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The nobility of Finland 1809–1919: From imperial loyalism to nationalist conflict

A separate Nobility of Finland was — inadvertently — created by Russia. It did not abolish the old Swedish legislation that regulated the nobility in Finland. Before the year 1809, there was no separate Finnish nobility: there was only the Nobility of Sweden. Those noble families, which lived in the territory that Russia conquered in 1808–1809 and which previously had been members of the Nobility of the Swedish Realm, suddenly realized that they were a separate nobility. They were separated from the Swedish nobility by the new state border between Sweden and Russia. They were not absorbed into the Russian nobility, because the Swedish system of nobility remained in force and it was not compatible with the Russian system. The Russian system of nobility was never introduced in the Grand Duchy of Finland. Of course, the separate Baltic German nobilities (*Ritterschaften*) were quite similar to the Finnish nobility, but they had existed already before the Russian conquest. The Nobility of Finland had not.

In this article, I describe the main characteristics of the Finnish nobility: the number of people, ennoblements, occupations and landownership. The article is largely based on my doctoral dissertation, which was published in the spring of 2014 (in Finnish)[1]. I propose that the Nobility of Finland favoured imperial loyalism in 1809–1899, when it administrated the Grand Duchy on behalf of the Russian emperor. At the end of the 19th century, loyalism was superseded by Finnish nationalism as well as Russian nationalism and centralizing state ideology. The nationalist conflict

[1] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli: yhteiskunnan huipulta uusiin rooleihin 1809–1939. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2014.

in 1899–1917 meant that the age-old bond between the nobility and the monarch was severed. A clear majority of the Finnish nobles formed an oppositional group and, as a consequence, lost their traditional alliance with the emperor. This, in all probability, accelerated the decline of the nobility as a political force in the Grand Duchy[2].

The separate Finnish nobility was a by-product of the Napoleonic wars. Emperor Napoleon and the Russian Emperor Alexander I agreed in Tilsit (1807) that Russia would force Sweden to join the Continental System, an embargo against Great Britain. As Russian diplomatic efforts did not achieve that objective, Russia decided to occupy the Finnish territory of the Swedish Realm in the spring of 1808 and — soon thereafter — to incorporate the territory into the Empire as a separately-governed Grand Duchy. The Swedish legal system was retained in force in the Grand Duchy. It divided the society into four estates (or orders): nobility, clergy, burghers and peasants. In the Swedish system, the nobility was a particularly well-defined social group. The organization of the nobility, the House of Nobility (*Riddarhuset*, literally the House of Knights), registered all the nobles and supervised their right to attend the legislative assembly (the four-estate Diet) that in the Swedish Realm was called *Riksdag* and, since 1809, in the Finnish Grand Duchy, somewhat more modestly, *Landtdag*[3].

I propose in my dissertation that the Nobility of Finland separated from the Nobility of the Swedish Realm during the Diet of Porvoo 1809, the first legislative assembly meeting in the newly conquered Grand Duchy. The Nobility of Sweden, which included the noble families living in the Finnish territory of the Realm, was registered at the House of Nobility in Stockholm. During the Diet of Porvoo, the assembled sixty or so noblemen decided to establish a separate House of Nobility in Finland. Secondly, they swore an oath of allegiance to Alexander I of Russia and in that oath announced that they were the *Finlands Ridderskap och Adel* which was the official title of the Noble Estate — now apparently extant in the confines of the Grand Duchy of Finland. Thirdly, the emperor promised to uphold the fundamental laws, the estate privileges and the Lutheran religion. Thus the laws that regulated the Swedish noble system were confirmed. The most important were the *Riddarhusordningen* of 1626 (the statutes of the House of Nobility), the noble privileges of 1723 and the Instrument of Government («constitution») of 1772. Finally, the assembled noblemen received new members when Alexander I conferred the first Finnish noble ranks. At the end of the Diet, 19 July 1809, the emperor created two counts and two barons and ennobled four persons. These eight noble ranks were not Swedish anymore, but neither were they Russian: the ranks were conferred «in the Grand Duchy of Finland». The Finnish nobility was formed as an amalgamation of families ennobled by the Russian emperors and those ca. 200 old noble families of the Swedish Realm that became subjects of the emperor[4].

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[2] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 181–202, 227–229.

[3] Ibid. S. 33–42.

[4] Ibid. S. 43–66.

Fig. 1. The beginning of the alliance between the emperor and the Finnish nobility The Nobility is preparing for the oath of allegiance at the Porvoo Cathedral on 29 March 1809. Emanuel Thelning, detail (1812): 1. Justice Chancellor Adolf Tandefelt, 2. Marshal of the Nobility Robert Wilhelm De Geer, 3. Governor General of Finland Göran Magnus Sprengtporten, 4. Emperor Alexander I, 5. Foreign Minister Nikolay Rumyantsev, 6. Minister of War Aleksey Arakcheyev, 7. Unknown court official, possibly Grand Marshal of the Court Nikolai Tolstoy, 8. Unknow person in court uniform, 9. Unkown Russian general, 10. General Matvei Platov, 11. A herald of Saint Andrew, 12. A herald of the Noble Estate, 13–14. Finnish noblemen in uniforms of the nobility[5]

This new-born social group was minute: in 1815 there were 2885 Finnish nobles according to the data I created for my dissertation[6]. That was 0.26 % of the population. At the same time there were 0.39 % nobles in Sweden[7]. The nobility grew slowly both through natural increase and through ennoblements, but as the population growth rate was even higher, the proportion of the nobility decreased fairly continuously. The only exception was the great famine of

[5] I have studied Emanuel Thelning's painting in detail in the article «Emanuel Thelningin maapäivämaalaus ja Porvoon tapahtumat». Suomen Museo 2007. Helsinki: Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistys, 2008. Available: http://www.1809.fi/lue_naee_koe/artikkeleja/fi.html

[6] All the nearly 20 000 Finnish nobles are included in the data. It is based on the genealogical records of the Finnish House of Nobility, see *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. C 1 and app. 1.

[7] There are differences in the methods of calculation, see *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 67–68, 157.

1866–1868, when the proportion of nobles increased temporarily as the nobility was not affected by hardships in the same measure as the population in general.

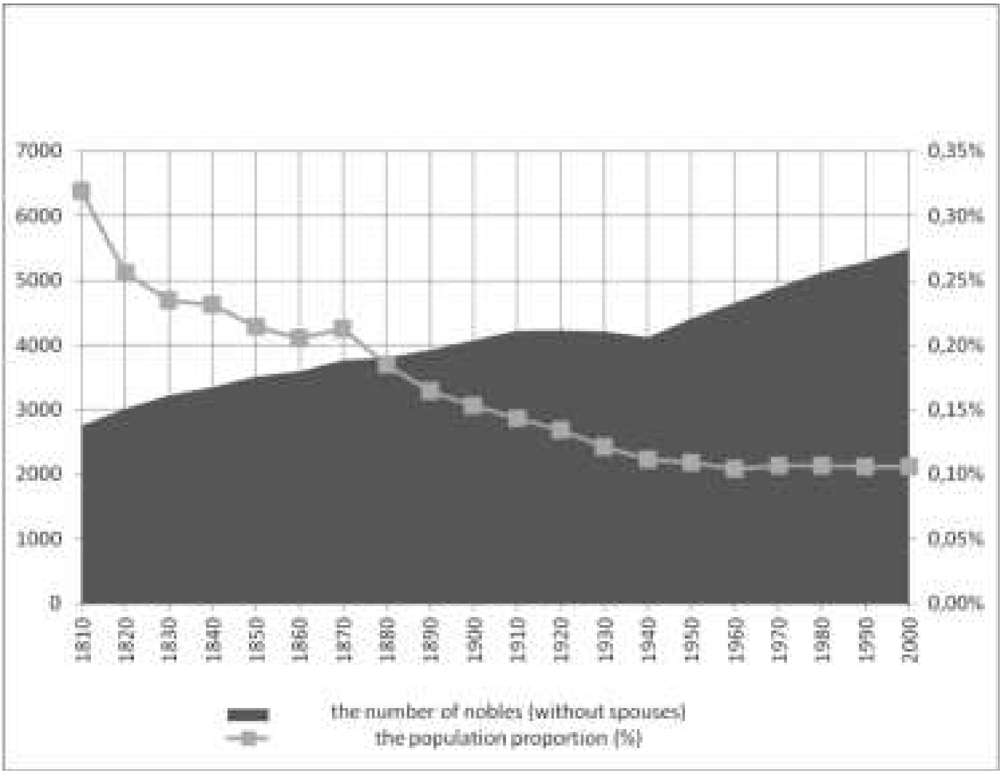

Fig. 2. The number of Finnish nobles and their percentage of the Finnish population

As mentioned earlier, in 1809, the Noble Estate made plans to establish a separate House of Nobility in Finland. However, these plans were not materialized immediately. The Finnish House of Nobility as an organization of the nobles was established in 1816–1818, whereas the House of Nobility Building was constructed only later in Helsinki — it was completed in 1862[8]. As all the members of the noble families were, at least in theory, registered at the House of Nobility, it was generally speaking evident who was noble in Finland and who was not. Unlike in many other countries, the dividing line between nobles and the rest of the society was clear. The assumption of noble rank was difficult as there were only two ways to become a Finnish noble: either by inheriting the nobility from one's father or by personal favour of

[8] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 61–66. See also the new book on the Finnish House of Nobility: Adeln och dess hus. Helsingfors: Fontana Media, 2013 (in Swedish); Ritarihuone ja Suomen aatelissuvut. Helsinki: Minerva, 2013 (in Finnish).

the emperor (ennoblement, permission for adoption to a noble family, legitimization of extramarital child or naturalization of foreign nobility — this category included Russian nobility). The personal, non-hereditary nobility, which was part of the Russian system of nobility, was unknown in Finland. The restrictiveness of the Finnish system differed considerably from Russia, where high military and civil ranks and badges of imperial orders conferred nobility automatically[9].

In fact, the first Chair of the Board of the Finnish House of Nobility, Baron Carl Erik Mannerheim made sure that persons automatically ennobled in Russia were not equated with the Finnish noble families that had received their noble ranks directly from Swedish kings and Russian emperors. Old Finland, which Russia had conquered in the 18th century, was united with the newly conquered Finnish territory in 1812. When the Finnish House of Nobility was established in 1816–1818, it was debated, whether the Russian nobles that lived in Old Finland could register at the House of Nobility. On Baron Mannerheim's advice, the emperor approved a very restrictive possibility for registration: automatically ennobled families (2nd and 3rd classes of the Дворянская родословная книга) were excluded[10].

In Finland, the statutory authority for ennoblement was provided by the Instrument of Government of 1772, which was the most important of the fundamental or «constitutional» laws. The 11th section of the law stated that only the sovereign could elevate to the Noble Estate those who had well served the sovereign and the realm with loyalty, virtue, courage, study and experience. It stated further that there were so many nobles in Sweden that the sovereign should graciously limit the number of ennoblements to one hundred and fifty, which 150 new noble families the House of Nobility was obliged to register. Neither could the House of Nobility deny registration from those nobles that were elevated to a comital or baronial dignity. The number of ennoblements was restricted, because the previous Swedish rulers had ennobled in massive numbers during the 17th and 18th centuries[11].

During the Imperial Era in Finnish history (1809–1917), the Russian emperors conferred 10 comital, 38 baronial and 115 untitled noble ranks in Finland. Because nine persons received a noble rank twice, only 154 persons were actually ennobled. Baron Carl Erik Mannerheim was one of the ennobled: he received the title of count from Alexander I in 1824. In addition, the emperors naturalized 23 foreign (inclu-

[9] *Snellman A.* Aateliskorotetut yhteiskuntaryhmänä: suomalaista virka-aatelia 1809–1912. Master's thesis in Finnish and Nordic history. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2006. S. 37–61. On the Russian system, see also e. g. *Becker S.* Nobility and Privilege in Late Imperial Russia. Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb, 1985; Gentes Finlandiae IX. Skrifter utgivna av Finlands riddarhus 10. Helsingfors: Finlands riddarhus, 2001; *Tillander-Godenhielm U.* The Russian Imperial Award System during the Reign of Nicholas II 1894–1917. Helsinki: Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistys, 2005.

[10] *Gronow T.* Den ryska adeln i Finland under autonomis tid // Genos. 2000. N 1. S. 9.

[11] *Snellman A.* Aateliskorotetut yhteiskuntaryhmänä. S. 33, 51. Published e. g. in: Storfurstendömet Finlands grundlagar jemte till dem hörande statshandlingar / Ed. J. Ph. Palmén. Helsingfors: J. C. Frenckell & Son, 1861.

ding Russian) noble ranks in the Grand Duchy. For example, Governor General, Prince Alexander Menschikoff was naturalized Finnish prince in 1833. He remained the only prince in the House of Nobility. The aforementioned 11th section of the Instrument of Government did not mention princely titles: they were not part of the Swedish system of nobility[12].

In fact, not all the ennoblements and naturalizations were registered at the House of Nobility. The registration was quite expensive, so some ennobled persons decided not to bother. For example, Minister State Secretary, Baron Robert Henrik Rehbinder did not register his comital title (1826). It would have cost him 800 silver roubles to do so[13]. Last untitled ennoblements took place in 1904 and the final noble rank was conferred in 1912, when Minister State Secretary August Langhoff was created baron.

Although Russia had conquered the Finnish territory, there was no attempt to implant Russians into the local nobility. The ennobled persons came mostly from Finland. Only 7 per cent of the 154 ennobled persons were of imperial Russian origin (Russians, Baltic Germans etc.). The Russians ennobled in the Grand Duchy were, furthermore, mostly officials whose posts were situated in Finland or they had some other connection to the country[14].

The most important variable related to ennoblements is occupation. In the Grand Duchy, 90 per cent of the ennobled were serving the state — in a broader sense — as civil servants, military officers, academics or clergymen. Only 14 per cent of the ennobled came from the armed forces. Typically they were majors general — the lowest officer ennobled had the rank of major[15]. The proportion of the military officers is quite low in international comparison. For example, in Sweden it was around 30–40 per cent of the ennobled in the first half of the 19th century[16]. In Russia, on the other hand, higher officers were automatically noble[17].

The remaining 10 per cent of the ennobled, those not serving the state, were engaged in economic activities. All the entrepreneurs ennobled in the first half of the 19th century can be described as ironworks proprietors. The first modern industrialists were ennobled in the mid-nineteenth century. Brothers Wilhelm and Carl Nottbeck (later von Nottbeck), who owned the Finlayson & Co., received noble ranks in 1855. The cotton factory in question was the largest industrial enterprise in the Grand Duchy and, moreover, the Nottbecks had close ties with Governor General Friedrich Berg. The governor general himself received the last Finnish comital title in 1856[18].

[12] *Snellman A.* Aateliskorotetut yhteiskuntaryhmänä.

[13] *Snellman A.* Aateliskorotetut yhteiskuntaryhmänä. S. 62–64.

[14] Ibid. S. 80–82.

[15] Ibid. S. 90–109.

[16] Estimation based on *Fahlbeck P. E.* Sveriges adel — statistisk undersökning 1: ätternas demografi. Lund: Gleerup, 1898. Table VI.

[17] See e. g. *Becker* 1985; Gentes Finlandiae IX 2001; Tillander-Godenhielm 2005.

[18] *Snellman A.* Aateliskorotetut yhteiskuntaryhmänä. S. 90–99; *Helenius K.* Wilhelm von Nottbeck ja Finlayson. 3rd ed. Tampere,2006.

Table 1

Families registered at the Finnish House of Nobility (last registration 1912)

Old noble families from the Swedish period	**191**
comital	2
baronial	23
untitled	166
Ennobled families from the Russian period	**145**
comital	8
baronial	36
untitled	101
Naturalized foreign (including Russian) families from the Russian period	**20**
princely	1*
comital	1
baronial	4
untitled	14
Other families	**1****
TOTAL	**357**

* Russian Prince Alexander Menschikoff, the governor general of Finland
** Separated branch of an old noble family

The occupational structure of the 154 ennobled persons during the Imperial Era was far more «peaceful» than the occupational structure of the whole Finnish nobility that I studied in my dissertation. Noblemen were typically military officers. The source for this analysis is an extensive data that includes all the members of the Finnish nobility (nearly 20000 persons)[19]. Statistical findings were complemented and illustrated by case studies that portray eight noble families: Armfelt, Furuhjelm, Järnefelt, Mannerheim, Ramsay, Soisalon-Soininen, Törngren and von Wendt. The social analysis of the noble power focused on a few key features: mainly occupations (especially public offices) and landownership. This was based on the ideas of M.L. Bush. He states as a synthesis of his two comparative analyses *Noble privilege* (1983) and *Rich noble, poor noble* (1988) that: «Noble power in the modern period had four bases: landownership; parliamentary membership; the tenure of public office; and the force of arms»[20]. However, in the 19th century, the independent force of arms was not relevant anymore. The nobles did not have private armies and the period of *coups d'état* in Russia was over: nobles served as officers, in public office.

[19] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. Ch. 1 and appendix 1.

[20] *Bush M.L.* An anatomy of nobility // Social orders and social classes in Europe since 1500: studies in social stratification / Ed. M.L. Bush. London: Longman, 1992. P. 36.

Parliamentary membership instead was important: *all* Finnish noble families that were registered at the House of Nobility (357 families were registered by 1912) had a seat in the Noble Estate of the Diet. The Russian nobility lacked this kind of legislative power altogether, which again demonstrates the differences between the Swedish and the Russian systems of nobility. However, the four-estate Diet of the Finnish Grand Duchy was convened only in 1809 and then again in 1863–1906, which meant that between 1809 and 1863 officials and civil servants ruled the Grand Duchy free from the competition and from the annoying attention of the Diet[21].

As mentioned earlier, according to the nobility data the Finnish noblemen were, for the most part, military officers in the beginning of the 19th century. The Finnish noblewomen were not employed in formal occupations. I coded the nobility data automatically with HISCO occupational codes. Those noblemen who had an officer's title were coded as officers, although many were, in fact, retired officers and often actually occupied as gentleman farmers, iron mill patrons etc.[22]

Table 2

Occupational codes (30–70 year old noblemen in 1810)

Occupation	HISCO	Number	Distribution
Officer	58 320	411	80 %
Non-Commissioned Officer	58 330	32	6 %
Government Administrator	20 210	13	3 %
Jurist, Specialization Unknown	12 000	12	2 %
Manager, Specialisation Unknown	21 000	8	2 %
Legislative Official	20 110	7	1 %
General Manager	21 110	6	1 %
Land Surveyor	3020	5	1 %
Other occupational codes	16 different	20	4 %
TOTAL		514	100 %
No occupational code (or HISCO –1)		21	
ALTOGETHER		535	

Hundred years later military officers were still the most common occupational group, but its proportion had fallen nearly 60 percentage points. The occupational group of general managers consisted mainly of managers in the private sector: the nobility was increasingly moving from the public sector (serving the crown as officers and civil servants) to the private sector (businessmen, lawyers, engineers etc.).

[21] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. Ch. 2, 7, 9.

[22] I would like to thank Professor Marco H. D. van Leeuwen and the International Institute of Social History for friendly cooperation. See HISCO: Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations / Ed. Marco H. D. van Leeuwen — Ineke Maas — Andrew Miles. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002.

Table 3

Occupational codes (30–70 year old noblemen in 1920)

Occupation	HISCO	Number	Distribution
Officer	58 320	178	21 %
General Manager	21 110	118	14 %
Manager, Specialisation Unknown	21 000	66	8 %
Jurist, Specialization Unknown	12 000	54	6 %
Farm Manager	21 230	51	6 %
Medical Doctor, Specialisation Unknown	6100	35	4 %
Engineers, Specialisation Unknown	2000	33	4 %
Government Administrator	20 210	28	3 %
Working Proprietor (Wholesale or Retail Trade)	41 025	23	3 %
Teacher, Level and Subject Unknown	13 000	18	2 %
Legislative Official	20 110	17	2 %
Railway Station Master	22 210	15	2 %
Clerical or Related Worker, Specialisation Unknown	30 000	15	2 %
General Farmer	61 110	15	2 %
Pharmacist	6710	12	1 %
Other occupational codes	73 different	187	22 %
TOTAL		865	100 %
No occupational code (or HISCO –1)		103	
ALTOGETHER		968	

At the end of the research period noblewomen had already established their position in the sphere of public occupations: 30 % had occupational codes in 1920. They were often teachers, nurses and office workers. Usually they were unmarried: marriage tended to end the occupational career of a noblewoman.

Table 4

Occupational codes (30–70 year old noblewomen in 1920)

Occupation	HISCO	Number	Distribution
Teacher, Level and Subject Unknown	13000	86	27 %
Professional Nurse, General	07110	27	9 %
Clerical or Related Worker, Specialisation Unknown	30000	15	5 %
Physiotherapist	07620	14	4 %
Office Clerk, General	39310	14	4 %
Bookkeeper, General	33110	13	4 %
Other Stenographers, Typists and Teletypists	32190	12	4 %
Cashier, Office or Cash Desk	33135	8	3 %
Fine Arts Teacher (Second Level)	13250	7	2 %

Head Teacher	13940	7	2%
Singer	17145	6	2%
Mail Distribution Clerk, General	37010	6	2%
Medical Doctor, Specialisation Unknown	06100	5	2%
Manager, Specialisation Unknown	21000	5	2%
Other occupational codes	56 different	90	25%
TOTAL		315	100%
No occupational code (or HISCO –1)		720	
ALTOGETHER		1035	

As the highest officials were very often either born noble or ennobled, the nobility — consequently — ruled the Grand Duchy. The nobles were on the top of the society. A social group that represented ca. 0.2 per cent of the population controlled 30–40 per cent of manors and higher offices. Three-quarters of the Senate economic department («Government») members were nobles. The alliance with the emperor, of course, explains this phenomenal overrepresentation of nobles in the elite. I would describe this as a period of imperial loyalism (1809–1899). The Finnish nobles had no reason to oppose the emperor: he favoured them and they co-ruled the Finnish Grand Duchy with him.

Many liberal nobles did demonstrate anti-imperial and pro-Scandinavian opinions in the parliamentary debates of the 1860s, but this was short-lived. When leading liberals Johan August von Essen and Count Carl Magnus Creutz were appointed provincial governors, their oppositional fervour was considerably diminished[23]. A more persistent theme among the Finnish nobility was the fear that Finnish noble officers, who married Russians, would become Russians themselves. At least in one, very famous, case the effect was quite the opposite. Finnish noble officer Alexander Järnefelt married Baroness Elizaveta Clodt von Jürgensburg (a niece to the famous sculptor Baron Clodt), but she adopted the Finnish language and became a mother-figure for the Finnish-speaking cultural life[24]. Further, systematic studies in the Finnish-Russian upper-class marriages would illustrate the contacts between the Finnish and Russian elites more thoroughly.

The power structure in the Baltic Provinces was a somewhat similar to the Finnish Grand Duchy, but the distance between the Baltic German nobility and the local Estonian and Latvian peasants was far wider than the distance between the Swedish-speaking nobles and the Finnish-speaking peasants in Finland[25]. Finnish peasants had

[23] *Vuorinen M.* Kuviteltu aatelismies: aateluus viholliskuvana ja itseymmärryksenä 1800-luvun Suomessa. Helsinki: SKS, 2010; *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. Ch. 7.

[24] *Jägerskiöld S.* Nuori Mannerheim. Helsingissä: Otava, 1964. P. 215–222; *Hämäläinen-Forslund P.* Elisabetin romaani: Järnefeltin perheen pietarilainen tausta. Porvoo: WSOY, 1999; *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 144, 164–165, 259.

[25] On Baltic German nobilities see e. g. *Ungern-Sternberg von W.F.* Geschichte der Baltischen Ritterschaften. Limburg a. d. Lahn: C.A. Starke, 1960; *Mühlendah von E., Hoyningen gen. Huene von H.* Die Baltischen Ritterschaften: Übersicht über die in den Matrikeln der Ritterschaften von Livland, Estland, Kurland und Oesel verzeichneten Geschlechter. 2. verbesserte

never been subjected to serfdom and the nation-building process in Finland was a common cause for both the Swedish-speaking nobles and the Finnish-speaking peasants. There were language disputes, however, and the Russian governors general of Finland utilized these disputes from the 1880s onwards with the motto: *divide et impera*[26].

The central administrative body of the Grand Duchy was the Senate. Its economic department is the precursor of the Finnish Government and its justice department corresponds to the current Supreme Court. According to the legislation, half of the senate members should have been nobles and the other half non-nobles. In reality, the Senate was dominated by nobles. As Peter Burke reminds us, we must not worship the idol of legalism: historic societies are not always structured as their laws might suggest[27]. Fig. 3 illustrates how the nobles vanished from the Senate economic department and from its successor the Government. It shows that nearly 90 % of Senate economic department members were nobles in 1840. The proportion fell below 50 % only at the end of the 19th century. During the so-called first republic (ca. 1919–1944) there often were a noble minister or two at the Government, but in the second republic, after the Second World War, there were hardly any. The war seems to be a turning point: the nobility disappeared from public life and lost its remaining political influence. The post-war period was characterized by strong leftist and agrarian tendencies — and political pressure from the victorious Soviet Union. Accordingly, I suggest that the political power of the nobility went through three phases: it reigned supreme during the 19th century, diminished at the turn of the century and disappeared between the first and the second republic[28].

These findings are corroborated by the proportion of nobles in the Finnish unicameral Parliament that was established in 1906–1907. Many noble politicians that had represented their noble families in the Noble Estate of the Diet were still active during the first republic and were now democratically elected to the modern Parliament. In addition, for the first time, noblewomen gained access to the legislative assembly. In the first democratic elections (1907), eleven nobles were elected to the Parliament (there were 200 members altogether). Among them was Aleksandra Gripenberg, a feminist writer and a member of a baronial family[29].

In addition to public offices and parliamentary membership, a key power base that I follow in my dissertation is the noble landownership. In the beginning of the 19th century, the nobility owned approximately 40 % of all the manors. At the turn of the century, the proportion had fallen under 25 %. In 1939, the nobility owned 19 % of manors in the most important manorial area, the Province of Uusimaa, which

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und erweiterte Auflage / Aus dem deutschen Adelsarchiv 4. Limburg/Lahn: C. A. Starke, 1973; *Whelan H.* W. Adapting to modernity: family, caste and capitalism among the Baltic German nobility. Ostmitteleuropa in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart 22. Köln: Böhlau, 1999.

[26] E.g. *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 181.

[27] *Burke P.* The language of orders in early modern Europe // Social orders and social classes in Europe since 1500: studies in social stratification / Ed. M. L. Bush. London: Longman, 1992. P. 8.

[28] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 83–95.

[29] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 227, 277–279.

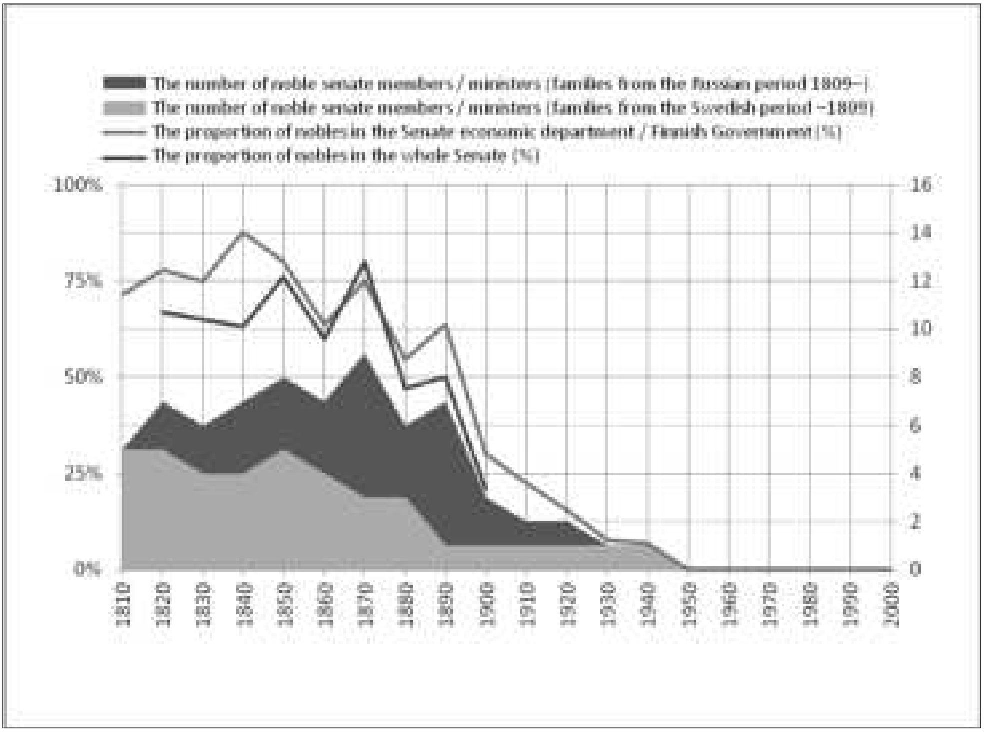

Fig. 3. Nobles in the Senate and in the Finnish Government (at 10 year intervals)

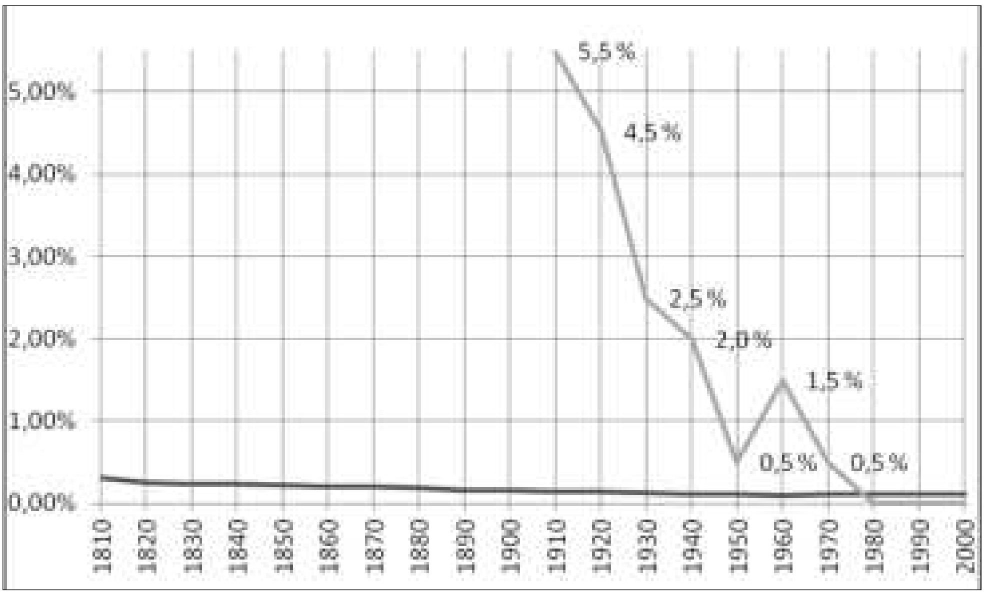

Fig. 4. The proportion of nobles in the population (darker line) and in the Parliament 1907 — (lighter line) at 10 year intervals

surrounds the City of Helsinki. If compared to the noble proportion of the population (0.11 %), the figure still indicates an overrepresentation that is over hundredfold. However, the declining trend is still obvious[30].

It is also visible in fig. 5, which shows the proportion of manor owners in the nobility data and follows the trend to the end of the 20th century. There is, however, a temporary increase at the turn of the 19th century: the political situation in the Grand Duchy is likely to be the culprit. The alliance between the Russian emperor and the Finnish nobility — an alliance that was formed already in 1809 when most nobles accepted the conquering Russian ruler — was severed during the russification period at the turn of the 19th century[31].

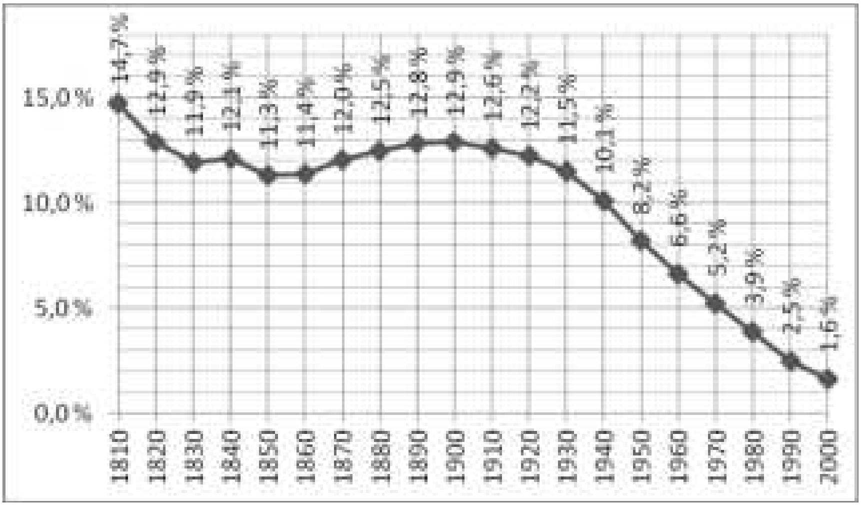

Fig. 5. The proportion of manor owners in the Finnish nobility

Serving the crown as an officer or a civil servant became unpopular. Loyalty to the emperor was replaced by the loyalty to the Finnish constitution, at least according to the Constitutionalists, who formed the vocal majority of the nobility. Therefore, the turn of the century saw the nobles to choose careers in the liberal professions, in business life and as gentleman farmers — instead of the traditional careers in imperial service[32].

At the same time as the nobles were losing their position as high officials and members of parliament, the nobility also became less exclusive. This was a clear indication that the last remains of the Estate Society (*Ständische Gesellschaft*) were rapidly disappearing. The diving line in marriages between the First Estate, the nobility, and the other

[30] Ibid. Ch. 5, 12.

[31] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 191–202, 249–251, 283.

[32] Ibid. S. 280–281.

estates ceased to exist. The transformation was not legislative: marriages between nobles and non-nobles were legal. Still, at the beginning of the 19th century, over 40 % of nobles married other nobles. As there were only ca. 3000 nobles — 0.2 % of the population — this signified a strong endogamous tendency. Fig. 7 shows how the diving lines of the Estate Society were melting away. Laws were not changed, but the behaviour of people was changing. Interestingly, there is an anomaly in the figure: at the turn of the 19th century nobles married slightly more exclusively. As the alliance between the Russian emperor and the Finnish nobility disappeared at the same time, perhaps it caused a sort of comforting return to traditions: marrying more nobly and, as fig. 5 indicates, abandoning the unpopular state service and returning to the plough, much like Cincinnatus[33].

Officiela Afdelningen.

Hans Kejserliga Majestäts Nådiga Manifest, gifvet i S:t Petersburg, den 3/15 Februari 1899.

Afskrift.

Wi NIKOLAI den Andre, med Guds Nåde, Kejsare och Sjelfherskare öfver hela Ryssland, Tsar af Polen, Storfurste till Finland, etc., etc., etc.

„NIKOLAI.“

„MIKAEL.“

Fig. 6. The end of the alliance between the emperor and the Finnish nobility. Most Finnish nobles thought that the February Manifesto issued by Nicholas II in 1899 abolished unconstitutionally the foundations of the Finnish autonomy (Finlands Allmänna Tidning 18.2.1899. The Historical Newspaper and Journal library. National Library of Finland)

In part, the nobility lost its position because of legislative reforms, such as the abolition of noble privileges from the 1860s onwards. However, the formal privileges were not very significant. Before 1860s nobles were exempt of a minor tax called *mantalspengar*, they had the right to have their cases heard directly at the Courts of Appeal and they had the monopoly of tax-free manors called *säterier*. The fact that they controlled the highest offices was not regulated by legislation. It was regulated by the imperial policy that upheld the *Ancien Régime* in the Empire[34].

[33] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 282–283.

[34] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 145–150, 227–228, 287–288.

Slowly the influence of the nobility vanished in the minds of the people: as it became more and more common to cross the dividing line between nobles and non-nobles in marriages, and as the noble rank lost its value and esteem. These cultural transformations deserve more attention in future studies. Dr Marja Vuorinen has already shown how the Finnish nobility was culturally constructed as an enemy of the rising Bourgeoisie[35]: that process understandably weakened the cultural power of the nobility.

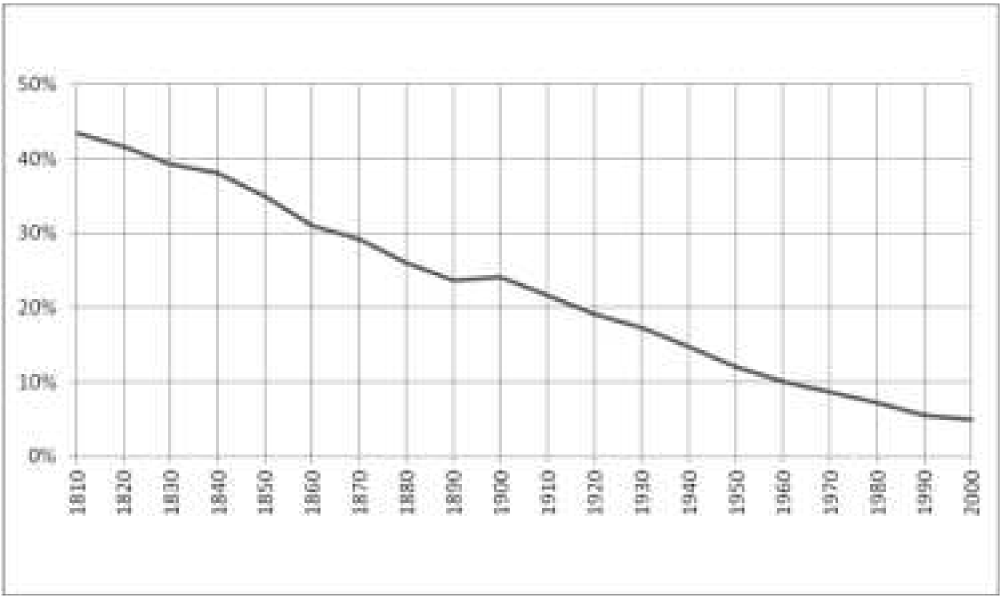

Fig. 7. The proportion of nobles marrying other nobles in Finland

In all probability, the conflict between the nationalistically inspired Finns of both languages and the government of Nicholas II (inspired by nationalism, centralizing state ideology and concern for imperial defence capability) eventually halted the Finnish ennoblements. In 1904 the last five persons received untitled noble ranks as part of parliamentary politics. The ennobled were Old Fennomanes — supporters of that part of the Finnish-language movement, whose leadership tried to find a compromise between the Finnish autonomy and the Russian centralizing tendencies. As the antiquated Diet of the Estates was substituted by a modern parliament in 1906–1907, the imperial government could no longer use the ennoblements for such political purposes. Apparently in accordance with the centralizing tendencies, the separate Finnish ennoblements ceased (the end of the ennoblements should be studied more carefully)[36].

[35] *Vuorinen M.* Kuviteltu aatelismies.

[36] *Snellman A.* Aateliskorotetut yhteiskuntaryhmänä; *Klinge M.* Aatelointi palkitsemisen muotona. Valtio palkitsee — Staten belönar. Helsinki: SKS, 2007; *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 193–194.

Fig. 8. The Nobility of Finland exists even today. The hall of the House of Nobility (Helsinki). The coats of arms of the Finnish noble families decorate the walls. In the middle, under the clock, are the most prestigious coats of arms: prince Menschikoff, count Creutz, count Cronhjem af Hakunge etc.

As the alliance with the emperor disappeared at the turn of the century, the nobility had no political allies against other, increasingly powerful, social groups: the Bourgeoisie and the Working Class. It seems clear that when the last Diet voted on the parliamentary reform in 1906, the nobles realized this and the fact that their opposition to the reform would be counterproductive. They made a virtue out of necessity: 100 noblemen favoured the unicameral parliament, 8 noblemen favoured a more conservative bicameral parliament and — at least publicly — *no-one* opposed the abolition of the four-estate Diet and the legislative power of the nobility[37].

The imperial power collapsed in the spring of 1917. The Bolshevik regime and the Russian Civil War were disastrous for the Russian nobility[38]. In Finland, the situation was different. Finland gave a Declaration of Independence on 6 December

[37] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 198–202, 276.

[38] *Rendle M.* Defenders of the motherland: the tsarist elite in revolutionary Russia. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; *Smith D.* Former people: the final days of the Russian aristocracy. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

1917, and the Finnish Civil War raged in the spring of 1918, but in Finland the Whites were victorious. In fact, the highest White leaders were Finnish nobles: Chair of the Senate P. E. Svinhufvud and Commander-in-Chief, Baron Gustaf Mannerheim. For a short period it looked possible that a Kingdom of Finland would be founded with a German Prince Friedrich Karl as its ruler. There was a possibility for a new alliance between the Finnish nobility and a new Finnish monarch. These fantasies disappeared with the collapse of the German Empire[39].

A new republican Instrument of Government was formulated. It was confirmed by the Regent of Finland, Baron Gustaf Mannerheim on 17 July 1919. The fifteenth section stated: «Noble ranks or other hereditary ranks shall not be conferred in the Republic»[40]. Interestingly, only the ennoblements were prohibited, the nobility was not abolished: it exists even today in the Finnish Republic.

The Finnish nobility did not perish in a revolution — unlike the Russian nobility. The peaceful withdrawal of the nobility from the top of the society has been an important factor in the formation of the current egalitarian Finnish society. Finland did not become a rigid class society in the British manner. The old elite renounced its power for the most part voluntarily — albeit under social pressure. It was a graceful retreat.

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[39] Vesa Vares: Kuninkaan tekijät: suomalainen monarkia 1917–1919: myytti ja todellisuus. Porvoo: WSOY, 1998; *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 229–237.

[40] *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli. S. 237–241.

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