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### De Kingma-kroniek, of Nicolai, Hendrik

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## SUMMARY

### THE KINGMA CHRONICLE OR HOW THE FAMILIAL MEMORY WAS KEPT ALIVE DURING TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS

Object of this study is the Kingma family in Makkum in the province of Friesland. Seven generations of this family are reviewed. Our central question is: how did the individuals of these generations – consciously and unconsciously – construe the familial identity.

'Who the Kingmas were?' is not an easy question to answer. They can be described as village notables and entrepreneurs and by way of this description we can start to explain their behaviour and add to our general knowledge of notables and entrepreneurs. This approach, however, omits certain aspects of their identity. From a distance their identity seems to be identical with their social roles, but to their fellow notables this identity was not determined by their status and occupation, but by the fact that they were Kingmas. What does it mean to be a Kingma? And in more general terms: what is a familial identity and how can we study its history?

In our *Introduction* we argue that if we want to recognize this identity we first must pay attention to unique behavioural characteristics. Identity is not determined by *what* individuals or groups *are*, but by *how* they *behave*. This mode of behaviour is the 'fingerprint' of the family and its members. A study of the family archive reveals this identity in

the course of seven generations. Attention has to be paid to trivial traits and habits which members unconsciously have contributed to the familial identity, as well as to the traits they have cultivated as being part of that identity. By tracing the inheritance of these traits we reconstruct the evolution of the familial identity in time.

The Kingmas lived in Makkum since the middle of the eighteenth century. The house, a number of small workshops and the family archive – a hold of personal as well as business data – were inherited in the direct male line. In the first part of this study we tell the story of four heads of family – Hylke Jans (1708-1782), Marten Hylkes (1746-1825), Jan Kingma (1802-1875) and Tjeerd Herre (1838-1930) – and of the way they have tried to convert their wealth into status and reputation.

Hylke Jans can be regarded as the founding father of the family, because he originated its dynastic sense. He adopted the prestigious name of Kingma, he embellished his two houses and he was made an assessor (an important function in a regional court of justice). His son Marten Hylkes plagued by misfortune and of a more retiring nature did not pursue the dynastic quest, but the grandson Jan Kingma renewed the effort. He held

numerous public functions, but he experienced his lack of education as a social handicap and he exerted himself to give his sons a better schooling. His personal life was marred by conflicts and disappointments. His relationship to his father was strained, because Jan Kingma had more liberal religious views than his father. His first wife Sybrigje Rinia also was more orthodox than her husband, but she managed to maintain the familial peace. After her death he remarried Feike Horreus Romar, a minister's daughter. They begat two sons, but the marriage was not happy. After a number of years she and her sons moved out of the house.

As the children of Jan's first marriage became of age conflicts between Jan and his sons arose. In Leiden and Amsterdam where they started their careers as student and unsalaried clerk respectively they fell under the spell of the romantic age and of the emotional christian belief which was familiar to them as part of their mother's piety. When Jan discovered their religious penchant he could no longer change their minds. Relations became strained and Jan even broke off relations with one son never to renew them.

Jan Kingma's social ambitions were frustrated by a provincialism which he could not shake off. As a village notable he aspired to belong to the national bourgeois culture without being able to forget his local background. After him the family abdicated these ambitions. Tjeerd Herre, the next in line to take over the family capital, did not have the social flair of his brothers nor the ambitions of his father and so he gave up the effort to give the family a regional and national identity. His renunciation was facilitated by the fact that the local village sociability had lost its bourgeois élan and villagers adopted the ideal of cosy domesticity. Within the context of this village sociability the desire to lead a plain life as well as certain idiosyncrasies were elevated into virtues by Tjeerd Herre and his brothers. Paradoxically this retreat from bourgeois culture helped the Kingmas to consolidate their familial identity, not as upper class bourgeois but as Kingmas. Because of the economic success of the Kingma bank, founded in 1869, they were able to get their way in the larger society and have their

type of Kingma behaviour accepted in the small circle of friends till this very day.

The evolution of the Kingma identity is the subject of the second part of this study. First attention is paid to the collective memory and its function in the family culture. Recollections specific to this collective memory were transmitted to the next generation notably by way of the family archive, by anecdotes and stories. The familial chronicle emphasized the typical Kingma virtues and sins and it contained the implicit command to behave like father and grandfather; a command which was felt by all descendants who celebrated it in intimate rituals and traditions.

Several factors caused the decay of this familial identity. After the death of Tjeerd Herre the family archive was not kept very well. Eventually it was transferred to the Provincial Archive in the provincial capital. Members of the family left Friesland. The Kingma bank was sold in 1971 and with this sale the last theater in which the Kingmas could play their familial role disappeared. The founding of the family association can be seen as a restorative reaction. It is an attempt to preserve old objects and family stories and to keep alive the familial identity among members of the family. The founder of the association was also the sponsor of this study. The last chapter of this book deals with this last representative of the old Kingma culture.

What will be his contribution to the familial identity? At first sight we can notice that the Kingma past has been turned into a museum. The ancestral home of Hylke Jans has been bought and restored by the Kingma association. In this house objects of the family and archival material can be stored. The new generation of Kingmas has little affinity with this museum. On the other hand the founding of the Kingma association has revitalized the familial identity. Reunions and the periodical newsletter are greatly appreciated. So the continuity of the familial identity seems to be assured. Perhaps it will survive in a more fragmented or reduced form, but it is impossible to tell what form the familial identity will take in a more distant future.