

Eötvös Loránd University  
Faculty of Humanities

PHD THESES

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ON THE PATRONAGE OF JÁNOS VITÉZ  
JOHANNES TRÖSTER AND THE 1450'S

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The aim of this paper is to provide a fresh and more nuanced portrait of the patronage of "the Father of Hungarian Humanism" as well as the birth of Transalpine humanism and its bearings on Hungary by examining the narrative sources on the maecenatism of János Vitéz. What called for the elaboration of this topic was not only the fact that, so far, we know of no comprehensive account of the findings these scripts of various origins have shed light on, but also the enticing prospect that the thorough recapitulation of both earlier and recent ideas allows of acquiring a fresher, more up-to-date profile of the patron than the one suggested by Vilmos Fraknói. The nature and aspects of Vitéz's humanism have been disputed for decades. Since I am convinced that it is by surveying his work as a patron that his activities related to humanism (literary patronage, textual emendations and other innovations in philology, establishing libraries, educational activities, etc.) can be understood.

In addition to all these, his political and diplomatic work can also be connected to his work as a patron, thus yielding assistance for the delineation of an even more realistic image.

My paper begins with a general introduction, in which I briefly describe the sources, forums and ways of implementations of fifteenth-century humanism (I.). This introduction seemed essential in order to serve as a handhold for the reader by mustering the topics and activities which are to occur hereafter, thus showing a preliminary view of fifteenth-century humanism. Enea Silvio Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II), who managed to obtain both political and cultural primacy in the 1440's and 1450's, played a crucial role in the birth of Transalpine humanism (II.) His friendship, correspondence, and common interests with János Vitéz, such as the organization of a war against the Ottomans or the supporting of the young, are surpassingly important topics in the investigating the roots and birth of Hungarian humanism. Besides Piccolomini, Cardinal Bessarion and Leonard Huntepichler can be identified as some of the most significant role models of Vitéz. This makes it obvious to assume long-term connections with and some most determining friendships from Vienna. The paper's extensive central chapter (III.3.) enumerates scholars, friends, and relatives of Vitéz, with an attempt to arrange them in a way that not only the chronological order, but also a whole network of relationships can be seen. The above-mentioned personalities were either granted literary patronage or supported by Vitéz backing their studies and then securing them a place at the chancellery. These supportive activities can scarcely be separated from each other: studies in Italy could be followed by positions held at the chancellery (Miklós Bánfalvi, István Bajoni, etc.), graduates with their own writings and/or references from a *Maecenatulus* went to win his favors and managed to obtain positions (Johannes Tröster, Nicolaus Liscius, György

Kosztolányi [Polycarpus], etc.), but it is also common that his subvention can only be inferred from posterior acknowledgements (Galeotto Marzio, Nicolaus Modrusiensis, Jacobus Publicius...stb.). In most cases, there were two ways of approaching him: one was through the Viennese connections, that is, with the mediation of Piccolomini and Huntpehler, and the other one was via his ex-protégés studying in Ferrara, that is, via Janus Pannonius and György Kosztolányi (Polycarpus). The linkage between these two coteries was not only Vitéz's personality but also that of Johannes Tröster, to the presentation of whom the second half of my paper is dedicated.

The novelty of the dissertation is the presentation of Johannes Tröster, a Bavarian humanist and lesser-known protégé of János Vitéz and a study of their maecenatic relationship (IV.), which is followed by an analytic review of his *Dialogus de remedio amoris* (V.), a work dedicated and tailored to the taste of Vitéz. The lack of a critical edition of this literary work – with more than one versions from the author – has long been a shortcoming of the international research on humanism, not to mention that its Hungarian relations make it a deserving subject of research, analysis and interpretation in Hungary, as well. The author, Tröster, was the preceptor of King Ladislaus V, then, following the elopement putsch of 1452, he finally managed to obtain a job in 1454, when his master Enea Silvio Piccolomini commended him to his friend János Vitéz. In all probability, he performed diplomatic tasks at the service of Vitéz between 1454 and 1457. Though there are no written records of correspondence or any literary activity related to Tröster from this period, he apparently preserved his previous relationships, which was certainly a great benefit for Vitéz, as well. Since the period between 1454 and 1457 bore the burden of both foreign and internal skirmishes, Vitéz was in desperate need for a reliable intermediary with his Viennese relations. Besides, Tröster's friendship with Janus Pannonius, György Kosztolányi (Polycarpus) and Simon Hungarus in Hungary also show that the Bavarian humanist had multiple ties to the then nascent Hungarian humanism.

The main objective of my dissertation is to map and systematize the maecenatic system connected to Vitéz, and also to get a better understanding of the nature and working of patronage. On charting the networks of these relationships, also involving Johannes Tröster in the research, my findings can be summarized in the following statements about the patronage of János Vitéz:

1. Vitéz's humanism can best be approached, interpreted, and understood by examining his maecenatic work.

2. While establishing his system of patronage, he used both inherited and newly devised ways, the most important of the latter being his connections in Vienna and Italy (the latter via Janus Pannonius and Kosztolányi [Polycarpus] György). The reasons for his tight relations with Vienna are both political and personal. Vienna was home to the imperial chancellery, where he had to settle everyday matters. In addition, he attended university there, like most of his pen-friends and protégés. It seems that the Italian connections gained importance from the late 1450's. In the beginning, the 'Viennese way' proved more prominent.

3. Vitéz's patronage was a particularly extensive one, embracing many fields of life: from art and literary patronage to educational reforms. Since we can scarcely speak of art patronage in the 1450's – as its invigoration probably began after the marriage of Matthias Corvinus and Beatrice of Naples – his prevailing motivations in patronage were of literary, educational and political nature.

4. The various forms of seeking a patron evolved until the fifteenth century are also present in Vitéz's patronage system. As I explain in detail – largely relying on Beccadelli – there was often the need for a third person, an intermediary or agent, a so-called *Maecenatulus*, who would act as a mediator between supporter and supported. In Vitéz's case it was usually Piccolomini who assumed this role. Such 'role plays' remained in fashion in later humanist literature as well, and there are also interesting accounts of Vitéz, Piccolomini, and the Viennese friends identifying with the roles they assumed in their letters: Vitéz would appear as Maecenas, Piccolomini as Virgil, Tröster as Horace, Ladislaus V as Augustus, Castelbarcus as Asclepius, etc. Considering the fact that Beccadelli was a contemporary of Vitéz and a friend of Piccolomini, it may not be an exaggeration to assume an almost identical system and culture of patronage.

5. It is not only the system of patronage where these common traits can be traced, but also the literary allusions and common sources and vocabulary which connect Janus, Vitéz, Tröster, and the humanist coterie in Vienna on the basis of their works and correspondence. In my paper I quote numerous accounts of the usage of common vocabulary and means of expression, which serve as a proof of the fact that not only did they know each other's writings, but they were also eager to exhibit this by explicit indications.

6. The works relating to Vitéz's patronage abound in characteristics implying astronomical, medical, and literary interest, or some peculiar mixture of all these. Unlike indicated by the relevant secondary literature so far, Vitéz was not only interested in astronomy, but also in medical, philosophical and theological questions.

7. Johannes Tröster – lesser-known in Hungary – was one of his protégés between 1454-1457. A version of his only known work, *Dialogus de remedio amoris* was sent to Vitéz, the aspired patron, accompanied by an enclosed letter of reference by Piccolomini. The presentation and processing of Tröster's life, his years at Vitéz's service, and his literary work is not only groundbreaking in the research of Hungarian humanism, but is also a fine example of how Vitéz's patronage actually worked. This patronage – with regard to both its coming into being as well as its implementation – bears the traits typically present in Vitéz's patronages of the 1450's: the protégé reached Vitéz with the help of Piccolomini's letter of reference and supposed dedication. The patron himself then made good use of Tröster's writing and rhetorical skills as well as his political practice when employing him as a go-between carrying his letters of commissions. Much as he acknowledged talent and the eagerness to write, Vitéz seems to have valued the practical use of *studia humanitatis* even more.

The thorough presentation and reinterpretation of Vitéz's patronage system by adding new aspects also proves an invaluable aid in revisiting his establishing libraries and founding Academia Istropolitana, other topical issues related to Vitéz's humanism.

## PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC OF THE THESES

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- SZILÁGYI 2010 = Emőke Rita SZILÁGYI, *Ajánlás bécsi módra: Enea Silvio Piccolomini ajánlólevele Johannes Trösterről Vitéz Jánosnak 1454 nyarán* (*A Viennese Recommendation, Recommendation Letter of Johannes Tröster to Johannes Vitéz, by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Summer 1454*) = *Ghesaurus: Tanulmányok Szentmártoni Szabó Géza hatvanadik születésnapjára* (*Ghesaurus, Collection of Studies Dedicated to Géza Szentmártoni Szabó for his 60th Birthday*), ed. by Rumen István CSÖRSZ, Bp., rec.iti, 2010, 125–132.
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- SZILÁGYI 2012d = Emőke Rita SZILÁGYI, *Johannes de Kupferberg, az Academia Istropolitana tanára* (*Johannes de Kupferberg, a Professor of the Academia Istropolitana*), MKSz 128 (2012), 375–80.