

= Stephen II of Hungary =

Stephen II (Hungarian : II István ; Croatian : Stjepan II ; Slovak : Štefan II ; 1101 ? early 1131) , King of Hungary and Croatia , ruled from 1116 until 1131 . His father , King Coloman , had him crowned as a child , thus denying the crown to his uncle Álmos . In the first year of his reign , Venice occupied Dalmatia and Stephen never restored his rule in that province . His reign was characterized by frequent wars with neighbouring countries .

= = Early years (till 1116) = =

Stephen and his twin brother , Ladislaus , were sons of King Coloman of Hungary by his queen , Felicia of Sicily . According to the Illuminated Chronicle , they were born " ... in the year of our Lord 1101 . " Stephen was named after the first king of Hungary , who had been canonized in 1083 , implying that he was his father 's heir from birth . A document written in Zadar in approximately 1105 AD makes mention of " Stephen , our most renowned king " along with Coloman , proving that the latter had his four @-@ year @-@ old son crowned king .

By the time of Stephen 's coronation , Coloman had demonstrated his intention to secure the succession for his son . Coloman 's ambitious brother , Álmos ? who had already rebelled against the king in 1098 ? opposed this plan and left Hungary . He first sought the assistance of Henry V , Holy Roman Emperor , followed by an appeal to Duke Boleslaw III of Poland . When all of his efforts ended in failure , Álmos submitted to Coloman and returned to Hungary , although he made several abortive attempts to dethrone Coloman in the following decade . In order to bring an end to the menace these plots presented to Stephen 's succession , Coloman had Álmos and Álmos 's little son , Béla , blinded .

When he fell gravely ill in early 1116 , Coloman also had his brother imprisoned . The Illuminated Chronicle narrates that the dying king " instructed his son and his great men " to invade Rus ' in order to take vengeance for Coloman 's failure in the 1099 siege of Peremyshl (Przemy?l) , Poland . Coloman died on 3 February 1116 .

= = Reign = =

= = = Wars and internal conflicts (1116 ? 1127) = = =

Stephen was crowned king in Székesfehérvár within thirty days of his father 's death . His peaceful succession showed the effectiveness of the measures Coloman had implemented to prevent Álmos from usurping the throne . Upon his councilor 's advice , Stephen initiated a meeting with Vladislaus I , Duke of Bohemia , in order to improve the countries ' relations , which had deteriorated in the previous decade . The two monarchs met on the river Ol?ava , which marked the border of their realms . However , the lack of mutual confidence hindered the opening of negotiations , leading to armed conflicts which evolved into a battle on 13 May . On the battlefield , the Bohemian army inflicted a serious defeat on Stephen 's troops . The contemporaneous Cosmas of Prague blamed the young king 's advisors for the fiasco , but later medieval Hungarian chronicles ? all completed under kings descending from Stephen 's opponent , Álmos ? wrote that the king acted without consulting his advisors " ... for he was of an impetuous nature " .

The Hungarian people are prodigious in energy , mighty in strength , and very powerful in military arms ? sufficient to fight with a king of lands anywhere . After the death of their king , Coloman , their princes sent to Duke Vladislav to renew and confirm with the new king , named Stephen , their ancient peace and friendship Vladislav came to the River Ol?ava , which separates the realms of Hungary and Moravia . Immediately , the Hungarian people , innumerable as the sands or drops of rain , covered the whole surface of the land in the field of Lu?sko , like locusts But , as scripture says , " Woe to the land whose king is a child . " Their princes , through their inborn pride in themselves , strayed from the duke 's peaceful words and sent replies more to stir up strife than to

bring the kiss of peace .

Doge Ordelafo Faliero , who had conquered an island in the Gulf of Kvarner during the last year of Coloman 's reign , returned to Dalmatia at the head of the Venetian fleet in May 1116 . On 15 July , he vanquished the Hungarian troops which had arrived to relieve Zadar . Thereafter all towns ? including Biograd na Moru , ?ibenik , Split , and Trogir ? surrendered to Venice , terminating Stephen II 's suzerainty along the coastline of the Adriatic Sea . However , in either 1117 or 1118 , the Hungarian troops were able to defeat the Venetians , during which Ordelafo Faliero himself died at a battle near Zadar , enabling Biograd na Moru , Split , and Trogir to rejoin the sovereignty of the Hungarian monarch . However , the new Doge , Domenico Michele , invaded and reconquered all Dalmatia . A five @-@ year truce , which was concluded in 1117 or 1118 , confirmed the status quo : the seizure of Dalmatia by Venice .

Stephen 's troops launched a plundering raid into Austria in 1118 , provoking a counter @-@ attack by Leopold III , Margrave of Austria , later that same year . Bo?ivoj II , Duke of Bohemia , supported Leopold and pillaged the northwestern regions of the Kingdom of Hungary . Despite this , when Vladislaus I dethroned his brother Bo?ivoj in 1120 , Bo?ivoj fled to Hungary and settled at Stephen 's court .

Stephen married a daughter of Robert I of Capua , in the early 1120s . Historian Paul Stephenson wrote that Stephen 's marriage alliance with the Normans of Southern Italy " ... must have been partly directed against the Venetians . " The Norman Princes of Capua had been the Pope 's staunch supporters during the Investiture Controversy , suggesting that his marriage also continued his father 's pro @-@ Papal foreign policy . According to W?odzimierz Dworzaczek , Stephen in 1121 married Adelheid , daughter of Heinrich , burgrave of Regensburg .

Stephen 's cousin and the daughter of his uncle Álmos , Adelaide , whose husband Sob?slav had been expelled from Moravia , arrived in Hungary in early 1123 . According to Cosmas of Prague , Stephen " kindly received her ... acknowledging her as his relative " , which implies that his relations with his uncle were cordial around that time . In the same year , the young king launched a military expedition against the Principality of Volhynia in order to assist its expelled prince , Iaroslav Sviatopolchich , regain his throne . Even though Sviatopolchich was assassinated at the beginning of the siege of his former seat , Volodymyr @-@ Volynskyi , Stephen decided to continue the war . However , according to the Illuminated Chronicle , his commanders threatened to dethrone him if he continued the aggression , forcing Stephen to lift the siege and return to Hungary .

Cosma , of the line of Paznan , stood up before the King and said : " Lord , what is this thing which you are doing ? If with the death of a multitude of your soldiers you take the castle , whom will you appoint as its lord ? If you choose one among your nobles , he will not remain here . Or do you wish to abandon your kingdom and yourself have the dukedom ? We barons will not storm the castle . If you wish to storm it , storm it alone . We are returning to Hungary and we will choose for ourselves a king . " Then by order of the nobles the heralds announced throughout the camp that the Hungarians should return as speedily as possible to Hungary . When the King thus saw himself justly deprived of the help of his people , he returned to Hungary .

Taking advantage of the absence of the Venetian fleet from the Adriatic Sea because of a naval expedition in the Levant , Stephen invaded Dalmatia in the first half of 1124 . His charter confirming the liberation of Split and Trogir in July 1124 is evidence that the central regions of Dalmatia returned to his rule . However , upon the return of the Venetian armada the Dalmatian towns once again surrendered , one after another . According to the *Historia Ducum Veneticorum* , only the citizens of Biograd na Moru " ... dared resist the doge and his army ... " , but " ... their city was razed to its foundations . "

According to the Illuminated Chronicle , the blind Álmos , " ... fearing death at the hands of King Stephen ... " , fled to the Byzantine Empire . Many of his partisans followed him , and Emperor John II Komnenos settled them in a town in Macedonia . The Byzantine historian John Kinnamos confirmed that the emperor looked upon Álmos " ... favorably and received him with kindness . " He added that Stephen " sent his envoys to the emperor and demanded that ... [Álmos] ... be expelled from " the Byzantine Empire , but his request was rejected . The sources do not specify the date which Álmos 's fled , but it likely occurred circa 1125 . Historian Ferenc Makk wrote that Álmos was

forced to flee from Hungary because he had taken advantage of Stephen 's failures in Volhynia and Dalmatia , and conspired against Stephen .

Stephen met the new Duke of Bohemia , Sobeslav ? whose wife was Adelhaid ? in October 1126 . The meeting of the two monarchs ' brought an end to the hostilities between their two countries . Around the same year , Stephen also concluded an agreement with Archbishop Conrad I of Salzburg .

= = = Last years (1127 ? 1131) = = =

According to the Byzantine chronicler Niketas Choniates , the citizens of the Byzantine town Brani?evo " attacked and plundered the Hungarians who had come to " the Byzantine Empire " to trade , perpetrating the worst crimes against them . " In retaliation , Stephen decided to wage war against the Byzantine Empire . The Illuminated Chronicle relates that the childless Stephen " ... so ordered the succession to the throne that after his death the son of his sister Sophia , by name Saul , should reign . " The chronicle does not specify the date of this event , but Ferenc Makk says that Stephen most probably declared Saul as his heir during the first half of 1127 , before storming the Byzantine Empire .

Stephen broke into the empire in the summer . His troops sacked Belgrade , Brani?evo and Ni? , and plundered the regions around Serdica (Sofia , Bulgaria) and Philippopolis (Plovdiv , Bulgaria) , before returning to Hungary . In response , Emperor John II marched against Hungary in 1128 , where he defeated the royal troops in a battle at Haram , and " captured Frangochorion , the richest land in Hungary " (now in Serbia) . Stephen was unable to participate in the fighting because " he happened to be sickly in body and was recuperating someplace in the midst of his land " , according to John Kinnamos . The Illuminated Chronicle said that his illness was so serious that " all expected his death . " The chronicle added that " traitors " went so far as to elect two kings , the " Counts Bors and Ivan " . Upon regaining his health , Stephen had Ivan executed and expelled Bors from his kingdom .

John Kinnamos wrote of a second campaign by Stephen against the Byzantine Empire . The Hungarian troops , supported by Czech reinforcements under the command of Duke Vaclav of Olomouc , took Brani?evo by storm and destroyed its fortress . Emperor John II Komnenos was forced to retreat and sue for peace . Historian Ferenc Makk writes that the resulting peace treaty was signed in October 1129 .

Going to Branitshevo for a second time , [Emperor John] made haste to rebuild it . Since some time elapsed in the task , the army , suffering from winter weather and lack of necessities , was in severe distress . When he learned this , the Hungarians ' king decided to cross the Danube as quickly as possible and attack them unexpectedly . In the Hungarians ' land , however , there was a woman , a Latin by birth , outstanding in wealth and other distinction . Sending to the emperor , she revealed what was being planned . Since he was unable to engage them with an equivalent force , because as stated his army had already been overcome by disease and lack of necessities , he fortified the city where possible and withdrew .

For many years , Stephen believed that his cousin , Béla , had died after being blinded on the orders of Stephen 's father . Having learnt , around 1129 , that Béla was alive , the king " ... rejoiced with great joy ... " , according to the Illuminated Chronicle . He even granted Béla the town of Tolna and arranged Béla 's marriage with Helena of Rascia .

The Illuminated Chronicle recounts that Stephen showed blatant favoritism towards the " Comans " , identified as Pechenegs or Cumans by historians , who had arrived in Hungary in the 1120s . In his last years , he even tolerated the crimes they committed against his subjects , causing a revolt . Before his death , Stephen " ... laid aside his royal state and took the habit of a monk ... " . He died of dysentery in the spring of 1131 . No source recorded the exact date of his death , but most of his biographies wrote that he died on 1 March . He was buried in the Várad Cathedral (Oradea , Romania) .

= = Family = =

According to the Illuminated Chronicle , Stephen had no " wish to marry a lawful wife but took to himself concubines and harlots " . However , his advisors , " grieving that the kingdom was in a sorry state and the King without a heir " , persuaded him to marry . They chose a daughter of the late Robert I of Capua as their monarch 's wife , although her name was not recorded . Stephen died childless .

The following family tree presents Stephen 's ancestors and some of his relatives who are mentioned in the article .

* Whether Géza 's first or second wife was his children 's mother is uncertain .