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The economic and social transformation of the Finnish landed elite, 1800-2000

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This paper deals with the transformation of the Finnish landed elite from the end of the Swedish Era to the threshold of the new millennium. It also examines the role of the nobility within the landed elite. I define the landed elite as those persons who owned *large farms* and *large estates* and those who owned *manors* of historic importance, even if such manors were not large farms or estates in statistical sense. In Finland – as in Sweden – large farms had at least a hundred hectares of arable land.¹ Large estates are defined by total area: at least thousand hectares. This large-scale farming was not as important in Finland as in many other countries.² Finland was a peasant-farmer society up to the twentieth century.³

The Finnish landed elite is interesting in international comparison, because it usually spoke Swedish – the main tongue of the Swedish Kingdom – whereas the majority of the common people spoke Finnish. It can be compared with Baltic German nobles in Estonian provinces or the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. However, the Finnish landed elite shared the Lutheran religion with peasants, had no feudal privi-

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- 1 A. Snellman, *Suomen aateli. Yhteiskunnan huipulta uusiin rooleihin 1809-1939* (Helsinki, 2014) 100; J. Myrdal and M. Morell, eds, *The Agrarian History of Sweden* (Lund, 2011) 147.
 - 2 1000 hectares as a limit for large estates, see E. Jutikkala, 'Suurmaanomistuksen historiallinen kehitys Suomessa', in: E. Jutikkala and G. Nikander, eds, *Suomen kartanot ja suurtilat, I* (Helsinki, 1939) 47-48; 10.000 hectares as the highest category, see J.H. Vennola, *Maanomistus Suomen maalaiskunnissa* (Helsinki, 1908/1917).
 - 3 In general, see V. Rasila et al., eds, *Suomen maatalouden historia, I-III* (Helsinki, 2003-2004).

leges and did not differ ‘ethnically’ from the common people. It is true that the language difference contributed to the rise of nationalism since the late nineteenth century, but the Finnish nationalist conflict was hardly as profound as in Estonia or Ireland. All three countries, however, shared the position of a periphery: their rulers lived elsewhere and were of different nationality than both the landed elite (except in Ireland) and the common people.⁴

The landed elite did not own most of the land in Finland and it did not include aristocrats of truly European magnitude. There were some impressive landholdings in Finland, but weather conditions, the quality of the soil and the short growing season affected their productivity. They evidently could not support palaces and castle-like manors, and as a consequence those are almost non-existent in Finland. A Finnish manor house remained typically a wooden building throughout the centuries.

126 In rural municipalities, the manorial owners were at the top of the social ladder, but it is uncertain, whether there existed as wide a gap between them and the rest of the community as in those countries which had experienced feudalism or serfdom. Neither was the difference in material culture between the manor and the village or the vicarage as pronounced as, for example, in Britain. Some landed proprietors were in debt and some were well off, but no one was as fabulously rich as many Russian counts, German princes or British dukes. This is confirmed by the modest extent of conspicuous consumption.

Language differences, position in imperial periphery and relative poorness were the factors that made the Finnish landed elite stand out, but in other respects it probably followed general European trends. In the nineteenth century, many members of the elite spoke some French, their children were often educated by tutors and occasionally the parents travelled to continental Europe to restore their health in a spa or to see those cultural monuments that all European educated classes admired. Some did charitable work and often the lord of the manor had established the village school. They made agricultural improvements and helped to spread innovations in the countryside. They modernized their estates, electrified their houses and mechanized their agricultural production – and had to cope with the same economic hardships as their peers elsewhere. The European agricultural depression of the 1880s and 1890s affected Finland, where the solution was usually to change from cereal crops to dairy products. Timber brought much needed extra income. During the economic depression of the 1930s some had to face foreclosure. As we shall see, land reforms were particularly

4 On landed elites in general, see D. Lieven, *The aristocracy in Europe, 1815-1914* (New York, 1992); E. Wasson, *Aristocracy and the modern world* (Basingstoke, 2006); Y. Kuiper et al., eds, *Nobility in Europe in the twentieth century. Reconversion strategies, memory culture and elite formation* (Leuven, 2015). Baltic German nobility, see H. Whelan, *Adapting to modernity. Family, caste and capitalism among the Baltic German nobility* (Köln, 1999). Irish situation, see P. Bull, ‘Irish land and British politics’, in: M. Cragoe and P. Readman, eds, *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950* (Houndmills, 2010); D. Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (London, 1996).

problematic for the Finnish landed elite, whereas death duties, so dreaded in Britain, do not usually figure prominently in Finnish manorial literature, although their role deserves further study.⁵

From Sweden to Russia

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Finnish territory was part of Sweden. In the Swedish core area of the kingdom, around Stockholm, there were many large estates and imposing manors, often owned by noble proprietors. On the other side of the Baltic Sea, in Finland, landed estates were more modest in size and manor houses were usually wooden and rather unpretentious.⁶ As the highest officials and aristocrats were drawn into the capital Stockholm, where the royal court resided, their Finnish estates were often cultivated by estate managers. This phenomenon, described also in the Finnish historiography as 'absenteeism', came to an end when Russia conquered the Finnish territory in 1808-1809.⁷

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Although the Russian court resided in St Petersburg, Finnish officials and aristocrats did not abandon their estates to the same extent as previously. Only seldom did they acquire manors in Russia. Russian culture and language, unlike those in Sweden, were foreign to Finnish landowners. They were also unaccustomed to the Russian system of serf labour (abolished in 1861), as Finnish peasants either owned or leased their farms. Finland had inherited from Sweden the system of four estates (nobility, clergy, burghers and peasants), which strengthened the position of the peasantry, as it had a say in legislation and taxation at the legislative assembly (the four-estate Diet).⁸

The Finnish nobility was formed as an amalgamation of families ennobled by the Russian emperors and those circa two-hundred old noble families of the Swedish Realm that had become subjects of the emperor. In 1815, there were 2885 Finnish nobles (male and female, all age groups), 0,26 percent of the population. During the Russian Era, the emperors conferred ten comital, 38 baronial and 115 untitled noble

5 In general, see Jutikkala, 'Suurmaanomistuksen'; Rasila, *Suomen maatalouden historia*, I-III; J. Ojala et al., eds, *The road to prosperity. An economic history of Finland* (Helsinki, 2006). There is a rich literature on individual Finnish manors. Among the most comprehensive on cultural aspects, see B. Lönnqvist, ed., *Finländskt herrgårdsliv. En etnologisk studie över Karsby gård i Tenala ca 1800-1970* (Helsingfors, 1978); A. Åström, 'Sockenboarne'. *Herrgårdskultur i Savolax 1790-1850* (Helsingfors, 1993); H. Tandefelt, ed., *Sarvlax. Herrgårdshistoria under 600 år* (Helsingfors, 2010).

6 Compare the striking difference between the large and imposing Swedish manors and Finland: Finnish manors at <http://www.muuka.com/finnishpumpkin/manor/manor.html>, and Swedish manors South of Stockholm (Lista över slott och herresäten i Södermanland) at <https://sv.wikipedia.org> (last visited November 2016).

7 E. Jutikkala, *Läntisen Suomen kartanolaitos Ruotsin vallan viimeisenä aikana*, I (Helsinki, 1932) 131-132, 195-215; Idem, 'Suurmaanomistuksen', 41.

8 The lack of Russian landownership is evident, when one studies the Finnish nobility, although not explicitly stated in Snellman, *Suomen aateli*.



Kulla Manor, in the Province of Uusimaa, built in 1863, is a typical Finnish manor house. At the turn of the century, the manorial community comprised some hundred people (circa ten tenant farmers and seventeen crofts). There were 250 hectares of arable land and the total area was 2200 hectares (B. Lönnqvist, 'Kulla gård'. *Unpublished brochure, May 2013/November 2014*)

ranks in Finland. Because nine persons received a noble rank twice, only 154 persons were beneficiaries of these imperial favours. The Russian system, in which higher military and civil ranks and decorations of imperial orders ennobled automatically, was not introduced in Finland. In 1912, Minister State Secretary August Langhoff, the Finnish representative to the emperor, was created baron and his baronial family was registered at the Finnish House of Nobility. That was the last Finnish noble rank and the last noble family to be registered. Altogether 357 noble families were registered at the House of Nobility since it had been established in 1816-1818. In 1940, there were 4116 nobles, which was 0,11 percent of the population.⁹

⁹ Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 66, 68, 253, appendix 6. In English, see also A. Snellman, 'The nobility of Fin-

The provinces of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1831 (based on E. Jutikkala, Suomen historian kartasto (Porvoo, 1949) 34)



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Although the nobility formed the First Estate, the main division in society in the nineteenth century was between *herrar* and *män*, between gentlemen and men, between ‘persons of rank’ and the common people. The divisions between the higher estates (nobility, clergy and burghers), who for the most part were persons of rank, were not as important anymore as they had been particularly in the seventeenth century. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the estate manager was also considered a person of rank. The persons of rank comprised many categories that were

land 1809-1919. From imperial loyalism to nationalist conflict’, *Петербургский исторический журнал*, IV (2014). Available at helsinki.academia.edu/AlexSnellman.

not included in any of the four estates: non-noble gentleman-landowners, iron-works proprietors, industrialists, military officers, lawyers, architects and other professionals were often entirely outside this system. At the end of the nineteenth century, the category of ‘persons of rank’ became known as the ‘educated classes’, and a certain level of education became the most important dividing line in rising class society.¹⁰

During the nineteenth century, it became more and more common for the representatives of the landed elite to adopt the role of a (semi)professional gentleman-farmer, rather than that of an official in the administration of the Grand Duchy of Finland or an officer in the imperial army. At the beginning of the century, it had been typical for a lord of the manor to serve in the army and to acquire an officer’s rank. Manors were, accordingly, inhabited by captains and majors, who proudly used their military ranks, even if they had retired decades earlier.¹¹ The title of ‘agricultural counsellor’ was created in 1860, so that those preeminent gentleman-farmers, who did not receive any military or civil titles – because they devoted their lives to agriculture – could be awarded. It was placed in the eighth class of the table of ranks of the Grand Duchy and corresponded accordingly to the rank of major (since 1884, captain). Also in 1860, the Agricultural Institute of Mustiala, in Southern Finland, was taken over by the Senate of the Grand Duchy. It was another sign of professionalization and higher esteem of agriculture. There were many nobles among agricultural counsellors and the students of the institute.¹²

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The decline of noble landownership

The nobility used to have a monopoly on tax-exempt land: ordinary *frälsejord* (*räls-simaa*) and tax-exempt manors, *säterier* (*säterit*).¹³ This land was typically situated near Stockholm: half of the land in the Province of Stockholm was tax-exempt in the middle of the eighteenth century. The overall percentage of tax-exempt land in the Swedish part of the Realm was 33 percent (measured in tax unit *mantal* (*manttaali*)). In the Finnish part of the Swedish Realm tax-exempt land was not that common: at the end of the Swedish Era there were only 1419 *mantal* tax-exempt land in Finland, whereas in the Province of Stockholm alone there were 2215 *mantal*.¹⁴

10 On the social structure, see K. Wirilander, *Herrasväkeä. Suomen säätyläistö 1721-1870* (Helsinki, 1974) 103; Rasila, *Suomen maatalouden historia*, I-III; Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 54, 76, 132.

11 This is evident when studying the careers of Finnish nobles, see Snellman, *Suomen aateli*.

12 Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 97, 133, 359. The Grand Duchy of Finland had a fourteen-class table of ranks, which was modelled after the famous Russian table of ranks (introduced by Peter the Great), but which included the local titles and ranks that were not used in Russia. For Mustiala, see T. Halonen, *Maaseutuopistoista yliopistoon. Maatalous- ja metsätieteiden tutkimus- ja opetustoiminnan akatemisoitumisprosessi Helsingin Yliopistossa vuoteen 1945* (Helsinki, 2010) 68.

13 Terminology is given in Swedish, which was the original language, and in brackets in Finnish.

14 S. Carlsson, *Ståndssamhälle och ståndspersoner 1700-1865. Studier rörande det svenska ståndssamhällets upplösning* (second edition; Lund, 1973) 119; E. Jutikkala, ‘Ståndssamhällets upplösning i Finland’, in *Turun historiallinen arkisto*, XII (Turku, 1954) 123.



Munkkiniemi Manor in the Province of Uusimaa. When it was built in 1815, the manor was in the countryside near Helsinki. Now the manor is in the middle of a densely populated residential area, which has been part of the City of Helsinki since 1946. The manor has housed the head office of the KONE Corporation since 1967 (*Snellman et al.*, Munkkiniemen kartano)

Since the end of the eighteenth century, even peasant-farmers could buy ordinary tax-exempt land, but *säterier* were a noble monopoly in Finland until 1864 – at least *de jure*. *De facto*, non-nobles had been able to acquire these tax-exempt manors even earlier.¹⁵ A third category of privileged land should be mentioned, although it was not tax-exempt or a noble monopoly. Many important manors had been tax-exempt *säterier*, but their status was altered in the 1680s reduction of tax-exempt land

15 Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 98.

and they were demoted to the status of *berustat säteri*, also known as *säterirusthåll* (*säteriratsutila*), a cavalryman-providing manor (similar to a cavalryman-providing farm, ordinary *rusthåll* (*ratsutila*)). Despite this infringement of their economic privileges, they continued to have a high status and some of the most famous Finnish manors, such as Malmgård and Munkkiniemi, were cavalryman-providing manors.¹⁶

Before Helsinki was made capital in 1812, the City of Turku and its surrounding Province of Turku and Pori was the central area of the Finnish territory. Almost half of the Finnish tax-exempt land was located there (630 *mantal*). The information on noble ownership of tax-exempt land and cavalryman-providing manors in the province in 1800 shows that they owned only 55 percent of this privileged land. From the 729 *mantal* nobles owned 404, clergy 8, other persons of rank 265 and peasant-farmers 52 *mantal*.¹⁷ This shows the relative weakness of the nobility: in the seventeenth century all this land had been a noble monopoly and they had lost almost half of it in this central region. It should be noticed, however, that the land tax unit *mantal* was anything but a precise indicator of land area or even its value. A farm valued to around a *mantal* could have six hectares cultivated land or it could have more than 300 hectares of cultivated land.¹⁸

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The distribution of tax-exempt land in 1880 is given in table 1. It can be compared with noble landownership; from the years 1880, 1890 and 1896 we have some statistics on that subject. There were Russian great landowners in the Province of Viipuri (most of the province had been part of Russia in 1721-1812), whose lands were categorized as tax-exempt, which explains the high figure. Their lands were bought by the Grand Duchy and transferred to peasants, so the province did not remain as aristocratic as the high figure might suggest.¹⁹ Even the percentage of tax-exempt land in the Finnish provinces, which in itself is low when compared to Sweden, gives an impression of the landed elite as being more aristocratic than it was in reality. The number of noble landowners and especially the proportion of their landownership show the real extent of their influence.

The Finnish provinces differed considerably. In 1880, there was just one noble landowner in the Province of Oulu, although the province covered all of Northern Finland, circa 45 percent of the country!²⁰ By 1896 even this last *blueblood* had apparently left. The northern provinces of Kuopio and Vaasa were equally devoid of nobles. There is even a Finnish saying that ‘there are no crayfish or noblemen in Pohjan-

16 Snellman et al., *Munkkiniemen kartano*, 19-23.

17 Jutikkala, ‘Ståndssamhällets upplösning i Finland’, 124.

18 SVT II:5, *Katsaus Suomenmaan taloudelliseen tilaan 1881-1885*, 115. SVT = Suomen virallinen tilasto [Official Statistics of Finland]. Many volumes are available online: <http://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/67150>.

19 See, for example, Rasilla, *Suomen maatalouden historia*, I, 433-444.

20 SVT II:5, *Katsaus Suomenmaan taloudelliseen tilaan 1881-1885*, 1.

TABLE 1 NOBLE LANDOWNERSHIP AND TAX-EXEMPT LAND IN FINLAND

Provinces (name in Swedish)	Tax-exempt land	Noble land-owners	Land owned by nobles	
	1880	1880	1890	1896
1. Uusimaa (Nyland)	17,83%	1,86%	8,39%	13,55%
2. Turku and Pori (Åbo and Björneborg)	12,45%	0,66%	2,88%	2,98%
3. Häme (Tavastehus)	9,45%	0,75%	3,18%	2,04%
4. Viipuri (Viborg)	42,15%	0,12%	1,83%	0,89%
5. Mikkeli (St Michel)	1,92%	0,39%	1,50%	1,77%
6. Kuopio (Kuopio)	4,93%	0,05%	0,14%	0,22%
7. Vaasa (Vasa)	0,26%	0,09%	0,15%	0,16%
8. Oulu (Uleåborg)	0,08%	0,01%	0,02%	0,00%
Entire Finland	11,97%	0,32%	0,96%	1,00%
	N tax-exempt land (<i>mantal</i>) = 2,358.09	N noble = 337	ha nobles = 351,654	ha nobles = 364,437
	N all land (<i>mantal</i>) = 19,707.90	N land-owners = 105,953	ha total = 3,6559,000	ha total = 3,6559,000

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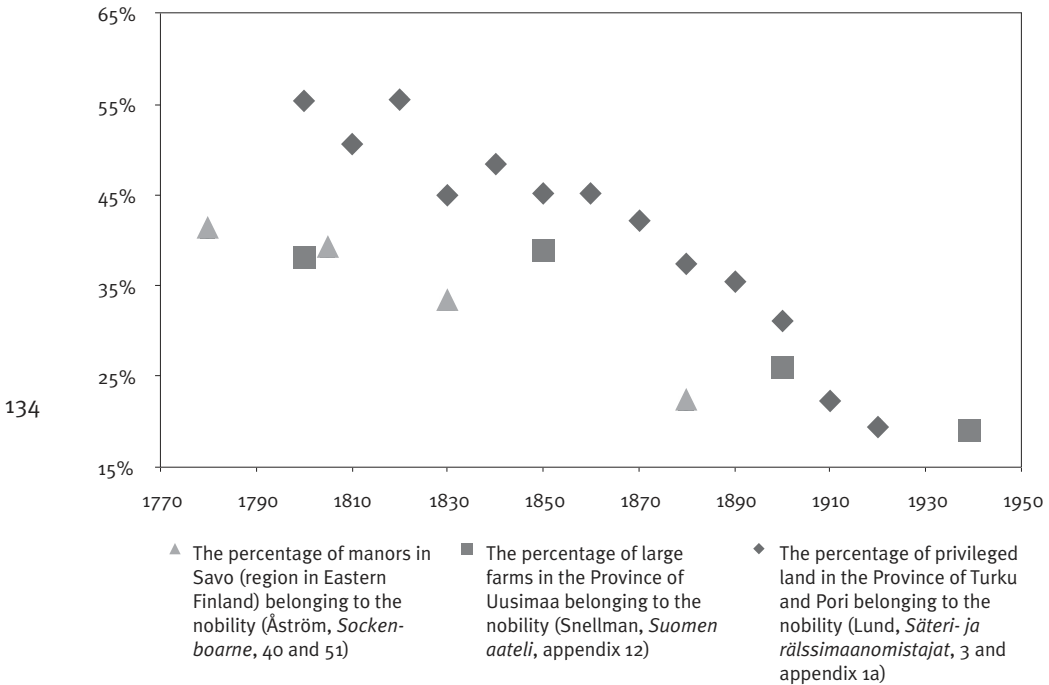
Sources: SVT II:4, *Katsaus Suomenmaan taloudelliseen tilaan 1876-1880*, 51; SVT II:6, *Katsaus Suomen taloudelliseen tilaan 1886-1890*, 122; SVT II:8, *Katsaus Suomen taloudelliseen tilaan 1896-1900*, 83. SVT = *Suomen virallinen tilasto* [Official Statistics of Finland]. Available at: www.doria.fi/handle/10024/90247

maa', a historic-cultural region that covered most of the Province of Vaasa and the southern part of the Province of Oulu. Uneven distribution of nobles is, of course, quite common. Northern Sweden and Northern Russia were similar: nobles were scarce.²¹

The three southern provinces listed first in contemporaneous statistics and in Table 1 formed the realm of the landed elite. The concentration around the capital of the Grand Duchy, Helsinki, in the Province of Uusimaa, is not unexpected. Still, even in this most aristocratic area, the nobility did not own a lot more than a tenth of all the land at the end of the nineteenth century. The nobility was losing its position, although the transformation was not straightforward.

²¹ Myrdal et al., *Agrarian history*, 105; S. Becker, *Nobility and privilege in late Imperial Russia* (Dekalb, 1985) 183.

GRAPH 1 THE HOLDINGS OF THE LANDED ELITE AND THEIR DECLINING NOBLE OWNERSHIP

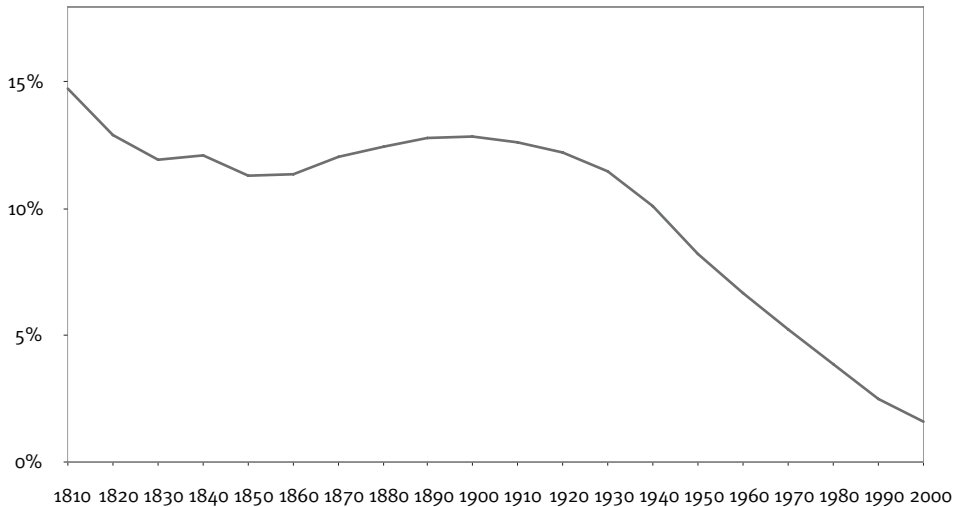


Sources: Snellman, *Suomen aateli*; T. Lund, *Säteri- ja rälssimaanomistajat Turun ja Porin läänissä Venäjän vallan aikana* (Helsinki, 1952); A. Åström, 'Sockenboarne', *Herrgårdskultur i Savolax 1790-1850* (Helsingfors, 1993)

Graphs 1 and 2 give us more information about the noble decline. In Graph 1, we can see how the above mentioned 729 *mantal* of privileged land in the Province of Turku and Pori loses its noble character. At the beginning of the Era of Independence, in 1920, only nineteen percent of this land was in noble hands. Peasant-farmers were at that point the most important owners.²² Similarly, the manors of Savo (a historic-cultural region that covered most of the Provinces of Kuopio and Mikkeli) were losing their noble status. Savo being a somewhat peripheral region, it is not as surprising as the situation in the Province of Uusimaa. Even there, near the capital, the nobles were losing their ownership of large farms, and the structure of the landed elite was changing. However, even the nineteen percent of large farms that the no-

22 Jutikkala, 'Ståndssamhällets upplösning i Finland', 124-127; Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 98, 106, 108.

GRAPH 2 THE DECLINE OF THE PROPORTION OF LANDOWNERS AMONG THE NOBILITY



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Sources: Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 250

bility owned in 1939 meant a significant overrepresentation when compared to their proportion of the population: 0,1 percent.²³

As there were only a little over four thousand Finnish nobles in 1939, their potential to dominate the landed elite – without privileges and in a republican society that emphasized equality and was more affected by social and geographical mobility than before – was jeopardized by their numerical weakness. A large social group can cope with unsuccessful individuals and still hold important positions, but a small social group easily spreads itself too thin.²⁴

Graph 1 shows the situation from the point of view of landholdings. In graph 2, we can see the same phenomenon from the point of view of the nobility, and follow it to the threshold of the new millennium. The declining trend is obvious, but at the turn of the twentieth century, this general decline was temporarily reversed. The alliance between the Russian emperor and the Finnish nobility – an alliance that had been formed already in 1809 when most nobles accepted the conquering Russian ruler – was severed during the russification period, which began in 1899. Serving the Crown as an officer or a civil servant became unpopular. It seems likely, that at the turn of the century nobles decided on careers in liberal professions, in business

²³ Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 106, 108, 253.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 251, 253.

and as gentleman-farmers, instead of the traditional careers in imperial service.²⁵

When all the large farms of the Province of Uusimaa in 1939 are studied, it is evident that a new non-noble landed elite was gaining ground.²⁶ There were 196 large farm owners (excluding institutional owners) in 1900 of which 26 percent were noble. In 1939, there were 152 owners of which nineteen percent were noble. The five largest farms were all owned by non-nobles. Kytäjä (1.000 ha arable/10.800 ha total) was owned by the Director General of the Building Administration Väinö Vähäkallio, Ylikartano (760 ha arable) was owned by the shoe manufacturer Emil Aaltonen, Myrskylä (601 ha arable) was owned by the Greggböhle Egendom Company, which was founded by the commercial counsellor Johannes Askolin. Myllylä (517 ha arable) was owned by the economic counsellor August Stauffer and his wife. Pukaro (509 ha arable) was owned by Nils Borup and his wife. Only the sixth largest farm was a renowned noble manor: Fagervik, with 500 hectares of arable land. It was owned by the Hisinger-Jägerskiöld family. As the last Finnish noble title was conferred by the Russian emperor in 1912 and new ennoblements were prohibited by the constitution of 1919, the new landed elite was destined to remain non-noble.²⁷

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The change in the workforce

An important feature that affected the way of life of the landed elite was the structure of the workforce. Tenant farmers were the oldest group of landed workers. A tenant farmer (*landbonde, lampuoti*) was a peasant-leaseholder, who cultivated an entire farm. Only a small part of the landowner's estate was reserved for the demesne and the tenant farmers cultivated the rest. Since the eighteenth century, it had become more common to reserve more land for the demesne and to lease small plots of land to crofters and cottagers, who would pay their rent mostly in *corvée*, which made the cultivation of the demesne possible. In addition, the landowners employed regular farm-hands.²⁸ The situation was similar in Sweden.²⁹ A crofter (*torppare, torppari*) was a peasant-leaseholder of a minor part of a farm, whereas a cottager (*backstugusittare, mäkitupalainen*) leased only a cottage with too little land to allow independent farming.³⁰

The 'land question' became acute in Finland at the end of the nineteenth century, when the rural population grew rapidly, but the industry, which in Finland grew slowly, could not absorb the masses. As table 1 shows, there were only 106.000 landown-

²⁵ Ibidem, 249-251, 283.

²⁶ Ibidem, appendix 12.

²⁷ Ibidem, 83, 235-241.

²⁸ Jutikkala, *Kartanolaitos*, 216-268; Rasila, *Suomen maatalouden historia*, I; Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 104-105.

²⁹ Myrdal et al., *The agrarian history of Sweden*, 118.

³⁰ Rasila, *Suomen maatalouden historia*, I-III. English terminology based on Myrdal et al., *The agrarian history of Sweden*.

ers in 1880, although the population of the Grand Duchy amounted to two million. In the same year, there were 62.000 crofters and countless landless people, whose situation was usually even worse. Still, the land question became known somewhat misleadingly as the ‘crofter question’. It was championed, among others, by the socialists, who in Finland had a distinctly rural character – a consequence of the late industrialisation. The leaseholders (tenant farmers, crofters and cottagers) demanded better conditions or wished to become freeholders; landless people demanded smallholdings. With these issues firmly on the political agenda, the landed elite had to respond: their land and their workforce were at stake.³¹

On several manors, the solution was to incorporate the leaseholders’ land into the demesne and to cultivate it with farm labourers. A farm labourer (*statare, muonamies*) was paid mostly in kind, but money wages were slowly becoming more important and competition for the workforce raised the wages. The ‘crofter question’ was solved immediately after the Civil War of 1918, when the Leaseholders’ Act allowed tenant farmers, crofters and cottagers to buy their leaseholds at favourable prices, even if the landowner opposed the purchase. This rapidly led to the complete disappearance of the crofter system in Finland. Those members of the landed elite, who had not incorporated leaseholds into the demesne, lost vast areas and all had to cope with the situation where there was an increased demand for labourers (both by the farms and by the slowly strengthening industry) and the cheap workforce of the crofters was no longer available. The disappearance of the crofter system brought economic hardships to many landlords and it has been said that it ended the traditional manorial culture in Finland. The hierarchical manorial community vanished. For example, formerly the manor house and the surrounding tenant farms, crofts and cottages used to have a shared harvest feast, but now this disappeared.³²

In some places, the trauma of the Civil War undoubtedly contributed to the disappearance of the manorial community. In Honkola Manor, in the Province of Häme, five persons of rank, including the lord of the manor Elis Furuholm, were shot by the Reds. After a while, 49 Reds or their alleged sympathizers were shot by the Whites in the same municipality. The people’s hall, which was located on Honkola land, had to be relocated. However, these events were quite rare: only six noble manorial lords were murdered during the Civil War of 1918. Because of the Leaseholders’ Act, Honkola lost 2366 hectares of land, including 72 crofts and 21 cottages. One of the leading Finnish novelists, Väinö Linna, was raised in the sphere of Honkola as a butcher’s son. His great historical trilogy *Under the North Star* (1959-1962) was heav-

31 V. Rasila, *Suomen torpparikysymys vuoteen 1909. Yhteiskuntahistoriallinen tutkimus* (Helsinki, 1961); V. Rasila, *Torpparikysymyksen ratkaisuvaihe. Suomen torpparikysymys vuosina 1909-1918. Yhteiskuntahistoriallinen tutkimus* (Helsinki, 1970).

32 Rasila, *Suomen torpparikysymys*; Rasila, *Torpparikysymyksen ratkaisuvaihe*; Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 243-249.

ily influenced by the events in Honkola. Elis Furuholm's son refused to read the novel, because it sympathized with the crofters' cause. The fictitious lord of the manor was not described positively, but Linna did not, in fact, describe the nobleman Elis Furuholm. He based his caricature on other persons.³³

Although the Leaseholders' Act was a serious blow to the landed elite, it could have been far worse. In Estonia, the Baltic German nobility lost its landed estates almost completely in 1919: 96,6 percent of manor land was expropriated.³⁴ The nobility in Russia lost everything.³⁵ The Finnish land reform was far less radical. Tenant farmers, crofters and cottagers could buy their leaseholds at favourable prices and become independent farmers. The 'crofter liberation' had considerable effects on the landed elite, but only in those manors that still relied on their workforce.³⁶

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It is easy to explain the leniency of the Finnish land reform. Although there were language disputes in Finland, the mostly Swedish-speaking members of the landed elite were usually not perceived as a 'foreign element', whose lands should be confiscated and distributed to Finnish-speaking farmers. Ordinary farmers owned most of the land already. However, it should be added that in Sweden there was no land reform at all: crofts existed there until the tractor driven by a full-time wage labourer would take their place.³⁷

At those Finnish manors that survived the Leaseholders' Act, the mechanisation of agriculture would slowly reduce the needed workforce, which helped to compensate for the rising wages. In 1901, a total number of 127 persons were living on Johannisberg Manor, in the Province of Uusimaa. In 1935, there were still twelve labourers, five milkmaids and some kitchen staff. The manor had 160 hectares of arable land and 656 hectares in total. Today, the owner and his son are the only 'labourers': they cultivate wheat, barley and oil plants.³⁸

The disappearance of large farms and estates

When one studies the transformation of the Finnish landed elite, older agrarian and rural statistics are not very helpful. The 1880s and 1890s provided the first serious national statistics (see table 1), but unfortunately they were not standardized: in every publication, the methods used to measure were somewhat different. Accordingly, there are no diachronic series that show transformations over time. In 1901, the

33 Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 234, 269.

34 S. Zetterberg, *Viron historia* (Helsinki, 2007) 523.

35 M. Rendle, *Defenders of the motherland. The Tsarist elite in revolutionary Russia* (Oxford, 2010); D. Smith, *Former people. The final days of the Russian aristocracy* (New York, 2012).

36 Rasila, *Suomen torpparikysymys*; Rasila, *Torpparikysymyksen ratkaisuvaihe*; Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 243-249.

37 Myrdal et al., *The agrarian history of Sweden*, 152.

38 B. Lönnqvist, *Kartanot ja rusthollit Helsingin seudulla* (Helsinki, 2009) 115; Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 246.



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Malmgård Manor, in the Province of Uusimaa, was probably the grandest Finnish manor house, which was built in the nineteenth century. Today, it still has 1500 hectares and is an important farm (*Sirén, Malmgård; Snellman, Suomen aateli, 244-249, appendix 12*)

Subcommittee of Farmless Population produced an impressive statistical six-volume study on rural municipalities. It is very helpful, but unfortunately its statistics on arable land include natural meadows, which means that the figures are twice as high when compared to statistics that were published both before and after the said study. The standardized statistical series on rural Finland began only in 1910. At that point, however, the statisticians were not interested in the nobility anymore. It had lost its legislative powers in the parliamentary reform of 1906.

Usually the nineteenth-century farm statistics describe *arable land* only and do not include information on the *total area*. That information is available for the first time in 1901. It shows that there were 1714 great landowners (at least 1000 hectares) in Finland. That was 1,44 percent of all 118.617 landowners. The figure excludes the state, which owned 13 million hectares, but it includes municipalities, parishes and companies. Particularly the forest companies (saw mills and paper manufacturers) owned vast areas. The figure is higher than the real number of great landowners, because it is measured by rural municipalities. If a landowner had 1000 hectares in two

municipalities, he or she was counted twice. However, in general, this phenomenon was probably quite rare in Finland.³⁹

If the minimum size for more important landownership in 1901 is set at 500 hectares, instead of 1000 hectares, we can make an interesting comparison. It is famously known that in 1876 less than 5000 great landowners owned almost 75 percent of the British Isles.⁴⁰ In comparison, in 1901, those 6333 Finnish landowners, who had at least 500 hectares, owned twenty percent of Finland. This marked difference in the concentration of landownership partly explains why Finnish manors tend to consist of wooden single-storey houses instead of large houses the size of 'Downton Abbey'. Also, lower productivity per hectare and fewer investments in industry, commerce and urban real estate, weakened the great landowners' ability to build stately country houses in Finland, when compared to Britain.

140 In 1901, there were 22 landowners who had *very* large estates of at least 10.000 hectares.⁴¹ An agricultural company owned Jokioinen Manor, which had more than 10.000 hectares. Other giant estates include Vuojoki Manor in the Province of Turku and Pori, which was owned by the noble family Björkenheim and consisted of some 15.000 hectares and a three-storey brick manor house designed by the leading Finnish architect of the first half of the nineteenth century, Carl Ludvig Engel. The Barons Cedercreutz likewise possessed over 10.000 hectares at their Köyliönkartano Manor in the same province. Although the Province of Uusimaa was the most important region for the landed elite, it was more densely populated and had only one very large estate of over 10.000 hectares: Kytäjä Manor, belonging to the noble family Linder.⁴²

As said, the landed elite consisted of those who owned *large farms* and *large estates* as well as those who owned *manors* of historic importance, even if such manors were not large farms or estates in a statistical sense. The last group is difficult to count, but, as mentioned, the number of great landowners was 1714 in 1901, a figure which unfortunately also includes institutional owners and owners that were counted twice or even more often. On the other hand, we have information on the number of large farm owners from the year 1880. There were altogether 1194, which was 1,13 percent of all the landowners.⁴³ We can also compare that figure to Sweden, where large farms were far more common: there were over 4000 large farms in Swe-

39 H. Gebhard, *Viljellyn maan ala ja sen jakautuminen*. Tilastollinen tutkimus yhteiskunta-taloudellisista oloista Suomen maalaiskunnissa v. 1901. Vol III (Helsinki, 1908); Vennola, *Maanomistus Suomen maalaiskunnissa*.

40 Cannadine, *The Decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, 55; M. Cragoe and P. Readman, eds, *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950* (Houndmills, 2010) 2.

41 Vennola, *Maanomistus Suomen maalaiskunnissa*, 365. Unfortunately, the names of the landowners were not published.

42 Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 104.

43 SVT II:4, *Katsaus Suomenmaan taloudelliseen tilaan 1876-1880*, table 9. Area for year 1880 is given in *tynnyrinala*, which is not precisely 0.5 hectares but calculated here as such. SVT II:4; available at www.doria.fi/handle/10024/90551.



Jokioinen Manor in the Province of Häme. Its stately main building is unusually large for Finnish circumstances. The building, however, was surrounded by a landed estate that was among the greatest in the country. When the state bought it in 1918 it comprised 32.000 hectares, of which 12.400 hectares were arable land (E. Aaltonen, 'Jokioisten kartanon alue-ja omistusvaiheista', in: Jokioinen 1631-1931. Juhlajulkaisu (Forssa, 1931); Snellman, Suomen aateli, 104, 222)

den in 1870.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, we cannot say to what extent the groups of great landowners and large farm owners coincided in Finland. All the great landowners did not have arable land (forest companies) and all the large farm owners did not have a total area of at least 1000 hectares. Perhaps one could still estimate that even when one includes smaller historic manors, the size of the Finnish landed elite hardly comprised more than 1500 private owners (and their immediate families) at the end of the nineteenth century.

Table 2 is based on modern agricultural statistics and allows us to follow the transformation of the landed elite into the twenty-first century. These statistics provide no information on the nobility or large estates or historic manors specifically, but they give relatively reliable and comparable information on large farms. Eino Juttikala has named this important indicator *suurtilavaltaisuus*, which I translate here

⁴⁴ Myrdal et al., *The agrarian history of Sweden*, 145.

TABLE 2 THE LARGE-FARM PERCENTAGE IN FINLAND (ARABLE LAND OF LARGE FARMS/ALL ARABLE LAND)

	1910	1920	1929-1930	1941	1950	1959	1969	1980	1990	2000	2010
Large farms	899	937	832	739	223	237	292	387	500	1.682	3.846
Arable land of large farms (ha)	161.670	162.589	138.111	123.661	35.773	38.934	46.057	55.695	70.088	228.783	568.329
Arable land of large farms on average (ha)	180	174	166	167	160	164	158	144	140	136	148
All arable land (ha)	1.864.400	1.993.000	2.263.200	2.335.200	2.409.600	2.628.900	2.612.500	2.372.000	2.271.000	2.186.800	2.253.300
The large-farm percentage	8,7%	8,2%	6,1%	5,3%	1,5%	1,5%	1,8%	2,3%	3,1%	10,5%	25,2%

Sources: SVT III:9, *Maataloustiedustelu Suomessa vuonna 1910*; SVT III:7, *Maataloustiedustelu Suomessa vuonna 1920*; SVT III:26, *Yleinen maataloustiedustelu vv. 1929-30*; SVT III:38 vol. II, *Yleinen maatalouslaskenta 1941*; SVT III:45, *Yleinen maatalouslaskenta v. 1950*. These are available: <http://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/103815>; SVT III:53, *Yleinen maatalouslaskenta, 1959*; SVT III:66, *Yleinen maatalouslaskenta, 1969*; SVT 4:3:1, *Maatilaräkisteri 1980*; SVT, *Maatalouslaskenta 1990*. The figures for years 2000 and 2010 are available: <http://stat.luke.fi/maatalous> The figures on all arable land are from the table 'Peltoalat 1910-2010' (category: cultivated area and fallow, total) by Information Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Tike, which has since been incorporated into the Natural Resources Institute Finland: <http://stat.luke.fi/maatalous>.

as the 'large-farm percentage'. In Table 2, the former provinces are not mentioned anymore: they were changed many times during the twentieth century and abolished altogether in 2010. However, it is useful to realise that in 1910, of the 899 large farms, 81 percent were in the main region of the landed elite: the three southern Provinces of Uusimaa, Turku and Pori and Häme. In the enormous Province of Oulu there were only eight large farms at that point.⁴⁵

The Leaseholders' Act caused a decline of two to three percentage points in the large farm percentage, but an even more profound change was to come. After the Second World War, only 1,5 percent of all arable land belonged to large farms. This upheaval – the second Finnish land reform – was caused by the Land Acquisition Act of 1945. Finland lost the region of Karelia to the Soviet Union and land was needed for the evacuated Finnish population. It was also promised to soldiers. Land was expropriated and compensation paid, but again the compensation was below market value – as it had been during the implementation of the Leaseholders' Act.⁴⁶

To give an example: Malmgård Manor had lost its leaseholds in the period between 1919 and 1923: fourteen tenant farmers and eight crofters bought their areas and the manor lost 403 hectares. It was still a large farm, but as a result of the Land Acquisition Act it was threatened to lose seventy to eighty percent of its agricultural land, which would have pushed it out of the large-farm category. It could, however, find compensating ways of meeting the requirements of the law (for example by clearing waste land for fields and using monetary compensation) and remains a large farm even today. On the other hand, Ylikartano Manor, which belonged to the shoe manufacturer Emil Aaltonen and was, accordingly, categorised as a part-time hobby, used to have 2400 hectares, but after the Land Acquisition Act there was only 248 hectares left.⁴⁷ The decline in the number of large farms was dramatic. Finland became a land of smallholdings, which after a few decades often proved to be too small to be economically viable.

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Conclusion

At the end of the Swedish Era, the Finnish landed elite formed a part of the elite of the Swedish Realm, which gravitated to Stockholm and its surroundings. Since 1809, Finland formed a separate administrative unit, whose landed elite was far less aristocratic than in Sweden – or in Russia, for that matter. The small group making up the Finnish nobility could never dominate the landed elite alone, although it probably enjoyed a symbolic pre-eminence. The transformation of the workforce from tenant

⁴⁵ SVT III:9, *Maataloustiedustelu Suomessa vuonna 1910: 1. maanviljelys*, 54-60.

⁴⁶ Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 246-249.

⁴⁷ O. Sirén, *Malmgård. Grevliga ätten Creutz' stamgods* (Helsingfors, 1985); Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 244-249, appendix 12.

farmers to crofters and from crofters to farm labourers, changed the costs of labour and the way manorial culture was structured and manorial land was used.⁴⁸

The two land reforms (1918/1919 and 1945) were disastrous for the landed elite: in 1910 there were 899 large farms, forty years later only 223, which means that 75 percent had disappeared. The landed elite shrank, but these reforms probably increased social stability and contributed to the formation of current egalitarian Finnish society. After the Second World War, leftist ideological currents backed up by the victorious Soviet Union made it difficult to openly promote manorial culture and its values. Such 'elitist' themes did not interest historians either: the recent interest of scholars in the history of the elites seems to coincide with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

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After Finland joined the EU in 1995, there has been a rapid change as agricultural holdings are concentrating again and there has been *a rebirth of the large-farm system*. That has been an economic necessity, as smaller Finnish farms could not compete with the agricultural prices of the EU. Before the membership, Finnish agriculture had not been affected by foreign competition and the prices were double as high as in the EU.⁴⁹

It is unlikely, however, that we will see *a rebirth of the landed elite* in a traditional sense with its peculiar manorial culture. Today, the existing manors rely on large-scale agribusiness and manorial tourism – and manorial traditions are valued – but it remains to be seen how the landed elite will transform in the coming years. At least, the purchase of historic manors by some of the wealthiest business leaders seems to prove that land has an enduring appeal.

⁴⁸ Rasila, *Suomen maatalouden historia*, II.

⁴⁹ Snellman, *Suomen aateli*, 244-249; Rasila, *Suomen maatalouden historia*, III, 351.

Alex Snellman

The economic and social transformation of the Finnish landed elite, 1800-2000

This paper deals with the transformation of the Finnish landed elite from the end of the Swedish Era to the threshold of the new millennium. The small group making up the Finnish nobility could not dominate the landed elite by itself, although it probably enjoyed a symbolic pre-eminence. The transformation of the workforce from tenant farmers to crofters and from crofters to farm labourers, changed the costs of labour and the way manorial culture was structured and manorial land was used. The two land reforms (1918/1919 and 1945) were disastrous for the landed elite: in 1910 there were 899 large farms, forty years later only 223, which means that 75 percent, had disappeared. After Finland joined the EU in 1995, there has been a rapid change as agricultural holdings are concentrating again.

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