

Envoys or Diplomats? Envoys of the Polish Medieval Monarchs in Their Marriage Politics*

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Słowa kluczowe: małżeństwo, królowa, dyplomaci, posłowie, gniew króla

Marriages of all people of high rank were a matter of utmost importance in centuries past. A well-chosen alliance strengthened by a proper marriage was supposed to give actual benefits to both parties involved. It is not surprising that such a delicate matter as a marriage policy was treated with care and was thought over from many perspectives; in addition, the envoys who could ultimately finalise the arrangement or enter into the marriage *per procura* on behalf of the ruler were chosen very cautiously. For it was their responsibility to effectively settle all the matters for the mission to be successful. At least this is how they should have been selected. However, did the rulers always choose their envoys well in such a delicate matter as their future marriage? Political conditions were significant in every relationship of this kind, but there was one matter which could not be dealt with only through arrangements — the way a future spouse looked. In the Middle Ages portraits were not yet sent and the ruler would find out how his future wife looked only after her arrival in the country, and what he saw was not always what he had expected to see. Meticulously built structures of political connections, strengthened by marriage, could be shattered by such a delicate matter as the beauty and good looks of the candidate for a wife. The monarch's anger would then fall on the envoys who were supposed to accomplish the mission, but who kept silent about the chosen woman's questionable looks. However, were they allowed — having seen her — to refuse, on behalf of the ruler, the marriage which had already been agreed upon and discussed many times in terms of political benefits? They certainly knew that by arranging marriage *per procura*, i.e. in the name of the ruler, they took upon themselves his disappointment and anger. How could they react in a given situation? How long did the anger of the monarch last and how was it manifested? Were the envoys, who were dispatched to bring over the future spouse, experienced in other

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diplomatic missions or was it their — sometimes not overly successful — debut? I will try to answer these questions, using two very similar examples.

After the death of Jadwiga of Poland, the situation of Władysław Jagiełło in the Kingdom of Poland changed significantly. Treated by some of the Polish lords only as the queen's husband, the ruler tried from the beginning of his reign to gather trusted people around him in order to create his own faction with their support and to oppose the so-called formation of the lords of Cracow, who pursued their own politics. When Jadwiga of Poland died in July 1399, the ruler — according to Długosz — planned to return to Lithuania due to the expiry of his rights to the throne.¹ However, he was stopped from taking this step; a secret meeting took place in July in that same year between the main representatives of the Polish lords — Jan of Tęczyn, Castellan of Cracow; Sędziwój of Szubin, Voivode of Kalisz; Jan of Tarnów, Voivode of Sandomierz; Jan Ligęza, Voivode of Łęczyca; Jakub of Koniecpol, Voivode of Sieradz; Mikołaj Kurowski, Bishop of Włocławek; and Klemens of Moskorzew, Chancellor at the Cistercian monastery in Koprzywnica, where the ruler was persuaded to stay.² Having returned to Cracow in the company of the abovementioned lords and a number of other representatives of the Polish nobility, Władysław Jagiełło was once again elected, but this time as a hereditary king. In order to strengthen these provision and oaths, it was agreed that Anna, Countess of a distant state, Cilli (Celje) — suggested already by Jadwiga of Poland, at least according to Długosz — was to become a candidate for the monarch's wife.³ It is difficult to state whether the chronicler's account on Jadwiga indicating her successor is true, but the fact is that marriage between the Kingdom of Poland and a small duchy was by no means necessary at that time. However, there was one circumstance in Anna's favour — she was the granddaughter of Casimir III of Poland, daughter of his daughter, Anna, from his marriage to Hedwig of Sagan. This meant an additional connection between Władysław Jagiełło and the blood of the Piast dynasty for the Polish lords. Anna, born towards the end of 1380 or at the beginning of 1381, was raised at the court of her uncle Herman, Count of Celje, from 1394. Her mother, after the death of her husband, William of Celje, was once again married, to Ulrich, Duke of Teck, and she did not take her daughter with her.⁴

After the ruler's return to Cracow in July 1400, the talks commenced on his future marriage and the envoys — who were going to go to Celje — were appointed in order to finalise the union with the King of Poland. Interestingly, there were no people among the envoys who came from the first line of the Polish lords — Jagiełło evidently had influence on the appointments of his deputation, since we meet only

¹ DLUGOSSIUS 1985, pp. 231–235; PIEKOSIŃSKI 1897, pp. 287–289; SILNICKI 1913, pp. 12–14; KRZYŻANIAKOWA, OCHMAŃSKI 1990, pp. 175–176; KURTYKA 1997, pp. 232–233; SPERKA 2001, pp. 71–72.

² KURTYKA 1997, p. 232; SPERKA 2001, p. 72.

³ DLUGOSSIUS 1985, p. 236.

⁴ WDOWISZEWSKI 2005, p. 66.

new people who started their careers only after his coronation as the king of Poland. This also shows that after the arrangements made with the Polish lords in Koprzywnica, the ruler began to feel definitely stronger because he reached his goal, i.e. independence in making crucial decisions. The deputation consisted of Iwan of Obichów and Hinczka of Roszkowice — people most certainly associated with the ruler — and the third deputy was Jan Naszan of Ostrowiec, co-advocate of the Tęczyńskis, which can indicate — as suggested by Janusz Kurtyka — that some control over this deputation was kept by the lords of Cracow.⁵

Who were the people appointed by the king to this important mission? Iwan (Jan) Goły of Obichów and Karnin came from the middle-ranking nobility represented by the coat of arms of Wieniawa. Not much is known about the beginnings of his career, but in the later years he was quite strongly associated with Piotr and Jan Szafraniec, so it is possible that his career was associated with their father, deceased in 1398, and later only with the brothers. From December 1398 he acted as a governor of Cracow and he was still in office when he was appointed deputy to Celje. Thus he was neither a leading politician nor an official, nor a figure from the most eminent Polish families of that time. He probably also never took part in any deputations. Associations with Szafraniec brothers — who would soon become the leaders of the royal faction — can explain how Iwan became a member of the deputation.⁶ Similar situation concerns Hinczka of Roszkowice, although we can tell a lot more in his case. He was from Silesia, from the area of Namysłów, where his family's Roszkowice were situated. Like many other Silesians, he came to the Wieluń Land together with the Duke of Opole, Władysław, and in 1385 he purchased the village of Szyszków. However, he became quickly associated with the nobleman Spytek of Melsztyn, and most likely — due to the latter's support — he became an envoy to Lithuania perhaps as early as 1385, but definitely also in January 1386 in order to negotiate the Polish crown with Jagiełło. It is also not surprising that after the coronation of the Lithuanian ruler as the king of Poland Hinczka quickly ended up in his closest circle; Spytek's sympathy and support only helped him in this endeavour. Probably owing to this connection, he was entrusted by the king with one of the most important — although not overly prestigious — offices of treasurer in June 1393. Entrusting the treasury to a Silesian who was not long ago associated with the Duke of Opole in the times when the wars with Władysław of Opole were still going on, shows great trust that the monarch had in Roszkowski. The treasury under Hinczka was efficiently managed and he was increasingly associated with the king. It is not surprising that the monarch entrusted him the incredibly important and delicate mission, knowing that he would be successful.⁷ The third person among the envoys to

⁵ DLUGOSSIUS 1985, p. 237; SIKORA 1991, pp. 95–97, see: *ibidem* on the erroneous offices of the envoys in Długosz; CZWOJDRAK 2002, p. 44; KURTYKA 1997, p. 240.

⁶ JAŚKIEWICZ 1963, p. 192, however, the profile has many mistakes, see also: SPERKA 2001, in accordance to the annex; *Urzędnicy małopolscy* 1990, no. 1436.

⁷ CZWOJDRAK 2002, pp. 35–44; SPERKA 2011, pp. 14–15; *Urzędnicy* 1992, no. 727.

Celje was Jan Naszan of Ostrowiec. Contrary to the opinion of Franciszek Sikora, who referred to him as one of the most prominent knights of the kingdom at that time, he did not stand out in any way.⁸ He did not hold any office, he did not take part in any missions, nor did he make a name for himself at war. His presence in the deputation was probably due to the influence of the Tęczyńskis, to whom he was related.⁹ However, it is clear that among the three men only Hinczka had participated earlier in some deputations; for the others it was a novelty. Should people with so little experience and so unfamiliar with the world have been sent on such a delicate mission?

At the turn of August 1400 the deputation left for Celje, where the preliminary agreement on the marriage was concluded without any major issues.¹⁰ The envoys returned in October or even at the end of September, since Jan Naszan and Iwan were attested on the document of Jan Tęczyński from 23 October, while Hinczka was in Cracow already on 2 October.¹¹ Together with the Polish envoys, the envoys of Herman, Anna's uncle, also came to sign the relevant documents. This took place during a meeting with Jagiełło in November in Biecz.¹² The envoys from Celje returned home and both parties started preparations for the wedding. However, Anna arrived in Poland only on 16 July 1401 and only then a major problem emerged which was probably carefully hidden by both the Polish deputies and the Celjan party. It turned out that the Celjan duchess was far from beautiful, a fact Jagiełło immediately pointed out to his envoys, asking that if they had seen a young lady of dubious looks, then why the negotiations had been undertaken.¹³ The question is whether the envoys could make such a decision without the consent of the ruler (and of the Polish lords). They could certainly have informed him about the lack of the young lady's beauty after their return to the country and the agreements in Biecz. Perhaps the reason for concealing this information was due to the fear of the monarch's wrath, or perhaps the pressure was applied by the Celjan party, very keen on the marriage, or perhaps the envoys did not assume that this factor was decisive in the arrangements already made. It turned out that the looks of the future spouse were an extremely important matter for the Polish king. Naturally, he did not cancel all the agreements, but he expressed his disapproval in a very acute way for the envoys, his future spouse as well as the Celjan deputies. The angry ruler postponed the date of the nuptials under the pretence that the future queen of Poland had to study Polish, and the unfortunate envoys were removed from his circle for a few years. Iwan had to give up the office

⁸ SIKORA 1991, p. 96.

⁹ KURTYKA 1997, pp. 79–80, 240.

¹⁰ SIKORA 1991, pp. 95–96.

¹¹ ZDM 1969, no. 1150; SP 1885, no. 10676.

¹² DLUGOSSIUS 1985, pp. 237–238; SIKORA 1991, pp. 95–96, did not mention Hinczka in the negotiations in Biecz even though he certainly took part in them for he was in Biecz at that time with the king and, furthermore, he was one of the envoys going to Celje; therefore, it is difficult to leave him out from the main talks with the deputies of Celje, CZWOJDRAK 2002, p. 44.

¹³ DLUGOSSIUS 1985, pp. 243–244.

of the governor and he waited for the next office for a decade; Hinczka perhaps kept his office of the treasurer (but most likely he relinquished it) and stopped coming on the king's tours, remaining in Cracow where the king stayed very rarely. Similarly, Jan Naszan stopped appearing in the monarch's circle, which clearly indicates that Anna's beauty was of very poor quality, the king's wrath was relentless and his demands regarding his wife's appearance were very high. The envoys did in fact do what was required of them, but they turned out to be bad diplomats who did not manage to make their own decision. The ruler's wrath lasted for a few years and the unfortunate envoys started to show up in the royal circles only after the birth, in 1408, of Anna and Jagiełło's daughter — Hedwig. Długosz writes that many lords tried to assuage the ruler's anger throughout the years, but it seems that only the birth of the first child softened the king's attitude towards the three unfortunate men. It lasted, however, for almost eight years.¹⁴

The efforts of the younger son of Jagiełło, Casimir IV Jagiellon, to obtain the hand of Elizabeth of Austria, looked slightly different. The future Queen of Poland was born in 1436 as the daughter of Albert II of Germany, King of Bohemia and Hungary, who died in 1439. After the death of her father, Elizabeth was successively looked after for many years first by her nanny, Helena Kottanerin, in Visegrád, then from 1440 by the King of Germany, Frederick III, and then finally from 1452 by their relative, Ulrich II, Count of Celje, who placed her at his court in Vienna.¹⁵ The idea of marrying Elizabeth to the King of Poland was not new as it first came up in 1436, when such a proposal was presented to Sigismund of Luxembourg (Elizabeth was his granddaughter) by two Polish envoys — Mikołaj Powąła, Chamberlain of Sandomierz, and Paweł of Sienna. At that time Sigismund refused. However, Elizabeth's father, Albert, returned to the matter during the 1439 talks in Wrocław, where he was to promise his daughter together with Bohemia as a dowry to Casimir, but then he quickly withdrew his promise. The issue was once again addressed in 1442, when during the peace talks in Pożonie between Władysław III of Poland, Casimir's elder brother and the King of Hungary, and the widow of Albert II, the initial engagement conditions between the pair were established. However, Elizabeth had already been engaged, since 1440, to Frederick, Duke of Saxony, which suspended all further talks on the matter with the Jagiellons. The fact of her engagement to Frederick did not prevent her guardian and relative, King Frederick III of Germany, from trying to marry Elizabeth off — after her mother's death — to Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, or Louis de Valois. Yet when Elizabeth came under the care of the Count of Celje, he started to implement his plan against the activities of Frederick III

¹⁴ DLUGOSSIUS 1985, pp. 243–244, 247; *Urzędnicy małopolscy* 1990, no. 1436; *Urzędnicy wielkopolscy* 1985, no. 549; *Urzędnicy województwa ruskiego* 1987, no. 1157; *Urzędnicy łęczyccy, sieradzcy i wieluńscy* 1985, no. 18 (part B); WADOWISZEWSKI 2005, p. 81; CZWOJDRAK 2002, pp. 45–46.

¹⁵ WADOWISZEWSKI 2005, pp. 93–94; KOTTANEROVA 2008.

and thus rejecting his marriage concepts. Meanwhile, the Polish party still remembered the old marriage plans for Casimir Jagiellon and Elizabeth. The king had already been reigning for a few years, but he had not made efforts to find a suitable wife. The counts of Cejle — being in opposition to Frederick III — were also looking favourably towards Poland. At the same time, Elizabeth's brother, known as Ladislaus the Posthumous, was in the castle of the German Emperor and Frederick reigned in his estates on his behalf. Ladislaus tried to win back the throne of Vienna and was supported i.e. by Ulrich of Cejle, who started a confederation against the Emperor. They were successful at freeing Ladislaus and on his behalf — since he was still under age — Ulrich began to rule in Vienna.¹⁶ Wanting to build a stronger coalition against the Emperor, he returned to the previous notion of marrying Elizabeth off to the Polish side, who also considered these efforts favourable. As a result, an official mission — with Dzierśław of Rytwiany, Prefect of Sandomierz, and Mikołaj Szarlejski, Voivode of Brześć — left Poland and went to Vienna in September 1452.¹⁷ The envoys returned in November and found the king in Grodno, where they arrived with good news — consent to his marriage to Elizabeth. The envoys were accompanied by deputies from Ulrich — Zygmunt Fritzesdorfer and Czech Kaplerz. Dzierśław of Rytwiany was sent with them on their way back in order to pass information about the monarch's decision and settle the exact date for the wedding. The final decision, however, was made only in August 1453 at the meeting in Wrocław, where the formal deputations from both parties signed the terms of marriage, arranged the dowry (100,000 florins), set the date of Elizabeth's arrival for February 1454, and announced this publicly.¹⁸ Dzierśław of Rytwiany, the main deputy in this case, was also taking part in this meeting. However, he was not present among the officials waiting for the future queen in February in Cieszyn in order to escort her to the capital. The queen did not, however, arrive in Cracow within the specified time as her retinue was stopped for a few days in Skawina without providing any official reason. Długosz writes that the deputies who accompanied Elizabeth were concerned about the engagement being broken off and their worries were probably right; there are many indications that the reason was once again the problem of the future queen's looks.¹⁹ Analyses of Elizabeth of Austria's remains, conducted in the 1970s, show that just like Anna of Cejle she was not a pretty woman. She had scoliosis, a small hump, receding forehead, protruding upper jaw and deep-set eyes.²⁰ The three-day delay was most certainly caused by the news reaching Casimir about the limited beauty of the young lady. Apparently, Dzierśław of Rytwiany had previously hidden this fact or had treated the matter of the future queen's appearance very briefly, and only when

¹⁶ ROMBEK 2012, pp. 42–43; GARBACIK 1946–1948, p. 250; SKOCZEK 1932, pp. 62–64.

¹⁷ DLUGOSSIUS 2003, p. 145.

¹⁸ DLUGOSSIUS 2003, p. 178; WDOWISZEWSKI 2005, pp. 94–95.

¹⁹ DLUGOSSIUS 2003, pp. 179–180.

²⁰ WIDACKI 1988, pp. 69–74.

Elizabeth was seen by more people on her way from Cieszyn to Cracow, did the king receive the news which was not pleasant. After all, according to what Długosz says about the behaviour of the deputies from the Celjan monarch, the news should have been passed the king by Rytwiański in the first place. Rytwiański was not a novice — he already had a few diplomatic missions behind him and the fact that he was well-prepared for the deputation is reflected also by the private correspondence — preserved later — of the Castellan of Rozprza with Ulrich of Celje, to whom he wrote with respect to the formalities but as an equal, inviting the ruler of Celje to visit him and guaranteeing him hospitality equal to that offered to him in Vienna.²¹

Fortunately, in this case the three-day delay was enough to convince the monarch and the wedding took place.²² Dzierśław of Rytwiany by no means suffered the consequences, as the following year he was even appointed the Voivode of Sieradz.²³ The king's wrath was therefore sudden but short-lasting in contrast to Władysław Jagiełło, whose rage against his deputies lasted around eight years.

The examples of these two marriages have something in common — the lack of beauty of the candidates which was either concealed or not exposed enough by the deputies. It seems that regardless of political arrangements, the matter was very important for Polish rulers and the deputies should have paid attention to it. Describing the visit of the two deputies from Ulrich in connection with the wedding of Elizabeth and Casimir, Długosz writes that the deputies arrived: “in order to gain a complete certainty, honestly from the king's mouth, that he is ready to enter this kinship of his own free will, or under the pressure from the advisors, in order to observe his habits and personality, and additionally, his looks and figure.”²⁴ And this is how the deputies who considered marriage should have acted, to ask about everything, but also to explore and, first and foremost, to observe the most important matters, for they were the eyes of the future spouse. The deputies should therefore have paid attention also to this aspect, but did they have any right, however, to make a decision about breaking the agreement after seeing the future queen? In the case of Anna of Celje the marriage had no political or military significance, apart from strengthening the rights of Władysław Jagiełło to the throne of Poland through his relationship with the granddaughter of Casimir III the Great. However, it was not necessary and the blood of the last of the Piasts was also diluted by the fact that Anna's mother came from a bigamous relationship between Casimir and Hedwig of Sagan. Had the envoys withdrawn from concluding the marriage arrangements, the scandal would not have been that great and the king's wrath would certainly have been smaller. In the case of the second marriage, significant political conditions were involved and breaking these arrangements could have had far more serious

²¹ CE 1876, no. 119.

²² DLUGOSSIUS 2003, p. 179; WDOWISZEWSKI 2005, p. 96.

²³ *Urzędnicy łączycy*, no. 290 (part B).

²⁴ DŁUGOSZ 2009, p. 162 (DLUGOSSIUS 2003, p. 145).

consequences. Perhaps if the envoys of the first deputation had been more diplomatically experienced, they would have taken the decision to reveal the lack of beauty of the candidate for the Polish queen. The rank and file of the deputation additionally indicates a very low position of the mission. In contrast, envoys sent to Ulrich were experienced diplomats aware of the gravity of the deputation and the agreements made, as well as the consequences of breaking them. This was probably understood also by Casimir Jagiellon and thus we have no signs of the envoys having been punished, in contrast to the three miserable men from 1400. It is clear that being a deputy was not always easy, that the consequences of missions were long-lasting, and the missions did not always end well...

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Envoys or Diplomats? Envoys of the Polish Medieval Monarchs in Their Marriage Politics

Marriages of persons of high rank, especially in the past, were a matter of utmost importance. A well-selected alliance strengthened by a right marriage should be beneficial to both sides. It is, therefore, no wonder that the delicate matter of marriage policy was approached with due care and analysed from many sides, and the envoys who would eventually finalise a pact or enter into proxy marriage were very carefully selected. They were responsible for resolving all issues and for the success of the entire mission. However, did rulers always choose their envoys well in a matter as delicate as their future marriage? Political determinants were important in every relationship of this kind, but there was one issue which could not be resolved by negotiations alone — the image of the future spouse. The intricate structure of political ties strengthened by a marriage could be broken by the delicate matter of the looks of the bride. The monarch's anger would turn against the envoys who had been entrusted with a mission, but who had made no mention of the doubtful beauty of the ruler's future spouse. Yet did they have the right to refuse marriage — which had been decided upon and discussed many times with regard to political benefits — on behalf of their ruler after seeing her? After all, when entering into proxy marriage on behalf of the ruler they knew they were taking upon themselves his disappointment and anger. How could they behave in such a situation? How long did the monarch's anger last and how was it manifested? Were the envoys sent to bring the future spouse tested in other diplomatic missions or was it their — sometimes not very successful — debut? I will try to answer these questions, using as my examples the marriage of Władysław Jagiełło to Anne of Celje and Casimir Jagiellon's marriage to Elizabeth of Austria.