

Description

Duke Béla of Macsó, a 13th-century nobleman of both the Árpád and Rurikid dynasties, was lured to a council on Margaret Island in the Danube in 1272 and assassinated by the rival Kőszegi-Héder family. Forensic examination of his 178-centimeter (5'10") skeleton told the story in clinical detail: 26 perimortem sword wounds, including 9 to the skull. Defensive injuries on his hands indicate he fought back against at least 3 simultaneous attackers. Genomic sequencing of the petrous bone confirmed his identity, linking him to the Árpád royal line. It also placed him in the N1a-L550 Y-haplogroup, a paternal marker of the Rurikid dynasty. Within this lineage, his genome matches that of Prince Dmitry Alexandrovich of Vladimir.



Mosonmagyaróvár Castle — seat of the medieval Duchy of Macsó.

Image by Civertan Grafikai Stúdió

Béla was the grandson of King Béla IV and a prominent surviving male of the royal house — a figure of sufficient dynastic significance to be considered a threat by rival families. The number of wounds reflects not impulse but deliberate intent: this was a planned killing by multiple attackers acting together.



Historical illustration of Rostislav Mikhailovich, father of Béla of Macsó.

The forensic and genomic details produce an unusually complete portrait. Isotope analysis of his bones revealed an elite diet exceptionally rich in animal protein and freshwater fish. Dental calculus preserved traces of semolina, wheat bread, and expensive spiced foods — the dietary signature of high medieval nobility. His predicted phenotype: dark curly hair, light-brown eyes, medium skin. He was a prince at the biological intersection of two great dynasties — Norse-Rurik and Central European royal — whose Scandinavian paternal lineage had traveled from the Baltic through the rivers of the Rus and into the heart of medieval Hungary. His skeleton carries the complete record of that ancestry, and the forensic evidence of how his life ended.

Modern population	Distance
Turkish (Northern Bulgaria)	3.388
Gagauz	3.626

Modern population	Distance
Pomak (Bulgaria)	3.763
Romanian	3.815
Bulgarian	3.936
Greek (Eastern Macedonia and Thrace)	4.174
North Macedonian	4.184
Turkish (Southern Bulgaria)	4.380
Serb	4.712
Montenegrin	4.726

Source

Date: 1743–1793 CE

Y-DNA: N-VL15

mtDNA: U3b3c1*

Location: Hungary

Research: Murder in cold blood? Forensic and bioarchaeological identification of the skeletal remains of Béla, Duke of Macsó (c. 1245–1272)

Sample(s): S18173