

ORDER OF THE IRON CROWN

The Order of the Iron Crown was founded by Napoleon Bonaparte for his coronation as King of Italy, in Milan in 1805. In the ceremony Napoleon was crowned with the ancient Crown of Lombardy, the so-called Iron Crown. The Order had three classes and was awarded until Napoleon's fall and abdication on 11 April 1814. By the Paris Agreements signed on 30 May 1815, Lombardy and Venice became part of the Hapsburg Monarchy. Wanting to give this event a special ceremonious significance, the Austrian Emperor Francis I re-established the Order on 1 January 1816, making the Order of the Iron Crown an Austrian Imperial Order.

A precious source for the study of the Austrian Order of the Iron Crown is its Statutes. In addition to the Order's insignia and charter, each Knight of the Order got luxuriously fashioned, hard bound Statutes as a reminder of how to behave in the future. The Statutes explain everything that must be known about the Order, its founding and the reasons for founding it, about the classes of the Order and its forms, which are described in detail, about the ranks of various Austrian Orders. We bring here a translation of the Statutes of the Austrian Imperial Order of the Iron Crown, which were written in German and Italian. As the years passed several new amendments were added to the first Statutes from 1816, which were included among the Supplements (*Nachtragen* or *Suplementi*).

The Austrian Imperial Order of the Iron Cross had three classes, like its French predecessor, but the additional designations were omitted (grand cross knights, commander knights and ordinary knights). Furthermore, the Austrian Order had a completely different design. The first class of the Order of the Iron Crown was worn on a sash with a star; the second class was worn on a ribbon around the neck, and the third class on a tri-fold ribbon on the left chest. The ribbon for the Austrian Imperial Order of the Iron Crown was gold, with dark blue stripes at the sides.

In 1860 war decorations were introduced for the Order of the Iron Crown, for merit "in direct contact with the enemy". In 1908 wearing a "small decoration" (*kleine Dekoration*) was prescribed for the Order of the Iron Crown 1st class. From then on knights, instead of the ungainly order on a sash and the star, wore the 3rd class order with a smaller star on a tri-fold ribbon. On 13 December 1916 swords were also introduced, for participants in World War I.

The hallmarks on the order insignia and stars and on the boxes show that the Order of the Iron Crown was made, in the second half of the 19th century until 1918, by firms in Vienna: *Rothe & Neffe*, *Vincent Mayer's Söhne*, *A.E. Köchert*, *Rozet & Fischmeister*, *Wilhelm Kunz* and *Heinrich Ulbruchts Witwe (HUW)*.