Elisabeth Timm:
“Genealogy of Illegitimacy”

in: Eric Hounshell, Ruth Amstutz (eds.):

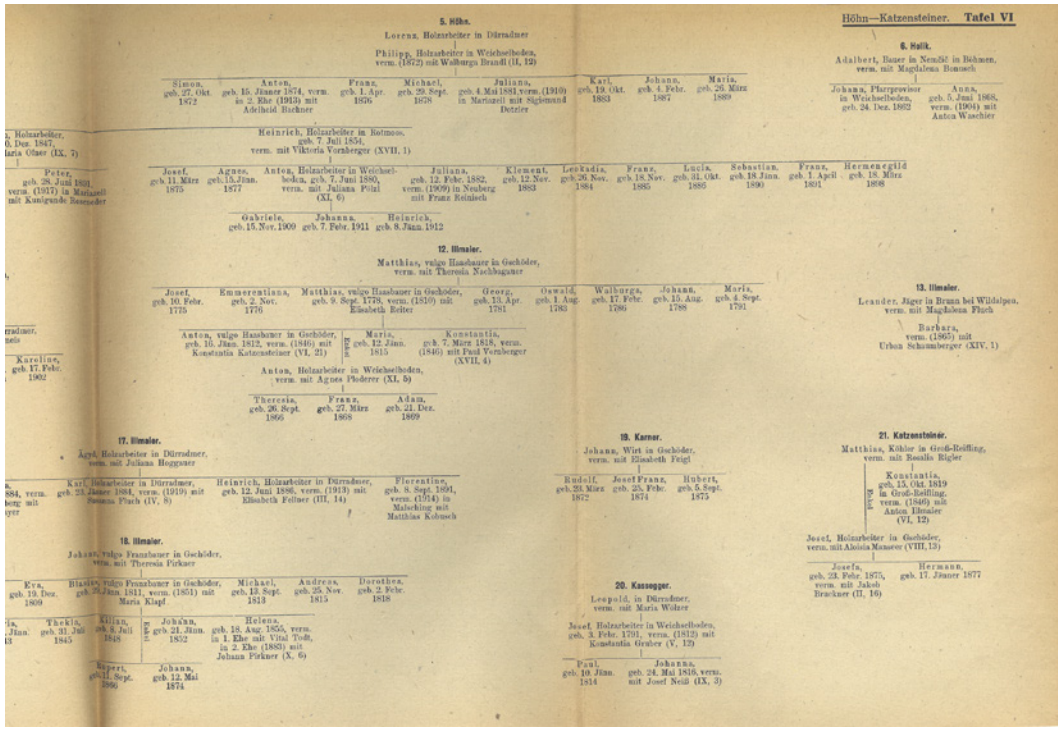
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SHADOW OF THE TREE

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GENEALOGY OF ILLEGITIMACY Peopling a Book

Josef Katzensteiner was a lumberjack in nineteenth-century Gschöder, a hamlet in the parish of Weichselboden in Styria. He can be found on a genealogical tableau in a book entitled *Die Bevölkerung der Pfarre Weichselboden in Steiermark genealogisch dargestellt* (1920).[1] Its author Konrad Brandner, a priest and teacher at the *Gymnasium* for boys in Graz, did a complete survey of the parish's church registers during his summer holidays there in 1919. Like some contemporaries, he had the idea to expand "genealogical research" that in his view for a long time had been confined to ruling or noble families by including "all the people of a municipality or a region or a whole country."[2] Therefore, he assembled the clergy to generate a "Styrian *Volksgenealogie*" for which he estimated "several decades" of work.



Konrad Brandner: *Die Bevölkerung der Pfarre Weichselboden in Steiermark genealogisch dargestellt, Sonderabdruck aus dem Jahresbericht des Fürstbischöflichen Gymnasiums am Seckauer Diözesan-Knabenseminar Carolinum-Augustineum in Graz*, Graz: Self-published by the author (1920), n.p.

While all Weichselboden ancestral trees are integrated by one alphabet, there are dozens of timelines, since every surname-patrilineage has one of its own. The alphabet of surnames taken from the church registers rules out historical time on the tableaus, since the surnames are arranged following the reading line from left to right and top-down, whereas the years have to start back in history over and over again throughout all tableaus.

To cover the expensive printing of large tableaus, Brandner got funding from the diocese to publish his first book, including seventeen genealogical tableaus *(Tafeln),* each printed on a horizontal format sheet that has to be unfolded several times from the vertical octavo format book. The tableaus are counted with Roman numbers, while the families within each tableau have Latin numbers. The oldest evidence of a surname in the registers defines the male ancestor of a "family," and the younger generations that Brandner assigned this man like a patrilineage followed top-down. Thus, the "families" that meet on one of the seventeen fold-out tableaus do so because of the alphabet, not because of reproductive or contractual relatedness between them (if pertinent, such relations are cross-referenced with the Roman-Latin tableau code that is added to an individual's surname).



WEICHSELBODEN-Reg.1

14

Verzeichnis der Stammbäume.

	Tafel		Tafel		Tafel
Ablasser	I, 1	Hartel	V, 19, 20	Neudofska	IX, 5
Ahrer	— 2	Haselwander	— 18		
Aigner	— 3	Hatler	— 21	Oberfeuchtinger	— 6
Asch	— 4	Häußler	— 22	Ofner	— 7
Auer	— 5—10	Heinrich	— 23	Ortner	— 8—10
		Heißl	— 24		
Bauer	II, 1, 2	Heß	— 25	Pachler	— 11
Baumann	— 3	Hochauer	— 26	Parzer	— 12
Berger	— 4—7	Hochfellner	— 27, 28	Pesl	— 13
Bizjak	— 8	Hofer	— 29, 30	Petritz	— 14
Brandl	— 9—15	Hoggauer	— 31, 32	Pichler	— 15-17
Bruckner	— 16	Höhn	VI, 1—5	Pichlmayr	X, 1
Brunader	— 17	Holik	— 6	Pietsch	— 2
Brunegger	— 18	Hollerer	— 7	Pilz	— 3
Brunnstainer	— 19	Holzer	— 8, 9	Pircham	— 4
Butter	— 20	Hönigl	— 10	Pirkner	— 5, 6
		Hoppaus	— 11	Plachel	— 7, 8
Castelrotto	— 21			Pladerer	XI, 1
Chundolf	— 22	Illmaier	— 12-18	Plasizer	— 2
				Plenker	— 3
Danner	— 23	Karner	— 19	Plintenhofer	— 4
Dolin	— 24	Kassegger	— 20	Ploderer	— 5
Duspiva	— 25	Katzensteiner	— 21	Pölzl	— 6
		Kern	VII, 1, 2	Porteder	— 7, 8
Ebner	III, 1	Klaringer	— 3	Prader	XII, 1

Konrad Brandner: *Die Bevölkerung der Pfarre Weichselboden in Steiermark genealogisch dargestellt, Sonderabdruck aus dem Jahresbericht des Fürstbischöflichen Gymnasiums am Seckauer Diözesan-Knabenseminar Carolinum-Augustineum in Graz*, Graz: Self-published by the author (1920), p. 14.

Detail from the index of ancestral trees with Roman and Latin numbers referring to the tableaus and the families appearing in them.

GENEALOGY OF ILLEGITIMACY Hiding Mothers

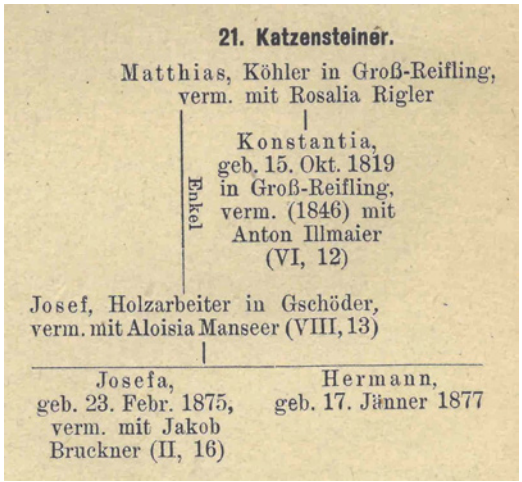
Konrad Brandner was cutting-edge in his choice of Weichselboden for didactical reasons. In order to create a generic type of full parish survey, he sought a small one with church registers as recent as possible. Since this parish had been established in 1775 as part of Mariazell, it met Brandner's criterion of a manageable corpus of sources and cases. He saw this as a

start to prove that in Styria "nearly the whole resident population by their ancestral trees *[Stammbäume]* can be tracked down at least 200–300 years, if not most of them even 400 years." But why, after all this effort to obtain completeness, does Josef Katzensteiner's life appear in this tree diagram without birth and death? Where are his parents? Brandner was a meticulous genealogist, and he was explicit about why and how he created and bridged the gaps concerning illegitimacy.

"Regarding the development of the ancestral trees, a particular factor needs to be emphasized. The church registers are books of official character; that is, they are not public books in the sense that their contents [...] could be opened to the public through a publication. They contain certain records that must remain secret in the interest of the honor and good reputation of individuals and families. A publication of such facts would be a coarse tactlessness and could in some circumstances have unholy consequences for those involved. Thus, carefulness is to be applied without impairing the truthfulness of representation. [...] In the case of extramarital descent [...] the matter can mostly be designed in such a way that this state of affairs is not made visible. Should, however, the citation of such cases be in the interest of a complete ancestry table be desired, it can be aided by entering children of extramarital birth as descendant directly from the grandfather or great-grandfather with the remark 'grandson' or 'great-grandson'."

Konrad Brandner: *Die Bevölkerung der Pfarre Weichselboden in Steiermark genealogisch dargestellt, Sonderabdruck aus dem Jahresbericht des Fürstbischöflichen Gymnasiums am Seckauer Diözesan-Knabenseminar Carolinum-Augustineum in Graz*, Graz: Self-published by the author (1920), p. 8.

"Bezüglich der Ausarbeitung der Stammbäume muß noch auf einen besonderen Umstand aufmerksam gemacht werden. Die Matrikenbücher sind Bücher mit ämtlichem [sic] Charakter; sie sind also nicht öffentliche Bücher in dem Sinne, daß ihr Inhalt [...] durch eine Publikation der Öffentlichkeit übergeben werden könnte. Sie enthalten manche Aufzeichnungen, die im Interesse der Ehre und des guten Rufes einzelner Personen und Familien geheim bleiben müssen. Eine Veröffentlichung solcher Tatsachen wäre eine grobe Taktlosigkeit und könnte unter Umständen von heillosen Folgen für die Beteiligten sein. Es muß daher Vorsicht angewendet werden, ohne daß dabei die Wahrhaftigkeit der Darstellung leiden darf. [...] bei nichtehelicher Abstammung [...] läßt sich [...] die Sache meist so gestalten, daß dieser Tatbestand nicht ersichtlich wird. [...] Ist [...] die Anführung solcher Fälle im Interesse einer lückenlosen Stammtafel doch erwünscht, so kann dadurch geholfen werden, daß Kinder nichtehelicher Geburt als direkt vom Großvater, beziehungsweise Urgroßvater, abstammend eingetragen werden mit der Bemerkung 'Enkel' oder 'Urenkel'."



21. Katzensteiner.

Matthias, Köhler in Groß-Reifling,
verm. mit Rosalia Rigler

Enkel

Konstantia,
geb. 15. Okt. 1819
in Groß-Reifling,
verm. (1846) mit
Anton Illmaier
(VI, 12)

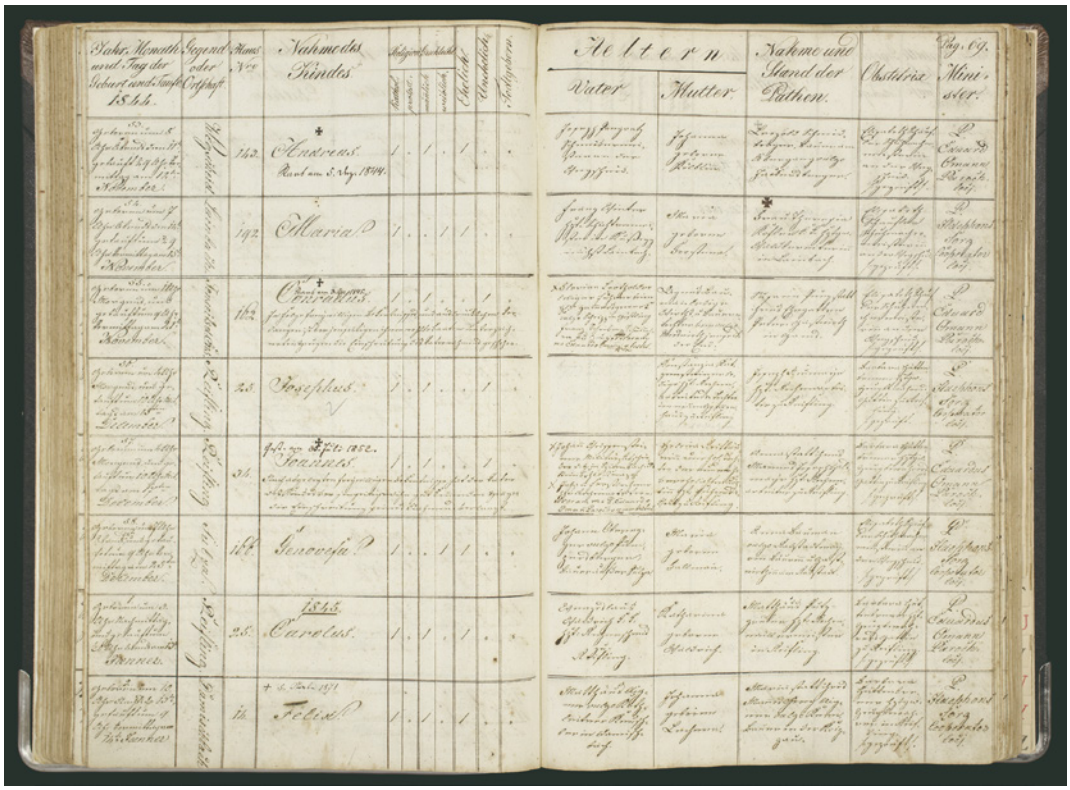
Josef, Holzarbeiter in Gschöder,
verm. mit Aloisia Manseer (VIII, 13)

Josefa,
geb. 23. Febr. 1875,
verm. mit Jakob
Bruckner (II, 16)

Hermann,
geb. 17. Jänner 1877

Detail from Konrad Brandner: *Die Bevölkerung der Pfarre Weichselboden in Steiermark genealogisch dargestellt, Sonderabdruck aus dem Jahresbericht des Fürstbischöflichen Gymnasiums am Seckauer Diözesan-Knabenseminar Carolinum-Augustineum in Graz*, Graz: Self-published by the author (1920), n.p.

Josef Katzensteiner appears without birth or death. He is displayed as a father and a husband with two children, himself not a son but an orphan and grandson.



Benediktinerstift Admont, baptismal register of the parish of Landl (vol. 11, 1834–1856), *Pagina* 69.

Joseph's birth and christening as no. 56 on December 15, 1844 with Konstantia Katzensteiner documented as his mother beneath the field for "father" left empty.

GENEALOGY OF ILLEGITIMACY
Investigating Heredity

While its catholic inventors hoped to enforce the rural population's sense of regional belonging after WWI, Styrian *Volksgenealogie* got its moment in the history of genealogical practices not according to their intentions but by the emergence of Mendelian genetics since 1900 and the following efforts to find manageable samples to prove and to practice it in humans and to combine it with the concepts of race and eugenics. In 1925, a young student of physical anthropology, Eberhard Geyer, who had learned how to combine genealogical and anthropometric methods during his stay with Herman Lundborg at the University of Uppsala in the summer semester 1920, came from the University of Vienna to measure the antihelix *(Anthelix auriculae)* of 401 individuals in the hamlet Gußwerk of the Weichselboden parish during a four-week stay. This sample encompassed all inhabitants older than one year. Geyer chose this locality with reference to Brandner's Weichselboden book that "spared me genealogical investigations," furthermore he pointed to the social homogeneity of the population ("lumberjacks") who lived in "enclosed remote valleys" under "same environmental conditions."[3] Anthropologist Otto Reche in his review praised Geyer's thesis as "a very good work," based on "well-chosen data [...], namely an inbred-population."[4] Thus he transformed the Weichselboden ancestral trees from a visualized accolade of ethnic rootedness *(Bodenständigkeit)* to a stain that substantiates the investigation of heredity.

"My work method (because has grown out of practice) is rather the same as yours. Regarding illegit. children, I put all of them on my lists and would be happy if I could capture all illeg. children because illeg. children in particular offer very valuable material for statistics, heredity, etc."

Pastor Josef Demleitner to Konrad Brandner, 22 December 1922, Diözesanarchiv Graz-Seckau, Nachlass Konrad Brandner.

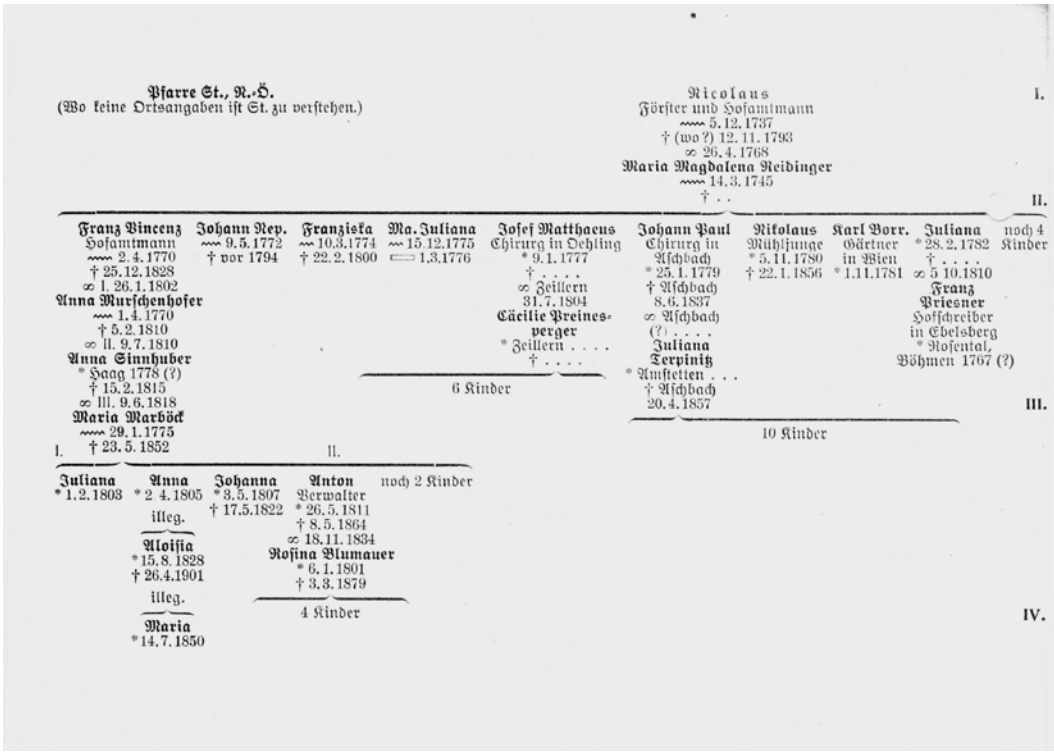
"Meine Arbeitsmethode ist (weil aus der Praxis herausgewachsen) so ziemlich die gleiche wie die Ihrige. Was illegit. Kinder betrifft, so nehme ich alle in meine Listen auf u. wäre froh wenn ich alle illeg. Kinder erfassen könnte, weil gerade illeg. Kinder für Statistik, Vererbung etc. sehr wertvolles Material liefern."

Though also a catholic priest, the proponent of the Bavarian group of *Volksgenealogie,* Josef Demleitner, saw illegitimacy not as *kompromat* but as a resource.

"The total of ancestral trees represents, as mentioned, a vertical cross section of the development of Weichselboden. [...] A major deficit [...] is the inattention to death dates. For this reason these ancestral trees are unusable for biological and population-statistical inquiries. With attention to these dates, they would be an inestimably rich source for these disciplines in particular."

Viktor Lebzelter: "Steirische Volksgenealogie", in: *Wiener Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 28 (1923), p. 90-92, p. 91.

"Die Summe der Stammbäume stellt, wie gesagt, einen Vertikalschnitt der Entwicklung Weichselbodens dar. [...] Ein schwerer Mangel [...] ist die Nichtberücksichtigung der Sterbedaten. Dadurch werden diese Stammbäume für biologische und bevölkerungsstatistische Untersuchungen unbrauchbar. Bei Berücksichtigung dieser Daten wären sie eine unschätzbare Fundgrube gerade für diese Disziplinen."



Artur Maria Scheiber: *Einführung in die Familiengeschichtsforschung: Ein kurzer Leitfaden für Anfänger, zusammengestellt über Anregung des Arbeitsbundes für österreichische Familienkunde*, Graz, Vienna, Linz: Self-published by the Landesstelle Linz des Arbeitsbundes für österreichische Familienkunde (1929), p. 11.

The co-founder of the *Arbeitsbund für österreichische Familienkunde* in 1927 had learned how to draw a *Stammtafel* from church registers by reading Brandner's Weichselboden book. However, in his popular "short guidelines for beginners" he designated illegitimacy explicitly (but anonymized the parish's name) to contribute to racial hygiene *(Rassenhygiene)*. Scheiber recommended using curly brackets to relate children to their parents on a printable format, and he demanded following one timeline top-down and counting the generations with the Roman numbers on the right to address questions of heredity *(Vererbungslehre)*.

Notes

1 See my discussion of other aspects of this case in Elisabeth Timm: "Grounding the Family: Locality and its Discontents in Popular Genealogy", in: *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology* 42/2 (2012), pp. 36–50; Elisabeth Timm: "Reverenz und Referenz: Zwei Weisen der populären Genealogie seit dem 19. Jahrhundert und ein neuer genealogischer Universalismus?", in: Christine Fertig, Margareth Lanzinger (eds.): *Beziehungen Vernetzungen Konflikte: Perspektiven Historischer Verwandtschaftsforschung*, Cologne: Böhlau (2016), pp. 209–231.

2 Konrad Brandner: *Die Bevölkerung der Pfarre Weichselboden in Steiermark genealogisch dargestellt, Sonderabdruck aus dem Jahresbericht des Fürstbischöflichen Gymnasiums am Seckauer Diözesan-Knabenseminar Carolinum-Augustineum in Graz*, Graz: Self-published by the author (1920), p. 1.

3 Eberhard Geyer: *Gestalt und Vererbung der Gegenleiste (Anthelix) des menschlichen Ohres* (Phil. Diss, University of Vienna 1925), p. 5.

4 Eberhard Geyer, Otto Reche: "Beurteilung der Dissertation des cand. phil. Eberhard Geyer", n.d. [before 18 June 1926], Archiv der Universität Wien, Ph RA 9108.

Further Readings

Margit Berner: "From 'Prisoner of War Studies' to Proof of Paternity: Racial Anthropologists and the Measuring of 'Others' in Austria", in: Marius Turda, Paul J. Weindling (eds.): *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, Budapest: Central European University Press (2006).

Brigitte Fuchs: *"Rasse", "Volk", Geschlecht: Anthropologische Diskurse in Österreich 1850–1960*, Frankfurt/Main: Campus (2003).

Katja Geisenhainer: "'Rassenkunde' und 'Rassenhygiene' an der Philosophischen Fakultät in Wien 1923–1938", in: Andre Gingrich, Peter Rohrbacher (eds.): *Völkerkunde zur NS-Zeit aus Wien (1938–1945): Institutionen, Biographien und Praktiken in Netzwerken*, vol. 1 (= Veröffentlichungen zur Sozialanthropologie 27/1), Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (2021).

Hans-Peter Kröner: "Von der Vaterschaftsbestimmung zum Rassegutachten: Der erbbiologische Ähnlichkeitsvergleich als 'österreichisch-deutsches Projekt' 1926–1945", in: *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 22 (1999), pp. 257-264.

Maria Teschler-Nicola: "Der diagnostische Blick: Zur Geschichte der erbbiologischen und rassenkundlichen Gutachtertätigkeit in Österreich vor 1938", in: *Zeitgeschichte* 30 (2003), pp. 137-149.