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The Making of Business Nobility. The Social Rise of Austrian Businessmen after 1848

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Abstract:

In the 19th century, the society of the Habsburg monarchy underwent a fundamental transformation. The changes associated with the year 1848 and the demise of the estate society also significantly affected the social position of businessmen. Their position before this date was not legally defined and prestige did not depend on their property, but on their place in the traditional ranking of the social hierarchy associated with the possession of burgher rights or the noble title. Their prestige began to grow after this date, mainly due to the ever closer cooperation with the state and growing political influence. In the new era, the noble title was not a prerequisite for belonging to the elite, but for many people it was still a symbol of prestige and many businessmen sought it. They saw in it a demonstration of their achievements and a fulcrum for the historical memory of their entire family.

Key words:

history, Austria, nobility, business, social transformation

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Introduction¹

Business elites in the modern sense of the word can be talked about in the Habsburg Monarchy as early as the first half of the 18th century, but their number significantly decreased after the annexation of the economically significant region of Silesia by Prussia in 1741–1742. Moreover, the social composition of entrepreneurship in the Habsburg Monarchy in the proto-industrial period differed in some respects from the later one, in part because the aristocracy played an important role among businessmen.²

The continuous increase in the number of businessmen, especially factory owners, wholesalers and financiers, is associated with the enlightened reforms in the second half of Maria Theresa's rule³. Thanks to them, the Austrian Empire, half a century later, had a large business class, the importance of which grew exceptionally due to social changes after 1848. At the same time, the social composition of entrepreneurship began to sharply change in favour of persons from the non-aristocratic classes, among which the proportion of individuals of the Jewish faith increased.⁴

The legal position of businessmen was complicated before 1848. They were not recognized as a social class *per se* (i.e. a class of an estate), and their activities were further restricted by the existence of guilds. The status of the individual continued to be determined by the professional division of the society, and his prestige was not primarily based on an economic basis, but mainly on their position on the ladder of the social hierarchy associated with the possession of burgher rights or of the peerage⁵.

¹ This study was created with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic within the NAKI II project Nr. DG18P02OVV003, implemented by the National Technical Museum, the National Agricultural Museum and the National Heritage Institute in 2018–2022.

² On this question, cf. Hannes Stekl, *Adel und Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert. Hannes Stekl zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet von Ernst Bruckmüller, Franz Eder und Andrea Schnöller* (Sozial- und Wirtschaftshistorische Studien, Bd. 31) (München, 2004) (hereinafter: Stekl, *Adel und Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert*); Tatjana Tönsmeier, *Adelige Moderne. Großgrundbesitz und ländliche Gesellschaft in England und Böhmen 1848–1918* (Köln–Weimar–Wien, 2012), pp. 145–161.

³ Jiří Brňovják, *Šlechticem z moci úřední. Udělování šlechtických titulů v českých zemích (1705–1780)* (Ostrava, 2015), pp. 232–236.

⁴ Jan Hájek and Václav Matoušek, "Ringhofferové v kontextu obecného fenoménu rekreačních ('venkovských') aktivit buržoazních elit v 19. a na počátku 20. století", in: Hlavačka, Milan and Hořejš, Miloš, *Fenomén Ringhoffer. Rodina, podnikání, politika* (Prague, 2019), pp. 469–509 (particularly pp. 498–499); Jan Županič and Michal Fiala, *Nobilitas Iudaeorum. Židovská šlechta střední Evropy v komparativní perspektivě* (Prague, 2017), pp. 65–75 (hereinafter: Županič and Fiala, *Nobilitas Iudaeorum*).

⁵ Monika Wienfort, *Der Adel in der Moderne* (Göttingen, 2006); Eckart Conze and Monika Wienfort, "Themen und Perspektiven historischer Adelforschung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts", in: Conze, Eckart and Wienfort, Monika (eds.), *Adel und Moderne. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln, 2004), pp. 1–16.

The legal situation was particularly complicated for Jews, as demonstrated by the example of the

This situation only changed as a result of the adoption of the April 1848 constitution and the introduction of equality before the law and other changes that radically transformed the society of the Habsburg Monarchy. An aristocratic title was no longer a prerequisite for belonging to the elite and the prestige of businessmen gradually began to grow due to their ever closer cooperation with the state and their participation in the activities of various professional committees (especially within the newly established chambers of commerce and trade), cooperation with new ministries or courts, or on the basis of the profit of parliamentary mandates. Moreover, many increasingly began to connect public activities with philanthropic activities, both in relation to their own employees and their broader surroundings. The patronage followed the traditions and forms of representation that were common among the aristocracy and the town patri-cians, and *de facto* took their place. The richest ones even imitated aristocratic families in their lifestyles, built or modernized luxurious castles and invested a considerable part of their resources in the purchase of real estate, especially large country estates.⁶ However, it should be stressed that this led to an increase in the prestige of individuals and not in entrepreneurship as a social status.⁷ Yet this process did not have to include the acquiring of a noble title, as many were not interested in it. There were certainly many reasons, but I consider only one of them to be crucial: the gaining of a peerage no longer played a role in integrating an individual and his descendants among the elites because, after 1848, there was no concept of creating (or reconstructing) this class.⁸ Thus, his ennoblement did not change anything in terms of his social status, because other factors had already determined his place on the social ladder.

Porges Brothers, owners of a large textile factory in Smíchov near Prague. When they were repeatedly denied the granting of burgher rights and equalization with the Christian inhabitants of the monarchy, they finally received a noble title in 1841, which gave them an extremely respected and privileged position even outside the Jewish community (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (hereinafter: AVA), Adelsarchiv (ca 1500–ca 1918), Hofkadselsakten (1600–1918), Akten (hereinafter: AVA, Adelsarchiv), Porges von Portheim, Adelsakt 1841–1879. Also William D. Godsey, "Adelige Intoleranz. Die antijüdische Aufnahmeordnung des niederösterreichischen Ritterstandes aus dem Jahr 1808", in: Keller, Katrin, Mafa, Petr and Scheutz, Martin, *Adel und Religion in der frühneuzeitlichen Habsburgermonarchie* (Wien, 2017), pp. 321–337; Županič and Fiala, *Nobilitas ludaeorum*, pp. 61–62.

⁶ However, businessmen approached the purchase of large estates as early as the pre-March period. On the social rise of businessmen, see: Stekl, *Adel und Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert*, pp. 140–156; Petr Popelka, *Zrod moderního podnikatelstva. Bratři Kleinové a podnikatelé v českých zemích a Rakouském císařství v éře kapitalistické industrializace* (Ostrava, 2011), pp. 112–133.

⁷ This is often referred to in historiography as "aristocratization", and it should be noted that the term is not used unambiguously. Cf. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Band 3: *Von der "Deutschen Doppelrevolution" bis zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges 1849–1914* (München, 1995), pp. 718–723.

⁸ Dieter Hertz-Eichenrode, "Wilheminscher Neuadel? Zur Praxis der Adelsverleihung in Preußen vor 1914", *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 282 (2006), pp. 676–678.

The demarcation of the individual's place in the society of the Danube Monarchy was not so easy in the mid-19th century. Although there was equality before the law, the exceptional position of the family aristocracy, the so-called first society, as determined by the Court Rank Order (*Rangordnung am Hofe seiner k. u. k. Apostolischen Majestät*) unequivocally favouring a family aristocracy with an appropriate number of noble ancestors over persons with large individual merit from low-born or neo-noble families (including senior ministers or diplomats).⁹ The rest of the society was not organised on a hierarchy on the basis of titles or origin but, *de facto*, on the basis of an individual's status on a step on the ladder in the civil service. As early as 1807 and 1812, all civil servants of the Austrian Empire were divided into twelve classes (*Diätenklassen*) because of the creation of directives for their financial evaluation and the costs of their possible relocation. In 1873, these diet classes were renamed to rank classes (*Rangklassen*) and their number was reduced to eleven. All civil servants were classified under this scheme.¹⁰

The highest civil servants, in the rank classes I to IV, were to be the new elite of the Empire. In fact, this was not entirely the case, mainly for two reasons: (1) the existence of the first (courtly) company recruited almost exclusively from members of the aristocracy to whom they had no access; (2) the underpayment of Austrian civil servants. From this perspective, businessmen had a better starting position, but their position in the social hierarchy of the monarchy was relatively difficult to define. This is also why some members of very rich business dynasties entered the civil service despite their financial independence, because their prestige as officials greatly exceeded that of businessmen.¹¹

As a result of the constitution of 1848, the estates society ceased to exist, and thus the nobility was no longer a prerequisite for belonging to the elite of the Empire.¹² Once the possession of a noble title no longer brought tangible

⁹ The aristocracy for all intents and purposes did not accept into their ranks people from the new nobility. One of the few exceptions was Baron Salomon Albert Anselm von Rothschild (1844–1911), who, along with his wife Bettina Caroline de Rothschild (1858–1892) from the Paris line, received on December 23, 1887, as the first Jewish nobleman, the right of access to the court. This privilege was negotiated by Hungarian Prime Minister István Count Tisza for his merits in reducing Hungarian gold annuity from 6 to 4 per cent. The privilege was extended to his children on January 29, 1906. Cf. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages-Ausgabe)*, 25 December 1887, p. 2; *Weimarer historisch-genealogisches Taschenbuch des gesamten Adels jehudiischen Ursprungs* (Weimar, 1912), p. 204. No other Jewish family in the monarchy gained a similar level of privilege (Jan Županič, *Židovská šlechta podunajské monarchie. Mezi Davidovou hvězdou a křížem* (Prague, 2012), p. 584 (hereinafter: Županič, *Židovská šlechta podunajské monarchie*)).

¹⁰ Karl Megner, *Beamte. Wirtschafts- und sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte des k. k. Beamtentums* (Wien, 1985), pp. 32–33 (hereinafter: Megner, *Beamte*). The 12th rank was abolished for state officials and most types of troops in 1873.

¹¹ Roman Sandgruber, *Traumzeit für Millionäre: Die 929 reichsten Wienerinnen und Wiener im Jahr 1910* (Wien–Graz–Klagenfurt, 2013), pp. 124–126 (hereinafter: Sandgruber, *Traumzeit für Millionäre*).

¹² Dirk Schumann, "Wirtschaftsbürgertum in Deutschland: segmentiert und staatsnah. Bemerkungen

benefits, its acceptance became only a matter of personal choice, not a prerequisite for social ascent.¹³ As a result, during the second half of the 19th century, ennoblement was transformed into a specific form of state honour, whose extraordinary prestige in the Danube Monarchy was due to two factors: tradition and the fact that ennoblement was always hereditary.¹⁴

The transformation of noble status into an honorary title in Austria was all the more profound that, from the 1860s at the latest, the awarded title of nobility was allowed to define the social status of an individual in the same way as in the case of an order or distinction. This rule was applied to the whole society of the Monarchy, not only to civil servants. The goal of this study is to capture the development of and the reasons for the ennoblement of businessmen in the Austrian Empire in the era of the last two rulers: Franz Joseph I and Karl I. On the basis of an analysis of official state, and court and royal materials we will try to reconstruct the development of the aristocratic policy towards businessmen and also to more generally define the possibilities of valuation of their merits after the decline of the estates society in 1848. We will focus mainly on the attitude of the state authorities towards these persons and on the question of who was and who was not eligible for ennoblement. On the other hand, personal motives of interest or lack of interest in ennoblement will be left out because they are always highly individual and difficult to integrate into a wider framework.

* * *

Austria's system of noble titles had five degrees: Princes (*Fürst*), Counts (*Graf*) and Barons (*Freiherr*) were ranked among the higher nobility, while Knights (*Ritter*) and untitled Nobility (*einfacher Adel*) belonged to the lower nobility.

zu den Erträgen, Problemen und Perspektiven der neueren deutschen Unternehmensgeschichte", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3, No. 3 (1992), pp. 375–384.

¹³ The individual motives that led individuals to be interested in a noble title are difficult to find because in the central offices of the monarchy (ministries, ruler's cabinet office) they have usually not been preserved. Here we are entirely dependent on materials of a personal nature (family archives, correspondence, etc.), which do not fully cover the new nobility, and no comparative studies exist in this respect.

¹⁴ Hereditary ennoblement was not the rule in Central Europe during the "long 19th century". The kingdoms of South Germany, Bavaria and Württemberg in particular, which were heavily influenced by Napoleonic France at the beginning of the 19th century, granted personal ennoblements much more often than hereditary ennoblements. Titles were awarded *ad personam* also in Prussia, but never in the Danube Monarchy. Conclusions based on the author's research in: Bayrisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Adelsmatrikel a Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, I. HA Rep. 176 Heroldsamt. See *ibid.*: Marcus D. Ernst, *Der bayerische Adel und das moderne Bayern. Die Gesetzgebung und Debatte über die persönlichen Privilegien des in Bayern immatrikulierten Adels (1808–1818)*, Inaugural-Dissertation, Universität Passau (Passau, 2001); Berndt Wunder, "Der württembergische Personaladel (1806–1913)", *Zeitschrift für württembergische Landesgeschichte*, Bd. 40 (1981), pp. 494–518.



Emperor Franz Josef I
(about 1890) (private
Archive)

Only three lower noble titles were eligible in the case of businessmen. The princely state was granted (and only rarely) solely to aristocrats and the count title usually to members of the old nobility or, very exceptionally, to high officials and officers.¹⁵

¹⁵ Ernst Mayrhofer and Anton Graf Pace, *Handbuch für den politischen Verwaltungsdienst der im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der diesen Ländern gemeinsamen Gesetze und Verordnungen*, Vol. 5 (Wien, 1901), pp. 126–127; Jan Županič, *Nová šlechta Rakouského císařství* (Prague, 2007), pp. 98–105 (hereinafter: Županič, *Nová šlechta Rakouského císařství*).

Unfortunately, there is still no complete listing of all Austrian ennoblements from 1804 to 1918. Peter Frank-Döfering's overview¹⁶, the most widely used one today, is not quite comprehensive, and Arno Kerschbaumer's lists are limited to the period of the First World War.¹⁷ The statistical works of Hanns Jäger-Sunstenau and Johann Baptist Witting also have considerable limits.¹⁸ While Witting's study summarizes the ennoblements from 1848 to 1898, Jäger-Sunstenau's work attempts to map the development of the awarding of noble titles from 1701 to 1918. While Witting's work – with respect to its release date – is purely statistical, this approach is surprising for Jäger-Sunstenau. There is no introduction, and demarcation of the methods and reasons for defining individual ennobled socio-professional groups.

Even though Witting's study is older, in one respect it is better than the one by Jäger-Sunstenau: the study classifies the title recipients not only by profession, but also by their position on the ladder within the civil service and also on the basis of the method of promotion. This study therefore addresses the question of whether the awarding of the title was a result of the highest decision, of the granting of an award (*systematisierter Adel*) or was based on military service (*systemmäßiger Adel*). While Witting's conclusions seem to be accurate for civil servants, his work has its limits for other population groups. Similar to Jäger-Sunstenau, Witting does not explain the reasons for the division into social groups, which causes problems in more detailed investigations. According to Witting's list¹⁹, 236 businessmen would have been promoted to the aristocracy between 1848 and 1898, which is an extraordinarily underestimated number.

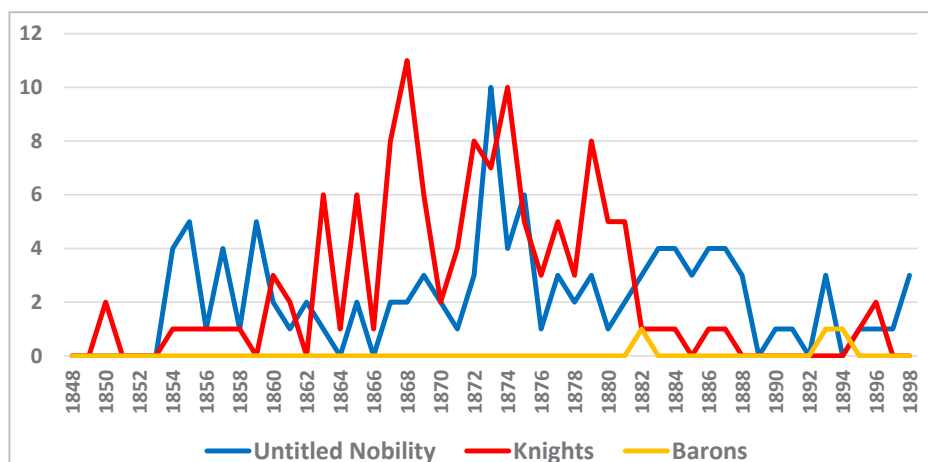
Particularly suspicious is the extremely low number of promotions to the rank of barons (three persons promoted by the highest decision of the Emperor (*Allerhöchste Entschlieſung*)), because it is known that a barony was awarded to

¹⁶ Peter Frank-Döfering, *Adelslexikon des Österreichischen Kaisertums 1804–1918* (Wien–Freiburg–Basel, 1989).

¹⁷ Arno Kerschbaumer, *Nobilitierungen unter der Regentschaft Kaiser Franz Josef I. / I. Ferenc József király (1914–1916)* (Graz, 2017); Arno Kerschbaumer, *Nobilitierungen unter der Regentschaft Kaiser Karl I. / IV. Károly király (1916–1921)* (Graz, 2016).

¹⁸ Hanns Jäger-Sunstenau, "Statistik der Nobilitierungen in Österreich 1701–1918", in: *Österreichisches Familienarchiv*, Bd. 1 (Neustadt an der Aisch, 1963), pp. 3–16 (hereinafter: Jäger-Sunstenau, "Statistik der Nobilitierungen in Österreich 1701–1918"); Johann Baptist Witting, "Statistik der Standeserhöhungen während der Regierung Seiner Majestät des Kaisers Franz Josef I., in: *Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Regierungs-Jubiläum (1848–1898) Seiner kaiserlichen und königlichen apostolischen Majestät Franz Josef I.* (Hrsg. von Historischen Vereinen Wiens im Selbstverlage des Vereines für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich) (Wien, 1898), pp. 59–91 (hereinafter: Witting, "Statistik der Standeserhöhungen").

¹⁹ Businessmen (Witting's categories *Industrielle, Großbändler, Banquiers, Fabrikanten, Kaufleute* and *Fabrikbesitzer*) are most likely to be also found in categories *Landesorgane, Deputierte, Gemeindeorgane* and *Private*. On the contrary, I have included also descendants of businessmen in this number of 236 ennoblements (*Grossbändlers-Sohn*) and the category *Handelskammerpräsident*.



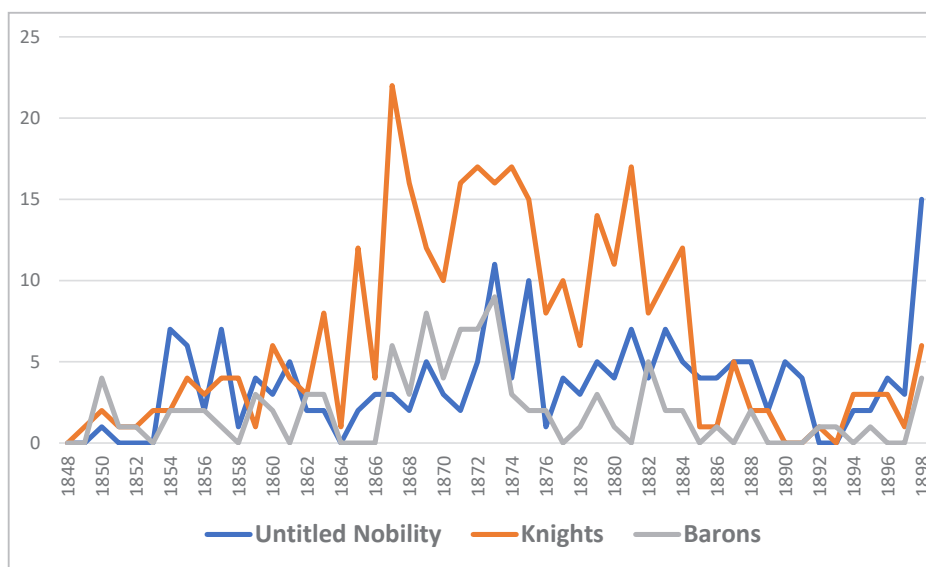
Graph 1: The ennoblement of businessmen in 1848–1898 according to J. B. Witting

several dozens of businessmen, and to the vast majority of them on the basis of the Order of the Iron Crown class II. This is why the data of Jäger-Sunstenau are probably closer to reality. For the period from 1848 to 1918, Jäger-Sunstenau states a total of 829 ennobled businessmen, 612 of them in the period from 1848 to 1898, which is a number three times higher than the one proposed by Witting.

Both statistical studies clearly demonstrate one fact: The principal turning point in the Austrian ennoblement policy was the year 1884, when the possibility of applying for ennoblement after the awarding of an order was done away with.²⁰ Although the decline in the number of ennoblements was only temporary, the structure of ennoblements changed radically afterwards. While up to 1884, businessmen unambiguously dominated in the promotion to knighthood on the basis of the award of the Order of the Iron Crown class III, after 1884 they usually acquired untitled noble titles.

One interesting fact, however, is the maintaining of the share of baronies, which in both time periods exceeded 17 percent for businessmen and after 1884 was higher than for other social groups. The ratio of promotion among the

²⁰ The claim was associated with all orders except for the Order of Franz Joseph (founded as late as 1849). After this date, however, the claim on nobility was connected only with the Military Order of Maria Theresa, but which was not awarded until the First World War. For example, Jan Županič, "Poslední rytíři monarchie", in: Tomáš Kykal and Jaroslav Láník at all., *Léta do pole okovaná*, Bd. II, 1915 – Noví nepřátelé, nové výzvy (Prague, 2017), pp. 133–145. On this issue see e.g.: Georg Gaugusch, "Die kaiserliche Entschließung vom 18. Juli 1884", in: Irmgard Pangerl and Zdislava Röhner, *Zwischen Archiv und Heraldik. Festschrift für Michael Göbl zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wien, 2019), pp. 79–89.



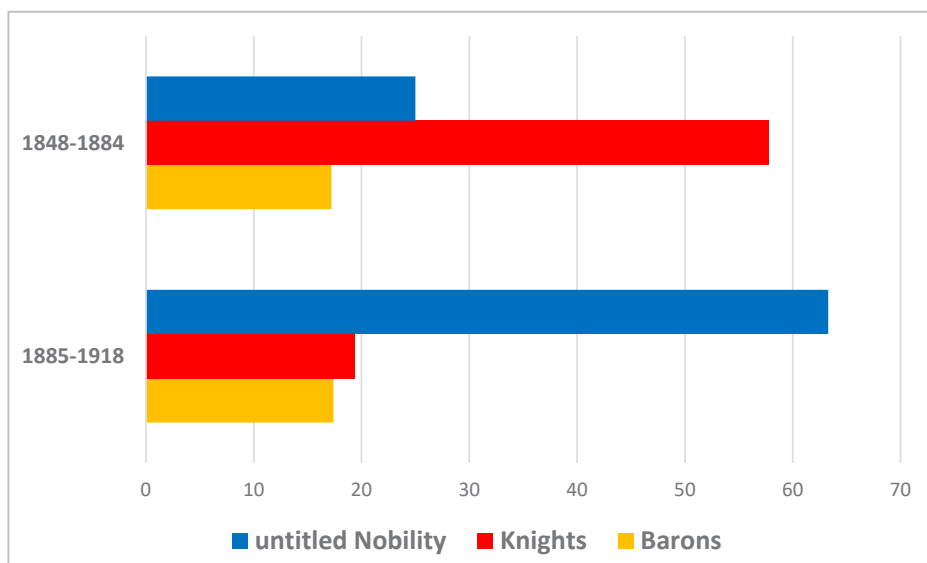
Graph 2: The ennoblement of businessmen in 1848–1918 according to H. Jäger-Sunstenau

higher nobility (the status of barons) and the lower nobility (untitled Nobility, Knights) remained the same in both periods, while in other social groups the share of barons decreased.²¹ Yet the reduction of the number of ennoblements significantly affected businessmen as a whole. While in the years 1848–1884 businessmen were granted some degree of nobility in 519 cases (14 times a year on average), after that date there were only 311 ennoblements, *i.e.* about nine per year. The decline was all the more significant because there was a significant increase in population in Austria during that time period.²²

When investigating Austrian businessmen, we come across a basic shortcoming. None of the authors has so far shed light on why and for what reasons

²¹ Jan Županič, "Nobilitierungspolitik der letzten Habsburger. Der neue Adel im Zeitalter Franz Josephs und Karls", *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 106, No. 4 (2019), pp. 473–518 (here particularly pp. 493–498) (hereinafter: Županič, "Nobilitierungspolitik der letzten Habsburger").

²² According to the census of 1880, 22,144,244 inhabitants lived in the area of Cisleithania, and 28,571,934 thirty years later. Die Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 31. December 1880, Wien 1884, Heft 3, s. IV; Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1910, Wien 1917, Heft 1, p. 33.



Graph 3: Percentage distribution of ennoblements of businessmen according to granted status²³

these businessmen were ennobled. The reason probably is the fact that, from the mid-19th century, one cannot rely only on the files on ennoblements (*Adelsakten*) stored in the Nobility archive (*Adelslarchiv*), because their informational value has rapidly decreased over time. While approximately up to the mid-19th century it is possible to find in these files virtually all the agenda associated with the awarding of a title (the application for ennoblement, recommendations of the provincial governments, statements of the court office, royal notes, etc.), at least from the 1860s, these materials were appearing less and less in the files. From the end of the 19th century, the documents usually contain only the application for an award, a very brief curriculum vitae, the concept of the deed and official documents (accounts, takeover protocols, etc.) connected with their production and handover.

It is not possible to clarify the reason for this change given the current state of knowledge. Unquestionably, the development of the administrative state played a role, but no less important was the transfer of decision-making powers from the monarch to the government. Even after the restoration of constitutionality, the ruler granted nobility and orders according to his own will,

²³ Graph 3 based on the conclusions from: Jäger-Sunstenau, "Statistik der Nobilitierungen in Österreich 1701–1918".

but the ministers essentially gained the same competences, because the ruler almost never contradicted their recommendations.²⁴ While the decision of the ruler was the sovereign decision of the individual, in the case of the government it was the step of a collective body: the proposal for an award had to be presented by a minister at a meeting of the Ministerial Council and, if approved, was handed over to the ruler's cabinet office, as the ruler's approval was a prerequisite for awarding any distinction. After the adoption of the Constitution in 1861, an interesting model of coexistence was created: the Emperor awarded noble titles to any person and, at the same time, more or less unreservedly accepted the proposals of his ministers for such awards and titles.

It was not only ministers, however, who submitted the proposals for state honours to the ruler. The same competence belonged to the highest court dignitaries, who stood outside the "classic" state apparatus and had the right without mediation by the Austrian or Hungarian government to propose to the ruler the awarding of people of worth. In the case of businessmen, the proposals for the granting of nobility status were found in the archives of the Office of the Lord High Steward (*Obersthofmeisteramt*),²⁵ among whose competencies also were matters of court museums, which some businessmen sponsored. Further information can be found in the archives of the offices of the orders of the monarchy, which (with the exception of the Military Order of Maria Theresa) also fell under the authority of the Supreme Stewart.²⁶

Data on the granting of nobility status are dispersed over several archives and collections, which makes this research very complicated. While the files associated with the issuance of awards are kept in the nobility archives (*Adelsarchiv*), the final versions of the proposals for the granting of the titles are in the archive of the Imperial Cabinet Office (*Kabinettsarchiv*), deposited in the House, Court and State Archive (*Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*).²⁷ But there is a lot of important information that is missing too. One of the reasons could be both the enormous increase in the agenda that the ruler had to deal with, as well as the possibility that he had less and less influence on the policy of enno-

²⁴ Such situations occurred more during the reign of Karl I. From the Franz Joseph era, a similar case has not yet been captured in archival materials (Jan Županič, "Karlovská šlechta. Rakouské a uherské nobilitace ve světle materiálů kabinetní kanceláře Karla I. (IV.)", *Sborník archivních prací* LXI, No. 1 (2011), pp. 3–114.

²⁵ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (hereinafter: HHStA), Hofarchiv, Privat- und Familienfonde, Obersthofmeisteramt (13. Jh.–1921), Obersthofmeisteramt (1650–1921), Akten-Hauptreihe (hereinafter: Obersthofmeisteramt, Akten-Hauptreihe).

²⁶ HHStA, Hofarchiv, Privat- und Familienfonde, Obersthofmeisteramt (13. Jh.–1921), Obersthofmeisteramt (1650–1921), Orden der Eisernen Krone (1816–1918), Akten (hereinafter: Obersthofmeisteramt, Orden der Eisernen Krone (1816–1918)).

²⁷ HHStA, Kabinettsarchiv (1523–1918), Kabinettskanzlei Vorträge (1848–1918), Akten (hereinafter: KK).

blement, and might not have been informed at all about the background of some of these promotions.

Since most proposals for ennoblement were dealt with by the government, the relevant files are kept in the files of the k.k. Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerium des Innern*), more rarely in the files of the Presidium of this Ministry (*Präsidium, Akten*)²⁸ or of the Presidium of the Ministerial Council (*Ministerratspräsidium*).²⁹ The evidential value of these materials is absolutely extraordinary. There is information on internal negotiations, proposals from individual ministers, and often also supplementary materials in the form of information from the governorates or provincial governments and police directorates. Unfortunately, the archive of the Ministry of the Interior was seriously damaged in 1927 by a fire at the Palace of Justice, in which part of the archive was completely destroyed and another part was seriously damaged. A continuous series of writings from the mid-90s of the 19th century has been preserved; until this time, we have only fragments available, (so-called burn files (*Brandakten*). Hungarian ennoblements are out of the focus of this study, but even here it was necessary to study a representative sample. The documents for the granting of Hungarian nobility status are located in the files of the Cabinet Archive (*Kabinettsarchiv*) in Vienna and in Archive of the Royal Ministry at the Supreme Court (*Király Személye Körüli Minisztérium Levéltára*) in Budapest.³⁰

Finding information on the reasons for ennoblement of businessmen is a relatively difficult task. It is not only the question of extending the material and the fragmentation into a number of collections, but above all of the loss of sources of fundamental value caused by the fire of 1927 and also because it is usually not possible to reconstruct the reasons arising from the ruler's decisions. The ruler only issued his decisions and did not usually justify them. A similarly complication can be seen in the granting of state awards on the occasion of royal anniversaries and birthdays in 1898, 1908 and 1910. Even though we have lists of the awarded persons (which is not all that common, we often find only numbers in the files), the reasons are missing.³¹

²⁸ AVA, Inneres (1550 ca–1918), Ministerium des Innern (1848–1918), Präsidium (1848–1918), Akten (hereinafter: AVA, Inneres, Mdl, Präsidium). Here are to be found several dozens of cartons directly marked *Orden und Auszeichnungen* (Kt. 1091–1187 and 2329–2448).

²⁹ AVA, Inneres, Ministerratspräsidium (1860–1918), Ministerratspräsidium, Akten (hereinafter: AVA, Inneres MRP Präsidium).

³⁰ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary), K 20 – Király Személye Körüli Minisztérium Levéltára – Elnöki iratok, K 20. On the Hungarian ennoblement policy, see e.g. Županič, "Nobilitierungspolitik der letzten Habsburger", pp. 500–509.

³¹ Cf. HHStA, KK, 4184/1898; *ibid*, 3634/1908; *ibid*, 2573/1910. These are only tables summarizing the number of individual granted awards. The list of names, often with the name of the ennobling person but without giving a reason, was found only up to 1908. (in: AVA, Inneres, Mdl, Präsidium, Kt 2385/1908).

The decline of the estates society forced the state to try to hierarchize the society according to another key. One of the variants was the division according to voters groups within the framework of the curial electoral law (after 1861), but a more precise one was the use of the above mentioned system of rank classes. Therefore, the citizens of the monarchy outside the civil service began to be ranked (albeit virtually) according to their position on this ladder. At the same time, the services rendered to the state and the general prestige associated with performing a certain function, not the origin and property, began to be the main factor in achieving a certain position. The system was perfected during the long reign (1879–1893) of Prime Minister Count Eduard Taaffe and remained in force until the end of the monarchy.³² The award was therefore not tied to the merit, but the place of the individual on the actual or virtual ranks ladder.

A visible symbol of belonging to the elite of the state thus became the possession of a noble title or an order, most of which covered up to 1884 by the so-called ennoblement article, which allowed the bearer to apply for a certain noble title. An imaginary boundary for the award of the lowest order with the ennoblement article, namely of the Iron Crown class III, which made it possible to apply for the title of Knight, was the rank VI class for officials. Rarely, however, this order, as well as that for untitled nobility status, could be granted to persons at a lower level of the state hierarchy.³³

Surprisingly, after the abolition of the ennoblement articles in 1884, the situation did not change much, with the only difference that the ennoblement of officials was usually made conditional on the achievement of the rank V class. The stratification of ennoblements at the level of titles was also maintained, when the granted status was dependent on the individual's current position in the civil service. Individuals in rank V class were thus granted untitled nobility, in rank IV class a knighthood and to higher-ranking persons a barony. Thanks to this step, after 1884 ennoblement finally turned into a specific form of state distinction. This system was not applied to officers, because from 1757 they were entitled to promotion to untitled nobility after thirty or forty years of service (systematic nobility, *systemmäßiger Adelstand*).³⁴

³² Cf. Mario Laich, *Altösterreichische Ehrungen – Auszeichnungen des Bundes. Vergleiche und Betrachtungen. Ein Beitrag zur Rechts- und Kulturgeschichte* (Innsbruck–Wien 1993), pp. 62–63 (hereinafter: Laich, *Altösterreichische Ehrungen*); Županič and Fiala, *Nobilitas Iudaeorum*, pp. 29–31.

³³ The rules for the granting of orders were more liberal in the case of officers and the Order of the Iron Crown, therefore, Subaltern Officers in the classes X–VIII also obtained them. (Major, Hetman, First Lieutenant). On the contrary, officials from below the class VII were awarded the Order only very rarely (Witting, "Statistik der Standeserhöhungen"; Županič, *Nová šlechta Rakouského císařství*, pp. 119–123).

³⁴ Reinhard Binder-Kriegelstein, *Österreichisches Adelsrecht. Von der Ausgestaltung des Adelsrechts der cisleithanischen Reichshälfte bis zum Adelsaufhebungsgesetz der Republik unter besonderer*

The valuation of persons who were not civil servants proved to be a complex problem. It was necessary that the awarded honours corresponded – albeit virtually – to their social position on the ladder of civil service.³⁵ Up to now, it is still not known if a special memorandum was drawn up on this issue, but the practice was stabilized along approximately the following lines:³⁶

Table 1: Division of ranks according to the rank classes of civil servants

| Rank Class / degree ³⁷ | The status of persons outside the civil service |
|---|---|
| III. / Order of the Iron Crown I. Class | Archbishops and bishops, owners and presidents of large banks |
| III. and IV. / Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph | Archbishops and bishops, members of the Austrian House of Commons (the Hungarian House of Mandates) |
| IV. / Order of the Iron Crown II. Class or Commander with Star of the Order of Franz Joseph | The most important industrialists and bankers, outstanding scientists, artists, architects and builders |
| V and VI. / Commander of the Order of Franz Joseph | Church dignitaries, outstanding scientists, prominent lawyers, public notaries, builders, industrialists and landowners |
| VI. / Order of the Iron Crown III. Class | Church dignitaries, members of the Imperial Council, mayors of large cities, representatives of banks, industry, insurance and railway companies, lawyers and notaries, representatives of charities, leading doctors, prominent builders and artists |
| VII. / Knight of the Order of Franz Joseph | Deans and other church dignitaries, representatives of the liberal professions, important entrepreneurs (manufacturers, wholesalers) |
| VIII. / zl. GC + C (see footnote 37) | Owners of factories and larger companies, prominent independent professionals |

This system may remotely resemble the Russian Table of Ranks (Табель о рангах всех чинов воинских, статских и придворных) introduced in 1722 by Peter I, which with some modifications remained in force until the fall of

Berücksichtigung des adeligen Namensrechts (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 53–56. Proposal to grant a knight title to officers from the rank IV was rejected. Both the knighthood and barony were awarded to officers, but not on the basis of the system, but only *ad hoc* (Jan Županič, "Proměna vojenské šlechty za první světové války", *Sborník archivních prací* vol. LXIX., No. 1 (2019), pp. 87–137 (particularly pp. 131–134)).

³⁵ Županič, "Nobilitierungspolitik der letzten Habsburger", p. 495.

³⁶ Table 1 is compiled on the basis of the author's study in the Adelsarchiv collection (AVA Wien) and according to the proposals for the awarding of honors in HHSTA, KK; AVA, Inneres, MdI, Präsidium, Akten a Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Ministerratspräsidium (1860–1918), Ministerratspräsidium, Akten. Laich, *Altösterreichische Ebrungen*, pp. 62–83, came to similar conclusions. Only the categories of persons who could reach one of the orders of the monarchy (exceptionally the Gold Cross of Merit with crown) and a noble title are listed. It was published in: Županič, *Proměna nobilitační politiky*, pp. 557–558.

³⁷ This division is not fixed but comes from the author's own research. The Roman numeral refers to the rank class of the civil service, the Arabic numeral to the individual ranks (see the table 1 Division of ranks according to the rank classes of civil servants). The abbreviation zl. GC + C is the Gold Cross of Merit with a crown in English.

the monarchy in 1917.³⁸ However, the Austrian system, unlike the Russian one, did not grant the holders of certain classes other privileges (aristocratic title, etc.), it was only an official division of civil servants (state officials, officers) into ranks, and respectively into salary classes. This system was created between 1807–1812, based on the decrees by Emperor Franz I and was reformed several times.³⁹ The fact that in the second half of the 19th century it was applied in an *ad hoc* fashion – albeit purely virtually – to the rest of the Dual Monarchy's population was done out of necessity, as there was no other means of stratifying the population (basing it purely income was out of the question). The division of the population into classes was important, among other things, because on this basis, merits were awarded through orders, distinctions, and honorary titles. This was not a novelty. A similar principle was already applied in Napoleonic France after the establishment of the Legion of Honor (1802) and the creation of the nobility of the empire (the decrees of 1808, 1810 and 1812), which were subsequently partially taken over by the southern German states.⁴⁰

In the case of businessmen, consideration was *de facto* given only to the granting of some degree of nobility or ennoblement following the award of the Order of the Iron Crown class II and class III. The prestigious Order of St. Stephen was granted only to the employees of the state and imperial court, and the Order of Leopold was awarded to businessmen only if they were actively engaged in politics and achieved significant positions there.⁴¹ Representatives of municipalities (lord mayors) also received these awards only in rare instances.⁴² For others, only the Order of Franz Joseph and the Order of the Iron Crown were to be gran-

³⁸ Cf. Sejmur Bekker, *Mifo ruskom dvorjanstve. Dvorjanstvo i privilegii poslednego perioda imperatorskoj Rossii*, Glava 5 (2004), available at: coollib.com/b/274367/read#t23, accessed on: 21 October 2020.

³⁹ Cf. e. g. Megner, *Beamte*, p. 128.

⁴⁰ François R. Velde, *Napoleonic Heraldry*, available at: www.heraldica.org/topics/france/napolher.htm, accessed on: 10 March 2021; Berndt Wunder, "Der württembergische Personaladel (1806–1913)", *Zeitschrift für württembergische Landesgeschichte*, Bd. 40 (1981), pp. 494–518 (especially pp. 509–510).

⁴¹ We can mention Simon Wintestein (1819–1883), with the original profession of a businessman and owner of an expedition company. In 1862, however, he began to be intensively devoted to politics (from 1861 a member of the Lower Austrian Provincial Assembly and of the Parliament of the Imperial Council. He also worked at the head offices of several railway companies and, in 1865, became a member of the commission for the amortization of the state debt. In 1867 he received the Knight's Cross of the Leopold Order (on its basis, he obtained a knight's title in 1869) and, in 1868, was appointed a lifetime member of the Upper House. In 1874 he was promoted to the baron rank and in 1878 was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Leopold Order. Winterstein was not included in the sample of investigated businessmen, because accurate information on the background of his ennoblement and on the award of the order is not available. Cf. AVA, Adelsarchiv, Simon Winterstein, Adelsakt 1867–1874; AVA, Inneres (ca 1550–1918), Ministerium des Innern (1848–1918), Präsidium (1848–1918), Akten (hereinafter: AVA, Inneres, MdI, Präsidium), Nr. 2163, Kt. 1137/1874.

⁴² For example, a knighthood for the lord mayor of Prague JUDr. Václav Bělský (1818–1878) for his merits during the war of 1866, from 1867. In: AVA, Inneres, MdI, Präsidium, Kt. 1120/1866.

ted, which was highly valued until 1884 thanks to its nobility section. The direct granting of a noble title by a ruling decision has always been a completely extraordinary award, especially after the abolition of the nobility paragraphs.

* * *

This work is based on the reconstruction of a total of 235 ennoblements of a total of 216 businessmen, some of who were repeatedly ennobled.⁴³ This number can be considered a representative sample: it is a full quarter of the ennoblements registered by Jäger-Sunstenau. Men were ennobled almost solely, women were promoted only in two cases: Claara Waagner (1787–1877) and Anna von Liebig (1855–1926), who are exceptional even taking into comparison Austria as a whole.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to distribute the total of ennobled businessmen evenly, because the rate of preservation of official materials is not the same in every decade. But with the exception of the years 1849⁴⁵ to 1859 it managed to keep the minimum number to ten ennoblement proceedings.⁴⁶ This figure was exceeded in most other time periods, most notably in the 1870s, when 17 businessmen were ennobled just for their merits based on the success of the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873.⁴⁷

I did not rank among the businessmen only industrialists and bankers, but also landowners that had not belonging to the old nobility who were engaged in business in the food industry and senior officials (mainly directors) of banks and insurance companies. In view of the fact that among the prominent businessmen who conducted business in Austria we find citizens of other countries, they were included in all of this, as long as they permanently lived in the lands of the monarchy.⁴⁸

⁴³ Unfortunately, in some cases we could not find the reasons for further ennoblements. This particularly concerns the baronies awarded on the occasion of the ruling jubilee in 1908 to Georg Haas von Hasenfels (1841–1914) and to the brothers Oscar (1844–1927) and Ottomar von Klinger (1852–1918).

⁴⁴ Cf. Jan Županič, "Nobilitace žen v Rakouském císařství", in: Hana Ambrožová et al., *Historik na Moravě* (Brno: Matice moravská, 2009), pp. 699–710.

⁴⁵ Because Franz Joseph I ascended to the throne as late as December 2, 1848, he did not execute any ennoblement in 1848.

⁴⁶ The distribution of the number of ennoblement proceedings is as follows: 1849–1859: 7; 1860–1869: 33; 1870–1879: 76; 1880–1889: 20; 1890–1899: 10; 1900–1909: 25; 1910–1918: 45.

⁴⁷ Of these numbers, four received a barony, eight a knight's title, and five a noble title. See HHStA, KK, 4025/1873, *ibid* Jan Županič, "Nobilitace spojené se světovou výstavou roku 1873", in: Jiří Brňovják and Aleš Zářický (eds.), *Šlechtic podnikatelem, podnikatel šlechticem*, Ostrava University in Ostrava (Ostrava, 2008), pp. 261–286.

⁴⁸ For this reason, some Hungarian businessmen who were awarded the Austrian title for various reasons are also included in this list of Austrian ennoblements (Schey, Popper, Kürschner); (they usually lived in the Cisleithanian region or even in Vienna). If other foreigners (other than Hungarians) were included in this list, then it was necessary for them to be economically linked to the monarchy or eventually acquire local citizenship (e.g. banker Ignaz Eprussi, originally from Russia, or Alexander

In reconstructing the reasons for ennoblements, it was found that most people were not granted the noble title for one particular reason and, if so, this was more often further in the past than during the last decades of the monarchy.⁴⁹ What was more common was the accumulation of merits, with one usually being highlighted as dominant and the other having a complementary character.⁵⁰

The analysis of archival documents gradually identified several categories of major merits stated as reasons for ennoblements:

- State banking and financial services (participation in state loans, interest rate cuts, *etc.*);
- Humanitarian merits (including financial donations);
- Supporting government policy (including supporting the government in the press);
- Active engagement in politics (especially at the state but also at the regional levels);
- Merits in economic development (construction and operation of factories, banks and railways, development of agriculture and trade);
- Gifts to art and natural science collections;
- Support of Austrian interests abroad (merits in enhancing export and economic-political "expansion").

We can define two specific categories:

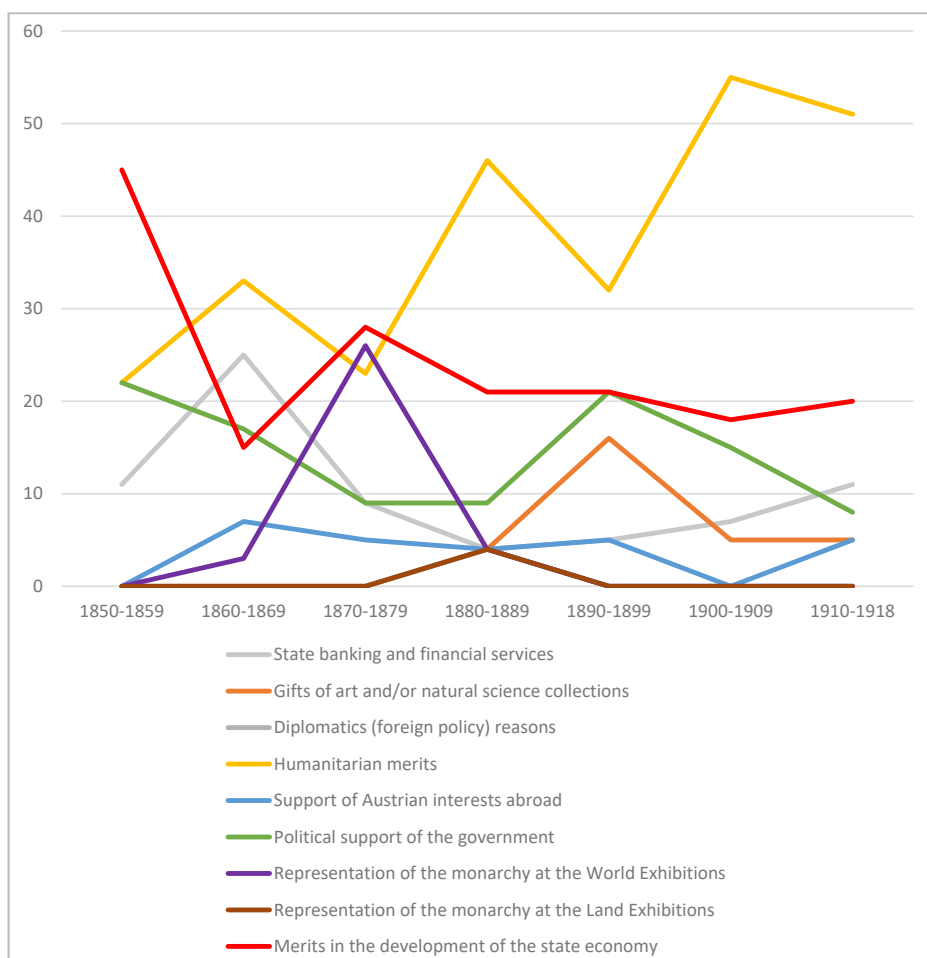
- The representation of the monarchy at world exhibitions (rarely at regional provincial exhibitions), which as the reason for ennoblement we can come across from the 1860s to 1890s, particularly with the Vienna Exhibition of 1873;
- Foreign policy reasons when the businessman was ennobled at the explicit request of a foreign sovereign.⁵¹

Daninos, the director of the insurance institution *Riunione adriatica di sicurtà* in Trieste, who had French citizenship).

⁴⁹ E.g. in 1849, Kaliman Minerbi obtained the Order of the Iron Crown class III (a knighthood in 1850) for his merits in the development of the Trieste Stock Exchange. In 1856, Leopold von Lämél was awarded the same order (the knighthood in 1856) for his merits in the establishment of the Creditanstalt Bank. In 1868, Aron Pollak was also awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class III (a knighthood in 1869) on the occasion of the completion of the construction of the Rudolfinum, a house for 75 poor students of the Vienna School of Technology.

⁵⁰ E.g. bankers Ignaz Ephrussi (1829–1899) was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class III in 1871 (and then the knighthood) for creating a consortium from the *Ignatz Ephrussi & Comp.*, *Paul Schiff* and *Max Kann & Comp.* and the Paris banks *Samuel Haber* and *Anton Schnapper*, which secured a loan for the Danube Regulatory Commission (*Donau-Regulierungs-Kommission*) with a particularly favourable interest rate of 2.3% (4% was usual). Besides, he had great merits in reviving Austrian trade to Odessa and repeatedly made generous donations to the poor of Vienna. Cf. AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 1130–1131.

⁵¹ We can mention Knight Moses von Waldberg (1832–1901), a banker by origin from Romanian Iași and later became an Austrian citizen who, at the direct request of the Serbian King Milan in 1884, was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class II (and on its basis a barony). Waldberg on King Milan's



Graph 4: Reasons for the granting of noble titles to Austrian entrepreneurs

According to these categories, the reasons for ennoblement over time were as follows (the vertical scale shows the percentage of relevant reasons in a given decade).⁵²

authorization sold the farms of his wife Natalia located in Russia (HHStA, KK, 316/1884). The Order of the Iron Crown class II (and subsequently a knighthood) was also awarded in 1869 to an Alexandrian banker Heinrich Schwabacher (1823–?), a confidant of Egyptian Khedive Ismail, who signaled to Austria that he would welcome his awarding a title (HHStA, KK, 2319/1869). In the case of Jacob Levy Menasce (1809–1882), another Egyptian financier and a personal banker of Khedive Ismail, the awarding (1873) of the Order of the Iron Crown class III and of a knighthood took place at the direct request of the Ottoman Foreign Minister Mehmed Rashid Pasha (HHStA, KK, 3104/1873).

⁵² Because of the unequal number of promotions over the decades, the causes of ennoblements are not

It is clear from *Graph 4* that the main reasons for the granting of ennoblement were essentially two: merits in the development of the economy, whose weight has however declined from the early 1870s, and humanitarian merits. *Graph 4* also disproves the opinion of some authors according to which businessmen were increasingly valued for their economic merit, while merits in the social (care for the working classes and the poor, patronage, *etc.*) played only a complementary role from the mid-19th century.⁵³ We can disprove this thesis on the basis of the analysis of archival documents. Business activities themselves could only rarely have been the reason for the ennoblement of businessmen because, in their case, it was absolutely necessary to improve their social profiles also by achieving merits in other areas. The reason was logical. Unlike with soldiers and civil servants who worked exclusively for the state, it was a generally accepted opinion that the activities of businessmen were to generate a profit. The state acknowledged their merits in the development of the economy, but this was not usually enough to award honours. It was therefore necessary to show another form of merit.

Obviously, political activity offered the greatest prestige, however this had to be over the long-term and therefore was very time-consuming.⁵⁴ Support for government policy did not have to be realized only from the benches of deputies, because orders and titles were also granted to press magnates for their helpful attitude towards government policy.⁵⁵ Also highly appreciated was the

given in absolute numbers but in percentages. *Graph 4* was created on the basis of this author's own research in the *Österreichisches Staatsarchiv*.

⁵³ E.g. Milan Myška, "Wirtschaftsadel in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien im 19. Jahrhundert (Bemerkungen – Probleme – Forschungsperspektiven)", *Études Danubiennes* XIX, No. 1–2 (2003), pp. 43–48.

⁵⁴ Cf. The promotion of the industrialist Adalbert Kulp (1850–1932) to the ranks of the nobility for merits, which he demonstrated as a member of the Moravian Provincial Assembly and the Imperial Council and for the closure of the so-called Moravian settlement in 1905 (HHStA, KK, 470/1914). Landowner and banker Franz von Hopfen (1825–1901), who for his support of the government in the Imperial Council during the negotiations of 1861–1862 obtained the Order of the Iron Crown class III (1863) and subsequently a knighthood, eventually withdrew from the business world because of politics. He later became the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies of the Imperial Council and was awarded (1872) the Commander's Cross of the Order of Leopold (in 1873; on its basis, he received a barony), which was otherwise inaccessible to businessmen. An interesting case was Ludwig Oppenheimer (1843–1909) who, as a deputy of the Bohemian Provincial Assembly, contributed to the election of the Imperial Chancellor Beust to the Liberec Chamber of Commerce and subsequently to the Bohemian Provincial Assembly and the Chamber of Deputies of the Imperial Council, for which he was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class III (knighthood in 1868). He was granted the status of a baron (1878) for his participation in the negotiations on the economic settlement with Hungary (HHStA, KK, 4722/1867; *ibid.*, 3534/1878).

⁵⁵ Gustav Heine (1810–1886), the owner of the *Fremdenblatt* newspaper, was decorated (1867) with the Order of the Iron Crown class III, became a knight in 1867 and was awarded a barony in 1870 for the same reasons (AVA, Inneres, MdI, Präsidium, Nr. 4628/1870, Kt. 1129). Gustav Schlesinger (1833–1906), the owner of the *Pester Lloyd* newspaper, also obtained the Order of the Iron Crown class III and a knighthood (1869) (HHStA, KK, 1342/1869).

representation of the monarchy at the World Exhibitions (especially in Vienna in 1873), where businessmen not only sat in various committees and commissions, but often also co-financed the entire event.⁵⁶

Another option was the assistance to the state in areas related to business activities, but whose profits (whether financial or otherwise) went to the monarchy. It involved participation in various commissions that drafted new laws, in international negotiations⁵⁷ or taking part in the expansion of the railway network and in the transfer of railways from private companies to the state.⁵⁸ Also very appreciated were the merits for reducing the state debt, securing foreign loans (or lowering interest rates) and issuing government bonds on foreign markets.⁵⁹ During the First World War, merits for successfully concluding war loans were also awarded.⁶⁰

After the mid-19th century, most businessmen, however, received a noble title on the basis of financial or material donations for charitable and publicly beneficial purposes. The granting of nobility often reminded a mutually beneficial business, when an individual exchanged money earned through business for a title that increased his social prestige. As documented by archival materials, it indeed often was an internal agreement between the businessmen and the Austrian government or a senior official of the Imperial Court. The ennoblement could be the result of a single donation of higher value, but more usually because of long-term activities of this kind. It clearly follows from the archival materials that some businessmen even gradually increased their donations in order to reach a certain threshold beyond which they could apply for a noble

⁵⁶ Hardtmuth was promoted to a noble rank for his merits in the success of the World Exhibition in Vienna (HHStA, KK, 4025/1873).

⁵⁷ Horaz Landau (1824–1903), a wholesaler and the agent of the Rothschild banking house was decorated with the Order of the Iron Crown class III for his merits in negotiating the details of the peace treaty with Italy in 1866 (knighthood in 1867), because he managed to increase the compensation granted to Austria to 35 million Austrian Gulden (HHStA, KK, 3637/1866 – in the record his first name is incorrectly written as Moritz; AVA, Adelsarchiv, Horaz Landau, Ritterstand 1867).

⁵⁸ Moritz Frölich (1827–1896), a businessman and an owner of real estate, was awarded a noble title (1877) for his merits in building railways (HHStA, KK, 3421/1877).

⁵⁹ Banker Ignaz Ephrussi (1829–1899) was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class III and subsequently a knighthood (1871), *inter alia*, for the export of Austrian state bonds abroad (see also above). Gustav Mauthner (1848–1902), the Director of the Creditanstalt Bank, received the same order (and a knighthood) in 1884 for his merits in the redemption of the most bonds with an interest rate of 4 per cent gold annuity of 1880 (HHStA, KK, 1590/1884; AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 1130 a 1131). In 1869 Ludwig von Haber (1804–1892), a landowner and industrialist, was promoted to the rank of baron in 1869 for co-financing and securing loans for a number of railway constructions in Austria-Hungary and placing the Austrian state loan on the French market (AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 1126/1869).

⁶⁰ Cf. The granting of a noble title to Eugen Minkus (1841–1923), the President of the Union Bank, and to Bernhard Popper (1853–1931), the President of the Wiener Bankverein. Both in: StA, KK, 935/1915. Also Županič, *Židovská šlechta podumajské monarchie*, p. 484 and p. 545.

title.⁶¹ But if the businessman's charity was awarded by the state in some form other than a noble title (e.g. an order), it was necessary to prove others merits (i.e. to spend more money), because one and the same activity could not be awarded twice.⁶² Thus, the most common reason for ennoblement was the accumulation of several kinds of merits: for example, the development of industry and charitable donations. The concrete sums that justified the granting of nobility were found in 51 cases out of the total of 235 ennoblements only in the period from 1859 to 1918. In other cases we know that ennoblements were due to financial donations, but their amounts remain unknown.⁶³

The granting of a noble title for the provision of finances can be divided into several categories, not only in terms of the direction of funds, but also of the timeframe and the quality of merits. For example, from the end of the 19th century, investments in the care of own employees were increasingly com-

⁶¹ This process is unambiguously documented in the case of Rudolf Hoschek (1855–after 1932). In 1894, he achieved the restoration of a Czech knighthood with the predicate "von Mühlheim", which, however, was withdrawn from him in 1905, because the agent, who processed his request for re-ennoblement, made fakes for this purpose. After an unsuccessful attempt to obtain the title through adoption, he donated in 1905–1908 – partly alone, partly with his brother Gustav (1847–1907) – at least 122,500 Crowns for charitable and public benefit purposes and, in 1908, was awarded a noble title. See HHStA, KK, 2250/1908; NA, ŠA, kt. 32–33; Jan Županič, Michal Fiala and Pavel Koblasa (ed.), *Šlechtický archiv c. k. ministerstva vnitra – Erbovní listiny Národního archivu, Státního oblastního archivu v Praze, Archivu hlavního města Prahy (dodatky), Archivu Národního muzea (dodatky)* (Prague, 2014), pp. 155–157.

⁶² Hermann Kuffner (1822–1905), who received a noble title (1900) for providing land worth 40,000 Crowns and a gift of 100,000 Crowns for the construction of a new building of the District Court in Břeclav, was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph for establishing a foundation for widows and orphans of officers in the amount of 30,000 Austrian Guldens. The ennoblement was an appreciation of donations in the height of 58,000 Austrian Guldens for establishing the hospital in Břeclav (1888), 10,000 Austrian Guldens (1889) for foundation for work incapable small tradesmen and other sums for charity (AVA, Inneres, Mdl Präsidium, Kt. 2332/1900; HHStA, KK, 2132/1900). Knight Emil von Kubinzky (1843–1907, a big industrialist, established in 1898 a foundation for the support of incapacitated workers in the amount of 200,000 Crowns, for which he was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class III. Besides, he proved extraordinary merits in the development of industry and foreign trade (including from his position of the US Vice-Consul in the monarchy) and was also a member and functionary on a number of expert panels. He received a barony for his merits in 1901 (HHStA, KK, 2711/1901). Josef Bartoň (1838–1920), a textile businessman, donated 150,000 Crowns for the establishment of the orphanage in Náchod on the occasion of the 60th ruling jubilee (1908), for which he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph. When he was promoted to rank of knight four years later (1912), his care for employees, activity as the Mayor of Náchod and the merits in industrial development were also highlighted (HHStA, KK, 794/1912).

⁶³ This was the case of the brothers Franz (1852–1915), Friedrich (1846–1942), and Isidor (1848–1931) May, the partners in the *Gebrüder A. und H. May* sugar company. They were awarded noble status (1914), *inter alia*, for depositing considerable, albeit unspecified sums to rescue the *Nordösterreichische Bank für Industrie, Handel und Landwirtschaft* in Brno, whose collapse – according to the k. k. Minister of the Interior Baron Heinold – would have had serious consequences for small depositors from a large part of Moravia. At the same time, Heinold stressed that the Mays did not have their own finances in the bank, so that the bankruptcy would not directly affect them (HHStA, KK, 1585/1914).

mon. First of all, it was the creation and financing of accident and pension funds, the establishment of kindergartens for the children of employees, the construction of houses with subsidized rents or the establishment of housing free of charge.⁶⁴ At a time when the state hardly dealt with the social issues and when social democracy was becoming a strong player on the political stage, these were extremely important steps that contributed to the stability of the monarchy.⁶⁵

It was not necessary to give donations only in monetary form. Some people interested in a title took advantage of the situation where the administration was interested in a strategically or otherwise important piece of real estate and *de facto* exchanged it for a place in the nobility.⁶⁶ Others donated land for public buildings (hospitals, museums, student dormitories, *etc.*) or built them at their own expense.⁶⁷ Gifts to the army were also highly valued,⁶⁸ in particular to

⁶⁴ This kind of humanitarian activity was the main reason for the granting of the Order of the Iron Crown class II and subsequently a barony (1869) to Knight Eduard von Todesco (1814–1887), a banker who, in addition to donating 40,000 Austrian Gulden in Austrian state bonds for a Jewish foundation for the establishing of the Institute of the Blind in Hernal, he also donated 60,000 Austrian Gulden in Austrian state bonds to a foundation for supporting Subaltern Officers (AVA, Inneres, Mdl Präsidium, Kt. 1126/1869). Hans Czjžek (1841–1925) and Georg Haas (1841–1914), were promoted to a noble rank. The partners of the *Haas und Czjžek* firm were promoted (1899) to noble status, *inter alia*, for establishing a pension fund for their employees with a deposit of 50,000 Crowns and an annual contribution in the amount of 2,000 Crowns, and donated 20,000 Crowns to a supporting fund for their officials and employees. In addition, Haas also donated 80,000 Crowns to the Natural-History Museum in Vienna and smaller amounts to the Red Cross. Unlike Czjžek, Haas was promoted to the rank of Barons (1908), but the reason for this ennoblement could not be traced (Haas: AVA, Inneres, Mdl Präsidium, Kt. 3819/1899; Czjžek: HHStA, KK, 1711/1899). Knight Adalbert von Lanna (1836–1909), a big industrialist, was awarded a barony (1907) mainly because he donated 100,000 Crowns to the pension fund of his employees and officials, and also for the gift of 300,000 Crowns to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague and his merits in the development of industry (AVA, Inneres, Mdl Präsidium, Kt. 2378/1907, 2379/1907; HHStA, KK, 3041/1907). In 1915, the brothers Emanuel (1868–1929) and Hugo (1872–1937) Grabs were awarded knighthood for setting up a labour fund in their company for workers and officials incapable of work and annually subsidized it with 50,000 Crowns (HHStA, KK, 241/1915).

⁶⁵ Brigitte Hamannová, *Hitlerova Vídeň. Diktátorova učednická léta* (Praha, 1999), pp. 168–171, 183.

⁶⁶ This was the case of Julius Eisner (1823–1880) and Jacob Eisner (1835–1901), wholesalers in Trieste, who donated their garden in Trieste with an area of 2,000 acres (7.1958 m²) to the army on the condition of granting a nobility status (1874) (AVA, Inneres, Mdl Präsidium, Kt. 1137 and 1138).

⁶⁷ Robert Fuchs (1854–1925) donated 200,000 Crowns to buy land for the Museum of Decorative Arts and acquired a noble title in 1912 (HHStA, KK, 3099/1912). Adolf Landsberger (1840–1914) was promoted to a noble rank (1912) by donating 190,000 Crowns to the Austrian Society of the White Cross for the establishment of an officer's house in Františkovy Lázně (*Franzensbad*) in Bohemia, and 10,000 Crowns directly to Austrian Silesia (AVA, Inneres, Mdl Präsidium, Kt. 2398/1911; HHStA, KK, 1604/1912). Max Mandl (1865–1942), who was promoted to a knighthood in 1916, donated more than 1 million Crowns for the construction of a new hospital building in Vienna (1865–1942) (AVA, Inneres, Mdl Präsidium, Kt. 2422/1916; HHStA, KK, 1917/1916).

⁶⁸ Gustav Leon (1839–1898), a wholesaler, donated an undetermined sum in favour of the Hungarian Honved and was rewarded (1876) by the Order of the Iron Crown class III, and subsequently applied for a knightly title (HHStA, Obersthofmeisteramt, Orden der Eisernen Krone (1816–1918), Akten, Kt. 76/876). Rather interesting was the case of Julius von Morpurgo (1845–1915), a nobleman from 1898, who was awarded a barony (1913) for the financial support of the emerging Austrian Air Force

the support funds for officers and their families, or the Austrian Society of the White Cross (*Österreichische Gesellschaft vom Weißen Kreuze*) which provided medical and especially spa care for soldiers.⁶⁹

The continuation of ancient traditions is represented by the financing or co-financing of the construction of churches and support of the church. We can see it with businessmen of all creeds, but an interesting specific feature is the behaviour of some businessmen of the Jewish faith. Some of them did not hesitate to support Christian churches, particularly the Roman Catholic one. Their measures can be interpreted in several ways: either as an extreme example of religious tolerance, or as a calculus of cold-minded bean-counters who assumed that in this way they would acquire the sympathy of the church and of state dignitaries. However, with respect to the close link between the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty and the Catholic Church, I believe this was a specific form of expression of loyalty to the Imperial House.⁷⁰

Very specific kinds of sponsorship were gifts of material nature, mostly to art or natural science collections. The earliest evidence of this conduct among businessmen is documented in the mid-1880s, when Felix Zwiklitz (1836–1901), a partner of the Lindheim & Co. in Vienna, donated to the Natural His-

(HHStA, KK, 608/1913). For more on this person, see also below.

⁶⁹ Julius Léon (1842–1927) obtained (1883) the Order of the Iron Crown class III (and then a knightly title) for donating 40,000 Austrian Guldens to the Austrian Institute for Officers' Daughters in Hernal, on the occasion of the 35th ruling anniversary of Franz Joseph I (HHStA, KK, 786/1883).

⁷⁰ Quite undoubtedly, this motif can be traced to Max Kahler (1846–1919), who received (1911) a knightly title, *inter alia*, for his merits in the development of banking and stock exchange, and for activities in the humanitarian field. He donated 50,000 Crowns for the construction of religious objects, including the church in memory of the murdered Empress Elisabeth (Kaiserin-Elisabeth-Gedächtniskirche) on Schneeberg mountain in Lower Austria and of St Wenceslas Chapel on his estate in Svinaře in Bohemia (HHStA, KK, 1715/1911). Ignaz Eisler (1822–1902) was awarded a noble title (1901) for extraordinary merits in the k. k. Navy, to which he transferred strategically important land on St Pietro peninsula in Pula, donated 40,000 Austrian Guldens for the establishment of a nursery school for children of sailors, and 15,000 Austrian Guldens for the construction of the parish church in Pula (HHStA, KK, 1264/1901). Julius Weisenfeld (1823–1895), a Bavarian citizen based in Trieste, was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class III in 1870 and subsequently a knightly title (1871) for providing a loan (!) of 20,000 Austrian Guldens to the congregation of Mechitarists (Armenian Church) for establishing a monastery in Trieste. However, according to a memorandum of the Trieste Governor K. Möring (1810–1870), the wording of this loan was formulated in half as a gift. The granting of the order was also supported by other merits of Weisenfeld's in the economic development of Trieste and gifts during the war of 1866 (AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 1130/1869; HHStA, KK, 3546/1869). Extraordinary was the case of Gustav Redlich (1852–1908), earning untitled nobility (1902) for his exceptional contributions to the development of the sugar industry, improving the working conditions of his employees, and lower financial donations (3,000 Crowns) for charity, but, above all, for the gift of land and the contribution in the amount of 1 million Crowns for the construction of the church to the memory of Elizabeth I. However, Redlich converted to Catholicism shortly before his ennoblement. The generous gifts he gave to the church caused economic problems for the family business and Redlich was forced to give up the right to dispose of most of his property and hand over its administration to his sons in 1905 (HHStA, KK, 2212/1902; AVA, Adelsarchiv, Gustav Redlich, Adelstand (Edler von Vežeg) 1902; Županič, *Židovská šlechta podunajské monarchie*, pp. 568–569).



Coat-of-Arms of Felix Edler von Zwiklitz (granted 1886) (Autor: Michal Fiala)

tory Museum (*Naturhistorisches Museum*) in Vienna prehistoric collections worth approximately 26,000 Austrian Guldens and subsequently rare meteorites estimated at 200,000 Austrian Guldens, which were the largest collection

of these items after the collection stored in the *British Museum*.⁷¹ Although such events did not occur very often (between 1880 and 1918, these gifts were the reason for less than eight percent of the researched sample of ennoblements), we can still consider them significant. Part of these donations were directed to the imperial museums and art collections, *i.e.* institutions subject to the Office of the Supreme Stewart. The latter, as a court official, was only subject to the ruler and therefore did not have to submit proposals for awards (including ennoblements) for approval to the Ministerial Council. To put it simply: in the case of good contacts at the court, or at least between museum and gallery managers, the approval of the ennoblement could have been quicker and more certain than through the classic official channels.

However, most of the awards for the gifts of art and nature collections were eventually discussed at the Ministerial Council, among other things, because in many cases it was only part of the merit for which the businessman was later awarded.⁷² Among this kind of sponsorship can also be ranked the purchase of important estates for which the state did not have funds and that contributed to enhance science, and donations for funding scientific research.⁷³

Ennoblements based on single investments are less common, but not exceptional. In such cases, however, we can already assume a very close cooperation with the authorities (whether state, court or provincial), because this money was not provided for charity in general, but for specific purposes. This procedure is also illustrated by the contents of the relevant memoranda with proposals for awards.⁷⁴ We even come across cases where the businessmen

⁷¹ Zwicklitz received a noble title for these gifts in 1886 (HHStA, Obersthofmeisteramt, Akten-Hauptreihe, Kt. 1113 (Akten), Hofmuseen, 50-5-3 (Mineralogische-petrographische Abteilung); Županič, *Židovská šlechta podunajské monarchie*, p. 701.

⁷² Eduard Doctor (1858–1926), a textile businessman, donated important works of art worth 250,000 Crowns in total to the Imperial Picture Gallery and provided great means for improving the living conditions of his employees (the construction of houses for workers and officials where accommodation was provided free of charge or subsidized). On this basis, he was promoted to a knighthood in 1911 (AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 2398; Županič, *Židovská šlechta podunajské monarchie*, pp. 185–186).

⁷³ Horace Landau (1869–1926) donated 350,000 Crowns to the Imperial Academy of Sciences, which were used for funding both archaeological excavations in the Orient and the purchase of the estate of Dr. Eduard Glaser, a prominent Austrian Arabist. He was promoted to a knighthood for this deed in 1912 (HHStA, KK, 4140/1910; Županič, *Židovská šlechta podunajské monarchie*, pp. 451–452). It is interesting that Samuel Horowitz (1841–1924) a Lvov wholesaler, landowner and real estate owner, was willing to buy Glaser's collections (even in 1894, during his life) for the award of a noble title; this step is also listed as one of the reasons for his ennoblement (in addition to political support from the government at city, provincial and imperial levels, and generous donations to the Jewish community) (HHStA, KK, 5236/1894).

⁷⁴ Gustav Epstein (1828–1879) was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown class III and a knighthood (1866) for participating in providing a credit for securing the repayment of war compensation to Prussia, and a gift of 100,000 Austrian Guldens for charity purposes (HHStA, KK, 3067/1866; HHStA, Obersthofmeisteramt, Orden der Eisernen Krone (1816–1918), Akten, Kt. 54, Nr. 137). Bernhard

made the granting of a financial gift conditional on the award of an honour (e.g. a noble title).⁷⁵

It is difficult to quantify the amount that had to be paid in cases where there was interest in ennoblement. The issue is complicated by several factors. First of all, not all businessmen, for whom we know a specific amount of donations to charity, obtained a noble title only on this basis. Some had accumulated merits and therefore the amount spent could be lower than for others. The state's interests also played an important role. If the administration directly requested a certain service, it was possible to achieve ennoblement for relatively little money.⁷⁶ It is also very difficult to estimate the specific amount that was spent for the title if the obligation to pay continued into the future,⁷⁷ or when the monetary amount was supplemented by a gift of a real estate with an unstated market price.⁷⁸

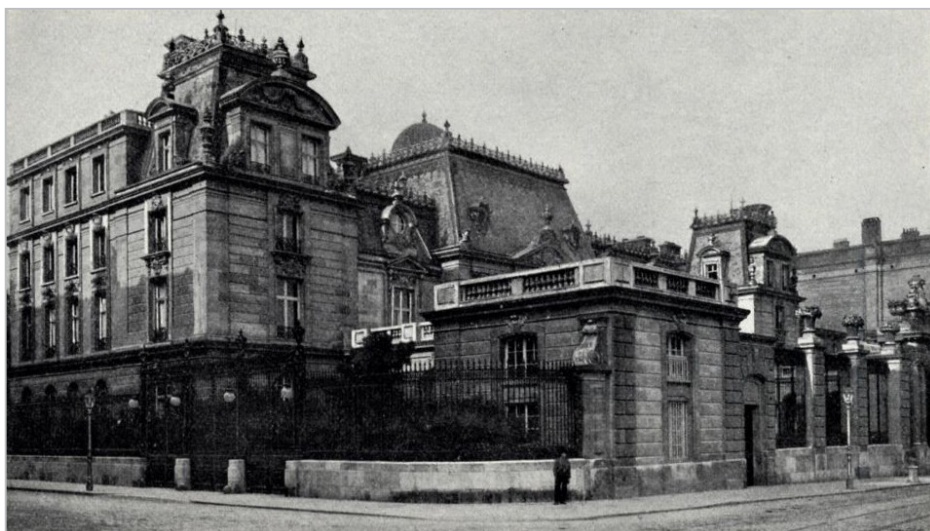
Pollack (1847–1911) was promoted (1907) to a noble rank for constructing and financing the operation of two children's pavilions for 100 patients at the Kaiser Franz Joseph Hospital (*Kaiser Franz Joseph-Spital*) in Vienna. The implementation of this project cost him 600,000 Crowns (HHStA, KK, 1020/1907). Felix Stiassny (1867–1938) received the same title (1911) for the donation of land and 200,000 Crowns for the construction of the Empress Elizabeth Home (*Kaiserin Elisabethheim*) in Vienna with apartments for 60 people (AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 2383, 2386), 2395 and 2396; HHStA, KK, 1838/1911). In Stiassny's case, correspondence between state officials regarding the form of state honours was even preserved in the MdI, because it was originally proposed only to award the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph or the Order of the Iron Crown class III. In the end, however, the ennoblement took place (undoubtedly taking into account the amount of donation). An agreement with the state can be assumed in the case of Sigismund Springer (1873–1928), who obtained a barony (1913) for a donation of 500,000 crowns to the Red Cross (HHStA, KK, 6/1913). In this case, his marriage to Valentine Noemi (1886–1969), the daughter of Baron Albert Salomon von Rothschild (1844–1911), played a significant role in the granting of an unexpectedly high title. The targeting of gifts is also captured in great detail by Max Mandl (see above).

⁷⁵ See the above-mentioned, but unrealized offer of Samuel Horowitz in 1894 and the aforementioned ennoblement of the brothers Julius and Jacob Eisner (1871). Another very interesting was the case of Moritz Doctor (1862–1929). After his brother Eduard (see above) was awarded a knight's title in 1911, he promised in December 1911 to set up a foundation of 100,000 Crowns for the benefit of the Austro-Hungarian Aid Association (*Österreichisch-ungarischen Hilfsverein*) in Munich, if he was promoted to a noble rank. This occurred on May 1, 1912 (Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 2398; HHStA, KK, 1091/1912; Županič, *Židovská šlechta podunajské monarchie*, pp. 183–185).

⁷⁶ The case of the Eisner brothers (see above) who offered their land of 2,000 acres (7.1958 m²) to the army. The property was adjacent to the local garnison hospital and the army was very interested in it. Although the value of the land was estimated at only 6,000 Austrian Guldens, the Eisners were awarded their titles.

⁷⁷ The Grab brothers annually donated the sum of 50,000 Crowns to a fund for their incapacitated workers and officials. Similarly, Hans Čížek and Georg Haas, business partners, jointly created a support fund for their officials and staff with a capital of 20,000 Crowns and a pension fund of 50,000 Crowns with an annual contribution of 2,000 Crowns (see above).

⁷⁸ The above-mentioned Felix Stiassny donated not only 200,000 Crowns for the construction of the Empress Elizabeth home but also a building plot of undetermined value at Blindengasse in Vienna's eighth district, Josefstadt. Another gift that was not precisely quantified was that of Franz Czerweny (1848–1921), ennobled in 1918 who, in addition to his merits in industrial development, export and social measures in favour of his own workers, donated, in 1916, to the Red Cross the Arnfels Castle with farm buildings and park worth at least 410,000 Crowns for a sanatorium of 120 beds for soldiers suffering from tuberculosis (AVA, Adelsarchiv, Franz Czerweny, Adelstand (Edler von Arland) 1918).



Palais Rothschild in Vienna (private Archive)

Unfortunately, the sample of businessmen ennobled solely (or almost solely) for financial donations is too small for unambiguous conclusions. Of the 51 cases for which we know specific amounts, only 28 persons were ennobled solely "for money" and 20 of them as late as after 1898. So, we know very little about the older period, especially about the financial background of awarding orders with the ennoblement article.⁷⁹

Even from this small group, a few facts emerge. There are no doubts that a noble title could indeed have been obtained without any prior merits on the basis of a single or repeated financial or material donation. Its amount depended on a number of circumstances. For women without descendants, when it was clear that the family would die out with the ennobled person, the amount could be lower,⁸⁰ but otherwise we are always talking about donations worth

⁷⁹ Specific sums are known only in two awards of the Order of the Iron Crown class III and subsequently a knighthood (Gustav Epstein in 1866 – a total of 200,000 Austrian Guldens; Julius Léon in 1883 – a total of 80,000 Austrian Guldens) and of two Orders of the Iron Crown class II and subsequently a barony (Knight Eduard von Todesco in 1869; Knight Franz von Wertheim in 1871 – both 200,000 Austrian Guldens). A specific case is the award of the Order of the Iron Crown class III (1864) and subsequent promotion to knighthood (1865) of the brothers Baltazzi, Spiridion (1826–867) and Epaminondas (1828–1887). We know the amount for which they were awarded (4,000 Turkish Golden Pounds for the establishment of the Austrian school in Constantinople), but not the rate of the Turkish Pound against the Austrian Gulden (AVA, Adelsarchiv, Spiridion Baltazzi, Ritterstand (von Kale) 1865; *ibid*, Epaminondas Baltazzi, Ritterstand 1865).

⁸⁰ Anna von Liebig (1855–1926) paid "only" 92,673.70 Crowns for a barony, which was otherwise the

at least 100,000 Crowns (50,000 Austrian Guldens), because only the title of the Imperial Councillor (*Kaiserlicher Rat*) cost the interested in the early 20th century some 60,000 Crowns.⁸¹ Promotions to a noble rank for gifts of lower amounts were absolutely exceptional and other unknown circumstances, were probably part of the story.⁸² If we exclude the utmost extremes,⁸³ we can very roughly quantify the average amounts that businessmen sacrificed for their social ascent. The conversion into today's currency is very difficult, but taking into account the relatively low inflation of that time (up to 1914–1915), a more-or-less fixed interest rate of four per cent and currency stability after the introduction of the 1892 gold standard, we can roughly recalculate the "price" of the titles into kilograms of gold.⁸⁴ The sums that the businessmen spent for their titles on average were extremely high, well above the annual incomes of the very wealthy people of the monarchy, and only the richest could afford to pay them.⁸⁵ It even happened that some of the businessmen overestimated their ability to rise socially in this way and got into serious financial difficulties.⁸⁶

lower limit paid for a rank of untitled nobility (see above).

⁸¹ By the same highest decision (of June 24, 1912) by which Adolf Landsberger (1840–1914) was awarded a noble title, Samuel Schein (1852–1937), the owner of a carpet and furniture factory, was awarded the title of Imperial Councillor. While Landsberger's donations amounted to 200,000 Crowns, Schein, on the occasion of the Emperor's 60th Anniversary, donated to the spa house for officers in Rohitsch-Sauerbrunn, built by the Jubilee Foundation of Emperor Franz Joseph I (*Kaiser Franz Joseph I. Jubiläumsstiftung*), complete furnishing products (furniture, curtains, carpets and bed linen) worth 25,000 Crowns and additional 35,000 Crowns (60,000 Crowns in total). As follows from the internal correspondence of the Ministry of the Interior and from Schein's letters, Schein sought the title, *inter alia*, mainly because he had been sentenced to a fine of 90 Austrian Guldens (180 Crowns) or a three-day prison for public insult. The judgment damaged his reputation as a businessman, and although he was previously proposed for the title of the Imperial Councillor, it was not granted to him because of his misdemeanour (AVA, Inneres, MdI Präsidium, Kt. 2398/1911).

⁸² There are two persons from the monitored group: The first was Hans Čížek (1841–1914) who, together with his partner George Haas, jointly set up the aforementioned pension and support fund of 70,000 Crowns with an annual contribution of 1,000 crowns for employees. However, it cannot be ruled out that he himself paid most of this sum, since Haas, his companion, in addition donated 80,000 Crowns to the Museum of Natural History in Vienna. But it is also possible that Čížek provided the state with other services, the form and scope of which we do not know (HHStA, KK, 1711/1899).

⁸³ Hans Čížek paid the lowest amount for an untitled nobility title (35,000 Crowns) while Bernhard Pollack paid the highest amount (600,000 Crowns). Max Mandl paid the highest sum (1 million Crowns) for his knighthood and Anna von Liebig paid the lowest sum (92,673.70 Crowns) for a barony.

⁸⁴ The Austrian-Hungarian Empire used after the introduction of the Crown currency in 1892 for the minting of golden coins the so-called coin gold, which had a purity of 900/1000 (21.6 carats). The biggest coin of 100 Crowns contained 33.8753g of gold.

⁸⁵ See Sandgruber, *Traumzeit für Millionäre*.

⁸⁶ This was the case of Adolf Kürschner (1844–1915), a Moravian sugar maker, whose firm ranked among the most successful in the monarchy at the turn of 20th century. In 1908 he was promoted to the Austrian noble state for unknown reasons, but his ambition was not satisfied. He allegedly sought the Austrian status of Barons, for which he was willing to pay a mediator 1 million Crowns. Later, however, he took Hungarian citizenship and agreed with the Hungarian government of the Prime Minister Khuen-Héderváry on a donation of 800,000 Crowns for charitable purposes. This plan also changed

Table 2: Average outlay of entrepreneurs associated with the gaining of noble titles

| Title | Average "price" for a noble title | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| | In Austro-Hungarian Crowns* | in kg of gold |
| Untitled Nobility (von/ Edler von) | 180 000 | 59,05 |
| Knighthood (Ritter) | 300 000 | 101,63 |
| Barony (Freiherr) | 450 000 | 152,44 |

* the amounts are rounded up to whole Crowns

It is obvious that there were differences in the "prices" of individual titles, but there is not the always the direct proportionality between the donation size and the awarded title. Especially in the case of the lower nobility (untitled noblemen and Knights) this is the average, which resulted from the elimination of extreme amounts. Almost 175,000 Crowns on average were "paid" for the award of untitled nobility, but eight out of 17 ennobled individuals spent sums higher: five of them 200,000 Crowns, two more than 300,000 Crowns and one even full 600,000 Crowns.⁸⁷ Similar was the situation with knighthoods, where one of the donors paid 700,000 Crowns more than was the average sum.⁸⁸

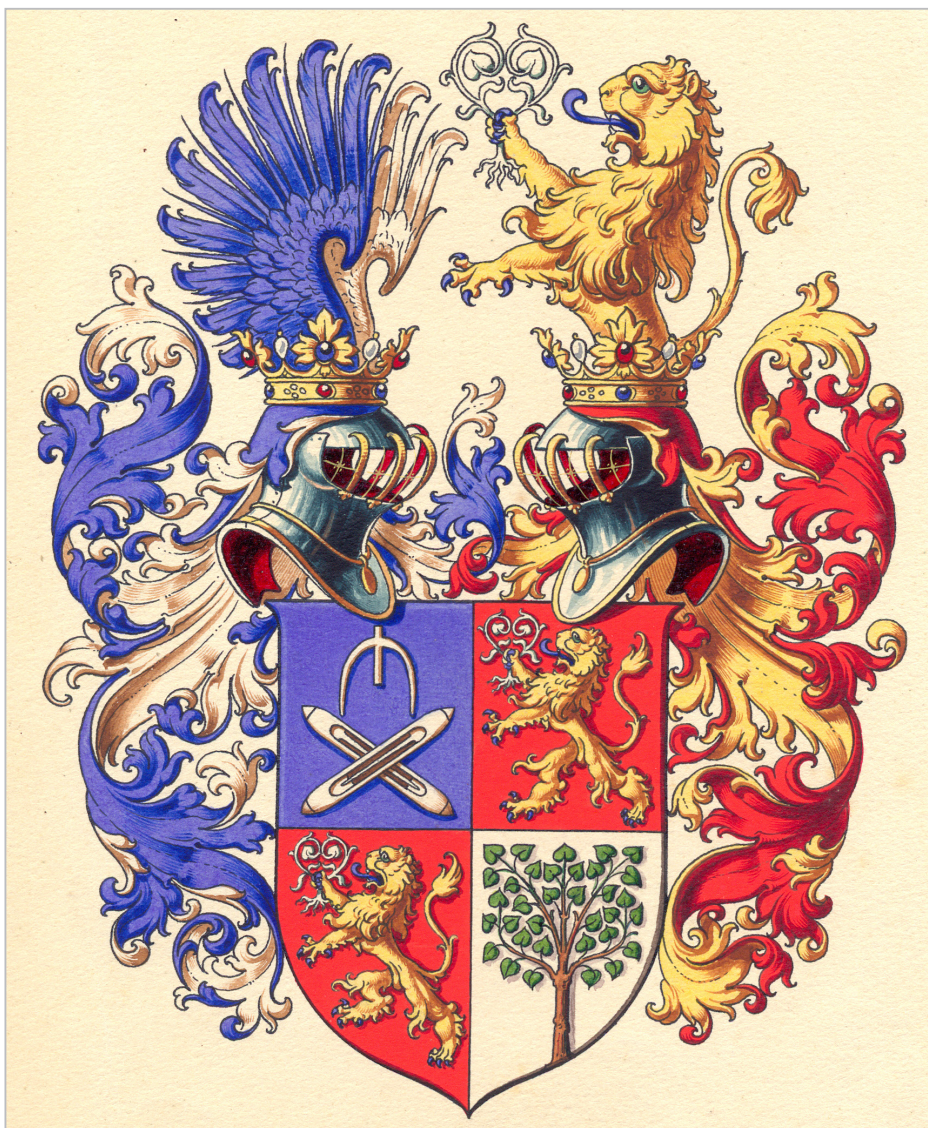
Generosity had no limits, but donors were unlikely to be so modest and content with a lower title if they could get a higher one. Therefore, it is more likely that the businessman was in some way able to negotiate the ennoblement, but was less able to influence the title to be awarded. The decisive factor was the position on the social ladder and other related factors: contacts in the highest places, kinship ties to the nobility and the ennoblements of relatives.⁸⁹

in the end because Adolf directly negotiated with the Hungarian prime minister a contribution to the Treasury of the newly created Hungarian National Labour Party, which was lower than the originally considered donation for charitable purposes. After gaining a barony (1910), Kürschner got into financial problems and, in 1913, his company *Kürschner & Co.* was taken over by the Creditanstalt and Länderbank, which transformed it into the *Středomoravská akciová společnost cukrovarnická* (Central Moravian joint stock sugar factory). According to the press, Kürschner's profligate lifestyle was the reason for the decline (*Pester Lloyd (Abendblatt)*), 18 March 1913, p. 2; Georg Gaugusch, *Wer einmal war. Das jüdische Großbürgertum Wiens 1800–1938 (A–K)* (Wien, 2011), pp. 1609–1613).

⁸⁷ Bernhard Pollack (1847–1911). Ennobled in 1907.

⁸⁸ Max Mandl (see above) paid more than 1 million Crowns for the award of a knightly title (1916).

⁸⁹ In Heinrich Keil's case (1856–1914), who was a nobleman from 1908, it was emphasized that he was a relative of the Field Marshal Lieutenant Knight Heinrich von Keil, ennobled in 1855 (HHStA, KK, 1718/1908). When his brothers Eduard (1854–1926) and Viktor (1860–1923) were promoted to noble status (1913), Heinrich's ennoblement and the fact that one of Viktor's daughters married Baron Rokitsky were mentioned in a memorandum (HHStA, KK, 856/1913).



Coat-of-Arms of of Text lindustrialist Josef Ritter Bartoň von Dobení (granted 1912) (National Archive, Prague)

Interestingly, the amount of assets did not play a major role, as shown in the following *table 3*. As of 1910, it records the annual incomes of businessmen set-

tled in Vienna who were ennobled between 1907 and 1914.⁹⁰ Data were found for a total of 16 persons, nine of which were promoted to nobles, four to a knighthood and three to a barony. The differences in their incomes are considerable, but they do not correspond to the awarded titles.

Table 3: Annual income (1910) of ennobled Viennese entrepreneurs⁹¹

| Name | Date of the ennoblement (documents) | Granted status | Predicate | Annual income in Crowns (1910) |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Krones, Anton (1848–1912) | 1911, 21. 12. (1912, 02. 01.) | N | Edler von Lichtenhausen | 112,809 |
| Stiassny, Felix (1867–1938) | 1911, 09.06. (1911, 28.07.) | N | Edler von Elzhaim | 116,323 |
| Fröhlich, Arnold (1839–1924) | 1914, 19.03. (1914, 04.05.) | N | Edler von Fanyon | 121,354 |
| Krassny, Maxime (1858–1936) | 1911, 06.01. (1911, 14.02.) | N | Edler von Krassien | 138,150 |
| Doctor, Moritz (1862–1929) | 1912, 01.05. (1912, 08.06.) | N | Edler von Hohenlangen | 159,824 |
| Neumann, Adolf (1847–1922) | 1913, 27.02. (1913, 23.04) | N | Edler von Ditterswaldt | 191,445 |
| Benda, Gustav (1846–1932) | 1911, 12. 07. (1911, 07. 12.) | N | Edler von | 256,986 |
| Pollack, Bernhard (1847–1911) | 1907, 05.04. (1907, 29.04.) | N | Edler von Parnau | 499,637 |
| Redlich, Theodor (1850–1922) | 1911, 07.05. (1911, 20.07) | N | Edler von | 619,974 |
| Doctor, Eduard (1858–1926) | 1911, 21.11. (1911, 05.12.) | K | – | 288,067 |
| Suess, Friedrich (1864–1938) | 1908, 06.11 (1909), 06.05. | K | Hellrat | 119,500 |
| Landau, Horace (1869–1926) | 1910, 27.12. (1911, 18.03.) | K | – | 411,300 |
| Morawitz, Karl (1846–1914) | 1913, 02.11. (1914, 25.02.) | K | – | 1.138,211 |
| Fould, Eugène (1876–1929) | 1908, 18.03. (1908, 03.04.) | B | – | 152,326 |
| Springer, Sigismund (1873–1928) | 1913, 03.01. (1913, 08.02.) | B | – | 243,535 |
| Wertheim, Franz, Edler von (1865–1925) | 1913, 12. 07. (1913, 05. 09.) | B | – | 262,712 |

⁹⁰ Revenue data for 1910 are given by Sandgruber, *Traumzeit für Millionäre*, pp. 306–469. The years 1907–14 were chosen because we can assume that the annual incomes of these persons and the purchase price of the Crown were constant with some variations in the given period.

⁹¹ N = untitled Nobility, K = Knight, B = Baron.

Particularly interesting are the relatively low incomes of the three newly promoted Barons, because they did not even belong among the extremely rich. Fould stood among the 929 richest residents of Vienna at the 487th place, Springer at the 239th place and Wertheim at the 203rd place.⁹² But the title of Baron was transferred to Fould from his father-in-law, Baron Gustav von Springer (1842–1920), Vienna's fourth richest man,⁹³ because he was the husband of his only daughter Maria Căcilie (1886–1978). Sigismund Springer became a Baron mainly because he became the son-in-law of Baron Albert Salomon von Rothschild (1844–1911).⁹⁴ Another specific case was that of Franz Wertheim (1865–1925) who, as an illegitimate son and universal heir to one of the leading Austrian industrialists Baron Franz von Wertheim (1818–1883), after his father's death was first promoted to a noble rank and later among the Barons.⁹⁵ Moreover, excellent social contacts were common to all new Barons from the ranks of businessmen who were granted their titles after the abolition of the ennoblement articles in 1884. In ten cases found in our sample of 235 ennoblements only two (Fould and Springer) were directly promoted to the status of Barons. Four individuals⁹⁶ came from previously ennobled families and the rest were first promoted to the rank of untitled nobles and then to the Barons. But they all had relatives among the higher nobility: either among their ancestors, relatives,⁹⁷ or the partners of their descendants.⁹⁸

⁹² Sandgruber, *Traumzeit für Millionäre*, pp. 341, 444 and 460.

⁹³ Von Fould-Springer with the predicate. His father-in-law reported an income of 4,123,906 Crowns in 1910 (*Ibid.*, p. 444; HHStA, KK, 849/1908; AVA, Adelsarchiv, Springer, Adelsakt 1868–1908).

⁹⁴ Given his annual income, he may have used Rothschilds' finances for a single donation of 500,000 Crowns for the Red Cross, on the basis of which he was awarded the title (HHStA, KK, 6/1913).

⁹⁵ He was born as Franz Gunst and adopted the name of Wertheim after the death of his biological father. He received a noble title in 1886 and a barony in 1913 (AVA, Inneres, MdI, Präsidium, Kt. 1156/1886; AVA, Adelsarchiv, Franz Wertheim, Adelsakt 1886–1913).

⁹⁶ Including only one woman: Anna von Liebig (Baroness in 1916) who, however, married a nobleman.

⁹⁷ Franz Wertheim's father was a Baron (see above). Julius Morpurgo (1845–1915) was not among the direct ancestors of the nobleman, but the Parente family, from which his mother came, was ennobled in two lines (baronian and aristocratic). Morpurgo (nobility 1898, Baron 1913) had other advantages compared to others. Although he was an Austrian citizen, he lived permanently in Paris, where he did important services for the monarchy. He was also one of the leading sponsors of the emerging Austrian Air Force (AVA, Inneres, MdI, Kt. 2386/1908, HHStA, KK, 608/1913).

⁹⁸ For the award of a barony (1911) to Leopold Alexander Haupt von Buchenrode (1827–1904) was emphasized the fact that the Hungarian barony of his father-in-law, August Stummer de Tavarnok, was transferred to one of his sons in 1888, and the other son married Baroness von Phull (HHStA, KK, 758/1901; AVA, Adelsarchiv, Leopold Haupt, Adelstand (Edler von Buchenrode) 1875); *ibid.*, Leopold Alexander Haupt Edler von Buchenrode, a Baron in 1901. Solely the humanitarian merits in the award of a barony (1918) are mentioned in Leopold Pollack von Parnegg's case, even though his children had partners among the higher nobility (AVA, Inneres, MdI, Kt. 2441/1918; HHStA, KK, 1170/1918).



Baron Gustav von
Springer, Industrialist
and Landowner
(about 1900) (private
Archive)

The granting of noble titles for money or gifts can be described with some exaggeration as the indulgences of modern times. The businessman, however, did not endeavour to save his soul, but to achieve social promotion, and to pay not to the church but to the state, which, on this basis, "forgave" the otherwise required long-term services and their impeccability. Donations from businessmen went to a number of sectors that Austria was otherwise unable to finance: for the purpose of charity, the creation of pension and accident funds, the purchase of art and natural science collections and important estates, or for the rescue of failing banks and savings banks. From the point of view of national interests, it was a logical step that led to savings in budgetary resources, played a role in reducing social tensions and could also have positive political consequences.

As the granting of the princely state to Count Karl Joseph von Palm-Gundelfingen⁹⁹ (1749–1814) in 1783 shows, similar ennoblements can rarely be documented in earlier periods, but not as much as during the second half of the 19th century. This had serious consequences, among other things, because society fundamentally changed in less than a century. Although ennoblements remained the sovereign's prerogative, the circumstances of promotion were more and more discussed in society. The existence of nobility diverged from the attitude of a large part of society, which was also shown by the proceedings of the Assembly at Kroměříž (Kremsier).¹⁰⁰ Not only was the institution of nobility attacked, but also the hereditary character of ennoblement, which also made the awards of an individual a privilege for future generations. In the context of a fundamental transformation of society, the noble title often had less respect than the social status achieved through one's own diligence (and not a hereditary one).¹⁰¹

Thus, it was the form of nobility that was primarily attacked, but not the reasons for granting it as such. This was particularly true for officers, as well as for officials, where ennoblement was often seen as a form of appreciation for demanding and usually lifelong service, which was not very well paid. However, the situation was different for businessmen. As their work activities were not generally recognised through noble titles, they had to gain merits of another character. If they embarked on political activities, they put themselves at the risk of criticism for their excessive favour for state power. But the award of a title for money was generally considered to be a much larger transgression. Such action was not seen by the public (and not only in Austria) as an aid to state, but as an ordinary deal that degraded the value of noble status. In many cases, the situation was aggravated by the arrogance of some of the wealthy, who ostentatiously showed off their property and showed that they could buy for their money not only castles and large estates, but also positions and titles. Due to the generosity involved in the granting of noble titles, such a practice was more tolerated in Austria than, for example, in Prussia, where similar deals

⁹⁹ Count Karl Joseph von Palm-Gundelfingen was promoted to the Imperial Princely rank in 1783 for a donation of 740,000 Guildens of conventional currency in total for humanitarian purposes (Thomas Klein, "Die Erhebungen in den weltlichen Reichsfürstenstand 1550–1806", in: Walter Heinemeyer (Hrsg.), *Vom Reichsfürstenstande* (Köln–Ulm, 1987), pp. 137–192 (here pp. 181–182).

¹⁰⁰ In the end, the Constitutional Committee turned down the article on the abolition of noble titles by a majority of only one vote (Vojtěch Teska, *Kroměřížský sněm a tzv. kroměřížská ústava*, Diploma work, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Law (Prague, 2007), pp. 30–31).

¹⁰¹ Often cited is the statement of the banker Rudolf Sieghart (1866–1934): "I also thought that in my business dealings with members of the aristocracy I had to be rather a boss of bourgeois section than a newly baron" (*Ich war auch der Meinung, dass ich in meinem dienstlichen Verkehr mit Mitgliedern der Aristokratie als bürgerlicher Sektionschef mehr zu gelten habe denn als neugebackener Baron*). Cited according to: Rudolf Sieghart, *Die letzten Jahrzehnte einer Grossmacht. Menschen, Völker, Probleme des Habsburger-Reichs* (Berlin, 1932), p. 127.

were the subject of severe criticism by many journalists,¹⁰² but even there they led to a serious decline in the institution of nobility and undoubtedly contributed to its abolition after the collapse of the monarchy in 1918.

Jan Županič

**USTVARJANJE POSLOVNEGA PLEMSTVA.
DRUŽBENI VZPON AVSTRIJSKIH GOSPODARSTVENIKOV
PO LETU 1848**

POVZETEK

O poslovnih elitah (v sodobnem pomenu besede) v habsburški monarhiji lahko govorimo že v prvi polovici 18. stoletja, vendar se je njihovo število močno zmanjšalo po priključitvi gospodarsko pomembne regije Šlezije k Prusiji v letih 1741–1742. Poleg tega se je družbena sestava podjetništva v habsburški monarhiji v protoindustrijskem obdobju v nekaterih pogledih razlikovala od poznejšega, med drugim tudi zato, ker je imela v tej skupini pomembno vlogo aristokracija. Nenehno naraščanje števila in pomena podjetnikov je povezano z razsvetljskimi reformami, ki so bile izvedene v drugi polovici vladavine Marije Terezije. Po zaslugi teh reform je imelo avstrijsko cesarstvo pol stoletja pozneje velik družbeni razred gospodarstvenikov, katerega vloga se je zaradi družbenih sprememb po letu 1848 izjemno povečala.

V 19. stoletju je družba habsburške monarhije doživela temeljno preobrazbo. Spremembe, povezane z letom 1848 in propadom posestniške družbe, so pomembno vplivale tudi na družbeni položaj podjetnikov. Njihov položaj pred tem datumom ni bil pravno opredeljen in prestiž ni bil odvisen od njihovega premoženja, temveč od njihovega mesta v tradicionalni razvrstitvi družbene hierarhije, povezane s posestjo meščanskih pravic ali plemiškim naslovom. Njihov prestiž je po tem datumu začel rasti predvsem zaradi vse tesnejšega sodelovanja z državo in vse večjega političnega vpliva. Od spremembe volilnega

¹⁰² On this question, see e.g. Županič and Fiala, *Nobilitas iudaeorum*, pp. 132–135, 168–175.

pravilnika v Poslansko zbornico avstrijskega cesarskega sveta leta 1873 so imeli gospodarstveniki tudi svojo kurijo (volilno skupino), tako imenovano Kurijo gospodarskih in trgovskih zbornic. V novi dobi plemiški naziv ni bil pogoj za pripadnost eliti, a je bil za marsikoga še vedno simbol prestiža in mnogi poslovneži so si ga želeli. V njem so videli simbol svojih dosežkov in temelj zgodovinskega spomina celotne družine. Vendar pot do njega ni bila lahka in se je bistveno razlikovala od drugih družbenih skupin v monarhiji.

Zasluge, zaradi katerih so bili podjetniki povišani v plemiški stan, so bile različne. So pa očitno predstavljali edino družbeno-profesionalno skupino, ki je lahko prejela plemiški naziv ali drugo nagrado za denar ali darila v naravi. To stanje se je, razumljivo, odražalo tudi v prestižu plemstva, ki je v drugi polovici 19. stoletja upadel – ravno v povezavi s pogostim podeljevanjem plemiških naslovov. Vendar so k temu upadu precej prispevali tudi podjetniki sami, saj je bil njihov "komercialni" pristop k tej problematiki dobro znan. Informacije o prodaji nazivov so postopoma pricurljale v javnost in število ljudi, ki so jim te nazive podelili predvsem na podlagi premoženja, je raslo. Stanje je zaostriła tudi arogantnost nekaterih novepečenih bogatašev, ki so bahaško razkazovali svoje materialno bogastvo in pokazali, da lahko s svojim denarjem kupijo ne le gradove in graščine, ampak tudi nazive in družbeni status. Kljub temu je plemiški naziv ostal marsikomu privlačen, zato so ga nekateri (bolj ali manj uspešno) poskušali pridobiti tudi v novejšem času.

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Izvleček: V 19. stoletju je družba habsburške monarhije doživela temeljno preobrazbo. Spremembe, povezane z letom 1848 in propadom posestniške družbe, so pomembno vplivale tudi na družbeni položaj gospodarstvenikov. Njihov položaj pred tem datumom ni bil pravno opredeljen in prestiž ni bil odvisen od njihovega premoženja, temveč od njihovega mesta v tradicionalni razvrstitvi družbene hierarhije, povezane s posestjo meščanskih pravic ali plemiškim naslovom. Njihov prestiž je po tem datumu začel rasti predvsem zaradi vse tesnejšega sodelovanja z državo in vse večjega političnega vpliva. V novi dobi plemiški naziv ni bil pogoj za pripadnost eliti, a je bil za marsikoga še vedno simbol prestiža in mnogi poslovneži so ga iskali. V njem so videli prikaz svojih dosežkov in temelj zgodovinskega spomina celotne družine. Vendar pot do nje ni bila lahka in se je bistveno razlikovala od drugih družbenih skupin v monarhiji.