

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.¹ Later historians built upon this assumption,² and the issue was compounded by the fact that the so-called John Vitez the Younger really did study in Bologna and Padua.³ 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.⁴

Decades after Fraknói, a number of historians correctly stated that Vitez studied at the University of Vienna.⁵ 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.⁶ That was the standard tuition fee for non-noble students.⁷ 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

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.⁸

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.⁹ For comparison's sake, Demetrius Čupor enrolled in 1425,¹⁰ when he was about fourteen.¹¹ 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 1430.¹² It could also be that Vitez was hired by the royal chancery sometime before 1434, which would have enabled him to consider higher education.¹³ 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.¹⁴

Before enrolling in Vienna, it is possible that Vitez, for a while, studied at the cathedral school in Zagreb.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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,¹⁷ and even that could be obtained after enrollment, at the chapter school of St. Stephen's.¹⁸ 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

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.¹⁹ This included students from Slavonia, the largest share of whom studied at the University of Vienna throughout the Late Middle Ages.²⁰ It should also be noted that tuition fees in Vienna were comparably lower than at other universities.²¹

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.²² Looking a step lower, he is not on any of the lists of bachelors applying for determination.²³ 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.²⁴ Unfortunately, this is impossible to prove, as the names of applicants for bachelor's examinations were normally not recorded.²⁵

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.²⁶ 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.²⁷ If we assume that Vitez studied in Vienna for at least two

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,²⁸ due to which the university was temporarily dissolved.²⁹

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.³⁰ 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,³¹ 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.³² In fact, his Latin is closer to its medieval variant than to the polished, *all'antica* humanistic Latin, used in imitation of Classical authors.³³ 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.³⁴ 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.³⁵ 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*.³⁶ During the next year, Donatus's work was also studied, but not as intensely as Alexander's.³⁷ In 1435/36 there were no courses on grammar, except on one part of Everard's text.³⁸

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*.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ It was the only text on rhetoric studied at the time of Vitez's enrollment,⁴² and in 1435/36 it was lectured on by Ulrich Sonnenberger of Öhringen, later bishop of Gurk and chancellor of Frederick III.⁴³

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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ John was one of the first Viennese professors who specialized in mathematical disciplines.⁴⁶ He was also very innovative and had extensively studied astronomical instruments; besides the astrolabe, he also lectured on the albiton, one of the most complex medi-

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.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹ In Vienna it was extensively lectured on during the 1430s, usually by two or more lecturers.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ Courses on it were taught in Vienna in the academic years 1433/34 and 1434/35.⁵²

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.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴ 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. 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.⁵⁵ 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*.⁵⁶

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.⁵⁷ Lectures on it were held throughout Vitez's probable sojourn there.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹

It was noticed long ago that contemporary humanists did not think much of the University of Vienna.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹ 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.⁶² 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.⁶³ Moreover, some courses—including ethics—consisted not

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.⁶⁴ These were highly ritualized and consisted almost exclusively of the routine scholastic practice of quoting and counter quoting authoritative texts.⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ In fact, leafing through books after meals was a favourite way of discussing topics among humanists.⁶⁸ In fact, their discussions would sometimes take place in libraries, where the participants would have the necessary books at their disposal.⁶⁹

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,⁷⁰ 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, "Lecture 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.⁷¹ However, statistically speaking, Hungarian students were quite successful in their studies.⁷² 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.⁷³

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 1423.⁷⁴ He had his determination in 1425, inception in 1429, and in 1432/33 he taught a course on Aristotle's *On the Soul*.⁷⁵ Demetrius Čupor was also there, possibly at the same time as Vitez, as he enrolled in the Faculty of Law in 1429.⁷⁶ According to his own statement, he was still a student in 1433.⁷⁷ Thomas Himfi of Döbrönte studied with Demetrius, as he enrolled in the same faculty in the spring of 1430,⁷⁸ right after passing his bachelor's examination at the Faculty of Liberal Arts.⁷⁹ Vitez's future vicar and provost of Oradea, John of Tapolca, was an examiner at the Faculty of Liberal Arts in the spring of 1434,⁸⁰ and he enrolled in the Faculty of Law in the same semester, obtaining a doctor's degree in 1438.⁸¹

Vitez's colleagues in Vienna were not only subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary. The already mentioned Ulrich Sonnenberger enrolled in 1425,⁸² and had his inception in 1431.⁸³ Kaspar Schlick's brothers, Matthias and Henry, both enrolled in 1426.⁸⁴ Henry was still there during the 1430s.⁸⁵ Bohuslav of Zvole, who would later become

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 Helmrath, *Das Basler Konzil (1431–1449)—Forschungsstand und Probleme* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1987), 192–93.

bishop of Olomouc, enrolled in the autumn of 1431,⁸⁶ and studied there at least until 1440.⁸⁷ The renowned jurist Hartung von Kappel, who enrolled in 1431,⁸⁸ was incorporated in the Faculty of Law in 1432 and elected as its dean a year later.⁸⁹ Finally, the unfortunate pedagogue, Kaspar Wendel of Krems, enrolled at the same time as Vitez, in the spring of 1434.⁹⁰ Piccolomini described him as a man of humble origins, who was forced to beg for food during his student years.⁹¹ 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 1434.⁹² Peter, son of the palatine and judge royal Matthias Pálóci, lectured at the Faculty of Liberal Arts at the time when Vitez enrolled.⁹³ So did Nicholas Lépes,⁹⁴ a cousin of the Transylvanian bishop George Lépes, who died fighting the Ottomans with John Hunyadi in 1442.⁹⁵ Nicholas was an archdeacon of Transylvania at the time, and was simultaneously studying at the Faculty of Law.⁹⁶ The Rozgonyis were represented by Oswald, provost of Eger, who enrolled directly in the Faculty of Law in 1437.⁹⁷ Finally, Albert Hangácsi enrolled at the eve of the succession war between the Habsburgs and the Jagiellons, in the autumn of 1439.⁹⁸ Unsurprisingly, this interrupted his studies, and he was able to continue them only much later, in Italy.⁹⁹ In 1449 he was in Padua,¹⁰⁰ and in 1450 he attained a doctorate in law from the University of Bologna. Prior to tak-

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.¹⁰¹

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.¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ That might help explain Vitez's interest in collecting books, but there is no conclusive evidence to support it. As Pajorin noticed,¹⁰⁴

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,¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶ It was long believed that the latter was none other than John Vitez.¹⁰⁷ However, Pajorin convincingly concluded that Callimachus confused two different bishops, and that he more likely referred to John de Dominis.¹⁰⁸

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.¹⁰⁹ This does not mean Vergerio did not play a part in that process,¹¹⁰ 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.¹¹¹ 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,¹¹² but only at the very end of his life, when his health was probably failing,¹¹³ and by which time his standing at the court had waned.¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵

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,¹¹⁶ De Dominis was a successful diplomat in the service of King Sigismund, who sent him on many important missions to Italy.¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸

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.¹¹⁹ 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.¹²⁰ 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.¹²¹ 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.¹²² In 1449, Lasocki sent him two more students, one of whom was a nephew of the archbishop of Gniezno Wladislas of Oporów.¹²³

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

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.¹²⁴ 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.¹²⁵ He was still in contact with Guarino in 1449.¹²⁶ 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.¹²⁷ Pope Eugene IV would later send him on diplomatic missions to Hungary.¹²⁸ 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.¹²⁹ During the succession war, it seems that Taddeo supported the Habsburg side.¹³⁰ 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.¹³¹ 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.¹³² 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.¹³³

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-

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.¹³⁴ 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.¹³⁵ 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.¹³⁶ 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.¹³⁷ 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.¹³⁸ Opinions differed regarding whether any of this actually happened,¹³⁹ 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.¹⁴⁰ Indeed,

134 See Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 22, Ritoókné Szalay, "Ferrara und die ungarischen Humanisten," 152, and Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 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.¹⁴¹

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,¹⁴² and during the 1420s the acclaimed humanist Francesco Filelfo made a home for himself there.¹⁴³ 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.¹⁴⁴

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.¹⁴⁵ 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.¹⁴⁶ 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.

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.¹⁴⁷ 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.¹⁴⁸ 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.¹⁴⁹

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

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 (Vitez, *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 (Vitez, *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.¹⁵⁰ 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.¹⁵¹ Peter enrolled in the University of Vienna in 1425, when he was custos of Oradea,¹⁵² 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.¹⁵³ 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.¹⁵⁴ 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.¹⁵⁵ 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.¹⁵⁶ 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

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 váradai 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.¹⁵⁷

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.¹⁵⁸ 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.¹⁵⁹ Barius was studying in Padua since early 1448, and he attained a doctorate in canon law in October 1450.¹⁶⁰ 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 1450.¹⁶¹

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.¹⁶² 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.¹⁶³ 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

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.¹⁶⁴ 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 1452.¹⁶⁵ 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.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷

Guarino's school was also attended by Vitez's protégé Simon, of whom we know very little.¹⁶⁸ 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.¹⁶⁹ 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.¹⁷⁰ 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.¹⁷¹ 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.¹⁷² 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.¹⁷³ 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*.¹⁷⁴

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,¹⁷⁵ 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.¹⁷⁶ 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.¹⁷⁷

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,¹⁷⁸ when the latter was already archbishop of Lviv, in 1476,¹⁷⁹ 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.¹⁸⁰ 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,¹⁸¹ 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.¹⁸² He attained a doctorate in medicine from the University of Bologna in 1449,¹⁸³ 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.¹⁸⁴ This last remark probably refers to Hunyadi's unsuccessful campaign against Jiskra, which took place in that year.¹⁸⁵ 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.¹⁸⁶

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,¹⁸⁷ 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.¹⁸⁸ 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.¹⁸⁹ In 1445 he wrote his version of *Algorismus minutiarum*, dealing with fractions and their use in astronomical calculations,¹⁹⁰ 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.¹⁹¹ The latter is significant, because Georg Peurbach later wrote for Vitez a treatise on how to construct and use such an instrument.¹⁹² 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.¹⁹³ 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.¹⁹⁴ 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.¹⁹⁵ Of course, it is possible this was only

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 renascentium*, 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.¹⁹⁶ However, Paul of Ivanić, who was given the task of editing the letters, recorded that many of the ones he gathered were damaged,¹⁹⁷ that some were incomplete,¹⁹⁸ and that he simply could not find some of them even though he knew they existed.¹⁹⁹ 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.²⁰⁰ 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.²⁰¹

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,²⁰² based most of her conclusions on similarities between handwritings in which emendations, i.e. corrections of grammatical and other errors in manuscripts, were inscribed.²⁰³ 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.²⁰⁴ Vitez was doing the same, comparing his copies of texts to older specimens, as we know

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.²⁰⁵ 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 1469.²⁰⁶

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.²⁰⁷ She also argued that Vitez knew Greek, as some of the notes in the book were in that language.²⁰⁸ 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, 1443.²⁰⁹ 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.²¹⁰

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.²¹¹ 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

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”,²¹² However, its similarity to lowercase zeta depends on the reader; for example, it is also similar to the common symbol for *finis*.²¹³

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.²¹⁴ 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.²¹⁵ 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.²¹⁶

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.²¹⁷ 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.²¹⁸ 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.²¹⁹ 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.²²⁰ This is most likely not the same work as that Piccolomini copied for Vitez,²²¹ unless the quality of his copy was truly abysmal.²²² 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.²²³ 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.²²⁴

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),²²⁵ which might mean that Vitez finished reading and emending the codex very soon after it was made.²²⁶ 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).²²⁷ 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).²²⁸

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.²²⁹ 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*.²³⁰ 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.²³¹

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.²³² The same message was delivered to Król orally by Długosz.²³³

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.²³⁴ It seems that Livy was one of Vitez's favourite authors, as he would often quote him in his works.²³⁵ 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.²³⁶ However, the last tome bears a version of the coat of arms with an archbishop's cross, which means that it was produced after 1465.²³⁷ 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

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 uulgatam esse rem uideam:
dum noui semper scriptores aut in rebus
certius aliquid allatuos se: aut scribendi
arte rudem uetustatem superaturus credunt.

Vtque erit: uiuabit tamen rerum gesta
rum memorie principis terrarum populi pro uirili parte me ipsium con
sulsisse. Et si in tanta scriptorum turba mea fama in obscurum est: nobilita
te ac magnitudine eorum, qui nomini officient meo consolet. Res est
preterea & immensi operis: ut que supra septingentesimum annum re
petatur: & que ab exiguis profecta intus co creuerit: ut iam magnitu
dine laboret sua. Legentium plerisque haud dubito quin prime origines
proximaq; originibus minus prebitura uoluptatis sint: festinantibus ad
hec nona, quibus iam pridem preualentis populi uires se ipse conficiunt.
Ego contra: hoc quoq; 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: q; 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 condito: usq; sui parentem marrem potissimum ferat:
tam & hoc gentes humane patiantur, equo animo q; imperium patiant
tur. Sed hec & his similia utcumq; animaduersa aut exultimata erunt:
haud in magno equidem ponam discrimine. Ad illa mihi pro se quisq;
acriter intendat animam: que uita, qui mores fuerint: per quos uirios
quibusq; artibus domi militiae & partium & 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.²³⁸ 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,²³⁹ 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.²⁴⁰ 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.²⁴¹ 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.²⁴² The emperor would often consult him before making decisions.²⁴³

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,²⁴⁴ 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.²⁴⁵ After Piccolomini departed for Rome in 1455, Nihili wrote that he missed him and that he enjoyed their conversations.²⁴⁶ Prokop of Rabštejn was also an old friend of Nihili's, back from before he became a chancellor of Ladislaus V.²⁴⁷

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.²⁴⁸ He was probably prompted by the revision of property rights initiated by George of Poděbrady after Ladislaus's coronation.²⁴⁹ For his journey, he was provided with recommendations to Poděbrady by both Piccolomini and Frederick III.²⁵⁰ The former also wrote to Prokop of Rabštejn, informing him that Nihili would soon arrive at Ladislaus's court.²⁵¹ 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.²⁵² However, his visit to Bohemia was met with success, as he managed to gain King Ladislaus's sympathies.²⁵³ 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.²⁵⁴

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—

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 *Vitez, 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.²⁵⁵ 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.²⁵⁶ 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.²⁵⁷ 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.²⁵⁸

Nihili was probably the connection through which Peurbach came in contact with John Vitez. To Nihili, Peurbach was a struggling, junior colleague.²⁵⁹ 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.²⁶⁰ 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 astrolabe, the sundial and others), meaning in the early 1460s.²⁶¹

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.²⁶² 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.²⁶³ 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

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.²⁶⁴ 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 Peurbach's charts computed to the Vienna meridian, copied a number of times and later even printed.²⁶⁵ The Oradea version is of lesser quality than its Viennese counterpart. The calculations in it are not very precise, and it is apparent that Peurbach 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.²⁶⁶ It eventually ended up in King Matthias's library, because Peurbach's student, Johannes Müller of Königsberg, called Regiomontanus,²⁶⁷ added his own dedication to Matthias to the manuscript already containing Peurbach's dedication to Vitez and presented it to the king.²⁶⁸ This might mean the *Tabulae* were never delivered to Vitez, but that Peurbach kept them with him until his death in 1461, after which they passed to Regiomontanus.²⁶⁹ 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,²⁷⁰ we have already noted that he was rarely in his see throughout Ladislaus V's reign.

Vitez also owned a specimen of Peurbach's *Theoricae novae planetarum*, finished in 1460.²⁷¹ Vitez's copy bears his coat of arms and contains a dedication by Regiomontanus,²⁷² so the latter likely presented it to Vitez sometime after Peurbach'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 Peurbach 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 Peurbach 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, Peurbach 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. Peurbach, 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.²⁷³ 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.²⁷⁴

All these men, particularly Nihili, Peurbach 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.

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."