

Ingrao, C. 1987. *The Hessian Mercenary State*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. % [00CC]

see on the Jews on p. 92 ff.

Frederick II, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel

Frederick II (German: *Landgraf Friedrich II von Hessen-Kassel*) (14 August 1720 – 31 October 1785) was Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel (or Hesse-Cassel) from 1760 to 1785. He ruled as an enlightened despot, and raised money by renting soldiers (called "Hessians") to Great Britain to help fight the American Revolutionary War. He combined Enlightenment ideas with Christian values, cameralist plans for central control of the economy, and a militaristic approach toward international diplomacy.^[1]

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Early life

Frederick was born at Kassel in Hesse, the son of William VIII, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel and his wife Dorothea Wilhelmine of Saxe-Weitz. His paternal grandfather was Charles I, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, and his paternal uncle was Frederick I of Sweden. His education was initially entrusted to Colonel August Moritz von Donop and then from 1726 to 1733 to the Swiss theologian and philosopher, Jean-Pierre de Crousaz.

Marriages and children

On 8 May 1740, by proxy in London, and on 28 June 1740 in person in Kassel, Frederick married Princess Mary, fourth daughter of King George II of Great Britain and Caroline of Ansbach. They had four sons:

- William (25 December 1741 – 1 July 1742)
- William I, Elector of Hesse (3 June 1743 – 27 February 1821)
- Charles (19 December 1744 – 17 August 1836)
- Frederick (11 September 1747 – 20 May 1837), father of Prince William of Hesse-Kassel and grandfather of Queen Louise of Denmark.

In December 1745, Frederick landed in Scotland with 6000 Hessian troops to support his father-in-law, George II of Great Britain, in dealing with the Jacobite rising. Although he supported the "Protestant succession" in Great Britain on this occasion, Frederick later converted from Calvinism to Catholicism. In February 1749, Frederick and his father visited the Archbishop-Elector of Cologne, Clemens August of Bavaria, who received Frederick into the Catholic Church.

Despite his exertions in support of her father, Frederick's marriage with the British princess was not a happy one. The couple were living apart from each other by 1747, and were formally separated in 1755. Mary moved to Denmark the following year, to care for the children of her late sister Louise of Great Britain, who had died in 1751. All three of the couple's surviving sons moved with Mary to Denmark. Two of them, including Frederick's heir William, later married Danish princesses, their first cousins. The younger sons lived permanently in Denmark, rising to high office in the court of their cousin; only William returned to Germany upon inheriting the principality of Hanau. He also later succeeded Frederick as Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel.

Frederick II



Portrait by Johann Heinrich Tischbein

Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel	
Reign	1 February 1760 – 31 October 1785
Predecessor	<u>William VIII</u>
Successor	<u>William IX</u>
Born	14 August 1720 <div>Kassel</div>
Died	31 October 1785 (aged 65) <div>Kassel</div>
Spouse	<u>Princess Mary of Great Britain</u> (m., 1740; died 1772) <div><u>Margravine Philippine of Brandenburg-Schwedt</u> (m., 1773)</div>
Issue	<u>Prince William</u> <div><u>William I, Elector of Hesse</u><div><u>Prince Charles</u><div><u>Prince Frederick</u></div></div></div>
House	<u>Hesse</u>
Father	<u>William VIII, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel</u>
Mother	<u>Dorothea Wilhelmina of Saxe-Weitz</u>
Religion	<u>Roman Catholicism</u> , prev. <u>Calvinism</u>

Mary died in 1772, and Frederick lost little time in marrying again. On 10 January 1773, at Berlin, he married Margravine Philippine, daughter of Frederick William, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt and Sophia Dorothea of Prussia. No children were born of this marriage.

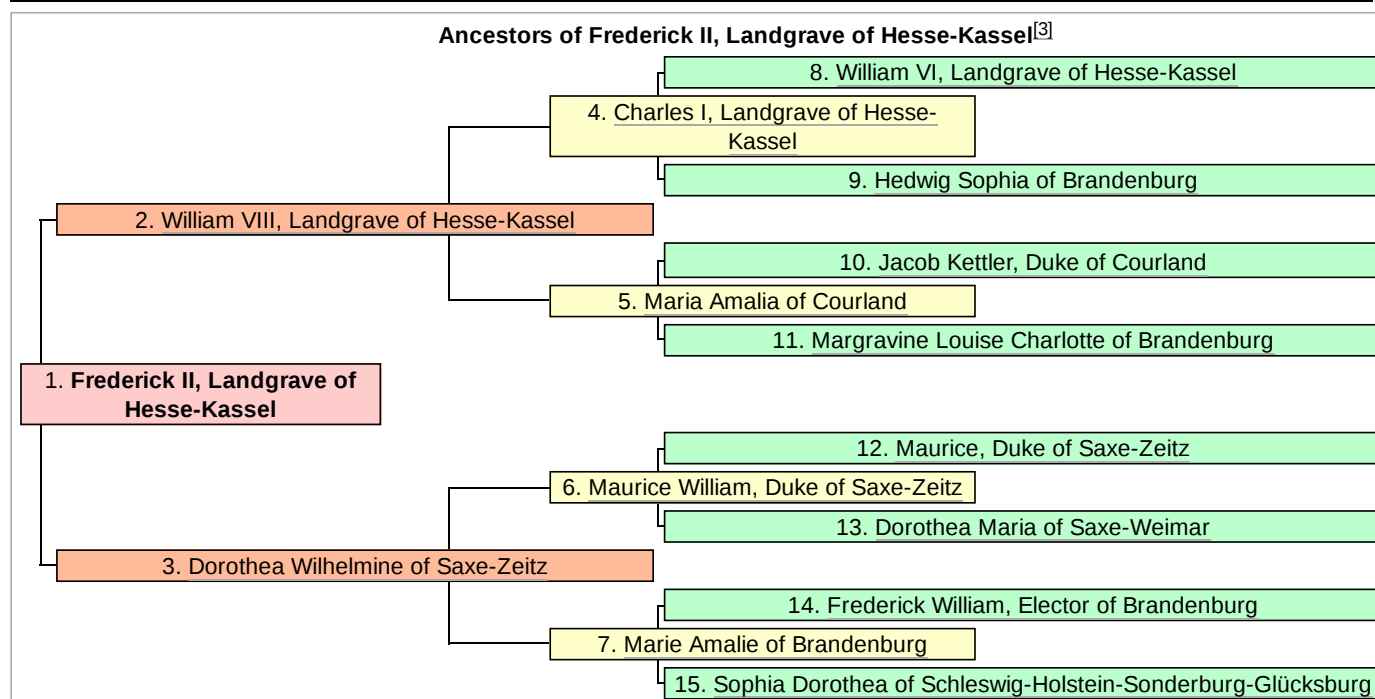
Ruler

After being formally separated from his wife in 1755, Friedrich entered active service in the Prussian military. In 1760, he succeeded his father as Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel. Despite Frederick's Catholicism, the principality remained Calvinist, and Frederick's children were raised as Protestants in Denmark.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, it was a fairly widespread practice for smaller principalities to rent out troops to other princes. However, the practise was carried to excess in Hesse-Kassel, which maintained 7% of its entire population under arms throughout the eighteenth century.^[2] Frederick hired out so many troops to his nephew, King George III of Great Britain, for use in the American War of Independence, that "Hessian" has become an American term for all German soldiers deployed by the British in the War. Frederick used the revenue to finance his patronage of the arts and his opulent lifestyle. The architect Simon Louis du Ry transformed for Frederick II the town of Kassel into a modern capital.

Landgrave Frederick II died in 1785 at Castle Weißenstein, Kassel. He was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, William.

Ancestry



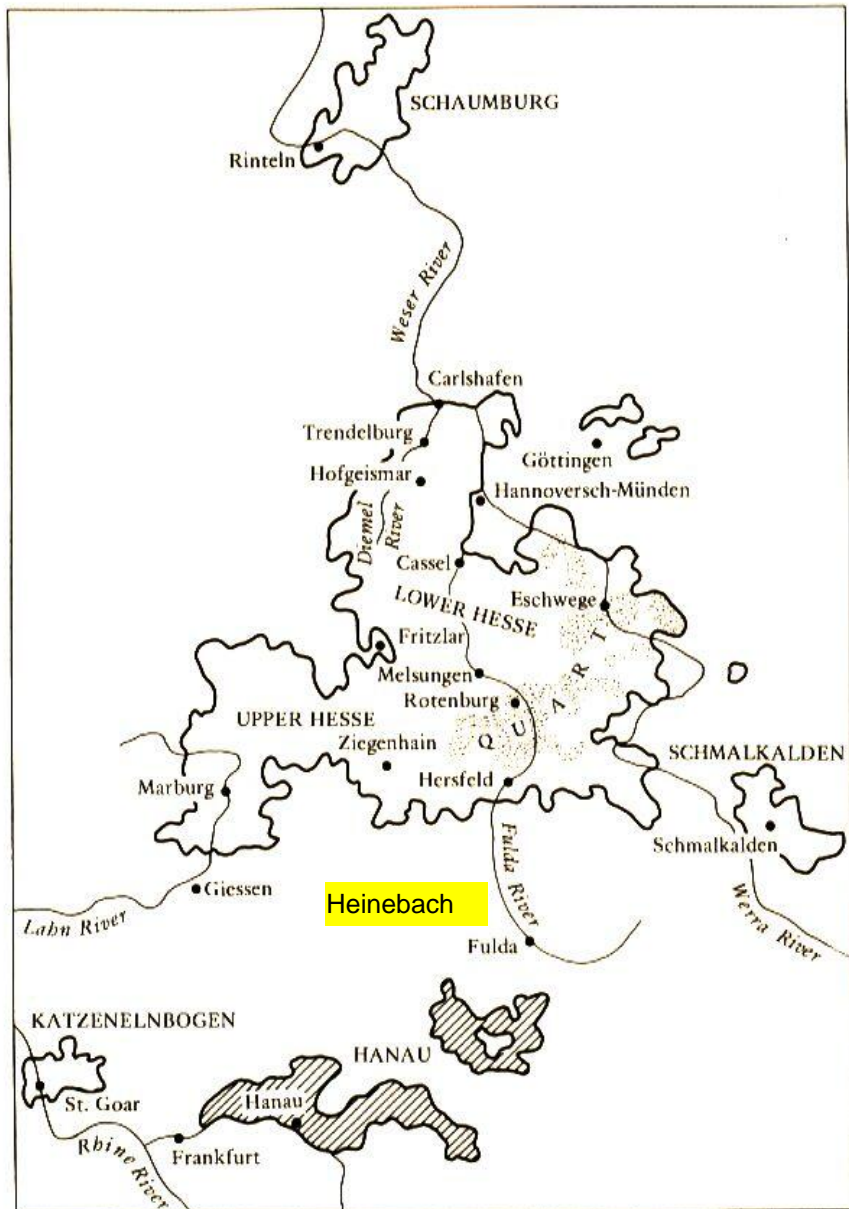
References

1. Charles W. Ingrao, *The Hessian Mercenary State: Ideas, Institutions, and Reform under Frederick II, 1760–1785* (2003)
2. Tilly, Charles "Coercion, Capital, and European States."
3. *Genealogie ascendante jusqu'au quatrieme degre inclusivement de tous les Rois et Princes de maisons souveraines de l'Europe actuellement vivans* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=AINPAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA57>) [*Genealogy up to the fourth degree inclusive of all the Kings and Princes of sovereign houses of Europe currently living*] (in French). Bourdeaux: Frederic Guillaume Birnstiel. 1768. p. 57.

Further reading

- Charles W. Ingrao, *The Hessian Mercenary State: Ideas, Institutions, and Reform under Frederick II, 1760–1785* (2003)

External links



Hesse-Cassel under Frederick II.

the landgrave sought to introduce best conformed to Frederick the Great's own requirements, including the need to detach as many offices as possible from his "insubordinate" core bureaucracy, something that was not a problem in Hesse-Cassel. It was needlessly complicated for a small state like Hesse-Cassel and probably resulted in decreased efficiency and increased operating costs. Locally there were problems too. Like the Prussian *Régie*, the Hessian tax farmers ended up alienating the peasantry with their ruthlessness, as well as those local bureaucrats who resented their interloping. Unlike their Prussian counterparts, however, the Hessian tax farmers actually succeeded in collecting less revenue than before.¹¹ Yet, if Prussianization was a failure at least it outlasted Bopp, who was demoted at the end of 1776, his Hessian career cut short by his inability to increase receipts and by the discovery of a diary filled with condescending comments about the country and its people.

The agrarian challenge and reform

The government's interest in increasing revenue persuaded it to examine the productive potential of Hessian agriculture. By then, however, the regime had found a more compelling reason to undertake a thorough reform of the country's agrarian economy. The crop failures in 1770 and 1771 had created a second subsistence crisis on a scale comparable to the effects of the Seven Years' War. The price stability in staples that the government had achieved by 1765 was shattered. In Cassel grain prices doubled in 1770, tripled again in 1771, and then sextupled in 1772. Long lines of burghers besieged the town's bakeries, often going two or three days without eating. By 1772 the mortality rate had risen by 70 percent and did not return to normal levels until 1775.¹² Conditions were little better outside the residence. From the Diemel Valley in the north to Schmalkalden in the east local officials reported numerous cases of death by starvation and large-scale emigration abroad.¹³ The government immediately initiated several stopgap measures to stave off widespread starvation by freezing staple prices, canceling tax collections, and forbidding

¹¹Berge, "Friedrich II.," 70-4.

¹²Möker, *Geschichtliche Wirtschaft*, 251; Losch, *Kasseler Chronik*, 135-8; "Tabelle von den Getauften, Begrabenen und Geehlichten in der Stadt Cassel, von den Jahren 1765 bis 85," *HB*, 2 (1785), 679.

¹³StAMg, 5)13446: 15 Jan. 1784 Motz report; Lohse, *Schmalkaldener Eisengewinnung*, 62.

all exports of grain.¹⁴ By a stroke of luck Frederick had just begun building a countrywide system of granaries modeled after Prussia's. Although the granaries themselves were not yet fully stocked, their existing stores helped minimize the extent of starvation.¹⁵ The country was also well served by the newly established Carlshafen Company, which, on Uckermann's own initiative, secretly purchased 230,000 taler's worth of foreign grain for shipment back to Hesse-Cassel.¹⁶ Meanwhile, to boost productivity the government provided peasants with free seed grain, released them from labor service during the harvest, and permitted Sunday farming.¹⁷

* As was his custom the landgrave also turned to the estates. When it convened in November 1771, the *Landtag* vented its wrath on the two most hated groups in the Hessian countryside: lawyers and Jews. The lawyer problem stemmed directly from Frederick's decision to afford the peasants free legal aid. At the time he believed that legal aid would give them access to the judicial system that they could not otherwise afford due to the cost of fees, travel, and lost income by letting a lawyer act as their surrogate in court. But the diet now pointed out that, in practice, lawyers had flooded the countryside and induced peasants to initiate trivial litigation since it was all at the government's expense. Not only had the surfeit of court cases defeated the landgrave's hope of expediting justice, it had also so attracted the peasants' interest that they were now devoting less time to their work than before. Worst of all, lawyers were still saddling them with debts by charging unreasonable travel costs from Cassel, which were not covered by the government. Over the next three years the regime labored to eliminate these unexpected consequences of the legal aid program, first by punishing lawyers who promoted trivial litigation, then by withdrawing the entire program (as the estates had requested), and finally by reinstating it along with restrictions against frivolous suits and the levying of travel costs by lawyers.¹⁸

¹⁴StAMg, 5)799: 30 Apr. 1771 rescript; 5)13163: 4 June 1771 Actum; 5)2697: 20 Sept. 1772 KDK report, 18 Feb. 1772 resolution; HLO, 623-5: 5 Oct. 1771.

¹⁵StAMg, 5)13193: 22, 23 Nov. 1769 KDK reports; Fox, "Upper Hesse," 239, 246-50.

¹⁶StAMg, 5)10600: 5 Dec. 1771 KDK report. Although much of the grain came from outside Germany, Uckermann's success in purloining the harvests of neighboring states resulted in considerable resentment among the population of Paderborn. Dascher, "Karlshafen," 239-40.

¹⁷StAMg, 5)8746: 22 Aug. 1771 GR protocol; 40b) Generalia 37: Verzeichnis; HLO, 616: 22 Aug. 1771.

¹⁸HLO, 661, 685, 785-6: 22 Aug. 1772, 13 Apr. 1773, 25 Oct. 1774; StAMg, 5)11109: Kopp votum [n.d.]; Berge, "Friedrich II.," 187.

Like its remonstrances against country lawyers, the diet's complaints about the Jews were directed against the impact of previous government decrees. This is not the proper place for a detailed profile of eighteenth-century attitudes toward the Jews. Suffice it to say that Christian hostility was general within every country and segment of European society. Though they opposed religious persecution, most philosophes such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Holbach were disdainful of what they saw as the Jews' religious barbarism, together with their unprincipled and mercenary nature.¹⁹ This was also the case among Germans, and certainly Hessian academics, including the future *Collegium Carolinum* professors Christian Wilhelm von Dohm and Georg Forster.²⁰ All levels of Hessian officialdom, like the Hessian people themselves, sincerely believed that the Jews competed unfairly with Christian merchants and unscrupulously exploited the ignorant and hard-pressed peasantry. Bopp was convinced that they were the principal cause of poverty in Hesse-Cassel.²¹ Indeed, the country's economic malaise may have exacerbated anti-Semitic feeling by intensifying the competition for survival. Given its greater concern for the Christian community's economic well-being, the Frederician regime had heretofore limited itself to a few ordinances easing the numerous restrictions on the country's 7,500 Jews.²² It was, however, a 1730 decree permitting them to settle in the countryside that the diet now sought to repeal. The *Landtag* had made the same request in 1764, at which time it had decried the business practices of rural-dwelling Jewish settlers.²³ Although it now repeated these arguments, it was also able to point to the example of Frederick the Great, who had recently decided to expel all propertyless Jews from the Prussian countryside.²⁴

In August 1773, Frederick and his ministers concluded a nine-month-

¹⁹Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1968), 282-6, 292, 309-12.

²⁰Justus Friedrich Runde, "Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden," *HB*, 1 (1784), 63; Joseph S. Gordon, "Georg Forster und die Juden," *Jahrbuch des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte*, 7 (1978), 218, 221, 226; Epstein, *German Conservatism*, 221-2.

²¹Bopp, "Fehler," 179.

²²Abraham Cohn, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Juden in Hessen-Kassel im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Marburg, 1933), 31, 35-40, 61-3, 69; H. Metz, "Die Juden in Hessen," *Hessenland*, 10 (1896), 74.

²³StAMg, 5)14715: 4 July 1764 GR protocol; 5)14717: "Desideria der Stadt Hofgeismar, 4." [1764]; 5)13427: 30 Apr. 1768 Actum.

²⁴StAMg, 5)14722: "Protocol von Landtags Sachen, 20." [1772]; 1711)1153: 21 Feb., 27 Nov. 1772 GR protocols; Selma Stern, *Der preussische Staat und die Juden*, 1 (Tübingen, 1971), 95.

long investigation by approving the diet's request.²⁵ Important as the decree was for the hundreds of Jewish families living in the countryside, the decision itself rested on certain calculations and priorities that exposed the underlying mind-set of the Frederician regime. As the *Regierungsrat* Ludwig August von Berner had made clear back in November, one indispensable consideration was that expulsion not affect tax receipts. In addition was the regime's sensitivity to the implacable hostility of the Christian peasantry and to the lack of sufficient arable land to support the growing number of Jewish settlers. What seems to have been most decisive, however, was the Jewish settlers' apparent reluctance to become farmers and forsake those commercial activities through which they might exploit the peasantry's ignorance and financial difficulties. Under such circumstances the government concluded that their presence in the countryside represented an "extremely dangerous situation and a major reason for the deteriorating living conditions in the countryside."²⁶ Quite apart from their reputed unscrupulousness, the Jews' engagement in commerce corrupted the customary distinction that needed to be made between the separate economic roles of town and country. Such was the message that Frederick conveyed to Landgrave Constantin when he informed him that "like all merchants, which the Jews are after all, they belong in the cities, not in the villages."²⁷ Indeed, although the expulsion edict forbade further Jewish migration to the countryside and required younger children to return to the towns, it did permit firstborn sons to remain there so long as they forsook all commercial activities and learned a truly "rural" profession such as farming. The government reiterated this commitment to a vocational distinction between town and country when it issued a second edict one year later that forbade even Christian artisans, entrepreneurs, and merchants to settle in the countryside unless they somehow served the agrarian economy, and placed immediate restrictions on those artisans already located there.²⁸

Whether it was justified or not the action taken against country lawyers and Jews was the panacea that the estates sought for the current agrarian crisis. In addition, however, they planted the idea for another major

²⁵StAMg, 5)5528: 11 Aug. 1773 protocol.

²⁶StAMg, 5)5528: 10 Dec. 1772 Actum, Kopp to Riedesel, 11 Aug. 1773; 17II)1153: 27 Nov. 1772 GR protocol.

²⁷StAMg, 5)5528: Frederick to Constantin, 17 Aug. 1773.

²⁸StAMg, 5)5528: 10 Dec. 1772 Actum; 5)813 and HLO, 783-4: 7 Oct. 1774 rescript.