

János Bak, ed., *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, University of California Press: Berkeley 1990.

During the past decades a growing number of historians, influenced by anthropology and ethnology, has become interested in the study of rituals and other symbolic acts and expressions. However, only a few scholars have applied these new methods and insights to the study of rulership and elites. This collection of fifteen papers by historians, as well as specialists in art and literature, helps to fill this gap by suggesting some new ways for analyzing power, hierarchy, and kingship.

Although the volume purports to examine the meaning of coronation ceremonies from the ninth to the seventeenth century, and the editor insists that it covers „most of the geographical regions of Europe“ (p. 1) the scope is in fact much narrower. The period from the twelfth to the fourteenth century receives most attention. Moreover, the book ignores half of Europe as none of the papers deals with coronation rites in Germany, Austria, Spain, or Russia. Most focus on France and England. The editor must be commended, nevertheless, for including studies on much neglected areas, such as Scandinavia, Poland, and Sicily, for the wide range of approaches, and for the sensitive treatment of different types of sources.

Particularly refreshing is the fact that most of the essayists recognize the connection between ritual and

power. They stress how coronation rites serve to legitimize and enhance royal authority and to secure peaceful succession and the unity of the realm. They also demonstrate how some coronation ceremonies reflect power sharing among king, church, and nobles. Evocative in this respect is Janet L. Nelson's evaluation of Hincmar of Reims' perception of kingship. Challenging traditional notions about the omnipotent authority of the church as kingmaker, she points to the importance the archbishop of Reims attached to the legitimizing function of the *primores* in consecration rites. Hincmar's views, she believes, were guided less by hierocratic interests than by concerns for securing the unity of the Frankish realm, a concern that frequently led him to distort political realities.

A number of papers broaden our conception of the field. They demonstrate how other political symbols related to coronation ceremonies and how this aided in legitimizing and strengthening royal power. Ralph E. Giesey considers a range of French royal rituals from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, connecting ceremonial entries of the new king into Paris. The inaugural *lit de justice*, and the old king's funerals to the coronation itself. Lawrence M. Bryant's impressive study focuses on the meaning people attached to entries of medieval rulers into Paris after their coronation in Reims. Supplementing textual analysis with pictorial evidence, Bryant pays careful attention to ceremonial in-

vention and concludes that, as French kings began to free themselves from juridical restraints of intermediary powers during the early modern period, civic pageantry became central to entry ceremonies. No longer stressing the reciprocal relations between king and city, they called attention to the ruler's „messianic – eschatological“ mission.

Bryant's study is one of a series of papers in this volume that suggests new modes of inquiry for coronation studies. Reading the coronation *ordo* of 1250 as a rite de passage, Jaques LeGoff examines the places occupied by and movements of the participants in the various stages of the ceremony to illustrate that the coronation rite served to demonstrate the balance of power achieved between king and church in Saint Louis' France. This theme is reinforced by Jean-Claude Bonne who produces an original interpretation of the same *ordo* by reading the pictorial evidence as a second narrative, thereby illuminating how the handling of colour „musicalizes“ images and action. Aleksander Giezstor imaginatively examines the importance of gestures in the pictorial evidence of Polish coronation ceremonies from the late thirteenth to the seventeenth century. The author emphasizes that the rituals, designed to preserve the social order, enacted a symbolic social drama through which people expressed collective experiences.

Anne D. Hedeman, an art historian, offers yet another approach to coronation studies by examining what hap-

ned when illustrations of Charles V's *Coronation Book* were copied to other texts. She elucidates that such copies, and the changes introduced to them, can be understood only by considering the context and function of the new text they served. While the copies in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* are not accurate presentations of history and do not enrich our knowledge of coronation ceremonies, they express a concern for a smooth transition of power upon Charles V's death. Shifting the focus from royal coronations to papal Avignon, Bernhard Schimmelpfennig discusses the importance of location and architecture for understanding the significance of and changes in papal ceremonial. Separated from their urban Roman environment, coronations at Avignon emphasized the secular, monarchical role of the papacy rather than the universal position of the pope as successor of Saint Peter. They also reflect the popes' alienation from church and people, a problem transmitted to their Renaissance successors.

Another group of papers concern themselves with the traditional but important task of dating texts and tracing the origin of royal inauguration rituals. Reinhard Elze attempts a precise dating of the coronation *ordo* of Roger II of Sicily and provides an edited version of it, while Andrew Hughes, a musicologist, shows how musical scores in the fourth recension of the English coronation *ordo* can assist in the dating and grouping of sources. Although no medieval coronation *ordines* exist for the Scandina-

vian countries, Erich Hoffmann reconstitutes coronation rituals and the origin of changes introduced to them between the twelfth and the sixteenth century from scattered pieces of evidence. Elisabeth Vestergaard's brief essay on Viking inaugurations clarifies, however, that the absence of records for the Viking period leaves much open to conjecture and debate.

The two final papers illuminate some central problems of determining change and continuity in English coronation ritual. Richard C. McCoy explores the changes and compromises necessitated by the Reformation in Elizabeth I's coronation, a difficult task considering the conflicting reports of the event by contemporary observers. The comprehensive survey on the historiography of medieval and early modern English coronations by David J. Sturdy focuses on the ideological implications of why some historians have stressed the continuity between rituals, whereas others have underlined the departure from tradition. This concluding paper complements the editor's excellent introduction to the book which surveys the historiography of coronation studies in general and proposes new ways to interpret text and images.

A few papers are too encyclopaedic to be enjoyable reading, but only one (Andrew Hughes's in musicology) will be difficult for non-experts (in musicology). Overall, this is a well-edited and stimulating volume of essays that will be valuable for students and

specialists of medieval studies and early modern history.

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