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Defining New Elite

Ennoblements in the Grand Duchy of Finland 1809–1912

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The Russian emperors demarcated new status elite in the Finnish Grand Duchy through ennoblements. Loyal service to the state, and occasionally economic merits, were the main reasons for elevating someone to a noble dignity. In this paper I shall demonstrate what kind of persons were ennobled and how they reflect the transforming elites of the Grand Duchy.

This paper is based on my master's thesis,[1] which is the first study of the Finnish ennobled in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Finnish nobility of the past two centuries has not received much attention: the only major study was published more than 70 years ago.[2] Even after the groundbreaking study on European nobilities *après l'Ancien régime* by Arno J. Mayer,[3] the Finnish interest in the history of the post-revolutionary nobility has remained curiously low. It is probable that the nobility, which was overwhelmingly Swedish-speaking and more or less loyal to monarchical rulers, has not been a convenient part of the traditional nationalistic history of the Finnish Republic.[4] Moreover, at least the 1980s were still infused with leftist research agendas, which hardly were compatible either with the conservative and "elitist" nature of the social group in question or with the individualistic tendency to emphasize the role of "great men" in the aristocratic historiography.

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[1] Alex Snellman: *Aateliskorotetut yhteiskuntaryhmänä: suomalaista virka-aatelia 1809–1912* [The Ennobled as a Social Group: Finnish Service Nobility 1809–1912]. Unpublished master's thesis. 127 pp. + index and appendices 63 pp. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Department of History, 2006. I am preparing dissertation on the whole Finnish nobility 1809–2005.

[2] P. O. von Törne: *Finlands riddarhus 1818–1918 1–2* [The Finnish House of Nobility 1818–1918]. Helsingfors, 1926–1935.

[3] Arno J. Mayer: *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War*. New York: Pantheon, 1981.

[4] Marja Vuorinen has studied the use of the nobility as "the chosen enemy". She views the nobility as the antagonist in the thinking of the nineteenth century Finnish national/democratic opposition. Her licentiate's thesis in Finnish: http://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/val/yhtei/lt/vuorinen/

As it is probable that the international audience is not quite familiar with the features of the Finnish nobility, I shall, at first, sketch the outlines of the nobiliary system in the Grand Duchy. Thereafter, it is my intention to present the ennoblement procedure in brief, before focusing on the composition of the new status elite: the ennobled.

The Nobility in Finland

A separate Finnish nobility was formed in the spring of 1809, when Emperor of Russia Alexander I convened the local estates of the Grand Duchy[5]– nobility, clergy, burghers and peasants – to a Diet in the town of Porvoo. The Finnish territory of the Kingdom of Sweden was occupied by Russian troops, but it was not formally ceded to Russia until 17 September 1809. Nevertheless, at the end of March 1809, heads of several noble families convened as a separate Noble Estate of Finland and pledged (together with the other estates) allegiance to the emperor, who in return promised to uphold fundamental laws, estate privileges and the Lutheran religion.

During the Diet, the Noble Estate made plans to establish a separate House of Nobility,[6] although these plans were not materialized immediately. The Finnish House of Nobility as an organisation of the nobles was established 1816–1818, whereas the House of Nobility Building was constructed only later in Helsinki – it was completed in 1862. As all the members of the noble families were usually 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 the emperor (ennoblement, naturalization of foreign nobility, permission for adoption to a noble family, legitimization of extramarital child or confirmation/renewal of uncertain nobility).

The final element during the Diet that led to the formation of separate Finnish nobility were the first ennoblements of the Finnish Grand Duchy. 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 nobility of the Grand Duchy of Finland was formed as an amalgamation of families ennobled by the Russian emperors in the Grand Duchy and those "old" noble families of the Swedish Realm that chose to become

[5] Alexander I had taken the title *grand duke of Finlad* in 1808 and the Finnish territory was known as a *Grand Duchy* (literally the designations were in fact grand prince and Grand Principality). However, the Russian sovereigns were all the time primarily *emperors* even in Finland. Grand duke of Finland was an additional title of the emperor, not a separate throne. The ruler conferred Finnish ennoblements as *emperor and autocrat of all the Russias and grand duke of Finland*. Later this short title included also *tsar* [king] *of Poland* in the middle. The terms grand duke of Finland and Grand Duchy of Finland had been used already during the Swedish Era – although not systematically.

[6] In Swedish *Riddarhuset*, literally *House of Knights*.

subjects of the Russian emperor. The old nobility numbered roughly 200 families.[7] During the Imperial Era in Finland (1809–1917), the Russian emperors created 10 comital, 38 baronial and 115 untitled noble ranks. [8] However, not all the ennoblements were registered at the House of Nobility.[9]

Table 1: Families registered at the Finnish House of Nobility (last registration 1912)

old noble families	**191**
comital	2
baronial	23
untitled	166
ennobled families	**145**
comital	8
baronial	36
untitled	101
naturalized foreign families	**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 majority of the noble families in Finland had been created during the period when the territory had been part of Sweden. In fact, also the Finnish nobiliary system was essentially Swedish: the Finnish nobility was never incorporated to the Russian one and the laws[10] and customs regulating it were originally Swedish. The most important privilege provided by these laws applied only to the head of the family. He (never she) had the personal and hereditary right to attend the Noble Estate of the Diet and duly take part in the legislative process of the Grand Duchy.[11] All the nobles enjoyed a minor personal tax relief (until 1865), but the most important tax exemption

[7] Not all the old families became members of the House of Nobility.

[8] In addition, the emperors naturalized 23 foreign (including Russian) noble ranks in the Grand Duchy.

[9] Furthermore, noble ranks and noble families do not exactly correspond with each other, because in some cases there were two persons (e.g. brothers) who received noble ranks but were registered as one noble family. Conversely, it was also quite common that within one genealogical family there were technically many noble families at the register of the House of Nobility. There were, for example, one untitled and three baronial families von Willebrand – all closely related. In the Mannerheim family, the head of the family and his eldest son were counts (and registered as a separate comital family), whereas the family otherwise was baronial. The baronial dignity was conferred by the King of Sweden, but the title of count was granted by the Russian emperor. Thus the Mannerheim family is counted in two categories at Table 1: it is both an old baronial family and an ennobled comital family.

[10] House of Nobility Regulations (Riddarhusordningen 1626) with amendments (1778), Noble Privileges (1723), Instrument of Government (Regeringsformen 1772) and its amendment the Act of Union and Assurance (Förenings- och säkerhetsakten 1789).

[11] The right applied only to those noble families, which were registered at the House of Nobility. Additionally, it was not important all the time: the Diet was convened in 1809 and then – after a lengthy pause – regularly between 1863 and 1906.

was applied to a specific type of landed property: privileged manors (*säterier*)[12] which were a noble monopoly until 1864. In other words, there was no overall tax exemption for the nobility. The highest state offices were in theory still reserved for the nobility, but according to common interpretation this clause had fallen into disuse. However, in practice the highest offices of the Grand Duchy were dominated by nobles and the ennobled – although not exclusively. Until 1867 the Courts of Appeal acted in many cases as courts of first instance for the nobility (*forum privilegiatum*). Nobles also had some honorific rights that set them apart from the rest of the society: particular surname, family coat of arms and noble uniform were such marks of distinction. In the Swedish language there were two words for unmarried ladies of the upper classes: *mamsell* and *fröken*. The latter was reserved for the daughters of the nobility until the 1860s. A formal letter addressed to a noble had a specific salutation[13] and the higher nobility of course had its titles: baron (*friherre*) and count (*greve*).[14] There were several other privileges of mostly minor importance; from the 1860s onwards many were repealed or became obsolete.[15]

Table 2: Number of hereditary nobles and their proportion of the population

	1850	1895
Finland	2 692 (0.16%)	3 348 (0.13%)
Sweden	11 758 (0.34%)	13 096 (0.27%)
European Russia (1858 and 1897)	610 000 (1.00%)	886 000 (0.90%)

Sources: Pontus E. Fahlbeck: *Sveriges adel – statistisk undersökning 2:den levande adeln i Sverige och Finland.* Lund: Gleerup, 1902, pp. 5 and 27–28; Sten Carlsson: *Ståndssamhälle och ståndspersoner 1700–1865* 2. omarbetade uppl. Lund: Gleerup, 1973, p. 42; Kaarlo Wirilander: *Herrasväkeä: Suomen säätyläistö 1721–1870.* Helsinki: SHS, 1974, pp. 440 and 442; Seymour Becker: *Nobility and privilege in late imperial Russia.* DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985, pp. 18 and 181–182. The numbers of Finnish nobles in the two years mentioned probably are not totally comparable as they are from different sources and summed differently.

The Finnish nobility was a minute group in comparison with the population or with other countries, as Table 2 shows. The nobility of the new mother country, Russia, was significantly larger due to automatic ennoblement: high enough civil or military rank or prestigious enough decoration of a Russian Order conferred directly a noble rank. The nobility of the Grand Duchy was, as well as small, also relatively poor in comparison with other nobilities. It has been argued that

[12] The noble terminology in this paper is given entirely in Swedish, whereas the place names are in Finnish.

[13] For untitled nobles *välboren* (the Honourable) and for titled nobles *högvälboren* (the Right Honourable).

[14] Unlike in Russia, the title of prince (in Swedish *furst(e)* and in Russian *князь*) was not standard part of the Finnish nobiliary system. Although Governor General Alexander Menschikoff's Russian title was naturalized in Finland, there were no actual elevations to the dignity of a Finnish prince.

[15] In fact, the Noble Privileges of 1723 were formally annulled in their entirety only in 1995. However, by then, they had obviously lost all their significance.

there was no real *aristocracy* in Finland, at least, of European magnitude.[16] The estates were indeed modest in size and the manor houses usually wooden and one-storied.[17] There were hardly any stately townhouses and real palaces were non-existent. The number of "aristocratic" noble families scarcely topped a few dozen: comital families Armfelt, Aminoff, Creutz, Mannerheim and Rehbinder can be mentioned because of their titles, court connections, imposing manors and high offices, whereas for example Barons Standertskjöld and untitled families Björkenheim, von Nottbeck and Linder were at least for a while very wealthy.[18]

It is somewhat problematic to characterize the landed property as *sine qua non* for the Finnish nobility. The model *nobility as landed elite* may describe the British situation perfectly, but to impose it on other nobilities can be an exercise in futility. Although (at least a modest-size) manor was an important part of noble life also in Finland, it probably was not *the most* important part. The Finnish nobility could be characterised, instead of a landed elite, as *service nobility*. Service to the state had yielded the noble ranks; it regulated the careers of the nobles and safeguarded the future of the Estate. It was the monarchical state and the hierarchical society of estates which ensured the pre-eminence of the nobility – not the relatively modest landownership as such.[19]

The Ennoblement

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

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[16] Jyrki Paaskoski: "Aurora Karamzinin vuosisata". pp. 9–37. *Aurora Karamzin: aristokratian elämää.* Espoo: Espoon kaupunginmuseo, 2006, p. 11. *Aristocracy* is a problematic term. It usually means the highest and wealthiest nobility, but it is hard to measure the size of such a relative and blurred group and especially compare it internationally. Ellis Wasson has devoted a whole chapter of his book to the explication of aristocracy. He does not approve a purely formal definition (e.g. titled nobility), but wants to define aristocracy more relatively: "– – titled elites who owned substantial amounts of land, recognizing that some barons were not part of the aristocracy and that some important nobles were never raised to titular rank." Ellis Wasson: *Aristocracy and the Modern World.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 19.

[17] The total area of larger manors seldom topped few thousand hectares and there were only handful of manors (at least Jokioinen, Köyliönkartano, Kytäjä and Vuojoki (names in Finnish)) that were over 10,000 hectares (i.e. over 100 square kilometres or ca 24,700 acres). In comparison, 250 magnates possessed more than 30,000 acres each in the United Kingdom. Wasson 2006, p. 36. The area of the United Kingdom is only two thirds of Finland (only southern Finland is suitable for farming).

[18] The older nobility did not have the highest incomes in the country. In 1864 there were 9 persons (or estates of a deceased person), mainly industrialists, whose income was valued at over 100,000 marks per year in taxation. No-one represented the pre-nineteenth century nobility: 4 were non-noble (Wolff, Arppe, Wahl, Sinebrychoff), 2 were descendants of persons ennobled in the nineteenth century (Törngren, Wasastjerna) and 3 were ennobled personally during the nineteenth century (Hackman 1874, von Nottbeck 1855, Wahren 1883). Eino Jutikkala: "Suomen suurituloiset teollisen murroksen kynnyksellä". pp. 73–111. *Historiallinen Arkisto 98.* Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1991; Pertti Haapala: "Tulot ja varallisuus". pp. 182–183. *Suomen historian kartasto.* Helsinki: Karttakeskus, 2007.

[19] The service nobility model was also clearly evident in both Sweden and in Russia, although at least in Russia there was, in addition, a very wealthy landed aristocracy. In fact, in the seventeenth century there had been a powerful landed nobility in Sweden also (and in Finland as a part of it), but at the end of the century autocratic Swedish kings confiscated vast territories that their predecessors had "donated" to nobles.

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 ennoblements were restricted because previous rulers had ennobled in massive numbers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Charles XI (1655–1697) had ennobled 634 families in total and Ulrika Eleonora (1688–1741) had ennobled 236 families – during her reign that lasted a little over a year. The Swedish House of Nobility had finally responded to the surge of the ennobled by refusing to register new families in 1762. The Instrument of Government of 1772 eventually solved the problem.

Figure 1: The speaker of the Noble Estate and the whole Diet had the title marshal of nobility (*lantmarskalk*). Baron Robert Wilhelm De Geer (1750–1820) was the marshal of nobility in 1809. He is holding the emblem of the marshal, a staff, and wearing a noble uniform with the Russian Imperial Order of Saint Anne, 1st class. He was created count at the end of the Diet. (Original painting: Finnish House of Nobility)

The sovereign could ennoble either spontaneously as a sign of personal favour or, presumably more often, following the advice of high officials. However, at least in the early eighteenth-century Sweden, many officers and civil servants were still initiators of their own ennoblements: it was not unusual to apply for ennoblement personally. One simply sent an official application to the Royal Chancellery stating one's merits and often even requesting a specific noble surname. If the resolution was positive, a patent of nobility with coat of arms (*sköldebrev*) was prepared and the duly ennobled person registered eventually at the House of Nobility. Thus the en-

nobled person received the full rights of a noble – especially the membership of the Noble Estate at the Diet.

The Finnish ennoblements in the nineteenth century differ somewhat from this traditional procedure. It seems that there were no official applications, though unofficially the desire for ennoblement could be brought to imperial attention.[20] The Finnish minister state secretary in St Petersburg and/or the emperor's representative in Finland, the governor general, were the highest intermediaries of such noble aspirations. Even the Finnish ennobling document differed from the Swedish *sköldebrev*. The Finnish patent of nobility was a modest peace of paper: it had neither a fine leather binding nor an imperial seal. The patent granted neither a coat of arms nor a noble surname. It simply conferred a noble rank and usually stated "proven merits" (*ådagalagda förtjenster*) as the sole cause for ennoblement. Next step for the ennobled person was to design a coat of arms and (sometimes) to choose a new surname: both were sent to St Petersburg to be approved by the emperor. Finally, registration at the House of Nobility completed the Finnish ennoblement process.

The Nobility and the Elites

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the determining feature of the Finnish society was the division into four estates. Accordingly, the nobility – as the First Estate – was a self-evident elite group. However, this elite position was relative as the old nobility was not a homogeneous estate. There were wealthy gentleman farmers, high-ranking officers and leading civil servants but also small farmers, petty officers, minor functionaries and even destitute nobles. The heterogeneity of the nobility was of course a common feature of those nobilities which were defined by formal regulations, not by social standing alone.[21]

The ennobled, in contrast, were a homogeneous elite group as only persons in prominent positions were ennobled in Finland.[22] It is helpful to discern many kinds of elites – instead a of single monolithic elite of the society – in order to analyse the role of the ennobled more precisely. I would like to define an *elite* simply as a group of people at the top of some hierarchy in the society. These hierarchies may be divided and classified at will, but I would like to suggest a system of hierarchies based on the amounts of several *capitals* – in a sense inspired by (but not

[20] Nobleman J. A. Ehrenström wrote to a friend on 5 September 1819 that a rich landowner had asked for help in attaining a baronial title for himself and an untitled noble rank for his son-in-law. Ehrenström was known as a close friend of the influential State Secretary R. H. Rehbinder. The landowner is unidentified, but – perhaps as pure serendipity – one Mikael Hisinger, a rich noble landowner and ironworks proprietor, was created baron on 12 September 1819. His son-in-law was not ennobled at the time, but later also he was created baron.

[21] Seymour Becker: *Nobility and privilege in late imperial Russia*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985, p. 16.

[22] There were no such exceptions in Finland as the ennoblement of peasant O. I. Komissarov in Russia. Komissarov saved the Emperor Alexander II from an attempted assassination. Igor Rozjkov: "Den finländska adelns rättsliga status i kejsardömet Ryssland (åren 1809–1917)". pp. 11–34. *Gentes Finlandiae 9*. Helsingfors, 2001, p. 13.

fully coincident with) Pierre Bourdieu. I propose a division into six different types of capital: 1) a capital of *physical force* (or violence) that was the most important one before it was monopolized by territorial states and its private use criminalized, 2) a *political* capital, i.e. the resources that enable direct legislative, executive or judicial exercise of power such as the hereditary right of the noble families to influence the legislation of the Grand Duchy; 3) an *economic* capital, i.e. money, landed property and other forms of wealth 4) a *social* capital, i.e. trust, loyalty, charisma and networks of influence; 5) a *status* capital, i.e. noble ranks, decorations, conspicuous manor houses, clothing etc. and 6) a *cultural* capital, i.e. education, artistic, ideological and rhetorical skills, books, mastering civilized manners and other cultural codes etc.

Many types of capital can be directly related to one's mental and physical qualities (such as physical strength as violence capital and, perhaps, personal height as status capital), whereas other types of capital are possessions of immaterial (a noble rank) or material (silver roubles) nature. Similarly many types of capital can be inherited while others cannot. For example, a monarchical position, a noble rank, money, social networks, books and perhaps some personal qualities can be at least partly hereditary, whereas a modern presidency, a personal noble rank (e.g. in Russia), a decoration or education, to name a few, are not (directly) inheritable. The amounting capitals form five (in pre-modern period six) parallel hierarchies with their haves and have-nots. As the interchangeability of capitals is the key feature of the model, the position of a person probably tends to be rather coherent in most of the hierarchies. A wealthy person (economic capital) often shows his/her position with conspicuous consumption (status capital) and perhaps receives, for example, a title of commercial counsellor (status capital). He/she has a proper education (cultural capital) to be able to socialize with friends in high places (social capital) and he/she might even personally have some important post (political capital). It is thus possible to be part of political, economic, social, status or cultural elite or – all of them combined – the elite of the society.

The ennoblement, from the point of view of this elite model, can be described as an allocation of status capital and the ennobled as a part of the status elite purposefully created by the imperial government. In a monarchical state, the government controlled the *official* status hierarchy and the sovereign personally acted as the source of the status capital (*fons honorum*). Who received this status capital? What kind of persons were ennobled in the Grand Duchy? How did the imperial government define this officially recognized elite and – who were excluded?

The 154 Persons Ennobled

As mentioned earlier, the first ennoblements of the Grand Duchy occurred at the end of the Diet of 1809. Altogether 163 noble ranks – 10 comital, 38 baronial and 115 untitled – were conferred during the period 1809–1912. 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. Because nine persons received a noble rank twice,[23] only 154 persons were actually ennobled. The ennobled were, without exception, men. This had been the custom in the Swedish Realm also, although one exception is reported.[24] The ennobled were typically in their late fifties when they received their rank, which – in other words – was usually awarded for already accomplished merits. The youngest one to be ennobled, for own merits, was Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Amatus Thesleff, an officer in the Russian army that occupied Finland in the war of 1808–1809. He was thirty-three when ennobled in 1812. Later he became deputy governor general of Finland. The oldest persons that received noble ranks were two eighty-year-old bishops whose noble ranks were conferred directly to their children as the Clerical Estate was traditionally kept separate from the Noble Estate.

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. 18 persons were born in Turku that was the capital of the Finnish territory – until it was substituted by Helsinki in 1812. The capital of the Swedish Realm, Stockholm, took the second place: 9 persons were born there. The next birthplaces were Viipuri with 8 ennobled, Porvoo with 7, Hamina with 6 and Helsinki with 4 ennobled persons. Altogether 11 persons were born in Russia (of which 5 in the Baltic Provinces of Estonia, Livonia and Courland). In other words, 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.

The most important variable related to ennoblements is, of course, occupation. In the Grand Duchy 90 per cent of the ennobled were serving the state – in a broader sense – as civil servants, officers, academics or clergymen. Even the only university of the country[25] was an integral part of the state. Although it had a separate budget and it was not answerable to the government council in Finland – the Senate – it was still integrated to the state machinery through its chancellor (usually the heir to the Russian throne) and his closest advisor in Finnish affairs, the minister state secretary. Also the Lutheran Church of Finland was a loyal supporter of the state and its clergy akin to civil service: the emperor nominated the bishops and some vicars. The

[23] In eight cases first untitled ennoblement and then the title of baron and in one case first the title of baron and then the title of count.

[24] At the beginning of the eighteenth century Emerentia Düben, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Ulrika Elenora, was ennobled (von Düben) and then created baroness. She is the only woman in Sweden that was ennobled for her own merits. Ingvar Elmroth: *Från överklass till medelklass: studier i den sociala dynamiken inom Sveriges adel 1600-1900*. Lund: Nordic academic press, 2001, pp. 236–237.

[25] The Academy of Turku that was transferred to Helsinki in 1828 and known since then as the Imperial Alexander University, currently University of Helsinki.

clergy was included in its entirety in the official directory of the state[26] that listed all the officials in the Grand Duchy. The Church was even responsible for much of the local government until the 1860s.

The government council of Finland, the Senate, accounts for ¼ of the ennobled. This body was divided into two sections: the judicial section acted as the supreme court and the economic section resembled somewhat a cabinet of ministers. The vice-chairs[27] of these sections, senators and senate procurators (an eminent judicial official) were often ennobled and elevated to higher noble dignities. Military officers were the second most important group: 14 per cent of the ennobled came from the imperial armed forces. Typically they were majors general – the lowest officer ennobled had the rank of major. The proportion of the 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 nineteenth century.[28] Most of the military units were entirely Russian and from the Russian point of view higher officers were automatically noble, so in that respect a separate ennoblement in the Finnish Grand Duchy was an additional (or perhaps unnecessary) favour. Most of the military ennoblements occurred during the Crimean War, in the mid nineteenth century, when the English and French navies were harassing the shores of the Grand Duchy. The third largest ennobled group were the higher judges (excluding in this classification the senators of the Senate judicial section) with 13 per cent proportion. The justices and especially the presidents of the Courts of Appeal (in Turku and Vaasa and from 1839 also in Viipuri) were frequently ennobled, while the status of the district courts was significantly lower as only one judge ever received a noble rank. One reason for the regular ennoblements of the higher judiciary was the fact that they seldom were noble by birth: it is possible that the old nobility did not appreciate the judicial sector as was the case in Prussia.[29] Another major ennobled group were academics, especially university rectors, with 10 per cent proportion. The high officials representing the Grand Duchy in St Petersburg accounted for 7 per cent. This group is particularly aristocratic as 3 comital titles (Armfelt, Aminoff, Rehbinder) and 4 baronial titles (Bruun, Langhoff, Rosenkampff, Indrenius) are included. The next group are the provincial governors with 4 per cent proportion. The governors general of Finland are already a minute group, but the most aristocratic. The first Governor General Göran Magnus Sprengtporten, a Finnish nobleman and a Russian baron, was created count, as were Governors General Fabian Steinheil, Arseni Zakrewsky and

[26] *Finlands Statskalender*, published since 1811.

[27] The governor general was the nominal chair of the whole Senate but in practice the vice-chairs ran the organisation. The governors general often received high noble titles (see in following pages).

[28] Estimation based on Pontus E. Fahlbeck: *Sveriges adel – statistisk undersökning 1: ätternas demografi*. Lund: Gleerup, 1898, Table VI.

[29] Lamar Cecil: ”The Creation of Nobles in Prussia 1817–1918”. pp. 757–795. *The American Historical Review, volume LXXV, number 3*. 1970, p. 767.

Friedrich Wilhelm Rembert von Berg. The comital title which Governor General Berg received in 1856 was the last one ever to be conferred in the Grand Duchy. Governor General, Prince Alexander Menschikoffs princely rank was naturalized in Finland, whereas Platon Rokassovsky was created baron. A couple of the permanent governors general (Adlerberg and Heiden) were already Russian counts, so it was natural that they did not receive a higher rank, as an elevation to a princely dignity was not actually part of the Finnish nobiliary system. Those ennobled for state service included also a few bishops and clergymen (to be precise their children were ennobled for father's merits), sporadically some directors general of government boards, a couple of lower civil servants who had donated for charitable causes and finally a few persons in the service of the Russian diplomacy and central government.

The overwhelming majority of the ennobled were *service nobility*: they were men of reasonable means in the service of the state. As service nobility, the Finnish ennobled were not a homogenous economic elite. Their landed wealth was usually limited; their salaries were seldom immense. Industrialist, financiers, merchants and ship-owners were often richer. Furthermore, considerable number of nobles by birth dedicated their lives for economic activities and, vice versa, many businessmen were ennobled. There was no irreconcilable antagonism between business and nobility in the Finnish nobiliary system. The remaining 10 per cent of the ennobled (17 persons) were indeed engaged in economic activities. All the entrepreneurial ennobled in the first half of the nineteenth century can be described as ironworks proprietors. For example John (von) Julin, the proprietor of Fiskars (a well-established trademark even today), was ennobled in 1849.

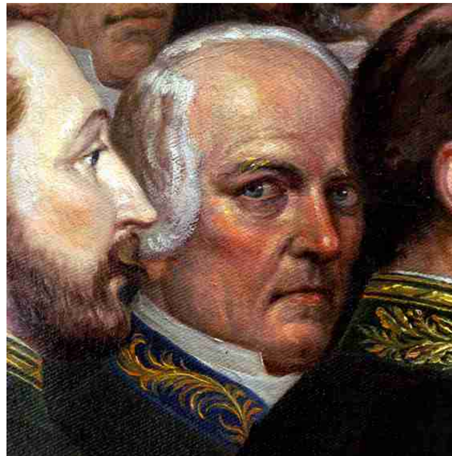

Figure 2: Lars Magnus Björkman (1793–1869), a wealthy ironworks proprietor and landowner, was ennobled in 1834 (noble surname Björkenheim). He adopted an aristocratic way of life. His manor Vuojoki was among the greatest in Grand Duchy: its area amounted to 14,000 hectares and the main building, a three-storied brick house in neoclassical style, was designed by the leading architect C. L. Engel. Björkenheim's children married appropriately. He had seven daughters: 2 married a count, 4 married a baron and 1 married a non-noble ironworks proprietor. The three sons married respectively a baroness, a noblewoman and a non-noble lady. (Original painting (detail): Finnish House of Nobility)

Ironworks were practically the only manufacturing industry in the country during that period – still in small-scale and usually combining agricultural activities with iron production and

processing. Proprietors of mines and metal works had already in the Swedish Era had a relatively prestigious position in the society: *mining counsellor* (*bergsråd*) was – and still is in the Finnish Republic – the highest honorific title given for economic merits. The first modern industrialists were ennobled in the mid-nineteenth century. Brothers Wilhelm and Carl Nottbeck (later von Nottbeck), who were major proprietors of 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 Berg. It was the duty of the governor general to report to the emperor on meritorious service. Although this formally applied to officials only, it hardly could prevent the governor general mentioning the Nottbecks' industrial merits to the sovereign. The official motivation for the ennoblements in the Nottbecks' patent of nobility was rather laconic: "proven civil merits" (*ådagalagda medborgerliga förtjenster*). This was the standard explanation in those ennoblements not based on actual state service. The second half of the nineteenth century saw many more industrialists ennobled. Also other representatives of the economic elite received noble ranks, for example Johan Fredrik Hackman, a trading house proprietor, in 1874, and Fredrik Nybom, the managing director of the KOP Bank, ennobled in 1904.

The latter received his rank as the Senate wished to amend the composition of the Noble Estate at the Diet to its advantage. During the period of the regular Diets of the Estates (1863–1906) ennoblements could be used in this political fashion: the "ruling party" could recommend its supporters to be ennobled. They became members of the Noble Estate that has been called – comparing with the British situation – as the Upper House of Parliament. For example, many *fennomane*[30] notables received noble ranks as the Russian government regarded them as a useful counterforce to the traditional Swedish-speaking elite. The above-mentioned Nybom was one of the fennomane ennobled. The same group accounted for all the three noble surnames in Finnish: Yrjö-Koskinen, Wuorenheimo and Soisalon-Soininen.

As 90 per cent of the ennobled were in state service and 10 per cent in business, who then were not ennobled? As mentioned earlier, not a single woman was actually ennobled (although several became noble trough ennoblement directed to the children of a clergyman or through adoption). Also, occupationally, the liberal professions are absent: artists, architects, doctors, engineers, lawyers, scientists and the like never received noble ranks, if they were not in state service. There were ennobled medical doctors in the Grand Duchy, but they were invariably in permanent office. In fact, almost all the university professors ennobled had a medical education and there were a few other medical officials ennobled as well. The high prestige of the medical profession is an interesting phenomenon – yet to be explained. Although many of the leading archi-

[30] Supporter of the (nationalistic) Finnish-language movement.

tects and especially artist (e.g. painters Albert Edelfelt, Eero Järnefelt and Ellen Thesleff) were noble in the nineteenth century, no-one was ennobled for such merits. In Sweden there were a few ennoblements of royal favourites, but this type was non-existent in the modest artistic spheres of the Grand Duchy. On the other hand, extramarital descend did not hinder ennoblement (as this was the case with two persons), but religion might have hindered. The discrimination of Jews, a question raised in relation to Prussian ennoblements,[31] might have been visible even in the Finnish ennoblements, would there have been more Jews in such positions that usually yielded noble ranks. All the ennobled in Finland were – to my knowledge – Christian. However, one of the ennobled, Industrialist Axel Wilhelm Wahren (1883), was a converted Jew: as the civil rights of the Jews were extremely limited in the nineteenth century, he could not have carried on his business in Finland without conversion. As all the peasants and workers and most of the burghers, businessmen, academics, priests and even the majority of the officers and civil servants were apparently beneath the level required for ennoblement, it was a rare award indeed.

Instead, the imperial award system catered to the prestige needs of these spheres with honorific titles, decorations, medals, imperial presents, official commendations etc.[32] The awards of the Russian Empire, which were widely bestowed even in Finland, formed a meticulous system of official status hierarchization. The Order of Saint Alexander Nevski, for example, was in practice a higher award than a Finnish ennoblement: no-one of the ennobled received it before their ennoblement – even if they formally had a post high enough – but after the ennoblement it became available and many received it. In similar fashion, the highest Russian decoration, the Order of Saint Andrew, was higher than a Finnish baronial rank. The Finnish comital title was apparently prestigious enough to equal the Order of Saint Andrew: two persons had received the decoration even before they were created counts.

The official status hierarchization of the Grand Duchy is a rather complex system that should be researched in depth. Awards were not granted haphazardly. In addition to the imperial award system, an integral part of the status hierarchy was the table of ranks (*rangordning*), which hierarchized all the state offices and all the honorific titles into 14 classes. In Russia the ennoblements were conferred automatically according to these classes, in Finland that was not the case. For example Senator Axel Ludvig Born had the honorific title *privy counsellor* – in the third class of the hierarchy of ranks – but he was not ennobled. In Russia he would have been automatically counted as a noble. Altogether, the Finnish ennoblements were usually bestowed far more sparingly than in Russia, which in all probability prevented their devaluation as status capital.

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[31] For example Mayer 1981, pp. 100–101 and passim.

[32] Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm has studied the system in her dissertation: *The Russian Imperial Award System during the Reign of Nicholas II 1894–1917*. Helsinki: Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistys, 2005.

The Changing Society and the Transforming Elites

In the monarchical society of estates, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the nobility, being the First Estate, was a status elite by definition. The sovereign and the nobility were usually in an (uneasy) alliance, dictated by their shared ideology of hereditary power. For the imperial government, the ennoblement was a way of elevating the ennobled person nearer to the top of the status hierarchy, the emperor. Ennoblement as an imperial award was quite extraordinary: it was hereditary, rare and entailed privileges. It was used for awarding proven merits, binding together the ennobled and the monarchical state and encouraging loyal service and further achievements. For the Noble Estate, moderate amounts of ennoblements were essential as they preserved its numbers (the number of nobles tended to be slowly declining) and, at least partly, its legitimacy. Ennoblements helped to prevent the formation of non-noble counter-elites as the most powerful non-noble individuals were absorbed into the nobility. The older nobility was restructured with higher titles that recognized some older families as more eminent than others. For an ennobled person, the noble rank was an award and a sign of success. It was hereditary status capital, an immaterial possession, whose value was culturally relative and depended on the form of the society. The devaluation of noble rank as status capital is, in fact, one of the essential indicators of the estate society in transition. In the society of estates, the noble status capital was a valuable asset that the children inherited. It could be exchanged to the social capital of favourable relations. The noble privileges still had some advantageous effects on economic capital and the political capital of the permanent and hereditary legislative representation was something quite extraordinary.

Although the nobility was by definition a status elite and by virtue of its legislative rights also, in relative terms, a political elite, it was not a homogenous economic, social or cultural elite. The ennoblement was a way of absorbing representatives of the political and economic elites to the nobility – influential officials and politicians and wealthy businessmen were co-opted. The ennobled, who almost invariably must have had friends in high places, probably had a significant amount of social capital. They were well connected, part of the social elite. Through ennoblement they were officially recognized as members of the status elite. The political or economic capital – or both – in connection with the social capital were exchanged to the status capital of the nobility. Ennoblement was an instrument of elite transformation. Interestingly, cultural capital was not valued very highly. Although some academics and clergymen were ennobled, this was not very common (12% of the ennoblements). The exchange rate of the cultural capital of artists and other representatives of the liberal professions was even poorer: the imperial government did not define them as status elite. Loyal service to the state and exceptional economic merits were considered more valuable.

The Finnish society of estates was in transition in the nineteenth century: it was transformed judicially, as privileges were slowly repealed, and culturally, as values and valuations of different types of capital were altered. The driving forces of egalitarianism, liberalism, industrialism, individualism and nationalism provided value systems differing from the relatively unequal, conservative, agrarian, collective and monarchical society of estates. Although ennoblements were essentially part of the dynamism of the estate society, they were utilized into the twentieth century as instruments of awarding, elite definition and Diet politics.

At the beginning of the Imperial Era, the Russian government had lavished imperial awards, including ennoblements, to the elites of the newly conquered country (see Figure 3). That the intention was to charm the old noble elite, as well, is visible in the amount of baronial and comital titles: they were never conferred to non-nobles but instead to persons already noble. In the later decades, the government turned its attention more firmly to the definition of a new status elite: non-nobles were awarded with untitled ennoblements. The old *noble* families still occasionally received baronial titles, but the old *baronial* families usually had to content themselves with their title, as the Finnish comital title was conferred only in exceptional cases. At the mid century, the Crimean War and the change of ruler (Alexander II ascended the throne in 1855) caused a peak in ennoblements, of which unusually many were, understandably, bestowed upon military officers.

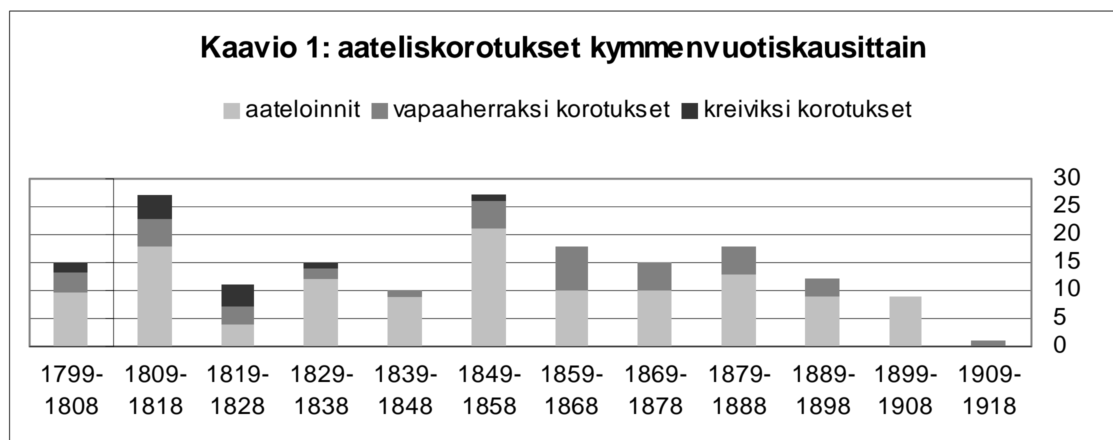

Figure 3: Ennoblements in the Grand Duchy of Finland in ten-year periods.
Light gray = untitled ennoblements, dark gray = baronial ranks and black = comital ranks.

The ennoblements do not particularly well reflect the nineteenth century as “the bourgeois century”. Economic activities were encouraged with ennoblements all along, in fairly steady (albeit quite low) numbers. The profile of the economic-ennobled persons changed as the industry evolved from the small-scale ironworks to the large-scale manufacturing industry and other sectors developed. However, manufacturing was apparently all the time considered more prestigious than trade and, furthermore, many leading economic figures were not ennobled. In the future, these “bourgeois” ennoblements should be studied in detail. From the year 1863 onwards, the

ennoblements regulated the intake of new representatives at the Noble Estate of the Diet – the "Upper House of Parliament". Accordingly, ennoblements continued to have a significant role even though the Diets were continuously repealing noble privileges and the public show of inequality was – perhaps – becoming more unbecoming. As mentioned earlier, the ennobled persons reflected the conflict between the old Swedish-speaking elites and the rising fennomanes.

In all probability, the far more serious conflict between the nationalistically inspired Finns of both languages and the government of Nicholas II (inspired by centralizing state ideology as well as nationalism) eventually halted the ennoblements. In 1904 the last five persons received untitled noble ranks as part of the Diet politics. As the antiquated Diet of the estates was substituted by a modern parliament in 1906–1907, the imperial government could not anymore 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). Minister State Secretary of Finland August Langhoff still received a baronial title in 1912, but otherwise the emperor was not inclined to allocate noble status capital to the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy. At that time, the Finns would have hardly anymore valued such status capital – of imperial origin. After the Declaration of Independence (1917) and the Civil War (1918), 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.* Since the first ennoblements in the Grand Duchy of Finland, 110 years had passed, almost to the day.

Research Project
Re-power
Reproduction of Power Structures in Finland 1660–2005

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