

Planta family of the Grisons

Dr John S Plant

September 2014

A few dozen noble families and clans built up the ruling class of the Grisons, which is the largest Canton of Switzerland. Prominent among them were the Salis and the Planta. Perhaps because of the powerful position of individual families and the often violent politics, a grim popular expression was created. In the Grisons, you need three people to bring you from life to death: one Salis (bend up lower left arm), a Planta (bend up lower right arm) and a Travers (adumbrate a crossbeam above).

Andreas Planta is mentioned in 1244 and 1288 as having been appointed Chancellor of the Upper Engadine by the Bishop of Chur. The illustration here is of the Cathedral of Chur, which is the capital of the Grisons. The bishopric was planted in the fourth century as the first foundation of the roman church north in the Alps; its first named bishop is recorded in 451AD.



Inside Chur Cathedral, is shown the Planta heraldry (illustrated here). From 1551 to 1565, Thomas Planta b 1520 was Bishop of Chur.

In Chur, around the sixteenth century, the German language began to replace Romansch (a mixture of Celtic and Latin). The illustration shown here includes the arms of various individuals who are designated "v. Planta" no doubt as an abbreviation of "von Planta".



The principal component of the Planta arms is a severed bear's leg showing the sole of its foot. This may be just a rebus (play on words) since planta means either plant shoot or sole of foot in Latin. We may note however that the foot's sole can be associated loosely with foundation with, for example, the meanings of the word plant including the "base of a statue" in French and "to found" or "to establish" in medieval English.

The variant name forms "von Planta" and "de la Planta" might hence mean "from the foundation place" though the Edict of Milan was not until 313AD, when the Roman Emperor Constantine promoted tolerance to Christianity throughout the Empire. Julius Planta is recorded as a friend and advisor of the Emperor Claudius much earlier in 46AD when the Emperor granted citizenship to the people living near Trento in the Italian Alps. Though the name Planta might perhaps derive from a "foundation place" it seems too early to be associated with the foundation of a bishopric at Chur.

The museum at Chur includes a section devoted to Power and Politics, with several paintings of prominent people who, in this German speaking region, are styled "von Planta".

(1) Conrad von Planta, erster Bundner Landehauptmann in Veltin, 1512.



(2) Pompejus von Planta, führender Politiker, 1569-1621.



Pompejus Planta (bap 1570; d 25 February 1621 in Rietberg) was the leader of the Spanish-Austrian party in the Bündner confusions. He came from the reformed Zernezer branch of the Bündner Ministerialengeschlechts. He studied in Basel and converted after the study to the catholicism. As a member of the family Planta he soon held important offices. In 1614 he became Vogt of the Bishop von Chur in Fürstenu and hereditary marshal.

(3) Joseph Planta, Principal Librarian of British Museum, 1744-1827.



(4) Gaudenz von Planta, ..der Bar, fuhrender Politiker, 1757-1834.



There are also displays pertaining to the foundation of the Museum, involving the von Planta name.

spacious attic.

The family von Buol was one of the leading dynasties of the Three Leagues. Paul von Buol belonged to the Churwalden branch. He was married to Narcissa von Planta-Wildenberg. About 1690 he converted to Catholicism. Buol was considered a leading mind of the Austro-Spanish party. He was buried in the cathedral in 1697.

1869 the eminent politician Peter Conradin von Planta-Zuoz made an appeal for a science and art museum for Grisons. He had noticed how objects of cultural value were disappearing from Grisons. 1872 the Raetian Museum opened its doors on the ground floor of the house Buol. 1876 the canton acquired the house. Main focus of the Grisons historical museum remains history, folklore and archaeology.

This mentions Peter Conradin von Planta-Zuoz (Zuoz was the locality of Andreas Planta, who was appointed Chancellor of the Upper Engadine in 1244). His portrait hangs alongside.



Chur Museum is alongside a church, down some steps from Chur Cathedral. Standerat Peter Conradin von Planta-Zuoz (1815-1902), Begründer des Rätischen Museums, eröffnet 1872.