

AMBIGUITIES OF RITUAL: DYNASTIC LOYALTY,
TERRITORIAL PATRIOTISM AND NATIONALISM IN
THE LAST THREE ROYAL CORONATIONS IN BOHEMIA,
1791–1836*

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Shortly after midday on Tuesday, 6 September 1791, while the guns from the Prague city walls roared, the church bells tolled, and the red-and-white banner on the tower of St. Vitus's Cathedral waved, the assembled crowds of townsfolk and country visitors joined the Bohemian lords and knights, the representatives of the burghers, and the foreign dignitaries in shouts of „Vivat!“ in honor of the newly-crowned King of Bohemia, Leopold II. Not quite one year later the scene was re-enacted in honor of his son Francis, and yet once again in 1836 for Francis' son Ferdinand. According to a ritual based on early French models and brought to Bohemia by Charles IV in the fourteenth century, these three Habsburg rulers formally assumed the dignity and were adorned with the symbols of the Kingdom of Bohemia. The assembled Estates (including delegations from the Estates of Moravia and Silesia) paid homage to their liege lord, a female member of the imperial family was invested as abbess of the Theresian Institute for Noblewomen at the Prague castle, and the royal spouse was crowned Queen of Bohemia. The whole set of ceremonies was accompanied by a series of official and unofficial celebrations of all kinds, ranging from festive balls to opera and theatrical performances to street entertainments and balloon flights.

The coronation festivities clearly provided a good excuse to have a party. But what other functions did they fulfill? What sense did it make to contemporaries that this ancient – and expensive – performance should be staged anew? Did it not breathe a medieval atmosphere when monarch, subjects, and church stood in a very different relationship to each other than in the statecraft of the waning Enlightenment or even under the Restoration? Were not such rituals on the way to becoming (in the words of an English nobleman and Ferdinand's contemporary) „fit only for barbarous, or semi-barbarous ages; for periods when crowns were won and lost by unruly violence and ferocious contests“?¹ Had not Joseph II demonstrated, as would Francis

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¹ Earl Fitzwilliam, in the House of Lords during debates in 1838 over plans for Queen Victoria's coronation, cited in Sturdy, David J.: „Continuity' versus 'Change'. Historians

Joseph after him, that it was not *necessary* to be crowned King of Bohemia in order to rule over it? Finally, why did contemporary Czech „awakeners“ consider the coronations so significant to the Czech nation?

In recent years the study of ritual, politics and power has enjoyed something of a renaissance among historians and scholars in other disciplines. In the light of their conclusions, the royal coronations in Bohemia cannot be dismissed easily as mere anachronisms. They served readily-identifiable political goals: Leopold used the Bohemian coronation as part of his conciliation of the noble-led opposition to Joseph II's most radical reforms; Francis aimed to cement the stability of the political order under the shadow of war with Revolutionary France; and Ferdinand's advisers sought to solidify the regime of a monarch whose physical and mental capability to rule was doubtful in the extreme. In these respects the Bohemian coronations functioned in ways Clifford Geertz has discussed, as a set of symbolic forms to invest the king with the sacredness of power and to demonstrate that the governing elite was in fact governing.

[R]oyal progresses (of which, where it exists, coronation is but the first) locate the society's center and affirm its connection with transcendent things by stamping a territory with ritual signs of dominance. When kings journey around the countryside, making appearances, attending fêtes, conferring honors or defying rivals, they mark it, like some wolf or tiger spreading his scent through his territory, as almost physically part of them.²

Of course the monarch is only one player in the drama of the coronation, and political ritual „is not only used to communicate that a person is to be exalted over others; it is also used to calibrate degrees of power within an organization.“³ Thus, when Prince August Lobkowitz demanded precedence for his equipage among the imperial princes during the ceremonial parade for Leopold's entry into Prague, or when Prince Joseph Schwarzenberg asserted a claim to his rightful position in Francis's coronation, they were reflecting the fact that the individual roles assigned to other actors in this drama were significant.⁴ Their venerable father in the church, Prince Anton Peter Příchofský, Archbishop of Prague, was no less jealous of his

and English Coronations of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods. In: *Coronations. Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*. Ed. János M. Bak. Berkeley 1990, 243–244.

² Geertz, Clifford: *Centers, Kings and Charisma. Reflections on the Symbolics of Power*. In: *Rites of Power. Symbolism and Politics since the Middle Ages*. Ed. Sean Wilentz. Philadelphia 1985, 15–16.

³ Kertzer, David I.: *Ritual Politics and Power*. New Haven-London 1988, 30.

⁴ See Petráň, Josef: *Kalendář. Velký stavovský ples v Nosticově Národním divadle v Praze dne 12. září 1791* [Calendar. The great estates ball in the Nostitz National Theater in Prague, 12 September 1791]. Praha 1988, 172–173. – Prince Lobkowitz was somehow prevailed upon to accept the eighth place, behind the princes Clary, Paar, Colloredo, Kinský, Auersperg, Taxis, and the Prince-Archbishop of Olomouc. See the manuscript order of the entry parade in: Státní ústřední archiv. Praha (hereafter SÚA. Praha). Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269, dated 31 August 1791. – Schwarzenberg's plenipotentiary in Prague, Franz von Hasslinger, wrote to the Highest Burggrave Count Rottenhan on 22 July 1792 with his noble employer's claims. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 304, sign. 19e, Karton 270.

position. Twice during Leopold's coronation, when he lost his place due to his advanced age and failing memory and one of the other clerics stepped forward to assist him, he so loudly asserted that he would do it himself that the whole church heard and the king was hard pressed to keep a straight face.⁵ The nobility's role in the ritual of the coronations was not limited to questions of individual place alone. The noble Estates to which these princes belonged also played a key part as a collective body, in particular during the ceremonial oath of fealty.

The noble estate had its competitors for a place in the ritual. The Prague town magistrates claimed their rightful place in the performance, too, just as tenaciously as their delegates had argued the previous year for the towns in the debates at the Bohemian Diet over the *desideria* to be presented to the new emperor.⁶ The towns of Prague got permission to participate in the entry of the Crown of St. Václav and in Leopold's festive entry, in which the magistrates, a burghers' corps of infantry, cavalry and artillery, the university and schools, and all the guilds of the four Prague towns took part. The Gubernium also insisted that „considering the [religious] toleration existing in the Kingdom of Bohemia“ it would not be permissible to deny the Jews participation in what was allowed others, so they too should have a role – even though limited – in the ceremonial entry into Prague.⁷ Not quite a year later, Francis decided not to permit a similar burghers' parade, largely to avoid unnecessary expense. He eventually approved a scaled-down version, not least because (as the Gubernium argued) the burghers knew that their counterparts in Buda had been allowed one, and would consider it a calculated slight if they were not.⁸ Ferdinand's entry similarly involved the Prague magistrates, the guilds, the schools, and the Jewish community, following the model of Francis's coronation.⁹

The *dramatis personae* would not be complete without mention of one other important player, the people. For what would any performance, especially this type

⁵ This episode is recorded in full by František Jan Vavák, village justice [vesnický rychtář] of Milčice on the Poděbrady estate and author of extensive memoirs, who attended the festivities in Prague: *Paměti Františka J. Vaváka, souseda a rychtáře milčického z let 1770–1816* [The memoirs of František J. Vavák, yeoman and justice of Milčice, 1770–1816]. Ed. Jindřich Skopec. Vol. 3/1. Praha 1915, 30–32. See also Petr áň: *Kalendář* 257–58.

⁶ See Kerner, Robert Joseph: *Bohemia in the Eighteenth Century. A Study in Political, Economic and Social History with Special Reference to the Reign of Leopold II, 1790–1792*. New York 1932, 101–112, especially 106.

⁷ Correspondence between the vice-mayor of Prague and Vienna, 8 August 1791, and between the mayor and the gubernium, 12 August and 16 August 1791. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269. – The Jews were, however, forbidden to appear in anything resembling a uniform, but were to wear only „decent clothing“, and they were not to make any speeches or present formal good wishes.

⁸ See United Court Chancellor Kollowrat's original refusal, dated 13 July 1792, and the Gubernium's correspondence with Count Starhemberg, Master of the Court [Obersthofmeister] in Vienna, in charge of preparations for the coronation, dated 21 July 1792. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 304, sign. 19e, Karton 270.

⁹ United Court Chancellor Count Mittrowsky to Highest Burgrave Count Karl Chotek, 11 January 1836, regarding coronation preparations. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1836–1840, i. č. 2020, sig. 18/9b, Karton 1853.

of political ritual, be without an audience? The people, lining the route of the entry parade, packing the squares and streets on the day of the coronation, gawking at the entertainments, illuminations and decorations, were not merely onlookers but participants in the entire event.¹⁰ Nevertheless, every actor has to have its own place, and (as the Gubernium noted in its printed announcement of interior viewing arrangements in St. Vitus' Cathedral in 1791):

However much one would like to be able to give all classes of citizens a view of the festive activities on such a joyous day for the entire Bohemian nation as the day of the coronation of His Majesty the Emperor as King of Bohemia, [...] because of the narrow space in the cathedral the lower classes of the people will not be admitted at all.¹¹

They would have to be content with shouting „Vivat“ from the squares and streets, and letting the deputies of the royal towns (standing behind the knights, who stood behind the lords) witness the actual coronation on their behalf.¹²

The „lower classes of the people“ fortunately had at least partially-accessible alternative sources of information about the coronation festivities. Detailed descriptions of the ceremonial were published in both Prague and Vienna, while the German and Czech newspapers in the Bohemian capital devoted practically single-minded coverage to the course of the celebrations in all three cases.¹³ Though basic literacy, the key to unlocking these sources, was by no means universal, it was increasing. The school reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II had dramatically increased the number of schools – most of them basic elementary („trivial“) schools in the country-

¹⁰ As Kertzer: *Ritual Politics* 14, points out, „People derive a great deal of satisfaction from their participation in ritual.“ See also Petrů: *Kalendář* 258–59.

¹¹ Printed announcement of disposition of church during coronation, dated 4 September 1791. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269.

¹² In all three coronations great attention was given to planning the location of the various participants, as the sketches of the ceremonies preserved in the archives testify. See for example *Böhmische Krönungsfeier Sr. Majestät Leopold II. Römischen Kaisers, und Marie Louise, Römischen Kaiserin*. Wien 1791, 28–29; and the lithographed copies of the ceremony used in Ferdinand's coronation. In: *Archiv národního muzea* (hereafter ANM). Praha. Staré sbírky, Series D, Karton 34, 1832–1836.

¹³ Examples include, besides the *Böhmische Krönungsfeier Sr. Majestät Leopold II.* (see previous note), *Geschichte des Krönungsceremoniels der Könige und Königinnen in Böhmen von der ältesten Epoche bis auf unsere Zeit*. Prague 1791, *Tagebuch der böhmischen Königskrönung*. Prag 1791, a large-format illustrated commemorative work, Debrois, Johann: *Urkunde über die vollzogene Krönung seiner Majestät des Königs von Böhmen Leopold des Zweiten und Ihrer Majestät der Gemahlin des Königs Maria Louise, von den Ständen Böhmens zum Immerwährenden Andenken im Druck herausgegeben*. Prag 1806; and *Legis-Glückselig, Gustav Thormund: Aktenmässige Darstellung des königl. böhmischen Erbhuldigungs-, Belehungs- und Krönungs-Ceremoniels bei Gelegenheit der Krönungsfeier Ihr. All. Maj. Ferdinand und Maria Anna bearbeitet*. Prag 1836. – „Václav Matěj Kramérius's Krameriusovy c. k. vlastenské noviny“ [„Kramérius's Imperial and Royal Homeland News“] provided detailed coverage of the first two coronations in Czech, while the semi-official „*Prager Zeitung*“ and its Czech-language counterpart, „*Pražské noviny*“ [Prague news], joined the German-language „*Bohemia*“ in covering Ferdinand's coronation, which also drew the attention of the „*Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*“ and the „*Frankfurter Ober-Postamts Zeitung*“.

side – and legislation requiring school attendance for all children between the ages of six and twelve had been in effect since 1774. In addition, the reach of printed sources was often farther than circulation figures or print runs would suggest, since newspapers and calendars as well as occasional prints would be placed in the local public house, or read by the local priest or schoolteacher to groups of illiterate listeners.¹⁴ These were also the fora in which the relatively small but enthusiastic group of patriotic intellectuals (much more numerous in the 1830s than during the 1790s) known as „awakeners“ celebrated the coronations as festivals for the Czech nation. Václav Matěj Kramerius expressed these thoughts for the readers of his „Vlastenské noviny“ (Patriotic News) in 1791:

This day, the sixth of September, was thus that glorious day on which the Czech Nation beheld its king, crowned in greatest glory. Let none assert that it is a useless ceremony when a nation crowns its king and a king has himself crowned by his nation; rather it is a holy proceeding, which in truth inspires the King to be merciful, and the people to be loyal subjects.¹⁵

In occasional verses, enthusiastic descriptions of the events (in which the possessive pronoun – „our“ crown, „our“ king, „our“ Czech Estates – occurred repeatedly), and painstaking attention to anything that could be construed as support for the Czech language, they insisted that the coronations were national celebrations that should be preserved in memory for generations.

In this phase of the Czech national renaissance (národní obrození), the exact meanings attached to the word „nation“ could still be ambiguous. In their own eyes the Bohemian Estates, especially the nobility, represented the „nation“, at least its politically active part, without regard for language or ethnicity. Certainly the Estates had cheerfully appropriated the language of eighteenth century political thought in their complaints to Leopold at the time of his accession. They claimed to be representatives of the people and the appropriate partner for a new social contract between ruler and nation.¹⁶ In a legal, constitutional sense they were still the bearers of Bohemia's

¹⁴ On the spread of schooling see for example Přehled dějin Československa [Survey of Czechoslovak history]. Eds. Jaroslav Purš and Miroslav Kropilák. Vol. 1/2 (1526–1848). Praha 1982, 446–448; and Počátky Českého národního obrození. Společnost a kultura v 70. až 90. let 18. století [The beginnings of the Czech national renaissance. Society and culture from the 1770s to the 1790s]. Eds. Josef Petráň et al. Praha 1990, 131–137. – The authorities certainly respected the printed source; see Volf, Josef: Vyšetřování vlivu novinařských zpráv o francouzské revoluce na selský stav v Čechách v roku 1789 [Investigation of the influence of newspaper reports of the French Revolution on the peasantry in Bohemia in 1789]. Osvěta 43 (1913) 565–83.

¹⁵ Krameriusovy císařské král. Vlastenské noviny No. 37 at 10 September 1791, 294. The passage is repeated word for word in Rulík, Jan: Kalendář historický, obsahující krátké a summovní poznamenání všechněch proměn, příběh, válek, nejvyšší nařízení, a t. d. jak v slavném národu a království Českém, tak i na díle v jiných národech a zemích, zběhlých [Historical calendar, containing brief and concise notations of all changes, events, wars, highest ordinances and so forth occurring both in the glorious Czech nation and kingdom, and in part in other nations and lands]. Vol. 1. Praha 1797, 161–162.

¹⁶ See the copy of the Estates' formal address to Leopold from 1791. ANM. Praha. Staré sbírky, Series D, Karton 24, 1790–1792. The terms „constitution“, „nation“, and „social contract“ occur frequently in it. See also Drábek, Anna M.: Die Desiderien der böhmischen Stände von 1791. Überlegungen zu ihrem ideellen Gehalt. In: Die böhmischen Länder zwi-

identity as a separate kingdom, and in the coronations they elevated any aspect of the ceremonies that expressed this separate identity. In this way their determined defense of their narrow political and social interests against Joseph II's policies, and the stirrings of a desire to reassert their position in the Vormärz, could intersect with the concerns and interests of the „awakeners“. This intersection of interests was made all the more evident by the role of the Czech language. Central to the intellectual patriots' concerns, the Czech language was also one tangible symbol in the coronation ritual that the Kingdom of Bohemia had a separate historical tradition and independence from the other Habsburg lands. Thus the nobility and the „awakeners“ both placed special emphasis on the same elements of the ritual.

That the monarch, nobility, burghers and people could agree among themselves on the importance of the ritual – even the importance of specific features of the ritual – did not mean that all the actors involved agreed upon the precise meaning of what they were doing. One feature of political ritual, as David Kertzer has argued, is that it can still serve an important function without general agreement on what it means. The agreement on the *importance* of ritual, when there are ambiguities over its *meaning*, enables it to help build solidarity without demanding consensus.¹⁷ All actors involved can feel that what they are doing is important and meaningful, even while pursuing different goals through the rituals they perform and celebrate. A closer look at the rituals and symbols involved in the Bohemian coronations will help illustrate this point.

One symbol above all others represented the traditions of Bohemian statehood and independence: the royal crown itself. Transferred to Vienna after Maria Theresa's coronation in 1743 for safekeeping during the War of the Austrian Succession, the Crown of St. Václav reposed in the imperial vaults throughout Joseph II's reign, until with the accession of Leopold the Estates petitioned for its return. Leopold agreed in a decree of 26 August 1790, and just under a year later the crown and other coronation regalia were ceremonially transferred to the care of a deputation from the Bohemian Estates and taken back to Prague.¹⁸ On 9 August 1791 the crown arrived in the Bohemian capital and was displayed to the public. „Czechs, patriots!“ apostrophized Kramerius in his newspaper, „may this day be to your eternal memory, and may you celebrate it in your hearts, rejoicing that your glorious and precious crown will once more remain among you, in your Czech Kingdom.“¹⁹ Later numbers included descriptions Kramerius received from correspondents in towns along the route the crown followed (Vienna-Znojmo-Jihlava-Čáslav-Kolín-

schen Ost und West. Festschrift für Karl Bosl zum 75. Geburtstag. Ed. Ferdinand Seibt. München 1983, 132–142.

¹⁷ Kertzer: *Ritual Politics* 67–68.

¹⁸ „Ceremoniel, Wegen Überbringung der königl. böhmisch. Krone von hier nach Prag,“ and letter from Prague vice-mayor to United Court Chancellery in Vienna, 8 August 1791. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269. – After the coronation the insignia remained in Prague, see the „Urkunde über die ständische Übernahme der Reichsinsignien nach vorgenommener Krönung Ihrer Königlichen Majestäten [...]“. Ibidem.

¹⁹ Krameriusovy Vlastenské noviny No. 33 at 13 August 1791.

Český Brod-Prague), describing local celebrations in its honor. Everywhere it was welcomed „with drums and trumpets,” and by the common people „with simple sincerity, for even the peasant feels great joy that now his highest jewel has been returned to him.”²⁰ This festive return of the Crown of St. Václav to Prague, where it remained, was recalled in the pages of „Bohemia” at the time of Ferdinand’s coronation, and the regalia themselves were described in detail.²¹

Leopold’s ceremonial entry into Prague on 31 August 1791 received no less attention. Again this ceremony included several moments emphasizing the separate traditions of the Bohemian Kingdom, especially through the use of Czech. When the king arrived at the Prague castle, he was greeted by the Highest Burggrave, Count Heinrich Rottenhan, and the assembled estates, secular and spiritual. Rottenhan welcomed the monarch with a speech in Czech (carefully prepared by Josef Dobrovský, the leading expert on the Czech language at the time) in which he formally tendered the resignation of the Gubernium.²² For the duration of the coronation festivities, with the king in residence in Prague, the government of Bohemia belonged to the monarch’s Bohemian Court Chancery. This symbolic return to independence lasted for eleven days during Leopold’s coronation in 1791, whereas Francis, a year later and ever-mindful of the costs, cut the duration of this change of government down to one day.²³ Ferdinand’s coronation in 1836 dispensed with it altogether, but retained the Czech-language greeting after the royal entry, given by the Highest Burggrave, Count Karl Chotek.²⁴

The use of Czech in the speech of welcome clearly had a ritual character, especially in Leopold’s case. Not only was Czech not Rottenhan’s mother tongue, but His Majesty could not understand a word of it, in contrast to the greetings in German from the Prague city fathers, and the Latin speeches from the rector of the Charles-Ferdinand University and the archbishop. The highest burggrave’s speech was not, however, intended to communicate anything to the king that he did not already know in advance. Instead, like the syllables in a magical incantation, it was intended to assert the unchanging nature of the order of things, or, more accurately, to change them back to what it was asserted they had once been. František Jan Vavák, a well-to-do peasant and village justice from the Poděbrady estate, simply noted in his

²⁰ *Ibidem* 35 at 27 August 1791, 281; see also *Ibidem* 34 at 20 August 1791. Vavák records the arrival of the crown and something of the celebrations along its way, see Paměti F. J. Vaváka III/1, 21; so does Rulík: *Kalendář historický* I, 137–138, entry for 9 July 1791.

²¹ Müller, Anton: *Erinnerungen an die Krönung der Könige Böhmens*. Bohemia, ein Unterhaltungsblatt No. 83 at 10 July 1836 and No. 84 at 12 July 1836.

²² Dobrovský produced the Czech versions of all the formal speeches used during Leopold’s coronation, see Debrois: *Urkunde über die vollzogene Krönung* 44.

²³ *Krameriusovy vlastenské noviny* No. 37 at 10 September 1791, 282–292. – Rulík: *Kalendář historický* I, 139–150, entry for 31 August 1791. – For Francis’s cost-cutting decision, see „Protokoll über die königl. böhm. Krönung Sr. römisch kais. könig. apostol. Majestät Franz II.“. ANM. Prague. Staré sbírky, Series D, Karton 25, 1792–93. See also Petráň: *Kalendář* 59–61.

²⁴ United Court Chancellor Mittrowsky to Highest Burggrave Chotek, 11 January 1836; and *Prager Zeitung* No. 138 at 2 September 1836. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1836–1840, i. č. 2020, sig. 18/9b, Karton 1853.

family chronicle that the burgrave's speech was in Czech because „it must always be so.“²⁵ The formal entry ended in the cathedral of the Prague castle, with the king kissing the golden reliquary cross presented to the canons by Charles IV, the singing of the „Te Deum“, and more cannonades and cheers.

The next major event of the coronation festivities, possibly even more significant than the coronation itself, was the formal session of the Bohemian Diet at which the assembled Estates including delegates from Moravia and Silesia recognized the king as their lord and swore an oath of fealty to him. The king then presented the Diet with his *postulata*, or proposals for legislation (usually taxation) for the Diet's obligatory consent. Even more than the royal entry into Prague, the oath-taking ceremony was characterized by the ritual use of the Czech language. Following a procession from the royal chambers to the oratorium in St. Vitus' cathedral, and the singing of „Veni, sancte spiritus“ and the mass, the king took his place in the Gothic Vladislav Hall in the castle, which had been decorated with red and white hangings and floor coverings. The oath-taking ceremony began with a brief address in Czech by the Master of the Court to the assembled prelates, lords, knights and delegates of Prague and the other royal towns, to which the Highest Burgrave replied in the same language. Then, the Highest Court Chancellor as the head of the royal government also spoke in Czech, announcing that the king was prepared „graciously to receive the promise of hereditary fealty from his true and obedient Estates of the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Moravia, and the Duchy of Silesia.“ The royal postulates were also delivered to the Highest Burgrave, who replied with yet another speech in Czech.

During Leopold's coronation, Rottenhan's speech on this occasion used the fashionable language of the social contract, referring to „the mutual contract which the lord of the land and his people renew on this glorious day of homage.“ This mutual contract, he said, was „most precious above all to the faithful Czech people, rightfully represented by the most faithful land estates.“²⁶ By the time of Ferdinand's coronation, Chotek's speech made no reference to a social contract, merely looking forward to the continued blossoming of the lands of the Czech Crown under the scepter of the House of Austria, and promising that the Estates would sacrifice their lives and fortunes for their monarch.²⁷ In any case, when the oath itself was read out, first in Czech and then in German, there were no modish references to newfangled ideas of social contract: the Estates swore to render to the king and his heirs everything that was fitting for „obedient, faithful subjects of their hereditary lord.“²⁸ Though the members of the four estates could swear in either of the languages of the land, the contemporary accounts went out of their way to record that „the greater

²⁵ Paměti F. J. Vaváka III/1, 29. See also Petráň: Kalendář 61–62.

²⁶ Debrois: Urkunde über die vollzogene Krönung 62–64. – Krameriusovy vlastenské noviny No. 36 at 3 September 1791, 286. – Rulík: Kalendář historický I, 151–156; Böhmisches Krönungsfeier Sr. Majestät Leopold II., 31–33. – Petráň: Kalendář 63–64.

²⁷ Prager Zeitung No. 139 at 4 September 1836.

²⁸ Böhmisches Krönungsfeier Sr. Majestät Leopold II., 33–34.

part of the Estates swore the oath in the Czech language.²⁹ Again, this ceremony ended with ringing cheers from the onlookers and participants in the hall and the throngs gathered outside on the castle squares.

The coronation itself usually took place a few days after the oath-taking ceremony. In its basic outline it resembled the coronations of other European monarchs in the Western, Latin tradition.³⁰ The king entered the church, where he was presented to the Archbishop of Prague by the Bishop of České Budějovice as worthy of being elevated to the royal dignity. A holy mass followed, and during the epistle the special rites of anointing and coronation took place. The king affirmed that he would uphold the Catholic religion and defend the kingdom, after which he knelt on the highest step of the altar, where he swore the coronation oath in Latin read by the Archbishop from the pontifical order of ceremony, and the oath to the Estates in German read by the Highest Burggrave, as it was recorded in the „Verneuerte Landesordnung“ of 1627. Then he prostrated himself, the coronation robes were opened at the back and right arm and the king was anointed with holy oil between his shoulders and on his right arm. After drying off the oil and refastening the robes behind the main altar, the king returned and knelt again on the upper step, where the Archbishop of Prague and the appropriate land officers placed the crown and other regalia on his head and in his hands. Then the Burggrave summoned the estates to recognize their crowned king (in Czech), and they came forward to touch the scepter. During the Credo the king elevated candidates to the knightly Order of St. Václav by dubbing them with St. Václav's sword. At the offering the king presented two loaves of bread, one gilded and the other silvered, a gold and a silver cask of wine, and thirty specially-minted gold ducats. Ferdinand during communion received the host from the consecrator and unconsecrated wine from a separate chalice; Leopold and Francis apparently did not come even this close to taking communion in both kinds.³¹ The king returned to his throne and the service ended with a special

²⁹ Krameriusovy vlastenské noviny No. 37 at 10 September 1791. See also Paměti F. J. Vaváka III/1, 29; and for Ferdinand's coronation: Bohemia, ein Unterhaltungsblatt No. 109 at 9 September 1836. – Count Eugene Černín, a participant in Ferdinand's coronation, specifically mentions Fürstenberg and Windischgrätz among the „very few“ who repeated the oath in its German version. Státní okresní archiv (hereafter SOA) Třeboň. Pracoviště Jindřichův Hradec. Fond Rodinný archiv Černín, sign. VIII F 2, entry for 3 September 1836. – In an intriguing example of middle-class consciousness, Rulík in his account of Leopold's ceremony of swearing fealty carefully records the names of all the delegates of Prague and the 34 other royal towns. See Rulík: Kalendář historický I, 153–156.

³⁰ See Kertzer: *Ritual Politics* 24. See also Giesey, Ralph E.: *Models of Rulership in French Royal Ceremonial*. In: *Rites of Power* 43–46; and Sturdy: „Continuity“ versus „Change“ 234–238.

³¹ The accounts in the Prager Zeitung No. 142 at 9 September 1836, and by Wilhelm Adolf Gerle (1783–1846), correspondent in Prague of the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung No. 260 at 16 September 1836, 1728–1729, assert that Ferdinand received communion in both kinds, but this was erroneous. References to communion in both kinds were hardly likely to have been intended to echo the Hussite past, but rather by having the monarch share in communion almost as the clergy alone received it to emphasize the sacral nature of kingship. See Muk, Jan: Poslední korunovace Českého krále roku 1836 [The last coronation of a Czech king in 1836]. Praha 1936, 60. – My grateful thanks to Jiří Kořalka for sharing

coronation benediction. Then, accompanied by cheers and wishes for a long reign, he crossed the courtyard from the cathedral to the Vladislav Hall, the crown on his head and the orb and scepter in his hands. A state dinner in the Vladislav Hall followed.³²

The Czech language played a less prominent role in the coronation ceremony itself than it had in the oath of hereditary fealty, but there were many other elements of the ceremony besides the language that emphasized the separate status of the Kingdom of Bohemia. In this ceremony as in the other rituals during the coronation, specific roles were played by traditional officers of the Bohemian Crown lands and hereditary office holders among the nobility. Leopold's Court Chancery was concerned to make sure that in fact all the positions of land officers had been filled and that those who held hereditary office knew their duties, a concern echoed again at the time of Ferdinand's coronation. Badges or emblems of office had to be located, or created where they did not exist, nor could the task of providing the loaves of bread and the wine casks be overlooked.³³

Another troublesome aspect of the ceremony was the creation of new knights of the Order of St. Václav. Nobody knew for certain exactly what these knights were, nor what ceremonies or insignia were appropriate for them. Nevertheless, they had been created at previous coronations, so „according to ancient custom“ the king would create them at the present one.³⁴ Diligent historical research found the earliest mention of this order at the coronation of Václav II in 1270, but the oldest documentary evidence was a *Maiestas* or royal letter of King Sigismund dating from 1421.

with me his copies of the „Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung“, and his identification of the correspondents according to the editor's copies for payment of honoraria, „Deutsches Literaturarchiv“ Marbach am Neckar, „Cotta-Archiv“.

³² The ceremonial used in the coronations may be found in SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269 for Leopold; SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 304, sign. 19c, Karton 270 for Francis; and SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1836–1840, i. č. 2020, sig. 18/9b, Karton 1853 for Ferdinand.

³³ Rescript to the Bohemian Gubernium, 20 April 1791. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269. – Mittrowsky to Chotek, 11 January 1836. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1836–1840, i. č. 2020, sig. 18/9b, Karton 1853. – At Leopold's coronation the lords' estate nearly had to have a new banner made for them, but at the last moment the old one was discovered, kept as a museum piece by one of their number. The knights had no trouble finding their banner, but they had to order a new decorative point for it. See Petrání: Kalendář 256.

³⁴ Rescript to the Bohemian Gubernium, 20 April 1791. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269. The Gubernium was asked not only to announce that the king would create new Knights of St. Václav, but to report what the characteristic properties of the order were, and how the ceremony had been observed in the past using the coronations of 1723 (Charles VI) and 1743 (Maria Theresa) as models. For the Knights of St. Václav at Ferdinand's coronation, see SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1836–1840, i. č. 2020, sig. 18/9u, Karton 1857. The folder contains all the correspondence regarding candidates from the lords' and knights' estates, generally rewarded for long military or state service, for supplying the armies during the Napoleonic wars, or for elevating their districts through industry and culture.

None of these references gave any idea about the origin or customs of the order, so imagination could fill in:

There is no doubt that our glorious ancestors in their pious devotion to St. Václav did this, and fighting courageously under his banner, established in his honor that the king and lord of the land, girded with the sword of St. Václav, would create Knights of St. Václav just like the Holy Roman Emperor at his imperial coronation creates knights with the sword of Charlemagne. It is also known that whenever the brave Czechs went into battle or took the field they carried before them a banner with the likeness of St. Václav on it, singing pious hymns before battle to commend themselves to his care.³⁵

Like this ostentatious commemoration of St. Václav, venerated since the early middle ages as the patron of the Bohemian kingdom, the use of Czech in the formula summoning the four estates to recognize their crowned king echoed with the traditions of Bohemia's history of independent existence. So too did the coronation oath to the estates, in which the king confirmed all the traditional privileges of the Bohemian Estates, or at least those remaining after 1627. The most significant remaining right of the Estates was the free election of a new king if the dynasty expired. The other privileges were more formal, including the right to agree to the king's requests for financial contributions. As one author writing at the time of Leopold's coronation dryly noted, „When one considers that a King of Bohemia rules this kingdom as a monarch, and thus can prescribe all sorts of laws for the realm if they do not contradict these privileges, one can easily recognize what rights the ruler possesses and wields in this kingdom.“³⁶ In spite of the limited nature of these rights, the fact that they were legally enumerated and that the monarch swore to uphold them in his coronation oath expressed again that Bohemia once had had a separate status and formally possessed it still.

Preserving the coronation ritual essentially unchanged after the lengthy interval between both Leopold's and Ferdinand's ceremonies loomed large in the thinking of the court in Vienna and the Gubernium in Prague. The scripts for the rituals used in each coronation were based on research by the Gubernium sent to Vienna for approval, using the earlier coronations of Charles VI (1723) and Maria Theresa (1743) as models. Even the preparations for the 1836 coronation were expected to make only such minor changes in the ritual „as might be demanded by changing contemporary conditions.“³⁷ One reason ritual is so politically powerful is that it can create a sense

³⁵ Rulík: *Kalendář historický* I, 159–160. There is a similar discussion in the „Tagebuch der böhmischen Königskrönung“ 52–54, retelling the story of the Battle of Chlumec in 1126. For the original chronicler's account of how St. Václav appeared to the Czech troops before their battle with the Saxons at Chlumec, see Pokračovatelé Kosmovi. Trans. Karel Hrdina, V. V. Tomek and Marie Bláhová. Praha 1974, 39–40. See also Petrání: *Kalendář* 258.

³⁶ *Böhmische Krönungsfeier Sr. Majestät Leopold II.*, 36–37.

³⁷ Letter from Mittrowsky to Chotek, 11 January 1836. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1836–1840, i. č. 2020, sign. 18/9b, Karton 1853. For Leopold's coronation, see the correspondence between the United Court Chancellery and the Gubernium, especially Kollowrat's letter of 22 April 1791 to Rottenhan. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 300, sign. 19a, Karton 269.

that the order around us is not of our own making, but rooted in the external world, and that it is lasting.³⁸ One way ritual heightens this sense of permanence and naturalness is by its own unchanging quality. Thus it was important not to alter any aspects of the Bohemian coronations unnecessarily, even when it gave rise to curious ironic contrasts between the reality of daily life and the reality implicit in the language of the ceremony. Leopold, after some consideration, decided to leave unchanged the phrases in the archbishop's coronation ritual that implied that the king was elevated to his office through the intervention of the church hierarchy, as well as the passages in the Latin coronation oath in which he promised to uphold the Catholic faith and preserve it from heresy. Leopold and his successors wielded state control over the church in essentials already, and since Joseph II's patent establishing toleration, the state legally recognized the „heretics“ the king was swearing to combat. Nevertheless, the sanction the Catholic church could give to the authority of the throne was mutually beneficial to both.³⁹ Leopold decided to leave the words unchanged, stressing continuity and the unchanging patterns the ritual was intended to emphasize – and the mutual benefit to crown and church of the legitimacy conferred by that ritual.

This sense of permanence and naturalness contributed to a related aspect of the ritual celebrations of coronation, namely that they did not depend in any significant way upon the individual qualities or opinions of the person being crowned. Between 1791 and 1836 the crowned kings of Bohemia included a convinced Enlightened monarch who personally supported the concept of a constitution, an arch-conservative whose education under tutors hand-picked by Joseph II had not given him any of Joseph's interest in reforms, and an unfortunate invalid who bore in his genes and body the traces of the Habsburg family's marriage habits. When the Estates swore fealty to Ferdinand, according to the diary of Count Eugene Černín, the king looked „quite pitiful“ in his marshal's uniform. At the coronation, Černín noted that Ferdinand repeated the oath completely unintelligibly, and that the archbishop did not place the crown correctly on his head so that it appeared too heavy for him.⁴⁰ None of that mattered: like a true sacrament, the rite of coronation was efficacious no matter what the condition of the individual involved.

Among the remaining ceremonies connected with the coronation, the installation of a female member of the royal family as abbess in the Theresian Institute for Noblewomen in the castle preceded the coronation of the queen. As head of this institution, which replaced the convent of St. George's in the castle that Joseph II had suppressed, she then presided at the queen's coronation. The queen's coronation ceremony was patterned on that of the king, and used the same Crown of St. Václav,

³⁸ See Kertzer: *Ritual Politics* 10, 85–86.

³⁹ See Petrůň: *Kalendář* 256–257. – Rulík's account of the coronation gives the full text of the Latin oath. Rulík: *Kalendář historický* I, 157.

⁴⁰ Černín, who held the office of Hereditary Cup-Bearer, also noted that the rehearsal for the coronation of the Queen went so badly that the entire ceremony had to be repeated, which made the rehearsal last until 2:00 p. m. SOA. Treboň. Pracoviště Jindřichův Hradec. Fond RA Černín, sign. VIII F 2, entries for 3, 6 and 7 September 1836.

but lacked the political aspects of the king's coronation. Ferdinand's coronation was to have had another special ceremony, the granting of the Prince-Bishopric of Olomouc as a feudal fief from the Bohemian King to the current incumbent, Ferdinand Maria Chotek, brother of the highest burgrave. In a tragedy popularly interpreted as a judgment on the burgrave for insisting on carrying out the coronation in spite of a cholera outbreak, the disease carried off the bishop a few days before the scheduled ceremony. This ceremonial enfeoffment, too, would have emphasized the former status and independence of the Bohemian crown.⁴¹

The coronations were also marked by many festivities, running the gamut from court balls in gala dress, to theatrical performances, to popular sideshows such as the balloon ascension by Monsieur Blanchard at Leopold's coronation. From among all the functions and occasions that marked the coronations, several emerge that seem to have intentions beyond the purely recreational. In one way or another certain festivities seem aimed at representing the kingdom, at reflecting a desired vision of its achievements, culture, and status. That aim lay behind the proposal Count Ferdinand Kinský presented to the Bohemian Estates in January, 1791. Kinský argued that the history of Bohemia itself proved that such public festivals as the royal coronation reflected not only political conditions, but the fundamental culture of the nation. Therefore, he urged his fellow-members of the Estates, „in the great festival, which the nation will celebrate at the coronation of its benevolent king, we should be Bohemians! – Bohemians as they were in the epoch of their glorious sixteenth century.“ Instead of celebrating only with „dances, plays, or ephemeral monuments of art and theater, as lasting as a summer night,“ the noble Estates should organize a knightly tournament in the fashion of their Renaissance forebears.⁴² When this creatively anachronistic proposal was sent up through the Gubernium to the United Court Chancery in Vienna, it came back with a tactful but definite refusal. Kollowrat, communicating Leopold's rejection of the idea of a tournament, urged the Estates to avoid „all entertainments that are dangerous, offensive or inappropriate to the taste of our times.“⁴³ In the end (in spite of Kinský's scornful comments) the Estates settled on sponsoring an opera (Mozart's „La clemenza di Tito“), a ball, and a fireworks display.⁴⁴ Theater, dance and fireworks remained common features of the succeeding coronations, too.

Other, less predictable festivities also marked the coronations. At Leopold's coronation one of the innovations was the first industrial exhibition ever held in Central

⁴¹ For the Queen's coronation ritual see the sources in note 32. The enfeoffment of the Archbishop of Olomouc was scheduled for 8 September 1836, but he died on 5 September. See Muk: Poslední korunovace 50–51; and Prager Zeitung No. 142 at 9 September 1836. Černín records current opinions that the death of his brother was a divine judgment on Karl Chotek for urging the holding of the coronation in spite of the cholera outbreak, but argues that these views unfairly blamed the burgrave. SOA. Třeboň. Pracoviště Jindřichův Hradec Fond RA Černín, sign. VIII F 2, entry for 6 September 1836.

⁴² Copy of Kinský's original speech to Estates. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 302, sign. 19c, Karton 270.

⁴³ Letter from Kollowrat to Rottenhan, 2 March 1791. Ibidem.

⁴⁴ Letter from the Estates to Rottenhan, 11 May 1791. Ibidem.

Europe, organized by the Gubernium. Examples of manufactures from all over Bohemia were gathered in the Clementinum, and Leopold inspected them with unfeigned interest. The Gubernium's intent was to „honor the Bohemian factories and workshops, and to encourage those who devote themselves to their development.”⁴⁵ A similar, though less impressive, exhibition was organized for Ferdinand's coronation, which the king enjoyed so much that he visited it a second time.⁴⁶ These exhibitions displayed the economic and commercial development of the kingdom of Bohemia, which since the loss of Silesia half a century earlier was the industrial center of gravity of the Habsburg realm.

Another similarity between Leopold's and Ferdinand's coronation was a royal visit to a session of the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences. These meetings provided a celebration of the cultural and scientific attainments of Bohemia, complementing the industrial exhibitions. Leopold listened to a variety of presentations for nearly three hours, among which the most noteworthy to the „awakeners“ was the speech by Josef Dobrovský, entitled „Über die Ergebenheit und Anhänglichkeit der Slawischen Völker an das Erzhaus Österreich.“ In it, Dobrovský presented a slightly differently-accented vision of the ties between monarch and people than that propagated by the Estates. Dobrovský stressed the essential support that the Slavic peoples of the monarchy gave to the ruling house by their numerical predominance and military prowess. In his original draft, Dobrovský followed this argument with the request that Leopold relax the centralizing and Germanizing features of Joseph II's administration in favor of the Czech language and culture, which was the main reason that the „awakeners“ took his comments so much to heart. Count Rottenhan, to whom the speech was submitted for prior approval, insisted that Dobrovský leave out this potentially sensitive passage when presenting his address orally to the monarch, but Count Joachim Sternberg subsidized its publication in full in both the German and Czech newspapers.⁴⁷ Dobrovský also presented the monarch with copies of all the occasional publications in Czech on the theme of his coronation.⁴⁸ Ferdinand was to attend a similar session at which František Palacký spoke about Czech painting. Due to the after-effects of a new bout of epileptic seizures on 13 September 1836 (after viewing the nocturnal illumination of Prague)

⁴⁵ Circular letter from Gubernium to all administrative districts and the Prague city government, 8 July 1791. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 303, sign. 19d, Karton 270.

⁴⁶ Bohemia No. 112 at 16 September 1836.

⁴⁷ The Czech translation was by Karel Hynek Thám. Dobrovský never forgot this bureaucratic interference. See his remarks to an unnamed correspondent in 1795, cited by V. A. Francev in his introduction to *Řeč Josefa Dobrovského proslovená dne 25. září v České učené společnosti* [Josef Dobrovský's speech before the Bohemian learned society on 25 September 1791]. Ed. V. A. Francev. Praha 1921, 20. See also Agnew, Hugh LeCaine: *Origins of the Czech National Renaissance*. Pittsburgh 1993, 59–60. The Czech version appeared in *Krameriusový vlastenské noviny* at 7 January 1792.

⁴⁸ See Paměti F. J. Vaváka III/1, 36. Vavák's own poem: *Vlastenecké vzbuzování k vděčnému očekávání Leopolda Druhého, Krále Pána našeho* [A patriotic exhortation to thankful expectation of Leopold II, our King and lord], was among them.

Ferdinand was unable to attend, and was represented instead by Archduke Francis Charles.⁴⁹

Besides these demonstrations of Bohemia's cultural, scientific, economic and industrial development, the coronation festivities included other events that sought to represent the kingdom in another way. Both Francis's and Ferdinand's coronations included a special „People's Celebration“ („Volksfest“) as part of the overall program, and although this element was lacking in Leopold's Prague coronation, the contemporary publicity referred to the entire series of gala events, the illuminations, and the decorations as a „Volksfest“. The concept of the „Volksfest“ had its predecessors in the entertainments of the late Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo (*Festwerk* or *Wirtschaft*, entertainments with popular motifs held at court or in noble residences), but the coronation examples differ in their emphasis on the public nature of the celebrations. Leopold's festivities in Prague did not contain any self-conscious evocation of popular culture to represent Bohemia, though some of the festival celebrations marking the arrival of the crown in towns along its route on its way from Prague to Vienna, or celebrations organized by local priests, schoolteachers or estate authorities on 6 September to mark the actual coronation day, did have some of these elements.⁵⁰ Also, when Leopold visited the Moravian capital of Brno in October, 1791, among the festivities on that occasion – which to the Moravian Estates and local patriots served as a sort of substitute for the coronation in Prague – was a spectacle organized on 10 October at which representatives of the Moravian peoples, who „without doubt differ from each other in language, customs and dress more than in any other land in Europe,“ appeared dressed in their national costumes and danced national dances to the accompaniment of national music.⁵¹

These elements were included in Francis's coronation in Prague, in a „Volksfest“ put on at the expense of the Estates in the king's honor „and particularly intended for our country folk.“⁵² This festival, held in the open air in Bubeneč park, com-

⁴⁹ Muk: Poslední korunovace 71–72. – Palacký had coincidentally just seen the first volume of his famous „Geschichte von Böhmen“ appear in print. Černín received his „impatiently awaited“ copy of volume one directly from the author, see SOA. Třeboň. Pracoviště Jindřichův Hradec. Fond RA Černín, sign. VIII F 2, entry for 13 September 1836.

⁵⁰ Paměti F. J. Vaváka III/1, 21. Krameriusovy vlastenské noviny No. 38 at 17 September 1791, 307. According to Kramerius, at one village in the České Budějovice sub-district, the villagers appeared „in festival costume, all the bachelors with flowers in their hats, and all the maidens with cleanly-braided hair.“ In Bechyně the local Jewish community marked the day of the coronation with special prayers in the synagogue.

⁵¹ Citing the „Brünner Zeitung“ for October, 1791. In: d'Elvert, Christian: Die Desiderien der Mährischen Stände vom Jahre 1790 und ihre Folgen. Brünn 1864, 195. Leopold had refused a request by the Moravian Estates that their formal oath of fealty be sworn in Moravia, a custom which had ended at the time of Leopold I. Instead (as we have seen) the Moravian and Silesian estates were represented in Prague by a deputation. See also Petrů: Kalendář 57–58.

⁵² Krameriusovy vlastenské noviny No. 33 at 18 August 1792. This announced intention seems to have made an impression: one keeper of a family chronicle in central Bohemia, F. Tadra of Hostín, noted that when Francis was crowned, „he organized for the simple country folk a festive celebration, such that no townsman or nobleman was admitted, only the country folk themselves [...].“ Cited in Robek, Antonín: Lidové zdroje národního

bined elements of the allegorical tableaux depicting harvest festivals and the bounty of the land with dancing and celebration as at a wedding day. Count Rottenhan's original idea was to invite peasants from the estates near Prague that belonged to the Burggrave's domains to a re-enactment of a market, but the Estates took over the idea and began to expand it. To add to the festive nature of the celebration, they decided that the Gubernium should order each of the 16 administrative circuits (Kreis, kraj) to select and send to Prague a young couple who would be married at the festival, along with assorted witnesses, relatives, and musicians. Prague would also contribute four couples, each of whom would be rewarded with a dowry of 300 gulden (500 for the Praguers).⁵³ Care was to be taken in selecting the participating peasants for a pleasing variety in traditional costume, and especially so that the peasants selected should be „in a position, through pleasant outward appearance, health, cheerfulness, and clean, decent clothing to represent the picture of a *happy, contented peasant* appropriate for this celebration.“⁵⁴ On the other hand, some officials expressed concern lest the appearance of the chosen peasants create a false impression of the wealth of the countryside and lead to an increase in taxation, to which the Gubernium soothingly replied that even the nobility were sparing no expense to make this occasion a glorious one, and no one would draw unwarranted conclusions about peasant income from their appearance.⁵⁵ The Gubernium also warned the district officials to take care that no undue pressure was used to get the peasants to agree to attend, so that they would not consider their participation „a kind of *Robot* [forced labor].“⁵⁶

The question of coercion arose again repeatedly with the brides and bridegrooms. The prize of 300 gulden apparently was too much for some people in the circuits, for when the secretary of the Gubernium asked the prospective couples to confirm that they actually desired to be joined in marriage, in several cases either the bride or groom said „no,“ and in one instance it appeared that the threat of coercion was indeed applied. The Gubernium insisted that the monetary gift belonged to the selected girl alone, whether she married or not.⁵⁷ Otherwise, the event was deemed a great success, congratulations to the peasants on their „very respectable behavior“ were sent via the circuit administrative officials, and Their Majesties were graciously pleased.⁵⁸ So too were the contemporary chroniclers and „awakeners“ such as

obrození [Popular sources of the national renaissance]. Praha 1974, 91 (Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philosophica et Historica, Monographia XLVIII).

⁵³ Circular letter from Gubernium to all officials, announcing the change in plans, 24 July 1792. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 305, sign. 19 f, Karton 271.

⁵⁴ Letter from circuit captain of Hradec Králové to Gubernium, 17 July 1792; and letter from circuit captain of Rakovník to Gubernium, 13 July 1792 (emphasis in original). Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Letter from circuit captain in Rakovník to Gubernium, 13 July 1792; and Gubernium's reply, 21 July 1792. SÚA, Prague, Fond České Gubernium, Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 305, sign. 19 f, Karton 271.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ Gubernium President Rottenhan to all Circuit officials, 13 August 1792. SÚA. Praha. Fond České Gubernium, Praesidium (PG), 1791–1806, i. č. 305, sign. 19 f, Karton 271.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

Kramérius or Rulík, both of whom left detailed accounts of the festivities. Rulík, in addition to being fascinated by the amount eaten and drunk by the guests and participants, noted that as part of the wedding festival one of the village justices read a speech of welcome in Czech to the king, to which Francis replied, also in Czech.⁵⁹ At a time when the people of France were overthrowing their monarchy, Rulík addressed his countrymen in these tones:

Czechs! Renowned patriots and my fellow-countrymen! Remember this memorable day, and celebrate it in your hearts forever, for here you have learned to know under what a merciful royal scepter you remain, so that foreign nations will envy you, and actually do envy us, that such a gracious monarch rules over us in mercy and benevolence.⁶⁰

Altogether the „Volksfest“ at Francis's coronation was something new, not least because of the efficient official organization of such a large function. In spite of some difficulties in feeding the numbers of people who arrived, generally the event was considered a success: „our glorious court, as a sign that this country merry-making pleased it, remained in Bubeneč until midnight.“⁶¹

No other occasion for something of this magnitude and this semi-official nature offered itself until Ferdinand's coronation in 1836, when the Estates again put on a „Volksfest“ modelled on the one in 1792. Once again the abilities of the administrative apparatus were called into action. Count Chotek reminded the administrators that the goal was to organize the celebrations so that they would be as folk-like and representative of the Bohemian nationality as possible, and to „provide the lower classes an occasion for merry-making.“⁶² Participants were to behave in an orderly and disciplined manner, and the village justices who were to receive recognition were charged with ensuring good behavior. Achieving the desired result was not easy. The cholera outbreak in Prague during the coronation, news of which was suppressed in the official newspapers but reached the countryside anyway, caused many peasants to balk at participating. Rumors, often quite fantastic, circulated among the peasants directed to attend the festival. According to Černín's diary the peasants from the Boleslav circuit claimed that the emperor had agreed with the Pasha of Egypt to send them all there as colonists, to replace famine victims. Even those who did not quite believe that story felt it might be better to remain at home.⁶³

⁵⁹ Rulík: *Kalendář historický* I, 182–184. According to Rulík, peasants from the countryside accounted for more than 8000 of the people present (the total number that attended was given as 40000). For them various kinds of beef, pork, ham, sausage, koláče (8000 pieces), bread, žemle, and 200 barrels of beer were prepared. See also the account in *Kramériusovy vlastenské noviny* No. 33 at 18 August 1792, 277–280; and *Paměti F. J. Vaváka* III/1, 68–77.

⁶⁰ Rulík: *Kalendář historický* I, 184.

⁶¹ *Kramériusovy vlastenské noviny* No. 33 at 18 August 1792, 279. See also the treatment in Laudová, Hannah: *Lidové slavnosti a zábavy v období formování národní společnosti od přelomu 18. století do poloviny 19. století* [Popular festivals and entertainments in the period of the formation of national society at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century]. Praha 1980, 17–21 (*Lid a lidová kultura národního obrození v Čechách* [The people and popular culture of the national renaissance in Bohemia] 4).

⁶² SÚA. Praha. *Fond České Gubernium. Praesidium* (PG), 1836–1840, sign. 18/9.

⁶³ SOA. Třeboň. *Pracoviště Jindřichův Hradec. Fond RA Černín*, sign. VIII F 2, entry for 13 September 1836.

Nevertheless, the program did take place on 14 August 1836, though Ferdinand, still ill, could not attend and only the Queen represented him. In a series of allegorical presentations of each circuit, with wagons carrying bridal couples again, but also accompanying tableaux showing the products of the region's agriculture and industry, the Kingdom of Bohemia was paraded before the imperial tribune. There were separate dancing areas for each circuit's participants, expansive spaces for the thousands of visitors (again estimated attendance reached around 60 000 persons), and food and drink. Naturally trouble arose about the distribution of the latter, and the later radical Josef Václav Frič noted in his memoirs that the people's disgust at the miserliness of the caterers led to clashes and the intervention of the police.⁶⁴ Judging by the accounts recorded in the official and unofficial press, however, as well as the lasting reminiscences it exerted into the 1840s, this final great „Volksfest“ could be judged an overall success.⁶⁵

These „people's celebrations“ provide an interesting example of the shifting of interest among the upper classes and officials in the everyday lives of the people. The contrast between the „Volksfest“s of 1792 and the one of 1836 demonstrates this change. At Francis' coronation, the aim of the Estates was to show off the „happy, contented peasant“ and emphasize how much better his lot was than that of the Frenchmen who were bringing down their monarchy. By 1836 the „Volksfest“ was much more consciously used as another way of demonstrating the uniqueness of Bohemia, as well as the good relations between peasants and their lords and officials. That uniqueness consisted not only in historical and political characteristics carried by the traditions of the Estates, but also cultural and folkloristic attributes. Thus the Prague „Volksfest“ of 1836 and its Moravian counterpart, organized in Brno on 20 August 1836, continued the trend towards folklore research and collection already emerging in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶

Just as the „Volksfest“ of 1836 was the last major undertaking of its kind in the Czech lands, so the coronation of 1836 was the last royal coronation in Bohemia. No other ruler of the Czechs would set the crown of St. Václav on his head. What, then, could one say about the meanings of the coronations and related festivities held for Leopold, Francis, and Ferdinand? Clearly their significance goes beyond the simple political goals outlined at the beginning of this discussion. Participation in the

⁶⁴ Frič, Josef Václav: Paměti [Memoirs]. Vol. I, Praha 1957⁴, 56.

⁶⁵ Accounts of the „Volksfest“ may be found in Bohemia No. 116 at 25 September 1836, Prager Zeitung No. 146 at 16 September 1836, and „Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung“ (from Gerle) No. 274 at 30 September 1836, 1826–1828. A complete description based on the projects approved from the circuits was also published, Programm zu dem Volksfeste, welches zur Feier der Krönung Seiner Majestät, des Kaisers und Königes Ferdinand und Ihrer Majestät der Kaiserin und Königin Maria Anna, von den böhmischen Ständen veranstaltet wurde. Prag 1836.

⁶⁶ See Laudová: Lidové slavnosti 60–71. – The authorities in 1836 remained determined that the participants in the festival should present „a satisfying picture of the inhabitants of the circuit to which they belong“, as well as that they should display the local folk costume. See the detailed MS „Instruction für die zum Volksfeste erschienenen Landleute, und die demselben zur Aufsicht beigegebenen Beamte“. SÚA. Praha. Fond Zemský výbor (ZV), karton 1247, Fasc. 84, no. 120a, no date.

rituals and celebrations surrounding the royal coronations provided opportunities for other goals to be pursued, other meanings to be expressed. Obviously, the Estates emphasized the aspects of the ritual that made them independent of Vienna, or at least reminded Vienna that they had once formally been independent. Motivated by the threat they perceived already from the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, the nobility attempted to rally to the defense of its political, social and economic position. In the process the nobles looked both backwards and forwards, adapting the rituals of the feudal monarchy and the language of Enlightenment political thought to their aims.

As we have seen, in several instances the language and symbols the nobility stressed also appealed to the „awakeners“ of the early Czech national renaissance. They, too, welcomed any aspect of the ritual words or the activities connected with the coronation festivities that suggested social recognition or approval of the Czech language. Vavák in 1791 addressed Czechia, kneeling at Leopold's feet, urging her to beg him „to remove that heavy burden/that you have borne for so long/that the Czech language is taken away from you.“⁶⁷ A similar tone rings in one of the verses published in honor of Ferdinand's coronation in 1836, which depicts Chotek addressing Ferdinand: „May God grant you long life as our ruler/For you preserve our tongue, our customs, our rights.“⁶⁸ In these and all the other enthusiastic occasional pieces and depictions of the coronation celebrations – which, like the rituals themselves, changed little over the course of the three coronations – these Czech patriots expressed hopes for the further development of the Czech language and culture that would lead to the articulation of a political program for the first time in 1848.⁶⁹ Then, and for many decades thereafter, the mainstream of the Czech political leadership would seek a socially and politically influential ally in the Bohemian nobility, but their goals were not in fact the same.

Their mutual participation and enthusiastic celebration of the rituals of coronation serves as a good example of Kertzer's argument that ritual is more than an inherently conservative force legitimizing the existing political order. He claims that ritual should be seen as fostering solidarity without necessarily creating a consensus of

⁶⁷ Paměti F. J. Vaváka 22.

⁶⁸ Citing: Kuzmány, Karol: Hlas z pod slovanských Tater ke korunování J. C. K. M. Ferdinanda I. za krále Českého toho jména V. [A voice from under the Slavonic Tatras on the coronation of His Imperial and Royal Majesty Ferdinand I King of Bohemia, the fifth of that name]. České květy [Czech blossoms] No. 50 at 1836. In: Muk: Poslední korunovace 114–117.

⁶⁹ Krameriusovy vlastenské noviny No. 35 at 27 August 1791 and No. 36 at 3 September 1791, list examples printed at Kramerius's Česká expedice. The Czech literary journals „České květy“ (edited by Josef Kajetán Tyl) and „Česká včela“ [Czech bee] printed the efforts of leading Czech poets of the Biedermeier, such as Václav Hanka, Josef Jaroslav Langer, and Karel Vinařický. Even Karel Hynek Mácha produced a poem in Ferdinand's honor, Na příchod krále [On the arrival of the king], on the occasion of Ferdinand's visit to Prague in 1835, the year before his coronation. At that time the Bohemian Museum published a collection of such poems, Hlasy vlastenců při radostném vítání J. C. M. Ferdinanda I. a Marie Anny v Praze dne 4. října 1835 [Voices of patriots during the joyful welcome of His Imperial Majesty Ferdinand I and Maria Anna in Prague, 4 October 1835].

belief, so that for example each participant in the Bohemian coronations and their celebrations could agree that these actions were appropriate without agreeing on specifically what the actions meant. While this ambiguity of political ritual can lead to conflict when different groups in society see very different meanings in the same symbol, it can also be a significant source of social stability.⁷⁰ Ritual political symbols can also change meanings, and be used to replace an existing order as well as prop it up.⁷¹ In the last three coronations in Bohemia, aspects of this process can be traced. The resistance of the Bohemian nobility to centralizing and modernizing pressure from Vienna initially coincided with the desire of the rising Czech intelligentsia, increasingly joined by urban and eventually rural strata of the Czech-speaking population, for cultural recognition. As this noble resistance sought to broaden the social base of its support and adapt new weapons to its arsenal, however, it changed into something else that went beyond the limited goals of the nobility. In this process, the ideology of modern Czech nationalism emerged and continued to develop throughout the nineteenth century.⁷²

In that Czech nationalist ideology, the symbols of the Crown of St. Václav and the Kingdom of Bohemia continued to occupy a major place. The fact that, in spite of promises made on at least three occasions, Francis Joseph never was crowned King of Bohemia did not decrease the symbolic significance of the Bohemian crown. One could argue, in fact, that eventually his not doing so increased this significance by separating the crown from its possession by the House of Habsburg and raising its symbolic meaning as the repository and emblem of Czech statehood. The importance of the crown to the state-rights political tactics of much of the nineteenth century does not exhaust its symbolic meaning, either. That meaning continues into the present century, not least in connection with the return of the Czech lands to separate statehood with the breakup of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993.⁷³ The election of the President of the Czech Republic in the Vladislav Hall of the Prague castle, scene of the formal oath of fealty to the last three crowned kings of the realm, testifies at once to the permanence and malleability of such political rituals and their ability both to reflect and shape reality.

⁷⁰ Kertzer: *Ritual Politics* 71–76.

⁷¹ *Ibidem* 174–175.

⁷² On the shifting pattern of nationalist ideology as a mobilizing force for resistance to the centralizing, modernizing state, see Breuilly, John: *Nationalism and the State*. Manchester 1985, 1–35, 99–103.

⁷³ The fact that often lavish publications devoted to the crown or coronation of kings of Bohemia coincided with significant historical moments, sometimes tragic for the Czechs, is telling. Some examples: in the dark days of Nazi occupation, *Korunováční řád Českých králů* [The order of coronation of the Czech kings]. Praha 1941, with Charles IV credited as author; during „normalization“ after the fall of Dubček, see Tykva, Bedřich: *Korunováční klenoty Království Českého* [The crown jewels of the Kingdom of Bohemia]. Praha 1970; and most recently to commemorate the emergence of an independent Czech republic: *České korunováční klenoty*. Praha 1993. – The Husák regime lavishly celebrated the anniversary in 1978 of Charles IV's death four centuries earlier, including placing the coronation regalia on display in the castle (where the present author was among the thousands who queued up to see them).