

## Karlsruhe – Friedenstein

Family, cosmopolitanism and political culture at the courts of Baden and Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg  
(1750–1790)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The chief objective of this study is to investigate the amalgamation of culture and power at the Baden court in the latter half of the “long eighteenth century”. I endeavour to explain the co-existence of household and government at court in theory and practice, the importance of the institution of the court to Baden’s political system, and the evolution of that institution through a transitory phase, which has often been said to mark both the collapse of *ancien régime* Europe and the rise of modernity.

Margrave Carl Frederic (1728–1811) who ruled Baden from 1746 until his death in 1811 has been widely recognised as an exemplary enlightened absolutist. He carefully guided his principality, a *Musterländle* (“model state”) by contemporary standards, through the storms of the century and in the process emerged with great territorial gains and the title of Grand Duke. Whereas in the early days Baden-Durlach extended over 30 *Quadratmeilen* with a population of 90,000, at the end of his life Carl Frederic controlled 272 *Quadratmeilen* with over one million inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> His wife Caroline Louise’s pursuit of the fine arts and sciences also helped shape the court at Karlsruhe into a *Musenhof* (“creative court”), over which she presided as “Hessian Minerva”.<sup>2</sup> Blanning describes Carl Frederic as a cultured man, patron of Johann Gottfried Herder; the margrave wrote treatises on the political household and on national economy.<sup>3</sup> Although strictly Lutheran, he was a stern supporter of religious toleration, engrossed by physiocrat teachings, and renowned for abolishing torture and serfdom in 1769 and 1783 respectively. Furthermore, the margrave’s capacity for subtle political reorientation, which enabled Baden to survive the impact of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars virtually unscathed, even enlarged and enriched, was surprising indeed. Frederic William III of Prussia called Carl Frederic’s rise in status “a fair tribute of respect in return for the wondrous model with which his virtue and long, successful reign have provided the German Fatherland”.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 See “Carl Friedrich und seine Zeit”. Ausstellung im Rahmen der Landesgartenschau 1981, Markgräfliche Badische Museen, Karlsruhe 1981, pp. 21 and 47. See also Meyers Konversations-Lexikon. Ein Nachschlagewerk des allgemeinen Wissens, Bd. 2, 5. Aufl. Leipzig/Wien 1894, pp. 316-330, here p. 318. As a contemporary measurement unit *Quadratmeilen* remains without a translation.
- 2 Caroline Louise had already been known to possess a great deal of knowledge in the arts and sciences when she still lived at the court of her father Ludwig VIII von Hessen-Darmstadt, which is why she was called the “Hessian Minerva”.
- 3 BLANNING, Timothy, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture. Old Regime Europe 1660–1789*, Oxford 2002, p. 258. For details on Carl Frederic’s political writings see LANDGRAF, Gerald M., *Moderate et prudenter. Studien zur aufgeklärten Reformpolitik Karl Friedrichs von Baden (1728–1811)*, Diss. Regensburg 2007.
- 4 SAUER, Paul, *Napoleons Adler über Württemberg, Baden und Hohenzollern. Südwestdeutschland in der Rheinbundzeit*, Stuttgart, etc 1987, p. 52.

This wide-spread contemporary adulation, based on the facts and figures of Carl Frederic's reign, was carried forward by a majority of nineteenth- and some twentieth-century historians of Baden, and is still a dominant view today. Whether it is a fair view remains to be seen. It is my intention to examine the cultural and socio-political conflicts and complications which the margrave faced during his long reign, understand if and how he dealt with them and aim to draw insights from why his achievements appear so much grander than those of many other "third German" princes. The rulers of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg, resident at the palace of Friedenstein at Carl Frederic's time, serve as a welcome example; I have dedicated a chapter to a thematic comparison. The institution of the court forms the focal point of my studies, because it was the immediate representative domain of the ruler, a power-political instrument with an important functionality even within the structure of an autocratic principality as relatively diminutive in size as the margraviate of Baden.

### 1.1 The court of Baden in the late eighteenth century: Demise or renaissance of an old regime institution?

It appears that many early modern historians have in the past mentioned Baden as case in point to underpin or illustrate other, more general issues; only a curious few make more than a small number of allusions. Heer for example identifies a resurgence of "Empire patriotism" in the early 1780s in the German South-West, which "found sympathisers in Protestant princes such as Carl August of Weimar, Franz of Anhalt and Carl Friedrich of Baden".<sup>5</sup> Blanning draws the reader's attention to Baden on various occasions, for example to impress with high rates of literacy: by the end of the eighteenth century 80 to 90 per cent of men and 40 to 45 per cent of women were literate in Baden.<sup>6</sup> He further points out that Baden was one of several "industrial landscapes" in Germany which met the "proto-industrialisation criterion" of sixty rural industrial producers per 1,000 inhabitants, on a par with parts of the Rhineland, Westphalia, Saxony, Thuringia, Silesia, Württemberg and Bavaria.<sup>7</sup> Both Wilson and Zophy mention Baden together with the larger Bavaria, Württemberg, Hessen-Kassel, Saxony and Westphalia in the context of the Confederation of the Rhine.<sup>8</sup> Select allusions such as these first drew my attention to Baden; yet they appear erratic when in most general works on early modern Europe Carl Frederic's margraviate is rarely treated as a subject which deserves attention in its own right. Birtsch's essay on "ideal enlightened absolutists" is an interesting exception; he compares Frederic the Great, Carl Frederic of Baden and Joseph II in three

5 HEER, Friedrich, *The Holy Roman Empire*, Worcester/London 1967, p. 270.

6 BLANNING, *Culture of Power*, p. 114, with reference to GRAFF, Harvey J., *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture*, Bloomington, IN 1987, p. 187.

7 BLANNING, *Culture of Power*, p. 122. See also OGILVIE, Sheilagh C., *Proto-industrialisation in Germany*, in: IDEM and Markus CERMANN (eds.), *European Proto-Industrialisation*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 118–136, here pp. 135–136.

8 WILSON, Peter H., *The Holy Roman Empire 1495–1806*, London/Basingstoke 1999, p. 41, and ZOPHY, Jonathan W. (ed.), *The Holy Roman Empire. A Dictionary Handbook*, London 1980, pp. 332ff.

categories of “enlightenment”: their power legitimisation, their participation in processes of enlightened thought, and their implementation of reform.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, the essay certainly succeeds in scrutinising the Baden margrave’s general reputation as a model enlightened prince. On the other hand, a direct comparison with a king and an emperor highlights the dichotomy of differing individual circumstances in the Reich, particularly in terms of power scales. In theory Carl Frederic is put on a par with a king and an emperor, although in practice his reach was a good deal more limited. In my view Birtsch’s essay throws up many questions about the role of the smaller German principalities in this period, and about the influence their rulers exerted.

However badly needed, there have been few attempts to systematically and comprehensively analyse and reassess Carl Frederic and his court in a wider context. Most frustratingly, there is very little diversity of opinion in existing case studies on Baden. As a German stronghold for the development of “liberal” government Baden was a very popular “national” subject until the early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Its survival and consolidation as an independent state after 1789 has been seen as proof of the resilience of the “German spirit” and the so-called “third German” states of the south-west in particular.<sup>11</sup> The constitution conceived by Nebenius in 1818, several years after Carl Frederic’s death, confirmed Baden’s position as a German stronghold for liberal government.<sup>12</sup> The development of its court and government from the decidedly autocratic/baroque reign of Karl Wilhelm, grandfather to Carl Frederic and founder of Karlsruhe, to the establishment of constitutional government in the immediate aftermath of his reign naturally throws up the question of how this relatively provincial little state leaped into modernity in less than 80 years. In this vein Carl Frederic has frequently been portrayed as the heroic margrave who single-handedly lifted Baden into a new age, a mirror image of the so-called “Prussian myth”. Historical treatise, national propaganda and the popularity of eighteenth-century imagery (as found for example in the works of Daniel Chodowiecki) shaped the posthumous image of Frederic the Great as the “charismatic eccentric”, which still dominates popular perceptions today.<sup>13</sup> The works of Carl Frederic’s best known nineteenth-century biographers Draï and Nebenius suggest that maybe the figure of the Baden margrave underwent a similar historical metamorphosis.<sup>14</sup>

9 BIRTSCH, Günter, *Der Idealtyp des aufgeklärten Herrschers*, in: *Aufklärung*, 2 (1987), pp. 9–47.

10 See e. g. HÄUSSER, Ludwig, *Über die Regierung Karl Friedrichs von Baden*, Heidelberg 1864; KLEINSCHMIDT, Arthur, *Karl Friedrich von Baden*, Heidelberg 1878; WEECH, Friedrich von, *Badische Geschichte*, Karlsruhe 1896, and ANDREAS, Willy, *Badische Politik unter Karl Friedrich*, in: *ZGO* 65 (1911), pp. 415–442.

11 BEINERT, Berthold, *Geheimer Rat und Kabinett in Baden unter Karl Friedrich (1738–1811)*, Berlin 1937, pp. 57ff.

12 FENSKE, Hans, *Der liberale Südwesten. Freiheitliche und demokratische Traditionen in Baden und Württemberg 1790–1933*, Stuttgart, etc 1981, pp. 35ff.

13 Most notoriously: KUGLER, Franz, *Geschichte Friedrichs des Grossen*, Leipzig 1842.

14 DRAIS, Carl W. L. F., *Geschichte der Regierung und Bildung von Baden unter Carl Friedrich vor der Revolution*, Karlsruhe 1816–1818, and NEBENIUS, Carl Friedrich, *Karl Friedrich von Baden*, ed. by Friedrich von WEECH, Karlsruhe 1868.

Conversely, nineteenth century heritage is as important as it has been misleading in this context. German historians of the nineteenth century concentrated mainly on specific aspects of constitutional and legal history in their writings. Thus in the name of the “German cause” they invented and shaped concepts of “absolutism” and “enlightened absolutism” as they are known today. Moreover, the professionalisation of the historical discipline in this period was generally linked to the emergence of modern “national” state systems; even Leopold von Ranke who is regarded as having laid the foundations for modern historiography was generally concerned more with the formation of European state systems than any sociological implications of change.<sup>15</sup> In 1874 Wilhelm Roscher also developed a highly influential history of absolutism in which he maintained that absolutism progressed in three stages. He separated the “confessional” absolutism of the sixteenth century (Philipp II of Spain for example believed “*Cuius regio, eius religio*”) from the “courtly” absolutism of the seventeenth century (embodied by Louis XIV and his dictum “*L’état, c’est moi*”), and the “enlightened” absolutism of the eighteenth century (Frederic II of Prussia famously saw himself as “servant of the state”).<sup>16</sup> Like several others Roscher seemingly felt the need to convince the “conservative rulers of the post-Napoleonic period of the necessity of reforms which had already been part of the programme of their glorious predecessors”.<sup>17</sup> Bauer further points out that “the fundamental socio-economic, political and cultural change which accompanied the fall of the *ancien régime* buried any historical awareness for the requisite conditions which framed early modern court life in the industrial age”.<sup>18</sup>

The characteristics, values and most of all expense of courts as such were deemed absurd by nineteenth-century academics. In Duindam’s eyes “an obsession with the antecedents of the modern state prevented them from granting the household its proper place, and from understanding the crucial unrecorded and informal component of collegial decision-making”.<sup>19</sup> They used the *Verschwendungsargument* (“argument of waste”, Ehalt) to banish court culture to the realm of the anecdotal, which was dominated by an interest in the curious or grotesque and made history “a talent closely related to poetry or philosophy” (Humboldt).<sup>20</sup>

15 See RANKE, Leopold von, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation*, 6 Bde., Berlin 1839–1847; IDEM, *Die deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund: Deutsche Geschichte von 1780 bis 1790*, Leipzig 1871–1872; IDEM, *Hardenberg und die Geschichte des preußischen Staates von 1793 bis 1813*, Leipzig 1879–1881; IDEM, *Zur Geschichte von Österreich und Preußen zwischen den Friedensschlüssen zu Aachen und Hubertusberg*, Leipzig 1875, and so on.

16 ROSCHER, Wilhelm, *Geschichte der National-Oekonomie in Deutschland*, München 1874. As seen in EHALT, Hubert Christian, *Ausdrucksformen absolutistischer Herrschaft. Der Wiener Hof im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, München 1980, p. 15.

17 EHALT, *Ausdrucksformen*, p. 14.

18 BAUER, Volker, *Die höfische Gesellschaft in Deutschland von der Mitte des 17. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts. Versuch einer Typologie*, Tübingen 1993, p. 26.

19 DUINDAM, Jeroen F., *Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe’s Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780*, Cambridge 2003, p. 7.

20 See EHALT, *Ausdrucksformen*, pp. 16ff. on Franz Oppenheimer, Humboldt, etc.

Baden archivist Karl Obser's (1860–1944) numerous, invaluable publications of the margrave's works, letters and many related materials remain comfortably within the above-mentioned historiographical framework.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Beinert argued in 1937 that Carl Frederic saw his own predecessor “as the stern architect who had begun to devise the political and ideological framework not only for the new capital, but also for the state; he was to complete that effort”.<sup>22</sup> The Baden margrave was apparently also an “agreeable personality, sympathetic to all that was human; he attracted an impressive chain of important men who closely co-operated with the ruler to turn his ideas into reality”.<sup>23</sup> Among those reforming ministers Beinert draws particular attention to Wilhelm von Edelsheim, epitome of the enlightened reformer and servant to the state, who “loved, cherished and looked up to his *Landesvatter* (‘father of the state’)” with the greatest respect. In her *Enlightened Bureaucracy versus Enlightened Despotism* Liebel also focuses on Carl Frederic's leading officials. Although she takes a more critical stance, her views are equally restricted by the historiographical heritage.<sup>24</sup> The title gives it away: having been written in 1965, her essay is tinted by Rosenberg's influential work on the Prussian administration, published only seven years earlier.<sup>25</sup> In Liebel's eyes Carl Frederic of Baden “tried to pursue policies much like those of Frederic the Great, but was unable to enforce them completely because his administration had relied on bourgeois officials for a much longer time”.<sup>26</sup> If Baden was “enlightened” in the eighteenth century, credit should go to his officials, such as von Gemmingen, Rues, Saltzer, von Hahn or Schlosser. They had to fight against the ruler's “reluctance, hesitation and lack of insight”, a ruler who “fought the Enlightenment every inch of the way”.

Indeed, Liebel confirms that nineteenth-century historians glorified Carl Frederic's life and reign, “some to encourage his descendants to emulate his example, some to illustrate what enlightened monarchy could achieve, and some to promote the cause of constitutional government”.<sup>27</sup> Still, the margrave was

21 See OBSER, Karl, Politische Korrespondenz Karl Friedrichs von Baden, Heidelberg 1783–1806, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 117 (1917), pp. 305–307; IDEM, Klopstocks Beziehungen zum Karlsruher Hof, in: *ZGO* 45 (1891), pp. 235–263; IDEM, Zur Erinnerung an Wilhelm von Edelsheim, in: *Karlsruher Zeitung* 6.12.1893, Beilage zu Nr. 336; IDEM, Voltaires Beziehungen zu der Markgräfin Karoline Luise von Baden-Durlach und dem Karlsruher Hofe, Festschrift zum Regierungsjubiläum des Großherzogs Friedrich von Baden, Karlsruhe 1902, pp. 55–105; IDEM, Markgräfin Karoline Luise von Baden und ihr botanisches Sammelwerk, in: *ZGO* 62 (1908), pp. 41–78; IDEM, Aus Karl Friedrichs hinterlassenen Papieren, Eigenhändige Aufzeichnungen, in: *ZGO* 65 (1911), pp. 443–482

22 BEINERT, Geheimer Rat, p. 23.

23 Ibid, pp. 128–129.

24 LIEBEL, Helen P., *Enlightened Bureaucracy versus Enlightened Despotism in Baden, 1750–1792*, Philadelphia, PA 1965. See also SCHNABEL, Franz, *Sigismund von Reitzenstein. Der Begründer des badischen Staates*, Karlsruhe 1927.

25 ROSENBERG, Hans, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience 1660–1815*, Cambridge, MA 1958.

26 LIEBEL, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 10ff.

27 Ibid, pp. 21 and 31.

“hardly anti-aristocratic” and “never for one moment forgot the privileges of his class”. As evidence she quotes Carl Frederic himself:

The saying that the nobility is a chimera is an extremely unphilosophical proposition. If there are races among animals, there are races among men, and thus the most superior must put themselves ahead of others, marry among themselves and reproduce a pure race: that is the nobility.<sup>28</sup>

Liebel’s account may be rightfully doubtful of any uncritical idolisation of the Baden margrave; he was, after all, an autocrat of his time, of old regime Europe. Yet at times her approach seems rather one-sided and bears an uncanny resemblance to the many specialised studies which have been written about Carl Frederic’s reign. In their specialisation, they tend to appear too narrow in focus.<sup>29</sup> Many of Baden’s historians still concentrate on specific art historical or sociological issues today; gender for example is a recurring issue, as well as religious toleration.<sup>30</sup> Without a doubt the reading shows that the amalgamation of Protestant Baden-Durlach with Catholic Baden-Baden in 1771, although executed with relative success, was not without difficulties in the long run.<sup>31</sup> It is a shame that this topic in particular is more often treated as a stand-alone conundrum than as part of a range of home political issues troubling Carl Frederic at times of great foreign political uncertainty.

While the massive, two-volume work written by Karl Stiefel in 1977 – often simply called the “Stiefel” – may still be considered the most important general work on the last three centuries of Baden history, it is also really the only well-known source of a more general nature.<sup>32</sup> The abundance of expert research and, as a result, the lack of progress in explaining the development of the Baden court and government in a wider power-political context have shown themselves to be

28 Ibid, p. 22.

29 See e. g. SCHNEIDER, Franz, *Geschichte der Universität Heidelberg im ersten Jahrzehnt nach der Reorganisation durch Karl Friedrich (1803–1813)*, Heidelberg 1913, or BASER, Friedrich, *Musik am Hof der Markgrafen von Baden*, in: *Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichte Baden-Baden, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Stadt und des Kurortes Baden-Baden*, Heft 15, 1976, pp. 1–122.

30 On gender see HAAS, Rudolf, *Stephanie Napoleon. Großherzogin von Baden. Ein Leben zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland 1789–1860*, Mannheim 1976, and BORCHARDT-WENZEL, Annette, *Die Frauen am badischen Hof*, Gernsbach 2001.

31 See e. g. WALCHNER, Martin, *Entwicklung und Struktur der Tagespresse in Südbaden und Südwürttemberg-Hohenzollern*, Sigmaringen 1986; LANKHEIT, Klaus, *Friedrich Weinbrenner und der Denkmalskult um 1800*, Basel 1979; KLEIN, Angela, *Im Lichte der Vernunft. Literatur und Publizistik der Markgrafschaft Baden in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Pfaffenweiler 1992, and MÜLLER, Christina, *Karlsruhe im 18. Jahrhundert. Zur Genese und zur sozialen Schichtung einer residenzstädtischen Bevölkerung*, Karlsruhe 1992. On religion see also WINDELBAND, Wolfgang, *Die Religionsbestimmungen im Erbvertrag von 1765 zwischen Baden-Durlach und Baden-Baden*, in: *ZGO* 66 (1912), pp. 70–98; Schneider, Jörg, *Die Evangelischen Pfarrer der Markgrafschaft Baden-Durlach in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Lahr 1936; RÜCKLEBEN, Hermann, *Evangelische Judenchristen in Karlsruhe 1715–1945. Die badische Landeskirche vor der Judenfrage*, Karlsruhe 1988.

32 STIEFEL, Karl, *Baden 1648–1952*, 2 Bde., Karlsruhe 2001.

the main predicament of Baden's current historiography. These difficulties, however, are not always due to a lack of insight by particular Baden historians.<sup>33</sup> The study of European courts in general has been characterised by an inconsistency which is reflected in the historical treatment of the Baden court especially. As a result of the above-mentioned nineteenth-century developments, the court "was [still] seen as a quixotic topic, suited only for reactionaries or eccentrics" until the 1970s.<sup>34</sup> As a result "romantic" cultural and art historical considerations became a quintessential aspect of research on German court culture; Ehalt criticises particularly the "unfit and imprecise" use of the term baroque in this context.<sup>35</sup>

*Kulturgeschichte* alone was hence unable to provide many truly satisfying answers until the days of Norbert Elias. Elias' social history of early modern court culture combined the nineteenth-century theory of state-building with the idea of a process of "internalisation": by losing its power the nobility would set the standards for civilisation in Europe.<sup>36</sup> No doubt Elias work was highly influential and contributed to overcoming court culture's traditional tag as a "historical non-entity carrying politically offensive associations" (Duindam); it also formed part of a widespread reappraisal of aulic history; see e. g. Dickens and Asch/Birke's editions.<sup>37</sup> Still, this revisionist movement was unable to comprehensively abolish the nineteenth-century heritage. The sharp divide between household and government so common in many nineteenth-century works, for example, is still a central prob-

33 An unpublished, but highly particular DPhil thesis by Claudia KOLLBACH on princely education at the courts of Baden-Durlach and Hessen-Darmstadt during the Enlightenment came to my attention: *Aufwachsen bei Hof: Fürstliche Erziehung zur Zeit der Aufklärung. Die Höfe von Baden-Durlach und Hessen-Darmstadt*, Florenz 2006.

34 DUINDAM, Vienna, p. 7.

35 See EHALT, *Ausdrucksformen*, p. 18. Richard Benz draws a picture of the German baroque as a "culture of the eighteenth century" (BENZ, Richard, *Kultur des 18. Jahrhunderts. Teil 1: Deutsches Barock*, Berlin 1949); Johannes Bühler's *Barockzeitalter* goes from 1555 to 1740 (BÜHLER, Johannes, *Das Barockzeitalter*, Berlin 1950), and for Carl J. Friedrich the years 1610 to 1660 constitute the "age of baroque" (FRIEDRICH, Carl J., *Das Zeitalter des Barock: Kultur und Staaten Europas im 17. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1952).

36 ELIAS, Norbert, *Die höfische Gesellschaft. Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie*, Darmstadt/Neuwied 1969. See also DUINDAM, Jeroen, *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court*, Amsterdam 1995.

37 See DICKENS, Arthur G. (ed.), *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty 1400–1800*, London 1977; ASCH, Ronald G. and Adolf M. BIRKE (eds.), *Princes, Patronage and Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, ca. 1450–1650*, Oxford/London 1991, and ADAMSON, John S. A. (ed.), *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500–1750*, London 1999. See also across the board EVANS, Robert J. W., *Rudolf II and his World: a Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612*, Oxford 1973; STARKEY, David (ed.), *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, London/New York 1987; ELLIOTT, John H., *Spain and its World 1500–1700: Selected Essays*, New Haven, CT/London 1989; BURKE, Peter, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, New Haven, CT/London 1992; SCHMIDT, Georg, *Geschichte des Alten Reiches. Staat und Nation in der Frühen Neuzeit 1495–1806*, München 1997; WILSON, *Holy Roman Empire*; PARAVICINI, Werner and Holger KRUSE (eds.), *Höfe und Hofordnungen 1200–1600*, 5. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Sigmaringen 1999, and PARROTT, David, *Richelieu's Army: War, Government and Society in France, 1624–1642*, Cambridge 2001.

lem of many treatises on early modern court culture today. It is particularly important in the context of my research on Karlsruhe as residential city and home of the margravian family. The model palace and grid-designed town plan, which may be compared to similar contemporary foundations like Ludwigsburg, make design, functionalities and the use of space central issues at court.

Moreover, Hellmuth is not the only one to suggest that state-building was also a cultural act: eighteenth-century courts possessed the potential to function as vehicles for societal transformation from above, both in the cultural and political domain, which makes the close integration of palace and city at Karlsruhe all the more important.<sup>38</sup> Patronage networks also constituted a form of structural integration which helped resolve the function of the court within state and society. Karin Friedrich's edition of collected essays on *Festive Culture* for example concentrates on the "context provided by power relationships and the interaction between below and above, reflected in popular festivals as well as in official, government-organised, institutionalised ceremonies".<sup>39</sup> Friedrich shows that the court as a representative household, political platform and intellectual breeding ground was a tool in the ruler's hands to generate cosmopolitanism among courtiers and audiences alike, and frequently functioned as an impetus to change. For a small, mostly rural state like Baden with a largely agriculture-based economy the court at Karlsruhe was perhaps the only door to an international stage. At the same time the institution of the court provided a degree of cohesion in the face of the many ideological crises of the "age of reason"; at Karlsruhe the court was also a symbol of the protective presence which shielded its population from the rest of the world. Baden had no military might and was in a volatile position on the French border of the Empire, yet the margrave made a point of presenting himself as an accessible father figure to his people, one who would do his best to look after his the interests of those entrusted to him.

Scott argues that the problems of the nobility in this period were a consequence of three interlocking developments: a shift in the balance of wealth, loss of traditional authority and severe identity crisis, but that the elites surmounted those problems.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Blanning describes the awakening of Habermas' "public sphere" as a cultural revolution which presented both "a challenge and an opportunity" to regimes all over Europe.<sup>41</sup> If one defines "cultural revolution" as a drastic change in social structure and the relationship between rulers and populace, provincial Baden was perhaps less afflicted than other, larger states with more urban centres and greater potential for social conflict. However, when focussing on the remarkably tight structure of Karlsruhe itself, it appears that the vicinity of

38 HELLMUTH, Eckhart (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, Oxford 1990.

39 FRIEDRICH, Karin (ed.), *Festive Culture in Germany and Europe from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Lewiston/Lampeter 2000, p. 4.

40 See Introduction in SCOTT, Harnish M. (ed.), *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Vol. 1, London/New York 1995.

41 BLANNING, *Culture of Power*, p. 2. See also HABERMAS, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, MA 1989.

court and town indeed caused some conflict and the kind of “cultural change” which a ruler “with access to [his] subject’s developing concerns” would have been able to detect and perhaps influence.<sup>42</sup> According to Blanning the opportunities which the possibility of transformation – “reinventing themselves as patriot kings or servants of the state” – presented to such rulers, also provide a key to understanding subtle changes in the traditional marriage of culture and power at late eighteenth-century courts.

## 1.2 Agenda and structure

Baden was in this period reigned over by a ruler who adopted various strategies to deal with the different challenges at home and abroad, all of which in some way made use of the court as an instrument of administrative power, education or representation. Although the diverse realities of numerous small secular and religious principalities within the Holy Roman Empire make it impossible to transfer widely known theories such as Elias’ on the French court over to Baden, it is no doubt possible to make Baden as a case study relevant to the study of court culture in general, and to hence assess it in a less insular way. Winterling’s well-regarded work on the courts of the electors of Cologne is most convincing in this sense, but so far exceptional.<sup>43</sup> More general works and typologies of German courts such as by Bauer, Müller or Kruedener still struggle to reach a deeper level of synthesis.<sup>44</sup> Bauer’s five-fold division of “German” courts into the ceremonial, emperor’s, paternal, sociable and creative court is particularly schematic.<sup>45</sup> Vierhaus is perhaps more successful in providing a less categorical summation, although his appreciation of the late eighteenth-century as *Schwelienjahrhundert* (“threshold century”) is not unanimously accepted either.<sup>46</sup> Matzerath warns about treating this period either as an “addendum” to the preceding era or as a “precursor” to modern society; others consider it a starting point for a process of social evolution, leading to modernisation.<sup>47</sup> According to Breuilly it was an era of “deter-

42 Ibid, pp. 2–3.

43 WINTERLING, Aloys, *Der Hof der Kurfürsten von Köln 1688–1794. Eine Fallstudie zur Bedeutung “absolutistischer” Hofhaltung*, Bonn 1986.

44 BAUER, *Die höfische Gesellschaft*; MÜLLER, Rainer A., *Der Fürstenhof in der frühen Neuzeit*, München 1995, and KRUEDENER, Jürgen Freiherr von, *Die Rolle des Hofes im Absolutismus*, München 1971.

45 See BAUER, *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, p. 57ff, and MOSER, Friedrich Carl Freiherr von, *Teutsches Hof-Recht*, 2 Bde., Frankfurt/Leipzig 1755, Bd. 1, pp. 6–7.

46 VIERHAUS, Rudolf, *Höfe und höfische Gesellschaft in Deutschland im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, in: BOHNEN, Klaus, etc (eds.), *Kultur und Gesellschaft in Deutschland von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart*, Kopenhagen 1981, pp. 36–56. See also VIERHAUS, Rudolf, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil des Begriffs “Frühe Neuzeit”. Fragen und Thesen*, in: IDEM (ed.), *Frühe Neuzeit – Frühe Moderne? Forschungen zur Vielschichtigkeit von Übergangsprozessen*, Göttingen 1992, p. 13–26.

47 MATZERATH, Josef, *Zum Konzept einer vergleichenden Analyse*, in: BUCHHOLZ, Werner (ed.), *Das Ende der Frühen Neuzeit im “Dritten Deutschland”. Bayern, Hannover, Mecklenburg, Pommern, das Rheinland und Sachsen im Vergleich*, München 2003, pp. 1–4.

minate transformation” as opposed to “just one phase in an open-ended, long-term process of loosely related changes”; he defines modernisation in the German lands as “societal transformation from corporate to functionally specialised institutions”.<sup>48</sup> Breuilly’s focus is upon institutions as modes of power, because institutions, “being shaped by the values and interests of their members, can be treated as quasi-agents”, which enable the historian to connect established values, meanings and interests to collective social actions.<sup>49</sup>

Breuilly’s perspective is quite useful to my study, in that it suggests a way to approach late eighteenth-century court culture in Baden from different angles without losing a sense of its specific characteristics. I will analyse whether the institution of the court transformed from “corporate” to “functionally specialised” in Baden, to what extent it retained/gained cultural or political functions, and how it contributed to the formation of a “modern” state in the long term. Given how central the Baden court was not only to the daily running of the state, but also to the way the margrave saw himself, it seems clear that its gradual transformation in response to increasing pressures of the period was essential in helping its ruler adjust without losing a sense of direction. In the course of this process the court indeed became more “functionally specialised” to the point where it was able to generate a sense of cohesion as a political centre stage and representational domain which no longer depended on the aging margrave alone, especially during the last decade of his reign. Internationally, the court provided the cosmopolitan platform and panache which kept Baden firmly on the power-political map of Europe; at home its accessibility made possible the close interaction of members of the ruling elite with government officials, which paved the way for a relatively peaceful reform movement.

My agenda here is to use information about the development and efficiency of the court to form an understanding of Baden’s position at the end of the early modern age and subsequent move into modernity. My study cannot endeavour to comprehensively deal with the manifold effect this period had on Baden’s institutional frame, its inhabitants’ socio-cultural identities, its relationship with the Empire, the role of its ruler as a reformer and educator, and his interactions with his subjects and the rest of Europe. However, as a contribution to the history of late-eighteenth century Baden and the study of European court culture the Baden court appears to be a fascinating subject and well worthwhile the effort.

The most important work on the court at Karlsruhe as yet is probably still Jan Lauts’ biographical study on Margravine Caroline Louise; it provides an excellent, detailed account of her life which covers much ground.<sup>50</sup> It is, however, also rooted in a more traditional appreciation of her personal achievements in the cultural and intellectual domain. Similarly, a more recent work by Borchardt-

48 BREUILLY, John, *Modernisation as Social Evolution: The German Case, ca. 1800–1880*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series*, XV, Cambridge 2005, pp. 117–147.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

50 LAUTS, Jan, *Karoline Luise von Baden. Ein Lebensbild aus der Zeit der Aufklärung*, Karlsruhe 1990.

Wenzel describes the life of Carl Frederic as an “individual and legend”.<sup>51</sup> My interests do not lie with personality traits of one particular person, but with the court as a complex whole, living environment for the ducal family, seat of the government and stage for the entertainment of courtiers and visitors. Carl Frederic’s regime at court has traditionally been divided into the “golden age” era before the death of the margravine in 1783 and a post-1783/9 period of revolution-induced instability and decline. The incessant conflict between Carl Frederic’s second wife Luise Karoline von Hochberg, his anti-French daughter-in-law Amalie, and Hereditary Prince Karl’s French wife Stéphanie, forced upon him by Napoleon, apparently epitomised the state of uncertainty at the Baden court after the margravine’s death.

I intend to open up the debate by enquiring into the political functions of court life in Baden between 1750 and 1790, with a special emphasis on 1779–1790, for which a set of court diaries exists by *Hoffourier* Epple. My study deals with the period before as well as immediately after the death of Caroline Louise, so as to make possible an analysis of the transformation of court functions, especially in the build up to the French revolution. 1751–1783 was a period of relative stability in the political, administrative and socio-cultural sector, a period which the ambitious Caroline Louise utilised to transform an undisputedly provincial court into a more or less representative system with Francophile bearings and quasi-international cultural agenda. Caroline Louise can indeed be credited with putting Baden on the cultural map of Europe, and on a societal level her death caused a vacuum which Carl Frederic was neither able nor willing to fill. New first lady Amalie was also more interested in status enhancement than public enlightenment or education.

However, although 1783 was followed by a period of “decentralisation” during which the infrastructure of the Baden court slowly expanded, this was not due to a lack of leadership at the top. Politically Carl Frederic was very much in control and busier than ever in the 1780s, and his legendary “retreat” after his wife’s death was very temporary indeed. It goes to show that the Baden court had never been merely a centre of cultural and intellectual prowess. In order to cope with the increasing volume of representative and administrative work, the margrave came to rely on family members and senior officials such as von Edelsheim more than ever before. This enabled Amalie also to play a greater role on the power-political circuit of Europe; she became known as “Old Europe’s mother-in-law”. Her marriage policies for her children forged personal and political connections e. g. to Sweden and Russia; these connections rendered Baden valuable in the eyes of Napoleon who was well-aware of the potency of old-aristocratic blood-bonds. Such political potency in return created upwards momentum at court. Carl Frederic’s large-scale architectural improvements of Karlsruhe designed by Friedrich Weinbrenner at the turn of the century show that the growing court was more than ever in need of a suitable representative setting. Interestingly, Carl Frederic’s “inadequate” second match eventually also became the saving grace for the house of the Zähringer: Karl died soon after his grandfather in 1818, next-in-line Ludwig in

51 BORCHARDT-WENZEL, Annette, Karl Friedrich von Baden. Mensch und Legende, Gernsbach 2006.

1830, leaving only the male children of Frau von Hochberg as next-of-kin. Her eldest Leopold whom Gustav of Sweden had refused to tolerate at his reception in Mannheim in 1803 became fourth grand duke in 1830.

I have organised the body of this study into 6 thematic chapters. The first chapter to follow from this introduction (chapter two) concentrates on Karlsruhe palace and town, and is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the spatial and functional development of the palace as shown by architectural developments and building phases, and Kircher's 1787 inventory.<sup>52</sup> Samuel Klingensmith's work on the Bavarian court provides a guideline by which I will try to establish how the daily affairs of the household – family, intellectual and political – operated on a purely practical level.<sup>53</sup> This section shows that there was in fact next to no distinction between the personal affairs of the margrave, the court and matters of government; all were conducted on a daily basis under the same roof. Given the relatively small scale of his operations, the Baden margrave was in effect a good deal more directly involved in all of the above, and less pressed to delegate, than rulers of larger states: he had no distinctly “private” or “public” persona.<sup>54</sup> For although the concept of privacy is a nineteenth-century phenomenon and can only with difficulty be applied to early modern rulers, the small size of the margrave's lands, paired with the nineteenth-century “liberal” heritage and his known interest in the developing “public sphere” seem to have led some historians to assume that Carl Frederic was a particularly modern ruler, with a need for a modern kind of “privacy”. Ernst II of Gotha, for example, whom I will discuss in my comparative chapter six, was a much more atypically “private” ruler, and at the same time a rather more dysfunctional one. The second and third sections of chapter two explain the architectural development of Karlsruhe and its social structure. They aim to show how the relationship between members of the court and the town population developed during the course of the reign. Contemporary accounts such as Brunn's *Briefe über Karlsruhe* provide important information on the integration of the two.<sup>55</sup>

The next chapter (chapter three) concentrates on the ideas and intentions behind the geographical and practical lay-out, and is based on Carl Frederic's *Hofordnung* (“court manual”) from 1750. This essential document lays down the rules of conduct and social structure at court in 61 paragraphs and is attached as a full-length appendix at the end of this book. Following in the footsteps of six centuries of European court manuals designed to regulate spending, hierarchies and the code of behaviour at the apex of society, Carl Frederic's *Hofordnung* does all that and a good deal more. A distinctly religious slant is characteristic for the Protestant ruler who also considered himself an educator of his people. His court was

52 KIRCHER, Gerda Franziska (ed.), *Das Karlsruher Schloss als Residenz und Musensitz*, Stuttgart 1959.

53 KLINGENSMITH, Samuel J. (ed.), *The Utility of Splendour: Ceremony, Social Life and Architecture at the Court of Bavaria, 1600–1800*, Chicago, IL 1993.

54 On “public” versus “private” see CASTIGLIONE, Dario and Lesley SHARPE (eds.), *Shifting of Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, Exeter 1996.

55 BRUNN, Friedrich Leopold, *Briefe über Karlsruhe*, Karlsruhe 1988, Original: Berlin 1791.

intended and strictly regulated as a model household to the rest of his “public”. Although this document has been brought up in many works on Carl Frederic’s reign, it is worth more than a quick mention. For while Friedrich Carl Freiherr von Moser listed and criticised the court manuals of many German courts as purely cosmetic in his *Hof-Recht*, Carl Frederic’s *Hofordnung* is mentioned in *Hoffourier* Epple’s diaries – it was still in active use in the 1780s. The latter is all the more surprising in light of the negligible size of the newly established Baden court in 1750. If one assumes that it was most likely not amended at a later stage – it was published on conception and no other version has survived – the *Hofordnung* indeed seems proof of an astounding degree of ambition and foresight on the part of the young margrave, whether he had help with it or not. My analysis aims to explain the reasoning behind Carl Frederic’s organisation of the court and his emphasis on educational pragmatism, which will help me recognise aspects of continuity or transformation at a later stage. Five central themes emerge in the process as a conceptual basis of the *Hofordnung*: religion, reputation, ceremony, economy and discipline. Religion, ceremony and economy were traditional concerns; the margrave’s focus on reputation and discipline, however, was rather more unusual.

In the last section of the *Hofordnung* chapter I will also draw attention to the issue of implementation, which follows on logically from the ideas and concepts provided by the *Hofordnung* and constitutes the main focal point of the next chapter (chapter three). I will offset the *Hofordnung* against the above-mentioned *Teutsches Hof-Recht* by notorious court critic Moser, a 12 book compilation on common practices and conduct at contemporary German courts from 1754/5, in order to establish a wider context for my findings.<sup>56</sup> It is after all important to know whether Carl Frederic’s court was deemed typical or atypical in the 1750s, and whether it can be seen as symptomatic of the state of other German courts in this period. Incidentally, Moser regarded Carl Frederic’s *Hofordnung* as a rather prudent example of a hated genre.

Chapter four forms the central segment of this study, in that it aims to determine who lived and worked at court, what the courtiers’ daily routines and duties were, and how the organisation, functions and quality of the court changed between 1750 and 1790. In this chapter I will explain ranks, occupants and changes to court hierarchies over the years, including the rules of interaction of court personnel and government officers in theory and practice, with the help of various court calendars and *Hoffourier* Epple’s diaries. Another section of that chapter then deals with the so-called “golden age” period between 1751 and 1783. Due to the fact that Epple’s diaries only commence in 1779, one of the most common fallacies relating to this period is the generalisation on matters of court life and culture before 1779, which can be found in most secondary works. I will start anew by comparing the information provided by the diary about the last four years of the margravine’s life with information about the earlier court as provided by other primary sources, such as for example the comments of international grand tour travellers, and so on. The comparison will help identify cycles or patterns of development at the Baden court in this period. One wonders whether the theory of

56 MOSER, *Teutsches Hof-Recht*.

uninterrupted progress indeed applies to the court as a whole, or to Caroline Louise's cultural and intellectual achievements only, which is where it originated. This is especially important when considering the role of the margrave himself, and any possible shift in responsibilities and functions after 1783.

With the help of Epple's diaries the remainder of chapter four then deals in detail with the effect of the death of Caroline Louise on the court, and aims to unravel the myth of "spiralling decline". In actual fact the diaries show no such thing; the next seven years really prove the importance of the court as a many-faceted institution with distinct political and representative functions. After a short period of mourning the margrave returned to his duties which were more pressing than ever in the mid and late 1780s. As regards life at court, a degree of decentralisation was not the result of the death of the margravine. The margravial family and court were more numerous than ever before in the 1780s; Carl Frederic's second marriage as well as the increasingly powerful position of some of the senior government officials complicated social relations at court. The growing number of visitors and ever more complex layers of representation stood in direct correlation with the increasingly tense political situation which required an expansion of the ceremonial base of the court. The diaries show that the death of the margravine affected relations between family members and changed the face of the court, but also that structural amendments and changes in individual responsibilities depended on a myriad of factors. To what extent the margrave himself was responsible for, or at least in control of some of these changes remains to be seen. It is clear, however, that as an institution the Baden court responded relatively well to internal and external challenges in this period, and grew in size and consequence to provide a suitable basis for the margrave's operations.

Chapter five then deals with another issue which gradually emerges as important throughout the first three thematic chapters: the English connection of the margravial pair. Carl Frederic's and Caroline Louise's early interest in English language and culture – established by a collection of English letters – constitutes a rather unusual aspect of life at the Baden court in this period. Although there was not as obvious a reason for the Baden English connection as there was at Hanover or even Gotha (as will be shown), Carl Frederic apparently spoke English rather well. He ordered literature and plants from England, nurtured a keen interest in English gardening and even funded the London-based studies of young artisan Johann Sebastian Clais in the 1770s, in order to make him court engineer on his return. Caroline Louise also corresponded over a longer period of time with one G. Hamilton who corrected her letters and returned them to help her improve her language skills. Although an interest in England and the English language was becoming fashionable in the late eighteenth century, such distinctly early efforts to forge a connection are surprising indeed, as is the fact that they intensified during the inter-war years. Besides offering insights into the margrave and margravine's intellectual ambitions, the English letters also provide numerous momentary impressions on how the Baden court experienced the Seven Years War.

James Boswell's momentous grand tour visit to Karlsruhe in 1764 throws further light on the "English connection". Boswell's travel diaries confirm that

Karlsruhe must have been in some way exceptional even in 1764, since he visited many small German courts and none impressed him more. The young Boswell took to the margravian pair as much as they took to him, and endeavoured to establish a philosophical literary correspondence in the style of the universal “republic of letters” with the margrave. The communication was eventually interrupted, but Boswell was not Carl Frederic’s only English contact. The margrave kept correspondences with various English acquaintances throughout the 1750s to the 1770s, and even succeeded in drawing well-known cartographer Peter Perez Burdett to Karlsruhe permanently. Whether such efforts appear consistent with attempts to establish an early English community at Baden in this period, and if so, for which reason, will be shown.

### 1.3 The comparison with Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg

Chapter six comprises a comparison with the dukedom of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg, ruled by Frederic III and Ernst II between 1750 and 1800, which will help contextualise some of my findings on Baden. Gotha was of a similar size to Baden and in a similarly volatile position in 1750; however, unlike Baden its lineage was extinct by 1825. Thematically, this chapter is consistent with the main body of this study. Initially it provides an introduction and background to my comparison. It introduces Gotha and Friedenstein as residential city and palace of the dukes of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg in the latter half of the eighteenth century, in comparison with Carl Frederic’s Karlsruhe, before moving on to Frederic III’s court manual of 1750, the Gotha equivalent to Baden’s *Hofordnung*. In the last section I will introduce Frederic III’s cultured wife Louise Dorothee, the “Saxon Minerva” who may, in terms of my study, be seen as a counterpart to Caroline Louise. The two “Minervas” had remarkably similar cosmopolitan interests. One was a specialist in botany and medicine, the other a connoisseur of French literature; both were also involved in their husbands’ governing activities. Subtle differences nevertheless show upon closer scrutiny. Whereas Caroline Louise was distinctly practical and devoted to philanthropy – Carl Frederic’s abolition of serfdom was her last wish – but stood back behind her husband, Louise Dorothee dominated the sedentary Frederic and his court. Her friendship with Frederic II of Prussia aided Gotha during the Seven Years War; however she also enjoyed frivolous fun at the meetings of her “hermit order”. The distinct differences between the two leading ladies show in their heritage.

Another section examines the court of Louise Dorothee’s “enlightened” son Ernst II who at first shows promising parallels with Carl Frederic in terms of inclinations and reforming momentum, but finished steeped in disillusion and short of the kind of results seen in Baden. Ernst received an excellent education at his mother’s philosophical court; he had a penchant for the sciences, which also took him to England. However, although he was able to simply take over his mother’s court after her death – unlike Carl Frederic – he failed to maintain the same centralised cohesion, which soon split the court into different factions. Whereas the

decentralisation which occurred at Baden in the 1780s was more of a delegation of responsibilities which did not immediately affect the margrave's own safeguarded position at the centre, Ernst was quite unsure about his place. Less pragmatic but perhaps more "enlightened" even than Carl Frederic, he remained painfully aware of being his own final hurdle to any comprehensive programme of enlightened reform. If truly enlightened, it would call into question central authority, and thus the reason for the ruler's existence. The French Revolution finally drove him to consider abdicating – never an option for father-figure Carl Frederic. By means of my comparison with late eighteenth-century Gotha I hope to illustrate the relevance of some of my findings on Baden in a wider context. At the same time it also serves as a reminder of the uniqueness of each case, and the importance of each ruler's personal influence, inclinations and circumstances.

My conclusion aims to consolidate the above by explaining the importance of my research in the context of Carl Frederic's extended reign, with a short description of the Baden court after 1790 and the effects of the French invasion on Karlsruhe. The last two decades of Carl Frederic's reign no doubt deserve further scrutiny also; however they may best be considered in the context of an analysis of the political and constitutional changes which followed his death in the 1820s and 30s. For now this remains an exercise for the future. Here I will instead provide answers to my original questions, such as what role the Baden court played as a political instrument in this period, how its functions changed and whether it was the ruler's intention that they did, and explain the role of the court in the process of modernisation as it emerges from my research. Finally, was the *ancien régime* court a dying institution indeed, or does the case of Baden show that it may have experienced a renaissance as an essential political organ which (in Baden) supported stately and socio-cultural cohesion and contributed to the survival and fortification of that state at a time when it could have easily been submerged by greater powers?