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Dutch gentleman genealogists and the end of the Old Order (1900-1945)*

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The Dutch seem to have a particular fondness for presenting themselves as egalitarian, modern, tolerant, liberal world citizens, and their capital Amsterdam as a home for the *brash, outrageous and free*. This modernity, however, is of fairly recent date. Nineteenth-century foreign observers, such as the French Goncourt brothers, regarded the Netherlands as a society steeped in conservatism, hardly touched by industrialization and modernization. ‘It’s a stagnant, sleeping country,’ they noted in their famous diary after embarking on a trip to Holland in 1861. ‘When you leave a museum you find the houses or the canals exactly as you just saw them in a painting by Pieter de Hooch.’¹ This conservatism was expressed in the all-pervasive force of the notions of ‘birth’ and ‘belief’ in Dutch society. Social inequalities and religious divides may not have been as sharp in the Netherlands as in other European states, but up to the 1950s, both exercised their influence on almost all aspects of everyday life. ‘People point out the paths you should go and call out “shame!” if you hesitate once,’ lamented Dirk Witte in 1917 in his classic *Mensch durf te leven* (Man, dare to live), a cry for individualism which is still regarded by many as the best Dutch song of the twentieth cen-

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1 E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal. Mémoires de la vie littéraire* (22 vols.; Paris, 1956), IV, 235. The Dutch themselves were recorded by the Goncourts as a pale and cold race, as people with a character as patient as the water and as flat as the canals, to which they added the unsparing, if not malicious, observation: ‘The men and women are ugly [...] displaying the colour of dried fish, looking like sea lions and frogs’ (232-233).



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The baptism of Princess Juliana in the Willemskerk in The Hague, in the presence of aristocratic court dignitaries, members of the political elite and foreign diplomats, painted by Jan Hoynck van Papendrecht, 1909 (*oil on canvas, Jan Hoynck van Papendrecht, 1909; collection Geschiedkundige Vereniging Oranje-Nassau, Paleis Het Loo, Apeldoorn*)

ture. ‘They decide your future, they choose your job. They pick a pub for you, and a church. And what you should give to the poor. Man, is that life?’²

In the nineteenth century, an elite of (mostly protestant) noble and patrician families firmly set the tone in Dutch politics and society. Since 1813, the Netherlands were a constitutional monarchy under the House of Orange-Nassau. Apart from the king and his royal relatives, families of ancient noble stock (barons, counts) occupied the highest positions in the social hierarchy. Second to them were the (mostly non-titled) new nobility, comprising descendants of old patrician families, officials, and administrators who had risen to the fore during the Batavian Revolution and the years of French domination, successful officers, personal favourites of the king, and other upstarts (titles were not bestowed solely on the principle of birth, but also as a reward for personal merit). Third came families that traditionally

² Translations from the Dutch are by the author.

belonged to the power elite and embraced an aristocratic lifestyle but for some reason had not been elevated into the nobility. Most of them probably were not particularly bothered by that.³ Especially the richest merchant bankers of nineteenth-century Amsterdam proudly claimed that they refused to buy their dignity from the king.⁴

In 1848 almost all noble rights were formally abolished by liberal reforms and a new constitution. Most aristocratic families, however, managed to keep hold of their powerful positions in government and parliament or as senior civil servants and colonial officials. Nobles and patricians together accounted for only twenty percent of the male electorate, but they held about two thirds of the seats in the House of Representatives in the 1850s and 1860s.⁵ For decades to come, they continued to display an unwavering feeling of superiority, based on the political power, family fortune, cultural hegemony, and – of course – prestige deriving from their ancestry.⁶

Genealogy and status anxiety

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In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the prominent position of the old power elites finally came under serious threat. Industrialization, the emergence of a new class of business tycoons and the labour movement, the emancipation of Catholics, the educational and political rise of the middle classes, the dismantling of old hierarchical structures in the countryside as a result of the absenteeism of landlords and the drift of farmworkers to the cities, the advent of party politics, and the trend towards proportional representation in parliament – all these developments fostered ‘status anxiety’ within noble, patrician, and high-bourgeoisie circles. Some aristocrats even feared the collapse of the monarchy and a Communist revolution. Foremost, however, their anxiety was directed towards the success and pretensions of the new rich. Old patrician families, which at first had not taken a particular interest in noble status and had boasted that they preferred to remain members of the old patriciate rather than gaining a new nobility, now turned to the king in increasing numbers with requests to be elevated into the untitled rank of *jonkheer* – thereby taking the risk of being smirked at by old titled families.⁷ Some of them did their utmost to ensure that the Dutch equivalent of the term ‘elevation into the nobility’ was avoided in their letters patent, claiming instead that they were of ancient noble stock. In most cases, they had only family tradition to support their claim.

In this climate of status competition within the old upper classes and between the upper classes and the new rich, the practice of genealogy was no longer restricted to private studies

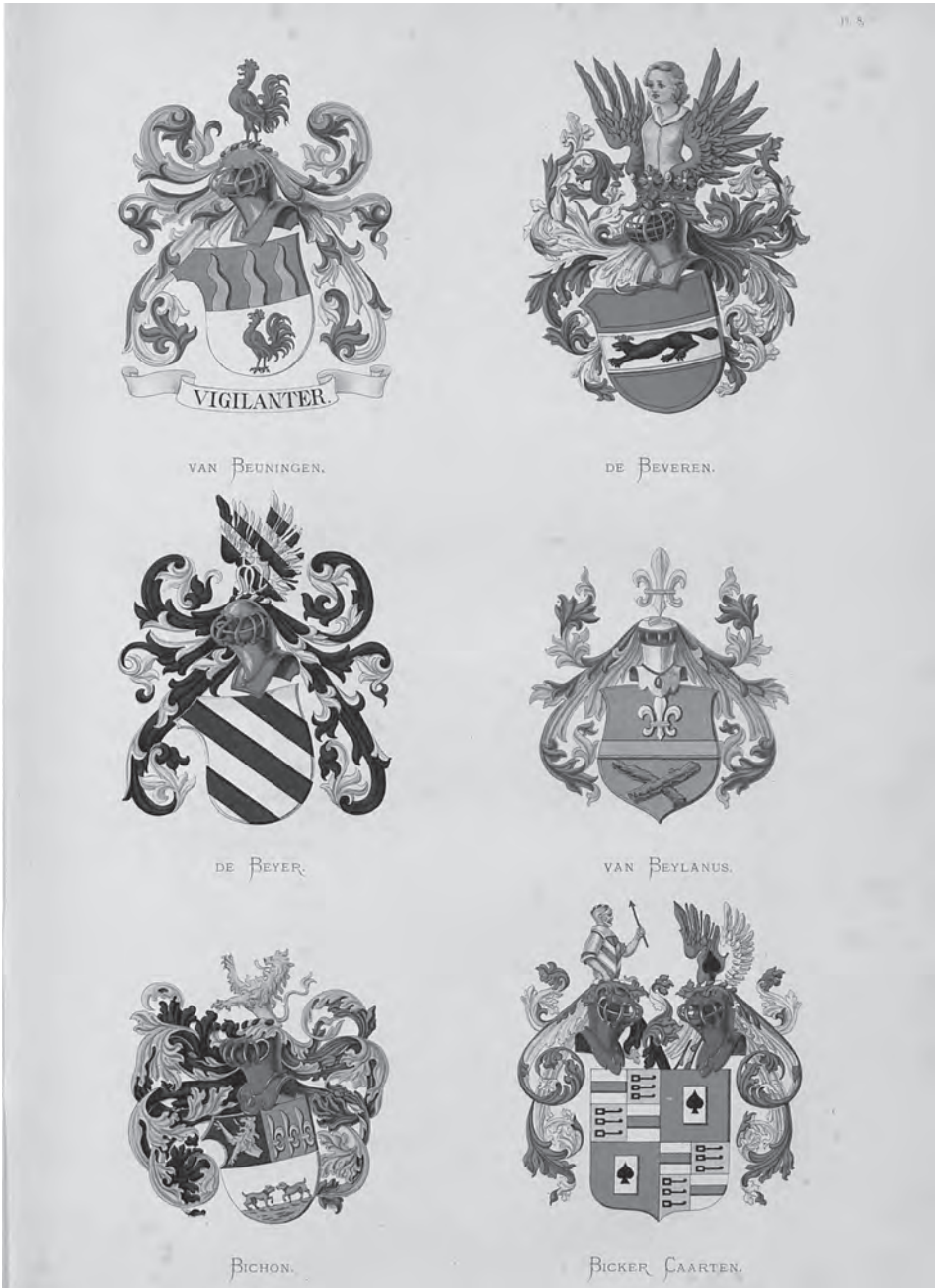
3 *Jonkheer* is the lowest, untitled rank in the Dutch nobility.

4 R. van der Laarse, *A nation of notables. Class, politics and religion in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century* (Salford, 2000) 14.

5 J. Bank and M. van Buuren, 1900. *The age of bourgeois culture* (Assen-Basingstoke, 2004) 33-34.

6 Y. Kuiper, ‘Eine rein bürgerliche Nation? Adel und Politik in den Niederlanden im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert’, in: J. Leonhard and C. Wieland, ed., *What makes the nobility noble? Comparative perspectives from the sixteenth to the twentieth century* (Göttingen, 2011) 201-217; I. Montijn, *Hoog geboren. 250 jaar adellijk leven in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 2012) 37-53.

7 See examples in K. Bruin, ‘Kwesties van stand. Over de opname in de adelstand van Amsterdamse patriciërs in de 19de eeuw’, *Sociologische Gids*, 28 (1981) 115-121.



Coats of arms of Dutch noble and patrician families in the first volume of Vorsterman van Oyen's *Stam- en wapenboek van aanzienlijke Nederlandsche familiën*, published in 1885 (collection *Hoge Raad van Adel*, The Hague)

and libraries. Instead, it became a very public affair, following the examples set in other Western countries.⁸ Such professionals as Abraham Vorsterman van Oyen tried to create a market to satisfy the demand for knowledge of family origins, ancestors, and bloodlines. In 1880, Vorsterman van Oyen initiated an exhibition on the history and heraldry of the House of Orange – an exhibition that is generally considered by historians to mark the starting point of modern genealogy in the Netherlands. In the decades that followed, Vorsterman he remained a prominent figure in the emerging genealogical scene. Most new initiatives in the 1880s and 1890s in this field can be attributed to his professional drive and zeal. In 1883, he was one of the founders of Genealogisch-heraldiek Genootschap ‘De Nederlandsche Leeuw’ (Genealogic and Heraldic Society The Dutch Lion), nowadays the oldest and most prestigious genealogical society in the Netherlands. His monumental three-volume *Stam- en wapenboek van aanzienlijke familiën* (Genealogic and Heraldic Register of Illustrious Families), published between 1885 and 1890, included the genealogies and crests of more than six hundred families – not only pedigrees of families belonging to the traditional elite, but also those of industrialists and bankers.⁹ Despite the success of some of Vorsterman van Oyen’s undertakings and his extensive network in the highest ranks of society, his reputation was not very good. Gentleman genealogists argued that his work did not meet critical standards, while his modest background, poor education, and servile appearance and behaviour caused irritation, even disgust. In their opinion, Vorsterman van Oyen produced ‘parvenu genealogy’, just like the Van Epen brothers in Haarlem, two young bohemians who had been kicked out of their parental home and were now desperately trying to make money out of the vanity of the new rich.¹⁰

Aristocratic criticism of ‘parvenu genealogy’ and, more generally, a dislike for upstarts and fear of socialism and Catholicism were played out openly in the journal published by the first genealogical society in the Netherlands, *De Nederlandsche Heraut* (The Dutch Herald). The primary objective of the society’s board members seems to have been to expose and condemn noble pretensions and usurpations of family names and crests. Denouncing these genealogical follies was now needed more than ever, according to Willem Jan baron d’Ablaing van Giessenburg, the first chairman of the society. In 1890, two years before his death, he wrote:

Vanity has always driven man to pretend to be better than he actually is. By behaving that way, he is unconsciously humiliating himself and making a fool of himself. This human weakness shows itself stronger than ever before in our century of imagined equality. Lineage has to be equal as well now; if not, it is presumed and claimed.¹¹

8 See e.g. M. Sharpe, *Family matters. A history of genealogy* (Barnsley, 2011) 66-131; F. Weil, *Family trees. A history of genealogy in America* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 2013) 112-179.

9 K. Bruin and K. Schmidt, ‘Zur Genealogie der Genealogie. Over het boekstaven van “aanzienlijkheid” in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden’, *Sociologische Gids*, 27 (1980) 274-292.

10 C. Gietman, ‘Genealogie met snoeimes en bijl. Autobiografische notities van D.G. van Epen’, *Genealogie*, 11 (2005) 20-23.

11 Cited in C. Gietman, ‘Genealogie, waarheid en statusangst in de late negentiende eeuw. De Nederland-

The members of the *Nederlandsche Heraut* considered it their duty to expose genealogical charlatans and snobs to the public. However, after a promising start, the society dwindled into inertia in the early 1890s.

Generation 1900

Genealogy gained real momentum in the Netherlands somewhat later, around 1900, when a new, self-confident, patriotic generation of genealogists of noble, patrician, and high bourgeoisie families rose to the fore. This generation had grown up during the 1890s, a decade of political radicalization. Jan Bijleveld, Everhard Wittert van Hoogland, Frans and Willem Beelaerts van Blokland, Theodoor Valck Lucassen, and Marinus Wildeman, to name just a few of the most important and interesting ones, were self-confident, cocky, and, at times, witty as well. These young men had become obsessed with genealogy (and to a lesser extent with heraldry) during their college years. They shared an upper-class background, but they came from different segments within the elite. The families of Wittert and the Beelaerts brothers had been ennobled in the early nineteenth century, and Marinus Wildeman was the son of a high-ranking army officer and a baroness. Jan Bijleveld, the most outspoken genealogist of his generation, was the great-grandson of the extremely wealthy Johanna Borski, who is still renowned in the Netherlands for her amazing banking exploits. Although the Bijlevelds were very rich and could boast of a quite respectable ancestry, they lacked patrician status. For that reason, Jan Bijleveld was denied admittance to Colonel Colt, the most exclusive aristocratic student club of Leiden, while his close friend *jonkheer* Everhard Wittert was made president – a situation that reveals the intricate social structure of Dutch upper-class society around 1900. In later years, when their once intimate friendship had turned sour, Wittert, writing his memoirs, went to great lengths to portray his new enemy as the epitome of snobbery. For Bijleveld, however, this exclusion must have been extremely humiliating, and might be the cause of his disdain for the nobility – which he would express more explicitly during the last years of his life.¹²

Despite their small differences in status, these young gentleman genealogists shared a common outlook on life and society. Born and raised in liberal Protestant families (with the exception of Wittert, who was a staunch Catholic), they seemed destined for high positions in life. Although society was beginning to shift, making it increasingly difficult for the Protestant establishment to determine the social, political, and religious contours of the Dutch nation state, most of these gentlemen seem to have been confident that their families or even they themselves would still be able to play a dominant role in urban, provincial, and national politics. Even more importantly, they believed they had every right to fulfil that role. Surprisingly, in their outlook on society and politics, they seem to have been more hostile towards

sche Heraut (1880-1903)', in: A. Gevers, e.a., ed., *Mensen van adel, Beelden, manifestaties, representaties. Opstellen aangeboden ter gelegenheid van het afscheid van Albert Mensema als archivaris bij het Historisch Centrum Overijssel te Zwolle 14 september 2007* (Hilversum, 2007) 178.

12 C. Gietman, 'Heraut van de oude orde. Een genealogie van Nederland's Adelsboek', *Jaarboek Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie*, 59 (2005) 170-174, 199-202.



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Jonkheer Everhard Wittert impersonating Count Willem van Oostervant during the Leiden student masquerade of 1900 (stereo postcard by J. van der Stok; collection Erfgoed Leiden)

the new rich than towards the workers and farmers who began to make their way into municipal councils around 1900. As one young nobleman put it in the *album amicorum* ('friendship book') of Jan Bijleveld, during their years at Leiden University: 'Aristocrats and working class workers should strive together against capitalism.'¹³ This dislike, sometimes even hatred, of the new rich regularly shows up in letters of these gentleman genealogists, in their diaries and memoirs, and – in a less obvious way – in their articles and books.

From an early age, Bijleveld and Wittert had been fascinated by history. As students in Leiden, they fully immersed themselves in the traditional 'student masquerade', a costume parade in which the participants dressed up as historical figures. During this parade they not only showed their love of history and costume play, but they also displayed their status to their fellow students and the public. Commemorating a victorious entry of the Count of Holland into the city of Enkhuizen in 1396, Wittert and his fellow students could feel like true medieval knights and indulge in noble fantasies. Participating in these 'student masquerades' was cherished and remembered by almost all gentleman genealogists well into old age as a highpoint in their lives.

The historical and genealogical fascination of these young aristocrats bore a strong patriotic tone. Nationalism in the Netherlands had experienced a steep rise in the late 1890s, following the start of the reign of Queen Wilhelmina (in 1898) and the Second Boer War (1899-1902), which served as unifying forces in a religiously and socially divided country. Especially the struggle of the African Boer Republics against the British made a huge impression

¹³ Erfgoedcentrum Leiden, Bijleveld Family Archives, nr. 420, *album amicorum* of Jan Bijleveld.

on these young genealogists, who – in conformity with Dutch public opinion – regarded the Afrikaners as kin (stamverwanten). Frans and Willem Beelaerts van Blokland, for example, had been raised in a family that had fostered ties with South Africa since the early nineteenth century. Their father was a prominent member of a national committee supporting the Boer cause in the 1880s and even seems to have sported a beard to look like the old Afrikaner president Paul Krüger. When Krüger travelled to Europe in 1884 to conclude a peace agreement with the English, he showed his respect for the Beelaerts family by visiting them in their home in The Hague. Some days later, twelve-years-old Frans was even allowed to attend a luncheon offered by Dutch magistrates to the Afrikaner guests. He would evolve into a staunch supporter of the Afrikaner cause.¹⁴ The Beelaerts brothers were not alone in their heartfelt sympathy for their Afrikaner ‘kin’. In his memoirs, Everhard Wittert delivers a vivid description of a brief encounter with Krüger at a rally in The Hague, in December 1900:

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I have never forgotten the immense tragedy of my visit to the old President. President Paul Krüger, who had done so much for his country, was a broken man, sitting in an armchair, a victim of English imperialism. When he shook my hand, tears almost came to my eyes.¹⁵

For Wittert and some other young men of his generation, the Boer War marked the beginning of an anti-English sentiment that lasted until the end of their lives.

Given the general patriotic mood of the European upper classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the nationalist and royalist stance of Dutch gentleman genealogists is not surprising at all. Nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned because it defined their research immensely. This generation displayed a particular fondness for the ancestry of great Dutchmen and the history of the colonies. Paul Bloys van Treslong Prins, for example, received praise for his relentless efforts to locate the grave of Jan Pietersz Coen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, founder of Batavia (modern Jakarta), and celebrated as a national hero in the Netherlands up until quite recently, when he came under attack from revisionist historians and left-wing activists.¹⁶

Debates and controversies

During the initial stages of their journey into the world of genealogy, Bijleveld, Wittert, and others were inspired by the examples and initiatives set by Vorsterman van Oyen. Nevertheless, they quickly denounced his publications as superficial, erroneous, and totally uncritical. As a result, Vorsterman van Oyen became the embodiment of everything that was wrong

14 A.B. Beelaerts van Blokland, ‘Jhr. Mr. Frans Beelaerts van Blokland (1782-1956). Markante Hagenaar, minister en vice-president van de Raad van State’, *Jaarboek Geschiedkundige Vereeniging Die Haghe* (2006) 169.

15 National Archives, The Hague, Personal Archives of E.B.F.F. Wittert van Hoogland, nr. 10, ‘Memoires van E.B.F.F. baron Wittert van Hoogland’, 124.

16 ‘Mr. P.C. Bloys van Treslong Prins †’, *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, 59 (1941) 81.



Paul Bloys van Treslong Prins (third from the left) during a formal meeting in Batavia (Jakarta), probably as member of the commission of inquiry on the grave of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, 1934 (collection University Library Leiden)

in their discipline. Just as the members of *De Nederlandsche Heraut* had done twenty years before, these ‘new genealogists’ took a particular liking to publicly criticize genealogical pretensions – especially those of the new rich –, claiming their approach was purely scientific. This attitude produced a lot of controversy and debates, and sometimes even public threats. Marinus Wildeman, one of the most uncompromising polemicists of his age, was denied access to private archives based on the accusation that his only aim was chopping down family trees. One of Wildeman’s friends was even denounced as a genealogical anarchist.

However, despite all their scientific pretensions, displayed over and over again in magazines and lectures, for these young noblemen and patricians, genealogy served mainly as an instrument for defining their own status among their peers and as a means to exclude outsiders. This becomes obvious when we take a closer look at one of the most prestigious Dutch genealogical projects of the early twentieth century: the establishment of *Nederland’s Adelsboek* (The Book of the Dutch Nobility), in 1903, a series that, according to co-founder Everhard Wittert, was meant ‘to serve as a bastion against hatred of gentlemen’. For this new series, the ancestry of all Dutch noble families was researched, and the editors systematically recorded all living noblemen and noblewomen. *Nederland’s Adelsboek* or the ‘red booklet’,

as this annual soon came to be known unofficially, was hailed by many as a great genealogical achievement. The series was a success in another way as well. Anyone who claimed to be a member of the nobility but was not listed in the 'red booklet' could be quickly exposed as an imposter, a fraud. *Nederland's Adelsboek* thus served to record and defend the nobility in a changing society.¹⁷

However, *Nederland's Adelsboek* met with fierce criticism as well. It soon turned out that the tradition of dozens of the most prominent noble families regarding their historical origins was not supported by archival evidence or could even be proven to be blatantly false. It is hard to overestimate the mental impact of this new, critical view on genealogical evidence. In some families, sons and daughters had been raised for centuries in the firm belief that their ancestors had been noble since times immemorial. In turn, they had passed on these sacred family traditions to their children and grandchildren – in some cases even naming their sons after legendary progenitors. Now this mythical past threatened to be wiped out overnight.

180 One of the victims of the new critical attitude was the untitled Von Daehne family. The Daehnes, ennobled by the elector of Saxony in 1792, had been members of the Dutch nobility since the early nineteenth century. Despite their claims to be the descendants of a well-known noble family from Brunswick that carried almost the same name, they were exposed by Marinus Wildeman as frauds in *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, the leading Dutch genealogical journal. The father of their ennobled ancestor Johann Wilhelm von Daehne had been a lackey of the duke of Brunswick and his mother a laundress, so it was disclosed by Wildeman. The editors of *Nederland's Adelsboek* were prone to take over his conclusions, and they refused to mention the fact that the ennobled forefather had, in all probability, been an illegitimate son of the duke. When the Daehne family objected to their findings, they arrogantly replied that there was no room for speculation in a series which is based on facts. On closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that this editorial stance was not solely motivated by genealogical considerations. Personal letters by the editors and their friends are full of sarcastic remarks regarding the 'Danish pigs', as the oldest generations of the family were called. Especially Everhard Wittert seems to have been driven by personal animosity towards the last male member of the Dutch branch of the Daehne family, a former Jesuit who, after leaving the Order and the Catholic Church, had married a German countess and established himself as an anti-clerical writer.¹⁸

While many noblemen were displeased – to say the least – to see the heads of their mythical forefathers chopped off and their family tradition attacked, some leading genealogists were expressing exactly the opposite point of view. On numerous occasions, they suggested that the editors' approach was not critical enough. Wittert was their easiest pushover becau-

17 Gietman, 'Heraut van de oude orde', 174-180, 182.

18 M.G. Wildeman, 'De herkomst van het geslacht Daehne, later Van Daehne van Varick', *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, 27 (1909) 203-231; National Archives, Personal Archives of E.B.F.F. Wittert van Hoogland, nr. 10, 'Memoires van E.B.F.F. baron Wittert van Hoogland', p. 26; Hoge Raad van Adel, The Hague, Wildeman Family Archives, nr. 302, letters of E.B.B.F. Wittert van Hoogland and H. Obreen to M.G. Wildeman, 23 and 28 June 1909.

se of the naive confidence he displayed towards the medieval knightly origins of his own family and the credence he gave to old manuscript genealogies. Professional genealogist D.G. van Epen, always hungry for fun and controversy, was quick to denounce publicly the reliability of Wittert's claims of ancestry. The controversy only ended when the two opponents signed a formal agreement in which Van Epen promised to withdraw an upcoming publication on the history of the Wittert family.¹⁹ Although in the end Everhard Wittert showed willingness to scrap the first generations of his family tree, he stubbornly refused to give in entirely and denounce all medieval ancestors. It was only after the Second World War, when he was no longer a member of the editorial board, that the genealogy of his family in *Nederland's Adelsboek* finally met modern critical standards.²⁰

Defending the Old Order

The Von Daehne and Wittert incidents were just two of the many controversies that characterized the scene of gentleman genealogy in the Netherlands in the first decades of the twentieth century. Most attacks on snobbery and fraud were not just motivated by a growing commitment to high evidential standards – a point stressed in recent historiography – but also by status rivalry and personal animosities.

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As the generation of gentleman genealogists that had gained prominence around 1900 grew older, their anti-modern sentiment and distrust of the parliamentary system and mass culture seem to have become more radical. The First World War and the Interbellum years marked a real break with the past. In this period, many members of the establishment experienced serious loss of wealth for the first time in their lives and found their careers cut short. In *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, the inclination of prominent genealogists to defend the Old Order is very plain and clear. In 1919, editor in chief Valck Lucassen wrote a furious reply to a newspaper article in which a left-wing government official proposed to tax family crests. Such a tax could only satisfy the 'envious tendencies' of neo-democrats, he argued:

Nowadays people do not accept anymore that their neighbour is slightly richer, is slightly better man, is slightly more capable, is slightly more important. From now on they do not accept either that their neighbour's family had slightly more quality.²¹

Valck Lucassen was by then already heavily involved in a fierce dispute concerning the ancestry of the ennobled Texeira de Mattos family, Amsterdam bankers with Sephardic roots. The debate had erupted after his butchering of the (false) assertion in the 1918 issue of *Nederland's Adelsboek* that the first generations of the Texeira's were Christians of old Portuguese noble stock. Valck Lucassen knew that the editors of the 'red booklet' had adopted

19 National Archives, Personal Archives of E.B.F.F. Wittert van Hoogland, nr. 160, letters of D.G. van Epen to E.B.F.F. Wittert van Hoogland, 28 April, 16 May, and 20 May 1903.

20 Gietman, 'Heraut van de oude orde', 201-202.

21 Th.R. Valck Lucassen, 'Een belasting op geslachtswapens?', *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, 37 (1919) 262.

this assumption in good faith from *jonkheer* Eduard Teixeira de Mattos, the family genealogist. However, for tactical reasons (and in conjunction with the editors of *Nederland's Adelsboek*), he decided not to mention the name of his genuine genealogical opponent. But Eduard Teixeira could not resist the temptation to react, and in the course of the next years this physician and amateur genealogist revealed himself as a relentless enemy who succeeded in rallying support within his own regional branch of the *Genootschap*. The appointment of Willem Beelaerts van Blokland, secretary of the Supreme Council of the Nobility, as an arbitrator did not help much to diffuse the tension, and at one point a formal division within the ranks of the *Genootschap* seemed to loom. In the end, however, all prominent members took the side of Valck Lucassen.²²

Publicly Theodoor Valck Lucassen and his supporters claimed to act as gentlemen, guided only by reason and commitment to historic truth, while they portrayed their opponent as a mere streetfighter.²³ In their private conversations and correspondence, they reacted less cautious, especially when arbitrator Willem Beelaerts was accused of libel and defamation. 'I won't cross swords with dishonourable Jewish swindlers,' he wrote in 1921, when he was confronted with Eduard Teixeira's latest defamatory libel. Interesting enough, the Christian Teixeira's met with resistance in the Jewish community as well and were blamed by some to be pretentious renegades trying to erase their roots.²⁴ A cartoon drawn by their distant relative Joseph Teixeira de Mattos shows the Christian *jonkheer* in the company of



Jonkheer Willem Beelaerts van Blokland, chairman of the Genealogisch-Heraldiek Genootschap (collection Hoge Raad van Adel, The Hague)

22 Th.R. Valck Lucassen, 'Het geslacht Teixeira in Nederland's Adelsboek', *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, 36 (1918) 121-145; 37 (1919) 138-189; M.G. Wildeman, 'De titel "Graaf van Olo" bestaat niet', *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, 37 (1919) 291-292; E. Teixeira de Mattos, *Critiek op het artikel van Mr. Th.R. Valck Lucassen in "De Nederlandsche Leeuw", d.d. Mei 1918, over het geslacht Teixeira in het Nederland's Adelsboek. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis betreffende oud-Spaansch-Portugeesche geslachten in Nederland* (Heelsum, 1918); E. Teixeira de Mattos, *Laster met bedrog door achterhouding van een essentieel document, onder verzwarende omstandigheden gepleegd door jhr. mr. W.A. Beelaerts van Blokland (Secretaris van den Hoogen Raad van Adel) in het Maandblad de Nederlandsche Leeuw van April 1921* (Heelsum, 1921); 'Verslag van het onderzoek ingesteld in de zaak Teixeira de Mattos door Jhr. Mr. W.A. Beelaerts van Blokland', *De Nederlandsche Leeuw*, 39 (1921) 74-83.

23 Cf. J. Cohen, *De onontkoombare afkomst van Eli d'Oliveira. Een Portugees-Joodse familiegeschiedenis* (Amsterdam, 2015) 316-317.

24 Hoge Raad van Adel, W.A. Beelaerts Genealogical Papers. nr. 10.



Caricature of *Jonkheer* Eduard Teixeira de Mattos, in the company of his Jewish grandmother and great-great-grandmother, by Joseph Teixeira de Mattos (collection *Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam*)

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his grandmother and great-great-grandmother, both bearing distinctively Jewish names and stereotypical facial features.

War and the end of the Old Order

Status anxiety, distrust of democracy, fear of socialism and communism, antisemitism, hatred against the Americanization of culture and society – all these elements made quite a few Dutch gentleman genealogists sensitive to the temptation of Fascism and National Socialism. The private correspondence between Bijleveld and Wittert in the 1930s, for example, is littered with rants against Jews, Freemasons, Democrats, the disgustingly decadent French and English, and – after Wittert's lapse from Catholicism – Jesuits as well. It should be stressed, however, that other prominent genealogists wholeheartedly rallied behind the constitutional monarchy and democracy – most notably Frans Beelaerts van Blokland, who acted as

one of Queen Wilhelmina's chief advisers and accompanied her to London in May 1940, after the defeat of the Dutch army.²⁵

Most members of the generation that had sought genealogical prominence around 1900 were too old to take on political positions of any kind during the German occupation or even to play a role in the *Gleichschaltung* of the genealogical scene by the Nazis in the early years of the war. Quite a few of the gentleman genealogists who survived the war, however, were left with disappointment or even bitterness and abhorrence towards post-war society, in which there seemed to be no place left for them.²⁶ Their death marks the end of an era during which genealogy could serve as an effective tool in personal quarrels between members of the upper classes and as a gentleman's bastion against the status ambitions of outsiders. In genealogy, just as in other spheres of life, the future now belonged to the masses and to those who could explain things to them in a simple way.²⁷

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25 As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vice-President of the Council of State, and one of Queen Wilhelmina's most trusted confidants, Frans Beelaerts established a reputation as the 'viceroy of the Netherlands'. During the quest for a suitable spouse for Princess Juliana, he acted as the queen's main broker and informer. See C. Fasseur, *Juliana & Bernhard. Het verhaal van een huwelijk: de jaren 1936-1956* (Amsterdam, 2008) 24-38; A. van der Zijl, *Bernhard, een verborgen geschiedenis* (Amsterdam-Antwerpen, 2010) 236-255.

26 Even Frans Beelaerts, who had served Queen, country, and democracy faithfully in high positions for decades and continued to do so after 1945, was increasingly regarded as an archetype of a bygone era.

27 Cf. A. Herman, *The idea of decline in Western history* (New York, 1997) 83-86.

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