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Gender and Ennoblement in the Austrian Empire. The Transformation of the Nobility in the Context of the Women's Question

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Gender and Ennoblement in the Austrian Empire. The Transformation of the Nobility in the Context of the Women's Question

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Women's emancipation was a centuries-long process that took different forms across regions. In the Habsburg monarchy, as elsewhere in Europe, noble titles signified elite status and service to the state. Titles were typically conferred on men, reflecting their legal and social dominance. However, hereditary nobility meant that women often shared in the privileges of their husbands or fathers. Direct ennoblement of women was rare and usually tied to marriage with Habsburg princes. Yet in the 19th century, a few Austrian women were ennobled for their own achievements. These women were exceptions, not the rule, within a male-dominated honor system. Still, their recognition marked a shift in the monarchy's view of women's public roles. The practice reflected changing ideas about merit, gender, and service to the dynasty. Though few in number, such cases signalled a broader transformation underway.

Keywords: Gender; Austrian Empire; ennoblement; History; „long 19th Century“

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Spol in podeljevanje plemiških naslovov v Avstrijskem cesarstvu. Preobrazba plemstva v kontekstu vprašanja žensk

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Emancipacija žensk je bil stoletja dolg proces, ki je imel v različnih regijah različne oblike. V habsburški monarhiji, tako kot drugod po Evropi, so plemiški nazivi pomenili pripadnost eliti in služenje državi. Nazivi so bili praviloma podeljeni moškim, kar je odražalo njihovo pravno in družbeno prevlado. Vendar pa je dedno plemstvo pomenilo, da so ženske pogosto uživale privilegije svojih mož ali očetov. Neprivedno podeljevanje plemstva ženskam je bilo redko in običajno povezano s poroko s habsburškimi princi. Kljub temu je bilo v 19. stoletju nekaj avstrijskih žensk plemiškega naslova deležnih zaradi lastnih zaslug. Te ženske so bile izjema, ne pravilo, v sistemu časti, ki je bil moško dominiran. Njihovo priznanje pa je vseeno pomenilo premik v odnosu monarhije do javnih vlog žensk. Ta praksa je odražala spremenjajoče se predstave o zaslagah, spolu in službi dinastiji. Čeprav redki, so ti primeri nakazovali širšo preobrazbo, ki je bila že v teku.

Ključne besede: spol; Avstrijsko cesarstvo; podeljevanje plemstva; zgodovina; »dolgo 19. stoletje«

Women's emancipation was a centuries-long process that took different forms in different parts of the world.¹ An integral part of it was the recognition of the accomplishments of women on the part of the monarch or the state, especially in the form of the award of noble titles as the most prestigious among honours. This question remains a little-known part of gender history, and in the case of the Central European Habsburg monarchy, it has been almost completely overlooked by historians. Thus, only a few partial studies have been produced on the subject of female nobility, although they deal with only some of the issues and frequently contain a number of inaccuracies.² This paper therefore relies mainly on the examination and thorough analysis of sources based exclusively on the study of unpublished documents stored in the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv in Vienna, above all, the records stored in its department the *Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv*, which houses the Archive of the Nobility (*Adelsarchiv*) containing material on the granting of noble titles.³ However, the informative value of these documents has gradually declined since the 1860s, and it was therefore necessary to compare these sources with others – in particular, the Interior (*Inneres*) collection, which contains materials from the Praesidium of the Council of Ministers (*Ministerratspräsidium*) and the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerium des Innern*).⁴ It was here that draft documents were created, which were then submitted to the Emperor for approval. These documents were then stored in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* and the monarch's Cabinet Office (*Kabinettskanzlei*) collection.⁵ The contemporary press, especially the official government newspaper *Wiener Zeitung*, was also consulted for the study.

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¹ This study was conducted as part of research carried out at the Institute of History at the University of Hradec Králové. Dedicated to the memory of Jana Rathsamová (1972–2008).

² On the acquisition of nobility on the basis of office-holding, inaccurately: Granichstaedten–Czerva, *Geadelte Frauen*, 104–106; Granichstaedten–Czerva, *Ein Amtsadel*, 121–122; Kotz, *Ein Amtsadel für Frauen*, 121–122. On questions of heraldry: Göbl, *Die Frau und das Wappen*.

³ AVA, Adelsarchiv.

⁴ AVA, Inneres, MdI, Präsidium.

⁵ HHStA, KK.

In the Habsburg monarchy, or rather Austria (Austria-Hungary), an individual could be honoured by the monarch and the state in a number of ways. As early as the 17th century, we know of cases where important personages were rewarded with a medal bearing the sovereign's portrait on a ribbon or chain. However the first orders of merit came into being as a result of Enlightenment reforms – in 1757 the Military Order of Maria Theresa (*Militärischer-Maria Theresien Orden*) and in 1763 the Royal Hungarian Order of St Stephen (*Königlich ungarischer Sankt Stephans-Orden*); the former was awarded exclusively to officers for heroism in combat, and the latter to high-ranking civil servants. Other orders of merit from the first half of the 19th century – the Order of Leopold (*Leopoldsorden*) founded in 1808, the Order of the Iron Crown (*Orden der eisernen Krone*) from 1816 and the Order of Franz Joseph (*Franz Joseph-Orden*) established in 1849 – no longer contained professional or status restrictions. This is exactly what was expressed in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the 1808 Statute of the Order of Leopold: it was to be awarded as “*die Belohnung der um den Staat und um Unser durchlauchtigstes Erzhaus erworbenen Verdienste*” (a reward for services rendered to the state and to Our Most Illustrious Family) and was intended for “*jedermann ohne Unterschied des Standes, er mag in unmittelbaren Civil- oder Militär-Staatsdiensten stehen oder nicht*” (anyone without distinction of status, whether or not in the direct civil or military service of the state).⁶

In reality, however, these decorations were also intended only for men. Although their articles did not contain a gender restriction, this was in fact the case. Indeed, until the end of the monarchy, women could not hold such responsible positions as to merit these honours. The General Civil Code (*Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) of 1812, which was valid in Austria until the end of the monarchy, stipulated that in personal affairs a woman was subordinate to her husband; he represented her before the authorities, decided on her employment and disposed of their joint property. At the social level, a woman was equal to a man only in terms of freedom of speech and press, the right of assembly, freedom of belief and conscience, and the right to move freely. However, she was restricted in other rights by law, particularly with regard to the right of association, freedom of study and education, choice of profession and entrepreneurship.⁷

Women's access to education, which was an important milestone in the development of feminism and a step towards women's social empowerment, only began to improve towards the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to Maria Theresa's 1774 school reforms, although girls too were obliged to attend school, they had no right to higher education. Thus, the first gymnasiums (grammar schools) for girls were not established in Austria until the end of the 19th century, with the proviso that they could only graduate from boys' gymnasiums.⁸ Girls' gymnasiums only received the relevant licensing in 1907/1908. Access to universities was even more difficult for women. Some therefore studied abroad, especially in Switzerland. It was not until the end of the 19th century that the government in Vienna changed

⁶ Cited from: Statuten für den erhabenden österreichisch–kaiserlichen Leopoldsorden, 5.

⁷ Neudorlová, České ženy, 100; Bahenská, *Počátky emancipace žen*, 21.

⁸ In Bohemia this was the Minerva girls' gymnasium, established in 1891–1892.

its negative attitude towards women's studies at universities; from 1897 they were permitted to study at faculties of philosophy and from 1900 at medical faculties.

The position of women in Austrian politics was even more complex. The electoral regulations did not exclude women from voting a priori, because until 1907 the right to vote was linked to the payment of taxes.⁹ In practice, women could only vote in the Electoral Curia of the Grand Estates (*Wahlkurie für Großgrundbesitz*) if they were holders of a great estate, and in the Municipal Curia (*Kurie der Städte*), but with certain exceptions.¹⁰ The introduction of universal and equal suffrage for the Imperial Diet (Reichsrat) in 1907, however, concerned only men. Interestingly, the question of passive suffrage was not addressed, no doubt because it seemed unthinkable that a woman would stand for the Diet. This did not happen until 1908, when the first three women appeared on the ballot in Bohemia. Božena Viková-Kunětická (1862–1934), who was elected to the Bohemian Diet, eventually became the first female deputy in Cisleithania at the next election in 1912. However, she did not get to take up her mandate because the Bohemian Governor Franz Prince von Thun und Hohenstein refused to sign the necessary documents.¹¹ Moreover, the Bohemian Diet was by this time already paralysed by Bohemian-German disputes, did not meet and was dissolved the following year and did not reconvene until the end of the monarchy.

Social and legislative constraints were very restrictive for women in Austria, and this was also reflected in the area of honours. The awarding of decorations was always a consequence of two factors: merit and social position. And since women's social position was mostly based on that of their husbands, on whom they were economically and otherwise dependent, they rarely received state awards. Moreover, the vast majority did not have a university education or even a high school diploma, could not become civil servants, and their business and political activities were also limited.

As late as the mid-19th century, women with social influence were still rather the exception, but their importance gradually grew. This was demonstrated in 1850, when Emperor Franz Joseph I established the Cross of Merit (*Verdienstkreuz*) in four classes to supplement the Order of Franz Joseph. It was intended to recognise minor services – from charitable donations, to artistic merit, to work. Among the honourees, we soon find women.¹² The problem of course was that the Cross of

⁹ Of course, only for elections to the Imperial Diet (Reichsrat). Elections to the Provincial Assembly (Landtag) were conducted this way until the end of the Monarchy.

¹⁰ In Bohemia for example they could not vote in Prague or Liberec (Ger. Reichenberg). In Moravia they were completely excluded from active and passive voting rights after the so-called Moravian Settlement (Mährischer Ausgleich) between Czechs and Germans in 1905. Malíř – Marek, *Politické strany I.*, 34.

¹¹ Kořalka, *Zvolení ženy*.

¹² In 1891, Franziska Schram, a factory worker in the Smíchov Cotton Works, was awarded the lowest level of honour, the Silver Cross of Merit, for her 61 years of work at this factory. Two years later, Josefa Geisler, a hospital orderly in Brno, received the same award; she was decorated for more than 37 years of work on the occasion of her retirement. AVA, Inneres, Ministerratspräsidium, Kt. 1158/1891; Kt. 1164/1893.

Merit stood very low on the ladder of Austrian honours, and in the category of civil servants, for example, it was intended only for subaltern officials.

It was not until 1898 that a radical intervention in the established system took place. After the assassination of Empress Elisabeth, Franz Joseph I founded the Order of Elisabeth (Elisabeth-Orden), in her memory, intended only for women and awarded to high-ranking ladies from aristocratic circles.¹³ An unmistakable sign of social change was the establishment of the Decoration for Services to the Red Cross (*Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um das Rote Kreuz*) in August 1914, awarded for achievements in the field of voluntary medical service, in the bestowal of which gender no longer played a role.

Interestingly, although women were denied orders of merit until the end of the 19th century, they could obtain titles of nobility. However, it is necessary to distinguish the reason for this - i.e. whether it was merely a matter of courtesy (recognition of social position) or the result of genuine merit.

Women could acquire titles in four ways: by birth into a noble family, by ennoblement of a father or husband, by marriage to a nobleman, or by direct ennoblement by the monarch. It is the last option that we will consider. It was rare, but until the establishment of the Order of Elisabeth it was de facto the only way to recognise the merits of exceptional women in Austria. An important factor in this was that in the Habsburg monarchy the type of decoration awarded always had to correspond to the social position of the recipient. Thus, a high-ranking civil servant could for the same act receive the Grand Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph, while a factory worker earned only the Silver Cross of Merit. And nobility was considered a distinction until the introduction of equality before the law in 1848.

In the first two cases mentioned above, the woman automatically acquired her nobility with one specific exception. It could happen that not the father but the father-in-law of the woman was ennobled. In this case, she was only entitled to the noble title if her husband was still alive. As Baron Schiessl, head of the Cabinet Office of Emperor Franz Joseph, stated in the case of the knighthood conferred on Rudolf Rohrer, a businessman, member of the Moravian Diet and first deputy mayor of Brno:

“Nach den Bestimmungen der §§ 92 und 146 des allgemeinen bürgerlichen Gesetzbuches erwerben mit dem Begnadeten seine am Leben befindliche Gattin und seine lebenden Kinder diesen Standesgrad. Derselbe geht von den Letzteren kraft der zitierten gesetzlichen Bestimmungen auf deren Gattinnen und direkte eheliche Nachkommen über. Dagegen können vorverstorbene Kinder des Adelserwerbers den diesem verliehenen Standesgrad auf Grund der Bestimmungen der bezogenen Paragraphe (...) nicht erwerben. Die direkten ehelichen Nachkommen eines solchen vorverstorbenen Kindes erlangen aber adelige Standesvorzüge von dem Adelserwerben...”

¹³ This was the first order of the monarchy that women could obtain. Although the Order of the Starry Cross (Sternkreuzorden) had already been established in 1668 for ladies only, they had to come from the nobility, have four generations of noble forebears and their husbands had to come from the old nobility. Rather than an award, it was more a symbol of belonging to the aristocracy.

The widows of deceased sons had to be ennobled separately. The monarch, however, had no problem with granting such requests.¹⁴

There could still be complications to acquiring a title of nobility by marriage; it depended on whom the woman married. The law of the Danube monarchy did not provide for the institution of unequal (morganatic) marriage (*morganatische* or *unstandesgemäße Ehe*), and this term is not to be found in the 1812 *Allgemeinen bürgerlichen Gesetzbuch*, with the specific exception of the ruling family, which was governed by the so-called Imperial Family Code of 3 February 1839 (*Kaiserlich österreichisches Familienstatut vom 3. Februar 1839*).¹⁵

Unlike members of other Central European ruling dynasties, however, the Habsburgs contracted unequal marriages very rarely. With the exception of Archduke Ferdinand II von Tirol (1529–1595), who in 1557 married Philippine Welser (1527–1580), a member of one of Europe's richest financier families, no such case can be found until the first half of the 19th century. Moreover, the marriage of Ferdinand von Tirol was kept secret by the family and Welser became archduchess, but received from her husband the titles of Margravine of Burgau (Markgräfin zu Burgau), Landgravine of Nellenburg (Landgräfin zu Nellenburg) and Countess of Ober- and Niederhohenberg (Gräfin von Ober- und Niederhohenberg).¹⁶

The few morganatic wives who married members of the Habsburg-Lorraine family in the 19th century were not entitled to the title Archduchess of Austria (or Austria-Hungary (Erzherzogin von Österreich/Österreich-Ungarn). Only in these cases did the dynasty apply the old custom from the time of the Holy Roman Empire, which tied membership in the high nobility to the conclusion of a suitable marriage.¹⁷ A condition for the validity of a morganatic marriage in Austria was the consent of the head of the family. This was also explicitly stated in the aforementioned 1839 *Familienstatut*, which placed all affairs of the members of the Habsburg-Lorraine family under the supervision of the Emperor. If the marriage was not approved in advance, the Archduke was expelled from the ranks of the dynasty.¹⁸

There were only three morganatic marriages during the existence of the Austrian Empire. In 1823, i.e. prior to the publication of the *Familienstatut*, Archduke Johann (1782–1859) married Anna Plöchl (1804–1885), the daughter of a postmaster, who was elevated to Baroness von Brandhofen in 1834 and Countess

¹⁴ Cited after: Cabinet director Baron von Schiessl for Minister Baron Heinold von Udyński 22. 4. 1914. In: AVA, Adelsarchiv, Rudolf Rohrer, Ritterstand 1914. This was the case of the family of Rudolf Rohrer (1838–1914), who on 24 February 1914 was granted a knighthood. His eldest son Rudolf (1864–1913) died before ennoblement, and elevation thus did not apply to his widow Margareta née Krackhardt (1870–1926), who was later granted a title with the Emperor's approval. Subsequent ennoblement also applied to Emma née Maurer von Kronegg zu Ungarshofen (1857–post 1918), widow of Viktor Isbary (1854–1890); in this case it was a grant of Barony on 29 March 1893 to the family of the deceased Rudolf Isbary (1827–1892). AVA, Adelsarchiv, Isbary, Adelsakt 1893–1894.

¹⁵ Stekl, *Der Wiener Hof*, 17–60. The text of the Family Statue in: *House Law of the Austrian Imperial Family, Familienstatut (1839)*.

¹⁶ Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexicon* 6, 193–195.

¹⁷ Cf. Boenicker, *Die Ehe zur linken Hand*.

¹⁸ Cf. Wiesflecker, *Studien zur habsburgischen Heirats- und Familienpolitik*.

von Meran in 1850.¹⁹ The second case occurred in 1868, when Archduke Heinrich (1828–1891) married the singer Leopoldine Hofmann (1842–1891). The marriage was contracted without the consent of the Emperor and Heinrich was expelled from the family. After four years, however, Franz Joseph forgave him and returned the title of Archduke to him. On this occasion, his wife was elevated to the rank of Baroness von Waidek.²⁰ The most famous morganatic marriage took place in 1900 between the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand d'Este (1863–1914), and Countess Sophie Chotek (1868–1914). After the marriage, she received the title of Princess von Hohenberg, and in 1908 *ad personam* the title of Duchess von Hohenberg.²¹

From the cases of morganatic Habsburg wives mentioned above, it is clear that the title given to them after marriage was directly commensurate with their lineage. While A. Plöchl and L. Hofmann, who came from non-noble families, became baronesses, Sophie Chotek, from an old aristocratic family, was elevated to the status of princess and later became a duchess.²²

The last possibility for a woman to acquire a peerage was direct ennoblement by the monarch. Although, given the social position of women, it might seem that this was a very exceptional matter, the situation was different. At this point, however, it should be stressed that there were quite profound differences between the western part (later Cisleithania or Austria) and the eastern part (Transleithania or Hungary) of the monarchy in terms of aristocratic rights. The differences also concerned women's rights. While in Cisleithania, the granting of peerages to women occurred without undue problems, the situation in Hungary was fundamentally different. According to local law, women could only acquire a title of nobility through their father or husband. Promotion by themselves was not possible in Hungary because it contradicted the Hungarian prescription that nobility must always be hereditary. In other words, it could pass to the next generation of the family exclusively through the male line.

This view was also held by Hungary during the First World War, when Austria began to increasingly grant noble titles to the widows of fallen officers. Budapest, however, enforced the rule that nobility could only be granted to Hungarian citizens if the fallen officer left male descendants. But even in this case, only daughters were granted the title, wives never.

This principle was clearly expressed by the Hungarian Prime Minister Count István Tisza during an interview with the Emperor on 3 March 1915. This concerned a proposal to grant nobility to the family of the fallen Hungarian hero Colonel Othmar Muhr (1860–1914), the only known violation of the above policy:

¹⁹ The son of Johann and Anna, Franz (1839–1891), was a baron from birth, and was raised to Count von Meran as soon as in 1844. AVA, Adelsarchiv, Meran, Adelsakt 1834–1850.

²⁰ Her daughter Marie Raineriana (1872–1936) was raised in 1892 to a countship. AVA, Adelsarchiv, Waidek, Adelsakt 1872–1892.

²¹ AVA, Adelsarchiv, Hohenberg, Adelsakt 1900–1917. Her children were also princes. Only in 1917 however was the head of the family granted the title of duke and the family a new coat of arms.

²² Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 541–558.

“Es ist zwar ein Kardinalprinzip des ungarischen öffentlichen Rechtes, dass die Frau primus aquirens des Adels nicht sein kann, weil der Adel der Frau nicht erblich ist und hiendurch eine an die Person gebundene Adelserwerbung ermöglicht würde, was aber die Erschütterung des uralten erblichen Charakters des ungarischen Adels zur Folge hätte; da jedoch bei dieser Adelsverleihung die Adelserwerbung der Frau ausschliesslich auf Grund der Verdienste des Gatten auf dieselber übergeht, kann gegen die in diesem Falle besonders begründete Beantragung der Verleihung des Adels an die Wittwe des Obersten Muhr eine Einwendung nicht erhoben werden.”²³

In the western part of the monarchy the situation was much more liberal. Nobility had been granted to women for many centuries, usually for courtesy reasons. In 1638, for example, Emperor Ferdinand III allowed Prince Václav Eusebius of Lobkovic (1609–1677) to transfer one of his titles (Count von Sternstein) to his bride Johanna Myška of Žlunic (†1650), the widow Pětipeský of Chýš. She came only from a knightly family, but had considerable property.²⁴

Far more frequent were the ennoblements of women as a result of the merits of their fathers or husbands, more rarely on the basis of the antiquity of their lineage. In December 1785, for example, the widow Maria Anna Honrichs zu Wolfswarfen née Baroness Locher von Lindenheim (1728–1788/1793) applied for promotion to the rank of baroness and the award of a Bohemian *Inkolat* for herself and her children. Her husband since 1755 had been Lieutenant Colonel Georg August von Honrichs, originally a Lutheran, who converted to Catholicism because of his marriage, but he died before 1785.

The reason for this request was that in 1783 Maria Anna inherited from her relative Baroness Maria Antonia von Imbsen²⁵ (†1783) the Kunštát Estate in Moravia. Her claim to the inheritance was however disputed by the von Imbsen family, who felt that the Honrichs family was not sufficiently highborn. Although it was one of the oldest families in the estate of Jever in East Frisia (Ostfriesland), it had no ties to the aristocracy and belonged only to the lower nobility in the Habsburg monarchy. Maria Anna Honrichs therefore asked Emperor Joseph II to confirm the baronetcy, which her husband's family allegedly enjoyed. The Honrichs family papers were located in East Friesland, however, and the monarch therefore granted the request on the basis of the military record of Georg August von Honrichs and the fact that Maria Anna came from a baronial family.²⁶

In the 19th century, similar situations occurred ever more frequently. We encounter not only the awarding of higher titles to women on the basis of the antiquity of their noble lineage or the merits of their husbands or fathers,²⁷ but

²³ Cit. after: Proposal by Count Tisza, 3 March 1915 in: HHStA, KK, 247/1915.

²⁴ Sedláček, *Pýcha urozenosti*, 14–15. Sternstein (present-day Störstein) was purchased as early as in 1575 Ladislav Popel of Lobkowicz. In 1641 Sternstein was raised to the Princely County (gefürstete Grafschaft), thanks to which the Lobkovic family obtained a seat in the Imperial Diet.

²⁵ Her mother came from the Locher von Lindenheim family.

²⁶ The baronetcy was granted to the family on July 4, 1786. AVA, Adelsarchiv, Honrichs zu Wolfswarfen, Freiherrnstand 1786.

²⁷ E.g. in 1898 Amalie Nádherný von Borutin, née Baroness Klein von Wisenberg

also with the granting of nobility to women of non-noble birth. Originally, these were mainly ladies whose husbands – generally officers – had a claim to a title of nobility (usually after being granted one of the orders of the monarchy), but had not had time to apply for such a title. In this case, the consent of the monarch was originally necessary, but Franz Joseph I introduced a change in 1859; after the Battles of Magenta and Solferino, he ordered that such requests should always be granted.²⁸ Surviving dependents of those who were not officers were a more complex matter, with the general rule being that applications from the families of deceased civil servants were approved quite frequently, while those from other persons, especially businessmen, only rarely.²⁹

Such an exception occurred in the case of the daughters of the great industrialist Josef Werndl (1831–1889). He had received the Order of the Iron Crown, Third Class, in 1870, but was not interested in the knighthood associated with it.³⁰ He died without male issue and his vast fortune was inherited by two daughters who married into aristocratic families – Caroline (1859–1923) became the wife of Count Joseph Friedrich von Lamberg (1856–1904) and Anna (1861–1943) of Baron Max von Imhof zu Spielberg und Oberschwemmbach (1858–1922). Although they acquired titles of nobility by marriage, in 1902 they petitioned the monarch to be elevated to the nobility in their own right. They justified their request on the grounds that they wanted “*an die Verdienste unseres Vaters zu ehren, unserer gesellschaftlichen Stellung wegen und um unserer Kinder willen von hohen Werte auch selbst den Adel zu erlangen*”. In other words, they were interested in their children being considered the offspring of noble parents, not of noblemen and non-noble women. This would greatly improve their social position. Taking into account the accomplishments of Josef Werndl and the status of the families of the two ladies’ husbands, Emperor Franz Joseph I granted their request.³¹

A significant strengthening of the position of women and other bereaved persons (again, however, only on the basis of the father’s or husband’s merits) was brought about by the imperial decree published on 24 January 1915 in the *Wiener Zeitung* newspaper.³² This concerned the right of officers to be promoted

(1854–1910), was raised to the rank of Free Lord, with her children Johannes (1884–1913), Karl (1885–1931) and Sidonia (1885–1950), and in 1906 Anna Dobrženský von Dobrženicz geb. Kolowrat-Krakowský (1865–1934) was elevated to a countship with her sons Anton (1889–1915) and Heinrich (1892–1945).

²⁸ Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 431–432.

²⁹ Cf. the ennoblement of the families after the death of minister Karl Giskra (barony for the bereaved, d.1894) or Julius Glaser (d.1892). See Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 537–540.

³⁰ Stögmüller, *Josef Werndl*, 37.

³¹ Cit. after: undated petition by Anna von Lamberg and Caroline von Imhof both née Werndl. AVA, Adelsarchiv, Caroline und Anna geborene Werndl, Adelstand 1902/1903. Their noble titles were conferred on 23 August 1902.

³² On this question in more detail: Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*. *Wiener Zeitung*, 24 January 1915, 6–7. Cf. e.g. the ennoblement of A. Winternitz and his sons, surviving dependents of Walter Winternitz, lieutenant-colonel of the 18th Landwehr infantry regiment, who fell in September 1914 at the village of Viharos (now Viška, Ukraine). AVA, Adelsarchiv, Alexandrine Winternitz und Söhne (Edler von Viharos), 1916–1917. See also record of the Impe-

to the nobility after thirty years of service and participation in battle (the so-called *systematisierter Adelstand*). Surviving dependents of fallen officers could also apply for ennoblement, including widows without offspring.³³

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The granting of nobility to women on the basis of their own merits was, however, on a completely different level. In this respect, the Austrian Empire was extremely liberal, even pioneering, although of course few women were so honoured. It was typical of the Habsburg monarchy that women in religious service were the first to receive nobility. Unlike men, in Austria they could not acquire a title of nobility associated with a Church office.³⁴ The sole exception was the office of abbess of the Theresian Institute of Noblewomen at Prague Castle, to whom the right to crown Bohemian queens passed after the dissolution of the Benedictine monastery of St. George at Prague Castle (1782). However, since only Austrian archduchesses could hold this office, this was a mere formality.³⁵

The two known cases of the ennoblement of women religious were members of the Congregation of Jesus (*Englische Fräulein* or English Ladies). In the 19th century, the members of this congregation were divided into two groups: ladies of the first class were of noble birth and were entitled to be addressed as *Fräulein*, while ladies of the second class came from non-noble families and were addressed as *Jungfrau*. According to custom, the head of a house of the order was always a lady of the first class, i.e. a noblewoman. Only under exceptional circumstances could a lady of the second class be promoted to a lady of the first class, but the prerequisite was the acquisition of a noble title.

The first such case in Austria occurred on 22 September 1822, when Countess Julia Mailáth, Major Superior of the all Institutes of English Ladies in Austria, asked Emperor Franz I. to grant a title of nobility to Ludmilla Mally. In doing so, she requested that the diploma include the following as a justification for this ennoblement:

*„weil sie sich nach dem Urtheile ihren Vorgesetzten, durch einen tadellosen Wandel in ihrem Berufe, durch Hingebung für selben, und durch Anwendung ihrers Vermögens für das Beste des Hauses vorzüglich verdient gemacht hat“.*³⁶

rial & Royal Interior Ministry no. 1400/A from 1914 in: AVA, Adesgeneralien, Kt. 17a Offiziere (1914–1916).

³³ HHStA, KK, 460/1916. Cf. e.g. the ennoblement of childless widow Maria Kasal, widow of Colonel Rudolf Kasal of the 30th Landwehr infantry regiment in 1917. See AVA, Adelsarchiv, Maria Kasal, Adelstand (Edle von Sanstatt) 1917.

³⁴ These were certain archbishops and bishops, and from 1881 the Bohemian-Austrian Grand Prior of the Order of the Knights of Malta. An exception was the superior of the Savoy Noblewomen's Institute in Vienna (Savoyisches Damenstift in Wien) established in 1772, who, however, was not a church figure. However, after the resignation of the first of them, Countess Maria Anna Friederike Gianini (1705–1788) née Landgravine von Hessen-Darmstadt in 1778, her successors did not use it. On this question see Kotz, Amtsadel für Frauen, 121–122.

³⁵ Žáková, Tereziánský ústav šlechtičen, 240, 263–267.

³⁶ Cited after: AVA, Ludmilla Mally, Adelstand (von Frommenburg) 1822.

However, the file itself shows that Mally was to be appointed superior of the Congregation in Prague, which focused on the education of aristocratic children. A governess with a noble title could better represent the institute and better meet the demands of the pupils' parents.

A very similar course was followed by the ennoblement of Marie Mariacher (1802–1878) in 1848. This woman had been the head of the convent of the Congregation of Jesus at Rovereto since 1847. However, this function was reserved for noblewomen, so the Major Superior Countess Mailath requested her elevation to the nobility. The reason was not only the exercise of that office, but in particular Mariacher's contributions to the founding of the institute in Lodi, Lombardy, her work as a teacher and novice mistress at Vicenza, and her success in reorganizing the school and convent at Rovereto. The petition was also supported by the Tyrolean Governor Count Clemens Brandis. He stressed the achievements of Mariacher in uplifting education, but also pointed out that it was not appropriate for "*eine bürgerliche Jungfrau [...] über adelige Fräulein regierte*".³⁷ The titles were conferred (as on all religious) *ad personam*, because the ladies were bound to celibacy.³⁸

The fact that the only women to be elevated to the nobility in the first half of the 19th century for their own merits were two members of the Congregation of Jesus led the lawyer and genealogist Rudolf von Granichstaedten-Czerva to believe that in their case too it was a title associated with the holding of office, as in the case of the aforementioned bishops and archbishops. But the reality was different. The clerical nobility (German: *Amtsadel*) was so closely linked to the holding of ecclesiastical office that the actual ennoblement of these persons did not occur at all, since they acquired the title immediately after taking office. Conversely, the moment they resigned their office, they also lost the title associated with it.³⁹ The reasons for the ennoblement of the two ladies can be described as a combination of merit and courtesy – they had considerable involvement in the development of the Convent of the English Ladies, which led to them becoming superiors (*Vorsteherin*). However, as this office was, according to the rules, to be held by noblewomen, they were subsequently (and not upon taking office!) granted a title of nobility.

Interestingly, the ennoblement of women religious ended with the Revolution of 1848, apparently as a result of the introduction of equality before the law and the abolition of most noble privileges. Ladies elevated to the nobility after that date were granted titles solely on the basis of their exceptional merits, which were at least comparable to those for which men were granted peerages.

³⁷ Cit. after: AVA, Adelsarchiv, Maria Mariacher, Adelstand (Edle von Friedenstern) 1848. The noble title was granted on 5 June 1848. Maria Mariacher von Friedenstern became General Superior at St. Pölten in 1863 and later Superior of all the Institutes of English Ladies in Austria.

³⁸ Otherwise, of course, Austrian aristocratic law did not include the institution of personal nobility and titles were always hereditary. The issue of personal nobility was not addressed at government level until March 1918 and was not implemented. On this question in more detail see: Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 55–56.

³⁹ Granichstaedten–Czerva, *Ein Amtsadel*, 67. This was the case of the Olomouc Prince-Archbishop Theodor Kohn (1845–1915), who held the office in 1893–1903.

At the same time, it should be emphasised that women were not honoured for different reasons than men, although the range of their activities was considerably smaller. They were limited by the laws and customs of the time, which, among other things, excluded them from state or military service. The areas in which the ladies below excelled were therefore essentially threefold: teaching, serving at court and humanitarian activities.

The first case concerns Antonia Harrucker, who from the mid-1830s at the latest worked at the Educational Institute for Officers' Daughters at Hernals near Vienna (Offizierstöchter-Bildungsinstitut in Hernals) and from 1846 to 1891 was in charge of the institute as General Superior (Obervorsteherin).⁴⁰ Little is known about her life. From the press it appears that for many years she made small donations to charity, but her teaching and organisational works and the fact that she worked in an institute associated with the army, for which Franz Joseph I had a great affection, were undoubtedly crucial. Harrucker ran the institute for thirty years, earning the nickname *Mama Harrucker* for her attitude towards her charges, and was awarded the Gold Cross of Merit with Crown for her services to its development.⁴¹

Unfortunately, we do not know the details that led to her elevation to nobility. The reason for this is that the conferral of the title was based on a decision of the Emperor himself, by his personal letter (German: *allerhöchtes Handschreiben*). In such cases, however, officials did not prepare supporting materials for the monarch, which usually summarised the merits of the person proposed for the award, because the emperor knew them. Harrucker received her noble title on 16 December 1875, and it can be ascertained from the press that this was on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the institution and on the eve of her retirement.⁴² However, she never applied for a diploma confirming her ennoblement and granting her a coat of arms, and given her profession, she was most likely unmarried and childless. The title therefore became extinct upon her death.⁴³

Fortunately, we have more information about other ennoblements. Undoubtedly the most interesting is the 1876 ennoblement of Clara Waagner (1788–1877). Clara came from a non-noble but very influential and wealthy family. Her father, Jakob Veith (1758–1833), was born into humble circumstances, but worked his way up to become a textile mill owner and acquired a large fortune through supplying the state during the Napoleonic Wars. The money he earned was mostly invested in the purchase of large estates. Although he did not acquire a noble title himself, he found partners for his children in the old noble families.⁴⁴ Clara was the exception. In 1815, at her father's château in Libochovice, she married Martin Anton Waagner (1788–1849), a wealthy Prague burgher whose father had also become rich as a

⁴⁰ Hof- und Staats-Schematismus des Österreichischen Kaiserthums, Bd. II, 154.

⁴¹ Pester Lloyd, 2 April, 1891, 5; Klagenfurter Zeitung, 9 April 1891, 2.

⁴² Three other teacher/matrons also received a Gold Cross of Merit with Crown, one a Gold Cross of Merit, and two more (as well as the institute's doctor) a Monarch's Commendation. Wiener Zeitung, 22 December 1875, p1; Die Presse, 25 December 1875, 9.

⁴³ AVA, Adelsarchiv, Antonie Harrucker, Adelstand 1875.

⁴⁴ On Jakob Veith: Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 695–698; Jouza – Jouzová, *Veithové*.

textile entrepreneur. In the following years, the couple gradually bought several estates for the huge sum of 870,000 gold pieces and rebuilt their mansion, the Jirny Château near Prague, in the Neo-Gothic style.

They were also publicly active. Clara supported the Roman Catholic priest, mathematician and philosopher Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), who often visited the Waagner family at Jirny, and the couple regularly gave money to humanitarian causes. However, it was only after her husband's death that Clara and her unmarried daughter Rosalie (1829–1897) became truly generous in their charitable work. The exact extent of her donations is unknown, but they must have been very large sums indeed.

At the beginning of 1876, the Bohemian Governor, Baron Philipp Weber von Ebenhof, proposed that she should be elevated to the status of nobility for these accomplishments. His superior, the Minister of the Interior, Baron Joseph Lasser von Zollheim, agreed with his recommendation and submitted the proposal to the Emperor on 5 March 1876. It was extremely interesting that both Weber and Lasser stated that the merits of Clara and her daughter Rosalie should be rewarded, and in view of the warm relations prevailing in the family and its esteemed social status, they also recommended that not only the two ladies but also Clara's sons should be raised to the nobility.⁴⁵

Franz Joseph I approved the proposal on 12 March 1876. This was an extraordinary event in the history of the Austrian nobility: the House of Waagner von Wallernštadt became the only one to owe its title to a woman.⁴⁶ By chance, all the other ennoblements had involved only one particular woman – either because she remained unmarried or for some other reason (see below).

It took almost 20 years for a further grant of nobility to a lady - in this case, a governess in the Imperial family, Eugenie Touzet née Delattre (1828–1902), was so rewarded. Born in Paris, she undoubtedly received a very good education and probably also married in France in 1847. We do not know when she settled in Austria, but she was widowed in 1879 and probably then began working as a governess in aristocratic families.⁴⁷ She was undoubtedly a woman of extraordinary talents, for not long after the death of Crown Prince Rudolf (1858–1889) she became governess to his daughter, Archduchess Elisabeth (1883–1963).⁴⁸ She became part of the miniature chamber (German: *Kammer*) of this favourite granddaughter of Emperor Franz Joseph, which consisted of its superior (*Kammer-Vorsteherin*) Countess Elisabeth von Coudenhove, two chambermaids (*Kammerdienerin*), a butler

⁴⁵ HHStA, KK 938/1876. These were Heinrich (1820–1890) and Karl (1823–1889). The youngest child, Jakob (1825–1865), was already dead by this time, and the peerage was thus granted to his offspring.

⁴⁶ AVA, Adelsarchiv, Clara Waagner und ihre Kinder, Adelstand (Edle von Wallernštadt) 1876. The diploma was issued on 19 June 19th 1876.

⁴⁷ Very brief biographical information can be found in her request for the issuance of a diploma, dated 31 January 1896 in: AVA, Adelsarchiv, Eugenie Touzet, Adelstand (Edle von Treuenzwölf) 1895/96.

⁴⁸ First mentioned in the Hofschematismus in 1890. Vgl. *Handbuch des allerhöchsten Hofes*, 1890, 87.

(*Kammerdiener*), two footmen (*Leiblakai*), two housemaids (*Hausdiener*) and one attendant (*Kammermagd*).⁴⁹ Touzet (like Harrucker) received her noble title directly from the monarch, on 22 December 1895. The exact reason is again unknown, but it was undoubtedly in recognition of her services to Archduchess Elisabeth.

Interestingly, even though Mrs Touzet had a son, the promotion was treated as a personal one. In the diploma of 24 February 1896, which granted her the coat of arms and the predicate *Edle von Treuenzwölf*, the usual passage about heredity was crossed out.⁵⁰ The reason undoubtedly lay in her French origins; we do not know what citizenship she held, but her son was certainly a citizen of the French Republic and an officer in the Navy of the Republic⁵¹ – a fact that would prevent ennoblement by succession. While the French government did not prevent its citizens from being elevated to the nobility, it did prohibit them from using their titles in France. This was unacceptable to Austria, which therefore granted nobility to French citizens only exceptionally and on condition that they were permanently settled in the Monarchy;⁵² although Eugenie met that requirement, her son lived permanently in France and could not therefore obtain an Austrian title.⁵³

The last grant of Austrian nobility to a lady dates from the very end of the Monarchy. This time it was a businesswoman, Anna von Liebig née Knoll (1855–1926), owner of a large North Bohemian textile factory. Unlike Clara Waagner, who also came from a business family, Anna von Liebig was self-employed and very successful. She ran the family business of Franz Liebieg & Comp., founded in 1843 by her father-in-law Franz Liebieg the Elder (1799–1878), completely independently after the death of her husband Knight Ludwig von Liebieg (1846–1909), transforming it into a joint-stock company in 1920.

While we do not know whether the ladies mentioned above (Harrucker, Waagner and Touzet) were actively interested in the nobility, this is quite clear for Frau von Liebieg. Unlike the others, she applied for the title herself. She suffered from a strong inferiority complex in relation to the younger branch of the von Liebieg family, which had held a baronetcy since 1868. Her brother-in-law, Franz the Younger von Liebieg (1827–1886), formerly head of the family firm, had also received a title in 1883, but he died childless. Her husband was only a knight.

⁴⁹ *Handbuch des allerhöchsten Hofes*, 1898, 115.

⁵⁰ AVA, Adelsarchiv, Eugenie Touzet, Adelstand (von Treuenzwölf) 1895/95.

⁵¹ Sport und Salon, 21 June 1902, 8.

⁵² Cf. e.g. the ennoblement of the French citizen and wholesaler in Trieste Alexander Daninos (30 December 1879). Spis č. 5364 in: AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidiun, Kt. 1141/1880. He received a knighthood only because he was permanently settled in Austria, and both of his sons had obtained Austrian citizenship. Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 283–284.

⁵³ Eugenie Touzet von Treuenzwölf retired in 1900, when, on the occasion of Archduchess Elisabeth's forthcoming eighteenth birthday, preparations began for the transformation of her chamber (Kammer) into a separate court (Hof). Her position was temporarily filled by Sidonia Gräfin Chotek (1861–1946), eldest sister of Sophia (1868–1914), later wife to the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand d'Este. At this point Touzet received the Order of Elisabeth II. Class. See *Handbuch des allerhöchsten Hofes*, 1899, 126; *Handbuch des allerhöchsten Hofes*, 1900, 131; *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 12 June 1902, 7.

In Austria, however, the awarding of a noble title for meritorious business achievements was practically impossible from the beginning of the 19th century onwards, and entrepreneurs had to have rendered other services to the state: engaging in politics, cooperating with state authorities, or (most often) donating large sums of money to charitable and public causes.⁵⁴

We have no information on whether Anna von Liebieg was active in the humanitarian sphere for a long period of time, but she supported the Catholic Church, for which she received an award *Pro ecclesia et pontifice* from Pope Leo XIII in 1903.⁵⁵ It was not until the First World War that she became extensively involved in the social field.⁵⁶ It is not impossible that she was touched by growing poverty and suffering, but the available material rather suggests that it was part of her quest for social ascent. In fact, her first documented donations date back to the end of August 1914. In early February 1915 Liebieg was awarded the Decoration for Services to the Red Cross II Class, a distinction that was given for providing a certain amount of money.

While the majority of businessmen elevated to noble status for merit in the humanitarian field donated a single sum or a gift of high financial value (real estate, objets d'art) to charity,⁵⁷ for Anna von Liebieg several hundred financial contributions were involved. The great majority of these sums were very low: „2 Broschüren für Kriegsfürsorge“ for 2 Kronen, „Geschenk für verwundete Soldaten“ (3 K) or „Kuchen für Rotes-Kreuz-Konzert“ (6.40 K). The highest amount was K 20,407.50, which, however, was not a donation in the strict sense of the word, but a so-called war supplement (*Kriegszulage*), which had to be paid to its officials and employees by order of the government. Anna claimed, however, that her merit lay in the fact that she had paid this money to her employees despite the serious problems of running a business in wartime, thus helping to reduce distress and reduce rising inflation. She even attached a detailed list of these gifts to her application for promotion to the status of Free Lady, which was highly unusual. The fact that she had subscribed considerable funds to war loans may also have played a role.⁵⁸

But there is no doubt that this strategy of hers was successful. It undoubtedly found its way to the Czech Governor Count Max von Coudenhove, who fully supported her plea. Moreover, as his letter to the Minister of the Interior, Prince Konrad of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, shows, he respected her not only as a patron but above all as an excellent businesswoman and economic expert:

⁵⁴ On this question in detail: Županič, *The Making of Business Nobility*; Županič, *Nobilitierungspolitik*, 494–499, 511.

⁵⁵ Prager Tagblatt, 7 May 1903, 2.

⁵⁶ Only a few smaller gifts are documented from earlier times. For example, in 1908 200 K for the construction of a children's home in Stráž nad Nisou (German: Althabendorf). Nordböhmisches Volksblatt, 30 June 1908, 7.

⁵⁷ Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 730–759.

⁵⁸ E.g. her third war loan in 1915 for 200,000 K. Prager Abendblatt, 1 October 1915, 5; Wiener Zeitung, 7 November 1915, 34.

“Der grossen Aufgabe, die damit an sie herantrat, wusste sie, gestützt auf umfangreiche Kenntnisse und die Erfahrungen ihrer Jugend, in vollkommener Weise gerecht zu werden und die umfangreichen Unternehmungen, die wohl einen Wert von Millionen Kronen repräsentieren, trotz manigfachen Schwierigkeiten tadellos und erfolgreich zu leiten. Die Etablissements wurden während der Dauer ihrer Wirksamkeit als Chefin mit bedeutendem Aufwande der Modernisierung unterzogen.”

He therefore recommended her petition, among other things, “*in Ansehung seiner hervorragenden sozialen Stellung*”, an argument that played an important role in Austria in the granting of noble titles.⁵⁹

Minister Hohenlohe did not dispute his conclusions. In his report to the Emperor, he stated that Anna, on the death of her husband as his universal heir “*gestützt auf reiche Erfahrung und tüchtige Fachkenntnis, die umfangreichen, Millionenwerte darstellenden Unternehmungen dieser Firma mit dem besten Erfolge.*” He recommended her request and was sympathetic to her desire for parity with the baronial line of the family: the Frau von Liebieg

*“beruft sie sich daran, daß sie zurzeit das einzige Mitglied der Großindustriellenfamilie Liebieg sei, welches des Freiherrnstandes nicht teilhäftig ist, ein Umstand, dessen mißverständliche Auffassung sie als Versteherin der Firma des öfteren in peinliche Situationen gebracht und in ihr den Wunsch nach einer Gleichstellung mit den übrigen Familienangehörigen erweckt hat.”*⁶⁰

Franz Joseph I agreed with the recommendation and granted Anna the barony,⁶¹ in this case too, however, it was an ennoblement *ad personam* – she had no children, and the title died with her. However, this does not change the fact that her ennoblement was quite extraordinary and qualitatively different from the previous ones: the strategy she adopted in pursuit of the baronial title was no different from that of male entrepreneurs. The surviving official correspondence shows that even the highest state officials recognised her abilities and respected her as one of the leading representatives of Austrian industry. This was unmistakable evidence of the changing conditions and the emancipation of women, which was reflected in the radical transformation of society after the end of the First World War.

Conclusion

In the Habsburg monarchy, as in most of Europe, a title of nobility was a symbol of belonging to the elite of the state. The conferment of nobility was both a confirmation of an exceptional social status, very often resulting from the possession of extensive property (often land), and a distinction awarded by the monarch to persons who had rendered significant service to the state or dynasty.

⁵⁹ Cit. after: Max Coudenhove for Konrad Hohenlohe, 27 April 1916. In: AVA, Adelsarchiv, Anna von Liebieg, Freiherrnstand 1916/1917.

⁶⁰ Hohenlohe for Emperor Franz Joseph I, 7 July 1916, *ibid.*

⁶¹ The title was granted on 18 July 1916, the diploma issued on 7 February 1917. AVA, Adelsarchiv, Anna von Liebieg, Freiherrnstand 1916/1917.

Due to the disadvantaged legal position of women in the society of the time, ennoblement was for a long time limited only to men; however, since noble titles granted in the Habsburg Monarchy were always hereditary (except for ecclesiastics), the acquired privileges (the right to a noble title, coat of arms, judicial privileges, etc.) were also transmitted to the wife and descendants. For a long time, women were raised to the nobility only rarely, usually on the merits of their husbands (if they had already died) or on the antiquity of their lineage. Ladies who married members of the Habsburg family and whose marriage was approved by the Austrian Emperor constituted an exception. They were not entitled to the status of archduchess, but were granted a different title of nobility and coat of arms.

The situation began to change in the second decade of the 19th century, when Ludmilla Mally, a member of the Convent of English Ladies, was ennobled for exceptional merit. In her case, however, and in the case of another member of this spiritual congregation, Marie Mariacher, the elevation to nobility was an interesting combination of personal merit and social considerations, since both ladies held offices reserved for noblewomen.

The social position of women, however, gradually (albeit slowly) improved, and the state began to look for ways to recognise their merits. The first possibility was the Cross of Merit instituted by Emperor Franz Joseph in 1850. Although its recipients were again predominantly male, it was awarded to dozens of women over the following decades, ranging from female benefactors and artists to nurses and factory workers.

It soon became apparent, however, that emancipation was proceeding faster than most men in Austria had anticipated. This was also reflected in the awarding of honours. Women were playing an increasingly important role, even if their influence remained limited to a few areas - the arts, culture, education or (more rarely) business. However, their role as patrons and generous donors was indispensable, among whom we can find both aristocrats and ladies from wealthy bourgeois circles.

The unexpectedly rapid rise in the social prominence of women caused considerable problems for the responsible state officials. Increasingly, it became apparent that it was necessary to recognise their services with some kind of award, but the monarchy did not have one available. While men could receive not only the Order or the Cross of Merit, but also the title of "councillor" (privy, imperial, court or commercial – in German *Geheimer Rat*, *kaiserlicher Rat*, *Hofrat* and *Komerzialrat* respectively), women could be awarded only the Cross of Merit. However, this was a decoration intended mainly for the lower social classes and it was unthinkable that it be bestowed upon ladies from genuinely influential and wealthy families.

The solution turned out to be the granting of peerages, which were highly prestigious, but at the same time were often awarded to women (with the specific exception of Hungary). Now, however, women were not granted nobility for courtesy reasons or on the merits of their husbands or fathers, but solely on their own merits. Thus, during the second half of the 19th century, three ladies were ennobled in Austria for merit in their respective fields – Antonia Harrucker in 1875 for her pedagogical contributions, Clara Waagner in 1876 for her philanthropy, and

Eugenie Touzet in 1895 for her work as a governess. All the women were awarded the lowest title of nobility, the so-called “*einfacher Adelstand*”, which was still a very prestigious award and was also given to very important officials, officers or businessmen.

The situation with regard to women's rewards changed at the end of the 19th century. This was undoubtedly due to the establishment of an all-female Order of Merit, the Order of Elisabeth (1898) with three (from 1918 onwards four) classes, supplemented by a medal (the *Elisabeth-Medaille*) and, from 1918, the Elisabeth Cross (*Elisabeth-Kreuz*).⁶² This decoration was intended for ladies from all social classes – the highest grades for members of the ruling and most important aristocratic families, while the medals were intended for women from the lower classes, including employees of state institutions (postmistresses, commissionaires, etc.). The gender specific character of this order was further strengthened by a decision of Emperor Charles I of 29 December 1916: he handed over the responsibility for the Order of Elisabeth to his wife Zita, who was to decide upon whom it would be conferred.

The very last female ennoblement in Austria in 1916 – the granting of a barony to Anna von Liebieg – was proof of increasing emancipation. While the aforementioned ladies had been granted their nobility for merit in what could be described as exclusively or predominantly female domains, Liebieg was also awarded for humanitarian merit, but at the same time the state authorities recognised her quite extraordinary achievements in managing one of the most important textile factories in Bohemia.

Compared to the total number of ennoblements during the Austrian Empire, women were granted a negligible number of noble titles.⁶³ However, the mere fact that they were not denied such honours is testimony to the ever-increasing role of women in the life of the Danubian monarchy. An unmistakable milestone was the case of Madame von Liebieg, which under different historical circumstances would have opened the way for the more frequent awarding of higher titles of nobility to ladies of her position. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the autumn of 1918, however, brought the question of the further evolution of the Austrian nobility to a definitive close.

⁶² Dikowitsch, *Die österreichischen Damenorden. Der österreichisch kaiserliche Elisabeth-Orden*.

⁶³ The total number of noble titles granted by the Austrian monarchs between 1804 and 1918 is unknown. An analysis of available information sources suggests that there were at least 9,532. Županič, *Habsburská šlechta*, 109.

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POVZETEK

Spol in podeljevanje plemiških naslovov v Avstrijskem cesarstvu. Preobrazba plemstva v kontekstu vprašanja žensk

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Študija raziskuje mehanizme, pogoje in pomen podeljevanja plemiških naslovov ženskam v habsburški monarhiji, s posebnim poudarkom na primerih podeljevanja plemstva na podlagi osebnih zaslug. Medtem ko je bilo prenašanje plemiškega stanu po očetovski ali zakonski liniji običajna norma v monarhiji, je bilo neposredno povzdigovanje žensk med plemstvo razmeroma redko in je pogosto zahtevalo posebno utemeljitev, utemeljeno na običaju, pravni tradiciji ali služenju državi. Vendar pa je razvoj družbenega in pravnega položaja žensk v 19. stoletju omogočil posameznim izjemnim osebnostim, da so presegle te omejitve.

Na habsburškem ozemlju je lahko ženska pridobila plemiški status na štiri glavne načine: z rojstvom, s poroko, s povzdignjenjem bližnjega moškega sorodnika ali z neposrednim podeljevanjem plemstva s strani monarha. Medtem ko so bili prvi trije načini pogosti in urejeni z uveljavljenim pravom in prakso, je bil četrti – neposredno podeljevanje – redek in politično pomemben. Bil je eden redkih legitimnih načinov, s katerimi je monarhija lahko priznala javne zasluge žensk v družbi, ki jih je sicer izključevala iz državne in vojaške službe.

Do sreda 19. stoletja je bilo povzdigovanje žensk med plemstvo običajno povezano z njihovimi družinskimi vezmi, bodisi kot priznanje zaslug moža ali očeta, bodisi kot del običajnih privilegijev, ki so pripadali ženam in hčeram aristokratov. V primerih morganičnih porok – tj. porok med habsburškimi nadvojvodami in ženskami nižjega družbenega stanu – so bile ženske običajno izključene iz naslova »nadvojvodinja«, čeprav so lahko prejele plemiški naziv in grb, ki je odražal njihovo poreklo in primernost. Ti redki primeri kažejo, kako strogo je dinastija varovala plemiške privilegije in nazive.

Prvi znaki sprememb se pojavijo v zgodnjem 19. stoletju, ko sta bili dve članici reda Jezusa (Englische Fräulein) – Ludmilla Mally in Marie Mariacher – povzdignjeni v plemstvo. Čeprav so bile te podelitve predstavljene kot individualne nagrade za izjemne zasluge na področju izobraževanja in upravljanja samostanov, odražajo tudi napetost med službo in plemiškim statusom v ženskem verskem kontekstu. Ker so morale biti predstojnice plemiških samostanov same plemkinje, sta bila povzdigovanji Mally in Mariacher deloma tudi sredstvo za uskladitev kanonskega prava in cesarske prakse.

Preobrazba se je pospešila po revoluciji leta 1848 in uvedbi pravne enakosti pred zakonom. Od tedaj naprej so bile ženske vse pogosteje počaščene zaradi lastnih zaslug, ne več zgolj zaradi vlijednosti ali rodu. Nova utemeljitev za podeljevanje plemstva se je osredotočala na vodstvo na področju izobraževanja, dobrodelnosti in izjemne zasluge za dinastijo ali državne ustanove. Pomembni primeri vključujejo Antonio Harrucker, ki je več kot tri desetletja vodila Zavod za hčere častnikov v Hernalsu; Claro Waagner, dobrodelnico, katere družina je bila povzdignjena zaradi njenih obsežnih karitativnih dejavnosti; in Eugenie Touzet, francosko guvernantko v gospodinjstvu nadvojvodinje Elizabete, ki je prejela osebni naslov.

Primer Clare Waagner je bil posebej izjemen: plemstvo ni bilo podeljeno le njej, temveč tudi njenim otrokom, vključno s sinovi, zaradi česar je postala osrednja osebnost pri nastanku nove plemiške družine – kar je bila redkost v cesarski praksi. Ti primeri kažejo, da je bila država pripravljena prilagoditi obstoječe konvencije, da bi nagradiла družbeno vplivne ženske, katerih ravnanje je bilo v skladu z imperialnimi vrednotami služenja, izobraževanja in katoliške pobožnosti.

Vrhunec teh sprememb je bil dosežen med prvo svetovno vojno, ko so bile ženske, kot je Anna von Liebieg, industrijska podjetnica iz severne Češke, povzdignjene ne le zaradi dobrodelnih prispevkov, ampak tudi zaradi poklicnih dosežkov. Za razliko od prejšnjih primerov je Liebieg sama zaprosila za plemiški naslov, uporabila enake strategije kot moški podjetniki in bila

izrecno pohvaljena s strani visokih uradnikov za svoje vodstvene sposobnosti in gospodarsko znanje. Njen primer pomeni najvišjo točko v spolni preobrazbi podeljevanja plemiških priznanj v monarhiji – obliko simbolne enakopravnosti tik pred zlomom cesarskega sistema leta 1918.

Vzporedno s temi razvoji je monarhija ustvarila tudi poseben red zaslug za ženske – Red Elizabete (1898) – s čimer je dodatno institucionalizirala čast, namenjeno izključno ženskam. Vendar podeljevanje plemstva ženskam zaradi zaslug nikoli ni postalo razširjen pojavi. Čeprav je država pokazala določeno prožnost in so ženske postopoma pridobivale vidnost v javnem življenju, je sistem še vedno močno privilegiral moške. Kljub temu primeri, predstavljeni v tem članku, kažejo, kako je cesarska Avstrija skušala uskladiti vztrajnost tradicionalnih družbenih hierarhij z vse večjo vlogo žensk na področjih kulture, izobraževanja in humanitarnosti.

Za zaključek: podeljevanje plemstva ženskam v habsburški monarhiji ni bilo zgolj podaljšek patriarhalnega privilegija, ampak se je sčasoma razvilo v mehanizem za priznavanje ženskih zaslug in družbenega vodstva. Čeprav redki, ti primeri kažejo na subtilen, a jasen premik v državnem priznavanju žensk kot dejavnih nosilk javnih vrednot – premik, ki ga je prekinil razpad habsburškega imperija, a ki kaže na širše družbene spremembe v »dolgemu 19. stoletju«.