

MOHÁCS 1526–2026  
RECONSTRUCTION AND REMEMBRANCE

ISABELLA JAGIELLON,  
QUEEN OF HUNGARY  
(1539–1559)

Edited by  
ÁGNES MÁTÉ AND TERÉZ OBORNI

STUDIES



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## ISABELLA AND HER ITALIAN CONNECTIONS

When dealing with the Italian relations of Isabella Jagiellon one has to speak first of all about the role of her Italian mother, Bona Sforza. She was not only a tender mother, but also a supporter and counselor of her daughter during her lifetime. Isabella inherited from her a number of graceful characteristics of Italian nature, as testified by Bishop of Nocera Paolo Giovio (1483–1552), a contemporary historiographer, physician and museologist from Como: “*Isabella fanciulla di virile et erudito ingegno; e quel che molto importò per allettare l’animo di lui [i.e., the Polish king] amabilissima per vaghezza Italiana e per leggiadria Polonica.*”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Isabella became acquainted with Italian Renaissance culture through her mother. Like Queen Bona, Isabella also made many efforts to maintain this culture in a totally alien, Central European milieu. Her court frequently included many courtesans inherited directly from Bona Sforza. Taking into consideration the above facts, I first investigate the role of Bona Sforza in Isabella’s life. Moreover, I analyze some of the Italian contacts of their family, people who played an important role in political or court life in Kraków or in Transylvania, using lesser-known primary sources. Finally, I present some similarities in the destiny of the Italian queen and mother Bona Sforza and that of her daughter Isabella Jagiellon.

### BONA SFORZA (1494–1557) AND HER INFLUENCE

It is a well-known fact that before becoming queen of Hungary, Isabella was educated at the court of her father, King Sigismund I of Poland (ruled 1506–1548), in Kraków. This court was largely influenced by the king’s Italian wife, Bona Sforza. The Sforza princess originated from a prominent Italian noble family. She

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<sup>1</sup> Paolo Giovio, *Delle istorie del suo tempo*, translated by Lodovico Domenichi. Venezia: Al Segno della Concordia, 1608, 547.

was born from the union of Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Isabella of Aragon<sup>2</sup> (her maternal grandmother was thus Ippolita Maria Sforza) in 1494, an extremely unlucky year. Indeed, 1494 was the year when Charles VIII of France attacked the Italian Peninsula. During the following Italian Wars (1494–1559), the Italian states could not protect their independence from French and Spanish domination.<sup>3</sup> Bona Sforza's family was also a direct victim of these wars, since Bona Sforza's father, Gian Galeazzo Sforza, died at the age of 25 in October 1494, when Bona was just eight months old. According to many contemporary chroniclers like Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Domenico Malipiero, his death was due to poisoning ordered by his uncle and regent of Milan, Ludovico Maria Sforza (also known as Lodovico il Moro). Lodovico il Moro had made some previous efforts to obtain the Duchy of Milan from Gian Galeazzo. After the death of Gian Galeazzo, the infant Bona Sforza and her mother had to renounce the throne of Milan and escape to Naples, to the court of their relative Frederic II of Aragon. As compensation the ladies received from Ludovico Sforza, who had also been the Duke of Bari since 1479, some territories in Puglia and Calabria. This story may remind us of the fate of Isabella Jagiellon, who would receive the duchies of Opolen and Ratibor from her enemy, Ferdinand I (1526–1564), in exchange for renouncing the throne of the Principality of Transylvania.

In Bari, Isabella of Aragon started to build a court by inviting numerous humanists and physicians into her service. Despite having her own court and relative independence Isabella of Aragon was always dissatisfied with her status of victim of historical circumstances. Thus as a little girl, Bona was inspired by both her mother's powerful personality and the tension that grew inside her as a result of her fate. Bona trusted her mother wholeheartedly and started to transform her own personality in an effort to emulate that of her mother.<sup>4</sup> Bona's education in Bari was overseen personally by her mother, as decades later she would educate her own daughter Isabella in Kraków. Bona Sforza was educated in the spirit of Renaissance humanism: she studied history, law, theology and the natural sciences, besides receiving instruction in dancing and singing. She also spoke fluent Spanish and Latin.<sup>5</sup> Later on Isabella of Aragon assigned the task of educating Bona to Crisostomo Colonna, who described his pupil in 1516 with the following words: "*molto colta, di temperamento sanguigno, di altezza media, né troppo magra né troppo grassa, di buona indole, conosce quattro libri di Virgilio, molte lettere di Cicerone, diversi epigrammi, sa a memoria il Petrarca,*

2 Achille Dina, *Isabella of Aragon duchessa di Milano e di Bari, 1471–1524*. Milano: Tip. S. Giuseppe, 1921.

3 Michael Mallett and Christine Shaw, *The Italian Wars, 1494–1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Pearson, 2012.

4 Gerardo Cioffari, 'Bona Sforza. Aspetti religiosi ed umanitari della sua personalità', in *La Regina Bona Sforza tra Puglia e Polonia. Atti del Convegno promosso dall'Associazione culturale "Regina Bona Sforza" sotto il patrocinio dell' Regione Puglia della Provincia, del Comune e dell'Università di Bari*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1987, 70.

5 Krzysztof Żaboliński, 'La Regina Bona e la sua corte (Królowa Bóna i jej dwór)', in *Bona Sforza "Una principessa italiana sul trono di Polonia."* Pessano: Mimpe-Docete, 2004, 30.

*scrive e parla in modo particolarmente dotto.*<sup>6</sup> Bona was acquainted with Latin literature and history, she was a good dancer and rider, and a passionate hunter. She started to become familiar with the art of governance by learning how the Kingdom of Naples functioned. She would use this knowledge later, as the wife of King Sigismund of Poland so efficiently that an Italian diplomat wrote about her in 1532: *“la rezina... è fatta omnipotente et ha tolto tutta l’autorità al marito.”*<sup>7</sup> Bona’s mother did not give up the hope of reacquiring the Duchy of Milan even after Ludovico Moro lost power in 1500 and when he died in 1508. For this reason Isabella tried to marry her daughter to Massimiliano Sforza, the first-born son of Ludovico il Moro. Massimiliano became Duke of Milan in 1513, using the chaotic situation caused by the Italian Wars between France and Spain. However, in 1515 the Duchy of Milan was occupied again by Francis I of France.<sup>8</sup> Following these events, Princess Bona was advised by the husband of her great aunt Bianca Maria Sforza, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, regarding her marriage plans. Maximilian suggested that she marry King of Poland Sigismund I Jagiellon, who had recently lost his first wife, Barbara Szapolyai. Taking this advice, the 25-year-old Bona Sforza married the Polish king, who was 51 years old, in April 1518. Their first daughter, Isabella, was born on January 18 of the following year. Bona, who was named after her paternal grandmother, Bona of Savoya (wife of Galeazzo Maria Sforza in the years 1468–1476), followed the family tradition when she gave the name Isabella of Aragon, the name of her mother, to the newborn Isabella Jagiellon.

On the one hand, many contemporary writers condemned Bona Sforza for her behavior as a young wife of her old husband, Sigismund. According to a Milanese manuscript, probably from the seventeenth century, she was criticized for three things in Poland: her *monetae falsae*, *facies picta* and *vulva non stricta*.<sup>9</sup> The first refers to the supposition that there had been fake coins mixed in with Bona’s dowry, the second suggests that the Italian princess introduced the excessive use of cosmetics in Poland and the third alludes to the reputation of girls coming from Italian ruling families for not having lived an ascetic life before marriage.

On the other hand, other chroniclers wrote about Bona Sforza in a totally different manner. These sources emphasized how much Bona had changed when arriving to the court of Kraków: she became graceful, she initiated changes to both domestic and foreign policy, she revitalized cultural life and tried to reform the royal court in Kraków, obviously to her own taste in an Italian manner. The energetic, ambitious, proud and determined young queen soon managed

6 Henryc Barycz, ‘Bona Sforza, regina di Polonia’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 11. Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1969, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bona-sforza-regina-di-polonia\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bona-sforza-regina-di-polonia_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/) (accessed on March, 1, 2020).

7 Barycz, ‘Bona Sforza’.

8 Bona fought for the throne of Milan even while living in Poland.

9 György Domokos, ‘Izabella királyné levelei a Modenai Állami Levéltárban’, *Turul* 87:1 (2014) 25; Abou-el-Haj Rifa’at, ‘Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 87:4 (1967) 498–512.

to take control over her aging king. This fact was noticed already in 1525 by contemporary political actors, who wrote that the Italian queen had virtually cast a spell over her husband.<sup>10</sup> Living on Wawel Hill, the site of one of the largest royal courts in Europe, Bona could not only take part in the reception of ambassadors from the Ottoman Empire, Russia, the Kingdom of Hungary and countries in Western Europe, but was also able to play an active role in political decision-making. Her strategy was always to collect information from different sources and to adapt her decisions to the actual situation.<sup>11</sup> Although normally the royal orators as diplomats worked under the authority of the royal chancellery and were therefore Polish by nationality, some exceptions to this rule are known. For instance, the Italian Ludovico Alifio enjoyed the royal couple's trust to such a great degree that he was elected to the position of chancellor. Moreover, Queen Bona also trusted the Italian lawyers Giambattista Ferdinando from Bari (who later gained noble rank in Poland) and Antonio Laterciano from Taranto.<sup>12</sup>

Having been educated in the spirit of Renaissance humanism, Bona Sforza influenced through her own taste the culture and activities of patronage of the Jagiellonian court as well.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, her helpers were the members of her court brought from Italy to the very different environment in Poland. The queen was accompanied by, among others, 13 Italian ladies-in-waiting, including Beatrice Zurlo and Lucrezia Alifio, sister of the above-mentioned lawyer and royal chancellor Ludovico Alifio. Some of the ladies in her service, such as Beatrice Roselli, Porzia Arcamone and Laura Effrem, married Polish noblemen.<sup>14</sup> Her own Italian tailors also composed part of her inner court. As Queen Bona liked to eat well, the kitchens on Wawel Hill were also dominated by Italians. The head of the kitchens was Cola Maria de Charis from Naples, who later received knighthood from King Sigismund I. Most of the ingredients used in the royal kitchens were also imported from the queen's homeland: spices, olive oil, oranges, lemons and rice regularly arrived to Kraków from Italy.<sup>15</sup> The person responsible for the royal gardens and stables was a certain Tarambino from Ferrara. Similarly, Bona's doctors and pharmacists also came from different parts of Italy, e.g., Giovanni Andrea Valentino came from Modena, Cola Categnani

10 Barycz, 'Bona Sforza, regina di Polonia.'

11 Gerardo Cioffari, *Bona Sforza: donna del Rinascimento tra Italia e Polonia*. Bari: Levante, 2000, 82. The description of the atmosphere of the court of Kraków in 1527: "*Qui sono oratori francesi, angli, ongari, et de re Ferdinando, sono ancora li ordinarii nuncii tartari, moschi, vallachi; el re de Svetia ha mandato oratori... Qui ne la corte nostra, piena de varie nationi, se dicono molte cose...*" (letter from G. A. Valentino to the Duke of Mantova Federico II Gonzaga).

12 Cioffari, *Bona Sforza*, 83–87.

13 Wojciech Szymon Rothbard, *The Cultural Influence and Artistic Patronage of Queen Bona Sforza in Early 16th Century Poland–Lithuania*. Master's thesis, Budapest: Central European University, 2010.

14 Cioffari, *Bona Sforza*, 87.

15 Żabolicki, 'La Regina Bona e la sua corte,' 33.



from Brindisi and three physicians – Iacopo Zofo, Bartolomeo Minerva and Iacopo Ferdinando – arrived from Bari.<sup>16</sup>

The queen's court musician and chapel composer who stayed in Poland for 30 years and greatly influenced the development of Polish music was Alessandro Pesenti from Verona. The Italian who had the biggest impact on Bona's life was her confessor, Padre Marco della Torre. This Franciscan monk, who earned his university degree in Padua, had the primary task of governing the queen's court, though he also became Bona's counsellor, thus acquiring a significant degree of political power in Poland. As far as foreign affairs were concerned, Padre della Torre tried to strengthen the relationship between Poland and the Republic of Venice. In domestic affairs he concentrated on religious questions, notably impeding the spread of Protestantism in his new country. The Italian community of merchants, artists and other employees of the court found in him a leader who also administered to them spiritually at a separate chapel in the Franciscan Church of Kraków.<sup>17</sup>

Bona Sforza was connected most closely to cities in southern Italy such as Bari and Naples, though culturally speaking she had important contacts with the courts in Ferrara and Mantua in northern Italy. The Gonzaga court of Mantua was led by Isabelle d'Este, one of the most educated ladies in contemporary Italy and a relative of Bona with whom she had a very close relationship. The regular exchange of gifts between the Isabella d'Este and Bona were signs of their friendship.

Due to her many contacts and multifaceted interests, Queen Bona established a regular postal service between Poland and a series of Italian cities, such as Milan, Venice, Florence, Ferrara, Mantua, Modena, Naples and Bari. The queen had special officials for each and every personal and political issue in Italy.<sup>18</sup> Her most important goal was to become politically independent from the Habsburgs and she also used the marriage of her first-born daughter to reach this objective. Unlike her mother, Isabella of Aragon, a faithful friend of the Spanish Habsburgs, Bona Sforza became the fiercest enemy of Ferdinand I Habsburg, forming a political bond with Alfonso I d'Este, ally of the French. In the years 1547–1548 she attempted to form a direct alliance with France as well.<sup>19</sup>

In her private life Bona became a faithful and loving wife, and devoted mother of six children. She also attempted assiduously to maintain morale at the court. She was especially fond of her first-born daughter, Isabella, who had been named – as mentioned above – after her mother. Unlike her mother, who had betrothed Bona to Sigismund I Jagiellon following the advice of Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I, Bona Sforza pursued a strongly anti-Habsburg policy, offering the hand of her daughter Isabella to King John I Szapolyai of Hungary,

16 Nicola Mongelli, 'Iacopo Ferdinando barese a Cracovia, medico di Bona e Sigismondo e il suo "Tractatus" (1543)', *Archivio Storico Pugliese* 34 (1981) 211–280.

17 Żaboliński, 'La Regina Bona e la sua corte', 34.

18 Her agent in the court of Mantua, for instance, was Giacomo da Montagna until his death in 1546.

19 Barycz, 'Bona Sforza, regina di Polonia'.

rival to Ferdinand I Habsburg, in an evident sign of this policy. The wedding of 20-year-old Isabella was commemorated among others by Jacopo Ferdinando da Bari, the above-mentioned physician of Queen Bona.<sup>20</sup>

Isabella's 52-year-old new husband tried to do his best to make his young wife feel at home in her new environment. Isabella may have been less concerned about her husband's age due to the example of her own parents: her father, King Sigismund, was the same age when Isabella was born as King John was at the time of their wedding. Isabella likely received precise instructions from her mother regarding how to behave with her husband in light of their big age difference.

### ITALIAN FAMILY LINKS

Besides her mother, Bona Sforza, there were also other Italian relatives of Isabella who could support her in times of need. One has to consider that Isabella had many Italian relatives, not only among the Sforzas, the Savoyas and the Aragones, but also the Estes of Ferrara. In order to illustrate this Italian familial network, I would like to quote a lesser-known, recently discovered source. In 2013, the Vestigia Research Group led by György Domokos at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University found while doing research in Modena the correspondence of Isabella with the Este court of Ferrara from the years 1540–1541. Queen Isabella exchanged letters with her third cousin, Duke of Ferrara Ercole II d'Este (1534–1559).<sup>21</sup> In the first letter, written in Buda on March 31, 1540, she wrote mostly about the export of grain. In the third letter, dated March 15, 1541, however, she thanked the duke for the greetings he had sent following the birth of her son and the condolences he had expressed when her husband had died. In the remaining part of the letter Queen Isabella described in detail the hopeless situation that had emerged as a result of the Habsburg attack and subsequent Ottoman "assistance."<sup>22</sup> She expressed the desperate need to strengthen relations with her relatives in the hope of receiving advice and help. Contrary to the commercial letters written in Latin from a year before, she wrote these letters in Italian and emphasized the family relationship already in the salutation, using the form *consanguineo nostro carissimo et honorevolissimo*, and when signing she used the moving formula: *bon sorella Ysabella regina*.

### GIOVANNI BATTISTA CASTALDO

Giovanni Battista Castaldo<sup>23</sup> was another Italian who exercised a significant impact on the life of Isabella even if he was not in her service. On the contrary, Castaldo took part of the Habsburg army, thus he played an important role in

20 Mongelli, 'Iacopo Ferdinando barese a Cracovia', 238–242.

21 Domokos, 'Izabella királyné levelei.'

22 See the article by Teréz Oborni in this volume.

23 Mariano D'Ayala, 'Vita di Giambattista Castaldo, famosissimo guerriero del secolo XVI', *Archivio Storico Italiano* Serie 3 45:1 (1867) 86–124.

the queen's life as an adversary. Castaldo was born in 1493 in Nocera (Campania) to a noble family. He became a *condottiere* in the service of Emperor Charles V, and he excelled with his military actions both in the Italian Wars and elsewhere. As is well-known, in 1551 Castaldo entered Transylvania and without resistance occupied the principality on orders from Emperor Charles V and his brother, King Ferdinand I Habsburg.<sup>24</sup>

As a result of the previously mentioned Vestigia Research Group project, Chiara Carpentieri found at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana of Milan a manuscript that contains extraordinary documents concerning the military campaign by general Castaldo against the Turks in the years 1551–1552. Carpentieri translated and published two documents from that codex, one written in Latin and another in Italian. These sources are extremely interesting from our point of view, as they show that Isabella – probably as a result of her Italian education – trusted Castaldo so much that she gave to him the Holy Crown of Hungary in his capacity as a representative of King Ferdinand I. This Italian letter was written in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, Romania) on July 19, 1551, bearing the title *Documento che certifica il passaggio della corona del regno d'Ungheria*. It can be read as one of the preparatory texts for the Treaty of Alba Iulia (July 21, 1551) in which Queen Isabella transferred the jurisdiction over Hungary, Transylvania, Croatia and Dalmatia to King Ferdinand I Habsburg. The document guarantees that Castaldo, Tamás Nádasdy, and András Báthory would personally take the crown to King Ferdinand in the capacity of *supremi regni Hungarorum capitanei*.<sup>25</sup> Following this event, as agreed with Friar George, Castaldo accompanied the queen from Alba Iulia to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and on July 21 Isabella gave him the crown and the other regalia. These facts are well-known in Hungarian historiography, but this letter is an additional source regarding the events.

The second letter is dated June 4, 1553, and was written by Isabella in Italian vernacular. Isabella, after being deprived of the title of queen, lived far from Transylvania, in Krzepice,<sup>26</sup> Poland. In this letter, a worried Isabella wrote to Castaldo asking him to keep her better informed of events.<sup>27</sup> It is no surprise that Isabella was worried, as Castaldo's situation in Transylvania was indeed

24 Lajos Kropf, 'Castaldo Erdélyben', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 9:1 (1896) 299–325.

25 Chiara Maria Carpentieri, 'Minima hungarica. Jegyzetek a lombardiai könyvtárakban őrzött, magyar vonatkozású XV–XVII. századi kéziratokról és nyomtatványokról', in György Domokos, Norbert Mátyus and Armando Nuzzo (eds.), *Vestigia. Mohács előtti magyar források olasz könyvtárakban*. Piliscsaba: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Bölcsész- és Társadalomtudományi Kara, 2015, 31–45, <http://vestigia.hu/vestigia.pdf>. 40 (accessed on March 1, 2020).

26 Lajos Szádeczky, *Isabella és János Zsigmond Lengyelországban, 1552–1556*. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1888; Endre Veress, *Erdély fejedelmi interregnuma: Isabella királyné diplomáciai működése, 1551–1556*. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1899.

27 "Non voglia manccar di farlo, assicurando La che tanto mi sarà grato questo e più, come se al presente avessimo da la M.tà del ser.mo de' Romani tutto quello è tenuta darmi; perchè di quello siamo sicurissime: che sempre avremo S. V. per protettor nostro, non mancherà di esserne dato. Ma della salute Sua non abbiamo quella certezza che noi desideriamo di aver, della quale rendasi V. S. sicura che così siamo curiosi, come siamo della propria del nostro ill.mo figlio, per non dir mo più, la quale desideriamo al pari della vita. Procuri adunque V. S. di star sano con tener memoria di noi e viva felice

critical. After the murder of Friar George in December 1551, Castaldo – as representative of King Ferdinand – in effect lost Transylvania. Formally this would happen only later, in 1556, when Isabella and John Sigismund returned to Transylvania.

In 1553 Castaldo's situation became unbearable for three reasons: first, because of the hopelessness of his attempt to resist the Ottoman offensive led by Kara Ahmed Pasha; second, due to the rebellion of his own unpaid troops; and third, because of the antipathy of the Transylvanians towards him. The Transylvanians even restarted the negotiations with the sultan with permission of Castaldo himself. Despite Castaldo's difficult position, Isabella still looked at him as the guarantor of the clauses of the Treaty of Alba Iulia of 1551 and an intermediary between her and King Ferdinand. For these two reasons, in her letter Isabella refers to Castaldo as her protector and asks him to keep her informed about his health, which was "as important to her as that of her own son."<sup>28</sup> However, Isabella's hopes were not fulfilled, since Ferdinand, who was clearly dissatisfied with the military results of the Italian general, recalled Castaldo from Transylvania and sent him to Belgium during the spring of 1553. Later Castaldo served as a member of the government of the Duchy of Milan, where he died in 1563.

#### THE COURT OF GYULAFEHÉRVÁR AND ITS ITALIAN PRESENCE

Isabella learned from her mother how to be a protector of her compatriots. As I have shown above, the support and closeness of Italians were always important for Bona Sforza, thus she built her court in Kraków based on the entourage that had accompanied her from Italy.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, she and her husband, King Sigismund, actively supported many different forms of Italian visual and decorative art: jewelry, textiles, garden architecture and sculpture, and their court followed Italian tastes. Her activity as a patron of the arts and the modernization of the court introduced Italian Renaissance style to Polish cultural life,<sup>30</sup> which had previously been under German influence. Queen Isabella evidently was influenced both by the Polish Renaissance court of her mother and later also by the Hungarian Renaissance milieu that had developed at the court of Buda during the reign of King Matthias Corvinus. During her time in Transylvania, Isabella consciously transformed Gyulafehérvár into a small-scale version of Wawel Hill and Buda Castle.<sup>31</sup> Besides the artisans who transformed Gyulafehérvár for representational

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*e longa vita. Da Crzepicze, a li 4 di giugno 1553. D. V. S.ria, come sorella, Isabella.*" Carpentieri, 'Minima hungarica', 44.

28 "Ma della salute Sua non abbiamo quella certezza che noi desideriamo di aver, della quale rendasi V. S. sicura che così siamo curiosi, come siamo della propria del nostro ill.mo figlio, per non dir mo più, la quale desideriamo al pari della vita." Carpentieri, 'Minima hungarica', 44–45.

29 Żaboliński, 'La Regina Bona e la sua corte', 33.

30 Rothbard, 'The Cultural Influence', 62.

31 Szabolcs Ö. Barlay, *Romon virág: fejezetek a Mohács utáni reneszánszról*. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1986.

purposes, there were also a number of Italian *condottieri* and engineers<sup>32</sup> who worked on the modernization of the castles and fortresses throughout Transylvania.<sup>33</sup> Isabella had many Italian courtiers in Gyulafehérvár such as her Italian secretary, Paolo Savorgnano.

The best-known Italian man at her court was probably the doctor and theologian Giorgio Biandrata. Biandrata was born in Saluzzo, studied medicine in Montpellier and Pavia and finally earned his doctorate in gynecology. He dedicated his scientific manual (*Gynaecorum ex Aristotele et Bonaciolo a Georgio Blandrata medico Subalpino noviter excerpta de fecundatione, gravitate, partu et puerperio*) to Bona Sforza and to Isabella Jagiellon. He was invited in the court of Sigismund I in 1540 to be the personal physician of Queen Bona Sforza. Isabella “inherited” Biandrata from her mother in 1544, when he moved from Kraków to Gyulafehérvár. Biandrata remained with Isabella until 1552 as her court physician and advisor.<sup>34</sup> In 1547 Biandrata was already a renowned figure who was described by a Hungarian contemporary eyewitness the following way: “*uomo di grande signorilità, nato all’amicizia..., altamente apprezzato a Venezia per la sua dottrina e pratica del mondo, nome pronunciato in Italia non solo con onore ma anche con orgoglio.*”<sup>35</sup>

After leaving Transylvania, Biandrata returned there once more during Queen Isabella’s lifetime. Biandrata traveled from Pińczów (Poland) to Transylvania in June 1559 to treat the dying Queen Isabella. Following the queen’s death, Biandrata returned to Poland. With the passage of time, Biandrata became known throughout Europe for his diplomatic skills and the originality of his religious ideas.<sup>36</sup> However, since he was persecuted by both the Lutherans and the Calvinists, in 1563 Biandrata accepted the invitation of John Sigismund to move back to Transylvania in order to become the physician and advisor of the prince. Biandrata remained in Transylvania even following the death of the young ruler in 1571 and died in Gyulafehérvár in 1588.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion one can make two assertions: first, that Isabella’s Italian “network” was more complex than was previously thought, and even the most recent research may provide further important details with regard to this topic; and

32 Leone Andrea Maggiorotti, *Gli Italiani nell’Architettura Militare dell’Epoca Moderna e Contemporanea*, vol. 2, *Gli architetti militari. L’opera del genio italiano all’estero*. Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1932.

33 Gianluca Masi, *I rapporti tra il Granducato di Toscana e il Principato di Transilvania (1540–1699)*. PhD diss., Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, 2013.

34 Domenico Caccamo, *Eretici italiani in Moravia, Polonia, Transilvania (1558–1611): Studi e documenti* (Biblioteca del “Corpus Reformatorum Italicorum” 2). Firenze: Sansoni, 1970, 22.

35 Antal Verancsics to Gáspár Békés, May 29, 1547: László Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal összes munkái*, vol. VI (*Vegyes levelek 1538–1549*) (Monumenta Hungariae Historica I; Scriptorum 9). Pest: Eggenberger, 1860, 256.

36 For this aspect of Biandrata’s life, see the article by Mihály Balázs in this volume.

second, that Isabella's destiny shows some interesting similarities to the fates of her direct Italian female lineage, Bona Sforza and Isabella of Aragon. She married an older sovereign in order to give birth to a male child, just as Bona Sforza did. Moreover, she fought desperately for herself and for her son to regain the rights that she had lost, just as Isabella of Aragon, her grandmother, had done. From some perspectives, their destinies were similar to those of Italy and Hungary, since after the flourishing medieval and Renaissance period, both countries would become the theaters of wars fought by the neighboring great powers.



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Although Isabella did not have the long and tranquil life that she had envisioned at the time of her marriage, she nonetheless had an interesting life, as she was forced to confront challenging political and personal circumstances.

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