

## Abstracts

### **Nobility in the eighteenth century: taste and distinction An exploration of the field**

*Yme Kuiper*

This article is based on a introductory paper presented at the conference session ‘Taste and hegemony’, at the conference entitled ‘Taste and distinction: Elites in the Netherlands in the eighteenth century’, held in Amsterdam in January 2009. It introduces not only the various papers presented at the before mentioned conference session which feature as full-blown articles in this current *Virtus*, it also aims to introduce the present state of research on the nobility in The Netherlands and beyond in the eighteenth century. One of the – undoubtedly revisionist – conclusions is that it is no longer tenable to maintain that the eighteenth century nobility and other contemporary elites related to each other on the basis of straightforward imitation mechanisms. Moreover, the image of a bourgeoisie of the Dutch society that was completed in the eighteenth century must also be relegated to the realm of legend.

### **Equality and distinction as regards funeral rites of the Dutch nobility in the eighteenth century**

*N.H. Bijleveld*

In this article the Dutch noble funeral in the eighteenth century will be looked upon as a total social fact (M. Mauss). The aim here is not to consider merely the religious dimension of burial rites, but rather to focus on the complete trajectory from death till grave: e.g. mourning conditions, funeral processions, hatchments, burial locations and funeral orations. Notwithstanding the fact that – as the expression goes – all are equal in death, the departing of a noble person undeniably expressed inequality. Against the backdrop of ideological and social pressure from the upcoming bourgeoisie, distinction from other classes in society appears to have been a pivotal factor in the development of the noble funeral in the eighteenth century. Apart from religious values, status, nobleness, dynastic transference and family sense are particularly emphasised. We may conclude that the nobility existed by the grace of social distinction, which continued beyond the point of death.

## An instrument of noble distinction: the Bailiwick of Utrecht of the Teutonic Order

*Renger de Bruin*

In the Dutch Republic the nobility held a relatively strong position, especially in the eastern provinces. However, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, patricians and merchants started to emulate the aristocratic lifestyle. In response, the nobility attempted and succeeded to block access of non-nobles to the *Ridderschap*, the administrative body of the Provincial Estates reserved for the nobility. Another bastion of nobility, which they also defended successfully, was the Bailiwick of Utrecht of the Teutonic Order. This remnant of the crusades had been transformed into a secular institution consisting of nobles in the early seventeenth century. A century later the bailiwick was in a state of decay, but in the years 1753-1762 count Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer van Twickel (1692-1766) carried through a, foremost financial, reorganisation. The subsequent surpluses were distributed amongst members, which meant that 'the commanders' benefited considerably, making membership highly attractive. Admittance, however, was restricted to the old nobility; Lutherans and Catholics were explicitly excluded.

## Men in armour: portraits of the nobility in the eighteenth century

*A.J. Mensema*

The government of Overijssel in the Dutch Republic consisted of representatives of the three towns Deventer, Kampen and Zwolle, together with members of the knighthood (*Ridderschap*). This last group considered themselves as the real defenders of the sovereignty of Overijssel. This can be seen by the manner in which members of the *Ridderschap* had their portraits painted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is remarkable that many were immortalised as knights, dressed in armour, in spite of their non-militaristic way of life. None of these men in armour owned such heroic outfits themselves. Hence, it is plausible that only the head of the portrayed person was painted realistically. Moreover, it is most salient that many portraits were inspired by the portraits of the Teutonic Order in the Dutch Republic.

## Princely patronage or cultural policy? Stadtholder William V and Wilhelmine of Prussia and the arts

*Edwin van Meerkerk*

This article explores the role of William V of Orange and his wife Wilhelmine of Prussia in terms of their support of the arts in late eighteenth-century Dutch society. Ruling the Dutch Republic on the eve of the revolutionary era, William and Wilhelmine embody both the traditional and modern approach to the arts. Employing the theoretical concepts and theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Howard Becker, William V of Orange and Wilhelmine of Prussia are portrayed in this article as administrative professionals vis-à-vis the arts comparable to those whom exist today, as well as patrons of the arts, conventional nobles and lovers of the arts.

## Philip Ernst Vegelin van Claerbergen (1613-1693) Secretary and senior court official of the stadholder of Nassau-Dietz

*S. Groenveld*

Bureaucratisation in the households of noble families in the Dutch Republic is a little studied subject; the court of the Orange-Nassau family is, to some extent, an exception to this rule. The long career of Philip Ernst Vegelin van Claerbergen (1613-1693) in the service of the Stadtholders of Friesland offers good opportunity to gain insight into the matter. The question must be asked though, whether the environment of the Frisian stadtholders should be looked upon as a princely court or rather as a noble household. Vegelin descended from a German gentry family, commencing his military career during the Thirty Years War. He arrived in the Dutch Republic in the retinue of the Prince Palatine Charles Louis and, unable to return to his homeland, he looked for a position in the Republic. He was recommended to Stadtholder William Frederick, Count of Nassau-Diez, who was in need of a secretary and councillor. Eventually, he was promoted *major domus* at the Frisian court and first councillor to the Stadtholder. In these functions he accompanied the Count on campaigns of the Dutch army and on other journeys, and looked after Nassau's affairs in various parts of the Republic and in Germany. Vegelin's correspondence is highly informative as regards the meaning of these functions, especially in comparison with what we know of similar posts at the Oranje-court in The Hague.

## Nobilities of Münster and the Dutch border region in an era of religious strife (1550-1650)

*Bastian Gillmer*

At the start of the early modern period, close connections existed between the nobilities of the Münsterland and the neighbouring Dutch regions (Gelderland and Overijssel). Marriages across these boundaries were as common as the holding of offices in the service of particular territorial lords. In the period of confessionalisation, noblemen in the two regions faced the same challenge: both in the Netherlands and in Westphalia, Catholic dynasties tried to enforce political and religious uniformity in order to strengthen their own territorial lordship. After the successful formation of the States-General, the nobility of the prince-bishopric of Münster could count on Dutch support for the defense of his political and religious liberties. Catholic bishops were under permanent threat of a Dutch intervention, therefore lacking in effectiveness. Both in territorial politics and in local power struggles the 'networking' of the noble groups ensured a successful assertion of their interests. A clear division between a Dutch and Westphalian nobility only occurred when confessional oaths were introduced in relation to the holding of territorial offices.

## The social identity of 'lucky bastards' in Holland (1200-1523)

*Kees Kuiken*

How the social identities of late medieval noble bastards in the Dutch county of Holland were construed, is the main focus of this case study. Prior to analysing these identities, some technical and methodological problems regarding the identification of members of this group of more or less privileged bastards are discussed. Informal recognition rather than formal legiti-

mation of bastards appears to have been current within the family network investigated here: the main patriline of the Lords of Wassenaar (fl. 1200-1523) and their kith and kin. The social identity of their bastards is broken down into three fields: (1) social status and stature; (2) military performance; and (3) church, memoria and study. Initially, noble bastards were not considered nobles or gents themselves, although some acquired the status of a knight or squire or even presided over a *forum privilegiatum*. Although some bastards from the kinship group described here became famous (deservedly or not) for their courage in battle, careers in administration, and sometimes the clergy, appear to have been the rule. Bastards, some of them learned clerics, have also played significant roles in the memorial culture of their family network.

## Noble Gaelic identity in medieval and modern Ireland

*Andrew Tierney*

The status and identity of the native nobility in Ireland from the later Middle Ages onwards remains a neglected topic in a country where ideas of class and gentility were complicated by a long colonial past. Views of the Gaelic Irish aristocracy have been much obscured both by a traditional dependency on colonial source material and by the general neglect of Gaelic Ireland within Irish historiography. Class relations within native society are still little understood and have rarely been the subject of enquiry but nevertheless underpinned what hierarchy existed. Of particular interest here is the decline of the Gaelic nobility and the transformation of their identities amidst economic and political upheaval.

## The Nature Scenery Act: nobility and nature conservation in the Netherlands 1928-1973

*Wybren Verstegen*

In the Netherlands private landowners were indispensable in the development of nature conservation, at least until about 1950. The Nature Scenery Act of 1928 substantially eased the taxation pressures on estates which had increased considerably after the Great War. Thanks to this law, many endangered estates were saved. The law obliged owners to keep their estates intact and open to the public if they wanted to reap the full benefits of the law. Some 700 larger and smaller landed estates and privately owned forests became strong pillars of nature conservation in the Netherlands during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

This paper investigates to what extent noble landowners dominated the scene after the law was effectuated in the late nineteen twenties. We know that nobles played their part in the leadership of the conservation movement; we also know that large estates in the country were owned by noble families. But how many protected estates and how many acres of land were owned by nobles in comparison to non-noble families in the inter-war-period? By using a random sample, based on registered inheritances, it can be shown that the share of noble families, though dwindling, remained remarkably large between the thirties and the early seventies of the twentieth century.