

= Béla I of Hungary =

Béla I the Champion or the Wisent (Hungarian : I. Bajnok or Bölény Béla , Slovak : Belo I. ; before 1020 ? 11 September 1063) was King of Hungary from 1060 until his death . He descended from a younger branch of the Árpád dynasty . Béla 's baptismal name was Adalbert . He left Hungary in 1031 , together with his brothers , Levente and Andrew , after the execution of their father , Vazul . Béla settled in Poland and married Richeza (or Adelaide) , daughter of King Mieszko II of Poland .

He returned to his homeland upon the invitation of his brother Andrew , who had in the meantime been crowned King of Hungary . Andrew assigned the administration of the so @-@ called ducatus or " duchy " , which encompassed around one @-@ third of the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary , to Béla . The two brothers ' relationship became tense when Andrew had his own son , Solomon , crowned king , and forced Béla to publicly confirm Solomon 's right to the throne in 1057 or 1058 . Béla , assisted by his Polish relatives , rebelled against his brother and dethroned him in 1060 . He introduced monetary reform and subdued the last uprising aimed at the restoration of paganism in Hungary . Béla was fatally injured when his throne collapsed while he was sitting on it .

= = Life = =

= = = Childhood (before 1031) = = =

Most Hungarian chronicles , including Simon of Kéza 's Gesta Hungarorum and the Illuminated Chronicle , record that Béla 's father was Ladislaus the Bald , a cousin of Stephen , the first King of Hungary . However , many of the same sources add that it " is sometimes claimed " that Béla and his two brothers ? Levente and Andrew ? were in fact the sons of Ladislaus the Bald 's brother , Vazul . The chronicles also refer to gossip claiming that the three brothers were their father 's illegitimate sons , born to " a girl from the Tátony clan " . Modern historians , who accept the latter reports ' reliability , unanimously write that the three brothers were the sons of Vazul and his concubine .

Béla was born between 1015 and 1020 . It is debated whether Béla was a second or a third son . The former view is represented , for example , by the Polish historian Wincenty Swoboda , and the latter by the Hungarian scholars Gyula Kristó and Ferenc Makk . Kristó and Makk write that Béla 's name " most probably " derived from the Turkish adjective *bujla* (" noble ") . However , the name may also be connected to the Slavic word for white (*bjelij*) or to the Biblical name *Bela* .

= = = In exile (1031 ? c . 1048) = = =

King Stephen 's only son who survived infancy , Emeric , died on 2 September 1031 . Thereafter , Vazul had the strongest claim to succeed the King . However , the monarch , suspecting that Vazul inclined towards paganism , favored his own sister 's son , Peter Orseolo . In order to ensure his nephew 's succession , Stephen had Vazul blinded . Béla and his two brothers fled from the kingdom .

They first settled in Bohemia , but their " condition of life was poor and mean " there . They moved to Poland , where " they received a warm reception " from King Mieszko II . According to the Hungarian chronicles , Béla participated in a Polish expedition against the pagan Pomeranians and defeated their duke " in single combat " . The Illuminated Chronicle narrates that the Polish monarch " praised the boldness and strength of Duke Béla and bestowed on him all the Pomeranian tribute " . The King even gave his daughter ? named either Richeza or Adelaide ? in marriage to Béla and granted " a goodly quantity of land " to him . Makk says that Béla was not baptized until just before his marriage ; his baptismal name was the Germanic one of Adalbert .

At that time the Pomeranians refused to pay their yearly tribute to the Duke of Poland , to whom they were subject . The Duke set out to exact by force of arms the tribute due to him from the Pomeranians . Then the Pomeranians , who were pagans , and the Poles , who were Christians ,

agreed together that their leaders should meet each other in a duel , and if the Pomeranian fell defeated , he would render the customary tribute ; and if the Pole , then he might bewail its loss . Since [the] Duke [Mieszko] and his sons shrank in fear from the duel to be fought , [Béla] presented himself before them and through an interpreter spoke thus : ' If it is pleasing to you , Poles , and to the lord Duke , although I am of nobler birth than that pagan , yet I will fight for the advantage of your kingdom and for the honour of the Duke . ' This was pleasing both to the Pomeranians and to the Poles . When they met in combat , armed with lances , [Béla] is said to have struck the Pomeranian so manfully that he unseated him from his horse ; and the Pomeranian could not move from the spot where he had fallen , and [Béla] smote him with his sword . Then the Duke of the Pomeranians confessed himself at fault ; and the Pomeranians , seeing this , humbly submitted to the Duke of Poland and paid the accustomed tribute without murmuring .

King Mieszko II died in 1034 ; his son and heir , Casimir was forced to leave Poland . A period of anarchy followed , which lasted at least until 1039 when Casimir returned . According to Kristó and Makk , Béla was staying in Poland during this period ; he even may have administered the kingdom in the name of his absent brother @-@ in @-@ law . On the other hand , the Polish historian , Manteuffel writes that Béla and his two brothers , in contrast with the unanimous report of the Hungarian chronicles , arrived in Poland only with Casimir , after 1039 . It is beyond a doubt that Levente and Andrew departed from Poland in about 1038 , because ? according to the Illuminated Chronicle ? they did not want to " live the life of hangers @-@ on in the Duke of Poland 's court , regarded only as Béla 's brothers " .

= = = Duke in Hungary (c . 1048 ? 1060) = = =

Upon leaving Poland , Andrew and Levente settled in Kiev . They returned to Hungary after a rebellion which was dominated by pagans broke out against King Peter Orseolo in 1046 . The King was dethroned , and Andrew was proclaimed king . Levente died in the same year and Andrew , still childless , decided to invite Béla back to Hungary .

Having lost one brother , King Andreas sent to Poland to his other brother Bela , calling him with great love and saying : " Once we shared poverty and labour together , and now I ask you , most beloved brother , that you come to me without tarrying , so that we may be companions in joy and share in the good things of the kingdom , rejoicing in each other 's presence . For I have neither heir nor brother except you . You shall be my heir , and you shall succeed me in the kingdom . " Won by these words , Béla came to the King with all his family . When the King saw him , he rejoiced with a great joy , because he was fortified by his brother 's strength . Then the King and his brother Bela held a council and divided the kingdom into three parts , of which two remained under the proprietorship of the royal majesty or power and the third was put under the proprietorship of the Duke . This first division of the kingdom became the seed of discord and wars between the dukes and the kings of Hungary .

Urged by his brother , Béla returned in 1048 and received one @-@ third of the kingdom , with the title of duke . Béla 's ducatus or " duchy " encompassed large territories along the eastern and northern borders , including the regions of Nyitra (Nitra , Slovakia) and Bihar (Biharia , Romania) . He possessed a wide range of royal prerogatives , including coinage . The half @-@ denars minted for him bore the inscription BELA DUX (" Duke Béla ") . According to Steinhübel , the mid @-@ 11th @-@ century timber and earth walls of the fortress of Nyitra were erected in Béla 's reign .

The two brothers closely collaborated in the subsequent years . According to the Illuminated Chronicle , they together worked out a military strategy against the Germans , who were frequently invading the kingdom in the early 1050s . Ferenc Makk writes that Béla 's epithets ? the Champion or the Wisent ? are connected to his fighting against the Germans . The chronicler emphasizes that Andrew and Béla " lived in a great tranquillity of peace " even after Andrew fathered a son , Solomon , in 1053 . Béla was one of the lords witnessing the deed of the foundation of the Tihany Abbey , a Benedictine monastery that his brother established in 1055 .

The two brothers ' good relationship deteriorated after King Andrew had the child Solomon crowned king in 1057 or 1058 . The coronation was the consequence of the peace negotiations with the Holy

Roman Empire , because the Germans did not acquiesce in a marriage between Solomon and Judith ? the sister of the young German monarch , Henry IV ? until Solomon 's right to succeed his father was declared and publicly confirmed . Thereafter Andrew was determined to secure the throne for his son . He invited Béla to his manor in Tiszavárkony , where the King offered his brother a seemingly free choice between a crown and a sword (which were the symbols of the royal and ducal power , respectively) . However , he had ordered that Béla be murdered if he chose the crown . Having been informed of his brother 's secret plan by one of his own partisans in the royal court , Béla opted for the sword , but he departed for Poland after the meeting .

He returned to Hungary , in the autumn of 1060 , with Polish troops that Duke Boleslaus the Bold of Poland had provided . Around the same time , German reinforcements arrived in Hungary to assist Andrew against Béla . The ensuing civil war ended with the victory of Béla , who defeated his brother in two successive battles fought at the river Tisza and at Moson . The King was seriously injured and died soon afterward . His partisans took his son , the child Solomon , to Germany .

= = = Reign (1060 ? 1063) = = =

Béla was crowned king in Székesfehérvár on 6 December 1060 . He ordered that " the wives and sons and all the property of all those who had followed " his nephew to Germany " should be protected and kept safe and sound " , which induced many of Solomon 's partisans to reconcile themselves to Béla 's rule and return to Hungary . He reformed the coinage and introduced " large coins of purest silver " into circulation . In order to stabilize the new currency , Béla maximized the prices and eliminated the black market . He also ordered that weekly markets should be held on Saturdays , instead of Sundays , in the kingdom . The historian Nora Berend says that the latter measure " may have adversely affected Jewish activities " , because Jews , who observed the Sabbath , could not work on Saturdays .

Béla decided to discuss his innovations with the representatives of the freemen , and " sent heralds throughout all Hungary to summon two elders with gift of speech from each village to a royal council " , according to the Illuminated Chronicle . A great crowd of commoners gathered in Székesfehérvár in 1061 . They demanded the restoration of paganism and the murder of clergymen , but Béla collected his army and suppressed their uprising within three days .

Béla attempted to conclude a peace treaty with the Holy Roman Empire . For this purpose , shortly after his coronation , he released all German commanders who had assisted his brother during the civil war . However , the young German monarch 's advisors refused Béla 's proposals . In the summer of 1063 , an assembly of the German princes decided to launch a military expedition against Hungary to restore young Solomon to the throne . Béla was planning to abdicate in favor of his nephew if the latter restored his former ducatus , but he was seriously injured when " his throne broke beneath him " in his manor at Dömös . The King ? who was " half @-@ dead " , according to the Illuminated Chronicle ? was taken to the western borders of his kingdom , where he died at the creek Kinizsa on 11 September 1063 . Béla was buried in the Benedictine Szekszárd Abbey , which he had set up in 1061 . Following Béla 's death , his three sons ? Géza , Ladislaus and Lampert ? sought refuge in Poland , and Solomon ascended the throne .

= = Family = =

Béla married , in about 1033 , a daughter of King Mieszko II of Poland . According to Makk , her name was either Richesa or Adelheid . Their eldest children , Géza and Ladislaus ? who became kings of Hungary in 1074 and 1077 , respectively ? were born in Poland in the 1040s . Béla 's third son , Lampert , was born after Béla 's return to Hungary .

Lampert was followed by a daughter named Sophia , who was first married to Margrave Ulric I of Carniola , and later to Duke Magnus of Saxony . Her younger sister , Euphemia , became the wife of Duke Otto I of Olomouc . Béla 's third daughter , Helena , was the queen of King Demetrius Zvonimir of Croatia . An unnamed daughter of Béla became the first wife of a Hungarian nobleman , Lampert of the Clan Hont @-@ Pázmány . According to the historian Martin Dimnik , Béla also fathered a

fifth daughter , Lanka , who was the wife of Prince Rostislav Vladimirovich of Tmutarakan .

The following family tree presents Béla 's ancestry , his offspring , and some of his relatives mentioned in the article .

* A Khazar , Pecheneg or Volga Bulgarian lady . * * Györffy writes that she may have been a member of the Bulgarian Cometopuli dynasty . * * * Lanka is not mentioned as Béla I 's daughter by all specialists .