

A Royal Bambino Is Born: The First Italian Heir In Four Decades

Contributed by Dr. Janice Seto
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While Prince William has been reminding us of his natural empathy with children in his Newsround interview, over in Italy a far less high-profile prince has been celebrating the birth of a new heir. Here Dr. Janice Seto takes an in-depth look at a royal dynasty with just as much of a chequered history as the Windsors.....

On March 4 2009 in Paris, the newly-wed HRH the Duchess of Puglia, Princess Olga di Savoia, nee Princess Olga of Greece gave birth to her first child, a young Prince.

The happy father is Prince Aimone di Savoia, HRH the Duke of Puglia, heir to his father, the Italian royal and 5th Duke of Aosta. Italian monarchists likely broke out the Barbaresco at the news of the first new heir in almost four decades.

The grandparents on both sides must have been ecstatic: maternal grandparents Prince Michael of Greece and his wife - known also in the art world as Marina Karella - and paternal grandparents, the artist HRH Princess Claude d'Orleans, and Prince Amadeo di Savoia, HRH the 5th Duke of Aosta.

{jumi
[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The family tree gets a bit complicated as the new father's parents, who had married at barely the age of 20, had each remarried – with a step grandfather, Enrico Gandolfi and step grandmother, the current Duchess of Aosta, a Sicilian noblewoman, formerly Silvia di Paterno di Spedalotto.

In honour of this happy occasion, The Royalist.com has commissioned a brief overview of the three Italian royal families.

As you'll discover, their backgrounds truly represent a European Union.

Their similarities are remarkable and their differences... combustible!

- The Savoy family: direct descendants of the last king of Italy, Umberto II and his queen, Marie Josee of Belgium (The Savoy or di Savoia) in the form of his son, former Crown Prince Victor Emmanuel, Prince of Naples, and his grandson, Emmanuel Filiberto, Prince of Venice and

Piedmont, raised in exile as Umberto II and his male descendants had been forbidden entry into Italy by law until its repeal in 2002.

- Their cousins, the Tuscany-based Savoy-Aosta family, who trace their lineage from their common ancestor, Victor Emmanuel II di Savoia, Duke of Aosta, King of Sardinia and of Piedmont, royal founder of reunited Italy. Whereas the Savoy-Aosta descend from his second son, King Umberto I, the Savoy-Aosta descend from his second son, Amadeo, King of Spain and Duke of Aosta (The Savoy-Aosta or di Savoia-Aosta)

- The Borbon dos Sicilias family, direct descendants of the reigning family of the region of Naples and Sicily displaced from their throne in 1861 by Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel II's Risorgimento for a united Italy.

Like the claimants to the throne of France, the three Italian pretender/rivals lines are all related, have a Spanish connection, and poach titles from other lines. The main difference from the French rivals is the Italians are in short supply when it comes to heirs.

The cause of the dearth of heirs is Salic Law...

Salic Law:

Salic Law means the succession is a boys-only club. As mentioned in a previous article of mine in The Royalist, the French Orléans family came close to extinction when successive generations produced few males who had no or few legitimate offspring.

The vivacious 22-year-old young Duchesse de Berry had been left the mother of a little princess and pregnant widow when her 42-year-old husband, the second heir to Charles X was assassinated in 1820.

During her pregnancy, she occasionally was harassed by anarchists hoping to provoke a miscarriage. Ultimately, the duchess - born Princess Caroline Ferdnande de Borbon Dos Sicilias - safely delivered a healthy son called Henri Dieudonné ('God given'), who died childless at the age of 62 as Duc de Bordeaux and Comte de Chambord.

He left the bulk of his fortune,

including the monumental Chateau de Chambord, to his elder sister and her family, the Dukes of Parma. (An interesting sidenote: Princess Caroline Fernande and her family had spent time at Villa Spedalotto, ancestral home of the Silvia, Duchess of Aosta, during a period of exile.)

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The late Comte de Paris was left for all intents and purposes the sole Orleans heir.

His bride, the magnificent Princess

Isabelle d'Orléans-Braganca, presented him with eleven children, including princes Henri, Francois, Jacques, Michel, and Thibault, four of whom sired sons. Except for Prince François who fought in the Algerian war and died 'pour la France'. (You can say that Madame had re-stocked the heir supply.)

Germanic royal families also operate under

Salic Law. After Maria Theresa, the Habsburgs reverted to it and most families that have lost their thrones have retained male only. It is commonly felt that changing succession rules would lead to disputes such as seen within the Romanovs and the Romanian families.

On the other hand, reigning families are directly subject to the sentiments of their people and thus are more inclined towards females on the throne. Liechtenstein and Luxembourg may be adapting their constitutions.

Even so, Japan dropped its parliamentary bill which would have permitted Crown Prince Naruhito to be followed by his only child, Princess Aiko, in the face of traditionalist opposition and his younger brother's wife, Princess Kiko, giving birth to a son, Prince Hisahito.

None of the three Italian rivals have a Princess Isabelle d'Orleans. They are all only sons of their respective parents, and their fathers were only sons as well.

- The

Savoys: Umberto II, had only one son, his heir Prince Victor Emmanuel who has only one son by his wife Marina Doria, the dancing Prince Emmanuel Filiberto. This direct line has been precarious as Umberto II himself was the only son of Victor Emmanuel III and his Queen, formerly Princess Elena of Montenegro. Victor Emmanuel III was in turn the only son of Umberto I and his first cousin, Margherita Teresa di Savoia.

Umberto I had

five legitimate brothers from his father, Victor Emmanuel II, king of Sardinia-Piedmont, later celebrated as founder/king of reunited Italy. But only his second brother, Amadeo, has a lineage that continues to this day.

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Savoy-Aostas: Although Amadeo, first Duke of Aosta, fathered three sons from his first wife and one from his second

wife (more about her later), only the eldest, Emanuele Filiberto, the 2nd duke, married and had legitimate issue, two sons. The elder, Prince Amadeo, as 3rd duke, sired only two daughters and the younger, Prince Aimone, as 4th duke and one-time King of Croatia, had only one son, Amadeo, the present day 5th duke, a wine connoisseur. It is his only legitimate son, Prince Aimone, Duke of Puglia, who is the happy new father of the infant Prince Umberto.

- The Borbon
dos Sicilias family is currently split into two competing branches headed by Carlo and Carlos (no, I am not kidding).
The junior line is represented by Carlos, Duke of Calabria, who is Spanish, married to Anne d'Orleans, one of the daughters of the aforementioned late Comte de Paris and Isabelle d'Orleans Braganca. Carlos's only son, Pedro, Duke of Noto, fathered four sons with Sofia Landaluze, with the eldest born eight years before their marriage.
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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The Italian claimant, Carlo, is the only son of the late Duke of Castro and his French wife, aristocrat Chantal de Chevron-Villette.

Formerly known as the Duke of Calabria, Carlo, Duke of Castro, has only two daughters with his beautiful wife, the wealthy former Camilla Crociani (I know, another Charles and Camilla....).

Most royal families, except the Spanish, recognize the Italian Carlo as the junior line had renounced their claims in 1900 in order for the Prince Carlo at that time to marry Infanta Maria Mercedes of Spain.

She was the heiress as Princess of Asturias to her younger unmarried brother, Alfonso XIII - their future children needed to be eligible for the Spanish succession. You really cannot take that kind of statement back.

Perhaps the Spanish royals backed Carlos - created an Infante of Spain and right behind Infanta Cristina's children in the succession - as a show of support and because the king is himself descended from that Prince Carlo, his maternal grandfather.

headship of the Spanish house of Borbon, Luis Alfonso, however seems to have chosen to recognize the Italian Carlo, by attending Princess Maria Carolina's baptism. What is not in dispute is that Carlo and Camilla are based in Rome and Monaco, their children were born in Rome, elder daughter Maria Carolina was baptized in Naples, and have more of a presence in Italy.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The Italian Borbon dos Sicilas tend not to have any animosity towards the Savoys these days, having had over 100 years to get over losing their throne to Victor Emmanuel II.

For the christening of Princess Maria Carolina at Caserta in 2003, Carlo and Camilla hosted a soiree that included both Savoy and Savoy-Aosta family members.

The French Fact:

It is interesting to note the French fact coursing through the histories of all three families.

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Savoys of Sardinia claim descent from French royals and also via Queen Marie Josee the great granddaughter of the founding king of Belgium, Queen Victoria's beloved uncle Leopold and his second wife, Princess Louise Marie d'Orleans. The queen was a daughter of Louis Philippe, King of the French and his wife, Marie Amalie of Borbon Dos Sicilas. Non-royal French blood has been added by the marriage of Emmanuel Filiberto, Prince of Venice in September 2003 to actress Clothilde Courau in Rome with Prince Albert II of Monaco as best man. (For a while, Emmanuel Filiberto had dated the niece of Ursula Andress and designer Alejandra di Andia).

- The

Savoy-Aostas have recent Orleans ties themselves with Princess Helene, wife of Emanuele Filiberto, 2nd Duke of Aosta, Princess Anne, wife of the 3rd Duke, and Princess Claude, first wife of the 5th Duke of Aosta, mother of Prince Aimone and his two sisters, Princess Bianca and Princess Mafalda. (Many British royal watchers know Helene as the Catholic princess that Prince "Eddy", Duke of Clarence had to renounce and it was her name on his dying lips, not that of his fiancée, Princess Mary of Teck, later consort of his younger brother George V.)

- The Italian

Carlo's sister, Princess Beatrice de Borbon Dos Sicilas, married and divorced Prince Charles Napoleon, son of Prince Louis Napoleon and Princess Clementine of Belgium. From this marriage, her only son, Prince Jean-Christophe now heads the Napoleon Imperial family. The Spanish Carlos is married to Princess Anne d'Orleans, sister of Princess Claude.

That Belgian Touch:

Before leaving the Borbon dos Sicilias to focus on the succession to the united Italy throne, we find all three Italian royals are on speaking terms with the Coburg royals.

Not that the most recent pairing between a Savoia-Aosta and a Belgian went well. Prince Aimone's sister, Princess Mafalda, married a nephew of Queen Paola, Alessandro Ruffo di Calabria in big wedding with photos sold exclusively to an Italian celebrity magazine. Not too long afterwards, the couple parted ways.

The 3rd Duke of Aosta, Prince Amedeo, had only two daughters - Princesses Margherita and Maria Cristina - by his wife, Princess Anne d'Orleans. (With no sons his title passed to his younger brother, Prince Aimone, who became the 4th Duke.)

The elder daughter married His Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke Robert of Habsburg of Austria-Este and one of their sons, Archduke Lorenz, married Princess Astrid of the Belgians. In 1995, Lorenz as well as his children by Astrid were created HRH Princes of the Belgians.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The senior Savoy branch saw two marriages.

The first was through the elder daughter of the founding Savoy king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia. Princess Marie Clotilde married Napoleon Joseph, and their son, Prince Victor Napoleon, overcame King Leopold II's obstacle to marry Princess Clementine of the Belgians. (Well, they waited for him to die before marrying in 1910).

King Albert II of the Belgian's aunt, Princess Marie Josee of the Belgians, married in 1930 the Crown Prince of Italy who later reigned for a month as Umberto II of Italy. Marie Josee is still remembered as the May Queen.

Although she was quoted as saying there was never a day of happiness in her marriage, Marie Josee never divorced her husband. They lived separately upon leaving Italy in 1945, she went to Switzerland and he spend much time in Sintra, Portugal with other exiles.

Carlo and Camilla, now TRT the Duke and Duchess of Castro with the passing of his father, maintain ties with extended

royal relations.

They were married in Monaco in the presence of their great friend, the now reigning Prince Albert II. Prince Laurent of Belgium was a godfather to Princess Maria Carolina while second daughter Princess Maria Chiara has a British royal godmother, Princess Michael of Kent.

Both Savoy marriages featured pregnant brides:

Clothilde Courau was three months pregnant when she and Emmanuel Filiberto announced their engagement in July 2003. The fashion designer, Valentino, created a simple wedding gown to conceal her bump in September.

By December, she became of the mother of Princess Vittoria. Two years later, their second child, Princess Luisa, appeared to complete the family.

Because her work is based in Paris, the City of Lights is home to the Princess of Venice and her daughters, while Emmanuel Filiberto spends most of his professional life in Geneva as a hedge fund manager.

Lately, however, the former Italian football-commentator prince has adjusted his schedule to add Rome. The prince has advanced in Ballando con le Stelle, the Italian version of the dance competition, Strictly Come Dancing (UK) or So You Think You Can Dance (North America and more).

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The multi-talented Olga and Aimone clicked at the wedding of Felipe and Letizia in 2004 and announced their engagement in 2005. Delays kept pushing the date back, reputedly due to the Italians wanting a big royal wedding along the lines of the Prince of Venice's 1200-guest ceremony in Rome and the bride's family preferring an intimate setting.

In 2008, with no notice, word got out that the civil wedding had taken place in Moscow, where Prince Aimone works for Pirelli (the tire company associated with Carla Bruni's family).

Around a week later, Olga walked from her family home into a Greek Orthodox church on Patmos in a striking gown with a crown of wheat in her hair! Very ancient symbol of fertility.

Photos showed a radiant bride and groom and delighted family including the bride's elder sister, Alexandra, who had married years earlier in Venice. Later in the month, the Italian royals surreptitiously announced that the young couple were expecting in April. And, it was whispered, a boy at that....

Cousin Marriages (and Closer. Ew):

The senior Savoy branch may have married cousins in the past but the most recent generations have broken that tradition.

In Tehran, the Prince of Naples married commoner Marina Doria, a Swiss water ski champion two years his senior in 1971, much to his father's displeasure, after waiting for 11 years. His grandson has a French actress as his consort.

Prince Aimone and Olga are cousins both from the Greek Royals and French Orleans and more. His paternal grandmother was Princess Irene of Greece, wife of the 4th Duke. Of the five Dukes of Aosta, three have married Orleans princesses. And Princess Olga might as well be an Orleans as her paternal grandmother was Princess Françoise d'Orleans!

Even closer marriage....

The 1st Duke of Aosta, Amadeo, the second son of the first king of a unified Italy, Victor Emmanuel II, who had served for three years as King of Spain from 1870 – 1873, married as his second wife, the daughter of his sister Marie Clothilde. Yes, Amadeo married his niece, Princess Maria Letizia Bonaparte. Ew.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}For more "Ew" - and illustrating how inbreeding increases genetic problems - one need not go much further in reading about the Spanish Habsburgs and how it eventually ended with infertile and feeble-minded offspring.

One visual image is the famous 1656 Velasquez painting, Las Meninas. The principal figure is the very adorable blonde Infanta Margarita, half-sister of Louis XIV's wife, surrounded by her servants in the palace in Madrid and watching a portraiture by Velasquez of her parents, Felipe IV and Queen Mariana.

This was one of many depictions of the Infanta intended for her fiancé, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I, also her mother's brother. Ew.....

And Margarita herself was the product of a niece-uncle marriage as her mother, Mariana of Austria, was the daughter of her husband's sister. Ew!

The Spanish Connection:

Other factoids:

The Aosta family gave Spain a king from 1870 -1873 in the form of Amadeo, the 2nd Duke and his first wife, the Piedmontese heiress, Donna Maria Vittoria dal Pozzo, Princess della Cisterna.

Rumour had it the dashing Prince Juan Carlos and Maria Gabriella di Savoia had been an item but the Spanish claimant, Don Juan, Count of Barcelona, wanted a princess from a reigning house for his son....which he duly got in the form of Princess Sophie of Greece.

His Queen, Sofia, attended Olga and Aimone's wedding as both the bride and the queen had been born princesses of Greece, although her presence may also underline the Spanish royal family choosing to back the Savoia-Aostas. After years of official neutrality that ended in 2004 with 'The Punch Up' at Letizia-Felipe's pre-wedding dinner.

The King said, "Nunca Mas!":

According to witnesses, the Prince of Naples punched out his cousin, the 5th Duke of Aosta, at a pre-wedding banquet. Queen Sofia and Marina, Princess of Naples had to intercede, with either Sofia or her sister-in-law, Queen Anne Marie of Greece,

mopping up a bloodied Amadeo and an Arab royal lending a hand.

The king's reported reaction was to say "Nunca Mas!" ("No more!") Anecdotal evidence suggests that Victor Emmanuel and his alleged temper still keep close company.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The Prince of Naples has had to defend himself from manslaughter charges, procuring prostitutes for casinos, and other skirts with the law.

In 2007, the Prince of Naples, along with the Prince of Venice, petitioned Italy for 260 million Euros in financial damages suffered during their exile until 2002 and the restoration of all confiscated properties. This was not well-received at all, leading to a firm rejection and the threat by the Italian state to seek compensation from the Savoys.

Is Victor Emmanuel now persona non grata in royal courts? He did appear at some Belgian royal functions as a cousin of the king Albert II but lately has kept a low profile. Amadeo has similarly stayed low key after it was revealed that another mistress went to the press about their affair and an unplanned pregnancy resulting in a daughter with Down's syndrome.

Congratulations from Belgium would arrive from both the household of the King's daughter, Princess Astrid and her husband, Prince Lorenz, whose mother, Margherita, had been born the eldest daughter of the 3rd Duke of Aosta and first cousin of the 5th Duke. Lorenz and Aimone are thus second cousins.

Two Princes of Piedmont:

In an audacious move that rivals the present day Comte de Paris naming his nephew Charles-Philippe the Duc d'Anjou - an in-your-face swipe at the Spanish Luis Alfonso, Duc d'Anjou of the senior Bourbon line - in 2006 Amadeo had taken upon himself the title of Duke of Savoy, claiming the headship of the royal house with the backing of monarchists disillusioned with the Princes of Naples and Venice.

He waited until Clotilde Courau was delivered of another daughter, leaving the senior branch without an heir in the next generation under Salic Law.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The birth of his grandson, Prince Umberto, has resulted in another form of retaliation for the punchup of 2004. With his heir having an heir, the Duke of Savoy granted his grandson the title of Prince of Piedmont. This is one of the subsidiary titles of the Prince of Naples's son, Emanuel Filiberto, as Prince of Venice and Prince of Piedmont.

It would be like Prince Ernest August of Hanover bestowing upon his younger son the title of Duke of York! It unsubtly rubbed it in the face of Victor Emmanuel that the future of the house of Savoy lies with the Aosta branch.

For now.....

Dr Janice Seto is currently completing her book, From Commoner to Court: The Enneagram Styles of Europe's New Princesses, which will be available for purchase online via Amazon. All excerpts will appear on TheRoyalist.Com