CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE DUKES OF CARINTHIA
BETWEEN HISTORY AND IMAGINATION: ISSUES
OF ITS TRADITION, DEVELOPMENT, AND COURSE

Historians have dealt with the enthronement of the dukes of Carinthia for over a century now. During all this time, a vast body of research has been produced that is nearly impossible to cover in its entirety. Among the authors are numerous researchers of the past of great reputation and outstanding merit, who often sought to solve one of the “key issues of Carinthian history” with commendable erudition and penetration. Although many a problem has been solved in the course of this long scientific tradition and discourse, a whole range of fundamental questions remain without clear, unambiguous answers. The principal reason for this state of research is connected with the sources on the enthronement of the Carinthian dukes, because opinions differ on their chronological order and hence on their interdependence and value; this is particularly true of the three crucial sources from the Late Middle Ages – the only ones that describe the course of the ceremony in detail and to which we shall return below. These different views and appraisals of the key sources have led to highly divergent interpretations of the ceremony itself, its course, and development.

In this connection we must draw attention to a specific burden that additionally weighs on the research into the enthronement of the dukes of Carinthia. It concerns the issue of the knowledge and reception of Slovene studies, which had a vital contribution to the bibliography of the enthronement, in particular the works of Josip Mal, Ljudmil Hauptmann and, first and foremost, Bogo Grafenauer. Due to the linguistic barrier, these studies have remained inaccessible to the wider circles of (mainly German-speaking) researchers, or have been known to them only in the form of brief summaries. These of course cannot compensate for knowledge of the integral texts because summaries

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1 The best survey of the research history is in Grafenauer 1952, 9–68; Grafenauer 1962, 176 ff.; Grafenauer 1970a, 112 ff.
2 Fräss-Ehrfeld 1984, 348.
principally deal with research results, not with arguments or criticism of different opinions. It is particularly regrettable that the most extensive monograph on the enthronement of the dukes of Carinthia, written by Bogo Grafenauer, and its to date most comprehensive, thorough, and extensive textual criticism of the sources related to the issues of the enthronement has remained inaccessible to the majority of non-Slovene researchers. More than fifty years after its publication, this section of Grafenauer’s book has lost none of its cutting edge and significance, and still deserves to be translated into German or English.

The two material monuments of the enthronement, the Prince’s Stone (Fürstenstein) and the Duke’s Throne (Herzogsthul), create no fewer problems than the written sources. Some researchers date the origin of the latter to the 9th century, others to as late as the 14th century.\(^3\) Half a millennium separates these two points in time and it is not hard to imagine what this means for the interpretation and reconstruction of the ceremony. Adding complication to the issue is the fact that it is not clear whether the Duke’s Throne originated in the form we know today, or whether it initially and merely represented the western seat of the count palatine. And since the corresponding arguments normally refer to the above-mentioned written sources, which contain the terms lapis, sedes tribunalis, stain, gesidel, stůl and the like, and on whose genealogy, chronology, and historical value no consensus exists, everything seems to be locked in a vicious circle. The same is true of the Prince’s Stone, on which the discussion has recently focussed – but to date without any conclusive findings – on the question of whether this oldest legal symbol in the territory of present-day Austria originally stood at Karnburg, as it is depicted in the famous drawing by Markus Pernhart from around 1855, and from where it was transferred to Klagenfurt in 1862.\(^4\)

Historical surveys have a decisive influence on shaping historical awareness and the image of history in public use, but even in the best among them\(^5\) the descriptions of the enthronement ceremony are necessarily, for the reasons stated above, only more or less inspired digests of largely unsolved research issues, where firm and clear answers are not as readily available as we would expect based on these descriptions.

\(^4\) See Pleterski 1997, 61 ff.