

**“Count von Cluge”**

**aka Charles FRENCH**

How did Charles FRENCH come to be described by his descendants as “Count von Cluge” ?

It seems to be the result of a letter written by his grandson (Charles John FRENCH) to Bismarck.

Back story:

**1785:** Charles FRENCH (C.F.) is shown in the E.I.C. Enlistment Rolls at a muster at Gravesend on 15 June. He is describes as a Pte., of Pembroke, age 24, height 5’ 6”

**1786-6:** He sailed on the “Earl Talbot” via Madeira, & Cape, arriving at Madras in India on 6 Apr.

**1789:** He married as a “widower” to Elizabeth Jackson, widow of Major Wm. Jackson of 8 Battn. N.I.

**1792:** Eldest son Charles Augustus is baptised at Trichinopoly, now known as Tiruchirappalli.

C.F. is “German, Sgt, in Capt. Turners Coy, 2 Bn. Coast Artillery,” Coromandel Coast.

**1792-1812:** 5 sons and 3 daughters are baptised at various locations in Madras Presidency.

**1799:** Coast Artillery are at Seringapatam Battle of 4th Mysore War

**1803:** C.F. is recorded in Madras list of Invalids & pensioners

**1812:** youngest son Henry Arthur is baptised at Trichinopoly.

**1819:** C.F. died and buried at Fort St.George, Madras

So although his enlistment in the EIC records his origin as Pembroke Wales, he is recorded as German in 1792.

In 1839 C.F’s son Henry Arthur FRENCH baptised his eldest son Arthur Cluge

In 1864 C.F’s grandson Charles John FRENCH baptised his youngest son Vincent Cluge

In 1875 & 1912 further descendants were baptised with middle name “Cluge”.

Henry Arthur was seven years old when his father C.F. died, but his mother Elizabeth presumably raised H.A. At age 24 H.A. was the Head Writer in the Principal Collectors Cutchery at Salem Madras, when he married Mary HANKINS. The baptism of son Arthur Cluge in 1839 indicates that the name CLUGE was relevant to the family.

C.F’s eldest son Charles Augustus FRENCH moved to Bengal in 1832 when appointed Government Translator in the Sudder Court. His eldest son Charles John born Madras 1815, married at Agra in 1842. Charles John was involved in the defence of the Lucknow Residency in 1857 “Mutiny”.

In June 1880, Charles John wrote a letter to Prince Bismarck Imperial Chancellor of Germany, in which (inter alia) he stated that his great grandfather “was the companion and relative of Count Schimmelman” and that C.F. had “married daughter of Colonel French whose surname he assumed”. A misunderstanding of the letter led to the incorrect conclusion that C.F. was “Count von Cluge”. However there was a presumed association between Schimmelman and Cluge.

Further research revealed that there was a German surname “KLUGE” and that a Johann Gottlob KLUGE was Stablemaster and Cellarmaster for Count von Schimmelman at Ahrensburg Castle in Holstein.

Searching for KLUGE relatives led to contact with Frank KOHLER in Bornheim Germany, 4XG grandson of Johann KLUGE . This led to discovery of a “Ahrensburg Village Clans Book” showing that Johann’s family, including son **Carl Hans Paul KLUGE** born 22 Aug 1759 was on the Coromandel Coast (i.e. Madras) in 1800.

**This convinced me that Carl KLUGE became Charles FRENCH**

The Count was Heinrich von Schimmelman. who became Prime Minister of Denmark.