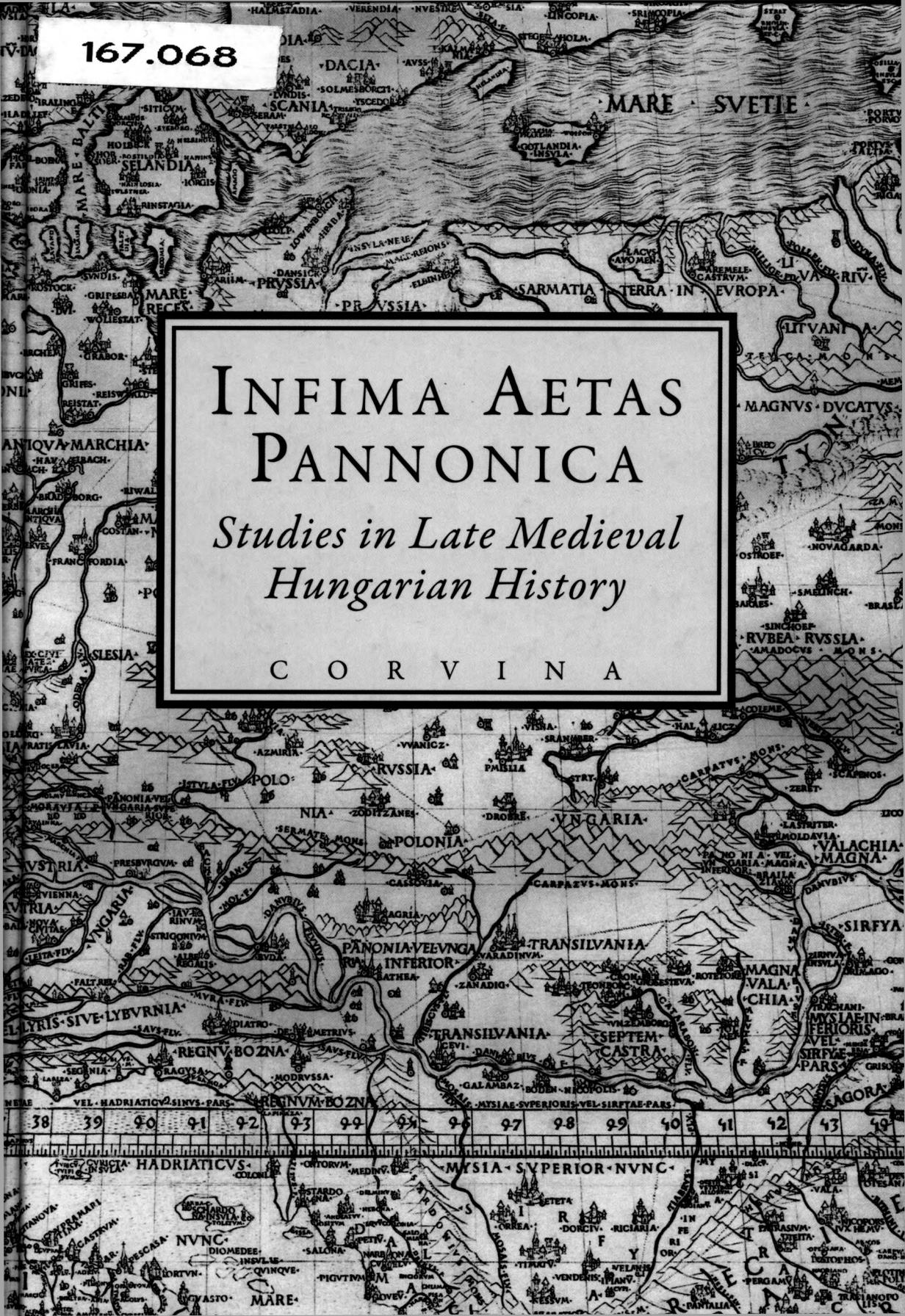


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C O R V I N A



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THE CRUSADES AND EARLY HUMANISM IN HUNGARY

In an essay in which he analysed the rise of the myth of King Matthias and its essential nature, Tibor Klaniczay summarised his conclusions with the statement that Hungarian humanism “blossomed as a token of, and intertwined with, the idea of the anti-Turkish and anti-Hussite crusading spirit, in close alignment with papal policy, or to be more specific: the Roman court that, little by little, was being transformed into a centre of humanism.”¹ That statement, which may, at first glance, strike one as a commonplace, points to one of the most, if not *the* most important motive forces and touchstones behind Hungarian humanism, and is all the more valid if the period prior to Matthias’s reign is seen as laying the groundwork for, and sparking the appearance of, humanism in Hungary. It is widely known that Hungary was one of the first places for humanism to make an appearance north of the Alps.² In the article that follows, I would like to show that the reason that the new ideology and style were able to strike root so early in Hungary was because in the first half of the fifteenth century, they played a major role and were a major instrument in the struggle to smash the Hussite heresy and drive back the Turks.

The first clash at the Field of the Blackbirds (Rigómező, Kosovo Pole) in 1389 is widely recognised as having opened a new chapter in the history of the Kingdom of Hungary. With the loss of Serbia, Hungary now became a direct neighbour of Ottoman Turkey, which pushed forward with military campaigns and continually attacked Hungary’s border regions with marauding raids. A military campaign launched in 1396 that was led by the Hungarian king Sigismund of Luxembourg in order to regain the lost territories was unsuccessful, and Europe’s united Christian army was defeated by Ottoman sultan Bajazet I at Nicopolis. With Jan Hus being

¹ Tibor Klaniczay, *A kereszteshad eszméje és a Mátyás-mítosz* [The idea of a crusade and the myth of Matthias], in: Id., *Hagyományok ébredése* [The Awakening of Tradition], Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1976, p. 190.

² Ágnes Ritoók-Szalay, *A magyar humanizmus-kutatásról Schallaburg után* [Research in Hungarian humanism after Schallaburg], in: Id., *“Nympha super ripam Danubii”. Tanulmányok a XV–XVI. századi magyarországi művelődés köréből* [Studies in Hungarian Culture in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries], (Humanizmus és Reformáció, 28), Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2002, pp. 11–14.

put to the stake by the Council of Constance in 1415, the challenge of fighting an internal enemy, the Hussite heresy, also had to be accepted, thus making Hungary a “bastion of Christianity” twice over. Due to its geopolitical situation, together with its protective role and the political clout of its rulers, Hungary’s diplomatic and cultural contacts became closer over the first part of the fifteenth century, first and foremost with the Holy See and the Italian states, but also with other countries.³ That included Constantinople, which sought an ally in Sigismund, the king of Hungary, which was under similar threat as itself. The extensive and diverse contacts played a big part in the spread of humanist culture in Hungary.

In this war on two fronts, against the Hussite heretics and the Turks, Sigismund concentrated his attentions on defeating the Hussites.⁴ During his reign, Hungary became one of Europe’s most important political centres, with outstanding Italian humanists, diplomats and princes living there or visiting. Thus, the noted Padovan humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio (the Elder, born at Capodistria in 1387) lived in Buda from 1418 till his death in 1444.⁵ Earlier on in life, Vergerio had studied rhetoric at Padua and canon law at Florence before he became tutor of the princes of Carrara at their court in Padua. When Padua was taken over by Venice, the Carraras, like the della Scala family, the lords of Verona and their rightful heirs, were forced to flee from the Venetians and thus Sigismund’s court represented a refuge for Vergerio. Also living in Sigismund’s court and functioning as a royal councillor and diplomat for decades was the Veronese heir, Brunoro della Scala,⁶ while the lord of Padua, Mar-

³Cf. Klaniczay, op. cit., pp. 167–170.

⁴František Kavka, ‘Bemerkungen zur Rolle des Hussitentums in Sigismunds europäischer Politik,’ in: *Sigismund von Luxemburg. Kaiser und König im Mitteleuropa, 1387–1437 (Studien zu den Luxemburgern und ihrer Zeit, 5)*, ed. Josef Macek, Ernő Marosi and Ferdinand Seibt, Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1994, pp. 89–90.

⁵Florio Bánfi, ‘Pier Paolo Vergerio il Vecchio in Ungheria,’ *Archivio di scienze, lettere ed arti della Società Italo–Ungherese Mattia Corvino, Supplemento a Corvina Rassegna Italo–Ungherese* 1 (1939), no. 1, pp. 1–3 and no. 2, pp. 17–29; *ibid.*, 2 (1940), no. 1, pp. 1–30; József Huszti, ‘Pier Paolo Vergerio és a magyar humanizmus kezdetei [P. P. Vergerio and the beginnings of Hungarian humanism],’ *Filológiai Közöny*, 1(1955), pp. 521–533; Klára Pajorin, ‘A magyar humanizmus Zsigmond-kori alapjai [The foundations of humanism in the Hungary of King Sigismund’s era],’ in: *Művészet Zsigmond király korában, 1387–1437, Tanulmányok* [Arts in the Age of King Sigismund, 1387–1437, Studies], eds. László Beke, Ernő Marosi and Tünde Wehli, Budapest: Művészettörténeti Kutatócsoport, 1987 (hereafter Beke, Marosi and Wehli [eds.]), pp. 193–211; Zsuzsanna Kiséri, ‘Vergerio és Luxemburgi Zsigmond [Vergerio and Sigismund of Luxembourg],’ in: *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Művészet és kultúra Zsigmond király korában* [Art and Culture in the Age of King Sigismund], ed. Imre Takács, Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum & Luxemburg: Musée National d’histoire et d’art, Philipp von Zabern, 2006 (hereafter: Takács, ed.), pp. 292–294.

⁶A. A. Strnad, ‘Della Scala, Brunoro,’ in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960- (hereafter: *DBI*), vol. 37, pp. 389–393; Elemér Mályusz, *Zsigmond király uralma Magyarországon, 1387–1437*, [The Reign of King Sigismund in Hungary, 1387–1437], Budapest: Gondolat, 1984, pp. 67, 77, 95 and 128; Pajorin, op. cit., pp. 195–196; Gisella Beinhoff, *Die Italiener am Hof Kaiser Sigismunds, 1410–1437*, (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Series 3, vol. 620), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995, pp. 203–208.

silio da Carrara, as a friend of Sigismund's, enjoyed the Hungarian king's hospitality for roughly a decade (c. 1413–1423).⁷

These scions of Italy's ruling houses did not arrive in Hungary by themselves but maintained great households as befitted rulers, entourages which, understandably, comprised primarily Italians. A number of these loyal supporters did, in fact, go on to enter services with Sigismund. One example is Ognibene della Scola, who from 1418 to 1426 worked as a councillor to Sigismund. He was a doctor of philosophy and jurist, husband to the half-sister of the aforesaid Marsilio da Carrara. Earlier, back in Italy, he had been in regular correspondence with Vergerio and is remembered as being a worthy student of the humanities.⁸ Vergerio had started on his literary career while working for the Carraras, and his *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adolescentiae studiis* (Venice, 1472), which is held to be the first humanist treatise on education, was dedicated to Ubertino da Carrara (†1407).⁹ The Carraras and Vergerio were well-known to be among Petrarch's most loyal backers, with the poet at the end of his life spending the two years of his life at the Carrara court as the guest of Francesco Carrara. The latter heaped favours on his guest, such as placed at his disposal a house at Arquà, in the Euganean Hills near Padua, where Petrarch was able to live and work in idyllic surroundings for two years until his death in 1374. Vergerio, like the Carraras, had revered Petrarch long before he left Italy, and it was he who brought out posthumously *Africa*, the Latin epic poem by Petrarch on Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Maior on which the poet's greatest claim to fame rested. Indeed, a veritable small colony of those admirers of Petrarch who could perhaps take most credit for perpetuating the poet's oeuvre came together at in Sigismund's court.

The trajectory taken by the Scolari family of Florence in Hungary is likewise well attested, with Pipo de Ozora (Filippo Scolari, or Pipo Spano)¹⁰ putting roots to become essentially Hungarian, serving as governor of Temes, Sigismund's most outstanding military leader, campaigning against the Hussites and also winning more than a few clashes with the Turks. Pipo excelled not only in the martial arts but also functioned as a diplomat, inducing the pope to establish a university in Óbuda in

⁷ M. C. Ganguzza Billanovich, 'Carrara, Marsilio da, in: *DBI*, op. cit., vol. 20, pp. 693–695; Mályusz, op. cit., pp. 67, 95, 128, 232; Pajorin, op. cit., pp. 194–196; Beinhoff, op. cit., pp. 219–220.

⁸ Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Epistolario (Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Epistolari, secolo XIV–XVI)*, ed. Leonardo Smith, Rome: Senato, 1934, pp. 207–208; Beinhoff, op. cit., pp. 225–228.

⁹ Beinhoff, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁰ Pál Engel, 'Ozorai Pipó temesi ispán [Pipo de Ozora, governor Temes]; in: Beke, Marosi and Wehli (eds.), op. cit., pp. 432–434; Id., 'Ozorai Pipo' [Pipo de Ozora], in: *Ozorai Pipo emlékezete* [In Commemoration of Pipo de Ozora], ed. Ferenc Vadas, Szekszárd: Múzeumi Füzetek, 1987, pp. 53–88; Franco Cardini, 'Pippo Spano nell'Ungheria umanistica,' in: *Italia e Ungheria all'epoca dell'Umanesimo corviniano* (Civiltà veneziana, Studi, 45), ed. Sante Gracioti and Cesare Vasoli, Florence: Olschki, 1994, 37–50; Beinhoff, op. cit., pp. 181–185; Gisella Nemeth, 'Filippo Scolari. Un esempio di condottiero e mecenate alla corte di Sigismondo di Lussemburgo,' in: *Hungarica varietas. Mediatori culturali tra Italia e Ungheria*, eds. Adriano Papo and Gisella Nemeth, Udine: Laguna, 2002, pp. 87–92; Armando Nuzzo, 'Coluccio Salutati e l'Ungheria,' *Verbum*, 7(2005), pp. 352–355.

1410. He also procured posts in Hungary for many of his Italian relatives and acquaintances, and no less a person that Coluccio Salutati urged him by letter to support his fellow countrymen.¹¹ Pipo obtained appointments to the bishopric of Nagyvárad in Transylvania (now Oradea, Romania) for two relatives in succession, Andrea Scolari (1409–26)¹² and Giovanni Milanesi (1426–27),¹³ as well as the archbishopric of Kalocsa for Cormanio Scolari (1420–22)¹⁴ and Giovanni Buondelmonti (1424–28),¹⁵ and it was he who invited to Hungary in 1409 Manetto Ammannatini, “the fat woodcarver” (*il grasso legnaiuolo*, 1384–1449) and a former pupil of Brunelleschi’s in Florence. The artist worked as a friend of Sigismund’s, becoming one of the most influential individuals at the court in Buda.¹⁶ Commissions from the king as well as ecclesiastical and secular notables kept him creatively busy in Hungary until he died.

The activities in Hungary of the papal nuncio Cardinal Branda Castiglione (1360–1443)¹⁷ were directed mainly at stifling the Hussite heresy.¹⁸ The pro-humanist prelate was at ease in Buda, where he built a palace built.¹⁹ He also had a part in bringing two eminent Italian intellectuals to Hungary. A protégé, Masolini Panicale, is known to have lived and worked in Hungary for a while.²⁰ The first to arrive, in 1424, was the cardinal’s secretary Giuliano Cesarini, himself later made a cardinal, and who took part in the anti-Turkish crusade two decades later, being killed in action in the battle of Varna in 1444.²¹ While a young man still, in Buda, Cesarini struck up a friendship with Francesco Filelfo, a renowned humanist, who in 1424 spent several months in Sigismund’s court as an envoy of the Byzantine emperor John

¹¹ Cf. “*Nunc autem memor esto concivium tuorum qui post gratiam regiam te solum habent in illis partibus protectorem. Illis consulas, illos iuves, illos obnoxios non dimittas iniurie, nec rogari velis sed coneris cuncta rogamina prevenire*” (letter of 5 July 1405 by Salutati, as published by: Nuzzo, op. cit., p. 359).

¹² Cf. Jolán Balogh, ‘Andrea Scolari váradi püspök mecénási tevékenysége [Andrea Scolari’s patronage as bishop of Nagyvárad],’ *Archaeológiai Értesítő*, 40(1923–1926), pp. 173–188.

¹³ Engel, op. cit., p. 433.

¹⁴ G. Rill, ‘Buondelmonti, Giovanni,’ in: *DBI*, op. cit., vol. 15, p. 209.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 209–211.

¹⁶ *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler*, eds. U. Thieme and F. Becher, Leipzig: Engelmann, 1907, vol. 1, p. 416; *Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, Munich & Leipzig: Saur, 1992, vol. 3, p. 258; L. A. Maggiorotti and F. Banfi, *Le fortificazioni di Buda e di Pest e gli architetti militari italiani*, Istituto di Architettura Militare, Museo del Genio, n. d. (1934?), pp. 46–48; Beinhoff, op. cit., pp. 178–180; Nemeth, op. cit., pp. 88 and 91.

¹⁷ D. Girgensohn, ‘Castiglione, Branda da,’ in: *DBI*, op. cit., vol. 22, pp. 69–75. On Castiglione’s work in Italy, see: Lajos Vayer, *Masolino és Róma* [Masolini and Rome], Budapest: Képzőművészeti Alap Kiadóvállalata, 1962, pp. 49–74; Tino Foffano, ‘Rapporti tra Italia e Ungheria in occasione delle legazioni del Cardinale Branda Castiglioni (1350–1443),’ in: *Venezia e Ungheria nel Rinascimento (Civiltà veneziana. Studi, 28)*, ed. Vittore Branca, Florence: Olschki, 1973, pp. 67–78.

¹⁸ Beinhoff, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁹ “*In opido Bude Regni Vngarie pariter palatium edificavit*” (Johannes de Olomnos [=Olomouc, Czech Republic]). See: P. Bandioli, ‘La ricognizione della salma del cardinale Branda Castiglioni e la scoperta d’una sua biografia,’ *Aevum*, 9(1935), cited by Vayer, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁰ Vayer, op. cit., *passim*.

²¹ A. A. Strnad and K. Walsh, ‘Cesarini, Giuliano,’ in: *DBI*, op. cit., vol. 24, p. 189.

VIII Palaiologos. Not long after Filelfo, still in the same year, the Byzantine emperor himself arrived in Buda²² to ask for support against the Turks, for which he was by then in urgent need, as two years before Sultan Murad II had besieged Constantinople in an attempt to capture the city.²³

Humanists provided Sigismund with inestimable assistance, above all in the field of foreign policy, though their schooling and training in rhetoric played an important role in the fight against the Hussites. Vergerio, for instance, provided his master substantial aid in evolving anti-Hussite policies, unlike the nuncio sent by the pope, Cardinal Giovanni Dominici (i.e. Giovanni di Dominici Bachini),²⁴ who was known for his overt anti-humanism, and who provoked the furious anger of the Hussites with his arrogance and his callously purblind faith. Bachini died in 1419 while he was in Hungary and was buried in St. Paul's church in Buda.²⁵ From the end of that year until the spring of 1421 Sigismund was in Bohemia, where, following the death of his elder brother Wenceslaus IV, the King of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor, and with the Hussites having dealt the latter a series of blows, he had assumed the throne there as well. Accompanying Sigismund were Brunoro della Scala and, alongside various theologians, jurists, Hungarian aristocrats and prelates, also Vergerio,²⁶ of whom even the Hussites spoke highly. Indeed, the latter were unable to decide whether he was "more learned or more eloquent"²⁷ when he pronounced an opinion on behalf of Sigismund on their articles of faith. Three of the four items he accepted without any objection, and he did not completely reject even the remaining one and just explained what the Hussites were right about and what they were incorrect in thinking.²⁸ On hearing his words, those present began to rejoice and devoutly praise the Lord.²⁹ In both his speech and his person Vergerio earned a victory for the tolerance, thinking and, not least, rhetoric of humanism.

In 1434, the nine-year-old Wladislaw of Varna ascended to the Polish throne, becoming King Wladislaw III of Poland, and in 1440 he was also elected to become Wladislaw I of Hungary, primarily in order for him to launch the united military

²² Cf. P. Viti, 'Filelfo, Francesco', in: *DBI*, op. cit., vol. 47, p. 614.

²³ István Baán, 'Zsigmond és Bizánc kapcsolatai [Sigismund's links with Byzantium]', in: Takács (ed.), *Sigismundus rex.*, op. cit., p. 441.

²⁴ Johann von Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigismunds*, 4 vols., Hamburg, 1838–1845, vol. 3, pp. 6–9; Vayer, op. cit., passim, pp. 130–131; G. Cracco, 'Bachini, Giovanni di Dominici', in: *DBI*, op. cit., vol. 5, pp. 657–664.

²⁵ Cracco, *DBI*, op. cit., p. 664.

²⁶ "...presentibus... Guilhelmino de Prata, Brunoro de la Scala Veronae, nec non venerabilibus dominis Ladislao regie maiestatis Hungarie vicecancellario, Benedicto preposito Albensi, ap. Sedis protonotario, ac egregiis magistro Petro Paulo de Vergeriis de Iustinopoli utriusque iuris, Martino Talayero sacre theologie, Nicolao Cisselmeyster decretorum et Jacobo de Spinolis similiter decretorum doctoribus..." (Vergerio, *Epistolario*, op. cit., p. 461).

²⁷ "[N]escimus si doctior an eloquentior" (quoted by Vergerio, from an 8 February 1421 pamphlet by the Hussites of Prague; *ibid.*, p. 462).

²⁸ See *ibid.*

²⁹ "Quibus auditis, mox quasi singuli vultum et animum in gaudia et ob spem beatae tranquillitatis laxaverunt, et in verba laudes Dei devotius eruperunt" (*ibid.*, p. 462).

forces of the two countries on a Crusade in a big bid to push back the Turks. Whereas Sigismund had waged war on two fronts, against the Turks and the Husites, concentrating mainly on vanquishing the latter, during the reign of Wladislas I, and the subsequent regency of John Hunyadi, solving the Turkish question was seen as the top priority. Organising the Crusades against the Turks drew the European nations more tightly together, and the international contacts were also felt in the field of culture. The legates of the Holy See and Italian humanists who were urging that a start be made to sending off military expeditions against the Turks acquainted the Hungarians with arguments that were new in their content as well as their approach.

Vergerio's former house is situated in the centre of the Buda Castle district, and during the early 1440s it was a veritable international talking shop, holding symposia and literary contest. Along with courtiers and chancellery, Wladislas brought in his wake Polish literary figures, and they in turn paid visits to Vergerio's house. Along with the Greek Filippo Podacataro, Italians, Hungarians and Croats were also among the humanist's guests.³⁰ In the will that he made out in Buda, Vergerio appointed as executors Cardinal Cesarini and the woodcarver Manetto Ammannatini,³¹ who were closest to him and probably saw him more often than anyone else. Cesarini, as was mentioned before, first passed through Buda in 1424 and was next in 1442 sent as a legate by Pope Eugene IV to both Vienna and Hungary in order to organise and rally support for the next Crusade. One participant in the Buda symposia was Ioannes de Gara, about whom we know through Callimachus Experiens, and who was in fact Ioannes de Dominis, bishop of Várad and a friend of Vergerio.

Another likely participant at these gatherings was János Vitéz, who at the time of de Dominis's bishopric was himself the provost at Nagyvárad as well as working as chief notary in Wladislas I's Hungarian chancellery.³²

János Vitéz³³ was the first Hungarian literary man to express the view that there were too few "educated persons" in his homeland, that the literary culture there was unrefined. The modern literary attainments, or in other words, the professional hu-

³⁰ For his last will and testament, see: Vergerio, *Epistolario*, op. cit., p. 468 (lines 15–23).

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 469–470.

³² Klára Pajorin, 'Vitéz János műveltsége [János Vitéz's erudition],' *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 108(2004), pp. 538–540.

³³ Vilmos Fraknói, *Vitéz János esztergomi érsek élete* [The Life of János Vitéz, Archbishop of Esztergom], Budapest: Szent-István-Társulat, 1879; Iván Boronkai, 'Vitéz János, "a magyar humanizmus atyja", in: *Vitéz János levelei és politikai beszédei* [János Vitéz, the "Father" of humanism in Hungary: The letters and political speeches of J.V.], eds. Iván Boronkai and Ibolya Bellus, Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1987, pp. 5–30; Ferenc Szakály, 'Vitéz János, a politikus és államférfi (Pályavázlat – kérdőjelekkel)' [János Vitéz, politician and statesman (An outline of his career, with question marks)], in: *Vitéz János Emlékkönyv* [J.V. Memorial Album] (Esztergom Évlapjai. Annales Strigonienses, 1990). Esztergom: Balassa Bálint Társaság, 1990, pp. 9–38; András Kubinyi, 'Vitéz János a jó humanista és a rossz politikus [J.V.: Good humanist, bad politician]', in: *A magyar történelem vitatott személyiségei* [Contentious Figures in Hungarian History], ed. Magyar Történelmi Társulat, Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, pp. 7–30; Ritoók-Szalay, op. cit., pp. 11–14; Pajorin, 'Vitéz János műveltsége,' op. cit., pp. 533–540.

manist cultivation that he yearned for could only be acquired in Italy at that time. It is known that some time soon after 1444, the year in which Vergerio and de Dominis died, Vitéz, a man in the prime of life, with a post as chief notary behind him, set off to travel to Italy with the aim of learning Greek and Latin, but he never made it.³⁴ Not long after, John Hunyadi, who from 1446 ruled Hungary as regent in place of the infant King Ladislas V, charged Vitéz with conducting his international correspondence. By this time Vitéz was an acknowledged literary figure, as is testified by the fact that a certain "Pál", a former notary in the Hungarian royal chancellery of Wladislas I, sought him out around 1445 with a request to gather together his letters and send them to him.³⁵

A hand may have been played in this interest in letters of a good standard by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who was at that time working in the Viennese chancellery of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III. After the battle of Varna, the Italian humanist had had deplored the deficiencies in literary knowledge and inadequate grasp of Latin shown by a letter he had received from the chancellery of Queen Sophia of Poland. He had gone carefully through the Polish chancellor's letter and pointed out every single error he found in it.³⁶ As he wrote, the composer of the epistle was no more suited to a chancellery post than a pig for the throne.³⁷ Piccolomini's criticism did have some effect, for it appears the Hungarians also took them to heart because the letter from Queen Sophia's chancellery that was torn to shreds by the humanist happened to be one in which the Polish chancellor had responded to an earlier enquiry that Hungary's prelates and great lords had sent the queen as to whether Wladislas I had managed to escape from the battle of Varna, and if so, what were his whereabouts now. Just as the Hungarians' letter had reached the chancellery of Frederick III and Piccolomini in Vienna, so too must the latter's censorious letter have found its way Buda. In 1446 Hunyadi was elected regent of Hungary and the aforementioned "Pál" became chief notary in his chancellery on Buda. This, it seems he had still not dropped the idea of studying Vitéz's letter, as in this new post he repeated the earlier request that he had sent to Vitéz.³⁸

Vitéz's epistolarium is known to have been compiled in 1451 from letters that he had written between 1445 and 1451, with the very last letter being dated 15 December 1451. The next year, with Ladislas V's accession to power, Hunyadi's regency came to an end, and with it the collection of letters. Pál Ivanich, the bishop of Nagyvárad in question, compiled the epistolarium and provided an afterword and

³⁴ Fraknoi, *op. cit.*, 19–20; cf. Iohannes Vitéz de Zredna, *Opera quae supersunt*, ed. Iván Boronkai, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980, pp. 60–61.

³⁵ Cf. Vitéz, *Opera quae supersunt*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 20–26 and 29, 1–6.

³⁶ *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*, Part 1. *Briefe aus der Laienzeit (1431–1445)*, vol. 1. *Privatbriefe*, ed. Rudolf Wolkan (*Fontes Rerum Austriacarum*, 2), Vienna: Hölder, 1909, pp. 508–522.

³⁷ "[A]t tu consulere rectius debebas tam regine quam tibi nec eo te fungi officio decebat, cui tam aptus es quam selle gestende porcus" (*ibid.*, p. 509).

³⁸ Vitéz, *Opera quae supersunt*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–46.

commentary. What is perhaps most notable is that it resembles nothing so much as the “critical” editions of more modern times. Ivanich added commentaries, clarified the meaning of archaic expressions by furnishing up-to-date synonyms, gave the ancient *loci*, and so on – in short, he furnished an explication of Vitéz’s letters, who was brought up in the spirit of Scholasticism, in accordance with the new requirements of the new humanism.

The first letter in the epistolarium is a letter to Pope Nicholas V informing him of the defeat suffered at Varna on 10 November 1444, but the bulk of the letters embody Hunyadi’s anti-Turkish diplomacy. Particularly noteworthy are those that were written in the heat of organising the 1448 Crusade, which thus represent early examples of anti-Turkish literature north of the Alps. Among these the epistle to Nichols V stands out for its sheer literary merits.³⁹ Prior to this, two anti-Turkish exhortations had reached Hungary. The first, dated 5 November 1444 (i.e. five days before Varna) was written by Francesco Filelfo to King Wladislas I,⁴⁰ who, as has been noted, fell in action at Varna. In 1448 Poggio Bracciolini sent an epistle of similar nature to Regent Hunyadi.⁴¹ These two exhortations, along with Vitéz’s anti-Turkish letters, are earlier than the latter’s writings to Biondo Flavio and Piccolomini around the time of the fall of Constantinople which are generally regarded as marking the birth of *Turcica* as a literary form.⁴² In other words, Vitéz, quite apart from his role in introducing Hungary to the literary epistle, also played an important part in the emergence of anti-Turkish literature north of the Alps. On the fall of Constantinople 1453, naturally enough, he fell silent as he had done earlier for he had written a letter beforehand on behalf of King Ladislas V warning that it was on the brink of disaster and asking the pope to do all he could to save Byzantium.⁴³

The other important literary form besides the epistle was the oration, with these two genres represent humanist prose in Hungary until 1472. Totally absent were other characteristic classes of humanist writing such as the dialogue or the moral discourse. Orations themselves were dominated by an anti-Turkish subject-matter, which alone goes a long way to explaining the position in which Hungarian humanists found themselves. The first oration of Hungarian composition that is known to have been delivered in an international forum was given at the end of 1452 at Wiener Neustadt, in the presence of Ladislas V, with Vitéz making a speech on behalf of the

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 90–94. In regard to the literary value of the letter, see Iván Boronkai, ‘Vitéz János és az ókori klasszikusok [János Vitéz and the classics of Antiquity]’, in: *Janus Pannonius. Tanulmányok* [Studies on Janus Pannonius], ed. Tibor Kardos and Sándor V. Kovács, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975, pp. 226–228; Id., Vitéz János, “a magyar humanizmus atyja,” op. cit., pp. 22–27.

⁴⁰ Franciscus Philephus, *Epistolarum familiarum libri XXXVI*, Venetiis, Ioannes et Gregorius de Gregoriis, 1502, 37r–38r.

⁴¹ Poggio Bracciolini, *Lettere*, vol. 3, ed. Helene Harth, Florence: Olschki, 1987, pp. 65–68.

⁴² Cf. Johannes Helmroth, ‘Pius II. und die Türken,’ in: *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, eds. Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kuhlmann. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000, p. 84.

⁴³ Vitéz, *Opera quae supersunt*, op. cit., pp. 176–177.

Hungarian estates and greeting the king on the occasion of his being released from the restraints under which Frederick III had been holding him and was now able to set off for Hungary to occupy his rightful place on the throne. At the beginning of the following year, he exhorted Frederick in another oration to return the crown of St Stephen and to desist from further hostility against Hungary. It was during this period that Vitéz must have had the chance to meet Piccolomini in person, and it is known that their contact became closer after Vitéz delivered another oration to the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire at Frankfurt (1454). Copies are extant of ten letters that Piccolomini wrote to him between August 1453 and 1457, though none of his to Piccolomini over that period are known, only those that Vitéz wrote later on as chancellor on behalf of King Matthias to his old friend, who had by then become Pope Pius II.

Piccolomini regarded Vitéz as being a distinguished literary figure, the greatest in Hungary, that is clear. On the occasions when they appeared together in public, he readily gave expression to how greatly he admired his Hungarian colleague's rhetorical skills. Nor was he alone: not only Piccolomini's orations but Vitéz's Wiener Neustadt address were copied and analysed, and presumably used as models, over the whole of Central Europe.⁴⁴ But in Piccolomini's biographical treatise *Europa* one can read: "*Ex Hungaris, qui studia humanitatis secuti aevo nostro claruerunt, duos novimus, Ioannem episcopum Varadiensem, qui regni cancellariam obtinuit, et alterum Ioannem eius ex sorore nepotem, qui sub Guarino Veronensi Graecas ac Latinas literas didicit...*"⁴⁵ – that is to say, Vitéz and Janus Pannonius. Or in other words, despite Vitéz lacking the schooling that matched humanist norms, it was Piccolomini's considered view that Vitéz was outstanding in his observance of the humanities. In another of Piccolomini's writings, his commentary on Antonio Beccadelli's *Hermaproditus*, while recording to a witty saying of Vitéz's, he notes that in respect of the elegance of his actions and attitudes and his literary erudition the bishop of Nagyvárad outdid everyone else in Hungary: "*Ioannes Varadiensis episcopus regniq[ue] Hungariae cancellarius tam morum elegantia quam literarum scientia regnicolarum nulli secundus...*"⁴⁶ On reading, it does seem that Piccolomini held Vitéz in even higher esteem than Janus Pannonius, and he also knew the latter personally having met him at Wiener Neustadt in 1455 and indeed exchanged letters in verse after Janus borrowed Piccolomini's *Martialis* volume. Scevola Mariotti, who analysed this "exceptionally elegant" correspondence ("*di rara eleganza*" as Guido Martellotti

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 268–269.

⁴⁵ Aeneae Sylvius Piccolominicus, *Opera quae extant omnia*, Basileae, off. Henricpetrina, 1571, p. 392.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 486. The text carries on: "*Cum praefecturas urbium de prouinciarum ad nouos et incognitos deferri homines animaduertent. Post annum, inquit, uidebimus, bonane fuerit electio, quod si mihi fides fuerit, probatos ad haec munera, quam probandos potius asumam.*"

called it) with philological meticulousness, convincingly demonstrated that Janus was a better poet than Piccolomini.⁴⁷

Besides Janus, Piccolomini was acquainted with other Hungarian humanists who had been schooled in Italy. In 1453, Vitéz's protégé, Nicolaus Barius (i.e. Miklós Bánfalvi, †1459), appealed to him in a letter. Bánfalvi read law in Padua, returning to Hungary in 1450. At Wiener Neustadt in 1452, he, like Vitéz before, delivered an oration to greet Ladislas V, and he also made an anti-Turkish speech to the German Diet in Frankfurt (no record of this has survived, beyond the fact that it was delivered in 1454).⁴⁸ In 1455 Piccolomini came into contact with another Vitéz protégé, Georgius Polycarpus (György Kosztolányi), who had studied at Guarino Guarini's school in Ferrara, and praised the young man's "*humanitas*" and "*eruditio*."⁴⁹ Polycarpus was later, after the Congress of Mantua was concluded in 1460, as an envoy of King Matthias, delivered a speech in Siena in the presence of Pius II, and then following year at the German Diet in Nuremberg delivered another speech to urge a united intervention of all European nations against the Turks.⁵⁰ Yet another of Vitéz's protégés was Albert Hangácsi,⁵¹ who, acting as envoy to Matthias, delivered an anti-Turkish speech at the Congress of Mantua.⁵² Piccolomini therefore had plenty of ground on which to make comparisons in expressing his view of Vitéz's literary attainments.

The question therefore arises as to where Vitéz gained his exceptional learning. It seems most likely that it was from the same source as Gáspár Schlick, Frederick III's chancellor and also Piccolomini's patron. Schlick was just as much a stranger and newcomer at Frederick's court as Piccolomini; he had previously been Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg's chancellor and then headed the chancellery for Albert V of Habsburg (Albert I of Hungary, 1437–1439) and Albert II as Holy Roman Emperor, 1438–39). Piccolomini writes that he noticed him in Frederick's court as a "*rem miram et relatus dignam*."⁵³ He reported to his friend, Giovanni Campisio in 1444 that he had heard in the emperor's presence an oration such as those that had been delivered in ancient Rome. He describes a debate that had taken place in Emperor Frederick's presence in which Schlick had spoken on behalf of Cardinal Ioannes Bavarus

⁴⁷ Scevola Mariotti, 'La corrispondenza poetica fra Giano Pannonio ed Enea Silvio Piccolomini,' in: *Umanesimo e Rinascimento. Studi offerti a Paul Oskar Kristeller (Biblioteca di "Lettere Italiane". Studi e testi 24)*, Florence: Olschki, 1980, pp. 45–56. Martellotti's opinion ('Recensione a F. R. Hausmann, *Martial in Italien*, *Ann. d. Scuola Norm. Sup. di Pisa*, 3/7 (1977) p. 1562 is quoted by Mariotti (op. cit., p. 45).

⁴⁸ Nicolaus Barius, Georgius Polycarpus de Kostolan, et alii, *Reliquiae*, ed. Ladislaus Juhász, Leipzig: Teubner, 1932, vol. 3–4, pp. 1–3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4–5, pp. 6–13.

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 7–12.

⁵¹ Vilmos Fraknói, 'Mátyás király magyar diplomatái 4. közlemény, Hangácsi Albert [King Matthias's Hungarian diplomats. 4. A.H.]; *Századok*, 1898, pp. 481–493.

⁵² MS held in: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Ottob. Lat. 905, 31r–34v.

⁵³ *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*, op. cit., p. 338.

and his bother Heinrich in favour of their gaining title to the episcopate of Freising, giving the following assessment of the oratorical skills shown by Schlick and his opponent:

*Petit uterque castrorum possessionem, que in dominiis Austrie sunt. Johannes pro se dicit et inter orandum lacrimas miscet. Heinrichi causam cancellarius suscipit absentemque fratrem tuetur. Visus sum apud Argolica naves Ajacem atque Ulixem contendentes videre. Si affuisses, Johannem Ajaci, Ulixi cancellarium adequasses. Haud dissimiles orationes fuere, nisi quod he teutonice, illas Ovidius latinas fecit, quas constat grecas fuisse. Mira cancellarii fuit oratio et longe ornatior, quam ex viro Ciceronis et Quintiliani inscio expectari deberet. Sed agnosco, naturam illi favisse, tum usum, quem cum Sigismundo et Alberto cesaribus habuit, nature dotes juvisse. Fuit enim illorum cancellarius multosque viros orare causam coram illis vidit, quos nunc imitatus est.*⁵⁴

One may conjecture, therefore, that imitation played a big part in the development of Vitéz's oratorical and literary skills. He served the same rulers in Hungary as his friend Piccolomini's friend, Frederick's chancellor, with the difference being that Schlick worked in the imperial chancellery whereas he was in the Hungarian royal chancellery. He encountered the same notabilities in the court of Sigismund and his son-in-law, Albert, as Schlick did, and he had the same models to follow.

Vitéz possessed great literary talent and he clearly acquired a mastery of the *ars dictandi*, which is to say the art of medieval rhetoric, the basic principles of which were little different from those of the humanists. Quite apart from that, he was self-instructed, picking up learning throughout his life, with the Classical Latin authors and the humanists as his masters. Even though no direct quotations are to be found, it is a reasonable guess that the exhortation Poggio Bracciolini sent to Regent John Hunyadi in 1448 had some influence on Vitéz's anti-Turkish letters, and it is not inconceivable that Filelfo's epistle to Wladislas I was also not unfamiliar to him. He almost certainly heard speeches by Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, who exercised considerable influence in Hungary and he may well have also have learned from Guarino's ex-pupil, the eminent Greek scholar Cristoforo Garatone, as the latter visited Hungary as a papal nuncio on several occasions during the 1440s; indeed, having joined Hunyadi's military campaign against the Turks, he died in the next big clash (on this occasion with Murad II) on the Field of Blackbirds in 1448.⁵⁵

Early on in his career, the writer from whom Vitéz learned most was the historian Livy, who was also held in high regard for his speeches and exhortations. The humanists were well acquainted, above all from Livy's works, with the history of the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁵⁵ For further details, see: Klára Pajorin, 'Antiturcica negli anni quaranta del '400. L'epistola di Filelfo, di Poggio e di János Vitéz,' *Camoenae Hungaricae*, 3 (2006), pp. 21–24.

Punic Wars, because they found in those struggles close analogies to the Ottoman Turkish conquests of their own day. Just as the Italians had no difficulty in identifying with the ancient Romans, the new culture enabled the Hungarians likewise to see themselves too in the shoes of their greats. It is not impossible that the example of the Roman general Scipio in vanquishing the Carthaginians in the second Punic war was before Hunyadi's eyes from which draw strength and courage in his fight against the Turks. It is known or certain that János Vitéz's favourite reading matter was Livy's *Ab urbe condita*, and he used that as a starting point for letters that he wrote on Hunyadi's behalf. Iván Boronkai was able to show the passages from this that Vitéz built into the epistle that he wrote in 1448 to Pope Nicholas V.⁵⁶ One of the most valuable items in Vitéz's library was, in fact, a codex of one of Livy's works that he asked Jan Długosz in Cracow to lend him around 1449.⁵⁷ The encounter of the ideology of the medieval Crusades with the content and style of Livy's works is arguably the first sign of humanism's gaining recognition in Hungary, and in point of fact a more appropriate writer than the Roman historian could hardly have been found to assist the Hungarians in formulating their own particular problems and the anti-Turkish thrust of their main concern. Knowing the high status in which Livy was held in Hungary, it can well be believed that an exhortation taking its inspiration from Livy would have been used by Hunyadi to rouse his army before the battle of Kosovo Pole. Piccolomini used the accounts of eye-witnesses to the combat to inform Pope Nicholas by letter, including in the letter the address that was alleged to have been delivered by Hunyadi to his soldiers before the battle.⁵⁸

Thus, thanks to János Vitéz, the "Father" of Humanism in Hungary, and also Piccolomini's pupil, King Ladislas V, the Kingdom of Hungary committed itself at the very highest levels to humanist culture very early on, by the start of the 1450s, as compared with other countries north of the Alps. Right at the front of Hungary's born-and-bred humanists stands Janus Pannonius. The true overture for Hungarian humanism came with his adoption in 1450 in Ferrara, where he had already gained a name for himself as a well-known poet, of the Classical Latin form of his Hungarian given name János and, identifying with the role of a humanist, exchanged this for the name of the Roman god Janus.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Cf. *Analecta ad historiam renascentium in Hungaria litterarum spectantia*, ed. Eugenius Ábel, Budapest, 1880, pp. 166–167.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini. Part 2. Briefe als Priester und als Bischof von Triest (1447–1450)*, ed. Rudolf Wolkan, Wien: Alfred Hölder, 1912, p. 75.

⁵⁹ Cf. Janus Pannonius, *Poëmata omnia*, vol. 1, [ed. Samuel Teleki and Alexander Kovásznai], Traiecti ad Rhenum: Wild, 1784 (reprinted Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2002), Ep. I, p. 130. On the dating of the epigram, see: Klára Pajorin, 'La funzione e l'importanza dei nomi umanistici,' in: *Acta conventus neo-latini Cantabrigiensis, Proceedings of the Eleventh International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Cambridge*, ed. Rhoda Schnur. Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003, pp. 431–432.

In that same year, three young Hungarians, the above-mentioned Nicolaus Barius and Albert Hangácsi as well as István Várdai (or Stephanus de Várda),⁶⁰ returned to Hungary after acquiring doctorates from the university of Padua, and before long all three were occupying high offices working for Ladislas V in the chancellery under Vitéz. All three were illustrious humanists. Barius and Hungácsi, as already seen, were both entrusted with delivering an important anti-Turkish oration, while Várdai gave another address as the envoy of Ladislas V, before Charles VIII of France in 1457, which met with widespread approbation.⁶¹

János Vitéz closed his own collection of letters one year after the return of that trio. He had seen the change in culture through primarily by pushing for and supporting the schooling of talented young Hungarians in Italy. During the 1450s, a series of young men, besides Janus Pannonius, were trained at Guarino Guarini's school in Ferrara. Crowning their studies by qualifying in jurisprudence, a whole series of them arrived back in Hungary in the early days of the reign of King Matthias Corvinus (from 1458) to obtain the highest posts in both the state and Church administration. It is therefore true to say that humanist ideas and culture began to take root in Hungary from 1450–51 onwards, and it proceeded triumphantly, without hindrance, for the next two decades until the 1472 plot against Matthias, which led to the deaths of both Vitéz and Janus.

⁶⁰ For more on the latter, see Pál Lukács, 'Várdai István ferrarai diák levelei, 1448–1449 [Letters of István Várdai as a student at Ferrara, 1448–1449]; *Történelmi Szemle*, 14 (1929), pp. 124–136; Endre Veress, *Olasz egyetemeken járt magyarországi tanulók anyakönyve és iratai* [Records and Writings of Hungarian Students Who Attended Italian Universities 1221–1864], *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*. Budapest: Academia Scientiarum Hungarica, 1941, pp. 156, 356–358 and 423–424; Sándor Eckhardt, 'Várdai István beszéde a francia király előtt [The speech given by István Várdai in the presence of the French king]; *Egyetemes Philológiai Közöny*, 62(1938), pp. 101–104; Sándor Csernus, 'Magyarország mint a Kereszténység védőbástyája [Hungary as the bastion of Christianity]', in: *La civiltà ungherese e il cristianesimo. A magyar művelődés és a kereszténység*, eds. István Monok, Judit Nyerges and József Jankovics, Budapest & Szeged: Nemzetközi Magyar Filológiai Társaság & Scriptorum Rt., 1998, pp. 580–596.

⁶¹ Eckhardt, op. cit., pp. 101–104.