

# NOBLES AND NATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE

*Free Imperial Knights in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850*

BY

WILLIAM D. GODSEY, JR.

*Historical Commission, Austrian Academy of Sciences*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
**UNIVERSITY PRESS**

# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	I
1 Wealth and noble autonomy: the Free Imperial Knights in Mainz on the eve of revolution	16
Knightly debt in the old regime	22
The knightly order, imperial authority, and the resolution of debt	28
Knightly wealth and income	33
Conclusion	45
2 Nobles becoming Germans: the transformation of a concept	48
The traditional understanding of nobility	50
The old concept weakened	54
The conceptual shift	57
A concept transformed	60
Toward a “national” nobility	67
3 Nobles becoming Germans: the destruction of a “geo-cultural landscape”	72
The “geo-cultural landscape” in the eighteenth century	78
The “geo-cultural landscape” and revolution	92
The Dalberg-Herrnsheims from revolution to Restoration	101
4 Between destruction and survival: knights on the Middle Rhine 1750–1850	106
Breidbach-Riedt: from Mainz to Wiesbaden	108
Kesselstatt: Catholic and “German”	117
Greiffenclau-Dehrn: the attack on pedigree	125
Heddesdorff: the destruction of a knightly family	135

5	The past recaptured: knights in the Hapsburg Empire 1792–1848	141
	Émigrés and official Austrian policy	143
	Factors favoring knightly emigration	148
	The knights at Court and in the army	164
	Stadion-Warthausen	168
	Sickingen-Hohenburg	174
	Dalberg-Heßloch	179
6	From cathedral canons to priests: the Coudenhoves and the “Catholic revival”	187
	Pedigree and Enlightenment in the old regime	190
	The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era	197
	Pedigree and Piety in the Austrian Restoration	203
	Conclusion	211
7	The beginnings of conservative German nationalism: the “naturalization” of Baron Carl vom und zum Stein (1757–1831)	213
	Stein, Metternich, and the old order	216
	The background of Stein’s cultural nationalism	220
	Stein abandons the old concept of nobility	226
	Metternich and the corporate nobility	230
	Stein, Metternich, and the “nation”	240
	Conclusion	245
	Conclusion	249
	<i>Appendix Families of Free Imperial Knights (1797)</i>	255
	<i>Bibliography</i>	266
	<i>Index</i>	295