

POLITICS AND HISTORICAL BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBITIONS LOOKING AT THE STAUFER EXHIBITION IN STUTT GART IN 1977

Elisabeth Erdmann
University Erlangen-Nürnberg
Germany

Abstract

The Staufer exhibition in Stuttgart in 1977 was a historical blockbuster exhibition, which established a type of state exhibitions in public's consciousness and in historical culture. It contributed to the rising interest in History in the public and played a vital part in rediscovering the Middle Ages in Germany. It is asked who took the initiative to put it on? Which were the aims intended by this exhibition and did the exhibition meet its set goals? The research in the archives showed that what is said in the catalogue about the initiative, is not the whole truth, because at first it was the wish of the then State Prime Minister for a representative exhibition, but the theme and the connection with the 25th anniversary of the state Baden-Württemberg were proposed by others.

Keywords: Politics; Blockbuster exhibition; Staufer dynasty; 25 anniversary of the state Baden-Württemberg; National identity; History culture.

The exhibition 'The Staufer dynasty. History, art and culture' was put on at the Württemberg State Museum in Stuttgart from 25 March 1977 to 7 June 1977. 671.000 visitors visited the exhibition on the 72 opening days.¹ Because of that, the exhibition is seen as a very successful one, compared to earlier and later major exhibitions. How justified this statement is can also be verified by comparing the number of visitors of other major exhibitions in the Federal Republic of Germany between 1960 and 2000, which was done by Martin Große Burlage.²

1 E Gerhold-Knittel, "Die Stauferausstellung in Stuttgart", *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 115, 1979, pp. 163-168.

2 M Große Burlage, *Große historische Ausstellungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1960 – 2000*, Münster, LITVerlag, 2005, pp. 363-366.

Along with the exhibition, a lot was offered by the education department: 190 guided tours for pupils were conducted by ten teachers who were ordered by the ministry of culture and education. Furthermore, there were 400 tours on Art History and 184 History tours, along with 800 groups that had booked a tour.³ There were another eight Art History and eight History talks about the exhibition, which were all extremely busy. The total number of visitors and the selling of the catalogue exceeded all expectations. The first edition of the catalogue, which comprised 20 thousand copies, was sold out within the first two days of the exhibition. It was reprinted and all in all 153 thousand copies were sold of the 4.5 kilo catalogue.⁴

In it it says in a prominent position: “The exhibition is put on to mark the 25th anniversary of the state Baden-Württemberg.”⁵

This fact was the starting point of my research.

Who took initiative to put on this exhibition? Which aims were intended with this exhibition? How were they realised and did the exhibition meet its set goals? And what about the after-effect? The main goal for this discussion is to address an aspect of my country’s heritage, that learners of History will find interesting and that may, to some extent, relate to aspects of heritage learners and educators from other countries can associate with.

About the initiative

In the catalogue’s preface, the then State Prime Minister Hans Filbinger contributed the following in the section ‘About the meaning of the exhibition’: ‘When I made the proposal about organising a representative exhibition about the time of the Staufer dynasty several years ago and about setting an extremely rich and public-attracting cultural event at the centre of the anniversary of the state of Baden-Württemberg, I immediately met spontaneous approval and assistance with this initiative: with my cabinet ministers from the state government, who co-decided on the project and with the parliament, which granted the essential financial support. I also found support with academic experts, who contributed with enthusiasm in the preparations. And last but

3 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg EL 230/2 Bü. 46.

4 E Gerhold-Knittel, “Die Stauferausstellung ...”, *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 115, 1979, p. 168.

5 R Haussherr (Ed.), *Die Zeit der Staufer. Geschichte – Kunst – Kultur. Katalog der Ausstellung*, vol. I – III (Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1977) p. II in each volume. The whole catalogue has 5 volumes, IV (maps) includes only maps, V (lectures and research) was printed only after the exhibition in 1979.

not least with the public, who encouraged this endeavour with manifold reactions.⁶

An explanation: Dr. Hans Filbinger, who was from Mannheim and who died in Freiburg on 1 April 2007, became State Prime Minister in Baden-Württemberg in a grand coalition between CDU and SPD, got an absolute majority with the CDU in 1972, upon which Filbinger became State Prime Minister again. In 1976, the CDU achieved an even better result but in 1978, Filbinger had to step down due to his function as naval judge during World War II and, even more so, due to his rigid attitude regarding his own vindication and due to his stubbornness. I do not want to go into details about that here as this is not related to the topic.⁷

I assumed that the anniversary was indeed the main reason why the Staufer exhibition was put on, especially as this was to be read in relevant press releases and reviews of the exhibition. My main interests are the political aims that the exhibition had.

It then came as a surprise that Filbinger originally neither thought of the Staufer dynasty as theme of the exhibition, nor of the 25th anniversary of the state Baden-Württemberg.

The State Archive Ludwigsburg holds the files of the Staufer exhibition. I found a letter of the then director of the Württemberg State Museum, Prof. Siegfried Junghans, to the ministry of culture and education from 26 February 1973. In it, he approves of lending objects of his museum to the *Suevia sacra* exhibition in Augsburg, because all requirements regarding the conservation of objects were met. At the end, he writes: “The topic of the exhibition would have been a suitable one for the Württemberg State Museum, too.”⁸ An elaborate letter by Junghans from 8 August 1973 to the Permanent Secretary Wolf Donndorf, then in the ministry of culture and education, is obtained. The latter said that the State Prime Minister had been puzzled by the fact that the exhibition *Suevia Sacra* was not put on by a Baden-Württemberg state museum and that he thought about putting the Augsburg exhibition back on in Baden-Württemberg. In the following Junghans plausibly justifies the notion of both state museums in Stuttgart and in Karlsruhe why the exhibition was not suitable for neither of the two sites: He said that that

6 H Filbinger, “Vom Sinn dieser Ausstellung. Vorwort des Ministerpräsidenten”, R Haussherr (Ed.), *Die Zeit der Staufer. Geschichte – Kunst – Kultur. Katalog der Ausstellung*. (Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1977) vol. I, pp. V – X, p. VI.

7 W Wette, “Der Fall Filbinger”, *Filbinger- eine deutsche Karriere* (Springe, Zu Klampen, 2006), pp. 15 – 34; pp. 23 - 24.

8 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg EL 230/2 Bü. 4 v. 26 February 1973.

exhibition series had existed since 1950 and that it had been worn down. The majority of these exhibitions had been put up in context with catholic church congresses or ecclesiastical anniversaries. Furthermore, there was academic doubt whether this form of art was binding and specific for that region. After that, he takes up the State Prime Minister's idea to 'show the political and cultural importance of Swabia in a big exhibition'. He suggests the topic of "Art and Culture at the time of the Staufer dynasty". He had often talked about that topic with Donndorf before. They always had to forbear from this idea because of financial reasons. He then gives the details that were already known to Donndorf:

- Place of the exhibition: Stuttgart;
- Premises: Old Castle, approximately 1500 m² of space;
- Estimated costs: 1 to 1.5 million;
- Preparation time: approximately four years;
- Organiser: state government;
- Acquisition of loan collection: a special representative from the state government;
- Design: building construction department of the Treasury;
- Academic design and catalogue: The Wurttemberg State Museum, which consults academics from Germany and abroad.⁹

This enumeration, which I have shortened slightly, already shows that Junghans had planned the exhibition in detail and that he had talked about it to Donndorf. After looking at the state budget, he concludes:

I truly am Swabian, by birth and tradition and I have cared about Swabia only because of that. Our tribe possesses imagination and a sense for reality. Therefore I will be content if I am put in the position to carry out my assignment during my term in office. ...'In order to achieve that, a great sum of money is lacking up to today'.¹⁰

Junghans' letter ends on a rather low note. Yet the letter or at least its content must have been put through to the State Prime Minister as on 5 September 1973, the state ministry told the ministry for culture and education that the State Prime Minister would visit the exhibition in Augsburg on 6 September. He was willing to conduct a similarly representative exhibition in Stuttgart, while Junghans' ideas about displaying the Staufer dynasty's art and culture

⁹ Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 4 letter from Junghans to Donndorf from 27 August 1973, p. 4.

¹⁰ Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 4, letter from 27 August 1973, p. 4.

were taken on. The exhibition is to be organised soon, preferably in 1975, therefore the ministry of culture and education is to submit a bill for the council of ministers by 11 September 1973.¹¹

On 7 September 1973 the then Minister for culture and education Wilhelm Hahn wrote to the state ministry that for such an exhibition at least four years of preparation time would be necessary. He went on: "Putting the exhibition on in the year 1977 would also relate to the 25th anniversary of the state Baden-Württemberg. Not only would this date make sense when it comes to hard-to-get loans, it would also be suitable to strengthen the citizen's sense of pride for the state."¹² It becomes clear that Hahn followed the arguments of the museum experts, he additionally mentioned the 25-year-existence of the state Baden-Württemberg and the sense of pride.

On 12 September 1973, the council of ministers met. According to the minutes, the State Prime Minister thought it was desirable:

... to organise a representative international art exhibition as soon as possible. According to experts, an exhibition about, art and culture of the 'Staufer dynasty' would be advisable. – Such an exhibition would have an extraordinary effect on state politics. It would be suitable to reinforce the awareness for the state and would surely meet with good response with the public. According to historical circumstances, Baden-Württemberg could see itself as the centre of the Staufer empire. Everything should be done that the exhibition was successful. Autumn 1975 should be targeted for the date of the exhibition. If the time until then is not sufficient, the exhibition should then be put on in the context of the 25th anniversary of the state Baden-Württemberg.¹³

Although the state home secretary and two state secretaries were in favour of the 1975 date, Hahn and Junghans were eventually able to prevail as it was obvious that it was not possible to realise such an exhibition with prominent loans, even from abroad, at that short notice.

If one asks the question why the exhibition was desired by the State Prime Minister and the home office in the year 1975, or, at the latest, in the year 1976, one does not get information from the files. Große Burlage assumes that the upcoming state elections in spring 1976 could have been a reason, yet these thoughts cannot be proven.¹⁴ Since its overwhelming victory from 23 April 1972 with 52.9% of the popular vote and a voter turnout of 80%, the

11 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 4 letter from Staatsministerium to Kultusministerium 5 September 1973.

12 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 4 letter by minister Hahn from 7 September 1973.

13 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/ 2 Bü. 4 extract of the minutes from 20 September 1973 concerning the meeting of 13 September 1973.

14 M Große Burlage, *Große historische Ausstellungen...*, p. 31.

CDU had reigned in Baden-Württemberg on its own. In September 1973, no severe problems were prevailing in Baden-Württemberg which could have had a negative effect on the CDU at the upcoming elections in 1976. The debates over the building of the nuclear power station Wyl at the Kaiserstuhl, or the resistance against it there did not start until February 1975.¹⁵ Had the exhibition only been planned in 1975 or 1976, it would have been different. That is why Filbinger's need for representation and the still non-existent feeling of belonging in Baden-Württemberg was rather the main reason why the exhibition was organised.

Baden-Württemberg's difficult path to itself and the attempt of founding an identity

Baden-Württemberg as it is known in 2010, was founded as a state by Dr. Reinhold Maier from the FDP only on 25 April 1952 combining the states Baden, Württemberg-Baden, Württemberg-Hohenzollern and was then still missing a proper name. The three states mentioned only came into existence because of the demarcation line of the Allied forces from the old states of Baden and Württemberg. What did precede the foundation of that new state was a referendum about the new structure of the south-west German region on 9 December 1951, when over 90% of the electorate argued for a joint federal state. Yet, the state Baden, i.e. South Baden, had voted against it. People did not accept this in Baden. Finally, the Badian Homeland Federation appealed on an institutional issue, which turned out to be justified. Yet the decision about Baden's fate was linked to the rearrangement of the Federal Republic of Germany. That is why it was not until 1970 that a referendum was held in the former state of Baden. With a 62% turnout, nearly 82% voted that Baden should stay with Baden-Württemberg. That decision was made easy for some by the fact that now a person from Baden was State Prime Minister and that Baden was not reigned by a person from Württemberg any longer. A feeling for Baden-Württemberg however did not arise. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann noticed in a publication from 1977 about the 25th anniversary that opinion polls would even today confirm "popular perceptions about the differences between people from Baden and those from Württemberg".¹⁶

15 U Kempf, *Bürgerinitiativen. Politische Mitwirkung des Bürgers in neuer Form. Materialheft*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh 1979, pp. 4-20. Th. Schnabel, *Geschichte von Baden-Württemberg, 1952-2002*, Stuttgart, W Kohlhammer, 2001, pp. 174-178.

16 Th. Schnabel, *Geschichte von Baden-Württemberg...*, p. 184 cites Noelle-Neumann.

With regard to these findings, which can be documented even today, it was understandable that people tried to foster the non-existent awareness for the state by putting up such an exhibition, like Hahn had suggested. In his preface in the catalogue Filbinger asked the question what reasons the state government had to put up this exhibition:

Our united state Baden-Württemberg with its nine million inhabitants celebrates its 25th year of existence in 1977. As difficult as it then was to unite these states in Germany's south-west, it has proven its worth. Baden-Württemberg with its scenic charms, its rich cultural heritage and its hard-working and patriotic people has quickly developed into a sane and flourishing federal state with a balanced, strong and panic-proof fabric. Wide circles of the population have pleasingly and lastingly approved of the expanded and invigorated state homeland in an extraordinary short time span. Theodor Heuss, the then Federal President of Germany, described Baden-Württemberg shortly after its creation as a model of Germany's opportunities.

Some centuries ago, however, the south-western German region was already merged, in the time of the medieval swabian-aleman tribal duchy, where the Franks' relatives lived, too. The German duchy Swabia combined in its core a majority of both states-to-be Baden and Württemberg. It ranged beyond this area and reached into the area of Bavaria-Swabia, Vorarlberg, North-East Switzerland and Alsace of today, it reached into regions with which we are in good and amicable contacts.

The duchy Swabia evolved under the Staufer dynasty, who were intermittently dukes of the Franks, too, and gained importance.

After mentioning the Staufers' lordliness and their creation of the High Age of the Mediaeval Times in Germany and Europe, he referred to the fact that many of today's state, economic and social institutions were rooted in the time of the Staufer dynasty.¹⁷ This argumentation shows that the Staufer dynasty was used in order to foster the integration of the relatively new federal state and in order to boost its people's identities.

Junghans had suggested "Art and Culture of the Staufer dynasty" as title of the exhibition. Already in March 1974, Historian Walter Schlesinger, who was a member of the historical work group who prepared the exhibition, suggested naming the exhibition "The time of the Staufer dynasty. History – Art – Culture", which was approved and which turned out to be the eventual title.¹⁸ In a time when in at least some federal states the school subject History was to be abolished and when Historical Science at university level was in a process of diminishing, Water Scheel, the Federal President of Germany,

17 H Filbinger, "Vom Sinn dieser Ausstellung...", *R Hausberr (Ed.), Die Zeit der Staufer...*, vol. I, p. V.

18 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 4; This title was accepted latest 25 November 1974.

had declared at the opening of the Historians' conference (Historikertag) in Mannheim in 1976: "We are in danger of becoming a nation without a sense for history."¹⁹ He also had referred to the fact that our history did not only start in 1949 or 1871. The State Prime Minister alluded to that statement. He stressed that dealing with the time of the Staufer dynasty "does not have to be a narcotic escape from the present, but a constructive enrichment and strengthening of that presence." He furthermore pointed out how important it is to know where one comes from in order to know where one should go. He hoped that the exhibition would evoke helpful suggestions and professional output and that it would be an impetus "for a revival of thinking about History seriously."²⁰ As the reference to Scheel's speech from 1976 showed, the question about dealing with history was vigorously talked about.

Realising the exhibition

Regarding the professional preparation, the Württemberg State Museum was involved, which is housed in the Old Castle in Stuttgart, on 20 September 1973.²¹ Four workgroups were built, including several experts and academics from Germany and abroad: the History and Art-History and aftermath workgroup and the committee for conservation (including safety and transport), which was also very important as was the patronage of the Federal President of Germany and the ICOM (International Council of Museums) in order to get valuable loans from Germany and abroad. Within the exhibition's budget, the editors of the catalogue were allowed to make an expedition to the objects. The Robert-Bosch trust gave money in order to organise academic colloquia.²²

The publicity for the exhibition was planned and organised very thoroughly.²³ As Stuttgart hosted the Federal horticultural show and a planetarium was about to be opened, there was another reason to visit the city. This led to utilised capacity in inns and restaurants and during the time of the exhibition, overnight stays that were booked via the tourism office were about 100% higher than usual.²⁴ In addition, Staufer memorials were restored everywhere

19 W Scheel, "Ansprache des Bundespräsidenten bei der Eröffnungsveranstaltung des Deutschen Historikertages 1976 am 22 September 1976 im Kongreßzentrum in Mannheim", 31. *Versammlung Deutscher Historiker in Mannheim* (Stuttgart, Klett, 1977), pp. 12 – 19, p. 12, 19.

20 H Filbinger, "Vom Sinn dieser Ausstellung ...", *R Haussherr* (Ed.), *Die Zeit der Staufer...* vol. I, p. VIII.

21 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 4 v. 20 September 1973.

22 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 58.

23 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 4, Staatsministerium Baden-Württemberg, November 1975.

24 E Gerhold-Knittel, "Die Stauferausstellung...", *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 115, 1979, pp. 163, 168.

in the state and even 'Staufer routes' were put together so that a 'road of the Staufers' emerged. In December 1975, the State Prime Minister invited all majors of the Staufer towns and other celebrities and told them to participate at the 'Year of the Staufers'.²⁵ This set off an avalanche of initiatives. The term 'Year of the Staufers', by the way, does not go back to the government but was a concept that was triggered by the press, which was then taken on by the government willingly. Travel agencies and tourism in general, especially in towns with Staufer memorials, were revived and book shops, publishers and retail noted higher revenues.

The overall costs of the exhibition, according to the State Museum Württemberg, were nine million Deutsch Marks, and eight million of revenues, which were mainly achieved by publications. The state government then sponsored approximately 1 million, which was halved by a federal grant. People had feared and expected a deficit of two million Deutsch Marks. The cost chart does not contain the money that was put into the accelerated rebuilding of the destroyed eastern wing of the Old Castle, which was backed up by transferring these costs to the state budget.²⁶

About the presentation: A first section dealt with Staufer monarchs and their policies, then the Staufer state and its system were highlighted. This was accompanied by original manuscripts, documents, signets and coins. A further section dealt with the building of churches during the Staufer period, church windows and church mural painting. That was followed by explanations about the spiritual and political impact of the church in the corresponding time. After that, artefacts from the mid-12th century to the second half of the 13th century were shown, which were mainly from the state area north of the Alps. The objects were sorted by categories and presented: glass painting, sculpture, treasure art, book art and textiles. The question whether the Staufers were responsible for the cultural and artistic development in that century was not explained, yet only was able to stimulate thoughts about that question. In contrast, Friedrich II.'s art from southern Italy and Sicily were presented in an own section as it was clear that there was a link between the monarch and the artefacts that were produced in his environment. The exhibition was concluded by interpretations about the geographical world view and about the awareness for nature in the corresponding time.

In the art building close by, the section 'The Staufers and their aftermath' was presented. Starting from the founding of the Staufer legend in the late

²⁵ Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 57 meeting with the State minister 4 December 1975.

²⁶ M Große Burlage, *Große historische Ausstellungen...*, pp. 81-82.

middle ages and the changing evaluations in historiography, emphasis was put on the 'Staufer Renaissance' in literature and art in the 19th century, and also on the image of the Staufers in popularisation.

All in all, an overwhelming wealth of high-ranking original artefacts was presented. The difficulty of adequately presenting the History, Art and Culture of the Staufer period has to be mentioned here as well. For sure, art historical and conservational interests led to the fact that objects were presented in the Old Castle sorted by genre. He who wanted to get a coherent overview of the Staufer period either had to bring along a well-rooted pre-knowledge or he needed a lot of time in order to read through and look at all the multimedia, plates, films and objects in the first part of the exhibition.²⁷ The question has to be asked who was willing and able to do that, not only because of the necessary time effort, but also because of the densely packed exhibition, which also led to complaints about 'bad air'. The highpoint of visitor congestion was the Tuesday after Whitsun, when slightly over 18 000 visitors were counted. It added to the difficult situation that the first volume of the catalogue, which contained explanations of more than a thousand objects, was far too heavy with its 784 pages. Apart from that, the complete catalogue was temporarily unavailable, yet could only be ordered and was then sent to the visitor some time after that.²⁸

Realising the exhibition's goals

To organise a representative exhibition was surely the first political aim, even before the Staufer dynasty was thought about. The topic of 'The Staufer dynasty' originated from Siegfried Junghans, the then long standing director of the State Museum Württemberg, who was pre-Historic Archaeologist but who had a soft spot for the Staufers as he was from Swabia. The idea of linking the planned exhibition to the 25th anniversary of the state in order to foster awareness for the state of Baden-Württemberg was first uttered by the Minister of culture and education, Wilhelm Hahn. The wish to stimulate a profound dealing with History can surely be explained given the time then, when there was a considerable necessity to justify History. In the draft for a greeting, which Hahn gave on 2 June 1975 on the occasion of an academic

27 H Glaser, "STUTT GART, Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Altes Schloß, Ausstellung: Die Zeit der Staufer. Geschichte, Kunst, Kultur", *Pantheon. Internationale Zeitschrift für Kunst*, XXXV, 1, 1977, pp. 262-265.

28 E Gerhold-Knittel, "Die Stauferausstellung...", *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 115, 1979, p. 165-166; Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 52.

symposium about the Staufer exhibition, it said: “Both the state parliament and government are aware of the fact that such a goal can only be achieved if people try to aspire to experience the individual and unrepeatable elements of a historical period without nostalgia and ideologies.”²⁹ Walter Scheel warned about losing a sense for History in 1976, which was taken up by the State Prime Minister in the catalogue.

If we look at the amount of high-ranking artefacts, the well-grounded preparation and the presentation, which found acclaim despite criticism, one can say that the politicians’ aim of putting up a representative exhibition was fully achieved. At this point, I would also like to mention the satirical comment by writer Thadäus Troll, which appeared some days before the opening of the exhibition in the daily ‘Stuttgarter Nachrichten’. It ends with a play on words, in which Troll said that State Prime Minister Filbinger profited from the hype about the Staufer exhibition.³⁰

It is more difficult to answer the question whether the exhibition led to an increased feeling of identity of the people of Baden-Württemberg. There was no visitor evaluation. According to the files, 3415 letters were directed to the State Museum during the time of the exhibition. Most referred to the catalogue and the publicity. Only some letters were relevant when it came to evaluating the exhibition, of which 143 contained positive remarks, 44 contained both positive and negative comments and 103 contained negative comments. The main part of the criticism was owed to organisational problems and the organisational problems with the catalogue. The exhibition was only reviewed 12 times. On the other hand, the exhibition mainly received praise, 31 letters contained suggestions to the exhibition. Nothing, however, can be said about national awareness whatsoever.³¹ From 4 June to 14 August 1977, an exhibition was organised by the Pfinzgaumuseum in Karlsruhe-Durlach with the title: “The Staufers in the Oberrhein region. History. Manuscripts. Documents. Art.”³² It was put together and organised by the city archive in Karlsruhe. Karlsruhe’s major Otto Dullenkopf referred in the catalogue’s preface to the formal capital function of Karlsruhe and the historical role of Baden at the creation of the federal state and also referred to both the “bridging function” of the region “between the inherited property of the Staufen dynasty in the Alsace and the

29 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 57 speech of minister Hahn 2 June 1975.

30 T Troll, “Vision vom Stauferstaat: Ich staufe, du staufst...”, *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* Nr. 57, 10 March 1977, p. 22: “Und einer sprach zu sich selber: Je staufer der Rummel, desto filbinger der Nutz”.

31 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü. 52.

32 Stadt Karlsruhe (ed.), *Die Staufer am Oberrhein. Geschichte, Handschriften, Urkunden, Kunst. Ausstellung im Städtischen Pfinzgaumuseum*, 4 June-14 August 1977, (Karlsruhe, Stadtarchiv, 1977).

Palatinate, and to the home counties of Swabia-Staufen.”³³ The realisation of this exhibition suggests that the Staufer exhibition was not very successful in creating a national identity for Baden-Württemberg. More than a decade later, that situation seemed to have unwound. Hans-Georg Wehling cancelled in 1991 all events that aimed at fostering a national identity, but pointed out the political and cultural diversity of the state Baden-Württemberg.³⁴

According to the profound dealings with History, no conclusions can be drawn neither according to the total number of visitors, nor according to the number of catalogues sold, but this is rather possible from the last part of the exhibition, the Aftermath part. The exhibition and the aftermath of the Staufer dynasty in the Art Building prompted a profound and critical dealing with the reception of the Staufer dynasty in the course of centuries. Roughly 253 540 visitors looked at this part of the exhibition. Due to the lack of space, it was necessary to outsource this part of the exhibition from the Old Castle. The reasons for the lack of visitor interest are not known, especially as the press had praised that section. Lacking information cannot be listed as a reason, but rather the fatigue of visitors and a disinterest of those who mainly focused on the art-historical highlights and valuable objects. It is further striking that visitors still remember this part of the exhibition even today, which suggests a profound engagement with the theme. There are also letters available which point out the interest in History, which was brought about by the exhibition and fostered a profound. But one should be cautious with generalisations.

A critic found it hard to meet all expectations and then said about this dilemma:

The politician asks for success, the Art Historian for the academic gain, the Historian for the link to historical reality, the journalist for critical enlightenment, the public asks for – an experience.³⁵

Politics and the Staufer exhibition

The Staufer exhibition was an example for the combination of politics and a big history and art-history exhibition. At the same time, the then raised

33 O Dullenkopf, “Vorwort”, Stadt Karlsruhe (ed.), *Die Staufer am Oberrhein...* (Karlsruhe, Stadtarchiv 1977), p. 5.

34 HG Wehling, “Die Genese der politischen Kultur Baden-Württembergs”, J Thierfelder/U Uffelmann (red.), *Der Weg zum Südweststaat*, (Karlsruhe, G Braun, 1991), pp. 324 – 340, p. 340.

35 H Glaser, “STUTT GART, Württembergisches Landesmuseum...”, *Pantheon. Internationale Zeitschrift für Kunst*, XXXV, 1, 1977, p. 265.

fears that the exhibition would be a “provincial self-adulation” or “a restored Staufer in the light of the CDU government” were unfounded. Simply in left-wing political press organs, the exhibition and its organisers were alleged to anti-democratic tendencies. In an article in the newspaper “Vorwärts”, the author described the exhibition as “for post-war German history (excluding the GDR) unique case of state decreed art and culture politics.”³⁶

The wish for a representative exhibition, the take-over of the theme, which was suggested by the museum director, and the intention to foster the national identity for the people of Baden-Württemberg and the interest to deepen the dealings with History all were political statements. It has to be said, however, that it was not only the State Prime Minister but the Minister of culture and education, assisted by the museum director, they were only able to prevail regarding the preparation time and the exhibition’s quality assurance by mentioning the 25th anniversary of the creation of the state and the creation of an identity for Baden-Württemberg. It was also the Minister of culture and education who mentioned the profound dealing with history, even before the Federal President of Germany did.³⁷

There was, according to the files, no attempt to influence the creation of the exhibition from a political side. Within the workgroups there was occasionally lively discussion, as can be seen from the files. The discussions mainly inflamed about the section ‘Aftermath’. As far as this can be seen from the minutes and letters obtained, it was mainly Historians and European Ethnologists who had opposing lines of argumentation.³⁸ After all, experts are part of society and represent different opinions, irrespective of their professional competence.

There was, however, criticism in press and journals as it was noted that areas of interest from the Staufer period were only mentioned briefly or were left out. There is a danger of idealising that era.³⁹

Conclusion

It was not the State Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg who had at first the idea about organising an exhibition about the Staufer dynasty and about setting it at the centre of the 25th anniversary of the state of Baden-

36 M Große Burlage, *Große historische Ausstellungen...*, p. 63 cites the article in *Vorwärts* (Bonn) 28 April 1977.

37 See above p. 103 with note 29.

38 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, EL 230/2 Bü 2, letters from 20 June 1975 (H Apphun), without exact date, but received 25 June 1975 (H Bausinger et al.).

39 M Große Burlage, *Große historische Ausstellungen...*, pp. 56 -74.

Württemberg as he wrote in the catalogue and as it is usually believed until today. But there were other people like the director of the Wurttemberg State Museum, Siegfried Junghans, and the then Minister for culture and education, Wilhelm Hahn, who did so. The State Prime Minister wished at first only a representative exhibition.

As a result, the Staufer exhibition was the main impulse for other historical blockbusters and state exhibitions. Hans-Ulrich Thamer said in an essay in 1996: “The Staufer exhibition in Stuttgart, at the latest, established a type of state exhibitions in the public’s consciousness and in History Culture, which developed as big events new forms of presentational forms, and which attracted new audiences and consumption needs and which achieved a new cultural and historical-political claim.”⁴⁰

The exhibition surely contributed to the rising interest in History in the public. It furthermore played a vital part in rediscovering and valuing the Middle Ages in Germany.

40 HU Thamer, “Vom Heimatmuseum zur Geschichtsschau. Museen und Landesausstellungen als Ort der Erinnerung und Identitätsstiftung”, *Westfälische Forschungen* 46, 1996, pp. 429-448.