

# How to Reject a King and to Marry a Bishop

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## ABSTRACT

Elisabeth of Görlitz, granddaughter of Charles IV, married Anthony, Duke of Brabant. After his death at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, she was forced to take care of her own well-being while being yet again embroiled in Luxembourg's politics. This study will therefore focus on the period of time the young widow attempted to cope with her new life situation, maintain a good political and economic position and find a new husband.

## KEYWORDS

Elisabeth of Görlitz, John III of Bavaria, Jacoba of Bavaria, Bavaria-Straubing, Luxembourg, Hainaut, Holland, Zeeland, marriages

*... Antony, Duke of Brabant,  
The brother to the Duke of Burgundy,  
And Édouard, Duke of Bar; of lusty earls,  
Grandpré and Roussi, Fauconbridge and Foix,  
Beaumont and Marle, Vaudemont and Lestrelles.  
Here was a royal fellowship of death.  
Where is the number of our English dead?*<sup>2</sup>

With these words and a list of nobles who were killed on Saint Crispin's Day 1415, Shakespeare's King Henry summarizes the outcome of the clash of English and French armies that have later come to be known as the Battle of Agincourt. Shakespeare's history plays, however, do not truly correspond to today's notion of the period they describe, although the famous English bard is not wrong in suggesting with such a long list that there were many fallen nobles on the French side. He is also not

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  - 2 W. SHAKESPEARE, *The Life of Henry the Fifth*, in: J. JOWETT — W. MONTGOMERY — G. TAYLOR — S. WELLS (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, Oxford 2005, p. 620.



mistaken when he names Anthony, Duke of Brabant, among them, brother to the Duke of Burgundy and husband to Elisabeth of Görlitz.

According to contemporary reports by the chronicler Edmond de Dynter, the first husband of Elisabeth of Görlitz did indeed die in the carnage. His body was supposedly found two days after the battle by Hector de Vitry and was, predictably, robbed of armour and clothes. The body was then transported to Saint-Pol, embalmed, and placed in a leaden sarcophagus. The ensuing funeral procession moved the body to Brussels where a memorial service was held and finally, Anthony was interred in St John the Baptist's church in Tervuren next to his first wife Joan of Saint-Pol<sup>3</sup>. Thus, Elisabeth of Görlitz became a widow for the first time and unfortunately not for the last time. Sources do not describe her reaction to her husband's death but the situation she found herself in was certainly a difficult one. This study will therefore focus on the period of time the young widow attempted to cope with her new life situation, maintain a good political and economic position and find a new husband.

It seems that Elisabeth did not attend her husband's funeral. According to Edmond de Dynter (who wrote his chronicle many years after the battle, but being one of the most important officials and diplomats of Anthony's court), Elisabeth had fallen ill just before her husband was supposed to leave for the fatal battle.<sup>4</sup> Dynter maintains that this was no common illness and informs about it relatively extensively in his chronicle; he also points out that some individuals from the Duchess' inner circle were convinced that Elisabeth must have ingested an unspecified poison, which was supposed to occur during her stay in the Turnhout castle. Her husband managed to send doctors from Brussels, Leuven and Antwerp as well as nobles to take care of her before setting out for the battle that proved to be his last. Elisabeth recovered fully from her assumed poisoning.

After the duke's death, the States of Brabant decided that he would be succeeded by his twelve-year-old son John, whose mother was Anthony's first wife Joan of Saint-Pol.<sup>5</sup> The underage boy was too young to rule on his own and his uncle John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, was supposed to become his regent. However, after the Battle of Agincourt, the Duke of Burgundy concentrated his efforts on gaining influence in Paris and perhaps because of that he was not truly trying to claim the position. The States of Brabant then established a council that gained regency over the duchy until the young duke came of age.

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3 Further on Anthony's participation in the Battle of Agincourt (S. BOFFA, *Antoine de Bourgogne et le contingent brabançon à la bataille d'Azincourt (1415)*, in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, Vol. 72, No. 2, 1994, pp. 255–284), the funeral is described in P. F. X. DE RAM (ed.), *Chronique des ducs de Brabant, par Edmond de Dynter — Chronica nobilissimorum ducum Lotharingiae Brabantiaeque ac regum Francorum, autore magistro Edmundo de Dynter, T. III*, Bruxelles 1857, pp. 299–303, J. H. BORMANS (ed.), *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant — De Brabantsche Yeesten, of Rymkronyk van Brabant, T.3*, Bruxelles 1869, pp. 214–231.

4 DE RAM, *Chronique des ducs de Brabant, par Edmond de Dynter*, pp. 296–298, BORMANS, *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant — De Brabantsche Yeesten*, pp. 231–235.

5 R. VAUGHAN, *John the Fearless. The Growth of Burgundian Power*, London — New York 1979, pp. 238 — 239.



There is no evidence to suggest that Elisabeth, the young duke's mother-in-law, was in any way trying to stake a claim to the regency, although Edmond de Dyonter mentions that after Anthony's death, the States of Brabant sent envoys (consisting of two abbots, two barons, two nobles and several burghers) to Turnhout where she was staying. The emissaries offered their condolences to the widow and held a discussion about the future.<sup>6</sup> They also conveyed the young duke's proposal; Elisabeth was offered to stay in one of the duke's palaces in Brabant.

Elisabeth likely desired to be in the center of events, since after these discussions she decided to return to Brussels and to be at the young duke's side in Coudenberg. It is unknown what exactly took place during her stay but as events evolved into a minor drama (mentioned below) it is unlikely that she was a passive observer and it seems very probable that her efforts to subordinate the politics of the court of Brabant to the goals of her uncle Sigismund of Luxembourg, King of the Romans, brought her nothing but trouble.

In the Middle Ages, Brabant was a part of the Holy Roman Empire but its location on the empire's western border in the immediate vicinity of France very often made it impossible for the Roman kings and emperors to exert their influence directly. Although the States of Brabant approved Anthony's son as his successor, there was no guarantee that the King of the Romans would agree with their decision, since the king was supposed to grant a fief to the local duke. Anthony's claim to Brabant, which he inherited from his great-aunt, was already disputable; he was never awarded fief, therefore he never *de facto* considered Rupert III, Jobst of Moravia and later Sigismund of Luxembourg to be his liege lords. After marrying Elisabeth of Görlitz, a union arranged in 1409 by Sigismund's brother, the deposed King of the Romans Wenceslaus IV (who probably hoped for the help of Anthony's relatives to return to the throne), there was the additional threat of Anthony claiming Luxembourg. After his ascension to the Roman throne, Sigismund immediately began addressing the issue and worked actively against the couple.<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth and Anthony then decided to establish diplomatic contact with the King of the Romans and gain his favour. The situation soon seemed hopeful, and the negotiations were beginning to bear fruit, but the fateful Battle of Agincourt thwarted the efforts.

It is no surprise that Sigismund disapproved of the choice of John IV as the new Duke of Brabant and wanted the States of Brabant to acknowledge himself as their liege lord. The fact that his childless niece Elisabeth of Görlitz was staying at the court of Brabant must have upset him even more since that implied the possibility of the Brabantians attempting to permanently seize control of Luxembourg. After all, that would be similar to the manner Anthony claimed Brabant from his childless great-aunt Joanna of Brabant. Hypothetically, Elisabeth could have made John her heir.

<sup>6</sup> DE RAM, *Chronique des ducs de Brabant*, par Edmond de Dyonter, p. 312.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in 1412 in Košice, he banned the citizens of Luxembourg from toasting to the newlywed Elisabeth and Anthony citing that such behavior would disparage the rights of the Bohemian Crown (W. ALTMANN (ed.), *Regesta Imperii XI. Die Urkunden Kaiser Sigismunds (1410–1437)*, I. band (1410–1424), Innsbruck 1896, No. 212, p. 14).



Therefore, in March 1416, envoys from the Empire appeared at the court of Brabant.<sup>8</sup> Sigismund demanded all documents issued by Wenceslaus IV, the deposed King of the Romans, and the release of prisoners from Luxembourg, whom the Duke of Brabant had no right to imprison, thus attempting to exert his rights as John's liege lord. At the same time, however, the emissaries extended the Roman King's thanks, so that his only niece is taken care of her. It seems that she was taken care of even after the envoys' departure, since Elisabeth remained in the Brussels palace at the duke's expense, although she started to behave somewhat unpredictably.<sup>9</sup> In July 1416, she began to complain that her ladies-in-waiting cannot be trusted and decided to get rid of them. Since that was no simple procedure, she attacked them by claiming to have bad manners. The young duke, to whom Elisabeth complained, was reluctant to believe the accusations and wanted to leave her in their company. The situation culminated with Elisabeth leaving Brussels and withdrawing to Luxembourg.

In mid-July, Elisabeth was already staying in Luxembourg. Edmond de Dwynter states that from there she sent demands to the States of Brabant, thus extending the demands of Sigismund's envoys.<sup>10</sup> Naturally, she mainly asked for property, which included any documents related to Luxembourg. The States of Brabant, however, had no intention of complying with her demands.

In the meantime, Elisabeth was attempting to seize control of Luxembourg. On 13 August 1416, as Duchess of Luxembourg and Countess of Chiny, as well as Duchess of Brabant and Limburg, she issued a document by which she, as the local governor, affirms all rights and privileges to Luxembourg and the county of Limburg.<sup>11</sup>

Her uncle Sigismund did not idle either. He understood that while Elisabeth was no longer staying in Brabant the situation had changed and there was no longer the danger of John and the States of Brabant trying to take advantage of her. This time, therefore, the King of the Romans did not oppose his niece, who was no longer on Burgundy's side and left the country in the hands of Elisabeth and the Czech king Wenceslaus.<sup>12</sup>

As expected, the widowed Elisabeth was once again in high demand as a potential wife. The possibility of inheritance to be gained along with the bride attracted even the King of Poland.<sup>13</sup> According to the Polish chronicler, Jan Długosz the newly widowed Władysław II Jagiełło sent his knight Piotr Miedźwiecki to arrange a marriage with the widow of the Duke of Brabant. Although Długosz is confused when it comes to names — he mistakes Elisabeth for Anne of Bohemia, the wife of Richard II,

8 DE RAM, *Chronique des ducs de Brabant*, par Edmond de Dwynter, pp. 313–316 on Sigismund's relationship to the Dukes of Burgundy see J. KUPPER, *Empire et Bourgogne: le séjour à Liège du roi des Romains Sigismund (décembre 1416-janvier 1417)*, in: *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, t. 149, No. 2 (2005), pp. 457–477.

9 DE RAM, *Chronique des ducs de Brabant*, par Edmond de Dwynter, pp. 316–317.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 317–319.

11 A. VERKOOREN (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes et cartulaires du Luxembourg*, T. IV, Bruxelles 1917, No. 1568, p. 162.

12 A. VERKOOREN (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes et cartulaires du Luxembourg*, T. IV, Bruxelles 1917, no. 1574, p. 167.

13 Jerzy WYROZUMSKI (ed.) Joannis Dlugossii. *Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae, liber undecimus et liber duodecimus (1431–1444)* Warszawa 2001, pp. 63–64.



King of England, and believes that her actual future husband is the bishop-elect of Utrecht, not Liège — but he manages to record the situation in general. The widow of the Duke of Brabant supposedly refused to marry the King of Poland because she fell in love with the bishop-elect who, since he was only a subdeacon, resigned from his post because of her.

The bishop-elect in question was John III of Bavaria, son of Albert of Bavaria and Margaret of Brieg,<sup>14</sup> of the Bavaria-Strabing branch of the House of Wittlesbach, born in 1373 in Le Quesnoy in northern France. In his youth, John could not hope to inherit his parents' estates, since he had an older brother — William II of Bavaria who in 1404 inherited Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut. Their father Albert I, however, intended to leave his younger son provided for as well. In 1390 he helped his then seventeen-year-old son John to become the successor of Arnold van Horne as the Prince-Bishop of Liège.

On the issue of John's title; as was mentioned above the government of Liège and its surroundings were connected to the office of the Prince-Bishop. John III of Bavaria began his reign at the tender age of seventeen and he certainly could not reach the highest level of ordination (it is stated that he could have been a subdeacon at best) and subsequently the rank of bishop immediately.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, he is titled elect only.<sup>16</sup> Understandably, it was expected that this title is only temporary and John would reach the required level of ordination in time. Whether John himself expected so remains a question.

For various reasons, John does not have a very good reputation in narrative sources; he is described as a debauched gambler and his image could not be farther from the Catholic priesthood ideal. As the chronicler, Jean de Stavelot recounts, in 1405 John travelled to Paris where the nobility held a celebration. There he allegedly swindled everyone present out of their money, an act that rather annoyed one of the nobles. When he started to berate John about his lack of priestly behaviour (supposedly calling him a devil, not a priest), John's reaction was indeed befitted more of a lout than a representative of the church. He supposedly threw all the money he had won into the air and protested that he is no priest.<sup>17</sup> In effect, both men spoke the truth — there was nothing priestly about John's behaviour but it is likely that he was not actually a priest; therefore, it is no wonder that no one was very enthusiastic about his reign in Liège. It is important to consider that these events occurred in the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a time when such behavior could not be considered wholly uncommon.

Probably the worst picture of John's character is painted by sources recounting the series of uprisings against his reign in Liège. These culminated in the bloody battle of

14 For a biography of John III of Bavaria see F. SCHNEIDER, *Herzog Johann von Baiern. Erwählter Bischof von Lüttich und Graf von Holland (1373–1425). Ein Kirchenfürst und Staatsmann am Anfang des XV. Jahrh.*, Vaduz 1965.

15 For being called „subdeacon“ see e. g. VAUGHAN, *John the Fearless*, p. 327.

16 For example S. BALAU (ed.), *Chroniques liégeoises I. Chronique du règne de Jean de Bavière, 1387–1423*, Bruxelles 1913, p. 148; (ed.) A. BORGNET, *Chronique de Jean de Stavelot (Collection de chroniques belges inédites X)*, Brussels 1861, p. 17.

17 BORGNET, *Chronique de Jean de Stavelot* pp. 95–96.



Othée on 23 September 1408. John reportedly had the instigators of the uprisings and their relatives brutally massacred.<sup>18</sup>

John's aversion to becoming a bishop and ruling in Liège in accordance with expectations is probably best demonstrated by the fact that when faced with the option of gaining extensive lands through marriage, he did not hesitate at all and swiftly gave up Liège along with his career as a priest and married Elisabeth of Görlitz.

John was commonly considered to be a capable military leader and he managed to maintain good relations with the neighbouring duchies. In fact, he was closely related to many of the dukes who ruled in the nearest vicinity. John's sister Margaret married John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, in 1385. John's older brother William IV of Bavaria inherited the lands of Holland, Zeeland, and Hainaut in 1404.<sup>19</sup> From 1406 to 1415 Brabant and Limburg were governed by duke Anthony, brother to the Duke of Burgundy, and his relations with John were quite amicable. Additionally, from the very beginning, John as well as his relatives listed above supported the duke of Burgundy in his conflict with Louis of Orléans, which culminated with Louis' brutal murder in November 1407 and a lengthy civil war.<sup>20</sup>

Among the relatives of John III of Bavaria, his sister Joanna deserves a mention as well. In 1370 she married Wenceslaus IV and thus became Queen of Bohemia. Due to the existence of this marriage, it is apparent that John's family maintained close contact with the House of Luxembourg even before the marriage of John and Elisabeth.<sup>21</sup>

If at first glance the union of Elisabeth of Görlitz and John III of Bavaria appears complicated due to John's ecclesiastical career, the reality must have been even more complex. Elisabeth first met John during her journey from Bohemia to Brabant where she was due to marry her first husband Anthony of Brabant.<sup>22</sup> Duke Anthony was of course in close contact with his neighbour and when in 1410 Elisabeth bore a son

18 The Battle of Othée was given considerable attention, for comparison see e.g. H. CARRIER, *Si vera est fama. Le retentissement de la bataille d'Othée dans la culture historique au XVe siècle*, in: *Revue historique*, No. 3, 2001, pp. 193 — 256; Y. CHARLIER, *La bataille d'Othée et sa place dans l'histoire de la principauté de Liège*, in: *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique liégeois*, 1985, pp. 61 — 76; J. LEJEUNE, *Liège. De la principauté à la métropole*, Antwerpen 1968, pp. 87 — 95; H. PIRENNE, *L'histoire de Belgique II. Du commencement du XIVe siècle à la mort de Charles le Téméraire*, Bruxelles 1903; F. SCHNEIDER, *Herzog Johann von Baiern. Erwählter Bischof von Lüttich und Graf von Holland (1373–1425). Ein Kirchenfürst und Staatsmann am Anfang des XV. Jahrh.*, Vaduz 1965, pp. 65–68; E. WILLE, *Die Schlacht von Othée*, Berlin 1908; Z. BOLERAŽKÁ, *Lutyšský elekt dobývá Lutyň. Příspěvek ke vztahům měst a vládnoucích elit ve středověkém Nizozemí*, in: *Historie — Otázky — Problémy*, 2020, Vol 12, No. 2, pp. 69–75.

19 Further in: VAUGHAN, *John the Fearless*, p.50, R. STEIN, *De hertog en zijn staten. De eenwording van de Bourgondische Nederlanden ca. 1380 ca. 1480*, Hilversum 2014, pp. 43–47.

20 VAUGHAN, *John the Fearless*, pp. 32–34, 43.

21 F. ŠMAHEL — L. BOBKOVÁ — P. MAŠKOVÁ — R. NOVOTNÝ (eds.), *Lucemburkové: česká koruna uprostřed Evropy*, Praha 2012, pp. 758–762; J. SPĚVÁČEK, *Václav IV. (1361–1419): k předpokladům husitské revoluce*, Praha 1986, pp. 67–69; V. ŽŮREK, *Karel IV. Portrét středověkého vládce*, Praha 2018, pp. 112–113.

22 DE RAM, *Chronique des ducs de Brabant*, par Edmond de Dyonter, pp. 185–6 BORMANS, *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant — De Brabantsche Yeesten*, pp. 82–89.

christened with a name typical for the Bavaria-Straubing branch of the House of Wittelsbach — William — John III of Bavaria became his godfather.<sup>23</sup>

This implies several facts. Mainly, Elisabeth must have been aware of whom she is marrying and she must have known that John's reputation is far from the model. Even so, she preferred him to the King of Poland. Their marriage was complicated for more reasons than just John being the bishop-elect of Liège, as the author of *Brabantsche Yeesten* points out dramatically:

*...Ghetrouw Vrouwe Elisabetten  
Van Lutzenborch hertoghinne,  
Weduwe wilen, dat versinne,  
Van den edelen hertoghe Anthonijs  
(Wiens ziel God bringhe int paradijs!),  
Niet wederstaende dien zaken  
Dat hi was subdiaken...<sup>24</sup>*

Another issue arose from the fact that when John became the godfather of Elisabeth's son from her first marriage, under canonical law they became relatives. Luckily for them, the Holy Roman King Sigismund approved of their union.

It seems unlikely that John would give up his office in Liège so readily, in case he was (thanks to his wife) about to gain possession of Luxembourg alone. However, in 1417 his brother William, who had held Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut in his power, died without male issue, thus the problematic issue of inheritance was brought up.<sup>25</sup> There were two possible heirs — John, and William's only daughter Jacoba.<sup>26</sup>

William himself was probably aware of the complications his death would bring and that his daughter could be deprived of her inheritance. Thus, from the very beginning, he tried to provide for her the support of a husband who would be able to stand by her, defend her inheritance and, later on, rule by her side. Logically, it had to have been a man for whom this would be a primary objective; who would not have to deal with other problematic possessions; who would have sufficient support from either

23 DE RAM, *Chronique des ducs de Brabant*, par Edmond de Dyonter, p. 187.

24 BORMANS, *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant — De Brabantsche Yeesten*, pp. 326–327.

25 In literature William is usually designated as William II of Bavaria-Straubing, William VI of Holland, William V of Zeeland, William IV of Hainaut.

26 Further on Jonh and Jacoba: M. BLEICHER, *Das Herzogtum Bayern-Straubing in den Hussitenkriegen. Kriegsalltag und Kriegsführung im Spiegel der Landschreiberrechnungen*, Regensburg 2004; L. BOEHM, *Das Haus Wittelsbach in den Niederlanden*, in: *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, Vol. 44, 1981, pp. 93–130, D. DE BOER — E. H. CORDFUNKE, *Graven van Holland. Portretten in woord en beeld (880–1580)*, Zutphen 1997; R. HONINGS, O. VAN MARION, *Vrouw van het Vaderland: Jacoba van Beieren in literatuur en kunst*, Haarlem 2011; A. JANSE, *Een pion voor een dame. Jacoba van Beieren (1401–1436)*, Amsterdam 2009; D. KRENN, *Das Herzogtum Straubing- Holland (1353–1425/1429)*, in: *Bayern-Ingolstadt. Bayern-Landshut. 1392 — 1425 (Hefte zur bayerischen Geschichte und Kultur 28)*, Augsburg 2003; SCHNEIDER, *Herzog Johann von Baiern*; STEIN, *De hertog en zijn staten*; J. VON MUSSINAN, *Geschichte der herzoglichen niederbairischen Linie Straubing-Holland*, Sulzbach 1820.



his family or the King of the Romans (whose power did not practically reach these territories but he was still the liege lord there). At the same time, it had to have been a man who would be able to cope with the territory's complicated situation. During the second half of the 14th century and for much of the 15th century, the issue of the Duke's succession in Holland was influenced by disputes between the local towns and the nobility. These disagreements often resulted in conflicts and armed clashes referred to as the Hook and Cod wars (Hoeken en Kabeljauwen in Dutch). Generally speaking, Dutch towns are referred to as cods (Kabeljauwen) while the hooks (Hoeken) are comprised of the local nobility. Jacoba's husband thus had to have been skilful enough to manoeuvre between the two groups and gain the support of both feuding factions or at least find some other *modus vivendi* enabling his rule in Holland.

William found such a person in one of the French king's younger sons, who seemingly met all these requirements. This was John, son of the French king Charles VI. and his wife Isabeau of Bavaria. Since this was the couple's fourth son, it was unlikely for him to succeed his father, while his background ensured a very good position. He and Jacoba were married as children in 1406 and John was subsequently brought up at the court in Hainaut and prepared for his future role as the lord of Bavaria-Straubing. The issue thus seemed to be resolved, but death interfered unexpectedly. First, all three of John's older brothers died, so in 1415 he became the heir to the French throne, then he himself died suddenly two years later. Shortly afterwards, William, Duke of Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut, died too and Jacoba had to attempt to secure her inheritance on her own. She competed for it with her uncle and, coincidentally, also with the stepmother of her second husband, Elisabeth of Görlitz. Of course, due to the prospect of inheritance, Jacoba was a sought-after bride, just as Elisabeth was. Thus, only two months after her father's death (and four months after the death of her first husband) Jacoba has married again to John IV., Duke of Brabant, son of Anthony of Brabant and the stepson of Elisabeth of Görlitz (who resided at his court). Logically, this marriage was influenced by Burgundy's interests and family politics. Jacoba's mother was Margaret of Burgundy and her uncle was John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy. It is generally assumed that these familial relations lead to the marriage's quick arrangement.<sup>27</sup>

The King of the Romans and John of Bavaria immediately tried to intervene against the marriage at the Council of Constance, as the bride-to-be Jacoba was closely related to John of Brabant — they were both grandchildren of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, and were therefore cousins. This union was branded as “scandalous” but was finalized nevertheless.<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, Sigismund and John were arranging the terms of John's marriage to Elisabeth of Görlitz. On the 16th of September Sigismund issued a marriage contract, in which he affirmed the mortgage of Luxembourg to Elisabeth and promised to secure the required dispensation so the groom would be able to marry despite his position in the church.<sup>29</sup> Sigismund also determined that in case Elisabeth died

<sup>27</sup> VAUGHAN, *John the Fearless*. p. 249; A. JANSE, *Een pion voor een dame. Jacoba van Beieren (1401–1436)*, Amsterdam 2009, p. 129–131.

<sup>28</sup> DE RAM, *Chronique des ducs de Brabant, par Edmond de Dynter*, p. 344–346.

<sup>29</sup> A. VERKOOREN (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes et cartulaires du Luxembourg, T. IV*, Bruxelles 1917, No. 1578, p. 171–173.



before John and the pair had no children, John would rule Luxembourg until his death and would receive an annuity of six thousand Rhenish guilder. In this document, Sigismund as the King of the Romans also promised the rights to Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut to the prince-bishop of Liège and added that these lands are given by their liege lord.

It is not certain to what extent Wenceslaus IV agreed to this marriage. At the time, he was mainly directing his niece to secure a successful rule in Luxembourg. For example, he authorized her to rebuild Luxembourg's strongholds or appoint local officials.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, John of Bavaria was related to the House of Wittelsbach and was therefore related to both of Wenceslaus' wives. Furthermore, later (in the twenties) Queen Sophie's brother Ernest was staying in the Netherlands, as shown by their mutual correspondence.<sup>31</sup> It appears, therefore, that the courts in Prague and in the Hague were in contact.

In February 1418 John of Bavaria declared that he had secured Elisabeth's dowry in the form of all of his current and future property, movable or immovable and inheritance and jewellery located in Bavaria, Hainaut, Holland and Zeeland, where Elisabeth would live with him.<sup>32</sup> In case John died without issue, his possessions would pass to his legitimate heirs. If they had children with Elisabeth, she would gain half of the income from these possessions after John's death. If Elisabeth died before John, he would gain Luxembourg's mortgage in the amount of 120 thousand guilders and after John's death, Luxembourg would be inherited by Elisabeth's heirs.

The wedding itself took place almost two years later — in June 1419 in Luxembourg. Elisabeth, then aged 27, was to be wedded for the second time, while for her husband who was 16 years older, this was his first wedding. Unfortunately, unlike her wedding to Anthony of Brabant, there's very little detail about Elisabeth of Görlitz's second wedding in the records.<sup>33</sup> It must have been a grandiose affair though, as was customary in that time and place. There are reports, for example, that the city of Luxembourg sent valuable gifts to the newlyweds including silver and gold chalices and that they were presented with plentiful gifts from the local Dominican Order.<sup>34</sup> After the wedding, John began to engage in the country's administration. On June 9, for example, he affirmed the city of Luxembourg's prerogatives and privileges and

30 A. VERKOOREN (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes et cartulaires du Luxembourg, T. IV*, Bruxelles 1917, No. 1579, p. 172, no. 1582, p. 175.

31 B. KOPIČKOVÁ, *Mnichovský fascikl č. 543: Korespondence královny Žofie z období března 1422 — prosinec 1427. Dodatky ke studii F. M. Bartoše*, in: *Mediaevalia Historica Bohemica*, No. 8, 2001, p. 129.

32 A. VERKOOREN (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes et cartulaires du Luxembourg, T. IV*, Bruxelles 1917, č. 1583, s. 175–176.

33 M. BLÁHOVÁ, *Svatba Alžběty Zhořelecké s Antonínem Brabantským*, in: *Historie — Otázky — Problémy*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2015), pp. 43–45; Z. BOLERAZKÁ, *Poslední lucemburská princezna. Životní osudy Elišky Zhořelecké v letech 1390–1425 (unpublished master thesis)*, Praha 2016, pp. 45–48.

34 F. X. WÜRTH-PAQUET (ed.), *Table chronologique des chartes et diplomes relatif a l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Luxembourg. Règne de Wenceslas II. 8 décembre 1383–16 août 1419*, in: *Publications de la Section historique de l'Institut Grand-Ducal de Luxembourg*, bd. XXV, 1870, No. 857, p. 231–232.



swore his loyalty to the whole country and adherence to local laws and customs.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, these efforts were soon interrupted by the necessity to deal with the issue of Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut's inheritance. For that reason, the newlyweds named John of Parsberg steward of the land, moved to the west and took little interest in managing the duchy.<sup>36</sup> For the record, John did indeed give up his office in Liège because of the marriage and was replaced with John of Wallenrode.

At first glance, Holland and Zeeland might not seem to be politically significant areas, especially since they were highly affected by their seaside setting and frequent flooding, but these were economically stable regions that became more and more involved in continental politics. Additionally, three significant European rivers, the Rhine, the Meuse and the Scheldt, flow there into the North Sea. Already in the Middle Ages, there could be no question of the region's relevance for shipping and trade. It is only natural that culture flourished in the region and that it held great importance for John.<sup>37</sup>

With her second marriage, Elisabeth was thus embroiled in a complex family feud that was escalating into an Europe-wide conflict, as it was not only Jacoba and John of Bavaria who had their interests in the matter but also the Burgundians and the Holy Roman King Sigismund. Since the whole conflict tends to be subsumed within the Hundred Years' War, in the end even the English and the French king were involved.<sup>38</sup> Elisabeth and John had one great advantage in the support of the King of the Romans, while Jacoba and John were endorsed by the Duke of Burgundy, John the Fearless. He was, however, assassinated in September 1419 on the bridge at Montereau-Fault-Yonne for his pacts with the English king, and so Jacoba and John lost their most powerful ally. Consequent quarrels between the couple culminated in Jacoba's attempts to annul the marriage and find a new husband, one that would be more helpful to her. However, her actions only lead to a downward spiral with no real possibility of her maintaining power in disputed territories. John of Bavaria and Elisabeth were left to reign in relative peace and keep a costly court in the Hague. This was, however, only the calm before the storm, as the marriage ended abruptly on 6 January 1425 when John was poisoned. His death was supposedly orchestrated by his former adviser Jan van Vliet, allegedly because of a personal vendetta.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Elisabeth of Görlitz became a widow for the second time.

Papers that focus on the marriages of princesses in the Middle Ages and the matrimonial politics of their families usually end with a brief mention of how many children the couples had, how long the women lived, or with some mentions of their fundraising activities. The example of Elisabeth of Görlitz, however, clearly shows that the matrimonial politics of the family did not and could not end with the marriage itself. Women often continued to maintain close contact with their birth relatives,

35 A. VERKOOREN (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes et cartulaires du Luxembourg*, T. IV, Bruxelles 1917, no. 1584, p. 176–177; no. 1585, p. 177–178.

36 WÜRTH-PAQUET, *Table chronologique des chartes et diplômes relatif a l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Luxembourg*. No. 66, p. 18.

37 BOEHM, *Das Haus Wittelsbach in den Niederlanden*, p. 104.

38 J. H. C. BLOM, E. LAMBERTS, *History of the Low Countries*, New York 2009, p. 86.

39 F. SCHNEIDER, *Herzog Johann von Baiern*, p. 125.

they were supported and influenced by them. Their husbands often worked closely with their wife's families and took advantage of the various benefits that marriage provided. In the case of women who were widowed and wanted to remarry, the power ambitions of their families may have interfered with the marriage again, although they seem to have had a much greater chance of autonomy in the choice of a partner. Marriage politics should therefore be explored in a much broader way than it has been before. While marriages may have been contracted for some objective reasons (e.g. they may have been the basis for arranging peace between opposing parties, they may have been the reward for support, they may have been the basis for promoting inheritance rights), it must always be assumed that they were not just some immediate solution. Marriages have always been a kind of promise of a common future, not only in a romantic sense but also in a purely practical sense. It was not just a union between a man and a woman, as we often perceive it today. It was a union of entire families. The only possible way to end a marriage in the Middle Ages was by the death of one of the spouses. This union between families was essentially indissoluble, and descendants would have strengthened it even further. Of course, the persons involved must have been fully aware of all this.

In order to understand medieval society and the political situation, it is therefore imperative to pay attention to the consequences of marriage when researching it. This study has attempted to summarize the life of the last princess of Luxembourg, Elisabeth of Görlitz, at a time when her life was most affected not only by the consequences of her first marriage, but also by the politics of the family from which she came, her own ambitions, and the newly emerging relationship between her and her second husband, John of Bavaria. This is by no means an all-encompassing study. But it was intended to illustrate, at least in part, how essential women's contacts with relatives were and that the family's matrimonial politics did not really end with the wedding ceremony.

