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# DIPLOMATIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE CRUSADES AND THE ÁRPÁD-ERA KINGDOM OF HUNGARY

“Post hec Andreas Terram Sanctam visitavit ad mandatum pape.”

The aim of this study\* is to provide an overview of the diplomatic interaction between the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary and the Crusades from 1018, when St. Stephen opened the pilgrimage route through Hungary to Jerusalem, until the 1220s, up to the end of András II's military campaign to the Holy Land. As the scope constraints of the study do not allow a detailed overview of the entire five crusades of the era, I would like to highlight three events of decisive importance.<sup>1</sup>

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1 The topic is part of the diplomatic history of the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary, which has not been summarised since Miklós Asztalos' 1935 medieval Hungarian foreign policy history work (Miklós Asztalos, *A magyar külpolitika a kezdetektől 1526-ig* (The Hungarian Great Power I–II. Hungarian foreign policy from the beginning to 1526). Reprint Edition, Attraktor Kiadó, Máriabesnyő, 2003). In recent years, as part of the 2014 Lendület II (Momentum II) programme of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), a research group led by Attila Bárány has written studies on relations between medieval Hungary and Western Europe: Attila Bárány, “Magyarország helye és képe a középkori Európában” (The place and image of Hungary in medieval Europe). (Presentation of the objectives of the programme awarded in the 2014 Lendület II (Momentum II) programme of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) and introduction of the research group). *Debreceni Szemle* (2014), 3, pp. 268–274.

After an overview of the diplomatic history surrounding the opening of the land pilgrimage route to Jerusalem, I will focus on the First Crusade as it was the beginning of a series of nearly two centuries of events that moved the entire Christian world, and coincided with the beginning of the reign of Kálmán the Learned, a prominent ruler of the Árpád dynasty. Next is the diplomatic history review of the Third Crusade, in which King Béla III played a decisive political role in the successful period of medieval Hungarian history: the Hungarian ruler resolved a situation threatening a serious military conflict between the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I and Byzantine Emperor Isaac II. The third topic is the diplomatic history review of the Fifth Crusade led by András II: this was significant not only because of the ruler who issued the Golden Bull of 1222, but also because it was the last of the Crusades in which the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary was directly involved.

## Crusades to the Holy Land

To reclaim the Holy Land from the Muslims, for centuries Latin Christianity led Crusades, or, as they are sometimes called, wars between 1095 and 1291.<sup>2</sup> The chroniclers of the First Crusade use the word “*iter*” or “*peregrinatio*” to describe the event itself, and those who went to the Holy Land were called either “*populus Dei*”, “*Exercitus Dei*” or simply “*peregrini*”. These names show that in the ideology of Latin Christianity at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, two ideas were closely intertwined: the concept of the pilgrimage itself and the war for the recapture of the Holy Land.<sup>3</sup>

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2 The literature on the Crusades can fill a library, but here I highlight only a few. Fordham University’s online resource collection, which includes an extensive literary compilation, can be used quite well: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/sbook1k.asp>. The bibliographies of Bozsóky 1995 and Runciman 1999 include the sources of the Crusades and international literature, as well as Hungarian literature. Note that the assessment of the causes, antecedents, goals and results of the Crusades have been the subject of debate among historians for centuries, but this is probably not only because historians’ beliefs and perceptions differ from each other, but also because the drivers of the centuries-long Crusades were complex too.

3 However, it was not until the 1200s, in other words, in the later phases of the Crusades,

This concept was then reflected in the ideology of church law in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries: “from a legal point of view, the Crusade is a direct continuation of the pilgrimage.”<sup>4</sup>

The primary objective of the Crusades between 1095 and 1291 in the understanding of the age of the Crusades was to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslim rule prevailing since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the secondary objective was to assist Latin Christianity in helping Eastern Christianity to end the schism that began in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The ideals of the Crusades were influenced by the Byzantine Empire’s struggles against Islam as well as the military actions of the *Reconquista* on the Iberian peninsula and the fights against the Arabs in southern Italy, which had been in progress since the beginning of the Arab conquests, i.e. the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Oscar Halecki’s idea is rightly considered appropriate: “There is nothing more characteristic of the era in European history that the common language refers to as the Middle Ages than the Crusades,”<sup>5</sup> along with the Investiture Controversy.<sup>6</sup>

In the long run, however, the Crusades did not yield a solution in either a military or religious sense: the Holy Land could not be permanently reclaimed from the Muslims, and the schism between the Latin and Orthodox Christians only eased, it did not actually end.<sup>7</sup>

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that it was possible to “distinguish between those who had set out for the protection of the Holy Land and those who wanted to travel there for a merciful purpose. It was then that the words *crusade* and *crusader* spread, although in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the terms *Peregrinatio* and *Peregrini* still appeared when it came to these military expeditions.” Sigal 1989, pp. 11–14. These two ideas, i.e. pilgrimage and the armed struggle against the Muslims, which was regarded as one in the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, were not well understood or were misunderstood by the historians of later times, influenced by the ideas of 18<sup>th</sup>-century enlightenment and liberalism. Another contributing factor was that Christianity, which had been the decisive moral and spiritual norm of the medieval centuries and determined the lives of people, was overshadowed by the advancement of liberalism and the rise of the totalitarian ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the thinking of “*Christian universalism*” (Halecki 1993, p. 123), which applied to both Latin Christianity and Eastern Christianity, was often not understood or was misunderstood by historians and medieval researchers in recent centuries.

4 Sigal 1989, p. 13

5 Halecki 1993, p. 161

6 Matthew 1989, p. 87

7 It was not until more than 600 years after Acre’s fall in 1291 that the Holy Land and Jerusalem came under the control of a Christian state again when British troops entered the area occupied by the Ottoman Empire in December 1917.

## **Historical background of the Crusades in the 11th century in Hungary, King St. Stephen and the opening of the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem in Hungary**

Jerusalem occupies a central place in the history of monotheistic religions. There is no other city in the world that believers of three religions that fear a single God would regard as their holy place: the Jewish (Israelites), the Christians, and the believers of Islam consider Jerusalem their holy city.

“Jerusalem is built,  
As a city that is compact together,  
Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the Lord,  
To the Testimony of Israel,  
To give thanks to the name of the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

For this reason, even before the Muslim conquest of the Holy City, there was a serious war between the Byzantine Empire and Sasanian Persia under the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) and Khosrow II the Great (591-628). Between 610 and 620, the Persian armies invaded the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire, taking the major cities of Antioch, Alexandria and then Jerusalem in 614. The Persian army killed tens of thousands of people in the city, and together with several other churches and monasteries destroyed the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, plundering the cultivated areas around the city. Zechariah, the patriarch of Jerusalem, was taken to Persia with the majority of the surviving population as well as the relic of the Holy Cross. It was not until more than a decade later, in 629, that Heraclius was able to defeat the Persians and return the relic of the Holy Cross to Jerusalem triumphantly.

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8 Psalm 122, pp. 3–4.

A few years later, one of the two “most aggressive<sup>9</sup> military campaigns of the first millennium” began, the Muslim Conquest. Emperor Heraclius – who was regarded as the first crusader in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the French knights who set out to take the Holy Land, and by French chroniclers, despite the fact that, at that time, the Byzantine Empire was regarded almost as an enemy in Western Europe – could not resist the attack of the Muslim armies. Damascus was occupied by Caliph Umar’s soldiers in 635, who defeated the Byzantine army a year later at the Yarmuk River in 636, and then entered Jerusalem in 638, after a siege lasting more than a year. One contributing factor to the Muslim military successes was that the Byzantine Empire’s treasury was empty after nearly two decades of wars against the Persians, and the Arab invaders used this difficult situation and the internal Byzantine struggles well to achieve their goals.<sup>10</sup>

The situation of Christian pilgrims in the Muslim-occupied Holy Land and Jerusalem was often difficult, but at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century it not only got worse, but serious. The Caliph al-Hakim (996-1021) of Egypt destroyed the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1009 along with many other churches and monasteries, expelled the monks and ordered the Muslims of the city to loot the Christians. In addition, he obliged both Jewish and Christian inhabitants to carry a “distinctive” sign: Jews had to wear a wooden calf’s head on a chain and Christians had to wear a heavy copper cross around their necks.

After the death of Al-Hakim, these laws and decrees considered cruel even by the standards of the time were abolished, and after 1027 pilgrims from Western Europe arrived in masses in the Holy Land, who wanted to celebrate the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the torture, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. However, a serious prerequisite in this context was for Jerusalem and other Christian holy places not only to be reachable by sea, but also on land.

“At that time, the Hungarian people who lived in the Danube region, together with their king, converted to the Christian faith. Their king, who was baptised Stephen, and was rightly considered the most Christian, [...] was given Emperor Henry’s sister as his wife. At this time, almost everyone who wanted to go from

9 Armesto 2001, p. 19

10 Bozsóky 1995, p. 28

Italy and Gaul to Jerusalem to the tomb of the Lord, began to ignore the usual route through the surging sea, and instead started to pass through the homeland of this king. And he guaranteed everyone a safe journey, and every pilgrim he met was received as a brother, and gave them great gifts. Inspired by this grace, an immeasurable mass of nobles and commoners went to Jerusalem.”<sup>11</sup>

Rodulfus Glaber, a monk of Burgundian origin, often describes events inaccurately in his history book, but he is not mistaken in this detail: at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, “almost everyone” who tried to go from Western Europe to Jerusalem, to the Holy Land, began to ignore the “usual route through the sea”.

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, our historians have linked the opening of the Jerusalem pilgrimage route to St. Stephen,<sup>12</sup> which was not primarily the demand of Western European Christianity, but the decision of King St. Stephen originating from within.

According to György Györffy, the pilgrimage route could have opened when the Byzantine-Bulgarian war was over, and Bulgaria became part of the Byzantine Empire. In the final phase of this war, in 1018, Basil II (976–1025) and St. Stephen struck a military and political alliance against Tsar Ivan Vladislav (1015-1018), who was put on the Bulgarian throne by means of murder. St. Stephen marched to the Balkans, where he met the Byzantine Emperor, and together they defeated the Bulgarian Tsar. “The end of the Bulgarian campaign meant that Hungary had become a bridge between the Holy Roman and the Greco-Roman empires. Cut off from the circulation of Europe since the migration, “Pannonia” became the main artery between the West and the East, on which material goods and ideas flowed, and thus inaugurated a secluded Hungary as an integral part of Europe.”<sup>13</sup>

In Gyula Kristó’s opinion, which resonates with Györffy’s statement, this decision was most probably made around 1018: “One of the greatest services Stephen did for the Christian Church was to open the pilgrimage route to

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11 Az államalapítás korának 1999, pp. 185–186

12 Pauler 1899a, p. 69

13 Györffy 1983, p. 289

Jerusalem through Hungary. Previously, those travelling to the Holy Land could reach their destination only by the much riskier sea route, as the Carpathian Basin crossing was dangerous even in the first two decades of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. [...] It appears that from around 1018 (when conditions in the Balkans also normalised with the end of the Byzantine-Bulgarian war) a new opportunity for a safe passage through Southeast Europe opened up.”<sup>14</sup>

With this historical event at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the participation of the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary in the pilgrimages to the Holy Land of Latin Christianity began. These pilgrimages were a kind of antecedent to the Crusades, in which Hungary’s participation in the military actions of the Crusades became direct, even though, to the best of our knowledge, Hungarian military forces did not join those who wished to go to the Holy Land during the first two Crusades. According to James Ross Sweeney, this was a kind of “*passive*” attitude, which was replaced by Hungary’s “*active*” involvement between 1169 and 1217 in the history of the Crusades.<sup>15</sup>

However, is it perhaps more accurate to distinguish between the diplomatic and military relations of the Crusades and the Hungarian state of the Árpád era from the perspective whether they were *direct* or only *indirect*? From the opening of the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem until the beginning of the 1220s, Hungary was *directly* involved in both the pilgrimages and the Crusades from 1095. Namely, it was possible to participate in these events not only with weapons, but also by helping pilgrims and armed knights to achieve their goal, whether that goal from the Christian perspective was peaceful or, stemming from the common perspective of the time, more violent.

This *direct diplomatic and military relationship* from the early 1220s all the way up to 1291, until the fall of Acre, was only *indirect* – for example, St. Elizabeth’s husband joined the Crusade as Emperor II. Frederick’s vassal – so conditions changed compared to the events of the two centuries between 1018 and 1220: the territory and kings of the Kingdom of Hungary were no longer directly affected by the events of the last three Crusades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

14 Kristó 2001, p. 97

15 Sweeney 1984, p. 114

## King Kálmán and the first Crusade

Pope Urban II (1088–1099) was the first to devise an armed pilgrimage to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim rule that actually did happen.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the serious problems of Western Christianity, Urban also took into consideration the issues faced by Eastern Christianity, as the excommunications in Constantinople in 1054 and the defeat of the Byzantine Empire at Manzikert in 1071 created a new situation within Christianity. Both Urban II and Emperor Alexios I wanted to resolve these grave political situations. As a first step, at the Council of Melfi in 1089 Urban acquitted the Emperor of the excommunication proclaimed by Pope Gregory VII. Subsequently, Alexios assured the Pope that Latin Christians in Constantinople were free to perform their masses according to their own rituals. The theological questions, which raised many problems, were wisely avoided, so Alexios distanced himself from the anti-pope, even though supporting Clement III was in the best interest of the Byzantine high priests.<sup>17</sup>

Then, in the spring of 1095, the Council of Piacenza took place, where the envoys of Alexios asked the Western Christians for military help.<sup>18</sup> The Byzantines not only referred to the dire situation of the Holy Land, but also to the fact that, at that time, Seljuk rule showed signs of crisis, it had weakened and militarily became more vulnerable. The Pope thought of immediate military assistance to combine the strength of the Christian knights in a united war: this was his plan that Urban II revealed at the council held in Clermont in November of the same year.

“For your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. [...] On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ’s heralds to publish

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16 For details about the relationship between Pope Urban II and the Crusades see: Runciman 1999, p. 90.

17 Runciman 1999, p. 91

18 Runciman 1999, p. 93; Duroselle 1991, p. 143



this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians [...]. Let those who have been accustomed unjustly to wage private warfare against the faithful now go against the infidels and end with victory this war which should have started long ago. Let those who have been robbers for a long time now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians.”<sup>19</sup> Urban II’s speech and appeal at the Council of Clermont had an unexpected response, first in the French territories, of course, as the Pope was French and the council was held in the Kingdom of France, and then the German territories also received news of the call for an armed pilgrimage.<sup>20</sup>

In the following year, the First Crusade that started 1096 was organised in two different periods in different parts of Europe. First in the spring along the Loire and Rhine, then in early summer in other areas of Western Europe. The former evolved “spontaneously”, the latter was organised militarily and was timed for the departure date of the Pope on 15 August 1096, the celebration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>21</sup> It was precisely because of the differences in timing that the “People’s Crusade” arrived at the Hungarian border on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem that led through Hungary towards Constantinople in May 1096, but the knights’ armies that waited until the official departure date of 15 August arrived at Moson and the Croatian territories only in the second half of September.

At this time, before the arrival of the crusaders from Western Europe between the summer of 1095 and the spring of 1096, intense political events took place in the Kingdom of Hungary. In late July 1095 King St. László died, leaving the Hungarian throne to his younger nephew, Prince Álmos, whom he earlier made King of Croatia. He appointed Kálmán, his older nephew, as bishop, but Kálmán left for Poland with his followers in the first half of 1095

19 Foucher de Chartres: *Gesta Francorum Hierusalem Peregrinantium*. Translation: *Szöveggyűjtemény* 1999, pp. 206–207.

20 Bozsóky 1995, p. 44

21 Veszprémy 1999, p. 131

when László was still alive, because he wanted to seek out allies so he could still be crowned king based on his right of being the first born. Prince Álmos stayed in Hungary with his followers, but he did not get himself crowned, at least that is not reported in the sources. Rather, it is likely that the supporters of the two young men (Kálmán must have been 23–24 years old and his younger brother Álmos was around 20–21) started to negotiate with each other. These talks proved successful, and in the spring of 1096 the two princes reached an agreement without an armed conflict.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, Kálmán was crowned king, and Álmos was given the previously known position of duke, which was vacant under St. László. In light of the events that took place shortly thereafter, we can say this agreement was very important for the Kingdom of Hungary, because the situation could have been very serious if the participants of the First Crusade had arrived at the western borders with an internal war raging in Hungary, or if Kálmán had been crowned king without a political agreement, and had been forced to watch the crusade march for months while fearing that Álmos would stab him in the back and try to seize the throne.<sup>23</sup>

Between the beginning of May and the end of August in 1096, tens of thousands of armed and unarmed pilgrims marched across Hungary in five large groups.<sup>24</sup> The first crusaders arrived at the western Hungarian border at the beginning of May, the fifth group led by Count Emicho von Leiningen and the French Guillaume de Melun, around mid-July. Having just taken the throne, the young Kálmán I provided free passage to this first group, as simple pilgrims, and, in return for payment of course, access to food markets on the pilgrimage route through Hungary, which had been used since the end of the 1010s. However, neither they nor those who came after them behaved as expected. The next group of crusaders led by Peter of Amiens, were also granted permission

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22 Makk 1996, p. 139

23 Magyarország története 1987, p. 948

24 First, the crusaders of Walter the Penniless also called Walter Habenichts by German sources and Gautier Sansavoire by French sources. Next up was Peter of Amiens, also known as Peter the Hermit and his followers, then the German “Adventurer Knight” Volkmar and his army. The fourth group was led by the priest Gottschalk, Peter the Hermit’s “disciple”, and the fifth by Count Emicho von Leiningen and the French Guillaume de Melun.

of free passage by Kálmán, with the addition that the Hungarian king would retaliate to any looting. While marching through Hungary, the crusaders laid siege to Zimony, and according to foreign sources, killed thousands of soldiers and civilians, then distributed the animals and valuables found in the city among themselves. After Kálmán drove them out of the country, they continued the robbery, destruction and looting in Byzantine territory.

Volkmar led the groups of the new crusaders arriving from the west to the Hungarian border, we know nothing for sure about their origin.<sup>25</sup> They already became infamous while in the Rhine region, and then in Prague they began to kill the Jews at the end of June, even though Bishop Kozma and the secular authorities had taken vigorous action against them. Then they entered the territory of Hungary from the northwest, where the Hungarian army defeated and crushed them at Nitra, but Volkmar's fate remains unknown.

The next group of crusaders was led by the priest Gottschalk, Peter the Hermit's disciple, who arrived from Regensburg to Moson in mid-June, only a few days after Kálmán's troops destroyed Volkmar's army. According to Pál Gerő Bozsóky, even though Gottschalk's group asked for permission to pass, they entered the country on the usual pilgrimage route without waiting for a response, and like Volkmar, they wanted to continue the same thing they started west of Hungary: robbery, looting and killing people. However, it was not the Jews they attacked here, but the Hungarian population; as the chronicler Abbot Guibert de Nogent wrote: "Although our sons were foreigners {in Hungary}, they reached such a peak of madness that they trampled the people of the countryside with their feet. The Hungarians, as good Christians to Christians, were happy to sell their goods, but our insatiable pilgrims, forgetting about the hospitality they received, engaged in a fight with their hosts for no reason, believing that they were so pious they would not dare to oppose them. And so they shamefully set fire to the public granaries, raped the girls, and kidnapped the wives, shaved the beards of the men, or branded them with a hot iron. From then on, there was no mention of buying the things necessary for their

25 Pál Gerő Bozsóky considers him an "adventurer knight"; Bozsóky 1995, p. 47.

survival, but everyone threw themselves into the robbery and bloodshed with all their energy, shouting slogans like this: “And we will do the same to the Turks {Muslims}.”<sup>26</sup>

Next, the Hungarian army defeated Gottschalk’s army with a trick, surrounded them and forced them to lay down their arms, and then massacred them: Gottschalk fled the country at Moson.

The next and the last army of the people’s crusade probably reached the western border of the Kingdom of Hungary at the same time: Count Emicho von Leiningen’s large army of German and French troops plundered the Rhineland in May and June. The Jewish population of the archbishop and bishop cities of Mainz, Cologne, Trier and Metz were killed and looted, and then they left for the Hungarian border in early July. The army led by Count Emicho included French knights, Clarambald of Vendeuil, Thomas of La Fère, and the most notorious, William the Carpenter, the vicomte of Melun. They besieged the Castle of Moson, but the Hungarian army led by Kálmán drove them out of the country in a western direction.<sup>27</sup> Several of the Frenchmen who escaped and did not return home, including Knight William, joined one of the more orderly and disciplined armies of knights that left for the Holy Land at the end of August and early September.

After the first crusader units of the period between the beginning of May and the end of August, the two knight armies arrived at the western borders of Hungary and the southern borders of Croatia, which left for the Holy Land on the day of the departure announced by Pope Urban II, i.e. on 15 August 1096. The first army of knights to reach the Hungarian border in the autumn, which, of course, were not only made up of soldiers, nobles, and people of wealth, but also poor, simple, unarmed men, women and children, were led by Godfrey of Bouillon.<sup>28</sup> Two of his brothers also took up the cross with him: his younger

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26 Cited by Foss 2000, p. 86

27 Count Emicho and the Germans returned home after this humiliating failure, as did most of the French, who were greeted at home with “mockery and the quibble that they wanted to go to Jerusalem and only managed to harvest – in French Miosson, i.e. Mosony.”

28 These crusaders organised, left and marched from Lorraine to the Hungarian border without any serious complications. The commander himself was Duke of Lorraine, and

brother Baldwin, the first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, marched with him with his wife and children, while his elder brother, Eustace III, the Count of Boulogne, set out by sea.

Due to his bad experiences with the earlier groups of crusaders, King Kálmán called the leaders of the knight army to a meeting, where they agreed on the conditions for crossing Hungary. The crusaders were represented at the meetings by Count Ascha, who knew King Kálmán from earlier, so they obviously trusted each other. Kálmán first convinced the crusaders that he did not smash the army of the People's Crusade because of his hostility to the Christians, but because of legitimate self-defence, and secondly, he asked for assurances from the army led by Duke Bouillon that the robberies, lootings and murders that took place in the previous months would not be repeated. They agreed with the delegation of the Crusade that the Duke's brother Baldwin and his family would stay with Kálmán as hostages until the army crossed the Sava river into Byzantine territory at Zimony, and in exchange for their money they would be provided with appropriate markets from Sopron to Zimony. Baldwin did not want to take on the role of hostage at first, but eventually went to Kálmán's camp with his family.<sup>29</sup>

After that, the army led by Duke Bouillon crossed the country without any trouble, confrontation or major problem: it is true that the Hungarian royal army was watching their every move on the left bank of the Danube, and this was obviously enough as a deterrent. Before the crossing in Sava, the crusaders rested at Zimony for five days, and then began their crossing into Byzantine territory. King Kálmán said goodbye to the duke and the hostages by exchanging a sign of peace and giving gifts to the leaders on their way to the Holy Land. The first two dominant personalities of the Kingdom of Jerusalem from 1099, Godfrey of Bouillon, and his little brother Baldwin, therefore crossed Hungary

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on his mother's side he was a descendant of Charlemagne and was nearing the age of fifty. He was a devotee of Henry IV, but at the same time he definitely considered himself a good Christian, and it was natural for him to set out to the Holy Land at the Pope's call. In 1099, after taking Jerusalem, he became the *Advocatus*, the Defender of the Holy Sepulchre, because he refused to rule as king in Jerusalem.

29 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 50–51; Borosy 1996, pp. 22–23

without any issues or problems, and even said goodbye to the young King Kálmán in friendship.<sup>30</sup>

The other army of knights also crossed an area that belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary since the conquest of St. László in Croatia. In October 1096, the crusader army from the southern French territories had two leaders of the same importance as those who marched on the pilgrimage route through Hungary. It was this army that Adhemar, the bishop of Le Puy joined, who was entrusted by Pope Urban II to lead the crusade, and Raymond IV, Count of Toulouse, or rather, as he called himself, the Count of Saint-Gilles, an older man in his sixties was also travelling with this army. He himself had previously expected that Urban II would entrust him with the military leadership of the crusade, but this did not happen. He hoped, however, that if he and Bishop Adhemar went to Jerusalem together, sooner or later his military leadership would be necessary. That moment arrived in the Dalmatian mountains where the crusaders were attacked several times by “uneducated, savage, thieving and murdering” peoples living there, as William of Tyre described these ethnic groups in his work written a few decades later.<sup>31</sup>

For nearly forty days they marched in this “mountainous, impassable and barren country” as another chronicler, Raymond of Aguilers, wrote,<sup>32</sup> but thanks to Count Raymond they reached Durazzo without great losses. The army was joined by many Southern French nobles, such as Rambald, the Count of Orange, William of Montpellier, and church dignitaries such as William, Bishop of Orange. They reached Byzantine territory at Durazzo, and continued their journey through the ancient Via Egnathia to Constantinople.<sup>33</sup>

By comparing the estimated numbers of the population of contemporary Hungary and that of the crusaders side by side, we can conclude that about one tenth of the population of the country at that time, nearly one hundred thousand people, passed through peacefully or fought, ravaged and looted

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30 Pauler 1899, pp. 196–200; Runciman 1999, pp. 120–122

31 Cited by Szamota 1891, p. 24

32 Cited by Szamota 1891, 23

33 Pauler 1899a, pp. 198–199; Runciman 1999, pp. 130–131

during these six months, between May and October 1096. To supply such a large mass, to manage it militarily and diplomatically, was no small feat, since even Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, who was very hostile to the crusaders, could not prevent the destruction of the Rhine territory. In his letter to Prince Álmos, he rejoiced at Kálmán's victory over the robbing, plundering people's crusaders, and did not want him to stop at the western borders of Hungary in his pursuit of the crusaders, but to carry on into Bavaria against Prince Welf of Bavaria. However, being a follower of Urban II and the Papacy, Kálmán, of course, did not do so.<sup>34</sup>

The young Hungarian king was a strong and capable ruler who defended the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary and the interests of its subjects, as Györffy put it quite accurately: "In the first year of his reign, Kálmán was immediately caught up in events of world politics at that time, and held his position in such an exemplary fashion that for nine centuries, the historians of the crusaders have been paying him tribute with a wreath of recognition."<sup>35</sup>

## King Béla III and the Third Crusade

The most talented diplomat of the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and a brave and smart warlord of Muslim territories, Sultan Saladin had been attacking the crusader states of the Holy Land since the beginning of the 1180s.<sup>36</sup> As it had been unable to form an alliance with Byzantine Emperor Manuel, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was drifting in the midst of crises of constant dissension and political conflict. King Baldwin IV (1174-1185) died young at barely 24 years of age, and the little Baldwin V (1185-1186) was only 9 when he passed away. There were partisan fights and conspiracies of the lords in the struggle for the throne. The internal situation was aggravated by the lack of proper military leadership of the crusader armies in the Holy Land. This ultimately led to the

34 Magyarország története 1987, p. 946

35 Magyarország története 1987, p. 947

36 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 78–82

Christian defeat at Hattin on 4 July 1187, which proved fatal in the long run, and started the Muslim recapture of the Holy Land. The victorious Saladin reached Jerusalem on 17 September, and after a short siege and bargaining he marched into the city on 2 October. Even though there was no bloodbath similar to the summer of 1099 when the crusaders took the city, those who could not be freed from among the Christians for ransom were sent to slave markets.<sup>37</sup>

Reactions to the news of the fall of Jerusalem were different in Byzantium and Western Europe. Emperor Isaac II, Béla III's son-in-law, "congratulated" Saladin on his victory at Hattin and the capture of Jerusalem, but in Western Europe the news was tragically received and they were shocked, and the organisation of the third crusade began without delay. This work was started by Pope Clement III, elected on 19 December 1187. Clement first wished to contact Emperor Frederick I while Archbishop of Tyre Josias sought help from the kings of France and England. However, the news preceded the Archbishop even before he arrived in France: Henry II's eldest son Richard, the Count of Poitiers, had already taken up the cross.<sup>38</sup>

While the Archbishop in Western Europe verbally recounted the tragic fate of the Holy Land, Conrad of Montferrat, the defender of Tyre, wrote a letter to the Western European princes, including Béla III, the king of Hungary, urging them to set out immediately to defend the Holy Land.<sup>39</sup>

In January 1188 in Gisors, Henry II and Philip II "on the border between Normandy and the French kingdom, under a huge elm tree where the rulers of the two countries used to meet from ancient times, came together, embraced each other and took up the cross".<sup>40</sup> Archbishop Josias met here with the two kings to make peace to end the war that raged between them for years and to leave for Jerusalem as soon as possible. The two kings agreed with each other and each imposed a so-called "Saladin tithe" to cover the costs of the campaign. The archbishop then headed back to the Holy Land and thought that the crusade

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37 Runciman 1999, pp. 604–612; Bozsóky 1995, pp. 82–85

38 Runciman 1999, pp. 645–646; Bozsóky 1995, p. 86

39 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 75

40 Pauler 1899 b, p. 1



would start soon. Henry II thought the same, because he wrote a letter to Béla III as early as in 1188 to ask for permission and help for the English crusader army to pass through Hungary. In his reply written in the same year, Béla, as a good Christian king of course, made that promise like his predecessors who received the crusades earlier.<sup>41</sup>

However, soon the fighting between Henry II and Philip II resumed, and Richard abandoned his father and sided with the French king. The elderly Henry II could not endure these tribulations and died in Chinon on 6 July 1189. His son, Richard II and Philip, Béla III's brother-in-law, eventually did not choose the land route through Hungary, but a sea route when they travelled to the Holy Land to fulfil their pledge for the crusade.

However, in the summer of 1189, when Henry II died, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I marched across Hungary, then in the Byzantine area around Barancs with his German crusader army towards Constantinople and Jerusalem. Ever since Frederick I returned from the Second Crusade as a young Duke of Swabia, he always wanted to return to the Holy Land to lead a successful campaign against the Muslims. On 27 March 1188, he took up the cross again in Mainz at the age of almost 70. He prepared for the journey for more than a year before the German crusader army under his command set out at the beginning of May 1189. He entrusted his eldest son, Henry, the future Emperor Henry VI to govern the Holy Roman Empire, and took his younger son, Frederick, the Duke of Swabia, on the campaign. He wrote letters to all the rulers whose lands he wished to cross: King Béla III, Emperor Isaac II and even Sultan Kilij Arslan I, the victor of the Battle of Myriokephalon.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the negative experiences of the previous years with Frederick, Béla prepared cautiously for the passage of the German crusaders, but, of course, he granted his permission in return for discipline in the army. In the same way, Kilij

41 Árpád- és Anjou-kori levelek 1960, p. 105

42 The old emperor also wrote a letter to Sultan Saladin: In November 1189, he challenged him to a duel, and demanded that the Sultan return the occupied areas of the Holy Land to the Christians. Saladin's response was polite but dismissive: he would release the Frank prisoners, return the monasteries to their owners in the Holy Land, but he was willing to do more than that only through war.

Arslan promised help and granted permission to pass, while a delegation from Isaac II met with Frederick I in Nuremberg to discuss the terms of the crossing.<sup>43</sup> According to the description of Abbot Arnold of Lübeck's description, Frederick sent hundreds of undisciplined people back to their country at Vienna, before they reached the Hungarian border, and the crusade arrived at the western borders of Hungary on 24 May. They celebrated Pentecost on 29 May, then crossed the Hungarian border on 31 May. Béla "welcomed him via his envoys, willingly opened the country's door before him, and promised that they could buy all kinds of goods as they pleased."<sup>44</sup> The rulers negotiated with each other for four days in Esztergom, and confirmed that the German crusaders would pass peacefully through Hungary. Béla, who was afraid of Frederick, was able to ensure the German crusaders crossed the country without serious incident or looting as a result of his hospitality and several days of negotiations. However, the journey took a long time, a good five weeks, because the two rulers spent several days not only negotiating but also hunting.

Back in Esztergom, at the ceremonial reception, Queen Margaret gave Frederick a magnificent gift, in exchange for which she asked Frederick to try to persuade Béla to release his brother Géza, who had been imprisoned for more than ten years after he was sent to prison around Béla's coronation in 1173 on charges of conspiracy.<sup>45</sup> Emperor Frederick fulfilled the Queen's request and discussed Géza's case with Béla. Finally, they agreed on Géza's release: "The King {Béla III}, who received the Emperor with such great respect, not wanting to sadden him, not only released his brother from his captivity at his request, but also arranged for him to proceed before the Emperor to prepare and show the way with the two thousand Hungarians at his disposal."<sup>46</sup>

Béla released his brother, but obviously the condition was for Géza to leave the country, and a good opportunity arose: Géza joined the German crusaders with a small army. This force of two thousand was not enough for Géza to turn

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43 Runciman 1999, pp. 649–650

44 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, pp. 75–76

45 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 77

46 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 77

against Béla, but in the eyes of Frederick the number of Hungarian crusaders did not seem offensively low, and actually included ten lords: this was the first time in the history of the Crusades that Hungarian crusaders joined a campaign to the Holy Land.

Before the German crusaders led by Frederick crossed into Byzantine territory, a good political relationship developed between the two rulers: Béla donated several carts of flour to the crusaders in Esztergom, then at Szalánkemény, and four camels loaded with gifts to the emperor, worth “about five thousand marks”, and Frederick gave all his ships, which transported the crusaders from Regensburg to Hungary, along with their cargo, to Béla.<sup>47</sup> The good political relationship was also sealed by an alliance in the form of the engagement between Prince Frederick and one of King Béla’s daughters.<sup>48</sup> This favourable atmosphere left such a good memory in the imperial family that the emperor’s son, the later Henry VI, had the reception of his father in Hungary painted on one of the frescoes of his palace in Palermo.<sup>49</sup>

After the army left the Kingdom of Hungary behind and crossed into the Byzantine Empire, however, the political relationship between the two emperors was not that good, even though in Nuremberg in 1188 they agreed on the conditions for the crossing of the western crusaders. One reason for this was that Frederick not only met the Serbian prince and his brother in Niš, but also the two brothers who led the Bulgarians’ anti-Byzantine rebellion, Ivan and Peter Asen. This shocked Isaac II, who even learned that his own envoys had turned against him and sided with Frederick. Isaac reacted poorly to these events: he had the envoys of Frederick – who were distrustful of the Byzantines and sent to Constantinople – captured and held hostage in an attempt to prevent Frederick from doing the same as what had happened during the previous crusades: robberies, violence, hostilities. However, these events could not be prevented by the Byzantine emperor: Frederick conquered Philippopolis in a

47 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 78

48 Borosy 1996, p. 32. Prince Frederick died in the Holy Land in 1191, so the engagement did not become a marriage, just like the engagement of Prince Imre – later King Imre – and the daughter of Frederick in the early 1180s.

49 Makk 1996, p. 178

proper siege, sent his son Prince Frederick to ravage the Byzantine territories upon learning the news of his envoys' capture, and sent a message home to his son Henry to gather a fleet against Constantinople. Next, he contacted Pope Clement III so he could capture Constantinople as part of the crusade, and he planned to lay siege to the city in the spring of 1190.<sup>50</sup>

At this critical point, Béla III tried to mediate between the hostile rulers. As a first step, in November 1189, he wrote to Frederick asking him to release the Hungarians in his crusader army.<sup>51</sup> Frederick interpreted this move as if Béla preferred his own son-in-law, Emperor Isaac, to him, but he did not hold back the Hungarians who wanted to return to Hungary on Béla's orders. In December, under the command of the Bishop of Győr and six ispans, most Hungarians in Frederick's army turned back,<sup>52</sup> but "three Hungarian ispans or barons" as well as Prince Géza continued their march towards Constantinople. However, Frederick sent an envoy to Béla with the returning Hungarians because he did not want to get into a conflict with his new ally.

Of course, such a conflict was not in Béla's interest either, nor was it to weaken the Byzantine Empire against the Holy Roman Empire. So in January 1190, he wrote a letter to his son-in-law, Emperor Isaac, the contents of which he also revealed to Frederick, "in which he warns him {Isaac} that his stubbornness is very harmful and dangerous to his whole country."<sup>53</sup> Finally, shortly afterwards, in February 1190, the two emperors made peace with each other in Edrine, and they agreed that Isaac would transport the German crusaders to the Asian continent not at the Bosphorus, but at the Dardanelles, and that he would also provide them with food in Asia Minor.<sup>54</sup> The crossing of the Dardanelles took place in March 1190, but a few months later, on 10 June 1190, the old Emperor Frederick drowned in the Salef River. The campaign continued after the death of the emperor, but it was no longer as powerful as Frederick himself leading the German crusaders.

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50 Runciman 1999, pp. 651–652

51 Pauler 1899b, p. 5; III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 80

52 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 80

53 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 81

54 Runciman 1999, p. 652

Béla III discussed the passage of Frederick I's crusader army across Hungary and the Byzantine territories with Isaac II over a year after the events, in the autumn of 1191. At the face-to-face meeting held in Syrmia, the two were probably satisfied with the way this difficult foreign policy issue was resolved, mostly thanks to Béla, who cleverly and skilfully resolved the political problems as they emerged.<sup>55</sup>

## A Hungarian king in the Holy Land

In addition to the *Illustrated Chronicle*, Antonio Bonfini also praised the military virtues and conduct of King András II:

“But it is said that he only coveted the throne in order to do something worthy of himself and his ancestors.”<sup>56</sup>

This deed “worthy of his ancestors” would have been his campaign in the Holy Land that he had repeatedly vowed, but since he delayed, Pope Innocent III repeatedly called upon him when he was still a Prince. However, after being crowned king by Archbishop John of Kalocsa on 29 May 1205, András did not depart for more than ten years to fulfil his vow.

Pope Innocent knew, and this was confirmed by the tragic outcome of the Children's Crusade in 1212<sup>57</sup>, that only a well-organised army of western crusaders could win in the Holy Land, one that stopped and repressed the Muslim attack at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. To this end, in 1213 he sent Robert of Courson as his legate to France to start organising a new crusade, and he convened the universal council by 1215, one of the most important issues of which was to organise this crusade. In April 1213 the Pope sent his letter convening the council to both the Western and Eastern patriarchs, archbishops and bishops.<sup>58</sup>

55 Makk 1996, p. 221; Kristó 2001, p. 178

56 Bonfini 1995, p. 386

57 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 168–174; Runciman 1999, pp. 745–749

58 Török 1999, pp. 65–66

With that, Pope Innocent again urged András to fulfil his crusader vow, but in February 1213 he allowed the king to postpone his departure to the Holy Land for three years, in light of the situation in his country. An excerpt from one of András's letters dated in 1214 reveals that after the murder of his wife he was even more interested in the idea of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In that letter, the king appealed to the Pope that certain Hungarian high priests should not have to attend the universal council to be held next year because of the planned crusade. András wanted to start his campaign to the Holy Land in 1215, before the Council of the Lateran. For this reason, we cannot accept the view that András only started to prepare to fulfil his vow when he had the opportunity to be crowned Latin Emperor in Constantinople, for which he would have had the opportunity only after the death of Henry I on 11 June 1216, while András wanted to depart at the beginning or the summer of 1215, but before the council was to convene on 1 November.<sup>59</sup> Why this did not happen is explained in the letter written by András at the end of 1215, i.e. during the Council of the Lateran: “[...] our request for our son {Kálmán} to be crowned King of Galicia {Halych} was granted by apostolic decree, although the people of Galicia have recently turned away from the oath of loyalty to our son, and the army recruited from the surrounding Ruthenians even laid siege to the Castle of Galicia, where he stayed with his followers. For this reason, we had to rush there in such a hurry and unexpectedly that [...] we could not even wait for our army.”<sup>60</sup> So the political reason was that his son Kálmán, the king of Halych, had to be given immediate military aid to stop the rebels rising against him. Eventually, order was restored at the end of 1216, and the power of Kálmán was reinforced.

The other reason for postponing the crusade to the Holy Land planned for 1215 was not primarily political, but since the marriage of a king in that age was also a political step, we can even consider it as such: after the murder of his wife, Gertrude, András II remarried in 1215. His young wife, Yolanda de Courtenay was the daughter of Peter of Courtenay, cousin of French king Philip II and Count of Auxerre and Namur, and her mother, Yolanda of Flanders, was the elder sister of

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59 For more details on this issue, see the studies Bárány 2013 and Bárány 2016; Veszprémy 2008, p. 114

60 Árpád- és Anjou-kori levelek 1960, p. 128

Latin Emperors of Constantinople Baldwin and Henry.<sup>61</sup> Emperor Henry (1206-1216) and Margaret, Queen of Thessaloniki, András' elder sister probably played a key role in bringing about the marriage. The political background may have been an emerging French-Hungarian-Serbian alliance against the Bulgarian and Greek states of the Balkan peninsula. András' father-in-law was a relative of Philip II, and so the Hungarian king was already connected to the French ruler on two fronts, since his first wife Agnes, Gertrude's sister, married Philip, although Pope Innocent III protested several times because their relationship was not legal by church law.

In 1215, the year András married Yolanda, Emperor Henry invited András and the Serbian prince to a meeting. Although the meeting in Niš proved fruitless in the long run, it did indicate that András was paying ever more attention to the political situation in the Balkans.<sup>62</sup> However, before he could take action on this matter, on 11 November 1215 the Fourth Council of the Lateran convened, which regarded the proclamation and organisation of a new crusade as one of its main jobs.<sup>63</sup> The Hungarian church was represented by Archbishop of Esztergom John, Bishop of Veszprém Robert and Abbot Pannonhalma Uriah, although András had asked Pope Innocent III in his letter written in 1214 that they would not have to attend the council. Most likely they were able to attend the council because of the delay of the crusade, and later, Abbot Uriah also participated in the campaign in the Holy Land.

The Fourth Council of the Lateran proclaimed the gathering and departure of the crusader army by 1 June 1217. The call of the universal council did not trigger much response in English, French and Italian speaking lands, and no significant armies could be recruited from these territories. Apart from András II of Hungary, only the south-eastern German territories mobilised: Dukes Luis Wittelsbach of Bavaria, Leopold VI of Austria and Otto VII of Merania took up the cross. Leopold was András' cousin, while Otto was Gertrude's brother, so the Hungarian king left with his German relatives for the Holy Land.<sup>64</sup>

61 Pauler 1899b, p. 54

62 Magyar történet 1935, pp. 437–438

63 Jedin 1998, pp. 53–56

64 Magyar történet 1935, pp. 440–441

However, before the actual organisation began, Latin Emperor Henry died unexpectedly in Thessaloniki in June 1216, so the Latin Emperor's throne became vacant; and in July 1216 Pope Innocent III also died, and King András asked his successor, Pope Honorius III (1216–1227), to allow him to depart with his army for the Holy Land as early as the beginning of 1217. Pope Honorius, who had previously urged András in his letter to fulfil his vow as soon as possible, promised the Hungarian king at the end of January 1217 that he would call the crusaders to war on Easter Day of that year. In the same year András introduced new taxes, the extraordinary tax and the eightieth tax, to cover the costs of the crusade.

András chose the sea route, but he planned to leave not from the ports of Sicily or southern Italy, as decided at the Fourth Council of the Lateran, but from the Dalmatian coastal port city of Spalato. For this voyage, the ships were chartered from the great opponent of the Kingdom of Hungary, Venice, which played a dishonourable role in the occupation of Zadar during the Fourth Crusade.<sup>65</sup>

The preparations for the crusade were thorough, and this is also shown by how Christians were received in the Holy Land, and how contemporary chroniclers wrote about the arriving crusader army.<sup>66</sup> When András and his army arrived in Cyprus, they held the first military council. Three kings were present at this meeting: In addition to András, John of Brienne of Jerusalem (1210–1237) and Hugh I of Lusignan, the young Cypriot ruler (1205–1218), and Count of Tripoli Bohemond IV (1187–1233). This first part of the military campaign, which took place in the Holy Land, is also called the “crusade of the three kings” by some chroniclers.<sup>67</sup> At the military council of Cyprus, they could not discuss any concrete military action or military command issues, as they did not want to make any decision about the campaign without Leopold

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65 Pauler 1899b, p. 60

66 Sweeney 1984, p. 123. In light of these sources, especially the chronicle of Jacques de Vitry, we cannot accept the assumption raised so often by historians since Henrik Marczali that this venture on the part of András would have been a “crusade without military significance”, a simple “relic deal”, just a kind of “tourist trip”.

67 Bozsóky 1995, p. 127



VI and the Duke of Bavaria, who were already in Acre at the time. András and the other rulers therefore continued their voyage to Acre, where on 3 November the patriarch of Jerusalem presented the remaining part of the relic of the Holy Cross to the crusaders: King András and Duke Leopold walked barefoot before the Holy Cross and kissed it.<sup>68</sup>

A larger military council was held in Acre, in András' tent, which meant he was considered, if not officially, the commander of the military campaign. This can also be explained by the fact that the Hungarian crusader army was the largest in number, as no matter what the estimate was – from a few thousand to 20,000 – what is certain is that, according to the eyewitness chronicler Jacques de Vitry, there had not been an army in the Holy Land as large as the Hungarian one since the third Crusade. The crusader army of Hungarians, Germans and Austrians, who had no appointed leader, launched three attacks in November and December from their camp in Acre, none of which yielded any major result that could have assisted in the Christian occupation of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, we cannot regard these military operations as completely flawed and ineffective. András did not participate in the second and third operations because he returned sick after the first one, and after the siege of the fortress on Mount Tabor he travelled to his cousin Count of Tripoli Bohemond IV with King Hugh of Cyprus. The reason for the visit was the wedding: Bohemond married Hugh's half-sister, Melisenda. However, a few days after the wedding, there was a funeral: on 10 January 1218, the young Cypriot king Hugh died in Tripoli. His throne was left to his infant son, Henry, with the regent being his widow, Alice of Jerusalem.<sup>69</sup>

At the same time András decided to return home. He marched with his army across Asia Minor all the way to Constantinople, then across the Balkans to Hungary, where, according to a letter he wrote to Pope Honorius, he was faced with a serious situation. However, over the course of the journey of several months, he made political alliances which at first glance seem very strange. Since Gyula Pauler, historians have studied these marital alliances

68 Pauler 1899b, p. 63

69 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 128–134

decided on the way from the Holy Land to Hungary, not forgetting, of course, that according to the norms of the age, a king was not primarily looking for a spouse for his sons and daughters, but was trying to increase the number of his potential political allies.<sup>70</sup> In 1219, the year after his return home, he wrote a letter to the Pope in which he revealed important details about his marriage plans.<sup>71</sup> The first half of the letter depicts the dire situation of Hungary rather vividly, perhaps exaggerating the severe conditions that András faced after his return, but the second part deals with the political situation, which, of course, he describes to the Pope as benefiting the Holy Land: “[...] we could not stay beyond the sea as intended, but even though we returned for reasons beyond our control and will, on our fortunate journey home we gained no less partiality for the Holy Land than if we had stayed longer around Jerusalem.”

Then, in his letter, he described his first marriage plan: King of Armenia Minor, who received the royal title from Emperor Henry VI, was Leo II (1185–1219), who wished to marry his daughter with the son of the Hungarian king, Prince András, and entrust him with the throne of the country. The young Christian kingdom was growing stronger at the time: Leo’s eldest daughter was married to King of Jerusalem John of Brienne, so by the planned marriage András would have become related to the King of Jerusalem, with whom he fought in the military campaign.

The next state along the mainland route was the Sultanate of Iconium, where “the Sultan of Iconium sent us an envoy with a message that if we were to marry one of our daughters or relatives to him, he would no longer be an infidel but would convert to Christianity and be baptised,” wrote András in his letter. At that time Izz ad-Din Kaykaus I was the Sultan of Iconium (1210–1220), who would have been willing to convert to Christianity if András had married one of his daughters or other female relatives. This was a request of great importance, since the idea from a Muslim ruler to convert to Christianity was very rare, and we do not even know of any other Muslim ruler making such a decision in that age.

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70 Pauler 1899b, pp. 69–70

71 Árpád- és Anjou-kori levelek 1960, pp. 130–132

The next agreement was made in Nicaea with András' brother-in-law, the (Greek) emperor Theodore I Laskaris (1208-1222) where they engaged their children, Mary and Béla, the future King Béla IV, to reinforce their alliance.<sup>72</sup>

We do not know whether he then met his mother-in-law, Yolanda, the regent in Constantinople, but we do know that Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) asked for the hand in marriage of Mary, András' daughter.

András could have returned to Hungary towards the end of 1218, and if we look at the map, we can see that he surrounded his mother-in-law, Yolanda, who was a regent in the imperial seat in Constantinople at the time, with relatives and allies from the County of Tripoli, Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Thessalonica, and even the Sultan of the Muslim Iconium sought András' friendship. When we look at these, we cannot clearly say that András' ideas of making alliances were haphazard, even though these ideas changed in the coming years.<sup>73</sup>

After András returned home, the events of the Fifth Crusade continued, and in the spring of 1218 military operations even intensified. The crusaders of Duke Leopold VI of Austria, including a Hungarian unit under the command of Bishop of Eger Thomas, were joined by crusaders from Western Europe and laid siege to Damietta, which eventually failed in the same way as András' military operations in the Holy Land. The siege was long and tough, many of the crusaders fell, including two Hungarian bishops: Gyula Pauler mentions Peter, the Bishop of Győr, and Simon, the Bishop of Várad.<sup>74</sup> Bishops Thomas and Robert returned to Hungary around 1220, after the failed siege of Damietta, and they probably met Saint Francis of Assisi in the camp of the Crusaders.

72 Incidentally, the journey that had been without hostile attack or other inconvenience thus far was disturbed by a political conflict in Nicaea: The sons of Géza, uncle of András II, whom the Hungarian lords wanted to invite to the Hungarian throne back in 1210, argued with András. Nonetheless, András continued his journey undisturbed.

73 András probably did not plan to be elected as a Latin Emperor later, which is shown by the fact that when his brother-in-law Robert of Courtenay was elected emperor – most likely on the advice of Pope Honorius III – after the death of his mother Yolanda, András spent the winter of 1220-1221 in Hungary without suggesting that he wanted to take the emperor's throne. In fact, when Robert continued his journey to Constantinople in March 1221, András and his son Béla accompanied him to the Bulgarian border, where they attended the wedding of Mary and Tsar Ivan.

74 Pauler 1899b, p. 71

In the summer or autumn of 1223, Pope Honorius sent a letter to King András and asked him to take up the cross again and join Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, who had promised to launch a crusade to the Holy Land in 1225: “[...] How great Hungary’s preparation for this assistance would be, the country that is so terrible for the enemies of the cross! Far be it from the people of Endre {András II} not to arm themselves in the fight for the Son of God and let their swords rust and forsake victory.”<sup>75</sup>

András was not averse to the plan, and several bishops and lords even took up the cross, but Hungarian crusaders eventually did depart for the Holy Land. Nearly two hundred years after King St. Stephen opened Hungary to pilgrims from Western Europe, direct Hungarian participation in the crusade movement, the armed pilgrimage, came to an end. Hungary did not break away from the idea of the crusade, but later the country’s involvement took a different form. The first chapter of the crusades, which was important for Hungary, was closed.



Fragments of the tomb of Queen Gertrudis, c.1235,  
Museum of Fine Arts - Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

75 Quoted by Pauler 1899b, pp. 85–86

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