

János M. Bak - Géza Pálffy
CROWN AND CORONATION
in Hungary 1000-1916 A.D.

In memoriam Éva Kovács (1932–98)
and for the 80th birthday of Zsuzsa Lovag

János M. Bak – Géza Pálffy

CROWN AND CORONATION
in Hungary 1000–1916 A.D.



Research Centre for
the Humanities



HUNGARIAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM

Budapest 2020

The volume was prepared with the support of the “Lendület” [Momentum]
Holy Crown of Hungary Research Project at the Institute of History
in the Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest

Edited by
Krisztina Bertók

Proofreading
Frank Schaer

Design by
auri grafika

ISBN 978-963-416-219-3

All rights reserved, including reproduction, public presentation, the rights of radio and
television broadcasting and translations, as well as the individual chapters.

© János M. Bak, Géza Pálffy, 2020

© Institute of History in the Research Centre for the Humanities, 2020

© Hungarian National Museum, 2020

Responsible publisher: Pál Fodor, general director of Research Centre
for the Humanities and

Benedek Varga, general director of Hungarian National Museum

Pressed and tied by the Pauker Printing House

Responsible leader: Gábor Vértes managing director

CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	7
THE WAY TO THE TRONE: RIGHT OF BLOOD— RIGHT OF THE ESTATES—RIGHT OF THE HOUSE OF AUSTRIA	11
Beginnings.....	12
Failed attempts at primogeniture	17
Heredity <i>vs</i> suitability	24
First sons succeed	27
The first elections.....	31
Election <i>vs</i> heredity	35
Limited inheritance – limited election	43
CORONATIONS THROUGH NINE CENTURIES.....	47
Place and time	47
Esztergom and Székesfehérvár	47
Pressburg and Sopron	51
Buda and Budapest	55
The date of the coronation	59
The king's <i>entrée</i>	61
King by the grace of God: Crowning and anointing	68
German or Anglo-Saxon order?	68
Acceptance of the papal liturgy	72
Late medieval coronations	77
The Habsburg centuries	81
Festive crown wearing	84
Coronations of the queen consorts	89
Royal marriages	89
Crowning the queen	93
Secular acts of inauguration	99
The king as judge, warrior and host.....	99
Rights and duties of the ruler: Coronation oaths and election promises.....	107

Actors and participants.....	121
The ruler and his spouse.....	122
The <i>coronator</i>	123
Magnates, nobles, and other subjects.....	125
SIGNS OF POWER AND THEIR FATE	131
Throne.....	137
Holy Lance	141
Coronation mantle.....	142
The Holy Crown and its fate	149
The Greek crown and the Latin bands	150
The “closed” crown.....	157
The irreplaceable Holy Crown	161
The adventures of the crown in the late Middle Ages	168
The Holy Crown in Habsburg hands.....	170
Homecomings.....	173
From revolution to compromise.....	181
The American episode.....	186
The Holy Crown in the Third Hungarian Republic	190
Crowns of queens	192
Scepter	193
Orb	196
Swords	200
Other regalia and chests.....	203
Crosses and paraments	208
Flags and batons	214
Coins and tokens	221
RITES, SIGNS AND IDEAS OF KINGSHIP ACROSS NINE CENTURIES: A SUMMARY	227
CHRONOLOGY OF CORONATIONS AND THE TRAVELS OF THE HOLY CROWN	229
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY: SOURCES AND LITERATURE.....	237
INDEX OF PERSONAL NAMES	253
PICTURE CREDITS	263

PREFACE

The change of leadership is always a major event in polities based on the monarchical principle. One may say that the chieftain's or ruler's death always provokes a crisis that is solved only by the formal inauguration of his or her successor. In English (and many other languages) the rites of accession are referred to by the term "coronation" even if the crowning proper, that is, the placing of some special headgear on the new leader, is only part of the extended ceremonies. Some of them can be called constitutive acts, that is, their performance itself implies the enabling of the candidate to his (or her) high office. Others are more demonstrative: announcing to the subjects that the new leader has been established in the proper way. By the time the Christian monarchies of Central Europe were founded at the turn of the first millennium, most of the rites of inauguration had long been established elsewhere. The history of coronations in Hungary includes the acceptance of these ceremonies, their transformation in local traditions, and their political implications.

Between 1000 A.D. and 1916 A.D. fifty-one kings and two reigning queens were crowned in Hungary. As some were crowned more than once, we know about almost sixty coronations, although the medieval ones hardly in any detail. Add to this the incompletely recorded crownings of some two dozen queen consorts, but deducting the ones merely mentioned, we can describe and discuss in detail some thirty events across the centuries. Reliable information on the acts of accession and the accompanying festivities is available only from the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries onward, thus a good part of the following story is based on incomplete references and unconfirmed hypotheses. For the early centuries we can rely on usually short entries in chronicles and histories, with a very few eye-witness reports and references in liturgical books. For the modern era, when Hungary became part of the Habsburg Monarchy, the sources increase. Since Hungarian coronations were major festive events of the monarchy and connected with sessions of the diet, from the sixteenth century onwards copious material—coronation ordinances, parliamentary records, the reports of foreign ambassadors (from Spain, Venice, the papal court, and elsewhere) and personal—have come down

to us. For coronations in the early modern period we have as well the *Zeremonialprotokoll* of the Vienna court. All these offer a wealth of evidence on the ceremonies and the history of the insignia.

Moreover, recent research, particularly of the special research team at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the “Lendület” [Momentum] group founded in 2012 for the study of the Holy Crown and Hungarian coronations, has unearthed hitherto little known details. Among them are the earliest inventories of the insignia (1551, 1608, 1622), eyewitness reports in Latin and Hungarian from 1563 and 1655, and the handwritten notes of Emperor Leopold I about the removal of the crown in 1663–4. Some hitherto unknown objects have also been found, such as a pair of coronations sandals, the oldest surviving coronation flags of Hungary and Croatia (1618, 1647), and the ceremonial baton of the Hungarian Royal Lord Steward for 1792.

We begin with an overview of the “road to the throne,” the succession of rulers based on blood right or election or whatever other rule was the prerequisite of the coronation. As the location and the date of the inaugurations had symbolic significance, we continue with the history of these and the entrées of the kings to them, and then turn to the development of the ecclesiastic ceremonies and the secular acts of inauguration, including the constitutionally relevant acts connected to them. After a brief survey of the participants involved, we describe the insignia of kingship and their fate through the centuries down to our own days.

Considering the many changes to the borders of Hungary and its neighbors in the last centuries, geographical names are given in the form as they appear on a good contemporary map even if this appears anachronistic at times. Personal names, especially those of rulers, are Anglicized as far as is usual practice. Institutions and royal or other officers specific for this country have usually been given the names of their closest English equivalents or, if retained in the vernacular (or Latin), glossed appropriately. Due to the importance of coronations for political, social and cultural history, the scholarly writings on all these subjects are numerous. We have utilized a great number of relevant publications. However, instead of referring to them or the sources consulted from case

to case, we have included for further information an extensive bibliography, giving preference to titles in languages other than Hungarian.

However, we wish to note in particular that the present overview would be more incomplete and lacking the results of most recent research without three important publications. The description of the crown jewels is based to a great part on the splendidly illustrated critical monograph of Endre Tóth, *A magyar Szent Korona és a koronázási jelvények* [The Hungarian Holy Crown and the coronation insignia] (Budapest: Országház, 2018) of which an English translation is being planned. The fate of the insignia was reconstructed in great detail and with many new insights in the articles by various authors in *A Szent Korona hazatér: A magyar korona tizenegy küldöldi útja (1205–1978)* [The Homecoming of the Holy Crown: The Hungarian Crown's Eleven Trips Abroad (1205–1978)], edited by Géza Pálffy (Budapest: MTA BTK TTI, 2018), and in a new documentary by the Holy Crown of Hungary Research Group, *On the Trail of the Holy Crown and Coronation Insignia of Hungary: International Publication in 8 Languages. DVD-ROM*, written by Krisztián Bárány, with expert historian Géza Pálffy (Budapest: MTA BTK TTI–Filmever Stúdió, 2018). Besides the older literature and our own studies, the following owes much to these three publications.

Budapest, Spring 2020

János M. Bak – Géza Pálffy