

Article

Corona Angelica Pannoniae: ‘...ecce Angelus Domini’[†]

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† In Loving Memory of Márton.

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Abstract: The article examines the Hungarian *corona angelica* tradition, according to which the Holy Crown of Hungary was delivered to the country by an angel. In order to embed Hungarian results into international scholarship, it provides an English language summary of previous research and combines in one study how St. Stephen I (997–1038), St. Ladislaus I (1074–1095), and King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) came to be associated with the tradition, examining both written and visual sources. The article moves forward previous research by posing the question whether the angel delivering the Crown to Hungary could have been identified as the *Angelus Domini* at some point throughout history. This possibility is suggested by Hungary’s *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV* and an unusually popular Early Modern modification of the Hartvik Legend, both of which use this expression to denote the angel delivering the Crown. While the article leaves the question open until further research sheds more light on the history of early Hungarian spirituality; it also points out how this identification of the angel would harmonize the Byzantine and the Hungarian iconography of the *corona angelica*, and provides insight into the current state of the *Angelus Domini* debate in angelology.

Keywords: angelology; angels; *Angelus Domini*; angelic coronation; St Stephen I of Hungary; St Ladislaus I of Hungary; Matthias Corvinus; *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*; Hartvik Legend; Luigi Lippomano

1. Introduction

And as their Language is peculiar, so is the opinion of their Crown; of which they have the greatest esteem of any other Nation. This they commonly believe, to have been brought by an Angel from Heaven unto St. Stephen their King: And have so high an estimation thereof, that they think, the right and fate of the Kingdom goeth with the possession thereof. (Brown 1673, p. 16)

So speaks the British physician and traveller Edward Brown of the Hungarians in 1673. Far-fetched as the theory appealing to him may sound, the *corona angelica* tradition about an angelic delivery is just one among the many mysteries surrounding the Holy Crown of Hungary (Figure 1). Scholarship agrees on surprisingly little concerning the origins of this over 800-year-old Crown, one of the oldest in Europe. According to the present state of research, its circular base, the *corona graeca*, arrived from Byzantium and was intended for the Greek wife of Géza I (1074–1077); while the cross-straps forming the upper part, the *corona latina*, used to comprise parts of a devotional object related to St. Stephen I (997–1038). The two parts presumably joined during the reign of Béla III (1172–1196) and were topped by a cross in the 1500s, the characteristic bent of which resulted from an accident in the following

century. The Crown has been referred to as *corona sacra* from 1256, due partly to the *corona angelica* tradition claiming it was delivered to the country by an angel.¹



Figure 1. The Holy Crown of Hungary. Photo courtesy of the Holy Crown Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, copyright Károly Szelényi.

The symbolism of the *corona angelica* for the Hungarians as a nation is difficult to overstate. Loyalty was sworn to the Crown and not to the king in the 1300s; and the Crown sustained claim for land ownership as a sort of legal entity side by side with the king by the early 1400s. The Hungarian coat of arms is topped by the Crown, whose purported mystical powers over the nation's liberty and independence attract a bountiful amount of followers in the form of the Doctrine of the Holy Crown today.²

¹ See (Tóth 2018) for the most recent, authoritative discussion of historical and art historical debates relating to the Crown.
² See recently (Lucherini 2017, pp. 267–83). For an update on the present state of Crown research see (Tóth 2019), with further bibliography. The volume is among the latest editions of the Holy Crown Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Characteristically for the importance of the topic, the title page is decorated with a copperplate representation of the *corona angelica* by Wolfgang Kilian, appearing first on the title page of *De sacre coronae regni Hungariae ortu virtute, victoris, fortuna* by the Crown Guard Péter Révay (Augsburg, 1613). See (Lucherini 2013, pp. 479–90). For research presented in

In light of the importance of the tradition for the Hungarian national identity, research focusing on the *corona angelica* comprises a relatively small niche within the Crown's immense academic literature. The first and only systematic study of the tradition was conducted by the late historian Váczy (1982). Váczy linked the *corona angelica* to issues around royal legitimacy and argued that belief in the tradition intensified in periods when the country's liberty and independence were threatened. Váczy's article, which searched for the origins of the tradition in medieval Hungarian textual sources and made tentative steps for the exploration of the *corona angelica* in art, has served as a point of reference ever since. Among historians, Rácz (2011) extended the time period examined by Váczy and argued that the *corona angelica* notion referred not merely to the act of an angelic delivery but rather to the frequent association of angels with the Crown throughout its history. Art historians examined the *corona angelica* as a recurrent motif in the iconography of three Hungarian kings: Saint Stephen I, Saint Ladislaus I (1077–94), and King Matthias Corvinus (1458–90). Research led by the late Kerny (2003), Wehli (2005),³ Csilla Bíró and Tamás Kertész (Bíró and Kertész 2007) described how pictorial representations of the *corona angelica* served as visual compensation in cases of debatable legitimacy, by reminding the audience of the heavenly source of royal power.

English publications on this Hungarian tradition are nevertheless scarce, making international contextualisation difficult. Although English language publications commenting on other aspects of the Crown do make mention of the *corona angelica*, the translated version of Váczy's (1985) article provides the only detailed examination of the motif in English until today. Furthermore, and perhaps even importantly, research has so far concentrated primarily on the object and less on the agent of the angelic Crown delivery, as the tradition has not yet been examined from the point of view of angelology. The following study will make an attempt at filling in these lacunae and present a state-of-research overview with angelological observations closing in on the identity of the participating angel.

2. St. Stephen I (997–1038) and the Beginnings

The addressee of the Crown in Edward Brown's afore-mentioned account is Saint Stephen I, the first king of Hungary. Despite the fact that common knowledge indeed identifies the Holy Crown with the crown of the king who Christianized the nation, the one thing scholarship agrees on concerning the date of the Crown is that it could not possibly have been worn by him. Besides St. Stephen's popularity, another factor likely to generate confusion is the heavenly connection between Stephen and his crown, suggested by two of the three medieval legends recounting his rule.⁴

The *Legenda Maior Sancti Regis Stephani*, the longer legend allegedly finished by Stephen's 1083 canonization, includes an episode about Stephen's father receiving a heavenly message. In a dream, Grand Prince Géza (972–997) encounters a young man of a pleasing appearance (*iuvenem delectabilem aspectu*), who tells Géza that his own political ambitions would be realized by his yet unborn son, later also to be crowned as king by the will of God.⁵ The divine messenger is described as a young man of exceptional beauty, which is not uncommon for the description of an angel. What the being delivers is rather an Annunciation than a crown, however, unless we understand the promise of the

English, see the forthcoming volume (Géza and Bak 2020). I hereby express my gratitude to Dr. Géza Pálffy, Head of the Holy Crown Research Group, for the valuable support provided during the preparation of the present article.

³ I thank Dr. Tamás Karáth from the Pázmány Péter Catholic University for helping me access the article.

⁴ In English see (Engel 2005; De Cevins 2004).

⁵ "Cumque nimium æsset sollicitus de rebellibus domandis et ritibus sacrilegis destruendis et episcopatus secundum estimationem suam ad profectum sancte ecclesie statuendis, mirabili visione noctu consolatur eum Dominus, fecit adstare sibi iuvenem delectabilem aspectu, qui dixit ei: "Pax tibi ælecte, iubeo te de sollicitudine tua fore securum. Non tibi concessum est, quod meditaris, quia manus pollutas humano sanguine gestas. De te filius nasciturus egredietur, cui hec omnia disponenda divine providentie consilio Dominus commendabit. Hic unus erit de regibus electis a Domino, 'coronam vite' secularis commutaturus æterna. Verumptamen virum spirituali legatione tibi transmittendum honorabiliter suscipito, susceptum honesto timore perditionis ultime perterritus et amore raptus iugiter manentis spei, que non confundit, exortationibus eius non fictum cordis fidelis prebeto assensum." *Legenda Maior Sancti Regis Stephani*. The Latin Library. Available online: <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/legenda.stephani.html> (accessed on 12 July 2019).

yet unborn Stephen's coronation as a metaphorical delivery of the crown. Considering the flexibility of oral traditions, the possibility that this metaphorical reference grew out into a physical delivery of the Crown cannot, of course, be excluded. Even though the description of the agent is plausibly angelic, however, the episode does not provide a direct link to the *corona angelica* notion (Váczy 1985, p. 5).

Another indirect reference is provided by the c. 1100 Hartvik Legend on the life of St. Stephen. Composed on the order of King Coloman the Learned (1095–1116) by his bishop Hartvik, this legend provided an extended summary of St. Stephen's two earlier legends, and was officially confirmed by Innocent III (1198–1216).⁶ While the Hartvik Legend repeated the Annunciation to Géza from the *Legenda Maior* and described the participating angelic figure with the same words, it endowed the *corona angelica* with a new meaning by also claiming that St. Stephen received his crown from the pope through heavenly intervention. According to Hartvik, a crown had already been finished by the papal goldsmiths when a messenger of the Lord (*domini nuncius*) addressed the pope in a dream and informed him that it is the will of God that the crown be given to the Hungarian king, instead of the originally intended Polish recipient:

*Prefixa itaque die, qua parata iam corona predicto Poloniorum Duci mittenda fuerat, nocte, que precedebat, pape per visum domini nuncius adstitit, cui et dixit: "Crastina die prima diei hora ignote gentis nuncios ad te venturos esse cognoveris, qui suo duci coronam a te regiam cui (sic) benedictionis apostolice munere flagitabunt."*⁷

As Váczy noted, Hartvik inserted the pope as a second mediator after the angel between the king and God. The description of the angelic delivery is once again metaphorical at best in this source, as the expression "messenger of the Lord" once again does not directly name an angel, even if it is certainly a step closer to unambiguity than the *Legenda Maior* version. The being, nevertheless, once again does not personally deliver the crown but delivers it indirectly at best, by delivering a message eventually directing the crown to Hungary (Váczy 1985, p. 5).

3. St. Ladislaus (1077–1095) and the 1300s

In chronological order, the next source for the Hungarian *corona angelica* tradition is the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*, a compilation of earlier chronicle texts of uncertain dates merged and extended during the course of the 1300s.⁸ The 1300s extensions demonstrate that popular belief in the angelic origins of the Hungarian Crown was in full bloom around the beginning of the century. Evidence is provided by the account of Otto Wittelsbach, Prince of Bavaria, making the journey to Hungary for his own contested coronation ceremony. The chronicle tells that the future king and his entourage considered it wise to transport the Crown hidden in a little barrel, which accidentally got lost overnight. Although they could only return to rescue the precious content during the night of the following day, they were lucky enough to find the Crown, and Otto was crowned King of Hungary (1305–1307) shortly afterwards. The anonymous chronicler stressed that the recovery was a miracle, considering how many people used the road during the day the Crown was lying by, and drew the conclusion: "...Pannonia would not be deprived of the crown given to her by an angel." (*data sibi corona ab angelo*).⁹

⁶ In English see (Font 2001).

⁷ Imre Szentpétery, *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, vol. 1 (Budapest, 1937–1938, henceforth SRH), p. 413. This is also the version quoted by Edward Brown, who wrote: the pope "was warned by an Angelical Apparition" (Brown 1673, p. 16).

⁸ The first part of the compilation was composed during the reign of the Angevin Charles Robert (Károly Róbert, 1308–1342) and concludes with the years 1333–34; the second dates from the age of the also Angevin Louis I the Great (Nagy Lajos, 1342–1382) and its compilation started on 15 May 1358. Both parts modified, continued and occasionally extended earlier texts (Somogyi 2011, fn. 8, with extensive further bibliography). In German see (Horváth 1971).

⁹ "Quid est, quod a nullo inventa, sed ab ipsis, qui portabant? nisi, quod ne Pannonia, sibi data corona ab Angelo, privaretur." József Podhradczky, *Chronicon Budense* (Buda, 1838), p. 129.

The section recounting Otto's journey in the chronicle is attributed to the hand of an unknown chronicler working for the Angevin dynasty, who presumably commissioned the compilation of the chronicle, and who were also Otto's competitors for the Hungarian throne. Accordingly, the chronicler concluded that by making him lose the Crown, Heaven made Otto understand that he was not allowed to keep the Hungarian Crown neither in a literal nor in a metaphorical sense. Indeed, owing to the increasing number of conflicts with the oligarchs subdividing the country, Otto eventually had no choice but to leave Hungary in 1307, when he was also physically deprived of the Crown, which did not leave Hungary. As Váczy (1985, pp. 4–5) pointed out, this observation made the chronicle section the earliest written source using the *corona angelica* for the justification of human actions. Not less importantly, it also bonded the Crown with the country instead of the person of the king.

The intensification of the *corona angelica* belief during the two centuries separating the St. Stephen legends and the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV* may be related to St. Ladislaus I, the king who canonized St. Stephen and himself became the second canonized king of Hungary in 1192 (Klaniczay 2002, pp. 173–94). King St. Ladislaus I and his brother Géza I (1074–77) both faced legitimacy issues after successfully contesting the throne of their cousin, Solomon (1063–74). Following Géza's death, Ladislaus benefited from the combined support of the pope and the nobility, and snatched the crown from the legitimate heirs, his own underage nephews. In spite, or perhaps because of his disputable legitimacy, he also became the only Hungarian king whom the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV* turned into both an eye-witness and participant to the *corona angelica*.

The compilation recounts that Ladislaus experienced a vision just before the 1074 Mogyoród battle, which proved to be decisive in the fight between the brothers and their reigning cousin. Ladislaus saw the Angel of the Lord (*Angelus Domini*) descend from Heaven and place a crown on Géza's head, from which he understood that they would emerge victoriously and his brother would be crowned as king:

Tunc beatus Ladizlaus subiunxit: Dum staremus hic in consilio, ecce Angelus Domini descendit de celo portans coronam auream in manu sua, et impressit capiti tuo, unde certus sum, quod nobis victoria donabitur et Salomon exul fugiet debellatus extra regnum. (SRH vol. 1, p. 388)

As the text explicitly uses the word *angelus*, there can be little doubt that it describes an angel, and the angel indeed literally places a crown on a head this time. The angelic coronation made both Géza's and subsequently, the visionary Ladislaus' claims to the throne unshakable. The *corona angelica* functioned as a reminder of the heavenly source of royal power: if the king was chosen by God, he could legitimately mount the throne by *ius divinum*, owing to his *idoneitas*. The fact that Géza was not crowned with St. Stephen's traditional initiation crown offered the *raison d'être* for this episode in the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV* for Váczy, who proposed that it brought around the identification of the Holy Crown of Hungary with St. Stephen's now lost crown. Since the reigning King Solomon took the coronation crown with him when fleeing the country after the lost battle, Géza had to be crowned with a new crown, which was believed to be holy once delivered by an angel, therefore it did not take long to associate it with the canonized St. Stephen. Unaware of the crown switch, popular folk could easily believe Géza's crown to be identical with that of the country's first and holy ruler (Váczy 1985, p. 16; Bíró and Kertész 2007, p. 369; Kerny 2003, p. 6).¹⁰

A round miniature image on Fol. 42^r of the *Chronicon Pictum* (*Képes Krónika, Illuminated Chronicle*, National Széchényi Library of Budapest, MS Cod. lat. 404), a richly illustrated section of the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*, even depicted the vision of Ladislaus about the royal future of his brother.¹¹ In this earliest visual representation of the Hungarian *corona angelica*, the brothers appear

¹⁰ As Rác noted, the *corona angelica* also ensured coherence between Heaven and earth, and signified that royal power is given and not inherent, consequently limitable (Rác 2011, pp. 19–21).

¹¹ The *Chronicon Pictum* (see the digitized version with full text and images at the Wayback Machine internet archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20120304111134/http://konyv-e.hu/pdf/Chronica_Picta.pdf, accessed on 12 October 2019) was written by Márk Kálti (*Marci de Kalt*) shortly after 1358, and its decoration was finished around 1370. The attention devoted

sitting on white horses against a rocky landscape when St. Ladislaus spots the angel reach down from heaven and place a crown on Géza's head. Interestingly, the coronation of St. Ladislaus is also depicted in a larger, 14-line square miniature on Fol. 46^v of the same manuscript, comprising the second earliest Hungarian *corona angelica* image. The chapter accompanying the image makes no mention of angels contributing to Ladislaus' coronation, despite the fact that two angels are actively participating in the scene in the image. Ladislaus is standing between two high level ecclesiasts who are placing a crown on his head together with two angels reaching down from Heaven in a position similar to Géza's angel. The event is witnessed by a large crowd.¹²

The first striking detail of the image is the fact that Ladislaus is being crowned by angels, which is not mentioned in sources pre-dating the image. [Bíró and Kertész \(2007, p. 371\)](#) nonetheless found a sermon in the anonym Carthusian sermon collection of the Codex Érdy, compiled between 1524 and 1527, which remembers Ladislaus' vision in a way slightly better suiting the image. Ladislaus claims in the sermon that an angel arriving from Heaven placed a crown on his head, i.e., not on that of his brother; from which he understood that he and his brother would emerge victoriously from the battle of the following day. Bíró and Kertész attributed the crown's shift from the head of Géza to that of Ladislaus either to the creativity of the sermon's author or to the influence of Ladislaus' cult. Ladislaus consolidated his power and occupied the throne for a significantly longer time than his brother, and a saintly cult developed around him already during his lifetime, which lives on even today. The holy ruler's legendary deeds were frequently represented in multi-scene iconographical cycles in medieval church interiors, with new examples continuously surfacing today as restoration works proceed. Currently, Ladislaus' angelic coronation is visible in a c. 1350 fresco in Vitfalva (Vítkovce, Slovakia) ([László 1993, p. 121](#); [Lángi 2012](#)), in the 1378 fresco decoration of the church of Velemér ([Radocsay 1977, p. 172](#)), and in a 1418 fresco commissioned by Vladislaus II in the chapel of the Lublin castle ([Bíró and Kertész 2007, p. 371](#)). In the Vitfalva fresco, which is roughly contemporaneous with the *Chronicon Pictum* miniature, Ladislaus is crowned by two angels, whereas he is crowned by one in both of the later examples.

This leads us to the second anomaly in the *Chronicon Pictum*'s Ladislaus miniature, namely the increased number of angels: Géza is crowned by one angel and Ladislaus by two. Whence the second angel? Both St. Stephen legends mention but one angel, the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV* also remembers but one angel in both of its *corona angelica* episodes, even Edward Brown described the Hungarian tradition involving but one angel. Apart from [László Veszprémy](#), who proposed the doubled number of angels fashions Ladislaus as the humble *rex renitens* unwilling to accept the crown,¹³ Hungarian scholarship has not attributed much significance to the number of angels involved in the coronation. The Hungarian language, similarly to English, is endowed with a semantic layer where the plural form also conveys a general meaning and can simply express that the delivery of the crown was an angelic task, whether performed by a singular or a dual agent. Indeed, one angel or more equally suffice to grant holiness and, in turn, legitimacy, which has so far been the central concern of historians

to the *corona angelica* in the richly illustrated codex may well be related to the questionable legitimacy of the Angevin Charles Robert (1308–42), whose son Louis I the Great (1342–1382) was not alien from the idea of utilizing art as propaganda. ([Kerny 2003, pp. 6–7](#)); in Italian see ([Lucherini 2015](#)); in English see ([Dercsényi 1969](#); [Fügedi 2004](#)).

¹² The colour of the wings matches the colour of the robes in each case. Géza's angel is different from those of Ladislaus and Ladislaus' two angels also differ from each other, which makes the possibility of a doubled or tripled representation of the same angel highly unlikely. Géza's angel is wearing green; the angel on Ladislaus' left is wearing pink robes and has short curly hair, unlike the angel on his right. The angel on the right seems to be perhaps the most decorated among the three angels, wearing deep red with occasional yellowish decoration in the wings as opposed to the monochrome wings of the other two angels, albeit the size of the images makes meticulous analyses challenging.

¹³ A slight discrepancy of the theory is that if both Géza and Ladislaus had to be forced to accept the crown as [Veszprémy](#) claims, they both would have deserved the doubled number of angels ([Veszprémy 2018, p. 154](#)). Perhaps Ladislaus received two angels because he simply needed double visual confirmation in lack of written sources. Perhaps the artist simply preferred a symmetrical composition and paired two ecclesiasts with two angels. Another possibility is that if the Crown was spoken of as being brought by angels, using the plural due to the characteristics of the Hungarian language to be discussed below, it was also represented this way, in which case perhaps oral tradition influenced the arts.

and art historians approaching the topic. The lack of attention devoted to this detail is nevertheless all the more significant, as the majority of artistic representations followed the example of the more successful king, and diverted from written sources by involving two angels.

4. King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) and the Corona Angelica in Art

The artistic utilization of the *corona angelica* reached its full bloom in the following century under King Matthias Corvinus, whose relationship with the tradition differed from both that of St. Stephen and St. Ladislaus. Matthias apparently made conscious use of the legitimizing power attributed to the tradition, embedding his own *corona angelica* portraits in a well-designed propagandistic political programme still during his lifetime. Renowned patron of art and science, whose royal library, the Bibliotheca Corviniana, comprised one of the largest European collections,¹⁴ Matthias turned Hungary into the first land outside Italy to embrace the Renaissance. He is a legendary figure of Hungarian history even today, and several contemporaneous popular myths explain him being chosen by heavenly intervention in lack of a fully legal claim to the throne (Bíró and Kertész 2007, pp. 373–74). In reality, Matthias ascended the throne after King Ladislaus V (1444–57) died without a legitimate heir, and his elder sister's family line received no support from the Estates. The Diet of Hungary elected the candidate preferred by Pope Calixtus III (1455–58) instead, and Matthias' rule started in 1458, when he was but 14 years old. Matthias could only be crowned in 1464, however, once the Crown had returned to Hungary as a result of a peace treated with Frederick III (1452–93).

It was Tünde Wehli who first argued that Matthias consciously made the *corona angelica* part of an extensive iconographical programme intended to amend his legitimacy (Wehli 2005, pp. 872–74). According to Kerny (2003, p. 9), Matthias simply inherited the idea from the Angevin dynasty, who, as mentioned above, found it wise to keep the *ius divinum* idea alive amidst their own proper series of contested coronations. Bíró and Kertész argued that the very idea of using propaganda for filling in the legitimacy lacunae reached Matthias with the Renaissance from Italy, and materialized with the help of the closest circle of royal advisors.¹⁵ Wherever it came from, the *corona angelica* experienced its own Renaissance in Matthias' visual representations.¹⁶

Kerny argued that in art, the *corona angelica* visually connected the kings associated with the tradition by shifting from one ruler's iconography to the other as a kind of artistic inheritance. She proposed that the *Chronicon Pictum's* 1300s Ladislaus miniature was the model for a coloured woodcut allegedly printed in Ulm around 1460–1470, the earliest known example of the *corona angelica* in St. Stephen's visual representations. This Ulm woodcut served as the model for a 1486 Matthias statue on the gate tower of the Ortenburg castle in Bautzen; and the Ortenburg statue became the model for Stephen's portrait in the second, hugely influential 1488 edition of Johannes Thuróczy's *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, printed in Augsburg.¹⁷ Owing to Thuróczy's popularity, this *corona angelica* portrait became the standard iconographical type of St. Stephen until the 1600s, living on in innumerable copies and smaller variations up until modern times.¹⁸

¹⁴ Perhaps it is not by chance that Edward Brown (1673, pp. 15–16) also discussed the Hungarian *corona angelica* tradition in the paragraph immediately following his admiration of Matthias' library. See recently (De Cevins 2016).

¹⁵ They considered the humanist Archbishop John Vitéz de Zredna (1408–72), the humanist poet and bishop Janus Pannonius (1434–72), and the Carthusian Andreas Pannonius (b. 1420–25) with a military past and extensive Italian travels the most likely candidates, who were all familiar with the cult of St. Ladislaus (Bíró and Kertész 2007, pp. 365, 372–73).

¹⁶ Matthias' rule is also the period when the Holy Crown first appeared on top of the Hungarian coat of arms (Rác 2011, p. 24).

¹⁷ Kerny (2003, pp. 7–12) acknowledges that it was Tünde Wehli who first created a link between the *Chronicon Pictum* St. Ladislaus miniature and the Thuróczy chronicle's St. Stephen portrait. Wehli further pointed out that the Thuróczy text also stresses that Matthias was chosen by God (Wehli 2005, p. 873; referenced by Bíró and Kertész 2007, p. 371).

¹⁸ A copperplate by Peeter Rucholle in the 1633 edition of *Gloria virtutis Hungaricae...* by György Alajos Erdődy is a famous example of the *corona angelica* in St. Stephen's post-1600 iconography. The image depicts Saint Stephen dashing over symbols of idolatry in Jove's quadriga with the lightning in his right hand. Two angels are flying in the sky, one of whom is holding a crown over Stephen's head, with a ribbon bearing the words 'In hoc signo vinces'. The sign of the cross is projected above this angel by another angel hovering above the horses, and this second angel also projects similar rays towards the Hungarian coat of arms in Stephen's left hand. The second angel's participation in the delivery of the crown is debatable.

Despite the fact that the crown is delivered by two angels in all these examples, the presence of the second angel engaged scholarship in context of the Ortenburg Matthias statue only, where one of the angels is holding a sword. By way of this detail, the statue was linked to a composition combining the *Arma Christi* and the *Vir Dolorum* in one of Matthias' Corvinas (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Ross. 1164, Fol. 125v). The richly dressed Matthias is imploring the resurrected Christ on his knees in the full-page image. Two angels are hovering above the king's head: the angel on the left, wearing blue robes and endowed with feathery green wings, is holding a crown; while the angel on the right, dressed in red, with green and white feathers decorating the wings, is holding a sword. The king's identification is ensured by the text accompanying the image, as well as the coat of arms in front of him, which also suggests 6 May 1469 as the *terminus ante quem* for this Matthias portrait (Wehli 2005, p. 872).¹⁹

In Wehli's (2005, p. 872) interpretation, the second angel is delivering a sword to Matthias; while Bíró and Kertész (2007, p. 366) understood this detail as a sign of heavenly protection originating from a legend told, again, by the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*. King Ladislaus and King Solomon met for a duel under the walls of the Bratislava castle according to the chronicle compilation. Before the duel could commence, Solomon looked his enemy in the face and saw two threatening angels hovering above Ladislaus' head and swinging flaming swords.²⁰ Bíró and Kertész (2007, p. 370) suggested that the merge of the two stories, the *corona angelica* and the two angels protecting the king with flaming swords, brought around the second angel holding a sword above the head of Matthias.

A slightly earlier Corvina, *Libellus de virtutibus Mathiae Corvino dedicatus* by Andreas Pannonius, with a dedication signed on 1 September 1467 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 3186), shows Matthias with a single angel *corona angelica*.²¹ In a 14-line S-initial occupying half of Fol. 1^r, the king appears enthroned in an imaginary space, wearing a crown and holding a sceptre. The half figure of a red-winged angel dressed in green is facing the king on the right side of the border decoration, proffering the same crown to the king. Under the angel, at the bottom of the S-initial, the author is proffering his work to Matthias. The *corona angelica* serves a double aim here, according to Bíró and Kertész (2007, p. 368): it stresses the importance of spiritual guidance over the king and legitimizes Matthias by communicating that he was chosen by God, which is also accentuated in the text running right under the image.

Finally, sources report that a now destroyed fresco on the exterior wall of a house by the Campo' de Fiori in Rome depicted Matthias and the *corona angelica* with one angel. The fresco is known from contemporaneous Hungarian and foreign descriptions; as well as from a heavily damaged preliminary study in the Eszterházy collection in Fraknó; and from an early 1600s watercolour in the Vatican Library (MS Barb. Lat. 4423, Fol. 75r). Their collective summary reconstructs the portrait of a fully armoured Matthias on horseback, drawing a sword with an angel holding a crown above the king's head. A second angel was present in the composition in pairs with a demon or devil, both holding

(Kerny 2003, pp. 12–20). See the digitized version of the article at http://real-j.mtak.hu/4919/1/ArsHungarica_2003.pdf (REAL-J—repository of the Library and Information Centre, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, accessed on 12 October 2019) for images.

¹⁹ Several Hungarian cities received coats of arms held by two angels in the 1400s and 1500s. Towards the end of the reign of King Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387–1437), angels also appeared as supporters of the Hungarian coat of arms, featured in official documents related to Matthias, as well as in his Corvinas. Matthias was also the king who regulated the number of angels around the Hungarian coat of arms by limiting their number to three. The official number was finalized in two much later, by Queen Maria Theresa of Austria (1740–80) (Rácz 2011, pp. 19–24).

²⁰ “Milites vero Salomonis super castra sedentes illos aspiciabant, putabatque Salomon illum esse servientem et propterea iverat decertare cum illo. Statimque cum ad eum venisset et faciem eius respexisset, vidit duos angelos super caput ipsius Ladizlai igneo gladio volantes et inimicos eius minantes.” *SRH* vol. 11, pp. 401–2. The event also appears in a miniature format in the historiated initial accompanying this section of the *Chronicon Pictum* (Fol. 46^r). A sermon in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 1369 sermon collection, probably made for Hungarian Dominicans around 1300, argues that one angel appeared sitting on Ladislaus' shoulder because Ladislaus had been chosen by the Lord, Who commanded His angels to guard him (Bíró and Kertész 2007, p. 370).

²¹ The 1 September 1467 date of BAV MS Vat. Lat. 3186 is challenging the 6 May 1469 *terminus ante quem* of the BAV MS Ross. 1164 portrait which, in Wehli's (2005, p. 872) opinion, is Matthias' earliest manuscript representation.

short epigrams on Matthias' two sides in the sky. The fresco is dated after Matthias' 1464 coronation and before 1470, when the name Corvinus, missing from the epigrams, started to be used in Italy.²²

5. Angelus Domini?

Even though Matthias was the last Hungarian king to be associated with the *corona angelica*, the tradition well outlived him. Shortly after Matthias' death, the officially confirmed Hartvik Legend on St. Stephen's life was published for the first time in the 1498 *Legendae Sanctorum regni Hungariae* compilation. While this edition still followed the medieval text, and used the expression *nuncius domini* for the angel directing the crown from the pope to Hungary,²³ a modified version was used only four years later by the distinguished Franciscan Pelbartus Ladislaus de Themeswar (1430–1504), renowned for publishing an extraordinary number of sermons among the Hungarian representatives of scholasticism. The 1502 edition of Pelbartus' *Sermones Pomerii de sanctis pars aestivalis* called the angel directing the crown from the pope to Hungary *Angelus Domini*, in a manner similar to the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*. In addition, Pelbartus also used the *Angelus Domini* denomination for the angel who announced the birth of St. Stephen to his father Grand Prince Géza in the *Legenda Maior*, as though equalling the two angels.²⁴ Somewhat later a new version of the Hartvik Legend appeared which also followed suit, and swept aside any doubts concerning the identity of the messenger visiting the pope:

*Nocte enim eius diei, quo statuerat Pontifex coronam Polonorum Principi dare perferendam, apparuit ei Angelus Domini, atque ad eum: Noveris cras hora diei prima ignotae gentis nuncios ad te venturos, suo Duci coronam regiam, et Apostolicae benedictionis munus abs te expetituros. Eam ergo coronam, quam parari iussisti, illis incunctanter tribue, ad ipsorum Ducem eam absportaturis: nec dubites illi eam cum regni gloria pro vitae eius meritis deberi.*²⁵

The earliest appearance I have hitherto found for this modified Hartvik version is the 1581 edition of *De Vitis Sanctorum* by the Venetian bishop and papal nuncio Luigi Lippomano (1496–1559);²⁶ whereas the latest comes from the 1878 edition of *Historiae seu vitae sanctorum* by Laurentius Surius (1522–78).²⁷ Both authors were among the most acclaimed hagiographers of the 1500s, equally known for a preference for sources considered reliable at the time. Lippomano was famous for seeking

²² Visual and written sources differ in smaller details of the fresco, for instance there are altogether three angels or putti visible in the Eszterházy painting, where the epigram is held by two (Szentmártoni Szabó 2016, pp. 664–65, with further bibliography).

²³ *Legendae sanctorum regni Hungariae in Lombardica Historia non contentae* (Venice, 1498), p. 16.

²⁴ "Ecce autem nocte praecedente papae astitit per visum Angelus Domini, dicens: "Crastina die ignotae gentis nuncii ad te venient, qui suo duci regiam coronam postulabunt. Hanc ergo coronam praeparatam illorum duci largiaris, quia sibi pro suae vitae sanctae meritis debetur cum regni gloria." Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Sermones Pomerii de sanctis II. Pars aestivalis* (Augsburg, 1502). Sermo LII., div. H. The Annunciation to Géza in div. G of the same sermon: "Cumque iam in Christo baptizatus et spiritu fervens nimis sollicitus esset de ritibus sacrilegis destruendis et rebellibus domandis, ac episcopatibus et ecclesiis construendis, ecce quadam nocte astitit Angelus Domini in specie iuvenis, aspectu delectabilis, dicens: "Pax tibi, Christi electe, iubeo te de sollicitudine tua fore securum. Non tamen tibi concessum est, quod meditaris, quia manus pollutas humano sanguine habes, sed de te filius nasciturus est, cui haec omnia disponenda commendavit Deus." "Pelbartus: Pomerium de sanctis, Pars aestivalis Sermo LXXXIV," Eötvös Loránd University Sermones Compilati Research Group, accessed on 23 August 2019, <http://sermones.elte.hu/pelbart/pa/pa084.html>.

²⁵ Jacques Bongars, *Rerum Hungaricarum scriptores varii, historici, geographici: Ex veteribus...* (Frankfurt, 1600), p. 272; Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, *De officio principis Christiani libri tres* (Rome, 1619), pp. 348–49; Lorenz Beyerlinck, *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae ...* vol. 1 (Venice, 1707), p. 428; Johannes Georgius Schwandtner, *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum veteres ac genuini...* vol. 1 (Vienna, 1746), pp. 417–18; Marianus Gerl, *Innocentium romani pontificis in elargiendis honorum titulis jus ab ineptiis...* (Regensburg, 1759), p. 94; Josephi Innocenti Desericii, *Stephanus Supremus, Et Ultimus Majorum Hungarorum: atque ad eo corona et coronis...* (Pest, 1760), p. 41; Alexius Horányi, *Memoria Hungarorum et provincialium scriptis editis motorum*, vol. 3 (Bratislava, 1777), p. 299; Ignátz Csétsényi Svastics, *Magyarok históriája* (Bratislava, 1805); 85, even the Hungarian translation "az Úrnak Angyala" differentiates this angel on page 51; Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis liber unus* (Naples, 1862), 586; Cesare Baronio, *Annales Ecclesiastici* vol. 16 (Lyon, 1859), p. 380; Cesare Baronio, *Annales Ecclesiastici* vols. 15–16 (Lyon, 1868), p. 380.

²⁶ Luigi Lippomano, *De Vitis Sanctorum: Complectens Sanctos Mensium Iulii et Augusti*, vol. 4 (Venice, 1581), p. 266.

²⁷ Laurentius Surius, *Historiae seu vitae sanctorum juxta optimam coloniensem editionem...* vol. 9 (Turin, 1878), p. 37.

hagiographies dating from the lifetime of the author, and equally infamous for his lack of consideration for subsequent modifications thereof. Surius, in contrast, was particularly interested in changes that texts underwent over time, and put heavy emphasis on the authors' reputation (Touber 2014, p. 64). Two hagiographers of such diverse methods equally establishing a preference for the *Angelus Domini* Hartvik version suggests that this was the version they both believed to be the authentic, earliest text of the Legend.²⁸

The fact that the *Legendae Sanctorum regni Hungariae* still contained the *nuncius domini* version allows for the consequence that the *Angelus Domini* version came into existence at some point between its 1498 date and the 1581 first usage by Lippomano. Pelbartus' intermediary version of the text further narrows the birth of the *Angelus Domini* version to the period between 1502 and 1581. It should be noted, though, that the c. 1115 *Gesta principum Polonorum* by Martinus Gallus (also known as Gallus Anonymus, 1066–1145), the earliest account of the history of Poland, also called the same angel *Angelus Domini*, being the earliest source to my knowledge to do so.²⁹ Given that it was composed only approximately 15 years after the alleged composition of the Hartvik Legend, the idea of referring to the angel directing the crown to Hungary as *Angelus Domini* may not have been alien to Hungarians even if Bishop Hartvik happened to make a different word choice in his own text. The difference may not be insignificant. According to a two millennia old tradition in angelology, the being referred to as *mal'ak YHWH* (מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה) in the Old Testament and as *Angelus Domini* in the Vulgate is more than just an angel among many.

Gieschen (1998) recently provided a long-awaited overview of the *Angelus Domini* problematics in his book *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*. The debate proposes the denomination of a being distinct from created angels in Scriptural passages using the expression 'the Angel of the Lord' as opposed to 'an angel of the Lord'. The first generally recognized OT appearance of the phrase is the angel's apparition to Hagar in Genesis 16:7–14, the second one is the three young men visiting Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18:1–16. Further examples include the sacrifice of Abraham in Genesis 22:11–18, the burning bush in Exodus 3:13–14, the story of the prophet Gideon in Judges 6:11–24, the Annunciation to Manoah and his wife in Judges 13:3–22, the Dream of Jacob in Wisdom 31, Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22:21–35, and Joshua before the heavenly council in Zechariah 3:1–10. There is no full agreement in scholarship about the exact number of *Angelus Domini* apparitions narrated in the Bible, since passages where the angel is explicitly referred to as the *Angelus Domini* have been expanded with passages where the context suggests that the angel appearing might be the *Angelus Domini*.³⁰

The basis of the identification is the interchangeability of God and the *Angelus Domini*: while the text uses the term 'messenger,' the narrative endows the figure with divine features in these cases. The actions and visually discernible form of the *Angelus Domini* do not differentiate the being from other angels; he is endowed with the same awe-inspiring yet appealing appearance, commands his subjects, conveys divine messages or foretells the future. Yet, the *Angelus Domini* typically appears to individuals with the aim of safeguarding the fate of the people as a whole (Garrett 2008, pp. 21, 30), and humans meeting him perceive the presence as divine. The angel speaks, acts, and is addressed as God, even an occasional variation is detectable in the text between the use of *Angelus Domini* and God to denote the same being. The *Angelus Domini* appears as a man of an imposing and distinct presence but speaks as if he were God (Gieschen 1998, pp. 62–63), at times even using the first person pronoun

²⁸ The possibility that Lippomano intentionally modified the original Hartvik text of course cannot be excluded but it seems to be rather incompatible with his characteristic *modus operandi*.

²⁹ "Quumque in crastino legatis Poloniae dari corona debuisset; ecce eadem nocte Papae per visum Angelus Domini apparuit, et duci Stephano eam dari praecepit; quam quare duci Poloniae eam dare non praecepit..." (Knauz 1866, p. 220).

³⁰ According to White (1999, p. 300), the phrase *mal'ak YHWH* (מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה) or 'angel of the LORD', appears 48 times in 45 verses in the Bible. Among debated *Angelus Domini* passages Gieschen included, for example, the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud leading Israel out of Egypt in Exod 14.19–24; or the angel wrestling with Jacob in Genesis 32:22–31 (Gieschen 1998, pp. 60, 78–79).

in these cases. While there is a noticeable variation in consistency (Gieschen 1998, pp. 56–57; Garrett 2008, pp. 22, 246 fn. 6, 247 fn. 12), these passages implicitly identify God and the *Angelus Domini* as the same being.

While the *Angelus Domini* has as yet kept the secret of his or her identity, the majority of approaches nonetheless explained the being as a theophanic angel.³¹ The *identity theory* asserts that the *Angelus Domini* is a visible manifestation of God the Father, who appears to humans in the form of an angel with regard to the impossibility of a direct encounter between God and human beings.³² Perhaps a more extreme version of the same, the *messenger theory* stresses the union between sender and messenger; and the *interpolation theory* accordingly asserts that the expression *Angelus Domini* was added to the texts subsequently to soften the anthropomorphism of God appearing in the visible form of a man.³³ The *Angelus Domini* denomination could, along similar lines, be simply a literary device, a differentiated expression which employs tension to the text to highlight the paradox of an unmediated encounter with God.³⁴

Another group of theories discussed the details of the *Angelus Domini*'s participation in the divine. The *l'ame exterieure theory* holds that the *Angelus Domini* is the direct manifestation of an aspect of God's personality. The *hypostasis theory* says the *Angelus Domini* is a distinct but not separate aspect of God, identifiable with His Name, Glory or Wisdom, for instance, and stemming from Jewish traditions picturing these attributes of God as independent angels. The *Logos theory* asserts that the *Angelus Domini* can be identified with various different angels and persons depending on who or which form best fulfils the *Angelus Domini*'s primary function as the Word of God, i.e., God's primary means of communication with the created world (Gieschen 1998, pp. 70–121; Garrett 2008, pp. 27, 53–57, 74).

Ideas for the identification of the *Angelus Domini* coalesced, already by Paul's day, into the theory of a chief heavenly mediator who participates in the divine in some way, from which it did not take long to interpret the *Angelus Domini* as the second person of the Trinity. Followers point out the reference to Christ's secret name in Revelations 19:12 and argue that the Hebrew word denoting angels in the Bible (*mal'ak*, מַלְאָךְ) can mean not only messenger but also representative, either human or divine (Garrett 2008, pp. 26–27, 55, 67, 74, 127, 238; Gieschen 1998, pp. 23, 316, 325–27, 351; Hoffmann 2003, pp. 230–32; White 1999, p. 300). Gieschen (1998, pp. 6–8) pointed out that interest in the question was at a particular high before the 325 CE Council of Nicea, although subsequent dogmatic bounds also maintained an ontological difference between the *Angelus Domini* and created angels. While a reading of Paul with the identification of Christ as the *Angelus Domini* has also been suggested (Gieschen 1998, pp. 315–48), Justin Martyr is generally acknowledged as the starting point for the identification of Christ and the *Angelus Domini* (*Dialogus cum Tryphone* 76.3; 86.3; 93.2; 116.1; 126.6; 127.4; 128.1, 2, 4). Tertullian considered Christ to be an angel in His function as God's messenger, but not ontologically,

³¹ Among alternative theories, Jews before and during the time of Jesus understood the *Angelus Domini* as the primary angel, who is still a being completely separate from God (Garrett 2008, p. 27). Presumably this approach lived further in the *representation theory*, which asserts that the expression denominates a created angel, Biblical or apocryphal, among them perhaps even Metatron, acting as God's ambassador (Gieschen 1998, pp. 124–51; Garrett 2008, pp. 31, 54). The proposal that the expression denotes the angel in charge of the execution of divine punishments has also found followers, not irrelevant for the understanding of angels as the Hand of God (*manus or dextera Domini*) (Gieschen 1998, pp. 313, 325–29; Garrett 2008, pp. 249, fn. 27, 191, 202, fn. 57; Eszenyi 2016; Hoffmann 2003). Vincenzo Cicogna (c. 1519–after 1596), a Church reformer priest and theological writer involved in the 1500s Catholic reform in and around Verona, identified as the *Angelus Domini* as Lucifer. Vincenzo Cicogna, *Angolorum et Demonum nomina et attributa...* (The J. Paul Getty Research Institute MS 86-A866, Fol. 97^{r-v})—see (Eszenyi 2014, pp. 18–179). Human figures such as prophets have also been put forward as *Angelus Domini* candidates; see (Gieschen 1998, pp. 152–86). For an overview of *Angelus Domini* theories, their origins, bibliography, and criticism see (White 1999, pp. 303–5; Gieschen 1998, pp. 53–57).

³² Humans must experience the divine presence in a way suited to their limitations as finite beings whom God's unmediated holiness would otherwise overwhelm and eventually consume. The angel form creates a redaction of the divine essence and prevents an eventually fatal encounter (Garrett 2008, pp. 23–26, 38, 58, 247 fn. 15).

³³ In publications appearing roughly at the same time, White attributed the *interpolation theory* to W. G. Heidt, while Gieschen mentioned Heidt Gerhard von Rad as the person 'who championed this approach' (Gieschen 1998, p. 54; White 1999, pp. 303–4).

³⁴ White's (1999, p. 305) own theory.

since the Second Person of the Trinity is not a created being (*De carne Christi* 14). Philo's reading of the Logos, as an aspect of God with an independent agency identifiable as the *Angelus Domini*, has also been interpreted as a reference to Christ (e.g., *De migratione Abrahami* 174, *De Agricultura Noë* 51, *Legum Allegoriae* 3.217–219). Origen of Alexandria identified Christ and the Holy Spirit as two supreme Angels of the Presence (*De Principiis* I.3.4); while Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340) explicitly called Christ the 'Angel of the Most High his Father' (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.5, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 1.5).³⁵ Evidence of Christ being identified with the *Angelus Domini* can similarly be found in Pseudo-Clementine texts; as well as in the diverse second-century angelomorphic figures of *The Shepherd of Hermas* and *The Ascension of Isaiah* (Gieschen 1998, pp. 201–44).

From the point of view of the Hungarian *corona angelica* tradition, the key is the theophanic, divine essence of the *Angelus Domini*, and the fact that this angel has been considered divine since Old Testament times. As Gieschen (1998, p. 68) summarized it: "...the angel is either indistinguishable from God as his visible manifestation or the angel is a figure somewhat distinct from God, yet who shares God's authority."

The age-old nature of the tradition distinguishing the *Angelus Domini* from other angels makes it plausible that the being was differentiated from created angels in Hungary, just like in other parts of Christianity. Evidence is once again provided by the arguably richest source for the *corona angelica* tradition, the *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*. The chronicle recounts an encounter among the afore-mentioned St. Ladislaus, his brother Géza, and a miraculous stag; at the end of which St. Ladislaus realizes the stag is an angel indicating the site where they should construct a church.³⁶ The text describes an angelic encounter, similarly to Ladislaus' vision about the angel delivering the crown to his brother, but does not use the expression *Angelus Domini* to denote the angel this time. The miraculous stag in Ladislaus' explanation is referred to as '*Angelus Dei*'. Other references to angels (disguised or not) simply use the word '*angelus*' in the compilation. The situation is similar with the 1500s modification of the Hartvik Legend, where the expression *Angelus Domini* is reserved for the angel delivering the Crown.

The possibility that Hungary, at some point, recognized the *Angelus Domini* in the angel delivering the Hungarian Crown may not be without relevance in context of the Byzantine origins of the tradition either. Váczy argued that visual representations of the *corona angelica* in Western art demonstrated a need to link the emperor's claim to the throne directly with the divinity; whereas in Byzantium, the direct heir of the Roman Empire, this need was not so urgent. This is why angels could more commonly take over the task of the coronation, which Váczy explained somewhat light-heartedly perhaps, but also in a way that is difficult to doubt, with their gentle nature and general popularity.³⁷

Nevertheless, the *corona angelica* is performed in the presence of the divinity in all Byzantine pictorial representations listed by Váczy, seemingly unlike in the case of the Hungarian images. Basil II is indeed being crowned by Gabriel in his psalter portrait (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS Marc. gr. 17, Fol. 3r, after 1017), but Christ hands down the crown from Heaven. In the famous *Liber vitae* image of King Cnut and Queen Aelfgifu (London, British Museum, MS Stowe 944, Fol. 6r, 1020–1030)

³⁵ Gieschen (1998, pp. 187–98) also mentions Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus of Rome, Novatian, and Lactantius in the history of the idea's formation.

³⁶ "Et dum ibi starent iuxta Vaciam, ubi nunc est ecclesia Beati Petri apostoli, apparuit eis cervus habens cornua plena ardentibus candelis, cepitque fugere coram eis versus silvam et in loco, ubi nunc est monasterium, fixit pedes suos. Quem cum milites sagittarent, proiecit se in Danubium, et eum ultra non viderunt. Quo viso Beatus Ladizlaus ait: Vere non cervus, sed angelus Dei erat. Et dixit Geysa rex: Dic michi, dilecte frater, quid fieri volunt omnes candelae ardentis vise in cornibus cervi. Respondit Beatus Ladizlaus: Non sunt cornua, sed ale, non sunt candelae ardentis, sed penne fulgentes, pedes vero fixit, quia ibi locum demonstravit, ut ecclesiam Beate Virgini non alias, nisi hic edificari faceremus." SRH vol. 1, 394. The church in question is the present-day Church of the Blessed Virgin in Vác, in the vicinity of Budapest.

³⁷ Constantinos Porphyrogenitus' *De administrando imperio*, where chapter 13 declared that imperial regalia were sent from God to Constantine the Great by 'his angel', also declared that these angelic donations ought to be kept in the Hagia Sophia and used only on great religious holidays. The Hungarian crown was similarly kept in the Maria Church in Székesfehérvár and used only on the three major holidays, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost (Váczy 1985, p. 6; Rácz 2011, p. 12; Kerny 2003, p. 6; Bíró and Kertész 2007, p. 369).

an angel puts a crown on the king's head, but Christ is overseeing the scene above and the angel even points at Him.³⁸ Christ is similarly hovering above Emperor Constantinos Monomakhos, Empress Zoe and her sister Theodora while two angels reach down with two crowns from the sky (Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, MS 364, Fol. 3r, c. 1042–1050). In the portrait of an unknown emperor in the Barberini Psalter (Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb. gr. 372, Fol. 5r, after 1180), the angel holds his right hand on the crown while pointing towards Christ with the left. Finally, the Bulgarian Tzar Ivan Alexander indeed receives the crown from an angel but he is standing between Christ and the chronicler Constantine Manasses in the late Manasses-Chronicle (Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Slav. 2, Fol. 22r, c. 1345).³⁹

Byzantine artistic representations, therefore, support the idea that the divinity was supposed to be present at the coronation even if it was *de facto* performed by angels. Perhaps the Hungarian tradition expressed the same by choosing, from all the angels, the theophanic *Angelus Domini* to deliver the nation's Holy Crown, an angel whose presence consequently did not make it necessary to include (other) divine figures in pictorial compositions. As another consequence, this could also mean that Hungarian images representing the angelic coronation as performed by one angel as listed above, may be a characteristic regional variation of the *Angelus Domini* iconography, stemming from the chronologically earliest, c. 1360 *Chronicon Pictum* coronation portrait of Géza I.

In lack of early sources from the history of Hungarian spirituality, it is, of course, difficult to state with certainty whether the angel delivering the Crown was ever understood to have a theophanic presence. The question might still be worth asking, perhaps. Considering the age of the tradition differentiating the *Angelus Domini* from other angels, it is reasonable to assume that it did not go unnoticed by medieval Hungarians who, in turn, imagined the *Angelus Domini* as a theophanic angel in charge of delivering their precious Crown. This did not necessarily have to happen before the 1300s emergence of the expression in Hungarian sources. Considering the popularity of the *Angelus Domini* version of the Hartvik Legend, the association could as well have taken place in the 1500s or later, while this version enjoyed a steady growth in popularity.

Obviously, two layers must be separated at this point: the intention of chroniclers using the *Angelus Domini* expression and the readers' understanding of the text. A similarly careful distinction must be made between the intention of the artists representing the *corona angelica* in the iconography of the four kings involved, and the viewers' interpretation of the images. If the *Angelus Domini* was indeed understood as a theophanic angel in medieval Hungary as well, the Hungarian *corona angelica* might be a step in-between the Eastern and Western tradition. In that case, the Byzantine *corona angelica* tradition was not simply copied but transformed and somewhat westernized by the time it arrived in Hungary, not only geographically but also in its ideology. Hungary received the Crown from an angel, similarly to Byzantium, but this angel was theophanic to ensure the divine presence more strongly required at the coronation in the West. As it was argued above, the angelic coronation never fully

³⁸ It should be noted, though, that while technically an angelic coronation happens in the image, Cnut receives not an actual crown but the Crown of Glory, which the king is expected to receive not on earth but upon entering Heaven. See (Karkov 2004, p. 137), I hereby thank Prof. Karkov for consultation on the topic. The situation is similar with another, non-Byzantine example brought by Váczy, the c. 1125–35 coronation miniature of St. Edmund the Martyr (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 736, Fol. 22^v). Indeed two angels place a crown on the king's head while Edmund is surrounded by four other angels and no divine figures are present, but the miniature shows Edmund's apotheosis, therefore a heavenly and not earthly coronation. Edmund's actual earthly coronation is depicted on Fol. 8^v of the same manuscript, where the crown is placed on his head by a cleric (Pinner 2015, pp. 65, 68, 72).

³⁹ The earliest example brought by Váczy is the c. 880 coronation portrait of Basil I (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Gr. 510, Fol. 14^v), where the emperor is crowned by Archangel Gabriel and handed a labarum by his patron saint Elijah. While admittedly no divine figure is present in the scene, the concept of the divine is not missing if "...Elijah represents the divine force that assured Basil's rule" (Brubaker 1999, p. 161). Váczy did not mention the famous miniature showing an emperor being crowned by two angels in the c. 981–987 Benevento Exultet roll (Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana MS Vat. Lat. 9820). The image has been associated with Otto II but whether it is an actual portrait is questionable. Furthermore, the roll is a palimpsest, it was cut into pieces and most of the text was erased to be replaced by the Vulgate in the 1100s, which makes the presence of divinity around the coronation similarly difficult to state with certainty (Ladner 1983, p. 320, fn. 31).

seceded from the divinity in Byzantine art either, and the divine presence the *Angelus Domini* brings to the act could offer an explanation for the absence of divine figures from Hungarian *corona angelica* images. Further examination of the written and visual source material will hopefully clear some grounds, or at least further muddy the angelic waters around the Holy Crown of Hungary.

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