

is van het ander, maar dat beide ontwikkelingen parallel plaatsvinden als uitdrukking van veranderende verwantschaps- en standsconcepten. In dat licht is het betrekken van de kwartierstaten bij de duiding van het verschijnsel *Ahnenprobe* nog helemaal niet zo gek, al komt de uitwerking daarvan naar mijn smaak nog niet echt tot zijn recht. Belangrijk is in dat kader de bijdrage van Simon Teuscher die ingaat op de ontwikkeling van verwantschapsconcepten vanaf de middeleeuwen, een onderwerp dat de laatste twintig jaar terecht veel aandacht heeft gekregen.

Voor het begrip van oorzaak en gevolg van de *Ahnenprobe* en de adellijke kwartierstaat is dat conceptuele onderzoek, denk ik, nog belangrijker dan de historische ontwikkelingen. De meest wezenlijke basis van adeldom is vanouds de afstamming. Het is een recursief begrip: men is van adel omdat zijn vader (of moeder) dat is. Dat wil niet zeggen dat die recursiviteit in de sociale werkelijkheid doorgevoerd werd, laat staan in zijn historiciteit werd beschouwd. Zeker in de late middeleeuwen werd de sociale positie van een edelman synchroon bepaald: zijn eigen positie en die van zijn levende of in de persoonlijke herinnering voortlevende bloed- en aanverwanten. Het ontbreken van een historisch besef zoals wij dat kennen maakt het onmogelijk dat men een blik op de eigen kwartierstaat kon werpen zoals wij dat kunnen.

Aan de visualisering van alle voorouders tot een bepaalde graad, in de vorm van een kwartierstaat, en het toetsen van de adeldom van die voorouders opdat de proband toegelaten wordt tot een corporatie of functie, gaat een ontwikkeling vooraf waarin het besef ontstaat dat een edelman en zijn adeldom het product is van *al* zijn voorouders—en bijvoorbeeld niet alleen van die in mannelijke lijn of de rechtsvoorgangers op zijn kasteel. Die ontwikkeling in verwantschapsconcepten onderscheidt de adel in die periode van de niet-adel en is mijns inziens wezenlijk voor het begrip van zowel kwartierstaten als *Ahnenprobe*. Die problematiek verdient het om verder uitgewerkt te worden.

De *Ahnenprobe* gedijt niet alleen slecht in een absolute monarchie, maar ook in een staat die door een sterke burgerlijke macht wordt gedomineerd, zoals de Republiek. In die gebieden blijft zij beperkt tot zelfregulering van adellijke corporaties. De Nederlanden worden dan ook niet bij de bijdragen betrokken, buiten het artikel van Venner over Opper-Gelre. De adel van de Republiek heeft de *Ahnenprobe* blijkbaar slechts mondjesmaat toegepast als middel tot verhoging van de adellijke exclusiviteit. Desalniettemin is deze bundel ook voor onderzoekers van de adelsgeschiedenis in ons land een mooie en belangrijke publicatie, omdat hij de algemene context biedt voor de eigenlijke *Ahnenprobe* en voor de mentaliteitshistorische ontwikkelingen waar die het gevolg van is.

Redmer Alma



DEFINING THE NOBILITY: LAW, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

Jörn Leonhard and Christian Wieland, ed., *What Makes the Nobility Noble? Comparative Perspectives from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011, 396 p., ill.)

The study of the role of the nobility in Modern Europe has undergone something of a renaissance during the last few decades. An increasing body of scholarly work is helping to redefine our understanding of landed elites. Even in the Early Modern period, where the focus has always been more intense than it has been for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, new insights are being achieved. For the later centuries whole vistas are opening up for the first time. Topics of interest include estate management, industrial entrepreneurship, military leadership, dueling, hunting, sports organizations, architectural patronage, salons, childhood, demography, social

mobility, organization of orchestral performances, philanthropy, royal courts, gender roles, the legal system, overseas empires, diplomacy, science, literature, Pietism, socialism, fascism, Evangelicalism, Romanticism, bureaucracy, and noble interaction with nationalism, to enumerate only some of the themes that have attracted attention. The range is so wide because the nobility remained at the center of society into the twentieth century.

Marx's facile dismissal of the nobility in the nineteenth century as the 'dancing masters' of Europe typified the view that landed elites were in steep decline from 1789. Such assumptions about inevitable and uniform decay have been shown to be as unhelpful as the equally inaccurate notion of a perpetually 'rising' bourgeoisie, although one still does not learn about these shifts in historical understanding from current textbooks. Alas, even in respectable journals one regularly finds outdated and misguided information about the character of the nobility.¹ The scholarly world has been liberated from the vision of the nobility engaged in a sustained and losing battle with the challenges of modernity.² Escaping the gravity field of Marx and the equally unfounded assumptions of both liberal optimists and conservative pessimists about Europe after the French Revolution has freed us to engage with the arguments of Norbert Elias, Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, Barrington Moore, Arno Mayer and other influential writers, who, if their theories and interpretations are flawed, at least take the nobility seriously.

The volume edited by Jörn Leonhard and Christian Wieland is a worthy addition to our expanding understanding of a complex and nuanced story embedded in the heart of the history of modern Europe. They have collected a series of papers delivered at a conference on the nobility held at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies in June 2009. The focus of the speakers was on three central themes: law, politics, and aesthetics. Coverage ranged from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries in England, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, France, Bohemia, and Austria.

The central question addressed by the conference theme was 'what makes the nobility noble'? The authors of the papers looked for commonalities among the landed elite across boundaries, for a transnational language of membership. What were the external and internal criteria of definition and was there convergence or divergence over time? The papers undertake a search for a noble *mentalité*. They triangulate the elusive nature of the patriciate within the boundaries of its relations with monarchs, other nobles, and the rest of society by considering what nobles themselves posited as the justification for their privileged status.

The nobility had always been challenged by other elements in society, although demographic and economic change, the advent of the Enlightenment, the rise of the modern state, the ascendance of nationalism, the spread of mass armies and mechanized warfare, the emergence of the capitalist bourgeoisie, and the growth of mass politics often intertwined with socialism, fascism, populism, and communism, exerted enormous pressure on the order both imposing external controls and undermining internal self-confidence. The nobility, however, by no means departed from the scene quickly and were active participants in shaping modernity as we know it.

All such collections of conference papers are uneven in quality and often linkages to the general theme are less than perfect. One notices the absence of Iberia, Scandinavia, Russia, Hungary, and Ireland. Women and children are also missing, as are imperialism and sport. The focus of some chapters is very narrow while the scope of the whole enterprise is, perhaps in this format, too broad. Long-term comparisons, a stated goal of the conference, are not fully achieved. The excellent and extensive bibliography includes most of the important recent work by German scholars but much British, American, French and Italian research is absent. Important European sources such as Christiannsen, Monteiro, and Roszkowski are missing.³ The two most serious problems with the volume are the interchangeable use of the terms 'nobility' and 'aristocracy' and the neglect of economic history. The authors acknowledge the diversity and range of status and income among the nobility but never resolve the serious problems arising from the conflation in the same general discussion of nobles so poor that they were really peasants who happened to possess coats of arms with magnates who owned hundreds of thousands

of acres and were the captains of nations. The prosperous and titled lord comfortable in urban drawing rooms and the corridors of power shared little in common and often had only contempt for the petty noble 'squatting in his den in the country'.⁴ Moreover, no discussion of the role of the nobility in modern times can achieve a fully rounded portrait without examining the elite's responses to economic change.

That said, this volume has much to offer and many of the papers make significant contributions to our understanding of the landed elite in modern Europe. In the section on the law Christian Wieland usefully argues that 'a noble way of life' was not always clear or unambiguous. Marco Bellabarba discusses the decline of dueling and militarism in Italy beginning in the seventeenth century. More references to the broader literature on the topic, however, would have enhanced the comparative value of the piece. Moreover, in Italy the Piedmontese elite remained wedded to an almost Prussian military style of life well into the nineteenth century.⁵ André Krischer's study of trials in the House of Lords in England is founded on a very small number of cases. Monica Wienfort's paper on entails and noble associations raises an interesting discussion of the changing means by which nobles defined themselves. Her study of the Fideikommiss in Prussia would have benefited by drawing comparisons with the practices of controlling the succession of property of other elites. Her discussion of the rise of family associations is particularly interesting. Some nobilities never resorted to them while others such as the German families in the Baltic States found them a way to hold fast together in a rapidly changing environment and the Dutch turned to them when the monarchy associated itself with egalitarian values.⁶

In the section on politics Hilla Zamora explores the continuously negotiated frontier between royal authority and the nobility in a meaty analysis of the perpetual conflicts over status within elites. His insights can perhaps also guide us in understanding the later changing relationships between the nobility and mass politics during the nineteenth century. Robert Frost's fascinating article about the *szlachta* in Poland-Lithuania draws attention to one of Europe's largest and weirdest landed elites. He raises a range of issues relating to self-definition, corporatism, and change over time. Jonathan Dewald's focus on a single, atypical individual, Henry de Rohan, nonetheless has broad implications for our understanding of the process of modernization. Peter Mandler makes a strong case for the 'deliberate adaptation' of the British aristocracy into the twentieth century. The sustained nature of the political supremacy of the old elite was remarkable.⁷ Tatjana Tönsmeier compares local authority and noble involvement in regional governments in Bohemia and England between 1848 and 1918. Unfortunately, she neglects several key works on the subject for England.⁸ This is an area that deserves much greater attention across Europe than it has so far received. Yme Kuiper looks at nobles and politics in the Netherlands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here one finds an example of the use of a term 'notabelenelite' or 'notables' to describe a merged group of haute bourgeoisie and nobles that one also finds employed in France, Spain, and elsewhere. I am not sure that it is a helpful one. Landed elites all over Europe had for many centuries been penetrated and even merged with urban and commercial elements. Such an emulsion was more or less a permanent characteristic of noble life.⁹

The final section on aesthetics or culture includes a piece by Klaus Pietschmann on the relationship between notions of nobility and musical skills. The arena of music and social class is a neglected one, but Pietschmann's analysis would have been enhanced by comparison with other work in the field that has been published such as that of DeNora and Zelechow.¹⁰ Claudius Sittig considers a similar dilettante approach in relationship to poetry, again in the realm of defining the elite against bourgeois culture. Andreas Pecar uses the example of palaces in Vienna to address issues relating to the nobility and the Habsburg dynasty. A quantitative base would have enhanced this paper. Hubertus Kohle looks at noble self-definition through portraiture. Here more of a comparative approach, transnational or over time, would have been helpful. Edoardo Costadura presents a strong comparative analysis of two great aristocratic literary figures, François-René Vicomte de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) and Giuseppe Tomasi Prince di Lampedusa (1896-1957), and their encounters with revolution and modernity. I would have

enjoyed reading Costadura's thoughts on the third remarkable figure in this company, in terms of period and theme if not quite so able a writer, the Hungarian novelist Count Miklós Bánffy (1873-1950).¹¹

For me the best things in this book were the comprehensive introduction by the editors, which addressed if they did not always answer, all the important questions, and the shrewd and sparkling insights of Ronald G. Asch's commentary in the conclusion. All three scholars wrestle with the protean nature of the nobility. One knows a noble when one sees one and members of the elite certainly could recognize each other. David Cannadine has even suggested the existence of mutual recognition and affinity between Western and non-European elites during the age of imperialism.¹² Precise definition of the nobility remains, however, elusive. What, in the end makes nobles noble? How and why did external and internal criteria of definition change over the *longue durée*? And by what means did they sustain their elite status even when swimming against strong tidal currents that seemed antithetical to hereditary privilege. One of the ways was by continually changing rules of behavior that could be learned only by being an intimate member of the nobility; the secret handshakes of recognition were changed like passwords, which makes the historian's task of detection and dissection exceedingly difficult.

Much has been written about the remarkable conspiracy among the German nobility to overthrow Hitler that misfired in July 1944, the last concerted bid by a substantial segment of a hereditary landed elite to seize control of the destiny of their nation (if one does not count the Cabinet Winston Churchill formed in May 1945 to fight the general election after VE Day, which was full of members of the old ruling class). Yet few people seem to recognize the importance of the extended nature of the conspiracy of silence among the hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals involved, many of whom refused to participate but who also felt that ties of honor and dynastic connection made it impossible to reveal to the authorities what was being planned. Surely no such important and dangerous conspiracy was ever kept secret for so long by so many people in modern history. Nor were the conspirators by any means a uniform cadre of Prussian junkers. They composed an extraordinarily diverse group. Even a brief review of the backgrounds of men such as Stauffenberg, Trott, Moltke, and Yorck suggests the binding glue of noble status and what Lampedusa called 'vital memories' transcended gaping chasms of religion, education, regional origins, wealth, and dynastic history.¹³ A study of the remarkable diaries of the Lithuanian Princess Marie Vassiltchikov during her years in Berlin and Vienna between 1939 and 1945 also suggests a freemasonry of aristocratic communion ranging from Rome to Paris and Budapest to old St. Petersburg. She moved effortlessly among Danish counts and Bavarian royalty, the Bismarcks and the Croys, Italian princes and White Russians.¹⁴ This solidarity among the German elite in particular and the European nobility in general in the midst of a cataclysmic world war suggests that the sinews of status were vigorous even near the very end of the story.

The book under review raises more questions than it answers, but it reminds us of the importance of the subject and the vast amount of work that has yet to be done. William Doyle, in his recent spirited attempt to come to terms with the aristocracy, argues that noble privilege was often gained through violence, greed, and ruthless exploitation, and that we must eschew romantic notions of chivalry, which was as much about exclusivity as it was about honor.¹⁵ At the same time, nobles were extraordinarily adept at adapting to changing circumstances and sustaining themselves until quite recently as an important element of modern society.¹⁶ Scholars have a duty to understand why this happened and explain how it shaped the modern world, which most people assume was the product of reason and science not landed estates and hereditary privilege.

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- ¹ For an egregious example of erroneous information on noble attitudes and practices, see: *The Economist*, 17 Dec. 2011, 130.
- ² See E. Wasson, *Aristocracy and the Modern World* (New York, 2006) and M.P. Romaniello and Ch. Lipp, ed., *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT, 2011).
- ³ P.O. Christiannsen, *A Manorial World. Lord, Peasants and Cultural Distinctions on a Danish Estate, 1750-1980* (Oslo, 1996); N. Gonalo Monteiro, *Elites e Poder. Entre o Antigo Regime e o Liberalismo* (Lisbon, 2003); W. Roszkowski, *Landowners in Poland, 1918-1939* (New York, 1991).
- ⁴ A. de Toqueville, *Recollections* (New York, 1959) 183.
- ⁵ A.L. Cardoza, *Aristocrats in Bourgeois Italy. The Piedmontese Nobility, 1861-1930* (Cambridge, 1997) 150-155.
- ⁶ H.W. Whelan, *Adapting to Modernity. Family, Caste and Capitalism among the Baltic German Nobility* (Cologne, 1999) 239-243.
- ⁷ See, for example: E. Wasson, ed., *Sources and Debates in Modern British History: 1714 to the Present* (Oxford, 2012) 234-238.
- ⁸ D. Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London, 1997); J.M. Lee, *Social Leaders and Public Persons* (Oxford, 1963).
- ⁹ For a full discussion of this problem, see: Wasson, *Aristocracy in the Modern World*, 115-117.
- ¹⁰ T. DeNora, 'Musical Patronage and Social Change in Beethoven's Vienna', *American Journal of Sociology*, XCII (1991) 310-346; B. Zelechow, 'The Opera. The Meeting of Popular and Elite Culture in the Nineteenth Century', *History of European Ideas*, XVI (1993) 261-2666.
- ¹¹ Count Miklós Bánffy, *The Writing on the Wall. The Transylvanian Trilogy* (3 vols.; London, 1999-2001; orig. ed. 1934-1940).
- ¹² D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire* (New York, 2001).
- ¹³ Wasson, *Aristocracy and the Modern World*, 179-182, 208-213.
- ¹⁴ Princess Marie Vassiltchikov, *Berlin Diaries, 1940-1945* (New York, 1985).
- ¹⁵ W. Doyle, *Aristocracy. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2010) 102.
- ¹⁶ W.D. Godsey, 'Nobles and Modernity', *German History*, XX (2002) 512-513, citing Heinz Reif; E. Wasson, *The Role of Ruling Class Adaptability in the British Transition from Ancien Regime to Modern State* (Lewiston, NY, 2010) passim.



NOBLE RESILIENCE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Matthew P. Romaniello and Charles Lipp, ed., *Contested Space of Nobility in Early Modern Europe* (Ashgate: Farnham-Burlington, 2011, xi + 298 p., ill.)

Over the last decades scholarly interest in the European nobility has grown significantly and according to Hamish Scott, 'has reached such proportions that there is a considerable risk of exaggerating their historical role and importance'.¹ In general more research leads to a more nuanced—and often more complex—picture of the subject under study, something to which the volume *Contested Space of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Matthew Romaniello and Charles Lipp, accedes. Because this volume contains twelve case studies of the nobility in various European countries, covering a time span roughly from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, this review will not deal with every chapter separately, but will highlight some chapters instead—without giving the impression that the other contributions are less noteworthy. In addition the strengths and weaknesses of this volume as a whole as well as the more general ideas or conclusions presented in this volume will be addressed.

In the general introduction the editors firmly place the volume within the historiographical current which rejects the thesis of the decline of the nobility. (10) Noble decline was presented in the older historiographical tradition as being almost inevitable, as the nobility could not cope with the changes of a modernizing world. This teleological or 'Whiggish' view of history, which proposes that nobles lost power and influence as a result of 'modernizing' actors such as the centralizing state or the rise of the bourgeoisie, has become increasingly criticized by historians from the last decades of the twentieth century onwards.² The contributors of this volume present another picture, namely that of noble resilience and adaptation to a changing world. Change in