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a cura di

MARCO MERLO, FABIO ROMANONI e PETER SPOSATO



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Stamp of the Teutonic Knights from the 14th century. (“Visitatorum Magister in Allemaniae”). Material: brass Deutschordens-Zentralarchiv, Singerstraße 7, 1010 Vienna, Austria Foto Frank Bayard 2012 Wikimedia Commons CC SA 3.0

The Battle of the Leitha River in 1246: the mystery of the King of Rus'¹

by ILLIA PARSHYN

ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the course and historical circumstances of the battle of the Leitha River in 1246, which became a turning point in the struggle for the Austrian inheritance after the death of Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome, the last representative of the Babenberg family in the male line. Attention is paid to the participation of the Rus' prince in the army of the Hungarian king Béla IV. The aim of this article is to re-examine the identity of this mysterious ruler mentioned in Austrian and Hungarian medieval sources and to determine whether Rostyslav Mikhailovych or Danylo Romanovych could have been the Rus'ian prince involved in the conflict. The results of the analysis allow us to conclude that the most likely participant in the battle was Prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych, son-in-law of Béla IV and an active figure in Central European politics in the mid-13th century. Data from the "Continuatio Lambacensis" and other Austrian annals further confirm the identification of this figure with the participant in the sudden attack during which Duke Frederick II was killed. The scientific novelty lies in a comprehensive reinterpretation of the "Rus' trace" in the events of 1246, which has long remained marginalized in historiography. The article contributes to the study of dynastic politics in Central Europe, allowing for a new assessment of the role of Rus'ian princes in the struggle for the Austrian inheritance and the relations between local elites.

KEYWORDS: KING OF RUS', LEITHA, DUKE FREDERIK II THE QUARRELSOME, BÉLA IV, DANYLO ROMANOVYCH, ROSTYSLAV MYKHAILOVYCH.

The struggle for the Austrian inheritance in the middle and second half of the 13th century turned into a full-scale European war. The whole conflict began in June 1246, when the armies of Hungarian King Béla IV (1206–1270) and Austrian Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome (1211–1246) clashed near the Leitha River. The Austrian duke died. The next era saw intense

1 This research was carried out with the financial support of the Deutsch-Ukrainische Historische Kommission (German Ukrainian Historical Commission, DUHK), which operates with funding from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

internal conflict involving foreign powers. The wealth and extremely advantageous geographical location of the Alpine country made it an attractive possession for any neighboring ruler. Individual sovereigns created entire factions, supported their candidates, and sought to occupy the throne of the Austrian duchy (either personally or indirectly). The local nobility aimed to at least retain their old privileges and sided with various contenders. The papal curia also had its own interests, as it could strengthen its influence over the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire and the territory of Northern Italy thanks to the local clergy. The struggle for the Austrian duchy also became a separate chapter in the gender history of Europe. According to the Privilegium Minus (1156), if the male line of the Babenbergs died out, power could be inherited by women. So, princesses-representatives of this family immediately became “desirable partners” among the European nobility. At least, the Habsburgs ultimately prevailed when Rudolf I (1218–1291) defeated Přemysl Ottokar II (1233–1278) of Bohemia in 1278². During this time, local noble elites emerged as a dominant political force in the Duchy of Austria.

Scientists turned to analyzing the political history of this period. Austrian researcher Karl Lechner described the general course of the battle and its consequences³. Alphons Lothsky provided detailed information about the main sources on the history of medieval Austria, including chronicles and annals describing the death of the last of the Babenbergs⁴. Polish researcher Norbert Mika analyzed the struggle for the Austrian inheritance, noting the formation of political coalitions in Central and Eastern Europe in the mid-13th century⁵. An important aspect of his research was the battle of the Leitha River. Other researchers also concluded that this battle in 1246 triggered a whole kaleidoscope of political events and became a catalyst for dynamic changes on the political map of Europe at that time⁶. From

2 Dušan Zupka, «Forms of Communication of the political Elites in medieval central Europe (Hungary, Austria and the Czech lands 1250–1350)», *Historický Časopis*, 67 (2019), pp. 800–801.

3 Karl Lechner, *Die Babenbergen: Mark-Grafen und Herzoge von Österreich 976–1246*, Böhlau, 1994.

4 Alfons Lhotsky, *Quellenkunde zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte Österreichs*, Hermann Böhlau, 1963.

5 Norbert Mika, *Walka o spadek po Babenbergach 1246–1278*, Wydawnictwo i Agencja Informacyjna WAW, 2008.

6 Witalij Nagirnyj, *Polityka zagraniczna księstw ziem halickiej i wołyńskiej w latach*

this point of view, it is worth noting the important “Rus’ trace” that has been marginalized in scientific interest. In Ukrainian historiography, the presence of warriors from Rus’ was noted by Isidor Sharanevych⁷, Leontii Voitovych⁸, and Illia Parshyn⁹. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, a classic figure in Ukrainian historiography, also devoted considerable attention to this issue. In his seminal work (“History of Ukraine-Rus’”), he reviewed the main reports on the participation of Rus’ian rulers in Austrian events, not overlooking the battle near Leitha¹⁰. On the other hand, contemporary Belarusian scholar Alexei Martyniuk also pointed to the key role played by the Rus’ prince and discussed his figure in detail¹¹. However, this issue is still little known in scientific literature and therefore requires further research. It is particularly relevant to return to this issue against the backdrop of the anniversary of this important battle, which will take place in June 2026. Raising this issue in the year of the 780th anniversary of the battle near Leitha is important for Ukrainian historical science, if only because of the involvement of Rus’ian princes in European politics after the Mongolian invasion.

The course of the battle of Leitha in 1246 is well known, primarily from Austrian medieval sources and Hungarian documents. It is believed that Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome attempted to take advantage of the unrest in the western Hungarian counties and annex them to his lands. This was facilitated by the generally dire situation of the Hungarian Kingdom, caused by the Mongol devastation of the early 1240s. King Béla IV still viewed his eastern possessions with fear, trying to quickly restore the castles near the Carpathians and prevent a possible repeat of the Mongol conquest. Under these conditions, he concluded several dynastic alliances – with the Krakow prince Bolesław V the Chaste (1226–1279) and two Rus’ian princes, Rostyslav of Chernihiv (1219–1262) (the Olgovych clan from Chernihiv) and Lev (d. after 1301), son of the prince (after 1253 – king

1198(1199)–1264, Avalón, 2011.

7 Isidor Szaraniewicz, *Die Hypatios-Chronik als Quellen-Beitrag zur österreichischen Geschichte*, Druk v. J. Dobrzanski & K. Groman, 1872.

8 Leontii Voitovych, *Halych v politychnomu zhytti Yevropy XI–XIV stolit*, Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakevycha NAN Ukrainy, 2015.

9 Parshyn, Illia, *Dyplomatiia Halytsko-Volynskoi derzhavy: yevropeiski naratyvni dzherela XIII–XV stolit*. Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakevycha NAN Ukrainy, 2018.

10 Hrushevsky, Mykhailo, *Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy*, vol. 3, Kyiv, 1993, pp. 67–69.

11 Martyniuk, Alexei, *Do Herbershteina. Avstryia i Vostochnaia Evropa v systeme personalnykh svyazei (XIII – nachalo XVI veka)*, Kvadriga, 2019.



Fig.. 1. The seal of Béla IV (circa 1250).

of Rus') Danylo (1201–1264) (a branch of the Galician-Volhynian Romanovych family). In a letter to Pope Innocent IV (1190–1254) from 1247, Hungarian king explained these steps by his fear of the Mongols: “Returning to what we could do for the good of Christianity, we humbled our royal dignity and gave two of our daughters in marriage to two Rus’ian princes, and the third to a Polish prince, so that through them and our other friends in the East, we might learn news that is largely hidden about the Tatars, so that we might in some way better resist their attempts and insidious tricks”¹². Under the conditions of the Austrian invasion, Béla IV had to use the forces of his new allies, who only partially belonged to the Western Christian world.

12 Roman Hautala, «Letter from King Béla IV of Hungary addressed to Pope Innocent IV on November 11, 1247», *Qazaq Historical Review*, 2 (2024), pp. 436–438. See: “Nos vero, ad id, quod potuimus, recurrentes, propter bonum Christianitatis majestatem regiam humiliando, duas filias nostras duobus ducibus Ruthenorum et tertiam duci Polonie tradidimus in uxores, ut per ipsos et alios amicos nostros, qui sunt ex parte Orientis, sciremus nova, que multum latent de Thartharis, ut sic eorumdem conatibus et fraudulentis ingeniis utcumque commodius resistere valeremus. Cumanos etiam in regno nostro recepimus, et – prohdolor! – per paganos hodie regnum nostrum defendimus et per paganos infideles ecclesie conculcamus. Amplius propter defensionem fidei Christiane filio nostro primogenito Cumanam quandam thoro conjunximus maritali, ut per hoc vitaremus deterius et ut occasionem aliquam na[n]eisci possemus, per quam valeremus eosdem, sicut plures jam fecimus, ad baptismi lavacrum convocare”.



Fig. 2. The battle of Leitha (Tapestry of the 15th century)

The battle began on June 15, St. Vitus' Day. Part of the Hungarian army crossed the Leitha (in Hungarian tradition, the Sárón River) and engaged in battle against the vanguard of Frederick II the Quarrelsome's army. According to Hungarian records, the losses on both sides were immediately significant. The Hungarian Erne Akós knocked one of the Austrian knights out of the saddle with his spear and sent his severed head to the royal camp¹³. On the other hand, Pál, a former judge of the Kingdom of Hungary, was hurt. With seven other compan-

13 Georgius Fejér (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 4, pars 2, Budae, 1826, pp. 93–94.



Reiterfiegel. (Seite 224.)

Fig. 3. Seal of Frederick II the Quarrelsome. Source: Karl von Sava, *Die Siegel der österreichischen Regenten bis zu Kaiser Max I*, Gerold in Komm, 1871, p. 89.

ions, he was taken prisoner by the Austrians. Heinrich von Liechtenstein set out with his men to meet the enemy, while Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome lined up his knights and addressed them with words of encouragement. The Austrian ruler did not notice that part of the Hungarian cavalry was already advancing on him: in the general melee, he found himself surrounded by Hungarians and the loyal knights of Heinrich von Liechtenstein. In the heat of battle, no one noticed that Frederick II had been wounded in the face and knocked from his horse. In the end, it was only after the battle was over that it became clear that the Austrian duke had been killed. This, however, did not prevent the Austrian heavy cavalry from scattering the Hungarian attackers and quickly pushing them back to the river. The main part of the Hungarian knighthood had not even joined the battle when its outcome was already clear. In fact, the battle of 1246 did not bring any other notable results except for the death of the last male representative of the Babenberg dynasty.

The mysterious death of Frederick II gave rise to many rumors. The Hungarian side emphasized the role of Hungarian knights in the death of the last of the Babenbergs. This is evident in the hagiographic account of the life of Saint Margaret (1242–1270, canonized in 1943), written in the 14th–15th centuries. The source states that once, when Margaret was about four years old and her father was leading an army against Austria, she was staying with her mother. She asked the girl what the outcome of the campaign would be. Then, so that the Lord would reveal the Spirit that would guide her in the future, Margaret replied, as if she were a prophetess: “My lord king will return unharmed. His army will be defeated, but the Austrian duke will die.” Soon, events confirmed her prophecy. The king did indeed return unharmed, although he lost many warriors, and the Duke of Austria was killed in battle by Hungarian knights who loyally served the king¹⁴. At the same time, Austrian medieval authors noted a clash with the

“King of Rus’” which was the last for Frederick II. This episode can be found in several chronicles and annals, although the identity of this ruler from Rus’ is difficult to determine.

In historiography, the discussion revolves around two figures who could have been involved in this event. These are the Galician-Volhynian prince Danylo Romanovych or his rival, prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych of Chernihiv, son-in-law of the Hungarian king Béla IV. Most historians tend to see Rostyslav Mikhailovych at the head of the Rus’ contingents in the Hungarian army¹⁵. Among the main arguments of this group of researchers is Prince Danylo’s departure to the Horde to obtain the khan’s charter (yarlyk)¹⁶. This made his return to Rus’ before June 1246 doubtful. Therefore, he would not have been able to physically reach the battlefield on the Hungarian-Austrian border. It should also be noted that Prince Rostyslav’s presence in the Hungarian army is confirmed by documentary evidence. In 1255, King Béla IV honored the relatives of knight Andreas, who fought against the Austrian duke, with a valuable gift. Prince Rostyslav was a witness to the Hungarian warrior’s merits¹⁷. However, the late Hustyn Chronicle,

14 Ildikó Csepregi, «Miracle Types and Narratives The Case of Saint Margaret of Hungary», *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections*, Brill, 2021, pp. 345–346.

15 Lechner, *cit.*, pp. 295–296; Mika, *cit.*, pp. 18–19.

16 Nagirnyj, *cit.*, pp. 229–230; Martyniuk, *cit.*, pp. 50–64.

17 Georgius Fejér (ed.), *cit.*, p. 314.



Figure 4. Prince Rostyslav Mykhailovych (on the horseback) (miniature of the 16th century)

compiled in the first half of the 17th century, directly attests to the presence of Prince Danylo Romanovych in the battle of the Leitha River and his victory over the Austrian duke¹⁸. Although the sources of this monument are little known, some researchers have suggested that Prince Danylo could indeed have sent aid to his Hungarian ally¹⁹.

Thus, a Rus'ian prince, whose identity requires further verification, took part in the military campaign of 1246. For example, in the text of the Cologne Royal Chronicle (“*Chronica regia Coloniensis*”) it is noted: “Around that time, the prince of Austria [Frederick II] fought with the king of Bohemia [Wenceslaus I]; having emerged victorious, he captured about two hundred soldiers. That prince [of Austria] met the King of Hungary [Béla IV] on the battlefield sometime in June. Fighting fiercely in a duel with a certain king of Rus', he killed [him] himself and received a mortal wound from him, living for two days; however, his army won the battle”²⁰. From the general style of the excerpt, the anonymous author was working with uncertain information. In our opinion, this is evidenced by the frequent use of the adverb “circa” (“about, around, approximately”), as well as the absence of references to the names of influential Central European rulers of that time – Wenceslaus I, King of Bohemia, Hungarian monarch Béla IV, and even Frederick II himself, the last representative of the Babenbergs in the male line. It is also incorrectly stated that the Austrian duke did not die on the battlefield but died from his wounds a few days later.

It is important to mention the participation in the armed conflict of the Rus'ian ruler, who inflicted a fatal wound on the duke, although he himself was allegedly killed in the process. Both princes (Danylo Romanovych and Rostyslav Mykhailovych) died after 1246, so at first glance, the record does not refer to them. However, N. Mika considered it necessary to understand “quodam rege Ruscie”

18 Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej, *Hustynskaya letopis*, Moskva, 2003, p. 121.

19 Mykola Kotliar, *Voienne mystetstvo Davnoi Rusi*, Nash chas, 2011, pp. 202–205.

20 Georgius Waitz (ed.), *Chronica regia Coloniensis (Annales maximi Coloniensis)*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, t. 18, Hannoverae, 1880, pp. 289–290: “Circa idem tempus dux Austriae cum rege Bohemiae dimicavit; ibi victor existens, circiter ducentos milites captivavit. Idem dux circa mensem Iunium congressus est cum rege Hungariae in bello campestri. Cum quodam rege Rusciae singulariter in prelio dimicans, ipsum interfecit et ab eodem mortale vulnus accepit, supervivendo duobus diebus; exercitus tamen suus triumphavit”.

as “the former king of Rus”²¹. Accordingly, Prince Rostyslav fully fell under this definition (although the record of his death still appears to be accidental).

Returning to the phrase “quodam rege Ruscie,” we can identify certain negative connotations. At least, such unflattering epithets were used in relation to Rus’ian princes during the struggle for the Austrian inheritance. For example, Prince Roman, son of Danylo, earned such a review in “Continuatio Praedicatorum Vindobonensium” when he left his pregnant wife Gertrude, niece of Frederick II the Quarrelsome: “1252. The ruler Gertrude (...) married someone from Rus’, who, when he was unable to establish himself, returned to his lands, unworthily abandoning his own wife”²². Chroniclers viewed Prince Roman’s brief stay in Austria negatively. Escape was considered a dishonorable act, which, given medieval knightly ethics, deserved a corresponding characterization. Thus, “quodam rege Ruscie” in the battle of the Leitha River in 1246 could also have acted unprincipled, proceeding suddenly, without adhering to the rules of combat acceptable for a nobleman.

Ulrich von Liechtenstein (1200–1275) briefly described the “dishonesty” of the “King of Rus” during the campaign in his poem “Frauendienst” (“Service to Women”). In his description of the battle of Leitha between the Austrians and Béla IV, he noted the presence of “Rus’ians” (“Riuzen”) on the battlefield and confirmed the death of the duke during their attack. The Rus’ians unexpectedly attacked the Austrian ruler from behind when he addressed his own warriors with words of encouragement²³. There are no grounds for mistrusting the author: due to his high position at the Austrian court and his good knowledge, the poem “Frauendienst” is rightly considered a valuable source of European political and social history²⁴. In addition, Heinrich von Liechtenstein, his father, was on the battlefield at the time – it was he who found the body of Duke Frederick II. The “King of Rus”, who led an entire detachment, did indeed behave treacherously,

21 Mika, *cit.*, pp. 18–19.

22 Wilhelm Wattenbach (ed.), *Continuatio Praedicatorum Vindobonensium*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 9, Hannoverae, 1925, p. 727: “1252. Domina Gerdrudis (...) dum proficere non posset, reversas ad partes suas uxore sua relicta minus honeste”.

23 Karl Lachmann, *Ulrich von Liechtenstein*. Berlin, 1841, pp. 527–528.

24 Franz Spechtler, «Liechtenstein, Ulrich von». *Neue Deutsche Biografie*, 14 (1985), pp. 522–523.

according to Ulrich's assessment, by suddenly attacking the enemy from behind. It is difficult to say whether he delivered the fatal blow or whether Frederick II the Quarrelsome was killed by his own confused knights while repelling the sudden attack. However, the reference to a significant number of Rus' warriors in the Hungarian army of Béla IV does not allow us to establish the identity of their leader²⁵. On the other hand, A. Martynyuk particularly emphasized the importance of this historical source. According to the scholar, the information provided by the Austrian nobleman Ulrich and the mention of Prince Rostyslav in the Hungarian letter as a direct participant in the battle near Leitha testified to the prince's unique combat-style. Given Prince Rostyslav's young age, his impulsiveness and boldness in attack took the Austrian duke by surprise and led him to death²⁶. In this context, A. Martynyuk significantly developed M. Hrushevsky's version that it was Prince Rostyslav who participated in the battle near Leitha²⁷. But did he really lead the Rus'ian warriors?

In "Annales Sancti Rudperti Salisburgenses" (Salzburg, Austria), another Latin-language source that mentions the battle of 1246, no precise details can be found: "The King of Hungary, gathering a huge number of warriors, and at the same time "Bruscie" and the king of Rus', invaded neighboring Austria. Prince Frederick went out to meet him and fought him fiercely near the Leitha River; there, many of the king's [of Hungary] troops were killed and numerous others taken prisoner, and the prince of Austria himself was killed, either by his own men or by his enemies. His army, having won the victory, returned home"²⁸. This work initially covered events from the beginning of our era to 1286, later Archbishop Waikart continued it to 1307–1308, after which, thanks to the efforts of

25 Vitalii Mandziak, «Rostyslav Mykhailovych – "Dux Galiciae et imperator Bulgarorum"», *Kniazha doba: istoriia i kultura*, 5 (2011), pp. 137–138.

26 Martyniuk, *cit.*, pp. 62–64.

27 Hrushevsky, *cit.*, pp. 67–68. It is important to note that the researcher found the existence of another source describing the events – "Continuation Lambacensis" (see below for more information about this evidence).

28 Wilhelm Wattenbach (ed.), *Annales Sancti Rudperti Salisburgenses, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 9, Hannoverae, 1925, p. 789: "Rex Ungarie collecta magna multitudine pugnatorum, simulque Bruscie et Ruscie regibus, confinia Austriae invasit. Cui occurrens dux Fridericus iuxta Leitam fluvium, cum eo acriter dimicavit; ubi pluribus ex acie regis interfectis et multis captivatis, ipse dux Austriae vel a suis vel a hostibus, sicut dubitatur, fuit interemptus. Exercitus tamen ipsius accepta victoria ad propria est reversus".

an unknown author, the information was brought up to 1327, and already in the 15th century the annals of St. Rupert's Monastery in Salzburg were thoroughly supplemented up to and including 1398²⁹. Commenting on this news, we should note that the king "Bruscie" refers to the Polovtsians. However, Béla IV already held the title of king of the Cumans at that time, and the annalists' references to a separate monarch seem strange. In addition to the mention of the "King of Rus'" the annalists' remark about the uncertainty of the circumstances of the death of Frederick II the Quarrelsome, who "was killed, either by his own people or by his enemies, it is not known," is valuable. Obviously, this happened during the sudden attack mentioned by Ulrich von Liechtenstein.

An analysis of the "Continuatio Lambacensis", the annals of the Lambach monastery in Upper Austria, will help to identify the Rus'ian ruler who took part in the battle of the Leitha River. This work carefully records the events of 1197/98–1283. However, the text of the monument contains separate additions for 1330 and 1348. The names of the analysts are unknown, but from a general overview of the contents of the manuscripts, researchers have concluded that they were loyal to the German king and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen³⁰. Let us focus on two interesting excerpts: "[In] 1246, Frederick, Prince of Austria, defeated King Wenceslaus I of Bohemia in battle, capturing the Prince of Carinthia along with many other nobles, and returned home as a glorious victor. In the same year, [Frederick II] started a dispute with three kings, the King of Hungary [Bela IV], the King of Cumania, and the King of Rus', in which countless [soldiers] on the side of the King of Hungary were killed and drowned, and Frederick himself, having won the victory, died in battle in a strange way"³¹.

29 Ernst Klebel, «Die Fassungen und Handschriften der österreichischen Annalistik», *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich*, 21 (1928), pp. 125–134; Lhotsky, *cit.*, pp. 197, 242, 411.

30 Lhotsky, *cit.*, pp. 179–181; Hannes Möhring, «Friedrich II. und das Schwert des Messias in der Continuatio Lambacensis», *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 58 (2002), pp. 213, 216–217.

31 Wilhelm Wattenbach (ed.), *Continuatio Lambacensis, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 9, Hannoverae, 1925, p. 559: "1246. Fridericus dux Austrie regem Boemye in bello devicit, in quo duce Karinthie cum aliis multis nobilibus captivatis ad propria victor revertitur gloriosus. Eodem etiam anno cum tribus regibus, cum rege Ungarie et rege Gomanorum et rege Ruscie, certamen iniit, ubi innumerabili multitudo ex parte regis Ungarie occisa et submersa, ipse Fridericus hac obtenta victoria, in bello mirabiliter occisus occubuit".

Rus'ian sources also indicate the strange circumstances of the Duke's death³².

At first glance, the report does not change the established view of the military operations of 1246, but unlike other cited sources, the Lambach annalists mention the "King of Rus'" a second time: "Ottokar, King of Bohemia, divorced his wife Margaret; and instead took the daughter of the King of Rus' as his wife; whom he crowned with the royal crown a little later"³³. In 1260, Czech King Přemysl Otakar II divorced Margaret, a member of the Babenberg family. This event had political consequences, as the official break with the heiress to the Austrian dynasty called into question the legitimacy of his rule in the Duchy of Austria. This provoked a short-lived conflict between the Czech monarch and Béla IV, which ended with the defeat of the Hungarian army in the battle near Kressenbrunn in 1260. Then, a peace agreement between the parties was sealed by the marriage of Přemysl Otakar II and Kunegunda, daughter of Rostyslav, granddaughter of King Béla IV³⁴. Thus, anonymous compilers from the Lambach monastery understood the "king of Rus'" to be one and the same person. It is obvious that in both cases they were writing about Prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych, a young warrior who was knowledgeable about medieval tournaments³⁵.

It is difficult to determine to what extent Rostyslav Mikhailovych was recognized as an owner of the royal title. After all, he himself never called himself "king"³⁶. At the same time, his daughter Kunegunda is known in some Austrian annals precisely as the daughter of the "King of Rus'"³⁷. This discrepancy could have been caused, on the one hand, by the geographical and chronological distance of chroniclers and analysts from the place and circumstances of the events described. It is also worth noting the widespread practice among medieval Latin-speaking authors of considering influential princes of Rus' (and sometimes

32 Szaraniewicz, *cit.*, pp. 69–70.

33 Wattenbach (ed.), *Continuatio Lambacensis*, p. 560: "Otacharus rex Boemorum uxorem suam Margaretam a se separavit; et pro ea sibi filiam regis Ruscie copulavit; quam etiam in reginam secum brevi post tempore coronavit".

34 Voitovych, *cit.*, p. 209–210.

35 Khrystyna Mereniuk, «Gloria et Virtus: Hastiludium in Ruthenian Lands and Beyond XII–XV Centuries», *Nuova Antologia Militare*, 6 (2025), pp. 111–138.

36 Parshyn, *cit.*, pp. 90–91.

37 Georgius Waitz, (ed.), *Annales Frisacenses, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 24, Leipzig, 1925, p. 66.

their sons) to be equal in status to other European monarchs³⁸. Therefore, although there were no legal grounds for using “rex Russiae” in relation to Rostyslav Mikhailovych, in the Latin tradition his title, given his proximity to the Hungarian king, is quite natural.

Therefore, based on the review and study of European medieval sources, we believe that the mysterious Rus’ian ruler who took part in the battle of the Leitha River on June 15, 1246, as part of the Hungarian army against the Austrian Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome, was Prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych, son-in-law of the Hungarian king Bela IV. Additional confirmation of this assumption can be found in “Continuatio Lambacensis” from the Lambach monastery. It is possible that the detachment led by the prince suddenly attacked the Austrian ruler’s positions and killed him during the ensuing confusion. Suddenness was not welcome in the medieval world, so Prince Rostyslav earned not very “good reviews” in the sources, causing at the same time a major dynastic crisis in Austria.

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38 Parshyn, *cit.*, pp. 99–100.

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The battle between the Austrians and the Hungarians took place on 15 June 1246 on the banks of the Leitha River, between Ebenfurth and Neufeld. © NordNordWest, own work, 2023. CC-BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons



Pietro l'Eremita predica la prima crociata, dal codice occitano *Abreujamen de las estorias* (epitome storica), Avignone ca 1321 (BL, Egerton MS 1500, f. 45 v)

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