

= Géza , Grand Prince of the Hungarians =

Géza (c . 940 ? 997) , also Gejza , was Grand Prince of the Hungarians from the early 970s . He was the son of Grand Prince Taksony and his Oriental ? Khazar , Pecheneg or Volga Bulgarian ? wife . He married Sarolt , a daughter of an Orthodox Hungarian chieftain . After ascending the throne , Géza made peace with the Holy Roman Empire . Within Hungary , he consolidated his authority with extreme cruelty , according to the unanimous narration of nearly contemporaneous sources . He was the first Hungarian monarch to support Christian missionaries from Western Europe . Although he was baptised (his baptismal name was Stephen) , his Christian faith remained shallow and continued to perform acts of pagan worship . He was succeeded by his son , Stephen who was crowned the first King of Hungary in 1000 or 1001 .

= = Early life = =

Géza was the elder son of Taksony , Grand Prince of the Hungarians . His mother was his father 's wife " from the land of the Cumans " , according to the anonymous author of the *Gesta Hungarorum* . This anachronistic reference to the Cumans suggests that she was of Khazar , Pecheneg or Volga Bulgarian origin . The Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus , who listed the descendants of Grand Prince Árpád around 950 , did not mention Géza . Even so , Gyula Kristó wrote that Géza was born around 940 and the emperor ignored him because of his youth . The genuine form of his name was either " Gyeücsa " or " Gyeusa " , which is possibly a diminutive form of the Turkic title yabgu . Géza 's father arranged his marriage with Sarolt ? a daughter of a Hungarian chieftain called Gyula , who ruled Transylvania independently of the grand prince and had converted to Christianity in Constantinople . Sarolt seems to have also adhered to Orthodox Christianity , according to Bruno of Querfurt 's remark on her " languid and muddled Christianity " .

= = Reign = =

Géza succeeded his father around 972 . He adopted a centralizing policy , which gave rise to his fame as a merciless ruler . The longer version of his son 's Life even states that Géza 's hands were " defiled with blood " . Pál Engel wrote that Géza carried out a " large @-@ scale purge " against his relatives , which explains the lack of references to other members of the Árpád dynasty from around 972 . Koppány , who continued to rule the southern parts of Transdanubia , is the only exception to this dearth of references . A marriage alliance between the German and Byzantine dynasties brought about a rapprochement between the two powers neighboring Hungary in 972 . Géza decided to make peace with the Holy Roman Empire . First , a monk named Bruno sent by Otto I , Holy Roman Emperor arrived in Hungary around 972 . Hungarian " legates " were present at a conference held by the emperor in Quedlinburg in 973 .

Geyza , who was strict and cruel , acting in a domineering way , as it were , with his own people , but compassionate and generous with strangers , especially with Christians , although [he was] still entangled in the rite of paganism . At the approach of the light of spiritual grace , he began to discuss peace attentively with all the neighboring provinces ... Moreover , he laid down a rule that the favor of hospitality and security be shown to all Christians wishing to enter to his domains . He gave clerics and monks leave to enter his presence ; he offered them a willing hearing , and delighted them in the germination of the seed of true faith sown in the garden of his heart .

A record on one Bishop Prunwart in the Abbey of Saint Gall mentions his success in baptising many Hungarians , including their " king " . The nearly contemporaneous Thietmar of Merseburg confirms that the conversion to Christianity of the pagan Hungarians started under Géza , who became the first Christian ruler of Hungary . His baptismal name was Stephen . However , Géza continued to observe pagan cults , which proves that his conversion to Christianity was never complete . Kristó and other historians have said that the first Roman Catholic diocese in Hungary , with its seat in Veszprém , was set up in Géza 's reign , but their view has not been unanimously accepted . A charter issued during his son 's reign states that Géza was the founder of the Benedictine

Pannonhalma Archabbey .

[Géza] was very cruel and killed many people because of his quick temper . When he became a Christian , however , he turned his rage against his reluctant subjects , in order to strengthen this faith . Thus , glowing with zeal for God , he washed away his old crimes . He sacrificed both to the omnipotent God and to various false gods . When reproached by his priest for doing so , however , he maintained that the practice had brought him both wealth and great power .

Taking advantage of internal conflicts which emerged in the Holy Roman Empire after Emperor Otto I 's death , Géza invaded Bavaria and took the fortress of Melk in 983 . In 991 , the Bavarians launched a counter @-@ attack which forced Géza to withdraw Hungarian forces from the territories east of the Vienna Woods . Furthermore , he renounced the lands east of the river Leitha in his peace treaty of 996 with Henry IV of Bavaria . Géza also arranged the marriage of his son and heir Stephen to Henry IV 's sister Giselle . Even before this marriage alliance , Géza convoked the Hungarian leaders to an assembly and forced them to take an oath confirming his son 's right to succeed him .

= = Family = =

Sarolt gave birth to at least three of Géza 's children ; Stephen , who succeeded his father on the throne , and two unnamed daughters . Sarolt survived Géza , which suggests that she was also the mother of Géza 's daughters . Based on the Polish @-@ Hungarian Chronicle , Szabolcs de Vajay wrote that the daughters ' mother was Géza 's alleged second wife Adelaide (Adleta) of Poland , but this has not been widely accepted . The following family tree presents Géza 's ancestry and his offspring .

* Whether Menumorut is an actual or an invented person is debated by modern scholars . * * A Khazar , Pecheneg or Volga Bulgarian lady . * * * Samuel Aba might have been Géza 's grandson instead of his son @-@ in @-@ law . * * * * The Aba family descending from them still flourished in the 14th century .