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## **De Herlaars in het Midden-Nederlandse rivierengebied (ca. 1075 - ca. 1400)**

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## 7 Summary <sup>1481</sup>

The lord who ordered to build the castle of Ammersoyen is unknown to us, as is the case for many medieval houses. However there is a presumption which can be based on the first record of the house Ammersoyen (1354), the first lord of Ammersoyen known as Gerard Herlaar (1351) and the construction period of the castle as assumed in literature (mid-14th century). Because of this some historians point to a descendant of the Herlaars as the builder. Could this be true? Was one of the descendants of the Herlaar family indeed in the (social-economic) position to build this majestic house? That question, based on the above-mentioned facts, motivated this study. It covers the period from the first recording of the name Herlaar, the late 11th century, until the last quarter of the 14th century. It focuses strictly on the Herlaars with properties in the Dutch river area, the area of the major rivers in the middle of the Low Countries in which Ammersoyen is located.

### 7.1 *The social-cultural and social-political capital of the Herlaars*

The first records of the name (Dirk van) Herlaar date from the fourth quarter of the 11th century. The name Herlaar refers to a manor located in present-day St. Michielsgestel near 's-Hertogenbosch. There is no need to argue about the origins of the power, status and prestige of the Herlaars. Despite the scarce resources, it is clear that these already belonged to their ancestors, their lineage. Although we can say nothing about the inherited attributes, it is clear that thanks to his ancestors Dirk van Herlaar possessed power and prestige at the time of his first mention in the sources. Contemporaries confirmed the high status - and thus the wealth and power - of the Herlaars by listing them in 12th- and 13th century documents and charters as *nobiles* (noblemen). The first note that affirmed this power is that of a Dirk van Herlaar as *dominus* (lord) in the middle of the 12th century. The high stature of the Herlaars does not only follow from the records but also from the bonds they kept in a relatively closed network with a number of significant dynasties from the river area like: Van Kuyc, Van Altena, Van Heusden, Horne and Van Boxtel.

Unfortunately the social-economic position of the Herlaars is described inaccurately in the literature. By using no reliable sources many authors consider the lords of Herlaar as vassals or even as (unfree) *ministeriales* of the bishop of Liège. This comes from the idea that the manor of Herlaar with its seigneurial rights was a fief of the bishop of Liège. However, this deserves nuance. After the lord of Horne bought the manor, its houses and the jurisdiction in 1315 from Gerard van Loon he advanced the domain to the bishop of Liège and transformed this private property into a fief, which therefore became a so-called *fief de reprise*. From then onwards the manor of Herlaar may be considered to be a fief of Liège. Their indication as *nobiles* in the charters shows unambiguously that the Herlaars were *ministeriales* neither of the bishop of Liège, nor of the bishop of Utrecht, let alone of the duke of Brabant. The Herlaars owned their manor, house(s) and jurisdiction privately, they were not vassals linked by a feudal bond with any lord. In particular in charters of the heiress Petronella van Herlaar (1227-1235) the title of *domina* clearly shows that she was the sole owner of the domain Herlaar. As an heir Petronella breaks the patrilineal supremacy of the dynasty, her children inherited the last name Herlaar. It is easy to overlook this breakpoint in the dynasty by sticking to the male succession *a priori*.

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<sup>1481</sup> Met dank aan Mevr. Drs. H. van Well en Prof. P. Hoppenbrouwers voor hun steun bij het vertalen van de tekst van de slotbeschuwing en de conclusie.

The 13th century sources contain more data about the filiation but still insufficient for a complete genealogical reconstruction. It is recorded that Petronella, *domina* of Herlaar, had two sons: Dirk and Godfried. Dirk (1235-1282), the first of the Herlaars with the title of *miles* (knight), was the successor. His descendants are in the centre of this research. Except being lord of Herlaar Dirk was also *advocatus* (governor) of Berlicum (for the Premonstratensians of Berne), *advocatus* of Waalre (for the Benedictines of Echternach) and co-patron of the chapter of Hilvarenbeek. To expand his social-economic capital Dirk van Herlaar acquired a fief of the bishop of Utrecht in the period 1255-1266. He became lord of the manor of Tienhoven and Ameide, located in the border area of the countries of Holland Gelre and Utrecht. The lord of Ameide owned the domain with its high and low jurisdiction as a fief of the bishop of Utrecht. Although he thus became a vassal of the bishop of Utrecht Dirks power and prestige increased. The castle where Dirk lived, and possibly had built, was located in Tienhoven next to Ameide. This house was his own private property. Besides Ameide Dirk still owned the manor of Herlaar and all that belonged to it, as the inherited property of the family. Certainly the acquisition of the domain of Ameide proves an expansion of his power and status. However one may question if this expansion of power and status was Dirk's main motive to become a vassal of the bishop. For sure acquiring Ameide must have served a purpose. Dirk lost his autonomy partly, as a vassal he was to pay services to his liege lord in return. But the 'flight' to Ameide - to use a term from a chronicle - can be seen also as resisting the threat of the duke of Brabant. At that time, the mid-13th century, the duke of Brabant tried to eliminate the influence of the count of Gelre and the bishop of Liège in 'his' area. The lord of Herlaar probably was not an obstacle to the duke of Brabant in his geo-political game but that does not mean that Herlaar was not looking for refuge in another territory. Perhaps Dirk also wanted to expand his own territory, which at that time was not possible in Brabant. Whether he deliberately sought his 'refuge' is not clear, but the domain Ameide offered him some opportunities to hold in a way his independence.

One may argue that there were other ways to maintain that position, so why did he choose Ameide? The question of why the bishop of Utrecht granted his fief to Herlaar may also be posed. Both questions are answered by the connection between Herlaar and Van Kuyc. Although Ameide is known as a fief of the bishop of Utrecht, it originally belonged to Van Kuyc. Van Kuyc sold his ownership in Utrecht in the first quarter of the 13th century to the bishop but he retained his men. There are several indications that the Kuyc and the Herlaar lineages in the 13th century were closely connected. Except for a feudal bond between lord and vassal this might include intermarriage as well. The relationship with Van Kuyc was steady; perhaps that is why the Herlaars allowed themselves for decades to neglect the sovereign of Ameide, the bishop of Utrecht. The Herlaars had a good relationship with Van Kuyc, something that cannot be said of the bond with the bishop. The Herlaars chose to serve the counts of Holland, who deployed their power in the region of Ameide at the expense of the bishop of Utrecht *nota bene* the sovereign of Ameide. What is more, in the fourth quarter of the 13th century (1298) the house of Ameide secretly become an 'open house' of the count of Holland in his struggle against the bishop of Utrecht. Initially, this had no effect but later the bishop became suspicious. In 1312 Dirk van Herlaar (1312-1354) only succeeded in retaining the fief of Ameide by offering his house to the bishop of Utrecht.

It is quite striking that the survival of the Herlaars as a dynasty - linked by name, weapon and possession - in the beginning of the 14th century depended on yet another woman. This time Aleid van Herlaar deserves the honour (1306-1309). She was married to Gerard van Loon. My research has clearly shown that her marriage to Gerard van Loon produced several male descendants. This offspring did own significant manors and houses, but they did carry the name of their mother, not their father. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, they all acquired domains in the Dutch river area under the Herlaar name: Ameide, Ammersoyen, Bokhoven, Empel-

Meerwijk and Poederoyen. Within the ranks of the aristocracy Gerard van Loon probably had a lower status than his wife. Who was this man? This question is relevant because some of his descendants, named Herlaar, acquired a special position in the court of Holland as well as of Gelre. Somehow Gerard must have contributed to the development of the social power of his sons in a geographically well marked area in the Dutch river area, especially the Bommelerwaard. It is strange though, and challenging for this study, that almost nothing is known about his capital, power and possessions. To search for the origin, status and power of Gerard van Loon therefore was an essential part of this investigation. However, the lack of specific information on his origin and social position remains, despite the fact that 'every stone was reversed'. Taking into consideration his ownership of certain rights in the Bommelerwaard the position of viscount of Zuilichem seems most likely to have been his avenue to power. He probably influenced the acquisition of property in the Bommelerwaard but when he married Aleid he did not yet have the social-economic power that later belonged to his descendants.

Although it is known in literature that in the 14th century the Herlaars owned the seigneurial rights of Ameide, Ammersoyen, Bokhoven and Poederoyen, the manor of Empel-Meerwijk has wrongly been left out of view. This study shows clearly that the lord of Empel-Meerwijk was a brother of the lord of Ameide and the lord of Poederoyen.

Dirk van Herlaar, in the period of 1312-1354 lord of Ameide, was heir to Aleid and Gerard. He managed to manoeuvre himself in the highest echelon of nobility in the region, that is the court of the Count of Holland. How did he achieve that? The lineage of the Herlaars and the large fortune they inherited were the conditions to be introduced in the county's centre of power after 1345. In 1345 Count William IV and many of his noble vassals were killed at Stavoren against the Frisians. This brought about significant changes in Holland. It gave a non-native lord with sufficient social-economic capital the opportunity to present himself in the network of nobles around William's eponymous son and successor, Count William V. Dirk was lord of Ameide, he also owned the seigneurial rights of Bokhoven, Ammersoyen and a number of awarded fiefs, mainly low jurisdictions, located in the Bommelerwaard. He was a lord of many vassals himself, mainly aristocrats from the region. After 1345 he happened to choose the right side in the succession struggle between the parties of the 'Hoeken' and the 'Kabeljauwen' that soon broke out.

Presumably Dirk introduced his eldest son Gerard (1347-1354) in this conflict, with remarkably far-reaching consequences as a result. They both became confidants of Count William V. Gerard became a banner lord of William, and belonged to the most select group of his intimates. He acquired a fortune in that position. Because of that it is very strange that neither Dirk nor Gerard is listed in the covenant letter of the Kabeljauwen of 1351. This stirs up the debate on the dating of the covenant letter. Without wishing to take a stand in this discussion it is hard to explain why they did not belong to the confederates of this letter. However an explanation might be that Gerard van Herlaar did not have a domain located in the territory of Count William.

Modern authors on the subject have difficulty with fitting Gerard of Herlaar in the courts of the territorial lords of Holland and Gelre (Guelders). They characterize him as a 'foreigner', but are they right? Indeed, the support of Gerard to the Kabeljauwen in Holland cannot be associated with his status or location in the duchy of Gelre. However they neglect the fact that Gerard as a heir was to become lord of Ameide. For sure his doings served his own interest. It is remarkable that Gerard was not only involved in the struggle between the parties in Holland, he also played a role in the war of succession in Gelre. He supported Eduard van Gelre and advised him in the fight against his brother Reinald III. In the secondary literature the qualification of Gerard as being a 'foreigner' is also valid from the point of view of Gelre. Authors consider him - after all a confidant of the count of Holland - as a representative of Holland. However it is only from a modern

nationalist perspective that Gerard's actions in the two counties are considered to be unexpected. This was not the case from the position of Gerard Herlaar himself.

Although the causes are unknown, Dirk van Herlaar and his son Gerard died almost simultaneously in 1353. As a result all their possessions, their power and their status were inherited by respectively their son and brother, Jan van Herlaar (1354-1369). Jan offered Ammersoyen and Bokhoven as *erfleen* (inherited loan) to his brother Arnold. As Jan and Arnold took over status and power it is remarkable they did not make their appearance in the courts of either Holland or Gelre. Why was that? The explanation lies in changes beyond their reach and influence, such as the arrival of new princes. After the transfer of power in 1358 - Albrecht of Bavaria took over the government of Holland from his 'insane' brother William V - the Herlaars did not play any role at all anymore at the court of Holland. Instead, Jan and his brother Arnold appeared at the court of John of Blois to whom they were loyal. Using their power and status to make part of a nobility network outside the court of lords with princely status, the splendid court of Blois, centred in the towns of Gouda and Schoonhoven, was the highest possible position they could attain.

If, as it now appears, only the Herlaars from Ameide and Ammersoyen succeeded in gaining access to the courts of Holland and Gelre, one may wonder what caused the social rift with their relatives who did not reach such elevated positions? The explanation can be found in Jan's and Arnold's social-economic power. The social capital of Jan and Arnold, as heirs of Ameide and Ammersoyen, was many times bigger than that of their relatives in Poederoyen and Empel-Meerwijk. The power of the lords of Poederoyen and Empel-Meerwijk was limited; it did not extend further than the boundaries of their domains. Because their social-economic capital and status was less there was no role for them to play in coalitions of nobles. The Herlaars of Ameide granted property including Ammersoyen, Bokhoven and Herenthout to their vassals, including some relatives. These vassals increased the prestige (and military potency) of the Herlaars of Ameide. Moreover there was a huge property, formerly owned by Herbaren van Arkel, which was added to the ownership of the lord of Ameide by van Arkel's heiress.

With the exception of that of heiress Heilwich van Arkel, who married Dirk van Herlaar (1312-1354) lord of Ameide, absolutely nothing is known about or can be traced back to what possibly contributed to the social-economic capital from the partners. This shortage of documentary evidence concerns the entire period and all persons that I studied. The parental inheritance of female marriage partners was apparently small. That suggests that except for the matrimony of Heilwich van Arkel with Dirk van Herlaar there were no other marriages of Herlaars with wealthy heiresses. In the secondary literature it is said that partner selection had a large impact on the social capital of aristocratic elites in the later Middle Ages, and that the choice of marriage partners was even dependent on this selection. Perhaps it is a remarkable discovery of this research but no evidence for this opinion is found. What is striking in this study is that when choosing a partner geographical vicinity seems clearly to have taken priority. The daughters of the lord of Ameide married to lord of Vianen's sons, and the partners of lord of Poederoyen's children were selected from the nearby castle of Loevestein. Also Dirk van Herlaar and Heilwich van Arkel can be considered as 'neighbours' in the region of Ameide. Marriage thus seems mainly to have been aimed at consolidating ownership which was possibly more important than expansion of power. A good relationship with a neighbour prevented pressure on landed property.

In his PhD thesis on the party struggles of the Hoeken and Kabeljauwen in Holland, Brokken introduced a new category within the Dutch nobility in order to classify the striking and unexpected roles of Dirk and Gerard van Herlaar: *grensadel* ('border lords'). Did the location of the main possessions of the Herlaars (land, castles) indeed gave them an advantage over other nobles? Were the Herlaars really independent in

their choices, did they always have the opportunity to 'bet on several horses' at the same time, as is assumed? It does not look like this. The lords of Ameide and Ammersoyen did only succeed in joining noble networks in Holland and Gelre a network of nobles by giving temporary but unconditional allegiance to party leaders in succession struggles. They did not play out other territorial lords, such as the prince-bishop of Utrecht or the duke of Brabant, in order to preserve power and wealth, but they took risks in their choices and selections instead. The lords of Poederoyen and Empel-Meerwijk, whose domains were located in the border region as well, did not act like border lords at all. In fact between the Herlaars and the landlords of Brabant and Utrecht there was no (close) personal bond. This applies to all Herlaars in this investigation throughout the period of this research.

In this study, kinship in coalitions is often recognized as being highly relevant. However despite the fact that at one point in time the lords of Ameide, Ammersoyen, Bokhoven, Poederoyen and Empel-Meerwijk were brothers, lordships that were located close to each other in a geographically marked (small) area, there are no indications of alliances in which they act closely together. However there was one central meeting point for all relatives: the court of Blois. The Herlaars served the lord of Blois and stayed often at his court, but there is no evidence of joint action based on kinship.

The Herlaars, members of one family, acquired the domains and castles of Empel-Meerwijk, Bokhoven, Ammersoyen and Poederoyen, in a clearly marked period between 1330 and 1350. All these territories are located along the river Maas (Meuse), several kilometres apart from each other. In addition, the lordship of Ameide comprised a huge amount of enfeoffed landed property in the Bommelerwaard. But does this reflect a complex of power in which these lords took different positions? As is demonstrated by the reconstruction of the property of the Herlaars and their castles, this was not the case.

## 7.2 *The socio-economic capital of the Herlaars*

The earliest sources already state that the Herlaars belonged to the nobility. Status and privately owned (*allodial*) patrimonial property were inherited attributes that were passed on to the offspring. The respect which the Herlaars enjoyed was based on this private property and its inherent 'public' functions until the mid-13th century. From then onwards their ownership comprises both land, houses and rights which were owned as private property or in fief (Ameide). The Herlaars also granted parts of their property as fiefs to their own vassals. The *leenboeken* (*libri feodorum*) of Herlaar and Vianen (Ameide), and to a lesser extent also of Ammersoyen, provide an idea of the size and extent of that original, 'allodial' property. The recorded items not only inform us of its exact size or location, but (indirectly) also about the status of the vassals. It has been an important part of this research to reconstruct this original property as accurately as the sources allow. Due to the lack of quantifiable data it is not possible to reconstruct a really complete overview of all possessions of the Herlaars. However an impression can be made based on different sources.

The original *allodial* core possession of the Herlaars was the manor Herlaar near 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc). This domain is located in an area where ample evidence show human activities and habitation since Roman times. Besides the manor with its seigneurial rights the lords of Herlaar also owned property outside the region. Early documents show that the property outside Herlaar was scattered over a large area comprising the villages of Postel, Reusel, Gerdingen, Baesweiler, Berlicum, and Herenthout. The total size of this complex is not known. The socio-economic capital was not necessarily based on a geographically large area, much more important was the fact that the lord of Herlaar owned adequate resources for autonomy, in other words independence.

As said before, after it was sold to the lord of Horne in 1315 the manor of Herlaar became a fief of Liège. Nevertheless, many authors suggest (implicitly) an earlier feudal bond. How is that possible? It turns out that

this idea is based on several anachronistic interpretations of the extant documentary sources, which have been adopted subsequently as 'fact'. In reality, the actions of the Herlaars clearly show that at that time they were no vassals of the bishop of Liège at all. That the manor of Herlaar was not a fief of Liège before 1315, appears even more from the succession of the manor than from the actions of the Herlaars themselves. If a vassal of Liège died without heirs, his fief fell back into the hands of the feudal lord, the bishop of Liège. Sources indicate clearly that after the death of Dirk van Herlaar in 1305 his property was held in the hands of his sister Aleid. Such a transfer would not have been possible for a fief granted by the bishop of Liège.

The (wrong) idea that the manor of Herlaar was a fief of Liège, was also linked to thoughts about the Herlaars as *advocatus* and *co-patronus*. These are just as little supported by our sources. They concern the right of *co-patronus* of the Hilvarenbeek chapter (from 1246) and the duties as *advocatus* of Echt (1078) for the St. Servaas church in Maastricht, of Elmeth (1173) and Berlicum (1243) for the Norbertines (Premonstratenzians) of Postel and Berne, and finally of Waalre (1276) for the Benedictine abbey of Echternach. The assumption is that the rights of *advocatus* were hereditary and that the position of governor had led to usurpation. The right of *co-patronus* was seen as 'proof' of ownership of seigneurial rights in Hilvarenbeek. Both ideas are incorrect. The *advocatus* was the executer of independent jurisdiction, the high jurisdiction over an ecclesiastical jurisdiction that was not tied to a count or duke. He was a lay lord charged with the protection and representation in secular matters of an abbey, his functions were confined to the protection of the interests of religious houses. Recruitment for this service was only possible for those at the top of the medieval aristocracy, more specifically the high (pre-feudal) nobility. Above all lineage was essential to become an advocate. To serve the interests of the ecclesiastical institution the office required an independent non-feudal position of the candidate. The *advocatus* had to have capital, authority, reputation and prestige by his own. He did not derive his power from this duty, although the assignment undoubtedly increased his authority.

Perhaps usurpation was commonplace in the Middle Ages - so it seems from much popularizing literature - but there is no specific evidence in the sources that the Herlaars owned former church property or rights. When ownership cannot be explained, it is too easily assumed to have been acquired by usurpation. That idea also suggests that usurpation of church property would have been relatively simple. However the sources show that the church was more than able to resist any moves in that direction.

Actually, the idea of usurpation is based on a misconception of the position of the *advocatus*. The advocates did not gain prestige because of their service but were asked to serve, the other way around, because of the social capital and prestige they already had. Probably an independent position, in other words not one tied to a liege lord, was an advantage. That was true at least for the Herlaars.

Even to the right of *co-patronus*, first mentioned in 1246, interpretations are linked that follow from *a priori* and anachronistic arguments, such as the assumption that the Herlaars possessed seigneurial rights in the village of Hilvarenbeek. That the Herlaars owned those rights or other property in Hilvarenbeek is very unlikely. There are no sources with specific reference to those assumed rights and/or property in Hilvarenbeek other than the canonical right of co-patronage. The fact that the right of co-patron of Hilvarenbeek was linked to the manor of Herlaar can simply be explained by the fact that Dirk van Herlaar was a devout man. He donated part of his propriety of the domain of Herlaar to the Hilvarenbeek chapter. At that moment (between 1207 and 1246) the chapter was in a hard and difficult financial position. Because of the link with the domain of Herlaar the later lords of Herlaar remained co-patrons even after the transfer of the manor. The fact that Horne - who became lord of Herlaar in 1315 - may have had manorial rights in Hilvarenbeek is not linked to the manor of Herlaar.

Gerard van Loon sold the manor of Herlaar, once the core of the Herlaars' possessions, to Gerard van Horne in 1315. It was Horne who offered the manor to the bishop of Liège, with whom he was in conflict in



those days. The ins and outs of the deal and why the manor of Herlaar became a *fief de reprise* are not clear. Because of the conflict between the bishop and the city at that time the situation in Liège was somewhat vague. There are no sources after 1325 that still link any rights to the manor to the Herlaars. Why Horne bought the manor is not clear, but at a later stage his wife owned the house and the rights as apanage. Apparently Horne did not reckon the manor to be part of his core property, that was later inherited by his son.

After the mid-13th century fundamental changes occur in the possession of the lords of Herlaar. Although the manor and the houses of Herlaar belonged to the Herlaar family as their private possession, Dirk (1232-1285) did add the seignorial rights of the Land of Ameide to his property. At that moment land developments in the Land of Ameide were already at an advanced stage. A ring dike encircled the region (Alblasserwaard) and the blocks of land development had already been determined. There are no resources to illustrate that the Herlaars acted as locator (entrepreneur in the opening up of the area), yet without doubt they have contributed in various ways to the development of Ameide. That Ameide as 'late medieval new town' was established because of self-interest of the local lord, as suggested in literature, while the founders would have had no regard for the economic prosperity and the importance of citizens, can easily be refuted. The lord of Ameide allowed Lombarden to settle a bank in his territory and gave the citizens of Ameide city rights and freedom of toll in Holland. The freedom of toll was received from Count William V as thanks for Dirk's efforts - and those of his son - in his struggle against the Hoeken.

In the period 1255-1315 the lord of Herlaar still owned two separate blocks of property: the manor of Herlaar and the domain of Ameide, with their appurtenances. The property that had been enfeoffed can be surveyed from the late-14th/early 15th century. In this study I examined to which extent the fiefs of Herlaar, known from that period onwards, could have originated from the allodial property of the Herlaars, held before 1315. The total number of fiefs, especially large farm houses, was limited, most of them were located around Herlaar.

The fiefs of Ameide were recorded at the beginning of the 15th century in the book of fief holders (*liber feodorum*) of Vianen. This makes a reconstruction difficult, because a lot of fiefs belonged to the lord of Vianen already. The fiefs originating from Ameide were reconstructed by Kort, so Kort's reconstruction could be taken as point of departure for a more detailed and systematic description. Its purpose was not only to get a picture of the actual wealth of the lord of Ameide, but also to be able to make a clear distinction between the fiefs located in the area of Ameide and the fiefs located in the river area, in particular in the Bommelerwaard. Whereas the fiefs in Ameide almost exclusively consist of land and some land rents, the fiefs outside the area of Ameide mainly concern rights of low jurisdiction and their appurtenances.

How, by whom and when was this property outside Ameide, particularly located in Gelre, acquired? With the exception of Herenthout the fiefs owned outside Ameide can be traced back as being 14th-century property. So this was not originally possessed by Ameide, but was added to it later on. In the secondary literature it is suggested that these possessions in the river area already belonged to Gerard van Loon when he married Aleid van Herlaar (1285-1290). The idea is that he used them to compensate for his lower social status compared to his bride. However, the many details that came up during this research show that the ownership of these lands and rents only came in the hands of the Herlaars in the first quarter of the 14th century. Therefore, it did not belong to the inheritance brought in his marriage by Van Loon. As nothing about his inheritance is known this seems to be more realistic, a scale of ownership like this was very unlikely for a minor member of the regional aristocracy. In general the regional gentry owned the low

jurisdiction with annex rights of one or some (small) manors. So, if the fiefs in the Dutch river area did not belong to Van Loon previously, when and how was this acquired by the lord of Ameide?

The following hypothesis may provide an answer. In 1318 Reinald I Count of Gelre and his son Reinald II disputed the right to be count, not with words but with weapons. Reinald II was supported by the local gentry in the river area, including relatives of Gerard van Loon and his son Dirk van Herlaar. In this area they faced attacks by their opponents. After he had won the civil war the fight Reinald junior, who had promised to pay his allies, lost a fortune. To strengthen his financial position, he not only pawned his revenue in Zutphen (1325) but also that of the Bommelerwaard and Tielerwaard. The revenue came from manors, and jurisdictional and annex rights in the river area, and exactly that was put in pawn, while Reinald II retained the high jurisdiction of these domains. My hypothesis is that Dirk van Herlaar, lord of Ameide, acquired these rights/ revenues as pawn taker.

In this study it is suggested that in the period between selling the manor of Herlaar, 1315, and his death, 1323, Gerard van Loon acquired Brakel and Ammersoyen by exchange or purchase from the lord of Altena (Horne). So Brakel, and probably also Ammersoyen, originally did belong to the complex of possession of the lord of Altena. After the death of Gerard van Loon, 1323, the ownership passed on to his son and heir Dirk. Apart from Ameide and other property, Dirk presumably had power in the Bommelerwaard already before 1325. Thanks to the Gelre domains pawned in the Bommelerwaard it appears that the lord of Ameide had succeeded in creating a solid base of power.

It has already been pointed out that the fiefs outside Ameide were held by regional aristocrats, however nothing is known about a feudal bond between these men and the lord of Ameide. This may seem strange for such a consolidated complex of fiefs, but it is less surprising if we assume that the ownership was transferred to a pawn holder, Dirk van Herlaar. It explains why the bond between the lord of Ameide and his vassals was not a personal one, but more business-like. Altogether the lord of Ameide acquired a considerable complex of property in the Bommelerwaard. Moreover, in 1326 his wife added her legacy to this fortune. It is this total of accumulated property of various sorts that made up the socio-economic capital of Dirk van Herlaar. It enabled him to symbolize his power in a big castle: Ammersoyen.

### ***7.3 The houses of the Herlaars, symbols of power and prestige***

Current studies of castles assume that the architecture of the noble residence was a testament to the power and status of the owner. It was part of his social and cultural capital. Thus a house can be seen as a source to determinate the status of the owner of the building or its occupant. To get a correct impression of such a house, and thus of its master as well, its morphology should be reconstructed to the shape of the investigated period. That is what this study attempts to do: reconstruct the houses of the Herlaars to their 13th or 14th century shapes. However, because of the limited resources this is problematic. Only for the reconstruction of the house of Ammersoyen the building itself can be investigated. Unfortunately castle drawings and archaeological surveys only provide an impression of the houses. Still, even when a only few resources are available the chrono-typology of Janssen demonstrates a relationship between the morphology of the houses and the status of the occupant. That implies that the morphology can be used as a source when other information is limited.

The fact that the Herlaars adopted contemporary ideas from their socio-cultural environment and in that way confirmed their socio-cultural capital, follows, besides the choice of marriage partners, also from their castles. The Herlaars built their houses according to the latest views of their time, which were concepts that correspond to the structures built or owned by the noble environment of which the Herlaars made part. This takes us back to the start of this research. Ammersoyen castle has a very elite and exclusive floor plan: it is

built in one construction phase as a square castle with round towers on each corner. This floor plan and the chrono-typological concept make it very unlikely that the castle of Ammersoyen would have been built by a less affluent aristocratic lord like a member of the *ministerial* family Van Ammersoyen. Only territorial princes and members of the high nobility had the means to adopt this concept. Even so there are not many examples from the Low Countries.

The historical data available are sufficient to give a plausible representation of the earliest construction phase. What can be concluded? Firstly it appears that this castle, even much more than can be deduced from the floor plan and from drawings, was built to become an extravagant, luxurious home. Secondly, and more specifically, the historical data of the construction show that the design of the building was determined within an identifiable network. The house of Ammersoyen has so many similarities with that of Helmond that it cannot be called a coincidence. When sources then show that Dirk van Herlaar and the lords of Helmond and Vorselaar - with houses with a similar floor plan - belonged to the same circle of kinsmen and friends in the second quarter of the 14th century it may be concluded that the role of kinship or a nobility network played a greater role in the construction of the noble houses of this type than had been known before. The idea of network influences is not new but it has not been demonstrated as clearly in the literature on the history of buildings in the Low Countries as in this study. This also sheds a different light on the introduction of the square castle with round corner towers in this region. The theory about the introduction of this type of castle in the Low Countries must therefore be revised.

The reconstruction of the building history of Ammersoyen in the earliest construction phase shows a concept-based architecture, so there was a plan, and that was fixed on living luxuriously. Precisely those aspects that exude luxury and wealth and thus determine the difference cannot be reconstructed from castle drawings and / or archaeological remains. Therefore any information on the materials that were used are a source of added value.

Some authors ascertain as date of the earliest building activities of the castle either 1300 or 1350. However this is solely based on research concerning the building history of Ammersoyen. Their studies are purely focused on constructions, they neglect the status of the builder; in the case of Ammersoyen he must have been an aristocrat with a huge capital and power. This study shows that Dirk van Herlaar acquired Ammersoyen as part of a conglomerate of rights in the Dutch river area after 1318/1325. The Herlaars did not have any possessions to speak of in this area before this time window. Dirk possessed a huge social-economic capital and prestige. He had close connections as well with lords who built nearly identical houses. Based on these outcomes this study leads to the conclusion that Dirk van Herlaar probably ordered to build this castle. Thus the start of the construction of the castle of Ammersoyen can be dated after 1318 at the earliest, but more likely began (shortly) after 1325.

Without a doubt the houses of the Herlaars symbolized their social capital, but this study also demonstrates that their castles served a geo-political function. Although the architecture of the houses mainly represents the social capital of the owner and the military function was not taken as a starting point to build these castles, the functionality of these buildings was, either as a fief or as an allodial 'open' house, to fortify the border of the territory of the count/duke of Gelre. Considered geographically, the possessions of the Herlaars are part of a defensive line along the river Maas (Meuse), a line of houses on Gelre territory: Empel-Meerwijk (Hedel) Ammersoyen (Nederhemert) Poederoyen. Reinald II and his successor Reinald III pawned the houses (except for Ammersoyen) between 1330 and 1350. They must have been aware that the castles of the Herlaars: Poederoyen, Empel-Meerwijk, Ammersoyen and Bokhoven, closely located to each other, could serve territorial aspirations of the Herlaars. However, such ambitions are not materialized.

For sure the unexpected rise of the Herlaars along the Maas between 1330-1350 is not a coincidence; these points in time mark an important period for Gelre: it can be argued that at that time Reinald II

consolidated his territorial border with Brabant. Willem van Kranendonk offered his house at Hedel to the duke in 1336. The bond with the lord of Nederhemert became more intensive through the intervention of Moliart, land steward of Gelre and close confidant to Reinald II, when he solved a debt on the house for the lord of Nederhemert in 1332. Moliart was also involved in the renovation of the house of Poederoyen. It appears that Moliart, inhabitant of the Bommelerwaard, was of major influence in securing the border of the lord of Gelre, and thus of his power. At that time the Herlaars acquired Poederoyen and Empel-Meerwijk as fiefs from Gelre. To bind all the strongholds along the river Maas to his person in such a short period clearly indicates a deliberate and strategic military policy of Reinald II. A policy which was heavily influenced by developments in Brabant. After the battle of the grand coalition 1332-1334 the lord of Gelre indeed won Tiel and Heerwaarden, but he lost the villages south of the Meuse river in the Land of Heusden. He was then forced to secure the new border of his territory. He achieved this by turning a number of castles along the Meuse river into essential buttresses of his territorial power. It is not known why he selected the Herlaars to become his vassals. Perhaps the deciding factor was a good relationship between Dirk van Herlaar and Reinald II or Moliart. Nevertheless this shows that it was not Dirk Herlaar who gained regional power but the lord (count, later duke) of Gelre. In particular, it is indicative for a deliberate stronghold policy of Reinald II, who for its execution found the Herlaars useful. This may also explain why in their management of castles the Herlaars did not operate together in order to fulfil a common goal primarily determined by family interests.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

To give direction to this thesis the main question was set up as follows: how did the Herlaars acquire their position in the Dutch river area and manage to maintain it for a long time, and what served as the basis of power? The concept of 'maatschappelijk vermogen' (social capital), introduced by Schmidt in 1986 (and inspired by Bourdieu), is used to describe the position and power of the Herlaars. This concept allows the researcher to describe power in objective terms because it combines the unit of power and its source without needing to ask how exactly powerful people acquire their power. 'Maatschappelijk vermogen' contains the socio-economic capital, social and cultural capital and socio-political capital. This concept creates the possibility to describe the development of power for a certain dynasty.

The focus of this research is pointed to the Herlaars with their extensive possessions in the Dutch River area. Their origins go back a prefeudal noble family. The way, in which in this study the term 'dynasty' is used, deserves some explanation. Because the Herlaar family is not determined purely patrilineal it is, strictly speaking, not correct to use the terminology 'dynasty'. The symbols of a dynasty: the surname, first names, the image on the weapon shield and how is referred to the ancestors in transactions, were passed on to the descendants, are recognisable. However the succession of the Herlaars was not only formed by males but also by females. That is, children of a female heir not only inherited the core property formerly owned by their descendants but the surname as well. This may be called very special. It is argued in this study that such a rupture took place twice: at the beginning of the 13th century as well as at the start of the 14th century. Until the mid-13th century only the social capital of the heir is described. It is only from the 14th century onwards that information on the assets of other descendants than heirs is recorded in the sources.

Schmidt showed in his work on the dynasty Teding van Berkhout that the interest of a family was not captured in the 'great men' it produced. More important was its 'ordinariness' within the social environment of which it made part and the continuity in its social position. Surely, that was also the case with the Herlaars in the Dutch river area during the three centuries between 1100 and 1400. It is difficult to fit the development

of the social capital of the Herlaars in the successive stages which were distinguished in Schmidt's study. Until the 14th century, that is to say, for several centuries, the possessions of the Herlaars were fairly constant. Accumulation of property and converting it into political power took place almost instantly and simultaneously in the first half of the 14th century. Before that period the political power of the Herlaars had been quite limited. Moreover, there is nothing that suggests that the Herlaars - unlike the lord of Ameide end of the 13th century and his successors in the 14th century - had used their castles and lordship rights strategically to consolidate their position or maintain their social ranking. Neither did their relatives at this stage manage to consolidate the family's social capital. But then circumstances that were completely outside the reach of the Herlaars made the tables turn in their favour abruptly. The fact that the development of the social capital of the Herlaars does not synchronize with the stages Schmidt distinguishes is not remarkable. Social capital in the High Middle Ages is after all quite different in structure from that of later times, in which money plays an important role and the position of the landlords and the nobility has changed.

Still the development of power as described provides an image of power and also answers the question how the Herlaars managed to maintain their position. This process cannot, as Schmidt states, be separated from the background of the changing balance of power, in this case that of the territorial princes. The Herlaars seem to have been very aware of both the opportunities and the threats offered by the geopolitical ambitions of these great lords. Without resisting the Herlaars bowed for the development of territorial politics of the landlords. Therefore it looks as if the Herlaars kept a low profile, but that was all done on purpose to retain their position and ranking. From the mid-13th century onwards they had to take into account the territorial politics of four princes. When the duke of Brabant ensured the position of Den Bosch by eliminating the power of the (local) lord of Vught Dirk van Herlaar acquired an escape route in Ameide. In the struggle between the counts of Holland and the prince-bishops of Utrecht, at the end of the 13th century, the lord of Ameide assigned his house, albeit in secret, to Wolfert of Borselen, that is to say to the young count of Holland. This way Dirk's castle was prevented from being besieged by troops of Van Borselen, as had happened at IJsselstein. Sure, it is not strange that the bishop of Utrecht reacted, even though this was much later. The upcoming lord of Ameide humbly bowed his head in 1312 and thus managed to retain the possession of his descants. In the second quarter of the 14th century the Herlaars managed to acquire seigneurial rights and substantial houses in the border area of the territory of Gelre and Brabant. However, this property was not used by the Herlaars to consolidate or gain a position in the territory of the landlords, or to acquire even more possessions. This is clearly shown by the castle policy of the Duke of Gelre, Reinald II (1318-1343), in his fights against the Duke of Brabant, John III (1312-1355). The Herlaars were no border lords but something more humble, noblemen living on the border.

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