Contents

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The cosmopolitan city as the city of horsemen[1]

The Union Klub Berlin from 1867 to 1914: a pioneer of elite change?

Recast as the capital of the new German Empire, Berlin's magnetic power grew rapidly from 1871 on. People flocked into the city from all over. During the Imperial Era, the resident population grew from around 830,000 (1871) to 3.5 million (1910). Thus, in just a few decades, it had come to equal that of London, and to outstrip that of Paris. Berlin rose into the illustrious circle of the great European metropolises, and soon celebrated itself as a "cosmopolitan city." However, compared to Paris and London, this late, open and almost sprawling capital still lacked a minimum of inner unity, not least of all among the old and the new: the well-established elites on the one hand and the numerous elite groups that had newly joined urban society on the other. However, probing deeper into the everyday lifeworlds of selected elite groups in the city, and the spaces they created to meet and interact, reveals that numerous projects to bring these groups together were underway.

The term of a "Tout Berlin," borrowed from Paris, which was soon on everyone's lips, certainly anticipated the processes of new elite formation, but it also expressed a fundamental expectation of the urban public: Berliners demanded a new, "better society" of the new imperial capital, one that would set an example and provide orientation, promote integration and represent the unity of the country beyond the rigid court society. Kaiser Wilhelm II recognized this, and with the creation of new places for these partial elites to meet – spatially removed from the court – he tried to promote these developments, but with limited success. In the long run, elite projects that grew out of society proved to be more successful and effective – projects in which old and new elites adopted the goals of the reform state under the symbolic protectorate of the monarch. These groups established arenas of new elite association and socialization by means of joint organizational structures and "working" so-

1 Beaulieu, *Das Leistungspferd* (chapter: Die einmalige Reiterstadt Berlin), 102ff. This study uses the following expert literature on horse racing: Ende, *Berliner Pferderennsport*; Krüger, *Hoppegarten*; Pfaender, *50 Jahre Union-Klub*; *Id.*, *100 Jahre Berliner Rennsport* (including the initiative to found the club of 1866, p. 45); Vom Union-Klub, Hoppegarten, das Paradefeld des deutschen Vollbluts; Ende, 100 Jahre Rennbahn Karlshorst. Karl Boldt, Berlin, kindly granted me access to: Union-Club 1873 (list of members, 17 pages); N.N., Das Jubiläum des Union-Klubs; N.N., Der Union-Klub; N.N., *Verein für Hindernis-Rennen, 1881–1906*; Beaulieu, *1867–1967. 100 Jahre Union-Klub, Berlin.* At the Fürstliches Archiv zu Corvey (Private Angelegenheiten, Sportliche Vereine und Gesellschaften, Nr. 35: Der Jockey-Club, later Union-Club, vol. 1), I analyzed: Carl Louis Joseph Adolph Freiherr von Thielmann – Nachruf, *Der Sporn* 22 Feb. 1887: 53–57; N.N., *Denkschrift zum fünfundzwanzigjährigen Bestehen des Union-Clubs 1867–1892* (list of members); and N.N., *Die Statuten des Union-Clubs.*

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ciability,[2] creating mutual trust, closeness, shared habitus and a new awareness of rapport. The history of the Union Klub, founded in Berlin in 1867, with predecessors dating back to the 1820s, is an illuminating example of these developments.

These kinds of associations of horsemen were modelled on the Jockey Clubs of London and Paris, which the publics of these countries generally perceived as the "better societies" of the capital cities, also representing the country as a whole.[3] Prussia-Germany, however, at that time not only lacked such an integrated composite elite, but also (apart from the few salons and associations that deliberately brought together aristocrats and the bourgeoisie) the corresponding urban meeting spaces. Arenas were needed that enabled the "work" of old and new elites to create a new society and – in the sense of Foucault's dispositif – actively promoted and shaped this process through the way they were conceived.

This chapter describes the process by which the Union Klub and its predecessors promoted new elite formation in Berlin and its rural surroundings "by means of the thoroughbred horse." Here, important segments of the high nobility, the wealthy estate and military nobility and the bourgeoisie developed surprisingly far-reaching and close relationships in mutual everyday cultural approximation. Within this process, the study focuses on the Berlin bourgeoisie and on the three most important stages of the elite formation organized here: (1) the construction of the arena, (2) its actors and their cultural practices, and (3) the results of this "working" elite sociability based on the exchange of passions, attitudes and knowledge.

Horsemanship: the construction of an arena

Cavalier journeys of Mecklenburg aristocrats brought the already highly developed equestrian sport with thoroughbred horses from England to Prussia-Germany around 1800, where it quickly gained ground, sparking an "Anglomania" among the Eastern Elbe nobility. The basis of this success was the integration of the new horse passion into three central political goals of the post-Napoleonic Prussian reform state: (1) increasing the productivity of post-feudal agriculture through "rational" farm management, (2) improving the strength of the military, especially the cavalry, which had been defeated several times since 1806, using English and French models, and (3) expanding the reservoir of new elite recruitment following the example of the significantly more performance- and wealth-oriented composite elite of England.

The model of a free, open agricultural club system in which landowners, farmers, senior civil servants and officers worked together in an agrarian-innovative way, supported by the state (in theory and practice), provided the framework for the plan-

2 Thomas Nipperdey coined this term in 1976 in his work on the Enlightenment activities of associations around 1800. Cf. Nipperdey, Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland, 191.

3 Cf. Erbe, Der Jockey Club als gesellschaftlicher Mittelpunkt der Pariser Dandys.

ned elite making. In the emerging equestrian sport of Prussia, the common passion of breeders, cavalry officers and other owners of horses was to develop rational horse breeding and horse training, but they also saw the horse as a source of extraordinarily high kinetic energy. In contrast to England, where the civilian motives of competition, gambling, profit, taste building, entertainment and idleness shaped these sporting events, equestrian sport in Prussia-Germany from the very beginning followed a general welfare claim prescribed by the reform state. Only gradually were "English" motifs and functions added to this essentially state-functional character of horsemanship.

After the first horse races in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (in the Baltic seaside resort of Doberan/Heiligendamm) in 1820, the *Verein für Pferdezucht und Pferdedressur* [Association for Horse Breeding and Horse Dressage] was founded in Berlin in 1828, which, however, mainly organized horse races: "flat races," which were about speed, and "races on the open track" (with and without obstacles), which were more about the horses' endurance and flexible movement in "difficult terrain."[4] With the founding of this club, the equestrian sport changed from the simple race of certain "gentlemen" who only rode for the sum of their own bets to a system based on the English model – a development traced by the club's statutes, which were repeatedly amended over time. They included: (1) formally chosen membership, club management and administrative organization, (2) a clear definition of goals, methods (race protocols, stud book) and categories of horse breeding (age, nationality, pedigree, weight, and the like of the race horses), (3) the regulation of the access of riders to the races ("signature races"), the number of races, the execution, control and judicial decision and/or sanctioning of the race procedure and, last but not least, (4) the regulation of bets and the premiums for the winner (which rose continuously through subsidies from the King and the Minister for Agriculture). Even a first Code of Honor was already under way.[5]

Parallel to this, similar horse racing clubs were established in the other regions of Prussia-Germany. The Berlin club, which was composed mainly of "Herrenreiter" (noble horse owners from Mecklenburg, Lower Saxony and Silesia), therefore initiated the foundation of the first umbrella organization in 1840: the *Norddeutscher Jockey-Club* [North German Jockey Club]. However, this organization lacked the power to unify the regional clubs because equestrian sport was under attack early on. It was still largely dominated by the nobility and contributed little "of use" to agriculture. This criticism intensified again shortly before and after the Revolution of 1848. Nothing more aptly expresses the bad conscience of club members than the motto in its coat of arms from 1828: *Pro Republica Est Dum Ludere Videmur.*

4 On the following: Mittler, *Verein für Pferdzucht und Pferdedressur* and *Dreizehnter Jahresbericht des Vereins für Pferdezucht und Pferdedressur 1841.*

5 According to the annual report of 1841 (see note 4), a certain Mr. Lichtwald and a certain Mr. Hart were excluded from participating in races because they were suspected of having wrongly "labeled" their horses.

The foundation of the Union Klub Berlin in 1867 as a new umbrella organization was a breakthrough for equestrian sport in Prussia-Germany. Again, the initiative came from Berlin because the club cooperated with the Berlin association of 1828 and incorporated the umbrella association of 1840. With the construction of the railway, the industrial upswing and the rapid expansion of the banking system, wealth grew and with it the need for representation among the aristocracy and grande bourgeoisie; hence their competition for social prestige and "splendor." Bismarck's national turn, the three successful Wars of German Unification, the foundation of the Reich in 1871 and the vision of a unified, strong, imperial nation state newly revitalized the equestrian movement. Despite the stagnation of the 1850s and 1860s, in Germany shortly before 1867 many individual horse racing clubs still coexisted – with their own rules, racing and breeding concepts.[6] The founders of the Union Klub now interpreted, propagated and organized these activities at the national level to support Bismarck's unification policy.

The new imperial capital was also a magnet for immigrants. These groups were curious and they had a desire for entertainment as well as a passion for betting, which the newly emerging guild of sports and social reporters for the magazine press catered to and stimulated. Thus, horse races in Berlin and elsewhere became spectacular mass events. Around these races, a socially and politically relevant public developed. In this context, the horse experienced its last great renaissance as a riding and carriage horse, as a racer and trotter.[7] Berlin, which developed into the center of German equestrian sport within four decades, only had 176 riding horses and 354 "luxury horses" in 1867 – the year of the Union Klub's founding. In 1910, the stables of the racetracks and stud farms in the city and its surroundings alone counted more than 1,500 English thoroughbred horses. And in the villa districts, especially in the elegant Tiergarten neighborhood, the sheds behind the houses as well as the stables and riding halls of the nearby "Tattersall" proved that "horse fever" now held sway over the "better", upper-class social circles of Berlin. On the representative public bridle paths and carriage trails, members of the court and the military as well as rich Tiergarten dwellers met on their daily "morning rides." By way of the Kurfürstendamm and the Grunewald, one could even reach Potsdam on horseback.[8]

However, the bridle paths were only one element in the urban spatial structure of the capital, dedicated to horses and designed to meet the needs of horses. In 1828, the racetracks and the racing paths "in open terrain" had still been allocated to the *Berliner Renn-Verein* [Berlin Racing Club] by the authorities. For a long time, their location on the outskirts of the city, and access to them via wide, only provisionally

6 Krüger, *Hoppegarten*, 34, counts 50 race racks, 30 clubs and 140 racing events per year.

7 Additionally, see the extraordinarily knowledgeable and inspiring book by Raulff, *Das letzte Jahrhundert der Pferde* on the concepts of "thorough-breeding" and "speed": 156–159 and 170–173.

8 On the representative bridle paths in Tiergarten, see Reif, *Adel, Aristokratie, Elite*, 160–162. On the rides from the prestigious Tiergarten neighborhood to Potsdam, using the example of Harry Graf Kessler, *Ibid.*, 204–206.

laid out, often swampy paths narrowly limited the influx of the public – especially ladies. With the founding of the Union Klub, this problem was immediately on the agenda: the search for "a better place" began without delay; and it was found, with a station on the "Ostbahn," northeast of Berlin: Hoppegarten (a name deriving from the cultivation of hops). The wealthy club members generously expanded this venue, and it became the headquarters of modern German equestrian sport. In addition to the previous goals of the racing events – rational improvement of horse breeding and representation of the importance of court, state, military and agriculture – the club now came to pursue new sports functions: training, betting, the buying and selling of horses onsite, status representation, communication between the social classes, arousal of curiosity, entertainment, thrills and star cult, recreation and the experience of nature and the landscape.

The abundance of movements and encounters that resulted from this, but also the rapidly growing demands of the mass audience, which was increasingly "joining the game," necessitated a new, versatile space and building concept for the racetrack facilities. The design of racetracks with large stables and adjoining stud farm increasingly became a task of internationally renowned architects, whose facilities modeled on Ascot, Newmarket, Chantilly, Bois de Boulogne and the like became increasingly demanding, but above all more and more numerous in Berlin.

In short: before 1914, there were already eight equestrian sports clubs in Berlin and the surrounding area, each with its own facilities, competing in size and representative design and unparalleled in Germany. In 1867, Hoppegarten, then "the largest track in the Reich" on an enormous 780 hectares, had set the first high standard. But in 1909, the Union Klub and the *Verein für Hindernisrennen* [Obstacle Race Club] based in Karlshorst near Berlin, built the "most beautiful track in the world" (Wilhelm II) based on English and French models in the Grunewald near the recently completed villa district of the same name on only 70 hectares of expensive land.

Designed by the famous architect Otto March (builder of the Olympic Stadium of 1916), "Grunewald" comprised an ensemble of several racing tracks set in an artistically designed landscape of meadows, paths, woods, hills, lakes and obstacle hedges. The ensemble was surrounded by an audience room with main and secondary grandstands and an exclusive grandstand for the members of the club, which led via an open staircase to the Kaiser Pavilion with vestibule and colonnade on the one hand, and to the tea house with ladies' pavilion and show terrace on the other. For the arrival of the old and new elites at the racetrack – besides the station for the masses of visitors – a representative "driveway" was reserved, with separate parking spaces for carriages and cars. To mingle with the audience – to bathe in the crowd – there was a large promenade behind the grandstands. The paddock with scale, the round walk for pre-race inspection of the horses and the auction place served the curiosity of all. For the enthusiastic audience (the members of the club preferred to bet "discreetly" in their clubhouse), the totalizer and the ticket offices were connected to each other and to the city's betting offices via a "pneumatic tube system" for the fastest possible transmission of betting and racing results to

the speculating public on the racetrack as well as in the city. Finally, for everyone, several restaurants, cafés and music pavilions. The technical infrastructure – starting gates, finish and referee towers, timekeeping and display board – was right next to the racetrack. At the very edge of the facilities, the racing stables, the training tracks and the staff houses. There were also rooms for professional jockeys on the large facilities, who in contrast to England, however, were always second to the "Herrenreiter" in the representative races up to 1914.

To sum up: within four decades, the members of the Union Klub and the associated Berlin racing clubs had created a stage "around the horse" – a public space of elitist self-representation with high mass attention. In 1913, there were 561 races on 83 days on the four largest racetracks in Berlin (Hoppegarten, Karlshorst, Grunewald and Strausberg) alone, at which 4,905 horses competed and a total of four million "Reichsmark" prize money was won.[9] Berlin had the best-known races (including the Diana Prize, the Union Race and the Henckel Race), awarded the highest victory prizes and recorded the highest betting turnover in German equestrian sport. 40,000 visitors and more were no rarity on the racing facilities of the imperial capital – with low admission prices. Here, the national, and after the turn of the century increasingly also the international horse culture presented itself as a joint achievement of the old and the new elites of great wealth. A new "Tout Berlin" seemed to be emerging and enjoying its significance in the public spaces it had created. As organizers of highlights of social life with a *Volksfest*-character, the joined elites enjoyed the recognition of the monarchy as well as the attention and admiration of the metropolitan masses.

Fig. 1: Prince Wilhelm on the Grunewald racetrack, photograph, 1913. [© Süddeutsche Zeitung Photo/ Alamy Stock Photo]

9 Krüger, *Hoppegarten*, 58.

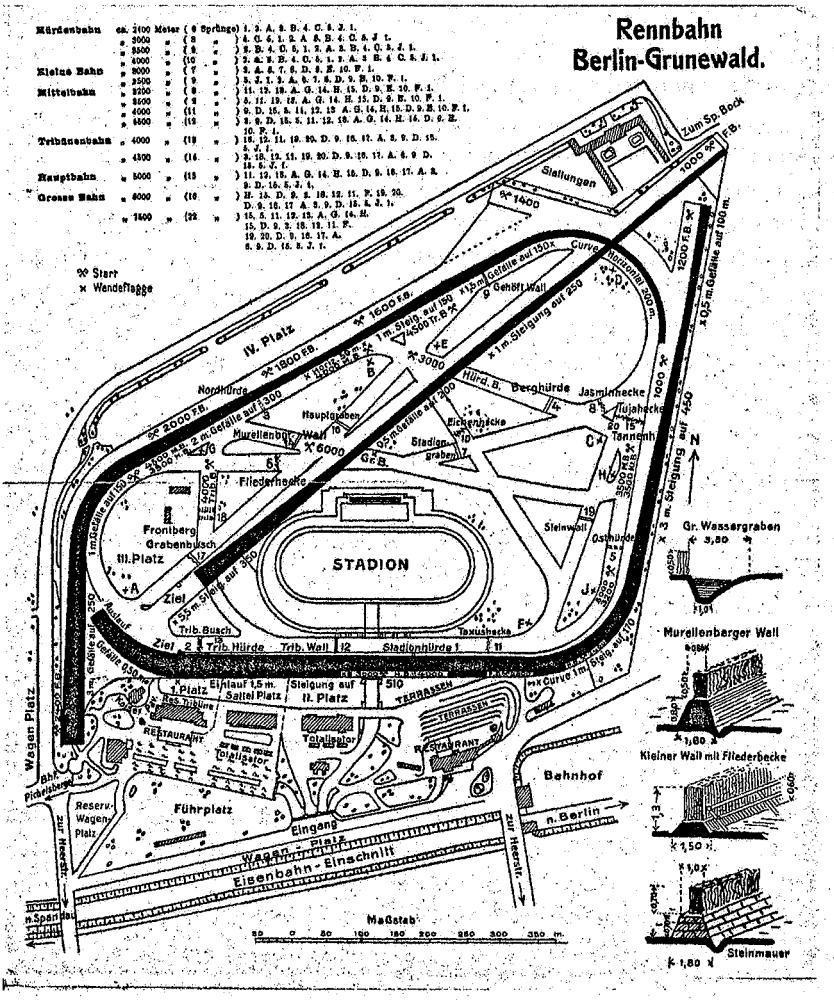

Fig. 2: Grunewald racetrack, published in *Reher's Jahrbuch für den Pferde-Sport* (Berlin, 1912). [Berlin, Humboldt Universitätsbibliothek]

The actors: founders, members and the wealthy Berlin old bourgeoisie

Which groups performed so virtuously on this stage they had created, and with which cultural practices did they win its "splendor" for themselves? Already in 1830, the poet, estate owner and agrarian reformer Achim von Arnim had strongly criticized the *Verein für Pferderennen* [Association for Horse Racing] founded in 1828 because its breeding goal (speed) did not bring any benefits to farmers, but