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The Hortenau Family – the Unknown Hapsburgs¹

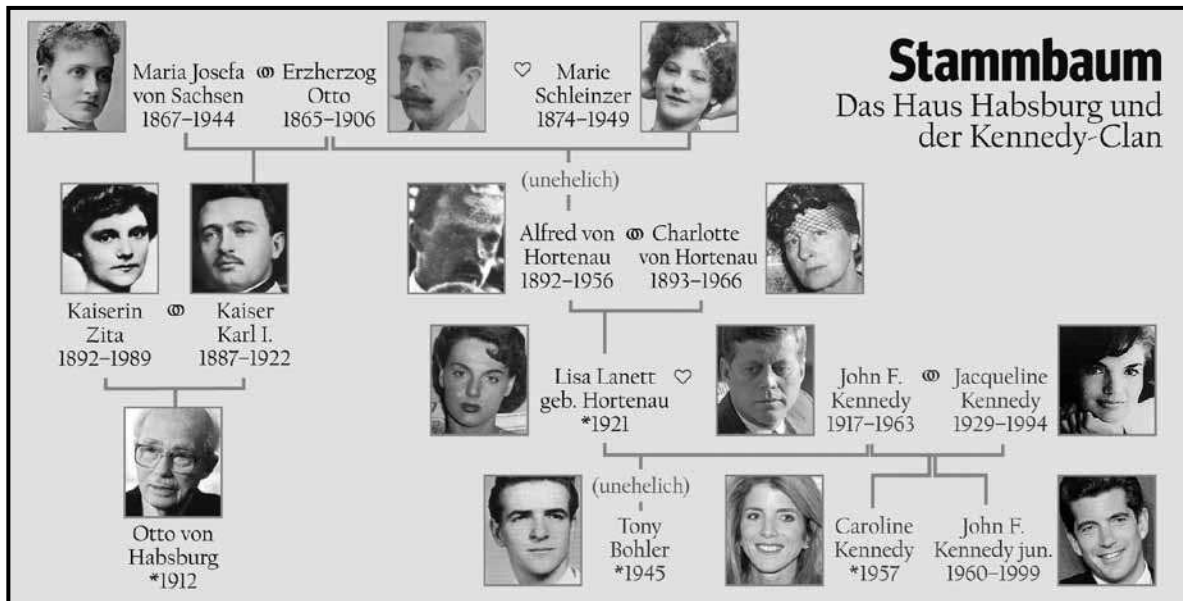
The House of Hapsburg, or actually the family of Hapsburg–Lorraine, was long governed by a customary law based on tradition. The legal foundation of their position was — according to some old documents — above all the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713, which authorised the principle of the integrity of the empire and the power of the ruling dynasty. It also made throne succession principles more precise, and made it possible for women to assume royal power, too, if necessary. Alongside the rules on inheritance, it also reinforced a hierarchical structure of dynasty and regulated the difficult issues of etiquette. Since then, everybody knew their place within the Hapsburg dynasty, and any primacy contention has since been immaterial.²

The ways of the dynasty or the duties of its members have not been codified, though. Those were written down only in 1839 in the Imperial–Austrian family statute of 3 February, 1839 (*Kaiserlich Oesterreichische Familien–Statut vom 3. Februar 1839*). Its provisions were classified until the fall of monarchy, which as of mid–19th century caused heavy criticism on the part of parliamentarians. The document, made up of 61 articles, was since its conception kept in *Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv*, which was subordinated to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Imperial House. It was usually aristocrats from the best houses that sat in it, possibly because part of their workload was the issues of the whole imperial family, on top of foreign policy.

The family statute of 1839 was by and large the work of Chancellor Clement, Duke von Metternich, who strove to preserve and strengthen not only the power of Austria, but also the unity of the whole Hapsburg family, which was in danger in the aftermath of the demise of Emperor Franz I. His son and successor, Ferdinand I, had “serious problems with himself” and the impression that he acted in the name of the dynasty was absolutely fallacious. The rulers of Tuscany and Modena, despite being dependent on the military might of Vienna, ceased to recognise the authority of the young emperor, while the Hungarian line, represented by the local palatine, Archduke Joseph (1776–1847), supporting the tendencies for the autonomy of the Crown of Saint Stephen, was getting dangerously independent. The family statute was then written mainly for the sake of reinforcing the position of the weak monarch, whose entitlements as the head of the family were thus engrained in law and hence unchangeable: “The emperor, as the head of the family, is not only sovereign and judge of all family members, but he is also entitled to special supervision, and in particular: care, guardianship and supervision of entering into wedlock, but above all the monitoring of any activities and relations of the highest–ranking family members

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² cf. Valentin Urfus, *19.4.1713 — Pragmatická sankce: rodný list podunajské monarchie* (Praha, 2002).



Hapsburg and Kennedy family tree

that could affect the honour, dignity, peace, order and welfare of the Their Most Serene Dynasty.³³ Although the statute was sometimes perceived as a way of enhancing the influence of Metternich, after 1848, when the young Franz Joseph I was sworn successor to the throne, it became the pillar on which the emperor based his power within the dynasty, justifying his interventions into the lives of other family members.

In accordance with the statute, the whole family formed the so-called House of Hapsburg, a durable and structured social group, with the monarch-emperor its head. Inscribing this structure in the law was of utmost significance because until 1839 the relations between the monarch and his family members had been based on tradition and pacts. The ruler was not only entitled to sovereignty over his family in judicial issues (there was a special court under the auspices of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs), but also had the right of supervision regarding the behaviour of all his relatives. He could affect the most minor issues related to their lives. Without his knowledge, no archduke could choose a profession or travel. In fact, all their actions that could be regarded as irresponsible representation and thus harmful for the dynasty were being monitored.

The family statute also regulated other issues in more detail. The most fundamental was the membership of the House. Under Article 1, it was the emperor, as the head of the whole family, his spouse, the spouses of the previous rulers, archdukes, archduchesses, who descended in male lineage from one of the three sons of Mary Theresa and Francis I, and were descendants of the persons that were married to a royal family member. Archduchesses were members of the House until married, and once they became widows, they re-entered the House.

The supreme judge (practically the only one) of the members of the Hapsburg family was the emperor. Archdukes were exempt from any court's jurisdiction, and one could not limit their freedom or privileges. They enjoyed extraterritorial status, which proved particularly convenient after 1867. Thanks to it they did not have to receive either Austrian or Hungarian citizenship (one could not have both), so they did not have to declare as Transleithanians of Cisleithanians.

³ Brigitte Hamannová, *Habsburkové. Životopisná encyklopedie* (Praha, 1996), 23–24.

All disputes and issues were solved behind closed doors and could not be revealed. Contentious though this family absolutism may have seemed, the truth was other. Despite some exceptions,⁴ until the fall of the dynasty in 1918, all Hapsburgs recognised the authority of the emperor without any reservations and conformed to his rulings.

The wide-ranging privileges of the members of the Hapsburg–Lorraine family and their extraordinary revenue came at a price, though: above all the duty of absolute obedience to the head of the dynasty (emperor–king) and the injunction to observe the family statute. One of its chief clauses was the principle of equality in the spouse’s status. Only members of a Christian family, ruling contemporarily or supposed to rule in the future were deemed “proper for wedlock.” This rule may have been broken (with serious problems involved) by Archduke John (1782–1859), when he married a daughter of a postmaster from the Styrian Aussee, Anna Plöchl.⁵ Sixteen years later, though, after the issue of the family statute, such a union would have been impossible. Under Franz Joseph I disregard for these rules meant immediate removal from the dynasty, loss of all rights and forced emigration.⁶

It was for this reason that some archdukes never legalised their relationships, even if they had male offspring. In most cases, such matters were solved by means of money — mother was given a sum as security. The problem was considered settled since.⁷

Interestingly, no illegitimate child of the Hapsburgs was ever appointed to public office in the era of the Austrian Empire, although in the 16th and 17th centuries some bastards had received a privileged position in the society, and the name d’Austria.⁸ The 19th century society, more conservative in some ways, regarded the existence of extramarital offspring as socially unacceptable, so bastards were hardly ever legitimised. The situation of out-of-wedlock children of nobility was particularly complicated. A recognition of inherited nobility would have been considered only in two cases: if parents were married, all of their offspring automatically received the titles of their father (*egitimatío per matrimonium subsequens*). Another way out was a recognition of an illegitimate child by a decision of the emperor (*legitimatío per rescriptum principis*), for which only parents could apply. Following the imperial approval, those children gained all their fathers’ privileges, including the right to inherit their parents’ allodial assets, but

⁴ Peter Wiesflecker, *Studien zur habsburgischen Heirats- und Familienpolitik im Zeitalter Kaiser Franz Josephs I. Austritte aus dem Kaiserhaus und Ehen mit Bürgerlichen*, Diplomarbeit (Wien, 1989).

⁵ Their only child was son Franz Ludwig (1839–1891), who initiated the lineage of Counts of Meran. See Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Adelsarchiv (hereinafter: AVA, AA), Anna Plöchl, Freiherrnstand (von Brandhofen) 1834; Meran, Grafenstand 1844–1850.

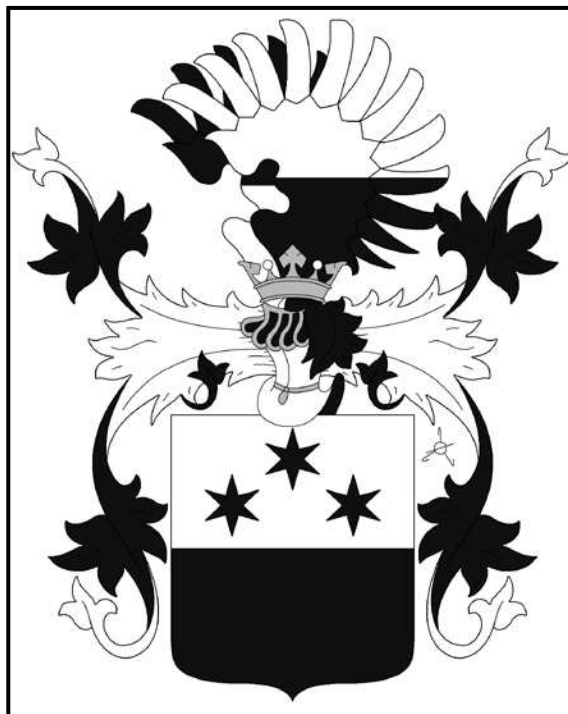
⁶ This is how Archduke Heinrich (1868–1872 Count Waidek) and Archduke Ferdinand Karl (since 1911 Ferdinand Burg) were treated. P. Wiesflecker, *Studien*, 20 n., 150 n. The so-called *casus Wallburg* has remained inexplicable. In 1858 Archduke Ernest from the line of Archduke Rainera (1824–1899) allegedly married a Hungarian noble Laura Skublics de Velike et Bessenyo (1826–1865), with whom he had four children, using the name of baron von Wallburg. Upon the duke’s death they applied to the emperor for recognition of their inheritance, which was rejected on the grounds that the emperor did not consent to their parents’ marriage. B. Hamannová, *Habsburkové*, 72–73.

⁷ Anna Nahowski got PLZ 150 000 compensation from Franz Joseph I. cf. Friedrich Saathen, ed., *Anna Nahowská a císař František Josef. Zápisky* (Praha, 1994), 124. Archduke Leopold Salvator (1847–1915) did otherwise: he really cared for his three illegitimate children living in Mallorca and divided his assets between them. B. Hamannová, *Habsburkové*, 256.

⁸ The most famous bearer of this name was don Juan d’Austria (1547–1578), victor in the battle of Lepanto, son of Emperor Charles V and Barbara Blomberg. The same name was given to the illegitimate children of Emperor Rudolph II and Anna Maria Strada von Rosberg and a son of the Spanish King Philip IV and Maria Calderón Juan José (1629–1679).



Tony Bohler

The coat of arms from the ennoblement
of the Hortenaus

they were excluded from inheriting *fideicommissum*. The rights of legitimised issue were close to those of legitimate children. So, if their father was elevated to the ranks of nobility or granted a higher title, the privilege extended to his legitimised offspring, too, and there was no need to include those in any separate document. Confessional differences between parents constituted no hindrance here, whereas the same religious issue would have made the parent's marriage impossible.⁹

It was the requirement of emperors consent that was the main hindrance in Hapsburgs' receiving legitimisations of their extramarital offspring. The ruler would have to officially endorse the cohabitation and then concede in public that some family members do maintain extramarital relationships. This was socially unacceptable, particularly in case of married Hapsburgs. Therefore, if it did come to some children becoming ennobled, this fact was being concealed. This is why any search for those is so problematic.

Today, we know of only two ennobled bastards of the Hapsburg–Lorraine dynasty.¹⁰ These are the illegitimate children coming from a years-long relationship between Archduke Otto (1865–1906) with the ballerina Maria Theresa Schleinzer (1874–1949), *de domo* Adam. Se was born from the cohabitation between Joseph Schleinzer and Katherine Adam, and initially he bore her mother's name, whereas she was ennobled (with the name Schleinzer) only upon their parents' ennoblement. She was in a long-lasting relationship with Otto, and he owned up to two children born out of this cohabitation: He later recognised Alfred (1892–1957) and Hildegard

⁹ Reinhard Binder–Kriegelstein, *Österreichisches Adelsrecht. Von der Ausgestaltung des Adelsrechts der cisleithanischen Reichshälfte bis zum Adelsaufhebungsgesetz der Republik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des adeligen Namensrechts*, (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 43.

¹⁰ J. Županič, *Nová šlechta Rakouského císařství* (Praha, 2006), 114.

(born 1894), who bore their mother's maiden name, Adam, as his own¹¹ children and secured their economic status.¹²

In 1902 Maria Theresa Schleinzer married a doctor from Opatija, Istria, Julius Cohn (born 1869) with whom she had a son. Cohn came from a Jewish family that had converted to Catholicism. He was a son of Leon Cohn, a retired first-class chief accounting counsellor, and graduated from Vienna University as a physician, and in 1897 he settled in Opatija, a reputable health spa in Istria. He was an esteemed doctor and contributed to the development of the local spas and the whole of the Austrian Riviera. During the 60-year anniversary of Francis Joseph I's enthronement in 1908, the emperor conferred on him the title of imperial counsellor.¹³

The children Maria had with Otto grew up in Cohn's family. Although any mention of them was classified, they seemed to have had their own guardian and tutor. It was a woman of most distinguished circles — Charlotte Countess von Boos–Waldeck (1838–1920), *de domo* baroness von Breidbach–Bürresheim,¹⁴ a Mistress of the Order of the Starry Cross, wife of an Imperial and Royal Bailiff, secret advisor and owner of the Lower–Austrian domain of Raabs, Johann Philipp von Boos–Waldeck (1831–1917). Even though her position has not been officially listed in preserved materials, it was her who submitted the motion for the ennoblement of the two children, and her close terms with the family of the archduke's ex-lover can be testified to by the fact that she died in 1920 in Opatija, the town where Julius Cohn performed his medical practice.

Countess Boos–Waldeck remarked to the emperor that “the children of the present spouse of Doctor Cohn were born as illegitimate, and that at the moment the legitimisation *per subsequent matrimonium* is out of the question and so is legitimisation *per rescriptum principis* ([...] the adopting father cannot have marital children, while Doctor Cohn does have his own children”),¹⁵ She stressed, too, that the names of the children should be changed — Adam to Cohn — so the ennoblement of the children ought to extend on Julius Cohn, as well. All ought to be conferred the same predicate title on. Thanks to this, it ought to be possible for Cohn and his spouse, as well as Alfred and Hildegard, to resign from using their names by the Emperor's consent, and use only the predicate name, which would create an impression of them being one family.

Francis Joseph I consented to this plan because the ennoblement applied for had one more objective — the concealment of the relationship with the Archduke. While his ennoblement, which took place on 24 October, 1911, was duly published in *Viener Zeitung*, the ennoblement of the siblings which occurred on the very same day, albeit in secret, was marked as strictly forbidden to be revealed to the press. The reasons for the ennoblement of the children were not revealed even by the materials from the cabinet chancellery; it is only in the file of Julius Cohen that we find the information that his ennoblement was performed upon the motion by the Viceroy of Trieste and “with a most respectable reference to the Emperor's oral acceptance and

¹¹ Like a daughter born from his relationship with the actress Luise Robinson. B. Hamannová, *Habsburkové*, 351. I have found no information on her ennoblement, though.

¹² He did not include them in the last will, though. (signed at the castle of Schönau on 7 May, 1906). Otto divided his assets in such a way that a quarter was bequeathed to the elder son Karl Franz Joseph (the subsequent Emperor Charles I), and the remaining three quarters to the younger Maximilian Eugene Luis. After debt it was 700 238,75 koronas. See Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kabinettskanzlei (Separatakten) (hereinafter HHStA, KK), 63/1911.

¹³ HHStA, KK, 3103/1911.

¹⁴ Her only son Clement (1863–1885), a cadet in a dragoon regiment, died early. *Almanach českých šlechtických rodů* (1999), 37.

¹⁵ appendix to the act of ennoblement, no date, in: AVA, AA, Adam von Hortenau, Adelstand 1911–12.

a consent by the Minister for Public Works and the Council of Ministers (session of 14 October, the previous year).¹⁶

The name Horst, initially proposed by Countess Boos–Waldeck was negatively opinionated by the Imperial and Royal Ministry of the Interior.¹⁷ Therefore on 16 November, 1911, Julius von Cohn alongside with his spouse applied for the title Edler and predicate Hochenau, Hortenau or Hoheneich, from among which the servants authorised the second one. Both titles were granted to them in a document of 27 November, 1911, alongside a coat of arms: per fess Argent and Gules, three red stars, one and two; crowned Tournament Helm with visor, mantling Gules and Argent. Two folded, separated eagle wings in crest: dexter Gules–Argent, sinister Argent–Gules. Upon the next motion of 2 May, 1912, all those ennobled were granted the right to sign as Edler von Hortenau.¹⁸ instead of the names Adam or Cohn.

Further details of the lives of the Archduke's descendants are known only in an outline fashion. Hildegard married Mihály Pála Kuczor, who had a florist shop in Opatija, later both emigrated to the USA. Alfred, like his stepfather, became a physician and had his practice in Opatija. While his mother remained in this town and was buried there, he left for Sweden (according to some sources in 1938, with others giving the date after WWII), and thence to the USA. He was probably married twice. His only daughter Elisabeth (born 1921), also called Lisa, was born from of the first wedlock with Charlotte (1893–1966), Böhler¹⁹ by her second marriage.

Lisa Lanett's personal life, and the way she was called later were rather tempestuous. In mid-1940s she had an affair with a young US navy officer John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917–1963). Probably Lisa's son Tony Böhler (born 1945) was his issue, but Kennedy refused to recognise the child. Tony was adopted by his grandmother Charlotte, after whom he was named Böhler or Bohler. He studied at the Peekskill Military Academy and later he went into trading works of art. Today he lives in California. His mother, Lisa, married several more times. She worked as a real estate agent and finally she settled in San Antonio, Texas, where she was still alive in 2009. Tracing Tony Bohler's descent by the Austrian daily *Kurier* in 2009 was a somewhat sensational event.²⁰

*Translated from Czech into Polish by Andrzej Spyra
[retranslated into English from Polish by L. Kawalec]*

¹⁶ HHStA, KK, 3104/1911 a 3103/1911.

¹⁷ "In the light of the regulations in force, the name Horst is inappropriate because there is already a noble family who are using it, and there are several families using it as predicate," AVA, AA, Adam von Hortenau, Adelstand 1911–1912.

¹⁸ The final decision of 25 May, 1912, *ibidem*. The application together with the recommendations by the Ministry of the Interior has been preserved in the file of Julius Cohn, 12 May, 1912.

¹⁹ *Descendants of Archduke Franz Karl of Austria*, [cit. 07.02.2010]. available at: <<http://www.angelfire.com/in/heinbruins/FraKa.html>>.

²⁰ cf. „Kurrier. Unabhängige Tageszeitung für Österreich” (20.03.2009); *John F Kennedy's alleged child Tony Bohler*, [cit. 27.02.2010]. available at: <<http://theoriginalgreenwichdiva.com/john-f-kennedy-alleged-child-tony-bohler/3459/>>; *John F. Kennedy's "Austrian" Son*, [cit. 27.02.2010]. available at: <<http://theoriginalgreenwichdiva.com/john-f-kennedy-alleged-child-tony-bohler/3459/>>.