Working for the King (and the Queen): Krakovian Scholars in the Royal Service in Late Medieval Poland
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Krakovian Scholars in Royal Service in Late Medieval Poland

This article examines several of the ways in which Krakovian scholars in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were engaged in the national life of Poland. The focus is on selected individuals associated with the University of Kraków who served the rulers of Poland in this period. Some held positions in the royal chancery; others were involved in diplomatic affairs relating to issues connected with the Knights of the Teutonic Order; and others provided their expertise in matters touching the legal status of the union between Poland and Lithuania. While by no means treating all the avenues of royal service that involved Krakovian scholars nor discussing all the people who were involved, the examples chosen for analysis here are sufficient to suggest the range and depth of service by these individuals for the monarchy and the state.

In the popular imagination, there is a deeply held image of the university as the proverbial “ivory tower,” separate and disengaged from society and its everyday practical workings. Scholars, however, hold a very different view, based in their understanding of universities as products of society, profoundly engaged in both the pursuit of learning in the abstract and, at the same time, committed to service within the communities in which they existed. At times, universities have also been involved in politics. Since the rise of universities in the European Middle Ages, it has ever been so.1 Much of their educational program in the twelfth through

fifteenth centuries was oriented to professions such as teaching, law, medicine, and the array of notarial and administrative activities that characterized the ever more sophisticated political, religious, economic, and social institutions of Europe.

It is the purpose of this study to survey in rather general terms some of the ways in which the personnel of one particular medieval university, the University of Kraków, was fully engaged in the national life of Poland by looking at the ways scholars associated with the studium in the Polish capital served the policies and ambitions of the monarchy in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We can not treat all details, but it is possible to show the range of involvement by these Krakovian scholars and thus to reinforce the sense of the university—in those times and, perhaps by implication, in our own—as a fully engaged part of society. In this study, I want to focus only on three things: first, on the activities of scholars in the royal chancery; second, on relations with and issues concerning the Teutonic Knights; and third, on the question of union with Lithuania.

Authorized originally in 1364 by Pope Urban V at the request of King Casimir the Great, the University of Kraków had not prospered in the years thereafter. The functioning of the university was minimal in the remainder of the 1360s, and following the king’s death in 1370 it gradually sank into decrepitude. During the 1390s, however, there were efforts to revive the studium that met with some suc-
cess, with both rulers of Poland at that time, Queen Jadwiga and her husband, King Władysław Jagiełło, actively engaged. The full resurrection of the university did not come, however, until 1400. Both before and after the refounding, faculty and scholars involved with the university played important roles in royal service.

This can be seen first in their activities in the chanceries of Jadwiga and Jagiełło, and, after them, in the chancery of King Casimir the Jagiellonian and his successors. The scholars the queen used included, among others, Piotr Wysz of Radolin, Andrzej Łaskarz, and Andrzej of Kokorzyń, each of whom served her in a variety of roles. Wysz had been educated in Poznań and perhaps Kraków, then studied in Italy at Padua, where he earned a doctorate in both canon and civil law. Upon his return to Poland he became part of Jadwiga’s circle and represented her interests in Polish negotiations with the Teutonic Knights, Poland’s traditional enemy, in 1388 and again in 1393, by which time he had become, with the queen’s support, Bishop of Kraków. Andrzej Łaskarz studied first at Prague, then in Italy, before returning to Prague, then in Italy, before returning to Kraków, then joining Jadwiga’s chancery. His contributions there were modest,
though in later years after her death, he had a distinguished ecclesiastical and cultural career, and was active in royal service on matters related to Poland’s continued conflict in the fifteenth century with the Teutonic Knights. Andrzej of Kokorzyn also began his studies at Prague, and before returning to Poland to continue study at Kraków, he was already before Jadwiga’s death a member of her inner circle of advisers. Little is known of his contributions in this regard.8 This brief survey must suffice to suggest the activities of Polish scholars in the queen’s service.

King Władysław Jagiełło, however, during his long reign, was able to make much greater use of Krakovian scholars. Many served directly in his chancery, and it is striking that during his reign there was a much higher percentage of that office with personnel who had received university education than at anytime during the reigns of Jagiełło’s predecessors.9 Among the most important individuals who served there were Mikołaj Trąba, Wojciech Jastrzębiec, Zbigniew Oleśnicki, Stanisław Ciołek, and Mikołaj Lasocki. We offer a word or two about each.

Mikołaj Trąba’s formal education is little known, but was probably limited to study at a cathedral school. He served as Jagiełło’s confessor and was entrusted with several important diplomatic missions, and probably as early as 1390 entered the royal chancery, where from 1390 to 1403 he was a secretary, then from 1403 to 1412 vice-chancellor. In that latter year, he was named Archbishop of Gniezno, and in that status he loyally supported the king in his policies against the Teutonic Knights until his death.10

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8. His career is better known for his excellence as a scholar and theologian. Indeed, he was termed “the most famous” theologian and teacher at the University of Kraków by no less than Andrzej Gałka of Dobczyn (an infamous Wycliffite follower in the 1440s); see Knoll, “‘The Worst Heretic,’ Andrzej Gałka of Dobczyn in the Academic and Ecclesiastical Context of Mid-15th Century Kraków and Poland,” Polish Review 54 (2009): 3–29, here 16. For Andrzej’s biography, see LTCP/SPTK, 1:55–56. His theological and philosophical views are best treated by Mieczysław Markowski, “Poglądy filozoficzne Andrzeja z Kokorzyna” [The philosophical views of Andrzej of Kokorzyn] Studia Mediewistyczne 6 (1964): 55–136.


The education of Wojciech Jastrzębiec is also not well known, but it was probably not extensive, though it has been suggested he may have spent time in university study (possibly Prague), but certainly did not graduate. His ecclesiastical career brought him into the circle of Queen Jadwiga, for whom he served as chancellor. In 1399 he was named Bishop of Poznań and in 1412 was translated to the see of Kraków, while at the same time serving in Jagiełło’s chancery. In 1423 he succeeded Trąba as Archbishop of Gniezno and primate of Poland, and until his own death was a major force supporting royal policy, especially against the Teutonic Knights.

Zbigniew Oleśnicki is one of the best known figures of medieval Polish history, primarily because of his role as Cardinal Bishop of Kraków. Before that, however, the beginnings of his career lay in brief study at the university—though like most who matriculated at the studium he did not earn a degree—followed by appointment as notary in the royal chancery. He also served the king in diplomatic missions, rising in the circle of bureaucrats in royal service. His ecclesiastical rise was equally rapid, culminating in his appointment as Bishop of Kraków in 1423. Jagiełło continued to rely upon him after that, but there was a noticeable tension between them, as Oleśnicki’s clerical and noble interests came increasingly into conflict with royal policy. Despite this, Oleśnicki’s career, at least until his accession to the

12. The fullest treatment of his career is Grażyna Lichończak-Nurek, *Wojciech Herbu Jastrzębiec Arcybiskup i mąż stanu* [Wojciech of the Jastrzębiec escutcheon: archbishop and statesman] (Kraków: Papierska Akademia Teologii, 1996 [Studia do dziejów wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego (Studies in the history of the Theological Faculty of the University of Kraków) 4]).
13. The very substantial literature touching Oleśnicki is noted by Thomas Wünsch, *Conciliarismus und Polen. Personen, Politik und Programme aus Polen zur Verfassungsfrage der Kirche in der Zeit der mittelalterlichen Reformkonzilien* [Conciliarism and Poland. People, politics, and programs in Poland on the constitutional questions of the Church in the period of the Medieval Reform Councils] (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, and Zurich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998), 90–93, though Wünsch’s focus is primarily upon the context of the conciliar movement. His treatment, and that by those whom he cites, should now be supplemented by Maria Koczerska’s entry in *PSB*, 23:776–84 and her Zbigniew Oleśnicki i kościół Krakowski w czasach jego pontyfikatu (1423–1455) [Zbigniew Oleśnicki and the Krakovian Church during the time of his pontificate (1423–1455)] (Warsaw: DiG, 2004), the latter of which focuses primarily upon his activity as Bishop of Kraków. See also the conference volume, containing many excellent individual papers, Zbigniew Oleśnicki. Książękościoła i mąż stanu [Zbigniew Oleśnicki. Prince of the Church and statesman], ed. Feliks Kiryk and Zdzisław Noga (Kraków: Secesja, 2006).
14. On this point, see now the analysis of bachelors’ and masters’ promotions by Krzysztof Boroda, *Studenci Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego w późnym średniowieczu* [The students of the University of Kraków in the late Middle Ages] (Kraków: Avalon, 2010), 147–71.
Krakovian see, remains a good example of the way the monarchy made use of the skills attained by scholars and university-trained individuals.

Stanisław Ciołek fits more clearly the category of scholar. He earned his bachelor’s degree in arts at Prague in 1402, and continued on into the study of law there—though without earning a degree. After he returned to Poland, he entered the royal chancery as a notary, serving also as a diplomat for the king. In subsequent years he continued to serve Jagiełło, while at the same time pursuing a successful ecclesiastical career, holding positions in Gniezno, Kraków, and Poznań. In 1423 he was appointed by Jagiełło as his vice-chancellor, with special responsibilities for matters connected with the Teutonic Knights and the Bohemian court, and for the next several years he played a prominent role in royal policy. He was eventually appointed Bishop of Poznań.15

The last example I want to mention from Jagiełło’s chancery is Mikołaj Lasocki. He held a doctoral degree in law (though from where, it is not known), and his ecclesiastical career included the holding of canonries in Płock, Gniezno, and Kraków. His first appointment in the royal chancery was as notary, apparently in 1423, and thereafter he rose under the patronage of Stanisław Ciołek to become a royal secretary, with special responsibilities for matters connected with the Teutonic Order. He often represented the king in a number of capacities.16

The use of educated, and increasingly university-trained men, in the royal chancery continued to grow during the long reign of Casimir the Jagiellonian. In the interests of time, I will not discuss individually any of the corps of university-trained individuals. It is perhaps enough to note that of the 187 people employed there between 1447 and 1506 (the date of King Alexander the Jagiellonian’s death), eighty-one had university training, seventy from Kraków. There were fourteen who had earned doctorates in one faculty or another, one licentiate, eight masters in arts, and twelve bachelors. The remainder—the majority—had apparently not remained


16. A brief overview of his career, together with bibliography, is given by Wünsch, Konziliarismus und Polen, 74–75. During the Council of Basel he was present as a delegate from the diocese of Kraków, but also ensured that the reputation of the king, who died in 1434, was appropriately memorialized. His sermon on Jagiello’s death was said to move the other delegates to tears; for the eulogy in his sermon, see Karolina Grodziska, “Mikołaja Lasockiego pochwała królowej Jadwigi i Władysława Jagielly na soborze bazylejskim” [Mikołaj Lasocki’s eulogy of Queen Jadwiga and Władysław Jagiello at the Council of Basel], Analecta Cracoviensis 20 (1988): 381–99.
in the university to complete a degree. Five of the seven royal chancellors in this period and seven of the ten vice-chancellors had undertaken higher studies.\textsuperscript{17}

The foregoing is sufficient to indicate in general terms one way in which scholars were used in royal service during the reign of Jadwiga and the first Jagiellonians. More specifically, however, their service was devoted to engaging, on the rulers’ behalf, the most pressing issues of royal and national policy. In what follows, I would like to address the other two issues identified above as foci of this study: relations with and issues concerning the Teutonic Knights and the question of union with Lithuania.

The establishment of the Knights of the Teutonic Order—or the Teutonic Knights, the Order, or simply the Knights (with a capital “K”) for short—on the southern littoral of the Baltic was a complicated process, but by the first decades of the fourteenth century conflict between Poland and the Knights was both frequent and protracted.\textsuperscript{18} One of the reasons Jagiello had sought marriage with Poland’s ruler, Jadwiga, in the 1380s and was willing to join the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which he ruled as Grand Duke, to Poland was that the Teutonic Knights threatened both Poland and Lithuania. Union would be in the interests of both states.\textsuperscript{19} Conflict

\begin{enumerate}
\item This profile is derived from Irena Sułkowska-Kurasiowa, \textit{Polska kancelaria królewskwa w latach 1447–1506} [The Polish Royal Chancery in the years 1447–1506] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1967), esp. 107–62, where the author has provided biograms of all the chancery staff in this period.
\end{enumerate}
The Polish Review

between the Knights and Poland–Lithuania in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries ultimately led to armed conflict between 1409 and 1411—traditionally called the “Great War” (Wielka wojna) in Polish historiography. Despite the overwhelming Polish–Lithuanian victory at Grunwald/Tannenberg in 1410,20 the Order was not really defeated in this war, and Jagiełło decided to pursue an aggressive diplomatic offensive against the Knights at the great church council in Constance between 1414 and 1418. He chose as his chief representative Paulus Vladimir of Brudzeń, doctor of canon law from Padua, professor of law at Kraków, and rector of the university in 1414 and again in 1415.21

Paulus was only one of a number of Krakovian scholars who participated at Constance in support of royal policy, but he was the most important and creative.22 He wrote several treatises that accused the Teutonic Order of violating canon, civil, and natural law. In doing so, he systematically undermined the rationale and political support the Order had among Europeans, though his efforts did not immediately achieve the result he sought on behalf of the king.

Following Jagiełło’s death in 1434, Polish scholars continued to act as royal servants while at the same time pursuing academic and ecclesiastical careers.23 In the present context, let me mention the examples of only three individuals, and these within the framework of Poland’s relations with the Teutonic Order.

After the “Great War” of 1409–11, a second major conflict between them was precipitated by the decision of local nobles and cities in the lands of the Order to form a Prussian Union and declare their allegiance to the younger son of Jagiełło, Casimir the Jagiellonian. In the Thirteen Years’ War, which was ended by the Second Treaty of Toruń in 1466, Casimir used Kraków professors as ambassadors and negotiators.

20. On the battle, the older, classic work of Stefan M. Kuczyński, Wielka Wojna z zakon krzyżackim w latach 1409–1411 [The Great War with the Teutonic Order in the years 1409–1411], 4th rev. ed. (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1987), now needs to be revised by the insights of Andrzej Nadolski, Grunwald. Problemy wybrane [Grunwald. Selected problems] (Warsaw: Templum, 2010), a revised version of his study that originally appeared in 1990.


22. For other Polish participants at Constance see Wünsch, Konziliarismus und Polen, 53–58, with their activities and contributions discussed on pages 60–72.

23. The larger picture of intellectuals in royal service during Jadwiga and Jagiełło’s reigns is now presented and analyzed in great detail by Ożóg, Uczeni.
For example, in 1463, John of Dąbrówka and James of Szadek were sent to negotiate on the king’s behalf. The first of these had earned degrees in arts at the University of Kraków in the 1420s, then began the study of canon law and theology, in both of which he earned the doctoral degree. He taught for some years in the Arts Faculty, before his appointment to teach in higher faculties. He was nine times elected rector of the university before his eventual death in 1472 and also served for several years as vice-chancellor of the studium. He was, arguably, one of the most important members of the institution. His inclusion in the Polish delegation in 1463 was a recognition of the service that his legal and academic skills could provide in pursuit of a conflict-ending treaty. James of Szadek had earned his doctoral degree in canon law at Kraków, was a member of the legal faculty, and was ultimately twice elected rector of the university. He had previously served King Casimir in negotiations regarding the incorporation of the region of Mazovia into the Polish crown lands. In addition to his negotiations on behalf of the king in 1463, James was also a member of the Polish delegation who participated in negotiations in 1464 and 1465, when the preliminaries of peace signed the following year in Toruń were established. That the king thought it useful to include academic lawyers among his representatives reflects both royal recognition of the usefulness of Krakovian scholars and their own willingness to engage in the concrete and pressing matters of state.

The third Krakovian scholar who was engaged in support of royal policy in connection with the Thirteen Years’ War was John Długosz, probably well known to readers of this journal. At first, it may seem inappropriate to include his name in this company, for Długosz held no academic degree and was not a faculty member


25. There is a very large literature devoted to John Długosz. The following items represent some of the more general treatments, especially of his biography: the popular treatment by Stanisław Grzybowski, Jan Długosz (Kraków: WAM, 2003), should be supplemented by the essay by Marian Plezia, “Jan Długosz,” in Pisarze staropolscy, sylwetki [Old Polish writers, profiles], vol. 1, ed. Stanisław Grzeszczyk (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1991), 132–73. Upon the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Długosz’s death in 1980, there were a number of important publications, two of which, each containing influential articles, are of particular importance: Długosiana. Studia historyczne w pięćsetlecie śmierci Jana Długosza, [Długosiana. Historical studies on the 500th anniversary of the death of Jan Długosz], part 1, ed. Stanisław Gawęda (Kraków: Nakładem Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1980 [Prace historyczne, (Historical Studies) 65]), and part 2 (Kraków: Nakładem Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1985 [Prace historyczne 76]). A recent overview of Długosz’s life and writings is provided in Paul Radziłowski, “Binding the New Together with the Old: Fifteenth-Century Writings on the Origins of the Polish State and People in the Face of Earlier Tradition” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2000), 297–316.
at the university. And yet, by almost any standard, Długosz’s body of writings mark him as one of Poland’s greatest scholars. The following short list of Długosz’s most important works is indicative of this. Among other smaller writings, his accomplishments include (1) the *Banderia Prutenorum*, a heraldic and administrative study of the field banners captured from the Teutonic Knights on the field of Grunwald;26 (2) the *Insignia clenodia Regni Poloniae* (Coats of arms of the Polish Kingdom), another heraldic work, but one that reveals the structure of the Polish state, the Polish church, and the composition and social function of the nobility;27 (3) multiple catalogs of the lives and tenures of bishops in the Polish past;28 (4) several saints’ lives;29 (5) the *Liber beneficiorum* of the Kraków bishopric, which provides a mine of information touching on the economic, social, and geographic history of not only the diocese but, indeed, practically the whole of Little Poland (Małopolska);30 and finally (6) his magnum opus, the *Annales*, a history of Poland in twelve books


28. The complex character of composition for these is discussed by Jan Dąbrowski, *Dawne dziejopisarstwo polskie (do roku 1480)* [Early Polish historiography (to 1480)] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1964), 212–13. One of Długosz’s episcopal catalogs (that for Kraków, together with its later continuation) is discussed (125–33) and edited (143–281), occasionally in the context of his other catalogs, by Józef Szymański: *Catalogi episcoporum Cracoviensium* in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, series Nova* (Warsaw: PWN, 1974), 10:2.


that constitutes the crowning jewel of medieval Polish historiography, and, in many ways, represents also the fullest medieval history of the region of which Poland was a part. And although not formally a part of the university—he was a cleric who was first a member of Bishop Oleśnicki’s chancery and then eventually a canon of the Kraków cathedral—Długosz’s life was nevertheless closely connected with the Kraków studium, as Krystyna Pieradzka has shown.

On these bases I think it justified to include Długosz in the group of scholars working for the monarchy. For example, in matters relating to the end of the Thirteen Years’ War, the king named him in 1464 as one of several Polish representatives to the cities of the Hanseatic League, with the result that Długosz prepared fifteen articles defining the historical bases of the claims the Polish king had to the cities


32. Długosz’s relationship to the city of Kraków and the range of his benefactions there—and elsewhere—can be summarized as follows. He arranged the purchase of properties for the school, including negotiations with Kraków’s Jewish community for acquisition of real estate that adjoined the main university property, the Collegium Maius. He executed Bishop Oleśnicki’s bequest in his will for the endowment and erection of a student hostel, the Jerusalem bursa, which housed 100 students, repairing and restoring it at his own expense following a fire in the 1450s. He paid for an enlargement of the Bursa pauperum, which had been founded in 1409; facilitated the creation of what became the Hungarian hostel for the university; and relocated, with enhanced quarters, the Bursa pisarum (the so-called Grochowa hostel). Finally, his most significant benefaction for the university was the establishment and endowment of a hostel for as many as 100 students preparing for a career in canon law, the Bursa (or Collegium) Longini pro Canonistis. For these matters, see Krystyna Pieradzka, Związki Długosza z Krakowem [The Relations of Długosz with Kraków] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1975 [Biblioteka Krakowska 115]). See also my comments in “Jan Długosz, 1480–1980,” Polish Review 27, nos. 1/2 (1982): 3–28, reprinted in Fifty Years of Polish Scholarship: The Polish Review 1956–2006, ed. Charles S. Kraszewski (New York: PIASA Books, 2006), 259–95.
The Polish Review of Gdańsk Pomorze (Pomerania) and Prussia. He also met with representatives of the Teutonic Order and the Union of Prussian Cities. Then in 1465 and also in 1466, Długosz again presented the Polish case, once to demand return of lands that had been in dispute since the fourteenth century, next to negotiate with a papal legate who was trying to mediate the conflict, and finally to arrange for a meeting between the Polish king and the Grand Master of the Order, which led to the [Second] Peace of Toruń. Obviously, John of Dąbrówka, James of Szadek, and John Długosz were not the only participants in the foregoing negotiations, but they were effective in these diplomatic activities. The power of Długosz's historical arguments was especially relevant. In sum, then, their work for the king was productive.

Let me turn now to the final issue identified above, the question of union with Lithuania. Polish–Lithuanian ties were based in the marriage of Jadwiga and Jagiełło and the Union of Krewo of 1385. Jagiełło had, until then, been Grand Duke of Lithuania, and for a time he retained this title until relinquishing it to his cousin Vytautas, known in Polish historiography as Witold. Relations between Jagiełło and Vytautas, while often strained in the late fourteenth century when Vytautas had aimed at breaking the union with Poland, had ultimately been resolved in 1401, when Vytautas had been given the title of Grand Duke. Thereafter, for much

33. Długosz’s activities in connection with developments leading up to the Second Peace of Toruń in 1466 are included in the larger discussion of the diplomatic activities of the Polish church, especially the role of John Lutek of Brześć, presented by Tomasz Graff, Kościół w Polsce wobec konfliktu z Zakonem Krzyżackim w XV wieku. Studium z dziejów kultury politycznej polskiego episkopatu [The Church in Poland in the face of conflict with the Teutonic Order in the fifteenth century. A study in the history of the political culture of the Polish Episcopate] (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2010), 94–99. Graff ends his study by quoting Długosz’s observation in his Annales, 11:177–78 (Liber duodecimus 1462–1480, sub anno 1466): “Cepit et me scribentem presencia Annalia non mediocris super finito bello Pruthenico et restitutes terrises abstractis dudum, Prussia quoque regno unita, voluptas, utpote qui molestius tuleram Polonicum Regnum a variis nacionibus et populis laceratum in eam diem iri, fortunatum me et ceteros coetaneos meos, quibus reintegrationem ipsam post tot secula videre contigit, crediturus fortunaciorem, si Slesie, Lupsensem et Stolpensemoras, in quibus tres episcopatus a Boleslao Magno, Polonorum primo rege et patre suo Myeczslao fundati, Wratysiavensis videlicet, Lubuczensis et Kamyenensis consistent, redid quoque et reuniri Regno Polonie per clemenciam Divine, me inspectante, continget. Lecior enim exhinc discerem et in somno meo suavius molliusque quiescendo accumberem.”


35. For the steps in the history of the Jagiellonian union, the starting point is the classic study by Oskar Halecki, Dzieje Unii Jagiellońskiej [The history of the Jagiellonian Union], 2 vols. (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1919–20). More current general treatments (in Polish) of Polish–Lithuanian relations during Jagiello’s reign can be found, for example,
of their reigns Jagiło and Vytautas had worked in concert (most notably in the
Grunwald campaign of 1410), but by the late 1420s their cooperation was again
fraught with tension. In his old age, the Polish king had come more and more un-
der the influence of an oligarchy of Little Poland nobles who were led by Zbigniew
Oleśnicki—from 1423 Bishop of Kraków—and who sought to bring Lithuania into
even closer union.36 Vytautas, however, was the unchallenged master of the east
and increasingly independent. He was not less powerful than the king and resisted
the idea of closer union. By the late 1420s it was clear that Polish and Lithuanian
policies were diverging and the ambitions of Vytautas for a crown, which had been
aroused earlier, were once again being revived.

Into this growing breach stepped Sigismund, king of the Romans (i.e., German
king) and Holy Roman Emperor elect, though not yet crowned, who was, in general,
no friend of Poland. To encourage Vytautas in his ambitions he suggested the possi-
bility of his coronation as king of Lithuania. This was a dangerous proposal for the
union.37 Soon thereafter, Vytautas decided to accept the crown offered to him, and to

[Nzgiew Oleśnicki on the Polish–Lithuanian Union to the death of Jagiło] Nasza przeszłość
91 (1999): 101–51, has treated the bishop’s policy and attitude in this period and suggests
that the attribution to him of an aggressive “incorporationist” policy is an exaggeration; for
developments in 1429, see 122–29.

37. It was agreed that all interested parties, including representatives from the church,
would meet in Łuck in Volhynia in 1429 to discuss a broad agenda of issues. By the time all
were assembled, it was a gathering so magnificent of rulers, princes, prelates, and retinues
that the chronicler Jan Długosz remarked that the ages had not seen such a glorious gather-
ing. Długosz, Annales, 8:248 (Liber undecimus 1413–1430, sub anno 1429): “Convencionem
tam magnificam et tam illustrium trium principum etas longa neque vidit neque visura est,
uptote qui illa tempestate omnes reges et principes mundi fama, diviciis, pompa, gloria belli
anteibant.” When Sigismund initially proposed the question of the coronation, Jagiło at first
seemed to give his assent. Later the king was convinced by his advisers that it was unwise
to let Sigismund interfere in this area, in particular to accept his assertion that he had the
right to confer this title with or without the Polish king’s assent. This assertion is explicitly
attributed to Sigismund by Długosz, Annales, 8:252 (Liber undecimus 1413–1430, sub anno
1429): “Adhibere tuum consensum velis et fave et permitte, ut tam mihi quam tibi per me,
qui nunc hanc potestatem velut Romanorum rex habeo, creatus in novum regem par fiat, nec
solum caput sum, sed et patriam tuam Lithuaniam tantis decoris admite ornari.” Sigismund
forestall this Jagiello and his advisers attempted to show that the emperor had no right to take such an action. They relied upon the university to formulate their arguments.

To the law faculty fell the responsibility of preparing a statement of the royal position. During the course of 1429 they completed their work, a protest against Sigismund’s intentions that was registered in April 1430 by Polish representatives at the imperial Diet in Nuremberg. This consilium was prepared and signed by the following professors: Stanisław of Skarbimierz, the first rector of the refounded university and the leading professor in canon law; John Elgot, another canonist, who eventually also served Bishop Oleśnicki as vicarius in spiritualibus, and three additional member from the law faculty, James Zaborowski, Thomas of Chroberz, and Adam of Bandków. They denied Sigismund’s right to crown Vytautas on two accounts. Their first point had confronted Jagiello in his bedchamber, while he was still in bed, to insist that the king agree to Vytautas’s coronation.

38. My narrative of these developments is based on Grzegorz Błaszczyk, Burza koronacyjna. Polska–Litwa 1429–1430. Dramatyczny fragment stosunków polsko-litewskich w XV wieku [The coronation tempest. Poland–Lithuania 1429–1430. A dramatic fragment of Polish–Lithuanian relations in the fifteenth century] (Poznań: Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1998), and the treatment by Nikodem, Witold Wielki książę litewski, 381–402. The two do not totally agree on important matters connected with these developments, especially with respect to the question of Witold’s, and—to a lesser extent—Sigismund’s, motivation. See also the treatment by Jadwiga Krzyżaniakowa and Jerzy Ochmański, Władysław Jagiello (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990), 286–92.

39. The text of this consilium has been edited and analyzed in detail by Stanisław Zachorowski, Studya z historyi prawa kościelnego i polskiego [Studies on the history of ecclesiastical and Polish law] (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1917), 151–201, within the context of other documents touching on the proposed coronation of Vytautas (see the author’s comments, 187–92). The document is undated, but was clearly completed prior to April 1430. Krystyna Pieradzka, “Uniwersytet w służbie państwa i wobec soborów w Konstancji i Bazylei” [The university in the service of the state and at the Councils of Constance and Basel], in Lepszy, Dzieje Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 113, has described it as a reply to consilia on the same issue from the University of Vienna.

40. For information on James, see PSB, 10:368–69; for Thomas, see Piotr Rabiej, “Uczenci uniwersyteccy w służbie i otoczeniu Zbigniewa Oleśnickiego, Biskupa Krakowskiego,” [University intellectuals in the service and environment of Zbigniew Oleśnicki, Bishop of Kraków], in Ożóg and Szczur, Polska i jej sąsiedzi, 214–15; Adam, doctor decretorum, is an individual mentioned only in passing by a number of scholars. In general, their biographies are poorly known. Stanisław, however, was a major figure, on whom there is substantial literature; for an overview, with bibliography, see the entries on him in Filozofia w Polsce, 364–65, LTC/P/ SPTK, 3:179–82, and Wünsch, Konzilarismus und Polen, 41–42. John Elgot is an equally important figure, though in context more closely related to the administration of the diocese of Kraków as Oleśnicki’s vicar and to conciliar matters—he was the author of an important treatise on the superiority of the Council of Basel over the pope; for biography and bibliography, see Filozofia w Polsce, 140, and Wünsch, Konzilarismus und Polen, 87–89. For a fuller treatment, though one focused primarily on John’s position
of departure, distinguishing between royal jurisdiction and the authority of the imperial dignity, was to deny that the king of the Romans, not yet crowned emperor could bestow a crown upon someone else. In support of this they argued that the electus—Sigismund—must subsequently be approved and crowned by the pope. Until this had taken place he was not truly emperor. Only the imperial dignity bestows the right to provide someone with a crown, and then only in limited circumstances. They based their positions upon an impressive body of medieval legal sources. Their second point in denying Sigismund's right was that royal power did not include authority to create kings; this was something that was reserved only to the pope. In general their arguments followed the so-called “curialist” tradition. This consilium is a very workmanlike document. Its authors were learned and drew upon a wide variety of sources. But it was by no means a dispassionate scholarly treatise. It was serving a particular goal of national policy. It represents an official public statement by one of the faculties of the university upon an issue of this import, and therein lies its significance. Vytautus's death on October 27, 1430, rendered his coronation plans moot, and, indeed, prior to dying, he gave full power in Lithuania into Jagiello's hands.

To sum up: in a variety of ways and with a variety of skills, learned individuals, with training at and in many instances appointment in the university were fully engaged in royal service in late medieval Poland. Upon reflection it could not have been otherwise. The studium would not have emerged—either in Casimir the Great’s time or in the time of Jadwiga and the early Jagiellonians—without royal support.
Indeed, whatever other roles the university served in medieval life, the university arose out of society’s needs, responding to the practical and pragmatic concerns of professionalization and politics. There was a fine balance between, on the one hand, the internal needs of the life of the mind and, on the other, the external engagement with societal expectations, state aspirations, and civic needs. All of these had been reflected in Jagiełło’s charter of foundation in 1400. As he put it:

Surely it was for this very purpose, by the will of the Supreme, that we have . . . received the diadem of the Kingdom of Poland, that we should make this realm illustrious through the brilliance of learned persons, thanks to whose knowledge we may remove the blemishes and the darkness, thereby making it the equal of other kingdoms. . . . Let [this university] be a pearl of powerful learning [sitque ibi scienciarum prevalencium margaritha], so that it may bring forth men outstanding for the maturity of their counsel, pre-eminent for their virtue, and well-qualified in all the branches of knowledge.45

Or, in other words, Jagiełło was saying: be useful—to me, to the kingdom, and to the larger society by your learning and service. And so the scholars of the Studium Cracoviense were.

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