



Dutch farmers of the Middle Ages labored on their small farms to feed not only themselves, but also the inhabitants of nearby cities. They grew various grains which they ground into flour at local mills, and kept dairy cows and draught horses. Most were freemen who held land in a feudal arrangement and passed it on to their descendants. They paid taxes in the form of fees, tolls, and tithes to the clergy and aristocracy, and were theoretically given some military protection in return. For them, life was a constant struggle, with wars, floods and disease always a threat. [Jacob Cats, Amsterdam, 1656. Collection: J.N.A. Groenendijk]

Chapter 1

Life Along the Waal

The River

As the river Rhine pushes its way down from the Alps, through the German foothills, and onto the flat plain which we now call The Netherlands, it divides itself into a northern and a southern branch, both of which continue westward to the sea. Our story begins in the land between these two rivers - the northern branch, called the *Lek* or *Neder Rijn*, and the southern branch, which in the memory of man has always been called the *Waal*. At the time the Romans occupied this place, and even before, the rivers were smaller than they are today, flowing in sinuous meanders to the sea, changing course at will on the broad, flat floodplain. The river Meuse, called *Maas* in these parts, pushes north from France, then turns west to meander through the Rhine delta. It nearly joins the *Waal* near today's village of Rossum, but turns south, then north again, before finally linking up at Loevestein. Farther down, these three rivers flow into the giant estuary of Zeeland, thence to the North Sea.

This land between the *Waal* and *Maas* which lies downstream of their near-joining at Rossum and above their merger at Loevestein, is a quasi-island now called the *Bommelerwaard*, and it is of special interest to us because it was - and still is - the seat of the family van Tuyl. This is one of the oldest inhabited areas of the Rijn-Maas Delta, where traces of human habitation found in the Pleistocene river dunes date from 3500 to 2500 years before Christ.¹ In the Iron Age (700 - 12 BC), many small villages dotted the *stroomrug* (stream ridge) near today's villages of Bruchem and Gameren.² Actually, the *Waal* was then probably a group of thin, braided channels which in Roman times (50 - 300 AD) could be forded by horses.³ In fact, the course of the River *Waal* has

¹ The *Bommelerwaard* was formed by this course of the *Maas* and *Waal* during the Middle Ages and modern times [Berendsen, H.J.A. et al., "Het Landschap van de Bommelerwaard," Geografisch Instituut, Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, 1986, pg. 61]. About 1900, the river *Maas* near Loevestein was converted to a canal, and the main river diverted to a more southerly course, called the *Bergse Maas* [Bongaerts, M.C.E., "De Scheiding van *Maas* en *Waal*," Ministerie van Waterstaat, Den Haag, 1909].

² Berendsen, "Het Landschap..." pp. 53, 64.

³ Tacitus, *The History*, IV:12, 26. Local tribesmen were able to swim horses and men across the Rhine in formation - a feat the Romans couldn't perform. In AD 9, the Romans built a jetty at the fork of the Rhine and *Waal*, forcing more water into the Rhine, thus decreasing the size of the *Waal* and making it easier for them to cross. In AD 70, this jetty was destroyed by tribes in revolt against the Romans [Tacitus, *The History*, V:19], thus starting a tradition of war-by-waterworks used over the centuries.

changed many times since then, undergoing a major change in about 200 - 300 AD,⁴ and again in the 13th century, when the climate of Northern Europe turned wetter, causing the Waal to increase its flow and reroute itself into nearly its present course.⁵

The People

The river's meanders scoured their outside bends and deposited sand on their inside curves, thereby creating natural high spots - called *stroomruggen*.^{6,7,8} After the 200-300 AD change in the river course, many meanders were cut off, leaving behind curved sections of former river channel on whose *stroomruggen* villages flourished.⁹ These early dwellers left deposits of pottery and bones of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats, indicating that they were herdsmen, and possibly hunters.¹⁰ In pre-Roman times, various Celtic and Germanic tribes inhabited the area, but Julius Caesar's conquests (59 - 52 BC) brought incursions of displaced Germanic tribes.¹¹ After Caesar's departure to Gaul in 52 BC, the *Menapii* occupied the western estuary and Zeeland, while the *Batavi*, coming from Germany, invaded the area between the Maas and the Rhine.¹² Of these tribes, the *Batavi*, who became temporary allies of the Romans, are of particular interest because some of them lived on the *stroomruggen* along the Waal at the sites of what were to become the villages of Tuil and Gameren. Excavations show that they were indeed herdsmen and cattle breeders, but also fishermen, and that they lived in small settlements of 2 to 5 farmsteads.^{13,14} They possessed pottery made near the Roman fort in Nijmegen which, unlike their own crude coil-built pots, was turned on a wheel.¹⁵ They developed an interdependent relationship with their Roman conquerors, providing food and military assistance in return for trade goods and protection.

A Frankish tribe called the *Salii* settled along the Waal in the 4th century, but after the exodus of the Romans in the 5th century AD there was a dramatic drop in population along the Waal. This

⁴ Berendsen, H.J.A., "River Courses in the Central Netherlands during the Roman Period," in *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek*, vol. 40, 1990, pg. 234.

⁵ Elbers, P.F., "Een Opgraving in Tuil," in *Mededelingen van de Historische Kring West-Betuwe*, March, 1986, pg. 2.

⁶ De Groot, J.H., "Zaltbommel, Stad en Waard door de Eeuwen heen," Europese Bibliotheek, Zaltbommel, 1979, pg. 16.

⁷ Berendsen, "Het Landschap..." pg. 61.

⁸ Van Balken, A.C. et al., "De Bommelerwaard, Zien, Kennen en Waarderen," Natuurwacht, Zaltbommel, 1978, pg. 12.

⁹ Berendsen, "River Courses..." pg. 234. In America, these cut-off sections are called *oxbow lakes*.

¹⁰ Van Balken, pg. 19.

¹¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 15, pg. 447; vol. 23, pg. 315.

¹² Van Es, W.A., "De Romeinen in Nederland," Bussum, 1972, pg. 23-28.

¹³ Elbers, pg. 2.

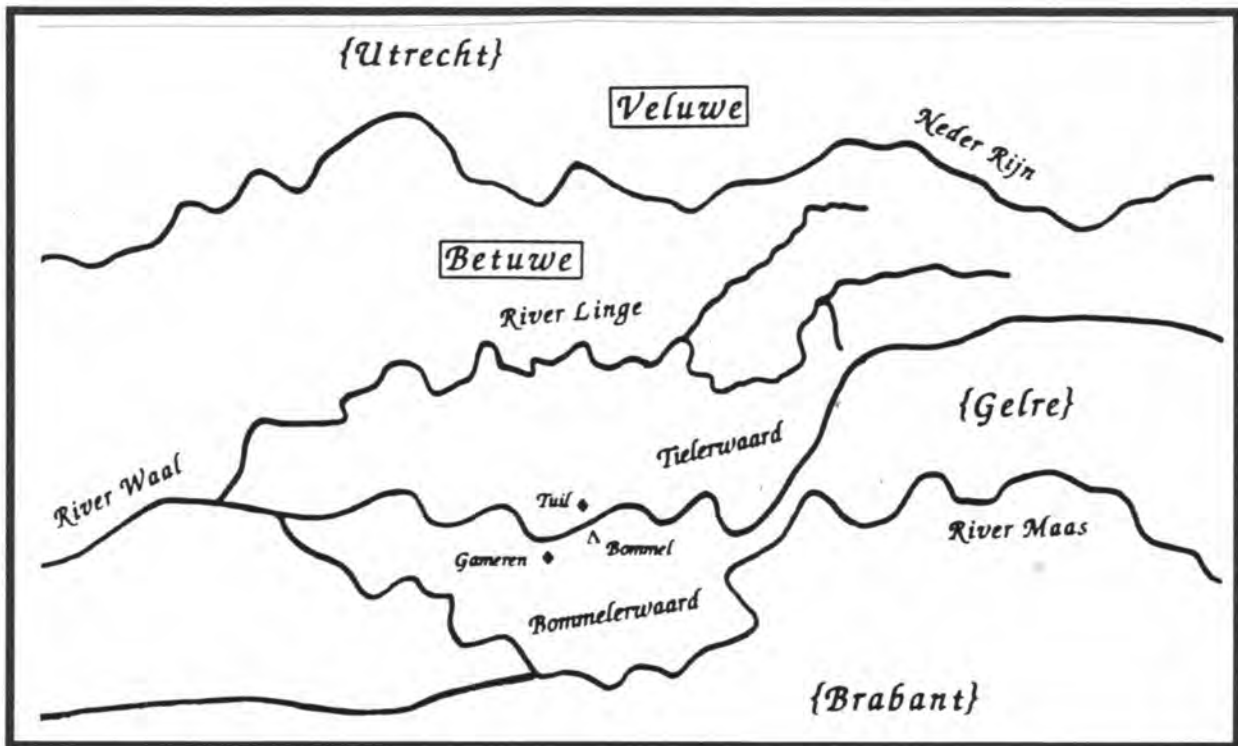
¹⁴ De Mooij, C., et al., "Bataven, Boeren en Bondgenoten," 's-Hertogenbosch, 1994, pg. 16.

¹⁵ Elbers, pg. 11.

The Rhine Delta ~ Homeland of the Family Van Tuyl



The alluvial floodplain where two of Europe's great rivers flow to the sea has sustained people for thousands of years. Since the 4th century, when Frankish tribes settled the region, people have farmed and grazed the land, battling the elements as well as the invading armies. Tenth century records tell of a place called *Tuil*, and of people who, by the fourteenth century, derived their name from this village. The descendants of this family *van Tuyl* - though now scattered worldwide - still live here along the River Waal, many in the village of Gameren, just across the river from the home of their forbears.



was brought about partly by the societal upheaval and partly by flooding, as the river increased its flow and radically changed its course.^{16,17} Possibly, the area was completely uninhabited for a time.¹⁸ Although there was some population increase in the era of the Merovingian Franks (400 - 650 AD),¹⁹ it wasn't until the era of the Carolingian Franks (650 - 900 AD) that villages were re-established along the Waal - villages that remain to this day.²⁰ It seems, then, that the people of the Bommelerwaard were at that point mostly Franks - a collection of Germanic tribes which had lived along the Rhine for centuries and had now expanded to France, Germany, Northern Italy and The Low Countries.^{21, 22}

Farming Villages

Excavations in Gameren show that the people living there before and during the Roman occupation practiced a form of agriculture which as early as the Iron Age included such techniques as crop rotation and manuring.²³ They cultivated barley, oats, millet, wheat, linseed, flax and broad beans, and gathered apples, prunes, hazelnuts, blackberries and raspberries.²⁴ One of the earliest sections farmed was in Gameren, in the exact area where the van Tuyl family would later cultivate the soil, an area of light sandy clay which still ranks among the world's most productive land (and is still farmed by van Tuyls).²⁵ With the formation of organized villages in the Carolingian era, there came remarkable improvements in farming. Most of the village land was held in common, and used for cattle-grazing,²⁶ but individually-worked fields, called *akker*, were used for both grain cultivation and as orchards.²⁷ Most farmsteads were situated on the border between grassland and farmland, with the fronts of the houses facing the farm sections, where fields of wheat, rye, oats, and barley grew.^{28, 29, 30} Farmers introduced a three-year cycle of crop rotation: wintercorn (wheat and rye) one year, summercorn (oats and barley) the second season, and fallow

¹⁶ Elbers, P.F., "Tuil, een Bijzonder Dorp," in *Mededelingen van de Historische Kring West-Betuwe*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1987, pg. 27.

¹⁷ Berendsen, "Het Landschap...", pg. 64.

¹⁸ Elbers "Tuil...", pg. 27.

¹⁹ Elbers "Tuil...", pg. 27.

²⁰ Berendsen, "Het Landschap...", pp. 64-65.

²¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, vol. 4, pg. 936.

²² Garraty, L.A. and Gay, P. eds., "The Columbia History of the World"; 1972, pg. 371.

²³ Berendsen, "Het Landschap...", pp. 64-65. Both dung and green manuring were used to maintain soil fertility.

²⁴ De Mooij, et al., pp. 20-21.

²⁵ Hoeksema, K.J., "De Bodemkartering in de Bommelerwaard," 1948 [map].

²⁶ Van Balken, pg. 20.

²⁷ Van Balken, pg. 20.

²⁸ Berendsen, "Het Landschap..." pg. 67.

²⁹ Van Balken, pg. 25.

³⁰ Slicher van Bath, B., "De Agrarische Geschiedenis van West-Europa 500-1850," Utrecht, 1987, pp. 62-80.

fields the third, with each crop standing in a long, narrow field about 16 by 400 meters, a convenient size for plowing and drainage.³¹ They also cultivated beans and peas.³² In the 11th century, farm efficiency - and population - saw an increase when horses were introduced to the plow, replacing the ox.³³ But the helter-skelter arrangement of privately owned farm plots made for inefficient transport, drainage, and farm layout in the area as a whole.

Though barley was used for cattle feed and beer brewing, wheat, rye, and oats found their way to Gameren's village *korenmolen* [grist mill], where the wind-powered grindstones turned out the flour so necessary to the peoples' survival. This mill was first mentioned in the records of 1370, when one Arnd of Loyenbergh, son of the local lord, was granted "...the right of the wind and the grind for the villages of Gameren and Nieuwaal." For a yearly payment of fifteen pounds of wax to the far-away nobility, this member of the elite was granted a monopoly on the grinding of grain for Gameren's farmers - all of whom faced stiff penalties for using alternative mills.³⁴

The Rise of Bommel

Sometime around the 7th century AD, small villages sprouted along the riverbanks of the Waal. The river's course was radically different from what it is today, and we think that the early village of Bommel lay on the *north* bank of one branch of the Waal, rather than the *south* bank, as it does today. Archaeology tells us that this stretch of the river had been settled in Roman times,³⁵ but the first recorded mention of today's city of Zaltbommel came in 850 AD, when one Balderik donated as a fief the tiny village he called *Bomela* - then comprising five farmsteads - to St. Martin's Church of Utrecht.³⁶ The village was mentioned under various spellings over the next 500 years until, in 1299, it first appeared as *Sautbomel*.³⁷ By this time, the village had grown to become a commercial town on the great east-west water highway, the Waal. Salt from the Baltic was transhipped to Germany from Salt-Bommel - this accounts for the "Salt" prefix - distinguishing this *Bommel* from the *Bommel* along the river Maas. Its commercial activity distinguished Salt-Bommel from agrarian Gameren next door, and by 1231 the former village was endowed with certain *city rights*.³⁸

³¹ Slicher van Bath, pp. 62-80.

³² Slicher van Bath, pp. 291 ff.

³³ Slicher van Bath, pp. 291 ff. For centuries, the basic unit of farmland was the morgen, about as much as a man could plow in a morning's work. 1 Morgen = 0.87 hectares [Moorman van Kappen, O., et al., "Tieler-en Bommelerwaarden 1327-1977," Tiel/Zaltbommel, 1977, pg. 50].

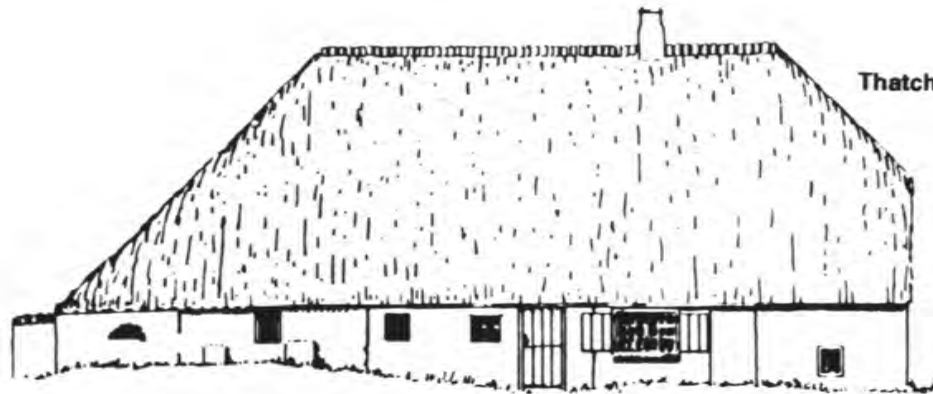
³⁴ Rijksarchief Gelderland, Archief Gelderse Rekenkamer, Charter 2680. Gameren had a functioning windmill until 1945, when it was destroyed by fleeing German troops.

³⁵ De Groot, pg. 15.

³⁶ "Liber Donationum Ecclesiae Maioris Traiectensis," in *Oorkondenboek van het Sticht Utrecht Deel I*, by S.M. Muller, Utrecht, 1920.

³⁷ The name *Bommel* is probably derived from *Boom* = "tree" + *Loo* = "a sandy, wooded area" [De Groot, pg. 38].

³⁸ De Groot, pg. 42.

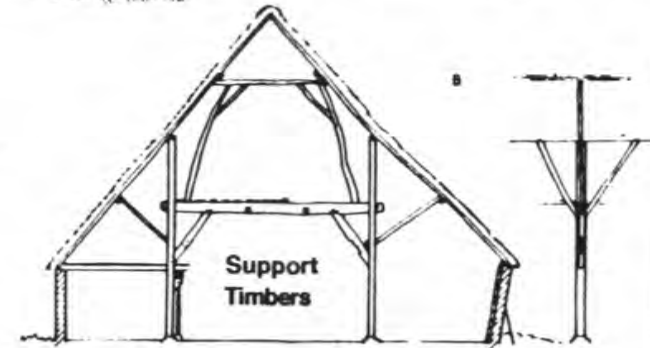
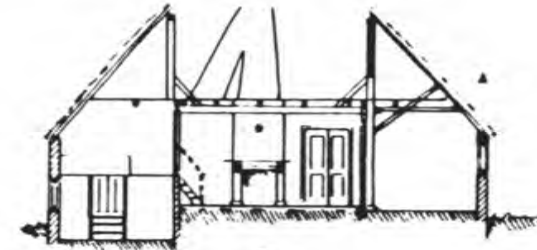
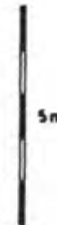
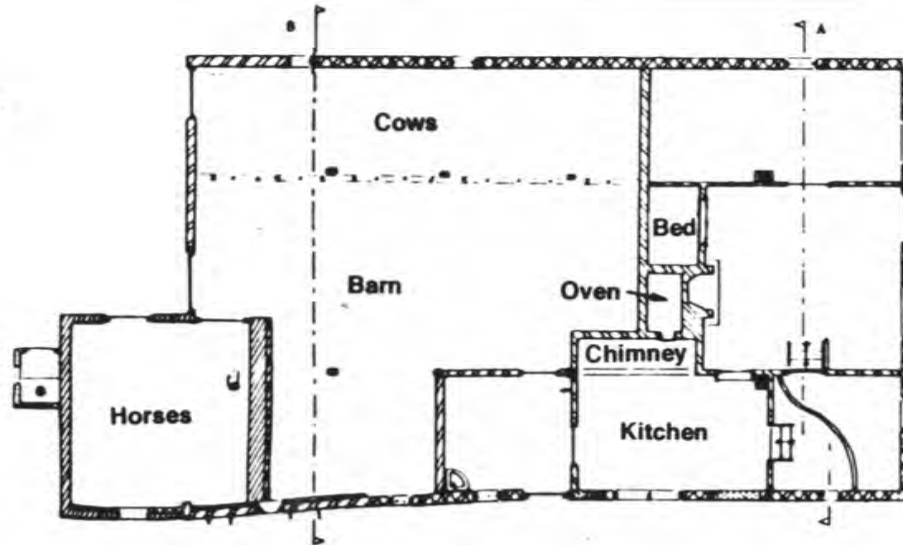


Thatched Roof



A Farmhouse along the Waal

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Dutch farmhouses provided shelter for the family as well as their animals. Family life centered on the kitchen, where the oven provided heat as well as cooking fire. Beds were built close to the oven in enclosed cabinets, to ensure warmth. Thatched roofs were supported by hand-hewn timbers.

Walls were originally of *wattle and daub*, a basketweave of twigs plastered with mud. Later, bricks became the standard material for walls, but the main structural support was the timbers. Farmhouses of this type still stand in the Bommelerwaard, but this 17th century Nieuwaal home was demolished in 1993. [After J.E. Diltz, 1993]

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By 1316 this small city was granted permission by the Count of Gelre to build a stone wall some three meters high and half a meter thick around itself.³⁹ Salt-Bommel had become a place worth defending.

Bommel's neighbor village to the north, just across the Waal, was a tiny village called *Tuil*. Perhaps one of the oldest villages in the area, Tuil was mentioned in early records that tell us a convent was established at a place called Elten in the year 963, and that German King Otto I granted it the village of Tuil [called *Thuli* in the documents] as a feudal possession.⁴⁰ One of the oldest written records pertaining to Tuil was the AD 1031 edict of Bishop Meinwerk in far-away Paderborn [now Germany]:

...in Testerbant curtem cum tota familia, matrem ecclesiarum in Tuilon, cum quator capellis attinentibus Nijwele, Hellue, Haften, Gamberen cum decimus earum...

With this edict, the bishop assigned income from the tithes of the four chapels in Nieuwaal, Hellouw, Haaften, and Gameraen, along with those of the "mother church" in Tuil, to a new monastery in Paderborn.⁴¹ The population of Tuil had grown during the 10th century as people applied dike technology to create arable land. But during the 13th century, Europe's climate became wetter, and villagers were faced with having to drain more and more rain and seepage water from their properties. In Tuil during the 14th century, increased flooding forced people to elevate their houses in an effort to stay high and dry.⁴²

Meanwhile, just across the river, the burghers of Salt-Bommel set about improving their walled city. No emblem was prized more by medieval cities than the *cathedral*, and though Bommel didn't have a bishop [whose presence would have warranted a cathedral] they set about construction of a cathedral-class church in 1368 on the site of their old village *kerk*. One hundred thirty two years and several fires later, the magnificent St. Maarten's church was finally completed.⁴³ This *Gelderse Gothiek* edifice stands today, a survivor of various wars and natural disasters, as a monument to the aspirations of medieval Bommel.

³⁹ De Groot, pp. 45-46.

⁴⁰ "De Monumenten van Geschiedenis en Kunst in de Provincie Gelderland; B. De Tielerwaard," *Algemeene Landsdrukkerij*, 's Gravenhage, 1946. In 1312, Gijsbert de Voicht and his wife Agnes were granted *in fief* from the count of Gelre, "The hofstad Tuil and Nessche, the hofstad of Rodenburg with the water and the fishery named Nessche".

⁴¹ Post, R.R., "Eigen Kerken en Bisschoppelijk Gezag in het Diocees Utrecht tot de XIIIe Eeuw," 1928, pp. 44-46. Some question has arisen regarding the authenticity of Bishop of Paderborn document's date. However, the same assignment of tithes was reiterated in an AD 1146 Papal document, so the tithing point seems certain. The grouping of these five villages, which today are on opposite sides of the Waal, supports the notion that the Waal was much less of a barrier to travel in 1000 AD.

⁴² Elbers, "Tuil...", pg. 27.

⁴³ De Groot, pp. 63-71.

Salt-Bommel, then, had emerged as a commercial and cultural center by the Middle Ages. It was walled against attack and serviced by the farms of nearby villages - Gameren to the west and Tuil to the north. But during the 14th century the walled city and the open villages alike found themselves still locked in the age-old battle with their traditional enemy: the flood.

Battle Against the Floods

Prosperous farms - indeed life itself along the Waal - depended in the Middle Ages, as it does today, on man's mastery of the river. Initially, people lived on the natural high spots and hoped for the best. When the natural spots were used up, a man would build his own piece of elevated ground, called a *woerd*, and still hope for the best.⁴⁴ But increasing population demanded, and made possible, a more comprehensive solution... the *Dijk*.

Dikes were not new to this part of the world. The Romans had built some, but the decrease in population and collapse of social organization after their departure forestalled serious construction until the Middle Ages, at which time the monasteries were the first to take up the task.⁴⁵ Thin, flexible branches cut from the local willow trees were woven into a mat, then mud and sand were hauled in skins and on sleds to build the earthwork dam.⁴⁶ The process must have been excruciatingly slow, and since the dikes had to fully encompass a region to be effective, a form of administrative organization grew up to control the dikes. We don't know for sure when the first Bommelerwaard dikes were constructed, but it must have been before 1327. That's when the Count of Gelre vested the city of Salt-Bommel with certain rights and responsibilities wherein details of dike inspection and maintenance were described.⁴⁷ Throughout the countryside, each landowner within the *polder* [land protected by dikes] was personally responsible for the maintenance of a section of the dike.⁴⁸ If he failed his responsibility, officials called *dijkgraaf* and *heemraden* would do it for him and levy a fine equal to twice the cost of repair.⁴⁹ The dike system was only as strong as its weakest section, and in the Bommelerwaard the weakest section was in the west, where the two rivers converged. So the eastern people banded together in the 14th century to build a public works called the *Meidijk* which divided the island along a north-to-south line, thus protecting most of the Bommelerwaard but leaving the less-populous western section still subject to flood.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Van Balken, A.C. et al., "De Bommelerwaard, Zien, Kennen en Waarderen," *Natuurwacht, Zaltbommel*, 1979, pg. 25. In other parts of the Netherlands, the term *terp* is used instead of *woerd*.

⁴⁵ Tacitus, *The Annals*, XIII:53.

⁴⁶ Colijn, H., "Of Dutch Ways," 1980, pg. 39.

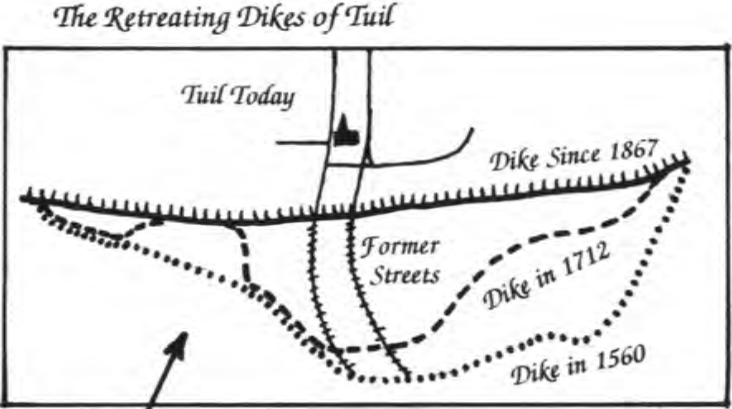
⁴⁷ De Jong, P.J., "Het Oudste Dijkrecht van de Bommelerwaard," *Historische Kring Bommelerwaard*, Zaltbommel, 1971, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁸ De Jong, pg. 13. A farmer in Tuil was responsible for 1 roede [rod] of dike per morgen of polderland he farmed [Elbers, "De Dijken Van Tuil...", pg. 5]. In other villages these numbers were sometimes different.

⁴⁹ De Jong, pg. 13.

⁵⁰ Van Balken, pg. 34.

Dikes of the Bommelerwaard
 Showing Villages & Towns
 ~ as well as ~
 Present and Former Dikes



Chapter 1

Life along the Rivers Waal and Maas depends on a system of dikes to protect the farms, villages, and cities. The meandering line of the dikes - built and rebuilt since the 13th century - hints at the former courses of the rivers. Numerous dike-breaks through the ages have devastated the people, but they have always rebuilt and carried on. [Sources: 19th and 20th century maps, and "The Dikes of Tuil, a Sad Story," by P.F. Elbers, in *Mededelingen van de Historische Kring West-Betuwe*, Aug., 1992, pg. 28].

In 1478, part of the western section protected itself by building another north-south wall, the *Nieuwedijk*, west of Brakel.⁵¹

The dikes were far from perfect. Between 1595 and 1861, some twenty-five dike-breaks in the Bommelerwaard caused floods, with the entire region being inundated in 1757, 1809, and 1861.⁵² On the north side of the Waal, similar disasters struck with regularity, the Tielerswaard being flooded some thirty times between 1300 and 1855.⁵³ Usually, it was the late winter or early spring onrush of snowmelt from the Alps which breached the dikes. Or the pressure of a hard winter's ice against them would rip the levees apart. Each time the dikes broke, there would be a violent rush of water that could scour out a *wiel* [wheel], a sort of circular hole behind the dike where water would later collect to form a pond. Because of this erosion, it was not always possible to repair the dike in its original location in the space of a year. Consequently, a strange-looking patchwork of hasty dike repairs would grow up through the years, as it did near the village of Tuil.⁵⁴ Ironically, the higher the dikes, the more severe, though less frequent, were the floods.⁵⁵ But somehow, the farmers managed to rebuild and carry on in the Bommelerwaard after even the most severe inundations. Not so in all parts of the country: the famous St. Elizabeth's Day flood of 1421 permanently wiped out *sixty-five villages* southeast of Rotterdam!⁵⁶

Adversities of Life

It is hard to say whether the struggle for survival against the floods shaped the character of the people in this part of the world, or whether they were already tough, hardworking, stubborn survivors even before they populated the river delta. Either way, they needed to be determined if they were to survive - and survive they did. We don't have a complete list of all the famines, floods, and plagues that may have affected the people of the Waal, but we do know of some. For example, in the 14th and 15th centuries, bubonic plague may have killed one-third of the world's population living between India and Scandinavia.⁵⁷ The Plague first hit the Netherlands in 1349, with a major outbreak occurring in 1400 through 1401.⁵⁸ And of course, there was the Hundred Year's War. This prolonged struggle [1337-1453] between France and England, which certainly

⁵¹ Moorman van Kappen, pg. 50.

⁵² Van Balken, pg. 41.

⁵³ Elbers, "...Opgraving," pg. 3.

⁵⁴ Elbers, P.F., "De Dijken van Tuil, een Treurige Geschiedenis," in *Mededelingen van de Historische Kring West-Betuwe*, August, 1992, pg. 28.

⁵⁵ Today's dikes are typically 6 m high, whereas those of the Middle Ages were about 3-4 m above the polder [P.F. Elbers, private communication]. Increased river flow and channelization has created the need for larger dikes, which were barely high enough to contain the Waal and the Maas in 1993-1995.

⁵⁶ Colijn, pg. 37.

⁵⁷ Tuchman, B., "A Distant Mirror; The Calamitous 14th Century," Ballantine, New York, 1979, pp. 117-125.

⁵⁸ De Boer, D. et al., "De Middeleeuwen 300 tot 1500," Martinus Nijhoff, Leiden, 1992, pg. 179.

disrupted The Netherlands, was an ill omen for the future of a people who would know no peace for centuries to come, due to the strategic position of their homeland on the north-south route from the northern Dutch provinces to France. These disasters, along with the ever-present floods, led to a measurable drop in population for the villages along the Waal. The villages of Tuil, Haaften, Brakel, Gameren, and Nieuwaal suffered a loss in total number of houses at the turn of the 15th century amounting to 32% on average. Nieuwaal, right next to the van Tuyl's future home, had 74 dwellings in 1382, but only 28 by 1434.⁵⁹ By the time the 15th century drew to a close, there were only five thousand people inhabiting the entire Bommelerwaard.⁶⁰ The 14th century was, in particular, a difficult time for all of Europe and, surely, for the people living along the Waal.⁶¹ As we will see, it is from this turbulent period that we have the first records of people calling themselves *van Tuyl*, among them the ancestors of today's bearers of that name.

Modern Archaeology in the Village of Tuil

Much of what we know about the village of Tuil comes from the work of amateur archaeologist Dr. Peter Elbers. About 1970, while he was working as a cell biologist and Professor at the University of Utrecht, Dr. Elbers and his family joined the exodus of postwar Dutch professionals from the cities of their employment to the countryside villages. He moved to the village of Tuil, bought a run-down farmhouse slated for demolition, moved his family into it, and began a lengthy project of restoration. The result was *Lindenhof*, a beautifully restored and upgraded farmhouse which is now the jewel of that ancient village. About the time he retired from the University in 1983, prof. Elbers' son - who had undertaken a project to build a duck pond next to the house - had unearthed some striking sherds of pottery. Elbers was intrigued. He ended up spending several years excavating his property, collecting and cataloging a number of artifacts, and studying the natural history of the village in detail. The picture that emerged was a remarkable portrait of the *Batavi*, who had lived at the site of *Lindenhof* in Roman times, tending their cattle, and dumping their refuse into drainage ditches surrounding the elevated property. Subsequent studies led him to findings about the dikes of Tuil, about the changing course of the Waal, and about De Nessche - a fishery in the village.⁶² Excavating a part of his garden, Elbers found a lump of lead which he believes was used to weigh down fishnets. A clay jar found at Lindenhof had a neat hole drilled in its side, allowing water to flow in and out. Elbers determined that this pot - produced at the end of the 14th century at Elmpt (a German village in the lower Rhine region) - must have been used by a local fisherman as a submerged storage container for live fish. Clearly, the people who lived at

⁵⁹ Van Schaik, R., "Belasting, Bevolking en Bezit in Gelre en Zutphen 1350-1550," *Verloren*, Hilversum, 1987, pp. 255-277.

⁶⁰ The provincial populations were: Gelre, 135,000; Holland, 268,000; Flanders, 660,000 [de Boer, pg. 177].

⁶¹ Tuchman, B., "A Distant Mirror; The Calamitous 14th Century," Ballantine, New York, 1979, pp. 117-125.

⁶² Elbers, P.F., "Tuil, een Bijzonder Dorp," in *Mededelingen van de Historische Kring West-Betuwe*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1987, and "Een Opgraving in Tuil," in *Mededelingen van de Historische Kring West-Betuwe*, March, 1986. Also: interview with prof. Dr. P. F. Elbers, 8 July, 1993.

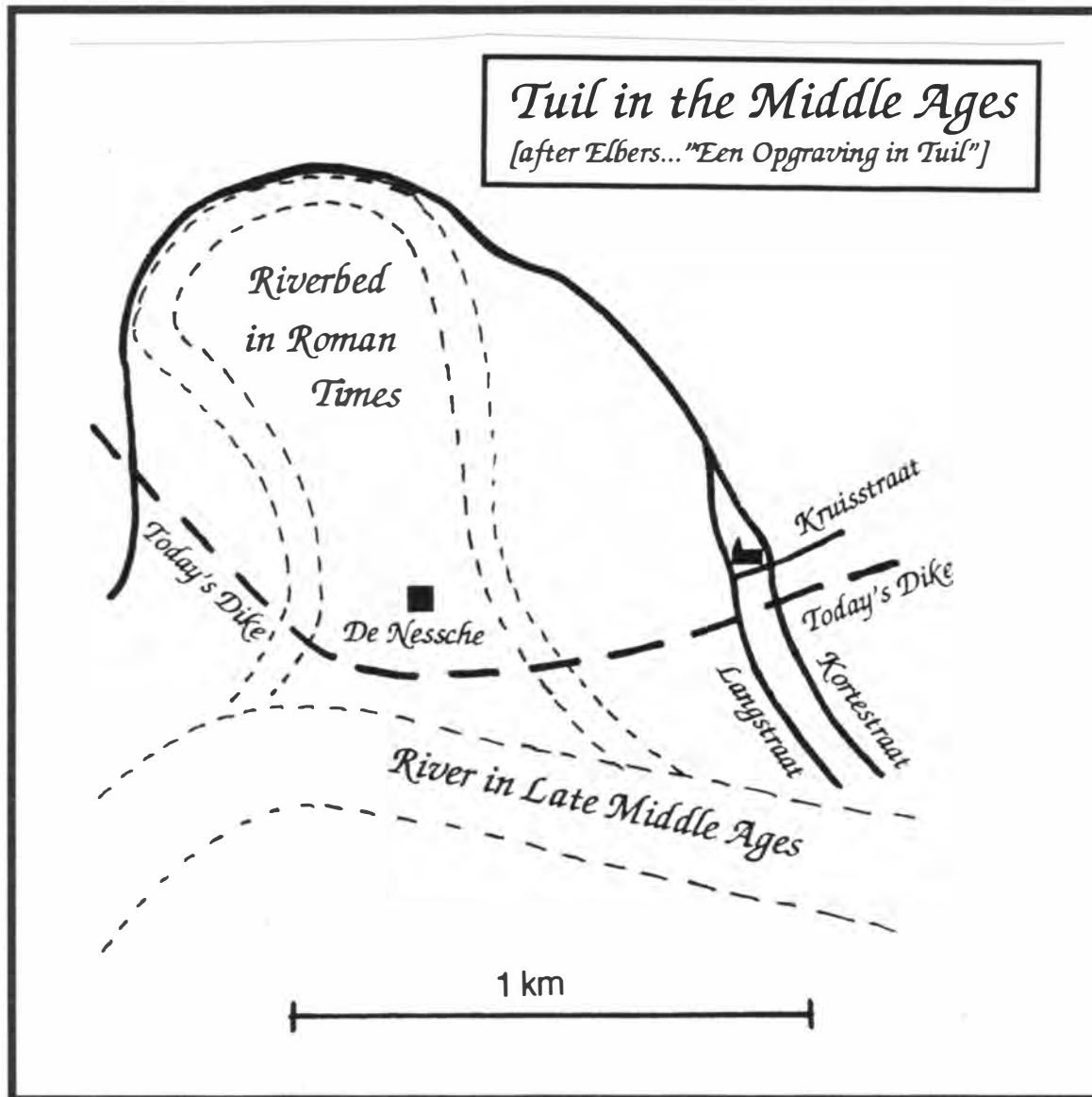
Chapter 1

this site in any era would have exploited the fishing resource to the limit of their technology, and residents of the middle ages would have been no exception. Originally, the Waal had a north-bending meander here, and this river bend probably determined the village's layout, along a north-south axis. Sometime during the middle ages - and possibly because people were building dikes from about 1100 onward - the river Waal straightened itself out, cutting off the meander, which created an oxbow lake in place of the river loop. This, Elbers reports, was the site of *De Nessche* ["The Nose"] - apparently named for the noselike shape of the river bend.

A Connection Between the Van Tuyls and the Village of Tuil?

At the time the earliest public records still in existence were written - the early 14th century - there lived a man named Ghijsbrecht die Voecht van Tuyl, owner of *De Nesse* [De Nessche] at Tuil.⁶³ His fishery was likely then in the pond (it still exists today) created by the rerouting of the Waal, as well as in the river itself. He was not the only *Van Tuyl* in the area at that time, nor was he the only person in the region styling himself *Van Tuyl*. These early Van Tuyls may or may not have been related to one another (though in the small, static villages of the time it must have been common for most people to be relatives - legitimate or otherwise). Just who were they? Where did they fit into society? What is their relation, if any, to today's bearers of the name *Van Tuyl*? To understand this, we need to learn a bit about the history of the Middle Ages, the Feudal System and the *Duchy of Gelre*.

⁶³ Van Doornick, P.N. and Van Veen, J.S., "Acten betreffende Gelre en Zutphen 1107 - 1415," Haarlem, 1908, pg. 179.



Today, the village of Tuil lies - oddly - at right angles to the town dike. The reason? Up until the 12th or 13th century, the River Waal meandered through this delta region, and Tuil was built along the river bend. When people began building dikes in the middle ages, the river was forced into a new, straighter flow pattern. In the 19th century - after centuries of dike breaks at Tuil, a new dike was built which truncated the original village as shown.

The family *Van Tuyl* takes its name from this village. One of the earliest village residents of that name we know of was Ghijsbrecht de Voecht van Tuyl and his wife Agnes, who owned the *hofstad in Tuil and the fishery De Nessche* in 1322, but what connection, if any, they had to the family Van Tuyl which settled at the same time along the River *Linge* is unknown. It is these settlers along the *Linge* which became the progenitors of today's Van Tuyls of the Bommelerwaard and America

Update: Twenty-first century research has determined that Ghisbrecht de Voecht van Tuyl testified in 1333 that he was the nephew of one *Heer Willem van Tuyl*, and as a result, we now believe that Willem van Tuyl, born about 1230 C.E., is the earliest known member of the family van Tuyl. [See: Dutch Genealogy, pg. 485].