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PREPARING A BRIDAL TRAIN
UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS CONCERNING BIANCA MARIA
SFORZA'S UNREALIZED JOURNEY TO HUNGARY

The year 1476 marked the wedding of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary¹ with a Neapolitan princess Beatrice of Aragon,² accompanied by splendid and sumptuous festivities. However, not before long the new queen appeared to be sterile, so in order to ascertain his dynastic line Matthias opted for taking an unprecedented step, at least in the Central Europe, to make his illegitimate son John Corvinus³ an heir to the throne. As soon as in 1481 the born-out-of-the-wedlock child of Barbara Edelpöck, the commoner from Stein an der Donau, was rumoured to be appointed a successor of Matthias who started a series of deliberate acts to prepare John for this role, e.g., by bequeathing numerous lands and titles to him, incorporating him in the public ceremonies, or boosting his status by sponsoring humanistic writings featuring the young Corvinus.⁴

One of these strategies was finding a suitable wife for the heir-apparent from well-established European dynasties, that would further support his position and claim to the throne. Therefore, the marital union with Bianca Maria Sforza of Milan⁵ started to be negotiated since 1484, probably put in motion by Francesco Fontana,⁶ an Italian diplomat in the service of the Hungarian king, who approached with the plan of the powerful Milanese official and future archbishop Guidantonio Arcimboldi.⁷ The hatched plan was welcomed by both sides. Matthias had considered a possibility of marital alliance with Milan already in the 1460s when seeking a wife for himself but the enterprise was

¹ Matthias I Corvinus (1443–1490), King of Hungary (1458–1490).

² Beatrice of Aragon (1457–1508), Queen of Hungary, wife of King Matthias (1476–1490), wife of King Vladislaus II (1490–1500).

³ John Corvinus/Korvin János (1473–1504) illegitimate son of King Matthias.

⁴ Schönherr, *Hunyadi Corvin János (1473–1504)*, 45; Farbaky, “The Heir: The Role of John Corvinus in the Political Representation of Matthias Corvinus, and as Patron of the Arts,” 414–18; Farbaky, “The Sterile Queen and the Illegitimate Son: Beatrice of Aragon and John Corvinus’s Rivalry at Matthias Corvinus’s Court,” 420–23.

⁵ Bianca Maria Sforza (1472–1510), former spouse of John Corvinus (1487–1492), Queen of Germany and Empress of the Holy Roman Empire, wife of Maximilian I Habsburg (1494–1510).

⁶ Francesco Fontana (1475?–1504?), Ferrarese physician, diplomat of King Matthias, nephew of Cardinal Gabriele Rangoni.

⁷ Schönherr, *Hunyadi Corvin János (1473–1504)*, 38. Guido Antonio Arcimboldi (1428–1497), Archbishop of Milan (1488–1497).

thwarted by Venice that feared the union of two of her foes.⁸ Ludovico il Moro,⁹ a de-facto ruler of Milan, also recognized the utility of political alliance with the mighty king of Hungary and after all Milanese misgivings about Beatrice potentially bearing a legitimate offspring or Matthias marrying again were dispelled, Ludovico sent a diplomatic embassy to Hungary confirming the matrimony between John and Bianca Maria.¹⁰

The subsequent Austrian campaign and siege of Vienna delayed the quick development of the wedding. It was only in 1487 when the solemn delegation, led by Jan Filipec, bishop of Várad (Varadinum, Großwardein, today Oradea, Romania),¹¹ and consisting of three hundred nobles and the same amount of cavalrymen arrived in Milan with the task of finishing the marital contract and performing the wedding by proxy. Bianca's dowry was to amount to 150 thousand florins, of which fifty thousand florins were in trousseau items.¹² Even though Schönherr describes Bianca as the richest bride in Europe, the dowry for her wedding with John was only a fraction of the dowry negotiated for her later union with Maximilian I of Habsburg¹³ (400 thousand florins) but this astronomical amount was de facto a price for the imperial investiture of Milan for Ludovico Sforza.¹⁴ But also in comparison with other contemporary brides the arranged dowry seems to fall into an average category: Bona of Savoy,¹⁵ Bianca's mother, brought a dowry equalling 100 thousand ducats¹⁶ along with additional 40 thousand in the trousseau belongings;¹⁷ Ippolita Maria Sforza,¹⁸ Bianca's aunt, was equipped with a dowry of 200 thousand florins;¹⁹ Isabella

⁸ Kovács, "Mattia Corvino e la corte di Milano," 76.

⁹ Ludovico Maria Sforza/Ludovico il Moro (1452–1508), Duke of Milan (1494–1500).

¹⁰ Schönherr, *Hunyadi Corvin János (1473–1504)*, 42.

¹¹ John/János/Jan Filipec (1431–1509), Bishop of Várad (1476–1490), Chancellor (1485–1490).

¹² Schönherr, *Hunyadi Corvin János (1473–1504)*, 47–49.

¹³ Maximilian I Habsburg (1459–1519), King of the Romans/German King (1486–1519), Archduke of Austria (1493–1519), Holy Roman Emperor (1508–1519).

¹⁴ Black, *Absolutism in Renaissance Milan: Plenitude of Power under the Visconti and the Sforza 1329–1535*, 84–85.

¹⁵ Bona of Savoy (1449–1503), Duchess of Milan as the second spouse of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan.

¹⁶ Approximately 140 thousand florins. Cf. Häberlein, *The Fuggers of Augsburg*, 7.

¹⁷ Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court: Milan under Galeazzo Maria Sforza*, 48.

¹⁸ Ippolita Maria Sforza (1445–1488), wife of the Duke of Calabria, who later reigned as King Alfonso II of Naples.

¹⁹ Bryce, "Fa finire uno bello studio et dice volere studiare: Ippolita Sforza and Her Books," 56.

of Aragon,²⁰ Bianca's sister-in-law 100 thousand;²¹ Matthias's wife Beatrice of Aragon was even assigned a dowry totalling 200 thousand ducats which would make roughly 300 thousand florins.²²

On 25 November 1487, the proxy nuptial rite, officiated by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza,²³ Bianca's aunt, took place in the ducal palace. Prior to the ceremony Gian Francesco Marliani delivered a non-verse epithalamium speech extolling the virtues and families of the groom and bride.²⁴ This oration does not eschew praising of inappropriate figures from Hungarian history, such as Attila, that was, as Anthony D'Elia argues, meant to shock the Italian audience that was deemed these characters evil.²⁵ Given the subsequent glorification of King Matthias's military exploits in the fights against Turks, the unabashed exaltation of the ancient barbarian might have served to present the metaphorical incorporation of the Hungarian former ferocity and still-existing fighting skills into the Christian world that was under the Ottoman threat.²⁶ However, Marliani was asked to speed up the recital since Ludovico Sforza was feeling unwell so it is doubtful to what extent his speech made an impact on the audience but the epithalamium in the form of a richly ornamented manuscript as a wedding gift found the way to the Corvinian library so it eventually fulfilled its panegyric purpose.²⁷

According to the contemporary practise, the delegation arriving to perform the proxy wedding also accompanied the bride to her new country right away. The urgency for the bride to depart as soon as possible was motivated by the fear that the still not-consummated matrimony could have been dissolved.²⁸ This was not the case for Bianca as her transfer was postponed, first until the following year due to unknown reasons, probably mostly because of Matthias's Austrian campaign, and ultimately it did not take place at all as a result of the

²⁰ Isabella of Aragon/Isabella of Naples (1470–1524), Duchess of Milan and *suo jure* Duchess of Bari.

²¹ Vaglianti, "ISABELLA d'Aragona, Duchessa di Milano."

²² Marti, "Oklevelek Aragóniai Beatrix hagyatékából: Magyar vonatkozású források a spanyol katonai lovagrendek iratanyagában," 503; Berzeviczy, *Beatrix királyné (1457–1508): Történelmi élet- és korrajz*, 127.

²³ Ascanio Maria Sforza (1455–1505), Cardinal (1484–1505).

²⁴ Edited in Ábel, *Olaszországi XV. századbeli írónak Mátyás királyt dicsőítő művei*, 359–81.

²⁵ D'Elia, *The Renaissance of Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 67–69.

²⁶ Pastrnak, "Flores Italiae: Talianské princezny v strednej Európe v neskorom stredoveku," 82–85.

²⁷ Carusi, *Dispacci e lettere di Giacomo Gherardi nunzio pontificio a Firenze e Milano (11 Settembre 1487 – 10 Ottobre 1490)*, 47–48; Schönherr, Hunyadi Corvin János (1473–1504), 52.

²⁸ Spieß, "Unterwegs zu einem fremden Ehemann: Brautfahrt und Ehe in europäischen Fürstenhäusern des Spätmittelalters," 26.

king's sudden death in 1490.²⁹

Nevertheless, the Milanese expended considerable effort to prepare for the passage of their young princess as numerous documents in the state archives of Milan show. The meticulous planning process is recorded in several letters between the state secretary Bartolomeo Calco and Ludovico Sforza, three of which were already edited in the nineteenth century.³⁰ Other papers related to the planning, such as letters, a draft of a letter and of a list of Bianca's travel companions, have remained unpublished. This study aims to provide a scholarly edition of these accounts, alongside the analysis of the main issues featured in them, the composition of the noble entourage that was to accompany Bianca Maria to Hungary and the logistical problems connected with the travel.

The bridal trains in the medieval and early modern era were massive groups of individuals, almost always amounting to hundreds. For instance, Beatrice of Aragon was escorted by 879 people on horses, from that 529 of Hungarians and 350 of Neapolitans;³¹ Bona of Savoy, Bianca Maria's mother, travelled from France with a company exceeding three hundred.³² However, it was not unusual that the total tally of companions surpassed one thousand, to mention just two contemporary examples: Eleanor of Portugal,³³ the wife of Emperor Frederick III,³⁴ was accompanied by three thousand people; Joanna of Castile³⁵ arrived in Flanders in 1496 with a navy numbering over fifteen thousand persons.³⁶ However, these inflated numbers can be explained by an existence of a strong garrison that was to ensure the personal safety of the princess and the most prominent members of the entourage. Still, even in these enormous bridal trains it is possible to discern a hard core, consisting of the princess's

²⁹ Although Schönherr states that the date of departure was stipulated in the marital contract (and this is reverberated later on) but it is not clear what was the source of this claim as the contract specifies nothing of this sort. Schönherr, *Hunyadi Corvin János (1473–1504)*, 76; Kovács, "Mattia Corvino e la corte di Milano," 78; E. Kovács, "Corvin János házassága és a magyar diplomácia," 966. The marital contract in Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 356–59.

³⁰ Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 4:14, 27–9, 30–1; Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza-Visconti, regina dei romani, imperatrice germanica, e gli ambasciatori di Lodovico il Moro alla corte cesarea secondo nuovi documenti*, 12–15.

³¹ Berzeviczy, *Aragóniai Beatrix magyar királyné életére vonatkozó okiratok*, 27–29.

³² Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court: Milan under Galeazzo Maria Sforza*, 51.

³³ Eleanor of Portugal (1434–1467), Empress of the Holy Roman Empire, consort of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III.

³⁴ Frederick III Habsburg (1415–1493), Holy Roman Emperor (1452–1493).

³⁵ Joanna of Castile (1479–1555), Queen of Castile (1504–1555) and Queen of Aragon (1516–1555).

³⁶ Lanckmann, *Leonor de Portugal, imperatriz da Alemanha: Diário de viagem do embaixador Nicolau Lanckman de Valckenstein*, 54; Fleming, *Juana I. Legitimacy and Conflict in Sixteenth-Century Castile*, 17.

household members and aristocrats, whose numbers also added up to hundreds. Why it was necessary to escort the bride with such a major group of people?

In order to answer this question, one has to realize that premodern monarchies lacked a permanent bureaucratic apparatus, and as a result, the rulers relied heavily on personalized communication in diplomatic encounters. Therefore, when encountering other power figures, they were forced to constantly negotiate their social position by various means that directly translated into the social hierarchy.³⁷ One of these means was the high status, number, or physical appearance of the representatives that were to meet the foreign power holders. As a princely wedding was one of a few chances to interact with the other dynasty the magnificence of the bride's retinue was crucial in the construction of the high status of the princess and by extension her entire house. That is why the bridal journey was perceived as a political showcase and both wedding parties strove to staff either the bride's retinue or the fetching company with the most prominent figures.

The Milanese documents reveal how these considerations were very much in progress as one can see a multiple-stage selection of candidates for the bridal company. As the first from the series of letters exchanged between the state secretary Bartolomeo Calco and Ludovico Sforza shows, the process began with drawing up a list of names of aristocrats.³⁸ Calco informs the duke of Milan (but in reality, most likely Ludovico who was the real power wielder) about receiving the roll—unfortunately, it is not clear who authored it, but most probably it was Ludovico himself as the tenor of the following letters suggests. Then, the secretary goes on saying that he will notify, either by correspondence or personally, the chosen noblemen about their mission and the departure date (in April) so they can prepare themselves for the journey.

A wedding of another princess, Beatrice d'Este³⁹ with Ludovico in 1491 gives an idea of how these notifications could look like.⁴⁰ In a letter to several

³⁷ Windler, "From Social Status to Sovereignty: Practices of Foreign Relations from the Renaissance to the Sattelzeit," 254–66.

³⁸ Bartolomeo Calco to the duke of Milan, Milan, 28 February 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo–Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 17; edited in Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 4:14.

³⁹ Beatrice d'Este (1475–1497), Duchess of Bari and Milan by marriage to Ludovico Sforza.

⁴⁰ "Venendo de proxima a Milano la illustrissima duchessa de Ferrara con la illustrissima madona Beatrice sua figliola et consorte de lo illustrissimo signore Ludovico nostro amantissimo barba et patre, le quale ce pare conveniente de honorare [...] volemo tra le altre cose far fare una giostra p.ca a Demenini, dove correrano multi signori et valenthomini, et havendo noi fact electione de la persona tua intra li altri nostri che habbia a giostrare, tene avisamo et imponemo ad metterti bene in ordine secundo la conditione tua, che non manchi ritrovandoti a Milano ali vii del mese de zenaro proximo." The duke of Milan to various recipients,

aristocrats, Gian Galeazzo, the Duke of Milan,⁴¹ firstly briefly states a fact that his uncle is getting married, who is a person “conveniente de honorare”. Subsequently the duke invites the addressee to join a joust he is intending to organize and reminds the invited individual to prepare accordingly for the set date. The answer of one nobleman that was invited (although not exactly to the joust but to the wedding in general) is also extant:

Since serving You is my duty I respond that I will be there at the prescribed time to do what will be in my powers and I will miss no way possible to honour such a triumph.⁴²

At the first sight, a positive reply to the duke’s invitation can be seen as a matter of duty, but the wording, identifying the nuptials as a triumph, might indicate that the invited person perceived the nuptials as a prestigious event tapping into one’s sense of honour.

The same might have been true for participation in the bridal train. How did the first draft of Bianca’s entourage look like? Despite Calco’s succinct phrasing the epistle makes mentions of several names (Conte Alexandro, Vescovo Malicacense, Bracello), which enables us to identify this first draft with the undated roll of people from Bianca Maria’s folder.⁴³ If that being the case, the bridal train was originally supposed to be composed entirely of male personages, three counts, the same number of bishops, messers, and protonotaries. From what we can grasp about the personal background of some of the individuals listed, they were strong Sforza loyalists with good political and diplomatic experience: Federico di Sanseverino, a bishop of Maillezais, was a close collaborator of Ludovico;⁴⁴ Fabrizio Marliani, a bishop of Piacenza, besides being a scholar and bibliophile was also a member of the ducal secret council and performed various diplomatic errands to Ferrara, Florence, or Monferrato, and

Vigevano, 4 December 1490. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1470, carta 5.

⁴¹ Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1469–1494), Duke of Milan (1476–1494). In reality, his uncle governed the Duchy of Milan from 1481. Ludovico Maria Sforza/Ludovico il Moro (1452–1508), Duke of Milan (1494–1500).

⁴² “*Illustrissime princeps et excellentissime domine, domine colendissime. Havendo veduto quanto me scrive vestra Excellentia in invitarme ad honorare le nuptie de la illustrissima duchessa di Bari [...] Li respondo, che essendo mio debito per la servitute ch’io tento con Lei, me trovaro al tempo ordinato a fare quanto sera in me in quelle parte, ne macharo de tutti li modi che me serano possibili per fare honore a tanto triumpho. In questo meglio me recomando nela gratia [...]*” Nicolò da Correggio to the duke of Milan, Ferrara, 5 December 1490. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1470, carta 6.

⁴³ ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 66, the number 4 in the edition.

⁴⁴ Alonge, “SANSEVERINO, Federico.”

even accompanied Anna Sforza⁴⁵ on her wedding transfer to Ferrara in 1491;⁴⁶ Scipione Barbavara, too, was also an influential member of the *consiglio segreto*, Ludovico's close associate and a skilled diplomat.⁴⁷

Overall, this choice of people somewhat takes into the account their social standing but puts a large emphasis on their diplomatic prowess and dynastic loyalty rather than other qualities. Furthermore, aside from two exceptions (*senescalco*—seneschal and *apparechiatore*—preparer of meals) the list does not outline any offices necessary for proper functioning of the princess's household nor does it create an internal hierarchy within the bridal train. Such an internal structure was a constant feature of other bridal households⁴⁸ or entourages of other princely figures en route. For instance, Ferrarese dukes were even during low-profile trips accompanied by *cancelliere* (chancellor), *camerlengo* (chamberlain), *cavalieri* (knights), *paggi* (pages), *scudieri* (squires), *credenziere* (tableware keeper), *apparechiatore*, *famigli* (servants), *cuoco* (cook), *fanti di stalla* (stable servants), *marescalco* (marshal), *mulatieri* (muleteers), *staffieri* (footmen), *sescalco*, *spenditore* (stewards) and *aiutanti* (helpers).⁴⁹ Probably aware of these flaws, the duke of Milan (or Ludovico) instructed Calco to further discuss the selection of travel companions, first with the ducal counsellors Pietro da Gallarate and Pietro Landriano.⁵⁰ According to Calco's report from this discussion, the princess's future household was chosen by her mother, Duchess Bona, so the two officials concentrated only on the entourage consisting of aristocrats that were not to stay with Bianca in Hungary. This laconic information might point to the fact that the inner core of the bridal train, the princess's household, was not so much politically loaded and that is why it was not debated with such concern.

Having examined Ludovico's draft of the noble entourage, the counsellors found it "commendable", which sounds more like a polite way to dismiss it rather than accept it without any misgivings since they immediately go on enumerating the parts that the draft is missing. Firstly, there is no mention of the total number of horses and people that will travel and these details would allow for better logistics of departure. The second and more important point the coun-

⁴⁵ Anna Maria Sforza (1476–1497), first wife of Alfonso I d'Este, future Duke of Ferrara.

⁴⁶ Vaglianti, "MARLIANI, Fabrizio."

⁴⁷ Raponi, "BARBAVARA, Scipione."

⁴⁸ Pastrnak, *Dynasty in Motion: Wedding Journeys in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 53–63.

⁴⁹ Kuffart and Neumann, "Olyan szép kísérete lesz, mint kevés úrnak Itáliában: Az esztergomi érseki udvartartás szervezése 1486/87 folyamán," 9.

⁵⁰ A letter of Bartolomeo Calco to the duke of Milan, Milan, 28 March 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 21, edited in Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 4:27–9.

sellors raise is that the list completely lacks female personages. In their view, it would be not “decent and honourable to let her [=Bianca] travel only with the women that would stay with her”. As a remedy, they suggest to add at least four matrons, wives of illustrious men and women of excellent reputation. This piece of advice fits into the contemporary notion that a woman of princely rank should be followed by a group of females. When Bianca’s niece, Bona Sforza,⁵¹ was about to begin her bridal journey to Krakow, the Polish envoys tried to limit the number of noblewomen due to a considerable financial burden. They too were rebuffed because “nothing is more indecorous than the wife of such a great king traveling without an appropriate retinue.”⁵²

It might not be coincidence that the counsellors advise for adding four matrons. The ladies’ court of Bianca’s mother Bona of Savoy consisted of four female companions (*compagne*), twelve ladies (*donzele*), and several chambermaids. These members of the *Frauenzimmer*, to use a term coined in German lands, carried out various functions according to their social rank and age. There were chambermaids responsible for attending to the princess, such as helping her with dressing or waiting on her; then, unmarried noble maidens whose task was mostly representative — they followed the princess at social gatherings, either as passive (audiences, liturgy) or active participants (dances). And lastly, there was a small group of older ladies that were staffed with an oversight of other damsels.⁵³

As we possess very little information about the household members of Bianca’s entourage it is hard to determine how her *Frauenzimmer* should have looked like but Calco’s letter from 28 March gives an idea that there were at least two groups of females — those that should have stayed with her in Hungary and those that were only to accompany her and return back to Milan. This fact, however, does not help in clarifying the matter as there was no contemporary rule setting out which of the three *Frauenzimmer* groups stayed with the princess after her transfer and wedding. A hint might be found in the marital status of the candidates for the post proposed by the counsellors as well as in the usage of the word *matrone*, which clearly means married, older noblewomen, and therefore, the most senior part of the ladies’ court. Interestingly though, the counsellors did not support their suggestions about adding the matrons by the necessity of oversight, which was usually the main task of

⁵¹ Bona Sforza of Aragon (1494–1557), Queen consort of Poland, Grand Duchess consort of Lithuania (1518–1157) and Duchess of Bari (1524–1557).

⁵² Gorski, *Acta Tomiciana: Epistolarum, Legationum, Responsorum Actionum et Rerum Gestarum Serenissimi Principis Sigismundi Primi, Regis Poloniae at Magni Ducis Lithuniae*, 241.

⁵³ Keller, “Ladies-in-Waiting at the Imperial Court of Vienna from 1550 to 1700: Structures, Responsibilities and Career Patterns,” 81.

these office-holders, but on account of the representation and building of social status for the princess.

This representative aspect is further accentuated in the next revision of the travelling list, documented in Calco's letter to Ludovico on 2 April.⁵⁴ Unlike the previous discussion, this time Calco examined the list with Milanese archbishop Guido Antonio Arcimboldi.⁵⁵ He, too, regarded the list to be drawn up with a great deal of consideration but he had many suggestions on how to improve it. Firstly, he advises to form a more specific hierarchy within the bridal court, especially by adding a leading figure for Bianca and her household, which is a position corresponding to the office of high steward (Hofmeister) in the German lands. Then, having visited Hungary, Arcimboldi claims to have familiarity with the ways of the king of Hungary — after all, it was him and Francesco Fontana who orchestrated the entire wedding plan — and thus, he knows that “His Royal Majesty would aim to send such a splendid legation [to fetch the princess] as no other potentate has ever done, either in terms of the number of persons, overall pomp, or ornaments”. The archbishop expresses, as Calco refers, a desire that Milan would match this level of magnificence, and with this intention in mind, he suggested to cross out from the list some persons, especially prelates, for not having the appropriate appearance nor a faculty to obtain one, and to add other distinguished individuals who did not lack this sort of visual appearance nor the richness and noble rank.

The archbishop's motives for these suggestions are clear: “... in that country [=Hungary] it is paid great attention to these aspects and they are source of not little appraisal”. In his view, the personal qualities of the travel companions, such as resourcefulness and lineage, demonstrated by the outward form, are tokens of social estimation that serve to elevate the standing of the entire duchy and to match the political importance of the other wedding party. One of the qualities — the number of the bridal train — is even expressed in very concrete terms: the entourage, according to the archbishop, should include at least six hundred people. It is unclear what this figure stemmed from; it might have been based on precedents or on undisclosed data the archbishop possessed.⁵⁶ Alternatively, this number might have been an articulation of the unwritten practices at the Milanese court since the real-time bridal train with which Bi-

⁵⁴ Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Milan, 28 March 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 22, edited in Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 12–15.

⁵⁵ Guido Antonio Arcimboldi (1428–1497), Archbishop of Milan (1488–1497).

⁵⁶ In 1476, Matthias sent to Naples a fetching delegation amounting to 529 horses, Filipec led embassy to perform the wedding by proxy in 1487 was of similar number. Berzeviczy, *Aragóniai Beatrix magyar királyné életére vonatkozó okiratok*, 27–29; Schönher, *Hunyadi Corvin János (1473–1504)*, 47.

anca Maria was escorted for her nuptials with Maximilian of Habsburg in 1493 roughly comprised of the same amount of participants.⁵⁷ Interestingly, it is also the number of wedding entourages of two Ferrarese brides, Eleanor of Aragon and Lucrezia Borgia.⁵⁸

What is important, Arcimboldi's ideas did not come solely out of his personal diplomatic experience but they were a part of the systematic effort of the Milanese officials to aim for this kind of symmetry in terms of representativeness and magnificence between the wedding parties. Following this goal, they left no stone unturned in discovering the likely actions of the king of Hungary and long before having the discussions about the bridal entourage, they dispatched a special delegation, consisting of Gian Francesco Olive and Guidantonio Arcimboldi (not the archbishop yet), to Hungary, in order to learn what persons and number of horses King Matthias is planning to include into the fetching embassy.⁵⁹ Most importantly, they were supposed to find out who would be in charge of this delegation and what the social rank of the participants would be. Since a part of Olive and Arcimboldi's mission was also to enquire about the festivities planned at the Hungarian court, one of them is a likely author of a register of the gifts Matthias made during his 1476 wedding with Beatrice of Aragon, which might have served as a blueprint for the Milanese how to prepare for the king's generosity during his son's nuptials.⁶⁰

The bridal entourage was clearly arranged with regard to the other wedding party, but not only in terms of representativeness and building of social status but also in regard to the current political landscape. Arcimboldi strictly advises not to include anybody with ties to the kingdom of Naples as such a person would be ill-received at the Hungarian court. Most likely, this might have been motivated by Queen Beatrice's perpetual efforts to hinder the marital alliance

⁵⁷ Hochrinner, "Bianca Maria Sforza: Versuch Einer Biographie," 33.

⁵⁸ Eleanor of Aragon or Naples (1450–1493), wife of Duke Ercole I and Beatrice's elder sister; Lucrezia Borgia (1480–1519), second wife of Alfonso I and daughter of Pope Alexander VI. Kuffart and Neumann, "Olyan szép kísérete lesz, mint kevés úrnak Itáliában: Az esztergomi érseki udvartartás szervezése 1486/87 folyamán," 10.

⁵⁹ The instruction from February 27, 1488, is edited in Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 3:382–5. The envoys were even given a cipher key in order to write an encrypted record but this was not necessary as the wedding transfer was deferred until the following year. E. Kovács, "Corvin János házassága és a magyar diplomácia," 966.

⁶⁰ This record is composed of two parts, the first is an inventory of the gifts given to Beatrice by Matthias, and the second is the inventory of the presents given to Beatrice's travel companions returning back to Naples. The names of the Neapolitans enable us to identify this record with the 1476 wedding as neither Matthias or Beatrice names are stated. Given the enigmatic inscription "Gifts of the king to the queen of Hungary" the document was incorrectly allocated to Bianca Maria's folder (busta 1467) in ASMi. See more in my paper with a full edition of the inventories Pastrnak, "Mechanics of Royal Generosity: The Gifts from the Wedding of King Matthias Corvinus and Beatrice of Aragon (1476)."

between the Milanese princess and the Hungarian bastard as such union would not only question her role as a queen but also would mean a shift in Hungarian foreign policy from her native kingdom of Naples to Milan.⁶¹ Similar suggestions about not including politically inconvenient individuals in the bride's escort are documented elsewhere too. The government of Tyrol, arranging a retinue for Joanna of Habsburg,⁶² soon-to-be wife of Francesco de' Medici, strongly protested against appointing a Mantuan for the position of the princess's chamberlain, as this "could cause a displeasure to the duke of Florence."⁶³

While the Milanese archbishop and his propositions can be seen as an expanding element — he advocates for a massive retinue, adding distinguished personas, even creating a separate household for Count Alessandro — the counsellors Landriano and Gallarate with whom Calco continued to talk over the arrangement seem to be a slightly limiting factor. In the next letter,⁶⁴ they are said to again urge Ludovico to determine the precise numbers of horses and people since this would greatly facilitate the organization and the overall logistics. Unlike Arcimboldi, they advocate curbing the personal households of the nobles, most likely due to the financial costs and more problematic logistics. Quite astutely, they let the decision be at Ludovico's discretion as this was probably not a popular action to take. At the end, however, the duke let the counsellors make the judgment,⁶⁵ but their concerns show the complexity of the entourage's logistics. Furthermore, Calco's last letter to Ludovico from 18 May⁶⁶ demonstrates the extent to which the planning was not automated but rather depended on the personal preferences of the people in charge—in informing the entourage members that the journey has just been postponed the secretary does not act based on the usual practice but on his personal opinion that this would be a sound course of action that just "occurred to him".

An additional part of the planning was a reception for the Hungarians coming to fetch the princely bride. Usually, it was quite challenging to find proper lodging for hundreds of people coming to one place at once and that is why

⁶¹ E. Kovács, "Magyarország és Nápoly politikai kapcsolatai a Mátyás-korban," 244.

⁶² Joanna of Austria (1547–1578), Archduchess of Austria, Grand Princess of Tuscany (1565–1578).

⁶³ Pastrnak, *Dynasty in Motion: Wedding Journeys in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 78–79.

⁶⁴ Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Milan, 28 April 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 20. The number 1 in the edition.

⁶⁵ A letter draft by Ludovico Sforza to Bartolomeo Calco, Vigevano, 30 April, 1489, ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 21. The number 2 in the edition.

⁶⁶ Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Milan, 18 May 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 22. The number 3 in the edition.

bridal trains had to be split into smaller groups when passing minor towns that could not supply adequate quarters. A big city such as Milan did not have to worry about the sufficiency of accommodation options but as the Milanese documents show, a different sort of problem could have emerged. Gallarate and Landriano exhort Ludovico to consider the possibility of lodging the Hungarians not in the burghers' houses but in the ducal palace since "this nation [=Hungarian] is very different, not only in the language but also in the life-style".⁶⁷ Housing the members of the bridal train in various dwellings across the city was standard practise. Some cities, such as Genoa in 1548, issued a decree ordering the citizens to prepare their flats for the visitors under threat of heave fine.⁶⁸

Why did the counsellors deem cultural differences an obstacle to lodging the foreign guests with locals? Different languages and customs might have caused tensions and even conflicts. For instance, Fleming and Spanish entou-rages of Charles V and Philip II caused an upheaval and even armed conflicts when travelling through Spain and Genoa respectively.⁶⁹ Yet the advice of the Milanese counsellors does not seem motivated by the angst of such cultural clashes. Gallarate and Landriano's reasoning is indeed based on the cultural differences between Hungarians and Italians but they apparently fear mutual dissatisfaction rather than conflict: "they [=the burghers] would not know how to make their [=Hungarian] stews and to take care of them according to their custom, which would lead to the displeasure of both sides".⁷⁰ We might question the sincerity of the burghers' claims (they could have been motivated to refuse the foreigners out of expenses and personal comfort) but at least the dietary differences between Italians and Hungarians at that time were reflected and discussed. In his collection of facetie, dedicated to John Corvinus, the Italian humanist Galeotto Marzio brought attention to the fact that Hungarians serve stews for every meal and in contrast to Italians, they use spices, such as saffron, cloves, cinnamon, pepper, and ginger in great amounts.⁷¹ It is open

⁶⁷ Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Milan, 28 April 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 20. The number 1 in the edition.

⁶⁸ The decrees of the Genovese magistrates for the stay of Maximilian II on his wedding journey to Spain, dated 14 and 16 July 1548, edited in Malfatti, *El Archiduque Maximiliano, Gobernador de España: Su Viaje a Valladolid En 1548 y Su Boda Con La Infanta María: Crónicas y Documentos*, 169–70.

⁶⁹ Pastrnak, *Dynasty in Motion: Wedding Journeys in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 44. For more about accommodation and hospitality during bridal transfers see Pastrnak, 41–45.

⁷⁰ Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Milan, 28 April 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 20. The number 1 in the edition.

⁷¹ "Moris est apud Hungaros [...] omnia in iure apponere; variant enim iura pro rerum varietate. [...] semper et proprio iure aut merguntur aut condiuntur. [...] Croco enim gariophilis,

to debate to what extent the Milanese were aware of Marzio's text, authored around the same time,⁷² but the notion that Central European regions had different culinary standards might have circulated via other channels. In that case, the burghers' misgivings could have been well substantiated. But if nothing else, such a notion was an effective and astute strategy from their side to politely decline the ducal demands to host the foreigners, which could have been an arguably expensive enterprise.

At any rate, the counsellors rightly point out that if the duke forced the citizens to accommodate the transalpine guests, it would "lead to little satisfaction for both parties" and that is why it is better for the honour of "our lord [the duke] and the lord king [Matthias] to lodge the said company [of Hungarians] at the court".⁷³ In other words, such an arrangement would have only resulted in annoyance and mutual disappointment, which would not be a great start to the dynastic and political alliance. Furthermore, Milanese hospitality and the public image of the polity could have been subjected to scrutiny. The ill-prepared reception could have massively offended the other wedding party, which Archbishop Arcimboldi warns against as well. Besides his suggestion to exclude controversial noblemen (who might have ties to Naples, as we have seen above) from the bridal train, he also draws attention to sartorial differences. In his view, everybody from Bianca Maria's entourage should wear long dresses because "this is their [=Hungarian] custom and they greatly disapprove of these short clothes".⁷⁴ Besides the careful staffing of the bridal entourage, awareness of the cultural differences is thus another way how to please the other wedding party, to build the social status of the duchy and to achieve symmetry between the two political players entering into the marital alliance.

In assessing these preparatory processes, we can find an interesting comparative example from around the same time (1486/87), involving the Hungarian and Italian actors too, but this time not the Milanese but the Ferrarese. Arrangements of the entourage of the newly appointed archbishop of Esztergom (Strigonium, Gran), Ippolito d'Este, Queen Beatrice's nephew, show many similar traits to Bianca Maria's case. Like the Milanese, the Ferrarese also aimed to staff Ippolito's train with the most illustrious personages possible. Similarly,

cinnamon et pipere gingibereque et speciebus in maxima copia utuntur." Marzio, De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Mathiae: ad duces Iohannem eius filium liber, 17.

⁷² Around 1484–1486. Marzio, *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Mathiae: ad duces Iohannem eius filium liber*, III.

⁷³ Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Milan, 28 April 1489. ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 20. The number 1 in the edition.

⁷⁴ "[...] che el fusse bene admonire ognuno ad portare veste longhe, peroche cosi e il costume loro et dannano grandamente questi habiti corti." Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 4:31.

the Hungarian royal couple wanted to match the high social rank of Ippolito's Italian companions and provide him with an equally — or more — prestigious Hungarian entourage.⁷⁵ Ippolito's entourage was discussed even more in detail: two Ferrarese special delegations (we know only about one Milanese) were sent to Central Europe and several drafts were compiled with Beatrice having a major say in the matters.⁷⁶ In both cases, entourages of the prominent individuals (princess, archbishop—the queen's nephew) served as a canvas for projecting the dynasties' and realms' aspirations for social standing and power balance.

Edition

1. Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza

Milan, 28 April 1489

ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 20.

A letter by Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza, relating his discussions with the ducal counsellors. They advise give precise numbers of horses and limiting the personal households of the nobles. Concerning the Hungarian embassy, they advise lodging it at the court rather than in the citizens' houses.

Illustrissimo signore mio observantissimo. Ho facto intendere á questi consiglieri deputati allo apparecchio de la illustrissima madona Bianca, le ordinatione quale me mandoe l'Excelentia vestra questi proximi giorni acio se possa provvedere á quelle cose sono da exequire dependente. Ma perche in epse principalmente se contene che per loro se habia ad taxare le persone et caualli douerano condure seco li homini et donne deputate ad accompagnare la predita madona in Ungaria, hano dicto parerli necessario che per l'Excelentia vestra sia prima declarato el numero quale debia essere tutta la compagnia, acio sapiano como governarsi in fare la dicta limitatione, quando epsa voglia pur che la sia facta per loro: ben la pregano chella se digna limitare al mancho la comitiva del illustrissimo conte Alexandro et reverendo vescovo Maleacense: et perche la signoria vostra possi piu facilmente fare quella deliberatione gli piacera sopra questo: li mando qui incluse le liste cosi de quelli haverano remanere in Ungaria como ritornare indretto.

Circa lo alloggiare la comitiva mandara in qua lo serenissimo signore re in casa de li citadini: li prediti consiglieri hano repetito quello che altre volte fecero scrivere alla Excelentia vostra el parere suo essere, che non senza grande

⁷⁵ Kuffart and Neumann, "Olyan szép kísérete lesz, mint kevés úrnak Itáliában: Az esztergomi érseki udvartartás szervezése 1486/87 folyamán," 15, 26.

⁷⁶ Kuffart and Neumann, 4–8, 15, 30, 41.

difficulta se ritrovera veruno qual voglia tore simili carichi, per essere quella natione molto diversa da la nostra non solamente del parlare, ma nel modo de vivere, et quando pur li acceptassino per obedire à quello gli fusso commandato, non saperiano farli quelli soi potagii et tractarli secundo el costume loro, in modo che da l'uno et l'altro canto ne sequiria pocha contenteza, siche per questo et alcuni altri respecti existimano essere melio et maiore honore de lo illustrissimo signore nostro et anchora del signore re alloggiare la predita compagnia in corte. Non di manco se remettono in tutto al sapientissimo iudicio de l'Excelentia vostra, alla quale me ricomando. Mediolani die 28. Aprilis 1489.

Illustrissime Dominationis Vostrae servitor Bartholomeus Chalcus

[a tergo: Illustrissimo rincipi et excellentissimo domino mihi observantissimo domino duci Barii etc.

Viglevani. Cito.]

2. Ludovico Sforza to Bartolomeo Calco

Vigevano, 30 April 1489

ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 21.

A draft letter by Ludovico Sforza to Bartolomeo Calco in response to Calco's previous letter (above). Ludovico agrees with the counsellors' views and entrusts them and his seneschals with these matters.

Messer Bartholomeo. Havemo inteso per una vostra de 28 del presente como haueti facto vedere alli consiglieri deputati le liste della compagnia de Hungaria: et che havendo noi dargli la cura de statuire ad ognuno el numero delle persone hauerano condurre seco: loro habiano responso che per noi fosse prima declarato el numero quale habia ad essere in tutta dicta compagnia: á questo ve dicemo che noi non se ne volemo imparare *niente* ma che dasemo a loro la cura a ~~loro~~ de questo faciano allo li sperare conveniente.

Circa lo alloggiare li Hungari che venirano: epsi consiglieri siano de parere, che sera ad magiore satisfacione depsi Hungari et piu honore nostro che se allogiano in corte che per le case delli citadini: per respecto de le lingue diverse da le nostre, et per li diversi costumi de fare li potagii al modo ~~loro~~: de questo siamo contenti et daremo la cura alli nostri seschali de fare aparichiare.⁷⁷

Che essendo ~~li~~ gia piu giorni li uno messo del vescovo de Coyra, quale procu-

⁷⁷ The paragraph in italics is preserved as a separate letter from 3 April (sic!) in the State Archives of Modena (unspecified location) and is edited in Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, 4:32.

ra el pagamento suo del l'anno passato, scriveremo á ~~Marchesino~~ Philippo Ther che al messe de marzo li dia 500 ducati.

~~Havendo anchora inteso per le vostre como sonno li quelli Varesini et li agenti per li conti de Lando dimandati da noi: fareti che vengano qui da noi per essere cosi la mente nostra.~~

Della comitiva che se de dare al conte Alexandro et al Vescovo: puro dassemo la cura alli prediti consiglieri deputati che li diano quello che li pare et sii conveniente.

3. Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza

Milan, 18 May 1489

ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 22.

A letter by Bartolomeo Calco to Ludovico Sforza. Calco and the ducal counsellor Gallarate ask permission to notify the selected noblemen about the postponement of Bianca Maria's departure for Hungary.

Illustrissimo Signore mio observantissimo. Li giorni passati quando se comincio attendere alli apparati de la illustrissima madona Biancha, la signoria vostra me mandoe la lista de alcuni gentilhomini et prelati haveva electo perche la accompagnassero in Ungaria, alli quali fu scripto in nome del nostro illustrissimo signore, che se mettesino in punto, et perche hora é differita questa andata, me era venuto in mente chel fusse bene dargline qualche aviso, acio non stiino su la spesa de cavalli et familii, como é da pensare che haverano facto. Il medesimo me ha ricordato messer Petro da Gallarate del che me parso avisarne la signoria vostra perche parendoli me faccia intendere la volunta sua, secundo la quale sempre me governaro: et ad lei de continuo me ricomando. Mediolani 18. maii 1489.

Illustrissime Dominationis Vostrae Servitor Batholomeus Chalcus

[a tergo: Illustrissimo principi et excellentissimo domino mihi observantissimo domino duci Barii etc.

Viglevani. Cito.]

4. A proposed list of Bianca Maria Sforza's bridal entourage.

sine data

ASMi Carteggio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane, busta 1467, carta 66.

Compagnia che ha andare in Ungaria con la illustrissima madona Bianca

Primo

El magnifico conte Alexandro

El reverendissimo vescovo da san Severino

El reverendo vescovo de Piasenza

El reverendo vescovo de Novara

El prothonotario da Scipione

El prothonotario di Negri

Messer Scipione Barbavorra

Messer Raphael Zarniello

Messer Ambrosio del Mayno

Conte Guido Zarello

Uno de li figlioli del Conte Manfredo

Iacomo da Soregno per seschalco

Barcello et -

Refendente - per aparechiatore

(Translated by the author)