

Imperialiter

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*Gli spazi del potere*  
*Strategie e attributi dell'imperialità*

*Les espaces de la puissance*  
*Stratégies et marqueurs de l'impérialité*

*a cura di*

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ATTILA BÁRÁNY

*The Medieval Kingdom of Hungary :  
a Power Factor in Central Europe*

*Abstract* : A symbolic motive in Hungarian historical mythology is the preservation of sovereignty in order that not be subordinated to any overlordship. The rulers sought to earn equal status to any Christian monarch – and recognized as equals. The article is to give an overview of the means of upholding independence, from ‘familiar’ dynastic policy through harboring claimants to preventive campaigns. There was a pragmatic ideology constructed to preserve stability within a balance of powers. In the conceptual framework of *regnum Hungariae* the country was seen as ‘queen’ of all monarchies, having several members under St. Stephen’s crown, incorporated within *tota Hungaria* and dependent as members. The fidelity of the members was to be preserved once and for all, the methods and fields of which (i.e. representation, legislation, narrative sources) are seen in detail, particularly highlighting King Andrew II’s (1205–35) ambitions.

*Keywords* : Sovereignty ; Political family ; Saint Stephen’s Holy Crown ; *regnum regnorum* ; *tota Hungaria* ; *partes subjectae* ; Andrew II (1205–1235) ; the Latin Empire of Constantinople

Foreign observers formed a particularly negative view of medieval Hungarians. According to the late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> century Cosmas of Prague, « the Hungarian people are prodigious in energy, mighty in strength, and powerful in arms, sufficient to fight with a king anywhere. Their kings stray from peace... to stir up strife »<sup>1</sup>. It seems the Hungarians had never-ceasing hostilities with their neighbours, or, as if the « belligerent » rulers preferred enmity with every land and indulged in devastation, covering

<sup>1</sup> « Ungara gens viribus ingens, opibus pollens, armis bellicis prepotens [...] cum quovis rege terrarum pugnare sufficiens [...] aberrantes ad pacifica [...] magis rixam provocantia quam pacis osculum ferentia », *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum*, cur. B. Bretholz, W. Weinberger, Berlin 1923 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., *Nova series*, II), p. 215 ; Cosmas of Prague, *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, trad. L. Wolverson, Washington 2009, p. 230.

« the land like locusts »<sup>2</sup>. This view may have derived from the 10<sup>th</sup> century picture of the pagan tribal society's campaigns against Western Europe. Even home narrative sources report that even after the 10<sup>th</sup> century assaults, the Hungarians regularly « laid waste to territories by fire and sword, caused much damage, burnt down everything, depopulating lands, taking numerous captives and striking terror in the hearts »<sup>3</sup>.

Nevertheless, modern scholarship must detach *topoi* of history writing and have a more balanced view, going beyond the 'distorted vision' of those who suffered the onslaughts<sup>4</sup>. Even though Hungarians in the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century were still described in the style of former assaults, it is out of the question that they were enjoying themselves in conquest. It is hard to keep distance even from the native narratives, for instance the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Chronicle Composition* puts that in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, when the Hungarians laid siege to Belgrade, they cruelly slaughtered the Greeks and carried away much treasure<sup>5</sup>. King Ladislaus I (1077–85) was seen as a conqueror when he « marched against the Ruthenians », who asked him for mercy and « promised they would be faithful

<sup>2</sup> « Terre cooperuerant sicut locuste », Bretholz, Weinberger, *Cosmae Pragensis* cit., p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> « Spoliare [...] civitates expugnantes [...] devastavit [...] pro nimia reputavit iniuria [...] igne et gladio devastavit [...] maxima preda captivorum [...] cecidit timor super omnes », *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*, in *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*, cur. I. Szentpétery et al., I-II, Budapest 1937-1938 (New ed. 1999. cur. K. Szovák, L. Veszprémy, [hereinafter SRH] I, pp. 217-505. cap. 152, p. 433 ; cap. 155, p. 439. ; cap. 153, p. 434. ; cap. 101, p. 365 ; « lupina fraude semet occularunt », *Annales Altahenses maiores*. MGH SS rer. Germ., IV, cur. E. L. B. von Oefele, Hanover 1890, p. 29 ; J. Kükülle / I. de Kikullew, *Lajos király krónikája. Chronicon de Ludovico rege*, trad. Gy. Kristó, Budapest 2000, cap. 36, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> A. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the early Middle Ages : an Introduction to Early Hungarian History*, Budapest 1999, partic. pp. 332-339 ; L. Veszprémy, *The Military History of Hungary from the first Contacts with Europe until the Battle of Mohács*, in *Illustrated Military History of Hungary*, cur. Róbert Hermann, Budapest 2012, pp. 13-62, partic. 14-17.

<sup>5</sup> *Chronici Hungarici* cit., cap. 108 ; *The Illuminated Chronicle. Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians from the Fourteenth-Century Illuminated Codex. Chronica de gestis Hungarorum e codice picto saec. XIV*, cur. J. M. Bak, L. Veszprémy, Budapest - New York 2018 (Central European Medieval Texts, 9), p. 205.

to him in all things »<sup>6</sup>. The late 12<sup>th</sup>-early 13<sup>th</sup> century author Anonymus is still celebrating that the late 9<sup>th</sup> century Prince Álmos subjected Vladimir, whose ruler gave his sons as hostages. The chief men with precious presents proceeded and voluntarily opened the city to him<sup>7</sup>. Even if Anonymus finds that their « concern was none other than conquer peoples from their lord and lay waste the realms of others »<sup>8</sup>, the situation is much more complicated. It is not to be seen that the Árpád kings were always striving for pillaging the countryside of their neighbours.

### *Sovereignty and diplomacy – regnum Hungariae*

A major, symbolic motive in historical mythology is the strive for independence, the preservation of sovereignty in order that Hungary is not subordinated to any overlordship. The opening lines of Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum* make it clear that their forefathers, the Scythians « have right up to the present day never been subject to the sway of any emperor »<sup>9</sup>. The rulers sought to earn equal status to any of the Christian monarchs – and recognized as equals<sup>10</sup>. The kingdom needed to prevent subordination under the threat of German or Byzantine invasion and eastern, pagan aggression.

In historiography the foreign policy of the House of Árpád (997-1301) has been labelled as 'familiar', referring to the safe-

<sup>6</sup> « Rex [...] invasit Rusciam [...] Ruteni [...] rogaverunt regis clementiam et promiserunt regi fidelitatem in omnibus », *Chronici Hungarici* cit., cap. 138 ; *The Illuminated Chronicle* cit., p. 257.

<sup>7</sup> « Cum diversis pretiosis muneribus processerunt et civitatem Lodomeriam ultro ei aperuerunt », *Anonymus, Notary of King Béla / Anonymi Bele regis notarii*, « *The Deeds of the Hungarians. Gesta Hungarorum* », in *Anonymus and Master Roger, The Deeds of the Hungarians. Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*, cur. M. Rady, L. Veszprémy, Budapest – New York 2010 (Central European Medieval Texts, 5), cap. 11 ; « Galicie dux [...] obviam Almo duci cum omnibus suis nudis pedibus venit [...] et aperta porta civitatis quasi dominum suum proprium hospitio receipt », *ibi*, cap. 12.

<sup>8</sup> « Quorum cura nulla fuit alia, nisi domino suo subiugare gentes et devastare regna aliorum », Anonymus, *Gesta* cit., cap. 53.

<sup>9</sup> « Scythia [...] usque in hodiernum diem et nullius umquam imperatoris potestate subacti fuerunt » : Anonymus, *Gesta* cit., cap. 1.

<sup>10</sup> A. Zsoldos, *The legacy of Saint Stephen*, Budapest 2004, pp. 49, 70.



guarding of the rights of dynasty-members or upholding the claims of a wide circle of queen-consorts, nephews etc., seen as *consanguinei* belonging to their 'political family'. They established matrimonial alliances to political influence and had recourse to various techniques, from organizing a league within the aristocracy, through harbouring claimants, or taking them as hostages, to direct military intervention, preventive campaigns, so as to preserve their positions. Whenever they felt that a family tie was threatened, for example a son-in-law was on the verge of losing power or had been banished, they intervened « to avenge insults »<sup>11</sup>. Dynastic fraternities were seen as a defensive means to uphold stability.

Intervention did not always mean large-scale military campaigns and territorial devastation. Hungary very rarely applied direct territorial rule. First, they exercised political pressure, expressed their indignation, and made complaints before they resorted to force. Even then, they were mostly content with a demonstration of force. If they had in fact recourse to force, they occupied key points while justifying their presence by claiming to uphold the rights of their protégé. Sometimes they returned in relative peace after strengthening the positions of their allies or vassals. St. Stephen (997-1038) is portrayed in historical mythology as a *rex pacificus* who only wished to reinforce peace with the surrounding nations<sup>12</sup>. He strictly enjoined upon his posterity that "no one should ever invade another land with hostile intent"<sup>13</sup>. St. Ladislaus is described as "campaigning only to restore peace"<sup>14</sup>. Sometimes the motives were genuinely defensive. Several pretenders and ousted rulers found refuge in Hungary. The system of "nurturing" relatives (*cognati*) functioned very

<sup>11</sup> « Iniuria suorum vindicantes », *Legenda sancti Ladislai regis*, ed. E. Bartoniek, in SRH II, cap. 8, p. 522 ; *Die heiligen Könige*. edd. T. Bogyay, J. M. Bak, G. Silagi, Graz 1976, pp. 155-165.

<sup>12</sup> « Pacem cum externarum provinciarum populis fideliter statutam corroboravit », *Legendae S. Stephani regis* [Legenda Maior], ed. E. Bartoniek, in SRH II, cap. 6, p. 381 ; « Cum omnibus circumquaque [...] provinciarum vicinis de pace, cuius magna [...] fuerat amator, cepit attente tractare », *ibi*, cap. 1, p. 378 ; Zsoldos, *The legacy* cit., p. 125.

<sup>13</sup> « Nullus alium hostiliter invaderet » : *Legendae S. Stephani* cit., cap. 9. p. 384 ; G. Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses : Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 136-137.

<sup>14</sup> « In expeditionem profectus [...] reformata cum honore [...] pace » : *Legenda sancti Ladislai* cit., cap. 8, p. 522.

well. Ladislaus received and acknowledged his cousin, Duke Břetislav of Bohemia “as his relative” and “granted him a place to live [...] nourishment and provisions were supplied to” him<sup>15</sup>. The kings, however, intervened if a foreign power granted asylum to a Hungarian pretender. An insult to a blood-relative (“in-iuria nepotism”) was treated as a *casus belli*. In 1108 King Coloman, “wishing to revenge the injuries done to him” by Duke Svatopluk, began to lay waste to Moravia<sup>16</sup>. Diplomacy was yet flexible and pragmatic. Rulers did not indulge in vengeance but were concerned to keep the *status quo*. They valued the balance of power above all.

A peculiar ideology, a conceptual framework of “regnum Hungariae” was constructed corresponding to the needs of sovereignty. The country was seen as the kingdom, or “queen” of all monarchies, “regnum regnorum, regnorum regina”. Hungary was to be treated as having several members, “regna” under St. Stephen’s crown. The “entire” country, “totius regnum Hungariae” has always had “kingdoms incorporated within” and “lands subject to it”. All the principalities where Hungary had ever had any rule were legally dependent upon a greater entity, “tota Hungaria”. All principalities wherever the kings of Hungary had ever claimed titles at all – from Halych/Galicia and Volhynia-Vladimir, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Serbia – became constituent kingdoms, “regna incorporata”, i. e. parts of the crown, as “partes subjectae or pertinentiae”<sup>17</sup>. In the political mythology of St. Stephen’s Holy Crown, Halych or Serbia were in perpetuity held as “membra Sacrae Coronae” once and for all<sup>18</sup>.

Sovereignty, and correspondingly the political family of the members of the “regnum regnorum” had to be preserved. Alt-

<sup>15</sup> « Recognoscens cognatum suum [...] benigne suscipit [...] concessit inhabitare locum [...] victualia et cetera nature amminicula per preceptum regis [...] subministrabantur », *Cosmae Pragensis* cit., pp. 155, 225.

<sup>16</sup> Cosmas of Prague, *The Chronicle* cit., pp. 213-214 ; M. Font, *Koloman the Learned, king of Hungary*, Szeged 2001, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> *The Customary Law of the Renowned Kingdom of Hungary : A Work in Three Parts Rendered by Stephen Werbőczy. Tripartitum opus iuris consuetudinarii incliti regni Hungariae per Stephanum de Werbencz editum* [hereinafter *Tripartitum*], cur. J. M. Bak, p. Banyó, M. Rady, Idyllwild - Budapest 2005 (*Decreta regni Medievalis Hungariae* [hereinafter *DRMH*], 5), I, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> L. Péter, *The Holy Crown of Hungary, visible and invisible*, “Slavonic and East European Review”, 81 (2003), 3/July, pp. 421-510.

though royal titles did not necessarily denote territories effectively ruled, the parts that had belonged to the kingdom continued to be treated as members of the Holy Crown forever, also present in the *titulatura* and the representation (e.g. coat-of-arms) of the monarchs up to 1918. Those who had once “accepted the Holy Crown” but rejected it as “infideles regni” were to “return under its obedience”<sup>19</sup>. Whenever the kings laid a campaign, the reasoning was that the princes “subjected to the Holy Crown” and denounced it as “infideles Sacrae Coronae”. Rulers launched invasions asserting that the subjects of “the Holy Crown revolted against their lawful majesty”, and they were to “restore the unfaithful to obedience”<sup>20</sup>. Whenever a king felt that a “tie” in the “common membership” was threatened, he found excuses in the « urgent necessity of the realm »<sup>21</sup>. The reason was to give “protection to all the members” of the crown, the indivisibility of which came to be a guarantee of the political *status quo*. Its preservation could legitimize an intervention and enforcement of vassalage. Even though the kings lost control over some territory, they kept on using their titles. This policy was to be justified by that Hungary, necessarily, almost constantly had to face confrontations first, from the Holy-Roman and Byzantine empires then, from the Mongols and the Ottomans. Kings are mostly described as leading invasions « because of the deeds with which [their neighbours] had afflicted » the « regnum Hungariae »<sup>22</sup>. The adversaries always attacked the realm “insolently and treacherously”<sup>23</sup>.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century *Chronicle Composition* puts that in the 1350s the Voivode of Wallachia « accepted the rule of the Holy Crown », though, in fact the principality was not at all under the direct Hungarian rule, for the most part Hungary had a – rather unsteady – political influence. The rebel voivode, who « turned from the way of fidelity », but coming in person to King Louis I the Great (1342–82), « prostrated himself on the ground at the feet of His Majesty, returned to his due obedience » and restored

<sup>19</sup> Küküllei, *Chronicon* cit., cap. 1, p. 11 ; cap. 3, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibi*, cap. 38, p. 32 ; cap. 7, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> « Urgente regni sui necessitate », *Legenda sancti Ladislai* cit., cap. 8, p. 522.

<sup>22</sup> Cosmas of Prague, *The Chronicle* cit., p. 213.

<sup>23</sup> J. Thuróczy / J. de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*. I. Textus. cur. E. Galántai, Gy. Kristó, Budapest 1985, cap. 211, p. 223.

the *dominium* under the Holy Crown and preserved his loyalty<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, in the 1340s Croatian rebels were forced under the obedience of the Holy Crown and took an oath of fidelity under the grace of the ruler<sup>25</sup>. When in the 1350s Louis led a campaign into Halych against pagan Lithuanians, the 1380s chronicler, János Küküllei justified its reason as the principality was subject to the Holy Crown, and the monarch was authorized to appoint voivods, who did not only keep it under Hungarian rule, but also « protected it for the Holy Crown »<sup>26</sup>.

Although sources sometimes speak of a direct relationship of vassalage and even subjects paying tribute, Hungary had no direct territorial rule and did not exact taxes and dues. Military administration was never established, perhaps, except for Matthias Corvinus' (1458–90) defense measures in Bosnia against the advance of the Ottomans in the 1460s–70s. If the rulers resorted to force, they claimed to uphold the rights of the “*regnum Hungariae*”. The *14<sup>th</sup> century Chronicle Composition* relates that in 1330 the Voivode of Wallachia swore an oath of vassalage and paid homage as « he had always faithfully paid the tribute due to the king ». He acknowledged that he was bound to the crown of Hungary a tribute, which he would pay each year faithfully and sent one of his sons as a pledge of surety, a hostage to serve the king<sup>27</sup>. In fact, in 1330 we do not know any tribute paid or hos-

<sup>24</sup> « A via fidelitatis divertendo rebellaverat, [...] ad ipsum [...] personaliter veniens, [...] ad pedes Regie Maiestatis, humo tenus est prostratus, et ad obedientiam ac fidelitatem debitam reductus [...]; et suum dominium sub Sancta Corona recognoscendo », Küküllei, *Chronicon* cit., cap. 3.

<sup>25</sup> « Rebelles [...] ad obedientiam Sacre Corone venire sunt compulsi ; et cum fidelitatem servare iurassent, aliquibus castris restititis [...] Regno Croacie restituto, Regie Maiestati obedire, et se gratie submittere compulerunt », Küküllei, *Chronicon* cit., cap. 7.

<sup>26</sup> « Regnum Ruscie, Sacre Corone Hungarie subiectum, pro defensione eiusdem Regni contra Lithvanos [...] ad regendum ipsum regnum Vayvodas [...] prefecit ; qui regnum [...] bene [...] defensantes, sub titulo Sacre Corone, et regimine [...] Regis conservarunt », Küküllei, *Chronicon* cit., cap. 30.

<sup>27</sup> « Censum quo teneor vestre corone, fideliter persolvi faciam omni anno [...] unum ex filiis meis vestre curie ad serviendum deputabo cum meis pecuniis [...] princeps censum debitum regie maiestati semper fideliter persolvisset », *Chronici Hungarici* cit., cap. 209 ; *The Illuminated Chronicle* cit., p. 373.

tage taken to Hungary, though it was in a way becoming a part of historical memory. Narrative tradition also shows that Louis made efforts to keep the rebellious Moldavia and Serbia under royal power in the 1350s, while it is known that apart from starting a program of settling urban population into Moldavia, he had no rule whatsoever over the principality, not to speak of Serbia, where he only recaptured the frontier territories that had belonged to Hungary proper<sup>28</sup>. Louis' campaign into Bulgaria in the 1360s was alike explained that the country was subjected to the Holy Crown, and, stemming from this ancient right the king deposed its prince, but then restored him on the throne to govern Bulgaria on behalf of him, based upon his services to him<sup>29</sup>.

Narrative tradition gave way to the conception being manifested in legislation in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The military regulations of King Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387–1437) also speak of the defense of “regna incorporata”<sup>30</sup>. The general levy is required to set out for the defense of not only the country itself, but « whereas beside the title of the kingdom of Hungary the King of Hungary uses also the titles of Dalmatia, Croatia, Rama, Serbia, Galicia, Lodomeria, Cumania and Bulgaria, namely those kingdoms which of old have been incorporated, [...] in the kingdom of Hungary »<sup>31</sup>. The political construction appeared in full form in the 1514 (1517) law code, *Tripartitum* compiled by Stephen Werbőczy. It has a refined, well-differentiated system of « regna incorporata » and adjoined territories, « partes adnexae ». The royal style and its

<sup>28</sup> « Contra rebelles [...] Racenses, et Moldavanos omnimode diligentiam adhibendo : et maxime circa Regnum Racie, [...] labores assiduos impenderunt ad conservandum [...] Regnum sub regie ditionis potestate », Küküllei, *Chronicon* cit., cap. 39.

<sup>29</sup> « Regnum Bulgariae, Sacre Corone [...] subiectum [...] intravit [...] subiugavit ; Principem [...] capiens, [...] sub custodia [...] conservatum [...] ad regendum [...] Regnum sub nomine et titulo sue Maiestatis, sub certis pactis et servitiis, [...] Princeps fidelitatem et obedientiam repromissam », Küküllei, *Chronicon* cit., cap. 34.

<sup>30</sup> « Circa modum et formam defensionis totius regni Hungariae »: National Széchényi Library, Budapest, MS Fol. Lat. 4355, published : *The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary, 1301-1457*, cur. J. M. Bak, p. Engel, J. R. Sweeney, Salt Lake City 1992 (DRMH 2), pp. 141-152.

<sup>31</sup> « Rex [...] utitur titulum regni Hungariae horum regnorum titulus, videlicet Dalmatiae, Croatiae, Rame, Servie, Gallicie, Lodomerie, Cumanie et Bulgarie, que scilicet regna sunt ab antiquo eidem regno Hungariae incorporata », DRMH 2 cit., p. 143.

formulation had by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century a set formulation as « all the lord prelates, barons, magnates, nobles [...] of the entire kingdom [...] and all the kingdoms incorporated within it and the lands subject to it »<sup>32</sup>. For instance, Dalmatia was seen as an incorporated kingdom, which King « Ladislaus [...] with his sword subjugated »<sup>33</sup>, though in reality it was only Coloman that assumed its crown in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, though the custom was never to re-appear afterwards. The incorporated and annexed parts are « under the allegiance of the Holy Crown : the customs of the kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia, [...] which have long been subject to the Holy Crown of this kingdom [...] and incorporated therein », though these have particular entities since their customs are « somewhat different to [...] our law<sup>34</sup>. And although the Dalmatians, Croatians [...] have various customs different from ours regarding the payment of [...] fines and in certain other legal procedures, [...] have the right to enjoy these customs, and are allowed [...] with the prince's consent, to make statutes [...] among themselves, [...] they cannot establish any law and have no right to make statutes in contravention of general statutes [...] of this kingdom »<sup>35</sup>.

### *King Andrew II's "imperial" ambitions (1205-1235)*

In order to examine the way how this system of political mythology was working in practice, as well as to shed light to the geopolitical position of Hungary, I am proposing here to make use of a case study, investigating the schemes of Andrew II (1205-1235), applying in a peculiar way, an excursus from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the country became a leading power, a

<sup>32</sup> « Quoniam omnes domini [...] totius regni Hungariae necnon regnorum eidem incorporatorum ac partium sibi subiectarum », *Tripartitum* cit., I, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Tripartitum* cit., II. p. 6 [§5].

<sup>34</sup> « Regnorum ... sacrae coronae regni Hungariae dudum subiectorum et incorporatorum consuetudinibus, a nostra lege parum per distantibus », *Tripartitum* cit., III. p. 1 [§1].

<sup>35</sup> « Alia consuetudine a nostra longe discrepante [...] de consensu principis statuereet ordinari possint. Contra [...] generalia statuta et decreta regni [...] nil quicquam constituere possunt nullamque statuendi habent facultatem », *Tripartitum* cit., III. p. 2 [§2].

maker of *grand policie* in the region, a decisive factor on the frontiers of *Latinitas*. The kings maintained an extensive dynastic policy, with partners from Byzantium through the Holy Land to France. In order to protect its interests and preserve stability, interventions and the enforcement of dependence were applied as legitimate means. After the fall of Byzantium in 1202/1204, in a way in a “*tabula rasa*” situation the kingdom necessarily became a prime mover in the European political theatre, yet, it is not to be seen as an empire in traditional sense, not at all as a potential follower of the legacy of Byzantium, even though there was a momentary power vacuum.

Much of historical works examine Andrew II's foreign politics only through his “overriding” ambition to acquire the Latin imperial title. His “strive for grandeur” is however, not founded on genuine evidence, though have very much been up to the present day seen in historiography as a part of a glorious national heritage. Nevertheless, the two immeasurable *caesurae*, the ravage of Zara/Zadar in 1202 and the fall of Constantinople resulted in new challenges for contemporaries. Necessary measures were needed in the new situation, which was critical also for Hungary, especially if we consider that such a political framework was broken up all of a sudden which had been in place for hundreds of years. The constellation which had been based on the balancing power of Byzantium for over seven hundred years collapsed. The peoples of the Balkans who had belonged to Byzantium's sphere of interest became independent overnight, which also led to chaotic turn-over. Furthermore, new powers emerged that threatened the position of Hungary and demanded to have a role in a partition of the Balkans. Andrew II's space to manoeuvre was much restricted.

After 1204, following the initial hostilities between the Frankish “conquerors”, the Asenid Bulgarians and the Greek successor Nicaea, in the early 1210s the Constantinople Latins and Hungary were bound to approach one another and warm up their rapports. The major concern of Hungary was to hold up a balance of powers. Andrew did not wish that any power would take Byzantium's place and gain excessive weight. The king judged that in the current situation Serbia, together with her ally, Venice – which gained significant positions in the Levant – were stronger than Bulgaria. The solution for the time being was to keep up the balance between the Serbs, the Asenids, the Latins and the emerging new factor, Epirus. The real rise of the Epirus was yet to come : in

1216 Henry, Emperor of Constantinople was assassinated, which the Epirotes must have had a hand in, and in 1217 the new despot, Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215–30) had the newly elected ruler, Peter of Courtenay killed. Bulgaria could not withstand the great Epirote offensive. Hungary had to prevent the turmoil. However, it was not in the way that generations of historians have “expected” to be the simplest : finally, the king of Hungary did *not* assume the crown of Constantinople. The king of Hungary sought to find a stable solution in a different way but did not bring it forth through obtaining the imperial crown, since this would not have put an end to the crisis.

### *The Latin crown*

Andrew II did *not* in fact hope to ascend the throne of the Latin Empire. I would not put it in that way that he would not have probably *dreamed* of rising as the ruler of Constantinople, but in the field of practical policy, in the every-day reality of the political constellation largely shaped by the Papacy, the Franks of the Aegean, the Asenids and the successor Greeks, not to speak of Venice, it was simply out of the question.

There is no evidence that the Andrew married her second spouse, Yolande of Courtenay because he wanted to obtain the imperial throne with the help of this “trump card”. Through the paternal line the queen originated from the house of Capet : she was daughter of Peter of Courtenay-Capet, count of Auxerre, later to be elected Emperor of Constantinople (1216-17), and Yolande, countess of Flanders and Hainaut, a sister of emperors Baldwin and Henry. However, at the time of the marriage, 1215, Emperor Henry was still alive, and did not show any sign of an illness whatsoever. Furthermore, negotiations for the betrothal had even started earlier than 1215. Andrew could not have known a year before that Henry would be assassinated a few months afterwards. In addition, at the time of the emperor’s death, Andrew, even by right of his consort was not at all the direct line heir to the throne. In 1216, as Emperor Henry died childless, the closest relative was her sister, Yolande – herself later to be regent empress of the Empire –, and thus, either herself, or, by right of her marriage to Peter of Courtenay, her consort would become the rightful alternative to be elected emperor.



Duly, early in the summer of 1216 Peter of Courtenay was elected emperor. Andrew at that time could not have nurtured any hopes to get the crown. He was only the consort of the daughter of the emperor elect, third in line even behind Yolande of Flanders herself. Nevertheless, it is not out of the question that Andrew's candidacy may have arisen within the Constantinople Latins, probably amongst the supporters of Andrew's sister, Margaret, Queen of Thessalonica, by right of her son, Demetrius of Montferrat<sup>36</sup>, Peter of Courtenay was before long elevated to the throne by the home faction of French and Italian barons, and this choice was unquestionable. Peter had a much stronger league, and whether Andrew had a party of followers is not at all confirmed in any narrative sources. Andrew's candidature is hypothetical, largely shaped by modern historiography, since his would-be election did not at all arise in any of the contemporary sources of the Latin East or the Fifth Crusade: it is *not* mentioned by either Ernoul, or Éracles, or Oliver Scholasticus of Paderborn, not to speak of Henri of Valenciennes.

Of Andrew's "intention" to apply for the imperial throne we have only a single source, an indirect mention, a reply from Pope Honorius III to King Andrew in January 1217. The pontiff writes that because of a new cause – "sed arduus of novo casus emergens" – Andrew sets out on an inland route to the Holy Land. Yet he does not speak out that this *novel* matter is Andrew's purpose to have himself elected emperor and this is why he is now giving up the originally designed naval route<sup>37</sup>. It turns out from the pope's words that the Holy See welcomes Andrew's candidacy, but Honorius says the same about Peter's candidature as well. It is *not* just for this reason that Andrew set out to launch his crusade. The pope also writes that he learnt that the Latins had sent a delegation *both* to Andrew and Peter of Courtenay to elect *either* of them emperor, which is yet *only* known from this letter. Honorius does only learn from the Andrew's former letter

<sup>36</sup> Gy. Pauler, *A magyar nemzet történelme az Árpád-házi királyok alatt*. [History of the Hungary under the Árpád kings] I-II, Budapest 1893: II, pp. 77-78.

<sup>37</sup> A. Theiner, *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia*, Romae 1859-1860 [hereinafter Theiner, VMHH] I, p. 4, n. 5; *Regesta pontificum Romanorum*, ed. A. Potthast, Berlin 1874, n. 5440; *Az Árpád-házi királyok okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke. Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico diplomatica*. edd. I. Szentpétery, I. Borsa, Budapest 1923-1987 [hereinafter RA] I p. 102, n. 312.

dispatched to Rome that the king of Hungary's candidature had arisen at all<sup>38</sup>. Yet we do not have any information that a delegation would have been in fact sent to Hungary. The pope also warns Andrew not to neglect the Holy Land because of the *causes of the empire*, which cannot be taken as evidence for Andrew's imperial ambitions since the pontiff does not expound what he exactly means. We do not know what these "causes" were in fact. It might have referred to the expectation that Andrew's crusade would have also strengthened the position of Constantinople.<sup>39</sup> However, the pope did not promote Andrew's cause at all, since a few weeks afterwards Honorius openly stood out for the candidature of Peter of Courtenay<sup>40</sup>.

Andrew had been preparing for the crusade years before 1217<sup>41</sup>. He had been already embarking for war when the hypothetical candidacy might have at all arisen. He was on his way to the Holy Land when Honorius crowned Peter as emperor in April 1217<sup>42</sup>. Andrew was deliberate now and his decision to go on a crusade was not at all dependent on a slight chance of being elected emperor. He wrote to the Pope that he could not wait now to set out<sup>43</sup>.

It has also been proposed that Andrew called off the crusade and abruptly left for home from the Holy Land just because Peter

<sup>38</sup> « De oblato Orientis Imperio gratulatur : quod universitas Latinorum in Graecia commorantium, ad te suos nuncios destinarunt, in imperatorem Constantinopolitanum te, [...] Comitem Antissidiorensem, [...] electuros », Theiner, VMHH cit., I, p. 4, n. 5 ; Potthast, *Regesta* cit., n. 5440.

<sup>39</sup> « Ne per hoc terrae sacrae retardetur succursus », *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, ed. G. Fejér, Tom. I-XI, Vol. 1-43, Buda 1829-1844 [hereinafter Fejér, CD] III/1. p. 188 ; RA cit., I, p. 102, n. 312.

<sup>40</sup> *I regesti del pontefice Onorio III dall'anno 1216 all'anno 1227 compilati sui codici dell'archivio Vaticano ed altre fonti storiche*, ed. p. Pressutti, I, Roma 1884, p. 137, n. 497.

<sup>41</sup> R. Röhrich, *Studien zur Geschichte des fünften Kreuzzuges*, Innsbruck 1891, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> *I regesti del pontefice Onorio III dall'anno 1216 all'anno 1227 compilati sui codici dell'archivio Vaticano ed altre fonti storiche*, ed. p. Pressutti, I, Roma 1884, p. 130, n. 464 ; Potthast, *Regesta* cit., n. 5517.

<sup>43</sup> L. Veszprémy, *Lovagvilág Magyarországon. Lovagok, keresztesek, hadmérnökök a középkori Magyarországon*, Budapest 2008 [Chivalrous world in Hungary. Knights, crusaders, military engineers in medieval Hungary], p. 105, n. 87.

of Courtenay died, and he again nurtured hopes for the Constantinople throne. It is true that Peter was captured by the Epirote despot, Theodore, but it was *before*, in June 1217 that Andrew embarked for Palestine. Nevertheless, there was no news of Peter for about two years, he must have died in prison. Even in that case Andrew's candidature could not have arisen, since the Frankish barons promoted the Courtenay succession, since Peter had a legitimate heir.

Nonetheless, even if we cannot take Andrew II's ambition for the Latin throne into a serious *practical* account, we can examine his goals in the Balkans. Yet, instead of the Latin crown, Andrew needed a solid alliance system, of which he could be the most prestigious leader, for which he wanted to gain political positions in the area. Andrew still undertook the task to defend the *Latinitas* and the Latins' positions, and for that purpose he was to build a strong interest circle. He made benefit of the fact that he was the only crowned monarch who had fought for the cause of the Cross<sup>44</sup>.

Andrew was keeping on fabricating the dynastic system from the Holy Land to the Aegean Franks, from the Balkans to the Levant his father, Béla III (1172–96) had started to establish. Andrew was a descendant of one of the oldest dynasties in Jerusalem, the House of Antioch. He was related to most of the ruling families of the Holy Land. The Franks of Jerusalem and the Latins of Constantinople considered him one of their own, belonging to the *Outremer* himself. His Châtillon ancestors were renowned crusaders: Béla married Agnes/Anne, daughter of Raynald of Châtillon and Constance, Princess of Antioch. His second consort, Margaret was a daughter of Louis VII of France. By the time of Andrew's crusading venture, Antioch and Tripoli were ruled by his cousin, Bohemund IV.

The kingdom of Thessalonica was ruled by Andrew's sister, Margaret, consort of Boniface of Montferrat, in the name of her minor son, which increased the political weight of Hungary in the region. The Montferrat relationship was remarkably valuable as Boniface was not an "ordinary crusader". The marriage with

<sup>44</sup> Veszprémy, *Lovagvilág* cit., p. 107; T. C. Van Cleve: *The Fifth Crusade*, in *A History of the Crusades*, II, *The Later Crusades 1189-1311*, cur. R. L. Wolff, H. W. Hazard, in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K.M. Setton, vol. I-V, Madison 1969, pp. 377-428, 394.

the Montferrats, who were of enormous weight in the Holy Land and the Levant was to heighten Béla's Châtillon and Capetian relations. The Latin kingdom in Thrace was a pillar for Hungarian interests in the Balkans. The informal authority that the rulers of Thessalonica held in Christendom was invaluable. They had precious family ties as well. The first wife of Boniface was Jeanne of Châtillon-sur-Loing, daughter of Raynald of Châtillon and Constance of Antioch, a sister-in-law of Béla III, that is, the aunt of Andrew II<sup>45</sup>. A brother of Boniface, Renier married Mary Porphrogenete, a daughter of Manuel Komnenos, who had formerly been engaged to Béla. Another of Boniface's brothers, William 'Longsword' of Montferrat, Count of Jaffa and Ascalon married Sibylla of Jerusalem, daughter of King Amalric I and was the father of Baldwin V, King of Jerusalem (1185–86). The first spouse of Boniface's third brother, Conrad, was most probably Theodora Angelina, a sister of the Byzantine Emperor Isaac II Angelos – thus he also became the brother-in-law of Margaret, who had previously married him as her first spouse and rose to be Basilissa. Later, Conrad, as Lord of Tyre became the governor of the crusader state. He married Queen Isabella, daughter of Amalric, and their daughter became the heiress of Jerusalem, Mary 'La Marquise'. When Andrew went on his crusade, the daughter of his niece, Isabella II sat on the throne of Jerusalem (1212-1225).

Andrew supported his sister's governance in Thessalonica, which could be of much use in the defense of Constantinople. Epirus was a growing threat<sup>46</sup>. If the Epirotes and their Serbian allies had reached the Aegean Sea, Constantinople could have no longer played the balancing role on which Hungary had built on – or, wished to build on – in the Balkans. Another family bond tied Andrew with Thessalonica : the uncle of his consort, Emperor Henry of Flanders married Agnes of Montferrat, a daughter of Boniface, Andrew's brother-in-law<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Foundation for Medieval Genealogy, Vowchurch, Hereford. ([http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/LATIN%20EMPERORS.htm#\\_fn81](http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/LATIN%20EMPERORS.htm#_fn81)) - September 23, 2021.

<sup>46</sup> J. J. Norwich, *Byzantium : the decline and fall*, New York 1996, p. 193.

<sup>47</sup> G. de Villehardouin, *Bizánc megvétele*, [The conquest of Byzantium] Budapest 1985, pp. 165, 168 ; R. L. Wolff, *The Latin Empire of Constantinople*

As it will be seen below in detail, on his return journey from Palestine Andrew set out to organize several marriage alliances. The ruler himself described his dynastic policy in a letter written to Pope Honorius III in 1219. The king speaks of all his matrimonial schemes in the same political context, treating them not separately, but conjointly, as parts of a whole, signifying a common, mutually bound “*commercia*”. The Hungarian, Nicaean and Bulgarian matrimonial relationships were closely inter-related<sup>48</sup>.

Andrew betrothed his youngest son, Andrew to Isabella, daughter of Leo I (II), King of Armenia<sup>49</sup>. The king was also planning to send the prince to Asia Minor, and it was not by chance that he asked the Pope to embrace the child and his crown in his protection, commend him on to the custody of the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers. Prince Andrew was not simply to wed a princess from Lesser Armenia, but Leo’s heiress, and the marriage would have assured a more forcible resistance against Turkish invasions. The charter implies an inheritance contract: he placed the whole of Armenia, with its crown, forever under the authority of our son and his successors<sup>50</sup>. The monarch in fact wished his son to rule Armenia, which would have made him an important political factor in the Latin East. The would-be rule of the Hungarian heir in Armenia, supported by the Knights of St. John and the Temple must have been es-

1204-1261, in Wolff, Hazard, *A History* cit., pp. 187-234, partic. 205; A. Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea. The Story of an Empire in Exile*, London 1912, p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> « Nuptiarum commercia, inter nos, et iam dictum Lascarum, inter Azenum etiam, Bulgariae Imperatorem, et filiam meam celebrate »: Theiner, VMHH cit., I, p. 21, n. 32; A. Dancheva–Vasileva, *Les relations politiques bulgareo-latines au cours de la période 1218-1241*, « Bulgarian Historical Review », 7 (1979), 1, pp. 75-90, partic. 77.

<sup>49</sup> S. Der Nersessian, *The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia*, in Wolff, Hazard, *A History* cit., pp. 630-660, partic. 651; *Chronique Ernoul et Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. M. L. de Mas Latrie, Paris 1871, p. 411.

<sup>50</sup> « Ad confringendum vicinos, atque iuges Turcorum insultus, ... filiam suam nostro filio tradidit in uxorem, totumque regnum Armeniae cum sua corona, ... in perpetuam iurisdictionem eidem filio nostro, et suis heredibus subiugavit [...] factum inter nos et regem Armeniae contractum, tam super matrimonio ... filiae suae cum filio nostro, quam de collatione sui diadematis et regni, auctoritatis vestrae munimine confirmetis », Fejér, CD cit., III/1. p. 250; Theiner, VMHH cit., I, pp. 20-21, n. 32; *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae*, ed. R. Marsina, Bratislava 1971, n. 237.

sential for the Pope, as the Christians were losing positions in the Holy Land. Honorius III supported the succession plan and placed the young couple under his protection<sup>51</sup>.

The inter-relationship between the marriages is shown by the fact that on the way home, in Nicaea, Andrew also discussed his schemes in Cilicia with Emperor Theodore I Laskaris, who agreed to support Prince Andrew's Armenian succession<sup>52</sup>. Finally, the marriage and the succession failed due to internal anarchy, but it is possible that for a period this prospect may have had a chance. Prince Bohemund III of Antioch, half-brother of Andrew's mother, Agnes of Châtillon extended his rule over Armenia. In 1219, heiress Isabella was proclaimed queen and it seemed that if Andrew could have got to Asia Minor, he could acquire the crown<sup>53</sup>. Even if Andrew's plan did not succeed, his relatives were in the position to lead the government of Armenia, since Philip of Tripoli, the son of Andrew's Antiochian cousin, Prince Bohemund IV married Isabella, Prince Andrew's former betrothed and reigned until 1225. It also suited Andrew's schemes that the grand-nephew of his blood, Bohemund IV, formed a close alliance with Armenia and ruled the county in concord with Andrew's – and the Latins' – stand.

At Nicaea, the next stop on the return journey, another betrothal was to be sealed between Theodore Laskaris' daughter and an Árpád prince, Béla<sup>54</sup>. Mary was then brought to Hungary – the couple were to be wedded in 1220<sup>55</sup>. The approach to the Laskarids was also the concern of Hungary, because by the end

<sup>51</sup> Theiner, VMHH cit., I, p. 21, n. 33.

<sup>52</sup> M. Wertner, *Negyedik Béla király története* [History of King Béla IV], Budapest 1893. 16.

<sup>53</sup> G. Érszegi, *Eine neue Quelle zur Geschichte der bulgarischen–ungarischen Beziehungen während der Herrschaft Borils*, «Bulgarian Historical Review», 3 (1975), 3, pp. 91-97, partic. 96.

<sup>54</sup> [Ephraim/Ephraemius], *Imperatores*, in *Fontes Byzantini Historiae Hungariae aevi ducum et regum ex stirpe Árpád descendentium*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, Budapest 1984, pp. 328-335, partic. 335; Ephraim [Ephraemius], *Imperatores*, ed. A. Maio, Bonnae 1840 (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, 21), v. 8330.

<sup>55</sup> [Georgios Akropolites], *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, rec. August Heisenberg, cur. p. Wirth, I, Stuttgartiae 1978 [hereinafter Akropolites], cap. 15. p. 30; *Theodoros Skutariotes*, in Moravcsik, *Fontes Byzantini* cit., pp. 301-316, partic. 315.

of the 1210s Nicaea had strengthened its Venetian connections. The Aegean advance of Venice made the Republic's predominance in the Adriatic increasingly pressing<sup>56</sup>.

With the Armenian-Nicaean policy it was possible now to pave the way towards Bulgaria. Arriving to Bulgaria, an engagement was announced between Anne Mary, daughter of Andrew and Tsar Ivan Asen II. Following the Hungarian marriage, Asen also approached the Latins and the Greeks of Nicaea, confirmed by the ensuing betrothal between the would-be Latin Emperor, Baldwin and Elena Asenina (daughter of Tsar Asen and Anne Mary of Hungary). Ivan Asen, who had just ascended to the throne, also wanted to indicate with the Árpád marriage that he was open to the renewal of the issue of the union of the Church<sup>57</sup>.

In his letter to Pope Honorius Andrew also emphasizes his sacrilegious scheme, that is, that he is wishing to establish a family tie with the Seljuk Sultan. There were envoys sent to the Pope to ask for his consent to marry one of Andrew's nieces to the Sultan of Iconium, since the Seljuk ruler did himself approach Hungary and asked for a spouse, promising that « refuting his perfidious faith, he shall convert to Christianity and receive baptism »<sup>58</sup>. Even if the scheme of the Seljuk marriage can probably be interpreted as a "game" of political influence, Andrew's diplomacy took on very pragmatic characteristics. In a word, the Sultan of Iconium could have just as well been taken as a potential ally in the political theatre. This might have just as well been taken seriously by the monarch as well, supplementing his other marriage plans.

Following the betrothals there was no Christian ruler in Asia Minor to whom Andrew was not closely related. In 1218 Theodore, despot of Epirus moved forward in the Thessalian and Thracian territories of the Latins, who were continuously forced

<sup>56</sup> D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1992, p. 159, pp. 161-163 ; Id., *The Despotate of Epiros*, Oxford 1957, pp. 27-29 ; J. Longnon, *L'empire latin des Constantinople et la principauté de Morée*, Paris 1949, pp. 106-111.

<sup>57</sup> Vasileva, *Les relations* cit., p. 84 ; V. Gyuzelev, *Das Papsttum und Bulgarien im Mittelalter (9.-14. Jh.)*, "Bulgarian Historical Review", 5 (1977), 1 : pp. 34-58, partic. 45.

<sup>58</sup> RA cit., I/1, p. 118, n. 355 ; Fejér, CD cit., III/1, p. 250 ; Theiner, VMHH cit., I, p. 20, n. 32.

back towards the innermost regions of Constantinople<sup>59</sup>. This consideration must have made Andrew to gain further partners. As Nicaea was driven back by the Seljuks, it seemed the Lascarids would join in an alliance even with their former Latin adversaries. The dynastic contacts were further deepened. Due to the growing Epirote threat, to top up the Latin-Nicaean alliance, a younger sister of Andrew's spouse, Mary of Courtenay (another daughter of Emperor Peter II of Courtenay and Yolande, Empress of Constantinople) married Theodore Laskaris<sup>60</sup>. The following ruler, Peter's son, Robert was to get engaged to Eudokia Laskarina, Theodore's daughter<sup>61</sup>. Another of Andrew's sisters-in-law, Agnes of Courtenay was married to a very influential actor in the Latin East, Geoffrey II of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia, who was able to keep Epirus at bay<sup>62</sup>.

However, as the newly elected Emperor, Peter of Courtenay was captured even before taking his seat in Constantinople, and his consort, Yolande was needed to rule as a regent until 1219, the Empire was to rely on the support of Hungary more than ever. Peter's heir, Robert had to start his rule in a desperate search for allies. This is the light in which his visit to Hungary on his way to Constantinople is to be seen. Robert did not only pay a visit to see his queen sister, Yolande. He consciously chose the unusual inland route to negotiate with his brother-in-law, Andrew, and also stopped in Bulgaria for his own concerns<sup>63</sup>. He must have intended to feel out whether Andrew would further support the cause of the Franks against Epirus' aggression, and keep up the friendship with Bulgaria and Nicaea, the backing of whom the Latins were most in need of. Andrew welcomed the

<sup>59</sup> Nicol, *The Despotate* cit., p. 54.

<sup>60</sup> Akropolites cit., 15. p. 30 ; Wolff, *The Latin Empire* cit., p. 209 ; Renewal of the treaty : Gardner, *The Lascarids* cit., p. 85 ; Longnon, *L'empire latin* cit., p. 157.

<sup>61</sup> Akropolites cit., 18. p. 33 ; Gardner, *The Lascarids* cit., p. 118.

<sup>62</sup> p. Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204-1500*, London 1995, Table 3 ; J. Longnon, *The Frankish states in Greece, 1204-1300*, in Wolff, Hazard, *A History* cit., pp. 235-276, partic. 242.

<sup>63</sup> *Compilation dite de Baudouin D'Avesnes*, in *La conquête de Constantinople, avec la continuation de Henri de Valenciennes*, ed. J. N. de Wailly, Paris 1872, p. 424.



entourage of his “kin”<sup>64</sup>. Robert accompanied Princess Anne Mary as she was taken to her wedding with Ivan II Asen.<sup>65</sup> The Tsar, in the approaching Greek peril, was most in need of assistance. He did approach the Holy See to negotiate over the adoption of Catholicism<sup>66</sup>.

The Asenid, Laskarid and Armenian marriages mark the same community of interests, with which « our peoples are tied together in a solid bond » (« nostrae gentis et suae glutinatus in unum commercio »).<sup>67</sup> Even if Andrew was not the leader of an “empire”, the crusade and the pedigree of his relatives gave him such authority that he became the sole ruler – in the absence of a Latin emperor and an apt ruler in Jerusalem – capable of negotiating for a concord of concerns in Christendom. He was the Christian *princeps* acknowledged from Tarsus to Tarnovo. In addition, the goal of the matrimonial alliances were to « lay a safe way for pilgrimages moved by the cause of God » (« securum peregrinationis »), from which the « Holy Land may make a great benefit of ». The king was not dreaming of an empire. Beyond the matrimonial contacts he had a deeper, underlying concern to protect the inland itinerary – and its Levantine economic background – through Hungary, the Balkans and Asia Minor. In this way it might have been possible to develop further schemes after Andrew had realized in his 1217-18 enterprise the – logistic, organizational, financial – hardships of launching a crusade along the traditional, naval route. He was to secure the itinerary to the Outremer, in a completely new political reality.

As the Latins being not able to stabilize their Empire, Andrew was bound to take up the legacy of Byzantium – but *not* to take her empire over – and was to succeed in her political position to preserve the traditional political constellation. The parties in the Balkans, the Aegean and the Levant were bound to approach one another particularly with the intermediation of Hungary. Hungary did not wish that any power would take Byzantium’s place and gain excessive power. Andrew’s concern was to

<sup>64</sup> *Chronique métrique de la conquête de Constantinople par les Francs par Philippe Mouskés*, in *Chronique de la prise de Constantinople*, ed. J.-A. Buchon, Paris 1828 (Collection des chroniques nationales Françaises, 3), p. 347.

<sup>65</sup> *L'estoire de Eracles Empereur et la conqueste de la terre d'Outremer*, in *Recueil des Historiens des croisades* (Historiens Occidentaux, II), Paris 1859, p. 294.

<sup>66</sup> Vasileva, *Les relations* cit., p. 84 ; Gyuzelev, *Das Papsttum* cit., p. 45.

<sup>67</sup> Theiner, VMHH cit., I, p. 21, n. 32.

keep the Franks “on the political map” and preserve the crusaders’ state amid the Greek successor states’ attempts in reorganizing Byzantium, and, at the same time prevent the Bulgarians striving to take a large share of Byzantine lands. Andrew undertook the task to defend *Latinitas* for which he was building a strong alliance block, mainly sealed with marriages, a *modus vivendi* to hold the constellation up.

Nonetheless, if Andrew II had been in possession of the Hungarian and the Latin throne at the same time, this overweight would have undoubtedly undermined the European power system. He could not have a real chance, neither was his energy, nor his financial strength sufficient even for applying for the Constantinople throne as a potential candidate. Andrew’s “empire” existed only in the daydreams of historians.

However, Andrew stood up as – if not Latin Emperor – but a potential pillar of the Christians of the Balkans and the Latin East. The dynastic relationships ran parallel routes, side by side, complementing one another. This framework of relations is well grasped in a letter by Andrew’s son, King Béla IV (1235–70) to Pope Gregory IX: « we are bound together in friendship and cousinly confederation ». All our allies are « tied to us with respect »<sup>68</sup>. Andrew’s companionship of relatives, « cognati », « consanguinei » and « amici » survived and was solidly working as well as the balance was being kept up to 1238. It was partly due to this that Ivan II Asen and the new Emperor of Nicaea, Ioannes III Doukas Vatatzes could not capture Constantinople, and thus the Latins could preserve their existence even after the final years of the 1230s<sup>69</sup>.

Hungary also needed this to preserve this balancing role and retain the integrity of Bulgaria and Nicaea and even against the Holy See’s ambitions. In the late 1220s Ivan II Asen joined the Laskarids and turned against the Latins. It was feared that the Nicaeans and the Bulgarians would enclave the capital. In 1231 the Pope called upon Hungary for organizing a crusade against Bulgaria and Nicaea. Yet Andrew was striving for restoring good relations and emphasized her friendship with his “old”, family allies, Asen and Vatatzes.

<sup>68</sup> « Quocum tamen nos amicitiarum et cognitionis foedera coniunxerunt », 1238, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] Diplomataikai Fényképgyűjtemény [Diplomatic photo collection, hereinafter DF] 289 183 ; 293 361.

<sup>69</sup> Wolff, *The Latin Empire* cit., p. 221.

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La storia degli imperi è un ambito di ricerca piuttosto studiato, non altrettanto lo è quella dell’“imperialità” intesa come orizzonte concettuale di riferimento esemplare, che manca ancora di un approccio completo. Tuttavia, la diffusione e il successo dell’ideologia imperiale sono misurabili in relazione all’impronta che essa imprime nelle forme emulative delle monarchie non imperiali. I volumi di questa collana mirano a indagare tali aspetti, concentrando l’attenzione sugli “pseudo-imperi” cristiani che si sono costituiti nel Medioevo e nella prima Modernità. In altri termini, intendono esplorare tutte le modalità di quella che può essere definita “imperialità derivata” o “seconda”: cioè le forme di imperialità che talvolta, sebbene in modo ricorrente, hanno caratterizzato quelle istituzioni di tipo monarchico o principesco che non potevano assumere il nome di impero, ma che ne hanno reinterpretato alcuni aspetti.

La vastità del territorio è attributo necessario di imperialità? Un impero è solo un regno più grande? Rielaborando gli interventi al convegno scientifico tenutosi alla Maison Française di Oxford nel giugno del 2018, questo libro mette in discussione i legami sviluppati a partire dal Medioevo tra l’idea di impero e la sua espressione geografica. Più precisamente, riflette sul rapporto tra razionalità politica imperiale e configurazione territoriale attraverso alcuni casi di studio tratti dai regni di Sicilia, Francia, Ungheria, Spagna e Inghilterra.

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