

= Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria =

Ivan Alexander (Bulgarian : Иван Александър , transliterated Ivan Aleksandŕ ; pronounced [iˈvan alˈkʲsandŕ] ; original spelling : Иванъ Александър) , also sometimes Anglicized as John Alexander , ruled as Emperor (Tsar) of Bulgaria from 1331 to 1371 , during the Second Bulgarian Empire . The date of his birth is unknown . He died on 17 February 1371 . The long reign of Ivan Alexander is considered a transitional period in Bulgarian medieval history . Ivan Alexander began his rule by dealing with internal problems and external threats from Bulgaria 's neighbours , the Byzantine Empire and Serbia , as well as leading his empire into a period of economic recovery and cultural and religious renaissance .

However , the emperor was later unable to cope with the mounting incursions of Ottoman forces , Hungarian invasions from the northwest and the Black Death . In an ill -fated attempt to combat these problems , he divided the country between his two sons , thus forcing it to face the imminent Ottoman conquest weakened and divided .

= = Early rule = =

Ivan Alexander was the son of the despot's Sracimir of Kran by Petrica , a sister of Michael Asen III of Bulgaria . Therefore , Ivan Alexander was a nephew of Michael Asen III . Paternally , Ivan Alexander descended from the Asen dynasty . By 1330 Ivan Alexander was himself a despot's and governed the city of Lovech . Together with his father and his father -in-law Basarab of Wallachia , Ivan Alexander fought in the Battle of Velbazhd against the Serbs at modern -day Kyustendil in 1330 , in which Bulgaria suffered defeat . The defeat , combined with the worsening relations with the Byzantine Empire , precipitated an internal crisis , which was exacerbated by an invasion of the Byzantines . A coup d'état drove Ivan Stefan out of the capital Tarnovo in 1331 , and the conspirators placed Ivan Alexander on the throne .

The new ruler set about consolidating his position by regaining territories recently lost to the Byzantine Empire . In 1331 Ivan Alexander campaigned around Adrianople and reconquered northeastern Thrace . Meanwhile , Stefan Uroš IV Dušan deposed his father Stefan Uroš III Dečanski and became Serbian king in 1331 . This helped normalize the previously tense relations between the two countries . Ivan Alexander and Stefan Uroš IV Dušan concluded an alliance , which was cemented by the marriage of the Serbian king to Helena of Bulgaria , a sister of Ivan Alexander , on Easter 1332 .

At about the same time , Belaur , a brother of Michael Asen III , rebelled in Vidin , probably in support of his deposed nephew Ivan Stefan 's claim to the throne . The advance of the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos against Bulgaria in the summer of 1332 protracted military operations against the rebels . The Byzantines overran Bulgarian -controlled northeastern Thrace , but Ivan Alexander rushed southward with a small army and swiftly caught up with Andronikos III at Rusokastro .

After giving the impression that he wished to negotiate , Ivan Alexander , reinforced by Mongol cavalry , overwhelmed the smaller but better organized Byzantine army in the Battle of Rusokastro . The contested cities surrendered to Ivan Alexander , while Andronikos III sought refuge within the walls of Rusokastro . The war ended with Ivan Alexander meeting Andronikos and agreeing a peace based on the status quo . To seal the alliance , he betrothed his eldest son , Michael Asen IV , to Andronikos 's daughter Maria (Eirene) , the marriage eventually taking place in 1339 . The Bulgarian emperor was now free to turn his attentions to Belaur , but it was not until 1336 or 1337 that the rebellion in the northwest was put down .

In about 1332 Ivan Alexander had crowned his eldest son Michael Asen IV co -emperor , perhaps to safeguard possession of the throne by his own family . He followed up this traditional association with the coronation of his younger sons Ivan Sracimir and Ivan Asen IV in 1337 . Ivan Alexander may have intended the creation of two younger co -emperors to establish immediate control over important cities and regions , as Ivan Sracimir was eventually based in Vidin , and Ivan Asen IV perhaps in Preslav . Nevertheless , this was a marked departure from Byzantine practice ,

in which younger sons of the sovereign were made despot's , whether they were charged with a territorial administration or not .

= = Relations with the Byzantine Empire = =

In the early 1340s relations with the Byzantine Empire temporarily deteriorated . Ivan Alexander demanded the extradition of his cousin ?i?man , one of the sons of Michael Asen III , threatening the Byzantine government with war . Ivan Alexander 's show of force backfired , as the Byzantines managed to see through his intentions and sent against him the fleet of their ally , the Turkish emir of Smyrna Umur Beg . Landing in the Danube Delta , they pillaged the countryside and attacked nearby Bulgarian cities . Forced to restrain his demands , Ivan Alexander invaded the Byzantine Empire again at the end of 1341 , claiming that he was summoned by the people of Adrianople . However , Ivan Alexander 's troops were defeated twice by Turkish allies of the Byzantines near the city .

In 1341 ? 1347 the Byzantine Empire was plunged into a protracted civil war between the regency for Emperor John V Palaiologos under Anna of Savoy and his intended guardian John VI Kantakouzenos . The neighbours of the Byzantines took advantage of the civil war , and while Stefan Uro? IV Du?an of Serbia sided with John VI Kantakouzenos , Ivan Alexander backed John V Palaiologos and his regency . Although the two Balkan rulers picked opposite sides in the Byzantine civil war , they maintained their alliance with each other . As the price for Ivan Alexander 's support , the regency for John V Palaiologos ceded him the city of Philippopolis (Plovdiv) and nine important fortresses in the Rhodope Mountains in 1344 . This peaceful turnover constituted the last major success of Ivan Alexander 's foreign policy .

= = Rise of Serbia and the Ottoman threat = =

During the same period , the Serbian king took advantage of the Byzantine civil war to take possession of what is now Macedonia , and of most of Albania and northern Greece . In 1345 he began to call himself " Emperor of Serbs and Greeks " , and in 1346 he was crowned as such by the newly created Serbian Patriarch . These actions , which the Byzantines received with indignation , appear to have been supported by Bulgaria , as the Patriarch of Bulgaria Simeon had participated in both the creation of a Serbian Patriarchate and the imperial coronation of Stefan Uro? IV Du?an .

By the second half of the 1340s , little remained of Ivan Alexander 's initial successes . John VI Kantakouzenos ' Turkish allies pillaged parts of Bulgarian Thrace in 1346 , 1347 , 1349 , 1352 and 1354 , to which were added the ravages of the Black Death . The Bulgarians ' attempts to repel the invaders met with repeated failure , and Ivan Alexander 's third son and co @-@ emperor , Ivan Asen IV , was killed in battle against the Turks in 1349 , as was his older brother Michael Asen IV in 1355 or a little earlier .

By 1351 the Byzantine civil war was over , and John VI Kantakouzenos had realized the threat posed by the Ottomans to the Balkan Peninsula . He appealed to the rulers of Serbia and Bulgaria for a united effort against the Turks and asked Ivan Alexander for money to construct warships , but his appeals fell on deaf ears as his neighbours distrusted his intentions . A new attempt for cooperation between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire followed in 1355 , after John VI Kantakouzenos had been forced to abdicate and John V Palaiologos had been established as supreme emperor . To cement the treaty , Ivan Alexander 's daughter Keraca Marija was married off to the future Byzantine Emperor Andronikos IV Palaiologos , but the alliance failed to produce concrete results .

= = Further stability problems and external conflicts = =

At home Ivan Alexander compromised the internal stability of his realm by divorcing his first wife Theodora of Wallachia (in about 1349) and marrying a converted Jew , also named Theodora . The new marriage produced new sons , whom Ivan Alexander proceeded to crown co @-@ emperors ,

Ivan Asen V by 1359 . Ivan Alexander 's last surviving son from his first marriage , the co-emperor Ivan Sracimir , became effectively independent around 1356 ; and Ivan Alexander 's control over other powerful vassals , such as the rulers of Wallachia and Dobruja , who pursued their own foreign policies , was hardly stronger .

From the middle of the 14th century , Bulgaria fell prey to the aspirations of the Angevin king Louis I of Hungary , who annexed Moldavia in 1352 and established a vassal principality there , before conquering Vidin in 1365 , and taking Ivan Sratsimir and his family into captivity .

In the meantime Bulgarians and Byzantines had clashed again in 1364 . In 1366 , when Emperor John V Palaiologos was returning from his trip to the west , the Bulgarians refused to let him pass through Bulgaria . This stance backfired , as another Byzantine ally , Count Amadeus VI of Savoy , leading the Savoyard crusade , captured several Bulgarian maritime cities in retaliation , including Ankhalos (Pomorie) and Mesembria (Nesebar) , though he failed to take Varna . Outmanoeuvred , Ivan Alexander was forced to make peace .

The captured cities were turned over to the Byzantine Empire , while Emperor John V Palaiologos paid the sum of 180 000 florins to Ivan Alexander . The Bulgarian emperor used this sum and territorial concessions to induce his at least de jure vassals Dobrotica of Dobruja and Vladislav I of Wallachia to reconquer Vidin from the Hungarians . The war was successful , and Ivan Sracimir was reinstalled in Vidin in 1369 , although the Hungarian king forced him to acknowledge his overlordship .

The relatively successful resolution of the crisis in the northwest did nothing to help recover the losses in the southeast . To make matters worse , in 1369 (the date is disputed) , the Ottoman Turks under Murad I conquered Adrianople (in 1363) and made it the effective capital of their expanding state . At the same time , they also captured the Bulgarian cities of Philippopolis and Boruj (Stara Zagora) . As Bulgaria and the Serbian princes in Macedonia prepared for united action against the Turks , Ivan Alexander died on February 17 , 1371 . He was succeeded by his sons Ivan Sracimir in Vidin and Ivan Asen V in Tarnovo , while the rulers of Dobruja and Wallachia achieved further independence .

= = Culture and religion = =

During Ivan Alexander 's rule , the Second Bulgarian Empire entered a period of cultural renaissance , which is sometimes referred to as the " Second Golden Age of Bulgarian culture " , the original one being the rule of Simeon the Great . A large number of Bulgarian monasteries and churches were constructed or renovated on the order of Ivan Alexander . Mural portraits of him as a donor can be seen in the Bachkovo Monastery 's ossuary and in the Rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo . Donor 's deeds of Ivan Alexander prove that the monasteries of the Holy Mother of God Eleoussa and St Nicholas in Nesebar were reconstructed during that period , as was the St Nicholas monastery near Pernik , according to a Hilandar monastery deed . In addition , the tsar also initiated the construction of the Dragalevci and Kilifarevo monasteries .

Literary activity also flourished during the reign of Ivan Alexander . Several important literary works were created in the period , such as the Middle Bulgarian translation of the Manasses Chronicle (1344 ? 1345) , currently preserved in the Vatican Secret Archives in Rome , the richly illustrated Tetraevangelia of Ivan Alexander (1355 ? 1356) , now exhibited in the British Library , the Tomi? Psalter (1360) , today in Moscow , and the Sofia Psalter (1337) .

Ivan Alexander 's rule was also marked by efforts to strengthen the position of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church by pursuing heretics and Jews . He organized two anti-heretical church councils , in 1350 and 1359 ? 1360 , that condemned various sects such as the Bogomils , the Adamites and the Judaizers .

The spiritual practice of hesychasm , a form of incantatory prayer , deeply influenced certain areas of the Eastern Orthodox world of the 14th century . A notable Bulgarian representative of the movement during Ivan Alexander 's reign was Theodosius of Tarnovo .

During this time , the Bulgarian Empire had trade relations with the Mediterranean maritime powers Venice , Genoa and Ragusa . In 1353 , Ivan Alexander issued a charter allowing Venetian

merchants to buy and sell goods throughout Bulgaria after Doge Andrea Dandolo assured him they would observe the prior treaties between the two countries .

In modern times , the rule of Ivan Alexander inspired Bulgarian national writer Ivan Vazov to write the novelette Ivan @-@ Aleksand?r and the drama K?m propast (Towards an Abyss) , in both of which the tsar is the main character .

A piece of a garment signed by Ivan Alexander and interwoven with gold was discovered in a noble 's grave near Pirot in the 1970s ; today it is preserved in the National Museum of Serbia in Belgrade . It is the first find of its kind , demonstrating a medieval tradition attested in writing according to which Orthodox rulers would present their most eminent dignitaries with a piece of a garment they had worn .

Ivan Alexander Point on Nelson Island in the South Shetland Islands , Antarctica is named after Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria .

= = Family = =

By his first wife Theodora of Wallachia (nun Teofana) , a daughter of Basarab of Wallachia , Ivan Alexander had several children , including Ivan Sracimir , who ruled as emperor of Bulgaria in Vidin 1356 ? 1397 , associated emperors Michael Asen IV (co @-@ ruled c . 1332 ? 1354 / 5) and Ivan Asen IV (co @-@ ruled 1337 ? 1349) .

By his second wife Sarah @-@ Theodora , Ivan Alexander had several other children , which included Keraca Marija , who married the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos IV Palaiologos , Ivan ?i?man , who succeeded as emperor of Bulgaria in T?rnovo 1371 ? 1396 , Ivan Asen V , associated as emperor of Bulgaria by 1359 ? 1388 ? , a daughter called Tamar (Kera Tamara) , who was married first to the despot?s Constantine (Konstantin) , and then to Sultan Murad I of the Ottoman Empire , as well as two daughters named Desislava and Vasilisa .

= = Timeline = =