

RENGER E. DE BRUIN\*  
Departement Geschiedenis en Kunstgeschiedenis  
Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen  
Universiteit Utrecht  
Drift 6  
3512 BS Utrecht  
The Netherlands  
R.E.deBruin@uu.nl

THE COMMANDERS' SPOUSES.  
THE MARRIAGES OF THE UTRECHT TEUTONIC KNIGHTS,  
1640–1940\*\*

KEYWORDS

*history; Early Modern History; military orders; Teutonic Order; Bailiwick of Utrecht; marriages; women's history; Dutch History*

ABSTRACT

In 1640 the Bailiwick of Utrecht abolished the obligation of celibacy, as a continuation of the Protestantisation process that had started 25 years earlier. After this decision, half of the sitting members married. Most of the knights who joined after 1640 were married. The paper analyses data collected on 221 marriages over three centuries. Most of these marriages fit the Western European Marriage Pattern: entered into by mature people, generally of their own free will, but in good consultation with the family (marriage by consent). The age difference between the partners was usually not very large. Very young brides were rare, mainly restricted to the circles of German princes, who knew arranged marriages. The spouses usually came from the same milieu, but certainly not always. As noble girls, the brides had received an education aimed at finding a suitable spouse, after which they could play a role as a mother, manager of the household and pivot in the social network. The knights formed their own households, with their children, no longer living in the commanderies.

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\* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9801-896X>

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Until the nineteenth century a substantial part of the offspring died young. The effects of medical developments in the nineteenth century, which reduced child and maternal mortality, are visible in the data set.

On 8 May 1640 the Estates of Utrecht ratified the decision to allow the knight-brethren of the Teutonic Order Bailiwick of Utrecht to marry. This abolition of the celibacy rule was the capstone of the Protestantisation process, which had been initiated by the same assembly a quarter of a century earlier. At that time it prescribed that only followers of the Reformed religion were allowed to join the Order. This process put an end to a remarkably long-lasting effort to let the Bailiwick keep its Catholic character in an environment that had been formally Protestant since 1580.<sup>1</sup> Since Catholicism was associated with a pro-Spanish attitude, this effort created a field of tension in the context of the struggle against the king of Spain, in which Utrecht was involved as one of the rebellious provinces. The obvious loyalty to the Habsburg Grand Master shown by the fiercely Catholic land commander Jacob Taets van Amerongen (1542–1612) brought this relationship to a head. The Protestantisation that began in 1615 was explicitly intended to guarantee the political loyalty of the Bailiwick. The appointment of eight-year-old Hendrik Casimir I van Nassau-Dietz (1612–1640), who was a close relative of the powerful stadholder and commander of the army Prince Maurits van Orange-Nassau, as land commander in 1620 was an extension of this. The young man did not disappoint. In close cooperation with the Estates of Utrecht, which had been the sovereign of the Bailiwick since the abjuration of the Spanish king Philip II as lord of the Netherlands in 1581, he set out to transform it into a reliable institution. The Estates saw the break with the Central Order, which resulted from the abolition of celibacy, as an advantage, because it meant the end of the relationship of dependency with a foreign and potentially hostile authority. All subsequent attempts to reunify the Bailiwick with the Central Order failed due to objections by the Estates and the issue of celibacy.<sup>2</sup> However, talks about

<sup>1</sup> Johannes A. Mol, “Trying to survive. The Military Orders in Utrecht, 1580–1620,” in *The Military Orders and the Reformation. Choices, State Building and the Weight of Tradition*, ed. Johannes A. Mol, Klaus Militzer and Helen J. Nicholson (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 181–207; Daniela Gröger-Schiemann, *Die Deutschordensballei Utrecht während der Reformationszeit: die Landkommende zwischen Rebellion und Staatsbildung*, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens 68 (Weimar: VDG, 2016), 86–199.

<sup>2</sup> Udo Arnold and Bernhard Demel, “Die kalvinistische Ballei Utrecht,” in *800 Jahre Deutscher Orden. Ausstellung des Germanischen Nationalmuseums Nürnberg in Zusammenarbeit mit der*

reunification continued and unlike the secularised lands of the Order in Prussia and Livonia, the Bailiwick of Utrecht maintained the name Teutonic Order.

The abolition of celibacy made the Bailiwick of Utrecht an independent institution of mostly married, Protestant noblemen, fundamentally different from the bailiwicks that had remained within the Central Order, including the Lutheran bailiwicks of Saxony and Thuringia and the triconfessional Bailiwick of Hesse.<sup>3</sup> The Utrecht Teutonic knights functioned within the structure of the Dutch Republic, the state that had emerged from the Revolt against Spain and which had gained international recognition by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, formally breaking away from the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup> The role of the nobility in this state was considerably greater than has long been assumed.<sup>5</sup> The marriages that the members of the Bailiwick of Utrecht concluded after 1640 were important for the persistence of noble networks. This paper analyses these marriages over a period of three centuries and addresses the following aspects: number of marriages, average

*Internationalen Historischen Kommission zur Erforschung des Deutschen Ordens*, ed. Udo Arnold and Gerhard Bott (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1990), 252; Bernhard Demel, "Die Deutschordensballei Utrecht in der Reichs- und Ordensüberlieferung von der frühen Neuzeit bis in die Zeit Napoleons," in *Unbekannte Aspekte der Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*, ed. Bernhard Demel (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar: Böhlau, 2005), 9–92; Udo Arnold and Maike Trentin-Mayer, *Deutscher Orden 1190–2000. Ein Führer durch das Deutschordensmuseum in Bad Mergentheim* (Bad Mergentheim: Deutschordensmuseum, 2004), 79; Renger E. de Bruin, *Bedreigd door Napoleon. De Ridderlijke Duitse Orde, Balije van Utrecht, 1753–1838* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 66–67, 170–175, 204–207, 270–279; Renger E. de Bruin, "The Religious Identity of the Teutonic Order Bailiwick of Utrecht, 1560–2006," *Ordines Militares Colloquia Torunsia Historica. Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders* 23 (2018), 243–248.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold and Trentin-Meyer, *Deutscher Orden*, 52–53; Bernhard Demel, "Die Reformation in ihrer Auswirkung auf den Deutschen Orden in Thüringen unter Berücksichtigung von Kardinal Christian August von Sachsen-Weitz," in *Der Deutsche Orden und Thüringen. Aspekte einer 800-jährigen Geschichte*, ed. Thomas T. Müller (Petersberg: Michael Imhoff Verlag, 2014), 75–82.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 659–665; James C. Kennedy, *A Concise History of the Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 182–183; Friso Wielenga, *Geschichte der Niederlande* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2018), 106–109; David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World. A History of a Global Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 58–60.

<sup>5</sup> Henk K. F. van Nierop, *The Nobility of Holland, from Knights to Regents, 1500–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 11–24; John Leslie Price, "The Dutch Nobility in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* I, ed. Hamish M. Scott, (London–New York: Longman, 1995), 82–84; Paul Brusse and Wijnand Mijndhardt, *Towards a New Template for Dutch History: De-urbanization and the Balance between City and Countryside* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011), 87–90.

age at marriage, duration of the marriage, the number of children, the social status of marriage partners, and the role of women. In order to be able to follow the developments in time, the journey of three centuries has been divided into shorter stages, which are related to turning points in the history of the Order. These caesurae, as well as the starting and ending year of the study, will be addressed following a discussion of the source material.

I want to compare the demographic patterns that emerge from the study of the marriages of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights with what is known in this field about nobility in general, both in the Netherlands and in surrounding countries, or even more broadly about the upper layers of society in those countries. This comparison serves the question to what extent the Bailiwick of Utrecht constituted an elite within the nobility. I have posed this question in my contribution to a symposium at the Université Côte d'Azur in October 2019.<sup>6</sup> The answer is the subject of a prosopographical study of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights between 1640 and 1940. This paper addresses the demographic aspects. Mapping marriage patterns is not only a matter of counting and classifying into groups, but also of looking for personal motives and emotions. Sources such as letters are regularly quoted to bring them out. Quotes have been translated into English, with the original Dutch texts in footnotes.

#### SOURCE MATERIAL

The rich source material available on the marriages of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights makes it possible to map these marriages in some detail, starting with the membership lists. Membership was highly coveted because of the prestige and the high income that went with it. Noblemen were enrolled at a young age and their parents had to pay an entry fee. Incumbent commanders were allowed to register young boys from their network during the chapter meetings, which registrations were recorded in the chapter resolutions. These candidates were placed on an expectant list and, when a position became available as a result of death, the one who was the highest on the list was asked to submit his proofs of nobility in four quarters and proofs of Reformed baptism and confession in order to check whether he met the criteria. If that was the case, a pedigree was drawn up and the person

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<sup>6</sup> Renger E. de Bruin, "An Elite within Dutch Nobility. The Teutonic Order Bailiwick of Utrecht, 1640–1840," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 104 (2022): 159–174.

concerned could join. The extensive documentation was carefully preserved in the archive because of the importance of the membership.<sup>7</sup>

This material was used in the nineteenth century by the prominent genealogist Willem Jan Baron d'Ablaing van Giessenburg (1812–1892), who was for a long time the secretary of the Supreme Council of Nobility, the government body founded in 1814 that dealt with all procedures concerning nobility.<sup>8</sup> D'Ablaing van Giessenburg published legal works about noble rights and overviews of noble institutions such as the knighthoods since their re-establishment in 1814. In 1871 he published an armorial of the Bailiwick of Utrecht, in which he complemented the data from the Order's archives with those from other sources, such as the archives of the Supreme Council of Nobility.<sup>9</sup> For all members in the period 1581–1871, he collected data on births, deaths, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, wives, parents-in-law, children, with their possible marriage partners, political and military functions, and ranks within the Order. Following the same pattern, F. J. W. Fabius, secretary of the Bailiwick of Utrecht between 1942 and 1979, completed the overview for the period 1871–1961.<sup>10</sup> For the period 1961–2014, this was done by F. P. de Boer in the context of a book on the Order Signs.<sup>11</sup> The knights described therein fall outside the scope of this article, but the book also contains data on

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<sup>7</sup> Utrecht, Archief Ridderlijke Duitse Orde Balije van Utrecht, Oud Archief, 1200–1811 (henceforth as: ARDOU-OA), Inv. Nr. 192.0, Register houdende namen van de leden van de Duitse Orde Balije van Utrecht met hun kwartieren en heraldische wapens over de jaren 1634–1775 en gedeeltelijk met opgave van geboorte- en sterfdata, ca. 1775; 193.0, Staten en lijsten houdende de namen en andere persoonsgegevens van de landcommandeurs, commandeurs, jonkheren en edel-expectanten van de Balije van Utrecht, 1639–1809; Utrecht, Archief Ridderlijke Duitse Orde Balije van Utrecht, Nieuw Archief, 1811–1955 (henceforth as: ARDOU-NA), Inv. Nr. 110, Stukken betreffende overlijden en opvolging van leden van het kapittel, 1824–1949. Met betreffende staten, ca. 1950, ca. 1965.

<sup>8</sup> *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, vol. IV (Leiden, Sijthoff, 1918), 8–9; Matthijs Adriaan Beelaerts van Blokland, *De Hoge Raad van Adel, geschiedenis en werkzaamheden* (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1966), 171–175; Egbert Jan Wolleswinkel, *Nederlands adelsrecht. Wettelijke adeldom als historisch gegroeid instituut* (The Hague: Stichting De Nederlandsche Leeuw, 2012), 47–49.

<sup>9</sup> Willem Jan d'Ablaing van Giessenburg, *Wapenboek der Ridders van de Duitse Orde, Balije van Utrecht, sedert 1581 opgeluisterd door hunne vier opgezworen adellijke quartieren en acht stamdeelen, huwelijken en kinderen* (The Hague: C. van Doorn, 1871).

<sup>10</sup> Foppe Jan Wybrand Fabius, *De Ridderlijke Duitse Orde van verleden tot heden* (Utrecht: School voor de Grafische Vakken, 1961).

<sup>11</sup> Frits P. de Boer, *Uniformen en eretekenen van de Ridderlijke Duitse Orde Balije van Utrecht, 1606-heden* (Utrecht: RDO, 2014).

knights who joined before 1940 and who had not yet died in 1961, as well as data on their wives.

The material published by D'Ablaing van Giessenburg, Fabius and De Boer contains sufficient information for an analysis of the marriages of the members of the Order between 1640 and 1940. However, there are gaps and the data needs to be checked. The first round was carried out with the aid of the *Nederland's Adelsboek*, a periodical *état présent* on the Dutch nobility, published since 1903, comparable to the *Almanach de Gotha*. This series is reliable and complete for the period after 1814, the starting point for the constitutional nobility in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but it also contains a lot of data for the centuries before that.<sup>12</sup> Checking and supplementing on the basis of the civil status records (from 1811) or baptismal, marriage and burial registers (before 1811), formerly an extremely time-consuming activity, has become feasible because archives make these files available online. Special genealogical sites can put the researcher on the trail of a lacuna, but caution is advised.<sup>13</sup>

The advantage of research into nobility is that much genealogical research has been done, often by or on behalf of noble families. These proofs of noble status were, and remain, of essential importance to the social identity of these households. To please their noble patrons, genealogists sometimes worked very imaginatively, which led to bizarre family trees. For example, the Van Brederodes claimed direct descent from the Trojan king Priam.<sup>14</sup> In addition to such completely unreliable descendant lists, family histories have also been published that are based on thorough scholarly research. For instance, it has been made plausible that the lineage of the noble family Van Limburg Stirum, which has branches in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, can be traced back to the Carolingian period.<sup>15</sup> This makes the Van Limburg Stirums, who also supplied several members for the Bailiwick of Utrecht, the oldest in the Netherlands, even older than the Dutch royals, the House of Orange-Nassau. The use of genealogical literature and family histories should therefore be done with great caution, but it simplifies the research enormously. In any case, the researcher has a starting point, whereas such research

<sup>12</sup> The lineage of the branches that were recognised, incorporated or elevated after 1814 have been published in several historical volumes of the *Nederland's Adelsboek*, but not the died-out or non-noble branches.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, accessed 1 March 2022, <https://www.genealogieonline.nl>.

<sup>14</sup> Frits van Oostrom, *Nobel streven. Het onwaarschijnlijke maar waargebeurde verhaal van ridder Jan van Brederode* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017), 9–10.

<sup>15</sup> *Die Grafen van Limburg Stirum*, vol. I,1, ed. Wilhelmus Wedekind (Assen-Amsterdam-Münster: Van Gorcum-Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1976), xv–xliii, lxvii–lxx.

into other layers of society sometimes has to start from scratch. In my doctoral research into the members of the Utrecht city council in the period 1795–1813, the starting point for those from the nobility and patriciate was much easier to determine than for their colleagues from other social backgrounds, especially because at that time, in the 1980s, the use of online resources was still far beyond the horizon.<sup>16</sup> In the archives of noble families, often transferred to public records offices, many documents can be found that are relevant to this research. It concerns manuscript genealogies, about which the same problems apply as for the published copies just mentioned, but also items such as birth, marriage and death certificates. An extensive genealogical collection (published material, manuscripts, family announcements and photographed archives) is in the Central Bureau for Genealogy in The Hague, which made data from sources like baptism records and civil status registers available online.<sup>17</sup> An overview of portraits in public and private collections is kept by the Netherlands Institute for Art History.<sup>18</sup> In addition to an image of the portrait and art-historical data, it also includes biographical data. Relevant data can also be found in biographical overviews such as the Repertory of Civil Servants, 1428–1861. These works can be easily consulted online via the website Biographical Portal of the Netherlands.<sup>19</sup>

The data from D'Ablaing van Giessenburg, Fabius, and De Boer, checked and supplemented with genealogical literature and archive sources, have yielded a reasonably complete set, on which the following analyses are based. For the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, reliability and completeness approach 100%, whereas for the earlier period, and especially for the first decades after the year of the beginning, there are certainly gaps and inaccuracies. For instance, the data on the number of children is incomplete until the introduction of the civil registry in 1811, because babies who died without being baptised were often not registered. Moreover, baptism, marriage and burial books have not been preserved as completely as the civil status registers. The books had to be handed over to the municipality in 1811 to serve as retro-acta, but that did not always happen and sometimes the books were not available or incomplete, due to church fires or careless storage. The starting point for record-keeping also differs depending on the church community. Whereas Amsterdam already started with a baptismal

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<sup>16</sup> Renger E. de Bruin, *Burgers op het kussen. Volkssoevereiniteit en bestuurssamenstelling in de stad Utrecht 1795–1813* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1986), 203–285.

<sup>17</sup> Accessed 26 February 2022, <https://cbg.nl/>; <https://www.wiewaswie.nl/bronnen>.

<sup>18</sup> Accessed 26 February 2022, <https://rkd.nl/>.

<sup>19</sup> Accessed 26 February 2022, <http://www.biografischportaal.nl>.

register at the introduction of the Reformation in 1578, the oldest baptismal book of the village Elspeet on the Veluwe, a region with a strong noble presence, dates from 1670. In the case of noble and other prominent families, who usually kept family archives, records from these, such as marriage, birth and death announcements, can provide additional information. All in all, the deviations will be limited and largely neutralised by the fact that the data refer to the whole group. An undercounting of the number of children for the first half of the period under consideration and some missing data with regard to marriage age and social origin of the brides are the main problems resulting from lacunae in the source material.

## PERIODISATION

The starting point for this research is absolutely clear: 1640, the year in which the obligation of celibacy was abolished and the knight-brethren were allowed to marry. The end point, 1940, is more arbitrary. That is the final limit of my prosopographical research into the members of the Bailiwick of Utrecht, of which the analysis of the marriages is a part. It is also the limit of a project into the Dutch elite, in which I am collaborating.<sup>20</sup> This year has been chosen because of the availability of tax sources, which has been lacking since World War II. More recent tax data have either not been preserved or cannot be consulted for reasons of privacy. Changes in tax legislation also play a role. The choice for 1940 has nothing to do with the War as such. The protection of privacy is also a consideration for subjects other than wealth and income, in order to stop in the middle of the twentieth century, to make sure that all persons mentioned are no longer living.

In order to follow the demographic developments among the Utrecht Teutonic Knights, the period of three centuries has been cut into shorter pieces. In doing so, I use caesurae in the history of the Bailiwick, which I also use for other subjects, e.g. the regional origin of the members.<sup>21</sup> The first caesura is 1696, the year in

<sup>20</sup> Oscar Gelderblom “Investment behaviour, political change and economic growth in the Netherlands 1780–1940”, Onderzoeksproject bij NWO (2017–2023), accessed 9 April 2018, <https://www.nwo.nl/onderzoek-en-resultaten/onderzoeksprojecten/i/74/28074.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Renger E. de Bruin, „Die Entwicklung der regionalen Herkunft der Ritter der Ballei Utrecht im Zeitraum 1640–1840,” in *Globale und regionale Aspekte in der Entwicklung des Deutschen Ordens. Vorträge der Tagung der Internationalen Historischen Kommission des Deutschen Ordens in Würzburg 2016*, ed. Udo Arnold, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens 82 (Weimar: VDG, 2019), 119–149.



which Hendrik Casimir II died, the land commander who, like his namesake, was also stadholder of the province of Friesland. This brought an end to the period in which the Nassau family, together with their relatives by marriage, controlled the Bailiwick. The next cut-off point is 1753, when a reorganisation started that turned the dilapidated institution into a profitable business. The period of prosperity ended in 1795 when French troops occupied the Dutch Republic and unleashed the Batavian Revolution, which turned against aristocratic institutions. The Bailiwick managed to survive the threat, only to be abolished by Napoleon in 1811. Four years later, King William I reversed this decision.<sup>22</sup> The last caesura is 1871, when a drastic change in the statutes was made.<sup>23</sup>

For each period, the data on numbers of marriages, marriage age, numbers of children and social background of the partners have been calculated, so that the developments over the entire three centuries can be followed. These results are compared with what is known about the Dutch nobility during these periods, which is interesting for the question of how exceptional the members of the Bailiwick of Utrecht were. In order to follow the developments, the members have been divided into groups, separated by the caesura years, for which I will use the demographic term cohorts.<sup>24</sup> The criterion is the year of entry. The first cohort consists of the men who were already members at the time the obligation of celibacy was abolished. Then come the men who joined in the years 1640–1695, followed by 1696–1752, 1753–1794, 1795–1814, 1815–1870 and 1871–1940.

## NUMBER OF MARRIAGES

Until the decree of 8 May 1640, the Utrecht knight-brethren had to remain unmarried. Still in 1635 knight Albrecht van Duvenbode (1599–1657) had to leave the Or-

<sup>22</sup> Renger E. de Bruin, "Hidden in the Bushes: The Teutonic Order of the Bailiwick of Utrecht in the 1780–1806 Revolutionary Period," in *The Military Orders*, vol. 5, *Politics and Power*, ed. Peter Edbury (Farnham–Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 349–361; Renger E. de Bruin, "The narrow escape of the Teutonic Order Bailiwick of Utrecht, 1811–1815," in *The Military Orders*, vol. 6.2, *Culture and Conflict in Western and Northern Europe*, ed. Jochen Schenk and Michael Carr (London–New York: Routledge, 2017), 222–232.

<sup>23</sup> ARDO-NA, Inv. Nr. 104, Reglement voor de Ridderlijke Duitse Orde Balije van Utrecht, 1871. De Bruin, "Religious Identity", 257.

<sup>24</sup> David A. Grimes and Kenneth F. Schulz, "Cohort studies: marching towards outcomes", *Lancet* 359 (2002): 341–345. This term is also widely used in historical-demographic research: Van Nierop, *The Nobility of Holland*, 50–62.

der, because he wanted to marry. A century earlier, the obligation of celibacy in the sense of sexual abstinence had been treated leniently. Land Commander Albert van Egmond van Merestein (?–1560) even accommodated his beloved in the Teutonic House, but a formal marriage was out of the question.<sup>25</sup> The reorientation towards Catholicism under Jacob Taets van Amerongen implied a stricter enforcement of the rules, including those of chastity. With Protestantisation, beginning in 1615, the obligation of celibacy remained in place until May 1640. Then the knight-brethren were allowed to marry, even the sitting ones. The land commander who implemented this decision together with the Estates of Utrecht, Hendrik Casimir I, did not make use of this possibility himself. He hardly had the time for it either. On 22 July 1640 he died of the injuries he had received shortly before in an encounter with Spanish troops. His brother Willem Frederik, who succeeded him as land commander and stadholder of Friesland, did marry, but only twelve years later, to his second cousin Albertine Agnes, a daughter of the Dutch stadholder Frederik Hendrik. Others were less patient. Bernt van Oostrum (1615–1661) married Mechtild van Reede (1620–1650) on 21 July 1640. Besides these two commanders, four of the ten knight-brethren who formed the chapter in May 1640, married afterwards. Four of these men remained single until their death. This makes the proportion of unmarried men the highest of all cohorts, as can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Numbers of marriages of the commanders

	0x	1x	2x	3x	Σ
–1640	4	4	2	-	10
1640–1695	4	14	2	-	20
1696–1752	8	23	1	-	32
1753–1794	3	18	7	-	28
1795–1814	-	10	3	-	13
1815–1870	10	37	9	2	58
1871–1940	9	43	7	1	60
Total	38	149	31	3	221

0x = number of knights who remained unmarried; 1x who married only once; 2x who married twice; 3x = who married for the third time; Σ = sum per cohort.

<sup>25</sup> Mol, “Trying to survive,” 186; Gröger-Schiemann, *Die Deutschordensballei Utrecht*, 40–41; Joris van der Meer, “Geestelijk Vader. De strijd om de nalatenschap van Albert van Egmond van Meerestein aan het einde van de zestiende eeuw” (MA thesis Utrecht, 2003), 19–23; Jerem van Duijl, “Women in the Teutonic Order,” *leidenmedievalistsblog* (2018), accessed 23 February 2022, <https://www.leidenmedievalistsblog.nl/articles/vrouwen-in-de-duitse-orde>.

Among the men who joined after 1640 and thus became members of an institution where being married was an accepted fact, the inveterate bachelors formed a minority of 10–20%. Of those who joined during the revolutionary period 1795–1814, none remained unmarried. Most married knights had already married before joining the Order. This was not yet the case in the 1640–1695 cohort. Seven knights contracted their first marriage after taking their seat in the chapter. Since the date of marriage is not known for all of them in this period, it may even have been a majority. One man who married even after his promotion to land commander was Hendrik Trajectinus Count von Solms-Braunfels (1636–1693). On 15 September 1683, eight years after his election, he married Karole Henrike Countess von Solms (1667–1752), who came from another line of the same noble family. At the time of the wedding, he was 47 and she sixteen. This union will feature again in the discussion on marriage ages.

In the later cohorts, by far the majority of married knights had already completed their nuptials when they took their seats. As the age of entry increased over time, the likelihood that a knight was already married by the time it was his turn to have his proof of nobility and religious eligibility examined, also increased. During the period 1696–1752, when the average age of admission rose from 30 to 50, at least seven more knights married for the first time after being admitted.<sup>26</sup> One of them was the later land commander Willem van Lintelo (1674–1732), who became a member in 1698 at the age of 24 and married Beatrix Maria van Buren (1678–1751) five years later. His successor in the highest office of the Bailiwick, Evert Jan Benjamin van Goltstein (1665–1744), was also admitted in 1698 and early in 1706 he married Charlotta Agnes van Essen (1683–1748), like him a descendant of a knightly dynasty in the province of Gelderland. Of the 1753–1794 cohort no one married for the first time after joining the chapter. Most of them had been married for quite some time. Arend van Raesfelt (1725–1807) and Assueer Jan Torck (1733–1793) had already celebrated their silver wedding anniversary when they were admitted. At the time of their accession, they were respectively 52 and 53 years old. Arent Sloet (1722–1786), on the other hand, had only been married a few months when he joined in 1767, at the age of 45. Most of the next cohort (1795–1814) were also married when they became members. Three of the ten had already celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In all cohorts, there were knights who married for the second time, in the vast majority of cases, after being widowed. Until well into the nineteenth century,

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<sup>26</sup> De Bruin, *Bedreigd door Napoleon*, 92–94.

many women died at a relatively young age due to complications surrounding childbirth and the nobility was by no means exempt from that fate.<sup>27</sup> Only when the Austro-Hungarian doctor Ignaz Semmelweis (1818–1865) discovered the cause of maternal fever and recommended hygienic preventive measures did this mortality rate drop.<sup>28</sup> Before that time, for men in the prime of life and responsible for the care of small children, a second marriage was an obvious choice. Growing up in blended families was a common phenomenon until well into the nineteenth century, before giving way to a pattern in which almost all children were raised by their biological father and mother.<sup>29</sup> For the last two cohorts, there were even three third marriages. A higher number does not appear in the membership records. There was no such man as King Henry VIII of England among the knights.

#### TILL DEATH DO US PART

The death of a wife may have given rise to a new marriage of the commanders more than once, but it was by no means only the women who died during the marriage. Men also died in the prime of their lives. Where for women the maternity bed was the biggest risk factor, for men it was the battlefield, at least for those commanders with a military career and there were quite a few of them. For example, land commander Hendrik Trajectinus von Solms-Braunfels died in 1693 at the Battle of Neerwinden after both his legs were shot off. Even for less serious injuries, the prospects were not favourable and the same applied to diseases such as pneumonia. Doctors were often powerless. The correspondence from the personal archives

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Roberts, *Through the Keyhole: Dutch Child-rearing Practices in the 17th and 18th Century: Three Urban Elite Families* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 75; Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel. Women's Lot in Seventeenth-century England* (New Haven: Phoenix Press, 2002), 85; Jean C. Streng, *Leven naar staatsgelegenheid. Gelderse en Overijsselse adellijke vrouwen (1600–1850)* (Epe: Streng, 2016), 19.

<sup>28</sup> J. Lange: "Ignaz Semmelweis – "Savior of Mothers". Long fight for recognition," *Fortschritte der Medizin* 115/33 (1997): 60; V. Jay, "Ignaz Semmelweis and the conquest of puerperal sepsis," *Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine* 123/7 (1999): 561–562; M. Best and D. Neuhauser: "Ignaz Semmelweis and the birth of infection control," *Quality & safety in health care* 13, no. 3 (2004): 233–234; Brett E. Ory and Frans W.A. Van Poppel, "Trends and risk factors of maternal mortality in late-nineteenth-century Netherlands," *The History of the Family* 18, no. 4 (2013): 481–509.

<sup>29</sup> Frans W. A. van Poppel, Niels Schenk and Ruben van Gaalen, "Demographic Transitions and Changes in the Living Arrangements of Children: The Netherlands 1850–2010," *Population Research Policy Review* 32 (2013): 243–260.

of the commandants bear witness to ineffective and sometimes horrifying medical procedures. Only faith offered hope. For the vast majority of men and women in the data set, the cause of death is unknown. A death shortly after birth or a mention in an obituary provides more information. We know that in February 1703 Land Commander Godard van Reede-Ginkel (1644–1703) died of a stroke. Some thirty years earlier he had recovered from battlefield injuries.<sup>30</sup> The following table shows how the marriages of the commanders ended, either by death of the husband, death of the wife or dissolution. In some cases this could not be established because of lacking data.

Table 2. Cause of marriage termination

1 <sup>st</sup> marriage				
	♂†	♀†	dissolution	?
– 1640	3	2	-	1
1640–1695	9	5	-	2
1696–1752	14	8	-	2
1753–1794	9	13	2	1
1795–1814	3	9	-	1
1815–1870	18	28	1	1
1871–1940	24	23	4	-
Total	80	88	7	8
2 <sup>nd</sup> marriage				
	♂†	♀†	dissolution	?
– 1640	1	1	-	-
1640–1695	2	-	-	-
1696–1752	-	-	-	-
1753–1794	5	2	-	-
1795–1814	1	2	-	1
1815–1870	4	7	-	1
1871–1940	7	-	1	-
Total	21	12	1	2
3 <sup>rd</sup> marriage				
	♂†	♀†	dissolution	?
1815–1870	2	-	-	-
1871–1940	1	-	-	-
Total	3	-	-	-

<sup>30</sup> Den Haag, Nationaal Archief, Familiearchief Fagel, Inv. Nr. 554, Relation succinte de la campagne de 1674; quoted by Olaf van Nimwegen, *Deser landen krijchsvolck? Het Staatse leger en de militaire revoluties 1588–1688* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2006), 339.

These figures show considerable variation between cohorts and do not demonstrate a clear trend. The fact that in the last cohort the death of the man is more often the cause of the termination of the marriage may have something to do with finding a remedy against maternal fever around 1850, the moment from which most marriages of the men from the last cohort were concluded. From that time on, the average lifespan of women increases faster than that of men. Since the men in the data set were on average older than their wives, they were more likely to die earlier.

It was very rare for a marriage to end in divorce. Only in the last cohort is there a somewhat larger number, in line with the fact that divorce became more common (but still rather exceptional) from the late nineteenth century onwards, also among the nobility.<sup>31</sup> Before 1811, formal divorce was very complicated, although there were more possibilities in the Dutch Republic than in Catholic countries or in Anglican England.<sup>32</sup> Separation was easier. One of the two dissolution cases from the cohort 1753–1794 concerned this option, namely the marriage between Jan Carel van der Borch (1734–1797) and Anne de Villegas (1743–?). Baron van der Borch was quite a *bon vivant*, incurring many debts and not very concerned about marital fidelity. He suggested to a friend that he should *live out his worldly pleasures in Groningen and see whores*.<sup>33</sup> Anne's father, George de Villegas (1691–1773), lieutenant-general in the Dutch army, was worried and included in his will that his Valkenberg estate did not come into the hands of his daughter and son-in-law, but would go to the second son from this marriage.<sup>34</sup>

The other case of marriage dissolution was an invalidation. According to the *Armorial* by D'Ablaing of Giessenburg, it seems that Charles-Louis von Anhalt-Bernburg-Schaumburg-Hoym (1723–1806) only entered into one marriage, but a closer look reveals a prior history. Charles-Louis, son of Victor I, the reigning prince of a small state in the Holy Roman Empire, came as a young officer to the

<sup>31</sup> Frans W. A. van Poppel, *Trouwen in Nederland. Een historisch-demografische studie van de 19e en vroeg-20e eeuw* (Diss. Wageningen, 1992), AAG Bijdragen XXXIII, 277; Jaap Moes, *Onder Aristocraten. Over hegemonie, welstand en aanzien van adel, patriciaat en andere notabalen in Nederland, 1848–1914* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 252.

<sup>32</sup> Donald Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland in de 17<sup>de</sup> en 18<sup>de</sup> eeuw. Processtukken en moralisten over aspecten van het laat 17<sup>de</sup> en 18<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse gezinsleven* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1982), 201–206.

<sup>33</sup> [...] *in Groningen zijn wereldse genoegens te beleven en hoeren te zien*, Arnhem, Gelders Archief (henceforth as: GA), Archief Huis Keppel, Inv. Nr. 344; quoted by Renée Smid, "Adolph Werner C. W. van Pallandt tot Walfort (1733–1813), Levensschets van een Gelders Edelman," *Virtus, Journal of Nobility Studies* 7 (2000): 31.

<sup>34</sup> Accessed 19 February 2022, <https://adoc.pub/het-landgoed-valkenberg-bij-gilze.html>.

Netherlands to fight in the War of the Austrian Succession. He was stationed in Stevensweert, a fortress on the Meuse, which had been assigned to the Dutch Republic by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. He fell in love with the daughter of a junior officer and married this Benjamine Gertrud Keyser (1729–1787) in March 1748, first in the Reformed Church and then in the Catholic Church. When the father heard about what his son had done, he flew into a rage and started proceedings at the High Military Court in The Hague to have the marriage annulled. Charles-Louis seemed to bow to his father, but Benjamine, meanwhile pregnant, did not leave it at that. The legal wrangling dragged on for a long time, and came into include a demand for recognition of the daughter from that union, Victoria Hedwig Caroline (1748–1841). When Benjamine was arrested for adultery after entering into a relationship with someone else, the dissolution of the marriage to Charles-Louis was simple. She escaped from captivity, fled with Victoria to Paris and applied for asylum as a persecuted Catholic. She received an annual stipend and further supported herself by running a playhouse. Her daughter eventually did get recognition from the father. When Charles-Louis, meanwhile neatly married to Amalia Eleonora von Solms-Braunfels (1734–1811), succeeded his father as sovereign of the small country, he had his hands free to recognise the fruit of his earlier union. Victoria henceforth called herself ‘princesse d’Anhalt’. She married a French nobleman, Thomas de Mahy marquis de Favras (1744–1790), who was executed on 19 February 1790 for involvement in a counter-revolutionary plot.<sup>35</sup>

The introduction of civil marriage in 1811, when French legislation came into force after the annexation of the Netherlands to the French Empire, made divorce much easier, but it remained rare. From 1811, marriage was a matter for the civil registry. Previously, only a marriage in the Reformed Church was considered legal, where followers of other denominations had to have their union concluded before the aldermen, after which, if they wished, a ceremony could take place in their own church, but this had no legal significance. Since the Utrecht Teutonic knights had to be Reformed, their marriages were performed there. The marriage ceremonies took place according to Calvinist liturgy, with a standard marriage form, which was read out by the minister. The questions had to be answered with ‘yes’ by the

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<sup>35</sup> Els Naaijkens, “Keyser, Benjamine Gertrudis,” in *Digitale Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*. Accessed 7 January 2022, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Keyser>; Eduard Stillfried von Rattonitz, *Thomas de Mahy, marquis de Favras, und seine Gemahlin* (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1881).

partners.<sup>36</sup> In order to prevent irregularities such as bigamy, the announcement of the marriage was made a few weeks in advance, when any objections could be raised. In a few cases a description of the ceremony was preserved, for instance of the first marriage of Frederik Lodewijk Christiaan van Rechten Limpurg (1748–1814) with Wilhelmina Charlotte Dorothea van Heiden-Hompesch (1758–1789), which took place on 12 December 1780 in Oostmarsum. The preacher began his address to the *High Couple* with a prayer: *That this moment, most gracious Majesty, may be marked with the most evident manifestations of Thy goodness, we respectfully pray Thee for the sake of the Redeemer.*<sup>37</sup> The pastor's formulations and his emphasis on God's goodness and his optimistic view of married life point in the direction of the modern, enlightened theology that was gaining ground in the Dutch Reformed Church during these years.<sup>38</sup>

Although the Calvinist marriage form did not contain the strict stipulation about a lifelong union (*till death do us part*) common to the Catholic and Anglican tradition, it did contain the intention that partners should stay together until one of them died, the vow *that you will never leave him/her*.<sup>39</sup> Death could sometimes come quickly. Willem Frederik Count van Reede (1770–1838) had to report that his wife Henrietta Maria Isabella Christina van Reede (1770–1800) had died *after a very happy but very brief marriage of less than two years*. In the obituary, he wrote: *Your Honour and all those who knew her lovely character will understand how grieved I am by this most grievous and heartbreaking loss.*<sup>40</sup> She was the daughter of his uncle, at whose castle Amerongen they were married in May 1798. He never remarried. The marriage between Jacob Neomagus Count van Randwijck

<sup>36</sup> Accessed 1 March 2022, <https://www.online-bijbel.nl/liturgie/formulier/6/>; <https://www.bijbelsberaadmv.nl/het-klassiek-gereformeerde-huwelijksformulier-1566/>.

<sup>37</sup> *Hoog Graaflijk Paar; Dat dit ogenblik Goedertieren Oppermagt! getekend zij met de kennelijkste blijken uwer goedheid, bidden wij u Eerbiedig om des Verlossers wil*, Zwolle, Collectie Overijssel (henceforth as: CO), 214, Inv. Nr. 737, Stukken betreffende de huwelijksinzegening van Frederik L.C. van Rechten Limpurg en Wilhelmina C.D. von Heiden-Hompesch (1780).

<sup>38</sup> Joris van Eijnatten and Fred van Lieburg, *Niederländische Religionsgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 276–286.

<sup>39</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford, 1815), 214; *belovende dat gij haar/hem nimmermeer zult verlaten*. Accessed 1 March 2022, <https://www.bijbelsberaadmv.nl/het-klassiek-gereformeerde-huwelijksformulier-1566/>.

<sup>40</sup> [...] *na eene allergelukkigste dog kortstondige Echtverbintnisse van nog geen 2 Jaaren. U Hooggeb. en allen die haar Hoog geboorens beminnellyk Character gekend hebben, zullen ligtelyk bevroeden, hoe ik te moede ben oover dit allersmertelykst & hartgrievend verlies*. Rouwbrief van W.F. van Reede, 6-1-1800; GA, 609, Archief van de familie Van Randwijck, 1292–1870, Inv. Nr. 273, Rouwbrieven etc., ingekomen bij Otto van Randwijck (1781–1832).



(1725–1790) and Henrietta Helena Countess van Bylandt (1736–1758) was even shorter. She died on 14 December 1758, just two weeks after the wedding. He remarried eleven years later to his cousin Reinira Charlotta van Randwijck (1737–1803). For this marriage between *brother children*, the Estates of Gelderland granted permission afterwards.<sup>41</sup> Marriages between relatives in the Dutch Republic were not as problematic as under Catholic and Anglican rules, but they were not entirely uncontroversial.<sup>42</sup> A very long union was that between Frans Steven Carel van Randwijck (1697–1785) and Ursula Philippota van Reede (1709–1778). She died after almost 48 years of marriage; he remained inconsolable at his castle Clingelbeek near Arnhem and complained of loneliness to the steward of the Bailiwick of Utrecht.<sup>43</sup> Seven years later he died himself, aged 88. The following table shows how the average duration of marriage developed during the period 1640–1940.

Table 3. Average duration of marriages (in years)

	First	Second	Third
– 1640	11.1	8.1	
1640–1695	14.5	18.4	
1696–1752	20.0	34.6	
1753–1794	24.9	22.4	
1795–1814	26.6	17.0	
1815–1870	29.6	19.5	17.3
1871–1940	29.8	25.8	11.2
Total	26.0	21.0	15.2

When reading these figures, it should be borne in mind that there are missing values, especially for the first cohorts. In a few cases, no marriage or death years could be found, but even here it is a small minority (one or two per cohort). An increasing trend can be observed in the average duration of marriage, although the difference between cohort six and cohort seven is minimal. In the first two cohorts, very long marriages of more than forty years did not occur. The lon-

<sup>41</sup> *broederskinderen*. Accessed 19 February 2022, <https://www.neomagus.nl/2010/03/08/neomagus-van-randwijck>.

<sup>42</sup> Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin*, 35–46.

<sup>43</sup> GA, 609, Inv. Nr. 222, Brieven ingekomen bij F.S.C. van Randwijck als landcommandeur (1767–1785). Renger E. de Bruin, “Verwaltung per Brief. Die Korrespondenz des Utrechter Landkomturs mit seinen Angestellten, 1753–1845” *Ordines Militares Colloquia Torunsia Historica. Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders* 26 (2021): 233.

gest marriage in this segment was that between Godard van Reede-Ginkel and Ursula Philippota van Raesfelt, which lasted 37.5 years. In cohort three, three marriages have been found that lasted longer than forty years. The first golden wedding anniversary I found, is in cohort six: on 23 October 1839 it was exactly fifty years ago that Coenraad Willem Sloet (1767–1849) and Maria Mechtild Florentina Gansneb gen. Tegnagel (1764–1847) exchanged their vows. They had more than seven years together afterwards. The marriage between Anthony Sloet (1769–1853), a younger brother of Coenraad Willem, and Isabella Antoinetta le Vaillant (1773–1848) lasted a few months longer. At 57 years, 7 months and 16 days, this is the longest marriage in the entire data set. In contrast to these very long marriages, there were extremely short ones, such as the one that lasted only a fortnight. In the last cohort, four first marriages ended untimely because of divorce, which explains why the increase in duration halted here. Among the second marriages in this cohort, one ended in divorce already in sixteen months.

The growth in the average duration of the marriage during the period under investigation can be easily explained. That the first cohort shows the lowest figure is primarily due to the fact that these knights were only allowed to marry after 1640. The early loss of the husband through death on the battlefield was only found for the first three cohorts. After the end of the War of the Spanish Succession none of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights was killed in action. From cohort four onwards, the improvements in medical practice undoubtedly had an impact. The nobility was open to new scientific ideas, such as smallpox inoculation, and had the means and the room to pay good doctors and take hygienic measures.<sup>44</sup> While in the nineteenth century cholera killed countless people, noblemen and patricians were hardly bothered by it in their spacious houses with clean water from the pump.<sup>45</sup> Although knights or their wives also died young in the later period, this was less and less frequent, with increased longevity becoming the norm among nobility. Moreover, from cohort three onwards, the average age of entry increased, so that it was less common for sitting knights to die young.

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<sup>44</sup> Willibrord Rutten, “De vreselijkste aller harpijen. Pokkenepidemieën en pokkenbestrijding in Nederland in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw: een sociaal-historische en historisch-demografische studie” (PhD Diss., Wageningen, 1997), 131–144.

<sup>45</sup> Pieter Dirk’t Hart, *Utrecht en de cholera 1832–1910* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1990), 137–155, 304.

## AGE OF MARRIAGE

The duration of a marriage also depended on the age at which the couple married. In the case of the record marriage just mentioned, Isabella Antoinetta le Vaillant was only sixteen when she married Anthony Sloet, who was four and a half years her senior. They died a few years apart in their seventies. Ursula Philippota van Reede was twenty when she married Frans Steven Carel van Randwijck in 1730 and therefore they could almost celebrate their golden wedding anniversary, although she died at the age of 68. I have been able to determine the age of most of the couples. Again, for the first two cohorts, there are most blank spots in the database. However, for enough individuals, data on age at marriage are available to make a meaningful overview. The following table contains these figures.

Table 4. Average age of partners at marriage

	♂ <sup>1st</sup>	♀ <sup>1st</sup>	♂ <sup>2nd</sup>	♀ <sup>2nd</sup>	♂ <sup>3rd</sup>	♀ <sup>3rd</sup>
-1640	42	22	45	37	-	-
1640-1695	31	23	38	25	-	-
1696-1752	32	25	35	17	-	-
1753-1794	30	24	49	40	-	-
1795-1814	32	25	44	29	-	-
1815-1870	31	24	46	31	50	34
1871-1940	31	24	48	37	68	64

In the first cohort, the average age of the bridegrooms at the first marriage is clearly higher, which is not surprising, since they had to wait until 1640 to be allowed to marry at all. In all other cohorts, the average is in their early thirties. The age difference with the brides in the cohorts after 1640 is also considerably smaller than with the first group, on average about seven years. These averages deviate little from what is known about the Dutch nobility and the urban elites, between the sixteenth and the early twentieth century.<sup>46</sup> A marriage from the second

<sup>46</sup> Van Nierop, *The Nobility of Holland*, 72; De Bruin, *Burgers op het kussen*, 243-244; Streng, *Leven naar staatsgelegenheid*, 124-125; Van Poppel, *Trouwen in Nederland*, 174-192; Sherrin Marshall, *The Dutch Gentry 1500-1650. Family, Faith and Fortune* (New York-Westport-London: Greenwood Press, 1987), 31-52; Joop de Jong, *Een deftig bestaan. Het dagelijks leven van regenten in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Utrecht-Antwerpen: Kosmos, 1987), 88-97; Conrad Gietman, *Republiek van adel. Eer in de Oost-Nederlandse adelscultuur, 1555-1702* (Utrecht: Van Gruting, 2010), 150-151.

cohort of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights that fits well within this broader picture is that between Robert van Ittersum (1645–1705) and Joachima van Rechteren (1648–1674). They married when he was 25 and she was 22. As an example from the fifth cohort, I can mention Frederik Willem Floris Theodorus Baron van Pallandt (1772–1853) and Anna Jacoba Wilhelmina Baroness van Aylva (1778–1814). They married when he was 27 and she was 22.

Of course, the data set contains enough deviations from the average. In 24 first marriages and two second marriages, the woman was older than the man, usually only a few years, or even a few months, as in the case of the couple Hendrik Willem Jan van Lynden (1729–1803) and Jacoba Louisa van Eck (1729–1781), but occasionally the difference was substantial. For example, in 1711 Anthoni Adolf van Haersolte (1671–1722), aged 39, married the 55-year old widow Walburge van Heeckeren van Nettelhorst (1756–1721). Her previous husband was nineteen years older than her. In some cases, commanders married considerably younger women. Evert Jan Benjamin van Goltstein, for instance, was already in his forties when he married Charlotta Agnes van Essen, aged 22, in 1706. The age difference was even greater, almost a century later, when Godert Willem de Vos van Steenwijk (1747–1830), aged 50, made advances to Andrea van Holthe van Rheebruggen (1773–1825), to the apparent hilarity of his brothers. *I must tell you something new*, Carel de Vos van Steenwijk wrote to his brother Jan Arend, who was ambassador in Paris,

“which will more or less surprise you and which consists of the fact that Googjen is in his own way amorous, and is courting Lady van Rheebrugge. He goes there from time to time, and since he has easily obtained the mother’s consent, he will, as you can feel, not run the risk of being rejected. I think we will acquire a sister. I don’t know the person, but as the lady is 25 years old, the difference in years is quite large, the citizen must feel hale and hearty to take on a girl of those years.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Nog een Nouvelle moet ik u communiceren welke u min of meer frappeeren zal en daarin bestaat dat Googjen op zijn wijs amoureux is, en het Hof maakt aan de Freule van Rheebruggen, hij trekt er van tijd tot tijd naar toe, en daar hij het consent van de moeder gemakkelijk geobtaineert heeft, zo zal hij, als gij wel voelt, geen risque van een blaautje te hebben, wij zullen dus na mijne gedagten de acquisitie van een suster doen. Ik ken de persoon niet, maar daar de juffrouw 25 jaren oud is, zo is het verschil in jaren vrij groot, de burger moet zig kras voelen, om een meisje van die jaren aan te pakken.* Quoted by Albrecht Nicolaas de Vos van Steenwijk, *Het geslacht de Vos van Steenwijk in het licht van de geschiedenis van de Drentse Adel* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976), 337.

The fact that he married such a young woman did not prevent him from becoming a widower: Andrea died at the age of 51 at the family castle Havixhorst. The baron had just become land commander six months earlier, a task he performed with little alertness. He did not realise that the steward was committing large-scale fraud. Whether the grief over the loss of his wife or his advanced age played a role, is not clear from the sources.<sup>48</sup>

In the second marriages, the age differences are, on average, greater than in the first. This is to be expected, since the bridegrooms were often older widowers. For example, 44-year-old Frederik Lodewijk Christiaan van Rechteren Limpurg married eighteen-year-old Elisabeth Johanna Reiniera van Heeckeren (1774–1834) three years after the death of his first wife. The age difference in the second marriage of the later land commander Carl Wilhelm Georg Theodor Freiherr von Bodelschwing-Plettenberg was even greater. In 1834 he married as a 69-year-old widower the 28-year-old Bertha von Plettenberg-Heeren. In most second marriages, the age difference was much smaller. In both the sixth and seventh cohorts, third marriages occurred. In two of these cases, there was no great age difference.

Marriages with very young women are rare in the data set: in 31 out of 183 first marriages and in five out of 34 second marriages, brides were younger than twenty on the day of the wedding. The teenage brides were usually eighteen or nineteen. The youngest bride was Ernestina Charlotte Princess von Nassau-Schaumburg (1662–1732), who married, two weeks before her sixteenth birthday, to her relative Wilhelm Moritz Count von Nassau-Siegen (1649–1691), thirteen years her senior. It was mainly the princely marriages that featured very young brides. The aforementioned marriage of the 47-year-old Hendrik Trajectinus von Solms-Braunfels to the sixteen-year-old Karole Henrike von Solms is another example. With princes, arranged marriages were much more standard, where people from the knightly nobility basically chose their partners themselves, as adults. From the commanders with a knightly background, the vast majority, married a woman in her twenties or thirties, who was usually about six years younger than themselves.

Knightly (*riddermatig*) can be defined as lower nobility. Qualified nobles belonged to the knighthoods (*ridderschappen*), the institutions that represented the nobility and the countryside in the Estates Assemblies, the governments of the

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<sup>48</sup> ARDOU-OA, Inv. Nr. 11.04, Resoluties van de landcommanderij van Utrecht, 1791–1827, fol. 398–410; ARDOU-NA 175, Stukken betreffende het wanordelijk beheer door de rentmeester-generaal Chr.P. de Vos; met rapport der commissie tot onderzoek benoemd in juni 1827 (1827–1830). De Bruin, *Bedreigd door Napoleon*, 555–567.

provinces that formed the constituent parts of the federative Dutch Republic.<sup>49</sup> They usually descended from medieval ministerials, formally unfree men who merged with the old nobility to form a knightly class, which also included urban patricians. Due to extinction and emigration, the old noble families largely disappeared from this class. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, under the rule of the Burgundians and Habsburgs, the criteria for status were tightened and the knights obtained a position of lower, regional nobility, separated from farmers and citizens downwards, with requirements such as demonstrable noble descent and the possession of a castle with a certain status (*ridderhofstad* or *havezathe*), but also distinguished upwards from the men of the high, supra-regional nobility, who fulfilled important administrative and military functions, resided at the court in Brussels and were often members of the Order of the Golden Fleece.<sup>50</sup> When, with the Revolt against Spain, the high nobility, with the exception of the Nassau family, reconciled with Philip II, the lower, nobility in the now sovereign provinces was left victorious. In contrast to the Nassaus, who besides having a prominent role in the Dutch Republic also had their own principalities, and the German princes in the chapter of the Bailiwick of Utrecht, the knightly commanders only had a role in their provinces and their personal possessions, but no realm of their own. In lifestyle, wealth and also marriage pattern, they more resembled the urban patricians, with whom they governed the provinces and the Republic as a whole.<sup>51</sup> One area where the nobility remained dominant was in the Dutch army. More than half of the officers were nobles, a proportion that grew to two-thirds in the course of the eighteenth century. Especially for foreign noblemen, the Dutch army offered career perspectives, but also for younger sons of knightly families in the Dutch provinces, a military career was an alternative since brothers were not allowed to be in the knighthoods at the same time.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Jean C. Streng, "De adel in de Republiek," *Virtus. Journal of Nobility Studies* 10 (2003): 73–78; Price, "The Dutch Nobility," 95–103.

<sup>50</sup> Sherrin Marshall Wyntjes, "The Lesser Nobility of Utrecht in the Revolt of the Netherlands" (PhD Diss. Tufts University, Medford-Somerville Mass., 1972), 133–146; Helmut George Koenigsberger, "Orange, Granvelle and Philip II," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 99 (1984): 573–595; Marshall, *The Dutch Gentry*, 117–158.

<sup>51</sup> Price, "The Dutch Nobility," 107–113; Streng, "De adel in de Republiek," 73–78; Van Nierop, *The Nobility of Holland*, 173–198; Marshall, *The Dutch Gentry*, 160–161; Maarten Prak, *Citizens without Nations. Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World c. 1000–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 183–204.

<sup>52</sup> Streng, "De adel in de Republiek," 79, 92; Hans Laurentz Zwitser, *'De militie van den staat'. Het leger van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Van Soeren, 1991), 225–226, 232–235.

We see the same picture with the commanders with a background of lower nobility in the data set analysed here. My earlier research on the Bailiwick of Utrecht showed that, in terms of wealth, they strongly resemble what other studies on nobility and patriciate in the Netherlands have shown, at least for the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> My follow-up research will have to show whether this is also the case for earlier and later periods. The demographic data from this study indicate that the commanders with a knightly background resemble their peers and patricians in their marriage behaviour, and not the princes. They largely fit into the Western European Marriage Pattern, which has the following main characteristics: late marriage; a small age difference between the spouses; a large proportion unmarried; establishment of a neolocal household; marriage by consent and affective relations.<sup>54</sup> People chose their own partners when they reached adulthood and married them, usually in consultation with or even under the direction of their families, but in principle there was no question of coercion or forced marriage: the marriage by consent. The word 'consent' appears in the previously quoted letter about the intended marriage of Godert Willem de Vos van Steenwijk. In the case of minors (with an age limit of 25), parental consent was compulsory, but desired even after that. When choosing a partner, emotional elements certainly played a role, although the interests of the family were not lost sight of. In the case of the nobility and the patricians, these interests were greater than in other layers of the population. With the nobility, elements such as honour and bloodline also played a role. In the knighthoods of the province of Gelderland, maternal quarters were also a criterion for admission, which was also the case in the Bailiwick of Utrecht.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> De Bruin, *Bedreigd door Napoleon*, 354–357; Van Nierop, *The Nobility of Holland*, 86–125; Marshall, *The Dutch Gentry*, 69–92; Price, "The Dutch Nobility," 88–95; De Jong, *Een deftig bestaan*, 65–82; Luuc Kooijmans, "Patriciaat en aristocratisering in Holland tijdens de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw," in *De bloem der natie. Adel en patriciaat in de Noordelijke Nederlanden*, ed. Johan Aalbers and Maarten Prak (Meppel-Amsterdam: Boom, 1987) 93–103; Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122–135.

<sup>54</sup> David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, *The History of the European Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xiv; Sarah G. Carmichael, Alexandra M. de Pleijt, Jan Luiten van Zanden and Tine De Moor, "The European Marriage Pattern and its measurement," *Journal of Economic History* 76 (2016): 196–204; Julia Adams, "The familial state: Elite family practices and state-making in the early modern Netherlands," *Theory and Society* 23/4 (1994): 505–539.

<sup>55</sup> Evert de Jonge and Marc V. T. Tenten, "De drie kwartierlijke ridderschappen als deel van de soevereine Staten van het vorstendom Gelre en graafschap Zutphen, 1621–1795," in *Adel en ridderschap in Gelderland. Tien eeuwen geschiedenis*, ed. Coen O. A. Schimmelpenninck van der

The young people themselves were active in finding a marriage partner, but there was guidance from the family and sometimes active pairing or even arranging. Accompanied meetings took place at the castles and town houses of the families. Events such as weddings, christenings or funerals were also convenient occasions. From the late eighteenth century, balls, theatre performances and concerts were added. Until 1795, dancing and acting were often forbidden under pressure from the Reformed Church, which considered these things to be sinful, but after 1795 the separation of church and state ended this, while the attitude of the Church changed as well. In the twentieth century, when the number of female students increased, student associations offered further opportunities for seeking suitable marriage partners.

Social conventions assumed that the initiative in these matters lay with the man. He was faced with the dilemma that he had to be sufficiently energetic not to run the risk of someone else securing his intended, but on the other hand not to appear too pushy. The later commander Assueer Jan Torck, for example, was afraid that he would be *kicked* if he did not approach his beloved Eusebia Jacoba de Rode van Heeckeren with sufficient care.<sup>56</sup> He was successful and they married on 8 June 1758; he was 24 and she was eighteen years old. When preparing for marriage, the families had to negotiate the terms and, in the case of minors, as in this case, the consent. The young Torck had few problems here; he was a very attractive match: his father (who was a land commander of the Bailiwick of Utrecht) and his uncle were prominent noblemen in Gelderland and Assueer Jan was the heir of this uncle, who had married a non-noble, but extremely rich Amsterdam woman.<sup>57</sup> So here was a perfect match between equal families, but when the choice was less favourable, because the intended partner was too different on religious, political or social grounds, an unpleasant situation could arise. A nobleman could eventually defy his family if he waited until he was of age (25 years old) and accepted disturbed relations and a discount on the inheritance. Among the German nobility and especially the *Hochadel*, marriage negotiations were extremely important, so Utrecht Teutonic knights of German origin probably had less freedom than

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Oije, Frank Keverling Buisman, Marc V. T. Tenten and Fred J. W. van Kan (Zwolle: WBooks, 2013), 151.

<sup>56</sup> Smid, "Adolph Werner C. W. van Pallandt," 27; Streng, *Leven naar staatsgelegenheid*, 96.

<sup>57</sup> Johan Carel Bierens de Haan, *Rosendaal, Groen Hemeltjen op Aerd. Kasteel, tuinen en bewoners sedert 1579* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1994), 85–90, 172–173.



their Dutch counterparts.<sup>58</sup> I will come back to the social backgrounds of the commander's brides later in this article.

Noble girls were expected to be virtuous and to wait. They had to react cautiously to advances, but they also had to avoid the risk of being left behind. Even more than was the case with boys, a pleasing candidate for marriage was considered important. A son with a non-noble wife would in any case have nobility in his offspring, since *a woman does not give or take nobility to her children*, but such a marriage of a daughter resulted in non-noble grandchildren.<sup>59</sup> When a noble girl lost her heart to a man of lower birth, total panic could break out. This was the case for Maria van Wassenæer (1618–1651), a descendant from one of the most important noble families in the province of Holland. She was a sister of Commander Pieter van Wassenæer (1616–1669). Maria fell in love with the servant of a German nobleman, who was a guest of her father. The relationship with this Heinrich Sältzer led to confinement, severe mistreatment by her brothers, escapes and re-imprisonment, but finally the lovers could marry. They did not live happily ever after: Maria died a few years after the wedding. For father Johan van Wassenæer (1577–1645), the choice of his daughter was *at once ignominious and infamous for his reputation and lineage*.<sup>60</sup>

Women could use pregnancy as leverage to get permission for an unwanted marriage. Unmarried motherhood was an even greater disgrace to the family than marriage to a man of lower status. Laura Christina van Haersolte (1806–1857), granddaughter of a commander, experienced how bad this was. Here, it was precisely her lover's family that was obstructive, because her father was severely impoverished. When it finally seemed to work out, the intended groom

<sup>58</sup> Siegrid Westphal, Inken Schmidt-Voges and Anette Baumann, *Venus und Vulcanus. Ehen und ihre Konflikte in der Frühen Neuzeit* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2011), 35–39.

<sup>59</sup> [...] *een vrouw geen adel geeft, ofte neemt aen haere kinderen*. Simon van Leeuwen, *Redeningh over den oorspronck, reght, ende onderscheyt der Edelen, ende Welgeborenen in Hollandt; Mitsgaders der selver Voorrechten, soo die nu zijn, ofte van aloude tijden zijn geweest* (1659); quoted by Johan Aalbers, "Geboorte en geld. Adel in Gelderland, Utrecht en Holland tijdens de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw," in *De bloem der natie*, ed. Aalbers and Prak, 69; further to this issue, cf. Marshall, *Dutch Gentry*, 50–51; Adams, "Familial estate," 511–512.

<sup>60</sup> [...] *t'eenemael ignomineus ende infaem, voor sijne naem ende geslachte*. GA, 124, Hof van Gelre en Zutphen, Inv. Nr. 5257; Bert Koene, "De verboden liefde van Maria van Wassenæer," *Bijdragen en mededelingen Gelre. Historisch Jaarboek voor Gelderland* 102 (2011): 161–204. Maria van Wassenæer van Duijvenvoorde en Wolf Heinrich Sältzer van Elwingen, accessed 22 February 2022, <https://www.databankschakingen.nl/maria-van-wassenæer-van-duijvenvoorde-en-wolf-heinrich-saltzer-van-elwingen/>.

died in the Dutch attempt to crush the Belgian Revolution. She was left with two illegitimate children and lived out her days in abject poverty.<sup>61</sup>

## CHILDREN

The main purpose of a noble marriage was to produce legitimate offspring, thus guaranteeing the continuity of the noble lineage. Using the above-mentioned sources, it has been possible to reconstruct the family composition for the whole group, although for the earliest cohorts there will be an undercount, because not all children who died young can be traced. In the course of time the figures become more complete. The following tables show how many of the first and second marriages remained childless, how many did produce children, what the average number of children per marriage was and what the largest number of children in a cohort was.<sup>62</sup> None of the third marriages produced children.

Table 5. Number of children from first marriages

	0 C.	≥1 C.	mean	max.
– 1640	1	5	2.8	5
1640–1695	4	12	4.1	14
1696–1752	5	19	4.1	15
1753–1794	2	23	4.1	16
1795–1814	1	13	2.9	6
1815–1870	9	39	4.3	12
1871–1940	7	44	3.0	8

With regard to the childless couples, it should be noted that among these, couples with children who died young and were not registered, as noted before, a source problem related to the cohorts before 1815, have also been counted. Infant mortality among the nobility was very high until well into the eighteenth century, while children up to the age of five also remained very vulnerable. A daughter of Otto van Randwijck (1763–1833), for instance, died at the age of sixteen months

<sup>61</sup> Streng, *Leven naar staatsgelegenheid*, 103.

<sup>62</sup> The average number of children is calculated on the basis of the total number of marriages, including childless ones.

*from the effects of measles, accompanied by a chest complaint.*<sup>63</sup> Little Anne Gertrude Henriette died at half past one in the morning on 10 June 1804 and was buried three days later in the family vault in Nijmegen's St Stevenskerk. The funeral cost almost 70 guilders. Because no guests were invited for a child's funeral, it was possible for such a sum to be expended. The most expensive items were the church and the coffin. The grieving father kept a precise record of the expenses.

Table 6. Number of children from second marriages

	0 C.	≥1 C.	mean	max.
– 1640	0	1	1.5	3
1640–1695	1	1	2.0	4
1696–1752	0	1	3.0	3
1753–1794	5	2	0.9	5
1795–1814	3	1	1.3	5
1815–1870	6	3	1.1	4
1871–1940	4	1	2.0	8

There is no clear trend in the number of children, although the score for 3.0 for the last cohort does seem to be in line with increasing birth control among higher educated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the other hand, a brake on the number of children, namely the death of the spouse at child-bearing age, was strongly reduced in this period. This factor led to a growth of the birth rate in the total Dutch population, much stronger than in surrounding countries. This was especially true for the lower population and in religious terms for Catholics and strict Protestants.<sup>64</sup> The data found for the Utrecht Teutonic Knights match with the results of other research into social elites.<sup>65</sup> The largest family in the entire period 1640–1940 is that of Jacob Hendrik Count van Rechteren van Westerveld (1709–1783) and Margaretha Pijnsen van der Aa

<sup>63</sup> [...] *aan de gevolgen van de mazelen, gepaard met een borstquael*. GA, 609, Inv. Nr. 327, Stukken betreffende het overlijden van Anne Gertrude Henriette, jongste dochter van Otto van Randwijck (1804).

<sup>64</sup> Kennedy, *Concise History*, 328; Dirk Damsma, *Het Hollandse huisgezin (1560-heden)* (Utrecht–Antwerpen: Kosmos, 1993), 115–116.

<sup>65</sup> Van Nierop, *The Nobility of Holland*, 59; Marshall, *The Dutch Gentry*, 15; De Bruin, *Burgers op het kussen*, 244.

(1714–1758), who had sixteen children.<sup>66</sup> Margaretha died in childbirth, shortly before her 44<sup>th</sup> birthday. The child survived. Eight other children of the couple died at a very young age. Another two did not reach the age of 25. Frans Steven Carel van Randwijck and Ursula Philippota van Reede fared somewhat better. Of their fifteen children (seven sons and eight daughters), ten reached adulthood, which led to a considerable fragmentation of the estate.<sup>67</sup> Ursula Philippota, who also survived the last birth, was a granddaughter of the above-mentioned land commander Godard van Reede-Ginkel. The latter was an only child himself, but with his wife Ursula Philippota van Raesfelt (1643–1721), after whom the granddaughter was named, he fathered no less than fourteen children, the largest family of the 1640–1695 cohort. Of these children, twelve reached adulthood. Five were placed in care by their grandmother Van Reede, because she could not appreciate the Catholic sympathies of her daughter-in-law and wanted to give the children a proper Reformed upbringing.<sup>68</sup>

With this spiritual baggage the second son, who was called Godard Adriaan after his paternal grandfather, could easily enter the chapter of the Bailiwick of Utrecht. He passed through the different ranks but died before he could reach that of land commander. He had already anticipated the next generation by registering his second son, Willem Hendrik, who died, however, before his turn.<sup>69</sup> In terms of maternal quarters, this could well have been the case, since Godard Adriaan van Reede (1674–1730) was married to Maria van Nassau-Zuylesteyn (1687–1765), a descendant from a bastard branch of the stadholder family, which by now belonged to the Utrecht knighthood. Maternal quarters were essential, as

<sup>66</sup> Here an undercounting by D’Ablaing has been corrected on the basis of archive material. D’Ablaing *Wapenboek*, 84. CO, 0214, Huis Almelo, Inventaris, inleiding. Huis Almelo, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=141&miaet=1&micode=0214&minr=862536&miview=inv2>.

<sup>67</sup> GA, 609, Inv. Nr. 177, Akte van magescheid tussen de erfgenamen van Frans van Randwijck betreffende de onroerende goederen (1789). De Bruin, *Bedreigd door Napoleon*, 167.

<sup>68</sup> A.W.J. Mulder, D.F. Slothouwer and R.M. Heethaar, *Kasteel Amerongen en zijn bewoners* (Amerongen: Stichting Vriendenkring Kasteel Amerongen, 2015), 89–90; Renger E. de Bruin and Luc W. Nagtegaal, *Middachten en Amerongen, twee kastelen, een geschiedenis* (Amerongen: Stichting Kasteel Amerongen, 2022), 39.

<sup>69</sup> ARDOU-OA, Inv. Nr. 192.0, Register houdende namen van de leden van de Duitse Orde Balije van Utrecht met hun kwartieren en heraldische wapens over de jaren 1634–1775 en gedeeltelijk met opgave van geboorte- en sterfdata, ca. 1775, p. 58; ARDOU-OA, Inv. Nr. 193.0.1, Staten en lijsten houdende de namen en andere persoonsgegevens van de landcommandeurs, commandeurs, jonkheren en edel-expectanten van de Balije van Utrecht, 1639–1809; D’Ablaing, *Wapenboek*, 52.

were Reformed baptism and confirmation. In 1740, these requirements were once again clearly laid down in regulations.<sup>70</sup>

A commander who married a woman with the right background, had sons who reached adulthood and had at least one of them registered with the Order in time, could thus pass on the black cross to the next generation. The Gelderland nobleman Evert Jan Benjamin van Goltstein (1665–1744), who joined the Order in 1698 and became its land commander in 1732, started a family series that continued until 1872. After him his son Philip Hendrik (1715–1776) and his son-in-law Allard Philip van den Borch (1690–1766) were members, followed by his grandson Evert Jan Benjamin van Goltstein (1751–1816) and finally the next generation Hendrik Rudolph Willem (1790–1865) and Jan Karel (1794–1872). The first, like his great-grandfather, became a land commander, the second a coadjutor. Jan Karel Baron van Goltstein was a prominent politician in the 1840s and 1850s. In the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, the strongly internationally oriented Counts van Aldenburg Bentinck provided six members of the Order. In the female line they descended from the van Reedes and inherited their possessions, including Amerongen Castle. The most prominent of them was Godard John George Charles Count van Aldenburg Bentinck (1857–1940). The last four years of his life he was a coadjutor. In the years 1918–1919 he hosted the fleeing German Kaiser Wilhelm II on Amerongen Castle.<sup>71</sup>

## SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF PARTNERS

Data on the social origin of spouses exist for the vast majority of commanders. Only in seven cases is this data lacking. Five of them belong to the seventeenth century cohorts. Since the rich genealogical literature makes it relatively easy to determine whether someone was of noble birth, it is reasonable to assume that these ladies were of non-noble birth, but this is not completely certain. Therefore, these seven brides are included in Table 7 in the column 'unknown'. Those of whom it is

<sup>70</sup> Extract uit de Resolutiën van van de Balye des Ridderlicken Duytschen Ordens binnen Utrecht in datis 21, 22 en 23 September 1740, ARDOU-OA, Inv. Nr. 8.0, Resoluties van de Balijs van Utrecht betreffende de vaststelling van statuten, ordonnanties en artikelen betreffende deze balijs (1608–1805). De Bruin, "Religious Identity," 246–247.

<sup>71</sup> De Bruin and Nagtegaal, *Middachten en Amerongen*, 24–27; Beatrice de Graaf, "Vorstin op vredespad. Wilhelm II en Wilhelmina en het einde van de Eerste Wereldoorlog," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 131, no. 4 (2018): 577–604.

certain that they descended from a non-noble family have been included in the appropriate column. The category ‘nobility’, to which most of the wives belonged, has been split into different types of nobility. For the cohorts before 1815, a distinction has been made between nobility of knighthood, other Dutch nobility, and foreign nobility. Nobility of knighthood (*riddermatige adel*) is defined as belonging to families that were represented in the knighthoods of Holland, Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel. Other Dutch nobility includes descendants from noble families in the provinces of Friesland and Groningen, where no knighthoods existed, as well as descendants from families that were denied access to the knighthoods, for instance Catholics, who were excluded because of their religion.<sup>72</sup> Brides, who came from outside the Dutch Republic, mainly from the Holy Roman Empire, are categorised as ‘foreign nobility’. A separate column has been set up for female relatives of reigning princes from the Empire.

For the last two cohorts, the spouses of the knights who joined between 1815 and 1940, the definitions have been slightly changed. The first column also includes those who had ruled over a territory in the Empire during the Ancien Regime, but who had lost it under Napoleon. In German noble law, however, they were still considered ‘fürstlich’ (princely) and this has also been used here. The column ‘knightly’ lists the brides that belonged to families that were recognised as old Dutch nobility within the framework of the policy on noble status adopted by King William I of the Netherlands. For the most part, these were families from the pre-revolutionary knighthoods, but also non-knightly families, such as Frisians and Groningers, as well as Catholics, were included, provided that they were considered noble under the old Republic. The category ‘other Dutch nobility’ for the period after 1815 includes descendants from families that were incorporated or elevated under the Kingdom. ‘Incorporated’ are Dutch families with a foreign title of nobility that were counted as part of the Dutch nobility by the King. Elevated families had been given a title of nobility by the King, where they had not been part of the nobility before. That right had been granted to him by the constitution.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Streng, “De adel in de Republiek,” 72, 80; Conrad Gietman, “Katholieke adel in een protestants gewest, 1621–1795,” in *Adel en ridderschap in Gelderland*, ed. Schimmelpenninck van der Oije et al., 176–209.

<sup>73</sup> “Grondwet voor de Vereenigde Nederlanden (1814),” art 42; “Grondwet voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden/Loi Fondamental du Royaume des Pays-Bas,” art. 63, *Verzameling van Nederlandse staatsregelingen en grondwetten*, ed. W.J.C van Hasselt et al. (Alphen aan den Rijn: Samson, 1964, 15th edition) 172, 220. Wolleswinkel, *Nederlands adelsrecht*, 51.

Table 7. Social background of spouses

	Princely	Knigh-ly*	Other NL Nobility#	Foreign. Nobility	Non-noble	?	Total
-1640	1	5	-	-	-	2	8
1640-1695	3	11	1	-	-	3	18
1696-1752	-	18	2	3	1	1	25
1753-1794	1	22	1	4	3	1	32
1795-1814	-	7	2	4	3	-	16
1815-1870	4	25	6	17	10	-	62
1871-1940	1	15	12	10	21	-	59

\* Before 1815 brides from families represented in the knightoods, from 1815 onwards recognised as old noble families.

# Before 1815 brides from families not represented in the knightoods, from 1815 onwards from incorporated and elevated noble families.

It is clear that most commanders looked for a wife in their own social milieu, that of the knightly nobility, or for the later period, the recognised old nobility. Social equivalence of this kind was necessary for their issue to be eligible for membership. After the restoration of the Bailiwick of Utrecht in 1815, the strict entry requirements were maintained: *Knighly, Old Noble and Irreproachable Quarters*, as well as *the true Reformed Christian Religion*.<sup>74</sup> Marriages with non-gentry or even new nobility disqualified the offspring for membership. However, the figures show that this endogamy was not exclusive. A marriage with a non-noble woman was sometimes out of economic necessity: marrying a rich heiress from a patrician or merchant family could help impoverished noblemen get back on their feet, so that, for example, the sale of castles could be prevented. This happened especially in difficult times, such as during the European Agricultural Crisis (1650-1750). Commander Reinout Gerard van Tuyll van Serooskerken (1677-1729), for example, married Isabella Agneta Hoeufft (1683-1725) from Amsterdam, who brought along a large inheritance with a lot of colonial capital. His eldest son, who due to this marriage was not eligible for membership of the Bailiwick of Utrecht, also married a rich Amsterdam girl. With her money, he not only managed to keep castle Zuylen, but also to have it drastically rebuilt, just like the town mansion in

<sup>74</sup> *Riddermatige, Oud Adellijke en irreprochabele kwartieren, de ware Hervormde Christelijke Godsdienst*. ARDOU-OA, Inv. Nr. 11.04, fol. 374-375.

Utrecht. Such capital injections through marriage are also known from the English nobility, where they were considered an unwanted emergency move.<sup>75</sup>

The openness in marriages seems to have increased in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which is in line with research results on Dutch nobility as a whole that indicate an increasing intermarriages with other segments of the elite (patriciate and rich bourgeoisie).<sup>76</sup> The share of non-noble spouses of the Utrecht Teutonic knights has grown to over one third, in the last cohort. An example of such a marriage is that of Godard Adriaan Henry Jules Count van Aldenburg Bentinck (1887–1968), a son of the Amerongen castle lord who had given shelter to Kaiser Wilhelm II, with Jacoba van den Heuvel (1888–1949). His second marriage was also with a woman without a title of nobility: Alida Vlieger (1909–2006).

The share of foreign nobility, which has increased since the middle of the eighteenth century, points on the contrary to endogamy, namely among German nobles. In fact, most of the women of foreign nobility are German ladies who married commanders of German descent. For example, Wolf Dietrich von Trotha (1884–1971), the last German in the chapter, expelled after World War II, was married to Irmgard Anna Eugenie Thilda Wilma Freiin von Seefried auf Buttenheim (1897–1948).<sup>77</sup> The sons of German princes in the chapter were usually married to women from German royal or princely families. As a rule, these were marriages between tiny states in the Holy Roman Empire, such as Anhalt-Bernburg-Schaumburg-Hoym with Solms-Braunfels. Alexis Frederick Christiaan von Anhalt-Bernburg (1767–1834), who had merged several branches into the Duchy of Anhalt-Bernburg and had survived the Napoleonic land consolidation, so that his still

<sup>75</sup> John Cannon, “The British Nobility, 1600–1800,” in *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, vol. I, ed. Hamish M. Scott (London–New York: Longman, 1995), 73.

<sup>76</sup> Moes, *Onder aristocraten*, 251–257, 266–269; Jaap Dronkers and Huibert Schijf, “Huwelijken tussen *adel* en *patriciaat*: een middel om hun elitepositie in een moderne samenleving in stand te houden?,” *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 122 (2005): 144–155. These studies do not distinguish between old and new nobility. My research on the Utrecht nobility shows that among the members of the knighthood in the province of Utrecht (1814–1850) marriages occurred regularly between descendants from old and new noble families, as well as with non-noble persons. This research, based on a survey by D’Ablaing van Giessenburg, has been published in the book on the nobility in the province of Utrecht. Willem Jan d’Ablaing van Giessenburg, *De Ridderschappen in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden of de geschiedenis, regeling en zamenstelling van den stand der edelen van 1814 tot 1850* (The Hague: C. van Doorn, 1875), 123–125; Renger E. de Bruin, *Adel en Ridderschap in Utrecht* (Zwolle: WBooks, 2023).

<sup>77</sup> Fabius, *Ridderlijke Duitse Orde*, 183; ARDOU-NA, Inv. Nr. 054.5, Notulen van de vergaderingen van het kapittel met bijlagen waaronder verslagen van de dirigerende commissie (1901–1959), June 1946.



not very extensive territory could join the German Confederation, had succeeded in making the daughter of the Elector of Hesse, Maria Frederica (1768–1838), his consort. Her mother was a Danish princess. The marriage was not a success and ended in divorce in 1817, after 23 years. He soon remarried Dorothea Friederike von Sonnenberg (1781–1818), but this marriage was short-lived: she died within a year. In 1819, he remarried her sister Ernestine Charlotte (1779–1845). The second and third marriages were morganatic: Dorothea and Ernestine were raised to the peerage after the wedding as Baronesses von Hoym.<sup>78</sup> Among the members of the House of Ascania, to which the Bernburg princes belonged, morganatic marriages were more common, quite exceptional among German princes and royals.<sup>79</sup>

The biggest class difference during the pre-revolutionary periods was the invalidated marriage between Prince Charles-Louis von Anhalt-Bernburg-Schaumburg-Hoym and Benjamine Keyser, the daughter of a junior officer. It was the kind of rash commitment that was feared in noble circles and, as we have seen, the father did everything he could to rectify the mistake, ultimately with success. If this was the action of a young man in love, an example of a socially very unequal marriage, made by a man of mature age, was that of Commander Adolf Jacob Hendrik Christiaan Carel Baron van Heeckeren (1771–1846). At the age of 57, he married the much younger weaver's daughter Garritdina Straalman (1797–1855), with whom he already had a child. The children born after the marriage inherited a title of nobility, but they did not live according to a noble order. The social decline continued. Descendants married farmers and maids from the surrounding area and practiced professions such as farmer, gardener, carpenter and bartender.<sup>80</sup> A remarkable marriage was that of Godert Willem Count van Rechteren (1841–1902) and Augusta Isabella Alexandrina Janssens (1844–1919). She was the daughter of an unmarried Belgian woman; in the Van Rechteren family, it was rumoured that Augusta's natural father was none other than King Leopold I of Belgium.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Accessed 6 February 2022, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexius\\_Friedrich\\_Christian\\_\(Anhalt-Bernburg\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexius_Friedrich_Christian_(Anhalt-Bernburg)); Reinhold Specht: *Alexius Friedrich Christian*. In *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (NDB). Vol. 1 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953), 198; Accessed 6 February 2022, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd104173130.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Sikora, "Eine Missheirat im Hause Anhalt. Zur sozialen Praxis der ständischen Gesellschaft in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Die Fürsten von Anhalt. Herrschaftssymbolik, dynastische Vernunft und politische Konzepte in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Werner Freitag and Michael Hecht (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2003), 217–234.

<sup>80</sup> *Nederland's Adelsboek* 84 (1994): 232–248.

<sup>81</sup> CO, 1447.1, Archief Huis den Berg, Dalfsen; CO, 227, Archief Familie Van Rechteren, 2.2.7.9., Godert Willem van Rechteren (1841–1902) trouwt 1867 Augusta Isabella Alexandrina Jans-

By far the majority of commanders entered into a marriage that did not jeopardise the status of their household. Concerns about a household's financial position counted for a lot. Otto Baron van Randwijck, for instance, who was married to a woman from the other branch of the Van Randwijck family, wrote in his letter to his future son-in-law Jan Arend Godert Baron van Dedem that he would give permission to marry his daughter Adriana Sophia since *the financial circumstances will allow the marriage to go ahead*.<sup>82</sup> Van Randwijck had reason to be wary of men who were after his daughters' money: when he died in 1833, he left almost half a million guilders. Each child inherited almost 100,000. With Jan Arend Godert, he could rest assured: the Van Dedems were wealthy and, like the Van Randwijcks, belonged to the old noble families, with Teutonic Knights among their members and relatives.

#### THE ROLE OF WOMEN

The main purpose of the marriages of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights was to produce offspring, preferably male, and to strengthen the wealth and the family network. In the case of the Teutonic Order, moreover, the provision of the right quarters played a role: for the admission of the members themselves that of their mothers and grandmothers, and for the following generations the descent of the wife was important. After the wedding, noblewomen had to be above all good mothers, managers of large households and excellent hostesses. The education of noble daughters to become a *filles de qualité* included good written and oral command of Dutch and French, artistic skills such as drawing, embroidering, singing, playing music and dancing. Dealing with money and household management were also part of the education of noble girls. Anna Elisabeth Christina van Tuyll van Serooskerken (1745–1819), granddaughter of Commander Reinout Gerard van

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sens (1844–1919), accessed 20 February 2022, <https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/ead-display/-/ead/pl/aicode/NL-ZIHCO/type/fa/id/1447.1/unitid/1447.1+-+2.2.7.9>.

<sup>82</sup> [...] *dat de finantieele omstandigheden de voltrekking van't huwelijk sullen permitteren*. Brief van O. van Randwijck aan J. A. G. van Dedem, na 15 maart 1815; GA, 609, Inv. Nr. 329, Stukken betreffende de totstandkoming van het huwelijk van Adriana Sophia van Randwijck en Jan Arend Godert van Dedem (1815).

Tuyll van Serooskerken and married to a scion of the Van Reede family, published an extensive manual for running a noble household.<sup>83</sup>

Very important was the care for appearance and an elegant posture, for which corsets served. The noblewomen served *to embellish, cheer up and make cosy intercourse more pleasant*, as a Utrecht nobleman put it.<sup>84</sup> Noble girls were educated by governesses (often from French-speaking Switzerland) and subsequently at boarding schools. They had to learn enough to fulfil their social role, but not too much knowledge; they certainly did not have to become a *femme savante*.<sup>85</sup> Such a woman was Isabella Agneta Elisabeth van Tuyll van Serooskerken (1740–1805), at home called Belle. This granddaughter of Commander Reinout Gerard van Tuyll van Serooskerken was extraordinarily studious. She built up a network of correspondence with scholars at home and abroad and gained fame as a writer. Her parents gave her the chance, but when Belle wrote a satirical novel *Le Noble*, in which she criticised her own environment, they had the entire edition taken off the market.<sup>86</sup> She saw nothing in the destiny of finding a suitable noble husband and then fulfilling the usual role of mother and hostess. She rejected one noble partner after another, including the son of Land Commander Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer (1692–1766), and finally married a Swiss teacher.

Noble girls who did not marry were taken care of by the family. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the noble nunneries that were closed during the Reformation offered a solution. The convents no longer existed, but the estates provided income to unmarried noble women, so-called prebends.<sup>87</sup> Three

<sup>83</sup> [Anna Elisabeth Christina Van Reede-van Tuyll van Serooskerken], *Voor de huishouding, ten nutte van alle standen en van aldegeen, die voor de orde zijn om eene gemakkelijke en naauwkeurige rekening van de kosten hunner huishouding te houden, door berekeningstafelen gesteld en op ondervinding gestaafd* (The Hague: G. Bakhuisen, 1804/1815). Copies of this manual are kept in: GA, 613, Archief Bentinck/Aldenburg Bentinck, Inv. Nr. 637c; Utrecht, Het Utrechts Archief, 76, Huis Zuilen, Inv. Nr. 1275-a. The manual is described by Coen O. A. Schimmelpenninck van der Oije, "Van gewest naar vaderland: adel en ridderschap, 1780–1850," in *Adel en ridderschap in Gelderland*, ed. Schimmelpenninck van der Oije et al., 265.

<sup>84</sup> [...] *tot verfraaiing, vervrolijkning en veraangenenaaming van de gezellige omgang*, Willem Emmerij de Perponcher Sedlnitzky, *Onderwijs voor kinderen van drie tot vijf jaar*, vol. I (Utrecht: Van Schoonhoven, 1782), viii; quoted by Frances Bulhof, *Ma patrie est au ciel. Leven en werk van Willem Emmerij de Perponcher Sedlnitzky (1741–1819)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1993), 185.

<sup>85</sup> Streng, *Leven naar staatsgelegenheid*, 40.

<sup>86</sup> Pierre H. Dubois en Simone Dubois, *Zonder vaandel. Belle van Zuylen, 1740–1805, een biografie* (Amsterdam: G.A. van Oorschot, 1993), 101; Kees van Strien, *Belle van Zuylen, een leven in Holland* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2019), 52.

<sup>87</sup> Streng, *Leven naar staatsgelegenheid*, 59–84; Wilma van den Brink, "Utrechtse adellijke vrouwen en prebenden in de achttiende eeuw," *Virtus. Journal of Nobility Studies* 11 (2004): 43–53;

daughters of Commander Barend Hendrik Bentinck (1703–1773) enjoyed such prebends. Commander Joost Taets van Amerongen (1726–1791) gave his daughter Maria Jacoba Amisfortia no less than four prebends in different former nunneries in Utrecht, the first when the child was only four years old.<sup>88</sup> These institutions were abolished during the revolutionary period 1795–1813, but afterwards special noble funds could provide a solution when the family capital was insufficient. The Bailiwick of Utrecht also supported noble spinsters.<sup>89</sup>

There was no independent position for women during the entire period investigated, apart from exceptions such as the aforementioned Belle. Gender inequality among the nobility was even greater than among other sections of the population. For noble women there was no economic necessity to work, as was the case for shopkeepers, farmers and farm labourers.<sup>90</sup> Also, until at least the end of the eighteenth century, noble men were not expected to perform any work other than exercising political or military functions. In the course of the nineteenth century, they increasingly took up professions such as judge, lawyer, tax official or scientist, but for women, certainly married women, this was absolutely out of the question. Where they could be active outside the home was in the field of charity. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this activity increased significantly, which was linked to social awareness and an increased religious consciousness. A religious upbringing, with a confirmation around the eighteenth year of life, had always been standard, but in the nineteenth century there was a clear deepening under the influence of the Reveil, a pietistic movement, which had originated in Switzerland.<sup>91</sup> From the middle of the nineteenth century, the Bailiwick of Utre-

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Petros Samaras, “De Utrechtse ridderchapsconventen in de zeventiende eeuw,” *Virtus. Journal of Nobility Studies* 11 (2004): 23–42.

<sup>88</sup> Van den Brink, “Utrechtse adellijke vrouwen,” 45–46.

<sup>89</sup> ARDOU-NA, Inv. Nr. 241, Stukken betreffende de vaststelling van een reglement voor het Ondersteuningsfonds van de Orde, gesticht tot ondersteuning van leden van protestantse oudadellijke geslachten, die in behoeftige omstandigheden verkeren (1920–1950). Nota van A.C. Snouckaert van Schauburg voor de minister van Binnenlandse Zaken, 18-1-1830; NA 2.02.01, Inv. Nr. 3333 (18-1-1830), nr. 8; Renger E. de Bruin, “Return to charity. The donation policy of the Teutonic Order Bailiwick of Utrecht, 1815–2006,” in *Deutschordensgeschichte aus internationaler Perspektive. Festschrift für Udo Arnold zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Roman Czaja and Hubert Houben, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens 85 (Weimar: VDG, 2020), 6.

<sup>90</sup> Ileen Montijn, *Hoog geboren. 250 jaar adellijk leven in Nederland* (Amsterdam–Antwerpen: Contact, 2012), 320–323.

<sup>91</sup> Kennedy, *Concise History*, 302–303; Marie Elisabeth Kluit, *Het protestantse Reveil in Nederland en daarbuiten 1815–1865* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1970), 80–124.

cht as an institution also started to do more for charity.<sup>92</sup> The role of women as a hostess at the castle or town mansion was extremely important for the social network of the husband. This was partly local, but in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the relationship with the royal court in The Hague, in which noblewomen were crucial, became more and more important. In this respect the Dutch nobility fitted into a European pattern.<sup>93</sup>

In their roles as wives and mothers, noblewomen did have room for manoeuvre. Margaretha Turnor, the mother of Land Commander Godard van Reede-Ginkel, was in charge of the reconstruction of Amerongen Castle, destroyed by French troops in 1673.<sup>94</sup> Her daughter-in-law, Ursula Philippota van Raesfelt, Godard's wife, did the same during the rebuilding of Middachten Castle. After Margaretha's death, she adjusted the design, glad to be out of the influence of her dominant mother-in-law. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the two was extremely bad. The arguments were mainly about the religious education of the children, but also about Philippota's carelessness and bad handling of money. What also did not make the relationship better, was that Philippota was a cultured, elegant beauty, who completely fulfilled the ideal of society, while Margaretha was a coarse, somewhat limping woman, who did not hesitate to climb up the scaffolding and scold construction workers during the rebuilding of Amerongen. Another factor was that Philippota had an impeccable noble lineage, while Margaretha's origins were somewhat obscure.<sup>95</sup> The position of noble women became considerably stronger when their husbands died. In Dutch law, widows were not subject to their sons or other male relatives. In business life they could even run a company.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> De Bruin, "Donation Policy", 7–9.

<sup>93</sup> Montijn, *Hoog geboren*, 323; Dominic Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 135–137.

<sup>94</sup> Ruud Meischke and Koen Ottenheim, "De herbouw van het huis Amerongen (1673–1685)," *Bulletin KNOB* 110/1 (2011): 3–18.

<sup>95</sup> Aalbers, "Geboorte en geld," 70; Ferry Gouwens, "Johan van Reede van Renswoude. Een Utrechtse edelman en zijn politieke netwerk in de Republiek (1634–1682)," *Virtus. Journal of Nobility Studies* 21 (2014): 42; M. J. van't Kruijs, "Margrita Tumor omgeturnd," in *De Gelderse Leeuw. Jubileumboek van de Groep Gelderland van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Geslacht- en Wapenkunde 1916–1991*, ed. W. F. M. Ahoud et al. (Zutphen, 1992), 16–28; Coen Wilders, *Turnor, Margaretha*, in: *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*. Accessed 24 March 2022, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Turnor,Margaretha> [13/01/2014].

<sup>96</sup> Danielle van den Heuvel, "Women and entrepreneurship. Female traders in the Northern Netherlands c. 1580–1815" (PhD Diss., Utrecht University, 2007), 56–69.

As we have seen before, in the investigated group it was common for women to outlive their husbands. This was also the case with Margaretha and Philippota.

## CONCLUSION

With the abolishment of celibacy in 1640 the Bailiwick of Utrecht became an independent noble institution of Protestant, mostly married noblemen. The analysis of the marriages contracted by its members in the three following centuries shows that most of them fit the Western European Marriage Pattern. Marriages were entered into by mature people, mostly of their own free will, but in good consultation with the family (marriage by consent). The age difference between the partners was usually not very large. Very young brides were rare, mainly restricted to the circles of German princes, who knew arranged marriages. The partners of the knights usually came from their own environment, but certainly not always. The noble girls, who formed the majority of the commanders' wives, received an education aimed at finding a suitable spouse, after which they could play a role as a mother, manager of the household and pivot in the social network.

The knights formed their own households, with their children. Until the nineteenth century a substantial part of the offspring died young. The effects of medical developments in the nineteenth century, which reduced child and maternal mortality, can also be seen in this data set. The fact that commanders could marry and thus have a legitimate offspring made it possible for sons to enter the Order after their fathers. The registration procedures simplified this. Thus, series are constructible, in one case a series of six commanders in four successive generations. The demographic picture of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights is similar to what is known about the Dutch elites, nobility and patriciate, between the mid-seventeenth and mid-twentieth centuries.

The analysis of the marriages contracted by the commanders is part of a broader prosopographical study of the Utrecht Teutonic Knights. Aspects such as wealth, income, education, professions and political functions will also be addressed. In this way, this research aims to make a detailed group portrait of this special institution, which developed from a (monastic) Military Order into an exclusive noble society with an increasingly stronger charitable profile. The Bailiwick of Utrecht's strict admission criteria alone gave it the self-image of an elite within the nobility. Prosopographical research will have to show to what extent the membership distinguished itself within the Dutch upper class. The analysis of the

marriage data shows that, demographically speaking, the differences are not very significant.

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