

The Transformation of Aristocratic Landownership in the Eastern Netherlands, c. 1750-1850¹

Piet van Cruyningen

TSEG 22 (1): 35–62

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52024/nd6cw532>

Abstract

The Batavian Revolution of 1795 put an end to officeholding in the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel, as afforded to noblemen through possession of a noble estate. Many indebted noblemen were forced to sell out, and many noble houses were demolished. A small group of wealthy families survived the revolution by increasing revenue from their estates. They even expanded those estates, particularly by using their influence to press for division of the commons and by appropriating large parts of the commons. In this way, a veritable landed elite came into being, which put a strong imprint on the landscape in the sandy regions of the eastern Netherlands.

Introduction

At the end of the eighteenth century, in the wake of the French Revolution, the nobility of a considerable part of continental Europe (France, the Low Countries, major parts of Italy, and the German lands) lost political power, legal privileges, and part of their revenue sources (officeholding, seigneurial dues, landownership). By 1820, much political power had been regained, but privileges were irretrievably lost.² There is less clarity regarding the prosperity of the nobility. Did it recover from the revolutionary blows? For the Netherlands, Paul Brusse and Wijnand

1 I thank Paul Brusse, Oscar Gelderblom, Joost Jonker, Bas Machielsen, and Wijnand Mijnhardt for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The research was funded by NWO.

2 W. Doyle, *Aristocracy and its enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford 2009) 335-340.

Mijnhardt claim that the Batavian Revolution of 1795 never seriously threatened the nobles' position and that the agricultural powerbase of the nobility was preserved. Their view appears plausible, especially since very few confiscations of land occurred in the Batavian Republic, yet they present hardly any empirical evidence to support their hypothesis.³ This inquiry tests Brusse and Mijnhardt's claims by looking into the changes in aristocratic landownership in Gelderland and Overijssel – the provinces with probably the most powerful and numerous nobility – during the revolutionary period and the restoration.⁴

The paper will show that due to the revolution of 1795, nobles in Gelderland and Overijssel lost access to lucrative offices and had to reorient economically. Poorer, indebted nobles were forced to sell their landed estates, and as a result many noble houses in the countryside were demolished. A small group of wealthy noblemen, however, managed to survive the revolutionary years and to enlarge their estates. They chose to invest in agriculture and forestry as they were familiar with these activities, though influenced additionally by the enlightened and Physiocratic ideas about improving agriculture and forestry. Finally, it will be demonstrated that this group was able to do so by profiting from estate sales by poorer noblemen, domain sales, and legislation enabling the division and sale of common land.

The paper will first show what international and Dutch historiography have to say about the economic consequences of the revolutionary period for the nobility. It will then discuss the economic and political position of the nobility at the end of the ancien régime, concentrating on the sandy districts (Salland and Twente in Overijssel, Veluwe and Quarter of Zutphen or Achterhoek in Gelderland) where noble estates were most numerous. Then the consequences of the revolution of 1795 will be addressed, before focussing on the minority of noblemen who managed to increase their possessions. Subsequent sections will show how these noblemen were able to enlarge their estates, as well as what effects these developments had on the number and size of estates. These findings are based on an Van der Aa's *Aardrijkskundig woordenboek* of the 1840s, supplemented with estate

3 P. Brusse and W.W. Mijnhardt, *Towards a new template for Dutch history. De-urbanization and the balance between city and countryside* (Zwolle 2011) 87.

4 C. Gietman, *Republiek van adel. Eer in de Oost-Nederlandse adelscultuur (1555-1702)* (Utrecht 2010) 11, 16; K. Douma, *De adel in Noord-Brabant 1814-1918. Groepsvorming, adellijke levensstijl en regionale identiteit* (Hilversum and Tilburg 2015) 110-111. The nobilities of Holland, Zeeland and Staats-Brabant were extinct or nearly extinct by the late eighteenth century.

and family archives, probate records, cadastral ledgers, and *memories van successie* (declarations for the inheritance tax). The final section offers some conclusions on how to continue this inquiry.

Historiography

The following survey of international historiography will focus on countries or regions that were directly or indirectly affected by the French Revolution (France, northern Italy, western Germany), or went through revolutions of their own (Sweden), sometimes in response to the Napoleonic onslaught (Prussia). At first glance, this literature appears to confirm that the economic consequences of the revolutions were limited. Even in France, where land belonging to *émigré* nobles was confiscated in the 1790s, regional research – in the Dordogne and Sarthe departments, for instance – has shown that by the 1820s noble landownership had recovered from the blows of the late eighteenth century. The same holds true for Piedmont in northern Italy.⁵ Paul Bois's research in the Sarthe department, however, went on to demonstrate that the structure of aristocratic landownership had changed to a great extent. In his research area, the nobility owned about 13,000 hectares of land both in 1777 and 1830. The number of noble landlords, however, was reduced from 71 to only 27. Large aristocratic landowners had managed to expand their landed possessions, while smaller noblemen had disappeared. For Piedmont, Anthony Cardoza reached the same conclusion. The rift between wealthy and relatively poor Piedmontese nobles had become wider.⁶

For France, Robert Forster has pointed out that impoverishment of the nobility in the revolutionary period was not only caused by confiscation of landed property, but also by the abolishment of feudal rights and of the venality of offices. The loss of seigneurial dues and of income from officeholding further weakened the economic position of the nobility.⁷ Heinz Reif's study on the nobility of the prince-bishopric of Münster shows a comparable problem. The income strategy of

5 R. Gibson, 'The French nobility in the nineteenth century – particularly in the Dordogne', in: J. Howorth and P.G. Czerny (eds), *Elites in France. Origins, reproduction and power* (London 1981) 12-13; P. Bois, *Paysans de l'Ouest. Des structures économiques et sociales aux options politiques depuis l'époque révolutionnaire dans la Sarthe* (Paris and The Hague 1960) 318-320; A.L. Cardoza, *Aristocrats in bourgeois Italy. The Piedmontese nobility, 1861-1930* (Cambridge 1997) 26-32.

6 Bois, *Paysans de l'Ouest*, 318-320; Cardoza, *Aristocrats*, 31.

7 R. Forster, 'The survival of the nobility during the French Revolution', *Past and Present* 37 (1967) 72, 85.

these noblemen was based on revenues from a *Rittergut* – an estate that provided access to the diet of the principality – plus income from state offices. In addition, the younger sons could obtain a very lucrative post as *Domherr*, canon at the cathedral of Münster. When the prince-bishopric was mediatised in 1803, the income from the latter two sources ended. The nobility here needed to reorient economically and concentrated on enlarging estates and investing in improvement of agriculture.⁸ In southwest Germany, the lower nobility also had to supplement its revenue from its estates with income from officeholding in state and church. However, they mostly managed to hold on to their estates during the nineteenth century.⁹

These cases show that the prosperity of the nobility was not just threatened by the confiscation of land, although that was their most important economic power base. Consequently, loss of other income sources could force noblemen to reorient economically, and not all of them may have been able to do so. Expanding estates and improving agriculture demanded availability of capital, and the examples of the Sarthe and Piedmont regions show that not all aristocrats possessed sufficient capital. Only the wealthiest families could afford to adopt this strategy. Families from the high nobility, moreover, could also profit from their high status. The dukes of Arenberg, for instance, managed to recover their vast possessions in Germany, Belgium, and France, because Napoleon wanted to insert this prestigious family into his new imperial elite and therefore needed to give them preferential treatment.¹⁰

In Sweden, most privileges of the nobility were abolished by legislation in 1789 and the liberal constitution of 1809. This abrogation did not much affect the high nobility with large estates, which often included ironworks. Between 1800 and 1850, the number of manors this group owned remained at the same level. Yet the low, untitled nobility was forced to sell many estates during this period. Lower noblemen left the countryside and joined the urban middle classes. They often took up offices in the state administration.¹¹

8 H. Reif, *Westfälischer Adel 1770-1860. Vom Herrschaftsstand zur regionalen Elite* (Göttingen 1979) 34-35, 42, 184, 222-230.

9 D. Menning, 'Nobility, peasantry and estates in southwestern Germany, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century', in: S. Boeskov, J. Finch and M. Frausing (eds), *Estate landscapes in Northern Europe* (Aarhus 2019) 167-169.

10 B. Goujon, *Les Arenberg. Le gotha à l'heure des nations, 1820-1919* (Paris 2017) 63-69.

11 G. Ulväng, 'The Swedish manor 1750 to 1950. Decline or continuity?', in: Boeskov, Finch and Frausing (eds), *Estate landscapes in Northern Europe*, 100-102.

Prussia responded to the crushing defeat in the 1806 battle of Jena with its own revolution from above. The ministers and officials who designed the edicts of October 1807 and later were not inimical to the nobility – if only because they were noblemen themselves – but they intended to create a free-market economy, which required the abolition of several noble privileges and the liberation of the subject peasant population from *corvée* labor and other obligations. Peasants were required to compensate their lords, however, with money or by transferring up to half of their holdings, depending on their legal status. The consequences of the October Edict for estates in the province of Brandenburg have been studied extensively by René Schiller. He demonstrates that over the nineteenth century, the number of estates owned by noblemen very slowly declined. By 1885, however, noblemen still owned almost 60 percent of all estates in Brandenburg.¹² The October Edict did not lead to revolutionary shifts in the distribution of landownership at the cost of the nobility. Noble landowners even profited from it because they could add peasant land to their possessions and the compensation payments provided them with capital to improve productivity on their estates. Even here, however, smaller noble landlords often sold their estates, while the wealthier layers of the nobility managed to hold on to their estates or even enlarge them.¹³

In the Netherlands, literature on this topic is very scarce. For Friesland, Kuiper has made some very general remarks. The Frisian nobility appears to have survived the revolutionary period relatively unscathed, and Frisian nobles were still among the most wealthy landlords in the Netherlands around 1850, several of them with estates over 1000 hectares.¹⁴ In the adjoining province of Groningen, the picture is very different. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onward, noblemen began to sell estates, and many of their castles were demolished. By 1850, they had also lost political power in the province. However, this decline was not only caused by the Batavian Revolution. The main cause was the fact that members of the nobility during the eighteenth century had given out their land to tenants in perpetual rent at fixed sums. As the result of inflation, those fixed rents lost value. After

12 R. Schiller, *Vom Rittergut zum Grossgrundbesitz. Ökonomische und soziale Transformationsprozesse der ländlichen Eliten in Brandenburg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin 2003) 43-49, 190, 196.

13 *Ibid.*, 207.

14 Y. Kuiper, *Adel in Friesland 1780-1880* (Groningen 1993) 160; Idem, 'Country houses and estates in Dutch urban and rural history, 1600-1900', in: Boeskov, Finch and Frausing (eds), *Estate landscapes in Northern Europe*, 217.

a while, the tenancies became more valuable than the ownership of the land, and the tenants were considered as *de facto* owners. The landlords were left with a payment for the use of the land which had become symbolic, and therefore many of them sold out.¹⁵ Loss of feudal rights and access to offices after 1795, however, may have contributed to the decline of the Groningen nobility.

Ownership of landed estates was most relevant for nobles in the provinces of Gelderland, Overijssel, and Utrecht, because there it was a requirement for admission to the *ridderschap*, the corporation of the nobility, and that membership provided access to officeholding. Renger de Bruin has demonstrated that the revolution of 1795 indeed had grave consequences for the nobility in Utrecht. They lost offices and feudal rights and taxes were raised. As a result, between 1780 and 1820, 35 estates changed hands. Whether this situation led to shifts in the distribution of ownership of estates remains unclear.¹⁶ Did wealthier nobles weather the storm better than poorer ones? Were estates sold to members of the bourgeoisie? Those questions I will try to answer for the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel (figure 1). Until now Dutch historiography has not paid any attention to economic differentiation within the nobility. In that respect, this inquiry will bring Dutch historiography slightly more in line with the international literature.

The Gelderland and Overijssel nobility at the end of the ancien régime

As everywhere in Europe, the power base of the nobility was land. In the eastern provinces of the Netherlands, noble-owned land was usually concentrated in compact, contiguous, and not very large estates. The nobility here was numerous, though not very wealthy.¹⁷ There were around a dozen large estates in the two provinces, each with over 500 hectares of land, but most estates were smaller.¹⁸ More typical of a noble estate was Leemcule near Dalfsen. Apart from the house, it consisted of five farms and three smallholdings. All in all, it may have measured

15 H. Feenstra, *Adel in de Ommelanden. Hoofdelingen, jonkers en eigenerfders van de late middeleeuwen tot de negentiende eeuw* (Groningen 1988) 130-131; IJ. Botke, *Boer en heer. 'De Groninger boer' 1760-1960* (Assen 2002) 131-134.

16 R.E. de Bruin, *Adel en ridderschap in Utrecht* (Zwolle 2023) 323-324.

17 Gietman, *Republiek van adel*, 18-19.

18 E. Storms-Smeets, 'Het profijt van schoonheid. Landgoed Biljoen, 1661-1930', in: C. Gietman and J. Jas (eds), *Biljoen. Kasteel – bewoners – landgoed* (Zwolle 2020) 281.



Map 1 The provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel and their districts (borders of 1816)
(Map made by Annemieke Verhoek.)

some 150 hectares.¹⁹ Most estates appear to have been in the order of some 150-200 hectares.²⁰ Revenues were mostly composed of rents from tenant farmers and income from timber sales. The modest size of many of these estates implies that revenues were also modest, and it also implies that it was difficult to exploit them efficiently. The noble owner was usually absent for most of the year, and it was not financially possible to have a full-time professional steward on such a small estate. Only the larger estates could afford that facility.²¹ Smaller estates had to make do with a *werkbaas* (bailiff), often one of the tenants who collected the rents alongside running his own farm.

19 Gietman, *Republiek van adel*, 174

20 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, passim; Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Twente*, passim.

21 P. van Cruyningen, *Landgoederen en landschap in de Graafschap* (Utrecht 2005) 101.

Little is known about the financial situation of the Gelderland nobility in the eighteenth century, although according to Verstegen, the nobles of the district of Veluwe were doing rather well.²² We know more about Overijssel. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the financial situation of many estates in this province was precarious. Of eight noble estates in the jurisdiction of Olst in 1750, two were so heavily indebted that interest payments on debts were higher than the income from the estate. One of them was worth 30,000 guilders and mortgaged for 45,600. A third one, the Averbergen estate, was valued at 25,000 guilders and mortgaged for 16,000 guilders.²³ These were all smaller estates, but some of the large estates were indebted as well, such as the estates of the count van Rechteren Limpurg, where interest payments reduced net income to a negligible sum.²⁴ For very large landowners like the Van Rechteren Limpurg family, these debts were manageable. In 1758, the count was still one of the three richest men in Overijssel with a fortune of 163,000 guilders.²⁵ Smaller estates often went from bad to worse. The aforementioned Averbergen estate, for instance, was mortgaged for 30,000 guilders by 1769.²⁶

The precarious situation of the Overijssel nobility around 1750 has been attributed to several causes, such as a luxurious lifestyle and the need to purchase expensive commissions in the army to pursue a military career.²⁷ Nevertheless, Jan Luiten van Zanden has pointed to a more structural cause. Between 1650 and 1750, agriculture was in a downward phase of the secular trend, which reached its nadir in the 1730s. Tenant farmers, suffering from low grain prices, were supported by their landlords who kept rents low and permitted tenants to delay rent payments.²⁸ As a result, estates often were no longer profitable. In 1707, the count and countess van Rechteren stated that owning an estate was more of a burden than an asset, because expenditures were

22 S.W. Verstegen, *Gegoede ingezetenen. Jonkers en geërfden op de Veluwe tijdens Ancien Régime, Revolutie en Restauratie (1650-1830)* (Zutphen 1990) 67-69.

23 B.H. Slicher van Bath, *Een samenleving onder spanning. Geschiedenis van het platteland in Overijssel* (Assen 1957) 268.

24 T. Kooijmans and J. Jonker, 'Chained to the manor? Payment patterns and landlord-tenant relations in the Salland region of the Netherlands around 1750', *TSEG – The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 12:4 (2015) 97.

25 Slicher van Bath, *Samenleving onder spanning*, 252.

26 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, 211.

27 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, XVII.

28 J.L. van Zanden, 'De opkomst van een eigenerfde boerenklasse in Overijssel, 1750-1830', *A.A.G. Bijdragen* 24 (1984) 121; Kooijmans and Jonker, 'Chained to the manor?', 104-107.

higher than revenues.²⁹ After a while, tenants began to consider it as normal to be in arrears for a couple of years and resisted increases in rents. Even after 1750, when grain prices increased, noble landlords were unable to skim off part of the increasing farm profits by raising rents. Nominal rents on four large estates – two in Gelderland and two in Overijssel, studied by Van Zanden – remained at the same low level until 1800.³⁰

If it was impossible to raise rents, maybe one option was to increase revenue from the part of the estate that was directly exploited: the woods. There is indeed evidence that noble landlords – such as the owners of the Rosendael and Biljoen estate in the Veluwe district – began to invest in forestry from the 1760s onward.³¹ This opportunity was only available to the larger and more prosperous landlords, however, because it required costly investments, and commercial wood production is only profitable on a large scale.³² And, of course, trees take a long time to mature and finally yield revenue. For small, indebted landlords there were few feasible options.

Under these circumstances, it is surprising that only a few estates were sold before the 1790s. Somehow most estate owners, including seriously indebted ones, muddled on. From a purely economic viewpoint, it would have been rational to sell the encumbered estate and more profitably invest what remained after deduction of debts. A strong reason to hold on to estates was that most noble estates not only produced direct revenue from rents and timber sales, but also indirect income, because they provided access to offices. Almost all noble-owned estates were *havezaten*, that is, estates that gave their owners access to the *ridderschap*, the corporation of the nobility (at least, if they were males and members of the Reformed Church).³³ In Overijssel, there was one *ridderschap* for the whole province. Gelderland was divided into three Quarters, each of which had their own *ridderschap*, as well as their own requirements concerning the amount of real estate a prospective member was required to own. In Overijssel, the *havezate* and the attached land had to be worth at least 25,000 guilders. In Gelderland, the Quarter of Zutphen required the

29 Gietman, *Republiek van adel*, 174.

30 Van Zanden, 'Opkomst', 120.

31 Storms-Smeets, 'Profijt van schoonheid', 284; J.C. Bierens de Haan, *Rosendael, groen hemeltjen op aerd. Kasteel, tuin en bewoners sedert 1579* (Zutphen 1994) 181.

32 Van Cruyningen, *Landgoederen en landschap*, 120.

33 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, VII-VIII.

nobleman to own a *havezate* with land yielding a net yearly income of 400 guilders, whereas membership of the *ridderschap* of the Quarter of Veluwe did not require ownership of a noble house, but only of 18,000 guilders worth of real estate.³⁴ An important difference to stress between Gelderland and Overijssel was that in Gelderland the house and other real estate had to be free of mortgages.³⁵

Ownership of an estate and membership of the *ridderschap* provided noblemen with status and political power, together with access to lucrative offices. For this two access requirements had to be met: favor from the stadholder, who after 1747 appointed just about all officeholders; and membership in a municipal government or *ridderschap* with access to the provincial Estates.³⁶ Noble members of the Estates could hold office in the *Gedeputeerde Staten* (the executive committee of the province or quarter), in the provincial court, and in the provincial audit office, and they could also become representatives in the States-General, the Council of State, the federal audit office (*Generaliteitsrekenkamer*), and four out of five admiralties. All in all, Gelderland had 26 offices at the national level, and Overijssel 13.³⁷ Members of the Estates could also become administrator of chambers of the big trading companies, and member of all kinds of committees or administrator of a rural district.³⁸ In the provinces, schemes were made to distribute these offices equitably over the municipalities and the members of the *ridderschap*.³⁹ All these offices were remunerated – often very well – and this made membership in the Estates very valuable. A Gelderland representative with the States-General, for example, received 1500 guilders yearly; a member of the Council of State 2000; a member of the federal audit office 2100; and the administrator of the district of Neder-Betuwe 2500. To these salaries must be added reimbursement for expenses and the income from emoluments, which

34 E. de Jonge and M.V.T. Tenten, 'De drie kwartierlijke ridderschappen als deel van de soevereine Staten van het vorstendom Gelre en graafschap Zutphen', in: C.O.A. Schimmelpenninck van der Oijje et al. (eds), *Adel en ridderschap in Gelderland. Tien eeuwen geschiedenis* (Zwolle 2013) 151, 153, 163.

35 De Jonge and Tenten, 'Drie kwartierlijke ridderschappen', 151; Verstegen, *Gegoede ingezetenen*, 50-51.

36 A.J.C.M. Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaren en de dienaar als heer. Het stadhouderlijk stelsel in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw* (The Hague 1990) 1, 69-70, 326.

37 Numbers calculated on the basis of 'Instellingen alfabetisch' on www.resources.huylgens.knaw.nl, retrieved 2 February 2021.

38 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Twente*, 14-16.

39 Gabriëls, *Heren als dienaren*, 43-44; J. Folkerts and J.H. Wigger, 'De eerste volksvertegenwoordigers uit Twente in 1795', in: P. Brood, P. Nieuwland and L. Zoodma (eds), *Homines novi. De eerste volksvertegenwoordigers van 1795* (Amsterdam 1993) 328-329.

could be considerable. Some officeholders had the right to appoint commanders of army companies, for instance, for which sums of up to 13,000 guilders were paid.⁴⁰ The nobility managed to almost monopolize some offices. For instance, of the 40 men who represented Gelderland in the Council of State between 1674 and 1793, 31 were noblemen.⁴¹

Noblemen could have impressive and well-remunerated administrative careers. Robert Hendrik van Hambroeck, for instance, owner of the Weleveld estate near Borne in Overijssel, almost continuously held office at the federal level between 1747 and 1774, as member of the admiralty of Friesland, the admiralty of Amsterdam (twice), the *Generaliteitsrekenkamer* (twice), the Council of State, and the States-General. In 1774, he resigned from the Amsterdam admiralty to become *hoogschout* (high sheriff) of the town of Hasselt. In addition, he was administrator of the goods of the chapter and monastery of Oldenzaal.⁴² Income from all these offices must have been higher than revenue from the modest Weleveld *havezate*. Accumulation of offices could lead to impressive incomes. The Veluwe nobleman Lubbert Adolf Torck, for instance, had an average total yearly income of 15,500 guilders over the period 1729-1758, of which 9500 was revenue from offices.⁴³ Another Gelderland nobleman, Christiaan Carel van Lintelo, was indebted at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but managed to pay off his debts and even save money thanks to lucrative offices and commissions.⁴⁴ It is not surprising that an observer remarked in 1783, that Gelderland noblemen knew to the penny what any office was worth.⁴⁵

There were *havezaten* that appear to have provided more income through access to offices than from rents and timber sales. They were only bought to get access to the Estates. A famous example is the Patriot statesman Joan Derk van der Capellen, who bought the *havezate* Bredenhorst near Heino in 1769, and six years later the manor de Pol near IJhorst, in order to gain admission to the Estates of Overijssel. He

40 L. van der Hoeven, 'Naar een overheersende stand. Een beschouwing omtrent de vermogensontwikkeling, de huwelijkspolitiek en de sociaaleconomische positie van de Gelderse adel in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw', in: Schimmelpenninck van der Oije et al. (eds), *Adelen ridderschap in Gelderland*, 106.

41 Van der Hoeven, 'Naar een overheersende stand', 124.

42 'Robert Hendrik baron van Hambroeck', on www.resources.huuygens.knaw.nl, retrieved 2 February 2021; Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Twente*, 107.

43 Bierens de Haan, *Rosendael*, 90.

44 Aalbers, 'Geboorte en geld', 74.

45 Gabriëls, *Heren als dienaren*, 395.

was far from unique in doing so.⁴⁶ When a *havezate* was valued, the access to *ridderschap* and Estates it provided was estimated separately at sums of up to 5000 guilders.⁴⁷ The prospects of gains through officeholding also meant noblemen were prepared to take mortgages in order to purchase a *havezate*. As noted above, in Gelderland this method was not possible, but in Overijssel many noble estates were saddled with heavy mortgages.⁴⁸ This was all the more risky since the wealth of the Overijssel nobility had already been decreasing from the seventeenth century onward.⁴⁹

To conclude, by the end of the ancien régime, the nobility of Gelderland and Overijssel derived its income partly from the rents of relatively small, not very efficiently run estates, as well as from lucrative offices, access to which required ownership of such an estate. These noblemen were primarily a political elite, much less a landed elite, and most of them were not particularly wealthy.⁵⁰ How would they fare after 1795, when the old system came crashing down, especially the noblemen in Overijssel who had contracted substantial debts to acquire an estate?

1795 and its aftermath

In January 1795, French troops occupied the Dutch Republic and brought the Patriot movement to power. One of the first changes to be introduced, in February 1795, was the abolition of the *ridderschappen*.⁵¹ From that moment on, all representatives at the local, regional and national levels were to be elected. Later, the political system gradually returned to being more aristocratic, and the *ridderschappen* were even re-instituted after 1813, but the old system was never fully revived.⁵²

46 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, 162, 336 (van der Capellen), other examples: *Ibid.*, 118, 304, 396, 419, 425, 471.

47 De Jonge and Tenten, 'De drie kwartierlijke ridderschappen', 153; Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, 68.

48 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, XX.

49 C. Trompetter, 'Burgers en boeren. Geld en grond. De betekenis van burgerlijk kapitaal voor veranderende eigendomsverhoudingen in Twente', in: C. Trompetter and J.L. van Zanden, *Over de geschiedenis van het platteland in Overijssel (1500-1850)*. *Elf studies* (Zwolle 2001) 75.

50 Van der Hoeven, 'Naar een overheersende stand', 101-102; Gietman, *Republiek van adel*, 18-19.

51 P.W. van Wissing, ed., *De eerste volksvertegenwoordigers van Gelderland in 1795* (Amsterdam 1996) 28-31; Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, XX.

52 C.H.E. de Wit, 'De Noordelijke Nederlanden in de Bataafse en Franse Tijd 1795-1813', *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 11 (Weesp 1983) 158-186; Versteegen, *Gegoede ingezetenen*, 101-130.

Under the autocratic regime of King Willem I, the provincial Estates were again for a large part composed of noblemen, but these Estates had no real power and did not give access to lucrative offices.⁵³ Officeholding was still possible for noblemen, though no longer based on the ownership of a *havezate*. After 1795, competence and connections were decisive. Moreover, offices became less lucrative. Salaries were lowered after 1795, and all lucrative emoluments, such as the aforementioned right to appoint army officers, were abolished.⁵⁴

The revolutionary changes of 1795 brought an end to an income strategy of the nobility of Gelderland and Overijssel, based on a combination of officeholding and rent income from a modest estate. Suddenly the estate lost its political value, as it no longer provided access to lucrative offices. Noblemen had to choose whether to sell the *havezate* and find employment elsewhere or retire to the countryside and make the estate profitable. For many of the impoverished and indebted aristocrats in Overijssel the choice was simple: they sold out. In Twente, noblemen owned 37 *havezaten* in 1780; by 1832, that number had been reduced to 17; in Salland, the number of noble-owned *havezaten* was reduced from 58 to 30 over the same period. Farms and land were often sold to farmers, the houses were mostly bought by bourgeois urbanites.⁵⁵ Many noble houses in Overijssel were also demolished during this period: 15 in Twente and 24 in Salland. In some cases the noble owners kept the land and demolished the house, thus avoiding associated maintenance costs. In most cases, however, the whole estate was sold.⁵⁶

In the Quarter of Zutphen, many *havezaten* also disappeared. Of the 36 officially recognized noble houses in 1750, 13 had been demolished by 1830.⁵⁷ Of these 13 estates, however, at least nine had been gobbled up by larger estates owned by noblemen. Barlham and Hagen in the Oude IJssel region, for example, had become part of the large Keppel

53 G.A.M. Beekelaar, 'Adel en ridderschap in Gelderland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw', in: P.J.A.N. Rietbergen (ed.), *De periferie in het centrum. Opstellen door collegae aangeboden aan M.G. Spiertz* (Nijmegen 1987) 10.

54 De Bruin, *Adel en ridderschap*, 322, 336.

55 Trompetter, 'Burgers en boeren', 75; Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, passim.

56 Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Twente*, passim; Gevers and Mensema, *Havezaten van Salland*, passim.

57 De Jonge and Tenten, 'Drie kwartierlijke ridderschappen', 150, enumerate the *havezaten* in 1750; their fate in the following decades can be reconstructed from the publications of J. Harenberg, 'Kastelen en buitenplaatsen in ons gewest'; *Kastelen in Oost-Gelderland*; *Kastelen rond Zutphen I*; *Kastelen en landhuizen rond Lochem*.

estate of baron van Pallandt van Keppel.⁵⁸ It appears, therefore, that the disappearance of noble houses in the Quarter of Zutphen was not an indication of a decline of the nobility in this part of Gelderland, but of a reorganization of aristocratic landownership to the detriment of poorer noble families. For the Quarter of Veluwe, Verstegen has demonstrated that in most of that area, the nobility managed to hold on to its possessions or even expand them until the 1830s. Only in the IJssel valley was noble landownership reduced.⁵⁹

Overall, the nobility of Gelderland did better than that of Overijssel. That was, of course, partly due to the fact that *havezaten* in Gelderland could not be mortgaged. Therefore, incurring debts in order to buy a noble house was more difficult, and the financial situation of the owners of such houses was usually better. Factors on the demand side played a part, too, however. In Overijssel, wealthy textile manufacturers from Twente, as well as bourgeois from Deventer and Zwolle, had the money to buy estates and were prepared to lend money to farmers wanting to buy their farms. In the IJssel valley, prosperous tenant farmers were willing and able to purchase their farms.⁶⁰ In the remainder of the Veluwe and in the Quarter of Zutphen, it appears the nobility had less prosperous competitors in the land market.

It is unknown what happened to the noble families that sold their estates, as it has not as yet received scholarly attention. For younger noblemen, of course, there were ample opportunities for an army career in the 1795-1815 period, and others may have used their connections to get a job in the new bureaucracy. Many young noblemen studied law to get access to an office in the judiciary or the administration. However, as noted above, salaries in the public administration were not that luxurious in the nineteenth century. Additional income from other sources was required. Jan F.H. baron van der Feltz, for instance, was *griffier* (secretary) of the province of Gelderland, for which he was remunerated with 3000 guilders yearly. In the nineteenth century, that amount was far from sufficient for *vivre noblement*. His investment portfolio was small; he owned some bonds but no real estate. When he died in 1883, the net value of his fortune was estimated at the modest sum of 18,000 guilders, which had to be divided among his five children.⁶¹ There were probably more noblemen who held respectable

58 Harenberg, *Kastelen in Oost-Gelderland*, 25, 41.

59 Verstegen, *Gegoede ingezetenen*, 55-56.

60 Trompetter, 'Boeren en burgers', 74-82; Verstegen, *Gegoede ingezetenen*, 129.

61 Gelders Archief, Arnhem (hereafter GAA), 0021, no 112.

offices but had middle-class fortunes. Dutch historiography, however, has fully concentrated on the winners. Maybe the time has come to remedy this shortcoming.

Noble estates after 1795

This section will concentrate on the winners, those who fit the image Brusse and Mijnhardt created. If we define them as those members of the nobility who owned at least 500 hectares, there were some 30 of them in the sandy districts of Overijssel and Gelderland in the 1840s, as shown in table 1. There were, of course, also noble landlords with smaller landed estates who also survived the Batavian-French period, but information on them is more sparse. Those noblemen who held on to their estates needed to make them yield more to compensate for the complete lack of, or much reduced, income from offices. Noblemen of the Patriot persuasion had already had this experience after the counterrevolution of 1787. Young Allard P.R.C. baron van der Borch van Verwolde (1766-1836) was so disappointed by the Patriot defeat that he considered emigration to the United States. Since he did not want to leave his mother, he stayed in Gelderland, refused to hold office until 1795, and dedicated himself to the management of his Verwolde estate near Lochem.⁶² He reclaimed heath and moors and became a generally respected expert in agriculture and forestry.⁶³

The intellectual climate at the end of the eighteenth century was conducive to such a shift towards agriculture. Everywhere in the western world from the mid-eighteenth century onward, elites were striving towards improvement of agriculture, sometimes for pragmatic reasons, but often also influenced by the French Physiocrats. By the 1770s, these ideas had also reached the Dutch Republic.⁶⁴ From 1795, when many Orangist noblemen had time on their hands because they refused or were prohibited to hold office under the Batavian

62 GAA, Huis Verwolde no 231.

63 H.K. Roessingh and A.H.G. Schaars (eds), *De Gelderse landbouw beschreven omstreeks 1825* (Wageningen 1996) 35-37; J. Buis, *Historia forestis. Nederlandse bosgeschiedenis*, vol. 2, A.A.G. Bijdragen 27 (Wageningen 1985) 581-582, 909-910.

64 J.M.G. van der Poel, *Heren en boeren. Een studie over de Commissiën van Landbouw (1805-1851)* (Wageningen 1949) 5-33. Tamara P. Thornton, *Cultivating gentlemen. The meaning of country life among the Boston elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven and London 1989); Th.L.M. Thurlings, *Turgot en zijn tijdgenoten. Schets van de bevestiging der economische wetenschap* (Wageningen 1978) 126-127; Brusse and Mijnhardt, *Towards a new template*, 93.

regime, they could implement these ideas on their estates. As edifying gentlemen, they have often received a bad press in historiography due to their often naïve opinions about ‘scientific’ farming and forestry. They read theoretical treatises but lacked practical knowledge.⁶⁵ However, it should be kept in mind that not all gentlemen farmers were this naïve. The large aristocratic landowners in the east often possessed practical knowledge or employed competent estate agents who possessed that expertise. A man like the baron van der Borch van Verwolde was well aware of the obstacles facing landlords and farmers trying to improve yields on the rather poor soils of the Quarter of Zutphen. Like many of his fellow large landowners, he was enthusiastic about agricultural improvement, but about his own reclamation projects he admitted he might have reached the same result by simply buying good land instead of investing a lot of labor, capital, and manure to improve heath and moors.⁶⁶ He was not a naïve idealistic reformer, but a man with an eminently practical target: ‘*améliorer sa fortune en améliorant ses terres et bienfonds*’, as he put it himself.⁶⁷

Men with very different political views shared Van der Borch’s ideas on estate management. Whether their tenants were always happy with it is doubtful, because one of the consequences was that the lax attitude towards rents was abandoned. On the Middachten, Keppel and Twickel estates rents were raised in the early nineteenth century by up to 50 percent.⁶⁸ Johan F.W. baron van Spaen (1746-1827), the Orangist owner of the Biljoen estate near Arnhem, through careful management raised the net revenue of his estate (after deduction of taxes and other costs) from 17,000 guilders yearly in 1795-1799 to 27,600 guilders in 1808-1811, after which it was reduced somewhat to 24,400 guilders in 1812-1815.⁶⁹ This development of estate revenues mirrors the development of the grain prices in this period. Van Spaen’s interest in agriculture dated from before the revolution of 1795: already in 1777, he had started cultivating tobacco on his estate.⁷⁰ After the revolution he had ample time to engage in agriculture. He did well during the Batavian-

65 Buis, *Historia forestis*, 598-599.

66 *Magazijn van Vaderlandschen Landbouw* 4 (1808) 478.

67 GAA, Huis Verwolde, no 231.

68 Van Zanden, ‘Eigenerfde boerenklasse’, 120.

69 J. Aalbers, ‘Willem Anne van Spaen van Hardestein en de voormalige riddermatige adel (1806-1813)’, in: J. Aalbers and M. Prak (eds), *De bloem der natie. Adel en patriciaat in de Noordelijke Nederlanden* (Meppel and Amsterdam 1987) 109.

70 H.K. Roessingh, *Inlandse tabak. Expansie en contractie van een handelsgewas in de 17^e en 18^e eeuw in Nederland* (Wageningen 1976) 357.



Illustration 1 Johan Frederik Willem baron van Spaen (1746-1827). This Orangist nobleman was forced to give up his offices after the revolution of 1795, following which he dedicated himself to extending and improving his Biljoen estate near Arnhem. In 1805 he became a member of the agricultural committee of the province of Gelderland. Oil on wood by Narcisse Granier (source: Geldersch Landschap en Kasteelen, Collection Stichting Brantsen van de Zyp)

French period and managed to expand his estate. Of course, landlords like Van Spaen were aided by the fact that agriculture was booming during most of the period under research here, apart from a slump in the years from around 1817 to around 1835. Since trade, shipping, and industry were stagnating during most of the 1780-1850 period, it was natural for the aristocratic landlords to concentrate on the agricultural sector.⁷¹ This focus may be one of the roots of the divergence of the 'investment culture' of the rural political elite from that of urbanites in the west of the Netherlands. This agriculturally oriented investment culture persisted until the end of the nineteenth century.⁷²

71 J.L. van Zanden and A. van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914. Staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling* (Amsterdam 2000) 152-158, 166-178, 185-194.

72 P. Brusse, 'Investeringscultuur in Nederland. Ruraal beleggingsgedrag in een burgerlijk-stedelijke samenleving, 1780-1880', *TSEG – The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 19:3 (2022) 82-96; J.K.S. Moes, *Onder aristocraten. Over hegemonie, welstand en aanzien van adel, patriciaat en andere notabelen in Nederland, 1848-1914* (Hilversum 2012) 153.

Expansion of noble estates

For those noblemen who did not have to sell, intellectual, political, and economic circumstances contributed to their choice to invest in better management of their estates. They also started acquiring more land and continued doing so until the beginning of the agricultural depression of 1878-1895. The first opportunities to do so were offered by the domain sales from the late 1790s onward. They did not make much use of this potential, however. In Gelderland in 1798, Frans G. baron van Lynden van Hemmen bought 750 *morgen* that had formerly belonged to the Nederrijkswald domain and afforested it with pine trees and coppice.⁷³ A survey of domain sales for the period 1801-1804 shows that most purchasers were of bourgeois origin, however. Only J.F.W. baron van Spaen bought, for 17,800 guilders, pasture near his Biljoen estate in 1803 and the future governor of Gelderland Willem H.A.C. baron van Heeckeren van Kell bought pastures near Wageningen for 127,700 guilders, as well as tithes in the Achterhoek worth 22,000 guilders in the same year.⁷⁴

Noble landlords appear to have been more interested in appropriating large chunks of the so-called wastelands. Most of the territories of villages in the sandy districts in the east of the Netherlands consisted for a large part of heath, sand drifts, and moors that were used for gathering fuel and grazing sheep, and especially for cutting the sod required to make manure to fertilize the arable fields. These lands were common property of the landowners in the village, united in the so-called *marke*. The commons could be vast: around 1830, 85 percent of all the land in the Veluwe municipality of Beekbergen was owned by *marken*.⁷⁵ One of the elements of the late-eighteenth century discourse on agricultural improvement was the call for division of these commons, based on the liberal idea that private owners would take better care of this land and might even change it into fertile fields and pasture.⁷⁶ In view of the mediocre quality of the sandy soils these views were overly optimistic, but it did not prevent the government from taking measures to promote the division of the commons. Between

73 *Magazijn van Vaderlandschen Landbouw* 4 (1808) 452.

74 GAA, Bataafs-Franse Archieven no 1496.

75 *Kadastrale Atlas Gelderland 1832. Beekbergen* (Velp 1998).

76 H.B. Demoed, *Mandegoed schandegoed. De markeverdelingen in Oost-Nederland in de 19^{de} eeuw* (Zutphen 1987) 7, 24-26.

1807 and 1840, legislation was introduced that aimed at division of the commons and reclamation of these 'wastelands'.⁷⁷

For the nobility division of the commons was interesting because they often owned most of the farms that had shares in the *marke*; therefore, when the commons were divided, it was the nobility that received the major part of the land. Moreover, many of the smaller owners were not interested in owning plots of heath or moor and were prepared to sell to wealthier landowners, such as members of the nobility. Not all wasteland was owned by *marken*. In the northwest Veluwe, they were property of the state as successor of the duke of Gelre, and the wastelands in the territory of Arnhem were owned by the city.⁷⁸ The nobility could also profit from privatization and sale of these lands. Since noblemen held offices at the national, provincial, and local levels, they could use those positions to promote division and sale of the wastelands. They may have become a landed elite, but they were also still a political elite.⁷⁹

Under the autocratic regimes of Louis Napoleon, Willem I, and Willem II, the influence of aristocratic landlords at the national level remained limited. As far as the division of commons was concerned, they played a more important part at the local and provincial level. In 1805, provincial *Commissiën van Landbouw* were created. These provincial agricultural committees had only an advisory function, and their members received no salary, but they were very influential in the issue of the division of the commons. Both Gelderland and Overijssel each had a committee consisting of 12 members. Six of the committee members in Gelderland were noble owners of large estates, among them Van der Borch and Van Spaen. In Overijssel, 'only' three of them were noblemen; another three were Twente textile manufacturers. It appears the composition of the committee reflects the changing property relations in Overijssel.⁸⁰

Thus in 1806 and 1807, the committees in Gelderland and Overijssel produced proposals to divide the commons and introduce tax exemptions for those who reclaimed parts of the former commons. They were cautiously supported by the provincial administration of Gelderland whose administrators, including Van der Borch and Van

77 Demoed, *Mandegoed schandegoed*, 35-64.

78 Demoed, *Mandegoed schandegoed*, 18; J. Hofman, 'Ontginning van de heidevelden in de gemeente Arnhem in de 19^{de} eeuw. Een oriënterend onderzoek', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Gelre* 74 (1983) 108.

79 Beekelaar, 'Adel en ridderschap'; Brusse and Mijnhardt, *Towards a new template*, 88-89.

80 *Magazijn van Vaderlandschen Landbouw* 3 (1807) 56-57.

Spaen, pointed to the need to preserve part of the wastelands for cutting sod for manure production. These proposals – brought to the attention of the king by Jan Kops, the ‘commissioner for agricultural affairs’ – formed the basis for the statutes introduced by King Louis Napoleon in 1809-1810, and for subsequent legislation by Willem I. An important aspect of this regulation was that it enabled division of the commons by a majority vote, whereas previously unanimity was required.⁸¹ The 1806 proposal was drafted by a committee, including the ubiquitous Van der Borch for Gelderland, Carel baron de Vos van Steenwijk for Overijssel, and Van der Borch’s uncle Lucas baron van der Borch van Hondsdonk for Brabant.⁸² Clearly, the landowning nobility put its stamp on this legislation.

Noblemen also used their influence to promote the sale of state domains and the wastelands of the city of Arnhem. Joost A.J. baron Sloet tot Oldhuis, administrator of the Veluwe district, pleaded for sale of state domains in the northwest Veluwe. In 1843, aided by the desperate financial situation of the government, some 24,148 hectares of heath and moor were sold to the municipalities in the area.⁸³ The intention was that the municipalities would then sell the land on to those landlords willing to reclaim them. Although certainly not all land was sold, in the first couple of years after 1843, noble and bourgeois landlords bought 6000 hectares of wastelands.⁸⁴ In 1834, for the commons of the city of Arnhem, Derk W.G.J.H. baron Brantsen van de Zyp and Hendrik J.C.J. baron van Heeckeren van Enghuizen – the former *gedeputeerde* (member of the executive committee) and the latter member of the Estates of the province of Gelderland – requested the city council to be allowed to purchase part of this land. The city fathers listened carefully to these two wealthiest of the city’s citizens and granted the request. As a result, from 1835 onward, most of the city’s commons were gobbled up by a small number of large estates. All in all, between 1835 and 1854, 2600-2700 hectares were sold.⁸⁵ These and other sales permitted Van Heeckeren van Enghuizen, Brantsen van de Zyp, and another aristocratic landowner near Arnhem, Jan baron van Pallandt van Walfort, to increase their estates enormously. Respectively

81 Demoed, *Mandegoed schandegoed*, 32-38; Van der Poel, *Heren en boeren*, 143-144.

82 *Magazijn van Vaderlandschen Landbouw* 3 (1807) 214-219.

83 *Tijdschrift voor Staathuishoudkunde en Statistiek* 2 (1843) 516.

84 J.A.J. Sloet tot Oldhuis, ‘Staat der heidegronden in 1844 en 1845 op de Veluwe verkocht, in erfpacht uitgegeven of verdeeld, met het doel tot ontginning’, *Tijdschrift voor Staathuishoudkunde en Statistiek* 4 (1848) 123.

85 Hofman, ‘Ontginning van de heidevelden’, 117-127.



Map 2 Topographical map of Arnhem, 1821

Made by G.J. Dibbets in 1821, shortly before the sales of common land by the city of Arnhem. Estate owners have begun reclamations, indicated by the plots planted with trees, but most of the land north of the city is still heath. (Source: Special Collections, Wageningen University & Research – Library.)

from 669 to 2361 hectares, from 135 to 627 hectares, and from 188 to 1025 hectares between the late 1820s and the late 1840s. These sales enabled them to considerably enlarge the reclamations they had initiated around the turn of the century (figure 2).⁸⁶

⁸⁶ *Kadastrale Atlas Gelderland 1832. Arnhem* (Arnhem 1986); P. van Cruyningen, 'Het grootgrondbezit in Gelderland omstreeks 1850', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Gelre* 108 (2018) 107–108.

Division of the commons had already begun in the 1820s in the hinterland of the cities of Zutphen and Deventer, and particularly in the Achterhoek where many *marken* had already been divided by 1837. Yet another wave of divisions swept over the remainder of the two provinces after 1837. In Overijssel, almost 101,000 hectares were divided until 1854, in the Quarter of Zutphen 21,000 hectares until around 1850, whereas the Veluwe remained somewhat behind with c. 6000 hectares until around 1850.⁸⁷ To those 6000 hectares should be added the sales of the commons of Arnhem and the former domains of the northwest Veluwe, however. In most cases, large noble landowners took the initiative for these divisions and profited most from them. They could take these initiatives because, besides being the largest landowners, they were often also chairman (*markenrichter*) of the *marke* and frequently presided over the committee that prepared the plan for division. A well-documented example is the *marke* of Azelo in Twente. In 1841, the *markenrichter*, Jacob D.C. baron van Heeckeren van Wassenaer, proposed to divide the commons. The proposal was accepted by the meeting of shareholders in the *marke* with a majority of seven to three. Since Van Heeckeren's wife owned six of the ten farms with shares, the baron could always be certain of a majority, but as it was, he received the support of one of the other owners. Under the old rules, which required unanimity, he would not have been able to get his proposal accepted. Four years later the commons were divided, and the baron was granted 163.5 hectares, more than all other owners combined.⁸⁸ Van Heeckeren proceeded in the same way in all seven *marken* on his vast estate, and he did not stop at that. He also bought land from smaller owners. In 1849/1850, for instance, he spent 6000 guilders on land purchases.⁸⁹ In this way, he enlarged the Twickel estate with almost 2700 hectares between 1832 and his death in 1875.⁹⁰

By dividing commons, buying domain land and land of smaller landowners – and, not to forget, the estates of less fortunate noblemen – a group of wealthy aristocrats were able to increase their acreages considerably in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. Most of this land was not very valuable, however. To make it valuable,

87 Demoed, *Mandegoed schandegoed*, 74; L.A.J.W. Sloet, *Bijdragen tot de kennis van Gelderland* (Arnhem 1852) 112-123.

88 Demoed, *Mandegoed schandegoed*, 111-117.

89 Huisarchief Twickel, Delden, no 2519.

90 J. van Zuidam, 'Het adellijk landgoed Twickel. Groeiend bezit aan erven en landerijen na de markeverdelingen en landbouwnieuwingen', *Overijsselse Historische Bijdragen* 138 (2023) 89, 94-96.

serious investments in reclamation were required. How did noble landowners do this? They were wise enough not to try to transform unfertile wastelands into arable fields and pasture. As W.A. baron Schimmelpenninck van der Oije, owner of the large Poll estate in the Veluwe, remarked in a debate in the Lower House in 1840 on an act that was to grant tax exemption for land reclamation: such an activity was only financially worthwhile when performed piecemeal by farmers, using surplus labor, manure, and money.⁹¹ When large landowners engaged in reclamation of heathlands, it was in the form of afforestation. Van Heeckeren van Wassenaer, for instance, had 131,000 pine trees planted on the Twickel estate in 1849/1850 alone.⁹² This kind of activity was only profitable for large landlords.

These noblemen were investors who focused on the long term. They were aware their new possessions were not that valuable, but they were prepared to wait until afforestation and reclamation into pasture or cropland would yield profits in the future, sometimes even only after decades. The profitability of agriculture at a certain time was not even that relevant. Expansion continued also during the 1818-1830 period, when prices of agricultural products were low.

Effects on the number and size of estates

It is clear that the number of noble-owned estates was reduced as a result of the revolutionary tribulations. In the districts of Twente, Salland, and Achterhoek (figure 1), their number fell from 131 to 70 between approximately 1780 and 1830. The effects on the size of the estates are more difficult to gauge due to a lack of sources. The first survey of size and ownership of estates was only published in the 1840s, in the *Aardrijkskundig woordenboek* of Van der Aa.⁹³ The data in Van der Aa's work is not complete and not always reliable. Therefore, it has been supplemented and corrected with information on the size of estates from estate and family archives, probate records in notarial archives, cadastral ledgers, literature, and particularly *memories van successie* (declarations for the inheritance tax), which for this period are available for every deceased person who owned any real estate.

91 *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1839/1840*, 21 March 1840, 'Vrijdom van lasten voor landontginningen', 113.

92 Huisarchief Twickel, Delden, no 2609/6.

93 A.J. van der Aa, *Aardrijkskundig woordenboek der Nederlanden* (14 vols., Gorinchem 1839-1852).

Combining all these primary and secondary sources enables us to identify 29 large estates or estate complexes (some landlords owned more than one estate) with more than 500 hectares in the 1840s. They are shown in table 1. The possessions of the houses of Orange-Nassau and Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen are not included in this table, nor are the estates that noblemen owned outside of Gelderland and Overijssel. Of these 29 estates or estate complexes, 22 were situated in Gelderland, 5 in Overijssel, and 2 in both provinces.

For the late eighteenth century there is no source providing information on estate size covering the entire area researched. Therefore, the size of these estates in the 1790s has been estimated by taking account of the changes during the 50 years between the early 1790s and the early 1840s, due to inheritance, sale, purchase, or division of commons, based on primary and secondary sources. The outcome of these estimates is also shown in the table. Of the 29 estates or complexes, 28 had remained in the hands of the same family during this period. Only the Doorwerth estate was sold in 1837, by Count Aldenburg Bentinck to Baron van Brakell.

Table 1 Noble landowners in Veluwe, Achterhoek, Salland and Twente, with estates over 500 hectares, 1840s

Owner 1840s	Acreage 1840s	Acreage 1790s
Torck, A.C. baronesse	8000	10,000
Sandberg, S.J. baron, and wife	6900	2000-3000
Rechteren Limpurg, A.F.L. graaf van	4800	3800-4200
Heeckeren van Wassenaer, J.D.C. baron van, and wife	4600	1500-2000
Heeckeren van Enghuizen, H.J.C.J. baron van	3800	500-1000
Heeckeren van Kell, W.H.A.C. baron van	2600	1000-1500
Brakell Doorwerth, J.A.P. baron van	2200	2000-2200
Heyden van Baak, J.H.A. baron van der	1900	500-1000
Spaen van Biljoen, A.J. baron van	1900	400-500
Pallandt van Walfort, heirs J. baron van	1800	400-500
Nispen van Sevenaer, jhr. J.A.C.A. van	1700	400-500
Pallandt van de Beerse, A.W. baron van	1600	?
Schimmelpenninck van der Oije, W.A. baron	1400	800-1000
Pallandt van Barlham, A.W.C.W. baron van	1300	800-1000
Isendoorn à Blois, F.C.Th. baron	1200	500-1000
Nagell van Ampsen, A.C.W. baron van	1200	400-600

Owner 1840s	Acreage 1840s	Acreage 1790s
Aldenburg Bentinck, C.A.F. graaf van	1000	400-500
Westerholt van Hackfort, B.F.W. baron van	1000	400-500
Zuylen van Nievelt, J.H. baron van	900	400-500
Borch, heirs W.F.E. baron van der	900	400-500
Nispen van Pannerden, jhr. C.E.J.F. van	900	400-500
Pallandt van Eerde, heirs A. baron van	800	700-800
Brantsen van de Zyp, D.W.G.J.H. baron	800	100-150
Bentinck van Schoonheeten, R.F.C. baron	700	300-400
Dorth tot Medler, R.E. baron van	600	200-300
Sandberg, jhr. A.	600	< 500
Borch, A. baron van der	600	400-500
Goltz, F.A. graaf van der	500	< 500
Nagell van Wisch, C.S.J.W. baron van	500	< 500

Archives: GAA, 0021, nos 52, 56, 64, 69, 80; 0024, no 67; 0026, no 1; 0032, no 8; 0033, no 53; 0035, no 51; 0036, no 57; 0092, no 87; 0168, no 6779, 6932, 6938, 6939, 6940, 6942, 6950; 0221, nos 22, 68, 70; 0520, no 155; 0894, no 155; 2066, no 94; *Collectie Overijssel*, Zwolle, 0122 no 47; 0136.4, nos 95, 1106, 1401, 1410; 0217.2 no 43; *Nationaal Archief*, Den Haag, 3.06.05, no 3665; *Streekarchief Noordwest Veluwe*, 3002, no 53; *Huisarchief Twickel*, Delden, *Huis Twickel* no 2460; *cadastral ledgers of Doetinchem, Gorssel, Hengelo, Hummelo en Keppel, Ruurlo, Steenderen, Voorst, Vorden, Warnsveld and Wisch*, retrieved from *digilegger.web*.

Literature: J.C. Bierens de Haan, Rosendaal, groen hemeltjen op aerd. Kasteel, tuin en bewoners sedert 1579 (*Zutphen* 1994); K. Bouwer, Voor profijt en genoegen. Bos en landschap van de Zuidwest-Veluwe (*Utrecht* 2008); P. van Cruyningen, 'Het grootgrondbezit in Gelderland omstreeks 1850', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Gelre* 109 (2018) 95-110; H.B. Demoeid, Mandegoed schandegoed. De markeverdelingen in Oost-Nederland in de 19^{de} eeuw (*Zutphen* 1987); M.A.M. Franken, Willem Anne Schimmelpenninck van der Oije (1800-1872). Uit de schaduw van Thorbecke (*Utrecht* 2018); A.J. Gevers and A.J. Mensema, De havezaten in Salland en hun bewoners (*Alphen aan den Rijn* 1985); A.J. Gevers and A.J. Mensema, De havezaten in Twente en hun bewoners (*Zwolle* 2004); B. Haak and P. Hofman, De Hoge Veluwe in de 19^e eeuw (*Apeldoorn* 1995); J. Harenberg, 'Kastelen en buitenplaatsen in ons gewest', *Archief de Graafschap* (1975) 44-80; J. Harenberg, Kastelen in Oost-Gelderland (*Zutphen* 1993); J. Harenberg, Kastelen rond Zutphen I (*Zutphen* 1987); J. Harenberg, Kastelen en landhuizen rond Lochem (*Zutphen* 1989); J. Hofman, 'Ontginning van de heidevelden in de gemeente Arnhem in de 19^{de} eeuw. Een oriënterend onderzoek', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Gelre* 74 (1983) 103-131; *Kadastrale Atlas Gelderland 1832* (65 vols., *Velp* 1985-2014); V. Pacquay, 'Landgoed Middachten, een terreinexploitatie in het verleden', in: T. Hoekstra (ed.), *Middachten. Huis en heerlijkheid (Utrecht 2002)* 105-126; E. Storms-Smeets, 'Het profijt van schoonheid. Landgoed Biljoen, 1661-1930', in: C. Gietman and J. Jas (eds), *Biljoen. Kasteel – bewoners – landgoed (Zwolle 2020)* 277-290; H. Woolderink, 'Het grootgrondbezit in Twente', *Jaarboek Twente* 4 (1965) 14-63.

Aldenburg Bentinck, who lived in London, left the Doorwerth estate in a ruinous condition. Most owners of the 29 large estates, however, had clearly invested in enlarging and improving their possessions. Most of the estates already had a considerable size in the 1790s, but they were considerably enlarged in subsequent years. They belonged

to the larger, well-managed estates whose wealthy owners were able to invest in improvement and expansion of their possessions. Of nine estate owners on this list who died between 1844 and 1862, seven were millionaires.⁹⁴ It is doubtful whether all these large fortunes were just the result of agricultural improvement and frugal living. Marriages with daughters of wealthy patrician families from the major cities in the west may also have played a part. This is obviously the case with Baron van Heeckeren van Enghuizen, who married Elizabeth Hope, daughter of Amsterdam banker John Williams Hope. She inherited 3.5 million guilders, which her husband invested in the purchase of land, creation of parks, and building of a new castle on his estate near Hummelo.⁹⁵ Another estate builder in the Arnhem region, Jan baron van Pallandt van Walfort, who left an estate worth at least 1.3 million guilders, was married to Anna H. E. Verstolk, daughter of Rotterdam patricians.⁹⁶ It remains to be established how widespread this type of marriage strategy was among the landed nobility. Therefore, not only was the number of noble estates reduced from 131 to 70, the table shows that the remaining estates were also enlarged. Whereas 29 estates of 500 hectares or more can be identified in the 1840s, in the 1790s there were at most 11 or 12.

Conclusion

Brusse and Mijnhardt were right to conclude that the Batavian Revolution did not threaten the positions of the nobility and left their agricultural power base intact. The article at hand, however, suggests that their conclusion is only valid for a part of the nobility of the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel, as they have not taken into account any existing economic inequality within the nobility. They can hardly be blamed for this oversight, because the extremely sparse Dutch literature on this topic has ignored it, too. International historiography, however, is aware of it, and this study shows that Gelderland and Overijssel fit into the continental European pattern in which wealthy aristocrats stood their ground, whereas poorer nobles often had to sell

94 GAA, 0021, nos 53, 64; 0035, no 51; 0168, nos. 6779, 6932, 6938, 6939, 6940, 6942, 6950; 0894, no 155; Collectie Overijssel, Zwolle, 0122, no 47; 036.4, no 95; Streekarchief Noordwest-Veluwe, 3002, no 53.

95 GAA, 0168, nos 6938, 6939, 6940; cf. also Brusse, 'Investeringscultuur', 69-70.

96 GAA, 0168, nos 6779, 6932, 6950; *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* 9 (1933) 750-751.

out (as Bois has demonstrated for the Sarthe department and Cardoza for Piedmont).

When the accustomed revenue strategy of the nobles – based on a combination of rent income from a middle-sized, routinely managed estate, together with income from officeholding – collapsed in 1795, it had different consequences for poor and wealthy aristocrats. When *havezaten* no longer provided access to offices, it was an incentive for many indebted noblemen to sell their estates. This article has focused on the winners: those who not only held on to their estates, but managed to enlarge them and become a veritable landed elite, a small group consisting of some 30 families around 1850. They possessed larger fortunes and larger landed estates from the outset. The ideas about improving agriculture which affected elites all over Western Europe and Northern America also influenced the landowning nobility of Gelderland and Overijssel, and the loss of offices induced them to retire to their estates and actively engage in agriculture. Moreover, booming prices of agricultural products made farming not only a socially acceptable but also a profitable activity. The traditional criticism by historians of this group of gentlemen – that they had no practical knowledge of agriculture – needs to be more nuanced. While these men did not work behind the plough themselves, they were aware of the obstacles and challenges facing farmers and landlords in the sandy districts. For running a large estate with dozens of tenants such knowledge was a necessary condition.

The noblemen who survived the Batavian-French period as landowners managed to enlarge their estates considerably, turning them into a genuine landed elite. They could do so by using the influence they still had in Dutch society as members of parliament, as regional and local administrators, and as members of the provincial agricultural committees. They promoted the division of commons and the sale of state and municipal domains, managing to appropriate a large portion of the land that was divided or sold.

Several questions remain unanswered in this study and require more research. It is clear that by far most of those who sold out did so because they were indebted. It is less clear how some of those who survived managed to enlarge their estates. Better estate management may be the explanation, but in several cases marriage with rich heiresses from patrician families in the west of the country considerably added to the fortunes of noble landowners. We do not know yet, however, how often this occurred. Due to lack of research, we also do not know whether

the developments outlined here also occurred in other parts of the Netherlands. For Utrecht, Renger de Bruin's research provides a basis for further investigation.⁹⁷ Finally, more research is required on the fate of those who had to sell their estates and their descendants. Elite research in the Netherlands has focused strongly on those who managed to stay on top, and the present analysis– *mea culpa* – fits into that tradition. Even so, those noblemen who were less successful also merit greater research, if only to better understand why others succeeded.

About the author

Piet van Cruyningen (1958) is Senior Researcher with the Economic and Environmental History Group of Wageningen University & Research. He has published on agricultural history, water management history, and estate management in the Low Countries.

E-mail: piet.vancruyningen@wur.nl

⁹⁷ De Bruin, *Adel en ridderschap*.