



COMMEMORATIVE COIN
TO CELEBRATE THE 750TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE CROWNING OF MINDAUGAS

Denomination 200 litas
Gold (Au 900)
Silver (Ag 925)
Diameter 27 mm
Weight 15 g (core 7.9 g)
Quality proof
Words on the edge of the coin:
LIETUVOS KARALYSTĖ 1253
(KINGDOM OF LITHUANIA 1253)
Designer of the coin Petras Repšys
Mintage 2000
Issued 2003

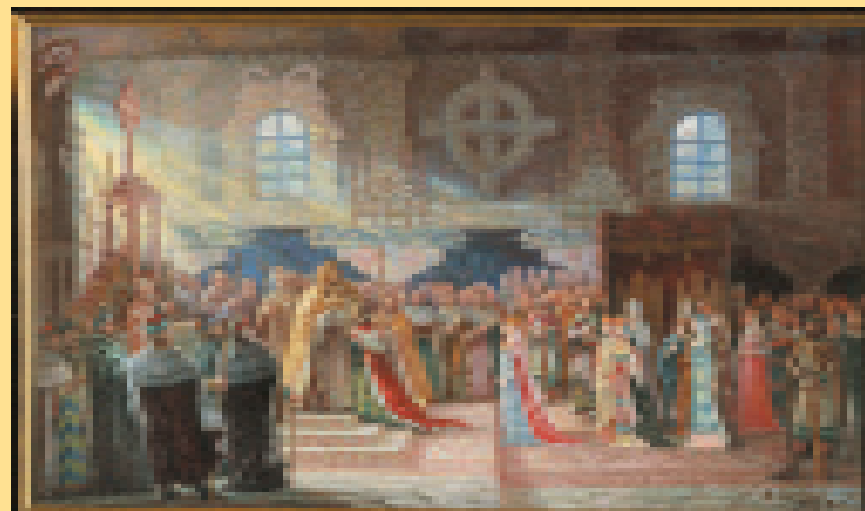
MINDAUGAS AS THE FOUNDER OF THE LITHUANIAN STATE

Mindaugas was the first ruler of Lithuania. One may think that this alone is enough to consider Mindaugas as one of the most outstanding personalities to be honoured for his deeds. He made the greatest creation in the history of early Lithuania, a state that gave the Lithuanian nation an opportunity to survive and later adopt Western civilisation. When did this happen? The belief shared today is that the Lithuanian state was established ca. 1240, but Mindaugas needed time to strengthen his power. The opposition consisted, first of all, of the representatives of his own family who not only sought the aid of Samogitians but also foreigners – Volhynia and the Livonian Order.

Mindaugas used both military campaigns and diplomacy to overcome this problem: he took advantage of internal discord in the Livonian Order and enlisted the support of Andrew of Stirland, Master of the Order. It was owing to him that Mindaugas was christened in 1251 and soon was crowned as king. Therefore, the key goal that the baptism was to help achieve was the crown. This was accomplished on 6 July 1253.

The day of Mindaugas' coronation is the most honourable date in our calendar, for he was the first and last King of Lithuania. However, the deed was even more significant from another point of view. In a way it completed the formation of the state, as Lithuania was then recognised by the surrounding world of the time. This is why that date is as great a holiday today as February 16 or March 11.

There are other reasons to maintain that Mindaugas was not just a man acting under the influence of circumstances but rather a maker of history. He had to accomplish more than the rulers of other, earlier established Central European countries. Bohemia became a kingdom in the 12th century, while a separate archbishopric was established there as late as in the 14th century; Poland became a kingdom and established an archbishopric at the junction between the 10th and 11th centuries, yet, like Bohemia, it became the vassal of the Holy Roman Emperor, not the Pope. Mindaugas, on the other hand, who became king with the help of the

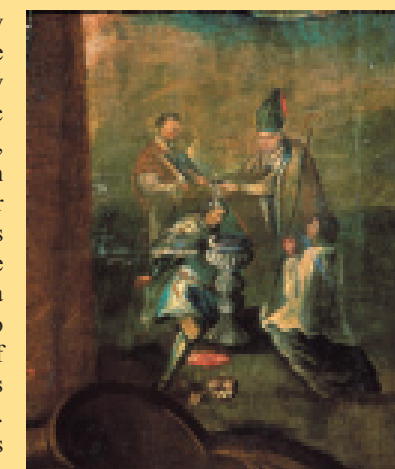


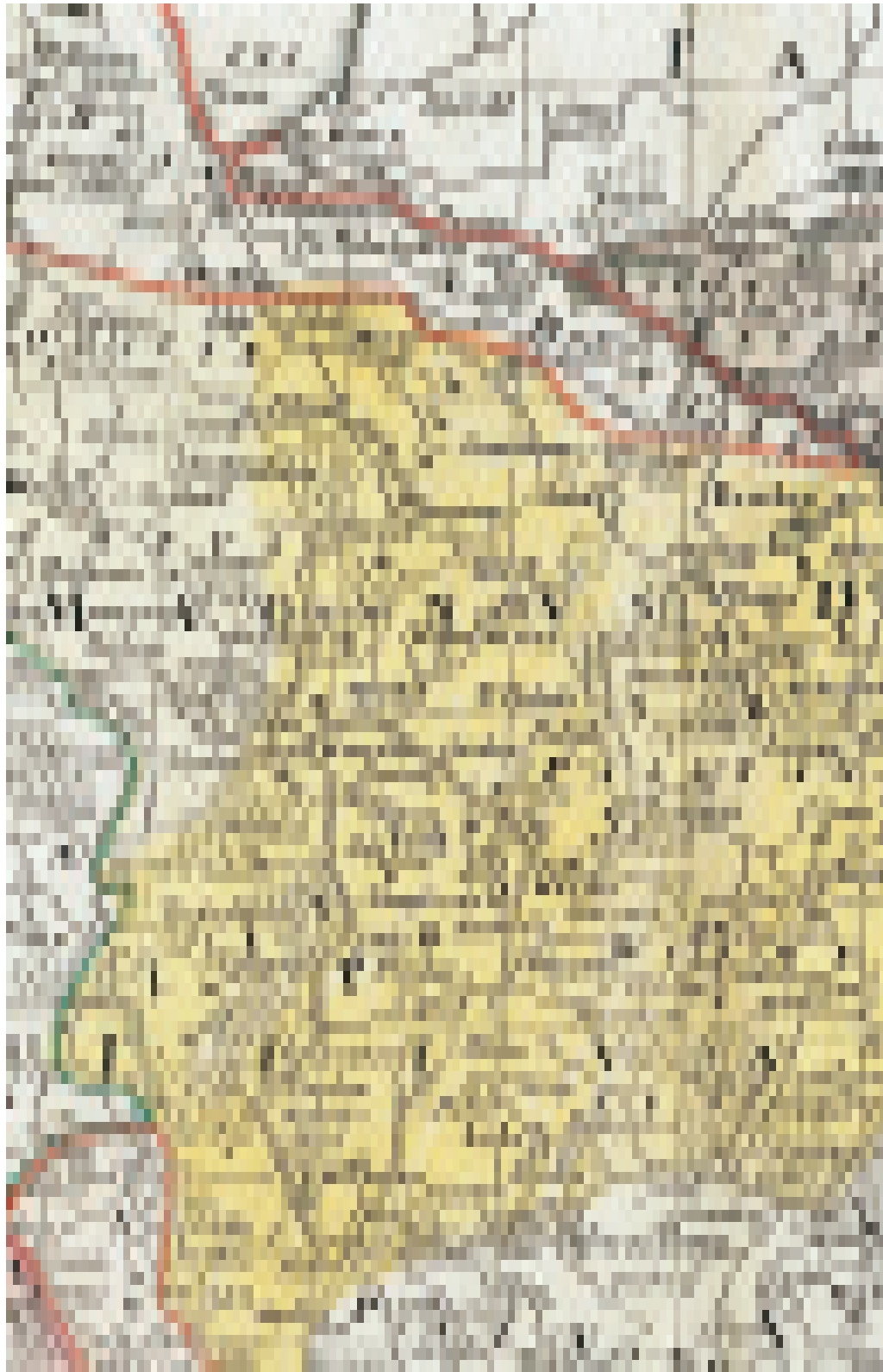
Livonian Order, itself vassal of the Holy Roman Empire, got to be the vassal of the Pope, not the Emperor, and was immediately granted the right to an independent bishopric directly subordinate to the Pope. Moreover, after several years he got the king's crown for his dynasty when the Pope allowed for his son to be crowned as well. All of this was the result of Mindaugas' diplomacy. He made a shrewd choice of an assistant, Christian, a priest and brother of the Livonian Order, who enlightened him about the organisation of the Catholic Church and the Pope's relations with European rulers, especially the Emperor. Through his envoy Parbus Mindaugas presented to the Pope his own terms that were more beneficial to Lithuania than to the Livonian Order, the intermediary of christening and coronation. To the surprise of Livonian envoys, the Pope satisfied the request of Parbus, i.e. Mindaugas. Thus Mindaugas claimed the first international victory for Lithuanian diplomacy by managing to avoid political links with the Holy Roman Empire. This important diplomatic achievement showed that Mindaugas was a talented and creative personality who was capable of steering the course of events towards a desired goal. Even his enemies called him wise.

That is the role of Mindaugas in the history of Lithuania, yet there is also a European dimension to him. During the Early Middle Ages the Popes kindly accepted baptism of countries; from the 9th to the 11th centuries European, primarily Central and North European, countries were allowed to take baptism independently and become the vassals of the Pope or the Emperor. However, this changed in the 12th–13th centuries, when Europe entered the epoch of crusades (the seventh crusade took place during Mindaugas' rule, while the eighth, and the last one, soon after his death). During that period the right of pagan countries and nations for independent baptism was no longer recognised. Baptism was only granted following their conquest. This is why the Slavs of Pomerania, Finns, Estonians and Latvians were conquered, Prussians, Yotvingians, Curonians and Semigalians were wiped out, while Mindaugas not only managed to create a state but also join, while only temporarily, the system of European countries. In the Baltic region, that could be called the Latest Medieval Europe, Mindaugas was the only one to turn his nation into a subject of history. During the later history of Lithuania it was only Vytautas who could claim a similar European role due to the victory in the Battle of Grünwald that stopped the German *Drang nach Osten*, and the makers of Lithuanian independence of 1990 who contributed to the collapse of the Soviet empire.

Mindaugas suffered a tragic fate: he was murdered in 1263. Yet it was on the foundations of the state established by him that an empire, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, emerged in the 14th century, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Consequently, traces of Mindaugas' achievements survived until the very destruction of the state in 1795 and, in a sense, even until the restoration of the state of Lithuania in 1918 and 1990. But today the most significant mark of his deeds and ideas is the ability to perceive Lithuania in Europe and to take it there.

Prof. dr. Alfredas Bumblauskas





Information is available at the Bank of Lithuania
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The coin was minted at the state enterprise
"Lithuanian Mint"
www.lithuanian-mint.lt

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