

1. Courts
2. Sources
3. Periods

1. COURTS

The matrimonial proceedings of all the inhabitants of the archduchy Austria below the Enns who lived in one of the many dominions are even more difficult to research than other proceedings because the archives of the dominions, if in the possession of the Lower Austrian Provincial Archive at all, have, until today, not (yet) been registered systematically. The search for matrimonial proceedings turned out to be like the proverbial search for a needle in a haystack.

2. SOURCES

Provided they still exist, the files of the divorce proceedings would now be stored in boxes labelled as judicial documents from the district courts. Since we could not examine hundreds of cartons all by ourselves, we decided to limit our investigations to the matrimonial proceedings which could be found in spring of 2016 using the find data base of the Lower Austrian Provincial Archive. The “hits” in the data base were limited to two dominions (now municipalities), Seitenstetten and Sitzenberg. Both dominions lie west of Vienna and have belonged to the district court of St. Pölten since the abolishing of the patrimonial courts and the ensuing restructuring of the courts in 1850.

SITZENBERG

The matrimonial proceedings from the secular dominion of Sitzenberg, which were found in the database of the Lower Austrian Provincial Archives, cover the period from 1822 to 1846. The dossiers of the divorce proceedings can now be found in the boxes of the district court of St. Pölten 159. The box numbered 1247 contains the divorce dossiers of five couples. These dossiers are filed chronologically amongst the other documents from this dominion. According to Franz Xaver Schweickhardt, the dominion of Sitzenberg was the local authority for the villages of Sitzenberg (44 houses), Neustift (18 houses), Sichelbach (21 houses) and

Thallern (20 houses) at around 1838, i.e. for a total of 103 houses and 121 families.

SEITENSTETTEN

The matrimonial proceedings listed in the data base of the Lower Austrian Provincial Archives are from the time period between 1798 and 1828. The matrimonial proceedings are to be found in the boxes of the District Court of St. Pölten 151. Box 1182 contains the divorce dossiers of 18 couples which are enclosed in a fascicle with the title page: "Divorces resp. Division of Property, Adoptions and Legitimation of Children) 1806-1828.

According to Franz Xaver Schweickhardt, in 1836 the Seitenstetten monastery was the local authority for a total of 692 houses and 954 families, who lived in the villages of Biberbach (26 houses), St. Michael (185 houses) and Seitenstetten (195 houses) as well as in Jedersdorf (193 scattered houses), in Seitenstetten market (80 houses) and in Sonntagberg (13 houses).

3. PERIODS

The following table gives an overview of the dominions and periods of investigation, number of proceedings examined and number of couples concerned.

	Patrimonial Courts	Periods	Years	Proceedings	Couples
1	Dominion of Sitzenberg	1822-1846	25	10	5
2	Dominion of Seitenstetten	1798-1828	31	24	13
	Total		56	34	18

USED LITERATURE

Joseph Marx von Liechtenstern, Handbuch der neuesten Geographie, Vol. 1 (Vienna 1817), 145.

Franz GRÄFFER u. Johann Jakob CZIKANN (Hrsg.), Oesterreichische National-Encyklopädie, Vol. 4 (Wien 1836), 117 f.

Johann SPRINGER, Statistik des österreichischen Kaiserstaates, Vol. 2 (Wien 1840), 106.

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Next: Ecclesiatical courts (1857-1867)

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