to the one described with the words “veni, vidi, vici”. Other than these contradictory excuses, he conveyed to Ladislaus the Hungarian Estates' invitation to come to Hungary as quickly as possible.<sup>270</sup> During the next several days, Vitez and Cardinal Szécsi competed with Garai and Nicholas of Ilok over who would throw a more splendid feast for the king. The aforementioned Provost Jacob claimed that Vitez and Szécsi

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**264** *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493)*, 12:180–81, no. 254.

**265** Piccolomini, “*Historia Friderici*,” 396.

**266** DL 38 843. This document concerns George Gecsei, who was at the time a retainer of Vitez's; he remained in his service until at least 1458. See *Codex diplomaticus comitum Károlyi*, ed. Géresi, 2:319–22, doc. 190.

**267** Piccolomini, “*Historia Friderici*,” 399.

**268** Szakály, “*Vitéz János*,” 22; Held, *Hunyadi*, 238. For eyewitness accounts, see Piccolomini, “*Historia Friderici*,” 399ff and Antal Áldási, “*A magyar országgyűlés követsége V. Lászlóhoz 1452 október havában*,” *Századok* 44 (1910): 554–62.

**269** Áldási, “*A magyar országgyűlés*,” 556 and 559–60.

**270** *Vitéz, Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 228–31, doc. 1.

had won by a large margin, and that they had spent at least a hundred florins on the feast.<sup>271</sup> It seems that at least they realized where the little king's priorities lay.

The honour to speak for the embassy was certainly a tribute to Vitez's rhetorical skill, as it was customary for an embassy to begin its mission with a grand speech. However, its role was primarily artistic and the real business would begin after it.<sup>272</sup> Indeed, as agreed with the newly crowned Emperor Frederick III, a diet was to convene on Martinmas, and various embassies were arriving to participate in it. The most difficult negotiations were led with the Bohemian embassy. The Bohemian Estates insisted on their kingdom being elective, not hereditary. They composed a list of conditions for Ladislaus's election, including establishing his court in Prague and preserving the rights of the Utraquists. A compromise was reached in December 1452, but the Bohemian Estates did not accept it. The problem remained open.<sup>273</sup>

Enea Silvio Piccolomini was also in Vienna, as a papal emissary, together with Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus, and they were both charged by the pope with protecting the emperor's interests.<sup>274</sup> Piccolomini even composed a treatise against the Austrian rebellion for the occasion.<sup>275</sup> This was probably when he and Vitez became acquainted,<sup>276</sup> as there is no indication of them having known each other before. Piccolomini later wrote that while the diet was in progress, he visited the Viennese mansion of Cardinal Szécsi as a representative of the emperor, together with Ulrich Sonnenberger and Hartung von Kappel,<sup>277</sup> to convene with the Hungarian ambassadors. There he personally debated with Vitez, who spoke on the embassy's behalf, on the conditions of the future peace agreement with the emperor. Vitez demanded that the emperor hand over the Holy Crown and everything that his forces were still occupying in Hungary. In Piccolomini's opinion, he spoke rather rashly and belligerently. Piccolomini suffered that for a while, but felt compelled to react when Vitez asserted that Ladislaus V had been Frederick's prisoner, saying that being in the custody of a blood relative could not be called imprisonment. This caught Vitez by surprise, and he retreated, saying he had merely meant that the king was now more available to Hungarians.<sup>278</sup>

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**271** Áldási, "A magyar országgyűlés," 561.

**272** Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 36–38.

**273** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 85–86.

**274** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:108, doc. 52. Cusanus was already sent as a legate to the Empire a year earlier (see Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 340–41), so he was the closest cardinal available.

**275** See Piccolomini, [*Pii II*] *Orationes*, ed. Mansi, 1:184–248, doc. 11. See also *Briefwechsel*, III/1:131, note b.

**276** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 33; Pajorin, "Primordi," 822.

**277** Ulrich Sonnenberger of Öhringen was a loyal supporter of Frederick III. After the rebellion of 1452, he tried to obtain the bishopric of Passau. Although he had the emperor's support, the mitre went to Ulrich von Nussdorf, a member of the rebel alliance. Sonnenberger became bishop of Gurk in 1453. See Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 586–90. For his biography, see Jakob Obersteiner, *Die Bischöfe von Gurk 1072–1822* (Klagenfurt: Geschichtsverein für Kärnten, 1969), 233–48.

**278** Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 400–402. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 83–85.

In December, an even larger Hungarian embassy arrived in Vienna. On December 13, Vitez addressed the king again on behalf of the ambassadors, saying that this time, as the king had summoned them, both the ambassadors and those who appointed them (meaning the Estates) were present, with only a few remaining absent. As for the rest of the speech, Vitez merely repeated the invitation to Ladislaus to come to Hungary as soon as possible.<sup>279</sup> His remark about the few who were absent probably referred to Hunyadi, who was still lingering in Hungary. However, as the inevitable could not be postponed any further, he too arrived at the end of December.<sup>280</sup> He renounced his position as governor, receiving in return the title of captain-general, hereditary ownership of the county of Bistrița, and the authority to dispose with the royal incomes in Hungary.<sup>281</sup> It is possible that Vitez's future career was also a concession to Hunyadi.

Ladislaus V briefly visited Hungary in early 1453, attending a diet in Bratislava to confirm the agreements reached during the past few months.<sup>282</sup> This was when it became apparent how important the Diet of Vienna was for Vitez. He appeared in Bratislava as the king's privy chancellor, issuing the king's charters; for example, he personally composed and affixed the secret seal of the Kingdom of Hungary to the charter awarding a new coat of arms to Hunyadi.<sup>283</sup> That was probably an unpleasant sight for many. Cardinal Szécsi was hoping that his circle of Habsburg supporters would take full control of the royal bureaucracy. He managed to get himself appointed as high chancellor,<sup>284</sup> and the office of privy chancellor was supposed to go to Shalanky.<sup>285</sup> It is likely that Hunyadi did not allow that, instead wanting Vitez to act as his agent at the court.

### At the Court of the Ill-Fated King

Thus Vitez became a member of the royal court, in charge of the king's secret seal and serving as the judge of a special court attached to the secret chancery, called the court of the king's personal presence (*personalis praesentiae*).<sup>286</sup> He followed the king back to Vienna and started handling his correspondence concerning Hungarian affairs; for example, on March 4, 1453 he composed a letter in Ladislaus's name to the Polish king Casimir IV, responding to the latter's accusation that brigands (likely Jiskra's dis-

**279** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 234–38, doc. 2.

**280** See Engel's comment in Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. and ed. Mantello and Engel, 167n431.

**281** Held, *Hunyadi*, 146–47. See also Fraknói, *Vitez János*, 87.

**282** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 293.

**283** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 183–85, doc. 9; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:365–68, doc. 177. For Hungarian royal charters marked with the words *commissio propria*, see Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 32.

**284** Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:89.

**285** Szakály, "Vitez János," 23. Cf. Kubinyi, "Vitez János," 15. Shalanky was hated at the imperial court: see Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 322.

**286** See Szakály, "Vitez János," 12 and Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 34.

banded troops) were pillaging his lands around Spiš. Vitez dismissed the issue by stating that those were not Ladislaus's subjects.<sup>287</sup>

Vitez's duties were not merely bureaucratic. His diplomatic abilities were also put to use. It did not take long for him to embark on his first grand mission in the king's service. The peace negotiations with Frederick III were still dragging on, and the next round was held in the emperor's seat of Wiener Neustadt. Vitez gave a speech there on March 23, in which he praised Frederick's younger brother, Duke Albert VI of Austria, for assuming the role of mediator. He also presented Ladislaus's conditions: the return of the Holy Crown and everything Frederick still held in the Duchy of Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>288</sup> The relationship between Frederick and Albert was turbulent,<sup>289</sup> but on that occasion Frederick had indeed given his proxy to his brother, who suggested that Frederick should be bought out of the contested holdings.<sup>290</sup> Ladislaus's ambassadors initially refused that; Piccolomini, still acting as a papal emissary, tried to persuade the emperor to agree to further concessions, but only managed to provoke his wrath. However, Albert negotiated with the ambassadors (including Vitez) for a whole night, managing to wring out their assent.<sup>291</sup> Due to the resistance of the Hungarian Estates and Ulric of Celje, this agreement was never ratified,<sup>292</sup> but the negotiations were a valuable experience for Vitez nonetheless. They proved that peace with the emperor could be bought.

Vitez also made a valuable friend during these events—Enea Silvio Piccolomini.<sup>293</sup> It was a friendship of convenience, as both of them would try to draw confidential information out of each other.<sup>294</sup> For example, not long after their meeting in Vienna, on April 10, 1453, Piccolomini reported to Pope Nicholas V that Vitez had divulged to him that King Charles VII of France had covertly sent an envoy to Ladislaus V to persuade him to agree to the convocation of a new general council, and that this was supposed to be kept secret from the Hungarian Estates.<sup>295</sup> A week later, Piccolomini sent a

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**287** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 179–82, doc. 8.

**288** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 238–42, doc. 3.

**289** The conflict between them, often erupting into open warfare, started in the 1430s, when Frederick denied Albert his share of the family inheritance. See Konstantin Moritz A. Langmaier, *Erzherzog Albrecht VI. von Österreich (1418–1463). Ein Fürst im Spannungsfeld von Dynastie, Regionen und Reich* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 28ff.

**290** *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493)*, 12:190–94, no. 266.

**291** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:127–30, doc. 61.

**292** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:145–46, doc. 74.

**293** Klára Pajorin, "The Crusades and Early Humanism in Hungary," in *Infima Aetas Pannonica*, ed. Kovács and Szovák, 237–49 at 245.

**294** Cf. Pajorin, "Primordi," 823.

**295** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:132, doc. 62. France remained a bastion of conciliarism even after the Council of Basel was dissolved in 1449. See Götz-Rüdiger Tewes, "Kirchliche Ideale und nationale Realitäten. Zur Rezeption der Basler Konzilsdekrete in vergleichender europäischer Perspektive," *Vorträge und Forschungen* 67 (2007): 337–70 at 346.

letter for Vitez to King Ladislaus's Austrian chancellor Stephen Aloch of Stein,<sup>296</sup> asking him to forward it to the addressee, because Piccolomini did not know where the latter was at the time. He also remarked that Aloch could open it if he wished to.<sup>297</sup> He could afford to do so because, as we have seen, he and Vitez would pass on confidential information to each other in person, as was usual in their time. Letters would contain only harmless information, while confidential messages would be delivered either in person or by the letter's carrier.<sup>298</sup> Piccolomini certainly seemed very eager to stay in contact with Vitez, even if that meant going through a number of intermediaries. A few weeks after the letter to Aloch, on April 27, 1453, he wrote to King Ladislaus's secretary Nicholas Barius, asking him to deliver his thanks to Vitez for the gifts he had received from him, and to check whether his previous letter was delivered. He also mentioned that he asked Vitez to send him a book on Hungarian history.<sup>299</sup>

Considering Piccolomini's trouble with reaching Vitez, it seems that the latter was not at the royal court in Vienna at the time. He did still receive orders from the king—for example, on May 17 Ladislaus personally issued a charter ordering Cardinal Szécsi (the high chancellor), Palatine Ladislaus Garai, judge royal Ladislaus Pálóci and Vitez to intervene in some court process involving the nuns of Óbuda.<sup>300</sup> However, Vitez did not participate in Ladislaus's next great embassy, the one that in August 1453, in Wrocław, negotiated the wedding of the king's sister Elizabeth to the Polish king Casimir IV. Stephen Aloch was a member of it, while Hungary was represented by Stephen Várdai.<sup>301</sup> The latter was archdeacon of Pata (in the diocese of Eger) and the king's adviser at the time.<sup>302</sup> It is possible that during this, Vitez was attending to the business of his diocese. He indeed was in Oradea when the king visited it in July 1453,<sup>303</sup> so he had probably arrived there somewhat earlier, to prepare for the king's visit. After it, he may have participated in embassies charged with maintaining communication with Emperor Frederick,<sup>304</sup> but we do not know that for certain. Although Vitez did

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**296** Stephen Aloch used to be a chaplain of Frederick III; he crossed over to Ladislaus after the latter's emancipation and became his chancellor for the Duchy of Austria. His new master gave him the parish of Gars, previously held by the already forgotten Kaspar Wendel. See Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 581, 593 and 622–23.

**297** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:142–143, doc. 72.

**298** Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis, Ars Dictandi*, 18–19; Camargo, "Where's the Brief?," 4–9.

**299** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:143–44, doc. 73. See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 33.

**300** DL 14 684.

**301** Both sides sent illustrious embassies. See Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, vol. 13, part 2, 121 (hereafter 13/2:121) and UB, 63, doc. 52.

**302** See Zichy, 9:346–47, doc. 270. Várdai had studied in Kraków and Vienna, returning to Hungary after attaining a doctorate in canon law in Padua in 1451. See Béla Kovács, "Studensek, magisterek, doktorok," *Archivum—A Heves megyei levéltár közleményei* 11 (1983): 5–41 at 30.

**303** See Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 220–21, doc. 2N. Ladislaus stayed in Oradea for several weeks: see DF 284 161 and 222 498 and DL 44 690 and 38 309. He decided to found a new chapter in the city's cathedral, by the tomb of St. Ladislaus. See Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:282.

**304** See *Briefwechsel*, III/1:145, doc. 74.



participate in the Diet of Bratislava in late August and early September 1453,<sup>305</sup> he was not among the ambassadors sent to inform Frederick III that the Hungarian Estates refused to ratify the previously mentioned peace agreement; this embassy was headed by the bishop of Vác Vincent Szilasi.<sup>306</sup>

All things considered, it seems that Vitez's position at the king's court was not firmly established, perhaps due to the decisive influence which Count Ulric of Celje had on the young king. As we have seen, a much more prominent role was played by Stephen Aloch, an agent of Ulric's.<sup>307</sup> He was rewarded for his service with the lectorate of Zagreb by mid-1453,<sup>308</sup> probably due to the fact that the counts of Celje were patrons of that diocese at the time.<sup>309</sup> Aloch's decline coincided with Count Ulric's loss of influence in late 1453. In early 1454 the office of Ladislaus's Austrian chancellor was taken by Ulrich von Nussdorf,<sup>310</sup> and Aloch was no longer lector of Zagreb as that office was held by some John,<sup>311</sup> probably identical to John Aloch of Stein who held it in 1458.<sup>312</sup> The latter was likely Stephen's brother or relative.

Changes that occurred in late 1453 accelerated Vitez's rise. This was intrinsically related to the transfer of Ladislaus's court to Prague. In April 1453, after much bickering, most of the Bohemian demands were accepted, George of Poděbrady was confirmed as governor for the next six years, and Ladislaus was to transfer his court to the Czech capital, where he was to be crowned as king of Bohemia.<sup>313</sup> This was indirectly Ulric of Celje's undoing, as he tried to levy the cost of Ladislaus's procession to Prague on the Austrian estates. In a palace coup in September 1453, the place of the king's chief adviser was taken by Ulric Eizinger.<sup>314</sup> Immediately afterwards, the great migration to Prague began. Two thousand Austrian cavalry, led by Eizinger (Count Ulric tried to join the procession, but was forbidden by the king), escorted Ladislaus to Bohemia,<sup>315</sup> together with three thousand Bohemian horsemen led by George of

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**305** DL 14 719. For the diet, see *Briefwechsel*, III/1:230, doc. 126 and 242, doc. 135.

**306** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:309, doc. 172.

**307** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 38.

**308** *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Wien*, ed. Karl Uhlirz et al., part 2, *Regesten aus dem Archive der Stadt Wien*, vol 2, *Verzeichnis der Originalurkunden der Städtischen Archives 1412–1457* (Vienna: Alterthum-Verein zu Wien, 1900), 347–50, nos. 3509, 3517, and 3520.

**309** The right of patronage was granted to them by Elizabeth of Luxembourg, Queen of Hungary, in 1440, and they took control of the diocese by force in 1445. See Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak," 54 and 72ff.

**310** Nussdorf was then bishop-elect of Passau, as the emperor was blocking his confirmation because of his participation in the rebellion of 1452. See *Briefwechsel*, III/1:580–83, doc. VIII. See also Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 588 and 654–56.

**311** MHEZ, 7:265, doc. 251.

**312** MHEZ, 7:359, doc. 358.

**313** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 88–89.

**314** Piccolomini related the event with much malice: see *Briefwechsel*, III/1:302ff, doc. 172.

**315** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:314, doc. 176.

Poděbrady and fifteen hundred Hungarian ones led by John Hunyadi. Duke Albert VI of Austria and Margrave Albert of Brandenburg also took part.<sup>316</sup>

Vitez probably arrived with the Hungarian contingent. He was present when Ladislaus was crowned by the bishop of Olomouc John Haz in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague, on October 28.<sup>317</sup> A few days later he composed several letters in Ladislaus's name, informing the addressees—including the Polish king—of the coronation.<sup>318</sup> But for Vitez, the most important event took place the day before. On October 27, Hunyadi, Eizinger, Poděbrady and several other magnates entered a treaty of cooperation.<sup>319</sup> Of course, it was only worth as much as its participants were willing to uphold it, but it gathered the most powerful men in Austria, Bohemia and Hungary. It is therefore significant that Vitez was one of them. Although it was probably Hunyadi who had him included, to bolster his own position, Vitez was nevertheless recognized as powerful in his own right. He was the only bishop and the only bureaucrat among the signatories, and in the treaty's text he was listed in the third place, right after Poděbrady and before Eizinger and his brothers.<sup>320</sup>

This was a crucial moment in Vitez's career. He took residence in Prague and remained there as one of the few non-Bohemians at the king's court.<sup>321</sup> Piccolomini reported in April 1454 that besides Vitez and Ladislaus's Austrian chancellor Ulrich von Nussdorf, all the other members of the royal court were Bohemians. Among the latter, he praised his old friend Prokop of Rabštejn, who was appointed as the king's chancellor for Bohemia.<sup>322</sup> Prokop's family, although noble, was not distinguished, and he had himself long served Frederick III; after Ladislaus's coronation, Poděbrady convinced him to come to Bohemia.<sup>323</sup> These three powerful men, Nussdorf, Vitez and Rabštejn, effectively controlled the royal bureaucracy. Piccolomini treated them as equals; for example, in late 1453, after Prokop had asked Piccolomini to send him Niccoló Lisci of Volterra to work for him in the Bohemian chancery,<sup>324</sup> Piccolomini made sure to recommend Lisci to Vitez.<sup>325</sup> After Lisci's arrival in Prague, Piccolomini

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**316** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:310, doc. 172.

**317** The rite was traditionally performed by the archbishop of Prague, but the Utraquist archbishop-elect John of Rokycany lacked the pope's confirmation. See Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 92.

**318** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 188–89, docs. 13–14.

**319** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 92–93.

**320** Franz Kurz, *Oesterreich unter Kaiser Friedrich dem Vierten*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Doll, 1812), 1:277–79, doc. 15. Zdeněk of Šternberk was also one of the signatories. See also Szakály, "Vitéz János," 23.

**321** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:401, doc. 212.

**322** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:462–63, doc. 274.

**323** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 105.

**324** Piccolomini pointed out that Lisci was learned in law, history, poetry, and rhetoric, which means that Prokop probably wanted a humanist for his chancery. *Briefwechsel*, III/1:357–59, doc. 183.

**325** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:356, doc. 182. Transcript also in Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 36, doc. 1. See also Pajorin, "Primordi," 823.

instructed him to give his regards both to Prokop and Vitez.<sup>326</sup> He also wrote directly to Prokop in January 1454, asking to be recommended to Vitez and Nussdorf.<sup>327</sup>

Vitez was not really the only member of Ladislaus's Hungarian secret chancery in Prague. He had at least his vice-chancellor, Nicholas Barius, with him. The latter was then provost of Eger.<sup>328</sup> It is possible that Vitez had personally picked him for chancery service.<sup>329</sup> It was necessary for at least one Hungarian administrative unit to reside at the court, to handle the correspondence concerning Hungary, but it is likely that the king also wanted to keep Vitez by his side, considering that he tried to increase his income. In 1454 he requested of the Hungarian Estates that Vitez should receive not only his personal salary, but the total income of the chancery, due to the cost of staying at the court.<sup>330</sup> Vitez had apparently managed to develop a good rapport with the young king.

While in Bohemia, Vitez maintained his friendship with Piccolomini, probably aware of its potential usefulness. It was Vitez's influence, among other factors, that prompted Ladislaus V to suggest to Pope Nicholas V that Piccolomini should be made cardinal.<sup>331</sup> Piccolomini received a copy of the letter containing that suggestion, produced by Vitez's secret chancery, from Prokop of Rabštejn, and thanked Vitez, Prokop and Nussdorf for recommending him to the king.<sup>332</sup> This attempt failed, however, as Nicholas soon died and the next pope, the Spaniard Callixtus III, had other favourites.<sup>333</sup>

Vitez also had the opportunity to meet the papal nuncio Giovanni Castiglione, bishop of Pavia, during the flurry of activities caused by the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when Pope Nicholas V sent out a legion of emissaries tasked with calling for a crusade.<sup>334</sup> Castiglione was sent to Emperor Frederick and King Ladislaus.<sup>335</sup> In December 1453 he presented the idea of a crusade against the Ottomans to the emperor.<sup>336</sup> The latter was aware that Sultan Mehmed II was on the offensive, especially as he kept receiving alarming letters from George Branković, who expected an Ottoman

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**326** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:378, doc. 195.

**327** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:404, doc. 215.

**328** See Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:422–23, doc. 206.

**329** Szakály, "Vitez János," 24.

**330** *Decreta Regni Hungariae / Gesetze und Verordnungen Ungarns 1301–1457*, ed. Ferenc Döry, Györgyi Bónis, and Vera Bácskai (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1976), 433.

**331** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 186–87, doc. 11. This letter was certainly not sent from Prague on September 12, 1453 (because the king did not arrive there until October), but probably from Bratislava, as the previous one was (in *ibid.*, 186, doc. 10).

**332** Vitez, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 37, doc. 2; *Briefwechsel*, III/1:291, doc. 206. See also Pajorin, "Primordi," 823.

**333** Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, 120–21.

**334** See Canedo, *Un español*, 136.

**335** Castiglione was sent as a nuncio with the powers of a legate: see Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 160.

**336** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:394ff, doc. 207.

assault on Serbia.<sup>337</sup> Castiglione's visit prompted him to summon an Imperial diet in Regensburg for next spring, to discuss a potential crusade. Ladislaus V had different priorities. Around Christmas 1453, his emissaries proposed a meeting between the king and the emperor, and an alliance against Count Ulric of Celje. Frederick III postponed his response to this suggestion.<sup>338</sup> That was a sign that the potential crusade had other, more subtle uses.

Vitez was probably not one of those emissaries, as he was in Prague immediately before they appeared before the emperor in Wiener Neustadt.<sup>339</sup> He was also there to greet Castiglione in January 1454. The latter gave a speech before Ladislaus V, presumably very similar to the one he had previously given before the emperor.<sup>340</sup> Vitez replied in the king's name, praising the pope for taking it upon himself to organize a crusade and proclaiming Ladislaus's readiness to contribute to it.<sup>341</sup> But he also knew how to use the idea of a crusade to his ruler's advantage. After eight days of negotiating, Castiglione was summoned before the king, and Vitez addressed him with a much longer speech. Referring to certain agreements reached between the nuncio and the king's advisers (among which he doubtlessly counted himself), he pointed out that the fall of Constantinople should not be the only reason for a crusade, as Hungary was directly threatened by the Ottomans. He said that the king had decided to summon diets in his realms for next February, in Prague for Bohemia and in Buda for Hungary, and to report their decisions to the pope.<sup>342</sup> That was similar to what the emperor had promised. Vitez sent a summary of this speech to the pope on January 26.<sup>343</sup> That was less than nothing as far as the crusade was concerned, but the negotiations between Frederick III and Ladislaus V had just reached a new level, as relations between them had become a religious issue. By the time the diet in Buda convened in February 1454, it was already suspected that the crusade could become a bargaining chip. Piccolomini thought the diet's real purpose might have been aimed against the emperor.<sup>344</sup>

However, the diet dealt more with internal than with foreign matters. Among the king's decisions published there, the most relevant were, firstly, that two new commissions were to be formed, one tasked with gathering and distributing the king's incomes in Hungary, and the other with advising the king about the affairs of the realm. Secondly, that royal incomes were not to be distributed to anyone who did not receive

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**337** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:281–82, doc. 153.

**338** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:399, doc. 211.

**339** UB, 69–70, doc. 59.

**340** His speech mostly consisted of the usual crusading clichés. See the transcript in Boronkai, "Vitéz János diplomáciai," 118–22.

**341** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 31–33; Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 242–45, doc. 4. Fraknói mistook Castiglione for Carvajal and placed the speech in 1456.

**342** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 245–51, doc. 5.

**343** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 190–91, doc. 15.

**344** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:398, doc. 211. Regarding the diet, see Held, *Hunyadi*, 148–49.

a special permit from the king himself.<sup>345</sup> Many scholars thought Vitez was behind those decisions, either because he wanted to decrease Hunyadi's power and increase the king's, or because they fit into his political idea of limited monarchy.<sup>346</sup> However, the system those decisions attempted to establish was an exact copy of the one already existing in Bohemia. An advisory commission was established there in 1452,<sup>347</sup> and commissions in charge of reorganizing the royal incomes right after Ladislaus's coronation.<sup>348</sup> Those were all Poděbrady's ideas. As the latter was the king's closest adviser during his stay in Prague, it is likely that he influenced Ladislaus to introduce a similar system in Hungary, to salvage what little royal authority was left there, and probably to limit Hunyadi's rule and give it a semblance of legitimacy, which it sorely lacked.

There is no evidence that Vitez was the instigator of that reform.<sup>349</sup> Hunyadi's reaction to it points at Poděbrady as the one responsible. The former governor complained to Eizinger and other Austrian signatories of the treaty of cooperation from October 1453—but, significantly, not to Poděbrady. The Austrians conveyed Hunyadi's complaints to the king, and that probably swayed Ladislaus to cancel the whole project and proclaim it a misunderstanding.<sup>350</sup> Hunyadi's power over the royal holdings in Hungary remained intact. Although he had formally resigned the office of governor, he was behaving as a king in all but name. Everyone just continued to call him governor, including Piccolomini,<sup>351</sup> and even Vitez.<sup>352</sup> The magnates had come to loathe him; in September 1453 Ulric of Celje, Nicholas of Ilok, Ladislaus Garai and Ladislaus Pálóci formed an anti-Hunyadi league.<sup>353</sup>

Vitez had to carefully balance between his old master in Hungary and his new friends in Prague. He still had much to fear from Hunyadi, not least because his diocese was well within the latter's sphere of influence, and an open attempt on his rule was not something Vitez could contemplate. Piccolomini related that he heard about Hunyadi threatening to take away Vitez's diocese if he composed charters with which the king intended to transfer the command of some royal fortresses to Hunyadi's old enemy John Jiskra, who was still in the king's service.<sup>354</sup> Jiskra was a useful and necessary means of containing the so-called "Brethren," groups of nominally Czech brigands

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**345** *Decreta Regni Hungariae*, 432–33.

**346** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 131; Held, *Hunyadi*, 150; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 294. These authors mostly quote Elemér Mályusz's opinion: see *Decreta Regni Hungariae*, 431. Cf. Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 16–17. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 90–93.

**347** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 57–58.

**348** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 100–103 and 109–10.

**349** Szakály though so too: see Szakály, "Vitéz János," 27.

**350** Katona, *Historia critica*, 6:981–82. Fraknói omitted this whole affair: see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 93.

**351** See, for example, *Briefwechsel*, III/1:398, doc. 211 and 459, doc. 272.

**352** DL 81 224.

**353** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 294. See also Canedo, *Un español*, 332.

**354** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:491, doc. 290.

that had become endemic in the north of Hungary.<sup>355</sup> However, Hunyadi treated the Hungarian royal demesne as his own and would not allow the king to meddle in it. But if he really did threaten Vitez, he would have done so because he, as the privy chancellor, would produce the charters, not because producing them was his idea.<sup>356</sup>

Besides internal conflicts, Vitez had to balance international ones as well. In the spring of 1454, an Imperial diet was held in Regensburg, and despite Vitez's previous proclamation of Ladislaus's readiness to participate in the organization of the crusade, the king did not send an emissary there. Piccolomini wrote a treatise on the diet a few months later and dedicated it to Vitez.<sup>357</sup> In the dedication he pointedly wrote that the carelessness of the Christian people worried him. He noted it was a great shame that Ladislaus's emissaries were not present at the diet, as Bohemia was part of the Holy Roman Empire (and its king a prince-elect), and because a crusade would benefit Hungary most of all. He especially blamed the Hungarian magnates, adding on a conciliatory note that he would not make any direct accusations because he feared Vitez's retort, as Vitez knew how to trade blows.<sup>358</sup> To soften his harangue, Piccolomini mentioned that a Burgundian embassy, headed by the bishop of Toul Guillaume Fillâtre, praised Ladislaus greatly upon returning from Bohemia.<sup>359</sup> However, in letters to other addressees he did not mince words, writing that it may well be that God himself was threatening to exterminate the Hungarians, to punish them for neglecting the common good of Christendom.<sup>360</sup>

Also on the international level, Vitez met Fillâtre and the other Burgundian ambassadors on the first Sunday of Lent in 1454, at a preliminary meeting in Mainz regarding the conflict over the Duchy of Luxembourg.<sup>361</sup> This duchy had been a vassal of the Kingdom of Bohemia since the fourteenth century, but Duke Philip III of Burgundy had recently claimed it for himself.<sup>362</sup> Vitez was one of Ladislaus's emissaries in this matter (as was Gregory of Heimburg, a famous jurist), and he travelled to Prague together with the Burgundians after the meeting, arriving on Maundy Thursday.<sup>363</sup> As this business concerned the Kingdom of Bohemia, whose subject Vitez was not, it is likely that he was only formally the head of Ladislaus's embassy, as he was the only consecrated

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**355** Július Bartl, "Vzt'ah Jána Jiskru a Jána Huňadyho," in *Husiti na Slovensku*, ed. Kaczarová, 69–78 at 74.

**356** Cf. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 171.

**357** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:492–93, doc. 291. In Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 40, doc. 5 the dedication is mistakenly placed in 1455.

**358** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:495.

**359** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:510 and 549. Duke Philip III of Burgundy was eager to participate in the crusade and had personally attended the diet in Regensburg.

**360** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:491, doc. 290.

**361** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:443, doc. 256; 510, doc. 291.

**362** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 141.

**363** "Beitrag zur Geschichte der Königin Elisabeth von Ungarn und ihres Sohnes König Ladislaus," ed. Ernst Birk, in *Quellen und Forschungen zur Vaterländischen Geschichte, Literatur und Kunst* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1849), 209–58 at 249, doc. 10.

bishop at his court and as such its only member not outranked by Fillâtre.<sup>364</sup> In his speeches and letters he normally dealt only with matters concerning Hungary.

### The Manifest Menace

One of Vitez's main concerns was the business of organizing the anti-Ottoman crusade. Hunyadi had openly threatened to give Ottoman armies free passage through Hungary unless other Christian countries came to its aid.<sup>365</sup> Branković was threatening to do the same,<sup>366</sup> simultaneously sending panicked pleas for aid to Ladislaus and reminding him that he was still a vassal of Hungary.<sup>367</sup> Vitez was responding as well as he could to various accusations, but it was undeniable that the king could no longer afford to ignore the Ottoman threat or the Imperial diets promising to counter it. Castiglione warned him that the emperor's emissaries spoke harshly against him in Regensburg.<sup>368</sup> Due to this, Ladislaus was represented at the next diet, held in Frankfurt in the autumn of 1454. Vitez was not among his emissaries,<sup>369</sup> although the speech given there by one of the ambassadors, probably Nicholas Barius, was almost identical to parts of Vitez's aforementioned second response to Castiglione, delivered almost a year earlier.<sup>370</sup> Although this and the other speeches held in Frankfurt were rhetorical masterpieces,<sup>371</sup> almost nothing was achieved. The most concrete contribution was the pledge made by the papal emissary that the pope would provide a fleet for the crusade.<sup>372</sup> Decisions were postponed for the next diet, to be held in Wiener Neustadt, where the emperor himself would participate.

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**364** John Haz was then either dead or dying, as a new bishop of Olomouc was elected by June 1. See *Briefwechsel*, III/1:491, doc. 220. Nussdorf was still unconfirmed and no other bishops resided at the court. Cf. Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 98.

**365** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:467, doc. 274.

**366** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:488, doc. 288.

**367** Vitez responded to his pleas in Ladislaus's name: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 196–97, doc. 20.

**368** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 191, doc. 16.

**369** The embassy's membership can be determined from a charter in which Ladislaus's representatives prolonged a truce with Philip III of Burgundy in Frankfurt on October 16. Those were chancellors for Austria and Bohemia Ulrich von Nussdorf and Prokop of Rabštejn, vice-chancellor for Hungary Nicholas Barius, Stephen Várdai (then provost of Alba Iulia), and Gregory of Heimbürg. See *Urkunden, Briefe und Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der habsburgischen Fürsten Kg. Ladislaus Postumus, Erzherzog Albrecht VI. und Herzog Siegmund von Österreich aus den Jahren 1443–1473*, ed. Joseph Chmel (Vienna: Hof- und Staats-Druckerei, 1850), 68, doc. 73. See also Pajorin, "Crusades and Early Humanism," 245. Cf. Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 99 and Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 34.

**370** The speech was published in Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 252–54, doc. 6. Compare with Vitez's earlier speech, especially the part about the struggle between Hebrews and Philistines (*ibid.*, 252) and the whole section after "Cum autem sepenumero..." (*ibid.*, 253).

**371** Housley, *Crusading*, 159ff.

**372** Piccolomini, [*Pii II*] *Orationes*, ed. Mansi, 1:288, doc. 14; Canedo, *Un español*, 145.

In mid-November 1454, Ladislaus V and George of Poděbrady embarked on a tour of Bohemian vassal countries, Lusatia and Silesia.<sup>373</sup> Vitez took his leave of the king then and returned to his diocese.<sup>374</sup> He was there, in Kölesér, on November 25, settling disputes among his parish priests.<sup>375</sup> But that was certainly not the primary reason of his return. The Imperial diets, with their promises of enormous crusader armies, forced the Kingdom of Hungary to act. Hunyadi had summoned a diet for November 1454, but the king proroged it until January, to implement the agreements reached in Frankfurt.<sup>376</sup> Vitez came as Ladislaus's envoy, and he declared his mission to Hunyadi and an assembly of magnates in Petrovaradin on December 19, delivering the king's orders that a diet was to be held in Buda next January, to discuss the future crusade.<sup>377</sup>

However, great changes took place over the next few months. In February 1455, Poděbrady escorted Ladislaus back to Vienna. In the meantime, Ulric of Celje took his old place at the court, outplaying Eizinger and reconciling with the king.<sup>378</sup> Count Ulric's influence took Ladislaus's policy in a completely different direction, towards renewing the war with the emperor.<sup>379</sup> As the already ridiculously lengthy peace negotiations were prolonged once more in August 1455,<sup>380</sup> it was clear that the crusade was becoming less and less likely.

Nevertheless, the events Vitez put in motion in Hungary took their course. The Hungarian Estates agreed to send representatives to the Imperial diet in Wiener Neustadt requesting safe conduct for a great embassy led by Cardinal Szécsi, with Vitez, Andrew Kálnói, Count Ulric, Hunyadi and other magnates as members, escorted by two thousand cavalry. However, the emperor hesitated to grant it, and by the end of February Piccolomini suspected that the crusade would never materialize.<sup>381</sup> Hunyadi ultimately refused to leave Hungary, but Vitez and the rest of the embassy eventually, on their way to Wiener Neustadt, arrived before King Ladislaus in Vienna.<sup>382</sup> This was where it became apparent what a delicate balance Vitez had to maintain between several dangerous factors. On March 3 he warned the king that he received a letter from Castiglione, in which the nuncio informed him he had previously twice asked Ladislaus to send representatives to Wiener Neustadt, without receiving a response. Prompted by this, Ladislaus immediately sent a letter to Castiglione, saying he would

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**373** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 122–23; see also UB, 87, doc. 78. The king and the governor were to leave Prague a week after Martinmas.

**374** His last known act in Prague was composing a royal charter on October 4. See DL 107 560.

**375** DF 278 585.

**376** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 172.

**377** Zichy, 9:475–76, doc. 347.

**378** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 127; Canedo, *Un español*, 332.

**379** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 128ff.

**380** *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493)*, 12:222, no. 331.

**381** Canedo, *Un español*, 147 and 325.

**382** Canedo, *Un español*, 332.



soon send representatives and justifying his tardiness by claiming he was waiting for Count Ulric to arrive in Vienna.<sup>383</sup>

It was obvious that the crusade did not matter to Ladislaus's court. Nevertheless, Vitez had to keep up appearances before the pope and the emperor. When the king's embassy arrived in Wiener Neustadt, Vitez gave brilliant and rhetorically exemplary speeches there on its behalf, which were later often transcribed and held up as models of rhetorical skill.<sup>384</sup> In his first speech, given on March 23, he acknowledged the emperor's primacy among Christian rulers, reminding him of his duty to defend Christendom. However, when it came to pressing issues, he dismissed the fact that the emperor and Hungary were still formally at war by claiming Hungary would join the crusade anyway.<sup>385</sup> Piccolomini responded on the emperor's behalf, praising Vitez's eloquence, but avoiding any commitment on his master's behalf, simply stating that it would be honourable to help Hungary because it had fought the Ottomans for so long.<sup>386</sup>

These pretentious speeches did not advance the issue in any way. The one who tried to do so was Poděbrady, who offered to mediate between Ladislaus V and Frederick III, in exchange for the latter's promise to support the Utraquist cause before the pope.<sup>387</sup> The Hungarian embassy responded to Poděbrady's offer through Vitez. In his second speech, he pointed out that his embassy did not have the mandate to negotiate a peace treaty, but he did offer his cooperation within the limits of his authority. He reiterated that a crusade should be launched regardless.<sup>388</sup> As his cooperation without a mandate was not worth much,<sup>389</sup> it appears that he was trying to dismiss this issue as irrelevant, to satisfy both his king and the pope. The emperor's side was aware of that, and at the close of the diet, on April 25, Vitez could only feign indignation over the emperor's alleged listlessness and employ legal arguments, claiming the decree to launch a crusade was made by the Imperial diet and did not depend on the emperor being at peace with Hungary.<sup>390</sup> Piccolomini again responded on the emperor's behalf, saying the latter decided to postpone the crusade for a year, because so much time had passed that an army could not be assembled before winter, and because the death of Pope Nicholas V had dashed the hope of a crusader fleet materializing. Most importantly, he stressed that any future crusade would depend on Ladislaus V making peace with the emperor.<sup>391</sup>

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**383** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 197–98, doc. 21.

**384** Boronkai, "Vitéz János retorikai," 137ff. Boronkai thought that his first speech was composed in accordance with the principles of Pseudo-Cicero's *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. See also Pajorin, "Primordi," 824.

**385** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 15 and 20. Fraknói published the specimen of the speech preserved in Munich.

**386** Piccolomini, [*Pii II*] *Orationes*, ed. Mansi, 1:316 and 321.

**387** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 128–29.

**388** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 23–24, doc. 2.

**389** Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 40.

**390** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 271–73, doc. 9.

**391** Piccolomini, [*Pii II*] *Orationes*, ed. Mansi, 1:330–31. Assembling the fleet was an enormous problem. The pope's own fleet was not built until 1457. Housley, *Crusading*, 67.

The whole situation was fraught with conflicting interests and Vitez handled it as well as anyone could have. In his final speech, he expressed disappointment with the emperor's decision, but also promised to make sure King Ladislaus and the Hungarian Estates would accept it without animosity.<sup>392</sup> After this he reported to Ladislaus in Vienna. Castiglione followed him there, and presented the king with his idea of solutions to the problems that impeded the crusade—specifically, the lack of a peace treaty between the emperor and Hungary, and the conflicts between the Kingdom of Bohemia and the duke of Burgundy over Luxembourg, and with Duke Frederick II of Saxony over other matters.<sup>393</sup> Hunyadi was also a problem that, according to Castiglione, demanded a solution, as the emperor doubted that he would obey Ladislaus.<sup>394</sup> Vitez replied on the king's behalf, limiting himself to the issues concerning Hungary. He assured the nuncio that Hunyadi's obedience was not to be of concern, but did not offer any solutions to the conflict with Frederick III, merely saying his master was right and the emperor wrong.<sup>395</sup>

Vitez was trying to separate the issues of the crusade and the peace treaty, which was the opposite of what the emperor wanted. The latter probably knew that treating those issues as interdependent would put enormous pressure on Hungary. In any case, Vitez was acting as Ladislaus's court expected of him. As for his personal feelings, it seems that he was hoping a treaty would ultimately be reached. In a private letter to Cardinal Carvajal, written in April 1455, Piccolomini remarked that the rivalry between Ulric of Celje and Hunyadi was the greatest obstacle to peace.<sup>396</sup> As he was conversing with Vitez at the time, it is entirely possible that he was repeating the latter's opinion. A letter from Piccolomini to Vitez, written on May 15, corroborates this theory. It is a reply to Vitez's earlier letter, in which he wrote of Castiglione's activities in Vienna. Piccolomini cryptically stated he hoped that harmony would be reached and that the person on whom the state depends would agree to make peace.<sup>397</sup> We do not know who this person might have been, but it is clear the correspondents did, and that they had talked about this before. Not long afterwards, Piccolomini held a speech before Pope Callixtus III, saying Hungary had long defended Christendom and lamenting: "Oh, how ungrateful we are towards Hungarians, our defenders!"<sup>398</sup>

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**392** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 273–76, doc. 10.

**393** For the latter, see Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 47f.

**394** A year earlier, Frederick III attempted to make an alliance with Hunyadi against Count Ulric, but his attempt failed spectacularly. This was reported to Vitez, who was then in Prague, by Piccolomini. It seems that the imperial court thought that Hunyadi was uncontrollable. See *Briefwechsel*, III/1:500–501, doc. 291.

**395** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 25–28. We know of Castiglione's suggestions only from Vitez's reply. The latter is preserved only in Fraknói's transcript, as the original was lost or destroyed. See Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 13.

**396** Canedo, *Un español*, 147–48.

**397** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 41, doc. 6.

**398** Piccolomini, [*Pii II*] *Orationes*, ed. Mansi, 1:342, doc. 16 (translation mine).

It is possible that his change of heart regarding Hungary was a result of Vitez's influence.<sup>399</sup>

After a short stay in Vienna, Vitez returned to Hungary, to continue his increasingly futile efforts at organizing a crusade. In late May he was in Buda, where he, together with Hunyadi, Szécsi and Kálnói, issued summons to a diet that was to be held in the following summer in Győr.<sup>400</sup> He also attended it, as did Hunyadi, George Branković and other magnates. The famous friar Giovanni Capestrano was there too, and he made unrealistic plans with Hunyadi about forcing the Ottomans out of Europe and conquering Jerusalem.<sup>401</sup> A letter from Callixtus III arrived, and the Estates sent a reply, saying that they would readily participate in any crusade he would launch, but also pointing out that the diet in Wiener Neustadt had achieved nothing. On the other hand, they were greatly impressed with Capestrano.<sup>402</sup> Conversely, the latter was, according to his own words, most impressed with Vitez and Kálnói, and he admonished the pope for not addressing them personally in his letter.<sup>403</sup>

After this diet—also fruitless—Vitez probably remained in Hungary. We know that he was in Oradea in December 1455. It is possible that he avoided the court after it fell under Count Ulric's influence, and the state of his relations with Hunyadi is unclear. The former governor summoned him at the end of the year; Vitez asked, through emissaries, whether the invitation was urgent, and upon finding that it was not, he excused himself. He did cooperate with local magnates, however. The royal treasurer and count of Szabolcs Nicholas Várdai, Andrew Báthori and Nicholas Drágfi invited him to a meeting, to be held on January 3 in Bagamér, and Vitez declined Hunyadi's invitation so he could meet with them.<sup>404</sup> The purpose of this meeting was probably to coordinate military actions against the Brethren in the North, which were put into motion in early 1456. Vitez's retainers and the troops of the castellan of Tokaj were defeated by the Brethren at *Keresztur* (likely Bodrogkeresztúr) in early February, after which the castellan withdrew to Tokaj and Vitez's retainers were dispersed and fled to the area around Szerencs. The other allies—Nicholas Várdai, Drágfi, Báthori, John Vitez Kállói and his father—were called to Tokaj, as there were not enough troops left to defend it.<sup>405</sup>

Some of these were men with whom Vitez had worked before. It is possible that Nicholas Várdai, brother of the future archbishop Stephen, became the royal treasurer

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**399** Pajorin, "Primordi," 819.

**400** Zichy, 9:498–99, doc. 364.

**401** Housley, *Crusading*, 108–9.

**402** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 198–200, doc. 22. For Capestrano's mission in Hungary, see Housley, *Crusading*, 30–31 and Péter Kulcsár, "L'unione contro i turchi e l'unità religiosa nell'Ungheria quattrocentesca," in *Spiritualità e lettere*, ed. Graciotti and Vasoli, 319–28 at 326–27.

**403** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 117.

**404** DL 81 224.

**405** Zichy, 9:513, doc. 376.

in November 1453 thanks to Vitez's support.<sup>406</sup> John Vitez Kállói (not related to the bishop in any way) had also previously cooperated with Vitez,<sup>407</sup> and he was one of Hunyadi's castellans of Tokaj in 1452.<sup>408</sup> The mentioned alliance against the Brethren was probably made out of necessity, as their presence so deep within Hungary proper threatened the involved nobles' estates. The Brethren had become significantly more dangerous after the emancipation of Ladislaus V, as John Jiskra was then stripped of many of his functions and estates, which destabilized the area previously under his control.<sup>409</sup> He got some of them back in 1454 (despite Hunyadi's protests) and tried to contain the Brethren, with varying success.<sup>410</sup> Vitez's involvement with the anti-Brethren alliance indicates that he had focused on his domain, not on organizing the crusade.

Pope Callixtus III was much more persistent.<sup>411</sup> In September 1455 he dispatched another wave of emissaries to Christian rulers; this time, the one sent to Ladislaus V was none other than Cardinal Juan Carvajal. He arrived in Vienna on November 22 and was very pleased with the reaction to his call for a crusade. However, Vitez was not the one to speak for the king on that occasion, as that honour was given to Gregory of Heimburg.<sup>412</sup> Ladislaus pledged his support for the crusade and promised to summon another diet in Hungary.<sup>413</sup> This time he personally participated in it, coming to Buda in February 1456. However, his agenda was different than the pope's. He was trying to rouse the Hungarian Estates for a war against Emperor Frederick III, not the sultan,<sup>414</sup> and started mustering troops in Vienna for that purpose.<sup>415</sup>

After a long absence from the king's court, Vitez was again with Ladislaus when he entered Buda.<sup>416</sup> It is possible that he really believed that he could help organize the crusade, but perhaps he was just there because it was expected of him. In March, Hunyadi arrived as well. His relations with the court were abysmal, almost escalating to open war.<sup>417</sup> With Carvajal's mediation, he reconciled with Ladislaus V and agreed to turn some of the royal castles over to him, in return gaining full control over Belgrade and some other border fortresses.<sup>418</sup> An agreement of cooperation was formally

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**406** Szakály, "Vitéz János," 24. See also Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 17.

**407** DL 44 729.

**408** DL 55 522.

**409** František Oslanský, "Portrét Jána Jiskru z Brandýsa," in *Husiti na Slovensku*, ed. Kaczarová, 79–88 at 83–84.

**410** Bartl, "Vzt'ah Jána Jiskru," 74–75.

**411** See Housley, *Crusading*, 27–28.

**412** Canedo, *Un español*, 156–57.

**413** UB, 93–94, doc. 89.

**414** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 131.

**415** UB, 101–2, doc. 100.

**416** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 44–45.

**417** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 174–75.

**418** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 131–32; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 295.

reached between Count Ulric, Hunyadi and other Hungarian magnates, including Vitez.<sup>419</sup> Nevertheless, despite Carvajal's exhortations, the Estates decided to postpone the crusade until after the harvest, nominally due to the lack of foodstuffs.<sup>420</sup> On April 6, Vitez publicly declared in the king's name that the crusade would begin on August 1, and that Ladislaus V would personally provide the victuals for the army.<sup>421</sup> It is possible that this postponement was a prelude to cancellation.<sup>422</sup> Deep divisions between Hunyadi and the other magnates could not be so easily overcome, and it is undeniable that the previous two crusades left bitter memories of defeat. However, all of this soon became unimportant, as news that the sultan's army was on the march reached Buda.

The long-feared invasion had begun. Now the king needed Vitez. In May 1456 he charged him, together with Cardinal Szécsi and Hunyadi, to organize the defence of the Danube crossings and border fortresses, and to coordinate the recruitment of crusaders with Cardinal Carvajal.<sup>423</sup> Thus all the previously mutually opposed parties suddenly found themselves forced to cooperate. Vitez's erstwhile underling, Nicholas Barius, was also there; the king had nominated him as bishop of Pécs in December 1455, after Andrew Kálnói's death.<sup>424</sup> Both he and Vitez were present at the court in Buda on May 16, when they and other magnates witnessed the king's promise to compensate Count Ulric for the cost of the royal procession to Hungary.<sup>425</sup>

The 1456 Ottoman invasion of Hungary is irrelevant for this study, but its aftermath was very important for Vitez's career. Therefore, let it suffice to say that the hammer eventually fell on Belgrade. Unexpectedly to everyone—himself included—Hunyadi managed to defend it.<sup>426</sup> A wave of triumphalism washed over Christian Europe.<sup>427</sup> However, if viewed soberly, the situation had become no less dire for Hungary.<sup>428</sup> Indeed, the Ottomans were not discouraged by the defeat and in the following years their pressure on Hungary and its vassal states was stronger than ever.<sup>429</sup>

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**419** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 41.

**420** Canedo, *Un español*, 159; Held, *Hunyadi*, 155–56.

**421** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:500, doc. 251. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 120 and Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 18.

**422** Housley, *Crusading*, 109–10.

**423** Canedo, *Un español*, 159–60.

**424** *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 40–41, doc. 32. The pope's confirmation followed soon afterwards: see MCV, 2:738–39, doc. 1338.

**425** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:522–23, doc. 252. See also Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 18 and Klaić, *Zadnji knezi Celjski*, 92. It is worth noticing that the count chose to cover the cost himself this time, probably remembering what happened the last time he tried to levy it on someone else.

**426** Housley, *Crusading*, 112. For a recent reconstruction of the siege, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 176–87.

**427** Housley, *Crusading*, 27; Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 133.

**428** Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare," 93.

**429** Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 80.

We do not know whether Vitez's troops took part in the defence of Belgrade, nor where he himself was during the eventful summer of 1456. It is possible, if (considering his previous distance) unlikely, that he went to Vienna with the king and Count Ulric in May and was with them when they returned to Hungary at the head of a large Crusader army in late summer, when a diet was summoned in Futog to plan a continuation of the anti-Ottoman campaign.<sup>430</sup> He was in Belgrade with Ladislaus Hunyadi, Palatine Garai and other Hungarian magnates to greet the king and the count when they arrived by boat from Futog.<sup>431</sup> It is possible that he was in the meantime dismissed from the post of privy chancellor, as he was last mentioned as such on April 7, 1456.<sup>432</sup> There certainly was something unusual happening with the royal chanceries, as Nicholas Barius, Stephen Várdai and Albert Hangácsi were all titled as vice-chancellors within a short time span.<sup>433</sup> Perhaps this was a portent of the power struggle that would soon ensue, in which even Vitez would be forced to choose sides. His days of careful balancing between Hunyadi and the court were over.

### To the Dungeon and Back

As we approach the end of this chapter and this stage, according to our division of Vitez's career, we come to the most turbulent and uncertain period of Vitez's life. Allegiances would shift, power struggles would ensue, and the system Vitez helped to build, predicated upon the consensus on Ladislaus V's rule, would crumble. As we will see, not even Vitez managed to emerge from the turmoil unscathed. His involvement in the Hunyadis' conspiracy had him incarcerated, but he soon recovered his standing at the court, proving his political adroitness and paving the way for his future ascent.

The events were put into motion by the death of the erstwhile governor. Soon after the Siege of Belgrade, John Hunyadi died of the plague. His elder son Ladislaus thus became the head of his party and expected to take over his father's prerogatives. However, as the post of captain-general was now vacant, Ladislaus V appointed Count Ulric to it at the Diet of Futog.<sup>434</sup> Affronted by this, the Hunyadi party decided to strike while the iron was hot. In Belgrade, on November 9, Ladislaus Hunyadi, his maternal uncle

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**430** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 188–89.

**431** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 64.

**432** Szakály speculated that Vitez might have been replaced with Barius, and Stephen Várdai made vice-chancellor, as they were both more agreeable to Count Ulric. See Szakály, "Vitéz János," 25–26.

**433** Hangácsi from the second half of 1455 (DL 75 855; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:513–14). Barius was still vice-chancellor when he was nominated as bishop of Pécs (*Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 40–41, doc. 32), which would mean that he held the post simultaneously with Hangácsi. Várdai was mentioned as vice-chancellor around May 1456 (Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 17) and was still one as late as November (*Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczi Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:694, doc. 487). It does not help that the sources do not specify at which of the chanceries these men worked.

**434** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 189. See also Held, *Hunyadi*, 170–71. Note that before returning to Hungary, Ulric made a treaty of cooperation with George of Poděbrady: Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 133–34.

Michael Szilágyi and their supporters assassinated Count Ulric and detained the king, disbanding the Crusader army.<sup>435</sup>

Willingly or not, Vitez played a role in this plot. Antonio Bonfini was the first to name him as one of the conspirators. According to Bonfini, on the night before the assassination, Ladislaus Hunyadi sought advice from his late father's friends, primarily Vitez. Although he was not enthusiastic about the plan, Vitez ultimately gave it his approval.<sup>436</sup> It is impossible to tell whether those are facts or Bonfini's construct.<sup>437</sup> Other sources claim that the Hunyadis' conspiracy to remove Count Ulric was joined by several Hungarian magnates, one of whom was a bishop.<sup>438</sup> On the other hand, eye-witnesses testified that Vitez pleaded with Hunyadi to free King Ladislaus's entourage, which was robbed and imprisoned after the assassination.<sup>439</sup> This could mean that he did not unconditionally condone Hunyadi's actions, which would fit his profile. He usually did not approve of excesses, and after Ulric was dead, he probably thought the Hunyadis' goal was accomplished and that further escalation of the conflict was pointless.

The strongest indication of Vitez's support for the Hunyadis' plot is the fact that he prospered thanks to its success. Ladislaus V, who was then *de facto* a prisoner of Ladislaus Hunyadi,<sup>440</sup> bestowed Sóllyomkő Castle (today Piatra Șoimului in western Romania) and its estates upon Vitez. The castle until then was held in the king's name by Stephen Losonci, and the grant deed stated that it was given to Vitez in compensation for the great expenses and physical and mental exertions he had suffered while performing various diplomatic missions for King Ladislaus. It also stressed that the castle was given to Vitez personally and not to the bishopric of Oradea, and that the recipient had the liberty to bequeath it or dispose of it as he wished.<sup>441</sup> As Vitez had been in conflict with Stephen Losonci and his family before (his troops had occupied

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**435** Thuróczy had a great influence on historiography in this case, and his agenda was to justify Ladislaus Hunyadi's actions. However, Ulric's assassination was doubtlessly premeditated. See Engel's comment in Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. and ed. Mantello and Engel, 190n490. See also Klaić, *Zadnji knezi Celjski*, 102–4. For a recent reconstruction of the assassination, see Robert Kurelić, "Posljednji svjedok ubojstva: Frankopani i Celjski u petnaestome stoljeću," *Povijesni prilozi* 35, no. 50 (2016): 205–29.

**436** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 519; see also Tomislav Matić, "Ivan Vitez u djelima Antonija Bonfinija i Ivana Turočkog," in *Zbornik radova s prve medievističke znanstvene radionice u Rijeci*, ed. Kosana Jovanović and Suzana Miljan (Rijeka: Filozofski fakultet sveučilišta u Rijeci, 2014), 161–71 at 156.

**437** Fraknói, for example, thought that his account was false. See Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 123.

**438** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 83. The example offered here is the *Schöppenchronik* of Magdeburg.

**439** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 71.

**440** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 297.

**441** DL 88 433. Stephen Losonci was among those put in charge of the royal castle of Piatra Șoimului by Hunyadi in 1452: see DL 14 568.

several of their estates),<sup>442</sup> it seems that he took advantage of the situation to deal with his adversaries.<sup>443</sup>

Count Ulric was evidently not much missed. Emperor Frederick's astrologer noted that there was not much grief over his death at the imperial court.<sup>444</sup> He was the last of his line, and after his assassination his family's lands were torn apart by its enemies and former retainers.<sup>445</sup> However, Ladislaus V did not forgive nor forget, and the Hunyadis' dominance was not agreeable to their rivals. When the Hunyadis started plotting to remove the king from power altogether, the ever-self-serving Nicholas of Ilok revealed the plot to the court,<sup>446</sup> and the king's supporters, including Ladislaus Garai, John Jiskra and Ladislaus Pálóci, arrested John Hunyadi's sons and their allies in Buda in March 1457. The only cleric among the latter was none other than John Vitez.<sup>447</sup> Ladislaus Hunyadi was executed soon afterwards, and the rest of the captives were imprisoned.

If not before, Vitez definitely lost the office of privy chancellor after his arrest. In February 1457 Stephen Várdai was promoted to it and held it simultaneously with Vitez, but in April the only two privy chancellors were Várdai and Barius.<sup>448</sup> This could mean that the king and his adherents were planning ahead. Várdai was appointed as archbishop of Kalocsa in mid-1456,<sup>449</sup> which made him Vitez's metropolitan and immediate superior. He was a supporter of Ladislaus V,<sup>450</sup> and had personally warned Count Ulric of a plot to murder him upon his arrival in Belgrade.<sup>451</sup> He was also hoping to gain Vitez's bishopric after the latter's arrest, and the less prosperous archdiocese of Kalocsa was supposed to go to Albert Hangácsi.<sup>452</sup> Due to all this, he was perfect for subverting Vitez and preparing his removal and, ultimately, taking his place. It therefore seems the court was planning to permanently remove Vitez even before his arrest.<sup>453</sup>

**442** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczi Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:676–80, docs. 475–76.

**443** For a similar opinion, see Szakály, "Vitéz János," 26.

**444** "Aus dem Briefwechsel ... Georg von Peuerbach," ed. Czerny, 304, doc. 10.

**445** The *Chronicle of the Counts of Celje* offers a dramatic account of these events: see Franz Krones, *Die Freien von Saneck und ihre Chronik* (Graz: Leuschner und Lubensky, 1883), 127ff.

**446** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 190–91.

**447** UB, 107, doc. 108. For a list of the arrested, see Engel's comments in Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. and ed. Mantello and Engel, 197–98nn512–17. Cf. Kaprinai, *Hungaria diplomatica*, 1:179–85.

**448** Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:89. See also Szakály, "Vitéz János," 25–26.

**449** Engel, *Közepkori magyar genealógia. Magyarország világi archontológiája*, CD-ROM, s.v. Főpapak/Kalocsai érsek/Várdai István.

**450** According to a confidential report written for Duke William III of Saxony in December 1457, Várdai had always been a supporter of Ladislaus V. See Fraknói, "Anna szász hercegné," 5.

**451** The poet Michael Beheim, who witnessed those events, claimed so. See Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 63.

**452** Birk, "Beitrage zur Geschichte," 258, doc. 16. See also Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 102.

**453** See Szakály, "Vitéz János," 25–26 and Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 19.



Vitez's imprisonment caused an international scandal. The papal legate, Cardinal Carvajal, protested immediately, telling the king that he would not suffer having a prelate imprisoned by a layman before his very eyes. Ladislaus retorted that Vitez had hostile intentions against him, but Carvajal insisted he be turned over to ecclesiastical authorities. After three days, the king relented.<sup>454</sup> Vitez was turned over to Cardinal Szécsi, the highest ecclesiastical authority in Hungary.<sup>455</sup> Conveniently, Szécsi was also a staunch supporter of Ladislaus V (as the high chancellor, he composed the charter which denounced the Hunyadi brothers).<sup>456</sup> The king could be confident that he would not be sympathetic to Vitez, and indeed, Szécsi had him confined in Esztergom. It seems he was supposed to remain there. The king sent word to George of Poděbrady that Vitez was to remain Szécsi's captive indefinitely.<sup>457</sup>

Immediately before the arrest, Piccolomini sent Vitez his thanks for contributing to his recent promotion to cardinal, asking him to forward his regards to King Ladislaus.<sup>458</sup> It seems that he was oblivious of what had been happening in Hungary during the past year. However, news of Vitez's arrest travelled quickly. Several months later Piccolomini wrote to Vitez that he and the latter's other friends had persuaded the pope to intercede with Ladislaus V in Vitez's favour, and that they themselves had sent two letters to the king—the first immediately after they heard of the arrest, and the other when the nuncio Lorenzo Roverella was departing for Ladislaus's court. They supposedly charged the nuncio with brokering Vitez's release, but Roverella notified them that King Ladislaus had already released Vitez before his arrival. Piccolomini wrote he was sure that the king was not enthusiastic about Vitez's arrest, but that Vitez's enemies, whom Ladislaus did not dare oppose, persuaded him to agree to it.<sup>459</sup> His egocentrism aside, it seems that Piccolomini really did intervene in Vitez's favour; he wrote of it to Niccolò Lisci, of course claiming he was the one responsible for the pope's intercession.<sup>460</sup>

In any case, Vitez's confinement did not last long. In May 1457 King Ladislaus departed for Vienna, bringing along the late Ladislaus Hunyadi's younger brother

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**454** Canedo, *Un español*, 178. Canedo cited Fraknói, who in turn cited the report of a Venetian ambassador written on April 7, 1457. See Fraknói, *Carvajal János bíbornok magyarországi követségei*, 39–40.

**455** Besides being primate of Hungary, he was granted the office of permanent legate (*legatus natus*) by Pope Nicholas V (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukácsics, 2:326, doc. 1337 and Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 140), and Callixtus III made him a legate *de latere* in 1455 (Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 24, 27, and 159).

**456** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:546–53, doc. 268.

**457** UB, 109, doc. 110; see also Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 99.

**458** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 44, doc. 9. See also Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, 123.

**459** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 44, doc. 10. Lorenzo Roverella, the future bishop of Ferrara, was merely a papal subdeacon at the time. See Marini, *Degli architatri pontificii*, 1:157. His mission was to participate in the continuation of the peace negotiations between Ladislaus V and the emperor: Katona, *Historia critica*, 6:1199.

**460** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 126.

Matthias as a prisoner.<sup>461</sup> On the way he visited Esztergom, where he ordered Vitez's release. Piccolomini later wrote that he did so because he did not want Vitez to be arrested at all, but that he could act freely only after leaving Buda and getting away from Hungarian magnates.<sup>462</sup> Bonfini took this report and expanded it into a touching melodrama, with Ladislaus visiting the incarcerated bishop and consoling him.<sup>463</sup> However, Piccolomini was always trying to glorify the young king—unsurprisingly, as he himself took part in his upbringing.<sup>464</sup> It is more probable that Vitez's release was a sober political decision, as he was more useful to the king outside prison, primarily due to the violent response of the Hunyadi party to the execution of Ladislaus Hunyadi.

It seems the king's circle anticipated some unrest after the coup and counted on the support of George of Poděbrady and Ulric Eizinger. The Bohemian and Austrian Estates were summoned to Trenčín beforehand,<sup>465</sup> and Poděbrady and Eizinger were ordered to gather their troops at the Hungarian border at the end of March.<sup>466</sup> However, there was little trust between Ladislaus's court and Poděbrady,<sup>467</sup> and the execution of John Hunyadi's heir did not weaken his party. Quite the opposite, it galvanized it. A rebellion arose in Hungary, led by the Szilágyi siblings—John Hunyadi's widow Elizabeth and her brother Michael. The kingdom was once again divided by internal war.<sup>468</sup>

Surprisingly, but perhaps not shockingly, Vitez rejoined the king's ranks after his release. Even if he was not an intransigent supporter of Ladislaus V, his previous support for the Hunyadi party was limited. On July 2, 1457, Ladislaus wrote to the councillors of Bratislava to provide lodgings for several prelates who were to participate in the diet he had summoned—Várdai, Barius, Hangácsi (then provost of Eger), and John Vitez. As the diet was cancelled,<sup>469</sup> we do not know whether Vitez actually arrived in Bratislava, but it seems he was trying to mediate between the king and the rebels. He was not the only prelate to do so—Hangácsi was sent to negotiate with Hunyadi partisans in Transylvania and was in turn captured by them.<sup>470</sup> For Vitez's part, he travelled to Vienna together with his allies (at least one, John Vitez Kállói, went there with him)

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**461** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 140.

**462** Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 466–67. See also Piccolomini, *Opera*, 140.

**463** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 523. See also Matić, "Ivan Vitez," 165–66. Unlike Bonfini, Ranzano did not know much about these events; he claimed that the bishop of Oradea and the archbishop of Esztergom were both arrested. See Ranzano, *Epitome rerum Ungaricarum*, LIII.

**464** He dedicated his *De liberorum educatione* to him in 1450, when Ladislaus was ten. See *Briefwechsel*, II:104–5, doc. 40.

**465** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 88–89.

**466** UB, 109–10, doc. 111.

**467** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 139–40.

**468** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 100–101; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 297; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 28–29.

**469** Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 107–9.

**470** Juhász, "Bischof Albert Hangácsi von Csanád," 68–69. Although Juhász titles him as chancellor, the sources he cites refer to Hangácsi as vice-chancellor (for example, DL 15 147).

sometime before September 1457, to meet with the king and to work on making peace with the rebels (“causa paciencie et pacis inter regnicolis Hungarie”).<sup>471</sup> This stance fits his profile, as it appears he was rarely firmly on either side in a conflict, but always ready to mediate between the belligerents. It also seems that, similar to the situation after Count Ulric’s assassination, he worked towards a peaceful resolution.

It is likely that Vitez went to Vienna to take part in the negotiations led in and around it (Poděbrady refused to enter the city) in August 1457. The king was trying to gather allies and was courting Poděbrady, Albert VI of Austria, two of the dukes of Bavaria and others.<sup>472</sup> In any case, Vitez rejoined the king’s court and in September 1457 travelled with it to Prague, where the royal wedding between Ladislaus and Princess Madeleine of France, daughter of King Charles VII, was to take place. To escort the bride, a great and illustrious embassy was to be sent to France, led by the Bohemian Catholic magnate Zdeněk of Šternberk. All of Ladislaus’s realms—Bohemia, Hungary, Austria and Luxembourg—were to be represented in it; for example, Vitez’s old colleague Ulrich von Nussdorf was to represent the Duchy of Austria.<sup>473</sup> As the Kingdom of Hungary was divided by internal conflict, the rump Estates, consisting of Ladislaus V’s partisans, gathered in Győr in late September to appoint their representatives.<sup>474</sup> The only reason Vitez was not among them was that he was with the king at the time. The appointed representatives were Archbishop Várdai, the judge royal Ladislaus Pálóci and the lector of Esztergom Simon of Treviso.<sup>475</sup> However, not long after the embassy’s departure, the unfortunate bridegroom Ladislaus V died.

Europe was soon flooded with rumours that the king was poisoned. The blame was mostly laid on George of Poděbrady, although there were accusations against the Hunyadis, Emperor Frederick and Ulric Eizinger.<sup>476</sup> According to recent analyses of the young king’s remains, he died of acute lymphocytic leukaemia.<sup>477</sup> Vitez was in Prague at the time of Ladislaus’s death and, according to his own statement, he saw him die and wept before his body. A day later, on November 24, he sent a short letter to the

**471** DL 15 188.

**472** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 143.

**473** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 143; for a full list of ambassadors, see Urbánek, *Konec Ladislava Pohrobka*, 115–16. See also UB, 116, doc. 120 and Piccolomini, *Opera*, 141. Cf. Katona, *Historia critica*, 6:1210.

**474** UB, 113–14, doc. 116. Among them were Cardinal Szécsi, Bishop Salánki, the lord palatine Garai, Nicholas of Ilok and others.

**475** The latter is the one and the same as lector Simon *de Montono*, King Ladislaus’s envoy to the Holy See in September 1453 (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:323, docs. 1322–23). In 1461 he was made archbishop of Bar (in today’s Montenegro). See Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:89.

**476** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 148–49. Bonfini did not believe such rumours (Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 525–26), but Vespasiano da Bisticci did (Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:320–21). An informant of Duke William of Saxony reported in December 1457 that he did not think the king had died of natural causes: see Fraknói, “Anna szász hercegné,” 4.

**477** Jiří Ferda et al., “111 Years of Radiology in the Heart of Europe: Czech Radiology 1896–2007,” *American Journal of Roentgenology* 190 (2008): 1462–65 at 1464.

Hungarian representatives in France, in which he described the king's brief illness and death—according to him, Ladislaus died of the plague, but extremely suddenly. As their embassy had lost its purpose, Vitez advised them to return.<sup>478</sup>

This letter definitely proves that Vitez regained the king's favour and remained close to him until the latter's death.<sup>479</sup> Also, in a confidential report given by Balthasar Montschiedel, a contender for the bishopric of Zagreb, to agents of Duke William III of Saxony immediately after Ladislaus's death, Vitez was listed among the king's most loyal supporters.<sup>480</sup> In fact, it seems that Vitez, despite everything, had a personal affection for Ladislaus. In 1459 he decided to realize the deceased king's wish to found the chapter of St. Ladislaus's Sepulchre in the Oradea Cathedral. In the supplication in which he asked permission from the pope, Vitez stated that Ladislaus V planned to build a tomb for himself in the cathedral and to found said chapter, but was prevented by his early death.<sup>481</sup> As he could not provide a tomb for him—the king was already buried in the Prague Cathedral—Vitez would at least found the chapter.

King Ladislaus's death marked the end of an era for Vitez. Although it is possible he supported the Hunyadi conspiracy to murder Count Ulric, there are no indications that Vitez acted directly against the king, nor that he intended to follow the Hunyadis unconditionally. Even if there was a plan to remove him from the chancery, and although his arrest was not accidental, Ladislaus's court was eventually convinced of his innocence. The king's poet Michael Beheim, while composing verse on the events after Count Ulric's assassination, wrote the following:

von wardein der pischoff	(The bishop of Oradea,
Off dises küniges hoff	A member of this king's court,
auch wart gegriffen an.	Was also assailed.
dem wart vnrecht geton	An injustice was done unto him,
als sich seit hot herfunden." <sup>482</sup>	As was since then discovered.)

There is strong reason to believe that Vitez did not act rashly or without considering the consequences of his actions. He valued sobriety and deliberation. In the municipi-

**478** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 201, doc. 23. Of course, the embassy lost its purpose only as far as the Kingdom of Hungary was concerned. The Kingdom of Bohemia still benefited from it, as the king of France agreed to support it in the conflict with Burgundy over Luxembourg. See UB, 122–23, docs. 125–26. This was probably the main purpose of the intended royal marriage: see Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 141.

**479** Cf. Szakály, "Vitéz János," 26–27. Boronkai and Csapodiné Gárdonyi have seen this letter on microfilm, but did not know where the original was kept (Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 12–13 and 201, doc. 23; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 12). It was identified in the Archive of the Yugoslav (now Croatian) Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb by Miroslav Kurelac (Kurelac, "Kulturna i znanstvena," 29), but he mistranscribed the call number; it should be AHASU, Codices—97, II b 3, fol. 35r–v.

**480** Fraknói, "Anna szász herczegné," 5. Cf. Szakály, "Vitéz János," 26.

**481** Theiner, 2:320, doc. 491.

**482** "Zehn Gedichte Michael Beheim's zur Geschichte Oesterreichs und Ungerns," ed. Theodor Georg von Karajan, in *Quellen und Forschungen zur Vaterländischen Geschichte, Literatur und Kunst* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1849), 1–65 at 63, doc. 9.

pal charter he composed for his episcopal city of Beiuș, he ordered the judge and the jurors never to adjudicate after they had been drinking.<sup>483</sup> Also, he was famous for consulting the horoscope before making any decisions.<sup>484</sup> Vitez's most consistent effort, ever since he entered the service of Ladislaus V, was to maintain internal balance and peace within Hungary. However, both of his masters worked against that goal. Hunyadi might have been respected and feared, but he was brutal and power-hungry. Ladislaus V might have been pitied and loved, but he was a spineless puppet. When both were dead, the only man Vitez would serve would be himself. He had learned much. He knew how to weave agendas into speeches and to make politics out of personal contacts. But those were only some of the instruments of power at his disposal.

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**483** DL 50 326. See also Enikő Csukovits, "A középkori írástudók „munkaideje,” *Levéltári Közlemények* 63 (1992): 3–14 at 11.

**484** Galeottus Martius, *De egregie* (2005), 206–7.



## Chapter 3

### A TURBULENT PRIEST

ANOTHER IMPORTANT ASPECT of Vitez's life is his career as a prelate. Unfortunately, we have very little information regarding his spiritual views, and what we do know about his ecclesiastical career is mostly confined to his actions as a great lord of the realm (which he, as a bishop, certainly was), the ruling of his domain, and the relations with his neighbours. This, along with some scattered information about the construction of his cathedral and the issues concerning the clergy under his supervision, is all that we know regarding that aspect of his life. Of course, that does not mean that his ecclesiastical career was simply an extension of his political one, but the information at our disposal forces us to treat it as such. Therefore, in the following sections we focus on Vitez's investiture as bishop of Oradea, on the group of clerics—his “inner circle”—on whom he relied to maintain his rule, on his relations with his neighbours and, finally, on his concerns regarding the spiritual life of his diocese.

Vitez did not become a bishop easily. Although he was elected by the chapter of Oradea and had John Hunyadi's support, Pope Eugene IV considered his election invalid. He considered the right to appoint the bishop of Oradea reserved to himself, which would, at least in his eyes, automatically invalidate all elections. Vitez claimed that he had not known of this, which gives us reason to doubt whether the pope was acting within his rights, especially considering his close relation to Frederick III, who was Hunyadi's enemy at the time. As soon as he found out about the reservation, claimed Vitez, he decided to submit his case to the papal consistory. It took some persuasion from the cardinals, but the pope ultimately agreed to confirm him as bishop and issued the document stating so on June 1, 1445.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of his confirmation Vitez was an ordained priest, but we do not know the date of ordination. The only document which mentions his status prior to that is the supplication to the pope in which he sought confirmation in his office as *custos* of Zagreb in 1438. He had not been ordained to any of the holy orders until then, being still a simple cleric.<sup>2</sup> That was the lowest order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. However, it was not unusual for clerics to postpone their ordination until after they received some office.<sup>3</sup> Age was also a requirement, but as Vitez did not request a dispensation for being a minor in 1438, he had likely by then passed the age limit for receiving a chapter office, which was twenty-one.<sup>4</sup> It was expected of the recipients

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<sup>1</sup> *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 24, doc. 18. All this information comes from this document.

<sup>2</sup> MHEZ, 6:539, doc. 512.

<sup>3</sup> Razum, “Osvaldo Thuz,” 84–85.

<sup>4</sup> Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 119.

to be ordained to priesthood within a year,<sup>5</sup> but they would often omit to do so.<sup>6</sup> We cannot rule out the possibility that he was ordained as late as the time of his episcopal election.

It was customary for elected prelates to employ one or several cardinals to support their appointment at the consistory,<sup>7</sup> and it seems that Hunyadi's diplomatic interventions were successful in that regard. In late 1445 Hunyadi and Vitez sent a number of letters expressing their gratitude to various cardinals, which show that Vitez's main promoter had been the old cardinal Giovanni Berardi dei Tagliacozzi, the grand penitentiary.<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Lodovico Trevisan also played a role,<sup>9</sup> as well as Jean le Jeune, to whom Vitez apologized several years later for neglecting to send him a gift for the favour.<sup>10</sup> And finally, one of Vitez's most influential promoters was the already mentioned Taddeo degli Adelmari, who also received a letter of gratitude for currying favour for Vitez with the pope and the cardinals.<sup>11</sup>

The custom of offering gifts to cardinals in exchange for their favour was so routine that it could hardly be called bribing. For example, in the 1460s Stephen Várdai sent an ornate chalice to Cardinal Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini so that the latter would support his bid to become a cardinal.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Vitez's omission to do the same could have been seen as tactless. He was also not the only Hungarian candidate whose bid Jean le Jeune supported that year—in the autumn of 1445 he played a crucial role in Augustine of Shalanky's confirmation as bishop of Győr.<sup>13</sup> It seems that Jean was open to cooperation with Hungary. The fact that Vitez did not send him a gift when it was appropriate indicates that he had financial problems during the first years of his episcopate.

Vitez's troubles did not end with his confirmation. The first significant problem was his failure to pay the dues for it—the *servitium commune* and the minor *servitia*,

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**5** Admittedly, this rule was more insisted on if the office included pastoral care. See Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 119 and Jerković, "Kandidati za prebendu," 35–36.

**6** For example, Demetrius Čupor held the archdeaconry of Küküllő in Transylvania for many years without being ordained (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:46, doc. 29) and Oswald Thuz was ordained to holy orders only after being appointed as bishop of Zagreb (Razum, "Oswald Thuz," 83).

**7** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 25–26.

**8** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 58, doc. 16 and 60, doc. 19. Paul of Ivanić noted that this cardinal was Vitez's main promoter in note c to the latter letter. Regarding Berardi, see Lorenzo Cardella, *Memorie storiche de' cardinali della santa romana chiesa*, 9 vols. (Rome: Pagliarini, 1792–1797), 3:70–71 and Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:7.

**9** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 57, doc. 15.

**10** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 157–58, doc. 75, especially note a. According to Piccolomini, Jean was one of the more pragmatically inclined cardinals: see Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 130ff. See also Cardella, *Memorie storiche*, 3:87 and Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:8.

**11** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 56–57, doc. 14.

**12** Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 140.

**13** Nemes, "Salánki Ágoston," 10–11.



owed to the Apostolic Camera by all prelates confirmed at the consistory.<sup>14</sup> For the bishopric of Oradea, the price was two thousand florins.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Cardinal Trevisan's intervention, the Apostolic Chancery issued Vitez's bull of confirmation immediately after his procurator in Rome, Peter of Crkvica, made an obligation in his name to pay the *servitia*.<sup>16</sup> The papal bureaucracy was usually not this lenient and would issue bulls only after payments were made. Nevertheless, it seems that Vitez did not make a single payment until March 1446, and was punished for it with excommunication. That was also not unusual. Bishops would often delay paying their *servitia*, and the Holy See would punish them by seizing their diocese or excommunicating them.<sup>17</sup> Luckily for him, Vitez soon managed to have the censure lifted. He immediately remitted five hundred florins, claiming that until then he had been too financially bereft to send any money. Thanks to this, the excommunication was lifted, and Vitez was even granted an extension to pay the rest of his debt, as he claimed that he was still destitute. The incident was most likely mitigated by Taddeo degli Adelmari, who received Vitez's payment in the name of the Apostolic Camera.<sup>18</sup>

During the next several years, Vitez delayed paying this and other debts he incurred after he was made bishop. It seems that he really did have financial difficulties, which is unsurprising, considering that he was not a member of a wealthy family and did not have the time to accumulate money from the offices he had previously held. In August 1446 he remitted another hundred florins to the Camera,<sup>19</sup> and after that no payments were made in his name until May 1448, when he remitted another 220 florins. The whole debt was never repaid, as he was forgiven the rest of it after making that last payment.<sup>20</sup> In a letter to Cardinal Berardi from early 1446, Vitez apologized for being unable to send him any gifts for promoting his cause and lamented the trouble he had to go through to gather the money for his *servitia*.<sup>21</sup> Jean le Jeune still did not receive any gifts by 1451, and Vitez claimed he had sent him a gift through Nicholas Lasocki, but that the latter neglected to deliver it, which Vitez purportedly found out only after Lasocki's death.<sup>22</sup>

Vitez also owed money to Taddeo degli Adelmari, who had borne the cost of bringing about Vitez's confirmation and provided at least some of the money for his *servitia*. It seems that this debt was settled sometime before mid-1450, when Vitez sent Taddeo a rather insulting letter, telling him his favours were not worth much. Vitez

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14 See Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 68.

15 Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:262.

16 Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 57, doc. 15, especially note a. Peter was sent to Rome to bring about Vitez's confirmation: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 56, doc. 13, note f.

17 Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 70 and 74.

18 MCV, 1:569–70, doc. 1069; see also MCV, 2:375, doc. 665.

19 MCV, 2:376, doc. 667.

20 MCV, 2:377, doc. 669.

21 Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 60, doc. 19.

22 Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 157, doc. 75.

had previously sent him six hundred florins seemingly accompanied by quite unflattering comments, in which Vitez called Taddeo avaricious. Understandably, Taddeo took offence, and sent a letter expressing his indignation in return.<sup>23</sup> He had by then become one of the four papal registrars.<sup>24</sup> Vitez's comment that Taddeo had "become comfortable" probably refers to him gaining this post.<sup>25</sup> We do not know whether Taddeo reconciled with Vitez before his death in 1454.<sup>26</sup>

### Being a Great Lord

As we have examined the conditions in which Vitez became bishop of Oradea, let us now look into the state of his diocese. The diocese of Oradea, a suffragan of the archdiocese of Kalocsa, was located in Transylvania and northeastern Hungary, although its episcopal estates were scattered throughout the kingdom. By the order of precedence, the bishop of Oradea was the fourth-ranking prelate in Hungary, behind the archbishops of Esztergom and Kalocsa and the bishop of Eger, although his bishopric was perhaps richer than some of theirs.<sup>27</sup> Most of its area was relatively unspoiled by the Habsburg-Jagiellonian War.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, some of the episcopal estates were occupied by lay magnates during the period of vacancy after John de Dominis's demise,<sup>29</sup> and it seems the latter had pawned some prior to it.<sup>30</sup> De Dominis had probably exhausted the diocese's resources to gather the enormous troop he led to Varna in 1444.<sup>31</sup> Also, the dynastic struggle had damaged his income. For example, in 1441 Cardinal Szécsi forbade the Transylvanian clerics to render to De Dominis the tax usually rendered to newly installed bishops.<sup>32</sup> After Vitez took over the diocese, it took much time and effort to put its affairs in order.

One of the first charters Vitez issued as bishop of Oradea was a deed of grant to Nicholas the Vlach, an official (voevode) in his service. As the charter states, Nicholas was endowed with an estate, which he had prepared (presumably, populated) himself, as a reward for his service to Vitez's predecessor—especially for his help with gaining

<sup>23</sup> Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 160–62, doc. 78, especially notes h, r, t, and x. Cf. Perić, "Zbirka pisama," 108–9. Taddeo's letter is not preserved; all of this information comes from Vitez's response.

<sup>24</sup> Marini, *Degli architri pontificii*, 1:153.

<sup>25</sup> Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 160, doc. 78 and 162, note m. Paul of Ivanić commented that by that Vitez meant the Roman Curia.

<sup>26</sup> Marini, *Degli architri pontificii*, 1:155; cf. Beinhoff, *Die Italiener*, 291.

<sup>27</sup> Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:291. See also Pannonius's poem on Vitez's elevation to the archbishopric of Esztergom in Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 112–13.

<sup>28</sup> At least Paul of Ivanić thought so: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 54, doc. 11, note b.

<sup>29</sup> Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:269–70.

<sup>30</sup> Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:291.

<sup>31</sup> Although an extraordinary tax was exacted to subsidize participation in the crusade, it is unknown whether Dominis received any of the funds thus gathered. See Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 122–23.

<sup>32</sup> Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 126.

new estates and populating them with serfs brought not from other episcopal estates, but from elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> Populating estates with serfs was a serious problem. Due to Ottoman raids, the whole kingdom was facing a population loss, and serfs became valuable assets.<sup>34</sup> The way in which the aforementioned Nicholas was bringing serfs not from episcopal estates, but from elsewhere, can perhaps be discerned from the following example. In the summer of 1448, acting on the orders of Vitez himself and his official Paul of Kartal, two of Paul's retainers invaded the estate called *Babona* in Heves county, owned by the Rozgonyi family. There they captured a serf, tied a rope around his neck and led him away. However, other serfs followed them, wanting to release the captive. The two retainers attacked them, but the serfs managed to kill one of them. Afterwards, George and Sebastian Rozgonyi demanded that the Heves county officials investigate the incident. We do not know what happened with the captured serf, but the officials decided that the fallen retainer was caught stealing (the serf) and therefore justly killed as a thief.<sup>35</sup>

This incident did not mean that Vitez and the Rozgonyis were in conflict. In fact, Sebastian Rozgonyi was one of Hunyadi's most loyal supporters,<sup>36</sup> and George was one of the seven captains of the kingdom appointed in 1445.<sup>37</sup> It would have been foolish indeed for Vitez to seek open conflict with them. However, stealing serfs was a low-level incident that did not have to have anything to do with politics. Conversely, Vitez's subjects were not exempt from such treatment. A charter issued by King Ladislaus V in 1453 states that in 1450, Paul Hédervári captured Clement Krutzel, a serf of the diocese of Oradea, held him captive for seven months and stole a large sum of money from him. When the king visited Oradea in 1453, Vitez and the chapter of Oradea brought this case before him and an investigation was opened.<sup>38</sup> Although we do not know what happened afterwards, it seems this serf was abducted in a manner similar to the one Vitez's own men employed. It is possible this one was a merchant or a craftsman, considering the large sum of money he carried and his German surname.

Although small, such conflicts were numerous. It was difficult to face them alone. By making alliances, a magnate would simultaneously gain supporters and eliminate potential adversaries. Vitez made an alliance with Albert Losonci in 1449, when they agreed to support each other militarily and to peacefully resolve their mutual conflicts. On that occasion they exchanged ownership of the estates that might cause disagreements between them. Albert received several estates in Záránd county—of which some were pawned to one of Vitez's predecessors by one of Albert's ancestors—and a sum of three hundred florins, which Albert was to spend on redeeming the estate of Abádszalók. Vitez in turn received two thirds of the latter estate and the whole estate

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**33** DL 44 405.

**34** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 173; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 329–30.

**35** DL 14 195.

**36** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 510, 514, 521, and 530; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 294.

**37** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 288; Held, *Hunyadi*, 116.

**38** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 220–21, doc. 2N.

of Tomajmonostora, both in Heves county, together with Albert's inheritance rights to all estates owned by his relatives in that county. If some of them were to die without legal heirs, what was supposed to go to Albert would go to Vitez.<sup>39</sup>

This agreement was beneficial to both parties, as Albert regained estates pawned long ago, and Vitez was given the opportunity to expand his holdings in Heves county. Soon after the act, Vitez reported the exchange to Governor Hunyadi who, acting with royal powers, confirmed it and ordered a livery of seizin. He stipulated that in case of obstructions, Albert would have to deal with them in court, as he was the previous holder of the estates and would therefore be held responsible. This was good for Vitez, as there indeed were obstructions—the abbot of the local Benedictine abbey challenged the seizin of Tomajmonostora, and some nobles that of Abádszalók.<sup>40</sup>

This was not Vitez's only livery of seizin that was challenged in court. A similar occurrence took place in 1451. Vitez and the chapter of Oradea requested that the Hungarian Estates allow them to take possession of the estate of Poroszló, also in Heves county, not far from the previously mentioned two estates. However, it seems that the Rozgonyis and the Vetési family challenged the seizin, as their officials prevented it from taking place.<sup>41</sup> It is possible this was one of the episcopal estates alienated after John de Dominis's demise.<sup>42</sup>

Judicial procedures such as these were part of Hungarian magnates' everyday life, and it was not uncommon for them to last for years. Although Vitez was apparently trying to consolidate and enlarge his demesne, that was not a simple task, as he would incur a lawsuit whenever he would try to gain a new estate. The alliance with Albert Losonci strengthened his standing among the Hungarian nobility, but he was still weighed down by the fact that he was a newcomer from Slavonia, without a powerful family to support him.

Nevertheless, Vitez persisted. He did his best to perform his seigniorial duties. In May 1446 he confirmed the existing privileges of the episcopal town of Beiuș. That was done regularly by all new bishops of Oradea upon their accession, as the town was their property; De Dominis had done the same in 1442. However, Vitez went a step further and on October 28, 1451 personally issued Beiuș a municipal charter, stating he had composed it himself after consulting many distinguished men of the realm, as well as his retainers and servants. According to him, his motivation was to revitalize the town and encourage its growth both in size and population, as it had previously been devastated and impoverished by lay governors. The charter was primarily a measure meant to prevent depopulation, as it did not grant any significant liberties to its

**39** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczy Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:664–69, docs. 468–99. The Losonci family got its name from Lučenec in today's Slovakia. Regarding Abádszalók and Tomajmonostora, see Ferenc Balászy and Nándor Szederkényi, *Heves vármegye története*, 4 vols. (Eger: Az Érseki Lyceum Könyvnyomdája, 1891–1898), 1:14, 1:16–17, and 1:97–102.

**40** DL 38 839. Regarding Tomajmonostora Abbey, see Romhány, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok*, 99.

**41** DL 14 461.

**42** Bunyitay thought so: see Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:269–70. Regarding Poroszló itself, see Balászy and Szederkényi, *Heves vármegye*, 1:3 and 1:156.

citizens; its greatest aim was to prevent further abuses of power by the local castellan and other episcopal officials.<sup>43</sup>

After he was appointed as King Ladislaus V's privy chancellor, Vitez usually did not reside in his diocese. However, his absence did not mean that his interests were neglected, or that quarrels with his neighbours ceased. For example, although Vitez had an alliance with Albert Losonci, he was locked in a bitter dispute with the latter's brother, Stephen. In early 1454 Vitez ordered some of his men, all distinguished members of the local nobility—John Peterdi, Thomas Radványi, Bernard Dengelegi and Sylvester Bályoki—to occupy four of Stephen's estates in Crasna county. Stephen insisted this was done illegally, although Vitez previously contested ownership of those estates and a court ruling was brought in his favour by John Hunyadi, Palatine Ladislaus Garai and Nicholas of Ilok.<sup>44</sup> In fact, a deputy of the palatine performed the livery of seizin which made Vitez owner of the disputed estates, and it seems that the latter paid a price of 4200 florins for them.<sup>45</sup> Stephen Losonci apparently did not agree to the transaction and his family brought the case before King Ladislaus himself. They requested the king not to delegate the case to the count nor the viscount of Crasna, as these were Thomas Szécsi and Sylvester Bályoki, both enemies of the plaintiffs; in fact, as we have seen, the latter acted on Vitez's orders during his takeover of the disputed estates. The king ordered some local nobles to investigate the case, instructing them to call Vitez and the four accused nobles to the court of the king's special presence if the accusations were confirmed.<sup>46</sup> It would have been interesting to see how that case would be tried, as the chairman of the court of the king's special presence was the high chancellor,<sup>47</sup> Cardinal Szécsi. We do not know whether the case was brought before that court, but Vitez continued to hold the contested estates until 1457, when the Losoncis took them back by force during Vitez's captivity.<sup>48</sup>

This case indicates that by the mid-1450s, Vitez had become quite entrenched in his role as bishop of Oradea and magnate. Numerous local nobles, even higher-ranking ones, were ready to do his bidding and careful not to cross him. For example, in mid-1454, an official of John Vitez Kállói arrested one of Vitez's serfs, Lawrence the Croat, due to the accusations brought against him. However, the citizens of Ajak, where the arrest was made, begged their lord Kállói to release Lawrence and compensate him for

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**43** Transcripts of confirmations of municipal privileges issued by Vitez, Dominis, and their predecessors, as well as the new charter issued by Vitez, can be found in DL 50 326. Bunyitay summarized Vitez's charter in Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 3:354–58. See also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:292 and Vera Bácskai, *Városok és polgárok Magyarországon*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2007), 1:140–41.

**44** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczi Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:676–77, doc. 475.

**45** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 222, doc. 20. See also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:258, but the data here are somewhat skewed.

**46** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczi Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:677–80, doc. 476.

**47** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 34.

**48** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 222, doc. 20; see also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:276.

his troubles, as his accuser was neither one of them nor a serf of the bishop, and was therefore an impostor.<sup>49</sup>

Vitez quarrelled not only with lay lords, but with other Hungarian bishops as well. For example, Vincent Szilasi, bishop of Vác, accused Vitez in early 1455 before Pope Nicholas V, Archbishop Raphael Herceg of Kalocsa, and Bishop Peter of Cenad, of illegally extending his authority to some fringe areas of Vincent's diocese.<sup>50</sup> There were also cases where Vitez would have to pass judgment on clergymen. In one of the rare instances when he resided in his diocese, in November 1454 in Kölesér, parishioners from Kisvásári brought before him a complaint, saying the parish priest of Ghiorac had usurped some incomes belonging to their parish. As the accused was not present, Vitez could not pass judgment, so he ordered the parish priests of Arpășel and Cighid to prevent further usurpation and to offer the offending priest a chance to defend himself from these accusations before Vitez's vicar.<sup>51</sup> On this occasion, Vitez was probably resolving issues which had accumulated during his long absence.

Among the ecclesiastical disputes Vitez took part in is also the one between the already mentioned Stephen Losonci and his brother Albert. The contentious siblings quarrelled over the right of patronage over the parish church of the city of Reghin, located in the part of Transylvania under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Esztergom. In 1451 the pope entrusted the case to Vitez, the Benedictine abbot of Cluj and the dean of Sibiu.<sup>52</sup> After the latter passed verdict against Albert, he, perhaps prompted by Vitez, complained to the pope that the city's parish was not within this dean's authority, as his deanery was rural. The pope agreed and in 1452 returned the case to Vitez, this time appointing Vitez's vicar and the provost of Oradea as co-judges.<sup>53</sup> It is likely that Vitez would have taken care for the case to end in his ally's favour. However, Stephen Losonci appealed to the pope for a second time in 1453, and this time the pope decided that the original verdict was valid.<sup>54</sup>

The longest dispute Vitez got himself involved in was that over the bishopric of Zagreb. Although its history goes much farther back, it escalated in 1444, when Ban Matko Talovac installed Demetrius Čupor, then bishop of Knin in Croatia, as the bishop of Zagreb. Although Demetrius managed to temporarily occupy the episcopal see, in March 1445 he and his adherents were driven away by an army of the counts of Celje and their candidate for the bishopric, Benedict of Zvolen.<sup>55</sup> Militarily beaten, Demetrius was taken in by his friend, John Vitez, in Oradea.<sup>56</sup> John Hunyadi, as the counts'

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49 DL 44 729.

50 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:331–32, doc. 1350.

51 DF 278 585. All these parishes were located within the Kölesér archdeaconry in Vitez's diocese, in today's western Romania: see Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 3:448, 3:453, 3:455, and 3:479.

52 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:299, doc. 1237.

53 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:313, doc. 1284.

54 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:322–23, doc. 1420.

55 Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak," 70ff; cf. Lukinović, "Biskup Demetrije Čupor," 203.

56 Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 63, doc. 21, note a.

enemy,<sup>57</sup> supported Demetrius's cause, despite the pope's objections. In 1446 Vitez composed a letter to the pope in Hunyadi's name, in which he defended Demetrius's reputation.<sup>58</sup>

Demetrius was a fellow Slavonian (the Čupor family estates were not far from Sredna),<sup>59</sup> as well as Vitez's colleague from the University of Vienna.<sup>60</sup> It is possible that Vitez lent him the money to pay his *servitia* for the see of Zagreb; the payment was made by Natalis of Venice, bishop of Nin, in September 1447.<sup>61</sup> A few months later, Vitez thanked Natalis for the favours he had done unto Demetrius, promising to return them as if they were done unto himself.<sup>62</sup> It is likely that Demetrius depended on Vitez financially, as the Croatian nobility started denying him the tithe due to him as bishop of Knin.<sup>63</sup> Vitez also continued to compose letters to the pope in Hunyadi's name, in which he repeatedly endorsed Demetrius's bid for the bishopric of Zagreb.<sup>64</sup>

Probably by using the services of Nicholas Lasocki, Hunyadi persuaded the pope to entrust the investigation of the dispute over the bishopric to Vitez. The latter received a list of questions from the pope, and his answers, sent on December 20, 1450, make up a report on the contemporary state of the diocese of Zagreb—of course, according to how Vitez wanted to present it. He called Bishop Benedict a pawn of the counts of Celje, who squandered away episcopal goods and was even imprisoned by the counts for more than a year. Vitez claimed that Demetrius would have made a much better bishop of Zagreb, as he would liberate the diocese from lay control and could count on Hunyadi's support to do so.<sup>65</sup> Although this was only partly true—Hunyadi probably did not intend to liberate the diocese from his own control—the pope took Vitez's report seriously and ordered a commission, made up of Cardinal Szécsi, Vincent Szilasi and Bishop Gabriel of Koper, to visit the diocese. Its findings corresponded with Vitez's claims, and in April 1451 the pope declared Demetrius bishop of Zagreb.<sup>66</sup>

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**57** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 290. Vitez wrote a letter of apology in Hunyadi's name to Frederick III for damages Hunyadi's troops did to the latter's estates during their campaign against the counts in early 1446: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 64–65, doc. 23.

**58** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 66–67, doc. 24.

**59** For the family's history, see Nikolić Jakus, "Obitelj Čupor Moslavački," 269–300.

**60** See further in the following chapter.

**61** MHEZ, 7:117, doc. 114 and 7:121, doc. 119. Natalis was bishop of Nin from 1436 until his death in 1462 and papal emissary to Bosnia for the last two years of his life. See Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:204 and Jadranka Neralić, "Udio Hrvata u papinskoj diplomaciji," *Hrvatska srednjovjekovna diplomacija. Zbornik Diplomatske akademije* 4, no. 2 (1999): 89–118 at 111.

**62** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 62, doc. 21. Judging by this letter, Natalis was a friend of Demetrius's, who had introduced him to Vitez.

**63** MHEZ, 7:149, doc. 148.

**64** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 94, doc. 38.

**65** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 149–53, doc. 72. Paul of Ivanić claimed (in note w) that Benedict was imprisoned because he had tried to defect to Hunyadi. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 71–72.

**66** MHEZ, 7:197, doc. 192.

However, he rescinded this decision a few months later, fearing its enforcement would cause much bloodshed.<sup>67</sup>

The dispute dragged on for years. It outlasted Benedict, whose death prompted Thomas Himfi of Döbrönte, a protégé of Nicholas of Ilok,<sup>68</sup> to seek the bishopric for himself. He managed to get himself confirmed by the pope, formally elected by the chapter, and even consecrated in Rome in March 1455.<sup>69</sup> However, Count Ulric of Celje, who actually controlled the diocese, did not acknowledge any of it and made his own chancellor, Balthasar Montschiedel, its bishop.<sup>70</sup> Later in 1455, after Count Ulric's reconciliation with King Ladislaus V, the king declared that Thomas had lied to him about having the count's consent to be made bishop of Zagreb, and that he therefore ceased to recognize him as such.<sup>71</sup> This only made the situation more confusing, as now there were three potential bishops. However, by then Vitez was not involved in the dispute, at least for the time being.

In the brief period between Vitez's arrest and liberation in 1457, it seems that his enemies took advantage of his captivity and tried to resolve conflicts that were simmering for years. A lawsuit against Vitez's supporter John Vitez Kállói at the episcopal court in Eger is a good example of this. It had been going on for years and verdicts had been postponed at least twice (in 1455 and 1456), once on the direct intervention of the bishop of Eger, Ladislaus Hédervári.<sup>72</sup> However, after Vitez's fall from grace, the court promptly reached a verdict against Kállói.<sup>73</sup> Not only Vitez's supporters, who depended on his protection, suffered. He himself suddenly became an acceptable target. His enemies in the chapter of Zagreb were publicly insulting him during his captivity.<sup>74</sup> Stephen Losonci violently retook the contested estates in Crasna county,<sup>75</sup> and his family prevented Vitez's men from taking over Piatra Șoimului Castle. But their advantage vanished quickly; by the autumn of 1457 Vitez had reintegrated himself in King Ladislaus's court enough for the king to summon the Losoncis to his palatine's court to answer for the mentioned incident.<sup>76</sup>

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**67** MHEZ, 7:209, doc. 202. See also Canedo, *Un español*, 263.

**68** András Kubinyi, "A kaposújvári uradalom és a Somogyi megyei familiárisok szerepe Újlaki Miklós birtokpolitikájában—Adatok a XV. századi feudális nagybirtok hatalmi politikájához," *Somogy megye múltjából* 4 (1973): 3–44 at 21–22.

**69** MHEZ, 7:259, doc. 245 and 7:265–66, docs. 251 and 253.

**70** MHEZ, 7:269–70, doc. 259. See also Krones, *Die Freien von Saneck*, 107, and Klaić, *Zadnji knezi Celjski*, 84.

**71** MHEZ, 7:281, doc. 263.

**72** DL 14 996 and 15 024.

**73** DL 15 188.

**74** MHEZ, 7:333, doc. 312.

**75** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 222, doc. 20. See also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:276.

**76** DL 88 433. The case dragged on for years nonetheless.



## All the Bishop's Men

Ruling a diocese as large as Oradea was not a simple task, and Vitez did not perform it all by himself. He was helped by subordinates he could trust and rely on despite the numerous plots and power plays, to which Hungarian bishops were not at all immune.<sup>77</sup> Judging by the people he employed, he had to build his power base from the ground up, and he trusted newcomers like himself more than established members of the chapter of Oradea. The group of his most trusted subordinates was made up of men he brought from the diocese of Zagreb. Hunyadi's partisans were unwelcome there at the time of Vitez's investiture, as they were expelled by the counts of Celje and their bishop Benedict of Zvolen in 1445.<sup>78</sup>

The most important among these was Peter of Crkvica, son of Michael.<sup>79</sup> He was the one who carried the letters to Rome when Vitez sought the pope's confirmation in 1445. He was a notary and chaplain of John Hunyadi at the time.<sup>80</sup> He was also a canon of Zagreb, but while in Rome he tried to obtain the office of custos of Oradea, vacated by its previous holder's, John of Tapolca's, promotion to the office of provost.<sup>81</sup> Although the office of custos eluded him,<sup>82</sup> he did become a canon of Oradea. As such, he carried Vitez's and Hunyadi's letters to Rome on two more occasions. In early 1446 he was sent there to deliver Vitez's thanks to the cardinals for supporting his confirmation and to settle his debt to the Apostolic Camera,<sup>83</sup> and in early 1450 he carried the messages from Hunyadi and the Hungarian Estates to Nicholas Lasocki, along with a personal message from Vitez.<sup>84</sup>

Vitez chose Peter as his assistant, and probably recommended him to Hunyadi, not only due to their common Slavonian background (Crkvica was a parish in Križevci county),<sup>85</sup> but also because he possessed at least some education. He enrolled in the

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**77** Bisticci recounted how Janus Pannonius told him that after he was made bishop of Pécs, some "envious prelate" tried to poison him, but he discovered the plot and kept it secret to avoid a scandal. Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:1:331.

**78** Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak," 72ff.

**79** For his biography, see Tomislav Matić, "Peter of Crkvica, a Man who Could Be Trusted—The Career of a Middle-Ranking Cleric and Diplomat in the Kingdom of Hungary in Mid-Fifteenth Century," in *Secular Power and Sacral Authority in Medieval East-Central Europe*, ed. Kosana Jovanović and Suzana Miljan (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 153–65.

**80** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 49–56. Only one of those letters identifies Peter as its carrier, but Paul of Ivanić explains that he carried all of them. See Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 56, note f. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 24–33.

**81** MHEZ, 7:48, doc. 54.

**82** After John of Tapolca the office was held by Andrew of Timișoara: see Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 252.

**83** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 48, doc. 5. and 60, doc. 19.

**84** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 120–21, doc. 57–58.

**85** Ranko Pavleš, "Srednjovjekovni posjedi na području Poljane, Đurđica i Treme kod Križevaca," *Cris* 9 (2007): 26–35 at 33.

University of Kraków in 1430,<sup>86</sup> but as he was never mentioned bearing any academic titles, it seems that he, like Vitez, did not manage to complete his studies. The fact that he carried Vitez's personal letters indicates that he had the latter's trust, as letters were regularly accompanied by confidential messages to be delivered orally.<sup>87</sup> Peter also handled Vitez's other affairs. In 1454 he acted in Vitez's stead, confirming that Nicholas Várdai had settled a debt of one hundred and fifty florins to the bishop.<sup>88</sup> It seems that at least some of Vitez's accounts were managed by Peter.

Peter formally remained a canon of Zagreb and in 1447 he tried to obtain that chapter's lectorate.<sup>89</sup> In this he did not succeed, but he did become custos of Oradea around 1449, and its lector around 1452.<sup>90</sup> His previous office was then given to Janus Pannonius, to provide him with an income during his studies in Italy.<sup>91</sup> It seems that by 1453 Peter had reconciled with his colleagues in Zagreb, as he acted as its Chapter's representative and defended its interests at the Slavonian ban's court.<sup>92</sup> He was not mentioned after 1454, so we can assume that he died around that time.

Another important subordinate of Vitez's was Brice of Szeged, son of Ambrose, also a transplant from the chapter of Zagreb. He is probably one and the same as "Brice the Hungarian," a notary of Ban Matko Talovac who illegally held a canonry of Zagreb in 1440.<sup>93</sup> At the outbreak of the succession war, Brice supported King Wladislas, which earned him the wrath of Queen Elizabeth who, at least formally, took the canonry away from him and gave it to Vitez's old rival, Marinus of Sevnica.<sup>94</sup> As Ban Matko was in control of the diocese, this was merely a legal problem for Brice, and in 1442 Wladislas remedied it by formally making him a canon and archdeacon of Zagreb, which was confirmed by Pope Eugene IV.<sup>95</sup>

Brice was one of the canons expelled from Zagreb in 1445. He complained to the pope in 1447 that his enemies had exiled him from the diocese of Zagreb and that Bishop Benedict had unjustly excommunicated him. Pope Nicholas V assigned his case to Vitez, which was probably not a coincidence.<sup>96</sup> Brice simultaneously accused one of

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**86** Jerzy Zathay and Jerzy Reichan, *Indeks studentów Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego w latach 1400–1500* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich / Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1974), 251.

**87** Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis, Ars Dictandi*, 18–19; Camargo, "Where's the Brief?," 4–9.

**88** Zichy, 9:442, doc. 328.

**89** *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 30–31, doc. 24; MHEZ, 7:111, doc. 108.

**90** Since at least November 1449 and November 1452 respectively: see DL 22 491 and 55 525. See also Kristóf, *Egyházi középírtegy*, 205.

**91** Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 308.

**92** MHEZ, 7:244–45, doc. 232. See also Ivančan, *Podatci o zagrebačkim kanonicima*, in *Nadbiskupijski arhiv Zagreb*, 190 and Razum, "Osvaldo Thuz," 887.

**93** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:193, doc. 711.

**94** MHEZ, 6:630, doc. 580.

**95** MHEZ, 7:19, doc. 24.

**96** MHEZ, 7:108–9, doc. 105. In this and the next document Brice's father is called Anthony, but

the members of the chapter of Zagreb of despoiling him of the archdeaconry of Komarnica, and the pope, probably also not coincidentally, assigned the case to Andrew Kálnói, who was also an adherent of John Hunyadi.<sup>97</sup> As Nicholas Lasocki was then in Rome as an envoy of Governor Hunyadi and the Hungarian Estates, we can assume that he arranged these assignments.<sup>98</sup>

Unlike with Peter of Crkvica, it seems that the tasks Vitez would give to Brice were less sophisticated. He was made canon of Oradea by 1450, and it seems he had by then become entrenched there, as he himself stated that Vitez had charged him with administering the temporal possessions of the bishopric together with a fellow canon, Blaise son of Ladislaus, while the bishop was absent. In 1450 Brice supplicated the pope to absolve him of the ecclesiastical censures for murder, as he had ordered an episcopal subject to be beaten so hard that he died soon afterwards.<sup>99</sup> Although it seems that Brice was more of an enforcer than an intellectual, he was not uneducated, as he had enrolled in the University of Kraków in 1434.<sup>100</sup> He, like Peter of Crkvica, did not attain any academic degrees. There is no mention of him after the incident in 1450.

The third aide whom Vitez brought from Zagreb was the often-mentioned Paul of Ivanić, son of Demetrius, editor of Vitez's collection of letters. While we do not know exactly when he arrived in Oradea, we may assume he was also one of the members of the chapter of Zagreb expelled in 1445.<sup>101</sup> In that year he was titled as a cleric of the diocese of Zagreb and a chancery notary.<sup>102</sup> He never attained any important offices in the diocese of Oradea; when he finished editing Vitez's collection of letters in December 1451 he was merely rector of the altar of St. Paul in the Oradea Cathedral.<sup>103</sup> Besides compiling Vitez's correspondence, he accompanied Vitez to at least one diplomatic mission, the one to Vienna in 1448.<sup>104</sup> It is probable that he served Vitez as a personal secretary. At least some thought that the way to Vitez led through Paul—for example, Vitus Hündler, titular bishop of Vidin and episcopal vicar of Pécs, repeatedly beseeched Paul to secure for him the office of Vitez's episcopal vicar.<sup>105</sup> Although Vitus ultimately remained in Pécs (he lived to be Janus Pannonius's vicar and the latter

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those are most likely scribal errors.

**97** MHEZ, 7:113, doc. 109.

**98** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 89, doc. 36, note a. See also Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 24.

**99** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:285, doc. 1143.

**100** Kristóf, *Egyházi közlépréteg*, 247.

**101** Cf. Kristóf, *Egyházi közlépréteg*, 218 and Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:135.

**102** Kristóf, *Egyházi közlépréteg*, 218.

**103** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 166.

**104** At the end of his commentary on the Hungarian embassy's composition, Paul added the words "ubi et ego interfui" (and I myself was there) and his signature; Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 76, doc. 27, note l, the original manuscript in DF 286 311, p. 18v. As previously noted, although the letter in question was dated 1447, the year was 1448 according to our reckoning.

**105** József Koller, *Historia Episcopatus Quinqueecclesiarum*, 7 vols. (Bratislava: Landerer, 1782–1812), 4:326, doc. 104. Episcopal vicars were often called suffragans, which is the term Vitus used. They were always bishops of titular sees. See Razum, "Osvaldo Thuz," 305.

wrote scathing poems about him),<sup>106</sup> he apparently thought that Paul had an influence on Vitez in matters of staffing. Also, in his letter from October 1450 Vitus addressed Paul as lector of the collegiate chapter of Čazma in the diocese of Zagreb, so we can assume Vitez had secured that office for him.<sup>107</sup>

We do not know whether Paul ever studied at a university, but it seems he possessed at least some knowledge of literature. Vitez probably chose him as his assistant not only because of his background, but because of his education as well. His comments on Vitez's letters reveal he knew Classical Latin well enough to know that the word *avisare* was a medieval neologism,<sup>108</sup> which could mean he was familiar with contemporary literary trends. Klára Pajorin thought that Paul, through his comments, attempted to “freshen up” Vitez's essentially medieval style and explain his expressions in humanistic terms.<sup>109</sup> Paul himself stated something in that vein in the introduction to Vitez's collection of letters, saying, to make the text easier to read, he listed in the margins the names of authors Vitez quoted and added explanations of some of the words or phrases he used, based on the information he received from Vitez himself or read in books.<sup>110</sup> He was relatively well versed in Classical literature.<sup>111</sup> In one of his comments he declared that Cicero was the best among Roman orators, Livy and Sallust among historians, Virgil among epicists, Ovid among elegists, Terence among comedigraphers, and Juvenal among satirists, while Persius was also excellent but wrote very little. Of tragedians, he claimed, Seneca was currently the most popular, and Horace, Martianus Capella and Boethius were also good in various literary genres.<sup>112</sup> In another place he displayed his knowledge of satirists, explaining they are the ones who chastise bad habits or human vices in their works. He wrote that where he lived, only those satirical pieces that are well-known and widespread were available, such as those by Lucilius, Horace, Persius and Juvenal, although he admitted he had never seen a work by Lucilius.<sup>113</sup> It is possible he copied this list from elsewhere.

Paul knew Persius's writings well enough to recognize and quote them. He referred to them several times, because Archdeacon Paul—the mysterious person to whom Vitez's collection of letters was dedicated—liked that author, to the extent that Paul of Ivanić, speaking to the archdeacon, called him “your Persius.”<sup>114</sup> This is interesting, as Persius's works grew in popularity among humanists and became one of the cen-

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**106** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 115.

**107** Kristóf and Bunyitay thought so: see Kristóf, *Egyházi középélet*, 219 and Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:135.

**108** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 49, doc. 5, note c.

**109** Pajorin, “Crusades and Early Humanism,” 243–44.

**110** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 28.

**111** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 30–31.

**112** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 42, doc. 2, note uu.

**113** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 36, doc. 1, note R.

**114** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 167, especially notes f, h, q, and r.

trepieces of fifteenth-century Italian curricula.<sup>115</sup> That could mean that Paul of Ivanić was educated in Italy. Also, he called the practice of professors discussing the subject matter with their students after lectures an “Italian custom,”<sup>116</sup> which could mean he was referring to the universities with which he was familiar. Such discussions were practised in all European universities and were not specifically Italian,<sup>117</sup> but it is possible Paul did not know that.

It is possible—although not certain—that Paul of Ivanić is the person to whom Janus Pannonius referred to as “our Paul” in an undated letter to Vitez. In it, he wrote about this person travelling to Italy as Vitez’s emissary and paying a surprise visit to Janus on December 8 (he did not write of which year) in Ferrara, where he stayed just long enough for Janus to write a letter for him to carry back to Vitez, along with a bronze medallion bearing the likeness of Janus’s teacher Guarino Veronese (also known as Guarino da Verona).<sup>118</sup> If this was Paul of Ivanić, it is possible that he was in Ferrara because he was carrying Vitez’s letter, written on October 20, 1449, to Nicholas Lasocki.<sup>119</sup> Perhaps that was when he met or even travelled with Valentine of Kapos. In said letter, Valentine is mentioned as the person who can tell the pope more about its contents, as he had recently visited Hungary and brought the pope’s letter to the Hungarian Estates.<sup>120</sup>

It is possible that Paul of Ivanić was the same “Paul” mentioned in the letter sent by a certain Simon, a Hungarian pupil of Guarino’s, to Vitez on September 4, 1453. In it, Simon wrote that earlier that year, he saw this Paul in Guarino’s house, as Cardinal Carvajal, with whom Paul was travelling at the time, was forced to delay his journey from Ferrara to Venice due to bad weather. He referred to this Paul as Vitez’s “fidelissimus olim famulus” (erstwhile most faithful servant), with whom Simon grew up and became friends at Vitez’s court. On that occasion, Paul told Simon he had to leave Vitez to attend to some urgent business in his homeland (perhaps meaning Slavonia), and that he eventually settled in Rome. Due to his knowledge of Turkish, he found employment at the Curia, and entered the service of Brother Valentine (probably identical to the aforementioned Valentine of Kapos). However, he yearned to return to Vitez’s service, and if the latter would send envoys to Rome, said Paul, they could seek him out

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**115** Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy—Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 247 and 252.

**116** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 156, doc. 74, note k.

**117** Christoph Flüeler, “Teaching Ethics at the University of Vienna: The Making of a Commentary at the Faculty of Arts (A Case Study),” in *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, 1200–1500*, ed. István P. Bejczy (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 277–346 at 279 and 295–96.

**118** *Epistolario*, 3:440–41. Sabbadini, the editor, assumed the letter was written in 1449. See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 38, *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*, 3:358 and 3:360–61, and Kristóf, *Egyházi középréteg*, 219. Note that “Veronese” is equivalent to “da Verona” (which is used in some texts).

**119** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 111–13, doc. 51.

**120** Regarding this, see Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 104, doc. 45.

there, and he would make sure their missions would be swiftly accomplished.<sup>121</sup> This raises several questions, such as when did Paul of Ivanić have the time to grow up at Vitez's court? Also, if this Paul is identical to Paul of Ivanić, it seems that between the time he finished compiling Vitez's collection of letters in late 1451 and the end of 1452 he left Vitez's service, as Simon stated that the fact that Vitez was made privy chancellor was news to him. We cannot, however, be certain of any of this.

Based on these three of Vitez's assistants—Peter of Crkvica, who handled his diplomacy and finances, Brice of Szeged, who managed his estates, and Paul of Ivanić, his secretary—we can assume that Vitez chose his subordinates among educated clerics with whom he shared a common background. These were all men he could reasonably believe would not plot against him, and who were newcomers in Oradea, like him. These were all valuable qualities in the perilous environment of Hungary during Hunyadi's regency.

However, Vitez could not work only with outsiders. He needed the help of established members of the chapter of Oradea. His first vicar *in spiritualibus* (not to be confused with episcopal vicar) was a man who suited both him and the chapter—his old colleague from the University of Vienna, John of Tapolca.<sup>122</sup> As a doctor of canon law and provost of Oradea, John was both the most educated and the highest-ranking member of the chapter, and other canons could not dispute his suitability for the office. Sources mention him as vicar in 1446, and as such he was taking testimonies and issuing charters to local nobles.<sup>123</sup>

Based on the small quantity of preserved documents, we can assume that Vitez would delegate less important legal issues to his vicar. However, it seems that he and John of Tapolca never developed a close rapport, as John did not remain vicar for very long.<sup>124</sup> A few years later he was replaced with another cleric, John Sarlói, who could probably thank Vitez for his entire career. We find him as vicar from 1451 on.<sup>125</sup> As he was not an older and established member of the chapter of Oradea, it might be that Vitez appointed him because he could control him better than his predecessor. John Sarlói attained a doctorate in canon law from the University of Padua, perhaps with Vitez's financial assistance.<sup>126</sup> His example also shows that Vitez chose his assistants among educated individuals. Like his predecessor, John acted as Vitez's vicar *in spiritualibus* and *auditor causarum*, and dealt with everyday legal affairs, which Vitez did not have time due to his long absences from his diocese.<sup>127</sup> That was quite usual, as

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**121** *Epistolario*, 3:442–43. For Carvajal's mission to Venice in 1453, see Canedo, *Un español*, 136–37.

**122** For his biography, see Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:49–52 and Kristóf, *Egyházi középírtegy*, 103 and 251–52.

**123** DL 38 285, 38 286 and 38 287.

**124** He did remain provost of Oradea until at least the summer of 1457: see DL 25 981.

**125** See Kristóf, *Egyházi középírtegy*, 242–43.

**126** Kristóf, *Egyházi középírtegy*, 57.

**127** For example, see DL 62 305, 14 563, and 38 304.

many prelates would delegate legal issues within their jurisdiction to their vicars. For example, Callimachus Experiens stated in his biography of Gregory of Sanok that the latter rarely sat in court himself, and that his judicial duties were usually handled by his vicar.<sup>128</sup> Vitez's predecessor John de Dominis delegated such duties to his vicar as well.<sup>129</sup> Even when a case was brought before him, Vitez himself directed his officials to refer the involved parties to his vicar.<sup>130</sup> In fact, after 1453 Vitez would visit his diocese so rarely that most of the everyday issues would have had to have been handled by his vicars. By then, Sarlói was replaced by a new person, Andrew of Bogyiszló.<sup>131</sup>

### Vitez and Oradea Cathedral

While he was bishop of Oradea, Vitez did not disregard his cathedral. The rebuilding he commissioned there is the first example of his investments in architecture. It was precipitated by a disaster that struck on Passion Sunday, 1443, of which Paul of Ivanić left a dramatic account. On that day, a tower of the cathedral collapsed on top of a vaulted sacristy in which relics of saints were kept and venerated—among others, the head and both arms of St. Ladislaus and an arm of St. Agatha, the latter sent to Oradea by the chapter of Arad for safe keeping, due to the fear of Ottoman raiders. The sacristy was completely crushed by the remains of the tower, but the relics were miraculously preserved. In a letter to Eugene IV, Hunyadi listed the rebuilding of the Oradea Cathedral as one of the reasons Vitez should swiftly be confirmed as bishop. If he is to be believed, the cathedral's towers (note the plural) had already collapsed, and the chancel was threatening to do the same.<sup>132</sup> Vitez probably initiated the rebuilding, but the lack of funds prompted him to send a supplication to the pope jointly with Hunyadi on April 2, 1449, asking him to award the cathedral the privilege to grant indulgences, to raise funds for the construction works. The supplication offers further details on the building's previous state. The collapse of the towers was not mentioned, but apparently King Sigismund began the construction of a new cathedral and died when it was far from finished. The money ran out, and the work stalled. It is possible that this half-finished state contributed to the towers' instability. In any case, the pope granted the privilege, also allowing Vitez to appoint confessors at the cathedral, to minister to the pilgrims attracted by the new indulgences.<sup>133</sup> We do not know how the construction progressed, but a considerable part of the cathedral might have

**128** Callimachus, *Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei*, ed. Miodoński, XXVIr.

**129** *Codex diplomaticus comitum Károlyi*, ed. Géresi, 2:141–42, doc. 141.

**130** DF 278 585.

**131** DL 38 315. See also Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 305.

**132** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 50–51, doc. 6. See also Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 102.

**133** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:267, doc. 1059. In the same supplication, Hunyadi and Vitez asked for permission to award the abandoned Augustinian monastery in Oradea to the Dominicans or the Observant Franciscans, and for the monastery to also be given the privilege to grant indulgences. The pope granted both. See also Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitez," 353.

been finished while Vitez was bishop. The inscription “JEW 1456” (the initials possibly meaning *Johannes Episcopus Waradiensis*), which a traveller claimed to have seen on the building at the beginning of the seventeenth century, might have been made to commemorate that.<sup>134</sup>

The Oradea Cathedral was also a place where the jubilee indulgence of 1450 could be obtained. On April 12, 1450, Pope Nicholas V granted the privilege to obtain the jubilee indulgence by visiting the Oradea Cathedral on three consecutive days to John Hunyadi, his wife and sons.<sup>135</sup> Soon afterwards, the privilege was extended to all penitents who would visit this cathedral or the collegiate church of the Blessed Virgin in Székesfehérvár.<sup>136</sup> These churches housed the relics of the two holy kings of Hungary—Ss. Stephen and Ladislaus, so they were the logical choices for this privilege. However, Vitez had probably done some lobbying to bring this about. He was the one who, on behalf of Hunyadi and the Hungarian Estates, composed the letters to the pope in which they asked for the privilege of obtaining jubilee indulgences without travelling to Rome to be extended to all subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary;<sup>137</sup> these were carried to Rome by Peter of Crkvica.<sup>138</sup> The pope agreed to that arrangement, so that the money gathered from the penitents could be used for the defence against the Ottomans.<sup>139</sup> Hunyadi, however, had different plans, using it to wage war against George Branković.<sup>140</sup>

Besides rebuilding the cathedral, Vitez took care for it to be properly staffed. He employed a choirmaster, a certain Peter called *Gallicus* (which could mean he was French), a member of the Hospitaller order, to conduct the cathedral choir and instruct its younger members. On April 29, 1451, Vitez requested and received permission from the pope to keep this Peter as a member of his entourage and to endow him with some ecclesiastical office as sinecure. He also made sure the cathedral had its preacher. On the aforementioned day, he received the permission to keep the Franciscan George of Baranja, who preached to the clergy and the laymen of the city of Oradea and its diocese, as a personal retainer.<sup>141</sup> It also seems that Vitez himself took up preaching, or at least tried to, as in 1459 Pope Pius II allowed him to employ his nephew Janus Pannonius as his coadjutor, allegedly so he would have the time to study

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**134** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 165–66; Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:289; Prokopp, “The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz,” 352.

**135** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:277, doc. 1102.

**136** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:277, doc. 1104.

**137** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 113–14, doc. 52 and 131–35, docs. 62–63.

**138** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 162, doc. 78, note b.

**139** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 133, doc. 62, note n.

**140** Held, *Hunyadi*, 140.

**141** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:296, docs. 1224–25. Preachers were often employed by Hungarian ecclesiastical institutions in the fifteenth century, due to the rise of heretical movements. See Edit Madas, “The Late-Medieval Book Culture in Hungary from the 1430s to the Late 1470s,” in *A Star in the Raven’s Shadow*, ed. Földesi et al., 9–23 at 15.



theology and engage in preaching.<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, none of Vitez's sermons have so far been discovered.<sup>143</sup> One of the few traces of his supposed interest in sermonizing is a codex containing the sermons of St. Leo the Great, in which Vitez inscribed his initials (JEW) and a note saying he had seen the book and emended it somewhat in Esztergom in 1457, and finished emending it and inscribing page numbers in Oradea in 1458. This might mean he started reading the book while he was a prisoner of Cardinal Szécsi.<sup>144</sup>

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**142** Theiner, 2:320, doc. 490.

**143** See Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 157; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 44.

**144** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 112–13.



## Chapter 4

# A PATRON OF THE ARTS

### Studying in Vienna

To complete the list of instruments of power available to Vitez, let us now look into the aspect from which most of his fame originated: his cultural activities, especially his patronage of the arts. To gain a better understanding of the cultural milieu in which he worked, we will first try to assess the education he might have gained prior to his employment in the royal chancery.

Much of the earlier theories regarding John Vitez's education were based on Fraknói's assumptions. Fraknói assumed that Vitez had most likely studied in Padua, because during the Late Middle Ages students from the diocese of Zagreb would often do so, and because he saw in Vitez's letters an Italian influence.<sup>1</sup> Later historians built upon this assumption,<sup>2</sup> and the issue was compounded by the fact that the so-called John Vitez the Younger really did study in Bologna and Padua.<sup>3</sup> However, there is no proof that our John Vitez, or rather John of Sredna, ever studied at any of the Italian universities, or even travelled south of the Alps.<sup>4</sup>

Decades after Fraknói, a number of historians correctly stated that Vitez studied at the University of Vienna.<sup>5</sup> He enrolled on April 14, 1434, at the beginning of the summer semester, under the name *Johannes de Zredna*, having paid a fee of four Bohemian groats.<sup>6</sup> That was the standard tuition fee for non-noble students.<sup>7</sup> This does not mean Vitez was not a nobleman, but more likely that he could not afford a higher fee. The tuition fee reflected the weekly cost of a student's room and board, and higher

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1 Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 10–11.

2 For example, Kurelac, "Kulturna i znanstvena," 26; Kurelac, "Znanstveni i kulturni krug," 184; Kurelac, "Ivan Vitez od Sredne i Jan Panonije (Ivan Česmički) između anarhije i tiranije," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 222–46 at 228.

3 See Marijanović, "Jan Panonije u svom vremenu—Janovo pravo lice," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 126–46 at 144; Stanko Andrić, "Studenti iz slavonsko-srijemskog međuriječja na zapadnim sveučilištima u srednjem vijeku (1250.–1550.)," *Croatica Christiana Periodica* 20, no. 37 (1996): 117–51 at 124–25; Hrvoje Petrić, "Prilog poznavanju intelektualnih gibanja u srednjovjekovnoj Slavoniji kroz veze s europskim sveučilištima s posebnim osvrtom na Križevce i okolice," *Cris* 4 (2002): 26–32 at 28–29.

4 Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 124; Pajorin, "La cultura di János Vitéz," 21; Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 139. Cf. Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 351.

5 See, for example, Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 124; Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, "Ferrara und die ungarischen Humanisten," in *Universitas Budensis 1395–1995*, ed. Szögi and Varga, 151–56 at 152; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, "Ime," 441; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 45; Pajorin, "La cultura di János Vitéz," 18.

6 *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:186.

7 Franz Gall, "Einleitung," in *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:x–xxiv at xxii.

quality ones were more expensive. It was not obligatory; those who declared themselves as paupers were exempt from payment.<sup>8</sup>

As John Vitez was first mentioned in 1417, he was at least seventeen when he enrolled. That would have made him somewhat older than an average freshman.<sup>9</sup> For comparison's sake, Demetrius Čupor enrolled in 1425,<sup>10</sup> when he was about fourteen.<sup>11</sup> It is possible that Vitez had to wait for his father to gather the money to pay for his education. As we have seen, Dennis did not take possession of his half of Sredna until 1430.<sup>12</sup> It could also be that Vitez was hired by the royal chancery sometime before 1434, which would have enabled him to consider higher education.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that several other students from Križevci county enrolled in the University of Vienna at the same time as Vitez, so it might have been that several families coordinated their actions.<sup>14</sup>

Before enrolling in Vienna, it is possible that Vitez, for a while, studied at the cathedral school in Zagreb.<sup>15</sup> One could get a relatively good lower education there—the cathedral's library was one of the best-stocked in Hungary, with a whole section containing books on liberal arts.<sup>16</sup> However, there is no evidence that Vitez ever lived in Zagreb before going to Vienna, much less that he studied in the local cathedral school. Besides, no previous knowledge was required for enrolling in the Viennese Faculty of Liberal Arts, except basic Latin and mathematics,<sup>17</sup> and even that could be obtained after enrollment, at the chapter school of St. Stephen's.<sup>18</sup> We, therefore, cannot assume that Vitez studied anywhere before coming to Vienna.

Vitez's choice of university was not surprising. As Prague had become unattractive due to Hussite Wars, Vienna became the most popular destination for aspiring

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**8** Rainer Christoph Schwinges, "Admission," in *A History of the University in Europe*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens and Walter Rüegg, vol. 1, *Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 171–94 at 185ff.

**9** Schwinges, "Admission," 182–83.

**10** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:151.

**11** In 1433 he was mentioned as twenty-two years of age: MHEZ, 6:365, doc. 376. See also Nikolić Jakus, "Obitelj Čupor Moslavački," 272 and 289.

**12** DL 35 046.

**13** Szakály, "Vitéz János," 11.

**14** Those were Peter and Valentine of Križevci, Paul of Dubrava and John of Središće: see *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:185–86.

**15** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 16.

**16** György Domokos, "Lecture e biblioteche nel Quattrocento in Ungheria," in *Convegno internazionale di studi "L'Umanesimo Latino in Ungheria"*, ed. Papo and Papo, 61–75 at 62–63, and Kurelac, "Kulturna i znanstvena," 25. On Hungarian cathedral and chapter schools and libraries in the fifteenth century, see also Madas, "The Late-Medieval Book Culture in Hungary."

**17** Gordon Leff, "The *Trivium* and the Three Philosophies," in *A History of the University in Europe*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens and Walter Rüegg, vol. 1, *Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1:307–36 at 325.

**18** Schwinges, "Admission," 177.

students from Hungary.<sup>19</sup> This included students from Slavonia, the largest share of whom studied at the University of Vienna throughout the Late Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> It should also be noted that tuition fees in Vienna were comparably lower than at other universities.<sup>21</sup>

Although we are certain he enrolled there, we do not know for how long Vitez studied in Vienna. He is not on any of the lists of applicants for inception, so he likely did not gain a master's or licentiate's degree. He also did not teach at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, which was required of its master's graduates.<sup>22</sup> Looking a step lower, he is not on any of the lists of bachelors applying for determination.<sup>23</sup> As most students would not pursue further education after obtaining a bachelor's degree, it is possible Vitez chose to do the same. That would mean he attended courses for at least two years, the minimum requirement for applying for a bachelor's examination.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, this is impossible to prove, as the names of applicants for bachelor's examinations were normally not recorded.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, such a possibility matches what we know of Vitez's actions. He certainly left Vienna sometime before late 1437. A charter issued by King Sigismund on November 24, 1437 specifies that he had, by then, been a notary in the king's chancery for some time, and that he had been following the king both within Hungary and abroad.<sup>26</sup> By looking at King Sigismund's itinerary, we notice he visited Vienna in early 1435, and again in May 1436, before departing for Bohemia, where he would spend the rest of his life.<sup>27</sup> If we assume that Vitez studied in Vienna for at least two

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**19** Joseph Ritter von Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität in ersten Jahrhunderte ihres Bestehens* (Vienna: Verlag der k. k. Universität, 1865), 347–48.

**20** Andrić, "Studenti iz slavonsko-srijemskog," 128; Petrić, "Prilog poznavanju," 29–30; Hrvoje Petrić, "Studenti na zapadnim sveučilištima kao pokazatelj mobilnosti stanovništva zapadnog dijela srednjovjekovne Slavonije (Na primjeru koprivničke Podravine do kraja 16. stoljeća)," *Podravina 2*, no. 4 (2003): 151–99 at 155–56. The second most popular university was the one in Kraków.

**21** Schwinges, "Admission," 185.

**22** Inception was a ritual during which a student who had completed all previous requirements—a licentiate—first had to participate in a discussion, then make an inaugural lecture and preside over another discussion. It was the final step of gaining a master's degree. See Leff, "The *Trivium*," 328; Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 97.

**23** Determination was the act of pronouncing a conclusion on a previously discussed topic. It was one of the requirements for gaining a master's degree. See Leff, "The *Trivium*," 326 and Olga Weijers, "Les règles d'examen dans les universités médiévales," in *Philosophy and Learning: Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Maarten Hoenen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 201–23 at 208–9.

**24** Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 96.

**25** Although records were kept, they mostly consisted of the number of applicants, for example: "Et fuerunt admissi 14 scolares ad examen"; "Et admissi fuerunt 13 scolares ad examen"; "Et admissi fuerunt 22 scolares ad examen," meaning "x students were admitted to the examination." See Vienna, Archiv der Universität Wien, Cod. Ph 7: Liber secundus actorum facultatis artium, 1416–1446, 126v, 127v, and 128r.

**26** DL 35058.

**27** Engel and Tóth, *Itineraria regum et reginarum*, 129–31; Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 273–74.

years, it would be probable that he entered Sigismund's service in 1436. Even if he did not, he would have had a good reason to leave Vienna, as in the summer of that year a plague epidemic broke out,<sup>28</sup> due to which the university was temporarily dissolved.<sup>29</sup>

All things considered, we can assume that Vitez did not obtain any academic degrees. This assumption is corroborated by the already mentioned episode when he unsuccessfully tried to go to Italy to study there in the early 1440s.<sup>30</sup> Although the real reason for the journey might have been different, its premise was sound. As Vienna had become inaccessible to adherents of King Wladislas,<sup>31</sup> and a journey to Kraków would pass through the area under the control of Jiskra's troops, one of the Italian universities would seem like a logical choice for Vitez to continue his studies.

The education Vitez might have obtained in Vienna corresponds with the literary and other skills he displayed throughout his lifetime. Above all, it shows in the "old-fashioned-ness" of his writing style. Klára Pajorin determined that Vitez did not display any traits of the humanistic style or vocabulary, either in his speeches or letters.<sup>32</sup> In fact, his Latin is closer to its medieval variant than to the polished, *all'antica* humanistic Latin, used in imitation of Classical authors.<sup>33</sup> The former is the kind of language he would have been taught in Vienna, as classes on Classical authors were not introduced there until the middle of the fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup> In medieval Christian Europe, Latin was taught from textbooks of Aelius Donatus and Priscianus, to which the verse textbooks of Alexander of Villedieu and Everard of Béthune were added at the turn of the thirteenth century.<sup>35</sup> This was still the case in Vienna when Vitez enrolled. In the academic year 1433/34, grammar courses were taught on Alexander's *Doctrinale* and Everard's *Graecismus*.<sup>36</sup> During the next year, Donatus's work was also studied, but not as intensely as Alexander's.<sup>37</sup> In 1435/36 there were no courses on grammar, except on one part of Everard's text.<sup>38</sup>

**28** Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 334.

**29** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:48.

**30** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 61, doc. 20, note b.

**31** According to the data gathered by Stanko Andrić, the number of Slavonian students in Vienna dropped drastically in the early 1440s. See Andrić, "Studenti iz slavonsko-srijemskog," 137–38. Areas of western Slavonia, where the Habsburg party held sway, were largely unaffected by this trend. See Petrić, "Prilog poznavanju," 30 and Petrić, "Studenti na zapadnim sveučilištima," 184.

**32** Pajorin, "Primordi," 824; Pajorin, "Crusades and Early Humanism," 243–44.

**33** Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 139.

**34** Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 353.

**35** Leff, "The Trivium," 312–13.

**36** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:93. Everard's work mostly dealt with Latin tropes, solecisms, barbarisms, and etymology. See Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 87. Alexander's text mostly concentrated on morphology, with chapters such as *De declinatione*, *De comparatione*, and *De accentibus*. See *Das Doctrinale des Alexander de Villa-Dei—Kritisch-exegetische Ausgabe*, ed. Dietrich Reichling (Berlin: Hofmann, 1893).

**37** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:98.

**38** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:101–2.

Another characteristic of Vitez's style that could be directly linked to his studies in Vienna is the medieval structure of his speeches and letters. Pajorin concluded that Vitez's speech and epistolary craft could have been learned not from contemporary humanistic practice, but from any medieval textbook on *ars dictaminis*.<sup>39</sup> These were the main medieval sources of knowledge on rhetoric. Besides them, Cicero's *De inventione* and, from the twelfth century on, Pseudo-Cicero's *Rhetorica ad Herennium* were also studied.<sup>40</sup> These works, as well as the *Nova poetria* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, were occasionally lectured on at the University of Vienna. However, the only work on rhetoric that was a regular part of the curriculum was the *Summa de arte dictandi* by the medieval French author Jupiter Monoculus, composed in rhyming stanzas.<sup>41</sup> It was the only text on rhetoric studied at the time of Vitez's enrollment,<sup>42</sup> and in 1435/36 it was lectured on by Ulrich Sonnenberger of Öhringen, later bishop of Gurk and chancellor of Frederick III.<sup>43</sup>

The field of study in which the University of Vienna excelled among other late medieval universities was astronomy. Although its curricula consisted mostly of older texts, many of the leading contemporary astronomers lectured there.<sup>44</sup> In the year 1434/35, when Vitez was probably in Vienna, the distinguished astronomer John of Gmunden taught a highly unusual course on the use and construction of the astrolabe. That was a rare occasion when a whole course was devoted to that subject.<sup>45</sup> John was one of the first Viennese professors who specialized in mathematical disciplines.<sup>46</sup> He was also very innovative and had extensively studied astronomical instruments; besides the astrolabe, he also lectured on the albiion, one of the most complex medi-

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**39** Pajorin, "La cultura di János Vitéz," 15. *Artes dictaminis* were medieval manuals on composing letters and speeches; according to them, the structures of both genres were almost identical. See Camargo, "Where's the Brief," 3–4.

**40** Leff, "The Trivium," 315.

**41** Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 352–53. For Jupiter's work, see Martin Camargo, "Si dictare velis': Versified *Artes dictandi* and Late Medieval Writing Pedagogy," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 14 (1996): 265–88.

**42** It was listed in the curricula as *Summa Iovis*. See *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:93, 2:97–98, and 2:102.

**43** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:102.

**44** John North, "The *Quadrivium*," in *A History of the University in Europe*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens and Walter Rüegg, vol. 1, *Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 337–60 at 356. In the second half of the fifteenth century the leading role in this area was taken over by Kraków, but only thanks to its contacts with Vienna. See Backowska, "Die internationalen Beziehungen," 84–85.

**45** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:97; Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 353. A course on the astrolabe was not taught again until 1444. See Paul Uiblein, *Die Universität Wien im Mittelalter. Beiträge und Forschungen* (Vienna: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1999), 382.

**46** For his career, see Uiblein, *Die Universität Wien im Mittelalter*, 349–97. See also Katherine J. Walsh, "Von Italien nach Krakau und zurück: Der Wandel von Mathematik und Astronomie in vorkopernikanischer Zeit," in *Humanismus und Renaissance*, ed. Eberhard and Strnad, 273–300 at 279–80.

eval devices, developed in the fourteenth century by Richard of Wallingford.<sup>47</sup> It is possible that John of Gmunden's lectures left an impression on Vitez, as he was very interested in the construction and use of astronomical instruments later in life. He commissioned treatises on that subject, including the *Quadratum geometricum* by George Peurbach.<sup>48</sup>

In Vienna, Vitez had the opportunity to attend courses on the most widespread astronomical treatises of his era. One of those was the *De sphaera* by John of Sacrobosco, a cosmological work on concentric spheres that envelop Earth, based on a simplified interpretation of Aristotle's and Ptolemy's system.<sup>49</sup> In Vienna it was extensively lectured on during the 1430s, usually by two or more lecturers.<sup>50</sup> Another key work on astronomy was the *Theoricae planetarum*, which added a dynamic dimension to Sacrobosco's system by describing the motion of planets. It was based on Ptolemy's *Almagest*, and there was more than one version of it, the most popular being the one by an anonymous thirteenth-century author.<sup>51</sup> Courses on it were taught in Vienna in the academic years 1433/34 and 1434/35.<sup>52</sup>

It is possible that these courses piqued Vitez's interest in astrology. Later in life, he was so engrossed in it that, as Galeotto Marzio noted, he always carried almanacs (*ephemerides*) with him and would do nothing without first studying the positions of the planets.<sup>53</sup> He also commissioned works by the most forward-thinking astronomers of his time, such as Johannes Müller Regiomontanus. The latter dedicated his *Tabulae directionum et profectionum*, designed as a tool for casting horoscopes, to Vitez.<sup>54</sup> Georg Peurbach, who also lectured in Vienna, dedicated to Vitez a version of

**47** It consisted of revolving discs and its purpose was to calculate the motion of planets. North, "The *Quadrivium*," 350 and 356.

**48** See Peurbach's dedication of the work to Vitez in Georg Peurbach, *Quadratum geometricum praeclarissimi Mathematici Georgii Purbachii* (Nuremberg: Joannes Stuchs, 1516), A ii r. Available online on Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Digital, [https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10942357\\_00001.html](https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10942357_00001.html). Peurbach constructed a wooden quadrant for Vitez, but in the dedication of this work he mentioned that he had in the meantime found a way of perfecting it, and offered to make Vitez a new, metal one. Unfortunately, the manuscript of this treatise was not preserved. Its oldest specimen is the printed one from 1516. See Zoltán Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche nella corte umanistica di Giovanni Vitéz," in *Rapporti veneto-ungheresi*, ed. Klaniczay, 65–93 at 80.

**49** North, "The *Quadrivium*," 348; Leff, "The *Trivium*," 323–24.

**50** It was listed as *Spera materialis*: see *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:92, 2:97 and 2:101–2.

**51** North, "The *Quadrivium*," 349.

**52** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:92–93 and 2:98. Courses on astronomy were also taught from the same books also in Bologna and other Italian universities. It should be noted that, although astronomy and astrology were not identical to Vitez's contemporaries, those two terms were often used interchangeably and the disciplines themselves were thought to complement each other. See Azzolini, *The Duke and the Stars*, 26–28.

**53** Galeottus Martius, *De egregie* (2005), 206–7.

**54** The dedication to Vitez was included in practically every printed version of this work; for example, see *Tabulae directionum profectionumque famosissimi viri Magistri Ioannis Germani de Regiomonte in nativitatibus multum utiles* (Augsburg: Erhard Ratdolt, 1490), available online on



his eclipse almanac attuned to the Oradea meridian.<sup>55</sup> He also worked on an improved version of the *Theoricae planetarum*, adhering much more closely to the *Almagest*, edited and put into print by his student Regiomontanus in the 1470s, under the title *Theoricae novae planetarum*.<sup>56</sup>

As far as the mathematical basis for calculating the motion of planets is concerned, Vitez had an excellent opportunity to study advanced mathematics. In Vienna, courses were taught on the treatise *De proportionibus velocitatum in motibus* by the fourteenth-century English mathematician Thomas Bradwardine.<sup>57</sup> Lectures on it were held throughout Vitez's probable sojourn there.<sup>58</sup> It is possible that Vitez did not just apply astronomical calculations, but that he also understood the mathematics behind them. Peuerbach's statement from the dedication of his *Tabulae Waradienses*, according to which Vitez ardently collected books on mathematics, might corroborate that. However, in the same place, Peuerbach stated that Vitez requested a simple and less boring text.<sup>59</sup>

It was noticed long ago that contemporary humanists did not think much of the University of Vienna.<sup>60</sup> For example, Enea Silvio Piccolomini noted around 1438, not long after Vitez was there, that its lecturers did not care for music, rhetoric or arithmetic, and that, while they would force students to ape other authors' poems and letters, they were completely ignorant of rhetoric and poetry themselves. Few of them possessed original books by Aristotle or other philosophers, and most of their teaching material consisted of commentaries.<sup>61</sup> Although these criticisms should be taken with a grain of salt, the practice Piccolomini describes did not differ from contemporary university norms. Regarding his remark about aping other authors' letters, it should be said that treatises on *ars dictaminis* usually consisted of formulaic models that could be applied either partly or wholesale.<sup>62</sup> As for using commentaries instead of original texts, that was neither condemned nor unusual. Ethics, the longest and most expensive course at the Viennese university, was taught from commentaries of the first six books of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* by Jean Buridan, while the original was not lectured on at all.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, some courses—including ethics—consisted not

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Dolnośląska Biblioteka Cyfrowa, <https://dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/publication/2606/edition/2609/content>. Cf. Pray, *Specimen hierarchiae Hungaricae*, 2:183, note *e*. See also Backowska, "Die internationalen Beziehungen," 85.

**55** Dadić, "Znanstveni i kulturni krug," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 183–207 at 185; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 50.

**56** North, "The *Quadrivium*," 356; Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 112.

**57** North, "The *Quadrivium*," 351.

**58** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:93, 2:98, and 2:101; it was listed as *tractatus De proporcionibus*, *Proporcionones breves*, or *Proporcionones breves Bragwardin*.

**59** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 176–77.

**60** Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 207–9.

**61** *Briefwechsel*, I/1:81–82, doc. 27.

**62** Camargo, "Where's the Brief," 8.

**63** Flüeler, "Teaching Ethics," 279 and 285.

only of lectures, but also of discussions.<sup>64</sup> These were highly ritualized and consisted almost exclusively of the routine scholastic practice of quoting and counter quoting authoritative texts.<sup>65</sup>

Such discussions would actually prepare students quite well for participating in scholarly conversations, even among humanists, as they followed the same pattern. Such was the case, for example, with discussions that took place at the court of Borso d'Este in Ferrara.<sup>66</sup> Also, in one of his anecdotes, Galeotto Marzio described a discussion on theology between King Matthias and the Italian humanist Giovanni Gatti. It allegedly took place after dinner, in the steam room of John Vitez's archiepiscopal palace in Esztergom. According to Marzio, Matthias won the discussion because he knew which text contained the quotation to answer the question he put to Gatti with, while Gatti did not. He ordered said text to be brought from Vitez's library, the required quote was read, and Gatti could only blush in embarrassment.<sup>67</sup> In fact, leafing through books after meals was a favourite way of discussing topics among humanists.<sup>68</sup> In fact, their discussions would sometimes take place in libraries, where the participants would have the necessary books at their disposal.<sup>69</sup>

Considering this, it seems that John Vitez, although he could not have encountered humanistic practices at the University of Vienna, could have been well prepared for the activities he would engage in later in life by the knowledge and skills he might have gained there. These were quite adequate for exchanges with European intellectuals. On the medieval foundation he had gained in Vienna, an astute man like Vitez could develop a very rich intellectual life, including an interest in humanism.

Another dimension of studying in Vienna should not be disregarded. It was a hub for students who would later dominate the Hungarian church,<sup>70</sup> as well as others who would become very powerful men in their respective countries. It is important that all of them met early in life, sharing the same tasks and joys. According to Piccolomini, there were plenty of the latter; he wrote that Viennese students would mostly seek

**64** Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, 95–96 and 352.

**65** Flüeler, "Teaching Ethics," 307 and 312.

**66** Bene, "Where Paradigms Meet," 211–12.

**67** This is the longest anecdote in Marzio's book. John Vitez, Janus Pannonius, and other dignitaries also allegedly participated in this discussion. See Galeottus Martius, *De egregie* (2005), 208–23. Interestingly, Gatti was usually the one to triumph in discussions that took place in Ferrara (see Bene, "Where Paradigms Meet," 212–13). Ritoókné Szalay thought that Marzio was not impartial towards Gatti because he did not agree with the latter's theological views. See Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, "Peregrinazioni erudite nel regno di Mattia Corvino," in *Italia e Ungheria*, ed. Graciotti and Vasoli, 61–70 at 64–65.

**68** Domokos, "Letture e biblioteche," 70; Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 140.

**69** Tibor Klaniczay, "La corte di Mattia Corvino e il pensiero accademico," in *Matthias Corvinus and the Humanism*, ed. Klaniczay and Jankovics, 165–74 at 167–68.

**70** Regarding this, see Tomislav Matić, "Future Hungarian Prelates at the University of Vienna during the 1430s" in *Papers and Proceedings of the Third Medieval Workshop in Rijeka*, ed. Kosana Jovanović and Suzana Miljan (Rijeka: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, 2018), 55–68.

pleasure, guzzle wine, stuff themselves with food and lecherously pursue female companionship.<sup>71</sup> However, statistically speaking, Hungarian students were quite successful in their studies.<sup>72</sup> After graduating in liberal arts, many of them would move on to studying canon law, as a degree in it could greatly benefit their careers, due to its importance in the legal structure of the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>73</sup>

Many of the people who would later play a role in Vitez's life studied at the University of Vienna during the 1430s. For example, Benedict of Zvolen enrolled in 1423.<sup>74</sup> He had his determination in 1425, inception in 1429, and in 1432/33 he taught a course on Aristotle's *On the Soul*.<sup>75</sup> Demetrius Čupor was also there, possibly at the same time as Vitez, as he enrolled in the Faculty of Law in 1429.<sup>76</sup> According to his own statement, he was still a student in 1433.<sup>77</sup> Thomas Himfi of Döbrönte studied with Demetrius, as he enrolled in the same faculty in the spring of 1430,<sup>78</sup> right after passing his bachelor's examination at the Faculty of Liberal Arts.<sup>79</sup> Vitez's future vicar and provost of Oradea, John of Tapolca, was an examiner at the Faculty of Liberal Arts in the spring of 1434,<sup>80</sup> and he enrolled in the Faculty of Law in the same semester, obtaining a doctor's degree in 1438.<sup>81</sup>

Vitez's colleagues in Vienna were not only subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary. The already mentioned Ulrich Sonnenberger enrolled in 1425,<sup>82</sup> and had his inception in 1431.<sup>83</sup> Kaspar Schlick's brothers, Matthias and Henry, both enrolled in 1426.<sup>84</sup> Henry was still there during the 1430s.<sup>85</sup> Bohuslav of Zvole, who would later become

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**71** *Briefwechsel*, I/1:82, doc. 27.

**72** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:xvii–xviii.

**73** Domokos, "Lecture e biblioteche," 62.

**74** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:141

**75** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:51, 2:67, and 2:87.

**76** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:37. He had previously graduated from the Faculty of Liberal Arts, having had his determination in 1428. See *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:60.

**77** MHEZ, 6:365, doc. 376.

**78** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:39.

**79** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:72 and 73.

**80** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:96.

**81** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:45 and 1:51.

**82** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:152.

**83** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:78.

**84** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 2:154–55. Like Kaspar, Matthias was employed at King Sigismund's chancery. Both he and Henry were canons of Brno at the time of their enrollment, but Matthias eventually left the clergy and took a wife. See Pennrich, *Die Urkundenfälschungen*, 36–37.

**85** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:62, 2:84, and 2:88; *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:43. During the 1440s, he was one of the parties in the dispute over the bishopric of Freising between the Council of Basel and Frederick III. See Johannes Helmtrath, *Das Basler Konzil (1431–1449)—Forschungsstand und Probleme* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1987), 192–93.

bishop of Olomouc, enrolled in the autumn of 1431,<sup>86</sup> and studied there at least until 1440.<sup>87</sup> The renowned jurist Hartung von Kappel, who enrolled in 1431,<sup>88</sup> was incorporated in the Faculty of Law in 1432 and elected as its dean a year later.<sup>89</sup> Finally, the unfortunate pedagogue, Kaspar Wendel of Krems, enrolled at the same time as Vitez, in the spring of 1434.<sup>90</sup> Piccolomini described him as a man of humble origins, who was forced to beg for food during his student years.<sup>91</sup> As Wendel did not declare himself a pauper when enrolling and had paid a regular tuition fee, it seems that Piccolomini was, as usual, exaggerating.

Many other powerful men of Vitez's era studied in Vienna during the 1430s. Ladislaus Hédervári, the future bishop of Eger, enrolled in the Faculty of Law in 1434.<sup>92</sup> Peter, son of the palatine and judge royal Matthias Pálóci, lectured at the Faculty of Liberal Arts at the time when Vitez enrolled.<sup>93</sup> So did Nicholas Lépes,<sup>94</sup> a cousin of the Transylvanian bishop George Lépes, who died fighting the Ottomans with John Hunyadi in 1442.<sup>95</sup> Nicholas was an archdeacon of Transylvania at the time, and was simultaneously studying at the Faculty of Law.<sup>96</sup> The Rozgonyis were represented by Oswald, provost of Eger, who enrolled directly in the Faculty of Law in 1437.<sup>97</sup> Finally, Albert Hangácsi enrolled at the eve of the succession war between the Habsburgs and the Jagiellons, in the autumn of 1439.<sup>98</sup> Unsurprisingly, this interrupted his studies, and he was able to continue them only much later, in Italy.<sup>99</sup> In 1449 he was in Padua,<sup>100</sup> and in 1450 he attained a doctorate in law from the University of Bologna. Prior to tak-

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**86** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:177.

**87** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:100; *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:47 and 1:55.

**88** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:178.

**89** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:43 and 1:44.

**90** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:184; see also *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:107, 2:117, and 2:121.

**91** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:351, doc. 181.

**92** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:46.

**93** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:92. He enrolled in 1426, paying a baron's fee of two florins. See *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:157. Regarding his father, see Engel, *Magyrország világi archontológiája* (CD-ROM).

**94** *Wiener Artistenregister*, 2:93.

**95** Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, 244–45 and Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 457–58.

**96** *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:46.

**97** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:200; *Die Matrikel der Wiener Rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*, 1:49.

**98** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:214.

**99** Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 139.

**100** Kovács, "Studensek, magisterek, doktorok," *Archivum—A Heves megyei levéltár közleményei* 11 (1983): 5–41 at 12.

ing his final examination he was absolved from not fulfilling his student duties—for example, he had not attended classes on canon law for five years.<sup>101</sup>

These examples demonstrate the importance of the University of Vienna for the forming of a Central European ecclesiastical elite during the first half of the fifteenth century. The university attracted members of the aristocracy as well as those of much humbler origins, and served as an equalizer of a sort, at least when it came to social standing and academic knowledge. Belonging to its circle probably had an impact on Vitez's career as well.

### Apostles of Humanism

As we have seen, the education Vitez might have gained in Vienna was thoroughly medieval in nature. We will now examine the origins of his involvement with humanistic circles, for which he was later renowned. This issue is narrowly connected with Vitez's choice of acquaintances. He had an opportunity to become a member of the Hungarian ecclesiastical elite already in Vienna, but only during the later period of his life did he become acquainted with humanistic enthusiasts, who might have led him towards developing an interest in humanism.

Considering that humanists were few in early fifteenth-century Central Europe, many researchers were puzzled by the question: where did Vitez's humanistic leanings come from? During the twentieth century, Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder was often suggested as the person who directed Vitez towards humanism, to such an extent that Vitez was sometimes considered his pupil, or a continuator of his work.<sup>102</sup> Vergerio was certainly a famous exponent of early humanism. He spent much of his life in Hungary; however, there is no conclusive evidence he ever associated with Vitez. To bridge this gap, several compromise solutions were proposed, usually claiming that Vitez met Vergerio at the very end of the latter's life, when he was already provost of Oradea, or that he inherited Vergerio's library.<sup>103</sup> That might help explain Vitez's interest in collecting books, but there is no conclusive evidence to support it. As Pajorin noticed,<sup>104</sup>

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**101** *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*, 3:38–39.

**102** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 18ff; Kurelac, "Kulturna i znanstvena," 23–24; Kurelac, "Ivan Vitez od Sredne i Jan Panonije (Ivan Česmički) između anarhije i tiranije," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 222–46 at 228; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 45; Adriano Papo, "L'Umanesimo in Ungheria: il periodo degli esordi," in *Convegno internazionale di studi "L'Umanesimo Latino in Ungheria"*, ed. Papo and Papo, 21–44 at 38; Božanić and Kisić, "О Ивану," 218–219. Pajorin also thought so in her earlier works: see Klára Pajorin, "L'educazione umanistica e Mattia Corvino," in *Matthias Corvinus and the Humanism*, ed. Klaniczay and Jankovics, 185–92 at 186.

**103** Florio Banfi, "Pier Paolo Vergerio il Vecchio in Ungheria II–III," *Archivio di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti della Società Italo-Ungherese Mattia Corvino. Supplemento a Corvina Rassegna Italo-Ungherese* 2 (1940): 1–30 at 22–23; Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 127; "Domokos, Letture e biblioteche," 67.

**104** Pajorin, "Alcuni rapporti personali di Pier Paolo Vergerio in Ungheria," in *Convegno internazionale di studi "L'Umanesimo Latino in Ungheria"*, ed. Papo and Papo, 45–52 at 49.

although there were contemporary claims that Vergerio possessed many books in Greek and Latin before his death,<sup>105</sup> we do not know what became of them.

The only near-contemporary source claiming that Vitez and Vergerio knew each other is Callimachus Experiens's biography of Gregory of Sanok. In it, Callimachus claimed that Gregory, Philip Podacatharo and Vergerio used to engage in intellectual games presided over by a certain Bishop John. Callimachus called him "Johannes Gara" and claimed he was very learned and virtuous, and that he was later promoted to the archbishopric of Esztergom.<sup>106</sup> It was long believed that the latter was none other than John Vitez.<sup>107</sup> However, Pajorin convincingly concluded that Callimachus confused two different bishops, and that he more likely referred to John de Dominis.<sup>108</sup>

De Dominis is actually a far likelier candidate for the person who introduced Vitez to humanism, and is one of the key sources for the introduction of humanism into Hungary in general.<sup>109</sup> This does not mean Vergerio did not play a part in that process,<sup>110</sup> but it seems that his sojourn in Hungary, where he lived from 1418 until his death in 1444, was a lonely one, at least as far as his contacts with Italian humanists are concerned.<sup>111</sup> Apparently, he was mostly isolated from foreign men of letters. Of native intellectuals, we know that Vergerio was in contact with De Dominis, who was then bishop of Oradea,<sup>112</sup> but only at the very end of his life, when his health was probably failing,<sup>113</sup> and by which time his standing at the court had waned.<sup>114</sup> We can assume that the language barrier was a problem for him, as the list of witnesses to his will indicates that he associated only with fellow Italians, those who spoke Italian, and clerics, with whom he could have conversed in Latin.<sup>115</sup>

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**105** This claim came from the oldest biography of Pier Paolo Vergerio, written shortly after his death and appended to his treatise *De ingenuis moribus*: see *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio. Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Epistolari: Secolo XIV-XV*, ed. Leonardo Smith (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1934), 474–75, doc. 4.

**106** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 163; Callimachus, *Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei*, ed. Miodoński, XVr–XVv.

**107** This theory is still occasionally reiterated; for example, see Paul W. Knoll, *A Pearl of Powerful Learning: The University of Cracow in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 557.

**108** Pajorin, "La cultura di János Vitéz," 19–21.

**109** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 98–99.

**110** For examples of his contributions, see Banfi, "Pier Paolo Vergerio II–III," 9.

**111** Pajorin, "Alcuni rapporti personali di Pier Paolo Vergerio in Ungheria," 45.

**112** Pajorin, "Crusades and Early Humanism," 242; Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 107. See also Banfi, "Pier Paolo Vergerio II–III," 22.

**113** Klára Csapodiné Gardonyi found a note from 1440 in a book on Latin grammar, which stated that its owner had been very ill during that year. It is possible that this was Vergerio. See Csapodiné Gardonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 26 and Domokos, "Lecture e biblioteche," 67.

**114** It seems that Vergerio was not as welcome at the Hungarian court after the death of King Sigismund. See Banfi, "Pier Paolo Vergerio II–III," 23. It should be noted that this information comes from much later biographies. See, for example, *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. Smith, 473, doc. III.

**115** Pajorin, "Alcuni rapporti personali di Pier Paolo Vergerio in Ungheria," 49.

De Dominis's career and intellectual leanings are largely comparable to Vitez's, meaning the latter's interest in humanism was not an isolated case in Hungary. Vitez could have seen De Dominis as a role model in diplomacy and career advancement. Besides being on friendly terms with some of the most distinguished humanists of his time, such as Ambrogio Traversari and Francesco Barbaro,<sup>116</sup> De Dominis was a successful diplomat in the service of King Sigismund, who sent him on many important missions to Italy.<sup>117</sup> Vitez could certainly have learned a lot about contemporary politics and literary trends from De Dominis, perhaps more than from Vergerio. Furthermore, even if there was a connection between Vitez and Vergerio, De Dominis was the most likely link between the two. Vergerio could consider him his intellectual peer—one of the only three letters known to us he wrote while in Hungary was addressed to De Dominis.<sup>118</sup>

In any case, we are forced to admit that there is no evidence of Vitez ever receiving anything that resembled a humanistic education, be it formally or informally. The only remaining conclusion is that he developed an interest in humanism gradually, through contacts with distinguished European humanists.<sup>119</sup> It is worth noting that those contacts were not between Vitez and humanists *per se*, but with influential diplomats who happened to have an interest in humanism. One was the already mentioned Nicholas Lasocki. Like De Dominis, he was also a prominent diplomat.<sup>120</sup> There are many examples of correspondence between him and Vitez, one of which is Vitez's aforementioned letter in which he lamented his unsuccessful journey to Italy.<sup>121</sup> It is possible that Lasocki sparked Vitez's interest in continuing his studies there. He was most likely the one who recommended the school of Guarino Veronese to Vitez, to which the latter sent his nephew Janus Pannonius. Lasocki, as well as other Polish humanists (or humanistically inclined intellectuals) were in close contact with Guarino during the 1430s and 1440s. In 1437 Nicholas sent his nephews to study in Guarino's school in Ferrara specifically because he wanted them to be educated in the *studia humanitatis*. On that occasion he called Guarino the most learned person of their time, and Guarino was happy to receive his nephews as students, under the condition that he was well paid for the honour.<sup>122</sup> In 1449, Lasocki sent him two more students, one of whom was a nephew of the archbishop of Gniezno Wladislas of Oporów.<sup>123</sup>

Nicholas certainly could have told Vitez much about humanism; at the very least, Vitez might have learned from him that it was becoming increasingly fashionable. In

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**116** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 103.

**117** Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 268–69, 287, and 290.

**118** Pajorin, "Alcuni rapporti personali di Pier Paolo Vergerio in Ungheria," 45–46. The letter was published in *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. Smith, 388–95, doc. 141.

**119** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 127 and Pajorin, "Crusades and Early Humanism," 246–47.

**120** Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 22.

**121** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 60–61, doc. 20.

**122** *Epistolario*, 2:321–26, docs. 715–19.

**123** *Epistolario*, 2:514, doc. 817. See also *Epistolario*, 3:416.

fact, the whole idea of Vitez continuing his studies in Italy might have been Lasocki's. As Vitez was provost of Oradea at the time, he could have realized that his lack of education might present an obstacle to his career in the Church, especially as the tendency of promoting university graduates to higher offices was then growing stronger.<sup>124</sup> Lasocki might have proposed both a solution to that problem and a way of attaching oneself to the current trend in education. After that attempt failed, it is possible that Lasocki encouraged Vitez to send his protégés, such as his nephew Janus Pannonius, to Guarino's school.

Besides this "Polish connection," another link between Vitez and Italian humanism might have been Taddeo degli Adelmari of Treviso. The latter was a friend of Guarino Veronese, and in 1438, as he was also a physician, he treated one of Lasocki's nephews who fell ill while studying in Guarino's school.<sup>125</sup> He was still in contact with Guarino in 1449.<sup>126</sup> Taddeo had been an official of the Roman Curia since 1432, and King Sigismund made him his retainer in 1433, during his imperial coronation in Rome.<sup>127</sup> Pope Eugene IV would later send him on diplomatic missions to Hungary.<sup>128</sup> For example, in the spring of 1444, he charged Taddeo with delivering a blessed sword and infula to King Wladislas for the crusade against the Ottomans.<sup>129</sup> During the succession war, it seems that Taddeo supported the Habsburg side.<sup>130</sup> Despite this, he was apparently in contact with Hunyadi; Paul of Ivanić claimed he treated members of Hunyadi's household when he was in Hungary.<sup>131</sup> As previously explained, Taddeo played a pivotal role in Vitez's confirmation as bishop of Oradea, and served as a messenger between Hunyadi and the pope.<sup>132</sup> Later he complained to Vitez that the support he gave him had made him many enemies in Hungary, and that Vitez's predecessor, John de Dominis, was much more generous.<sup>133</sup>

This not only shows that Taddeo degli Adelmari was a person who, besides Nicholas Lasocki, might have brought Vitez in contact with Guarino Veronese, but also that he was a member of the network which Vitez also eventually joined. All of these people—De Dominis, Lasocki, and Taddeo—knew each other long before Vitez was of any importance, and it was their influence and connections that propelled Vitez's early career. They are also a much more likely link between Vitez and Italian human-

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**124** Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance*, 91, 99 and 101; Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 149 and 229.

**125** *Epistolario*, 2:326–27, docs. 719–20.

**126** *Epistolario*, 2:517–18, doc. 820.

**127** Beinhoff, *Die Italiener*, 290.

**128** *Briefwechsel*, 1/1:504–5, doc. 173, especially Wolkan's remark in note a.

**129** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:214–15, doc. 809.

**130** See Marini, *Degli architri pontificii*, 1:153 and *Briefwechsel*, 1/1:538, doc. 184.

**131** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 53, doc. 10, note a.

**132** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 48, doc. 5.

**133** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 161, doc. 78.



ism—primarily Guarino—than Pier Paolo Vergerio.<sup>134</sup> They, unlike the latter, certainly knew and conversed with Vitez. In fact, even if Vergerio attempted to establish contact between Vitez and Italian humanists, we cannot assume Guarino would have been his first choice. As far as we know, the two were in contact only once while Vergerio was in Hungary—in 1415, on the occasion of their mutual teacher's, Manuel Chrysoloras's, death.<sup>135</sup> Even if Vergerio did appreciate Guarino, he left no records of it. This is telling, considering that he spoke of admiration for other distinguished educators of his age. For example, he was full of praise for the teaching methods of his patron, Cardinal Francesco Zabarella.<sup>136</sup> As for Gasparino Barzizza, to whom Vergerio was introduced by Zabarella, Vergerio wrote that their age owed much to him, as he took it upon himself to educate as many boys as possible in the field of rhetoric.<sup>137</sup> On Guarino's contributions he remained silent.

The only source that might indicate Guarino was recommended to Vitez by Vergerio is a biography of the latter inserted in a copy of his treatise, *De ingenuis moribus*. It contains an anecdote of a "Pannonian" who, while returning from Poland to "Pannonia" one winter, came to Buda and heard that in one of that city's monasteries there lived a very learned old Italian. The Pannonian went to visit him, and when he told the Italian he would soon travel to Italy to study in Guarino Veronese's school, the old man was overjoyed, saying Guarino was like a son to him. The author of this biography claimed he received this information from the mysterious Pannonian himself.<sup>138</sup> Opinions differed regarding whether any of this actually happened,<sup>139</sup> but it is certain that this anecdote is insufficient proof of any close relations between Guarino, Vergerio, and Hungary.

Regardless of the channels through which he heard of current Italian trends in learning and education, by 1448 Vitez had developed a great respect for them. He wrote then that in his homeland the knowledge of Latin was rustic, and that while his compatriots deluded themselves that they were learning Latin, their material was the dregs of Latin literature. According to him, it could not have been considered education, as the local teachers possessed and conveyed only an *ignorance* of rhetoric, and those who wished to gain a real education abandoned this "darkness" and fled abroad. Paul of Ivanić helpfully explained that by that, he meant to Italy.<sup>140</sup> Indeed,

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**134** See Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 22, Ritoókné Szalay, "Ferrara und die ungarischen Humanisten," 152, and Pajorin, "Antitursica," 24.

**135** *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. Smith, 358–59, doc. 136. Smith thought the two were never close friends: see his comment in note 2.

**136** *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. Smith, 369, doc. 138.

**137** *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. Smith, 351, doc. 133. See also Barzizza's response in doc. 134.

**138** *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. Smith, 477–78, doc. V.

**139** Cf., for example, *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. Smith, 475–77n3 and Banfi, "Pier Paolo Vergerio II–III," 23–24. The latter thought that the Pannonian was none other than Paul of Ivanić: see *ibid.*, 30n34.

**140** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 38, doc. 2 and 41, notes aa and bb.

Vitez intended to follow in their footsteps, and in 1451 he asked for and received the pope's permission to leave his diocese for five years and travel abroad to complete the studies begun in his youth. It was specified that he was allowed to travel whether to the West or the East, to receive the full income of his office for the duration of his absence, and to appoint any bishop he wished as his episcopal vicar; the only condition was to appoint capable vicars to govern the diocese.<sup>141</sup>

The dispensation specified that Vitez intended to learn Greek and Latin, perhaps indicating that the clause "whether to the West or the East" had a precise meaning. The obvious destination for Vitez would have been Italy, but it is possible he intended to go to Constantinople as well. That would not have been uncommon. In the late fourteenth century, Guarino Veronese spent five years in Constantinople, studying under Manuel Crisoloras,<sup>142</sup> and during the 1420s the acclaimed humanist Francesco Filelfo made a home for himself there.<sup>143</sup> After the Ottoman conquest of the city, Piccolomini wrote that Constantinople used to be the home of literature, and that none among the Westerners could have considered themselves sufficiently educated if they had not spent time studying there.<sup>144</sup>

It might be significant that, on the same occasion, in 1451, Vitez also received the pope's permission to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, with an entourage of ten companions.<sup>145</sup> Such pilgrimages were not unusual among Hungarian prelates. Just a year earlier, Bishop Peter of Cenad received permission for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, also with ten companions.<sup>146</sup> It is possible that Vitez was planning a "grand tour" of the Levant, from Constantinople to Jerusalem, and perhaps from there to Italy. However, his intentions were thwarted by the turbulent political events of 1452.

Based on the information we have, we can conclude there was no precise moment in which Vitez became interested in humanism, but that he gradually developed a taste for it during the 1440s, through those he met at the royal chancery and during his diplomatic service. John de Dominis, Nicholas Lasocki, and Taddeo degli Adelmari almost certainly introduced him to the current trends in education and learning. However, Vitez never received any structured education and most of what he knew about humanism most likely came from fellow enthusiasts. For all we know, it is possible that he knew very little of it, but it matches what we know of his character for him to be as fashionable and prestigious as possible. After all, these qualities were also instruments of power.

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**141** Pray, *Specimen hierarchiae Hungaricae*, 2:182, note b; see also Pajorin, "La cultura di János Vitéz," 21. The full text of the papal dispensation can be found in *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*, 3:425–26.

**142** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 24.

**143** Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 32. See also Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 19.

**144** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:208, doc. 112.

**145** Pray, *Specimen hierarchiae Hungaricae*, 2:182, note b. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 11.

**146** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:271, doc. 1074.

## Collecting Protégés

If we view soberly Vitez's assumption of a humanist persona, it appears that perhaps he was not motivated primarily by a fascination with humanism. We have to keep in mind that he was a man of a relatively obscure background, whose advance through the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was achieved partly thanks to a series of coincidences and unexpected circumstances. After becoming bishop of Oradea, he found himself at the head of an enormous institution, but without a power base to rely on, and forced to treat other magnates of the realm as his equals, but without any prestige to back up such appearances. His only lifeline was Hunyadi's support, but he could himself witness how easily Hunyadi would betray prelates he no longer found useful. Vitez personally composed a letter in Hunyadi's name in which the latter justified such deeds by political expediency; he did not hesitate to retract his support for Thomas Himfi in 1446, when the diocese of Eger was practically pried from Thomas's fingers.<sup>147</sup> Building his own circle of supporters from the men he brought from Zagreb did help Vitez to rule his diocese, but to make his position secure he needed much more than that. He needed prestige.

In the fifteenth century, rulers, especially Italian ones, found it advantageous to present themselves as patrons of humanism, because they were aware that humanists would in return praise them in their writings. Duke Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan kept Gasparino Barzizza and his son, Guiniforte, as well as Francesco Filelfo and others, in his employ, and they vociferously praised his virtues. King Alfonso of Aragon and Naples also understood the value of humanistic propaganda and employed Guiniforte Barzizza, Antonio Beccadelli, Lorenzo Valla, and others.<sup>148</sup> It should be noted that the image of a patron of the arts was especially cultivated by rulers whose legitimacy was questionable, such as King Alfonso and the margraves of Ferrara Leonello and Borso, both of whom were illegitimate sons of Niccolò d'Este.<sup>149</sup>

Vitez had the opportunity to learn of such practices from De Dominis, Lasocki or Adelmari. Besides, he had examples of it much closer to home. Andrew Scolari, one of his predecessors on the see of Oradea, was remembered as a patron of the arts, and

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**147** Himfi was promised to receive the first available diocese by the Hungarian Estates in May 1445 (*Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, iv–v, doc. 1). Soon afterwards, Nicholas of Ilok supported his bid for the vacant diocese of Eger. Hunyadi sent two letters to Pope Eugene IV, in one of which he supported Himfi, and in the other his rival Ladislaus Hédervári (Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 67, doc. 24, note 1). In a letter composed by Vitez in October 1446, Hunyadi justified this duplicity by saying it was necessary for keeping the peace within the realm (Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 67, doc. 24; see also Held, *Hunyadi*, 231). The pope sent Himfi permission to be consecrated on April 17, 1446 (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:235, doc. 907), but after Hunyadi retracted his support, Thomas's adversaries forced him to renounce the diocese. Immediately afterwards, the pope gave the diocese to Ladislaus Hédervári (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:253, doc. 995).

**148** Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 175–82.

**149** Bene, "Where Paradigms Meet," 203–7.

for enlarging the episcopal library.<sup>150</sup> Scolari, a Florentine and a relative of King Sigismund's military commander Filippo Scolari, was even more of a newcomer in Oradea than Vitez, but his case is comparable to Vitez's as he also had no firm foothold within his diocese or among the Hungarian nobility. On a smaller scale, there was the example of Vitez's own lector, Peter Vépi (d. around 1449), who distinguished himself by founding and financing charities.<sup>151</sup> Peter enrolled in the University of Vienna in 1425, when he was custos of Oradea,<sup>152</sup> but, like Vitez, it seems he did not obtain any academic degrees. However, he was educated enough to correct grammatical errors in a charter issued by his chapter.<sup>153</sup> Considering the examples he was presented with, it is not inconceivable that Vitez would have tried to utilize humanism to build up his own prestige, and to strengthen his position through it.

The simplest and safest way for a patron to gain the humanists' sympathies was to subsidize them. That did not require any special effort on behalf of the patron, and humanists were generally wise enough not to bite the hand that fed them. Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki knew what he was doing when he, in 1453, sent a gift of marten fur to Enea Silvio Piccolomini, along with a request to be careful when writing about Polish rulers.<sup>154</sup> Earlier that year, Vitez had done something similar, sending Piccolomini a riding horse and some fur as gifts; Piccolomini immediately started praising Vitez's virtues, noting that no one is so cruel to not be well disposed towards their benefactors.<sup>155</sup> Another example is George Polycarp Kosztoláni. While he was studying at Guarino's school in Ferrara together with Janus Pannonius and the abovementioned Simon (who was also Vitez's protégé), he sent a letter to Vitez, in which he openly stated that many of his friends advised him to start exchanging letters with the bishop, for he could obtain great boons from him, which he sorely needed due to his poverty. He also asked Vitez to recommend him to Pannonius.<sup>156</sup> It seems he had not known Vitez before, but that the latter's generosity was well established by then. Indeed, the letter worked, and Kosztoláni received his boons; in a letter sent by Simon from Ferrara, it is mentioned that Polycarp sent his thanks to Vitez for the favours he received

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**150** Domokos, "Lecture e biblioteche," 63; *Convegno internazionale di studi "L'Umanesimo Latino in Ungheria,"* ed. Papo and Papo, 35; Pajorin, "Crusades and Early Humanism," 240; Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 103.

**151** Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:154. Bunyitay here refers to the document DL 30 184. On November 24, 1449 another person was titled as lector, so Peter had probably died by then. See DL 22 491.

**152** *Die Matrikel der Universität Wien*, 1:150.

**153** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczi Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:669, doc. 469.

**154** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:253, doc. 137.

**155** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:144, doc. 73.

**156** *Nicolaus Barius, Georgius Polycarpus de Kostolan, Simon Hungarus, Georgius Augustinus Zagabriensis—Reliquiae*, ed. László Juhász (Leipzig: Teubner, 1932), 6–7. The letter is undated; Juhász thought it was written in 1450. Veress dated it to December 3, 1453 in *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*, 3:426–29. In this letter Kosztoláni remarked that he taught Simon, so he was either a tutor or a teacher at Guarino's school. See Fraknói, "Mátyás király magyar diplomatái," 3.

from him, which were so great that he would never be able to repay them, even if he would serve Vitez for the rest of his life.<sup>157</sup>

By the time he received Kosztoláni's letter, Vitez had obviously built up a reputation as a patron and benefactor of students. He financially supported a number of them, but it is significant that they were all studying at Italian establishments. His nephew John of Česmica, who called himself Janus Pannonius, was sent to Guarino's school in 1447 at Vitez's expense.<sup>158</sup> Vitez possibly encouraged Nicholas Barius to study in Italy, and also helped him financially during his studies, if a letter he sent Barius after his return to Hungary is to be believed. It is written in a humorous fashion, so we cannot be sure to what Vitez alluded in it, but it seems that Barius was ironically accusing him of stinginess, to which Vitez jokingly replied that he would make him retract those accusations.<sup>159</sup> Barius was studying in Padua since early 1448, and he attained a doctorate in canon law in October 1450.<sup>160</sup> At around the same time he came into contact with George of Trebizond, a former student of Guarino's, but rather accidentally: George was the official at the Apostolic Chancery who processed Barius's supplication to hold two incompatible offices in February 1450.<sup>161</sup>

It seems that Vitez's connections with Italian humanists were, at least during the 1440s, limited to supporting students studying at their establishments. Vitez most likely did not personally know Guarino Veronese, and he did not communicate with him except regarding his protégés.<sup>162</sup> When Janus Pannonius sent Vitez a bronze medallion bearing Guarino's likeness in 1449, given to him by Guarino himself, he said that Vitez had already known Veronese's fame and writings, but that, thanks to the medallion, he would also know the man's face.<sup>163</sup> The only trace of communication between Guarino and Vitez is a letter sent by Vitez on March 17, 1451, when Janus was to return to Ferrara after a short visit to Hungary. In it, Vitez addressed Guarino as a dear friend and recommended Pannonius to him once more, which means that he had already done so earlier, most likely when he was sending the youth to Ferrara. Between those two instances, there is nothing to indicate further contacts. In 1451 Vitez also sent a letter to Giacomo Antonio della Torre, bishop of Modena and adviser to Margrave Borso d'Este of Ferrara. In it he outright stated that he did not know the addressee, but that he is therefore even more thankful that Giacomo had stood surety for Janus Pannonius when the latter was supposed to leave Ferrara to visit Vitez, but

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**157** *Epistolario*, 3:443.

**158** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 22.

**159** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 155, doc. 74. For more on Barius, see Erik Fügedi, "A XV. századi magyar püspökök," *Történelmi szemle* 8 (1965): 477–98 at 486.

**160** *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*, 1:8–10.

**161** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:272, doc. 1080. George of Trebizond, a Greek born on Crete, was brought to Italy in 1417 by Francesco Barbaro. Guarino taught him Latin, but they did not become friends. See Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 30.

**162** Cf. Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 352.

**163** *Epistolario*, 3:441. See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 38.

did not have the money to pay his debt to Guarino.<sup>164</sup> In his comment, Paul of Ivanić explained that Giacomo did so out of the affection he had for Vitez, despite not knowing him personally. This indicates that Vitez had by then built up quite a reputation in Italy, probably through Janus and other pupils in Ferrara, as well as Barius.

It is likely that Vitez was preparing these men to one day become his aides. As we shall later see, some of them, such as Kosztoláni and, above all, Janus, did enter his service. Janus was a very useful protégé, as his talent brought him fame while he was still in Italy; he even involved himself in local politics and presented a work of his to Emperor Frederick III while the latter was passing through Ferrara in 1452.<sup>165</sup> During the mid-1450s, while he was still *custos* of Oradea, Janus engaged in a poetic exchange with Piccolomini, which resulted in four poems in which the two correspondents heaped praise upon one another. They exchanged books as well, with Pannonius asking Piccolomini to send him Martial's epigrams, and the latter asking Janus to send him his own verse.<sup>166</sup> It is possible that these two met during the diet in Wiener Neustadt in 1455, and that Vitez introduced his nephew to his distinguished friend as a debut in the political circle in which Pannonius was to operate.<sup>167</sup>

Guarino's school was also attended by Vitez's protégé Simon, of whom we know very little.<sup>168</sup> Almost all of the information we have about him comes from his already mentioned undated letter to Vitez, in which he claimed that he grew up at Vitez's court.<sup>169</sup> Also, Kosztoláni mentioned in his own letter to Vitez that he had read Virgil's works to Simon, and that the latter liked them very much.<sup>170</sup> Although this is just anecdotal evidence, it might indicate that Vitez was not only sending talented youths to Italy, but also raising them in his household.

This leads us to another issue—namely, does that mean that humanists would gather at Vitez's court as early as the 1440s? There is only one source that states so—the already mentioned *Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei* by Callimachus.<sup>171</sup> Its author tells how Gregory of Sanok took part in the Battle of Varna as a non-combatant, and that he remained in Hungary for a while after surviving the Crusader defeat.<sup>172</sup> During his stay, the bishop of Oradea, whom Callimachus calls *Johannes Gara* (this could be a cor-

**164** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 158–59, docs. 76–77. Janus wrote a poem about this event: see Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 190–91. See Perić, “Tragom Ivana Česmičkog u pismima Ivana Viteza od Sredne,” in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 156–64 at 159–60.

**165** Oren Margolis, *The Politics of Culture in Quattrocento Europe: René of Anjou in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68ff.

**166** Mariotti, “La corrispondenza poetica,” 45–46.

**167** Mariotti, “La corrispondenza poetica,” 52–53.

**168** *Nicolaus Barius*, ed. Juhász, 5–6.

**169** *Epistolario*, 3:442.

**170** *Nicolaus Barius*, ed. Juhász, 6.

**171** Callimachus, *Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei*, ed. Miodoński, XVr–XVIIIr. The parts that mention the bishop of Oradea were also published in *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 162–65.

**172** Regarding this, see also Harold B. Segel, *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470–1543* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 28.

rupted version of the Hungarian name for Oradea —Várad), became so fond of him that he made him a canon in his chapter. This is the only source stating that Gregory of Sanok was a canon of Oradea.<sup>173</sup> After this, Callimachus starts describing the discussions and competitions in poetry and rhetoric that took part at the mentioned bishop's court. If that bishop was Vitez, this could mean that he founded a humanist circle, or a *contubernium*.<sup>174</sup>

However, as previously noted, Callimachus's report is unclear and full of chronological inconsistencies, making it difficult to fit it into the rest of the data we have on the people it mentions. Besides Gregory of Sanok and Bishop John, Callimachus mentions two other participants in those discussions and competitions: Pier Paolo Vergerio, who was already dead by the time Vitez became bishop,<sup>175</sup> and the little-known Philip Podacatharo of Cyprus, of whose sojourn at Vitez's court there is no other source but Callimachus's anecdotal report, and who should have been at Guarino's school in Ferrara when the events described in it purportedly took place.<sup>176</sup> There is no solid proof that Podacatharo and Vitez knew each other. The only trace he left in Hungary is a codex found in Buda after its conquest from the Ottomans in 1686, which contains a note that identifies Philip Podacatharo as its owner.<sup>177</sup>

It should be kept in mind that the whole biography is anecdotal and written in praise of Gregory of Sanok. It was, after all, composed by Callimachus while he was in Gregory's service,<sup>178</sup> when the latter was already archbishop of Lviv, in 1476,<sup>179</sup> about thirty years after the events it recounts, and after the death of John Vitez. Callimachus never knew any of the alleged participants in the discussions and competitions he described except for his patron, and it is probable that his source, Gregory himself, remembered many of the details incorrectly. Even if we take Callimachus's report as at least partly correct, the bishop mentioned in it would more likely be Vitez's predecessor, John de Dominis.<sup>180</sup> Additionally, most of Callimachus's account of Gregory's stay

**173** As such, it is cited in Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 150–51, Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:137, and Kristóf, *Egyházi középréteg*, 244–45.

**174** For theories regarding this, see Klaniczay, "Das Contubernium"; Klaniczay, "La corte di Mattia Corvino e il pensiero accademico," in *Matthias Corvinus and the Humanism*, ed. Klaniczay and Jankovics, 165–74 at 165; Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, "Der Humanismus in Ungarn zur Zeit von Matthias Corvinus," in *Humanismus und Renaissance*, ed. Eberhard and Strnad, 157–71 at 160.

**175** Klaniczay, "Das Contubernium," 231.

**176** Two letters sent by Podacatharo from Ferrara are known: one was addressed to John, nephew of Nicholas Lasocki, and probably written in August 1448 (*Epistolario*, 3:411–12), and the other, undated, was sent to Guarino at his request and contained one of Podacatharo's speeches (*Epistolario*, 2:667, doc. 918).

**177** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 94.

**178** He had taken refuge at Gregory's court after fleeing Rome, where he was accused of plotting against Pope Paul II. See Rainer A. Müller, "Humanismus und Universität im östlichen Mitteleuropa," in *Humanismus und Renaissance*, ed. Eberhard and Strnad, 245–72 at 257. See also Segel, *Renaissance Culture in Poland*, 30.

**179** Klaniczay, "Das Contubernium," 228.

**180** Pajorin, "La cultura di János Vitéz," 19–20.

at said bishop's court consists of a treatise on the origins of Poles,<sup>181</sup> so it is possible the author used a fictional setting of a humanist discussion to convey his or Gregory's ethnological ideas. Therefore, we can conclude that, while it is possible that Gregory of Sanok resided at Vitez's court sometime during the 1440s, it is unlikely that a humanist society existed there.

As we have previously explained, Vitez had little contact with Italian humanists during the 1440s. It therefore seems that Vitez's network of humanistically inclined contacts, including Nicholas Lasocki and (perhaps) Gregory of Sanok, was during that time largely Polish. Another person should be added to it—the distinguished astronomer Martin Król of Żurawica. In humanistic fashion, Król, which means “king” in Polish, Latinized his last name to Rex.<sup>182</sup> He attained a doctorate in medicine from the University of Bologna in 1449,<sup>183</sup> but before returning to Poland he stayed for a while in Hungary. There he entered John Hunyadi's service, probably as a physician, and received payment for one year's work. We know this from a letter sent to him in late 1449 by John Długosz, in which the latter said he sought Król out in Buda while returning from a mission to Rome, but did not find him despite their previous agreement to meet there. He reproachfully added he hoped Król would not follow Hunyadi on his campaign.<sup>184</sup> This last remark probably refers to Hunyadi's unsuccessful campaign against Jiskra, which took place in that year.<sup>185</sup> Not long after Długosz, Cardinal Oleśnicki also sent a letter to Król, saying he had been keeping a post for him at the University of Kraków, and admonishing him to return as soon as possible, as he had promised he would.<sup>186</sup>

During his stay in Hungary, Król was certainly in contact with Vitez, as both Długosz's and Oleśnicki's letters contained messages that Król was supposed to convey to him and requests of being recommended to him. It is possible he was the one who encouraged Vitez's interest in astronomical observations, especially those geared toward astrological prognostication. Vitez certainly had the opportunity to be introduced to astrology at the University of Vienna. John of Gmunden, the aforementioned Viennese professor, did not practice predictive astrology openly,<sup>187</sup> but he did engage in it privately, and he composed at least one prognostic table. He owned a large number of books on astrology, which he bequeathed to the University of Vienna under the condition that they be kept in a locked cabinet.<sup>188</sup> Martin Król composed several trea-

**181** Callimachus, *Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei*, ed. Miodoński, XVIr–XVIIr.

**182** For more on his career, see Knoll, *A Pearl of Powerful Learning*, 381ff.

**183** Walsh, “Von Italien nach Krakau,” 289.

**184** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 166.

**185** Bartl, “Vzt'ah Jána Jiskru,” 73.

**186** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 166–67.

**187** Walsh, “Von Italien nach Krakau,” 286–87.

**188** Michael H. Shank, “Academic Consulting in Fifteenth-Century Vienna: The Case of Astrology,” in *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science—Studies on the Occasion of John. E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Edith Sylla and Michael McVaugh (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 245–70 at 256–57. Frederick III consulted that table when Ladislaus V was born.



tises on astronomical charts and devices both before and after studying medicine in Bologna, but after he returned to Kraków, immediately after his sojourn in Hungary, he worked exclusively on prognostic astrology.<sup>189</sup> In 1445 he wrote his version of *Algorismus minutiarum*, dealing with fractions and their use in astronomical calculations,<sup>190</sup> which might have interested Vitez. Of special interest here is Król's work containing an extensive description of the use of the quadrant in measuring solar altitude relative to the geographic latitude of the observation point. In it, he proposed that the quadrant, with the help of solar altitude charts, could be used as a chronometer, and he also described a quadrant with a movable handle in its corner.<sup>191</sup> The latter is significant, because Georg Peurbach later wrote for Vitez a treatise on how to construct and use such an instrument.<sup>192</sup> As Vitez specifically commissioned such a treatise from Peurbach, it is possible that he got the idea of using such a device in his observations from Król.

### Collecting Books

Another element in building up one's prestige as a patron of the arts was owning a well-stocked library and procuring new books for it. Peurbach's dedication of his *Tabulae Waradienses* to Vitez leaves no room for doubt that books were status symbols, and that Vitez knew this. Peurbach plainly stated that gathering books increased Vitez's prestige, especially because of the enormous sums he spent on them.<sup>193</sup> Based on the way in which Vitez treated his own writings, we can assume that prestige was, if not the primary motivation, then certainly a prominent one for gathering books. The way in which he treated his letters is especially indicative. Vitez was actually not interested in preserving them, despite them being, along with the speeches he later composed, his only literary legacy.<sup>194</sup> In a letter to Archdeacon Paul, who asked Vitez to send him his letters, Vitez himself stated that he had to gather them from scattered drafts. He used the term *sceda*, which Paul of Ivanić interprets as unbound folios, which were called *minuta* at the chancery.<sup>195</sup> Of course, it is possible this was only

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**189** Grażyna Rosińska, "Krakowska szkoła astronomiczna przed Kopernikiem: zainteresowania techniczne Marcina Króla z Żurawicy i znajomość instrumentów astronomicznych w XV wieku," *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* 18 (1973): 463–83 at 472ff.

**190** Knoll, *A Pearl of Powerful Learning*, 371.

**191** Rosińska, "Krakowska szkoła," 476–77.

**192** Peurbach, *Quadratum geometricum*, A ii r–A ii v. Nagy pointed out that the quadrant was not Peurbach's invention, but that he had improved it and provided the accompanying astronomical tables. See Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 80. For a description of the instrument and Peurbach's improvements of it, see Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 26–27.

**193** *Analecta ad historiam renaescentium*, ed. Ábel, 176.

**194** Pajorin, "La cultura di János Vitéz," 13–15.

**195** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 31, doc. 1. For a rhetorical analysis of this letter, see Boronkai, "Vitéz János retorikai," 133–34.

ceremonial humility, which was common among humanists.<sup>196</sup> However, Paul of Ivanić, who was given the task of editing the letters, recorded that many of the ones he gathered were damaged,<sup>197</sup> that some were incomplete,<sup>198</sup> and that he simply could not find some of them even though he knew they existed.<sup>199</sup> He said that many of them were not given to him by Vitez, but that he found them himself and added them to the collection.<sup>200</sup> However, although it appears Vitez was not interested in preserving his letters for himself, he was shrewd enough to charge Paul of Ivanić with editing them once he learned others were interested. This does not mean their content was not in pace with the times. In fact, Vitez's letters concerning the wars against the Ottomans might be the first examples of the anti-Turkish genre outside of Italy.<sup>201</sup>

We do not have much information on Vitez's book collecting from the early years of his episcopate. Oradea already had a rather large library, the legacy of Andrew Scolarari and his other predecessors, when Vitez became its bishop. However, we can only guess which books he procured himself at that time. Klára Csapodiné Gárdonyi, the author of the best attempt at reconstructing the contents of Vitez's library,<sup>202</sup> based most of her conclusions on similarities between handwritings in which emendations, i.e. corrections of grammatical and other errors in manuscripts, were inscribed.<sup>203</sup> It is possible, but not certain, that the handwriting in some of the books she studied was Vitez's.

It is worth noting what emendation meant at the time when books were copied by hand. Humanists cared very much about the copies of Classical works they owned being as close as possible to the originals, so they would try to find the oldest available specimens and compare them to the newer copies. For example, in 1419 Guarino Veronese discovered a very old specimen of Pliny's letters which to him seemed well emended. As he had previously ordered a copy of Pliny's letters, he was hoping to compare it to the older specimen and make the necessary emendations. He also tried to procure a copy of Terence's works, by either purchase or exchange.<sup>204</sup> Vitez was doing the same, comparing his copies of texts to older specimens, as we know

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**196** Some thought that Archdeacon Paul was an imaginary person, made up by Vitez as an excuse for making a collection of letters. See Edina Zsupán, "János Vitéz's Book of Letters. Prologue," in *A Star in the Raven's Shadow*, ed. Földesi et al., 117–39 at 123–27. Zsupán herself thought it possible that the idea of creating the collection originated with Paul of Ivanić.

**197** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 27 and 68, doc. 24, note b.

**198** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 52–53, docs. 8, 10, and 11.

**199** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 43, doc. 3 and 56, doc. 13, note a.

**200** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 42, doc. 2, note ww.

**201** Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 17.

**202** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Bibliothek*.

**203** See also Domokos, "Letture e biblioteche," 69.

**204** *Epistolario*, 1:233, doc. 141. Regarding the difficulties in emending books, see Ferenc Földesi, "A Society of Scholars and Books. The Library of János Vitéz," in *A Star in the Raven's Shadow*, ed. Földesi et al., 92–104 at 99–100. The rest of this text mostly repeats older misconceptions and should be regarded cautiously.

from codices which were certainly at one time his that he emended them. Also, Guarino's remark "by either purchase or exchange" is indicative of the way books were procured. If there were no specimens of a text available for purchase, one could borrow one from a friend. For instance, also in 1419, Guarino asked a friend to lend him the works of Quintilian and Asconius Pedianus, and if he did not have the latter, to ask another friend, whom he knew to have a copy.<sup>205</sup> Hungarian prelates would also lend books to each other, even issuing receipts to make sure that they would be returned. The aforementioned Vitus Hündler issued such a receipt in 1469.<sup>206</sup>

There were therefore many ways in which Vitez could procure books. However, we have no information on how, or even if, he procured any of them before he was made bishop. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering he was not wealthy during that time. Gárdonyi thought the first book he emended might have been a specimen of *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius, in which she found an inscription saying "XIII Augusti 1435." Based on the handwriting of this inscription, the marginalia and corrections, she assumed that this book was handled by Vitez.<sup>207</sup> She also argued that Vitez knew Greek, as some of the notes in the book were in that language.<sup>208</sup> She used the same method while assuming that he had read and emended the *Speculum Sapientiae* by Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, a copy of which was inscribed with the date August 5, 1443.<sup>209</sup> The evidence for this is, therefore, weak. As for other books Vitez might have possessed during this time, there are only assumptions. For example, Vitez often quoted Lucan in his letters, especially in one from 1445. His successor in the archdiocese of Esztergom, John Beckensloer, took a copy of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (produced in Verona in 1338) with him to Salzburg when he crossed over to Frederick III. Those are the only indications that Vitez might have possessed that codex.<sup>210</sup>

According to Gárdonyi's analysis, the only books for which there is more solid evidence that Vitez perused them, six in total, were emended much later, during the 1460s.<sup>211</sup> Such is, for example, a codex containing the *Quaestiones super I. libro sententiarum* by Francis of Mayrone, a commentary on the theological work of Peter Lombard. It is inscribed with the year 1449, but Gárdonyi thought the inscription might be a later addition. According to her, the handwriting of the notes and emendations is probably Vitez's, and one of the notes states that its author started reading the book on September 3, 1463 and finished on October 31 of the same year. Next to the note

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**205** *Epistolario*, 1:284, doc. 179. This other friend was likely Poggio Bracciolini, who had discovered Pedianus's works in 1416, or one of his circle. See Guiseppe La Bua, *Cicero and Roman Education: The Reception of the Speeches and Ancient Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 77.

**206** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 162.

**207** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 60 and 138.

**208** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 42.

**209** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 61 and 99.

**210** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 25 and 117. See also Zsupán, "János Vitéz's Book of Letters," 133.

**211** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 42.

is a symbol that could be read as the Greek letter ζ, which Gárdonyi interpreted as the initial of “Zredna”,<sup>212</sup> However, its similarity to lowercase zeta depends on the reader; for example, it is also similar to the common symbol for *fnis*.<sup>213</sup>

What we do know, whether from preserved codexes or other sources, is that Janus Pannonius was procuring books for Vitez in Italy, and very likely for himself as well. For example, a codex containing the work of the early medieval neoplatonist Aeneas of Gaza was emended by two scribes at the request of Guarino Veronese in 1451, later ending up in the library of King Matthias Corvinus, probably with Janus serving as the intermediary.<sup>214</sup> In a letter sent by Janus to Vitez from Ferrara, the former apologized for not sending any books with it, explaining that the arrival of Vitez’s messenger surprised him.<sup>215</sup> Janus also composed a poem in which he vented his anger at a certain pawnbroker, who sought, in Janus’s opinion, too great an interest for the three books Janus had pawned (containing the works of Lucan, Virgil and Ovid), exclaiming that he would not redeem them at that price even though his name was inscribed in them.<sup>216</sup>

Later, during the 1450s, Vitez found other sources of books. For example, there was Piccolomini. Besides the aforementioned account of the Imperial diet in Regensburg by himself, he sent Vitez other books as well. In a letter sent on January 22, 1454 to Prokop of Rabštejn, Piccolomini wrote that Vitez had asked him to commission a copy of a work by Tertullian (it is not specified which one in the letter). Piccolomini asked Prokop to notify Niccoló Lisci that he, Piccolomini, would soon send this copy to him through John Nihili, who was at the time preparing to depart for Prague. Lisci was to receive it and immediately deliver it to Vitez.<sup>217</sup> It was likely necessary for Lisci to serve as an intermediary because Nihili had not yet been properly introduced to Vitez. To address that problem, Piccolomini composed a letter of recommendation for Nihili, in which he mentioned he had sent the book to Prague with him, and that it was copied hastily, and therefore somewhat messily, because he was eager to dispatch it as soon as possible.<sup>218</sup> It seems that the end result was not very presentable. A week or so later, Piccolomini wrote to Lisci, telling him to pass on his excuses for the poor quality of the book to Vitez, to explain to him that the specimen in Piccolomini’s possession, from which the copy was made, was not very good either (Lisci had apparently seen it), and that Piccolomini would gladly send Vitez copies of the other books he possessed, but that there were no available copyists in Wiener Neustadt, where he was residing at the time.<sup>219</sup> Considering this, perhaps Vitez learned from Lisci that Piccolomini possessed a specimen of this unidentified work by Tertullian, and was keen to obtain a copy of it as soon as possible.

**212** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 103.

**213** I thank Klára Pajorin for this idea.

**214** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 30 and 65.

**215** *Epistolario*, 3:440.

**216** Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 202–3. See also Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 144.

**217** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:421, doc. 234.

**218** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 38, doc. 3; *Briefwechsel*, III/1:428, doc. 238.

**219** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:439, doc. 252.

This and other examples indicate Vitez's interest in Tertullian. A copy was made of that author's *Apologeticus* in 1455, in Vitez's see of Oradea, and its codex still exists today.<sup>220</sup> This is most likely not the same work as that Piccolomini copied for Vitez,<sup>221</sup> unless the quality of his copy was truly abysmal.<sup>222</sup> On the last page of the codex is a note saying: "Ex Waradino per Briccium presbyterum de Polanka anno Domini 1455 Domino Johanni de Zredna episcopo sanctae diocesis Waradiensis" (From Oradea, by the priest Brice of Polanka, in the year of Our Lord 1455, for John of Sredna, bishop of the holy diocese of Oradea). It is likely, as Gardonyi thought, that this Brice is identical to the one who was custos of Oradea from 1464 on.<sup>223</sup> However, he was certainly not the previously mentioned Brice of Szeged, all the more because the latter served as canon of Oradea since the 1440s, and the former signed the mentioned copy as a mere priest. It is also worth noting that the fact that this copy's creation in Oradea does not necessarily imply that Vitez's see had a scriptorium, especially as the manuscript is rather plain and unilluminated.<sup>224</sup>

Besides commissioning copies of Tertullian's writings, there are indications that Vitez read and quoted from them. A note on the margin of the last page of the Oradea *Apologeticus* reads "deo gracias τελος 1455" (completed in 1455, thanks be to God),<sup>225</sup> which might mean that Vitez finished reading and emending the codex very soon after it was made.<sup>226</sup> It is possible he tried to quote Tertullian in one of his speeches at the Imperial diet of Wiener Neustadt in 1455, as it contains the phrase. "laudem profecto merebitur agniti erroris repudium" (renouncing of a discovered error will surely deserve praise).<sup>227</sup> Perhaps this is a paraphrase of Tertullian's sentence: "nonne laudem magis quam poenam merebatur repudium agniti erroris" (did not the renouncing of a discovered error deserve praise rather than punishment).<sup>228</sup>

There were others, besides Piccolomini, who caused Vitez to acquire certain books. As we have previously noted, during Ladislaus's reign Vitez came in contact with the

**220** Fraknói was the first who saw the connection between this codex and Vitez. See Fraknói, "Váradon írt Vitéz-codex".

**221** Regarding this, see Csapodi, *The Corvinian Library*, 366 and Pajorin, "Primordi," 823.

**222** It is worth noting that, according to Anna Boreczky's opinion, the books' appearance was not very important to Vitez. See Anna Boreczky, "Book Painting in Hungary in the Age of János Vitéz," in *A Star in the Raven's Shadow*, ed. Földesi et al., 25–45 at 25.

**223** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 140–41; see also Kristóf, *Egyházi középréteg*, 54.

**224** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 68; Kristóf, *Egyházi középréteg*, 141. Some thought it possible that the much more richly decorated Victorinus-codex was also produced in Oradea. See Boreczky, "Book Painting," 36.

**225** Fraknói, "Váradon írt Vitéz-codex," 245.

**226** See Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 141.

**227** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 19, doc. 1. Boronkai's transcription of this speech differs slightly from Fraknói's, but the quoted line is the same. See Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 265, doc. 7.

**228** Tertullianus, *Apologeticus* 12.25–26, trans. Alexander Souter, ed. Franz Oehler and John E. B. Mayor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917; repr. 2012).

distinguished jurist Gregory of Heimburg. In 1467 Heimburg himself reminded Vitez of the time he resided at Vitez's house, when he inspired Vitez to purchase a book containing the decrees of the early Church councils.<sup>229</sup> This might have occurred sometime during Ladislaus V's reign, when they were both the king's courtiers. We do not know how close they were at the time, but it is worth noting that Heimburg and Piccolomini were not exactly on friendly terms; Piccolomini ridiculed Heimburg extensively in his *Historia Friderici Tertii Imperatoris*.<sup>230</sup> Also, considering that precisely in 1467 Vitez chose the famously anti-conciliaristic intellectual Leonard Huntzpichler to advise him on the matters of founding the University of Bratislava, it seems that Heimburg's conciliaristic views did not appeal to him.<sup>231</sup>

The most well-known books Vitez owned during the early years of his episcopate are surely the works of Livy. Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki sent a letter to Vitez in (judging from its content, as the date is missing) 1449, asking him to lend those books to him, because he had heard from an expert that Vitez owned them. He also wrote to Gregory of Sanok and Martin Król (only the letter to Król is preserved), requesting them to bring him these books on their return to Poland, and to pass on to Vitez his promise to immediately have them copied and returned.<sup>232</sup> The same message was delivered to Król orally by Długosz.<sup>233</sup>

Livy's writings had a profound influence on the humanist worldview and literary style, ever since Lamberto Colonna discovered several of his books in Chartres back in the fourteenth century.<sup>234</sup> It seems that Livy was one of Vitez's favourite authors, as he would often quote him in his works.<sup>235</sup> Three tomes of Livy's *History of Rome*—the first, third and fourth decade—bearing Vitez's coats of arms are still extant, which means he truly did possess them.<sup>236</sup> However, the last tome bears a version of the coat of arms with an archbishop's cross, which means that it was produced after 1465.<sup>237</sup> All three of them were of a high quality and richly decorated, and were probably produced by the famous Florentine copyist Piero Strozzi. They were, therefore, commissioned by

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**229** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:245, doc. 427.

**230** See, for example, Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 124ff.

**231** See Frank, *Der antikonziliaristische Dominikaner Leonhard Huntzpichler*.

**232** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 167. See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 30 and 45.

**233** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 166.

**234** Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 25.

**235** Pajorin, "Crusades and Early Humanism," 247–48.

**236** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 115–17. The first and fourth decades also bear the coat of arms of the Garazda family, but in a subordinate position relative to Vitez's. Fraknói analyzed those codices and mentioned that a piece of paper was found inserted in one of them, bearing the inscription "qui ambulat" on one side, and on the other "de decimis; de literis casparis; de Jo. pongracz; de dominico preposito; de Nicolao Banfy; de Stephano Bathor." He thought these were written by Vitez himself. See Fraknói, "Vitéz János Livius-codexei," 11.

**237** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 116.

TITI LIVII PATAVINI HISTORICORVM SVMMI  
RERVM POPVLI ROMANI AB VRBE CONDITA LI  
BER PRIMVS INCIPIT.



ACTVRVS NE SIM OPEREPRE  
TIVM. SI A PRIMORDIO VRBIS

res populi .r. perscriperim nec satis scio:  
nec si sciam dicere auisim. Quippe qui cu  
ueterem. tum uulgotam esse rem uideam:  
dum noui semper scriptores aut in rebus.  
certius aliquid allaturos se: aut scribendi  
arte rudem uetustatem superaturus credunt.

Vtque erit: uiuabit tamen rerum gesta  
rum memorie principum populis pro uirili parte me ipsam con  
sulsisse. Et si in tanta scriptorum turba mea fama in obscuro est: nobilita  
te ac magnitudine eorum. qui nomini officient meo consolentur. Res est  
preterea & immensi operis: ut que supra septingentesimum annum re  
petatur: & que ab exiguis profecta titulis co creuerit: ut iam magnitu  
dine laboret sua. Legentium plerisque haud dubito quin prime origines  
proximaque originibus minus prebitura uoluptatis sint: festinantibus ad  
hec nona. quibus iam pridem preualentis populis uires se ipse conficiunt.  
Ego contra: hoc quoque laboris premium petam: ut me a conspectu malo  
rum. que nostra tot per annos uidit. etas tantisper certe dum prisca illa  
tota mente repeto auertam: omnis experte cure. que animum & si non.  
flectere a uero. sollicitum tamen efficere possit. Que ante conditam co  
dendamue urbem poetis magis decora. fabulis: qui incorruptis rerum  
gestarum monumentis traduntur: ea nec affirmare. nec refellere in ani  
mo est. Datur hec uenia antiquitati: ut miscendo humana diuinis pri  
mordia urbium augustiora faciat. Et sicui populo licere oportet con  
secrare origines suas & ad deos referre auctores: ea belli gloria est popu  
lo .r. ut cum suum conditor: isque sui parentem matrem potissimum ferat:  
tam & hoc gentes humane patiantur. equo animo. qui imperium patiun  
tur: Sed hec & his similia utcumque animaduersa aut exultimata erunt:  
haud in magno equidem ponam discrimine. Ad illa mihi pro se quisque  
acriter intendat animam: que uita. qui mores fuerint: per quos uirorum  
quibusque artibus domi militiaeque partem & auctum imperium sit. La

Figure 1: Title page of Livy's *History of Rome* bearing Vitez's coat of arms. From München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 15731, fol. 3r. Reproduced with permission.

Vitez around the time he was made archbishop of Esztergom.<sup>238</sup> That means that those were almost certainly not the specimens requested by Oleśnicki in 1449. It is possible that the episcopal library of Oradea already possessed specimens of Livy's works, and that Vitez inherited them when he was made bishop.

### An Ardent Astrologer

We have so far examined Vitez's education, his circle of acquaintances, and his efforts to build up an image of himself as a patron of the arts. However, another important aspect of his cultural activities became prominent during the 1450s—his interest in astronomy, or, to be more precise, its astrological applications. This is connected to Vitez's career advancement. Joining King Ladislaus's court launched Vitez to the higher echelons of European politics and brought him in contact with influential diplomats, such as Prokop of Rabštejn and Enea Silvio Piccolomini. However, it also brought him in contact with men of other trades, but not necessarily less influential. These were, above all, astronomers. Here we will examine what these contacts can tell us about this aspect of Vitez's intellectual pursuits.

The most distinguished among these astronomers was one of the leading astronomers of the second half of the fifteenth century, who continued John of Gmunden's work in Vienna: George Aunpekh of Peuerbach. As was previously mentioned, Peuerbach dedicated some of his works to Vitez and was in relatively close contact with him. It seems their encounter was not accidental,<sup>239</sup> and that it included several intermediaries, the first being Piccolomini. Studying their connection shows that Vitez knew another important scholar even before he met Peuerbach—John Nihili.

Piccolomini would often recommend to Vitez people who had some business at King Ladislaus's court, such as the aforementioned Niccoló Lisci and a certain Virgil of Brescia.<sup>240</sup> Among others, in April 1455 he advised George Polycarp Kosztoláni to seek employment at Ladislaus's chancery and to ask Vitez for assistance in doing so. Kosztoláni previously asked Piccolomini to help him find employment at Frederick III's chancery, but the Italian excused himself as being unable to.<sup>241</sup> Piccolomini also recommended someone much more influential to Vitez—the Bohemian John Nihili, court astrologer of Frederick III and one of the latter's most influential courtiers.<sup>242</sup> The emperor would often consult him before making decisions.<sup>243</sup>

**238** Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 349–59.

**239** Cf. Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 74.

**240** Vitéz, *Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 42, doc. 7. This letter of recommendation of Virgil (probably Virgilio Bornati) contains a humorous play on words, as Piccolomini wrote about sending Virgil to Vitez—not the famous one from Mantua, but one from Brescia, who, while being infinitely inferior to the former, was nevertheless noble and gifted in body and spirit. See also Pajorin, "Primordi," 822–23.

**241** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 133. Kosztoláni's bid was successful, and he later entered King Matthias's service. See Fraknói, "Mátyás király magyar diplomatái," 5–14.

**242** For more on him, see Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 746–47.

**243** Shank, "Academic Consulting," 260–62. Regardless of whether or not Piccolomini personally



Piccolomini was on excellent terms with Nihili. In June 1451, he supported the astrologer's bid for a canonry of Olomouc,<sup>244</sup> and in 1454, when the deanery of Olomouc was vacated by the election of its previous holder, Bohuslav of Zvole, as the city's bishop, he intervened, having it assigned to Nihili.<sup>245</sup> After Piccolomini departed for Rome in 1455, Nihili wrote that he missed him and that he enjoyed their conversations.<sup>246</sup> Prokop of Rabštejn was also an old friend of Nihili's, back from before he became a chancellor of Ladislaus V.<sup>247</sup>

Piccolomini recommended the astrologer to Vitez in January 1454, at Nihili's own request. The latter decided to return to Bohemia, to try to reclaim his family's estates, lost during the Hussite Wars.<sup>248</sup> He was probably prompted by the revision of property rights initiated by George of Poděbrady after Ladislaus's coronation.<sup>249</sup> For his journey, he was provided with recommendations to Poděbrady by both Piccolomini and Frederick III.<sup>250</sup> The former also wrote to Prokop of Rabštejn, informing him that Nihili would soon arrive at Ladislaus's court.<sup>251</sup> Nihili specifically requested to be recommended to Vitez, probably because the latter was one of the few Catholics at Ladislaus's largely Utraquist court in Prague, and because he, as the privy chancellor for Hungary, had direct access to the king. As Nihili was himself a Catholic cleric, he might have hoped for Vitez to be sympathetic to his plight.

Although he was in the emperor's employ, Nihili offered his services to other dignitaries as well. He was forced to do so primarily for financial reasons; in a letter to Peuerbach, he bemoaned the expense of residing at the imperial court. Other things had their price too. In the same letter, Nihili complained about having to write and make copies of his writings himself, because he could not afford a scribe.<sup>252</sup> However, his visit to Bohemia was met with success, as he managed to gain King Ladislaus's sympathies.<sup>253</sup> It might be that Vitez had a hand in that. Nihili remained at Ladislaus's court at least until April 1454. He was missed at the imperial court in Wiener Neustadt, and Piccolomini asked Lisci to give his regards to him.<sup>254</sup>

As Ladislaus proved to be a welcoming patron, Nihili advised Peuerbach to seek employment with him, as Peuerbach's financial situation was worse than Nihili's—

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believed in Nihili's predictions, in June 1453 he considered them important enough to be reported to Cardinal Carvajal. See *Briefwechsel*, III/1:172, doc. 97.

**244** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:18, doc. 7.

**245** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:491–92, doc. 290.

**246** "Aus dem Briefwechsel ... Georg von Peuerbach," ed. Czerny, 296–97, doc. 7.

**247** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:349, doc. 179; 359, doc. 183; 421, doc. 234.

**248** *Vítěz, Orationes*, ed. Fraknói, 3, doc. 38.

**249** Regarding this revision, see Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 100–101.

**250** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:425–26, doc. 237 and 612, doc. XIX.

**251** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:440, doc. 253.

**252** "Aus dem Briefwechsel ... Georg von Peuerbach," ed. Czerny, 292, doc. 2.

**253** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:492, doc. 290.

**254** *Briefwechsel*, III/1:461, doc. 273.

he incessantly complained about being deep in debt.<sup>255</sup> During the mid-1450s, Peurbach was indeed taken into Ladislaus's employment. Of course, he, like Nihili, had other clients as well. He would occasionally provide services for Frederick III, and he lectured at the University of Vienna—interestingly, not on astronomy, but on Classical Latin poetry. There he requested and received the key to the cabinet in which John of Gmunden's books on astrology were kept.<sup>256</sup> He also remained in contact with Nihili until the latter's death in 1457 and cooperated with him on constructing astronomical instruments. For example, Nihili loaned him a sundial with a magnetic needle, called a "compass," and asked Peurbach to make two or three portable sundials for him.<sup>257</sup> In 1456, Peurbach even said he hoped their masters, Ladislaus and Frederick, would soon make peace, so he and Nihili could spend more time together.<sup>258</sup>

Nihili was probably the connection through which Peurbach came in contact with John Vitez. To Nihili, Peurbach was a struggling, junior colleague.<sup>259</sup> Similarly to how he recommended him to seek employment with King Ladislaus, Nihili probably helped him by introducing him to that astrologically inclined prelate. Considering that chance had played an important role in his career, it is not unlikely that Vitez thought the stars directed his life. In any case, he availed himself of Peurbach's expertise, commissioning several astronomical treatises and instruments.<sup>260</sup> We have already mentioned the *Quadratum geometricum*. Although we do not know when this treatise was written, or the accompanying instrument constructed, it is likely that Peurbach composed it around the time when he wrote his other works on astronomical devices (the astrolobe, the sundial and others), meaning in the early 1460s.<sup>261</sup>

The other work dedicated by Peurbach to Vitez, *Tabulae Waradienses*, is an almanac adapted to the Oradea meridian, with a list of future eclipses. According to Peurbach's dedication, Vitez commissioned it because the existing works on eclipses were too long and difficult, and tedious even to experts.<sup>262</sup> Eclipses were usually associated with events of great importance, and at least one astrologer predicted that the partial solar eclipse of September 1457 would portend the death of a great man.<sup>263</sup> As Ladislaus V died several weeks afterwards, it appeared at least to some that such predictions were reliable. Whether or not this particular prediction reached Vitez, the dramatic events of the previous few years probably prompted him to pay special attention to celestial events. It is also possible that Vitez did not intend for the treatise to be

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**255** "Aus dem Briefwechsel ... Georg von Peurbach," ed. Czerny, 289–92, doc. 2.

**256** Shank, "Academic Consulting," 264–65 and 269.

**257** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 19–20.

**258** "Aus dem Briefwechsel ... Georg von Peurbach," ed. Czerny, 302–3, doc. 9. This letter reveals that Nihili's eyesight had severely deteriorated by then, a debilitating condition for an astronomer.

**259** Peurbach turned thirty in 1453: see Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 17.

**260** Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 78.

**261** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 26; Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 80.

**262** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 177.

**263** Azzolini, *The Duke and the Stars*, 68.

used only by himself. It was considered commendable for rulers to be acquainted with astronomy; even Piccolomini recommended to Ladislaus V in his *De liberorum educatione* to at least learn the basics of it. The examples of its usefulness listed there are, perhaps significantly, stories about how commanders were able to calm their superstitious soldiers by knowing the nature of eclipses.<sup>264</sup> As Vitez specifically requested a simple and less boring work, it is possible he intended to present it to Matthias Corvinus.

The *Tabulae* were a reworked version of Peuerbach's charts computed to the Vienna meridian, copied a number of times and later even printed.<sup>265</sup> The Oradea version is of lesser quality than its Viennese counterpart. The calculations in it are not very precise, and it is apparent that Peuerbach did not know the exact coordinates of Oradea. It was made sometime before 1460, as the first eclipse listed in it was set in that year.<sup>266</sup> It eventually ended up in King Matthias's library, because Peuerbach's student, Johannes Müller of Königsberg, called Regiomontanus,<sup>267</sup> added his own dedication to Matthias to the manuscript already containing Peuerbach's dedication to Vitez and presented it to the king.<sup>268</sup> This might mean the *Tabulae* were never delivered to Vitez, but that Peuerbach kept them with him until his death in 1461, after which they passed to Regiomontanus.<sup>269</sup> Perhaps Vitez never had the opportunity to make use of them anyway. Although some authors believed Vitez founded an observatory in Oradea and made his observations there,<sup>270</sup> we have already noted that he was rarely in his see throughout Ladislaus V's reign.

Vitez also owned a specimen of Peuerbach's *Theoricae novae planetarum*, finished in 1460.<sup>271</sup> Vitez's copy bears his coat of arms and contains a dedication by Regiomontanus,<sup>272</sup> so the latter likely presented it to Vitez sometime after Peuerbach's death. Later it came into possession of Martin Bylica of Olkusz, also an associate of Vitez's, who donated it to the University of Kraków in 1492. Although these *Theoricae* did not bring anything revolutionary to the understanding of the motion of planets, it is worth noting that later editors found it unusual that Peuerbach started

**264** See Shank, "Academic Consulting," 260–61.

**265** Dadić, "Znanstveni i kulturni krug," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 183–207 at 185.

**266** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 27.

**267** Regiomontanus admired Peuerbach and was proud to call himself his student. See Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 29–30.

**268** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 124.

**269** Not long before his death, Peuerbach sent an example of the Viennese version of the *Tabulae*, copied by Regiomontanus, to Cardinal Bessarion. See Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 27.

**270** For example, see Dadić, "Znanstveni i kulturni krug," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 183–207 at 185 and Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 347. Zinner was very skeptical, noting the lack of evidence. Peuerbach, for his part, obviously did not make his observations in Oradea, as he would have noticed the discrepancies. See Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 27.

**271** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 22 and Shank, "Academic Consulting," 269. Cf. Dadić, "Znanstveni i kulturni krug," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 183–207 at 184.

**272** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 124–25.

his list with the Sun.<sup>273</sup> Two astronomical tables were appended to Vitez's copy, one of which might have been made by John Gazulić of Dubrovnik, and the other by Regiomontanus.<sup>274</sup>

All these men, particularly Nihili, Peuerbach and Regiomontanus, were members of Vitez's network, and their work probably influenced his decisions. Due to his contacts with Martin Król, we can assume he developed an interest in astrology earlier (perhaps during his study in Vienna), but that he had the opportunity and ability to indulge in it only after he became the privy chancellor of Ladislaus V. This interest would later develop even further, with astronomers forming a prominent group among Vitez's courtiers in the following decade.

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**273** Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 79.

**274** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 125. For a short biography of Gazulić, see Grmek and Dadić, "O astronomu Ginu Gazulu."

## Chapter 5

# IN HIGH PLACES

### Behind Matthias's Throne

In the following sections, we examine Vitez's political actions after King Matthias's accession. Their scope is limited to Vitez's political life, his diplomatic activities and his involvement with foreign powers. Unfortunately, using this approach means that some important events, such as his appointment as archbishop of Esztergom or his founding of the University of Bratislava, are glossed over. They will be discussed separately, in their own sections. The key points here will be his participation in Matthias's election and accession, the role he played in the making of the peace treaty with Emperor Frederick III, his involvement in the preparation and execution of the Hungarian participation in the Bohemian Crusade and, lastly, his complicity in the conspiracy against Matthias.

As we will see, Vitez's influence waxed and waned considerably during this period. As Matthias got older, he increasingly pushed Vitez into the background, which makes it more difficult to discern which of Vitez's actions were of his own device, and which of Matthias's. It is important to note there were many factors at play at the Hungarian court, and the king's policy was not necessarily the dominant one. It is necessary to present the events in a clear and uninterrupted manner, as many of those regarding Vitez's ecclesiastical career or his cultural activities happened simultaneously with political developments. As it would not do either of those aspects justice either to intersperse them or to drastically condense them so as to interrupt the narrative, they feature in separate sections.

The watershed moment in Vitez's life was, without any doubt, Matthias Corvinus's accession. After it, he was no longer just one of the pieces on the board, but a policy-maker and statesman. However, despite everything he accomplished up to that point, the part he played was, as so many things in his life, decided by chance. Nevertheless, this time he was far better equipped to control the tide of events instead of being carried by it.

The series of events preceding Ladislaus V's death was essentially accidental. The king initially entrusted the captive Matthias Hunyadi to the treasurer of the Duchy of Austria Konrad Hölzler, who became the king's most trusted adviser after the assassination of Count Ulrich of Celje. However, not long before his death, Ladislaus had Hölzler imprisoned for embezzlement and ordered Matthias's transfer to Prague.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, purely by coincidence, Vitez and the young Hunyadi were at the same place at the time of Ladislaus's death—the former a powerful courtier, the latter a prisoner.

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<sup>1</sup> Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 143–44.

The king's death caused another power vacuum in Hungary. The neighbouring rulers pressed their more or less legitimate claims, attempting to fill it. Duke William of Saxony, married to Ladislaus's eldest sister Anne, had arguably the strongest claim, but it was not taken very seriously, except by Balthasar Montschiedel.<sup>2</sup> William himself devoted his energies to his bid for the throne of Bohemia, not Hungary.<sup>3</sup> King Casimir IV of Poland was a much more serious contender, as he was not only married to Ladislaus's other sister, Elizabeth, but was also a brother of the heroic King Wladislas, who perished at Varna.<sup>4</sup> The rest of the candidates were Ladislaus's distant cousins, Emperor Frederick and his brother Albert (recently elevated to archduke of Austria).<sup>5</sup> Both of them concentrated their efforts on the Duchy of Austria, and the latter attempted to become margrave of Moravia as well.<sup>6</sup>

Vitez was probably weighing his options. As he served John Hunyadi and Ladislaus V through almost two decades of conflict with the emperor, Frederick or Albert's taking the throne would have been risky for him. Casimir was an alluring option, especially as he would not have had the time to focus exclusively on Hungary and would have therefore had to rely on his advisers. However, his election would have prolonged the internecine war, considering that the Hunyadi party held almost half of the kingdom and refused to recognize anyone but their own candidate.

This candidate was Matthias Hunyadi, a boy of fourteen and the last remaining heir of John Hunyadi, who just happened to be in Vitez's vicinity. From Vitez's perspective, he was the ideal choice. Matthias was an inexperienced youth, and if Vitez would arrange the situation to his advantage, he could hope to effectively rule though him. After all, the boy's claim was virtually nonexistent. He could not claim the throne by the right of inheritance, and his family was of foreign, not aristocratic stock.<sup>7</sup> If elected, Matthias would need the help of powerful and experienced politicians such as Vitez, and that presented many opportunities. Besides, by offering his support to Matthias, Vitez could both regain his reputation among the Hunyadi party and stop worrying about the animosity of the Habsburgs. Of course, as we cannot be certain of Vitez's motives, this is merely speculation, but it might help us understand why he, who had

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<sup>2</sup> See Fraknói, "Anna szász hercegné," 3–6.

<sup>3</sup> Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 154.

<sup>4</sup> Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 29–30. Długosz, probably trying to justify later events, claimed that the emperor supported Casimir's bid. See Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:220–21.

<sup>5</sup> The title was awarded to him by the emperor in 1453, during one of their more amiable episodes. See Wilhelm Baum, "Albrecht VI. († 1463), Erzherzog von Österreich. Skizze einer Biographie (1. Teil)," *Der Sülchgau* 31 (1987): 23–45 at 36.

<sup>6</sup> Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 161–62 and 176.

<sup>7</sup> Bonfini noted that Matthias was prone to fits of rage if someone would belittle his origins, which his opponents would often do. He was mocked for being a Wallachian and some called him a mongrel (because his mother was Hungarian), particularly among the nobility of Hungary proper. See Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 542. Regarding Matthias's ancestry, see Radu Lupescu, "Matthias Hunyadi: From the Family Origins to the Threshold of Power," in *Matthias Corvinus, the King*, ed. Farbaký et al., 35–50.

until then served Jagiellonian and Habsburg kings, decided to support a candidate so different from them.

Immediately after Ladislaus V's death, Vitez contacted the leaders of the Hunyadi party—Matthias's mother, Elizabeth Szilágyi, and her brother Michael. He had much to offer them. Not only was he at the court in Prague, in direct contact with Matthias, but he also had access to the Bohemian governor, George of Poděbrady, and could obtain his support for Matthias's bid. Vitez thus had the opportunity to practically deliver the boy to the Szilágyis and to secure the support of the most powerful neighbouring ruler. The Szilágyis took his offer and relied on him to negotiate with Poděbrady.

Three weeks after Ladislaus's death, Poděbrady agreed to support Matthias's bid and made sure that the strongest enemies of the Hunyadis—Nicholas of Ilok and John Jiskra—would not attend the election diet in January 1458.<sup>8</sup> This, however, came at a price. Matthias was required to get engaged to Poděbrady's daughter Catherine, which he did, perhaps on Vitez's advice. Poděbrady also requested a payment of sixty thousand florins, but immediately remitted it as part of his daughter's dowry.<sup>9</sup> Vitez communicated Poděbrady's terms to the Szilágyis, who apparently found them acceptable. He continued to work with them on gathering support for Matthias.<sup>10</sup> It is possible that the Szilágyis deliberately deceived Ladislaus Garai when they made a deal with him on January 12, according to which Matthias was to marry Ladislaus's daughter Anne.<sup>11</sup> However, it is likely that they were willing to promise anything to anyone at the time, thinking they would later be able to choose which commitments to fulfil.<sup>12</sup> It is possible that Vitez also influenced the papal legate Carvajal, who was in Hungary at the time and who might have secured the pope's support for Matthias.<sup>13</sup>

With these preparations in place, Michael Szilágyi marched his army to Pest, where the Estates had gathered. Under duress, they elected Matthias as king on January 24, 1458. Szilágyi was immediately appointed as his governor.<sup>14</sup> Soon afterwards, Poděbrady brought Matthias to the Hungarian border, to Strážnice on the River Morava. There, on February 9, Matthias swore to bring Catherine to his kingdom within a year and to marry her when she turned twelve, and to crown her as queen upon his own coronation, or pay an indemnity of one hundred thousand florins, to repay Poděbrady

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**8** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 152–53.

**9** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 299.

**10** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 529–30. Bonfini claimed that Poděbrady insisted on a ransom in return for Matthias's release. Some historians accepted this as credible (see, for example, Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 136; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 53).

**11** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 140–41.

**12** It seems they were still considering their options when Matthias acceded to the throne, as there were rumours about him breaking off the betrothal to Catherine and planning to marry Anne: Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 207.

**13** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 140. Carvajal might have believed that Matthias's (and, by extension, Szilágyi's) election would be beneficial for the pope's crusade project. See Canedo, *Un español*, 189–90.

**14** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 298–99.

for his help during the election. He also made an alliance with Poděbrady and his sons. This contract was witnessed by, among others, Vitez, Bishop Vincent Szilasi of Vác, and Elizabeth and Michael Szilágyi, all of whom applied their seals to it.<sup>15</sup> In Bonfini's version of these events, Vitez was the most important factor in them; in Strážnice he gave a welcoming speech to Matthias on behalf of Hungary and brought him across the Morava.<sup>16</sup> Although the speech itself, which Bonfini records in full, is almost certainly Bonfini's contrivance, Vitez apparently played a very important part in Matthias's accession, at least because his influence in the kingdom increased immensely after it.

As an experienced statesman, Vitez knew that there would be consequences to the alliance with Poděbrady. The Utraquist governor soon followed in Matthias's steps, and on March 2, 1458, was elected as king of Bohemia thanks in no small part to the support of Zdeňek of Šternberk, one of the most powerful Catholic Bohemian nobles.<sup>17</sup> However, he did not have a bishop to crown him. The Bohemian bishops were Utraquists and as such unconfirmed by the pope, and the only Moravian bishop, Protase of Boskovice, was just appointed as bishop of Olomouc and still unconsecrated.<sup>18</sup> Vitez was likely seen as a staunch ally of Poděbrady, as the latter's rivals, such as Margrave Albert of Brandenburg and the dukes of Saxony, thought it necessary to prevent him from performing the coronation.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, not long after his election, Poděbrady asked Matthias to send him a bishop, pointing out that he was keeping up his end of the alliance—specifically, that he admonished Nicholas of Ilok to submit to Matthias. The request possibly came with an oral message expressly asking for Vitez. Matthias agreed on March 15 to send *some* bishop, noting somewhat sourly that Nicholas of Ilok still did not show any signs of submission.<sup>20</sup> However, before dispatching said bishop, Matthias consulted Carvajal, who did not oppose the notion, but did recommend that the officiating bishop should request of Poděbrady to swear an oath of fealty to the pope and to renounce all heresies before the coronation.<sup>21</sup> This is significant, as just before the dukes of Saxony had, through the papal tithe collector Marinus di Fregeno, asked the pope and Carvajal to prevent Vitez from officiating the coronation.<sup>22</sup> The legate himself may have believed that Vitez would not insist on the

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**15** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:573–75, doc. 279 (see also Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 54). It was specified that the wedding was to be a Catholic one. The Hungarian side likely insisted on this proviso to avoid participating in Utraquist rituals.

**16** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 535–36.

**17** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 160.

**18** Protase was appointed by the pope on November 21, 1457: see UB, 115–16, doc. 119. Although his family was originally Utraquist, they converted to Catholicism, apparently under Capestrano's influence. See Kalous, "Boskovice urai," 375–76.

**19** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 162. The only other bishop they thought was likely to crown Poděbrady was Jošt of Rožmberk, who would later be a close adherent of Poděbrady's.

**20** MKL, 1:1–2, doc. 1.

**21** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 167.

**22** Max Jordan, *Das Königthum Georg's von Poděbrad* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1861), 431–32, docs. B and C.



oath and therefore suggested that Matthias should not send him to Prague. The ones ultimately sent there were the bishops of Győr and of Vác, Augustine of Shalanky and Vincent Szilasi respectively.<sup>23</sup>

As these two came from opposing sides of the political spectrum, their mission may have meant to demonstrate the newly established Hungarian unity. In any case, what they did in Prague determined the events of the next several decades. Nominally, Poděbrady refused to renounce all heresies, as he did not think himself a heretic. He did, however, agree to swear fealty to the pope, under the condition that it would be done in secret, to avoid an outrage among the Utraquists.<sup>24</sup> Shalanky and Szilasi consented and, before the coronation, both Poděbrady and his wife, Joan of Rožmitál, swore on the Gospel to the written text of the oath, held by Shalanky.<sup>25</sup> After the oath was taken, on May 7, 1458, Shalanky crowned Poděbrady.<sup>26</sup> It is impossible to know how Vitez would have acted had he been in Prague instead, but judging by his efforts to preserve the alliance with Poděbrady, he likely considered it essential. By then, his own policy had begun to take shape, and he finally had the power to implement it.

During the first years of Matthias's reign, the royal court tried to secure the support of the lesser nobles and to curb the power of the magnates. Vitez probably had a hand in laying this course.<sup>27</sup> He was seen as one of the most influential persons in the kingdom, and his contemporaries thought the path to the king led through him. For example, in May 1458, the Venetian Senate instructed its ambassador in Hungary, Pietro Tomasi, to approach Vitez as soon as possible and try to win his support for a request from the king.<sup>28</sup> Also, in 1462 the papal nuncio Girolamo Lando reported to the pope that Vitez's advice was worth more than the combined power of all other Hungarian bishops.<sup>29</sup> Vitez could exert such an influence on the young king not only due to his carefully crafted international prestige and his role in the accession, but also because he managed to rather quickly eliminate the competition. Matthias managed to make himself an enemy of Michael Szilágy, and the latter was forced to step down as governor in mid-1458, in which Vitez played a part.<sup>30</sup> The king also antagonized other powerful allies of his late father, such as Ladislaus of Kanizsa.<sup>31</sup>

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**23** MKL, 1:8, doc. 5.

**24** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 168–71.

**25** MDE, 1:22–25, doc. 16.

**26** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 172; see also Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 174.

**27** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 68; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 81–82.

**28** MDE, 1:26–27, doc. 18. For the context of his action, see Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 88.

**29** Johann Christian von Engel, *Geschichte des Ungrischen Reiches und seiner Nebenländer*, 5 vols. (Halle: Gebauer, 1797–1804), 2:15–16, doc. 3; regarding this report, see Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 142.

**30** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 14; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 60–61. Pálosfalvi thought that his mandate as governor was supposed to end with Matthias's arrival in Hungary. See Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 81.

**31** Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 83.

If he was truly working to strengthen royal power and limit that of the magnates, Vitez had an example to look up to—George of Poděbrady, who was doing the same since Ladislaus V's coronation, and trying to rule with the support of the Estates after his own accession.<sup>32</sup> Vitez also had a vested interest in reducing the magnates' and increasing the king's power, as he could influence the young king directly. After all, no one really saw Matthias as anything more than a convenient puppet at the time.<sup>33</sup> It is difficult to determine which of the latter's decisions during the first year of his reign were really his own, and which were dictated by his advisers, particularly Vitez.

If we decide to view Vitez as one of the most influential among Matthias's advisers, it is perhaps baffling that he was not immediately reinstated as privy chancellor. At that time, the privy chancellor was effectively the only chancellor, as Matthias was not yet crowned and therefore could not legally use the royal double seal, carried by the high chancellor. Although Cardinal Szécsi still held the title, he could not issue any of the king's charters.<sup>34</sup> The privy chancellor, on the other hand, could, as the legal restrictions did not apply to the secret seal. During the first few years of Matthias's reign, that office was held by Albert Vetési, bishop of Nitra from 1457 and of Veszprém from 1458, and after him by Nicholas Bodó Györgyi, provost of Székesfehérvár.<sup>35</sup> However, it was not crucial to Vitez to hold that office himself,<sup>36</sup> as he could wield his power directly through Matthias.<sup>37</sup> In fact, he was given a chancery office only after his influence on the king started to wane.

Vitez had other ways of securing his power. After his acquaintance Enea Silvio Piccolomini became Pope Pius II in 1458, Vitez obtained from him a lifelong exemption from the authority of his metropolitan (the archbishop of Kalocsa), his primate (the archbishop of Esztergom), and all papal legates, as well as the privilege to be personally subject directly to the Holy See, no matter which diocese he ruled.<sup>38</sup> That was presumably a precaution meant to prevent another incident such as when Vitez was interned by Szécsi, or when Várdai tried to supplant him as bishop of Oradea. Vitez had also gathered enough influence to start promoting his protégés to positions of power.

**32** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 389.

**33** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 299; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 31.

**34** This does not mean he was powerless; in fact, his judicial authority as judge of the court of the king's special presence had most likely increased. See András Kubinyi, "Szécsi Dénes esztergomi érsek—különös tekintettel Mátyás-kori politikai szerepére," in *Lux Pannoniae—Esztergom, Az ezeréves kulturális metropolis*, ed. István Horváth (Esztergom: Balassa Bálint Múzeum, 2001), 97–108 at 99.

**35** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 34. Regarding Vetési, see Pál Rainer, "Vetési Albert Veszprémi püspök," *A Veszprém Megyei Múzeumok Közleménye* 18 (1986): 227–33. Györgyi was provost of Székesfehérvár from 1444 until his death around 1475: see Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 1:83.

**36** Cf. Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 20–21.

**37** This is another similarity between him and Provost Benedict (son of Michael) of Székesfehérvár, who did not hold any office in King Sigismund's chancery (being formally his "special adviser"), but had a great influence on the charters issued by it. See Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 291.

**38** Theiner, 2:319–20, doc. 489.

One of the first bishops appointed after Matthias's accession was his nephew, Janus Pannonius. In March 1459, when Pannonius was provost of Titel (he advanced from being custos of Oradea by then), he was made Vitez's coadjutor in Oradea.<sup>39</sup> Immediately afterwards, after the death of Nicholas Barius, he was appointed as bishop of Pécs, despite being well below the required canonical age of thirty.<sup>40</sup> It appears that Vitez was in charge of that diocese for a while, perhaps due to Pannonius's youth. In a letter sent in June 1459, King Matthias addressed Vitez as the custodian and episcopal administrator of the diocese of Pécs.<sup>41</sup> It is also possible, although difficult to prove, that Pannonius was deputy chairman of the court of the king's special presence in 1458.<sup>42</sup>

### A Man of Peace

The first few years of Matthias's reign were the period in which Vitez's actions as a statesman became more prominent. As his position became reasonably secure, he could start implementing his policy. However, he never explicitly expressed his policy, and what little of it we can discern from his writings is limited to the broader problem of Christian unity and coordinated action against the Ottomans. Nevertheless, we will examine his actions and try to determine whether there was an underlying pattern to them which could be considered a policy. As we shall see, if there was such a policy, it was one of peace.

One of the first goals Vitez devoted himself to was obtaining the Holy Crown for Matthias. The beginning was promising. In the summer of 1458, Vitez started negotiating the transaction with Emperor Frederick,<sup>43</sup> who previously hinted that he was ready to turn over the crown in exchange for money.<sup>44</sup> On September 1, Frederick offered to hand over both crowns he had in his keeping—the Holy Crown and the one previously worn by Queen Elizabeth—and expressed a willingness to cede the parts of western Hungary he still held, in exchange for a payment in cash.<sup>45</sup> The negotiations essentially came down to haggling. However, we do not know how they would have ended, as they were interrupted by a rebellion of Hungarian magnates in February 1459.

The dissatisfaction with the new king did not take long to erupt. Nicholas of Ilok, after vacillating for almost a year, gathered other dissidents and offered the throne either to Poděbrady, or to the latter's third son, Henry. However, the Bohemian king

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**39** Theiner, 2:320, doc. 490.

**40** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 111; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 57; Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 308.

**41** DL 15 373.

**42** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 34. Cf. Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 71.

**43** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 137–38; Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 14.

**44** According to Bonfini, the emperor claimed he was entitled to indemnities for the damages he had suffered while safekeeping the crown, and for fostering Ladislaus V. See Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 547.

**45** UB, 159–61, doc. 167.

turned down both offers.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Nicholas and his allies, such as the counts Szentgyörgyi, John Vitovec, Ladislaus of Kanizsa, Martin Frankapan, and the bishop of Transylvania Matthias of Łabyszyn, elected Frederick III as king of Hungary on February 17, 1459.<sup>47</sup> This rendered Vitez's negotiations meaningless, as war with the emperor broke out again. It also created a lasting problem, as the emperor now claimed the title of king of Hungary for himself. However, although the rebels, supported by Imperial troops, had considerable success in the battlefield, Nicholas of Ilok withdrew after a few months and swore fealty to Matthias on July 1. That threw the rebellion into disarray.<sup>48</sup> True to Balthasar Montschiedel's earlier assessment of his character, Nicholas proved he was loyal only to himself.<sup>49</sup>

During the rebellion, Vitez was firmly on Matthias's side and was among the magnates who affirmed their allegiance to him on February 10 in Buda.<sup>50</sup> However, the rebellion interrupted another item on his agenda. When it broke out, Vitez was negotiating in Szeged with the Bosnian king, Stephen Thomas, who agreed to send his son Stephen to what was left of Serbia to marry the recently deceased George Branković's daughter and become its ruler. That was a bitter honour, as an Ottoman invasion was looming. King Stephen wrote to Vitez from Bosnia on February 10, thirteen days after their meeting (he emphasized that he rode very quickly and without rest), promising to execute the plan despite the Ottoman pressure. He also let Vitez know he had learned that the Ottomans would make a decisive assault on Bosnia as soon as the snow melted, begging Vitez to influence Matthias to send him aid, because otherwise he would certainly perish.<sup>51</sup> This plan was supposed to consolidate the defence of Hungary in the south by establishing an alliance between Bosnia and Serbia. Although the plan succeeded, the alliance failed militarily and Sultan Mehmed II conquered Smederevo, the capital of Serbia, on June 20.<sup>52</sup> As Hungary was paralyzed with infighting, it was unable to prevent that, or even to respond to it. If not before, Vitez probably realized then that the Ottoman Empire was impossible to ignore, and that it would take the full strength of Hungary to resist it.

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**46** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 206.

**47** See their declaration in *Vestigia comitiorum apud Hungaros*, ed. Kovačić, 348–52. See also Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 544. Pálosfalvi warned that Ladislaus Garai had died shortly before the election, but his name and seal were included in the declaration nevertheless. See Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 83. Grgin thought that Martin Frankapan had joined the rebels due to his rivalry with his brother Stephen, who was Matthias's supporter. See Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 85. The only prelate among the rebels, Bishop Matthias of Transylvania, was an ally of Nicholas of Ilok. See Solymosi, "König Matthias Corvinus," 290.

**48** Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 63–64. Kubinyi thought that Nicholas used the rebellion as a means of exacting concessions from the king.

**49** For Montschiedel's assessment of the loyalties of Hungarian magnates, see Fraknói, "Anna százsz herczegné," 4–6.

**50** For their declaration, see *Vestigia comitiorum apud Hungaros*, ed. Kovačić, 352–55.

**51** UB, 171–72, doc. 176. Regarding the power struggle that ensued in Serbia after Branković's death, see Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 94–97.

**52** Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilágyi," 34–35; see also Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 197–98.

Pope Pius II was already aware of that, and he quickly took steps to end the war between Frederick and Matthias. Cardinal Carvajal, who was still residing in Hungary and trying to organize the increasingly elusive crusade,<sup>53</sup> suggested that George of Poděbrady could mediate between them. The latter found this offer appealing, as he needed the emperor to recognize him as king of Bohemia and prince-elect, and did not mind putting some pressure on Matthias due to the rumours about him refusing to marry Princess Catherine.<sup>54</sup> In July 1459, Vitez went to negotiate with the emperor again, accompanied by Oswald Rozgonyi, this time to broker a truce. They reported to Matthias that Poděbrady offered to mediate. Matthias accepted the offer and granted his envoys full powers.<sup>55</sup> The first result of the negotiations was a one-year truce, concluded in Brno under the Bohemian king's auspices. To maintain his neutrality, Poděbrady titled both Frederick and Matthias as nominated kings of Hungary in the text of the truce,<sup>56</sup> which Matthias agreed to ratify.<sup>57</sup>

Vitez's actions show that strengthening the bond with Bohemia was one of his priorities. Bohemia evidently could tip the scales in a conflict between its neighbours, so such a policy was sound. Vitez set about realizing the wedding between Matthias and Catherine of Poděbrady. The Bohemian king, through his envoy Zdeňek Kostka of Postupice, specifically requested from Matthias that Vitez and Michael Szilágyi be included among the representatives who were to, in December 1460, discuss Matthias's and Catherine's marriage and reaffirm the alliance between Bohemia and Hungary.<sup>58</sup> While insisting on Szilágyi's presence—in fact, Poděbrady titled him as his "brother"—probably meant that George knew Matthias was not the only factor in Hungary, insisting on Vitez's says a lot about how much the Bohemian king trusted the bishop. It is also significant that Vitez was the one who, in early 1461, escorted Catherine to Hungary to marry Matthias.<sup>59</sup>

It seems that the fall of Serbia strengthened Vitez's resolve to maintain the alliance with Bohemia and convinced him that making peace with the emperor was of paramount importance. The morale within Hungary was low,<sup>60</sup> and the recent rebellion was a sobering experience. It signalled the failure of the court's anti-magnate policy.<sup>61</sup>

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**53** When the pope sent a blessed crusade banner to Carvajal in April 1459, he specified that it was to be used only against the Ottomans, so that Matthias could not use it in his war against Frederick. See Canedo, *Un español*, 209.

**54** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 207–9.

**55** MKL, 1:9–10, doc. 7; see also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 139.

**56** Kaprinai, *Hungaria diplomatica*, 2:341, doc. 49. For context, see Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 210–11.

**57** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:636, doc. 313.

**58** UB, 234–36, doc. 230. Zdeňek Kostka of Postupice was, like his brother Albert, a distinguished Utraquist lord. See Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 283.

**59** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 140; Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 21.

**60** Carvajal reported to the pope that the Hungarians were again threatening to come to terms with the Ottomans, as they were facing war on two fronts. See Canedo, *Un español*, 214.

**61** Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 84.

It also demonstrated the insecurity of Matthias's position, and that it was unwise to bind one's fate to him alone. Even more importantly, it shattered both the negotiations with the emperor and the anti-Ottoman strategy, proving that stability within Hungary and peace between it and its Christian neighbours was crucial for its survival. After the rebellion, and possibly prompted by it, Vitez inaugurated his policy of maintaining peace with Christian rulers and concentrating on containing the Ottomans.

Unlike Matthias, Vitez was old enough to remember the havoc wreaked by Ottoman incursions in the late 1430s and early 1440s when Serbia was under their control.<sup>62</sup> Now Serbia had fallen again and Hungary lay exposed.<sup>63</sup> Vitez was not the only Hungarian prelate aware of the danger. Albert Hangácsi started fortifying his palace and the city of Cenad in 1459, not long after becoming its bishop.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps it was one of these two to whom the ban of Mačva and commander of Belgrade Simon Nagy of Szentmárton sent an alarming letter in May 1460, saying he sent several messages to King Matthias to warn him of an impending Ottoman attack on Belgrade, but that the king would not believe him. He begged the unknown addressee to persuade Matthias to reinforce Belgrade, because there was not enough food, troops or money for it to withstand a siege.<sup>65</sup>

Besides the clear and present danger from the Ottomans, another reason for Vitez to pursue a peace policy was Pius II's effort to organize a general crusade, for which the Congress of Mantua was organized in 1459. The Kingdom of Hungary was represented at the congress by Count Stephen Frankapan, Albert Hangácsi, Bishop Francis of Krbava and the lector of Esztergom, Simon of Treviso; Nicholas of Modruš, then bishop of Senj, was also there, although unofficially.<sup>66</sup> Though the congress was a failure, the pope continued calling for a crusade. As he knew the emperor, King George of Bohemia, and King Matthias of Hungary were crucial for that project, he devoted his energies to reaching a peace agreement between Frederick and Matthias.

By then, Carvajal, who was still the papal legate, had become so loathsome to the emperor that the latter requested his removal, due to his partiality for Hungary. Pius refused, but he also warned Carvajal not to irritate the emperor any further.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, he decided to accelerate the peace efforts by dispatching Cardinal Basil Bessarion to mediate between the emperor and Matthias. Bessarion immediately approached the emperor, and in April 1460 asked Poděbrady, who was still chairing the negotiations, to delay them until his own, or at least his emissary's, arrival. He also

**62** For that phase of Ottoman-Hungarian wars, see Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare," 85–87.

**63** Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare," 94.

**64** Juhász, "Bischof Albert," 72.

**65** MDE, 1:78–79, doc. 50. For Simon Nagy, see Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 63.

**66** Luka Špoljarić, "Nikola Modruški avant la lettre: Društveno podrijetlo, akademski put i počeci crkvene karijere (uz prilog o slučaju živog mrtvaca u Senju)," *Povijesni prilozi* 33, no. 46 (2014): 69–94 at 80. Regarding Simon of Treviso, see Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:89 and Marini, *Degli archiatri pontificii*, 1:152. For Pius's crusade project, see Housley, *Crusading*, 119–20.

**67** Canedo, *Un español*, 216.

invited the Bohemian king to Vienna, to coordinate the plans for the crusade with the emperor.<sup>68</sup> The emperor joined Bessarion by extending his own invitation to George.<sup>69</sup> The relations between these two rulers, and between them and the pope, were becoming warmer, and Matthias was in danger of isolation.

Due to these developments, it would have been logical for Vitez to seek a rapprochement with the magnates, primarily with Michael Szilágyi. The latter was, as we have seen, on friendly terms with Poděbrady, and esteemed by the pope for continuing to wage war against the Ottomans on the southern borders of Hungary. He would have made a useful ally. There is an indication that Vitez approached him. In October 1460, Szilágyi issued a charter in which he pledged to protect Alexandrina of Těšín, widow of Ladislaus Garai, and their children, due to his alliance with the now late Ladislaus back in 1458. What is important here is that Vitez and his nephew Janus were there to witness the charter and affix their seals to it.<sup>70</sup> This might have signalled that Vitez had begun to improve his relations with Szilágyi and the other magnates, to make sure he would not fall together with Matthias if another, more powerful rebellion broke out. It could also be understood as an extension of what we might call his peace policy, meant to channel the kingdom's energy away from infighting and towards fighting the Ottomans.<sup>71</sup> If so, it must have been a shock for Vitez when Szilágyi was captured by an Ottoman raiding party led by Ali-bey Mihaloğlu merely a month later, and executed in Constantinople soon afterwards.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, Matthias had other priorities. By 1461, the emperor's position had become precarious, as he was pressed between his brother, Archduke Albert VI of Austria (who had once again turned against Frederick), and Duke Louis IX of Bavaria-Landshut.<sup>73</sup> Around that time, Albert attended the wedding of Matthias and Catherine of Poděbrady, and he managed to impress the adolescent king with plans for a military campaign against the emperor. On April 10, the two made an alliance in Buda against Frederick III.<sup>74</sup> According to their plans, Albert was to become the new ruler of Austria, and Matthias was to receive the Hungarian holdings still occupied by the emperor, as well as the Holy Crown, in return for his aid.<sup>75</sup> It appears that Matthias greatly valued Albert and the alliance with him. In May 1461, when Cardinal Carvajal called for a new round of negotiations between the emperor and Hungary, Matthias

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**68** UB, 221–22, doc. 216.

**69** UB, 227–28, doc. 222.

**70** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 10:640–41, doc. 316. See also Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 62–63.

**71** Cf. Kubinyi, “Szécsi Dénes esztergomi érsek,” 101.

**72** Olesnicki, “Mihajlo Szilágyi,” 101–2 and 105ff. The author convincingly explains that Szilágyi was captured while suppressing an Ottoman raid in southern Hungary, not during a reckless expedition across the Danube, as King Matthias later claimed. See also Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 202; Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 97–98.

**73** For the context of Frederick III's conflict with Louis, see Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 253–55.

**74** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 17.

**75** Langmaier, *Erzherzog Albrecht*, 525.

agreed, but insisted that Albert be represented at the negotiations, saying he would not negotiate anything without Albert's knowing.<sup>76</sup> However, it was soon revealed that Carvajal's attempts were irrelevant, as in June 1461 Albert and Matthias executed their plan. Albert declared war on the emperor, and Matthias coordinated his operations with him and sent him reinforcements.<sup>77</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the emperor called Poděbrady to his aid. The latter answered, as he needed the emperor's support; negotiations with the pope regarding the legitimacy of the Utraquist Church had reached a critical phase.<sup>78</sup> An experienced politician such as Vitez might have known this would happen, but Matthias was surprised by it, perhaps because he thought his father-in-law and ally would not thwart his plans. To Matthias's great dissatisfaction, Poděbrady forced the invaders to agree to a nine-month truce, made on September 6, 1461 in Laxenburg.<sup>79</sup>

This was when Vitez started acting assertively and independently of Matthias. We cannot be certain why, but perhaps he saw this truce as an opportunity to reconcile Hungary with its neighbours, even if not in accordance with Matthias's wishes. What we called Vitez's peace policy began to take shape. First, he took steps to reconcile the king with the remaining rebel magnates. When the counts of Szentgyörgyi made peace with Matthias in Esztergom on February 10, 1462, Vitez was among those who guaranteed, as the only bishop besides the host, Cardinal Szécsi, that the king would hold his promise of pardoning the counts for all the crimes they committed against himself.<sup>80</sup> That was sensible, as internal dissent would have hampered any foreign policy. What happened next, however, is unclear. The sources offer vague and confusing reports, but we will attempt to tentatively reconstruct the events.

Even before the Truce of Laxenburg expired, Albert VI renewed the conflict.<sup>81</sup> Frederick retreated to Graz in Styria, as uprisings against him erupted in Austria. The papal nuncio Girolamo Lando, archbishop of Crete, went there with him, as he was at the time following the imperial court. Then, Vitez appeared in Graz. Unexpectedly, even bafflingly, he, acting on behalf of the Kingdom of Hungary, made a preliminary peace agreement with the emperor on April 3, 1462, in the presence of the nuncio.<sup>82</sup> The earliest sources that mention Matthias's reactions to this event give us reason to think he did not intend for it to happen. He sent a letter to Vitez in which he made it clear that the latter did not tell him anything about the negotiations (which were apparently still going on when the letter was sent), and ordered him to immediately set out to present himself before the throne, even if it meant abstaining from the rites

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**76** MKL, 1:13–14, doc. 9.

**77** Langmaier, *Erzherzog Albrecht*, 535 and 540.

**78** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 257.

**79** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 253–54; Langmaier, *Erzherzog Albrecht*, 540–41.

**80** DL 24 767. The same terms were granted to the allies of the Szentgyörgyis: see DL 15 698.

**81** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 322.

**82** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 18–19. Lando was not a papal legate, but a nuncio with special powers: see Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 31–33.



of the Holy Week. The letter came with an express, reiterated instruction not to do anything but present himself before the king as soon as possible.<sup>83</sup>

Such a reaction on the part of the king is indeed confusing, but a letter sent by Matthias to Albert VI not long after Vitez returned from Graz offers some clarification. According to it, Vitez himself declared he did not meet with the emperor in Graz on the king's orders, but on the advice of some of the prelates and barons of the realm. What he had arranged with Frederick III was not done in the king's name, but in the name of the royal council. Upon presenting himself to Matthias, he said it was not for the king to decide whether to ratify or annul the agreement thus made, because it concerned the whole of the kingdom and not just the king's person. In fact, he refused to show Matthias the text of the treaty, declaring he would present it to the Estates, at a diet summoned for that express purpose.<sup>84</sup>

These two letters indicate that it was not Matthias's will to make peace with the emperor. However, why would Vitez act so brazenly? It is possible he and his allies on the royal council—the "prelates and barons of the realm" mentioned in Matthias's second letter—were aware of impending Ottoman attacks, and even if Matthias did not consider those an insurmountable obstacle to continuing the war with the emperor, Vitez was circumspect enough to know that doing so would antagonize both Poděbrady and the pope. That was a dangerous risk to take, especially as reinforcements from the West, which would be needed in the case of an Ottoman invasion, would have become unlikely. From that perspective, Vitez and his cohorts might have decided it was necessary to put an end to Matthias's alliance with Albert VI. It is possible that the Hungarian magnates, primarily those opposing Matthias's policies, such as Cardinal Szécsi and Nicholas of Ilok,<sup>85</sup> saw Matthias's actions as wasteful adventures, from which only Albert VI and Louis of Bavaria would benefit.

We have reason to believe that Vitez, with several decades' worth of experience, simply knew the political situation better than Matthias. The latter overestimated his alliance with Poděbrady. The Bohemian king turned out to be willing to intervene on the emperor's behalf, even militarily. He did so next winter, by waging war on Albert VI and forcing a peace agreement between the brothers on December 2.<sup>86</sup> He needed the emperor more than ever, as Pope Pius II had rescinded the very foundation of the Utraquist Church's legitimacy, the Basel Compacts, in March 1462, thus reducing Utraquism to a heresy.<sup>87</sup>

**83** MKL, 1:17–18, doc. 12. Cf. Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 24.

**84** MKL, 1:20–21, doc. 14. See also Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 22 and Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 140–42. Note that Fraknói offers a different explanation of those events. In his opinion, Matthias was only pretending that he did not want a peace treaty.

**85** Girolamo Lando listed these two among the king's opponents in 1462. For the original text, see von Engel, *Geschichte des Ungarischen Reiches*, 2:15. See also Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 142. Cf. Kubinyi, "Szécsi Dénes esztergomi érsek," 101–5.

**86** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 326–29.

**87** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 267–70 and 275–77. See also Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 18–19.

Lando's, and therefore the pope's, role in this matter should not be disregarded. Although Pius II had in his *Commentaries* greatly exaggerated the part his emissaries played in the reconciliation of the emperor with Hungary, he also emphasized that he considered peace between them to be of paramount importance, due to the growing Ottoman threat.<sup>88</sup> There was even hope of a crusade being launched soon, as Venice agreed to take part in it and started sending monetary aid to Hungary.<sup>89</sup> Peace with the emperor was a prerequisite for any such aid, as otherwise there was a great risk of Matthias using it to wage war on the emperor. At the time of his negotiations with the emperor, Vitez was in close contact with Venice, including the doge, Cristoforo Moro, through his protégé George Polycarp Kosztoláni, on a diplomatic mission there in March and April 1462.<sup>90</sup> The peace agreement was potentially the result of a grand scheme, with threads stretching as far as Prague, Venice and Rome.

Soon after Vitez's return to Hungary, Archbishop Lando was supposed to arrive as well, probably to persuade Matthias to agree to the peace treaty. According to Matthias's letter to the nuncio, Vitez had been preparing the ground for the latter by assuring the king that Lando was well-disposed both to the king personally and to his kingdom. However, it seems Matthias was not eager to meet with the nuncio. He wrote that he and the royal council were currently busy in Vác, negotiating a reconciliation with John Jiskra (who joined the rebellion in 1459), and that Lando should therefore postpone his arrival.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps Matthias was hoping to persuade the prelates and barons to refuse the terms negotiated by Vitez, and then to cancel the peace treaty altogether. However, in Vác, the expanded royal council agreed to the terms of the treaty, and a general diet was summoned to ratify it.<sup>92</sup>

Another letter could explain what happened in Vác. Soon after the described events, Matthias sent a letter to the emperor, borne by his envoys, the provost of Bratislava George Schönberg and the parish priest of Buda Stephen Aloch (the former Austrian chancellor of Ladislaus V).<sup>93</sup> In it, he wrote that Vitez laid out before him and the royal council the terms of the treaty. He thanked Frederick for the treaty, emphasizing it had come at an opportune moment, as the Ottomans were on the offensive. He also wrote that he accepted the terms, and he would persuade the Estates at the upcoming

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**88** Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae temporibus suis contigerunt*, ed. Giovanni Gobellini and Francesco Bandini Piccolomini (Frankfurt: Aubriana, 1614), 324 and 328. See also Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 172–73.

**89** Magda Jászay, "Venezia e Mattia Corvino," in *Italia e Ungheria*, ed. Graciotti and Vasoli, 3–18 at 6.

**90** Fraknói, "Mátyás király magyar diplomatái," 8–11. Doge Moro entrusted Kosztoláni with a letter for Vitez, in which he praised both Vitez and Janus Pannonius. See Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 85, doc. 10. Perhaps Janus's poem about Kosztoláni's return from Italy refers to this mission. See Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 150.

**91** MKL, 1:22–23, doc. 16.

**92** Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 68.

**93** George Peltel von Schönberg was formerly a protonotary of Ladislaus V, and after the latter's death he entered the emperor's service and actively participated in his war against Albert VI. He remained close to the emperor even after joining Matthias's court. See Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 609–10.

diet to ratify them. The tone he used when mentioning Vitez's negotiations with the emperor in Graz is significant—he wrote that Vitez went there on the advice of “some of us,” probably meaning the prelates and barons, whom the king termed his brothers.<sup>94</sup> The tenor of the letter is such that it might be assumed it was dictated either by Vitez himself, or by someone from his circle, as it emphasizes the role of the magnates and diminishes that of the king. It should also be noted that it was not a coincidence that the reconciliation with Jiskra coincided with the royal council's decision to accept the terms Vitez negotiated. Jiskra submitted to Matthias because the emperor withdrew his support from him.<sup>95</sup> The royal council could thus be convinced of the usefulness of the peace agreement with the emperor.

It is worth noting that Vitez had still not shown the king the text of the treaty. The letter mentioned above merely stated that he had “laid it out” before the king and the council, presumably orally. As previously discussed, Vitez said that he would show it only to the Estates. It is not clear why he chose to do so, but it might be because he did not have the mandate to negotiate anything; even if he did, the treaty would require ratification to become binding.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps there was reason for him to think that Matthias would not be willing to ratify it, but that the Estates would. Those were, during the first years of Matthias's reign (at least until 1463), relatively independent, and Matthias usually did not challenge their decisions.<sup>97</sup>

With all this considered, we can assume Vitez was acting independently of Matthias when he concluded the peace agreement with the emperor. There was certainly a reconciliatory pattern in the diplomatic actions Vitez undertook during the first years of Matthias's reign, which we termed his peace policy, and this might be considered its pinnacle. A war that had lasted for more than two decades was finally over. Vitez would never again be able to accomplish anything of such political magnitude. Also, judging by Matthias's actions, he was never forgiven for it.

The treaty was ratified very soon after the events in Vác. The Estates gathered in Buda on May 20, 1462, and deliberated for a week; late in the evening, on May 26, they decided to accept the peace terms, and to send their decision to Archbishop Lando, who would then communicate it to the emperor. The Venetian ambassador Tomasi immediately reported this to his superiors, adding the Estates decided that the money to be delivered to the emperor in exchange for the Holy Crown would not be provided before the end of the year, as it could not be gathered before then; the ambassador remarked that the king did not have any money at all at the time.<sup>98</sup> In fact, a few days later he wrote to Venice that many were doubting whether the king would be able to

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**94** MKL, 1:21–22, doc. 15.

**95** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 300. Matthias wrote of Jiskra's submission in his letter to Albert VI: see MKL, 1:21, doc. 14. Regarding this, see also Oslanský, “Portrét Jána Jiskru,” 85.

**96** Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 40.

**97** Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 68.

**98** MDE, 1:141–43, doc. 88.

redeem the crown at all, as he was, in the ambassador's words, destitute.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, the Estates decided to collect a special tax for this purpose.<sup>100</sup> Vitez used his influence to secure the nobles' support for this tax. As he wrote in a letter to an unnamed Transylvanian lord, he sent numerous letters to his acquaintances in Transylvania, enticing them to contribute to the Holy Crown's return to Hungary. He claimed its return would enable the Hungarian nobility to unite and fight more effectively against the Ottomans, adding that his own estates were also suffering from Ottoman raids.<sup>101</sup> He also sent a letter to Carvajal, who was in the meantime recalled to Rome, informing him of Jiskra's submission and the Hungarian Estates' ratification of the peace treaty with Frederick III, and asking him to influence the pope to send Hungary (Vitez referred to it as Carvajal's adoptive homeland) some aid for fighting the Ottomans, saying the rumours about their impending attack were frequent and trustworthy, that the Danube was teeming with their ships, and its shore was covered in their tents.<sup>102</sup>

Those two letters offer an outline of Vitez's outlook on the political situation. From his perspective, peace with the emperor was supposed to end the infighting and empower Hungary to effectively counter the Ottoman Empire. The pope would have certainly supported that. In early June 1462, not long after the treaty was ratified, Archbishop Lando finally arrived in Buda. During his audience with the king, the welcome address was given by Janus Pannonius, who said Vitez had already prepared the king for the nuncio's arrival and explained to him the reasons behind it, and declared on behalf of the king, the prelates and the barons that Lando should return to the emperor as soon as possible and tell him the kingdom was ready to make peace.<sup>103</sup> It is noticeable that Pannonius emphasized Vitez's role, but also the role the prelates and barons. It is also important to note that Vitez remained in direct contact with the emperor. The Venetian ambassador reported to his government that the nuncio left Buda on June 7, bearing the Estates' resolution, but that he (the ambassador) is already certain the emperor would accept it, because he confirmed he would in a letter he sent to Vitez.<sup>104</sup>

This letter is important because it demonstrates that Vitez was in direct contact with the Venetian ambassador as well, and that he had been sharing confidential information with him. Venetian aid was almost certainly dependent on whether Hungary would make peace with the emperor, and Vitez's actions were undoubtedly aimed

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**99** MDE, 1:144, doc. 90.

**100** Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 68.

**101** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 208, doc. 31.

**102** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 210, doc. 34. Carvajal left Hungary in September 1461. See Canedo, *Un español*, 217–18. Carvajal would allegedly often remark that Hungary wanted money, not legates. See Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere (1444–1479)*, ed. Paolo Cherubini, 3 vols. (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1997), 3:1476–77, doc. 509.

**103** Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 54–58, there misdated. See also Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 145.

**104** MDE, 1:146, doc. 91.

towards securing that aid. During the night of May 27, immediately after dispatching to Venice the report in which the Diet of Buda agreed to the terms of the peace treaty, Ambassador Tomasi wrote another. In the meantime Vitez himself came to him with a message from the king, saying he learned from his contacts in Serbia that the sultan marched his army to Sofia, and that no reports were coming from the voivode of Wallachia, which the king found disturbing.<sup>105</sup> A few weeks later, Tomasi wrote that Vitez had received news from his estates adjacent to Wallachia that the sultan had entered that country at the head of a large army, and that rumours indicated that he was heading for Belgrade.<sup>106</sup> This alarming news, as well as the ratification of the peace treaty, likely prompted the Republic to send aid to Matthias as early as June 1462, and also to intervene with the pope to encourage other Italian states to do so.<sup>107</sup>

Despite Vitez's efforts, it was too late to prevent the fall of Wallachia. That country had recently ceased paying tribute to the sultan, so Mehmed II personally led the campaign that resulted in its conquest, forcing out Voivode Vlad III Dracula, who sought refuge in Hungary. An Ottoman puppet, Vlad's brother Radu III was to be installed as the new voivode, and Ali-bey Mihaloğlu was appointed as governor of Wallachia, with the task of securing Radu's rule.<sup>108</sup> Although preparations to aid Dracula in the struggle against the sultan were made in Hungary throughout 1462, ultimately nothing came of them.<sup>109</sup> Matthias did eventually march his army to the Wallachian border, but he did nothing to counter the Ottoman conquest. He recognized Radu as the new voivode and imprisoned Dracula, probably due to the latter's intriguing with the sultan and as a punishment for the damages his troops inflicted on Hungarian lands. Wallachia remained an Ottoman vassal.<sup>110</sup>

There is an indication that Vitez took part in this campaign—namely, a note in the book he was reading at the time, saying he finished it on September 27, 1462 in Sibiu, near the Wallachian border.<sup>111</sup> The campaign's failure was certainly a setback for his anti-Ottoman efforts. Janus Pannonius took it upon himself to compose a celebratory poem in which he praised Matthias for imprisoning the "tyrant" Dracula and implored him to return home as soon as possible, as his wife and mother were longing for him.<sup>112</sup>

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**105** MDE, 1:143, doc. 89.

**106** MDE, 1:147, doc. 92.

**107** MDE, 1:148–51.

**108** Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 219–22. Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 140–43. See also Castilia Manea-Grgin, "Biskup Nikola Modruški o vlaškom knezu Vladu III. Drakuli-Tepešu te o podrijetlu i jeziku Rumunja," *Povijesni prilozi* 24, no. 28 (2005): 107–133 at 117–21.

**109** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 204–5.

**110** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 301; Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare," 95–96; Richárd Horváth, "Hunyadi Mátyás és Havasalföld," *Világtörténet* 3–4 (2010): 3–12 at 5–6; Manea-Grgin, "Biskup Nikola," 123–24.

**111** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 145–46.

**112** Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 88–89. The image of Dracula as a tyrant was widespread among the contemporary humanists: see Manea-Grgin, "Biskup Nikola," 126.

Its purpose was to present the campaign as a success, although it is difficult not to notice the sting of irony.

With Serbia conquered and Wallachia in the sultan's fold, Bosnia stood as the only remaining Hungarian vassal. The relations between its king Stephen II Tomašević (son of the late Stephen I Thomas) and Matthias were not good.<sup>113</sup> Vitez worked on their reconciliation in the spring of 1462. Pius II contributed to the quarrel between the rulers by sending a legate to crown Stephen against Matthias's will,<sup>114</sup> so he tasked Vitez with intervening in the Bosnian king's favour and persuading Matthias to take him under his protection. Vitez responded that the pope's letter to Matthias arrived simultaneously with envoys from Bosnia, and that Stephen II had already regained Matthias's favour.<sup>115</sup> But the rift did not fully heal. In May 1462, Matthias wrote to Carvajal that he had conceded to extend his protection to the Bosnian king, due to the pope's and Carvajal's own insistence, but he made it clear he had done so reluctantly.<sup>116</sup>

### Half a Chancellor

The year 1462 was, as we have seen, one of Vitez's busiest. It was marked primarily by his reconciliatory efforts, which resulted in the submission of what was left of the pro-imperial rebels, an improvement in relations with Bosnia and, most importantly, a preliminary peace treaty with the emperor. A direct consequence of the latter was a warming of relations with the Republic of Venice, which would soon turn into an alliance. In the light of later events, it appears that Vitez was indeed preparing Hungary for open conflict with the Ottoman Empire. However, his own position at King Matthias's court did not improve because of it. Here we will examine the effect of Vitez's peace policy on his career, as well as the development of the external policy of the kingdom.

At the Diet of Tolna in March 1463, an embassy was appointed to finalize the peace treaty with Frederick III and bring the Holy Crown to the Kingdom of Hungary. Its members were Stephen Várdai, John Vitez, Nicholas of Ilok, Ladislaus Pálóci, and Emeric of Zapolje (Szapolyai in Hungarian). After more than twenty years of intermittent war, these players made peace with the emperor in Wiener Neustadt on July 19, 1463.<sup>117</sup> Vitez's presence among them indicates he was still one of the foremost men in the kingdom, but also that his diplomatic skill was too valuable to be dispensed with in matters of such importance.

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**113** See Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 232–33; Szakály, “Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare,” 94–95.

**114** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 203–4.

**115** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 209, doc. 33. Vitez reported the same to Carvajal: see *ibid.*, 210, doc. 34.

**116** MKL, 1:35, doc. 27.

**117** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 20. The Zapolje family, named after an estate in today's Croatia, rose rapidly during Matthias's rule. Kubinyi theorized that Emeric was an illegitimate son of John Hunyadi. See Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 20–22.

The treaty itself was very lenient toward the emperor, supporting the assumption that Matthias may have been unwilling to accept it. According to its text, Frederick was to surrender what he was still occupying in Hungary, except for the castles of Forchtenstein and Kobersdorf. Matthias was granted the option to buy those after the emperor's death for forty thousand ducats. Both rulers were to thereafter be titled as kings of Hungary, and Matthias was to address Frederick as his father. Also, if Matthias would die heirless, the inheritance right to Hungary would pass to Frederick. The treaty was concluded in the presence of the papal emissaries Domenico de' Domenichi, bishop of Torcello, and Rudolf von Rudesheim, at the time provost of Freising.<sup>118</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Holy Crown was to be ransomed for a considerable sum of money.

The final negotiations, led right before the conclusion of the treaty, were marked by mutual mistrust. In his *Commentaries*, Pope Pius II mentioned a thirty-day delay caused by the emperor's insistence on the pope guaranteeing the treaty. He also noted there was so little trust between the opposing sides that the ambassadors would neither hand over the ransom money to the emperor first, nor would the emperor give them the Holy Crown. In the end they handed over both to the papal emissaries, who executed the exchange.<sup>119</sup>

Bonfini's version of these events gives Vitez a larger role. According to him, the embassy arrived at Sopron, which was held by Frederick, with an entourage of three thousand cavalry, being given the permission to reside there during the negotiations by the emperor's commander. However, the emperor allowed only Vitez to travel to Wiener Neustadt with two hundred horsemen, where the two negotiated alone for a month. Bonfini also mentions the lack of trust during the final transaction, but in his version it was suggested by Vitez and the bishop of Passau, Vitez's old colleague Ulrich von Nussdorf, that the emperor's men should bring the Holy Crown, and the ambassadors the money, to the town gate, for the exchange to take place simultaneously.<sup>120</sup> Although there is no reason to trust Bonfini unconditionally, Vitez possibly played a special part in the final negotiations with the emperor, as he negotiated the preliminary agreement with him a year previously. Perhaps the month during which Bonfini claims Vitez was negotiating with the emperor represents the delay mentioned by Pius II.

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**118** See the transcript of the treaty in Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 202–9. See also Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 299–300. Some later chroniclers claimed there was also a secret clause stipulating that Matthias would not remarry after the death of his wife Catherine of Poděbrady, who was at the time dying of consumption, and thus eliminating the possibility of him having legal heirs. Although this was most likely a later contrivance (as it appears only in sources written well after Matthias's death), some historians believed the secret clause did exist. See Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 143 and Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 3:331, and the sources listed therein.

**119** Piccolomini, *Commentarii rerum memorabilium*, 328. By the time the pope confirmed the treaty in September 1463, Rudesheim was already bishop of Lavant. See Theiner, 2:382–91, doc. 567.

**120** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 558–59. Bonfini claimed the sum in question amounted to sixty thousand gold coins. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 143–44.



Figure 2: Remains of Székesfehérvár Basilica, the coronation site of the kings of Hungary. Wladislas, Ladislaus V, and Matthias Corvinus were all crowned here. Photograph by author.

In the meantime, Ottoman conquests continued. Bosnia was the next to fall. In May and June 1463, Mehmed II personally led the conquering army, capturing and executing King Stephen II.<sup>121</sup> This left Hungary without the last of its vassal and buffer states, and such a blow could not be ignored. Matthias gathered a large army, but did not attempt to engage the sultan. He waited until autumn instead, allowing the main body of the Ottoman army to depart.<sup>122</sup> Meanwhile, he was joined by Vitez and Archbishop

<sup>121</sup> Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 236–39.

<sup>122</sup> Pálosfalvi, “The Political Background,” 86–87.





Stephen Várdai.<sup>123</sup> Together they witnessed a watershed event, along with the palatine Michael Ország, Nicholas of Ilok, Stephen Frankapan, John Vitovec (by then recognized as the ban of Slavonia), and Emeric of Zapolje: on September 12, 1463, in Petrovaradin, an alliance was made between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Republic of Venice, represented there by the ambassador Giovanni Emo.<sup>124</sup> At least partly a result of Vitez's diplomatic manoeuvrings, it also signalled that Venice was alarmed by the shifting balance of power in the Balkans. Also, it should be kept in mind that the alliance bound Matthias as much as it bolstered him. Unlike in the previous year, this time

**123** Matthias's deed of grant issued to Várdai and his family in April 1464 mentions that the archbishop had contributed troops for the Bosnian campaign. See Zichy, 10:299. doc. 220.

**124** Theiner, 2:380–82, doc. 566. See also Jászay, "Venezia e Mattia Corvino," 6–7.

he was compelled to counter the Ottoman expansion. He limited himself to conquering the Bosnian capital Jajce and a large part of the country, without attempting to take all of it.<sup>125</sup>

There are some indications that Vitez personally took part in this campaign. The ambassador Emo, who did participate in it,<sup>126</sup> sent a report to the Venetian authorities on November 3, saying there was much discontent with the Republic in the Hungarian military camp after the return of Bishop Nicholas of Modruš from his mission in Venice. The bishop brought news that Venice had not sent any additional monetary aid, and that it intereved in the dynastic struggles in Hercegovina, which the king considered a matter of his own concern. Emo also reported what Várdai and Vitez told him regarding these matters, which could mean they were with the king's army at the time.<sup>127</sup> It should be noted, however, that Várdai was in Zagreb on November 12, and with Vitez and Matthias in Dubrava (in Slavonia) on January 23, so perhaps he did not venture to Bosnia.<sup>128</sup> Janus Pannonius also took part either in this campaign, or the one that took place next year,<sup>129</sup> considering that he later bragged to Bisticci that he had accompanied the king on his campaigns against the Ottomans, and that he once even helped shovel the snow covering the king's camp.<sup>130</sup>

Matthias's Bosnian campaign was mostly successful, but it ended quickly, as winter set in. Venice tried, through Emo, to persuade the king to press on, promising him sixty thousand ducats if he would continue the campaign in 1464. Emo was also tasked with finding out from bishops and other magnates he was on good terms with—probably meaning Vitez and Várdai—how many troops, including mercenaries, the king could muster with that sum.<sup>131</sup> However, such plans were interrupted by an event of crucial importance: the royal coronation.

Although the Holy Crown had been in Hungary for almost a year, Matthias's coronation had to be postponed due to the Ottoman onslaught. However, Matthias's partial conquest of Bosnia, made possible at least in part by Vitez's peace policy, brought him the aura of a victor over the infidels, and thus made the ceremony even grander. In the atmosphere of triumph, Cardinal Szécsi crowned Matthias on March 29, 1464, in Székesfehérvár.<sup>132</sup> On that occasion, a celebratory diet was held, during which the

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**125** Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 245–46; Pálosfalvi saw this as a return to King Sigismund's defensive strategy: see Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 87–88. See also Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 207–8.

**126** Jászay, "Venezia e Mattia Corvino," 7–8.

**127** MDE, 1:258–61, doc. 159. Emo's letter is not preserved. This information comes from Venice's response, sent on December 31. On Bishop Nicholas's mission to Venice and Dubrovnik and his participation in the Bosnian campaign, see Špoljarić, "Politika, patronat," 7.

**128** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 54.

**129** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 145–46.

**130** Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:331.

**131** MDE, 1:263–65, doc. 161.

**132** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 144.

king confirmed the Estates' liberties.<sup>133</sup> As the king's decrees from then on had the full force of law, the peace treaty with Frederick III was confirmed, as the Hungarian ambassadors promised it would be. Only then, on April 3, did the ambassadors, including Vitez, finally declare their mission discharged.<sup>134</sup>

Shortly after the coronation, Matthias rewarded those who made it possible. Vitez seemingly received much. The king awarded permanent ownership of Bihar county to the bishopric of Oradea, but not to Vitez personally, an important nuance, especially as Vitez's term as bishop of Oradea would soon end. Listing the reasons for the donation, the king wrote that Vitez was imprisoned together with him in 1457, that Vitez was to be thanked for bringing him to Hungary from Prague, that Vitez had always helped him both actively and with his advice, that he had helped to pacify the kingdom, and, lastly, that he had always either personally participated in, or contributed troops to the king's military campaigns, against the Bohemians (meaning the brigands in the north of the kingdom) and the Ottomans, in Wallachia and in Bosnia.<sup>135</sup>

There were further rewards. A few weeks after the coronation, on June 11, Matthias granted Vitez the privilege to swear judicial oaths by proxy, either through the count of Oradea or his deputy judge, both Vitez's subordinates. The reason for this was interesting: Matthias's charter stated that Vitez had often been called to court by many accusers, among whom his abutters were especially numerous, and that he was often required to establish his innocence by compurgation. However, as tradition required of him to do so in his cathedral, dressed in liturgical vestments, he was often forced to leave Matthias's side. This privilege was supposed to free him of such obligations, allowing him to remain close to the king.<sup>136</sup> Finally, on June 30, 1464, Matthias confirmed Ladislaus V's donation of the Piatra Șoimului Castle to Vitez, because the Losonci family was still refusing to turn it over. Nevertheless, the judicial proceedings regarding the castle dragged on until 1466, when the judge royal Ladislaus Pálóci ruled that King Sigismund had mortgaged it to the Losoncis and the Jakcs Kusalyi family for 6750 florins, and that Vitez was obligated to honour their usufruct until he would buy them out.<sup>137</sup>

Vitez's opinion was apparently still sought; his influence at Matthias's court had not evaporated. However, Stephen Várdai's star suddenly started to rise. The archbishop of Kalocsa stayed away from the court until the spring of 1462, when he started to frequently appear in Matthias's vicinity.<sup>138</sup> It may be that Matthias started using him as a counterbalance to Vitez, as the relations between these two had not been warm at least since Vitez's imprisonment. This is indicated by a series of small disputes

**133** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 301–2.

**134** DF 292 952. Note that Vitez was not titled as count of Bihar in this charter.

**135** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 562. The original charter is not preserved, so we are forced to rely on Bonfini's rendition of it. Regarding this, see also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 145. Regarding Matthias fighting the "Czech" brigands, see Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 300.

**136** Pray, *Specimen hierarchiae Hungaricae*, 2:154–59. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 145–46.

**137** DL 88 433.

**138** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 43.

between Vitez and Várdai's family. Judging by a letter from April 1460, his relations with Nicholas Várdai had soured. In it, Vitez warned Nicolas to stop subjecting Vitez's serfs in Szabolcs county, of which Nicolas was count, to his authority, as Vitez's diocese was exempt from the authority of comital courts.<sup>139</sup> Also, in early 1462 Nicholas confiscated the belongings of one of Vitez's servants in Ajak, prompting the bishop to send an agent to adjudicate on the matter; his verdict was that Nicholas acted illegally.<sup>140</sup> The list of court cases involving Stephen Várdai and his relatives Nicholas and Simon from 1461 mentions one against Vitez.<sup>141</sup> Vitez's ally John Kállói also quarrelled with Nicholas Várdai's family in 1463.<sup>142</sup> Those events do not necessarily signify open hostility, but they are far from the more cordial relations Vitez and Nicholas enjoyed before 1457.

It is noticeable that, from about the time of the coronation onward, no matter what honours Vitez received from Matthias, Stephen Várdai received equal or greater ones.<sup>143</sup> For example, at the coronation diet, both Vitez and Várdai were granted the privilege to hold fairs on their estates on Sundays and on Marian feast days.<sup>144</sup> That was, of course, trivial, but the king also took serious steps to advance Várdai's career. In July 1464, Matthias asked Pope Pius II to make Várdai a cardinal. As Hungary already had a cardinal—Archbishop Dennis Szécsi—Matthias argued the latter was more suited to ecclesiastical than to political affairs.<sup>145</sup> This possibly reflected the lack of trust Matthias had in Szécsi. Nevertheless, the reason for Várdai's elevation was at least partly to set him as a counterbalance to Vitez.

The king's reform of the royal chanceries brought those two prelates in close contact, and it might have been symptomatic of Matthias's treatment of Vitez. After the coronation, all high and privy chancellors were deposed, and their chanceries merged into a single office. The unified title of high and privy chancellor was then bestowed on both Várdai and Vitez. However, a vast majority of the charters would thenceforth be issued by Várdai, while there are very few known occasions on which Vitez would have a part in the unified chancery's workings.<sup>146</sup> Bonfini claimed the two prelates would carry the royal seal in turns, for six months each, and that they carried out their duties without disagreements.<sup>147</sup> However, there are very few known instances in which Vitez affixed the seal. The seal's handler's initials were usually inscribed beneath the

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**139** Zichy, 12:263–64, doc. 209.

**140** Zichy, 10:206–7, doc. 159.

**141** Zichy, 10:202, doc. 155.

**142** Zichy, 10:286–87, doc. 212.

**143** This prompted Solymosi to think that Várdai was Matthias's favourite prelate. See Solymosi, "König Matthias Corvinus," 290–91.

**144** *The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, ed. Bak, 3:22.

**145** MKL, 1:55–56, doc. 41. See also Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 139–40.

**146** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 35–37.

**147** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 572. Kubinyi considered this unlikely, as most known charters from that period were composed by Várdai. See Kubinyi, "Adatok," 37–38.

wax, and Vitez's are found there extremely rarely.<sup>148</sup> On one of the occasions when Matthias's royal double seal was applied by Vitez, this was pointed out in the text of the charter, and the palatine's seal was affixed to it as well, likely ensuring there would be no doubt regarding its authenticity, as Várdai was not present when it was issued.<sup>149</sup>

Vitez may have been actively trying to get himself appointed as chancellor at the time of Matthias's coronation, perhaps because he realized his informal influence on the king was not as strong as it was six years ago, and decided to compensate for it by obtaining a formal bureaucratic office. If that was his intention, it is possible that Matthias decided to check him by giving the office of chancellor to both him and Várdai, as by doing so he would simultaneously reward Vitez for bringing him the Holy Crown, and prevent him from using the office to increase his own influence. Vitez was indisputably still useful to the king, and the latter did not want to remove him from the court. However, by relying on Várdai he could be sure the issuing of royal charters would be in the hands of a less independently-minded prelate.

Despite Matthias's efforts, Várdai had to wait before becoming a cardinal. Cardinal Ammannati Piccolomini, who was employed as his promoter, wrote to Várdai on January 5, 1465, that he had done all he could with Pope Pius II, but that the latter had died soon after the king requested a cardinal's hat for Várdai, and that Ammannati did not have as much influence with the new pope, Paul II. This letter also contains one of the few indications that Vitez and Várdai were not at odds, as Ammannati wrote he had received letters from the king, Várdai, "our" Vitez, and Janus Pannonius, and that he had devoted himself to the business they entrusted to him. He also asked Várdai to give his regards to Vitez and Pannonius.<sup>150</sup> The letter does not specify whether the mentioned business was the same for all those listed, but it might mean that Vitez and Pannonius supported Várdai's bid for a cardinal's hat, so perhaps Vitez and Várdai had by then reconciled. On the same day, Ammannati sent a letter to Pannonius, listing the same excuses for not being able to perform the (unidentified) tasks, and one to Vitez, the substance of which was the same. In that last one he included several compliments to Vitez, claiming the late Pope Pius II often spoke well of him, praising his part in the peace negotiations with the emperor, and that Cardinal Carvajal was known to remark that Vitez's influence had made his assignment as legate significantly easier.<sup>151</sup>

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**148** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 36. However, Kubinyi warned of a large number of charters dated between March 1464 and March 1465 marked with the initials "Jo. Q." or "Jo." Older historians thought the person behind these initials was either Janus Pannonius (as bishop of Pécs—*Johannes Quinqueecclesiensis*), or John Beckensloer (as provost of Pécs). Kubinyi noted it is possible that Pannonius was acting as Vitez's substitute in the chancery, as it is known that in the late 1460s he did manage some of the assignments related to it. See Kubinyi, "Adatok," 30–31.

**149** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 47.

**150** Jacopo Ammannati-Piccolomini, "Commentarii, eiusdemque epistolae," in Piccolomini, *Commentarii rerum memorabilium*, 512–13, doc. 66. The letter was dispatched in early 1465, as Bishop Mark of Knin, who was to carry it, could not allow himself to depart for Hungary from Rome any earlier, due to the old pope dying and a new one being elected.

**151** Ammannati-Piccolomini, "Commentarii," 513–14, docs. 67 and 68. See also Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 140 and Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 116.

Meanwhile, as could have been expected, the Hungarian intervention in Bosnia did not go unnoticed at the Sublime Porte. In the summer of 1464, the sultan besieged Jajce, which was defended by Emeric of Zapolje, but was unable to conquer it. Just as he had done a year previously, Matthias waited for the Ottoman army to depart, and then, in autumn, made a quick assault on the part of Bosnia under Ottoman control. That was wise, as Hungary had so far regularly lost direct engagements with the Ottoman main force; consequently, however, the success of the campaign was again limited. Although he did conquer Srebrenik, the main objective, Zvornik, did not succumb to Matthias's siege.<sup>152</sup> Both Várdai and Vitez took part in this campaign. A charter issued by Matthias on October 19, 1464, during the siege of Zvornik, to Andrew Nagymihályi, count of Bihar (or, rather, Vitez's commissary in that office), testifies to that, as it states Vitez personally brought Andrew's plea before the king.<sup>153</sup> Várdai's presence is evidenced by the initials—*S. ar. Co. Can rius*—beneath the royal seal, abbreviations for "*Stephanus archiepiscopus Colocensis cancellarius*" ("Archbishop Stephen of Kalocsa, Chancellor").<sup>154</sup>

Matthias had just turned twenty-one in 1464, but already knew how to keep his subjects in check. We do not know what Vitez thought of that, but as long as the king was actively pursuing an anti-Ottoman policy, he did not have any reason to object. Although Matthias did not necessarily agree with Vitez's actions, it was indisputable that they brought results. The peace policy was successful: it reconciled the nobility with the king, redeemed the Holy Crown, secured the realm's western border and helped it to successfully wage war against the Ottomans. Besides, Archduke Albert VI died in December 1463,<sup>155</sup> along with his plans of an anti-imperial alliance with Matthias. By early 1465, Matthias had no reason to be displeased with Vitez, especially as he could consider him successfully subdued.

### Creeping towards War

The years that followed Matthias's coronation are comparably the most confusing period of Vitez's life. The reason for this is, paradoxically, not a lack of sources, but rather the extremely tumultuous state of the Central European political landscape. Several significant changes took place at the beginning of this period. Primarily, after the conquest of Srebrenik in 1464 Matthias apparently lost interest in offensive actions against the Ottomans. The Republic of Venice was aware of that; its government informed Matthias in mid-1465 that it did not consider itself obligated to send him any further aid. The relations between the two allies cooled, partly due to false rumours about Matthias preparing to ally with the emperor against Venice.<sup>156</sup> In late 1465, when much more accurate rumours spread about Matthias considering making

**152** Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 220.

**153** DL 16 073.

**154** See Kubinyi, "Adatok," 55.

**155** Of course, rumours of poisoning abounded again. See Langmaier, *Erzherzog Albrecht*, 637ff.

**156** Zsuzsanna Teke, "Rapporti diplomatici tra Mattia Corvino e gli stati italiani," in *Italia e Ungheria*, ed. Graciotti and Vasoli, 19–36 at 20–21.

peace with the sultan, the Holy See reacted with indignation, but in vain; Matthias continued to wage an illusionary war against the Ottomans in his correspondence with the pope and Venice, while in reality he found a *modus vivendi* with them.<sup>157</sup>

Vitez had by then reached the apex of his career. In 1465 he was made archbishop of Esztergom and primate of Hungary.<sup>158</sup> We do not know whether he personally agreed with the shift in Matthias's foreign policy, he apparently submitted to the king's will. In July 1466, the Venetian authorities urgently requested of their ambassador, Francesco Venerio, a report on the allegations of Matthias intending to make peace with the sultan, as in his previous report, sent a month previously, Venerio claimed that he could not send any definite answers regarding that before conversing with Vitez.<sup>159</sup> The latter was in Trnava at the time,<sup>160</sup> so it seems the ambassador was awaiting his return. This indicates Vitez's opinion still mattered in international politics, at least to Venice. In fact, upon being appointed as ambassador to Hungary in July 1465, Venerio was instructed to formally introduce himself to both Vitez and Várdai immediately after his arrival.<sup>161</sup> Although we do not know what information he received from Vitez, immediately after the latter's return from Trnava, in August 1466, Venerio reported that Matthias decided to pursue making peace with the sultan. This report was received with elation, as Venice was not eager to continue the extremely costly war, and the Republic instructed Venerio to make sure Matthias would include the return of the Peloponnesian holdings and Lesbos to Venice in the peace treaty with the sultan.<sup>162</sup> It therefore seems Vitez was unable or unwilling to prevent this initiative.

The purpose of Matthias's strategic shift soon became apparent. It was supposed to free his forces to turn westwards, where his erstwhile father-in-law, George of Poděbrady (Catherine died in early 1464), was at his most vulnerable. Although his trial for heresy was previously suspended due to the emperor's intervention in his favour, Pope Pius II reopened it in June 1464.<sup>163</sup> Pius's death stalled the process, but Paul II renewed it in August 1465, authorizing his emissary, Bishop Rudolf von Rudesheim of Lavant, to release Bohemian subjects from their oath of fealty to their king.<sup>164</sup>

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**157** Housley, *Crusading*, 89–91.

**158** His appointment is discussed in chapter 6 below.

**159** MDE, 2:24–25, doc. 13.

**160** DL 16 363.

**161** MDE, 1:348, doc. 213.

**162** MDE, 2:25–26, doc. 14. For further context, see Joan-Aurel Pop and Alexandru Simon, "The Venetian and Wallachian Roots of the Hungarian–Ottoman Truce of Spring 1468: Notes on Documents from the States Archives of Milan," in *Italy and Europe's Eastern Border (1204–1669)*, ed. Alexandru Simon, Julian Mihai Damian, and Mihailo Popovic (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2012), 283–301.

**163** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 381–82.

**164** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 396. Rudesheim was not a legate, although he styled himself as such, but a nuncio with special powers. See Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 33.

Zdeněk of Šternberk started gathering malcontents, and in November 1465 they founded a league of Catholic lords in Zelená Hora.<sup>165</sup>

Faced with increasing instability, Poděbrady turned to Matthias, who was still formally his ally, for help. It was planned for them to meet personally in the autumn of 1465, but Matthias cancelled the meeting in favour of leading a short and abortive campaign against the Ottomans.<sup>166</sup> He sent Vitez in his stead, to which Poděbrady replied by sending Bishop Protase of Olomouc. Vitez apparently accompanied Matthias on that campaign at least as far as the Ottoman border, as he notified Protase of his forthcoming arrival from Belgrade.<sup>167</sup> The two prelates met in Trnava and agreed that Matthias would intervene with the pope on Poděbrady's behalf and suggest a reinstatement of the Basel Compacts.<sup>168</sup> Matthias's anti-Ottoman campaign turned out to be nothing more than a show of force, perhaps for the sake of his foreign allies; he notified Vitez immediately after its beginning that he would withdraw to Hungary as quickly as possible, due to a shortage of provisions.<sup>169</sup> The king's attention would from then on increasingly turn from the Ottoman frontier to Bohemia.

For the next few years, Vitez and Protase would act as the premier representatives of their respective rulers in their mutual contacts. It was an uneasy task. The pope threatened Protase with suspension if he continued supporting Poděbrady.<sup>170</sup> As for Vitez, the letter he sent to Protase on October 17, 1465, is indicative of his standing. He notified the Moravian bishop that King Matthias had received the pope's bull in which Poděbrady was accused of heresy, and ordered it to be forwarded to Vitez. He decided to immediately send a copy of it to Protase, stressing that Matthias had given him the permission to do so. It was unfortunate, said Vitez, that Poděbrady, who at the beginning of his reign seemed to be a wise and worthy ruler, was now so reviled. However, he added that he had himself, both in Prague and later, during Poděbrady's mediation of the negotiations with the emperor, personally advised George to convert to Catholicism to preserve his reign, but that the latter would not listen to him. Vitez promised to do his best to clear Poděbrady's name, but he also warned that the pope's condemnation would overpower the Bohemian king if he persisted in Utraquism. To that Vitez appended a remark telling Protase this was all confidential, and that he should proceed as he saw fit.<sup>171</sup>

This remark might be interpreted as a hint that Protase should distance himself from Poděbrady. That would have been sound advice. A few months later, in December 1465, the nuncio Rüdeshheim wrote to Protase that the pope heard rumours of him being Poděbrady's most successful advocate, in dealings with both Hungary and the

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**165** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 403–4.

**166** Regarding this campaign, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 224.

**167** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 420.

**168** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 181–83.

**169** MKL, 1:126, doc. 89.

**170** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 450–51.

**171** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 217–18, doc. 41.



Bohemian magnates.<sup>172</sup> Protase replied he had always been loyal to the Holy See,<sup>173</sup> but the pope did not find that satisfactory; in May 1466 he ordered him to sever all ties with the Bohemian king.<sup>174</sup>

Protase's support for Poděbrady was no secret—he had himself defended his king in a letter to Rudesheim.<sup>175</sup> The question of whether Vitez's support, public or otherwise, was sincere is much more complicated. When the Bohemian king inquired whether Matthias had done anything of what Vitez and Protase agreed upon at Trnava, Vitez replied, from Buda, in February 1466, that Matthias instructed him to send a letter on the matter to Cardinal Carvajal, and that he had done so, but could not send a copy of it to Poděbrady because Janus Pannonius (who was apparently assisting Vitez in matters of state) left it in Pécs.<sup>176</sup> This evasiveness might indicate that Vitez's intervention with the pope was not in the Bohemian king's favour at all.

It is difficult to discern how much of this was of Vitez's own making, and how much originated with Matthias. In this letter, Vitez stressed that it was written "de mente domini nostri Regis" (roughly translated, "according to my king's wishes"), adding that he would not dare correspond with Poděbrady in Matthias's absence or without his orders. This is significant, as it gives us reason to think Matthias had by then taken control of his kingdom's foreign policy, and that Vitez was relegated to executing his orders. The following examples corroborate this. In a letter he sent to Vitez while he was on the short anti-Ottoman campaign of 1465, Matthias included a copy of his response to Poděbrady regarding the latter's request for Matthias to intervene with the pope on his behalf, and told Vitez he would soon discuss the other matters with him in person.<sup>177</sup> As Poděbrady immediately asked Vitez for his opinion of this response, the latter pointed out to Poděbrady that he was not present when Matthias composed it, and could therefore not comment on it before Matthias's return. It appears Vitez did not have much autonomy when it came to his correspondence with the Bohemian king.

As for the response in question, Matthias said he would gladly intervene with the pope on Poděbrady's behalf, and that a special envoy would be sent to Rome for that purpose.<sup>178</sup> An envoy, George Handó, was indeed sent in late 1465.<sup>179</sup> However, even before he was dispatched, in October 1465, Matthias notified the pope that he was in favour of the Bohemian king being tried for heresy, and that he was open to other

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**172** UB, 372–74, doc. 342. Rudesheim was then in Wrocław, which had rebelled against Poděbrady.

**173** UB, 382–83, doc. 346.

**174** UB, 404–5, doc. 357.

**175** UB, 344–45, doc. 325.

**176** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 218, doc. 42. See also Perić, "Tragom Ivana Česmičkog u pismima Ivana Viteza od Sredne," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 156–64 at 162–63. Considering this, Kubinyi's assumption that Pannonius was substituting for Vitez in the chancery seems plausible. See Kubinyi, "Adatok," 31.

**177** MKL, 1:126, doc. 89.

**178** MKL, 1:127, doc. 90.

**179** MKL, 1:129–30, docs. 93–94.

actions against him as well, including war.<sup>180</sup> In the spring of 1466, alarming rumours spread through Bohemia, of Matthias being ready to make war on it if the pope so ordered him.<sup>181</sup> By the end of that year Matthias was complaining to Poděbrady about the crimes allegedly committed by Moravian nobles in Hungarian borderlands, especially by Matthew of (Moravian) Šternberk. Matthias insisted Matthew's case be settled not judicially, but by force. A series of letters was exchanged by the two kings, gradually degrading into angry bickering.<sup>182</sup>

It is apparent that there was at least some duplicity involved in this correspondence: on whose part, it is difficult to say. It would be safe to assume Poděbrady did not want to antagonize Hungary. The sources indicate that Matthias was not averse to war. But as to Vitez, we do not know.<sup>183</sup> His offers to help Poděbrady may have been sincere, but certainly not to the extent that involved going against the Holy See or Matthias. In any case, war with Bohemia would shatter the peace policy for which Vitez had laboured so much. Poděbrady and his court appear to have thought Vitez was on their side: they praised him for his honesty in his dealings with them, and insisted upon Matthias sending him to negotiations. For example, Prince Victor, King George's son and heir, thought it wise to send a report on the legal steps taken against Matthew of Šternberk in October 1466 not directly to Matthias, but to Vitez, so that Matthias would get the information from him. Victor was sent to Moravia to address the offences Matthias complained about, and was persuaded by Bishop Protase and the Moravian nobles to agree to a peaceful solution. Nevertheless, Matthias insisted Matthew of Šternberk be dealt with militarily, and was insulted by an agreement made without his approval.<sup>184</sup> Victor possibly anticipated such a reaction, and hoped Vitez, who was with Matthias at the time,<sup>185</sup> would mollify him, especially as his friend Protase was one of the authors of the abovementioned peaceful solution. It involved Matthew being subjected to a trial presided over by two Hungarian and two Bohemian prelates and barons—Vitez, Protase, the palatine of Hungary and the marshal of Bohemia. In a letter to King Matthias, Poděbrady expressed his disappointment with Matthias's refusal of this solution, as well as with Vitez's failure to arrive in Brno for the meeting with Poděbrady. The latter expected him, and Vitez did set out for Brno, but unexpectedly aborted the journey, promising to arrive at an unspecified later date. Poděbrady also refused to discuss these matters by letter, saying he would wait to personally discuss them with Vitez, whom he called his sincere friend. Matthias answered that he was not responsible for Vitez's failure to arrive, but that the latter

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**180** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 420–21.

**181** UB, 402, doc. 354.

**182** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 477. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 184–89. The whole correspondence can be found in MKL, 1:144–200.

**183** For various opinions regarding this, see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 193, Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 24, Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 85 and Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 193.

**184** MKL, 1:146–52, docs. 110–11.

**185** Matthias was in Esztergom on October 29 (MKL, 1:144–46, doc. 109), and in December both he and Vitez were in Trnava (MKL, 1:159–60, doc. 115; Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 220, doc. 43).

could not travel because the roads were infested with brigands, and that he would gladly dispatch Vitez again when they become safer. Both of these letters were written in a polemical tone and were peppered with insults.<sup>186</sup>

We do not know whether Matthias ordered Vitez to abort the journey to Brno. One cannot fail to notice that unsafe roads were once again presented as a reason for cancelling negotiations. However, the significant detail is that Poděbrady invited Vitez personally and called him his friend.<sup>187</sup> In a subsequent letter to the Bohemian king, sent in December 1466, Vitez defended Matthias's actions and tried to convince Poděbrady that Matthias would remain his steadfast ally, if only Poděbrady would reimburse and avenge the damages inflicted by his subjects. He stressed several times that the Bohemian king could trust him, reminding him of their personal contacts and promising he would do everything to preserve the peace. He also, in greatest confidence, advised Poděbrady to stay in good relations with Matthias no matter at what cost, because otherwise the consequences would be dire.<sup>188</sup> Perhaps this was a subtle warning of Matthias's intentions. Poděbrady responded he did not doubt that Vitez's advice was sincere and meant no offence, and that he still expected to meet him in Brno, or whatever place Vitez chose, believing that together they could settle all disputes between their respective kingdoms.<sup>189</sup>

Knowing Vitez's previous involvement in secretive and questionable dealings, such as delivering confidential information to Piccolomini, planning Count Ulric's assassination, negotiating Matthias's release from Poděbrady's custody and his subsequent election, and his peace negotiations with Emperor Frederick, it is not impossible that he meant to convince King George of his honesty while preparing a war against him. However, Poděbrady was an experienced politician and could not be deceived easily. Conceivably, Vitez was sincerely trying to prevent a war, but did not have either the influence or the resources to directly oppose Matthias. In late December 1466, after harsh words were exchanged between the two rulers, Vitez wrote to Poděbrady that he would have preferred if both sides had done differently. As for his failed journey to Bohemia, he said Matthias allowed him another attempt, and asked Poděbrady to arrange a meeting somewhere close to the border.<sup>190</sup> It seems Matthias had different things in mind, however, as he suggested to Poděbrady that John Beckensloer, who was in the meantime, after Vitez's promotion to the archbishopric of Esztergom, made bishop of Oradea,<sup>191</sup> should go instead of Vitez. Protase informed Vitez that this suggestion was refused, and that Vitez absolutely should come to meet with King George, on any date of his own choosing.<sup>192</sup>

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**186** MKL, 1:166–78, doc. 120.

**187** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:215–16, doc. 410.

**188** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 218–20, doc. 43.

**189** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:220–22, doc. 413.

**190** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 220–21, doc. 44.

**191** This is discussed in chapter 6 below.

**192** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:224–25, doc. 415. According to Protase, Poděbrady considered Beckensloer his subject. That is not surprising, as the latter was a native of Wrocław.

Protase was, despite the pope's threats, still working to preserve Poděbrady's reign. It seems that Vitez was, at least from the Bohemian side, seen as inclined to do the same. On January 10, 1467, Poděbrady again asked Matthias to send Vitez to him, calling the latter "amicus noster charissimus" (our dearest friend), adding Matthias should not think ill of Vitez because of Poděbrady's wish to negotiate with him personally, promising he would negotiate with Vitez as if he was negotiating with Matthias himself.<sup>193</sup> The invitation was also sent to Vitez directly, this time inviting him to Prague, as urgent business was preventing Poděbrady from travelling to Brno. The king's son Victor was ordered to escort Vitez from the Hungarian border to Prague and back, so that safety could not be an issue this time.<sup>194</sup> The international situation was indeed dire for the Utraquist king. The urgent business referred to above was a diet summoned for the purpose of finding a way to reconcile Poděbrady with the Holy See.<sup>195</sup> If Vitez was seen as a person who would contribute to those efforts, it is all the more puzzling why he did not do so.

It is possible Matthias worried that Vitez might attempt something unsanctioned, as he had done five years ago, if he was allowed to meet Poděbrady in person. If that was so, it is not surprising he did not allow the meeting to take place. Still, he did not prevent Vitez from participating in the negotiations with the Bohemian king's emissary, Albert Kostka of Postupice, who arrived in Hungary in early 1467,<sup>196</sup> probably because they were conducted under Matthias's supervision. Kostka reported to his king that Vitez had sincerely and benevolently contributed to his negotiations with Matthias, resulting in the latter's agreement to personally meet with Poděbrady. The Bohemian king accepted that wholeheartedly, and asked Vitez to be present at that meeting, explicitly stating his trust in him.<sup>197</sup> Even after his return to Bohemia in February 1467, Kostka confirmed to Poděbrady that Vitez was well-disposed towards him and his kingdom.<sup>198</sup> However, we can assume that Matthias was not, as his projected meeting with Poděbrady never took place. From then on, Matthias would promise to send Vitez to negotiate, but never did.<sup>199</sup>

Poděbrady continued to trust Vitez, to the extent that he asked him to act as his representative at the Imperial diet in Nuremberg in the summer of 1467, at which Vitez arrived as Matthias's emissary.<sup>200</sup> He was forced to seek his aid because his own emissaries were driven away immediately upon their arrival.<sup>201</sup> Vitez departed for

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**193** MKL, 1:179.

**194** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:232–33, doc. 419.

**195** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 443.

**196** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 480–81.

**197** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:239–40, doc. 424.

**198** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:250–51, doc. 429.

**199** MKL, 1:193–94, doc. 132 and 1:200, doc. 136.

**200** UB, 468–69, doc. 403.

**201** UB, 472, doc. 405.

Nuremberg after May 13, as he was still in Buda on that date, perhaps preparing for his mission.<sup>202</sup>

By then, the political situation had changed considerably. On December 23, 1466, the pope concluded Poděbrady's trial, declaring the latter a relapsed heretic and perjurer, and therefore unfit to rule.<sup>203</sup> The nuncio Rüdeshheim forwarded the verdict to Protase,<sup>204</sup> admonishing him to distance himself from his formally deposed king. This time, Protase obeyed, and he soon joined the League of Zelená Hora.<sup>205</sup> In addition to losing his ardent advocate, Poděbrady lost his most powerful ally, the emperor. The Bohemian king had become accustomed to being supercilious toward Frederick III after saving him from his brother in late 1462, and when Poděbrady's envoys acted in an excessively insulting manner in February 1467, the emperor shouted furiously that he would no longer suffer such insolence.<sup>206</sup> Shortly after that, the members of the League of Zelená Hora, led by Zdeněk of Šternberk, rebelled openly.<sup>207</sup>

The pope proclaimed a crusade against the Bohemian Utraquists and the recruitment of crusaders began.<sup>208</sup> Bishop Lorenzo Roverella of Ferrara was sent to Germany to gather recruits, arriving at the Diet of Nuremberg. This diet was originally intended to organize a crusade against the Ottomans, but Roverella and the emperor's envoy—Vitez's old acquaintance, Bishop Ulrich von Nussdorf of Passau—appropriated it to promote the Bohemian Crusade, although without much success.<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, it was noted that the papal emissaries declared the Utraquists a more urgent and important threat than the Ottomans.<sup>210</sup> At that moment, King Matthias's and the pope's wishes were finally aligned. Matthias wrote to Vitez in Nuremberg to urgently, before the beginning of August 1467, report to him whether aid for the war against the Ottomans could be expected from the Empire, specifying he did not mean future, but immediate aid, so he could decide whether to make peace with the sultan.<sup>211</sup> The only answer he could have gotten from Vitez was that there was no interest in anti-Ottoman campaigns, only in anti-Bohemian ones.

Vitez returned to Hungary even before August, as he was in Esztergom on July 18.<sup>212</sup> Poděbrady wrote to him around that time, saying that he wanted to ask Vitez to come and visit him on his way to or from Nuremberg, but that there was no opportunity

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**202** DF 249 865.

**203** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 438.

**204** UB, 425–26, doc. 374.

**205** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 450–51.

**206** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 433–34.

**207** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 451–54.

**208** UB, 487–88, doc. 417.

**209** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 460–62. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 189–90.

**210** UB, 472–74, doc. 405.

**211** MKL, 1:200–201, doc. 137.

**212** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 221, doc. 45.

for that because Vitez was preoccupied with King Matthias's and his own business.<sup>213</sup> There was indeed a good reason for Vitez to hurry home. Another revolt against Matthias had broken out, again casting doubts on the sustainability of his reign.

The Transylvanian Revolt, another in a series of uprisings of Hungarian noblemen against Matthias's policies, postponed whatever plans the king may have had. It was precipitated by a reform of royal finances, introduced in 1467, which included a tax increase.<sup>214</sup> Although it began in Transylvania, the revolt soon spread throughout the kingdom, led by the ever-fickle Szentgyörgyi brothers, recently appointed as voivodes of Transylvania, Bertold Ellerbach, and the Zapolje brothers, Emeric and Stephen.<sup>215</sup>

According to Bonfini, Vitez played a decisive role in the crushing of this rebellion. Most significantly, he reconciled Emeric of Zapolje with the king.<sup>216</sup> Also, a letter sent by Matthias to Albert Kostka on August 17, 1467 from Buda suggests that Vitez was in the king's company at that time, and that Matthias intended for him to take part in the royal campaign in the south of the kingdom.<sup>217</sup> However, Vitez went north instead, as on September 14 he was in Győr.<sup>218</sup> Demetrius Čupor may have been considering joining the rebels, and Vitez thought it necessary to make sure he would not. As we will later see, he was given control of the fortress of Nitra around that time, so the king may have tasked him with pacifying the northern part of the kingdom.

By the end of the year, the royal forces stamped out the rebellion in the east, and Vitez was in Oradea together with Janus Pannonius, waiting for the king's return from a punitive expedition to Moldavia.<sup>219</sup> The mere fact that Vitez did not withhold his support from the king indicates he still considered Matthias's reign viable and beneficial. Considering how the other Hungarian bishops acted, Vitez and Janus were apparently among the minority giving Matthias their unambiguous support. Stephen Várdai, for example, acted ambivalently. Some inconclusive indications place him among the rebels, but by the end of 1467 he certainly joined Vitez and Janus in Oradea.<sup>220</sup> Bishop Nicholas of Zapolje of Transylvania, a cousin of the renegade magnates, also did not unequivocally support the king, even though there is no evidence of him having joined the rebels.<sup>221</sup> This vacillation would have its reprise in 1471, when many of the magnates would calculate to whom and at what price to sell their allegiance.

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**213** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:283, doc. 443.

**214** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 302. Regarding the financial reform, see Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 47ff.

**215** Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 82–83.

**216** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 570 and 572.

**217** MKL, 1:201–2, doc. 138.

**218** DF 240 527.

**219** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 41.

**220** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 41; see also MDE, 2:68, docs. 39–40.

**221** Kalous, "Boskovice urai," 382–83; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 83.

The one who supported Matthias the most in 1467 was Bishop John Beckensloer of Oradea, who was rewarded with estates confiscated from the rebels.<sup>222</sup> Soon afterwards, he was transferred to the even richer diocese of Eger. He personally participated in Matthias's failed expedition to Moldavia in late 1467, undertaken with the excuse that Voivode Stephen III supported the rebels.<sup>223</sup> Although Vitez did not accompany Matthias there, he probably did contribute troops for the campaign. Janus's poem about a "Prelate John's" banner, returned to its owner by his men after the campaign in Moldavia, indicates that.<sup>224</sup> It is also notable that Pannonius once again took the role of the king's publicist, presenting a failed campaign as a great success.<sup>225</sup>

The Transylvanian Revolt tied up Matthias's forces and any plans for joining the Bohemian Crusade had to be postponed. Quite the opposite, Matthias affirmed his alliance with Poděbrady and asked him not to grant asylum to the escaped rebels.<sup>226</sup> The attack on Voivode Stephen III brought further complications. It enraged the Polish Estates, because they considered Stephen a vassal of Poland. They brought their protest before Matthias, simultaneously (and ominously) complaining about unrelated border incidents.<sup>227</sup>

Matthias's negotiations with the sultan stalled, and did not resume before 1468. In March 1468, the Milanese ambassador to Hungary reported to his authorities that Matthias was negotiating with Ottoman emissaries in Oradea, and that they were offering him Smederevo in exchange for Jajce.<sup>228</sup> From then on, reports regarding Matthias's relations with the Ottomans became unclear. Bonfini claimed Matthias refused their peace offer, as accepting it would have ruined his reputation, but that he agreed to maintain a tacit truce with the sultan for as long as the latter would do the same.<sup>229</sup> Długosz recorded that Protase of Boskovice had, upon arriving in Kraków as an emissary of King Matthias in 1468, reported to the Polish king that Matthias had already dispatched John Jiskra to conclude a three-year truce with the sultan on his behalf.<sup>230</sup> A Milanese ambassador repeated similar rumours circulating through Venice in 1468 and early 1469.<sup>231</sup> However, as early as January 1469 the same ambassador reported

**222** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczy Bánffy család történetéhez*, 2:95–97, doc. 79.

**223** Kubinyi, "Vitéz János és Janus," 18. Długosz claimed that the bishop of Pécs took part in that expedition, but he probably confused Beckensloer with Pannonius. See Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:418. Regarding Matthias's war with Stephen III, see Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 302.

**224** Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 90–91.

**225** Regarding this, see Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 84.

**226** MKL, 1:201–2, doc. 138. Matthias wrote about that to Albert Kostka; regarding that letter, see also Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 481.

**227** CE, 1/1:241–42, doc. 214.

**228** MDE, 2:79, doc. 47. See also Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 284–85 and Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 29.

**229** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 577. Engel thought this likely: Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 307.

**230** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:421.

**231** MDE, 2:86–88, docs. 52–53 and 55.

there were now rumours about Matthias being at odds with some of his magnates, Stephen Várdai most of all, because of his dealings with Mehmed II.<sup>232</sup> It is possible Várdai was against such dealings, especially as his archdiocese was exposed to Ottoman raids. As difficult as it is to discern truth from fabrication, Matthias either really did make a truce with the sultan, or other Christian rulers thought he did.<sup>233</sup>

We do not know what Vitez thought of this. There are no reports of him resisting Matthias's actions. However, the king was staunchly supported by Beckensloer, the new bishop of Eger. After his transfer in 1468, Matthias wrote to the pope that he wanted the diocese of Oradea to remain vacant, because he frequently received information about prelates working against him; consequently, he would not promote anyone but those who proved themselves loyal to him.<sup>234</sup> Vitez was most likely still among the latter. However, Bisticci claimed Vitez had lost his influence on the king due to the actions of a certain German bishop.<sup>235</sup> Although we cannot be certain who that person was, Beckensloer seems to fit the description.

By the spring of 1468, the debris of the Transylvanian Revolt was cleared, and Matthias could concentrate on foreign politics—specifically, his conflict with Poděbrady. All he still needed was a *casus belli*, and it was soon provided. Poděbrady's army, led by his son Victor, invaded Austria in support of the local rebels against the emperor. Frederick sent out calls for aid, among others to Matthias. At the same time, Bishop Protase and Zdeněk of Šternberk personally went to Hungary and asked Matthias to support the League of Zelená Hora. The Hungarian king agreed, and responded to the emperor's call for aid. After years of creeping diplomacy, on March 31, 1468, Matthias declared war.<sup>236</sup>

## The Bohemian Crusade

We have so far seen Vitez lose much of his formerly pivotal role in Hungarian diplomacy. His participation in maintaining the relations with Bohemia were mostly reduced to constant invitations to negotiations which he never attended. King Matthias had by then become the dominant factor in his kingdom. It is therefore difficult to determine Vitez's role in the Hungarian entry into the Bohemian Crusade. We shall now examine his actions during the first years of the war.

First, it should be said that in Bohemia, Vitez was still seen as a beacon of hope. In the flurry of frantic diplomatic actions prompted by Matthias's attack, the Bohemian court asked him for help. Poděbrady sent him a copy of Victor's declaration of war (or, rather, feud) on the emperor, insisting the cause was just and begging him to convince

**232** MDE, 2:92, doc. 58. See also Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 574.

**233** Regarding this, see also Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 225 and 235–36. The Sublime Porte was well aware that both Venice and Matthias wanted to make peace and was fanning hostilities between them. See Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 216.

**234** MKL, 1:208–9, doc. 145.

**235** Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:322–23.

**236** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 486–90.



Matthias of it.<sup>237</sup> Albert Kostka also wrote to Vitez, saying he had been working to preserve the alliance between Hungary and Bohemia for two years, and that he thought Matthias should mediate between the emperor and Poděbrady, as well as between the latter and the pope, instead of joining them in the war against him. He, too, begged Vitez to somehow stop Matthias.<sup>238</sup> Even after the first shock passed, when Poděbrady met Matthias's invasion with the bulk of his force and pushed him into Austria, he still considered Vitez his friend. During a parley by the city of Laa an der Thaya, the Bohemian king suggested Vitez should arbitrate between himself and Matthias.<sup>239</sup>

On the other hand, it seems Vitez actively supported Matthias's actions. There are several indications of that. For example, on April 9, 1468, Bishop Protase wrote to Rüdeshheim (who was in the meantime elected as bishop of Wrocław) that Matthias's prelates had helped him the most to convince the king to declare war on Poděbrady.<sup>240</sup> Also, in late May, the municipal notary of Görlitz wrote to his city council that he had received second-hand news about Vitez sending his troops to aid Matthias.<sup>241</sup> Finally, there is evidence that Vitez's men really did fight in Matthias's army in Moravia, as the king rewarded two of them in November 1468 on Vitez's request.<sup>242</sup>

This is not surprising, as a pragmatic person like Vitez would, if war was inevitable, prefer to help make it a short and successful one. King Matthias had confidence in him, to the degree that he asked the pope to delegate to him (or some other Hungarian prelate, but primarily Vitez) the authority to adjudicate the legal proceedings against Nicholas Bánfi of Lendava and his family, as well as, if possible, all other legal issues concerning Matthias's subjects who had received summonses to the papal court, as he needed the accused for the war.<sup>243</sup> This would have saved the accused the journey to Rome, but also ensured the verdicts would not be incompatible with the king's needs. It is also significant that Janus Pannonius, Vitez's confidant, personally participated in Matthias's campaign. On July 3, 1468 he rode into recently conquered Olomouc together with the king, Zdeněk of Šternberk and other magnates.<sup>244</sup> Pannonius was also appointed as the royal treasurer in the autumn of the same year, with the task of collecting war taxes, and he remained in that office until 1469, when he was appointed as ban of Slavonia.<sup>245</sup>

We can safely assume that Vitez supported his king in the early stages of the Bohemian Crusade, when the odds were on his side. However, unlike Janus, he did

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**237** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:329–30, doc. 465.

**238** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:341–42, doc. 471.

**239** Katona, *Historia critica*, 8:313.

**240** UB, 523–24, doc. 440. Regarding Rüdeshheim's election, see Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 489 and Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:415.

**241** UB, 532, doc. 451.

**242** DL 16 146.

**243** MKL, 1:237–38, doc. 173.

**244** UB, 543, doc. 459.

**245** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 48; Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 24; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 88–89.

not personally take part in the operations in Moravia in 1468.<sup>246</sup> He remained in Bratislava, where we find him on April 21,<sup>247</sup> and from there he returned home, to Esztergom, where he was on May 1.<sup>248</sup> Perhaps he was too old or too sick to take the field. Nevertheless, in early May, when the war was going badly for Matthias, the latter ordered Vitez to organize the defence of Bratislava from a potential Bohemian counteroffensive.<sup>249</sup> This forced the prelate to urgently journey back to the borderlands. On his way there he visited Nitra, where he finished emending a copy of one of Tertullian's works on June 2.<sup>250</sup> From there he hastened to Bratislava, where we find him on June 8.<sup>251</sup>

Despite the initial setbacks, by the end of the campaigning season Matthias had conquered most of Moravia. Poděbrady had lost some of his most important supporters—the Catholic lord John II of Rožmberk crossed over to Matthias, and the Utraquist Zdeněk Kostka of Postupice was killed. But the war was far from over, as the German crusaders' invasion of Bohemia proper ended in complete failure.<sup>252</sup> In September 1468 the Hungarian king returned to Bratislava, where he summoned a diet to convince his Estates to continue financing the war effort. Vitez took part in that diet, as did Janus Pannonius, who probably arrived from Moravia with the king. That was where Pannonius was appointed as the royal treasurer, charged with collecting the war tax.<sup>253</sup> Also, this was most likely the diet at which the astrologer Martin Bylica triumphed in a public debate regarding the exact calculation of the time of birth of one of Reynold Rozgonyi's sons.<sup>254</sup> After the diet, the king retired to Buda. Vitez went there with him, as we find him there on November 8.<sup>255</sup> They were probably encouraged by Bylica's prediction of Poděbrady's imminent death.<sup>256</sup>

However, as soon as Matthias retook the field in January 1469, misfortune struck him. As his forces were replenished with fresh troops (and perhaps due to Bylica's predictions), he decided to bring the war to a swift end by attacking Bohemia directly and conquering Kutná Hora with its silver mines, Poděbrady's main source of income. However, the campaign went horribly awry. Matthias's army was outmanoeuvred and surrounded at Vilémov. Forced to parley with Poděbrady, Matthias agreed to a truce

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**246** Cf. Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 193.

**247** DF 240 535.

**248** DF 234 695.

**249** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:343–44, doc. 472.

**250** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 140.

**251** DF 266 510.

**252** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 497–506. At the Roman Curia it was feared that the German failure would ruin the crusade's chances of success. See Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere*, ed. Cherubini, 2:1229–31, doc. 377.

**253** Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 24.

**254** Hayton, "Expertise *ex stellis*," 33–37.

**255** DL 16 146.

**256** Hayton, "Expertise *ex stellis*," 40–41.

and the opening of peace negotiations.<sup>257</sup> It was agreed that those would be held in Olomouc, which was under Hungarian control. Vitez was still in Esztergom on March 17,<sup>258</sup> but he travelled swiftly to Moravia, entering Olomouc on April 4 as a member of Matthias's grand entourage, together with Beckensloer, the papal nuncio Roverella, the Imperial ambassador Bishop Johannes Roth von Wemding of Lavant, the Bohemian magnates Zdeněk of Šternberk and John of Rožmberk, and others.<sup>259</sup> Poděbrady encamped with his army outside the city, and negotiations began.<sup>260</sup>

The conditions offered to King George were dictated by Roverella, and they were draconian. The Bohemian king was supposed to renounce Utraquism and ensure its extermination, as well as to completely submit to Matthias and recognize his conquests. The only concession he was offered was the right to bear the title of king for the rest of his life.<sup>261</sup> Most likely not even Matthias took those conditions seriously. He was stalling for time, perhaps with Vitez's help. Bishop Protase, who was present there, reported to the League of Zelená Hora that Matthias told him, after taking counsel from Vitez, that he expected reinforcements from the German princes. This shows that Vitez was still one of Matthias's chief counsellors, and he may have suggested the king keep Poděbrady in Olomouc until his allies' forces rallied.

Vitez apparently still had Poděbrady's trust as well, as on April 15 he was sent to negotiate with the Bohemian king after the latter requested a personal meeting with Matthias and Roverella. Five days later, the kings met in person, in a field outside Olomouc, and Matthias was on that occasion accompanied not only by Vitez, but also by Beckensloer, Zdeněk of Šternberk, and other Bohemian lords. Ultimately, in late April Poděbrady and Matthias agreed to prolong the truce until the end of the year.<sup>262</sup> However, the shocking event that followed rendered all this irrelevant.

Ever since the negotiations began in mid-April, Zdeněk of Šternberk had been preparing Matthias's election as king of Bohemia. The chance of Matthias making peace with Poděbrady, with whom they severed their ties, doubtlessly upset Bohemian Catholic lords. Therefore, on May 3, 1469, the rump Bohemian Estates, led by Zdeněk, formally elected Matthias as their king. The latter accepted, swearing the coronation oath before Vitez and the papal emissaries. The coronation itself could not take place, as the Bohemian royal insignia were in Poděbrady's possession.<sup>263</sup>

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**257** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 512–19.

**258** DL 88 476.

**259** UB, 570, doc. 480. As the sources place Vitez in Olomouc in April 1469, it seems the document in which he proclaimed Schönberg his vicar in Bratislava is misdated in Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 223, doc. 46. Roth was appointed as bishop of Lavant after Rudesheim was elected as bishop of Wrocław. Regarding him, see Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:174 and Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III*, 698ff. Regarding Roverella's status, see Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 33.

**260** UB, 571–75, doc. 481.

**261** UB, 569–70, doc. 479.

**262** All this information comes from Protase's report in UB, 577–80, doc. 482. See also Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 87.

**263** UB, 581–82, doc. 482. See also Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:441, and Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 37.

We do not know whether Vitez was working with Zdeněk, but it seems he approved of the election. It is conceivable that he had been deceiving Poděbrady ever since the negotiations began, and that this was the very reason Matthias kept sending him to negotiate with the Bohemian king. If so, perhaps other Hungarian diplomats were instructed to act similarly. George Schönberg, for example, did his best to convince the Imperial Estates gathered at the Diet of Regensburg in February 1469 that Matthias had no intentions of claiming the Bohemian crown for himself.<sup>264</sup> Perhaps these men, Matthias included, were taken by surprise by how the events unfolded, but it seems more likely that such a development was at least partly planned.

In any case, Vitez did not shirk from officiating Matthias's enthronement, nor from helping him to assert his rule. He accompanied Matthias to Silesia after the election, where the king was to receive the homage of the local estates. He arrived in Wrocław on May 26 as a member of the royal entourage, together with Beckensloer and the bishop of Lavant.<sup>265</sup>

In the short term, Matthias's election had disastrous effects, not only because all hopes of making peace with Poděbrady were utterly dashed. Most importantly, Poland was extremely dissatisfied. After he had declared war on Poděbrady, Matthias sent Bishop Protase to Kraków to try to appease King Casimir IV, who had a solid claim on Bohemia as the late Ladislaus V's brother-in-law. Protase's mission was a failure: Casimir declared he would consider anyone who claims the Bohemian crown his enemy. Immediately afterwards, Albert Kostka arrived in the Polish capital as Poděbrady's emissary, promising his king would nominate one of Casimir's sons as his heir.<sup>266</sup> It is therefore understandable that Matthias's election as king of Bohemia prompted Casimir to continue negotiating with Poděbrady.<sup>267</sup> Matthias's relations with Poland deteriorated further later in 1469. A meeting of representatives of the two kingdoms was supposed to be held in Podolínec. However, the Hungarian embassy failed to arrive on the agreed date, as Matthias kept its members in Bratislava due to some urgent business, likely the session of the royal council summoned to approve further war taxes. The Polish emissaries were unwilling to wait for their counterparts' arrival and abruptly departed, causing a diplomatic incident.<sup>268</sup>

On the opposite side of the kingdom, the alleged truce with the sultan turned out to be just that. Mehmed did temporarily refrain from waging a war of conquest on Hungary, but he did not prevent his subjects from raiding it.<sup>269</sup> In 1468 and 1469 Croatia was ravaged by Ottoman raiders, and the local magnates, such as the Frankapans and the

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**264** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 510. The possibility that the Kingdom of Bohemia could secede from the Empire greatly upset the Imperial Estates; see Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere*, ed. Cherubini, 2:1217–22, doc. 372.

**265** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:441–42; UB, 590, doc. 589.

**266** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 502–3; see also Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:421–23.

**267** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 38–39.

**268** CE, 1/1:242–43, doc. 215; Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:499. Regarding this session of Matthias's royal council, see Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 90.

**269** Regarding the Ottoman raids after 1468, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 231–32.

Kurjakovičs, sought protection from Venice and the emperor. Matthias was extremely displeased by this, and he reacted by occupying some of the said magnates' holdings.<sup>270</sup> But displeasure with the Hungarian king's foreign policy stretched much farther than some aggrieved nobles. Venice, left to face the sultan's forces virtually alone, was exasperated with Matthias fighting Poděbrady instead of the Ottoman Empire. On March 27, 1469, the Signoria informed the Hungarian ambassador that they hoped Matthias would turn his attention to the Ottomans as soon as possible.<sup>271</sup> The Venetian ambassador negotiated with Matthias, Vitez and Albert Vetési in Bratislava in late August 1469, trying to persuade the king to actively fight the Ottomans, but Matthias said he would not do so if Venice would not supply him with money first. The Signoria replied their Republic was unable to send him any aid, as it was already spending enormous sums on its own actions against the Ottomans.<sup>272</sup> What went unspoken was the suspicion that any forthcoming aid would be sunk into the Bohemian Crusade. That concern was openly voiced by the Hungarian Estates in late 1470, when the king proposed a new round of war taxes. The Estates consented, with the condition that money thus raised would be used against the Ottomans, not Bohemians.<sup>273</sup>

As Vitez participated in the negotiations with the Venetian ambassador, he could see that the Republic, with which he had previously cultivated such warm relations, was losing faith in its alliance with Matthias. Vitez worked to improve the kingdom's relations with Florence around this time, with the possible intention to counter Venice. The Florentine government sent their regards to Vitez and Janus Pannonius on November 29, 1469, saying that the king's emissary, Stephen Bajoni (another Vitez protégé) told them Vitez and Pannonius had done much to make their king more favourably disposed towards Florence.<sup>274</sup>

Nevertheless, enemies were multiplying at a pace even Vitez was unable to keep up with. The alliance with the emperor was falling apart. The Ottomans were plundering not only Hungarian and Venetian lands, but the emperor's as well,<sup>275</sup> and the latter suspected Matthias of granting safe conduct to their raiding parties.<sup>276</sup> Also, many of the Bohemians were affronted by Matthias's election as king of Bohemia, which allowed Poděbrady to rally his forces and turn the tide against Hungary. In mid-1469, the bishop of Wrocław Rudolf von Rüdeshheim admonished Matthias for not leaving troops stationed in Silesia and asked him to immediately dispatch some aid. The king replied he would do so as soon as he had troops to spare, and that he and the nuncio Roverella had written to Vitez, ordering him to secure reinforcements from the emperor.<sup>277</sup>

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**270** Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 100–104.

**271** MDE, 2:99–101, doc. 64.

**272** MDE, 2:140–41, doc. 93.

**273** Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 90.

**274** Gentile, "Marsilio Ficino," 93–94.

**275** Regarding this, see Theiner, 2:408, doc. 583 and Teke, "Rapporti diplomatici," 23–24.

**276** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 304.

**277** MKL, 1:240–41, doc. 176.

Reinforcements from Frederick III became a dire necessity after Matthias suffered a severe defeat at Uherské Hradiště in 1469.<sup>278</sup> Vitez spent almost the entire November negotiating with the emperor's representatives in Wiener Neustadt and Vienna, at the head of Matthias's embassy. Hans Hausner, an emissary of the city of Chéb, who was in Vienna at the time, wrote on November 23 that the Hungarian ambassadors—among whom he named Vitez and John of Rožmberk—requested the emperor to send the military and monetary aid he promised Matthias, but also that he renounce the title of king of Hungary, which was a new development, and a sign of deteriorating relations. The emperor's chief negotiator was probably Ulrich von Nussdorf, with whom Vitez had a long-standing acquaintanceship.<sup>279</sup> It seems Matthias himself was supposed to come to Vienna, as his mansion was being readied. Hausner conversed with Vitez on that occasion and was awed by him, saying: "Es ist wunderlich mit den grossen herrn!" (It is wonderful [to be] with the great lord!) He noted that his companion Nicholas Schlick (one of the late imperial chancellor Kaspar Schlick's brothers) commented: "Wann der von Gran ist gancz konig, waz der tut" (loosely translated: The [archbishop] of Esztergom acts as behoves a king).<sup>280</sup>

This round of negotiations failed, and the Hungarian ambassadors left empty-handed. This seemed to only anger Matthias. The Milanese ambassador Cristoforo Bollato (also known as Cristoforo da Bollate) wrote on January 21, 1470 that Vitez returned to Vienna around last Christmas, and that this time further requests were added to existing ones—that the emperor hand over the Hungarian holdings he was allowed to keep by the peace treaty of 1463, and that he pardon Andrew Baumkircher, the Hungarian count of Bratislava who led the uprising against him in Styria.<sup>281</sup> Matthias wrote to the ambassadors that they were to leave immediately if the emperor would not comply with those requests. They did leave, twice, but both times the emperor persuaded them to return. In the end, the most they were able to achieve was to arrange a personal meeting between Matthias and Frederick in Vienna. Bollato thought Matthias had no intention of improving his relations with the emperor, and that he would turn on him as soon as he had reached a peace agreement with Poděbrady.<sup>282</sup>

We do not know whether that was really Matthias's intention, or, if so, whether Vitez knew about it. However, relations between Matthias and Frederick worsened even before Vitez conveyed these extreme requests. Ottoman raids and Baumkircher's revolt were just pieces in a greater mosaic of disagreements. In fact, it seems Matthias wanted a full annulment of the concessions granted to the emperor by the 1463 peace treaty in payment for coming to his aid. He perhaps even aimed to supplant the

**278** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 43.

**279** Adolph Bachmann, ed., *Urkunden und Actenstücke zur Österreichischen Geschichte im Zeitalter Kaiser Friedrichs III. und König Georgs von Böhmen (1440–1471)* (Vienna: Gerold, 1879), 480–82, doc. 363.

**280** Bachmann, *Urkunden und Actenstücke*, 483–85, doc. 364.

**281** Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 87.

**282** MDE, 2:206–7, doc. 144. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 195–96.

emperor by becoming king of the Romans.<sup>283</sup> Frederick III therefore simply replaced Poděbrady with another, perhaps even more dangerous creditor, and he had, by the time Matthias arrived in Vienna in February 1470, begun striving to extricate himself from the Bohemian Crusade and the uneasy alliance with the Hungarian king. However, if Bollato's opinion was correct, Matthias intended to collect his debt one way or another.

Frederick may have been the weaker party, but Matthias was worse at hiding his animosity. Immediately before his arrival in Vienna, on February 9, his counsellors dispatched a strange missive to the emperor: a guarantee that their king would act friendly towards him during their meeting. Among the guarantors were Vitez, Pannonius, Beckensloer and other magnates.<sup>284</sup> The fact that such a guarantee was thought necessary demonstrates that Matthias was not merely an unpleasant ally, but a direct hindrance to the alliance itself.

The negotiations were nearly broken off several times. Bollato wrote that the king almost left the negotiations twice, and that both rulers would act more politely towards one another only when they met in Vitez's presence.<sup>285</sup> Matthias apparently went as far as to request the emperor's daughter's hand in marriage, and his intentions to become king of the Romans were spoken of. Frederick, of course, strongly disagreed with such ideas, so Matthias flew into his notorious fits of rage. In the end, despite Vitez's best efforts, Matthias abruptly broke off the negotiations and left Vienna, gravely insulting the emperor in the process.<sup>286</sup> Another layer of complexity was thus added to the political situation, and the future became an even greater enigma. Many of the actors began to reconsider their allegiances.

## The End of the Tether

The last few years of Vitez's life were marked by significantly more autonomy than he displayed during the period between 1463 and 1470. In this chapter we will examine how this was brought about by his increasing displeasure with Matthias's policy, eventually leading to his involvement in the 1471–1472 plots against Matthias. The nature of that involvement will be considered, especially as the paucity of evidence makes it uncertain whether Vitez acted against Matthias at all.

After the 1470 Vienna conference failed so dismally, Vitez retreated to Esztergom. As we find him there for quite a while, he may have temporarily withdrawn from politics.<sup>287</sup> He was not a young man any more. Statesmen of his generation were becom-

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**283** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 518–19 and 522–23.

**284** Kurz, *Österreich unter Kaiser Friedrich dem Vierten*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Doll, 1812), 2:247, doc. 28.

**285** MDE, 1:73–74, doc. 46. Note that document is misdated; it is impossible that the events described in it took place in 1460.

**286** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 196; Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 556–57; Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 44–45.

**287** DL 88 496; DF 237 834 and 225 576.

ing scarce; for example, Ulrich Sonnenberger died in December 1469.<sup>288</sup> Vitez's health had deteriorated due to the stress of the previous couple of years. For example, in June 1469, when King Matthias was in Wrocław, the local chronicler Peter Eschenloer noted that his entire entourage took part in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament on the feast of Corpus Christi, except for Vitez, who was too weak to walk.<sup>289</sup> In his book *De homine*, written in 1469–1470 in Esztergom and dedicated to Vitez himself, Galeotto Marzio wrote that Vitez suffered immensely from kidney stones, and was in great pain while performing his political duties.<sup>290</sup> This is reflected in one of Janus Pannonius's poems dedicated to Vitez. In it, the poet compares Vitez to Prometheus being mangled by an eagle, and admonishes him to stop exerting himself, because his body could not bear it.<sup>291</sup> Kidney stones could have caused Vitez to suffer periods of paralyzing pain, making it difficult for him to travel, so it was understandable that he wanted to remain in Esztergom for a while. However, another reason for his seclusion may have been the collapse of the relations between Matthias and the emperor. That might have seriously shaken Vitez's reputation.<sup>292</sup> Perhaps he started losing faith in his abilities, or, more likely, Matthias's.

Although we cannot know what Vitez really thought, at least until 1470 he behaved as if he believed it was possible and likely that Matthias would win the war against Poděbrady. The change in his behaviour after the Vienna conference indicates he might have changed his opinion. If he did, he was not the only one to do so. By the end of 1470, Rudolf von Rüdeseim became convinced the Bohemian Crusade was a mistake.<sup>293</sup> By early 1471, the emperor was again on excellent terms with Poděbrady, and even Zdeněk of Šternberk was trying to reconcile with the latter.<sup>294</sup> In fact, Frederick III started negotiating an anti-Hungarian alliance with Casimir IV,<sup>295</sup> and Venice fanned the hostility between them and Matthias, due to rumours about him desiring Trieste and planning an invasion of Dalmatia.<sup>296</sup> Additionally, the pope did not recognize Matthias as king of Bohemia; as a result, Matthias began to publicly doubt his support.<sup>297</sup> To make an unfavourable situation worse, in mid-1470 Poděbrady launched

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**288** Obersteiner, *Die Bischöfe*, 247.

**289** Peter Eschenloer, *Historia Wratislaviensis*, ed. Hermann Markgraf, *Scriptores rerum Silesiacarum* 7 (Wrocław: Max, 1872), 204.

**290** Galeottus Martius Narniensis, *De homine libri duo* (Basel: Frobenius, 1517), fol. 87r–v (available online at <https://www.e-rara.ch/ch16/id/20948497>). See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 48 and D'Alessandro, "Astrologia, religione e scienza," 139.

**291** Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 98–99.

**292** Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 24.

**293** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 567; Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 155–56.

**294** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 582–83. Roverella noted that the emperor remained strangely inactive in the war against the Bohemian king. See Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere*, ed. Cherubini, 2:1217–22, doc. 372.

**295** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 47.

**296** Teke, "Rapporti diplomatici," 25.

**297** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 571–72. The nuncio Roverella did recognize Matthias's election,



a series of raids on the north of Hungary, intending to incite the local populace to rise against Matthias.<sup>298</sup>

The Kingdom of Hungary seemed beset by enemies on all sides, with Matthias driving it into ruin. Of course, later he proved he was able to fight all his neighbours and win, but there was no way of knowing that then. When Vitez returned to Hungary in 1470, everything he could see portended a disaster. Poland and Venice were indignant. Poděbrady's troops were on Hungarian soil. Ottoman raiders ran rampant. News about the Ottomans plundering Hungary and enslaving its inhabitants were spreading.<sup>299</sup> Długosz claimed their raiding parties ravaged Transylvania, Croatia and Slavonia, reaching as far as Zagreb, and that Matthias did nothing to stop them.<sup>300</sup> That was not merely anti-Corvinian propaganda: the Chapter of Zagreb and the citizens of the nearby city of Gradec indeed reported to Matthias that the Ottomans were raiding their estates.<sup>301</sup>

This bleak outlook could have prompted Vitez to try to effect a change in the kingdom's policy. Although he remained politically inactive throughout most of 1470, he came out of his seclusion to participate in the Diet of Buda, summoned in late 1470 to approve yet more war taxes. We find him Buda in November and December 1470.<sup>302</sup> In a charter he issued there on December 8, he claimed he had not time to adjudicate cases concerning his archdiocese, due to being extremely busy with affairs of state.<sup>303</sup>

Vitez was still far from being a defeated, tired old man. In fact, the events that followed suggest he tried to turn the kingdom's forces back against the Ottoman Empire. The Hungarian Estates shared this initiative. They did approve a new round of war taxes, but the decree proclaiming them included the proviso that the tax money should be used mostly to fight the Ottomans, as they, and not the Bohemians, were the greatest threat to the kingdom.<sup>304</sup> Faced with the suspicions of the Estates, a number of prelates and barons guaranteed Matthias would uphold the decrees of this diet, not introducing new taxes against the will of the Estates. However, it is significant that Vitez was not among them.<sup>305</sup>

As he was present in Buda when the guarantee was issued, something must have inspired Vitez not to take part in it. The only source offering any information is a much later third-hand report, written on September 14, 1471. The information it conveys

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but under duress and without the pope's permission. See Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 156.

**298** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 563–64.

**299** See, for example, Bachmann, *Urkunden und Actenstücke*, 482, doc. 363.

**300** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:461.

**301** Katona, *Historia critica*, 8:406ff.

**302** DF 268 976; DL 88 513.

**303** DF 237 610.

**304** *Vestigia comitiorum apud Hungaros*, ed. Kovačić, 384.

**305** *Vestigia comitiorum apud Hungaros*, ed. Kovačić, 390. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 202. Regarding this diet, Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 90.

came from Hans Monhaupt, an agent of the princes-electors of Saxony. According to him, the Hungarian king requested that the Estates grant him the means to continue the war in Bohemia. Vitez delivered the Estates' response, saying they would provide him the means, but only for defending Hungary from the Ottomans. Upon hearing this, the king asked Vitez to consider a different response. When Vitez declined to do so, Matthias struck him in the face.<sup>306</sup>

Considering that the conspiracy against Matthias was well underway when this document was written, it may have been just a piece of anti-Corvinian propaganda. There was certainly an abundance of disinformation circulating at the time. For example, a Milanese ambassador in Venice reported to his authorities rumours about Matthias being dead, having been killed by two of his chamberlains.<sup>307</sup> On the other hand, the decree of the 1470 Diet of Buda stated exactly what Monhaupt later ascribed to Vitez: the Ottomans were the greatest threat to the kingdom, and the tax money was to be used to counter them. Why, then, did Vitez deny it his guarantee? Perhaps he really did bring the Estates' terms before Matthias, and the latter eventually agreed to them, but only after insulting Vitez to such a degree that he refused to participate in the diet any further.

There are other indications of Vitez having distanced himself from Matthias in late 1470. Matthias apparently thought it necessary to ask the pope to persuade Vitez to continue supporting him. On January 8, 1471, Pope Paul II admonished Vitez not to stop supporting the king regarding the Bohemian Crusade, which he had, in the pope's words, until then so eagerly done. The pope also said Matthias was constantly asking him to bestow new honours upon Vitez, and that he was so far unable to do so because he had other pressing business, but that he would be more forthcoming if Vitez would continue supporting Matthias.<sup>308</sup> The timing and the content of the letter indicate its purpose was to make Vitez stop opposing the king's policy, something he had only recently begun to do.<sup>309</sup> Additionally, in March 1471, shortly before his death, Poděbrady wrote gleefully to his friend, Margrave Albert of Brandenburg, that Matthias was having trouble with his magnates, including the prelates.<sup>310</sup>

At the beginning of 1471, Vitez returned to Esztergom. It appears he left Buda immediately after the diet and retreated to his domain, devoting himself to affairs concerning his archdiocese.<sup>311</sup> The only contact between him and Matthias during the first half of that year was a short letter sent by the king on March 8, warning Vitez to stop illegally imposing tithes on the estates belonging to the convent on

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**306** CE, 3:157–59, doc. 132. Kubinyi considered this source unreliable; however, he did not disregard it completely. See Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 25 and Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 91. Cf. Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 201, and Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 198.

**307** MDE, 2:224–25, doc. 162.

**308** Theiner, 2:417, doc. 593.

**309** Cf. Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 178.

**310** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 583.

**311** See DF 279 697, 225 577, and 227 247; DL 102 585 and 17 214.

Margitsziget.<sup>312</sup> In that document Vitez was titled as the high and privy chancellor. He would bear that title until his death, despite everything. Perhaps he rejoined the royal court in the late summer, as on August 22 he issued one of Matthias's charters, in his capacity as a high and privy chancellor.<sup>313</sup> That was exceptional, as by that time he probably bore that office in name only; after Stephen Várdai died in the first half of 1471, the chancery was effectively run by the new archbishop of Kalocsa, Gabriel of Matuchina.<sup>314</sup> After all, Matthias himself addressed Vitez as high and privy chancellor even after he had him arrested, when it was quite impossible for him to perform his duties as such.<sup>315</sup>

There are no indications that Vitez acted against Matthias in mid-1471, and it may be that he once again took his place at the court. Długosz claimed Matthias had by then known that Vitez and Janus were the ringleaders of a plot against him.<sup>316</sup> However, considering that author's bias, relations between Vitez and the king may have been fairly normal. Perhaps the pope's admonition had worked. Bonfini's report corroborates this, as it states Vitez was the last one to join the conspiracy against Matthias, and that he did so reluctantly, on Janus's urging.<sup>317</sup>

As for the conspiracy itself, Bonfini claimed it was caused by the extortionate taxes imposed by Matthias, from which even the Church was not exempt, as well as by his reduction of the role of the prelates and barons in the affairs of state. Regarding Vitez personally, Bonfini claimed Matthias angered him by confiscating many of the incomes of the archdiocese of Esztergom, including its dues from the gold mines on its territory.<sup>318</sup> It is not unlikely that such a matter would have catalyzed Vitez's animosity, especially considering the accusations brought against the king by the conspiracy's participants were largely their personal grievances.<sup>319</sup> A whole litany of such accusations was published by the Polish prince Casimir when he invaded Hungary in late 1471. At least some guessed the list was composed by Vitez,<sup>320</sup> though there is no evidence of it.

As the conspiracy was, by its very nature, secret, it is difficult to discern truth from fabrication. We cannot be certain whether Vitez was one of its ringleaders, a reluctant participant, or an opportunistic observer. Still, it is unlikely that Vitez, as Długosz

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**312** DL 17 178.

**313** DL 73 614.

**314** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 36–37. Previously the parish priest of Buda, Gabriel was delegated by the nuncio Roverella to gather support for the anti-Ottoman crusade. See Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 134.

**315** DL 17 349.

**316** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:462–63. Fraknói agreed with this: see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 212–13.

**317** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 592; see also Matić, "Ivan Vitez," 169–70.

**318** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 588–89. Fraknói and Nehring mostly repeat this: see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 204–10 and Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 54.

**319** Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 25.

**320** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 215–17.

asserted, hated Matthias.<sup>321</sup> It is possible he joined a group of dissenters in early 1471, when they did not have a clear agenda. However, later, when it turned out that proceeding with the conspiracy would hurl the country into a new internecine war, it would not have been inconsistent with Vitez's previous actions—such as after Count Ulric's murder, during the Hunyadi rebellion or after the rebellion of 1459—to balk at that and seek a peaceful solution. Perhaps that is what happened in August 1471, when, as we mentioned, we find Vitez issuing a royal charter. Finally, when it became obvious that the revolt would start with or without Vitez, he, as will be explained later, was not willing to risk everything and was careful not to commit himself.

What decided the course of the conspiracy were the alarming events abroad. George of Poděbrady died on March 23, 1471, and the Bohemian Estates gathered to elect a new king. Matthias decided to enter the election as a candidate, even though that implied his previous election was invalid.<sup>322</sup> According to Długosz, he sent Beckensloer and the Transylvanian voivode Nicholas Čupor to present his bid, supposedly offering to reinstate the Basel Compacts. However, his supporters, including Zdeněk of Šternberk and John of Rožmberk, were few.<sup>323</sup> In the end, the Estates fulfilled the late King George's promise by electing the Polish king's eldest son, Wladislas Jagiellon.<sup>324</sup>

Thus, the king of Bohemia was Catholic again, and the Bohemian Crusade lost much of its religious dimension. This election ushered in a Jégiellonian alliance of Poland and Bohemia, hemming in Hungary between the Jagiellonian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire. Also, Matthias's attempts at making foreign alliances failed. For example, Margrave Albert of Brandenburg wrote to Duke William of Saxony that he was offered Lusatia in exchange for recognizing Matthias as king of Bohemia, but that he refused.<sup>325</sup> All of this most likely convinced Vitez that a change of policy was urgent.

The events at the Imperial diet in Regensburg, held in July and August 1471, reflected this urgency. Matthias sent Bishop Albert Vetési and John Rozgonyi there, and they, supported by one of the few remaining advocates of the Bohemian Crusade, Lorenzo Roverella, requested aid from the Imperial Estates. The emperor and the German princes did not recognize Matthias as king of Bohemia and refused to send him any further aid for fighting the Bohemians; they were willing, however, to offer him aid for fighting the Ottomans. As that was not the kind of aid Matthias wanted, nothing was accomplished. However, a letter from Vitez and other Hungarian magnates arrived in Regensburg independently of the king's emissaries, and in it the senders

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**321** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:471.

**322** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 588.

**323** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:466.

**324** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 203.

**325** "Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Häuser Brandenburg und Österreich, der Länder Ungarn und Böhmen namentlich aus der Zeit Markgraf Albrechts Achilles von Brandenburg," ed. Karl Adolf Konstantin Höfler, *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 7 (1851): 25–146 at 57–58, doc. 32.

requested aid precisely for fighting the Ottomans. This shows Matthias was facing serious dissent at home and losing control over his kingdom's foreign policy.<sup>326</sup>

The Hungarian king was aware of the situation he was in. On July 19, 1471, Bishop Protase brought Matthias's peace offer to Kraków, proposing to let the pope decide the rightful king of Bohemia. Matthias also offered to adopt Wladislas and recognize him as king of Bohemia, on the condition that the latter accepted his tutelage. He also offered to marry Casimir IV's daughter. However, all of this was refused.<sup>327</sup> Casimir knew Matthias was at a disadvantage and was unwilling to reduce the pressure he was under.

This refusal probably convinced the dissenters in Hungary that Matthias's cause was lost, as they intensified their efforts after it. According to Długosz, around the time of Wladislas's coronation in Prague (August 21), Hungarian magnates started sending emissaries to Casimir IV, begging him to send them his younger son, also named Casimir, so they could make him their king. The foremost among them were allegedly Vitez, Janus Pannonius and Reynold Rozgonyi. Although Długosz was certainly biased, the Polish invasion of Hungary was very likely precipitated by internal dissent. In any case, the chronicler continues, Casimir IV agreed to send his son to Hungary with an army. It gathered in Nowy Sącz on October 2, and entered Hungary later that month.<sup>328</sup>

However, Casimir was too late. Matthias had by then managed to bribe, coax or intimidate most of the Hungarian lords. In September 1471 he summoned a great diet in Buda, at which he redressed many of the grievances brought against himself.<sup>329</sup> He also managed to sway some of the magnates who were calculating whom to support. For example, he bought Nicholas of Ilok by granting him the title of king of Bosnia.<sup>330</sup> According to an anonymous report sent from Hungary to John of Rožmberk, Vitez was also present at this diet, and he personally negotiated with the king. However, he requested a letter of safe conduct before attending.<sup>331</sup> There is no reason to think this did not happen, especially as Vitez had before always tried to negotiate a peaceful solution to a conflict. Even Długosz claimed he and Janus Pannonius started having doubts about supporting Prince Casimir before he even entered Hungary.<sup>332</sup> However,

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**326** Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus*, 52–54. Rozgonyi died during this embassy: see Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 19.

**327** CE, 1/1:252–53, doc. 221.

**328** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:470–71. See also MKL, 1:270, doc. 189.

**329** See the text of the decree issued at the diet in *The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, ed. Bak, 3:24–28.

**330** Richard Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce in the Organization of the Hungarian Border Defence System under Matthias Corvinus" in *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.–1463.)—sлом srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb / Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest / Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Sarajevu, 2013), 89–98 at 94–95.

**331** See a transcript of the document in František Palacký, *Geschichte von Böhmen*, 5 vols. (Prague: Tempsky, 1865), 5:57–58n1. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 213–15.

**332** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:471.

Vitez's request for safe conduct suggests he was at least somewhat involved with the conspirators.

The safest assumption might be that Vitez was acting similarly to Nicholas of Ilok—trying to extort concessions from Matthias by threatening to support the Poles. In fact, if we consider the actions of other alleged conspirators, it becomes obvious that very few of them persisted until the bitter end. When Prince Casimir arrived in Hungary, only Reynold Rozgonyi and a few other lords joined him.<sup>333</sup> Bonfini claimed that before the September Diet of Buda Matthias could not count on anyone except Michael Ország and Gabriel of Matuchina, but that the number of his opponents fell precipitously after it.<sup>334</sup> There are indications that many of the lords were involved with the conspiracy, but the fact that they eventually joined Matthias suggests some of them were only considering when, and at what price, to offer their support to him. That was, for example, the case with Emeric of Zapolje.<sup>335</sup> We should also bear in mind that this was the third rebellion Matthias had to face. It is therefore likely that not many of the lords were eager to support him unconditionally, as his rule was proven to be fragile and often challenged.

It should also be remembered that the Polish king was playing a very intricate game, in which Hungary was only one of the prizes. He faced Matthias on two fronts, and the main one was in Bohemia. Noticeably, he did not commit fully to his younger son's expedition to Hungary: he treated it ambiguously. On the one hand, he disseminated propaganda about Hungary being rightfully his.<sup>336</sup> On the other, on November 16, 1471, he promised to some Hungarian nobles who had sworn fealty to him that he would have their well-being in mind if he were to make a peace treaty with Matthias, referring to the latter as king of Hungary.<sup>337</sup> It seems his plan was to reach a compromise with Matthias, and that Prince Casimir's expedition was essentially a distraction. If it managed to dislodge Matthias, all the better; but if it would induce him to recognize Wladislas's claim to Bohemia, it would have fulfilled its purpose. The fact that the Polish army retreated swiftly after Matthias consolidated his forces also indicates that King Casimir did not intend to commit his troops in Hungary.

Nevertheless, some of the participants in this tug of war were trampled underfoot. For example, Reynold Rozgonyi fled to Venice after the Poles retreated.<sup>338</sup> Those who had been vacillating for too long paid for their indecisiveness. Oswald Thuz, bishop of Zagreb, for example, did not openly join the rebellion, but he also did not personally join Matthias's army or put his troops at his disposal when a general summons to war

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**333** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 217. See also Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 92.

**334** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 588 and 590.

**335** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 588; Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce," 94–95; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 21.

**336** A Milanese agent reported in December 1471 that he had seen a pamphlet with such content with Cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini. See MDE, 2:237, doc. 168.

**337** CE, 3:584–85, doc. 76.

**338** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 201.

was issued. Matthias's revenge was swift—in January 1472 he forbade Križevci county to pay tithes and other taxes to the bishop.<sup>339</sup>

Unlike those, Vitez once again emerged triumphant. However, it is questionable whether he acted against Matthias at all. His only “rebellious” act was letting the Polish army occupy Nitra, but it is unclear whether he did that on purpose. Of the contemporary sources, Długosz was the only one to expressly claim Vitez gave the orders for the fortress's surrender.<sup>340</sup> As for the others, Ranzano and Thuróczy vaguely claimed that some lords, Vitez and Pannonius among them, brought the Polish prince Casimir into Hungary and surrendered the fortress of Nitra to him.<sup>341</sup> Bonfini did not mention Vitez at all while writing about the Polish occupation of Nitra, but did claim Prince Casimir was unsuccessfully trying to persuade Vitez to come to his aid.<sup>342</sup> Eschenloer thought the castle was surrendered to the Poles by its castellan, who was Polish himself.<sup>343</sup> This is somewhat corroborated by the treatment the castellan later received. Finally, a report sent by a Bohemian nobleman to the princes of Saxony on January 23, 1472, stated that Prince Casimir had occupied Nitra, which belonged to the archbishop of Esztergom, and left a garrison in it before retreating to Poland. Matthias succeeded to negotiate its surrender, after which he handed control to the archbishop, with whom he had reconciled.<sup>344</sup> There is, therefore, no conclusive evidence of Vitez being responsible for the Polish occupation of Nitra, and even less that he had openly rebelled against Matthias. In fact, he was still in contact with the king on October 26, 1471, when Matthias, on Vitez's request, granted the chapter of Nitra an exemption from the obligation to contribute troops for the wars against the Poles and Ottomans.<sup>345</sup>

It is most likely that Vitez simply retreated to Esztergom and bided his time. He and Janus Pannonius reached some agreement with the king before December 17, 1471, when Bartolomeo Fonizio wrote to Peter Garazda (as we shall later see, they were both Vitez's contacts) that he heard of “his people” having reconciled with the king, by that meaning Vitez and Janus.<sup>346</sup> Vitez certainly declared for Matthias in Esztergom on December 21, when Gabriel of Matuchina, Beckensloer, Michael Ország and

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**339** AHAZU, 110—D CXLVII (Privil.), no. 34. See also Razum, “Oswaldo Thuz,” 92–94 and Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 374. There are indications that Oswald and his relative John Thuz acted against the royal city of Gradec, which remained loyal to Matthias. See MHEZ, 2:338, doc. 273 and 2:341, doc. 275.

**340** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:472. This is the source cited in Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 4:261, and in turn transmitted in Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 218. The version in Anon., *Episcopatus Nitriensis eiusque praesulum memoria*, 298 is very similar and probably also comes from Długosz.

**341** Ranzano, *Epitome rerum Ungaricarum*, LIXv–LXr; Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, 289–90.

**342** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 591.

**343** Eschenloer, *Historia Wratislaviensis*, ed. Markgraf, 247.

**344** CE, 3:162–63, doc. 137.

**345** József Vagner, *Adalékok a Nyitrai székes-káptalan történetéhez* (Nitra: Huszár, 1896), 426–27, doc. 24.

**346** Fonizio, *Letters to Friends*, trans. Davies, 28, doc. 14.

Emeric of Zapolje reached an agreement with him on the king's behalf.<sup>347</sup> In the text of the agreement there was no mention of Vitez having committed crimes against the king, merely that suspicions and disagreements between them had accumulated over the last few years. Vitez was to swear fealty to and recognize Matthias as the only true king of Hungary, and to garrison all of his fortifications with Hungarians (meaning, not foreign mercenaries). The latter request was in accordance with the decree of the September Diet of Buda.<sup>348</sup> These garrison troops were to swear fealty to Vitez personally and, by extent, to the king, and to promise they would open their gates to royal troops if that was necessary for the defence of the kingdom. Conversely, royal troops were not allowed to evict Vitez's garrisons. Vitez also promised he would do whatever he could to reclaim Nitra and, if it was in enemy hands, Breznica (in today's northwestern Slovakia). If he failed, he would send aid to Matthias in the manner of all other Hungarian prelates and barons. This means that Vitez's contribution to the war against Poland was to consist of reclaiming Nitra and Breznica, probably because they were originally held by his troops. There was no mention of him having surrendered either of these fortresses to the Poles, nor that he was to turn them over to the king after reclaiming them. The agreement also stipulated that he was to demolish the fortress he built in Szekszárd and to stop building another one in the south of the kingdom.

In return, Vitez was to receive great rewards. First, the king would compensate him for all (presumably, previously confiscated) incomes of the archdiocese of Esztergom. Next, all verdicts brought against Vitez's brothers (probably meaning Pannonius) and retainers during the period of disagreement between the primate and the king were annulled, and their cases were to be reopened and settled by the royal council. Next, Vitez's rights of patronage were confirmed, together with all other rights belonging to his archdiocese. Also, Matthias promised to pay Vitez the seven thousand florins he borrowed from him. Lastly, the king granted absolute immunity to Vitez's person, liberty, property and retainers. If Vitez merely heard that someone had spoken ill of him before the king, he was to report it immediately and the matter would be brought before the royal council. Conversely, the king was obliged to immediately notify Vitez of such cases, and give him the opportunity to either swear his innocence, or defend himself before the royal council.

From this we can conclude there was almost no trust left between Vitez and Matthias, and that Vitez thought it necessary to shield himself from the king's retribution. However, judging by his previous cautiousness, open rebellion was not something he would have allowed himself to indulge in. It is far more likely that he merely avoided supporting the king, at least until he was granted a plethora of concessions. As usual, Bonfini wrote a whole dramatization of Matthias's reconciliation with Vitez, complete with imaginary speeches.<sup>349</sup> The probably only true part of that report is that Matthias

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**347** A transcript of the agreement is in János Török, *Magyarország primásai—Közjogi és történeti vázlat*, 2 vols. (Pest: Laufer és Stolpnál, 1859), 2:79–81, doc. 71. Regarding it, see also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 218–20 and Kubinyi, "Vitéz János és Janus," 24.

**348** *The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, ed. Bak, 3:24.

**349** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 590–91.



met with Vitez in person, as he was himself in Esztergom on December 21.<sup>350</sup> From there he immediately took his army to Nitra, and on December 24 he was encamped by it.<sup>351</sup>

Vitez had seemingly once again managed to outplay everyone. It should also be noted that he was true to his word. On January 18, 1472, Matthias wrote to Zdeněk of Šternberk that Janus Pannonius negotiated with the Polish garrison, after which it agreed to vacate Nitra and leave the country.<sup>352</sup> Regarding Pannonius's actions, they might indicate that Vitez was in contact with the Poles through him. Długosz claimed Pannonius joined Prince Casimir after the latter took Nitra, arriving from Esztergom with two hundred cavalry, but that after only a few days he returned the way he had come.<sup>353</sup> This was perhaps one of Długosz's embellishments. However, Pannonius probably was in Esztergom at the time of Vitez's reconciliation with the king, and Vitez dispatched him to reclaim Nitra on his behalf after it.<sup>354</sup> Długosz also claimed the negotiations with the Polish garrison were mediated by Pannonius, but he wrote that it was agreed Nitra would remain in the hands of Casimir's troops, almost certainly a fabrication. It is also significant that Długosz listed Breznica among Vitez's fortresses confiscated after his arrest in 1472,<sup>355</sup> meaning that he recovered that fortress as well, if that was even necessary. The agreement between Vitez and Matthias made after the mentioned arrest confirms this, as it stipulated that Vitez was to turn over Breznica to the king.<sup>356</sup> This means that Vitez had very quickly fulfilled the requirements of his reconciliation with Matthias. Although no sources mention that he personally left Esztergom, it is possible that he dispatched his troops together with Pannonius. On February 24 he rewarded his retainer Ladislaus Mark Terjéni of Csúz for faithful service, primarily during the recent unrest, by mortgaging to him the castle of Revište for one thousand florins. That castle belonged to Vitez personally, not to his archdiocese.<sup>357</sup> Considering the size of the reward, this person may have been a military commander in Vitez's service.

## Come, Sweet Death

As we have seen, Vitez could think he had successfully weathered the crisis. However, in a strange twist, his success was suddenly reversed. In March 1472, merely a few months after his agreement with the king, news circulated about Vitez and his allies having committed high treason. The reports on this are scattered and imprecise, so we can only examine the sources and attempt to reconstruct the events they refer to.

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**350** From there he sent a letter to the princes-electors of Saxony: see MKL, 1:261–62, doc. 186.

**351** MKL, 1:263–64, doc. 187.

**352** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 221. For a transcript of the letter, see Johannes Tanner, *Geschichte derer Helden von Sternen oder deß Geschlechtes von Sternberg* (Prague: Hraba, 1732), 388–89.

**353** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:472.

**354** Cf. Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 200.

**355** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:477–78.

**356** Katona, *Historia critica*, 8:555.

**357** DL 17 294.

On March 25, 1472, Matthias wrote to the princes-electors of Saxony that Vitez and his “brother” Janus Pannonius were traitors who caused harm not only to him, but to the whole of Christianity. He warned them that Pannonius might flee to their lands, requesting his immediate extradition if he did.<sup>358</sup> The fleeing bishop actually took refuge in Oswald Thuz’s castle of Medvedgrad and died there before the end of March, most likely of pulmonary tuberculosis. When leaving Pécs, he took his belongings with him and left a garrison in the town fortress. Matthias’s forces soon besieged and conquered it.<sup>359</sup> Pannonius’s castellan, a Slavonian nobleman named Ladislaus of Ravenica, was punished, and his holdings in Slavonia were pillaged in April 1472.<sup>360</sup>

Vitez was arrested at about the same time. Contemporary chroniclers seem not to know why. Eschenloer thought Vitez had again committed some treason, while Długosz claimed Matthias arrested him for no reason.<sup>361</sup> Bonfini asserted that the king was taking revenge for Vitez’s part in the recent rebellion, to make an example out of him and to make sure he would not flee. According to Bonfini, Matthias invited the prelate to participate in a session of the royal council in Buda, where he had him arrested and taken to Visegrád.<sup>362</sup> A report by an anonymous author, written before Vitez’s and after Pannonius’s death, offers an additional explanation of Matthias’s actions. According to it, the Polish king sent emissaries to Oswald Thuz, but Matthias learned of this and had them captured and tortured. After they revealed whatever messages they carried, Matthias decided to arrest Vitez. The anonymous author agrees with Bonfini that Vitez was lured out of Esztergom by an invitation to a session of the royal council. However, according to his report, Vitez suspected a trap and sent his secretary, some provost, to tell the king he was too sick to attend. Matthias had the provost detained and sent another invitation to Vitez. This time he did come, and was arrested. The report further claims the king arranged for Vitez to remain the archbishop of Esztergom, but that he was to be confined under surveillance in his see. Matthias entrusted the Esztergom fortress to Beckensloer, but he had to conquer Nitra once again. He also, according to the anonymous author, conquered the fortress of Pécs, from which Pannonius previously fled. The latter took refuge with Bishop Oswald and died soon afterwards. Oswald put himself at Matthias’s mercy, and was forced to surrender his (unnamed) fortress.<sup>363</sup> This last part of the report is confirmed by other sources, so we can assume it is at least partly reliable.

**358** MKL, 1:272–73, doc. 190; see also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 222.

**359** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 200–202. The symptoms of his sickness described in his poems correspond to pulmonary tuberculosis. See Vladimir Dugački, “Medicinski elementi u poeziji Ivana Česmičkog,” in *Zbornik radova četvrtog simpozija iz povijesti znanosti*, ed. Dadić, 183–92 at 186–88.

**360** Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 107–8.

**361** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 222.

**362** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 592.

**363** “Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Häuser Brandenburg,” ed. Höfler, 76–77, doc. 60. Birnbaum thought that the author was one of Beckensloer’s men, probably because he titled this bishop as “mein Herr,” but it is more likely that that was just a formal address. See Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 201.

This information gives us reason to believe Matthias planned the action against Vitez and his circle and executed it with lightning speed. The cause of it may have been that Vitez and his allies—Pannonius and, apparently, Oswald Thuz—remained in contact with Casimir IV, perhaps in case Matthias decided to break the agreement made on December 21. Casimir was likely to have maintained connections with Hungarian dissenters, as the issue of Bohemia was still unresolved. Matthias might have learned of this and decided to remove the involved prelates. The conditions of Vitez's release support the theory that his contacts with the Polish king were the main reason for his arrest. Namely, all confiscated possessions were to be returned to Vitez after peace was made with Poland. The only exception was the castle of Szanda, because the king took it from Vitez's men before the agreement was made.<sup>364</sup> As for Matthias's reconquest of Nitra, mentioned in the anonymous report, during the truce negotiations with the Polish ambassador Stanislaus Strzelecki that took place not long after Vitez's arrest it was agreed that Vitez's castellan Peter Kot would be subjected to a test of loyalty. The ambassador was supposed to ask him on whose behalf he was holding the fortress, and if Kot answered he held it on the Polish king's or Prince Casimir's behalf, the ambassador was to relieve him of his duty. If he answered he was holding it on Vitez's behalf, which would be proper, the ambassador was to let the Hungarian Estates deal with him. Vitez was also obligated to settle any debts he might have owed Kot.<sup>365</sup>

Vitez did not stay imprisoned for very long. Matthias was persuaded by some of the prelates and barons to conclude a new agreement with him in Buda on April 1, 1472.<sup>366</sup> The list of its guarantors is impressive—Lorenzo Roverella, Gabriel of Matuchina (titled as the high and privy chancellor),<sup>367</sup> John Beckensloer, Albert Vetési, Michael Ország, the judge royal Stephen Báthori (junior), the Transylvanian voivode Nicholas Čupor, Zdeněk of Šternberk, and the royal treasurer John Ernuzt. Roverella's presence indicates that a papal agent once again protested against Vitez's incarceration, as Carvajal did in 1457. However, the conditions of his release were extremely harsh. He was allowed to reside in Esztergom, but under the surveillance of thirty-two guards loyal to Beckensloer. The latter was to receive command of the Esztergom fortress, and later he and Vitez were to share custody over it. This is completely in accordance with the previously mentioned anonymous report, down to the number of men guarding Vitez, so it seems its author knew the contents of this agreement. Vitez was also to turn over four more fortresses, including Breznica, to Beckensloer. He was left with full temporal and spiritual authority, and the king promised to eventually return all estates confiscated after Vitez's arrest, whether they belonged to him personally, his archdiocese, his chapter, or his retainers. Vitez also had the liberty to dispose of all his estates, except the ones belonging to the castellan of Esztergom, who was to be one of

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**364** Katona, *Historia critica*, 8:556–57. Vitez bought Szanda in 1465 for three thousand florins, but it belonged to the archdiocese of Esztergom, not to him personally. See DL 16 206.

**365** Katona, *Historia critica*, 8:580.

**366** See the text of the agreement in Katona, *Historia critica*, 8:554–59. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 223.

**367** Regarding his service as chancellor, see Kubinyi, "Vitéz János és Janus," 19–20.

Beckensloer's men. In case of Vitez's death, Beckensloer was to turn over the possessions in his custody to Matthias or his legitimate heir. Conversely, if the king would die heirless, they were to revert to Vitez. Additionally, Vitez was reminded that the king still regarded him as a threat by the stipulation that his men could only visit him alone and unarmed.

Długosz and Bisticci claimed there were some difficulties regarding the transfer of control of Esztergom to Beckensloer. Vitez's castellan allegedly refused to surrender it, even after Matthias threatened to have Vitez executed, but in the end the latter was allowed to enter the fortress and personally surrender it to the king.<sup>368</sup> Bisticci probably received this information from George Polycarp Kosztoláni, at the time in Italy as Matthias's emissary; Pope Sixtus IV employed him as his notary and retainer, and gave him a number of ecclesiastic offices in Hungary.<sup>369</sup> We know Kosztoláni told Bisticci, regarding his erstwhile benefactor, that of all Hungarian lords, only Vitez and Pannonius opposed the king, and the latter had them deposed, but spared their lives because some of the lords vouched for them.<sup>370</sup>

It might be interesting to note that the surrender of Esztergom was a legend among the local populace. Mathes noted in the early nineteenth century that there was a stone there with a carving of a hand on it, which the locals believed was made to commemorate an archbishop once surrendering the fortress to a king. The author remarked that the stone had nothing to do with Vitez, and that it probably came from a collapsed vault.<sup>371</sup>

To conclude, Vitez was left with formal authority over his archdiocese, but his key fortresses were put under the control of a prelate loyal to the king. As we will see in the following chapter, that was Matthias's usual way of dealing with disobedient bishops. The defeated archbishop returned to his see, where we find him in late April and early May 1472. He continued to collect his incomes, as stipulated in the agreement with the king. Matthias notified him on July 27 that the nuns of Margitsziget once again complained of him exacting tithes on their estates, and warned him to stop doing so.<sup>372</sup> It seems the king had Vitez confined not to destroy him completely, but merely to prevent him from plotting until peace with the Polish king was concluded.<sup>373</sup> We do not know what would have happened after that, as Vitez did not live to see it.

As early as April 1472, Vitez started liquidating his assets. On April 30, he donated the estate of Piliscsév to the chapter of Esztergom for the salvation of his soul, empha-

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**368** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:478; Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:1:325.

**369** MREV, 3:218, doc. 348.

**370** Gentile, "Marsilio Ficino," 94–95.

**371** Máthes, *Veteris Arcis Strigoniensis*, 10–11.

**372** DL 17 349.

**373** Vitez's erstwhile vicar Nicholas of Lunga participated in the peace negotiations on the king's behalf. See Antonín Kalous, "King Matthias Corvinus and the Papacy in Early 1472: Miklós Nyújtódi Székely in Rome," *Povijesni prilozi* 36, no. 52 (2017): 11.

sizing that it belonged to him personally and not to his archdiocese.<sup>374</sup> On the same day, he gave his house in Bratislava to five of his retainers, also stressing he had bought it himself and that it was therefore his personal property.<sup>375</sup> He seemingly sensed his life was at its end. Bonfini wrote Vitez was at that time old and tired of living, and that he was constantly praying for death to release him from the disgrace that befell him.<sup>376</sup> Although unlikely that he was mistreated while in custody, the strains of the last several months must have taken their toll. We can assume he really was ill when he, according to the anonymous report, communicated so to Matthias. His kidney stones might have caused an inflammation of the urinary tract or other complications. If that were the case, Vitez was dying in horrendous pain.

Death finally came on August 8, 1472,<sup>377</sup> about three months after Vitez started donating his possessions. The agony was probably lengthy. As always, accusations of foul play ensued. Długosz claimed Vitez was poisoned.<sup>378</sup> Those accusations were unsubstantiated, and as he was seriously ill long before his arrest, there is no reason to suspect murder. We do not know whether Matthias mourned for him, but he was rather quick to start redistributing the deceased's assets. On August 22 he gave the castle of Piatra Șoimului to Bartholomew Drágfi, noting Vitez held it until his death.<sup>379</sup> It therefore seems Matthias really did uphold his part of the agreement and did not confiscate Vitez's personal property, but only that belonging to his archdiocese. For example, in 1473 the chapter of Esztergom opposed Matthias's donation of Szanda Castle to Stephen II Báthori, arguing it belonged to the archdiocese.<sup>380</sup> However, the agreement made upon Vitez's release stipulated the castle was not to be returned to the archbishop. Whether Matthias hated or loved Vitez, the latter gambled with his trust, and lost. In the end, he was punished severely, but not ruthlessly.

Vitez's last resting place was destroyed by the passage of centuries. If he had not become a prelate, he would have probably been buried in the Pauline monastery of Garić, as his family secured a plot for him in the monastery church in 1417.<sup>381</sup> As an archbishop of Esztergom, he was buried in his cathedral, and his remains are now lost forever.

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**374** DF 236 463 and 236 464. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 5–6, but note that the interpretation there is wrong, as it was based on the author's later discarded theory that Vitez was a member of a family that originated from Pilis.

**375** Császár, *Az Academia Istitopolitana*, 118–19, doc. 20.

**376** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 593.

**377** That is the date engraved in his tombstone: see Máthes, *Veteris Arcis Strigoniensis*, 64; cf. Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 224.

**378** Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:482–83.

**379** DL 88 531.

**380** DL 17 463.

**381** DL 35 447.



## Chapter 6

### A PETULANT PRELATE

#### The Threat of Transfer

The topic of the following chapter is Vitez's ecclesiastical career during the reign of Matthias Corvinus. During this time Vitez became the most powerful prelate in Hungary—the archbishop of Esztergom and primate of the kingdom. Although the ecclesiastical aspect of Vitez's career overlaps significantly with the political one, the former is treated separately here due to the intricacies which would make the larger events difficult to follow if both of them were treated as a whole. The first subject featured here is the attempt to transfer Vitez to the diocese of Zagreb. We will examine whether this attempt was intended to limit his influence, as it is possible King Matthias tried to do so due to Vitez's behaviour during the negotiations with Frederick III. As we will see, there are indications the king supported Vitez's rivals, perhaps within a broader effort of asserting his control over the Hungarian prelates.

Vitez's ecclesiastical career after Matthias's accession reflects his difficult relations with the king, especially after he negotiated a peace treaty with the emperor independently of the king. Matthias did not wait long to take revenge for such insubordination. The king made his move against Vitez at the Diet of Buda in May 1462. This time, he acted very subtly. He proposed for Vitez to be transferred from the diocese of Oradea to that of Zagreb. It seems the prelate was extremely displeased with this.<sup>1</sup> Even Matthias admitted, in the letter to the pope in which he suggested Vitez's transfer, that that would have been a fall from riches to rags, and a dangerous one at that, as there would be much resistance to Vitez's control within the diocese itself. As a solution, he promised to provide Vitez with an additional source of income during the initial stage of his new episcopate.<sup>2</sup> Immediately after proposing the transfer, Matthias behaved as if it was an accomplished fact—in May 1462, he conferred unto Vitez the full right of patronage over the diocese, including the right to present candidates for all its benefices.<sup>3</sup>

Vitez was already deeply involved in the diocese of Zagreb, but he had his own candidate for its cathedra—Demetrius Čupor. Unlike Vitez himself, Demetrius remained a staunch supporter of the Hunyadi party even after its members rebelled against King

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**1** See Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 179ff; Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 23. Although these authors do note that Vitez did not take kindly to this proposal, they thought that Matthias's motivation was to establish order in Slavonia, and that he considered Vitez the right person for the task.

**2** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 202, doc. 25. Thomas Himfi claimed before the pope that numerous episcopal estates had been usurped by laymen. See MHEZ, 7:495–96, doc. 442. See also Kubinyi, "Vitéz János és Janus," 10.

**3** MHEZ, 7:430, doc. 409.

Ladislaus V in 1457. He was in control of the diocese of Zagreb as early as January 1458.<sup>4</sup> He was supported by Michael Szilágyi,<sup>5</sup> and later by John Vitovec, a former mercenary captain in the service of Ulric of Celje, who was received into Matthias's service and appointed as ban of Slavonia.<sup>6</sup> Demetrius waged war against the Ottomans in Matthias's service in mid-1458,<sup>7</sup> remaining loyal during the rebellion of 1459. By June of that year he was appointed as the king's chaplain.<sup>8</sup> He remained firmly in control of the diocese during the early 1460s.<sup>9</sup>

Parallel to Demetrius's accomplishments, after Matthias's accession Vitez renewed his influence on the chapter of Zagreb. Its members previously tried to take advantage of his fall from grace, which led to an episode in 1457, when they asked for King Ladislaus's help in reclaiming the rights they previously ceded to the recently extinct counts of Celje.<sup>10</sup> The Chapter's envoys happened to arrive in Buda when Vitez was in captivity, in May 1457,<sup>11</sup> and they took the opportunity to "slander" him, as he later accused them. He took his revenge in 1458, after Matthias's accession put him in a position of power. As the case of the mentioned rights was still being reviewed at the royal court, Vitez simply took the charter on which the chapter based its claim away from its envoys. In April 1458 the chapter was forced to suspend those of its members who had crossed Vitez, with the condition that they would be reinstated only if they presented Vitez's written confirmation that he had forgiven them.<sup>12</sup> Immediately after the chapter had performed this act of contrition, Vitez returned the precious charter, and King

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**4** DF 231 401.

**5** In May 1458 Szilágyi asked the pope to receive some of Demetrius's subordinates as papal acolytes and chaplains: see MHEZ, 7:338, doc. 318. He also acted in favour of the chapter of Zagreb after Demetrius took over the diocese. See MHEZ, 7:303, doc. 286.

**6** On April 18, 1458, Demetrius endowed Vitovec with a number of episcopal estates and incomes, including one castle, in exchange for the aid he had given Demetrius in taking control of the diocese. See DL 34 211. Regarding Vitovec's entrance into Matthias's service, see Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 80–81.

**7** MHEZ, 7:362, doc. 339. This was during the Ottoman conquest of Serbia and their concurrent incursion in Syrmia: see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 196–97; Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilágyi," 29; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 82–83.

**8** DF 288 157.

**9** He mostly resided in the episcopal manors of Čazma and Dubrava. See MHEZ, 7:361–362, doc. 337; 7:364, doc. 342; 7:395, doc. 369, and DF 282 433, 262 152, and 252 418.

**10** Soon after Count Ulric's death, the chapter requested a copy of a charter issued by Frederick of Celje in 1441, in which he confirmed that the right to collect tithes in the district between the rivers Mur and Drava, ceded to his family by the chapter, would revert to the latter if his lineage were to become extinct. See MHEZ, 7:303–4, doc. 286.

**11** They presented their plea to the king on May 24: see MHEZ, 2:249–50, doc. 187. and MHEZ, 7:315, doc. 296.

**12** MHEZ, 7:333, doc. 312.



Matthias ruled in the chapter's favour.<sup>13</sup> Soon after this, Demetrius Čupor cleansed the chapter's ranks of his adversaries and filled them with his supporters.<sup>14</sup>

This demonstrates that Vitez carefully maintained his reputation, and thought it important to demonstrate that crossing him was perilous indeed. He demonstrably already had much influence in the diocese of Zagreb and his ally was effectively acting as its bishop, although without the pope's confirmation. It was therefore a wise move on Matthias's part when he attempted to both remove Vitez from a rich diocese in which he had become entrenched and remove one of his allies from a position of power. Although Vitez vehemently opposed the transfer, Matthias managed to persuade the royal council to assent to it.<sup>15</sup> In its letter to Carvajal, the council admitted that Vitez had until then consistently refused to be transferred to Zagreb, and that he was only with difficulty convinced by the king and the council to consent to it.<sup>16</sup>

It is possible that Matthias made use of the animosity some of the prelates (such as Várdai) felt for Vitez to put pressure on him in the royal council and present his transfer as a virtuous and pious project, undertaken to deliver the diocese of Zagreb from ruin. At least that was how the king presented it in his letters to the pope, Carvajal and the other cardinals.<sup>17</sup> In this light, Vitez's refusal would have seemed a base and selfish act. Carvajal wrote to Vitez regarding the transfer, and the latter replied that he had accepted it grudgingly, and that the cardinal knew how fiercely Vitez previously resisted it. He agreed to it, wrote Vitez, because the king and the council had practically forced him to do so, and only after he managed to obtain the promise of an additional source of income while he would work on reclaiming the episcopal holdings. What this source of income would be, he did not know, but he asked Carvajal to support him in that matter. As for the other candidates for the bishopric of Zagreb, meaning Thomas Himfi and Demetrius Čupor, Vitez wrote that one of them responded to the summons to the royal court, while the other stubbornly refused to do so, even though he had been summoned four times.<sup>18</sup> The latter was probably Demetrius, because we know that Thomas did obey the king's summons.

Thomas Himfi had a history of conflict with Vitez. At the outbreak of the rebellion of 1459, he was among those who swore allegiance to King Matthias on February 10. In the text of the oath he was titled as a bishop without a diocese and rector of the Benedictine abbey of Pannonhalma, while Demetrius was titled as the bishop of Zagreb.<sup>19</sup> However, soon afterwards Thomas joined the rebels and surrendered his abbey to their ringleaders, the counts Szentgyörgyi. The Milanese ambassador to Hungary claimed that he had done so because he had been denied the diocese of Zagreb

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**13** MHEZ, 7:339, doc. 321.

**14** MHEZ, 7:356, doc. 338 and 7:359, doc. 337.

**15** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 203–4, doc. 26.

**16** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 204, doc. 27. Both this and the previous letter are undated.

**17** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 202–3, doc. 25; 205–6, docs. 28–29.

**18** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 206–8, doc. 30.

**19** *Vestigia comitorum apud Hungaros*, ed. Kovačić, 353. See also DL 15 316 and 15 318.

by none other than Vitez, of whom the ambassador wrote that he had swapped dioceses with the previous bishop of Zagreb.<sup>20</sup> The ambassador likely confused Vitez with Demetrius (who did exchange dioceses with Benedict of Zvolen), but it seems that Vitez as well held a grudge against Thomas.<sup>21</sup> However, in January 1460, Thomas stepped before Matthias and again swore fealty to him, confirming the act in writing. In exchange, he was forgiven his prior transgressions and recognized as the bishop of Zagreb, and allowed to remain in control of Pannonhalma.<sup>22</sup> Not long after that, the case of the diocese of Zagreb was reopened at the Roman Curia.<sup>23</sup> As we will see in the following paragraphs, this may have been an early sign of Matthias's attempts to curb Vitez's power. It was certainly a stab in the back for Demetrius, who was essentially punished for being loyal. But Vitez was a dangerous enemy to have, and Thomas would soon feel the brunt of his enmity.

As Thomas himself confessed to the pope in January 1461, during the previous rebellion he had hired mercenaries to, as he said, fight for his episcopal rights.<sup>24</sup> With the help of the lay magnate Ladislaus Töttös of Bátmonostor, he occupied the Cistercian abbey of Cikádor and the nearby town of Bátaszék.<sup>25</sup> Töttös reconciled with the king as early as the summer of 1459,<sup>26</sup> but Thomas continued to hold those places. In November 1460 he sent an urgent message to Töttös from Bátaszék, begging him for military aid and saying he would himself soon go to the king.<sup>27</sup> This was when Thomas was in the king's favour; in the following year he resided at the royal court and participated in the sessions of the royal council.<sup>28</sup> However, he was not in Vitez's favour. Sometime during 1462,<sup>29</sup> Thomas fled Hungary for Rome. There he staked his claim to the diocese of Zagreb, but he also, in August 1462, accused Vitez before Pope Pius II of violently occupying Cikádor Abbey. The pope entrusted the investigation to Cardinal Szécsi and charged him with returning the abbey to Thomas.<sup>30</sup> It should

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**20** MDE, 1:64–65, doc. 42. See also Kubinyi, "A kaposújvári uradalom," *Somogy megye múltjából* 4 (1973): 3–44 at 22. Regarding the actions of the counts Szentgyörgyi, see UB, 222–24, doc. 160.

**21** For Fraknói's opinion of this, see Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 169.

**22** DL 102 543.

**23** MHEZ, 7:401, doc. 378.

**24** MHEZ, 7:405, doc. 382.

**25** A few years later, Thomas confessed to Pius II that he had conquered the monastery from some laymen and held it illegally for two years. See MHEZ, 7:472, doc. 435. These "laymen" were in fact the troops of Emeric of Zapolje, who was on the king's side at the time. Emeric was reimbursed by the Töttöses in August 1459 for the damages he had suffered. See Zichy, 10:89, doc. 70.

**26** Zichy, 10:86, doc. 67.

**27** Zichy, 10:130, doc. 106.

**28** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 145.

**29** In 1464 Thomas said he had been living for almost two years in the household of Cardinal Ammannati Piccolomini. See MHEZ, 7:515, doc. 455. Perhaps he was the person alluded to by Ammannati in his letter to Vitez, of whom he said that their opinions regarding him differed. See Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere*, ed. Cherubini, 2:605.

**30** MHEZ, 7:434–36, docs. 414–15.

be kept in mind that Vitez was exempt from any ecclesiastical jurisdiction except the pope himself, as we have previously mentioned. Still, it is doubtful whether this warrant would have had much effect in normal circumstances. However, Vitez's position was not as secure at the time, as the king's initiative to transfer him to Zagreb began to progress.

These are the circumstances in which Matthias made his move to uproot Vitez. The plan he presented to the pope was to transfer Vitez to Zagreb, grant him the Provostry of Glogovnica as an additional source of income (which amounted to a paltry sixty florins), and allow him to unofficially continue holding the diocese of Oradea. Thomas Himfi, although the king praised him, was supposed to become what he was before his reconciliation with Matthias—a bishop without a diocese and rector of Pannonhalma Abbey. Lastly, Demetrius Čupor was slated to receive the abbeys of Cikádor and Bijela in compensation for the bishopric of Zagreb. This would have helped Matthias keep Vitez in check, as his unofficial control of the diocese of Oradea could easily be revoked. However, Carvajal opposed this plan. He instead suggested that Stephen Várdai should be transferred from the archdiocese of Kalocsa to the diocese of Oradea, while keeping the pallium, archbishop's title and metropolitan jurisdiction, and that rule over the archdiocese of Kalocsa (but not its cathedra) should be given to Vitez. However, Várdai refused to assent to this.<sup>31</sup> That is understandable, as he did not have any reason to trust Vitez and would not risk trading places with him. It is also not a given that Carvajal was acting in Vitez's favour; perhaps the opposite is true, as Thomas Himfi called the cardinal his ally in 1464.<sup>32</sup>

Considering that Vitez mostly vanished from political events during the second half of 1462, the king may have successfully suppressed him. It seems his circle, including Janus Pannonius, lost much of its influence around that time. When writing to Cardinal Alessandro Oliva in September 1462, Janus promised to do what he could for Bishop Mark of Knin, whom the cardinal recommended, but sadly remarked that he had not seen the king recently, and even if he had, Janus's words would not mean much to him.<sup>33</sup> That year also marked the beginning of the ascent of Vitez's future rival, John Beckensloer of Wrocław. In May 1462, when the latter was provost of Pécs, Matthias granted him the income of Pécsvárad Abbey, as a reward for his aid in returning some of the former rebels back into the king's fold.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps because it was not necessary to subdue Vitez any further, his transfer to Zagreb never took place. In the spring of 1463, Matthias wrote to the pope that he would agree with whatever the latter decided regarding the diocese of Zagreb. As for Thomas Himfi, Matthias reported to the pope that he had Cikádor Abbey returned to him. Regarding the pope's suggestion that Thomas could receive the bishop's see of

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**31** The plan, and the reactions it caused at the Curia, can be discerned from the papal response to the emissary: see MKL, 1:28n1. The emissary was Ladislaus Veszenyi: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 202, doc. 25. Regarding him, see Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 14.

**32** MHEZ, 7:515, doc. 455.

**33** Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 83–84, doc. 9.

**34** MKL, 1:31, doc. 25. Cf. Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 178–79.

Nitra instead of that of Zagreb, Matthias was more cautious: he wrote that he would give it to Thomas only if he would (again) swear fealty to him in person.<sup>35</sup> At about the same time, Vitez sent a letter of his own to the pope, saying he had recently resided in the diocese of Zagreb and managed to—with the king's and the local metropolitan's (Várdai's) aid—redeem its holdings from the laymen who had usurped them, noting those holdings were in poor condition. As the ordering of the diocese was the official purpose of the intended transfer, he considered it fulfilled, and asked the pope not to burden him with it any longer.<sup>36</sup>

Both letters were carried to Rome by the same person, Bishop Mark of Knin, perhaps meaning Vitez was by then back in the king's favour. This notion is backed by Matthias's request, expressed in his recently mentioned letter, that the pope reconfirm the founding of the chapter of St. Ladislaus's Tomb in Oradea Cathedral, which Vitez intended to found back in 1459. It seems that Vitez truly was trying to bring order to Slavonian property rights, which were in disarray ever since the extinction of the counts of Celje. On April 7, 1464, immediately after his coronation, Matthias pledged the castles of Čakovec and Štrigova to Frederick Lamberger,<sup>37</sup> a former retainer of the counts of Celje who had by then entered King Matthias's service. The official reason for the pledge was some debt Matthias allegedly owed Lamberger. However, on the same occasion both castles were partially pledged to Vitez and, indirectly, Janus Pannonius, who was acting on Vitez's behalf, to the value of six thousand florins, the sum they spent redeeming those castles. Lamberger was to either respect their usufruct or buy them out.<sup>38</sup> Vitez possibly spent that money during his mission in the diocese of Zagreb; perhaps he was not redeeming only episcopal holdings, but royal ones as well, as the holdings of the counts of Celje had formally reverted to the crown after their extinction.<sup>39</sup> It is also conceivable that doing so won back the king's favour.

The pope, however, was either not adequately informed of those developments, or had an agenda of his own. He let Matthias know that Thomas Himfi presented himself before him, and had entrusted his case to Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus. When the cardinal examined it and brought his findings before the Consistory, Thomas's claim on the diocese of Zagreb was found to be valid. However, the pope agreed to transfer Vitez to the diocese of Zagreb if an additional yearly stipend of eight thousand ducats would be secured for him. For that purpose, he persuaded Thomas to accept the diocese of Nitra instead, with permission to hold it together with the abbeys of Pannonhalma and Cikádor. As for the diocese of Oradea, it was to be given to Demetrius Čupor. The pope

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**35** MKL, 1:36–37, doc. 29.

**36** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 211, doc. 36. Vitez mentioned the king had recently ordered Cikádor Abbey to be returned to Himfi, indicating the letters were written at about the same time.

**37** Regarding Lamberger, see Engel's comment in Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. and ed. Mantello and Engel, 196n509, Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 81, and Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 81.

**38** DL 15 945.

**39** Cf. Pálosfalvi, "Vitovec János," 458–59.

allowed the king three months's time to accede to this solution; and if he chose not to, the pope would re-establish Thomas's right to the diocese of Zagreb.<sup>40</sup>

These decisions were, however, based on antiqued data. At the Diet of Tolna in 1463,<sup>41</sup> the king and the gathered lords decided the diocese of Zagreb would be formally held by a royal governor only until its holdings were redeemed. Bertold Ellerbach, a former rebel who reconciled with the king simultaneously with the counts Szentgyörgyi, was selected for the task. John Vitovec, the dominant strongman in Slavonia, was cautioned against aiding any of the pretenders to the episcopate.<sup>42</sup> This probably referred to Demetrius Čupor, considering his previously mentioned ties with Vitovec. As for Demetrius, he was admonished not to defy the king's will, but to peacefully surrender the episcopal holdings, with the promise that the king would compensate him and his status and honour would not be harmed.<sup>43</sup> The only part of the pope's plan that materialized was Thomas Himfi's transfer to the diocese of Nitra, which took place in early 1464. The pope himself warned Vitez and Demetrius that if Thomas was unable to take control of this diocese and Cikádor Abbey within a year due to their actions, his claim to the diocese of Zagreb would be reinstated.<sup>44</sup> Thomas was subsequently recognized as bishop of Nitra by King Matthias, and titled as such in royal charters, but in those same charters the diocese of Zagreb was listed as vacant and Demetrius was titled a bishop without a diocese.<sup>45</sup>

Judging by this, Matthias decided to put the diocese under his direct control, abandoning the plan to get Vitez transferred there. It is difficult to say whether that meant he had reconciled with Vitez, but it is worth noting that around that time, Vitez sent a letter of appreciation to Cardinal Ammannati Piccolomini, thanking him for coming to his aid and unexpectedly granting his protection, of which Vitez learned from Bishop Mark of Knin.<sup>46</sup> Janus Pannonius also thanked Ammannati for this unidentified favour rendered unto Vitez, and sent him a gift.<sup>47</sup> We do not know whether Ammannati's protection had anything to do with Vitez's planned transfer to Zagreb or the accusations against Vitez that Himfi brought before the pope, but it certainly did not harm Vitez's standing at the Curia. Also, this indicates that Bishop Mark was working in Vitez's favour when he was in Rome. He was on good terms with Vitez

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**40** MKL, 1:37–39.

**41** For more on that diet, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 206.

**42** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 212, doc. 37. For Ellerbach's reconciliation with the king, see DL 15 698. Pálosfalvi thought that this task was given to Ellerbach because he used to be Vitovec's ally, and that it was thought that he would be able to negotiate with the latter. See Pálosfalvi, "Vitovec János," 462.

**43** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 212, doc. 38.

**44** MHEZ, 7:472–76, docs. 435–36.

**45** DL 15 520.

**46** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 216–17, doc. 40. In his reply, Ammannati said this thing Vitez thanked him for was a trifling matter he scarcely remembers. See Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere*, ed. Cherubini, 2:605.

**47** Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 81–82, doc. 8.

and Janus Pannonius since becoming bishop in mid-1462. Around that time, Vitez and Janus recommended him to the Slavonian and Croatian lord Gregory of Blagaj, asking him to help Mark with the collection of his tithes.<sup>48</sup> Mark was also supposed to run some errands for Janus in Rome, so the latter and Vitez wrote several letters of recommendation for him, addressed to curial dignitaries.<sup>49</sup>

To conclude, Vitez successfully avoided a transfer, but his power diminished considerably in the process. It took Matthias just a few months to reduce his ability to act independently. Perhaps this was because the young king was no longer inexperienced, and had now devised ways to assert his authority. It is possible that a note on the margins of a codex containing a miscellany of speeches and letters, which Csapodi Gárdonyi thought was inscribed by Vitez, was made at about that time. It says “*Mathia nota*,” and it is located next to a passage from Cicero’s *De amicitia* in which the author says that youths, upon growing up, often forget those who used to be close to them. It may be that Vitez was trying to let the king know he was aware of his faltering influence, and to appeal to the trust Matthias used to have in him.<sup>50</sup>

### Primate of Hungary

Considering Matthias’s attempts to transfer Vitez to a less advantageous position, it might seem surprising that his career took a sudden turn for the better not long afterwards. However, we should keep in mind that Vitez was, despite everything, a very capable courtier, and his relations with the king did not consist only of disagreements. The previous chapter features just one facet of his relations with Matthias, with the narrow evasion of his planned transfer was just one detail in the complex web of fifteenth-century Church politics. Here we consider its exact opposite: Vitez’s appointment as primate of Hungary. In this discussion we also examine the level of control Vitez had over the Hungarian Church and his manner of exerting it. Namely, we study the dioceses Vitez had under his direct or indirect control, such as Zagreb and Nitra, and the conflicts and cooperation with King Matthias that stemmed from or brought about that control.

After the events described in the previous chapter, Matthias probably did not regard Vitez as a threat, evidenced by the latter’s appointment as high and privy chancellor in 1464. This explains why in February 1465, after the death of Cardinal Szécsi, Matthias and the royal council asked the pope to appoint Vitez as the archbishop of Esztergom and primate of Hungary.<sup>51</sup> As Vitez was still titled only as a nominated archbishop on May 25, 1465,<sup>52</sup> we can assume it took a while for the papal confirma-

<sup>48</sup> Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 209, doc. 32.

<sup>49</sup> Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 210, doc. 35; Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 80–81, docs. 6–7.

<sup>50</sup> Regarding this note, see Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 119–20. This codex may have been brought from Italy by Janus Pannonius.

<sup>51</sup> MKL, 1:76–77, doc. 58.

<sup>52</sup> DL 16 206.

tion to arrive. It is quite disappointing that there are so few sources regarding Vitez's investiture. Bonfini made only a brief note of it, saying Matthias made Vitez Archbishop Szécsi's successor after the latter's death, that Vitez had renounced the diocese of Oradea to make that possible, and that the pope confirmed his transfer to Esztergom. He also noted that Matthias confiscated the eight thousand florins Szécsi bequeathed to the fabric of the Esztergom Cathedral, perhaps meaning the cardinal's relations with the king remained wintry until the former's death.<sup>53</sup> Although Matthias's motives for promoting Vitez are not clear, we can assume that Vitez, as a manifestly capable, the most powerful, and one of the eldest Hungarian prelates, was a suitable candidate for that position.

By that time, Vitez knew well how to rule a diocese. In Esztergom he quickly established a circle of subordinates he could rely on. Some were inherited from the previous archbishop; others were brought in from Oradea. Of the latter, Andrew Nagymihályi, who briefly served as Vitez's deputy count of Bihar, remained in his service. This is demonstrated by the fact that on April 9, 1470, Vitez gave him one of the estates of the Piatra Șoimului Castle as a reward for many years of faithful service.<sup>54</sup> The castle was then still held by the Losoncis, which means Vitez had not yet bought them out. In November of the same year, he appeared before the palatine's court with Nagymihályi, because the latter requested a copy of Ladislaus Pálóci's verdict from 1466, confirming Vitez's possession of the castle, so he could defend his right to the estate he was given. Vitez needed the original document himself, so he had the court make a copy.<sup>55</sup>

Another important person Vitez brought to Esztergom was George Polycarp Kosztoláni. He had by then become an experienced diplomat and served as Vitez's secretary at least in 1466 and 1467. King Matthias explicitly mentioned him as such in the letter of donation issued to him and his family on April 4, 1467.<sup>56</sup> Kosztoláni was Vitez's secretary in the previous year as well, and he personally participated in the issuing of Vitez's charters. His signature—*Geor. polycarpus Secretarius*—can be found on one of them, containing the instructions issued to Vitez's tithe collectors in Bratislava county on June 10, 1466.<sup>57</sup> His tenure of this office ended in 1467, when he was sent to Rome as a royal emissary. He made a home for himself there, found employment at the Apostolic Chancery, and married one of George of Trebizond's daughters.<sup>58</sup>

Among the attendants Vitez inherited from Szécsi, there was the old diplomat and erstwhile lector of Esztergom Simon of Treviso, appointed as archbishop of Bar (in today's Montenegro) in 1461.<sup>59</sup> He stepped in as the archiepiscopal vicar of Esz-

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**53** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 564. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 177.

**54** DL 88 496.

**55** DL 88 513.

**56** DL 75 653. Kubinyi thought this meant that Kosztoláni passed from the king's service to Vitez's: Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 87.

**57** DL 16 363.

**58** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 112.

**59** Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:89.

tergom during the period of vacancy between Szécsi's death and Vitez's investiture.<sup>60</sup> He retained that position for a while during Vitez's archiepiscopate,<sup>61</sup> although not for long, as he was titled as Vitez's former vicar by pope Paul II in June 1467.<sup>62</sup> In March 1469 Vitez already had a new archiepiscopal vicar—Michael, titular bishop of Milcovul in Moldavia.<sup>63</sup>

Among other established members of the archdiocese of Esztergom, Vitez relied heavily on George of Schönberg, provost of Bratislava. Vitez appointed him as his vicar *in spiritualibus* on April 26, 1469, but with a jurisdiction limited to the area between the rivers Váh, Morava and Danube, where he was allowed to adjudicate in Vitez's name. He was expressly provided with this authority so the professors and students of the university Vitez founded in Bratislava would not have to leave the city to appear before the ecclesiastical court.<sup>64</sup> Schönberg was also appointed as Vitez's vice-chancellor of the University of Bratislava, remaining in that office until his death in 1486.<sup>65</sup> The Viennese theology professor Leonard Huntzpichler praised him as an excellent choice for that position.<sup>66</sup> Parallel to that, Schönberg continued serving as the king's envoy, particularly to German princes.<sup>67</sup> George's plethora of offices was complemented in August 1469 by the pope's permission to wear episcopal insignia, issued on King Matthias's request.<sup>68</sup>

Another member of Vitez's circle was Nicholas of Lunga (Nyújtod in Hungarian), canon of Székesfehérvár and, from 1467, bishop of Knin.<sup>69</sup> He served as Vitez's assessor in the archiepiscopal court, and Vitez would delegate him to hear cases in his absence.<sup>70</sup> As a highly educated man, who studied in Vienna and Padua,<sup>71</sup> he fit the model of attendants usually employed by Vitez.

These were not all Vitez's assistants. We know there were more; for example, when Vitez left the Diet of Nuremberg in the early summer of 1467, he left behind one

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**60** György Bónis, *Szentszéki regeszták—Iratok az egyházi bírászkodás történetéhez a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest: Püski, 1997), 367, no. 3016.

**61** He was mentioned as such in early 1466: see DL 16 305 and DF 286 820.

**62** MREV, 3:187, doc. 304.

**63** DL 88 476; DL 16 826. Michael was mentioned as also holding the archdeaconry of Nógrád, a canonry of Esztergom, and other benefices. See also Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:191.

**64** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 222–23, doc. 46. For a list of cases that fell under the authority of ecclesiastical courts according to the Hungarian law (revised in 1462), see *The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, ed. Bak, 3:17.

**65** György Székely, "Universitätskanzler im Ungarn des 14–15. Jahrhunderts," in *Universitas Budensis 1395–1995*, ed. Szögi and Varga, 35–50 at 50.

**66** Frank, *Der antikonkiliaristische Dominikaner Leonhard Huntzpichler*, 377–78.

**67** See Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 509–10 and MKL, 1:236, doc. 172.

**68** Császár, *Az Academia Istropolitana*, 113–14, doc. 12.

**69** Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:251. He was mentioned by Andrew Pannonius in 1467: see Andreas Pannonius, "Libellus de virtutibus," ed. Fraknoi and Ábel, 131.

**70** DF 237 610.

**71** Kalous, "King Matthias," 8.



Hungarian bishop to act as Matthias's envoy—a "bischoff von Bauden," mentioned on August 1.<sup>72</sup> This probably referred to the see of Vidin, a titular office which, according to Eubel, was at that time occupied by Andrew of Sárospatak, who also had episcopal authorities in the diocese of Nitra.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps he was an agent of Vitez's, especially as the diocese of Nitra was then under the latter's control, as discussed below. However, Vitus Hündler was still alive then, and still a bishop of Vidin. In 1467 he served, at least for a while, as an episcopal vicar to Demetrius Čupor in Győr,<sup>74</sup> while keeping his tenure as an episcopal vicar of Pécs. However, by then he was in terrible relations with his employer, Janus Pannonius. Hündler himself admitted that Pannonius could not stand him—allegedly because he did not like Germans—and was trying to find employment elsewhere. Pannonius apparently even tried to deprive him of his income and seized his personal belongings; Hündler thought it necessary to threaten him with excommunication to get them back.<sup>75</sup> Considering such farcically bad relations, it would have been strange for Hündler to accompany Vitez to Nuremberg. It seems more likely that the abovementioned Andrew of Sárospatak was the person Vitez would have relied on.

Vitez's position in Esztergom was, as we have seen, strengthened by a group of reliable attendants. However, his promotion also created opportunities for his rivals. In March 1465, before Vitez's transfer to Esztergom was finalized, King Matthias asked the pope to assign the diocese of Oradea to John Beckensloer as soon as it became vacant.<sup>76</sup> This probably did not appeal to Vitez's adherents.<sup>77</sup> Not long afterwards, Matthias repeated the request, this time before the new pope, Paul II, for Stephen Várdai to be made a cardinal.<sup>78</sup> A few months later he did so again, adding he had full confidence in Várdai, and that he intended to appoint him as the military commander of the Belgrade region, then exposed to Ottoman raids, during the short anti-Ottoman campaign of 1465.<sup>79</sup> The king's request was finally fulfilled in early 1468.<sup>80</sup> This meant Matthias gave significant power to two people who could not have been considered Vitez's allies. Precisely at this time, around 1465, a new clash between the king and the newly created primate erupted, again involving the diocese of Zagreb.

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**72** UB, 472, doc. 405.

**73** Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:108.

**74** DF 207 913.

**75** Koller, *Historia Episcopatus Quinqueecclesiarum* (Bratislava: Landerer, 1782–1812), 4:338–39, 4:344–46, and 4:353–55.

**76** MKL, 1:81–82, doc. 61.

**77** Birnbaum thought that Janus Pannonius had been hoping to receive his uncle's former diocese, because it was allegedly wealthier than his: Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 178–79. Kubinyi disagreed, indicating that the income of Pannonius's diocese of Pécs was more or less equal to that of Oradea. See Kubinyi, "Vitéz János és Janus," 9–10. It should not be disregarded, however, that Vitez had amassed other assets for the bishopric of Oradea, such as Bihar county.

**78** MKL, 1:91–92, doc. 67. See also Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 137.

**79** MKL, 1:99–101, doc. 73.

**80** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 46.

As previously mentioned, in 1464 Matthias ceased to recognize Demetrius Čupor as bishop of Zagreb. In a letter written in May 1465 (and carried to the pope by Bishop Mark of Knin), the king said he and the royal council agreed that Demetrius should not be allowed to control the episcopal fortresses and estates. He mentioned that Demetrius was offered Pécsvárad Abbey, to be vacated by Beckensloer's appointment as bishop of Oradea, in exchange for his diocese. As Demetrius refused the offer, it was decided that the diocese of Zagreb would be divided into a spiritual and a temporal component. Demetrius was to retain the spiritual authority, together with a yearly stipend and some of the episcopal estates. The temporal authority was to be handed over to Oswald Thuz, together with Pécsvárad Abbey. The pope was merely asked to confirm this as a *fait accompli*. Also, in this letter Matthias finally declared that he considered the question of Vitez's transfer to Zagreb closed, due to the latter's transfer to Esztergom.<sup>81</sup> The fact that he had waited for so long to formally dismiss the issue might mean he held on to it, perhaps as a threat to Vitez.

However, Matthias made a mistake. When he dispatched Bishop Mark to Rome, he sent Demetrius with him, with the task of persuading the pope to accept Matthias's decisions. In a letter Demetrius was supposed to deliver to the pope, Matthias claimed that he had been acting in the demoted bishop's best interest, to enable him to rest after a lifetime of hardships.<sup>82</sup> But Demetrius had no intention of buckling under Matthias's requests. On the contrary, he persuaded Pope Paul II to, on June 14, 1465, declare his claim to the diocese of Zagreb valid and, what is much more, to appoint him as bishop of Zagreb anew, emphasizing that he was to have full spiritual and temporal authority.<sup>83</sup> Thereby all doubts regarding Demetrius's position were removed, and he returned to Slavonia a full-fledged bishop, confirmed by the pope. Immediately after his return, he retreated to the episcopal fortress of Garić and on August 26 appointed a procurator who went to Rome and settled the matter of his *servitia*.<sup>84</sup>

As could have been expected, Matthias was incensed. He wrote to Paul II that he considered Demetrius incompetent and untrustworthy, and that he would not recognize him as bishop of Zagreb. However, he acceded to the pope's refusal to divide the diocese. Therefore, he forced Demetrius to renounce it before himself and the papal nuncio, Girolamo Lando. In compensation, Demetrius was given the diocese of Bosnia—the smallest and poorest one in the kingdom—and Bijela Abbey (with the argument that it was close to his family's estates), along with a yearly stipend. As the bishopric of Zagreb was therefore vacant, the king invoked his right of patronage and appointed Oswald Thuz as its bishop.<sup>85</sup> As the king also warned the pope not to trust his critics, it seems someone was acting in Demetrius's favour in Rome. Per-

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**81** MHEZ, 7:522, doc. 463.

**82** MHEZ, 7:524, doc. 465, and MKL, 1:95–96, doc. 69.

**83** MHEZ, 7:530–31, docs. 472–73.

**84** MHEZ, 7:539, doc. 480.

**85** MHEZ, 7:528, doc. 470. Lukinović also thought that Demetrius was acting under duress: see Lukinović, "Biskup Demetrije Čupor," 205. Cf. Razum, "Oswaldo Thuz," 78–79.

haps this was Vitez trying to protect his ally. In the end, the king did not execute this plan, perhaps purely by chance. Namely, Augustine of Shalanky died and the diocese of Győr became vacant, so Matthias decided to give it to Demetrius. In April 1466, the king asked the pope to confirm this decision, and to confirm Thuz as bishop of Zagreb, which the pope apparently had still not done, perhaps out of consideration for Demetrius.<sup>86</sup> On the same occasion, Matthias's emissary to the pope, Provost George Handó of Pécs, promised in Demetrius's name that the *servitium* for the diocese of Győr would be paid.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps Vitez stood in the background of these events, as it is unlikely Demetrius would have managed to sway the pope's opinion by himself. Exactly at the time when he and Bishop Mark were sent to Rome, in early May 1465, Janus Pannonius and John Rozgonyi were there as King Matthias's emissaries, sent there to swear fealty to the new pope on the king's behalf.<sup>88</sup> Bonfini confirms that Mark arrived in Rome while the mentioned emissaries were still there,<sup>89</sup> and Pannonius was certainly in Rome at least until May 19.<sup>90</sup> During that time he gave two speeches before the pope—one public and one private—in which he praised Matthias's efforts in fighting the Ottomans and encouraged the pope to continue financing him.<sup>91</sup> Pannonius, therefore, had more than one opportunity to act in Demetrius's favour, and if he did, it is hard to imagine he would have done so without Vitez's approval. The fact that Pannonius, upon his return to Hungary in July 1465, fell out of favour with King Matthias,<sup>92</sup> indicates he did something in Rome that displeased the king. In fact, it is possible that the person responsible for his loss of favour was the papal nuncio Girolamo Lando, as Pannonius became very angry with him after these events. In a letter to Galeotto Marzio, he called Lando a liar, an evil beast and a lazy glutton.<sup>93</sup>

Considering Matthias's displeasure with Janus, it is conceivable the latter helped Demetrius gain the pope's favour. Perhaps Vitez was trying to protect his ally, and consequently his own influence in the diocese of Zagreb, by instructing Pannonius to back Demetrius's claim in Rome. We can assume Lando learned about Janus's actions and passed the information on to Matthias, causing Pannonius's fall from grace. Also, if Vitez was protecting Demetrius, he did not fail completely. Demetrius's transfer to Győr was a relatively good compromise: Vitez's ally remained a full-fledged bishop

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**86** MKL, 1:137–39, doc. 103. The pope promptly complied with Matthias's requests. See MHEZ, 2:306, doc. 248.

**87** MCV, 2:539–40, doc. 1038. Handó was sent to Rome in early 1466. See MKL, 1:135–36, doc. 101.

**88** According to the Venetian authorities, these two left Buda on February 20. See MDE, 1:313, doc. 192.

**89** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 565.

**90** MHEZ, 7:526, doc. 467. See also Razum, "Osvaldo Thuz," 311.

**91** Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 58–69. See also Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 159.

**92** See Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 60–61 and 177–79.

**93** Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 95–97, doc. 17. Lando was then at Matthias's court because he was again dispatched as a nuncio to Hungary in 1464, to support the king's crusading efforts. See Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 161.

with a real diocese, not just an empty title. Despite that, Demetrius was not satisfied with his new diocese and was unsuccessfully trying to return to Zagreb, claiming in 1470 he was better suited to be its bishop than Oswald Thuz, who allegedly did not know the local language.<sup>94</sup>

Whether or not Vitez supported Demetrius or not, this game of cathedras proved that he, although elevated to the rank of primate, did not possess enough power to openly challenge Matthias's will even in ecclesiastical matters. The time of weak rulers, around whom prelates and barons could weave their plots, was over. Matthias intended to rule, both over the church and the state, whether the prelates liked it or not. However, this did not mean that he did not trust Vitez or consider him useful, at least compared to other prelates.

One of the less trustworthy prelates was Thomas Himfi, recently made bishop of Nitra and provided with the pope's protection, specifically from Vitez. He once more displayed his fickleness, providing Vitez the opportunity to take his revenge and simultaneously increase his power. Here we examine how Vitez gained control of the diocese of Nitra.

Thomas was probably one of those prelates of whom Matthias later wrote to the pope that they were working against him. As we know from one of the king's charters, Thomas and his family, the Himfis, had in 1464, while Matthias was occupied with the siege of Zvornik, harboured the king's enemies, "Czechs and foreigners," in their fortresses of Pannonhalma and Döbrönte. They were also found guilty of attaching the royal seal, ripped from an original charter, to a forged one. Matthias punished the bishop and his relatives by confiscating their estates.<sup>95</sup> The "Czechs and foreigners" were the last remaining groups of the Brethren, led by John Švehla, which Matthias would wipe out in a battle near Kostol'ani, not far from Nitra, in early 1467.<sup>96</sup>

Due to Thomas's treason, the king took the control of the diocese of Nitra away from him.<sup>97</sup> Matthias's men governed it for a while, but it was eventually put under Vitez's control. According to a complaint brought before the king by the Benedictines of St. Hippolytus's Abbey on the Zobor Hill by Nitra, Vitez held the fortress of Nitra as early as mid-1467, and his retainer Peter Kot was stationed there as its castellan. After their abbot died sometime before August 1467, Vitez ordered Kot to take control of their abbey, which he did, also seizing the charters containing the abbey's privileges.<sup>98</sup>

Vitez was probably given control over Nitra's fortress during the Transylvanian revolt, perhaps to strengthen the king's control over the North, and perhaps in payment for his loyalty. Why Vitez occupied Zobor Abbey remains unclear, but it is per-

<sup>94</sup> Lukinović, "Biskup Demetrije Čupor," 205; Razum, "Osvaldo Thuz," 87–88.

<sup>95</sup> Renáta Kupovics, "A döbrönteí vár kutatása," *Castrum* 9, no. 1 (2009): 31–68 at 39; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:96–98, doc. 364.

<sup>96</sup> Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 479; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 300; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 58.

<sup>97</sup> Solymosi, "König Matthias Corvinus," 294.

<sup>98</sup> DF 205 862; transcript in Anon., *Episcopatus Nitriensis eiusque praesulum memoria*, 119–21.

haps just opportunism,<sup>99</sup> or that it was also previously under Thomas Himfi's control. In any case, presumably not to displease the pope, the king still recognized Thomas as bishop of Nitra. He was titled as such in the charters confirmed by the king on April 18, 1468. Those charters were brought before Matthias by Vitez, who asked the king to reconfirm them because their seals were ripped off by the laymen who occupied Nitra. Significantly, among them was the one by which King Charles I donated Nitra county to the city's bishopric.<sup>100</sup> On this basis, we can assume Vitez was given control of the diocese's temporal holdings, most significantly its fortifications.<sup>101</sup> That was essentially the same arrangement as the one previously offered to Demetrius Čupor, and the one forced on Vitez himself near the end of his life.

This shows that Vitez's relations with the king improved greatly during the second half of the 1460s. Nitra and Zobor Abbey were only a few among a multitude of ecclesiastical institutions Vitez brought under his control. The alliance with his nephew Janus Pannonius, Demetrius Čupor and (judging by his involvement in the intrigues with the Polish king in 1472) Oswald Thuz solidified his power in the Hungarian church. On the occasion of his reconciliation with the king in December 1471,<sup>102</sup> it was mentioned that he held the rights of patronage over the abbeys of Bakonybél and Sâniob,<sup>103</sup> as well as over the Premonstratensian provostries of Šahy and Bozók,<sup>104</sup> which Matthias himself had granted him. Some of these suffered due to Vitez's ultimate downfall. For example, Matthias rescinded Sâniob's status as a "locus credibilis" (place of authentication) on May 1, 1472, not long after Vitez's arrest, formally because its seal was used to usurp privileges of the diocese of Oradea.<sup>105</sup>

Vitez also held Pannonhalma Abbey for a while. As it was previously one of Thomas Himfi's benefices, we can assume it was entrusted to Vitez at the same time as Nitra. Pope Paul II wrote to Vitez on June 20, 1471, that Thomas Himfi constantly complained Vitez was denying him the incomes of both the diocese of Nitra and Pannonhalma Abbey, but that he (the pope) had so far considered Vitez's reasons for doing so valid. However, as this had by then been going on for a long time, he encouraged Vitez to let Thomas have those incomes.<sup>106</sup> The pope simultaneously wrote to Albert Vetési

**99** Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 24.

**100** DF 273 069; transcript in Anon., *Episcopatus Nitriensis eiusque praesulum memoria*, 294–97. Another example in Vagner, *Adalékok a Nyitrai székes-káptalan történetéhez*, 421, doc. 23.

**101** Anon., *Episcopatus Nitriensis eiusque praesulum memoria*, 293–94, claims that Vitez controlled only the temporal aspects of the diocese; cf. Długosz, *Historia Polonica*, 13/2:472.

**102** Török, *Magyarország primásai* (Pest: Laufer és Stolpnál, 1859), 2:79–81, doc. 71.

**103** The former abbey is referred to simply as "Bél" in the document. There were two abbeys with that name in medieval Hungary (see Romhány, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok*, 9), but the one in question was almost certainly Bakonybél, as that abbey was previously under Szécsi's patronage. See MREV, 3:178–80, docs. 291–92. Regarding Sâniob, see Romhány, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok*, 90–91.

**104** Regarding these, see Romhány, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok*, 14 and 77.

**105** Katona, *Historia critica*, 8:564.

**106** Theiner, 2:425–26, doc. 607.

and Gabriel of Matuchina, asking them to intercede with Vitez in Thomas's favour.<sup>107</sup> This should probably be viewed in the context of the pope's collaboration with Matthias on putting pressure on Vitez during 1471, due to the latter's distancing from Matthias's policy.

In any case, by the time of the Polish entry into the Bohemian succession crisis, Vitez had become the most powerful prelate in Hungary, both in terms of office and direct control of its church. The only honour he lacked was a cardinal's hat, although there are indications he might have received it had he lived somewhat longer. Namely, Sixtus IV returned to the anti-Ottoman policy of his predecessors and was trying to end the Bohemian Crusade, but the Polish entry into the fray had diminished hopes that an anti-Ottoman crusade could materialize. Some of the cardinals even assumed King Matthias would make some arrangement with the sultan out of necessity.<sup>108</sup> The papal legate, Cardinal Marco Barbo, who was sent in January 1472 to mediate between Casimir IV and Matthias and to persuade them to fight the Ottomans instead of each other,<sup>109</sup> was issued written instructions on May 1. According to them, he was to try to reconcile Matthias with his prelates and barons, but most of all with Vitez, as he was the most influential among them. If Matthias would ask for a cardinal's hat for Vitez to regain his support, the legate was to give a vague response—that the pope would promote Vitez as soon as possible, but, in any case, only if he remained loyal to his king.<sup>110</sup> This does not mean Matthias really intended to secure a cardinal's hat for Vitez, but that the pope thought that he might attempt it. Also, Bisticci's claim that Vitez, due to his virtues, would certainly have become a cardinal if he had lived a little longer, might mean the Curia was considering his appointment.<sup>111</sup> This might have fit into Sixtus's plans, as Vitez had the reputation of being an advocate of anti-Ottoman policies.

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**107** Theiner, 2:426, doc. 608.

**108** MDE, 2:238–39, doc. 169.

**109** Regarding his legation, see Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation*, 71–73 and 157. See also CE, 1/1:259–64, docs. 224–225. Note that King Matthias strongly resisted this mission and instructed his emissary, Nicholas of Lunga, to persuade the pope not to replace Roverella with Barbo. See Kalous, “King Matthias,” 12–17.

**110** Theiner, 2:436–38, doc. 622. Interestingly, the same response was to be given to the emperor if he would request the same for one of his prelates.

**111** Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:322.

## Chapter 7

# THE LIGHT OF PANNONIA

### The Network Expands

The following sections examine the most thoroughly researched period of Vitez's career, regarding which very few new insights can be added. We therefore limit ourselves mostly to a recapitulation of earlier researchers' work, with some additions and an effort to present this part of Vitez's life in the context of his previous endeavours. First, we continue the examination of Vitez's informal network of international contacts, starting where we left off—namely, Matthias's accession—and ending with Vitez's death. This subject is closely related to the books Vitez gathered and read during this time. They are therefore presented simultaneously.

Vitez continued to expand his cultural network, as well as his knowledge, throughout Matthias's reign. In 1460 he read and emended *Philosophia*, the cosmological work of William of Conches, signing it with his initials JEW. He remarked that he found the book tedious, and filled it with reproachful observations, especially its third part—that dealing with the celestial spheres and the zodiac.<sup>1</sup> This corresponds with what we know of Vitez's later involvements with astronomers, as the problem of precisely calculating the coordinates of the astrological houses remained one of his preoccupations. This was probably due to his interest in prognostication, as the exact calculation of the houses' positions, or cusps, was crucial for the casting of horoscopes.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the astronomers contemporary to Vitez tried to solve that problem. John Gazulić of Dubrovnik was one of the most successful, and King Matthias fruitlessly tried to attract him to Buda in 1458 or 1459. We may assume he did so on Vitez's advice. Although the government of Dubrovnik gave Gazulić its permission to leave and agreed to cover his travel expenses, he declined the invitation, sending his book to Buda in his stead. This book may have contained his lost treatise on astrological houses; from later sources we know it was called *De directionibus*. Conceivably it found its way to Vitez's library, as Regiomontanus is known to have read it, perhaps while he was staying in Esztergom when Vitez was its archbishop.<sup>3</sup> It is also significant that Janus Pannonius wrote to Gazulić after he was made bishop of Pécs, as it gives us reason to think Vitez was interested in his work as well. Pannonius praised Gazulić's book and asked him to send an armillary sphere next, claiming no one in Hungary was capable of making one.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 51–52 and 147.

2 Regarding the significance of houses in medieval astrology, see Azzolini, *The Duke and the Stars*, 57–58.

3 Grmek and Dadić, "O astronomu Ginu Gazulu," 58–60.

4 Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki, 101–2, doc. 18. See also Dadić, "Znanstveni i

Besides books on astronomy, based on the information available to us we know Vitez also read theological works, as well as pieces of Classical literature. He also continued expanding his library. In July 1461, the municipal council of Dubrovnik approved the purchase of a codex containing a collection of Cicero's letters, called *Epistolae ad familiares*, for ten ducats at the city's expense, as Vitez himself had, through the Hungarian king's emissaries, asked the council to send it to him.<sup>5</sup> Csapodiné Gárdonyi thought this Cicero codex is the same as the one today kept in the Vatican Library.<sup>6</sup>

In 1462, at the time of Matthias's abortive expedition to Wallachia, Vitez read Gaius Marius Victorinus's commentary on Cicero's *De inventione*, leaving a note saying he finished reading it in Sibiu, and that he had emended it as best he could.<sup>7</sup> From September 3 until October 31, 1463, during Matthias's first Bosnian campaign, he read the theological work *Quaestiones super I. libro Sententiarum* by Francis of Mayrone, containing the commentary on the first part of Peter Lombard's seminal work *Libri quatuor sententiarum*.<sup>8</sup> Next year, from July 22 to September 1, when the second Bosnian campaign (the one resulting in the unsuccessful siege of Zvornik) was being prepared, Vitez read and emended a collection containing Cicero's *De fato*, *De principiis rerum* by Pseudo-Timaeus of Locri, and the agricultural treatise *De insitione* by Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus.<sup>9</sup> It seems it was Vitez's custom to take some books along on his travels, and to read and emend them on the way. He did so in the aftermath of King Matthias's coronation, as he finished reading and emending a book containing the works of Pliny the Younger in Buda, on May 23, 1464.<sup>10</sup>

Vitez and his nephew Janus Pannonius may have influenced King Matthias to purchase books for the royal library, perhaps to promote his international reputation as an enlightened ruler.<sup>11</sup> It is also possible Vitez was trying to influence the young king to actually study the humanities, in a way he might have thought suitable for the development of a ruler. Regarding that, we should note that Janus may have been responsible for the first arrival of a Greek version of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in Hungary, as such a book was given to him as a present by his friend Battista Guarino, Guarino Veronese's son. It is possible that Vitez read a Latin version of the work, which was sent to John Hunyadi by Poggio Bracciolini,<sup>12</sup> and might have thought it useful for Matthias's education.

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kulturni krug," in *Dani Hvarskog kazališta XVI*, ed. Batušić et al., 183–207 at 187–88.

5 *Raguza és Magyarország összeköttetéseinek oklevéltára*, ed. József Gelcich and Lajos Thallóczy (Budapest: Magyar tudományos akadémia, 1887), 750–51, doc. 16.

6 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 95.

7 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 145–46.

8 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 103.

9 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 93–94.

10 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 126–27.

11 Domokos, "Letture e biblioteche," 71; Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 139–40.

12 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 147–48.



Vitez continued to carefully cultivate the image of a patron of the arts, and he was indeed seen as such abroad. His reputation was above all diffused by his own protégés, including George Polycarp Kosztoláni and Janus Pannonius. For example, Polycarp came into contact with the Italian humanist and Janus's school colleague Raffaele Zovenzoni during his embassy to Italy in 1462. As Polycarp informed him about the current state of affairs in Hungary, Zovenzoni wrote to Pannonius, asking to be recommended to Vitez. Pannonius agreed, noting Vitez supported all men of learning without being prompted.<sup>13</sup>

Hungarian and Slavonian students Vitez supported during their studies also contributed to his reputation. For example, the so-called John Vitez the Younger studied in Bologna from 1463 until 1466, and in 1468 he graduated in canon law in Padua. During that time, he was a canon of Oradea and Zagreb, and from 1467 provost of Oradea.<sup>14</sup> Vitez likely arranged for him to hold those offices as a source of income, especially considering that Matthias gave Vitez the right of patronage over canonries of the diocese of Zagreb in 1462. Gregory Handó was studying together with Vitez the Younger; they often witnessed their colleagues' examinations, and shared the experience of their own final examinations.<sup>15</sup> Handó was supported by Vitez and Janus Pannonius, and Vitez secured a canonry of Oradea for him, perhaps due to the influence of his elder brother George, provost of Pécs and Matthias's vice-chancellor during the 1460s.<sup>16</sup> It is possible that this George was one of Pannonius's adherents.<sup>17</sup> Peter Váradi and Stephen Bajoni, who would both later attain high posts in King Matthias's chancery and the Hungarian church, were Vitez's protégés and their studies in Bologna were partly financed by incomes he secured for them. He gave Váradi a canonry of Esztergom in 1465, and Bajoni was awarded a canonry of Pécs by Pannonius in 1467.<sup>18</sup> Bajoni's family had long been in Vitez's service; his father was a retainer of Vitez's, who arranged for him to receive some estates in 1458.<sup>19</sup>

Parallel to creating a network of reliable and educated men to buttress his power over the Hungarian ecclesiastical hierarchy, Vitez maintained his contacts with international humanist circles. Janus Pannonius played a pivotal part there, and his studies in Italy turned out to have been an excellent investment, as they brought Vitez in contact with a number of foreign dignitaries. For example, the previously mentioned Protase Černohorský of Boskovice, who would become bishop of Olomouc in 1458, studied in Ferrara with Janus, and it was probably through Janus that Vitez came into

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**13** Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Teleki 87–88, doc. 11. Zovenzoni's surname is here mistranscribed as "Tonenzoni." Regarding his connection to Pannonius, see Margolis, *The Politics*, 105–6, Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 54, and Fraknói, "Mátyás király magyar diplomatái," 11.

**14** Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 308; Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 55–56.

**15** *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*, 1:13–14.

**16** Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 311; Tamás Fedeles, "Pécsi kanonokok egyetemlátogatása a későközépkorban (1354–1526)," *Magyar egyháztörténeti vázlatok* 17, no. 1–2 (2005): 51–82 at 57.

**17** Kubinyi, "Adatok," 35.

**18** Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 309–10; Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 56–57.

**19** *Codex diplomaticus comitum Károlyi*, ed. Géresi, 2:319–22, doc. 190.

contact with him.<sup>20</sup> Protase was close friends with Pannonius and Galeotto Marzio (also a Ferrara alumnus) ever since their student days. During their studies, the former two together read one of the seminal humanistic works on the Latin language, *Elegantiae linguae latinae* by Lorenzo Valla, and about a decade later, when they were both bishops, Protase reminded Pannonius of it and asked whether he could borrow that book.<sup>21</sup> This little circle could have appealed to Vitez not only for its members' erudition, but also for their capabilities. For example, Marzio wrote to Protase in the first half of 1461 that Vitez was full of praise for him, and that he called him the apogee of his respective homeland.<sup>22</sup> Marzio himself was brought into Vitez's circle by Janus Pannonius, and was in Hungary twice: for the first time in 1461, and for the second, much longer, when Vitez was already archbishop of Esztergom.<sup>23</sup>

As we have mentioned earlier, Protase was, despite their religious differences, one of the closest advisers of George of Poděbrady, and carried out numerous embassies for him. For example, he was present in Brno in mid-1459, when Vitez and Oswald Rozgonyi concluded a one-year truce with the emperor's emissaries, and in Vienna in 1460, when Cardinal Bessarion mediated the peace negotiations between Frederick and Matthias. In fact, Bessarion accused Protase of sabotaging the peace effort.<sup>24</sup> It is possible that Vitez and Bessarion became acquainted during this failed mission,<sup>25</sup> although there is no evidence of them ever having been close. There is an indication, however, that the cardinal befriended Vitez's protégé Polycarp, as on May 19, 1462, he recommended the latter to Cardinal Ammannati Piccolomini, asking him to make sure Polycarp's future mission in Rome went well.<sup>26</sup> Ironically, Polycarp later married the daughter of Bessarion's intellectual adversary, George of Trebizond.<sup>27</sup>

Vitez and Bessarion had at least one common acquaintance: George Peuerbach. The cardinal met him in Vienna in 1460 and commissioned him to write a summary, or an epitome, of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, but the astronomer died before completing it. Before his death in 1461, he asked Regiomontanus to finish the work and dedicate it to Bessarion,<sup>28</sup> which the latter did a few years later.<sup>29</sup> Vitez himself owned at least

**20** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 38; Kalous, "Boskovice urai," 376.

**21** Ritoókné Szalay, "Peregrinazioni erudite," 66; Ritoókné Szalay, "Der Humanismus in Ungarn," 167. See also the letters exchanged by Protase and Marzio in 1461 in Galeottus Martius Narniensis, *Epistolae*, ed. László Juhász (Rome: Királyi Magyar egyetemi nyomda/Messaggerie Italiane, 1930), 3–4, docs. 1–2.

**22** Galeottus Martius Narniensis, *Epistolae*, ed. Juhász, 3, doc. 1.

**23** Regarding his first visit, see Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 118.

**24** Kalous, "Boskovice urai," 377–78.

**25** Ritoókné Szalay, "Der Humanismus in Ungarn," 163. Cf. Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 114.

**26** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 116.

**27** Regarding the polemic between Bessarion and George, see Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 86 and 91.

**28** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 29.

**29** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 52.

one of Ptolemy's works—his *Cosmographia*—a still extant codex bearing Vitez's coat of arms. Some of its contents are confusing, such as a map drawn after the discovery of America. There were also other Ptolemy's works in King Matthias's library, such as a translation of the *Almagest* into Latin by George of Trebizond.<sup>30</sup>

Considering examples like these, it is undeniable that diplomatic activities contributed immensely to the establishment of cultural connections.<sup>31</sup> Cultural liaisons would often translate into political power, as some of the men involved were powerful statesmen, and their personal contacts or friendships could make or break political alliances. During the early years of Matthias's reign, Vitez gathered influential humanists at his court. As many of them were diplomats and prelates, their gatherings cannot be viewed purely as harmless pastimes.<sup>32</sup> We know of these gatherings thanks to Bishop Nicholas, first of Senj and then of Modruš, because he wrote in one of his books—the *Dialogus de mortalium foelicitate*, dedicated to Vitez—that he once wintered at Vitez's court in Oradea, in its magnificent library, in the company of many learned men.<sup>33</sup> Špoljarić convincingly proved the winter in question was that in 1461/62, when Galeotto Marzio was also in Hungary, which could be the identity of at least one of the mentioned "learned men." Nicholas's book, however, was written later, and probably given to Vitez during the winter campaign in Bosnia in 1463, when Bishop Nicholas joined Matthias's army after returning from a mission to Venice and Dubrovnik. On the same occasion, he gave another of his books to Stephen Várdai, complete with a dedication.<sup>34</sup> Of course, Vitez could not have spent the entire winter of 1461/62 at his court, as he participated in the reconciliation of the counts Szentgyörgyi and other rebels with King Matthias in Esztergom in February 1462.

When Vitez was made archbishop of Esztergom in 1465, his new see was already a distinguished cultural centre, with a well-stocked library, and many of its canons were highly educated in canon law.<sup>35</sup> Vitez probably brought many of his own books from Oradea, and continued to purchase new ones. Regiomontanus, who was a resident of Esztergom for a long time, wrote that Vitez spared no expense or effort to create a library filled with all kinds of books.<sup>36</sup> He ordered high quality codices from Italy, some made by the famous copyist Pietro Cennini. Janus Pannonius assisted Vitez in his efforts, as he purchased or commissioned a number of books during his mission to Italy in 1465.<sup>37</sup> For example, the Florentine bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci wrote that Vitez established a great library and spared no expense to purchase books in

**30** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 128–30; Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 77.

**31** See Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 141.

**32** Špoljarić, "Politika, patronat," 9.

**33** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 121.

**34** Špoljarić, "Politika, patronat," 5–6 and 9–10. See also Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 21.

**35** Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 354.

**36** *Analecta ad historiam renascentium*, ed. Ábel, 169–70.

**37** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 38.

Italy,<sup>38</sup> that Janus Pannonius, during his embassy in 1465, bought all available books both in Rome and in Florence, and that in Florence he ordered copies of those books not available for purchase. Those copies alone allegedly cost several hundred florins.<sup>39</sup> It is probably correct to assume that Bisticci wrote Vitez's and Pannonius's biographies precisely because they were among his best customers.<sup>40</sup> As for Cennini, he was a good friend of Bartolomeo Fonzio, and certainly in contact with Peter Garazda on at least one occasion, in January 1469, when he produced a charter for him.<sup>41</sup> Both Fonzio and Garazda were members of Vitez's circle,<sup>42</sup> so they may have brought Cennini into it as well.

Vitez purchased such immense quantities of books at least partly to be celebrated as a learned patron of the arts. But he did read at least some of them. He did not stop reading or emending after his transfer to Esztergom, and he still habitually carried books with him while travelling. Based on scattered bits of information, we can conclude he was interested in a variety of topics. Many books which might have been his are still extant. There is a codex containing Cicero's speeches, decorated with both Matthias's and Vitez's archiepiscopal coat of arms (with a two-barred cross). Csapodiné Gárdonyi suggested Matthias gave it to Vitez as a present.<sup>43</sup> It is not surprising that an orator as celebrated as Vitez would be interested in Cicero's rhetoric, but he also possessed a codex containing Cicero's works on philosophy, decorated with his coat of arms and copied by Cennini.<sup>44</sup>

One codex also bearing Vitez's archiepiscopal coat of arms contains Plautus's comedies,<sup>45</sup> with a miniature portrait possibly depicting Vitez on its front page. As the codex bears Matthias's coat of arms as well, and that of Bosnia on the right-hand margin of the front page, it could be that it was a gift meant to commemorate Matthias's (partial) conquest of Bosnia.<sup>46</sup> Another codex marked with Vitez's coat of arms contains Pseudo-Quintilianus's *Declamationum liber*, but in that one Matthias's coat of arms was painted over Vitez's, signifying a change of ownership.<sup>47</sup> There is also a codex containing Tacitus's works with an inscription reading "Io. Ar. legi transcurrendo a. 1467 sed mansit inemendatus" (Jo[h]n Ar[chbishop]. I read this during the year 1467, but it remained unamended),<sup>48</sup> meaning Vitez read it during the year he

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38 Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:321.

39 Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:333.

40 Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 140.

41 Alessandro Daneloni, "Sui rapporti fra Bartolomeo della Fonte, János Vitéz e Péter Garázda," in *L'eredità classica*, ed. Graciotti and di Francesco, 293–309 at 295 and 305–8.

42 See the chapter "The Glory Lives on?".

43 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 96–97.

44 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 95–96.

45 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 125.

46 Csapodi, *The Corvinian Library*, 321–22.

47 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 131.

48 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 138–39.

PLAVTI POETE COM  
ICI CLARISSIMI P  
RIMA COMEDIA

N faciem uertus ambitionis lupiter  
Dum bellum gerere cū thelobori hostibz  
Alcmenam uxorem coepit usurariam  
Mercurius formam solis seui gerit  
Abrens. his alcmena decipitur dolo  
Postq̄ redire uiri Amphitrionē & solia  
veitq̄ deludunt doli mutum in modū  
Hinc iuegrum tumultus uxori & uito  
Donec cum tronitru uoce missa ex ehere

A dulterium se iupiter confessus est

ALIVD ARQVM ENTVM

**A**more captus alcmena iupiter mutauit se se  
In formam illius coniugis pro patre amphitrion  
Dum erant cum hostibus habitum mercurius ei suberuit solie  
I s aduenientis seuum ac dominum frustra hē trahat uxori  
C itet amphitrion atq̄ inuicem raptant p̄ mebris elefaro cape  
A ebiter uter sit non que amphitrion decernere  
O mnem rem noscunt geminos Alcmena emittit

PROLOGVS

**A**t uos in uostis uolētis mactationis seruandis vendam inter  
M e lectum lucris affertis atq̄ adiuuare meoq̄ omnia bal  
E e ueres rationesq̄ uostorum omnium  
B ene expedite uolētis peregreq̄ & p̄ domi



Figure 3: Title page of Plautus's *Comedies* bearing Vitez's coat of arms, and perhaps his portrait (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 111, fol. 1r).

was negotiating with Albert Kostka, participating in the Diet of Nuremberg and dealing with the Transylvanian Revolt, so it is understandable he had no time to emend it. During the next year, when he was organizing the defence of the northwestern regions of the kingdom in the opening stages of the Bohemian Crusade, he read and partly emended Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem*, finishing it in Nitra on June 2. As he noted, he was unable to emend it completely, because the other specimen of this work at his disposal was not emended either.<sup>49</sup> It is obvious that Tertullian's works remained an object of Vitez's study.

Despite the variety of books Vitez perused, his literary interests remained largely unchanged, and can be grouped into three categories: Classical literature, theology, and astronomy, with the observation that Classical works he was interested in were mostly those on rhetoric and theology. However, there are outliers. Some of the books perhaps in some way connected to him are on medicine, which is understandable, as Vitez suffered from kidney stones and may have tried to alleviate his condition. One of these is a collection of texts on primarily medical matters, also copied by Cennini, in Florence, in 1468. Its margins contain notes that Csapodiné Gárdonyi thought were Vitez's.<sup>50</sup> The texts inside include one by Pseudo-Benedict Crispus, and one by Quintus Serenus Sammonicus; the latter contains prescriptions for treating illnesses of various parts of the body, written in the form of an anatomical examination.<sup>51</sup> In those aspects it is similar to Galeotto Marzio's *De homine*. Another medical work perhaps connected to Vitez is a copy of *Clavis sanationis* by Simon of Genoa, which Csapodiné Gárdonyi guessed contained Vitez's emendations.<sup>52</sup> That thirteenth-century text contains mostly pharmacological data.<sup>53</sup>

Judging by the preserved specimens of Vitez's books, the period when he read the most was during 1470. As we have seen, he spent the better part of that year in Esztergom, between the failed negotiations with Frederick III in Vienna in February and the Diet of Buda in November. Judging by the number of books he read during this time, it seems he really did temporarily withdraw from politics, either due to the failure of the mentioned negotiations, or because of his illness.

The assumption that Vitez read the following books hinges on the premise that the initial "Jo" in them (presumably shortened from "Johannes") was his, as Csapodiné Gárdonyi thought. If we accept this, we can assume that during the year 1470, Vitez read the *Compendium grammaticae ad Andream filiolum* by George of Trebizond,

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**49** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 140.

**50** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 135–36.

**51** See Svetlana Hautala, "As a Matter of Fact, This Is Not Difficult to Understand!': The Addresses to the Reader in Greek and Latin Pharmacological Poetry," in *"Greek" and "Roman" in Latin Medical Texts: Studies in Cultural Change and Exchange in Ancient Medicine*, ed. Brigitte Maire (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 183–200 at 193–96.

**52** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 136.

**53** See Petros Bouras-Vallianatos, "Simon of Genoa's 'Clavis Sanationis': A Study of Thirteenth-Century Latin Pharmacological Lexicography," in *Simon of Genoa's Medical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Zipser (London: Versita, 2013), 31–47.

marked with the note “Anno domini 1470” followed by the initial “Io,”<sup>54</sup> as well as the novel *Historia Troiana* by Guido delle Colonne. The latter specimen contains the initial “Jo,” the word “Pannonia” in two places in the margins, and a note at the end placing its production in the year 1470.<sup>55</sup> We can be more certain about him having read in 1470 a collection of letters and sermons by St. Jerome in three parts, as the codex containing them is decorated with Vitez’s archiepiscopal coat of arms, as well as marked with the initial “Jo.” At the end of each of the three parts is the date on which he finished reading and emending it: the first on July 11, the second on July 23, and the third on September 1, 1470. At the end of the book is a note saying he could not emend the copy sufficiently due to the discrepancies between the exemplars (note the plural) he had at his disposal, but that this text is better than the other ones he had seen.<sup>56</sup> This remark makes it obvious that this was not the first time he read Jerome’s works. That is corroborated by the fact that in 1467, Gregory of Heimburg referred to the author as “your Jerome” in a letter addressed to Vitez,<sup>57</sup> meaning that the latter’s predilection for Jerome’s works was well known.

The assumption that Vitez read the following two books again depends on whether he was the author of the initial “Jo.” If he was, it would mean that immediately after finishing Jerome’s book, he started another. On September 20 he finished George of Trebizond’s *Comparatio Platonis et Aristotelis* and inscribed a remark saying: “Contra hunc scripsit dominus Bissarion cardinalis Nicenus vir eruditissimus pro Platone non tamen contra Aristotelem” (Lord Bessarion, Cardinal of Nicaea and a most learned man, wrote against this [book], defending Plato, but without offending Aristotle).<sup>58</sup> This would mean Vitez was aware of Bessarion’s reaction to George’s anti-Platonistic work, which the cardinal expressed in his *In calumniatorem Platonis*. In it, he defends Plato and, indirectly, his own teacher Gemistus Pletho, as George accused them both of being enemies of Christianity.<sup>59</sup>

Bessarion tried to reconcile Platonism with Aristotelianism, and had admitted to admiration for both Plato and Aristotle.<sup>60</sup> As Vitez usually tried to find a peaceful solution to a conflict, he could have found this view appealing because of its reconciliatory nature; in this context it is interesting to note that Leonard Huntzpichler advised Vitez to admit followers of both Realism and Nominalism into the university he founded in Bratislava, to avoid conflicts over philosophy.<sup>61</sup> However, the conflict between George and Bessarion spiralled out of control when George accused Pletho of paganism. As Bessarion knew the accusation was true, he tried to play it off as a

54 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 142.

55 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 105.

56 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 105–6.

57 Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:282, doc. 442.

58 Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 142–43.

59 Pajorin, “L’Influsso del concilio di Basilea,” 113–14.

60 Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 87.

61 Frank, *Der antikonziliaristische Dominikaner Leonhard Huntzpichler*, 372–73.

conflict between philosophical systems.<sup>62</sup> By the 1460s, their conflict evolved into a much larger dispute, involving other Italian humanists.<sup>63</sup> We do not know to what extent Vitez knew this, and there is no indication that he participated in the dispute, but the fact that he was aware of it indicates he monitored contemporary humanistic trends. In any case, George's treatise did not preoccupy him for very long; merely six days after he finished reading it, on September 26, he finished another, completely different work—that of St. John Climacus, an early medieval monk. Vitez (presumably) added summaries to some of its chapters and marked its pages with Arabic numerals.<sup>64</sup>

Based on the data we have at our disposal, it seems Vitez's favourite authors were Tertullian and Jerome, fitting for a prelate famous for sermonizing, especially one who spent much of his life dealing with heterodox colleagues or adversaries—namely, Utraquists. We can also assume Vitez found it important to obtain high quality codices, as we know he either already possessed the texts they contained, or at least had access to them, as he used them as exemplars while emending.

### **Astronomers, Astrologers, and the University of Bratislava**

This section touches upon Vitez's interest in astronomy, well-developed by this point in his life, in the context of his founding of the University of Bratislava. As we will demonstrate, these two subjects were intertwined, as astronomers were foremost members of both Vitez's court in Esztergom and of his university. As the history of the latter is, due to a lack of sources, unclear, we begin with examining the role of astronomers at Vitez's court, and then try to assess their involvement with the university.

To begin, it is important to note that astronomy remained Vitez's primary interest. Based on what we know of his activities, he would find time for it even at his busiest. Namely, during 1469, Vitez left Esztergom in March, to participate in the negotiations with Poděbrady, and affairs of state kept him away from his see until the spring of 1470. Despite his numerous responsibilities, during 1469 he found the time to read and emend a copy of Marcus Manilius's *Astronomicon* together with Galeotto Marzio. Of that there is no doubt, as the book in question contains a remark stating so, signed with initials that are doubtlessly Vitez's—"Jo. Ar. Strig" (Johannes Archiepiscopus Strigoniensis or John, Archbishop of Esztergom). This is another of the codices that bears Vitez's coat of arms.<sup>65</sup>

Not long after that, Marzio dedicated his work *De homine* to Vitez, explicitly calling it a treatise on astrological medicine.<sup>66</sup> He based his idea of using astrology for medical

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**62** John Monfasani, "George Gemistos Pletho and the West: Greek Emigrés, Latin Scholasticism, and Renaissance Humanism," in *Renaissance Encounters—Greek East and Latin West*, ed. Marina S. Brownlee and Dimitri H. Gondicas (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 19–34 at 33.

**63** Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 91–92.

**64** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 108–9; Csapodi, *The Corvinian Library*, 258.

**65** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 119. See also D'Alessandro, "Astrologia, religione e scienza," 133.

**66** D'Alessandro, "Astrologia, religione e scienza," 142; Enikő Békés, "From King Matthias to Lorenzo



purposes on the teaching of Avicenna, according to which the positions of planets at the time of birth determined the length of one's life.<sup>67</sup> Marzio could, therefore, be useful to Vitez both as an astrologer and as a physician, and it is worth noting that those two disciplines overlapped significantly—the study and practice of medicine was almost inextricable from astrology.<sup>68</sup> This was during Marzio's second, longer sojourn in Hungary, lasting from 1465 until 1472.<sup>69</sup> During this period that Pannonius wrote a jocular poem about how Marzio once wrestled someone in Esztergom, before King Matthias.<sup>70</sup> This occasion possibly took place in the autumn of 1466, when we know the king was in Esztergom.<sup>71</sup>

King Matthias himself valued astrological advice,<sup>72</sup> and we may assume that Vitez's influence played a part in that. For example, on July 25, 1468, while besieging Uherské Hradiště in Moravia, Matthias ordered the city of Bratislava to provide Galeotto Marzio and Martin Bylica with a carriage and horses, and to bring them to him as soon as possible.<sup>73</sup> As we have seen, Vitez was in Bratislava around that time,<sup>74</sup> perhaps organizing the newly founded university, so it is probable the two astrologers were with him there. One of the few purposes Matthias could have had for them was to use their advice for the siege. If he did, it was not particularly useful, as Victor Poděbrady later managed to relieve the besieged city.<sup>75</sup>

Martin Bylica of Olkusz, a student of Martin Król Rex, resided in Rome with John Regiomontanus at the time of Pannonius's embassy in 1465, so it is probable the latter met them both there and invited them to Hungary.<sup>76</sup> They were both proficient in

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de' Medici: Galeotto Marzio's Astrological Works and his Dedictees," in *De Frédéric II à Rodolphe II: astrologie, divination et magie dans les cours (XIIIe-XVIIe siècle)*, ed. Jean-Patrice Boudet, Martine Ostorero, and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Florence: Sismel, 2017), 295–312 at 297–299.

**67** Eugenio Garin, *Lo zodiaco della vita—La polemica sull'astrologia dal trecento al cinquecento* (Rome: Laterza, 2007), 48–49.

**68** See, for example, Azzolini, *The Duke and the Stars*, 48–49, and the entire first and fourth chapter of that book.

**69** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 38.

**70** Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 94–95.

**71** MKL, 1:144–46, doc. 109.

**72** See, for example, Endre Zsoldos, "The Stellarium of Johannes Tolhopff," in *Corvina Augusta: Die Handschriften des Königs Matthias Corvinus in der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel*, ed. Edina Zsupan and Christian Heitzmann (Budapest: Bibliotheca Nationalis Hungariae, 2014), 213–21; Darin Hayton, "Martin Bylica at the Court of Matthias Corvinus: Astrology and Politics in Renaissance Hungary," *Centaurus* 49, no. 3 (2007): 185–98; Leslie S. Domonkos, "The Polish Astronomer Martin Bylica de Ilkusz in Hungary," *The Polish Review* 13, no. 3 (1968): 71–79.

**73** Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, 11:350–51, doc. 477; see also Jean-Patrice Boudet and Darin Hayton, "Matthias Corvin, János Vitéz et l'horoscope de fondation de l'université de Pozsony en 1467," in *Matthias Corvin, les bibliothèques princières et la genèse de l'état moderne*, ed. Jean-François Maillard et al. (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2009), 205–13 at 206.

**74** He was there on June 10: see DF 266 510.

**75** Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 512.

**76** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 170–71; Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 80 and 83; Backowska,

casting horoscopes.<sup>77</sup> It was in Esztergom, in 1467, that Regiomontanus composed, with Bylica's help, the *Tabulae directionum et profectionum*.<sup>78</sup> In it they described the procedures for determining the division of the ecliptic plane into astrological houses and provided the instructions and charts for making horoscopes.<sup>79</sup> This work criticizes the method developed by John Gazulić,<sup>80</sup> so it may be Vitez had been using that method himself before Regiomontanus's and Bylica's arrival. Their method was not significantly more precise (the underlying theory was the same in both cases), but it was simpler.<sup>81</sup> Also, in 1469 Regiomontanus made for Vitez a complex astronomical device—a torquetum—and composed the instructions for its use. The machine was meant to be used to determine the position of the planets, and Regiomontanus himself used it for that purpose.<sup>82</sup>

It is therefore apparent that prognostic astrology remained one of Vitez's chief preoccupations, perhaps even more so as his power and responsibilities increased, along with the risks that came with them. Perhaps he sought solace in the stars then more than ever. It was probably he who had frescoes of the zodiac painted on the vault of a chamber in the archiepiscopal palace in Esztergom,<sup>83</sup> and the depictions of the sybils who prophesied the birth of Christ in his palace chapel could also point to his preoccupation with predictions.<sup>84</sup> However, it should also be noted that we do not have any evidence suggesting whether he possessed many of the key astrological texts, such as those of al-Qabisi, Abu Ma'shar, pseudo-Ptolemy or Michael Scot.<sup>85</sup> This could be attributed to the fact that we have no inventory of his library. However, it could also mean that delving too deep into astrology was unseemly for a prelate, or that he was more interested in applying its results than in studying its principles. After all, he could always employ men who could do the latter for him.

Vitez's pivotal role in the founding of the University of Bratislava, the *Universitas Istropolitana*, should perhaps be viewed in the context of his preoccupation with astro-

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"Die internationalen Beziehungen," 85.

**77** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 33 and 94–95.

**78** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 37–38 and 131.

**79** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 92–94.

**80** Grmek and Dadić, "O astronomu Ginu Gazulu," 60–61.

**81** Zdravko Faj, "O Gazulovoj tablici u Regiomontanusovu djelu 'Tabulae directionum...,'" in *Zbornik radova četvrtog simpozija iz povijesti znanosti*, ed. Dadić, 63–68 at 64–65.

**82** Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 98–99; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 132–33; Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 81.

**83** Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 355–56 and Mária Prokopp, "L'Academia Istropolitana e il suo cancelliere Johannes Vitéz (1408–1472), primate d'Ungheria. Il programma degli affreschi nel suo studiolo a Esztergom," in *Matthias and His Legacy*, ed. Bárány and Györkös, 135–48 at 135–41.

**84** István Horváth, "The Palace of Archbishop János Vitéz in Esztergom," in *A Star in the Raven's Shadow*, ed. Földesi et al., 197–207 at 197–200.

**85** The library of the dukes of Milan, for example, did contain these books: see Azzolini, *The Duke and the Stars*, 50ff.

logy.<sup>86</sup> On May 19, 1465, during his embassy in Italy, Janus Pannonius requested from Pope Paul II permission to found a university in Hungary, at the place of the king's choosing. The pope approved and issued the bull with his permission to Vitez and Pannonius; it prescribed that the university was to be modelled on the one in Bologna.<sup>87</sup> Bratislava was elected for the new university's location, and it was officially opened on July 20, 1467.<sup>88</sup> According to the astrological chart made for its founding day, preserved on the last page of a copy of George of Trebizond's translation of the *Almagest*, the university was actually founded on June 5, in Esztergom Cathedral.<sup>89</sup> As we know Vitez participated in the Imperial Diet of Nuremberg between those two dates, it is possible he held the founding ceremony before departing, and the opening itself took place after his return.

Vitez apparently cared much for this university, at least at the beginning. According to an undated document probably written during the summer of 1467, Vitez personally received and welcomed distinguished students arriving to study in Bratislava. There was a considerable group of scions of powerful families there. The document in question was written by a tutor of a son of John Kállói, one of Vitez's oldest allies, so his son may have received special treatment, but Vitez certainly devoted his attention to the new university's inauguration.<sup>90</sup> On July 18, 1467, two days before the university opened, Vitez wrote from Esztergom to the municipal authorities of Bratislava that he sent to their city three professors—Giovanni Gatti, Martin Bylica and a doctor of liberal arts and medicine called Peter—so the university could start working, and that other professors were expected to arrive, as Vitez invited them from Italy and France.<sup>91</sup> Gatti was probably the “Brother Johannes Watt,” professor of theology, who arrived in Vienna in July 1467 and presided over a disputation at the city's university, impressing everyone and spreading the fame of Vitez's university. The Dominican scholar Leonard Huntepichler described his visit in a letter to Vitez, mentioning that

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**86** Regarding the university, see Miriam Hlavačková, *Kapitula pri Dóme sv. Martina—Intelektuálne centrum Bratislavy v 15. storočí* (Bratislava: Slovenská akadémia vied / Historický ústav, 2008), 105–39.

**87** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 159; Prokopp, “Az egyetemszervező,” 263; for a transcription of the text of the bull, see Császár, *Az Academia Istropolitana*, 102–4, doc. 2.

**88** Székely, “Universitätskanzler im Ungarn,” in *Universitas Budensis 1395–1995*, ed. Szögi and Varga, 47–48.

**89** See Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 130 and Pajorin, “L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea,” 112. For a detailed description of this horoscope, its reproduction and transcript, see Boudet and Hayton, “Matthias Corvin, János Vitéz et l'horoscope de foundation,” 208–13. For a concise explanation of the practice of casting various charts, see Azzolini, *The Duke and the Stars*, 60ff.

**90** DL 48 206. For a thorough examination of the document and its transcript, see Tibor Klaniczay, “Egyetem Magyarországon Mátyás Korában,” *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 94 (1990): 575–612 at 590–93 and 608–11.

**91** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 221, doc. 45. Regarding those professors, see Ritoókné Szalay, “Der Humanismus in Ungarn,” 161 and 166. Said author thought that the mentioned “Peter” might have been the German humanist Peter Luder.

the said professor conveyed to him Vitez's greetings.<sup>92</sup> It is therefore probable that this visit to Vienna was connected to the opening festivities held in nearby Bratislava.

Vitez did not neglect the university in the following years; in fact he worked to attract more lecturers, especially from the nearby University of Vienna.<sup>93</sup> He worked closely on this with Huntpichler, who advised that the new university should be an elite institution, with a small number of students.<sup>94</sup> This was not only good advice, but also necessary, due to the new institution's staffing problems. In 1467 Vitez had to resort to hiring graduate students from Vienna as theology professors. Two of them—Nicholas Schricker of Hüttendorf and Stephen of Brück—were apparently accomplished scholars (the former was eventually made a canon of Bratislava), likely recommended by George Schönberg. However, about two years later, in 1469, Vitez asked the University of Vienna to issue conditional licences to Lawrence of Krumbach and Matthias Gruber of Mödling allowing them to teach in Bratislava, and also allowing one of them to finish his practice lectures at the *Istropolitana*.<sup>95</sup>

Sadly, as with many of Vitez's initiatives, the university came to nothing and disintegrated not long after his death. Vitez was perhaps also behind the opening of a printing house in Buda, maybe to supply books for the university. However, it became operational in 1473, after Vitez's death, and was also short-lived.<sup>96</sup> The only one who truly profited from the university was Martin Bylica, who went on to become King Matthias's court astrologer.<sup>97</sup>

### The Fame Lives On?

Upon examining Vitez's cultural activities during the latter years of his life, it only remains to their impact on his contemporaries. As we will explain here, Vitez's main means of spreading his fame were the same as when he was bishop of Oradea—to subsidize talented youths' studies in Italy, and to maintain contacts with foreign intellectuals. He continued doing so during his years as archbishop of Esztergom.

By the time he reached the apex of his career, Vitez had cultivated the image of one of the most generous patrons of the arts in central Europe. It is debatable whether he was more well-known than before, as many of the distinguished humanists with whom he had established acquaintanceships (such as Enea Silvio Piccolomini) had already passed away. The others knew him mostly through his protégés, such as Kosztoláni and Pannonius. As already mentioned, information regarding Vitez reached his first biographer, Vespasiano da Bisticci, through those two. Perhaps he had become more of a distant idea, an image of a wise man in a far away country.

<sup>92</sup> Frank, "Das Gutachten," 433.

<sup>93</sup> Császár, *Az Academia Istropolitana*, 58–62 and 114–18, docs. 13–19.

<sup>94</sup> For a transcript of Huntpichler's treatise containing his advice to Vitez, see Frank, "Das Gutachten," 435–37. See also Ritoókné Szalay, "Peregrinazioni erudite," 64.

<sup>95</sup> Frank, "Das Gutachten," 430–32.

<sup>96</sup> Ritoókné Szalay, "Der Humanismus in Ungarn," 162; Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 124.

<sup>97</sup> Hayton, "Expertise *ex stellis*," 27ff.

Janus Pannonius was a more familiar face in international circles. He became acquainted with many of the Italian humanists, especially the Florentine ones, such as John Argyropoulos and Donato Acciaiuoli, during the late 1450s, while touring Italy upon finishing his studies. He renewed those acquaintances during his embassy to Rome in 1465.<sup>98</sup> On that occasion, he had the opportunity to meet a number of people who would later praise Vitez in their writings, such as Andrew Pannonius and Gaspare Tribraço.<sup>99</sup> In his book *De regiis virtutibus ad Matthiam Hungariae regem*, finished on September 1, 1467,<sup>100</sup> Andrew Pannonius praised a whole group of Hungarian prelates, even suggesting that the book could be read to Matthias by either Janus (of whom he said his voice was sweet and clear, and as rich as organ music), or Nicholas of Lunga (Nyújtod), bishop of Knin,<sup>101</sup> also an associate of Vitez's. As for Vitez, Andrew dedicated a whole chapter of his book to praising his virtues.<sup>102</sup> As for Gaspare Tribraço, he dedicated to Vitez a booklet containing seven of his eclogues, and had its title page decorated with a visual representation of the dedication: an image of himself offering the book to Vitez, whose image is surrounded with the inscription "Lux Pannoniae."<sup>103</sup> We may, therefore, assume Janus was behind these people's admiration for Vitez. There are other examples: John Argyropoulos dedicated his Latin translation of Aristotle's *On the Heavens* to Vitez, emphasizing his love of astronomy in the dedication.<sup>104</sup> It is possible Vitez's influence was behind King Matthias's invitation to Argyropoulos to Hungary in 1471,<sup>105</sup> but nothing indicates they were in direct contact. The circumstances again point to Janus as the intermediary.

As an ambassador to the Holy See, Janus Pannonius was received by the pope on May 19, 1465, the day he received permission to found a university in Hungary. On the same occasion he arranged for some ecclesiastical offices to be granted to Peter Garazda and other Hungarian and Slavonian students in Ferrara, along with permission for them to hold these as absentees for the duration of their studies.<sup>106</sup> He also personally recommended Garazda to Battista Guarino, the son of his late teacher.<sup>107</sup>

**98** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 117; see also Péter Ekler, "Propugnacula Christianitatis—studia humanitatis. Relations between Byzantium and Byzantine Humanists Active in Italy and Hungary in the Middle of the 15th Century," in *A Star in the Raven's Shadow*, ed. Földesi et al., 105–16 at 110–12.

**99** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 158.

**100** For a comparison of this work to a similar one by the same author, written in 1471 and dedicated to Ercole d'Este, see Bene, "Where Paradigms Meet," 182ff.

**101** Andreas Pannonius, "Libellus de virtutibus," ed. Fraknói and Ábel, 131.

**102** Andreas Pannonius, "Libellus de virtutibus," ed. Fraknói and Ábel, 87–88. See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 47.

**103** For descriptions of it, see Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 143 and Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 348.

**104** Nagy, "Ricerche cosmologiche," 76; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 48.

**105** MKL, 1:256–57, doc. 182; see also Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 121–22.

**106** MHEZ, 7:525, doc. 466.

**107** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 116.

Peter's family had long served Vitez—his father John Garazda was a castellan of Oradea in 1457, and in that year a Demetrius Garazda was also mentioned as a retainer of Vitez's.<sup>108</sup> In return for the favours bestowed upon him, Peter spread Vitez's renown and prestige during his sojourn in Ferrara and, later, Florence. He probably influenced Bartolomeo Fonzio to dedicate his book *De poenitentia* to Vitez and to plan a journey to Hungary, though it never took place due to Vitez's death. As Vitez died soon after the book was finished, Fonzio ultimately dedicated it to Giuliano Medici. However, he mentioned in the dedication that he meant to bring the book with him to Hungary and present it to Vitez.<sup>109</sup> He wrote to Peter Garazda in the second half of 1471 that, as he failed to find employment in Ferrara, he was ready to move to Hungary,<sup>110</sup> in the hope of entering Vitez's service. His hopes were dashed by Vitez's arrest, and he himself wrote to Battista Guarino on April 19, 1472, that he was shocked by the misfortunes that befell his friends—that Vitez was arrested by the king and that Pannonius perished while fleeing from the king. Fonzio was afraid the king's ire would reach Peter Garazda as well,<sup>111</sup> which indicates Peter's close association with the disgraced prelates.

During his Florence days, Garazda also served as a liaison between Janus Pannonius and the famous Neoplatonist philosopher Marsilio Ficino, who sent Pannonius a copy of his commentary on Plato's *Symposium* in August 1469.<sup>112</sup> In return, Pannonius sent Ficino his own poems. Although there is no proof of Vitez's direct contact with Ficino, he was perhaps aware of his work.<sup>113</sup> It is also worth noting that many of the scholars who were members of Vitez's court—such as Regiomontanus and Gatti—were previously members of Bessarion's circle in Rome.<sup>114</sup> This might indicate Vitez had an interest in Neoplatonism. Still, even the anti-Platonist George of Trebizond, Bessarion's adversary, tried to get in Vitez's good graces, perhaps hoping for employment. The liaison between the two of them was almost certainly Polycarp Kosztoláni, George's son-in-law. In 1467, after George was shunned by the pope due to his secret dealings with the sultan during an embassy to Constantinople in 1465,<sup>115</sup> the recently disenfranchised philosopher sent out three copies of his Latin translations of Greek works.

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**108** Theiner, 2:284, doc. 447. See also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:293. For a reconstruction of the Garazda family tree, see Pálosfalvi, "Vitézek és Garázdák," 16. Also note there were Slavonian nobles with the last name Garazda, so it would have made sense for Vitez to take them on as retainers, but that that name was borne by other families as well. See Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 295–301.

**109** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 102; Daneloni, "Sui rapporti," 299; Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 122–23.

**110** Fonzio, *Letters to Friends*, trans. Davies, 24–26, doc. 12.

**111** Fonzio, *Letters to Friends*, trans. Davies, 36, doc. 16; see also Daneloni, "Sui rapporti," 294.

**112** Valery Rees, "Marsilio Ficino and the Rise of Philosophic Interests in Buda," in *Italy and Hungary*, ed. Farbaky and Waldman, 127–51 at 130–32.

**113** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 120–21.

**114** Ritoókné Szalay, "Der Humanismus in Ungarn," 163; Bene, "Where Paradigms Meet," 212; Zinner, *Regiomontanus*, 51ff and 90.

**115** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 114.

To Vitez he sent *Contra Eunomium* by St. Basil the Great, originally commissioned by Bessarion; to Pannonius *De spiritu sancto ad Amphiloichium* by the same author; and to King Matthias the already mentioned Ptolemy's *Almagest*.<sup>116</sup> There is also a codex containing George's translations of two of St. Basil's texts, as well as Bessarion's dedication of it to Pope Eugene IV and George's polemical letter to Bessarion; it was originally marked with Vitez's coat of arms, later painted over and covered with Matthias's. Vitez possibly gave this codex to Matthias after receiving the book dedicated to him personally by George.<sup>117</sup>

Stephen Bajoni also contributed to Vitez's renown in Florence. He served as King Matthias's emissary to Florence in 1469, and the Florentine authorities noted that he told them of Vitez's and Janus Pannonius's good will towards their city.<sup>118</sup> He was the one who suggested to the city fathers that they send a few lions to Matthias as a present, because of the king's fondness for the animals.<sup>119</sup> The lions were actually sent, and a Hungarian student named John Telegdi was charged with escorting them during transport; he called himself "Leontinus" to commemorate that occasion.<sup>120</sup>

Perhaps it is ironic that Vitez's fame became an urban phenomenon in Florence, as he essentially did not have any contacts with that city until the very end of his life. Still, it might be that he was remembered as a great man at least by some Florentine humanists. Jacobus Publicius mentioned in his work on the history of the House of Laval, the *Panegyricus domus Lavallensis*, that before composing that text he wrote the histories of the Ottoman and Bohemian wars of King Matthias, and a biography of a very wise and saintly archbishop of Esztergom ("sapientissimi atque sanctissimi strigoniensis archiepiscopi"), to commemorate his glorious and virtuous life: that was most likely Vitez.<sup>121</sup> The biography itself, unfortunately, is not preserved.

Except for scattered traces in various codices, little remains of Vitez's physical legacy. The construction works he commissioned in Oradea and Esztergom were almost completely destroyed during the centuries after his death. As for what is left, we have already seen that his tombstone is today mostly reconstructed, and there are some fragments that might be remains of his building projects. Bonfini wrote of the marvellous works executed for Vitez in Esztergom, such as a new roof for the basilica, a bath with cold and hot water, a lovely garden, and a tower on a cliff top overlooking the

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**116** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 110–12. Regarding George's translations, see also Péter Ekler, "Die *Bibliotheca Corviniana*: Lateinische Übersetzungen griechischer Autoren," in *Matthias Corvin, les bibliothèques princières et la genèse de l'état moderne*, ed. Jean-François Maillard et al. (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2009), 237–47 at 238–39.

**117** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 88.

**118** Gentile, "Marsilio Ficino," 94.

**119** MKL, 1:241–43, doc. 177.

**120** Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 119.

**121** Csapodi, *The Corvinian Library*, 338–39; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 131. For the original text, see Jacobus Publitiu, *Panegyricus Lavallensis domus, ad illustrissimum Remorum Ducem dominum Petrum de Laval*, fol. 2v. Available online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9077974t/f3.image>.

Danube, in which the prelate was fond of residing.<sup>122</sup> Janus Pannonius also praised his edifices.<sup>123</sup> However, although the existence of some of the buildings described by Bonfini, such as a large dining hall with an adjacent chapel and an external red-marble gallery, is attested by sixteenth-century sources, only fragments of them still stand above ground. The archiepiscopal palace was so completely destroyed and overbuilt that even the memory of its location was utterly lost.<sup>124</sup> In recent times, fragments of frescoes were excavated from the ruins of the old archiepiscopal complex in Esztergom, depicting personifications of the cardinal virtues and the already mentioned signs of the zodiac.<sup>125</sup> These might have been commissioned by Vitez, but it is impossible to say with certainty. Nothing beside remains.

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**122** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 593. See also Horváth, "The Palace of Archbishop János Vitéz in Esztergom," 197–98. Horváth thinks that most of the construction works attributed to Vitez were actually initiated by Dennis Szécsi.

**123** Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 94 and 226.

**124** Horváth, "The Palace of Archbishop János Vitéz in Esztergom," 198–207.

**125** Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz," 355–56 and Prokopp, "L'Accademia," 135–41.



## CONCLUSION

AFTER STUDYING VITEZ'S life and works in the context of his era, if we consider the various aspects of his activities (political, diplomatic, ecclesiastical, and cultural), we can conclude they were not radically different from those of other prelates of his time, but there was a certain uniqueness about him. He managed to take advantage of circumstances on a number of occasions, to seize the moment, sometimes even to turn disaster into triumph. He displayed amazing acuity and adaptability in sudden reversals of fortune which might have rendered others stunned. This became apparent on occasions he had no way of predicting. For example, no one could have predicted that King Albert would die precisely when Vitez was in the position to become a member of the embassy which was to offer the Hungarian throne to King Wladislas, or that John de Dominis would become bishop of Oradea, and then be killed in the Battle of Varna precisely when Vitez was the most likely candidate for his successor. Additionally, neither he nor his contemporaries could have known Ladislaus V would be removed from Frederick III's custody in 1452, and Vitez would be employed as his privy chancellor, or that Vitez would be in Prague with Matthias Hunyadi precisely at the time of Ladislaus's death.

Many of Vitez's contemporaries were crushed by these events. Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny that Vitez possessed the talent and skills allowing him to take advantage of the opportunities presented to him. He became one of the greatest magnates in Hungary, a veritable kingmaker, precisely because he could to act quickly and deliberately, choose the right allies and associates, outplay his opponents, and endure adversities, such as his arrest in 1457. With these skills and aided by chance, Vitez became the most powerful prelate in Hungary during the first few years of King Matthias's reign, when his power exceeded that of all other fifteenth-century Hungarian prelates, including Cardinal Szécsi.

From beginning to end, Vitez's career, despite his exceptional qualities, is representative of his peers. He came from a middle-ranking Slavonian noble family, not at all a distinguished one, and embarked on his career because he was fortunate to have a father who fought for King Sigismund. This allowed him to study in Vienna and most likely opened the door to the royal chancery for him. Vitez's assignments in the chancery were not different from those performed by other officials, and his only opportunity to distinguish himself was the embassy to Kraków in 1440. He was probably included in the embassy, with the task of performing bureaucratic duties, thanks to John de Dominis, who met him previously. Thanks to his participation in that mission, he was eventually made provost of Oradea. This put him in exactly the right position at the time of De Dominis's and King Wladislas's demise, which threw the kingdom into disarray, and he was the candidate for the bishop's see who was pliable enough to guarantee stability in the uncertain environment of John Hunyadi's regency.

As the bishop of Oradea, Vitez's actions were not significantly different from those of other prelates of his time, such as Andrew Kálnói and Peter Agmánd. His duties consisted of ruling his diocese, mostly through officials, vicars and other subordinates, and of performing diplomatic missions for his patron, John Hunyadi. His appointment

as a privy chancellor of Ladislaus V was unexpected, but not illogical, as it was a result of a compromise between Hunyadi's and the Habsburg party. As a privy chancellor, Vitez turned out to be shrewd enough not to follow his former patron's orders to the letter. He was a good attendant to his new master, King Ladislaus, and had the opportunity to learn from George of Poděbrady, who took on the role of the king's guardian.

The greatest leap forward in Vitez's career took place during the turbulent years of 1456 to 1458, from the death of John Hunyadi to the election of his son Matthias as king of Hungary. Then it became clear that Vitez was no longer either on the Hunyadi or the Habsburg side, but primarily on his own side, and that he was capable enough to create policy for the Kingdom of Hungary. Cardinal Szécsi had similar tendencies, but the difference between these two prelates was that Szécsi tied his fate to the Habsburgs, while Vitez proved to be much more flexible. The period when Vitez decided Hungarian policy culminated with what we termed his "peace policy," manifesting in the initiative for a peace treaty with Emperor Frederick III in 1462. From then on, Vitez would have to adjust his actions to accommodate King Matthias's will, as the young king began to rule in earnest.

The war against George of Poděbrady turned out to be Vitez's undoing. Although he supported his king in its opening phases, a series of failures and defeats caused him to once more try to act independently. This resulted in a clash with Matthias, and the so-called conspiracy of 1471. Even though there is no evidence that Vitez intended to depose Matthias, plotting with his enemies forced the king to take decisive steps against him, leading to Vitez's arrest in 1472. In this respect, Vitez's fate was no different from that which befell other disobedient prelates; in fact, Matthias did to him the same as he had done to Demetrius Čupor and Thomas Himfi. The supposed conspiracy of 1471 and/or 1472 was not a tightly knit group with clear goals, but a loose gathering of lords with differing opinions on what to do and how. Vitez remained on the margins of the revolt, making it uncertain whether he openly opposed Matthias.

What made Vitez different from other prelates of his time and helped him to successfully adapt to emerging situations, as well as to extricate himself from dire circumstances, was his understanding of the importance of prestige and self-promotion, both at local and international levels. That understanding allowed him to refine and increase his power to levels unavailable to most men of his status. Temporary alliances with other magnates, such as those Vitez made with Albert Losonci, Nicholas Várdai or John Vitez Kállói, were typical for his time and regularly practised by his contemporaries. Also, it was not exceptional that Vitez was prone to surrounding himself with men he could trust, such as the group of clerics he brought from Zagreb during his first years as the bishop of Oradea, or Janus Pannonius and George Polycarp Kosztoláni later in his life. The *familia*, or retinue, was the power base of any Hungarian magnate, whether ecclesiastical or lay. However, befriending scholars and artists, and building up one's reputation as a patron of the arts, were Vitez's distinctive features, propelling him to levels of fame unheard of among his peers, which in turn advanced his career. His fame helped him during his first arrest in 1457, and when he was appointed as the archbishop of Esztergom in 1465. Vitez was not the only fifteenth-century Hungarian prelate who used such means to increase his power, but he certainly was the most

successful. The ultimate proof of his success is that he is still remembered more as a humanist or a patron of the arts than as a politician, diplomat or landholder.

As we examine Vitez's life and works, one factor constantly emerges: the stars. Vitez's interest in astrology was partly sparked by his interest in contemporary cultural trends, and it caused him to establish contacts with distinguished astronomers and/or astrologers. But it cannot be explained purely as conforming to trends. We can safely assume Vitez was genuinely interested in prognostication, and that makes his actions all the more difficult to interpret. Perhaps the reasons for them were as banal as the position of planets on a specific day. Although it is tempting to view all the actions of Vitez and his contemporaries as logical, meaningful, and rational, we cannot forget that they were humans, with their whims, irrationalities, and fancies.

Ultimately, it should be kept in mind that Vitez was, throughout his life, a cleric of the Catholic Church. His contributions to contemporary ecclesiology or theology are either non-existent or long forgotten, but his actions as a Hungarian prelate were significant. Starting as a loyal agent of John Hunyadi, he slowly advanced in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, avoiding dangerous situations such as the dreaded transfer to Zagreb. He managed to get his supporters elected as bishops, fought the clerics who opposed him, such as Thomas Himfi, and brought many ecclesiastical institutions (such as the diocese of Nitra) under his direct control. The Hungarian Church would certainly not have been the same without Vitez, and it was impossible for other Hungarian prelates to ignore him, whether they opposed or supported him.

Finally, it should be said that researching John Vitez's life and career demonstrates that a fresh reading of sources, including those known since the nineteenth century, interpretations of which had become entrenched over the decades, can lead to new conclusions. A series of sources so far unexamined in this context was also considered, which filled some of the previously existing lacunae. Despite this, as we live in a time when communication among scholars and access to information is easier and faster than ever before, we can be certain this biography will soon need to be revised. That would be welcome, as it would confirm Vitez's significance for historiographical research.



## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Abbreviations and Acronyms

AHAZU Arhiv Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti

D Diplomata

*Briefwechsel* *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*. Edited by Rudolf Wolkan. 3 vols. Vienna: Holzhausen, 1909–18.

CD *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*. Edited by Tadija Smičiklas et al. 18 vols. Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1904–90.

CE *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*. Edited by Anatol Lewicki et al. 3 vols., with vol. 1 in two parts. Kraków: Nakładem Akademii umiejętności Krakówskiej, 1876–93.

DL Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [National Archives of Hungary], Budapest, Diplomatikai Levéltár—Mohács Előtti Gyűjtemény.

DF Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [National Archives of Hungary], Budapest, Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény

*Epistolario* *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*. Edited by Remigio Sabbadini. 3 vols. Venice: Regia deputazione veneta di storia patria, 1915–19.

MDE *Magyar diplomacziái emlékek Mátyás király korából*. Edited by Iván Nagy and Albert Nyáry. 2 vols. Budapest: Magyar tudományos akadémia, 1875–77.

MHEZ *Monumenta historica episcopatus Zagrabiensis*. Vols. 1–2 edited by Ivan Krstitelj Tkalčić. Zagreb: Karl Albrecht, 1873–74. Vols. 5–7 edited by Andrija Lukinović. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost / Arhiv Hrvatske-Hrvatski državni arhiv, 1992–2004.

MKL *Mátyás király levelei. Külügyi osztály*. Edited by Vilmos Fraknói. 2 vols. Budapest: Magyar tudományos akadémia, 1893–95.

MREV *Monumenta Romana Episcopatus Vesprimiensis*. Edited by József Lukcsics et al. 6 vols. Budapest: Collegium Historicorum Hungarorum Romanum (et al.), 1896–1950.

MCV *Monumenta Croatica Vaticana*. Vol. 1: *Camera apostolica: obligationes et solutiones camerale primo, 1299–1560*. Vol. 2: *Annatae, Introitus et exitus, Obligationes pro communibus servitiis, Obligationes et solutiones—Additamenta (1302–1732)*. Edited by Josip Barbarić et al. 2 vols. Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti/Hrvatski državni arhiv / Kršćanska sadašnjost / Papinski hrvatski zavod sv. Jeronima, 1996–2001.

Theiner *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia*. Edited by Augustin Theiner. 2 vols. Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1859–60.

UB *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte Böhmens und seiner Nachbarländer im Zeitalter Georg's von Podiebrad (1450–1471)*. Edited by František Palacký. Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlich Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1860.

Zichy *Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vasonkeő*. Edited by Ernő Kammerer et al., 12 vols. Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat (et al.), 1871–1931.

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