

# Noble, Princely, Royal, and Imperial Titles

by  
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## **Sovereigns and Sovereignty.**

"Sovereign" (in the European sense) is a technical term, both noun and adjective. In times past, a sovereign was sovereign, i.e., answerable only to God for his actions. Only the Pope is sovereign in this sense today (as head of the Vatican City State), with Princes Rainier of Monaco and Hans-Adam of Liechtenstein coming a relatively close second. More generally, a sovereign is any hereditary head-of-state, whatever the title, and whatever constitutional powers the sovereign may have. For the purposes of this document, "sovereign" refers to a ruling head of state and need not be royal or imperial.

Luxembourg is headed by a grand duke; Liechtenstein and Monaco are headed by princes. Liechtenstein and Luxembourg are both sovereign states and their heads of state are sovereigns. While Prince Rainier of Monaco is a sovereign, in strict terms Monaco is not a sovereign state, its semi-dependent relationship to France governed by treaty. Andorra is similarly not strictly a sovereign state. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not part of the United Kingdom but feudal dependencies of the British Crown and also lack sovereignty, as do Britain's various colonial leftovers.

Before the unifications of Germany and Italy, there were a welter of sovereign or essentially sovereign states ruled by variously-titled sovereigns -- electors (in German, "Kurfürst"), margraves, etc. The families ruling these formerly independent states are for the most part still dynastically significant today.

## **Nobles and Nobility.**

Romans recognized three orders: patricians, equestrians and plebeians, and earlier, before the foundation of the republic, a fourth: royalty. Added to this, there was the concept of *nobilis*; to be noble meant you were descended from someone who had been Consul; being a patrician was necessary to become Consul (though you could buy your way in),

but to be noble was ineffably grander, at least to the Roman way of thinking. This has been turned around a bit in Italy; in Italian cities today, a "patriciate" exists which is considered to be above "mere" nobility.

These notions of the Romans apply to present-day parlance. In the British system, one can discriminate between royalty, nobility, knights, gentry and commons: five grades. The Germans tend to regard certain of what the British regard as gentry as noble, and at the highest levels, what the British define as noble resembles what the Germans regard as "princely" and in general, continental systems as a whole tend to have a broader definition of "noble".

In essence, the nobility were the landowners. To be a landowner you had to be prepared to *defend* your right to *own* that land, and with the progressive disorders that lead to the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the development of the feudal system in Europe, nobility became synonymous with the military caste -- an essentially self-appointed caste.

In the West, it is nearly impossible to trace any noble lineage back much before AD 800 (though the old Gaelic nobility of Ireland has a special claim to antiquity here); anything before 1100 is remarkable. The organized system of titles we have today is a rather late development, but "count", and "prince" go back to the Roman Empire. Only when it was recognized that one might have "betters" (i.e., with the organization of nation-states) did the nobles start paying attention to titles, styles, and pedigrees.

A distinction needs to be made between "nobility" and "peerage". In the British system, a peer is the holder of the title, while a noble is a member of a family headed by a peer. In the UK, such family members, while "noble", are still technically common, which is not necessarily the case elsewhere. More narrowly, a peer also sits in parliament, as with the British House of Lords or the former French House of Peers. There are some titles in the United Kingdom (e.g., the Irish peerage, when the peer lacks another English, Scots or UK title) which do not permit one to sit in the House

of Lords; thus, in Scotland, the distinction of a "Lord of Parliament".

Something also needs to be said about "title inflation". While the British system is tidily exclusive, this is not the case in other systems. As explained below, some systems (as with France) have long tolerated "courtesy titles", a putative title of nobility that has no basis in fact. In other cases, all the descendants of a noble have a title, the title holder, as in Italy, being styled "Duke of Suchandsuch", with everyone else being titled "Firstname of the Dukes (or Marquesses, etc) of Suchandsuch".

François Velde writes about the French situation:

*Nowadays, anyone descended from a count uses the style of count (although "le comte Pierre de X" is distinguished from "Pierre, comte de X" who is the real title-holder). That makes it seem like many counts. Since there are only about 1000 authentic titles, the share of titles/peerages to population is similar to England.*

In Germany, since the Weimar Republic, all titles are considered part of one's last name. Thus, a real title holder can "adopt" an adult, and the otherwise unrelated person then can become "Joe Schmuck Duke of Saxony" (this is the case of ZsaZsa's hubby); the practice is alluded to in Billy Wilder's film, *One Two Three* (Cagney's last film before *Ragtime*).

Then there is the matter of how the nobility of a previous state was incorporated into that of a successor state or regime. This particularly applies to Germany as well as Italy, but also applies to the case of the United Kingdom (with the Scots and Irish peerages) and in France, how titles granted after the ancien regime are handled. The term "mediatization" is often applied here.

On occasion, all of this becomes very involved, a topic hotly (and voluminously) debated. Outside the British system, the reader is cautioned about taking **any** title at immediate face value, as a thousand years of history, succeeding states, differing usages, vast quantities of personal vanity, as well as not a little fraud may be involved; it is not without good reason that Dumas, Trollope, et al. had fun casting faux Italian nobles as charming (or not-so-charming) villains. Even in Britain, the recent practice of peddling lordships of the manor (feudal leftovers so devoid of meaning that Parliament has never seen fit to abolish them) testifies to the problems.

## ***Imperial Titles.***

Latin	Imperator, Imperatrix
Greek	Autokrator
English	Emperor, Empress
German	Kaiser, Kaiserin
French	Empereur, Imperatrice
Spanish	Emperador, Emperatriz
Russian	Tsar, Tsarina

"Emperor" comes from the Latin *imperator*, roughly "commander", a title which ancient Roman armies "spontaneously" hailed a victorious general by; this entitled the general to a triumph (a sort of ancient Tournament of Roses Parade and Bowl Game). It was one of the titles of the Roman Emperor.

Diocletian divided the Roman Empire into East and West, with two emperors, each emperor being "Imperator" and "Augustus". Each co-emperor had associates, termed "caesars". This system proved unworkable, but the division of the Empire was permanent by about AD 395.

The fall of the Western Empire is traditionally dated to August 23, 476 when Odoacer was crowned King of Italy. Romulus II, or alternately, Julius II Nepos, is considered the last Western Emperor.

"Caesar", as a title of the Roman Emperor, or an associate of an emperor, entered both German and Russian as the word for "emperor" (respectively, "kaiser" and "tsar"); the Bulgarian word "tsar" is usually translated to "king". In English and the western Romance languages, "imperator" was the word that won out.

The Byzantine/Eastern Roman Empire continued up to 1453, when Constantinople fell to the forces of the Ottoman Turks under Mehmet II. The last Byzantine Emperor was Constantine XI. It has been said that as Rome began and ended with a Romulus, so Constantinople began and ended with a Constantine.

On Christmas Day, AD 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Roman Emperor, i.e., Western Emperor. The Eastern Emperor (by now, the Byzantine Emperor) acceded to this. This is the start of the Holy Roman Empire, which would continue for a thousand years, until 1806. This was the first "thousand-year reich".

"Charlemagne" is Old French for "Charles-le-magne" or "Charles the Great". In German, he referred to as "Karl der Große". In Latin, this is Carolus Magnus. He is counted as King Charles I of France and as Holy Roman Emperor Charles (or Karl) I.

Napoleon I was vested with "the imperial dignity" by a law of the French Senate in May 1804. A referendum approved the hereditary character of that dignity in his family. He abdicated in April 1814, returned for a brief interlude (the 100 Days) in March-June 1815 and abdicated again. (--François Velde)

The son of Napoleon I by Marie-Louise of Austria is counted as Napoleon II. He is usually treated in historic and encyclopedic works under his Austrian title, Duke of Reichstadt.

Emperor Napoleon III was the first Napoleon's nephew. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, president of the French Republic, instigated a coup on Dec. 2, 1851 and had himself proclaimed Emperor in 1852; he abdicated in 1870 consequent to France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. The 1852-70 period is called the Second Empire. (--(mostly) François Velde)

In 1804, Holy Roman Emperor Francis II assumed the title of Austrian Emperor as Francis I (in German, Franz). On August 6, 1806, he disclaimed the title of Holy Roman Emperor, which is as good a date as any to mark the deacease of Holy Roman Empire. The use of the numeral was a decision on the part of Franz himself.

### **Emperors of Austria**

Franz I ( Francis I)	1806-1835
Ferdinand	1835-1848
Franz Josef (Francis Joseph)	1848-1916
Karl (Charles)	1916-1918

Dr. Otto von Habsburg is the present head of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine; he is the son of Emperor Karl and Empress-Consort Zita. The headship of Habsburg-Lorraine may pass to the Archduke Lorenz of Austria-Este, the husband of Princess Astrid of Belgium (who is anticipated to eventually become queen-regnant, as her brother, Crown Prince Phillippe, seems disinclined to marry); if this happens, the head of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine may again wear a crown, in the person of (the probable) future King Amedeo of Belgium.

In 1871, at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, the King of Prussia was proclaimed German Emperor (*Deutscher Kaiser*) at Versailles. Considering the

number of ruling or reigning kings, grand dukes, margraves, etc, to be found in the now-unified Germany, the assumption of the imperial title was not unreasonable. It also symbolized the emergence of Germany as a world power. This was "the second reich".

### **German Emperors**

Wilhelm I	1871-1888
Friedrich	1888
Wilhelm II	1888-1918

Kaiser Friedrich was also King Friedrich III of Prussia; Prussia is wholly defunct as a state since the Potsdam Conference following World War II. The present head of the (imperial) House of Hohenzollern is Prince Georg Friedrich (born 1976); he is the great-great-grandson of Wilhelm II through his father and grandfather, both of whom were named Louis Ferdinand, and his great-grandfather, Crown Prince Wilhelm. There are Hohenzollerns in the legitimate male line senior in descent to Georg Friedrich, but they have been denied succession rights due to unequal marriages.

The Russian monarchy was different from those in the West. The Russians considered themselves a kind of "New Rome" after the fall of Byzantium to the Turks. Until the reforms of Tsar Peter I ("the Great"), the word "tsar" was used exclusively; thereafter, he decreed "emperor" was to be the term used when translating "tsar" into other European languages. For the francophile, often francophone Russian aristocracy, the equivalence of "tsar" and "emperor" became complete. Notwithstanding this, the Russian monarchy, the Russian Church and much of Russian society was originally based on the Byzantine model, something evident even today. Note that the Russian tsars called themselves "autocrats", after the Byzantine term for emperor, "autokrator".

There is some controversy about who represents the authentic Romanov heir, but Maria Vladimirovna, the daughter of Grand Duke Vladimir Kyrillovich (first cousin of Tsar Nicholas II), and her son, George Romanov, seem to have the strongest claim. A tsarist restoration in Russia seems unlikely, but some sort of "official" status may develop, analogous to the status held in France by the Count of Paris as the most broadly recognized claimant to the French throne.

The Brazilian emperors were offshoots of the Portuguese royal family. Emperor Pedro I is also counted as King Pedro IV of Portugal. Brazil became independent in 1822 with Pedro as Emperor. He abdicated in 1831. Pedro II was deposed in 1889 by a

military coup. There are two pretenders to this throne, descended from Princess-Imperial Isabel, heiress of Dom Pedro II. Relatively recently, the Brazilian people were asked if they wanted a restoration as a "crowned presidency". This may yet happen; in Brazil, anything is possible.

Mexico has had two emperors. The first was Augustin Iturbide; he crowned himself a la Napoleon in 1822, abdicated in 1823, and was executed in 1824. Mexico's more famous emperor was the ill-fated Maximilian, younger brother of Franz Josef of Austria. He and his consort, Carlota (the daughter of King Leopold I of Belgium and a first cousin of Queen Victoria), were crowned in 1864. In 1867, Maximilian's position became untenable when French troops provided by Napoleon III were withdrawn. Instead of fleeing, he held out to the last and was captured by the forces of Benito Juarez. Despite international pleas, Juarez had him executed by firing squad June, 9, 1867 (Maximilian is the one wearing a sombrero in Manet's famous painting of this event).

In the United Kingdom, the Assumption of Titles Act (1877) granted to Queen Victoria the title Empress of India. This was mostly a reaction to the "inflation" of imperial titles (Germany, Brazil, Austria, Russia), but was also a recognition that the British Raj had supplanted the old Mogul dynasty. King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (mother of the present British sovereign) were the last Emperor and Empress-Consort of India.

## ***Ruling Titles. Kings and Queens.***

Latin	Rex, Regina
Greek	Basileus
English	King, Queen
German	König, Königin
French	Roi, Reine
Spanish	Rey, Reina
Portuguese	Rei, Reiha
Romanian	Regele, Raina
Bulgarian	Tsar
Norwegian	Konge, Dronning
Danish	Konge, Dronning
Swedish	Konung, Drottning
Dutch	Koning, Koningin
Irish	Ri, Rigan (High-King = Ard Ri)

In modern terms, a king or queen-regnant is the hereditary head of a nation-state. In Europe today, there are only seven such monarchies. These are:

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Sovereign, Consort; Heir-Apparent</i>
Belgium	King Albert II, Queen Paola; Crown Prince Philippe
Denmark	Queen Margrethe II, Prince Henrik; Crown Prince Frederik
Netherlands	Queen Beatrix, Prince Claus; Crown Prince Willem-Alexander
Norway	King Harald V, Queen Sonja; Crown Prince Haakon Magnus
Spain	King Juan Carlos, Queen Sophia; Felipe, Prince of Asturias
Sweden	King Carl XVI Gustaf, Queen Silvia; Crown Princess Victoria
United Kingdom	Queen Elizabeth II, Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; Charles, Prince of Wales

More distantly in time, there were other kingdoms and dynasties. Bohemia was once a kingdom. There was an elective monarchy in Poland, but this became extinct when Poland was partitioned between Prussia, Russia and Austria. Burgundy was absorbed into France, but had an illustrious history. In Spain, Navarre and Castille were just two of the kingdoms that united to form the state we know today. The "kingdoms" of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are two formerly separate kingdoms, England (joined with the Principality of Wales) and Scotland, plus a rump of a third former kingdom, Ireland. What is now Italy has a very jumbled history, but there were kingdoms to be found there too, among them, the old Norman Kingdom of Sicily, the Kingdom of Sardinia (which lead to the modern Italian state), and the curiously-named Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. We might also mention the old Crusader-founded Kingdom of Jerusalem.

### Other Ruling Monarchies.

Three current European monarchies are headed by persons lacking the title of "king" or "queen". These are:

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Sovereign, Consort, Heir-Apparent</i>
Liechtenstein (principality)	Prince Hans-Adam II, Princess Marie; Hereditary Prince Alois
Luxembourg (grand duchy)	Grand Duke Jean, Grand Duchess Josephine-Charlotte; Hereditary Grand Duke Henri
Monaco (principality)	Prince Rainier III, [none]; Hereditary Prince Albert

The use of "Hereditary Prince" or "Hereditary Grand Duke" is discussed under "Imperial, Royal, and Noble Offspring".

In earlier times, there were many more monarchies of this kind, variously titled as grand duchies, duchies, principalities, etc. Most of these occurred within the bounds of the former Holy Roman Empire, or in regions adjacent to it, though in Italy, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany (Florence) of the Medicis (and later, as a branch of the Habsburgs) needs mentioning. Finland was a grand duchy held by the Romanovs. The brief-lived Grand Duchy of Warsaw was created by Napoleon I. Some discussion of the history of the Holy Roman Empire is necessary before many of these titles originating from it can be adequately understood. We might mention here that Luxembourg was created as a grand duchy for the House of Orange-Nassau *within* the German Confederation (successor of the Holy Roman Empire), while the Netherlands (including present Belgium) remained outside of the Confederation (and previously, the Empire).

### The Pope.

Since the signing of the Lateran treaty, the Pope has been Sovereign of the Vatican City State. Before the States of the Church were incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy, the Pope was similarly a territorial sovereign (this was the central part of Italy from Rome north). Almost all nations of the world recognize the Vatican as a sovereign nation-state, albeit a peculiar one, and maintain diplomatic relations with it -- including the United States.

### The Holy Roman Empire and the German System.

Holy Roman Emperor was an elective office. However, dynastic politics made it effectively hereditary, first with the Hohenstaufen, then, except for a brief period, the Habsburgs. For the Habsburgs, an imperial election was still necessary for an emperor to enter into his reign, and this was done by the Electors (in German, Kurfürst, Kurfürstin). The number of electors grew over time; at the dissolution of the empire these were:

<i>Temporal</i>	<i>Spiritual</i>
Brandenburg	Cologne
Bavaria	Mainz
Bohemia	Trier
Hanover	
Hesse	
Palatinate	
Saxony	

The power of the Holy Roman Emperor was limited and the nobles who putatively owed him allegiance were oftentimes sovereign in all but name, particularly in the latter stages of the Empire.

Some of these magnates held lands *outside* the Empire as kings; the Elector of Brandenburg (as King *in* Prussia, then with Frederick the Great and his successors as King *of* Prussia) and the Elector of Hanover (Kings George I through George III of the United Kingdom) are two such cases.

Within the Empire, these powerful families ruled as electors, grand dukes, dukes, margraves, landgraves, and princes. With the extinction of the Holy Roman Empire, kingdoms emerged out of the former Imperial domains, each headed by its own royal house:

- Bavaria
- Hanover
- Saxony
- Prussia (additional lands within the old Empire)
- Württemberg

The Austrian Habsburgs, accustomed to being imperial, assumed the title of Emperor of Austria in 1804. Later, the "dual-monarchy" was established, with the Habsburgs as Emperors of Austria and Kings of Hungary, the combined realm being known as "Austria-Hungary".

The other magnates often became entirely independent grand dukes, etc., usually retaining their old titles, but sometimes assuming (on occasion, unilaterally) a grander one. Some of these titles and styles are only approximately equivalent to those encountered in European nations outside the borders of the former Empire. All of this was settled at the Congress of Vienna, and the British equivalencies are determined by starting (but not ending) with the protocols hammered out there; part of this was a process referred to as "mediatizing".

Mediatization is very important in the German system. It refers to formerly ruling houses who maintained their dynastic rights even when they lost sovereignty over territory. It meant that even if they no longer ruled, they were still "equal" in dynastic dignity to the luckier families that did retain sovereignty over lands and would remain equal provided their members married equally.

The word "ebenbürtigkeit", "equal-birth-ness" is often found in this context, and seems to be naturalizing itself into English with the sense of "equal marriage", as an antonym for "morganatic" (unequal marriage). An unequal, or morganatic marriage meant (and still often does mean) that any child of such a marriage will be denied succession rights and will have a lesser status than that of an ebenbürtigkeit cousin.

The word "mediatize" refers to the "immediate" person the magnate owed allegiance to; originally this was the Emperor, but after 1815, many of the smaller magnates were placed under the authority of one of the new entirely sovereign states in what is now Germany.

Incorrectly or not, this term, (mediatization) has also been applied to other no-longer reigning or ruling houses which were never part of the Holy Roman Empire, e.g., the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies which was consolidated with the Kingdom of Italy or to the ancient royal and noble houses of Armenia and Georgia in their relationship to the Russian throne.

What should be kept in mind here is that formerly ruling or reigning houses (royal or not) are carefully distinguished from (formerly) non-ruling or non-reigning houses in the German system, with the former taking precedence before the latter -- *whatever the actual title may be*. Of similar but lesser importance is the distinction between "old" and "new" (post-1800 creation) nobility. If all of this makes the Germans seem insufferable snobs, you're not far off track.

Outside of the Empire, each nation-state evolved its own system and nomenclature. For the most part, the different systems are parallel, but there are important distinctions and exceptions that one should be aware of, particularly when distinguishing non-royal but otherwise formerly sovereign houses from those which are merely noble.

## ***Imperial, Royal, and Noble Offspring.***

Some titles were reserved exclusively for an imperial or royal child. Othertimes, the child was given an otherwise noble title. The heir of a noble often bears a distinctive style as well.

In English, a prince is the child (and in the male line, a grandchild) of the king or queen-regnant (and in the direct line of succession, the great-grandchildren of the sovereign), and are styled a "royal highness". This nomenclature applies to the children of continental kings and queens-regnant, at least when **speaking** English.

What distinguishes a style from a title here is unclear. "Dauphin" for the French heir or "Prince of Wales" for the British, while a title, is really more of a style. The same can be said for "Prince [or Princess] of Asturias" for the Spanish heir, but "infante" for a Spanish prince of the blood seems closer to a title as we have been using the term; one may say the same thing about the Habsburg use of "Erzherzog". Title and style for imperial and royal offspring varies from dynasty-to-dynasty. What might be thought of in English as being a non-royal title may in fact be a very royal title in another place.

Most people are aware of the distinction between a royal prince, as with the United Kingdom, and a ruling prince, as with Monaco or Liechtenstein, but are probably confused about who takes precedence over who (a ruling prince *usually* takes precedence; this is all governed by international protocol). The potential for confusion is also present with grand dukes, as a ruling grand duke would normally outrank the child of a Russian tsar.

The child of a Habsburg emperor was referred to as an archduke or archduchess (Erzherzog or Erzherzogin), a style used by the Habsburgs as far back as the 14th century. It extended to his grandchildren in the direct line of succession.

Absent another specific term, the English term for the heir-apparent to an imperial throne was "Prince [or Princess] Imperial", as with Napoleon III's son, Prince-Imperial Eugene, or the heiress of Dom Pedro II of Brazil, Princess-Imperial Isabel, which in fact was also the form in French and Portuguese.

The German system often makes use of the prefix "Erb" for the heir to a title as with "Erbgraf" whereas the British system prefers using a lesser "courtesy title". William Addams Reitwiesner writes:

*"Erb" in German (in this sense) means "hereditary" [. . .] The oldest son and heir of a Mediatized Count would be an "Erbgraf". The oldest son and heir of a Grand Duke would be an "Erbgroßherzog". And so on. Another way of spelling the title would be "Erb-Prinz" or "Erb-Graf", etc. The wives of these men have equivalent feminine titles, such as "Erbprinzessin", "Erbgräfin", "Erbgroßherzogin", etc. The French form is "prince hereditaire", "comte hereditaire" "grand-duc hereditaire", etc. (toss in accents as appropriate).*

In French usage, Prince Albert of Monaco, as heir to Prince Rainier, is a "prince-hereditaire", and Prince Alois, the heir of Hans-Adam of Liechtenstein is, in German usage, an "Erbprinz". "Hereditary Prince" and "Hereditary Grand Duke" sound alien in English, but this is how they must be translated.

This German usage, however, does not extend to royalty; for the Germans, Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden is a "Kronprinzessin" and Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands is a "Kronprinz".

The heir to a French ducal title is sometimes styled "Prince of Suchandsuch", but this is more a "courtesy title" (see François Velde's comments under "Prince"),

and roughly corresponds to the British practice of the heir to a peerage using a lesser title held by the actual peer, as with the marquessate of Blandford for the Dukes of Marlborough.

In the Russian system, "grand duke" is the English term for the son of a tsar, a translation for "velikiy knyaz" (which might be better translated as "great [or grand] prince"). For a grand duchess, the Russian term is "velikiy knyazhna" if unmarried, "velikiy knyagina" if married. This is a title that was used by the Grand Dukes of Muscovy. In German, this is termed Großfürst or Großfürstin (vs. "Großherzog" = Grand Duke). This is considered equivalent to archduke or archduchess, but needs to be distinguished from *sovereign* grand dukes (as with Luxembourg). Generically, the son of a Russian tsar was termed a "tsarevich", a daughter "tsarovna". "Tsesarevich" or "cesarevich" has been stated to be a title reserved for the eldest son of the tsar.

The son of a Spanish king or queen-regnant is termed an infante, a daughter an infanta, in distinction to "principe" or "princesa". The king or queen-regnant's heir, however, is always styled Prince or Princess of Asturias (*Principe de Asturias*). A Princess of Asturias can be "demoted" to mere infanta by the advent of a baby brother; the wife of the Prince of Asturias, however, is styled the Princess of Asturias.

## **Prince and Fürst, Grand Duke, Margrave, Count-Palatine, and Landgrave.**

### **Prince and Fürst.**

Latin	Princeps
English	Prince, Princess
French	Prince, Princesse
German	Prinz, Prinzessin; Fürst, Fürstin
Italian	Principe, Principessa
Spanish	Principe, Princesa
Portuguese	Principe, Princeza
Russian	Knyaz, Knyazhna

"Prince" has a long history. When the Emperor Augustus accepted the title from the Roman Senate, it meant "first among equals", as in "primus inter pares". It remained one of the titles of the Roman Emperor. The English word "principal" retains some of this meaning. In German, the idea has been translated into the title "Fürst".

In the most general terms, when not referring to the children of a king, "prince" refers to a sovereign or semi-sovereign individual who has direct personal rule over a relatively small territory, as with Monaco and Liechtenstein today.

Because the Germans were much more used to minor princes than were other European states outside the Empire, and because German has the additional title of "Fürst", "Prinz" in German does not have the very royal cachet it does in English, and sometimes may be classed as a lesser title than "Herzog", or "Großherzog" depending on a particular title's history.

"Fürst" is a uniquely German title that is best translated to "prince" and should be regarded as superior to "prince". It designates the head (the "first") of a princely house, or the head of a branch (or "cadet") of such a house. For example, the German form of Prince Rainier's title is "Fürst von Monaco" (Princess Grace was "Fürstin").

Electors of the Holy Roman Empire were termed "Kurfürst, Kurfürstin". "Großfürst" is the word used in German for a Russian grand duke (son of a tsar).

From these examples, we can see that in the German system (and elsewhere in continental systems), a prince is sometimes something more than a mere noble, but not necessarily royal and it is this distinction that makes comparing it with the British system difficult.

In the Russian system, "knyaz" (translated as "prince", e.g., Prince Potemkin) is the highest degree of nobility, and sometimes, represents a mediatization of an older native dynasty (e.g., the Bagratians) which became subject to the Russian imperial dynasty; it was "also used by Rurikid branches, and before the Romanovs they WERE the Russian imperial dynasty." (--Louis Epstein)

"Prince" is also the term used to translate the highest level of the old Gaelic nobility (see under "count").

Napoleon created princes during the First Empire, and I am told, at least one survives to the present day. François Velde comments on the usage of "prince" during the ancien regime:

*France, in theory, had no sovereign princes within its boundaries like Germany had, so the rank of prince was reserved for the royal family (as in England) and there was no title of prince. However, when one looks at 10th or 11th c. charters, one sees the word princeps used synonymously with baronis, optimus, etc*

*to designate nobles and lords. The usage disappeared in most places, with a few exceptions, where the lord of some little village was, by custom, called "prince of". In the 16th c. and 17th c. some of these lordships passed into ducal families, who then took the habit of bestowing that "princely" title on the eldest son of the current duke.*

### **Grand Duke.**

English	Grand Duke, Grand Duchess
German	Großherzog, Großherzogin
French	Grand Duc, Grande Duchesse
Italian	Gran-duca, Gran-duchessa

As has been explained in earlier sections, this is a ruling (or formerly ruling) title unless it refers to the children of a Russian tsar. A sovereign grand duke or grand duchess was often a royal highness (as with Luxembourg). In German usage, you will also encounter the style of "Grand-Ducal Highness".

It is difficult to decide if a Grand Duke outranks a Prince or Fürst. One has to know the history of the title.

For a discussion of the distinction between a dukedom and a duchy, see under "duke" below.

### **Margrave.**

"Margrave" and "margravine" are the English words for "Markgraf" and "Markgräfin". As a title, it is etymologically equivalent to a Marquess (see below), but as there were ruling margraves in what is now Germany, such a Markgraf was superior.

### **Count-Palatine.**

"Palatine" refers to extraordinary powers granted to a noble. The English word "palatine" means a region under the authority of a noble where the king's writ was suspended. While the noble owed allegiance to the king (or Holy Roman Emperor), the holder of a palatine had absolute authority, including the right to grant titles of nobility, create knights, raise armies, coin money -- i.e., powers normally reserved to a sovereign. There were palatinates in British history, in both England and in Ireland, and could be given to either lords temporal or spiritual. There was a case of a "bishop-palatine"; Louis Epstein reports "the English Lords Bishop of Durham used to rule a 'county palatine'".

"The Palatinate", however, refers to the Rhineland Palatinate in Germany, or in German, "Rheinland-

Pfalz" (as with the state in the modern Federal Republic of Germany). There was also the "Upper Palatinate", or "Oberpfalz".

The Counts-Palatine of the Rhineland Palatinate (in German, "Pfalzgraf, Pfalzgräfin"), were one of the premier noble houses of the Holy Roman Empire, and were electors, i.e., the Elector-Palatine.

**Landgrave.**

As with "margravine", "landgrave" and "landgravine" are another pair of German titles that have achieved their own regular word in English. It corresponds roughly to a count or earl, but in the case of Hesse-Homburg, it was a ruling title. The German words are Landgraf and Landgräfin. See "Earl, Count, and Graf", below.

**Nobility.**

**Dukes.**

Latin	Dux
English	Duke, Duchess
German	Herzog, Herzogin
French	Duc, Duchesse
Italian	Duca, Duchesa
Spanish	Duque, Duquesa
Portuguese	Duque, Duqueza

*Related Terms:* duchy, dukedom, ducal.

The Latin *dux* was a military title that might roughly translate to "field marshal". The historical kernel of in the stories of King Arthur probably refers to a *dux bellorum* in charge of the forces holding off the barbarian onslaught in early post-Roman Britain.

The English kings introduced the French ducal structure into the British system, and it was initially a mostly royal title (as all new creations during this century have been). In France especially after 1600, however, as well as in Britain, it has evolved into a mostly non-royal title.

The idea that a duke is a royal title, however, is strong in Germany, perhaps stronger than it ever was in Britain, where all the children of the head of some ruling houses are automatically a Herzog or Herzogin, much as imperial offspring were archdukes or archduchesses.

A duchy (or grand duchy) is the territory ruled by a duke (or grand duke) or the lands (and/or incomes) specifically attached to the ducal title. A dukedom is the title itself. In the UK, there are properly only two duchies, those of Lancaster and Cornwall; these are essentially corporations holding properties that provide income for the Queen (who is "Duke" of Lancaster), and the Prince of Wales (who is also the Duke of Cornwall); as only these two dukedoms carry such special "attachments" with the title, duchies are thus a royal preserve.

"Duke" is normally a very exalted title; however, when equating the dignity of some dukes, some insight is needed. For example, Ferdinand of the Two Sicilies created dukes in Naples almost by the gross, and these titles cannot be considered equal to dukes in the British or other continental systems.

**Marquess.**

English	Marquess, Marchioness
German	Markgraf, Markgräfin (in English, Margrave, Margravine)
French	Marquis, Marquise
Italian	Marchese, Marchesa
Spanish	Marqués, Marquesa
Portuguese	Marquez, Marqueza

*Related Terms:* marquessate, margravate.

This title glosses to "march lord", i.e. a noble in charge of the marches (the border regions) of a realm in distinction to other lords in more-settled lands. These were essentially warlords with broad powers and in this context, may be thought of as a "palatine" title. In earlier times, it was a rare title; it was later revived as a grade between count and duke.

Jeff Leader writes that

*"How the King Became His Majesty, by L.G. Pine, [...] says margrave (Latin: marchio or margravius, Dutch: marckgrave) occurs first in the dispositions of Charlemagne."*

As a senior title (about two-thirds of British dukes are also marquesses), it is not that common the United Kingdom, at least when compared to other countries (especially France where "petit marquis" was a term of derision).

In Germany, margraves were ruling, heading their own little states and today are still accounted as formerly ruling houses (see the separate heading).

### **Earl, Count, and Graf.**

Latin	Comes, Comitissa
English	Earl, Countess
German	Graf, Gräfin; Landgraf, Landgräfin (In English, Landgrave, Landgravine); Pfalzgraf, Pfalzgräfin (In English, Count-Palatine, Countess-Palatine)
French	Comte, Comtesse
Italian	Conte, Contessa
Spanish	Conde, Condesa
Portuguese	Conde, Condeza
Swedish	Greve, Grevinde
Danish	Greve Grevinde
Dutch	Graaf, Graafin
Irish	Ard Tiarna, Bantiarna
Hungarian	Groef, Groefin

*Related Terms:* earldom, comital, countly.

"Earl" is related to Old Norse "jarl", and is equivalent to "count", which itself comes from the Latin *comes*. This in turn is related to the English word "county", which pretty much explains what a count was: the principal figure of the county. In Roman times, the comes was a courtier, an Imperial official, and actually outranked a *dux* (duke).

William I of England regarded the Anglo-Saxon "earl" as a synonym for "count", and while this was not correct, it was a practical equivalency. Old English lacked a feminine and thus the French term was adopted for an earl's wife as well as for women who hold earldoms in their own right.

The German word "graf" seems etymologically related to the English "reeve", which comes from the Old English "gerefe". A reeve is an important appointed official, as with the "shire reeve", i.e., the "sheriff". What English divides among several words, German uses a single word with prefixes, and generally it has a broader meaning than English "earl" or "count". "Graf", then, should not be understood as being perfectly equal to "earl" or "count", but as also containing the idea of "reeve", or "important official". In German lands, offices normally thought of as being appointive and held by commoners in Great Britain

could be hereditary and noble. The House of Thurn and Taxis, for example, started out life as the Imperial postmasters, a job one would not think of in Britain as ennobling.

Some will maintain that a British earl outranks any continental count. Compared to some other systems, especially those that incorporated the results of the often slapdash practices of older systems (e.g., Italy), there are proportionally fewer British earls than counts.

In France and Italy, the title holder is "Firstname, the Count of /title/", while his family members are, roughly, "Firstname, of the Count of /title/". This makes county (and other titles) seem far more common than in the UK. With "count", "title inflation" is particularly notable.

François Velde, speaking of title inflation, says:

*Since the late 18th century (even before the Revolution) petty nobles started using titles which were never theirs. No one bothered to rebuke them publicly, and these became known as "titres de courtoisie". These totally invented titles multiplied in the 19th c.*

Landgraf/landgrave (along with Pfalzgraf/Count-Palatine) is inserted here with un-prefixed graf mostly because the distinction is difficult to make outside of German. The title is equivalent neither to marquess nor viscount. A Landgraf was lower than Herzog or Markgraf, but definitely above a Graf in the pecking order. When a sovereign title, (as it was in one instance), it would outrank even a (non-ruling) duke or prince.

Regarding the status of the Irish titles provided here (and under "Baron"), Patrick O'Shea writes:

*"Ard Tiarna" ("High Lord") and "Tiarna" ("Lord"), respectively in literal translation; the titles properly belonged only to the male holders, and the female titles were courtesy titles only ("Bantiarna" literally means "wife of a Lord"). Women could not, and still cannot, hold Gaelic feudal titles in their own right. There are no equivalent titles for other grades of nobility, as the Gaelic feudal system had fewer levels of heirarchy than the continental or Anglo-Norman systems. In fact, many Irish Lords of great rank, which could appropriately be styled "Ard Tiarna," prefer the simpler style of "Tiarna."*

*These titles are distinct from those created by the English Crown in Ireland (though some*

have the same geographical names), which naturally follow the English system. The Kingdom of Desmond lost its independence in 1596, but the titles have been retained as 'incorporeal property' as is the case with the many recognized titles granted by other non-regnant Royal Houses.

### **Viscount.**

English	Viscount, Viscountess
French	Vicomte, Vicomtesse
Italian	Visconte, Viscontessa
Spanish	Vizconde, Vizcondesa
Portuguese	Vizconde, Vizcondeza

*Related Terms:* viscounty or viscounty.

This title is mostly confined to the United Kingdom and France, though it appears rarely in Italy and elsewhere.

This is the leftover title, what the king bestowed on someone who was not important enough to merit being made a count. It's a rather late innovation. It originated in France, as the count's deputy, i.e, the "vice-count".

### **Baron.**

English	Baron, Baroness
German	Baron, Baronin; Freiherr, Freifrau
French	Baron, Baronne
Italian	Barone, Baronessa
Spanish	Baron, Baronesa
Portugese	Baron, Baroneza
Irish	Tiarna, Bantiarna

*Related Terms:* barony, baronial, baronage.

Barons were originally (in Britain) those who held their lands directly from the king. Not all British nobles have baronies and many viscounts, for example, do not. (-- Louis Epstein) The majority of the nobility in Britain are just plain barons. In the UK, life peers are always barons or baronesses (as with Baroness Thatcher).

Once, a baron was an important noble, especially before the Renaissance. It was the barons who brought King John to heel at Runnymede, and "robber-baron" has entered English as the term for one of the lords who collected "tolls" from Rhine river-

traffic. In olden times, when there was little differentiation in degree or rank between neighboring nobles, "baron" could signify any noble, large or small, a meaning with some currency today on the continent, roughly equivalent in meaning to "peer" or "lord" in the UK.

The terms "Baron, Baronin", can be found in use in German lands, but apparently not that commonly. Freiherr and Freifrau are preferred, and there seems to be a perception that "Baron" is bit under a "Freiherr". "Freiherrin" seems to be an obsolete form for a baron's wife. D.A. Willis comments:

*Freifrau is a wife of Freiherr, Freiin is his daughter. I used to think that Freiin was an abbreviation of Freiherrin, but I was quickly corrected by several Freiherren and Freiiinen (plural of Freiin). This is the only case in German that I am aware of where the wife and daughter have different words for their titles.*

The status of barons varies. It can be a very high title or something of little consequence. It is definitely a noble title, however, and needs to be clearly distinguished from "baronet".

### **Baronet.**

*Related Terms:* baronetcy, baronetage.

This may be thought of as a hereditary knighthood. For convenience, it may also be thought of as a noble title, though there are those who would disagree, at least as used in the British system. A baronet is certainly not a peer; in the United Kingdom, baronets are not entitled to a seat in the House of Lords (unless, of course, they additionally hold a peerage). Guy Stair Sainty writes: "In Germany the rank of knight was hereditary, but it was always viewed differently from knighthood earned."

The German "Ritter", when part of a last name, indicates the German equivalent of a baronetcy. A woman holding a baronetcy in her own right is termed a baronetess.

When one picks through lesser German titles, such things as "Waldgraf", "Rheingraf", "Burggraf" and the such pop up. On the whole, these seem obsolete, yet, there are a few families who cling to them; they are also encountered on title-lists of otherwise far more exalted personages. The German system was more flexible when it came to titles; as has been demonstrated, it was also broader in its definition of nobility. Since we have been using the British system to classify titles, these are placed here at the end,

somewhere between-and-after the British sense of  
Baronet-as-a-knight and Baronet-as-petty-noble.