

Relations of King Władysław Jagiełło of Poland with the Latin Kingdom of Cyprus in the Early 1430s

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Abstract

The article is devoted to a relatively unknown Polish-Cypriot episode in the late medieval period, which was unusual for the realities of 15th century Europe. In 1426, Cyprus was conquered by the Egyptian-Syrian Mamluk Sultanate, and the island's ruler himself, Janus of Lusignan, was taken captive by the Muslims. After regaining his freedom, the Cypriot king attempted to acquire aid in the Christian world to throw off Muslim supremacy. One such attempt was the expedition of a Cypriot envoy to Poland in 1432. The proposal made by the Cypriots on that occasion was for the marriage of the heir to the island's throne with Hedwig, the daughter of Poland's King Władysław Jagiełło, and also included a request for a loan in exchange for the Polish side's almost practical assumption of control over Cyprus.

Keywords: Poland, Cyprus, Władysław Jagiełło, Hedwig daughter of Władysław Jagiełło, Mamluks

Poland's contacts with the Latin Kingdom of Cyprus were relatively exotic for the realities of fifteenth-century Europe, particularly if viewed through the lens of Polish participation in the Crusade movement, both the classical one (until 1291) and in the context of later expeditions.¹ At the center of Poland's contacts with Cyprus at the time was the matter of the Cypriot crown for Hedwig, daughter of Polish King Władysław Jagiełło (1386–1434),

¹ To learn about the participation of Poles in the Crusades, cf., e.g.: K. Olejnik, *Wyprawy krzyżowe w średniowiecznych źródłach polskich*, in *Rycerstwo Europy środkowo-wschodniej wobec idei krucjat*, W. Peltz, J. Dudek, Eds. Zielona Góra 2002, pp. 7–15; in pilgrimages, cf., e.g., K. Ratajczak, *The Pilgrimages of the Piast Dynasty in the Middle Ages*, *Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej*, 10 (2015), pp. 227–250. The Crusades found little resonance in Central and Eastern European countries. Cf. W. Iwańczak, *Udział Czechów w krucjatach do Ziemi Świętej*, in *Peregrinationes. Pielgrzymki w kulturze dawnej Europy*, J. Łojek, Ed. Warszawa 1995, pp. 118–119. The topic of Polish pilgrimages to the Holy Land in a historical context has been covered in the literature, among others, by M. Bersohn, *Kilka słów o polskich podróżnikach do Ziemi Świętej i ich dziełach*, *Biblioteka Warszawska*, 4 (1868), pp. 1–12; J. Bystron, *Polacy w Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egipcie 1147–1914*, Kraków 1930; S. A. Korwin, *Stosunki Polski z Ziemią Świętą*, Warszawa 1958. A major difficulty in assessing the overall scale of the Polish pilgrimage-making to Palestine is the quantity and quality of archival material, especially concerning the Middle Ages, where the source message is laconic and fragmented, cf. W. Szyborski, *Źródła do dziejów ruchu pielgrzymkowego – próba klasyfikacji*, *Peregrinus Cracoviensis*, 17 (2006), p. 33.

and the circumstances of her eligibility to it. A number of Cypriot dispatches arrived from King Janus of Lusignan (1398–1432) to Poland for the hand of the king in March 1432. Janus was seeking a candidate for a wife for his son John (1432–1458), as well as sending envoys for financial and military assistance. The account of this expedition is primarily known thanks to the Polish chronicler Jan Długosz². One Cypriot chronicle mentions the event, but relatively vaguely. It refers to the greatest historian of medieval Cyprus, Leontios Machairas,³ the secretary of one of the Frankish knights around the island's rulers, who worked in the first decades of the 15th century and died after 1432, thus having witnessed the most important political events of the period, mentions Hedwig inaccurately, recognizing her as the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor and putting her death date at 1433.⁴

The Latin Cyprus has been written about extensively already. This period, also referred to in historiography as Frankish, began with the occupation of the island, then an independent Byzantine province (but actually not recognizing the supremacy of Constantinople), in May 1191 by the crusaders of King Richard the Lionheart of England, following an expedition to the Holy Land, later called the Third Crusade (1189–1192).⁵ In 1192, Richard the Lionheart sold Cyprus to Guy of Lusignan, a former king of Jerusalem, who, as *Cipri Dominus* (but not king) and a fief of the ruler of England, founded a dynasty that ruled the island until 1474, when James III, the last heir to the Cypriot throne, died having reigned for less than a year.⁶

² The circumstances of the Cypriot envoy who came with a proposal to acquire the hand of Władysław Jagiełło's daughter were described by Jan Długosz, cf. *Joannis Dlugossii Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, Lib. 11-12, 1431–1444, consilium edited C. Baczkowski et al., *textum recensuit Cz. Pirożyńska*, moderatore G. Wyrozumski, comment. confecit L. Korczak, Varsaviae 2001, pp. 62–63. This issue was revisited by subsequent historians, cf. Matthias de Mechovia, *Chronica Polonorum*, Cracoviae 1521, liber IV, c. LII, p. 299; Martin Cromer, *Polonia: siue de origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX*, Cologne 1586, pp. 306–307; Maciej Strykowski, *Kronika Macieja Strykowskiego niegdyś w Królewcu drukowana*, Warszawa 1766, chapter 16, p. 543.

³ Machairas' chronicle covers the period from St. Helen's legendary visit to Cyprus in 309 to 1458, but the most detailed description is for the period 1359–1432, where there is a wealth of information.

⁴ In the Cypriot source material, the fact that a mission was sent to the court of King Władysław Jagiełło is not recorded anywhere else except in Machairas (cf. Leontios Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus Entitled "Chronicle"*, ed. and trans. R. M. Dawkins, Oxford 1932, 4, § 705). Sir George Hill (1867–1948) wrote about this expedition, and cited primarily Polish sources (in addition to Machairas) in his monumental work (*A History of Cyprus*, 2, Cambridge 1948, p. 494). Perhaps Hill's familiarity with Polish sources was due to the fact that another Briton, colonial army officer Sir Henry Luke (1884–1969), who had Polish roots (his mother was Polish), was interested in our native history. On the one hand, Luke was fascinated by the history of Poland, but when preparing two important chapters on Latin Cyprus for Kenneth Setton for his famous collection, *A History of the Crusades*, he did not include a mention of the title problem there, cf. H. Luke, *The Kingdom of Cyprus, 1291–1369*, in *A History of the Crusades*, general editor K.M. Setton, 3: *The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*, H.W. Hazard, Madison, Ed. 1975, pp. 340–360; idem, *The Kingdom of Cyprus, 1369–1489*, in *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 3. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*, pp. 362–395.

⁵ G. Hill, *A History*, 1, pp. 318–320.

⁶ It should be remembered that Cyprus almost became a province of the Templars. In fact, it was one for less than a year (1191–1192). Initially, the King of England had just sold the island to the order, however, as the Templars failed to subjugate it and impose their sovereignty on the Greek population,

During this time, the kings of Cyprus also reigned in the Kingdom of Jerusalem (only titularly after 1291) and set the tone for Latin politics in the eastern Mediterranean, spearheading an anti-Turkish naval league and leading – in this case, we are talking about Peter I of Lusignan (1358/59–1369) – an expedition, also known as a crusade, against Egyptian (Mamluk) Alexandria.⁷ The island's economic prosperity, linked to the takeover after the collapse of the Frankish states in Syria and Palestine, a broker of trade with the Muslims, contributed to the strengthening of Cyprus' position.⁸ Since the 1370s, the period of the kingdom's decline began. First, the Genoese won a devastating war by imposing huge contributions and seizing the island's richest city and port, Famagusta, and later in 1426, as a result of King Janus' cavalier policies, the island was invaded by the Mamluks, who imposed their sovereignty on it.⁹ Cyprus, politically and economically dependent from the Mamluks and Genoans, was subsequently dominated by the Venetians who, in 1489, took control of the island completely.¹⁰

The expedition of King Janus' envoy to the court of Władysław Jagiełło followed the defeat inflicted on him by the Mamluks in 1426, and was at the same time one of several that the ruler of Cyprus sent to European monarchs for military support, as well as financial support, in order to free himself from under the sovereignty of Egypt.¹¹

Richard the Lionheart accepted its return from them and resold it to Guy de Lusignan, cf. M. Balard, *Łaciński Wschód XI-XV wiek*, trans. W. Ceran, Kraków 2010, p. 71.

⁷ The Alexandrian expedition was part of the crusading policy of the rulers of Cyprus, especially Peter I of Lusignan. Cf., e.g., A.S., Atiya, *The Crusade in the Middle Ages*, London 1938, pp. 345–378; N. Housley, Cyprus and the Crusades, 1291–1571, in *Cyprus and the Crusades*. Papers given at the International Conference Cyprus and the Crusades, Nicosia, 6–9 September, 1994, N. Coureas, J. Riley-Smith, Nicosia 1995, pp. 187–206; P.W. Edbury, The Crusading policy of King Peter I of Cyprus, 1359–1369, in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of Crusades*, P.M. Holt, Ed. Warminster 1977, pp. 90–105; S.V. Bliznyuk, A Crusader of the Later Middle Ages: King of Cyprus Peter I Lusignan, in *The Crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the frontiers of medieval Latin Christianity*, Z. Hunyadi, J. Laszlovszky, Eds. Budapest 2001, pp. 51–57; M. Dąbrowska, Peter of Cyprus and Casimir the Great in Cracow, *Byzantiaka*, 14 (1994), pp. 257–267; Ł. Burkiewicz, Podróż króla Cypru Piotra I z Lusignan po Europie w latach 1362–1365 i jego plany krucjatowe, *Studia Historyczne*, 50 (2007), pp. 3–29; and a relatively new review by idem, A Crusading Policy of the Rulers of the Kingdom of Cyprus after the Fall of Acre (1291), in *Holy War in Late Medieval and Early Modern East-Central Europe*, J. Smolucha, J. Jefferson, A. Wadas, Eds. Kraków 2017, pp. 185–199.

⁸ G. Hill, *A History*, 2, p. 207; N. Coureas, Western Merchants and the Ports of Cyprus up to 1291, in *Cyprus and the Sea*, V. Karageorghis, D. Michaelides, Eds. Nicosia 1995, pp. 255–262.

⁹ Cf. Ł. Burkiewicz, Polityka egipskiego sultanatu Mameluków wobec łacińskiego Królestwa Cypru w XV wieku, *Studia Bliskowschodnie*, 5/1 (2011), pp. 97–109.

¹⁰ G. Hill, *A History*, 3, pp. 710–711; B. Arbel, The Reign of Caterina Corner (1473–1489) as a Family Affair, *Studi Veneziani*, 26 (1993), pp. 67–85.

¹¹ King Janus not only witnessed the defeat of his own troops in a clash with the Mamluks, but he also experienced personal humiliation. After he was taken prisoner after the Battle of Chirokitia (July 7, 1426), he was taken to Egypt and publicly humiliated in August 1426 in Cairo in front of Sultan Barsbāy. Then King Janus walked at the head of the procession of captives. He was shaven, marching barefoot, with his feet in chains, holding the royal banner upturned as a sign of defeat and dragging it along the ground. In the course of this procession, he mounted a donkey and rode it around bareback. At the same time, every now and then he was forced to stop and kiss the ground. Less than eight

The archived material makes it possible to more or less reconstruct the fate of these ministries. One of the first delegations to set out for help on behalf of the King of Cyprus was headed by the Bishop of Famagusta, who travelled to Genoa with a request for military assistance. The Genoese, who controlled the Cypriot city of Famagusta, were not going to risk conflict with the Mamluks and sent only a small detachment to perform honorary service around King Janus. In 1429, the Venetians did not help Janus either. Due to their own financial problems, they refused the Cypriot envoys a financial loan. The same deputies then asked for help at other courts in Italy and visited the Pope Nicholas V and the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos. Janus also wanted to marry his eldest daughter Anna to the eldest son of the Duke of Savoy, Amadeus VIII, also Amadeus. The duke soon died and was succeeded by his brother Louis, Count of Geneva. The marriage took place after the death of King Janus and tied the Savoy court to Cyprus for the next few years.¹²

However, the most exotic, from the point of view of distance and the scant contacts linking the two countries, was the diplomatic mission King Janus sent to the Kingdom of Poland.

It was mentioned by Leontios Machairas in his chronicle:

Ὁ ἔντιμος καβαλλάρης ὁ σὶρ Μπατὴν τε Νόρες ὁ μαρίτζας τῆς Κύπρου εὐρίσκειτον εἰς τὴν Πόλιν διὰ νὰ φέρῃ γραφὴν διὰ τὸν πρίντζην τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ρὲ Τζένιου· καὶ ἐπῆγεν εἰς τὴν Κωνσταντινόπολιν, καὶ ἦῤυεν τὴν νύμφην ὅπου ᾿πῆγεν διὰ νὰ φέρῃ ν' ἄρμαστῆ ὁ ρὲ Τζουάνης· ἐπέθανεν ἡ κόρη τοῦ βασιλέως, αὐλγ' ἀπέσωσεν εἰς τὴν Κύπρον ὁ ἄνωθεν μισερ Μπατής, καὶ ἐνηφίσαν τον με τοὺς ἄλλους μ' συμβουλατόρους.¹³

This brief entry in the Machairas Chronicle conveys the information that Marshal Baldwin of Norès arrived in Constantinople on a mission to arrange the marriage of King Janus' son to the emperor's daughter, who died sometime later, in 1433. This is the only record relating in Greek and Latin source material on the history of Cyprus. It undoubtedly refers to an expedition to Poland, not to Constantinople – Emperor John VIII, reigning in Byzantium at the time, had no children (from any of his three marriages). Machairas, despite the fact that this period in the history of Cyprus (1359–1432) was the one best described by him, must have made an error in recording the purpose of the mission as well as the date of the death of John of Lusignan's prospective wife. Hedwig died in 1431, not 1433, and before the arrival of the mission, not after its departure.

A more precise and comprehensive description of the Cypriot mission to the court of the Polish king can be recounted thanks to the chronicle of Jan Długosz.¹⁴

months later, the sultan made peace with the ruler of Cyprus and returned his freedom. However, the price for this act of clemency was enormous, amounting to 200,000 ducats. In addition, the Kingdom of Cyprus was levied an annual tribute of 5,000 ducats and forced to recognize the supremacy of the Sultan, who officially became Viceroy of Cyprus. Furthermore, Cyprus was obliged to supply Egypt with wheat and barley on a regular basis, cf. G. Hill, *A History*, 2, pp. 486, 490.

¹² For a description of the diplomatic efforts made by King Janus after leaving Egyptian captivity, cf. Hill's work. G. Hill, *A History*, 2, pp. 492–494.

¹³ L. Machairas, *Chronicle*, 4, § 705.

¹⁴ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, pp. 62–63.

In March 1432, the embassy of the King of Cyprus, Janus of Lusignan, who was staying in Wiślica at that time, consisting of over 200 people, faced King Władysław Jagiełło.¹⁵ The delegation was led by the titular marshal of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and a participant in the battle of Chirokitia, Baldwin of Norès¹⁶, and two of his sons.

Stante Wladislao Rege in Wislicia, venit ad suam serenitatem ambasiata notabilis Iani, Hierusalem, Cypri et Armeniae Regis, Baldvinus de Noris Regni Cypri marsalculus, miles insignis, habens in comitiva sua ducentos equites. Inter quos erant duo filii sui, adolescentes pulcerrimi (...)¹⁷

One of the envoys was Peter of Bnin, a knight of Polish descent who settled in Cyprus during his journey through the Levant, probably during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Thanks to his skills and, according to Jan Długosz, his wit, he gained great favor from King Janus.¹⁸

(...) et Petrus de Bnino Polonus natione, miles, qui maiori animo, quam fortune suae conveniebat usurus, in Cyprum perveniens et incolatum suum illic figens, celebris et favore regio propter alcius ingenium et factivitatem habebatur.¹⁹

Interestingly, the power of attorney issued by King Janus stated that the embassy was to be headed by a certain Marcellus, *sacrae theologiae doctor dominus magister Marcellus, confessor et secrearius noster*,²⁰ a doctor of theology, royal confessor and secretary.²¹ However, Jan Długosz does not mention him among the Cypriot delegation who arrived in Wiślica. Perhaps Marcellus did not reach Poland, or perhaps he did not stand out from other delegates, although this is unlikely.

The Cypriot envoys were received with the highest honours. They gave gifts on behalf of their ruler to King Władysław, Queen Sophia and other high royal dignitaries.

¹⁵ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 62. Długosz reports that the Cypriot embassy came to Jagiełło on behalf of King John of Lusignan. In fact, John became the ruler of Cyprus only in the second half of 1432. Accordingly, the delegation acted as the embassy of Janus of Lusignan, John's father. In turn, the Polish chronicler could have mentioned John's name as the commissioner of the legation due to the fact that the envoys sought the hand of the daughter of the Polish king for him, although they acted on behalf of his father Janus.

¹⁶ Martin Cromer, *Polonia*, p. 306; Maciej Strykowski, *Kronika*, p. 543; Mathiae de Mechovia, *Chronica Polonorum*, p. CCXCIX; G. Hill, *A History*, 2, p. 494. According to George Hill, Baldwin of Norès, writing from Rome to Amadeus of Savoy on January 13, 1433, mentioned that he had been to Poland a year earlier.

¹⁷ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 62.

¹⁸ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 62; Mathiae de Mechovia, *Chronica Polonorum*, p. CCXCIX; Maciej Strykowski, *Kronika*, p. 543; Martin Cromer, *Polonia*, pp. 306–307; Ł. Gołębiwski, *Panowanie Władysława Jagielly*, Warszawa 1846, p. 380.

¹⁹ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 62.

²⁰ *Codex Epistolaris Saeculi Decimi Quinti*, 1: 1384–1492, ex antiquis libris formularum, corpore Naruszeviciano, autographis archivisticque plurimis collectus opera Augusti Sokołowski, Josephi Szujski. Pars 1, Ab anno 1384 ad annum 1444, in: *Monumenta Medii Aevi Historica res Gestas Poloniae Illustrantia*, 2, Cracoviae 1876, letter 76, p. 72.

²¹ L. Machairas, *Chronicle*, 4, § 705; G. Hill, *A History*, 2, p. 494.

Ipse Baldvinus marsalcus, praesentatis Wladislao regi, Sophiae reginae, prelati, principibus et optimatibus suis nomine Iani regis Cypri satis notabilibus muneribus, staminibus videlicet subtilibus varii coloris de czamletho, lignum aloes, aromata preciosa et virgulas quasdam odoriferas fumum suavem spirantes (...) ²²

The head of the delegation, Baldwin of Norès, described the situation faced by the Kingdom of Cyprus after the Mamluk invasion of the island in 1426.²³ It was precisely this tragic situation of the Lusignan state, which was also presented by Długosz, that caused the Cypriots to ask the Polish king for a loan of 200,000 florins. In return, the ruler of Cyprus offered the entire Kingdom of Cyprus as a pledge, and Jagiełło was to have a decisive say in matters concerning the island for the duration of the loan repayment and to receive $\frac{2}{3}$ of the income earned in the Kingdom of Cyprus: *Regnum universum Cypri, ita videlicet, ut Wladislaus rex duas in illo haberet voces et duas omnium introituum porciones, tertia ipsi Iano regi Cypri.*²⁴ In order to cement the agreement, King Janus asked for the hand of Jagiełło's daughter, Jadwiga, for his only son, John.²⁵

The aforementioned Hedwig was the only child of Władysław Jagiełło and his second wife Anna of Cilli (1380/1381–1416), granddaughter of Casimir the Great.²⁶ In the absence of a male heir, at the convention in Jedlnia in 1413, she was officially proclaimed the heir to the Polish throne.²⁷ In this way, the young princess became a strong argument in Jagiełło's hands in political games, as her husband would become the king of Poland. Initially, King Władysław's plans were aimed at bringing about a Polish-Pomeranian-Scandinavian alliance, and the way to this alliance was supposed to be Hedwig's marriage to Bogislav IX, Duke of Pomerania, cousin of the king of the Kalmar Union (Denmark, Norway, Sweden), Eric.²⁸ However, most probably due to the pressure of King Sigismund of Luxembourg, who felt threatened by this potential alliance, and Eric's refusal to fulfill the conditions of the alliance, Jagiełło withdrew from the agreement in the spring of 1420 and, seeking support against the Teutonic Knights, turned his attention to the Brandenburg March.²⁹

In April 1421, an agreement was concluded between Poland and Brandenburg. According to its provisions, Hedwig was to marry the eight-year-old Frederick Hohenzollern, the second son of Frederick I, Elector of Brandenburg. The young were engaged, and Frederick came to Poland in April of the following year to learn about the culture, customs and language of his new country. The marriage would take place when Frederick reached the age of fourteen, and five years after the wedding he had the right to assume the Polish-Lithuanian throne, even if Hedwig would be dead. The agreement would be invalid if a

²² *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 62.

²³ L. Machairas, *Chronicle*, 4, § 705.

²⁴ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 63.

²⁵ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 63; Martin Cromer, *Polonia*, pp. 306–307; Maciej Strykowski, *Kronika*, p. 543; Mathiae de Mechovia, *Chronica Polonorum*, liber IV, c. LII, p. CCXCIX; Ł. Gołębiewski, *Panowanie Władysława Jagiełły*, p. 381.

²⁶ H. Łowmiański, *Polityka Jagiellonów*, ed. K. Pietkiewicz, Poznań 1999, pp. 117, 130.

²⁷ A. Prochaska, *Król Władysław Jagiełło*, 2, Kraków 1908, p. 291.

²⁸ Z. Nowak, *Sprawa przyłączenia Pomorza Słupskiego do Polski w latach 1419-1425 (projekt małżeństwa księcia Bogusława IX z Jadwigą Jagiellonką)*, *Zapiski Historyczne*, 39/3 (1974), pp. 99–124.

²⁹ M. Duczmal, *Jagiellonowie: leksykon biograficzny*, Poznań 1996, p. 274.

male heir was born to Jagiełło, but at that time no one assumed that the now aged ruler would still be able to father a son.³⁰

However, the situation turned out differently. In February 1422, Jagiełło married Sophie of Halshany, who in 1424 gave birth to the ruler's firstborn son, Władysław. From that moment, the king's policy was subordinated to efforts to ensure his son's succession, which was not so obvious given the fact that Jagiełło had no hereditary rights to the Polish throne and sat on it only thanks to the succession rights of his previous wife, Hedwig.³¹

The birth of Władysław, followed by two more sons (1426, 1427), complicated Hedwig's situation. On the one hand, King Eric tried again to marry Bogislav IX with Hedwig and send Frederick home, on the other hand, the young princess stood in the middle of a fight between the supporters of her succession and the rights to the throne for Jagiełło's sons.³² Around 1430, Hedwig's health deteriorated, which led some to suspect that Queen Sophia had poisoned Jagiełło's daughter.³³ The princess died on December 8, 1431 at the age of twenty-three from an illness that lasted a year. Perhaps it was tuberculosis, which was a common cause of death at that time. The princess was buried in the Wawel Cathedral next to her mother.³⁴

Jagiełło's response to the request of the Cypriot envoys was predictable. Due to Hedwig's death, which happened a few months earlier, her marriage with the heir to the Cypriot throne could not take place. After conferring with his advisers on the proposal of the ruler of Cyprus, according to Długosz, Władysław Jagiełło replied that he would be happy to help King Janus, not only with the army, but also with financial means, if only his country was not adjacent to the Tatars, the most barbaric of all nations that the world has seen and with which it is forced to fight every day. The Polish ruler emphasized that it would be wrong to support a foreign kingdom without satisfying the needs of his own state.

(...) si regnum ipsius Tartaris forcioribus, quos habet orbis, barbaris, confrontatum non esset, quibus resistenciam continuam suorum militum opponere cogitur, et quotidiano Marte belli ferre fortunam. Rogabat sibi non succenseri, si petitum non prestaret mutuum; magnis sibi impensis pro sustinendo bello Tartarico opus esse; nec equum, nec iustum, regno proprio indigente, alterius necessitatem, suo deserto et periculis exposito, supplere.³⁵

Jagiełło also referred to the matter of the planned marriage, adding that if Hedwig were alive, he would certainly agree or her to marry such an eminent heir to a throne as John of Lusignan.

³⁰ H. Łowmiański, *Polityka Jagiellonów*, p. 130.

³¹ M. Duczmał, *Jagiellonowie*, p. 275.

³² For the latest studies, cf., among others, W. Zawitkowska, *Walka polityczno-prawna o następstwo tronu po Władysławie Jagiellonie w latach 1424–1434*, Rzeszów 2015.

³³ Cf. E. Maleczyńska, *Rola polityczna królowej Zofii Holszańskiej na tle walki stronnictw w Polsce w latach 1422–1434*, Lwów 1936; for newer literature, cf. B. Czwojdrak, *Zofia Holszańska. Studium o dworze i roli królowej w późnośredniowiecznej Polsce*, Warszawa 2012.

³⁴ M. Duczmał, *Jagiellonowie*, p. 277.

³⁵ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 63.

Matrimonium filie frustra peti pridem fatis excepte; si tamen viveret, non abnuere se affinitatem tam optimi et clari regis et tale daturum se responsum, quo merito laetatus fuisset.³⁶

In addition, the king of Poland expressed his regret about the events that affected the island and King Janus himself.³⁷ The deputies, in addition to refusing their king's request for a loan, also received numerous gifts. They took the return route through Venice, at the same time resigning from the shorter and at the same time dangerous route through Wallachia, which they traveled to Poland.³⁸

What was the reason for the interest of the Cypriot court in the princess from Poland? Firstly, the aforementioned Polish knight, Peter of Bnin, who probably made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and settled permanently in Cyprus in the late 1420s, probably had great influence at the royal court in Nicosia, which allowed him to convince King Janus to make him interested in Hedwig. The more so that after the victory over the Teutonic Order in 1410, Władysław Jagiełło became one of the most powerful rulers in Europe. Peter of Bnin knew that the birth of Jagiełło's sons complicated the situation related to the succession to the throne, and the Polish ruler was in no hurry to choose a candidate for a husband for his daughter. Therefore, the proposal of a candidate from Cyprus could have met with the support of Jagiełło, who in this way would have solved the problem of succession in favour of one of his sons, while marrying his daughter to a ruler of a distant country, with the extremely prestigious title of King of Jerusalem. We can assume with high probability that it was Peter of Bnin who was the *spiritus movens* of the entire mission of King Janus to Władysław Jagiełło, not only as the originator of the expedition itself, but also as a guide and translator.³⁹

³⁶ *Joannis Długossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 63.

³⁷ *Joannis Długossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 63; Maciej Strykowski, *Kronika Macieja Strykowskiego*, p. 543; G. Hill, *A History*, 2, p. 494; L. Machairas, *Chronicle*, 4, § 705; Ł. Gołębiowski, *Panowanie Władysława Jagiełły*, p. 381.

³⁸ *Joannis Długossii Annales*, Lib. 11-12, p. 63; G. Hill, *A History*, 2, p. 494; L. Machairas, *Chronicle*, 4, § 705; Ł. Gołębiowski, *Panowanie Władysława Jagiełły*, pp. 381–382.

³⁹ It is difficult to identify Peter of Bnin. Amazing and obviously untrue information about a Peter of Bnin, which can somehow be related to the Peter mentioned by Długosz, can be found in the person of a diplomat mentioned in the register of the Main Court of the Volhynian Governorate of the Civil Department issued by King Casimir the Great to Peter of Bnin, who in this document is stated to be the son of King John of Cyprus (sic!), cf. *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego S.J., powiększony dodatkami z późniejszych autorów, rękopisów, dowodów urzędowych i wydany przez Jana Nep. Bobrowicza*, 2, Lipsk 1839, pp. 170–171. Elsewhere in this book, the author mentions a Peter of Bnin, whom he no longer presents as the son of the ruler of Cyprus, but *mieniać jednak nie synem, lecz tylko w laskach wielkich u Janusza (Janusa) będącego* [not a son, but only in great favors with Janusz (Janus)]. He further describes Peter as the castellan of Gniezno in 1433 and adds that he later also became the count of Poznań. He also mentions that he was a Polish envoy to Emperor Sigismund on the Teutonic cause. In this way, apart from the initial information about Casimir the Great's paternity, he can be directly connected with the most famous Peter of Bnin (d. 1448), the castellan of Gniezno and the starost of Mosina, appearing in Polish historiography, cf. J. Wiesiołowski, Piotr z Bnina, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 26, Wrocław 1982, pp. 385–386. That Peter of Bnin had two sons also named Peter: the younger one (d. 1494) was the bishop of Włocławek, and the older (d. 1466) was the castellan of Santok.

In the international circulation, Poland appeared as a strong state. Not only through the lens of the victory over the Teutonic Order, but also the Council of Constance (1414–1418), which touched upon many international issues, including the Polish-Teutonic conflict, may have been the place where members of the Polish delegation met representatives of King Janus of Cyprus – Nicholas Angemini and Wilhelm Brillheti – who were present during the ongoing debates.⁴⁰

On the other hand, in 1424–1425, the aforementioned King of the Kalmar Union, Eric, went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land also visiting Cyprus on this occasion. Perhaps he met with King Janus at that time, and the topic of conversation became Central European affairs and the person of princess Hedwig, who was part of Eric's matrimonial plans for Prince Bogislav of Pomerania. In addition, in King Janus' letter to the ruler of Poland dated January 2, 1432, in which he endorses his envoys, he refers to his acquaintance with the King of Denmark, admittedly mistakenly calling him Henry, but implicitly referring to Eric.⁴¹

Certainly, the memory of King Peter I of Lusignan, who stayed in Krakow at the court of King Casimir the Great during his trip to Europe, must still have been alive at the Cypriot court. The convention of monarchs at the time, one of the greatest in the history of medieval Europe, attended among others by Emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg, probably stuck in the minds of the Lusignans and testified to the status of the Polish state.⁴² King Peter's chancellor himself, Philip of Mézières, was convinced of the mission to defend Christian civilization that Poland was to fulfill.⁴³ The memory of the visit to Poland and the favourable reception from King Jagiełło was also strong after the death of King Janus, as evidenced by a letter dated August 3, 1434, sent by the Archbishop of Cyprus to Władysław III of Poland, in which the hierarch conveyed his condolences on Jagiełło's death.⁴⁴

News about the visit of the Cypriot delegation to Wiślica also reached Rome, from where on May 8, 1432, the prosecutor of the Teutonic Order sent information to the General of the Order, reporting (not very precisely) that the Poles had concluded an alliance with Venice and the Kingdom of Cyprus.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ G. Hill, *A History*, 2, p. 463.

⁴¹ *Codex Epistolaris Saeculi Decimi Quinti*, 1: 1384–1492, letter 76, p. 72.

⁴² The Krakow convent has been widely discussed. Cf., e.g., N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières (1327-1405) et la croisade au XVI^e siècle*, Genève-Paris 1976, pp. 194–196; for newer literature, cf. J. Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz Wielki*, Wrocław 1986, pp. 135–137; S. Szczur, *Krakowski zjazd monarchów w 1364 roku, Roczniki Historyczne*, 64 (1998), pp. 35–57; to find older literature as well.

⁴³ M. Głodek, *Utopia Europy zjednoczonej. Życie i idee Filipa de Mézières (1327–1405)*, Słupsk 1997, pp. 122, 133–135. In 1347, in Jerusalem's Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, Philippe de Mézières met with Adalbert of Pakość (Albert de Pachost), governor of Brzeg and then Kuyavia (1325 to 1350), who impressed Philippe greatly with his ascetic practices associated with his vow of pilgrimage. Adalbert of Pakość was considered a hero of the defense of Kuyavia from the Teutonic Knights in 1332.

⁴⁴ *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, 2: 1382–1445, collectium opera A. Lewicki, in *Monumenta Medii Aevi Historica res Gestas Poloniae Illustrantia*, 12, Cracoviae 1891, letter 223, pp. 332–333.

⁴⁵ *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, 3: 1392–1501, collectium opera A. Lewicki, in *Monumenta Medii Aevi Historica res Gestas Poloniae Illustrantia*, 14, Cracoviae 1894, letter 12, p. 518.

In 1431, Janus suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed. On June 10, 1432, he suffered a second stroke, from which he did not recover, and died on June 28 or 29, 1432, presumably not having lived to see the return of the envoys from Poland.⁴⁶

The time between the death of King Peter I of Lusignan (January 1369) and the Mamluk invasion of 1426 was a period of Cyprus' loss of sovereignty to outside forces, first the Republic of Genoa and later Egypt. To regain his former position, the ruler of the Kingdom of Cyprus needed real support from Catholic Europe.

In view of this, what did the ruler of Cyprus expect from the mission sent to the court of Władysław Jagiełło?

Admittedly, the perspective of military aid was unrealistic, but on the other hand, Jagiełło could have given a loan to Janus of Lusignan for the purposes of war with the Sultan and repayment of debts; after all, the Polish king had lent money to Sigismund of Luxembourg in the past.

The Kingdom of Poland was regarded in Europe, especially on its peripheries, as a strong state. The King of Cyprus had heard about Jagiełło's victory over the Teutonic Knights at Grunwald, nevertheless he was no longer aware of the Polish problems with the Tatars and with Lithuania. At the same time, the matrimonial plans put forward by the Cypriot side had the best chance of success. The rulers of Cyprus were looking for a suitable candidate in Europe to be the wife of the heir to their throne, and no doubt the rulers of Poland were regarded as influential and important monarchs. Hedwig Jagiellon could have become the wife, and therefore queen, of the ruler of Cyprus, John of Lusignan. In this way, she would have gone down in history as – most likely – the first queen of a country that was exotic from the point of view of Poland's Jagiellons in the Middle Ages. The source material available to us and used in the research on the history of Latin Cyprus contains no trace of other matrilineal ties between the Kingdom of Cyprus and Central and Eastern Europe during this period.

⁴⁶ *Chronique d'Amadi [Cronica di Francesco Amadi]*, in *Chroniques d'Amadi et de Strambaldi*, publ. M. René de Mas Latrie, 1, Paris 1891-1893, p. 515; *Cronica del Regno di Cypro di Diomede Strambaldi Ciprioto*, in *Chroniques d'Amadi et de Strambaldi*, publ. M. René de Mas Latrie, 2, Paris 1891-1893, p. 287 (Strambaldi provides an erroneous date, i.e., 1434); L. Machairas, *Chronicle*, 4, § 702–704; G. Hill, *A History*, 2, pp. 491, 495.



Photo 1. The house of Jan Długosz in Wiślica. It was built in 1460 and was intended for the vicars and canons of the local collegiate church. According to tradition, the sons of King Casimir Jagiellon, whom the chronicler taught using, among other things, his great work *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae* wherein he described the arrival of a Cypriot envoy to Wiślica and the circumstances of Polish-Cypriot relations, received their education namely in this building.

Author: Łukasz Burkiewicz (August 2022)



Photo 2. Collegiate Basilica of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wiślica built by Casimir the Great (1333–1370) on the foundations of two older Romanesque churches. View from the southeast. Author: Łukasz Burkiewicz (August 2022)



Photo 3. Collegiate Basilica of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wiślica, view from the northwest. It is very likely that the Cypriot deputies who arrived in Wiślica in March 1432 to see Władysław Jagiello attended mass in this church. Author: Łukasz Burkiewicz (August 2022)

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