

Lineage, War, Family—Michel von Ehenheim (1462/63–1518)

Abstract

Michel von Ehenheim came from a large family of Franconian Imperial knights who had long served the margraves of Brandenburg-Ansbach. His work, not an autobiography in the modern sense but rather a family chronicle, was composed for the honor and pleasure of his kinsmen and their descendants. Ehenheim's life of service to princes and monarchs was probably more typical of the lesser nobles of this time than the incessant feuds and brawls of the better known Götz von Berlichingen. Ehenheim's account of his domestic life differs from Bernard Zink's in that it is a spare register of major events and forms a kind of appendix to the chronicle. Above all, this text displays a nobleman's dedication to the military way of life and attests to Ehenheim's pride in his lineage and Franconian identity.

Source

In the name of the Almighty, Merciful, Eternal, Kind God, the Virgin Mary, and the holy knight St. George, also in the name of the holy bishop Kilian, our head, lord of the land and the duchy of Franconia.^[1]

In 1515 on the eighth day after St. Kilian's Day [15 July], I, Michael von Ehenheim zu Wallmerspach, a knight, began this book. It was written by my own hand, to please and perpetuate the memory of the name and lineage of Ehenheim. The following records such things that I experienced, especially in the land and duchy of Franconia, where most of them [the Ehenheims] had their seats and lie buried; it also records how many epithets they had and partly still have, those who are still living. May God give long life! I record whatever was heard about an Ehenheim and retained in memory into the third generation [...]. Such, down to the present day, has been the name and lineage of Ehenheim, whom many have called the noblest of all nobles in the land of Franconia.

There is no difference among those of this name and lineage with respect to either coats of arms or helmet devices, rather all have the same arms. Therefore, dear kinsmen and friends and all descendants of this lineage, receive in a friendly and kind manner this record of experiences, written by me, Michael von Ehenheim, knight, to the perpetual memory of the name. May Almighty God and His dear mother Mary pray for me and all of my name, as I am willing to do here and, God willing, there for both living and dead, amen!

[Hungary 1491]

In 1490 King Matthias, king of Hungary, died during Holy Week. He died in King Ladislaus' chambers in the castle at Vienna, and his body was taken in secret from Vienna by ship to Stuhlweissenburg [Székesfehérvár] and buried in the church there. And I, Michael von Ehenheim, was at his grave when the Roman King conquered Stuhlweissenburg. [...]

In the same year Duke Sigismund of Austria^[2] transferred his land and subjects to the Roman king, Maximilian. I was there in the Roman king's entourage, and I witnessed the act in the presence of his [Sigismund's] wife, a duchess [Katharina] of Saxony. Margrave Sigismund of Brandenburg and many counts and lords were also there. Emperor Frederick [III] as [senior] archduke ordered that the Roman king, as the most closely related archduke, and his governors should receive the homage of this land and subjects. This happened during Lent in 1491. [...]

Item, in this year [1491] on the day of St. Michael the Archangel [29 September], the Roman king [Maximilian] set out from Vienna for Stuhlweissenburg with a finely outfitted army on horseback and foot and a finely outfitted wagon train. On the road before Vienna we, the Franconian and Swabian troop of [The League with] St. George's Shield, and I, too, was mustered, along with Christoph von Limpurg. And I stayed with the king for nearly one year. We Franconians nominated Sir Ewolt von Lichtenstein as our captain and Wilhelm Shioldingen as our ensign. And the Swabians nominated Sir Wilhelm von Knoringen as captain, but the ensign's name I don't know. The troop of St. George comprised nearly one hundred horses, and, according to custom, we Franconians and Swabians were placed in the van. [...] *[There followed a dispute over who should have the leading place on the march.]* But when the king understood it, he gave the van entirely to us, just as our forefathers had with emperors and kings, as they expended their goods and gave their blood with the troop of St. George. Therefore, you Franconians and Swabians, tread in the footsteps of your ancestors and stick to this company! [...]

[Tournaments]

In 1481, shortly after the water receded following the great flood on the Rhine, a tournament was held at Mainz. Jörg von Ehenheim sent me and his squire, Michel Gabler, to Mainz for the tourney. It was the first tournament in which I took part.

Shortly thereafter there was a tourney at Heidelberg, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. I, Michael von Ehenheim, traveled there with my gracious lord, Margrave Frederick of Brandenburg, in whose service I then was. My brother, Ludwig von Ehenheim, who was at that time in the service of the bishop of Eichstätt came, too, and we both participated. Elector Palatine Philip and Duke George of Bavaria took part in the other tournament. [...]

Item, shortly thereafter a tournament was held at Onolzbach. It was organized by Margrave Albert^[3], elector of Brandenburg, and held in the open field. There was fencing, and on the fence planks, which were placed crosswise, Elector Albert of Brandenburg stood with his ladies and other ladies from the four lands^[4]. [...] This was the fourth tournament in which I, Michael von Ehenheim, took part. [...]

The first tournament was held at Würzburg, when I, Michael von Ehenheim, was young. Although it is called "the first," many had been held earlier. The last had been held at Ingolstadt thirty years before Würzburg, where the Franconians revived it. The old Count William of Henneberg was there at Würzburg with many knights and squires and 200 horses, plus the ladies, and he paid their costs. This tournament was held on the Tuesday or Wednesday after [12–13 January] 1479. From then until now, 1516, 36 years have gone by. Thereafter came the tournament at Mainz. [...]

[Knighthood]

Item, I, Michael von Ehenheim, was dubbed knight after Margrave Sigismund took Neunhofen in the Low Countries during the campaign to Ghent. [...]

Item, I was also dubbed by the authority of Bishop Lawrence of Würzburg, duke of Franconia. Two hundred years ago, he and his predecessors, as dukes of Franconia, were authorized by the Roman emperors and kings to create knights. He delegated this act to his auxiliary bishop, who had to sing Mass. He had to confer armor and sword, also helmet, shield, and lance on each man he dubbed and then dub him knight with his own sword. I, Michael von Ehenheim, was again dubbed knight on St. Dominick's Day [5 August] 1505 in the Dominican convent at Würzburg.

Thereafter my gracious lord, Margrave Frederick of Brandenburg, placed the golden emblem of the Order of the Swan around my neck and took me, Michael von Ehenheim, into his grace and commanded me to wear it my whole life as a knight and as a knightly man, and in the manner of his princely grace and others of the society according to the precepts of a book given to me by the society's secretary. This

happened in the year 1512, in William Schenck von Limpurg's court, in the presence of his princely grace's two sons, the cathedral provost of Würzburg, and his brother, Margrave John of Brandenburg. At that time, I, Michael von Ehenheim resided with my wife and children at Würzburg, where I was then a judge in the territorial court and had been for nearly ten years. May God give long life with joy! [...]

[Family]

In the year after Our Lord's birth 1502, on Sunday before Tiburtius [7 August], during the night, I, Michael von Ehenheim, knight, consummated my marriage with Margaretha von Kollenn. Early in the morning we had gone to church with my lords and good friends, and then we were married in Arnolt von Ehenheim's house. And when the wedding was over, I went to Wallmerspach, where I lived for four years. Thereafter I went to serve at the prince-bishop's court in Würzburg, for which service I received fifty gulden a year, as did each of my companions—seven noblemen altogether—as is traditional. The following are our children.

In 1503 our daughter Anna was born on Saturday after New Year's Day [7 January], about eight o'clock in the evening, and she was baptized at Wallmerspach. Her godmother, the daughter of old Dietrich, is named Anna.

Further we had together a son, Sebastian, who was baptized at Wallmerspach; he lived only ten hours.

Further we had a daughter, Katherina, who was baptized at Wallmerspach; she lived thirteen days.

In 1506 our daughter, Barbara, was born on Resurrection Day [21 May], early in the morning between one and two o'clock. She was baptized in St. Peter's church at Würzburg. Her godmother, Barbara Spenerin, then kept the inn Zum Rebstock.

In 1507 our son, Iringius, was born on Friday after St. Luke's Day [22 October], between five and six o'clock in the morning at the hour of Jupiter. The planet of the day was Venus. He was baptized in St. Peter's church at Würzburg, and his godfather, who raised him from the font, was Balthasar Wurtzburger, citizen and quartermaster of Würzburg. I named this son Iringius after the farmer at Ehenheim who donated 350 Hufen [of land] to the cathedral chapter and the New Minster.

In 1511 our daughter, Bertha, was born, she was baptized and lived one year.

In 1513 our daughter, also Bertha, was born, she was baptized in the cathedral at Würzburg. She was born on Wednesday after Laetare Sunday [9 March] at about six o'clock in the morning. The planet of the day was the sun; her godmother, who raised her from the font, was Doratheta Merrein, Michel Merrein's wife from Kitzingen.

In 1510 our daughter Anna was confirmed at the Dominicans' in Würzburg, and Zusann of Würzburg, Jorg Moerings' wife, tied the confirmation sash on her.

In 1515 our son, Iringius, and our daughter, Barbara, were confirmed at the Franciscans' in Würzburg. Iringius' sponsor, who tied the confirmation sash on him, was Jorg Seyler, citizen of Würzburg. Barbara's sponsor was the wife of Philip Mercklein of Würzburg. Hans Kellermann and his wife cleansed the confirmation oil from our son and daughter.

In 1511 we received a daughter, Anastasia, who was baptized at St. Peter's and lived one year. Thus together we received and bore two sons and six daughters of our bodies. Of these, one son and three daughters died, while one son and three daughters are still living—God keep them ever! May He also be gracious and merciful to us all. Amen!

In 1464 Linhard von Ehenheim zu Wallmerspach, my own father and the father of my siblings, died, may

Almighty God be gracious and merciful to his soul. He died on the eve St. Martin's, the holy bishop's, Day [10 November].

In 1478, on Saturday after St. Michael's Day [3 October], Wilhelm von Colnn, my wife's own father died, may Almighty God be gracious and merciful to his soul and to all the deceased souls of this family.

Item, in 1516 we had a daughter, Dorothea, who lived thirteen weeks.

NOTES

[1] St. Kilian (d. 688) was the Irish founder of the diocese of Würzburg; he is patron of Franconia—trans.

[2] The childless Count Sigismund of Tyrol surrendered his lands to King Maximilian I—trans.

[3] Elector Albert (r. 1470–86), called “Achilles” and known as “the German fox”—trans.

[4] Bavaria, Swabia, Franconia, Rhineland—trans.

Source of original German text: Michel von Ehenheim, *Familien-Chronik des Ritters Michel von Ehenheim*, edited by Christian Meyer. Würzburg: A. Stuber Verlagsbuchhandlung, pp. 7, 25–27, 32–34, 36–40; reprinted in Horst Wenzel, ed., *Die Autobiographie des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit, vol. 2, Die Selbstdeutung des Stadtbürgertums*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1980, pp. 174–77, 180–82, 184–86. Available online at:

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