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From “Montecarlisation” to “Medicalisation” – the Case of Bad Homburg vor der Höhe

Introduction

Bad Homburg, situated in the surroundings of Frankfurt/Main was the residency of the Landgraves of Hesse-Homburg, an appanaged branch of the Landgraviate of Hesse-Darmstadt. It was a small medieval town until Friedrich II of Hesse-Homburg, better known as the Prince of Homburg (of Heinrich von Kleist), tried to increase his income by enlarging its population through introducing settlements of Huguenot refugees at the end of the 17th century. The prince was a product of his time, a time characterised by a building boom, the so called “Bauwurm”. Consequently, under his rule not only was a modern baroque palace built, but the town also began to expand in a planned way. Further to these expansions, he started the commercial exploitation of the rediscovered salt springs in the surroundings of the town, but only for the production of salt.¹ Over one and a half centuries the town expanded in two directions and in two different ways: To the west, beginning at the palace, a spacious garden landscape started to stretch far into the suburbs and up the slopes of the Taunus Mountains; in the east the geometrically planned “new town” emerged.²

Thus the focus lays on Bad Homburg’s development from a small residential area to a fashionable spa town with regard to the economic, social and medical aspects: the economic requirements to develop as a spa town, the social groups which could be reached, and the therapeutic applications offered – in short, the development from a gambling town to an approved, therapeutic spa.

The early years

Rather late in comparison with other spa towns, and not before the second half of the 1830s, Homburg started its “spa-career”. During this period, the medical value of the salt water springs was discovered and proven. It was not until the 1840s that the Landgrave engaged French entrepreneurs for public gambling as well as for running the spa activities in Bad Hom-

- 1 Holger Th. GRÄF, Landgraf Friedrich II. Der Prinz von Homburg (Erfurt 2007), 81–105; Barbara DÖLEMEYER, Fragmentarische Staatlichkeit. Die Landgrafschaft Hessen-Homburg im Alten Reich und im Deutschen Bund, in: Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte und Landeskunde zu Bad Homburg vor der Höhe 44 (1995), 5–64; Christian OTTERSACH, Die Friedrichsburg in Bad Homburg. Denkmal eines ruhmbedeckten Feldherrn und politisches Statement, in: Aus dem Stadtarchiv 2008/2009 (2009), 37–64.
- 2 Andrea PÜHRINGER, Bad Homburg vor der Höhe (= Hessischer Städteatlas, Lieferung 3,1, Marburg 2012), 13–20, 34–36.

burg. In the short period between 1841 and 1871, the number of buildings in the town increased by a third. However, these successful years seemed to end in 1866, when the Prussians occupied the territory and finally closed the casino in 1872.³

“By – there is no denying – a somewhat artificial manoeuvre Homburg was allowed to be pushed into the list of luxurious spa-towns. However, in the long run it will and can only flourish if we, and especially Homburg itself, get used to the idea of the whole town with the surrounding villages as a large hospital; as a place, where in winter and summer the sick try to recover; as a place, where the government, the spa corporation, and the physicians take a high level of moral responsibility towards the sick persons, their families and their medical colleagues.”⁴

This remarkable quotation from Dr Wilhelm Deetz⁵, a spa physician of Homburg, and from 1858 to 1872 Public Health Officer and in this position also doctor of wells and cure, comes from his Promemoria of 1859 and shows the struggle in which Homburg was trapped; a small town surrounded by a small territory unable to maintain its rule, so the Landgraves were always forced to take on foreign military duties in order to sustain their dynasty. When the salt springs were rediscovered in the early 1800s, Landgrave Friedrich V Ludwig was interested in the new therapeutic uses for the springs and in 1810 had a well sunk at the first spring, an acidic mineral water, the later “Ludwigsbrunnen”.⁶ Not until 1836, when the third spring called “Elisabethenbrunnen” was analysed by the famous chemist and professor at the University of Gießen, Justus Liebig (1803–1873), did the Homburg success story experience its take off. The first travel guides were published, in which Homburg advertised its healthy climate, attractive surroundings, and its salt springs. Private citizens also opened bathhouses in their residential homes as private initiatives, where they offered steam and sweat baths. Nevertheless in these early times the number of guests increased only slowly – in 1839 no more than 829 spa guests visited Homburg.

However, the town benefited from another development: In 1838 the French emperor Louis-Philippe had banned gambling, so a lot of French casino entrepreneurs appeared at German spas. The French twin brothers Louis and François Blanc went to Luxembourg, where Landgrave Ludwig Wilhelm was governor of the fortress. Suffering from a chronic lack of money, Ludwig Wilhelm tried to support the first small experiments with spa cures in Homburg, not only by sinking wells but also by erecting a representative spa building, where games of risk were offered. His own financial opportunities were limited, so the first spa building was the

3 Heinz GROSCHE, *Geschichte der Stadt Bad Homburg vor der Höhe*, Bd. 3: Die Kaiserzeit (Frankfurt/Main 1986), 160–170; Egon Caesar Conte CORTI, *Der Zauberer von Homburg und Monte Carlo* (Frankfurt 1951), 233–244.

4 Cited and translated from Heinrich JACOBI, *Zur Geschichte der Homburger Mineralquellen*. Publikation zur Hundertjahrfeier des Heilbades Homburg (= Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte und Landeskunde zu Bad Homburg vor der Höhe 18, Bad Homburg v. d. H. 1935), 233.

5 Deetz requested not only the official prohibition of gambling, but also the institution of a bath for poor (“Armenbad”) – he failed in both concerns. Ulrich HUMMEL, *Dr. Wilhelm Deetz – Kreisphysikus und Badearzt von Homburg v. d. H.*, in: *Alt Homburg* 34 (1991), 4–8; GROSCHE, *Geschichte*, wie Anm. 3, 148–150.

6 Peter LINGENS, *Zur Frühgeschichte der Homburger Quellen und Brunnen*. Auffindung, Architektur, Andenkengrafik, in: *Homburg wird Bad! Geschichte(n) vom Kurwesen und Bäderarchitektur*. Eine Ausstellung des Museums im Gotischen Haus Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe (Bad Homburg v. d. H. 2012), 6–37, here 8–14.

so-called “Brunnensälchen”, a really small scale attempt.⁷ He had met the brothers Blanc in Luxembourg and in 1840 a contract was concluded, which obligated the Blancs not only to erect a representative spa building, but also to use and conserve the existing wells and sink new ones. So in 1841 the “Kaiser-” and the “Stahlbrunnen” were motivated to continue. The new spa building of 1841–1843 was a magnificent luxurious building and contained a restaurant, theatre, concert hall – and of course the casino.⁸ The Landgrave, citizens and the Blancs had the same objectives and ambitions – to rival the most famous spas at Baden-Baden or Wiesbaden – and the investment level was adequate to achieve their claim. Moreover, achieving their ambitions presented a further challenge because Homburg was located in a traditional and very competitive spa area, with several older spas nearby: in addition to the aforementioned, there were also the “Rhein-spas” at Bad Ems, Bad Soden/Ts., Bad Schwalbach, Schlangenbad and Bad Nauheim. It was in this competitive market that Homburg was hoping to succeed.⁹

Ungrudgingly, we have to admit that the brothers Blanc were early marketing specialists:¹⁰ They used their contacts in France, where they started to look for potential clients. In 1847 a French physician emphasised the curativeness of the springs in a brochure comprising 113 pages. Illustrated leaflets recommended not only the springs, but also the surroundings like the Taunus, with sports and hunting in the forests nearby. Advertisements were published in the most popular newspapers in France, Germany, and Great Britain: In Paris alone two press agents managed the newspaper advertisements.¹¹ And they succeeded: The audience was both exclusive and international and Homburg became a boomtown.

The leading landscape architect Peter Josef Lenné (1789–1866) laid out the spa gardens in 1854/55; these gardens were then enlarged in the 1860s. At first, the spa gardens served as an embellishment of the spa building, but later they were extended to the wells and featured therapeutic functions.¹² This development comprised of not only the spa gardens and the neighbouring Hardtwald, but also the Landgravian gardens, which gave way to the adjoining forests and extended to the Taunus and later on to the Saalburg, all of which were frequented by the spa guests.¹³

7 JACOBI, *Geschichte*, wie Anm. 4, 180–181.

8 LINGENS, *Frühgeschichte*, wie Anm. 6, 18–20, 25–28. The contract of 1840 is published in: JACOBI, *Geschichte*, wie Anm. 4, 188–191.

9 For the rivalry of the different spa-towns see Burkhard FUHS, *Mondäne Orte einer vornehmen Gesellschaft. Kultur und Geschichte der Kurstädte 1700–1900*, unveröffentlichte phil. Dissertation (Universität Marburg 1990), 258, 292; Ferdinand HEYL, *Die Taunusbäder*, in: *Der Salon für Kunst, Literatur und Gesellschaft* 10 (1872), 243–256; Andrea PÜHRINGER, *Zwei ungleiche „Schwestern“? Die Kurstädte Bad Homburg vor der Höhe und Bad Nauheim*, in: Alexander Jendorff / Andrea Pühringer, Hg., *Pars pro toto. Historische Miniaturen zum 75. Geburtstag von Heide Wunder (Neustadt/Aisch 2014)*, 479–497. Bad Nauheim had its take-off a bit later, but became a direct rival later on.

10 And ungrudgingly we have to admit, that the brothers Blanc succeeded also because they changed the rules of gambling. So in short term they sacrificed profits in favour of turnover – but this fact leads too far from this context. See CORTI, *Zauberer*, wie Anm. 3, 48.

11 CORTI, *Zauberer*, wie Anm. 3, 91–92. In a letter to his intimate Philipp Trittler Blanc wrote: “I make propaganda as much as possible, but only with persons of excellence.” Ebd., 101.

12 Roswitha MATTAUSCH-SCHIRMBECK, „Der Park ist großartig“. 150 Jahre Lenné’scher Kurpark in Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe, in: *Jahrbuch Hochtaunuskreis* 13 (2005), 77–95.

13 *Parkpflegewerk zur Landgräflichen Gartenlandschaft Bad Homburg*, 6 Bde., (Bad Homburg 2004–2014).

Simultaneous to the development of the gardens, numerous new buildings like privately owned hotels, spa villas, guest houses and also a new spa building were built.¹⁴ More and more people benefitted from the so-called “Spielbad”, the combination of spa and casino. However, the bathing facilities were provisional arrangements for a long period: Until 1837 only four private bathhouses existed, and it wasn’t until 1858 that the gas bath, where carbon dioxide was used for bathing therapy, and the public bath – both in the spa gardens – opened.¹⁵ At the beginning of the spa-period there was also the topographic problem that the springs and wells lay far away from the city in a neighbouring village, and it was only when the spa gardens were planned, that the village was incorporated into the spring area.¹⁶

For the first time in 1856, more than 10,000 guests visited Homburg; in 1865 this figure rose to over 12,000.¹⁷ Jointly responsible for this increase was the connection of Homburg with the international railway lines. The foundation of its own railway company – financed mostly by shares of the spa corporation – was inevitable and Homburg now easy to reach.¹⁸ So until 1871 the situation was contrary to the quotation of Dr Deetz, mentioned at the beginning – but Homburg expanded anyway, and was certainly never seen as a hospital – at least by itself or its citizens.

In 1866 Homburg came under the control of the avowed opponent of gambling, Prussia, and the end of the main source of municipal income was only a matter of time.¹⁹ The brothers Blanc – always ahead of their times – had just begun to search for other opportunities to launch casinos in the 1850s. In 1863 François Blanc took over the casino at Monte Carlo, which became his greatest success; a fact that Homburg used in its advertising slogan after World War II, when the casino reopened: “Bad Homburg – Mother of Monte Carlo.”²⁰ To this day, a specific percentage of the casino’s profits still goes to the municipality of Bad Homburg.

The consolidation of cure and spa

In 1872, in the year the Prussians closed the casino, the worst fears of communal decline were not realised. In the last two years of gambling the number of guests had nearly doubled, therefore it is not surprising that the numbers now contracted, but levelled off at around nine to ten thousand guests a year.²¹ Another reason for the decline was the German-French War of 1870/71, which kept French guests. Most of the guests now came from North America and the British Empire, followed by Russian nobility and bourgeoisie from the 1890s onwards. This

14 PÜHRINGER, Bad Homburg, wie Anm. 2, 16–18.

15 JACOBI, Geschichte, wie Anm. 4, 234–236.

16 PÜHRINGER, Bad Homburg, wie Anm. 2, 16–18.

17 Stadtarchiv Bad Homburg, Kurlisten 1834–1922.

18 GROSCHE, Geschichte, wie Anm. 3, 150–153; Walter SÖHNLEIN, Bad Homburg vor der Höhe. 150 Jahre öffentlicher Verkehr und Stadtstruktur (= Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte und Landeskunde zu Bad Homburg vor der Höhe 33, Bad Homburg v. d. H. 1978), 17–20.

19 Ebd., 47–50.

20 Stadtarchiv Bad Homburg, Sammlung S O4.

21 Stadtarchiv Bad Homburg, Kurlisten 1834–1922.

development is clearly illustrated by the building of a new synagogue in 1864/66, followed by an English church in 1868 and finally a Russian church in 1899.²²

Despite the dominance of the casino until 1872, the state of the art cure and spa facilities had developed at the same time – covertly, it seemed. Apart from the wells, covered walks, pump rooms, lobby hall, orangery and other facilities, which were managed by François Blanc and fell under the responsibility of the spa corporation, there were always physicians, pharmacists and natural scientists engaged in the newest forms of balneological treatments and balneotherapy as medical treatments.²³

Published in 1867 in German then six years later in English, was the book by John Edward Friedlieb, Privy Sanitary Councillor to the King of Prussia and Physician of the Springs: “The watering-place at Homburg with indications for the use of its Ferro-Saline acidulated waters.”²⁴ He categorised the internal and external use of the waters according to the respective spring: gargling, bathing, gas-baths, inhaling and enemas. As therapeutic institutions apart from the cure, he mentioned two hydropathic establishments, one operating in association with a gymnastic-orthopedic institute. The cures themselves encompassed a wide range of medical symptoms: maladies of the mucous membranes (respiratory, digestive, urological and genital organs), abdominal viscera (liver, spleen, kidneys and scrofulous affections), skin, haematopoiesis (venous Plethora, haemorrhoids, arthritis), nerves (neurosis, neuralgia, and – unsurprising considering the time – hyperaesthesia like hysteria and hypochondria), anomalies of nutrition (polysarcia, morbid corpulence). But he also admitted that the mineral content of the water was over- or under-estimated in comparison to springs of other spa-towns. The categorisation also covered detailed dietary instructions and treatment regimes.

Hence, this was the initial state of the resort at the end of the casino-era. On the other hand in this context, one should not forget that until 1872 Blanc was also responsible for supporting the development of the spa facilities, even if this support seemed inappropriate to some people.²⁵ Next, other therapeutic applications were offered and a new building constructed: the whey house. Whey cures had already been introduced around 1853, but in 1882 the new whey house opened, with coffee house and stables and surrounded by a rose garden, which conveyed privacy and silence. A dairyman from Appenzell was also employed at this time.²⁶ The bath cures were optimised in the new Kaiser Wilhelm’s Bad, built between 1887 and 1890, where

22 GROSCHKE, *Geschichte*, wie Anm. 3, 112–120, 231–234; Siegfried R. C. T. ENDERS, Kultbauten ausländischer Gäste in europäischen Kur- und Badestädten – ein vernachlässigtes Erbe?, in: Volker Eidloth, Hg., *Europäische Kurstädte und Modebäder des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Icomos. Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees (= Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, Arbeitshefte 24, Stuttgart 2012), 201–210, here 203–204, 206–207; Angelika BAEUMERTH, „Es wimmelt von Fremden aller Nationen“. Ansichtspostkarten aus Homburg 1888–1918 (Marburg 1984), 218.

23 JACOBI, *Geschichte*, wie Anm. 4, 187–228; J. SCHAEFFER, *Bad Homburg (vor der Höhe) und seine Umgebungen* (Darmstadt 1864), 44–46, 49–51.

24 John Edward (i. e. Johann Eduard) FRIEDLIEB, *The Watering-place of Homburg v. d. Höhe with Indications for the Use of its Ferro-Saline Acidulated Waters* (Homburg 1873). But it was not the earliest study, published in English. Already in 1845 F. H. PRYTHERCH, *Observations on the Mineral Waters of Homburg*, Resident Physician, was published, and had its second edition in 1846, and its third in 1853.

25 JACOBI, *Geschichte*, wie Anm. 4, 203–205; CORTI, *Zauberer*, wie Anm. 3, 135.

26 Frauke QUURCK, *Trinken, Baden und Spazieren. Kuranwendungen in Homburg*, in: *Homburg wird Bad! Geschichte(n) vom Kurwesen und Bäderarchitektur. Eine Ausstellung des Museums im Gotischen Haus Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe* (Bad Homburg v. d. H. 2012), 72–95, here 81–86.

various therapeutic facilities such as mud baths, peat baths, mineral water baths and showers, inhaling and massages were offered.²⁷

Other spa facilities developed in accordance with the medical progress; when new therapeutic methods became popular, such as medical gymnastics in the “Therapeuticum” in the old “Brunnensälchen”, also called “Zander Institute” after the founder of the apparatus gymnastics, or the electromagnetic institute. Apart from these developments, a hydrotherapy institution offering cold water treatments and an institute for air- and sunbathing opened.²⁸ However, the turn of the century was also the period of the sanatoriums. The earliest was founded by Dr Lommel in 1885, followed by Dr Pariser’s “Sanatorium Clara Emilia” in 1900, which specialised in the treatment of intestinal conditions as well as eating and metabolism disorders.²⁹ From 1904, Pariser developed the so-called Homburg diet, a diet accompanied by spa and drinking cures. It was also due to Pariser that the Brussels biscuits’ industry developed in Homburg and the villages nearby.³⁰ In 1911 the Dr Baumstark Sanatorium and the Taunus Sanatorium of Dr Goldschmidt were founded. The latter mainly focused on Jewish spa guests and had its own synagogue. In 1912 Dr Rosenthal also extended his guesthouse into a Sanatorium.³¹

Another reason for the prosperity in the last decades of the 19th century, were dynastic associations; therefore, this period up to 1914 is often called the era of the “princely bath” or “imperial bath” in Homburg. The wife of Landgrave Friedrich IV Joseph was Elizabeth, the daughter of King George III. She was very popular and interested in architecture and landscape gardening. She was responsible for the implementation of the English landscape garden and the construction of the Gothic House, a hunting castle in the Gothic Revival style of Strawberry Hill. Although she had died in 1840, English visitors were still very interested in her life and her personal circumstances. It was her ideas that led to the development for the “therapeutic landscape” of the Landgravian gardens which dominated Homburg’s expansion to the west.³² Also the Prince of Wales, son to be King Edward VII, a well-known bon-vivant, frequently visited Homburg in his youth. It was Edward who popularised the famous Homburg hat. And last but not least, Homburg became one of the favoured summer resorts of Emperor Wilhelm II. He also had English ancestors; his mother Victoria, better known as “Kaiserin Friedrich”, was the daughter of Queen Victoria.³³ Consequently until World War I, Homburg

27 Ruxandra-Maria JOTZU, Eine Inszenierung des Badens. Das Kaiser-Wilhelms-Bad, in: Homburg wird Bad! Geschichte(n) vom Kurwesen und Bäderarchitektur. Eine Ausstellung des Museums im Gotischen Haus Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe (Bad Homburg v. d. H. 2012), 96–105; Barbara DÖLEMEYER, Louis Jacobi und seine Zeit. Homburger Architekt und Bürger, Wiedererbauer der Saalburg (= Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte und Landeskunde Bad Homburg vor der Höhe 59, Bad Homburg v. d. H. 2010), 98–101.

28 PÜHRINGER, Bad Homburg, wie Anm. 2, 18, 34.

29 GROSCHE, Geschichte, wie Anm. 3, 201–202.

30 Andrea PÜHRINGER, Rauchende Schlote in der Kurstadt – Industrie, Industrialisierung und Kurwesen in Bad Homburg, in: Aus dem Stadtarchiv 2012/2013 (2014), 97–125, here 106.

31 GROSCHE, Geschichte, wie Anm. 3, 201–202; PÜHRINGER, Bad Homburg, wie Anm. 2, 18.

32 For Landgräfin Elizabeth see „Ich schreibe, lese und male ohne Unterlaß ...“. Elizabeth, englische Prinzessin und Landgräfin von Hessen-Homburg (1770–1840) als Künstlerin und Sammlerin (Bad Homburg v. d. H. 1995); for the Gothic House see Beate DATZKOW, Das Gotische Haus im Großen Tannenwald zu Bad Homburg vor der Höhe (= Aus dem Stadtarchiv, Sonderband 2005, Bad Homburg 2005).

33 Josef KALTENHÄUSER, Taunusrandstädte im Frankfurter Raum. Funktion, Struktur und Bild der Städte Bad Homburg, Oberursel, Kronberg und Königstein (= Rhein-mainische Forschungen 43, Frankfurt/Main 1955), 134; GROSCHE, Geschichte, wie Anm. 3, 255–259, 261–262.

enjoyed a high share of royal visitors and these visitors also attracted a lot of international royalty and higher nobility. Thus the “standard” of up-market visitors was sustained.

Besides the spa facilities, the growing resort required new leisure activities. Due to the British influence, new sports were introduced and gained a crucial role for the spa’s social life. Hence in 1874, Tennis was played in Homburg for the first time on the European continent and in 1876 the first tennis club was established, followed by a bicycle club in 1886.³⁴ In 1889, a golf course was constructed and ten years later the Golf Club was founded. In point of fact, the Prince of Wales became the club’s honorary president³⁵ and in 2013, Queen Elizabeth II accepted the attribute: Royal Golf Club. These sports increasingly replaced traditional noble amusements like hunting and established its modern continuance in car racings such as the Gordon Bennett Cup in 1904 and the Imperial Award Race in 1907.³⁶

Even though the glamorous, noble spa era, and most of the European monarchies were terminated abruptly by World War I, spa life continued – but in a different way. The upper classes were replaced by social insurance clients; the grand hotels closed and were replaced by large hospitals, which also changed the appearance of the town. This type of re-development was typical for spa towns in the 20th century, Homburg, however, managed to hold on to its high standards and maintained its quality of life.³⁷ The area surrounding the cure garden, high up in the Hardtwald and the Taunus, as well as the areas along the Landgravian gardens, developed as summer resorts and as peaceful residential areas.

Summary

At the beginning of its spa career, Bad Homburg needed the economic impact of gambling as a requirement for creating a satisfactory spa environment addressing the needs of the sophisticated spa guests Homburg wanted to attract. At the end of the casino era, the springs’ reputation, combined with imperial ties to the British royal family, sustained the numbers of upper-class and wealthy visitors until World War I.

At the turn of the 19th century Bad Homburg became also a preferred residential area, noting the increasing significance of natural landscapes in contrast to the neighbouring economic boom region of Rhein-Main. Now the town is situated in the region of Germany with the highest density of millionaires. Looking at Homburg today we have to concede it was enabled to reinvent itself again and again – holding onto the spa concept, but also accepting its changes.

34 Kurpark Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe. Geschichte, Gestaltung, Botanik (Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe 1988), 60; Bad Homburg vor der Höhe 782–1982. Bilder und Dokumente aus 1200 Jahren. Ausstellung des Stadtarchivs zur 1200-Jahrfeier der Stadt Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe (Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe 1982), 18, 105.

35 Klaus Dieter METZ, Homburgs denkwürdige Sporttage. Ein sportgeschichtlicher Streifzug von der Saalburg zur Sandelmühle, in: Aus dem Stadtarchiv (2009/2010), 127–155, here 135–140.

36 GROSCHKE, Geschichte, wie Anm. 3, 263–265, 267–269.

37 KALTENHÄUSER, Taunusrandstädte, wie Anm. 33, 154–157, 239–242; PÜHRINGER, Schwestern, wie Anm. 9, 496.

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