



# KINGS & QUEENS 15

September 2 to 4, 2026

Prague

## KINGS, QUEENS AND DYNASTIES IN PERIL

The Royal Studies Network and the Research Centre on Courts and Residences of the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences are delighted to announce that the next Kings & Queens conference will be held in the Czech Republic in Prague. The fifteenth Kings & Queens conference will focus on **Kings, Queens and Dynasties in Peril**, as 2026 marks the anniversary of several key historical events of **1306, 1526 and 1806**, which affected the existence of the Bohemian Kingdom and numerous other dynasties and monarchies, not only in Central Europe.

The assassination of the young King Wenceslas III in **1306** marked the unexpected end of the Přemyslid dynasty. Of the legitimate members of the royal family, only the Přemyslid women and the royal widow remained without any surviving male offspring. A literal game for the throne commenced between the royal men, women and the nobility. After several years of fighting, intrigues and battles, the Luxembourg dynasty emerged victorious. In **1526**, the young King of Bohemia and Hungary, Louis II of Hungary-Bohemia, died unexpectedly in the Battle of Mohács, as did numerous leading aristocrats and courtiers. The king was survived by a childless widow, Queen Mary of Austria. His demise left the thrones of both the Bohemian and Hungarian kingdoms vacant, and they were eventually assumed by the Habsburgs. Anna of Hungary-Bohemia, the wife of the new ruler Ferdinand of Austria, gave birth to ten children, who ensured the unique position of the Habsburg dynasty via their marriages. For a long time, the Habsburg Monarchy seemed to be on a trajectory of continued prosperity. Most recently, in **1806**, one of Emperor Napoleon's many moves to threaten the old European monarchies culminated in the formation of the Confederation of the Rhine and the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire. This transformation marked not only the end of one of Europe's institutions, but also a profound restructuring of dynastic structures. What were the consequences of Napoleon's actions, which created new royal dynasties, and what was the fate of the men and women of the old and new royal families?

The weaknesses and threats to various dynastic empires have consistently come to the fore in critical and unforeseen circumstances. However, it is evident that these situations often had deeper origins. Sometimes, these were long-standing concerns pertaining to the mental or physical health of the rulers, the infertility of royal couples or the mortality of their children, the rivalries between relatives, or the demands of the nobility for a share in the governance of the country.

**DaR**

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ROYAL STUDIES NETWORK



**The theme is divided into five main areas of research:**

- I Deposition and rejection of rulers**
- II Waiting for successors**
- III Handicaps and disabilities of monarchs**
- IV Death as a new beginning**
- V Shaping of royal men and women**

**Key Speakers:**

Assoc. prof. Jonathan Spangler (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Assoc. prof. Cindy McCreery – prof. Robert Aldrich (The University of Sydney)

**To propose a 20-minute paper**, please submit your abstract (up to 250 words) with a short bio of the presenter(s) to [kq26prague@hiu.cas.cz](mailto:kq26prague@hiu.cas.cz) by 31 January 2026. Proposals for panels should include a maximum of four papers and provide the same information. Selected applicants will be notified by 28 February 2026. The conference will be held in English.

**For more information** about the conference and updates, please visit the Royal Studies Network website (<https://www.royalstudiesnetwork.org/k-q-conference-serie>) and the Centre for Research on Courts and Residences website and social media (<https://www.hiu.cas.cz/en/centre-for-research-on-courts-and-residences>).

**Conference Fees**

For researchers: 180 EUR

For PhD Candidates: 160 EUR

Excursion: 30 EUR

Further information on the conference fees will be made available after the acceptance of the papers.

**ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

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**EXCURSION TO KONOPIŠTĚ CASTLE**

The main excursion of the *Kings & Queens 2026* conference, themed *Kings, Queens and Dynasties in Peril*, will take participants to Konopiště Castle, a place site symbolically linked to the crises of the Habsburg dynasty on multiple levels.

Konopiště Castle was the residence of the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand d'Este (1863-1914), whose morganatic marriage to Countess Sophie Chotek broke the traditional rules of the Habsburg family and caused an internal dynastic crisis. The tragic assassination of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie in Sarajevo in 1914 led to the outbreak of the First World War – a conflict that had a profound impact on the world and contributed to the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy. The death of Emperor Franz Joseph I in 1916 marked the end of an era and foreshadowed the final fall of the monarchy in 1918.

However, Konopiště Castle is not only connected with the personal fate of the heir to the throne, but also serves as a symbol of the intense social transformations that occurred after 1918. The prevailing negative attitudes of the population towards the Habsburgs were also reflected in their attitude towards Franz Ferdinand's orphans, who remained at Konopiště. Despite the fact that they were descendants of a morganatic marriage, and therefore not formally recognised as members of the imperial family, public demonstrations were held against them. Ultimately, the orphans had to leave Konopiště and their assets in Czechoslovakia subsequently became the property of the state.

Konopiště Castle is thus a remarkable site, connecting several symbolic aspects of the story of the decline of the monarchy – these range from the internal crisis of dynastic traditions, through the political and social upheavals of World War I, to the subsequent consequences of the monarchy's collapse, which also impacted the personal lives of individual family members. The excursion will offer conference participants the opportunity not only to walk through these historic locations but also to gain deeper insight into the broader political, social, and dynastic crises that are central to the conference theme.

Image: Map Collection of the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences